

WEEKLY PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENTS

BULLETIN / PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENTS

JANUARY 28 & 29

This week we begin the 2017 Annual Catholic Appeal to provide the funds for the pastoral, educational and charitable ministries of the Diocese of Bridgeport. This year's theme, *Sharing God's Gifts, Transforming Lives*, calls us to come together as a people of God to live and share the faith we profess as we carry forth the mission of Jesus Christ. When you receive your Appeal mailing this week, please take time to read the information thoroughly, how you can help and give prayerful consideration when contemplating your sacrificial gift to the campaign. Thank you.

FEBRUARY 4 & 5

The Bishop's Scholarship Fund provides tuition assistance to families who attend our Diocesan schools. Over \$2,000,000 in scholarships is awarded each year to students who demonstrate financial need. Every town and school in our Diocese has students receiving these awards. Over 2,000 students applied for tuition assistance and the need was calculated at over \$7,000,000. The Bishop's Scholarship Fund continues to work to raise and distribute funds to families with need so that the grace of a Catholic education is available to all who desire it.

FEBRUARY 11 & 12

Family Formation supports and facilitates the Church's mission of providing opportunities for ongoing faith formation for adults – the paradigm of all catechesis. This includes, but is not limited to: baptism preparation, parenting, RCIA and adult Confirmation, men's ministry, women's ministry, marriage enrichment and help for troubled marriages, chastity/human sexuality, separated/divorced support, bereavement, and fertility appreciation/natural family planning.

FEBRUARY 18 & 19

Respect Life Ministry strives to build a culture of life by upholding and promoting the dignity of human life from the moment of conception to natural death. The Diocese works to implement the guidelines of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities, in which we are called upon as church with our resources, our people, our services and institutions to pursue the cause of life with renewed energy and commitment.

Through prayer, education, pastoral care, and public policy advocacy, the Gospel of Life is proclaimed in our midst throughout all ages and stages of life. By working together diligently, prayerfully, and courageously in the Lord's service, we hope to transform the culture of death that is present in society today.

FEBRUARY 25 & 26

Supporting the Annual Catholic Appeal makes it possible to continue promoting vocations to the priesthood that are so vital to the future of our local Church. The indispensable role that our 26 seminarians will perform in the life of the Church necessitates that they receive an unparalleled formation in the spiritual, pastoral, and academic disciplines. The formation and preparation our seminarians receive at St. John Fisher, Redemptoris Mater, and in major seminary spans five to eight years. This year Bishop Caggiano will ordain three seminarians to the priesthood and two to the transitional diaconate. At an annual cost of more than \$21,000, your Annual Catholic Appeal gift will help underwrite this worthwhile investment and help promote and foster vocations to the priesthood throughout our diocese.

MARCH 4 & 5

During 2016, Catholic Charities celebrated a centennial of care across Fairfield County. With more than 30 programs, Catholic Charities will continue to put faith in action “for the next 100 years” by: feeding the hungry; housing the homeless; empowering and counseling those in need; and strengthening individuals and families. Today, Catholic Charities services touch more than 10,000 lives annually and have become one of the largest private social service agency in Fairfield County with over 1,000 volunteers.

Last year, Appeal funds made it possible for this agency to serve more than 1.3 million nutritious meals to needy and vulnerable persons throughout Fairfield County. The New Covenant Center in Stamford with their expanded space continues to greatly increase its services and mission. Catholic Charities conducted 15,000 counseling sessions, benefiting from its new behavioral health collaboration with St. Vincent’s in Bridgeport. 600 families still suffering from super-storm Sandy continued to receive needed assistance and counseling care. 250 seniors receive two delivered meals daily. Catholic Charities also continued to provide a variety of family focused safety net programs such as Room to Grow, serving 130 three to five year olds in two Norwalk locations, the Family Loan program, Immigration Services helping to reunite families, as well as housing services for 200 families and individuals. We cannot thank you enough for your partnership.

Your gift through the Appeal is truly changing lives and showing care one person at a time. “Catholic Charities is love in action,” as Bishop Frank stated after presenting the lifetime service awards at the recent 100th Anniversary Gala. Catholic Charities of Fairfield County was founded as a lifelong advocate of the poor and those in need. Thank you for joining with us in this advocacy and for your gift of support as we continue to serve for the “next 100 years”.

MARCH 11 & 12

This is Annual Catholic Appeal Commitment Weekend throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport. Our parish goal this year is that every family and individual will participate to the very best of their ability, in recognition and in thanksgiving for God's many blessings. All registered parishioners should have received a special letter from Bishop Caggiano seeking their personal commitment and a pledge of support. If you are among those in our parish family who have already responded in the spirit of stewardship and discipleship or will do so today, fervent thanks and blessings are yours. If you are still contemplating your Appeal gift, please give from your heart on behalf of those whose lives will be changed for the better because you cared. Every pledge and gift is vitally important and will bring us closer to reaching our goal. God will indeed bless and reward your generosity and concern for others, of that you can be assured.

MARCH 18 & 19

If you have not yet responded to the 2017 Annual Catholic Appeal, please reflect upon the importance of your support to ministry and outreach that relies upon the charity of the Diocese of Bridgeport. The challenge is immediate and far reaching, but the solution is within our reach!

Please consider the following options when deciding upon the best way to support the Annual Catholic Appeal this year:

- Make a pledge and spread out your payments over 5 months
- Donate on-line by going to the diocesan website, 2017ACAbidgeport.com
- Check if your employer will match your gift through the Corporate Matching Gift Program
- Donate a one-time gift
- Contribute a gift of appreciated stocks or securities

Whatever you decide, your gift will be greatly appreciated and make a difference in lives of others.

MARCH 25 & 26

Youth Formation exists to advocate and assist parishes and youth ministry leaders in the formation of young people. Guided by the USCCB Document "Renewing the Vision", we form parish youth ministry leaders to offer a comprehensive youth ministry program to, with, by, and for young people. We advocate for the needs of young people at all levels. Some of the special Diocesan programs and activities supported by the Annual Catholic Appeal are: Catholic Service Corps, World Youth Day, SHU Journey, and March for Life, CONVIVIO, the National Catholic Youth Conference, High School Apostles and Catholic Scouting. Please prayerfully consider making your gift today.

APRIL 1 & 2

For over 100 years now, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County delivers life solutions and human essentials through a comprehensive network of 30 plus service ministries each year to thousands of individuals and families regardless of their religious belief, health, age, race, or economic status. Feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, counseling the troubled, attending to the elderly, infirmed, disabled and incarcerated, assisting newly-arrived immigrants, and so much more, all are made possible through Annual Catholic Appeal funding. Your gift will enable these ministries and services to change lives one person at a time without interruption, whenever and wherever this outreach is most needed.

APRIL 8 & 9

Over the years many corporations in the Diocese have participated in the Matching Gift Program. When making your pledge to the 2017 Annual Catholic Appeal, please consult with your employer to determine if they match gifts. If your company does participate, the Diocese of Bridgeport or its designated agencies such as Catholic Charities or the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport may qualify for these additional funds. The company match will increase the dollar amount received at no extra cost to you. A list of Matching Gift companies has been posted on our website, www.2017ACAbridgeport.com. For further information please contact the Development Office at (203) 416-1312 or email us at 2017ACA@diobpt.org.

APRIL 15 & 16

Easter weekend, no Appeal activity.

APRIL 22 & 23

CONNected Catholics is the new outreach ministry of the Diocese to young adults, aged 18-35. The mission of this ministry is to accompany the young adults of the Diocese on their faith journey. This is accomplished through Diocesan Young Adult Masses, Catholic Underground, Theology on Tap, and various other social and service oriented events. This ministry is vital in trying to keep the young adult population connected to the Catholic Church.

APRIL 29 & April 30

The Diaconate Formation Program is a small and caring community of baptized Christian men who desire to serve God as a deacon. The Diocese of Bridgeport provides an integrated four and a half year program based on the standards established in the National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States. Through prayer, study and the grace of the Holy Spirit, the candidate undergoes a transformation of heart and mind as he humanly, spiritually, intellectually and pastorally prepares himself to be a minister of the Word, Liturgy and Charity. There are now 99 retired and active deacons and 11 men in formation.

MAY 6 & 7

The Catholic Academy of Bridgeport is a faith-filled learning community made up of four campuses in the city of Bridgeport: St. Andrew, St. Ann, St. Raphael and St. Augustine elementary schools. Its mission is to provide a Christ-centered, academically rigorous learning environment where cultural diversity is welcomed and celebrated. Students are nurtured, encouraged and challenged in preparation for a successful life of leadership and service. This year we serve 930 children of which 85% receive financial aid totaling more than \$2 million annually and many represent the neediest. 100% of 2015 students graduated from high school and 99% pursued post-secondary education. The Board of the Catholic Academy must raise more than \$1.8 million in aid each year for those in need.

Education is the gift of a lifetime. Donations restricted to the Annual Catholic Appeal enable inner-city youth to become faith-filled, industrious, responsible and well educated adults. Our World and the Church need these young students to excel academically and to develop a strong and active faith in God.

MAY 13 & 14

Since its founding in 1999, Saint Catherine Academy has been committed to providing the highest quality multi-disciplinary alternative education program to students from all backgrounds and faiths who are impacted with autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities. In 2014, this essential ministry became the Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs to centralize pastoral and educational support for individuals with disabilities. This new center brings together resources for parishes and religious educators, an inclusive support program for Catholic schools, St. Catherine's Academy, the special education school of the Diocese of Bridgeport and Adult Day Service Program for adults with disabilities. Giving to the Annual Catholic Appeal will ensure that this life changing organization will continue to provide a provide quality education, and a living faith for children and adults with special needs.

The same Jesus who heard the cry for recognition from people with disabilities in Judea and Samaria 2000 years ago calls us, His followers, to embrace our responsibilities to our own brothers and sisters with disabilities. (Pastoral Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1989)

MAY 20 & 21

As the 2017 Annual Catholic Appeal continues, we are grateful to the parish families that have already made their gift or pledge. For us to achieve our overall goal, it will require the active involvement and personal sacrifice of all members of our faith community. If you have not yet responded to the 2017 Annual Catholic Appeal, please set aside a moment to prayerfully consider a gift amount that reflects your blessings. Your gift will help tremendously and, together with your fellow parishioners, will enable the diocese to provide essential pastoral, educational and human needs throughout Fairfield County.

MAY 27 & 28

Marriage Preparation is offered monthly through a one-day Marriage Conference **held at the Catholic Center** in Bridgeport. It is a full-day of formation, dialogue among the couple, and reflection. The content presented comes from the Unveiled Program, which is relevant and aesthetically pleasing, solid on the tenets of the Catholic faith, and captivating. The day also includes a bag of supplemental conference materials for the couple, continental breakfast, light lunch, dinner, and an opportunity for Confession.

The new Marriage Conference is designed to share in Christ's vision for married love including the theology of marriage, communication, intimacy, and married spirituality. At the end of the Conference, couples will be enabled to understand the fundamental components of the human and spiritual elements of sacramental marriage and be empowered to live out that vision in the world.

JUNE 3 & 4

If you have not yet responded to the 2017 Annual Catholic Appeal, please set aside a moment to prayerfully consider a gift amount that your means will permit. Be assured that the Lord knows what is in your heart and how you share your gifts. While it is understood that we cannot all give equally, we are still called by the Gospel to give of ourselves in a way that reflects our blessings. Your gift whether large or small matters greatly to the diocese, our parish and to the Lord! Scripture tells us, *'There is more happiness in giving than receiving'*!

JUNE 10 & 11

Elementary Formation supports parish, school and all sacramental Catechetical programs that provide religious formation for children ages 5 - 13 and their families. We also provide assistance, direction and ongoing training for Catechetical leaders and pastors responsible for directing parish elementary Catechesis. This is done through days of formation, parish visits, program assessments and ongoing consultation of catechetical programs from development to implementation including assisting with Catechist selection, training and certification.

JUNE 17 & 18

We are hopeful that 100% of our registered households will respond to the 2017 Annual Catholic Appeal. While the level of sacrifice will differ from parishioner to parishioner, an Appeal gift this year is within the reach of the majority of our people. Please prayerfully consider supporting the Annual Appeal with a pledge or one-time gift as your means allow. Your support is much needed and will be greatly appreciated!

JUNE 24 & 25

The Annual Catholic Appeal closes this weekend. If you have not yet made a gift, please pray about your decision and make a pledge or one-time gift. Donations to the 2017 Appeal helps sustain many who are unable to provide for their families or themselves. From counseling sessions, food and shelter programs, to our clergy and religious, your support is vital in continuing to meet the needs of our community and parishes. Please complete a pledge card today or go directly to www.2017ACAbriageport.com. Together, we are Christ's guiding light for the lives of thousands in our diocesan communities.