

# THE SOUTHERN CROSS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO



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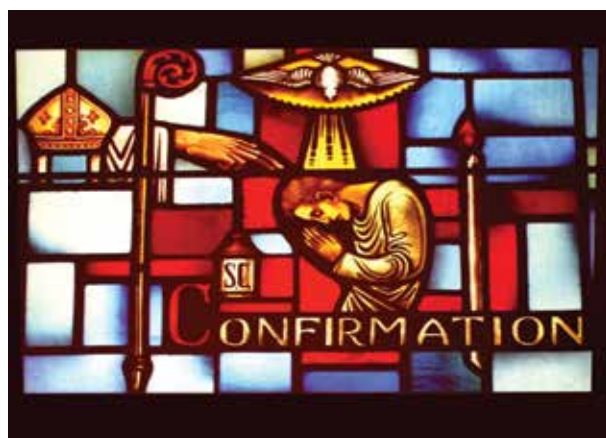
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MAY 2024



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**PIONEER:** Mauro Gutierrez Ruiz is a member of the first graduating class of Cristo Rey San Diego High School. He worked at Precision Diagnostics, a health laboratory in Sorrento Valley, as part of the school's innovative "Corporate Work Study" program, which enables students to divide their time between college-prep classes and job sites.



## Sealed with Spirit

Cardinal and bishops to confirm almost 3,750 teens between April and June. **Page 5**



## VIPs

Young adults bring the Gospel to juvenile hall through Volunteers In Probation (VIP) ministry. **Page 8**



## Mental Health Focus

In May, we can rededicate ourselves to bringing Christ to those experiencing mental illness. **Page 14**

## PENTECOST MASS FOR ALL PEOPLES

May 18, 2024  
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12:30-2 p.m. Festival

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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.



# Vatican: All Have Same Dignity

By Carol Glatz



VATICAN CITY  
— The Vatican's  
document on

human dignity highlights Pope Francis' decade-long insistence that every human being — independent of their circumstances, stage of development or state of sin — possesses infinite and inalienable dignity that must be respected and protected.

The declaration, “Dignitas Infinita” (“Infinite Dignity”), gathers what recent popes have said about this “fundamental pillar of Christian teaching” and summarizes the approach offered by Pope Francis, said Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

In fact, the nearly 25-page document was named a “declaration” to emphasize the doctrinal importance of the subject and the pope's unique thinking, attitude and behavior toward “the sick, those who do wrong, the forgotten,” the cardinal said during a news conference at the Vatican on April 8.

Unfortunately, not everyone is born with or has access to the same possibilities in life “and, therefore, it is not true that everyone is accorded the same dignity” in today's market-based or individualist “model of the success of the strong,” the cardinal said.

This is why Pope Francis has repeatedly reinforced “the conviction of inalienable dignity” as being independent of anyone's circumstance or situation, he said.

For example, those who are “slow, less gifted and weaker have infinite value,” and a child who has been born and one who has just been conceived have the same exact dignity, he said.

The document draws attention to about a dozen “grave violations of human dignity that are particularly relevant.” It is not an exhaustive list and each problem is only briefly addressed as “each of these themes would require its own entire paper,” Cardinal Fernández said.



**DECLARATION:** Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, presented the declaration “Dignitas Infinita” (“Infinite Dignity”) on human dignity at the Vatican press office April 8, 2024.

The idea is to show that no matter the threat — war, poverty, violence against women, abortion, forced migration — the dignity of the human being remains the same, he said.

“For example, it is true that there are at least two reasons not to accept gender ideologies,” reasons which are developed in the document, he said.

“Instead of helping recognize dignity,” he said, the ideologies “impoverish” the beauty and reciprocity of sexual difference and they reflect the temptation to be “omnipotent” and “create everything ... as if there was no reality that was given.”

When asked what the pastoral response to those who have undergone a sex change or who are experiencing gender dysphoria should be, Cardinal Fernández said that Pope Francis has made it clear that everyone must be welcomed and accompanied, even those whose thinking and choices are “different from what the Church says in its doctrine.”

Asked about the Church's position against the practice of surrogacy, seeing it as turning an “immensely worthy child” into a “mere object,” the cardinal said it refers to the child becoming the object of someone's desire to have children.

The Church is sensitive to those who want to have children, he said,

but they are invited to “transcend that desire” because the dignity of the people involved, including the surrogate mother, “is a much greater thing than the desire that one may have.”

“There is always the possibility of adoption for so many who need to have a family that not only receives them, but receives them with love,” he added.

The document reaffirmed that “every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while ‘every sign of unjust discrimination’ is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence.”

This reflects Jesus' teaching, “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone,” Cardinal Fernández said.

But when the acts of violence or discrimination are explicitly called for by law, then “we are facing a big problem. It's certain that we don't agree with criminalization,” he said.

Cardinal Fernández said he is horrified when he reads about Catholics praising governments for creating laws against homosexuals, saying he's shocked that a Catholic would say such a thing given the Church's “conception about human dignity.”

*Catholic News Service*



## AI Forum

Legionary of Christ Father Michael Baggot, a professor at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum, spoke during a forum on AI and the Catholic Church at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome April 18. Pope Francis has said that AI-powered systems “can help to overcome ignorance and facilitate the exchange of information,” but he voiced his concern that such a rapid digital revolution can leave humanity “adrift in a mire of confusion, prey to the interests of the market or of the powers that be.”

**Details in**  
[thesoutherncross.org/AI](https://thesoutherncross.org/AI)

# First Generation Poised to Make History

By Denis Grasska



Cristo Rey San Diego High School is making history once again.

The Catholic school, which exclusively serves low-income families and features an innovative work-study program, will be holding its first graduation ceremony in May.

Christian Kampfl, who has served as president of Cristo Rey San Diego since July, reflected on the significance of this moment.

He said that it is “a miracle in and of itself” that the school even exists, given that it opened at such an inauspicious time, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, in August of 2020.

Alfonso Magaña, who serves as head of school for academics and operations, has been on staff since the beginning. He said that this first graduation is an occasion not only to celebrate the graduating seniors, but also their families, who “took a chance.”

“They stuck with us,” Magaña said.

Of the 37 students who will receive their diplomas this year, 28 have been attending the school since freshman year.

Their trust has paid off.

Kampfl said that, as of April 4, some 95% of the graduating seniors had been accepted to four-year colleges and universities, including Gonzaga, Pepperdine, Villanova, the University of San Diego and the University of California, Los Angeles.

One of them is Mauro Gutierrez Ruiz. He’s been accepted to Pomona College, where he plans to study Biology. He transferred as a junior to Cristo Rey because his parents wanted him not only to be prepared to attend college but also have real-world work experience.

In his first year, he worked at Precision Diagnostics, an advanced health laboratory in Sorrento Valley where he assisted in the analysis of samples. Then, an opportunity came up to work over the summer at Immuneering Corp., a Rancho Bernardo biotech that researches new medicines to treat cancer. He applied and landed the position, which allowed him to learn lab techniques.

“It’s an experience not everyone gets,” the senior said. “I would not have gotten it if I was not at Cristo Rey.”

The last week of May will be a busy one for the Cristo Rey San Diego community.

Wednesday, May 29, will be College Signing Day, when the graduating seniors will reveal to the entire student body what college they will attend next year. Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will celebrate the baccalaureate Mass on Thursday, May 30, at the University of San Diego. Commencement will be the following day, also at USD.

Cristo Rey San Diego High School is one of 39 schools in the national Cristo Rey Network.

As with other network schools, admission is limited to low-income families, for whom Catholic secondary education



**COLLEGE-BOUND:** Graduating seniors stand outside their Cristo Rey San Diego High School campus. At commencement on May 31, some 37 students will receive their diplomas — the first graduating class for a school that opened amidst the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.



**FIRST GENERATION:** Miranda Ramirez will be graduating next month from Cristo Rey San Diego High School, where she participated in its innovative work program.

would be otherwise out of reach.

Magaña said that the school’s families on average contribute about \$600 annually toward their child’s education.

Much of the educational cost is paid through the school’s innovative “Corporate Work Study” program. Students attend classes four days a week and spend the remaining weekday at a professional workplace, where they gain invaluable employment experience.

The school’s corporate partners include law firms, hospitals, laboratories, real estate companies and other organizations.

It’s because of this corporate experience, Kampfl said, that so many of this year’s graduates are aspiring to some “pretty impressive” careers, such as being doctors, nurses and engineers.

Kampfl said students have demonstrated their worth as employees. He shared that Precision Diagnostics started out by accepting four Cristo Rey students, but it now has 24.

Additionally, he said, the company last year offered paid summer jobs to five students and will be offering twice as many this year.

Graduating senior Kassandra Sandoval had work-study assignments at the U.S.S. Midway Museum, Precision Diagnostics, Cristo Rey San Diego’s

own marketing team, and Flores Financial Services, Inc.

“I feel like I have gotten more responsible and driven,” said Sandoval, who wants to be a teacher some day. “Cristo Rey has given me motivation to try hard at what I do and strive to go beyond the bare minimum for my grades and for my personal life.”

Her classmate, Diego Vargas-Ornelas, worked primarily at St. Paul’s Senior Services and Precision Diagnostics during his years at Cristo Rey San Diego.

At the former, he did what he described as “hands-on work,” like distributing lunches to the seniors, setting up for events, and helping out with activities. At the latter, he worked in the billing department, performing such duties as scanning and sorting documents.

“Cristo Rey’s work-study program has helped me get a better sense of the world out there and what is there to come for me,” said Vargas-Ornelas, who plans to attend John Paul the Great Catholic University in Escondido and pursue his dream of becoming a film director.

Cristo Rey San Diego is located on the campus of what formerly had been St. Jude Academy, the parochial

school of St. Jude Shrine of the West that closed in 2011.

The school opened in 2020 with only a freshman class, but added a grade level each subsequent year. Today, there are 168 students — 37 seniors, 51 juniors, 39 sophomores and 41 freshmen.

The past four years have seen campus upgrades, made possible through the Shea Homes Foundation, as well as expanded offerings in classes, sports and clubs.

Like their counterparts at other network schools, Cristo Rey San Diego’s students must attend a “College and Career Readiness” class every year, beginning in ninth grade.

That class initially serves to equip them with the skills needed to be successful high school students, Magaña said. But eventually, it requires them to research colleges and to compile a list of those that meet their needs.

Magaña said the school’s college counseling team guides students and families through the entire process, including applying for financial aid.

“And it doesn’t end there,” he said, “because part of the Cristo Rey Network promise is not only graduating from high school and getting them into college, but also seeing them through college.”

He explained that a dedicated alumni advisor begins working with the students during their senior year and continues to assist them throughout their college years.

What does the future hold for Cristo Rey San Diego?

Kampfl said that the plan is to grow to 450 students within five years.

“We are super, super excited to see our students graduate this year,” said Magaña, “but we’re equally as excited in bringing in a new set of freshmen to our school.”

For more information,  
visit [cristoreysandiego.org](http://cristoreysandiego.org).



# Student Conquers Challenges to Graduate

By Denis Grasska



Adam Hank will graduate from Cathedral Catholic High School on June 1.

And his mother, Sharla, said she is “so incredibly proud.”

She recognizes the significant challenges that her 19-year-old son, a leukemia survivor with Down syndrome, has had to face — and overcome — to arrive at this happy day.

“He did this with his own will — his will to succeed — just as he has with everything else,” she said.

A graduate of All Hallows Academy in La Jolla, Adam Hank attended Cathedral Catholic through its Options Program. The program allows students with developmental challenges to complete a four-year modified program and earn a certificate of achievement.

The Options Program integrates students into the school community, including through general education classes and campus activities, while providing individualized instruction and pairing them with peer mentors who accompany them to their classes and provide one-on-one tutoring.

“I am feeling excited about graduating this year,” Adam told *The Southern Cross*.

He was diagnosed with leukemia in April of 2008 and underwent chemotherapy. It took three years for his immune system to recover sufficiently to go to school.

In November 2022, he was diagnosed with selective mutism, an anxiety disorder that renders a person incapable of speech when feeling overwhelmed. As a result, he had to study from home for several months as he took on this new challenge.

Sharla Hank said that, between the disorder and the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s been “a tough couple of years” for Adam. But she doubts that even her own friends would have been able “to just pick themselves back up” the way that her son has.

“I’m going to believe that it’s because of his faith and because of those around him that love him and that show that he can do many great things,” she said.

Throughout his four years at Cathedral Catholic, Adam has been a member of the basketball team. On Feb. 9,



**HAVING A BALL:** For Adam Hank, playing on the basketball team was among the highlights of his four years at Cathedral Catholic High School. The graduating senior is pictured, above, with Coach Graham Bousley and, at right, on the court.

he not only played in his first varsity game, but even made the last basket in his team’s winning game against Madison High School.

“Similar to other facets of Catholic education, inclusion presents our schools and the students they serve with countless opportunities and challenges,” said Adam’s father, Michael.

When it came to his son’s “buzzer-beater basket,” he said, spectators who witnessed it saw “only the tip of the iceberg.”

“They had no idea that over the last 18 months, Adam had worked tirelessly to overcome anxiety that presented with stress-induced brain fog and uncontrollable, shaking body movements. ... Those same fans had no idea that Adam had been working just as hard sitting on the bench as his fellow teammates who were playing on the court, because Adam was managing the stress of being surrounded by strangers in an extremely loud room.”

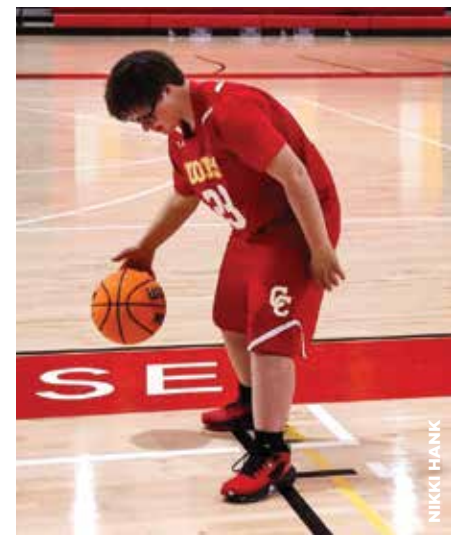
“Since that inspiring game,” said Michael Hank, “Adam’s anxiety has increased a little as he reflects on the end of the basketball season and the uncertainty of life after high school. In response to this time of increased intensity, Adam has had to distance

himself from his school campus with the hope that he can return and graduate this June.”

Sharla and Michael Hank are also the parents of a 15-year-old daughter, Nikki, who is a sophomore at Cathedral Catholic.

They are advocates for individuals with Down syndrome and their families. The couple co-founded the non-profit organization DS Action in 2008 and, through the Catholic Community Foundation of San Diego, established the Catholic Special Education Fund in 2016 to encourage and support inclusion in Catholic schools. More recently, Sharla was one of the presenters at “Beyond Inclusion: From Mission to Practice,” a conference on inclusive programs in Catholic schools, held April 19 to 20 at the University of San Diego.

“(The Hank family’s) story represents the power of parents who have learned and applied advocacy skills for their son to have the opportunity to move ‘beyond inclusion,’” said Rebekka Jez, assistant professor at USD’s School of Leadership and



Education Sciences (SOLES) in the Department of Learning and Teaching. “At the conference, you could feel the exhilaration in the room as we watched the video of Adam making a point for the high school basketball team and the moment of pause as he and his mother shared about his dream to go to college.”

What’s next for Adam and his family?

Adam expressed a desire to study Computer Science, as well as an interest in being a lawyer.

Regarding the latter, he said that people with Down syndrome can “use their loud voices” to “advocate (for) themselves.”

His plans show the impact that his Catholic faith and education have had on his young life.

“My goals are to show people how they are loved,” he said.

Sharla said that her son’s experience at Cathedral Catholic gave him a desire to attend college.

“He may not be ready to independently travel to an out-of-state college for next year, but with his continued hard work and the Holy Spirit guiding him, all things are possible,” she said.

Noting that Cal State University, San Marcos offers a program for students with developmental challenges, she said, “That’s a possibility for him.”

But not next year.

She said that Cal State San Marcos’ program is already full for the 2024-2025 academic year.

“Adam’s going to continue to trailblaze,” she said.

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# Bishops to Confirm Almost 3,750 Youth

By Denis Grasska



Spring is an especially busy time for bishops.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy and Auxiliary Bishops Ramón Bejarano, Michael Pham and Felipe Pulido will travel throughout the Diocese of San Diego — a territory of more than 8,850 square-miles — to confer the sacrament of confirmation.

Between April 5 and June 20, the sacrament will be celebrated at 84 parish locations. Collectively, almost 3,750 youth will be confirmed after completing the required two years of sacramental preparation classes.

Baptism, the Eucharist and confirmation comprise the three sacraments of Christian initiation. In the Western Church, the ordinary minister of confirmation is a bishop; however, the sacrament can be delegated to priests on such occasions as the Easter Vigil, when parishes receive catechumens and candidates into full communion with the Church.

Confirmation is accomplished through the laying on of hands, anointing the forehead of the baptized with a perfumed oil called sacred chrism, and the words “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The sacrament completes baptism and produces what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes as “an increase and deepening of baptismal grace.”

Cardinal McElroy celebrated the first confirmation Mass of the season on April 5 at St. Columba Parish. The last will be celebrated by Bishop



**CELEBRATION:** Cardinal Robert W. McElroy addresses dozens of teens, joined by their sponsors and families, at a confirmation Mass last May at Mission San Luis Rey Parish. This spring, Cardinal McElroy and the three auxiliary bishops will confirm teens at 84 parish locations.

Bejarano on June 20 at Resurrection Parish in Escondido.

The cardinal will preside over celebrations at 21 parishes, confirming a total of 1,139 youth. Bishop Pulido will confirm 987 at 23 parishes, Bishop Bejarano will confirm 913 at 20 parishes, and Bishop Pham will confirm 709 at 20 parishes.

In some cases, the demanding schedule will require the cardinal and bishops to be at geographically distant parishes on consecutive days, or to celebrate confirmation Masses at multiple parishes in a single day.

For example, after celebrating an evening confirmation Mass on May 3 at Holy Spirit Parish, in San Diego’s Oak Park neighborhood, Cardinal McElroy will spend the following day in the Imperial Valley. There will be confirmations in the morning in El Centro and in the afternoon in Holtville.

And that won’t be Cardinal McEl-

roy’s only visit to the Valley for confirmations. He will return on May 25 for two Masses, where he will confirm youth from Calexico, Brawley, Westmorland and Calipatria.

On May 4 alone, Bishop Bejarano will preside over celebrations at three parishes — Holy Family, Linda Vista; St. Patrick, Carlsbad; and St. Francis of Assisi, Vista.

When celebrating confirmations, Bishop Bejarano considers himself “blessed” to share this time with the diocese’s young people.

“I’m so happy that they have come to this point in their lives being more mature and responsible about how to live the Christian faith,” he said, adding that the sacrament represents not “a graduation, but the beginning of another stage in our faith growth as we practice more firmly the love of God toward our brothers and sisters.”

For Bishop Pham, confirmation sea-

son is a hopeful sign.

“Confirmation means to me that we have young people today still believing in God through the person of Jesus Christ, who loves them and cares for them to the point of death and giving them new life through His resurrection,” he said. “In response to this incredible love ... they want to witness to others through the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.”

Bishop Pulido said that he doesn’t mind that this is “the busiest time of the year” because he gets “to witness the faith of so many young men and women who are getting confirmed.”

“I love to visit parishes,” he said, “and I love to see the energy and excitement of families, parents and godparents who accompany the confirmation candidates on their journey of faith.”



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# Pilgrimages Go on, Rain or Shine

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**The Southern Cross**

 Rainy weather couldn't prevent the fourth Annual San Diego Young Adult Pilgrimage.

The event, co-sponsored by the diocesan Office for Youth and Young Adult Ministry and the nonprofit Modern Catholic Pilgrim, followed a 16-mile route from Friendship Park at the U.S.-Mexican border to Sacred Heart Parish in Coronado. At the parish, the pilgrims attended Palm Sunday Mass, followed by supper on-site.



DAVID MAUNG



DAVID MAUNG



# Memorial Day

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# New Generation Lifts Jailed Youth

By Denis Grasska

The Diocese of San Diego is making a concerted effort to put Catholic young adults behind bars.

Norman Saucedo, the lead Catholic volunteer chaplain for local juvenile detention facilities, has recruited about 15 young adults into his ministry so far.

"I really would love to recruit 100 young adults. That would be my dream and my prayer," said Saucedo, a veteran youth minister who assumed his current role about two and a half years ago.

Through the California-based non-profit Volunteers In Probation (VIP), Inc., Saucedo and his team serve at two locations — the Youth Transition Campus (YTC), in Kearny Mesa, and the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility, located in Otay Mesa.

For one hour on Sundays, volunteers read and discuss the Gospel reading with a small group of incarcerated juveniles.

In the waning days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Saucedo reached out to his list of more than 100 VIPs to see which were ready to return. In doing so, he made a discovery: Many were advanced in age, had already devoted decades to the ministry, and were ready to hand over the reins to a younger generation.

"I went on a mission to recruit young adults," said Saucedo, who attended

three Theology on Tap events last fall to tell the young adults in attendance about this ministry opportunity.

Dyanis Daleo, a 24-year-old member of Sacred Heart Parish in Coronado, was among them.

At the time, she was looking for a ministry that she "could be passionate about." She said that she was "intrigued" by Saucedo's pitch and decided to sign up.

Like other volunteers in the program, Daleo was paired with a more seasoned VIP when she made her first visit to the Youth Transition Campus last October.

Daleo, who now leads sessions there every other Sunday, admitted that she was "a little bit scared" that first time. But the experience was so positive that those feelings quickly dissipated.

"I even said to myself, 'Wow, I really was worried about nothing,' because these kids really are there to learn about God, and there's really nothing to be afraid of," she said.

Daleo added, "Honestly, the only thing that I was afraid of, at the end of the day, was doing these kids justice" and not letting them down.

Last November, she began leading sessions on her own. She said that, at the typical session, she has around five youth, but attendance has ranged from one to eight.

Israel Lara, a 31-year-old graduate student at the Franciscan School of Theology, feels called to a life in ministry.

A member of Immaculate Conception Parish in Old Town, he had already served in more "conventional,"



VIPS: Norman Saucedo, center, stands outside the Youth Transition Campus with Israel Lara and Dyanis Daleo, two of the young adults that he has recruited into juvenile detention ministry.

parish-based ministries when a friend told him about VIP and suggested that he reach out to Saucedo.

Lara, whose interest in serving those on the margins had already led him to homeless ministry through Father Joe's Villages, said that the idea of juvenile detention ministry "clicked" for him.

He said that, as a population, the

incarcerated have been "sometimes disregarded, sometimes abandoned, forgotten, isolated." But he recalled the 25th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, in which Jesus said that we will be judged on whether we cared for those in need, including prisoners.

"This ministry is doing its part to

VIPS Continued on Page 9

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DIocese of SAN DIEGO

JUNE 8-9, 2024  
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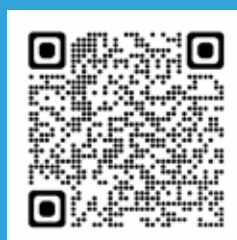


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**VIPs** *Continued from Page 8*

follow Jesus' command," said Lara, who made his first visit last October, accompanied by a more experienced VIP and has been going solo since January.

He participates in the ministry about every other Sunday and serves at both the Youth Transition Campus and at East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility.

Robert Ehnou, director of the diocesan Office for Life, Peace and Justice, said that Saucedo "has been very intentional and successful in recruiting young adults to join the juvenile detention ministry."

"The young adults can be particularly effective in establishing a rapport as they accompany and support our youth that are currently residing in a juvenile detention facility," Ehnou said.

Daleo and Lara agree.

Because of the smaller age gap between them, Daleo believes that the incarcerated youth "open up more" in the presence of young adults.

Lara said that the young adult volunteers provide them with an example, "an alternative to whatever path" led to their incarceration. Seeing young adults dedicated to serving others, he said, the youth can "wonder if that could be themselves ... in the future."

Sauceda acknowledged that many of the juveniles who attend the sessions do so "just to have something to do."

"They're not all Catholic; some probably never even stepped in any church, and that's okay," he said. "We

still bring the Word of God to them. We share Christ's love for them. ... We'll pray with them."

Sauceda, who tries to send in pairs of VIPs whenever he can, said that "no two VIPs are the same." Each has his or her own style, when it comes to sharing the Word of God.

For her part, Daleo said that she typically begins with an opening prayer and then asks if any of the youth will volunteer to read that Sunday's Gospel. Once it has been read aloud three times, she and the youth discuss what it means to them. The session ends with a closing prayer.

Lara said that, during their discussions, it's clear that the youth "are indeed reflecting about the Gospel and how that applies in their lives."

He recalled how one of the Lenten Gospel readings led to a fruitful discussion about forgiveness and how it could be lived out inside the juvenile detention facility. Some of the youth shared that they had been "bumping heads" with a fellow inmate, he said, but that they were beginning to think about how to respond better to such situations in the future.

"That's already a win," Lara said.

**For more information about the VIP program and detention ministry, contact the Office for Life, Peace and Justice at (858) 490-8375 or Norman Saucedo at (760) 518-7645.**

**Pope to Kids: A Better World Can't Be Built by Being Couch Potatoes**

By **Cindy Wooden**

**VATICAN CITY —** Peace can spread and grow from "small seeds" like including someone who is left out of an activity, showing concern for someone who is struggling, picking up some litter and praying for God's help, Pope Francis told Italian schoolchildren.

"At a time still marked by war, I ask you to be artisans of peace," the pope told some 6,000 Italian schoolchildren involved in the National Network of Schools of Peace, a civic education program designed to teach the children to care for themselves, their friends, their communities, the world and the environment.

During the gathering April 19 in the Vatican audience hall, Pope Francis led the children in a moment of silent prayer for their peers in Ukraine and in Gaza.

"In a society still prisoner of a throwaway culture," he told them, "I ask you to be protagonists of inclusion; in a world torn by global crises, I ask you to be builders of the future, so that our common home may become a place of fraternity."

The pope drew the children's attention to the U.N. Summit of the Future, which is scheduled for Sept. 22 to 23 in New York to draft a "Pact for the Future," focused on promoting inter-

national cooperation and partnerships to ensure "a world that is safer, more peaceful, more just, more equal, more inclusive, more sustainable, and more prosperous."

While government leaders and experts in a variety of fields obviously must get involved to make that hope a reality, the pope said, the pact will remain "just words on a page" without a commitment by all people of good will to take concrete steps aimed at changing harmful behavior and building communities and societies where everyone feels they are cared for and belong.

"This is a dream that requires being awake and not asleep," he told the young people. The world can change for the better only when people are out in the world, "not lying on the couch," using media to create connections and not just waste time, "and then — listen carefully — this kind of dream is realized by praying, that is, together with God, not by our strength alone."

"Peace, in fact, is not only a silence of weapons and absence of war," Pope Francis said. "It is a climate of benevolence, trust and love that can mature in a society based on caring relationships, in which individualism, distraction and indifference give way to the ability to pay attention to others, to listen to their needs, to heal their wounds, to be instruments of compassion and healing."

*Catholic News Service*

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# Diocese to Ordain Deacons, Priest in June

By Denis Grasska



The Diocese of San Diego will welcome four new permanent deacons and one new priest in June.

On June 1, Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will ordain four men to the permanent diaconate during a 10 a.m. Mass at Our Lady of Grace Church in El Cajon. They are Mario Diaz, of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Chula Vista; Don Meziere, of St. Mary Parish, Escondido; Victor Villagomez, of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish, San Ysidro; and Brian Wong, of St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Imperial.

On June 8, the cardinal will ordain Sean Embury to the priesthood at a 10 a.m. Mass at his home parish, St. Gabriel's in Poway.

The upcoming ordination to the permanent diaconate will be the first to be held in the diocese since 2022.

Ordination to the permanent diaconate is preceded by a five-year process that includes one-year of aspirancy, a period of serious discernment, and four years of formation. No permanent deacons were ordained last year because of a leadership transition in the diocesan Office for the Permanent Diaconate five years earlier. Sister Carlotta DiLorenzo, who led the office for 20 years, retired in June of 2018; her successor, Jesuit Father Eduardo Samaniego, didn't come on board until August of 2019.

Father Samaniego described the upcoming ordination as "a joyous oc-



**ORDINATION:** Cardinal Robert W. McElroy hands the Book of the Gospels to Daniel García at his ordination to the permanent diaconate June 18, 2022, at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Rancho Peñasquitos.

casation for the diocese." He explained that permanent deacons' role is "to help the pastors organize the outreach of a parish."

"That's exactly what Pope Francis is asking for — missionary disciples," Father Samaniego said.

He said that the number of men entering formation for the permanent diaconate has remained "pretty steady" over the years.

Nine men were ordained in 2022. There will be six next year.

Clarissa Martinez, associate director of the Office for the Permanent Diaconate, noted that this year's class includes two men — Diaz and Wong — for whom this is their second go-round in the formation program.

"Life circumstances prevented them from being ordained (the first time),

but the calling was ... still there," she said, explaining that both had withdrawn from the program in the past only to return five years ago.

There will also be a priestly ordination in June.

According to Father Matthew Spahr, rector of the St. Francis Center for Priestly Formation, it takes an average of six years of formation to become a diocesan priest.

Embury, who will be ordained to the priesthood on June 8, was ordained to the transitional diaconate last December at The Immaculata Parish.

Ordination to the transitional diaconate marks one of the last major steps on the path to priesthood. At that time, a seminarian publicly commits himself to a life of prayer, celibacy, and obedience to the diocesan bishop.

## Ordination to Permanent Diaconate

Saturday, June 1, 10 a.m.  
Our Lady of Grace Parish  
2766 Navajo Road  
El Cajon 92020

## Ordination to Priesthood

Saturday, June 8, 10 a.m.  
St. Gabriel Parish  
137 Twin Peaks Road  
Poway 92064

Both livestreamed at  
[sdcatholic.org](http://sdcatholic.org)

Over the past five years, the number of men ordained as priests for the Diocese of San Diego has ranged from one (in 2019 and 2021) to four (in 2023). Depending on how many men entered the program in a given year and how many discerned that they were not called to priesthood, there are some years in which no new priests are ordained.

The diocese currently has 13 men in formation, four of whom are scheduled to be ordained to the priesthood next year.

"The Rite of Ordination," said Father Spahr, "is the culmination of years of preparation on behalf of the candidate and a joyful sign for the Church of how Christ continues to provide shepherds for His people."

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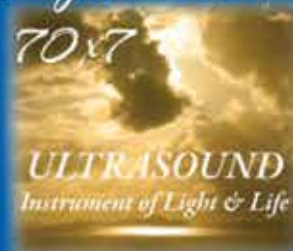


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# Joyful Party with Purpose Returns in June

By Denis Grasska



Two years ago, at the diocese's first annual Million

Meal Event, about 3,000 people labored under soaring summer temperatures to pack 1 million nutritious meals for the poor during a single weekend.

Last year, it was overcast and drizzling as approximately 4,000 volunteers strove to meet an even more ambitious goal of 1.5 million meals.

When the Million Meal Event returns to Cathedral Catholic High School for a third year during the upcoming June 8-9 weekend, once again with the goal of assembling 1.5 million meals, there's no telling what the weather will be like.

Regardless, fun is in the forecast.

"It's interesting that, no matter what the weather's been, it doesn't diminish the people's joy," said Deacon Jim Scull of Ascension Parish, who is on the event's planning committee.

And joy has been one of the popular event's hallmarks.

In assembly-line fashion, participants work in two-and-a-half-hour shifts to fill and seal meal packets consisting of red lentils, rice, vitamins and seasonings. During that time, a DJ plays lively music, and the organizers keep enthusiasm alive by announcing



**FOR ALL AGES:** About 4,000 volunteers are needed for the third annual Million Meal Event, June 8 to 9, and volunteers of all ages are welcome.

when a new milestone — perhaps a thousand, or 10,000 or 1 million packaged meals — has been reached.

"You don't feel like you're working," said Deacon Scull. "You feel like you're just having a wonderful party."

"It's a ... 'feel-good' event that brings people together in working, but (also) brings smiles to the faces of everybody who's there," echoed Deacon Kevin Murray, of Sacred Heart Parish in Coronado, who also serves on the leadership team.

He said that participants have told him that they wish the event wasn't only once a year.

The Million Meal Event is a charitable project of the Diocese of San

Diego's permanent deacons in collaboration with the nonprofit Kids Around the World.

About 1 million of the meals packaged this year will be distributed by the nonprofit to one of its partners in the southern African nation of Zambia.

The remaining 500,000 meals will go to Casa de Los Pobres (House of the Poor), an urban relief center in Tijuana, Mexico, founded and operated by the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady, Queen of Peace. There, Deacon Scull said, the food will provide almost eight months' worth of sustenance.

Volunteers can sign up for one (or more) of three available meal-packing shifts on Saturday morning and afternoon (8:30-11 a.m. and 12:30-3 p.m.) and Sunday afternoon (12:30-3 p.m.). There are also set-up and clean-up shifts on Friday morning and Sunday afternoon, respectively.

Jeff Rosene, president and CEO of Kids Around the World, has attended the previous Million Meal Events. He praised the deacons for their "amazing" and "very impressive" effort.

Of the more than 160 food-packaging events that Kids Around the World will be involved with this year, Rosene said, the Million Meal Event is "the largest single-weekend event." It is surpassed only by a one-day, multi-site event that involves the participation of eight cities.


Some \$375,000 must be raised to purchase the raw materials for the Million Meal Event. Donations can be made at [sdcatholic.org/event/million-meals](http://sdcatholic.org/event/million-meals).

The event attracts volunteers of all ages — from very young children, who can't do much more than decorate the boxes filled with food packages, to teenagers earning service hours, to senior citizens, for whom retirement means more time to give back.


St. Brigid's parishioner Caroline Kelner, another member of the leadership team, encourages families to bring their children. She said that the event offers a good way "to plant the seeds" in children for understanding the importance of service.

Deacon Murray said the event is "a lot of work to put it on," but everybody "feels a real sense of accomplishment when ... all the meals are packed and on their way to those who are in need."

For more information, visit [sdcatholic.org/event/million-meals](http://sdcatholic.org/event/million-meals). For corporate sponsorships, call (858) 361-1240 or email [hgdaniels@gmail.com](mailto:hgdaniels@gmail.com).





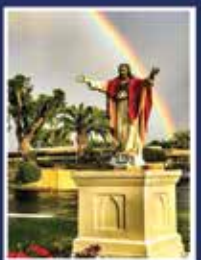
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## Faithful Can Shine Light on Mental Health

By John Prust

Mental health isn't just about "those people over there." In fact, just about everyone at some point in their lives will experience mental health challenges.

At any given time, one in four families is affected by mental illness, yet stigma and lack of understanding often prevent them from coming forward to get the help they need.

Since 1949, May has been designated "Mental Health Awareness Month." For those of us in the Church, this month presents an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to bringing Christ to families experiencing mental illness.

### A Patron Saint

May 15 is the feast day of St. Dymphna, the patron saint of those afflicted with mental illness.

Dymphna was born in seventh-century Ireland to a pagan king and his Christian wife. After Dymphna's mother died, her father recognized her resemblance to his late wife and wanted to marry her. She fled to the town of Geel in Belgium, where she devoted herself to caring for the mentally ill, until she was martyred at the hands of her father.

To this day, Geel is known for its welcoming embrace of individuals and families affected by mental illness.

### A Legacy of Accompaniment

The Church has spoken frequently about the importance of mental health and accompanying those in need.

Recent popes have shown compassion for people who live with mental illness and a deepening understanding of the psychology and underlying causes of mental illnesses. For example, Pope Francis has a monthly prayer for mental health and has supported mental health ministry.

In California, our own bishops in 2018 issued "Hope and Healing," a pastoral letter on caring for those who suffer from mental illness. "Just as Christ never abandons anyone," the document says, "so also the Church never abandons those who suffer from mental illness."

Former Auxiliary Bishop John Dolan, now the bishop of Phoenix, has been

### Special Mass

The Diocese's Mental Health Awareness Mass will be at 5 p.m., Saturday, May 25, at St. Michael Church in Paradise Hills, 2643 Homedale St.

Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano will be celebrant.

A mental health resource fair will follow the Mass.

For more information, visit [sdatholic.org/mentalhealth](http://sdatholic.org/mentalhealth), call (858) 490-8256 or email [jprust@sdatholic.org](mailto:jprust@sdatholic.org).

a catalyst in equipping the Church to respond to suicide by sharing how the deaths of siblings from suicide have affected him. He co-authored a book titled "When a Loved One Dies by Suicide: Comfort, Hope, and Healing for Grieving Catholics."

### How Can We Help?

We can educate ourselves by learning more about the psychology of mental illness, as well as what the Church says about this issue. This can help reduce the stigma and create the space for people to be more honest about their struggles.

Most of us aren't in the business of diagnosis; but the more we know, the better we can refer people who may be struggling. For example, we can learn QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) to better respond to individuals and friends who may be showing signs of suicidality.

Spiritual growth also does not preclude a person from struggling with their own mental health. Some of the greatest saints in Church history have been pretty frank about their mental health struggles, including St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Teresa of Calcutta, St. John of the Cross, and St. Benedict Joseph Labre.

### What Can Parishes Do?

Every parish can get involved, even if they don't have a formal "mental health ministry." Parishes can evaluate their efforts from the perspective of three pillars: accompaniment, education and referral.

Here are some easy ways to get started this May:

- Include blurbs about mental health in the bulletin from time-to-time.
- Include occasional prayers in the General Intercessions for individuals and families struggling with mental illness.
- Promote a faith-based mental health course or Mental Health First Aid course.
- Make sure that the parish has a process for making referrals.
- Start getting to know local Catholic therapists or other community resources.
- Arrange a training to better equip parish leaders to respond to mental health needs. Ideas include QPR trainings, which can be arranged for free through the County of San Diego's Suicide Prevention Council; seminars for parents on youth mental health; and trainings for hospitality ministers on how to respond to crisis situations.

## National Eucharistic Revival Supplement – May 2024

As we draw closer to the National Eucharistic Congress in July, we are reminded that we must hand on our Eucharistic faith as the disciples did after they experienced Jesus on the Road to Emmaus.



### THEME: TEACHING THE EUCHARIST TO CHILDREN

#### Eucharistic Saint



**Pope St. Pius X (1835-1914)** This saint-pope often gathered children around him in papal audiences and conversed with them. He loved the innocence of children as the Lord had loved them. In 1910, he published a decree allowing children to receive the Eucharist as early as seven years of age. Previously, only those who were confirmed were allowed to receive Holy Communion. He is known as "the Pope of the Eucharist".

#### Back to Basics

**THE DOMESTIC CHURCH:** Our Church has always placed the primary responsibility for handing on the Catholic faith in the family, not in systems of formal education, although important. Our Catechism states clearly that the family is its own type of church:



*The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason the family home is rightly called "the domestic church," a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity (CCC, 1666).*

In preparing children for their First Holy Communion, parents impart the first Eucharistic catechesis, teaching their children the essential virtues of reverence, purity of heart, humility, and the necessary connection between the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.

#### Faith in Action



**Wonderful Symbolism** – Dressing as little brides and grooms for First Holy Communion offers a unique opportunity to teach children that Christ is a husband whose Bride is the Church. This symbolism communicates to children that Christ *loves His Church* with the deepest possible love.

**Relationship** – As children grow, they need ongoing instruction in the Church's Eucharistic faith, which means they need to develop a relationship with the Bread of Life Himself. They do this primarily by their family's fidelity to Sunday Mass as well as through the numerous influences of catechesis, Eucharistic adoration, retreats, devotions, and preaching.

*"The Eucharist is the supreme proof of the love of Jesus. After this, there is nothing more but Heaven itself." ~ St. Peter Julian Eymard*

#### 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!



**IN ACTION:** San Diegans put “Laudato Si” into action in many ways. For example, from left, the St. Thomas More Community Garden Team tends to the cry of the earth; Our Lady of Guadalupe Youth advocate for community resilience at the State Capitol; and St. Francis of Assisi Earth Day 2024 promotes ecological education.

By Christina Bagaglio Slentz

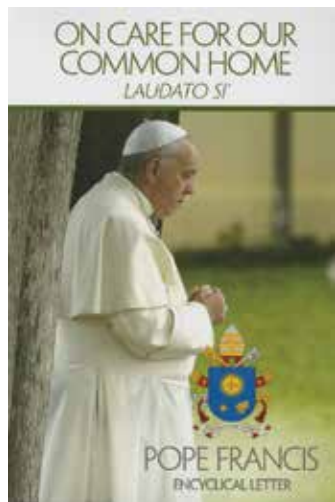


### Nine Years of “Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home”!

Each month in 2024, we have featured one of the seven goals of “Laudato Si” promoted by the Vatican’s Dicastery for Integral Human Development.

This month, we take a break to recognize the ninth anniversary of the encyclical’s 2015 publication, celebrated each May as “Laudato Si Week.” This year, the week runs May 19 to 26; it’s a time to examine this powerful document, which applies our faith teachings to today’s environmental crisis and sounds an urgent call for action.

### The Second of Three Encyclicals



“Laudato Si” is the second of Pope Francis’ three encyclicals, special letters issued by popes to announce guiding principles meant to be taken seriously and to challenge us in our growth as disciples of Christ.

Echoing the words of St. Francis’ “Canticle of the Sun” declaring “Praise be to you, my Lord,” this teaching on the “Care for Our Common Home” is sandwiched between the encyclicals *Lumen Fidei* (“The Light of Faith”) and *Fratelli Tutti* (“Brothers and Sisters, All”). Thus, “Laudato Si” connects Pope Francis’ foundational call to trust in the Church as the mother of our faith to his most recent summons to live with “fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical

proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives.”

This connection is made through the application of our Catholic faith teachings to global climate change, one of the greatest challenges of the modern era, such that we might discern a new way, leading us to live as Jesus has called us to live.

Having studied and worked as a scientist before entering the seminary, it’s perhaps unsurprising that Pope Francis was eager to produce an encyclical addressing the environmental crisis, which he is careful to point out is not one but two crises, one ecological and the other social. The process of assembling the knowledge, data and theological reflection to offer an accurate and holistic assessment took well over a year, carefully drawing upon expertise in a range of subjects from all over the world. The six chapters are composed of 40,673 words and include 172 citations, most of which credit great thinkers of the Church.

Throughout the text, Pope Francis applies the wisdom of numerous saints and popes to shed light on our responsibility as people of faith to live in right relationship with all of creation. By contrast, he laments the “rapidification” of humanity and the planet, an intensification of the pace of life and work in favor of goals that “are not geared to the common good or to integral and sustainable human development” (No. 18). The result is the embrace of a “throwaway culture,” characterized by careless hyper-consumption, unmanageable waste, pervasive toxins and pollutants, and the excessive use of fossil fuels combined with the deforestation of the planet to produce human-caused climate change. These adverse outcomes fall unevenly upon the poor and vulnerable, threatening lives and livelihoods, degrading the quality of human life and contributing to the breakdown of societies around the world.

### Light Offered by Faith: The Seven Goals

Through the application of Church teaching to current global dynamics, the seven goals of “Laudato Si” emerge, coalescing around the tenets of our faith, codifying our values, and offering pathways toward integral human development.

In the secular process of climate action planning, Step One is the identification of communal assets, understood as that which the community values, and Step Two is the identification of environmental impacts that threaten these assets.

Similarly, in “Laudato Si” action planning, the seven goals define our Catholic values and that which we must act to protect from environmental impact. The “Laudato Si Action Platform,” found at [laudatosiplatform.org](http://laudatosiplatform.org), provides a mechanism by which these steps can be formulated into an annual plan, responding to the “cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”

Though most papal documents are addressed to the bishops of the Church or the lay faithful, “Laudato Si” is addressed to “all people of good will,” emphasizing the urgent need for cooperation from everyone on the planet. If you are ready to begin this process as a parish, school or household, the Creation Care Ministry has developed a recommended three-step pathway to action:

**1. SEE:** Watch “The Letter,” a free film produced by the Vatican’s Dicastery for Integral Human Development and the “Laudato Si” Movement to get an overview of today’s environmental crisis and develop understanding of how the poor and vulnerable experience the greatest impact.

Families can watch at home on YouTube at [theletterfilm.org/watch](http://theletterfilm.org/watch), or parishes/schools/groups can register to host a screening at [theletterfilm.org/screenings](http://theletterfilm.org/screenings).

**2. DISCERN:** Participate in one of our diocesan introductory workshops to learn about the science that explains today’s environmental degradation, the spiritual nature of these dynamics, and how you can get involved with our Creation Care programs.

We hold two workshops at the Pastoral Center, just before Lent and during the Season of Creation in September, and we will gladly come to your parish — English and Spanish presentations are available!

**3. ACT:** Attend a “Laudato Si” Action Planning Hands-On Workshop, at which we will guide you — parishes, schools, families, businesses and universities — through the Vatican’s online platform for taking action to lessen your impact on Mother Earth. The next workshop is scheduled for June 5. Register at [bit.ly/HandsOnJUN5](http://bit.ly/HandsOnJUN5).

Creation is God’s gift to you. How you engage as co-creator of the kingdom of God on earth, in which we are all beloved sisters and brothers, *tutti fratelli*, is your gift to God.



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[sd catholic.org/creation](http://sd catholic.org/creation)

# Pentecost Mass Is Feast of Faith, Culture

**The Southern Cross**



The annual Pentecost Mass for All Peoples, which celebrates the rich cultural diversity found within the Diocese of San Diego, is returning for a seventh year.

More than 2,000 people are expected to attend the event, which will be held on Saturday, May 18, at Cathedral Catholic High School.

Everyone is invited to the festivities, which begin at 10 a.m. with a Call to Worship, featuring traditional music from around the world. This will be followed by an 11 a.m. Mass with Cardinal Robert W. McElroy presiding and Auxiliary Bishops Ramón Bejarano, Michael Pham and Felipe Pulido as concelebrants.

Representatives from more than 25 cultural communities, dressed in the traditional ethnic attire of their ancestral homelands, are to participate. The Mass itself will feature readings and prayers in multiple languages. After Mass, around 12:30 p.m., there will be a festival featuring exhibits from the cultural communities, samples of their traditional foods, and musical performances.

Auxiliary Bishop Michael Pham, who was the one who came up with the idea for the Pentecost Mass for All Peoples, reflected on the significance of this Christian holy day which cele-



**JOYFUL:** African Catholic community members played at last year's Pentecost Mass, including Bibiana Jones, center; their leader; and Father Emmanuel Ochigbo.

brates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, which emboldened them to spread the Gospel.

"The message of God's work through Jesus was proclaimed to people from all over the world," he said. "And so, when we, as Christians celebrate Pentecost today, we are celebrating our universal, catholic oneness as God's people. Pentecost is the feast of belonging."

"As you can see annually," he said, "our diocese celebrates the gathering of all people from different cultures to express our oneness in Christ. It is beautiful to see God's love being expressed in all ethnic groups."

Prince Paul, who will lead the Indian Catholic Community's delegation to the Pentecost Mass for All Peoples, recommends that every Catholic attend the celebration at least once.

"It is a joy to watch fellow believers, hailing from all over the world with their rich liturgical traditions, coming together to share in the Eucharist on one of the most important liturgical feast days of the year," he said.

Paul said that the large crowd that gathers for the Mass is "a thing to behold."

Diocesan Chancellor and Director of Pastoral Ministries Marioly Galván

said that, for the second consecutive year, the Pentecost Mass also will serve as an opportunity for Cardinal McElroy "to recognize ... and to welcome" the diocese's neophytes.

Neophytes are those who received the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil and have not yet celebrated their one-year anniversary of entering into full communion with the Catholic Church.

The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) recommends that newly initiated Catholics participate in a Mass celebrated by the diocesan bishop within their first year as Catholics.

Galván said that a special section at the Pentecost Mass will be reserved for the neophytes and, at one point during the Mass, Cardinal McElroy will acknowledge them and ask that they stand up and be recognized.

She said that the large-scale diocesan Pentecost Mass will remind them that they have become part of something much larger.

"To be able to witness 2,000 people coming together ... in their cultural attire really is an expression of how rich, and diverse, and vibrant our Church is," said Galván. "We look forward to (the Pentecost Mass) every year."

More information about the Pentecost Mass is available at [sdcatholic.org/Pentecost2024](http://sdcatholic.org/Pentecost2024)

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# Darkness Points Way to Light of Love



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When things don't work out like we imagined — when a loved one dies unexpectedly, when we lose our job, when infidelity destroys our marriage, when war threatens our borders, when a natural disaster rips through our home, or when famine forces us to migrate — we enter into the emotional territory of rage, anxiety and depression.

It's like a total emotional and spiritual eclipse, an absence of light that generates fear. The mystics call these times "the dark night of the soul." It's what Jesus experienced on the cross, when He cried out, "My God, My God, why have you abandoned Me?"

It's not a coincidence that the number of people who present symptoms of anxiety and depression has

**Columnist**

**Ricardo Márquez**



increased since the pandemic. The mental health issues of our population can't be hidden away any longer; they affect all of us, in one way or another. We feel it in our families, our parishes, our doctors' offices, inside of us.

It's not easy to accompany people who seek psychological and spiritual help, particularly when we ourselves are a part of that hurting, toxic society. We are part of that immense group of wounded healers.

I have learned — and I'm still learning — that in this moment of existential darkness, of a darkness in the soul, a phenomenon occurs that is manifested by a total loss of hope, when everything crumbles, when the horizon and a sense of purpose disappear, and our bodies seem paralyzed,

as if withdrawing into a dark cave. What sustained us no longer sustains us, what we believed important is no longer so, and the only thing remaining is a vast hopelessness. The "dark night" at its peak.

Yet from this empty chaos, paradoxically, emerges a profound search for what is essential, what really matters to us in our life, what moves us, what never disappoints nor dies. From this dark hole, we can connect with absolute love, and are able to return to the place that we should never have left.

We discover the hidden treasure in the darkness, we discover the God that Jesus revealed to us, a God who is the unconditional love in which we exist.

We have a treasure in our liturgical celebrations, when our faith community comes together to recall the memories and experiences of Jesus' disciples:

"... What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our

hands concerns the Word of life ... What we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:1-3).

These are not fairy tales. They are concrete, palpable experiences that were etched in the rational and emotional memory of His disciples. That is why they recall in moments of doubt and confusion what Jesus told them, words they gifted to us: "Do not be afraid"; "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you"; "Love one another as I have loved you"; "Be One like the Father and I are One"; "Where I go, you also will go." These are markers of faith that guide our lives during the dark nights of our soul until we reach a point where we can give thanks for the darkness, which led us to a more intimate, loving union with the eternal light of our God.

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

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# News Briefs

## Parish to Hold St. Peregrine Devotion

At its regularly scheduled 5:30 p.m. Mass on Wednesday, May 1, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Rancho Peñasquitos will honor St. Peregrine, the patron saint of those suffering with and seeking healing from cancer.

There will be an in-church procession at 5:20 p.m. and, after Mass, a special devotion to the saint, veneration of a relic of St. Peregrine, and recitation of the rosary.

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish is located at 13541 Stoney Creek Road, San Diego 92129. For more information, contact the parish at (858) 484-1070.

## Campus to Be Alive with 'Sound of Music'

POWAY — St. Michael School is staging a production of "The Sound of Music: Youth Edition," May 3 to 5, in the Holy Family Center.

Rodgers & Hammerstein's beloved musical, which inspired the Oscar-winning film starring Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer, is set in Austria in 1938. It centers around a young governess who brings music and joy back to a broken family, only to face danger as war looms.

Showtimes will be at 7 p.m. on Friday, May 3, and Saturday, May 4, and at both 1 p.m. and 6 p.m., Sunday, May 5.

Nearly 70 students have been rehearsing for four months. Students are involved in every aspect of the

production: acting, singing, dancing, tech crew, lights, sound, set design, props, costumes, makeup and more.

Tickets can be purchased at [showtix4u.com/event-details/82888](http://showtix4u.com/event-details/82888). For more information, email [theater@smspoway.org](mailto:theater@smspoway.org).

## Weekend Experience Offers Healing for Widowed, Divorced

OCEANSIDE — If you are grieving the loss of your marriage through death, divorce or separation, you are invited to the next Beginning Experience Weekend.

It will be held from May 3 to 5 at Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside.

During the weekend, a trained team will lead participants through a healing and growth program.

For more information, email [beginningexperiencesd@gmail.com](mailto:beginningexperiencesd@gmail.com) or call (858) 748-2273.

## Retrouvaille Gives Hope for Struggling Marriages

Retrouvaille is a program designed to help struggling marriages regain 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 information, including the cost to attend, call (951) 259-9474 or visit [helpourmarriage-sandiego.org](http://helpourmarriage-sandiego.org).

**Briefs** *Continued on Page 19*



## Sweet Gifts

ENCINITAS — The eighth-grade Faith in Action class at St. John School held a service project to brighten the Easter season for the less fortunate.

The students led their school community in collecting chocolates, art supplies and more, which they then used to assemble more than 100 Easter baskets. The project culminated on March 25 at the St. John Food Pantry, where they helped to distribute the baskets.

In a letter to the Faith in Action class, the parish's Food Pantry team expressed its appreciation.

"All of us who run the parish food pantry stand in awe of what you have done to bring the true joy of Easter to literally hundreds of people with the 100 baskets you made," the team wrote.

The letter shared how one homeless woman who regularly patronizes the food pantry "had a smile wider than I'd ever seen before on her face" when she discovered that chocolate Easter bunnies were available.

"Everyone loved the variety in the baskets and being able to pick out the one that fit their children best," the team wrote. "You took such care in putting them together — they were each a masterpiece that showed that someone really cares. And isn't that what Jesus called all of us to do? To love like He does?"



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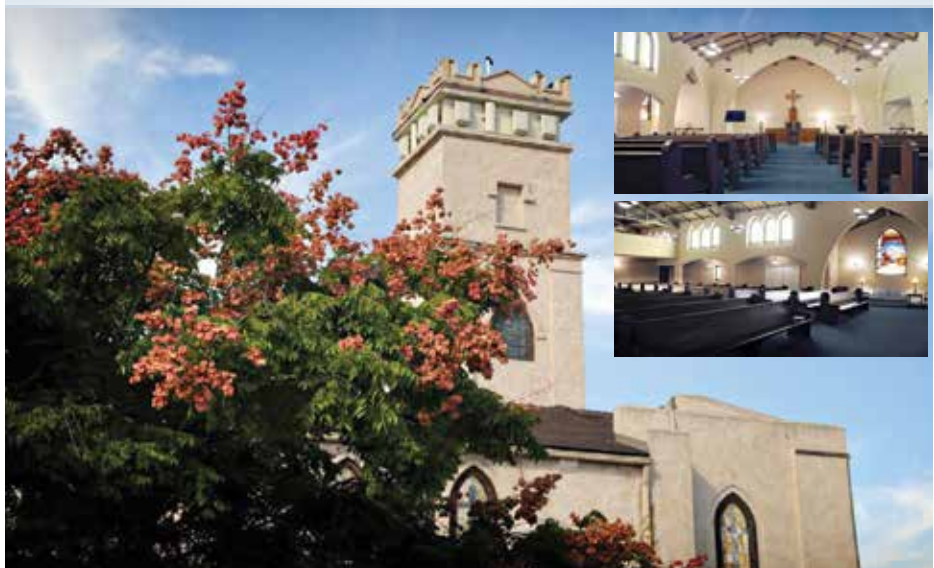
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INTO THY HANDS, O Lord, we commend the spirits of these beloved ones who are gone before us into the realm of thy eternal happiness and peace. **AMEN**



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**Briefs** *Continued from Page 18*

**Miles Christi Offering Silent Retreats**

OCEANSIDE — Silent weekend retreats, based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, will be preached by the priests of the Miles Christi religious order.

The next women's retreats will be during the May 9-11 and June 21-23 weekends. The next men's retreats will be during the June 28-30 weekend.

All of the retreats will be held at Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside.

For more information or to register, visit [mileschristi.org/spiritual-exercises](http://mileschristi.org/spiritual-exercises) or call (858) 768-0872.

**'Theology on Tap' to Focus on Vocation**

The theme of the upcoming spring series of Theology on Tap will be "Vocation: Discover, Discern, Thrive."

It will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. on two consecutive Thursdays, May 16 and 23, at Our Lady of Angels Parish.

Theology on Tap is a catechetical program for young adults, ages 18 to 39, that includes food, fellowship and a Catholic speaker.

On May 16, Father Billy Zondler will speak on the topic "Discerning Decisions." On May 23, Joe Melendrez will give a talk titled "Win the Day for Jesus."

The cost to attend each installment

is \$15, which includes food and drink.

For information, call (858) 490-8260 or email [yamsd@sdccatholic.org](mailto:yamsd@sdccatholic.org).

**Women's Retreat to Be Held at Whispering Winds**

JULIAN — The Whispering Winds Women's Auxiliary will hold a women's retreat from May 17 to 19 at Whispering Winds Catholic Camp and Conference Center in Julian.

The theme is "Your Heart, His Home." The retreat will feature guest speaker Liz Kelly.

The cost to attend is \$200 for members of the Whispering Winds Women's Auxiliary and \$230 for non-members.

For more information, contact Linda Aguilera at [laguilera@me.com](mailto:laguilera@me.com). Register online at [whisperingwinds.org/camps-retreats/womens-retreat](http://whisperingwinds.org/camps-retreats/womens-retreat).

**Picnic for Foster Care Awareness**

VISTA — In honor of "National Foster Care Awareness Month," the diocesan Office for Family Life and Spirituality is hosting a Foster Care & Adoption Picnic in the Park.

The event will take place from noon to 2 p.m., Saturday, May 18, at Shadowridge Park, 2101 Lupine Hills Drive, Vista 92081.

All foster, adoptive and kinship families are invited to an afternoon of pizza, fun and getting to know each other. Participants are welcome to bring snacks or a dessert to share.

Those interested in learning more about foster care or adoption are invited to attend. For more information, email [jperegoy@sdccatholic.org](mailto:jperegoy@sdccatholic.org).

**Magnificat Forming East County Chapter**

Magnificat, a ministry for Catholic women, is looking to form a new chapter in East County.

The group exists to evangelize and encourage Catholic women to grow in holiness through the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The essential function of Magnificat is the Magnificat Meal, which provides an opportunity for fellowship, praise, personal testimony, and intercessory prayer.

Women interested in helping to establish the East County chapter are encouraged to email [eastsandiegomagnificat@gmail.com](mailto:eastsandiegomagnificat@gmail.com). For information about Magnificat, visit [magnificat-ministry.net](http://magnificat-ministry.net).

**Pope Names Auxiliary Bishop for Sacramento**

SACRAMENTO — Pope Francis has appointed Father Rey Bersabal, a priest of the Diocese of Sacramento, as auxiliary bishop of that diocese. He will take up his appointment on May 31, following his ordination as bishop in the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament.

Father Bersabal, 59, grew up in a small town in Mindanao, Philippines. On April 29, 1991, he was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro. He came to the Diocese of Sacramento in 1999.

**Priest Assignments**

The Office of the Cardinal has announced that:

With the permission of his provincial, **Father Gabriel Afeti, AJ**, has been appointed associate pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish, San Diego, effective July 1.

**Eucharistic Procession to Mark Corpus Christi**

Two local parishes are collaborating on a celebration of the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, also known as Corpus Christi.

The event will take place on Sunday, June 2. It will begin at 2:30 p.m. with a Eucharistic procession from Christ the King Church to Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. Snacks will be available after the procession.

**'Love Our Priests' Group Welcomes Father McGuine**

Father Peter McGuine will be the special guest when the "Love Our Priests" Prayer Group gathers on Saturday, June 29, at Ascension Parish in Tierrasanta.

There will be a Mass at 10 a.m., followed by a potluck luncheon. Father McGuine, pastor of Mission San Diego de Alcala Parish, will share his vocation story.

For more information, email [jeanlaskey@outlook.com](mailto:jeanlaskey@outlook.com).

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