

THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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EMBRACING THE MOMENT: People of all ages came together Jan. 15 to participate in the San Diego Walk for Life and to share “a great moment of hope,” as Bishop Robert McElroy told them, as the U.S. Supreme Court weighs the future of the ruling that legalized abortion.



Vigilance Is Key

Local Church urges increased vigilance amid Omicron-fueled COVID spike. **Page 3**



A Sacred Gift

Diocese is inviting married couples to a Marriage Anniversary Mass just for them. **Page 4**



Keeping Traditions

Asian Catholic communities celebrate their history and faith at start of new year. **Pages 12-13**

Register in February

The Catholic Church wants to listen to you. Sign up with your parish to participate in this great consultation.

The Church needs you!

Details on Page 2



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The Diocese of San Diego runs the length of California's border with Mexico and serves more than 1.3 million Catholics in San Diego and Imperial counties. It includes 98 parishes, 49 elementary and secondary schools, Catholic Charities and various social service and family support organizations throughout the region. It also includes five historic sites, the most well known of which is the Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá, the first mission established in California by St. Junipero Serra in 1769.

MORE FOR YOU

This colored triangle indicates that we have more content related to a particular story in our digital edition, thesouthernccross.org, including photos, videos, and at times an extended version.



THE SOUTHERN CROSS.ORG

Parish to Consult Faithful in March

By Aida Bustos



"Our Holy Mother Church needs to hear from all of us."

Starting in March, she will be listening.

Parishes at the San Diego Diocese plan to hold sessions for their members to be able to share their experiences in the Church and their hopes for its future. The sessions are the heart of a multi-year consultation, formally called a synod, which seeks to listen to Catholics worldwide.

As Cecilia Herrera sees it, not only does the Church "need to hear from all of us," the faithful have to do their part, too.

"Now it's our turn to initiate the dialogue with our Church to strengthen the relationship between the Church and her people," said Herrera, a member of a diocesan commission that is guiding the synod in the Imperial Valley.

The goal of the synod is to ascertain how the Church journeys with her people, invites their authentic communication, listens to their concerns,

and promotes their participation in the full life of the Church. In other words, to what extent it functions as a "synodal Church." The findings are to be used by the Church at all levels to better engage and serve the faithful.

Pope Francis has called for this consultation at a pivotal time, when the Church is working to reinvigorate its mission amid unprecedented challenges, not the least of which is a persistent, deadly pandemic.

At the diocese, the consultation will be carried out in phases. In the first one, parishes will organize small groups, with six to eight people each. The participants will have an opportunity to encounter one another and listen to each other's experiences and ideas.

Initially, the diocese planned to hold these in-person sessions in February but delayed them one month given the surge in COVID-19 cases.

The faithful who want to participate must register with their parish, which will announce how to do it at Mass, through the bulletin and other means.

The consultation also seeks to hear from members of diverse church-

related groups, staff and parents from Catholic schools, clergy and religious women, seminarians and young adults. And it's making a special effort to invite individuals who live on the margins of society, such as refugees, the homeless and incarcerated.

Each parish will determine what day or days to hold the sessions, which will be in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Herrera, a catechist at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Calexico, has a message for those who have drifted away from the Church.

"This is your opportunity for your voice to be heard," she said. "Be courageous and allow the Holy Spirit to work through you. Your feelings matter and nothing should ever get in the way of your salvation or your relationship with God. Embrace the moment."

Register for small-group sessions at your parish. More information on the synod: sdccatholic.org/synod.



ART OF THE ENCOUNTER: Pope Francis, pictured during his general audience at the Vatican on Jan. 19, has said that the essential characteristics of a "synodal Church" are humility and trust. He has tirelessly invited all faithful to participate in the upcoming consultation.

Director of Schools to Leave in June

The Southern Cross



SAN DIEGO — The long-time director of the San Diego

Diocese's schools, John Galvan, will be leaving his post in June to join the National Catholic Educational Association.

There, he will be the director of Catechetical Assessments, which assists in evaluating religious education programs in Catholic schools and parishes across the country.

Galvan has directed the diocese's 44 elementary and secondary schools for eight years. In the last two years, he's

led the schools' efforts to continue to offer a Catholic education in the midst of the pandemic.

"It has been an honor and a blessing to serve as director of schools," Galvan wrote in a letter announcing his departure on Jan. 23. "In this time I am most proud of the collaborative culture we have created together — all for the good of advancing our shared Catholic education mission into new and innovative areas."

He's leaving at a time when enrollment at the diocese's schools has increased by nearly 15 percent in the elementary schools and more than 4 percent at the secondary schools, the highest rate in a decade.

"As a result (of his efforts), we have focused with new vigor on what Catholicity means in a school today and helped develop wonderful new principals for our parish, religious and diocesan schools," Bishop Robert McElroy wrote in a letter to the diocese's pastors that accompanied Galvan's letter. "John will be profoundly missed, but his legacy is substantial and will be long-lasting in our diocese."

Galvan, who plans to continue to live in San Diego County, will finish his diocesan tenure at the end of the current academic year. San Diego Auxiliary Bishop John Dolan will lead a national search to fill his post.

Parishes, Schools Responding to Virus Spike

By Denis Grasska



The recent surge in COVID-19 cases, fueled by the highly infectious Omicron variant, has had a major impact on parishes, schools and ministries in the Diocese of San Diego.

About 7 percent of the diocese's workforce was sidelined for five to 10 days in January, either because they were sick, had tested positive for the virus or had contact with someone who was infected. It's a reality that most organizations are facing.

John Galvan, director of the diocesan Office for Schools, said that the Omicron variant has resulted in "a surge the likes of which we have not seen throughout this entire pandemic."

In response to this most recent spike, Bishop Robert McElroy announced in mid-January that masks are now mandatory at Mass, regardless of vaccination status. He also encouraged parishes to review any events scheduled for the next few weeks to determine whether they could be canceled, postponed or modified to better mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

"I don't think anybody's in panic mode," said Auxiliary Bishop John Dolan, but the diocese is certainly encouraging pastors and their flocks to exercise caution.

When it comes to wearing a facial covering, observing physical distance, and avoiding unnecessary gatherings, Bishop Dolan is practicing what he preaches.

"I'm hearing (of) more cases than I ever had heard before," he said, referring to friends and acquaintances, including brother priests, who have tested positive recently.

As of Jan. 18, San Diego County's positivity rate was about 22 percent, meaning that almost one-fourth of all COVID tests were returning a positive result — and that's not taking into account the home tests that have detected infection and had not been reported. Just a week earlier, the positivity rate had stood at 31.4 percent. The decline can be attributed to San Diegans, like those at local parishes,



ALL HANDS ON DECK: Staff across the diocese's schools scrambled once more to keep their classes going amid a surge in COVID-19 cases. At Nazareth School, fourth-grade students worked on a STEM project in early January.

who are taking the virus seriously and observing such practices as wearing masks indoors at public settings, maintaining physical distance, and washing their hands frequently.

More than anything, the local Church's response to Omicron has been a call to increased vigilance.

For example, employees of the diocesan Pastoral Center were informed on Jan. 4 that, "out of an abundance of caution," they would be required to wear a multi-layer facial covering at all times and to check their temperature upon arrival.

In addition, the diocese has recommended vaccination, including the booster, for all who are eligible.

Like many local parishes, St. Mark's in San Marcos isn't implementing new protocols in response to the spike, but rather is continuing the measures that have served it well throughout the pandemic. These include allowing parishioners to choose from among five indoor and five outdoor Mass times every weekend.

Father Bruce Orsborn, pastor, is aware of parishioners who have contracted the virus.

"There are quite a few that have had

it, but with mild symptoms," he said, adding that "the bigger effect" of the recent surge has been the number of people having to quarantine after coming into close contact with an infected person.

Diocesan Chancellor Marioly Galván, who also heads the diocesan Office for Evangelization and Catechetical Ministry, reflected on how parish catechists are responding to the surge.

"Faith-formation instruction has either been postponed (at some parishes) for a few days or weeks, others have transitioned online during the spike, and yet others have continued to conduct their classes in-person with the proper precautions," she said.

Because of the rising COVID numbers, Galván opted to limit attendance at the diocese's Spring Forward catechetical conferences in January and February to 100 people each, which would keep attendees more socially distanced. The diocese will require participants to wear masks at the conferences and there will be hand-sanitizing stations available.

Some Catholic schools delayed their students' return to classes after Christmas break, including Mater Dei

and Cathedral Catholic high schools, both of which also required negative PCR tests from every returning student. It was a major logistical undertaking organized in a matter of days.

"During this time of the Omicron variant outbreak, which is highly contagious, we need to be extra cautious," Jesuit Father Joaquin Martinez, president of Mater Dei Catholic, wrote Jan. 7 in a message to school families.

Cathedral Catholic provided all students and employees with the opportunity to be tested on campus Jan. 3-4 and Jan. 6-7. Dr. Kevin Calkins, school president, said that "easily close to 2,000 people" were tested during that time.

"Cathedral Catholic has been able to pivot and respond to each time COVID has caused disruption to daily life, and this time is no different," said Calkins. "On the other hand, everyone is exhausted by the ongoing pandemic and the evolving guidance from county and state officials."

Galvan, the director of the diocesan schools, said one of the biggest challenges for local Catholic schools has been the limited supply of COVID tests.

Another challenge, Galvan said, has been the difficulty of keeping schools fully staffed as infections and exposure force faculty and staff members to quarantine.

"Finding substitutes is near impossible right now," he said.

Amidst rising COVID numbers, John Galvan counsels local Catholics against despair.

"In (Jesus Christ) we have hope, we have salvation, and we have a life transformed," he said.

"I just encourage ... all people of faith to cling to that, because that's (what's) going to get you through this, the hope that faith provides."



PRECAUTION: All Mass-goers are asked to wear masks, regardless of vaccination status. Hundreds attended the Mass commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at St. Rita's Church on Jan. 16 in San Diego.

More information about where to get free vaccinations: sdcatholic.org/vaccine.



Mass Will Celebrate Marriage Anniversaries

By Denis Grasska



Perhaps as many as 1,000 people attended the

Diocese of San Diego's special Marriage Anniversary Mass last year. Some women even wore their wedding dresses.

Blown away by the enthusiastic response, it was "kind of a no-brainer to do it again this year," said John Prust, director of the diocesan Office for Family Life and Spirituality.

The second annual Marriage Anniversary Mass will be celebrated at 11 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 12, at The Immaculata Church, located on the campus of the University of San Diego. Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano will be the celebrant.

The Mass will take place during National Marriage Week, observed from Feb. 7 through Valentine's Day, Feb. 14.

"Everything (at the Marriage Anniversary Mass) is based on the theme of marriage — the readings, the homily, all the intentions, the music," said Prust, who noted that married couples who are parishioners of The Immaculata or representatives of local marriage ministries will fulfill the various liturgical roles at the Mass.

After Bishop Bejarano's homily, all participating couples will have the opportunity to renew their wedding vows in English, Spanish or Vietnamese.

Deacon Manuel Rivas, who serves at Good Shepherd Parish and assisted at the altar for last year's Mass, recalled what that moment was like. He likened the sound of the couples' renewing their vows to "a heavenly choir of love."

Those couples who are celebrating major anniversaries will be publicly recognized.

In a departure from last year, this year's celebration will continue after Mass with a reception and a marriage ministry fair featuring representatives of such programs as Engaged Encounter, Marriage Encounter and Witness to Love.

Prust said the ministry fair will



JOHN GASTALDO

PICTURE OF LOVE: Prudencial Barba and wife, Prunella, who had been married for almost 50 years, attended the diocese's inaugural Marriage Anniversary Mass in 2021. The Mass will be held this year on Saturday, Feb. 12, at The Immaculata Church, to be followed by a reception.

"visually represent the reality that marriage formation is ongoing" and that "there are so many ministries out there to help couples."

As Prust sees it, the purpose of the Marriage Anniversary Mass is simply "to celebrate the gift of marriage," adding that we "too often take it for granted."

Auxiliary Bishop John Dolan, last year's celebrant, said that marriage "needs to be honored, and cherished, and supported" because the family home is "where Church really happens."

Married for 52 years, Good Shepherd parishioners Don and Mary Wagner were one of three couples who led the

Responsorial Psalm at last year's Mass.

Mary said that the presence of the bishop and many concelebrating priests "reinforced how important our marriage and family is to the Church and society."

Reflecting on the event's significance, her husband added, "It is important for Catholic couples to get together and communicate about our Catholic religion, family life issues and marital relationships. We are not alone in the world with our faith and family."

"Events like this (Marriage Anniversary Mass) provide encouragement and support for our

couples to continue to witness to the love of God in their lives and families," said Deacon Rivas. The couples' participation serves as "a witness to society that marriage does work, that marriage is important and that, while difficult, a marriage with God in their midst is a successful and joyful union."

More information is available at (858) 490-8299, by email at bolivero@sdccatholic.org, and online at sdccatholic.org/anniversarymass.



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"In the heart of my Mother, the Church, I will be love."
— St. Therese of Lisieux



SUCCESSFUL: At St. Mark's Church, about 100 couples have participated in the Spanish-speaking ministry known as the "Grupo de Matrimonios," which began 16 years ago with five couples. They come together weekly to strengthen their relationship and their faith.

Devoted Group Nourishes Couples Weekly

By Iliana De Lara



SAN MARCOS —
For 16 years,
dozens of couples
have gathered at St. Mark's
Parish every Monday at 7 p.m.
for two hours to strengthen
their relationship and learn to
live their marriage according
to the Church.

They nourish their faith through conferences, studies, talks, counseling and socials.

"This is very positive because it's constant formation, it's like a steady stream of faith that waters their family culture," said Ricardo Márquez, associate director of the diocese's Office for Family Life and Spirituality.

He's been invited several times to give

talks to the Spanish-speaking group, known as the "Grupo de Matrimonios de San Marcos," addressing such topics as how to cultivate faith in the family, conflict resolution, and healthy practices to handle emotions.

"The meetings help us to continue growing as an individual, as a Christian and as a couple," said Olivia Gracia, who along with her husband, Javier, has coordinated this ministry for more than four years. "They help us to communicate better, which is what we need most as a couple."

Her husband added that participating in the group teaches them how to live as a family from the point of view of the word of God.

"So that what we really believe can be reflected in our actions," he said. "So that our spiritual and social life have coherence."

The couple has belonged to the parish for more than 20 years. They have been married for 32 years, and the last 10 have participated in that ministry.

The group began when some parishioners who had experienced diocesan marriage retreats sought to do something similar at the parish level. Rather than focus on faith renewal, they wanted the group to tackle all aspects of Holy Matrimony.

They spoke to their pastor and the faith formation leader at the parish and the idea emerged to require all parents with children in classes to prepare for their First Communion to participate in a retreat as a couple.

At the retreat, they were invited to participate in a year-long program of personal growth. Five couples accepted. That's how the

grupo was born, one that now has about 100 couples.

The pandemic forced the group to meet virtually for a year and participation has diminished. They returned to meeting in-person a year ago but with a different format: The night begins with a Mass, which is followed by a talk or Bible study.

Márquez credits the group's success to the leadership of the pastor and the coordinators' commitment. Their organization, persistence, and interest in growing their spirituality at home have been key, he said.

"I thank God for my husband because he is not the same," Olivia said. "I tell him that he's worked so hard and opened his heart; he's been transformed. We have a ways to go but we are not the same."

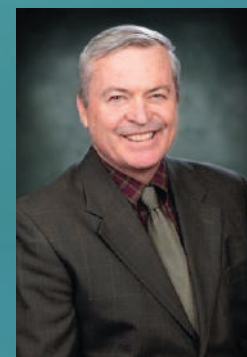
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Annual Catholic Appeal to Begin in February

By Denis Grasska



St. Paul famously wrote that the Gospel must be preached “in season and out of season.”

He didn’t include an escape clause for times of pandemic.

That’s why the Diocese of San Diego has selected “Living Our Mission” as the theme for this year’s Annual Catholic Appeal.

“Everybody’s been feeling this heaviness and this weight of the pandemic, but the Church and the work we do has not stopped,” said Manny Aguilar, director of the diocesan Office for Stewardship.

The diocesan collection, which will kick off during the Feb. 19-20 weekend, aims to raise \$3.5 million by the year’s end to fund faith formation, Catholic schools and Catholic Charities, as well as seminary education and support for retired priests.

“Even though (the local Church went) virtual in 2020, we stopped being virtual in 2021,” Aguilar said.

Faith formation classes are still being taught at parishes, local Catholic school enrollment is up more than 11 percent this year, and Catholic Charities distributed more than 1 million meals to food-insecure individuals and families in San Diego and Imperial counties during the pandemic.



SUPPORT: The Annual Catholic Appeal supports the diocese’s seminarian program, including participants Brian Frulla, left, and Anthony Jimenez. Father Efraín Bautista greeted them on Oct. 17, 2021, at a Mass at the Pastoral Center chapel.

Ministries are expected to expand, not contract, during this challenging time.

“People really are thirsting for reconnecting with parish life,” Aguilar said, explaining that local Catholics want to see catechesis at their parishes and to know that their parochial schools have everything they need to remain open for in-person instruction.

Many parishes have seen smaller offertory collections since the start of the pandemic because of a decline in Mass attendance. The highly contagious Omicron variant has once more discouraged attendance at a time when some were starting to feel comfortable returning.

While some parishes saw an increase in collections during the

last two fiscal years, a majority saw decreases ranging from 1 to as much as 56 percent.

The 2021 appeal, which concluded on Dec. 31 of last year, is on track to reaching about 95 percent of its \$3.5-million goal. That’s an improvement over the 2020 appeal, which had fallen about 6 percent shy of that goal. The 2022 appeal should be even better.

“Overall, we should be very grateful that people continue to be so generous and demonstrate their faith that way,” Aguilar said.

He noted that there are typically about a dozen poorer parishes, particularly those in inner-city San Diego or in the Imperial Valley, that struggle to meet their goals for the Annual Catholic Appeal. Catholics who would like to assist these parishes can send a donation directly to the diocesan Office for Stewardship, which can apply it where it is needed most.

“For those who cannot give (monetarily), we understand,” said Aguilar. “(But) please pray for a successful campaign so that the underserved and the marginalized can be served.”

Support the Annual Catholic Appeal at sdcatholic.org/giving. Cash, credit card, IRA and stock donations are all accepted.



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Marriage Anniversary Mass

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'MVP' to Seafarers Ends 17-Year Tour of Duty

By Denis Grasska



To say Ruperto "Bob" Condes was a volunteer with the Stella Maris Seafarer's Center would be an understatement.

For 17 years, he was an integral part of its ministry, which consists of extending hospitality and pastoral care on behalf of the Diocese of San Diego to those who make their livelihoods on the world's oceans.

Were it not for recent health problems — he underwent two emergency brain surgeries last March — and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the 88-year-old might still be volunteering today. And the diocese couldn't let him sail off into retirement without expressing its gratitude.

"I can't sing the praises of Bob enough," said Father Jim Boyd, port chaplain, who recalled that Condes not only assisted at the 10th Street Terminal, but essentially oversaw pastoral care at the 24th Street Terminal singlehandedly.

"I always considered Bob the 'most valuable player' we had," shared Joe Bartel, who retired early last year after a decade as director of the Seafarer's Center. "He was always available to the seafarers."

Among his duties, Condes would visit the various commercial vessels that dock at the Port of San Diego and arrange for Masses to be celebrated on board by Father Boyd; if Mass was unavailable, he would conduct a



WELCOMING THE STRANGER: The Stella Maris Seafarer's Center provides hospitality and pastoral care to those who make their livelihoods at sea. Pictured, from left, in an undated photo are: Joe Bartel; Father Jim Boyd; the late Rev. Bob Craft, Episcopal chaplain; and Bob Condes.

Communion service. He also provided seafarers with transportation to and from their ships.

"I would take them to the stores or to the malls, so they could go shopping," said Condes. "I would get magazines for them to read (and) provide them with calling cards" so that they could call loved ones back home.

Father Boyd said Condes also helped with the Christmas celebrations that were held annually aboard some of the visiting ships in pre-pandemic years, bringing holiday cheer to crew members who were separated from their families for most of the year.

Born in Looc, Romblon, Philippines, Condes served in

the U.S. Navy from 1954 through 1976. He subsequently worked for the Navy as a civilian for about 22 years and began volunteering at the Seafarer's Center in 2004.

"Bob really related so well to the sailors," said Father Boyd, noting that he shared with them a common cultural background. The majority of those served by the center also are from the Philippines.

Bartel suggested that Condes' Navy background was also a boon.

Following his two surgeries last year, Condes has finally stepped down from ministry.

"I am now home with my loving family and glad I am still alive," said Condes, who will turn 89 in March.

"Bob is the kind of guy who always puts the service of others ahead of himself," said Bartel, identifying his former colleague as "a true example of Christian service."

Father Boyd said his prayer is that the Seafarer's Center will attract "more people like Bob," although he admits this is a tall order.

"I don't know how we're going to get somebody to replace Bob."

The Stella Maris Seafarer's Center needs volunteers and financial donations. To learn more about how you can assist this ministry, contact Manny Aguilar at (858) 490-8294 or maguilar@sdccatholic.org.



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Program Graduates First Class

By Denis Grasska



A new diocesan certificate program for pro-life ministry is graduating its first students.

Eight students recently completed the 120 classroom hours and 30 hours of supervised, hands-on experience required to earn a Tessera in Culture of Life through the Diocesan Institute.

“The word ‘Tessera’ means ‘entry pass’ and ‘mosaic tile’ in Italian,” explained Gerardo Rojas, director of the institute. “Similar to how an associate’s degree relates to a bachelor’s degree, the courses included in the Tessera program form part of the required courses that are needed for our certificate programs.”

The Tessera is a level of study that represents the halfway mark toward advanced certification.

The Tessera in Culture of Life consists of five required courses, which are offered in both English and Spanish: Christian Anthropology (15 hours), Intro to Christian Morality (30 hours), Biomedical Ethics (15 hours), Catechism of the Catholic Church (15 hours) and Principles of Catholic Social Teaching (15 hours). There is also a practical skills component (30 hours) that provides students with firsthand experience in sidewalk counseling, post-abortion grief support, or another aspect of pro-life ministry.

This initial cohort of students took its first course toward the



FORMATION: A new certificate program gives the diocese's pro-life ministry students a greater grounding in Catholic theology and social teaching.

Tessera in January 2020. They had to put their studies on hold from March through October 2020, when classes were suspended in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. They completed their final class last November.

In thanksgiving for their completion of the program, the students will gather on Sunday, Jan. 30, at Our Lady of Angels Parish for a Spanish-language Mass celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano.

The Tessera in Culture of Life is the second certificate of its kind to be offered by the Diocesan Institute. It follows the Tessera in Catechetical Ministry, which was introduced in 2019.

Maria Valencia, who has overseen culture of life ministry for the Diocese of San Diego since 2018, said the program responds to

requests for further formation on that issue. Many of the students are already active leaders in the pro-life movement, Valencia said, but the program is designed to make them more effective by providing a solid grounding in Catholic theology and Catholic social teaching.

The goal, she explained, is to equip students to better explain their beliefs about the sanctity of human life and their actions in support of that cause.

“Providing those resources, they will feel ... more confidence to share the message.”

For more information, call (858) 490-8323 or email mvalencia@sdccatholic.org.



TRADITION: Pope Francis baptized 16 babies on Jan. 9 in the Sistine Chapel.

Pope Challenges Parents and Godparents



VATICAN CITY — Before baptizing 16 babies in the

Sistine Chapel, Pope Francis reminded parents and godparents of their responsibility to care for and preserve the Christian identity the infants were about to receive.

“This is your task throughout your lives: to guard the Christian identity of your children,” the pope said. “It is a daily commitment: Help them grow with the light they receive today.”

The pope baptized the seven boys and nine girls — the children of Vatican employees — in the Sistine Chapel during the celebration of Mass Jan. 9, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

The annual tradition of baptizing infants on the feast day, which began in 1981 by St. John Paul II, was canceled last year due to the pandemic.

Although the baptisms resumed this year, the number of infants was significantly reduced. In January 2020, the pope had baptized 32 infants in the Sistine Chapel.

Delivering a brief, off-the-cuff homily, Pope Francis recalled a hymn for the feast day that said the people of Israel went to the Jordan River to be baptized “with bare feet and bare souls.”

“These children today also come here with ‘bare souls’ to receive God’s justification, Jesus’ strength, the strength to move forward in life,” he said. “Your children will receive their Christian identity today. And you, parents and godparents, must guard this identity.”

Catholic News Service

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By Aida Bustos



Bishop Robert McElroy said the nation “stands on the precipice of seeing *Roe v. Wade* effectively overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court.” He cautioned, however, that pro-life activists will need to re-double their efforts to bring legal protections for the unborn in California.

The bishop led the annual San Diego Walk for Life on Jan. 15 at Waterfront Park, under an intermittent, cold drizzle. An estimated 2,500 people turned out for the walk, which circled the heavily transited streets around the County Administration Building.

Over the walk’s 10-year history, organizers have coped with rain and last year with Covid-19 restrictions, which led to its suspension in favor of a car caravan. They logged a milestone at this year’s event: a tsunami warning, issued for the coast minutes before it was to begin at 8:30 a.m., following the powerful eruption of an underground volcano in the Pacific.

All of that did not dampen the spirit of the participants, which included families with small children, adolescents and young people. They turned out in their winter jackets, raincoats and boots and held umbrellas, many seemingly reconnecting with friends they had not seen in a while.

They visited the dozens of exhibitors, which ranged from pregnancy resource centers to family clinics to church communities. The walk is an ecumenical event, with Protestant and Orthodox pastors and their flocks in attendance.

The participants heard from several speakers in English and Spanish. They included Dr. George Delgado, founder and medical director of COLFS Clinic; Debbie Bradel, RN, active with 40 Days for Life; Lelaiah Luna, from Silent Voices, a crisis pregnan-



‘This Is a Moment

LIFE-AFFIRMING: More than 2,500 people from across the region turned out for the 10th Annual San Diego Walk for Life on Jan. 15 at Waterfront Park across from the bay.

cy center; and Denisse Houze, who shared her personal testimony. The keynote speaker was Shawn Carney, the co-founder, CEO and president of the international organization 40 Days for Life.

The walk was Bishop McElroy’s first

public appearance since having open-heart surgery in November. Standing under a canopy, he addressed the crowd for a few minutes, first in English and then in Spanish, just before the walk began.

“This is a historic moment for our

nation and in the history of the pro-life movement because we stand on the precipice of seeing *Roe v. Wade* effectively overturned by the Supreme Court,” he began, as applause erupted around him.

He referred to the landmark case



FAMILY-FRIENDLY: The event draws participants of all ages — and modes of transportation.



HIGHER PROFILE: Organizers moved the walk to the bayfront to give the event higher visibility amid the heavily traveled area.



PHOTOS BY JOHN CASTALDO

nt of Great Hope'

from the bay. After the walk, they gathered in front of the podium to “celebrate life at all stages,” this year’s theme.

that established a woman’s legal right to an abortion. The court issued its ruling on Jan. 22, 1973, a date used by pro-life activists ever since to advocate against it, including with walk events across the nation, including in San Diego.

“It is a great moment of hope and it is a moment to give thanks to God and all of those who have worked this past half-century to bring this about,” the bishop said.

He recalled that he was in college when the Supreme Court issued

its decision.

“I remember being tremendously saddened by it. And wondered: Would we ever see a day when the rights of the unborn were affirmed by the court again?”

“I am confident that we are coming close to that day.”

When the court overturns the decision, he predicted that many states will move legislatively to protect the unborn, but not in California.

“Thus, this is a moment not to downsize our efforts but to re-double them,” he said, to applause.

He said that “we have to convince the people in California — and I believe we have the capacity to do that over time — that the unborn child in the womb is precious and that as we know, God is the author of all life, and we’re merely stewards of life in this earth.”

He urged the crowd members to continue the struggle to educate and to convert minds and hearts, to point to the unborn child and help others see the preciousness of that life.

He noted that in an ultrasound, parents see their child, and know that it’s a human life.

“We need to bring that home, that sense, and the implications for it, in terms of how our laws can protect the unborn.”

Moments after he finished, the participants gathered on the corner of Grape Street and Harbor Drive and began the three-quarter-mile walk around the County Administration Building. They waved blue flags and signs at the passing cars with messages in English and Spanish such as “Love Life, Choose Life,” “Pray to End Abortion,” and “Life Begins at Conception.”

Auxiliary Bishops John Dolan and Ramón Bejarano were on hand, along with pastors, seminarians and groups from parishes. After the walk, Auxiliary Bishop Bejarano joined a small circle of participants at the park and they prayed the rosary.

For more information,
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e heavily traveled streets.



GROUP EFFORT: Friends gathered to share their message of life and hope.

Celebrating Asian Cultures in Local Church

By Chris Bongato



As we dive into the New Year, we look forward to personal growth as we leave the last year behind. We hope to be more attuned to God's will and be a more loving, Christian people.

One way we can do this is by discovering the stories of the diverse Catholic cultural groups in our midst. Three communities — the Vietnamese, Chinese and Korean — will soon celebrate their own new year, Lunar New Year. Their stories reveal sacrifice, a determination to maintain their faith despite facing barriers, and a commitment to integrate into and support their Church community, as one people of God.

Lunar New Year Celebrations

This tradition is a celebration that ties these cultures together to begin the new year based on the lunar calendar. Generally celebrated in the context of the Mass, it is similar to how Catholics commemorate secular holidays like the Fourth of July or Memorial Day. Although these holidays aren't on the liturgical calendar, they are important cultural days to gather and celebrate.

For the Vietnamese Catholic community, each predominantly Vietnamese parish has a celebration for Lunar New Year around Feb. 1. During Mass, there may be liturgical dancing, not only to worship God but to express devotion to the Blessed Mother. After-



DRAGON DANCE: Father Christopher Tozzi and Father Anthony Yang, SVD, participated in the Chinese Catholic community's Lunar New Year celebration in 2018 at St. Therese of Carmel Church.

ward, the celebration continues in the parish hall with traditional Vietnamese food centering on *bánh chưng*, a square sticky rice cake, followed by entertainment.

The Chinese and Koreans celebrate the Lunar New Year in a similar fashion. And all three include special rituals to honor and venerate their ancestors. Like the Hispanic community's *Día de los Muertos*, families create altars adorned with photos, notes, flowers, lighted candles, even food, and pray for their deceased loved ones.

Chinese Catholics

Christianity has been in China since the 7th century, but Franciscan missionaries didn't arrive until the 13th century. In the 16th century writings of Mateo Ricci, an Italian Jesuit missionary/scholar known as the Apostle

of China, he explained that Confucianism and Christianity are remarkably similar in key respects. His writings were used to convert the Chinese, but also contributed to evangelization in Vietnam and Korea.

Chinese immigrants who arrived in the United States in the 1990s, including many Catholics, experienced persecution by the Chinese government that heavily regulated Christians, as it still does today.

The Chinese Catholic community started in San Diego with only three families. Last year, the community celebrated its 25th anniversary at St. Therese of Carmel Parish.

The Chinese-language Mass, initially scheduled twice a month at the parish, gradually evolved into a weekly one.

Margaret Marsh, the community's

president, shared that in the early years, there were no local priests to celebrate Mass for them, so they would drive back and forth to Los Angeles to bring one. Over the past 25 years, at least 80 priests have come to serve their community. In the past five years, Father Anthony Yang, SVD, has celebrated the Chinese-language Mass.

Marsh said that the community has between 80 and 100 families registered, with about 50 to 60 of them active, and 60 to 80 individuals currently attend Mass at St. Therese. The community also has an RCIA program held after Sunday Mass.

Marsh said the community reaches out to students or others visiting San Diego from China. They understand the difficulty of knowing or proclaiming the Catholic faith, given their government's laws, and want to let them know they are loved by God and can count on the local Chinese community's support.

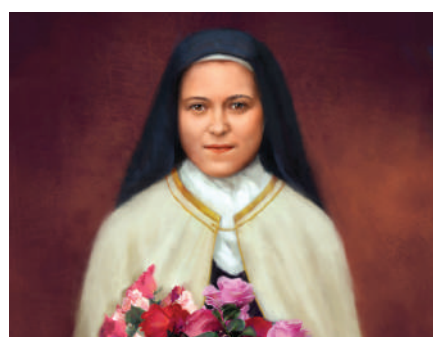
Vietnamese Catholics

French Jesuits introduced Catholicism in Vietnam in the 17th century. Though many Vietnamese converted to Catholicism and respected the missionaries, Catholic evangelization and worship was prohibited. This persecution during the rise of Communism led to martyrdom throughout the region, but these great servants continued to nurture the seed of faith among the Vietnamese faithful.

After the fall of Saigon in 1975, many Vietnamese refugees came to

Asian Cultures

Continued on Page 13



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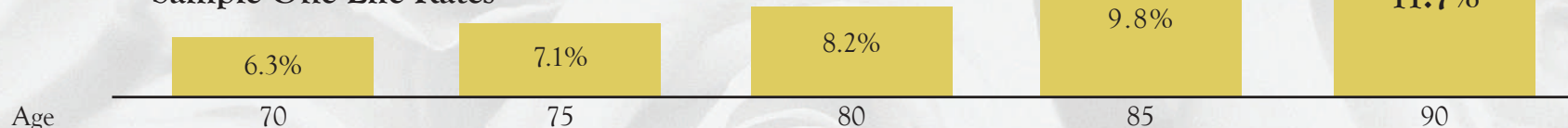
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Asian Cultures

Continued from Page 12

the U.S. heartbroken to leave their country. Giai Do, 60, recalls that when he came as a 17-year old with his family, they were “housed in a tent city in Camp Pendleton.”

After being processed, they were sponsored by families in local parishes. Do's family was sponsored by a family at St. Martin of Tours. He said that he “cannot overemphasize how much kindness (he) received and how much support (his) family received from the parish.”

Masses in Vietnamese were held once a month, but their frequency increased as the population grew, today numbering between 4,000 and 5,000, around 1,100 families. They settled in parishes such as Holy Family, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Good Shepherd, Holy Spirit and St. Thomas More (formerly at St. Francis of Assisi).

Do remembers that it was hard to integrate into the existing Church community due to the language barrier. Eventually, they became active servants and leaders within their parishes with the help of their pastors, who recognized their gifts and talents.

In 1978, the Vietnamese community became more organized and started to hold catechism classes, which also taught Vietnamese Catholic history. The Eucharistic Youth Movement also helped to apply what they learned in classes.

Korean Catholics

Korea's Catholic journey is one that starts with self-discovery. It is the only country in the world throughout the centuries where the Catholic Church was founded spontaneously



MOVING: Young members from the Vietnamese Catholic community share their faith through liturgical dance during Mass, as they did at the Multicultural Mass on May 19, 2018.



SPECIAL DAY: The Korean community holds faith formation for its children at St. Columba Parish.

by the native people themselves, who brought the faith from China. Through a collaborative effort of many faithful, Christianity took root in Korea.

Korea's first significant contact with Christianity was through mis-

sionaries in China in the 17th century. With the arrival of clergy from China and Europe, Korean Catholics were able to experience the true Mass, receive the sacraments and ordain native-born priests.

Like Vietnam and China, there were many waves of Catholic martyrs in Korea. The Korean faith remained strong even amid persecution and martyrdom.

The Korean faithful migrated to the U.S. to seek economic and educational opportunities, and were followed by their children.

An example is Jongshick Ahn, secretary of the Korean Catholic community. He lived a worldly life, focused on finances. His Catholic wife brought him into the Catholic community and, after seeing a great model of faith among its members, he decided to convert to Catholicism.

The local Korean Catholic commu-

AN INVITATION

These communities, with support and assistance from local diocesan clergy, have been able to provide a safe place for each other to grow in love and virtue while maintaining their faith traditions and family values.

Each of these communities expresses their appreciation for being welcomed into the local Catholic community, and reciprocates with the same spirit towards other cultures, celebrating with them and gathering as one Universal Church.

The schedule of Lunar New Year Masses includes:
Sunday, Jan. 30, 12 p.m., St. Columba Parish (Korean);
Monday, Jan. 31, 7 p.m., Good Shepherd Parish (Vietnamese);
Saturday, Feb. 5, 1 p.m., St. Therese of Carmel Parish (Chinese).

Check each parish for the latest details.

nity started in the 1990s, centered at St. Columba Parish in Serra Mesa. There are about 350 families, with an estimated 1,000 individuals, in the community. Due to the language barrier, the Korean community is separated from the larger parish community. The Korean community also created faith formation, cultural education, and community-building opportunities for adults and youth.

Chris Bongato is a third-year seminarian in the Catholic Diocese of San Diego.

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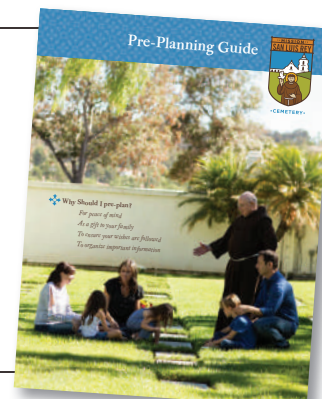
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Abundant Santo Niño Blessings

The Southern Cross



Around 400 Filipinos joyfully celebrated Santo Niño, or the Christ Child, at St. Michael's Church in Paradise Hills, one of the largest such gatherings in recent years.

Bishop Robert McElroy celebrated the special Mass on Jan. 15, his first public liturgy since undergoing open-heart surgery in November.

The Mass was one of several held in parishes across the San Diego region to celebrate Santo Niño, widely venerated as miraculous by Filipino Catholics.

Many families brought statues with the image of the Santo Niño to be blessed, some beautifully elaborate.

In his homily, the bishop shared his experience of visiting the Basilica de Santo Niño in Cebu, in the Philippines, and personally witnessing the devotion to the icon.

The original Santo Niño statue dates back to 1521, and is the oldest Christian artifact in the Philippines. Filipinos the world over are celebrating the 500th anniversary of Christianity reaching the Philippines, a celebration that continues into this year.

To contact the Diocesan Commission for Filipino Catholics: Charlotte Fajardo at (858) 271-0207, ext. 1204.



CHARLOTTE FAJARDO

TRADITION: Filipino faithful seek a blessing for their image of Santo Niño at a Mass on Jan. 15 at St. Michael's Church.

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'Pilgrims of Hope' Is Motto for Holy Year 2025

OPEN DOOR: A woman touches the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica after Pope Francis opened it to inaugurate the Jubilee Year of Mercy in this Dec. 8, 2015, file photo.

By Carol Glatz



VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis approved "Pilgrims of Hope" as the motto for the Holy Year 2025.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, told *Vatican News* Jan. 13 the words "pilgrims" and "hope" represent key themes of Pope Francis' pontificate.

The archbishop said the pope approved the motto Jan. 3 and that he is awaiting further instructions from the pope. In the meantime, the council already is working with Vatican and Italian authorities on the best way to welcome a large number of visitors during the year.

Traditionally for holy years, the celebrations begin with the pope opening the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica on Christmas Eve and ends with the sealing of the door one year later. The holy doors of St. John Lateran, St. Paul Outside the Walls and St. Mary Major are opened for the year, too.

A holy year or jubilee is a time of pilgrimage, prayer, repentance and acts of mercy, based on the Old Testament tradition of a jubilee year of rest, forgiveness and renewal. Holy years also are a time when Catholics visit designated churches and shrines, recite special prayers, go to confession and receive Communion to receive a plenary indulgence, which is a remission of the temporal punishment due for one's sins.

Pope Boniface VIII proclaimed the first Holy Year in 1300.

In 1470, Pope Paul II established the celebrations every 25 years, which has been the practice ever since. However, special anniversaries have called for special holy years.

Pope Francis declared an extraordinary Year of Mercy, which ran in 2015-16.

Catholic News Service

Mother Seton Shrine to Expand Awareness of U.S. Saint

Catholic News Service



EMMITSBURG, Md. — The National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg is launching a series of initiatives to expand awareness of first U.S.-born saint, it announced on Jan. 4, the saint's feast day.

The initiatives build on the momentum of a yearlong commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the saint's death.

"Underlying all that we do at the shrine is the strong belief that Mother Seton does not belong to the past. She belongs to all of us today and all those in the future who seek greater meaning in their lives and a friend in heaven," said Rob Judge, executive director of the shrine.

The initiatives for 2022 include a series of essays, continued retreats and an added at-home retreat, an emailed prayer program and the renovation of the shrine's museum and visitors center.

The shrine will publish on its website a bi-weekly series of spiritual essays profiling Catholic artists, novelists, poets and visionaries, from the perspective of St. Elizabeth Seton's life and spirituality.

The first essay by Catholic poet Paul Mariani describes the sensations of a concerto and the profound feelings it elicits through the eyes of Thomas Merton and Mother Seton.

Other essays will highlight the poet and Catholic convert Denise Levertov and former actress Mother Dolores Hart.

It will also resume its Seeds of Hope retreats and will add a prepared home retreat based on St. Elizabeth Seton's writings. The in-person retreat program is described as the only one in the U.S. geared primarily to those on the margins of society.

The at-home retreat, scheduled to begin during the Easter season, is particularly aimed at those struggling with anxiety as a means to build faith and resiliency in a time of uncertainty.

The shrine has developed an email prayer program called: "Lift Up My Soul: 15 Days of Prayer with Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton" using the writings of Mother Seton to help readers integrate themes of the saint's faith into daily life. The program's website page can be found here: setonshrine.org/lift-up-my-soul-15-days-of-prayer-mother-seton/.

The shrine also plans to break ground this summer on its work on a fully renovated and expanded museum and visitor center highlighting the life and legacy of Mother Seton and the sisters who took her message to the world. Funds for this effort are from the shrine's capital campaign that is close to reaching its \$7 million goal.

Information about the initiatives can be found at setonshrine.org.

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'I Am Filled with Hope About Marriage'

JOHN CASTALDO

By Denis Grasska



It's February, a month dominated by the celebration of Valentine's Day.

Jesuit Father Michael Ravenkamp's ministry has given him unique insight on the subject of love and marriage.

Father Ravenkamp, 69, works in the diocesan tribunal, a Church court that considers the cases of Catholics seeking annulments. His role is "defender of the bond," offering arguments for why a particular marriage should be considered valid and a declaration of nullity should not be granted.

A Jesuit since 1981 and a priest for 26 years, Father Ravenkamp is also involved with the weekend programs Engaged Encounter, for couples preparing for marriage; Marriage Encounter, for couples seeking to enrich their marriage; and Retrouvaille, for couples who need help healing a deeply troubled marriage.

Question: When did you recognize a call to priesthood?

Answer: Growing up in the Sixties, the civil rights and peace movements convinced me of the truth of Christianity. I became certain that, somehow, in some way, God was present in history.

Although I had wanted to be a history teacher, seeing that as the most noble thing that I could aspire to, I asked God, "What do You want from me?" I heard a voice in my head saying, "Be a priest."

I thought, "What? A priest? Oh no!" Like any other young man, I was interested in wine, women and song —

Interview with
Defender of the Bond:

Father Michael Ravenkamp, S.J.



and adventure. I thought priesthood would be the antithesis of that. But something happened, and I became more peaceful with the idea.

After college, I told my father that I thought I wanted to be a priest. Pop advised me to go to our parish and talk to the pastor. I asked the pastor if he thought I had a vocation, and he said, "Where there's smoke, there's fire."

The following year, I attended a Jesuit-led men's retreat. I had a vivid experience of the love of Christ Crucified for me. It was like I was being bathed in the blood of Christ. I thought, "God, why did You undergo such suffering?" And I heard God's voice saying, "Because I love you."

From that point on, I was sold on being a Jesuit.

How did you come to be involved in marriage-related programs?

I got involved with Engaged Encounter about a year after my ordination, when the pastor at my first parish assignment asked if I wanted to participate in one of the weekends. Kind of flippantly, I asked him what a priest had to say that would be of even remote interest to anyone contemplating marriage. The pastor urged me to experience the weekend for myself.

I was just blown away and realized that the commitments that married couples make to each other before God

are very similar to those that priests make before God and the Church. When I returned to the parish, as tired as I was from the weekend, all I could do was talk about it. I kept the pastor up until after 11 that night.

My involvement with Marriage Encounter and Retrouvaille started after I came to San Diego in 2014 and began my work with the tribunal. Not having a parish assignment, I knew I needed something to do on the weekends. After all, I didn't get ordained just to push paper around.

Why are you so passionate about these programs?

Tribunal work can be a depressing occupation, reading these annulment case reports. But when I go to one of these weekends, listening to the talks of the presenters and hearing the stories of the other participants, I'm filled with hope about marriage.

I once met a presenter couple at a Retrouvaille weekend in Owensboro, Ky. The wife had a bad cold and her husband doted on her, serving her meals in bed and making sure that she got the medicine she needed. When he was away from her, the way he talked about her was so endearing.

But, in their talks that weekend, the couple shared how troubled their marriage once was. They had been alcoholics and engaged in violence. She would throw things at him, and he would try to strangle her; the police were at their house almost every night. With the help of Retrouvaille, they turned that relationship around.

When my parents got married in the early fifties, they didn't have programs like Engaged Encounter; couples were pretty much on their own. Five-

hundred years in the future, when historians write about our time, I think they'll point to these sorts of ministries as a significant step forward in the Church's own development and in contributing to the overall good of society.

What can couples do to prevent their marriage from becoming one of the annulment cases that lands on your desk?

Be aware of yourself. Why are you interested in this person? Is it just because of looks, or is there something more? Ask yourself: Am I willing to see God acting in this person? Am I willing to have children with this person? Am I willing to work for his or her salvation and let him or her work for mine? If the answer is no, you'd better not marry that person.

Any final insights on the subject of marriage?

The Wedding Feast at Cana, where Jesus turned water into wine, is one of my favorite Gospel stories.

Marriages were a big thing in the Jewish culture in which Jesus lived, and people were expected to stop whatever they were doing and enjoy the wedding feast. But, even if money were no object, we know we can't party every day. We're not emotionally built to be "living it up" all the time.

Sometimes, when you're just relaxing at home with your nearest and dearest, maybe just watching TV together, you might say, "Dearest, this was a pretty good day." That humble water of day-to-day existence is transformed into wine, just with the goodness of being there together.

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Hidden Treasures in These Times Will Save Us



There are moments and situations that are so

overwhelming that one loses energy, strength and spirit wane, faith weakens and hope dims. These days, when the pandemic's grasp has reached into more homes and family routines have been upended once more, we feel confused and anxious because we don't know what awaits us.

What to do with the feelings of doubt, sadness and frustration that emerge in these circumstances?

In our schooling, the focus is to learn, memorize, be evaluated and advance through the grades. Rarely that I can recall, in school or college, are emotions taken into account.

What to do with emotions and feelings? How do we explore them to discover their messages? How do we teach the heart as well as the head?

We could begin to do this if we stopped and asked our children or students after they completed a task or activity: How do you feel? What emotions did you feel while doing it? These simple queries would open a conversation to get to know each other better and to create a space where all of us could speak like equals, like human beings, because emotions are universal expressions experienced in a unique way by each person. By

Associate Director,
Family Life &
Spirituality

Ricardo Márquez



speaking about emotions and feelings, we share our experiences and personal lessons, not grades or book knowledge.

When we discuss ideas and opinions, the tendency is to persuade the other person of what we're thinking with arguments and reason. There's a dynamic of "ping-pong": I opine and the other responds. We can reach agreement or confirm our different views. When we share emotions, I'm not trying to persuade the other person of a truth, only offering a glimpse of what's stirring inside me, what is making me feel joy, fear, sadness. That's why, when we share our emotions, we prepare ourselves to listen and "empathize," not to judge, to begin to understand and feel with the other.

Rage and sadness, for example, can be signs to explore more deeply what we desire, what really matters to us. Behind every furious scream, there is a frustration, and beneath that frustration is an unfulfilled desire.

So, when encountering this emotion, a better reaction is not to say, "Why are you screaming?" but rather, "I see that you're angry. What has



so frustrated you?" This takes the steam out of the anger and opens the door to explore, "What is it that you really want?"

Almost universally, I dare say, what we are searching for and what we want as human beings, at bottom, is to be loved and respected. When we don't have that, we become frustrated, and express ourselves in a way that desperately calls attention to what we really want.

Learning to walk in emotional territory takes practice and reflection about our own experiences, and a greater acceptance of ourselves, of our human nature. This road makes us more patient and compassionate because the emotions I see in the other person I also see in myself.

There are hidden treasures in these

times of crisis. We get the opportunity to recognize our common humanity and not what divides us, to speak openly about how we feel. We get the chance to strengthen our connection with each other in the face of our shared vulnerability.

In these times, we can connect with the roots of our faith, and drink from the "living water," the one that Our Lord offered the Samaritan woman, water that recognized her dignity and the power of forgiveness. It's a time we can live the prayers we recite every day, putting our lives in His hands.

These can be the hidden treasures of this crisis: A profound, comforting knowledge that we are not facing it alone — and that our energy, strength and hope will return.



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News Briefs

Diocese Marks 'World Day of the Sick' with Mass

Auxiliary Bishop John Dolan will celebrate a Mass in observance of World Day of the Sick.

The bilingual liturgy will take place at 10 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 12, at Good Shepherd Parish in Mira Mesa and will include the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, a blessing with Lourdes water and a special blessing for caregivers. A reception will follow.

The event, which was organized by the diocesan Office for Life, Peace and Justice and the Order of Malta, will also celebrate the "Caring for the Whole Person Initiative," a project of California's bishops and Catholic healthcare system that provides resources to parish leaders who have been called to serve the sick and dying.

In 1992, Pope St. John Paul II instituted the World Day of the Sick. Since 1993, it has been celebrated every February, tied to the Feb. 11 feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes.

In his message for this year's World Day of the Sick, released by the Vatican on Jan. 4, Pope Francis wrote: "How many sick and elderly people are living at home and waiting for a visit! The ministry of consolation is a task for every baptized person, mindful of the word of Jesus; 'I was sick, and you visited Me.'"

The World Day of the Sick Mass will be livestreamed at [goodshepherdparish.net/mass-streaming](https://www.goodshepherdparish.net/mass-streaming). For more information about the Mass, contact Maria Valencia at (858) 490-8323 or mvalencia@sdccatholic.org.



Auxiliary Bishop John Dolan

'40 Days for Life' to Begin Feb. 17

The spring campaign for 40 Days for Life will run from Feb. 17 through March 28.

It will be inaugurated with two Masses celebrated by Bishop Ramón Bejarano: 10:30 a.m., Sunday, Feb. 6, at St. Mary Parish in Escondido; and 10 a.m., Sunday, Feb. 13, at St. John of the Cross Parish in Lemon Grove.

Undertaken on the same dates in communities around the world, the 40 Days for Life campaign is an effort to protect the unborn through prayer and fasting, community outreach, and peaceful all-day vigils in front of abortion clinics.

The centerpiece of the campaign is a 40-day, round-the-clock prayer vigil on the public sidewalk outside of an abortion clinic. Locally, such vigils are taking place at several locations, including the College Area, downtown San Diego, Mira Mesa, El Cajon, Escondido, Vista and South Bay.

Similar vigils will be happening in hundreds of cities throughout the world, including 50 locations in California this year. More than 18,000 babies have been saved and more than 100 abortion centers closed since 40 Days for Life started in 2007, according to the organization.

Learn more about 40 Days for Life and sign up for vigil hours at [sdccatholic.org/event/40-days-for-life](https://www.sdccatholic.org/event/40-days-for-life).

Am I Called?

Do I think about being a Brother, Sister or Priest?

Does the idea come to me often?

Does the idea scare me?

I SHOULD CONTACT

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Sr. Kathy Warren
858.490.8289
kwarren@sdccatholic.org

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Gala to Benefit Human Trafficking Survivors

Children of the Immaculate Heart, a San Diego-based nonprofit that serves survivors of sex trafficking, will hold its eighth annual gala fundraiser.

It will be held from 6 to 9 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 19, at Our Mother of Confidence Parish.

The evening will include appetizers, Mediterranean cuisine, dessert, wine, beer, and a silent auction.

The master of ceremonies will be Christopher Check, president of Catholic Answers. Father Anthony Saroki, pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Rancho Peñasquitos, will speak on the theme of "Setting Captives Free." Attendees will also hear updates from Grace Williams, executive director, and from the staff and clients of Children of the Immaculate Heart.

Tickets are \$75 per person. RSVP at childrenoftheimmaculateheart.org/events or (619) 431-5537.

Upcoming Retreats Offer After-Abortion Healing

Two upcoming retreats will offer healing from the emotional and spiritual pain of abortion.

Rachel's Hope will be hosting an after-abortion healing retreat for Catholic and "Catholic-friendly" women, from Feb. 4 through Feb. 6, at the diocesan Pastoral Center. It will include a closing Mass. The cost to attend is \$60 per person, but partial scholarships are available. For more information or to register, visit RachelsHope.org or contact Rosemary Benefield at (858) 581-3022 or rachels_hope@juno.com.

Catholic men and women wounded by abortion might also consider attending an upcoming retreat hosted by A Time for Mercy/Rachel's Vineyard. The retreat will be held from March 11 through March 13. For more information or to sign up, visit atimeformercy.org, call (951) 325-7702 or email RVTemecula@verizon.net.

Magnificat Speaker to Share Reversion Story

ESCONDIDO — North County Magnificat, a ministry to Catholic women, will hold its next quarterly breakfast on Saturday, Feb. 5, at St. Mary Parish in Escondido.

The breakfast will be from 9 a.m. to noon in the parish's new hall. It will be preceded by an 8 a.m. Mass in the parish church.

The speaker will be Robin Saunders. Raised Catholic, Saunders drifted from the Church as an adolescent. Her family stopped attending Mass and her life was soon marked by partying, promiscuity and materialism. In her talk, she will share how God led her back.

For the past 27 years, Saunders has raised six children with her husband, Mike, and has volunteered as a Catholic speaker, a catechist for RCIA, and an instructor of baptism classes.

Those interested in attending the Magnificat breakfast must register in advance. Tickets are \$25 per person before Jan. 28 and \$28 after.

For information and to register, visit magnificat-nsd.com or call (760) 271-7743.

IN LOVING Memory

INTO THY HANDS, O Lord, we commend the spirits of these beloved ones who are gone before us into the realm of thy eternal happiness and peace. **AMEN**

Mary Alfreda Hlesta	12/13/2021	Goodbody Mortuary Chapel
August Louis Castille	12/19/2021	St. Rita's Catholic Church
Vincent Avila	12/24/2021	St. Mary Magdalene
Den Van Nguyen	12/27/2021	Holy Spirit Catholic Church
Lam Thanh Tran	12/28/2021	Holy Family Catholic Church

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Father Escalante Retiring in March

Father Peter Escalante, pastor of Mission San Diego de Alcalá, will retire from active ministry on March 1, his 70th birthday.

Ordained to the priesthood on June 9, 1978, Father Escalante has been pastor of Mission San Diego since 2015. He previously served as pastor of St. Charles Borromeo, St. Brigid, Santa Sophia, St. Joseph Cathedral, and Immaculate Conception parishes.

In the 1980s, he also directed two diocesan offices — the Office for Vocations and the Office for Priests.



Father Peter Escalante

Catholics Invited to 'Encounter' with Jesus

"Encounter," a Spirit-filled evening of inspiring music, prayer and Eucharistic adoration, is held on the second Friday of each month at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Rancho Peñasquitos.

Sponsored by the parish's Hearts of Fire Ministry, the event runs from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

The next meeting will be Feb. 11.

For more information, email olmcheartsoffire@gmail.com.

Are You a Catholic Mom Who Likes Catholic Books?

The Moms' Catholic Book Study, formerly known as the Moms' Bible Study, has been going strong for more than 25 years.

In addition to spiritual reading, the group also offers fellowship and has produced long-lasting friendships.

The group meets at 10 a.m., every Wednesday during the school year, at St. Mary Magdalene Parish.

For more information, visit momscatholicbookstudy.weebly.com.

Street Evangelization Brings Gospel to Public Square

St. Paul Street Evangelization is a grassroots, nonprofit organization dedicated to taking the Gospel message to the streets.

Participants in the ministry do this in a non-confrontational way, allowing the Holy Spirit to move in the hearts of those who witness their public Catholic presence.

For more information or to get involved, visit streetevangelization.com, call (619) 515-3267 or email scb@procopio.com.



JOHN GASTALDO

Rite of Election to Be Held as Three Liturgies

The Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion is the annual liturgy where the diocesan bishop welcomes hundreds of catechumens and candidates from local parishes and affirms their readiness to receive the sacraments of initiation at the upcoming Easter Vigil.

As a concession to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, the celebration will not be held as one massive gathering, but like last year, as three separate liturgies. One will be celebrated on Saturday, March 5, at St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Imperial, and two others the following day at Good Shepherd Parish in Mira Mesa.

Collectively, more than 2,000 people are expected to attend.

"I am so grateful to the pastors, the RCIA coordinators and their teams for their dedication in journeying with the catechumens and candidates throughout this process, and more so during this critical time (of pandemic)," said Diocesan Chancellor Marioly Galván, who also directs the diocesan Office for Evangelization and Catechetical Ministry.

She noted that the Rite of Election is a ticketed event. Given the limited seating capacity, it is not open to the general public. However, the three liturgies will be livestreamed at sdcatholic.org/roe and sdcatholic.org.

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In 1978, he co-founded with Dr. Jerry Tisi the largest Catholic Conference Center on the West Coast – Whispering Winds Camp in the Julian mountains.



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