

THE SOUTHERN CROSS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO



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WELCOME! Jacelle Lilia Beltran and Mario Alberto Bravo, from Our Lady of Angels Parish, are among nearly 1,000 people from across the diocese who will formally enter the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil.



Entrusted to Mary

Pope leads bishops in consecration of humanity, especially Russia and Ukraine. **Page 2**



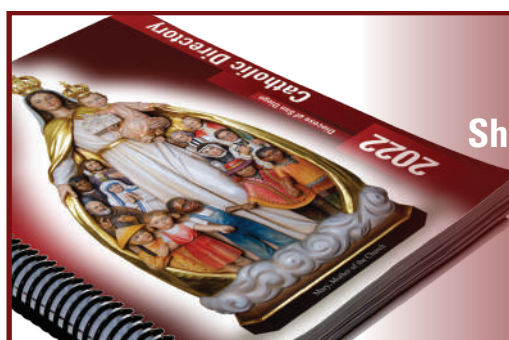
Care for Creation

Parishes, schools and families planting trees as part of diocesan campaign. **Page 3**



Baby Bird Book

Professional photographer collaborates with Catholic school students on book. **Page 12**



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THE SOUTHERN CROSS

PUBLISHER

Bishop Robert W. McElroy

EDITOR EMERITUS

Father Charles L. Fuld

EDITOR

Aida Bustos

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Denis Grasska

ADVERTISING/CIRCULATION

Donna Lightsey

WEB DEVELOPER

Will Cornejo

CONTRIBUTORS

Roman Flores, Father Bernardo Lara, Ricardo Márquez, Sharon Mousel, Montserrat Ramírez

DESIGN

Pinomaki Design

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Contact: (858) 490-8266;

dlightsey@sdccatholic.org



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.

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'I Wanted to Hug Everyone at the End'

AIDA BUSTOS

ENCOUNTER: Parishioners listened to each other in small-group circles at Good Shepherd Church on March 10, one of 10 synod sessions the parish held in March. Parishes and schools will begin to engage youth in the synod process in April.

By Aida Bustos



"It was wonderful. I liked the topics that we had to share. At the end, I wanted to hug everyone in my group."

That's how one woman described her experience after participating in a small-group session on March 10 at Good Shepherd Parish as part of the Catholic Church's worldwide consultation, called a synod.

In March, parishes hosted these sessions across the San Diego Diocese in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. And the diocese hosted sessions for priests, religious women and its administrative staff.

In April, the consultation shifts to two different fronts.

Parishes and Catholic schools will focus on engaging adolescents, a process that is to be completed by June 15. Parish synod coordinators, directors of catechetical ministry, and principals will be working together to create sessions for youngsters in grades five to 12.

In April, too, Church-related organizations will hold sessions for the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated and the homeless.

In the sessions already held, the parishioners got an unprecedented opportunity to meet fellow faithful and share candidly their joys and dis-



Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Calexico invited individuals who receive food to share their experiences with the Church.

appointments in the Church, and their hopes for it.

The insights gleaned will be shared with each parish's pastor, Bishop Robert W. McElroy, the U.S. Catholic Church and the Vatican. It will be used to develop ways to strengthen the participation of the faithful at all levels of the Church.

By month's end, parish synod coordinators had begun submitting their summaries of their sessions to the diocese — and praising the experience.

The session "was grace-filled and full of joy even as people shared very different viewpoints," wrote Laura Martin-Spencer, who coordinated the consultation at The Immaculate Church. "The consensus was that people wanted even more opportunities

like this to connect with each other on a deep level and to share their experiences about the Church they love."

Cecilia Herrera coordinated the sessions in Calexico.

"(Participants) said they enjoyed the event and that we should do this more often, every three months or so," she wrote after the session on March 22 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.

Eighteen-year-old Maricruz Mandiola and her mother participated in a session during the meeting of the Spanish-speaking pro-life group at Christ the King Parish in San Diego on March 15, along with other adolescents.

"I liked that it was with people who were younger," she said afterward. "Hearing my fellow brothers and sisters, I did feel comfortable that we do share common concerns about the Church and common things that we can make better."

She hopes more young people participate.

"Teenagers like to criticize a lot about the Church because they don't know about it," she said. "But I think if they share those criticisms about the Church, they can help improve it. They would also feel welcome and they could come."

Information on the consultation:
sdccatholic.org/synod



Pope Consecrates Ukraine, Russia to Mary



Pope Francis and bishops around the world have consecrated all humanity, "especially Russia and Ukraine," to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

With Russia's invasion of Ukraine and responding to a request particularly from Ukrainian bishops, Pope Francis announced that he would make the act of consecration on March 25.

The text of the prayer was sent to chanceries worldwide in advance of the pope's act of consecration, so that bishops could join him that day.

On March 22, during a meeting of the

diocese's priests, Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego joined with Auxiliary Bishops John Dolan and Ramón Bejarano and the priests in reciting the consecration prayer. In a memorandum, Bishop McElroy later asked all parishes to gather in prayer during the morning of March 25 to unite themselves with the pope and the consecration.

When Mary appeared to three shepherd children at Fatima, Portugal, in 1917 with a message encouraging prayer and repentance, she also asked for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart.

While popes, especially St. John Paul II in 1984, made acts of consecration, either "Russia" wasn't mentioned out

loud or the consecration wasn't made in union with the world's bishops, leading some people to think that the Fatima request had not been fulfilled. However, the last surviving visionary, Sister Lucia dos Santos, said St. John Paul had done so.

The text for Pope Francis' consecration pleads with Mary to "accept this act that we carry out with confidence and love. Grant that war may end, and peace spread throughout the world."

Catholic News Service, with information from The Southern Cross.

See video and prayer at
sdccatholic.org/consecration



More Parishes Dig Tree-Planting Campaign

By Denis Grasska



A tree-planting initiative has taken root in the Diocese of San Diego.

Inspired by Pope Francis' environmental encyclical "Laudato Si," the diocese's Creation Care Ministry is inviting parishes, schools and individuals to participate in its "Trees for Life" campaign.

On Feb. 24, parish volunteers planted trees at St. Didacus Church and School in the Normal Heights neighborhood of San Diego — three on the western edge of the school campus and another four near the church.

"I think that's the most we've had done in one crack," said Father Emmet Farrell, who directs Creation Care Ministry through the diocesan Office for Life, Peace and Justice.

Three weeks later, his team led RCIA students, mostly young adults, as they planted a macadamia tree in the front yard of a family from Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Barrio Logan.

As part of the campaign, trees also were planted last September at St. Thomas More and Mission San Luis Rey parishes in Oceanside, as well as at Kairos House, a transitional housing facility in the Hillcrest area of San Diego for men recently released from prison or jail.

Two days before the planting at St. Didacus, as part of a \$19,000 parish restoration project that included landscaping and installation of an irrigation system, Christ the King Parish in southeastern San Diego also beautified its campus with two trees.

St. Didacus School commemorated its tree-planting with a ceremony attended by Bishop Robert McElroy, Father Farrell and St. Didacus pastor Father Reynaldo Roque, with Principal Kim James serving as emcee.



TEAMWORK: A group from Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Barrio Logan pitched in to plant a tree at the home of a couple who serve as catechists. The group included, from left, Lilibian Armenta, Etelvina Velazquez, Heriberto "Beto" Camargo, Elba Nava and Susana "Suzy" Lomeli.

During the ceremony, the school was presented with the Creation Care Ministry's Green Ribbon Achievement Award in recognition of actions that advance the spirit of "Laudato Si."

The entire student body assembled in the schoolyard to watch as student representatives, including first-grader Elizabeth Holmes, fourth-graders Max Moran and Cruz Gyamfi, and seventh-grader Cloe Rascon, assisted with the planting of the trees.

"A tree is a miracle of God's grace and presence," Bishop McElroy told the assembled students.

Describing creation as a "beautiful

gift" from God, he said that human beings sometimes engage in behaviors that "throw the creation out of balance." He said planting trees is a way of "helping to heal creation."

Bishop McElroy encouraged the students to recognize the trees as "a sign of our hopes for our world" and to "know that every time they grow, this act that you have undertaken is more and more powerful in helping our world."

The principal said that a group of faculty, staff, parents and students will be entrusted with maintaining the trees.

Dr. David Larom, a member of the Creation Care Ministry who taught Environmental Science at San Diego State University for about 11 years, explained that newly planted trees require more care in our region than in some other areas of the country.

"We try to emphasize that the tree campaign isn't just planting one tree in the ground and then forgetting about it," he said.

In Barrio Logan, Rosa and Beto Camargo accepted the ministry's invitation to plant a tree at their home. She said the entire family, which includes an 18-year-old son, Jonathan, committed to taking care of it.

On March 19, RCIA students, catechists interested in planting trees and other parishioners converged on their home, listened to a blessing from Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano, picked up shovels and got to work.

"First of all, we wanted to do something to protect the environment," said Rosa Camargo, a catechist at the parish, along with her husband. "And also to honor my dad, who passed away two years ago. He loved trees

and macadamia nuts."

The Creation Care Ministry, which was launched in late 2016, released a Diocesan Climate Action Plan last fall. The plan was inspired by the Vatican's own Laudato Si Action Platform, a seven-year strategy to respond to climate change. Tree-planting is one facet of that plan.

The ministry made it easier to bring trees to parishes, schools and other locations. Using money from its own budget, the ministry is covering the \$75 cost of buying each tree and the supplies like stakes, tie bands, fertilizer and mulch. It also inspects the proposed planting sites, recommends the most suitable types of trees, and provides training for planting and maintenance.

Larom said the Creation Care Ministry would like to see at least 10 parishes over the next year become involved with tree-planting or other activities to support environmental sustainability. Within seven years, he would like to see all of the diocese's parishes and schools involved.

"Bishop McElroy said it best: A tree is a symbol of our commitment to care for what St. Francis called our Sister Earth, who is like a mother to us," he said. "It is a wonderful act on so many levels, and it doesn't have to be hard. Just planting one tree is a great start, and so much environmental education can be built around such a planting."



SHOVEL-READY: Elizabeth Holmes, assisted by Cloe Rascon, shovels soil at a tree-planting Feb. 24 at St. Didacus School. Also pictured, Bishop Robert McElroy, Father Reynaldo Roque and Cruz Gyamfi.

For more information on the tree-planting campaign, visit sdcatholic.org/plantatree, email dlarom@yahoo.com or call (619) 876-8794.





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War Is Personal for Local Ukrainian Church

By Denis Grasska



Millions around the world have expressed their solidarity with the Ukrainian people, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in late February.

But, for one community in San Diego — St. John the Baptizer Ukrainian Catholic Church — the invasion hits especially close to home.

The sister of its pastor, Father Yuri Sas, fled from Ukraine to the Czech Republic to escape the war; meanwhile, relatives of various parishioners have found safe haven in Poland, Italy and Romania. One parishioner's son, serving in the Ukrainian military, was taken prisoner by Russian forces. The tabernacle in the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, bears a plaque identifying it as a gift from St. John the Baptizer Parish.

"Still, I can't believe that this has happened," Father Sas said, reflecting on the "horrible" situation in Ukraine.

Luke Miller, whose maternal grandparents fled Soviet-occupied Ukraine and became founding members of St. John the Baptizer Parish, described recent atrocities, like the destruction of a maternity hospital in Mariupol, as "acts of terrorism" unleashed upon "primarily innocent, non-military targets."

"It's very difficult to see that from here (in San Diego) and not being able to do much," said Miller, 36, who has kept in contact with Ukraine-based



EASTER BLESSING: Father Yuri Sas, pastor of St. John the Baptizer Ukrainian Parish, blesses Easter baskets last year. At the time, liturgies were celebrated in a parishioner's backyard.

relatives via Facebook Messenger.

Still, the parish has been doing what it can.

Miller shared that his parish has collected clothing, blankets, baby food, medical supplies, and non-lethal military equipment like helmets and flak jackets to send to Ukraine. It has also raised funds for Ukrainian military chaplains, who are distributing supplies among the troops, and for refugee centers in Poland.

Beyond helping Ukrainians abroad, the parish is also preparing for the wave of Ukrainian refugees who are expected to arrive in the United States, he said. It has already begun taking stock of which parishioners have extra rooms available to house refugee families.

Bishop Robert McElroy visited the parish on March 6 and preached the homily for its Sunday liturgy, which is currently celebrated at 10:30 a.m. in the chapel at St. Augustine High School.

"We can't just stand by and watch," said Msgr. Dennis Mikulonis, diocesan vicar for ecumenical and interreligious affairs. "Just as Jesus couldn't carry the weight of His own cross by Himself and needed Simon of Cyrene to help Him, we now have to be Simon to help our Ukrainian brothers and sisters bear their cross."

St. John the Baptizer Parish isn't part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego. Rather, it is one of several Eastern-rite Catholic parishes in the San Diego area, each of which answer to their own bishops and

follow their own liturgical traditions, while remaining in full communion with the pope.

Because Christianity came to Ukraine from Constantinople, not Rome, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church uses the Byzantine-rite liturgy. The liturgy is also celebrated at Holy Angels Byzantine Catholic Parish in San Diego, as well as at Byzantine Catholic and Orthodox Christian churches worldwide.

Leavened bread is used for the Eucharist, and the liturgy is celebrated with the priest and the people facing the same direction.

At St. John the Baptizer, Sunday liturgies are about 90 minutes long and are entirely chanted, without the accompaniment of musical instruments. They are celebrated in a combination of Ukrainian and English.

Founded on March 13, 1960, the parish is composed of about 50 families, which represent "a healthy mix" of U.S.-born Ukrainian-Americans and recent immigrants.

The parish expects to break ground on a new church in Santee this fall and to be worshiping there by Easter of 2023, said Miller, who is chair of the parish's building committee. The new location will provide much needed space for when the expected influx of Ukrainian refugees arrives.

"We will be prepared when they come," said Miller, "and there will be a home for them."

An extended version of this story is available at thesoutherncross.org/042205



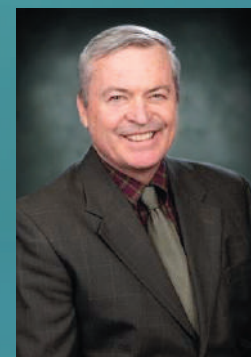
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Schools Join Forces to Support Cristo Rey High

The Southern Cross



Five San Diego-area Catholic schools — the Academy of Our Lady of Peace (OLP), Cathedral Catholic High School, Mater Dei Catholic High School, St. Augustine High School and Nativity Prep Academy — are collaborating to enhance classrooms at Cristo Rey San Diego High School.

It all started when Cathedral Catholic's president, Dr. Kevin J. Calkins, who is also a board member for Cristo Rey San Diego, was meeting with Cristo Rey's chief advancement officer, Beth Nicar, to discuss progress at the school.

"When Beth brought up the upcoming classroom renovations, it immediately dawned on me that our local Catholic high schools, including Cathedral Catholic, could support the effort," he said.

So, Calkins reached out to the heads of three other local Catholic high schools — Jesuit Father Joaquin Martinez, president of Mater Dei Catholic; Dr. Lauren Lek, head of school at OLP; and Ed Hearn, president of St. Augustine High School — all of whom committed to supporting Cristo Rey's classroom renovations.

Gilbert Brady, the president of Nativity Prep, is also a Cristo Rey San Diego board member. Like Calkins, he heard about the capital campaign



FRIENDS: Classrooms at Cristo Rey San Diego High School will be renovated with the assistance of five Catholic high schools, which are collaborating on the project.

from Nicar and wanted to lend Nativity Prep's support to the effort as well.

"I was delighted for Cristo Rey, but I was also proud of our Catholic high school community," said Calkins. "This is a sign of solidarity for our San Diego Catholic community."

This solidarity will renovate a classroom at Cristo Rey San Diego, which is located at the former St. Jude Academy, a K-8 parish school that closed in 2011. The classroom will be one of four renovated this summer as part of the school's spring capital campaign.

Cristo Rey San Diego is also prioritizing the construction of a state-of-the-art chemistry lab for the class of rising 11th-graders who will study chemistry in fall 2022. The lab will include essential technology and

supplies, including lab tables, desks, chemicals, safety supplies, glassware, lab equipment and books.

"Our building is more than 60 years old and requires extensive improvements to fully meet the needs of our students," says Bob Nascenzi, president of Cristo Rey San Diego. "We are grateful to our sister and brother Catholic schools for their support."

Cristo Rey San Diego is hoping to raise \$100,000 for its classroom renovation campaign and will hold a special giving day Thursday, April 7.

"The most important part of our jobs as educators is to ensure our students have access to excellent resources and tools to lay the foundation for success," said Lek. "In this era of global connectivity, I am proud that OLP has come together with its fellow

Catholic schools in San Diego to support Cristo Rey's growth. As one of us excels, all Catholic schools excel."

Father Martinez said, "I hope our support and sharing of resources for Cristo Rey inspires others to contribute to their classroom renovation goals."

Cristo Rey San Diego provides a college-preparatory education and unique work-study program to underserved students. Its mission is to educate young people of limited economic means to become men and women of faith, purpose and service, who are prepared for life. The families pay tuition on a sliding-basis based on their income, with some paying less than \$100 per month.

Launched in August 2020, Cristo Rey San Diego currently enrolls freshmen and sophomores and is adding additional levels each year with the goal of enrolling 350 to 400 high school students from freshmen to seniors by 2024.

It is the 37th school in the national Cristo Rey Network, which began in 1996, and which now boasts 23,100 alumni and a 90-percent college enrollment rate. Compared to the overall U.S. low-income population, Cristo Rey students are twice as likely to complete a bachelor's degree by age 24.

Cristo Rey San Diego High School is having an open house on May 1 for prospective families. For more information or to support the school, visit cristoreysandiego.org.



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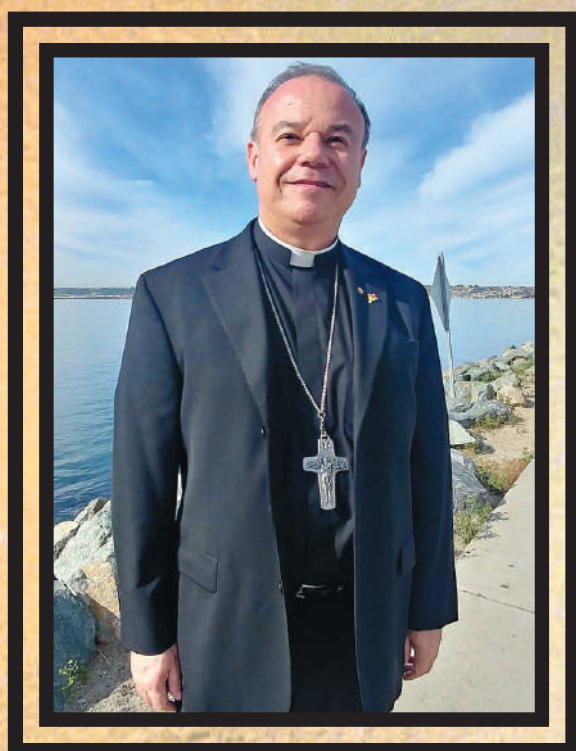
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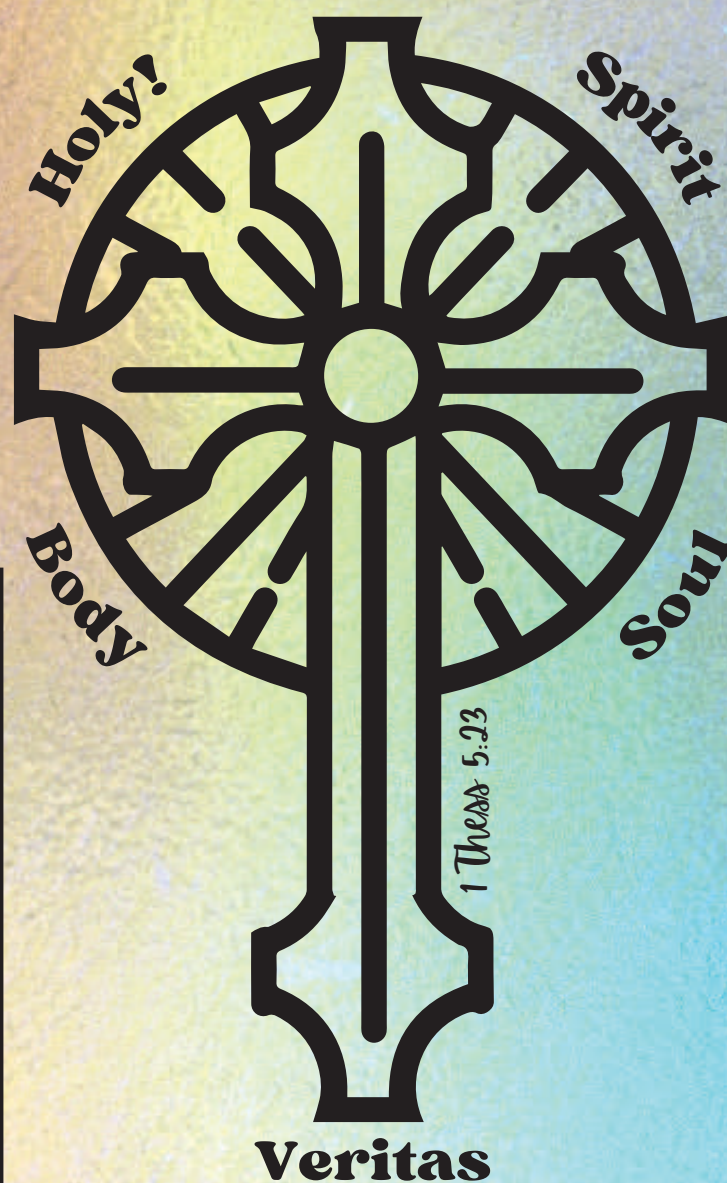


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Diocese Unites Youth, Young Adult Offices

By Denis Grasska

More than 15 years after they were divided into separate offices, the diocesan Offices for Youth Ministry and Young Adult Ministry have been reunited.

Maricruz Flores, who had served as director of the Office for Youth Ministry since July 2019, is the new director of the merged office and heads a four-person team.

Associate Director Pamela Poe had served as associate director of the Office for Young Adult Ministry for the past four years. Associate Director Brilema Pérez, formerly an administrative assistant to both the Youth Ministry and Young Adult Ministry offices, has rejoined the diocesan staff after leaving in September 2018 to pursue a Research Master and Sacrae Theologiae Baccalaureus from Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Leuven, Belgium. Erika Quevedo remains onboard as administrative assistant.

The diocese announced Flores' appointment and the restructuring of the office on Feb. 23.

"I don't want people to think that I'm coming in to tear down and rebuild, when there's already such a beautiful ministry going on with the young adults," said Flores, 32.

She praised Patrick Rivera, who stepped down as director of the Office for Young Adult Ministry last December, and Poe for their ministry success-



MEET THE TEAM: Maricruz Flores, right, is the director of the Office for Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Her team, from left, includes Erika Quevedo, Brilema Pérez and Pamela Poe.

es. Together, she said, they had been "a force to be reckoned with."

"We don't want to change too much," she said. "We've all been doing really good work in our separate offices. (The question is) how can we make it better?"

One way, she suggested, is to greet the recent merger as an opportunity "to bridge that gap" between youth and young adult ministry, finding ways to smooth the transition from youth groups and confirmation classes for Catholic teenagers to the sort of programming that Catholic college students and young professionals need.

She referenced "Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics," a report released in 2018 on

why young Catholics leave the Church. Based on a national study, the report revealed that the median age at which young people stop identifying as Catholic is 13.

A merged office enables the diocese to present "a united front" in confronting this challenge, Flores said. It also will allow the team to see how Pastoral Juvenil, a Spanish-language youth and young adult ministry with an emphasis on faith-formation and leadership training, and the existing English-language young adult ministry program might enrich one another through the exchange of best practices.

"We don't want it to be something separate," she said of Pastoral Juvenil.

"The priorities set forth by the

Young Adult Synod in 2019 remain at the forefront as we emerge from the pandemic, which halted much of the progress that was underway," said diocesan Chancellor Marioly Galván. "Additionally, with Maricruz's pastoral experience with both youth and young adults through the V Encuentro process, she will further be able to address the needs of our Spanish-speaking youth and young adults, which will lend for greater bridge-building between the two communities."

The Fifth National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry was a four-year process of consultations from the parish through the national level, beginning in 2017, to set priorities for Hispanic ministry in the United States.

For her part, Flores sees her "job" in coming months as listening to the diocese's young adult ministry leaders about their concerns.

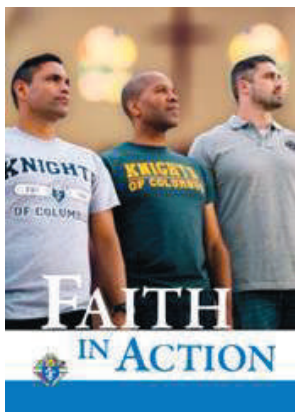
She said that "one of the biggest lessons" she learned as she moved from director of a parish youth and young adult ministry to director of the diocesan Office for Youth and Young Adult Ministry is that she is "not meant to do this alone."

"I'm meant to do this with a team (and) with people at the parishes ... The only way things are going to work well is if we do it all together."

More information is available at sdcatholic.org/youngadult



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'Rejoice in This Day of Discovery and Faith'

HOWARD LIPIN

Message from Bishop Robert McElroy:

The Feast of Easter constitutes the centerpiece of the Christian year, for in the resurrection of Jesus Christ we find our call as disciples to ennoble the world in which we live, our assurance that God has redeemed us fully once and for all, and our conviction that we are ultimately destined to live with our God in the Kingdom of Heaven alongside all those whom we have loved in this life and who have gone before us in death.

In the resurrection appearances of the risen Lord, the apostles are simply overwhelmed with the miracle of Easter — the power of God over every form of human suffering including death itself, the love that God bestows upon every one of us that is personal and without reserve, and the glory that lies before us in this earthly pilgrimage.

The sufferings of the past two years have burdened us

as people of faith, as families who have known sacrifice and illness, and as a Church seeking to recapture the vibrancy that we have lost.

But it is in the beauty of Christ's resurrection that we find the enduring context of hope and glory that can sustain us, draw us together and deepen our bonds of love and affection.

When the risen Lord encountered the apostles along the seashore in Galilee, their rejoicing was profound and palpable. They had seen Christ crucified and yet now they recognized that He lived in their midst once more.

Let us also rejoice in this day of discovery and faith, for it is the Lord who guides us in our journeys of faith and life, and it is the risen Jesus Christ who stands by us at every moment with unsurpassed power and mercy.

Robert W. McElroy



READY: Parishes across the diocese will welcome new members to the Church at the Easter Vigil. This group of candidates is preparing for the sacraments of initiation.

Season of Renewal: Church

By Aida Bustos



The Easter Vigil Mass at Our Lady of Angels will be special for Jacelle Lilia Beltran and Mario Alberto Bravo. They will receive their confirmation, along with 14 candidates.

By candlelight, they and 19 children, teenagers and adult catechumens will receive the sacraments of initiation, entering into full communion with the Catholic Church.

That ceremony will be celebrated across the San Diego Diocese in parishes large and small, which will welcome a total of 924 men, women and children into the Church.

For the diocese, this represents about a 40-percent increase from the number who joined the Church last year, amid the coronavirus pandemic.

And for each person, the Easter Vigil Mass represents the culmination of a personal journey to learn about the Catholic faith and how he or she can live every day as a disciple of God.

Each new member of the Church becomes a member of the broader Catholic family. In the case of Beltran, 20, and Bravo, 17, this is literally a family affair. The two are cousins, and in fact a third cousin, 19-year-old Rosalyn Sepulveda, also will be confirmed at the parish's Easter Vigil Mass.

Beltran's sponsor is Bravo's mother, while his sponsor is Beltran's father.



FAITH JOURNEY: Jacelle Lilia Beltran, left, and Mario Alberto Bravo, right, with their instructor, Brenda Chopin.

And Sepulveda's sponsor is her aunt, Margarita Guillén.

"I think it's really important to confirm my faith and see all the other people coming for their conversion," said Sepulveda, moments after participating in the Rite of Election on March 6. "I think it's really beautiful."

In March, the cousins were among the 924 who participated in three Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion ceremonies in San Diego and Imperial counties.

At these annual liturgies, catechumens and candidates are presented



Group of candidates and catechumens is from Our Lady of Angels Parish near downtown San Diego, along with their pastor, Father Ricardo Frausto.

Church Welcomes New Members



Mario Alberto Bravo and Brenda Chopin have prepared for their confirmation.

to the bishop and proclaimed prepared to receive the sacraments of initiation at their parishes at the Easter Vigil. Catechumens are those who have never been baptized, while candidates have been baptized but have yet to receive their First Communion or confirmation.

The total for all three liturgies: The Church welcomed 244 adult catechumens, 632 adult candidates, and 48 child catechumens and candidates from 75 parishes and communities. They were supported by 893 sponsors, 301 parish team members, and 703

guests, bringing the total number of people who attended them to 2,821.

Guillén was present as a sponsor in the Rite of Election ceremony on March 6 at 1 p.m., held at Good Shepherd Church in Mira Mesa.

"It's important to be present, supporting them in this great step in their life," Guillén said, "to make sure that we welcome them to the Church and to continue to push them to have a great future."

The immediate future for the cousins, and all who will become a full member of the Church at the Easter Vigil, is to continue their weekly RCIA activities until May 21. That's when they will mark the formal end of their faith formation with a Mass.

Their catechist, Brenda Chopin, explained that the five students in her class began meeting in September for in-person instruction. Then the Omicron variant began to spread.

"We spent all of January meeting through Zoom," Chopin said. "Thank God, we were able to meet in person again in February."

Around 2,650 catechists serve in the diocese in two counties, some for decades. One of them is Chopin, who has served at Our Lady of Angels Parish for 31 years, starting with singing in the choir when she was in high school. She's been a catechist for the last 15 years. An immigrant from Mexico and bilingual, she's able to converse with her students' parents in Spanish but talks to the youngsters in English,

their preferred language.

On a recent Sunday between Masses, she considered her work as a catechist all these years.

"It allows me to share a little of the many gifts the Lord has given me," she said, noting that she still sees at Mass some of her former students from her earliest years as a catechist.

She does not see a Church in decline, as some do, rather one that is vibrant and welcoming new members.

"There will always be new people joining the Church," she said, "and those of us who are there will pass away some day. But the Church will always be there, because that's why our Lord came to the world."

She tells her students to enjoy the Easter Vigil Mass, which begins as the darkness of the night begins.

"I say to them, 'Don't worry about anything that day, the things that may be happening around them,'" Chopin said. "That day is unique."

Outside of the church, the candidates and catechumens are the first to light their candles, passing the light from person to person. Then, they process inside the church.

"We're not only celebrating our Lord's resurrection," I tell them, "but they are the first ones to receive the beautiful light that will illuminate the entire community."

Gallery of Rite of Election photos on Facebook page @SDdisciples



Stations of the Cross Downtown

On Good Friday, April 15, there will be two public celebrations of the Stations of the Cross on the streets of downtown San Diego.

Sponsored by the Diocese of San Diego, the 29th annual Walk with the Suffering will be held from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. Costumed high school students will act out the stations. Representatives from organizations that serve the needy will provide reflections at nine downtown sites on issues that cause suffering in San Diego, beginning and ending at the San Diego Rescue Mission.

Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano will deliver a reflection on mental health for the Second Station. Dr. Robert Ehnou, director of the diocesan Office for Life, Peace and Justice, will reflect on prison ministry for the 14th Station.

For more information about the Walk with the Suffering, call (619) 384-6852 or email jnstn.rsmry@gmail.com or mvalencia@sdccatholic.org. Free parking will be available at the San Diego Rescue Mission parking structure on Second Avenue.

The 16th annual Good Friday Pro-Life Stations of the Cross, led by Bishop Bejarano, will begin at noon downtown. Participants will gather at 11:45 a.m. on the east side of St. Joseph's Cathedral at 4th and Beech and walk to the old Federal Building, returning to St. Joseph's around 1:15 p.m.

Pro-life signs will be provided; people may also bring their own, but no signs with graphic abortion images.

For more information about the Pro-Life Stations of the Cross, email roger.lopez.home@gmail.com or mvalencia@sdccatholic.org or call (619) 818-1354.



PRO-LIFE: The Stations of the Cross event advocates for the sanctity of life, as this photo from April 19, 2019, shows.

Tender Imagination Gives Flight to 'Baby' Book

By Denis Grasska



Over the past 40 years, photographer Essy Ghavameddini has covered four Super Bowls, as well as concerts by Frank Sinatra, The Rolling Stones, Cher and Dolly Parton.

He's been the official photographer for sports stadiums, including the San Diego Sports Arena, and for teams like the San Diego Gulls.

But all of that was just a prelude to "Welcome, Baby Hummingbirds," a new book that represents a collaboration between the veteran photographer and the second-grade class at Stella Maris Academy in La Jolla.

"This is my legacy," Ghavameddini said of the book.

The book features 29 original photos of a pair of hummingbirds rearing their two hatchlings, each photo paired with a charming caption written by one of the second-graders.

Ghavameddini's work on the book began about two and a half years ago. He was paying a visit to friends, when their young daughter led him outside to show him a small nest with two eggs. He decided to set his photographic talents to documenting the hummingbird family.

Seeking someone to write the accompanying text for his images, he met with some professional writers. But none grasped his vision. He wasn't looking for their polished writing and



ON THE SAME PAGE: A page from the new book "Welcome, Baby Hummingbirds" pairs a professional photographer's images with a second-grader's text.

their large vocabularies, but rather for what he termed "baby talk."

That's what led the Iranian-born photographer to Stella Maris Academy. After all, who better than a child to write like a child?

He approached Principal Francie Moss last fall with his idea, and she told her teachers about the opportunity.

Second-grade teacher Michelle Campagna said she "instantly wanted to participate," adding that the project was a good fit for her science and writing curriculum.

The 16 second-graders started their assignment last October and completed it just before Christmas. Every student submitted a caption for each photo; the best were chosen by class vote, with Campagna ensuring that "all the kiddos had at least one (caption) in the book."

Accompanying a photo of an adult male hummingbird alighting on the nest is the caption: "Daddy is back. He's come to protect his baby birds." Another caption, paired with a photo of the hatchlings with their heads back

in anticipation of being fed, is: "Hello babies, you are hungry, aren't you?"

"It was exciting because we got to work with a famous photographer, and it was my first time writing a book," explained second-grader Gala Riveros.

Leo Castellanos, another second-grader, said the process was "fun," but also "challenging." His classmate Sara Caglic feels "very proud" that her writing was included in the book.

Campagna said it was "a once-in-a-lifetime experience" to have her students work with a professional photographer like Ghavameddini on "such a simple yet beautiful subject."

The book is expected to be available soon. There are plans for the photographer and the second-graders to take part in a book-signing at Warwick's bookstore in La Jolla. Those interested in ordering the book can email essystudio@gmail.com; no money will be collected until the books are available.

Ghavameddini said that close to 800 books have been pre-ordered. He added that copies of the book will be donated to local elementary schools, maternity wards, and public libraries.

The book "is different than anything else that you see out there. ... There's an innocence about it," the principal said. "There's not enough innocence in this world anymore — there really isn't — and this is really just a beautifully innocent little project."

More information at
essysgallery.com.



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* Isabella Acevedo	Natalia Guevara	* Anapaula Portillo - Vega
Ella Aguilar	Kelsey Gunter	* Caitlin Prior
* Frances Aguilar	Zoey Gutierrez	* Gemma Quinn
Abigail Alcala	Sarah Guzman	* Isabella Quintana
* Olivia Alnoman	* Mila Halvorson	Kaitlyn Raagas
Angela Alvarez Parra	* Kathryn Hardy	Elizabeth Rak
Sydney Ameche	Zoe Hassin	* Charlotte Ramers
Grace Anderson	Julianne Hatem	Sabina Ramirez
Yuliana Antonio	Samantha Hernandez	* Sierra Ratonel
Nurah Arellano	* Lauren Hill	* Ava Razoky
Gabriella Arnaiz Valladolid	* Pryor Holmes	Mia Rees-Gomez
* Isabella Rose Audiss	* Sabine Howson	Amaya Reid
Paloma Avery	* Launa Hunt Amézquita	Erica Reinbolt
Elliana Barzal	* Sarah Ivanjack	Capri Reyes
* Faith Beltran	* Caitlyn Johnston	Kiana Ricasa
* Charlotte Berardino*	Laurel Jones	* Anna Robitaille
Mayumi Bolger	Sofia Jones	Natalie Rodriguez
Margaret Boni	Sofia Juarez	Paloma Valentina Rodriguez Corzo
Sofia Bravo	* Leia Justino	* Anabelle Rojas-Morgan
Giovanna Brunetto	Makenzie Kavanagh	Kalia Roper
Bianca Buccigross	Kate Kehrli	Valentina Rubio
Belen Butler	Celina Kennedy	Amelia Christi Sablad
* Elizabeth Cabrera	* Carly Knuth	Sofia Salas
Maia Cabrera	Mikaela Korbarr	Silvana Salazar
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Arianna Carini	* Hanley Larabee	Kaelyn Saner
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Ashley Clair	Isabel Lee	* Keira Schwartz
* Alicia Clark	* Elizabeth Leicht	Mizuki Shue
Sienna Comana	Lana Leist	Maya Smallwood
* Nadira Conroy	Isabella Lemus	* Hayley Smith
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Jeovanna Esquer	* Kathleen Michalowski	Maria Valenzuela
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Natalia Garcia-Diaz	Alexa Nordstrom	* Sophia Wilkinson
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Lillian Garland	Isabella Pace	* Anna Williamson
* Eyael Gebrelu	Alyssa Palacios	Caitlin Yakos
Samantha Gehler	Ava Parente	* Sofie Yu-Sanchez
Sophia Godoy	Judith B. Partida	Nicole Zamudio-Clerici
Amelia Goodall	Ally Patterson	Zixu Zhu
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By Denis Grasska



Augustinian Father Adnan Ghani, 36, is a Catholic chaplain at Kaiser Permanente Zion Medical Center and Alvarado Hospital Medical Center.

Hospital Chaplain**Father Adnan Ghani, OSA**

be there for them. I've been a hospital chaplain since 2019.

Are there any experiences from your ministry that have stayed with you?

There are two, one involving a woman and the other a man, both non-COVID patients. They told me that they wanted to receive the sacrament and that they were ready to go (to God). That moved me. Even I, as a priest, sometimes am afraid of death. I couldn't believe that they were so confident, that they were so ready.

What was it like to serve as a hospital chaplain during the COVID-19 pandemic?

As a newly ordained priest trying to explore what chaplaincy is, it was the toughest experience. I expected to hold patients' hands, praying with and for them at a bedside surrounded by their family members. But that changed when the pandemic hit.

I wasn't permitted to enter the rooms of COVID patients; I could only provide

spiritual support to them through the window. Many of them were so surrounded by machines that, even if I had been permitted in the room, I wouldn't have been able to see the person.

I wasn't allowed in the rooms of non-COVID patients either, except in the case of emergencies.

In the early days of the pandemic, every week, I received about four to five calls during the night. Once, I went to the hospital to minister to eight dying patients in a single day; three died the same day and others a few days later. Of the patients I lost to COVID, the oldest were in their 90s, but the youngest was only in his late 30s.

What did you do to keep from feeling overwhelmed? Where did you find your joy?

Cooking was one way I coped. I also exercised, talked with priest friends, and made an effort to watch comedy movies or funny videos every day. I also spent about 30 minutes in prayer every morning, prayed the Divine Mercy Chaplet around 3 p.m., and recited a daily rosary.

My joy came from letters I received expressing gratitude for my ministry. The community support from my Augustinian brothers, friends and family was also a source of joy.

What is your ministry like now, since the Omicron spike?

In my experience, the number of patients increased during Omicron, but deaths declined. The number of phone calls during the night also has dropped to maybe four in a month.

Though Omicron is a less serious variant, I'm still not allowed in a COVID patient's room. But I've been able to speak with them over the phone; it's a major change from when many COVID patients were on ventilators and unable to speak. I'm so happy to be able to tell them that the Church is here for them.

I'm also able to do my hospital rounds like I did before the pandemic. My ministry to non-COVID patients is back to normal. I can pray for them, administer the sacrament of the sick if they need it, and hold their hands.

What spiritual lessons did COVID-19 teach you?

I realized that there is no guarantee of how long you're going to live. Why postpone forgiving others and asking for forgiveness?

Also, I used to get angry and impatient when I was on the road and people would drive too fast or merge without indicating. Now, when people sneak into my lane, I just smile and laugh.

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■ Benediction

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This Season Invites Us to Transform Our Hearts



Amid the indignation, terror and sadness that

we feel at seeing the images of an absurd war, driven by the push for imperial power, the season of Lent, the 40 days of preparation to enter once more the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus, has a special meaning for us.

We are not living in “normal” times, even if we decide to drop our face masks and tell ourselves that the pandemic is over, and we silence the news.

The worst blind man is one that does not want to see. In numerous countries, where the majority of the population lives in poverty, the illness continues its deadly march. It seems like humanity needs to experience the boundaries of our self-destruction to wake up, to reach the abyss and to transform itself.

The readings from the liturgical celebrations of this season have moved me more than on previous occasions. It helps me to think that the reading

**Associate Director,
Family Life &
Spirituality**

Ricardo Márquez



of the day has a message just for me, for my community, for the Church and the world, in the here and now.

“Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart ...” (Joel 2:12).

“Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful ...” (Joel 2:13)

“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil ...” (Deuteronomy 30:15)

It’s never too late to change. Today can always be the new day to awaken from the slumber induced by our screens, to liberate ourselves from our addictions, from the newscasts that poison our days starting in the morning, as the Argentine songwriter Facundo Cabral tells us.

This season is an invitation to look inward, to re-orient our desires and intentions, to search for the hidden

treasure of the “kingdom,” for fraternity and for peace.

Hope lies in remembering that it’s not important where we are, nor the errant decisions we might have made in the past. What is important is to feel, when we’re at the abyss, that our Creator, the source of life and our lives, is compassionate and merciful.

The rituals and liturgical celebrations of this season can remain superficial, in tradition and obligation, or they can be the occasion to let ourselves be changed by what they signal, a transformation of the heart, of feelings and conduct. Religiosity that solely remains in the formality of rituals annihilates the spirit that moves it.

The goal of religions, Catholicism in particular, is to create the conditions for the personal encounter with the mystery we call “God,” who, according to the faith that the apostles handed down to us, became flesh in Jesus and lives in the Holy Spirit in each of us.

That is the mystery of the faith that we profess, that we are invited to live in our lives. To contemplate it and enter in it is what transforms us. The road, truth and life lie in Jesus’

message; that’s why to read it and meditate over it is “ecstasy” for us. It’s a message that shakes us out of our daily routines, moves us to take risks of love and service, and transforms our gaze to see God in everything, in nature, the sky, people, the sick and the incarcerated, the despised and marginalized.

That is the great paradox of our faith: A man sentenced to death by the authorities of His time revealed the immensity of a mystery of love, and ever since then, the immensity of His essence, which is love, is revealed to us in what humanity judges as insignificant. Paul expressed this from the depths of his soul: Some ask for proof, others for wisdom, “but we proclaim a Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” (Corinthians 1:23).

This season of passion and resurrection invites us to soak in, to contemplate and be touched by this mystery. And, in so doing, we can experience a transformation of the heart ... and, from this transformation, will spring actions that can heal, unite and love.

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April Event Raises Awareness of Child Abuse

By Denis Grasska



Twenty years ago, a sex abuse scandal began that shook the Catholic Church in the United States and around the world to its core.

It resulted in a series of reforms aimed at protecting children and preventing abuse internally, but it also tore away the shame and taboos that had kept victims of all kinds from speaking out, thus allowing abuse that had been hidden in families, schools and other institutions for generations to finally see the light of day.

It also ushered in a series of reforms aimed at protecting children and keeping a commitment to their safety foremost in the daily life of the Church. As part of that effort, the San Diego Diocese will join with organizations around the country to observe April as National Child Abuse Prevention Month and mark the occasion with an educational presentation and special Mass.

Both events will be held on Saturday, April 2, at St. James Parish in Solana Beach. Nancy Beehn, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who specializes in working with children and adolescents, will speak from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Her presentation will be fol-



PRIORITY: Bishop Robert McElroy looked on as District Attorney Summer Stephan addressed an Aug. 13, 2019, meeting with the more than 2,500 diocesan employees to focus on preventing child abuse.

lowed by a 5 p.m. Mass that will offer prayer and support to those affected by child abuse; it will be celebrated by St. James' pastor, Father Gerard Lecomte, C.J.M.

"The goal of the event is to bring awareness of the problem of child abuse to parishioners and the public and stimulate conversation about what we can do, as people of God, to help prevent abuse and support victim-survivors," explained Mary Acosta, the diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator, who serves those who have been sexually abused by clergy.

Since 2003, the diocese has mandated "Safe Environment" training for all diocesan personnel, as well as volun-

teers who work with children. In 2020, more than 10,500 people, including clergy, seminarians and lay employees, received that training, which teaches how to recognize and report signs of child abuse. Those who work with children at parish and school sites also are required to complete a criminal background check.

Safe Environment training and background checks are required upon beginning employment or volunteer work and must be renewed every five years.

Students in local Catholic schools and parish religious education programs also receive age-appropriate Safe Environment training. More than 26,000 youth and their parents re-

ceived this instruction in 2020.

"Everyone who is part of the Church must be vigilant to recognize signs of abuse and protect children in their communities," she said.

As Victim Assistance Coordinator, Acosta has been able to coordinate services to victims of clergy sex abuse, above and beyond any financial settlements. She has connected victim-survivors with therapy and spiritual resources, such as healing retreats and spiritual direction. And the diocese has started a support group for men who were abused.

"The Church has the responsibility to protect children from abuse within the structures of the Church, as well as within the communities in which parishes operate," Acosta said. "By bringing the issue of child abuse to the attention of parishioners and offering resources for the prevention and treatment of abuse, we are fulfilling our duties to protect children and support struggling families now and help those who experienced abuse in the past to heal."

Information about diocesan safety policies:

safeinourdiocese.org.

Contact Victim Assist.

Coordinator Mary

Acosta at (858) 490-8353.



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Ease Grief from Pregnancy Loss

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Those experiencing the pain of pregnancy loss are not alone.

That's the hope-filled message being offered by the Diocese of San Diego's Office for Family Life and Spirituality and by Life Perspectives, a San Diego-based nonprofit that specializes in reproductive grief care.

The Family Life and Spirituality Office is hosting a Mass and workshop to raise awareness about reproductive loss. It will take place from 5:30 to 8 p.m., Saturday, April 30, at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Rancho Peñasquitos.

Father Anthony Saroki, pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, will celebrate Mass at 5:30 p.m. Sara West of Life Perspectives will speak at 7 p.m. on best practices in reproductive grief and self-care. Before Mass, beginning at 4:30 p.m., there will also be an opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

"Reproductive loss is one of those topics that, when you really start to think about it, you realize how many of us — practically all of us in one way or another — have been touched by it," said John Prust, director of the Family



Life and Spirituality Office.

He said his "biggest hope" is that attendees will come away from the Mass and workshop "with more compassion for those who have experienced reproductive loss," as well as "a wider awareness of just how widespread it is."

Life Perspectives, a global leader in education and research on pregnancy and reproductive loss, held a ribbon-cutting and grand opening ceremony March 17 for its new Institute of Reproductive Grief Care.

Located at 4579 Mission Gorge Place, the institute is a new campus for training, research and healing of grief after pregnancy and reproductive loss. It includes a counseling center, a research library, teaching rooms, a re-

cording studio, a 400-seat auditorium, and space for visiting scholars.

Dr. Michaelene Fredenburg, president and CEO of the Institute of Reproductive Grief Care and Life Perspectives, explained the need for the institute.

"One in four pregnancies end in miscarriage — and that is just one type of reproductive loss. The reality is that over 2 million people are impacted by pregnancy and reproductive loss in the U.S. every single year," she said. "Our culture underestimates how many people are impacted and also underestimates the grief that many experience after this unique and painful loss. Also, our healthcare systems offer very little education to healthcare staff on best practices for offering emotional support after reproductive loss."

Fredenburg said the institute will educate healthcare professionals in providing "the gold standard of care" to those affected by reproductive loss, serve as a research hub around the topic of reproductive grief, and offer healing resources to those affected.

Information about the Mass and workshop: jprust@sdccatholic.org; (858) 490-8256. Information about Institute for Reproductive Grief Care: reproductivegrief.org

Bishop Dolan to Address Mental Health Conference

LOS ALTOS, Calif. — Auxiliary Bishop John Dolan and Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas, will be among the presenters at the inaugural Mental Health Ministry Conference.

The theme for the event, which will be held from May 19 to 21 at the Jesuit Retreat Center in Los Altos, is "Building a Culture of Community: Equipping Leaders for Mental Health Ministry." The conference is co-sponsored by the Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers, the National Catholic Partnership on Disability, and the California Catholic Conference.

Participants will be able to connect with others in ministry from around the country, hear from experts, and share resources and best practices.

A virtual option is available for individuals who are unable to attend in person. This option will include access to keynotes and panel presentations, but not breakout sessions.

For more information, including ticket prices, and to register, visit <https://bit.ly/MHCONF2022>.



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News Briefs

Expect Changes at Some Holy Week Liturgies

The pandemic may be winding down, but Catholic faithful can still expect a few changes at some of the Holy Week liturgies out of concern for public health.

Masses on Palm Sunday, April 10, will be observed as usual. The commemoration of the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem, including the blessing and distribution of palms, may be celebrated using one of the three forms given in the *Roman Missal*, at the discretion of the pastor.

The Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, April 14, will also be unchanged. The washing of feet, which is optional, may be celebrated at the discretion of the pastor. The Mass and the transfer of the Blessed Sacrament to an altar of repose may be celebrated according to the norms in the *Roman Missal*.

The changes begin during the Good Friday liturgy, April 15, where the assembly will not venerate the cross individually, as they typically do with a kiss, but rather in one communal act, according to norms laid out in the *Roman Missal*.

At the Easter Vigil, which can be celebrated after 8 p.m. on Saturday, April 16, immersion baptisms may not take place, even in churches with large, recirculating baptismal fonts. Baptisms must be celebrated with a pitcher and bowl, with the pouring of fresh water over the head of each person to be baptized.

Chrism Mass Scheduled for April 6

The Diocese of San Diego's Chrism Mass will be celebrated on Wednesday, April 6, at Good Shepherd Church.

The Chrism Mass is the annual liturgy at which the diocesan bishop consecrates the sacred chrism and blesses the oils that are distributed to parishes and used throughout the year in sacramental celebrations.

These include the oil of the catechumens, which is used to prepare and dispose catechumens for baptism; the oil of the sick, which is used to anoint those who are ill, that they might be comforted in their infirmity; and the sacred chrism, the perfumed oil that is used to anoint the newly baptized and to sign those to be confirmed. Sacred chrism is also used to anoint the hands of priests and the heads of bishops at their ordination.

The Chrism Mass is concelebrated by the priests of the diocese, as a sign of the bond with their bishop. During the liturgy, they publicly renew the priestly promises they made at their ordination. In past years, more than 100 priests have concelebrated.

Parish representatives carry the holy oils from the Chrism Mass to be received in the parish either before the celebration of the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday or at another appropriate time. This is an opportunity to catechize the faithful about the effects of holy oils and chrism in the Church's sacramental life.

Father Farrell Named Laudato Si Fellow

Father Emmet Farrell, diocesan director of Creation Care Ministry, has been named a Laudato Si Fellow at the University of San Diego.

The honor was bestowed in recognition of the priest's work to promote the message of "Laudato Si," Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical on environmental stewardship and care for creation.

A reception in his honor was to be held on Thursday, March 31, at USD, where Father Farrell would be greeted by noted environmentalist Dr. Mitchell Thomashow and presented with a copy of Dr. Thomashow's study "To Know the World: A New Vision of Environmental Learning."

It is USD's hope that Laudato Si Fellows, like Father Farrell, will form a community of scholars dedicated to reversing climate change and making the dangers of environmental degradation known to the academic and general community.



San Diego Youth Day to Be Held in April

San Diego Youth Day, a daylong conference for Catholic teens, will be held on Saturday, April 23, at Cathedral Catholic High School. It will take place from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sponsored by the diocesan Office for Youth and Young Adult Ministry, San Diego Youth Day includes talks by nationally and locally recognized Catholic speakers, engaging presentations, a thematic park with fun activities, the chance to meet other young Catholics, praise-and-worship music, the sacrament of reconciliation, and a Mass with Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano as the principal celebrant.

All parishes are invited to register their Catholic youth. The cost to attend is \$35 per person. Registration closes Friday, April 8.

For more information, visit sdcatholic.org/youth.

Birthline Launching Mother's Day Campaign

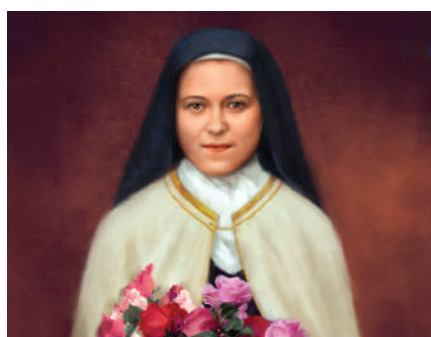
"Love Another Mother," a spring fundraising campaign by Birthline of San Diego County, Inc., gives San Diegans the opportunity to honor all mothers, especially the most vulnerable.

Founded more than 40 years ago, Birthline provides free diapers, children's clothing, food and more, as well as referrals for various services, to pregnant women and families with children age 6 and younger. Many of its clients live below the poverty line.

Supporters of the "Love Another Mother" campaign can honor their own mother or a special mother in their life simply by making a donation to Birthline this Mother's Day.

Each donation will sponsor a Mother's Day gift bag that will include: a Walmart gift card, a Mother's Day plant for their home, and an indulgence care package of soaps, toiletries and cosmetics.

For more information, visit birthlineofsandiego.org or call (858) 270-2491.



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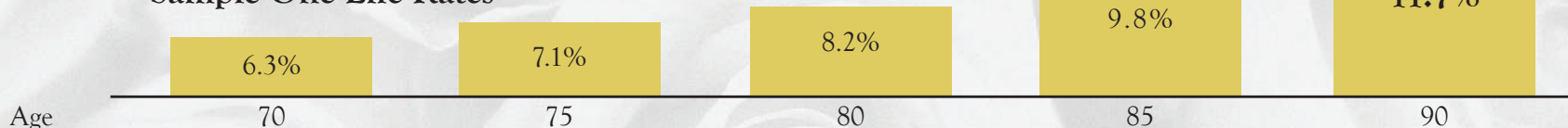
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Parish-Based Scout Troop Celebrates 75 Years

LA MESA — Boy Scouts of America Troop 51 is celebrating its 75th anniversary of Scouting at St. Martin of Tours Parish.

Troop 51 was originally chartered in La Mesa in 1921 and has been continuously chartered at St. Martin of Tours Parish since April 2, 1947. In 2020, a girls' troop was added to provide opportunities for boys and girls ages 11 through 17.

The troop will celebrate its anniversary with a Mass and dinner on Saturday, April 23, at St. Martin of Tours. For information, email troop51anniversary@gmail.com.

Troop 51 is a youth-led troop whose active schedule includes at least one overnight outdoor activity each month. Outings include activities such as camping, hiking, backpacking, rock climbing, fishing, kayaking, rafting, biking, horseback riding, sailing, sporting events and skiing.

The troop's weekly meetings are held at 6:30 p.m., Tuesdays, in the parish hall. Visitors are always welcome.

For more information about Troop 51, visit lamesa51.mytroop.us/home or email smartinstroop51@gmail.com.

Widowed, Divorced Invited to Healing Weekend

OCEANSIDE — Beginning Experience, an almost 50-year-old international ministry that helps the widowed, divorced and separated move beyond grief, will hold its next weekend retreat April 29 to May 1.

The retreat will be held at Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside. Its organizers promise a supportive and caring environment with others that are going through or have gone through the same experiences.

The fee covering individual rooms, food and materials is \$300. However, scholarships are available for those in need.

For information, call (858) 748-2273 in English or (330) 607-8774 in Spanish.

Santee Parish Presents 60th Anniversary Gala

SANTEE — Guardian Angels Parish will celebrate its 60th anniversary with a semi-formal gala on Saturday, June 18, in Cathedral Catholic High School's theater.

The evening will be filled with fun, silent and live auctions, food, and live music for dancing. Proceeds will benefit the Blessed Carlo Acutis Youth and Young Adult Building, which is being constructed on the back lot of the church property.

The parish is seeking community sponsors to support the gala.

Donations for the silent or live auctions are also being accepted, and donors' names will be included in the event program, as well as during the auction on the bid and description sheets.

Gala tickets can be purchased at GuardianAngelsSantee.org. For more information about being a gala sponsor, donating an auction item, or purchasing a seat, call (619) 548-2864. Sponsorship commitments are requested by Friday, April 15. Pre-sale seats go on sale Friday, May 6.

Mask Mandates Eased for Schools

With the number of COVID-19 cases dropping as the Omicron wave recedes, state and San Diego County authorities lifted the mandate to wear masks in K-12

public and private schools on March 11.

"At the Diocese of San Diego, the decision to require masks will be up to individual school principals and pastors, and depends on local conditions across a vast diocese," said John Galvan, director of the diocesan Office for Schools, in a statement released the preceding day. "Some schools will continue to have a mask requirement, while others will not."

Parents seeking additional information are encouraged to reach out to their child's school.

"Words cannot express how grateful we are to parents and schools for the hard work and cooperation that has been required to keep our students and teachers safe, and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our schools," Galvan added.

Mater Dei Welcomes New Principal

CHULA VISTA — Aarón González has been appointed the next principal of Mater Dei Catholic High School.

For González, who will step into his new role on July 1, the appointment means a return to his alma mater. He is a member of the 1990 graduating class of Marian Catholic High School, whose legacy is carried on today at Mater Dei Catholic.

He has served for the past 16 years at the Academy of Our Lady of Peace (OLP) in a variety of positions, including varsity golf head coach, social studies teacher, director of athletics, assistant principal and, most recently, interim assistant head of school. He also spent several years on the faculty of St. John of the Cross Catholic School in Lemon Grove.

González, who holds a master's in Education as well as bachelor's degrees in History and Political Science, all from the University of San Diego, will be visiting the Mater Dei Catholic campus periodically before his start date to get to know the school community.

"(González) brings a collaborative approach to the work of education and I'm very excited to work with him to lead Mater Dei Catholic to even greater heights," Jesuit Father Joaquin Martinez, president of Mater Dei Catholic, said in a letter to the school community.

Father Martinez also expressed appreciation for the dedication and commitment of Frank Stingo, the current principal of Mater Dei Catholic, whom González will succeed.



'40 Days for Life' to Continue Through April 10

The spring campaign for 40 Days for Life will run from March 2 through April 10.

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.

Learn more and sign up for vigil hours at sdcatholic.org/event/40-days-for-life.

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Dear Friends and Family of Catholic Charities:

We all now know what it's like to live in fear, and how that fear leaves lasting trauma. Yet, many of us cannot begin to imagine the level of fear and trauma that a homeless woman battles alone.

At Catholic Charities Rachel's Women's Center in downtown San Diego, hundreds of women walk through the doors each day seeking shelter, safety, and support to start over. Did you know:

- 50% of these women report being physically assaulted while homeless.
- 35% report being sexually assaulted on the street.
- 75% report experiencing at least one sexual assault at some time in their lives.
- 80% report histories of intimate partner violence.
- 80% report having their personal items repeatedly stolen while unsheltered.

More jarring than the statistics are the stories. Michelle is a cancer survivor who is unable to work. She fears losing her disability benefit and, in turn, the housing that Catholic Charities helped her secure last year. The trauma from her time on the street haunts her at night, while health issues limit her mobility in the day. Michelle's story is one of many that I hope you will read and watch on our website.

Catholic Charities has programs and services in place to keep women off the streets for the short term while working to house them for the long term. The challenge is that these facilities are operating at absolute capacity.

Directly above Rachel's Women's Center, we have eight affordable studio apartments for women who are completing recovery programs and/or are newly employed. Every apartment is full.

Leah's Residence is larger. It comprises of 24 affordable permanent housing units for formerly homeless women who have special needs, with an on-site coordinator to assist them. Every apartment is full.

In nearby Hillcrest, House of Rachel and Casa Maria provide safe, supportive, and sober shared living environments for low-income and formerly homeless adult women. Both facilities are also full.

Rachel's Night Shelter, across the street from Rachel's Women's Center, has 35 beds side by side in an open space. Every night, all 35 beds are occupied. In 2021, Rachel's Women's Center served 835 unique women, while the Night Shelter was only able to serve 138 unique women. The gap leaves hundreds of women on the street where they may be robbed, assaulted, or killed.

We are working diligently, tirelessly—and, in seeing the need and volume, urgently—to expand our capacity. When I see the fear on Michelle's face and hear the trauma in her voice even now as she sits with a roof over her head, I imagine what those women who remain on the street must be encountering.

Donations help sustain our services, and they are critical in sustaining our programs and services for the most vulnerable. Rachel's Women's Center has been operating in the same location for nearly 40 years. Catholic Charities has been providing help and creating hope for over 102 years. Our commitment is much deeper, and our vision is much larger than simply sustaining. We want to do more. We need to do more. This Easter, will you put your faith into action to help us do more?

Donate today using the envelope included or by visiting ccdsd.org/give.



Appaswamy "Vino" Pajanor
Chief Executive Officer


Halah and Marisela are all smiles at Rachel's Women's Center as they share their stories and hopes with us.



Julie and Noah (the puppy) live at House of Rachel.

Staff member Claudia and Michelle share a hug when Michelle visits Rachel's Women's Center.



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Michelle and her two support dogs.