

## What's In a Pane

by

Dr. George Diestel\*

I walked in to class one day at the start of the first Iraq war (1991) (Desert Storm) to find a note on my podium which read,

"Dear Dr. Diestel,

My Reserve Group has been called up to go to Iraq. If I come back, I'll take this class with you. Thank you. Please ask all my fellow students to pray for me. /signed/"

It had been twenty years since the Vietnam war, so I contemplated my role as a professor during war. I reserved the Faculty Senate chamber for an open faculty discussion of, "Our Role As Professors During War." I publicized the event on campus.

To my amazement, 200 faculty attended. We discussed our role(s) for several hours without any agenda or bias; we all left with some very useful insights about our role(s) and how to best help our students during war.

The large turnout of the young faculty who had never taught during war, made a lasting impact on me. There was a lot of thinking going on among the faculty, and until that meeting, we all thought we were alone.

During that discussion my thoughts of my reactions to war were indexed in my soul; I share the most vivid memory as follows:

\*\*\*\*\*

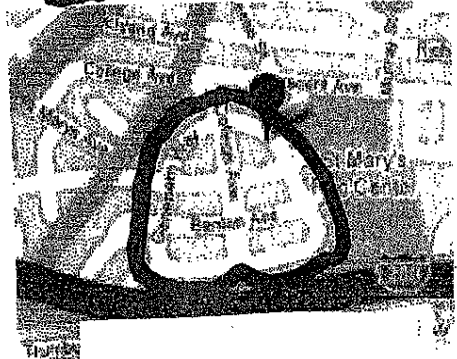
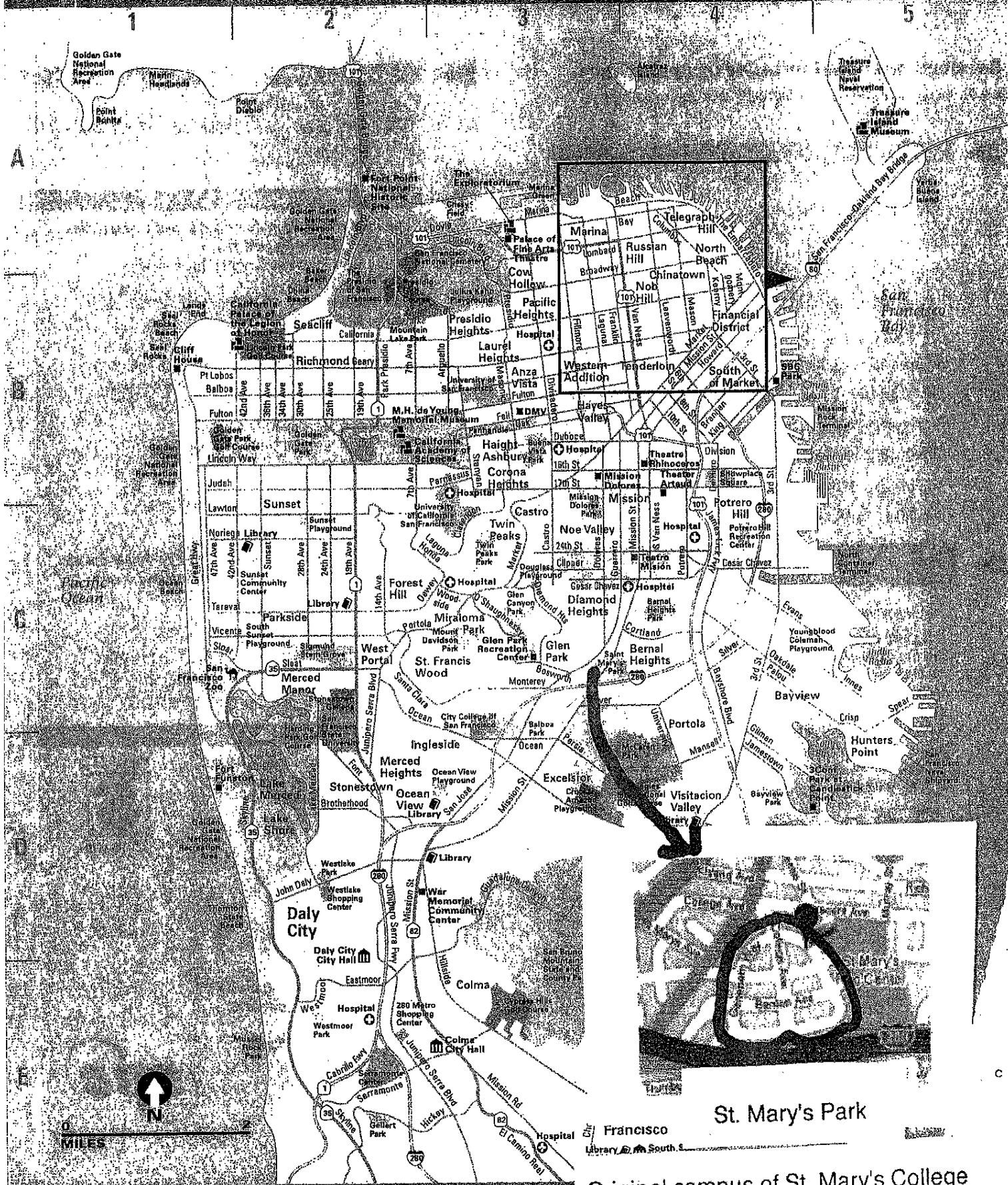
Three weeks ago, September 2006, I returned to my parents home in San Francisco where I grew up during and after World War II. Our home at 25 Justin Drive is now owned by my friend, Bryan, who invites me to stay with him; I sleep in my childhood bedroom and I am inundated with memories.

"Justin", the name of a street in San Francisco, can not mean much to you, yet.

Brother "Justin", FSC. (Christian Brothers) was the first president of St. Mary's College, California, now in Moraga, behind the Berkeley Hills. The original campus was in San Francisco and is now called: "St. Mary's Park". It is in the first subdivision built in the State of California. All the streets are named after the founding faculty at St. Mary's.

The Streets are configured in the shape of a bell--"The Bells of St. Mary's". At the end of the century the College was moved from San Francisco to Oakland (Brother Justin wrote, "to finally get out of the damp fog and blistering winds of San Francisco"); thence to Moraga and "St. Mary's Park" was built (1920s-30s) on the original San Francisco campus of about 200 acres. My parents paid \$3,600 for our home. The land was owned by the Archdiocese of San Francisco whose first Archbishop, Alemany, is remembered by the name of southern border to St. Mary's Park, Alemany Boulevard (which runs all the way from St. Mary's Park to Daly City).

# San Francisco Area



St. Mary's Park

Original campus of St. Mary's College  
1868-1889.

St. Mary's Park was indeed one of those social units about which it is said in Africa, "It takes a village to raise a child."

So during my visit three weeks ago, I walked down Justin Drive only three homes and noticed the scaffolding embracing 50 Justin while being re-painted. There was a painter on the scaffolding trimming the front window pane frames. I stopped in front of 50 Justin and watched him carefully paint the center window of eight panes.



50 Justin Drive, San Francisco  
St. Mary's Park

The young hispanic painter noticed me crying in front of the home and greeted me. I asked him to come down from the scaffolding and "take a break" and he did.

We lite a cigarette and he gave me permission to tell him a story about the pane frames he was painting:

I told him as follows:

Son, 50 years ago, I lived at 25 Justin Drive, just three homes from 50 Justin Drive and across the street. From our bay window we could see all the homes across the street. This home, 50 Justin Drive, was owned by the Garcia family.



My mom held the Gracia's only son, Al, up to me as my model. When I was a devil, my mom would say, "Al Garcia, wouldn't do that."

My mother told me that Al Garcia was going to be a great success and that I should try to be like him. She told me that he was the most handsome young man in San Francisco.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the Spring of 1945 our 'village' of St. Mary's Park was traumatized by the news that Al Garcia was killed in the Battle of Iwo Jima.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Marines in their dress uniforms had come to 50 Justin Drive with a chaplain and telegram. As was tradition, a red window banner (8"w x 15"h) bearing the Gold Star in its center was given to the Garcias.




The Gold Star banner was placed in the front window of 50 Justin Drive--in the vary window pane which the young man was painting 61 years later. Al Garcia's Gold Star banner hung there for decades.

As a little boy I never again saw Mrs. Garcia when she was not dressed completely in black. She walked to Mass each morning, and to shopping each afternoon, in a black dress, black coat, black hat, black shoes and black gloves.

I always greeted Mrs. Garcia, but she never replied. I was scared but always said, "Hello, Mrs. Garcia". Somehow, I understood her silence then. Now, I understand intensely why every little boy in St. Mary's Park must have reminded her of her only dear son, Alberto.

Al's father, Al Sr., parked his black Cadillac beneath the Gold Star ever night after the war in the driveway at 50 Justin Drive. There were no garage door openers in those days, so Mr. Garcia would always wave to me while opening the garage door at 50 Justin Drive, St. Mary's Park, San Francisco.

\*\*\*\*\*

There were in those days, in the front windows of American homes, Blue Star banners  placed by the families with sons in the war; Red Star banners  for those injured, and Gold Stars  in memory of those who gave their lives.

\*\*\*\*\*

In a WWII Memorial Park, north of Sydney, Australia, there is an inscription in the walkway every fifty feet: "They gave their lives, so you could have yours!"

When I walked there in 2000, my thoughts were of Al Garcia and his family; their loss, his sacrifice, and my profound gratitude to those who earned my freedom.

\*\*\*\*\*

I prayed daily for the Garcia family as a little boy as I passed their home and saw the Gold Star banner. When I think of war to this day, I think of Al Garcia, Mrs. Garcia and the Garcia family and that window at 50 Justin Drive in St. Mary's Park.

When I passed that window being painted a few weeks ago, it all overwhelmed me.

\*\*\*\*\*

When we finished our cigarettes, the young house painter, thanked me for telling him the story of the Gold Star banner which hung in the front window he was painting that day. He said to me:

"Sir, It is an honor for me to paint that window frame."

He then climbed up the scaffold and continued his work on the very pane frame which displayed Al Garcia's Gold Star banner for so many years.

\*\*\*\*\*

Today, the Gold Star Mother's organizations still carry on and try to keep the tradition alive. The Gold Star banners are available

through VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) website stores and  
[www.patrioticware.com](http://www.patrioticware.com).

\*\*\*\*\*

Since the original St. Mary's campus had a chapel which kept the Holy Eucharist, St. Mary's Park is built on Consecrated land.

To me, 50 Justin Drive is consecrated land, indeed! Thank you,  
Al.

Requiescat in Pacem!

\*\*\*\*\*

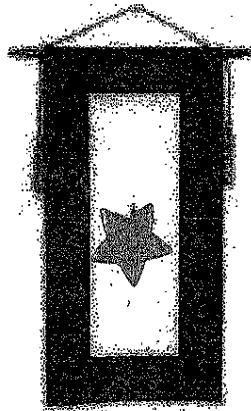
\*\*\*\*\*

\*Dr. George Diestel is Professor Emeritus of the California State University, Fresno. He taught at USC, and the California Institute of Technology before Fresno State. Interestingly, he graduated (undergraduate) from St. Mary's College, Moraga, California, in 1960.

[While replacing the main water service at 25 Justin Drive in 1984, he dug up 20 red bricks from the original campus of St. Mary's College, San Francisco (c. 1869-1889).]

His current residence is: 42867 Ave 12, Madera, California 93636.

-30- 10/28/06



Gold Star window banner



Christ  
was offered  
once  
to take  
away  
sins



### MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

**Saturday, November 11**  
4:30 pm Seghetti &  
Chiappini Family

**Sunday, November 12**  
7:30 am Mass Intention  
for All Parishioners  
9:30 am † Morris  
Freeland

11:00 am † Eliza Brennan  
12:30 pm Garcia Family  
& Al Garcia Jr.

**Monday, November 13**  
† Pat Nagal

**Tuesday, November 14**  
† Henry & Teresa Thran

**Wednesday, Nov. 15**  
† Rufino Ancheta

**Thursday, November 16**  
† Giulia, Enrico & Carlo  
Travaglini

**Friday, November 17**  
† Fr. Romuald



**PICTURES:** If you brought a picture of a beloved one for the All Souls Novena, please take it with you today. They are located at the little table at the entrance of the church. Thank you.

## November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006 Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

*The letter to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus completed his sacrifice by entering into heaven. There is where God is present in the most perfect way. In this sacrifice he took away sin once for all. In heaven he intercedes with his Father on our behalf. Jesus will come again in glory. His purpose will be to bring salvation to people who surrendered themselves to him in faith, "those who eagerly await him."*

*The call of today's Gospel is a call from Jesus to integrity. People who have integrity mean what they say. They don't say one thing and do another. The way of love is the way that Jesus wants to follow. This way is not one of giving for the sake of show, but rather one of giving, even from one's need, out of a sense of personal integrity. If we say that we are followers of Jesus, if we say it is not all about us, but about our neighbors then we should act accordingly.*

### PARISH COMMUNITY NEWS...

#### Encyclical "God Is Love"

**Charity as a responsibility of the Church.** - 21. A decisive step in the difficult search for ways of putting this fundamental ecclesial principle into practice is illustrated in the choice of the seven, which marked the origin of the diaconal office. In the early Church, a disparity had arisen between Hebrew speakers and Greek speakers. The Apostles, who had been entrusted primarily with "prayer" and the "ministry of the word", felt over-burdened by "serving tables", so they decided to reserve to themselves the principal duty and to designate for the other task, a group of seven persons. With the formation of this group of seven, "diaconia"—the ministry of charity became part of the fundamental structure of the Church.

**THANKSGIVING:** Begin your holiday with our annual tri-lingual Thanksgiving Mass on November 23<sup>rd</sup> at 9:00 am. All are invited to celebrate together the blessings God gives in our lives each day! As in the past, we also invite you to bring packaged and canned goods to benefit the San Francisco Food Bank and our St. Vincent de Paul Pantry. Most helpful items are rice and pasta, cereal, peanut butter, fruit juice, instant cocoa, tuna, soups, canned fruit, stew, chili or beans, cans of green or yellow vegetables. Two bins will be placed at the back of the church until Thanksgiving Day for you to donate food items. The generosity of our parish on this day has always been inspiring.

**MERCY HIGH SCHOOL HOLIDAY BOUTIQUE:** Mercy High School – San Francisco invites you to their Annual Holiday Boutique, Saturday November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Located in the McAuley Pavillion (3250 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue in San Francisco). For more information please contact Debbie Mathews 415-334-0525 X217.

**SAN FRANCISCO ADULT DAY CARE PROGRAM:** Are you a caregiver that needs a break from the daily duties of caring for a loved one? Catholic Charities CYO has just the right alternative for you. The San Francisco Adult Day Care services and Alzheimer's Day Care Resource Center is a friendly homelike daytime environment for frail seniors and disabled adults. The program provides meals, activities, entertainment, and an increased quality of life for our participants. For more information please call Barbara Tassone, at (415) 452-3500.

**INVITATION:** The Missionaries of Charity (sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta) invites you to the Profession of the First Vows of ten of their novices on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006 (Friday) in the Church at Mission Dolores Church (3321 16<sup>th</sup> Street). The Holy Mass will be at 4:00 pm. All are most welcome.