

# THE SOUTHERN CROSS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO



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## Starting Strong

Pages 10-11

ANDY HAYT

**FOUNDATIONAL:** San Diego Catholic schools provide students, like Ezekiel Falales, who's in transitional kindergarten at Good Shepherd Catholic School, with a great spiritual, educational and social foundation to prepare them to succeed in college, their community and the Church. These students benefit from wonderful educators — from preschool to high school — and supportive pastors. Details inside.



### Powerful Dialogue

Diocese of San Diego joins Tijuana Archdiocese for a historic restorative justice forum. **Page 4**



### Jam Session

More and more students are flocking to the SDSU Newman Center. **Page 6**



### You're Invited

Events begin in diocese and around the world to mark the Jubilee Year 2025. **Pages 12-13**

## 2023-24 Financial Report Inside

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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 13 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 can go online to obtain more information about the subject at hand, including additional photos, video and other content.



# New Deacons



LEONARDO ENRIQUE FONSECA

In 2025, the Diocese of San Diego is to ordain three seminarians to the priesthood. They took the last major step toward that milestone on Dec. 7, when Cardinal Robert W. McElroy ordained them to the transitional diaconate during a Mass at The Immaculata Church. Each seminarian promised to lead a life of prayer, celibacy and obedience to the bishop. The three, Brian Frulla, left, Anthony Jimenez and Jesse Lopez, will serve in local parishes until their priestly ordination on June 14.

## Two Leaders at Diocese Retiring

### The Southern Cross



Two long-serving  
leaders in the  
Diocese of San

Diego who had an impact on  
its administration and major  
construction projects are  
retiring.

Rod Valdivia served as vice moderator of the diocesan curia, and Dan Rancourt as director of construction with the Roman Catholic Services Corporation.

Valdivia served the diocese for almost 34 years, beginning as a full-time assistant to then Bishop Robert H. Brom. His responsibilities included office administration, overseeing special collections and serving as diocesan liaison to Catholic Relief Services.

Over the years that followed, he held a variety of posts, including director of Stewardship, director of Multicultural Affairs, and chairman of the board and interim director of Catholic Charities.

After earning a canon law degree in 2000, Valdivia served for about 15 years on the diocesan marriage Tribunal, where he assisted with annulment cases.

In 2003, after about five years as vice chancellor of the diocese, he was appointed chancellor and given responsibility to oversee the diocese's Safe Environment program, which he will continue to lead after retirement.

Since 2018, he has served as vice moderator of the diocesan curia.

At a farewell party on Dec. 16 at the Pastoral Center, Cardinal Robert W. McElroy asked assembled staff members if they remembered the



Rod Valdivia



Dan Rancourt

children's television show "Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?" from the 1990s.

"Today, the question is: 'Where in the diocese has Rod Valdivia not been?' Because he's been entrusted with so many roles of leadership and service," the cardinal said. "In all of them, he's distinguished himself, giving of his talents and his time, and doing it as a vocation."

At the reception, Valdivia said that, among "the many, many joys that my years in this ministry have brought me," two stand out.

"One is the constant awareness that ... what I did every day helped countless people on their journey of faith and assisted them on their way to Heaven; I will relish that for a long, long time," he said. "The second is having the chance to work with so many joy- and faith-filled colleagues here at the Pastoral Center all through the years."

Rancourt's 16 years of diocesan service began in 2008, as an independent contractor for the construction

department. After eight years in that capacity, he was hired as director of the diocesan Office for Construction Services.

Since 2018, he has served as director of construction with the Roman Catholic Services Corporation.

Rancourt told well-wishers at the farewell party that he hadn't "started celebrating yet," acknowledging his love for his work and how much he'd love to continue it.

"But ... it's time to go," he said. "Once you hit 85, you got to go."

At the reception, Cardinal McElroy cited newly constructed churches that represent a part of Rancourt's legacy: Mater Dei Church, Chula Vista (2020); Resurrection Church, Escondido (2018); St. Thomas More Church, Oceanside (2015); and Capilla de Cristo Rey, El Centro (2016).

The cardinal described these construction projects as "the most visible reflections of Dan's time here."



# Speaker Was 'Loved out of Abortion' Work

By Denis Grasska



"My story is, without a doubt, a story of hope, faith and Christ's unfathomable mercy."

That's how Ramona Treviño, the keynote speaker for the upcoming 13th annual San Diego Walk for Life, describes her transformation from pro-choice manager of a Planned Parenthood to impassioned advocate for the sanctity of life.

Treviño's speech will be just one example of how the event's organizers will be emphasizing the virtue of hope, in honor of Jubilee Year 2025. The Catholic Church is observing a holy year, or jubilee, from Dec. 24, 2024, to Jan. 6, 2026; the theme for this special period of repentance and conversion is "Pilgrims of Hope."

"This event is about hope," said Maria Valencia, the diocese's associate director for Culture of Life, reflecting on the San Diego Walk for Life. "It's about hope that we have a better world, that we can offer more resources to pregnant women, that we can save more babies. We really hope that abortion will be stopped one day."

More than 3,000 people are expected to attend the Walk for Life, which will be held from 8:30 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Jan. 18, at Waterfront Park. Cardinal Robert W. McElroy will lead the walk, as he has in previous years. The schedule includes an approximately half-mile walk, speeches and testimonials, about 50 pro-life exhibitor booths, and live entertainment.

Valencia said that a Women's March is expected to take place nearby on the same day as the Walk for Life. The event is expected to draw many pro-choice activists to protest the inauguration of President Donald Trump. This has occurred previously without incident.

As always, she said, the Walk for Life will have law enforcement and security personnel on-site to ensure



**PUBLIC TESTIMONY:** Several thousand are again expected to celebrate and defend life at this year's San Diego Walk for Life, which is planned for Saturday, Jan. 18, and returns to Waterfront Park in downtown San Diego.



Ramona Treviño

participants' safety, and participants are encouraged to adhere to the "walker's code of conduct," which includes refusing to respond to pro-choice protesters and immediately reporting them to security.

Treviño, a Catholic who serves as the outreach director for 40 Days for Life, had been the manager of a Planned Parenthood abortion referral

facility in Sherman, Texas. She credits the prayers of 40 Days for Life participants with helping her to break away from that life.

"At one point ... it appeared that I would never quit," said Treviño, the author of "Redeemed by Grace: A Catholic Woman's Journey to Planned Parenthood and Back."

"But the faithful continued to pray, fast and trust that God would move me to leave," she said. "Finally, it happened — even to my own surprise — proving that, with God, all things are possible."

She said that she was "loved out of the abortion industry" and counsels people that they "mustn't lose hope and faith in God's ability to change even the most hardened of hearts."

Treviño said that, after leaving Planned Parenthood, she didn't initially intend to share her story publicly. But, she explained, "My new convictions would not allow me to stay silent. ... I felt I owed it to (God)

to share far and wide both how He converted my heart, and speak out in defense of human life in the womb."

She encourages her fellow Catholics to stand firmly against abortion.

"No Catholic can support it," said Treviño, "and no Catholic should sit idly by as innocent babies are led to the slaughter."

At the same time, she said, those who have made the wrong choice should not despair.

"If there is anyone who is living with the shame or guilt of a past abortion, or their involvement in any way," she said, "please know that Christ's mercy is for us all."

More information is available at [sandiegowalkforlife.org](http://sandiegowalkforlife.org). Walk for Life T-shirts can be pre-ordered for \$20 at [tinyurl.com/SDWL2025T-shirt](http://tinyurl.com/SDWL2025T-shirt) or purchased for \$25 on the day of the event.

## Bishops Offer Support to Immigrants

The Southern Cross



The California Catholic Conference

has issued a statement standing in solidarity with immigrants as the incoming U.S. administration promises a tougher stance on immigration.

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, bishop of the Diocese of San Diego, and 11 other bishops in the state issued a statement on Dec. 12, the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

"The Lord hears the cry of the poor" (Psalm 34:7), and we, the Catholic

bishops of California, as shepherds of the flock of Christ, have seen and heard the growing distress among you, our migrant brothers and sisters," the statement began. "We want to assure you that we, and our mother, the Church, stand with you in these days of anxiety. You are not alone.

"We realize that the calls for mass deportations and raids on undocumented individuals and migrant families have created genuine fear for so many we shepherd in our dioceses.

"Rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the sacred dignity of every person, we commit to walking in solidarity with you, our migrant brothers, sisters, and families through this uncertain time. We will shepherd

you spiritually, gather information and resources, and continue to advocate for your dignity and family unity," the statement continued.

The bishops said that the nation's immigration system is broken. The disarray at the southern border cannot be allowed to continue, they added.

"We pray with you that any enacted policies restore a sense of security and peace for citizens as well as those seeking to find a home in this blessed land," the statement said.

"To achieve that end, policies must reflect empathy and solicitude, with due regard for the rights of children and those fleeing violent and impoverished countries, while ceasing to provide respite for serious offenders."

The bishops invited their Catholic communities to follow the example of the Good Samaritan (cf. Luke 10:34) and show compassion for their neighbors, especially the most vulnerable among them. They stressed that their parishes have a tradition of being havens of hope and solace for the lonely and the lost, embodying the peace that Christ gives.

They said that Catholic Charities in their respective dioceses would continue to serve as a trusted resource for those who need assistance.

Online resources for immigrants: [cacatholic.org](http://cacatholic.org)





# Forum Sows 'Seed' of Restorative Justice

By Omar Millán



TIJUANA — Some personal stories shared around

the table were so heart-breaking that listeners began to cry.

At eight tables covered with white linen, 48 people shared their testimony about being incarcerated, or suffering violence, or working with those affected by crime.

"My godfather raped me for 10 years, and my parents did not believe me," one woman said.

"I lost my three children, my job, my life," said another person, who had been wrongfully convicted of murder.

They were participants in a dialogue co-sponsored by the Archdiocese of Tijuana and the Diocese of San Diego about restorative justice. It was the first international dialogue along the U.S.-Mexico border that used a method the San Diego Diocese helped to develop to bring decision-makers in the criminal justice system and people affected by that system together to share their experiences.

The participants included crime victims, formerly incarcerated men and women, penitentiary officials, attorneys, religious women, social workers, priests, psychologists and volunteers.

The seven-hour gathering on Oct. 19 was held in the hall of Our Lady of Mercy Parish, located in the Guaycura colonia in eastern Tijuana.

The goal of restorative justice is to restore relationships that were damaged by crime. The Catholic Church in the United States is a proponent of this approach, with the Diocese of San Diego, under Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, taking a leadership role, working in collaboration with the national Catholic Criminal Justice Reform Network.

The speakers at the Tijuana dialogue explained how the restorative justice process works, and participants explored how it could be implemented in Mexico. Some expressed doubts, however, that it could be done, given that nation's social, political and economic conditions, and soaring crime rate.

Addressing the participants, Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano, of the Diocese of San Diego, said that in the current society, justice was based on punishment. This system was not necessarily just because some people had the means to defend themselves while others didn't, and at times received punishment they did not deserve, he said.

"Restorative justice proposes that the person who committed a crime has to receive a sentence from the judicial system but also, within that sentence, receive profound help so that the person can change his or her life," he said.

One restorative practice, victim-offender dialogues, encourages a meeting between a crime victim and



**PATHBREAKING:** The Diocese of San Diego and the Archdiocese of Tijuana collaborated on the first binational dialogue about restorative justice along the U.S.-Mexico border on Oct. 19 at Our Lady of Mercy Parish, in eastern Tijuana.

offender who committed the crime, following talks held separately with each side, he explained. The goal of this meeting is to foster understanding, acceptance and ultimately, forgiveness, opening the door to spiritual healing and mental wellness.

"I believe in all of this," said Jorge Agapito, a psychologist who said he had worked for 21 years in the state penitentiary of Baja California. "I know that these types of alternatives are needed so that people who leave prison can be reintegrated into society."

He said that the first thing that was needed was to train people in restorative justice practices, beginning with less serious crimes and then moving to serious ones.

"I'm convinced that we have to work with families on both sides of a crime and see if they agree to come together. Usually, these families see each other as enemies, but both sides are suffering. Both need to be restored," the psychologist said.

Though the dialogue did not feature meetings between crime victims and offenders, it did demonstrate how those encounters work, using "restorative justice circles," where people sitting around a table take turns sharing their experiences while the others listen attentively.

The gathering offered stark testimonies of those harmed by crime and how they had found a way to ease their suffering and begin to heal.

"I was in so much pain, felt so much hate," began one woman, who asked to remain anonymous. "My godfather raped me for 10 years, and my parents did not believe me. I was just a girl and grew up feeling this rage. I got married when I was a teenager because the only thing I wanted was to get out of that house, of that hell. I cried so much that I don't have any tears left.

"Because of my children, I realized that I should forgive, because if I did

## More Information

Restorative justice is a response to crime and violence that shifts the focus from punishment to "responsibility, rehabilitation and restoration."

### San Diego Diocese:

Contact Robert Ehnou, Ph.D., (858) 490-8375, [rehnow@sdcatholic.org](mailto:rehnow@sdcatholic.org); [sdcatholic.org/restorativejustice](http://sdcatholic.org/restorativejustice)

Center for Restorative Justice, USD: [sandiego.edu/soles/centers-and-institutes/restorative-justice](http://sandiego.edu/soles/centers-and-institutes/restorative-justice)

### Catholic Criminal Justice Reform Network:

[socialjusticeresourcecenter.org/resources/catholic-criminal-justice-reform-network-ccjr](http://socialjusticeresourcecenter.org/resources/catholic-criminal-justice-reform-network-ccjr)

not, they would inherit all that rancor. I forgave my tormentor, and I forgave myself. If I didn't, I really could not live."

The woman said she has volunteered for 40 years in the prisons in Tijuana and Tecate.

"I was in prison for 14 years, accused of homicide, accused of killing my husband," said another woman, who also requested anonymity. She spoke with long pauses, constantly staring at the floor, as if her words had fallen there. "I lost my three children, my job, my life, the rest of my family.

"My innocence was later proved, and I was released. I had been used as a scapegoat. But for anyone who knew me, I was guilty. But I also found God. I forgave so I could continue to rebuild my life. I'm in that process."

A religious woman who serves in jails in Tijuana and Tecate also spoke.

"Many people are innocent in the

prisons in this state. Many of them did not have the money to hire a good attorney to help them with their case," said the religious woman, who asked not to be named. "The judicial system we have is not fair."

Mexico has nine of the 20 most violent cities in the world, Tijuana among them, according to the independent organization World Population Review. Tijuana registered 138 homicides per 100,000 residents, according to the organization.

In Baja California, 91% of crimes that are committed are not reported; and, in 88% of the crimes that are investigated, no one is ever charged, according to *México Evalúa*, an independent research organization that evaluates the functioning of government at federal, state and local levels.

Baja California is among the top three states in Mexico with the highest populations of incarcerated people, with around 13,800 in 2024, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography.

Some representatives of the penal system said that judges and high-ranking politicians should be informed about restorative justice practices.

"We can begin conciliatory dialogues between victims and those who committed a crime," one said. "If society does not ask for it, we, in the institutions, need to create spaces to bring them together."

Father Marcos Saavedra, from the prison ministry in the Archdiocese of Tijuana, said the dialogue was "a seed" that the Church hoped to plant along the entire U.S.-Mexico border, with the support of the Diocese of San Diego.

"We don't want to judge, just listen. We want to have compassion, not just for the victims but also for those who committed a crime, because they, too, deserve it, so they can accept what they did and get better," the priest said. "You have to learn to listen."





# Lighting the Way

CHARLIE NEUMAN

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy celebrated the vigil Mass for Simbang Gabi with Auxiliary Bishops Ramón Bejarano, Michael Pham and Felipe Pulido on Dec. 14 at St. Mary Church in Escondido. The Mass, a Filipino tradition, included a procession of colorful, star-shaped lanterns meant to symbolically light the way to the birth of our Savior. The Mass was followed by a novena of Masses across the region to honor the Blessed Mother.



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# SDSU Newman Center Joyfully Thriving

By Denis Grasska

 The Catholic community at San Diego State

University has grown steadily for almost a decade.

And, when students return for their spring semester classes on Jan. 21, there's every indication that this trend will continue.

"We're definitely bigger than before COVID," said Father Pedro Rivera, the SDSU Newman Center's chaplain for the past eight years.

Between 2016 and today, he said, average attendance at the center's Sunday Masses has jumped from about 60 to more than 120 at the noon Mass and from fewer than 25 to almost 80 at the 8 p.m. liturgy.

That growth hasn't gone unnoticed by Liam Walters, a 20-year-old junior who is majoring in Environmental Sciences.

"I'm almost moved to tears by how many people come to our noon (Sunday) Mass," said Walters, who is co-president of the Newman Center this year.

In recent weeks, he said, there have been "just enough chairs ... for people to sit in" — and that's after office chairs or a bench have been brought in to provide additional seating. He said that the center also recently began adding another row of seats at its daily Masses.



**WELCOME GROWTH:** The Newman Center at San Diego State University has added additional seating to accommodate the more than 120 students who routinely attend the Sunday noon Mass. Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano celebrated a recent one there.

In addition to its Mass schedule, the Newman Center's weekly events also include Eucharistic adoration five days a week, and nine Bible study groups are currently underway.

There are also regular monthly events, including Dollar Dinner, XLT, Theology on Tap, and a special activity unique to each month. Attendance has been booming at those, too.

For example, at the Dollar Dinner, where participants can enjoy an all-you-can-eat, homecooked meal for only \$1, Walters said that the center can no longer rely solely on the food generously

donated by local parishioners.

"This year, we've actually had to start purchasing food on top of that," he said, explaining that the event was attracting so many people that the food would run out within a half-hour.

XLT is a praise-and-worship night that includes a spiritual talk and Eucharistic adoration.


Theology on Tap brings a Catholic speaker to campus to deliver a talk and take part in a Q&A, while students enjoy food, drinks and fellowship in a casual setting. Past presenters have included Auxiliary

Bishop Ramón Bejarano.

Walters noted that, for newcomers, the Dollar Dinner is "kind of an easy intro" to the Newman Center — a purely social event where "you're around people who love Jesus." From there, veterans can invite newcomers to the following week's XLT, which will introduce them to Eucharistic adoration; then to Theology on Tap, where they can ask questions about the faith; and, ultimately, to Mass.

A thriving SDSU Newman Center

**SDSU** Continued on Page 7


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July 26 – Pastoral Center (practicum : Thursday, July 31)  
October 25 – Pastoral Center (practicum : Thursday, October 30)  
November 22 – Saint Thomas More (practicum : Thursday, December 4)

SACRISTANS

\$30 per person | Saturday 9:00am–12:30pm  
October 25 – Pastoral Center


Diocesan Pastoral Center  
3888 Paducah Dr. San Diego 92117

Corpus Christi Church

450 Cerral Canyon Rd, Bonita 91902

St. Thomas More Church

1450 South Melrose Dr, Oceanside 92056


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sdcatholic.org/talleres

Information

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26 de julio – Centro Pastoral (práctica : Martes 29 de julio)  
25 de octubre – Centro Pastoral (práctica : Martes 28 de octubre)  
22 de noviembre – Saint Thomas More (práctica : Martes 2 de diciembre)

SACRISTANES

Costo por Persona : \$30 | Sábado a las 9:00am–12:30pm  
25 de octubre – Centro Pastoral

Centro Pastoral Diocesano  
3888 Paducah Dr. San Diego 92117

Iglesia de Corpus Christi

450 Cerral Canyon Rd, Bonita 91902

Iglesia de Saint Thomas More

1450 South Melrose Dr, Oceanside 92056


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**SDSU** *Continued from Page 6*

has led to conversions and vocational discernment.

“The students are searching for truth, searching for and attracted to the beauty of the Catholic Church,” said Father Rivera, who noted that the community had 13 people go through the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) last year to enter into full communion with the Church.

Another 23 have signed up for the OCIA process this year.

Father Rivera said that students also have been open to the idea of priesthood and religious life. In October of 2023, he said, 26 men from the community attended the diocesan Explorer Day to learn more about the priesthood; this past November, another seven attended.

A few SDSU students explained what led them to the Newman Center and kept them coming back.

Originally from Ohio, Walters recalled arriving at SDSU as a freshman and “not really knowing a single person.”

“The thing that was home to me was the Church,” he said. “So, I immediately looked up the closest Catholic church, and I found out there’s one on campus” — the SDSU Newman Center.

He recalled the warm welcome that he received upon arriving at his first Dollar Dinner.

“Everyone rushes over to me and introduces themselves,” he recalled. “I meet, like, 50 people that night.”

“They just became my really close



**UNION:** Auxiliary Bishop Ramón Bejarano celebrated the noon Mass on Dec. 8 at the Newman Center.

friends,” he said, “and I haven’t really looked back since.”

It was a few months into her freshman year that Brooke Suverkrubbe, a 19-year-old sophomore majoring in English, first started going to the Newman Center.

She had been baptized and had attended Catholic school until third grade, but her family was non-practicing.

“I didn’t really have anyone pushing me to the faith, so I fell away,” she said.

But she made a Catholic friend at SDSU, and she accepted his invitation to the Newman Center.

Suverkrubbe first came to the center for spiritual direction, not really

certain what that entailed, but knowing that she was going through “a little bit of a rough time.”

“I went, and just met everyone there, and never left,” she said.

She added that, “all of a sudden,” she found herself in a Bible study, attending Sunday Mass and, later, even daily Mass. This year, she joined the Newman Center’s leadership team.

Suverkrubbe, who makes daily holy hours now, credits the Newman Center as “a catalyst for ... growing deeper in the faith.”

Ryan Marquez, a 19-year-old sophomore, is a Business Management major, but plans to enter the Diocese of Orange’s priestly formation program

next summer.

He admitted that he had been “very hesitant” to attend SDSU because he knew it to be “a big party school.” But he was reassured by a good friend, a recent graduate who convinced him that he “had to go there ... for the Newman Center.”

Like Walters, he has also found the center to be a welcoming place.

“To walk into a building and feel instantly at home, I think it’s just very attractive for students,” he said.

Marquez described the community as one where “everyone has a desire for their friends to grow.”

“I feel that people are pushing me to do better, and just allowing me to grow, and loving me despite my faults,” he said.

While he can’t credit the Newman Center with sparking his call to the priesthood — something he had been discerning before setting foot on campus — he admits that being an active member “increased that desire for the seminary” and “seeing the beauty of the Catholic faith being lived out by so many fellow Catholic friends ... made me want to follow my faith even more.”

He said, “Every type of person can find a home there, at any level of their faith. ... We have a beautiful community of diverse Catholics.”

**For more information:**  
[sdcatholic.org/newmancenter](http://sdcatholic.org/newmancenter)



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# Moving Tribute

CHARLIE NEUMAN

Faithful of all ages joyously participated in the annual Our Lady of Guadalupe Procession on Dec. 1 through North Park streets. Afterward, around 2,000 attended a Mass at St. Augustine High School, celebrated by Cardinal Robert W. McElroy and the diocese's auxiliary bishops.

Those who turned out for the traditional event included members of parishes, ministries, organizations, dance troupes and mariachi musicians, all paying tribute to "La Virgen."

See story and photo gallery at [thesoutherncross.org/guadalupe2024](https://thesoutherncross.org/guadalupe2024).

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# SD Student Among Winners

## The Southern Cross



A local Catholic school student is among the national winners in this year's MCA Christmas Artwork Contest.

Nicole Monroy, now a fifth-grader at Sacred Heart School in Coronado, was in the fourth grade when she produced her winning artwork depicting the Nativity of Jesus.

"I wanted to draw the prettiest picture of Jesus and the Nativity scene that I could," she said. "I searched various images for inspiration. I used acrylic markers to complete the picture. I was surprised that I was one of the people to win."

The Missionary Childhood Association (MCA), one of four Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States, encourages children to engage in prayer, learning, and giving for children in mission territories.

Since 1933, through its annual artwork contest, the MCA has invited children in elementary schools and religious education programs to create artistic depictions of the Christmas story.

Students from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Venice, Florida, were this year's two grand prize winners. Their artworks were featured on the official Christmas cards of the Pontifical



**WINNER:** Nicole Monroy's drawing of the Nativity was one of the national winners of the MCA Christmas Artwork Contest. She attends Sacred Heart School in Coronado.

Mission Societies, which were sent to hundreds of people, including Pope Francis.

An additional 15 drawings, including Monroy's, were recognized as national winners.

An awards ceremony was held Dec. 6 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. All 17 winning drawings will be displayed at the National Shrine throughout the Advent

and Christmas seasons.

"Art has a unique power to bring the Gospel to life," said Alixandra Holden, national director of the Missionary Childhood Association. "These young artists have captured the heart of Christmas in their drawings."

"Through this contest," she added, "we aim to nurture a missionary spirit in children, connecting them with the universal Church and their brothers and sisters in the missions."

## Conference To Focus on Disabilities

### The Southern Cross



LAKESIDE — The "All Are One in the Body of Christ" Disabilities Ministries Conference will be held on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish.

Presented in both English and Spanish, it will cover how to minister to parishioners with needs and disabilities. It will include several methodologies, testimonials and practical applications. Those attending both days will earn a certificate in special education.

The conference in English will be from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., both Friday and Saturday. The Spanish-language conference will be from 6 to 9 p.m., Friday, and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday.

There will be exhibitors representing various organizations, publishers and resources.

The event was organized by the Office for Evangelization and Catechetical Ministry, with the National Catholic Partnership on Disabilities and the advisory team for Ministry with Special Needs from the Diocese of Orange.

Admission is \$50, including lunch and materials.

For more information, email [ltrent@sdccatholic.org](mailto:ltrent@sdccatholic.org) or call (858) 490-8232.



DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

# Spring Forward Conference



## ALL are One in the Body of Christ

Disabilities Ministries Conference

2-day Conference

January 31 & February 1, 2025

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

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SCAN ME





# Catholic Schools: United in



ANDY HAYT



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## Church's Message

Students are able to interact often with the priest serving their Catholic school. That's especially true when a parish has a school affiliated with it.

That's the case at St. Therese of Carmel Parish, where Father Christopher Tozzi is able to visit classrooms at Notre Dame Academy, which is located next-door.

The positive interaction between pastors and youngsters might even open a student's heart to the idea of a vocation to priesthood or religious life.

Parish priests often celebrate weekly school Masses, and the students receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion from them.

## Homegrown Leaders

Erika Rosas, an alumna of Sacred Heart School in Coronado, is in her first year as principal of her alma mater.

"This school holds a very special place in my heart because it shaped who I am," she said.

As both a student and educator, she has seen the value of Catholic education.

She said, "The values instilled in Catholic schools last a lifetime. ... Many graduates of Catholic schools find that their education continues to shape their decisions, relationships and careers long after they've left the classroom."



**\$90,640**

Average amount given by K-8 schools in tuition assistance

**41**

Elementary Schools

**32**

Pre-schools

**15,648**

Students served in preschool through 12th grade

**1,767**

More students enrolled in 2023-24 academic year compared to 2020-21.

**3**

High Schools





# Faith and Community



DAVID MAUNG

## Exceptional Educators

The dedicated educators at San Diego's Catholic schools, like fourth-grade teacher Julianna Genna at Santa Sophia Academy, range in experience from beginners to veterans. The diocese invests significant resources to training new teachers and supporting the professional development of seasoned ones.

Many of the teachers once taught in non-religious school systems, and they joyously opted to teach at schools where they did not have to choose between their faith and their craft as educators.



CHARLIE NEUMAN

## Building Preschools Together

For the past four years, Darlene Versteegh has been the director of St. Francis of Assisi Preschool in Vista, where she has 72 children ages 2 to 5.

With 20 years of experience as a preschool director, Versteegh serves on a leadership team formed by the diocesan Office for Schools to foster collaboration among preschool directors and provide mutual support.

"Catholic preschools are the parents' first step in entering the school system," she said. "So, we help them navigate this new and exciting change."

**8%**  
Of students served have an identified learning disability

**87%**  
Of all preschool and elementary students are Catholic

## Catholic Schools Week

Sunday, Jan. 26, to  
Saturday, Feb. 1

- Catholic schools celebrate their mission to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- Schools host events for students, families and community members
- Schools showcase what makes them exceptional

Many schools host special events and an open house during this week. Please check the websites of Catholic schools of interest. This is a great time to explore a Catholic school, meet the staff and talk to school families.

Information about Catholic schools in San Diego-Imperial Valley Region:  
[sdcatholic.org/schools](http://sdcatholic.org/schools).





# 2025: A Time of Jubilation

By Christina Bagaglio Slentz, Ph.D.



The year 2025 marks several momentous occasions in time.

We will celebrate the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' "Laudato Si" encyclical in May, inviting us to reflect upon our efforts to care for our common home. This teaching of our faith draws heavily upon the Franciscan tradition. At the heart of this tradition is St. Francis of Assisi's "Canticle of the Creatures," a song composed near the end of the saint's life, praising God through all of creation and recognizing our common kinship with all the world. This year is the 800th anniversary of this composition, certainly a cause for great rejoicing.

Finally, our Church practice of observing a jubilee year will take place in 2025, beginning in Rome on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, 2024.

## Pilgrims of Hope

The word "jubilee" comes from the ancient Hebrew word for a ram's horn, which was blown to signify the start of a jubilee year, known as "the year of the

Lord's favor," announced every 50 years as a time of emancipation and restoration. Prisoners were granted freedom, debts were canceled, the poor were given land, and the people and the land were allowed to rest as fields were left fallow.

Today, we announce a jubilee year every 25 years, continuing to honor a year of the Lord's favor in meaningful ways. Jubilee 2025 calls us to embrace a pilgrim identity of journeying toward hope.

Scan for a family-friendly video and educational materials about Jubilee 2025.



## Crossing the Threshold

To begin this special year, Pope Francis will open five holy doors in Rome as we cross the threshold of the new year. Though we cannot all be in Rome, we are invited to spiritually cross the threshold of these doors, recognizing ourselves as pilgrims wherever we are. How might we do this, and how might we understand this moment of celebration in relation to our ongoing celebrations of the 800th anniversary of St. Francis' "Canticle of the Creatures" and the 10th anniversary of "Laudato Si"?

One suggestion is to abstain from meat on every Friday of the year, giving our Sister, Mother Earth a rest from the intensive production of meat. Another way to practice this tradition might be to take on spiritual practices that set our hearts aflame with love for God and our brothers and sisters.

Perhaps no one knew love for God with such fervent a heart as St. Francis. His "Canticle of the Creatures" was written at the end of his life when he was very ill. Still, he praises God with gratitude for all that he sees. How might we set our hearts a flame in a similar way? How might we respond to His love by entering into deeper relationship with our earthly family, brothers and sisters all?

Finally, with each trip around the sun, we are invited to make resolutions. If you are inspired by the 10th anniversary of "Laudato Si" to learn more about how you can care for creation in response to this gift, Creation Care Ministry will be offering numerous opportunities. Our introductory workshop and "Laudato Si" Action workshop will be held at the diocesan Pastoral Center at the end of January and early February. You can register at [bit.ly/CCWorkshop22JAN25](http://bit.ly/CCWorkshop22JAN25) and [bit.ly/CCLSAPWorkshop5FEB25](http://bit.ly/CCLSAPWorkshop5FEB25).



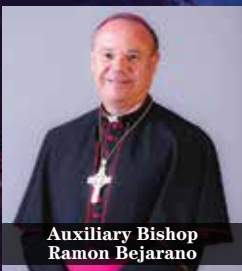
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[sdccatholic.org/creation](http://sdccatholic.org/creation)

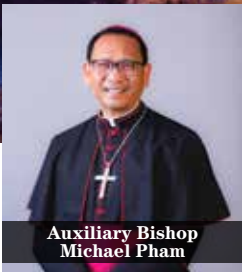
 Creation Care Ministry Explores a Theme Monthly to Inspire Action.

## A Jubilee Journey to Assisi & Rome

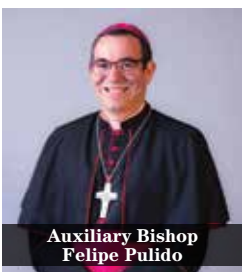
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## How Local Faithful Can Participate in Jubilee

### The Southern Cross



A local pilgrimage led by Auxiliary

Bishop Ramón Bejarano inaugurated the Diocese of San Diego's observance of Jubilee Year 2025.

On Sunday, Dec. 29, pilgrims gathered inside Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Little Italy. From there, they walked in procession to St. Joseph Cathedral in downtown San Diego, where an opening Mass was celebrated.

Pope Francis commenced the holy year, or jubilee, on Dec. 24, when he opened the "holy door" at St. Peter's Basilica. Dioceses throughout the world, including San Diego, began their jubilee observances five days later. The global celebration will conclude on Jan. 6 of 2026.

The theme for the jubilee year is "Pilgrims of Hope."

Jubilees are special periods dedicated to repentance and striving for greater holiness. "Ordinary" jubilees, like the current one, are held at regular intervals. There are also "extraordinary" jubilees, so called because they are held outside of the typical 25-year cycle.

St. Joseph Cathedral has been designated as the pilgrimage church for local faithful during the jubilee year. Catholics are encouraged to make a

symbolic pilgrimage from Waterfront Park through Beech Street or another appropriate point.

During the year, several Saturday mornings will be available for parishes to organize their own pilgrimages. Pastors may choose to celebrate Mass or hold a holy hour with their parishioners on that day.

A significant grace of the jubilee is the sacrament of reconciliation, of which the faithful are encouraged to avail themselves.

In honor of the jubilee, the Vatican has announced a special plenary indulgence, which provides complete remission of punishment for already forgiven sins. It can be applied to oneself or to a deceased person in Purgatory. More details on the indulgence are available at [press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2024/05/13/240513f.html](http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2024/05/13/240513f.html).

A local diocesan calendar, featuring different jubilee celebrations organized by the various diocesan pastoral offices, will be available in early 2025.

**For more information about the opening celebration, contact Alejandra Diaz at [adiaz@sdccatholic.org](mailto:adiaz@sdccatholic.org) or (858) 490-8306. Learn more about the Jubilee Year at [usccb.org/jubilee2025](http://usccb.org/jubilee2025).**



## Bishops to Lead Jubilee Pilgrimage to Italy

### The Southern Cross



San Diego's three auxiliary bishops — Ramón

Bejarano, Michael Pham and Felipe Pulido — will be making "a jubilee journey" to Assisi and Rome.

And you're invited to join them.

The upcoming pilgrimage will take place from Oct. 27 to Nov. 7, 2025.

It is being held during the holy year, or jubilee, that the Catholic Church will observe from Dec. 24, 2024, to Jan. 6, 2026. Jubilees are special periods dedicated to conversion and reconciliation.

At the beginning of the holy year, Pope Francis is opening a "holy door" at four papal basilicas — St. Peter's, St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major, and St. Paul Outside the Walls — that will remain open until the holy year draws to a close. He also opened a holy door at Rebibbia Prison in Rome.

In the papal bull that proclaimed the current holy year, Pope Francis wrote that the holy door "represents the passage to salvation — the path to a new and eternal life, which was opened to humanity by Jesus."

The itinerary for the upcoming pilgrimage includes entering through the



holy doors of the papal basilicas. It is also hoped that the pilgrims will be able to attend a general audience with Pope Francis.

Pilgrims can expect to visit other historic churches and locations, including the basilicas of St. Francis and St. Clare, both in Assisi; the village of Santa Maria degli Angeli; the hilltop town of Orvieto; and historic Rome, including the Trevi Fountain, the Pantheon, the Piazza Navona, and the catacombs of St. Calixtus that housed the tombs of many early popes.

Catholic Travel Centre is handling travel arrangements. For information about pricing and registration, please contact David and Nancy Schanzlin at (858) 456-2247, [dschanzlin@gmail.com](mailto:dschanzlin@gmail.com) or [redlajolla@aol.com](mailto:redlajolla@aol.com).

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# Learning To Sing: The Call to Discipleship



“Disciple” is a word we rarely use outside a religious setting.

My *abuela*, who had been a great singer in her youth, consistently used “disciple” to describe the complex relationship between her and her students. Violeta was her *discipula*, she insisted. This meant that my *abuela* was methodically sharing knowledge, experience and technique with Violeta. But the end goal was not for Violeta to know about singing; no, the goal for a disciple was different.

She didn’t just have to read music or know the intricacies of time signatures; all of this was there to facilitate an action — that glorious moment when Violeta’s own beautiful voice would emerge to continue what my *abuela* had started with her own singing. Violeta would sing and outlive my *abuela*, and continue giving to others not simply knowledge about singing, but what it is to actually sing.

**Columnist**

**Cecilia González-Andrieu, Ph.D.**



As we are called to relationship in the Gospels, it is as disciples with Jesus our teacher. Through every parable and how He lives in the world, Jesus prepares us to sing the way He has been singing. The way He understands God wants us to sing. Discipleship is a choice where we have made the teacher’s very being the inspiration for how we are to be in the world.

This moment of our journey discloses that it is time for us as disciples to act. As we acknowledge the deep mystery of God’s Word dwelling among us, we also hear with great clarity Jesus articulating who He is.

In the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we see the young Galilean find His own voice. Just prior, He had been following John, a fiery prophet

who baptizes Him. Something happens at that river that powerfully discloses God to Jesus. Afterward, He seeks solitude, and it is there that everything that would stand as an obstacle to His embodiment of God’s vision becomes clear.

In the privation of the desert, He is confronted with the glamorous lure of comfort and power. And this sets up the stage for Him to decide to return to His community where He is handed the Sacred Scriptures and asked to read,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19).

What Jesus notices as He reads the scroll is that the Spirit is sending Him out to act. Rather than giving up power, Jesus defines power differently.

Instead of power *over*, He claims as His own the power *for*. The vulnerable, oppressed, sick, poor and imprisoned are the most powerless of the world, and Jesus resolves that His power is for them, to free, heal, feed and tear down the structures that create victims.

In a time when many communities face uncertainty and fear, Jesus’ call to act with power for the most vulnerable resonates with particular urgency. Jesus asks us to be vigilant and act when we are confronted by situations that would harm others or our planet. He calls us to this today and always. To be Jesus’ disciples we must sing as He does — constantly and fearlessly. Our God acts in history and our work alongside Jesus is urgently needed. There’s a horizon toward which we are walking together. More about that next month. Happy New Year.

*Theologian Cecilia González-Andrieu, Ph.D., is a professor at Loyola Marymount University.*

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# To Find the Light, You Have to Move



ADOBESTOCK



The Gospel of Matthew brings us the good news of the visit of the Three Wise Men from the East, known as the Magi, to find Jesus. Over time, the observance of the stars has sparked the creation of myths and beliefs to signal the profound impact “the sky” has on the history of humanity.

We can assume that the Magi were possibly astrologers coming from Persia, Arabia or other remote nations. The catechetical intention of the Gospel of Matthew is to signal that Jesus not only fulfills the promise of salvation for the People of Israel but equally the hope for all peoples on earth, far beyond the borders of Israel.

In the sky, the Magi astrologers

**Columnist**  
**Ricardo Márquez**



could recognize a special conjunction of stars that sparked their curiosity and enticed them to leave their lands and search for “something special” that had occurred: “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him” (Matthew 2:2).

This tradition of the Magi, the source of happy childhood memories, loses its meaning if it remains only a reference to Christmas presents and school presentations. The most precious gift of this story is in the invitation “to look to the stars,” to search from a more elevated perspective for signs of the mystery of God present in our lives; signals, experiences and

events that invite us to inquire, to move and step closer to the “crib,” the intimate and mysterious reality of a God who “pitches His tent among us” to become part of our story.

We struggle to understand that a luminous event like the birth of Jesus was followed by the death of many innocent infants, deaths stoked by a profound and hidden insecurity, disguised as power, held by the person of King Herod.

Today, we see traces of that reality. Light, hope and salvation appear simultaneously with a reality that is dark, devastating and lethal. Territorial conflicts, religious fanaticism, mutual aggressions, the bombing of settlers, the displacement of human beings, death, hunger and sickness are the news emanating from the East.

I struggle to understand what I’m seeing; I see uncontrolled violence and feel powerless and hopeless, afraid and fearful for the future of our

humanity. That’s the way it is; I acknowledge and accept my emotions. But I have come to learn that it’s one thing to recognize what we feel, our emotions, and another to give them the power to guide our reactions and our life.

We celebrate the visit of the Magi on the Feast of the Epiphany on Jan. 6. That celebration invites us to look up to the stars that shine precisely when the nights are at their darkest. The memory of the Magi reminds us that, to find the light, we have to inquire and travel to reach the “crib” and be able to see the eyes of a Child that reflect in His gaze the immensity of the mystery. The Magi remind us, as well, that, through our faith, we can hold the fragile, simple, humble Child who gave us eternal hope and love.

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

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# 'Deacon Bob' Made History 50 Years Ago

By Denis Grasska

 Today, permanent deacons are a fixture at parishes throughout the Diocese of San Diego.

But that certainly wasn't the case when Deacon Robert Ekhaml was ordained 50 years ago.

Pope Paul VI reestablished the permanent diaconate in 1967, after the idea had been proposed a few years earlier during the Second Vatican Council. For centuries before that, the only deacons serving in the Latin rite of the Catholic Church were transitional deacons, those for whom diaconal ordination was merely a step toward priestly ordination.

In 1970, San Diego became the first diocese west of the Mississippi to launch a formation program to prepare men for ordination to the permanent diaconate.

Deacon Ekhaml, now 85, was among those trailblazers. He is the last surviving member of the San Diego Diocese's first ordination class of permanent deacons.

"It was so new, there was no roadmap, there was no nothing," he said, recalling his experience in the four-year program alongside his four classmates.

Clarissa Martinez, associate director of the diocesan Office for the Permanent Diaconate, said that the diocese planted "a seed of hope" in 1974 with



**MAKING HISTORY:** Deacon Robert Ekhaml poses with his wife, Carol, and their three children — Mary Beth, Mark and Matt — outside St. Therese Parish circa 1976. Ordained in 1974, Ekhaml made history as one of the Diocese of San Diego's first permanent deacons.

the ordination of its first permanent deacons and that "we are seeing the fruits of this harvest."

"We thank the Lord for Deacon Bob for allowing us to recognize that the seed of hope that was sowed 50 years ago continues to bear fruit," she said. "We pray and journey in hope for our 173 permanent deacons ordained and serving under our diocese, 27 candi-

dates in the diaconate formation, 13 aspirants and 21 applicants on discernment to the diaconate."

Born in St. Paul, Minnesota, Ekhaml moved to San Diego at age 13.

He attended Blessed Sacrament

Parish School and St. Augustine High School. He then earned a bachelor's in Chemistry at St. Mary's College of California, located in Moraga.

After college, he turned down a pre-doctoral fellowship to study comparative biochemistry and an appointment to the Navy's Officer Candidate School to attend the Paulist Fathers' seminary in Washington, D.C.

He had considered the priesthood since he was a fifth-grader.

The period from 1961 to 1966 was "a very interesting time to be in the seminary," he said.

The Second Vatican Council was then underway. He recalled that one of the seminary's priests was a theological advisor at the Council, and he and his fellow students were kept abreast of the Council Fathers' deliberations.

His time in the nation's capital also coincided with other significant events. He watched President John F. Kennedy's casket in procession down Pennsylvania Avenue and took part in a prayer vigil for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 at the Lincoln Memorial.

He ultimately decided that the priesthood was "not a fit" for him.

In 1967, he married his wife, Carol,

**Deacon** *Continued on Page 17*

IN LOVING  
*Memory*

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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**Deacon** *Continued from Page 16*

with whom he has three children.

He worked as a forensic chemist with the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, from 1967 to 1979, and then as an engineer for Pacific Tel, from 1979 until his retirement in 1997.

Deacon Ekhaml first learned that the Diocese of San Diego was seeking men to serve as permanent deacons courtesy of an announcement that appeared in *The Southern Cross*.

It seemed providential that his seminary studies, and his discernment that he was called to marriage instead of priesthood, all coincided with the restoration of the permanent diaconate as a possible vocation.

Deacon Ekhaml and the other members of his formation class became close, finding "a very strong sense of community" as they made diocesan history together.

"We didn't know where we were going," he said. "I think the program probably changed about four or five times over the four years of my formation — you know, tweaking it here, tweaking it there — and to be a part of that was very exciting."

Deacon Ekhaml was ordained on Aug. 17, 1974, at St. Therese Parish in Del Cerro.

The day after his ordination, he assisted at the altar at a parish Mass for the first time. It was especially memorable for him because, during the liturgy, he baptized his youngest child.



**CLASS ACT:** Deacon Robert Ekhaml celebrates his 50th ordination anniversary with St. Therese Academy, where he has been "a beloved presence," according to Principal Alison Knoll, pictured back left.

Officially, Deacon Ekhaml was only ever assigned to St. Therese Parish.

But Father Peter Escalante, whose first parish assignment was as associate pastor of St. Therese Parish (1978-1981), requested the deacon's assistance at his subsequent parish assignments — St. Brigid, Santa Sophia, St. Joseph Cathedral, and Mission San Diego de Alcalá — and Deacon Ekhaml was happy to help.

"During my 34 years as a pastor of several parishes around the diocese, Deacon Bob offered his unique gifts by serving in several capacities ... I will be forever grateful for his years of collaboration, support and friendship," Father Escalante said.

Deacon Ekhaml said he has had a "wealth of experiences" in ministry.

For about 25 years, he was the only diocesan clergyman fluent in American Sign Language, he said. When it was still part of the Diocese of San Diego, he drove up to Riverside monthly to assist at signed Masses for the deaf.

In 1987, he also served at a papal Mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II at the L.A. Memorial Coliseum.

He estimates that he has participated in more than 40 Cursillos.

Deacon Ekhaml retired from ministry at 75, but has continued to minister and, until a few years ago, was preaching regularly.

For the past three years, he said, he has attended morning assemblies and made classroom visits at St. Therese Academy.

"Deacon Bob is a beloved presence at St. Therese Academy, enriching our community with his unwavering commitment and inspiring spirit," said Principal Alison Knoll. "Every morning, without fail, he greets students

with his signature question: 'What day is it?' In unison, they joyfully respond: 'This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.'"

"Deacon Bob then shares his wisdom and offers a blessing," she said, "setting a tone of faith and positivity for the day ahead."

Deacon Ekhaml, who is gratified that Catholics have taken "wholeheartedly" to the idea of deacons, has seen the ministry evolve over the past half-century.

What advice does he have for men discerning a call to the permanent diaconate?

"If you feel there's any calling at all, pursue it," he said.

"You learn an awful lot about your faith going through that preparation program," he said, "and ... if you decide at the end of it you don't want it, you've got an experience that very few people have had, and it's worth it."

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# Missionary Order's 150 Years of Service

## The Southern Cross



The Society of the Divine Word is celebrating its 150th jubilee anniversary in 2025.

One of the largest missionary congregations in the Catholic Church, it was founded in 1875 by St. Arnold Janssen in Steyl, Netherlands. Since then, it has grown to include over 6,000 members working in more than 80 countries across six continents.

Priests of the society, who are also known as Divine Word Missionaries, are active at four parishes in the Diocese of San Diego: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, St. John the Evangelist, Blessed Sacrament and St. Kateri Tekakwitha.

"For 150 years, the Society of the Divine Word has been dedicated to spreading the Word of God and serving communities worldwide," said Father Soney Sebastian, a Divine Word Missionary who serves as director of the San Diego Diocese's Office for the Missions. "From building churches and schools to advocating for social justice and human rights, the society's missionaries have made significant contributions to the spiritual and social well-being of countless individuals."

The order's international headquarters is in Rome. Its U.S. Western Province is based in Riverside, California.

To commemorate its 150th anniversary, the congregation has planned special events and initiatives. The theme is "Witnessing to the Light from



**FOUNDER:** St. Arnold Janssen founded the Society of the Divine Word in 1875. Celebrating its 150th anniversary this year, it is among the Catholic Church's largest missionary congregations.

Everywhere for Everyone." These celebrations will include:

- Special Masses and ceremonies held in various locations worldwide to honor the founding generation and give thanks for the blessings received over the years;
- Community outreach programs aimed at continuing the Society's mission of promoting peace, justice and reconciliation;
- Historical exhibitions showcasing the rich history and important contributions of Divine Word Missionaries over the past 150 years; and
- Fundraising campaigns to support ongoing and future missionary work.

"This historic and spiritually fertile event unites us as (members of the Society of the Divine Word) and summons us to come together as one family to joyfully celebrate our common identity as brother Divine Word Missionaries," said Father Jon Kirby, provincial of the U.S. Western Province.

The newly elected Superior General Father Anselmo Ricardo Ribeiro said, "We celebrate the joy of being who we are: men consecrated to the mission, gathered in intercultural communities. We announce the Divine Word and assume His life and mission as ours. We pitch our tent in places where the Gospel has not been known or is not yet lived. We seek to dialogue with everyone, becoming one with people and putting the vulnerable, poor and those who suffer first.

"There must be room for all at this party," he said. "We cannot make distinctions, and no one should be left out."

## UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

In re The Roman Catholic Bishop of San Diego  
Case No. 24-02202

Notice of Deadline for Filing Claims: FEBRUARY 3, 2025

### YOU MAY HAVE A SEXUAL ABUSE CLAIM OR OTHER CLAIM AGAINST THE DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

On June 17, 2024, The Roman Catholic Bishop of San Diego, sometimes referred to as The Diocese of San Diego ("Debtor") filed for protection under chapter 11 of Title 11 of the United States Code (the "Bankruptcy Code").

**If you were sexually abused by any person connected with Debtor, you must file a claim so as to be received by February 3, 2025, or otherwise you will be forever barred, estopped, and enjoined from asserting such claim against the Debtor. Even if you have already filed a lawsuit against Debtor alleging abuse you must still file a claim to maintain and/or preserve your rights.**

**Claims based on acts or omissions of the Debtor that occurred before June 17, 2024, must be filed on or before February 3, 2025, even if such claims are not now fixed, liquidated, or certain or did not mature or become fixed, liquidated, or certain before June 17, 2024.**

For more information on how to obtain and file a proof of claim form and associated documents, please visit <https://www.donlinrecano.com/rcbsd>, or contact Donlin Recano, the Debtor's claims agent, via email at [rcbsdinfo@drc.equiniti.com](mailto:rcbsdinfo@drc.equiniti.com) or by phone at 1-866-521-4424, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. (prevailing Eastern Time), Monday through Friday.

## TÒA ÁN PHÁ SẢN HOA KỲ CHO HUYỆN NAM-PHẦN CALIFORNIA

Về vụ thưa kiện Giám mục Công giáo La Mã của San Diego  
Vụ kiện số 24-02202

**Yết thị về Hạn Chót Nộp đơn Khiếu nại:  
Ngày 3 Tháng 2 Năm 2025**

**BẠN CÓ THỂ CÓ MỘT KHIẾU NẠI LẠM DỤNG TÌNH DỤC HOẶC  
KHIẾU NẠI KHÁC ĐỐI VỚI GIÁO PHẬN SAN DIEGO**

Vào ngày 17 tháng 6 năm 2024, Đức Giám mục Công giáo La Mã của San Diego, còn gọi là Giáo phận San Diego ("Con nợ") đã nộp đơn xin bảo vệ theo chương 11 của Tiêu đề 11 của Bộ Luật Hoa Kỳ ("Bộ Luật Phá sản").

**Nếu bạn bị lạm dụng tình dục bởi bất kỳ người nào có liên quan đến Con nợ, bạn phải nộp đơn khiếu nại để nhận được cho đến ngày 3 tháng 2 năm 2025, nếu không bạn sẽ vĩnh viễn bị ngăn chặn, bị đình chỉ, và bị lệnh cấm không được đòi quyền khiếu nại đối với Con nợ. Ngay cả khi bạn đã nộp đơn kiện Con nợ để cáo buộc lạm dụng, bạn vẫn buộc phải nộp đơn khiếu nại để duy trì và/hoặc để bảo vệ quyền lợi hợp pháp của mình.**

**Các khiếu nại dựa trên các hành vi hoặc các bỏ sót của Con nợ xảy ra trước ngày 17 tháng 6 năm 2024, phải được nộp trước hoặc vào ngày 3 tháng 2 năm 2025, ngay cả khi các khiếu nại đó hiện chưa được ấn định, thanh lý hoặc xác định hoặc chưa đáo hạn hoặc đã được ấn định, thanh lý, hoặc xác định trước ngày 17 tháng 6 năm 2024.**

Để biết thêm thông tin về cách lấy và nộp mẫu bằng chứng khiếu nại và các tài liệu phụ thuộc, vui lòng truy cập <https://www.donlinrecano.com/rcbsd>, hoặc liên hệ với Donlin Recano, đại lý các khiếu nại của Con nợ qua thư điện tử tại [rcbsdinfo@drc.equiniti.com](mailto:rcbsdinfo@drc.equiniti.com) hoặc qua điện thoại số 1-866-521-4424, trong khoảng thời gian từ 9:00 sáng đến 5:00 chiều (Giờ Miền Đông hiện hành), từ Thứ Hai đến Thứ Sáu.



# News Briefs

## Workshop to Explore End-of-Life Teachings

The Office for Life, Peace and Justice will host “End-of-Life: A Catholic Perspective,” from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Monday, Jan. 13, at the diocesan Pastoral Center.

The free event will feature a talk by Dr. Charles Camosy, a professor of Medical Humanities at Creighton University School of Medicine. Lunch is included.

“We’re trying to inform the community about all of this,” said Maria Valencia, the diocese’s associate director for Culture of Life. “So when they are in a situation like that (involving the imminent death of a loved one), they can make moral decisions.”

Contact [cdiaz-romero@sdcatholic.org](mailto:cdiaz-romero@sdcatholic.org) or (858) 490-8324.

## Jan. 22 Is Day of Penance, Prayer

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

The 7-2 court decision, which was effectively overturned in 2022, established a constitutional right to abortion.

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

Along with prayer, Catholics should perform an act of penance, such as fasting or abstinence from eating meat.

## Ecumenical Service Looks Toward Christian Unity

During the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Catholics and Christians of all denominations are invited to attend an ecumenical prayer service.

It will be held at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 22, at Mission San Diego de Alcalá.

“Do You Believe?” is the theme for this year’s celebration. The question comes from Jesus’ conversation with Martha in John 11:26, after He tells her that her brother, Lazarus, will rise. It is a question Jesus asks of all of us.

“Pope Francis reminds us that Christian unity does not require uniformity, but rather a loving harmony in our diversity,” said Father Bradley Easterbrooks, secretary of the Diocese of San Diego’s Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Office.

## Retreat Offers Healing from Abortion

Catholic women can find healing from post-abortion grief at a retreat Jan. 31 to Feb. 2 at the diocesan Pastoral Center.

The cost to attend is \$60; partial scholarships are available. Housing is available if needed. Group size is limited.

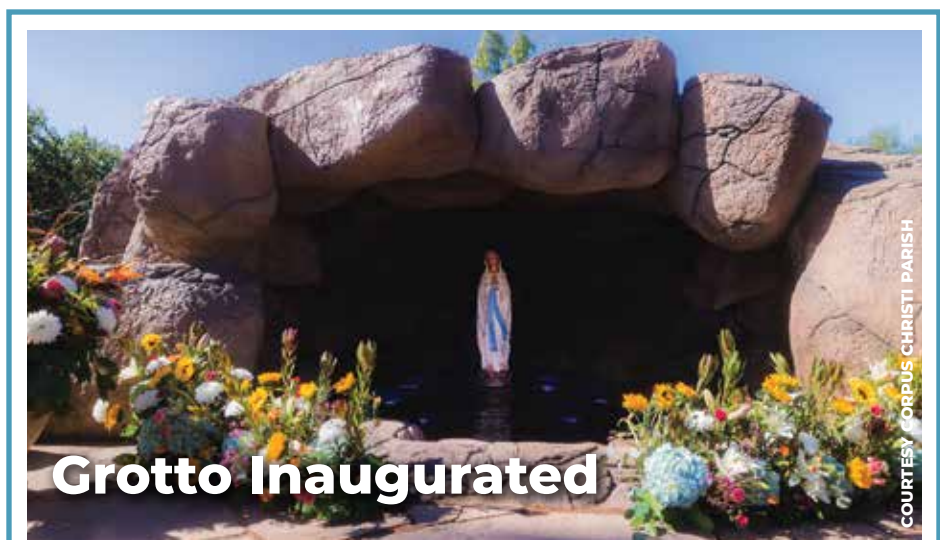
For information or to register, visit [RachelsHope.org](http://RachelsHope.org), call (858) 581-3022, text (858) 752-9378 or email [rachels\\_hope@juno.com](mailto:rachels_hope@juno.com).

## ‘Love Our Priests’ to Gather for Mass, Potluck

The “Love Our Priests” Prayer Group will gather on Saturday, Feb. 8, at Ascension Parish in Tierrasanta.

There will be a Mass at 10 a.m., followed by a potluck lunch. The special guest will be Father Victor Maristela, associate pastor of St. Michael Parish in Poway, who will share his vocation story.

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



## Grotto Inaugurated

BONITA — Corpus Christi Parish is now home to a Marian grotto depicting the Blessed Mother’s appearance to St. Bernadette Soubirous in southwestern France in 1858.

The grotto features a cave-like structure in which a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes has been placed; a few feet away, a statue of St. Bernadette kneels before the Mother of God. The illuminated structure includes a flowing waterfall and is surrounded by landscaping and artificial turf. There are benches where visitors can sit in silent prayer.

Father Efrain Bautista, pastor, described the new grotto as a place for people “to meditate, to reflect, to just appreciate the beauty and the gift” of Mary. “Mary always leads us to Jesus,” he said.

Millions have made pilgrimages to the original apparition site, located in France, where the waters of a spring are credited with miraculous healings.

Construction took about seven months, ending in October, Father Bautista said. The grotto cost about \$350,000 and was a gift from the Bienes family.

The statues of Mary and St. Bernadette were made in Italy. The grotto itself was constructed by locally based Creative Turf Install. Auxiliary Bishop Michael Pham blessed the grotto on Oct. 27.

## Local Teens Appointed to National Council

CARLSBAD — Teenagers Hector Saldana, Natalie Myers, Tim Rivette and Valeria Torres — all from St. Patrick Parish in Carlsbad — were selected as members of the National Youth Advisory Council.

The council is an initiative of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. According to the ministry’s website, the council is intended to empower youth “to activate their voices and gifts as members of the Church.”

Members began a 14-month term in October 2024. They will attend monthly online gatherings that include prayer, formation and discussion. At the end of their term year, they will attend an onsite gathering at the National Catholic Youth Conference.

## Retreat to Offer Post-Abortion Healing


The Rachel’s Vineyard ministry is presenting “A Time for Mercy,” a Catholic post-abortion retreat, from Friday, March 28, to Sunday, March 30, 2025.

Organizers promise a safe place to renew, rebuild and redeem hearts broken by abortion. Rachel’s Vineyard retreats are open to women and men seeking healing from an abortion. The retreats are confidential and non-judgmental, offered in the Catholic tradition.

Early registration is recommended, as space is limited.

For more information, visit [atimeformercy.org](http://atimeformercy.org), call (951) 325-7702 or email [RVTemecula@verizon.net](mailto:RVTemecula@verizon.net).

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