

The Catholic Voice

FEBRUARY 2023 • VOLUME 61 • ISSUE 2

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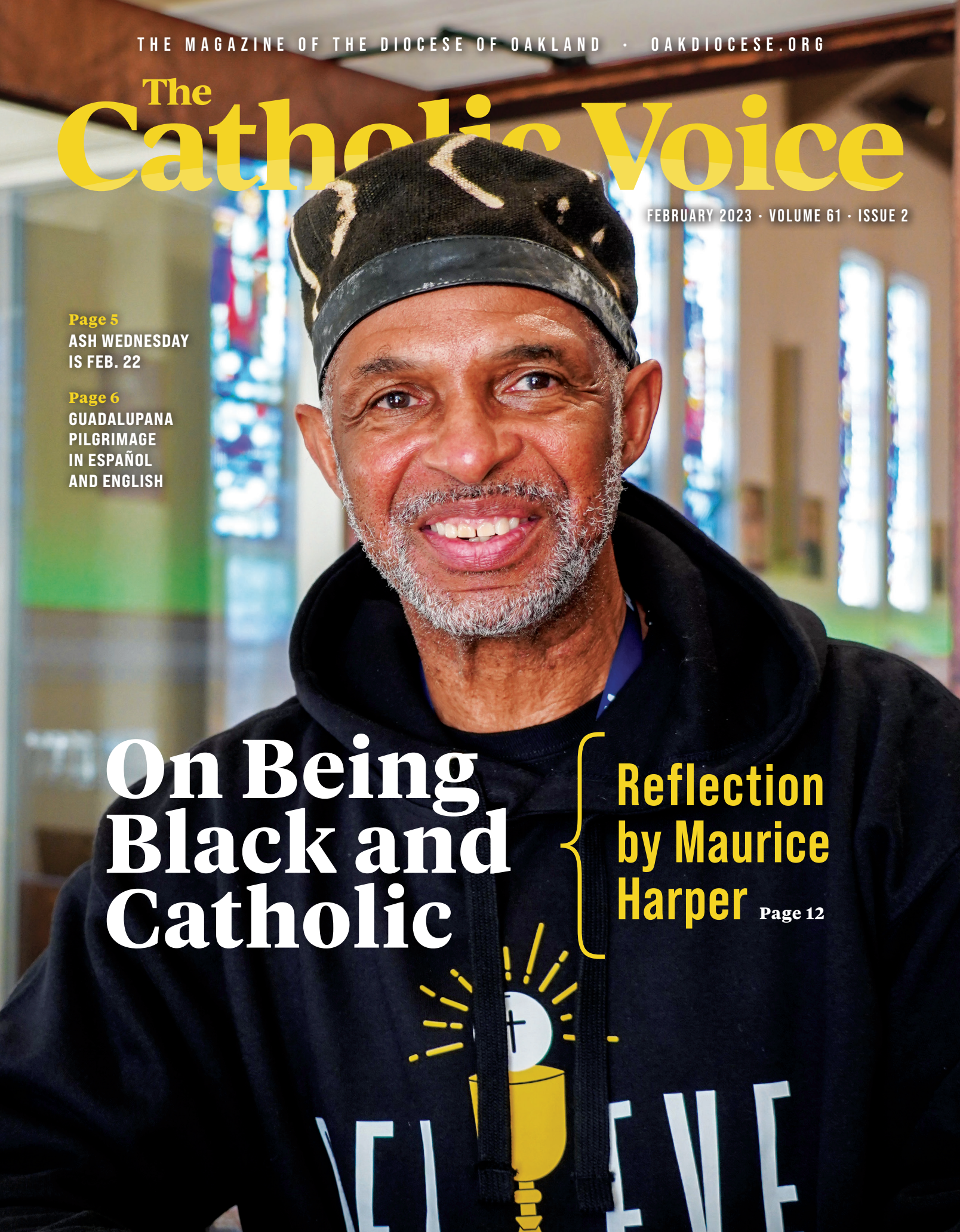
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Editor's note

December was full of wonderful events. Most of them won't have a chance to be in the magazine until two months after they happened.

The Guadalupe pilgrimage, in the pouring rain was a story of faith that could not be damped by rain – even a lot of rain – Lorena Rojas reported. Lovely stories in pictures and words in Spanish and English on Pages 6-10 in this issue.

The day after that, Dominique Ghekiere-Mintz was out in the streets of Concord, where Queen of All Saints was kicking off the parish's 150th anniversary celebration. Unspared by the much-needed rain, the photos told the story of soldiering on for the faith. Mass was celebrated in the town square – Todos Santos Plaza. We'll have those in an upcoming issue, along with other information on how the parish is celebrating its 150th anniversary all year long.

Another blessed day was Dec. 17, when Hoa Binh Ha was ordained to the transitional diaconate. Deacon Binh is serving at St. Isidore Parish in Danville. I'm hoping he'll be in the March issue of *The Catholic Voice*.

Then there were the Christmas Masses. Beautifully photographed on Christmas Eve by Chuck Deckert and Christmas Day by Dominique Ghekiere-Mintz. Managed to get a couple of those in.

You saw them first on *The Catholic Voice* Facebook page. You can follow the page, or just check in from time to time.

I am gratified to see the followers on Facebook, sharing the short stories and photos.

Join them at facebook.com/TheCatholicVoice. You can comment on posts, and share the posts.

For up-to-date information on upcoming events, check the Diocese of Oakland website, www.oakdiocese.org.

Thank you for reading,

Michele Jurich, Editor, *The Catholic Voice* ●

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THE LEGACY OF

POPE BENEDICT XVI

The last time a pope died was in 2005, when Pope John Paul II passed away. Pope Benedict XVI died on New Year's Eve, and was buried Jan. 5, 2023. He left over 60 published books and wrote over 1,300 articles and scholarly essays. How does one sum up such a gifted priest, professor, theologian and bishop? By his priorities.

Pope Benedict's personal secretary and aide for over 20 years was Father Georg Gänswein (made Archbishop in 2012). When Benedict resigned from the papacy in 2013, Archbishop Gänswein moved into the small convent to assist, then nurse, the pope in his final days. A reporter asked Archbishop Gänswein what were the Holy Father's priorities? He said: Holy Mass, Breviary, Rosary and Meditation. Sometimes I suggested we set aside these spiritual exercises when what I considered "more important things" came up. But the Pope insisted: "The most important thing is that God always comes first. First, we must seek the Kingdom of God, everything else will be given in addition." Father Georg said it sounds nice, but when governing a universal Church, it's not always so easy to stick to.

Archbishop Gänswein was asked, What words of Pope Benedict will always stick with you? He replied: "Time and again — especially during his time as emeritus — I found myself in difficult situations; moments when I said: 'Holy Father, this cannot be! I cannot cope with it! The Church is running against a

brick wall! I don't know: is the Lord asleep, is he not there? What's going on?' And he said, 'You know the Gospel a little, don't you? The Lord was asleep in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, so the story goes. The disciples were afraid, a storm was coming, waves were coming. And they woke him up because they didn't know what to do. And he just said, 'What's going on?' Jesus only had to speak a few words to the storm, in order to make it clear that he is the Lord, even over the weather and the storms.' And then Benedict said to me: 'Look, the Lord doesn't sleep! So, if, even in his presence, the disciples were afraid, it's quite normal that the disciples of today can be afraid, here and there. But never forget one thing: He is here, and he remains here. And in all that's troubling you now, that's difficult for you now, that weighs on your heart or on your stomach, this is something you must never forget! Take that from me. I act accordingly.'"

“

SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD: GO TO MASS, SAY THE ROSARY, PRAY. AND THEN TRUST IN THE LORD. HE'S IN OUR BOAT. HE'S IN OUR DIOCESE. IN OUR PARISHES. IN OUR SCHOOLS. IN OUR FAMILIES. AND THEN ACT ACCORDINGLY.

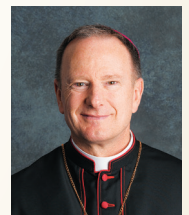


(World Meeting of Families 2012/CNA)

Archbishop Gänswein said, "That will always remain with me."

It remains with me, too. Seek first the Kingdom of God: Go to Mass, say the rosary, pray. And then trust in the Lord. He's in our boat. He's in our diocese. In our parishes. In our schools. In our families. And then act accordingly.

That is the legacy of Pope Benedict XVI for me. ●



BY BISHOP MICHAEL C. BARBER, SJ

Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ has been bishop of the Diocese of Oakland since May 2013.



THE *wonder* OF CHRISTMAS!

PHOTOS BY DOMINIQUE GHEKIERE-MINTZ



WORLD DAY OF THE SICK 2023



FEBRUARY 11

SATURDAY@11AM

MESSE DES MALADES

BENEDICT XVI CHOIR CONDUCTED BY RICHARD SPARKS

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To register visit
rebrand.ly/worlddayofsick2023



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LENT BEGINS; CRS RICE BOWL FILLS

Lent begins on Feb. 22 and perhaps, along with the ashes on your forehead and the resolve in your heart, you will bring home a CRS Rice Bowl. While the majority of the funds raised will be used for programs overseas, these local groups that feed the hungry close to home that are benefitting from your donations last year:

Church of the Assumption St. Vincent de Paul, San Leandro.....	\$1,050
Holy Rosary St. Vincent de Paul, Antioch.....	\$1,050
Immaculate Heart of Mary St. Vincent de Paul, Brentwood.....	\$1,050
Our Lady of Mercy St. Vincent de Paul, Point Richmond.....	\$1,100
St. Bede St. Vincent de Paul, Hayward.....	\$1,100
St. Bonaventure St. Vincent de Paul, Clayton	\$1,000
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Living Water Outreach Services, Dublin	\$1,000
Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa, Martinez	\$1,000
Project Outreach, Oakland	\$1,000
Simply Basketball Dreams Foundation, San Leandro.....	\$1,250
St. Mary’s Center, Oakland	\$1,000
The Light Ministries, Antioch	\$1,100
The More Foundation, Oakland.....	\$1,000
Victory Over Individual Challenges, Oakland	\$1,100
Vietnamese American Community Center of the East Bay, Oakland	\$1,000
Total	\$29,950

LEARN MORE

For additional information on CRS Rice Bowl, see crsricebowl.org. ●

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Feb. 11 - WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

15th Annual World Day of the Sick will be observed at 11 a.m. at the Cathedral of Christ the Light, Oakland. Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ and Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone will concelebrate the Mass. The Order of Malta will provide holy water from Lourdes. Those who are sick and their caregivers especially welcome. The Order of Malta is the sponsor for this annual event.

Feb. 11 - CRAB FEED & AUCTION

SJND’s 41st Annual Crab Feed & Auction will take place from 5-10 p.m. Feb. 11. Join the St. Joseph Notre Dame community in support of tuition assistance for SJND students and safety and security upgrades for the SJND campus. The school is at 1011 Chestnut Drive, Alameda. To purchase tickets and/or sponsor, visit www.sjnd.org/crabfeed.

Feb. 22 - ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. It is not a holy day of obligation, but many people will go Mass to receive ashes. Easter is April 9.

Feb. 22 - 40 DAYS FOR LIFE BEGINS

From Ash Wednesday to April 2, the 40 Days for Life campaign will bring witnesses for life to various cities across the world. In the past, 40 Days for Life vigils have been conducted in Walnut Creek, Concord, Hayward and El Cerrito. Visit 40daysforlife.com for information on local vigils. If you’re checking Concord, please include “California” in your search. ●

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Sacrifices and gratitude to Our Lady of Guadalupe

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LORENA ROJAS

Lorena Rojas is a Catholic journalist.

Many difficult things have happened to María Valle in recent years, including knee cancer. This parishioner at Most Holy Rosary Church in Antioch is not discouraged because she is certain that Our Lady of Guadalupe is taking care of her.

That confidence encouraged María to walk from St. Louis Bertrand Church, at 100th Avenue and International Boulevard International, to the Cathedral of Christ the Light on Harrison Street in Oakland. She walked barefoot to offer a greater sacrifice, especially at this time when her recovery depends largely on faith.

María is one of the thousands of faithful devotees of Our Lady of Guadalupe who walked in the Guadalupana Pilgrimage on Dec. 3, under incessant rain that did not discourage the pilgrims.



The diocesan pilgrimage began 17 years ago, to raise their voices against the laws of that time against Hispanic immigrants. Several priests from East Oakland parishes participated in the proposal, including Father Jesús Nieto and Monsignor Antonio Valdivia, said Héctor Medina, coordinator of Latino Ministries for the Diocese of Oakland.

The coordinators decide on a new theme each year that

inspires them in the walk. In the 2022 pilgrimage, pilgrims from the parishes of the Diocese of Oakland and guests walked, inspired by a call to the Virgin, Mother of God to continue covering the Church with her mantle.

This event requires the integration of many devotees, women and men of faith from the different parishes who meet with the coordinator once a month throughout the year, and for several months

before the pilgrimage, prepare the groups of dancers and the themes for floats, and look for resources to serve breakfast to pilgrims, free of charge.

There are expenses. The payment to the Oakland police to escort the pilgrims amounts to \$12,000, in addition to expenses such as the rental of portable toilets and others, for which the organizers appeal to the generosity of the faithful.

The 2022 pilgrimage, as is tradition, left St. Louis Bertrand Parish immediately after a religious service that took place in the parking lot, presided over by Bishop Michael C. Barber, SJ. He blessed the pilgrims and their floats from the corner of International Boulevard and 100th Avenue. Three hours, later he welcomed them as they entered the Cathedral of Christ the Light.

For the second year in a row, the pilgrims were

organized into two groups, all leaving from the same place, but some headed to St. Elizabeth Church, where they concluded with a Mass presided over by the Vicar General of the Diocese of Oakland, Father Lawrence D'Anjou, with a reflection by theologian Edy Fernández.

The other group of pilgrims continued to the cathedral, where Bishop Barber presided at Mass, and Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of San Bernardino Gerald Barnes gave the homily.

In the religious service before the pilgrimage, Bishop Barber told the faithful, "We are going to bear witness to the faith, walking through the streets, telling the world that we are children of the Blessed Virgin and that we are disciples of Christ."

In his homily, Bishop Barnes highlighted the relationship between the apparition of the Virgin of

“

We are part of a much bigger story, and the season of Advent helps us to recognize that story. We cannot celebrate this feast without knowing who we are as children of Mary, and children of God and brothers of Jesus Christ Our Lord.”

Guadalupe and the liturgical season of Advent that the Catholic Church celebrates before Christmas.

He said that the Virgin comes, just like Advent, to bring hope through Jesus to the oppressed, the suffering, the sick and the most needy, at the same time he called pilgrims to be missionary disciples. "Our vocation is to go with the message to those most in need. The Church is missionary. We are missionaries. It's up to us to keep the faith."

Bishop Barnes welcomed a significant number of young people present at the pilgrimage and at the Mass in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe, asking them to continue on the path of faith that their parents are teaching them.

Many of the pilgrims who came to the Mass are families who struggle to transmit the Catholic faith to their children and grandchildren, such as Silvina Duarte, a parishioner at St. Mary Church in Walnut Creek, who walked for the sixth consecutive year barefoot to sacrifice her body in gratitude to God and the Virgin for all the good that she and her family receive.

Her eldest daughter graduated from university and her youngest daughter is successfully advancing in university studies; both are young people of faith, devoted to the Virgin and practice the Catholic religion that her parents teach her.



"I am proud that they see this that I do as an example and that they want to do it too," she said.

Claudia and José Romo, coordinators of the group of the Guadalupana of St. Louis Bertrand Parish, also teach the Guadalupana devotion to their family. Three of their four daughters joined their parents to decorate the car that carried the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the pilgrimage, and participated in the Mass in the cathedral. Likewise, the coordinators of the group of dancers of the Holy Rosary Parish, spouses Susy Lizarraga and Alfredo López, transmit the devotion to the Virgin by dancing with their children to the rhythm of their Aztec ancestors.

These dancers were chosen this year – for the first time in the history of the pilgrimage – to offer an Aztec dance to the Virgin during Mass in the cathedral.





“The festival in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe is like a cloth, like a chain that is placed over the community and unites it, it is what is happening here, it is Our Lady who has united us, from wherever we have come. She has asked us to join as his children and that is why we are here,” Bishop Barnes preached.

He added that the Guadalupeana festival “also reminds us that we are part of something much bigger, and of the importance of being rooted in our culture and its values.

This is part of being Hispanic-Catholic, this devotion that we have to the Virgin,” he said.

“We are part of a much bigger story, and the season of Advent helps us to recognize that story. We cannot celebrate this feast without knowing who we are as children of Mary, and children of God and brothers of Jesus Christ Our Lord,” preached the bishop emeritus of San Bernardino.

He explained the relationship of the historical facts of the apparition of the Virgin to St. Juan Diego and the hope that Advent brings to humanity.

“The encounter of St. Juan Diego with the Virgin is part of that story. Juan Diego and the indigenous people of his time, in those lands lived an Advent without knowing it, because Advent is a time to focus on hope,” he said. Bishop Barnes prompted Marian devotees to ask, where do we lack that hope? What is the greatest wish we carry? What are our concerns and

“

The festival in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe is like a cloth, like a chain that is placed over the community and unites it . . . it is Our Lady who has united us, from wherever we have come.”

loneliness? What is that emptiness that some of us carry?

He affirmed that sometimes “we feel forgotten, we feel despised, distanced, restless, sometimes depressed, mistreated, abandoned. We long for something better, a healing, a freedom from what oppresses us. We long for a savior, someone who will get us out of this that we carry inside. Advent, this sacred time, warns us that God has listened to us and the Savior is coming soon, Emmanuel, God with us the Messiah.”

Bishop Barnes illustrated the relationship of Advent and the apparition of the Virgin with a piece of history. “The people of Juan Diego lived in a subhuman condition, they lived under oppression, they were the smallest, the most forgotten, they were one of the Last, they longed for something that was going to save them, was going to remove that yoke and the Virgin brings them the Good News, the Word, which is Christ Jesus,” he said. ●

Roses/Getty Images; Powreshka



Sacrificios y gratitud a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe

POR LORENA ROJAS



A María Valle le han pasado muchas cosas difíciles estos últimos años, entre ellas un cáncer de rodilla. Sin embargo, esta parroquiana de la Iglesia del Santísimo Rosario, en Antioch, no se desanima porque tiene la certeza de que Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe la cuida, esa confianza la animó a caminar desde la Iglesia San Luis Beltrán en la avenida 100 y el bulevar Internacional hasta la Catedral Cristo la Luz en la calle Harrison en Oakland, lo hizo descalza para ofrecer un sacrificio mayor, sobre todo en estos momentos en los cuales su recuperación depende en gran parte de la fe.

Valle, es una de los miles de fieles devotos de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe que caminaron el sábado 3 de diciembre en la Peregrinación Guadalupeña, este año bajo una incesante lluvia que no desanimó a los peregrinos.

La peregrinación surgió hace 17 años, para alzar la voz contra las leyes de entonces contra los inmigrantes hispanos. En la propuesta participaron varios sacerdotes de las parroquias del este de Oakland, entre ellos el padre Jesús Nieto y el padre Antonio Valdivia, dijo Héctor Médina, coordinador de los Ministerios Latinos de la Diócesis de Oakland.

Cada año los coordinadores deciden por un nuevo tema que los inspire en la caminata. En la peregrinación del 2022, los peregrinos de las parroquias de la Diócesis de Oakland y los invitados caminaron inspirados en un llamado a la Virgen, Madre de Dios para que continúe cubriendo con su manto a la Iglesia.

Este evento requiere de la integración de muchos devotos, mujeres y hombres de fe de las diferentes parroquias se reúnen con el coordinador una vez al mes durante todo el año, y preparan desde varios meses antes de la peregrinación, los grupos danzantes, los motivos de los carros alegóricos, y buscan

recursos para servir desayuno a los peregrinos, sin costo alguno

Requiere también de un gasto económico. El pago a la policía de Oakland para escoltar a los peregrinos asciende a \$12.000, además de gastos como la renta de baños portátiles y otros más, para los cuales los organizadores apelan a la generosidad de los fieles.

La peregrinación del 2022, como es tradición, salió de San Luis Beltrán, inmediatamente después de un servicio religioso que tuvo lugar en el estacionamiento de esta parroquia, presidido por el obispo de la Diócesis de Oakland, monseñor Michael C. Barber, minutos más tarde monseñor Barber bendijo a los peregrinos y sus carros alegóricos desde la esquina del bulevar Internacional y la avenida 100, y tres horas más tarde él mismo les dio la bienvenida en la Catedral de Cristo la Luz.

Por segundo año consecutivo los peregrinos se organizaron en dos grupos, saliendo todos del mismo lugar, pero unos se dirigieron a la Iglesia Santa Isabel donde concluyeron con una misa presidida por el vicario general de la Diócesis de Oakland, el padre Lawrence D'Anjou y predicada por el teólogo Edy Fernández. Otro grupo de peregrinos continuó hasta la catedral donde finalizaron con la misa presidida por el obispo

Barber y predicada por el obispo emérito de la Diócesis de San Bernardino, monseñor Gerald Barnes.

En el servicio religioso antes de la peregrinación, el obispo de Oakland dijo a los fieles, “vamos a dar testimonio de la fe, caminando por las calles, diciendo al mundo que somos hijos de la Virgen bendita y que somos discípulos de Cristo”.

Durante la misa de cierre de la peregrinación en la catedral, el obispo invitado y predicador de la homilía, monseñor Barnes, resaltó la relación de la aparición de la Virgen de Guadalupe y el tiempo litúrgico de Adviento que celebra la Iglesia Católica antes de la Navidad.

Él dijo que la Virgen llega, igual que el Adviento, para traer a través de Jesús la esperanza a los oprimidos, a los que sufren, a los enfermos y a los más necesitados, al mismo tiempo hizo un llamado a los peregrinos a ser discípulos misioneros. “Nuestra vocación es ir con el mensaje a los más necesitados. La Iglesia es misionera. Nosotros somos misioneros. Depende de nosotros mantener la fe”, dijo.

El obispo Barnes acogió con sus palabras en idioma inglés, a una significativa cantidad de jóvenes presentes en la peregrinación y en la misa en honor a la Virgen de Guadalupe, les pidió que continúen en el camino de la fe que les están enseñando sus padres.

Muchos de los peregrinos que llegaron a la misa, son familias que luchan por transmitir la fe Católica a sus hijos y nietos, como es el caso de Silvina Duarte, parroquiana de la iglesia Santa María en Walnut Creek, ella caminó por sexto año consecutivo, descalza para sacrificar su cuerpo en

gratitud a Dios y a la Virgen por todo lo bueno que ella y su familia reciben.

Su hija mayor se graduó de la universidad, su hija menor avanza con éxito los estudios universitarios, ambas son jóvenes de fe, devotas de la Virgen y practican la religión Católica que le enseñan sus padres. “Para mí es un orgullo que ellas vean esto que yo hago como un ejemplo y que quieran hacerlo ellas también”, dijo Duarte

Los esposos Claudia y José Romo, coordinadores del grupo de la guadalupana de San Luis Beltrán, también enseñan la devoción guadalupana a su familia, tres de sus cuatro hijas se unieron a sus padres para decorar el carro alegórico que llevó la imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en la peregrinación, y participaron en la misa en la catedral.

Así mismo, los coordinadores del grupo de danzantes de la Iglesia del Santísimo Rosario, los esposos Susy Lizarraga y Alfredo López, transmiten la devoción a la Virgen danzando con sus hijos al ritmo de sus antepasados aztecas. Estos danzantes fueron los elegidos este año para -por primera vez en la historia de la peregrinación- ofrecer una danza Azteca a la Virgen durante la misa en la catedral.

“La fiesta en honor a la Virgen de Guadalupe es como una tela, como una cadena que se coloca sobre la comunidad

y la une, es lo que está pasando aquí, es Nuestra Señora que nos ha unido, de dondequiera que hemos venido...ella nos ha pedido que nos unamos como sus hijos y por eso estamos aquí”, predicó el obispo Barnes.

Él agregó que la fiesta guadalupana “nos recuerda también que somos parte de algo mucho más grande, y de la importancia de estar arraigados a nuestra cultura y sus valores. Esto es parte del ser Católico-hispano, esta devoción que tenemos a la Virgen”, dijo.

Agregó “somos parte de una historia mucho más grande, y el tiempo de Adviento nos ayuda a reconocer esa historia. No podemos celebrar esta fiesta sin saber quiénes somos nosotros como hijos de María, e hijos de Dios y hermanos de Jesucristo Nuestro Señor”, predicó el obispo emérito de San Bernardino.

Explicó la relación de los hechos históricos de la aparición de la Virgen a san Juan Diego y la esperanza que trae el Adviento a la humanidad. “El encuentro de san Juan Diego con la Virgen es parte de esa historia. Juan Diego y el pueblo indígena de su tiempo, en esas tierras vivían un Adviento sin saberlo, porque



el Adviento es tiempo de enfocarnos en la esperanza”, afirmó

El obispo Barnes motivó a los devotos marianos a preguntarse ¿Dónde nos falta esa esperanza? ¿Cuál es el deseo más grande que llevamos? ¿Cuáles son nuestras inquietudes y soledad? ¿Cuál es ese vacío que algunos de nosotros llevamos?.

Afirmó que a veces “nos sentimos olvidados, nos sentimos despreciados, distanciados, inquietos, a veces deprimidos, maltratados, abandonados. Anhelamos algo mejor, una curación, una libertad de lo que nos oprime. Anhelamos un salvador, alguien que nos va sacar de esto que llevamos dentro. El Adviento, este tiempo sagrado, nos advierte que Dios nos ha escuchado y pronto llega el Salvador, Enmanuel, Dios con Nosotros el Mesías”, predicó.

El obispo Barnes ilustró la relación de Adviento y la aparición de la Virgen con un trozo de la historia, “el pueblo de Juan Diego vivía en una condición inhumana, vivían bajo la opresión, eran los más pequeños, los más olvidados, eran de los últimos, ellos anhelaban algo que les iba a salvar, les iba a quitar ese yugo y la Virgen les trae la Buena Nueva, la Palabra, que es Cristo Jesús”, predicó. ●



Él agregó que la fiesta guadalupana ‘nos recuerda también que somos parte de algo mucho más grande, y de la importancia de estar arraigados a nuestra cultura y sus valores. Esto es parte del ser Católico-hispano, esta devoción que tenemos a la Virgen’, dijo.”



Christmas Eve 2022



PHOTOS BY
CHUCK DECKERT



COVER STORY

BEING BLACK AND CATHOLIC OR BEING BLACK CATHOLIC

BY MAURICE HARPER
PHOTOS BY DOMINIQUE GHEKIERE-MINTZ



The following is excerpted from a reflection Maurice Harper gave to his fellow parishioners at St. Columba Church, Oakland, on Nov. 19 and 20, the Feast of Christ the King.

KNOW **WHO** YOU ARE
KNOW **WHOSE** YOU ARE
KNOW **WHERE** YOU ARE
KNOW **WHAT TIME** IT IS

Today is the celebration of Christ the King. Everybody say, “Christ is my King.”

Today is also Crown Sunday, which fits in with the theme of Christ the King. I see a number of folks rocking crowns.

I must acknowledge that some of the young people that I work with rock crowns, too, but they do it in their own different ways. Some are rocking a hoodie, and that’s OK. You’re supposed to do it the way you do it.

St. Columba is the place to do it the way we do it.

I was asked to be the speaker. My topic is “Being Black and Catholic” or “Being Black Catholic.” They’re not the same thing.

I reflect on those every day that I breathe. I don’t have much of a choice. I was born Black and my Mom made sure I was Catholic. My Mom was a convert and made sure I was Catholic. Since I’ve been confirmed – and I know people going through confirmation – I’m Catholic by choice.

Living in the world, I’ve got some people who look at me and say, “You’re Black. Why are you Catholic?”



The easy response is, “Jesus is my King.”

The Black part is important but as Father Kwame indicated, it is not just a matter of skin tone. It’s a matter of mentality.

Often I have to struggle to remember that I’m both Black and Catholic or Black Catholic.

I come here, and it’s clear that Jesus is my hope and our hope. I’m surrounded by people who are both hopeful and prayerful. That’s part of what it means to be Catholic and universal: to go anywhere and be able to pray and be comfortable. I know there’s a difference in places. That’s why I come here. I feel the support.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

MAURICE HARPER’S ‘SEASON OF YES’

During the pandemic, Maurice Harper entered his “Season of Yes,” answering the call to assist wherever he was asked. He said yes to JustFaith. And yes to the the Diocese of Oakland’s Racial Justice Task Force. He led a multigenerational group of St. Columba parishioners on a journey to New Orleans, where they engaged in social justice work.

His “season of yes” continues as he works with the confirmation program at his parish and makes plans to bring young people to World Youth Day.

One could say that the long-time educator and ministry leader’s “season of yes” began well before 2020.

May it continue, joyfully.



I acknowledge that you and I have to feel supported. That's why we come. That's why we come today. To rock the crown, we have to feel supported.

If Jesus is our King, we can't expect any better than our King. That means there's going to be some rough times. Our Savior experienced some rough times. Although salvation is on the other end, we've got to maneuver through this life. I've got to maneuver through this life.

Sometimes it's not the royalty we get; sometimes it's the crown of thorns that we experience.

For Jesus, as we know, and for us, there is suffering before the glorious rise.

There is the truth. My Mom is the reason I'm Catholic. Her greatest gift to me was not my Blackness – she didn't have any choice in passing that on – but she passed on what it means to be Catholic. She was a lady and there are many ladies I am truly grateful for.

Reflecting on what it means to be Black and Catholic: We all had to go to school. When I got out of college, I played for a community team. I had a coach, who was Christian, not Catholic, who said, "The more you all go to school, the dumber you all get."

What he was talking about was that we would get further from the truth. We were born with the truth; we're born knowing. Sometimes what sets us back is those challenges where we have to wear the crown.

I'm going to take this moment to recognize I've been out of college almost 50 years. I can recognize that the truth is that I get taught by young people all the time. That's why I stay connected with confirmation, because folks teach me all the time.

Young people teach me all the time.

Thank You, Alex and all the youth who continue to teach and challenge me. Thank you Savanah, Elijah, Hayden, Kai'noa.

One person taught me something I've just got to share; any time I get a chance, I share this. Alex said, "Slow down when you make the sign of the cross. Slow down and make it meaningful all the time."

In youth situations, folks don't want to lead prayer. Alex would always say, "I want to lead prayers."

In the name of the Father
Wait for us to think.

And the Son, Savior
(pause)

and the Holy Spirit.

Couldn't do nothing but say Amen to that,

I know whose I am. I know where I am.

I'm supposed to leave one or two words you can repeat during the week, words to think about.

The word I leave you is, "Rock the crown," whatever it means to you.

Sometimes it means, "I'm going through suffering but I'm rocking the crown. I know Jesus is my savior and it's gonna be all right. It may not be all right when I want it to be all right, but it's going to be all right."

Please respond as if I was pouring a Libation

response :
Praise God, Be with us

Mother Lydia,
My mother, Juanita,
Ester Bell and
my Grandmother Olivia
My Father Maurice,
my grandfathers Norman,
Lawrence, Lee
and my Uncle Melvin,
my bookend Ms. Edna,
The energy of God,

Ms. Venus
Ms. Lucy Castro
Kenneth McGaugh,
Bill Green and
Maude Green,
Aaron Permillion.

St. Columba is not the norm. When I go to other churches, one of the first things I do is count how many Black people in the room, unless you're here, or at St. Benedict or St. Patrick, trying to figure out how welcome I feel.

Sometimes because I travel a little bit. I move into spaces that are Catholic spaces, I get, "Are you sure you're coming in here?" That's still current.

"Are you're sure you're in the right place?"

I say, "Sure, I know I'm in the right place."

It goes kind of deep for me because my Mom had me so Catholic that after church I would come home and have Mass at home. We'd pound the bread; my sister was my acolyte. I was an altar boy, so I knew Latin. I was saying it in Latin.

My mother would stick her head in and say, "I don't know about that boy."

Later on, I must express, I had the yearning, without the invitation, to say I could be a priest, maybe. There was no invitation. I could be a Christian Brother. There was no invitation.

I said to my grandson, “You could be a priest, you could be a priest in Oakland and live in poverty. But you could carry the spirit.”

I think a little different sometimes.

I do remember I went over to SF, and someone directed me. I went in there and I was

stunned. The first time I saw this big black Jesus. I taught religion at a high school for over 20 years and never saw a Black Jesus. I don’t think I ever saw a Brown Jesus. Take a look up there: That’s Black Jesus.

Sister Thea Bowman, said, “I bring my whole back self, fully Catholic and fully Black.” And that’s despite the lynching that still occurs, white supremacy and racism.

On our website there’s a video of Bishop Barber saying he apologizes for the racism in the Oakland

diocese. I thought that was historic. That came after he was here at St Columba and experienced the Father Tolton experience.

I want to say again that Jesus is my king. To be a Black Catholic means that Jesus is my King. And I acknowledge that I need the support of God and the support of communities like St. Columba to feel comfortable, to see me.

I think we’re supposed to be about evangelization. I don’t hear anybody say we need more Black Catholics.

In the meantime when as we move from downsizing to evangelization – that’s going out at and getting people – we have to make people feel welcome at home, there’s a place for them, there’s a place of leadership for them, there’s a role of leadership,

Rock the crown.

CROWN SUNDAY

The African American Celebration Committee of St. Columba Parish in Oakland invited all women to wear their “Sunday Go To Meetings Hats” (Your Crown) to Mass to weekend Masses. (Men were invited to wear their Fez or African Kufi Cap.)

The tradition of wearing hats to church is a deeply rooted tradition in the African American community. Crown Sunday honors African American History Month.

Parishioners honored that tradition on the Feast of Christ the King. ●



THIS IS YOUR LIFE

Gail Sousa came to the high school in 1966; Mrs. Rodrigues says a fond farewell in 2022.

BY MICHELE JURICH



AT CENTER COURT, IN THE GYM IN WHICH SHE'D BEEN A PLAYER, A BARRIER-BREAKING SCOREKEEPER, A COACH, A P.E. TEACHER AND ATHLETIC DIRECTOR, GAIL RODRIGUES WAS SOMETHING ELSE THIS AFTERNOON: THE STAR OF THE ST. JOSEPH NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL VERSION OF "THIS IS YOUR LIFE."



SJND photo

Gail Sousa Rodrigues – lovingly known as Mrs. Rod – has spent four years of her life as a student and 47.5 years as coach/teacher/mentor. In between alumni basketball games on the Friday after Thanksgiving, she watched a screen that played a slideshow showing her in all those roles, and a few more. Interspersed were greetings from former students and colleagues.

Through it all, the woman whose story played on screen sat with her chin up, focused on the screen.

When it ended, the fans stood and gave her a standing ovation. Her husband approached her on the court, and the crowd went even wilder.

As she always does, her friends say, she turned the focus from herself to her students.

"When I was in eighth grade, it was St. Elizabeth or Bishop O'Dowd," she said. "Never a mention of St. Joseph's Notre Dame."

"My mother said, 'Hey, why don't you give it a try.'"

"My father's St. Joe's and my mother's Holy Names," she said. "I think they met at a dance here."

Gail Sousa was the only member of her graduating class at St. Leander School to enroll at St. Joseph's Notre Dame, an hour commute by bus each way, including transfers.

"I did not like being there my freshman year," she recalled. "I don't know what it was at that young age to say, 'You've got to give it two years.'"

"I don't know what happened. Things fell into place. After that, I couldn't have been happier."

One thing she knows: "I got involved in athletics." Not only did she play volleyball and basketball, she served as scorekeeper for the boys' basketball team in 1969.

"Broke that glass ceiling," she said.

In her school years, the schools were separate: St.



Photo Credit: Mallory Cornett, librarian, and Cathy Fitzgerald, English teacher, collaborated on a collection of photos stretching from 1966 to 2022.



Joseph High School for boys and St. Joseph's Notre Dame for girls.

"We had one more class than they did," she said. "We got out later than they did."

When students reached upper-division, some classes – math, sciences, languages – were co-ed. English and religion classes were not.

She graduated from St. Joseph's Notre Dame in the spring of 1970.

"I was at Cal State Hayward but I was coaching volleyball and basketball," she recalled. "I was this 18-year-old coaching 17-year-olds."

“ I’ve been here since I was 14. If you prick me, I will probably bleed orange and blue.”

She did play volleyball at Hayward, on the second team.

She knew what she wanted to do after college. "I think when I was in elementary school, I knew I wanted to be a teacher," she said. "When I got here, I knew I wanted to be a teacher."

Gail was working on her degree in kinesiology. "At the time at Cal State Hayward,

kinesiology was not considered an academic major. I started minoring in math, my senior year."

By the time graduation rolled around, kinesiology gained academic major status. She earned a K-9 math credential and a K-12 kinesiology credential.

She put those credentials to work ... where else?

"I was hired to teach math full time," Gail said. "Two weeks in, in 1975, the athletic director and physical education teacher, Fran Smith, who had been her coach left the school.

In the school's search for a replacement, one person they called for suggestions told the searchers:

You have a perfectly fine athletic director and P.E. teacher on your campus.

She began teaching math and P.E. "half and half."

Among the joys of being a young teacher, she recalled: "One of my favorite things



was for people to come into the gym or classroom. I'd be sitting in the back of the classroom. 'Where is your teacher?' But I looked like one of the kids.

"It was so much fun to have that happen."

For Gail Rodrigues, St. Joseph Notre Dame High School is family. Literally family.

She met her husband Ken at Cal State Hayward. He played baseball; she was the scorekeeper.

"They were traveling to Fresno. He had two teammates who had girlfriends. They didn't want me to be without someone," she recalled.

There were two volunteers.

"They flipped a coin," she said. "And he won."

They married in 1975.

Both of the Rodrigues children are SJND graduates: Jenn, Class of 1996 and Stephen, Class of 1999.

Even before they entered school, they both knew their way around.

"They grew up here," Gail said.

"I have fond memory of her sitting on the bench at Moreau with one of the basketball players, who is now a teacher," she recalled.

Jenn had been in her mom's P.E. class, while Stephen was in one of her math classes.

"This is family here," Gail said.

The inevitable question is: What kept you coming back?

"The students kept me coming back," she said.

"One of our principals asked me that," she said.

"Sometimes I don't want to get up in the morning and go to work," she said. "If I have to, this is where I want to be."

The students, she said, "keep me going until this day."

"I've been here since I was 14. If you prick me, I will probably bleed orange and blue." ●

Photos by Christine Schreck



Oakland's Eritrean Catholic Community prays for release of Eritrean bishop, priests

PRAYERS ANSWERED WITH DEC. 28 RELEASE, ENDING 75 DAYS OF IMPRISONMENT

PHOTOS BY CHUCK DECKERT

On Debre Qusquar, commemorating the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt, the Eritrean Catholic community at St. Anthony-Mary Help of Christians Parish in Oakland was joined by Eritrean Catholics from other communities in prayer to support Eritrean Bishop Fikremariam and religious freedom in their homeland.



On Oct. 15, 2022, the Most Rev. Bishop Fikremariam Hagos Tsalim was arrested at Asmara International Airport while returning from out of the country ecclesial duty travel.

A few days earlier, other two Catholic priests, Father Mihreteab Estifanos, the

parish priest of St. Michael's of Segheneity Eparchy and Father Abraham Habtom, a member of the OFM Capuchin Friars, were also arrested.

Catholic Bishops in Eritrea raised their voice in protest of the illegal confiscation of Church property and preventing the Church from conducting its mission to serve the people. Bishop Fikremariam Hagos is one of them.

In June 2019, the Eritrean government seized and closed over 20 health clinics owned and operated by the Catholic Church. In August 2022, the government confiscated all Catholic schools from kindergartens to colleges.

The Eritrean Catholic priests, and the Eritrean Communities they serve in the United States and Canada, implored all the bishops and the episcopal conferences of both countries to call on the American and Canadian government authorities to press the Eritrean government to take the following measures:





- 1 Immediately release all religious prisoners, including Bishop Fikremariam and the two recently arrested priests.
- 2 Refrain from arresting and oppressing the clergies/ Bishops, and any of the Church's associates in the health services.
- 3 Immediately reopen the clinics and schools, and return any property of the Church seized by the government.
- 4 Broadly enable personal and religious freedoms.

We hope and pray that with the support of your prayers and voices, the imprisoned Bishop Fikremariam and the clergies will be released, and the suffering induced by the clinic and school closures may end.

"Just as we shared our sadness with you, we would also like to share our joy," Father Tesfaldet T. Tsada, Apostolic Visitor, wrote to the U.S. and Canadian bishops. "Praise God, Reverend Bishop Fikremariam Hagos and the other priests are released from prison on December 28, 2022. We would like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all your prayers and support during this difficult time."

Father Ghebriel Woldai, who serves the Eritrean Catholic Community in the Diocese of Oakland, said, "God answered our prayers." ●



Pray, Register, Support

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DIOCESAN EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL



BY MEGAN ARTEAGA

Megan Arteaga is coordinator of youth ministry and communications at Santa Maria Parish in Orinda. She is a member of the steering committee for the 2023 Diocesan Eucharistic Revival Congress.



During this same month last year, the world was reeling in shock after Russia invaded Ukraine under the guise of a “special military operation.” Nobody could believe the force being used in the capital city of Kiev, the displacement of thousands of refugees and how ordinary civilians had taken up arms in defense of their beloved homeland.

The first instinct was for the world to ask, “What can I do?”

Responses came flying.

Countries around the world sent billions of dollars in aid, arms and supplies for Ukraine. Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky requested prayers for their armed forces and their country. Neighboring countries helped settle and transition tens of thousands of refugees looking to escape the Russian invasion. Social media exploded with ideas on how people could support the citizens of Ukraine, from emergency medical training to access to safe drinking water.

In Poland, Belarus and Ukraine itself, convents were turned into shelters and safe havens for orphans and refugees. Monasteries became aid and resource stations for traveling refugees. Parishes and churches across the world hosted prayer services, benefit concerts, and more in support of our Ukrainian brothers and sisters.

Any time something big happens, humanity comes together to actively respond with life and love. It’s a beautiful part of our human nature, no matter whether the unifying factor is tragic or uplifting.

What can I do?

Thanks be to God, today we have an opportunity for unite over something uplifting! As we continue to journey closer to our Eucharistic Revival kickoff with our Diocesan

Eucharistic Revival Congress this September, you may again find yourself asking, “What can I do?”

Thankfully, we’ve got an answer for you: the three simple ways you can support the Eucharistic Revival Congress are to Pray, Register and Support.

THE THREE SIMPLE WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT THE EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL CONGRESS ARE TO PRAY, REGISTER AND SUPPORT.

Pray

Prayer works.

When we pray, we’re having a conversation with God, committing things to Him and consecrating things to Him. That invites the Lord into the meat and potatoes of our lives and helps us to remember that it’s God who is in charge and not us. That’s why we need to pray about everything and anything!

When you pray for the Eucharistic Revival Congress, we humbly request prayers for the Steering Committee, that we work with God in creating an event that brings everyone closer to our Eucharistic Lord. You can pray for the speakers and presenters who will be joining us, for their safe travels and for inspiration by the Holy Spirit to touch hearts with their witness and catechism.

You can pray for all the attendees who will be participating in the Congress – the Friday youth evenings and the Saturday programs for all, each in both English and Spanish – that they have an encounter with the Lord that converts souls.

You can also pray for yourself, that the Lord softens your own heart and opens it up even further to the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, asking that He help you be more faithful to Sunday worship, more dedicated to the Adoration of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and more of a presence of His love and mercy in the world.

Register

Register early, and register everyone!

Registration is a great way to commit to your support of the Eucharistic Revival Congress! I've found that when I've bought a ticket for an event and put it on my calendar, I'm more committed to actually attending. This is definitely an event worth committing to!

When you register early, it also helps the event organizers with their logistical planning. Behind-the-scenes things like ordering food, planning event space, and even providing enough hosts for Holy Mass are made easier and more efficient the more people register early.

Nobody will be turned away from the Congress for lack of funds – but we do suggest a donation of \$20 per adult and \$5 per youth aged 11-17 (kids, clergy, religious and seminarians all come free!) when you register.

Support

There are multiple ways to support the Eucharistic Revival Congress.

Vendors, merchandisers and exhibitors can provide support with their physical presence. If you're connected to a company or organization who provides catechetical materials, education and formation resources or music, liturgy and parish resources, send them to our website to see about being an exhibitor! Catholic colleges and universities, religious orders, leaders of local ministries and outreach groups, and others are welcome, too. This is a great place to share your message to California Catholics!

You can also support the Congress by sponsoring scholarships for both Adult and Youth participants. Providing a scholarship will help to make the Congress a reality for those who otherwise might not attend.

Companies and individuals may support the Congress with their sponsorship, offsetting the costs of the entire event. You will be gratefully recog-

nized for your support on event banners, publications, programs and more.

We are so grateful for any support provided that will make these two weekends fruitful opportunities for encounters with the Lord!

Thank you for your participation!

Your prayer, registration and support of the Diocesan Eucharistic Revival Congress will make a real difference in the lives of thousands of Catholics around our Diocese and their connection to the Holy Eucharist – maybe even your own.

The many person-hours, funds and physical means of aid have made a real difference in the lives of tens of thousands of Ukrainians over the last year, and God willing will continue to do so as long as aid is required. Please continue to pray for peace in Ukraine and for the lives of her citizens as

this sad war continues; may our Eucharistic Lord in His infinite love and wisdom grant them peace, justice and mercy.

Please visit our website for updates on the Diocesan Eucharistic Congress and more information on how you can Pray, Register and Support the Congress! Your participation is what will make this event a success, and we thank you for any way you choose to do so. ●

+ MORE INFORMATION

- ▶ **To register:**
Visit www.oakdiocese.org/EucharisticRevival2023
- ▶ **To become a sponsor:**
Email Father Jimmy Macalinao at jmacalinao@oakdiocese.org.
- ▶ **To become a vendor, merchandiser, or exhibitor:**
Email Father Jimmy Macalinao at jmacalinao@oakdiocese.org.



SAVE *the* DATE

SEPTEMBER 8-9, 2023	SEPTEMBER 15-16, 2023
SPANISH LANGUAGE TRACK	ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRACK

"I Am With You Always"

Diocese of Oakland Eucharistic Revival Congress

Join us for a weekend of renewing prayer, talks, discussion, Mass, Adoration, and a public procession of the Blessed Sacrament

OFFICIAL SCHEDULE

February 3

Eucharistic Revival Bishops Advisory Meeting

February 4

11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation for Adults,
Cathedral of Christ the Light, Oakland

February 5

4 p.m.

Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation for Adults,
Cathedral of Christ the Light, Oakland

February 8

5:30-6:30 p.m.

Prayer Service in Support of the International Day of Prayer
and Awareness Against Human Trafficking, St. Anthony Parish,
1610 E. 15th St., Oakland

February 8-9

Board of Trustees Meeting, St. Patrick's Seminary and University,
Menlo Park

February 11

11 a.m.

World Day of the Sick Mass, Cathedral of Christ the Light,
Oakland

February 21

10:30 a.m.

Meeting with College of Consultors

February 22

12 noon

Ash Wednesday Mass, UC Berkeley Campus, Berkeley

5:30 p.m.

Ash Wednesday Mass, Cathedral of Christ the Light, Oakland

February 23

10 a.m.

Priest Personnel Board Meeting

1 p.m.

Presbyteral Council Meeting

February 24-25

24 Hours for the Lord throughout the Diocese

*Please see website (www.oakdiocese.org) for complete list
of parishes offering adoration and confession*

February 25

11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Rite of Election, Cathedral of Christ the Light, Oakland

February 26-March 3

Retreat for the Presbyterate of Los Angeles,
Archdiocese of Los Angeles ●



AN ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE IN DECEMBER

PHOTO BY DOMINIQUE GHEKIERE-MINTZ

Hoa Binh Ha was dressed in a simple white alb when he processed into Old Mission San José on Dec. 17. In a firm voice, he answered "Present" when called to the altar, where he was ordained to the Order of the Diaconate by Bishop Michael C. Barber, S.J.

He received a gold dalmatic at the conclusion of the Rite

In his homily, Bishop Barber told the new deacon that in five months, when he writes a letter asking to be ordained to the priesthood, the bishop will look forward to hearing how the deacon served the poor and needy, visited the sick and people in jail.

The new deacon prepared the altar for Communion and served and assisted at the altar. At the conclusion of the Mass, he told the faithful to "Go in peace."

Deacon Hoa Binh Ha is serving his diaconate year at St. Isidore Parish in Danville.

After Mass, the bishop and the new deacon posed with the clergy and seminarians who participated in the Mass. ●

PRAYER VIGIL IN SUPPORT OF THE International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking

BISHOP BARBER
Presiding

February 7, 2023

5:30 to 6:30 pm

St. Anthony-Mary Help
of Christians Parish

1610 E. 15th Street
Oakland, CA



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Rosa Marquez
Martinez, Hector Martinez
Milani, Ann Milani
Miller, Delores Miller
Apolonia Montenegro
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Pearl Williams
Efrain Zavala
Ralph Zavala

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Jeanette Bergholtz
Janet Bertolero
Veronica Binczewski
Jack Cardoza
Sonia Diaz-Garcia
Miriam duBoulay
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Gerald Frieberg
Salvatore Gonzalez
David Higby Sr.
Judy Johnson
Robert Knott
Elizabeth Krenz
Adrienne Lamoureux
Chuck Larabell
Jeffrey Locke
Louis Lopker
Pauline Loughrey
David Madding
Hershell Madding
Frank McEnaney
Catherine McGhee
Michael Miller
Howard Mitchell
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Martha Mora Castorena
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Alice Walls
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