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- 02** **Archbishop:** Catholic Schools – Sowing seeds of hope
- 05** **Mission Advancement:** July 4th BBQ at the Serra Clergy House
- 07** **Catholic quiz:** How well do you know the Catholic faith?
- 08** **National Eucharistic Congress:** Enkindles fire of Eucharistic love
- 10** **CSF Exclusive:** Interview with the St. Junipero Serra Route pilgrims
- 12** **Intercession:** In times of sorrow, turn to Our Lady
- 14** **Liturgy:** The Catholic Institute of Sacred Music
- 18** **St. Francis of Assisi:** 800th anniversary of the stigmata
- 24** **Beauty, Truth, Goodness:** The calling of St. Matthew
- 26** **Eucharistic Revival:** The source and summit of our lives
- 30** **Life-Affirming Care:** Offered for Catholic medical professionals
- 32** **Prayer & Fellowship:** Blessing and guidance for legal professionals
- 34** **Engaged learning:** Serving the blind for more than 120 years
- 36** **Prayer and Fasting:** Let us fast on Ember Days for priestly vocations



14



02



08

- 40** **Voting:** Message from Archbishop Cordileone
- 41** **Local News:** St. Brigid Academy begins first academic year
- 42** **Upcoming Events:** Save the dates! Come out and join us

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- 44** **Superintendent:** A conversation with Chris Fisher
- 46** **Human Life & Dignity:** The power of adoption
- 49** **Important High School Dates:** Open houses, application deadlines

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COVER: In this painting by artist Carmelo Ciaramitaro—commissioned by Angela Alioto and the Knights of Saint Francis—is depicted the stigmata of Saint Francis in 1224 on Mount La Verna. Dante Alighieri (lower right) in the *Divine Comedy* states, "On this raw stone, between the Arno and the Tiber, he was marked with the signs of Christ." Photo by Francisco Valdez.

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circulation.csf@sfarch.org

or send address changes to
Catholic San Francisco,
Circulation, One Peter Yorke,
San Francisco, CA 94109

Published by the Archdiocese of San Francisco, One Peter Yorke Way, San Francisco, CA 94109. Catholic San Francisco (ISSN 15255298) is published 8 times yearly. Catholic San Francisco is printed by Publication Printers Corp. in Denver, Colorado. Periodical postage paid in San Bruno, California. Subscriptions: \$35 a year anywhere in the United States.

Catholic Schools: Sowing seeds of hope

BY
ARCHBISHOP
SALVATORE
JOSEPH
CORDILEONE



Hope is an often overlooked and forgotten virtue. Perhaps it is because we tend to think of hope as mere optimism or wishful thinking. We might worry that relying too much on hope amounts to a kind of naïveté, disconnecting us from the real world. Or worse, we might be tempted to think of hope as a form of apathy whereby we shrug our shoulders, resigned to a stoic “que sarà, sarà” – whatever will be, will be. But this is not the Christian virtue of hope. Hope cannot be reduced to a platitude or to a misplaced optimism. Hope is called a theological virtue because it has God as its “origin, motive and object.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1812)

The virtue of hope is related to another theological virtue, the virtue of faith. Speaking to the Congregation for Catholic Education in 2017, Pope Francis reaffirmed that “Hope is not superficial optimism, nor is it the capacity to look at things benevolently, but rather is a way of knowing how to run risks in the right way, like education” (Address to Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for Catholic Education, Feb. 9, 2017). Hope is a risk because it requires trust and faith in God. It requires us to set aside our own plans and machinations so as to make room for what God has in store for us and which is always greater than we can imagine for ourselves. Hope comes through faith in God’s providential care for us, in the knowledge that He is present with us, especially in the Holy Eucharist, and that “all things work for good for those who love God and who are called according to His purpose.” (Rom 8:28)

When I look out at the Church today in the United States and in our own Archdiocese, I see signs of hope everywhere. The National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis this past July saw tens of thousands of pilgrims come together to celebrate and adore the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. I had the wonderful opportunity there to participate in the Eucharistic procession through the streets of that great American city. The faith that I witnessed gave me great hope. When I think about our own historic Eucharistic procession through San Francisco and over the Golden Gate Bridge that

took place in May, I am reminded that wherever Jesus goes, He brings hope.

How do Catholic schools sow seeds of hope? Catholic schools are built on hope because they are built on faith and trust in Christ. The document on Catholic education “The Catholic School” acknowledged that “(every) school is a center in which a specific concept of the world, of man and of history is developed and conveyed” (8). Catholic schools plant seeds of hope by proposing a concept of the world that understands God as the origin and sustainer of the world, who governs the world with love, and ordering it with laws that make scientific knowledge possible. Catholic schools propose that each person is made in the very image and likeness of God, imbued with an infinite dignity, and called to fullness of life (“Dignitas Infinita,” 1). Catholic schools propose that God is an active presence in human history and that history is not an accidental series of events but has Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection, the definitive sign of His love, as its central event.

Catholic schools sow seeds of hope by forming young men and women who are more engaged in service, in civic participation and in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. They sow seeds of hope by helping students to come to know their God-given gifts and discern their vocations.

Of this vital relationship between Catholic education and hope, Pope Francis has said, “To educate is always an act of hope....Man cannot live without hope, and education is a generator of hope....May we be sustained by the conviction that education bears within itself a seed of hope” (Message to Participants in Global Compact on Education, Oct. 15, 2020). Against the anxiety and despair so common in our increasingly secular age, our Catholic schools play a pivotal role in planting the seeds of hope.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Chris Fisher, the new superintendent of Catholic schools for the Archdiocese. Please pray for Mr. Fisher and the Department of Catholic Schools team as they continue to support the important mission of our Catholic schools in sowing seeds of hope! ■



“

To educate is always an act of hope...Man cannot live without hope, and education is a generator of hope....May we be sustained by the conviction that education bears within itself a seed of hope”

POPE FRANCIS



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Annual July 4th BBQ at the Serra Clergy House a festive gathering



BY ROD LINHARES

Director of Mission Advancement for the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

One of the highlights of the year for the retired priests of the Archdiocese is the annual July 4th BBQ at the Serra Clergy House in San Mateo.

A gathering of great spirit, it brings together retired priests, active priests, deacons and laypersons. In the words of Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone, “The annual 4th of July get-together with our senior priests is a wonderful time of camaraderie and fellowship. We’re so grateful to the staff at Serra Clergy House, and to the permanent deacons and their wives, who work so hard to sponsor this event.”

Deacon Arthur Sanchez, director of diaconate ministry in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, worked closely with Rachel Alvelais, the Clergy House manager, in coordinating the celebration. Deacon Art served as the primary chef. Ribs, chicken, hamburgers, sausages, salads, fruit and delectable desserts were the offerings. “There are quite a few deacons who help today,” said Sanchez. “We are a ministry of service, and even though most of us are known mostly by the service that we do at the altar, it’s much more. The prisons, hospitals and soup kitchens are just some of the areas we go. It’s very special for us to be here, given that we have worked with a lot of the priests that we serve today.”

Built in 1954 as part of Serra High School, the Serra Clergy House was designed to be home for the school’s priest faculty. It was converted to housing for active, independent retired priests in the early 1990s. A full-service residence for active senior priests, the Clergy House has 12 one-bedroom apartments. A hot sit-down dinner is prepared nightly, and a fully stocked pantry is available for self-service breakfast and lunch. A chapel and sacristy are on-site.

Thanks to the generosity provided in the 2023 Priests Retirement Luncheon and Special Collection, the Clergy House has a new roof, the irrigation system has been repaired, and the glass patio doors have been replaced. The common



Master of the grill Deacon Art Sanchez (St. Thomas More, San Francisco) at the barbecue.

areas have been refreshed, and the dining room décor and furnishings have been enhanced, which is especially key, since dinner is the retired priests’ primary gathering time! Additional projects designed to help ensure the safety and security of our retired priests are planned for 2024 and 2025.

Even though our retired priests are “retired,” they still practice Jesus’ vocational directive to a lifetime of service. Many continue to minister in our parishes, schools, hospitals and nursing homes. They celebrate Mass, visit the sick, hear confessions, attend parish events and serve as spiritual directors.

In the words of Father Tony McGuire, a Clergy House resident, “We celebrated the 4th with a wonderful barbecue. About 45 priests came, the Archbishop came, and a number of deacons and their wives served us. It was a joyful experience. We talk about the old times...remembering when we were in the seminary together...the people we served in different parts of our lives. It was a fun day.” ■

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How well do you know the Catholic faith?



The Ultimate Catholic Quiz by Catholic Answers' founder, Karl Keating.



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There are no trick questions, but there are questions that will trip you up if you fail to read carefully. An answer is counted as wrong if any part of it — such as a date or name — is wrong. Your goal is not to find the answer that is least wrong, but the one answer that is wholly right, which may be “none of the above.” On average, most informed Catholics score 50%. How well did you do?

1. Which of these is a proper chronological listing of ecumenical councils?

- Nicaea, Ephesus, First Lateran, Second Constantinople
- Chalcedon, Ephesus, Trent, Vatican I
- Third Nicaea, Second Lateran, Trent, Vatican II
- Fourth Constantinople, Chalcedon, First Lyon, Constance
- none of the above

2. The Church founded by Christ

- Came to be the Catholic Church after Christianity was legalized by the Roman emperor Constantine.
- Is called “Catholic”, which means “universal”, because she is found in every country in the world.

- Began at Christ's Ascension and will continue until the end of the world.
- Is a perfect society.
- none of the above

3. The first Christian

emperor of the Roman Empire was

- Constantine, although he was baptized only at the end of his life.
- Theodosius, who made Christianity the state religion.
- Diocletian, who retired to what is now Split, Croatia, where his palace still stands.
- Minimaximus, who became Christian at the end of the third century.
- none of the above.

4. Which is not an attribute of God?

- omnipresence
- omniscience
- omnivorousness
- omnipotence
- none of the above.

5. Who were the first to establish the existence of God can be known through reason alone, apart from revelation?

- ancient Greek (pagan) philosophers
- the Fathers of the Church (first through fourth centuries A.D.)
- Thomas Aquinas and other Medieval theologians
- It is not true that God's existence can be known by reason alone; faith is also necessary.
- none of the above.

Answer highlights can be found on page 33.



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National Eucharistic Congress enkindles fire of Eucharistic love

The 10th National Eucharistic Congress took place in Indianapolis, Indiana July 17-21, 2024. Over the course of five days attendees participated in liturgies, Eucharistic Adoration, daytime educational sessions on integrating the Eucharist into their lives, and powerful evening sessions coming together to worship in unity. The congress showed a united Church in America, one Body of Christ, on fire with love for Jesus in the Eucharist and spreading that zealously as newly formed Eucharistic missionaries. ■





Photo by Casey Johnson



Photo by Mary Powers



Photo by Mary Powers



Photo by Jacob Bentzinger

Top right: Oakland Bishop Michael C. Barber delivers the homily at the Mass for San Francisco and Oakland pilgrims. Left: Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone says the Latin Mass for the National Congress. Crookston Bishop Andrew Cozzens blesses the crowd after the Eucharistic procession. Below: Cardinal Luis Tagle, papal delegate for the National Congress, says Mass at Lucas Oil Stadium. A family adores the Eucharist during an evening session of the congress.



Photo by Grant Whitty



Photo by Casey Johnson

Interview with the St. Junipero Serra Route pilgrims Part I

Photo by Mary Powers

San Francisco seminarians Dereck Delgado and Jimmy Velasco share reflections



BY MARY POWERS

Assistant director of communications and media relations. Office of Communications, Archdiocese of San Francisco

San Francisco seminarians Dereck Delgado and Jimmy Velasco share reflections from their time on the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage.

Catholic San Francisco: Welcome to Indianapolis! We have been praying for you and following your journey as you traveled across the country. What

was your most memorable moment?

Dereck Delgado: There are a few moments that stand out to me, but most especially is when we arrived in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. We needed to get gas. I dropped everybody off at the church and as I was driving to the gas station, there was a huge dump truck that was following me, which I thought was a little bit weird.

So when I pulled into the gas station, a guy jumped out of the truck, this beefy trucker kind-of dude, and I was a little intimidated, thinking, “Oh no it’s road rage.” And then he came up to me and had the biggest smile on his face. He says, “Thank you for doing this.” He said, “I saw that sign on your van. I know what it means. I don’t know what you’re doing, but I know what that means, the Eucharist, and I’m just so excited that young people like you are bringing the Eucharist to this country.”

He said he’s a lapsed Catholic. He told me his story. The man’s one prayer request for me was to pray for the conversion of his wife to come back to the faith—somebody who doesn’t even go to Mass himself, and he’s asking for healing.

That’s something [Crookston] Bishop Cozzens also recognized, I think, that we’re bringing the Eucharist outside the church, to the people and to others.

Jimmy Velasco: I think there are many, many

highlights on our trip. Obviously, we like to brag that we were on the most scenic route traveling across the west, such as bringing the Blessed Sacrament to the Rocky Mountains. Having Benediction there was really incredible. Another moment was when we were waiting for Sacramento Bishop Jaime Soto to cross Lake Tahoe with the Eucharist.

But I think what stands out to me the most was when we were in Missouri and one of the churches had never done a Eucharistic procession before. As we were preparing for it, people told us, “Look up.” Then, looking up, we saw a rainbow circling the sun, like the Eucharist in a monstrance. That rainbow was with us the whole way through the Eucharistic procession. After we had Benediction, as soon as the Eucharist was reposed into the van, the rainbow went away. We called it the miracle of the sun. The parishioners who walked with us will never forget that day.

CSF: You have touched so many people along the way. How has the pilgrimage touched you? How has it changed you?

Delgado: Well, at least from my own vocation I think about St. Therese’s terminology, the vocation to love and the wounded healer idea. My intention coming into the pilgrimage was to deepen my discernment, to have a greater confidence in this call to the priesthood. And I feel that our Lord worked in very small and little ways to give me that grace. I think He’s helping me to trust Him in a much deeper, more profound way than I knew.

With the wounded healer idea, I think He used this opportunity to open again those wounds that I’ve had, to open it again, and it hurt, but just to enter into it a different way and bring healing to it. As a priest, we’re wounded healers. We’re bringing the Blessed Sacrament to others to bring healing to them, to bring our Lord into

their lives, into their darkest places, just as He's entered into my darkest place and brought healing and light to that. So that's what I'm taking away from this pilgrimage.

Velasco: First, not taking Eucharistic Adoration for granted because we've spent hours and hours in front of the Blessed Sacrament. We have had the most face time with the Eucharist throughout this entire trip. It would have been very easy to just slip away and lay back and cruise and not take seriously that we've spent so much time with Jesus Christ this summer. So really, not taking Adoration for granted and the great graces that God wants to give to us if we are receptive to it.

Similar to Dereck, I have experienced the joys and the sorrows throughout this trip because our trip was challenging. It was not easy to do what we just did for 65 days. We've had many days where we were just spiritually desolated. "Enter," as St. John of the Cross says, "the dark night of the soul." When we encounter God, both in consolation and in desolation, we can feel that we are journeying through tough times, but Christ walks with us. I think those are some of my big takeaways that I walk away with.

CSF: And it really was walking with Christ. Like the apostles, you didn't know where you were going to lay your head down the next day. Did that connect you more with our Lord and the apostles?

Delgado: We've done this for nine weeks, and most of those weeks there were just 10 of us in the van. One week, we had two extra people with us, two sisters who were with the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal. As we parked near a coffee shop in Idaho, I looked back at everyone with our Lord exposed in the monstrance, and I said, "Hey, there's 12 of us here right now with Jesus! We're the Twelve Apostles."

And that just hit everybody in that moment. It was just so edifying – we are traveling with Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe, along this highway, to this coffee shop where He has probably never been before in His Real Presence, in the Blessed Sacrament. And it was just a moment of realization that this is a critical moment for our country and our Church.

Velasco: And I think our group, in a way, also resembles the Apostles. All of us are very different, two seminarians, three men, three women. Some were college students and some in grad school. So we represent the variety of the Church that Jesus Christ called. The Lord called us together to journey with Him for two months.

It's really quite remarkable that what we just did has

never been done before other than the apostles. It's really something, a moment that I will never regret or take for granted.

CSF: You brought a lot of petitions with you too, including from Maui. You brought the stick made from the wood from the fire. Can you talk a little bit about that, about the petitions that you brought?

Delgado: Whenever we stopped at a place, we went out in teams, two by two, to go and gather petitions along the way. I remember it clearly, whenever I asked somebody for a petition, they'd think about it for a second. And almost without fail, there's just this emotion that overcame them when they realized how special this moment was, that we're going to go with our Lord on this pilgrimage – full of sacrifice, full of penance, full of hardship – to ask our Lord to reward us, help us to grow in our faith, but also for this special intention for this person.

Honestly, I just felt like I was entering into somebody's very personal space. But I think I was an instrument of our Lord. I think He was entering into their personal space, it wasn't me, but I was just an instrument.

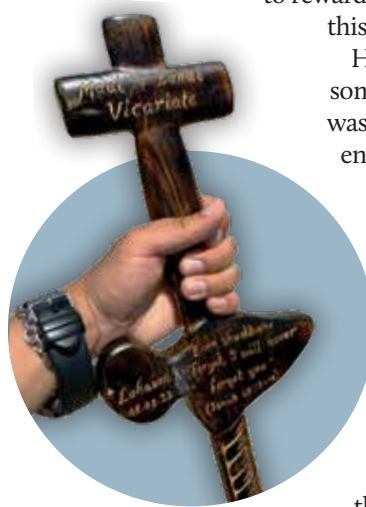
Velasco: Just to cover a little bit about the walking stick from Hawaii, the Diocese of Honolulu had sent us this walking stick for us to use, because we were too far from Hawaii to have a procession or have them join in. The stick honors the victims of the Maui wildfires.

While we were in Nebraska, I was given the opportunity to walk with it, which was very powerful. I was just praying for all those that had suffered from the wildfires and are continuing to suffer. We may not be hearing as much about it as we were before, but I was remembering them.

Obviously, before the trip started, I had many intentions for my family, for the different parishes of our Archdiocese, for our Archdiocese as a whole.

CSF: Yes, that was such a blessing that you were able to pray for us on the way!

Velasco: Yes, and a lot of the intentions we received had been for peace in the world, for healing, for conversion of families, all very personal and all desiring that the Lord listens to them, that God would listen to their prayer. It was very moving. ■



Walking stick from the Diocese of Honolulu, Hawaii.



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In times of sorrow, turn to Our Lady



BY AARON LAMBERT
Writer from Denver

Sorrow is among the most uncomfortable of human emotions. It is also one of the chief emotions that defines what it is to be human. While most people do everything in their power to avoid sorrow at all costs, the reality is sorrow is an unavoidable part of the human experience. Sorrow is especially prevalent in today's world and comes in many forms; depths of despair continue to rise, and whether one is experiencing grief, mental health struggles or a general loss of purpose, it is a difficult emotion to navigate through.

We need not fear sorrow, however; for Christ Himself plumbed the depths of human sorrow through His suffering on the cross. More than that, though, the Lord also granted that the Blessed Virgin Mary experience the sorrow of the cross such that she could be near to all who suffer and experience sorrow in a very tangible way.

September is an occasion to reflect more deeply on our response to suffering as we look to Mary's example. The Church traditionally dedicates the month of September to Our Lady of Sorrows, a title given to Mary that recalls the deep sorrows she felt as she witnessed the passion and death of her Son, not only as His mother, but

also as a co-redemptrix. The Church commemorates the memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows each year on Sept. 15. The date jumped around the calendar over the centuries, but eventually found its modern date in 1913, when Pope Pius X moved it to Sept. 15, the day after the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

Devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows dates all the way back to the 12th century and finds its roots in the prophecy of Simeon in the Gospel of Luke, when he tells Mary of the child Jesus: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against, and a sword will pierce through your own soul also, that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed" (Lk 2:34-35). It originated with the Servite order, whose principal devotion was standing under the cross in imitation of Mary and prayerfully entering into her sorrows.

Traditional depictions of Our Lady of Sorrows show a sorrowful Mary with seven swords piercing her heart. Each sword represents one of the seven sorrows of Mary: The prophecy of Simeon, the flight into Egypt, the loss of the child Jesus for three days, Mary meeting Jesus on his way to Calvary, the crucifixion and death of Jesus, the body of Jesus being taken from the cross and the burial of Jesus.

Each of these seven moments from Mary's life traverses the depths of human sorrow. Mary experienced





intense grief and fear in her divinely appointed role as the mother of Jesus, but she never succumbed to the darkness. She united her Immaculate Heart to her Son's Sacred Heart and constantly sought the strength to endure from God the Father. She suffered alongside her Son in a way that only a loving mother could and stood faithfully at the foot of the cross as Jesus died in the ultimate act of love.

Just like Our Lady of Sorrows, we too can stand at the foot of the cross with Jesus amid our own suffering and through the sufferings of others. Just as Mary's presence was all Jesus needed while He did the hard work of salvation, so it is with us. No matter what sorrows life brings, Jesus knows them intimately, and through Him, Mary does too. By praying with the seven sorrows of Mary and allowing ourselves to enter more deeply into them, Our Lady of Sorrows can be a steadfast companion and comfort through the swords that pierce our own souls.

Many churches have been named in honor of Our Lady of Sorrows, including San Francisco's own Mission Dolores Basilica on 16th St. and Dolores St., and by way of nickname, the old mission church of San Francisco de Asis, which is also the oldest surviving building in the city. Perhaps it's a coincidence that a church named for Our Lady of Sorrows is one of the last remaining remnants from the founding of San Francisco, or perhaps it's part of the Lord's divine design. Whatever the case, during the month of September, and especially on Sept. 15, may we heed the words of Pope St. John Paul II as we seek Our Lady of Sorrows' intercession and presence through the sorrows of our lives: "Turn your eyes incessantly to the Blessed Virgin; she, who is the Mother of Sorrows and also the Mother of Consolation, can understand you completely and help you. Looking to her, praying to her, you will obtain that your tedium will become serenity, your anguish change into hope, and your grief into love." ■

The Catholic Institute of Sacred Music

A new music education program at St. Patrick's Seminary & University strikes a chord with lay Catholics near and far



BY CHRISTINA GRAY

Lead writer,
Catholic San Francisco
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The intermittent harmonies of Gregorian chant echo down the halls of St. Patrick's Seminary & University on a hot July day. It comes not from within the campus chapel, but from a small classroom in the seminary's west wing. Here, two dozen adults from as far away as Paraguay, Slovenia and Mozambique, and as close by as Menlo Park, stand shoulder-to-shoulder in front of Jennifer Donelson-Nowicka, music sheets in hand.

Another handful could be seen on monitors at the front and back of the classroom Zooming in from different time zones across the globe.

They are parish music directors, liturgists, priests and nuns but mostly lay Catholics here for a weeklong course in "Introduction to Gregorian Chant." The course is one of more than a dozen graduate-level liturgical music courses offered in summer sessions by the Catholic Institute of Sacred Music at St. Patrick's Seminary & University in Menlo Park.

Donelson-Nowicka founded the Catholic Institute of Sacred Music at St. Patrick's Seminary & University in 2022 in collaboration with Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone. An esteemed sacred music educator and scholar, Donelson-Nowicka has two educational roles at St. Patrick's that run parallel to one another but serve different students.

As associate professor and director



Photo courtesy of Catholic Institute of Sacred Music

Jennifer Donelson-Nowicka, founder of the Catholic Institute of Sacred Music at St. Patrick's Seminary & University, faces her summer program students, mostly lay Catholics from around the world. During the academic year, she teaches required courses in sacred music to seminarians.

“

Having this community gathered here to sing the historic music of the Church is just a spectacular gift.”

LAURI HOFSTROM,
director of liturgy and music
St. Raymond Church, Menlo Park



of sacred music at St. Patrick's Seminary & University, she and other faculty members teach the sacred music courses that are a required part of a seminarian's formation during the academic year. She founded the Catholic Institute of Sacred Music to be able to share conservatory-level sacred music education and performances with lay Catholics, including the general public.

The Catholic Institute of Sacred Music is "an extension of the seminary's educational footprint," said Donelson-Nowicka, who left St. Joseph Seminary in Dunwoodie, New York, where she had developed similar music formation programs.

"This is something the Archbishop and I both wanted to have happen here," she said.

SACRED MUSIC FOR LAY CATHOLICS

Summer students may have different backgrounds and varying levels of sacred music experience, but they are united in their love of Church and their desire to incorporate its rich history of sacred music thoughtfully into their work, according to Donelson-Nowicka.

"I'm very new to this," Aubrey Pichler told *Catholic San Francisco* on July 10. The young musical liturgist from a small town in Missouri studied music and theology in college. She said she believed she would be able to start her first real liturgical music job in Philadelphia this fall with "more confidence" because of her summer coursework at the institute.

Father Paul Bechter is director of vocations for the Diocese of

Dallas. As such, he is in charge of the "propaedeutic" (first stage of seminary formation) program at Dallas Theological Seminary. He has loved singing sacred music since his own days in seminary, but said he never took a class until now.

"The early stages of seminary formation is the ideal time to lay the foundation for sacred music," he said. He feels he is leaving with "a language and methodology" he can use with seminarians to greater effectiveness.

"If you are formed by it in seminary, you develop a better appreciation for it and understand what it looks like to implement in a parish," said Father Bechter.

"OUR MISSION IS TO SERVE THE CHURCH"

Donelson-Nowicka said that >

while sacred music is the program, the mission of the Catholic Institute of Sacred Music is to serve the Church.

“Everything we do here are topics that musicians and Church leaders need to learn in order to be able to do their jobs with excellence and fidelity at Catholic parishes and schools,” she said.

The institute has other educational components, too. During the school year, the institute offers a public lecture and concert series, which draws hundreds to the seminary with prominent presenters and recitalists.

This year, the institute will present lectures by two foremost chant scholars. Susan Rankin, a professor of medieval music at the University of Cambridge, will present an online lecture on the Christianization of the Pantheon in Rome, and the liturgy and chants surrounding it. Anna Maria Busse Berger, a professor of music at the University of California at Davis, will present her research on the evangelization of the African continent through sacred music.

Prospective students learn about the summer program and public events in various ways, said Donelson-Nowicka. Detailed program information and application is available on the Catholic Institute of Sacred Music’s website, catholicinstituteofsacredmusic.org. Here, visitors can also join an email list and connect on social media. Donelson-Nowicka also hosts a podcast titled “Square Notes: The Sacred Music Podcast,” now in its sixth season.

MUSICIANS NEED COMMUNITY

Sarah Zielinski is a trained opera singer who left the secular performance world for a religious music career. She is now director of liturgy and music at St. Alice Church in Springfield, Oregon, in the Archdiocese of Portland.

“I realized I was way more happy singing for children and the Church,” she said. Zielinski is in her second summer session at the Catholic



“

Gregorian chant is still unusual for most parishes right now. That will change if more of us come to this program.”

SARAH ZIELINSKI,

director of liturgy and music, St. Alice Church, Springfield, Ore.

Institute of Sacred Music. She took four classes last year, two online and two in person. This summer, she traveled to participate in the Choral Institute and take more classes.

In addition to the value of the actual class experiences, Zielinski said time spent with other students who also love the Church and sacred music is invaluable. That includes the classroom, of course, but also collaboration on a homework assignment, singing together, or watching each other make presentations for a graded score.

“You get a better understanding of what was not effective, and why it wasn’t,” she said. “You get to experience a lesson as if you were one of the kids you are teaching.”

“Musicians need community,” affirmed Donelson-Nowicka.

After her attendance last summer, Zielinski said she made small modifications at St. Alice, like replacing an Offertory hymn with a chant. She had learned at the institute more about what the Church requires, liturgically speaking.

At first, she was afraid that people would be upset by the change but found the opposite was true. People were thankful.

“They said they could finally see what’s happening on the altar and pray with the beautiful music rather than have their head in a book,” she said.

Gregorian chant is still unusual for most parishes right now, she said. “But that will change if more



Photo by Christina Gray

Donelson-Nowicka is pictured July 10 at the head of an introductory course in Gregorian chant. The summer sacred music program draws Catholics from around the world.

of us come to this program.”

Lauri Hofstrom started her position as director of liturgy and music for St. Raymond Parish in Menlo Park in 2020. Weeks later, the pandemic brought a moratorium on communal singing. She came to the Choral Institute last year and took several courses again this summer.

“Having this community gathered here to sing the historic music of the Church is just a spectacular gift,” said Hofstrom. “When we depart from here, we will go back and see how it has changed us and what we can give away and offer and share in charity with everyone for the benefit of all and the glory of God.” ■



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St. Francis of Assisi: 800th anniversary of the stigmata



**BY FATHER BOBBY
BARBATO, OFM CAP.**
*Rector, National
Shrine of St. Francis*

“Henceforth, let no man trouble me, for I bear the brand marks of Jesus in my body.” (Gal 6:7)

These words of St. Paul are meant to remind us how important it is to be formed by the passion and death of Jesus and enter into His resurrection. They remind us, too, that following Christ is something that involves not only our minds and our hearts, but also our bodies. When we fast, pray and do acts of mercy and compassion, we use the bodies God has made to express our love of God and neighbor.

In the history of the Church, however, there has always been the temptation to leave our bodies behind, or to consider them and everything else material as evil. We have to be reminded what it says in the Book of Genesis: “God saw everything He had made and He found it very good.” (Gn 1:31)

During the lifetime of St. Francis, there were various movements that embraced dualism, proclaiming that the spiritual was good and the material was bad. The saint from Assisi was tempted to follow these groups, but always remembered the profound truth found in the Gospel: “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). While Francis did not deny the reality of sin and the ways our bodies could be used for evil, he reminded his followers:

“Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord God has placed you, for He created and formed you to the image of His beloved Son according to the body and to His likeness according to the Spirit.” (Admonition 5, “Francis of Assisi: Early Documents,” Regis Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellman and William Short, editors, New City Press, New York, 1999, vol. 1,131)

Francis embraced the faith of the Church,

which reminds us that we have to use our bodies, made in the image of God, as part of our journey back to the Father. The Lord Himself confirmed Francis’ conviction that our bodies also are part of God’s plan when a wondrous thing happened: God imprinted on Francis’ body the marks of the passion of Jesus Christ, often called the stigmata. God has done the same in various times in the history of the Church, most famously in our own times with St. Pio (Padre Pio). St. Francis, however, is believed to be one of the first to receive this gift, in September of 1224.

In regard to this miracle, it is important to understand that St. Francis did not receive the marks of Christ’s passion as some sort of reward or a gift only for himself. Although humility made him try to hide the marks, after his death they became public knowledge. The Lord wanted to speak to the world through the saint’s stigmata. As we celebrate the 800th anniversary of this marvelous event, the Lord still speaks to us through it.

In meditating on this event, it is essential to know the circumstances of St. Francis’ life as he received the stigmata. It was toward the end of his life, when he was facing a great crisis. Since his conversion in 1206, Francis had tried to live as intensely as he could the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In this he attracted followers, and in 1223 his religious order, the Friars Minor, had become a large and important group, receiving approval from Pope Honorius III for their Rule of life. It was in that same year that Francis of Assisi organized the first Christmas crib at Greccio. That year should have been a moment of joy and affirmation for the Poverello, as Francis was known, but instead he found himself in a spiritual and emotional crisis.

There were many causes for this. He had >



been to the Holy Land, where he had had his famous encounter with the sultan of Egypt. He returned not only with wonderful memories but also a painful disease. His eyes were affected by a virus that made him sensitive to light, so much so that daylight and even firelight were becoming painful to him. His body was also worn out by his many travels, fasts and exposure to the elements. His health, which had never been very strong, began to break down dramatically.

However, much harder for him were developments in the order he founded. Francis, who had not planned to found an order, tells us that “the Lord gave me brothers.” His Gospel way of religious life had blossomed and grew rapidly. In 10 years the small group of 12 friars had grown to a religious order with several thousand members. Such growth did not come without growing pains.

Francis’ vision of Gospel life was very radical, which inspired many young people to follow him. From the earliest days Francis had been the center of the new movement, and many who came to follow him hung on his every word. However, as time went on changes needed to be made. What was possible for a small group from Assisi needed to be adapted to the needs of a burgeoning religious order spread throughout Europe. Some of the adaptations Francis himself approved, but others were not to his liking.

The predella shows three scenes from St. Francis’ life: Left, “The Dream of Pope Innocent III” shows the collapse of Laterano, with its church tilting and a column just breaking. Right, “The Approval of Franciscan Rule,” Pope Innocent III affirmed St. Francis’ vow to live in poverty as they sought to reform Christianity.

He felt that the very order he had founded was being taken out of his hands, and despite his poverty and humility, he found this very difficult.

So it was in the fall of 1224, 800 years ago, Francis and a few of his close companions went up a high mountain, La Verna, so that he could spend time in intense prayer and ask the Lord to guide him through his disappointment and depression. La Verna was a mountain given to Francis by Count Orlando and it was a wild and lonely place, one of Francis’ favorite places of prayer.

While he was there, Francis centered his prayer on how best to live the passion and death of Jesus Christ. Francis asked the Lord for two things: he wanted to feel in his body something of the pains that Jesus had undergone, and to feel in his heart the love that led Jesus to accept His passion for our sake. The saint prayed intensely, spending most of his time alone in a hut separated from his brothers by a large chasm. He needed to focus on God and God’s will for him.

Sometime around the feast of the Holy Cross (still Sept. 14 on the Church’s calendar), Francis was in intense prayer when he had a vision. He saw a seraph, the kind of angel described by the Prophet Isaiah: “Seraphim were stationed above: each of them had six wings: with two they veiled their faces, with two they veiled their feet, and

with two they hovered aloft” (Is 6:2). While it truly seemed to be a seraph, Francis also saw what looked like a crucified man in the center of those wings. He was both overjoyed and frightened by this vision, and when it was over he discovered on his body the marks of the wounds of Christ in his hands and feet and side.

What did the stigmata look like? Most depictions of St. Francis show red holes in his hands and feet and a red scar on his right side (marking the place where Jesus’ side was pierced by the soldier’s lance). However, descriptions of the wounds by those who saw them after his death say there seemed to be the form of actual nails in his hands and his feet, with the nail heads on one side and the rest of the nails protruding on the other. (This is one reason some thought that these could not be self-inflicted wounds, as certain skeptics asserted.) Francis also had a wound in his side that would bleed and cause him pain.

Francis bore the wounds for the last two years of his life, until his death on Oct. 4, 1226. As noted, he tried to keep them a secret, hiding them for everyone except his most intimate companions. He did not want people to focus on him or think him more important than the Lord whom he followed. It was only after his death that the wounds were seen by an amazed group of both his own followers and public officials and others from Assisi.

From the beginning there was debate about what these wounds meant. Many obviously focused on Francis himself, especially on the saint as an “alter Christus,” another Christ. St. Bonaventure saw them as the stamp of God’s approval on Francis’ way of Gospel life (which some in the 13th century saw as not only radical but untraditional). He says: “The stigmata of our Lord Jesus were imprinted upon him by the finger of the living God, as the seal of the Supreme Pontiff, Christ, for the complete confirmation of the rule and the commendation of its author.” (Legenda Maior, IV 11, “Francis of Assisi: Early Documents,” vol. II, 559)

While it is obvious that the stigmata were part of Francis’ own journey in following Christ, they were and remain important for Christian spirituality and our own following of Jesus Christ in the 21st century.

As in the time of St. Francis, there is the great temptation today to embrace a type of dualism, a radical separation of soul and body. This may express itself in various ways, either in a depreciation of the body or in a separation of the physical reality of our bodies from our perception of them and our identities. The stigmata of St. Francis remind us that our bodies, in all their gritty particularities, are indeed made by God and a vital part of His >

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The third scene of the predella, "The Sermon to the Birds," stands out for its simplicity and abstraction, thanks to its gold background without decorations.

revelation of who we are created to be.

The stigmata of St. Francis are also a sign that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is something that can be lived in every age, place and time. Although many people say that Francis reproduced the life of Jesus, he in fact followed the Lord not as a first-century Jewish man but as a 13th-century Italian, in a particular place and time. It is true that Francis often said he wanted to follow in "the footprints of Jesus Christ," but he did so within his own time and culture.

I believe Jesus gave St. Francis his stigmata to show us that the Gospel can be lived by each one of us now, and in fact it is vital that we continue to take Jesus' words and call seriously and trust that the Lord will help us to make them real in 21st-century San Francisco.

At the same time, the stigmata are an important reminder that our salvation comes from the Lord, not from our own efforts. When Francis went up Mount La Verna, he felt that he was a failure. He was too weak in body to be able to do much preaching, and his order was not all that he hoped it could be. He felt disappointed, and in some ways betrayed, by others and even by his own weaknesses.

“

The stigmata are not so important for what they tell us about St. Francis but what they reveal about Jesus Christ and the place of His Gospel in our lives. ... The stigmata of St. Francis have shown to countless generations the continuing power of God's love for us all.”

It was at this moment that the Lord revealed to Francis, by the imprint of the wounds of Jesus Christ, that it was not his efforts that mattered in the end. God gave Francis the sign that in the very moment of failure, the power of God is present. In many ways the death of Jesus Christ on the cross was a failure. From an earthly point of view He had been abandoned by His followers, attacked by the religious authorities, and betrayed by those who supposedly were the upholders of truth and justice. When we look on the crucifix, we see the sign of the greatest evil we human beings could perpetuate, killing the Son of God. Yet the power of God was present in that very moment. The wounds of Jesus are the sign that God's salvation will not be thwarted by the power of sin. This was true not only for Jesus Christ, but for us as His followers.

The stigmata are not so important for what they tell us about St. Francis but what they reveal about Jesus Christ and the place of His Gospel in our lives. Still, the life of each saint is an encouragement to those of us who study and admire them. The stigmata of St. Francis have shown to countless generations the continuing power of God's love for us all. Francis' unique way of bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to life was a grace for the Church of his time as well as for ours. In a time of cynicism and division, Francis of Assisi reminds that Jesus is not just some great historical figure, but a real living person who can help us overcome sin and selfishness not by avoiding the sufferings life can bring, but by embracing them with love.

As we celebrate the 800th anniversary of St. Francis receiving the stigmata on Mount La Verna in Italy, we ask that here and now we can share in the sufferings of Christ and also experience the love which led God to send His only Son into our midst. ■

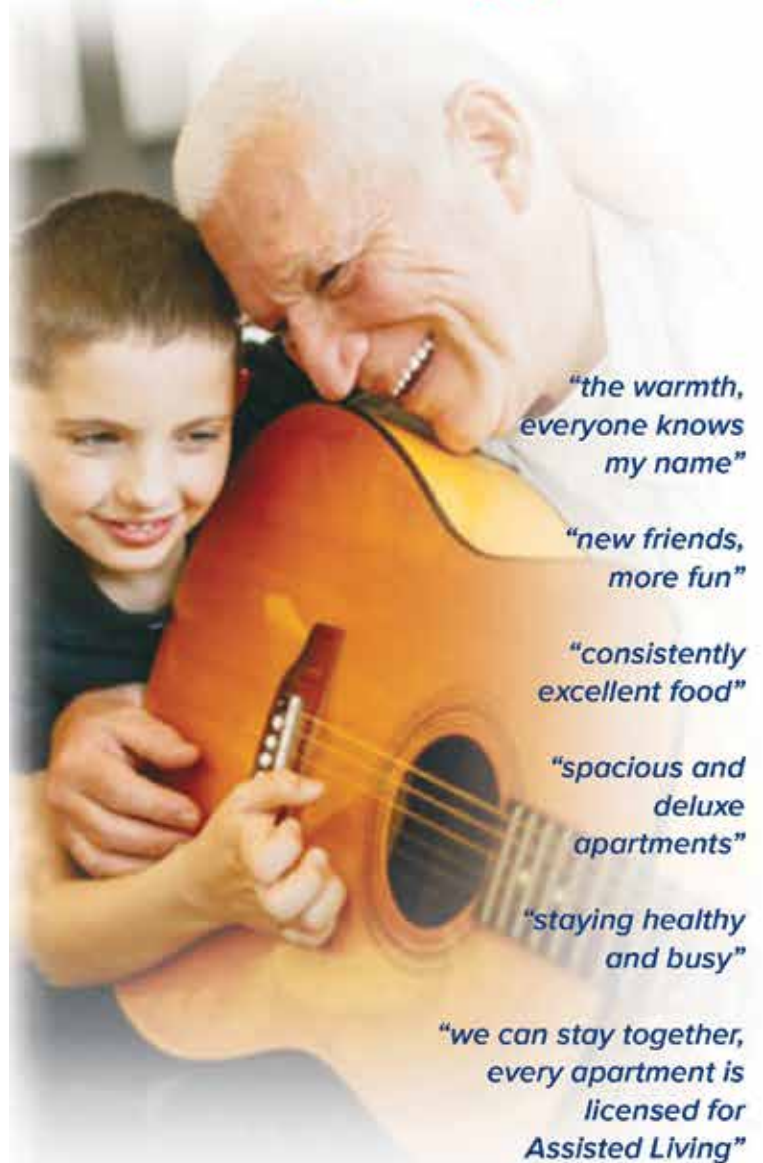
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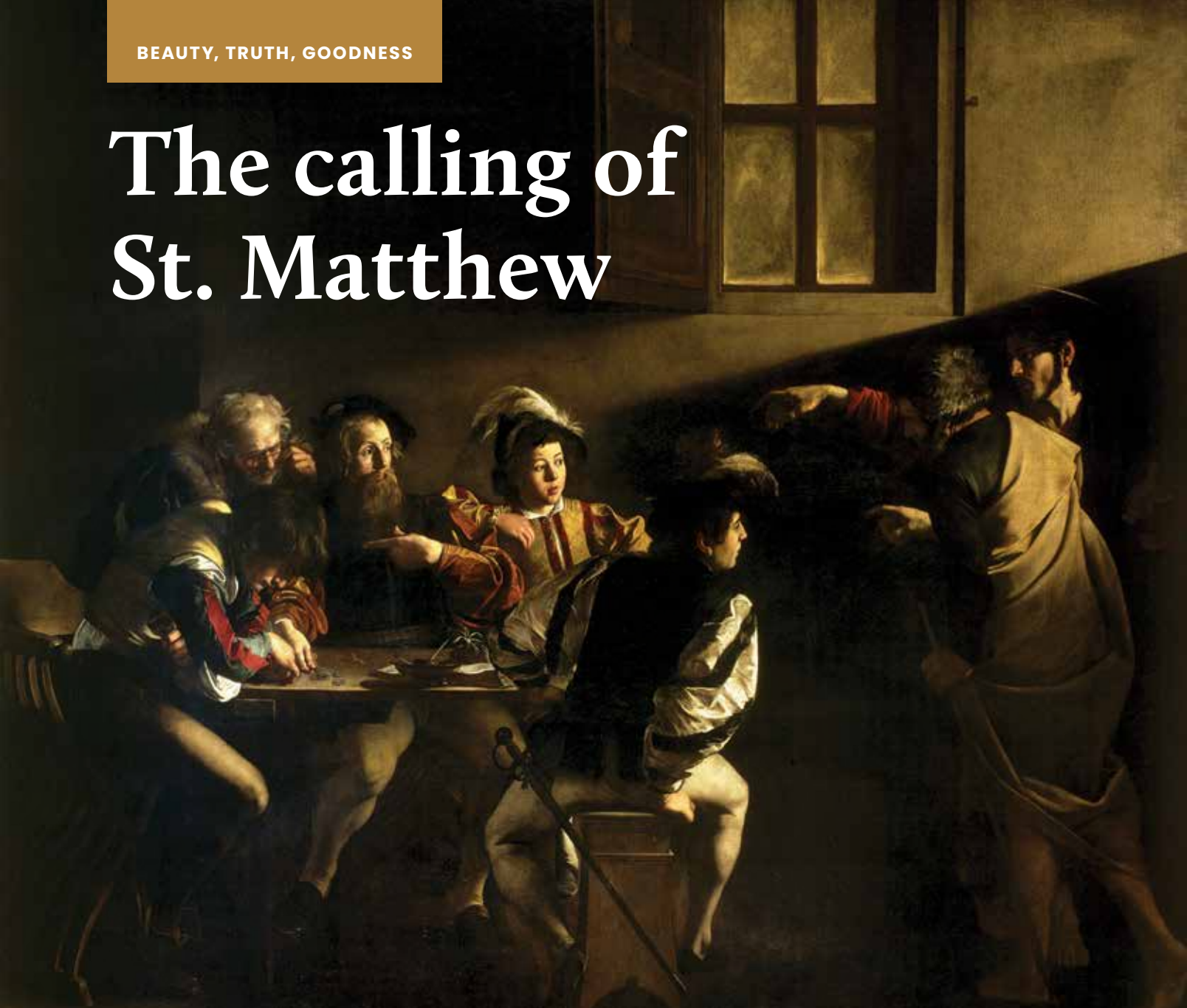
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The calling of St. Matthew



**BY REV. JEROME
A. MAGAT, STHD**

*St. Patrick's
Seminary &
University*

The French national parish of Rome (San Luigi dei Francesi) contains three priceless paintings by Michelangelo Caravaggio (1571–1610) known collectively as the Matthew Cycle. The three paintings depict, respectively, the calling of St. Matthew, his writing of the Gospel that bears his name and his martyrdom. Although Caravaggio was not a theologian, he had a strong grasp of the Catholic faith. This brief article highlights some of the theological meaning conveyed in “The Calling of St. Matthew” (1599–1600), based on the episode’s depiction in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

ATTIRE OF THE CHARACTERS

Notice that the Lord and St. Peter (next to Jesus) are dressed in vesture commonly found in the first century. Meanwhile, St. Matthew and his companions at the customs post wear attire common to the 16th century. Here, Caravaggio is telling us that while the calling of St. Matthew took place once in history, the Lord is still calling contemporary “Matthews” to follow him.

LIGHT THROUGH THE CROSS

Caravaggio was a master of the painting technique known as *chiaroscuro*, which juxtaposes light and darkness for effect. The contrast is symbolic of the contrast between good and evil, spiritual

enlightenment and darkness, and truth and falsehood. Notice that St. Matthew is receiving spiritual enlightenment from Jesus. That light passes alongside a nearby window that contains a cross, which is perhaps indicative of St. Matthew's future martyrdom.

ST. PETER

Notice where St. Peter stands: in the folds of Jesus's garments. This evokes the idea that Christ and the Church (represented by St. Peter) are one. It also demonstrates that vocations are not just private invitations. Rather, they always occur in the context of a wider ecclesial community. Peter's extended right hand reminds us that Christ calls His disciples through the Church.

JESUS' RIGHT HAND

Michelangelo Caravaggio was named after the more famous Michelangelo Buonarroti of Sistine Chapel and "Pietà" fame. Many art historians believe that Jesus' extended right hand was Caravaggio's homage to Michelangelo Buonarroti's "Creation of Adam," which is found on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. In that fresco, God the Father creates Adam. In this painting, Jesus "re-creates" St. Matthew by calling him to conversion.

MEN AND BOYS ALONGSIDE ST. MATTHEW

St. Matthew is surrounded by four male characters: two men (one young and one old) and two boys. Notice that the boys pay attention to Jesus and St. Peter, while the men are focused on their money. This juxtaposition of youth and age may be Caravaggio's way of telling us that it is far easier to follow the Lord if one has a childlike disposition of wonder and dependency, versus an older person's disposition of self-sufficiency. Notice, too, that the oldest man (next to St. Matthew) wears spectacles (symbolic of myopia or shortsightedness) as he focuses upon his money. Here, we are reminded of how fleeting material pleasure can be and that our focus should be upon Jesus, not our financial security.

ST. MATTHEW

St. Matthew's posture is remarkable. His countenance and left hand reveal shock and surprise at Jesus' call. He cannot fathom being called to discipleship, given that he was considered a public enemy of the Jews. And yet, the Lord chooses to make St. Matthew one of his apostles and evangelists. St. Matthew's right hand (emblematic of security) is still grasping onto money. It seems as if Caravaggio has attempted to capture the very moment of St. Matthew's conversion. He is in a liminal space between his former life and his new vocation in Christ. ■

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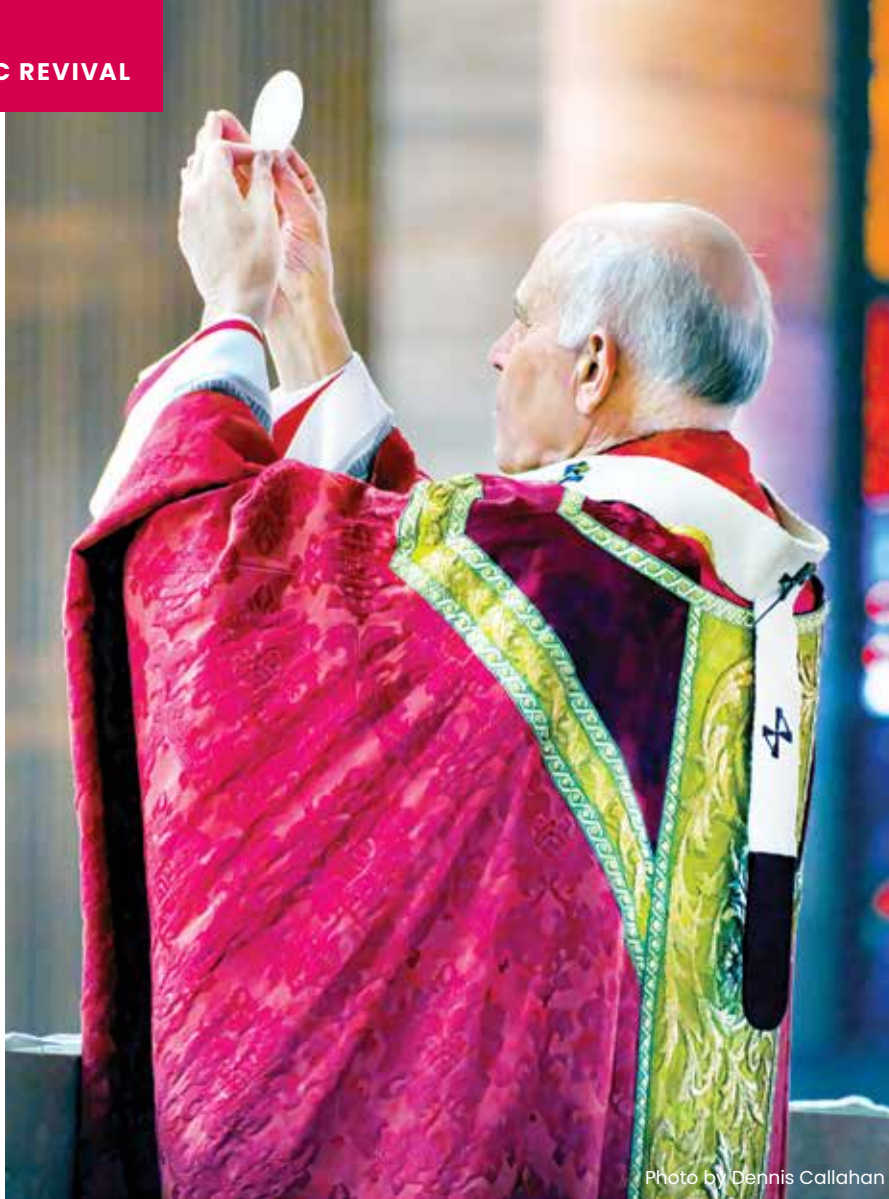


Photo by Dennis Callahan

The source and summit of our lives



BY FATHER BOBBY BARBATO, OFM CAP.

Rector, National Shrine of St. Francis

Editor's Note: The following reflection on the Eucharist is taken from the writings of St. Francis of Assisi by Father Robert Barbato, O.F.M. Cap., rector of the National Shrine of St. Francis of Assisi in San Francisco. This is one of many Eucharistic reflections that will be published by Catholic San Francisco magazine as part of the U.S. Catholic Church's Eucharistic Revival (eucharisticrevival.org) that began on June 19, 2022, on the feast of Corpus Christi, and continues through Pentecost 2025.

St. Francis of Assisi is known for his radical following of Jesus Christ. He did not do this alone, but as a part of the Church. Central to his Catholic faith was his belief in the real presence of Jesus in the sacrament of the Eucharist. He did not write many things, but in his writings, the theme of the Eucharist is very strong. I would like to reflect on three themes from the writings of Francis of Assisi concerning the body and blood of Christ.



We today once more are called to honor and revere the Eucharist as the source and summit of our lives. Our love of the Lord in the sacrament of His body and blood is not meant to lead us away from the world, but to look for God's presence in our everyday lives and our interactions with God's creation."

I see nothing bodily... (Testament):

"In this world, I see nothing corporally of the most high Son of God except for His most holy body and blood. I want these holy mysteries to be honored and venerated above all things." ("Francis of Assisi: Early Documents," Regis Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellman and William Short, editors, New City Press, New York, 1999, vol. 1, 125)

These were St. Francis' own words, written in the very last days of his life, when he wrote his Testament to the friars to remind them of what was essential to his life and theirs. His love for the Eucharist, the most holy body and blood of Christ, flowed from his experience of conversion. Francis had heard the voice of Jesus speak to him from the crucifix in the church of San Damiano and had experienced the touch of Christ when he embraced a leper in the forest outside of Assisi.

These were the very powerful ways that Francis came to know the real presence of God through tangible means, through his bodily senses. This led him to a deep appreciation of the very concrete way Jesus continued His presence in the midst of the Church and the world, especially in the sacrament of His body and blood.

In Francis' time there were many groups who wanted to follow the Gospels in a radical way. Such groups often became very "spiritual," in other words, dualistic. They rejected everything material as the root of evil. Because of this, they eventually rejected the sacraments of the Church because these involved the use of material things like water, oil and other elements. They came to think of the Eucharist as a completely spiritual reality and therefore rejected the notion that the material elements of bread and wine really became the body and blood of Christ.

St. Francis could not agree with this idea. If he was going to follow Jesus Christ, he had to trust in the Savior's words. Jesus had plainly said, "This is my body....this is the cup

of my blood." Jesus used real bread and wine, material things, and the hands of the priest to share His presence with His followers. Because of this, in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, Francis experienced the love of Jesus not only for his soul but for his body. He accepted this sacrament as the way Jesus gave us to connect to Him both in spirit and in body.

Francis knew that the way we treat this wonderful sacrament reflects our respect and veneration for the presence of God in our world, including in all God's creatures. When Francis looked with faith upon the Blessed Sacrament and tasted the sweetness of the Lord in Holy Communion, it was this that gave him strength to look for the presence of God in the world around him. It was the Eucharist that gave Francis the grace to find Christ in his brothers and sisters, especially the poor and those in need. It is no coincidence that from his earliest days, Francis found Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and also in the lepers, whose bodily needs he served with great care and compassion.

We today once more are called to honor and revere the Eucharist as the source and summit of our lives. Our love of the Lord in the sacrament of His body and blood is not meant to lead us away from the world, but to look for God's presence in our everyday lives and our interactions with God's creation. St. Bonaventure, an early follower of St. Francis and a holy theologian, tells us that Jesus Christ is the center of creation, the pattern for the whole universe. When we encounter Jesus under the very physical signs of bread and wine, transformed by the Spirit into His real body and blood, we encounter the very center of creation, the Word made flesh who dwells among us still.

It was this faith that helped Francis of Assisi become a model for all Christians who take Jesus' words and deeds in the Gospel seriously. ■

Let's support ou

Join us for the Priests Retirement Luncheon!

The 14th annual luncheon will be held Friday, **Oct. 11, 2024** in Patron's Hall on the lower level of Saint Mary's Cathedral.

Priests Retirement Fund Special Collection: **Sept. 21-22, 2024**

Over \$2.8M has been raised since the first luncheon in 2011. This support is critical for our retired priests. They have dedicated their lives to serving others, and it is now our turn to care for them.

As in 2023, the money raised this year will be directed to repairing and renovating the Serra Clergy House in San Mateo, where several of our retired priests reside.

- Thanks to the generosity provided in last year's luncheon and special collection, a new roof has been installed, the irrigation system has been repaired and the glass patio doors have been replaced. This increases the safety and security of our retired priests.
- Other completed projects refreshed the common areas and enhanced the dining room. Dinner is the primary gathering time for our retired priests; they enjoy the updated and more comfortable setting.
- The funds raised in 2024 will fund seismic and electrical panel upgrades already underway. Your generosity will also enable us to paint the Clergy House, revitalize landscaping, and install double-paned windows, among other projects.



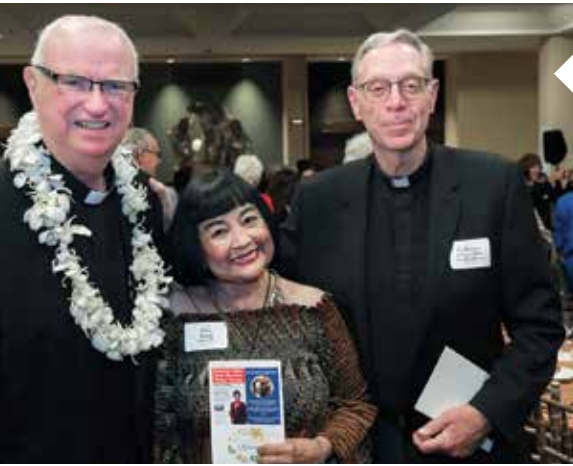
Retired priest Father Antonio Petilla with Holy Angels parishioners Patrick Uriarte, left, and Ted Cordano, right.



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r retired priests!



Retired priest Father Anthony McGuire, Star of the Sea parishioner Daisy Young and Father Matt Link, C.P.P.S.



Photos by Dennis Callahan

From left, Father Eduard Dura, Father Martin Njoalu, Father Angel Quitelig, Father Dominic Lee and Father Eugene D. Tungol.

“Thank you very much for your support, both through your prayers and/or your gift to the Priests Retirement Fund. You have a great impact on my life and the lives of my fellow retired Priests.”

FR. ULYSSES D’AQUILA

Retired Priest, Archdiocese of San Francisco

Join us for the **Priests Retirement Luncheon!**

The Thirteenth Annual Luncheon will be held
Friday, October 11, 2024
in Patron’s Hall at
Saint Mary’s Cathedral.

2024 Honorees



**Father Anthony LaTorre
and Father Paul Rossi**

The Luncheon is a unique opportunity for our retired Priests and the entire community to gather, renew old friendships, and make new ones!

*Join us in celebrating
these special men!*

Tradition of White Mass celebrates, supports Catholic medical professionals



BY VALERIE SCHMALZ

Director, Office of Human Life & Dignity

A few years ago, San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone made a request: create a White Mass for medical professionals as an annual tradition.

The White Mass had come and gone at various times in the history of the Archdiocese of San Francisco but was not a fixed tradition.

However, beginning in 2019, the White Mass and Blessing of Catholic Medical Professionals joined the Blue Mass, also known as the Police/Fire Mass, and the Red Mass for the Legal Profession as annual celebrations. This year, the White Mass at Mater Dolorosa Parish, South San Francisco, will be celebrated by Archbishop Cordileone at 6 p.m., Oct. 18. A reception will follow.

The Archbishop recognized the challenge and call of medical professionals in his homily at last year's White Mass. Medical professionals are blessed with "this holy call as a Catholic health care worker healing mind and body with the selfless love of the Mother of God, with the compassion revealed by her Son on the cross," he said.

For the Catholic Medical Association San Francisco Guild, the White Mass is an opportunity to showcase a professional organization that supports people of faith, said Dr. Stephen McCurdy, president of the San Francisco Guild.

"My vision is that it should be a forum for Catholic medical professionals where we can come together for spiritual purposes, for education, for fellowship and basically support one another in our walks," said McCurdy, a retired UC Davis medical school professor. The CMA guild was instituted several decades ago and then fell away but was recently reinstated. It draws local medical professionals and supports those studying medicine in various careers.



Archbishop Cordileone visits with members of the Catholic Medical Association-SF Guild and students from UC Davis School of Medicine.

"We need to support each other as we offer life-affirming care for our patients and provide hope in a time when many medical institutions have embraced anti-life, anti-Christian practices including abortion, transgender surgeries, and euthanasia," said Dolores Meehan, executive director of Bella



Photo by Dennis Callahan

Primary Care. “The White Mass is a wonderful time of community, and we feel honored that Archbishop Cordileone celebrates the Mass for us.”

The White Mass is the traditional name given for the Mass for medical professionals, drawn from the white coats that physicians still wear and the white uniforms worn by nurses in times past. The Mass is celebrated on or near the Oct. 18 feast day of St. Luke, patron of the medical

profession. St. Luke was an educated Greek physician, author of the Gospel of St. Luke and a companion of the Apostle Paul who remained with him when he was imprisoned in Rome.

The White Mass is sponsored by the San Francisco Guild of the Catholic Medical Association, Bella Primary Care, and the Order of Malta Clinic of Northern California. The event is organized by the Archdiocese of San Francisco Office of Human Life & Dignity. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Catholic Medical Association
San Francisco Guild:
<https://sfguild.cathmed.org/>

Bella Primary Care:
<https://bellapriamarycare.org/>

Order of Malta Clinic of
Northern California: [https://
www.orderofmaltaclinic.com/](https://www.orderofmaltaclinic.com/)



Photo by Dennis Callahan

Red Mass seeks blessing and guidance for those in the legal profession



BY MARY POWERS

Assistant director of communications and media relations. Office of Communications, Archdiocese of San Francisco

In a tradition dating back to the Middle Ages, members of the legal profession gather at the beginning of each court year for the annual Red Mass, seeking blessing and guidance for judges, attorneys, law school professors, law students, government officials and others involved in the legal and justice systems.

The “Red Mass” is named after the traditional red robes worn by judges and also the Catholic custom of wearing red for the votive Mass of the Holy Spirit, which is said for the Spirit’s intercession for the legal community. The Red Mass originated in Rome, France and England, with the first recorded Red Mass in the United States in 1928 in New York City.

Sponsored by the St. Thomas More Society of San Francisco, the oldest fellowship of Catholic lawyers and judges in the west, the Mass brings together the legal community for prayer and fellowship, while also recognizing an outstanding member who exemplifies the spirit of St. Thomas More.

St. Thomas More, a 16th-century lawyer, judge, diplomat and scholar, was martyred by

the King of England for refusing to submit to the “Oath of Supremacy” declaring King Henry VIII the head of the Church of England and granting him the authority to divorce Catherine of Aragon to marry Anne Boleyn.

The 2024 awardee is attorney James A. Lassart, a shareholder at the firm of Murphy Pearson Bradley and Feeney. Mr. Lassart is a former prosecutor with the San Francisco District Attorney’s Office and U.S. Department of Justice and a retired brigadier general in the United States Army Reserve.

The 2024 Red Mass will take place on Sept. 19 at Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in San Francisco and will be followed by a dinner at the Italian Athletic Club. Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone will be the principal celebrant with Albany Bishop Edward Scharfenberger concelebrating and delivering the homily. ■



SCAN LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RED MASS AND THE ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY, or visit <https://www.stthomasmore-sf.org/>

CATHOLIC QUIZ ANSWERS



OPEN THIS QR CODE FOR COMPREHENSIVE ANSWERS or visit <https://sfarchdiocese.org/septemeber-2024-catholic-quiz/>

1. Which of these is a proper chronological listing of ecumenical councils?

E is correct. None of the above answers.

2. The Church founded by Christ

D is correct. The Church is perfect not in her members—each of whom is a sinner and therefore imperfect—but “according to her nature and her rights [since] she possesses in herself and by herself, by the will and the goodness of her Founder, everything that is necessary for her existence and her efficacy” (Pope Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*, 1885).

3. The first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire was

A is correct. Constantine

legalized Christianity in his Edict of Milan, issued in 313. This did not establish Christianity as the state religion. It merely permitted Christians to practice their faith openly and without repression.

4. Which is not an attribute of God?

C is correct. Omnivorousness is the property of being able to eat both animals and vegetables. Man has this property, but God doesn't, since He doesn't eat.

5. Who were the first to establish the existence of God can be known through reason alone, apart from revelation?

A is correct. Preeminent among the Greek philosophers were Plato and Aristotle, who used reason to demonstrate that God exists.



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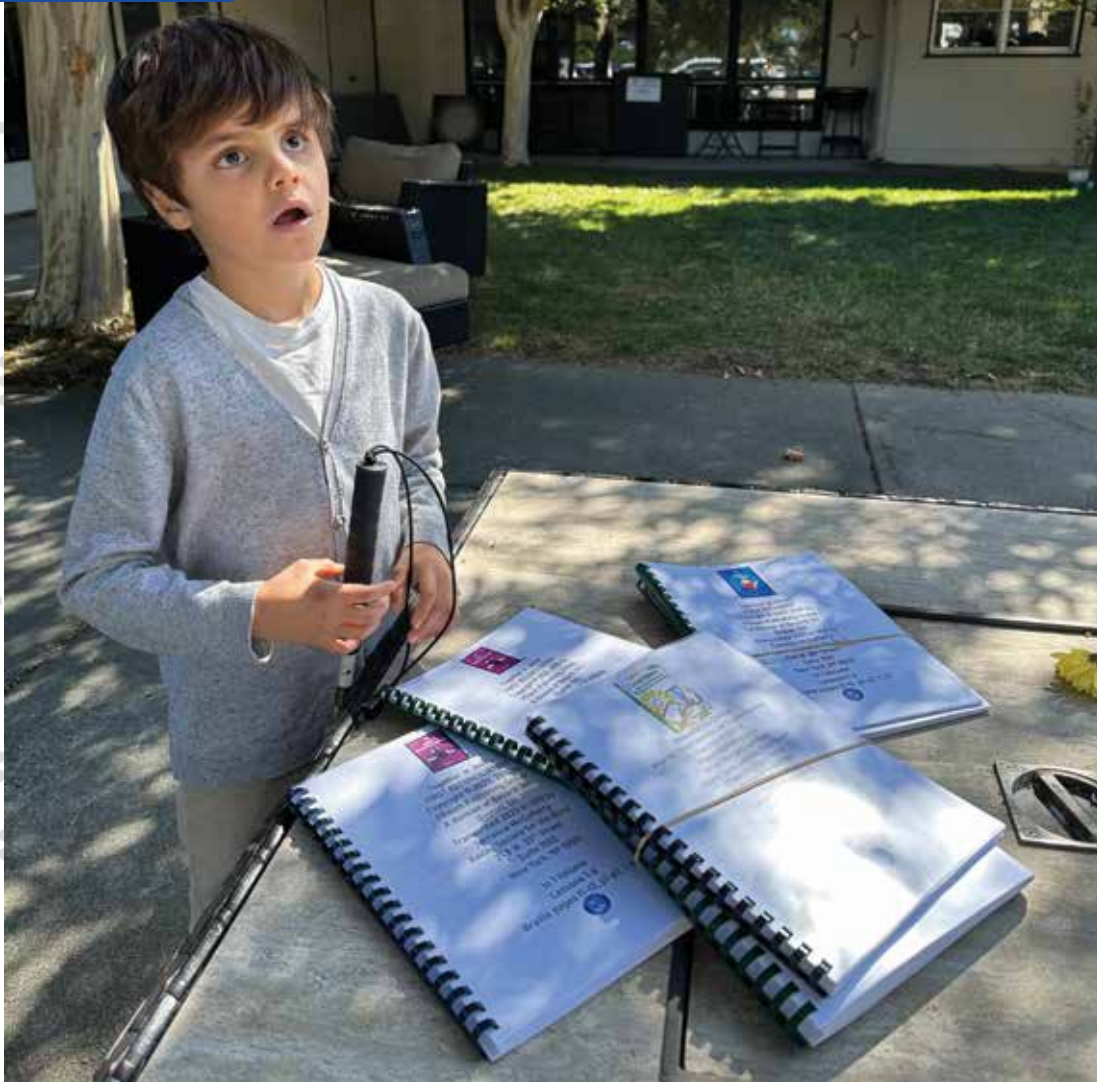
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Henrique Rio showcases his new religious education class materials in Braille provided by the Xavier Society for the Blind.

Serving God and the blind for more than 120 years



BY FRANCISCO VALDEZ

Reporter, Catholic San Francisco

The Xavier Society for the Blind, based in New York, is the only Catholic organization that actively provides reading and audio materials to the visually impaired for free. The Xavier Society exists because in 1900 a young blind woman, Margaret Coffey, wanted to make sure that the visually impaired children she taught had access to the same reading

materials that their sighted classmates had and for them to feel fully integrated in the classroom. No one else was doing anything at the time to help visually impaired children, so she teamed up with her co-founder, Jesuit Father Joseph Stadelman, to raise money to create the needed reading materials. This tradition of service continues today. The main purpose of the Xavier Society is to integrate those who are visually impaired into situations that

“

I think the Xavier Society makes our lives easier, and Henrique can be involved and participate more in religious education and in Church life.”

MAFALDA RIO

St. Raymond’s Catholic Church parishioner

sighted people take for granted. When we attend Mass, it is easy to take the option to participate in worship for granted because one can read the words on the page. What if a vision-impaired person wants to be lector for Mass? One could bet there are not any Braille worship aids in your local pews!

“Our patrons tell us that having the readings, prayers and responses in Braille at Mass really makes them feel like a part of their parish community,” said Malachy Fallon, executive director of the Xavier Society for the Blind. “Otherwise, even though they are attending Mass, they feel a greater sense of isolation without the missalette in Braille.”

The Archdiocese of San Francisco has parishioners who benefit from the free services of the Xavier Society for the Blind. Mafalda Rio attends St. Raymond’s Catholic Church in Menlo Park with her son Henrique, who is visually impaired. Henrique is preparing for his first Holy Communion but the parish did not have any catechism materials in Braille for him to use. The parish recommended that Mafalda reach out to the Xavier Society, and Henrique was able to get the books he needed to learn more about his faith.

“Up until now, Henrique would sit down in religious education with no materials, just listening,” said Mafalda. “He is a second grader, but they were able to help with those materials.”

Henrique also said having the materials in Braille made a difference. “I felt a little bit left out because I was not engaged at all,” he said. “I was just sitting there listening to everyone else.”

“I think the Xavier Society makes our lives easier, and Henrique can be involved and participate more in religious education and in Church life,” said Mafalda. “I just hope that other people reach out and ask for help.”

Getting help from the Xavier Society for the Blind is simple. A form on their website can be submitted electronically and the materials in Braille are shipped to your door completely free. ■



SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION AND HELP IN GETTING CATHOLIC MATERIALS IN BRAILLE, or visit the Xavier Society for the Blind at xaviersocietyfortheblind.org

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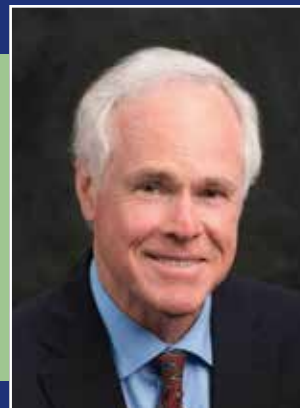


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Deacon David Mees (second from left) was ordained to the priesthood at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption on June 15.

Photo by Dennis Callahan

Let us fast on Ember Days for priestly vocations



BY REV. VINCENT WOO, J.C.D.

Assistant Professor of Pastoral Studies at St. Patrick's Seminary & University in Menlo Park. In addition to his role in teaching canon law at St. Patrick's, Father Woo also serves as the priest-secretary to Archbishop Cordileone.

The content of this piece is drawn from his article titled "Historical Development of the Times of Ordinations: A Proposal to Revitalize Ember Saturday Ordinations," which was originally published in The Jurist 79 (2023) 459-506.

Archbishop Patrick William Riordan was ordained to the priesthood on June 10, 1865, while Archbishop John Joseph Mitty became a priest on Dec. 22, 1906. What is common between these two dates? Both days are designated as days of fasting and prayer for vocations in the Church, known as Ember Days. Why do I write about Ember Days? Because I want to invite you to pray and fast for vocations!

Communal fasting before ordinations is deeply scriptural. The Acts of the Apostles records: "While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:2-3). Moreover, after the Apostles appointed elders in every church, "with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed" (Acts 14:23). In light of the scriptural connection between fasting and ordinations, the Church chose Ember Days to confer ordinations.

Ember Days are historically the seasonal fasts of the Roman Church. From apostolic times until 1966, Catholics were universally bound to fast on the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday: (1) in the first week of Lent, (2) in the week following Pentecost, (3) in the third week of September, and (4) in the third week of Advent, respectively. The original purposes of these fasts are to give thanks to God for harvests and atone for sins. Since the fifth century, the Church has added another purpose to Ember Days: the entire people of God pray and fast for three >

days—Wednesday, Friday and Saturday—for candidates of ordinations.

What are the three reasons behind the Ember Day fast before ordinations? First, our supplications to God are more powerful when coupled with fasting. Second, fasting for the clergy is a way for us to express our gratitude to them in a spiritual manner. Third, fostering priestly vocations is not just the work of bishops and vocation directors; it is a task that every Catholic should engage in on a regular basis.

Although the practice of associating Ember Day fasting with ordinations had been in existence since the fifth century, it was gradually relaxed beginning in the 19th century. Local bishops began asking the Apostolic See for dispensation from this requirement. For example, in the 1940s, the U.S. bishops were granted permission to confer ordinations on some Saturdays in May for convenience, as the Pentecost Ember Saturdays sometimes did not align with the end of the academic year. Slowly, the intrinsic association between Ember Day fasting and ordinations began to fade out. In 1963, Paul VI allowed bishops to confer ordinations anytime, as long as a pastoral advantage would require. With Ember Days no longer prescribed in the universal law as an obligation since the 1960s, conferring ordinations on Ember Saturdays seems to be a distant memory of the past.

However, the American bishops actually encourage the faithful to fast on Ember Days *voluntarily*, without imposing any legal obligation (NCCB Pastoral Statement on Penance and Abstinence, no. 17). This little-known fact has been rediscovered recently, leading to a revival of Ember Days in certain American dioceses.

For instance, the Diocese of Syracuse is a pioneer in restoring the Ember Day connection with vocations. Bishop Douglas Lucia of Syracuse established the Year of Vocations starting in Advent 2020. He granted partial indulgences to any faithful engaged in prayer and fasting for vocations. Each Ember Tide, which represents a series of days that fall on the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after a specific feast day, was dedicated to one of the four vocations: marriage and family, priesthood, consecrated life, and single life. Moreover, each of the four Ember Saturdays was exclusively dedicated to seminarians, and the faithful were invited to pray and fast for them by name.



The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

MATTHEW 9:38

Brothers and sisters, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Mt 9:38). The historical connection between fasting and ordinations shows us that our prayers for vocations cannot be separated from bodily fasts. As Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone will be ordaining a few seminarians to be transitional deacons in September, I invite you to pray and fast for vocations according to your own capability.



Photo by Dennis Callahan

THERE'S ART & SCIENCE TO LASTING VITALITY.



1. On the September Ember Days (falling on Sept. 18, 20 and 21 this year), pray and fast for these seminarians. Perhaps you can choose to have only one regular meal and two small snacks. If your health does not permit, you may consider abstaining from meat on these days instead. Offer up your intentions for these young men.

2. In future Ember Days, consider doing the same thing. Even if there are no ordinations on those Ember Days, it is still a good idea to perform some extra prayer and fasting for priestly vocations. How to find out the exact dates of Ember Days? Just search online!

3. Share this practice with your parish community. We need to promote a culture of vocations through which people are periodically reminded of the importance of praying and fasting for vocations.

Let us pray! Let us do penance! Let us observe Ember Days for vocations! ■

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Message from Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone on Voting

As American citizens, one of our most fundamental rights is our right to vote. Our votes decide issues on the ballot, and they decide who will be elected to office. Sometimes it seems as if one vote doesn't matter as we look at our society with its many problems.

However, as citizens in a democratic republic, we do make a difference! As Catholics, we have the virtue of prudence, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the teachings of our Church to help us make our decision.

Ultimately, and this is very important, the Catholic Church respects the individual right of a well-formed conscience. Each person is called to become educated and pray, but ultimately it is up to you, the individual, to judge how to vote.

I urge you to pray, ask for the help of the Holy Spirit and to vote.

VOTING REMINDERS:

- The last day to register to vote for the Nov. 5 general election is Oct. 21.
- All California active registered voters will receive a vote-by-mail ballot for the Nov. 5 general election.
- Your county elections office will begin mailing ballots by Oct. 7.
- Ballot drop-off locations open on Oct. 8.
- Vote-by-mail ballots can be returned by mail, at a drop-off location, or your county elections office.
- Vote centers open for early in-person voting in all Voter's Choice Act counties beginning on Oct. 26.
- Vote-by-mail ballots must be postmarked on or before Election Day and received by Nov. 12.



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(USCCB) ON VOTING, or
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“

We need to participate for the common good. Sometimes we hear: a good Catholic is not interested in politics. This is not true: good Catholics immerse themselves in politics by offering the best of themselves so that the leader can govern.”

POPE FRANCIS



St. Brigid Academy begins first academic year



BY CHRISTINA GRAY

Lead writer,
Catholic San Francisco
grayc@sfarch.org

After a prayerful grand opening celebration this June led by Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone, St. Brigid Academy began its first academic year on Aug. 19 serving families of K-8 students with language-based learning differences.

The school is poised to help all students reach their full potential, whether a child has a neurodiversity such as dyslexia, a comprehension or attention difference, or needs to be challenged beyond their age or grade level.

The official transition of the 136-year-old St. Brigid School to St. Brigid Academy is a victory for the Archdiocese of San Francisco's Department of Catholic Schools and the families it serves.

"We are starting something very positive here, something that is very much needed," said Archbishop Cordileone to school families and supporters.

St. Brigid Academy is the first Catholic "micro school" in Northern California for students with learning differences, according to head-of-school Megan Rabbitt.

Micro schooling has been described as a modern incarnation of the one-room schoolhouse, where class size is typically less than that of most schools with a low teacher-student ratio.

Despite the name change, the school will continue to serve "neurotypical" students.

"Our program is set up so that



Photo by Christina Gray

Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone turns to bless school families and supporters after blessing the doors of St. Brigid Academy at a grand opening ceremony June 29. The school is the first Catholic "micro school" in Northern California serving students with learning differences.

each student will learn at their own pace while meeting California state standards under the supervision of highly trained teachers and staff members," said Rabbitt.

She emphasized that the school's long tradition of Catholic education that began in 1888 with the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary has not changed.

"First and foremost, we are a school rooted in the Catholic faith that integrates Catholic values throughout all facets of learning," she said. "What sets us apart? We can now support a diverse array of learners with intentional smaller class sizes with a 7:1 teacher-student ratio."

A 2019 survey of K-8 Catholic

school leaders in the Archdiocese of San Francisco revealed an overwhelming desire to better serve students with diverse learning needs.

New superintendent of the Department of Catholic Schools Chris Fisher said the opening of St. Brigid Academy represents "a real need within our Catholic community and a fulfillment of that need."

"Today we open the doors to a place where every child is valued, understood and given the resources to thrive," he said. ■



SCAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ST. BRIGID ACADEMY or visit saintbrigidssf.org

SAVE THE DATES!

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visit sfarch.org/events

Sept. 13: Reentry Conference

Join the Archdiocesan Restorative Justice Ministry for the 12th annual Reentry Conference, Resource and Job Fair on Friday, Sept. 13, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sponsored by the Archdiocese of San Francisco's Office of Human Life & Dignity – Restorative Justice Ministry, the event supports the protection of the human dignity of justice-involved people, as well as victims and families of prisoners. The conference is free. Learn more: <https://sfarch.org/reentry-conference/>

Sept. 19: Red Mass

The St. Thomas More Society will host the annual Red Mass at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in San Francisco on Thursday, Sept. 19 at 6 p.m. followed by dinner. The Red Mass is traditionally celebrated at the opening of each court year and seeks blessing and guidance for judges, attorneys, law school professors, law students, government officials, and others involved in the legal and justice systems. Register for the Mass and dinner: <https://www.stthomasmore-sf.org/the-red-mass-2-2/>

Sept. 21: St. Patrick's Seminary and University Gala

Join St. Patrick's Seminary & University for their annual Gala benefiting its seminarians, the future priests of the Church. The



Photo by Dennis Callahan

Oct. 12: Bay Area Rosary Rally

The annual Bay Area Rosary Rally and Mass offered for All Immigrants will be held on Saturday, Oct. 12, at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption. The 2024 theme is "Our Lady who Unites all People" celebrating the many immigrants in San Francisco. The event will include Mass, Eucharistic procession, and Rosary, and will be followed by a lunch and "Know your Rights" immigration workshop in the Event Center. Learn more: <https://sfarch.org/event/rosary-rally/>

event takes place at St. Patrick's Seminary on Saturday, Sept. 21, beginning with Vespers at 4:30 p.m. followed by dinner. Learn more and buy tickets at: <https://stpsu.edu/st-patricks-seminary-gala-2024/>

Oct. 5: Faith Formation Conference

The Archdiocesan Office of Faith Formation will hold their annual conference on Saturday, Oct. 5, at St. Matthew Catholic Church. The theme is "Be Still and Know That I Am God," focusing on the power and beauty of prayer as we prepare for the Jubilee Year of Hope in 2025. Find more information and register at: <https://faithformationsf.org/>

Oct. 11: Priest Retirement Luncheon

Join the Archdiocese in celebrating and honoring our retired priests at the 14th annual Priest Retirement Luncheon on Friday, Oct. 11, at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption Event Center in San Francisco. Learn more and buy your ticket at <https://sfarchdiocese.org/prflunch/>.

Oct. 18: White Mass

Doctors, nurses and health care professionals are invited to a White Mass for medical professionals at Mater Dolorosa Catholic Church on Friday, Oct. 18 at 6 p.m. Learn more at <https://sfarch.org/event/2024-white-mass-for-medical-professionals/>

Oct. 26: Together in Holiness Conference

Married and engaged couples are invited to the eighth annual Together in Holiness marriage conference on Saturday, Oct. 26 from 10:45 a.m. to 6 p.m. at St. Pius Catholic Church. This one-day conference will help you strengthen your relationship with your spouse and discover God's plan for your family. This conference is presented by the Archdiocese of San Francisco and the St. John Paul II Foundation. Learn more at: <https://www.sfarch.org/event/together-in-holiness-in-san-francisco/>

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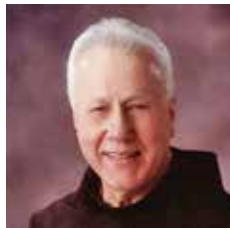
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A conversation with **Chris Fisher**

Get to know our new superintendent of Catholic schools



BY CHRISTINA GRAY

Lead writer,
Catholic
San Francisco
grayc@sfarch.org

Chris Fisher was interviewed by Catholic San Francisco this summer in the midst of his family's cross-country move from Rhode Island to San Francisco. The new superintendent of Catholic schools, serving more than 24,000 students, started July 1. Fisher was most recently executive director of the Portsmouth Institute for Faith and Culture at Portsmouth Abbey and School, a Benedictine monastery and Catholic boarding school in Portsmouth, Rhode Island.

CSF: Who is the essential Chris Fisher?

Fisher: I am a Catholic husband, father and educator, a trinity of vocations. I am a native New Englander. My wife Lauren and I have two young boys, Frederick and Felix. I was raised Catholic, but my faith was awakened largely through my study of the Catholic intellectual tradition in a 'great books' course in college. I have been called to provide the same kind of transformative education I received and that I've witnessed change the lives of so many students.

CSF: How did your vocation as a Catholic educator evolve?

Fisher: Working with Catholic school students and faculty when I was a young teacher gave me the experience of witnessing how in a Catholic school the cultivation of a love of learning can lead students to a desire for God. That teachers and school leaders are able to be

instruments of God's grace in such a profound way was so compelling for me to witness. I knew Catholic education was where I belonged.

CSF: What was it about the opportunity with the Archdiocese of San Francisco that made you decide to come West?

Fisher: The short answer is that God's providence is full of surprises. As a lifelong New Englander, San Francisco was not on my bingo card! However, several reasons converged to make this a thrilling opportunity. I knew working for Archbishop Cordileone was a very special opportunity. As a vital center for American culture from business and technology to arts and education to its natural splendor and rich Catholic legacy, the Archdiocese is an important and exciting vineyard to work for the Lord.

CSF: How would you articulate your vision and philosophy of Catholic education?

Fisher: Catholic education is an invitation to greatness. The heart of the Church's vision and mission for education is to liberate each person to flourish and achieve their full potential as a child made in the image and likeness of God. Catholic education is freeing in this full sense; we are only truly free when we become who God made us to be. It is also the primary responsibility of Catholic educators to support parents as primary educators of their children.

CSF: As an educator, what do you view as your greatest accomplishment to this point?

Fisher: Any educator is a teacher at heart. I am most proud of whatever contributions I've been able to make to the lives of my students that has helped them achieve their fullest potential as a child created in the image of God. The students (and sometimes whole families) who would convert to the Catholic faith because of an encounter with St. Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas in the classroom always reminds me of why we Catholic teachers are in this profession in the first place.



CSF: Do you feel Catholic schools in the Bay Area face unique challenges?

Fisher: In my experience, every school faces both unique and universal challenges, and the same is true for Catholic schools here. It is good to remember that every challenge is also an opportunity. Like anywhere else in the country, families crave authenticity, a sense of mission, confidence, joy, charity, dignity and especially meaning — all the hallmark characteristics of an excellent Catholic school. On a cultural level, you see on the West Coast a real desire to pursue a life of meaning. That passion, which has made San Francisco a cultural touchstone, represents a great opportunity for the Catholic Church, and Catholic education in particular, to respond to that innate human desire for meaning.

CSF: What is it that Catholic schools can offer families where high-quality education is an expectation?

Fisher: What is unique about a Catholic school is that it infuses all of its activities with meaning. We know that all that we do points to a higher end outside of ourselves: namely, to know, love and serve God and neighbor. While other schools could also have excellent academic or athletic programs, Catholic schools are centers of meaning and purpose. In an age where young people especially are longing for meaning, our Catholic schools are uniquely capable of filling that need. We also have the unique benefit of a dynamic legacy of education that we can draw from.

CSF: What are the challenges and opportunities of serving both Catholic and non-Catholic students in our schools?

Fisher: I have had a lot of experience working with families from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, including those with very little knowledge of, or experience with, the Catholic faith. In my experience, this has always been an energizing opportunity. Like the apostles, we have the privilege of introducing the fruits of our faith and our tradition to people for the first time. The opportunity for our schools is to create a culture where that experience, whether in the classroom, in

the liturgy, or in the witness of students and teachers, is meaningful, vibrant and joyful. We should welcome non-Catholic students and families into our schools and celebrate the opportunity to share with them the “pearl of great price” which we hold in trust.

CSF: What are some of your priorities as you start your first academic year?

Fisher: I believe that as Catholic educators, we need to be creative and courageous in how we accomplish our mission. I look forward to learning more about what our Catholic schools need through conversation with principals, pastors and families. I will work toward cultivating an esprit de corps among all educators in the Archdiocese. That sense of purpose, mission and community will be attractive to other teachers and school leaders who may feel called to join us in our important work. I will leverage resources like the St. Clare Institute for Learning to help train our next generation of teachers and school leaders. I will learn what our school families need and how the Archdiocese can support parents as the primary educators of their children. And finally, I'd like to better showcase the wonderful gifts and talents of our schools to attract even more families. ■



SCAN FOR MORE DETAILED BACKGROUND ON CHRIS FISHER, or visit sfarch.org/archdiocese-of-san-francisco-announces-new-superintendent-of-catholic-schools.

THE POWER OF ADOPTION

Archdiocese of San Francisco Respect Life Essay Contest



Perspectives from Catholic school students on topics of faith

ASSIGNMENT: Essay is based on the documentary “I lived on Parker Avenue,” which is about a boy who was given up for adoption. What have you learned about adoption, and what will you tell a potential birth mother considering placing her child for adoption?

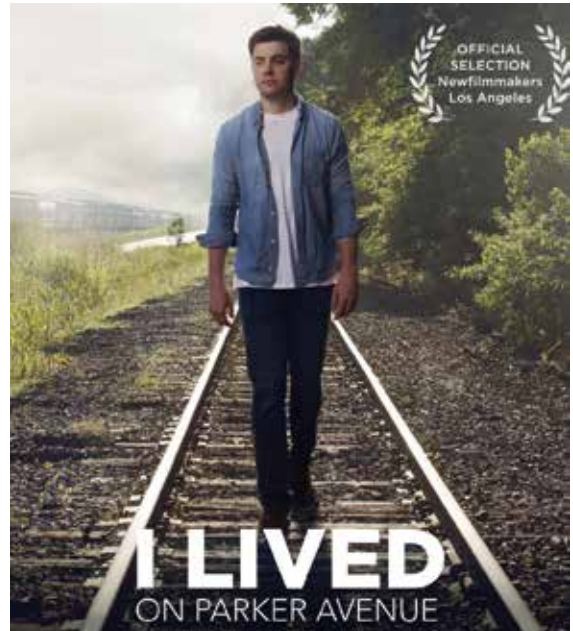


BY JEREMIAH DANIELS

*Grand Prize Winner
9th Grade,
Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory*

All life is sacred and valuable no matter what. Families are formed in many ways and that’s what makes life special. Adopted as a kid, I have my own insight to this question that others may not. I can relate a lot to David in the video, “I lived on Parker Avenue.” Being adopted is both a blessing and a challenge for many reasons. I am grateful every day for my new family and wonderful adoptive parents, but it can be a burden too. I have spent hours thinking about what life could have been like. I think a lot about my mom, but like David, I am not mad or angry at her. I just wish I could meet her and get to know her. Through the video and through personal experience, I have come to realize that adoption is just as valuable as being born into a family. The only thing that matters is that you feel safe and loved by the people you are surrounded with. That’s what makes a family.

If I were to ever encounter a potential birth mother considering placing her child into adoption, I would say do what is best for the child. This may not always be an easy decision but if you love the baby, do what you think is best for them. Adoption can make all the difference in their lives and yours. With the right care they can thrive and become the amazing person that you want them to be. Yes, it may mean you may not see them for a long time, but keep in mind that they WILL love you



no matter what. If you love them, consider making this sacrifice.

Sometimes I think about what life would have been like if I lived with my birth mother. Would I like it there? Would I have lots of friends? Would I be fluent in Spanish like my birth mom? I can always wonder but it’s important to keep in mind that, although things will never be like that for me, I can appreciate what I do have: a loving family that has my back and does whatever is in my best interest. They love me, and I love them with all my heart. God is good and has a plan for everything. My adoption, along with my brother and sister, is part of God’s plan for us. I must have faith that there is meaning to everything.

Adoption is many things, but above all, it is a gift to everyone involved. It is the start of new memories, family and love. Adoption is commonly not recognized for how sacred and important it is as society sometimes glosses over it. Being adopted makes me different, but at the same time it makes me just like everyone else. All that matters is that I have a loving family and community. I am grateful to my birth mom for putting me up for adoption, and to my new family for making a home for me. So, back to that letter to a mom considering giving a child up for adoption: it is going to be hard, and you are going to miss your child and your child is going to miss you but know that the path you choose is part of God’s plan too. ■



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Convent & Stuart Hall

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ICA Cristo Rey Academy

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Application Deadline:
November 22, 2024

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Application Deadline:
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Mercy Burlingame

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