WEEKLY BULLETIN/PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENTS

JANUARY 27 & 28

This week we begin the 2018 Annual Catholic Appeal to provide the funds for the pastoral, educational and charitable ministries of the Diocese of Bridgeport. This year’s theme, *Joy in Christ, Our Gift to Share*, calls us to come together as a people of God to live and share the faith we profess as we carry forth the mission of Jesus Christ. When you receive your Appeal mailing this week, please take time to read the information thoroughly, how you can help and give prayerful consideration when contemplating your sacrificial gift to the campaign. Thank you.

FEBRUARY 3 & 4

The Bishop’s Scholarship Fund provides tuition assistance to families who attend our Diocesan elementary schools. Over $2,500,000 in scholarships are awarded each year to students who demonstrate financial need. Every town and school in our Diocese has students receiving these awards. Over 3,000 students applied for tuition assistance last year and the student need was calculated at over $9,540,380. The Bishop’s Scholarship Fund continues to work to raise and distribute funds to families with need so that the grace of a Catholic education is available to all who desire it.

A student at All Saints Catholic School shared, "I was fortunate enough to receive a Bishop’s scholarship, which has allowed me to attend All Saints Catholic School. The classes that I take are challenging and demanding. The teachers equip students with the skills and knowledge to succeed in these classes. All Saints Catholic School has provided a solid educational foundation that will allow me to build a successful high school and college experience and will even help me in my future career. Most importantly, All Saints introduced me to the Catholic faith. My religion teachers have supported me in my journey through learning about the Catholic church. All of my teachers have role modeled what it means to be a Catholic, and the friendships I have built have allowed me to demonstrate my Christian values."

FEBRUARY 10 & 11

The Catholic ServiceCorps provides opportunities for all the faithful, especially young

 people, to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ and broaden their Catholic faith by

 inviting them to embrace a life of Christian service and the call to be missionary disciples.

 The Catholic Service Corps combines meaningful service to those in need with faith

 formation and Christian reflection. Young people of the Diocese are invited to a fuller

 understanding of their call to embrace a life of mercy and justice through programs like

 the Diocesan Service Challenge Week, Al’s Angels Thanksgiving & Christmas gift packing

 events and Toy drive, fundraisers for Catholic Charities, an upcoming summer week of

 service and Catholic Relief Services Food Fast.

FEBRUARY 17 & 18

 The Leadership Institute works in tandem with parishes to ensure effective sacramental

 preparation by offering opportunities for support, formation and mentoring for parish

 leaders. Our collective mission is that all who are preparing to receive the sacraments may be

 transformed by their encounter with Jesus through the sacraments.

FEBRUARY 24 & 25

Supporting the Annual Catholic Appeal makes it possible to continue promoting vocations to the priesthood that are so vital to the future of our local Church. The indispensable role that our 29 seminarians will perform in the life of the Church necessitates that they receive an unparalleled formation in the spiritual, pastoral, and academic disciplines. The formation and preparation our seminarians receive at St. John Fisher, Redemptoris Mater, and in major seminary spans five to eight years. This year Bishop Caggiano will ordain one seminarian to the priesthood and three to the transitional diaconate.  At an annual cost of more than $21,000, your Annual Catholic Appeal gift will help underwrite this worthwhile investment and help promote and foster vocations to the priesthood throughout our diocese.

“John Fisher Seminary is a real blessing, and to have that within the diocese is phenomenal. I can’t say enough about it. Because we all come there to discern our vocation and get to know each other, and fraternity with others builds. Ultimately, we’re all going to work in the diocese and serve the people of God.

“The value of the Annual Catholic Appeal is felt in my formation. It is because of the Catholic Appeal that I am here and that my brothers are here. We’re able to really dedicate ourselves to the Diocese of Bridgeport—to the Church—and that is the greatest gift we can give to the Church at this point,” says Juan Colon, Jr., seminarian.

MARCH 3 & 4

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. Catholic Charities serves 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 century, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County has become one of the largest private family service agencies in Connecticut, serving over 10,000 individuals annually with the help of over 1,000 volunteers. Last year, Appeal funds made it possible for the agency to serve more than 1.3 million nutritious meals to hungry people, including over 91,000 meals delivered to homebound seniors and 52,000 lunches served at senior centers in lower Fairfield County.

Additionally, Catholic Charities conducted more than 15,000 counseling sessions to help families and individuals address mental health, marriage and parent-child challenges. What’s more, the agency continued to provide a variety of family- focused programs such as: Room to Grow Preschools, which offer early childhood education to children from low income families; case managements services to assist homeless and formerly homeless adults and children living in federally funded housing units; and immigration services which provide hundreds of immigration consultations and help dozens of individuals obtain citizenship every year.

As you can see, your gift through the Appeal is truly changing lives. Eva, a 71-year old who eats lunch provided by Catholic Charities at a Westport senior center site said: “My gratitude for the meals has inspired me to make a small change in my daily prayer: Thank you for giving us our daily bread.”

At last year’s 100th Anniversary Gala, Bishop Frank summed it up this way: “Catholic Charities is love in action.” With your continued generosity and support, Catholic Charities hopes to reach its new goal: to serve Fairfield County for the next one hundred years.

MARCH 10 & 11

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

MARCH 17 & 18

If you have not yet responded to the 2018 Annual Catholic Appeal, please reflect upon the importance of your support to ministry and outreach that relies upon the charity of the Diocese of Bridgeport. The challenge is immediate and far reaching, but the solution is within our reach!

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

* Make a pledge and spread out your payments over 5 months
* Donate on-line by going to the diocesan website, 2018ACAbridgeport.com
* Check if your employer will match your gift through the Corporate Matching Gift Program
* Donate a one-time gift
* Contribute a gift of appreciated stocks or securities

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

MARCH 24 & 25

 The Diocese advocates for young people by assisting parishes in meeting the needs of

 youth and their families. Since every parish is different, the diocese also offers the chance

 for young people to grow in their awareness of the larger church. Some of these events

 include rallies for middle school and high school students; the March for Life; the National

 Catholic Youth Conference; and Catholic Scouting.

March 31 & April 1

Easter weekend, no Appeal activity.

APRIL 7 & 8

Over the years many corporations in the Diocese have participated in the Matching Gift Program. When making your pledge to the 2018 Annual Catholic Appeal, please consult with your employer to determine if they match gifts. If your company does participate, the Diocese of Bridgeport or its designated agencies such as Catholic Charities or the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport may qualify for these additional funds. The company match will increase the dollar amount received [at no extra cost to you. A list of Matching Gift companies has been posted on our website, www.](http://www/)2018ACAbridgeport.com. For further information please contact the Development Office at (203) 416-1312 or email us at 2018ACA@diobpt.org.

APRIL 14 & 15

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. The agency serves the needy through more than 30 service ministries that include feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless and homebound, strengthening families and individuals, and assisting those on the road to immigration documentation. But Catholic Charities can’t do it alone. Your gift to the Annual Catholic Appeal will help Catholic Charities to continue to do the incredible work it does for our most vulnerable neighbors in Fairfield County.

APRIL 21 & 22

CONNected Catholic is the diocesan ministry to young adults (age 18-39). The mission of

 this ministry is to accompany them on their faith journey. This ministry is vital to helping

 young adults stay connected to their sacramental home, the parish. We offer ways to engage

 this age group, including Baseball with the Bishop; annual pilgrimage to the Holy Land

 to study Scripture; World Youth Day; Theology on Tap and more.

APRIL 28 & April 29

The Diaconate Formation Program is a small and caring community of baptized Christian men who desire to serve God as a deacon. The Diocese of Bridgeport provides an integrated four and a half year program based on the standards established in the National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States. Through prayer, study and the grace of the Holy Spirit, the candidate undergoes a transformation of heart and mind as he humanly, spiritually, intellectually and pastorally prepares himself to be a minister of the Word, Liturgy and Charity. There are now 31 retired and 56 active deacons and 10 men in formation.

 “The Deaconate program is not something that’s taken lightly. It’s an incredible program that

 has turned out some great men throughout the years and it’s going to continue to do so. The

 Annual Catholic Appeal supports the program and enables us to go through it and not have

 an extra financial burden on our shoulders. It lets us really concentrate on our studies. It’s

 invaluable in that sense, when you are trying to fulfill your vocation of being a deacon,”

 comments Deacon Jeffrey Font, Chaplain, Immaculate High School, Danbury and a

 parishioner at St. Joseph Parish, Brookfield.

MAY 5 & 6

The Catholic Academy of Bridgeport is a faith-filled learning community made up of four campuses in the city of Bridgeport:  St. Andrew, St. Ann, St. Raphael and St. Augustine, and is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, (NEASC). Its mission is to provide a Christ-centered, academically rigorous learning environment where cultural diversity is welcomed and celebrated. Students are nurtured, encouraged and challenged in preparation for a successful life of leadership and service. This year we will serve nearly 950 children of whom 85% receive financial aid totaling more than $2 million annually. 80% of students come from families near or below the poverty line. 100% of 2015 students graduated from high school. Ninety-nine percent of graduates go on to attend a competitive college, university or post-secondary program upon completing high school, which is a notably higher rate than students attending Bridgeport public schools. Our students have hopes, dreams and high aspirations for themselves which are supported by the solid foundation they have received at the Academy. As one student recently said, "The Catholic Academy is like a second home to me. Now I know I can achieve anything.” The Board of the Catholic Academy must raise more than $1.8 million in aid each year for those in need.

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

MAY 12 & 13

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

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

MAY 19 & 20

As the 2018 Annual Catholic Appeal continues, we are grateful to the parish families that have already made their gift or pledge. For us to achieve our overall goal, it will require the active involvement and personal sacrifice of all members of our faith community. If you have not yet responded to the 2018 Annual Catholic Appeal, please set aside a moment to prayerfully consider a gift amount that reflects your blessings. Your gift will help tremendously and, together with your fellow parishioners, will enable the diocese to provide essential pastoral, educational and human needs throughout Fairfield County.

MAY 26 & 27

The Diocesan choir for youth (C4Y) provides young people a chance to share their gifts in

 song. The annual Christmas Concert, Spring Concert and special performances throughout

 the year highlight the gifts of these talented young people and offers the opportunity for the

 faithful to gather in prayer.

JUNE 2 & 3

If you have not yet responded to the 2018 Annual Catholic Appeal, please set aside a moment to prayerfully consider a gift amount that your means will permit. Be assured that the Lord knows what is in your heart and how you share your gifts. While it is understood that we cannot all give equally, we are still called by the Gospel to give of ourselves in a way that reflects our blessings. Your gift whether large or small matters greatly to the Diocese, our parish and to the Lord! Scripture tells us, ‘There is more happiness in giving than receiving’!

JUNE 9 & 10

Elementary Formation supports parish, school and all sacramental Catechetical programs that provide religious formation for children ages 5 – 13 and their families. We also provide assistance, direction and ongoing training for Catechetical leaders and pastors responsible for directing parish elementary Catechesis. This is done through days of formation, parish visits, program assessments and ongoing consultation of catechetical programs from development to implementation including assisting with Catechist selection, training and certification. “There is nothing more exciting than assisting those in parish Catechetical Ministry to engage their students in meeting and experiencing the person of Jesus Christ!  That is why we are here…to support those who inspire faith development in those they serve.”  Rose Talbot-Babey, Coordinator of Childhood Faith Formation

JUNE 16 & 17

We are hopeful that 100% of our registered households will respond to the 2018 Annual Catholic Appeal. While the level of sacrifice will differ from parishioner to parishioner, an Appeal gift this year is within the reach of the majority of our people. Please prayerfully consider supporting the Annual Appeal with a pledge or one-time gift as your means allow. Your support is much needed and will be greatly appreciated!

JUNE 23 & 24

The Annual Catholic Appeal closes next weekend. If you have not yet made a gift, please pray about your decision and make a pledge or one-time gift. Donations to the 2018 Appeal helps sustain many who are unable to provide for their families or themselves. From counseling sessions, food and shelter programs, to our clergy and religious, your support is vital in continuing to meet the needs of our community and parishes. Please complete a pledge card today or go directly to [www.2018ACAbridgeport.com.](http://www.2015ACAbridgeport.com/) Together, we are Christ’s guiding light for the lives of thousands in our diocesan communities.

**JUNE 30 & July 1**

The Annual Catholic Appeal closes next weekend. If you have not yet made a gift, please pray about your decision and make a pledge or one-time gift. Donations to the 2018 Appeal helps sustain many who are unable to provide for their families or themselves. From counseling sessions, food and shelter programs, to our clergy and religious, your support is vital in continuing to meet the needs of our community and parishes. Please complete a pledge card today or go directly to [www.2018ACAbridgeport.com.](http://www.2015ACAbridgeport.com/) Together, we are Christ’s guiding light for the lives of thousands in our diocesan communities.