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LOCAL CHURCH 15

Religious Order with Strong Ties to San Diego Celebrates 175 Years

OCEANSIDE — The Sisters of the Precious Blood of Jesus recently celebrated their 175th anniversary as a religious congregation and 96 years of ministry in California.

The three-day celebration, which took place Oct. 16-18 at Mission San Luis Rey in Oceanside, included an Oct. 17 Mass celebrated in the historic mission church by San Bernardino Bishop Gerald Barnes.

In his homily, Bishop Barnes identified the congregation's 175th anniversary as "a great time to remember and to celebrate," but also "a time to plan for the future" and "time to build on everything that has been done and to build on it with pride but also great humility."

"You've witnessed what love is to so many people," the bishop said. "You've shared with them not only the food that nourishes the body, but the greater food that nourishes the spirit, the soul — the food from heaven."

The Mass was concelebrated by Father Chuck Talley, OFM, pastor of Mission San Luis Rey Parish, and Father Warren Rouse, OFM. Some 24 Precious Blood Sisters from around the country were present, joining the eight who live in California.

After the liturgy, about 400 people gathered for a luncheon in the parish's McKeon Center, during which the congregation presented a 175th anniversary



ANNIVERSARY: Members of the Sisters of the Precious Blood pose for a group photo after a 175th anniversary Mass Oct. 17 at Mission San Luis Rey.

Legacy donation of \$15,000 each to St. Charles Mission School and St. Michael Indian School. Donations of \$15,000 each were also given to Catholic Charities in the dioceses of San Diego and San

Bernardino.

The anniversary celebration concluded Oct. 18. Events on the last day included a prayer service at the grave of Sister Hildebertha Gutman, the only Sister of the Precious Blood buried in California; the service included the reading of the names of all deceased sisters — 136 in total — who had lived and ministered at San Luis Rey or in Escondido. The Precious Blood Sisters also joined the Catholic community of Mission San Luis Rey Parish for Sunday Mass, during which

the sisters renewed their vows.

Founded in Switzerland by Mother Maria Anna Brunner, the Sisters of the Precious Blood came from Ohio to California in 1913 to open a boarding school on the grounds of Mission San Luis Rey. In the decades that followed, they established many schools, including St. Mary (Escondido) and Our Lady of Grace (El Cajon), and taught in several others, including Mission San Antonio de Pala Indian School and Our Lady of Perpetual Help School (Lakeside).

San Diego-based members of the congregation also served in the diocese's seminary and priestly formation programs.

After the Second Vatican Council, the congregation's charism expanded beyond the education of youth. Locally, the sisters served in parish adult ministries at St. Pius X (Chula Vista), Sacred Heart (Ocean Beach), St. Brigid, Our Lady of Refuge, Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. They have also served at Mission San Antonio de Pala, Our Lady of Grace Parish, St. Charles Parish and St. Mary Star of the Sea Parish (Oceanside), as well as Catholic Charities San Diego and the diocesan Office for Schools and Office for Women Religious.

"Today, in this mission church, in this part of God's kingdom," Bishop Barnes said in his Oct. 17 homily, "the Church celebrates in gratitude to Almighty God, for the gift of your ministry, of your service, of your presence in the Church. And the Church also celebrates in gratitude to you and the sisters that have preceded you, for your fidelity to that ministry, for your fidelity to feeding those that are hungry, for your fidelity to being witnesses to God's love."

The Southern Cross

Pastoral Visit

