Father Frank Gomez is new Dean for Bridgeport parishes

Young people “March for Life”

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Mass for Ministries of Reader & Acolyte

Celebrating role of Deacons

FAIRFIELD—“Adore the Eucharist. Sit before him and don’t speak. Listen,” Bishop Frank J. Caggiano implored deacon candidates at the Mass for Ministries of Reader and Acolyte in the Diaconate Formation Program.

More than 100 priests, deacons, religious and families turned out for the Ministries Mass at St. Pius X Church in Fairfield on January 27.

“Fall madly in love with the Lord,” the bishop said. “You can’t share him who you do not love.”

The bishop told the deacon candidates that they are “custodians of the Eucharist,” and that their role is “to serve and love others so they might be fed.”

During the Mass and ceremony, three candidates were installed as Acolytes by the bishop: Joseph Huong of The Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport; Joseph Koletar of St. Mark Parish, Stratford; and David Rivera of St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Bridgeport.

As an acolyte, the candidates will assist in the distribution of Holy Communion during the Mass and bring Holy Communion to the homebound, to those in nursing homes and to hospitals. They can also expose and repose the Blessed Sacrament. It is the final step before ordination as deacons later this year.

The bishop also installed six candidates as Readers: Joseph Cann, St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish, Brookfield; Stephen Hodson, St. Theresa Parish, Trumbull; Eric Keener and Richard Lawlor, St. Mary Parish, Bethel; Joseph Klimaszewski, St. Lawrence Parish, Shelton; and Michael Ronan, St. Rose of Lima Parish, Newtown.

As a Reader of God’s Word, the candidates will proclaim the Word in the liturgical assemblies, instruct children and adults in the faith and prepare them to receive the sacraments worthily.

Bishop Walter W. Curtis ordained the first class of permanent deacons for the Diocese of Bridgeport on February 25, 1978. Since then, over 120 men have been ordained for the diocese. They work in a variety of settings including schools, parishes and healthcare facilities.

(For more information on the diaconate program, contact Father Michael Novajosky, coordinator of diaconate formation: fmnovajosky@diobpt.org.)

Chrism Mass set for March 28

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will celebrate the Chrism Mass on Wednesday, March 28, at 3 pm at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport. All are invited to attend.

More than 300 priests and deacons will process into the cathedral for the yearly Chrism Mass, in which priests renew their priestly promises and the bishop blesses the sacramental oils that are used throughout the year in parishes.

The Chrism Mass traditionally manifests the unity of priests with their bishops and includes a homily in which the bishop directly addresses his brother priests

During the service, the bishop blesses the Oil of the Catechumens, the Oil of the Infirm and the Holy Chrism (a mixture of olive oil and balsam used in ordinations and confirmation.)

After Mass, the holy oils that were consecrated on the altar are distributed to priests who will use them in their parishes when blessing the sick and in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

Chrism Masses are traditionally celebrated during Holy Week or on the morning of Holy Thursday. It is a beautiful liturgy that celebrates the communion of the Church.
NEW CANAAN—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will celebrate the 25th Annual White Mass honoring health care professionals on Sunday, March 18, at 8:30 am in St. Aloysius Church in New Canaan. The Mass will be followed by brunch at Woodway Country Club in Darien.

Noted physician Joseph P. Dutkowsky, MD, will be the featured speaker at the breakfast. Dr. Dutkowsky is an attending orthopedic surgeon at Bassett Medical Center in upstate New York and an associate clinical professor of orthopedic surgery at Columbia University College of Physicians. The topic of his talk is “Healing Beyond Healthcare.”

“The 25th Anniversary White Mass is an opportunity for us to reaffirm the healing role of healthcare workers and to celebrate their mission of compassion and service in our society,” said Bishop Caggiano. “In his unique practice of treating patients with special needs, Dr. Dutkowsky has worked to bring together the physical and spiritual dimensions of healing. We look forward to his reflections.”

During the White Mass, the bishop will present the Father Rufin Compassionate Care Award to an area healthcare volunteer. The recipients are traditionally drawn from the ranks of physicians, nurses, dentists, healthcare workers or healthcare volunteers in Fairfield County.

The Father Rufin Award is presented to those who exemplify compassionate and loving care for the sick. It is named after the late Father Rufin Kuveikis, a Capuchin Franciscan and chaplain at Norwalk Hospital for 18 years. He died in 2008 at age 86.

About Dr. Dutkowsky:
Dr. Joseph P. Dutkowsky has dedicated his career to serving individuals with special needs locally, regionally and internationally. Focusing his practice on cerebral palsy, Dr. Dutkowsky is one of the few practitioners in the country seeing patients from childhood to adulthood.

He is a committed member of academic organizations including the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, the Pediatric Orthopedic Society of North America, and the American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine, for which he has been the elected president since October 2011. He serves on the board of directors of the Cerebral Palsy Association of New York State.

Dr. Dutkowsky earned his undergraduate degree in biomedical engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and his medical degree from the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. He completed residency training at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center and the University of Tennessee/Campbell Foundation, and his United Cerebral Palsy Fellowship at Harvard University and Children’s Hospital in Boston.

(All healthcare workers and their guests are invited to attend the White Mass. The Mass is also open to the general public. Breakfast tickets are $35 per person; table of 10, $250. Sponsors: $100; includes two brunch reservations and name listed in the program. Register online at: www.2018whitemass.org/2018whitemass. For more information, contact Elizabeth Auda: 203.416.1636 or 2018whitemass@diobpt.org.)

FIE announces innovation and leadership grants

BRIDGEPORT—In its historic first year of offering grants, Foundations in Education is pleased to announce 19 grant awards totaling $105,000 to benefit Catholic schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport. This competitive grant cycle is the first of its kind for Foundations in Education and diocesan-wide Catholic schools alike.

Grant proposals from teachers and school administrators were received from September 15-October 31, 2017. Schools were presented with the unique opportunity to request funding for projects promoting innovation in the classroom or training and leadership development.

“This is an historic moment for Foundations in Education,” explained Executive Director Holly Doherty-Lemoine. “We encouraged our schools to dare to dream, and we were inspired by the many creative responses this first year.”

Foundations received thirty-five grant proposals from nineteen of the twenty-six Catholic schools in Fairfield County. The grant requests totaled $235,859, more than twice the available funding.

A grants committee carefully reviewed each proposal and submitted recommendations to Foundation’s Board of Trustees for approval. The committee is led by Dr. Julie McNamara, former president of Albertus Magnus College.

“I am honored to have witnessed the incredible enthusiasm from our Catholic school educators,” commented Dr. McNamara. “Their remarkable projects will ensure that Catholic education remains on the cutting edge and will transform our students into our next generation of thinkers, leaders and entrepreneurs.”

An awards ceremony took place on Thursday, February 1, at the home of Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, acting chair of Foundations in Education. At this event, grant honorees shared the vision of their projects with Foundation’s board members, grant committee members and donors.

“I am delighted that we have reached this milestone of offering grants to our schools,” remarked Bishop Caggiano. “The funded projects hold great promise of being replicated among all our Catholic schools. The opportunities are incalculable and priceless.”

Thanks to the generosity of its donors, Foundations in Education continues its ongoing commitment to strengthening and transforming Catholic education.

“We have faculty with big ideas, but there’s very little funding available out there for nonprofit to take the risk of piloting new innovative programs,” said board member Tom McInerney.

“It’s important to support these initiatives—to nurture their ideas into fruition.”

The funding for this first round of grants was made possible through an event hosted by Lynn and Frank Mara of Greenwich, who joined Foundations in Education for the grant reception.

“We were very impressed by the inspiration of the teachers and the programs,” commented Lynn Mara. “It’s very rewarding to see the money raised used this way!”

Foundations in Education is a non-profit initiative created to assist the Diocese of Bridgeport’s ongoing mission to support Catholic education in Fairfield County by supporting innovation in academic and extra-curricular programs, fostering opportunities for the professional development of school leaders and providing scholarship assistance to families in need.  

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 24
Parish needs are top priority of Faith Formation

By PAT HENNESSY

“I spend a lot of time in the field, at the parishes,” says Rose Talbot-Babey, coordinator of childhood faith formation for the Diocese of Bridgeport. “I’ll go up on the invitation of a pastor who is looking to implement or improve faith formation in his parish. It always starts with a conversation. I’ll talk to the pastor and the director or coordinator of religious education (DRE or CRE), learn what they want to achieve, and get a sense of the parish: the staff, the manpower, the demographic. Everything is based on the parish.”

The Office of Faith Formation is one of the many ministries supported by the Annual Catholic Appeal. Based in the Catholic Center in Bridgeport, Faith Formation can seem somewhat remote from everyday faith needs. But it is as immediate as a Pre-K religious education program being developed for a parish filled with young families, preparation for marriage, or a meeting with youth ministers hoping to get started on exciting new plans.

“A number of pastors and DREs are working to bring parents in to the religious education process,” says Talbot-Babey. “They are the first educators of their children, after all.”

She works closely with faith formation resources offered through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and can arrange for on-site training in a new program. “They never have to go it alone. We’re always here to help them. We’ll accompany them until they reach their goals.”

Faith Formation also provides a weeklong program for new DREs and CREs at the end of August, to get them familiar with the programs and processes available to them. Days of recollection and professional updates are offered to catechists as well.

“When I visit a parish, I may learn that they’re hoping to develop a better baptismal preparation program for parents. Or they might be wondering if a baptismal reunion celebration once or twice a year would connect young Catholic families in the community.”

She also has calls from parishes which have recognized a cultural shift in their population.

“We’ll get a call asking how they can be culturally sensitive—what does this parish need to do? We can secure materials in both English and Spanish—or in Polish or Portuguese or Haitian, so that all students are working on the same material.”

Faith Formation also works with parishes on ways to recruit and train catechists. This might be due to conditions as varied as a shift in the community, an influx of Confirmation age students, or the retirement of experienced teachers.

For example, the church community at Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel in Bridgeport discussed with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano the value of re-establishing a baptismal and religious education program in that location.

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Parents explore new school model

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

Response to Bishop Frank J. Caggiano’s proposal for a new, “multi-age” teaching model at St. Joseph School in Brookfield has been positive, productive and encouraging, said Dr. Steven Cheeseman, diocesan superintendent of Catholic schools.

“Out of a potential crisis, we have taken steps toward an exciting opportunity to move forward. I’m very grateful for the response of parents and for their commitment to work with the concept,” Dr. Cheeseman said.

Bishop Caggiano introduced the plan for the transition of St. Joseph School of Brookfield into a multi-age model at a meeting concerning the future of the school attended by 200 parents on January 18 in St. Joseph Church.

The bishop said that if parents embraced the new model, that would make it possible to keep St. Joseph’s doors open by reducing costs and creating an innovative path to learning.

He told parents the model can also be exported to other diocesan schools because of its innovative use of technology and personalized learning.

Allyson Kane, a parent with two children in the school and a member of the marketing committee, said that she and other parents hope to see St. Joseph School begin a personalized multi-age instructional model beginning in September of this year.

The model proposed by the bishop involves individualized learning plans that engage each student at his/her knowledge and skill level based on how he/she learns best.

“The bishop has given us a clean slate to build a model that will appeal to more people,” said Kane. “Kids learn at different levels, and the way they learn can be addressed individually. Some might do better with manipulatives, (hands-on learning) while others might do better putting on the headphones and learning a lesson on the computer.”

Dr. Cheeseman said the creative approach called for in the new model is something Saint Joseph School’s teachers are quite familiar with, and they are excited to employ on a larger scale.

“The teachers are committed to expanding their own teaching styles; incorporating technology to assist in lesson delivery, using manipulatives and creating projects designed to measure mastery of the subject matter,” said Dr. Cheeseman.

“Professional Development is starting within the next couple of weeks and the teachers are excited for the future, merging this new vision with the academic excellence that SJ/SB is known for,” he added.

St. Joseph math teacher Kathleen Benzing is excited about the multi-age approach. “Part of what’s so wonderful about this model is that it allows us to expand on things that we’ve been doing in our classrooms for years—with great results,” she said.

“I’ve been grouping my students and challenging them to reach objectives for quite some time. This model affords us the incredible opportunity to put each student on their own individual track to learning, meeting and surpassing standards without the ceiling that exists in traditional models,” Benzing said.

Dr. Cheeseman said the taskforce commissioned by the bishop to study the new model has been meeting regularly and reporting back to parents through an email newsletter on its progress. The taskforce includes parents, educators and school leaders, including a representative from Immaculate High School, to explore the concept and determine what the model might look like moving forward.

Over the past two years, the diocese has worked with school leadership to assess long-term financial and education viability. The review process included an extensive analysis of enrollment, demographic trends and the financial position of the school.

“The meetings have been productive, positive and encouraging. We’ve reviewed various models and the pros and cons of each. We began to flesh out an idea of what a multi-age classroom might look like for St. Joseph School.”

Dr. Cheeseman said the group has also discussed some of the different implications of the various versions, and how to create an environment that allows teachers to personalize instruction for every child. “Our goal by the end of the next meeting is to come closer to finalizing the framework for our model and to begin looking at implementation steps,” he said.

Some members of the group recently visited St. Peter/St. Francis School in Torrington and were impressed by what they saw. The combined school adopted the multi-age model three years ago and has seen good results, along with a small growth in enrollment.

Conversion to the multi-age model will require an investment in technology so that each student has access to the tools needed to be successful and that the school’s infrastructure can support these tools. St. Joseph School parents have been invited to serve on sub-committees in education, technology and finance to help with planning.

The bishop has also asked for support from Foundations in Education, the diocesan foundation that funds students’ scholarships, professional development and innovation in schools. “Foundations in Education is designed to support innovation, and this new model clearly has implications for education across the diocese,” he said.

The bishop said that if parents decide to enroll their children in another Catholic school, the staff would work to create a transition plan and ensure a welcoming transition. There are five Catholic schools within 12 minutes of St. Joseph’s.

The next full parent meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 7, at 7:30 pm. At this meeting the task force will present an overview of the new educational model.

(St. Joseph School has set up a hotline for specific questions. Parents can call at any time at 203.209.2894.)
St. Charles Borromeo

Father Frank Gomez installed as Dean

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Father Frank Gomez was installed as the new Dean of the City of Bridgeport (Deanery A) by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano on January 27 in a Mass held in St. Charles Borromeo Church in Bridgeport, where he serves as pastor.

The installation featured Mass celebrated in four different languages, a completely packed church, and the attendance of every member of the large and enthusiastic St. Charles Youth Group.

“I’m just filled with gratitude for the support and love that the parish showed. All 137 members of the youth group attended, and so many people helped me to organize the Liturgy and the reception,” said Father Gomez.

“It is the support of the other priests and the laity that makes my role a great joy to undertake. I am humbled to be asked to serve as dean to my brother priests,” he said.

The new deanery model, introduced by Bishop Caggiano last April, replaced the former vicariate structure related to the territorial organization of the diocese. Deanery A includes the 11 parishes and St. Margaret Shrine in Bridgeport. The deaneries are designed to assist the bishop and priests in regional planning and decision-making, and improve collaboration between parishes.

“May you become another sign of unity and fraternity in the diocese,” the bishop said as the new dean stood before him for the installation oath.

During his homily, Bishop Caggiano challenged the faithful to be prophets who go out and proclaim the truth. He said that in order to do so, people must be enlightened by the light, who is Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Father Gomez was born and raised in Puebla, Mexico, and was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Bridgeport, on May 16, 2009. Bishop Caggiano appointed him pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish, the largest parish in the city, in April 2015. He also serves as the master of ceremonies/priest-secretary to Bishop Caggiano.

CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION—parishioners filled St. Charles Church in Bridgeport as Bishop Frank J. Caggiano installed their pastor, Father Frank Gomez, as Dean of the City of Bridgeport (Deanery A). The deaneries assist the bishop and area priests in regional planning and decision-making.
Cardinal Shehan Center

By Brian D. Wallace

When Terry O’Connor steps down later this year after 26 years as service director of the Cardinal Shehan Center and six years at the McGivney Center, his retirement will mark the end of an era of growth and transformation at the downtown youth center sponsored by the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Generations of young men and women have passed through its doors, some going on to fame in college and professional sports, others in business, political and civic leadership.

While perhaps best known for some of the sports prodigies who grew up on the hardwood floor, the Shehan Center has evolved under O’Connor to be a place of civic leadership.

O’Connor was first introduced to Fairfield County when he was named coach of the Fairfield University basketball team in 1981, after serving as an assistant coach at Harvard. A native of Mount Vernon, N.Y., he earned a bachelor’s degree from Niagara College and a master’s from Syracuse University and began his career as a physical education teacher.

After his coaching tenure at Fairfield, he worked for International Special Olympics and Robustelli Sports Marketing. “I didn’t go cold turkey from coaching,” he says, noting that he coached the New Haven Skyhawks in the U.S. Basketball League and also ran a summer basketball camp for a number of years.

Sports fans also remember him from his popular “College Hoops Talk” on WICC Radio. In 1992, he was encouraged by Shehan Center board member Fred Judd to apply for the position as executive director. He soon found himself in an interview with Bishop Edward M. Egan.

“We hit it off great,” O’Connor remembers. He was chosen over 104 applicants, and succeeded the legendary George Fasolo, first director of the Shehan Center, which opened in 1962.

In his 26-year tenure, he has been at the helm for a remarkable run of achievements, including a re-shaping of the mission to include many new learning and after-school programs, and the creation of a $1.9 million endowment fund to provide academic scholarships to Shehan Center members who wish to attend Catholic schools in the greater Bridgeport area.

Former McGivney Center board chair Paul Gleason also credits O’Connor with turning around the finances at the McGivney, which had financial challenges when he agreed to take on the role of executive director in 2012.

“Terry’s coming to the McGivney Center was the turning point for the organization and ensured the center would be there for the more than 450 children and families it serves in the East Side. His leadership has expanded resources and given us a plan going forward,” Gleason said.

Today, more than 4,500 young people are registered Shehan Center members, where they participate in a wide range of activities and classes including dance, swimming, photography, computers, science and cooking.

“And we have more sports programs than ever,” says O’Connor of the wide range of offerings including basketball teams, aquatics, golf, physical education classes, and a fitness center.

O’Connor says the sports and learning programs come together in a seamless way to engage kids and help them to be lifetime learners. In many cases they’re introduced to activities that would be otherwise absent from their lives.

“Without us exposing the members to all of these opportunities, who will?” he says.

A master fundraiser, he now presides over 23 fund-raising events a year at the Shehan Center. His roster includes something for everyone—the Celebrity Breakfast, two golf classics, a Dodge Ball Tournament, Casino Night, and the Great Shehan Trivia Classic, as well as the McGivney Mini-Golf event.

Former Shehan board chair Anne McCrory, who now serves as chief legal and real estate officer of the diocese, says that Terry O’Connor has brought a unique skill set to the job.

“Terry represents a great combination of fundraising skills that have expanded resources, while also having the ability to connect closely with the mission, the staff, volunteers and young people served by both Shehan and McGivney.”

McCrory, who is leading the search committee, says an active search for O’Connor’s replacement as director of both the Shehan and McGivney centers will officially begin in mid-March. Details will be posted on the diocesan website: www.bridgeportdiocese.com.

Terry O’Connor and his wife, Mary Ann, a retired health care executive, live in Trumbull and are members of Christ the King parish. They are the parents of two grown sons.

Why now?

“I’ll be four months shy of 72 when I step down at the end of the year. I always said that when I got to be 70, it would be time for us to talk about the next phase. It’s a good time; my wife, Mary Ann just retired this year. She’s doing some consultant work and I have some iron in the fire. I hope someone new can take the center to another level.

What should our readers know about the young people who come to the Shehan and McGivney centers?

The biggest lesson people can take from the centers is that given the opportunity, anybody regardless of ethnicity, race or politics can succeed, but they need help along the way—not a hand out, but a hand up. We’ve proven if you bring kids into a safe learning environment, where counselors and staff care about their well-being, they will flourish.

How important is the fundraising in your job?

Funding for any non-profit is the number one thing. It’s what keeps our doors open for the nearly 5,000 kids who come to the centers every year.

You make it look easy!

I’ve always believed that people give to people. A big part is obviously the kids. Whether or not you have kids, they are our future. People get the fact that our inner cities struggle. If they can make a contribution to lift a child, they’re willing to do that.

Have you noticed a change in the young people since you first opened the centers every year.

By THE FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

Zumiez donates warm clothes

Bridgetport—Catholic Charities received a much-needed gift in early January. On Wednesday, January 10, a shipment of 28 boxes arrived from Zumiez, a cutting edge clothing company known for snowboarding and skateboarding fashion apparel. The mission of the Zumiez Foundation is to donate warm cold weather items to those in need. Catholic Charities has been lucky to be a Zumiez recipient for the last 10 years.

As shown here, Charities’ staff quickly set to work, “shopping,” selecting jackets, socks, gloves and blankets for their clients located throughout Fairfield County. Most of the clients receiving the items receive services through the agency’s housing, homeless outreach and counseling services, but Zumiez also provided jackets for children, which were provided to families receiving services through Room to Grow Preschool in Norwalk. In total, Catholic Charities received 588 individual items, including 216 coats and 20 dozen pairs of socks. With the help of Zumiez, they will be able to make a significant impact throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport and help at least 250 individuals.
Synod Update

Building a Bridge to the Future

By PATRICK TURNER

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano is challenging all of us in the Diocese of Bridgeport to renew, rethink, reengage, and rejuvenate our personal faith and our institutions (parishes, schools, diocesan offices). Through the Fourth Diocesan Synod, more than 350 delegates from a broad cross-section of the diocese spent a year examining the landscape and challenges facing the diocese and proposing recommendations to address those needs. Now that more than two years have passed since the closing of the synod, we must ask ourselves, "how are we as a diocese (diocesan offices, clergy, staff, laity) progressing in moving our synod vision forward?"

The Synod Closing Mass at Webster Bank Arena was a historic moment in the life of the diocese of Bridgeport. It brought together more than 8,000 faithful from throughout the area to celebrate the conclusion of Synod 2014. The question for all of us now is whether the synod will be a one-time historic event, or will it serve as a formational moment regarding how we think about the Church and how we carry it forward, apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Facing the diocese, and identify responses to those challenges, the synod delegates approved a series of recommendations and initiatives designed to evangelize our diocese, accompany individuals—one person at a time—and solidify the diocese in the present and pivot to the future. Listed below are brief updates on the major initiatives:

Strategic Planning Commission:
The Strategic Planning Commission was established and tasked with bringing change to the Catholic Center and the curia by positioning it to be more efficient, cost-effective and responsive to the parishes and schools. A group of respected business leaders brought their experience and insight to a variety of concerns identified by the delegates in the areas of communications, information technology, human resources, and procurement and shared services. For example, a revamped Human Resources Department, led by a new chief human resources officer, has been able to more effectively respond to the needs of our parishes, schools and Catholic Center community.

In the area of Information Technology, led by a recently hired senior director of technology services, the diocese is working to streamline, unify and update all technological resources to bring the diocese well into the 21st century. In the past, technology decisions were made on an ad-hoc basis, without thought to integration or technical support. The technology team is also bringing its skills and knowledge to work directly with parishes and schools on their technology needs.

The diocese continues to update its communication methods to respond to the changing way individuals consume information. Led by Fairfield County Catholic, one of the strongest Catholic newspapers in the country, members of the commission have worked with the director of communications and the social media coordinator to identify new methods of outreach to young, young adults and other previously underserved communities. How can we (all of us) share the message of Christ and the good works that are taking place within the diocese?

A fourth area of study has been to look at how the diocese, parishes and schools steward their resources. Are there ways to share services, affect cost savings, and free up resources that can be utilized for mission rather than operations?

Pastoral Planning:
A comprehensive pastoral planning process was undertaken in all parishes. Parishes were asked to create planning teams to look at five priority areas identified by the synod: Liturgy and Worship, Family Life, Evangelization, Leadership and Catechesis and Education. In addition, Bishop Caggiano asked them to look at their finances, buildings and facilities, and community life. The submitted parish pastoral plans, fully published on the diocesan website at www.bridgeportdiocese.org/strategic-planning, create a mechanism by which all aspects of pastoral life are intentional, mission-driven and open to review and evaluation. These plans have been created to help parishes be pastorally vibrant and sustainable for the long term.

Parish planning teams are asked to review the plan each year with the pastor and parish staff to keep the parish moving forward. The goal is that intentional planning will become fully integrated as a part of parish life each year.

Catholic Service Corps:
The Catholic Service Corps (CSC) was created to provide opportunities for all the faithful, especially young people, to deepen their relationship with Jesus and broaden their Catholic faith through prayer, meaningful service to others and theological reflection. The Catholic Service Corps seeks to change the way
Moving the Synod forward

that young people serve and show
how and when sacraments are
celebrated, seek greater unifor-

mity, and strengthen liturgical
practices in parishes.

Support for Priests:
The delegates called upon
the diocese and the bishop to create
concrete measures to support
our priests in “holy and healthy
living.” Recognizing the changing
nature of ministry that priests
face in the 21st century, a six-
month planning process led to a
Presbyteral Assembly and sub-
sequent conversations that focus
on supporting our priests. Some
of the initiatives include: provide
funding for continuing forma-
tion for priests after ordination,
increase yearly education and
formation opportunities for new
pastors (including an overnight
retreat that allows experienced
pastors to share their insights and
experiences with those becoming
priests) and new rectory living
arrange-
ments to strengthen fraternity.
In addition, a new status of
“senior active priest,” which
allows men to step back from
administrative duties while still
undertaking ministerial duties,
has lessened the burden for our
older priests. The creation of
the deanery model allows local
parishes and clergy to examine
collaborative opportunities.

The formation of the Diocesan
Addiction Support and Healing
(DASH) team offers support and
encouragement to men in recov-
ery from substance or behavioral
addictions.

Consultative Bodies:
The Council of Religious and
the Diocesan Pastoral Council
have established and pro-
vide consultation, guidance and
support to Bishop Caggiano and
Catholics who may not be prop-

erly catechized in their Catholic
faith. If parents are the “primary
teachers” of their children, all
must be evangelized and formed
along with the children so that
Our common mission is to foster personal
conversion and deepen each disciple’s relationship
with the Lord Jesus in the Community of the
Catholic Church. (Synod Mission Statement)

Our common mission is to foster personal
canon of ministry. Indicators of effective
ministry and recommendations are offered to guide catechetical
leaders.

In particular, synod delegates
heard repeatedly that there is
one, if not two, generations of
Catholics who may not be prop-
erly catechized in their Catholic
faith. If parents are the “primary
teachers” of their children, all
must be evangelized and formed
along with the children so that
EDITORIAL

Leadership Institute Offerings

One of the great things about the new diocesan Leadership Institute is the large number of resources it offers people of all ages to deepen their faith and further their understanding of Church teachings. If you haven’t visited the website, now is a good time. You will find a trove of Lenten resources to help guide you from Ash Wednesday to Palm Sunday and the beautiful mysteries of Holy Week. It includes 40 Ways to Observe the 40 Days of Lent, Frequently Asked Questions about Lent from Catholic Online, videos and other reflections. You find a wide range of online courses, learning plans, events and other activities. It’s all part of the invitation to “lifelong formation.” To learn more visit: https://www.formationreimagined.org/a-lenten-trove.

Ashes from Burnt Palms

Ash Wednesday is one of the beautiful days in the Church, a call to begin the penitential season by renewing our spirit through prayer, sacrifice and preparation. In this reflection, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano urges us not to squander the opportunity to grow in faith and love:

“The beginning of Lent is a penitential time for each of us to prepare for the celebration of the Lord’s Paschal Mystery—His Suffering, Death and Resurrection.

“For the next 40 days, we will walk together, examine our conscience, face our faults and sins, turn to the Lord for His grace, seek conversion of mind and heart and be renewed in spirit. It is a privileged time that we should not squander or take for granted. This is the time for us to follow the Lenten disciplines of the Church so that we can grow in faith, hope and love.

“On Ash Wednesday we gather to have ashes imposed upon us. The ashes come from burnt palms that we used last year to welcome the Lord Jesus into the City of David, commemorated on Palm Sunday. It was a welcome that, by the end of the same week, led Christ to the Cross, as He freely gave His life for our salvation. Such a welcome with palms was reserved for the emperor and his delegate as a sign of their power and might. In the case of Jesus, the palms ushered in the victory of love, not the victory of military might.

“We receive ashes to remind us that every act of might, tyranny, power, selfishness and callous disregard of the poor will be consumed by the fire of God’s life. So too will our earthly possessions, opinions, honors, accomplishments, ego—even our very bodies will eventually turn to dust. And what will remain? Only the cross of Jesus Christ, through which you and I will be saved.

“Let us reflect on the words that we heard as the ashes were placed on our forehead: ‘Remember that you are dust and unto dust you shall return.’ How great is the love of Christ that can make our ashes into something of eternal value!”

Inner Light

If winter has a corollary, it is Lent. Lent and winter join our inner and outer worlds forming an austere landscape that tests our souls. Winter prepares us for Lent as we find ourselves in a frozen season and outer worlds forming an austere landscape that tests our souls. Inner Light features a poem by Ralph Lazzaro: 203.667.1622

INNER LIGHT

If winter has a corollary, it is Lent. Lent and winter join our inner and outer worlds forming an austere landscape that tests our souls. Winter prepares us for Lent as we find ourselves in a frozen season of solitary walks and roaring winds. In our quiet moments, we watch our windows as snow falls or cold rains pool on top of marbled ice that frames our lawns in glass. If we notice the new light creeping into the edges of the day, we are also aware that it comes without warmth. We awake in the dark and come home in the dark. The season drives us into ourselves and reminds us that we must take the journey into the empty space of our own lives because there is no other way forward. When we need inner light most, Lent gives us the language and a map. It tells us that we will not find the answer in ourselves, but in the light of Christ—the light that urges us toward Easter. For now we must learn to pray, and begin the journey.

CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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

PASTOR

FATHER F. JOHN RINGLEY, JR., from Pastor of The Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport, to Pastor of Saint Mary Parish, Norwalk. Effective date is June 30.

FATHER MICHAEL P. NOVAJOSKY, from Episcopal Chaplain to Saint Joseph High School, Trumbull, to Pastor of The Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport. Effective date is June 30.

PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR

FATHER MARIUSZ M. OLBRYŞ, from Parochial Vicar of Saint Joseph Parish, Shelton, to Parochial Administrator of Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Stratford. Effective date was February 12. Father Mariusz shall reside at Saint Charles Borromeo Parish, Bridgeport.

DEACON OFFICE

FATHER MICHAEL P. NOVAJOSKY, to Coordinator of Diaconate Formation. Effective date was February 12.

DEACON

DEACON RICHARD P. KOVACS, from Saint Gregory the Great Parish, Danbury, to Saint Joseph Parish, Danbury. Effective date was February 12.

DEACON GAUTHIER

VINCENT, from Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, Stamford, to Saint Thomas More Parish, Darien. Effective date is March 1.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Maria Cerdeña (Mapi): mcderena@fraternas.org.

EDITOR’S CHOICE

Convivio registration opens

CONVIVIO, a weekend conference for high school students, run by youth, for youth, includes dynamic talks, group discussion, games, prayer and worship led by peer ministers. It will be held the weekend of March 2-4 at Sacred Heart University, Fairfield.

This year’s theme is “Made for More,” and teens will be hearing from a former Generation Life missionary, a speaker from World Youth Alliance, and surprise panelists.

To register, participants can go to www.convivio.us.org/registration and begin registration on their own. This is a two-part registration. Teens can sign up as soon as they are interested; parents or legal guardians are needed to complete the full registration form. After teens pre-register, parents will receive their portion of registration via email, to conclude with permissions and payments.

The cost of Convivio is $60. It includes Convivio book and materials small group discussions; dinner on Friday, lunch and dinner on Saturday and lunch on Sunday; a Saturday night DJ Party and more!

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(For more information or to volunteer, contact Maria Cerdeña (Mapi): mcderena@fraternas.org.)
A brief lesson in life from our precious grandchild

A Woman’s View

BY DEBRA TOMASELLI

Debra Tomaselli writes from Altamonte Springs, Florida. She can be reached at dtomaselli@cfl.rr.com

February 2018

My grandfather grew hard of hearing in his old age, aggravated by the usual cacophony that was the best. One Ash Wednesday he thought he heard the priest make a peculiar announcement. “Did he just say there’s bread in the ashes?” Grandpa asked Nana. “No, dear,” she replied. “He said to step forward and they’ll brand you with the ashes.”

Grandpa was mildly disappointed. He was a Wild Turkey man but wouldn’t have sniffed at a snifter on a raw February holy day. Brandy in the ashes may not have been to his liking, but it’ll do during Lent.

We tend to view Lent as a season of deprivation. It is certainly tilted toward spiritual preparation and personal reflection. It is a time to be tested. Giggles are meant to be few during the forty days. Our Clara is about to turn fourteen. This year her birthday falls on Holy Saturday. She wonders if this “qualifies” her as an adult in the Catholic sense. Does she need to fast? Technically, the season ends on Holy Thursday with the start of the Triduum. The letter of the law says she’s off the hook.

Clara won’t like to hear that. Unlike most, she’s keen to give something up for Lent. She wants the challenge. Can she do it? Can she live without consumption of this or that material thing for forty days and forty nights? She’s ready to be tested.

Our Clara picked up a lot of good and practical theology on YouTube from Father Mike Schmitz of the Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota. Normally I vote against catechism by social media, but this guy is good and Clara eats it up. Call it Khan Academy for Catholics.

It doesn’t hurt that Father Mike is handsome like a movie star. It also doesn’t hurt that he’s funny. He self-deprecates. He does weird voices. All in the service of teaching the faith. Take a look. I think you’ll agree that he adds value.

“The Christian is the one who does not need to take themselves so seriously.”

“Okay,” I said, squaring my shoulders. “I’m in.”

I followed Justin down the hallway to a room where Lynn was sitting in the hospital bed holding little Abigail Therese. My daughter offered a glimpse smile and we hugged. Then we turned our gaze toward the baby.

Much to my surprise, Abigail Therese looked like any other newborn. She wore a pink knitted cap and every detail of her little body was there… fingernails, toenails, lips, tongue, ears, kneecaps… She was perfectly formed… she was so… complete!

A fetus is a hard concept to grasp. And when this pregnancy delivered prematurely, I didn’t know what to expect. What was I thinking? A blob? A body, but no limbs? Feet, but no toes? A head, but no lips?

Captivated, I realized I was gazing at perfection. Lynn stroked the delicate fingers, caressed the baby’s shoulder. It was a baby! A totally formed, beautiful baby!

In that moment, a passion arose.

For me, abortion has never been an issue. I never knew anyone who experienced a crisis pregnancy. So, while I agree it’s wrong, the concept has always been distant… until now.

Now I understand how mistaken we can be. A fetus is a child in that womb—a perfected child of God. If we think it is okay to eliminate a life because we can’t see it, if we think the mother’s choice trumps life within the womb, then we have no faith.

Faith, after all, is the conviction of things not seen.

Abigail Therese, you passed through this world for a brief moment, but we are forever changed. We grieve for the days we’ll never have with you, the wind blowing in your face, the giggles and the laughs, but you’ve left your mark.

You’ve revitalized our battle against abortion. You’ve enhanced our passion for life. Our grief will be turned to joy. Perhaps you’ll save a life. Perhaps you’ll rescue a soul.

Perhaps someone reading this story will grasp what I did in that hospital room… the tiny hand of life within the womb.

May you rest in peace, little one.

“Now I understand how mistaken we can be. A fetus is a child in that womb.”

I’m giving up being stupid for the past,” Father Mike wrote in a recent blog post. “I have one piece of advice for them: laugh. Laugh at yourself. . . . The Christian is the one who does not need to take themselves so seriously.”

That’s the kind of Christian I’d like to be.

We take sin seriously, Father Mike goes on. We take God seriously. But we don’t always have to be so severe with ourselves. Have you ever heard someone described as a “serious person”? Often it’s meant as a compliment. I always hear it as a slur.

Clara may not be holier than thou, but she’s certainly holier than most. I look forward to St. Patrick’s Day as a nice break from Lenten seriousness.

Last year Paddy’s Day fell on a Friday. More than 80 bishops granted dispensations to the faithful to enjoy corned beef. That’s pretty funny. Here’s something else that’s even better.

In 2010, Archbishop Gregory Aymond of New Orleans ruled that alligator meat is considered seafood, and therefore kosher for Fridays during the forty. “Abstinence and fasting is supposed to be a sacrifice,” he added, just in case Cajun Catholics are tempted to gastrobom their gator gumbo.

My Lenten struggle is the same as my all-year-long struggle. Discipline has never been a strong suit. One year I resolved to go to daily Mass. That lasted about ten days. I had better success the year my wife locked me out of Facebook by changing the password and refusing to give it up.

(See the idea was mine, not hers. She wouldn’t torture me like that.)

“I’m giving up being stupid for the past,” Father Mike jokes at the beginning of one of his videos. I’ll follow his lead. I’m aiming to make it more than ten days this time.

“Serious.”

Learning to lighten up for Lent

A Dad’s View

BY MATTHEW HENNESSEY

Matthew Hennessey and his family are parishioners of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Stamford.

February 2018

March 2018

April 2018

May 2018

“Now I understand how mistaken we can be. A fetus is a child in that womb.”

“Now I understand how mistaken we can be. A fetus is a child in that womb.”

“Now I understand how mistaken we can be. A fetus is a child in that womb.”
Holy Spirit Parish

Lenten retreatants to hear from Sister Gaudia

STAMFORD—“Both the cross and mercy are about one thing—giving life for others out of love,” said Sister Gaudia Skass, OLM, speaking at World Youth Day in Poland. “Mercy is about actions. Mercy is about concrete deeds.”

A Lenten evening of recollection with Sister Gaudia is being offered by Holy Spirit Parish in Stamford on Monday, March 12, at 7:30 pm. The title of her new talk is “God’s Surprising Remedy to our Sins.”

“In a world where we’ve learned that we have to be perfect it seems impossible that our misery can attract God. If this is true, should we not stop pretending how perfect we are and boldly show him our wounds? His reaction can be very surprising.”

A celebrated and world-famous speaker, Sister Gaudia was born and raised in Poland and studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw before entering the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in 2005, making her perpetual profession of vows in 2014.

The Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy was founded in Poland in 1862 and has been in existence for over 150 years. St. Faustina Kowalska, who was a member of the Congregation from 1926 until her death in 1938, is closely associated with St. John Paul II, who canonized her in 2000.

Because of this connection, the Knights of Columbus encouraged Sister Gaudia and another member of their congregation, Sister Donata Farbaniec, to become members of the staff of the John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, D.C. Both Sister Donata and Sister Gaudia are involved in spreading the Message of Mercy revealed to St. Faustina. They also lead the shrine’s daily prayer at the Hour of Mercy and organize meetings for young adults called “Evenings with the Merciful Jesus” on the 22nd of each month.

Before coming to the United States, Sister Gaudia ministered for six years to English and Spanish speaking pilgrims at the Divine Mercy Shrine in Kraków where she also worked in the “Faustinum” Association of the Apostles of Divine Mercy. In 2015, she completed graduate studies in journalism. In addition to media work, Sister Gaudia enjoys youth ministry and served for two years on a team coordinating events for World Youth Day Kraków 2016. She was a keynote speaker at World Youth Day.

“Everything that Jesus did was giving his life for others,” Sister Gaudia told the youth in her WYD address. “It’s in little things. Imitating Jesus means living our lives for others, not for me and my needs.”

She challenged the youth, and will challenge in a different way all that come for this Lenten reflection at Holy Spirit, “Look at your lives. What would be a logical, natural consequence of your current lifestyle?”

A thought to ponder as Lent moves toward the rebirth of Easter.

(Holy Spirit Parish invites all to attend the Evening of Recollection free of charge. For more information, visit the parish website: www.holyspiritstamford.org, or call Carol Pinard, coordinator of special events: 203.814.2493)

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Call Before You Throw Anything Away!!!
St. Jude Parish

Mercy and Mary Retreat

MONROE—Acclaimed speaker and bestselling author Father Michael E. Gaitley, MIC, will offer an inspiring “Mercy and Mary Retreat” on Friday March 16, from 7:30-8:30 pm, and Saturday, March 17, from 7:45 am-4:30 pm at St. Jude Parish in Monroe. The retreat is open to all throughout the diocese. Father Gaitley is director of evangelization for the Marian Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception and director of formation for the Marian Missionaries of Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

“We hope people throughout the diocese will join us for a full immersion experience into Divine Mercy and Mary,” said Msgr. Darius Zielonka, St. Jude’s pastor. “The retreat is a great Lenten opportunity to listen to talks by Father Gaitley and testimonies with the Marian Missionaries during the Lenten Season.”

The retreat will include five conferences with Father Gaitley: Personal Testimony: Now is the Time of Mercy; St. John Paul II: Fatima and the Great Mercy Pope; St. Maximilian Kolbe: Mary’s Instrument of Mercy; St. Thérèse: The Way of Merciful Love, and Your Role in this Time of Mercy. The retreat will also include Mass, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy; Adoration and Benediction.

Father Michael is the author of the bestselling books: 33 Days to Morning Glory, Consoling the Heart of Jesus, and his new book, 33 Days to Merciful Love. He lives and works on Eden Hill in Stockbridge, home of the National Shrine of Divine Mercy.

He received his master’s in theology from St. John’s Seminary in Boston and his licentiate in spiritual theology from the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C.

He has also authored a book, Consoling the Heart of Jesus: A Do-It-Yourself Retreat Inspired by the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, now in its second printing and quickly becoming a modern spiritual classic, and has just recently completed a companion guide to the book.

A familiar face on EWTN, Father Gaitley gives talks and retreats around the country on topics such as Divine Mercy, the merciful outlook as articulated by Pope John Paul II, and consoling spirituality.

The Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary is a fraternal community of consecrated life in the Roman Catholic Church. In America, the members of the congregation are perhaps best known for their work promoting the message of Divine Mercy from Stockbridge. They are also known for their devotion to Mary Immaculate, dedication to praying for the poor souls in purgatory and active service to the Church.

The National Shrine of The Divine Mercy is located in the heart of the Berkshire Hills in western Massachusetts. It sits on 350 acres, known as Eden Hill.

Thousands of pilgrims visit the National Shrine each year either on personal retreat or to join in the celebration of holy, ethnic or specialized days and is open to the public daily from 9 am to 5 pm.

(Retreat tickets: $49.95/person. Online registration is encouraged at https://events.marianmissionaries.org/events/mercy-mary-retreat-monroe-ct/)

Catholic University offers our nursing students opportunities in the classroom, the clinic, and on campus. An honors student, Scholastica works part time as a home health care aid and is active in the Student Nurses Association, Black Student Alliance, and Student Organization of Latinos. Most important, she says, “Catholic University has helped me to figure out who I want to be as a nurse and as a Catholic, because we’re an open and tolerant community of different races and beliefs.”

We invite you to visit our campus.

Register at discover.catholic.edu

A Catholic Mind for NURSING

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
An atmosphere of joy

By Priscilla Mahar

“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I love you very much. I beg you to spare the life of the unborn baby that I have spiritually adopted, who is in danger of abortion.”

This prayer, entitled the Prayer of Spiritual Adoption, is what is on my heart in the days following the March for Life. As many of us go back to school, work, and our everyday lives, the march will remain as not just a day we all travelled to Washington, D.C., but a day that unites people from all over our country in one common aspect, love.

This year marked the 45th annual March for Life, commemorating the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the decision that made abortion legal in the United States on January 22, 1973. I drove down the night before with a group of friends, not knowing what to expect. I had never been to Washington before, let alone the March, but I had seen the pictures and heard the stories. I figured I would be engulfed in a rally of passionate pro-lifers holding signs and cheering in unison.

I knew that more than 300 faithful hometown friends had traveled to Washington for the day, and I was looking forward to joining them. My goals for the day included finding friends from the Diocese of Bridgeport to feature on social media, and capturing the march for those who weren’t able to be there.

My job and my privilege as an artist and writing intern in the diocesan communications office is to communicate excitement and joy to others via media, and in D.C. this remained my goal. I’m passionate about the pro-life movement and want to spread that to others.

With this in mind, I wasn’t prepared for how much this would impact me. Not with regard to political issues, but for what it truly means to be in communion. As Catholics, there are many times in our lives when we feel alone. In numerous issues and events that affect our lives, the whole world seems to be moving away from Catholic teaching. It can be hard to stick with our faith if we don’t have the solidarity and outward support of others.

God is always looking to surprise us and to give us good things, and on this day he blessed us with communion.

As we marched down Constitution Avenue, what was present in the atmosphere was pure joy. Support and encouragement was apparent, even in a sea of strangers.

God is always looking to surprise us and to give us good things, and on this day he blessed us with communion.

I have been to the March for Life before, having taken groups of youth from other dioceses, but this was the first time I went myself through my local parish. As always, it was an amazing day seeing the multitude of people, predominately young people, from all over the country engaging in this very important issue.

One thing that I found interesting and different was that on our bus we had one family with their teenage daughter. You might say, “How unusual is that? Many parents with their children attend the event.” It wasn’t so much that she was there, but what I observed her doing both up and back on the bus. I noticed that she was speaking to almost everyone on the bus during the five hours we spent both up and back together.

When she got to me, I asked her why. She said, “I know why this issue is important to me and my parents, but I also want to know why it is so important to everyone else. We all have a very important story to tell!”

I asked her if she was doing this for a school project, since she was missing a day of school to attend. She said “No, I just want to be a better witness to this important teaching of the Church.”

This experience and conversation with this young lady, and seeing all the young people at the March for Life, was so important because it confirmed for me that our young people today do understand and want to spread the message of life!
A radiantly beautiful day greeted the joyful crowds of over 100,000 people who converged on Washington, D.C., on January 19 for the 45th annual March for Life. The upbeat atmosphere of this year’s March was enhanced by a full-dress marching band from New Orleans. High school, college and diocesan groups from as far away as Florida, Missouri, Nebraska and Louisiana; Catholics, Lutherans, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, and Evangelicals all joined forces to proclaim the dignity and sanctity of life.

Participants were not limited to those motivated by religious belief: there were groups identifying as “Atheists for Life,” “Pro-Life Humanists,” “Feminists for Life,” and former abortion workers, all attesting to the indubitable truth that life begins at the moment of conception.

Perhaps the most courageous example was “Love Saves Lives,” a group of mothers whose children were conceived from rape, with signs proclaiming their love for their children, the joy they would never have known had they succumbed to the pressure to abort.

Also witnessing to the triumph of love over violence and despair were young adults who had been conceived from rape, proclaiming their complete joy in life and thanking their mothers for choosing life for them.

The diversity of the crowd, united in purpose to uphold the right to life of the unborn, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness of the most vulnerable among us truly showed America at its best.

The call came late one evening during a busy work week as I was preparing for major projects. Little did I know this would be a blessing in disguise. Isn’t that how God works, surprising and gifting us with the something he knows we need? My friend calling said, “We are going to the March for Life in Washington, D.C. on Friday and we have an open seat, why don’t you join us?” “Thanks,” I said, thinking of how tired I was, what work needed to be completed and how could I ever manage a day off and a long trip at the end of a busy week. “I’m not sure I can make it. Listen, try to fill the spot and if it works out and I can go, I’ll be in touch.”

After I hung up, I knew this was the time to attend my first March for Life event. The planning that followed fell in place. Of course, we would be leaving at 4:30 in the morning and travel back and forth in one day, but this didn’t seem to bother me. I knew it was meant for me to attend.

Every year when the March takes place, I watch the coverage on Catholic cable channels and admire so many for standing for life in the face of opposition from others who do not feel that life begins at conception. I am pro-life. Scripture tells us that God knew us in the womb before we were born. I read the statistics and opinions on both sides of the issue and hear the debates through a variety of media. I also hear the anguish of women who have had an abortion and hear their stories of forgiveness through the Church, and in their personal lives and how they have healed. I have been a spectator on this issue.

When we arrived in Washington, D.C., we first attended Mass. The homily was touching. The priest reflected on how we are not to judge those who support abortion, but to love them and pray for them.

As we joined the actual parade line, every age, every organization including high school, college, parish, ecumenical church, medical organizations and others formed the line. It was a never-ending sea of prayer and devotion. I was in awe at the number of young adults who stand for life. Young high school and college-aged individuals singing, praying and chanting created energy and excitement along the route.

The March proceeded fast at times and sometimes at a standstill. As we walked along, the rays of the sun shown down on us and I felt the warmth of something bigger than I could imagine. A peace, a softness and an assurance that God was with us, watching over us and blessing us for this pilgrimage we made.

I was already pro-life, but this experience brought a gentle added blessing of love from God in my spiritual life that I will always remember and treasure. It is hard to put into words, but I also felt a knowing deep down in my spirit and intellect that those unborn aborted children were with us. If you have not participated in the March for Life in Washington, D.C., consider attending next year; it will change your life.
Our Lady of Norwalk

NORWALK—When Father Richard Cipolla was named pastor of St. Mary Parish in Norwalk, he decided to honor the Blessed Mother in a special way—a way that would endure for generations to come. His inspiration took him from the shores of Long Island Sound to Belgium, where he found a statue of the Virgin that was to become Our Lady of Norwalk, patroness of a city with an illustrious maritime heritage.

Father Cipolla became an assistant at St. Mary’s in 2007 and pastor three years ago. “When I became pastor, I wanted to find a beautiful statue of Our Lady for the church,” he recalled. For months he searched antique shops in New York City and Connecticut with no success. However, he found what he was looking for online. It was a magnificent statue of the Virgin and Child made in Belgium and worn in their original silk garments.

“My search brought me to an antique dealer who was selling a statue dated about 1850 that came from a parish church in a Belgian town,” he said. “When I saw the statue, I was captivated by the serene beauty of Mary’s face and the lovely vestments she wore. I knew that I had found the image for which I was searching.”

Father Cipolla, whose parents were immigrants, said, “As an Italian, devotion to Mary is in my blood. Every village in Italy has its own Madonna. It is an ancient custom for towns and villages to adopt a particular image of the Blessed Virgin and make her their own Mother Mary, whose presence blesses their town or village. So why shouldn’t Norwalk?”

Growing up in Rhode Island, Father Cipolla always loved the sea, which is why he has a special appreciation for Norwalk and its maritime heritage ... not to mention oysters.

After the statue arrived from Europe, he went to the Norwalk shore and found a perfect oyster shell to place in the Madonna’s hand, where her sceptor had once been. The Christ Child holds a pearl because he is the “Pearl of Great Value” in the Gospel parable. The oyster shell is particularly symbolic to Norwalk, which has relied on the shell fishing industry throughout its history.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano blessed the statue last summer during the parish festival on the Feast of the Assumption, and since that time Father Cipolla has directed his efforts to creating a shrine for Our Lady of Norwalk. When he started to look for artists to fulfill his dream, he didn’t have to go far. He recruited Alonso Flores, owner and founder of The Fine Woodworker in Norwalk, to build the triptych shrine. Flores, originally from Colombia, has five decades of woodworking experience.

“We did research to get a good, quality piece,” Flores said. “This triptych is loyal to the medieval tradition.” The planning and construction took him almost two months.

After interviewing several artists, Father Cipolla chose Henry Egan III, a native of Norwalk who is recognized internationally for his maritime painting, to paint it in the 13th-century medieval style. The left panel depicts St. Mary Church, and the right has an oysterman with the Norwalk islands behind him. In the center panel is the Virgin’s throne surrounded by angels and saints.

A member of Our Lady of Notre Dame in Easton, Egan said he is humbled and honored to have been part of the project, which took him three months from planning to completion, using the Old Masters’ technique of layering to achieve a luminous glow with the paint.

“I have a strong belief in faith,” Egan said. “When you’re with a piece eight hours a day, you have a lot of time to think, and it’s always great to say a Hail Mary and an Our Father. All doubt goes out of your head when you trust in God and the gift he’s given you.”

Egan, who attended St. Thomas the Apostle School in Norwalk, said his love for the sea began with his first job, pumping gas on the docks at Norwalk Cove Marina from 7 in the morning to 7 at night. “Even as a boy I knew I had a gift that was given to me by God the Father,” he said. With moral support of his earthly father, he pursued his dream and entered the Fine Arts School at the University of Connecticut. His maritime work is represented by the Russell Jinishian Gallery in Fairfield. Over the past year, parishioners have shown their devotion to the Madonna of Norwalk, Father Cipolla said. “The statue invites people to prayer, and it’s wonderful to see so many lighting candles at the Lady Altar throughout the day. I am so happy about this because in a way, it is the culmination of my priesthood and the culmination of my life.”

The dedication ceremony, held February 7, included a Solemn Mass and a reception attended by Mayor Henry Rilling, the artists, area clergy and people from the seafood and restaurant industries. Appropriately, one of the ancient titles for the Blessed Mother is “Stella Maris”—Star of the Sea—because she guides people to Christ.

Father Cipolla said, “Our Lady of Norwalk will be a supernatural lighthouse, who with her son will guide the parish at a period of renewal for the Church.”
Sisters announce plan for new school

Mater Salvatoris School to open in Stamford

STAMFORD—The Sisters of the Company of the Savior will open a new Mater Salvatoris all-girls independent Catholic College Preparatory School in Stamford this September in the former Holy Spirit School building.

Holy Spirit merged with other diocesan elementary schools to form The Catholic Academy of Stamford in 2017.

Plans for the Mater Salvatoris School have been underway for more than a year. When Mother Amelia Lora Tamayo, CS, Superior General of the Company of the Savior, visited this diocese last January, she brought with her plans for the school. “This is our mission, to educate girls,” Mother Amelia told Fairfield County Catholic at that time. “We have our own way, focusing on the development of the whole person.”

The order’s foundress, Mother Maria Felix, set the educational template when she opened the first Mater Salvatoris School in Madrid in 1954. This will be the seventh of the Mater Salvatoris Schools that the Sisters of the Company of the Savior have founded around the world. As of today, they have a total enrollment of 6,500 students.

When the Sisters first came to this diocese in the early 1960s, Bishop Walter W. Curtis requested their assistance teaching in parochial schools. Over the last 50 years, they have seen the urgent need of Catholic Education in the U.S. They begin this new project with passion and deep enthusiasm, supported by 60 years of experience in educational excellence, offering a faithful Catholic education, student-centered learning environment, strong academic formation and experiential and active education.

The Sisters met with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano soon after he was installed. “He was excited about our plan,” said Mother Amelia. Since then, the Sisters have been speaking with him on a regular basis.

The Mater Salvatoris School in Stamford will begin with the lower grades, Pre-K3, Pre-K4, kindergarten and first grade, and will expand by one grade level each year up to grade 12. Mater Salvatoris Schools accompany the young women in the different stages of their education, from their early years until their admission to college, seeking to nurture in each of them the entire development of their personalities: individually, socially and transcendentally.

“We focus on excellence in education, from technological innovation to artistic and cultural experience,” said Mother Amelia. “Most of all, we want to develop young women with strong core values, women who persevere when confronted with difficulties, women with high ideals, who can fight for a particular good or desire, women who experience the joy and freedom of spiritual life.”

Because the Sisters offer a holistic education, accompanying girls from their early years, it makes good sense to start with the youngest children. “We will grow with the girls” Mother Amelia said. “It’s a long-term vision.”

The Sisters will continue the search for a permanent location with larger property to build and expand the school. This will fulfill their Mother Maria Felix’ vision for the greater glory of God and under the maternal protection of Our Lady, Mother of the Savior.

(For more information on the new Mater Salvatoris School in Stamford, email the Sisters at stm.school@matersalvatoris.org, call 203.997.5421, or visit their website: www.stamfordmatersalvatoris.org.)

Brady to head Trinity campus

STAMFORD—When Bishop Frank J. Caggiano announced the formation of The Catholic Academy of Stamford and the Imagine 2020 campaign, he spoke of creating a single campus for Catholic education in Stamford for all students Pre-K through 12. The goal was to create an integrated and cohesive Catholic educational program that ensured continuity of curriculum, the leveraging of resources and a seamless transition from primary to middle to high school grades.

In January, that goal took another step closer to reality as the bishop announced that Patricia Brady, Head of School for The Catholic Academy of Stamford, would also be appointed as Head of School for Trinity Catholic High School, thus providing a single Head of School for both communities. This appointment will be effective officially on July 1, 2018.

Brady, who previously served as principal of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School in Fairfield, has an impressive career in education as both a teacher and administrator.

“We are excited for the impact her commitment and passion for Catholic education will have on the Catholic school community in Stamford,” said Dr. Steven Cheeseman, diocesan superintendent of schools. “I am deeply grateful that she has agreed to serve in this capacity, and I am excited to have the opportunity to work with her in this expanded role. Please join me in congratulating Pat Brady.”
Leadership Institute

Parishes seek ways to reach out to older adults

By EMILY CLARK

When Deacon Don Ross visited a group of residents at Middlebrook Farms in Trumbull, he was struck by the comment of one elderly woman during a faith conversation about death and dying. “I don’t want to be forgotten,” she said.

Of the many groups to whom the Diocese of Bridgeport ministers, the elderly are the most quickly growing, most in need of support, and most worried about being forgotten by society. And parishes may hold the key to affirming and serving them.

To begin addressing ways to ensure they are indeed not “forgotten,” the Leadership Institute of the Diocese of Bridgeport held a summit entitled “Serving Our Older Adults.” This January 27 event at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton brought together over 50 people from Fairfield County including priests, deacons, lay leaders and representatives from secular at-home care organizations.

“We need to begin the conversation on how to minister to older adults,” said Peter Eder, the event’s keynote speaker and a member of St. Thomas More Parish in Darien. “We see there is a burgeoning population of seniors.”

This realization first came from results of the Fourth Diocesan Synod and then from a survey in which parishes were asked to identify essential concerns of its members age 60 and older.

Patrick Donovan, director of the Leadership Institute, said, “Leaders realized they had to reimage faith formation at every level—especially with 10,000 baby boomers turning 60 every day.”

With survey responses such as transportation concerns, outreach programs to recognize the ill or homebound, and age-and-ability-appropriate events within the parish, parishes are aware they are a vital dimension for these people.

“It’s important to discuss what parishes reported as their needs to determine ‘What’s next?’” said Donovan. “How do parishes take the lead in addressing concerns of older adults?”

Following the introductory presentation by Peter Eder, which included PowerPoint slides of survey information and statistics, attendees engaged in small group discussions based on the information provided and were encouraged to talk about ways their parishes were working with this population and areas in need of expansion or improvement.

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Father Frank Hoffmann of St. John Parish in Darien commented on his parish’s Day of Recollection and Caring Committee as well as their monthly noon Mass and lunch. “Our ‘Chat and Chew’ group usually draws 35-40 people,” Hoffmann said.

Like most people, older adults desire to be included in programs and events within their community, an idea that was shared by many at the summit. Several people mentioned that though the elderly want programs geared toward their needs, they also wish for more opportunities to interact with young people, especially one woman saying, “Old people don’t always want to be with old people!”

Nicholas Troilo, a member of the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist in Stamford, said leaders need to recognize the assets older adults have and how to employ them. “We must look at the contributions the elderly can make to us,” he said. “Let’s bring the wisdom of the elderly and the wisdom of the youth together to enrich each other’s faith.”

Tapping into the work of Scout groups and local Catholic universities and creating Bible studies with members of all ages were possibilities for merging the interests of different generations. Engaging young people to work with older adults would also assist parishes in recruiting new people for existing ministries, including those with positions now held by the aging population.

“We need to find the next generation of who we were,” said Eder, an active member of AARP who was recognized as the recipient of their 2017 community service award.

Father Tim Iannocone of St. Pius X Parish in Fairfield said that this initiative echoes that of Pope Benedict who is quoted as saying “grandparents . . . are a precious resource.”

While many older adults continue to be active in their towns and parishes, attendees also noted that a large segment are limited in their mobility and require assistance. Residents from Oronoque Village in Stratford mentioned identifying those who need help and making it a priority to maintain regular contact with them. This could include serving them with the sacraments and employing such programs as the Stephen Ministry, in which lay people assist their pastors in caring for those in need.

“I keep asking, ‘What can we do?’” said Deacon Ross. “We can’t let barriers prevent us from doing what we need to do for the elderly.”

Organizations from outside the diocese are also helping to meet those needs. Representatives from Stay at Home in Wilton, At Home in Darien, and the Southwestern Connecticut Agency on Aging attended the Leadership Summit as well, sharing ways they assist both parishes and communities, proving that Fairfield County and the Diocese of Bridgeport are moving in the right direction to ensure that no person is forgotten.

(For more information contact the Leadership Institute: institute@diobpt.org or 203.416.1670.)
BRIDGEPORT—The feast day of St. Elizabeth Seton, founder of the Daughters of Charity in the United States, was the occasion for the presentation of Values Recognition Awards at St. Vincent’s Medical Center.

In a moving ceremony held in the Hawley Conference Center, St. Vincent’s paid tribute to employees and volunteers for their extraordinary compassion, thoughtfulness and respect for the dignity of patients and co-workers. “St. Elizabeth Seton had a remarkable life story. She was the first American-born saint,” said Bill Hoey, vice president and chief mission integration officer at St. Vincent’s. “We who work here today continue in the spirit of Mother Seton.”

Hoey said the Daughters of Charity founded St. Vincent’s 115 years ago, when the pastor of nearby St. Patrick’s Parish asked 115 years ago, when the pastor of Charity founded St. Vincent’s at St. Vincent’s. “We who work said Bill Hoey, vice president and the first American-born saint,” remarked the first American-born saint,” remarked the remarkable life story. She was dignity of patients and co-workers. thoughtfulness and respect for the their extraordinary compassion, employees and volunteers for their extraordinary compassion, employees and volunteers for the Hawley Conference Center, the Hawley Conference Center, Vincent’s Medical Center. Values Recognition Awards at St. Vincent’s Medical Center. David Rivera (center) who is preparing for ordination as a permanent deacon, was surrounded by staff and clergy at the ceremony. As a pastoral care volunteer, he worked with patients and families in traumatic situations.

Among those to receive a Values Award was Pastoral Care volunteer David Rivera of Bridgeport, who is preparing for ordination as Permanent Deacon later this year. The deacon candidate was recognized for his compassion and commitment to safeguarding the peace and dignity of patients and family members under stressful situations.

After completing his internship in the Pastoral Care volunteer training program, he continued to volunteer his time to serve as a translator and work with patients and families in traumatic situations. His service included calming the families, interpreting conversations and even repeating prayers and last rites in Spanish. Rivera received plenty of support from the diocesan officials who attended the ceremony to honor him and other honorees: Msgr. Thomas Powers, vicar general of the Diocese of Bridgeport; Father Frank Gomez, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bridgeport; and Father Skip Karsinski, pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish, also in Bridgeport.

Deacons Tim Bolton and Bill Coniers, both members of the Pastoral Care Department, were also on hand to honor Rivera “as a man for others.”

The youngest recipient of a Values Award was Jason Levine, a seventh-grade student at Cesar Batalla School, who is preparing for ordination as a permanent deacon. His effort was to help his friend Desmond Padilla, the custodian at Cesar Batalla School, who is need of a kidney.

Jason was nominated by St. Vincent’s vice president Dianne Auger for his help on the Medical Mission at Home, which was held at Batalla. Jason proved to be an adept organizer as he worked with staff and other volunteers.

Others receiving Value Awards awards included St. Vincent’s case manager Eileen Callahan, RN, for her extraordinary work helping an elderly couple who needed support; Patricia Dennis, RN, who helped to introduce Pet Therapy to the Westport campus; Danielle DiFronzo for professional and personal efforts to assist patients and staff; Nicole Rogucki, RN, who financed her own one-week mission trip to South America; and Christina Tamasdan, MD, for her compassionate leadership practice in Pain Management Services.

Three entire departments were also recognized for their spirit of caring and compassion: the Lab UPC team, the Radiation Oncology Team and the staff of St. Vincent’s Radiation Oncology.

“We are doing the work of the Church here,” said Bill Hoey after the ceremony. “Our staff reaches the most vulnerable in our society by caring for them with great dignity and compassion. It is a healing ministry.”
St. Joseph High School

Immersion program

TRUMBULL—Mari Andrejewski’s life changed dramatically—at 14 years old. As a freshman at St. Joseph High School, her view of what matters in life was transformed when she went on a trip to Nicaragua as part of the Francis Xavier International Scholars Program and saw a world she never knew existed—a world the Gospel called her to change.

She heard a woman named Yamilette talk about the 13 years she spent living in a Managua landfill and the horrors she witnessed, including the time a little boy was rummaging through garbage and died after he ate what he thought was a piece of chocolate but was rat poison.

Mari saw streets filled with trash, tin hovels where families lived, hundreds of stray dogs and starving animals, and other sights that led her to an appreciation of the Gospel, and the importance of love and charity.

“Something clicked,” she wrote in a presentation for her classmates. “My heart collapsed for the unfortunate lives of these people, and all I wanted to do was give them the clothes off my back, the money in my pockets and the love in my heart.”

She returned with the realization that as residents of Fairfield County, we’re among the richest on the globe and have a moral obligation to make the world a better place. As St. Joseph’s motto says, with privilege comes responsibility.

Maureen Anderson, director of the immersion program and director of co-curricular activities at St. Joseph’s, said, “We want this to be a transformative experience. Very often, their understanding of what is normal goes out the window.”

The program, named after the 16th century Jesuit missionary who spread the Gospel throughout Asia, was developed to give students an opportunity to encounter different cultures and examine the “social realities of a community from cultural, economic, religious and historical perspectives.”

“Teach the world religion course and tell students their roommates and their neighbors are going to be people of different faiths and cultures, and they have to walk in solidarity with them,” Anderson said. “I want them to achieve an openness of spirit and willingness to dialogue with those who have different understandings of life.”

During the 2017-2018 school year, there will be six immersion trips. In 2018, students and faculty will travel to Rome in February, China in April, Colombia in June, and Maine in July to work with First Nations people and the Latino community.

St. Joseph’s principal, Dr. James Keane, who provided the idea for the Francis Xavier program, said, “As a cross-cultural immersion program in a Catholic learning community, the program introduces our students to the global mission of the Church while helping them traverse the distances between culture, economics, religion and geography.”

Since it was launched in 2016, 91 students and 12 faculty members have participated in six trips. Anderson said the goal is to produce students who become global scholars and learn about Catholic social teaching.

“There is a service component in each of these trips, but they are not simply ‘service trips,’” she said. “Our goal is not to go to a place like Peru and build a house for the poor while the poor look on. Instead, in keeping with Pope Francis’ vision of solidarity and accompaniment, we try to get to know the poor and those of other cultures and backgrounds by name, and understand their challenges, histories and cultures.”

The program is open to all students, faculty and staff. Students working toward the International Scholars Certificate must make two or more trips and engage in world language study and related coursework. They then graduate as “Francis Xavier International Scholars” and receive documentation that becomes part of their high school transcript.

“These are experiences you can’t get in a classroom,” Anderson said. “We want to give students an understanding of the social divide between the rich and poor and help them realize we are the rich and there is a whole lot of poor.”

Seniors Nicholas and Joshua Harper are twins who have completed the requirements when they graduate. Both went to Peru in 2016 and returned home with a deeper understanding of their faith and how God can bridge socio-economic differences.

“I was surprised to see the sharp divide between social classes, as if there was a line between the slums and the rich,” Josh recalled. “It was unlike anything I had ever seen before.” He recalled playing soccer with children from a poor neighborhood and how they connected spiritually. “Even though we couldn’t speak their language, it was a very moving experience. It taught me Christ is everywhere on this earth and that I can connect with people who don’t speak the same language because we believe in the same God.”

Nicholas returned with a greater appreciation of his faith and said, “It was interesting to see how these people could be so faith-filled with so little. Even though they didn’t have material possessions, they were strong in their spirituality. It’s easy for us to lose sight of the importance of God when we have all these things that are falsely important to us.”

One of the most profound lessons students receive is that change is possible when people are committed to social justice. On the Nicaragua trip, they witnessed a success story in Yamilette.

For years, she rummaged through the landfill to salvage magnesium and aluminum so she could make $60 a month. Now, she runs an after-school program that she began with several women whose goal is to liberate others, like themselves, from poverty and deprivation.
High School Sports

Diocese soccer All-Americans: Mazo, Roessler

By Don Harrison

What is the quality of the soccer played by high school girls in the Diocese of Bridgeport? Using the United Soccer Coaches’ 2017 All-American high school team as a yardstick, the answer is top-flight.

The 60-member squad includes two players from Catholic schools in the diocese: Jessica Mazo, a junior midfielder at St. Joseph High in Trumbull, and senior goalie Kristen Roessler of Immaculate High in Danbury. For Mazo, this was her second straight year as an All-American. (For the record, another Fairfield County girl, Lauren Tangney of Fairfield Warde, joined Mazo and Roessler on the 2017 team.)

Mazo, whose father Hector played soccer in his native Colombia as well as here, considers herself fortunate to have played on the St. Joe’s varsity as a freshman. She learned a great deal from a certain teammate—senior All-American and four-time All-Stater Jenna Bike, who was voted National High School Soccer Player of the Year following that season.

“I analyzed Bike’s game. She was very composed,” says Mazo. “Getting to start on that team as a freshman gave me confidence.”

Since Mazo’s arrival, the Cadets have won three straight Class L state titles. The most recent championship match couldn’t have been closer—a 1-0 decision over top-seeded RHAM-Hebron last November. Freshman forward Maddie Fried scored the day’s lone goal, appropriately enough following an adept pass from Mazo.

Mazo and Fried shared the Cadets’ scoring lead with 21 goals apiece this past season and both, along with senior Tory Bike, were named to the Connecticut Girls Soccer Coaches Association’s Class L All-State team.

St. Joe’s Coach Jack Nogueira calls Mazo the “most skillful and technically sound player we’ve had at St. Joe’s,” which speaks volumes. She’s also an honors student. The University of Connecticut has taken note and offered her a scholarship, which she’s accepted.

Nogueira, who also coaches Mazo’s travel team, Yankees United, has been a guiding light for the 16-year-old junior, both on and off the field. “He tells you to value your family, to put an effort into everything you do,” she says.

Kristen Roessler, 18, is the fourth in a line of outstanding goalies coached by Nelson Mingachos during his 15 seasons at Immaculate High in Danbury. For Mazo, this was her second straight year as an All-American for the second straight year—and she’s just a junior.

“Kristen is our fourth goalie who will play at a Division-I school,” Mingachos notes. He reeled off the names of the others: “Nikki Weiss was an All-American here and she went on to Notre Dame, where she won a national championship. Cory Medrano and Ashley Houghton were both All-New England and played at Central Connecticut and Marist, respectively. And now we have Kristen.”

Roessler became the Mustangs’ regular goalie as a freshman and, although admitted-scared of the upperclassmen, distinguished herself from the outset.

“I was always scared if I made a mistake on the field,” she recalls, citing Immaculate’s 2014 state championship game against Avon, trailing 1-0 at halftime.

She held Avon scoreless in the second half and the Mustangs prevailed, 2-1.

“To be a freshman in that type of game and do well says a lot about Roessler’s resolve,” Mingachos states. “She has a physical presence and is a leader back there.”

As a junior, Roessler was an integral part of Immaculate’s 11th state championship team, but the Mustangs fell short this past fall, bowing to Weston, 1-0, in a free kick in the Class M tournament’s second round. Still, she and her teammates could find considerable solace in Immaculate’s 19-1 record (including 12 victories by shutout).

And, for the third straight season, Roessler was selected to the CGSCA All-State team.

In late January, Kristen received yet another award from the CGSCA, the first Tony DiCicco award for goalkeeping excellence.

DiCicco, a Connecticut native who died last summer, coached the U.S. National women’s team to the 1999 world cup.

Soccer is big in the Roessler household. Her father, Karl, played in Germany, and her older sisters, Jessica and Sarah, pursued the sport at Danbury High.
Obituaries

Sister Victoria Nolan, DC

Sister Victoria Nolan, DC, died January 7, at St. Louise House in Albany. She was 98 years of age and had 80 years vocation as a Daughter of Charity.

Born in Albany on April 22, 1919, Victoria was one of three children born to John and Agnes Nolan. She joined the Community of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in December 1937.

Sister Victoria graduated from Catholic University in Washington, D.C., where she completed her bachelor of science degree in nursing in 1951. She earned her master’s degree in nursing education in 1957, and in 1984 she became a certified chaplain through the National Association of Catholic Chaplains.

Early in her ministry, Sister Victoria served in education at hospitals in several states. She served as local community superior in Utica, N.Y. She came to Bridgeport in 1992, serving in pastoral care at St. Vincent’s Medical Center until her retirement in 2009.

In May 2009, Sister Victoria joined the Ministry of Prayer at St. Louise House in Albany, where she served until the time of her death.

A Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Victoria was celebrated January 10, at DePaul House Chapel in Albany. Burial followed at St. Agnes Cemetery in Menands, N.Y.

Sister Ann Molesevich, DC

Sister Ann Molesevich, DC, on mission at St. Louise House in Albany, died November 7, 2017. She was 78 years of age and had enjoyed 41 years in her vocation.

Ann Patricia Molesevich was born in Shamokin, Penn., on July 2, one of three children born to Ann and Peter Molesevich. After graduating from Kulpmont High School in 1956, she continued her education in the United States Navy as a civil servant in government work from 1956-69 in Philadelphia.

She joined the Community of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in January 1976 from Patronage of the Mother of God Ukrainian Catholic Church in Marion Heights, Penn.

Following her initial formation, Sister Ann ministered in pastoral care at St. Vincent’s Medical Center in Bridgeport for the first time from 1976-78. She then served in pastoral care in parishes and for Catholic Charities at locations in New York State from Buffalo in the far north to the Bronx in New York City.

Sister Ann returned to St. Vincent’s twice more during her time in ministry, from 1989-92 and again from 2012-14.

She served as the local Community Superior from 1999-2005. In January of 2017, she joined the Ministry of Prayer at St. Louise House, Albany. While there, she volunteered at the Rourke Center in Troy.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Sister Ann on November 14 at DePaul Provincial House Chapel in Albany, N.Y. Burial took place on November 16 in Patronage of the Mother of God Cemetery in Marion Heights.

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February 2018
Nuestra Voz

Parroquia con tradiciones hispanas

Por MARICARMEN GODoy

Con casa llena, la Parroquia de San Carlos (St. Charles Borromeo) en Bridgeport, celebró la Presentación del Niño Jesús durante la mas dominical en español el 4 de febrero a las nueve de la mañana. Esta parroquia cuenta en su seno con 2.830 familias registradas, de las cuales 1.800 son de origen hispano.

El pasado 2 de febrero fue la Fiesta de la Candelaria, o como se conoce en el calendario eclesiástico, la Presentación del Niño en el templo. Decenas de imágenes del Niño Jesús estuvieron a los pies del altar para celebrar el Día de la Candelaria. El Padre Frank acude desde hace 20 años a San Carlos porque es la iglesia que les permite vivir su fe en su idioma natal y porque el sacerdote es “dinámico y muy cariñoso”, dijeron.

El Padre Frank fue ordenado sacerdote para la Diócesis de Bridgeport en 2009. Su primera asignación sacerdotal fue a la Parroquia de St. John en Darien, llegando a San Carlos hace tres años.

La misión de San Carlos es crecer la vida espiritual de sus feligreses, y por eso ha desarrollado un ministerio juvenil con mucha fuerza y vitalidad. Cuenta con 137 jóvenes que conforman el grupo Juvenil.

Durante el año, sus feligreses hispanos celebran el calendario de fiestas religiosas tal como si estuvieran en sus países de origen. Los ecuatorianos celebran la advocación de la Virgen del Cisne o la Churona de Loja, imagen que sobresale a la entrada de la iglesia. Chile, por su parte, celebra al Virgen del Carmen, los paraguayos a la Virgen de Cacupé, los puertorriqueños a la Virgen de Guadalupe y cada último sábado del mes, la comunidad colombiana festiva al Divino Niño.

A los inmigrantes se los abraza a través del programa de Caridades Católicas y constantemente la parroquia tiene talleres para que sus feligreses lean sobre la ley de inmigración, se cuiden de las deportaciones y sobre otros temas espirituales y leyes a los “soñadores”, los jóvenes “dreamers”.

El sacerdote prefiere que en su parroquia no se topen aspectos políticos sobre inmigración, pero frecuentemente están alertando sobre la importancia de estar bien informados. Para ayudar y asesorar legalmente a los inmigrantes en sus trámites migratorios, siempre remite a sus feligreses a la oficina del Padre Arévalo, director de inmigración de Caridades Católicas.
“Each passing moment masks a tender face; nothing had to be, but is by Grace.”

(John Updike, “Midpoint”)

I am fond of February. February is promise. February is still winter, often full of snow and sleet, ice and cold. But winter’s days are numbered. No matter how hard it may try, winter is running out of breath.

The sun sinks now forty minutes later than it did a month ago, and moonlight, moonlight on snow. There is the wonder of night and dawn, sun and stars, sunlight and moonlight, moonlight on snow. There is the sound of rain, the squabble of the wind in its many moods, the sound of rain, the squabble of seagulls who ride the air currents like kites. I have occasional surges of sheer gratitude for being here. As Dante said, at the heart of the universe is a smile, a place of joy passed down from the moment of creation. I like walking winter beaches, listening to the voice of the sea, seductive, never ceasing, whispering, murmuring, inviting the soul to solitude. As Keats said, “the poetry of earth is never dead” (“On the Grasshopper & Cricket”).

A memorable expression of creation disclosing the reality of God is found in John Updike’s short story “Pigeon Feathers.” The protagonist of the story is a teenager named David who lives in a town named Firetown. Through catechetical instruction and his own reading, he becomes very anxious about death and living on after death. No one with whom he tries to speak about his concerns can give him satisfying responses. One day his mother says to him, “David, I have a job for you to do…Your grandmother thinks there are too many pigeons in the barn. They foul the furniture stored in the barn. She wants you to shoot them.” David doesn’t want to “kill anything especially,” but goes and does what he was told to do. He flowed without error across the bird’s body. David lost himself in the geometrical tides as the feathers, now broadened and stiffened to make an edge for flight, now softened and constricted to cup warmth around the mute flesh. And across the surface of the infinitely adjusted yet somehow effortless mechanics of the feathers played idle designs of color, no two alike, design executed, it seemed, in a controlled capture, with joy that hung level in the air above and behind him. Yet these birds bred in the millions and were exterminated as pests.

“Into the fragrant open earth he dropped one broadly banded in slate shades of blue, and on top of it another, mottled all over in rhythms of lilac and gray. The next was almost wholly white, but for a salmon glaze at its throat. As he fitted the last two, still plant, on the top, and stood up, he was robed in this certainty: that the God who had lavished such craft upon these worthless birds would not refuse to let David live forever.”

“I want them to walk through the doors and ask, ‘What else can I do? What fun ways to trick them in and say hello.’ We may have some fun ways to trick them into learning so they don’t think they’re in school, but they also know they’re going swimming or on a field trip. They’re as eager as the kids were 25 years ago to come into the building. Do you see your legacy as a fund raiser, coach or administrator?”

I’ve always been at teacher at heart. I’ve taught kindergarten through junior college. I always approached coaching basketball as a teacher. The gym might be a much bigger classroom, but you’re teaching young people about life and how to behave.

I’m proud of the programs we’ve added to help them learn. I want them to walk through the doors and ask, “What else can I learn?”
Beyond Hollywood

**Swimming Upstream**

*By Joe Pisani*

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

There's only one kind of movie my wife will watch — the romantic comedy, also known as the “chick flick” ... even though her chick days are over.

If I rent “Dunkirk,” the answer is no; if I rent “Star Wars,” never; if I rent “Mission Impossible,” it’s just not possible. Over the years, my cinematic viewing has been somewhat stymied, which is a good thing because I never watched depraved films like “Natural Born Killers.” The older I get, the less tolerant I am of graphic violence, casual sex and swearing in entertainment.

Nevertheless, man does not live by PBS alone, so every week I explore iTunes and Amazon to find something worthy of my God’s help.

Every so often I reread St. Paul’s definition of love in the First Letter to the Corinthians, and it scares the heck out of me. I want love to be fun, not work. I want to be the center of attention, not the one who has to do the heavy lifting. I want a love that makes me feel giddy like the characters in “Moonstruck,” not a love that requires commitment in the face of adversity and trials.

Paul said, “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

Even though Paul couldn’t have written the script for “Pretty Woman” or “When Harry Met Sally,” he knew what he was talking about when it came to love.

(Actually, the next time I rent a movie, I’m going to remind my wife about what Paul said: “Love does not insist on getting its own way.”)

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**Diocese of Bridgeport**

**Wedding Jubilee**

**Mass & Concert**

*For married couples celebrating 25, 30, 35, 40, 45 and 50+ year wedding anniversaries*

**SUNDAY, APRIL 29, 2018 • 3:00PM**

**Main Celebrant: Bishop Frank Caggiano • St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull**

As a special gift to those celebrating anniversaries, the Mass will be immediately followed by a free concert by the Diocesan Youth Choir.

* Photos with Bishop Caggiano will take place at 2:30 pm before Mass begins. Every couple that participates will receive a complimentary photo and certificate, sent via US Mail to each parish for distribution.
* A reception will follow the concert for all couples, their families, and choir members.

To register to attend, please contact your local parish or visit: formationisimagined.org

Space is limited; please RSVP by April 18th

For questions, please contact Deirdre Kearney at (203) 416-1670 or dkearney@dshbpt.org
WALKING WITH PURPOSE: women’s Bible study “Living in the Father’s Love” will be offered at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, starting Wed., Feb. 21, from 7-8:30 pm. The weekly sessions through Wed., March 28, will bring home how deeply relevant the Gospels are to relationships with God and those we love. For more info, contact the faith formation Office: 203.261.2583 or ctkfaithformation@att.net.

MEN’S LENTEN DAY OF REFLECTION is offered by the Leadership Institute on Sat., Feb. 24, from 8:30 am-2:30 pm at the Catholic Center, Bridgeport. Take a break from your busy schedules and come together with other Catholic men for great fellowship, prayer, and worship. Cost: $25, includes breakfast and lunch. Registration is limited, sign up today: www.formationreimagined.org or 203.416.1670.

PRAYING THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS for Seniors will be offered at St. Emery Parish, Fairfield, Fri., March 2, starting at 12 noon. For more information, call the parish: 203.334.0312.

MERCY LEARNING CENTER of Bridgeport, a literacy center for women, offers the National External Diploma Program, (NEDP), a web-based high school diploma that is flexible and self-directed. Over 100 women have received their high school diplomas through the NEDP and are now in college, occupational training programs or the workforce. Monthly information sessions are held on the first Fri. of each month (March 2), at 11 am at the Mercy Learning Center, 637 Park Ave., Bridgeport. For more info, call Lynn Davies at Mercy Learning Center: 203.334.6699.

TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE for St. Catherine’s Players production of “Shrek, The Musical.” Performances will be held Fri., March 2, through Sun., March 11. Curtain times: Fridays, 8 pm.; Saturdays, 7 pm; and Sundays, 2 pm in the St. Catherine of Siena, Riverside, parish hall. Tickets: $21 in advance; $25 at the door. Purchase tickets at the rectory or at stcatherineplayers.com. For more info, visit www.stcatherineplayers.com, email stcatherineplayers@gmail.com or call 203.637.3661, ext. 327.

DIVORCED AND SEPARATED Catholics are invited to join “Hearts Renewed,” a support group for divorced or separated men and women. Meetings are held in Fairfield on the first and third Fri. of every month (March 2; March 16) at 7:30. For more info and for directions, call Bette: 203.338.0503 or Peggy: 203.834.1287.

ADULT RETREAT: Disciples 4 Life at St. Mary Parish, Ridgefield, will take place Fri.-Sun., March 2-4, at the Seton-Neumann Center, Danbury. Cost: $150/person. Talks on spirituality, reconciliation, the Mass and Eucharistic Adoration. Reservations limited; sign up soon. For more info, contact Marilyn Kain: kainm@wesu.edu or 203.994.7080.

RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE will be held at St. Stephen Parish, Trumbull, on Sat., March 3, from 8 am-1 pm. Put the power of faith into action and help save a life. For more info or to schedule an appointment, call 800.733.2767 or visit redcrossblood.org, sponsor code 6948.

TRADITIONAL LATIN MASS is celebrated at St. Margaret Bourgeoys Parish, Brookfield, the first Sun. of each month (March 4) at 4 pm. For more info, call the parish: 203.775.5117.

JOIN IN PRAYING the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary for Persecuted Christians from your home/car офис the first Tues. of every month (March 6) at 7 pm. How? Before 7 pm, call 877.216.5269 and type in the pin number 96869.

FORTY HOURS DEVOTION of the Blessed Sacrament will begin at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, Thurs., March 8, at 3 pm and will end Sat., March 10, at 8 am with Mass. Please consider signing up to spend one hour with Our Lord. Signup sheets available during Feb. in the front entrance of the church. Adoration is also offered every Mon. from 7-8 pm. For more info, call the parish: 203.268.8695.

MEN’S RETREAT will be held at Holy Family Retreat Center, 303 Tunxis Rd., West Hartford, Fri.-Sun., March 9-11, Fri. 6 pm-Sun. 2 pm. Brookfield area men can join a carpool leaving from St. Joseph Parish, Brookfield, at 5 pm on March 9. For more info and for reservations, contact Holy Family: 860.521.0440 or www.holyfamilyretreat.org. For carpool info, contact Pete Brady: 203.740.1243 (home); 203.733.8002 (cell).

LANCER LEGACY GALA 2018 to benefit Notre Dame High School will be held Sat., March 10, at 6 pm at The Waterview, 215 Roosevelt Dr., Monroe. Cocktail reception, silent auction, dinner, awards presentation, dancing: 7-10 pm. Tickets: $125/person. For tickets and sponsorship opportunities, go to www.501auctions.com/notredame2018 or call Theresa Marzik: 203.372.6521, ext. 242.

WOMEN’S ONE-DAY RETREAT: "What Are You Looking For?" will be held at St. Rose of Lima Parish, Newtown, faith formation center, Sat., March 10, from 8 am-4 pm, concluding with 4 pm Mass. Cost, including continental breakfast, and lunch: $25 (more if you can and less if you cannot). To register, download the form at: strosechurch.com/faith-formation/st-rose-retreats/womens-retreat or email Dre@strosechurch.com. For more info, call St. Rose faith formation: 203.426.2333, ext. 1.

GOSPEL OF LIFE SOCIETY meets at St. Mary Parish, Norwalk, the second Sat. of each month (March 10) at 10 am following the 9 am Respect Life Mass. The speaker will be Joan Howard, outreach coordinator for Good Counsel Malta House. For more info, contact John Juhazs: 203.762.3661 or juhazjsjw@optonline.net.

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP for anyone grieving the loss of a loved one will meet at St. Stephen Parish, Trumbull, for 10 weekly meetings with experienced counselors beginning Thurs., March 15, from 4-5:30 pm. Registration required, preferably by Mon., March 12. To register or for more info, call the parish: 203.268.6217.

WOMEN’S GROUP at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, will meet Mon., March 12, at 10 am in the parish hall. All are welcome. For more info, call Esther: 203.268.8011.

MASSES OF HEALING AND HOPE: the Charismatic Renewal Services announces Masses of Healing and Hope: Wed., March 14, at 6:30 pm at Sacred Heart Parish, Greenwich, with Fr. Larry Carew; Mon., March 19, at 7:30 pm, at St. Lawrence Parish, Shelton; and Wed., March 21, at 7 pm at St. Margaretue Bourgeoys Church, Brookfield, with Fr. Carew. For more info, call the Charismatic Renewal Office: 203.456.5610.

MOMs+DADs prayer/support group for those with Down syndrome, their family and friends meets the third Thurs. of every month (March 15), at 7:30 pm at St. Mary Parish, Norwalk. For more info, contact strapostolate@optimum.net.

LENTEN MUSICAL RETREAT will be offered at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, on Fri., March 16, at 7 pm. The St. Cecilia Consort will present Pergolesi’s Stabat Mater, a Lenten musical reflection. Admission free. For more info, call the parish: 203.268.8695.

"COME AND SEE" if you are being called to a vocation in the Secular Franciscan Order. The Secular Franciscan Holy Spirit Fraternity invites everyone to St. Anthony of Padua Church, Fairfield, on Sat., March 17, at 9:30 am to celebrate Mass with Fr. Gene Szantyr. Social and meeting follow. For more info, call Pat Heile, OFS: 203.255.8801 or phiele5713@aol.com.

SIGHT AND SOUND THEATER in Lancaster, PA, will present “Jesus,” the musical stage adventure about the most famous person ever to walk the earth, on Tues.-Wed., March 20-21. Chartered bus leaves Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, at 7 am on the March
20. The trip is 2 days/1 night and includes round trip motor coach, overnight stay, tickets, breakfast and dinner. Cost: $305. For more info and for reservations, contact Fr. Marcel: 203.434.7208 or marcellsaintjean@gmail.com.

DISCERNMENT RETREAT for Women will be held at the Caritas Christi Center, Mount Sacred Heart, the weekend of March 23-25, from 4 pm Fri.-11 am Sun. This retreat is a time for prayer, reflection and support for women ages 18-35 who feel God may be calling them to religious life. To register, go to www.ascjus.org/Discernment_Event_Registration. For more info, go to ascjus.org or email Sr. Angela: vocations@ascjus.org.

SACRED HEART ACADEMY, Hamden, will hold its 2018 Live and Silent Auction and Dinner on Sat., March 24, beginning at 6 pm at Anthony’s Ocean View, New Haven. Open bar, dancing after-party, and one-of-a-kind auction items. Tickets for the $10,000 cash raffle ($20 each) can be purchased at the auction or in advance. Cost: $85; person; table of 10, $850. For more info and for reservations, visit www.sacredhearthamden.org/auction or contact Andrea Nezat: 203.287.8181, ext. 372, or anezat@sacredhearthamden.org.

CELEBRITY BREAKFAST for New Covenant Center will be held Wed., April 4, at the Woodway Country Club, 540 Hoyt St., Darien. Jeff Fager, executive producer of 60 Minutes, will be the featured speaker. Networking coffee: 7 am; event program: 7:30 am. For more info and for tickets, call 203.964.8228, ext. 409, or visit NewCovenantCenter.org.

IMMACULATE GALA “Under the Big Top” will be held on Sat., April 7, from 6:30-11:30 pm at Western CT State University O’Neill Center, 43 Lake Ave. extension, Danbury. Tickets: $150/person. Sponsorships and ad space available. Purchase a raffle ticket to win $10,000; cost: $100/ticket. Registration open now at www.immaculatehs.org/gala. For more info, contact Debbie Basile, director of advancement: dbasile@myimmaculatehs.org.

THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE DIVINE MERCY, located at 2 Prospect Hill Rd., Stockbridge, Mass., is looking for dedicated volunteers to help serve 20,000 people on Divine Mercy Weekend, April 7-8. Places that need help in order of priority include on-site parking, off-site parking, shuttle bus area, crowd control around and inside the indoor National Shrine, gift shop, disabled visitors and much more. For more info or to volunteer, visit www.marian.org/volunteers, or contact the volunteer office: 413.298.1114.

RECTOR’S DINNER: Join the “Forming Fishers of Men” gala dinner with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, guest honoree Msgr. Thomas Powers, the seminarians and others to learn about and benefit St. John Fisher Seminary on Sat., April 28, from 6-10 pm at Trinity Catholic High School, Stamford. Cost: $150. For more info and reservations, visit www.bridgeportpriest.org.

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY to Jordan, the Holy Land and Dubai with Fr. Marcel Saint Jean: Sun., Sept. 23-Sat., Oct. 6. Price: $3,899 includes airline tickets, all taxes, hotels, breakfast and dinner daily, sightseeing, tips for guides and transportation to JFK. For more info and for reservations, contact Fr. Marcel Saint Jean at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull: 203.434.7208, or 203.268.8695, or marcellsaintjean@gmail.com.

WONDERFUL MASS for Healthcare Professionals and All Who Serve the Sick Sunday, March 18, 2018 8:30 a.m.
Saint Aloysius Church, New Canaan followed by Brunch at Woodway Country Club, Darien, Connecticut
where Dr. Dutkowsky will speak on “Healing Beyond Healthcare”

Celestial and Homilist
Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of Bridgeport

The Ruffin Compassionate Care Awards will be presented

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