

THE SOUTHERN CROSS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO



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Pages 3-4

ANDY HAYT

CARRYING ON: In March, St. John of the Cross School enters its second month of classes on the campus of St. Michael Academy, where it relocated after heavy rains flooded its own campus on Jan. 22. Four eighth-graders — from left, Josh Castellanos, Nathan Gonzalez, Jonathan Okhueleigbe and Andres Pacheco — helped to move on Feb. 5, before their first day of classes at their new, temporary campus.



75 in the Desert

St. Anthony Parish in the Imperial Valley celebrated its 75th anniversary. **Page 5**



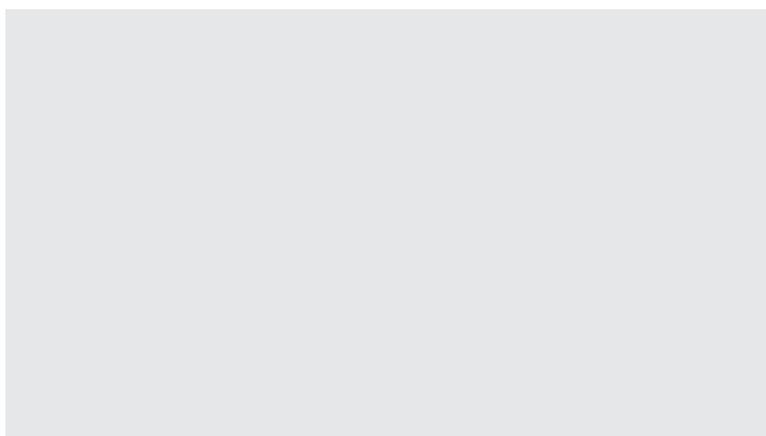
Sacred Sounds

Young adult Catherine Marshall is St. Thérèse of Carmel's music director. **Page 9**



Seeds of Faith

Creation Care Ministry brings fun activities, unique experiences to sixth-grade camp. **Page 12**



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THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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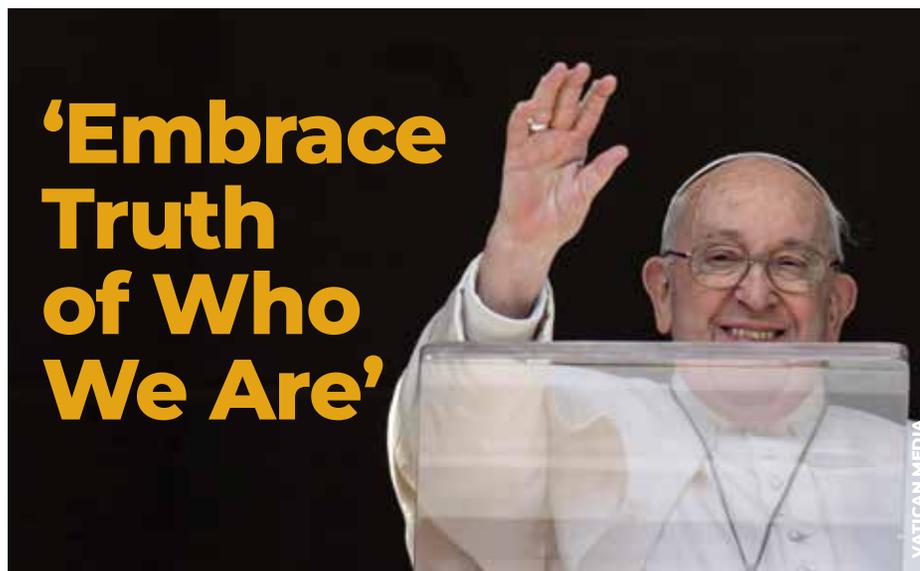


DIocese OF SAN DIEGO

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.



GREETING: Pope Francis addressed visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square on Feb. 18.



ROME — In an age when even one's most intimate

thoughts and feelings can become fodder for social media, Lent is a time to cast aside appearances and to find God at work in the depths of the heart, Pope Francis said.

Without realizing it, Christians have become immersed "in a world in which everything, including our emotions and deepest feelings, has to become 'social,'" the pope said while celebrating Mass at the Basilica of Santa Sabina to mark the beginning of Lent on Feb. 14.

Today, "even the most tragic experiences risk not having a quiet place where they can be kept," he said. "Everything has to be exposed, shown off, fed to the gossip mill."

Pope Francis said Lent is a chance for Christians to ensure their relationship with God "is not reduced to mere outward show."

Lent "immerses us in a bath of purification," he said. "It means looking within ourselves and acknowledging our real identity, removing the masks we so often wear, slowing the frantic

pace of our lives and embracing the truth of who we are."

The Lenten practices of "almsgiving, prayer and fasting are not mere external practices; they are paths that lead to the heart, to the core of the Christian life," he added, encouraging Christians to "love the brothers and sisters all around us, to feel compassion, to share all that we are and all that we have with those in need."

Pope Francis recalled the day's Gospel reading from St. Matthew, in which Jesus tells His disciples not to make a public show of their prayer but to rather "go to your inner room" to pray.

Jesus' message "is a salutary invitation for us, who so often live on the surface of things, who are so concerned to be noticed, who constantly need to be admired and appreciated," he said.

The pope urged Christians to "return to the center of yourself," where "so many fears, feelings of guilt and sin are lurking."

"Precisely there the Lord has descended to heal and cleanse you," he said. "There the Lord dwells, there our frailty is accepted and we are loved unconditionally."

Catholic News Service

Rome Synod Dates Announced



VATICAN CITY — The second assembly of the Synod of Bishops on synodality will meet Oct. 2 to 27 and will be preceded by several formal studies coordinated by the synod general secretariat working with various offices of the Roman Curia.

The Vatican announced the dates for the assembly, indicating that the desire of some synod members to spend less time in Rome was rejected. The fall assembly will be preceded by a retreat for members Sept. 30 to Oct. 1, the Vatican said.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, of the Diocese of San Diego, plans to attend, as he did the first assembly last fall.

In response to a call by members of the first assembly of the synod, Pope Francis has agreed to the establishment of "study groups that will initiate, with a synodal method, the in-depth study of some of the themes that emerged."

A papal document announcing the dates of the fall assembly did not list the topics to be studied.

In their synthesis report at the end of the first synod assembly, members voted to ask Pope Francis for several studies before the 2024 assembly. These included a study on the permanent diaconate. "Theological and pastoral research on the access of women to the diaconate should be continued," the report said.

Catholic News Service

Read Cardinal McElroy's recent address on "Building a Synodal Foundation for the Global Church," at sdccatholic.org/synodjourney.



DAVID MAUNG

Explore Priesthood



Kyle Schanzenbach is one of 13 seminarians in the Diocese of San Diego. Any man interested in finding out about a vocation to the priesthood is encouraged to attend the diocese's Explorer Day. The next one is on Saturday, March 16, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., at St. Francis Center on the campus of the University of San Diego. For more information, call (858) 490-8389.

'We're Grateful to Have a Place to Call Home'

By Denis Grasska



Feb. 5 was like a second "First Day of Class" for the students and faculty of St. John of the Cross School.

Two weeks after a day of record rainfall led to the flooding of its Lemon Grove campus, the school made a temporary home on the campus of St. Michael Academy, a parochial school in southeastern San Diego that closed three years ago.

As cars pulled into the parking lot to drop off students, they were greeted by two teachers who waved and danced to upbeat songs, while holding a sign that said, "Welcome Crusaders!"

At a morning assembly, Principal Greg Krumm acknowledged the unique situation in which the school community has found itself.

"It's not going to be the same ... but let's look at it as an adventure," he told the 150 students gathered inside St. Michael's parish hall.

Krumm added, "It's still St. John of the Cross, we're still Crusaders, and we're doing all the same things we would've done at the other building."

He later said that he had expected the first day at St. Michael's to be "more chaotic," but "everything fell into place."

"We're excited to be together again and get back to a regular routine," he said.

It remains unknown how long it will take before St. John of the Cross School can return to its own campus. Krumm said that the school could finish the year at St. Michael's "if necessary," but he hopes that they might be able to move back after Easter break.

Jan. 22, 2024, was the fourth wettest day on record in San Diego County, which received 2.73 inches of rain that day.

Among the 10 Catholic parishes and schools that were damaged, St. John of the Cross School was the hardest hit and the only one that had to be evacuated. One other Catholic institution — Rachel's Promise, a 40-bed shelter for homeless women in downtown San Diego operated by Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego — was also flooded and forced to evacuate its residents to Rachel's Women's Center, another Catholic Charities facility located across the street.

Recalling the events of Jan. 22, Krumm said, "We had a flash flood like we've never had before and, in a matter of minutes, it inundated the entire school — every single classroom, every single office space."

Seventh-grade teacher Amanda Hodges said it was a "very intense" situation.

"I think it started raining at 10:30 in the morning and, by 10:45, we had water almost across my entire classroom. ... By the end of it, I think it was like almost 2 inches of water inside the classroom," she said, adding that they



SETTLING IN: A teacher and students from St. John of the Cross School begin their first day of classes Feb. 5 on the St. Michael Academy campus.



SCHOOL SPIRIT: Two teachers, waving and dancing to upbeat songs like "Celebration" and "I'm a Believer," greet arriving students Feb. 5 with a sign that said "Welcome Crusaders!"

couldn't open the door without letting in more water.

By noon, most of the children had been picked up by their parents, Krumm said. Efforts to remove the water and mud began in earnest that same afternoon.

On Jan. 24 and 25, the school's Facebook page posted photos of flooded corridors, muddy classroom floors and water-damaged ceilings. In one particularly striking image, a statue of the Blessed Mother stood in the midst of the sea of muddy water that had been the schoolyard.

Within a few days, it was clear that the damage was extensive. Simply letting the classrooms dry wasn't a solution; there were health risks related to mold and contaminated floodwater.

As of Feb. 16, Krumm estimated that repairs could exceed \$500,000. He said that around 40% of the campus will have to be rebuilt.

St. John of the Cross School tran-

sitioned to distance-learning during the week of Jan. 29 to Feb. 2 — something Krumm said they never thought they'd have to do again after COVID — while an urgent quest began to find a suitable location for in-person classes to resume.

Ultimately, the vacant St. Michael Academy campus, which is only about a 15-minute drive from St. John of the Cross School, was identified as a perfect fit.

St. John of the Cross held a staff meeting at St. Michael's on Jan. 31 to familiarize themselves with the campus. Then, on Feb. 2 and 3, with the assistance of school parents, they readied the site for the students' arrival the following Monday.

"We're just grateful to have a place to call home for the time being, instead of being separate from the kids," said Hodges. "And they miss their friends, they miss being together; they do better in person."

She added, "I think it's going to be — I don't want to say 'seamless' — but it'll be fun."

Krumm described the arrangement, facilitated by the diocesan Office for Schools, as "a communal effort by two parishes ... who came together quickly to make sure the kids don't lose any more in-person instruction."

He spoke appreciatively of the hospitality that the St. Michael's community has shown to his school, noting that St. Michael Preschool gave up half of its space to accommodate St. John of the Cross' own preschool, which returned Feb. 7 for its first day since the campus' evacuation.

"We're so overjoyed and so blessed that the St. Michael's community has opened their arms to us," said Krumm, who said that he has received many phone calls and emails from Catholic elementary and high schools throughout the diocese offering their assistance.

"We had a terrible catastrophe happen to our school, but it's a new beginning," he said. "And, in a way, it's a blessing, because now we will be able to rebuild our school and also touch bases with all these other ... Catholic communities who have reached out to us. And it just shows how close-knit we are and how willing we are to help each other out."

Donations to assist in the rebuilding of St. John of the Cross School can be made online at stjohncross.org.

The Diocese of San Diego asked its pastors to consider holding a second collection to assist storm victims. Donate at sdcatholic.org/help-storm-victims.

Shelter, Parishes Repairing Flood Damage

By Denis Grasska



Catholic institutions were not spared from the destructive effects of recent record rainfall in Southern California.

Rachel's Promise flooded Jan. 22. It's a 40-bed shelter for homeless women in downtown San Diego operated by Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego. Its residents were evacuated to Rachel's Women's Center, a Catholic Charities-run day center across the street.

Evacuation was also necessary at St. John of the Cross School in Lemon Grove. The school transitioned to distance-learning for the week of Jan. 29 to Feb. 2 and, the following week, resumed in-person classes on the campus of St. Michael Academy, which closed three years ago.

Other examples of storm-related damage include: the church and hall at St. John of the Cross Parish; classrooms and hallways at St. Rita School; school classrooms, the office building and the adoration chapel at Sacred Heart Parish, Coronado; the parish office at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish; the church building at St. Didacus Parish; the hall in the church basement at Blessed Sacrament Parish; classrooms at St. Katherine Drexel Academy; classrooms and offices at Santa Sophia Parish; classrooms and the teacher's lounge



DELUGE: St. John of the Cross School shared this image of its flooded campus on its Facebook page Jan. 24. Heavy rains two days earlier forced the school to evacuate.

at St. Martin of Tours Academy in La Mesa; and the rectory at St. Therese Parish in Del Cerro.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy tapped Catholic Charities to assist in the distribution of funds raised through a special collection for those affected by the rains. Donations can be made online at sdcatholic.org/help-storm-victims. Half of the money from the collection will fund repairs to parish and school facilities that are not covered by insurance; the other half will be distributed by Catholic Charities to needy individuals and families in the region.

On Jan. 22, there had been 32 women residing at Rachel's Promise, when heavy rains brought water through

the building's vents and led to flooding, said Appaswamy "Vino" Pajanor, executive director of Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego.

Pajanor praised the staff at Rachel's Promise for their quick response, which ensured that residents did not lose their few belongings.

He said that the agency received the necessary permits to move the women to the neighboring day center until Rachel's Promise is repaired.

Because Rachel's Promise is fully funded by the San Diego Housing Commission, he said that Catholic Charities is working with that organization to resolve the situation and also to secure additional resources

for its residents.

Since Jan. 22, the original 32 evacuees have been joined by other women, bringing the current number of Rachel's Promise residents to about 35.

"A day center is not the best place for people to sleep overnight, but there's no other," said Pajanor, who noted that other San Diego-area homeless shelters operated by other organizations also experienced flooding, with the result that "hundreds of people now don't have that shelter that was previously existing."

Rachel's Women's Center continues to function as a day center. Its usual clientele, who do not stay there overnight, still need access to its showers, restrooms and other amenities, which they must now share with displaced residents of Rachel's Promise.

Pajanor inspected the damage at Rachel's Promise on Jan. 23 and spoke to the women who had evacuated to Rachel's Women's Center.

"The women know that this is something that is out of our control. ... They're very understanding, and we truly appreciate that," he said. "That being said, we are not taking that lightly."

He said that they are determined not to "dilly-dally" and are doing the necessary repairs "at warp speed."

The diocese asked its pastors to consider holding a second collection to assist storm victims. Donations can be made at sdcatholic.org/help-storm-victims.



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St. Anthony Parish Hailed as ‘Great Jewel’

By Roman T. Flores

 IMPERIAL, Calif.
— St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Imperial welcomed Cardinal Robert W. McElroy and a handful of its former pastors to celebrate its 75th anniversary.

Cardinal McElroy celebrated the anniversary Mass on Feb. 9 with three former pastors — Fathers Giananronio Baggio, Firmo Mantovani and David Sereno — and the current pastor, Father Danilo Valdepenas.

“Every parish has its own origin story ... and that’s what we’re celebrating today,” Cardinal McElroy told *The Southern Cross*, recalling the parish’s growth from a group of “just a few dozen” parishioners into “a much larger community of faith.”

He said, “It’s a testimony to the faith that has taken such root in Imperial County, in the City of Imperial, that all of these generations have come together forming a solid, faith-filled, caring, compassionate community around the table of the Lord.”

The cardinal praised the community for “taking God’s presence in their lives in an ever deeper way — in times of joy and celebration, achievement; in times of hardship and struggle — and all these things are etched into the life of the parish over these seven and a half decades.”



CELEBRATION: Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, center, recites the Eucharistic Prayer with, from left, Fathers Firmo Mantovani, David Sereno, Danilo Valdepenas and Giananronio Baggio during a Feb. 9 Mass marking the 75th anniversary of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Imperial.

While the City of Imperial was established in 1904, Imperial’s Catholic families had to travel to churches in the cities of Brawley to the north or El Centro to the south until 1949, according to a history of St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church provided by parish staff.

In May 1948, Father Francis Horvath visited the Catholic families of Imperial, according to the history. Seeing the need for the budding parish community, he began celebrating Mass at the Imperial County Fairgrounds, located

within the City of Imperial.

Father Horvath “helped the people of Imperial organize to prepare to build a church of their own,” the history reads. He oversaw the purchase of the present property and guided the construction of a small, mission-style church within Imperial.

The original church was dedicated by the first bishop of San Diego, Bishop Charles F. Buddy, on Feb. 8, 1949. A year later, the community built a rectory at its present location, and Father Horvath became the first pastor

of St. Anthony’s, serving in Imperial until April 1953.

After many years and other pastors, a finance and building committee was formed in 1990 to guide the building of a new church. Retired architect James Raymond offered to design and engineer the construction of the new church.

By this time, the parish had been under the pastoral care of Scalabrinian Fathers Firmo Mantovani and Father Ademar Barilli. A groundbreaking ceremony on the new church took place on May 23, 1993. The church was dedicated on March 6, 1994, by Bishop Robert H. Brom.

By the time the Scalabrinians concluded their time at St. Anthony Church, with Father Giananronio Baggio in 2007, the new church and catechetical center had been constructed.

“I think this parish is a great jewel in Imperial County, and I am delighted to be here to testify to that reality tonight,” Cardinal McElroy said at the dinner reception in the parish hall that followed the anniversary Mass.

Seventy-five years into the parish’s story, Father Valdepenas looked toward the future.

“We go forward hand-in-hand, we work as one, and we continue to grow together as one big Christian family, a community of faith,” said Father Valdepenas, pastor since August 2022. “I hope it’s going to be a continuous journey of togetherness as disciples of the Lord.”

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Holy Oils Flow from This Special Lenten Mass

By Denis Grasska

 Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will celebrate the annual Chrism Mass at 4 p.m., Thursday, March 21, at Good Shepherd Church in Mira Mesa.

Noreen McInnes, director of the diocesan Office for Liturgy and Spirituality, explained that one of the purposes of the Chrism Mass is to celebrate the institution of the ministerial priesthood, which took place at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, when Jesus instructed the Apostles to “do this in remembrance of Me.”

Traditionally, the Chrism Mass is celebrated on the morning of Holy Thursday, with the Mass of the Lord’s Supper held that evening, evincing a close connection between these two liturgies. But because Holy Week is a busy time for priests, many dioceses hold it earlier. A large number of local priests concelebrate the Mass.

“You could see up to 200 priests of the diocese gathered together, which is such a powerful image of the brotherhood of the priesthood,” McInnes said.

After the homily, during which the cardinal often directly addresses the gathered priests, he invites the



BLENDED: Cardinal Robert W. McElroy pours a cruet of balsam for oil into an urn of olive oil to make holy chrism during the diocesan Chrism Mass in this file photo.

priests “to renew, in the presence of your bishop and God’s holy people,” the promises that they made on their ordination day. And he exhorts the people to pray for the priests as well as for him.

During the offertory procession, in addition to the bread and wine, three urns of olive oil are presented to the cardinal. These include the oil of the sick, which is used in the sacrament

of anointing of the sick; the oil of the catechumens, which is used as a preparation for baptism; and the oil that will become holy chrism, which is used to anoint the newly baptized, to sign those who are to be confirmed, to anoint the hands of priests and the heads of bishops at their ordinations, and to dedicate churches and altars.

At the Chrism Mass, the cardinal blesses the oil of the sick and the

oil of the catechumens, and he consecrates the holy chrism. For the latter, he pours a cruet of balsam into an urn of olive oil; he then prays over it with extended hands, with all of the concelebrating priests also extending their hands for the duration of that prayer.

“We use glass urns, so you can see the mixing of the dark balsam into the golden olive oil,” said McInnes. “You see it swirling around as you smell the perfume.”

McInnes said that, in the offertory procession, transitional Deacon Sean Embury will carry the urn with the oil that will become chrism. He will be anointed with chrism at his priestly ordination this June.

After the Mass, representatives appointed in advance by each pastor in the diocese will receive the holy oils allotted for their parish. At each parish, the oils will be solemnly presented during the Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday. They will be used at the Easter Vigil and in sacramental celebrations throughout the year.

The holy oils are used for one year only. After next year’s Chrism Mass, the old oils will be burned and can be used to fuel the sanctuary lamp that hangs near the tabernacle.

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'It Was the Only Thing That Gave Me Relief'

By Denis Grasska



"I felt like what I had done was unforgivable."

That's how Carol, whose last name is being withheld to protect her privacy, described her state of mind after having an abortion about three years ago.

But her situation today is much different, thanks to her participation in a retreat offered by Rachel's Hope, a ministry focused on providing after-abortion healing and reconciliation to Catholic women in San Diego and Imperial counties.

Carol, a Catholic woman in her 30s, said that attending the three-day retreat was "the best thing I could have done."

"It was the only thing that gave me relief," she said.

Rachel's Hope offers two English-language retreats every year. The next one will be held from March 8 to 10 at the diocesan Pastoral Center.

The organization also annually offers four retreats in Spanish, the next of which will be held April 5 to 7, also at the diocesan Pastoral Center.

"We can offer God's mercy and healing in their life, and they can go forward renewed, and refreshed, and out from under the heavy burden that they have been carrying since their abortions. They can truly be set free," explained Rosemary Benefield, founder and director of Rachel's Hope, reflecting on the ministry's purpose.

Through the English-language



HEALING: Rachel's Hope offers retreats for Catholic women who are seeking emotional and spiritual healing from an abortion. The next retreat will be held March 8 to 10.

retreats alone, Benefield said, the organization has helped more than 600 women over the past 29 years.

It was in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic that Carol unexpectedly found herself pregnant.

Though her boyfriend previously had expressed interest in marriage and children, he "completely changed" after she told him that she was expecting. She said that he "started pressuring" her to have an abortion, assuring her that she would "ruin" her life if she carried the baby to term.

She asked him to give her time to collect her thoughts and weigh her options, but he kept up this drumbeat of negativity.

Carol wonders whether the situation might have turned out differently if, rather than feeling isolated because of lockdowns and social distancing, she had been attending Mass and felt connected to her parish community.

"I just felt terribly alone," she said.

Carol "really wanted that baby," but ultimately allowed herself to be persuaded to schedule an appointment

After-Abortion Healing Retreat

Catholic (and Catholic-friendly) women who are seeking relief from their grief and regret over an 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 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 or visit rachelshope.org.

with Planned Parenthood and to take the abortion pill RU-486.

She stayed at a cousin's house as the pill took effect. She experienced hours of "excruciating" pain and "a lot of bleeding." She said that her cousin was concerned that she might have to call an ambulance.

Healing *Continued on Page 8*

THE SACRED THREE DAYS: TRIDUUM RETREAT



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New Degree in Restorative Justice

The Southern Cross



Beginning this fall, the University of San Diego

will be offering a master's degree in Restorative Justice Facilitation and Leadership, becoming one of only a handful of universities offering such a degree and the only one in California.

The master's program will be offered through the Center for Restorative Justice, which was launched in 2019 within USD's Graduate School of Leadership and Education Sciences.

"Our team had observed tremendous growth in restorative justice across different sectors," said David Karp, PhD, director of the Center for Restorative Justice and program director of the new Master of Arts in Restorative Justice.

"However, we saw this expansion happen without capacity building," he said, explaining that programs were being started by people who weren't equipped with the education and skill sets that they needed.

Karp said that the new master's degree program represents "an effort to support the next generation of RJ leaders with in-depth training and education, so that they can be



EXPANDING: The Center for Restorative Justice at the University of San Diego co-sponsored an event June 11, 2022, where six people shared their experience with the criminal justice system. The center plans to begin a master's degree in Restorative Justice Facilitation and Leadership.

successful in the field."

"This is kind of groundbreaking" and "a big step forward," Robert Ehnnow, PhD, director of the diocesan Office for Life, Peace and Justice, said of the new degree program.

Ehnnow described restorative justice as "an alternative to our current system of justice." He said that it doesn't deny the need for punishment, but goes beyond holding someone accountable and seeks to bring about healing and reconciliation.

"In addition to learning the history, philosophy, and facilitation skills of restorative justice, we offer coursework in program leadership and mul-

iple opportunities to put theory into practice," said Karp, adding that the non-residential program includes seven online courses, two short courses that bring the cohort together at USD, and one travel seminar intended to show how restorative justice operates internationally.

The center also offers a three-course professional certificate program.

For more information, visit sandiego.edu/soles/academics/master-restorative-justice, call (619) 202-3649 or email dkarp@sandiego.edu.



Healing *Continued from Page 7*

But Carol's pain wasn't only physical. Within days, commingled with a sense of relief that she was no longer pregnant, she already had begun to have regrets.

"They sell this like it is an easy answer, and your life is going to be fine (after an abortion) ... and it is not," she said. "No one prepares you for the shame, the regret, the depression ... that comes afterwards."

One day the following year, she was attending Mass and seeking relief from her post-abortion depression. At the church, she came upon some information about Rachel's Hope and asked herself, "Why not?"

The experience of attending one of the ministry's retreats was life-changing.

"Just knowing that I could be forgiven for my sin, telling my story with other women, crying together, seeing that I wasn't alone," she said, "it gave me hope that I could be redeemed, forgiven, and ... move on with my life somehow."

She said, "It was a beautiful experience just to connect with other women."

Carol said that she has created lasting bonds with her fellow retreat participants and that they have kept an ongoing email chain.

"We pray for each other, we reach out, we know about each other's lives," she said. "It's kind of a sisterhood."

National Eucharistic Revival Supplement – March 2024

During the National Eucharistic Revival, we are reminded of our need to be spiritually prepared to receive our Eucharistic Lord. The disciples on the Road to Emmaus discovered Him in the breaking of bread.



THEME: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EUCHARISTIC FAST

Eucharistic Saint



St. Rose Philippine Duchesne (1769-1852) – This French nun was a Sacred Heart Sister who came to evangelize the Native American tribes in the mission territory of St. Louis, Missouri. She could not learn the native languages so she spent countless hours praying before the Eucharist for the other missionary sisters instead. The Indians gave her the name of "The Woman Who Prays Always."

Back to Basics

THE EUCHARISTIC FAST: Bodily fasting before receiving a spiritual gift has a long history in our tradition. Moses fasted for 40 days before receiving the Ten Commandments (Ex 34:28), and the prophet Elijah journeyed for 40 days through the desert before his experience of God on the mountain (1 Kgs 19:8).



The Eucharistic Fast has the same effect on us: it prepares us to be worthy vessels in which to receive our Eucharistic Lord. Canon Law states: "One who is to receive the Most Holy Eucharist is to abstain from any food or drink, with the exception of water and medicine, for at least the period of one hour before Holy Communion." (Canon 919)

Physical mortification before receiving Communion makes us spiritually receptive to His grace.

Faith in Action



Two Exceptions – If a priest must celebrate more than one Mass in a day, he is obliged to keep the Eucharistic fast only before the first Mass. Likewise, the elderly, the sick, and those who care for them may receive Communion if they have eaten something within the preceding hour. **Twice In a Day** – It sometimes happens that the faithful wish to receive the Eucharist more than once in a day. The Church allows a person who has already received the Eucharist to receive a second time on the same day, but **it must be within a Mass** (Canon 917)

"May my heart ever hunger for Thee and be nourished by Thee, whose sight the angels desire; may my innermost soul be filled by the sweetness of thy savor and ever thirst for Thee, the fount of life, the fount of wisdom and science, the fount of eternal life, the torrent of joy, the plenitude of the house of God." ~ St Bonaventure

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* at www.SitStandKneel.com for great evangelization resources to spread the Eucharistic fire!

Young Adult's Calling Is Music to Parish

By Denis Grasska

When Catherine Marshall speaks about the power of music to lead the people to God, she speaks from experience.

As a middle-schooler, she attended Mass with her parents and younger sister, but only out of a sense of obligation.

She credits her involvement with St. Thérèse of Carmel Parish's music ministry, beginning in eighth grade, with sparking a spiritual transformation.

"It became my favorite thing in life," said Marshall, now 27.

She remembers a schedule that had her attending two evening rehearsals and two Sunday Masses every week.

Her spiritual life continued to deepen as a student at Canyon Crest Academy, and she found a "booming Catholic community" at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she earned a Bachelor of Music in Flute Performance in 2018.

Despite that, Marshall never imagined working for the Church.

"Music was my profession, and I always had a passion for Church music but didn't realize it would be a full-time calling," she said, explaining that she had been on track to become a professional flutist.

That changed in fall of 2021, when



MAKING MUSIC: Catherine Marshall directs the St. Thérèse of Carmel Parish Choir, which will perform its annual spring concert at 3 p.m., Palm Sunday, March 24.

she accepted the position of director of music at St. Thérèse of Carmel Parish. She coordinates liturgical music, ensuring that musicians have been lined up for the parish's weekend Masses and for weddings and funerals.

Though she oversees all of the parish's music groups, Marshall has a hands-on role with two of them: She directs the St. Thérèse of Carmel Parish Choir and the youth and young adult choir, known as "Ruach."

Because so many diocesan liturgies are held at the parish, Marshall's job also means frequently collaborating with the diocesan Office for Liturgy and Spirituality on these events.

She believes that "we all have a longing for union with God" and that there is something about beautiful music that can awaken that longing.

Many among the parish choir's 35 members have degrees in music. Several have sung with such prestigious ensembles as the San Diego Master Chorale and the Vienna Singverein, and at such venues as Carnegie Hall; the Queen's (now King's) Chapel of the Savoy, London; and the Vatican.

The parish choir, which provides the liturgical music for the 9 a.m. Sunday Mass, is preparing for its annual spring concert, which will be held at 3 p.m., Palm Sunday, March 24. The choir began

its preparation for this concert last fall.

The choir will perform Maurice Duruflé's "Requiem," as well as Claudio Monteverdi's "Ave Maris Stella," Rene Clausen's "Set Me As a Seal," and Gabriel Faure's "Cantique de Jean Racine."

Marshall explained that the choir considers the event its "personal gift" to the parish and wider community, an opportunity "to appreciate the rich history of our Church and what beauty can inspire in one's spiritual life."

This will be the choir's second spring concert under Marshall, who earned a Master of Music degree in Flute Performance last spring from San Diego State University and is working on an Artist Diploma Advanced Certificate in Choral Conducting, also at SDSU.

Last year marked the return of the spring concert after a four-year hiatus due to the pandemic.

Marshall sees Duruflé's "Requiem" as a good fit for Holy Week, explaining that it encourages concert-goers to contemplate "those bigger-picture realities" that we don't think about very often. She said that the Requiem texts "allow us to reflect on where we are going and the reality of death and eternal life."

For more information about the concert, contact St. Thérèse of Carmel Parish at sttheresecarmel.org.



19th Annual Good Friday Pro-Life Stations of the Cross

March 29, 2024
12:00-1:15 p.m.
Sidewalk of St. Joseph Cathedral
4th St. & Beech, Downtown S.D.



Join Bishop Ramón Bejarano as he walks with Jesus to the Calvary and to be a witness for life

Recommendations

- Arrive by 11:45 a.m.
- Wear comfortable shoes
- Bring your own signs (no graphic images)
- Park at St. Joseph Cathedral (limited availability)
- Consider carpooling



Diocese of San Diego
Office for Life, Peace and Justice
<https://sdcatholic.org/>

Carolina Díaz-Romero
(858) 490-8324
CDiaz-Romero@sdcatholic.org

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By Denis Grasska



For almost 1,300 people in San Diego and Imperial counties, this Easter will be their first as fully initiated members of the Catholic Church.

The Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion represents a significant milestone on their spiritual journeys.

At this diocesan liturgy, held annually during the Lenten season, 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 in their parishes at Easter. This includes catechumens, who have never been baptized, and candidates, who are baptized Christians seeking the sacraments of confirmation and First Holy Communion.

To accommodate the 1,284 catechumens and candidates, 1,275 sponsors, members of parish's OCIA teams, and 862 guests, the diocese held five ceremonies over the Feb. 17-18 weekend. Collectively, a total of 3,744 people from 73 parishes and other Catholic communities attended.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy presided over four San Diego ceremonies, two each on Saturday and Sunday, at Good Shepherd Parish in Mira Mesa. He was joined by Auxiliary Bishops Ramón Bejarano, Michael Pham and Felipe Pulido. Auxiliary Bishop Pulido presided over the Imperial Valley ceremony on Saturday at St. Anthony's Church in Imperial, assisted by Auxiliary Bishop Bejarano.

"Each year, it is a great joy for every bishop in the world to welcome catechumens and candidates," said Cardinal McElroy, as he began his homily at Good Shepherd on Feb. 18. "It is a great happiness for me to see all of you here today."

He said that the five ceremonies held that weekend constituted "a sign that,

throughout San Diego and Imperial counties, men and women and young people have been touched by God's grace and have opened their hearts to God's invitation to walk with the Lord and the Catholic community."

Rodney Bruce, a 42-year-old candidate from St. Charles Borromeo Parish, reflected on what the liturgy meant to him.

"It's the first step in many steps, I believe," he said. "I kind of view this as a lifelong walk."

The catechumens and candidates listening to the cardinal's words took disparate paths to arrive at this ceremony.

Among them was Hani Bonaya, a 27-year-old catechumen from St. Charles Borromeo Parish.

Bonaya had been raised Muslim, but after emigrating to the United States with her family in 2006, she drifted away from that faith.

Her first exposure to the Catholic Church came through a friend's invitation to Mass.

Encouraged to "just come and see," she said, "I went in with an open mind, and ... just the moment I stepped in, it felt like I was at home."

"I kept going back every Sunday by myself," she said. "(My friend) didn't even have to ask me."

Brooke Renning, a 29-year-old candidate from Mission San Diego de Alcalá, said she studied "all mainstream religions and a few very non-mainstream religions." But she still always identified as Christian.

Explaining why she signed up for OCIA, Renning said, "I was completely led here by spirit."

After moving to San Diego, she found herself living just three blocks away from the iconic mission church.

"One morning, I was just so compelled to go to church," said Renning, whose fiancé accompanied her to Mass.

"It was a very emotional and spiritually moving experience," she said, "and this inner voice was like, 'You need to keep going to this.'"

Provisionally, at the end of the



RITE OF ELECTION: Representatives from parishes and other Catholic communities presented their Books of Intentions for the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion ceremony on Feb. 17 at Good Shepherd Church. In five such ceremonies over the weekend, the diocese welcomed 1,284 catechumens and candidates to the Church.

Mass, she heard an announcement that registrations were being accepted for the next round of OCIA classes.

Renning said that one of the attractions of Catholicism was "the capital 'T' tradition of the Church."

"I like things that are closest to their original roots," she said, "so an apostolic lineage was as close as I could get."

She also shared her anticipation of receiving the Eucharist, describing "that direct communion with Christ" as "probably one of the greatest honors of being a part of this Church."

Renning's fiancé, Joseph Burger, is also a member of her OCIA class as a catechumen.

The 35-year-old grew up attending what he described as a "rock 'n' roll church" because of the prevalence of Christian rock bands. He drifted away from practicing his faith during high school, reconnected with his Protes-

tant Christianity in his late 20s and, like Renning, was drawn to Catholicism through his experience of the Mass at Mission San Diego.

Reflecting on the Rite of Election, he said, "It was really just an electric moment to feel that Spirit moving through everybody that was present here, and being so welcomed was really special."

Ryan Knapik, 35, is a candidate from Ascension Parish.

Born and raised Catholic, he started his sacramental preparation for confirmation, but never completed it.

The birth of his niece brought him back to the Church and inspired him to finish what he began.

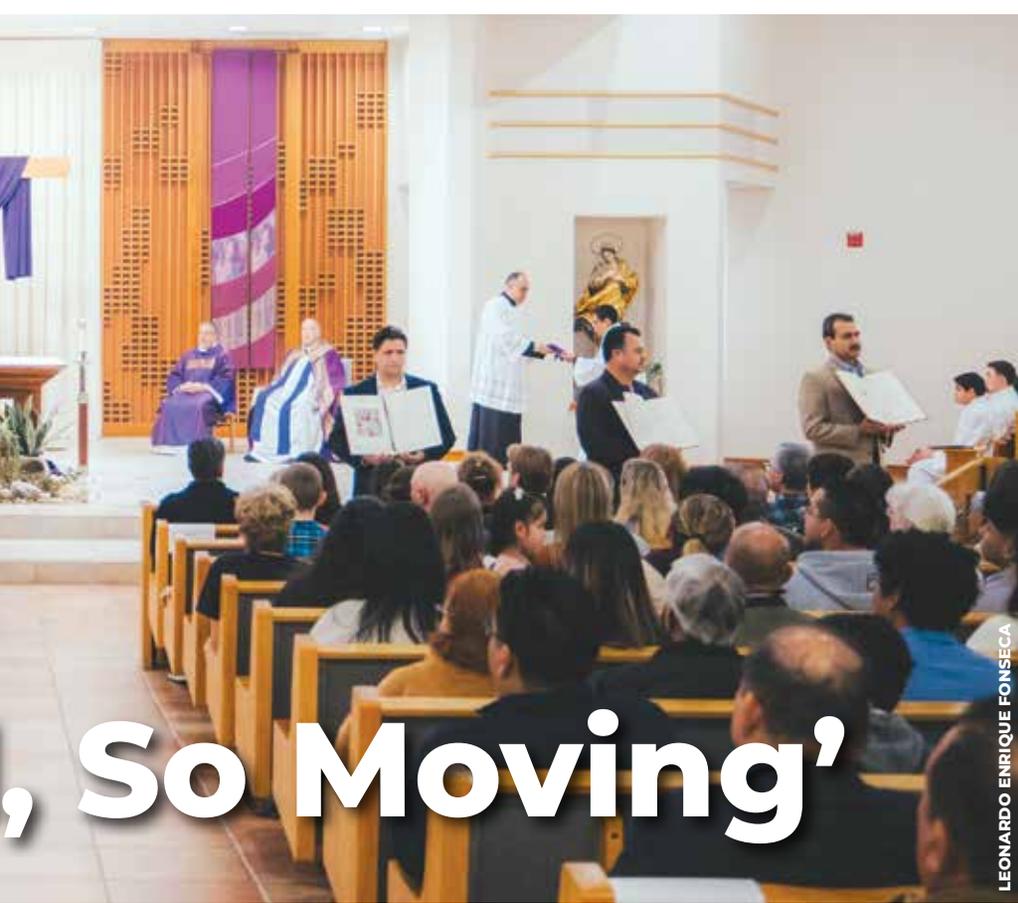
"Family has always been really important to us," he said, explaining that his sister and brother-in-law wanted him to be the godfather of their child, but only fully initiated Catholics are



OPENING: Three parishes in the Imperial Valley participated in the Rite of Election ceremony on Feb. 17 at St. Anthony Church in the city of Imperial.



HISTORIC: Cardinal Robert W. McElroy signed parish



LEONARDO ENRIQUE FONSECA

Books of the Elect, newly signed by Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, to those assembled at the Rite of Election and Call to Conversion, the diocese welcomed nearly 1,300 people who will join the Catholic Church.

permitted to fulfill that role.

He said, "That whole thing really forced me to look at myself, look at my shortcomings, why I didn't complete the process the first time ... (and to) come back to the Church."

Knapik described the Rite of Election as "so powerful and so moving," and he said that he is feeling "pure excitement" as he looks ahead toward the Easter Vigil.

The ceremony also moves many OCIA team members, godparents and sponsors.

Alicia Rahiotis was a catechumen about six years ago. On Feb. 17, she and her husband, Miguel Rahiotis, had brought 16 people to participate in Rite of Election ceremony in the Imperial Valley. Last year, the couple had become coordinators of OCIA at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Calexico.

"This day is very special because all our catechumens are now in our par-

ish's Book (of the Elect); they are part of the history of the church," she said. "I went through the program, and I know how it feels."

She said the individuals don't just learn about the Catholic Church in a classroom.

"You start giving your testimony," she said. "They are starting their new path in life because this is just the beginning."

For Christina Sardina, the family faith formation director at Santa Sophia Parish, this was her first year of involvement with the OCIA process and her first time attending the Rite of Election.

"The Rite of Election is a beautiful reminder that we, as a Church, are indeed the Body of Christ," said Sardina, who accompanied three catechumens and four candidates to the rite this year. "We offer those on this faith jour-

ney our support, encouragement and prayers. But more than that, today we have declared as a parish community that our catechumens are ready and prepared to accept God's call into the life and Body of Christ."

Linda Hewett, an OCIA team member at Mission San Diego, is a veteran of the Rite of Election, having attended it 23 times. This year, she brought 10 catechumens and candidates.

"I love this ceremony ... As a cradle Catholic, I would never see this, if I wasn't here with the (OCIA) team," she said.

Bonnie Curtis, director of evangelization at Ascension Parish, accompanied two catechumens and three candidates to the rite.

"It's just such a joyful liturgy," she said, "and it's always made an impact on our candidates and catechumens."

"We're kind of isolated in our small group most of the time," she said, "but to see so many other people just all coming into the church, it's very faith-affirming."

In the Imperial Valley, Ana Chacon arrived early for the 9 a.m. Rite of Election ceremony at St. Anthony Church.

"This day is really joyful because my daughters have both decided to take the next step and have Jesus more in their lives," she said.

The mother reflected on her daughters' decision.

"It's an honor to see that they have taken this step on their own because they really want to do their sacraments."

Chacon noted that one of her daughters had begun the process of joining the Church at St. Margaret Mary Parish in Brawley and then reached out to her younger sister to do the same.

The mother recalled thinking, "Let's do it!"

She sat between her daughters and a grandson. One of them, Ana Marie Chacon, 26, is a catechumen and will receive the sacraments of initiation at

the Easter Vigil Mass.

Why did she want to join the Church?

"To have a better relationship with God, to fully surrender myself to Him and to be a more godly woman," the daughter said, adding, "I'm getting to know myself through God."

Her sister, Rochelle Chacon Ruiz, 34, said she wanted to join the church because of her five children.

"I wanted to lead them to be closer to God," she said.

She said that she "was always close to my Bible" when she was a child, but later had grown distant from it. She now has returned to it.

"This day is precious. I know my children will follow now that I have taken these steps," she added, as her son, Michael, around 8 years old, sat next to her.

At that ceremony, Bishop Pulido focused on the concept of personal identity. He said that the Rite of Election "calls to mind our identity. Who are we? Where are we going?"

"Jesus knew He was the beloved Son of God; He knew His calling and mission. He knew who He was and where He was going."

He noted that those present were from Brawley, Calexico, El Centro or other parts in the Imperial Valley, and perhaps some were from San Diego.

"But in reality, we are one community of faith. And we rejoice that we are diversifying and growing our community of believers. And that is something to celebrate, the fact that we belong to a huge family."

Aida Bustos contributed to this story.

View photo gallery at thesoutherncross.org/ROE2024



LEONARDO ENRIQUE FONSECA

Books of the Elect.



LEONARDO ENRIQUE FONSECA

ACCOMPANIMENT: Daniel Montañó served as a sponsor for his cousin, Maura Evans, a catechumen from Santa Sophia Parish. They attended the ceremony on Feb. 18 at Good Shepherd Church.



Ecology Education Goes to Camp

CHRISTINA BAGAGLIO SLENTZ

By Christina Bagaglio Slentz



March-ing forth, we continue to explore the seven goals of “Laudato Si,” the focal points of Pope Francis’ encyclical — or letter to the faithful — calling our attention to our responsibility to care for God’s gift of creation.

Building on the first two goals, “Response to the Cry of the Earth” and “Response to the Cry of the Poor,” which recognize the entanglement of humans with that of the environment, this month adds the goal of “ecological education.” The Vatican defines this education as a call to rethink and redesign educational programming and institutions “in the spirit of integral ecology ... to foster ecological awareness and transformative action.”

Planting Seeds of Faith

On Feb. 13, our diocesan Creation Care ministry launched a new program for the ecological education of some of our youngest Catholic community members. We teamed up with Whispering Winds Family Camp to help host the first “6th Grade Camp” in our region to be held at a Catholic facility and to include Catholic catechesis as part of the students’ week-long experience.



Approximately 80 sixth-graders from St. Didacus, St. Rita, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, and Santa Sophia schools gathered on the mountain in Julian with the help of some of their teachers, the adept coordination of the camp staff, and a lively cadre of Life Teen Missionary camp counselors.

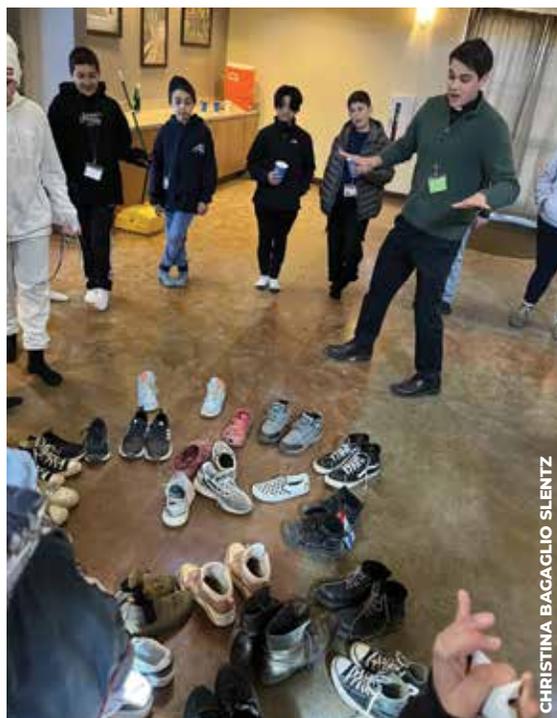
Scripture, Trees, Crawling Things, and the Human Family

For a half day, the diocesan Creation Care Ministry engaged with these energetic students, rotating them around four stations of activity. In what’s known as “Shepherd’s Hall,” the sixth-graders were asked to play the “Would You Rather?” game, compelling them to contemplate the many joys of the gift of creation as presented in the first chapter of Genesis.

Would you rather gaze at the stars or watch the sunrise? Spend a day at the beach or a day in the mountains? Hurry and choose your side of the room and don’t let your friends influence you! What speaks to you in the gift of



CHRISTINA BAGAGLIO SLENTZ



CHRISTINA BAGAGLIO SLENTZ

creation, and how does this shape your relationship with God? The students shared deep insights and lighthearted laughs about their likes and dislikes.

Next, the students were treated to time around a fire circle, where Brother James Lockman, OFM, a restoration botanist and Franciscan friar, shared with them the wonder of trees, truly magnificent earthly creations that make human life possible. Brother James then invited the students to become co-creators, planting 80 acorns to help grow next year’s Creation Care trees for distribution at our annual Feast of St. Francis Tree Festival.

Helping students understand the interconnectedness of the human family, seminarian John Murcko, who recently completed coursework studying “Laudato Si” at the Franciscan School of Theology, led the students through a station designed to reveal how we are all “neighbors.” The sixth-graders were challenged to disentangle a pile of their shoes and reorganize themselves in a new order, meeting new “neighbors” within their group. As Jesus responds to the question, “Who is my neighbor?” with the parable of the Good Samaritan, our seminarian John expertly unpacked this story with the students, highlighting the way our impact on the environment affects our poorest and most vulnerable brothers and sisters around the world.

Teach Your Children Well

San Diego Zoo Safari Park professional snake wrangler Allan Chornak, a lifelong camper/venturer at Whispering Winds Family Camp, provided the fourth lesson of the day. Full of passion for all of God’s creatures, Allan centered his presentation on one of the most vilified members of the animal kingdom, the rattlesnake. He dispelled the mythology that gives rattlesnakes a bad rap, inviting students to re-examine their preconceptions about nature and to take a deeper dive into ecology. His enthusiasm was certainly infectious!

And his impact should be no surprise. The grandchild of some of the earliest Whispering Winds Family Camp attendees, Allan learned to love creation from the very start, a necessary first step to recognizing our sister, Mother Earth, as a revelatory gift to be cared for in response to God’s love for us.

It’s our sincere prayer that our 80 sixth-graders will have fallen in love with this gift of the earth by the end of the week and will grow in their knowledge of God’s love and capacity to care for creation in return!



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

sd catholic.org/creation

Creation Care Ministry Explores a Theme Monthly to Inspire Action.

Tradition With Modern Causes

By Denis Grasska



The Stations of the Cross, also known as the Way of the Cross or Via Crucis, commemorate Jesus' passion and death on the cross.

With many of the nearly 100 parishes in the diocese holding their own services every Friday in Lent, local Catholics have plenty of options. They may also attend one of the two outdoor participatory events that are held every Good Friday in downtown San Diego.

The 31st annual Walk with the Suffering will be held from 8:30 to 11 a.m., Friday, March 29. The 19th annual Good Friday Pro-Life Stations of the Cross will be held from noon to 1:15 p.m. that same day.

The Walk with the Suffering seeks to connect Jesus' passion with contemporary causes of suffering in the local community, including homelessness, human trafficking and climate change.

Starting and ending at the San Diego Rescue Mission, where free parking will be available, this ecumenical event will include prayers and reflections at various sites.

Auxiliary Bishop Felipe Pulido will lead the Fourth Station. Cristo Rey San Diego High School students, costumed as Jesus and other characters,



RE-ENACTED: Catholic high school students re-enacting the Way of the Cross is a recurring feature of the annual Walk with the Suffering, one of two outdoor Stations of the Cross that will be held on Good Friday, March 29, in downtown San Diego.

will re-enact each of the stations.

"It is very important for Catholics and others to be aware of the suffering in our community and to realize that Jesus was no stranger to suffering Himself," said Rosemary Johnston, longtime organizer of the event.

"Jesus was also someone who responded to the suffering of others in the community ... and He invites us to do the same."

Participants in the Good Friday Pro-Life Stations of the Cross will gather at 11:45 a.m. on the east side of St. Joseph's Cathedral (4th Avenue and Beech Street). At noon, they will prayerfully walk to the federal building at Front Street and Broadway, where Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano will lead the Stations of the Cross, before

returning to St. Joseph's.

"While solemnly remembering the passion and death of our Lord, who was innocent yet put to death, we reflect on the deaths of thousands of innocent unborn babies who have died from abortion," said Roger Lopez, who organizes the event.

"Standing up for the truth in a public setting is not always comfortable," he added, "but it is the least we can do for the most vulnerable brothers and sisters of our Lord."

More information:
Walk with the Suffering — jstn.rsmry@gmail.com
Good Friday Pro-Life Stations of the Cross — Sue.Lopez.Helpers@gmail.com

Father Joe's Served Nearly 13,000 in 2023

The Southern Cross

Father Joe's Villages, San Diego's largest homeless services provider, served nearly 13,000 neighbors in need during the 2023 calendar year, including 3,897 people experiencing homelessness in December alone.

Father Joe's has been issuing monthly "Compassion in Action: Our Neighbors by the Numbers" reports, which offer a snapshot of how people are using its services and which help the organization allocate resources to meet the needs of the communities it serves.

Per the numbers, Father Joe's Villages offered 366,805 nights of shelter beds to people in need in San Diego and helped almost 900 people experiencing homelessness exit to permanent or temporary housing.

Additionally, Father Joe's Villages' medical staff also provided care to 3,469 unique neighbors in 2023, including through 1,791 dental appointments; 1,594 psychiatric appointments; and 2,180 encounters with the Street Health outreach team.

"We could not have accomplished all of this without the generous support of the community," said Deacon Jim Vargas, president and CEO of Father Joe's Villages.

More information: my.neighbor.org.

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April 7, 2023
2:00 P.M. to 3:30 P.M.

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GUEST SPEAKER:
WAYNE LEE



Wayne Lee is an educator, author and catechist, who will share his profound conversion story of God's infinite love and mercy to a prodigal son brought back to life.

You Can Break Cycle of Trauma



ADOBESTOCK



We have grown so used to using the word “trauma” in daily language that we run the risk of diluting its significance.

We live in a traumatizing culture of wars, migrations and climate change; in that sense, we belong to that great number of people traumatized, but there is a more intimate, personal dimension of trauma.

Trauma is “an inner injury, a lasting rupture or split within the self due to difficult or hurtful events ... a psychic injury, lodged in our nervous system, mind, and body, lasting long past the originating incident(s), triggerable at any moment. It’s a constellation of hardships, composed of the wound itself and the residual burdens that our woundedness imposes on our bodies and souls: the unresolved emotions they visit upon us; the coping dynamics they dictate; the tragic or melodramatic or neurotic scripts we unwittingly but inexorably live out;

Columnist

Ricardo Márquez



and, not least, the toll these take on our bodies,” according to Dr. Gabor Maté, in his 2022 book “The Myth of Normal — Trauma, Illness and Healing in a Toxic Culture.”

Trauma is not just what happens, but how one lives it from within over time. Our emotional brain is atemporal; it does not function like a watch that marks the passing of time. Any “trigger,” any word, suggestion or memory can detonate what we carry inside of us that we have not healed and lead us to relive the painful feelings and emotions of the traumatic event.

The present is the privileged place to heal the traumas that anchor us to the past; “today” is the day that we can decide, that we can ask for help

and that we can train our brain to create new circuits of acceptance and an appreciation of who we are.

To develop new habits of thinking is not easy, but it is possible. It’s very different to constantly remember what happened to us and be trapped in the present by the past than to affirm the possibilities and resources of the present. I am not, and am not defined by the trauma that I lived; I am much more than the trauma that wounded me. I recognize my wound, but I am not my wound.

Psychotherapy is a way to explore the roots of traumatic events so that, by recognizing them, they can become part of our history and diminish the power that they have in our lives, like subterranean forces. As Carl Jung told us, “Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.”

I have experienced that psychotherapy helps to understand the causes of our traumas and reduce their negative effects on our mental

health, but there is another higher, or transcendent level, the level of faith, from where I have experienced forgiveness and the radical healing of my traumas. It is the level of encounter and intimacy with the risen Lord of the Good News, the one who revealed to us in His life the mystery of a close God who loves us unconditionally and confirms us in that love, and that neither death nor trauma, not even disease have the last word.

I surrender and put in His hands everything that I am and have experienced, my lights and my shadows. I speak to Him like the leper of the Gospel and I say to Him: “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean,” and I feel that He extends His hand again, touches me and tells me: “I am willing; be clean” (Matt 8:1-3). There, I have found peace, acceptance and deep healing of my wounds and traumas.

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

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March 29, 2024

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Highlights

- Reflection on human life and dignity in Station IV, “Jesus Meets Mary” by Aux. Bishop Felipe Pulido
- Procession around Downtown San Diego
- Passion re-enactment by Cristo Rey High School students
- Reflections on social justice issues such as poverty, immigration, and mental health
- Free parking available at the Rescue Mission

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Rosemary Johnson
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On Lenten Journey, We Don't Travel Alone

The Lenten season, which consists of 40 days, reminds us that, because of our fallen nature, we need to be united with God by a spirit of penance with Christ's work of redemption.

Through prayer, fasting, almsgiving and other penitential exercises, Lent enables us to unite ourselves effectively with that work.

There can be no Lent worthy of the name without a personal effort to make our lives better, to lead them with greater fidelity, and to make reparation for our past sins through the practice of "giving up something for Lent."

Lent is like a long retreat that leads us to the practice of a Christian life

Diocese of San Diego

Auxiliary Bishop Michael Pham



more fully. It sets before us the example of Christ and, through fasting and penance, it unites us to His sufferings, which enable us to share in His redemption.

We should remember that we are not alone, that it is not just we who are concerned with Lent. We belong to an immense body in which we are united with the whole human family to be redeemed by Christ.

In the Gospel of the first Sunday of Lent, the Spirit led Jesus out into the desert for 40 days to be tempted by Satan. The account of the temptation of Christ shows Him to us as the new

head of humanity, at grips with Satan's power and overcoming him with divine power. This is an assertion of Christ's victory over "the prince of this world," who was cast out of heaven.

The meaning of Lent for us, then, is as a season of spiritual development. It is shared with the entire Church as we prepare to celebrate the Paschal mystery – the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Every year, the entire Christian people, following Christ, takes up the struggle against evil, against Satan and the sinful human that each one of us bears within ourselves. In order to draw from the Easter joy, from the very source of Divine Life, and to continue our journey to be with Him, we are challenged to develop a life of holiness.

In this spiritual development, we can spend time considering the things

we truly value in life. Then, we begin stripping away at least some of the things that keep us from living out those values.

Sometimes, we need to make difficult choices and lifestyle changes. Perhaps a simpler way of living, less overtime, or fewer creature comforts will allow us more time with family, friends, and God. Lent can help us put first things first!

At the end of Lent, we will be asked to renew our baptismal promises, our commitment to the Lord Jesus and to what Christian discipleship is all about. Everything we do in Lent — as we try to "put first things first" — should prepare us to make our re-commitment to Jesus at Easter as honest and sincere as we possibly can.

May God bless you all in this season of Lent!



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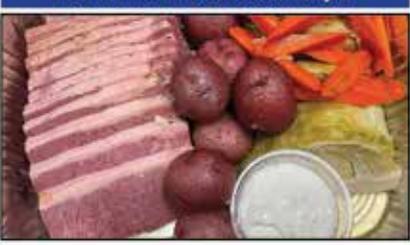
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'A Wonderful Adventure'

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE PARISH

COURTESY OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE PARISH

By Denis Grasska

 Jesuit Father Neal "Pepe" Wilkinson, 68, is an associate pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Barrio Logan.

Born in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, he made his first profession of vows on Aug. 17, 1991. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 9, 2000, and professed final vows on Jan. 20, 2018.

Father Wilkinson will be among the honorees at the Ignatian Volunteer Corps' Evening of Gratitude on Sunday, April 7, at St. Catherine Laboure Parish. He will receive the Sheila O'Malley Vision & Dedication Award in recognition of his work as a "spiritual reflector" for IVC members and for his support of Casa de los Pobres in Tijuana.

Question: What role did the Cath-

Pastor, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish
Father Neal Wilkinson



olic faith play in your early life?

Answer: My parents were both practicing Catholics. Our family was at Mass every Sunday and sometimes during the week, too.

I was an altar server, from around age 9 to 14, when the Mass was still celebrated in Latin, and I attended a Catholic grade school and high school.

I can remember praying a lot in the car with my family, including when we were on our way to school. Every time my parents, siblings and I made the drive into Milwaukee, which was about 45 minutes from where we lived, we'd pray the rosary at least one way. Prayer was part of the rhythm of life.

When did you first perceive a call to the priesthood?

I think the first time was when I made my First Communion.

Several priests were friends of our family and regular visitors to our house. They were good men, and they were smart, and they didn't try to be cool; they were just who they were. I think their authenticity was what was most important. I looked up to them as role models and felt a desire to make a contribution like they were.

How long did it take for that call to develop?

I was 17 years old, attending Marquette University in Milwaukee, when I decided that I wanted to be a Jesuit priest. But I didn't feel ready and didn't want to rush into anything. God is very patient, so it took another 17 years before I entered priestly formation.

In the interim, I went to college and graduated from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, a Jesuit school.

I worked in Chicago for about eight years, first as an insurance claims adjuster and then as a runner and a clerk in a commodities exchange.

During that time, I was able to attend daily Mass frequently. Because I was a single guy at daily Mass, people would ask me if I'd ever thought about being a priest.

Priesthood had always been in the back of my mind, but at the time, I had a girlfriend. When she broke up with me, I was pretty devastated. I remember looking up at the clouds one day and saying, "Okay, God, I'll be a priest."

What attracted you to the Jesuits?

I had always wanted to be a Jesuit, going back to when I decided at 17 that I would be a priest. But by the time I decided to pursue it, after my girlfriend and I broke up, I was 31 years

Wilkinson *Continued on Page 17*

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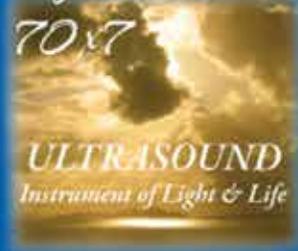


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Wilkinson *Continued from Page 16*

old. I thought, "Well, I'm too old to be a Jesuit now," because of the years of formation that that would require. So, I entered the seminary for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee with plans to become an archdiocesan priest.

My spiritual directors in Milwaukee were Jesuits and, after two years in the seminary, I left and entered the Jesuit novitiate in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The day I professed my first vows as a Jesuit was — and still is — the happiest day of my life. At the time, I felt as if I were jumping off a cliff, and I was holding onto a thread, and Jesus caught me. It's been quite a ride since then, with lots of adventures along the way.

Can you share a few examples of your varied experiences?

Among other things, I've ministered on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota. At first, I felt as if I had been planted on the far side of the moon because the culture there was so different from anything I had ever been around, but it became home, and I came to love these people. I've never in my life been in a place where God seemed closer, and that was because God is close to suffering people.

I've been a hospital and prison chaplain, a high school teacher at my own alma mater, and ministered to women seeking healing from a past abortion.

Right now, I serve at a Mexican-American parish close to the border, so immigration is a huge issue. It's been heartbreaking to see family members deported. These are not criminals, but godly people doing the best they could for their families.

You have been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. How does it impact your ministry, and how do you view this challenge through the lens of your faith?

About five and a half years ago, at Sunday Mass, when I was holding up the Body and Blood of Christ, I noticed that my hand was moving. I knew immediately what it was.

My dad had lived with Parkinson's for the last 23 years of his life. I knew what it looked like, so I was confident that's what I had. It took a few months to get an appointment, but when I did, the neurologist confirmed that I had Parkinson's.

Because this is not something I can hide, I often announce that my hand dances because that sounds better than having Parkinson's.

At Mass, I tell people that, at the offertory, we're putting everything on the altar. The bread and wine are at the end of the procession, but we put our whole lives on the altar, and we believe that God can transform them as God can transform the bread and the wine.

God can transform our lives, if we turn things over to Him. So, I have to turn over this dancing hand and ask God to work with it, to make the most of it. That's just part of my life now.

What message do you have for men discerning a priestly vocation?

It's a wonderful adventure. Choose companions who lift you up; it'll bring out the best in you and, if you're doing that, you'll be a good priest. None of us are going to save the Church or save anybody. It's God who saves us. It's a privilege and it's a joy to be a priest.

Obituary

Augustinian Father Had 'Immense Impact'

Father John D. Keller, a member of the Order of St. Augustine, died Jan. 26 at Nazareth House in San Diego after a few months of failing health.

He was 86.

Born in Brodhead, Wisconsin, he moved to La Mesa with his family after the seventh grade. He attended Blessed Sacrament School in San Diego for eighth grade, followed by four years at St. Augustine High School, or Saints, where he first encountered the Augustinians.

After graduating from high school in 1955, he began formation as an Augustinian religious. He professed first vows in 1956.

He attended Villanova University in Pennsylvania and did his theological studies at the Collegio Santa Monica in Rome. He professed solemn vows in 1959, and was ordained a priest in Rome on March 14, 1964.

Father Keller's first assignment was as a teacher at St. Augustine High School in San Diego, where he would go on to serve twice more, the last time in the roles of principal and president between 2001 and 2006. Other local assignments included six years as director of spiritual ministry at the University of San Diego.

"Father Keller was a faith-filled, self-sacrificing and gifted member of the Augustinian community here in San Diego, and he contributed

immensely and humbly to the life of our local Church," Cardinal Robert W. McElroy said.

The cardinal added that, through his ministry, he "emblazoned his powerful and caring priestly imprint on a wide swath of our diocese."

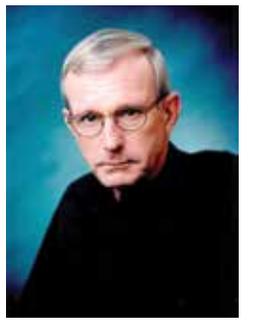
Augustinian Father Gary Sanders first met Father Keller at Saints in the mid-1960s, when the former was a student and the latter a teacher there.

"He was the head of the Augustinian seminary when I first entered, and he has mentored me throughout my priesthood," said Father Sanders. "I will miss him. I have never known a finer priest."

James Horne, principal of St. Augustine High School, described Father Keller as "the finest administrator and thought leader I ever had the privilege to work with in Catholic education and, for those fortunate to know him, he was a better friend."

Father Keller, who directed that his body be donated to science, is survived by his four siblings and their children.

The funeral Mass was celebrated Feb. 19 at St. Patrick Church in North Park. An additional Mass celebrating Father Keller's life was held Feb. 28 at St. Augustine High School.





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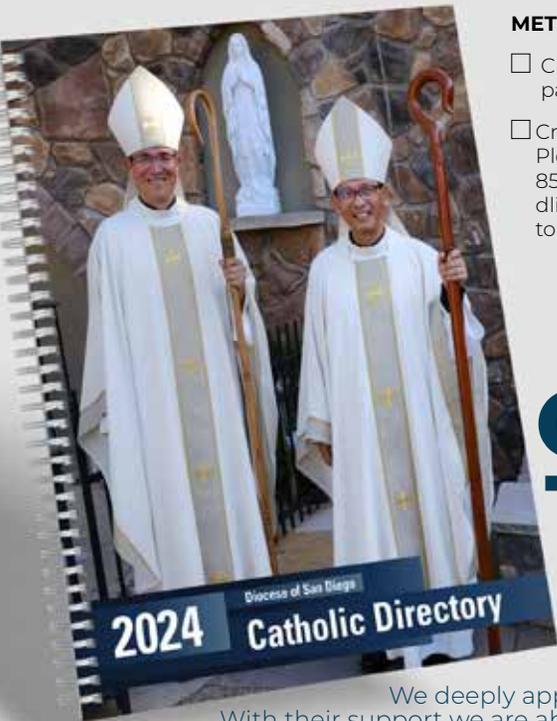
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News Briefs

Students to Compete in Academic Decathlon

The annual Academic Junior High Decathlon (AJHD), a one-day knowledge competition for Catholic school students in the sixth through eighth grades, will be held from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, March 2, at St. Augustine High School.

It will be the largest decathlon in the history of the competition and the largest in the nation, according to Elizabeth Kramer, associate superintendent of schools for the Diocese of San Diego.

Thirty teams and two pods (one to five students competing in Individual Subject tests only) representing 26 local schools will be participating.

There are 10 events. Two are collaborative team efforts — a Logic Quiz with 20 rigorous thinking problems, and a Super Quiz with 50 multiple-choice questions on five broad academic themes. The remaining eight events test individual knowledge of Catholic doctrine, English, Literature, Science, Mathematics, Current Events, Social Studies, and Fine Arts (Art and Music).

For more information, visit catholicajhd.org.

Special Needs Camp Seeking Volunteers

JULIAN — The annual Special Needs Family Camp, to be held in July at Whispering Winds Catholic Camp and Conference Center, is already sold out. But the camp is still seeking adults (age 18 and older) interested in volunteering as a “Special Needs Buddy.”

The camp seeks to remove barriers that might prevent families with special-needs children from attending camp together. Special-needs campers are paired one-on-one with a “buddy” for all activities during the entire weekend.

No previous experience is required. All buddies will receive basic training from Whispering Winds staff.

Buddies’ service will run from 1 p.m., Friday, July 19, to 5 p.m., Sunday, July 21. They will receive lodging for three days and two nights, six meals plus snacks, and a Family Camp T-shirt.

For more information, email Matisse Guillen at matisse@whisperingwinds.org.

Register at whisperingwinds.org/camps-retreats/special-needs-family-camp/volunteer-application-for-special-needs-family-camp.

Birthline Invites Donors to ‘Give Warmth’

“Give Warmth This Lent,” a new initiative of Birthline of San Diego County, presents an opportunity to provide needy mothers with warm blankets from Sackcloth & Ashes, a socially conscious business dedicated to community empowerment.

For every \$100 donation to the campaign, Birthline will provide a large, durable artisanal blanket for a mother in need, plus two hours of peer-to-peer counseling from its trained client managers.

“Many of these mothers are facing housing insecurity and financial hardship, leaving little room for self-care,” said Birthline’s executive director, Andrea Estrada.

For information on how to participate, visit birthlineofsandiego.org.

Baseball Star to Share Path to Priesthood

The Church of the Nativity will host an evening with Father Burke Masters, author of “A Grand Slam for God: A Journey from Baseball Star to Catholic Priest.”

As a Mississippi State star infielder, whose game-winning grand slam helped his team reach the College World Series, Masters was well on his way to achieving his dream of a career in Major League baseball. But after discerning a call from God, he entered the priesthood instead.

Father Masters will tell his story at 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 6, at the Church of the Nativity. Copies of “A Grand Slam for God” will be available for sale, and Father Masters will sign them after his talk.

For more information, contact the parish at (858) 756-1911.

Creation Care Ministry Sponsoring Poster Competition

The Diocese of San Diego’s Creation Care Ministry is sponsoring a Faith & Science Research Poster Competition.

All high school students are invited to create a research poster based on their investigation of a science or so-

cial science question related to today’s environmental crisis. Students should execute the scientific method and draw conclusions that incorporate faith-based reflection and discussion of the ethical and moral implications of their research findings.

Participants must register by Saturday, March 2. A final image of the poster entry is requested via email to sdcreationcare@gmail.com by 11:59 p.m., Sunday, March 17. The competition will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, March 23, at the Academy of Our Lady of Peace.

First and second places will be awarded \$50 and \$25 in each grade level, respectively. Of these winners, the overall winner will receive a \$500 scholarship to be applied to school needs.

For more information and to register, visit bit.ly/FaithScience24. Questions can be directed to Christina Slentz at cslentz@sdccatholic.org.

Tenebrae Service to Be Held on Good Friday

LA MESA — St. Martin of Tours Parish will present “A Choral Tenebrae Meditation on the Passion” by Lani Smith.

It will be held at 7 p.m., Good Friday, March 29, in the nave of the parish church.

This cantata is a journey through Jesus’ passion and death.

The Tenebrae service combines powerful choral music, readings and dramatic lighting. Communion and veneration of the cross will follow.

For more information, call the parish at (619) 465-5334.

5K Walk Keeps Oaxacan Kids in School

The Oaxaca Education Fund will host its annual 5K Walk on Saturday, March 23.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. The walk will start in Canyonside Park (12350 Black Mountain Road, San Diego 92129) and venture into the beautiful Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve.

There is a suggested donation of \$20. (Children walk for free.)

The Oaxaca Education Fund grew out of a migrant ministry that served the field workers who worked between Rancho Peñasquitos and Del Mar. Every year, volunteers travel to the mountains of Oaxaca, Mexico, to distribute school supplies to the children in the towns these workers come from.

The fund provides books and supplies to about 1,500 children, as well as a monthly food stipend for 50 orphans and disabled children.

For more information or to donate, visit oaxacaeducationfund.org, email drchristauriawelland@gmail.com or call (858) 922-8555.

Parish Hosting Divine Mercy Celebration

St. Thérèse of Carmel Parish in Carmel Valley will hold a Divine Mercy Sunday celebration after its 11 a.m. Mass on Sunday, April 7.

The celebration will run from 12:15 to 1 p.m. All are welcome.

For more information, contact the parish at (858) 481-3232.

Briefs *Continued on Page 19*

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'40 Days for Life' Underway

The fall campaign of 40 Days for Life, which began on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14, will conclude on Palm Sunday, March 24.

40 Days for Life is an effort to bring about an end to abortion through prayer and fasting, community outreach, and peaceful prayer vigils in front of abortion clinics.

The centerpiece of the campaign is a 40-day, round-the-clock vigil on the public sidewalk outside of an abortion clinic. Vigils are underway in front of eight clinics in San Diego County.

More information about local prayer vigil locations can be found at sdcatholic.org/40-days-for-life-campaign.

their health. It helps a husband and a wife rediscover or re-awaken the love, trust and commitment that originally brought them together.

The next English-language Retrouvaille weekend will be held May 3 to 5.

For more information about an upcoming Retrouvaille weekend, including the cost to attend, call (951) 259-9474 or visit helpourmarriage-sandiego.org.

Catholics Can 'Encounter' Jesus in Rancho Peñasquitos

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

Sponsored by the parish's Hearts of Fire Ministry, the event runs from 7 to 8 p.m.

For more information, email olmcheartsoffire@gmail.com.

Men Invited to Join 'Rosary Crusade'

The Men's Rosary Crusade gathers at 9 a.m., every first Saturday of the month, at the corner of 6th & Laurel in Balboa Park. All men are welcome.

The rosary intentions are for reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for the conversion of America, for families and for the unborn.

For more information, email draguez@sbcglobal.net or call (619) 920-8363.

Briefs *Continued from Page 18*

IVC to Hold Annual 'Evening of Gratitude'

The Ignatian Volunteer Corps-San Diego Region (IVC San Diego), part of a national organization providing community nonprofit organizations with experienced volunteers, will hold its annual Evening of Gratitude on Sunday, April 7.

The gala celebration will begin with a 4 p.m. Mass at St. Catherine

Laboure Parish, followed by a reception, hosted wine bar, dinner catered by The French Gourmet, award presentations and a live auction. All event proceeds will benefit the work of the IVC in San Diego.

The Evening of Gratitude recognizes the outstanding work of IVC's Service Corps members. It also will pay special tribute to the Sisters of Mercy, recipients of this year's Madonna Della Strada Award, and Jesuit Father Neal "Pepe" Wilkinson, who will receive the Sheila

O'Malley Vision and Dedication Award.

All are welcome to attend, but early registration is required because seating is limited.

To register, visit ivcusa.org/SanDiegoEOG2024. For more information, contact Curran Gaughan, regional director of the IVC, at (858) 822-9814 or cgaughan@ivcusa.org.

Retrouvaille Offers Hope for Struggling Marriages

Retrouvaille is a program designed to help struggling marriages regain

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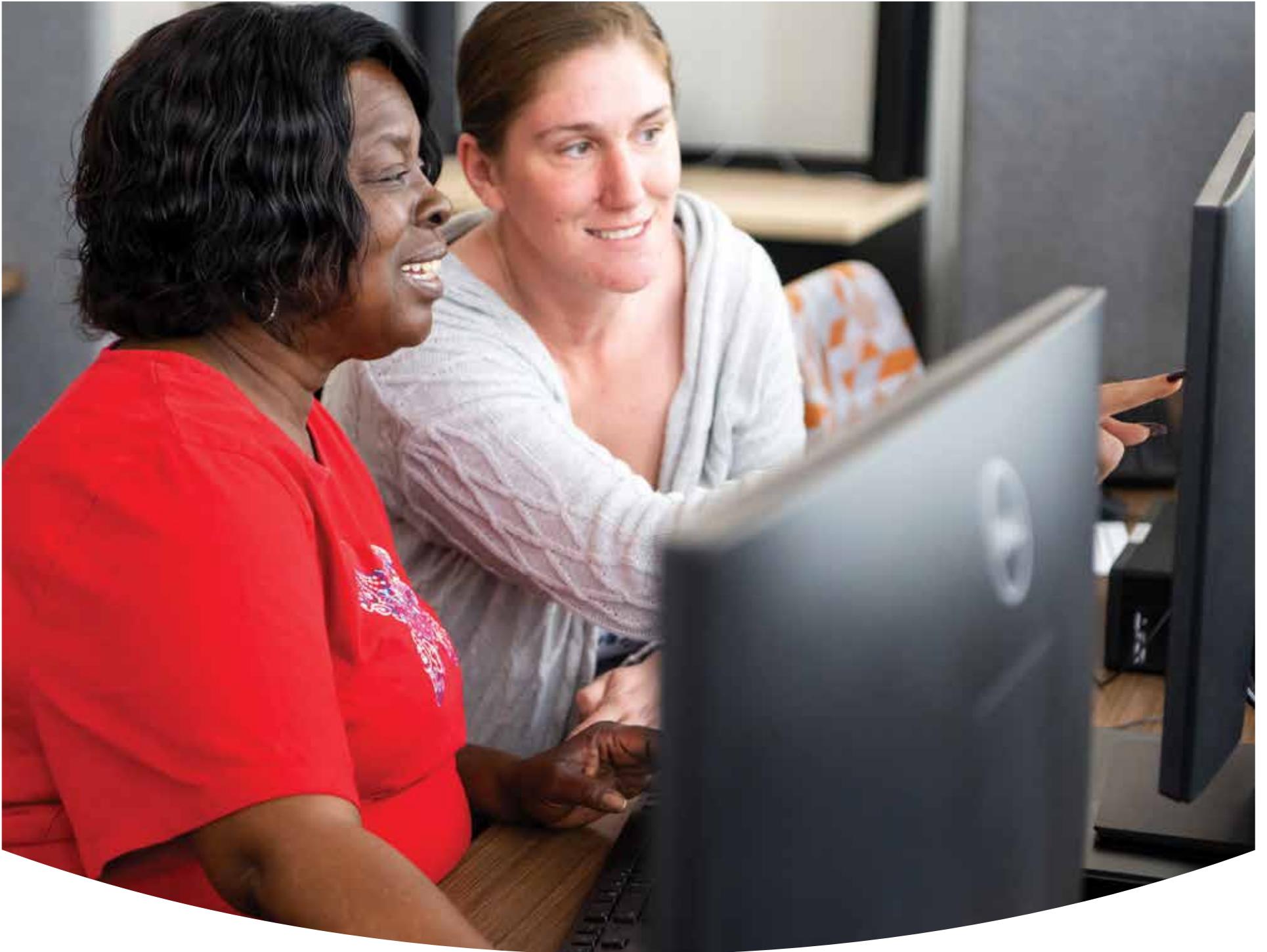
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