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GRATITUDE: Principal Hernán Valdivia of St. Patrick School in North Park is grateful that three alumni — from left, William Fleming, Leiana Lepule and Deziree Madachy — have returned as teachers.



Synod Dialogues

Thousands across the diocese participate in sessions focused on the Eucharist. **Page 2**



Birth of Tradition

Some 800 years ago, St. Francis of Assisi developed a Nativity scene accessible to all. **Pages 4-5**



New Papal Plea

Holy Father urges individuals and groups to work together to confront climate crisis. **Page 12**



Procession and Mass

Page 16

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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 96 parishes and 14 missions, 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.



'People Shared From the Heart'

By Denis Grasska



In small-group dialogues at parishes and schools across the Diocese of San

Diego, Catholics are opening up and sharing how much the Eucharist means to them.

These gatherings, which started in early October and will conclude in early November, represent a continuation of a worldwide consultation, called a synod. Pope Francis called for this consultation to encourage all faithful to listen to one another and develop pathways to address modern challenges, working together to renew the Church.

In fact, the Synod on Synodality, held in October at the Vatican, examined the results of the initial small-group sessions held in the spring of 2022.

For this current round of dialogues at the diocese, Cardinal Robert W. McElroy has sought to use the process employed last year at 1,100 synod sessions as a way to engage local Catholics in the ongoing National Eucharistic Revival. The revival is a three-year initiative of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to deepen understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist.

The diocese has asked all 98 of its parishes, the three diocesan high schools, and the middle-school grades at its 42 elementary schools to host dialogues. The sessions began with a brief video message. Then, participants broke into small groups of about six to eight people. Seated in a circle of chairs, they engaged in a confidential dialogue guided by three questions about the Eucharist.

What has the experience been like?

"Oh, it was wonderful," said Lisa Mersereau, 60, after an Oct. 2 session at Mission San Diego de Alcalá Parish.

"People shared from the heart," said Mersereau, who is an extraordinary



INSPIRED: Each synod session begins with a prayer, signaling that participants are entering a sacred space. The Church of the Resurrection held one of its sessions on Oct. 15 in the parish hall.

Latest News

Please visit

thesoutherncross.org for the latest information about the historic Synod on Synodality, which concluded at the Vatican on Oct. 29. Cardinal Robert W. McElroy served as one of the synod's 365 voting members.

minister of Holy Communion. "There was crying, there was laughing, there (were) awe-inspiring stories from the really learned people that were in my group. And so, I was very glad I came."

Max Sonnier, 27, attended the same session.

"I was curious about the direction of discussion that was going on in the synod and, as someone who converted to Catholicism recently ... I was curious where the laypeople's minds were at with the synod. That's what drew me in," said Sonnier, who became Catholic last Easter.

He expressed gratitude for having the opportunity to meet "a lot of fabulous people" and to engage in conversations where "a lot of intimate, personal experiences" were shared.

Mission San Diego held its synod sessions on Oct. 2, 4 and 16, and its

bulletin promises a "special bonus session" on Nov. 6.

At St. Michael Parish in Poway, parishioners had three opportunities to attend a synod dialogue session — in the evening on Oct. 2 and Oct. 4 and in the morning on Oct. 3.

Participants shared their experiences after the morning session.

Patrick J. Murphy, 64, reflected on the importance of the Eucharist.

"It is the way in which you connect with Jesus Christ, not just once a week, but as many times as you can," explained Murphy, a St. Michael's parishioner for more than 30 years. "We think it keeps us grounded in a very chaotic world and, without it, I would think that we wouldn't be as happy as we are."

Murphy found the dialogue with his fellow parishioners to be "enlightening."

"I think a lot of the people in my group, we all share similar loves and yet similar frustrations with the Church," he said.

Murphy noted that within his group were parishioners whose entire families still attend Mass weekly as well as those with family members who have become "CEOs," or those who attend Mass on Christmas and Easter only.

"What I found as the common theme was: We really want to get our youth back to the Church ... because they're the future," he said.

Kim Collins, 61, had some misgivings at the start of the small-group dialogues Oct. 3 at St. Michael's. She was initially disappointed to learn that the discussion would be based on prepared questions and, when the first one was posed, she didn't feel like she had an answer.

But these feelings subsided.

"I think the questions were so profound and the people were so open



FORMED: Participants reflected on the Eucharist on Oct. 2 at a synod dialogue at Mission San Diego de Alcalá Parish.

Synod Continued on Page 3



ENCOUNTER: Individuals sitting around in a circle took turns holding a “talking piece” as they answered a question at the session Oct. 15 at the Church of the Resurrection.

Synod *Continued from Page 2*

that it inspired in me something I didn’t even know that I thought,” said Collins, “and, as it turned out, it was a great way to communicate. Everyone was heard. Very valuable, important things were said.”

Collins said that she had been away from the Church for about 30 years before returning in 2013. Her return came about through the confluence of two events — a spiritual experience at Eucharistic adoration and the support she received from fellow members of her Catholic homeschooling group as she went through a painful divorce.

Collins felt “very positive ... and very hopeful” after the synodal discussion.

“We don’t talk in our society much about actual experiences with God in our day-to-day life,” she said. “So, to hear people talking about that so

truthfully, and honestly, and simply, it was wonderful.”

Dr. Robert Ehn timer, director of the diocesan Office for Life, Peace and Justice, coordinates the diocese’s synod, along with Chancellor Marioly Galván. He said that, like dioceses throughout the world, the Diocese of San Diego conducted small-group sessions at parishes and schools in the spring of 2022.

“As far as I know, there are no other dioceses in the United States that are continuing to have these kind of diocesan-wide, synodal consultations throughout the parishes,” Ehn timer said of the recent round of synod dialogues on the Eucharist.

The data will be analyzed by researchers at the University of San Diego, who will prepare a report that Cardinal McElroy can share with the faithful in early 2024.

Catholic Leaders Plead for Peace Amid War in Holy Land

The Southern Cross
Catholic leaders from around the world pleaded for peace amid “the outbreak of ferocious violence in the Holy Land.”

“War does not solve any problems; it only sows death and destruction. It increases hatred, multiplies revenge. War erases the future,” Pope Francis said at the end of his general audience at St. Peter’s Square on Oct. 18.

“Our thoughts go to Palestine and Israel,” he said. “Casualties are rising and the situation in Gaza is desperate. Please, may everything possible be done to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe.”

What is also disturbing, he continued, is the possibility the conflict will spread just as so many other battles of war are being waged in the world.

“Silence the weapons. Listen to the cry of the poor, the people, the children, for peace,” the pope said.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, from the Diocese of San Diego, issued a statement on Oct. 12 from Vatican City, where he was participating in the Synod on Synodality.

“The heinous attack upon Israel by Hamas shocks the conscience of the Catholic community of San Diego and Imperial counties and must be repudiated by all. We join in prayer with the

people of Israel and our own Jewish community for the consolation of the victims and their families and the immediate release of the hostages.

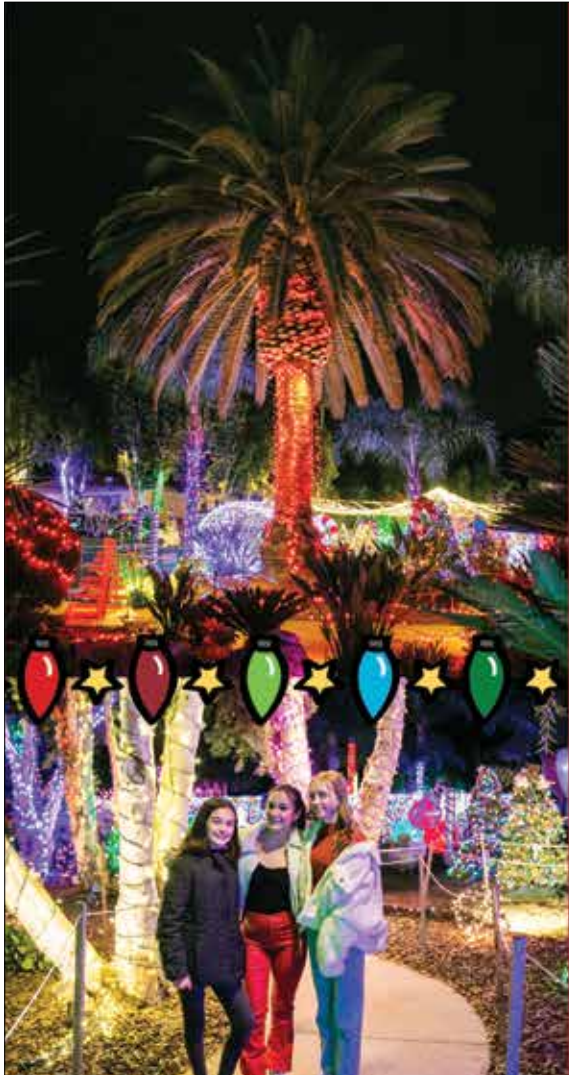
“As war escalates in the Middle East, we pray also for the civilian population of Gaza, which is suffering immensely from the siege being levied upon them. A second humanitarian disaster will only compound the cycle of violence that is the scourge of our world.”

The cardinal asked the diocese’s faithful to pray for “peace to return to the region where Our Lord walked the earth and called upon us all to love one another.”

Bishop David J. Malloy of Rockford, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on International Justice and Peace, also called for prayers in a statement on Oct. 8.

“The world is once again shocked and horrified by the outbreak of ferocious violence in the Holy Land. Reports indicate large numbers of wounded and dead, including many civilians.

“May all who love the Holy Land seek to bring about among all the parties engaged in the fighting a cessation of violence, respect for civilian populations and the release of hostages,” he said. “We call on the faithful, and all people of good will, to continue to pray for peace in the land Our Lord, the Prince of Peace, called home.”



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'Modern' Nativity Tradition Born 800 Years Ago

By Denis Grasska



How much do you know about the Nativity scene?

As it turns out, this beloved holiday tradition was popularized by St. Francis of Assisi in the Italian town of Greccio some 800 years ago. To mark this anniversary, two prayer services will be held in the Diocese of San Diego.

The bilingual services, complete with seasonal readings and carols, will take place at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 16, at Immaculate Conception Parish in Old Town, and at 10:30 a.m., Saturday, Nov. 18, at Mission San Luis Rey Parish in Oceanside.

The program at both events will include readings, including the Scriptural account of the Nativity and the story of St. Francis' famous re-enactment, and the blessing of the church's Nativity scene.

Those who plan to attend are invited to bring a figure from their own Nativity set to be blessed, and they will receive a special prayer card for the blessing of a creche, as well as some straw that has been blessed.

Members of four branches of the Franciscan community — the Franciscan friars in their familiar brown habits, women religious from both the Franciscan Sisters and the Sisters of St. Clare, and lay Catholics known as Secular Franciscans — have collaborated in the planning of this local celebration.

Franciscan Sister Kathleen Warren



RENEWAL: Setting up the Nativity scene shouldn't become routine. Two upcoming prayer services will show how to recapture the meaning of such a sacred moment.

said that the organizers opted to hold the prayer service before the beginning of Advent, the four-week season of preparation for Christmas, so that it might serve as "a teachable moment."

She explained that setting up the family Nativity scene can become "so routine," just one more thing to check off before Christmas, when it should be seen as "a holy event that we can do as a family in our own sacred space at home."

"Our hope is that, when people set up their own crib sets (this year) ...

there will be this new awareness, new insight about what we're doing," she said.

Sister Warren explained that, while St. Francis can't be credited with inventing the Nativity scene, he was the first to make it accessible to the common people.

During St. Francis' time, Christmas was "not even a major feast," she said. But he was "amazed and overwhelmed by God's extravagant love, especially that God would be so humble as to enter into the human condition and

walk with us on earth as one of us," and he wanted "to bring this to life for the people."

He did so by creating a living Nativity scene, including a live ox and ass. Those who turned out to his re-enactment 800 years ago weren't passive observers, said Laura Chun, leader of the San Luis Rey Secular Franciscan Fraternity.

She compared their participation to the "experiential joy" that children have when they are allowed to help set up their family's Nativity scene.

"That's what Francis tapped into ... and I think people responded to that," Chun said.

Franciscan Father Vincent Mesi is the guardian of St. Vincent Friary in Mission Hills and the sacramental and spiritual leader at Immaculate Conception Parish. He sees the first Nativity at Greccio as an effort by St. Francis to show the earthiness of the first Christmas and how Jesus accepted being born in far from ideal conditions.

He contrasted the imagery of "a beautiful Christmas card" with the reality of the Son of God being born in the midst of "a bunch of stinking animals."

Sister Madeline Fitzgerald, a member of the Sisters of St. Clare, similarly finds "great meaning" in "the poverty, and the humility and the simplicity of Greccio."

What occurred at Greccio 800 years ago was so profound, said Sister War-

Nativity Continued on Page 5



SACRED: The Immaculata Parish annually presents a Nativity scene.



DEVOTION: St. Gregory the Great Parish offers an outdoor Nativity scene.

Nativity *Continued from Page 4*

ren, that it was recognized almost immediately as a holy place, soon became a shrine, and remains a popular pilgrimage site, despite its location far off the beaten path.

And, from that humble town, the tradition of the Nativity scene has spread worldwide.

“As the friars moved around the world, they took that tradition with them,” Chun said.

“When I drive through my neighborhood and ... see people putting the creches in their front yard, I’m just so delighted to be a Franciscan,” she said. “It’s something real and (that) people enjoy, and it tells a story.”

The U.S. Catholic Church is in the

second of a three-year Eucharistic Revival, intended to deepen Catholics’ understanding of and appreciation for the Eucharist. Sister Fitzgerald made a connection between the revival and Greccio.

“I would hope that the Nativity scene will help people appreciate the gift of the Eucharist, because, for me, every day is Christmas when we receive Jesus in the Eucharist,” she said.

Sister Fitzgerald expressed her desire “that people begin to realize the great gift that we are being given in the Eucharist, and how the Eucharist transforms us to be better people,” and that the Eucharistic Jesus is “with us to strengthen us and help us in our ups and downs of life.”

You Are Invited

Members of the Franciscan family are hosting a prayer service and reception to honor the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi’s famous living Nativity scene in Greccio, Italy.

- Thursday, Nov. 16, 6:30 p.m., Immaculate Conception Church, Old Town
- Saturday, Nov. 18, 10:30 a.m., Old Mission San Luis Rey, Oceanside

Those who attend are invited to bring a figure from their own Nativity set to be blessed and will receive a prayer card.

For more information and resources for celebrating Christmas at home, visit sdccatholic.org/Greccio.

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'What Is the Lord's Mission for Our Lives?'

The Southern Cross



"Lord, what do you want of me?"

That's the theme of the Evangelization and Discipleship Conference from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 18, at St. Gregory the Great Parish in Scripps Ranch.

The event will be the first diocese-wide conference on this topic to be presented in English since before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Manny Aguilar, director of the co-sponsoring Office for Stewardship, said the conference will explore the vital roles each person of faith is called to fulfill. The event will feature music, praise-and-worship and an opportunity to meet Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido, who will lead the opening prayer.

"We are so excited for this conference," he said.

Joseph Horejs, associate director of the Office for Evangelization and Catechetical Ministry, the other co-sponsoring office, said everyone is invited to participate.

"We invite all to be fired up in understanding their mission to evangelize, and to send them out to do that work because we all know that that's desperately needed," Horejs said.

Koren Ruiz, founder and president of *Corresponsables de Dios* (Stewards of God), will lead a large-group discussion, reflecting on the question: "What is the Lord's mission for our lives?"

"This initial talk puts into perspective our call as disciples of Jesus Christ and as faithful stewards for the Church's mission," Aguilar said.



INSPIRED: Koren and Jessica Ruiz, from the organization Stewards of God, will lead a conference on Nov. 18 that invites all people of faith to explore what God is calling them to do. They presented a Spanish-language conference on stewardship at Corpus Christi Church on March 7, 2020.

"Sometimes, (parishioners) don't even realize they have a gift, but everybody has gifts to offer that God wants to accept."

Based in Portland, Ore., *Corresponsables de Dios* assists parishes, particularly those in the Hispanic community, to develop a culture of stewardship. In recent years, the two diocesan offices have worked with the organization to foster a stewardship culture in several Hispanic parishes

and host several Spanish-language conferences.

The organization has a history with Bishop Pulido, having brought their ministry to his parish when he was a pastor in the Diocese of Yakima, Wash.

"When I think about Koren's ministry, I think about the words 'evangelization' and 'conversation,'" Bishop Pulido said. "He delivers the message of discipleship in a conversation. He talks to people and asks them ques-

tions — he engages them in a soft conversation about God."

The bishop said he admires that Ruiz invites his wife, Jessica, to serve alongside him at conferences.

"He projects himself as a happy husband," the bishop said. "I think he is also preaching and evangelizing by the way he lives his life."

Aguilar said that the couple will lead praise-and-worship during the conference, sharing their own God-given gifts. Jessica Ruiz serves as creative director of *Corresponsables de Dios*.

There also will be workshops led by Father Edmundo Zárate-Suárez, pastor of St. Jude Shrine of the West Parish, and Maryanne Russell, director of Evangelization and Stewardship at St. Brigid Parish.

"Hospitality is key to fostering a community where people experience a sense of belonging, become engaged in parish life, and grow as committed disciples," said Russell, who has served in ministry for more than 30 years. "Looking to Jesus as our model, we will explore the impact of welcoming people as they are and inviting them to take the next step."

The session she is to lead will include practical tips for welcoming newcomers, forming leadership, communicating the message, and reaching out beyond the pews.

Registration is required to attend the conference. The cost to attend is \$20 per person, which includes lunch.

Information/registration:
sdcatholicdisciples.net
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**DIOCESE OF
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SPEAKING UP: The faithful are invited to share a short video exploring how they are a “witness to life,” the theme of the 2024 San Diego Walk for Life. The event will return to Waterfront Park in San Diego, where young and old expressed their views at this year’s event.

Walk for Life to Host Video Contest

The Southern Cross



About 3,000 people are expected to attend the 12th

annual San Diego Walk for Life, whose theme is “Witness to Life.”

The event will be held on Saturday, Jan. 13, 2024, at Waterfront Park in downtown San Diego.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will once more address the participants, then join them for an approximately quarter-mile walk along city sidewalks with pro-life signs and banners.

Patricia Sandoval is to deliver the keynote address — the first time that it will be bilingual in English and Spanish. She is a pro-life speaker whose

story was told in the book “Transfigured: Patricia Sandoval’s Escape from Drugs, Homelessness, and the Back Doors of Planned Parenthood.”

There also will be testimonials given by women who either regret having had an abortion, or are glad to have decided to raise their child or place the baby for adoption.

In advance of the event, to increase community engagement, the San Diego Walk for Life is hosting a video contest.

Submissions recorded in MP4 format should be no longer than one minute and should address how you are a witness for life in your community, why it is important to actively be a witness for life, and how we can continue to cultivate a culture of life. The deadline to enter is Monday, Dec. 4, 2023.

The top submissions will be posted on the San Diego Walk for Life’s website and on its social media platforms for viewers to vote for their favorite. One winner will be selected in each of the following categories: Youth and Young Adult, Families, and Open Submission.

The winners will be announced during the Walk for Life, where the top videos will be shown. Prizes are to be determined.

Official Walk for Life T-shirts will be available for pre-sale.

More information:
sandiegowalkforlife.org
or email info@sandiegowalkforlife.org.



UN World Day Highlights Child Sexual Abuse

The Southern Cross



The United Nations joins Pope Francis in acknowledging

the evil of child sexual violence worldwide and pledging to help survivors heal by commemorating the “World Day for the Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Violence” on Nov. 18.

Established in 2022, this World Day is aimed at increasing global awareness of the prevalence and trauma of child sexual abuse, with the hope that governments will take action to fight it. According to the World Health Organization, millions of children experience sexual violence each year.

Pray for the conversion, transformation, and understanding of political and spiritual leaders worldwide to take responsibility for their part in the abuses that have occurred in their country while they support the UN’s efforts to stop the sexual exploitation and abuse of children everywhere, mobilizing action to prevent violence and support healing and justice for survivors.

Visit safeinourdiocese.org to learn about the Diocese of San Diego’s continued efforts to prevent and expose child sexual abuse and train children to protect themselves from any kind of abuse within the Church and outside it.



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CLASS PARTICIPATION: Leiana Lepule looks out over her third-grade classroom as students raise their hands. Lepule is one of three St. Patrick School alumni who joined the faculty this year.

Three ‘Fantastic’ Alumni Return

By Denis Grasska



Principal Hernán Valdivia is grateful for the “gift of Catholic education” in general, as well as for the dedicated staff that he leads at St. Patrick School in North Park.

But, this Thanksgiving, he has three new reasons for gratitude: Their names are Leiana Lepule, Deziree Madachy and William Fleming.

All three attended St. Patrick School from kindergarten through eighth grade and remember one another from their time together as students. They returned to campus this fall as teachers.

“It means everything that we have three alumni who want to come back to teach at their former school,” said Valdivia. “At a time when all schools are facing severe teacher shortages, I feel lucky that we get these fantastic individuals who are not only committed to Catholic education, but to the mission of our school.”

“I believe it says a lot that St. Patrick School was such an important part of their educational and faith formation, and now they want to come back and serve in a new role as teachers,” he added. “Their familiarity with our community and school traditions will only benefit our students.”

Third-grade teacher Lepule and

fourth-grade teacher Madachy are both members of the Class of 2013. Fleming, who teaches music to all grade levels, graduated in 2006.

Lepule, 24, acknowledged that it’s “very surreal” being back on campus as a teacher, especially since she now counts some of her own former teachers as colleagues.

“My teachers here were the reasons why I wanted to become a teacher,” said Lepule, who recalled expressing interest in that profession as far back as first or second grade.

She earned a bachelor’s in Liberal Studies in 2021 and a teaching credential the following year, both at San Diego State University.

Lepule stayed connected to the St. Patrick Parish and school community over the years. She attended Mass there, despite having to commute from Chula Vista, as well as the annual fall festival.

She said the school has changed in some ways in the years since she was a student. She referred to campus improvements, noting that her generation had been required to make do without air-conditioning. Today’s students also have access to Google Chromebooks.

“What has stayed the same,” she said, “is the sense of community.”

For Madachy, also 24, St. Patrick’s School “feels very much like home.”

She said the school was “a huge,



NEW GUIDE: New fourth-grade teacher Deziree Madachy, a St. Patrick’s alumna and a former classmate of “guiding and supporting figure” like her own teachers were for her.



HIGH-FIVE: Music teacher William Fleming, seen giving a high-five to one of his students, remembers the fun music lessons he had when he himself was a student at St. Patrick's.

to Teach at Elementary School



Third-grade teacher Leiana Lepule, aspires to be a

positive and important part of my childhood," a place where she learned "how to be a good follower of God" and developed the "academic grit" that evolved into a strong work ethic.

During high school, she began seriously considering a career in education, as the result of an internship with her former kindergarten teacher at St. Patrick's.

"I really got to see the behind-the-scenes of everything, and I really enjoyed it," she said of her experience as an intern.

Madachy earned a bachelor's at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 2021, double majoring in Psychology and Education. She earned a master's in teaching and a teaching credential at San Jose State University in 2022.

She said, "I want to be that guiding and supporting figure for my students like (my teachers) were for me."

Today, Madachy teaches inside the same fourth-grade classroom where she once sat as a student. Her own fourth-grade teacher, Leslie Young, is down the hall teaching first grade.

"I arrived at St. Pat's when Leiana and Deziree were both in seventh grade, so I got to teach them for two years," said Valdivia. "I remember that they were both fantastic students, but, more importantly, outstanding individuals. So, when they applied for teaching positions, that was one of the easiest decisions I've

ever had to make."

Fleming, 31, admits that he wasn't "an angel" when he attended St. Patrick School.

"I was kind of hyper," he confessed, "but they were very patient with me."

His teachers' investment paid off: Fleming went on to earn a bachelor's in Music in Performance from San Diego State University in 2016. Prior to joining St. Patrick's faculty, he had given private music lessons and had assisted in classrooms, including at St. Therese Academy.

Reflecting on being back at his alma mater, he said there are memories in "every corner of that school."

"Everywhere I look, I'm just flooded with all these different memories," he said.

During his years as a student there, St. Patrick's didn't have much in the way of a music program. But Fleming, whose parents were both musicians, availed himself of the opportunities that presented themselves.

He recalled school talent shows, where he gave dance and musical performances, as "my highlight of the year." He also fondly remembers a school parent who, in the absence of a full-fledged program, brought "fun, little lessons" about music into the classrooms.

"It feels really great to come full circle and help share my gifts and my experience with the current stu-

dents," said Fleming, who teaches in a music classroom that had been the computer lab during his student days.

Valdivia said that, while he never taught "Willie," he has known him and his family for years. The Flemings have been active parishioners for decades, his parents still sing in the church choir, and his older sister was the school's former seventh-grade teacher and the writer of a grant proposal to the Augustinian Foundation that secured funding for the school's music program four years ago.

"Now, Willie gets the opportunity to grow our music program in his own vision, in addition to leading our student folk group, 'The God Squad,' (which) his father, Bill, started, so that's obviously very cool," Valdivia said.

"When students graduate from St. Pat's, our hope is they head out into the world and become positive difference-makers in their communities," said Valdivia, "so it's extremely rewarding to have former students return as colleagues and work alongside them to prepare the next generation of difference-makers."

He added, "These three teachers embody the values of St. Patrick School because they are choosing a vocation of service to their community. As an Augustinian school, building community is at the core of our mission."

New Call for Action on Global Climate Crisis

By Carol Glatz



VATICAN CITY — After warning the world against ignoring the cries of the earth and the poor with his 2015 landmark encyclical, "Laudato Si," Pope Francis intensified his critique with "Laudate Deum" ("Praise God"), warning against the selfish obsession with human power.

"When human beings claim to take God's place, they become their own worst enemies," he said, explaining the title of the document, released at the Vatican Oct. 4.

The document, addressed "to all people of good will on the climate crisis," is a follow-up to "clarify and complete" his 2015 encyclical because, he wrote, over the past eight years, "our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point."

The bulk of the 15-page apostolic exhortation is dedicated to a severe rebuke of the "resistance and confusion" regarding the global climate crisis and its link to human activity as well as of the growing "technocratic paradigm underlying the current process of environmental decay."

"I feel obliged to make these clarifications, which may appear obvious, because of certain dismissive and scarcely reasonable opinions that I encounter, even within the Catholic



SOUNDING ALARM: Luisa-Marie Neubauer, a climate activist, speaks at a conference about Pope Francis' document on the climate crisis, "Laudate Deum" ("Praise God"), in the Vatican on Oct. 4.

Church," he wrote.

"Despite all attempts to deny, conceal, gloss over or relativize the issue, the signs of climate change are here and increasingly evident," the pope wrote, detailing the serious and irreversible damage already done and "dangerous changes" underway according to evidence supported by most scientists specializing in climate science.

The pope blamed the resistance and confusion about the climate crisis on the lack of information on climate science, people choosing to "deride" facts and "ridicule those who speak of global warming," and inertia or indifference by "the great economic powers, whose concern is with the greatest profit possible at minimal cost and in the short-

est amount of time."

Consequently, the pope wrote, "a broader perspective is urgently needed, one that can enable us to esteem the marvels of progress, but also to pay serious attention to other effects that were probably unimaginable a century ago."

People need to let go of this "technocratic paradigm" that believes "goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power" and pursues "infinite or unlimited growth."

"Never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely, particularly when we consider how it is currently being used," he wrote.

Pope Francis called for "rethinking

our use of power," which requires an increased sense of responsibility, values and conscience with "sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint."

The pope appealed for more effective international organizations that have the authority and power to provide for the global common good, eliminate hunger and poverty, and defend fundamental human rights.

He also called for a new kind of international, multilateral cooperation and action in which "groups and organizations within civil society help to compensate for the shortcomings of the international community."

With world leaders set to meet at the 28th U.N. Climate Change Conference in Dubai Nov. 30-Dec. 12, Pope Francis said that "this conference can represent a change of direction, showing that everything done since 1992 was in fact serious and worth the effort, or else it will be a great disappointment and jeopardize whatever good has been achieved thus far."

COP-28 will need to present "binding forms of energy transition" that are "efficient, obligatory and readily monitored," he wrote, and this transition must be "drastic, intense and count on the commitment of all."

He urged individuals and families to pressure leaders. "It is necessary to be honest and recognize that the most effective solutions will not come from individual efforts alone, but above all from major political decisions on the national and international level."

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Laudato Si' Champions and New Papal Plea

LAUDATO SI' CHAMPIONS: The Creation Care team at St. Thomas More Church used the revenue from their recycling program to install an irrigation system for the parish garden.

By Christina Bagaglio Slentz



Only 14 1/2 pages long, Pope Francis' exhortation, "Laudate Deum," meaning "Praise God," was released on Oct. 4, the Feast of St. Francis, exhorting us to act in the face of the climate crisis. The same day began the Synod on Synodality at the Vatican, focused on the people of God journeying in communion, participation and mission.



At this year's Season of Creation Mass on Sept. 24, we celebrated those, here in our diocese, who have reflected these values of communion, participation and mission through their care for creation — our 2023 Laudato Si' Champions!

Recognizing our global interconnectedness and our call to love our brothers and sisters both near and far, seven parishes, two schools and nine individuals took local action responding to the seven goals of "Laudato Si'," Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical on care for creation:

- Respond to the Cry of the Earth
- Respond to the Cry of the Poor
- Develop Ecological Economics
- Adopt Sustainable Lifestyles
- Promote Ecological Education
- Foster Ecological Spirituality
- Build Community Resilience and Empowerment

2023 Laudato Si' Champions

Parishes/Schools — Action Area

Immaculate Conception Parish — Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles
Mission San Luis Rey — Ecological Education
Our Lady of Guadalupe (Barrio Logan) — Community Resilience
St. Francis of Assisi Parish — Community Resilience
St. James Parish — Ecological Spirituality
St. James Academy — Cry of the Earth
St. Martin of Tours Parish — Cry of the Poor
St. Martin of Tours Academy — Cry of the Earth
St. Thomas More — Cry of the Earth

Individuals — Action Area

Aida Bustos — Ecological Education at diocesan Pastoral Center
Brother James Lockman, OFM — Ecological Education, Diocesan Creation Care
Claudia Dunaway and Hud Freeze, Christ the King Parish — Cry of the Earth
Enrique Mandujano, St. Joseph's Parish (Holtville) — Cry of the Earth
Father Brad Mills, SJ, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish (Barrio Logan) — Community Resilience
Franco Garcia, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish (Barrio Logan) — Community Resilience
Jorge Mendoza, St. John the Evangelist Parish (Hillcrest) — Ecological Education
Silvia Paredes — Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles at diocesan Pastoral Center



FIRST PLACE: Boyue Deng, Academy of Our Lady of Peace

Youth and Young Adult Champions

Sixty-three Catholic school students submitted original artworks inspired by the theme "For the Beauty of the Earth" in our second annual "Season of Creation" Diocesan Youth and Young Adult Art Contest.

The winners received an award certificate and a

\$25 gift card during the St. Francis Tree Festival, held Oct. 8 at the diocesan Pastoral Center.

The students from the San Diego-Imperial Valley region honored creation with drawings, paintings and photography. The contest was an opportunity for youth to engage in eco-spirituality, one of the seven goals of "Laudato Si'."

By seeking to connect with the divine through the beauty of creation, we learn to appreciate this gift from God and respond with gratitude.

This year's winners include:

4th-5th Grades

First place: Emily Nawoj, St. James Academy, Solana Beach; Second place: Charlotte Roberts, St. Patrick School, Carlsbad

6th-8th Grades

First place: Joshua Nawoj, St. James Academy; Second place: Emmanuel Meza, Sacred Heart School, Brawley

9th-10th Grades

First place: Boyue Deng, Academy of Our Lady of Peace (OLP); Second place: Helena He, OLP

11th-12th Grades

First place: Desiree Develasco, OLP; Second place: Korina Apostol, OLP

About 60 people turned out for our St. Francis Tree Festival. Families came from as far away as Brawley for ecological education and eco-spirituality, as they celebrated the Feast of St. Francis.

Sixty-eight Texas live oak trees, provided by Franciscan Brother James Lockman, a local expert and restoration botanist, were blessed. About 30 were distributed to parish and school representatives as well as to families. Every family also took home a native milkweed plant, vital to the successful migration of monarch butterflies. Donations were also accepted, benefiting Misericordia Food Pantry's use of reusable grocery bags for food distribution in Barrio Logan.

Film Night, with a Purpose

If you are ready to learn more, you are welcome to attend St. Brigid's screening of "The Letter," on Nov. 18 at 6:30 p.m., a film that presents the voices of "Laudato Si'" — the youth, scientists, the indigenous, and the poor. Christina Slentz, diocesan director of Creation Care, will lead a Q&A following the 80-minute movie. Refreshments will be provided. Please contact Lee Hulburt at lee@saintbrigidparish.org to register.

sdcatholic.org/creation



Send pictures of your family or parish illustrating Care for Creation to cslentz@sdcatholic.org. We will post them on our Facebook and Instagram accounts.



 Creation Care Ministry Explores a Theme Monthly to Inspire Action.



Long before I became a Catholic priest, some 37 years ago, I served as a Naval officer for 22 years. It is because of those Navy years that I cherish the following story every Veterans Day.

I was the pastor of a parish here in San Diego, when I was confronted with the need to celebrate a funeral Mass for an elderly man I hardly knew. He had no relatives that I was aware of, only friends and neighbors.

The eulogy, given by one of those neighbors, was brief and bland to the point that I decided to walk into the

Columnist

Father Charles Fuld



modest gathering with a cordless microphone in my hand and ask various persons, "... And what do you remember about him?"

After a while, I gave up and was heading back to the sanctuary, when I noticed a man seated all by himself. I stopped and asked him the same question, and he replied. "Oh, he saved my life during the war."

Suddenly, everything seemed to stop as he told a little bit of the story

of his war-time buddy's act of courage that saved his life. You can well imagine the shock and surprise. No, he had never mentioned his war-time service, much less that he was a hero.

You can also imagine how everyone present gathered around the stranger after the funeral Mass to learn more about the friend and neighbor they thought they had known all those years.

Sure, there are many veterans who have shared their stories; some have suffered great physical losses in war that needed to be explained. But there are also many veterans who have put aside all these memories for some reason and are content just being a good friend, relative or neighbor.

Look around and you'll find men and women who helped save our country in time of war — or in troubled times like these. That's why, at all the Masses that I celebrate, I include in the Prayers of the Faithful a petition for "all the men and women who serve our country in the military here and overseas." I also pray for "all police officers, firefighters and first responders — and their families."

Veterans Day, like Memorial Day, Independence Day and Thanksgiving Day, is an occasion to remember and give thanks for all those who may have saved our lives — and our country, too!

Father Charles "Chuck" Fuld formerly served as editor of The Southern Cross.



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We are in times of war. The most publicized by the news media are in Ukraine and now in the Middle East, between Israel and Hamas. Groups also are battling each other, sowing death and famine, in countries such as Yemen, Ethiopia and Haiti.

What is happening to us? Have we not learned from the pain and tragedy that we have endured throughout time?

Humanity has achieved extraordinary advances in science, the arts, sports and new technologies. All of us as human beings are born with the universal yearning to be loved and respected. Why, then, are there wars? To oppress, subjugate, humiliate and kill others, an entire process of conditioning the mind occurs — through beliefs, ideologies and judgments —

Columnist

Ricardo Márquez



that leads us to see the other as the enemy, as a threat, as an obstacle, as a thing.

Wars are guided by the fear of losing control of what we possess, be they our borders or our property. The defense and protection of our interests is achieved through the power and force we accumulate to terrorize those who want to harm us.

It's inconceivable — from the perspective of a higher and more evolved conscience — that wars exist, as the astrophysicist Carl Sagan expressed in his book, "A Pale Blue Dot," inspired by a photo of the Earth taken from 3.7 billion miles away.

The Earth is a tiny blue dot in the universe, he wrote, "a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam." That is

where we live, our home.

"Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner, how frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds."

This is how he concludes his reflection: "There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known."

Our Christian traditions can also nurture hope for the creation of a more fraternal world.

How do the words of our Teacher,

Jesus, reverberate within us? "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Matt 5:9).

And what about these words, which are harder to assimilate: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:43)?

To repeat, reflect, ask for the grace to live this message in our daily life is today an urgent invitation.

To move from knowing this message to acting as instruments of peace is a challenge and gift of our tradition as followers of Jesus in this world of war. This option is not exempt from pain, a reality Jesus and His disciples well knew. Regardless, I'm inspired by His promise: "Do not fear, for I am with you" (Isa 41:10).

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



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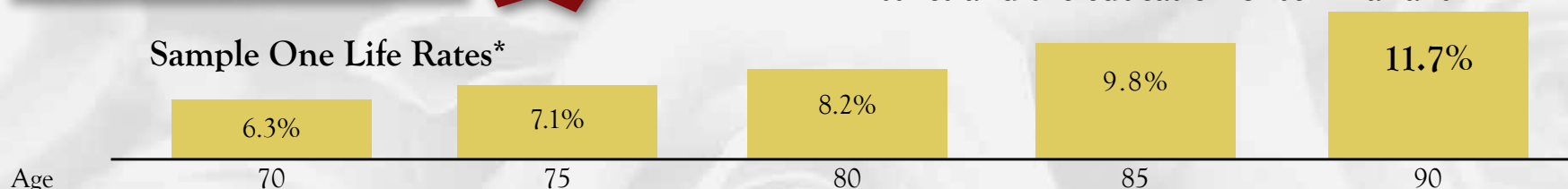
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Event Celebrates Faith, Friendship

By Iliana De Lara



"This is like being with family."

That's how Narciso Guzmán described being at the Unity Dinner, organized by the diocese's Hispanic Commission.

More than 530 people attended the annual event, held on Oct. 21 at Good Shepherd Church in Mira Mesa. They came from parishes and ministries from across San Diego County to celebrate their faith and friendships.

"I come every year. I like it because you feel happiness and brotherhood," said one of those on hand, Lucy Cardona, from the ministry *El Sembrador* at St. Rose of Lima Parish in Chula Vista. "I see so many people I know."

Jesús and Silvia Figueroa, from St. John of the Cross Parish in Lemon Grove, attended for the first time.

"I'm inspired by coming together with people from different communities in the Catholic Church," Silvia Figueroa said.

As the featured speaker, Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano shared highlights of the national plan to engage and serve Hispanic Catholics, who represent around 42% of the Catholic population in the country.

Father Edmundo Zárate-Suárez, pastor of St. Jude Shrine of the West Parish, served as the master of ceremonies.



RECOGNITION: Rigoberto and Matildé García, from Our Lady of Refuge Parish, were among those honored for their service to their community at the Unity Dinner on Oct. 21.

Pastors had nominated individuals in their communities to be recognized for their outstanding service to God. They received awards one by one to hearty applause.

The Hispanic Commission gave a special recognition to Charlotte Fajardo, who worked alongside now Auxiliary Bishop Michael Pham to co-

ordinate Hispanic events.

"I'm the Filipina that celebrates with the Hispanics," said Fajardo upon taking the stage to receive the recognition.

Proceeds from the dinner are used to maintain Quinta de Guadalupe, a retreat center used by Hispanic ministries near Imperial Beach.

Guadalupe Procession, Mass on Dec. 3

The Southern Cross



The entire Catholic community of San Diego is invited

to the annual Our Lady of Guadalupe celebration, to be held Dec. 3.

The event is to begin at 11 a.m. with a joyful procession through the streets of North Park, complete with folkloric dancers, brightly decorated vehicles, and dozens of parish and ministry groups.

The procession ends at St. Augustine High School, where a bilingual Mass at 1 p.m. is to be celebrated by Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, with Auxiliary Bishops Ramón Bejarano, Michael Pham and Felipe Pulido.

Afterward, there will be a Mexican fiesta, which includes traditional food and mariachi music.

The procession begins at the Morley Field Sports Complex, at the intersection of Texas and Upas streets, which has ample parking. It ends at the school, at 3266 Nutmeg St., where the Mass will be held in the gym.

The event is organized by the diocese's Hispanic Commission with the Guadalupe Confederation. It's all to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe, "the Patroness of the Americas."

For more information, visit sdcatholic.org/guadalupe2023.



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News Briefs

Cardinal to Celebrate Mass for Vietnamese Martyrs

The Vietnamese Catholic Community of the Diocese of San Diego is celebrating the Feast of St. Andrew Dung Lac and Companions, known collectively as the Vietnamese Martyrs.

The Mass, commemorating those who gave their lives for the Catholic faith in Vietnam, will be celebrated on Sunday, Nov. 19, at Good Shepherd Church in Mira Mesa.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will be the principal celebrant. Auxiliary Bishops Michael Pham, Ramón Bejarano and Felipe Pulido, along with many Vietnamese priests of the Diocese of San Diego, will concelebrate.

A procession will begin at 2 p.m., immediately followed by the Mass. The event will conclude with a reception in the parish hall.

Marriage Prep Workshops Offered for Clergy, Lay Leaders

The diocesan Office for Family Life and Spirituality is offering a four-part series to provide clergy and lay leaders with the formation and support they need to develop or further strengthen their marriage-preparation processes.

The sessions will be held at the diocesan Pastoral Center on Wednesdays, Nov. 1 (Marriage Prep Guidelines and Best Practices), Nov. 8 (The Marriage Catechumenate: New Vatican Guidelines), Nov. 29 (Administering and Facilitating the FOCCUS Inventory) and

Dec. 6 (Understanding the "Witness to Love" Process).

There is no cost to attend, and attendees are welcome to one or all sessions. Those who attend all four will receive credit for the Diocesan Institute's Marriage Formation course.

For more information or to register, call (858) 490-8299.

Donated Halloween Candy to Be Collected

Local Catholics are once again being invited to donate their excess Halloween candy to be used in the Christmas distribution at Casa de los Pobres (House of the Poor) in Tijuana, Mexico. Toothbrushes and toothpaste are also appreciated.

The candy and dental hygiene supplies can be dropped off at participating school or parish offices during the week after Halloween, Nov. 2 to 7.

For more information, contact Caroline Kelner at carolinekelner10@gmail.com or (858) 761-7744.

Craft Fair/Bake Sale Returning to Our Lady of Grace

EL CAJON — The Our Lady of Grace Parish Catholic Women's Club will hold its annual Holiday Craft Fair and Bake Sale on Saturday, Nov. 4.

It will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and will be held in the parish center and

Briefs Continued on Page 18



PORTRAIT: The Southern Cross won six awards in this year's San Diego Press Club journalism competition. Among the winning entries was this photo of SDSU Aztecs forward Aguek "A.G." Arop, taken by freelancer Andy Hayt.

Newspaper Wins First-Place Awards

The Southern Cross won two first-place awards and other honors at the San Diego Press Club's 50th annual Excellence in Journalism Awards.

Assistant Editor Denis Grasska won first place for his story "Pope Elevates San Diego Bishop to Cardinal."

Ricardo Márquez, the former associate director of the diocesan Office for Family Life and Spirituality, won first place for his columns, which appear monthly in the newspaper.

Three freelance photographers received recognition for their work for The Southern Cross. Andy Hayt won second place for his portrait of SDSU Aztecs forward Aguek "A.G." Arop, as did David Maung, for a feature photo from the Eritrean Catholic community's Christmas Mass. John Gastaldo won third place for his portrait of Sarah Keller, who opted to place her baby for adoption.

Father Chuck Fuld, editor emeritus of The Southern Cross, received honorable mention for a perspectives piece titled "My 'Resurrection' Began with a Loss."

The San Diego Press Club has nearly 400 members in the news communications field. The club presented the awards on Oct. 3 during a banquet in Balboa Park.

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Briefs *Continued from Page 17*

patio area. The address is 2766 Navajo Road, El Cajon 92020.

There will be more than 70 local crafters featuring fashion apparel, home decor and artwork for the upcoming holidays. There will also be freshly baked items. Breakfast and lunch will be available.

For more information, call (619) 980-6841.

Couples Retreat to Be Held in Imperial Valley

IMPERIAL — Couples, would you like to grow in your relationship and build a stronger foundation in Christ?

If so, then you are invited to a one-day marriage retreat on Saturday, Nov. 18, at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Imperial. Engaged and civilly married couples are welcome.

The retreat will run from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Topics will include: The Vocation to Marriage, Communication and Conflict Resolution, Faith and Finances, Raising Children in the Faith, and more. The cost to attend is \$125 per couple.

For more information, email vtoscano@sdccatholic.org or call (858) 490-8299. Register at sdccatholic.org/cyl.

Young Adults Are Invited to Online Prayer

The North American Vocation Team (NAVT) of the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) invites young adults ages 18 and older to a monthly online evening prayer on Tuesdays at 5 p.m. (PST) via Zoom.

The next scheduled evening prayer will be on Nov. 28.

For more information and registra-

tion for the Zoom links, visit ssnd.org/events.

Local Pilgrimage Set for Advent

The fifth annual Augustinian Advent Pilgrimage, a partnership between the Province of St. Augustine in California and Modern Catholic Pilgrim, will take place from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 16.

Enter more fully into the Advent season by taking a family-friendly pilgrimage with the Augustinians of St. Patrick's Parish and St. Augustine Monastery in North Park.

Participants will gather at St. Patrick's at 10 a.m. for the opening prayer service, then depart on a pilgrimage to the St. Augustine Monastery Chapel, where one of the friars will share a brief Advent reflection and there will be some time for personal prayer and offering intentions. Then, participants will walk back to St. Patrick's and end the day with lunch in the parish hall.

The pilgrimage is free and open to all. The round-trip walking distance is less than 3 miles. For more information and to sign up, visit moderncatholicpilgrim.com/pilgrimage-calendar/augustinian-advent.

Catholics Can 'Encounter' Jesus in Rancho Peñasquitos

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

The event runs from 7 to 8 p.m. Upcoming dates include Nov. 10 and Dec. 8.

For more information, contact the Hearts of Fire Ministry at olmcheartsoffice@gmail.com.

Obituary

Deacon William Klopchin

Deacon William Klopchin, a retired permanent deacon of the Diocese of San Diego, died Oct. 12. He was 88.

He was born on June 28, 1935, in Nyack, N.Y., to immigrant parents — a mother from Czechoslovakia and a father from Ukraine — and was the youngest of five boys.

Deacon Klopchin married his wife, Rose Marie, on July 1, 1961.

He earned a bachelor's in Accounting and Business from Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey in 1964 and worked as an accountant for the University of California, San Diego.

He was ordained to the permanent diaconate on May 31, 1986, by Bishop Leo T. Maher. The ordination Mass was celebrated at Our Mother of Confidence Church, where he had been a parishioner since 1968 and where he would serve as a deacon from 1986 until retiring in 2010.

During the 1990s, Deacon Klopchin also served in HIV/AIDS ministry through the diocesan Office for Social Ministry. In 2000, he was made ex officio presider over Our Lady of Refuge Parish's finance council.



Working for the Church

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

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Am I Called?

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

Does the idea come to me often?

Does the idea scare me?

I SHOULD CONTACT

Most Rev. Felipe Pulido
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cmaglang@sdccatholic.org

Sr. Kathy Warren
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Have fun!

VIDEO CONTEST

Get involved in the [San Diego Walk for Life](#) by participating in our video contest

Categories: [Family](#), [Youth & Young Adult](#), and [Open Submission](#)

Your video should answer one or more of these questions:

- How are we a witness for life in the community?
- Why is it important to act as a witness for life?
- How can we continue to cultivate a culture of life?

Videos should be no more than 1 minute long.
There will be prizes for the winner and runner up in each category.
Top videos will be shown at the SDWL on January 13, 2024

WITNESS FOR LIFE

SUBMISSION DEADLINE
December 4, 2023

Details & Entry Form
<https://forms.office.com/r/MqPpP9980z>



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