By Most Rev. Michael C. Barber, SJ

When I was based at the U.S. Navy submarine base in Bangor, Washington, from time to time a sailor would come to my office at the chapel. "Father Barber, our boat is going out, and I need some Catholic materials."

"Oh," I'd say. "Where are you going?"

"Sorry, that's classified."

"Oh," I'd reply. "How long will you be gone?"

"Sorry, I can't tell you," he'd say.

"What's your mission? I would push."

"Father, I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you," he smiled. Like Tom Cruise in "Top Gun." Then I would give him a dozen rosaries, with leaflets on how to say the rosary. I would give him a supply of Sunday missallettes, St. Christopher medals and holy water. I also gave him a link to Father Robert Barron's "Word on Fire" website, so he could download in advance sermons for the Sundays they would be underway. With these materials, the senior Catholic sailor or officer onboard would be authorized by the Commanding Officer to conduct an informal worship service for the Catholic crewmembers "in the absence of a priest."

Something like that is possible now in our homes because of the COVID-19 lockdown. We just heard that Gov. Gavin Newsom has halted indoor worship services in 41 California counties, including Alameda and Contra Costa. This comes as a blow, as we were just getting used to going back to indoor Mass, while taking all the precautions. Now we have to move back outdoors, not easy in the coming winter months, or have livestream Mass, or both.

It's the "yo-yo" effect that is particularly frustrating. I believe the reasons the governor gives sound. Hospitals are at 75% capacity right now. Infection cases are rising, Italy, France, England and parts of the United States are seeing a resurgence of infections, sickness and rising deaths. All are good reasons for Church leadership to follow advice of health professionals to keep all our parishioners safe.

Yet that does not mean we are reduced to "nothing." The first church any of us belong to is the "domestic church" — meaning the church of our own homes. This was stressed when I was a kid. Our teachers at my Catholic school — mostly nuns — had a campaign asking our families to pray the rosary together nightly at home. "The family that prays together, stays together," the Sisters said, echoing Father Patrick Peyton, the "Rosary Priest." My own family was not particularly religious, but I remember us saying the rosary together for Mass and worship openly, so they gathered in "home churches." The Holy Communion can be given to a car, and a family can have a message at 510-635-7252 or email info@oakdiocese.org, visit www.oakdiocese.org for more updates.

Holy Spirit comes to SPRED community

By Michele Jurich

SPRED — the Special Religious Education Department — seeks, by its mission statement, "to integrate people with developmental disabilities into the faith and life of the church."

It did just that, in the midst of pandemic, in the parking lot of an Oakland church, as Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ, confirmed a small group of friends, ranging from teenagers to their 60s.

Attendance at the Oct. 10 morning Mass was limited to the friends, as the participants are known, and their spon-

Guidelines for worship

As of Nov. 18, the governor has placed Alameda and Contra Costa counties in the Purple Tier category, along with 39 other counties in the state. The rising number of infections, hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19 made this change necessary.

The following guidelines apply to Masses, weddings, funerals, baptisms, confirmations, marriages, ordinations and other sacraments and rituals.

It is permissible to have indoor worship with a congregation at this time. The three options we have for worship at this time are: 1. Virtual (preferred); 2. Outdoor, seated or standing; 3. In a car, in the parking lot. The safest option is to live stream Masses, and encourage the faithful to make a "spiritual communion" from home.

Holy Communion may be distributed outside of Mass, preferably at the church doors or somewhere else outside. Care should be taken to protect the sacrament from the wind and rain. Mass may be conducted in the parking lot, with people remaining in their cars, but they must exit the car to receive Communion.

Objection to attendance outside of Mass, or the remains lifted until further notice, and the distribution of the Precious Blood is suspended indefinitely.

Outdoor Mass may be held, as long as chairs or standsensigned are at least 6 feet apart, and all wear masks.

On our cover

Veronica Velzkus, who attends the SPRED center at St. Cornelius Church, Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, holds an image of St. Mary, mother of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 8:38-39).
### Vatican issues McCarrick report

Although dogged for years by rumors of sexual impropriety, Theodore E. McCarrick, archbishop of Washington until 2017, has been lauded in the past for his work with the poor and with children. McCarrick was also a significant figure in the Vatican hierarchy, serving as a cardinal and playing a key role in the selection of Pope Francis.

McCarrick's ascent to high ranks of the Vatican was based on personal relationships, and he was able to rise in the Catholic hierarchy thanks to the support of the late Pope John Paul II. McCarrick was closely involved in the selection of Pope Francis, and he was a key figure in the formation of the new papal curia. However, his career was marred by allegations of sexual misconduct.

The Vatican issued a report in November 2020 that investigated the allegations against McCarrick. The report, which was compiled by a committee of experts, found that McCarrick had engaged in a pattern of sexual misconduct that had lasted for decades. The report also found that McCarrick had used his position to advance his own career, and that he had made use of his influence to obtain favorable assignments for himself and his family.

The Vatican report also overlapped with other parts of the meeting. In his opening address, Archbishop Gomez paused at the start to remember the children and adults within the church who are victimized by clergy sexual abuse. Acknowledging the McCarrick report, he called on the assembly to pay attention to the ongoing suffering caused by the coronavirus pandemic, noting that people’s faith in God “has been shaken” by the pandemic and related economic turmoil, and he urged the church leaders to help people navigate this enormous challenge.

Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the papal nuncio to the United States, spoke about the pandemic as one of the “dark clouds” looming over today’s world.

### Racism

Continuing their look at the sin of racism, the bishops approved their pastoral on racism in June 2020. They approved the pastoral after two years of work, and in their open session on Friday, the bishops discussed how to incorporate the pastoral into other parts of the meeting. In his open session, Archbishop Jose H. Gomez, president of the USCCB, said that the pastoral was a response to the “darker days” that the country is facing.

The pastoral calls for the church to be a source of hope and healing, and it urges the church to help people navigate the challenges of the pandemic. The pastoral also calls for the church to be a source of courage and strength, and it urges the church to be a source of hope and healing for those who are suffering.

### Advent begins

Advent, which begins Nov. 29, is the season encompassing the four Sundays (and weekdays) leading up to the celebration of Christmas. It is a time of preparation that directs our hearts and minds to Christ's second coming at the end of time and also to the anniversary of the Lord's birth on Christmas. Advent devotions include the Advent wreath, the White candle, and the purple and rose candles. Three candles are put out, one is rose, the candle in red is lit on the third Sunday, Gaudete Sunday.

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**Let the Catholic voice . . . be spread in every diocese, in every parish, in every association, in every family.**

— Pope Paul VI

### U.S. BISHOPS

**Bishops focus on McCarrick report, pandemic and racism during virtual meeting**

By By Carol Zimmermann

Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The two days of the virtual assembly of the U.S. Catholic bishops, Nov. 16-17, initially included discussion of the Vatican report on former cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick. But the bulk of the bishops’ conversation focused on the ongoing pandemic and the church’s response to it.

The meeting concluded with reaction to the presidential election, as Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, announced formation of a working group to address various issues of top importance to the church with the new administration of President-elect Joe Biden.

The bishops also discussed racism, acknowledging the McCarrick report, he called on the assembly to pay attention to the ongoing suffering caused by the coronavirus pandemic, noting that people’s faith in God “has been shaken” by the pandemic and related economic turmoil, and he urged the church leaders to help people navigate this enormous challenge.

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St. Vincent de Paul finds ways to serve neighbors in need

By Michele Jurich
Staff writer

It’s possible to concentrate on what couldn’t be done in a pandemic, but for the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Contra Costa County, the emphasis has been where it’s always been: on service to neighbors in need.

All are welcome. “We serve with no distinctions,” said Executive Director Claudia Ramirez. “To us, it’s never been an issue. That’s the way it’s been for 175 years in the United States. We serve with compassion and dignity to those who need it.”

Ramirez is rooted in this mission. “For nine years I’ve been a Vincentian,” she said, serving in her parish St. Vincent de Paul conference “long before I was in that seat.”

“It grounds me in what we do and why we do it,” she said.

That service with dignity has included forgoing new partnerships. With Catholic Charities East Bay, for example, food give-aways in Richmond have fed hundreds of families. The dining room at the Pittsburg center, operated with Loaves and Fishes, transitioned from sit-down service to take-away lunches. With a grant from the city of Pittsburg, service has grown from five days a week to seven.

There’s been an uptick in visitors to the emergency food pantry at Family Resource Center. Pre-pandemic, a Contra Costa County resident could come once a year for a three-day supply of food. “If people need food, they can come once a month,” Ramirez said.

Overflow from the food bank and food drives people conduct for SVDP supplement the offerings.

Despite the challenges, the Workforce Development Program, a paid jobs training program aimed at helping the unemployed re-enter the workforce and find stable employment, was able to start a 24-week program. Among the revenue sources St. Vincent de Paul went without for weeks were its thrift stores. Ramirez was preparing for a June 3 reopening by bringing workers back to sort through what was there when they had left almost three months before. The expected surge in donations has been met with workers ready to sort to resell.

Some new volunteers have also presented themselves. Some people working from home found that without commute time, they had now had time to volunteer.

Ramirez said.

“A two-hour commitment can make a difference,” she said.

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Bishop’s Appeal funds projects in an extraordinary year

By Michele Jurich
Staff writer

“Rebuild my church” has been the theme of the 2020 Bishop’s Appeal. The annual appeal, which funds programs benefiting seminarians, retired priests, assistance to parishes and schools, diocesan-wide programs in faith formation and ethnic ministry, has been put to extraordinary uses in 2020.

While many churches, as in physical buildings, have been closed by government order intermittently during the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of the Church has continued. Two men — Rev. Mac Lingo and Rev. Peter Lavongkeng — were ordained to the priesthood. Rev. Mr. Candidelo Jimenez and Rev. Mr. Huang Dinh were ordained as deacons, on their journey to the priesthood. Sixteen men were ordained as permanent deacons, and are serving in parishes across the diocese.

In addition to the two transitional deacons, there are 10 seminarians in formation for the diocese.

There are 47 priests of the diocese living in retirement, and receiving care as needed.

The Department of Faith Formation and Evangelization has found creative ways to meet the needs of those who depend on their services.

Marriage preparation has moved online, as well as virtual workshops for healthy Catholic living. Caregivers, for example, can engage in virtual calls with Nourish, a ministry designed to help them in the journey for caring for family members.

While the direct, onsite ministry at jails and other detention centers has been curtailed by the pandemic, new ways have been engaged to share the faith with inmates. The detention ministry is providing DVDs of the Mass and provides them to the three main facilities for broadcasting on internal TV feeds. The annual Christmas Mass will be presented to inmates in this fashion.

The vibrant Latino Ministry has not only hosted V Encuentro Virtual, a follow-up to last year’s ministry event, but has conducted virtual workshops to assist the faithful in navigating these challenging times. The annual pilgrimage and Mass in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the largest public gathering of the year, will be presented in a drive-by blessing and virtual conference, livestreamed Mass format on Dec. 5.

The diocesan finance and mission advancement departments have reached out assist parishes in navigating unprecedented times. Parishes that did not have online giving programs, for example, received assistance in setting them up.

The Department of Mission Advancement created an online giving portal that went into service early in the pandemic, providing parishioners a way to contribute online to individual parishes and some special collections.

The appeal, which has a goal of $3 million, stands just below the $2 million mark. Contributions can be made at www.oakdiocese.org/bishops-appeal.
By Rev. Carl Arcosa
Special to The Catholic Voice

As your new director of vocations and seminarians, I would like to ask for your prayers for my new mission and task. For the past 10 years, our diocese has been averaging two to three ordinations per year. This year we are blessed to have two men, Father Mac Lingo and Father Peter Lawongkerd. Thank you for your generous support both financially and prayers for our seminarians in formation.

Cultivating vocations starts in our families, schools and parishes. They are seedbeds of religious and priestly vocations and as a People of God, we are called also to be promoters of vocations in our communities.

National Vocation Awareness Week was celebrated in our country Nov. 1-7. I ask you this month of November to pray for increase of vocation to the priesthood and religious life. Please kindly ask your fellow parishioners to offer sacrifices, their rosaries, Holy Hours and Holy Mass for this intention.

Please ask Our Lord for more dedicated, holy priests, deacons and consecrated men and women. May they be inspired by Jesus Christ, supported by our faith community, and respond generously to God’s gift of a vocation.

As of now, we have 12 men in formation: two deacons, six in theology and four in college. It is my hope that you assist me in promoting vocations in your communities and schools by inviting me to speak in your parish and bring our seminarians with me when normalcy returns after the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to inform you that next year, hopefully when a vaccine would be available, that we all celebrate vocations and promote vocations during the month of November, the Feast Day of St. John Vianney, Good Shepherd Sunday and the January Seminary Appeal. With my vocation team, we are planning to do diocesan events in the Cathedral of Christ the Light and parishes.

If you know someone you think has a sign of a vocation or desire to become a priest, please reach out to me and I will be glad to come and sit down with you and talk to you about how we may be able to help in his discernment.

Please commit to make these prayers below as your Intentions for Daily Prayer and let us work together to create a culture of vocations in our homes and parishes:

For young people in our community, that they may respond generously with open hearts and willing spirits if the Lord calls them to the priesthood, diaconate or consecrated life.

For men and women to be open to God’s call to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ as priests, deacons or consecrated persons.

Father Carl Arcosa is director of vocations for the Diocese of Oakland. He also serves as pastor of St. Michael Parish in Livermore. Contact him at carcosa@oakdiocese.org.

Discernment opportunities

Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose Discernment Retreat
On Zoom, Dec. 12, 1-3 p.m.
For Catholic single women, ages 18-40, interested in religious life
Register online: bit.ly/discrimDominican
Contact: Sister Mary Yun, OP
mary@msjdominicans.org, 213-760-3085

St. Patrick’s Seminary Discernment Retreat
Jan. 16-27, 2021
For single men, 21 years or older
All meals and lodging provided
COVID-19 Safety Protocols may be required
Attendance does not imply further obligation
Conferences by Most Rev. Thomas A. Daly, bishop of Spokane.
To register: Rev. Carl Arcosa, director of vocations, Diocese of Oakland, carcosa@oakdiocese.org, 510-207-8345

Top: Deacon Candelario Jimenez, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Brentwood; Deacon Huong Dinh, Theology 1, St. Patrick Seminary; Raymundo Urbina, Theology 2, St. Patrick’s Seminary; Huu Binh Ha, Theology 3, Pope St. John XXII Seminary; Center: Juan Carlos Ponce, Theology 2, St. Patrick’s Seminary; John Paul Rabago, Theology 2, St. Patrick’s Seminary, Adam Cameron-Smith, College, Bishop White Seminary; Jessee Valdecasinos, College, Bishop White Seminary; Bottom: Alvaro Santamaria, Theology 1, St. Patrick’s Seminary; Eric Ruiz, College, Josephinum College; Biardillo Queintiáez, EXL program, Ohlone College; Garrett McGowan, Theology 2, St. Patrick’s Seminary.

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Each November, The Catholic Voice publishes the Gift of Giving Wish List. This list is compiled from responses to a request by The Catholic Voice to nonprofit organizations around the county to provide information about the needs of their organizations and the people they serve. With this information, the 2019 Gift of Giving Wish List reflected this reality.

Bay Area Crisis Nursery

The Bay Area Crisis Nursery’s mission is to prevent child abuse and neglect in the Bay Area. It provides short-term overnight and day services for babies and children to give parents time to focus on the challenges of parenting. To provide information about the needs of the children, a parent can apply to provide information about the needs of their children. Our grateful

Christians

Gift of Giving Wish List 2020

The program helps seniors make ends meet, retain their health, and stay in their own homes. Need: Cash donations, large-size paper bags, masks, gloves, snacks, and fresh produce to help seniors to break into the senior bags and deliver bags to senior’s doorsteps.

Volunteer: St. Mary’s Center where you can find volunteers and information about how to donate.

This Christmas, what are we hoping to give everyone a mask — so if folks want to donate make masks that would be fun to give away. Or send us dollar notes for the bags we deliver to doors. We have about 2,000 homes so it is a lot of masks and notes.

Visit: Mercy Brown Bag Program www.mercybrownbag.org

Address: 3401 Clayton Blvd., Oakland 94601
Contact: Krista Lucchini, director, 510-534-8540, extension 369

Next Step Learning Center

An older youth and adult literacy, high school equivalency program, high school diploma completion and college transition program operated by the Sisters of the Holy Names.

Need: Chromebooks; volunteers to tutor math and reading; literacy books; financial assistance for students unable to afford a bus pass or to pay cost of high school equivalency examination fees; sanitizing wipes.

Address: 2222 Curtis St., Oakland 94607
Contact: Lisa Stickler, senior director or Peggy Presley, program director, 510-251-1731

St. Mary’s Center

St. Mary’s Center is a community of hope, justice and healing that serves at-risk seniors and preschoolers in the heart of Oakland. Their task is to improve access to a quality life through counseling, shelter, nutrition, advocacy and social support.

Phone: 510-533-7375; oaklandcatholicworker@yahoo.com

Volunteer: Contact: John Sterns at 925-323-5848 or jsterns@sbcglobal.net

Annual collection benefits Retirement Fund for Religious

The generosity of U.S. Catholics enables us to continue our ministry, helps the elderly, and supports young religious communities.

Historically, Catholic communities have sufficient retirement savings, but 50% of religious communities providing data to the NRRO, only 29% are adequately funded for future retirement.

The 2019 collection raised $26.2 million and, in June, the NRRO disbursed $25 million in financial assistance to 341 religious communities. Throughout the year, additional funding is allocated for retirement programs, and religious communities improve eldercare delivery and plan for long-term retirement needs. For example, many religious communities lack sufficient retirement savings, so many religious communities providing data to the NRRO, only 29% are adequately funded for future retirement.

During these trying times, we know the best way to support senior religious is to continue helping their communities address retirement and eldercare challenges," Sister Still said. "Our grateful prayer is with all those who love and generously sustain this mission."
Giving Tree: Handle with even more care than usual

By Michele Jurich
Staff writer

Instead of a fleet of shiny new bicycles, warm winter coats and toys to delight their neighbors in need, one parish is asking its generous givers for just one thing for Christmas: cash.

“It’s a little bit different this year, as many things are,” said Roxanne Rasmussen, who coordinates the Giving Tree at Catholic Community of Pleasanton. The Giving Tree, an Advent staple at many parishes throughout the diocese, looks different this year. Gone is the tree with ornaments taken home by parishioners to fulfill wishes in many churches, with COVID-19 restrictions in place.

The community’s efforts, which provide Christmas gifts for 500 families — about 2,700 people — in nine parishes of the Diocese of Oakland, is “just as much needed as any year,” Rasmussen said. Parishioners at the Catholic community, which encompasses St. Augustine and St. Elizabeth Seton churches, are being asked to donate cash this year.

“We’ll buy gift cards for families,” Rasmussen said. The gift cards will be for places the families like to shop, she added. The gift cards will be placed in Christmas cards for each family and distributed by the parish liaisons, “so they can get it to families in a safe way.”

“We started asking early for donations,” Rasmussen said. They asked through messages from the pulpit, the bulletin, Facebook and the parish’s Constant Contact.

“Give what you can” is the message. “If you can, give what you’d typically give,” she said.

The decision to concentrate on cash gifts was made for the safety of the givers and recipients, she said. “We can’t even guarantee people can shop properly,” she said.

Among the questions members of the parish Giving Tree team asked was, Will families be comfortable accepting gifts? They chose the method they found “the most streamlined and safest,” Rasmussen said.

“Hopefully next year, we’ll get back to what we used to do,” she said.

At St. Charles Borromeo Parish, the Scandinavian-style wooden tree would stand in the vestibule of the Livermore church, its dowel-like branches holding ornaments with wish list requests, from toys to clothing to food gift cards.

People would crowd around, searching for a gift and/or recipient, and take one or two, perhaps after touching other ornaments.

Not this year.

Mary Fair, the parishioner who has organized the Giving Tree for the past 10 years, created a plan for maximum safety of givers and recipients.

“It will be different than past years, but we are hoping it will bring some normalcy to parish life and most importantly, continue to support the less fortunate in our community,” Fair said.

Recipients this year include families needing support, referred by child welfare specialists at Livermore schools; families served by Catholic Charities East Bay; families supported by Tri-Valley Haven; and residents of two convalescent homes.

The Giving Tree made its debut earlier this year, on the weekend of Nov. 7-8. The tags were placed on boards, wrapped in festive Christmas paper, and placed in the parish hall. The rules of Christmas 2020 were posted for all to see: Must wear a mask, maintain social distance of 6 feet part, and touch only the tag you’re taking.

There were boards with requests for toys; adult clothing; youth clothing; accessories; home goods; gift cards; and miscellaneous, including infant car seats, electronics and candy.

“We don’t know what the future holds, but it’s all God’s work,” says Sister Theresa McGrath (center), BS, a member of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas, who was among the normalcy and the religious shown here have devoted themselves to God’s work. They are among nearly 30,000 senior sisters, brothers, and religious order priests who benefit from the Retirement Fund for Religious. Your gift helps provide medications, nursing care, and more. Please be generous.

Please donate at your local parish December 12–13 or by mail at:
Diocese of Oakland
Office for Mission Advancement
2121 Harrison Street, Suite 100
Oakland CA 94612
Make check payable to Diocese of Oakland/WR.
First Communication at St. Isidore

Jean Schroeder, director of faith formation at St. Isidore Parish in Danville, reads the names of first communicants at St. Isidore Parish in Danville, members of which celebrated their First Communications outside due to COVID-19. Following the strict protocols of our county and diocese, First Communicants, parents and siblings wore face coverings and limits were strictly followed to ensure their safety. Thank you to our pastor, Rev. Gerard Moran, for making these First Communions possible.

Interfaith project gets backpacks safely to 550 Livermore students

Special to The Catholic Voice

For 27 years, the Community Interfaith Student Support Program has supplied backpacks, school supplies and Payless Shoes gift cards to children from families in need in Livermore. Like many other projects that involved many volunteers working in close proximity, the backpack project coordinators agreed to cancel this year’s project.

Shortly after school started in August, however, it was apparent that due to increased job losses and the need for distance learning, efforts to help the most needy students were even more essential. Fortunately, with the help of disturbed by the COVID-19 pandemic, uniforms Direct, Inc., CISSP was able to do a scaled-back version of the project.

To meet all the COVID-19 restrictions and keep it as safe as possible to a minimum, uniforms Direct agreed to fill 550 packs with basic school supplies in its Southern California warehouse, using all recommended guidelines for safe handling and contact. Because Payless Shoes had closed its stores due to bankruptcy, the CISSP group had the funds that had been reserved for shoe cards to support this year’s effort.

Volunteers were not allowed on the school campuses to help distribute the backpacks because of the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District’s COVID-19 restrictions. On the morning of Sept. 25, Uniforms Direct delivered the filled backpacks to designated Livermore schools, including 450 filled packs for elementary students and 100 filled packs for middle/high school students. Elementary classroom teachers distributed the backpacks for their students and the child welfare and attendance specialists agreed to distribute the middle and high school backpacks to the students identified in need at their schools.

News and notes

Joyful news reported by Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Fremont: On the weekends of Oct. 10 and 17, 62 young men and women received the Sacrament of Confirmation at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish. An additional 10 youth who were not able to receive due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all were joyful and excited to receive the Sacrament.

The Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose have added two new virtual offerings to the Center for Education and Spirituality calendar: “Fratelli Tutti — On Fraternity and Social Friendship,” a shared inquiry of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, facilitated by Sister Margaret Mary Moses, OP, eight sessions, every other Thursday from Nov. 19 through Feb. 25, 3:30-4:30 p.m. Registration at https://ces-event.myshopify.com/products/fratelli-tutti


St. Francis students ride for a cause

Special to The Catholic Voice

St. Francis of Assisi Falcons couldn’t let this pandemic take any of our fun! On Oct. 29-30, students at the Concord school joined together virtually and in person to complete our fall Wheel-A-Thon fundraiser. The annual fundraiser helps generate funds for class field trips and special assemblies for students in each class.

Cars lined the perimeter of the Wheel-A-Thon track, allowing socially distant spectators to cheer on their favorite riders from inside their cars. It was tailgating at its finest! Ridding in groups sized to meet Contra Costa County regulations, students took in, rode hard and raped out to tunes belted out over loudspeakers while their classmates encouraged them. The added bonus of smaller group traffic was minimal and there were no crashes.

It was a spectacular way to safely share time with each other. Students were happy and proud of their efforts. The Wheel-A-Thon raised funds for field trips and assemblies at St. Francis of Assisi School in Concord.

also invited to complete this event virtually and in their own neighborhoods. Hats off to our hard-working Wheel-A-Thon committee members for their extra efforts in making sure we would be able to have a fun and fun community event. Their creativity and organization allowed us to have fun together. We have missed each other sooooo much!

Giving Tuesday finds FACE with generous matching grant

Staff report

Family Aid Catholic Education is participating in Giving Tuesday on Dec. 1. This marks the second foray into the online international giving event. This year, a donor will match funds donated to FACE on that day up to $50,000. Last year, FACE began Giving Tuesday with a matching grant of up to $35,000. Two days later, contributions totaled $164,825.

Founded in 1978, FACE provides tuition assistance to students who attend Catholic schools in the Diocese of Oakland, based on financial need without regard to an applicant’s religion, gender, ethnicity or citizenship.

This year’s goal is to award FACE scholarships not only to the 588 students who received them, but to the 600 students who remained on the waitlist.

“By partnering with FACE to award scholarships to deserving families you are providing students of today the opportunity to rise above their economic challenges. This investment will inspire the next generation of active and engaged community leaders of tomorrow,” Terri Porter, director of FACE, wrote to donors.

Happy 90th birthday

Rev. Msgr. Daniel Cardelli, left, received a proclamation and key to the Town of Danville from Mayor Newell Arnerich to celebrate the monsignor’s 90th birthday. The Oct. 24 celebration included St. Isidore Parish and School families. Msgr. Cardelli retired from the Danville parish in 2008 after having served as pastor for 27 years.

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Elder Care Alliance, a nonprofit organization, is cosponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas West Midwest Community &
People of hope prepare for Simbang Gabi

By Rev. Erick Villa

Special to The Catholic Voice

Many things look different this year: the way we gather for our liturgies, the food and music we share, the time we spend together to catch up before and after each celebration. To say that we miss everything about Church particularly during these upcoming seasons of Advent and Christmas is an understatement. But we know, that even amidst these challenges of the pandemic, we will not be deflected. We will joyfully and peacefully continue with the things we can, following protocols and restrictions as we must. Part of this is the annual Simbang Gabi Kick-Off happening at 7 p.m. Dec. 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. To be celebrated at the Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland by Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ, the Mass will be limited to the Filipino priests and deacons in the Diocese of Oakland, but will be available via live streaming and on-demand.

Christmas is a season of hope, and we are a people of hope. Together, we anticipate the birth of Christ by celebrating in our parishes the Simbang Gabi from Dec. 16 to 24 — nine days of preparing our hearts and homes to this grace-filled season! Many parishes are planning their Simbang Gabi — the Filipino tradition of a novena of Masses preceding Christmas Eve — with an eye toward the rising rate of COVID-19 in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. There are restrictions on numbers in attendance and whether Masses may be conducted indoors; some Masses may be live-streamed only.

Parishes responding to The Catholic Voice were in unison: There will be no breakfasts or receptions following Masses this year. Staff report

The Detention Ministry of the Diocese of Oakland will help bring Christmas this year to the families of formerly incarcerated men and women who currently live in transitional homes. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, only gift cards from Target or Walmart and cash donations, submitted as checks, can be accepted. The cash donations will be used to buy additional gift cards.


Our Lady of Good Counsel, 2500 Bermuda Ave., San Leandro; Mass Dec. 15-23 at 7:30 p.m. Novena prayers will begin at 7 p.m. with the allowed number of participants. Check olgcsanleandro.com for updates.

St. Raymond, 11555 Shannon Ave., Dublin; Dec. 16-24, will have Simbang Gabi from Dec 16-24 at 5:30 a.m. We will be indoor and limited to 100 people for now.

Simbang Gabi Kickoff

Dec. 8, 7 p.m., Cathedral of Christ the Light, Oakland
Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ, celebrant
The Mass is not open to the public. Live-stream: Cathedral of Christ the Light YouTube channel
See www.catholicvoiceoakland.org for link closer to the date

Please reach out to the contacts listed for up-to-date information before leaving your home:

St. Joan of Arc, 2601 San Ramon Valley Blvd., San Ramon. Information: http://sjiac.org/
All Saints Catholic Church, 22824 Second St., Hayward; Masses 6 a.m. Dec. 16-24. Information: www.allsaintshayward.org.
St. Francis of Assisi, 860 Oak Grove Road, Concord; Masses, 5:30 a.m. Dec. 16-24. Information: www.sfaconcord.com.
Christ the King, 199 Brandon Road, Pleasant Hill. Dec. 15-23. Information: https://ctkph.org/
St. Joseph Basilica, 1109 Chestnut St., Alameda; Masses at 7 p.m. Dec. 15-23. Information: www.sjbalameda.org.

St. Margaret Mary, 1219 Excelsior Ave., Oakland; Missa Rorate: Votive Mass in the Extraordinary Form in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Advent. From Dec. 16-24. Mass begins at 6 a.m. on week-days, but at 5:10 a.m. on Sunday, Dec 20. Information: Rev. Glenn Naugat, gmnaugat@smgrarem.org.
St. Patrick, 825 Seventh St., Rodeo; Masses 5 a.m. Dec. 16-24. Sign-ups will be required in following all CDC guidelines and all Masses will be livestreamed. Link will be on homepage of www.stpatrickrodeo.org. Contact: 510-799-4405 or parishoffice@stpatrickrodeo.org.

Detention ministry brightens Christmas

Families benefiting from the program will receive gift cards to a target amount and can shop online or in person at these stores.

Matt Gray, of the Catholic Community of Pleasanton, is coordinating the collection. The gift cards and checks, payable to Catholic Community of Pleasanton, may be sent to Catholic Community of Pleasanton, P.O. Box 817, Pleasanton CA 94568 before Dec. 15. Please put Detention Ministry in the memo line of the check.

By Matt Gray

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OBITUARIES

Sister Cecilia Soberon, OP

Sister Cecilia Soberon, OP, died of cancer at St. Martin Residence at the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose Motherhouse in Fremont on Nov. 9. She was 83 years old and in the 60th year of her religious profession.

Born on June 22, 1937, in Mexico City, she was the daughter of Eugenio Soberón Vegamendi and Guadalupe Haro Borneque.

After studying at the Escuela Comercial Francesa in Mexico City, she attended Ravenhild Academy, Pennsylvania, where she met the Religious of the Assumption. She entered the Assumption Sisters of Mission San Jose and made her first profession of vows on Dec. 12, 1959.

Sister Cecilia earned a bachelor’s degree in the Teaching of English from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and taught in Catholic and private elementary schools in Mexico.

In 1979, she transferred to the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose, whom she met in Mexico. She pros-"fessed her final vows as a Dominican Sister on Aug. 9, 1980. As a Dominican, Sister Cecilia taught at schools in San Francisco and Los Angeles. She also served in pastoral ministry and religious education programs at parishes in Northern and Southern California. At the Motherhouse in Fremont, Sister Cecilia assisted in vari-ous roles, including the preparation of special handmade items for the Congregation’s annual Holiday Boutique. The rosary was offered Nov. 12 in the Motherhouse Chapel, followed by a Mass of Christian Burial the next day. Burial was in God’s Acre, the Congregation’s cemetery.

Sister Maureen Kelley, RSM

Sister Maureen Kelley, Sister of Mercy, chaplain and hospice worker, died at the age of 77 on Sept. 12 at Nazareth House in San Diego.

Born in Oakland in 1942 to Edward and Margaret Borneque, she was the daughter of Eugenio Soberón Vegamendi, sister Kit and her loving community.

She discerned a religious voca-
tion as a teenager, but her path was intercepted by family obligations. After high school she entered the Sisters of the Holy Names, but after seven months her mother died, and she left the community to care for her family's members.

She took a job at the Bank of America and studied theology at the University of San Francisco (1978) and the Franciscan School of Theology (1988) then went to work as program director of support services for seniors at Catholic Charities in Oakland.

It was while working there that she met the Sisters of Mercy at Mercy Retirement and Care Center. She said that she that “The spirit of Mercy was alive and well there. People were honored and treasured no matter what condition they were in. I began thinking about religious life again.”

She and Sister Karen Kelb shared this time as the two, serving at Mercy Retirement and Care Center, were drawn to religious life, especially through Sister Patty Campbell, who mentored them both. “We were both so grateful to the Sisters who inspired us. And I remain ever grateful to Maureen for leading the way,” said Sister Karen. Sister Maureen entered the Community in 1995 and professed her vows in 1999.

Sister Maureen earned a certificate in clinical pasto-
el education from USHS in 2001. From 2000 to 2012, she served as a chaplain for San Diego Hospice, where she accompanied people in the inpatient hospice unit. Maureen was known for her sense of humor and her ability to connect with people of all faiths and ages and relating to them.

“Maureen was loved and respected by her clients and co-workers and she especially loved being a chaplain. Maureen’s loving, compassionate and joyful presence touched many,” said Sister Patty. “Hospice is about living, not dying,” Sister Maureen had said. “I’ve planned weddings, high school gradu-
ations, retirements from the Navy and I’ve declared Christmas in early December. It’s intense but not depress-
ing at all.”

Although challenged by ill health, Sister Maureen also worked as volunteer chaplain at the Infusion Center at Scripps Mercy San Diego. Mark Zangrando, senior director of mission at Scripps Mercy, was moved by how she continued in spite of pain to serve others. “Month after month, year after year, close call after close call, Sister never ever complained about what she was going through,” he said. “There was never a ‘woe’s me’ or a ‘why me?’ ever uttered from her lips.”

Sister Maureen retired to Nazareth House in 2018. Her brother Edward, sister Kit and her loving community of the Sisters of Mercy survive her. After private funeral services in San Diego, gravesite services were held at Holy Cross Cemetery in Colma.

SPRED ... continued from page 1

ing: “Jesus says to you today, Come Holy Spirit. ‘Spirit of Love, give us your light, give us God’s life.”

For the rite, those to be confirmed stayed in their places. “I will come to you,” said the bishop. “You all did the prayers and responses perfectly, he told them.

SPRED will be first in line. ’”

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10 Days, $4199 (All Inclusive)

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Oberammergau Pilgrimage

Sep. 28-Oct. 7, 2022

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Spiritual Guide: Fr. Richard Mangini and Fr. Mark Wisniewski

10 Days, $5199 (All Inclusive)


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Questions or to make a reservation by phone:

(800) 777-7432

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www.bit.ly/CatholicVoice2022,
What do you want for Christmas really?

By Rev. Msgr. Daniel Cardcelli

The other day, I was talking to a friend about how time flies the older we get. It seems that we just started 2020, and here it is almost the end. And Christmas is very soon upon us! It seems like yesterday that Pope Francis, on the birth of the year, was also a time for us to give and receive gifts. So I asked my friend, “do you do something for Christmas?” “I don’t want to be bothered,” was his answer.

“Wait, I’ll tell you what I want for Christmas, both for me and for you,” says the Pope. “I want an endemic.”

At all stages

I was especially pleased to read Bishop Barker’s opinion on the front page of the Catholic Voice, Oct. 19 Voice offering guidance to voters on issues not candidates. The paragraph near the end contains the most important words: “our advocacy addresses protection of life at all stages in all circumstances, including issues of social and economic equality, the pervasive influence of systemic racism and welcoming immigrants and refugees.” The bishop is reminding us to pay close attention to which candidate(s) have plans to address all of these major pro-life issues.

Want to write?

Letters to the editor provide a forum for readers to engage in an open exchange of opinions. In this climate of respect and civil discourse, please express opinions vignettes are those of the writers, and not necessarily of the Catholic Voice or the Diocese of Oakland. While a full spectrum of opinions will sometimes include those which dissent from Church teaching or do not reflect the moral law, it is hoped that this forum will help our readers to understand better others’ thinking on important issues facing the Church.

Contributions to Reader’s Forum should be limited to 250 words. Letters must be signed, include writer’s address and phone number for verification purposes. All letters are subject to editing. Writers are generally limited to one letter per four-week period.

Mail to: The Catholic Voice, 21215 Shannon St., Suite 100, Oakland, CA 94612. Fax: 510-893-4722. Email address: Forum@oaklandvoice.org

What Pope Francis said

I think we are some not understanding what Francis said. If you do some research you will find he is not approving sacrament of annulling marriage for LGBTQ+ People. But what he is profiling is that all people, no matter what they believe sexually, should have a right to have a civil union. That they have a right to a equitable legal life, that all people, no matter what they believe sexually, should have a right to have a civil union. That they have the right to be openly who they believe they are and not be actively (or passively-aggressively) attacked by other citizens of that country.

This is simply a call to be openly loving as Jesus was. The world should have. If that country acknowledged and affirmed, that all people, no matter what they believe sexually, should have a right to have a civil union. That they have the right to a equitable legal life, that all people, no matter what they believe sexually, should have a right to have a civil union. That they have the right to be openly who they believe they are and not be actively (or passively-aggressively) attacked by other citizens of that country.

How can we help?

Let us know. (510) 267-8334

Every month: interested / facilitated support group meetings held at: Santa Maria Parish Library (upper tier) 40 Santa Maria Way, Orinda 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

The first Saturday of December

LETTERS

Rethink political ads

In Luke (6:27), Jesus urges, “Love your enemies.” Paul tells us Romans (12:17), “Do not repay anyone evil for evil.” Recent elections, with negative advertising the norm and money out of control in the face of Christian values. We need an election system that works.

A retired principal at Sacred Heart Catholic Parish in Berkeley, I impa-"ted a student electioneering for student body office whose poster trashan an opportunity offer: “That’s what real politicians do.” Or, “What about free speech?”

God bless our school’s students and culture, that circumstance never surfaced. In broader culture wars, who does it serve? Who is advertising threats ideals, worsening a political climate the existence of a Christ-like relational, service-oriented, joyful Catholic public body politic?

Not new, negative campaign takes on different dimensions in an electronic age but now filtered through partial media, facts are slippery, and truth gets questioned.

Let’s enact laws stipulating persons or groups who purchase political ads naming or alluding to an opponent must purchase the same priced ad-buy for that opponent. Media collecting ad money could monitor the same priced ad-buy for that opponent. Or alluding to an opponent must purchase media, facts are slippery, and truth gets masked.

Joyful community or body politic.

electioneering reset.

The Church

We need an electio-
JOIN US FOR OUR VIRTUAL FIRST SATURDAY MASS

WHEN: Saturday, Dec. 5 | 11:00 A.M.

WHERE: https://vimeo.com/event/365912