

# THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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EL ESPAÑOL  
SECCIÓN B

## Our Family Continues to Grow



Page 3

LEONARDO ENRIQUE FONSECA

**FAMILY PHOTO:** Nearly 1,300 people in San Diego and Imperial counties will join the Catholic Church, exceeding pre-pandemic numbers. Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will again preside at the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion ceremonies in San Diego, as he did last year.



### Bearing Witness

"Witness for Life" was the theme of the 12th annual San Diego Walk for Life. **Page 5**



### Winning Combo

Parish young adult group combines book discussion and snorkeling. **Page 8**



### Praiseworthy

Eight religious sisters celebrate milestones in consecrated life — 25 to 70 years! **Page 14**

2024 ANNUAL CATHOLIC APPEAL  
2024 LLAMADO CATÓLICO ANUAL

UNITED IN  
UNIDOS EN

Supplement Inside

Suplemento  
en el Interior

Christ  
Cristo



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# THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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**DIOCESE OF  
SAN DIEGO**

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.



# Cardinal Calls for Gaza Ceasefire

**The Southern Cross**



Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, of the Diocese of San Diego, and Archbishop John Wester, of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, N.M., joined Pope Francis in calling for peace in the Middle East.

The prelates issued a joint statement on Jan. 17, calling for an immediate end to the war in Gaza, where the death toll had already exceeded 23,000 after more than 100 days of military action.

The full text of that statement follows:

"The continuing war in Gaza that has killed tens of thousands of men, women and children and threatens to increase violence throughout the Middle East calls us as Americans to press for a national policy which is focused unswervingly on an immediate and total ceasefire.

"The massacre of more than 1,200 innocent Israelis, including children, and the abhorrent victimization of women on Oct. 7 stand as a shocking attack by Hamas upon the most basic principles of human dignity. It absolutely delegitimizes any future role for Hamas in the Middle East and underscores the right of Israel to bring to justice all those who carried out this outrage. Moreover, the piercing moral claim of releasing the hostages should be a priority for the whole international community.

"The siege of Gaza has lasted more



**DESTRUCTION:** Israeli bombardment devastated the city of Gaza after Hamas invaded Israel Oct. 7, 2023.

than 100 days and has already resulted in the deaths of more than 23,000 people, most of them innocent civilians. This is more than one percent of the entire population of Gaza. Proportionately for the United States, this would represent more than 3.5 million lives.

In addition, the infrastructure, housing and commerce of Gaza has been systematically destroyed by Israeli attacks, rendering much of the population homeless. A humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding in Gaza before the eyes of the world. In such a conflict, continuing such warfare is neither just nor tolerable.

"In addition, there is tremendous risk that the present war will produce major conflict in Lebanon, increase violence in the West Bank, and cause outbreaks throughout the Middle East.

"It is for these reasons that Pope Francis has called repeatedly in these days for an end to military action in the Holy Land. 'I continue to follow

the conflict in Israel and Palestine with much worry and pain ... I renew my call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire: There is so much suffering there.' Only such a ceasefire can end the humanitarian disaster in Gaza, stop the growing risk of expanded warfare in the Middle East and maximize the chance of returning the hostages to their families alive.

"It is critical for us in the United States to support this call for an immediate ceasefire, and to press for our government to make it the centerpiece of its foreign policy in the Middle East at this pivotal moment. Our country has a powerful voice on these issues. Let it echo Pope Francis' call amidst suffering on all sides, 'No to weapons, yes to peace.' For this will be the only true pathway for justice in the land that so deeply reflects the presence of God."

# New Liaison to Other Faiths

**By Denis Grasska**



Father Bradley Easterbrooks has been appointed secretary of the diocesan Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

Since his appointment in early December, he has been assisting Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano, the new Vicar for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. The bishop succeeded Msgr. Dennis Mikulanis, who was the first to hold that position and served in that role from 1990 until his retirement from active ministry last July.

Father Easterbrooks, who continues to serve as associate pastor of St. Mark Parish in San Marcos, explained that his duties include helping the diocese to build and maintain relationships with non-Catholic Christian denominations and other faith traditions, and looking for opportunities to collaborate with them to serve the local community.

He will also help to support Catholic parishes in their own ecumenical and interreligious work.



Father Bradley Easterbrooks

"The love of God is always a unifying love, so unity is an essential dimension to authentic community," said Father Easterbrooks. "Our work in ecumenism and

interreligious dialogue is therefore at the heart of the Church's mission."

"I am personally humbled to be able to serve this ministry in our diocese, particularly because of its significance to a world too often torn apart by division," he said. "God wills to unite all people in a unity that is only possible through love."

Father Easterbrooks described Msgr. Mikulanis as "one of a kind" and acknowledged that he "left big shoes to fill."

For his part, Msgr. Mikulanis expressed confidence in Father Easterbrooks.

"I am really pleased with the appointment of Father Brad to the ec-

umenical and interreligious work for the diocese," said Msgr. Mikulanis. "He is bright, hardworking, has a boatload of common sense, which is very much needed in the work, and is interested in and committed to this particular ministry. He will be a great asset to the diocese working in the field of ecumenical and interreligious affairs."

The new team in the Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Office has "hit the ground running," said Father Easterbrooks, who has already reached out to his counterparts in other churches and faith groups.

He also recently wrote a letter to local Catholic pastors, encouraging them to observe the International Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Jan. 18-25) by celebrating a "Mass for the Unity of Christians" at their parishes.

"Bishop Bejarano and I have also been in discussions about what the next year might bring," said Father Easterbrooks. "So, stay tuned!"



# Nearly 1,300 to Join Catholic Church in 2024

By Denis Grasska



Almost 1,300 people in San Diego and Imperial counties will become Catholic this year.

This includes about 415 catechumens and almost 860 candidates from around 70 local parishes.

The catechumens will receive baptism, confirmation and First Communion at their parishes during the Easter Vigil Mass. The candidates, who are already baptized, will receive the two remaining sacraments of initiation.

"We have once again reached and exceeded pre-pandemic numbers," said Marioly Galván, diocesan chancellor and director of pastoral ministries, referring to this year's class of catechumens and candidates.

"The Catholic family continues to grow," she said, "and we are overjoyed to welcome them home."

The catechumens and candidates, accompanied by their godparents and sponsors, will attend a special ceremony during the Feb. 17-18 weekend.

The Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion is the annual diocesan liturgy at which those enrolled in the OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) process are presented to the bishop and declared ready to receive the sacraments of initiation at Easter.

The liturgy takes its name from a moment that takes place shortly after the homily, when the bishop declares the catechumens to be "members of the elect, to be initiated into the sacred mysteries at the next Easter Vigil," and encourages the candidates to hear "the Lord's call to conversion" and to "be faithful to your baptismal covenant."

Because of the large numbers preparing to join the Church, Galván said, the diocese will be holding five ceremonies — one more than last year. One will take place on the morning of Feb. 17 at St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Imperial. On Feb. 17 and 18, there will be two ceremonies each afternoon at Good Shepherd Parish in Mira Mesa.

Auxiliary Bishops Ramón Bejarano and Felipe Pulido will preside over the Imperial Valley ceremony. Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will preside over all four San Diego ceremonies, joined by Auxiliary Bishops Bejarano, Pulido and Michael Pham.

The ceremonies are a ticketed event and not open to the general public.

Galván said the rite "has always been a moment of great hope and joy for our local Church."

Joseph Horejs, associate director of the diocesan Office for Evangelization and Catechetical Ministry, said that he and his colleagues "love" the annual celebration.

"For those of us who are already in the Church," he said, "it is a beautiful reminder of our own daily conversion and growth in faith."



**FAMILY AFFAIR:** Individuals joining the Church attend the Rite of Election with their godparents and sponsors, and sometimes with their children, as they did at last year's ceremony at Good Shepherd Church.

## 'We're all trying to get closer to God'

Two individuals recently shared their story of why they are preparing to join the Catholic Church this year.

**Jonathan Justin Fer, 26, is a catechumen at St. Charles Parish.**

Originally from Orange County, he attended a Catholic school for one year as a kindergartener but was never baptized and only recently felt a strong pull toward becoming Catholic.

"From the ages of 6 to 23 ... I wasn't as close to Him as I should have been," Fer said of his relationship with God.

He joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 2016. His four years and two months of service included a six-month deployment to Iraq.

In spring of 2021, he moved to Turkey to live with his father and stepmother, who had relocated there. It was while living in that Muslim country that he "felt compelled" to start reading the Bible.

In early 2023, he returned to the U.S. to attend college. He befriended the Catholic couple across the street and asked them if he could attend Mass with them at their parish, St. Charles.

"The more I look back and reflect on the chain of events of the past two and a half years, there's really no doubt in my mind that there is a God," he said, "because ... it's inconceivable to think that I was thousands of miles away, and then I picked the exact location where I would find the exact right people to be in my life ... to bring me closer to God."

Fer said the highlight of the OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) process, which he began last summer, is "the people that you meet."

"You see people that are sort of on a similar journey. ... You can see that they're seeking something that's beyond themselves, and we're all trying to get closer to God."



**Jacqueline Moreno, 29, is a candidate at Christ the King Church.**

Moreno was baptized and, at age 10, received her First Communion — but that's when her connection to her faith stopped.

"I strayed far away from the Church," she said. "It sounds bad, but that's what happened."

As a young adult, she felt that something was missing in her life. She decided, "I need to go and do my confirmation."

When she began the OCIA process last July, she figured she would receive the sacrament and that would be the end of it.

"Once I arrived, I saw that what God is really about is super different than what you hear on the street. It's something beautiful. I said to myself, 'I have to come here.'"

"One of the things that has stuck with me is that God loves everyone. All people are His children."

When she was growing up, adults would tell her that God would punish her if she behaved poorly. "They put ideas in your head that make you fear Him," she recalled.

"It's not like that. I opened my heart, listened, read and discovered how different He is from what I was told."

She has gotten to know her fellow companions on their faith journey.

"I feel peace here," she said on a recent break from the class. "That's why I like coming here so much."

Read more stories at [thesoutherncross.org/ROE2024](https://thesoutherncross.org/ROE2024).







**UNITED:** The Annual Catholic Appeal has adopted the theme "United in Christ" and this image of the Risen Jesus for its 2024 campaign.

**The Southern Cross**



"United in Christ" is the theme of this year's Annual

Catholic Appeal (ACA), which will begin at parish Masses during the Feb. 17-18 weekend.

"This year, I invite you once again to contribute to the annual diocesan appeal," Cardinal Robert W. McElroy said in a message to local Catholics.

"The Appeal," he said, "is one opportunity which all of us have in San Diego and Imperial counties to truly be united with the Lord in reaching out to those needs which are particularly pressing at the present moment and which represent the critical challenges we face as a Church to make Jesus more present in our midst."

The diocesan campaign raises funds for essential ministries that benefit the entire local Church, but are too big for individual parishes to efficiently provide by themselves. The goal is to raise \$3.5 million by Dec. 31, 2024.

Of those funds, \$1 million will be directed to each of the three following causes: Catholic schools; clergy formation and support, helping to provide formation to 13 diocesan seminarians and assistance to around 50 retired priests; and catechesis/faith-formation. The remaining \$500,000 will support Catholic Charities.

"Thank you for all that you have done in the past and I hope we'll be able to do this year," the cardinal said in his message.

Father Derek Twilliger, pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Lakeside, has received a positive response

to the campaign from his parishioners.

"The ACA is important to the people of our parish," he said, "because they know it is to support the many important functions of the diocese, especially the formation of new priests."

He added, "The people are generous and, when the needs are communicated effectively and consistently, they tend to want to be a part of this."

Father Jay Bananal, pastor of San Rafael Parish in Rancho Bernardo, said, "I only ask the faith community to believe in and support the ACA, just as I do. I promote 100%-participation as a goal based on equal sacrifice, not equal gift."

"The ACA helps us in our ministry and mission," he said. "Whatever we collect over our (diocesan) assessment, we keep for the parish needs."

Manny Aguilar, director of the dioc-

esan Office for Stewardship, said the recent Synod on Synodality inspired the theme and guided the planning for this year's campaign.

"Because of the synod," he said, "we really are looking internally on how we can be more united in Christ — in the Eucharist, in the liturgy, in the life of the Church."

Those interested in supporting the campaign can donate in a variety of ways, including cash, check, credit/debit card, as well as IRA, stocks and bonds. Payments can be made in one lump sum or in installments.

"All we ask is that people prayerfully consider what they can offer up," Aguilar said.

Online donations can be made at [giving.sdcatholic.org](https://giving.sdcatholic.org).



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**ADVOCATES:** Around 2,500 people participated in the 12th annual San Diego Walk for Life, led by Cardinal Robert W. McElroy and, from left, Auxiliary Bishops Felipe Pulido, Ramón Bejarano and Michael Pham.

## ‘We Need to Reach People’s Hearts’

By Aida Bustos



Cardinal Robert W. McElroy told the estimated 2,500 participants in the San Diego Walk for Life that their mission was greater than walking a few blocks that day.

“We’re called not just to march, and not just to talk with one another today, but rather coming out of this to understand that in our lives, in our families, in our relationships, we’re called to witness to the sanctity of human life, particularly of unborn children,” he told the crowd.

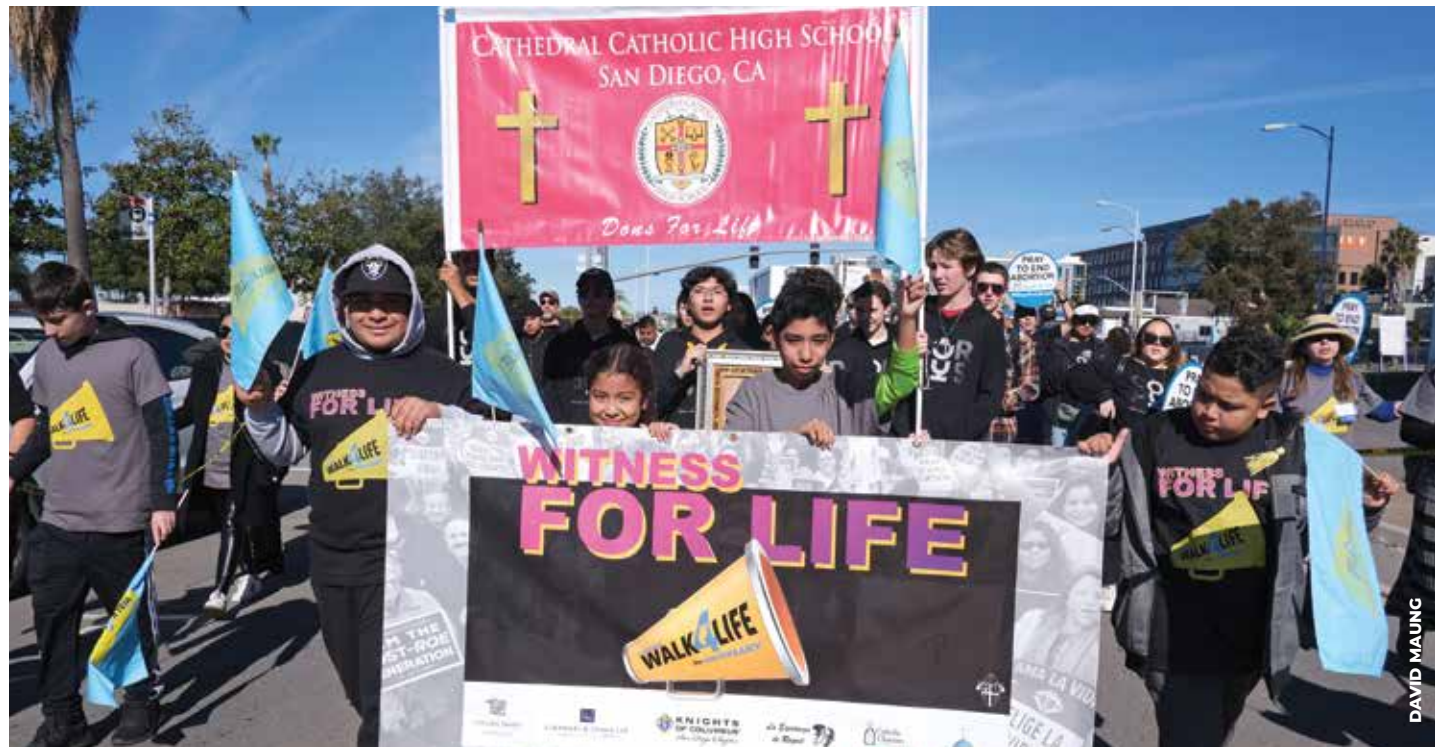
He was the final of five speakers at the 12th annual event, which included about 50 exhibitors, held Jan. 13 at Waterfront Park in San Diego.

The cardinal told the participants that, as disciples, they were called to “transform the world in which we live, so that no unborn child will have to fear anymore that they may never see life as God intended them.”

He warned that this transformation would take a long time “because we need to reach into people’s hearts so that it won’t matter what people’s politics are and it won’t matter what people’s predispositions are. All that will matter is the understanding we are dealing with human life.”

Families, parents holding babies, parish and ministry groups, and high school and college students, from diverse backgrounds, joyously walked the heavily transited mile route.

Among them were 20 members of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement, who were participating for the second year in a row, said Vi Sala-



**ON THE MOVE:** Youth and young adults from across the region had a major presence at the Walk for Life.



**CONTACT:** A variety of pro-life organizations, ministries, pregnancy resource centers and more shared their resources with participants.

zar, one of their leaders. They came from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Holy Family, Good Shepherd, Holy Spirit, and St. Thomas More parishes.

Thirty members of Dons for Life, Cathedral Catholic High School’s pro-life group, walked near the front of the walkers. Marissa Smith, a senior, was one of them.

“We’re standing up for those that don’t have a voice in the community,” she said. “And I just think that being here and being their voice and advocating for them and for their lives is really important.”

Find more information  
and a photo gallery at  
[thesoutherncross.  
org/2024SDWalk](https://thesoutherncross.org/2024SDWalk).





# Cardinal Highlights Role of 'Laudato Si'



COURTESY USD

**HONOR:** James T. Harris, president of the University of San Diego, presented Cardinal Robert W. McElroy with an award Jan. 11 recognizing his efforts to promote "Laudato Si," Pope Francis' encyclical on care for creation.

## The Southern Cross



The principles of "Laudato Si," Pope Francis'

2015 encyclical on care for our common home, should play a central role at modern-day Catholic universities, according to Cardinal Robert W. McElroy.

The cardinal shared his thoughts on this topic in an address he delivered Jan. 11 at the University of San Diego. His remarks came on the first day of the three-day "Lighting the Way Forward" conference, which kicked off USD's 75th anniversary year and provided an opportunity to reflect on the future of Catholic higher education in the United States.

"'Laudato Si' is often viewed primarily as a powerful moral challenge to the world to reverse the accelerating destruction of the earth," Cardinal McElroy said in his speech. "It certainly is that, but it is so much more."

The cardinal provided several reasons why he believes that "Laudato Si" should be central to the mission of contemporary Catholic universities. Among them, he noted that the encyclical speaks to the concept of

objective truth, testifies to the principle of solidarity, and encourages reflection on technology and its limits.

"For all these reasons, 'Laudato Si' constitutes an important pillar for identity and mission for the Catholic university in our day," he said. "Truly, 'Laudato Si' can help light the way forward."

During the conference, USD also presented the cardinal with its "Laudato Si" Fellows Award in recognition of his efforts to promote and put into practice the precepts of that environmental-themed encyclical.

Under the cardinal's leadership, about 70 percent of parishes and the diocese's Pastoral Center have deployed solar systems. In addition, the diocese launched a formal ministry within the Office for Life, Peace and Justice that promotes the principles of Catholic teaching about care for creation, working with parishes and schools. And the diocese has divested from fossil fuels, among other initiatives it has undertaken on this issue.

You can read Cardinal McElroy's complete address at [thesoutherncross.org/LaudatoSi](https://thesoutherncross.org/LaudatoSi).



## 40 DAYS FOR LIFE COMMISSIONING MASSES



Main Celebrant: Aux. Bishop Ramón Bejarano

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2 MASSES, 2 LOCATIONS

**FEBRUARY 4TH**  
**10:30 A.M.**  
**ST. MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
1170 S. Broadway  
Escondido, CA 92025

**FEBRUARY 11TH**  
**10:00 A.M.**  
**ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
8086 Broadway  
Lemon Grove, CA 91945

**Who is invited?**

- Parishioners and general public
- Respect life advocates
- 40 Days for Life Coordinators and teams
- Parish Culture of Life Coordinators
- Priests and deacons



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"There can be no  
renewal of our  
relationship with nature  
without a renewal of  
humanity itself."  
- Laudato Si' 118



# Our Response to the Cry of the Poor

By Karla Perez, MTS



In the next few months, we will be addressing each of the seven goals proposed in the Vatican's "Laudato Si" Action Platform. In this installment, we will address the second goal: our response to the cry of the poor.

In the encyclical "Fratelli Tutti," Pope Francis speaks to us about the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this document, the pope breaks down the role of each of the members in this parable, expressed in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and invites us to reflect on our own role in history.

## Being a Good Samaritan to All of Creation



We can also reflect on our role as "Good Samaritans" in our care for creation. God, in His immense love, has created everything that exists and places human beings in charge of all His creatures — our brothers and sisters and all living beings. Now, let's reflect on our role with these siblings in the family of creation. Are we the ones who hurt these brothers and sisters with our ecological behavior? Or are we like the priest or the Levite who, despite being religious people, do not stop on the way to help the needy? In Lenten preparation for Easter, we invite you to act like the Good Samaritan, who gave his time and resources to help someone in need.

Stop and contemplate who the poor, the needy, and the wounded are, and with the love that comes from God, reflect on what actions you can change to stop hurting others and what actions you can take to respond to the cry of our sisters and brothers in need.



## Suggested Actions

The "Laudato Si" Action Platform ([laudatosiactionplatform.org](http://laudatosiactionplatform.org)) proposes some ecological actions that can guide us to act in our response to the cry of the poor — our brothers and sisters in need:

- Ensure community members have free and open access to green spaces.
- Ensure that children are protected from air pollution in the places where they play and study.
- Reflect on the challenges caused by the failure of social systems and who may be most vulnerable.
- Support programs that address immediate and short-term needs.
- Engage elders to promote awareness of collective practices that have helped overcome community challenges.
- Promote initiatives that use existing resources to serve the general public.
- Hold days of social or ecological action.
- Develop educational activities to promote the defense of human life from conception to natural death.
- Support an anti-human trafficking campaign.
- Ensure community members have free access to safe drinking water.

## Following Christ's Example

You can be creative, and look for ways to help those in need, both near and far. What is important is that as Christians, we should not be indifferent or fail to act for fear of being unpopular. We should follow Christ's pathway, doing everything out of love because everything created is a gift of God, and should be valued and protected.

*Karla Perez is a recent graduate of the Franciscan School of Theology.*

## The 7 Goals of 'Laudato Si'

- #1 Response to the Cry of the Earth
- #2 Response to the Cry of the Poor
- #3 Ecological Economics
- #4 Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles
- #5 Ecological Education
- #6 Ecological Spirituality
- #7 Community Resilience & Empowerment



Send pictures of your family or parish illustrating Care for Creation to [cslentz@sdccatholic.org](mailto:cslentz@sdccatholic.org). We will post them on our Facebook and Instagram accounts.

[sdccatholic.org/creation](http://sdccatholic.org/creation)

 Creation Care Ministry Explores a Theme Monthly to Inspire Action.



# Young Adults Dive into Books & Snorkels

By Denis Grasska

**LA JOLLA —** Things have gone swimmingly for the new young adult ministry program at Mary Star of the Sea Parish.

Books & Snorkels, as its name suggests, offers the unique pairing of a book discussion and a snorkeling excursion.

About to mark its one-year anniversary, the group meets every other Sunday, with the next installment set for Feb. 4.

Open to young adults in their 20s and 30s, the group gathers at 12:30 p.m. in a conference room inside the parish office, where members enjoy a half-hour of socializing over brunch items that they've brought back from a nearby coffeeshop.

The book discussion runs from about 1 to 2 p.m., beginning with an icebreaker and introductions.

The parish's young adult leader, Joline Mann, who started the group, said she prepares a set of discussion questions for each meeting. But, oftentimes, attendees come with their own insights to share.

"It just flows really well," she said. "There's no silence. Everyone's just talking and discussing."

She added that members have had "really great debates," too, though not in a combative manner.

After their book discussion, the



**UNIQUE PAIRING:** Mary Star of the Sea Parish's Books & Snorkels group is seen at La Jolla Cove, where its members follow their biweekly book discussion with a snorkeling session.

group walks a few feet down Girard Avenue to La Jolla Swim & Sport, where they rent their snorkeling gear, and spend about an hour snorkeling at La Jolla Cove. They typically wrap up around 3:30 p.m.

Some attendees decide to "make a whole day of it," said Mann, explaining that they sometimes will grab a bite to eat after returning the snorkeling equipment, even though that isn't officially part of the schedule.

Typically, about 15 to 20 people attend Books & Snorkels. About half of them participate in the snorkeling, said Mann, and about one-quarter of the non-snorkelers watch from the beach.

She said the idea for the program sprang from her own "love for books"

and "deep passion for the ocean."

The group's inaugural meeting was on Feb. 19, 2023.

Its first book selection was "The Art of Living: The Cardinal Virtues and the Freedom to Love" by Edward Sri.

Among the subsequent books was "The Shadow of His Wings: The True Story of Fr. Gereon Goldmann," the autobiographical account of a German seminarian (and later priest) who was drafted into the SS during the Second World War and risked his life ministering to others.

On Feb. 4, the group will begin reading "In Defense of Purity: An Analysis of the Catholic Ideals of Purity and Virginity" by the German philosopher Dietrich von Hildebrand.

On her criteria for book selections,

Mann said that she looks for something that has a Catholic theological component and is applicable to young adult lives.

To mark the group's one-year anniversary, she said, there are plans to spend a weekend in Julian, "reading our books, hiking, watching Catholic movies (and) growing in fellowship."

John McGonegal, a member of Mary Star of the Sea Parish, and Valerie Kassab, who attends Mass at St. Peter the Apostle Chaldean Catholic Cathedral, have been with Books & Snorkels since the beginning.

The group was a natural fit for McGonegal, who describes himself as "a self-proclaimed 'book guy'" and "a big outdoor person."

"The books we have covered have not only inspired me to be a better Catholic," he said, "but they have also sharpened the tools necessary to go forth and spread the Good News to others."

Kassab, who is an avid reader, said that she was "all in" when she heard that the first meeting "would entail avocado toast, coffee and good discussion" with other Catholic young adults.

"I love the discussions centered on our Catholic faith and learning from my peers," said Kassab, a native San Diegan who had never snorkeled before joining the group, "and there is no better way to close up our discussions than going outside and appreciating God's beautiful creation with friends out at the Cove."



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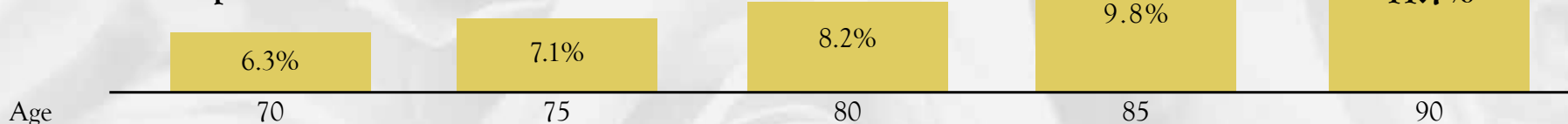
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# Wedding Expo, Anniversary Mass on Tap



**By Denis Grasska**

 This February, married and engaged couples can look forward to something old and something new (albeit nothing borrowed or blue).

The “old” consists of a returning event: Back for a fourth year, the annual Diocesan Marriage Anniversary Mass will be held on Saturday, Feb. 3, at The Immaculata Church on the campus of the University of San Diego. A marriage ministry fair and a reception will follow.

As for the “new”: The first San Diego Catholic Wedding Expo, which promises to help engaged couples to prepare for a Catholic wedding and to connect them with Catholic vendors and ministries, will take place on Saturday,

Feb. 10, at St. James Parish in Solana Beach. The expo will be followed by a special Mass for engaged couples.

Both are slated to take place during National Marriage Week, Feb. 7 to 14.

The Expo will be open from 12 to 4:30 p.m. in the parish hall, followed by a 5 p.m. Mass in the parish church. There will be a stage area where Catholic wedding musicians will perform, and a patio set up as a wedding reception space where couples can enjoy food and cocktail samples.

The expo was the brainchild of Maria Saradpon, who envisioned something more than the “Catholic equivalent to the secular bridal bazaar.” She saw the event as one that also would highlight the sacramental nature of marriage.

John Prust, director of the diocesan Office for Family Life and Spirituality, views the expo as a way “to reach out to those couples who ... are open to getting married in the Church, but maybe don’t know where to start, don’t know who to talk to, don’t know where to begin ...”

In addition to connecting couples with about 15 Catholic wedding vendors, such as caterers, photographers and florists, couples also will be able to meet with representatives of the Family Life and Spirituality Office and ministries like Engaged Encounter. There will even be a priest available.

**More information is available at catholicweddingexpo.com.**

## Marriage Anniversary Mass



The fourth annual Diocesan Marriage Anniversary Mass will be celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Michael Pham at 11 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 3.

Prust said it provides an opportunity to celebrate “all the ups, and downs, and the gifts and the graces that have come with marriage.” It’s about “remembering that ‘I do’ isn’t just a one-time thing, that it really has to be renewed — really every day — on one level or another.”

All of the Mass readings and music will have a marriage focus. At one point, the couples will be asked to stand in recognition of how long they have been married, from newlyweds to those with

60 years or more together. Once the longest-married couple is standing, the couples will be invited to renew their vows in English, Spanish or Vietnamese, and the husbands will be told that they “may now kiss the bride.”

Nick and Jen Rivette, of St. Patrick Parish in Carlsbad, have been married 28 years and plan to attend the anniversary Mass again this year.


“For me,” said Nick, “it’s a recharge seeing all the young couples who attend and seeing their love for each other, and it’s an inspiration to see those couples who have been married longer than we have, as well.”

Jen said, “I really enjoy the affirmation of our vows as part of the Mass. It is a reminder of what we committed to all those years ago.”

Sammy and Margie Guerra, members of Queen of Angels Parish in Alpine who will celebrate their 58th anniversary in April, agreed that the anniversary Mass is “an incredible experience” and “a time of prayer, reflection, and unity and renewal.”

A ministry fair after the anniversary Mass will showcase Engaged Encounter, Marriage Encounter, Retrouvaille and other apostolates that are active throughout the diocese in promoting and supporting marriage. A post-Mass reception will include wedding cake.

**More information is available at sdcatholic.org.**



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Saturday, February 3, 9am-1pm - St. Thomas More  
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Saturday, July 27, 9am-1pm - Pastoral Center  
Saturday, October 26, 9am-1pm - Pastoral Center

### MINISTERS OF THE WORD

Saturday, February 3, 9am-1:30pm - St. Thomas More  
Saturday, April 20, 9am-2pm - Pastoral Center  
Saturday, July 27, 9am-2pm - Pastoral Center  
Saturday, November 9, 9am-2pm - Pastoral Center

*\*Requires additional practice session (see registration link below for dates/times)*

### MINISTRY OF HOSPITALITY

Saturday, March. 9, 9am-12pm - Pastoral Center

### SACRISTAN TRAINING

Saturday, April 20, 9am-12:30pm - Pastoral Center  
Saturday, November 9, 9am-12:30pm - Pastoral Center

**Registration: [www.sdcatholic.org/workshops](http://www.sdcatholic.org/workshops)**

Scan to register







# Retreat for Adults from Divorced Families

By Denis Grasska



**OCEANSIDE — A healing retreat for adults with divorced or**

**separated parents will be held from March 1 to 3 at the Mission San Luis Rey Retreat Center.**

This will be the first time that Life-Giving Wounds, a nationally known ministry focused on adult children of divorce, has presented a retreat in Southern California.

The event was made possible through the collaboration of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the dioceses of Orange and San Diego.

Founded by Dr. Daniel Meola and his wife, Bethany, Life-Giving Wounds is a 501c3 nonprofit that offers peer-led retreat ministries and support groups, and online ministry and outreach, among other things. The Meolas wrote a book, titled "Life-Giving Wounds: A

Catholic Guide to Healing for Adult Children of Divorce or Separation," recently published by Ignatius Press.

"We brought this retreat to San Diego because we've heard so many powerful stories and testimonies from this ministry," said John Prust, director of the Diocese of San Diego's Office for Family Life and Spirituality.

Janelle Perego, who oversees separated and divorced ministry, said she is "really excited" about Life-Giving Wounds because it acknowledges that divorce doesn't only affect the ex-spouses.

"The reality is that divorce is a fracturing of family," she said, "and so, the Life-Giving Wounds model really helps give voice to adults from divorced families."

Perego said that many children of divorced parents are forced "to grow up faster than we would have naturally done," and statistics show an increased likelihood of substance abuse and mental health challenges among this demographic.

As a young adult, Perego found herself uncertain whether she even believed in marriage, as a result of her own parents' divorce.

She recalled her experience attending a Life-Giving Wounds retreat two years ago in the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

"It was so nice to be in a room ... with other people that had similar experiences," she said. "Everyone's circumstances are different, but we just found that it was really easy to talk about emotions and not having to explain ourselves."

According to the organization's website, the retreat schedule includes presentations by retreat leaders, guided small-group discussions, guided journaling, and opportunities for Mass, confession and prayer.

A licensed counselor and a priest are present at every retreat, so that participants' psychological and

spiritual wounds can be addressed, Perego said.

She said that the upcoming retreat will be followed by the formation of a new Southern California chapter of Life-Giving Wounds. The plan is to be able to hold additional events in the near future.

Prust said, "It's almost impossible to overestimate how many lives can be benefited from people taking the time to look at their woundedness and allowing God's grace to begin to heal them."

The cost to attend the retreat is \$375 for single-occupancy or \$325 for double-occupancy for those who register by Thursday, Feb. 1. After that, there will be a \$50 increase.

**For information, call (858) 490-8292 or email [jperego@sdccatholic.org](mailto:jperego@sdccatholic.org).**



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## Grand Opening for Grand Project

**INAUGURATION:** Hannah Rose and Kevin McNeely opened the art studio on Jan. 18 that is part of the outdoor project that transformed St. Rita School, along with Principal Gina Olsen.



**FACE TIME:** Cardinal Robert W. McElroy addressed students at a Mass at St. Rita's Church.



**BLESSING:** Cardinal McElroy blessed the prayer grotto that is part of the school's outdoor space.

By Aida Bustos



"Today, in many ways, is about dreams."

That is how Cardinal Robert W. McElroy began his homily during a special Mass on Jan. 18 to give thanks for the renovation of the outdoor space at St. Rita Catholic School. The \$7.5-million project, called "Art, Play, Pray," transformed the campus.

The school's students attended the Mass, along with contributors, members of the church community, and current and former staff.

The cardinal asked the students what they dreamed of doing when they grew up. Some shared their dreams out loud: "Fashion designer." "Firefighter." "Teacher." "Soccer player."

"The things you talk about wanting to be are focused so much on helping other people," the cardinal told the students. "We are here today because

a number of people had a dream to help the school, to help you and to help build up the community that's here."

After the Mass, the participants walked to the renovated space that formerly was the sloping concrete parking lot of the church. Today, that area is level and has a turf field, an outdoor amphitheater, a basketball court, two new playground structures, a prayer grotto and an art studio.

The cardinal blessed the grotto and then everyone settled on the turf field in front of a makeshift stage to listen to the people who had helped to bring the project to life.

Father Silverio Espenilla, the pastor of St. Rita Parish, shared the project's history, starting from the groundbreaking in December of 2021. He thanked the individuals who had been instrumental in raising funds and persistently working through the challenges as they arose, among them Father Anthony Saroki, attorney James Mittermiller, who volunteers at

the school, and Steve Laaperi, a former principal there.

He thanked the principal funders, the Manitou Fund through the Kevin and Rosemary McNeely family, which contributed \$6.5 million. The couple attended the grand opening, along with their daughter, Hannah Rose.

"Mr. and Mrs. McNeely, thank you for not giving up on this project," Father Espenilla said.

"Thank you for your extraordinary interest and passion in helping our school community."

He thanked other funders, including the Shea Homes Foundation, and many individual donors. And he praised the vision and tireless advocacy of the school's principal, Gina Olsen.

"For generations to come, all boys and girls passing through St. Rita School are going to benefit from this space," he said. "They will be able to play safely, have a conducive place to develop their art talent and have a beautiful grotto to pray."

After the presentation, the participants moved to the front of the art studio for a ribbon-cutting.

"This is a day of celebration, of opening a safe space for the children, so they can have the privilege of tapping into their creative side," said Rosemary McNeely, a few minutes later, of the studio that bears her name. "They will be able to learn skills that they can take into high school and into college."

In her remarks, Olsen, the school's principal, noted that the outdoor project would not only benefit the students but the greater community around the church and school.

"St. Rita's proudly shines as a beacon of light and hope in an area that sometimes sees much pain and darkness. Today, St. Rita's School, built in 1951, receives the gift of a lifetime."

Photo gallery, visit  
[thesoutherncross.org/  
opening.](https://thesoutherncross.org/opening)





# Mass Honors Dr. King's Vision

By Aida Bustos



Cardinal Robert W. McElroy called on all disciples of

God to work to transform the world, particularly on the social justice front, just like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., had once done.

He celebrated the Sunday morning Mass on Jan. 14 at Christ the King Parish in San Diego, where it was standing room only, on the day before the national holiday honoring Dr. King.

The Diocesan Commission for African American Catholics organized the Gospel Mass. Father Tommie Jennings, the parish's pastor, served as a concelebrant, along with Auxiliary Bishops Ramón Bejarano and Michael Pham, Father Emmet Farrell and Deacon Robert Booth.

Reflecting on the day's reading (Samuel 3:3-10,19) in his homily, Cardinal McElroy said that Dr. King



**RECEPTION:** Rick Stewart and Rebecca Duncan, of the Ladies Auxiliary of St. Peter Claver #371, honored Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



**SPECIAL MASS:** Cardinal Robert W. McElroy celebrated a Mass on Jan. 14 at Christ the King Church. He was accompanied, from left, by Auxiliary Bishops Ramón Bejarano, Michael Pham, Father Tommie Jennings, Deacon Robert Booth and Father Emmet Farrell.

understood that his faith called him to try to transform the world, particularly on the issue of racial justice.

"And so, he spent his life and lost his life because of his dedication," the cardinal said.

"And we know in our country, sadly, the issue of race and racial division, which has torn our country asunder from the beginning, is still with us in various forms that are very corrosive, very damaging.

"And we are called to proclaim the reign of God in justice, racial justice and social justice. And that's a major part of our mission as disciples. We cannot leave that to others."

He said two visions are competing in the nation.

"We can either believe we are called to be one family of God in our country, or we can believe every group

should be out for itself," he said. "And God's vision is for one human family, in solidarity."

After the 8:30 a.m. Mass, many of those on hand attended a reception in the parish hall, which featured information and photos of Dr. King.

Rick Stewart, the commission's chair, said the Altar Society and Pastoral Council of Christ the King Parish, the Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver, and leaders from St. Rita's Church, had collaborated to organize the Mass and reception. The parish's Gospel Choir, led by DeShon Hall, joyously accompanied the Mass, receiving several standing ovations.

Read the cardinal's homily at:  
[thesoutherncross.org/MLK2024](http://thesoutherncross.org/MLK2024).



**TRADITION:** Last year's Chinese Lunar New Year Mass and Ancestor Veneration.

## Lunar New Year Celebrations

The Southern Cross



The Vietnamese, Chinese and Korean Catholic

communities of San Diego invite all faithful to their Lunar New Year Eucharistic celebrations.

The Vietnamese Catholic Community will hold its Tết-Vietnamese Lunar New Year Mass on Friday, Feb. 9, at 7 p.m. at Good Shepherd Parish, 8200 Gold Coast Drive, San Diego, with Auxiliary Bishop Michael Pham, accompanied by Vietnamese priests.

The Chinese Catholic Community will hold its Lunar New Year Solemn Mass and Ancestor Veneration on Saturday, Feb. 10, at 1 p.m., at St. Thérèse of Carmel Parish, 4355 Del Mar Trails Road, San Diego.

And the Korean Catholic Community will hold its Lunar New Year Mass on Sunday, Feb. 11, at noon, at St. Columba Parish, 3327 Glencolum Drive, San Diego.

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**CALIPATRIA STATE PRISON, APRIL 20th**

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# 8 Sisters to Celebrate Key Anniversaries

## The Southern Cross



This year, these eight religious sisters in the Diocese of San Diego are celebrating milestone anniversaries of entering consecrated life.

## 70 Years



**Sister Maura Coakley, OCD**, was born on a farm in Iowa on Sept. 28, 1931. She was the sixth of seven children.

Originally named Helen, she was baptized on Oct. 4, 1931, at St. Lawrence Church, which her great-grandparents helped to establish.

After receiving her First Communion, Helen knew that she would be a nun. When she was 18, a friend joined the Discalced Carmelites and Helen decided that she too wanted to join the order. Her family convinced her to wait until she was 21.

At the encouragement of a priest friend, she visited the Carmelites in San Diego. She entered the convent on Feb. 15, 1952. The California weather took getting used to; she missed the changes of the seasons, the snow and, most of all, her family.

Along with the habit, she received the religious name Sister Maura of the Holy Spirit. She made her first profession of vows on May 15, 1954, and her final profession on May 16, 1957.

Sister Coakley describes herself as “surprised and thankful” as she looks back over her seven decades with the Discalced Carmelites.



**Sister Suzanne Ensminger, CSJ**, was born and raised in Prescott, Ariz.

She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet on Sept. 15, 1953, in Los Angeles, where she later professed her first vows on March 19, 1956, and final vows on Aug. 15, 1961.

Sister Ensminger was a teacher and administrator at various schools. Among them, she taught at All Hallows Academy in La Jolla, where she and two other sisters opened the school in 1964, and at St. Patrick's in San Diego.

In 1987, Sister Ensminger went into a different type of ministry, serving as a pastoral associate at parishes in Pasco, Wash.; Thousand Oaks, Calif.; and, finally, at Immaculate Conception in Old Town San Diego, from which she retired in 2012.

In January 2013, she joined the Ignatian Volunteer Corps. Under their sponsorship, she volunteered at Catholic Charities, where she assisted refugees from the Middle East, Africa, Asia and other areas.

Sister Ensminger considers her eight years working with the refugees to be among the most spiritually, culturally and educationally enriching. She said she learned and received more from them than they did from her.

## 60 Years



**Sister Maureen Evelyn Brown, CSJ**, describes herself as a “Southern California gal.”

Born in Los Angeles, she has lived her entire life between Granada Hills and Solana Beach. She entered the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet of the Los Angeles Province in 1963 and made final vows in 1971.

Her ministries have included elementary school teaching, including at St. James in Solana Beach. She has also served as director of religious education at St. James Parish, novice director for her religious community's Los Angeles Province, pastoral associate at St. Patrick's and St. Thomas More parishes, and part-time counselor on the provincial team in Los Angeles.

In recent years, her focus has been social justice and bereavement ministry.

“I am so grateful and humbled by the gift of God's constant love, mercy and fidelity,” she said. “I have been blest to be on this journey with so many faith-filled and dedicated women and men.”

## 50 Years



Born in Calexico, Calif., **Sister Bertha Meza, SJS**, said that it was in fifth grade that she received her call to religious life.

The principal was looking for five students to dress up as Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament for a Vocation Day presentation.

“I got all exited and raised my hand to volunteer,” she recalled, adding that she cried when she wasn't chosen.

But her tears turned to joy when she later felt that Someone was telling her, “Don't worry. She did not choose you, but I choose you to be Mine.”

Sister Meza entered the Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament on Feb. 12, 1972, in Guadalajara, Mexico. She made her first profession on Aug. 15, 1974, and final vows in 1980, both at the motherhouse in Guadalajara.

She taught primarily at the junior-high level at Catholic schools in the Diocese of San Diego, Archdiocese of Los Angeles and Diocese of Fresno, and served as principal of a few schools.

Since retiring from teaching in 2017, she has been director of religious education at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Calexico.



**Sister Maria Esther Núñez, SJS**, was born in Tepic, Nayarit, Mexico.

Educated by the Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, she entered that congregation on July 18, 1971, in Guadalajara. She professed first vows on Aug. 15, 1974, and final vows on Aug. 15, 1980.

“I came to the USA on Aug. 20, 1974, to study English,” she said, “so that I would be able to fulfill my mission to increase the love of Jesus in the Eucharist and Mary, His Mother, through ... Catholic education in this country.”

She has taught at Catholic schools in Los Angeles, Sacramento, Bakersfield and in the Diocese of San Diego. Locally, she has served at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School, San Ysidro; St. Mary's School, El Centro; and Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy, Calexico.

Sister Núñez has also served on her congregation's provincial team as treasurer and secretary.

She currently ministers at Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy, where she is “helping the little ones at the ‘Happy Numbers’ program and other simple assignments.”

“The wisdom I have learned throughout these wonderful years of love and service is God's great faithfulness,” she said.

## 40 Years



**Sister Ana Guzmán, SJS**, was born in San Juan de los Lagos, Jalisco, Mexico.

At 20 years old, she decided to become a religious sister and to dedicate her life to the service of God. In 1981, she entered the convent in Guadalajara.

She professed her first vows in 1984 and her perpetual vows in 1990.

Sister Guzmán became a teacher and taught in Bakersfield, Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Ysidro and Calexico.

“I consider that teaching and sharing with others, including my family, are the most precious moments of my life,” she said.

Sister Guzmán currently works at the Silviano Carrillo Centers, where she helps to prepare residents to obtain U.S. citizenship.

She said, “I feel myself full and delighted when I am adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, from whom I receive all graces and blessings to continue in this beautiful vocation.”

## 25 Years



**Sister Agnes Daniel, DMIC**, grew up in Iraq, mostly in Baghdad.

In 1989, she joined the Religious Community of the Congregation of Chaldean Sisters, Daughters of Mary Immaculate, professing her final vows in 1999.

In Iraq, she served in various parishes and schools in Baghdad and surrounding cities. In 2000, she left Iraq for the United States, where she served the elderly as the administrator of her community's St. Thomas Retirement Center in Turlock, Calif., until 2017.

In 2019, she moved to San Diego to serve the sisters of the local Chaldean community in El Cajon, caring for their spiritual and communal life at Good Samaritan Retirement Center.

“My motto, since entering the order was ‘Thy will be done,’ words I take very seriously, believing this was what God called me to do,” she said.

Sister Daniel was diagnosed with cancer in 2009 and said that, at that time, she heard God telling her, “Sit down. Let's talk.”

She said, “God opened my eyes ... I came to realize that my sickness was used for good in my life and I was able to assist others facing illness in a new way, a deeper way.”



**Sister C. Rose Miles, SFCC**, is a member of the Sisters for Christian Community.

She grew up in El Paso, Texas, where she was educated by the Sisters of Loretto, of which she is a co-member.

After several years in financial services and much discernment, she felt the call to religious life.

Sister Miles joined the Medical Mission Sisters in Philadelphia in 1996, making her first profession of vows with them in August 1999. In 2001, she transferred to the Sisters for Christian Community.

She has served in a variety of ministries.

From 1996 to 1999, she worked for Catholic Social Services in Philadelphia, where she facilitated empowerment support groups for at-risk teen girls.

From 1999 to 2012, she was at Father Joe's Villages in San Diego, facilitating women's life skills and spiritual support groups. From 2012 to 2020, she engaged in the same work at Martha's Village in Indio, Calif.

Since 2022, her ministry has been as an English tutor for elementary school children in Mecca, Calif.

“The motivating factor in my life” she said, “is to provide a quality of presence that gives integrity and authenticity to both my Christian commitment and my life as a woman religious.”



# Road to SD Ministry Began in China

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST CHURCH

By Denis Grasska



Father Anthony Yang, a priest of the Society of the Divine Word, has served for almost eight years as chaplain to the San Diego Chinese Catholic Community.

Born in 1981 in Shaanxi, China, Father Yang was ordained to the priesthood on Aug. 25, 2014, also in Shaanxi.

Since July of 2021, he has served as associate pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Hillcrest. Previously, he served Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart parishes.

**Question: What role did the Catholic faith play in your formative years?**

**Answer:** In the small Chinese village where I grew up, everyone was Catholic. My parents took me to Mass

**Chaplain, Chinese Catholic Community**

**Father Anthony Yang**



with them almost every day as a child. I essentially grew up in the church.

One day, when I was 10 or 11, the pastor asked me to be an altar server. When I was about 16, he asked my parents to talk to me about whether I would be interested in entering the seminary.

My mother supported the idea, but in the beginning, my father didn't. I'm the oldest son and, in China, it is tradition that the oldest son takes care of the parents in their old age. About two years into the seminary, I had my father's support, too.

**Why did you opt to join a religious order instead of continuing at the diocesan seminary?**

Following a brother priest's recommendation, I visited the Society of the Divine Word's center in Beijing, where I learned about the Society's history and missionary work.

I was told that, if ordained for the Society, I wouldn't necessarily serve in China. I might be sent to another country. I would have to learn another language and encounter different cultures, traditions and people. That appealed to me because I am interested in other cultures; I felt that I could learn from them and experience God through them.

At age 20, I joined the Society of the Divine Word. I went through a two-year period to see whether I was a good fit for religious life, which involves getting along well with the other members of the religious community. Then, I made my first profession of vows on July 14, 2005. After that, I continued my seminary studies for another eight years.

I professed perpetual vows on Feb. 27, 2014, in Taiwan, and was ordained to the priesthood on Aug. 25, 2014, in Shaanxi Province.

Religious order priests live in community, which is important to me. Priests don't have spouses, but we're human, so I need to have other people to talk to and to support me.

**What can you tell us about the local Chinese Catholic Community?**

Locally, the Chinese Catholic Community gathers at St. Therese of Carmel Parish.

I celebrate a Mass for the community on Sunday afternoons. About 60 to 70 people attend. Because many of the newly arrived and older immigrants cannot speak English, the Mass is cele-

brated in Mandarin and Cantonese.

Every year, Chinese-language RCIA is available. This year, the community has four people who are going through the RCIA process.

We offer Advent and Lenten retreats. There are also a few Bible study groups that meet weekly in the homes of our community members; every two or three months, I try to visit each group.

About 130 people attend our annual Thanksgiving/Christmas party in December, and similar numbers turn out for our annual celebration of the Chinese Lunar New Year.

**Why is the Chinese Lunar New Year, which takes place on Feb. 10 this year, so special?**

It is an important time for families. In China, we celebrate it over a 15-day period, and families come together during that time. Those who have been working in other provinces and cities will come back home to parents and grandparents. Together, they share their lives, joys and experiences, their challenges and changes, and clean up their house and wear new clothes. Children receive gifts and red envelopes from elders.

**How can people use the new year to grow closer to God?**

In China, when I was a child, everyone would attend Mass on the evening before the Chinese Lunar New Year, thanking God for all the blessings of the year that was ending. The next day, on the first day of the Lunar New Year, they would attend Mass again, this time with their petitions for the new year. They would ask God for His grace and protection, that their families would enjoy peace and health.

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If I had been born in Morocco, perhaps I would have been Muslim; if I had been born in Tibet, perhaps Buddhist.

But I was born in Venezuela, and my family and my culture shared with me the gift of faith, Catholic beliefs and traditions. I did not plan it, nor decided it; it was a gift.

Since I was small, my parents (more my mom than my dad) taught me simple gestures, like how to make the sign of the cross, ask for a blessing, say thank you at mealtime, and pray before going to bed.

They would take me to church on Sundays, and they would go with me to light little candles to the Virgin Mary, something that I greatly enjoyed as a child.

I now see that all of these gestures and actions were tiny seeds of faith that fell on fresh ground, open to receiving it. Today, I see with greater clarity that what parents don't do in those first years, ripe for registering

#### Columnist

**Ricardo Márquez**



values and beliefs that guide our future, is difficult to recover.

Children learn by modeling and repeated actions that provide security, generate confidence and form physical, mental and spiritual habits. Without conscious planning and participation by parents, be they married or single, without the support of uncles, grandparents, teachers or catechists, this task is inconceivable.

Catholic schools, parishes, sports groups and youth organizations that my parents took me to and in which I participated were places where those first seeds were cultivated and grew.

At practice, I learned to value the group, the team and the community. Triumphs and defeats, support for a teammate, service to the needy, the joy of celebrations and the initiation of the sacraments — I learned from all

of these things.

Today, I'm grateful and I value the immensity of the details and hours many dedicated so that those seeds would not dry up or die. Without a doubt, it takes a village, group and community to educate a child in the faith.

When you have received so much, you naturally share more. When there have been many lacks and much emptiness, it's more difficult to do so. Nobody gives what they do not have. From the abundance of the heart flow service and a sensitivity to your neighbor.

From the intimate experience with Jesus that we are all invited to live — the goal of all of the Church's work — spring joy, affection, patience, hope and love.

When one vividly experiences God's acceptance and unconditional love, there is no other alternative than to radiate and proclaim, in words and deeds, what we have lived. Love is expandable; it grows when it flows and is shared.

When we become aware of the crisis in our modeling behavior and family dynamics, when we live in a "fluid"

context that dilutes values and basic principles of coexistence and respect, John the Baptist's call for conversion rings loud and clear: for us to radically transform our conduct and values, to return to the source of the Good News, to hear the simple message that reminds us of what is sacred in our lives, to accept the invitation to treat each other as brothers and sisters destined to live the full life for which we were created ... And it all begins in the home, from the earliest years, from the conscious decision by some adults who conceived a life and committed themselves to accompany that life on its journey.

Let's insistently ask what we want and need to accomplish our mission to express gratitude, cultivate, share and radiate faith. Let's break down the walls of fear, rage and anxiety as we look to the future.

Lord, take and receive what I am and how I am, and may Your will come to life in me.

*Ricardo Márquez can be reached at [marquez\\_muskus@yahoo.com](mailto:marquez_muskus@yahoo.com).*

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UNSPLASH/JOSH-APPLEGATE

 The season of Lent and the Easter Triduum are a road that takes us to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.


In the movie “El Padrecito,” the great Mexican comedian and actor Cantinflas tells us that sayings are “tiny gospels.” So, I would like to begin with a saying in Spanish, “No hay mal que por bien no venga,” roughly equivalent to “God brings good out of evil.”

This refrain tells us that we can all learn from our experiences, that we can take away some lesson, some grace, some good, even from experiences that seem negative at first. This expression, “God brings good out of evil,” invites us to think that, despite all the bad things we experience in life, we can always hope that something good will come.

In the Gospels, we learned that our Lord Jesus spent His life doing good, and

**Diocese of San Diego**

**Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido**



yet He was taken to the cross; however, after His passion and death, God glorified Him and “gave Him the name that is above every name.”

In other words, Jesus experienced evil and death, but God elevated Him and glorified Him in the resurrection.

The Lenten journey begins on Ash Wednesday, followed by 40 days of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, which might seem a time of sacrifice. But at the end of the Easter Triduum — that is, Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection — we always experience the resurrection. In other words, we experience so many graces and God’s mercy in our lives. We die to sin, but rise with Jesus to a new life.

The good news is that we do not walk alone in our journey of Lent and the Easter

Triduum. The Church walks with us as a mother who gives us life at baptism, takes us by the hand with tenderness, patience and wisdom, and after Lent introduces us to the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

The Church leads us through the sacred celebration of the Easter Triduum and invites us to enter with Jesus into the mystery of His death and resurrection. The one big liturgy of Holy Thursday (Mass of the Lord’s Supper), Good Friday (with the commemoration of Christ’s Passion) and Holy Saturday (Easter Vigil) is the most sacred of the year. The entire Church makes these three days a type of sacred refuge where we can meditate in prayer about all that the Lord has done for our salvation.

Like the Jewish people were saved from slavery in Egypt, we are freed from the slavery of our sins and we receive the gift of eternal life through the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. He died on the cross to end sin, and we received the fruits of His death, without having to die, through bap-

tism and the other sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

When we think about Lent, we think about things that we give up. For example, not eating red meat, not using social media, not drinking alcohol, etc. But during Lent, we should think about things that we “give in.” For example, if you feel like going to Mass on weekdays, give in. If you feel like helping others, do it. Or, if you want to go to reconciliation, give in.

I hope, this season of Lent, you start walking with Jesus toward Easter. Lent takes us not only to the cross, but also to the Resurrection.

For the most part, we tend to concentrate on the negative, and sometimes that’s where we get stuck. I hope that, in this Lenten season, we remember what the Lord has done for us by His passion, death and resurrection; that we don’t just focus on sin, evil and the cross, but accompany Jesus until the resurrection; and that we remember that Lent always leads us to Easter joy.





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## News Briefs

### Commissioning Masses to Precede '40 Days for Life'

Two commissioning Masses will be celebrated to mark the beginning of the spring campaign of 40 Days for Life.

Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano will preside at both Masses. The first will be at 10:30 a.m., Sunday, Feb. 4, at St. Mary Church in Escondido; the second will be at 10 a.m., Sunday, Feb. 11, at St. John of the Cross Church in Lemon Grove.

The 40 Days for Life campaign, which will run from Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14, to Palm Sunday, March 24, is an effort to protect the unborn through prayer and fasting, community outreach, and peaceful all-day vigils in front of abortion clinics.

For more information, visit [sdcatholic.org/40-days-for-life-campaign](http://sdcatholic.org/40-days-for-life-campaign), email [mvalencia@sdccatholic.org](mailto:mvalencia@sdccatholic.org) or call (858) 490-8323.

### 'Mass of Hope' Returns to St. Gregory's

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

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 (by Feb. 9) for display."

For more information, call (858) 653-3540.

### World Day of Sick to Be Celebrated Feb. 10

Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido will celebrate a multilingual World Day of the Sick Mass.

It will be offered at 10 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 10, at Good Shepherd Parish in Mira Mesa.

The Mass will include the anointing of the sick, a blessing with water from Lourdes, a blessing of caregivers and ministers of the sick, and a celebration of the fourth anniversary of the Caring for the Whole Person Initiative.

Watch the livestream at [sdcatholic.org/event/world-day-of-the-sick-mass](http://sdcatholic.org/event/world-day-of-the-sick-mass).

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

### Gala to Benefit Trafficking Survivors

Children of the Immaculate Heart, a nonprofit that serves survivors of sex trafficking in San Diego, will hold its 11th annual Holy Hearts Gala.

The event will be held from 6 to 9 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 10, at St. Therese of Carmel Parish, 4355 Del Mar Trails Road, San Diego 92130. The evening will include appetizers, dinner, dessert, beer and wine, a live band, and a silent auction. The keynote speaker will be Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano.

Gala tickets are \$85 each. RSVP is required at [childrenoftheimmaculateheart.org/events](http://childrenoftheimmaculateheart.org/events) or (619) 431-5537.

### Ladies Guild Holding Fundraiser Luncheon

The Father Joe's Villages Ladies Guild will hold "A Souper Bowl of Caring," a soup-and-salad luncheon and silent auction fundraiser, at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 12, at St. Gregory the Great Parish Hall in Scripps Ranch.

Tickets are \$60 per person. Net proceeds will be used to benefit children living at Father Joe's Villages, including through the provision of diapers, strollers, shoes, school supplies and more.

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

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

### Valentine's Day Promotion to Gift Warm Blankets to Needy Moms

Birthingline of San Diego is planning a special Valentine's Day event for the vulnerable moms and their kids that the organization serves with material support and services.

The Wrap, Care & Share campaign provides an opportunity to gift a mom in need with a warm custom blanket from Sackcloth & Ashes, a small mission-driven business that supports community-driven solutions.

Every \$100 Wrap, Care & Share donation to Birthingline funds a special Valentine's Day gift blanket for a needy mother with children.

Every \$250 donation to the campaign funds three special Valentine's Day gifts: two for needy mothers and one complimentary blanket for the donor.

For more information, contact

Birthingline at (858) 270-2491 or email [clairemont@birthinglineofsd.org](mailto:clairemont@birthinglineofsd.org).

### Catholics Invited to Cheer on USD Athletes

Families are invited to celebrate "Catholic Schools Day" on Saturday, Feb. 17, at the University of San Diego.

They can cheer for the USD Toreros at two basketball games that day.

The USD women's basketball team will play Loyola Marymount University at 2 p.m., while the men's team will take on Santa Clara at 7 p.m.

Tickets are discounted to \$5 per person. A ticket purchased for the women's game is good for both games. There also will be food trucks, bounce houses, face painting, All-star Choir and All-star Cheer performances, and more.

### Knights' Dinner to Honor Priests, Religious

The Knights of Columbus San Diego Chapter will host its annual Priest and Religious Appreciation dinner on Saturday, Feb. 17.

The event will take place from 6 to 9 p.m. in the parish hall at Ascension Parish in Tierrasanta.

The dinner is a way for the Knights to thank priests and consecrated religious for their service to the Church.

### After-Abortion Healing Retreat Scheduled for March 8-10

Catholic (and Catholic-friendly) women who are seeking relief from their grief and regret over a past abortion are invited to attend an after-abortion healing retreat.

Presented by Rachel's Hope, the retreat will begin on Friday, March 8, and conclude on Sunday, March 10. It

**Briefs** Continued on Page 19



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 **Priest Assignment**

The following has been announced by the Office of the Cardinal:  
**Father Bradley Easterbrooks** has been appointed secretary of the diocesan Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, effective Dec. 5.

**Briefs** *Continued from Page 18*

will be held at the diocesan Pastoral Center. A closing Mass is included.

The cost to attend is \$60. Partial scholarships and housing are available if needed. The group size is limited.

For more information or to register, call (858) 581-3022, text (858) 752-9378, email [rachels\\_hope@juno.com](mailto:rachels_hope@juno.com) or visit [rachelshope.org](http://rachelshope.org).

**5K Keeps Oaxacan Kids in School**

The Oaxaca Education Fund will host its annual 5K Walk on Saturday, March 23, beginning in Canyonside Park and venturing into the Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. There is a suggested donation of \$20; children walk for free.


The Oaxaca Education Fund grew out of a parish migrant ministry. Every year, volunteers travel to Oaxaca, Mexico, to distribute school supplies to children there.


**Parish Choir to Perform Palm Sunday Concert**

The St. Thérèse of Carmel Parish Choir will perform Maurice Duruflé's *Requiem* at 3 p.m., Palm Sunday, March 24, inside the parish church. A reception in the plaza will follow the free concert.

The choir, under the direction of Catherine Marshall, includes 35 voices. They will be performing with guest organist Emma Whitten.

St. Thérèse of Carmel Church is located at 4355 Del Mar Trails Road, San Diego 92130.

 **Obituaries**



**Father Michael Blastic, OFM**

Franciscan Father Michael Blastic, who was on the faculty of the Franciscan School of Theology in San Diego, died Dec. 21. He was 74.

Born in East Chicago, Ind., he was ordained to the priesthood on April 5, 1975, in Rockford, Ill.


From the summer of 2021 until his death, he served on the faculty of the Franciscan School of Theology in San Diego.

"Father Blastic had a wonderful Franciscan spirit and was a splendid teacher and guide for our seminarians at the Franciscan School," Cardinal Robert W. McElroy said.

The funeral Mass for Father Blastic was celebrated Jan. 8 at Immaculate Conception Church in Old

Town San Diego. He was interred at Old Mission San Luis Rey Cemetery in Oceanside.

**Sister Joan Kowalski, OP**



ADRIAN, Mich. — Sister Joan Kowalski, formerly known as Sister Anne Richelle, died Jan. 8, at the Dominican Life Center in Adrian, Mich. She was 82.

Born in Detroit, Sister Kowalski's ministry assignments in the San Diego-area included these positions: elementary administrator at St. John of the Cross School in Lemon Grove, Calif., 1977 to 1978; psychiatric assistant and counselor at the San Diego Center for Psychotherapy, 1980 to 1995; and pastoral counselor at St. Patrick (1995 to 1998) and St. Elizabeth Seton (1998 to 2015) parishes, both in Carlsbad.

Sister Kowalski became a resident of the Dominican Life Center in 2023.

**Mary Elizabeth Accardi, LMFT**

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# National Eucharistic Revival Supplement – February 2024

The Church in America is journeying with our bishops to the National Eucharistic Congress in July. We are on the Road to Emmaus with them, our hearts burning with love for the Eucharistic Lord!

**THEME: THE PRIESTHOOD IS ESSENTIAL TO THE MYSTERY**




**Eucharistic Saint**


**St. Philip Neri (1515-1595)** In a period of great upheaval, the Roman priest St. Philip Neri ministered to the people of his diocese, particularly the youth, whom he cared for diligently. St. Philip was so devoted to the Eucharist that he would fall into ecstasy during his celebration of the Mass, remaining in that state for long periods. He has been called the "pilgrim of Eucharistic joy!"

**Back to Basics**

**MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD:** The priest who stands at the altar expresses the very essence of his priesthood in a Eucharistic way, through sacrifice and intercession. These are the essential elements of the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ Himself:



1. The Book of Hebrews says that Jesus, "has a priesthood that does not pass away [so] he lives forever to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25-26).
2. The Catechism reminds us that the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*: "The victim is one and the same: [Christ] offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different." (CCC, 1336)



**Calls to Action**

**Prayer for Vocations** – Pope Paul VI said that religious vocations are "the fruit of communities united in prayer." This means that families and parishes must "pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Mt. 9:38)

**Encouragement** – Young men and women who feel attracted to religious life need much encouragement to embrace the call. Make sure to reach out to vocations prospects in your family and community to let them know how much they are appreciated and needed.

*"If I were to meet a priest and an angel, I should salute the priest before I saluted the angel. The latter is the friend of God; but the priest holds His place." ~ St. John Vianney*

**National Eucharistic Revival News and Resources**

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



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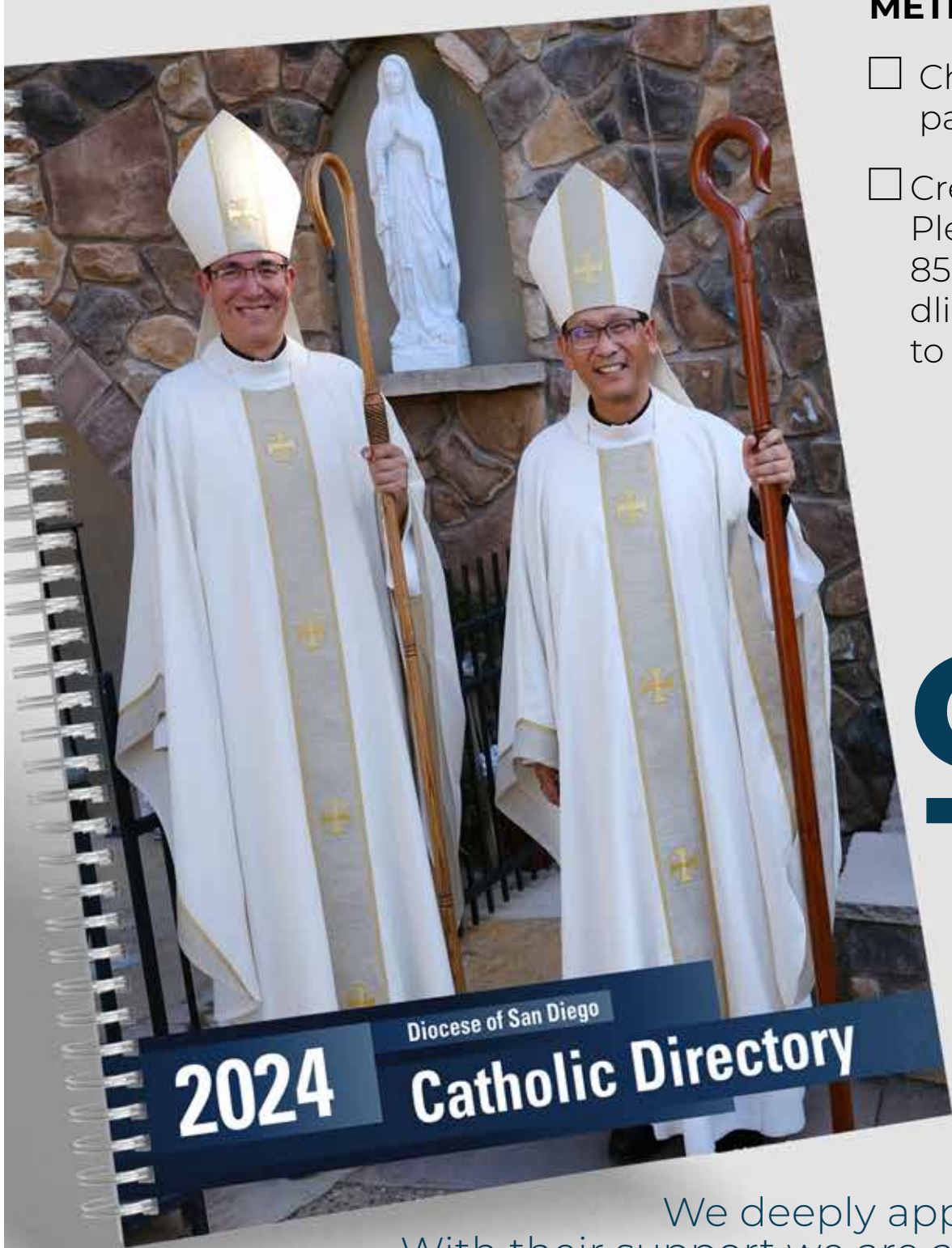
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