Leadership Institute launches new programs

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diocesan Leadership Institute

Leadership Institute surges ahead

BRIDGEPORT—Energy abounds in the programs arranged by the Leadership Institute for the coming months.

“We hope that the programs and online resources we offer help those who serve in ministry in our diocese to do so with even more energy and enthusiasm,” says Executive Director Patrick Donovan. “The institute’s goal is to create opportunities for people to encounter the person of Jesus Christ. We hope that, from that encounter, the call to be a missionary disciple will be awakened. It then becomes the role of the institute to accompany people on their journey so they, in turn, can walk with others.”

Opening the fall programs, the Leadership Institute hosted a Formation Day and Workshop for all parish and school administrative staff on September 22 at the Catholic Center. The speaker for the day was Mike Patsin, an internationally-known Catholic speaker who has motivated audiences across the world for more than three decades.

Susan Baldwin, director of religious education (DRE) at St. Andrew Parish in Bridgeport, along with two administrative assistants from St. Andrew’s, went to the workshop. They appreciated the opportunity to meet their counterparts from so many different parishes around the diocese.

“I was amazed at how many people in this diocese are dedicated to service. Coming together like this, we support one another. It reafirms who we are as Catholics,” Baldwin said.

She came away from the Formation Day with two main concepts. “First and foremost, we are the Ministers of First Impressions,” she said. “I never thought of myself that way. This is not a job, it’s a ministry.”

The second take-away dovetailed with the first. “Everyone you meet has a story. We have to minister to each new person who comes into the office.”

Quickly following the success of the Formation Day, on September 29, a special evening for married couples, “Fall in Love Again and Again,” gave everyone from newlyweds to those who had celebrated decades together a chance to rejoice in their chosen life. Featured author and national speaker Chris Padgett and his wife, Linda, presented tips for Christ-centered marriages.

Casting a wider net, all who serve in ministry were invited to hear Bishop Frank J. Caggiano’s keynote address, “People of Joy: The Call to Missionary Discipleship.”

The Leadership Institute has a number of longer-term programs in place. Starting in mid-September, they began collecting stories about the way people encounter the person of Jesus Christ. “As these brief stories show, we all encounter Jesus in different ways: through the birth of a child; the loss of a loved one; through nature, music, or even travel. Through joy or sorrow, triumph or tragedy,” Donovan said.

These stories of three to five minutes will be a part of a new series: “From Encounter to Accompaniment.” They will be available on the website: formationreimagined.org/from-encounter-to-accompaniment and, in time, as a podcast. The institute hopes that these stories may help someone come to experience Jesus, or may help to accompany another on their journey of faith.

“So much is happening in the world these days that take our eyes off God and onto a screen, large and small,” said Donovan. “My hope and prayer is that we can use those screens to communicate the Gospel message, so that those in ministry feel more confident sharing their faith with others.”

Off the screen, the new Bishop’s Lecture Series will offer powerful speakers a few times each year, starting with Sister Miriam James speaking on the Power of Encounter on October 11 at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull.

Responding to the suggestions of millennial Catholics, a Young Adult Scripture Study program, which will include a week-long pilgrimage to the Holy Land, was designed for young adults in their 20s to fall in love with Scripture through study, pilgrimage and reflection with a small faith community.

After returning from the pilgrimage in January 2018, the group will continue to meet, pray and study Scripture. Each participant will create a module for the Leadership Institute, so that they can share their experience with others.

St. Andrew’s DRE Sue Baldwin was pleased to learn that, through the Leadership Institute, Bishop Caggiano has arranged to meet with all catechists during the fall for a conversation with him about passing on the faith in engaging ways.

“I am looking forward to more and more programs from the Leadership Institute,” said Baldwin. “Feed me—feed my soul!”

(More programs from the Leadership Institute will be available in the near future. Check out formationreimagined.org for additional offerings.)

Priest Conclave

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano is asking for prayers as he and all the priests throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport prepare to gather at the Fifth Convocation of Priests from Sunday, October 15, through Wednesday, October 18. The Convocation, which takes place every three years, will be held this year in Newport, Rhode Island.

The theme of the Convocation is “Of One Heart and Mind: Brothers United in Christ.” The purpose of the three-day meeting is to strengthen the fraternal bonds among the priests and to provide a time of spiritual renewal for them so that they may return with an even greater commitment to service.

Please be aware that Masses will not be celebrated in parishes throughout the diocese from Monday, October 15 through Wednesday, October 18; however, members of the Jesus Community at Fairfield University and religious order priests will be available for sacramental emergencies.

“Thank you for your prayers and support for this very important event in the lives of our priests and the diocese,” Bishop Caggiano told the faithful.
**Latest News**

**All Souls Day Masses set for Trumbull & Norwalk**

TRUMBULL—All Souls Day Masses will be celebrated on November 2 at 11 am at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Trumbull and St. John-St. Mary Cemetery in Norwalk.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will celebrate the outdoor Mass at St. John-St. Mary Cemetery, 223 Richards Avenue in Norwalk.

At the same time, Msgr. Thomas Powers, vicar general of the Diocese of Bridgeport, will celebrate the Mass at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery, 1086 Daniels Farm Road in Trumbull.

The Masses will be offered for all the faithful departed souls in the diocese. They are open to the public and will take place rain or shine. Both locations will have chair seating and a large tent.

Bishop Caggiano announced the first outdoor All Souls Mass last year in the hope that it would become an annual tradition across the diocese. More than 150 people attended the inaugural Mass.

“It is my hope that this special Mass will be celebrated every year and become a new tradition in the Diocese of Bridgeport,” said Bishop Caggiano when he announced the Mass. Plans call for the Mass to be held in a different diocesan cemetery each year.

“These Masses will be offered for the repose of the souls of all the faithful departed. Catholics are encouraged that day to pray for all those who died and rest in the peace of Christ,” said Msgr. Powers.

Traditionally, Catholics visit cemeteries on All Souls Day to remember the dead and pray for their souls. During the Masses, the bishop and Msgr. Powers will remember in a special way, those who suffer from abuse and to foster reconciliation in the Church.

In support of the upcoming Healing Mass and the ongoing work of healing in the diocese, group members have most recently participated in a video project produced at Sacred Heart University in association with the Safe Environments Office of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Posted on the diocesan website and available for viewing (www.bridgeportdiocese.com), the two videos offer a hopeful look at what the group and diocese have done to address victims and prevent further abuse, but also explore the pain and ongoing suffering victims have felt as they come to terms with abuse in their own lives and work and seek to protect others.

The short video offers a positive look at the reconciliation now underway in the diocese. The longer video, “A Conversation on Hope and Healing,” explores the full range of feelings, challenges and hopes of those who have suffered from sexual abuse.

Appearing in the videos are James DiVasto, Peggy Fry, Barbara Oleynick and Peter Philipp, all of whom experienced abuse as children and teens.

“We are so grateful to the members of the Committee for Healing for having the courage and commitment to share their stories. Through their honesty, integrity and compassion, they have helped the entire diocese to move forward in a spirit of healing and reconciliation,” said Erin Neil, director of Safe Environments and victims assistance coordinator.

“By sharing their stories, they have helped us to grow in understanding. It is a very hopeful sign for the diocese that they are willing to forgive and to join in our efforts to increase awareness and prevent future abuse,” said Neil.

Over the summer, group members also served as guests on “Thoughts for the Week,” a radio program co-hosted by Father Ray Petrucci and Dorothy Riera. The program, which focused on healing from abuse, was recorded at Sacred Heart University radio studios and aired in August. It will be re-broadcast on October 22 on stations throughout the state.

The first public event sponsored by the survivor’s group was the Service of Peace, Hope, and Healing for Survivors of Clerical Sexual Abuse held at the Egan Chapel of Fairfield University in November 2016. It was an evening of prayer and reconciliation that involved the personal reflection of adult men and women who had experienced clerical abuse.

In addition, the group has sponsored gatherings at the Bridgeport Public Library at their North Branch, 3455 Madison Ave., Bridgeport. This is an opportunity to meet with fellow adult survivors of abuse as a group together with a diocesan victim assistance coordinator.

“You are important to us and we want to know how we may assist you in your journey towards healing,” said Neil.

(If you are an adult survivor of abuse as a minor, and you would like to learn more about this Mass, the upcoming gatherings, and resources that are available in our diocese, contact one of our victim assistance coordinators: Erin Neil, LCSW, 203.650.3265 or Michael Tintrup, LCSW, 203.241.0987.)
Faithful turn out in large numbers for Pilgrimage

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

“We come here 1,500 strong,” Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said to diocesan pilgrims who gathered around him for the dedication of the new Rosary Walk and Garden outside the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., on September 23.

The bishop’s words capped another extraordinary moment in the odyssey of prayer and renewal that he has brought to the diocese since his installation in 2013.

Bishop Caggiano had called for the pilgrimage to celebrate the power of prayer and to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the apparition of Our Lady of Fatima to three shepherd children in 1917. “That message is just as important now as it has ever been. We come here to ask for her intercession that she might lead every human heart to answer the question; ‘What is it that you are looking for?’ And we will answer it: ‘We are looking for your son, and lead us to him.’”

Bishop Caggiano
Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception
September 23, 2017

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of the new Rosary Walk and Garden outside the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., on September 23.

The bishop said that those who live entirely by the secular values of materialism and relativism often end up empty and lost with nothing to sustain them. “We bring them to Our Lady so they can ask the questions,” he said, praying that they find love and peace in the answer that, “Christ is the desire of every human heart.”

After Mass, the entire congregation formed a procession to the new Rosary Walk and Garden alongside the main entrance of each of our lives, and one we bring to this sacred space,” the bishop said, reassuring worshippers that the Blessed Mother opens a path to the Lord. “We ask her intercession that she may lead every human heart to answer the question.”

The bishop said that those who go on pilgrimage are also “carrying others in their hearts”—often a family member or friend who is struggling spiritually.

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After Mass, the entire congregation formed a procession to the new Rosary Walk and Garden alongside the main entrance of the basilica, completing the entire Rosary in the time it took to empty the Church.

“The Rosary is a mirror into the mystery of her son,” the bishop said, praying that the new Rosary Garden “stand as a symbol of hope that the world can find peace, happiness and joy, and that the road will ever lead to Christ.”

“Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us. Pray for the whole world!”

The new garden is meant to be an oasis of beauty and calm and an invitation to pray the Rosary while visiting the shrine. The walkway is a symbolic thread of the Rosary as the path winds its way through five granite arches, each with four mysteries. A sculpture of Christ crucified marks the beginning and end of the path.
Malta House, Norwalk

Malta House collaboration with Good Counsel

NORWALK—Malta House, a Fairfield County landmark giving hope to pregnant women for nearly two decades, has entered a collaboration to expand and enhance its help for mothers and their babies.

Malta House opened in Norwalk in 1998 to feed and shelter homeless women from all backgrounds eager to keep their unborn children. In September it officially announced a new partnership that renames the home Good Counsel Malta House of Connecticut.

“We’ve formed a collaboration with Good Counsel maternity homes, already well respected in the tri-state area and beyond, to extend our community’s mission improving the lives of moms and infants,” said Kim Petrone, chair of Malta House.

“Linked with Good Counsel’s network and resources, we’ll be able to provide even greater access to health services, education, job skills and more for expectant and parenting mothers,” Petrone said. “Good Counsel also has the ability to provide care for women with substance abuse and mental health disorders, ensuring that no woman who seeks our help will ever have to be turned away. This capability is a win-win for Connecticut and our home in support of human dignity and family stability.”

Good Counsel Malta House of Connecticut brings to seven the number of maternity homes in a widely recognized network that was founded in 1985. Petrone said this new association continues to value the long-standing local support from individuals, civic groups and leaders with a vision of expanding services to more of the state.

“We’ve been the only home of our kind serving Fairfield County,” she said. Ten expectant or parenting moms from a range of difficult backgrounds currently reside at Good Counsel Malta House of Connecticut in a faith-based community with 24/7 staff support.

Christopher Bell, Good Counsel’s co-founder and president, said the new collaboration affirms the experience of a true home shared by moms, kids and staff mentors. The experience of resources and responsibilities in the Fairfield County home started when she arrived in March, after she and her ill mother were evicted from their apartment.

“My mother and I were living out of our minivan, and I was eight months pregnant and needed help,” Autumn said. “I had not heard of Malta House until a shelter referred me here, and it has been a true godsend. I have been learning so much about so many things—like budgeting, parenting, and self-respect.”

Autumn gave birth on April 22 to Ameerah, who is now one of nine infants in the caring atmosphere “where everybody pitches in day and night, and no one feels alone,” as Autumn put it. She says she is embracing skills for parenting her new daughter while also benefiting from the home’s shared care-giving, which allows her time to train to be a dental assistant.

“I’m learning to be a better woman,” said Malta House resident Autumn, “both for myself and for my baby daughter Ameerah.” She is learning parenting skills while also benefiting from the home’s shared care-giving, which allows her time to train to be a dental assistant.

“I’ve been the only home of our kind serving Fairfield County,” the new resident said. “I needed help,” Autumn said. “I had been learning so much about so many things—like budgeting, parenting, and self-respect.”

Good Counsel Malta House of Connecticut, in a faith-based community with 24/7 staff support.

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First Responders unite the nation

BY BRIAN D. WALLACE

At a time when the country is divided, First Responders “unite the nation and represent the best of what it means to be an American,” Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said at the 16th Annual Blue Mass held on September 10 at St. Matthew Parish.

The Mass was cocelebrated by Bishop Caggiano; Father Charles Allen, SJ, of Fairfield University; Msgr. Walter Orłowski, pastor of St. Matthew Parish; and many of the priests who serve as police, fire, and EMS chaplains throughout the diocese.

The bishop said that, at a time when the country is divided, First Responders represent the best of what it means to be an American. “When there is an emergency, you don’t ask if someone is a Republican or Democrat, a liberal or conservative, an English speaker or not, you serve them because they are brothers and sisters in need,” said the bishop.

“You remind us what makes us a great nation, and that what unites us in Christ is greater than what could divide us because of personal differences.”

In remarks thanking uniformed personnel, Bishop Caggiano said that the “Great Prayer of Thanksgiving” at Mass was the appropriate way to recognize the personal sacrifice and bravery of uniformed personnel who “give of themselves sacrificially and generously.”

The annual Blue Mass observance was held on the day Hurricane Irma battered Florida, and the people of the Gulf area and the Caribbean were very much on the minds of the more than 500 in attendance at St. Matthew’s.

“It’s ironic that we gather here on such a beautiful day when so many people down south are suffering terrible tribulations and their lives are in peril,” said Father Allen, who delivered the homily.

Father Allen, who serves as chaplain of Fairfield Town Emergency Services, said he was happy to see that many churches were serving as sanctuaries.

Reflecting on the Gospel reading, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am,” Father Allen praised the police, fire and EMS’s for “watching out for others,” and treating those in harm’s way as brothers and sisters. He said they save lives through their “skill, strength and love.”

This year’s honorees were recognized for acts of bravery, public service and compassion in the line of duty. Honorees include Officer Maryhelen McCarthy from the Patrol Division of the Newtown Police Department; Weston firefighter and EMT Mark Blake; Norwalk Fire Department firefighter George Baez; and Norwalk police officers Anthony DePanfilis, Matthew Nyquist and José Silva.

Blue Mass Honorees

After Mass, Bishop Caggiano and Father Allen recognized Blue Mass honorees for their courage and services to the community. Each officer came forward to receive a plaque.

Officer Maryhelen McCarthy from the Patrol Division of the Newtown Police Department is a seventeen-year veteran of the Newtown Police Department. Over the years, she has counseled those suffering from the tragedy of the Newtown shootings of 2012, responded to a bomb threat at St. Rose of Lima Church, and most recently led a remembrance a Newtown police officer who died of an illness related to his service at Ground Zero after 9/11.

Weston Volunteer Fire Department EMT Mark Blake is a Life Member of their fire department. He has done a great deal for the Weston Fire / Rescue Team and the town over the years. He has been recognized as Firefighter of the Year and received the Chief and President’s Award. He worked as a logistics officer for the American Red Cross during the 9/11 attack in New York City. He also worked at L’Ambiance Plaza building collapse in Bridgeport. Mark is the coordinator of Safe Kids of Fairfield County. He has run multiple Safe Kids car seat clinics in Weston.

Norwalk Firefighter George Baez is a ten-year veteran of the Norwalk Fire Department. Prior to his coming to the Norwalk Fire Department he was a twelve-year veteran of the United States Marine Corps, attaining the rank of staff sergeant. During his years in Norwalk he has involved himself with a number of community activities. These include working with the Jefferson School children in their basketball program and at the Briggs/Pathways Academy High School with their Fire Academy Program. He assists with the City of Norwalk Public Safety Cadet Program.

Firefighter Baez is the lead of the Norwalk Fire Department Honor Guard. He is currently assigned as Deputy Chiefs Aide.

The Norwalk Department of Police Service recognized officers Anthony DePanfilis, Officer Matthew Nyquist and Officer José Silva for their excellent team work and professionalism displayed during an extremely dangerous situation on May 12, 2016.

“The officers demonstrated courage in the face of extreme danger and the use of restraint when confronted by a potentially life threatening adversary. The officers were able to handcuff the suspect and take him to the hospital for evaluation,” said Father Allen.

Officer Anthony DePanfilis was born and raised in Norwalk. He joined the department on February 26, 1999. During his tenure at the Norwalk Police Department, he has served in the Patrol Division, Special Services and in the U.S. Marshals’ Violent Fugitive Task Force. Over the course of his career, Officer DePanfilis has garnered numerous awards, medals and citations including a Police Service Cross, Medal of Merit and four Officer of the Month awards for outstanding and courageous police work.

Officer Matthew Nyquist joined the department on July 25, 2013. He holds a BS degree in criminal justice from the University of Scranton and an MS, also in criminal justice, from Long Island University. Officer Nyquist is currently assigned to the First Platoon.

Officer José Silva joined the Norwalk Police Department on March 26, 2015, after working at Pratt & Whitney-United Technologies, building jet engines for U.S. military fighter planes. He holds a bachelor of science degree in finance from Central Connecticut State University. Officer Silva is originally from the Cape Verde Islands off the northwest coast of Africa and is a native speaker of Cape Verdean Creole and Portuguese. Officer Silva is currently assigned to the First Platoon.

The Blue Mass is sponsored by the Knights of Columbus and other generous benefactors throughout Fairfield County.
Respect Life

‘Welcoming the Stranger’

By PAT HENNESSY

When Sister Mary Ellen Burns’ great-grandmother immigrated to this country in the 1860s, the 16-year-old girl faced a lonely, harsh and frightening journey from County Tipperary in Ireland. She left all that she knew and loved to escape poverty and political oppression in Ireland. “But as soon as she put her foot on the shore in New York, she was legally present in the United States,” said Sister Mary Ellen.

Sister Mary Ellen, ASCJ, a Yale graduate, worked for 19 years as a legal services lawyer in New York City before founding Apostle Immigrant Services in New Haven. The organization is a recent expression of the mission of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who came to this country over a hundred years ago to work with struggling immigrants in New Haven.

Sister Mary Ellen and Alex Arévalo, immigration counselor for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Bridgeport, spoke at “Welcoming the Stranger,” a social justice lecture on immigration sponsored by the diocesan Council of Religious. It was held at the Catholic Center in Bridgeport on September 26, the day before Pope Francis initiated his “Share the Journey” initiative.

Alex Arévalo—now a U.S. citizen—was able to graduate college and now is certified to assist more recent immigrants. His office has served people from more than 25 countries. Many are working toward or have become U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents, obtained employment authorization documents, or applied for family reunification relief. With the recent cancellation of the DACA program, Arévalo is also working with 160 DREAMers in this diocese for protection from deportation and removal. DREAMers is a broad name for people who were brought to this country as children and grew up here. He told the group that most of the young people he works with come from local parishes. “With no legal status, they have no Social Security, no work—often not even a drivers’ license. All these possibilities are denied them.”

“Many of these young people would be torn from the only country they have really known, to countries for which they hold no memories,” the bishops’ statement noted. “They would lose their educational, work and military service opportunities that would make them contributing members of our society.”

The lecture at the Catholic Center, in addition to showing the disparities in this country’s immigration policies, helped to counter misinformation about the immigration process. “For an employment visa, a specific employer in the U.S. must request the visa for a specific person and demonstrate that their skill level is needed in that capacity,” said Sister Mary Ellen. “The chances that someone in Africa will know of an American firm needing their skills are slim to none.”

The challenge for a family-based visa is equally daunting. From certain countries, it is nearly impossible. “For a Mexican-born man, now a U.S. citizen, the waiting time to bring his son to this country is over 60 years,” she said.

“This is such an important issue,” said Father Chris Samele, pastor of St. Stephen Parish in Trumbull. “I came here tonight because I’m just as ignorant as anyone about this topic, and I feel that it’s part of my vocation as a priest to learn what I can and make my parishioners aware of it.”

St. Stephen’s is starting a service group in October, and Father Samele plans to take the information he gathered back to them. “We can learn about this, we can look at it and ask, ‘What can we do?’ We have to live our faith.”

On September 27, the morning following the symposium, Pope Francis welcomed Caritas representatives to officially launch the “Share the Journey” two-year campaign aimed at raising awareness about the plight of migrants. The campaign aims to challenge negative perceptions regarding migrants through websites featuring the stories of individuals and explanations of Church teaching on the culture of encounter. This is exactly the exploration the “Welcome the Stranger” lecture hoped to begin, and that Father Samele plans to present to his parishioners.

Opening his arms wide in a powerfully symbolic gesture in St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis said, “Christ urges us to welcome our brothers and sisters with our arms truly open, ready for a sincere embrace, a loving and enveloping embrace.”

Participating U.S. organizations have launched a website, www.sharejourney.org for ideas and tools for participation in the campaign. To learn more about the Pope’s initiative, go to cestopstories.com/2017/09/27/share-the-journey-embrace-migrants-refugees-people-of-syry/ or www.youtube.com/watch}
EDITORIAL

Stretch

Toward the end of September, Pope Francis encouraged the Church to reach out to migrants and refugees through the Share the Journey program. “The Church” means us. No matter how well intentioned we are, most Catholics in Fairfield County don’t know any refugees. So how can we start to follow the Pope’s initiative?

Maybe sharing, like charity, begins at home. Or at church, or at the grocery store. Once you start thinking that way, there are lots of opportunities to reach out. Actually look at the people whose hand you shake during the Sign of Peace at Mass. Recognize that they are nice folks. Smile. Smile again at the grocery store clerks. They might not be as similar to you and me as the people we stand beside at Mass, but they are good people too.

It is absolutely, scientifically proven—that when your face stretches into a smile, your heart stretches, too. Pope Francis is asking us to grow bigger hearts. To get outside our comfort zone. Maybe when we stretch our prayers and hearts at home, we’ll be able to stretch out our arms to welcome the stranger when he finally comes our way.

Renewed in Prayer

What a remarkable day for those who traveled to Washington, D.C., on September 23 for Solemn Mass at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and the dedication of the new Rosary Walk and Garden!

More than 2,000 faithful from the diocese answered the bishop’s call to pilgrimage and prayer. They were young and old, individuals and families. Some parishes, like St. Charles Borromeo in Bridgeport, even filled buses with parishioners who journeyed together.

One highlight of day was the appearance of the Diocesan Youth Choir, which sang throughout the Mass behind the celebrants on the main altar.

“I was delighted and humbled to see so many young people and families from our diocese travel to Washington to pray and celebrate this great day together. Thank you for your sacrifices, witness, and joyful celebration of our Catholic faith,” said Bishop Caggiano.

At the dedication of the Rosary Walk following Mass, Bishop Caggiano prayed before the statue of Our Lady of Fatima. “No matter what challenge you and I face, the Lord will lead us through it, through the intercession of his mother, and as you and I struggling to be disciples, she is our model and guide.”

As a time when many people are divided and entangled in contentious social issues, our bishop has shown us the way forward in renewal: he urges us to keep our focus on Christ and the sacraments, to serve others, to be peacemakers, to be good people too.

Lifelong Formation

The need to improve catechesis was foremost in the mind of synod delegates in 2014 and 2015, when they gave it the highest priority in their list of recommendations.

This fall, the Leadership Institute has more than answered that call with the launch of a wide range of programs and online opportunities for people throughout diocese to learn more about their faith and share the gift with others.

The Catechetical Task Force Findings & Recommendations Report, highlighted in this issue, offers a blueprint going forward. The report is a singular call to re-imagine faith formation in the diocese by making it a lifelong journey of encounter and accompaniment within the context of the parish community. It outlines best practices and recommendations for sacramental preparation, effective pastoral ministry, marriage prep and more.

“Everything’s on the table,” said institute director Patrick Donovan at recent meeting with parish ministers, in which he unveiled the new report. Beginning with the understanding that the classroom model of religious education is no longer enough, the report serves as an invitation to create more welcoming parishes where people “encounter Christ” through communities of faith and service.

In the coming weeks, Bishop Caggiano will continue this “Conversation with Catechists” to discuss the report and outline the path to missionary discipleship “one person at a time.”

The Leadership Institute is off to a great start, bringing new energy and vision to the task of lifelong faith formation. To learn more about the exciting and challenging initiatives, visit wwwFORMATIONreimagined.org.
Editorial

Visiting the Imprisoned

A Woman’s Voice

By Sister Nancy Strillacci, ASCJ


E arly this year Bishop Frank J. Caggiano asked me if I would like to work in the Bridgeport Correctional Facility on North Avenue. I had been volunteering for eight years doing Communion services, so he knew I had an interest.

I now go in Tuesdays and Wednesdays through the Department of Corrections (DOC) Professional Partnership with the diocese. I am grateful to our bishop and Rev. Charles Williams at the DOC Religious Services Office to have this opportunity.

Why is this work necessary?

First, prison ministry is part of the Catholic Church’s fostering a Culture of Life, in which every human is recognized as having God-given dignity. Second, Jesus taught his followers (including us) by his own actions to have a preferential option for the poor and those on the margins of society. Third, one of the corporal works of mercy is visiting the imprisoned.

The U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops emphasized in their 2000 document “Responsibility, Rehabilitation and Restoration” that the Church stands in solidarity with the incarcerated as members of the social community.

It especially stressed the need for community-based substance abuse programs to reduce recidivism and the warehousing of those with addictions in correctional institutions. These would allow addicted persons in treatment to remain in jobs and with families.

The bishops also said, “Physical, behavioral and emotional healing happens sooner, and with more lasting effects, if accompanied by spiritual healing.”

Bridgeport jail’s Chaplains’ Office regularly includes Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Islamic chaplains. Imam Nasif Muhammad is the facilitator, having ministered there for 40 years. It has been a pleasure sharing our spiritual lives in professional dialog. They have been more than kind in getting me accustomed to the prison schedule and protocol, although after having volunteered there for years I had the advantage of knowing some of the buildings, correction officers and inmates.

Why is this work necessary?

North Avenue is a Category 1-4 male facility with a population of about 800. Many inmates are awaiting their court appearances. Some cannot afford to bond out. Some have already been convicted and are waiting for sentencing. Some, sentenced, soon go to another CT facility, program or halfway house. It is a mixed population of varied ages, races, ethnicities, of first timers and repeat offenders. I make them laugh when I say that ministry there is similar to my former experience as campus minister at a secular university. . .

You never know who will show up at a session and whether you will see them again. But in the jail you have a captive audience! It is very humbling to have Scripture sharing and discussion in groups or conversation with individual prisoners. They share personal stories of poor choices, their faith and insights, and lay out their plans for the future that with God’s grace they hope to achieve. It is a privilege to journey with them, help them deal with their “reality,” and encourage them to be free interiorly. I remind them that some on the outside are not free. Inmates are very ordinary people. One could be a neighbor, a work colleague, a relative.

I find it difficult to watch anxious family members of the imprisoned in the lobby, not knowing what to do, in particular if this is their loved one’s first “time in.” The impact of imprisonment on family members, especially on dependent children, is terrible. Often inmates decline jail visiting to spare loved ones the experience. Some tell their kids on the phone that they are away at school. Re-entry after release can also be worrisome for inmates with few resources on the outside waiting for them.

The Catholic community can urge for prison reform and pray for those in State facilities, their families coping with complicated emotional and financial situations and those who serve and care for the detainees.
George Weigel to offer talk and book signing

TRUMBULL—George Weigel, New York Times best-selling author and St. John Paul II’s biographer and personal friend, will visit the parish of St. Catherine of Siena for a talk and book signing on Saturday, October 21.

In conjunction with the book signing, a First Class Relic of the still liquefied blood of St. John Paul II will be present at all Masses at St. Catherine’s on Saturday, October 21, and Sunday, October 22. The relic will be available for public veneration following the 10:30 am Mass on Sunday. Mass times are Saturday: 4 pm and 7:15 pm; Sunday: 7:30 am, 9 am, 10:30 am, and 12 noon.

“All Masses during this weekend will be Memorial Masses of St. John Paul II, by special permission of Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of Bridgeport,” said Father Joseph Marcello, pastor of St. Catherine. “We’re honored and excited that Mr. Weigel’s only Connecticut appearance will be at St. Catherine’s. This is an event that is open to the entire diocese and we welcome all.”

Weigel’s book, Lessons in Hope: My Unexpected Life with St. John Paul II (Basic Books; September 19, 2017), is a book of stories about a saint who bent the course of human history by the biographer who knew him “from the inside.”

In this new book, distinguished Catholic scholar George Weigel amplifies his bestselling two-volume biography of John Paul II by offering an album of memories that reveals the rich personality of the emblematic figure of the second half of the twentieth century and sketches his own journey to becoming the Pope’s biographer and friend. Weigel recounts significant encounters with people who, through their influence and insight, shaped his own perspective on foreign affairs and human rights and, most importantly, his admiration and respect for John Paul II.

The relic of St. John Paul is similar to one displayed at the April 27, 2014, canonization of Pope John Paul in Rome. It consists of a vial of his blood that was entrusted to the Knights of Columbus for the Saint John Paul II National Shrine by his longtime personal secretary Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, Archbishop of Krakow. It is normally housed at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine, which is administered by the Knights in Washington, D.C. The site was designated a national shrine by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. It features a 16,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art exhibit on John Paul’s life and legacy.

(For more information, visit the St. Catherine website: www.stcathtrumbull.com. or call 203.377.3133.)

The Parish of Saint Catherine of Siena is pleased to present
An Organ Dedication Recital
MICHAEL HEY
Concert Organist
Sunday, November 12, 2017 ~ 4:00 p.m.

Featuring solo organ works on the church’s new four-manual organ built by The Walker Technical Company

Michael Hey is Associate Director of Music and Organist of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, New York City. He has been increasingly visible on U.S. and international concert stages, with recent performances for the U.S. visit of Pope Francis.

This is a FREE event ~ Everyone Welcome ~ Reception to Follow

The Parish of Saint Catherine of Siena • Trumbull
220 Shelton Road • Trumbull, Connecticut 06611 ~ 203.377.3133 • www.stcathtrumbull.com

Najam, Queen of Clergy chef

George Najam, chef at the Catherine Denis Keefe Queen of the Clergy Residence, died after being hit by a car on August 16 on the way home from work.

He had recently returned from a vacation with his wife, Linda.

Najam, 68, grew up in Danbury and was a graduate of Danbury High School, Class of ‘66. He served in the United States Navy during the Vietnam War, cooking on several aircraft carriers in the Tonkin Gulf.

He completed his formal education after returning from Vietnam and was a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America. Najam had been the executive chef for 25 years for the Sisters at the Congregation of Notre Dame, then in Ridgefield, before becoming chef to Queen of the Clergy.

The Liturgy of the Resurrection was celebrated for George Najam on August 22 at St. Anthony Maronite Catholic Church in Danbury, with Father Naji Kiwan, pastor, officiating.

Interment followed in St. Peter Cemetery, Danbury.
AN INVITATION TO LIFELONG FORMATION

Diocese of Bridgeport

CATECHETICAL TASK FORCE FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A MOMENT OF RENEWAL

My Dear Friends,

In accord with the mandates of the Fourth Diocesan Synod, the Catechetical Task Force was established in October 2015. Over a period of eighteen months, the committee met to recognize the good work happening in faith formation in our parishes and schools and to recommend new models of ministry to achieve the renewal called for in the Synod’s instructions.

This is not a moment of judgment in the history of our diocese—but a moment of renewal. What can we do better to bear great fruit? What can we do better together?

Let us pray for the courage to take an honest look at how we communicate the faith with others. Let us pray for the wisdom to see beyond what we have always done and look to what is possible. Finally, let us pray for strength to make changes where change is required.

Only then will we truly be renewed.

NAMING THE PROBLEM

While it is true that many parishes are doing faith formation well, few parishes have taken faith formation beyond the standard classroom model. For generations, the current model of religious education assumed that the faith of the family unit was alive and well. Religious education, be it in the parish parochial school or in the parish religious education program, was intended to supplement the faith practices at home, not replace them.

The Task Force recognized several issues:

• The classroom model is not all that effective in helping young people retain the faith, but this is how our buildings and textbooks are structured, so how do we meet that challenge?

• Families have changed over the last several generations. More and more families are what society would name, “nontraditional.” The Task Force rejected that term but wanted to be sure to identify the unique living situation that many families face.

• The cultural milieu has changed. Pluralism and relativism reign supreme and facing that reality is on the minds of parents and teachers as they seek new ways to share the faith.

• Life in Fairfield County provides its own challenges. We welcome the very wealthy and the very poor to our parish communities. For some leaders, we must find the balance between attitudes of entitlement among some and the choice to feed a child or educate a child among others.

• Every parish is different. Every family is different. How do we reimagine faith formation while recognizing that one size will never, ever fit everyone?

FINDING THE SOLUTION

If we are to be instruments of change in this world and in the lives of those around us, we must rethink everything. Not our core Catholic beliefs, of course, but how we live and share those beliefs. This goes far beyond the hour many of us spend at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days and asks how faith informs our head and motivates our heart. To do this, we have to challenge the culture of the status quo that exists in many of our faith communities. Phrases like, “We’ve always done it this way” and “Why do we have to change?” have no place in this new reality. As Pope Francis reminds us in Evangelii Gaudium, “Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon (this) complacent attitude.” Indeed, the Holy Father invites “everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities.” (EG, 33)
ABOUT CULTURAL DIVERSITY

One of the ways we hope to achieve lifelong formation is to build communities where diversity is welcomed and valued and where the faithful are seen as equal partners in the Gospel message. This is best reflected in the text that follows, which is part of a formation plan offered by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The program is called Intercultural Competencies and will be offered in the Diocese of Bridgeport in the coming months.

Therefore, to serve effectively, parishes might consider:

• Articulating a vision of ministry based on ecclesial integration and inclusion;
• Fostering the inculturation of the Gospel in all cultures;
• Planning with the people, not for the people;
• Broadening your understanding of ministry groups, programs, and structures, and cast a bigger net;
• Empowering people from different cultures and ethnicities into leadership positions.

Source: USCCB, Intercultural Competencies

SURVEY BACKGROUND

The Catechetical Task Force Survey was developed to obtain a better understanding of the needs of Directors of Religious Education/Faith Formation throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport.

A telephone survey was drafted, reviewed, modified and approved by the CTF. Interviews were conducted via telephone from May to August 2016.

Fifty-six of 78 (72%) parishes participated in the first survey. More than 80% of our parishes were represented in the second survey, conducted in November 2016.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Parishes reflect a wide range of student enrollment at all levels. There are also variances in the types and lengths of programs provided, the curriculum used, etc. In other words, there is no single “persona” to define a “typical” parish.

Nearly twice as many parishes report decreased student enrollment overall (45%) versus those that report an increase (25%).

Where enrollment is increasing, in nearly every case it is due to a direct action by the parish in creating/revising programs or parish clergy taking an active outreach role.

INITIAL CONCLUSIONS

• An active, comprehensive ministry to young people enlivens a parish, therefore, more should be done by the diocese to help parishes develop ministry teams that can make this happen
• Parishes that have pre-school ministry are three times more likely to report that these families attend Mass “regularly”
• Revised sacramental guidelines for First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation were requested by more than half of respondents
• The diocese should offer more formation for religious educators, catechists, and youth ministry leaders
• The diocese should create an online community where ministry leaders can share ideas
• The Task Force should make recommendations that allow parishes to tailor suggestions to their own unique realities
• The diocese should offer resources specific to every stage of faith formation
• Improve communication between the diocese and parish leaders
• The Task Force should create indicators and recommendations for parishes to use in assessing and reinvigorating their faith formation efforts

Online you can read more on the following topics in the Lifelong Formation, Catechetical Task Force Findings & Recommendations report:

• This Document’s Framework
• Indicators/Recommendations for Effective Baptismal Preparation
• Indicators/Recommendations for Effective Pastoral Ministry: Early Childhood
• Indicators/Recommendations for Effective Pastoral Ministry: Childhood
• Indicators/Recommendations for Effective First Reconciliation Preparation
• Indicators/Recommendations for Effective First Communion Preparation
• Indicators for Effective Pastoral Ministry: Early Adolescents
• Indicators/Recommendations for Effective Pastoral Ministry: Adolescents
• Indicators/Recommendations for Effective Confirmation Preparation
• Indicators/Recommendations for Effective Pastoral Ministry: Adults
• A Word About Young Adults / The Wisdom of Age
• Indicators for Effectively Welcoming New Members (RCIA)
• Indicators/Recommendations for Effective Marriage Preparation
• Indicators/Recommendations for Effective Pastoral Ministry: Families
• Answering the Call
• Expectations

www.formationreimagined.org
To help illustrate the path to missionary discipleship, the Leadership Institute has created an infographic outlining this lifetime relationship. Copies are available. Please email institute@diobpt.org.
Relics of Padre Pio visit Bridgeport diocese

By JOSEPH PRONECHEN

By early morning on Sunday, September 24, people were already arriving at St. Theresa Church in Trumbull to view and venerate the relics of St. Pio of Pietrelcina—beloved Padre Pio. They were open to view an hour before the first Mass at 7:30 am. As the day progressed, the unusually hot, humid weather didn’t deter droves of everyone who were simply in awe of being able to venerate the relics of a well-known saint. The Saint Pio Foundation, the official sponsors of this visit in the United States, brought for display and veneration St. Pio’s glove, crusts of his wounds, cotton-gauze with the saint’s blood stains, a lock of Padre Pio’s hair, a handkerchief soaked with his perspiration only hours before he died, and his friar’s mantle. All but the mantle were in exceptionally large reliquaries.

The timing to visit the Diocese of Bridgeport was right because 2017 brings together the 150th anniversary of Padre Pio’s birth and 15th anniversary of his canonization. For two days previously—September 22-23—the relics of Padre Pio were at the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist in Stamford. Msgr. Stephen DiGiovanni, the pastor, said that 6,000 people came to venerate the relics during those two days. The fruits were obvious.

“Most people already had an attachment,” he said, “and this was strengthened by the great spiritual fruitfulness for the families that came, many whom I have never seen before.” They came to St. John’s from long distances. Msgr. DiGiovanni said that all week the parish got calls from people in Texas, Arkansas, the Carolinas, Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey. They came from all over Connecticut, too.

There were also seminarians from Yonkers, from the Catskills, and a variety of religious order priests who came with their seminarians. “It was surely great to see,” said Msgr. DiGiovanni. For the three priests at the basilica, “We were all very moved by the presence the relics and the fervor of the people,” said Msgr. DiGiovanni. “For two full days pretty much, people were constantly coming in,” he noted, keeping the lines in the basilica long and full.

Masses were packed. On September 23, “There was standing room only, with 1,400 people at the Mass on the feast day.” Then, on Sunday at the 10:30 am Mass, St. Theresa’s, which seats 1,200 comfortably, was nearly completely filled with a spillover into the choir loft. With the relics left front and center in the lower sanctuary, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano celebrated Mass. Concelebrating with him were Father Brian Gannon, the pastor, Father Carl McIntosh and Father Harry Prieto.

During his homily, Bishop Caggiano began by highlighting the words of St. Paul from the second reading, “For to me life is Christ and death is gain.” He remembered those words spoken by his friend Peter, a seminarian knowing he would die before his ordination. The classmates were with him in the hospital room a week before ordination. “Peter recognized he was dying,” Bishop Caggiano said. Instead of a vista opening after ordination, there was this instead. Bishop Caggiano stressed how “God’s love is given not for transitory good but for eternal life.” And what God gives is “wildly different between us. But not unfair. He is wildly in love with each one of us.”

Turning to the gospel of the laborers being called to work in the vineyard at different hours of the day, then all receiving the same wage, much to the displeasure of the earliest workers who felt unfairly treated because they had labored longer, he noted, “the laborers were comparing theirs and forgot to look to God, the author of all goodness and love.”

The bishop tied a major lesson from the gospel into the life of Padre Pio. “Whatever we receive is meant to be given…To love not expecting in return…To love until everything is given away. That mystery did not escape Padre Pio.”

“It is true he wore in his physical body the stigmata of Christ,” Bishop Caggiano observed. “More importantly, he was a man who wildly loved everyone he met.” Padre Pio knew that only by presenting the truth could he help “the people entrusted to his care.” That was for their healing of body and spirit. The saintly friar founded the state of the art hospital at Pietrelcina.

Padre Pio loved and sacrificed and we’re challenged to do the same thing.

“You can’t do it on your own,” Bishop Caggiano said. Necessary is the power of the Holy Spirit. Plead with Christ: “Help me to do what I cannot do on my own. Help me, Lord, to be your disciple and love to the end.”

“…And if we, my friends, are willing to do that,” affirmed Bishop Caggiano, “Padre Pio is not the only one to be able to work miracles. So will you, and so will I.”

After Masses, 3,500 faithful from individuals to families with several children, from tots being carried in their parent’s arms to teenagers looking happy to be there, filled St. Theresa’s main aisle and continued outside and up to the rear of the church.

Father Gannon saw countless fruits during the day. Among them, he said, “For our own parish, all the volunteers coming together and being so sacrificial and self-giving with their time and having so much joy about it, was a blessing. And the incredible patience and calm of hundreds of people waiting in the heat was another testimony to the faith of people and the thirst for holiness.”

Father Gannon also saw a major fruit for priests with this visit. He explained, “Padre Pio is forever a reminder to us priests of the need for personal sanctity and faithfulness to our Lord’s teachings.”

Puerto Rico relief

When Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico on September 20, its 155-mph winds knocked out electricity to the entire island, leaving its 3.4 million people in the dark. The situation could last up to six months, officials said. “This is an event without precedent,” Puerto Rico Governer Ricardo Rossello said in a statement. He called for additional assistance as residents deal with not just the loss of power, but a lack of drinkable water, fuel and numerous necessities.

Catholic Charities USA has sent $1 million in emergency aid to assist Caritas Puerto Rico, the Catholic Charities agency on the island, as it begins the work of recovery, the agency told Catholic News Service on September 27. The national network of Catholic Charities agencies collected the money from thousands of donors across the United States in response to damage done by hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. The Knights of Columbus, based in New Haven, has raised more than $2.8 million as part of an ongoing national appeal “that builds on the donations and relief work of Knights themselves.” In a September 26 news release, the Knights announced that it has donated $100,000 to Puerto Rico to aid victims of Maria and an additional $100,000 to Mexico for victims of the earthquakes that have struck that country.

In addition to financial support, it said many Knights have helped to rescue stranded neighbors and provide assistance, which has included the distribution of more than $720,000 in food, water and other necessities.

“Charity has always been the defining characteristic of the Knights of Columbus, and people—both those in distress and those who want to help—have placed a great deal of trust in us,” said Knights’ CEO Carl Anderson. “The outpouring of generosity to our appeal by our members and others has been greatly appreciated.”

(Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) is the official domestic relief agency of the U.S. Catholic Church. To donate, call 800.919.9338 or visit www.catholiccharitiesusa.org. One hundred percent of funds raised are going to those affected.)
Gospel of Life Society

Educat ing for life

By PAT HENNESSY

“When Eileen Bianchini agreed to head the Gospel of Life Society, her aim was to inform and educate people about Respect Life issues,” said Maureen Ciardiello, director of the Respect Life office of the Diocese of Bridgeport. “She brought in speakers from every spectrum of the Culture of Life.”

Bianchini, who stepped down as director of the Gospel of Life Society after 11 years at the helm, was one of the strongest pro-life voices in Connecticut. In June, she was recognized with an award from the CT Right to Life Conference for her courageous and effective leadership. John Waite, president of CT Right to Life, presented the award at the June Gospel of Life Society meeting.

“Eileen was ahead of the rest of us in recognizing the threat and acted forcefully and effectively to educate both legislators and the public,” said Waite when making the award.

The Gospel of Life Society meets the second Saturday of the month after the 9 am Mass at St. Mary Parish in Norwalk. Members read a section from St. John Paul II’s encyclical Evangelium Vitae and to pray for a culture of life. Then, most months, a speaker will address the group on current issues affecting the culture.

“Eileen really brought a whole new facet to the Gospel of Life Society,” said Father Greg Markey, who was pastor of St. Mary’s when the GOLS first made its home there. Father Markey had been looking for a lay leader to take over the GOLS in 2005 and Bianchini, a Third Order Franciscan, generously took on the task.

Education was Bianchini’s goal. Research and information were, and remain, critical to the effectiveness of the Gospel of Life Society. When Bianchini assumed leadership, GOLS evaluations pointed to a lack of critical pro-life education in the state. “So we did more research and decided to have speakers in our meetings,” she wrote in the letter announcing her retirement. “Our search was for critical pro-life educational material that was fact based, verifiable, and would expose the hidden lies and deceits.”

For the ‘Culture of Life,’ you’re trying to build up an understanding of the entire culture—of the dignity of life in all its aspects,” said Father Markey. “Eileen had senators, she had congressmen, she invited people involved in the abortion issue and healing in the aftermath of abortion, speakers on Natural Family Planning, end of life issues, suicide, the death penalty.”

Participants in the GOLS have heard from nurses and doctors, professors, parents of children with Down Syndrome, specialists in teenage mental development. “Some were famous nationwide, others were dynamic speakers who most people didn’t even know exist,” said Father Markey. One critical strength of the Gospel of Life Society is that it brings together parish Respect Life groups, the CT Right to Life Society, and pro-life professionals and elected officials. “One of its goals is to encourage people,” said Father Markey. “It’s dis-covering to be the only Pro Life voice. Through the society, parish groups knew they weren’t alone. The Gospel of Life Society was there to help.”

With the guidance and support of sympathetic local legislators, GOLS members learned to effectively utilize a fact-based approach to persuading CT’s lawmakers on life and family issues. Many times they’re called to respond to urgent legislative issues in Hartford.

A prime example of this was Bianchini’s role in the proposed Physician Assisted Suicide legislation in Connecticut. Her testimony at a CT Public Health Committee hearing, March 30, 2013, included statistics, reports and information from a similar bill passed in Oregon. The report noted, chillingly, that in Oregon, after four years of assisted suicide, there was a decline in end-of-life pain control. Equally distressing, after the Oregon law was enacted, referrals for counsel- ing for fragile patients dropped. That data came from the Oregon Department of Health annual reports.

The Connecticut bill died in committee. For her part, Bianchini noted that the success of the Gospel of Life was largely the fruit of the membership in their active participation, interest in learning the truth about complex issues and effective use of evidence in persuading others.

As she put it in her last meeting with members as president, “The Gospel of Life is successful because of you. You were given the ball and you ran with it. Please keep it up. Connecticut needs you.” When she stepped down as director, Bianchini asked one of her long-time collaborators, John Juhasz, a St. Mary’s parishioner, to assume leadership of Gospel of Life Society. “There is a rich roster of speakers for this season,” Juhasz said. “At our October 14 meeting, the speaker will be Measi O’Rourke, executive director St. Joseph’s Parenting Center in Stamford.”

The title of O’Rourke’s talk is “How God Uses Broken Things: Protecting All God’s Children.” (The Gospel of Life Society meets at St. Mary’s the second Saturday of the month from September through June at 10 am. To be put on the mailing list for future meetings and newsletters, contact John Juhasz: Gospeloflife.stmary@gmail.com.)

Healing and Hope

By MAUREEN CIARDIELLO

There are many out there who think that abortion is an unforgivable sin. Our Catholic faith teaches us, instead, that God forgives anyone who is repentant and truly sorry.

Pope Francis put it so beautifully in a statement he made on May 29, 2013, “The Church is the great family of the children of God. Certainly, it has human aspects from the members who comprise it, pastors and faithful. They have defects, imperfections, sin. Even the pope has them—and he has many—but what is beautiful is that when we become aware that we are sinners, we find the mercy of God. God always forgives.

You heard him, right? He said it not once, but twice, “God always forgives.” What do you need to do in order to be forgiven? Pope Francis said, “When we become aware, we find the mercy of God.”

Where do we find that mercy? First of all, we find it in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In confession you meet the Lord in person, through his priest, and he will absolve you of your sin right then and there. That is where your healing journey will begin.

The Lord is always ready to forgive, but healing—particularly from the loss of a child through abortion—is a journey. Women undergo an abortion during a time of crisis, when abortion seems to solve the problem in the moment. In that crisis, women and men—can’t think about the effects down the road. In the aftermath, they get stuck with the fear and the shame.

Christ is the divine healer. He wants to restore us; he can make us well.

If you need help on your journey, Project Rachel is here to assist you. Project Rachel offers women support through our Days of Prayer and Healing and Hope and Healing weekends, and we can connect you to others who have experienced similar journeys so that you know you’re not on this path alone. Men can also find help through Days of Healing, time dedicated especially for them. In addition, there are many kind and compassionate priests we can connect you to.

We offer support not only for women and men but for siblings as well. Abortion affects the entire family, and can have an impact on other children. When siblings become aware of a parent’s abortion experience, they may say, “Now I understand why my mother or father reacted the way they did.” “Now I know why mom was so over protective.” “I can see why they were emotionally distant—caught up in their own feelings.”

Sibling retreats are geared for adults over 18. (If you or someone you know has experienced the wounds of abortion, Project Rachel offers support on your journey to healing. For more information contact the confidential phone line: 203.895.3554 or 203.416.1619 or email projectra-chel@dsbpt.org.)

BUILDING UNDERSTANDING—Eileen Bianchini, stepping down as director of the Gospel of Life Society after 11 years, was honored in June to her efforts to build up the Culture of Life. (Eileen Bianchini; Father Richard Cipolla, pastor St. Mary Parish in Norwalk; and John Juhasz, new director of the GOLS.)
Father Seraphim Rohlman, 52

Father Ralph Seraphim Rohlman, former director of the Propagation of the Faith, died on October 2 in Bridgeport. Father Seraphim was born on July 13, 1965, in Bridgeport, and attended area elementary schools and Central High School.

He was attending the University of Bridgeport on a full music scholarship when he heard a missionary bishop speak in his home parish of St. Dimitrie Romanian Orthodox Church. Inspired by that talk, he prepared for the priesthood in the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church. 

During his years in Alaska he traveled throughout the Aleutian island chain and along the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers, baptizing and celebrating the Divine Liturgy. He founded a hospice program in Anchorage and set up the first chaplaincy program at the Bureau of Indian Affairs hospital there.

He was later sent to Texas to teach at a seminary, and to New Mexico, Montana and Nebraska.

He was received into full communion with the Catholic Church in Danbury, a close friend of Father Rohlman and his family, was the celebrant.

Father Seraphim is mourned by his wife, Catherine, and their daughter, Evgenia. Condolences may be sent to their address: 40 Tesny Circle, Bridgeport, CT 06606. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Father Seraphim, and for the consolation of his family.

Hennessy from page 9

to step out on their own. Bell and Father Groeschel stayed on the Malta House board of directors. “Now, a few years have gone by, and the Good Counsel and Malta House boards have decided that we can do better together,” said Bell. “The rechristened home is Good Counsel Malta House of Connecticut “Hopefully we can turn people away. It boosts the “success rate” in their glossy brochures. Chris Bell won’t hear of it. All are welcome; that’s his policy.

The cases Bell and his staff take on can be complex. Substance abuse, mental illness, and the long, slow breakdown of the family in urban communities make it more so. Sometimes women leave without saying where they’re going. Often they don’t come back.

“We obviously can’t force people to stay and take the help we offer,” Bell told me. But they try.

With God’s help they try.
2017 COMMUNITY IMPACT SNAPSHOT
Catholic Charities of Fairfield County

- 100+ years impacting the community
- 1,316,255 meals provided
- 87 cents of every dollar directly given to programs and client services
- 23 towns
- 10,000+ individuals served

BUDGET BY REVENUE TYPE
- Government: 49%
- Contributions: 24%
- Catholic Appeal: 11%
- Program revenue: 11%
- Other: 5%

What is Catholic Charities of Fairfield County?
For over 100 years, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County has mobilized a philosophy of faith in action to provide a broad spectrum of social services to the extended Fairfield County community.

We serve the needy through a multitude of programs that include feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless and homebound, strengthening families and individuals, and assisting those on the road to immigration documentation.

Over the last 100 years, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County has become one of the largest private family service agencies in Connecticut.

Our goal is to continue to serve Fairfield County for the next 100 years.

How We Make a Difference

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<td>Served 95,760 breakfasts</td>
<td>Case management services provided for 220 homeless or formerly homeless adults and children in 121 federally funded housing units</td>
<td>Provided 15,000 counseling sessions</td>
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<td>183,488 lunches</td>
<td>Provided $416,400 in rental assistance to help clients stay in their homes</td>
<td>Educated 134 preschoolers of low income families</td>
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<td>72,207 dinners</td>
<td>Secured 45 permanent housing units to assist formerly incarcerated to reintegrate into society</td>
<td>Collected fully-supplied kindergarten backpacks for 75 preschool graduates</td>
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<td>Welcomed 2,680 individuals to shop in our food pantries</td>
<td>Helped over 70 homeless individuals move off the streets into safe housing</td>
<td>Conducted 387 immigration consultations and assisted 22 individuals with obtaining U.S. citizenship</td>
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<td>Home-delivered 91,375 meals to 175 seniors through our Meals on Wheels service</td>
<td>Distributed 2,643 donated toys and 1,082 clothing items to 881 individuals during the holidays</td>
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238 Jewett Avenue | Bridgeport, Connecticut 06606-2892 | www.CCFairfield.org | Phone: 203.416.1503
Karl Rahner, the major theologian of the 20th century, never offered any traditional "proofs" for the existence of God. He pointed out that God is not an object among objects, and, therefore, is never known in the way that objects are known.

Rahner thought that the way human beings come to the mystery of God involves the fact that there is no human experience from which God is absent. Rahner’s favorite image for God was that of the horizon. God is the horizon behind all things. He is the horizon behind all things. It is the horizon beyond all things.

Rahner further taught that there are situations in which God clearly comes to the fore. The world opens out. An encounter with transcendence may be quite transparent. He felt that in every life there are special moments like this—sudden, unexpected, breakthrough experiences. Rahner insisted that in every life there are these special moments that catch one by surprise. Here are a few examples:

A man in a park heard from far away the sound of children heading home from school, the sound of a woman’s voice calling, the sound of a bus shifting gears. He had a sense of the transcendent.

Rahner thought in every life there are special moments like these, occasions when the depth breaks through in an exceptional way. When an interviewer said to Rahner: “I have never had an experience of God,” Rahner retorted, “I don’t believe you, I just don’t accept that. You have had and will have an experience of God, and I am convinced that this is true of every person.”

People can have the experience but miss the meaning, as T.S. Eliot put it. The experience may invite them, but also unsettle them. They turn away from any intense encounter with depth.

People may not want to be aware of their transcendental experiences. Life may be simpler if they ignore them, do not open themselves to them.

Rahner insists that in every life there are the intimations which lure people, some sense of an invisible world which interprets the one we see, some sense of being grasped by something of utmost importance. These are not experiences which are given to some and withheld from others. It is a constant feature of all human beings’ experience, though it is a feature which can be resisted.

Rahner felt that if people do not have at least a vague sense...
The new iconoclasm

In some ways, it reminds me of the Taliban and the iconoclasm that followed the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution. Even in Catholic churches, you’ll find those who are eager to remove crucifixes because they claim the depiction of Christ suffering on the cross can be upsetting. After Vatican II, some reformers began taking the traditional statuary out of churches in keeping with what they thought was the spirit of the Council.

Here is a true story about a family that did something about it. Back in the 1960s, a woman and her son were driving past a Catholic church in a New England town when they noticed religious statues piled in a dumpster for removal. They got their pickup truck and in a rescue effort reminiscent of the Great Escape, they loaded them up and drove away with the Sacred Heart, Our Lady of Grace, St. Joseph, St. Therese and many others that they saved from certain destruction.

Then, she had a chapel constructed in her backyard, where she kept the statues safe for years, until the day she had to move. She called my wife, Sandy, and by the time we got to her home, all of them had been taken—except for a statue of St. Ann with the Blessed Mother and a statue of St. Jude, which were life-sized and made in Italy.

Since Sandy had been adopted and raised by a woman named Ann and since she was born on the feast of St. Jude, we found an artist who restored them to their original splendor, and now they occupy a place of honor in our home.

The zeal to deface statues is part of a greater spiritual illness that afflicts our society, which has no respect for the unborn, the frail elderly or the dispossessed and yet believes its iconoclasm is motivated by lofty principles.

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

Inauguran Capilla de Adoración en Santa María

POR MARICARMEN GODOY

En una ceremonia religiosa llena de fe y piedad, la Parroquia Santa María (Santa María ) en Bridgeport, con la presencia del Obispo Frank J. Caggiano, inauguró la Capilla de Adoración, que a partir de ese momento se convirtió en un lugar sagrado para orar a los pies del Santísimo.

A las 8:30 de la mañana del 24 de septiembre, el Obispo Caggiano, junto al Padre Rolando Torres, párroco de Santa María y el Padre Frank Gómez, párroco de la Parroquia de San Carlos Borromeo en Bridgeport, concurrieron a la Misa.

Dentro del ritual, Monseñor bendijo la Capilla de Adoración al Santísimo Sacramento, una obra que empezó a construirse en mayo del 2017 con un estudio técnico, diseño y recolección de dinero que logró un monto de 50 mil dólares, más decenas de horas trabajadas voluntariamente.

La edificación de la Capilla de Adoración estuvo a cargo de Angel Letona, un constructor hondureño, residente de Stamford, que por pedido del Padre Rolando decidió colaborar en la edificación de la obra. A pesar de que faltó dinero para dar por acabada en su totalidad, él puso gratuitamente la mano de obra junto a otro de sus trabajadores.

“Fue para mí un honor y un privilegio que el Padre Rolando me haya llamado para construir la capilla. Nunca había hecho un trabajo similar dentro de una iglesia, y eso fue realmente una bendición de Dios”, dijo Letona quien, acompañado por su madre, esposa e hijos, acudió a la Misa inaugural de la capilla construida con sus manos. También acudieron cientos de feligreses de origen hispano de la parroquia de Santa María.

En la misa, el Obispo Caggiano, en su mensaje durante la homilía, dijo que donaron tiempo y dinero a construir la capilla no solo porque el Obispo les invitó a que lo hicieran, sino porque le podían dar a la comunidad guatemalteca por donar las flores para adornar la iglesia. Pero sobre todo, el Obispo Caggiano, quien le dio todo el aval para que inicie la construcción de la capilla que nació de una necesidad de orar en forma piadosa dentro de la parroquia.

A las 8:30 de la mañana del 24, 2 horas al día, 168 horas semanales; sí creo que es importante que todos nosotros realicemos lo mismo para que lo dediquen a Dios.

“Tenemos siete días a la semana, 24 horas al día, 168 horas semanales, porque creo que es importante que seamos capaces de dedicar tiempo a Dios”, dijo, durante de su semana de trabajo para que lo dediquen a Dios.

A continuación, el Obispo Caggiano, quien le dio todo el aval para que inicie la construcción de la capilla, que nació de una necesidad de orar en forma piadosa dentro de la parroquia.

“Tenemos siete días a la semana, 24 horas al día, 168 horas semanales; si creo que es importante que todos nosotros realicemos lo mismo para que lo dediquen a Dios.

“A las 8:30 de la mañana del 24, 2 horas al día, 168 horas semanales; sí creo que es importante que todos nosotros realicemos lo mismo para que lo dediquen a Dios.”

Como un dato particular, el Padre Rolando agradeció a nombre de la familia Torres la donación de un cáliz que será utilizado durante las misas en la Capilla del Santísimo.

La nueva Capilla de Adoración, está abierta todos los días de 8 am a 10 pm.

Ayuda para Puerto Rico

BRIDGEPORT—El Padre Rolando Torres, párroco de la Parroquia de Santa María en Bridgeport, en donde se encuentra una de las comunidades más grandes de puertorriqueños, está uniendo todos los esfuerzos y recursos para ayudar a los hermanos que están en necesidad.

El Obispo les dijo a los feligreses que, quienes se encuentran en la isla del Encanto, Puerto Rico. Su familia, que se encuentra en el área norte (desde San Juan, Vega Alta, Vega Baja y Arecibo), sufrieron muchos daños a causa de los huracanes.

Además de las oraciones, el sacerdote confirmó que muchos de sus compañeros sacerdotes le llamaron, solidarizándose con su pueblo y su familia. Sus familiares viven principalmente en el área de Vega Alta y Vega Baja, y muchos de sus primos, tios y parientes cercanos han perdido sus casas y casi todas sus pertenencias.

Después del devastador paso del Huracán María, el Padre Torres se comunicó con el Padre Tomás González de la Arquidiócesis de San Juan, quien le contó los pormenores de la situación de Puerto Rico.

“Hay muchas áreas que están sin agua, hay muchas áreas que están bastante destruidas y muchas personas que perdieron sus casas”, sostuvo.

El Padre Torres pide que, durante estos días, los fieles visiten la Capilla de Adoración, den un tiempo a Dios y oren por nuestros hermanos y hermanas en necesidad.

(Para mayor información, pueden comunicarse al 203.334.8811).

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DAY OF RECOLLECTION for nurses from St. Vincent’s and friends will take place at St. Joseph’s Manor, Trumbull, on Sat., Oct. 14, from 10-3 pm in the Adult Day Care Center. Donation: $10. For more info, call Irma Palko: 203.333.5045 by Wed., Oct. 11.

PUBLIC SQUARE ROSARY RALLY to celebrate the 100th Fatima Anniversary will be held on Oct. 14, at 12 noon at the Old Mill Green, (the intersection of Boston Ave. & East Main St.). For more info, contact Michael Miller: 203.526.7655 or Michael_Miller910@hotmail.com.

100TH ANNIVERSARY of the Miracle of the Sun at Fatima on 10-12. For more info, call John Juhasz: 203.762.3661 or juhaszjw@optonline.net.

100TH ANNIVERSARY of the Miracle of the Sun at Fatima on will be observed with an outdoor celebration at St. Margaret’s Shrine, Brookfield, on Sat., Oct. 14, at 12 noon. For more info, call 203.775.9254.

DAY RETREAT at the Convent of St. Birgitta, Darien, with Fr. Anthony Mastromenti will take place Sat., Oct. 14, from 9-3 pm. Cost: $50, includes breakfast and lunch. For more info, call Erlinda: 203.866.5546, ext. 101, or at 203.919.5976.

TRIBUTE TO NEIL DIAMOND performed by “Simply Diamond” Brian LaBlanc will take place in St. Stephen Parish, Trumbull, on Sat., Oct. 14, at 7 pm. Cost: $15/person. Bring your own snacks and beverage. Coffee and dessert served. For more info and reservations, call Mary: 203.452.8333.

WINE TASTING with 25+ wines and appetizers hosted by Conte’s Package Store will take place at St. Margaret’s Shrine, Bridgeport on Sun., Oct 15, from 1-5 pm. Donation: $30/person; $50 couples; $20/person for groups of 10 or more. Tickets limited, presale only. Available at Conte’s: 203.367.5024; at the Shrine: 203.333.9627; or at www.eventbrite.com/e/wine-tasting-tickets.

INSPIRING EVENING of music, stories and prayer with musician Steve Angiulano will take place at St. Matthew Parish, Norwalk, on Sun., Oct. 15, at 7 pm. Free admission. For more info, contact Valerie Wyman at St. Matthew’s: 203.838.3788, ext. 109, or stmatthewparish@hotmail.com.

KNIGHTS OF LITHUANIA will hold their monthly Mass and meeting Sun., Oct. 15, at 12 noon at St. George Parish, Bridgeport. For more info, call 203.878.0519.

MEN’S FELLOWSHIP EVENING: Firefighter Bill Lavin will speak on “Making a Difference” as a Man of Faith at St. Rose of Lima Parish, Newtown, Sun., Oct. 15, at 6:15 pm, following the 5 pm Mass. Refreshments served. No charge. For more info and to register, call the parish: 203.426.1014.

WOMEN’S GROUP at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, will meet Mon., Oct. 16, at 10 am in the parish hall. Guest speaker Megan Murphy will discuss fire prevention. For more info, contact Esther: 203.268.8011.

CRAFT FAIR & BAZAAR for St. Margaret’s Bourgeois Parish, Brookfield, is now accepting vendor applications for the Sat., Nov. 11 fair. Application deadline is Mon., Oct. 16. Vendors applications are available at stmarguerite.org.

PETRA AND HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE with Fr. Arthur Mollenhauer will take place Feb. 19-March 2, 2018. Deposit required by Wed., Oct. 18. For more info, contact Sharon MacKnight: 203.327.1806 or smacknight@optonline.net.

MOMs+DADS prayer/support group for those with Down syndrome, their family and friends meets the third Thurs. of every month (Oct. 19), at 7:30 pm at St. Mary Parish, Norwalk. For more info, contact strapostolate@optumzum.net.

CALL TO ZION: Heal the wounds of the past through a program of healing and love at St. James Parish, Stratford, Thurs. evenings, 7-9 pm, once a month starting Thurs., Oct. 19. Cost: $50; includes book. For more info and to register, call the parish center: 203.375.5887.

DIVORCED AND SEPARATED Catholics are invited to join “Hearts Renewed.” Meetings are held in Fairfield on the first and third Fri. of every month (Oct. 20; Nov. 3) at 7:30. For more info and for directions, call Bette: 203.338.0503 or Peggy: 203.834.1287.

MASS OF HEALING AND HOPE: the Charismatic Renewal Services announces a Mass of Healing and Hope on Mon., Oct. 23, at 7 pm at Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Fairfield, with Fr. Larry Carew; and Mon., Nov. 6, at 7:30 pm at St. Lawrence Parish, Shelton, with Fr. Carew. For more info, call the Charismatic Renewal Office: 203.456.5610.

HAUNTED GRAVEYARD: Catholic Young Adults of Greater Danbury, (18-35), will gather on Sat., Oct. 28, from 5-10:30 pm at Lake Compounce, 186 Enterprise Dr., Bristol. For more info, email catholic.ya.danbury@gmail.com.

TOY DRIVE HOSTED for Ali’s Angels. The Angels distribute toys to over 13,000 children battling cancer. The Toy Drive will be held Nov. 8-Dec. 11. If you can help, contact Al DiGuido: adiguido@yahoo.com.

RAKE N’ BAKE: Handy Dandy Handyman has opened volunteer registration for Rake N’ Bake 2017, which will take place Sat., Nov. 11. The teams will be working on 80 properties. Registration required by Fri., Nov. 3, go to www.hdham.org/rake-n-bake-2017-registration. For more info or for large groups (12 or more), contact Sheila Kuhn: teachsmk@gmail.com or 203.775.3368.

MAGNIFICAT will host their semi-annual women’s breakfast on Sat., Nov. 11, at Ethan Allen Inn, Danbury. Registration deadline: Sat., Nov. 4. No tickets at the door. For more info, contact Fran Hood: s.m.hood@sbcglobal.net or 203.744.1856.

HOLY HOUR: Catholic Young Adults of Greater Danbury, (18-35), will gather on Tues., Nov. 7, at 6:45 pm for a Praise and Worship Holy Hour at Sacred Heart Parish, Danbury, followed by a social. For more info, email catholic.ya.danbury@gmail.com.

MASS AND BLESSING for veterans will be celebrated Sat., Nov. 11, at 12:15 pm at St. Margaret’s Shrine, Bridgeport. For more info, call 203.345.3244.

HARVEST FAIR at St. Luke Parish, Westport, will take place the weekend of Nov. 11-12, from 10 am-4 pm. For more info, contact Nancy Pandolfi: 203.259.5816.

HARVEST TABLE to benefit New Covenant Center, Stamford, will take place Sun., Nov. 12, from 11 am-2:30 pm at the Hyatt Regency, 1800 East Putnam Ave., Greenwich. Guest speaker Cecily Gans, owner of MainCourse Catering. Admission: $100 plus one non-perishable food item. For tickets, visit www.501auctions.com/harvestable.

DISCERNMENT TALK: Catholic Young Adults of Greater Danbury, (18-35), will gather on Tues., Nov. 14, at the WCSU Newman Center, 7th Ave., Danbury, for a talk by Paul Krenzelok from the Franciscan Friars at the Atonement. For more info, email catholic.ya.danbury@gmail.com.

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Teachers form students in ‘mind and faith’

By Brian D. Wallace

Describing teachers as the “spiritual mothers and fathers” of their students, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano told Catholic educators that in addition to building academic skills, they are also forming young people in the faith and values that will guide them over a lifetime.

More than 700 Catholic high school and elementary teachers turned out on September 5 for Convocation 2017 at the Klein Memorial Auditorium in Bridgeport to officially begin the school year.

The program began with Mass celebrated by Bishop Caggiano and diocesan school chaplains, and included an address from Dr. Steven Cheeseman, superintendent of schools, and motivational speaker Jonathan Doyle.

Bishop Caggiano said that “teaching is a noble and sublime vocation,” and that Catholic schools are “homes” that safeguard children, teaching them how to be lifetime learners, and to “discover values of God and family.”

“A Catholic school is a home where the heart of Jesus can be found, and that heart beats in you and me,” said the bishop. “Thank you for your witness, your authenticity and for the hope you give our students in increasingly difficult and conflicted times.”

The bishop said that many students may eventually forget the lessons they learn in school, but they always remember their teachers.

“I will work with you to strengthen our schools for the next generations to come,” he said.

The bishop said he believed that Catholic schools provide a superior education in “mind, heart, hands and spirit,” and invited teachers to join in the renewal of the Church by making schools “authentically and genuinely Catholic.”

The Kolbe Cathedral High School Choir, directed by Joe Elbertson, provided music for the Mass. Father Michael Novajosky coordinated the altar servers from St. Joseph High School.

In his yearly address to diocesan educators following the Mass, Dr. Cheeseman expanded on many of the themes mentioned in Bishop Caggiano’s homily.

“I don’t want Catholic schools to be public schools with religion classes,” said Dr. Cheeseman, superintendent of schools. “We have the freedom to be so much more than that.”

He drew applause from teachers when he said that Catholic schools would not use a standard assessment “to grade teachers, but to help them,” and likewise, it would not use standard assessments “to grade teachers, but to inform them.”

“I want to put my faith in you, not the standards,” he said to the teachers. “You know what it looks like when a child learns.”

Catholic schools have “academic excellence,” but also have the opportunity to define their own “common core—and that core is Christ.”

Dr. Cheeseman said the diocese will publish its strategic plan for education in October, and that teachers will be asked for their input. He said the strategic plan will address the questions of “What can Catholic education look like in five years and how can we change the landscape of education?”

He also issued a challenge to teachers. “I want you to ask for change and to flood the Foundations in Education office with proposals for innovation.”

“We are very grateful to our friends at KeyBank for their generous support for Foundations in Education,” said Executive Director Holly Doherty-Lemoine. “This contribution will provide scholarships so that even more children will benefit from the extraordinary faith filled education that Catholic schools provide. We appreciate the impact KeyBank has made on our children and their families.”

Foundations in Education is a nonprofit organization established in July 2015 to promote academic excellence, faith formation and enrollment in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport. It will provide more than $2.5 million this year in scholarships to children who would not otherwise have the means to attend Catholic schools. In addition, Foundations in Education provides funds to support professional development of teachers and administrators to promote innovation in curriculum and leadership development.

“KeyBank Foundation supports organizations that make the communities we serve better places to live, work and attend school,” said Matthew Fair, vice president for Key Insurance and Benefits Services, the insurance subsidiary of KeyBank.

KeyBank Donates $15,000 to Foundations

Bridgeport—The Diocese of Bridgeport announced a donation of $15,000 by KeyBank Foundation, the nonprofit charitable foundation of KeyCorp, to Foundations in Education, which provides scholarship assistance to students attending Catholic schools in Fairfield County.

The diocese educates more than 9,000 students in its 26 Catholic schools (Grades pre-K to 12) including five high schools, 20 elementary schools on 24 campuses, and one school for students with special needs. More than 60 percent of students in diocesan schools receive financial assistance and 15 percent of students are non-Catholic.

PREPARING CHILDREN for thriving futures—(l-r) Bishop Frank Caggiano; Holly Doherty-Lemoine, executive director of Foundations in Education; Bonnie Geppert and Matt Fair of KeyBank. The KeyBank Foundation donated $15,000 to Foundations in Education.

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Catholic Academy

Students wow at fundraiser for inner-city education

GREENWICH—A recent Catholic Academy of Bridgeport event raised $150,000 for scholarships. A gathering of Catholic Academy of Bridgeport supporters and their guests were joined by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano in the upper room of Polpo Restaurant on September 26 for the school’s annual fall dinner fundraiser. The academy, which educates more than 945 students on the campuses of St. Andrew, St. Ann, St. Augustine and St. Raphael, needs the support of St. Andrew, St. Ann, St. Augustine and St. Raphael, needs the support of St. Andrew, St. Ann, St. Augustine and St. Raphael, needs the support of the people in this room, as well as others who have been so generous in helping us seek academic excellence in an inner-city like Bridgeport, beleaguered with low-performing public schools and dire economics,” said Evans. Executive director of the Catholic Academy, Sister Joan Magnetti, rscj, followed Evans’ remarks by quoting Mark Twain. “The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why,” she said. “I want to thank all of you who are here tonight and who are faithful donors to our school,” she said. “You know the ‘why’ of your life, the purpose of your life, which is to be in the service of others.” Peppered between courses of chopped salad, penne alla vodka and delicious entrees and desserts were memorable appearances by several students. Kadjah Needham, a top student at Kolbe Cathedral High School who would like to be an attorney one day, received a standing ovation when she sang a moving rendition of Kari Jobe’s “I Am Not Alone,” accompanied on the keyboard by Kolbe music teacher Joe Elbertson. Later in the evening, Jennifer Melo, an alumna of St. Augustine who currently attends Notre Dame High School and dreams of being a neurosurgeon, spoke from her heart about her time at the Catholic Academy’s St. Augustine campus. “St. Augustine not only pushed me to grow spiritually but helped me to grow academically,” Melo said. “Every day I left my classroom knowing something new and was more prepared for all the obstacles and hardships I knew high school was going to throw at me. My teachers gave me the knowledge and confidence to do my best, and I knew I could count on them for assistance and guidance.” At one point in her elementary school education, Melo was struggling in math. “My teacher helped me to go from a B- to an A in just one semester,” she shared. “I want to thank the donors who made all of this possible. God bless you all for investing in the children of today to improve our future.” Rounding out the evening’s speakers was New Canaan resident Jennifer Cieszko, a parishioner of St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan, who joined his mother at the podium. “I like writing letters to Terence, our Leaders of Tomorrow student,” said Petey. “He sends us notes, too, and I might even get to meet him this year.” With sincere charm and authenticity, Petey implored guests at Polpo to consider giving to the academy. “I hope all of you here tonight will think about giving a dollar or two to help kids like Terence and others at the Catholic Academy who could really use your help.” Because Ron Rosa and his wife Dominique graciously hosted and underwrote the fall dinner for the fourth year in a row, all donations were fully tax-deductible and the academy was able to raise approximately $150,000 for the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport. The dinner is one of three major fundraisers the academy hosts each year.

(For more information about the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport, call 203.362.2990 or go to www.catholicacademybridgeport.org.)

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October 2017
Foundations announces new appointments

BRIDGEPORT—Foundations in Education is pleased to announce the appointment of Theresa Sciallo as associate director for scholarship and grants and Karen Sportini as associate director of development.

Calling them a “dynamic duo,” Executive Director Holly Doherty-Lemoine said that Sciallo and Sportini joined the Foundations in Education team in late September.

Sciallo will bring her expertise in working with the diocesan Catholic Schools to Foundations in Education, where she will shepherd and grow the programs of the foundation, including the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund and Innovation and Leadership Grants for faculty and administrators.

“Theresa will also lend her prowess and creativity in marketing to the foundations efforts of growing awareness and brand recognition throughout Fairfield County,” said Doherty-Lemoine.

As two new members join the Foundation’s team, Doherty-Lemoine took time to wish a fond farewell to Marina Deluca, who was the first assistant with foundations and served in that capacity for eight months. “During this time, she exhibited a kind and gentle spirit and patience beyond measure. She was the face and voice of foundations to many of the parents who called with regard to the Bishop Scholarship Fund.”

“Foundations in Education is an excellent example of an initiative working hard to create quality educational opportunities for all students and we are excited and honored to have contributed to this worthwhile cause.”

KeyBank Foundation serves to fulfill KeyBank’s purpose “to help clients and communities thrive,” and its mission is “to support organizations and programs that prepare people for thriving futures.” The foundation’s mission is advanced through three funding priorities—neighbors, education, and workforce—and through community service.

For information on Catholic schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport, visit www.dioceseforbridgeportcatholicschools.org. For information on Foundations in Education, visit www.foundationsineducation.org.

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Theresa Sciallo
Karen Sportini
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Sister Gloria Esposito

‘Daughter’ becomes grandmother to generations

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

Sister Gloria Esposito has 130 grandchildren and she’s still counting—she’s expecting her 131st soon in Bolivia.

They’re children of the children who grew up in the orphanage she ran at St. Ignatius Home and School in Cochabamba, Bolivia, one of her many assignments as a Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. Sister Gloria has served in Bolivia for the past 58 years.

The Bridgeport native, who will be 85 in October, was back in the area over the summer for her annual visit to family and friends.

“I couldn’t have done my work without them,” she says of the many people who have generously supported her work over the years.

In particular she’s grateful to her classmates from St. Ann School in the Black Rock section of Bridgeport. They get together when she comes home, and one of them is Dr. Jim Roach, known to many in the area for his work at St. Vincent’s Medical Center.

“We’re all very proud of her work,” says Dr. Roach, who met Sister Gloria as a first grader at St. Ann’s. “We look forward to her visits and reports from Bolivia.”

Another member of the St. Ann’s group is Dottie Sullivan of Stratford, who also attended Lauralton Hall with Sister Gloria.

“She was a great athlete there,” Dottie recalls, “and she surprised us when she said she wanted to enter the convent. We all took her to the station—it was only supposed to be a year!”

On September 8, 1950, at the age of 18, Gloria Esposito entered the community of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in Emmetsburg, Maryland.

After finishing her novitiate she began studies there at Saint Joseph’s College. When Pope Pius XII asked her province to take on a foreign mission, Sister Gloria volunteered, and six months later, on February 24, 1959, she was sent to Bolivia.

“My father said, ‘What have you done and done now?’” she says. “He was so concerned.”

It turns out that it was the adventure of a lifetime and the beginning of a very full life of service in education and service to orphans and street children.

When Sister Gloria first arrived in Bolivia as a Daughter, the sisters were still wearing the famous and wing-like cornette. “I went with the cornette and I wore that in the tropics for nine years,” she says with a humorous sigh. “It definitely was a bit of trouble—it would melt down on you in the heat, but no one died from it. We all managed. We were with the poor and that was it.”

Her first assignment saw her dropped down in the Bolivian jungle.

As a young woman, she taught and eventually ran two schools systems with 50 schools in each. Later in life she opened the St. Ignatius Orphanage, where she has worked for much of the past 28 years.

Sister Gloria says that many of the young people she serves live in unimaginable poverty and uncertainty, but they also have an outsized sense of gratitude for the help they’ve receive.

“You come back here and people have everything. Down there many people live from day to day. They don’t know what tomorrow will bring. They rely on God because there is no security,” she says.

Sister Gloria is grateful to Pope Francis for calling international attention to the poor, noting that he has spent his life living and working among them in Argentina and he understands their struggles. As one who has given her life to helping the poorest of the poor, she is discouraged by the current animosity to migrants and refugees, and she hopes that people will listen to the teaching of the Holy Father.

Although friends like Dr. Jim Roach are inspired and amazed by her missionary service, Sister Gloria believes she hasn’t done anything exceptional. “I don’t think I’ve done great things,” she says. “I was very fortunate to be able to live in Bolivia and work with the poor—I was just a Daughter of Charity from Bridgeport.”

Only three sisters from the U.S. are still working in her province, but many Bolivian women have joined the sisters in their work. “Women today have so many more choices, and they want to be independent. They want to give a couple of years as volunteers, but don’t want to dictate their lives.”

But Sister Gloria has no second thoughts.

“It’s a much richer life than I thought. I’m so thankful for the opportunity to have lived with the Bolivians and worked with them. They’re good people.”

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Immaculate High School

Student has interfaith experience in Africa

DANBURY—Over the summer, many Immaculate High School students perform their community service hours by helping local organizations. One senior, Albert “AJ” Vitiello, went beyond his borders, both personal and physical, and travelled half way across the world to help another community with seemingly simple but important needs.

AJ spent three weeks in the village of Anloga, Ghana, literally helping to build a school as well as building minds. During his time in Anloga, situated in the Keta District of the Volta Region, he taught a fifth grade class where students ranged from ages 12-18 years old.

“This made me realize how lucky I am to receive the quality education I am getting and the encouragement from my teachers,” AJ said. “My service also consisted of making bricks for a primary school, and I carved IHS into one of the bricks I made.”

AJ noted that he wore his Immaculate uniform the first day of class to show the students that Americans wear uniforms too.

Seeing how precarious education is in other parts of the world really opened AJ’s eyes to how fortunate he was to receive a top-notch, modern education in a comfortable, modern school building with some of the best educators in the world. He also was able to see how children from other parts of our world have to live.

The experience strengthened his faith.

“Although my village was mostly Muslim, my class made me a Rosary at the end of the trip, which was really special,” he said. “This strengthened my faith by showing how people from two completely different cultures and backgrounds can come together with God.”

Whenever he had free time, AJ enjoyed hiking to a waterfall, feeding the monkeys and shopping at an African market. But it was his time with the Ghanaian students that he enjoyed the most. “Of all the people I met in Ghana, I’ll probably miss a boy named Koshi the most. He was twenty years old and severely mentally disabled. He’d hang around our classroom all day and nobody would care, so I started to draw in the mud with him. Although we couldn’t speak to each other, we bonded over these drawings in the sand. He’d give me a big “thumbs up” every time I saw him. He taught me how to communicate without even using words. By the end of the trip, I really connected with him and found it hard to say goodbye.”

AJ bonded with two other boys at the orphanage school, who also opened his eyes, and heart, wider. “Jude was in my fifth grade class. While most students were afraid to answer my questions, Jude always raised his hand. He was fascinated by my camera and asked frequent questions about the United States.”

FRIENDSHIPS FORM QUICKLY—“This strengthened my faith by showing how people from two completely different cultures and backgrounds can come together with God,” said AJ Vitiello, who spent three weeks in the village of Anloga, Ghana, helping to build a school.

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Room to Grow

Operation Kindergarten Backpack

By ELLEN McGINNESS

They ranged in age from twelve to twenty-two years old. They attended dozens of different schools. They represented five different parishes.

But they had one common goal. These Catholic middle schoolers, high schoolers and college students came together to execute the first Operation Kindergarten Backpack, collecting and supplying over 80 fully-stocked backpacks for the graduates of Room to Grow Preschools, a program of Catholic Charities.

“I always had this dream of giving backpacks as graduation gifts,” explained Nancy Owens, the director of Room to Grow Preschools. “I’m so happy that it became a reality.”

After learning of Owens’ wish, the marketing department of Catholic Charities reached out to parochial middle schools and diocesan youth ministry groups to see if they would be willing to collect and donate the backpacks and supplies. The groups that were approached responded immediately. They were happy to help. Greenwich Catholic School students, St. Rose of Lima Youth Ministry, St. Aloysius Church Youth Ministry, past and current St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School students, and St. Matthew Parish Youth Faith Formation Group all joined forces to make sure Operation Kindergarten Backpack came to fruition.

These young volunteers not only collected over 80 new backpacks, folders, crayons, scissors, markers, glue sticks and pencils—but they also neatly assembled the supplies inside the backpacks. Even though the volunteer groups thought the backpacks were great gifts, they thought something was lacking. So they added another special item: handwritten notes that congratulated the little ones on their accomplishment, gave them advice for their academic futures, and wished them the best of luck in kindergarten.

The preschool graduation ceremony and backpack presentation took place on August 25 at Room to Grow in Norwalk.

Since this was the first year of Operation Kindergarten Backpack, the backpacks were a surprise gift. After the diplomas were handed out, an unexpected announcement was made: each graduate would be receiving a brand new backpack stuffed with essential kindergarten supplies. The crowd gasped and cheered, the children jumped and hollered—everyone overwhelmed by the thoughtfulness and generosity of the gesture.

When one of the teachers handed a glimmering pink and purple “Frozen” backpack to a bubbly little graduate, the girl beamed with a contagious smile, bounced up and down on her feet and shouted, “Oh thank you! Thank you! Thank you!”

Those were the only words needed to prove that the first Operation Kindergarten Backpack was a tremendous success.

(To learn more about Room to Grow Preschools, contact Nancy Owens: nowens@ccfc-ct.org. To donate, contact Bob Donahue: rdonahue@ccfc-ct.org.)
School News

New technology director named for schools

BRIDGEPORT—“It’s all about the kids,” says Kathryn Cioffi. “It’s about educating students to be digital citizens, giving them the skills they need to succeed.” Cioffi is the new director of educational technology and innovation for diocesan Catholic schools.

“She brings a depth and width of experience, both in technology and as a teacher in the Catholic school system,” says Dr. Steven Cheeseman, diocesan superintendent of schools. “She is knowledgeable in educational applications, systems and techniques, and can communicate complex technology concepts effectively in non-technical terms.”

Cioffi holds her BS degree from Georgetown University and her MA from Fairfield University with a major in computers in education. She received her certification in administration from Sacred Heart University. Cioffi is a member of the CECA, Connecticut Educators Computer Association.

She worked in technology and engineering firms, and was a programmer and consultant in residence at Fairfield University before coming to the Catholic Academy in Bridgeport as a computer teacher for grades K-8. During her time there, she was a member of the Website Development and Technology Curriculum Development committees.

“The diocesan school system has a unified curriculum,” she explains. “What we want to do is to help schools use technology in the classroom.”

The best way to explain how this works, she says, is to compare it to an experience most adults remember from their own school days. “They used to take children into the library and teach them how to search for information using the Dewey Decimal System. Then they could look for information for their reports. Now students search the Internet to get what they need.”

The end result is the same: informed knowledge.

Cioffi is quick to point out that parent involvement is always crucial in the educational process. “We want parents to know that we have filters on the school network to protect children. Everything on the network is there for educational purposes.”

In addition, the schools ask parents to sign a permission slip allowing their children to use the Internet.

Cioffi plans to visit each of the diocesan schools to help administrators and teachers with the effective integration of technology. “I want to become a familiar face to them, so that they see me as part of their team,” she says.

At the present time, she is helping schools implement an integrated student information system by Rediker, so that attendance and grades will all follow the same format. In the future, a parent portal will allow parents to follow homework assignments and other class activities.

“ar is a process,” she emphasizes. “It will come in phases.”

Cioffi has a personal reason for her dedication to excellence in Catholic education. She and her husband, Michael, are members of St. Jude Parish in Monroe. They moved their son from public school into St. Jude School, now part of Holy Trinity in Shelton.

“By putting him in Catholic school, we gave him a firm academic foundation for his future success. He got so much more attention and encouragement there.”

As she emphasized from the outset, academics, encouragement and technology all have the same aim: “It’s all about the kids.”

We invite you to attend our open house.

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The Catholic University
of America
Sacred Heart University

Larry Kudlow opens SHU Business Leaders Series

FAIRFIELD—Larry Kudlow, CNBC’s senior contributor and host of the nationally syndicated radio program “The Larry Kudlow Show,” will be the inaugural guest at Sacred Heart University’s Distinguished Business Leaders Series. He will also be available to sign copies of his latest book.

The series will feature leaders in a variety of sectors who have made a significant impact on the business community. It is presented and hosted by Katie Burke, senior strategist and chief of staff at Edelman Financial Services and a member of the SHU Board of Trustees. Co-sponsored by WSHU, the Distinguished Business Leaders Series begins on Monday, October 16, at 6 pm in SHU’s Martire Forum. The public is invited.

Kudlow, CEO of Kudlow and Company, LLC, is a prominent free-market, supply-side economist with a storied career spanning four decades. He previously hosted CNBC’s primetime The Kudlow Report, and his current nationally syndicated radio show broadcasts each Saturday from 10 am-1 pm on WABC. He also writes a weekly syndicated column.

Kudlow was associate director for economics and planning in the Federal Office of Management and Budget during Ronald Reagan’s first presidential administration. He also co-authored JFK and the Reagan Revolution: A Secret History of American Prosperity, which describes how President John F. Kennedy pioneered supply-side economics. Kudlow and co-author Brian Domitrovic argue that elements of this fiscal theory—the free-market principles of limited government, low tax rates and a strong dollar—would solve the long economic stagnation of the early 21st century. Forbes Magazine calls the book a “fascinating account of the internal battles within John F. Kennedy’s administration over cutting taxes and keeping the dollar linked to gold.”

Burke is one of the country’s leading political and corporate communications strategists, with nearly 20 years of experience at the highest levels of government and business.

“I’m excited to bring this series to Sacred Heart,” Burke said. “There is much to learn from the most proven leaders in our organizations and communities, and I am particularly excited to begin with renowned economist Larry Kudlow.”

Before rejoining Edelman this year, Burke was CEO of Katie Burke Communications. She also served as executive vice president of marketing and communications at Nielsen, a global information, data and measurement company. In addition, she has been an executive-in-residence and professor of communications at SHU.

In the political arena, Burke was communications director for former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani’s presidential campaign and Arnold Schwarzenegger’s gubernatorial re-election campaign in California. She was director of television news in the Bush White House and senior spokeswoman and director of broadcast media for the Republican National Committee during the 2004 election cycle. Her career began in Connecticut as a staff member for former U.S. Rep. Christopher Shays.

“Our Distinguished Business Leaders Series is inaugurated with the belief that leadership skills can be learned. We are grateful for the opportunity to engage with these distinguished leaders. I thank Katie Burke for hosting this important series,” said SHU President John J. Petillo.

(For more information, contact Tracy Deer-Mirek deer-mirekt@sacredheart.edu or 203.371.7751.)

His enthusiasm about school reminded me of how lucky I am to receive an education at Immaculate,” said AJ.

And then there was Gilbert, a four year-old boy at the orphanage with a rare physical condition that led his mother to believe he was a demon and abandon him. His story made my time playing with him much more meaningful,” AJ reminisced, noting that it also made him appreciate his place in the world more.

“Despite their struggles, all three of these students were blessed with knowing their cultural and personal identities. In the U.S., sometimes we are distracted from our identities because of social media or other responsibilities.

Because these children have so few material items, there is nothing to distract them from finding out who they are in the world. The trip as a whole helped me find my place in the world as well.”

This was not AJ’s first trip out of the country; he travelled with the Diocese of Bridgeport to Poland to celebrate World Youth Day 2016. Immaculate High School stresses the importance of community service and requires each student to perform at least 25 hours a year. At the end of the 2016-17 school year, IHS students had performed nearly 25,000 hours of community service, most of it in the communities of Fairfield County.
Sacred Heart University
Sacred Heart University was ranked one of the most innovative universities as well as one of the best universities in the North, according to U.S. News & World Report’s newly released guidebook, Best Colleges 2018.

“As one of the fastest growing Catholic universities in the nation, we are pleased to be recognized by U.S. News & World Report, Princeton Review and many others for the educational excellence we provide,” said SHU President John J. Petillo.

Besides being named one of the best universities in the North, SHU also was one of four schools in the North to be recognized as an innovative school. For the past three years, U.S. News asks academics participating in its peer assessment survey to name institutions they think are the most innovative for its Most Innovative Schools listing.

According to U.S. News, college presidents, provosts and admissions deans nominate 10 colleges they think are making the most innovative improvements in terms of curriculum, faculty, students, campus life, technology or facilities. U.S. News said the ranking is based on the responses to the question.

“Being considered one of the most innovative universities is a result of our mission and careful strategic planning,” Petillo said. Sacred Heart has earned recognition as well from the Princeton Review, which recently ranked the university one of the nation’s best institutions for undergraduate education and included SHU in its “Best 382 Colleges” guidebook. It also placed SHU on its lists for “Best College Theater” and “Most Engaged in Community Service,” each of which comprises only 20 schools from around the country.

Fairfield University
Fairfield University has been named third in the Northern Region in the annual ranking from U.S. News and World Report, 2018 Best Colleges ranking. The university is also the only master’s degree granting institution in Connecticut within the Northern Region category to make the Top 10.

Schools included in the ranking “provide a full range of undergraduate majors and master’s programs.” The schools are ranked against their peer groups by region—Fairfield is in the Northern Region, which includes schools from Maine to Maryland.

Several programs also made the regional and national lists. Fairfield’s Dolan School of Business is on the national list once again for “Best Undergraduate Business Programs.”

The undergraduate teaching program is ranked third in the Northern Region, based on faculty who have a strong commitment to undergraduate teaching. “The rankings that Fairfield continues to achieve are a reflection of the quality of our faculty, staff and students in the learning environment we create here on campus, as well as the amazing achievements of our alumni,” said Mark Nemec, PhD, president of Fairfield University.

“As Fairfield continues to rise as the modern Jesuit institution, we do so with the confidence that a Fairfield education leads to globally and civically minded individuals who produce strong outcomes after graduation.”

The rankings are the latest in a string of accolades for the university. The New York Times placed Fairfield University among the top schools in the country that help to sustain “the American Dream.” The Princeton Review named Fairfield among the top 15 percent of all schools in the country, and Fairfield was included in the ranking of schools considered to have the “Best Quality of Life” and “Happiest Students.”
Knights of Columbus Museum

Museum highlights the centenary of World War I

By JOSEPH PRONECHEN

In 1917 war was still raging in Europe. The United States had remained out of it, but on April 6, President Woodrow Wilson declared war on Germany, marking America’s entry into World War I. During this 100th anniversary year, the Knights of Columbus Museum in New Haven opened a new show titled “World War I: Beyond the Front Lines.” It presents a look at what soldiers of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) faced in warfare and living conditions, plus how the Knights worked on both the front lines and behind them in many surprising and heroic ways.

Besides being enlisting in the military, the Knights provided the comfort of much-needed recreation centers and through a large corps of military chaplains who brought the sacraments to soldiers and sailors. Over 116,000 American men died in the war, including 1,600 Knights. The very first and last officers to die in the war were both Knights—the last a chaplain.

This show presents a quick, broad overview of America’s involvement beginning 100 years ago, in which over 17 million military and civilians died in what was billed as the “war to end all wars.”

The first gallery has an altar stone from the 13th-century Cathedral Notre-Dame-de Rheims, bombed during the war. Here, too, visitors get an idea of what a typical American “doughboy” looked like in his basic full uniform, from hat to knee breeches and puttees—a strip of cloth wound around the legs for protection and support.

To get a feel of being a doughboy, visitors can “participate” by trying on the heavy metal helmets and soldiers’ uniform tunics. And they can be challenged trying to lift a facsimile soldier’s haversack. Filled with personal effects, field gear and weapons, the doughboy’s stuffed haversack weighed up to 100 pounds, but this facsimile 40-pound sack is still a struggle for many to lift.

This exhibit offers plenty of artifacts, from the familiar helmets, different uniforms and gas masks, to unusual equipment like the trench periscope (visitors can try one in the trench warfare gallery) and trench binoculars.

The exhibit also features fascinating objects, especially the shell art. During their free time soldiers would take things like spent artillery shells and fashion them into something religious or artistic—often both. Two items are a crucifix made of several cartridge cases and a holy water font, also formed from bullet cartridges.

Not to forget the folks back home, another gallery has a collection of posters meant to prompt those in the United States to support the boys in the military with messages such as “See Him Through—Help Us to Help the Boys.” Some relate directly to the Knights and the amazing work they did in Europe. Their work is brought to light in other galleries.

To begin, the United Service Organizations (USO) was based on what the Knights thought up and practiced with their “huts.”

But, most importantly, the stage would be used for frequent Masses. There is a table acting as a portable altar. On it is a Mass kit with chalice, crucet, small missal and stand. It belonged to Father Charles Conaty who served with the 28th Division in France. He received the Distinguished Service Cross.

Other times, the stage would be used for music and theatrical performances, plus boxing matchboxes—but not the “original” candy and gum given by the USO. Men who couldn’t get to the huts and the Caseys, the Caseys went to them, even to the front lines. This gallery, set up as a typical hut, identifies how the flexible stage would be used for frequent Masses. There is a table acting as a portable altar. On it is a Mass kit with chalice, crucet, small missal and stand. It belonged to Father Charles Conaty who served with the 28th Division in France. He received the Distinguished Service Cross.

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To begin, the United Service Organizations (USO) was based on what the Knights thought up and practiced with their “huts.” The story unfolds in the “K of C Hut” display. Everyone needed rest and recreation from the unrelenting intensity of the war. Besides, with well over one-third of military being Catholic, they needed access to Mass and the sacraments. The Knights of Columbus immediately recognized these needs and began a program of recreation centers that were known as “huts.”

Their motto was, “Everybody Welcome; Everything Free.” A serviceman’s race or religion didn’t matter. The only requirement was a uniform.
Lack of size no problem for Mellozzi, Harrison

By DON HARRISON

Two of the state’s most respected high school football players this season share a bond or two: Both are comparatively small for the positions they play, and both attend Catholic schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Introducing Jared Mellozzi of St. Joseph in Trumbull and Doug Harrison of Fairfield Prep.

Mellozzi, a senior, stands just 5-foot-10, but he’s an exceptional wide receiver who set pass-catching records (101 receptions, 1,522 yards, 20 TDs) as a junior and was voted to the New Haven Register and Coaches’ Class-M All-State first teams.

“He’s got terrific hands and focus on the ball,” Della Vecchia says. “If I were a college coach, I’d be looking at him.” Villanova, Albany and Massachusetts have shown considerable interest thus far. Harrison, a 5-foot-8, 200-pound junior running back, followed up on his noteworthy sophomore season by rushing for 211 yards and with a pair of touchdowns in the Jesuits’ sea-son-opening 29-12 verdict over Notre Dame of West Haven. The following Friday night against Amity Regional, he was en route to his sixth straight 100-yard game across two seasons when he tore up his left knee.

“Tear was a freak accident…on a broken play. He was trying to make a block,” laments Jesuits’ Coach Keith Hellstern. “Doug’s a good kid. He is very powerful and deceptively fast. We have a great orthopedic group here, and he’ll come back next year like new.” Harrison, who commutes to Prep from his Branford home via two Metro-North trains and a school bus, burst onto the scene midway through his sophomore year. On November 4, a remarkable five-touchdown, 334-yard rushing performance in a 38-15 upset of previously undefeated Shelton underscored his prowess.

Mellozzi, a Shelton resident, gets high marks from his coach.

“Doug didn’t make any all-star teams, probably because he lacked the body of work for the entire season. But I’d place him among the best in our conference,” says Hellstern.
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