



MISSION BELL

Vol. 15, No. 1 / Spring/Summer 2026

Ring in the News of the Preservation Campaign for Mission San Antonio de Padua

A Message from Campaign President

GRACE BORZINI

IT IS AN HONOR to serve as your President of the Preservation Campaign for Mission San Antonio de Padua—a place that holds deep historical, cultural, and spiritual significance for our community.

As we look ahead, I am excited to welcome Denise Hayes as our newest board member. Denise lives locally and has long been a devoted supporter of the Mission. Her genuine love for this sacred place, along with her regular attendance at Mass whenever she can, makes her a natural and meaningful addition to our team. We believe she will be a perfect complement to our Board and our shared mission.

This year, one of my primary goals as President is to ensure that our newly established Endowment Fund becomes a central and lasting pillar of our preservation efforts. To achieve this, we are focusing on several key initiatives:

- Expanding awareness by connecting with financial planners, accountants, and estate attorneys to share the importance and impact of planned giving.
- Partnering with the Community Foundation of Monterey County to provide professional oversight and stewardship of our Endowment Fund.
- Launching a dedicated social media campaign to broaden our reach and inspire community engagement and support.
- Hosting a special luncheon at the Mission, inviting financial advisors, community leaders, and prospective donors to experience firsthand the beauty and importance of this historic site.

Our endowment will grow forever and spin off proceeds to fund the ongoing maintenance and preservation of our mission.

You now have the option to donate to the Preservation Campaign which funds our annual current mission maintenance expenses or you can donate directly to our growing endowment fund which we hope to grow to \$2 million dollars. This fund will then generate income we can use for annual maintenance expenses.

Thanks to you all the Preservation Campaign was able to successfully raise over \$12 million to retrofit and restore our

beloved mission. Now our goal is to maintain this treasured beauty forever.

We hope you'll consider joining us in this endeavor. Gifts to the endowment can be a one-time gift, a pledge over several years, gifts of stocks, or property or a gift through your estate.

Together, these efforts will help secure a sustainable future for Mission San Antonio de Padua, ensuring that it remains a place of inspiration and heritage for generations to come.

Thank you for your continued support, dedication, and belief in this important work. ■

Welcome New Board Member DENISE HAYES



AS THE NEWEST member of the San Antonio Mission Board, I feel truly blessed. My early time at San Antonio includes many years of performing with the Camerata Singers. With the

Mission's phenomenal acoustics, the Christmas and Easter seasons were filled with the sounds of Mozart and Handel. I now enjoy Sunday Mass singing in the choir.

My husband, Larry, who has retired from the Navy, and I operate two gas station/convenience store businesses that provide valued services to the local communities which we enjoy.

Our family includes four adult children and four growing grandchildren.

Being a long time resident of South Monterey County, I have seen many positive changes occurring at the Mission. Its future seems bright with its restoration and retrofitting projects.

Again, we are so fortunate to be stewards of this iconic jewel set in our midst. *Happy Spring!* ■

ST. ANTHONY AND THE CHRIST CHILD

By Joan Steele, Mission Administrator

THE CALENDAR SAYS that Spring has just arrived in the past few weeks, but the poppies, daffodils, wild lilacs and irises in the Mission garden beg to differ. They've been in bloom for months already and are preparing themselves for Summer.

The early warm, sunny weather brought not only wild flowers, but also hundreds of visitors to the Mission already this year. This is good news. The goal of the seismic retrofit/restoration was to enhance safety and comfort for future generations of visitors and guests to our beloved historic Mission.

Together, we have saved the Mission, specifically to share it. Like anything that is shared by many, however, daily wear and tear takes a toll. In the beginning of the year, we needed to replace a commercial washer for our retreat center. The Mission can accommodate sixty-five people per night and that equates to a lot of laundry!

Our aging dryers are also on their way out; two new commercial dryers, donated by FHSAM (Friends of Historic San Antonio Mission), are currently on their way to their new home in the Mission laundry room.

A beautiful life-size bronze of St. Anthony (our Patron Saint) and the Christ Child has been installed in the Mission garden. This exquisite, one-of-a-kind sculpture was created by renowned artist Steven Whyte of Steven Whyte Studios in Carmel, California. Steven's work resides in the permanent collections of two Smithsonian Institute Museums. He has been honored as the 2022 *'Champion of the Arts'* by the Monterey County Arts Council, and is an Elected Fellow of The National Sculpture Society. He was the 2021 winner of the *Stanley Bleifeld Memorial Award* for an outstanding body of work. Steven was the 2016 *Sports Artist of the Year*, Sculptor, The United States Academy of Sports and The American Sport Art Museum & Archives. It has been our honor to



work with Steven on this important project.

The statue was donated by Al Wagner, in memory of his beloved wife, Ann Christine Nicol Wagner, who passed away on June 29, 2023. Ann was a native of Capitola, CA, a town she loved dearly. Her family and friends remember her ability and eagerness to strike up a friendly conversation with anyone and everyone she met. She also held a deep love of horses, and her participation within the equine community brought her countless friendships and treasured memories.



Anne Christine Nicol Wagner

When Al first approached me several years ago with a request to donate a statue for the Mission garden, in Ann's memory, my initial response was, "Thank you, but no." My reason was that we worked very hard during the retrofit to restore and renovate the garden to be a place of welcome, peace, and

serenity, within a very natural setting. A formal statue would alter the atmosphere of the garden. Albert persisted. Eventually, after much thought and prayer, I told Al we would accept a statue, with a few conditions.

It would have to be a life-size bronze of our patron saint, St. Anthony. It couldn't be just a standard statue, however. St. Anthony had

to be sitting on a bench with a "toddler" Christ Child in his lap. Anthony needed to be smiling and the baby Jesus had to be laughing. It would have to be a customstatue as we had not seen any rendition that matched the image in my imagination.

After considering my conditions and agreeing to them, Al and I began scouring the internet and the local area to find a sculptor who'd be up for the challenge. Al found Steven Whyte in his Carmel Studio. Steven met with us in the Mission garden to discuss our vision. Steven said he was excited to be able to work on a very personal, human

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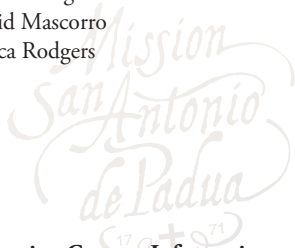
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MISSION BELL *Spring/Summer 2026*

St. Anthony and the Christ Child continued from page 2

version of this saint who is deeply loved around the world. We are very honored that he comprehended the concept and was so enthusiastic to make it come to life!

Al and his beautiful family were present at the Mission's Easter Mass on April 5, 2026, after which, Fr. Victor Ozoufuanya blessed the statue.

Sean Steele, Owner and Woodsmith of 805 Custom Woodworks, once again worked his magic and created a wonderful old-growth redwood bench worthy to seat St. Anthony and the Christ Child. Now, visitors to Mission San Antonio can sit-a-spell and have-a-chat with Anthony and Jesus.



Al Wagner and family, Easter 2026

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Campaign Board and the Parishioners of Mission San Antonio, to extend our deep appreciation to Susan Gill for once again stepping up in 2025 to lead the Campaign for the Preservation of Mission San Antonio de Padua as President.

Under Susan's adept direction, 2025 was a very good year for the Campaign. Our October 11th dinner was both a wonderful, enjoyable event, as well as a successful fundraiser. Susan, your love and support of the Mission has been, and continues to be, inspirational.

Thank you! ■

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