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United in Grieving and Hope

Mourning the loss of three
members of Opus Dei in
California

07/21/2025

In the past few days, the faithful of the Prelature have been united in mourning the loss of three members—Matt Anthony (44), Val Creus (59), and Matt Schoenecker (50)—who died tragically in a swimming accident in the Sierra Nevada Mountains on June 18, 2025. They were part of a group of six hikers

enjoying a day outing while taking part in a workshop at Trumbull Manor, a conference center in Novato, California.

The tragedy was not without a touch of heroism. Some of the hikers were swimming near a waterfall well-known to several in the group, though the water was unusually cold and the current unusually powerful. When Val jumped into the water, he began calling for help. Matt Schoenecker and Matt Anthony immediately leaped in to rescue him. None of the three surfaced, and despite the water's depth, their bodies were recovered a few days later.

Their loss has brought great pain to their families and stirred an outpouring of prayers and condolences from friends and members of the Work throughout the world. Upon hearing about the

incident, the Prelate immediately wrote to the Vicar of the United States and Canada, expressing his love and support.

In his letter dated June 19, he wrote: "It is natural that we ask the Lord why. It is not easy to find an answer, but we know that He knows best, and we continue our dialogue with Jesus who, through faith, fills us with hope and transforms our pain and sorrow into a path of salvation... Let us continue praying. The whole Work prays with you, and through prayer we are very united... As you are already doing, continue to be very united, attentive to one another, and, even in the midst of this enormous sorrow, joyful, because we know that Jesus blesses with the Cross."

Monsignor Thomas Bohlin, the Vicar of the region, stated: "We can still hardly believe that we have lost these three youthful and dedicated

men so suddenly and so tragically. Our hearts go out to their families and their friends and to all in the Work who feel the pain of this shocking event. The whole Work benefited from their lives, their joy, and their generous work. We will miss them greatly."

Matt Anthony, a native of St. Louis, used his classics training from the University of Notre Dame and New York University to teach and mentor young men for several years before working in various administrative positions for the Prelature. Most recently, he served as a member of the Regional Commission for the United States and Canada, based in New York. His funeral will take place in St. Louis.

Born and raised in Milwaukee, Matt Schoenecker studied electrical and biomedical engineering, earning a Ph.D. at the University of California,

Berkeley, developing devices to help people with severe hearing loss. After directing mentoring programs for young men in Southern California, he moved to New York to work at the Regional Commission. His funeral will be celebrated in Milwaukee.

Valentino Creus moved from his home country, the Philippines, to Los Angeles with his family and completed a master's in accounting at the University of Southern California. He balanced a full-time accounting career with helping direct various activities of Opus Dei in Southern California. Los Angeles Archbishop Jose Gomez will celebrate his funeral in Los Angeles.

The details of their funerals have yet to be finalized. Memorial Masses to pray for their souls will take place in New York and other cities in the United States and Canada.

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