# SOUTHERN CROSS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO



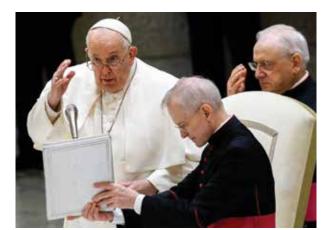
**VOLUME 113 · NUMBER 01** 

THESOUTHERNCROSS.ORG

**JANUARY 2024** 



COURT IN SESSION: St. Rita's School students enjoy the new basketball court that is one of the features of a \$7.5-million renovation project at their school. Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will be on campus Jan. 18 to bless the recent construction, which also includes an art studio, turf field and prayer grotto.



### **Special Blessings**

Vatican document says when and how blessings can be given to unmarried and gay couples. Page  ${\bf 2}$ 



### **Wishes Granted**

Hilton Foundation gives \$2.7-million grant to fund local Catholic outreach projects. **Page 4** 



### **Inspired**

Faith keeps beach volleyball champion grounded as she pursues her studies and competitions. **Page 6** 



P.O. Box 81869 San Diego, CA 92138-1869 TELEPHONE: (858) 490-8266
E-MAIL: socross@sdcatholic.org
WEB: THESOUTHERNCROSS.ORG

### #SOUTHERN FCROSS

### PUBLISHER Cardinal Robert W. McElroy

### **EDITOR EMERITUS**Father Charles L. Fuld

**EDITOR** Aida Bustos

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Denis Grasska

ADVERTISING/CIRCULATION
Donna Lightsey

#### CONTRIBUTORS

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

> **DESIGN** Pinomaki Design

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 except the month of November 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.

Periodicals Postage Paid at San Diego, CA.

TELEPHONE: (858) 490-8266.

EMAIL: socross@sdcatholic.org

WEB: thesoutherncross.org

### SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Monthly print subscription: \$15 per year

CONTACT: (858) 490-8266; dlightsey@sdcatholic.org



The Diocese of San Diego runs the length of California's border with Mexico and serves more than 1.3 million Catholics in San Diego and Imperial counties. It includes 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.



**CONSULTATION:** Pope Francis met with Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, left, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Msgr. Armando Matteo during a meeting at the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican Dec. 18, 2023.

## **How Gay Couples Can Be Blessed**

#### **By Cindy Wooden**



VATICAN CITY

— A Catholic
priest can bless

a gay or other unmarried couple as long as it is not a formal liturgical blessing and does not give the impression that the Catholic Church is blessing the union as if it were a marriage, the Vatican doctrinal office said.

The request for a blessing can express and nurture "openness to the transcendence, mercy and closeness to God in a thousand concrete circumstances of life, which is no small thing in the world in which we live. It is a seed of the Holy Spirit that must be nurtured, not hindered," the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith said in a formal declaration published Dec. 18.

The document, "Fiducia Supplicans" ("Supplicating Trust") was subtitled, "On the pastoral meaning of blessings," and was approved by Pope Francis during an audience with Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, dicastery prefect, Dec. 18.

In his introductory note, Cardinal Fernández said questions about a priest blessing a LGBTQ+ or other unmarried couple had been sent to the doctrinal office repeatedly over the past few years.

The need for a fuller explanation of blessings became clear, he wrote, after Pope Francis responded to the "dubia" or questions of several cardinals in a letter released in early October.

In his letter, the pope insisted marriage is an "exclusive, stable and indissoluble union between a man and a woman, naturally open to conceiving children," which is why the Church "avoids all kinds of rites or sacramentals that could contradict this conviction and imply that it is recognizing as a marriage something that is not."

At the same time, the pope said, "pastoral prudence must adequately

### Vatican's Document Online

To read the Vatican's document on blessings, "Fiducia Supplicans" ("Supplicating Trust"), in English, visit thesoutherncross.org/blessings, and in Spanish, visit thesoutherncross.org/bendiciones.



discern if there are forms of blessing, solicited by one or various persons, that don't transmit a mistaken concept of marriage."

Cardinal Fernández said the declaration "remains firm on the traditional doctrine of the Church about marriage, not allowing any type of liturgical rite or blessing similar to a liturgical rite that can create confusion," but it also explores the "pastoral meaning of blessings" in a way that opens "the possibility of blessing couples in irregular situations and same-sex couples without officially validating their status or changing in any way the Church's perennial teaching on marriage."

The Church "remains firm" in teaching that marriage can be contracted only between one woman and one man, he said, and continues to insist that "rites and prayers that could create confusion" about a marriage and another form of relationship "are inadmissible."

But in Catholic tradition blessings go well beyond the formal ritual used in marriage and other sacraments.

"Blessings are among the most widespread and evolving sacramentals. Indeed, they lead us to grasp God's presence in all the events of life and remind us that, even in the use of created things, human beings are invited to seek God, to love Him, and to serve Him faithfully," the declaration said. That is why people, meals, rosaries, homes, pets and myriad other things can be and are blessed on various occasions.

"From a strictly liturgical point of view," the declaration said, "a blessing requires that what is blessed be conformed to God's will, as expressed in the teachings of the Church," which is why the then-doctrinal congregation in 2021 excluded the possibility of blessing gay couples.

But, the new document said, Catholics should "avoid the risk of reducing the meaning of blessings" to their formal, liturgical use because that "would lead us to expect the same moral conditions for a simple blessing that are called for in the reception of the sacraments."

"Indeed, there is the danger that a pastoral gesture that is so beloved and widespread will be subjected to too many moral prerequisites, which, under the claim of control, could overshadow the unconditional power of God's love that forms the basis for the gesture of blessing," it said.

A person who asks for God's blessing, the declaration said, "shows himself to be in need of God's saving presence in his life and one who asks for a blessing from the Church recognizes the latter as a sacrament of the salvation that God offers."

The Church, it said, should be grateful when people ask for a blessing and should see it as a sign that they know they need God's help.

"When people ask for a blessing, an exhaustive moral analysis should not be placed as a precondition for conferring it. For, those seeking a blessing should not be required to have prior moral perfection," it said.

At the same time, the declaration insisted that the Mass is not the proper setting for the less formal forms of blessing that could include the blessing of a gay couple.

Catholic News Service

### Walk for Life Jan. 13 Will 'Witness for Life'

By Denis Grasska



"Witness for Life" is the theme of the 12th annual

San Diego Walk for Life, and organizers are making it easier than ever for participants to put that theme into practice.

The walk, which is the region's largest pro-life event, will be held from 8:30 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Jan. 13, at Waterfront Park in downtown San Diego.

The event strives to bring the community together to celebrate the gift of life. The event recognizes the fundamental worth of every person from conception to natural death, and its participants stand up for the unborn and their parents.

About 3,000 people are expected to attend the event. Among them will be not only Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, but also all three of the diocese's auxiliary bishops – Ramón Bejarano, Michael Pham and Felipe Pulido.

The centerpiece will be an approximately quarter-mile walk along city sidewalks with pro-life signs and banners, which will be led by a group of about 25 students from Cathedral Catholic High School.

Cardinal McElroy will be one of the featured speakers. Another one will be Patricia Sandoval, a bilingual speaker whose story was told in the book "Transfigured: Patricia Sandoval's Escape from Drugs, Homelessness, and the Back Doors of Planned Parenthood."

The line-up also will include two testimonials – one by a local woman who became pregnant at age 16 and chose to keep her baby; another by a



PUBLIC WITNESS: The 12th annual San Diego Walk for Life will be held on Saturday, Jan. 13, at Waterfront Park. This year's theme is "Witness for Life."

woman who also chose life, but opted to place her child for adoption.

A bilingual opening prayer will be led by Bishop Bejarano. Dr. Jim Garlow, the former senior pastor of Skyline Church in La Mesa, will offer the closing prayer.

Participants will have time to visit about 50 exhibitor booths, representing crisis pregnancy centers and other organizations that support pregnant women and unborn children.

For the first time, commemorative T-shirts will be available to participants. Shirts can be pre-ordered for \$15 at sandiegowalkforlife.org or purchased on the day of the event for \$20.

Maria Valencia, who serves in the Diocese of San Diego as associate director of Culture of Life, expressed hope that wearing the same T-shirts will foster "team spirit" among participants.

This year's walk also will feature its first-ever video contest. Participants were invited to make a one-minute video reflecting on how they personally witness to life, why it is important to do so, or how to further the Culture of Life.

A winner and a runner-up will be selected in three categories — Family, Youth & Young Adult, and Open Submission — based on which videos re-

ceive the most "likes" on social media. The videos can be viewed and voted upon on YouTube (@SDWalkFor-Life) and on Facebook and Instagram (#SDW4L). The voting period will run from Jan. 1 through Jan. 13; all of the videos will be screened at Waterfront Park, with participants able to vote during the event itself.

As a spiritual preparation for the walk, a Multicultural Novena for Life will begin on Friday, Jan. 5. Details are available at *sdcatholic.org/event/multicultural-novena-for-life*.

For more information, visit sandiegowalkforlife.org.

# **County Supervisor's Plan Rejected**

By Denis Grasska



A proposal to use legal action to force local pro-

life pregnancy resource centers out of business was withdrawn from consideration at the Dec. 5 meeting of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors.

The agenda item was first introduced at the board's Nov. 7 meeting by Vice Chair Terra Lawson-Remer. The board deadlocked at 2-2 on the proposal, which meant that it would automatically be brought up for a vote at the Dec. 5 meeting, unless Lawson-Remer requested its removal from the agenda.

The pro-life community had braced itself for the likelihood that the proposal would pass on Dec. 5, since the newly elected Supervisor Monica

Montgomery Steppe would be able to break the tie. She has expressed support for legal abortion.

Maria Valencia, who serves in the diocese as associate director of Culture of Life, said that she and other supporters of pregnancy resource centers had sent out alerts, urging their constituencies to express opposition to the proposal via email and phone.

She and others also had been planning to attend the meeting in a show of support for "the work that the pregnancy resource centers do to help pregnant women and vulnerable families."

But Valencia learned on Dec. 1 that Lawson-Remer had withdrawn the agenda item, which had called for the county to explore taking legal action against the approximately 15 pregnancy resource centers in San Diego County, "including but not limited to shutting down such centers"; to launch a public education campaign

to challenge their claims and promote the availability of resources that include abortion; and seek funding to raise awareness about 'reproductive health services."

In a Dec. 1 email addressed to "Dear Pro-life friends," the pro-life organization Helpers of God's Precious Infants –San Diego shared the good news about the proposal's withdrawal.

"Your voice really does matter!" the message read. "Today, Item 25 was withdrawn from the Dec. 5th County Board of Supervisor's meeting. This bill would have used public money to advertise that Pregnancy Resource Centers are 'fake clinics.' As of Friday afternoon, 91% of the public comments for 34 agenda items were focused on Item 25. An overwhelming 85% of Item 25 comments opposed this unfair use of taxpayer money to try to shut down PRCs."

Valencia said that she and fellow members of the pro-life community celebrated the unexpected development by exchanging "encouraging messages."

But, she said, they will "continue being vigilant" and not simply "trust" that the proposal will never be resubmitted for consideration.

In the meantime, Valencia encourages those who support the pro-life cause to familiarize themselves with the work of pregnancy resource centers.

Valencia invited pro-life supporters to consider donating to the centers and to be ready to recommend them to family, friends and acquaintances who find themselves in a crisis pregnancy.

"These (are) little things that we can do to show our appreciation," she said, "and to also be part of the change to save life."

For more information, contact Maria Valencia at (858) 490-8323 or mvalencia@sdcatholic.org.

**4** | January 2024 THESOUTHERNCROSS.ORG The Southern Cross

# **Innovative \$2.7-Million Grant Lifts Projects**

**The Southern Cross** 



"It sounded like something that Jesus would

offer you."

That's how Sister Kathleen Warren, director of the diocesan Office for Women Religious, felt when she heard about the grant that the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation wanted to give.

In late 2021, the foundation reached out to Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego, expressing interest in funding some of the diocese's social outreach projects, and it invited the agency to submit a grant proposal.

That proposal was approved in August of 2022, and a \$2.7-million grant was jointly awarded to Catholic Charities and to 11 congregations of women religious in the diocese.

Appaswamy "Vino" Pajanor, executive director of Catholic Charities, said the Hilton Foundation wanted "a single conduit" to support various projects. This led to the creation of the Sisters' Faith-In-Action Network (FAN), a consortium of the 11 participating congregations, and fostered close collaboration among the sisters, the Office for Women Religious, and Catholic Charities.

The grant money was used to fund 15 individual projects sponsored by the sisters, and three Catholic Charities projects. The amounts received by each project ranged in size from \$20,000 to \$800,000. Pajanor said the latter figure represents the largest first-time grant that the foundation has ever awarded for a project of this nature in the United States.

Though the grant supplied funding for only one year, Pajanor and Sister Warren hope that it might be renewed in 2024.

"Hilton Foundation's grant provided a groundbreaking opportunity for the existing ministries within our diocese," said Cardinal Robert W. McElroy. "I am impressed to see how ministries working together can create and show the power of collective impact.

"Our diocese is blessed to have the sisters and their respective ministries, as we are blessed to have such a vibrant Catholic Charities," he continued. "The Conrad N. Hilton grant has truly been a source of great goodness for the people of our diocese. We look forward to what comes next."

Sister Warren said that the projects respond to the needs of a wide variety of vulnerable populations, including struggling students, isolated senior citizens, asylum-seekers and survivors of human trafficking.

One of the projects is Casa de Misericordia (House of Mercy), run by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. It seeks to meet the needs of migrants who have crossed the U.S.-Mexican border. Among other programs, the project offers a Community Resource Center that provides case-



**LESSONS:** Free English-language classes are among the programs offered by Casa de Misericordia (House of Mercy), a project of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Casa de Misericordia was one of 18 projects funded by a \$2.7-million grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

management; a Community Garden, where families are taught to grow and harvest healthy food; free English-language classes; and, in partnership with Casa Cornelia Law Center, help to acquire legal documentation.

The impact of the Hilton funds was significant for Casa de Misericordia, according to Mercy Sister Mary Waskowiak, who founded the project in 2020.

"We could not ... serve the number of people we are serving without the financial support of the Hilton Foundation," she said.

During the period from October of 2022 to August of 2023, Casa de

Misericordia reached 3,379 people, many of whom were returning clients. (About 1,200 of those were recipients of the project's food distribution program, whose funding comes from another source than the Hilton grant.)

"The Hilton grant gave us a security that helped our ministry to grow, to thrive and to serve others in need, especially migrant persons," Sister Waskowiak said.

Thanks to the funds received from the grant, she said, Casa de Misericordia has been able to pay immigrants' travel expenses.

For example, a family of three — father, mother and 6-year-old son —

walked from Venezuela to the border at Laredo, Texas. There, the mother and son were bused to Brooklyn, N.Y., and the father was bused to San Diego. Casa de Misericordia paid for the father's transportation to New York, where he was reunited with his family.

Sister Waskowiak recalled a particularly "dramatic story" illustrating what the grant enabled her project to accomplish.

A few months ago, a 17-year-old Mexican man illegally entered the United States to be near his father. While scaling the border wall, he fell onto the U.S. side and was taken to intensive care with severe injuries. His mother, with a travel visa, joined her husband at their son's bedside.

"Thanks to Hilton Foundation funds, we were able to provide rent money for their stay at the hospital," said Sister Waskowiak. "We also provided transportation for the mother back to Mexico when her visitor's visa expired."

Another grant recipient was Women of Wisdom (WOW), a project run in collaboration by the Sisters of Providence, Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, and the Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Its mission is to visit and support senior citizens in low-income housing, retirement homes and hospitals, lifting their spirits and providing them with a sense of community; the project also involves care-giving for elderly sisters at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Convent in San Ysidro.

Catholic Charities Program Manager Ines Garre, who oversees the grant recipients, noted that Women of Wisdom was a program that "started from scratch" in response to the availability

### **Grant Recipients**

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation awarded a \$2.7-million grant to Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego and 11 congregations of women religious in the diocese.

Funds went to Catholic Charities for Diocese Outreach, Emotional Wellbeing, and the Low Bono Program.

The sisters' projects that received grant money included:

- Academy Projects (Congregation: Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament)
- Border Compassion (Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet)
- Border Ministry to Migrants (Religious of Jesus and Mary)
- · Casa Cornelia Law Center (Society of the Holy Child Jesus)
- Casa de Misericordia (Sisters of Mercy of the Americas)
- Escuela de Tareas Calasanz (Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament)
- Mary's Guest House (Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary)
- Myanmar/Burmese Catholic Community (Sisters of St. Francis Xavier)
- San Diego Ignatian Volunteer Corps (Society of the Sacred Heart)
   School Parenting Program (Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament)
- Silviano Carrillo Centers (Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament)
- Southern California Immigration Project (Sisters of Social Service)
- Spiritual Ministry Center (Society of the Sacred Heart)
- Students Without Limits (Society of the Sacred Heart)
- Women of Wisdom (Sisters of Providence, Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, and Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament)

**Grant** Continued on Page 5

### **Grant** Continued from Page 4

of the grant. She said that the three participating congregations have had a "great collaboration ... as if they have been working together for many years" and have made "a great impact" on the seniors.

Sister Josephine Bryan and Sister Mary Jo Piccione are members of the Sisters of Providence and gerontological nurses. They are both involved in the WOW program.

Sister Bryan, referencing remarks by Pope Francis and applying them to the WOW project, explained that the project works to replace "a culture of indifference" with "a culture of care."

She noted that many seniors do not see their children very often and, as a result, feel isolated. It's not that the children are neglectful, she clarified, but because of busy schedules or geographic distance. As a result of the seniors' mobility issues, many even feel isolated from the Church, she said, recalling one senior who told her that it had been four years since she had been able to go to confession.

Sister Bryan said that the COVID-19 pandemic diminished social activities at the senior facilities — something that the project is working to reverse. The sisters visit some seniors as often as once a week, meeting with them in groups as well as making personal visits to their rooms.

One senior described herself as having been "a scaredy cat all my life." When the sisters asked what the gatherings organized by WOW have meant to her, she said, they have helped her "to know that I don't need to stay in my own corner."



**LEADERSHIP:** Members of the Sisters' FAN (Faith-In-Action) Leadership Council are seen with Cardinal Robert W. McElroy at one of their quarterly meetings. The council is the coordination body of the Hilton Foundation grant. It works to strengthen collaboration among the grant recipients and share best practices.

"I thank the good Lord that He's allowed this program to start, and I hope and pray that it continues," she said.

Another senior, a 98-year-old, also spoke positively of the program.

"We need it," she told the sisters during a recent visit. "We (cannot) go to God, but God is coming to us by bringing you here."

The sisters have brought spirituality, the sacraments and fellowship into the lives of seniors. At the sisters' invitation, priests have come to hear confessions and to confer the anointing of the sick. The sisters have done arts-and-crafts projects with the seniors and have brought them together for Advent reflection, Taizé prayer, and communal rosary. They also have taken seniors to Mass at nearby Catholic churches and have simply taken the time to talk to them and listen to

their stories.

"It's not anything spectacular," Sister Bryan said modestly of the WOW project. "But ... (the seniors are) hungry for companionship."

She noted that the project isn't a one-way street, where the sisters are the ones giving and the seniors are receiving.

"We go home blessed. ... I've never seen God, but I can sure see God in them."

Another beneficiary of the Hilton Foundation grant was the Myanmar/Burmese Immigrant Catholic Community run by Sister Nant Shwe, of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier. This project provides catechesis to child and adult immigrants from Myanmar, and it also trains youth and young adults to spread the faith within their immigrant community.

The project's services include weekly online religion classes for children and young adults, annual in-person retreats for adults, marriage preparation, youth summer camps, translation services and assisting young adults with college applications.

A progress report covering the period from November of 2022 through August of 2023, showed that the project had reached more than 1,200 members of the Burmese Catholic community.

The Hilton grant also funded Students Without Limits (SWOL), a project of the Society of the Sacred Heart, which provides legal, mental health, and continuing education support to underserved minority and immigrant teenagers from low-income families, most of whom will be the first in their families to attend college.

# SERIOUSLY DIFFERENT

INDUSTRY LEADER
IN MRI... MORALLY
RESPONSIBLE
INVESTING

CATHOLIC
ADVISORY BOARD
OF PROMINENT
CATHOLICS



SCREENS WITH A
ZERO TOLERANCE
POLICY

ACTIVELY
MANAGED WITH
CONTRARIAN
THINKING

1-866-AVE-MARIA

AVE MARIA MUTUAL FUNDS

avemariafunds.com

Past performance does not guarantee future results.

Schwartz Investment Counsel, Inc., a registered investment adviser established in 1980, serves as investment adviser for Ave Maria Mutual Funds and invests only in securities that meet the Funds' investment and religious requirements. The returns may be lower or higher than if decisions were based solely on investment considerations. The method of security selection may or may not be successful and the Funds may underperform or outperform the stock market as a whole. All mutual funds are subject to market risk, including possible loss of principal.

Request a prospectus, which includes investment objectives, risks, fees, charges and expenses and other information that you should read and consider carefully before investing. The prospectus can be obtained by calling 1-866-283-6274 or it can be viewed at www.avemariafunds.com. Distributed by Ultimus Fund Distributors, LLC.

# 'Our Awesome God' Lifts National Champ

By Denis Grasska



The 21-year-old beach volleyball phenom not only has the talent and drive needed to achieve that goal. She also has a strong Catholic faith that keeps her grounded in the highly competitive world that she inhabits.

"It is very easy for me to get caught up in comparing myself to other athletes, feeling like I'm not doing enough, wanting to make the people around me proud," said Kraft, a senior at the University of Southern California. "But, at the end of the day, when I can go to Mass and be reminded of our awesome God, everything feels simple and I'm hit with so much perspective on how lucky I am."

Born in San Diego, Kraft grew up in a Catholic family with a twin brother and an older half-sister.

She began playing club indoor volleyball at age 10 and beach volleyball at age 13, ultimately deciding to dedicate herself exclusively to the latter.

"On the beach, it is just you and your partner out there — no subs, nowhere to hide," she said, contrasting it with indoor volleyball, which has six players on each side of the net. "If you're in a rut, you have to get yourself out of it very quickly, if you want to win."

And Kraft has won. A lot.

Among the highlights of her athletic career, she is a three-time NCAA



**DEDICATION:** Beach volleyball player Megan Kraft, a senior at the University of Southern California, is committed to her sport — but even more so to her Catholic faith.

national champion and a three-time All-American. She was PAC-12 Freshman of the Year in 2021 and Player of the Year in 2023; she was also half of the Pair of the Year in 2021 with teammate Tina Graudina and in 2023 with Delaynie Maple.

Kraft has represented the United States at more than 20 international events. She won the 2021 Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) Beach Volleyball U19 World Championship with Maple and the 2023 Hamburg Queen of the Court tournament with Emily Stockman.

She plans to continue playing beach volleyball professionally after her graduation from USC, where she

is currently on the Dean's List and working on a bachelor's degree in Accounting.

"I want to play beach volleyball as long as my body will allow it, because it truly brings me so much joy," said Kraft, who qualified for her first Association of Volleyball Professionals (AVP) Tournament at age 16.

Baptized at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Mission Hills, Kraft received her First Communion and the sacrament of confirmation at St. Therese of Carmel Parish in Carmel Valley, which she considers her home parish when she is in San Diego.

She feels fortunate that, unlike many young people, she has "never

been tempted to put my faith on the back-burner."

During her freshman year at USC, she was invited to join a Bible study for female athletes. Since accepting that invitation, she has continued to participate each year.

Kraft attends Sunday Mass at the USC Caruso Catholic Center, which serves the university's Catholic students. She also attends daily Mass about three times a week and Eucharistic adoration once a week.

She said, "I find that going to the chapel every day, if I can, really helps me think clearly and gives me a perspective of gratitude for every day I get to live."

When she has traveled abroad for international tournaments, Kraft has sought out nearby Catholic churches, experiencing firsthand that the Mass is "the same in every church around the world, even if it is in a different language."

From her faith, she draws solace and strength.

"The biggest thing I struggle with is anxiety and a desire to please every single person," she said, "and, with my faith, I am able to step back, think logically, and remember that, in the end, everything I do should be done to glorify the Lord."

She added, "During the hard workouts and times where my body is saying no, I feel strongly that I am able to push through, because of the mental strength I have from my faith."





### Prepared Meals Ready to Reheat at Home

Entertain with Ease
Hors d'oeuvres & Party Trays
The makings of Delicious Parties or
impromptu get-together

### Full Service Catering

Dining Indoor & Patio Thur-Sun Bakery Open Daily

Order online or call (858) 488-1725

www.thefrenchgourmet.com





Lenten meals available









# Community Serves Joy, Hope at 'Embrace'

**Bv Sharon Burns** 



EL CENTRO — The Catholic community launched a holiday

celebration six years ago to bring joy and hope to the needy in the Imperial Valley. The 2023 edition of the Embrace may have drawn the most participants ever.

That's how it looked to Deacon Domingo Enriquez, who initially proposed the event, a collaborative effort of El Centro Catholic and Catholic Charities.

This year, the community hosted the Embrace at two locations on Dec. 9: at the St. Mary Parish Center and, for the first time, at the day center run by Catholic Charities that provides services to the homeless.

For months, community members had donated food for the pantry, and toys and personal items through bins set up at St. Mary and Our Lady of Guadalupe churches, which make up Our Lady of the Valley (OLV) Parish. They also contributed thousands of dollars and served as volunteers on event day.

At St. Mary's, participants received a barbecue meal, groceries, haircuts and raffle prizes. Children played in a fun zone, participated in a cake walk, received toys and visited with Santa Claus.

Community members donated funds



**HELPING HANDS:** Homeless individuals at Catholic Charities' day center received a special meal as part of the holiday celebration, the Embrace, in El Centro on Dec. 9. At St. Mary's Parish Center, participants received a meal, groceries and haircuts from barbers from the Learning Institute of Southern California, which donated the services.



to purchase more than 2,000 pounds in groceries and contributed \$25,000, which was used to buy gifts, said Father Mark Edney, who leads OLV Parish.

Deacon Enriquez said that volunteers had served more than 1,000 plates of food by the time the event ended at 2 p.m.

"The parish center was filled, as was the school auditorium," he said. "I think we served more people than any other Embrace."

Father Edney thanked many contributors to the event, including the Good Times Valle Imperial Car Club, which also organized a toy drive.

"We feared that we would run out of toys. Just when we needed them most, these beautiful gifts arrived to tide us over until the end," he wrote in a social media post showing tables filled with toys.

Catholic Charities team members assisted individuals and families at both locations, said Appaswamy "Vino" Pajanor, the organization's chief executive officer.

At the day center, 57 people received help, gift cards and groceries. At the St. Mary's campus, team members helped 39 families and 86 individuals to sign up for the CalFresh food program, and they all received backpacks, lunch bags, stretching exercise bands, kneeling pads to avoid injury, and hand sanitizer. Lions Club International also provided prescription glasses to those who needed it, Pajanor said.





# 'Spring Forward' Promises Renewal

By Denis Grasska



Catechists in the Diocese of San Diego will have

three opportunities to attend the annual "Spring Forward" conference.

Spring Forward is a mid-year catechetical conference sponsored by the diocesan Office for Evangelization and Catechetical Ministry.

Diocesan Chancellor Marioly Galván, who directs that office, described the event as "a day of spiritual renewal, fellowship and community-building" for catechists as they enter the second half of the faith-formation year.

For catechists in San Diego County, "Spring Forward" will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 20, at St. Michael Parish's Holy Family Center in Poway. There is a \$25 cost to attend.

The presenter will be nationally-known speaker and author Jayne Ragasa-Mondoy, who has served in Catholic education and diocesan catechetical ministry for decades. This past summer, she retired as director of faith formation for the Diocese of Honolulu.

Mondoy's presentation, titled "Out of the Ordinary," was inspired by a quote from Pope Francis: "God is hidden in our life. He is always there; He is concealed in the commonest and most ordinary situations in our life." Her presentation will expound on this theme by reflecting on three biblical

**Amber Zendeias** 

619-563-0480

**DIRECTOR OF ADMISSION** 

Amber@NazarethHouseSD.org

NazarethHouseSD.org

6333 Rancho Mission Rd, San Diego, CA 92108



'SPRING' TIME: The annual Spring Forward conference, held last year in the St. Therese Parish Social Center in Del Cerro, provides an opportunity for spiritual renewal and fellowship at the midpoint of the catechetical year.

stories involving Jesus' friends Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

"We will engage in Jesus' method of using every day, common, ordinary moments as the perfect context for 'kerygmatic catechesis': communicating God's saving love in Jesus Christ so that we may have the fullness of life," she said.

Mondoy added, "I hope that attendees will gain increased confidence as 'kerygmatic catechists' — both in and beyond the classroom — who joyfully share the message of salvation in Jesus Christ ('kerygma') in the context of our everyday lives."

In the Imperial Valley, "Spring Forward" will be presented by Dr. Dora Tobar, who has a doctorate in Dogmatic Theology and serves as senior associate for Hispanic Ministry and

Hispanic Family Ministry in the Diocese of Lafayette, Ind.

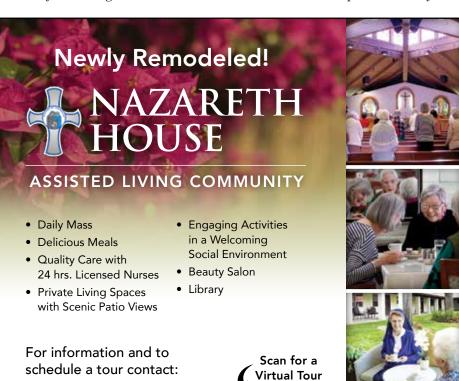
The conference will be offered in Spanish from 6 to 9 p.m., Friday, Jan. 26, at St. Patrick Parish in Calipatria, and in English from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 27, at the same location. The cost to attend will be \$10 for the Jan. 26 conference and \$15 for the next day's.

Tobar explained that she will be giving two talks during the Jan. 26 event. The first will reflect on "the ministry that God has entrusted to married couples, as spouses and parents."

"With the grace of God shared in their daily lives, spouses and parents build the Domestic Church and become witness of the salvation of the cross for the rest of the Church and society," she said. The second talk will explore the importance of good communication within families and will be accompanied by a practical "effective listening" exercise.

Meanwhile, Tobar said, the Jan. 27 event will cover similar ground. It will explain how married couples are the "ministers" of the Domestic Church; offer material that will help parishes to form couples and parents in that role; show how to listen and communicate effectively within the family; and conclude with a prayer for healing from our emotional wounds.

Register for the Spring
Forward conferences at
sdcatholicdisciples.net/
events or (858) 490-8232.





AEEODDARI E CATHOLIC EDIICATION

**AFFORDABLE CATHOLIC EDUCATION**CRISTO REY SAN DIEGO HIGH SCHOOL

TUITION AS LOW AS \$60/MONTH

**10:1 STUDENT TO TEACHER RATIO** 

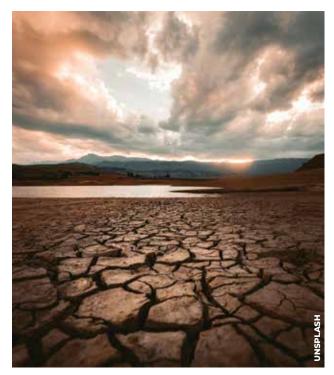
**COLLEGE AND CAREER PREPARATORY** 

Register Today!

JOIN US FOR OUR OPEN HOUSE SUNDAY, JANUARY 28TH, 1-4 PM

INDEPENDENT LIVING | ASSISTED LIVING | HOSPICE CARE
619.432.1899 | CRISTOREYSANDIEGO.ORG | 1228 S 38TH ST, SAN DIEGO, CA 92113

#### OFFICE WEBSITE SDCATHOLIC.ORG/CREATION







# Responding to the Cry of the Earth

By Christina Bagaglio Slentz Over the next seven months, the creation care page will present the "Seven Goals of 'Laudato Si."

These aims were established in connection with the launch of the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development's "Laudato Si" Action Platform (LSAP) and were announced in 2021 to guide our actions, redefining and rebuilding our relationship with each other and our common home.

The online platform is designed to facilitate the Catholic community's response to Pope Francis' "Laudato Si" encyclical, which calls our attention to the harm done to the environment as a result of modern human activity, in many ways reflecting our collective estrangement from God amidst the secular distractions of materialism and overconsumption. These goals offer us pathways to action, expressions of gratitude for the divine gift of creation, the foundation for every blessing we know in this world.

### **Local Response**

This month begins our coverage with "The Response to the Cry of the Earth," defined by the "Laudato Si" platform as "a call to protect our common home for the wellbeing of all, as we equitably address the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and ecological sustainability."

Here, in Southern California, for example, we have already seen the cry of the earth in the form of extreme heat in the eastern region of our diocese with temperatures reaching 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

One of the most biodiverse places

in the world, the San Diego region is home to a vast range of creatures, yet drought related to climate change and habitat loss severely threaten many already imperiled plant and animal species, such as the burrowing owl, the California least tern, the Torrey pine, the Quino checkerspot butterfly, the desert tortoise, and the flat-tailed horned lizard.

In 2022, the Diocese of San Diego took a major step in responding to the cry of the earth, divesting from all direct stock holdings of companies receiving revenue from the extraction and/or production of fossil fuels, the use of which is the main source of today's climate crisis. The diocese also divested from all mutual funds that reflected more than 3 percent of aggregated fund revenues from fossil fuel endeavors. This moral action conforms to the USCCB Socially Responsible Investment Guidelines agreed upon in November of 2021, which includes "Saving Our Global Common Home" as one of five conference investment policies. Diocesan investments were already aligned with the other four conference-specified areas: Protecting human life, promoting human dignity, enhancing the common good, and pursuing economic justice.



To address the problem, the diocese has also committed to eliminating, to the greatest extent possible, the use of plastic water bottles at the Pastoral Center and aims to reduce further use of all single-use plastics. As microplastics have become pervasive throughout the world — commonly found now in breast milk and the human brain we encourage all parishes to take on this challenge and adopt new practices, such as purchasing compostables and reusing good old fashioned silverware and coffee mugs.

### What Can You Do?

Along with parishes, schools, hospitals, universities and businesses, individual families are also called to take action and are invited to engage with the "Laudato Si" Action Platform (laudatosiactionplatform.org). There, you will find suggested actions corresponding to each of the seven goals of "Laudato Si." To respond to the cry of the earth, the platform offers the following actions:

- Conduct an energy audit
- Install solar panels
- Insulate buildings
- Plant native trees
- Plant native gardens
- Remove invasive species • Practice regenerative agriculture
- Protect pollinators
- Ensure sensible fertilizer application
- Institute conservative irrigation models
- Plant buffers along waterways
- Manage water drainage
- Institute regular litter-prevention and removal campaigns
- Pursue conservation plans The Creation Care Ministry is ready

We welcome you to join us on a new

pathway to action in care of our common home. the SDCreation-Care Pathway 2024:



- Though not required, the first recommended step is to hold a screening of the film "The Letter," which provides an overview of our current environmental crisis and Pope Francis' call to respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. More info is available at the letterfilm.org/screenings.
- The second step is to attend an introductory workshop designed to give participants a working scientific knowledge of climate and environmental issues, understanding of Catholic teaching on creation care, and awareness of diocesan activities. The next workshop will be held at the Pastoral Center, Jan. 23, 5:30 to 8 p.m. (Spanish), and Jan. 24, 5:30 to 8 p.m. (English). It's free, but please register at bit.ly/ CCIntro2024, as pizza and refreshments will be provided.
- The final step is creating a "Laudato Si" Action plan which we will facilitate at our hands-on workshop on March 12, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Register at bit.ly/LSAPHandsOn.

We are also happy to bring these events to your parish, and as always, you may contact Christina Slentz at cslentz@sdcatholic.org for help

with these and any other creation care needs For español, scan the red QR code.



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.









#### By Denis Grasska



transformed the urban campus, providing its students with increased safety and new opportunities.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will visit the school on Thursday, Jan. 18, to celebrate Mass and to bless the new additions to the campus, which include an art studio, a turf field, a basketball court, new play structures, and a prayer grotto.

Principal Gina Olsen said the various elements of the recent project, dubbed "Art, Play, Pray," represent "dreamscome-true for this community."

The project was primarily financed by the Manitou Fund, which contributed \$6.5 million. The Shea Foundation donated an additional \$500,000, with the remainder coming in the form of smaller donations.

The project at St. Rita's is the latest in a series of campus renovations that have taken place in recent years at Catholic elementary schools, like Our Lady's School, St. Charles School, St. Columba School, St. Mary's School (Escondido) and St. Katharine Drexel Academy, and at Catholic, Mater Dei Catholic, Vincent Memorial Catholic and Cristo Rey San Diego high schools.

Olsen said the original idea for St. Rita's renovation was "to just create a safer play space for our students," who were playing on "a very steeply sloped asphalt parking lot" that the school shared with the parish. But the project evolved into something much more ambitious.

St. Rita's School broke ground on the new construction in November of 2022.

Two older buildings were razed. With the demolition of the former convent, which was being used as storage space, the school was able to expand the playground. St. Rita's original par-

### **Celebrating Catholic Schools**

National Catholic Schools Week will be observed from Jan. 28 to Feb. 3. This year's theme is "Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community." The celebration is an annual opportunity to reflect on the value of Catholic education. Schools often observe it with Masses, open houses and fun activities.

Visit the website of your local Catholic school or reach out via phone or email to learn more about what events will be held.



**ART, PLAY, PRAY:** A \$7.5-million campus renovation at St. Rita's School was in its final stages in December of 2023. The school broke ground on the project in November of the previous year.

ish hall, which had been repurposed as a cafeteria before falling into disrepair, was torn down to make room for the new prayer grotto.

Newly constructed gates and walls have replaced much of the chain-link fencing and enhanced campus security.

Students in kindergarten through eighth grade will attend their twice-weekly art class inside the approximately 1,200-square-foot art studio. The new building, which has large windows on its west-facing side and glass accordion doors on the east-facing side, will allow students to explore a wider variety of artistic disciplines.

The turf field and the basketball court will be available for P.E. classes as well as for students to enjoy during recess, lunch breaks, and before and after school. Extracurricular sports teams will be able to hold their practices on campus instead of at the Encanto Recreation Center.

New climbing structures with slides were installed, one for preschoolers and another for elementary school students, replacing structures that were more than 20 years old.

Near the one in the preschool yard is a new mural, which depicts a cheerful garden scene. A rose representing St. Rita is surrounded by other plants, animals and natural elements with symbolic meaning, including hummingbirds, caterpillars, sun flowers, clouds and the sun.

Olsen said she can see the grotto, which features a statue of the Blessed Mother and room for others, being used for class retreats.

Though there was no requirement that the new facilities be shared with the wider community, the donors hoped that the addition of the grotto would serve "as a connection between the school and the parish communities," Olsen said.

"The donors envisioned a space that was safe and nurturing during the week, that could also be enjoyed by parishioners and school families watching their kids play on the field or basketball court while they enjoyed



IMPROVEMENTS: St. Charles School, left, and Vincent Memorial Catholic High School in Calexico are among the local Catholic schools that have seen campus upgrades in recent years.

### **Schools Renovated Across Diocese**

**The Southern Cross** 

example.

Catholic schools in the diocese work continuously to update their facilities, with St. Rita's School being the latest

Between spring and summer of 2022, funding from the Shea Homes Foundation enabled St. Katharine Drexel Academy to redo its turf field, replace chain-link with wroughtiron fencing, and replace the windows in one building.

The Shea Homes Foundation was also responsible for recent improvements at three other schools.

At St. Charles School, the summer of 2022 saw the renovation of K-5/office building's exterior,

including installation of a new sign; leveling and installing pavers outside the classrooms; renovating all student bathrooms; and installing student outdoor handwashing stations, new landscaping and security lighting.

At St. Mary's (Escondido), the foundation upgraded Wi-fi connectivity and renovated three classrooms in 2020; renovated the remaining 11 classrooms in 2021; and, from May to August of 2023, made safety upgrades, including installing 12 realtime surveillance cameras and secure, metal doors on both sides of all 14 classrooms, as well as a science lab sink and a water bottle filling station.

At **St. Columba School**, between May and September of 2021, the foundation installed a new turf field, a new playground, air-conditioning in all classrooms, new flooring in the

K-8 classrooms, and new windows for preschool through fifth grade.

Since then, St. Columba School has invested almost \$200,000 in repairing and replacing its blacktop play areas and parking lot; about \$100,000 this past year on new student bathrooms; and nearly \$50,000 to renovate the parish hall with a new sound system, new windows and walls. These projects represented a partnership between the school and parish through joint fundraising campaigns.

In January of 2023, at Cathedral Catholic High School, construction began on Zak Myers Memorial Park. Named after an alumnus and teacher, the park includes the ZAK, which is the main building and the social gathering place, and the Zak Myers Food Pantry and Service-Learning Center.

Thanks to a grant from the Shea

Foundation this year, Cristo Rey San **Diego High School** was able to renew the school's appearance by applying fresh paint, repairing wood-related structural issues on the building, completely overhauling landscaping, revitalizing science classrooms and completely renovating the teacher's lounge.

In May of 2023, nearly four years after the groundbreaking, Cardinal Robert W. McElrov blessed the extensively renovated Vincent Memorial Catholic High School, the Imperial Valley's only Catholic high school. The project, which cost more than \$6 million, included construction of a new building with a science lab, seven classrooms and a chapel; the remodeling of existing classrooms; new sidewalks; a new staff parking area; new exterior paint; and a new front gate.

### **St. Rita** Continued from Page 10

coffee and donuts or some quiet reflection time in the grotto," said Olsen, who noted that the area also provides a nice spot for photos after wedding Masses at St. Rita Church.

Seventh-grader Emmalani Pham, who has attended St. Rita's for almost nine years, likes her school's "new look."

"I'm excited for the new field for safer playground time and the art studio for better art classes, more interactive," she said, "and the prayer grotto is a nice touch to it."

Fellow seventh-graders Christian Michel and Arianna Moore were also enthusiastic about the changes to their campus.

Christian recalled that, when playing soccer on the blacktop, students would "fall very easily" and hurt themselves. Arianna echoed that sentiment and also predicted that the school "wouldn't be as hot anymore" with the blacktop replaced by turf.

Emmalani said, "It'll definitely be safer ... for all the students, and it will look nicer, and hopefully more people will come and join our school."



STUDIO: K-8 students at St. Rita's will be attending their twice-weekly art classes inside a newly constructed, approximately 1,200-square-foot art studio.



#### By Denis Grasska

Father Pat Mulcahy has served as pastor of Mary Star of the Sea Parish in La Jolla for the past four years.

Born in San Antonio, Texas, into a military family, he was ordained to the priesthood on June 30, 1995, for the Diocese of San Diego.

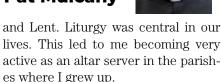
Father Mulcahy, 56, previously pastored the parishes of St. Joseph Cathedral (2015-2019); Corpus Christi, Bonita (2005-2015); and St. Mary Star of the Sea, Oceanside (2001-2005).

# Question: What role did the Catholic faith play in your life growing up?

**Answer:** I grew up in a very faithful Catholic family. Sunday Mass was absolutely part of our regimen, but even more so, we were the family that would go to daily Mass during Advent

Pastor, Mary Star of the Sea Parish

### Father Pat Mulcahy



### When did you recognize that you were called to the priesthood?

I was always kind of attracted to the idea of being a priest. I grew up in parish environments where the priests were really great examples. It may sound funny, but the priests that I encountered regularly through altar-serving and other activities seemed like they were laughing all the time. They seemed to have a real joy in their lives. So, I always thought that the vocation of priesthood would be really great.

For me, the question was: Do I have the call? As I teenager and during college, I really felt that I should explore this calling. And I was affirmed in that by the people around me. When you go to daily Mass as a teenager, other daily Mass-goers tend to notice and are proactive in suggesting that you might be a candidate for priesthood.

### What was it that you found attractive about the priesthood?

When you're active and engaged in the liturgy, such as when you're an altar server, you get a real sense of the meaning of what you're doing. It's not just about fulfilling an obligation. I really developed a sense of the awe of the Eucharist. I think, fundamentally, where it starts is with a real, deep love for the Real Presence of Jesus.

### What has been most rewarding about priestly life?

I feel very privileged to be invited into people's lives at very special, sacred moments. As a priest, you have access to people when they're most joyful, such as at the baptism of a child or on a wedding day, and when they or a loved one is ill or dying. I feel in awe that God would use me as an instrument to have them meet Jesus through me.

After 28-plus years as a priest, I'm also still in awe of celebrating the Eucharist and being the instrument through which the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ comes into our presence. I don't think I'll ever stop being in awe of that or feeling humbled by that. It's just the most awesome feeling for me.

# National Catholic Schools Week will be observed from Jan. 28 to Feb. 3. Why are Catholic schools so important?

There is a moment in Sacred Scripture when the disciples go to Jesus and say, "Lord, teach us to pray." I

Mulcahy Continued on Page 13





### Mulcahy Continued from Page 12

think that is a beautiful reflection of what a Catholic school is all about.

The academics and the formation are all very important, but at the center is helping young people to develop a relationship with God; to not only develop their gifts, but to connect them with God in a way that they see that they're not an accident or a mistake, that their life has a purpose, and that they have a value that maybe they don't hear about from the secular world. I think a Catholic school environment makes all the difference in the world.

There are exponential rewards for investing in a Catholic school. If you can form and shape a young person to center their lives on the Eucharist, to develop their gifts and talents, think about the impact they're going to have in the world. Multiply that by 200 students in school and you forever change the world in a dramatic way.

#### How meaningful is it to pastor a parish with a school, like Mary Star of the Sea?

Prior to coming to Mary Star of the Sea, I specifically requested to be assigned to a parish with a school. For all of us, one of the most important aspects of whatever vocation or job we have is that we want to feel like we make a difference. The impact we can make on young people going forward for years to come is just awesome.

There was a young woman who attended kindergarten at the parish where I first started as a priest. She remembered how I would try to teach at a level that kids would understand,

especially in the context of the liturgy. She called me up many years later and asked me to celebrate her wedding because of how fondly she remembered her experience as a kindergartner.

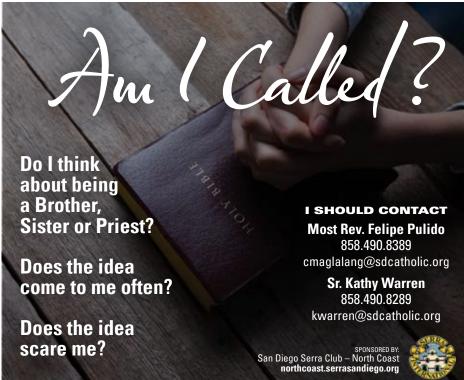
### What advice do you have when it comes to discerning one's vocation?

One of the biggest obstacles for me when I was discerning priesthood was the question, "Do I have the skills to do this?" I think that's a natural inclination when it comes to the secular world: "Well, I want to do this job, but do I have the ability to do it?"

But, with any calling or vocation or task that is God-given, God never asks you to do something without giving you the ability to do it. It might be scary, it might be risky, but God knows more than we do and knows each one of us more than we know ourselves. The man who feels a call to priest-hood shouldn't be worrying about his shortcomings; he should be thinking, "I'm really excited that, despite my brokenness, God would use me in this incredibly awesome way."

At the heart of any vocation, whether it's priesthood, marriage, mother-hood or fatherhood, or the single life, there should be a real trust that God knows what He's doing. If I cooperate with His grace, I can find that niche where I'll not only discover joy and peace, but where I'll be able to make a difference in the world and bring glory to God. If we focus on the very fact that "God is calling me," the other things will work out.







**SPECIAL MASS:** Cardinal Robert W. McElroy celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King's legacy on Jan. 15, 2023, along with Deacons Marvin Threatt, front, and Robert Booth.

# Cardinal to Celebrate Dr. King's 'Call to Service' on Jan. 14

#### **The Southern Cross**



"Life's most persistent and urgent question

is, 'What are you doing for others?'" Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., once asked.

The Diocesan Commission for African American Catholics invites everyone to a special Mass on Jan. 14 to honor Dr. King's call to service.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will celebrate the Gospel Mass at 8:30 a.m. at Christ the King Catholic Church, 29 N. 32nd St., in San Diego.

Dr. King's transformative work

touched "many people from all walks of life," said Reginald Stewart, the commission's chair.

Dr. King dedicated his life and work to the service of others, tirelessly working as a pastor and civil rights leader.

This will be the sixth annual Mass in the diocese honoring Dr. King's vision of every man, woman and child working together peacefully, in the service of each other.

"We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny," he once said. "Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."



### MARRIAGE, FAMILY & CHILD COUNSELOR MFT LIC. #20751



2067 W. Vista Way, Suite 130 Vista, CA 92083

The Shops 1030 La Bonita Dr., Suite 130

Lake San Marcos, CA 92078 (760) 304-4522





### Kate Romosod

REALTOR® (858) 518-2344 Kate.Romosod@gmail.com Cal BRE#01957292

Upon closing, \$500 will be donated on your behalf to the church you are registered at, and \$100 will be donated to "The Southern Cross," or any charitable organization of your choice.

Each Office is Independently Owned and Operated



JOYOUS: A dance troupe from Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Chula Vista participated in the diocese's Our Lady of Guadalupe Procession and Mass on Dec. 3.

### The Southern Cross



SAN DIEGO — More than 35 parishes and

ministry groups from across the county joyously participated in the diocese's annual procession through neighborhood streets to honor Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Afterward, more than 2,000 faithful attended a special Mass celebrated by Cardinal Robert W. McElroy.

On Dec. 3, the procession began at the Morley Field sports complex and traveled through North Park streets, ending about a mile away at St. Augustine High School, where the Mass was held in the gym.

Cardinal McElroy, accompanied by the diocese's three auxiliary bishops, led the procession that included brightly decorated vehicle floats, folkloric dance groups, and parish and ministry group members singing and praying

Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido delivered the homily, first in Spanish and then in English, before faithful from all corners of the county and of all ages. Many were dressed in traditional attire adorned with images of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

After the Mass, participants jammed the school's courtyard for a fiesta, complete with traditional fare such as tamales and other favorites.



TRADITION: Auxiliary Bishops Ramón Bejarano, left, Michael Pham and Felipe Pulido joined Cardinal Robert W. McElroy in the procession.







 $\textbf{\textit{STAR POWER:}} \textit{Faithful of all ages participated in the Filipino traditional Christmas-time \textit{Mass.}}$ 

# **Community Lights the Way to Our Savior**

### **The Southern Cross**



Simbang Gabi is a Filipino devotional novena of Masses

held in anticipation of the birth of the Savior and in honor of His mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Filipino Catholic community held the fourth annual vigil Mass on Dec. 14 that launched the novena. A total of 21 Filipino parish and ministry groups from across the county converged at St. Michael Church (San Diego), overflowing with more than 1,000 faithful.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy celebrated the Mass, accompanied by the diocese's three auxiliary bishops and about 20 priests.

The Mass opened with a procession of lighted five-point stars, or parols, a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem. And at one point, the faithful lighted candles, signifying that they, too, were the light leading to Christ.



 $\textbf{\textit{BLESSING:}} \ \textit{Cardinal Robert W. McElroy blessed the community's parols, lighted five-point stars symbolizing the \textit{Star of Bethlehem.}}$ 



The life we lead of rushing around, stress and confusion increases tensions and conflicts between couples, families and friends.

Accelerated changes shake the foundation of our traditions, beliefs and values that guaranteed us certain stability and security. Polarization and fanaticism emerge to compensate for the sense of insecurity and uncertainty unleashed by accelerated change.

Emotional reactions of rage or depression spike. We turn to alcohol and drugs to fuel our dreams instead of passion and drive, which are dying within. Life becomes unmanageable and some seek medical, psychological and spiritual help.

In the consultations, we hear the stories, open books packed with anxieties, sorrows, depressions and addictions. In these sacred encounters, the therapist, pastor or spiritual

### Columnist

### Ricardo Márquez



guide experiences the grace and the gift of another human being, just like himself, opening up to explore what is ailing his body, his mind and his soul.

Thanks to the feelings of dissatisfaction and discomfort that bloom in these crises, people seek the health and harmony lost in their lives; that is why we appreciate, encourage and value people who take the first step to seek help and support, to begin the road to healing, to acknowledge that I'm wounded and broken.

In these initial meetings, some people see themselves as victims of others, or of situations that they blame for their ills and dissatisfactions: "I feel overwhelmed by my wife's demands"; "My kids don't obey me, they are very rebellious"; "It's not like before, when there was respect ..." The focus is what's occurring outside. It's other people who make us feel bad.

The process of healing requires exploration, to learn to look inward to the labyrinths of our family's origins, experiences, traumas and shadows. We are helped on this road by those who by experience, reflection and learning have already traveled this territory; they are shepherds, therapists and spiritual guides.

Interior exploration can be painful, like the labor pains that deliver life. Sometimes, there is rage or tears, unleashed in a secure space, letting in light and acceptance, which lead to peace and reconciliation.

In this process, we come to understand that change comes from within, and we begin to awaken, we begin to take the power away from others to affect our emotional states, and we begin the road to taking responsibility for our own reactions and responses.

"You" are not the cause of my ills;

it's "me" who interprets your words from the perspective of my own wounds and shadows, and from there I respond to defend myself and to attack you.

When I learn to accept myself and love myself, that's when I can stand before you, not armed with arguments against you, vulnerable and compassionate ... and from there I can recover my power and real self. From my self-acceptance and transformation, I can be the change that I want to see in others.

When life seems unmanageable, we recognize that our will, therapies or discipline are not enough. And it's in that awareness that we open ourselves to grace, to Jesus, to the Holy Spirit. It's the gift of faith that allows us to open ourselves to a transcendent dimension, to the source of the infinite love we have experienced, to which we confidently deliver ourselves, to be healed from our depths.

Ricardo Márquez can be reached at marquez\_muskus@yahoo.com.



### **MULTICULTURAL NOVENA FOR LIFE JANUARY 5-13, 2024**



STARTS AT OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE PARISH (CALEXICO)

AND ENDS AT THE SAN DIEGO WALK FOR LIFE

ON JANUARY 13TH (WATERFRONT PARK)

SAN DIEGO COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING 1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, SAN DIEGO, CA 92101

**SCHEDULE** 

#### JANUARY

- OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE (CALEXICO) MISSION SAN LUIS REY (OCEANSIDE) ST JOSEPH'S CHALDEAN CATHOLIC (SPRING VALLEY) GOOD SHEPHERD (MIRAMESA)
- SAINT PIUS X (CHULA VISTA)
- SAINT DIDACUS (SAN DIEGO) MISSION SAN LUIS REY (OCEANSIDE)
- OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY (SAN DIEGO)
- SAN DIEGO WALK FOR LIFE (WATERFRONT PARK)
- SPANISH/ENGLISH MULTILINGUAL (YOUTH) ARAMAIC/ENGLISH 6:00 PM VIETNAMESE/ENGLISH TAGALOG/ENGLISH 7:00 AM 8:00 AM SAMOAN/ENGLISH 8:45 AM ITALIAN/LATIN/ENGLISH 8:30 AM MULTILINGUAL

### INDIVIDUALS CAN PARTICIPATE IN PERSON OR BY ZOOM

HTTPS://RB.GY/KTWOJO

MEETING ID: 799 752 8850

PASSCODE: ROSARY

FOR INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT ARMANDO MENA AMERICANAZTEC@SBCGLOBAL.NET OR (760) 213-1535







### Year of Health Challenges, Travel and Synod

**By Cindy Wooden** 



VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis' 2023 was a year of important

trips made or postponed, a predecessor's funeral and his own 10th anniversary as pope, a call to the world to act on climate change and a call to the Catholic Church to strengthen its mission by learning "synodality."

The Argentine pope, who was born Dec. 17, 1936, was to finish the year as an 87-year-old.

As the oldest reigning pope in the last 120 years, Pope Francis' year was punctuated with hospitalizations, breathing difficulties and ongoing mobility challenges. The last pope to serve at his age was Pope Leo XIII, who died at the age of 93 in 1903.

For Pope Francis, the year began with mourning Pope Benedict XVI, who resigned in 2013 and died Dec. 31, 2022.

The first of five foreign trips Pope Francis made in 2023 took him to Congo and then on an ecumenical peace mission to South Sudan. The trip had been set for July 2022, but was canceled because Pope Francis was experiencing intense pain in his knee.

Throughout the year, he would be pushed in a wheelchair to his place when presiding at Mass in St. Peter's



**ENCOUNTER:** Pope Francis greets residents as he arrives at the headquarters of the Apostolic Prefecture of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, Sept. 1, 2023.

Basilica and when greeting people at his general audiences.

Pope Francis spent nine days in Rome's Gemelli hospital in June after undergoing a three-hour surgery to repair a hernia.

Suffering from a respiratory infection, he also spent four days in March in in the hospital. When he was experiencing respiratory difficulties again in late November, he went to the hospital again for a CT scan but returned to his Vatican residence the same day.

The bronchial infection, which made his breathing very labored, forced him to cancel his planned trip to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates in early December for COP28; he would have been the first pope to attend a U.N. climate change summit.

"Are we working for a culture of life or a culture of death?" he asked world leaders in his COP28 message read in Dubai by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state. "To all of you I make this heartfelt appeal: Let us choose life! Let us choose the future!"

In anticipation of the conference, Pope Francis in early October released "Laudate Deum" ("Praise God"), a follow-up document to his 2015 encyclical "Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home."

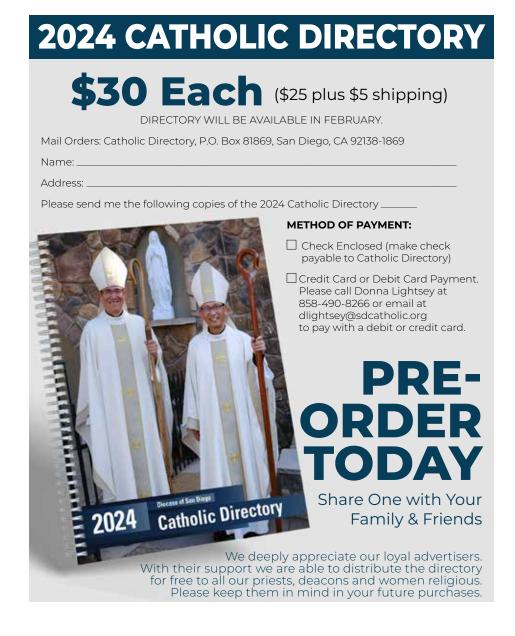
The two major events Pope Francis was able to participate in were World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, in August and the long-awaited first assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Synodality in October.

WYD brought more than 1.5 million young people together and, in a letter for local youth day celebrations in November, Pope Francis described it as an "event that surpassed all our expectations. Our meeting in Lisbon was magnificent, a genuine experience of renewal, an explosion of light and joy!"

In meetings both with young people and with clergy, the pope's refrain was that in the Church there is room for "everyone, everyone, everyone!"

At his Mass concluding the synod assembly, held Oct. 4-29, the pope summarized his key hope for the synod, which will meet again in October 2024: "The Lord will guide us and help us to be a more synodal and missionary Church, a Church that adores God and serves the women and men of our time, going forth to bring to everyone the consoling joy of the Gospel."

 $Catholic\ News\ Service$ 





# Pope Francis: Al Poses 'Grave Ethical Concern'

**By Carol Glatz** 

VATICAN CITY — All forms of artificial intelligence should be used to alleviate human suffering, promote integral development and help end wars and conflicts, not increase inequality and injustice in the world, Pope Francis said in his message for World Peace Day 2024.

"Artificial intelligence ought to serve our best human potential and our highest aspirations, not compete with them," the pope said in his message for the Jan. 1 commemoration.

The message, "Artificial Intelligence and Peace," was addressed to all men and women in the world, and in particular to heads of government and the leaders of the different religions and civil society. It was released Dec. 14 at a Vatican news conference.

The pope's message highlighted the "need to strengthen or, if necessary, to establish bodies charged with examining the ethical issues arising in this field and protecting the rights of those who employ forms of artificial intelligence or are affected by them."

The impact of any form of artificial intelligence "depends not only on its technical design, but also on the aims and interests of its owners and developers, and on the situations in which it will be employed," he said.

Positive outcomes "will only be

achieved if we show ourselves capable of acting responsibly and respect such fundamental human values as 'inclusion, transparency, security, equity, privacy and reliability," the pope added.

Many questions need to be asked, he added, including, "What will be the consequences, in the medium and long term, of these new digital technologies? And what impact will they have on individual lives and on societies, on international stability and peace?"

"Artificial intelligences already exert huge influence and will increasingly do so, but we do not know where AI will take us in politics and commerce, culture and the environment and so on, so everyone needs to be better informed and take responsibility," Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, told reporters on Dec. 14.

In his message, the pope pinpointed specific technologies and advancements in the world of artificial intelligence that require urgent attention and oversight such as: machine or deep learning: surveillance systems; social credit or ranking systems; and lethal autonomous weapons systems or LAWs.

The weaponization of artificial intelligence through LAWs, he said, "is a cause for grave ethical concern. Autonomous weapon systems can never be morally responsible subjects," and so "it is imperative to ensure adequate, meaningful and consistent human oversight of weapon systems."

Catholic News Service



### R. Neder Construction

### **GENERAL CONSTRUCTION**

R. Neder Construction, Inc. has been in business for 15 years, providing general construction services throughout San Diego County. We specialize in interior door, finish trim and custom carpentry. We are fully licensed, bonded and insured.

### **Contact Us for FREE ESTIMATES**

**General Contracting** Ray Neder

619-654-7052

ray@rnederconstruction.com

**Finish Carpentry** Silvestre Vargas

619-823-8356

silver@rnederconstruction.com

### National Eucharistic Revival Supplement – January 2024

Let us walk together with our bishops in these final months of the National Eucharistic Revival. Like the disciples on the Road to Emmaus, the Eucharistic Christ burns within our hearts too!

### THEME: THE RIGHT TO LIFE IS ROOTED IN THE EUCHARIST

#### **Eucharistic Saint**

St. Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997). After founding the Missionaries of Charity in 1950, Mother Teresa established a regimen of daily Mass and Eucharistic Adoration for her sisters so that the work of serving the poor would bear great fruit by their prayer. In 1994, she publicly challenged Bill and Hillary Clinton on their advocacy

#### **Back to Basics**

of abortion because the Eucharist and human dignity are inseparable.

EUCHARISTIC ADORATION: The Catholic Mass is the supreme act of worship, but Catholics also worship our Eucharistic Lord outside of Mass. We maintain tabernacles in our churches to reserve the Eucharistic species for the sick, and we solemnly display the Eucharist for worship in Adoration and Benediction services.

Many Catholic parishes have adoration chapels so that the faithful may pray in silence before the Eucharist and continue the angelic work of adoring the Lord's True Presence. The mission of certain contemplative religious orders is to pray for the world in *perpetual* Eucharistic Adoration. "The Catholic Church has always offered [adoration] to the sacrament of the Eucharist...not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession." (CCC, 1378)

### Calls to Action



**Human Dignity** – "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you" (Jn 6:53). The words of Christ Himself convince us that the Eucharist is the very source of life, for our souls and for the world.

Practice - In this month dedicated to the sanctity of human life, let us consecrate all works of the pro-life movement to the most Holy Eucharist and ask the Lord to bring abundant fruits of life and conversion to our nation.

"It is from the blood of Christ that all draw the strength to commit themselves to promoting life.... it is the foundation of the absolute certitude that in God's plan life will be victorious." ~ Pope John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, 25.

#### National Eucharistic Revival News and Resources

Keep up to date on the National Eucharistic Revival at the Bishops' website: www.EucharisticRevival.org. For news on the upcoming Eucharistic Congress, go to www.eucharisticcongress.org. Also, get the Eucharistic Revival Edition Prayer Cards atwww.SitStandKneel.com for great evangelization resources to spread the Eucharistic fire!

# News Briefs

### **USD to Host National Conference on Catholic Higher Education**

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will be one of the featured speakers in a national conference, "Lighting the Way Forward," to be held Jan. 11 through 13 at the University of San Diego.

The conference, which will launch the university's 75th anniversary observance, will explore the purpose of Catholic higher education in a changing world.

The event will bring together around 175 speakers, including USD faculty and administrators, professors from Catholic universities across the nation, local K-12 Catholic school educators and leaders from the Diocese of San Diego.

Cardinal McElroy is scheduled to speak at the opening plenary session on Jan. 11, on "Care for Our Common Home."

Other speakers include the Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, CM, prominent leader in the field of Catholic higher education; Gloria Purvis, the host of The Gloria Purvis Podcast from America Media; and Hosffman Ospino, PhD, a college professor, author and leading researcher.

More information is available on the web page, *sandiego.edu/lighting-the-way/* 

#### Jan. 22 Is a Day of Penance

WASHINGTON — For Catholics in the United States, Jan. 22 is a day of penance and prayer in commemoration of the *Roe v. Wade* decision issued by the U.S. Supreme Court on that date in 1973.

The 7-2 court decision, which was effectively overturned last year, established a constitutional right to abortion.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 373, states: "In all the dioceses of the United States of America, Jan. 22 ... shall be observed as a particular day of penance for violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion, and of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life."

In addition to prayer, Catholics should perform an act of penance, such as abstinence from eating meat or fasting.

ATTENTION ADVERTISERS —We appreciate your business. However, errors sometimes occur. Please read your ad the first day it runs. If you should find a mistake in your ad, please let us know right away, by calling (858) 490-8266. We'll be happy to make the necessary changes. Tearsheets are provided upon request.

LIMITS OF LIABILITY — The Southern Cross assumes no financial responsibility for errors or omissions of copy. It is the advertiser's responsibility to read ad proofs before publication and notify us of any errors. We reserve the right to adjust in full any error for which we are responsible by publishing a corrected insertion. Requests for adjustments must be made within 30 days of ad publication. All copy must be approved by the newspaper, which reserves the right to request changes or reject an ad. Publisher reserves the right to cancel any ad at any time. All advertising is subject to credit approval.

#### Diocese Generously Supports Hawaii Fire Recovery

Catholics in the Diocese of San Diego contributed \$217,477.66 through Catholic Charities to support response and recovery efforts related to the devastating wildfires that broke out last August in Hawaii.

A special collection was held at parishes in the days after the fires began.

#### School Gala to Be at Petco Park

A fundraising gala for St. Kieran Catholic School will be held on Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024, at Home Plate Club at Petco Park.

The event, which is dubbed "Meet Me at Home Plate," will take place from 6 to 10 p.m. and will include a two-hour host bar, silent auction and raffles.

For St. Kieran School families, the cost to attend is \$100 per person. For those who are not affiliated with the school, admission is \$120 per person. The deadline to purchase tickets is Wednesday, Jan. 3.

For more information, email *skcs. gala@gmail.com*. RSVP by Tuesday, Jan. 2, at *forms.gle/GMqBEBR9 wtMAHW24A*.

#### St. Gregory's Hosts 'Mass of Hope'

The 14th annual Mass of Hope will be celebrated at 10 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 10, 2024, at St. Gregory the Great Church in Scripps Ranch.

The event is organized by the parish's Family Cancer Support Ministry.

The organizers say, "We invite everyone affected by cancer or other serious illness to this special celebration of hope. An anointing of the sick will be administered. You can honor a loved one by: setting a candle by the altar, writing a prayer petition, (or) submitting a photo for display."

For more information, call (858) 653-3540. Photos must be dropped off at the church office by Friday, Feb. 9.

#### 'World Day of Sick' to Be Celebrated with Mass

A Mass in observance of the World Day of the Sick will be celebrated at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 10, at Good Shepherd Parish.

Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido will be the principal celebrant.

Organized by the Order of Malta and the diocesan Office for Life, Peace and

# BILINGUAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

Based in the Catholic Faith

Sliding fee scale, and various insurances accepted.



- SPECIALIZING IN:
- Anxiety and Depression
- Parenting
- Bereavement and Loss
- Marriage & Family Relationships

Mary L Hill
MA LMFT (Lic. # 83383)
760-687-9883

maryleehillmft@gmail.com www.maryleehillmft.com 1650 Linda Vista Dr. Ste. 210, San Marcos, CA 92078 Justice, the annual event will include the anointing of the sick, a blessing of the hands of caregivers, and a blessing with Lourdes water.

For more information, contact Maria Valencia at *mvalencia@ sdcatholic.org* or (858) 490-8323.

#### Ladies Guild Holding Fundraiser Luncheon

The Father Joe's Villages Ladies Guild will hold its annual fundraiser luncheon, "A Souper Bowl of Caring," on Monday, Feb. 12, in the parish hall at St. Gregory the Great's in Scripps Ranch.

Tickets are \$60 each. The event will include a silent auction for a variety of gift baskets. An opportunity drawing also will be held.

All proceeds will benefit children living at Father Joe's Villages.

RSVP by Jan. 31, to: Brenda Lane, 1205 Pacific Highway #902, San Diego, CA 92101. Checks should be made payable to "Village Ladies Guild."

For more information, contact Margie Mills at (619) 733-7410 or margie.r.mills@gmail.com.



#### **Father Ramon Marrufo**

Father Ramon Marrufo, a retired priest of the Diocese of San Diego, died from cancer on Nov. 15, 2023. He was 72.

Born in San Diego, Father Marrufo was ordained to the priesthood on March 19, 1976.

He served as pastor of St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Fallbrook from 2009 until his retire-

ment from active ministry in February 2019. He was particularly devoted to the care of the marginalized and dispossessed.

Among his previous assignments, he also was pastor of Our Lady of Angels Parish (1986-1990), St. Mary Parish in Escondido (1990-1994), and St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Vista (1994-2008).

His funeral Mass was celebrated Nov. 28 at St. Peter the Apostle Church.

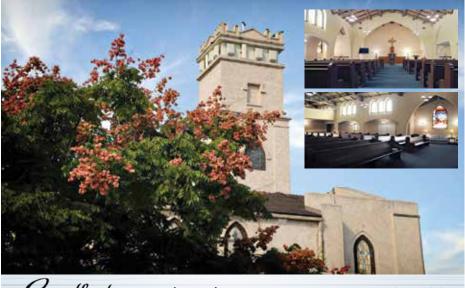
# Priest Assignment

The following has been announced by the Office of the Cardinal:

**Father Juan Pablo Barragan Mendoza, TOR,** was appointed associate pastor of St. Mary Parish in Escondido, effective Dec. 1.



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





(619) 582-1700 goodbodymortuary.com

5027 El Cajon Blvd, San Diego's Leading Catholic Funeral Directors FD LIC #790

F. D+ IP II

Dignity<sup>\*</sup>

Receive Free Information with No Obligation by Contacting Us.

