

# THE SOUTHERN CROSS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO



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Pages 10-11

ANDY HAY

**CALLED BY GOD:** From left, Evan Bui, Matthew Vasquez, Marc Andrew Gandolfo and Christopher Bongato are seen outside The Immaculata Church on the campus of the University of San Diego, where the diocesan seminary is also located. Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will ordain them to the priesthood June 2 at Good Shepherd Church.



## Mission Continues

Mission San Luis Rey de Francia celebrating 225th anniversary. **Page 8**



## High Interest

Pro-life services and ministries are expanding in the post-Roe era. **Page 9**



## Faith and Youth

Vietnamese youth organization promotes love for Jesus in Eucharist. **Page 12**



## Faith in Action Million Meals Event

June 10-11, 2023  
Cathedral Catholic High School  
Details Page 17

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# THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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The Diocese of San Diego runs the length of California's border with Mexico and serves more than 1.3 million Catholics in San Diego and Imperial counties. It includes 98 parishes, 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.



## Catholic Charities Steps Up

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE:** Cardinal Robert W. McElroy joined a Catholic Charities team that delivered food and water to desperate asylum-seekers near Jacumba on May 12. The agency's CEO, Vino Pajanor, center, accompanied the staff.

By Aida Bustos



Communities across the border braced for a major

influx of migrants trying to cross into the United States to seek asylum after a policy known as Title 42 ended on May 11. That did not materialize in the days after the policy ended, though the situation remained fluid.

In the Diocese of San Diego, "Catholic Charities assists asylum-seekers, fulfilling its mission to help the most vulnerable, treating them with mercy," said Chief Operating Officer Vino Pajanor.

For two years, the organization has operated three shelters across the diocese to receive these immigrants, working in partnership with other nonprofit organizations.

It has helped 210,000 people from many countries in that time, a majority of whom are women and children, he said.

The organization has a total of 1,500

## How to Help

Catholic Charities needs:

- Volunteers to help in a variety of ways at the shelters for migrants. To register, visit [bit.ly/3yKzdgT](http://bit.ly/3yKzdgT)
- Lightly used clothes, including men's clothing and shoes for any gender and size. Donations can be dropped off Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., at 4575 Mission Gorge Place, San Diego 92120.
- Donations, which can be made on the site [ccdsd.org](http://ccdsd.org)

beds available to receive the migrants in San Diego and Imperial counties, and is in continuous contact with public authorities at all levels.

At the shelters, staff members receive the migrants, who have been released by U.S. immigration authorities and are legally in the country to pursue their case for asylum. The staff ensures the migrants receive a health screening, provides them with housing and food, and coordinates their

travel to connect with loved ones. The migrants usually leave within a day or two of arriving at the shelters, operated primarily with state funds.

In the days before Title 42 ended, asylum-seekers crossed the border illegally. Catholic Charities responded to a call for help from the town of Jacumba, Pajanor said. Hundreds of immigrants — men, women and children from many countries — had set up a camp in that remote East County spot. They were not prepared for the chilly nights and hot days and were desperate for assistance as they waited to turn themselves in to immigration agents.

On May 12, Catholic Charities team members went to the site and handed out food and water to the migrants, said Pajanor, who traveled with them.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy accompanied the team. He visited the encampment to see the situation firsthand and delivered a blessing to immigrants.

Three days later, Border Patrol agents began taking the migrants to detention centers.

## Bishops Urge Mercy for Migrants



WASHINGTON — The bishops of communities along the southwest border, including

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy of the Diocese of San Diego, issued a statement on May 12 in response to the developing situation of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border:

"Daily, we witness the human consequences of migration, both its blessings and its challenges. As pastors of border communities, we minister to migrants and native-born persons alike. Our congregations include asylum-seekers, enforcement officers, landowners, and elected officials, who come together, not as strangers or adversaries but as sisters and brothers, equal in dignity and worth before the Lord.

"Since our nation's founding, Cath-

Chairman, Committee on Migration, USCCB

**Bishop Mark J. Seitz**



olics across this country have been at the forefront of efforts to welcome newcomers of all faiths and nationalities. As Christians, we are called to see the face of Christ in those who suffer, those who lack the basic necessities of life, and we judge ourselves as a community of faith by the way we treat the most vulnerable among us. We are each bound by a universal call to serve one another and to protect the sanctity of human life in all its forms.

"Therefore, we remain committed to supporting the efforts ongoing within our dioceses and beyond to promote the God-given dignity of every person, including those who have recently arrived in our communities. Further, as a Church committed to the common good, we always cooperate in

the administration of humanitarian aid with local, state, and federal officials, frequently in partnership with faith communities and like-minded secular organizations.

"Finally, we join together in prayer, entrusting these works of mercy to Our Lady of Guadalupe as a source of unity throughout the Americas. May each of us be blessed with a humanitarian heart that beats with fraternal compassion for those in need."

The bishops endorsing this statement as the pastors of U.S. communities along the southwest border include: Cardinal Robert W. McElroy of San Diego; Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller of San Antonio; Bishop Peter Baldacchino of Las Cruces; Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville; Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso; Bishop Michael J. Sis of San Angelo; Bishop James A. Tamayo of Laredo; Bishop Edward J. Weisenburger of Tucson.



# National Association to Honor San Diego Priest

By Denis Grasska



Father Emmet Farrell, a local priest who has

dedicated his retirement years to creation care ministry, will be honored for his efforts with a Pope St. John XXIII Award.

The Association of U.S. Catholic Priests will bestow the award June 14 at a special banquet held during its 12th annual assembly.

The national gathering, which is expected to draw about 200 priests and others from across the country, will be held from June 12 to 15 on the campus of the University of San Diego. The theme will be “Unity Through Synodality.”

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, a keynote speaker five years ago when the assembly was held in Albuquerque, N.M., will deliver a welcoming address to this year’s attendees on June 12.

“It’s kind of humbling,” Father Farrell, who is a member of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests, said of being selected as one of this year’s award winners.

In late 2016, about seven years after his retirement from active ministry, Father Farrell attended a diocesan workshop about “Laudato Si,” Pope Francis’ encyclical on environmental stewardship and care for creation. A few months later, he volunteered to spearhead creation care ministry in the diocese and, over the next six years, was joined by other dedicated volunteers.

For his part, Father Farrell believes that he is being recognized for something that was really “a team effort.”

“This whole team of people really should be getting the credit for this,” he said.

Father Farrell has preached on “Laudato Si,” in English and Spanish, at nearly one-third of the diocese’s 96 parishes. Before the pandemic, about 20 parishes had formed their own Creation Care Teams. In 2021, he also led



**TREE TEAM:** Father Emmet Farrell, far right, accompanied by Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano, led a group from Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish that planted a tree on March 19, 2022, at the home of Rosa and Beto Camargo.

the committee that wrote the diocese’s 55-page “Laudato Si” action plan, which provides concrete steps that parishes, schools and other organizations can take to protect the environment.

The retired priest is “an admirable, active person” whose work is well-known by many in the Diocese of San Diego, said Father Stephen P. Newton, CSC, executive director of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests, who lamented that promoting environmental stewardship has been “an uphill battle in the Church.”

Other Pope St. John XXIII Award recipients this year include the founders of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests and the co-directors of Discerning Deacons, an organization that advocates for the ordination of female deacons.

Father Newton recalled the origins of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests. In 2011, a group of priests lobbied for delaying implementation of the new English translation of the Roman Missal, which revised the wording of the Mass prayers to make

them more faithful to the original Latin text. Though their effort was unsuccessful, he said, those involved recognized “the need ... for fellowship with those who were striving in the same direction.”

Father Newton said the association’s priorities include furthering the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, opposing racism, and promoting nonviolence. There are also working groups dedicated to such topics as climate change, immigration, the ordination of women to the diaconate, and mutual support for priests.

The association currently has about 600 paid members, including both diocesan and religious-order priests; lay Catholics can join as “friends” of the organization. Most of the association’s members live east of the Mississippi. The decision to hold this year’s assembly in San Diego was motivated, as Father Newton put it, by a desire “to reach out to the West.”

This year’s assembly will begin with a one-day retreat led by Sister Nancy Sylvester, IHM, founder and president

of the Institute for Communal Contemplation and Dialogue.

Keynote speakers will include Massimo Faggioli, professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Villanova University in Pennsylvania; Dr. Brian Flanagan, associate professor of Theology at Marymount University in Arlington, Va.; and Cecilia Gonzalez-Andrieu, professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

The schedule also includes breakout sessions; elections for four positions on the leadership team; and presentations by various working groups, including one that will ask members to support a statement titled “Being Gay, Ordained, Faithful to the Church and Appreciated by the Church: Are all these possible in today’s Church?” to be distributed to members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

For more information, including registration prices, visit [auscp.org](http://auscp.org) or call (872) 205-5862.



## Join Young in Fighting for Planet, Pope Says



VATICAN CITY — While older people complain about “young people

today,” they must admit that the younger generations are leading the way in opposing “an economic system that is unfair to the poor and an enemy of the environment,” the pope wrote.

“They are not only asking us; they are doing it,” he said, pointing to a trend in choosing to consume less, to buy products “produced following

strict rules of environmental and social respect” and to lower their carbon footprints with the means of transportation they use.

Pope Francis wrote about the connections between the dominant global economic system and climate change in a preface to the Italian book “The Taste for Change: Ecological Transition as the Path to Happiness,” by the Jesuit economist Father Gaël Giraud and Carlo Petrini, the Italian founder of the International Slow Food Movement.

*Vatican News* published the text of the preface May 17, the day the book was released by the Vatican publish-

ing house.

Pope Francis wrote that the authors find hope in the younger generation, countering the tired narrative of claiming the past was better and that “those who come after us are squandering our achievements.”

“Instead, we must admit with sincerity that it is the young people who embody the change we all objectively need,” the pope wrote.

The young are asking older people “to change. Change our lifestyle, so predatory toward the environment. Change our relationship with the Earth’s resources, which are not in-

finite. Change our attitude toward them, the new generations, from whom we are stealing the future,” the pope wrote.

Christians cannot remain indifferent when they see people suffering because of drought and other environmental disasters or forced to migrate because of climate change, he wrote.

Those who stand by and watch or turn the other way, he said, are “accomplices in the destruction of the beauty that God wanted to give us in the creation that surrounds us.”

*Catholic News Service*



# Office Honors Catholic Educators Across Region

## The Southern Cross



The diocesan Office for Schools honored educa-

tors across the region at its annual Catholic Educators' Awards Banquet.

About 240 teachers and principals from throughout the diocese attended the event, held May 10 at the Academy of Our Lady of Peace.

"This is a celebration of Catholic education, of individuals who have committed themselves to the advancement of our Catholic school mission in the Diocese of San Diego," Leticia Oseguera, diocesan superintendent of schools, said in her opening remarks.

Almost 50 attendees were recognized for marking significant professional milestones — 10, 20 or 30 years in Catholic education. Thirteen educators who will be retiring at the conclusion of the current academic year also received recognition.

The majority of the evening was dedicated to the presentation of several "Awards of Distinction," which included:

- The **Re-Imagine Catholic Schools Award**, given to a school that "recognizes the needs and interests of the 21st-century student." This year's honoree was Sacred Heart School in Brawley, where teachers have implemented new strategies to support differentiated instruction in multi-age classrooms.

- The **"All Are Welcome" Inclusive Education Award**, presented to St. Katharine Drexel Academy, whose staff has made accommodations and modifications for students with various learning challenges and has created a part-time resource teacher position, offering one-on-one and small-group support to students.

- The **Sr. Breege Boyle Award**, which honors a preschool program



**A WINNING TEAM:** Retiring Principal Dan Schuh, left, recipient of this year's Sr. Claire Patrice Lifetime Achievement Award, poses with his team from St. John School at this year's Catholic Educators' Awards Banquet.

or director for making a difference in the lives of the diocese's youngest students, presented to Preschool Director Joette Correia of St. Vincent de Paul Preschool.

- The **ACT Fellow Award**, which recognizes an Academy of Catholic Teaching (ACT) fellow who has demonstrated the three pillars of the University Consortium of Catholic Education — service through teaching, community involvement, and spiritual development — as they work through their academic program at the University of San Diego. This year, the award went to Krissy Franklin of St. Katharine Drexel Academy.

- The newly created **St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Award**, given to a distinguished staff member who demonstrates excellence in serving the mission of Catholic education (in a school or at the diocese) and is committed to the success of the students and the school. The inaugural award recipient was Carla Barnett, receptionist/secretary at St. Patrick

Catholic School in Carlsbad.

- The newly created **St. Sebastian Award**, designed to honor exceptional individuals who have made a positive impact on both their school's athletic programs and the wider diocesan community, awarded to Eisha Bohman of St. James Academy.

- The **Good Shepherd Award**, for a member of the clergy who models discipleship, truth and courage, given this year to Father Emilio Magaña, pastor of St. Charles School.

- The **Catholic Teacher of the Year Award**, which went to both a high school teacher, Alma Kim of the Academy of Our Lady of Peace, and an elementary school educator, Tori Franklin of Our Lady of Grace School in El Cajon.

- The **Distinguished Principal Award**, presented to Shawna Taitano of St. Peter the Apostle School in Fallbrook.

- The **Sr. Claire Patrice Lifetime Achievement Award**, which recognizes major contributions over many

years of dedication to educational leadership in the diocese's Catholic schools. This year's honoree was Dan Schuh, principal of St. John School in Encinitas.

Schuh has spent 21 years in education, including 16 years at St. John School. He has been the school's principal for the past 13 years. He is among those 13 local Catholic school educators who will be retiring at the end of this year.

When presenting the award, Oseguera said that Schuh has "embodied the values and mission of Catholic education" through a "distinguished career."

"He understands that, in order for our Catholic schools to succeed, we must work together and support one another," she said. "That's why he has always been a strong advocate for collaboration with other principals and ensures his teachers partake in collaborative opportunities available to them."

# School Glee Club Wins Six National Awards

## The Southern Cross



St. Rose of Lima School's Glee Club won six

awards in this year's "Music in the Parks" Annual National Competition on April 14 at the Disneyland Resort.

For the competition, the club was divided into three groups — one for elementary-school students and two for middle-school students.

Under the direction of Musical Director Joseph Advento, the Glee Club took home both first and second place in the Show Choir category (Middle School Division), as well as first place in Mixed Choir (Elementary School) and first in Overall Performance (Middle/High School). Members Jaxon Escobar and Joelle Advento were recognized as Overall Best Vocalist



**RECOGNITION:** The St. Rose of Lima Glee Club took home six awards at the "Music in the Parks" Annual National Competition, held April 14 at the Disneyland Resort.

in the Elementary and Middle/High School divisions, respectively.

The club had been unable to practice or perform during two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the musical director felt they were ready.

"These kids are amazing," he said. "Gifted and blessed with not only their musical talents, they all have an outstanding work ethic and come prepared to work hard every day. Of course, all of this is made possible because of our community at St. Rose of Lima. It's a real team effort."

The St. Rose of Lima Glee Club brings theatrical music and dance, vocal improvisation, and modern pop and classical music stylings to the stage, schools and parishes.

More information:  
[strosecvschool.com/glee](http://strosecvschool.com/glee)





# Project Transforms St. Rita's School

The Southern Cross



Big things are happening at St. Rita's School and Parish in Southeast San Diego.

For more than 70 years, St. Rita's students have used the sloping asphalt church parking lot as their playground. Not any longer, however.

The students will now have a new, level, sustainable turf field; a basketball court; play structures; and a prayer grotto. These are part of a \$7-million project, called "Art, Play, Pray," that is under construction.

"It's amazing to think that less than 10 years ago, St. Rita's was slated for closure," said Gina Olsen, the principal. "This project represents the renaissance of Catholic education in Southeast San Diego."

The superintendent of the diocese's Office for Schools, Leticia Oseguera, said the long-awaited project will transform the entire school community.

"Not only will the students have a safe space to play and enjoy their recess and lunch, but they will also have an art studio where students can be creative and let their imagination fly. The sense of pride and excitement that it's already bringing to the community is quite a sight to see," said Oseguera.

St. Rita's School has 228 students in transitional kindergarten through eighth grade. Construction on the project began last November and is to be completed this summer.



**WORK IN PROGRESS:** The \$7-million "Art, Play, Pray" project is currently under construction at St. Rita School and Parish, where it is expected to be completed this summer.

The project was initiated by Kevin McNeely, whose family foundation, Manitou Fund, is the primary funder of the project, said Mary Johnson, a member of the St. Rita's Development Team.

"When Kevin first visited the school, he immediately recognized the need for a safe, sports-friendly play area for the school's students," she wrote in an email to *The Southern Cross*, describing the project.

His wife, Rosemary, expanded the vision, she added.

As an artist herself, Rosemary wanted art to be emphasized in the St. Rita's School curriculum more fully, Johnson said. So, in addition to funding art instruction at the school, Rosemary envisioned an art studio in a new, stand-alone building to encourage every student to explore the beauty and creativity of art.

Prayer is the essence of Catholic

education and parish life. This project includes a new, peaceful prayer grotto and garden for quiet reflection and meditation. The new grotto will stand where the run-down, long-vacant convent once stood.

Father Silverio Espenilla, Jr., pastor of St. Rita's Parish, said the community was "grateful and happy" the project included a grotto.

"This will greatly strengthen the school's purpose of providing our students with the experience of Our Blessed Mother, Mary," he said. "Our parishioners will also greatly benefit from the grotto by having a sacred outdoor space for prayer and contemplation."

The final phase of the project will be replacing the chain-link fence along Imperial Avenue with a beautiful new wall having openings to view the fields and grotto and enhancing security.

## 1,000 Graduate from Catholic High Schools

Around 1,000 students graduated from the five Catholic high schools within the Diocese of San Diego, with at least 95 percent planning to attend college.

The Academy of Our Lady of Peace held its graduation ceremony on May 25. A total of 175 young women graduated, including Mia Davis and Michaela Hine, who were co-valedictorians.

In Calexico, a total of 86 seniors graduated on May 26 from Vincent Memorial Catholic High School, where Leticia Bazua was honored as the valedictorian.

St. Augustine High School also held its graduation on May 26. Z. Harrison Quinto was named the St. Augustine Medal Winner, the school's highest honor.

A total of 252 students graduated on May 26 from Mater Dei Catholic High School, where Isabel Koch was honored as the valedictorian.

On May 27, a total of 355 students graduated from Cathedral Catholic High School. Esteban Murillo was honored with the Don Award and Anna Fox with the Doña Award.

"The time has come for the Class of '23 to begin the process of departure so that they may continue their life's journey," wrote Christine Braunstein, the Vice Principal for Campus Life at Mater Dei Catholic, to the school's graduating seniors and their parents. "They have matured academically, spiritually, and socially. Congratulations!"

*The Southern Cross*

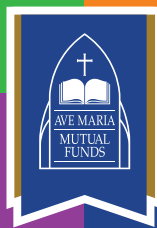
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# Joyful Flocked to Imperial Valley Conference

By Aida Bustos



CALEXICO —  
"I love the  
enthusiasm."

That's how Mario Coronado described the conference the San Diego Diocese presented for the Imperial Valley's faithful, particularly those who serve their parishes, schools and ministries.

He and his family, which included his wife and three children, had traveled from their home in Brawley to Vincent Memorial Catholic High School, where the conference was held on April 22.

"The atmosphere was very friendly and accommodating," he said during the lunch break, adding that he appreciated the fact that the event was bilingual. "We're not excluding anyone."

Around 230 people, including 86 youth, attended the conference, which had as a theme, "United in Christ/*Unidos en Cristo*." The conference opened with a 9 a.m. Mass celebrated by Father Efraín Bautista, pastor of Corpus Christi Parish in Bonita. Cardinal Robert W. McElroy had planned to preside, but he had to travel to the Vatican.

The conference, which ended at 3 p.m., included a keynote address by renowned speaker Brother Moisés Gutierrez, OFM, and two sessions, each consisting of 13 workshops in English and Spanish. The subjects included "The 5 Cs for Building a Successful Marriage," "Genuine Accompaniment: A Journey with Young People," and "Let it be Known that



**FAMILY DAY:** Mario and Janine Coronado and their three children, including 12-year-old Santiago, attended the diocese's Imperial Valley conference, where they found meaningful and fun activities for the entire family.

God Exists! New Crafts and Activities for Module 2."

Coronado and his wife, Janine, and their 12-year son, Santiago, had attended the latter workshop, led by Gaby Peña, a master catechist at the diocese.

"I loved that the workshop was not only for adults, but also for him," she said, pointing to her son. "He loved it."

The couple's two other children — Isabel, 14, and Isaiah, 16 — participat-

ed in a separate track for youth led by youth and young adult ministry leaders from parishes across the diocese.

Iris Muñiz was at the conference along with 11 other members of her parish, St. Joseph's in Holtville. In the past, she had traveled to San Diego to attend workshops for liturgical ministers, she said.

"The workshops here are very interesting," she said. "It's nice we don't have to go so far."

The workshop instructors included directors of the diocesan pastoral offices, formation leaders, educators, and veteran lay leaders. They included Victor Carmona, PhD, a professor of Theology at the University of San Diego; Lee Williams, PhD, director of the Marital and Family Therapy Program at USD; Koren Ruiz, an accomplished singer-songwriter and director of Hispanic Initiatives at Oregon Catholic Press; José Martínez, teacher, musician and founder of the podcast "Sacred Heart Narratives"; and Brian and Gloria Wong, long-time ministry leaders in the Valley.

The diocese had presented the inaugural conference in the Valley in November of 2018. The plan was to host it every two years. However, the pandemic and its after-effects delayed the return until this spring.

Conference-goers visited informational tables during breaks and lunch. A total of 23 organizations and companies shared their goods and services in the area outside the school's new and remodeled buildings. Sister Lupita Hernández, SJS, the principal, worked tirelessly alongside her staff, in temperatures that reached the mid-90s, to assist the organizers and participants.

Janine Coronado saw the conference as reinforcing the faith of her children, "and maybe their peers' faith, too."

Her husband summed up the family's experience simply:

"This has been a blessing."



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# Synod Small-Group Sessions Coming in Fall

By Aida Bustos



Last year in the diocese, around 11,000 people participated in small-group sessions in parishes and schools and more than 27,000 responded to a survey.

Those voices overwhelmingly expressed joy in the sacramental life of the Church. How can we build on that joy? And how do we invite more people to experience it?

The diocese will explore these questions in the next step in the synod. In the fall, parishes and schools will host another round of small-group dialogue sessions, this time focused on how they can more effectively build Eucharistic communities.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy has incorporated elements of the ongoing National Eucharistic Revival, organized by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, in this synodal process.

The dialogue sessions will be held from Oct. 1 to 31 and will follow a similar format as ones held last spring in parishes and schools. In those sessions, participants sat in small circles and shared their experiences while the others listened. Afterward, many said they enjoyed the experience and hoped their parish held more such sessions.

At Good Shepherd Parish, that enthusiasm led to a three-hour retreat last October for members of all ministries at the church, including those



**SYNODAL GATHERING:** Parishes are holding synodal conversations across the diocese. For instance, on May 21, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Barrio Logan hosted bilingual forums in English and Spanish on “Reimagining Women’s Participation in a Synodal Church.”

from its cultural communities that primarily speak other languages. The idea was to give them an opportunity to meet each other in small groups and listen to each other’s experiences and challenges.

“Our goal was unity among all the ministers,” said Manny Adriano, the parish’s coordinator of the English-language lectors, who was tapped to organize the retreat. “We also wanted to raise awareness of why we had been called to serve.”

He initially planned for 100 people to attend. On event day, nearly 300 turned out, including one group he hoped would participate, young adults.

“They were so engaged, so vocal,” he said. “They shared their stories. And they were very appreciative that people listened.”

When the event ended, “people said, ‘Let’s do it again!’”

At its core, the synod is a four-year conversation at all levels of the Catholic Church about how to be more

welcoming to all. To do that, parishes, dioceses and the Church itself seek to develop a culture that consistently listens to all community members, learns from their experiences, and works to meet their needs.

The goal of the synod is to renew and re-energize the Church through this process, especially as its leadership tackles today’s challenging issues.

In the San Diego Diocese, Cardinal McElroy has organized the synod in three phases. During the listening phase, from October 2021 to October 2022, the diocese held small-group sessions at parishes and schools and conducted an electronic survey.

A discernment phase followed, from October to December 2022, where synod commission members reviewed the findings from the group sessions and survey. These findings were shared with pastors and the community at large.

The diocese began the action phase in January, asking pastors to address two concerns expressed by their parishioners in the listening phase.

The synodal process, however, is a continual one of working to welcome all, to listen to all voices and to collaborate to build the Church.

More information about the synod at all levels in our Church is available at [sdcatholic.org/synod](http://sdcatholic.org/synod) (English and Vietnamese) and [sdcatholic.org/sinodo](http://sdcatholic.org/sinodo) (Spanish).




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# 'King of Missions' Celebrates 225th Anniversary

By Denis Grasska



Mission San Luis Rey de Francia, dubbed the "King of the Missions," is celebrating its 225th anniversary.

An entire year of anniversary-themed events began last January and will continue through December, but one of the highlights is just around the corner.

On June 13, the date on which the mission was founded in 1798, a multicultural anniversary Mass will be celebrated at 6 p.m. inside the historic mission church. The Mass prayers will be in English; Spanish, the language of the mission's founders; and Luiseño, in honor of the region's Native American population.

A full list of the mission's anniversary events, which include lectures, concerts and Masses, can be found by visiting [sanluisrey.org/about/225th-anniversary](http://sanluisrey.org/about/225th-anniversary).

The anniversary year will see the return of two popular events from the mission's past.

The Mission Fiesta, which hasn't been held in 25 years, will take place over three days, June 16 to 18. It will include food, live music, carnival rides and games, and the crowning of a Fiesta King and Queen, Prince and Princess, and Little Prince and Little Princess. Caballeros will also ride their horses onto the mission grounds, a callback to a beloved fiesta tradition.

The Heritage Ball, a gala fundraiser that was last held in 2015, is



**HISTORICAL:** Mission San Luis Rey, founded in 1798, was the 18th of 21 California missions.

scheduled for Aug. 19. The event will raise funds for repair and restoration of the interior walls of the old mission church.

Founded by Franciscan Father Fermín de Lasuén, the successor of St. Junípero Serra, Mission San Luis Rey was the 18th of the 21 California missions that stretch from Mission San Diego de Alcalá in the south to Mission San Francisco Solano in the north. Today, along with Mission Santa Barbara, it is one of only two California missions still administered by the Franciscans.

As the Catholic population attached to Mission San Luis Rey increased, it outgrew the old mission church,

which has capacity for only about 270 people. The mission, which is owned by the Franciscan Friars of California, and the parish became separate legal entities.

Despite that division, Mission San Luis Rey Executive Director Gwyn Grimes said, "In the eyes of our community, we are one faith community" and "there's a lot of overlap."

She noted that Masses are celebrated in both the historic and the new church, the same Franciscans who reside at the mission are the ones who celebrate Masses for the parish, many parishioners have been laid to rest in the mission's cemetery, and the separate staffs of the mission and the

parish frequently collaborate.

To accommodate the growing parish, construction began on a new chapel in 1955. Today, the community gathers for most Masses in the Fray Junipero Serra Center, which was consecrated by Bishop Robert H. Brom in 1996. Located east of the mission cemetery and north of the parish building offices, it can accommodate 840 people.

Two Sunday Masses — the 7 a.m. in English and 7 p.m. in Spanish — are celebrated inside the old mission church, as is the noon weekday Mass in English.

Mission San Luis Rey welcomes as many as 70,000 visitors every year, including about 4,000 fourth-graders.

Franciscan Father Oscar Mendez, who has served as pastor of Mission San Luis Rey Parish for almost three years, urges San Diegans during this anniversary year to "come to discover, or rediscover, the jewel nestled in our valley."

"Mission San Luis Rey is a place for you to gather and share your faith," he said. "The church represents a beacon of light, a place to encounter God in the solitude of the historic grounds. We are a place where you can live your faith by attending daily Mass, by living a retreat, or by serving in various ministries."

"The 'King of Missions' is a beautiful, active church, where each fired clay brick or roof tile speaks of the contributions of those who came before us and are now present," added Father Mendez, who has been a Franciscan for more than 40 years.

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# Interest Grows in Pro-Life Services after Ruling

By Aida Bustos



June 24 marks the one-year anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

Across the San Diego Diocese, several organizations that assist pregnant women and faith-based ministries said that the decision has profoundly affected them.

Their leaders said that they have experienced greater interest in their cause and growing demand for their programs and services — and have expanded their operations as a result.

At the same time, they acknowledged that voters in California overwhelmingly approved Proposition 1 in November that added the right to an abortion to the state's constitution. And they recognized that efforts continue in the public and private sectors to try to limit how their organizations promote themselves.

However, there's no doubt that the Supreme Court's ruling energized pro-life organizations and culture of life ministries at parishes.

"In this post-*Roe* era, our team feels more confident in our purpose and mission," said Eduardo Reyes, who with his wife, Alma, serve as coordinators of the 40 Days for Life Campaign in Escondido. "The overturning of *Roe* has opened up the eyes of many who were not aware of the abortion laws in our area. This has caused many to rise up and stand up for the unborn."

Reyes said campaign participants



**FAMILY-FRIENDLY:** Pro-life ministries supported and celebrated pregnant women at a fair after the diocese's Respect Life Mass on Oct. 23, 2022, at St. John of the Cross Parish.

wanted to keep praying outside of clinics that provide abortions beyond the 40-day period, and now hold prayer sessions year-round on Fridays.

Carolyn Koole is the executive director of Hope Clinic for Women in Fallbrook, which offers free medical care for pregnant women.

She said interest in events that support the clinic has picked up since the ruling. "Our gala had the largest

attendance we have ever had."

The number of people interested in volunteering has grown dramatically, she added.

"We feel more empowered because we have the hearts of our churches and community behind us," she said. "But we are more vulnerable because we know the government is looking for ways to trap us in our advertising. In the end, it has made us wiser."

Culture of Life Family Services (COLFS) is a nonprofit organization based in Escondido that assists women in crisis pregnancies and operates a family medicine practice guided by Catholic values. The organization expanded its staff in the last year to meet growing demand for its services, according to Melisa Sanchez, its Ministry Director, and is participating in more community events.

Penelope Ramírez is a long-time culture of life ministry leader at St. Mary's Parish in Escondido, working with the Hispanic community. She dedicates her time in a variety of activities, from giving talks to supporting women who have had abortions. She, too, has noted greater interest in the pro-life cause.

"More people are daring to ask me, 'So, you don't support abortion?'" she said. "They do it because they are interested in the issue, not to confront me."

Luly Ramirez directs Birth Choice of the Imperial Valley, a life-affirming pregnancy and resource center based in El Centro.

"The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* opened hearts in our community," she said. "We have been blessed with donations and support like never before, giving us greater opportunity to expand our programs to mothers in need. We have been empowered by the Holy Trinity!"

More information:  
[sdcatholic.org/chooselife](https://sdcatholic.org/chooselife)



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the program





By Denis Grasska



Four men will be ordained to the priesthood at 4 p.m., June 2, at Good Shepherd Parish in Mira Mesa, a Mass that will be livestreamed.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will confer the sacrament of holy orders upon Christopher Bongato, 30; Evan Bui, 25; Marc Andrew Gandolfo, 28; and Matthew Vasquez, 28.

The four men previously were ordained to the transitional diaconate on Dec. 17 of last year at Mater Dei Parish in Chula Vista, the home parish of Bongato.

They are the first class of seminarians to be formed under the diocese's revamped priestly formation program since it was put in place during the summer of 2019.

Under that program, the seminarians receive human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation at St. Francis Center for Priestly Formation and attend graduate-level theology at the Franciscan School of Theology, both on the campus of the University of San Diego. The program also includes parish placements and internships with various Catholic organizations, designed to familiarize seminarians with the inner workings of the diocese they will be ordained to serve.

As the first class scheduled to begin their theology studies under the new program, the four men were given a choice to attend the Franciscan School of Theology or to be the last diocesan seminarians to be sent to a major seminary outside the Diocese of San Diego. With the exception of Gandolfo, who completed his theology studies at Mount Angel Abbey in Oregon, all of the others remained in San Diego.

Laura Martin-Spencer, who oversaw their pastoral formation at St. Francis Center, noted that this year's ordination class is not only historic as pioneers under the new formation program, but also are "such a great representation" of the cultural diversity present in the diocese.

Effective July 1, the newly ordained priests will begin their first priestly assignments, as parochial vicars at local parishes: Bongato at St. Martin of Tours Parish, La Mesa; Bui at St. Thomas More Parish, Oceanside; Gandolfo at Our Lady of Grace Parish, El Cajon; and Vasquez at Good Shepherd Parish.

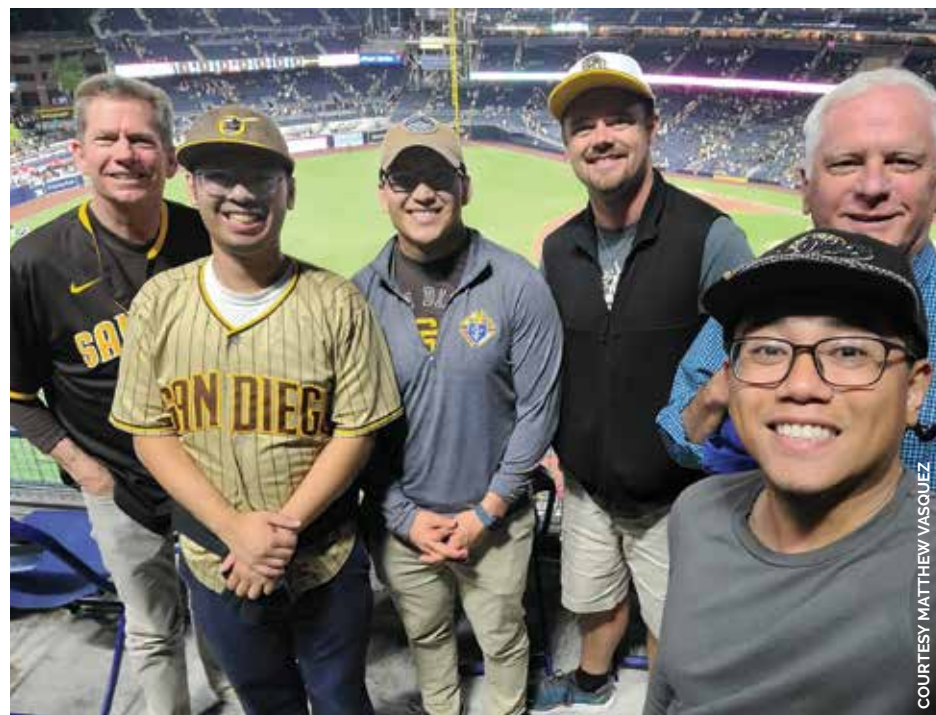
### Christopher Bongato

Bongato grew up in a Filipino Catholic family that attended Sunday Mass every week and prayed together regularly.

"We were very dedicated to praying the rosary, although I didn't like praying it at the time," admitted Bongato, a graduate of Mater Dei Catholic High School.

During his youth, he wasn't much interested in the idea of a priestly vocation. As a student at UC Irvine, he wanted to be a pharmacist, before opting instead to major in English. He later earned an MBA in Film Producing at John Paul the Great Catholic University in Escondido.

He felt the first stirrings of a call to the priesthood during his junior year at UC Irvine. While praying in a Blessed Sacrament chapel, he asked how God wanted him to serve and felt in his heart that the answer was by becoming a priest. After that, he was increasingly drawn to the idea of priesthood, but it took him another four years "to fully commit to it."



**PLAY BALL:** Seminarians and their formators enjoy a San Diego Padres baseball game in October 2022. From left are Father Matt Spahr, Evan Bui, Matthew Vasquez, Kyle Schanzenbach, Christopher Bongato and Father Mike Sinor.



## Four Share Their Joyo

**IN GOD'S HOUSE:** From left, Evan Bui, Matthew Vasquez, Marc Andrew Gandolfo and Christopher Bongato.

Bongato said it was "the relational aspect" that attracted him to priestly life. "I simply want to be with people, be with God, and bring people to Christ," he said. "I want to walk with people through their struggles and their joys, and hopefully through my background, bring people to an understanding of Christ that is comprehensible, consumable, loving, and beautiful."

During his first year after priestly ordination, he said he hopes "to grow in my craft of the priesthood by taking on the perception of being an apprentice. I want to grow in my craft of writing homilies, walking with people, and bringing people to God."

### Evan Bui

Bui is the son of Vietnamese immigrants, who have lived in San Diego since the 1990s. His father is a cradle Catholic, while his mother is a convert from Buddhism.

He described his mother as "probably the most devoted Catholic in the household."

"My mom is an inspiration for me, as she herself commits to a holy hour and attends Mass every day," said Bui, who was a member of Holy Family Parish before embarking on his vocational journey.

At one time, Bui had wanted to be a professional sports agent.

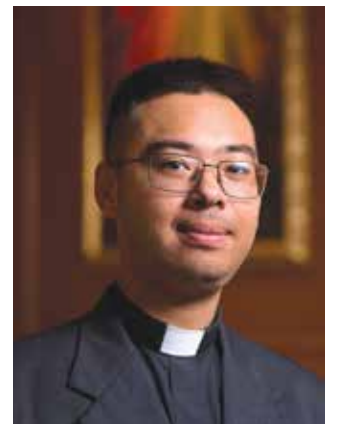
"I love sports, and getting paid to watch sports and babysit professional athletes was a career that was on my mind before priesthood," he said. "I would have attended law school and then worked for a sports agency."

But, during his senior year of high school, he began attending vocational discernment events at St. Francis Center for Priestly Formation, and he realized that God was leading him in a different direction.

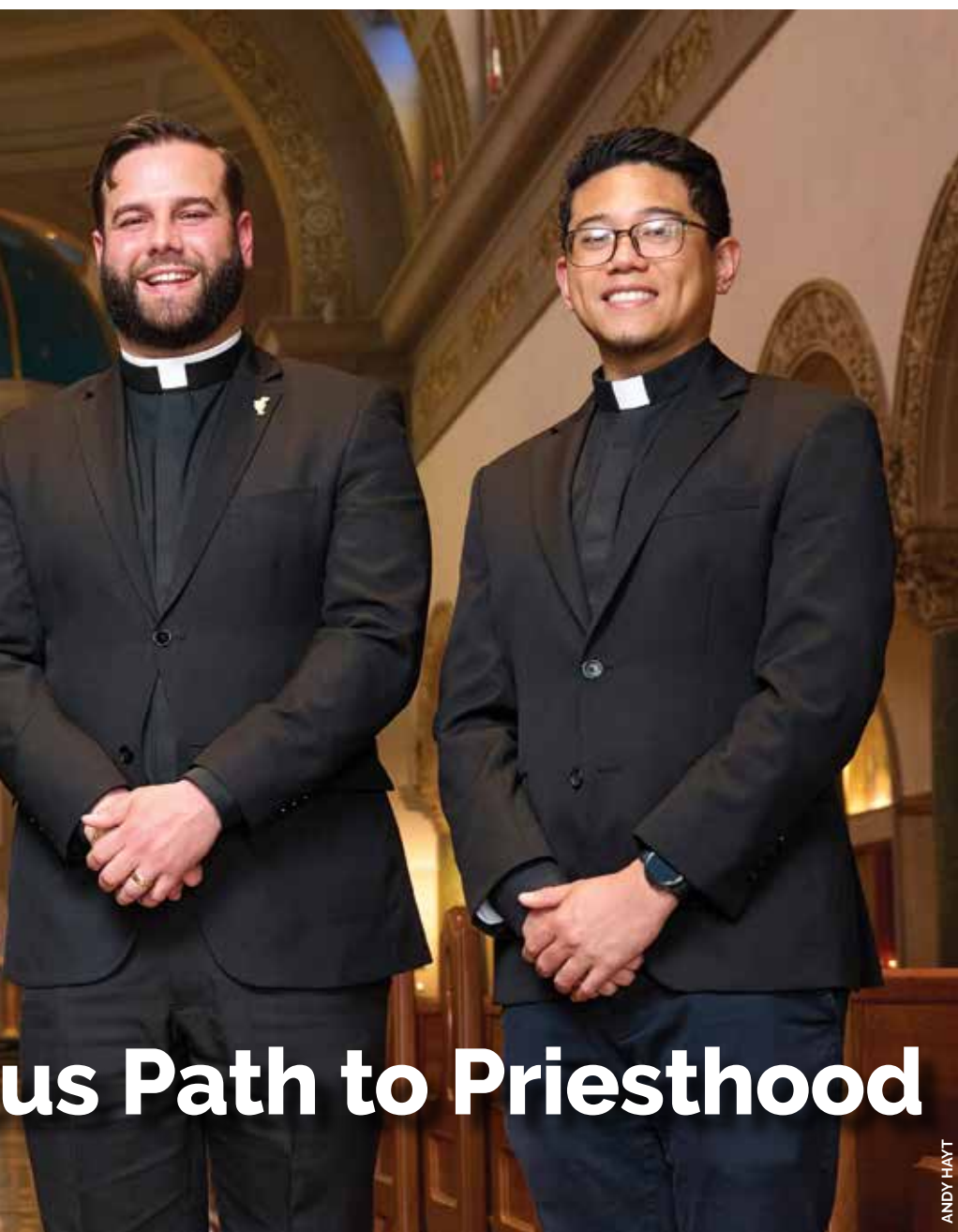
Bui said that he is feeling a combination of nervousness and gratefulness as his ordination day approaches. He believes that his "entire life has (been) shaped and formed for this moment."

He expressed excitement that God would be using him as "an instrument for the various sacraments" and looks forward to "representing the Church in a way ... that heals wounds and changes hearts."

"To be able to show that holiness is not an abstract ideal, but is a reality, is very special," said Bui, "and it makes me thank God each day for my vocation."







# us Path to Priesthood

ANDY HAYT

to, seen inside The Immaculata Church, will be ordained to the priesthood June 2.



COURTESY MARC ANDREW GANDOLFO

**BEACH BOYS:** The seminarians relaxed at Mission Beach during their convocation in July 2021.

## Marc Andrew Gandolfo

Gandolfo, who is of Italian and Hispanic ancestry and grew up at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Vista, credits his parents and the priests at his parish as the strongest Catholic influences in his life.

“My parents showed me how important a faith life is and how they experienced extreme joy when serving the Church,” he said. “The priests at my parish ... were able to make the priesthood a realistic possibility by showing how the Lord used their gifts to proclaim the Good News.”

Though he was still in elementary school when he first considered the possibility of a priestly vocation, he didn’t begin seriously discerning priesthood until he was in his early 20s.

“I began discerning a call to priesthood by praying more often and spending more time listening,” he said. “I figured it would be better to listen to what God had planned.”

He was attracted by the opportunity to serve at a deeper level.



“I was working in youth ministry and serving at Mass, which I loved, but I felt like I could do more,” he said. “I fell in love with the Mass and walking with people throughout their lives. ... I have always had a deep love of service, and I know the Lord will give me so much joy from serving Him and His people as a priest.”

“I cannot wait to see how the Lord will continue to form me,” he said. “Much like a marriage, things don’t end after the wedding day, but instead, that is just the beginning. I am excited to see where the Lord will take me in this new beginning.”



CHRIS BONGATO

**REFLECTION:** Marc Andrew Gandolfo led a prayer last January on the roof of the Cenacle/Upper Room in Jerusalem, where the Last Supper and Pentecost were thought to have taken place. He was accompanied by Father Matt Spahr, Sister Kathy Warren and seminarian Matthew Vasquez (in cap).

## Matthew Vasquez

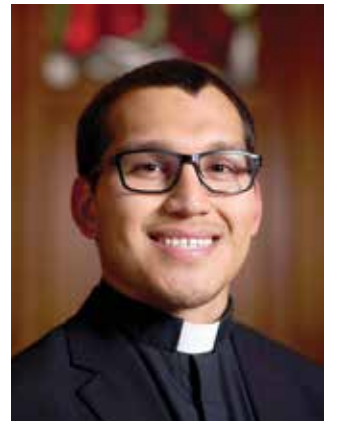
Vasquez can’t remember a time when his family, which resided first in Brawley and later in La Jolla, wasn’t “church-going.” But around 2014, their faith lives deepened. He and his three siblings attended a Steubenville Youth Conference, and his parents participated in retreats. The entire family became more involved in Church ministry.

“I had a great foundation of love and support within my family and, once faith began to make its way into the center of our lives, it was a very natural thing for me to begin discerning the priesthood and for them to support me throughout the process,” said Vasquez, who was studying Kinesiology at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, with hopes of becoming a physical therapist or sports trainer.

During his sophomore year of college, he got involved with the campus Newman Center, which increased his love for Christ and the Church. By his senior year, he had “a pretty good sense” that God was inviting him to serious discernment and, by winter break of that year, he had decided to apply for the seminary.

Vasquez, whose home parish is Mary Star of the Sea Parish in La Jolla, said that the past six years of formation have increased his love “for not just Jesus in the Eucharist, but for every person sitting in the pews.”

“I may never know the full reason why God called me to the priesthood,” he said, “but what I do know is that I have fallen in love with Christ and His Church, and that what brings me the most joy is being able to give my whole life so that others can know Him.”



COURTESY MATTHEW VASQUEZ

**FAMILY TIME:** Matthew Vasquez, as a transitional deacon, poses with his family after assisting at Mass at Mary Star of the Sea Parish in La Jolla last December.



# Vietnamese Movement Forms Lifelong Disciples

By Denis Grasska



In a certain sense, fostering devotion to the Body and Blood of Christ is nothing new for the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement (VEYM).

But the international Catholic organization, which has active chapters at five parishes in the Diocese of San Diego, is clearly redoubling its efforts in support of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' National Eucharistic Revival.

The three-year revival, which started last June, is the bishops' response to a 2019 Pew Research study showing that a whopping 70% of U.S. Catholics don't believe in a central tenet of their faith: that the bread and wine at Mass become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement has launched its own three-year campaign in conjunction with the Eucharistic Revival, said Khanh Duc Dao, president of the San Diego League of Chapters, which oversees the movement's five San Diego-based chapters. It's one of 12 leagues nationwide, which collectively represent more than 130 chapters across the country.

Dao said that, in this first year, the youth are participating in monthly Eucharistic adoration, an effort that he described as a "baby step" toward greater Eucharistic devotion. Over the next two years, the focus will be on encouraging group members to witness to their belief in the Eucharist and to evangelize others through their daily lives.

According to its website, the Vietnamese movement strives "to teach youths to be virtuous people and good Christians." It accomplishes this through a Eucharist-centered program that empowers members to spread the Gospel and to engage in charitable service.

The organization traces its history back to the Children's Eucharistic Crusade, which was started in France in 1915 and introduced to Vietnam in 1929.

It has been known by its current name since 1964. After the fall of Saigon in April of 1975, chapters were formed in Vietnamese refugee camps.



**PROCESSION:** Khanh Duc Dao, a leader in the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement, and two members of VEYM's Holy Family Parish chapter — Grace and Gwen Trinh — participate in a diocesan procession held in honor of canonized Vietnamese Martyrs last November at Good Shepherd Parish.

They can be found today in the United States, as well as in Canada, Australia and France.

The Diocese of San Diego's first chapter was established in 1992 at Good Shepherd Parish in Mira Mesa. Since then, four more parishes have formed their own chapters: Holy Spirit, Holy Family, and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in San Diego and St. Thomas More in Oceanside. Collectively, there are more than 500 members in the diocese.

Each chapter is open to ages 7 to 17 and is subdivided into the Seedling division (ages 7 to 9), the Search division (ages 10 to 12), the Companion division (ages 13 to 15), and the Knight of the Eucharist division (ages 16 to 17). Those age 18 and older serve as youth leaders.

Group members wear uniforms, similar to those worn in Scouting programs, consisting of a white, short-sleeve, buttoned-down shirt adorned with a colored scarf. Each division's scarf is distinguished by its color — green for Seedling, blue for Search,

yellow for Companion, brown for Knight of the Eucharist, and red for youth leaders.

Dao said that the chapters meet for one hour every Sunday at their parishes. Activities include reflections on the Sunday Gospel, Bible-themed games, and leadership training. They

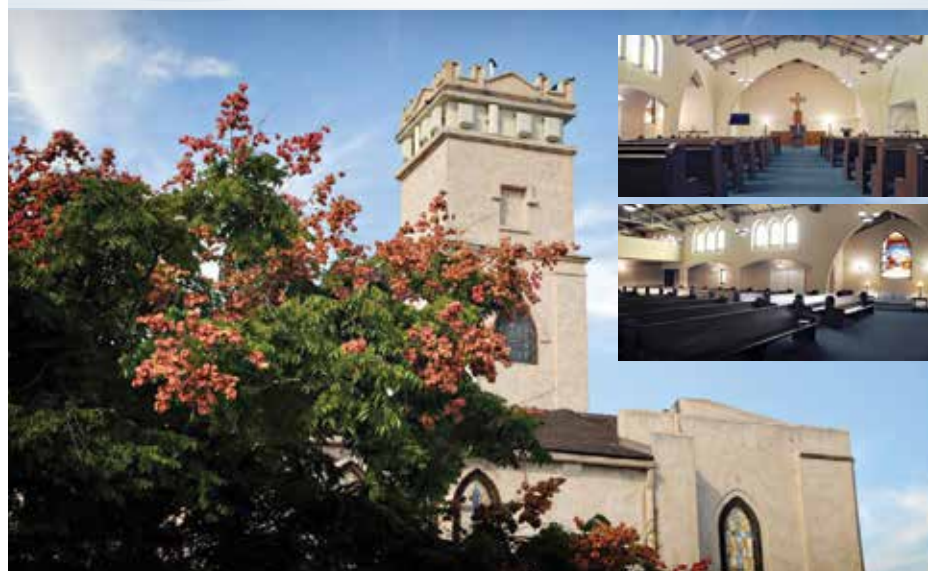
also regularly offer Eucharistic visitation, where the youth are taken in small groups according to their division to pray before the tabernacle, and Eucharistic adoration, where the entire chapter prays before the conse-

**Youth** *Continued on Page 13*

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**Youth** *Continued from Page 12*

crated Host exposed in a monstrance.

“The most important benefit ... that we provide to the youth is the connection between themselves and the Eucharist,” said Dao, whose affiliation with the group dates back to his own youth, both in his native Vietnam and after his family emigrated to the United States.

Father Michael Pham, pastor of Good Shepherd Parish, spoke positively of his interactions with the Vietnamese movement at his current parish and during his previous assignment at Holy Family Parish.

“It is a very good organization that trains and forms leaders in the Church,” he said. “Many priests and sisters have come out of this Eucharistic movement. Young people who are committed to this movement eventually often become resourceful and successful in the society because they were trained to be creative when they were young.”

Ashley Nguyen, who joined the Vietnamese movement at age 7 and became a youth leader at age 18, is currently wrapping up her second year as president of the Holy Spirit Parish chapter.

“VEYM, to me, is the place where knowledge blooms into discipleship; it is where the tenets of our Catholic faith are lived out in community,” she said. “Though catechesis has a vital function, we can’t just *know* God; we must love and serve Him as well. God designed us for communion with Himself and with one another — and youth in particular feel that need to



**AT PRAYER:** The Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement was present at last year’s diocesan Mass celebrating the feast of the Vietnamese Martyrs.

belong somewhere.”

She explained that youth leaders, like herself, are trained “to help each age group navigate growing up without losing Christian values.” She described the group as “a safe haven,” where youth encounter love for the Eucharist and “become the lamp that shares this light with others.”

Brian Nguyen is a 16-year-old member. “Without the Youth Movement, I

would find myself wandering in the dark with just a vague idea of the light,” he said. “Yet, if VEYM has given me anything, it is a clearer focus on the bright light that is the Lord in a dark world.”

More information is available at [veym.net](http://veym.net).



## Cardinal to Celebrate Juneteenth Mass

### The Southern Cross

The Diocesan Commission for African American Catholics will host a Juneteenth Mass on Sunday, June 18, at 10 a.m., to be celebrated by Cardinal Robert W. McElroy.

The Mass marks the anniversary of June 19, 1865, the day enslaved people in Texas learned that they were free, marking the end of slavery in the United States.

Everyone is invited to the Mass, to be held at St. Rita Catholic Church, at 5124 Churchward St., in Southeastern San Diego.

The commission works to share the history, faith traditions and concerns of African American Catholics with the broader community.

In recent years, members have promoted the canonization causes of six Black Americans. They are: Venerable Father Augustus Tolton, the first recognized American Black priest; Venerable Pierre Toussaint, a former enslaved person who became a philanthropic leader in New York; Mother Mary Lange, the founder of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the world’s first religious community for Black women; Sister Thea Bowman, the first African American member of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration; Julia Greeley, known as Denver’s “Angel of Charity”; and Mother Henriette Delille, founder of the Sisters of the Holy Family.



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# Season to Disconnect and Reconnect!

By Christina Bagaglio Slentz



## Has our “connectivity” left us disconnected?

The COVID-19 pandemic forced us onto our screens more than ever. In many ways, our Internet connectivity was critical to maintaining “near normalcy” in business, schoolwork, and geographically distant family relationships. Yet many have increasingly turned to the Internet for everything, exchanging real-world connections for digital ones. Researchers have found, the more people are on screens, the less they understand themselves as part of nature, a state some are calling “nature deficit disorder.”

Even before COVID, Pope Francis called our attention to the way this disconnectedness distorts our perceptions of reality, giving us an artificial sense of control through technological means and obscuring our awareness of God in our daily lives. Relatedly, when we are sucked into the virtual world, we lose touch with each other and are less present in the moment. We forget that we need each other — like those times when we forget to bring water for the journey. Our digital connectivity leads to a “disconnectivity” of the human spirit. Untethered from our common home, we forget that we are brothers and sisters.

## Re-connecting in Creation

With the official end to the pandemic recently declared, perhaps it’s a good time to examine the less-than-optimal habits that may have crept in during this unusual era. With school out, children’s screen time can easily get out of hand. How can you take a break from the virtual world and reconnect within your family — your domestic Church — nourishing love between family members at home as well as love for those who share our common home with us?

The natural world helps us to disconnect from electronics and reground ourselves. As the papal encyclical “Laudato Si” instructs us, the sense of wonder and awe require us to slow down, giving us time to appreciate the goodness of the world, and return



us to harmony with God, our neighbor, and the earth that connects us. Immersing children in the natural world is also credited with reducing stress, lowering blood pressure, improving sleep and fitness, and promoting confidence.

## Getting away from the electrons!

Here are a few tips to guide your effort at disconnecting and reconnecting:

- 1. Encourage outside time gently.** Simply enjoying dinner outside can be a positive injection of creation time in the day. Start more adventurous activities gradually. Avoid giving the impression that time in nature is a punishment for too much screen time.
- 2. Be intentional about planning your family time in nature.** Hand-in-hand with this idea is being more proactive about putting parameters on time in the digital world. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests a media plan might be right for your family. See the QR code on the page or visit <https://bit.ly/3O21JV5>.



- 3. Add family, friends and food!** Try picnicking at a favorite spot. Let each member of the family choose his or her favorite location — San Diego boasts fantastic beaches, parks and mountain tops. Don’t forget to say a prayer of gratitude before beginning the meal.
- 4. Grow something** — in your yard, on a windowsill, or in a pot on a balcony. Children can learn alongside parents, and both get the benefit of growing in confidence, working with nature to nurture new life. For a real challenge, start with seeds.
- 5. Try a hike.** San Diego features hikes in both rural as well as urban areas. You can find the 10 best hikes for kids in San Diego at <https://www.alltrails.com/us/california/san-diego/kids>.
- 6. Be prepared!** Always carry water and sunscreen. Pack healthy snacks and extra layers of clothes. Make sure everyone has good footwear or proper equipment. If you will be away from populated areas, have a first aid kit in case of injury.

The gift of creation is just waiting for you and your loved ones. Be sure to give thanks and talk about the importance of caring for God’s creation with your little ones when you are out there! And don’t forget to take pictures of all the fun memories you will make.



## ‘I Remember Feeling Calm and Peaceful’

**A Cristo Rey San Diego High School diocesan student-worker, Atziri Iñiguez, reflects on hiking with her family:**

My family and I enjoy adventuring, going on hikes in Cowles Mountain, exploring some of our favorite trails like Torrey Pines and Los Peñasquitos Creek. When I was younger, my mom would bring snacks for the way and remind us to

bring water, but usually someone would forget their water, which was why we started taking extras! On the trail, I always enjoy seeing the different plants, flowers, animals, clouds even. I have good memories of taking time at the top to rest and to enjoy the view; I remember feeling calm and peaceful listening to the birds chirping. When the pandemic struck, however, we were mandated to stay home for our safety where our only source of entertainment was on a screen. As a result, our social time as a family was more and more limited.

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UNSPLASH/BRAD ALLIE

# A Farewell, and Road to Uncertainty



When we leave a place is when we appreciate the advantages, values and emotions that come with a job, the colleagues who accompanied us, the shared mission that energized us; I experienced all of this in my position at the Diocese of San Diego's Pastoral Center.

It was a gift, a grace, having the opportunity to share nearly six years of service with groups and communities in San Diego and Imperial counties. During that time, I confirmed what we often say, that one receives so much more than what we offer people. The testimonies of simple faith, the constant activities centered on prayer, formation exercises, praise and worship, service to the needy, hospitality — all of these made visible and palpable the Spirit that encourages us and gives us life.

Every time I had the opportunity to give a talk, direct a retreat and accom-

**Columnist**

**Ricardo Márquez**



pany a group, I returned with a special interior joy, my faith and hope renewed even amid bad news all around us.

But the day of my departure arrived. Inexorably, like a thief at midnight. I knew it would come, but I did not want it to arrive.

All departures come with a cost: leaving what's familiar and kind, territory that is well-known. It's easier to hear that we need to leave comfortable places for us to grow than it is to actually do it.

I was amazed and moved by the demonstrations of affection, by the farewell gatherings, the good wishes and sincere prayers. One week before my departure, one of my friends, Salvador Rodríguez, gave me a poem that he wrote on a paper napkin during a farewell dinner. He served as a leader in the group of facilitators of diocesan

pre-marital retreats.

A few evenings later, he lost his life in a car accident, which left his wife, Berta, gravely injured. They were headed to the Good Friday liturgy.

Warm farewells accompanied by the death of an intimate friend, whose friendship had been stitched together one deep conversation at a time. I searched for congruence amid the laughter, joy and overwhelming sadness. Thank God Berta is recovering, supported by her children and the love of her grandchildren.

Loaded with emotions, a lot of love, nostalgia, and pain at the loss of a beloved friend, I began my cross-country trip toward my new home in Winston-Salem, N.C. Our youngest son accompanied me during the four-day journey. We had long stretches to converse, and to process what we had lived in our lives and what lay ahead. Dialogue is more fluid, without filters, and heart-to-heart encounters possible, when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable.

We passed by the Grand Canyon and valleys of majestic rocky formations in Utah. Greatness and the immensity of

creation embraced us. These were reminders that there is always something greater beyond our existence that will amaze us, will make us fall in reverence and wonder. I was moved to say out loud, like Thomas in the Gospel, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

Now I again face the uncertain and unknown and must once more discern where to provide the best service in a job. To experience anonymity, the indifference of some, the suspicions of others, but also the solidarity with those who have navigated similar situations and who give me hope.

We are born to a new life when we leave our mother's comfortable womb. To be reborn, we have to let go, to leave behind the known and to begin a new road, carrying lightly the baggage of social expectations, open to the possibilities of each new day. Everything changes, what does not change is God's promise that His unconditional love will always be on the road with us.

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

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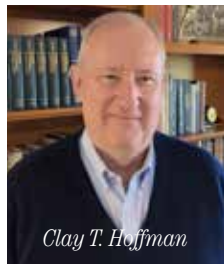


# Uganda's First Children's Hospital Has SD Roots

By Denis Grasska

 A new book chronicles the unlikely — and arguably miraculous — series of events that led to the development of Uganda's first pediatric hospital.

Holy Innocents Children's Hospital, which opened in July of 2009, has provided treatment to more than 300,000 children and is believed to have saved tens of thousands of lives.



Local author Clay T. Hoffman wrote "A Pearl of Uganda: The Story of Holy Innocents Children's Hospital" to memorialize what he calls "an amazing miracle of God."

It's a miracle that began in San Diego. In 2007, San Rafael parishioner Harold "Tom" Thomas had the opportunity to speak with visiting Archbishop Paul Bakyenga of the Archdiocese of Mbarara in southwestern Uganda.

The archbishop lamented that, in his archdiocese, more than 17,000 children under the age of 5 were dying every year from preventable illnesses. When Thomas asked if he could do anything to help, the archbishop replied, "Could you build me the first children's hospital in Uganda?"

"The Holy Spirit was involved (at that moment)," Hoffman told *The Southern Cross*, noting that Archbishop Bakyenga had providentially posed that question to "a real go-getter" who almost immediately accepted the challenge.

Hoffman's book recounts how Thomas and Father Bonaventure Turyomumazima, a priest of the Archdiocese of Mbarara and a frequent visitor to San Rafael Parish in Rancho Bernardo during the summers, made invaluable connections at the University of San Diego.

Just knocking on doors, they met Dr. Anita Hunter, a clinical nurse practitioner and then a professor at USD's Hahn School of Nursing and Health Science. She led a team of six USD nursing students on a two-week trip



**LIFE-SAVING:** Holy Innocents Children's Hospital, the first pediatric hospital in Uganda, is believed to have saved tens of thousands of lives since 2009.

to Uganda to determine the project's feasibility and, ultimately, would make about 15 trips.

But not everything went smoothly.

Hoffman said that, early on, the San Diego-based board of directors that Thomas had formed was struggling to raise funds. Msgr. Dennis Mikulanic, San Rafael's pastor and a board member, recommended making St. Therese of Lisieux the hospital's patroness.

"God heard her prayers, and the hospital is proof of His mercy," said Hoffman, who dedicated his book to St. Therese.

San Rafael Parish emerged as the hospital's single largest donor, contributing \$2.2 million.

"If it wasn't for San Rafael, (the hospital) never would have opened and ... grown to what it's become," said Hoffman, a former parishioner.

In late 2018, Holy Innocents Children's Hospital opened a surgery center. An Infant Critical Care Ward opened this year.

The book's origins date back about five years. Hoffman and his wife, Anne, were dining with their friend, Father Turyomumazima. Hoffman reflected on how "amazing" it was that "a swampy, empty field" had become the site of "a very fine hospital," and the priest encouraged him to write the hospital's story.

Hoffman had never written a book before. But he did have writing experience, which began with perspectives pieces and book reviews that

appeared in *The Southern Cross* in 2012 and 2013 and went on to include contributions to other publications.

"I've read Mr. Hoffman's book, and it's obviously a work of love on his part," said Msgr. Mikulanic. "It shows the deep faith and commitment that we had when we first undertook what appeared to us to be an almost impossible task."

He added, "I hope the readers of the

book realize that anything is possible when we let God be in charge."

The book can be purchased at [taupublishing.com](http://taupublishing.com) or directly from Hoffman by calling (858) 603-3322. Hoffman, who plans to donate the money he makes from the book to the hospital, also welcomes opportunities to speak at parishes and to ministry groups about the hospital's story.

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## News Briefs

### Paulist Fathers to Staff St. Gregory's Parish

Effective July 1, Paulist Father Bartholomew Landry will be pastor and Paulist Father Gerard Tully will be associate pastor of St. Gregory the Great Parish in Scripps Ranch.

Originally from Louisiana, Father Landry was ordained to the priesthood in 2007 and currently serves as coordinator of Black Catholic Ministry in the Diocese of Sacramento. Father Tully, a native of the Bronx who became a priest in 1994, currently serves as associate pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Community in Los Angeles.

Fathers Landry and Tully were among 11 Paulist priests receiving new assignments.

"I want to thank all those transitioning to a new role this summer for their openness to the Holy Spirit," said Paulist Father René Constanza, president of the Paulist Fathers. "My prayers and support accompany all of you!"

### Ascension Parish to Hold 39th Annual Fiesta

Ascension Parish's 39th annual fiesta will be held June 2 to 4.

The free community event is open to everyone and will include international foods, live music, dancing, games, a raffle, a rummage sale and more.

The fiesta will be open from 5 to 10 p.m., Friday; 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., Saturday; and noon to 4 p.m., Sunday.

For more information, call (858) 279-2735 or visit [sdascension.org](http://sdascension.org).

### 'Love Our Priests' Welcomes Ukrainian Pastor on June 24

The "Love Our Priests" prayer group will gather for Mass at 10 a.m., Satur-

day, June 24, at Ascension Parish.

Father Yuri Sas, parish administrator of St. John the Baptizer Ukrainian Catholic Church, will celebrate the Mass and share his vocation story. The event will conclude with a potluck lunch.

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

### Mass to Mark Anniversary of Overturning 'Roe' Ruling

LEMON GROVE — A Thanksgiving Mass for the End of *Roe* will be celebrated at 5 p.m., Saturday, June 24, at St. John of the Cross Parish in Lemon Grove.

Bishop Ramón Bejarano will preside over the bilingual Mass that marks the one-year anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which overturned its infamous ruling in *Roe v. Wade* and returned to the states the decision about whether abortion should be legal.

After the Mass, there will be informational tables with pro-life resources.

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

### 'Catechesis of Good Shepherd' Offered Bilingually

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, an internationally recognized approach to the religious formation of children, has been introduced at St. Didacus Parish.

St. Didacus is the first parish in the Diocese of San Diego to offer this program bilingually.

Based on the Bible, the liturgy, and the principles of Montessori education, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is designed to teach children the basics of their faith, how to



## Faith and Fun

### Million Meals Event:

The diocese's deacons are hosting the Million Meal Event, which gathers everyone from children to senior citizens to pack meals to be sent to hungry families across the border and around the world. Energized by a DJ, volunteers will pack meals in two-hour shifts over the weekend of June 10 and 11 at Cathedral Catholic High School. Donations are needed to pay for the ingredients. Visit [sdccatholic.org/millionmeals](http://sdccatholic.org/millionmeals) to volunteer or donate.

be in silence with God, and how to be contemplative from the earliest years of their lives.

Participating children meet in an "atrium," a place specially prepared for them, which has materials that they can interact with and use to study and to pray.

A training for adult instructors in the program will be held on June 17; for teachers, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd represents a 90-hour commitment, plus homework. Morning teaching sessions with children, ages 3 to 6, will begin in September.

Elena Platas, director of catechetical ministry, explained that adults

can re-read a Biblical passage, think deeply about the words, and start a conversation with God about them. But young children, especially those too young to read, need "another medium." She explained that, in the atrium, younger children can engage in such activities as using wooden figures of sheep while reflecting on the Good Shepherd parable or figures of the apostles in conjunction with a lesson about the Last Supper; older children can copy parables from the Bible or work with a long pictorial strip showing the story of the Kingdom of God.



## May Crowning Honors Our Lady

The San Diego-based apostolate Catholic Action for Faith and Family commemorated the feast of Our Lady of Fatima on May 13, with its fourth annual Marian Holy Hour and May Crowning.

Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano presided over the livestreamed celebration, which was held at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Rancho Peñasquitos.

The event began with a procession into the church led by four men, who carried a statue of Our Lady of Fatima.


"We have come here to crown the Virgin Mother of God and listen to the Word of God in faith," the bishop told those in attendance. "This ceremony has a lesson to teach us about the Gospel, that the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven are those who are foremost in serving and in love."

Bishop Bejarano blessed a crown of flowers with holy water, and a young girl from the parish placed it on the head of the Our Lady of Fatima statue. The bishop incensed the statue and led the faithful in reciting the glorious mysteries of the rosary and the Litany of Loreto.

Present also during the ceremony was a reliquary containing first-class relics of Sts. Jacinta and Francisco Marto, two of the three children to whom Our Lady appeared at Fatima.



# U.S. Bishops to Meet for Spring Assembly

 WASHINGTON — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) will gather for its 2023 Spring Plenary Assembly in Orlando, June 14 to 16.

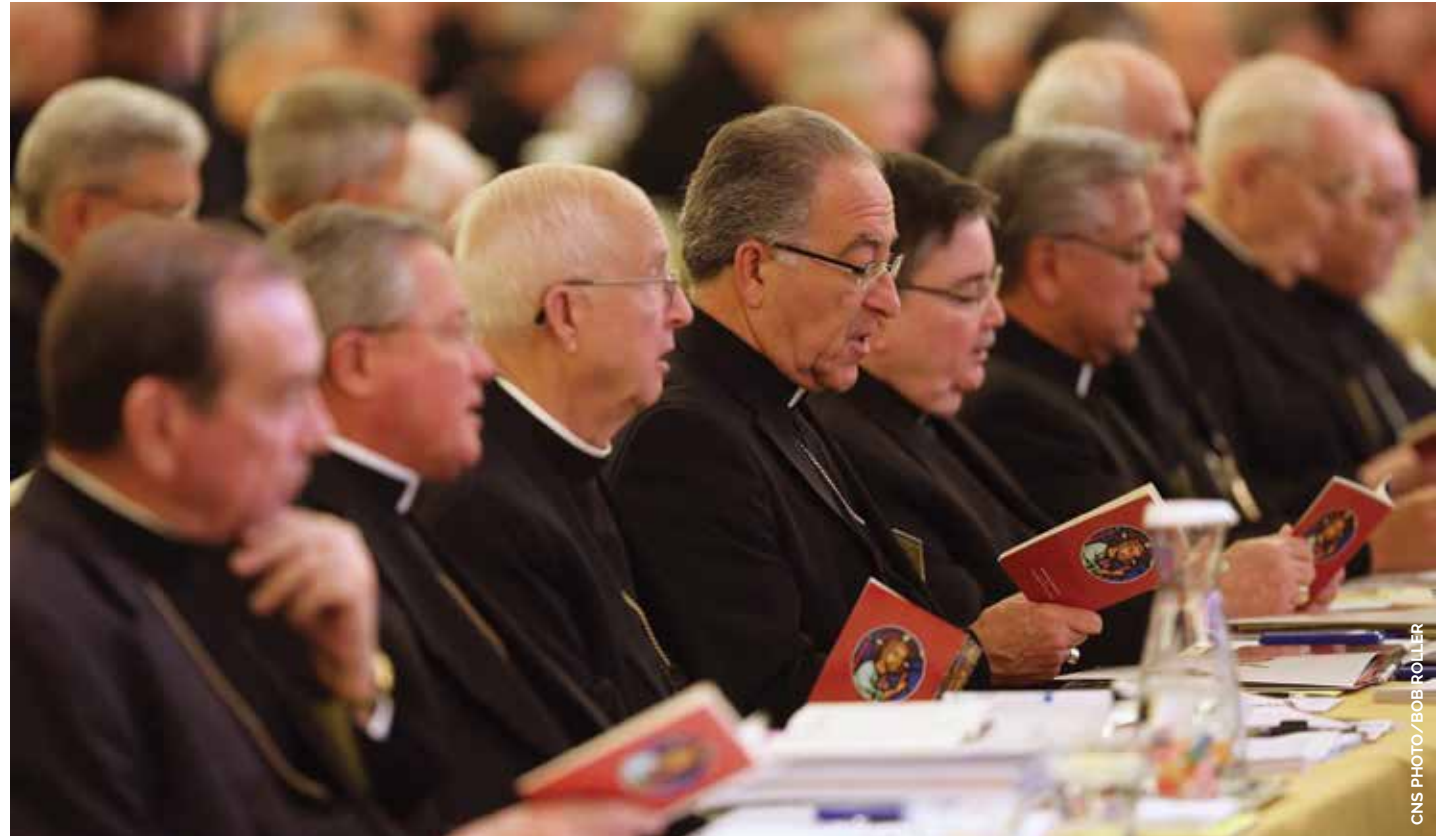
The general sessions will be on June 15 and 16 and will be livestreamed at [usccb.org/meetings](https://usccb.org/meetings).

The bishops will spend time in prayer and fraternal dialogue with one another prior to the commencement of the general sessions. The public portion of the assembly will begin with an address by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the papal nuncio to the United States. The bishops will also hear from Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, who serves as conference president.

During the plenary, the bishops will receive updates on the three-year National Eucharistic Revival, which started last June, and on the ongoing preparations for the National Eucharistic Congress in 2024 in Indianapolis, as well as the participation in World Youth Day with Pope Francis in Lisbon this August.

The meeting agenda is not yet finalized and therefore, subject to change, but is expected to include updates, discussions, and votes on a number of items including:

- a consultation of the bishops on causes of beatification and canonization for five diocesan priests of the Diocese of Shreveport who are



**COMING TOGETHER:** The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' 2023 Spring Plenary Assembly will be held June 14 to 16 in Orlando.

locally referred to as the “Shreveport Martyrs.”

- a plan for the ongoing formation of priests, which provides some guidance for priests to continue their personal and priestly formation following ordination to the priesthood.

- the priorities that will shape the USCCB's Strategic Plan for 2025-2028.

- four action items pertaining to the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), the commission

established for the benefit of bishops' conferences in countries where English is used in the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy according to the Roman Rite. One of the action items pertains to the revision of the statutes that govern ICEL's work; the remaining three address the approval of translations: the Liturgy of the Hours and Liturgical Texts for St. Faustina Kowalska; the Ordinary of the Liturgy of the Hours; and the Proper Texts of

the United States of America for the Liturgy of the Hours.

- the development of a process for a new pastoral statement addressing persons with disabilities in the life of the Church.

- the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry

- a revision of Part Three of the Ethical and Religious Directives (ERDs) for Catholic Health Care Services.

## Pray at Pentecost for Courage to Evangelize, Pope Says

By Cindy Wooden



VATICAN CITY — Christians should pray on Pentecost

that the Holy Spirit would give them the courage and strength to share the Gospel, Pope Francis said.

“No matter how difficult the situation may be ... we must not give up and we must not forsake pursuing what is essential in our Christian life, namely evangelization,” the pope said May 24, the Wednesday before Pentecost.

Using the example of 19th-century Korean martyr St. Andrew Kim Taegon, Pope Francis continued his weekly general audience talks about the “zeal” to evangelize. The pope introduced his talk about St. Andrew by pointing out how Christianity was introduced to Korea 200 years before St. Andrew by laypeople who had heard the Gospel in China and shared it when they returned home.

“Baptized laypeople were the ones who spread the faith. There were no priests,” the pope said. “Would we be able to do something like that?”

Ordained in 1844, St. Andrew Kim Taegon was the first Korean-born priest and ministered at a time of anti-Christian persecution. Pope Francis told the story of how when the saint was still a seminarian, he was sent to welcome missionaries who snuck into the country. After walking far through the snow, “he fell to the ground exhausted, risking unconsciousness and freezing. At that point, he suddenly heard a voice, ‘Get up, walk!’”

“This experience of the great Korean witness makes us understand a very important aspect of apostolic zeal: namely, the courage to get back up when one falls,” the pope said.

Each Christian can witness to the Gospel — “talk about Jesus” — in one's family, among friends and in one's community, the pope said.

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# Pope Adds Fatima Visit to World Youth Day Trip

By Justin McLellan



Pope Francis will visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima

during his trip to Portugal for World Youth Day 2023, the Vatican said.

In a statement May 22, Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See Press Office, confirmed that the pope will travel to Lisbon Aug. 2 to 6 and will visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima Aug. 5.

Pope Francis, who repeatedly has said he intended to be in Lisbon for World Youth Day, had not spoken publicly about also going to Fatima in August. In October 2022, he publicly registered to attend World Youth Day as a pilgrim with the help of two Portuguese university students after praying the Angelus from the window of the papal apartments overlooking St. Peter's Square.

The Marian shrine at Fatima is connected to Pope Francis' public prayer appeals for an end to the war in Ukraine. In March 2022, just over one month after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the pope consecrated both countries to Mary's Immaculate Heart, praying before a statue of Our Lady of Fatima in St. Peter's Basilica. Before her death, Sister Lúcia dos Santos, one of the three Portuguese children who claimed to see apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima in 1917, had said Mary requested that Russia be consecrated to her Immacu-



**VENERATION:** Pope Francis uses incense as he venerates a statue of Our Lady of Fatima at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal, May 13, 2017. The pope will return to Fatima Aug. 5 while in Portugal for World Youth Day 2023.

late Heart by a reigning pope to bring peace to the world.

Previous popes had consecrated Russia to Mary's Immaculate Heart in various forms but had never mentioned the country by name as Pope Francis did in 2022.

In 2017, Pope Francis celebrated Mass at the shrine to mark 100 years since the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima as part of a quick trip to Portugal that lasted just over 24 hours. He canonized Francisco Marto and Jacinta Marto, the cousins of Sister dos Santos,

who also saw Mary at Fatima. Francisco died in 1919 at the age of 10, while Jacinta succumbed to her illness in 1920 at the age of 9. Sister dos Santos died in 2005 at the age of 97.

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