BISHOP WANG:
Vatican-China agreement positive for church
PAGE **2**

ST. PETER:
Reading, math scores skyrocket at Mission school
PAGE **4**

WILDFIRE:
Panel weighs ethical issues in prevention, response
PAGE **6**

CATHOLIC SAN FRANCISCO

Newspaper of the Archdiocese of San Francisco

www.catholic-sf.org

SERVING SAN FRANCISCO, MARIN & SAN MATEO COUNTIES | JULY 11, 2019 | $1.00 | VOL. 21 NO. 13

Local parishioners rush to provide humanitarian aid at border refugee centers

CHRISTINA GRAY
CATHOLIC SAN FRANCISCO

(COURTESY PHOTOS)

Terry Sprague, a parishioner of Our Lady of Angels in Burlingame, speaks with a young migrant woman at the Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas, run by Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley. The woman, traveling with a toddler, gave birth by Cesarean section to a premature child at the border. Left, volunteers from St. John of God Parish in San Francisco worked at the center helping refugees connect with their American sponsors.

Parishioners of St. Ignatius, St. Agnes, Our Lady of the Pillar, St. John of God and Our Lady of Angels are among the archdiocesan faithful making the trip to the U.S.-Mexico border at their own expense to volunteer in overwhelmed refugee centers.

"Something must be done to alleviate the situation there, otherwise we will be seeing more desperate fathers taking a chance in swimming across the Rio Grande after they have been refused entry to claim asylum," said St. John of God parishioner Roberta McLaughlin.

McLaughlin spent nearly a month this spring at Casa del Refugiados (House of Refugees), the newest and largest refugee center run by Annunciation House, a nonprofit in El Paso, Texas, a few miles from the Mexican border city of Ciudad Juarez.

The humanitarian crisis on the border came into tragic focus June 24 when Salvadoran migrant Oscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez and his 23-month-old daughter Valeria drowned trying to cross the Rio Grande at Matamoros, Mexico. They attempted to swim across the river after they were unable to make an official request to U.S. authorities for asylum from El Salvador, the Mexican newspaper La Jornada reported.

Pope Francis expressed "immense sadness" on seeing the image of the father and child. The president of the U.S. bishops' conference and the chair of the bishops' migration committee said "this unspeakable consequence of a failed immigration system, together with growing reports of inhumane conditions for children in the custody of the federal government at the border, shock the conscience and demand immediate action."

At least 283 migrants died while attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border last year, according to the U.S. Border Patrol.

McLaughlin and her husband Jim were among five parishioners from the Sanctuary Committee of St. John of God Parish in San Francisco who traveled to Texas in May and June, working around-the-clock for the families that passed through Casa del Refugiados.

"We received 350 to 420 migrants per day while we were there," said McLaughlin, who was joined by parishioners Ken Hoegger, Claudia Quijane and Karen Duderstadt. Two more committee members left June 26 to volunteer at Casa Alitas, a Catholic-run safe house in Tucson, Arizona.

SEE **BORDER,** PAGE **13**

CCC: Confession bill pulled from Assembly floor hours before hearing

CATHOLIC SAN FRANCISCO

Legislation that would require priests to break the seal of confession has been pulled indefinitely from consideration in the California Legislature, less than a day before the Assembly's Public Safety Committee was scheduled to hold a hearing on it, according to the California Catholic Conference.

"We just got word from the capitol – Senator Hill pulled his bill from the Assembly Public Safety Committee. This bill will not be heard tomorrow, July 9. No other information at this time," said Linda Wanner, associate director for governmental relations with the conference.

Sponsored by Democratic Sen. Jerry Hill of San Mateo, Senate Bill SB 360 would force priests to disclose information about child sexual abuse that they learn when hearing the confession of a co-worker or another priest. It passed the Senate May 23 by a 30-4 vote. The Assembly had been expected to vote on it in September.

SB 360 has proved divisive since it was introduced in February, with priests and bishops stating they would go to jail before complying with the bill. The Archdiocese of San Francisco participated in a state-wide letter writing campaign rallying Catholics to write their representatives about the legislation.

According to the archdiocesan Office of Human Life & Dignity, more than 18,000 letters were hand-delivered to state Assembly members' local district offices June 28 during Religious Freedom Week. The archdiocese had also chartered buses to bring Catholics to Sacramento to attend the Assembly committee hearing on SB 360.

It was unclear whether the legislation has been defeated or whether it could

SEE **SB 360,** PAGE **17**

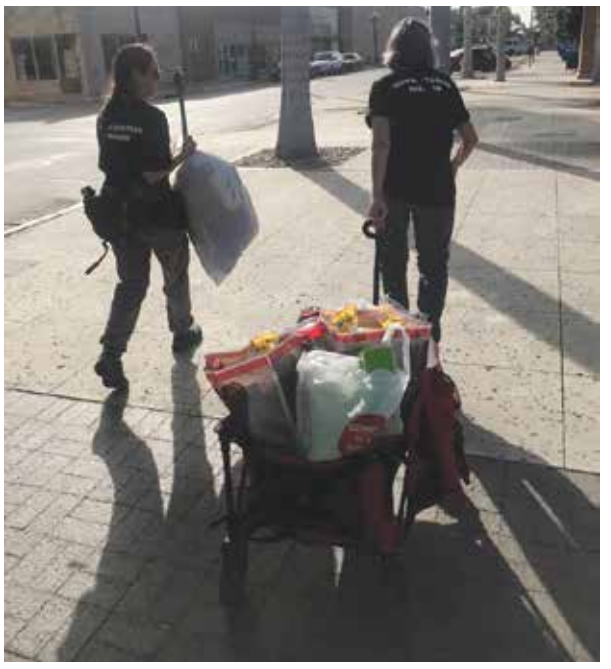
HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC CEMETERY
1500 MISSION ROAD | COLMA, CALIFORNIA 94014
Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery, 1500 Mission Road, Colma, CA
650-756-2060
A Tradition of Faith Throughout Our Lives.

INDEX

On the Street.....4
Faith.....10
Opinion.....11
National.....15
World.....16
Calendar.....19

BORDER: Local volunteers rush to provide humanitarian aid

FROM PAGE 1



(COURTESY PHOTOS)

Our Lady of Angels parishioner Terry Sprague and another volunteer haul a wagon of food and supplies across the border to a makeshift refugee camp in Matamoros, Mexico, where Sergio Jr., a Cuban boy played amid tents and tarps while his family waited to present their case for legal asylum.

McLaughlin said her group spent hours each day on telephones or computers helping migrants obtain bus or airplane tickets to take them to their U.S. sponsors. The men also took turns driving a 15-seat van they rented themselves to get families to the airport or bus station and helped them navigate the bewildering schedule and security process.

Volunteers did whatever was needed in the moment, she said, from making repairs to the overburdened facility, shopping for food supplies, organizing and distributing donated clothing and shoes, filling baby bottles and rocking crying babies while their weary mothers slept.

"If we were exhausted, what must the migrants be experiencing?" asked McLaughlin, who recalled seeing a large group of migrants in an outdoor arena with only tarps covering their heads.

"They yelled after us, 'We have been here 35 days, please help," she said.

Earlier this year, McLaughlin and other St. John of God parishioners had attended a meeting held at St. Ignatius Parish organized by Annette Lomont, a member of the Solidarity Committee for the Jesuit parish. Lomont had just returned from a volunteer trek to a border refugee center run by the Sisters of Loretto in El Paso and went to work to mobilize other local Catholics to volunteer.

Lomont told Catholic San Francisco that some migrants wept at the kindness shown to them by strangers and by the small comforts they were offered.

"Some of them just sobbed, especially the young mothers," said Lomont, who recalled leading a young woman with a six-month-old baby to a shower, something she had never seen before. She put her hand under the stream of clean water and murmured, "Oh, delicious," in Spanish.

Lomont contacted Annunciation House and discovered the organization's founder, Ruben Garcia, was overwhelmed, on some days receiving up to a thousand people at one of the organization's Costco warehouse-sized shelters.

Lomont's neighbor and friend Judy Reuter, a parishioner at nearby St. Agnes, helped coordinate the volunteer effort. Appeals in the Sunday bulletins of both Jesuit parishes generated dozens of inquiries and soon an informational meeting was organized at St. Ignatius.

"This is not a holiday," Lomont reminded the group of about 35 that included young adults, retirees and senior citizens. "You are going to work long and hard."

A good number of volunteers could speak Spanish, said Lomont, a necessity for being able to "listen to the migrants' stories."

Ten-person parish delegations are scheduled into November, said Lomont, the first leaving July 13. Volunteers pay their own travel, housing and food costs, though Annunciation House offers the same housing and food to volunteers as they do migrants.

Our Lady of Angels parishioner Terry Sprague and Our Lady of the Pillar parishioner Belinda Hernandez-Arriaga returned July 2 to the Bay Area after volunteering for two weeks in the border city of McAllen, Texas, with Bay Area Border Relief.

McAllen gained national attention last year when border patrol agents locked up hundreds of migrants presenting themselves for asylum and separated parents from their children.

Sprague and Hernandez-Arriaga were there when a 26-foot truck filled with clothing, toiletries, toys and supplies donated by people from throughout the Bay Area arrived to Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley's Humanitarian Respite Center in the Diocese of Brownsville. The center was founded by Sister Norma Pimentel.

"You do find a lot of Catholic representation here," Sprague told Catholic San Francisco in a phone call from the border. "But you find all faiths working together."

"I can't even tell you what I have seen without bursting into tears," she said. "What you see in the news, it's that bad and worse."

She said she came for people like the barefoot toddler she saw as she arrived at the center, filthy and hungry with matted hair and a world-weary expression.

Volunteers begin to restore dignity to the migrants by feeding them, offering them a shower, a place to rest, clean clothing and shoes.

When someone's dignity is restored, the light returns, Sprague said.

"I was able to see this little girl two days later, clean, sleeping on a mat," Sprague said. "I hope and pray that they are able to overcome the misery."

St. Ignatius pastor Jesuit Father Greg Bonfiglio, fluent in Spanish, hopes to travel with one of his parish teams this fall.

Volunteering at the border offers a "very concrete" opportunity for parishioners, many of whom are angry about the situation at the border, he said.

Catholic News Agency contributed.

SENIOR LIVING

Join the hundreds of Catholic parishes and organizations in the Bay Area who have found the ideal place to hold their meetings, conferences and retreats. A haven of peace and solitude with a beautiful chapel, state-of-the art, high-tech meeting rooms, lovely grounds, and guest rooms with private baths, Vallombrosa can be just the right choice for a parish workshop, a staff meeting, or a weekend retreat for 50 or 100. Our food service gets rave reviews. Our chefs cook with "Farm to Fork" produce and are happy to accommodate special diets. That's why more than 200 non-profit organizations choose Vallombrosa. We also welcome individual "anytime retreatants" as space allows. Visit: **www.vallombrosa.org**

CALL US TODAY: **650-325-5614**

VALLOMBROSACENTER
A Ministry of the Archdiocese of San Francisco
250 Oak Grove Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025

Are you:

- Living alone in San Mateo County?
- Over the age of 60?
- Concerned about your memory or thinking?

The San Mateo Support Staying Home program can provide free help.

Contact Erin Malone at 408.372.9928 or ermalone@alz.org.

alzheimer's association

Bladder Problems?

Volunteers Wanted!

Researchers from the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and Stanford University are conducting a study to see whether a yoga practice program or physical conditioning program can improve urinary incontinence.

You may qualify for the study if:
☑ You are a woman, 45 years or older
☑ You frequently experience unwanted urine leakages

If you qualify for the study you may:
❖ Answer questionnaires and keep study diaries
❖ Have a brief physical examination
❖ Be eligible to participate in a yoga practice program or physical conditioning program
❖ Classes are offered in San Francisco, Redwood City, and Oakland.

UCSF Stanford

Contact our study team now:

- **San Francisco/Oakland** - leave a message at (415) 885-7547 or email takecontrol@ucsf.edu
- **Palo Alto/Redwood City** –call (650) 724-7826 or email gynresearch@stanford.edu.

To find out more about our research studies, go to www.whcrc.ucsf.edu