

THE SOUTHERN CROSS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

VOLUME 112 • NUMBER 08

THESOUTHERNCROSS.ORG

AUGUST 2023



FRESH START: Catholic school students, like these at Good Shepherd Catholic School, will begin a new academic year in mid- to late August. Nine elementary schools have new principals, and the diocesan Office for Schools has welcomed two new associate superintendents.



Syriac Shepherd

Patriarch Ignatius Youssef III Younan visits local Syriac Catholic parish. **Page 3**



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Mission San Luis Rey now final resting place of friar credited with its restoration. **Pages 10-11**



Summer Fun

Outer space is theme of Vacation Bible School in El Centro. **Page 18**

Small-Group
Dialogues
Coming Soon
to Parishes



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THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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Founded in 1912,
The Southern Cross
is the official newspaper of the
Catholic Diocese of San Diego.

The Southern Cross (ISSN 0745-0257) is published monthly by the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego, 3888 Paducah Drive, San Diego, CA 92117-5349.

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Southern Cross, P.O. Box 81869, San Diego, CA 92138-1869.

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Email: socross@sdccatholic.org

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Subscriptions:

Monthly print subscription: \$15 per year

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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 symbol indicates where readers may go online to obtain more information about the subject at hand, including additional photos, video and other content.



Parishes to Host Dialogues in Fall

By Aida Bustos



In October, the San Diego Diocese will invite the entire community to participate in small-group dialogues at parishes and schools as part of the synod, which will be entering its third year that month.

The dialogues will follow the same format as the sessions held in the spring of 2022. As planned by Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, the dialogue sessions will provide another opportunity in the diocese for the faithful to encounter one another, this time focused on the Eucharist and how to build Eucharistic communities.

Encountering others and listening to one another are at the heart of the synod Pope Francis launched in October of 2021. He called on parishes to use the synodal process of inviting everyone to the table, particularly the vulnerable, then working together to address the concerns raised, all guided by the Holy Spirit. Over time, the pope hopes this new way of "being Church" will help renew parishes, schools and the Church itself.

Victor Carmona has a unique perspective on this synodal journey.

He's a man of faith, having been born into a Catholic family and nurtured by parish and religious communities on both sides of the border.

He participated in the small-group sessions at his San Diego parish in the spring of 2022, in which participants candidly shared their joys, disappointments and hopes for the Church.

He's a member of the commission of mostly lay leaders from San Diego and Imperial Valley that has been advising the diocese on the synodal process.

He participated in the Continental Phase of the synod, where representatives of faith communities across the U.S. and Canada shared the findings of their synods.

And he's a nationally recognized



Victor Carmona

theologian who teaches at the University of San Diego.

On a recent day, Carmona reflected on the synod's impact on the diocese and beyond.

"A beautiful and challenging aspect of the synodal journey is that it re-frames our thinking," he said. "The synodal journey has encouraged us to focus on the process itself — on dialogue."

From that perspective, one of the key accomplishments so far "has been a palpable openness to and desire for dialogue among fellow Catholics. This openness helps us discern the Spirit at work in rich and multiple ways among us all," he said.

Being process- rather than results-oriented can be unsettling "because it calls for a vulnerability we are not used to experiencing when encountering others, even if they are from the same faith community.

"And yet, together, we have experienced an openness to the Spirit through that vulnerability. For that reason, I believe we are living through a formative moment for the Church here in San Diego and beyond."

He said that the synodal journey is "nurturing us ... to be a Church that heals the polarization wounding many in our society."

More information:
sdccatholic.org/synod



Synodal Journey

October 2021 — Pope Francis launches a worldwide consultation of the faithful called "Synod on Synodality," with the themes of communion, participation and mission. He asks dioceses to launch their own synods, which Cardinal Robert W. McElroy did in the San Diego Diocese.

Spring 2022 — Diocese invites the faithful to share their joys, disappointments and hopes for the Church in small-group sessions held in English, Spanish and Vietnamese at parishes, schools and organizations serving vulnerable communities.

June 2022 — Diocese releases the findings from the 1,100 small-group sessions that were held. Parishes receive a summary of what their community members had said. Cardinal McElroy asks pastors to address at least two of the concerns raised by their community.

Fall 2022 — Diocese conducts an electronic survey to hear from as many faithful as possible. Around 22,000 would go on to complete the survey.

Winter 2023 — Vatican holds Continental Phase of the synod. The diocese was part of the North American cluster made up of representatives from the U.S. and Canada.

February 2023 — Diocese releases a general report of the findings from the electronic survey. Pastors receive reports with the findings of what their own parishioners said.

October 2023 — Diocese to hold small-group dialogues in parishes and schools, focusing on how to build Eucharistic communities. Meanwhile, the Vatican will convene the first part of the Synod of Bishops on Synodality in Rome. Pope Francis invited Cardinal McElroy to be a delegate at this synod, which will have its second session in October of 2024.

Most Rev. Bejarano Goes to Washington



BALTIMORE — Catholic Relief Services convened more than 120 of its supporters, including Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano of San Diego, in Washington, D.C., for its first-ever National Gathering. Held June 27 to 30 at the Catholic University of America, it included prayer, community building, and training, as well as a day on Capitol Hill. Supporters met with congressional offices to advocate for U.S. foreign aid.

Bishop Bejarano said, "It is a blessing to be here ... It's our job to help our representatives see that supporting foreign aid really makes a difference."

BRITANY WICHTENDAH/CRS

Flock Far From Homeland Greets Its Shepherd

By Denis Grasska



EL CAJON —
Our Mother of
Perpetual Help
Syriac Rite Catholic Church
welcomed a distinguished
guest on a recent Sunday.

Ignatius Youssef III Younan, patriarch of Antioch for the Syriac Catholic Church, celebrated Mass inside the packed church on July 16.

Patriarch Younan is the global leader of the Syriac Catholic Church, an Eastern Catholic Church that has been in full communion with the pope since 1781. His Patriarchal See is currently based in Beirut, Lebanon.

The See of Antioch dates back to the apostolic era, when St. Peter led the Church there before becoming the bishop of Rome. The Acts of the Apostles (11:26) says, “It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.”

Patriarch Younan’s visit to Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish, his first since 2019, was part of a larger pastoral visit to the Syriac Catholic Diocese of Our Lady of Deliverance, which encompasses the entire United States and includes 10 parishes, one mission church, and about 3,500 families.

The bishop of the Diocese of Our Lady of Deliverance, Barnaba Yousif Habash, joined the patriarch on his visit. It began in Michigan, where the patriarch spoke at the diocese’s national youth conference, and included stops in California, Arizona, New Jersey and Florida.

In an interview with *The Southern Cross* on July 19, Patriarch Younan recounted how political unrest and economic woes in their homelands of Iraq, Syria and Lebanon have led an increasing number of Syriac Catholics to seek better lives abroad.

He recalled the “massacre” on Oct. 31, 2010, at Our Lady of Deliverance Syriac Catholic Cathedral in Baghdad, where over a period of three hours, terrorists killed 48 people who had gathered for Sunday Mass, including two young priests, and wounded more than 80 others.

“After that very horrendous massacre, Christians began ... to emigrate much more than before,” the patriarch said.

He also mentioned the ISIS attack on the Christian settlements of the Nineveh Plain in Iraq on Aug. 6, 2014, which led to more than 150,000 Christians fleeing to neighboring Kurdistan. More than two years later, they were able to return and begin rebuilding, he said, but the experience created “an atmosphere of fear and of despair for the future.”

“(Young people) are very much inclined to emigrate and to find life outside (the Middle East), especially in the Western countries (in) North America, Western Europe, Australia,” Patriarch Younan said.



BLESSINGS: Patriarch Ignatius Youssef III Younan blesses the faithful during the entrance procession at a July 16 Mass at Our Mother of Perpetual Help Syriac Catholic Church.



CROWDED: Our Mother of Perpetual Help Syriac Catholic Church was packed with worshippers July 16 at a Mass celebrated by the global leader of Syriac Catholics.

He said the “phenomenon of emptying the Middle Eastern countries of their Christian population” has been exacerbated by the actions of Western nations, including the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. In his view, Western leaders have shown little concern for the impact that their decisions have on minority populations in the affected countries.

Patriarch Younan said the Syriac Catholic Church is the smallest of the Eastern Catholic Churches, with about 200,000 members worldwide.

The Church’s main liturgical language is Syriac-Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus, the Blessed Mother and the Apostles. However, the

patriarch said, the local language is typically incorporated into the liturgy as well; this means Arabic in Middle Eastern countries, French in Quebec, and English in the United States.

The liturgy that Patriarch Younan celebrated July 16 at Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish included Syriac-Aramaic, Arabic and some English. Following the traditional practice of the Syriac Catholic Church, Communion was distributed by intinction, with the priest dipping the host into the Precious Blood and then placing it on the tongue of the communicant.

Born in Syria, Patriarch Younan has long ties to Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish, which he helped to estab-

lish as a mission in 1994. For a time, he said, he came to the San Diego area once a month and then twice a month to celebrate Masses for the community, while the parish’s current pastor, Msgr. Emad Hanna Al-Shaikh, was in priestly formation.

In late 1995, Pope St. John Paul II created the Syriac Catholic Diocese of Our Lady of Deliverance and appointed Father Younan as its first bishop. He was consecrated a bishop in January 1996. In early 2009, he was elected patriarch.

Our Mother of Perpetual Help’s current parish property, which is located at 1101 S. Mollison Ave. in El Cajon, was purchased in 2011. Previously, the community had gathered at Santa Sophia Church in Spring Valley.

The parish currently has between 400 and 450 families.

On July 16, as he concluded his homily, Patriarch Younan encouraged gratitude to God for allowing the parishioners to live in safety in the United States. He also urged gratitude to “this wonderful country,” where they have “the human dignity and the Christian freedom.” But, at the same time, he also counseled them “always ... to remember our brothers and sisters who are back at home in the Middle Eastern countries, where ... there is no peace, there is no stability, and (there are) a lot of problems.”

“Please keep your brothers and sisters in your prayer and be generous whenever you can to help them survive, with the help of God and the Church,” the patriarch said, concluding with an appeal to the intercession of the Blessed Mother, under the title of Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

Nine Schools Welcome New Principals

By Denis Grasska



Nine schools in the Diocese of San Diego will have

new principals when the new academic year begins in August. They are:

Kristina Alger

St. Pius X School, Chula Vista



Kristina Alger is “a proud product of Catholic education,” from preschool through high school, and says it shaped her into the person she is today.

“Ever since I was a little girl, I knew I wanted to be a teacher,” she said. “I looked up to my teachers and have always loved learning.”

Alger, who grew up in Portland, Ore., graduated from Oregon State University with a bachelor’s in Human Development and Family Science. She began her 17-year career in education in a classroom of 4-year-olds at St. Ann’s Model Early Learning Center in Kaneohe, Hawaii, from 2005 to 2008.

Alger next taught kindergarten at St. Patrick School in Kaimuki, Hawaii, from 2008 to 2014.

Except for three years as an English teacher at a “hagwon” in Seoul, South Korea, from 2014 to 2017, she has taught exclusively in Catholic schools.

Alger, who earned a master’s in Educational Leadership in 2013 from Chaminade University of Honolulu, moved to San Diego in 2017. In the diocese, she has taught at St. Mary Star of the Sea School in Oceanside (2018-2021) and at St. Pius X School in Chula Vista (2021-present), where she also was vice principal.

In recent years, she has felt “drawn” to educational leadership and has served as a teacher liaison and as co-facilitator of the diocesan Office for Schools’ Institute for Novice Catholic Teachers.

“Catholic education is so special because we are able to educate and form the whole person — mind, body and spirit,” she said. “We are able to teach our faith and shape the future generation.”

Marisa Amann

Notre Dame Academy



Marisa Amann has taken over the top administrative post at Notre Dame Academy at an exciting time.

Since its founding in 2005, the school has been run by the sisters of the Institut de L’Union-Chretienne de Saint Chaumont. And, despite being located next-door to St. Therese of Carmel Parish, it has never been a parochial school.

But that is changing.

Amann, who previously served as principal of St. Pius X School in Chula Vista, described this as “a transitional year” in which Notre Dame Academy will “say goodbye” to the sisters, and an effort will be underway “to connect our school and parish more fully as we transition into a parish school.”

Born and raised in Las Vegas, Amann attended Catholic schools from elementary through graduate school. She felt early on that she had a “calling” to be an educator.

“I knew this was the vocation for me,” said Amann, who holds a bachelor’s in English and Theology from the University of San Diego and a master’s in Special Education from Loyola Marymount University.

Now entering her 13th year in education, she started teaching in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Since moving to San Diego, she has been a teacher at Stella Maris Academy; vice principal at the School of the Madeleine; and, from 2020 to 2023, principal of St. Pius X School.

“Our students are the future of our faith,” she said, “and, with parents as the primary educators, it is our primary purpose to help our students become saints and scholars to better our future world.”

Amanda Angaiak

Our Lady’s School



Amanda Angaiak is new to San Diego. Really new. In fact, the Alaska native has only been here since early July.

Angaiak had been “discerning a transition out of Alaska for a bit.” She knew that Jesuit Father Scott Santarosa, whom she had known during his years as provincial, had become pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in San Diego and that Our Lady’s School, the combined school of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Our Lady of Angels parishes, was seeking a principal.

“I reached out to Father Scott and, honestly, the Holy Spirit — and some careful steps of Ignatian discernment — took it from there,” she said.

Angaiak attended the University of Notre Dame, where she graduated in 1996 with a double major in Theology and Anthropology. That year, she took part in the University of Notre Dame’s Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) Teaching Fellows program and, in 2000, earned a Master of Arts in Teaching from the University of Portland. In 2008, she received a master’s in Educational Administration through the University of Notre Dame’s Remick Leadership Program.

Angaiak has spent 27 years in education, all but two in Catholic education.

Most recently, she served as director of the Catholic Schools of Fairbanks and president of the nonprofit Monroe Foundation, Inc. (2019-2023). Prior to that, she was PK-6th principal for

the Catholic Schools of Fairbanks (2003-2019).

“One of the best things about Catholic education is how Christ the Teacher moves us to action: to celebrate, to speak up, to be present, to give and not count the costs,” she said. “It’s super cool.”

Dr. Melody Belcher

St. Kieran School, El Cajon



Dr. Melody Belcher may be a first-time Catholic school principal, but she brings to that role three decades of experience in public education, including as principal at four public elementary schools.

She also has strong ties to the St. Kieran Parish community. For more than 20 years, she has been actively involved at the parish, where she has led Sunday School, sacramental preparation classes and Vacation Bible School.

For Belcher, who recently retired as a public school principal, it was “serendipitous” that St. Kieran’s principal position opened up at this time.

“I felt the guidance of Christ to bring my educational leadership abilities to my parish,” said Belcher, who describes herself as “filled with gratitude and excitement” as she begins her new job.

“I see the potential of St. Kieran’s ... to thrive to great achievements and continue its 63 years of tradition and reputation,” she said.

Originally from San Jose, Belcher came to San Diego in 1988 to attend San Diego State University, where she graduated with a bachelor’s in Speech Communication and a teaching credential. She went on to earn a master’s in Education at National University and, in 2022, a doctorate in Educational Leadership from SDSU.

Belcher, whose son is a St. Kieran’s alumnus, is passionate about Catholic schools.

“Catholic education is beyond special,” she said. “It is a ‘must’ in our world and lives today. ... The family unit is very fragile right now in our world. We, as Catholics, have much work to do, and I am confident that the Holy Spirit will direct our work.”

Jill Burke

St. John School, Encinitas



Education was “a second career” for Jill Burke, who earned a bachelor’s degree in Business and worked in the area of human resources before starting a family.

When she reentered the workforce, she did so first at a preschool and later at an elementary school, where she was an instructional aide.

She worked with students in kindergarten through fifth grade in the

Poway Unified School District, as an aide, intervention teacher and long-term substitute teacher, before transitioning into Catholic education.

“It wasn’t until my own children started attending a Catholic school that I realized the importance of a Catholic education,” she said.

She has spent 18 of her 28 years in education at a Catholic school — St. John School in Encinitas, as third-grade teacher, as assistant principal for the past 13 years, and now as principal.

“Catholic education is special because of the sense of community that permeates Catholic schools,” she said. “We get to share our lives in faith and service.”

She recalled a quote from Pope St. John Paul II, who said, “To teach means not only sharing what you know, but also living what you believe.”

Originally from Louisville, Ky., Burke obtained her bachelor’s degree from Bellarmine University in Louisville. She later earned a teaching credential and master’s in Education at National University. She completed her administrative credential, also at National University, after being asked to serve as assistant principal.

“While I have been working in administration for many years,” said Burke, “I am excited to help St. John School continue to grow and work in collaboration with the diocese.”

Britni Coito

St. Vincent de Paul School



“Once a Viking, always a Viking,” is a common expression at St. Vincent de Paul School and, for Britni Coito, it certainly rings true.

Having worked there from 2016 to 2021, she is back as principal.

“When the position at St. Vincent de Paul School opened, it gave me the needed push to take the next step,” said Coito, who already had experience as a vice principal. “I am returning to a place that has always held a special place in my heart and I am excited to be back.”

A native San Diegan, Coito is an alumna of Sacred Heart Academy and University of San Diego High School.

She holds a bachelor’s in Psychology, a Master of Arts in Teaching in Elementary Education, and a teaching credential from the University of San Francisco. She is also certified for Mild to Moderate Special Education, through the University of Notre Dame.

Coito began her teaching career in 2010 at St. Charles Borromeo Academy.

After a year of teaching outside the diocesan school system, she returned in 2016 to teach at St. Vincent de Paul School, where she would eventually become vice principal of curriculum and instruction.

Principals *Continued on Page 5*

Principals *Continued from Page 4*

In 2021, she came back to St. Charles Borromeo as vice principal and taught middle school math. This year, she has returned to St. Vincent de Paul.

"I firmly believe that faith and character education go hand in hand," Coito said, reflecting on the impact of Catholic education.

"My goal," she said, "is to empower my students to become not only knowledgeable individuals, but also compassionate members of society and disciples of Christ."

Dana Davalos

School of the Madeleine



Dana Davalos got her first taste of Catholic education as a high school student in Marin County.

"The teachers fostered the belief that the student is an image of God," she said. "Their mentorship made me love school."

That trend continued at the University of San Diego, where she earned a bachelor's in Diversified Liberal Arts with a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential. She credits her undergraduate years with having "greatly influenced my calling" to become a Catholic school educator.

She began her teaching career 32 years ago at the School of the Madeleine, where she has returned this year as the new principal.

During her first six-year stint at the

School of the Madeleine, she earned a Master of Education in Counselor Education, with a Pupil Personnel Credential, from USD. She then transitioned into the public school system, where she hoped to find a counseling position.

After nine years teaching at Nubia Leadership Academy, a predominantly African-American charter school in Southeast San Diego, she "yearned" to return to Catholic schools.

For the past 15 years, she has taught at St. Charles Borromeo Academy, where she has also served in administration. In 2015, she earned her Master of Education in Leadership and Administration through Jones International University.

Davalos is "honored and humbled" by the opportunity to lead the School of the Madeleine.

"I want to make sure we honor the mission of our school," she said, "which is to value each student as a unique creation of God."

Ali Knoll

St. Therese Academy



As a teenager, Ali Knoll was blessed with teachers who showed her that "faith was an invitation to a personal relationship with Jesus."

She realized that she wanted to be a teacher, so she "could be a positive force in students' lives as they discovered how to embrace their own faith."

Originally from Lafayette, La., Knoll attended Catholic schools from pre-

school through graduate school. She earned a bachelor's in Theology and Religious Studies and Psychology from the University of San Diego, and she earned a master's in Education from Providence College in 2019.

In the San Diego Diocese, Knoll served at Cathedral Catholic High School from 2012 to 2018 in a succession of roles, including director of retreats, assistant dean of students, and dean of mission and ministry. From 2018 until 2023, she was at the Academy of Our Lady of Peace, first as a theology teacher and campus minister and then, beginning in 2021, as assistant principal and director of campus life.

"I believe the guidance of the Holy Spirit led me through a series of small 'yeses' and invitations to this final big 'yes' to (becoming principal of St. Therese Academy)," she said.

Knoll, who sees the principal's role as primarily one of service, seeks to ensure that the school's teachers are "set up for success in the classroom."

"I am entering this role with trust and curiosity," she said. "I look forward to learning about what programs have been successful at (St. Therese Academy) and what the community hopes to prioritize as we grow."

Dr. Erin Zwahlen

St. Gregory the Great School



Upon learning that her predecessor as principal of St. Gregory the Great School was retiring, Dr. Erin Zwahlen was immediately

interested.

"I could not get the thought of applying off of my mind or heart," she said. "I prayed and meditated on the idea for weeks."

To her new role at St. Gregory the Great's, she brings 27 years of experience in education.

She has worked in more than 15 school districts in San Diego County in various roles, including with students with special needs and as a mentor, trainer, and consultant to administrators, teachers and parents.

But despite all of those experiences, this will be her first year in Catholic education — and she "could not be more excited about this next journey."

"I love working with children, collaborating with teachers, and sharing my faith, so Catholic education is a perfect fit for me," said Zwahlen, who holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Southern California, a master's from San Diego State University, and a doctorate from the University of Hawaii, Manoa.

Though she attended public schools during her own formative years, Zwahlen is a believer in the value of Catholic education. She shared that, even before the birth of her two children, she already planned to provide them with a Catholic school education.

"The Catholic school is a sacred place that combines faith, academic excellence, athletic rigor and social development in one place," she said. "There could not be a more special place than that."



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New Team at Schools Office Ready to Soar

By Denis Grasska



The diocesan Office for Schools recently

welcomed Elijah Bonde and Elizabeth Kramer as the diocese's new associate superintendents.

Their arrival marked the latest in a series of staff changes that has resulted in an entirely new Schools Office team. Just weeks earlier, Erica Yanez and Aireen Atkinson came onboard as the office's new administrative assistants.

The four new staffers join Leticia Oseguera, who became the superintendent in July of last year.

"I will always be grateful to (previous Schools Office Director) John Galvan and the rest of the previous Office for Schools team," said Oseguera. "The culture of collaboration they built over the last few years is alive and present across our diocese."

"Now, I'm blessed to have this amazing new team join me on this journey," she continued. "They are a very strong, diverse team who are committed to Catholic education. Each one of them brings unique perspectives, knowledge and experience. I'm very excited to see what we'll be able to accomplish together."

Bonde, whose first day in the Schools Office was July 5, brings with him 18 years of experience in Catholic education.

He was born in northern Nevada and attended high school in Sacramento.



Elijah Bonde

A Native American, he is a registered member of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone. He attended the University of San Diego, graduating in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in Philosophy.

He said that a career in education was "not my plan" while in college. But after graduation, he "quickly fell in love" with teaching while serving as an AmeriCorps intern at Nativity Prep Academy, an independent Catholic middle school and college-access program in San Diego for students from low-income families.

Bonde earned English and Science teaching credentials in 2007 and a master's in Leadership Studies in 2015, all at USD. He subsequently earned a Catholic School Leadership Certificate from Creighton University in 2021.

With the exception of one year at St. Aloysius School in Harlem, N.Y., from



Elizabeth Kramer

2007 to 2008, Bonde has served exclusively at Nativity Prep. At the school, he was a science teacher, from 2008 to 2013; the principal, from 2013 to 2022; and the vice president for institutional advancement, beginning in 2022.

Because Nativity Prep is not part of the diocesan school system, its faculty and staff had little interaction with the Office for Schools during Bonde's years as a teacher there.

"We were very much an island on our own," he said, explaining that this was something that changed after he became principal.

Bonde had taken note of the professional learning opportunities offered by the Schools Office, as well as the sense of collegiality that it fostered among local Catholic schools, and he felt strongly that Nativity Prep "should be a part of that." He began attending diocesan principals' meetings and

joined the diocese's curriculum leadership team.

Bonde, who is the husband of St. Katharine Drexel Academy Principal Kelly Bonde, reflected on what inspired him to apply for the associate superintendent position.

His 17 years at Nativity Prep contributed to his own professional development, he said, and his new position provides him with the opportunity to pay it forward.

"It's kind of shifting from personally growing to sharing all the blessings that I've had," said Bonde, whose areas of focus as associate superintendent will include working with principals on leadership development and school accreditation.

Kramer began her work in the Schools Office on July 3, following four years at Notre Dame Academy. For the past two years, she was assistant head of schools, a position equivalent to principal.

Born in Texas and raised in Bakersfield and in Singapore, Kramer earned a bachelor's in International Relations and Sociology at the University of San Diego in 2016.

After graduation, she enrolled in Loyola Marymount University's PLACE Corps program, an acronym for Partners in Los Angeles Catholic Education. Participants earn a master's degree and teaching credential while teaching full-time at under-resourced L.A. Catholic schools.

"I was thrown into the classroom

Team *Continued on Page 8*

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Team *Continued from Page 6*

... and absolutely fell in love with teaching," she said of her three-year experience at St. John Chrysostom School in Inglewood, where she taught Social Studies and English to sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders. She also served in an administrative role there as vice principal of liturgy.

Kramer earned her master's in Secondary Education in 2018.

From 2019 until her appointment as associate superintendent, Kramer served at Notre Dame Academy in San Diego. Initially, she taught middle-school English Language Arts, Social Studies and Religion classes. She became assistant head of schools in 2021.

Kramer said that Notre Dame Academy is transitioning from a private Catholic school run by the religious sisters of the Institut de L'Union-Chretienne de Saint Chaumond into a parochial school, and it felt like the right time for her to make a transition, too.

She sought a job where she could make an impact, and she found it in the Office for Schools, which oversees 46 elementary schools serving thousands of Catholic families and which works to empower Catholic educators throughout the diocese.

"I wanted to have a role that would allow me to use my God-given gifts and abilities to have a large impact on the San Diego community, and felt like this job really encompassed that," said Kramer, who explained that she and her colleagues at Notre Dame Academy were well-acquainted with the work of the Schools Office, having participated in the many professional development



STUDY SESSION: PK student Aubrie Delbrugge and fourth-grader Rielle Williams find the fun in learning at St. John of the Cross School in Lemon Grove.

opportunities that it makes available.

As associate superintendent, Kramer's area of focus will include professional development, curriculum and Catholic identity.

What is she most looking forward to?

"We have such amazing educators and passionate Catholic leaders in our diocese," said Kramer. "So, connecting them and empowering them to be con-

tinuous, lifelong learners and to help each other, to make sure that we're forming the best future leaders of our Church and our world, is what makes me the most excited about this role."

The Schools Office's former associate superintendents, Matthew Cordes and Dr. Julie Cantillon, left earlier this summer to pursue new opportunities within Catholic education.

Cantillon stepped down on June 2. Since July 1, she has been vice president of academics and advocacy for ADAC, which provides wide-ranging professional development services and support to public school educators.

Cantillon, who had served in the Schools Office since late 2014, described the new job as "a good opportunity to make a bigger impact on more students."

Cordes' last day in the Schools Office was June 30. In August, he will begin his new job as director of admissions at Cathedral Catholic High School.

He said his eight years in the Schools Office represent the longest he has ever remained in one position. And the reason for that, he said, is "I've loved the team that I've worked with." But he felt "it was time to find the next adventure."

Reflecting on what was accomplished during their years in the office, both Cantillon and Cordes mentioned the successful effort to foster collaboration among the diocese's Catholic schools.

Cordes said that, when he arrived in the diocese, the local Catholic school system felt "like the Wild, Wild West, where everyone was kind of working in their own little townships and no one talked in between."

"We got people talking, and we got people working together," he said.

For Cordes, the COVID-19 pandemic was "the big test" for local Catholic schools when it came to collaboration — and there's no doubt that the schools earned high marks.

He said, "It was a joy to see our schools supporting each other, working together, and thriving in ways that other school systems couldn't."

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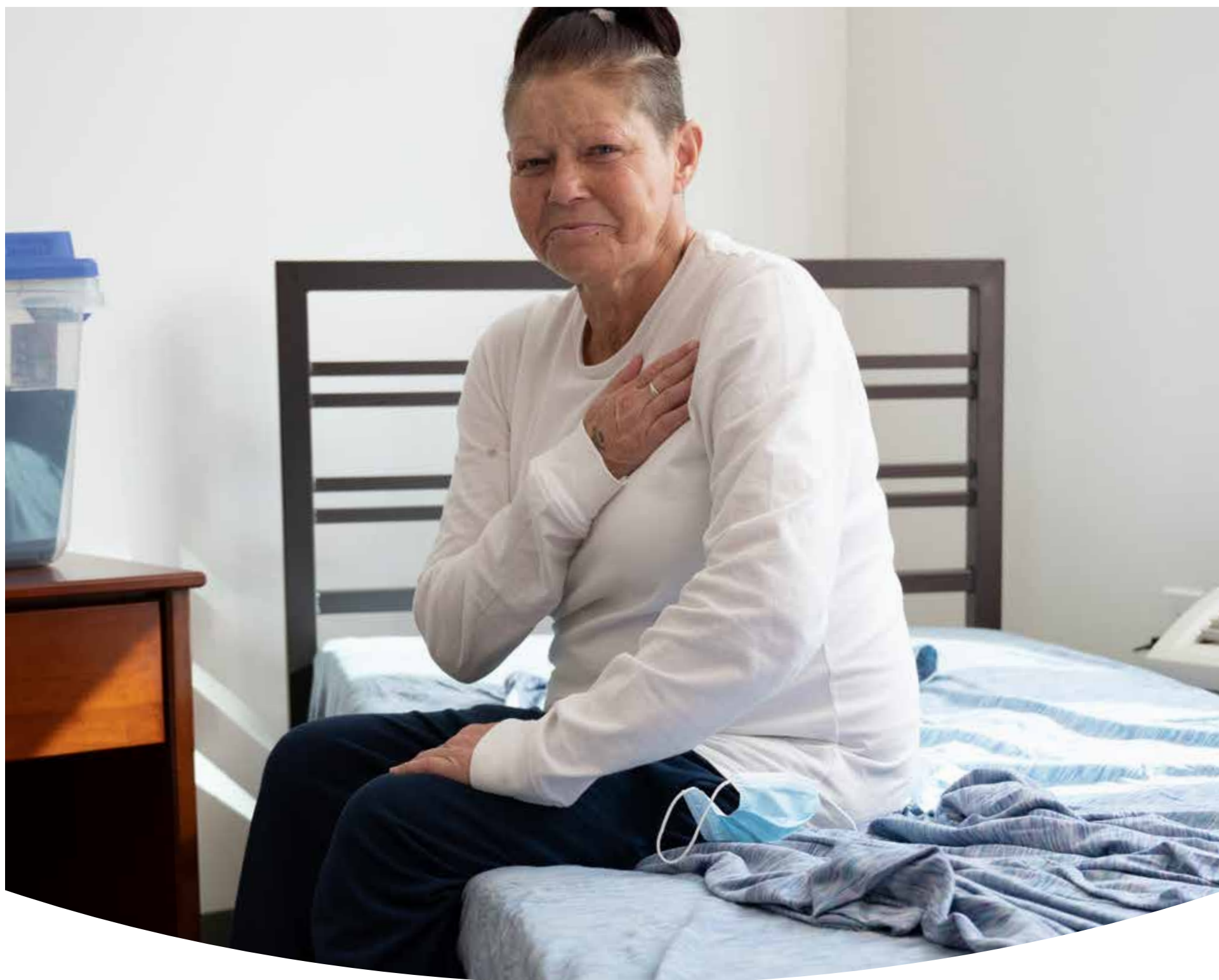
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Father Jeremiah Joseph O'Keefe

By Denis Grasska



OCEANSIDE — More than a century after he left, Father Jeremiah Joseph O'Keefe has returned to Mission San Luis Rey de Francia.

The Franciscan friar's remains were disinterred from a mausoleum vault at Old Mission Santa Barbara's cemetery July 7 and reinterred at Mission San Luis Rey on July 14 during a 30-minute prayer service. His final resting place is beneath the floor of the historic church, left of the altar.

It's not an everyday occurrence, but then again, Father O'Keefe wasn't just any priest: He is known by many as the "rebuilder" of Mission San Luis Rey. Over a period of about two decades, from 1892 to 1912, he oversaw the restoration of the mission church and grounds, which had fallen into disrepair after being abandoned for about half a century.

"If he didn't do that, we would just be a set of ruins," said Franciscan Father Anthony Garibaldi, who serves as guardian of the Franciscan community at Mission San Luis Rey.

Father Garibaldi, who gave a reflection on the life and legacy of Father O'Keefe during the prayer service,

REST IN PEACE: A casket containing the skeletal remains of Father Jeremiah Joseph O'Keefe was placed below the sanctuary floor inside Old Mission San Luis Rey.

told *The Southern Cross* that it was "fitting" that Father O'Keefe be buried at the mission that he restored, "where he belongs."

Also fitting is that the reinterment took place in the same year that Mission San Luis Rey is celebrating its 225th anniversary.

Founded in 1798 by Padre Fermín Francisco de Lasuén, successor to St. Junipero Serra, Mission San Luis Rey was named after St. Louis IX, King of France, who lived during the 13th century.

The Irish-born Father O'Keefe came to Mission San Luis Rey from Mission Santa Barbara in 1892. He served as a liaison between the English-speaking community surrounding Mission San Luis Rey and a small group of Franciscans from Zacatecas, Mexico, who fled persecution in their homeland and received permission to rebuild Mission San Luis Rey to serve as a seminary called the Apostolic College of Our Lady of Zacatecas.

"At that point, the mission had been abandoned for almost five decades. ...

Everything but the church was pretty much destroyed," said Helena Hazleton, museum director at Mission San Luis Rey.

The mission had been secularized by the Mexican government, then used by the American military as a base, and finally abandoned until 1892, when Father O'Keefe arrived.

Hazleton said, "It was because of Father O'Keefe that the mission was able to be rebuilt."

Father O'Keefe himself described the sad state of affairs that he encountered upon arrival at Mission San Luis Rey in an article appearing Jan. 1, 1898, in Oceanside's *Blade* newspaper.

"The houses were unroofed for the tiles and rafters; the beautiful arches were blown down with powder to get down the brick; doors and windows were appropriated; and finally, the bare walls were left standing exposed to all changes of the weather and erosions of storm and rains," he wrote, adding that "there were no roofs on

Rebuilder Continued on Page 11



MEN AT WORK: Franciscan friars work to rebuild Mission San Luis Rey circa 1900.



LEGACY: Father Jeremiah Joseph O'Keefe stands on the steps of Agapito Court at Mission San Luis Rey circa 1900.



San Luis Rey Church on July 14.

Rebuilder *Continued from Page 10*

any part of San Luis Rey except the church and even that was gone in large part.”

According to an article in *The Journal of San Diego History*, O’Keefe’s first order of business was the construction of temporary living quarters for the Mexican Franciscans and the repair of the mission church.

The church was rededicated on May 12, 1893, by Bishop Francisco Mora y Borrell of the Diocese of Monterey-Los Angeles.

Between 1903 and 1912, the focus of the rebuilding effort shifted to the construction of permanent living quarters on the foundations of the Old Mission quadrangle. The rebuilt quadrangle would be between one-fourth and one-third the size of the original, according to *The Journal’s* story.

“What we have today is his restoration,” said Father Garibaldi. “The friars live on the second floor, and the museum and the other mission activities are on the first floor. So, in effect, he brought the mission to where it is today.”

Father O’Keefe left Mission San Luis Rey in 1912 and returned to Mission Santa Barbara, where he died on Aug. 13, 1915.

His tomb was opened on Feb. 27 of this year to determine the condition of his remains, in anticipation of a possible relocation.

“All that was left were bones,” Father Garibaldi said.

Those remains were disinterred July 7 by Danielle Napoli, director of Old Mission San Luis Rey Cemetery, with the support of her husband, Sean, and Gwyn Grimes, executive director of Mission San Luis Rey.



BROTHER IN ARMS: Franciscan Brothers Juan-Jose Jauregui and Martin Sanabria carry the remains of Father Jeremiah Joseph O’Keefe to their final resting place at Mission San Luis Rey.

The trio entered the mausoleum around 6 a.m., closing the door to give themselves privacy, and were able to complete their work before noon. Napoli said they had to ascend scaffolding to reach Father O’Keefe’s vault, which was on the top row of the mausoleum.

The bones were placed in a new casket that Napoli had brought with her. She said the late Franciscan had been buried in his habit and cincture, or rope belt, and a stole. These were removed, although the habit broke into several pieces in the process. A new habit and cincture were placed atop the remains.

“The friars were very adamant about making sure he had a habit with him,” Napoli said.

The casket was sealed, and Napoli and her husband drove it back to Oceanside in their SUV.

Reflecting on her involvement with the transfer of Father O’Keefe’s remains from Mission Santa Barbara to Mission San Luis Rey, Napoli said she “spent many, many months, many sleepless nights making sure that it was done with the absolute, utmost respect and dignity.”

She said, “It was a very humbling experience to be trusted with something that was so incredibly important ... to our Franciscan family here, the fathers and the brothers that we have here at the mission. ... It was an amazing experience that I will treasure forever and be able to share with my grandkids.”

The remnants of Father O’Keefe’s old habit were to be treated for mold and, along with the stole, reinterred in the mausoleum vault at Mission Santa Barbara, said Napoli. The old cincture was taken back to Mission San Luis Rey, where it will be displayed in the mission’s museum.

At Mission San Luis Rey, Father O’Keefe’s skeletal remains were interred on the opposite side of the altar from Franciscan Father Francisco Ibarra, who died at Mission San Luis Rey in 1842, and Franciscan Father José Zalvidea, who died there in 1846. Father Zalvidea was the last resident priest at the mission prior to Father O’Keefe and the friars from Zacatecas, who arrived some 46 years after his death.

Three friars from Zacatecas who were at Mission San Luis Rey during Father O’Keefe’s tenure — Francisco Jesús Álvarez and José Caballero, who both died in 1897, and Pascual Manzano, who died in 1901 — are buried nearby in the Old Mission Cemetery.

Hazleton acknowledged that Father O’Keefe had “found his vocation,” professed his solemn vows, and ministered for many years at Mission Santa Barbara.

“But his legacy is bigger at San Luis Rey,” she said, “because without Father O’Keefe, we would not be the community that we are today.”



PAYING RESPECTS: Franciscan Brother Martin Sanabria, left, and Father Oscar Mendez, right, offered their prayers as Father Jeremiah Joseph O’Keefe was reinterred inside Old Mission San Luis Rey Church.

Retiring 'Irish Missionary' Had Great Impact

By Denis Grasska



Within the span of two weeks, Father Nicholas Clavin

marked two major milestones: the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination and the beginning of his retirement from active ministry.

What does it mean to him to know that he has been a priest for more for a half-century?

"Oh, gracious me," the 72-year-old replied in his thick Irish brogue, "I always am of the opinion (that) to do anything for 50 years is quite an achievement — in other words, to stay the course. I thank God for my family and for the good health to have been able to survive and to serve."

Born in Rahan, County Offaly, Ireland, Father Clavin grew up in a Mass-going family in which "priesthood was held in the highest esteem."

There were other priests in the family, including a great-uncle and an uncle. As a child, he would see photos of "all those high-power priests" hanging as "kind of a rogue's gallery" on the wall of the family home and would wonder, "How will I ever get up on that wall?"

By about age 16, Father Clavin knew that he wanted to enter the seminary.

In 1966, he entered All Hallows College. He was ordained on June 17, 1973, in Drumcondra as a priest for the Diocese of San Diego.

Father Clavin describes himself



ON MISSION: Father Nicholas Clavin left his native Ireland to minister in the Diocese of San Diego, where he served for 50 years until his recent retirement.

as part of "a long tradition of Irish missionary priests" that his seminary sent to parts of the world with sizeable Irish immigrant populations. He followed in the footsteps of his uncle, Msgr. Billy Clavin, and a cousin, Father Donal Walsh, both of whom were already ministering in San Diego when he arrived.

From 1974 to 1984, Father Clavin served as associate pastor at a succession of parishes, including Sacred Heart Parish, San Diego; St. Kieran Parish, El Cajon; and St. Mary Parish, Escondido.

He served as director of the diocesan Office for Clergy and as a faculty

member at St. Francis Seminary between 1984 and 1988.

Father Clavin became a pastor for the first time at Holy Trinity Parish in El Cajon, where he served from 1988 to 1989. Though not a long assignment, it was challenging and educational.

"We didn't have a nickel to rattle on a tombstone. We were poor and in debt," said Father Clavin, who worked to build community at the parish.

"I was challenged to discern the gifts because that's where all the gifts were: They were out in the pews and not in the pulpit," he said, sharing that, through their efforts, the parish almost tripled its offertory collection.

Father Clavin subsequently served as pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Mission Hills, beginning in 1993, and of St. Gregory the Great Parish in Scripps Ranch, from 2005 until his retirement in July of this year.

At St. Gregory the Great, he faced the challenge of overseeing the founding of the parish school, which opened and welcomed its first students in 2009.

"There wasn't even a road into the place when I went there," he recalled.

"I guess the key to it all ... was that Christ was the reason for a Catholic school," he said. "So, in that sense, we really felt that we were doing God's work, and we were God's workers, and the hand of God was on us."

In retirement, Father Clavin hopes to continue being of service by celebrating Sunday Masses "wherever I'm needed."

What advice does Father Clavin have for younger men who feel they might have a calling to the priesthood?

"I guess the first thing I would say is, 'Pursue it. Don't just think about it.' ... It's not the end of the world if you find out it's not the life for you. But at least you will have raised the questions and (seen) where God is guiding your life."

He recalled the words of a spiritual director at his seminary, who would often remind the seminarians that "the world needs good laymen."

"The world needs good laymen," concurred Father Clavin, "but the world also needs vocations to help the Church along the way."



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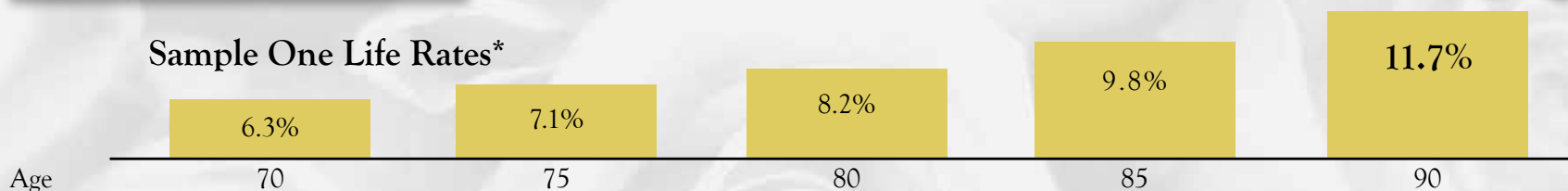
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'My Biggest Joy Has Been Those I've Served'

By Denis Grasska



Msgr. Dennis Mikulanis still remembers celebrating his first Masses.

He was only 4 years old at the time. His chalice was a regular household glass. Spools stood in for candles. His father lent him a missal and constructed a "tabernacle" for him.

"I started playing church, and it just continued from there," recalled Msgr. Mikulanis, 72, who retired from active ministry in early July after 46 years as a priest.

"Ever since I was a little boy, all I've wanted to be was a priest," said Msgr. Mikulanis, who noted that this wasn't an uncommon aspiration among his peer group.

He said the Catholic culture of the 1950s was such that "every boy wanted to be a priest and every girl wanted to be a nun," even if "very few of us made it."

Born and raised in San Diego, Msgr. Mikulanis was baptized at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish and made his first confession and first Communion at St. Rita's, before his family moved to what he considers his "home parish": St. Therese Parish in Del Cerro.

A product of Catholic education, he attended St. Rita's School, St. Therese Academy and the University of San Diego High School, before beginning priestly formation at St. Francis Seminary, located on the University of San Diego campus.

He was ordained to the priesthood



JOYFUL MOMENTS: Msgr. Dennis Mikulanis experienced joy in ministering to the people, like this married couple, during his 46 years of active ministry.

on June 25, 1977. Following assignments as associate pastor of Blessed Sacrament, St. Mary Magdalene and St. Brigid parishes, he was appointed pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in early 1988. He served there until 1992, when he began a decade-long assignment as pastor of St. Charles Parish in Imperial Beach. Made a monsignor in 1998, he pastored San Rafael Parish in Rancho Bernardo from 2002 until his retirement.

"I would say my biggest joy as a priest really has been the people I've served," said Msgr. Mikulanis.

"They've given me life and inspired me as much as I hope that the Holy Spirit, working through me, has inspired some of them."

In conjunction with his pastoral assignments, Msgr. Mikulanis has held various diocesan level posts, most notably in the area of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

Officially involved in ecumenical work since the early 1980s, he held the title of Vicar for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs from December of 1990 until his retirement. But his interest in the subject actually goes

back much further.

He said, "It's always been a fascination for me and an understanding of, 'Why can't we all be one, as Jesus asked us to?'"

As vicar he worked to foster collaboration between Catholic and non-Catholic Christian communities and to improve relations with the Jewish and Muslim communities.

Since early 2009, Msgr. Mikulanis also has served as director of Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery and Mausoleum. In that capacity, he has personally stepped in whenever a grieving family at the cemetery didn't already have a parish priest to preside over a deceased loved one's funeral or graveside service.

"So many of these people are unchurched or have not been to church in a long time, and the way they're treated at the death of a loved one is critical," he explained. "And so, I always just try to bring that patient love of Jesus to them at the funeral services."

How does Msgr. Mikulanis plan to spend his retirement?

For one thing, he said, brother priests have already started asking him to celebrate Masses at their parishes.

"I also joke with people that, if I'm not saying Mass ... on a weekend, I'll go to church somewhere and sit in the back of the church and complain about the air-conditioning, the sound system, and the use of incense at Mass."



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What We Can Learn from the Titan Implosion

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Some news stories become symbols of the times we live in.

The implosion of the submersible Titan is one of those signs.

God reminds us in the Gospels to be attentive to the signs of the times: “When you see a cloud rising in the West, you say immediately that it is going to rain — and so it does; and when you notice that the wind is blowing from the South, you say that it is going to be hot — and so it is. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; why do you not know how to interpret the present time?” (Luke 12:54-56).

An implosion occurs when the exterior pressure of an object is greater than its interior one, leading to the interior’s collapse. That is precisely how Titan was destroyed.

Bombarded by news stories about natural catastrophes, wildfires, the melting of the polar caps, fish die-offs, war, large-scale human migration,

Columnist

Ricardo Márquez



abuses by repressive regimes, mass shootings that kill students and others regularly ... our external emotional pressure is highly elevated. We all feel it. As I see it, all of this contributes to an internal emotional collapse that manifests itself in anxiety, depression and other mental health challenges.

In 2021, there were an estimated 57.8 million adults aged 18 or older in the United States with a mental illness, 22.8% of all adults, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. The impact of this illness ranged from no impairment to mild, moderate or even severe.

In my view, external emotional pressures have contributed to an implosion in our psyches, resulting in serious mental illness.

Private mental health services are so costly that they are beyond the means of most families, particularly low-income ones. Public services do what they can, but can’t meet demand.

The mental health system, generally speaking, offers an immediate response to a person’s crisis, usually with medication, but treatment and true healing take time.

When thinking about this reality, a phrase comes to mind from Frederick Douglass: “It’s easier to build strong children, than repair broken men.”

Behind this emotional implosion, there is a deep pain that can’t be expressed. Those affected feel like they can’t breathe; they scream, but no one hears them. All too frequently, they fill this interior vacuum with the exterior fire from drugs.

How can we create an interior strength to counteract the exterior pressure?

Paradoxically, it is in silence where recovery can begin. Silence is the entryway to our interior world and the

understanding of what surrounds us. In silence, we can focus on ourselves and become aware of what is affecting us emotionally, of what is “inflaming” our central nervous system. To be silent brings calmness, like a serenade to ourselves, and allows us to recognize what destabilizes, what moves us.

From a compassionate silence, we can accept the truth of what we are and what we need. In silence, we can listen to the truth of our conscience, to the voice that drives us, to the Spirit of God in which we live. From silence, hope can be reborn, opening space for action, for healing and for a restoration of life. From silence, we can build our strength, our internal pressure, to prevent an implosion.

“Be still and know that I am God” (Psalms 46:10). Let’s slow down, put down our screens, stop arrogantly fighting, and let’s be still and enjoy the love that sustains us.

Ricardo Márquez can be reached at marquez_muskus@yahoo.com.

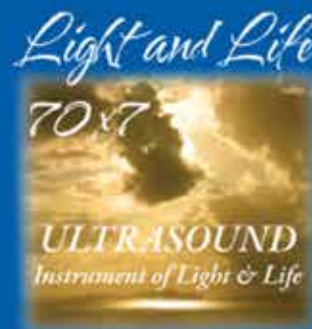
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'Angel of Death Row' and Partner Change Lives

The Southern Cross



Anne Steinemann grew up in the Clairemont neighborhood of San Diego and is now a university Engineering professor in Australia. Jimmy Kelley grew up in Yucca Valley and has been on death row at San Quentin State Prison for 13 years.

They have been corresponding and talking on the phone every week for the past 10 years, as part of the pen pal program organized by the diocese's Office for Life, Peace and Justice.

Their friendship has grown to a larger ministry within the prison walls. Kelley lets her know of inmates on death row who might need food or clothing. She arranges for packages to be sent to them from her home in Townsville, a city on Australia's northeastern coast.

Kelley, who is 55 years old, explained that the packages offer an invaluable opportunity.

"When I come along, and offer someone in need a package, they wonder, 'What's the catch? What do you want out of it?' and I say, 'I don't want anything; this is from God through Anne. She wants you to know that you are loved, and that you are not forgotten,'" he recalled in one of their conversations. "It blows them away. And that gives me an opportunity to



witness. I have someone who is more receptive."

He talks with each man about the love of God and Jesus Christ, as well as his own journey of faith and conversion.

She said that Kelley is able to connect with these men.

"He has street credibility," she said. "He was the toughest of the tough, and he got off that path of violence and onto the path of peace."

Kelley added, "I wish you could see how Anne has touched these men and warmed their hearts, even the hardest men."

This ministry has borne fruit.

"I have guys that keep coming back to talk with me about God," he said. "They hear the Gospel message, it ignites their faith, and they yearn for more. They thirst for the knowledge

of God. And they want to know how to get right with God."

He said he sees these men talking with other men about God.

"We pray together," he said. "I have started a Bible study among the men. Even men who said they didn't believe in God have started to pray."

He said the men call Steinemann the "angel of death row."

"They are really touched by her unconditional love for everyone, and how she loves us all, equally, without any barriers."

Steinemann said she's really the beneficiary of this ministry.

"I'm honored and humbled, and blessed by these men," she said. "They are children of God; they are my brothers. I see their beautiful souls."

"What greater gift than to think that you have helped someone, brought God's love to them, and made them happy, even in some small way?" she said.

"And it's so easy. Just a few encouraging words, or a candy bar, can give someone hope and make them feel loved."

She said that she has learned much from Kelley and the other inmates.

"I'm always amazed how Jimmy gets through each day. He is a great testimony to faith."

She urges people to get involved in ministry programs at the diocese, such as prison and jail ministry, restorative justice, and prisoner re-entry.

"Be a light in their world. Do whatever you feel called to do. You can change someone's life — and your life — for the better."

She recalled the saying, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind."

"I would like to think that 'an outstretched hand for an eye makes the whole world kind' — and able to see the power of compassion, the message of Jesus Christ in action, and the goodness of God."

Editor's Note: Anne Steinemann wrote this story in collaboration with Jimmy Kelley, an inmate at San Quentin State Prison, who spoke to her by phone.

For information on the pen-pal program, email Alyssa Castillo at alyssa@corpuschristicatholic.org.



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Community Offers Filipino Culture Immersion Camp

The Southern Cross



The diocese's Catholic Filipino community is hosting a Filipino Culture Immersion Camp Aug. 9 to 11, at Good Shepherd Parish.

The camp is open to children from kindergarten to high school age. Participants will be immersed in the Filipino culture and traditions, including language, song, arts and crafts, folk dancing and faith expressions.

Many Filipino families include parents and grandparents who are immigrants from the Philippines. The camp's designer, Juanita Santos Nacu, PhD, explained that the camp gives participants the opportunity to experience their family's culture.

"The camp is one of the best ways for children to know who they are culturally," she said.

And since the camp includes expressions of Filipino faith, she sees it as "Evangelizing through culture."

The camp began in 2006 and has been held every other year, except during the COVID-19 pandemic. It's been held at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Rancho Peñasquitos until this year.

Nacu said 25 youngsters participated in the inaugural camp, held for one day. Participation had grown to 150 by 2022.

For this year's camp, the hours are Aug. 9 and 10 from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Aug. 11 from 8:30 a.m. to noon, then return at 4 p.m. for a family Rosary, soup potluck and children's performances.

This year's camp is presented by Good Shepherd Parish and supported by the Diocesan Commission for Filipino Catholics.

The cost to attend is \$65 per person.

To register online visit
goodshepherdparish.net/fcic.



ADORATION: Three worshippers attend "Stay With Me: An Evening of Adoration, Praise, and Healing" at the National Black Catholic Congress XIII Gathering in Oxon Hill, Md. The six African American candidates for canonization are in the background.

Leaders Attend Black Catholic Congress

The Southern Cross



Four leaders of the diocese's African American Catholic community attended the National Black Catholic Congress XIII Gathering in Maryland.

The congress is held every five years to develop a pastoral plan and to celebrate the community's faith and culture.

The San Diego delegation was made up of Rick Stewart, chair of the Diocesan Commission for African American Catholics, Deacons Marvin Threatt and Robert Booth, Selma Johnson, and Charlotte Fajardo, from the diocese's Office for Ethnic and Intercultural Communities.

The 13th congress, which had as a theme "Write the Vision: A Prophetic Call to Thrive," was held July 20 to 23 at the Gaylord National Resort and

Convention Center in Maryland. The event had adult and youth tracks and included plenary and breakout sessions. Cardinal Wilton Gregory, from Washington, D.C., delivered the keynote address.

The gathering was organized by the National Black Catholic Congress, which represents African American Catholics and their affiliated organizations.

Johnson is a long-time leader of the African American Catholic community in San Diego. She attended the congress four or five times in the 1970s and 1980s, sometimes taking her niece, nephew and son to them.

"I was amazed at all the black priests, religious and people that were there at one time," she recalled in a phone interview days before leaving for this year's congress. "You didn't see that many in those days."

She wanted to go to this year's conference to add her voice to the conversations about the future of the black Catholic community. "If we don't speak up now, when are we going to speak?"

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*

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Caring for One Another When the Heat Is On

By Kyra Martin-Spencer



As hot days and heat waves become more frequent and intense in the San Diego and Imperial Valley region and across the globe, it is necessary to examine the causes and effects of extreme heat and, most importantly, our response.

What Is Extreme Heat?

Extreme heat is defined as “temperatures that are much hotter and/or humid than average for a particular location and the time of year.” Record-setting heat in the past month has brought more awareness to this relevant issue. Earth experienced its hottest month ever on record in July. Scientists predict there is a high chance that 2023 will be the warmest year on record. Experts warn that unless mindful action is taken, the amount of heat days will increase and pose a threat, especially to areas without sufficient infrastructure.

Global warming is a result of broader climate change and changing weather patterns. Shifts in climate can be natural, but human activity has drastically altered the course of the Earth’s climate since the onset of the industrial era. Actions such as burning fossil fuels, manufacturing, and deforestation produce heat-trapping gases, a main driver of climate change. The average global surface temperature has risen about 2 degrees Fahrenheit since 1880, which may not seem like a lot, but 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit (1.5 degrees Celsius) is the agreed-upon upper limit of average global temperature increase before irreversible damage results.

In the San Diego area specifically, there are three distinct climate zones: coastal, inland and desert. These zones have markedly different average temperatures and weather patterns, which makes it difficult to implement a “one size fits all” extreme heat response. Recognizing and understanding the definition of extreme heat and its causes allow for a closer examination of its effects.

Effects of Extreme Heat

Extreme heat correlates to more drought, higher chance of wildfire, worse air quality, agricultural degradation, and negative impacts on human health.

According to San Diego County’s 2022 Excessive Heat Report, “prolonged hot weather can cause dehydration and increase the body’s core temperature, making it difficult for the body to function normally.” Heat-related illnesses include heat stress, heat stroke, cardiovascular/respiratory complications, and kidney disease. People with high risk factors for health complications due to heat are the elderly, young children, people with chronic health conditions, outdoor workers, and people experiencing homelessness.

How to Respond

In extreme heat events, it is important to take care of yourself and your loved ones. Safety measures include hydrating, taking cold showers, wearing light clothing, staying in shade or air conditioning, avoiding physical exertion, and checking on people at high risk.



In situations such as these, there should be additional concern for the vulnerable. Catholic Social Teaching calls people of faith to always consider the needs of those in poverty. They are less likely to have air conditioning and access to sufficient medical care. Caring for the earth includes caring for the poor. One response is the fan distribution and cooling zone programs of San Diego County, which increase access to preventative measures against heat-related illness. While these immediate responses are vital, long-term solutions to address the root problems must also be pursued.

Climate change is a complex topic that may seem daunting, but even individuals can make an impact,

and as Catholics, we are called to do so. Some ways to combat climate change include transitioning to renewable energy use, leaving a portion of your yard “wild” to protect biodiversity, eating sustainably, recycling/composting, purchasing fair trade items, and voting for policies that care for the environment. Participating in Care for Creation initiatives is a great way to work for climate justice. For ideas and inspiration, explore Laudato Si’ Action Plans on the Laudato Si’ Action Platform (laudatosiactionplatform.org) and consider creating one for your parish or family. Contact the diocesan Creation Care office at cslentz@sdccatholic.org to get started.

Extreme heat is a threat to many facets of life, and a response rooted in solidarity is necessary to ensure health and safety. Our magnificent Earth is a gift from God, and humanity has not done the best job of taking care of it. In order for the Earth to take care of us, we must make every effort to protect and restore our beautiful common home.

Creation Care Director Receives Award

Christina Bagaglio Slentz is among the winners of the Catholic Climate Covenant’s first U.S. Laudato Si’ Champion Awards.

The awards were presented July 27 during a Zoom session that also served as the capstone to the 2023 “Laudato Si’ and the U.S. Catholic Church” conference, co-sponsored by the Catholic Climate Covenant and Creighton University.

Bagaglio Slentz, a winner in the Diocese category, recently celebrated her one-year anniversary in the Diocese of San Diego’s Office for Life, Peace and Justice, where she serves as associate director for creation care.

sdccatholic.org/creation


Send pictures of your family or parish illustrating Care for Creation to cslentz@sdccatholic.org.

We will post them on our Facebook and Instagram accounts.



Vacation Bible School Reaches for Stars

By Sharon Burns

 EL CENTRO — Vacation Bible School proved to be an out-of-this-world experience for 108 children from Our Lady of the Valley Parish.

The five-day event, designed for children in the first through sixth grades, was held July 9 to 13 in the parish center at St. Mary's Church.

Our Lady of the Valley is the only Catholic parish in the Imperial Valley to hold Vacation Bible School.

Each participating child and volunteer received a T-shirt featuring this year's space-exploration theme, "Stellar," and the week provided a unique opportunity for children to engage in faith-based learning through a variety of fun activities.

Participants were assigned to a "crew," led by a leader and assistant. After learning a theme song, each crew was "cleared to blast off" to its first activity, rotating out after about 30 minutes. Activities included games, interactive Bible stories, dancing and crafts.

Eddie Madueño, director of religious education at the school, said that First Christian Church in El Centro donated Vacation Bible School materials to Our Lady of the Valley after holding its own program, June 19 to 25.

"We have an astronaut out there, a moon vehicle, and a Styrofoam rocket ship," he said.

Annika Mitosinka and Marisa Perez, teen volunteers for this year's Vacation



ALL SMILES: Vacation Bible School offered faith-based learning through a variety of fun activities, July 9 to 13, at Our Lady of the Valley Parish.

Bible School, taught the children dance routines for the various songs they would perform for their parents.

"We're trying to get the kids more involved, and make them want to come back," Perez said.

Both teens find music to be conducive to prayer. Perez said it helps keep her focused during Eucharistic adoration.

Lupita Moreno Perez, who served as station leader for the Bible stories, has been volunteering with Vacation Bible School for nine years, since her own children were participants.

She shared that the Bible story told on the first day of this summer's program was about the birth of Jesus

and how His light shines through the darkness.

Children were welcomed into a dark room where volunteer actors told the story of Jesus' birth. As the story progressed, the room got brighter until the children were instructed to turn on their light-up candles. When they did, the lights came on, and Lupita Perez explained that telling others about Jesus has just that effect: bringing more light into the world.

Lupita Perez considers the Bible stories to be the most important part of Vacation Bible School.

"Children take what they learn here and apply it to life," she said, express-

ing hope that they recognize that these are true stories that volunteers "make come to life."

Madueño praised the many volunteers who helped put Vacation Bible School together.

This is its 10th year on the campus of St. Mary's Parish, which along with Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in El Centro comprises Our Lady of the Valley Parish.

When the call went out for volunteers, there was no shortage of interest, he said. He added that he would like to reduce the cost for school registration, which was \$40 per child this summer, or make it completely free.



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News Briefs

Blessed Sacrament Chapel Dedicated at COLFS

ESCONDIDO — Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano dedicated and celebrated Mass inside a new Blessed Sacrament chapel July 5 at Culture of Life Family Services (COLFS) in Escondido.

COLFS provides client counseling, ultrasounds, medical care and follow-up support for women and families in need, including referrals for housing and adoption. It is located at 362 W. Mission Ave., Escondido 92025.

For information, visit colfscclinic.org.

National Summit Focused on Catholic Business Education

The University of San Diego welcomed representatives from dozens of Catholic and Jesuit universities, as well as Catholic thought leaders, for an annual conference focused on advancing the Catholic approach to business education.

The 26th annual Colleagues in Jesuit Business Education Meeting was held on-campus July 13 to 15 and featured panels with special guests, research presentations and group discussions. Keynote speakers included theologian Father James Heft, S.M., and Father Robert Spitzer, S.J., who has spoken widely on the compatibility of faith and science.

Auxiliary Bishops Named for L.A.

WASHINGTON — Pope Francis has appointed Msgr. Albert M. Bahhuth, Father Matthew Elshoff, OFM, Cap., Father Brian Nunes, and Father Slawomir S. Szkredka as auxiliary bishops of Los Angeles.

The appointments were publicized in Washington, D.C., on July 18 by Cardinal-designate Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

'Witness to Love' Founders to Lead Trainings

Ryan and Mary-Rose Verret, founders of the marriage preparation program Witness to Love, are coming to Southern California to lead training sessions on the program.

A choice of two training sessions is available: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Friday, Aug. 4, at St. Martin of Tours Parish in La Mesa, or 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 5, at St. Edward the Confessor Parish in Dana Point, Calif. The latter is offered in collaboration with the Diocese of Orange.

There is no cost to attend, and lunch will be included.

For information, email jprust@sdcatholic.org or call (858) 490-8256.

Catechists to Attend 'Faith & Science' Training

All catechists and Catholic school teachers who teach middle school are required to attend the diocese's third annual Faith & Science Training with Jesuit Father Robert Spitzer.

Father Spitzer developed Credible Catholic's Faith & Science Curriculum, which includes "seven essential modules" intended to demonstrate to middle school and high school students that faith and science are not incompatible.

The upcoming training, which will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Friday, Aug. 11, at St. Pius X Catholic Church and School in Chula Vista, will focus on the two modules currently taught in the San Diego Diocese: "Evidence for God's Existence from Science" (Module 2) and "True Happiness" (Module 6).

The event is free, but registration is required. Call (858) 490-8232.

Mass to Be Celebrated for Foster Care Awareness

OCEANSIDE — All foster and adoptive families and those interested in learning more about foster care are invited to a Foster Care and Adoption Awareness Mass at 5 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 12, at St. Thomas More Parish in Oceanside.

After Mass, there will be fellowship over pizza and an opportunity to learn more about foster care.

For information, email GloryH@stmoside.org or jperegoy@sdcatholic.org.

Cardinal to Bless Shrine at Resurrection Parish

ESCONDIDO — Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will visit Resurrection Parish on Thursday, Aug. 17, to bless a new shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Festivities will begin at 5:30 p.m., with Aztec dancers. This will be followed by a 6 p.m. Mass celebrated by Cardinal McElroy. At 6:30 p.m., the cardinal will bless the shrine. A potluck on the plaza, featuring live music, will follow the blessing.

For information, call (760) 747-2322.

Open House to Shine Light on Parish Ministries

EL CAJON — Our Lady of Grace Parish is hosting its annual open house on Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 26 and 27. Various parish ministries will share about themselves.

The open house will take place in the parish hall, after each of the weekend Masses. There will be ice cream, coffee and donuts after the Sunday morning Masses, and wine and cheese after the Saturday and Sunday evening Masses.

For information, call (619) 469-0133.

Ladies Guild Holding Luncheon, Arts & Crafts Sale

The Father Joe's Villages Ladies Guild will host two upcoming events.

There will be a membership luncheon from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Monday, Sept. 11; registration is required by Friday, Sept. 1. The group's annual craft and bake sale will be held from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Monday, Oct. 9. Both events will be at St. Gregory the Great Parish in Scripps Ranch.

For information, call (619) 733-7410 or email margie.r.mills@gmail.com.

Chaldean Festival to Be Held Sept. 16-17

EL CAJON — The Knights of Columbus Mar Toma Council #10981 will host the 11th Annual Chaldean American Festival during the Sept. 16-17 weekend.

It will take place from 4 to 10 p.m. at Hillsdale Middle School, located at 1301 Brabham St. in El Cajon.

The two days of fun will include carnival games, rides, music, dancing, raffles and authentic Chaldean food.

Admission is \$5, and the festival is open to all ages. All proceeds will help fund future projects at the church.

Ignatian Volunteer Corps Seeking Applicants

The Ignatian Volunteer Corps welcomes applicants for its 2023-2024 program year, which begins in September.

The nonprofit provides retired and semi-retired individuals (age 50 and older) with opportunities to serve the poor and marginalized and to engage in a spiritual program in community.

See the list of open placements at: ivcusa.org/ivc-offices/welcome-to-ivc-san-diego/service-sites.

For information, call (858) 822-9814 or email cgaughan@ivcusa.org.

Priest Assignments

The following assignments have been announced by the Office of the Cardinal, effective July 1:

With the permission of his superior, **Father Salvador Mejia** has been appointed as parochial vicar of Mission San Luis Rey, effective July 1.

With the permission of his superior, **Father Rigoberto Olivares Mejia** has been appointed as parochial vicar of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Chula Vista, effective Aug. 1.

With the permission of Bishop Ronald Hicks of the Diocese of Joliet, **Father John Phan** has been appointed parochial vicar of Good Shepherd Parish, effective July 1.

Working for the Church

Looking for a job where you can put your faith into action?

There are many employment opportunities available at the diocesan Pastoral Center, local parishes and Catholic schools, and other Catholic organizations.

For a list of open positions, visit sdcatholic.org/human-resources/employment.

'Southern Cross,' USD Among Media Award Winners

BALTIMORE — *The Southern Cross* and the University of San Diego were among the winners at the 2023 Catholic Media Conference, which was held June 6 to 9 in Baltimore.



In the national journalism competition's Newspaper division, *The Southern Cross* took third place in the "Best Print Special Supplement — One-Time Special Issue" category for "The Road to Cardinal," a 40-page bilingual supplement to the August 2022 issue. It reflected on then Cardinal-designate Robert W. McElroy's seven years as bishop of San Diego in anticipation of his elevation to the College of Cardinals.

The contest judges described the supplement as "a joy to read and savor."

The University of San Diego received three awards in the Student Journalism Awards division, including a second place in "Best Publication," a second place in "Best Use of Multimedia for Storytelling," and an honorable mention in "Best Video — Single Episode."

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?

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George at La Posada

Dear Friends and Family of Catholic Charities:

We meet many men and women at our shelters, and everyone has a unique story about what led them to become unhoused. All our clients have stories of unforeseen circumstances and trauma that have fundamentally impacted them. It is astonishing to hear what they are working to overcome, their dedication and perseverance to change their lives, and their commitment to better their situation.

George is a man who is currently staying at La Posada. As he shared his story, our team learned of the catastrophic tragedy that changed the trajectory of his life forever.

“I showed up like a drowned rat to La Posada, and the first thing the staff said to me was, let’s get you a hot shower and some clean clothes before we talk,” George said.

At La Posada, as well as at all the shelters operated by Catholic Charities, our design is trauma-informed care. Trauma-informed care is a practice that promotes a culture of safety, empowerment, and healing. It is an approach that embraces an understanding of trauma at every step of service delivery. This model requires a compassionate and understanding attitude in order to address the intersecting effects that trauma can have on people’s lives. Catholic Charities believes a trauma-informed perspective creates the opportunity for individuals to overcome the barriers that have led them to become unhoused.

Our team understands that individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual. Trauma can be physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

This type of design was critical when working with George and providing a safe space for him to share his story of losing his daughter a year ago in a horrific accident. On August 31, 2021, while participating in a routine Navy training exercise, a helicopter with 6 souls aboard had a mechanical malfunction when it landed on the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier. The helicopter rotated, and when one of the rotors came in contact with the flight deck, the helicopter slid off the edge of the aircraft carrier and plunged 500 ft down into the ocean, ending the lives of all those on board, including George’s daughter Sarah.

“The death of a child, I would not wish that on nobody. That destroyed me for over a year; I was not right, it was hard for me to concentrate on anything, but I had to find things to do to keep my mind off of it,” George said.

As a father myself, when I met George at La Posada, I had a moment where I completely understood his situation and how I could easily be him if faced with the same circumstance. For a parent to outlive a child is against everything we believe and understand. As we take on our roles in their lives, to provide for them, to keep them safe, and help mold them into men and women, it doesn’t matter what age our children are; as parents, we always want to protect them. I admire George’s strength and his ability to take life one day at a time. George’s new mission is to continue to share Sarah’s story to keep her with him and share the sacrifice she made joining the Navy at a young age to protect our country and losing her life that fateful Tuesday morning.

Last year, La Posada served 244 unhoused men and farmworkers, providing 110,653 supportive services. It is through our efforts that we work daily with the unhoused men to help them on their journey to stability. Catholic Charities, in collaboration with the County of San Diego and the City of Carlsbad, are working to expand the shelter to include unhoused women and children. Unfortunately, the need to support unhoused individuals in San Diego is growing; last year in San Diego, the Regional Task Force on the Homeless reported an 89% spike in newly homeless families. Catholic Charities is doing all we can to help assist those individuals on their journey to become housed and stable.

We need your help; by sharing your time, talent, and treasure, Catholic Charities is able to sustain all the programs and services we provide. All donations made to Catholic Charities are critical in sustaining our services, and 100% of what is donated goes toward programs and services for the most vulnerable. Please put your faith into action and help us to do more.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Appaswamy V.P." with a flourish.

Appaswamy “Vino” Pajanor
Chief Executive Officer

George holding a special dog tag that he wears every day to keep Sarah close to his heart.



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