All Souls Day Observances

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Re-imagine how we pass on the faith

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

There is an urgent need to re-imagine the way the Church passes on the faith to young people and engages others in lifelong faith formation, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said to more than 200 catechists who gathered at All Saints School in Norwalk on October 28.

In a remarkable 45-minute talk that was punctuated by applause, laughter and absorbed listening, the bishop told the men and women in attendance that social media is re-wiring the lives of young people, leading them to ask tough questions and to become disaffiliated at an earlier age.

“There is in my mind a tremendous urgency that is growing,” the bishop said, noting that he sees it when he speaks to youth across the country and here in Fairfield County.

“The world is changing faster than we can appreciate,” he said of the new technology where “computer browsers are the open door” to a world that often dismisses faith and comes between children and their parents.

The bishop told catechists that they are a bridge between faith traditions and children, and that there is a need to “re-tool and re-imagine” the ancient task of passing on the faith.

“IT’S TIME TO BREAK OUT,” Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said in a “Conversation with Catechists” on October 28 in the first of a series of talks with those who teach the faith throughout the diocese. He told catechists that they are a bridge between faith traditions and children, and that there is a need to “re-tool and re-imagine” the ancient task of passing on the faith. (PHOTO BY MICHIELLE BABYAK)

“faith is the stuff that science hasn’t figured out yet.”

Several times during his talk, the bishop emphasized that “parents must play an intimate role in the faith of their children,” and that any successful catechetical approach must draw the entire family into the faith experience. “Our job is not to judge but to help parents love their children better,” he said.

Many of the parents in attendance nodded in agreement when the bishop discussed the challenges faced by those engaged in passing on the faith, beginning with a growing sense of disaffiliation in the young.

“Which means young people and people of all ages are making the conscious decisions to separate themselves from our parishes and the Church. Young people don’t see a value in these communities. They don’t see a value in being part of our schools and parishes. There is a crisis of relevance in our communities.”

Likewise, he believes young people are afflicted with a growing sense of anxiety and restlessness fueled by smartphones and social media.

“They’re not comfortable in their own skins because they live in a hyper-competitive world. And they’re told if they’re not great at everything, there’s something wrong. They’re afraid they’re not going to be good enough or accepted for who they are,” he said.

That leads young people “to doubt their self-worth and perhaps doubt that God loves them,” he said.

Despite the challenges, the bishop said he remains optimistic and believes that a new approach is possible. “This is not an exercise in discouragement. I didn’t come here to tell you we can’t do this,” he said. “It’s time to walk the walk as much as talk the talk. There’s nobody, myself included, who can grow more deeply in the love of Jesus. It starts with an encounter. The goal of catechists is to bring the Good News to the world by first allowing it to change their own hearts. We have to walk that path together,” he said.

After the bishop’s talk and question and answer session with the audience, Patrick Donovan, director of the Leadership Institute, distributed copies of the “Invitation to Lifelong Formation,” the recently published report that includes the Catechetical Task Force Finding & Recommendations for catechists.

“We’re not asking you to do one more thing. We’re asking you to do everything differently,” Donovan said, noting that people from the Leadership Institute and the Faith Formation team will walk with catechists during the process.

Those who were unable to attend the first catechetical meeting had another opportunity on November 7, when the bishop hosted a similar conversation with catechists. The event in Bridgeport took place at the Catholic Center.

(“An Invitation to Lifelong Conversion,” the 36-page catechetical report, is available in print and will be posted on line in many languages. It can be downloaded in its entirety or in individual sections. For more information, visit www.formationre-imagined.org.)
All Souls Day: ‘This is holy ground’

A gentle November sunlight and soft fall colors framed the All Souls Day Masses held outdoors in Trumbull and Norwalk as hundreds gathered to pray for their departed loved ones and remember the dead.

“Death is part of a life of faith, but not the last chapter in the story of faith. You and I are linked in baptism with the death and resurrection of Christ,” Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said in his homily before almost 400 people at St. John Cemetery in Norwalk.

“We have come here because this is holy ground. It’s beautiful and quiet. There is solitude here and a physical reminder of what awaits every one,” said the bishop. “We are doing today what ancient Christians did when they built early churches around the graves of the first martyrs.”

At the same time the bishop was celebrating Mass in Norwalk, Msgr. Thomas Powers, vicar general of the diocese, was celebrating Mass at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Trumbull.

“This cemetery is a place of hope,” Msgr. Powers said in welcoming over 250 of the faithful to the Mass. “It is wonderful that we can do this today as Masses are also being held in churches around the world. Let us remember those who have gone before us in faith.”

Both Masses were held under large outdoor tents and drew both young and old on a mild autumn morning.

After Mass, diocesan staff distributed white and red carnations, which many of those in attendance placed on the nearby gravestones of their loved ones. Msgr. Powers said the bishop hopes to expand the All Souls Day Mass observance to every cemetery throughout the diocese next year.

“God has given us today to live fully in grace because we do not know when we will hand our life back to him. We should remember that there will be a stone with our name on it as well, and offer our life one day at a time,” Msgr. Powers said.

St. John Cemetery, Norwalk

In his homily at St. John Cemetery, the bishop said the challenge is “not simply to come and pray for the dead, but to consider ways to follow their good example. Let us remember the good they did, their integrity and values, and follow their example. Today we commend them to God’s mercy as one day others will do for us.”

The bishop said that standing in a cemetery should also remind us “to live every day to do good,” and to let go of the pettiness, anger and worries that get in the way of our sense of God’s grace and the gift of life.

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By BRIAN D. WALLACE

Perhaps it took a rainstorm and a powerful liturgy to wash away some of the deepest anguish over sexual abuse in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

It also took the authentic and soul-baring testimony of victims of sexual abuse and a direct and deeply truthful homily by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. It all came together in a memorable way at the recent Mass of Hope, Healing and Reconciliation held at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Fairfield.

“No healing can occur unless we stand in the truth,” said the bishop, who condemned sexual abuse and its lifelong impact on victims.

“No healing can occur unless we stand in the truth,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano during a Mass of Hope, Healing and Reconciliation for those who were sexually abused by priests. The bishop praised members of the survivors group (above) for their strength and courage.

“Freedom from what happened in the past.”

Group members Jim DiVasto and Barbara Oleynick delivered the first and second readings. During the prayers of the faithful, the congregation prayed “For those who have suffered abuse, that they may experience God’s profound love for them and God’s healing powers, we pray to the Lord… For those affected by abuse in any way, that they may have the courage to tell their story to reach for healing.”

After Mass, the bishop asked all to be seated and Peggy Fry came forward to deliver a personal and unvarnished testimony of her struggles with the impact of abuse and her search for someone in the Church to listen and acknowledge her suffering.

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

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SS. Cyril & Methodius Parish

Religious Institute continues tradition

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has invited the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest, a Society of Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right, to establish an oratory and take over the pastoral care of SS. Cyril and Methodius Parish in Bridgeport.

On Sunday, October 8, Bishop Caggiano installed Canon Andrew Todd as pastor of SS. Cyril and Methodius and rector of the new Oratory, and paid tribute to Msgr. Joseph Pekar, who has served as pastor since 1971.

Canon Andrew Todd is a native of New Orleans. Born on November 14, 1947, he was ordained to the priesthood on August 5, 2014. He has served as a vicar at St. Francis de Sales Oratory in St. Louis, and at the Shrine of Christ the King in Chicago.

“These appointments have prepared Canon Todd well to become pastor of the historic parish in Bridgeport’s inner city,” said Bishop Caggiano.

“The parishioners have been very enthusiastic and welcoming, and they are eager to build on the good work of Msgr. Pekar and the unique traditions of the parish.”

Proud of its Slovak heritage, SS. Cyril and Methodius was established in 1907 to serve recent immigrants to Bridgeport’s East Side. The current stone edifice was built in 1912, and includes stained glass windows from Germany and a trio of paintings that replicate originals from the chapel of Saints Cyril and Methodius in St. Clement Basilica in Rome.

In 1998, following a request from his parishioners, Msgr. Pekar (see accompanying article) asked for and received permission from Bishop Edward M. Egan to bring the traditional Latin Mass back to the parish. The result was an energetic mix of parishioners introducing Slovak traditions to a new generation and young families from the surrounding towns who loved the stately beauty of the Latin Mass.

“The people of the parish are strong in their faith and generous in their support,” Msgr. Pekar said when the parish approached its 100th anniversary. He has served as their pastor for 46 years.

The pastoral care and administration of the parish is now being entrusted to the clergy of the Institute of Christ the King, who will continue the celebration of the traditional Roman Liturgy of 1962, carrying on the initiative of Msgr. Pekar and the long-standing custom of the parish.

According to Canon Law, an oratory is a place that is set aside for divine worship by a community or group of the faithful. By inviting the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest, Bishop Caggiano recognized the unique role of the SS. Cyril and Methodius and its parishioners.

The institute seeks to carry on the Catholic life and tradition of the parish by offering the traditional Roman liturgy, devotions, daily confessions, days of recollection in the spirit of St. Francis de Sales, classes in spirituality and doctrine and youth formation activities, among others.

The institute was founded in 1990, and its international seminary is located in Gricigliano, in the Archdiocese of Florence, Italy. Recognizing the importance of harmony between faith, liturgy and the power of beauty in attracting the human senses to the things above, an integral part of the institute’s charism is the use of the traditional Latin liturgy. Their motto, taken from St. Paul, is “Live the truth in charity.”

After merely twenty-five years of existence, the institute counts 80 apostolates in twelve countries, 80 priests and more than 90 seminarians. In 2004, a community of religious sisters was established to aid the priests in their mission.

The institute’s vicar general, Msgr. Michael Schmitz, was present for the installation. He said he was deeply grateful to Bishop Caggiano for welcoming the Institute of Christ the King to the Diocese of Bridgeport.

A reception was held following the Mass.

Since priests of the Institute of Christ the King normally live in community, Canon Todd will be accompanied by seminarian Bryan Silvey during his first year as pastor.

The Institute of Christ the King operates under the patronage of the Immaculate Conception, to whom it is consecrated.

(Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish is located at 79 Church Street in East Bridgeport. For more information, a new website for the parish will be coming soon at www.institute-christ-king.org/bridgeport. For more information on the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest, visit www.institute-christ-king.org.)

Msgr. Pekar retires

By PAT HENNESSY

Msgr. Joseph Pekar resigned as pastor of SS. Cyril and Methodius Parish in Bridgeport on October 7. He had led the parish since Bishop Edward M. Egan named him pastor in June of 1971.

“I came for supper and stayed for 46 years,” he says with a laugh.

A Bridgeport native, Msgr. Pekar grew up in a thriving Slovak neighborhood whose faith was encouraged by two parishes, the former St. John Nepomucene, established in 1891, and SS. Cyril and Methodius, which was founded in 1907. “The whole East Side of Bridgeport was Slovak in those days,” he recalls.

“When Bishop Egan asked me if I could take over the parish, I told him that I knew the language and I knew the people.”

Msgr. Pekar graduated from St. John Nepomucene School and Fairfield Prep, and entered St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield in 1949. He completed his studies at St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore, Md., and was ordained in St. Mary Church in Bridgeport by Bishop Lawrence J. Shehan on May 19, 1962, carrying on the initiative of Msgr. Pekar and the long-standing custom of the parish.

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Bishop’s Lecture Series

‘God is always calling us to deeper encounter’

BY BRIAN D. WALLACE

“Suffering that is not transformed is transmitted,” Sister Miriam James Heidland, SOLT, said several times in her reflection on “Decisive Encounter.”

In a powerful and deeply personal talk to inaugurate the new Bishop’s Lecture Series sponsored by the diocesan Leadership Institute, Sister Miriam said that all people are “broken,” but in their suffering and sense of shame they can find that God loves them and is always near.

“He meets us on our own road to Emmaus,” she said to a gathering of more than 60 young adults, including other women religious, on October 11 in St. Catherine of Siena Family Center.

“God is always calling us to a deeper encounter,” said Sister Miriam, who now lives in Corpus Christi, Texas, but grew up in Washington State and was a scholarship athlete at the University of Nevada-Reno.

In discussing the Road to Emmaus, Sister Miriam said that the disciples were “walking in the wrong direction” and didn’t recognize Jesus when they encountered him on the road. Like most people, they failed to see God in their own lives, but he accompanied them until they understood.

As she began her talk, she promised it would not be a lecture but an invitation to walk with her and together “encounter one who loves you, and that’s where the beauty of transformation takes place.”

In her hour-length reflection, which ended with a deeply felt prayer, she shared elements of her life as an unhappy daughter in a troubled relationship with her mother, a college volleyball player, and a young woman who wanted so much more out of life than success or business as usual.

While sharing her personal feelings, she gave a glimpse into her own spiritual autobiography that brought her from suffering to faith.

She said that many people become physically, emotionally and spiritually ill because of their inability to forgive. Forgiveness doesn’t mean dismissing the profound hurt that another person may have caused or “letting them off the hook,” she emphasized.

“To release our grasp upon a person is to choose to ask God to bless them and take care of them. It requires the Grace of God, ‘Father forgive them, they know not what they do.’ I didn’t know that for a long time,” she said.

Sister Miriam attributes her vocation to a priest who became a “spiritual father to her” when she was lost and in need of healing.

SISTER MIRIAM JAMES HEIDLAND, SOLT, delivered a moving and profound reflection on “decisive encounter” and human forgiveness in her recent talk to launch the new Bishop’s Lecture Series. The former college athlete said that Christ “meets us on our own road to Emmaus.” (Photo by Amy Mortensen)

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Mens Conference

Bishop Caggiano issues ‘call to arms’ to men

BRISTOL, CT—“I have come to give you a call to arms different from any other call in the world,” Bishop Frank J. Caggiano told 550 men at the Connecticut Catholic Men’s Conference on October 28. “You must surrender to Jesus Christ and fearlessly give witness to him in a very confused and mixed up world.”

The bishop delivered the keynote address at the 10th annual conference, whose theme was a celebration of the Apostolate of the Laity taken from Acts 1:8: “You will be my witnesses.”

“You and I must choose and be committed men of virtue,” he said, because it is the only hope for the next generation. “Young people are tired of words because the world is full of empty promises. Instead, they want to follow men and women who are people of integrity and who are true witnesses to Christ.”

The day-long program, which was held at St. Paul Catholic High School in Bristol, also included presentations by Tim Staples, director of apologetics and evangelization at Catholic Answers, Father Glenn Sudano, CFR, one of the original eight founders of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, and James Wahlberg, executive director of the Mark Wahlberg Youth Foundation, which he founded with his brother, actor Mark Wahlberg. Musician and evangelist Marty Rotella served as master of ceremonies.

Our country has become more divided and hostile to faith, Bishop Caggiano said. And modern life is characterized by consumerism, materialism, addiction, abortion, euthanasia and a callous disregard for the poor, the sick and the suffering.

“Men of Christ must stand up as virtuous witnesses and say, ‘Enough is enough.’” he said, adding that we can no longer wait for our leaders to act.

These efforts in spiritual growth should be based on the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. Bishop Caggiano outlined a suggested course of action for the men:

1. Make a nightly examination of conscience that considers not only faults, but also what had gone well that day ... and thank God.
2. When you find yourself confessing the same sin over and over, connect it to the appropriate virtue that is missing in your life. If you struggle with pornography, pray to Christ for the grace to be set free and work on the virtue of temperance.
3. If you need a virtue, ask for it in prayer because “God will not say no.”
4. Examine your fears; one of the greatest being the fear to stand before the cross and accept our sins—and realize that despite them we are still lovable to Jesus.

Bishop Caggiano told the men to pray for courage to face their fears and also to ask for the gift of obedience, which he called, “a dirty word in our modern world.” Nevertheless, our purpose is to “obey and be submissive to what the Lord Jesus asks” because this obedience leads to true freedom.

“Did you ever consider how much faith Jesus has in you?” Bishop Caggiano asked. “He has called you and let his Spirit literally transform you to do his work in the world. Jesus never said it would be easy, but in your greatest struggle, he is standing by you.”

Father James Sullivan, pastor of the Church of the Assumption in Ansonia and chaplain for the conference, said he had never seen so many men go to confession.

During the day, 20 priests were hearing confession in the chapel, the school, the offices and on the grounds. He heard at least 25 confessions, and another priest heard 35.

“The conference provided an opportunity for spiritual healing,” he said. “The talks led men to a conversion of heart and then to the sacramental grace and healing that comes from confession.”

Apologetist Tim Staples said that Catholic men must be armed, ready and equipped to take the faith to the culture at a serious time in our nation’s history when religion is under attack.

“We are living in a culture where people have lost what it means to be a human being—but we have the answer in the Catholic faith.”

“So many are afraid for fear they will be criticized,” he said, adding that “When you don’t know your faith, it leads to a spirit of timidity. Apologetics is very important in our age of growing indifference.”

A Baptist convert to Catholicism and father of seven children, Staples said that 31 years ago when he was serving in the U.S. Marines he met a young Catholic who was prepared to defend his faith and who had a thorough understanding of the Bible. “I was out-Bibled by a Catholic, and it was unnerving to me,” he recalled.

Jim Wahlberg, executive director of the Mark Wahlberg Youth Foundation, talked about his life of alcoholism, drugs, prison, loneliness and the events in his life, which through the grace of God, led to his recovery from addiction and to a true understanding of the Catholic faith.

The middle child in a family of nine kids, he grew up in Dorchester, Mass., and started drinking at age 11. He left home, was arrested many times and spent his early life in group homes and foster homes until age 17 when he went to prison for a violent crime. He turned a 2-year sentence into a 5-year sentence and eventually was on the streets again.

During his second prison term, at MCI Concord Prison, he was befriended by a priest and began to work in the chapel. A decisive moment in his life occurred when Mother Teresa visited the maximum security prison. During Mass, surrounded by dignitaries, she eschewed a place of honor on the stage beside the cardinal and chose instead to kneel on the floor with the prisoners.

“If I felt an explosion inside of me,” Wahlberg recalled. “I realized I was looking at Jesus.”

He was 25 years old when he was released from prison and entered a 12-Step program. Then, after his wife went on a retreat, she returned home and said he should attend one. However, he resisted until his 13-year-old daughter pleaded, “Daddy, I want you to go. I want you to be happy.”

“That retreat led me right to the foot of the cross, and I realized how broken I was,” he said. He continued to grow spiritually, but his life wasn’t without adversity. His world was rocked again when he learned that his young son was addicted to drugs. However, after entering a recovery program, his son has been clean and sober for five years, which Wahlberg described as one of the greatest blessings in his life of faith.
Saint Gregory the Great

Father Dunn comes home to his parish and school

By HEIDI DOMINAKUS

On October 2, St. Gregory the Great School held a homecoming reception surprising and welcoming Father Michael Dunn back home to St. Gregory the Great. The children sang songs, the cheerleaders performed a set of cheers, and then each grade presented Father Dunn with a gift.

The children sang a revised version of “Home” the folk song by Phillip Phillips. The song’s theme, about “making this place your home” brought tears to many eyes in the gymnasium. Along with the students there were parents, grandparents, alumni and even Father Dunn’s second grade teacher, Irene Anderson, in attendance.

Father Dunn was born in New Hyde Park, Long Island, N.Y., but he grew up in Danbury. He attended St. Gregory the Great School, graduating in 1978. He went on to Immaculate High School, Class of 1982. He graduated from Sacred Heart University in Fairfield with a major in criminal justice and pursued graduate courses in community counseling at Fairfield University. He was a counselor for troubled teenagers at VITAM adolescent counseling center in Norwalk, and was summer sports director for the Wilton YMCA before making the decision to pursue a vocation to the priesthood.

He entered St. John Fisher Seminary in Stamford and graduated from Immaculate Conception Seminary in South Orange, N.J. He was ordained by Bishop Edward M. Egan in 1994. Father Dunn celebrated his first Mass at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton, his parents’ home parish. His assignments included St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull, St. Mary Parish in Bethel and St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull, and he was named spiritual director of Notre Dame Catholic High School in Fairfield in 1997.

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George Weigel at St. Catherine

John Paul II biographer offers glimpse of Pope

When George Weigel went to dinner at Pope John Paul II’s residence at the Vatican in 1995, it was an event that would change his life and lead to his writing two volumes, 1,600 pages, about one of the towering Christian figures of the 20th century, a man who changed the Church and the world.

At the request of Father Joseph Marcello, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull, Weigel visited St. Catherine’s to talk about his recent work, Lessons in Hope: My Unexpected Life with St. John Paul II. “Everything he accomplished in the world was the fruit of prayer,” Weigel said in his talk.

In March 1996, the Pope had said of his other biographers, “They try to understand me from the outside, but I can only be understood from the inside.” They saw the public man who was the topic of countless news stories, analyses, opinion pieces and talks, but they did not grasp “the internal spiritual springs” for his role as the Pope’s biographer, right from the third grade when Sister Mary Euphemia announced his class would be praying for the conversion of a communist dictator—Władysław Gomułka. Thirty years later, when he was writing about Poland and Karol Wojtyła, the 40-year-old auxiliary bishop of Kraków, Gomułka played an insidious role in the story.

In college, Weigel had no intention of studying philosophy, yet doing so proved enormously helpful to him in understanding the thinking and mind of John Paul II. However, more important than philosophical ideas for the Pope was prayer. It was central to his life. “Everything he accomplished in the world was the fruit of prayer,” Weigel said, and the most important part of his day was the hour from 6:30 to 7:30 am, which he spent in the chapel at the papal apartment.

The inspiration for World Youth Day, which many in the Vatican thought would not succeed, came during prayer, and it ultimately became a signature moment in modern Catholic history. And prayer was central to the role he played in the collapse of communism.

One of the great lessons Weigel learned from his friendship with the Pope was that “He refused to accept the tyranny of the possible—the notion that some things simply are the way they are and are impossible to change.”

With prayer and the Holy Spirit, all things are possible, even the seemingly impossible, such as the collapse of world Communism and a gathering of two million young people around the Pope for a day of celebration. Even though we live in what Weigel calls “a seriously disordered era,” the life of St. John Paul II “provides us hope and teaches us that we should never accept that a situation, which ought to be different, can’t somehow be nudged toward change.”

Weigel discovered that five years after the death of John Paul II, people did not want more analysis. “What they wanted,” he recalled, “were stories and anecdotes that would somehow bring him back to life.... The risk of canonizing someone is that we lose the human texture, and I hope the stories in my book bring him a little closer.”
Saints & Souls

November ushers in the start of the long holiday season beginning with Thanksgiving.

But the early part of this month is perhaps the most important for people of faith, and sets the foundation for all that follows.

On November 1, we celebrated the heroes of our faith on All Saints Day. It’s a day to feel blessed and inspired by the two thousand years of heroic and transforming witness to the Catholic faith. The second gift of early November is the gentle, reflective All Souls Day, an opportunity to reflect on parents, friends, and the people who have gone before us and shaped our lives.

Hundreds throughout the diocese accepted the bishop’s invitation to outdoor Masses held in diocesan cemeteries in Norwalk and Trumbull. “We come here both to shed a tear and to sing Alleluia, because though death creates create pain and suffering, it won’t have the final say. Christ will come again to claim his people,” the bishop said in his homily at St. John Cemetery in Norwalk.

How beautiful it was to remember and pray for loved ones during an outdoor Mass on a beautiful autumn day! Bishop Caggiano said he would like to see Mass offered in every Catholic cemetery throughout the diocese next year on All Souls Day.

We are a Church blessed by great saints and caring souls! That’s something to celebrate!

Social Media & the Gospel

As more of us turn to social media for information or to voice our opinion, it may be worthwhile to consider the thoughts of Deacon Greg Kandra of the Diocese of Brooklyn. Deacon Kandra, a former producer of 60 Minutes and a man with a long, distinguished career in media of all forms, recently spoke at the Priest Convocation about the challenges associated with the communication of the Gospel in the 21st century. He focused specifically on the need for the Church and its leaders to use social media effectively as a way to evangelize the growing numbers of people who live, work and socialize in and through the digital continent. In his Facebook entry on the day of the talk, Bishop Caggiano offers this instructive summary of the deacon’s comments:

1. “Be not afraid”: Deacon Greg encouraged us to avoid whatever fears or anxieties we may have about using the various forms of social media that now mark ordinary life. With the proper humility and desire to learn from our mistakes, we should leave behind no form of social media in pursuit of avenues by which we can share “the story of Christian faith.”

2. “Put your sword away”: The deacon noted that many use social media as a way to tear down, sow division or propagate a tribal mentality that is meant to attack those who do not share our views or beliefs. His simple advice is to never sink to their level. We must never respond online in anger or hostility. Our words should always reflect our attitude of faith.

3. “Let us love one another”: Finally, as members of the Church, everything we do and say online is an opportunity to spread the Good News of the Gospel. It is a message of love, mercy and forgiveness. To do anything else is to betray who we are and the mission we have been given by Christ.”

Arise and Shine!

This year’s Christmas Concert by the Diocesan Youth Choir moves to the Quick Center of Fairfield University on Sunday, December 17, at 7 pm. Tickets are $20. VIP tickets are available for $50 and include a pre-concert reception with the bishop. Order tickets online at www.quickcenter.fairfield.edu or call the box office: 203.254.4010.

Running the the NYC Marathon for Catholic Charities

By ELLEN McGINNNESS

MANHATTAN—Catholic Charities of Fairfield County (CCFC) board member Marilyn Hart ran her 11th New York City Marathon on November 5. But this time, she hit the pavement to raise funds for Catholic Charities, an organization that’s dear to her.

Hart set up a crowdfund account with the goal of raising $2600. Why did she want to raise funds for this particular agency?

“CCFC is the largest private social services provider in the county, with programs that include soup kitchens, food pantries, early childhood education, housing and mental health. The state has cut funding to all organizations, but the need still exists and continues to grow,” she explained.

In true Catholic spirit, Hart stopped to help a woman who had fallen, losing 17 seconds off of her target time in the process. But she wasn’t disappointed with her finish saying, “The running is the easy part, taking care of so many people is the challenge.”

If you’d like to help Hart reach her goal, you can donate at: www.crowdrise.com/t/elenn/marilyns-15th-marathon. To learn more about Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, log on to www.ccfairfield.org.

The Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport, has made the following clergy appointments in the Diocese of Bridgeport:

INTERIM DEAN
FATHER FRANCISCO GOMEZ-FRANCO, to interim Dean of the “Queen of Peace” Deanery (A). Father Gomez-Francisco will continue to serve as Pastor of Saint Charles Borromeo Parish and as Episcopal Master of Ceremonies. Effective date was October 30.

PASTOR
CANON ANDREW TODD, new to the Diocese from the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest, to Pastor of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Bridgeport. Effective date was October 7.

PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR
MONSIGNOR THOMAS W. POWERS, to temporary Parochial Administrator of Saint Ann Parish in Bridgeport, until a permanent provision is made for the parish. Monsignor Powers will continue to serve as Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia of the Diocese of Bridgeport. Effective date was October 30.

PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL
FATHER GERALD BLASZCZAK, S.J., has been appointed to serve on the Presbyteral Council to represent the religious clergy in the Diocese. Effective date was November 1.

Father Joseph A. Marcella Vicar for Clergy, November, 2017
Exploring the Identity of a Catholic University

STUDIES AT SHU.

GUEST COLUMNIST
BY MICHELLE LORIS, Ph.D., Psy.D.

Michelle is associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences & chair of the Department of Catholic Studies at SHU.

O ur nation and the world grapple daily with prejudice, senseless brutality and violence. As we struggle with divisive issues such as intolerance related to religion, race, ethnicity and gender identity, it’s easy to lose perspective, get caught up in political rhetoric or misguided advocacy, and question one’s own beliefs and values. The constant bombardment from media and communication technology can be deafening, and the polarization numbing.

For a student in college, charting one’s own course in these chaotic seas is increasingly challenging, frustrating and confusing. Tumultuous issues require discussion and debate, sound reasoning, philosophical and historical underpinnings and an open mind. And if you don’t have strong religious or family roots, or a trusted hand to guide you, it can be a perilous journey.

As university leaders, we see that the trend among our students is toward more secularization and materialism. Many students identify as “agnostic,” or “spiritual but not religious,” or “unchurched” or “non-affiliated.” In many ways, they are indifferent to any institutional religion and unconnected with any enduring or universal morality. So, in Catholic higher education today, there is much discussion about how to maintain a robust, relevant, and distinctive Catholic identity in our colleges and universities.

Research shows that many students today are focused on “getting a degree,” not so much on becoming a knowledgeable and educated person. Studies in the humanities, for example, are often seen as irrelevant to students’ career goals. In the cyber world they inhabit, students are primed for quick responses and facts, most often captured in 140 characters or less. Rationale and perspective are not always congruent with this generation’s motives and disciplines.

Some university faculty, too, are focused only on a specialized area of study in their disciplines, and are less concerned about how this area of study may contribute to Catholic thought. Reality and truth are seen as purely subjective, relative and dependent upon perspective. Not unlike students, many faculty favor secularization; they are not committed to the development of or engagement with Catholic intellectual life.

In such a context, we need to consider the idea of a Catholic University and how we sustain its Catholic identity. We also need to determine how we can bring Catholic intellectual life across disciplines and place it at the heart of the Catholic university. And we need to ensure that our students are exposed to this thinking, see its relevance in addressing today’s challenges, and are equipped to go out into the world as leaders.

At Sacred Heart University, we have developed a curriculum that focuses on Catholic thought and enduring questions of humanity. And we are seeking out and cultivating faculty who recognize the value and vigor of Catholic intellectual life.

We are a laid staff, and lay led comprehensive Catholic university, rooted in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition. We understand that one way to distinguish a Catholic university is to place Catholic thought and Catholic thinkers, writers and artists at the center of an engaging interdisciplinary conversation. We believe that fundamental and enduring humanistic questions have no quick answers; they require thoughtful reflection, and foster open inquiry and a free exchange of views and ideas.

As such, we have created a required common core, housed in the Department of Catholic Studies. It is called the Human Journey Seminars: Great Books in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition.

We understand this tradition as an ongoing 2,000-year inter-disciplinary conversation about God, humanity, society, and nature. Our goal is to develop a community of learners and scholars, who, with Catholic thought at the center, engage in this ongoing conversation.

Fundamental questions frame the reading, inquiry, and discussion: what does it mean to be human; what is our relationship with God; what does it mean to live a life of meaning and purpose; what does it mean to understand and appreciate the natural world; and what does it mean to form a more just society for the common good?

In these seminars, students grapple with enduring questions, great books and authors, and pressing contemporary issues and problems. The dynamics of these seminars, whose central activities are reading, reflection, inquiry and dialog, foster self-awareness, moral understanding, and community both within the classroom.

We Have a Yeller!

A Dad’s View
BY MATTHEW HENNESSEY

Matthew Hennessey and his family are parishioners of St. Aloysius in New Canaan.

O ur Billy is a growing boy. He had his first birthday over the summer and has recently taken up toddling. He’s also an early riser, and wants his breakfast on the tray about two seconds early. He’s also pretty good at “hi” and “doo.” He can approximate his siblings’ names. All very charming during the normal day, but he’s also pretty good at “hi” and “doo.” He can approximate his siblings’ names. All very charming during the normal course of the day. Breakfast is another story.

Our Billy’s screeching drives the other children batty, especially our Magdalena, who is 11 and bedeviled by sensory issues. Even on her best day, a loud noise can set her off. She’s not keen on sudden outbreaks of laughter. She detests the Happy Birthday song. Like most Hennesseys, mornings are not Mags’s strong suit. She and Billy make a fine pair. When he screeches, she grunts. His call is like a bird of prey; her response is like an angry pig. It’s a barnyard battle over bacon and eggs.

And it’s not just breakfast. As I believe I’ve mentioned, he’s a yeller. Yellers gonna yell. “GWOOAAHK!” he yells in the car while we’re driving to visit Grandpa. “GRRR!” comes the inevitable reply. “GWOOAAHK!” he yells from the pew on All Saints Day. “GRRRR!” again like clockwork. “GWOOAAHK!” in the grocery store. “GRRRR!” at the playground. E-E-I-Oh please make it stop. I tell you all this for a particular reason. When you are the parent of small children, the parent of older or grown children will occasionally approach and remind you to “cherish this age.” “It’ll be gone in a flash,” they sometimes say. “Trust me they’ll never be this cute again.” You’re going to wish you could pick them up and squeeze them again when they’re 27 and asking for $4,000 to buy a moped.

These people are well-meaning. I’m sure they are telling the truth, just as I’m sure one day I’ll probably do the same thing. But that day hasn’t come yet. Right now the only polite thing I can think to tell them is, “Thank you for the reminder to be an attentive and in-the-moment parent, but there’s no way in a hundred months of Sundays I could possibly miss the open warfare at our breakfast table.”

I’ll tell you some other things I won’t look back fondly on. The time Sally fell and knocked her tooth out. Or the time she needed a spinal tap to rule out meningitis. She was three weeks old. It was 10:45 on a Friday night, during a snowstorm. Dr. Pierce probably doesn’t look back fondly on that either.

I won’t have warm memories of the time Clara fell off the slide at the playground and fractured her collar bone, or the time she broke her arm in the gym at school. We thought she was okay so we didn’t take her to the doctor until the next morning. I’d rather forget that, thanks.

I won’t miss the time Paddy barred off the top bunk on the Fourth of July, or the time Mags had her tonsils out and I had to stay with her overnight on a hospital cot. In fact I won’t miss that so much that I already don’t miss it. I’ll always cherish the hugs, the snugs, and the major milestones. But if the GWOOAAHKs and GRRRs are gone in a flash, well, I won’t complain. Not for a bananosecond.
By PAT HENNESSY

“Everything old is new again,” said Sister Marie Lucie Monast, STTY, pastoral care coordinator at Notre Dame Health and Rehabilitation Center (NDHR) in Norwalk.

Notre Dame celebrated the grand opening of its refurbished rehabilitation center on July 19. The name change (it was formerly Notre Dame Convalescent Home) recognized a change in focus of the facility, along with the opening of the newly refurbished rehabilitation gym, updated handicapped access and security and a cheerful living room for patients and families.

“We want to announce to the world that we are changing in response to the needs of people in our area,” said Dana Paul, Notre Dame’s administrator. “It’s not a new idea, it’s a new emphasis.”

He noted that while NDHR still offers long-term care, the facility aims to have 25 percent of its services dedicated to rehabilitation. “We’re adding a new element,” he explained. “Our therapy program is supported by a staff neurologist and physiatrist, specializing in physical medicine and rehabilitation, and is coordinated by a full-time rehabilitation director.”

Times have changed since Notre Dame Convalescent Home was opened by the Sisters of St. Thomas of Villanova in 1952. At that time, elderly people often chose the security of a residential setting when they didn’t want to stay alone in their homes. Now, in-home care often provides a viable option.

“We always offered some short-term therapy, but the new possibilities out there have changed the care needs,” said Sister Lucie. “When we began looking around a few years ago, we realized that there weren’t any programs that focused on stroke.”

NDHR has geared up to meet this need. Physical therapy is available seven days a week. A speech therapist is on staff, and occupational therapists work with clients to develop the skills needed to return home. “There’s a new feeling of energy here,” said Sister Lucie.

The rehabbed facility is owned and operated under the Sisters of St. Thomas of Villanova, and their founder’s spirit illuminates the facility. St. Thomas was called the “Father of the Poor.” As Archbishop of Valencia, Spain, he insisted that the material resources of the Church should be shared with those in the greatest need.

“Our residents may not be poor in money, but they are poor in their body, and sometimes poor in their minds,” said Sister Lucie. “Our staff treats residents as if we were treating Jesus in his physical body.”

Residents recognize this atmosphere. “I can’t say enough good things about the staff,” said Hedwig Anderson, who first came to Notre Dame for therapy. “Everyone I came in contact with was a happy person. The whole purpose of rehab is to get you home again to independent living. With their positive attitude, the staff built up my confidence so that I could do that.”

Anderson appreciated the atmosphere, which she credited to the availability of daily Mass in the chapel. “When you go to Mass every day, you continue that spirit all day long,” she said.

When she could no longer remain home alone, NDHR was Anderson’s immediate choice for long-term care. She is now president of Notre Dame’s Resident’s Council.

On September 30, Hedwig Anderson celebrated her 104th birthday.

NDHR has been awarded a five-star rating by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. It has been named one of the best nursing homes in Connecticut by US News & World Report. In addition to these ratings, Notre Dame’s mission statement says it best: “It is our sacred privilege to serve the aged, the sick and the infirm with love and compassion. We pledge ourselves to give the best possible care to each and every one.”

(For more information, call 203.847.5892 or email ndhr@ndhr.org.)
Mission Trip

‘I was a stranger, and you welcomed me’

The following account was written by John Grosso, social media leader of the Diocese of Bridgeport, after returning from his mission trip to Ethiopia.

When I was asked to accompany our diocesan trip to Ethiopia with Catholic Relief Services and Turning Wine into Water, I thought the theme of the trip was going to be “For I was thirsty, and you gave me drink.”

In fairness to me, we were going to see an inauguration of a clean water project funded in part by the founder of Turning Wine into Water, Nick Troilo!

What ended up happening was something far different, and more amazing than I could have ever imagined.

It started right after I arrived at a Cistercian monastery in a tough part of the capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. My Fairfield County bubble had just burst in a spectacular way, and I was visibly anxious. I’ve always been a worrier. I’ve always been hesitant to go anywhere near the borders of my comfort zone, so I was severely out of my element. One of the seminarians at the monastery, who I had just met, noticed right away.

“John! Why are you nervous?” he asked as he was moving me into my room that they had meticulously prepared.

I didn’t have a good answer, so I mumbled something about everything being so new and overwhelming to me.

“No need to be nervous,” he said, “This is your home. No need to be nervous. We will take care of you.” It was radical hospitality in its purest form.

I nearly cried. Here I was, in Ethiopia, there because I thought God had sent me because of my communications qualifications. I thought I was there to help my brothers and sisters, and I was closed to the fact that they could help me. That was one of the many moments in the trip when I felt like I “woke up.”

Those moments of awakening continued to happen almost every day. One such moment occurred when we were driving into the village of Blitti, hours away from our idea of “civilization,” to hundreds of people lining the streets cheering, clapping, and smiling.

I remember the honor guard of motorcycles and donkeys the village organized to greet us, and the abundant joy and love that every single person present poured upon us. We felt the presence of God radiating from everyone we met.

I felt so unworthy. Here were people who physically had very little, and they were offering me food and an honored place to sit. They were treating me like a family member, and yet, three days before, all I could think about was how nervous and uncomfortable I was.

“I could go on (and on, and on),” I said, “but I am already going on too long, so I will end with this. When I was leaving the Cistercian monastery (after three days) to join up with the rest of the group, I was talking to that seminarian again. His name is Fikadu, and we had become friends.

“Fikadu,” I said, “you guys have gone above and beyond for us. You’ve rolled out the red carpet for us. Why?”

He smiled, as if the question was a silly one, “Because we see Jesus in you.”

All week I thought it was going to be “I was thirsty and you gave me drink,” and that I was going to be the person giving the drink. I never imagined it would be “I was a stranger, and you welcomed me,” and that I would be the stranger.

FRIENDSHIP GROWS in unexpected places, as Social Media Leader John Grosso learned during a mission trip to Ethiopia. “They treated me like a family member,” he said of his experience.

A Catholic Mind for ENGINEERING

Tyler’s research could unlock cancer’s secrets, or even lead to new therapies. “If we could engineer different tissues or organs, you could replace them completely,” he noted, “which would be a much more effective way of treating a disease.” Thanks to our dual degree program, Tyler recently graduated with both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in biochemical engineering. His internships at a pharmaceutical company and the National Institutes of Health helped, too. “I like being able to use engineering and science concepts to make a meaningful impact on the world.”

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THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
Honoring Veterans

‘This We’ll Defend’

By DANIEL FITZPATRICK

Many people don’t know that “This We’ll Defend” is the official motto of the United States Army, adopted at the time of the Revolutionary War. According to Reference.com: “Each word is meaningful. ‘This’ refers to the United States, the U.S. Constitution and liberty. ‘We’ll’ references the army’s collective team efforts, and ‘defend’ refers to the primary function of the army as a defender of the nation, not an aggressor against others.”

I never served in the military, but members of my extended family served with honor as Army and Navy officers in just about every conflict from at least World War I through Operation Iraqi Freedom. And I have lived most of my life surrounded by the wonderful men and women of our armed services. My hometown of Plattsburgh, N.Y. is the site of the oldest military post in the U.S.—the “Plattsburgh Barracks,” first established as Cantonment Plattsburgh in 1812. In 1917, it was the home of the Plattsburgh Training Camp where Army Chief of Staff General Leonard Wood established the “Plattsburgh Idea,” the predecessor to today’s ROTC.

In 1944, the base was turned over to the Navy and became Camp MacDonough, an indoctrination school for naval officers. The camp was named after Commodore Thomas MacDonough, naval hero and victor of the Battle of Plattsburgh in the War of 1812. In 1945, the camp was turned over to the Army Air Forces and in 1954 became the Plattsburgh Air Force Base, a Strategic Air Command bomber base and home to the 308th and 380th Bomber Wings and 497th Refueling Wing.

As a critical component of the US nuclear triad, this meant that my hometown was a primary target for Soviet ICBMs in the event of nuclear war. Those not alive during the Cold War will find it difficult to understand what it was like to live under the constant threat of that Sword of Damocles.

During that time of global tension, another Plattsburgh native gave great service to his country and the world. General Glenn K. Otis, a four-star general who enlisted in the Army in 1946, served on occupation duty in post WWII Korea, was picked from the ranks to attend West Point, served with distinction in-country during the Vietnam War, directed major improvements as director of the XM-1 Tank Task Force and ultimately served as Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Army Europe from 1983-88. I am proud to have known General Otis. On his death in 2013, another Army general observed “Glenn Otis was a soldier’s soldier who served his country and his army with distinction and dedication for more than four decades.”

I mention this because in this noisy and contentious world it is all too easy to miss the fact that there are many extraordinary individuals quietly dedicated to preserving, protecting and defending the liberties we sometimes take for granted. We are profoundly fortunate that men and women of talent choose to serve in our armed forces. When I met my brother-in-law’s Officer Candidate School and Army Ranger School classmates, I felt like hiring each one of them on the spot; they were all that impressive. Let’s take a moment to give them the thanks they deserve.

(Daniel FitzPatrick is a parishioner and Eucharistic Minister at St. Mary Parish in Greenwich, and a Knight of Malta active in the Diocese of Bridgeport.)

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For additional information and a copy of the itinerary visit our website: www.littleflowerpilgrimages.com or the Diocese of Bridgeport website: www.bridgeportdiocese.org or call Susan at Little Flower Pilgrimages: 718.761.1251 or Toll Free: 888.843.7373 or email Susan: susan@littleflowerpilgrimages.com
2017 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

Recognizing the volunteers, the mentors and the prayerful servants of our diocese

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

“You may not be able to work miracles but you are wonder workers,” Bishop Frank J. Caggiano told 175 St. Augustine Medal of Service recipients gathered in St. Augustine Cathedral on October 28. The honorees, many of them married couples, were recognized for their volunteer service throughout Fairfield County.

“Today, the world is full of those who talk the talk,” the bishop said, “but you walk the walk. Every time you stand in front of a class, work in a soup kitchen or visit the sick and elderly, you are the hands and feet of God.”

Hundreds, including family members and friends along with priests and pastors filled the cathedral for the afternoon ceremony and prayer service, which was followed by a reception at Kolbe Cathedral High School on the cathedral campus.

After leading Midday Prayer, including the recitation of the Psalms, Bishop Caggiano began his homily by reflecting on the imagery of hands.

“Hands are our extension into the world. Hands allow us to engage the world and to change it,” he said in praising recipients for the work of their hands and hearts.

The bishop told the gathering that they don’t need to be miracle workers to do good in the world.

He said the witness of the St. Augustine Medal winners is an example of how most of the good done on earth comes out of “the common and ordinary things in life, using your hands day in and day out to make the love of Christ real.”

The bishop praised honorees “for breaking into the loneliness of others who have been blessed by the power of God’s love in you. Keep serving, and keep walking with him in joy.”

After his homily, the bishop blessed the St. Augustine Medals, which feature an image of St. Augustine on one side, and the seal of the Diocese of Bridgeport on the other.

“Conferr upon these men and women the gifts of your Holy Spirit that they may continue to serve your Church,” the bishop said.

Al Barber, president and CEO of Catholic Charities, read the names of recipients and called them forward to receive their medals and individual greetings from the bishop.

Many recipients were accompanied by their pastors and parish priests, who took the time from their busy weekend schedules to support their parishioners.

The gathering broke into applause when Bishop Caggiano called Father John Connaughton, director of vocations, forward to join the picture with his parents John and Anne Connaughton. The Trumbull couple was nominated and accompanied by Father Brian Gannon, pastor of St. Theresa Parish.

The St. Augustine Medal of Service was instituted in 2005 by Bishop William E. Lori to recognize the “unsung heroes” who unselfishly give of their time and talents to build up parish communities and diocesan ministries.
2017 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

Saint Mary School, Bethel:
Mr. Bob & Mrs. Ann Storrier — Nominated by Mr. Gregory Vizza, Principal

Saint Mary Parish, Bethel:
Ms. Rose Schlemmer — Nominated by Reverend Gary V. Pizzonia

Saint Margaret Shrine, Bridgeport:
Mr. Ed & Mrs. Ann Mastrone — Nominated by Reverend Giandomenico Flora, Rector

Saint Anne Parish, Bridgeport:
Mr. William & Mrs. Nora Vespene — Nominated by Reverend Peter J. Lynch, Pastor

Saint Augustine Academy, Bridgeport:
Mr. Charles Richardson — Nominated by Mr. Henry Bondono, Principal

Saint Andrew Academy, Bridgeport:
Ms. Nicole Rivera — Nominated by Mr. Bill McLean, Chief Development Officer

Saint Ann Parish, Bridgeport:
Mr. Mantzi & Mrs. Irene Coutinho — Nominated by Reverend Peter J. Lynch, Pastor

Saint Ann Academy, Bridgeport:
Ms. Sandra Santa — Nominated by Mrs. Patricia Griffin, Principal

Saint Andrew Parish, Bridgeport:
Mr. Charles Richardson — Nominated by Ms. Scotant

Saint Ann Academy, Bridgeport:
Ms. Nicole Rivera — Nominated by Mr. Bill McLean, Chief Development Officer

Saint Anne Academy, Bridgeport:
Ms. Nicole Rivera — Nominated by Mr. Bill McLean, Chief Development Officer

Saint George Parish, Bridgeport:
Ms. Sonia Ortiz — Nominated by Reverend Elio Albano, Pastor

Saint George Parish, Bridgeport:
Ms. Sonia Ortiz — Nominated by Reverend Elio Albano, Pastor

Saint Mary Parish, Bethel:
Mr. Emilio & Mrs. Guillermina Alicea — Nominated by Reverend Rolando Torres, Pastor

Saint Peter Parish, Bridgeport:
Mr. Felix & Mrs. Benedicta Mbello — Nominated by Reverend Jose Rehague, Parochial Administrator

Saint Raphael Academy, Bridgeport:
Mrs. Elena Lonnello — Nominated by Sister Christine Hoffner, Principal

Sankt Margarethus Shrine, Bridgeport:
Mr. Ed & Mrs. Ann Maraun — Nominated by Reverend Giandomenico Flora, Rector

Office of Development, Bridgeport:
Mr. Todd Van Nis — Nominated by Dr. Debi Beccafuso, Principal

Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Bridgeport:
Ms. Sandra Santa — Nominated by Mrs. Patricia Griffin, Principal

Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel, Bridgeport:
Mr. James L. Bailey — Nominated by Ms. Jane Schlemmer, RSCJ, Pastor

Saint Mary School, Bethel:
Mr. Bob & Mrs. Ann Storrier — Nominated by Mr. Gregory Vizza, Principal

Saint Mary Parish, Bethel:
Ms. Rose Schlemmer — Nominated by Reverend Gary V. Pizzonia

Saint Margaret Shrine, Bridgeport:
Mr. Ed & Mrs. Ann Mastrone — Nominated by Reverend Giandomenico Flora, Rector

Saint Anne Parish, Bridgeport:
Mr. William & Mrs. Nora Vespene — Nominated by Reverend Peter J. Lynch, Pastor

Saint Augustine Academy, Bridgeport:
Mr. Charles Richardson — Nominated by Mr. Henry Bondono, Principal

Saint Andrew Academy, Bridgeport:
Ms. Nicole Rivera — Nominated by Mr. Bill McLean, Chief Development Officer

Saint Ann Parish, Bridgeport:
Mr. Mantzi & Mrs. Irene Coutinho — Nominated by Reverend Peter J. Lynch, Pastor

Saint Ann Academy, Bridgeport:
Ms. Sandra Santa — Nominated by Mrs. Patricia Griffin, Principal

Saint Andrew Parish, Bridgeport:
Mr. Charles Richardson — Nominated by Ms. Scotant

Saint Ann Academy, Bridgeport:
Ms. Nicole Rivera — Nominated by Mr. Bill McLean, Chief Development Officer

Saint George Parish, Bridgeport:
Ms. Sonia Ortiz — Nominated by Reverend Elio Albano, Pastor

Saint Mary Parish, Bethel:
Mr. Emilio & Mrs. Guillermina Alicea — Nominated by Reverend Rolando Torres, Pastor

Saint Peter Parish, Bridgeport:
Mr. Felix & Mrs. Benedicta Mbello — Nominated by Reverend Jose Rehague, Parochial Administrator

Saint Raphael Academy, Bridgeport:
Mrs. Elena Lonnello — Nominated by Sister Christine Hoffner, Principal

The Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport:
Mr. Carlos & Mrs. Guadalupe Ortiz — Nominated by Reverend F. John Ringley, Pastor
2017 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

Saint Joseph School, Brookfield:
Ms. Mary Jo Howe — Nominated by Ms. Dina Monti, Principal

Saint Margarette Bourgeois Parish, Brookfield:
Mr. Donald & Mrs. Claudette Perley — Nominated by Reverend Shawn W. Culler, Pastor

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Danbury:
Mr. Jose & Mrs. Adelia Santos — Nominated by Reverend Jose Brito-Martinez, Parochial Administrator

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Danbury:
Mr. Luis & Mrs. Rosa Guachon — Nominated by Reverend John Jairo Perez, Pastor

Saint Joseph School, Brookfield:
Mr. Joseph Bromley — Nominated by Reverend Samuel V. Scott, Pastor

Saint Joseph Parish, Danbury:
Mr. Edward & Mrs. Marilyn Vieux — Nominated by Mrs. Lisa Lanni, Principal

Saint Gregory the Great Parish, Danbury:
Mr. Peter Buzaid — Nominated by Reverend Jeffrey Couture, former Parochial Administrator

Saint Joseph School, Brookfield:
Ms. Mayra Clay — Nominated by Mrs. Suzanne Curra, Principal

Saint Peter School, Danbury:
Mr. Michael & Mrs. Sally Wilson — Nominated by Mrs. Mary McCormack, Principal

Saint John Parish, Danbury:
Mr. William Frazer — Nominated by Reverend Francis T. Hoffmann, Pastor

Saint Thomas More Parish, Darien:
Mr. James Davis — Nominated by Reverend Paul G. Murphy, Pastor

Notre Dame Parish, Easton:
Mr. William & Mrs. Cheryl Constand — Nominated by Reverend Michael P. Lyons, Pastor

Notre Dame High School, Fairfield:
Ms. Kathy Rohr — Nominated by Mr. Chris Cipriano, Principal

Our Lady of Assumption Parish, Fairfield:
Mr. Michael & Mrs. Diane Blane — Nominated by Reverend Peter A. Cipriani, Pastor

Holy Cross Parish, Fairfield:
Ms. JoJo Gabor — Nominated by Reverend Alfred F. Peartic, Pastor

Holy Family Parish, Fairfield:
Mr. Al & Mrs. Marylou Edwards — Nominated by Reverend Norman J. Guilbert, Pastor

Notre Dame High School, Fairfield:
Ms. Patricia Roe — Nominated by Mr. Chris Cipriano, Principal
2017 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

Saint Anthony of Padua Parish, Fairfield:
Mr. Chris and Mrs. Kellie Ann McCarthy — Nominated by Reverend John P. Baran, Pastor

Saint Catherine Academy, Fairfield:
Ms. Virginia Ayama — Nominated by Mr. Brian Farrell, Director of Education/Principal

Saint Emery Parish, Fairfield:
Mr. Nicholas & Mrs. Lauren Pekar — Nominated by Reverend Milan Dimic, Pastor

Saint Pius X Parish, Fairfield:
Mr. Robert Guman — Nominated by Reverend Samuel Kachuba, Pastor

Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish, Fairfield:
Mr. Glenn & Mrs. Patricia Hansen — Nominated by Reverend Victor T. Martin, Pastor

Saint Thomas Aquinas School, Fairfield:
Ms. Josephine Dwyer — Nominated by Mr. Steve Anderson, Principal

Sacred Heart Parish, Greenwich:
Mr. John Innocent — Nominated by Reverend Bore Bajaj Selvanagi, Pastor

Saint Agnes Parish, Greenwich:
Ms. James & Mrs. Margaret Salerno — Nominated by Reverend James A. McDevitt, Pastor

Saint Mary Parish, Greenwich:
Mr. John & Mrs. Janet Glennan — Nominated by Reverend Ian M. Jeremiah, Pastor

Saint Michael the Archangel Parish, Greenwich:
Ms. Virginia Ayama — Nominated by Mr. Brian Farrell, Director of Education/Principal

Saint Roch Parish, Greenwich:
Mr. Robert & Mrs. Bonnie Titer — Nominated by Reverend David C. Leopold, Pastor

Saint Paul Parish, Greenwich:
Mr. Jeff & Mrs. Liz Romeo — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Dariusz J. Zielonka, Pastor

Saint Jude Parish, New Canaan:
Mr. Michael & Mrs. Mary Aldrich — Nominated by Reverend Robert M. Kiernally, Pastor
November 2017

2017 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

Saint Aloysius School, New Canaan:
Mr. Mike & Mrs. Lindsay Pignataro — Nominated by Mr. Bardhy Gjoka, Principal

Saint Edward the Confessor Parish, New Fairfield:
Mr. Alan & Mrs. Jane Lintz — Nominated by Reverend Nicholas A. Civita, Pastor

Saint Alphonsus School, New Canaan:
Mr. Robert & Mrs. Patricia LaSorda — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Robert E. Weiss, Pastor

Saint Matthew Parish, Norwalk:
Ms. Elizabeth Dunne — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Walter C. Orlofski, Pastor

Saint Rose of Lima Parish, Newtown:
Mr. Sean & Mrs. Maureen Kerins — Nominated by Sister Colleen Smith, ASCJ, Principal

Saint Mary Parish, Norwalk:
Ms. Mary Ann Miller — Nominated by Reverend Michael F. Dogali, Pastor

Saint Rose of Lima Parish, Newtown:
Mr. Mike & Mrs. Lindsay Pignataro — Nominated by Mr. Bardhy Gjoka, Principal

Saint Mary Parish, Norwalk:
Mr. Stuart & Mrs. Jill Chessman — Nominated by Mrs. Linda Dunn, Principal

Saint Elizabeth Seton Parish, Ridgefield:
Mr. James & Mrs. Cynthia Bruno — Nominated by Reverend Joseph A. Prince, Pastor

Saint Lawrence Parish, Shelton:
Mr. Frank Masso, Jr. — Nominated by Reverend Michael K. Jones, Pastor

All Saints School, Norwalk:
Mr. Salvatore Calise — Nominated by Mrs. Linda Dunn, Principal

Saint Catherine of Siena Parish, Riverstone:
Ms. Catherine Crowther — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Alan F. Detscher, Pastor

Saint Joseph Parish, Norwalk:
Ms. Catherine Crowther — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Alan F. Detscher, Pastor

Saint John the Apostle Parish, Norwalk:
Mr. Thomas Gorkowski — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Alan F. Detscher, Pastor

Saint Mary Parish, Norwalk:
Mr. Thomas Ryan — Nominated by Reverend Joseph Cervero, Pastor

Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish, Norwalk:
Mr. Thomas Gorkowski — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Alan F. Detscher, Pastor

Saint Patrick Parish, Redding Ridge:
Mr. Thomas Ryan — Nominated by Reverend Joseph Cervero, Pastor

Saint John the Apostle Parish, Norwalk:
Mr. Thomas Gorkowski — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Alan F. Detscher, Pastor

Holy Trinity Catholic Academy, Shelton:
Mr. Edward Gavin — Nominated by Mrs. Laura Varrone, Principal

Saint Joseph Parish, Shelton:
Ms. Mary Ann Miller — Nominated by Reverend Michael F. Dogali, Pastor
2017 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque Parish, Shelton:
Mr. Robert & Mrs. Barbara Stellner — Nominated by Reverend Ciprian Bejan, Pastor

Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Stamford:
Mr. Grzegorz & Mrs. Agnieszka Rus — Nominated by Reverend Paul M. Hronko, Pastor

Holy Spirit Parish, Stamford:
Ms. Karen Pachuck — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Kevin T. Beaul, Pastor

Saint Maurice Parish, Stamford:
Mr. John & Mrs. Susan Pritting — Nominated by Reverend Alfred A. Riendeau, Pastor

Saint Mary Parish, Stamford:
Pat Krause accepts for Ms. Sally Campo, posthumously — Nominated by Reverend Gustavo A. Falla, Pastor

Saint Leo Parish, Stamford:
Ms. Marcia Mandi — Nominated by Reverend James D. Groso, Pastor

Saint Benedict-Our Lady of Montserrat, Stamford:
Ms. Jackie Hargreaves — Nominated by Reverend Gustavo A. Falla, Pastor

Sacred Heart Parish, Stamford:
Ms. Barbara Cameleo — Nominated by Reverend Alfino Picone, Pastor

Saint Gabriel Parish, Stamford:
Ms. Teresa Sentenador — Nominated by Reverend William M. Quinlan, Pastor

The Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist, Stamford:
Mr. David & Mrs. Janet Lancaster — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Stephen M. DiGiovanni, Pastor

Our Lady of Peace Parish, Stratford:
Ms. Mary Ann Palmero — Nominated by Reverend Nicholas S. Pavia, Pastor

Saint James Parish, Stratford:
Mr. Dan & Mrs. Jen Carson — Nominated by Reverend Thomas F. Lynch, Pastor

Saint James School, Stratford:
Mr. Richard & Mrs. Jennifer Curran — Nominated by Mr. Jack Lynch, Principal
2017 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

**Saint Mark Parish, Stratford:**
Mr. Michael Mallica — Nominated by Reverend Rivenda Serreng, Pastor

**Saint Mark School, Stratford:**
Mrs. Theresa Scalzo — Nominated by Mr. Scott Clough, Principal

**Christ the King Parish, Trumbull:**
Mr. Bob & Mrs. Pat Silv — Nominated by Reverend Terrence P. Walsh, Pastor

**Saint Catherine of Siena Parish, Trumbull:**
Mrs. Patricia Capozzi — Nominated by Reverend Joseph A. Marcello, Pastor

**Saint Mark Parish, Stratford:**
Mrs. thereSa Scalzio — Nominated by Mr. Scott Clough, Principal

**Saint Stephen Parish, Trumbull:**
Ms. Doris Tower — Nominated by Reverend Christopher J. Saneele, Pastor

**Saint Theresa Parish, Trumbull:**
Mr. John & Mrs. Anne Connaghton — Nominated by Reverend Brian F. Gannick, Pastor

**Saint Catherine of Siena School, Trumbull:**
Mrs. Mary dineen — Nominated by Ms. Eunice Giaquinto, Principal

**Saint Michael Parish, Norwalk:**
Mr. Otto de Pierne — Nominated by Reverend Sudhir DSouza, Pastor

**Saint Mary Parish, Ridgefield:**
Mr. Scott Edwardson — Nominated by Mrs. Anna O’Rourke, Principal

**Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Wilton:**
Mr. Louis Pecchi — Nominated by Reverend Reginald Norman, Pastor

**Saint Francis of Assisi Parish, Westport:**
Mr. Christian Edy — Nominated by Reverend Michael L. Dunn, former Pastor

**Church of the Assumption Parish, Westport:**
Mr. Robert & Mrs. Veronica Estoff — Nominated by Reverend Thomas P. Thorne, Pastor

**Saint Luke Parish, Westport:**
Mr. Bill & Mrs. Judy Wanat — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Andrew G. Varga, Pastor

**Saint Luke Parish, Westport:**
Mr. chriStian Eidt — Nominated by Reverend Michael L. Dunn, former Pastor

**Saint Stephen Parish, Trumbull:**
Mrs. Doris Tower — Nominated by Reverend Christopher J. Saneele, Pastor

**Saint Susan School, Trumbull:**
Mr. Carmine Passion — Nominated by Mr. Salvatore Vittoria, Principal

**Saint Francis of Assisi Parish, Westport:**
Mr. Peter Maloney — Nominated by Mr. Al Barber, President

**Immaculate High School, Danbury:**
Mr. Kevin Archer — Nominated by Mrs. Mary Maloney, President

**Sacred Heart Parish, Danbury:**
Mr. William Jauber — Nominated by Reverend Peter J. Towsley, Pastor

**Catholic Charities, Bridgeport:**
Mr. Peter Maloney — Nominated by Mr. Al Barber, President

**Catholic Charities/New Covenant Center:**
John Gutman accepts for Mr. Ed Klars — Nominated by Mr. Al Barber, President

**Catholic Charities/Merton Center:**
Brian Jenkins accepts for Ms. Sheila McEnery — Nominated by Mr. Al Barber, President

**Saint Joseph Parish, Brookfield:**
Mr. Vincent, posthumously & Mrs. Andrea Lewis — Nominated by Reverend George F. O’Neill, Pastor
Our Lady of Peace, Stratford

Memorial blocks build parish community

By PAT HENNESSY

Bright spring daffodils, huge heads of blue hydrangeas in summer, gentle foliage mellowing into fall. All those add a touch of joy to any parish grounds. At Our Lady of Peace Parish in Stratford, a project by the Women’s Garden Club has added a purposeful accent to the flowers and foliage.

“We work very hard for people to feel welcome,” says Father Nick Pavia, pastor of Our Lady of Peace. “When the Garden Club came up with the suggestion of memorial blocks, it seemed like an excellent way to deepen our sense of community.”

The Garden Club, a group of women about 40 strong, cultivates the charm of the grounds surrounding the Norman French Church. The women suggested plantings and memorial blocks around Msgr. Gilmartin Hall with two ends in mind: remembering past parishioners and friends and celebrating current members, and improving the ecology of the area around the hall, which was subject to erosion and runoff.

“We had a tremendous response from the parish,” says Garden Club member and parish council representative Christine Griffin. “It was a way to remember parishioners who meant so much to us, or members of our own families.”

She pauses to point out a block in memory of Ginger Norko. “Ginger used to take care of the altar flowers, so it’s appropriate that her name is here among the plants she cared for,” Griffin says, sharing a fond remembrance.

Other blocks contain the names of current parishioners. “The nicest thing is, after Mass, seeing families stop and point out to their children, ‘That’s us,’” Griffin says. “The blocks build a sense of connectedness in the parish. We all had a little bit of a hand in it,” says Janet Benedict, another Garden Club representative to the parish council. “It will add to the history of the church as well.”

The women were also acutely aware of the ecological needs of parish property. Like so much of New England, the soil around the buildings is poor and rocky, compounded by fill and asphalt from old construction. Every year saw topsoil washing away.

“They knew they needed an edging strong enough to endure a snowplow. Belgian blocks from CT Stone in Milford, weighing 30 pounds apiece, filled the bill. Shaved smooth on one side at CT Stone, they were engraved at Barre Granite Memorials in Stratford. Because of their size and strength, the women could convey memorial blocks build memories and the plantings surrounding the Norman French Church. The women suggested plantings and memorial blocks around Msgr. Gilmartin Hall with two ends in mind: remembering past parishioners and friends and celebrating current members, and improving the ecology of the area around the hall, which was subject to erosion and runoff.

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“Whatever we do, nothing at Our Lady of Peace is ever wasted.”

In all, the Garden Club has installed 101 memorial blocks. Now, not only do the blocks build memories and the plantings recycle altar flowers, the beds are self-sustaining and will improve with every passing year. And there’s no more runoff. “Peat absorbs,” says Griffin. “It’s like a sponge. It holds ten times its weight in water.”

Generously assisted by men of the parish and a number of healthy young parishioners, among them Griffin’s two sons, the Garden Club removed the mulch in October and amended the soil, preparing for winter.

“We may be considering adding another memorial bed next year,” says Father Pavia. For now, he’ll bring the more fragile Christmas and winter flowers during his visits to homebound parishioners, and picture in his mind those to come next spring. “Whatever we do, nothing at Our Lady of Peace is ever wasted.”

FRIENDS, FAMILY AND FOND MEMORIES—Father Nick Pavia, pastor of Our Lady of Peace Parish in Stratford, and Christine Griffin peruse the memorial blocks installed by the Women’s Garden Club. Their project drew the parish community closer together.
Religious Education

Survey gives Holy Family high marks

By PAT HENNESSY

“It’s apparent that Holy Family’s religious education is highly regarded by parents,” says Father Norm Guilbert, pastor of Holy Family Parish in Fairfield. “It is delivering an outstanding product.”

Father Guilbert knows for a fact that parents believe faith formation is important within the parish, and that they think the religious education staff are doing an outstanding job.

Following the closing Mass of Synod 2014, Father Guilbert and his parish set about putting the synod goals into action. The Holy Family Strategic Plan, developed in 2016, identified three areas that are of major importance to the parish. Those include religious education, liturgical life and social life.

The decision was made to make religious education the first priority. To that end, the parish Catechetical Task Force, with input from the teaching staff, conducted a comprehensive survey of the religious education program.

“In marketing, if you’re selling a product you want to know if it’s any good, or get some feedback on how to improve it,” said John Connolly, who joined the task force early this year.

Using his experience in sales and marketing, he helped to draft a clear, easy to understand survey form that was sent to families with students registered in religious education and to families of education-age children who were not enrolled in the program.

“We were a little apprehensive when we sent out the survey, especially since it asked what parents thought about the program and the teachers,” said Mary Jane Perry, coordinator, with Catherine Nolfi, of Holy Family’s religious education. “But we knew our program was strong, and we knew how well our teachers work with our kids.

Her confidence was justified. Overwhelmingly, families expressed solid support for the religious education staff and the outstanding job they are doing.

“The teachers do a great job to inform my son about the importance of God in his life,” added one respondent in the optional “Comments” section.

“You have to know what’s working and what’s not working,” noted Jeannette McMahon, whose grandson, Nate, is in the program. “It’s important to ask, ‘How can we improve?’”

“The survey questions make sure that the program is going to work well for everyone, parents and teachers alike,” added Catherine Golding, who has two children in the program. She did not favor a proposed switch in class time from weeknights to Sunday mornings. “We go to Mass together on Sunday,” she said. A majority of parents agreed with her.

One of the popular features of Holy Family’s religious education program is the Family Mass, held the fourth Sunday of every month. Each month a different class takes charge, starting with the youngsters in first grade.

“Everybody is invited to ‘coffee and’ after Mass,” says Coordinator Perry. “All the families seem to come, not just the families whose kids are in charge. It has a special feeling.”

The program’s First Reconciliation service draws a goodly number of families as well. Families credit Perry and Nolfi as the heart of the program, with justice. “We try to be close to the parents and know every family,” said Perry. “If a child doesn’t show up for religious education, we’re aware of it. I’ll call the family and find out if there’s a problem. If there is, we’ll find a way to work around it.”

Nolfi attended the “People of Joy” formation day held at the Catholic Center in September, where she received the Catechetical Task Force report, which included best practices and recommendations. Both women also attended a Catechist Conversation with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

Perry noted that Holy Family gets new families for their religious education every week. “We welcome them. We’ll get to know them and their children. We’ll find out what they need,” she said, echoing a theme of the Formation Day.

Respondents to the parish survey appreciated that approach. “Everyone in the religious education program does a great job,” said one parent. “Our child looks forward to class each week.”

Nolfi summed up the attitude that received such a strong affirmation from the parish survey: “You’re all invited to God’s table.”

Have a question? Ask it. Ready to learn something new? Find it here. Have an idea to share? We’re listening. Want to explore the world? Start at Sacred Heart.

We turn young women into global leaders one curious step at a time.

FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

November 2017

23
Mass for people with disabilities at St. Catherine

FAIRFIELD—The annual Mass to celebrate people with disabilities held on November 5 was hosted by St. Catherine Center for Special Needs in Fairfield.

It has been customary at this Mass to offer the opportunity for individuals to receive one or more Sacraments of Initiation, with preparation that has taken place outside the typical faith formation program. Gail Mikolsky, director of parish and community outreach for the center, worked with directors of religious education (DREs) throughout the diocese to coordinate preparation and participation. Planning and coordination with the parish religious education programs began in the spring.

“Collaborating with the parishes, we get the opportunity to listen to parents and to create a welcoming and comforting setting for these children to participate in the Mass,” commented Mikolsky. This year, there were 17 young people from 11 different parishes and St. Catherine Academy who received sacraments.

Msgr. Thomas Powers, vicar general of the diocese, celebrated Mass with a church filled with families, St. Catherine Center board members and staff, Knights of Columbus honor guard and friends of St. Catherine Center. Anna Stowe, a confirmand from St. Catherine Academy, and her brother presented the first and second readings. Nicholas D’Ostilio, confirmand and parishioner of St. Peter Parish in Danbury led the Prayer of the Faithful and Philip Palilia, a confirmand from St. Catherine Academy and St. Rose of Lima Parish, presented the gifts at the offertory, accompanied by his family.

In his homily, Msgr. Powers spoke of the virtue of humility. “If we are truly humble, we see ourselves as God sees us,” he began. “These children of God are the essence of humility and are welcomed and valued in the eyes of God.”

“This annual Mass reminds us that all are welcomed in our Church,” commented Helen Burland, executive director of the center. “Each of us must work to encourage the full participation of all people in the life of our parishes and the diocese. Our efforts on a daily basis focus on the ordinary. But today, we celebrate the extraordinary”

Following Mass, Msgr. Powers, several board members and Ryan, one of the adult program participants, headed to the center’s new program room for a blessing. The day was filled with joy.

“Christ desires us to be healed,” said Jim DiVasto. “This was monumental. The bishop listened and there’s no doubt he had heard us,” she says of those early listening sessions. “I felt the remorse from my bishop, along with the incredible strength from my fellow survivors, and I began to regain my trust,” Fry said.

The meetings also represented the beginning of the survivors’ group. At the end of her talk, Fry, who is now a grandmother of nine, was joined by other members of the survivors’ group that came forward and embraced one another in a moment of pride and joy.

“Christ desires us to be healed,” said Jim DiVasto. “This committee would never have been possible without the courage and support of Bishop Frank. We’ve all grown to be great friends, and that’s a great source of healing for us.”

(For information about the survivors’ group or for victim assistance, call Erin Neil, LCSW: 203.650.3265 or eneil@diobpt.org; or Michael Trintrup, LCSW; at 203.241.0987, or mtintrup@ccfc-ct.org.)
CBS legend talks ‘Grandparenting’ at Breakfast

BRIDGEPORT—The first woman to serve as guest speaker in the Cardinal Shehan Center Celebrity breakfast series brought the house down with a mixture of humor, interesting stories and perceptive comments about the press and the “polarized nation.”

CBS 60 Minutes correspondent Lesley Stahl captivated almost 400 friends of the Shehan Center at the Downtown Holiday Inn with her talk followed by a question and answer session.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano delivered the invocation and Shehan Center executive director Terry O’Connor served as master of ceremonies for the breakfast, which is expected to raise over $70,000 for the educational and recreational programs of the center.

The bishop said that hope is one of the great gifts children receive from the staff and volunteers of the Cardinal Shehan Center, and the good things that happen there are “God’s way of showing us that there is real hope for the future.”

In the program prior to Stahl’s talk, Sylvia Martin of Stratford was presented the Volunteer of the Year Award for her work on many fund raising events. Martin is a retired registered nurse and a parishioner of the First Baptist Church in Stratford. She was a member of the Shehan Center as a young girl, and said she always wanted to return to serve others as a volunteer.

Ten-year-old Amaris Timmons, a sixth grader at the Cathedral Academy, was the Shehan Center Youth speaker. She told the gathering of business and civic leaders that the center has taught her the importance of losing gracefully and learning from her mistakes.

Stahl started her talk by saying she would “spare the audience” the hot political topics and focused on being a grandparent, something she delved into in her 2016 book, “Becoming a Grandma: The Joys and Science of the New Grandparenting.”

“We’re entering the age of Grandma,” she said. “There are 30,000 new grandparents in the U.S. each week.” More than 400 attended the event that raised $70,000 for the youth center’s educational and recreational programs.

“We’re entering the age of Grandma”—Lesley Stahl said at the recent Cardinal Shehan Center Breakfast held in Bridgeport. “There are 30,000 new grandparents in the U.S. each week.” More than 400 attended the event that raised $70,000 for the youth center’s educational and recreational programs.

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“We’re entering the age of Grandma,” she said. “There are 30,000 new grandparents in the U.S. each week,” many of them from the ranks of aging Baby Boomers who don’t quite fit the image of grandparents of the past.

“Most grandmas aren’t gray any more—we’re all blonds,” she quipped, but she believes that grandparenting is a bond that cements families and generations together.

“When we hold these babies we are instantly transformed,” she said.

Studies show that both grandparents and grandchildren are “happier and healthier when they interact,” she said. “We’re great for kids, and it’s important for them to know that they belong to a family. We give them unconditional love and they give it back.”

She said there has been an historic reversal in recent decades it that older Americans are now the wealthiest and they play a large role in helping their children and grandchildren, particularly with the purchase of “big ticket” item from healthcare expenses to paying for an education.

But there are also challenges. “Once the baby is born, the family balance of power immediately shifts to the young couple,” she said, and some grandparents are “terrified of being a ‘happier and healthier when they interact,’ she said. “We’re great for kids, and it’s important for them to know that they belong to a family. We give them unconditional love and they give it back.”

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Speaking about her own career, she said it was launched by an “affirmative action” pro-
New Orleans’ legendary Preservation Hall Jazz Band will perform on November 16 at the Hyatt Regency Greenwich at a benefit for Fairfield County’s Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education. The Preservation Hall Jazz Band derives its name from Preservation Hall in the heart of New Orleans’ French Quarter. The band has traveled worldwide, spreading their mission to nurture, perpetuate and expand the art form that is New Orleans jazz.

**BISHOP’S LECTURE SERIES FROM PAGE 6**

Bishop Robert Barron, she said “The desire for God is written in the human heart because God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God can he find the truth and happiness for which he never stops searching.”

“I thought when I entered the convent that everything would be all right, just as brides think when they marry,” she said drawing laughter. But her road to healing and forgiveness has been an ongoing process that has evolved over the 19 years she has been a nun. Half way through her talk, she told those gathered to hear her that she had struggled with alcoholism as a young adult and continues to participate in a 12-step program. But the focus of her talk was not psychological or self-help, it was about the power of God to meet us on the road. ”

“No one wants to be a project that is being worked on and is not finished,” she said. “The Inner-City Foundation’s 26th annual benefit dinner features the Preservation Hall Jazz Band will take place on November 16 at 6 pm at the Hyatt Regency in Greenwich. Master storyteller and Greenwich local Bonnie Levison will be the master of ceremonies. Mitch Barns, chief executive officer of Nielsen, chairs the Corporate Committee. Dick and Vilma Matteis chair the Benefit Committee, which is currently in formation and includes: Beth and Peter Barhydt; Ruth and Charles Chiusano, Pamela and Eric Dale, Amy Dana and Joe Profaci, Audrey and Daniel Dornier, Julie and David Genovese, Helen and Dan FitzPatrick, Edna Keleshian, Isabel and Joe Lane, Bonnie Levison, Virginia and John Lydanne, Patricia and Edward McLaughlin, Sue and Bill Mitchell, Mary and Brian Moran, Jane Pelletier, Geri and Jim Roper, Sheryl Shughnessey, Claudia Steers, Cindy and Rich Stone, Elaine and ChiChi Ubiña, Laura Wack, Maureen and Frank Walsh, Suzan and Ken Wirth, and Stephanie and John Wu. (For tickets and tables to the benefit or to donate, visit innercityfoundation.org, email info@innercityfoundation.org, or call 203.416.1496.)”

**CATHOLIC IDENTITY FROM PAGE 11**

and among the faculty who lead these seminars.

**TEACHING THE TEACHERS**

The best way to keep Catholic intellectual life at the heart of a Catholic university is to develop a faculty who see this goal as a compelling, exciting enterprise which engenders animating and engaging inquiry about the human experience. The faculty who facilitate these seminars come from a variety of disciplines; not all are Catholic, but all are dedicated to implementing the vision and purpose of this process. They are immersed in conversations about the texts and the pedagogy; offer colloquia; accompany students to films, museums and lectures; attend weekly workshops and conferences about Catholic thought and imagination; and participate in a three-day summer faculty-development workshop. These are a community of scholars who recognize that conversation about contemporary issues with Catholic thought at its center can offer its students moral clarity, and help them develop a moral compass. These faculty help students learn to question, to think critically, to develop perspective, to reflect, and to see the enduring relevance and legacy of the Catholic intellectual tradition in their lives today.
St. Margaret Shrine
75th anniversary celebration

BRIDGEPORT—Threatening clouds could not dim the beauty of the Mass celebrating the 75th anniversary of St. Margaret’s Shrine in Bridgeport on October 29. Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, who celebrated the anniversary Mass, has been an enthusiastic and frequent visitor to the shrine’s rambling hills and rock-rimmed grottos.

The bishop came to the shrine the first weekend after his installation in September of 2013. At that time he came for the dedication of a new shrine on its grounds, this one dedicated to St. Padre Pio.

“What a blessing it was to have the bishop here for our 75th anniversary celebration,” said Deacon Don Foust, the shrine’s administrator. “I believe he has a soft spot in his heart for our shrine. His comments after the Mass were very telling, particularly the way his experience here reminds him of his Brooklyn Italian roots. We are blessed for him to have that feeling about us.”

Opened in 1942, St. Margaret’s Shrine was built as a place to pray for peace and to remember the young men who were dying in World War II. Visitors to the shrine are greeted by the Stations of the Cross and a faithful reproduction of Michelangelo’s Pieta. The statues and grottos built over the past 70-plus years give the shrine its distinctive charm. Together, these welcome visitors to an oasis of peace and prayer.

The grounds contain individual outdoor shrines of St. Margaret, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Sebastian and Our Lady of LaVang (honoring an appearance of Our Lady in Vietnam), among others. The site has a St. Anthony Chapel and an All Saints Chapel. Another recent shrine recalls the children and staff who died in the Sandy Hook massacre.

Honoring its roots in Bridgeport’s Italian-American community, St. Margaret’s still celebrates a Mass in Italian each Sunday.

BUILT AS A PLACE TO PRAY FOR PEACE, St. Margaret Shrine in Bridgeport opened in 1942. Bishop Frank J. Caggiano celebrated the shrine’s 75th anniversary Mass on October 29. Honoring its Italian-American roots, St. Margaret’s still celebrates a Mass in Italian each Sunday.

WOMEN’S ADVENT DAY OF REFLECTION
THE ART OF WAITING

The Leadership Institute and the Sisters of Life are excited to offer a Women’s Day of Reflection in preparation for Advent on Saturday, December 2, 2017, 8:30am-2:30pm at The Catholic Center, 238 Jewett Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06606.

During the season of Advent, we are often distracted with many activities: shopping, decorating, baking, ending an academic semester, etc. However, this season ought to be about so much more than frenzied preparations. Above all, Advent is a time to slow down and prepare our hearts in an ever deeper way for Christ, and this brief day of reflection is just one way to give yourself the time and space to encounter Jesus. It is an opportunity to be renewed through the Sacraments (Mass, Reconciliation), Spiritual Talks, Rosary with meditations, reflective prayer, and of course, fellowship.

Please Join Us!

What is the cost?
The cost is $25 which includes breakfast and lunch.

How to sign up?
Please RSVP by November 28, 2017 at www.formationreimagined.org. Registration is limited, so please respond today.
Remembering the Holocaust

From Treblinka to Georgetown

By FRANK DEROSA

The clack-clack of the wheels of the freight cars penetrated the silence of the Polish countryside as they transported terrified Jews the 50 miles from Warsaw to Treblinka, the brutal extermination camp. It was September, 1942.

Among those at the threshold of death by asphyxiation in one of Treblinka’s six gas chambers were Majer Latowicki, 34, and two brothers among his 10 siblings.

The condemned knew, and history has confirmed, what lay ahead when the Holocaust train rolled to its last stop. SS soldiers, bearing weapons and icy stares, would prod them out of the cars with their rifles, collect their valuables, order them to disrobe, and then, bereft of conscience, line them up for liquidation, the latest victims of maniacal Adolf Hitler’s genocidal “Final Solution.”

Desperate to save their lives and deny the Fuhrer his wishes, they also were aware of the alternative if they didn’t risk the try.

As the fields of their beloved homeland swept by, the brothers finally saw an opening. In an instant they leaped from the death train and sprinted toward the unknown. The Nazi soldiers, catching sight of them, rained bullets in their direction. Major’s brothers fell, mortally wounded. He survived, suffering a broken bone in one leg. Meanwhile, the train continued toward its dreaded destination.

Having miraculously escaped death, Major found refuge with a Polish Catholic family. They hid him in the loft of a barn by their homeland years later to search for proper burial in a Jewish cemetery.

As the fields of their beloved homeland swept by, the brothers finally saw an opening. In an instant they leaped from the death train and sprinted toward the unknown. The Nazi soldiers, catching sight of them, rained bullets in their direction. Major’s brothers fell, mortally wounded. He survived, suffering a broken bone in one leg. Meanwhile, the train continued toward its dreaded destination.

Having miraculously escaped death, Major found refuge with a Polish Catholic family. They hid him in the loft of a barn by their home. For a year they provided food, nursed his injury and protected him, certainly aware of the risk of Nazi retribution toward them if his whereabouts were discovered. The Nazis never found him.

As the months wore on and as he hoped for the liberation of his country, he kept close the shattering memory of his dead brothers and the chilling way he lost them.

When the war ended, in time he emigrated from Poland, came to America, married and raised a family, settling in the Bronx. He vowed that one day he would return to the spot where his brothers were gunned down and move their remains to Warsaw for proper burial in a Jewish cemetery.

As we continued our conversation, Dan went on to explain that Major kept the promise he made to himself. He returned to his native land years later to search for his brothers’ remains. But he was able to locate and exhume those of only one of them. He then fulfilled his vow to bury what he found with dignity in Warsaw.

Dan, an observant follower of his Jewish faith, ever mindful of how his father and his family suffered (he believes only one other member of the large family did not go to the gas chamber), revealed his desire to journey one day to Treblinka and Warsaw. His sole purpose: to recite Kaddish, the solemn Jewish Prayer for Mourning.

More than 44 million people have visited Auschwitz and other death camps since 1945. Among them were our own bishop, Frank J. Caggiano, and young people from the Diocese of Bridgeport who made a prayerful visit there in 2016 as part of their World Youth Day pilgrimage to Krakow.

Although their prayers did not include the Kaddish, they conveyed the same intent from a faith based on belief and trust in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33
Saint Mark School, Stratford

Students cut hair for breast cancer awareness

STRATFORD—St. Mark School hosted their Eighth Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Cut-A-Thon on October 20. Students and faculty dressed in pink as they rallied together to raise awareness in the fight against breast cancer.

Stratford’s Jade Salon transported their services to the school’s auditorium and donated their time and products as they have for the past six years. They not only cut hair but gave pink synthetic hair extensions to students in an effort to raise additional funds.

Eleven boys had their heads shaved and four girls cut about a yard of hair collectively and donated it to make wigs for women fighting cancer. The cut hair will be donated to Pantene Beautiful Lengths and Wigs for Kids, benefiting women and children with medical hair loss. Additionally, 45 pink synthetic hair extensions were purchased by students to promote the cause.

A total of $2,460 was collected by St. Mark School and Jade Salon. All proceeds were donated to the Elizabeth Pfriem SWIM Cancer Center at St. Vincent’s Medical Center in Bridgeport.

Lyn McCarthy, executive director of the St. Vincent’s Medical Center Foundation, was on site to accept the donation check. She personally thanked the students for their continued efforts in supporting breast cancer awareness. “I look forward to coming to St. Mark every year to witness this school’s selfless acts of kindness,” she added.

Scott Clough, the new principal of St. Mark School, remarked, “I am proud to be part of such an amazing and caring community that knows the power of giving to those who are less fortunate than ourselves.”

In the past eight years, St. Mark School and Jade Salon have donated over $18,000 to the SWIM Cancer Center. Recognized nationally as a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence, St. Mark School will continue to turn its blue ribbon pink each October in an effort to raise breast cancer awareness.
Obituaries

Deacon William Murphy, 82

Deacon William Owen Murphy, a retired deacon of St. Joseph Parish in South Norwalk, passed away peacefully at his home in Norwalk on October 6 at the age of 82.

He was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., on November 18, 1934, and attended Brooklyn Prep, College of the Holy Cross and Columbia University Law School. He served on active duty with the U.S. Air Force in Germany 1961-1962.

He was hired by Simpson Thacher & Bartlett in 1960 and spent 35 years at the firm, 25 as partner. He served on the Banking Law Committee of the Bar Association and in the course of his career he worked on the restructuring of the debt of Yugoslavia and the Philippines, among other issues. He retired from the firm in December 1994 and was ordained a deacon by Bishop Edward M. Egan on July 8, 1995.

Following his ordination, he graduated from Yale Divinity School with a master’s of divinity degree. He was active at St. Joseph’s for 22 years, and served his community as well as his parish. Deacon Murphy served as chair of the Norwalk Board of Education, chair of the board of Family and Children’s Agency, a board member of an anti-poverty agency, a homeless shelter and the Side By Side Charter School. He also served on the Board of Trustees of the New Canaan Country School and on the Board of Consultants of Portsmouth Abbey School.

Deacon Murphy is survived by his wife of 52 years, Barbara, and his sons Bill of New York and Jim and his wife Jenny of Darien, as well as five grandchildren.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Deacon Murphy on October 14, at 10 am in St. Joseph Church. Msgr. Thomas Powers, vicar general of the Diocese of Bridgeport, was the principal celebrant. Father Peter Lenox, administrator of St. Joseph, was the homilist.

Interment followed in St. John’s and St. Mary’s Cemetery in Norwalk.

Sister Agnes

Sister Agnes Seebach, OSU died peacefully on August 3. She was born September 10, 1937, in Seaford, N.Y. She entered the Congregation of the Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk in September 1960, taking the religious name of Sister Mary Pauline.

She earned a BA degree in education from St. John’s University in Queens, N.Y., and a master’s in theology from Loyola University, New Orleans.

Sister Agnes taught at Our Lady Star of the Sea School in Stamford from 1973-75 and again from 1977-78. After serving in parish ministry and as as coordinator of St. Ursula Center in Bridgeport, she retired in 2004.

A Mass of Christian burial was celebrated for Sister Agnes in the Chapel of Villa Notre Dame on June 19. Msgr Walter Orlovski, pastor of St. Matthew’s, was the principal celebrant. Burial followed in St. Mary Cemetery, Bethel.

Sister Amalia

Sister Mary Amalia Menardi, 99, died on June 13, at Lourdes Health Care Center in Wilton. She celebrated her 75th jubilee with the School Sisters of Notre Dame this year.

Ruth Marie Menardi was born on March 22, 1918, in Bogota, N. J. She worked in Manhattan for three years before she entered the School Sister of Notre Dame.

Sister Amalia’s first assignment was to St. Paul the Apostle School in Ellicott City, Md., in a one-room schoolhouse designated for black children. Sister Amalia taught the first through the eighth grades in the same room. She remembered those two years as the highlight of her teaching career.

Sister Amalia taught at the former St. John Nepomucene School in Bridgeport from 1954-61; was principal of Holy Rosary School, Bridgeport, from 1961-67; and principal of Our Lady of Peace School, Stratford, from 1968-71.

In 1973, she became coordinator of religious education at St. Matthew Parish in Norwalk, where she served for 21 years.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Sister Amalia in the Chapel of Villa Notre Dame on June 19. Msgr Walter Orlovski, pastor of St. Matthew’s, was the principal celebrant. Burial followed in St. Mary Cemetery, Bethel.
Vocations

Seminarian is ‘not alone’ on the discernment journey

By DEACON DAVID FLYNN

“Discerning a vocation for the priesthood is not something you can do alone,” said Colin Lomnizter, a seminarian at St. John Fisher Residence in Stamford.

“You need the help and support of others who are in the same situation. That includes other seminarians and those who are skilled at helping you understand yourself and whether or not a vocation to the priesthood fits you.” Anyone who thinks he might have a vocation, but is uncertain whether or not he should enter the seminary, Colin’s advice is, “Just do it! There is never the ‘right time’.”

He speaks from personal experience. As a freshman at Fairfield Prep, Colin began wondering if he had a vocation to the priesthood. The question was stirred, in part, by an older brother, whom he observed searching for a similar answer. The search led to him and his brother attending a vocations fair at Sacred Heart University and went as far as Colin “nearly” completing an application to the seminary when he was a high school senior.

Feeling there were other things he wanted to do before making that decision, such as graduate school and traveling, Colin did not follow through on that desire. Instead, he decided to attend Catholic University of America (CUA), where he studied philosophy.

The notion of the priesthood still nagged at his conscience, though. The internal debate ended on September 23, 2015, when the final words of Pope Francis’ homily during the canonization Mass of Father Junipero Serra pierced his conscience and his heart.

Repeating the motto that St. Serra was famous for, Pope Francis exclaimed, “Forward! Always forward!” Immediately, Colin knew he needed to stop equivocating and make a decision.

He resolved to finish what he had been delaying and applied to St. John Fisher Seminary in Stamford for a time of discernment. He was accepted and entered the formation program at the beginning of the 2016-17 academic year.

His experience in the formation program has been hard and humbling, but very rewarding. The program is structured to provide time for study, prayer, worship, spiritual direction, chores and fraternity, all designed in a way that will help a man understand God’s desire for him and to learn about himself.

“Self-discovery is the hard part,” Colin said. Learning about himself “has been a humbling experience.” It has also convinced him of his vocation and is giving him confidence in that conviction. That part of the experience has brought him “joy and hope,” he said.

When he began his formation, Colin struggled with what he thought had to be a decision over whether to marry or become a priest. But that approach, he realized, was too complicated and he needed to simplify it. He came to understand that to be a good father, whether biological or spiritual, he first had to learn how to be a good son and listen to God in order to learn what kind of father God was calling him to be.

Colin has had many strong and positive influences that formed his impressions of what it means to be an obedient son, a good and holy Catholic man and a good father. First, there are the priests. Among them he mentioned Msgr. Richard Shea, who was the pastor at St. Catherine of Sienna in Trumbull when he was growing up and with whom he was always close.

St. Catherine of Sienna’s current pastor, Father Joseph Marcello, has provided Colin with friendship, spiritual advice and a holy example as a priest, helping to form for him a healthy impression of the priesthood.

Another priestly influential force was Father Frank Donio, a Palantine priest at CUA, whose example not only encouraged Colin to enter the seminary, but encouraged two of his best friends, as well. From each of the priests mentioned, Colin has grown to understand what the title “Father” means.

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The Black Carriage

Again it is stern November—“no butterflies, no bees, no fruits, no flowers, no birds—November!” (Thomas Hood). The aged year is near its end; proud Winter is close at hand.

All Saints and All Souls Day stand at the door of this month, calling us to remember those that our hearts held dear. More and more are gone. People I thought would never die have died. They were people with whom I identified myself. They were part of the fabric of my life. Their deaths left great gaping holes. I think of them and moments of lost time. I long for them to be living and to have it all over again.

The heart is sad for vanished hopes. I resonate to that passage from Psalm 23 about walking through the valley of the shadow of death. My belief in heaven has me feeling like someone who is waiting and waiting for.

Isaiah 38:12 uses two striking figures for death. “My dwelling is plucked up and removed from me like a shepherd’s tent; like a weaver he has rolled up my life, cut me off from the loom.” A shepherd’s tent doesn’t stay long in a place. With the thread on the loom, the Weaver weaves the pattern of my life, then detaches the thread from the loom, rolls up the pattern and takes it with him. There is a limit to the thread allocated to me.

The Roman writer, Seneca, compared life to a role in a play that should satisfy us when it is over, since that is all the Author wrote. One should leave graciously.

At times I do wonder how “Brother Death” will come for me. I pray he will arrange the meeting without much mess or fuss. Dying will be the last thing I’ll have the opportunity to do well. I love Therese of Lisieux’s reflections on this: “I wonder how I will do when dying. I would like to come off with honor. In my childhood, the great events of my life appeared to me as insurmountable mountains. When I saw little girls make their First Communion, I said to myself: How will I do at my First Communion? Later: How will I do at entering Carmel? And afterwards: at taking the habit? At making profession? At present, it’s How will I do at dying?”

We are children of earth, who die. “Who will save himself from the grasp of the grave?” (Psalm 89:50).

A man named John DuBas (died 1742) cleverly said: “Something that should console me feeling like someone who is waiting and waiting for Death, He kindly stopped for me; because I could not stop for Death, my labor, and my leisure too, and I had put away the custom is for the dying person to see me coming.”

There’s an American Indian tribe named the Athabaskan where the custom is for the dying person to make his/her last word the word “goodbye” which is Tiaa, which literally means “See you.”

I hope I can die in harness. Till then I expect, now and then, to feel Death touch my shoulder and say: “Live—I’m coming.” Life is to be lived, and it seems nearly incomprehensible to think of life continuing its ways without me. But sooner or later, I’ll hear the Banshee, I’ll open the door, I’ll see the black carriage “kindly stopped for me,” maybe wet with rain.

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What you can do to encourage vocations

Here are some suggestions from Deacon David Flynn about what you can do to encourage vocations:

Pray for the seminarians.

Pray for an increase in vocations.

Continue to support the seminarians with Serra Club of Bridgeport activities. That support is very meaningful to them.

Help people understand that a vocation is something that “normal people” do. Normal people love Christ.

When you meet someone who is considering the priesthood or religious life, encourage them to speak to a priest and to frequently attend Mass and Confession.
Column: Joe Pisani

To discover God’s will, just ask

SWIMMING UPSTREAM
By Joe Pisani

Joe Pisani has been a writer and editor for 30 years.

“Was that God’s will?” she asked. “Or was it fate?”

I understood how the ancient Greeks must have felt when Socrates was laying his trap for them as they debated on the streets of Athens. I stuttered, I started to perspire, and I probably blurted out something like “It’s not easy to tell what God’s will is.” Then, I detoured the discussion to something less perplexing like the sacraments.

“Beth, if you can’t remember the Seven Sacraments, how can you comprehend God’s will?”

It was a bad response. Years later, I realize God’s will for us is easier to understand than the 2,300 pages of the Affordable Care Act, and yet we agonize as if it’s indecipherable and we need a divine Rosetta Stone to crack the code and make sense of our lives.

Many people I know talk about their “destiny” and “fate” as if they’re characters in an Arthurian legend, a Greek myth or the Game of Thrones. Others trust their horoscopes more than God’s will. I don’t believe in horoscopes or fate, but I believe in God’s personally tailored plan for each of us.

The spiritual writer Carlo Carretto, commenting on the path that led him to become a Little Brother of Jesus and go into the solitude of the desert, once wrote, “Herein is contained the mystery of the history of our salvation … invited and impelled by a force which, when we do not recognize it, we call fate, but which, when we are clear about it and aware, we call the will of God. Do you believe that everything is part of a plan, a design, an intervention of God in our affairs? I do. And I am convinced that God’s love can transform the darkness of a disaster or the irrationality of an earthquake into an event that can influence or even completely change our lives.”

I’ve known family members and friends who look at their lives, scratch their heads and wonder what it’s all about. What’s their destiny? Some are celebrating, some are suffering. Many of them fell into careers or go from job to job pursuing a pay check while the true purpose of their lives eludes them.

Others knew their so-called destiny from an early age because their parents told them. They were achievers and over-achievers marked for greatness in the eyes of their families and society, and they eventually achieved prominence, prestige and wealth. But did they achieve as much in the eyes of God?

God’s ways are not man’s ways. He has a unique plan that existed before time for each of us, and it doesn’t necessarily involve acclaim and material success. Nevertheless, it can involve great things because when we commit to God’s will, he can turn our small acts of obedience into unimaginably tremendous spiritual accomplishments. Regardless of your vocation or profession, if you seek God’s will, you have purpose; and if you don’t seek God’s will, no vocation or profession however respected is as meaningful and productive as it should be.

Our world exalts power and celebrity, but the greatest achievements in salvation history often result from the efforts of humble people—homemakers, bank tellers, bricklayers and Uber drivers, who’ve turned their will and lives over to God.

Accepting God’s will means taking Christ with us moment by moment and asking him what he wants us to do in every situation. He’ll tell us, but to hear him, we have to pray, sit in silence and listen.

If we say “yes” to his plan for us, he’ll put people in our path, situations in our lives, and opportunities in our day to bring Christ to others. Does that sound simplistic? It’s simple, but not simplistic. God’s will has an immeasurable purpose in human and spiritual terms—nothing less than saving souls. God is counting on each of us. Really.

As I often tell my daughters, God has a plan for your lives and it’s better than your plan. To discover what it is, all you have to do is ask. His plan is your true destiny and the source of happiness. There’s no other.
Bits and Pieces

MOMs+DADS prayer/support group for those with Down syndrome, their family and friends meets the third Thurs. of every month (Nov. 16), at 7:30 pm at St. Mary Parish, Norwalk. For more info, contact strapostolate@optimum.net.

MASSES OF HEALING AND HOPE: the Charismatic Renewal Services announces a Mass of Healing and Hope on Thurs., Nov. 16, at St. Roch Parish, Greenwich, at 7:30 pm with Fr. Larry Carew. For more info, call the Charismatic Renewal Office: 203.456.5610.

DIVORCED AND SEPARATED Catholics are invited to join “Hearts Renewed,” a support group for divorced or separated men and women. Meetings are held in Fairfield on the first and third Fri. of every month (Nov. 17; Dec. 7) at 7:30 pm. For more info and for directions, call Bette: 203.338.0503 or Peggy: 203.834.1287.

THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN Holy Spirit Fraternity invites everyone to St. Anthony of Padua Church, Fairfield, on Sat., Nov. 18, at 9:30 am to celebrate Mass with Fr. Norm Guelbert. Social and meeting follow. For more info, call Pat Heile, OFS: 203.255.8801 or phile7513@aol.com.

KNIGHTS OF LITHUANIA will hold their monthly Mass and meeting Sun., Nov. 19, at 12 noon at St. George Parish, Bridgeport. For more info, call 203.878.0519.

ST. CATHERINE’S PLAYERS announces audition calls for its 2018 production of Shrek: The Musical! Open auditions will be held on Tues., Nov. 28, and Wed., Nov. 29, at St. Catherine Parish, Riverside. Elementary and middle school students, 7:30; high school students and adults, 8:30 pm. Come with a prepared song and sheet music. For more information about roles, or to volunteer, visit www.stcatherinesplayers.com or email stcatherinesplayers@gmail.com.

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP begins a nine-week session Thurs., Nov. 30, from 7:30-9 pm at St. Thomas More Parish, Darien. No charge; registration necessary. For more info, call Lillian Toll: 203.966.9367 or the parish office at 203.655.3303.

FOR EVERY MORNING... The SECULAR FRANCISCAN Holy Spirit Fraternity invites everyone to St. Anthony of Padua Church, Fairfield, on Sat., Nov. 18, at 9:30 am to celebrate Mass with Fr. Norm Guelbert. Social and meeting follow. For more info, call Pat Heile, OFS: 203.255.8801 or phile7513@aol.com.

The BOOK OF RUTH, a presentation by Fr. Ed Colohan, will be offered at Holy Family Parish, Fairfield, on Sat., Dec. 9, from 9:30 am to 12 noon in the parish center. Those attending should read the four chapters of Ruth. Bring your Bible. No charge. Space limited; registration needed. To register, call 203.536.1835.

PROJECT RACHEL: Are you or someone you know caring for a child to abortion? Call our confidential phone line: 203.895.3554 or 203.416.1619, or email projectrachel@diobpt.org. God’s mercy, healing and forgiveness are waiting for you!
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