



FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

DECEMBER 2016 | VOLUME 33, NUMBER 11 | CHRISTMAS ISSUE

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25-36 *Special Christmas Supplement*



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Merry Christmas



The Joyful Heart of Christmas

As Bishop of Bridgeport, I often find myself in the position of asking others for things—for their guidance and expertise, their financial support, their volunteer service—and always for their prayers.

Each and every time I ask for help, the people of our diocese are generous and gracious beyond all expectations. Whether planning for the future of schools, working to revitalize our parishes, or launching a new program to serve others, someone always steps forward.

So let me thank you in advance for the personal kindness you have shown me and for the many gifts you bestow upon the diocese each year, including at Christmas time when you give generously in so many different ways—whether volunteering in Catholic Charities soup kitchens or reaching out to others in your own parish.

Christmas gives us an opportunity to re-commit to personal generosity, openness to others, and largeness of spirit. Perhaps the season even challenges us to be more generous than we'd like to be! It calls us to a conversion of heart toward others—including those we have hardened our hearts against.

To give generously from the heart is a mandate of all discipleship. Every generous act makes visible and tangible the love that God has for each of us. At times, generosity involves the sharing of material goods. More importantly, the generous giving of time and the spiritual goods of life are more important in an age where there is so much loneliness, fear and alienation.

When you and I look ourselves in the mirror, do we see the face of a truly generous person? Do we see someone who will give generously until it hurts?

Ultimately even if we have very little of monetary value to give others, we have the gift of ourselves; we are invited to do what is best for our neighbors and to pray for the good of our community. This is a gift that we all can give.

Above all, Christmas celebrates the joyful heart that is found in Christ's love for us, and the knowledge that his love will never fail.

In the coming days as we complete our Advent journey and celebrate Christmas, I pray that the Light of Christ will shine upon you and your family, and that your hearts will be renewed and made joyful.

**Frank Caggiano*

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano,
Bishop of Bridgeport



ON THE COVER

CHRISTMAS JOY—Students at St. Ann Academy in Bridgeport perform at their recent Christmas Concert for parents and the community. The pageant is a moment of joy and faith as they prepare for Christmas. Advent and Christmas celebrations are underway in parishes and schools throughout the diocese.

PHOTOS BY AMY MORTENSEN

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Latest News

Seminary to stay in Stamford

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

St. John Fisher Seminary will remain in Stamford at its current location, 894 Newfield Ave., and will undergo a 30-month renovation project beginning in the spring of 2017. As part of the plan, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will reside in the St. John Fisher residence

“It has always been my intention to be present to the seminary community and become a more active presence in the formation of our seminarians,” said Bishop Caggiano in making the announcement.

He said the final decision was made after more than a year of reviewing options and planning, including consultation with diocesan priests. “After much due diligence we’ve decided that the Stamford location is most advantageous for seminarians and most cost-effective for the diocese,” he said.

“I am very grateful to donors who have agreed to transfer their gifts from the Trumbull location to Stamford and for all of those who have worked with us. Now

it’s time to move ahead,” the bishop added.

The diocese had originally announced plans to move the seminary to the bishop’s residence on Daniels Farm Road in Trumbull. However, after completing engineering studies and architectural drawings, it became clear that the proposed 10,000 square foot addition to the residence would be more expensive than originally planned. The diocese has begun to explore other uses for the Trumbull location.

The St. John Fisher renovation project will move ahead in three phases, with separate timelines, and each phase will be fully paid for prior to the beginning of construction.

Andrew Schulz, director of real estate for the diocese, will manage the project. He said that the diocese will be working with the city of Stamford to secure building permits in April and that major renovations would begin in the middle of May, when the seminarians complete their spring semester.

Phase One, which is expected to be completed by September, 2017, will be devoted to an



ST. JOHN FISHER SEMINARY was opened by Bishop Edward M. Egan in 1989 to nurture, support and encourage vocations. Plans for the renovation of the current structure in Stamford were recently finalized.

\$850,000 upgrade of safety, code and infrastructure issues at the Stamford location. It will also include renovation of a small suite of rooms to serve as Bishop Caggiano’s residence.

Donors were notified last May of a halt on the Trumbull plans as projected costs increased significantly, resulting from necessary code upgrades, the need to include a new commercial kitchen to accommodate the

needs of the seminarians, plans for an expanded chapel and other changes.

At the same time, a re-authorized engineers’ report on the condition of the Stamford facility determined that the cost to renovate the existing seminary building is substantially less than to build a new seminary.

Likewise, at a meeting of the entire presbyterate held earlier this year, the overwhelming sen-

timent expressed by the priests of the diocese was that the diocese should renovate and remain in the current building in Stamford.

St. John Fisher Seminary Residence was opened by Bishop Edward M. Egan in 1989, in order to nurture, support and encourage local vocations. Seminarians moved into the former St. Joseph High School convent in Trumbull, which later became the bishop’s residence when they outgrew the building. In 1995, the seminary moved to its present location on Newfield Avenue in Stamford.

To date, 92 men who resided there have been ordained to the priesthood.

Since opening in Stamford, the seminary has received strong community support, with many area Catholics visiting its Adoration Chapel daily to pray for vocations.

(Now that final plans have been set, the diocese will move forward to complete the fundraising for the project. For information or to make a contribution, contact Bill McLean, chief development officer: 203.416.1473 or wmclean@diobpt.org.)

Lemoine named Foundations in Education director

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has named Holly Doherty-Lemoine of New Canaan the first executive director of Foundations in Education, Inc. The effective date was December 5, 2016. Her appointment was approved by the Foundations’ Board of Trustees.

“Holly’s extensive experience, dynamic leadership, and a deep appreciation and passion for Catholic education will greatly benefit Foundations in Education,” Bishop Caggiano said. “She is a welcome addition to this newly formed organization.”

Foundations in Education is an independent, non-profit organization tasked with transforming diocesan Catholic schools into competitive, sustainable, 21st century learning environments, while maintaining high academic and moral standards.



HOLLY DOHERTY-LEMOINE

“The mission of Foundations in Education is rooted in the understanding that Catholic schools are about formation, information, and transformation. Our Catholic schools not only educate, they change lives and build community,” said the bishop.

Its mission is to invest in

schools and oversee plans to stabilize reenrollment and enhance learning opportunities. Foundations will support initiatives that improve the three key areas of formation in the faith, innovation and professional development.

Lemoine has more than 20 years of experience in implement-

ing and managing comprehensive fundraising programs that promote a culture of philanthropy to support general operations, capital projects, endowment and special events. Prior to accepting the executive director position for Foundations in Education, she worked as a fundraising consultant and held the role of chief development officer for Inspirica, Inc., one of Connecticut’s largest homeless service agencies, based in Stamford.

She has also held positions as executive director for Arts for Healing, Inc. based in New Canaan; director of institutional advancement at the Webb Institute in Glen Cove, N.Y.; and annual fund director with the Danbury Hospital Development Fund.

The new Foundations leader was introduced to principals and educators at a reception on December 13 at All Saints

Catholic School in Norwalk. At that same meeting, the bishop presented the guidelines for the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund for the 2017-18 academic year.

Nearly 9,000 students from Pre-K to Grade 12 attend 31 diocesan sponsored schools: 25 elementary, five high schools and one school for students with special needs.

The Bishop’s Scholarship Fund (BSF), which awards more than \$2.2 million yearly in scholarships to Catholic elementary and high school students, will be administered by Foundations in Education.

Lemoine and her husband, Bruce, are the parents of three grown children. They are members of St. John Parish in Darien.

(For more information on Foundations in Education, contact Holly Doherty-Lemoine: HLemoine@diobpt.org or 203.416.1642.)

Closing of the Holy Door

'Become the Living Door of God's Mercy'

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

On November 20, as Bishop Frank J. Caggiano closed the Holy Door on the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, he urged all those present to become "living doors" to others by carrying mercy and love in their hearts for all those they encounter.

The diocesan observance of the international Year of Mercy, which began with a candlelight procession early last December, came to an end on a cold and wind-whipped morning outside St. Augustine Cathedral on the Feast of Christ the King.

"The time has come for every single one of us to become living doors of God's mercy in the world. We are all being sent out in this cold world to give witness and to invite people to touch the face of God in you and me," the bishop said.

Members of the Neo-

Catechumenate Way sang and danced in a prayer circle with guitars and tambourines before the bishop processed into Mass. The Epistle was read in Spanish and the congregation joined in the responsorial song, "Vamos alegres a la casa del Señor." (Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.)

More than 700 parishioners and those who came from throughout the diocese for the observance filled the cathedral for the Mass and blessing. Music was sung in Latin, Spanish and English.

"We are not ending anything, we are beginning the next chapter in our Church," the bishop said. "As we close the Holy Door, we pray that we open the door of your heart and mine as we ask for the grace to become more and more merciful."

The bishop said that "mercy begins with looking in the mirror" and understanding "that God enters the wretchedness of



"THIS HAS BEEN A PRECIOUS time of mercy and conversion," Bishop Caggiano said as he gave the final blessing to the Holy Door, formally marking the end of the Year of Mercy.

our lives to lift us up in his love," so that we might become ambassadors of mercy to others.

After his homily, the bishop formally accepted the candidacy of Ricardo Batista to the priesthood. Batista is a member of the

Neo-Catechumenate community at the Cathedral Parish.

The congregation broke into applause when the bishop said that Ricardo will be the first seminarian from the new Redemptoris Mater Seminary to go on to St.

Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, in Yonkers, New York.

"This is an historic moment," the bishop said after Ricardo answered, "I do," to a series of resolves to enter formation.

After Mass, the bishop processed to the Holy Door at the back of the cathedral and gave the final blessing. "Throughout the year we've enjoyed every blessing of Christ. This has been a precious time of mercy and conversion."

Pope Francis formally declared the Jubilee of Mercy on April 11, 2015, to emphasize the importance of mercy and to keep alive a sense of encounter and openness in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. The Pope urged dioceses across the world to create a Holy Door, "to become a Door of Mercy through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope." ■

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|  <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; background-color: #e91e63; color: white; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">\$50</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; margin-top: 5px;">Reading or math textbooks for Inner-city Catholic Schools</p> |  <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; background-color: #e91e63; color: white; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">\$25</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; margin-top: 5px;">Provide warm breakfast for 25 people through Morning Glory, Danbury</p> |



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Safe Environment

Audit reflects comprehensive program

BRIDGEPORT—The Diocese of Bridgeport has been found compliant with all audited articles within the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* for the 2015/2016 audit period.

The announcement was made by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano after receiving notice from StoneBridge Business Partners of Rochester, N.Y., a national financial auditing firm specially trained to review diocesan compliance to the USCCB charter.

"I am very grateful to our Safe Environments office and to the thousands of people throughout the diocese who have participated in our programs to safeguard children and reach out to victims of sexual abuse. This year's successful audit reflects a comprehensive program that protects our children and invests every Catholic in safe environments," said Bishop Caggiano.

The diocesan audit response was led by Erin Neil, LCSW, director of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance coordinator, and Atty. Anne McCrory, chief legal officer of the diocese, for overseeing the effort to renew programs.

Included in this year's report is the recent Service of Peace, Hope and Healing, which took place in November at Egan Chapel at Fairfield University. The moving service grew out of meetings and listening sessions requested by Bishop Caggiano with survivors of sexual abuse by priests and with family members.

Neil said this year's audit also reviewed the diocesan outreach to victims to ensure that any allegation receives a prompt response consistent with state law and USCCB charter provisions.

The successful audit follows a major effort in 2015 to update diocesan programs, initiate a comprehensive re-certification process and introduce online innovations in the past year.

Neil said there are 242 employees and volunteers in schools, parishes and diocesan organizations who are trained as local safe environment coordinators and have access to the VIRTUS database (a live comprehensive three-hour class on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention) as administrators.

"Local Safe Environment coordinators track compliance with all Safe Environment programs and serve as a first line of defense when it comes to child safety," she said.

Among the highlights of the Diocesan Safe Environment report to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) for this year's audit:

- In 2015/2016 over 16,000 adults completed VIRTUS Protecting God's Children for Adults live training or an online re-certification.
- In 2016, the director of Safe Environment provided training to all school principals, all new school employees and all pastors/administrators

on changes to the state laws with regard to the mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse as part of its continuing education effort.

- Between June 30, 2015 and July 2016, approximately 22,000 criminal background checks were initiated or were renewed for existing volunteers and employees.
- In 2016, approximately 300 fingerprint analyses were completed for new School Employees and Coaches as part of the new hire process.
- The diocese has held over 3,520 child abuse prevention VIRTUS workshops, Protecting God's Children for Adults and Child Lures Prevention Workshops for students since 2003.
- It conducted more than 516 live VIRTUS classes in the past 24 months alone.
- Over 60,000 brochures and materials on child safety and abuse prevention were distributed within the Catholic community and beyond since the start of the program.

Neil said adults are trained to report any reasonable cause to suspect abuse of a minor, youth or vulnerable adult to the police, to the State of CT, Department of Children and Families Child



A POSITIVE AUDIT REPORT encourages Erin Neil and Mike DiToro of the Safe Environment Office. Included in this year's report is the recent Service of Peace, Hope and Healing and diocesan outreach to victims.

Abuse and Neglect Care-line, and to the diocesan Victim Assistance coordinator, within 12 hours of becoming aware of the information—whether or not the incident occurred recently or in the past.

There are currently 87 certified VIRTUS facilitators in the Diocese of Bridgeport who work together with the Safe Environment Office to deliver these programs. Workshops and training materials are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Vietnamese, Italian and Korean. The facilitators of the diocese are dedicated volunteers who are committed to the safety and protection of children everywhere.

The Diocese of Bridgeport victim assistance program provides outreach, assistance and opportunities to help promote healing for survivors of child sexual abuse committed by any person from the Church and, in many cases, by persons outside the Church.

It also offers assistance to victims and their families including counseling, support and other forms of outreach specific to the person's needs. We offer this outreach regardless of whether the abuse occurred recently or in the past and for as long as necessary for healing to take place.

In 2015, Bishop Caggiano reconstituted the Diocesan Sexual Misconduct Review Board, expanding their role and mandating quarterly meetings to ensure that policies and procedures related to Safe Environment are reviewed regularly. He also re-promulgated all Safe Environment policies, which have reached over 100,000 adults and children with live training and educational materials since their implementation.

(For more information on the Safe Environment programs and Victim Assistance Ministry of the Diocese of Bridgeport, visit www.bridgeport-diocese.com under Safe Environment or contact Erin Neil: 203.416.1406 or eneil@diobpt.org.)

To register for a VIRTUS training session in your area and for assistance with the VIRTUS database, contact Mike DiToro, Safe Environment Database Manager: 203.416.1407 or mditoro@diobpt.org. To schedule a VIRTUS training session at your school or parish, contact Bernadette Griffen: 475.988.5366.

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Diocesan News

Social Justice will aid racial healing

BRIDGEPORT—Prayer is empty if it is not accompanied by a conversion of heart and commitment to justice, religious leaders said at the recent interfaith prayer service for peace and racial healing held at St. Augustine Cathedral.

Almost 150 men and women turned out for the readings and reflections, which delivered a sobering message about the impact of racism on society.

The service was the beginning of a major interfaith initiative designed to bring together a widely diverse community and enter into a new level of dialogue and kinship among people of many faiths and ethnicities, explained Father Reginald Norman, who led planning for the evening.

"Racism is a sin against our neighbors and against God's witness and love and the unity he wants for us," Bishop Frank J.

Caggiano said in his introductory remarks. "Racism is alive and it's time to put an end to it. Our nation is better than this and we need to be better than this."

"Without justice there can be no authentic spirituality," said Rabbi James Prosnit, leader of Congregation B'nai Israel in Bridgeport. "To cloak ourselves in religion and forget mercy is blasphemous."

"Is it naïve to hope when hatred has gone mainstream?" the Rabbi asked. He said at a time when the nation is divided "Churches and synagogues can be places where we begin to repair ourselves."

In a passionate and powerful talk, Pastor Anthony Bennett, lead pastor of Mount Aery Baptist Church in Bridgeport, said the country will not move ahead until people come to terms with racism and work for justice.



A SOBERING MESSAGE about the impact of racism was at the heart of an interfaith service held at St. Augustine Cathedral. The service brought together a diverse community of faiths and ethnicities to begin a new level of dialogue and kinship.

He said that American society will not "find healing solutions if it does not first acknowledge the hurt" and the reality that "black and brown lives are not valued the way others are."

Quoting Frederick Douglas, Pastor Bennett said Christians cannot "favor freedom but despise agitation."

Imam Nasif Muhammad of Al-Aziz Islamic Center in Bridgeport told the gathering that he grew up attending segregated schools in the South for his first nine years, and then moved to the Bronx where he experienced a different kind of segregation. He said that race relations in the U.S. represent a history of "getting angry with each other rather than coming together," and that people should not label one another.

The Imam said that most

Americans are unaware that more than 38 percent of the slaves brought to America were Muslims. "Islam didn't just arrive. It has been here for a long time," he said, urging people to see each other as human beings who want the same things.

Rev. Cass Shaw, leader of the Council of Churches, said that too many Christians have "a complacency in the face of racism," and that "there is no healing without justice."

She pointed to a spike in hate crimes and harassment after the election and said that most of it happened in schools and universities—where young people should be protected.

"Many of our brothers and sisters are weary to the bone," Rev. Shaw said, noting that some immigrant children "are terrified

of being deported," while black parents fear for the safety of their children. "We who are white are un-attentive to racism, and until we acknowledge the truth of racial prejudice, we are complicit and we will continue to struggle."

During the evening, the 50-member Sacred Heart University choir raised the roof with spiritual hymns, and the congregation broke into small groups for discussion.

Patrick Turner, director of Strategic and Pastoral Planning for the diocese, served as host of the program.

At the conclusion of the prayer service the bishop said, "If we're going to speak truth to authority, we must also have the courage to speak words of friendship to one another. Getting to know one another is the best antidote to put an end to the scourge of racism, and that needs to be done one person at a time."

The bishop urged people to attend the upcoming listening sessions to discuss the issues and make recommendations on new ways to foster peace among all parties.

(Listening sessions are set for January 12 at 7 pm at the United Congregational Church, 877 Park Ave., Bridgeport; January 19 at 7 pm at Bethel AME Church, 110 Grove St., Bridgeport; January 24 at 7 pm at St. Joseph National Catholic Church, 1300 Stratford Rd., Stratford; January 26 at 7 pm at Blessed Sacrament Church, 275 Union Ave., Bridgeport; and January 30 at 7:30 pm at Salem Lutheran Church, 3160 Park Ave., Bridgeport.)



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Centers of Mercy

Now that the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy is concluded, Bishop Caggiano is happy to announce that several parishes have very generously offered to continue indefinitely as Centers of Mercy. "These eight parishes will offer during-the-week confessions, so that God's mercy will be more abundantly available in our diocese, and so that no one will have to wait until the weekend for regularly scheduled confessions," the

bishop said.

Days, times and locations of the continuing Centers of Mercy are also listed on the diocesan website:

Tuesdays, from 7-8:30 pm:

St. Catherine of Siena, Trumbull (with Eucharistic Adoration)
St. Joseph, Brookfield
Our Lady of the Assumption, Fairfield (with Eucharistic Adoration)

Wednesdays, from 7-8 pm:

St. Pius X, Fairfield

Thursdays, from 7-8:30 pm:

St. Theresa, Trumbull
Sacred Heart, Danbury
St. Charles Borromeo, Bridgeport

Monday through Friday, from 11:30 am-12 noon:

St. Augustine Cathedral, Bridgeport

Diocesan Financial Report

Diocesan budget ‘moving in the right direction’

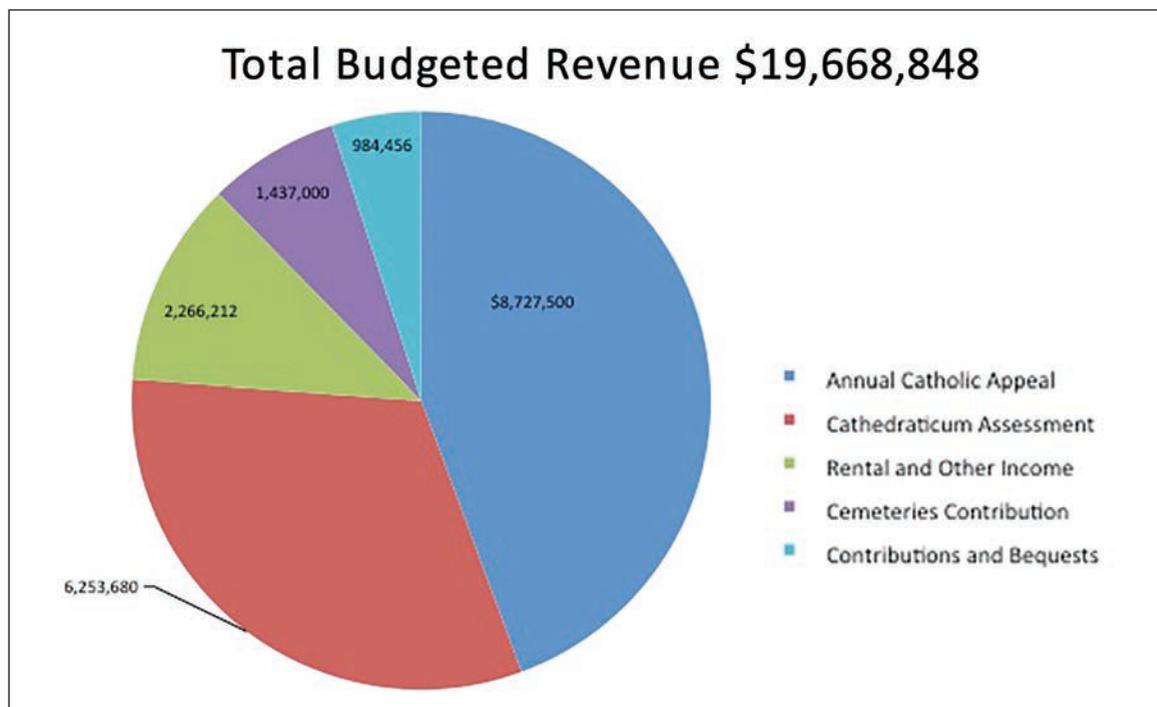
BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and the Finance Council of the Diocese of Bridgeport have approved a fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, operating budget with a total of \$19.7 million in revenues and \$20 million in expenditures.

Michael Hanlon, chief financial officer of the diocese, said the projected \$300,000 deficit reflects a “conservative estimate” of projected revenues and aggressive control of certain expenditures.

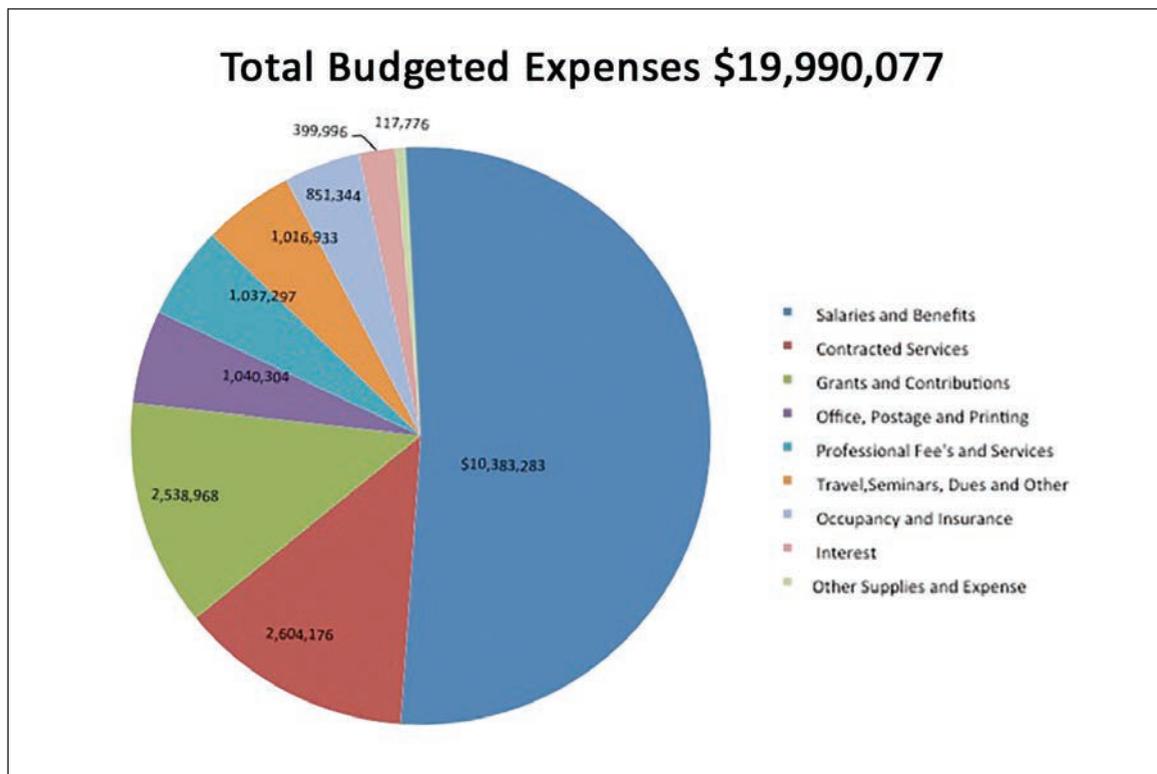
“Although we’re showing a deficit of \$300,000 based on conservative revenue estimates, our

challenges,” he said. “This year, we were able to control increases to six percent, which is below the national average, due to innovations to our benefit design, aided by a volunteer committee of experts including area doctors within the diocese, as well as a partnership with an area hospital to assist our insured, managing their care to control individual health care costs.”

Hanlon said the largest liabilities for the diocese continue to be the future pension obligations for the frozen lay pension fund and the Knights of Columbus note



| The Bridgeport Roman Catholic Diocesan Corporation | |
|--|---------------------|
| Operational Budget | |
| <i>July 2016 - June 2017</i> | |
| Revenue | |
| Annual Catholic Appeal | \$8,727,500 |
| Cathedraticum Assessment | 6,253,680 |
| Rental and Other Income | 2,266,212 |
| Cemeteries' Contribution | 1,437,000 |
| Contributions and Bequests | 984,456 |
| Total Revenue | \$19,668,848 |
| Expenses | |
| Salaries and Benefits | \$10,383,283 |
| Contracted Services | 2,604,176 |
| Grants and Contributions | 2,538,968 |
| Office, Postage and Printing | 1,040,304 |
| Professional Fees and Services | 1,037,297 |
| Travel, Seminars, Dues and Other | 1,016,933 |
| Occupancy and Insurance | 851,344 |
| Interest | 399,996 |
| Other Supplies and Expense | 117,776 |
| Total Expenses | \$19,990,077 |
| Deficit from Operations - Before Depreciation | \$(321,229) |



achievable goal is to have a balanced budget for the 2017-2018 fiscal year and surplus budgets thereafter,” said Hanlon.

“We’re moving in the right direction as we continue to implement synod initiatives and the diocese-wide turnaround strategy to fiscal viability and responsibility by controlling costs, and eliminating or reducing long-term liabilities,” he added.

The diocese has also looked for ways to control benefit costs without reducing the quality of benefits to employees. “As a self-insured entity, ever-increasing health care and pharmaceutical costs are two of our largest chal-

payable. A committee for the Finance Council is working with Hanlon to explore alternatives to reduce the lay pension liability. The diocese has reduced the Knights note payable from \$15 million to \$8 million over the past three years.

“Our goal is to have this liability further reduced by June 30 by paying down another \$4 million.”

The funds to achieve this will be from the sale of certain assets owned by the diocese that have been identified as non-essential to its core missions. Budgeted interest expense related to this note is \$400,000 for the 2016-17 fiscal year.

Salaries and benefits represent about 51 percent of the overall budget, Hanlon said, noting that many diocesan employees received a raise for the first time in several years last year and the new budget includes an increment again this year. “We’re committed to rewarding our dedicated employees and making sure salaries remain competitive to retain this talented employee base.”

Approximately 12.5 percent of diocesan expenses are represented by contributions to the Bishop’s

Scholarship Fund and to support other mission-driven initiatives.

The two major sources of revenue for the annual operating budget are the Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA), and the Cathedraticum, or assessment tax on parishes to support the mission-related work and operational costs of the diocese.

He added that a committee, including pastors, is now reviewing the Cathedraticum assessment to ensure equity and fairness in parish assessments.

In December 2013, Bishop

Caggiano took a major step toward financial transparency when he released the condensed financial statements and commentary for fiscal years 2010, 2011 and 2012, along with full audits for fiscal years 2010 through 2014, which can be found online. The June 30, 2016 audit report should be issued shortly. He also addresses finances in his yearly “State of the Diocese” report, which will be issued in January.

(To learn more, visit the diocesan website: www.bridgeportdiocese.com/financialreports.)

Parish News

Parishes bid fond farewell to pastors

As the new year begins, two parishes will be saying a fond farewell to long-time pastors and joyfully welcoming new ones. At St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan, Msgr. William Scheyd is retiring after more than 50 years of active priesthood. In Trumbull, Father Lawrence Carew, who celebrated his golden jubilee last month, is retiring as pastor of Christ the King Parish.

A native of Bridgeport, Msgr. Scheyd went to St. Ann School in Black Rock and graduated from Fairfield Prep. He attended St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield and completed his theological studies at St. John Seminary in Brighton, Mass. He was ordained in 1965 by Bishop Walter W. Curtis.

Among his other assignments, he was spiritual director of the former Central Catholic High School in Norwalk (now All Saints School), and director of the Third Diocesan Synod called by Bishop Curtis in 1981. In 1986 he was appointed a prelate of honor by Pope John Paul II, with the title of Monsignor.

He was appointed pastor of St. Augustine Cathedral in 1982 and later became pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Norwalk. Msgr. Scheyd was named vicar general for the Diocese of Bridgeport in 1988. He became pastor of St. A's in 2002.

"I'm very thankful for the 52 years of priestly service, service to the Lord," he says. "It has gone by very quickly. I am grateful. Without God's help and the help of wonderful people, family and friends who have supported me along my path, I would never have been able to do the things I have done."

Msgr. Scheyd will be moving into the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of the Clergy Residence. This is particularly appropriate since he was instrumental in building that residence and active in the completion of the new addition.

Going forward, he has been named Vicar for Senior Clergy. "I'll be a kind of coordinator, helping men get prepared for retirement, and talking to priests who may be ready for less active participation. I'm going to enjoy their friendship and company."

St. Aloysius' new pastor, Father Robert Kinnally is cur-



MSGR. WILLIAM SCHEYD

rently the rector of St. John Fisher Residence in Stamford and chancellor of the diocese. A late vocation, he had been dean of admissions and financial aid at Stamford University in California before he entered St. John Fisher Seminary in 2000. He has been both vocation director and director of seminarian formation at St. John Fisher. Parishioners at St. Aloysius will be happy to learn that Father Kinnally, an accomplished musician, is a member of the American Guild of Organists.

Father Kinnally will continue to serve as chancellor for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Toward the eastern end of Fairfield County, Christ the King

Parish in Trumbull is saying a fond farewell to Father Lawrence (Larry) Carew. Although he has been pastor since 2011, his history with the parish has lasted for 20 years, since he was named parochial vicar in 1997. His 50th anniversary of ordination saw the church and reception filled to overflowing with parishioners and well-wishers.

Father Carew was born in Boston but moved to this area in his teens and graduated from Fairfield Prep. He graduated from St. Bonaventure University in Olean, N.Y. and completed his theological studies in the former St. Mary Seminary in Norwalk. He was ordained in St. Mary Parish by Bishop Walter W.

Curtis on December 17, 1966.

He was parochial vicar at St. Peter Parish and St. Joseph Parish, both in Danbury, and at St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull. He was also a member of the faculty of Immaculate High School in Danbury.

He encountered a life-changing experience when the Charismatic Renewal movement came to the Diocese of Bridgeport in 1971. "It fulfilled what I was looking for spiritually, and became 'a call within a call,' to quote St. Mother Teresa," he says. He was named liaison to the Charismatic Renewal of the Diocese of Bridgeport in 2003, and will continue his relationship with that office in retirement.

He will also continue, and probably intensify, his ministry as a volunteer chaplain to prisoners. He has written an Inner Healing Retreat for Inmates that is currently being used for inmates in 130 prisons throughout the country, and is mentioned in a chapter of Florida Chaplain Dale Recinella's latest book on prison ministry, *When We Visit Jesus in Prison*, a guide for Catholic ministry.

Father Terence Walsh, the new pastor of Christ the King, was also a late vocation. The native of Bristol had a 12-year career as a sales representative



FATHER LAWRENCE CAREW

that took him to Florida, the Carolinas, the Midwest and New York. He lived in Fairfield County while working in New York, and felt an urging that brought him to St. John Fisher to explore a call to the priesthood. He was ordained by Bishop William E. Lori in 2004.

His first assignment was to St. Luke Parish in Westport, followed by an appointment to St. John the Evangelist Parish in Stamford in 2006. He came to Christ the King at the beginning of September 2015. ■

Pam Rittman earns new title

BRIDGEPORT—Pamela Rittman of Stamford has been named director of development of the Diocese of Bridgeport. She has been serving as director of the Annual Appeal since 2007. She is a parishioner of the Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist in Stamford.

"Her new title reflects her growing responsibilities within the office and the wide range of resources she brings to the major development projects in the diocese," said William McLean, chief development officer.

Rittman has been responsible for overall management of the \$11 million Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA), which funds major ministry programs and services of the Diocese of Bridgeport. She oversees the

creation of marketing materials and the popular Annual Appeal Video in conjunction with the Pastors' Advisory Committee, (PAC).

Working with McLean, Rittman strategizes new initiatives, plans and coordinates special events and planned giving efforts for the diocese. She also implemented the innovative "Blessed Gifts" program (www.blessedgifts.org), which creates an opportunity for people to personalize Christmas giving by supporting charitable outreach throughout the diocese.

Prior to joining the diocesan development team in 2007, Rittman served in Fund Development and Annual Giving for Stamford Hospital. She also held positions in Public Affairs and Marketing at Clairiol in Stamford.



A native of Buffalo, N.Y., she earned her bachelor of science degree at Pace University and an associate degree from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. She also has a certificate in Public Relations from New York University School of Continuing

and Professional Studies.

In November of this year, Rittman achieved Certified Fundraising Executive (CFRE) status. The CFRE Professional Certification Program offers fundraising professionals with five or more years of experience an opportunity to earn recognition for their experience and professionalism. It is a mark of distinction in the fundraising industry. Only 4,000 of the 25,000 members of the Association of Fundraising Professionals have the credential.

(For more information on the Annual Catholic Appeal and Planned Giving within the diocese, contact Pam Rittman: 203.416.1479 or prittman@diobpt.org.) ■

December 2016

Synod Update

Synod's growing impact on life of the diocese

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

Fourteen months after the close of the synod, its initiatives and recommendations are beginning to be felt at every level of parish life and diocesan ministries. However, there is much more work to be done to renew faith life by engaging active Catholics in the renewal efforts and welcoming others back to the Church, speakers said at the Third Post-Synod General Delegate Session held at St. Catherine of Siena Family Center in Nichols.

More than 100 of the men and women who served as delegates for more than a year of general sessions returned to St. Catherine's for an informative and upbeat presentation on the changes underway and ongoing challenges.

In his welcome to delegates, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano described himself as an "impatient man" who often asks himself, "Can the people of the diocese see the results?"

The bishop said he often reflects on the parable of the Sower and the Seed, and he prays that the seeds of the synod have been planted in fertile soil that will yield much in the life of the faithful. "In this one, singular, unique moment in the life of the Church, if we want truly the reform and renewal of the local Church it will demand that we are patient and fix our eyes on planting seed for the long term," he told the delegates.

The bishop asked former delegates to continue to serve "as ambassadors of the synod," because many parishioners may still have very little awareness of what is going on. He said that while the synod will take time to achieve its goals, "our personal and spiritual growth as disciples can't wait. Our number one task is to grow in our spiritual relationship with the Lord in the community of the Church. We can give birth to initiatives but if we don't grow in love and friendship, then all is for naught." Throughout the morning, delegates heard presentations on



a wide variety of synod initiatives that are now at work in the diocese.

In reporting on the Pastoral Planning Process, Patrick Turner, director of Strategic and Pastoral Planning, said that 71 of the 82 parishes have submitted pastoral plans as guidelines for activities in the next two years.

Each parish had been asked to identify goals and priorities. Forty-four parishes identified catechesis and education as a number one priority. Evangelization and family life were also selected as priorities.

Turner reported that more than 6,100 people from 29 parishes in the diocese responded to the Disciple Maker Index, making it the largest cumulative response of any diocese across the country. He said that 56 percent of those who responded "strongly agreed" that they would recommend their parish to a friend, "and that's a great testimony to our pastors and parishes."

At the same time, only 25 percent said that the parish helps them grow in their personal prayer life, he said, adding that his office will sponsor workshops beginning in January to help parishes evaluate their programs and move forward.

Patrick Donovan, head of the diocesan Leadership Institute, described plans for the institute's online programs that will begin with a twenty-question inventory of interests and provide a personalized learning path on topics of

faith and spirituality.

People who visit the sites will be able to choose from a series of modules that includes a 12-18 minute video, a print reading, and resources for further learning. The modules are also interactive and invite the participant's reflection.

Donovan said the diocesan goal "is not certification but participation in ongoing formation." In addition to its online programs, the institute will also offer lectures and other presentations. The institute will be formally launched on January 11 at 7 pm with an evening prayer and reflection at Assumption Parish in Westport.

He also shared results of the recent Catechetical Task Force Survey, which, he said, "Raised more questions than it answered." Donovan said the telephone survey "found that there is no typical parish or program," that there is very little uniformity in catechetical offerings across the diocese and that "classroom models of catechesis aren't effective and haven't been for some time."

However, there are many programs in the diocese where enrollment is increasing as a direct result of parishes doing something different or clergy being more present.

Donovan said there are "quick wins" for parishes if they immediately begin engaging families with pre-school children in early childhood formation programs and



AS "AMBASSADORS OF THE SYNOD" as Bishop Caggiano called them, delegates to the general sessions met in St. Catherine of Siena Family Center for presentations on the renewal efforts that are beginning to be felt in parishes throughout the diocese.

also renew their youth ministry. Evan Psenick, who recently completed his first year as director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, thanked delegates "for giving us a roadmap and paving the way." He said what inspires young people to remain faithful is other young people who come together in events such as World Youth Day. He added that some parishes in the diocese do youth ministry very well, while others are struggling or have little to offer.

This year his office launched "Connected Catholics" for young adults between the ages of 18-35, and has seen growing interest in its monthly meetings at the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist in Stamford. He credited Father Andy Vill for creating a welcoming atmosphere and engaging young adults through worship and service projects.

Michelle Smith, the new director of the Catholic Service Corps, said that in the first four months 220 young people have donated 1,300 hours of service in Fairfield County. "Young people often feel less connected than other Catholics and sometimes

feel they don't get much out of Mass," she said. "But when they go out and do service, they look left and look right and see young practicing Catholics at their side. That speaks important values to them."

She said the Catholic Service Corps "roots its service in prayer and Gospel values," and makes young people more aware of Catholic Social Teaching, which often surprises them and deepens their faith.

Rose Talbot Babey, coordinator of Childhood Faith Formation, announced that a Faith Formation Day will be held on January 28 from 8:30 am-2:30 pm at the Catholic Center and will be open to anyone in ministry. "Prophets of a Future Not Our Own" is the title of the day, which will include three rounds of presentations with both live speakers and guests on Skype.

"We get calls all the time from Catholics who want to know how to keep their families Catholic," she said, noting the program will look at ways to better engage Catholics and take the Gospel message out into the world.

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EDITORIAL

Christmas Thank You

By any measure, 2016 has been a remarkable year in the life of the diocese as many of the recommendations of the Diocesan Synod begin to take hold and create new opportunities for service, evangelization and renewal. As we move toward Christmas and the New Year, *Fairfield County Catholic* wishes to send out a heartfelt "Thank You" to you, our readers, and to so many around the diocese who inspired, served, and challenged us to be more faithful throughout the year. We offer this list in gratitude:

... To all those who participated in the pastoral planning process to revitalize and strengthen their parishes

... To the 75-member Diocesan Youth Choir who have brought such beautiful and spirited singing to diocesan liturgies and their concerts

... To the 231 young pilgrims who traveled to World Youth Day in Poland last summer for days of prayer and encounter culminating in Mass with Pope Francis, our Holy Father

... To the parishes that hosted Centers of Mercy and to the hundreds who turned out at St. Augustine Cathedral for the Closing of the Holy Door and the Extraordinary Year of Mercy

... To the more than 1,100 who participated in the recent Special Mass consecrating the Diocese to the Sacred Heart of Jesus—an extraordinary day of faith and unity

... To all the parents, parishioners and friends of Catholic education who have participated in the Strategic Plan process for Stamford elementary school, and to all of our teachers throughout the diocese

... To the thousands of donors, large and small, who made the 2016 Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) one of the most successful campaign in years

... To the 160 recipients of the St. Augustine Medal of Service for their profound faith and witness in our parishes, schools, charities and other settings.

... To all who planned and participated in Catholic Charities activities in celebration of its 100th Anniversary of Service in Fairfield

... To members of the Strategic Plan commission who have given generously of their time and expertise to advise the diocese in key areas of Human Resources, Communication, Procurement, and Information Technology

... To the young people helping others through the Catholic Service Corps and to volunteers of all ages throughout the diocese who feed the hungry, visit the sick and elderly, and reach out to those in need

... To our pastors and priests for planning and presiding over beautiful Advent and Christmas liturgies and for their personal witness and leadership throughout the year

... Finally to our bishop, who works ceaselessly and sacrificially to renew the diocese as a place of great faith, welcome, and transformation in our lives. Merry Christmas to all, and thank you!

Sandy Hook Memorial

There are moments when liturgy, private grief, and public emotion come together in a powerful way to imbue a sense of meaning and healing that often eludes us in every other human activity. Such was the case on Gaudete Sunday when hundreds gathered at St. Margaret Shrine in Bridgeport for Mass and dedication of the new Sandy Hook Memorial.

Recalling the tremendous evil that took the lives of 20 children and six adults in the shootings, the bishop acknowledged the unbearable pain, but said God does not abandon us. "Four years ago we experienced a day of deep darkness. The souls of so many were challenged so deeply... No matter how deep the pain, there is a gift that no one can take from us: hope is born in the power of the love of God."

The chapel was decorated for Christmas, and members of the shrine youth choir processed in singing, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." Their glowing innocence and trust was all the more poignant, given the focus of the bishop's reflection.

After Mass, young and old processed out of the tiny chapel and crossed the shrine grounds, where they shivered in the sudden cold, as the bishop cut the ribbon on the new monument remembering those lost on December 12, 2012, in Newtown.

You could say that most of the families gathered around the shrine were untouched by the shootings, but that would only be a figure of speech. Four years later, the young boys and girls who perished are our children, and the adults our neighbors and friends. We all bear the unthinkable loss, and our faith is the shared ground for moving forward. Deepest thanks go to all those at St. Margaret Shrine who created the memorial, which is open to all throughout the year. ■

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Monroe Knights to place creche on Monroe green

MONROE—A nativity crèche will grace Monroe's town green for the second year, thanks to the initiative of the St. John XXIII Council 5987 of the Knights of Columbus, which

meets at St. Jude Parish. As shown in this photo from last year, the crèche will be on the green from December 17-31. On Sunday, December 18, the council will hold a blessing service

conducted by Council Chaplain Msgr. Dariusz Zielonka, St. Jude's pastor. The service will be held at 1 pm.

(For more information, call the parish: 203.261.6404.) ■



CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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

PASTOR

REVEREND TERENCE WALSH, Parochial Vicar, Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, to Pastor, Christ the King Parish, Trumbull. Effective date is December 31.

HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN

REVEREND JAMES VATTAKUNNEL, V.C., Parochial Vicar, Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Wilton, to Assistant Chaplain, Stamford

Hospital and Assistant Chaplain, Norwalk Hospital. Father Vattakunnel will continue to reside at Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Wilton. Effective date was December 12.

RETIREMENT

REVEREND LAWRENCE CAREW, Pastor, Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, to retirement. Effective date is December 31.

RESIDENCE

REVEREND MONSIGNOR

JOHN B. SABIA, Retired, Stamford, to Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of the Clergy Residence, Stamford. Effective date was December 15.

OTHER

REVEREND CHARLES ANEMELU, Assistant Chaplain, Stamford Hospital and Assistant Chaplain to Norwalk Hospital, to Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. Effective date was November 10.

*Monsignor Thomas W. Powers,
Vicar General, December, 2016*

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Editorial



Breaking out of the Material Mold

A WOMAN'S VOICE

BY ALLIA ZOBEL NOLAN

Allia Zobel Nolan is the author of Angels in the Bible Storybook.

I used to spend money like a deranged Rockefeller every time the holidays rolled by. The only way to go, in my opinion was all out, so I did. Anything less seemed not in keeping with the season.

Indeed, one did not skimp at Christmas. If it had a designer label, was (about) the right size, and could be returned, I'd snap it up. The important thing was that come December 25 there were elaborate presents for everyone I knew under my tree. Going into hock this time of the year was expected, and all my friends reciprocated. I'm not quite sure how and when the custom started. (Was I the ringleader?) It was just something we all did.

Worse still, this all-consuming-shop-until-you-drop tradition clashed with the slow-down-and-savor-the-sights-and-wonder of the season...and won. So sharing the spirit of Christmas was totally out of the question. There was too much buying and wrapping to do.

Then, a couple of years ago, I decided to leave my job and go out on my own just as a shakeup hit the publishing world. As publishers pulled in their belts, my work slowed. And while I waited to hear about this book or that, my rainy day funds trickled down and evaporated. When Christmas was upon us, I had pretty much drained all my reserves. I thought this would be the worst Christmas of my life. But as it

turned out, it was not only the best, but also made every holiday since (including this one) more meaningful.

See, because I had no money, I had to call friends and, with a face redder than Santa's suit, announce there would be no presents. It was one of the hardest things I ever had to do.

To my surprise, though, collective sighs of relief greeted me. What's more, I actually turned out a hero. Seems everyone's pocketbooks had moths in them that year. So nobody really had money to burn. Yet no one wanted to be the first to come out and say so. That made me wonder how many times before I had inadvertently put pressure on friends to buy presents they couldn't afford.

Lesson number one: Being a good friend has nothing to do with buying expensive gifts.

It was then our group decided to break out of the material mold for good. We made a pact to stop the shopping frenzy, forgo the hoopla, and instead, spend some quality time together. We had a pot luck gab fest at my house instead. We drank mulled

cider, and ate the tidbits everyone brought. And you know what? We each still got a pretty nice Christmas gift in the bargain. Only this time, it didn't strap us financially...since the gift we gave was the gift of ourselves.

Lesson number two: Giving the gift of yourself is better than any you can buy in the store.

Canceling the Christmas gift-off proved better than I had imagined in other ways as well. It left me free to enjoy holiday happenings like Christmas tree lightings and the singing of the Messiah at the neighborhood high school.

Then, too, without all the pressures of gift-buying, I was able to concentrate more on what this holiday is intended to commemorate: the birth of Christ. I thought about how awesome it was that the King of Kings would even consider leaving his throne in heaven to come into a world like

ours. I thought of Him being born a helpless baby, in a cold stable, without even a crib for His bed. I thought of the love He must have for us, and how that love shines far and away brighter than any bauble I could own or give. I thought about how His love will be the one present that's as new tomorrow and every day after as it is on Christmas Day.

Lesson number three: God's love is the best gift of all. It doesn't break and it won't wear out.

Indeed, stepping out of the material mold has taught me a lot. And as

my friends and I get ready for our Annual No-Gifts-Allowed Get-together, I hope this new custom will be the norm for years to come. What's more, last night, when I sat down to breathe in the scent of pine, and enjoy the twinkling lights, I thanked God that there was nothing but a tiny stable under my Christmas tree. ■

"Nobody really had money to burn. Yet no one wanted to be the first to come out and say so."



The Only List that Matters

A DAD'S VIEW

BY MATTHEW HENNESSEY

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

In the long, lazy days after Thanksgiving, the lists begin to appear. Composed by little fingers with award-winning penmanship, they are strewn casually on household surfaces where the odds of catching an adult's eye are highest.

Our oldest, Clara, is nearly 13. As such, she is—shall we say—hip to the Christmas jive. She has transitioned into a more mature relationship with the secular aspects of the Most Wonderful Time of the Year.

For Clara, Jesus is the rea-

son for the season. She has no list. Then again, she probably wouldn't sneeze at an iPhone.

Ten-year-old Magdalena's list includes a new toy ukulele. This would be a replacement for the old toy ukulele, which a certain head-of-household angrily smashed after it was used as a weapon by a Hennessey who will remain nameless.

We go through ukuleles here the way some families go through cold cuts. There's no sense in getting attached. They won't be around long.

Since I consider Patrick's 2016 Christmas list a minor masterpiece of modern American consumerist culture, it is hereby reprinted in full and with original eight-year-old spelling: "ALL Harry Potter Lego sets, Mullenium falcan, snowball macker, skechbooks, poe's x-wing, all Harry Potter books, chess set, rubix cube, all Pixar movies."

I give my little guy full credit for putting dignity aside and just going for it. As they used to say about the lottery: you can't win it if you ain't in it.

Four-year-old Sally dictated her list, so the spelling choices are more conventional—and less amusing. But imagine, if you can, Dr. Seuss's Cindy Lou Who slowly and deliberately announcing the following inventory: "glitter, night gown, new light-up lizard, Dora Lego set, toy phone, prayer cube, pretty dress."

Prayer cube, I ask? "That was my idea," offers Patrick.

Thanks, bud.

In the past, living things have appeared on these lists—horses, turtles, puppies, and the like. Nothing so ambitious is requested this year, but a ranking system pioneered by Clara has been adopted by the junior varsity.

Three stars next to an item indicate a strong desire for it to appear beneath the tree on the morning of December 25. Four stars signify the likelihood of sudden-onset depression should the gift fail to appear. Five stars means: I Can't Live Without It So Don't Ask Me To If You Want Peace At Christmas Old Man.

A child was born to our family this year. It will be William-called-Billy's first Christmas, though of course, being just shy of five-months old, he has no list. At the top of my own list is the continued health and well-being of my beautiful boy.

I once dreamed, as my children do, of gifts and presents

piled high beneath the tree. Now my Christmas dreams are different—as they ought to be. No one has yet been able to buy his way into heaven. No one comes to the Father except through the Son. For a guy like me, these are tidings of comfort and joy.

When the snow begins to fall on Christmas Eve, as you and I both know it will, and as you gather with your loved ones to celebrate the miracle of Our Savior's birth, take a moment to acknowledge that the number of Christmases we are allotted is reduced by one every year. Our days and nights are numbered.

Do not be despondent about this. Whatever you find beneath your tree on Christmas morning, the Almighty has done great things for you and me. He was born of the Virgin Mary and became man. That alone is cause for rejoicing.

From my family to yours: Merry Christmas. ■

Parish News

Mater Ecclesiae mosaic in Danbury

DANBURY—"Jesus is the sun and Mary is the dawn announcing his rising." (Pope Francis.)

This quote takes on new meaning on the streets of the city of Danbury these days. The sun now rises and sets on the Dawn and The Son, a new mosaic commissioned by Father Peter Towsley, pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish.

Combining the thoughts of Pope Paul VI and St. John Paul II, Father Towsley has overseen the installation of a beautiful new mosaic on the facade of the church, an image of Our Lady and the Child Jesus under the title *Mater Ecclesiae* (Latin for Mother of the Church).

In 1964 Pope Paul VI chose to end the sessions of the Second Vatican Council "with the joy of honoring Our Lady with the title Mother of the Church, *Mater Ecclesiae*... This title will help us to honor Mary Most Holy, loving Queen of the world, source of unity as our Mother, and tender hope of salvation."

During Holy Week of 1980, at a gathering in Rome of Pope John Paul II with several thousand young people, a young man

named Julio Nieto commented to the Holy Father that of all the statues in St. Peter's Square, there was not an image of Our Lady, and therefore the square was incomplete. Pope John Paul responded, "Good, very good! We have to put the finishing touch on the square."

Inspired by this, wheels were set in motion to explore putting this "finishing touch" on the square by the head of Opus Dei, Msgr. Del Portillo, successor to St. José Maria Escriva. One year later, on May 13th 1981, in that same square, Pope John Paul II was shot in an assassination attempt. He attributed his survival to the protection of Mary, and as a sign of gratitude, he moved forward with Msgr. Del Portillo's suggestions to "complete" the square.

On the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, of that year, he blessed the newly installed mosaic, *Mater Ecclesiae*. St. John Paul II's hope was, "...that all who come to St. Peter's Square may raise their eyes to Mary, to greet her with filial trust and prayer."

With that same hope, Father Peter commissioned Brookfield



ALL WHO PASS by the *Mater Ecclesiae* mosaic on Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Danbury will be reminded that Our Lady, our loving mother, bears the hope of our salvation—her child, Jesus.

"Bruce and I are enamored of mosaic work. We love the timelessness of it, and the permanence of the medium. It permits our design aesthetic to be viewed in public spaces, hopefully allowing art to be included in everyone's daily life," Joanne explains.

Their largest mosaic to date is a 900 square foot mural for the city of Waterbury. They designed, planned and facilitated over 1400 students and community members from all walks of life in the creation of the piece entitled "Cool Waters" that now hangs adjacent to the Webster Bank, across from the Palace Theatre.

"Watching the subtle changes occur while we are creating a piece is quite something to behold," says Joanne, "From the beginning of each project, when we pick the specific kind of tiles we want to put into the art, to picking colors of the tesserae we'll use to create color shifts, to the actual prep work of the design and fabrication plan is all very exciting. Getting to start the actual mosaic, to see the subtle color changes that create shadow and form, the play of light glimmering on the tesserae, the image building right in front of us—then the magic really starts."

The art of mosaic dates back some five thousand years to ancient Babylon. The thousands of pieces, called tesserae, that make up a mosaic are hand cut to form the design. Each piece catches the light at a slightly different angle. As one of the most beautiful aspects of a mosaic is in its reflected light, it becomes a fitting analogy of what we are all called to be, a reflection of God's light and love in which we were created. And so this new addition to the streets of Danbury takes on many meanings, in the image, in the medium in which it was rendered, and of course simply in the profound words *Mater Ecclesiae*.

Mother Teresa once said, "If you ever feel distressed during your day, call upon our Lady—just say this simple prayer: 'Mary, mother of Jesus, please be a mother to me now.'"

May this image serve as a daily reminder to all passers-by on Cottage Street in Danbury to do just that, to "raise their eyes to Mary" and ask her to be their tender mother.

Bishop blesses St. Joseph Meditation Garden

DANBURY—On December 4, Bishop Caggiano presided at the 10:30 am Mass at St. Joseph Church in Danbury and afterward blessed the newly created Meditation Garden and outdoor Stations of the Cross.

This project was the culmination of a successful three-year Capital Campaign to upgrade buildings and grounds at the parish. The Meditation Walkway provided acknowledgement to donors with engraved pavers, engraved benches and memorials on each of the Stations.

"This beautiful walkway will be a place for reflection and prayer for all parishioners and it enhances the active parish campus," said St. Joseph's pastor,

Father Samuel Scott.

The Meditation Garden is located on top of a small hillside behind



the church. The entrance and exit columns are constructed of wood, each with a cross on top.

The walkway is a combination of concrete and memorialized pavers, along which run the 14 Stations of the Cross. Each Station consists of a wooden column with a mounted colored plaque and a bench facing the plaque for prayerful reflection. The garden is planted with trees, bushes, flowering shrubs and wildflowers.

"As stewards of God's gifts, we relinquish control of time, treasure, and talents just as we have relinquished our will to God. Simply put, may we respond to God's call by giving our first fruits. I am grateful to all for their sustained generosity," said Father Scott. ■

husband and wife artists, Bruce and Joanne Hunter, to create a new mosaic of this same image to grace not only the facade of the church, but the streets of Danbury. The parishioners of Sacred Heart Parish enthusiastically supported the idea, and their many long hours and funds were donated to bring the project to fruition. Lights were installed so that all who pass by, day or night, from any and all walks of life, may look up to Our Lady and know that she is there as our loving mother, and bears the hope of our salvation, her child, Jesus.

Life-long artists, Bruce and Joanne have been doing mosaics of public art for the past 20 years. "Before this project we had never done any religious art, so it was important to us to understand and honor the different aspects of, and the reasons for, the original piece at St. Peter's Basilica. The history of this specific project was intriguing to us."

They viewed religious art and visited chapels and churches to see other mosaics, both for inspiration and to admire their beauty.

Sacred Heart University

Sacred Heart University acquires GE headquarters

FAIRFIELD—A Christmas tree lighting became the first “official” ceremony following the agreement of Sacred Heart University to purchase the former 66-acre General Electric global headquarters in Fairfield. The purchase will support the university’s ongoing strategic expansion and development as a leading institution of higher education.

“This is a transformational moment in the history of Sacred Heart University,” said SHU President John J. Petillo. “With this property, SHU has a unique opportunity to contribute to education, research, healthcare and the community. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for us, and it also reflects our long-standing relationship with GE that includes former GE CEO Jack Welch, for whom our College of Business is named.”

Dr. Petillo noted that the purchase is another step in SHU’s recent and rapid growth. “Our strategic plan calls for thoughtful expansion of our campus footprint when opportunities arise that make solid business sense and strengthen the institution and its future,” he said. “This purchase will support our desire to offer new and innovative programming and expand our graduate offerings. Most importantly, it will serve to further enhance Sacred Heart University’s overall standing and competitiveness among national universities.

SHU plans to use the property as an innovation campus, to expand its new School of Computing, which is focused on computer engineering, computer gaming and cybersecurity, and to develop programs in STEM fields such as health and life sciences, science and technology. The university will also move certain elements of its Jack Welch College of Business to the new campus, including its new hospitality management program that will make use of facilities both at the GE site and SHU’s recently acquired Great River Golf Club in Milford.

The university also plans to move its College of Education art and design program and the

university’s business office to the site, eliminating the need to rent space in Trumbull. Future plans could include a performing arts space/recital hall, a swimming pool and running trails and incubator space that would allow students, in conjunction with investors and area businesses, to develop their creative ideas for new products and programs. All plans are contingent on approval by the Town of Fairfield and the ability of the university to raise the funds needed for these projects.

SHU officials are also hoping the purchase will allow the university to develop partnerships with local healthcare providers, providing clinical opportunities for students in its Colleges of Health Professions and Nursing. These partnerships could also mean more healthcare options for area residents.

Michael Kinney, senior vice president for finance and administration at SHU, notes that for \$31.5M—the price of an average-sized academic building—SHU will acquire a world-class corporate headquarters, approximately 66 acres, about 550,000 square feet for current and future use, 800 above/underground parking spaces and enough space to meet needs for the foreseeable future. The purchase of this parcel will bring the total acreage of Sacred Heart’s campus to nearly 200 acres, not including the 150-acre Great River Golf Club purchased last year.

The surrounding community will also benefit from this purchase. “The growth we will experience as a result of this purchase will increase consumer spending in the community by Sacred Heart students and parents—a number that already stands at close to \$56 million in the state,” said Kinney. “In addition, programs developed by SHU in the next four years could add 450 students and 50-60 new faculty and staff jobs. New direct and indirect spending driven by operational and capital spending by the university, its employees, new students and their families and visitors would be a minimum of \$27-33 million annually.” With the purchase by SHU, a nonprofit entity, Fairfield will

also receive payments from the state’s PILOT program.

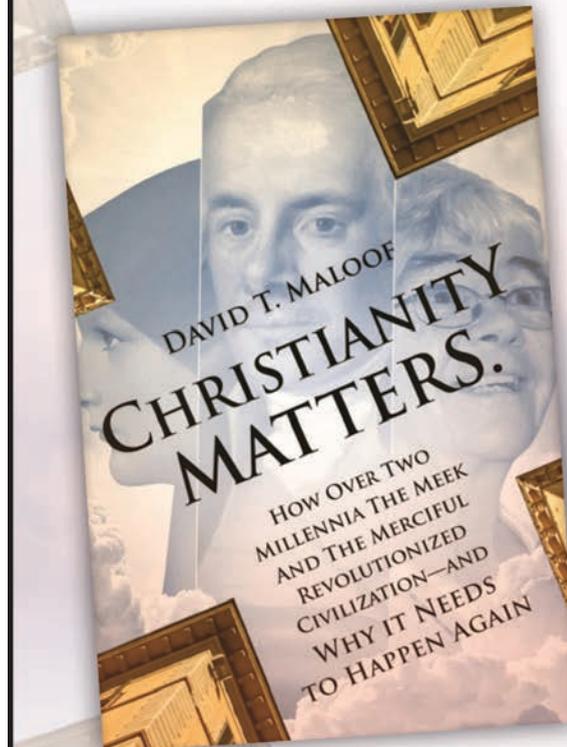
“We are pleased to sell our property to a world-class local university and are happy that the campus will continue to be used for learning and innovation, two hallmarks of both GE and Sacred Heart,” said Harri Singh, GE global properties leader.

“This purchase will benefit future students of Sacred Heart with added programs, new facilities and exciting opportunities,” Petillo said. “It will provide area residents and businesses with new facilities to use, increased consumer spending and additional jobs as well as incubator space that can develop much-needed economic opportunities for the area that are tied to a top-notch educational institution.” ■



SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY invited area residents to join members of the SHU community at a tree lighting on December 7 on the grounds of the former GE global headquarters and future West Campus of the University. “One of the first things we heard when news broke of the purchase—especially on social media—was that folks hoped we would continue the tradition of the tree,” said SHU President John J. Petillo. “We intended to do exactly that—in SHU style, of course.”

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Social Justice

Capital Punishment does not achieve justice

By PAT HENNESSY

“Death—executing a criminal—doesn’t heal the family. That’s a myth and a lie,” says Dr. George Kain, a professor in the Division of Justice and Law Administration at Western CT State University (WestConn), a parishioner at St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield and a police commissioner for the Town of Ridgefield.

“Families are told that they’ll feel better once this person is killed. But killing people, even criminals, doesn’t solve anything. Everyone involved in the death penalty process becomes traumatized: the victim’s family, the family of the offender, the cor-

rection officers, the chaplain who has to accompany the offender to the death chamber.”

Dr Kain had been asked to present a lecture at the 6th World Congress Against the Death Penalty in Oslo, Norway, this past June. Now he has just returned from his fifth visit to Italy following a request by the Community of Sant’ Eleggio to take part in the Cities for Life Campaign, which is celebrated on November 30 each year.

It has been a long journey, intellectually and emotionally, to this point.

With his law enforcement background, Dr. Kain began with an entirely different viewpoint. “I studied criminal justice in college and entered into a career in law enforcement as a probation officer after I graduated,” he says. “I’ve been involved in prison-related work for 30 years. There were plenty of times I had to put the cuffs on someone and haul them back to prison. I used to be the first one to say ‘We need capital punishment!’

“I was wrong. Yes, we need

prisons. We need to lock dangerous people up. But killing people in order to achieve justice does exactly the opposite.”

As he continued his education, he earned a master’s degree in counseling and eventually a Ph.D. in criminal justice. He became a full-time professor of criminal justice at WestConn in 1994. The more he read and learned, the more shocked he became at the injustices of the justice system to both the criminal and the victim, and to society as well.

More than his studies, he found his deepest inspiration in the family members of victims. “They said that if this person had been sentenced to life in prison, they could have gone on with their lives. As it is, their lives have been robbed by the death process. We should be focused on restoring the victims to wholeness.”

His intellectual transformation was followed by an examination of his spiritual beliefs. “We’re not God,” he says. “I think our view of justice is retribution—revenge. God’s view is one of hope and mercy—mercy for the victims and hope for the offender.”

Dr. Kain is particularly pleased that, as a professor at WestConn, “we’re expected to be connected to the community in the area that we teach. Visiting prisoners and speaking out against the death penalty has become a ministry for me, but it’s also part of my job. To be a good teacher, I must bring students to correctional institutions, and luckily we have a maximum security prison less than 10 miles away. The trips bring the academic studies and the real world together.”

Students get an entirely new view of criminal justice when convicted murders “talk about how prison saved them. Many now talk to younger inmates, telling them not to make the same mistakes they did. They know that their sentence is just, they will never be set free, but they feel that prison has given them a chance to contribute something to society. They love having us come up there.”



DR. GEORGE KAIN a professor in the Division of Justice and Law Administration at WestConn, spoke in Italy as part of the Community of Sant’ Eleggio Cities for Life Campaign. With 30 years experience in prison-related work, Dr Kain, has spoken nationally and internationally on the injustice of capital punishment.

Dr. Kain expects to see an end to the death penalty in the fairly near future. As the intensity of that call winds down, he is experiencing a greater call to local prison ministry. “I’m in a place of discernment in my life right now. I’m not totally sure where it’s going,” he says.

In early November, he gave the GED commencement address at the Federal Correctional Institution at Danbury. Watching the pride and hope in these men, Dr. Kain holds in his heart the words of Pope Francis at the opening ceremony of the meeting in Norway:

“The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy is an auspicious occasion

for promoting worldwide ever more evolved forms of respect for the life and dignity of each person. It must not be forgotten that the inviolable and God-given right to life also belongs to the criminal.... There is no fitting punishment without hope! Punishment for its own sake, without room for hope, is a form of torture, not of punishment.”

“How blessed we are that our God is a God of hope and strives to affirm our dignity in every way possible,” Dr. Kain says. “I am so grateful to God that he has given me the opportunities to speak for the marginalized and to reach out to those in prison, and I am humbled by the experiences.”

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Catholic Charities

Redefining 'Daily Bread'

By THOM GUTHRIE

Steve looks like a character in a sitcom about millennials. He's handsome, funny, smart and just a nice guy. So you might never guess that he's a driver who delivers food to the elderly clients of Catholic Charities' Senior Nutrition Program, providing Meals on Wheels Services—let alone how dedicated he is to a very fragile group of people.

For a 25-year-old, Steve's head is very clear and his heart is very strong. When speaking about his clients he declared, "They make my day. They say I make theirs, but they have so much to say, so much to share. I'm happy I can help them. These are some of the nicest people you'll ever meet."

When I visited the seniors with Steve, the first thing they told me was how badly they need the service. Not just for the food ... but for the human contact. That's because the first prerequisite of receiving Meals on Wheels is being what we'd call a "shut-in." And let's call the spade a spade: It isn't easy to make friends when you can't leave the house. Which is why it should come as no surprise that the seniors adored Steve.

Mr. L., the first client I met, was overjoyed to see Steve on a recent November morning (deliveries are made on every weekday; weekend meals are delivered on Thursday or Friday). But Mr. L. didn't want his name mentioned in this article. Why? His neighbors may read it, he explained, and he didn't want their pity.

A few blocks away Mrs. S. was nearly brought to tears (and so was I) when she told me her story. Her husband had just passed away and her children live an hour away, in either direction. For her, Steve was the center of the universe. She couldn't say enough about how valuable he was, how much she needed that brief interaction to know she was still alive. She explained her circumstance to me as this: she had always been on-the-go, a doer, and her husband had gone along gleefully with her. When he passed away, she struggled from day to day. But she knew she couldn't have survived without help, without Steve checking in on her several times a week. Her



MORE THAN FOOD, Meals on Wheels driver Steve shares stories and friendship with the clients he visits. "They make my day," he says.

blue eyes, undimmed by age or illness, filled with tears when she told me how thankful she was to have Steve's consistent help. The program delivers seven meals a week to current clients, but due to funding issues, any new clients will only receive six, including one weekend meal.

Mrs. K, a feisty woman in her mid-seventies (making her a younger-than-average recipient of the service), told me that one time she had some suggestions about a meal. So she talked to Steve and he took care of things immediate-

ly. Steve told me he always asks his clients about dietary concerns (vegetarians, diabetic, chewing problems) as well as quality and variety. The food was fresh, delicious, and varied enough even for Mrs. K, who assured me—repeatedly—that she would have said something if it weren't.

Which made me realize: these are proud people whose only misstep was to get old or sick, which then required them to stay inside most of the day. They were happy to hear that through this article, word of the program

would spread and that others might benefit from it as well. They wanted to share their stories because they knew what life would be like for them without the "Steves" of the world. They would have to leave their homes, in all likelihood, and move into single rooms at retirement homes. Even then, there is no guarantee that they would be taken care of with nearly the same consideration and compassion.

We all know that stories of overburdened families, and poor treatment of our elders are far

too abundant. But the Catholic Charities' Senior Nutrition Program, providing Meals on Wheels Services, helps keep people like those in this story from becoming another statistic or news item.

As the average life expectancy in America increases, the demand for services will logically follow. The Catholic Charities' Senior Nutrition Program (as the entire group of services is called) is funded through federal and state grants, administered through a contract with the Southwestern CT Agency on Aging (SWCAA). Government funding has stayed stagnant, however, and services are being reduced for the people who need them most.

The only way to combat the rising costs of operation, which are constantly reassessed for greater efficiency and value, is through donations from compassionate donors.

Which is to say: your elderly neighbors need you. Can you help them?

(If you'd like to learn more about Catholic Charities' Senior Nutrition Program, contact Maureen Neuberger: mneuberger@ccfc-ct.org or 203.324.6175. If you'd like to donate to the program, call 203.416.1313.)

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Priest Profile: Father Joseph Gill

Sainthood is not just for people on pedestals

By BETH LONGWARE DUFF

Father Joseph Gill grew up in Frederick, Md., the oldest of five children in a devout Catholic family. After graduating from high school, he entered the discernment program at Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio, and completed his studies with an MA in moral theology from Mount St. Mary Seminary. He was ordained in the Diocese of Bridgeport in 2013.

In addition to assisting with Masses and the parish youth group as a priest in residence at St. Mary Parish in Stamford, Father Gill is the chaplain at nearby Trinity Catholic High School and the newly-appointed spiritual director of the Diocesan Youth Choir. Previously he spent three years as a deacon and parochial vicar at St. Mary Parish in

Bethel.

Fairfield County Catholic recently caught up with Father Gill to discuss how he juggles his many duties as a priest and the impact he hopes to have on the people he serves.

FCC: This is your first year as chaplain at Trinity Catholic High School. What has prepared you for this position?

Father Gill: Most of my ministry has been spent working with youth. When I was at Franciscan University, some friends and I started a middle school youth ministry at a local parish. I've always found great fulfillment and joy in watching young people embrace Christ.

FCC: In your new position as spiritual director of the Diocesan Youth Choir, what plans do you



FATHER JOSEPH GILL blessed the fruits of Trinity's Thanksgiving Food Drive. Students collected over 5,900 lbs of food.

and the group's directors have for its future?

Father Gill: Our goal is to add a spirituality piece so they're not just singing or performing, but they're really worshipping. We hope to do a day of recollection for them as well as leading prayer before and after our concerts, and to do formation with them about how music can elevate us to get to know God and how by using our talents in that way we are sanctifying ourselves and those who hear us.

FCC: Music is an important part of your life. How do you use it in your ministry?

Father Gill: My dad was quite a piano player, and he taught me to play when I was five years old. I've recorded three CDs, which are available for free download at www.facebook.com/musicofjosephgill. At first I was very afraid to start using music in our youth group because I wasn't sure how it would go over, but it turned out that it really broke down barriers.

FCC: Your work schedule is

pretty full. What do you do in your spare time?

Father Gill: Well, over Columbus Day weekend I recorded 12 shows for Shalom World TV. They saw a video on YouTube of a talk I gave at A Day with Mary in Danbury that got almost 8,000 views. So they asked me to do a TV series for them! I've always loved working with the media, and God has opened all these doors so I can preach the Gospel.

FCC: You were once quoted as saying, "I am striving to become a saint and help others become saints as well." How do the teens you work with react to that message?

Father Gill: That came right out of Vatican II, where they talked a great deal about the universal call to holiness. Sainthood is not just for people on pedestals or people in convents—it's really for every human being. When we set the bar high for the standard of holiness, it's exciting for people, especially young people. They don't just want to live a life

of mediocrity and just be a nice person, because they're already nice people. The goal of being utterly transformed by grace into a saint is something that they can really make their own. I've only heard and seen positive responses to that message.

FCC: What do you see going on in the lives of the teens you interact with that's different from what you experienced at the same age?

Father Gill: I had a somewhat sheltered life because I was home schooled, so that was a piece removed from what's currently going on. There are a couple of main challenges teens face today. One is isolation, even with all the social media that's out there. Authentic, deep human relationships with one another, with adults and with God are becoming so superficial. Teens want to know that authentic relationships are still possible. Additionally, the Sandy Hook shootings changed young people across the United States. It really made violence and fear so much more a part of their lives. I see a lot of teens who are getting almost numb to the fact that violence is an everyday part of life. My challenge is to get them to hope in Christ.

FCC: Finally, your younger brother Patrick is currently a seminarian studying at the Pontifical North American College in Rome. What kind of advice do you give him?

Father Gill: The biggest piece of advice I keep telling him is "Don't take yourself seriously." You gotta laugh, and God works through it all! ■



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March for Life 2017

The annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., will take place Friday, January 27. The largest pro-life rally in the world, it is held on or around the anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision legalizing abortion in the case of *Roe v. Wade*.

Although the diocese is not organizing buses to the rally, the diocesan high schools and

some parish groups are arranging for transportation. One bus plans to leave from St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull and another from St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield. Other parishes may be making individual arrangements.

The March opens to music on the grounds of the Washington Monument at 11:45 am, with a rally at 12 noon. Marchers step off at 1 pm and head up

Constitution Avenue to the Supreme Court. There they will hear testimonies from Silent No More and have a chance to visit their Representative or Senator.

(To attend the March for Life, check with your local parish or call St. Theresa, Trumbull: 203.261.3676, or St. Mary, Ridgefield, Pat Postiglione: 203.438.7336.) ■

Local News

Walking with Purpose

By BETH LONGWARE DUFF

Walking with Purpose is not your grandmother's Bible study group. Founded in Maryland in 2002 by a young mother and Catholic convert who was looking for material that was relevant to her situation, Walking with Purpose has evolved into a program that strives to reach out to all Christian women regardless of age, background or marital status. As its website notes, Walking with Purpose "understands how it feels when life is stuck on the spin cycle."

In 2008, Walking with Purpose came to the Diocese of Bridgeport. Today, 15 parishes in Fairfield County offer the program; close to 200 more faith communities across the United States, Europe and Canada are also active.

"Walking with Purpose is based on the idea that all people should be *loved* towards Christ,

not necessarily *taught*," says Julie Ricciardi, whose home parish is St. Thomas More in Darien. "And if we lead with love—and if we meet women where they are in their spiritual journey—the Holy Spirit will fill in the gaps and do the work to lead people closer to Christ."

Ricciardi not only participates in the Walking with Purpose program, she also serves as the organization's CEO and board chair. In that capacity, she works closely with its founder, Lisa Brenninkmeyer, who spoke recently to a gathering of Catholic women and priests in the diocese. Brenninkmeyer says the woman-centric nature of the program has a great impact. "I would say it's somewhat revolutionary in the Church today," she says. "There has not been a lot of a gentle woman's voice that is in a leadership position. And I would contrast a gentle voice from a strident voice, a gentle voice that is

very much wanting the positions and titles that right now are only held by men."

"This is really a time for strong women who also have a grace in the way that they communicate to step forward," she elaborates. "That graciousness is something that other women really do engage with because they relate to it. There's no agenda behind it all. It's really a belief that where we are right now we have a voice, and if we use it we can have an enormous impact."

Walking with Purpose is consistent with Church doctrine and uses the Catechism of the Catholic Church as an additional resource; all course materials have received the imprimatur of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. The parish-based program consists of small weekly group meetings plus home study. Classes run for about 90 minutes over a 22-week period, September to April.

Courses have titles like "Opening Your Heart," "Keeping In Balance" and "Touching the Divine." The course description for "Discovering Our Dignity" says it provides "modern-day advice from women of the Bible. Ancient wisdom, sage advice, sorrowful failures and woundedness."

The program also offers monthly gatherings known as Connect Coffee, informal sessions during which women interested in learn-



"WALKING WITH PURPOSE is based on the idea that all people should be *loved* towards Christ, not necessarily *taught*," says Julie Ricciardi, CEO and board chair. Fifteen parishes in Fairfield County offer the program for women.

ing more about the program can review course materials and interact with current participants.

Pamela Rittman says she enjoys the upbeat nature of her Thursday night Walking with Purpose meeting at St. Leo Parish in Stamford. "What I really like about the group is the camaraderie of Christian women. We form a sisterhood, in a sense, as we learn more about our faith together. Along with the teaching we share personal thoughts on spiritual devotions and even challenges we face," she says. "We each read a page from the chapter and discuss the answers to questions we have prepared before our gathering. It is truly amazing, some of the insights we have learned and how exciting the Bible is. At the end of the evening, we ask each person for their prayer requests, and then we pray for each other. We're not trying to impress each other, we just come as we are."

Walking with Purpose continues on the path to growth and expansion. Coming soon: New courses, a new emphasis on high school and young adult women, and a new program for girls in middle school.

"We've been looking at the core issues that women struggle with, and then we're working our way back to say 'When did this begin? At what age do women start to struggle with how they define their sense of worth?'" says Brenninkmeyer. "We think a lot of that starts to happen in middle school, and so we want to engage middle school girls before a lot of faulty reasoning has set in. If they're engaged at that point, many of them will continue to move on to the next level of the program and we won't lose them."

(More information about Walking with Purpose is available at www.walkingwithpurpose.com. A locator map is available under the Parish Programs tab on the homepage.) ■

Wish Tree grows at St. Leo

STAMFORD- After many weeks of collecting donations, packaging presents and volunteering at Mass, the parishioners of St. Leo Parish delivered over 800 Christmas gifts and hundreds of toiletries to eight different organizations throughout the Stamford area. The efforts were part of the parish's annual Wish Tree initiative, and was a tremendous success this year. Father James Grosso, pastor of St. Leo's, was very encouraged by the event,



sharing that the "Wish Tree" is growing—there were 100 more gifts donated this year, a true testament to the giving spirit of the community and of the hard work of those who volunteered. ■

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Sports

2016 sports highlights to savor

By **DON HARRISON**

What were the 2016 sports highlights among the high schools embraced by the Diocese of Bridgeport? Here are a half dozen to savor:

TYLER MATAKEVICH became the first athlete from St. Joseph High School to play in the National Football League.

Selected by the Pittsburgh Steelers on the seventh round of the 2016 NFL draft, the 6-foot, 233-pound linebacker made the club and has appeared in all but one game entering the season's final three weekends. He registered six solo tackles and two assists in the Steelers' 30-15 loss to Miami on October 16.

At Temple, Matakovich was a consensus First-Team All-America as a senior, garnering both major prizes as the nation's

defensive player of the year—the Bronko Nagurski and Chuck Bednarik awards.

"Football has always been a dream," says the former St. Joe's All-Stater. "I never thought I'd get this far. It's been surreal."

IMMACULATE'S STATE TITLE: What better way to celebrate a school's golden anniversary than by winning a state championship in a marquee sport?

Coach Nelson Mingachos' boys basketball Mustangs did just that, capturing the CIAC Class C state title with a 53-43 victory over Coginshaug of Durham at the Mohegan Sun on March 19.

"To win a state championship in the school's 50th year is pretty awesome," Mingachos noted. "We knew we were going to be good, but we didn't know how good."

The 2015-16 Mustangs concluded with a 25-3 record, and

**TYLER MATAKEVICH**

senior guard Darius Hunter was selected to the Connecticut High School Coaches Association's All-State Second Team.

RYAN BOYLE: The young man who nearly lost his life at age nine achieved a personal milestone by winning a silver medal in cycling at the 2016 Paralympics in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil in September.

Boyle, 22, was riding a big wheel when he was struck by a pickup truck in 2003, resulting in emergency brain surgery and the loss of a portion of his brain. He had to learn to breathe, swallow, speak, sit, stand and walk again. Boyle spent nearly three years at St. Joseph High and was awarded an honorary diploma in 2012.

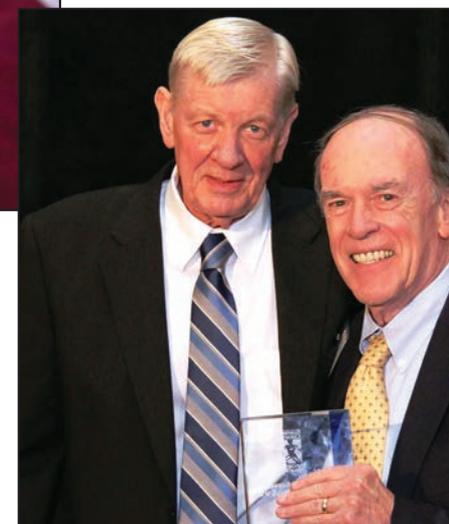
"My parents were the first people I saw when I crossed the finish line," he recalls. "When I saw them and then heard the news (about his runner-up award), I couldn't stop my emotions."

MIKE WALSH: Trinity Catholic's long-time boys basketball coach was inducted into the Fairfield County Sports Commission's Hall of Fame at its 12th annual Sports Night dinner on October 17.

Walsh enters the 2016-17 season with six state titles, six FCIAC championships and 596 career victories, the latter placing him fifth all-time among Connecticut high school coaches.

"I'm really thrilled and humbled at the same time," he says. "When you see the names on the plaques at the Hall of Fame, it really hits you."

JENNA BIKE: The St.

**JENNA BIKE**

MIKE WALSH, left, is inducted into the J. Walter Kennedy Community Service Wing of the Fairfield County Sports Commission on October 17. The presenter is Bob Kennedy, former Stamford Advocate sports editor and son of the late NBA commissioner, for whom the wing is named.

Joseph senior was voted National High School Player of the Year by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA). Among her three predecessors from Connecticut: Kristine Lilly of Wilton, a member of the U.S. National Team that won the 1999 World Cup.

"Jenna is the most talented player I've ever coached," says Cadets Coach Jack Nogueira. "She has the talent, the drive and determination to succeed. She's a great teammate and very humble."

As a freshman at Boston College, Bike started 18 games for the 11-7-1 Eagles this fall and ranked fourth on the squad with 11 points.

GIRLS SOCCER CHAMPIONS: St. Joseph shut out Masuk, 4-0, to win the CIAC Class L state championship on November 19. Meanwhile, on the same day, Notre Dame of Fairfield and Immaculate of Danbury shared the Class M title following a double-overtime scoreless tie.

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Nuestra Voz

Familias luchan con el hambre

Por MARICARMEN GODOY

Kate Lombardo, directora ejecutiva del Banco de Alimentos (Food Bank) con sucursal en Stamford, aseguró que Caridades Católicas del Condado de Fairfield (Catholic Charities), acude cuatro veces al día a sus almacenes para comprar comida y distribuirlas para alimentar por 365 días al año a Malta House de Norwalk, el Centro de Ancianos (Senior Center), en las parroquias y al comedor popular de Stamford, conocido como New Covenant House en Stamford.

Acorde con Lombardo, de las 97 organizaciones que sostiene el Banco de Alimentos, Caridades Católicas es la organización más grande en comprar y distribuir comida dentro del Banco de Alimentos, seguido por asociaciones de Stamford, Darien, Wilton, Norwalk, New Canaan, Stamford y Greenwich.

Un estudio "The Feeding America Hunger In America" en el 2014 encuestó a despensas de alimentos y clientes del Banco de Alimentos de Connecticut y reveló que en los 12 meses anteriores:

El 73% tuvo que elegir entre alimentos o servicios públicos

El 63% tuvo que elegir entre comida o alquiler

El 68% tuvo que escoger entre comida o atención médica.

En este momento el Banco de Alimentos (Food Bank) está buscando la ayuda de la comunidad para llenar las perchas de su almacén, ubicado en 461 Glenwood Avenue, con el fin de estar preparados para distribuir alimentos durante las fiestas de Navidad y Año Nuevo. Además,



UNLOADING A FOOD TRUCK, workers and volunteers at the Food Bank in Stamford carry daily groceries to be stored, distributed and delivered to 97 agencies in Fairfield County. Kate Lombardo, executive director of the Food Bank with a branch in Stamford, said that Catholic Charities distributes food for 365 days a year to Malta House of Norwalk, the Senior Center, in parishes and to New Covenant House in Stamford. A survey of clients who depend on food bank donations noted that a majority of them had to make the choice between buying food or paying the rent during the past year.

sigue el fomento del programa de Alimentos de Emergencia para personas con problemas mentales, residentes en Greenwich y Stamford.

Acorde con Lombardo, la economía ha provocado que muchos de los vecinos estén desempleados y no pueden poner el pan en sus mesas. Estas personas y sus familias se sienten menos seguras acerca del hoy y su futuro y en época de hambre no se conoce la temporada de Navidad ni de fiestas. Miles de familias luchan con el hambre y dependen de apoyo, especialmente durante la temporada de vacaciones de los niños, debido a que ellos consumen más alimentos cuando están en casa.

El Banco de Alimentos que

cubre el área del condado del Bajo Fairfield quiere asegurarse que todas las familias tengan su cena de Navidad. Por esta razón, se pide que considere hacer un donativo de \$20 que ayude a proporcionar una comida navideña a una familia necesitada. Y cada donativo permitirá cumplir la misión de ofrecer alimentos a los residentes locales.

El Banco de Alimentos anuncia que dos de sus organizaciones han añadido un nuevo programa que está siendo apoyado por esta agencia, al que se le ha denominado "Alimentos de emergencia", con el fin de ayudar a los pacientes que tienen problemas mentales. Estos programas se encuentran ubicados en el edificio Sioux Place de Greenwich,

y en Inspirica de Stamford, una entidad que ofrece viviendas de apoyo para las personas sin hogar. Con la incorporación de estos dos nuevos programas, el Banco de Alimentos ofrece ahora alimentación de emergencia a 97 agencias y programas, de las cuales 57 están ubicadas en Stamford.

El Banco de Alimentos ayuda a casi medio millón de residentes de Connecticut que luchan contra el hambre; Más de 140.000 niños padecen inseguridad a la hora de sus alimentos, incluyendo sus padres, personas mayores o personas que viven con discapacidades, e inmigrantes desempleados. El año pasado, el Banco de Alimentos de Connecticut distribuyó alimentos suficientes para preparar más de 19.2 millones de comidas a personas necesitadas en seis de los ocho condados del Estado. ■

Para ayudar

Para esta temporada de fiestas hay una lista de productos llamados de primera orden, que deben estar en las despensas del Banco de Alimentos durante las primeras semanas de noviembre, diciembre y enero:

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DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT: DECEMBER 18—JANUARY 21

DECEMBER

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|------|
| 19 | Rev. Philip Morrissey | 2008 |
| 21 | Msgr. Constantine R. Caldas | 2015 |
| 26 | Rev. Vincent P. Cleary..... | 1965 |
| 27 | Rev. Ignatius Baraniak, OFM Conv..... | 1980 |
| 29 | Msgr. James H. Grady..... | 1967 |
| 30 | Rev. M. Joseph McCarthy | 2006 |

JANUARY

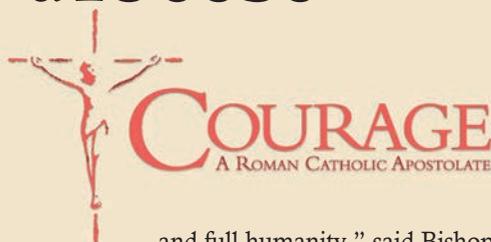
| | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Rev. Michael J. Flynn, C.S.Sa. | 1995 |
| 2 | Rev. Joseph J. Malloy..... | 2016 |
| | Rev. Robert J. McDermott..... | 1989 |
| 3 | Msgr. Pierre A. Botton..... | 2010 |
| 4 | Msgr. Francis Medynski | 2008 |
| 6 | Msgr. William J. Fox..... | 1962 |
| 7 | Rev. Walter E. Bozek | 1995 |
| 8 | Rev. Mr. Edward R. Kovacs | 1999 |
| | Rev. Joseph P. Biondino | 2001 |
| 9 | Rev. Gerald T. Devore..... | 2011 |
| | Rev. Mr. Hugh Sweeney..... | 1990 |
| | Rev. Robert Nemeth, O.F.M. Conv. | 1998 |
| 13 | Rev. Daniel J. Deehan..... | 1976 |
| 14 | Rev. M. Joseph Joaquin..... | 2013 |
| | Msgr. Joseph A. Sullivan | 2001 |
| 15 | Msgr. Harry L. Hale | 2003 |
| | Msgr. G. Robert Hanover | 1992 |
| 16 | Rev. Thomas B. Gloster..... | 1956 |
| 18 | Rev. Edward J. Small, SJ..... | 2010 |
| 19 | Rev. Andrew L. Horvat | 1973 |
| | Rev. William D. Thompson..... | 2004 |
| 20 | Msgr. George D. Birge..... | 2015 |
| | Msgr. Ralph P. Buongervino | 1994 |
| | Msgr. Andrew T. Cusack..... | 2004 |
| | Rev. Andrew L. Farkas..... | 1967 |
| | Rev. Robert E. Onze..... | 2010 |

Courage in the diocese

In order to assist people who experience same-sex attractions in a pastoral and spiritual way, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has decided to establish Courage International in this diocese as a diocesan, clerical and public association according to the regulations of Canon Law. The decree took effect Monday, November 28, 2016.

As of that date, Courage International has its formal canonical seat in Fairfield County.

"I ask the Lord and the Most Holy Virgin Mary to bless this initiative, whose purpose is to help us know and love Jesus Christ, the only Savior of mankind and the only hope for the world of a true



and full humanity," said Bishop Caggiano in promulgating the decree. "I bestow my heartfelt blessing on all the works of Courage International and those who support its mission." ■

Column: Thomas Hicks



Got more than I expected

POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

Thomas Hicks is a member of St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull.

“As for me, wretched and poor, the Lord thinks of me” (Psalm 40:17)

Four rooms made up the cold-water flat. They led into one another so the flat was called a

railroad flat. There was a clothes pole in the back yard from which six wash lines on pulleys connected with six kitchen windows. I sometimes made some pocket money by climbing the pole to replace a washline when it slipped off a pulley. On a sunny,

breezy day it was beautiful to see the lines filled with sheets taking the wind like a buccaneer movie ship, and the different colored clothes straining at the wooden pins as though the clothes were alive.

Such was the home where I grew up in Brooklyn. Sometimes I wonder if I am just another fleck of life who has his own small importance for a brief span of time. An image I have is being one of billions of lights in a vast sky, a light that flares up for a brief moment only to disappear into the endless night. But there's the wonder of the fact that I am. I'm stuck by the wonder of it, the strangeness of my being here at all. My being on this earth is not

my doing. It's a gift.

The world made a niche for me. I found a place in the scheme of things. However, in many ways I am a riddle to myself (as Augustine said in his *Confessions*). I see myself now as a man I know—but not intimately.

I have a crop of inextinguishable regrets. May those I have hurt forgive me. I am sorry for having failed them.

I do not know how to do things that seem to come to others so easily. The world abounds in apparatuses, from automobiles to electric stoves, that are resistant to my understanding. I don't know what takes place within a TV or radio, or even a fan. I envy those guys who never have to hire anybody to do anything because they can do it themselves. I wish I knew more about music, to be able to better understand Bach and Mozart. I do have the satisfaction of knowing that some of the things I do, I do well.

I've come to see that life does not follow a script. But I'm fascinated by the way things tie up, one with another. In my life, the pieces of a huge jigsaw puzzle have fitted themselves into place.

There's a pronounced introversion to my character. But this brought with it the gift for contented solitude. This introversion was no doubt part of the reason reading became an important piece of my life. This reading was one of the greatest graces in my life, a kind of heaven opened for me.

I have a persevering nature, capable of steadfast drudgery, dogged toil. I consider this part of my strength. I think my self was given to me far more than it was formed by me. There is Paul's teaching that “by the grace of God, I am what I am.”

In many ways, I experience myself as a stranger in this world. I feel myself at odds with the accepted ideals of those around me. Material things do not suffice for me. Having “things” interest me less and less. I'm only a renter in this world.

I didn't expect my body to turn querulous. Not long ago it had accompanied me without complaint or any exertion, forgiving and tireless.

I have a sort of wintery soul. So much strikes me as unutterably sad. I sense Virgil's *lacrimae rerum*, that tears are at the heart of things. There's the problem, as Hopkins puts it, of “beauty that must die” (“The Leaden Echo”). My view of life tends toward tragedy. Life is full of suffering. But there are throbs of splendor in the universe of night.

I have a growing list of ideals, principles, causes, in which I no

“I've come to see that life does not follow a script.”

longer believe. I see with different eyes. Things I previously considered imperative have lost their vitality. I am more and more uneasy with easy clarities about God.

God has become a dominant reality in my life. I'm a man haunted by God. I relate to something Socrates wrote: “There's the voice which I seem to hear murmuring in my ears, like the sound of the flute in the ears of the mystic; that voice is humming in my ears, and prevents me from hearing any other.”

I no longer know myself apart from God; I find myself in God. If the Scriptures are right, God has first sought me. So how did God find his way to me? Among other ways, the God who sought me arrived through others, mentors from many quarters whom God sent my way. However it happened, I am convinced of God's persistent pursuit. I wonder: When God looks at me, what does he see?

I won't be around forever; some day my spool will come to an end. I do not want to die playing bridge. I like something Hans Kung wrote: “When I am asked: ‘How would you like to die?’ I usually reply ‘on the way to an appointment.’ And I add, ‘at any rate, not in a nursing home.’” (*What I Believe*, p.180).

Happiness enough has fallen to my lot. I got more than I expected of life. My past life is brimful of God's goodness. I am a person to whom God has been merciful.

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Column: Joe Pisani



Peace on Earth: how about peace in the family?

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

There we were, all gathered around the festive holiday dinner table—mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, daughters, sons-in-laws, grandchildren, and even the dog—when bombs started bursting in air. Another holiday went up in smoke. I wanted it to be Norman Rockwellian, but it was George Orwellian—more like a Sopranos' family reunion.

I realized I wasn't going to make it through the holiday trifecta of Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's without a major disappointment. Every year, I go into the season with high expectations for Peace on Earth, good will toward men (and women) but instead of peace, I encounter strife.

Even though we want everyone to come together, some family members cling desperately to old grudges or create new ones. Others are willing to go to the grave holding onto legendary

resentments, although no one can remember what provoked them. (They say you can't take it with you, but if it's a grudge, you can.)

Christmas is supposed to be a time for love and forgiveness, but resentments often overshadow the festivities or derail them entirely. This year followed a familiar playbook for my four daughters, three sons-in-law, one fiancé, three grandchildren, one dog, one wife and a supporting cast of relatives.

Thanksgiving began with high hopes until one daughter, who I'm convinced has a gene that predisposes her to ruin the holiday, got into a wrangle with a son-in-law over something totally inane. Before I could say, "Peace on Earth," a fight erupted and the family plans for a joyful yuletide evaporated like the Ghost of Christmas Past.

I scratched my head in wonderment and dismay it happened

so fast. One person had escalated a minor disagreement into family Armageddon. Even the dog jumped into the fray by barking non-stop at the fiancé, and since I own the dog, they blamed me.

If I were asked to chronicle all the cases of "who isn't talking to whom" in our large family, I could write a book—a very long book. A few examples will suffice. For years, one woman hasn't talked to her sister. No one knows why and is afraid to ask. Another guy isn't talking to his sister-in-law. A father isn't talking to his daughter. A niece isn't talking to her aunt. We don't go to a certain uncle's home because he voted for the wrong person and does nothing but argue about politics. And no one wants to visit a family whose kids are vulgar.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," so I tried that tactic ... until I got accused of being "holier than thou" for suggesting it was time to make up and move on.

My father, who spent the last 25 years of his life as a recovering alcoholic in AA, would often tell me the greatest threat to his sobriety was resentments because they have a corrosive effect on a person's serenity.

They're easy to acquire but difficult to overcome. The causes are many and varied: Someone said something hurtful, someone cheated you, someone was unap-

preciative, someone didn't say thank you, someone insulted you, someone betrayed you and someone got more in the will.

Whenever I became distraught over something a person said or did, my father would offer the most profound advice I ever heard: "Let it go." Too often, however, we refuse to let it go. We cling to it, we nurse it, we fuel it and we exaggerate it until all that negativity breeds hostility, anger and division. So this holiday season, if you're haunted by grudges, my simple advice is: Let it go. Forgive and forget.

Remember when St. Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how many times should I forgive my mother-in-law? Seven times?" And Jesus answered, "Seventy times

seven." (I exercised a little poetic license, but you get the idea.)

We have to concentrate more on Christ than on our petty grudges, more on other people than on ourselves, more on giving than on getting, more on the true spirit of the season—love and reconciliation—than self-righteousness.

You're missing the spirit of Christmas if you go into the season with resentments. Christmas is a time to heal old hurts, and I'm convinced that at Christmas, you can receive special turbo-charged graces to help you reconcile and love again. You just have to ask Jesus for the graces to forgive and forget—and you'll get them. They'll be the best gift you ever got for Christmas. ■

Attorneys bring warmth

BRIDGEPORT—For their winter project, members of the St. Thomas More Society visited the Missionaries of Charity in Bridgeport on December 13. The St. Thomas More Society is an association of Catholic attorneys, judges, legislators and other legal professionals. Their goal is to strengthen the union of Catholics in the legal field and to encourage collaboration and service to the community.

In preparation for their visit, the Sisters had given Attorney Lee DeFusco, a member of Christ the King Parish in Trumbull, a list of school-aged children who needed winter jackets. Each member chose a child by name, and was given his or her age and jacket size.

The Missionaries of Charity serve the "poorest of the poor," regardless of their faith. In addition to warm jackets, many of the members brought supplies for the Sisters' food pantry, everything from rice and beans to peanut butter and jelly, along with necessities like soap and diapers.

"The generosity of our members is remarkable" said Attorney DeFusco. ■





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By *Curtiss*Ryan*

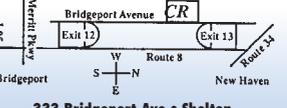
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Local News

Traveling El Camino on foot and by car

By **DON HARRISON**

Pilgrims of all ages have been walking El Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James) since the 8th century. The main route starts from the French side of the Pyrenees and concludes in Santiago de Compostela, a city in the northwest corner of Spain.

Their reasons vary for making the trek. Many are drawn to the Cathedral in Santiago, where the remains of the apostle, St. James, are said to be buried. Others chose to walk The Way of St. James as a retreat, to follow a dream or simply as a challenge to experience weeks in a foreign land. Today, hundreds of thousands of Christian pilgrims travel

the route each year.

In deference to our ages, my wife Patti and I made the decision to do what is called a partial Camino. We walked and we drove. It required seven days, from the morning of July 14 to a warm afternoon on July 21, for us to negotiate the 390 miles from the town of Santo Domingo to Santiago.

What prompted our personal pilgrimage? We wanted to walk this holy ground in the footsteps of those who had traveled before us. In part, we were inspired by the 2010 film, "The Way," starring Martin Sheen. Two of our young friends, Chris Constand and Loredana Trandu, had just completed their journey

and spoke glowingly about the undertaking. Two other friends, Joyce and Tom Flynn, who had traveled to Spain, shared helpful advice. For six months we faithfully went to the gym to gain some endurance.

We found the Spanish people to be welcoming, kind and hospitable, eager to help us in our journey. Two examples: A police officer in Carrión, who spoke no English, provided directions with a hand-drawn map and a smile. In a small supermarket in Astorga, we encountered a young shopper named Ramiro, who knew basic English.

Hearing that we were seeking the route to the Iron Cross in the León Mountains—the iconic marker where pilgrims pray and traditionally leave a rock they had carried since the start of their journey at the foot of the cross—Ramiro said he could help. "Follow me home on my bicycle and I will show you the directions," he stated. We did. And he did.

En route to Santiago, we explored three ancient cathedrals, each a wonder of architecture. The Cathedral of Santo Domingo de la Calzada is named for its founder, Domingo García (1040-1109), who devoted much of his life to assisting visiting pilgrims. He creating a hostel, where travelers could seek refuge; constructed a bridge across a river, and erected a small church.

The Cathedral of Santa María in Burgos, consecrated in 1260, was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1984. It houses the works of great Spanish painters, sculptors and architects as well as the tomb of El Cid, the 11th century military hero, and his wife, Dona Jimena.

The León Cathedral, dedicated to Santa María de la Regia, was built on the site of ancient Roman baths. The church has nearly 1,800 square meters of stained glass windows, making it the third largest church in the world.

Shortly after leaving the cathedral in León, we encountered another pilgrim, a German woman named Uta. In flawless English, she explained that she had walked from her home in Stuttgart and, although her feet were sore and wrapped in ban-



A WEARY PILGRIM (above) rests in the plaza outside the Cathedral in Santiago de Compostela.

UTA, (r) a pilgrim from Stuttgart, Germany, with the author in León.

dages, she planned to carry on to Santiago. We asked if we could help, but Uta cheerfully told us all she needed was patience. Her feet would heal and she would go on.

We were impressed, of course, by the massive Santiago Cathedral, a predominantly Romanesque structure completed in 1211. The Baroque façade, added between 1738 and 1750, is regarded as the symbol of the city. A likeness of St. James looks down at the activity in the plaza from a niche in the central tower.

Inside, we climbed the stairs behind the altar that lead to the gilded statue of St. James. Like most pilgrims, we gave the statue a hug. Then we descended into the crypt where the saint's relics are kept in a silver casket and prayed.

We attended the daily noon-time Pilgrim Mass (standing room only) in the main cathedral and, the following morning, the English-speaking Mass in a cathedral side chapel. We introduced ourselves, shared where we were from and why we had traveled The Camino. The stories were both profound and touching.

Father Joe O'Coilain, a visiting priest from Cork, Ireland, was the celebrant at the English Mass. We wondered: Was it mere coincidence that my wife's paternal



grandmother was born in Cork and that Father Joe served in the North Cathedral Church where she was baptized? Or, maybe, did that hug of St. James have something to do with it! ■

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CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEA: Donate a brick honoring a veteran; living, deceased, wartime, peacetime, reserves, regulars and currently serving, to St. Margaret Shrine Veterans Memorial. The names of the veterans on the newly donated bricks will be read at our 7th Annual Veterans Mass on Veterans Day and entered in our Mass Program Book. Bricks will be installed mid to late January, weather permitting. For more info or to have brick applications mailed or emailed to you, call 203.345.3244.

NOTRE DAME High School (Boys' and Girls') Class of 1966 is planning a 50th Reunion for the spring of 2017. If you are interested in working on the Class of 1966 Reunion committee or would like to receive more info, contact the Alumni Office: tmarzik@notredame.org or 203.372.6521 ext. 242.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT will be held at St. Luke Parish, Westport, on Sun., **Dec. 18**, at 3 pm. The concert will include the adult and children's choirs, an organ-piano duet and a Nativity Pageant featuring children in the religious formation program. There is no charge. For more info, call 203.227.7245.

CHRISTMAS PARTY with Catholic Young Adults of Greater Danbury (CYAD), ages 18-35. Spend the evening with other young adults to celebrate the birth of Our Lord with food, fun, and a White Elephant grab bag on Tues., **Dec. 20**, from 7:30-9:30 pm at the Newman Center, 7 8th Ave., Danbury. For more info, email catholic.ya.danbury@gmail.com or join us on Facebook: "Catholic Young Adults of Greater Danbury."

MASS OF REMEMBRANCE

for the loss of a child will be held on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, Wed., **Dec. 28**, at 7 pm at St. Ann Parish in the Black Rock section of Bridgeport. Fr. Peter Lynch, pastor, will celebrate the Mass. For more info., call the parish: 203.368.1607 or email OfficeofFaithFormation@diobpt.org.

MAGNIFICAT Ministry to Catholic Women will host a day of reflection and retreat for young women ages 18-25 on Sat., **Jan. 7**, from 9 am-3 pm at St. Rose of Lima Parish, Newtown. Guest speakers: Megan Murphy and Monica Ortega. Cost: \$20, includes breakfast and beverages. Register by Fri., **Dec. 30**. For more info or for reservations, contact Pat Paniccia: pat.pan@hotmail.com, or Fran Hood: s.m.hood@sbcglobal.net.

JOIN IN PRAYING the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary for Persecuted Christians from your home/car/office the first Tues. of every month (**Jan. 3**) at 7 pm with a conference phone number. How? Before 7 pm, call 877.216.5269 and type in the pin number 96869.

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 (**Jan. 6; Jan. 20**) at 7:30 pm. For more info and for directions, call Bette: 203.338.0503 or Peggy: 203.834.1287.

WOMEN'S GROUP at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull will meet Mon., **Jan. 9**, at 10 am in the parish hall. Guest speaker will be Sister Mary, Queen of All Saints, SSVM. Her presentation will be "My Journey: From the

Shores of Tripoli to the Shores of Galilee." All are welcome. For more info, call 203.261.8020.

CHILDREN'S ART PROGRAM: Holy Innocents School of Art: Art Through Faith/ Faith Through Art. With faith-based themes, children will learn to draw and paint through fun weekly projects. They will discover the beauty of God's creation and learn about sacred art and artists while creating art themselves. Two separate 6-week sessions: ages 5-7 on Weds. starting **Jan. 11**, from 4:15-5:30 pm; ages 8 and up on Thurs. starting **Jan. 12**, from 4:15-5:30 pm. Cost: \$110, supplies included. Financial assistance is available. For more info or to register, contact Adrienne Keogler: a.keogler@att.net.

PARENTS OF SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN are invited to a presentation on the new "ABLE Accounts Law," special needs trusts, and financial planning for special needs children and their families with wealth management Adviser Stephen Ehrens on Wed., **Jan. 11**, at 6:30 pm at Villa Maria School in Stamford. For more info or to RSVP, contact Stephen Bennhoff, assistant head of school: 203.322.5886, ext 104 or sbennhoff@villamariaedu.org.

GOSPEL OF LIFE SOCIETY meets at St. Mary Parish, Norwalk, the second Sat. of each month (**Jan. 14**) from 10 am-12 noon, after the 9 am pro-life Mass. For more info, contact Eileen Bianchini: 203.847.5727 or stmarygols@aol.com.

CATHOLIC UNDERGROUND will meet the second Sat. of every month (**Jan. 14**), from 7:30-10 pm at St. Ann Parish in the Black Rock section of Bridgeport. It's an evening of Adoration, Reconciliation, prayer, music, and fellowship. This month will have a concert with Alec Chambers. For more info, go to CONNected Catholics: www.conn-catholics.org.

MASS OF HEALING AND HOPE will be celebrated at St. Lawrence Parish, Shelton, on Mon., **Jan. 16**, at 7:30 pm with Fr. Charles Allen. For more info, call the Charismatic Renewal Office: 203.268.8253.

MOMs+DADs prayer/support group for those with Down Syndrome, their family and friends meets the third Thurs. of every month (**Jan. 19**), at 7:30 pm at St. Mary Parish,

Norwalk, parish center. For more info, contact strapostolate@optimum.net.

SECULAR FRANCISCAN Holy Spirit Fraternity invites everyone to St. Anthony of Padua Parish, 149 South Pine Creek Rd., Fairfield, on Sat., **Jan. 21**, at 9:30 am for Mass and social. NOTE: The Holy Spirit Fraternity is now going to be meeting at St. Anthony's. All are welcome! For more info, call Pat Heile, OFS: 203.255.8801 or pheile5713@aol.com.

ENCOURAGE apostolate for friends and family of loved ones



with same sex attractions or gender ID issues, meets the third Sat. of the month (**Jan. 21**) at 10:30 am and is strictly confidential. For more info contact the Norwalk Chapter: EncourageNorwalk@gmail.com.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for December 25, 2016

John 1:1-18

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for Christmas, Mass of Day. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| ALL THINGS SHINES ENLIGHTENS THE WORLD CHILDREN FLESH ONLY SON | LIFE DARKNESS EVERYONE BORN AMONG US GRACE | LIGHT TRUE LIGHT COMING POWER BECAME GLORY TRUTH |
|--|--|--|

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H N J O I V P A S I E O
T G P K E L G E E M N R
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R P A M O N G U S C R O
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St. Margaret Shrine

Power of hope at Sandy Hook Memorial

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

"Even on the darkest days in our life, there is hope," Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said to almost 400 who gathered at St. Margaret Shrine on December 11 for Mass and the dedication of the Sandy Hook Memorial, just days before the fourth anniversary of the shootings.

"Four years ago we experienced a day of deep darkness. The souls of so many were challenged so deeply. You and I and the whole nation were in shock," the bishop said of the Sandy Hook shootings that took the lives of 20 first graders and six teachers in Newtown.

On a bitter cold and bright morning, congregants processed out of the church to a hillside site on the shrine grounds where the new memorial was unveiled and blessed by the bishop.

The word "gaudete" is Latin for "rejoice." In his homily for the Gaudete Sunday Mass, the bishop said that hope and joy are more reliable than happiness in describing the human condition. He said that while people may enjoy happiness at times, their lives inevitably are touched by pain and suffering.

"No matter how deep the pain, there is a gift that no one can take from us: hope is born in the power of the love of God. No matter how profound the loss, his love can pierce through the pain."

Speaking to those who filled the small wooden chapel and also participated in the Mass through live-streaming in the lower level chapel, the bishop said, "We



come to remember the Newtown tragedy not as people look at history or even as a community resolved to love one another, but as a people of hope.

Bishop Caggiano described First Responders as "angels of mercy" during human tragedy, and also said that Msgr. Robert Weiss, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish, provided extraordinary and compassionate leadership when people most needed hope.

Music was provided by members of the Italian Choir and the Youth Choir of St. Margaret Shrine. Deacon Don Foust, Shrine administrator, joined Bishop Caggiano and priests around the altar.

The Mass and dedication ceremony reunited some of those who were there on the day of one of the worst mass shootings in U. S. history and also connected two faith communities within the diocese.

Newtown Police Chief James Viadero, a 23-year resident of the town, and Bridgeport Police

Chief A. J. Perez attended the Mass and the dedication.

Msgr. Robert Weiss' voice waivered as he acknowledged Father Luke Suarez and noted that the young parochial vicar "stood by my side" in the Sandy Hook Firehouse before he had to tell parents that their children had died.

He said that he and the parents were "overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity" they received from people across the nation, and that he was grateful that during the national tragedy his parish was able "to give a powerful face of what faith can be in a tragedy."

"No one in the firehouse that day asked, 'Why did God do this,'" he said. "They knew it was evil, but they also believed that God is love and life." A total of eight children from St. Rose died in the shooting on December 14, 2012 and were buried at St. Rose the following week.

In the dedication ceremony Senator Richard Blumenthal,

who traveled to Newtown immediately after learning of the shootings and spent the day consoling parents and families, said that St. Rose of Lima Parish inspired the entire nation.

Remembering a day of "unspeakable pain, grief and tragedy," the U.S. Senator said he also experienced the "indescribable warmth and grace within the church."

"The whole world was watching and they saw something larger than themselves, a tremendous courage, strength and faith and a generosity of spirit," he said.

Bridgeport Mayor Joseph Ganim said that everyone remembers where they were that day and they also remember the courage and faith of the parish. He presented Bishop Caggiano with a "recognition" from the city, that said, "Twenty tiny hearts and six heroes became twenty-six angels."

Construction for the Sandy Hook Memorial began last

November under the leadership of Armando Palumbo, who created the painting of Jesus and the children.

The mural is set in a brick and cement surround, which many volunteers helped to construct.

The inscription is taken from the Gospel of Matthew, "Let the little children come to me. Do not hinder them for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these" (19:14).

The granite engraving at the base of the memorial reads: "In Loving Memory of the 26 Innocent Lives Taken in Newtown, CT, December 14, 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School."

The memorial was constructed through a gift from the John DiMarco family, owners of Luigi's Pastry and built by Brown Monument and Ned Steinmetz. The project was also supported by UNICO Bridgeport Chapter, friends and co-workers.

St. Margaret Shrine is a diocesan shrine located in the North End of Bridgeport. It is open to all who wish to visit, pray and enjoy the beautiful outdoor shrines as well as the daily celebration of Mass in the chapel. The outdoor shrine and grottoes are open throughout the year. The grounds also include a St. Anthony Chapel, an All Saints Chapel and a Veterans Memorial.

(St. Margaret Shrine is located at 2523 Park Ave. Bridgeport. For more information, phone 203.333.9627, email saintmargaretshrine@gmail.com; or visit their website: www.ParishesOnLine.com/StMargaretShrine.)

Advent/Christmas

Knights sponsor Advent blessing at St. Matthew

NORWALK—The Knights of Columbus St. Matthew Council 14360 sponsored the Third Annual Christmas tree and crèche lighting at St. Matthew Church on November 27, the vigil of the First Sunday in Advent. The council provided refreshments and the St. Matthew adult and youth choirs sang Christmas carols. On top of that, special guest Msgr. Tom Powers, the vicar general of the Diocese of Bridgeport, blessed the crèche and Christmas tree.

The Christmas tree and crèche lighting was started by the St. Matthew Council as part of the Knights of Columbus “Keep Christ in Christmas” initiative emphasizing the real meaning of Christmas.

“This was truly a great way to kick off the Advent season as we prepare for the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day,” said Grand Knight Scott Criscuolo. ■



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Advent/Christmas

Night in a Box

NORWALK—On November 19, 36 teens from St. Jerome Parish in Norwalk gathered for the parish's fourth annual Night in a Box event. Night in a Box is a homeless awareness project in which TOTAL, the St. Jerome youth group, raises money and collects toiletries for the Open Door Shelter in Norwalk.

The day began with a prayer, and then everyone was off to service projects. Most of the teens raked the leaves of several elderly parishioners.

Ten of them went to the Open Door Shelter, where they were met by the executive director who gave the group a tour and helped them better understand the plight of the homeless in Norwalk. They

then planted small Christmas trees out front to decorate for the holidays, and helped with a mailing.

After the service projects, everyone met back at the church, ate a simple meal of grilled cheese and soup and heard from Bob Genuario, a member of the board of the Open Door Shelter and a longtime St. Jerome parishioner.

After a long day, the teens and adults went outside and began constructing their shelters for the night out of cardboard boxes and duct tape. After a beautiful prayer service where they talked about "what home means to me," teens and chaperones headed to their shelters for the night. The weather had different plans. Even though the shelters were covered

with tarps and plastic, the rain that had been coming down for a few hours was too much for them. One by one the shelters collapsed. Luckily, they had the church hall to sleep in. It wasn't all that comfortable, but the teens could stay safe, dry, warm and together. They took a moment to remember and pray for those who did not have the option of moving inside during the rain storm on this harsh night.

In the morning the youth group concluded their week-end of service with Mass. Ryan Williams, a high school senior, spoke to the congregation. Ryan said, "We went to the shelter and saw these little kids who are homeless. Last night, my little sister asked our speaker if kids



in the shelter get Christmas presents. He said, "They do because of people like you!" That struck a chord with me and I thought, 'It takes people like me.' I can sleep in a box many nights if it helps someone without a home."

(Donations can be sent to The Open Door Shelter, 4 Merritt St., South Norwalk, CT 06854. You can also visit their website at the link below to see a list of much needed items. www.opendoorshelter.org/donations/)



A silent winter's night,
Angelic voices softly singing.
May Joy and Peace be born
In both your hearts and home,
For unto us the Child is given.

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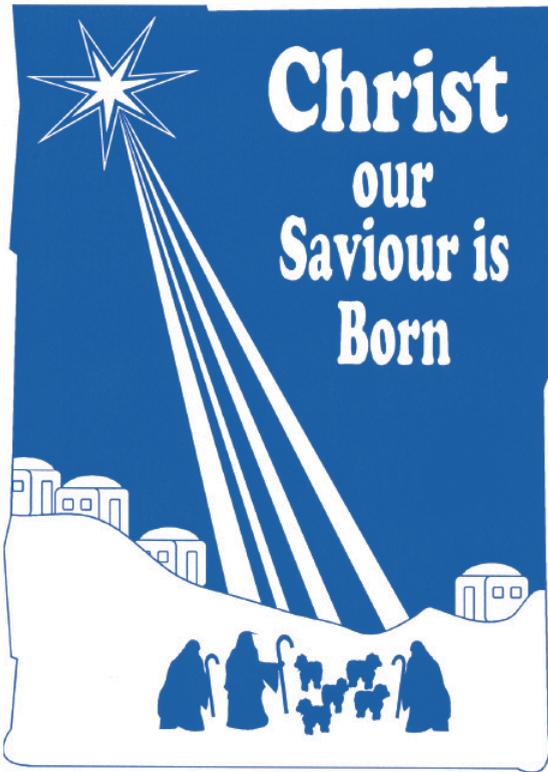
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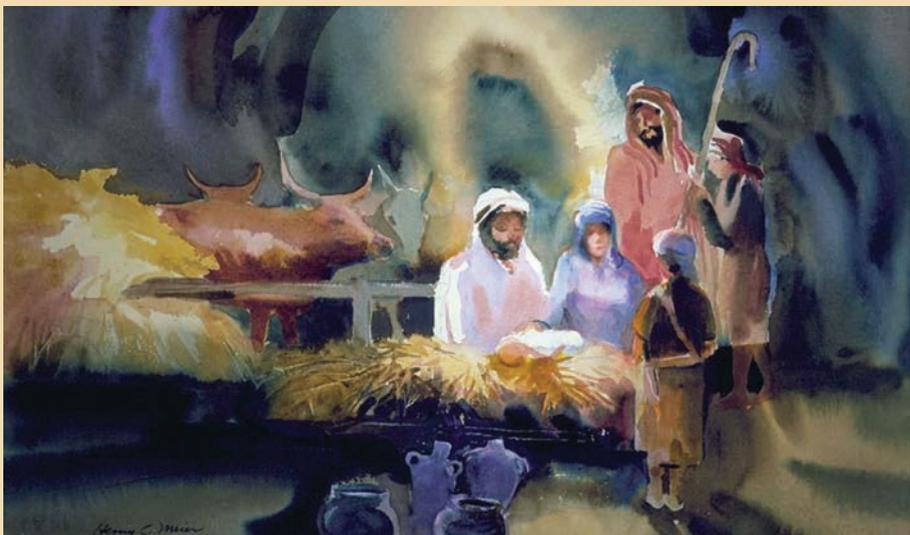


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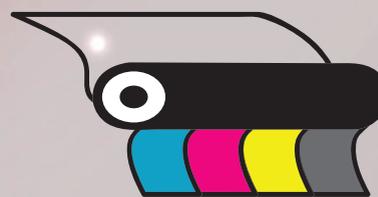
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Advent/Christmas

Tree lighting brings holiday joy

BRIDGEPORT—Christmas came to St. Vincent's on November 30 as the 18-foot Christmas tree received its crowning touch of the Snow White Angel during the 14th Annual Christmas Tree Lighting held in the lobby. President/CEO Vince Caponi welcomed the gathering of employees and visitors and introduced young soloist Kiara Simmons, a senior at Fairchild Wheeler Magnet School in Bridgeport, who sang "O Holy Night," and perennial favorites,

and Trumbull's Hillcrest Middle School Chorus, led by Margaret Winters, performed a selection of carols and holiday songs.

Santa, Mrs. Claus, and Jingles and Jangles the elves (who strongly resembled St. Vincent's staff members José Ramon, Maureen Parmelee, Nicole Ashe and Lindsay Knauf), made an appearance distributing candy canes, while the Grinch (Lou Moretti) and his "reindeer" Caesar were unsuccessful in stopping the Christmas cheer from

spreading to a very large crowd. "Alberta Spruce" the Christmas Tree (Dee Ashe) foiled the Grinch's efforts by stealing the show as she danced with abandon to Hillcrest's rendition of "O Christmas Tree."

But of course the most magical moment came as Employee of the Year Dolores Miele, a popular 22-year veteran of St. Vincent's got a "lift" to the top of the tree compliments of Engineering's Dan Rodriguez to put on the finishing touch, while the light

switch was flipped to illuminate it and create a truly beautiful sight.

Vince Caponi described Dolores as "a dynamo who has served not only as executive assistant to four presidents but as their

▶ *CONTINUED ON PAGE 33*



THE FIRST FAMILY of the North Pole takes a breather after greeting the gathering. (l-r) Mrs. Claus (Maureen Parmelee), Santa (José Ramon), Jingles the Elf (Nicole Ashe), "Alberta Spruce" the Christmas Tree (Dee Ashe), Jangles the Elf (Lindsay Knauf), and the Grinch and his dog Caesar (Lou Moretti).



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CHRISTMAS 2016 MASS SCHEDULE

CHRISTMAS EVE: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24

4:00 pm
in the McClinch Family Center.
Prelude music begins at 3:45 pm

6:00 pm
in the Church, especially for families with younger children. The Parish Children's Choir will sing.
Prelude begins at 5:45 pm

12:00 Midnight
THE MIDNIGHT MASS OF CHRISTMAS
Prelude music by the Parish Choir, soloists and instrumentalists begins at 11:30 pm

CHRISTMAS DAY: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25

8:00 am
10:00 am (*Festive Mass with Choir and Instrumentalists*)
12:00 noon

THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY,
THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD (NEW YEAR'S DAY)
SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 2017
* A Holy Day of Obligation *

VIGIL: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31

4:00 pm
7:15 pm

NEW YEAR'S DAY: SUNDAY, JANUARY 1

7:30 am
9:00 am
10:30 am
12:00 noon

Advent/Christmas

Reaching out with Al's Angels

Catholic Service Corps (CSC) members were back in action on December 10 to help out Al's Angels with their Christmas food basket preparations. Bishop Frank J. Caggiano stopped by to thank members of the Fairfield Prep and Sacred Heart University CSC Chapters as they helped to fill 1,600 bins for families who will be served over the holidays by Al's

Angels.

In November, they helped Al's Angels prepare Thanksgiving baskets for families in the tri-state area who are dealing with the ravages of cancer or are suffering severe financial hardship. "We joined over 500 other volunteers preparing these baskets and getting them ready for delivery throughout our area," said Michelle Smith, CSC coordinator.

The newly formed Catholic Service Corps kicked off in September with over 200 youth volunteers from twelve chapters participating in the Inaugural Day of Service throughout lower Fairfield County. Each of their activities begins in prayer and ends in reflection.

(For more information on CSC, email Michelle Smith: smith@diobpt.org.) ■



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December 24th, Christmas Eve: **4 pm, 10 pm, Midnight**

December 25th, Christmas Day: **8 am, 9:30 am in Italian, 11 am**

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Masses: Mon-Sat **8:15am**, Sat Vigil **4pm**, Sunday **8, 9:30 (Italian), 11am**

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www.stjamesstratford.com – Rev. Thomas F. Lynch,

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday, December 24 – Vigil Masses: 4:00pm and 6:00pm

A Mass in celebration of the Lord's birth at 11:00pm

Sunday, December 25 – 8:30am and 10:30am

Make a promise to your God today by making a greater commitment in 2017 to open your heart to experience God's intimate love by your consistent participation in Sunday Eucharist.

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Saturday, December 31, Vigil Mass: 4:30pm

Holy Day Masses – *Sunday, January 1, 2017*, 7:30am and 9:15am and 11:15am – Pray a rosary on this Holy Day for greater peace in this world. Thank God for His presence in your family in 2016 and ask for a greater openness for your family members to His love in 2017.

SAINT JAMES NEW YEAR'S DAY OF PRAYER

Sunday, January 1, 2017

1:00-3:00pm Eucharistic Adoration in the Parish Center Chapel

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

God's Holy Word Among Us - *An opportunity to come forward, reverence the Gospel book, and make or renew your commitment to love and pray with God's Holy Word in the Scripture.*

Saturday, January 7 – Vigil Mass: 4:30pm

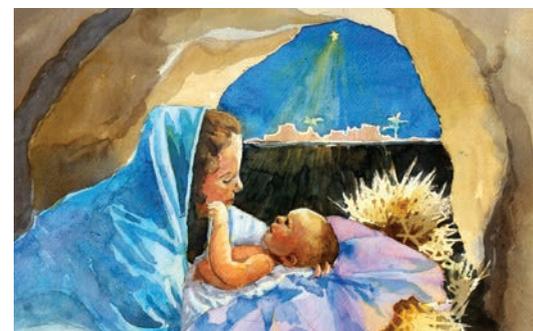
Sunday, January 8 – 7:30am, 9:15am, 11:15am, and 6:00pm

REMEMBRANCE FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE DIED

Saturday, January 14 – Vigil Mass: 4:30pm

Sunday, January 15 – 7:30am, 9:15am, 11:15am, and 6:00pm

All Masses will be dedicated to those children who have gone before us in faith. All who have lost a child are encouraged to attend and light a special candle.



Merry Christmas!



Advent/Christmas

Christmas is the greatest love story of all

By BARRY WALLACE

The birth of Christ is a story that keeps getting told and retold over the ages. One can be both impressed and disconcerted by its many variations—some sublimely beautiful, others easily forgettable—but they each borrow some aspect of the sacred event re-wrapped in secular context.

Like it or not, it's part of the Christmas experience in our culture. In the midst of the quirky abundance we have all found things to enjoy and cherish. Christmas is just too big a feast too contain.

There are countless books and movies that incorporate Christmas as central to their narrative. When I taught high school English, I assigned my classes Charles Dickens *A Christmas Carol*. It's a great piece of holiday entertainment, and a profound tale of regret and redemption. Christmas is about transformation, and that theme is very much alive in Christmas stories today.

There is a memorable Christmas dinner in James Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist*. The family is sitting down to a traditional holiday feast in middle-class Dublin when the quaint scene quickly deteriorates into angry arguments about Irish politics. Having come of age during the Vietnam Era, I can attest to such dinners where everyone ends up yelling and the mother pleads, unsuccessfully, for peace on earth and goodwill towards men.

Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* still heads the list of Christmas movies. It is the story of a man contemplating suicide



TINY TIM from Charles Dickens *A Christmas Carol*.

in his darkest hour but brought back to life by an amiable angel. Jimmy Stewart's change of heart is purely a secular tale but it holds together with the powerful themes of hope and joy at its core. Christmas always takes place in the midst of the real world.

It's hard to find a writer who hasn't written some story or meditation on modern Christmas. Much of the work, like Dylan Thomas' *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, centers around childhood memories of that magical day. Christmas tales include a variety of subjects.

Homecoming stories seem to fit the holiday mood. Romance has also borrowed the Christmas glow with numerous love stories set in the season of miracles. Christmas even moved to the snug comforts of the suburbs with films like Barbara Stanwyck's *Christmas in Connecticut*. And

what would it be without Bing Crosby's handsome priest and the saintly Ingrid Bergman saving the Catholic parish with a song and a prayer?

Of course the greatest of all

Christmas stories is the original found in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. I recently reread them with a fresh sense of discovery. The first thing that struck me is how brief they are. In Matthew, if you remove the genealogy from Abraham to Jesus, the actual narrative of the birth of Jesus is told in a little more than 20 sentences. Imagine that! This greatest story of the ages is just a fragment. Matthew includes the image of the rising star that guides the three wise men to the infant Jesus where they present him with gold, frankincense and myrrh. The first Christmas gifts ever given.

Luke's story is even more humble. The birth of Jesus is recorded in a mere eight lines. We find grittier details of Jesus born in a stable where Mary "wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger..." Instead of the wise men visiting with expensive gifts we meet shepherds tending their

flocks who seek out Jesus. They are filled with simple joy. As they say, it's a story for children of all ages.

Something caught my eye in reading Luke's warm-hearted version. After Mary and Joseph received their guests, the young couple are amazed at what the shepherds tell them about Jesus. When the men leave, the young mother becomes pensive. "But Mary measured all these words and pondered them in her heart." Here she realizes that she is both the mother of God and of the human baby at her bosom. Imagine the immensity of that quiet moment.

This private moment of Mary's is something that eventually overwhelms all of us at Christmas. We feel the joy of the baby Jesus, and awe in the presence of something wonderful beyond words. Christmas is not only a great story, but the greatest love story of all. ■

==== TREE LIGHTING FROM PAGE 31 =====

colleague and confidant." She attends St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Church in Bridgeport.

Thanks go to Chief Mission Integration Officer Bill Hoey and Mission Services Coordinator Lucinda Ames for coordinating the event with help from Deb Botticelli of Pastoral Care; Kiara Simmons and Hillcrest Choraleers led by Margaret Winters; Dietary & Environmental for preparing refreshments and setting up; Andy Bess and Steve Radziewicz for setting up and operating

the sound system with support from Deb Guerra; "Engineering Elves" including Ray Figlar, Dan Rodriguez, Chris Silva, Izzy Marrero, Andy Moore and his young assistant Ryan, Robert Macolino and their leader Tim Clarke, who all set up tree and decorations; all the volunteers who assisted, and especially José Ramon, Maureen Parmelee, Dee Ashe, Lou Moretti, Nicole Ashe and Lindsay Knauf for spreading holiday cheer.

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL! ■

CHRISTMAS *Parish Guide*

Church of the Holy Spirit - Christmas Season 2016
403 Scofieldtown Road, Stamford CT

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|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION</p> <p>WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7 5:15 PM Vigil Mass THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8 7:30 AM, 9:30 AM, 7:00 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE MONDAY, DECEMBER 12th 7:00PM Visiting priests will be available to hear confessions.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION Penance Every Saturday in the Divine Mercy Chapel 4:15 PM to 5:00 PM</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">CHRISTMAS EVE - VIGIL OF CHRISTMAS SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24TH 4:00 PM MASS 6:00 PM MASS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25TH - CHRISTMAS DAY 7:30 AM CHRISTMAS MASS AT DAWN 9:30 AM MASS OF CHRISTMAS DAY 11:30 AM MASS OF CHRISTMAS DAY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2016 VIGIL MASS 5:15 PM SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 2017 New Year's Day 7:30 AM MASS 9:30 AM MASS 11:30 AM MASS</p> |
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Advent/Christmas

Christmas is a time for empathy

STAMFORD—More than 200 audience members turned out at St. Bridget of Ireland Parish recently for an evening of Advent and Family Life Reflection they won't soon forget.

Acclaimed national TV and radio host, author of four books, and national speaker, Msgr. Jim Lisante (*Personally Speaking*, Sirius XM Catholic Channel) held the attendees spellbound as he discussed myriad spiritual issues that conflict with modern family life, especially at this busy time of the holiday season.

"It was an astounding evening. We've never had parishioners line up and wait for more than 45 minutes to be able to tell a speaker how much they loved him. This man is love incarnate, and it just happens to be wrapped in a fun-loving but reverent manner

that is charming, inspirational, and down-to-earth," said Kathy Rinaldi, a parishioner.

Blending warmth, humor, and heartfelt stories of his own family experiences with his years of pastoral ministry, Msgr. Lisante explained how love stems from our compassionate listening to one another, and in particular, listening with our hearts even more than our heads.

"Empathy is the key," Msgr. Lisante said, adding that he believes it is more important than sympathy, especially when comforting those in our lives facing difficult challenges and moments.

With the beginning of the holiday season, he emphasized, the time is right to not lose sight of what is most important in our lives: faith and family.

"The birth of our Lord and

creating and maintaining strong families... these are the finest gifts we can give and share both at the holidays and in our everyday lives," he said.

The appreciative audience hung on his every word and the reactions throughout and afterward clearly indicated this evening would resonate with them all for some time to come.

Msgr. Lisante is the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Massapequa, N.Y. He previously was the director of the Office of Family Ministry for the Diocese of Rockville Centre.

He has appeared on PBS, MSNBC, CNN, CBS, and ABC's *Nightline*. His columns have appeared in more than 300 newspapers nationwide and he lectures at conferences around the country.



ADVENT REFLECTION—Msgr. Jim Lisante speaks at St. Bridget's Parish.



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CHRISTMAS 2016

Sacrament of Penance

Thursday, December 22
7:00-8:30pm

Friday, December 23
7:30-8:00am, 4:00-5:15pm; 7:00-8:00pm

Saturday, December 24
10:30-11:30am

Masses Christmas Vigil

Saturday, December 24
4:00pm, 6:00pm and 12:00 midnight
*Christmas Concert at 11:30pm
before Christmas Eve Mass*

Christmas Day

Sunday, December 25
7:30am, 10:00am and 12:00 noon

New Year's

Solemnity of Mary, The Holy Mother of God
Holy Day of Obligation

Saturday, December 31
Vigil Mass at 4:30pm

Sunday, January 1
7:30am, 9:00am, 10:30am and 12:00 noon



St. Matthew R.C. Church

216 Scribner Ave., Norwalk, CT 06854 • www.stmatthewnorwalk.org • 203.838.3788

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

CHRISTMAS EVE - SATURDAY, December 24th
4:00 pm, 6:00 pm, 7:30 pm, 11:00 pm
Christmas Carol Sing-a-long at 10:45 pm

CHRISTMAS DAY - SUNDAY, December 25th
7:30 am, 9:00 am, 10:30 am, 12:00 noon

CONFESSIONS

Every Saturday: 3:15 pm - 4:00 pm
December 19, 20 & 22: 11:15 am - 12:00 pm & 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm
December 21: 11:15 am - 12:00 pm & 4:00 pm - 8:00pm
December 23: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm & 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm



Advent/Christmas

International Festival of Foods

STRATFORD—In a delicious response to the Pastoral Plan, Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Stratford held its first ever International Festival of Foods to introduce the festive holiday season. Father Andrew Marus, Holy Name's pastor, led parishioners in grace before the meal.



This event was the initial response to the parish's Pastoral Plan goal to recognize and celebrate the diversity of its cultural and ethnic background in both worship and parish functions. Over 140 parishioners attended the evening in the parish hall and shared foods from Slovakia, Poland, Columbia, Puerto Rico, Italy, Haiti, Hungary, Ireland and Vietnam.

It was an evening of fellowship and new friendships, with plans for more to come.

Seminarians sing the season

By ANDRÉ ESCALEIRA, JR

STAMFORD—On December 4, the seminarians at St. John Fisher Seminary gathered with their families and friends of the seminary to host their Annual Christmas Concert, with the assistance of the Serra Club of the Diocese of Bridgeport. With the help of Thomas Marino and David Harvey, the seminarians led the congregation of about 150 people through song, preparing for the coming of the Lord at Christmas with this yearly tradition.

Beginning with "Lo He Comes With Clouds Descending," the seminarians reminded all present of the Lord's advent "In the Bleak Midwinter." In order to honor Our Lady, the Mother of Christ, "Ave Maria" and "Maria Walks Amid the Thorns" were performed as well. A light reception followed the concert, during which the seminarians, their families, and other friends were able to celebrate the Advent season together.



Saint Pius X Parish

Rev. Samuel Kachuba, *Pastor*; Rev. Robert Crofut, *Parochial Vicar*,
Rev. Msgr. Ernest Esposito, *Priest in Residence*

834 Brookside Drive, Fairfield • www.st-pius.org • 203.255.6134

CHRISTMAS EVE MASSES:

- 4 pm – Church
- 4 pm – Faith Center
Community Room
- 4 pm – Religious
Education Center
- 6 pm – Church
- 11 pm – Church

CHRISTMAS DAY MASSES:

- 8 am – Church
- 10 am – Church
- 12 pm – Church



*A Merry & Blessed Christmas to all
The Clergy and Parishioners
of St. Pius X Parish*



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Parochial Vicar: Rev. Msgr. Ignacio Barreiro-Carambula

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION:

- Wednesday, December 21: 11:30am-12:00noon
- Thursday, December 22: 11:30am-12:00noon
- Friday, December 23: 5:00-5:45pm
- Saturday, December 24: 10:00am-12:00noon

CHRISTMAS EVE MASSES:

- Saturday, December 24: 4:00pm
and 7:00pm (Spanish)
- 11:00pm Rosary by the Crèche
- 11:30pm Christmas Carols
- 12:00 Solemn Midnight Mass

CHRISTMAS DAY MASSES:

- Sunday, December 25: 8:00am,
9:30am (Solemn Mass),
11:30am, and 1:15pm (Spanish)

NEW YEAR'S EVE MASSES:

- Saturday, December 31 - 9:00am and 12:10pm

SOLEMNITY OF MARY/ OCTAVE DAY OF CHRISTMAS MASSES:

- Sunday, January 1: 8:00am, 9:30am, 11:30am,
and 1:15pm (Spanish)



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HOURS: Saturday 10am-2:30pm | Sunday 9-9:30am and 11am-2pm | Monday-Friday 2:45-4:45pm
Located in Parish Center building behind Saint Mary Church | VISA/MC ACCEPTED



Merry Christmas

As we celebrate the many blessings in our lives, St. Vincent's extends our best wishes to you and your family for a joyous Christmas season and a New Year filled with peace, prosperity and good health.

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ASCENSION