

DIOCESE OF ORANGE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Irvine Catholic Parish Pledges \$1 Million to the UCI Interfaith Center

Orange, Calif., (June 16, 2005) - St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Roman Catholic parish, Irvine, has pledged \$1 million - a portion of a larger fund bequeathed to the parish by an anonymous parishioner - to the University of California Irvine Interfaith Center. The pledged funds were allocated by the parish finance council as part of its overall stewardship responsibilities.

St. Elizabeth's donation begins a fundraising campaign to secure a permanent location for the UC Irvine Interfaith Center. Long time Campus Chaplain at the UCI Interfaith Center, Rev. Pat Philbin, S.M., has worked to foster communication and trust between faiths at UCI. "St. Elizabeth Ann Seton's donation to the Interfaith Foundation will help to ensure a permanent location for the program that we have all worked so hard to build," said Fr. Philbin.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is the nearest Catholic parish and church to the University campus and has been involved with the campus community for many years because of this proximity. Pastor, Rev. Thomas Pado believes the Interfaith Center has been a positive and indispensable presence at UCI since its inception in 1965. "It is a place where students from any faith can go to become involved with faith-based activities, attend religious services, and interact with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures," he said.

The Interfaith Center was established in 1965, when the UCI was established. Its goal was to provide a ministry to serve the entire campus community -- students, faculty, and staff. The Interfaith Center is governed by the University Interfaith Foundation, composed of community and religious leaders. Forty years later, the mission continues and the Interfaith Center currently serves over 2,000 visitors per week.

The Interfaith Foundation is an ecumenical organization that seeks to overcome barriers between faiths and sects, and encourages fellowship among all persons, regardless of creed. It is home to a number of groups representing many faiths including -- Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim. The Interfaith Center's goal is to promote a sense of fellowship and to provide space for religions to worship according to their respective traditions. Executive Director of the Interfaith Center, Nancy Jenks has overseen the Center for the past 30 years. "We are thankful for this very generous pledge by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish and for Fr. Pado's leadership in securing this funding," she said.

The Interfaith Center is currently located on the UCI campus, housed in temporary buildings. The current facilities are in disrepair and inadequate for a growing student population. As a result, St. Elizabeth's Parish has earmarked one million dollars to enable both relocation to a permanent location and construction of a more suitable facility that will better serve the UCI community.

The pledge to the UCI Interfaith Foundation's Capital Campaign seeks to encourage other churches and organizations to aid this important effort. "Even with our pledge of one million dollars, the goal of a new and serviceable Interfaith Center remains incomplete. We encourage others - within and without the University system and community - to consider the value the center has provided to literally thousands of people over its forty-year history. "Our parish gesture is the result of the generosity of another," said Fr. Pado.

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