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Cross
en Español**
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‘Small Things with Great Love’

Mother Teresa declared a saint

CALCUTTA, India — A favorite motto of St. Teresa of Calcutta was: “Do small things with great love.”

But the “small things” she did so captivated the world that she was showered with awards and almost universally praised.

Despite calls on her time from all over the globe, Mother Teresa always returned to India to be with those she loved most — the lonely, abandoned, homeless, disease-ravaged, dying, “poorest of the poor” in Calcutta’s streets.

On Sept. 4, Pope Francis, who has spent this year preaching about mercy, canonized Mother Teresa. An estimated 120,000 people packed St. Peter’s Square for the canonization Mass.

“Mother Teresa, in all aspects of her life, was a generous dispenser of divine mercy, making herself available for everyone through her welcome and defense of human life, those unborn and those abandoned and discarded,” the pope said in his homily.

During her life, Mother Teresa traveled the world to deliver a single message: that love and caring are the most important things in the world.

“The biggest disease today,” she once said, “is not leprosy or tuberculosis, but rather the feel-

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Diocesan Synod Delegates Are Invited to ‘Think Big’

By Aida Bustos

SAN DIEGO — “Think big.”

That’s what Bishop Robert W. McElroy urged parish delegates to do leading up to the first general assembly in the diocese in 40 years.

This assembly, called a diocesan synod, will be held on Oct. 29 and 30. Its focus will be on how the San Diego Diocese and its individual parishes can strengthen marriage and families, give pastoral support to divorced Catholics and invite unmarried couples into the fold, all challenges faced by the Church.

At the end of the synod, the dele-

gates will present five proposals to the bishop, who has committed to implementing them.

The seed for the synod was planted by Pope Francis earlier this year. In his teaching document “Amoris Laetitia” (“Joy of Love”), the pope invited dioceses around the world to reflect on the state of families in their region and to find ways to strengthen them.

After consultations with the priestly leadership, deacons and lay leaders, Bishop McElroy announced in May that the Diocese of San Diego

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Chastity Groups Helping Catholics on Path to Purity

By Denis Grasska

SAN DIEGO — About five years ago, a few of Dr. Paul Santero’s male friends confided in him about their struggle with pornography.

They encouraged Santero, a Catholic psychologist who had wrestled with and overcome the same issues years earlier, to form a Catholic chastity group for men.

Around the same time, Santero heard a homily in which Father Matthew Spahr, pastor of The Immaculata Parish, lamented how easily accessible and widely used pornography had become — even among practicing Catholics — thanks to the Internet. Santero approached Father Spahr after Mass, pitching the very idea that his friends had suggested to him.

The result was Dragonslayers, a men’s chastity group based at The Immaculata Parish but open to any man struggling to lead a chaste lifestyle. Last year, it was joined by The Immaculata Women’s Chastity Group, led by parishioner Rita Sporleder, which provides a forum for

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► **CHASTITY**

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Dragonslayers helps men move beyond shame

Catholic women to reflect on the Church's teachings about human sexuality.

Dragonslayers — its name uses the dragon as a symbol for lust — is a closed group, its weekly meeting dates and times are not made public, and potential members must first contact Santero, who determines if they would be a good fit for the group. At their meetings, members can speak freely with the certainty that whatever is said in the group will remain there.

"The goal," said Santero, "is just to help men who are lost in this addiction ... to give them another option, give them hope that they can conquer and be free of this addiction."

Between six and 10 men attend the typical meeting, and members come from all walks of life. ("The addiction doesn't have any type of bias," Santero said. "It goes after everybody.") Though the common denominator among attendees seems to be Internet pornography, Santero said, the group is for men dealing with any type of sexual addiction — "whether it's masturbation, fornication [or] going to strip clubs." And whatever the issue, he said, the group is there to provide "tools ... to conquer this lust."

The weekly format is the same. Each meeting is about one and a half hours long. The first half hour is educational, with participants discussing a book, watching a video or listening to an audio presentation on chastity. During the last hour, participants are given the opportunity — if desired — to share how they are doing in their efforts to live chastely.

Exposing this often hidden source of shame is an important part of the recovery process, Santero said, and the group facilitates this.

"When you have other men that understand the experience and have compassion and they really give the guy the attention, affection and approval," he said, "then



DR. PAUL SANTERO

you turn that shame into something that's positive."

He explained that group members experience the freedom that comes with knowing that, even if they fall from time to time, they are making positive steps toward overcoming their addictions.

Santero estimates that some 50 to 60 men have taken part in the group over the past five years, whether by simply attending one meeting or continuing to do so for several months or years.

"To say the least, the men's group has had a tremendous impact on my life," one group member shared anonymously. "The group provided me with resources, nonjudgmental support and an environment to learn how to finally overcome my addiction to porn. ... I always thought this was something I could overcome by myself. Ultimately, I had to admit my powerlessness and, in humility, become open, and honest, and accountable with the group."

He added, "I have been walking in freedom now for over four years since joining the group. At times, it has been a painful journey, but so worthwhile considering the joy I now experience."

Father Spahr told *The Southern Cross* that he was "delighted" when Santero first approached him five years ago with the idea of starting the group, because pornography is "so much a part of people's lives today, but nobody really wants to talk about it."



RITA SPORLEDER

At one time, he felt "a little helpless" when men with pornography addictions came to him for confession, because he did not have any resources to offer them. But now he does.

"I think these kinds of problems, especially when they're more severe, really need the kind of accountability, and sharing, and mutual support that this kind of group offers," Father Spahr said.

Reflecting on what sets Dragonslayers apart from secular support groups, he noted, "It's hard to deal with things like this without bringing your spirituality into it."

The Immaculata Women's Chastity Group, open to all women ages 18 and older, meets on two Monday evenings each month at The Immaculata Parish. Sporleder said the group helps its members "to grow in the virtue of chastity and to rediscover the gift of authentic femininity."

"It is an opportunity to connect with

other women in order to prepare ourselves for a deeper relationship with Christ and with our loved ones," she explained. "We pray, we study and we support one another on our faith journey."

Each meeting begins with the rosary and includes a study and group discussion. Among other things, the group has read "Mulieris Dignitatem" ("On the Dignity and Vocation of Women"), an apostolic letter written by St. John Paul II, and "Redemptoris Mater" ("Mother of the Redeemer"), an encyclical also written by St. John Paul.

Sporleder, whose role as group administrator involves facilitating discussions, said group members now have "a deeper appreciation and understanding of the important role women play in the Church and the model example we find in the Blessed Mother Mary."

Celia Llanos Duarte said her participation in The Immaculata Women's Chastity Group has been "a blessing."

"Although most of us come to the group having never met before, I feel that we share an unbreakable and powerful bond with everyone else in the group: the love for Christ and thirst to get to know Him better," she said. "I am so happy I've found a community of women to grow and share my faith with and I'm so very grateful to the group's leadership for giving me the opportunity to do so."

For more information about *Dragonslayers*, contact Santero at (619) 507-9294. For more information about *The Immaculata Women's Chastity Group*, contact Sporleder at ritasporleder@gmail.com.

The Southern Cross

IN LOVING
Memory

INTO THY HANDS, O Lord, we commend the spirits of these beloved ones who are gone before us into the realm of thy eternal happiness and peace. AMEN

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Dorothy Sisson	St. Patrick's	8-5-16
Marie Anne Cavanaugh	St. Didacus	8-5-16
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Barbara Bixel	St. Therese	7-27-16
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