2018 APPEAL PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENT – January 20 and 21

*Read by Pastor or 2018 Appeal Lay Co-Chairs*

My friends once again I come to you with a humble heart to ask your support for our Annual Catholic Appeal.

This year’s theme, “Joy in Christ, Our Gift to Share,” speaks to one of the many ways we are united in God’s love as Catholic Christians and members of the family that is our Diocese of Bridgeport.

We are also united in giving thanks to God for His many blessings, and in the ways we respond to His call to serve as joyful missionary disciples of Christ.

Through our God who is love, we are called to love each other as brothers and sisters.

Through the programs sponsored by the Diocese we help those who live in need along their journey of life; help our youth and young adults who are seeking truth by opening their minds, developing their talents and serving all, leading them to fall in love with the Lord. We help the homeless and the hungry who live among us; whose lives are too easily invisible to our larger society; our priests, both active and retired, and the men who are studying for priesthood, who will sacrifice their lives in service to the Lord.

By faith and action, we are called to support each other through forgiveness, kindness, support, love, and generosity.

These are ways we renew our faithfulness in Christ our Savior and fulfill God’s plan that we love the least in our midst as our brother and sister.

It is by living in the joy of Christ and sharing His gifts that we can bring about His Kingdom on earth, one person at a time, one choice at a time.

May we unite in prayer that all may know they are touched by God’s love and mercy; that those with broken spirits can be healed; that lives that seem lost can be reclaimed; that minds and bodies that are suffering can be restored; and that each of us can be renewed in our faith in our God who Is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

My friends I am grateful for your past generosity and support, for your gifts have helped sustain our parishes, schools and the leaders in our midst who serve us generously.

And now I come to you to ask for your continued support, to help our communities to grow ever stronger in faith, hope, and joyful charity.

As your shepherd in Christ, I ask that you prayerfully consider supporting the 2018 Annual Catholic Appeal through sacrificial giving.

The Appeal enables Catholic Charities to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable and needy people across Fairfield County, through 30+ programs that:

**Nourish the Hungry**

Catholic Charities served over 1.3 million meals across the county through our soup kitchens, food pantries, and senior nutrition programs.

We provided 52,000 lunches at 8 senior centers throughout lower Fairfield County.

We home-delivered over 90,000 meals to elderly homebound clients through our Meals on Wheels service.

**Shelter the Homeless**

Catholic Charities provided 220 homeless or formerly homeless adults and children with case management services in 121 federally funded housing units.

Our team secured 45 permanent housing units to assist formerly incarcerated people reintegrating into society.

Our case workers helped over 70 homeless individuals move off the streets and into safe housing.

**Strengthen Families and Individuals**

Catholic Charities provided 15,000 counseling sessions to help families and individuals address mental health, marriage and parent-child issues.

Our teachers educated 134 preschoolers of low income families at our Room to Grow Preschools.

We distributed more than 2,600 donated toys and over 1,000 clothing items to almost 900 people during the last holiday season.

We conducted 387 immigration consultations and assisted 22 individuals with obtaining U.S. citizenship.

Your gifts to the Appeal also helped make it possible to:

* Award financial scholarships to 85% of students in the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport;
* Award financial assistance for Catholic education through the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund;
* Ensure that children and young adults had the opportunity to participate in religious education programs;
* Educate and train 29 men for ordination to priesthood in our Diocese;
* Educate and train 10 men for ordination to the Permanent Diaconate program;
* Care for 64 senior priests in their dignified retirement;
* Afford our youth with meaningful opportunities to mature as holy and active members of society through a wide range of faith-based programs;
* Respond to spiritual, educational and social needs of persons with disabilities through the St. Catherine Center for Special Needs.

Thank you for your generosity.

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano

Bishop of Bridgeport