Merry Christmas

A Very ‘Immaculate’ Christmas!

DANBURY—“We were glad that our neighboring families and their friends were able to join us in celebrating the wonderful joys of the Christmas season,” said president of Immaculate High School, Mary Maloney, of the “A Very Immaculate Christmas!” concert and tree lighting which took place on Sunday, December 2.

The event featured seasonal performances by Immaculate High School’s a cappella group, mixed and concert choirs, guitar ensemble and concert band, as well as a special guest performance by the choir from St. Joseph School in Danbury. In addition to hot cocoa and festive cookies, guests enjoyed a special lighting of a Christmas tree and a visit from Santa Claus.

“The voices of our choirs, ensemble group and guest children’s choir group captured the hearts of all in attendance,” said principal Mary Maloney.

Immaculate High School is a private, non-profit Catholic college-preparatory institution serving students from 28 communities in Connecticut and New York. Founded in 1962, Immaculate High School allows students to focus on academic excellence, spiritual development, personal commitments and service to others. Immaculate High School is located at 73 Southern Blvd. Danbury, CT 06810. Online at www.immaculatehs.org.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

My experience has been that the days become ever more hectic as we approach Christmas! There are many competing obligations that demand our time and attention. As a result, if we are not intentional in making time to prepare, we will find ourselves, before we know it, on the threshold of Christmas, having lost a great opportunity to prepare ourselves to receive the only gift of Christmas that matters—the Lord Himself.

Earlier this month we celebrated the great generosity of Saint Nicholas, who was a powerful force to evangelize the people of his own age, especially young people. I wondered to myself whether imitating his example might be a great spiritual exercise to prepare for the birth of the Savior.

More specifically, can you and I identify concrete ways by which, despite the busy time of year, we give of our time, money and presence to help others in need? Do we visit those who are sick and alone? Do we reach out over our differences to those who have offended or alienated us?

The gift of our generosity would only mirror in a small way the wildly generous love of God shown in His willingness to share our human life in all things but sin, so that we could one day inherit the richness of God’s own life!

The key lesson of Advent reminds us that God is always and forever coming into our lives, inviting us to draw closer to Him. The task for us is to clear our vision and learn to see His many comings into our lives, one day at a time.

Perhaps the greatest gift we can give to ourselves and those around us is the choice to transform these days of busy work into a time of silence and peace for which our minds and hearts so desperately desire.

I pray that the Light of Christ will shine upon you and your family, and that you have a joyous Christmas and Happy New Year.

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano,
Bishop of Bridgeport

Preparing for the Light of Christ

Preparations for the Light of Christ began with the message of the Bishop of Bridgeport, Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, in his Christmas message. He emphasized the importance of preparing ourselves to receive the only gift of Christmas that matters—the Lord Himself. He encouraged us to identify concrete ways by which we can give of our time, money, and presence to help others in need, mirroring the generous love of God.

The Bishop reminded us that God is always and forever coming into our lives, inviting us to draw closer to Him. He invited us to transform our days of busy work into a time of silence and peace, which is so desperately desired.

He concluded by praying that the Light of Christ will shine upon you and your family, and that you have a joyous Christmas and Happy New Year.
Bishop provides update on Accountability Report

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano issued the following letter on November 27, 2018. It was read in parishes throughout the Diocese and also posted on the Diocesan website and social media. In it he provides an update on the progress in the Diocesan Accountability Report being led by retired Connecticut Judge Robert Holzberg.

The Accountability Report is one of several administrative measures announced by the Bishop in September in response to the sexual abuse crisis in the Church. “I believe that the Church is facing a moment of crisis that demands honesty and repentance from the bishops and decisive action to ensure that these failures will never happen again,” said the Bishop in his August 18 pledge to move forward in transparency. His latest letter offers an update of work underway on the report:

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

In my letter of September 7, 2018, I announced the urgent need for administrative action with regards to the current crisis in the Church. Several initiatives have already begun and additional initiatives are planned. I am pleased to take this opportunity to report on these efforts.

On September 15, the Diocese came together at St Augustine Cathedral for a Mass of Reparation. It was a humbling and healing moment for the many who participated. Many parishes have had their own Masses of reparation as well. On October 31, the Diocese published its Financial Accountability Report, a copy of which is available on the “A Pledge to Protect” page of our Diocesan website. In all of these efforts to address the crisis with the utmost transparency and accountability, we have been truly blessed by the support we have felt from the faithful of our Diocese who have made their voices heard and also offered their prayers.

In addition, we have begun our engagement with retired Judge Robert Holzberg, who is leading the team that will produce the Diocesan Accountability Report. Judge Holzberg and his team have begun this work in earnest and expect to complete the effort by Spring of 2019. As I indicated in my earlier letter, this work will examine information regarding the sexual abuse of minors contained in the Diocesan files and the Diocesan response to this abuse over the years. The Judge’s investigation will result in a comprehensive and transparent accounting of sexual abuse of minors by Diocesan clergy between 1953 and today, and the Diocesan response to such abuse. I further indicated in my letter that the methodology for this work would be posted on the diocesan website.

I write to you today to share this methodology. Judge Holzberg has indicated that, as a part of his investigatory process, his team has been:

1. Conducting interviews of current and former Diocese religious and lay personnel;
2. Reviewing and analyzing hundreds of thousands of documents, including confidential and canonical files; and
3. Reviewing litigation records.

In addition, the team is planning to speak to some victims and survivors of or witnesses to abuse. Given the broad scope of this assignment, Judge Holzberg’s team is approaching the investigation systematically. As a critical part of this process, they have also begun consulting with outside experts familiar with canon law, child sexual abuse and investigations of religious institutions.

With the methodology articulated above, it is expected that the information collected will then be analyzed and consolidated into findings that may lead to follow up work by the team. Again, as earlier reported, this work will ultimately lead to a report of the findings for the benefit of the faithful of the Diocese, including constructive recommendations for Diocesan policy and procedures as it relates to sexual abuse of minors by clergy and the Diocesan accountability in its response to this issue.

I welcome the professional and thorough work that Judge Holzberg’s team has begun and look forward to the full cooperation of all those who will contribute in some way to the unprecedented work in this effort will entail. I truly believe that the report will be a moment of both transparency and grace for the Diocese of Bridgeport. While we are all aware of the changes we can effect for the larger Church, my hope as your Bishop is that these measures will begin to heal the wounds that we feel, address the legitimate desire for real change and restore your confidence in every level of leadership so that we can fully live out our faith with dignity, honesty and love for the Lord.

With an assurance of prayers, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of Bridgeport

Dr. Sauers named Parish Life Coordinator

FAIRFIELD—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano announced that Dr. Eleanor W. Sauers has been appointed Parish Life Coordinator of St. Anthony of Padua Church in Fairfield and will oversee the daily administration of the parish while a team of priests will fulfill its sacramental needs.

Dr. Sauers, who has been director of Religious Education and Pastoral Minister since 2002, has used her long history under Father John Baran of developing an extensive and co-responsible lay leadership that has allowed the parish to grow, and Eleanor was instrumental in helping to make that a reality,” Bishop Caggiano said. “Saint Anthony’s was ideal to have this new model of leadership, where experience can exercise leadership in the Church,” Bishop Caggiano said. “The key for success in our parishes is that we engage lay leadership in real, substantial, competent and appropriate ways.”

“I am thrilled to have been appointed to the position of Parish Life Coordinator of St. Anthony’s,” Dr. Sauers said. “I am grateful to Bishop Caggiano for his recognition of the unique character of the parish, and his understanding of the culture of lay involvement and ownership. This new model of governance is a tribute to that recognition and hopefully will lead to the continued flourishing of the parish.”

She also expressed gratitude to the parishioners for their support and for assisting in many ways to the life of the church. “I know they stand ready to continue to work together as we move forward in mission and ministry, and in doing so, honor the legacy of Father John.”

Since his death, she, Frank Macari, director of music, and Beth Parisi, pastoral minister for youth, have worked with Father Michael Boccaccio, director of the Propagation of Faith, to manage the pastoral and administrative needs of the church. Father Boccaccio will continue to serve the parish as part of the pastoral ministry team.

Dr. Sauers has a master’s
Safe Environments

Healing Mass offers hope and reconciliation

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

WESTON—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano reflected on the abuse of power within the Church at the Mass of Hope, Healing and Reconciliation at St. Francis of Assisi Church held on Sunday, November 18 in Weston.

“There is one thing at the root of all the sins suffered by our brothers and sisters at the hands of the priests and bishops—they are victims of power that was misused. What should have been self-sacrifice was twisted into the abuse of innocence for decades,” said the bishop at the annual Mass.

“Their exercise of power was not lived in the mind of Christ,” said the bishop who added that true power is only exercised when life is given over in love. Too many people have forgotten and forsaken that lesson.

“We pray for the reform and purification of the Church and that we may find a way forward in this crisis,” the bishop said in his welcome to the survivors, family members and all those who attended the afternoon liturgy.

Members of the survivors planning committee delivered the readings, led the Prayer of the Faithful and spoke briefly after Mass. In spite of their suffering and the current crisis, they said they were hopeful and also grateful for the leadership of Bishop Caggiano.

The bishop called for healing and reconciliation for survivors and all those who are broken and “hurt by betrayal, disappointment, failure, poverty, injustice, discrimination and simply forgotten.”

“We come here to allow Christ’s love to touch our brokenness. We are all called to bring healing, by allowing Christ’s love to get into the cracks of our broken heart first so we can help others.”

“This journey will continue throughout our lives. We must work to become messengers of hope in a broken world,” the bishop said, adding that his friendship with victims and survivors has been a very great gift to him.

BISHOP CAGGIANO CHATS with Healing Mass committee member Peggy Fry. Peter Philipp, also a committee member, welcomes all to the Mass.
Revised Liturgical Norms

Making the Case for Norms

By PATRICK DONOVAN

On the first Sunday of Advent, Bishop Frank Caggiano promulgated the new Diocesan Norms Governing the Liturgical Ministries. These norms are not intended to create anxiety, but to celebrate in a new way our liturgical life as Catholics. Though there will be some who will wonder why, with all that is going on both in the world and in local dioceses, we are making these revisions now, a close reading of the document will find that this revision can be an opportunity for renewal and new life.

The revision of the norms that govern how we celebrate the sacraments and the liturgical feasts in our diocese was mandated by our fourth diocesan synod that concluded in 2015. Its purpose was both to create a greater unity of liturgical practice among our parishes and to use the occasion to renew our understanding of the beauty, nature and responsibilities we have when we offer our worship to God. This process of revision will continue to unfold over the next four years, with a different section of the norms being revised, implemented for one year on an experimental basis and after final consultation, approved as final norms.

The revised Norms for Liturgical Ministries are not designed to be restrictive in nature. In fact, for many parishes, very little will change. Rather, the norms for our diocese are based on the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and many other Church documents that teach us how to pray the Mass—“the source and summit” of our Catholic faith—in such a way that both engages the faithful and is authentic to the Church’s teachings. In fact, Institute, “So far, the long process of revising these first set of norms, a fundamental principle that guided the revision process was to avoid restricting any option which the universal norms allow, allowing our diocesan norms to take into consideration that every parish community is different.

The norms also provide a time for conversation about the liturgy. The promulgation of these norms offers us the opportunity for catechesis, to reexamine our current practices, and challenge us to be more intentional about how we celebrate liturgy. They call for more uniformity in our Eucharistic celebrations. It can be confusing to go to Mass at one parish and see ministers acting one way and then visit a neighboring parish only to have ministers doing something different. The Church, in her wisdom, sets out how the Mass is to be celebrated. No parish, no matter how well intentioned, may add to the Mass which is not prescribed.

The norms celebrate the laity too and the many roles we are called and challenged to fill. The Church recognizes that the ordinary minister, the priest and deacon, cannot do everything, so (again in her wisdom) there are norms outlining the ways that the laity are involved. Whether we read at Mass, collect the offering, serve at the altar, sing in the choir, or even assist the ordinary ministers by distributing Holy Communion as extra-ordinary ministers, we are called to well-formed and well-prepared. These norms outline the requirements for ministry, the necessary formation, and the way many of these ministries are to be exercised.

The Venerable Fulton Sheen once said, “If you don’t behave as you believe, you will end by believing as you behave.” The implications of this statement are perhaps no more clearly felt than at the celebration of Mass. If I believe that my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is truly present—body and blood, soul and divinity—in the Blessed Sacrament, then that must inform how I behave whilst in the presence of the Eucharist.

Do I genuflect when passing in front of the tabernacle? Do I approach the altar at Communion with reverence, a clear conscience, and a reconciled heart? If I am an Extraordinary Minister, do I prepare prior to Mass so that I might fulfill this awesome responsibility with respect?

If I believe that the Word proclaimed at Mass is the Sacred Scriptures, do I listen attentively? Do I internalize that which I hear and consider the implications of this statement are perhaps no more clearly felt than at the celebration of Mass. If I believe that my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is truly present—body and blood, soul and divinity—in the Blessed Sacrament, then that must inform how I behave whilst in the presence of the Eucharist.

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If I believe that the Word proclaimed at Mass is the Sacred Scriptures, do I listen attentively? Do I internalize that which I hear and consider the implications for my own life? If I am the one proclaiming the Word (not just reading), am I prepared? Can I pronounce all the words correctly? Do I know the story such that I can tell the story? These are the questions the norms ask us to consider.

Am I prepared to serve at the altar? Am I prepared to sing in the choir? Am I dressed in a way that shows respect for the role I play? Do I enter into the celebration, fully, actively and consciously? Or am I a passive observer, checking off a box with my weekly attendance? The norms challenge all of us to ask these important questions. This is a great occasion for dialogue and catechesis. Let us not miss this chance because we think the timing is bad.

Yes, there will be anxiety for some and the need for minor adjustments in a few of our parish practices. But following the guidelines the Church lays out for the celebration of the Eucharistic feast is not only important, it is essential. Go back to Bishop Sheen: if the way we behave is not indicative of what we believe, it will take very little time for people to begin to question what we believed in the first place.

(To learn more about the norms, visit The Leadership Institute’s website, formationreimagined.org.)
December Light

The great sidelight of December paints the roads and houses with the tall shadows of the maples and oaks. At noon we find ourselves squinting as if walking into a vision: the golden spokes of sunshine proclaim the revelation of light; the shortest days of the year speak of the brevity of our lives; the cold clarity of the day offers a purity of thought and intention; the broad silences of early afternoon are an invitation to reflection. If we did not have hope of the light of Christ, we would certainly search for it. “The key lesson of Advent reminds us that God is always and forever coming into our lives, inviting us to draw closer to Him,” Bishop Caggiano writes in this year’s Christmas message. Let us live in the fullness of this understanding, and find our December Christ in the great gift he has given us.

In Gratitude

Christmas is the time to deepen our gratitude for the many gifts we have received, most notably, the great gift of Christ coming into our lives. Despite problems and challenges in our society and in our Church, we have so much to be grateful for as people of faith. Perhaps now more than ever, it is important to celebrate that which unites us in our parishes and in the life of the diocese:

…For all those who recently received the St. Augustine Medal of Service. Many of the individuals and couples honored in this issue have spent a lifetime of quiet and faithful service to the diocese and their parish communities

…For all the young people who attended Fan the Fire, Convivio the SHU Journey experience, and many other events that invite them to live their faith with exuberance and joy

…For our teachers, coaches, counselors, administrators and all those who work with the young of our diocese to guide them and help to form them in faith

…For the readers, choir members, altar servers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and all those in ministries of liturgical service who enhance the praise and worship of God in our parishes

…For the priests and women who serve on boards, parish councils, and in other volunteer positions in which they freely share their expertise and talent to build up the faith community

…For the great faithfulness of our brothers and sisters in parishes who kneel in Adoration during Holy Hours, pray the Rosary, faithfully attend Mass, and participate in diocesan liturgies

…For those who participated in the National V Encuentro, a celebration of the faith of Spanish-speaking Catholics and their contribution to the Church

…For all of those who have taken parish and diocesan pilgrimages in the past year, finding a faith-filled and joyous way to travel, to pray and to enjoy life together

…For the priests and laity throughout the diocese who attended the Mass of Reparation and Purification at St. Augustine Cathedral—a powerful moment of contrition and healing

…For the survivors of sexual abuse in our own diocese who have stepped forward to organize the Annual Healing Mass, and who have joined in diocesan Safe Environments efforts by speaking out publicly, encouraging prevention, and helping others who have been abused

…For all of our seminarians at a time when it may be increasingly difficult to hear the call and discern a vocation to the priesthood

…For the generosity of donors who have contributed to support diocesan efforts in education, faith formation and charity

…For the young people who joined the March for Life in 2018, and volunteered to serve the needy and elderly in their parishes and communities

…For the Faithful of all ages who walked down the aisle as new Catholics in this year’s Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

…For the many young couples who walked down the aisle after exchanging their marriage vows

…For priests, deacons, and religious who continue to inspire us by their faith and their commitment to holiness throughout the year

…For our bishop who leads from the front, never shrinking away from tough issues. His sacrificial witness, commitment to renewal and his leadership have made the following clergy appointments in the Diocese of Bridgeport:

PASTOR
FATHER JHON J. GOMEZ, from Medical Leave of Absence to Pastor, Saint Peter Parish, Bridgeport. Effective date was December 8.

FATHER WILLIAM F. PLATT, from Parochial Vicar, Saint Catherine of Siena Parish, Riverside, to Pastor, Saint Catherine of Siena Parish, Riverside. Effective date was January 31.

PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR
FATHER CYRUS M. BARTOLOME, from Parochial Vicar, Saint Aloysius Parish, New Canaan, to Parochial Administrator, Church of the Assumption Parish, Westport. Effective date is December 31.

FATHER WILLIAM M. QUINLAN, to temporary Parochial Administrator, Saint Cecilia Parish, Stamford. Effective date was November 30. Father Quinlan will remain Pastor, Saint Gabriel Parish, Stamford.

PAROCHIAL VICAR
FATHER MARCELO R. LOPRESTI, to from Parochial Vicar, Saint Roch Parish, Greenwich, to Parochial Vicar, Saint Mary Parish, Stamford. Effective date was December 17.

RETIRED
FATHER THOMAS P. THORNE, to temporary Pastoral Vicar, Church of the Assumption Parish, Westport and Dean of the “Queen Assumed into Heaven” Deanery, to retirement.

Effective date is December 31.

MONSIGNOR ALAN F. DETSCHER, from Pastor, Saint Catherine of Siena Parish, Riverside, to retirement. Effective date is January 31. Monsignor Detscher will reside at the Catherine Denis Keefe Queen of the Clergy Residence in Stamford.

DIAOCNATE OFFICE
DEACON GERALD LAMBERT, to Coordinator of Diaconate Formation. Effective date was December 1. Deacon Lambert shall temporarily remain Coordinator of Diaconate Continuing Formation.

Father Joseph A. Marcello
Vicar for Clergy
December, 2018

CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Publisher
Brian D. Wallace
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Elizabeth Clyons
Writer/Editor elizabethclyons@diobpt.org
Ralph Lazzaro
Advertising Manager riazzaro@diobpt.org
Renée Stamatis
Art Director rtstamatis@diobpt.org
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Clergy

New acolytes installed in Permanent Diaconate program

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano recently gathered with newly installed acolytes in the permanent diaconate program and their spouses at St. Augustine Cathedral.

The acolyte is instituted for service at the altar and to assist the priest and deacon. It is his place principally to prepare the altar and the sacred vessels and, if necessary, to distribute the Eucharist to the faithful as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

In the ministry of the altar, the acolyte has his own proper functions, which he must carry out in person. For example, in the procession to the altar, the acolyte may carry the cross. Also, the acolyte will approach the priest or deacon, whenever necessary, in order to present the book to them and to assist them in any other way required.

Left to right: Joseph and Laura Klimaszewski, Stephen and Susan Hodson, Richard and Christine Lawlor, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, Eric and Kathleen Keener, Joseph and Frances Cann, Michael and Kathy Ronan.

EDITOR’S CHOICE

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Left to right: Joseph and Laura Klimaszewski, Stephen and Susan Hodson, Richard and Christine Lawlor, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, Eric and Kathleen Keener, Joseph and Frances Cann, Michael and Kathy Ronan.

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…”...
A Young Woman's Voice

By Elizabeth Clyons

Libby Clyons is Communications Associate for the Diocese of Bridgeport. She can be reached at elizabeth.clyons@didbhpt.org.

Christmas with Martha, Mary and Grandma

A round the holiday season, I am increasingly reminded of the story of Mary and Martha in the Gospel. Martha grows impatient with her sister as she bustles around the kitchen, preparing food and making things nice for her guests. Meanwhile, Mary sits at the feet of Jesus, listening to what He says, being near to Him, loving Him.

A common question that runs in Christian circles is: “Are you a Martha or a Mary?” I have attended many talks centered on the idea that we all need a little bit of both. Both a serving heart and a loving heart are necessary.

I find my own answer when I think of my grandma—both the sweetest little lady and the strongest woman I know. Being the matriarch of a family of five children and 11 grandchildren, she has had her share of both heartbreak and celebration.

My family has undergone many changes over the years. The view from our Christmas table has morphed and suited to fit the surroundings. The people around the table look different, some are no longer with us, while some come and go at different times.

The table itself has also changed, as the white house on Hilltop is now being enjoyed by another family.

Despite all this change, the holiday doesn’t seem lacking. Somehow, during the holidays, my grandma has a way of bringing everyone together.

Being an only child and having grown up attending boarding school, cooking and hosting didn’t always come naturally to her. And yet somehow, she manages to host us all for holidays, birthdays and every celebration in between.

But, during these celebrations, she is not “distracted with much serving,” (Luke 10:40). She sets out the food and spends time in loving conversation with each of her family members.

Christmas is a good season to ask, “Are you a Martha or a Mary?” Personally, I tend to lean more toward the contemplative nature of Mary but I recognize that the importance of striving to be a Martha is necessary to properly serve God and His people.

And it is so important. We always need to recognize those who serve, especially those who serve with the utmost humility.

In our modern world, especially around the holidays, being a Martha seems to be held to a higher esteem, or at least the more “practical” option. The one with the spectacular menu, flawless decorations and Instagram-worthy spread is considered the “goal” of the holiday season.

But while Mary’s breaths a sigh of relief while they dry the last dish, Mary’s memories of the holidays are a bit different. Is it about the serving, or is it something else that makes holiday memories stand out?

Being with one another, talking, conversing, sharing. A laugh and a piece of pie... while drying the last dish, together.

My grandma has taught me both the importance of being a generous hostess and taking the time to connect and visit with your guests. I would even go so far as to say my grandma is the perfect combination of Martha and Mary... but I may be a little biased.

 Merry Christmas, Grandma!

You’re in Good Hands this Christmas

A Dad’s View

By Matthew Hennessey

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

Steve Largent was my hero. For a hot second in the 1980’s a lot of kids like me looked up to the Seattle Seahawks wide receiver. He was short (for a football player) and not too fast or well-built. Despite these obvious disadvantages, Largent had something special that set him apart. He had good hands.

Steve Largent was the perfect role-model for the 12-year-old me. I was a decent athlete, pretty good hands, but I had no chance of ever playing collegiate sports, let alone professionally. I was too small and too slow. Neither reality ever stopped me from dreaming that I would one day start me following the career of a playmaker on the far side of the country in the first place—177 consecutive pre-season regular-season games with a reception.

Fourteen seasons as a pro and he almost never dropped the ball. Those aren’t good hands; they’re great hands.

I was so enthralled by Steve Largent that in 1985 I told my parents what I wanted more than anything for Christmas was a Seattle Seahawks jersey with #80 on the back. That may sound like a reasonable request in 2018, but it wasn’t 1985. It was 1985.

And we didn’t live in the Pacific Northwest. The stores in our part of New Jersey weren’t exactly overflowing with branded merchandise for NFL teams on the west coast.

Needless to say there was no internet, no Amazon, no NFL store then and wearing sports jerseys wasn’t as common a thing as it is now. Still, my parents somehow pulled it off. They scored a Steve Largent jersey for me and got it under the tree in time for Christmas. The happiest kid in North America that day was the only kid in New Jersey repping not Big Blue but the Blue Wave.

I asked my dad recently how he managed such a trick, but he had no memory of buying the #80 jersey. He remembers Steve Largent, and he remembers my fascination with him, but whatever strings got pulled to find me that shirt have receded into the mists. His best guess, he says, is that he bought it at a store. But we all know that no such store existed in New Jersey circa 1985. Something extra was involved.

Now that I’m a parent, I know what it feels like to worry that your kids are going to be disappointed on Christmas morning. Children have outrageous expectations. I did too, once upon a time, and that was long ago. The outrageousness of the expectations has evolved exponentially. Kids today want drones, phones and smart homes.

But I also see now what my parents also surely saw then—none of the stuff that goes under the tree really matters. The only thing that matters are the intangibles. If the family is together it’s a good Christmas. If the Holy Spirit fills the home, then the baby Jesus smiles. If Christ is at the center of the family celebration, then nobody should worry too much about what’s under the tree.

Most of my childhood Christmas memories have blended into one. When I look back on those magical mornings, I don’t see piles of presents or over stuffed stockings. I see my parents drinking coffee in their bathrobes. I see my brother and sisters sitting cross-legged on the rug eating homemade cinnamon buns. I see Darby O’Gill, our inexplicably morose black lab, curled up under the boughs of the tree, tuned out the world, wrapped in a warm blanket. It was the best day of his year, with all his favorite people gathered in one place.

And I see myself, with a 100-yard smile, pulling Steve Largent’s jersey over my pajamas and saying, “Thanks mom! Thanks dad!” And them, giving you’re in good hands to them, wrapping Steve Largent’s jersey over my pajamas and saying, “Thanks mom! Thanks dad!” And them, giving...
Msgr. Weiss and shared his own shooting in British history on one teacher in the deadliest mass young children and six educators. Elementary School on December follows the two priests in the months the director of the film "Newtown" is the topic of a recently released the Holy Family in Dunblane, O’Sullivan, pastor of Church of Newtown, and Msgr. Basil pastor of St. Rose of Lima Church between Msgr. Robert Weiss, suffering by the terrible tragedies together in faith, friendship and separation two Catholic priests in Scotland, but they were brought Newtown, Conn., and Dunblane, separated two Catholic priests in Dunblane, O’Sullivan's visit to Newtown. looking back, Msgr. Weiss says, "The one thing that really surprised me in my situation is that from the beginning, people saw this clearly for what it was an act of evil by a very sick young man. For me, it was not a matter of losing faith in God, but of losing faith in people. The lack of respect for life that has taken this country just amazes me physically and emotionally.” At the invitation of Msgr. Weiss, the Irish priest, who was then 81, came to Newtown to mark the first anniversary of the shooting. A humble man, he described himself as “a very ordinary chap with no charisms of any kind.” And yet in a moving display of faith, this simple man of Christ told the congregation at St. Rose of Lima, “Love, although it looks weak, always overcomes hatred and evil.” To me, the message of the documentary is that you never know what is going to bind you to another person,” Msgr. Weiss said. “In this day and age, the film captures a different side of the priesthood that is really important. It points to the importance of faith in the midst of tragedies like this. We were both called on to minister to the families we knew. Priests are human and just because you’re a priest doesn’t mean you don’t feel and experience loss.” In October, St. Rose of Lima hosted a screening of the film, which won a first prize at the 2018 Tribeca Film Festival. Producer Marc Gurney and director/producer Kim Snyder were on hand, along with former Newtown First Selectman Pat Llodra. The film, which can be viewed on Netflix, includes new footage, interviews with the priests and coverage of Msgr. O’Sullivan’s visit to Newtown. Looking back, Msgr. Weiss says, “The one thing that really to the victims, and while some residents question the decision, many others are convinced it is something that must be done. The tragedy of Sandy Hook Elementary School has affected the community in countless ways, he said. Today, even the parish school has a security guard and a counselor. At the same time, his congregation is looking to the future with renewed hope. St. Rose of Lima is currently in the middle of a $6.1 million church renovation, and the enthusiasm that the project has inspired is a positive development, he believes. “That’s a sign we are moving ahead,” he said. “People are excited about it. The whole town is excited about it. In addition to the renovation, we are building an addition and creating a Garden of Peace that is going to be really beautiful.” Msgr. Weiss, who has been pastor for 19 years, is three years away from retirement. He would like to remain a fourth year, which would be his 50th anniversary as a priest, bringing Christ to others in joyful times and in their darkest hour. Looking back on the past six years, he says the school shootings at Sandy Hook and Dunblane are tragic reminders that “Something has to change. We have to reclaim the value of human life, and the changes have to come from within each person.”
2018 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

Recognizing the volunteers, the mentors and the prayerful servants of our diocese

BRIDGEPORT—“My friends, we have come here today because those of you who are being honored are being honored not simply because of all the good that you do, as important as that is, not simply because of the witness you give, as important as that is, but because you have discovered the mystery of love and willing what God wills,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, addressing the over 150 honorees gathered at St. Augustine Cathedral for the St. Augustine medal award ceremony on Saturday, November 17.

Every seat in the cathedral was filled as the pastoral leaders who nominated the recipients, their friends, family and loved ones gathered to acknowledge and celebrate the honorees for their volunteer service to parishes, schools and charities throughout Fairfield County.

Bishop Caggiano reflected on the words of St. Augustine: “love and do whatever you will,” during his Saturday homily.

“God is love, my friends…God teaches us that this life is about self-gift, self-offering, self-emptying for the good of the other before us,” said the bishop.

“Those who discover love, discover God…and those who discover God quickly realize that to be loving as He is, what we chose to do will be what God wants us to do.”

The bishop continued, addressing the medal award recipients, “You have been a force of unity and acceptance…you have been the agent to give life abundantly.”

The bishop said, “You are here because you do not walk the journey to paradise alone…you have many people walking with you because of your witness, your faith and your life,” a point that was brought to even greater light as each medal recipient did not walk up to receive their award alone, but was accompanied by their pastors, principals, or parochial administrators.

Bishop Caggiano reflected on the number of years this ceremony has been celebrated, saying, “This year above all others I am deeply grateful that we are here together…for we are living in a time of great storm, great crisis…and we will spend many years ahead not simply purifying our church, bringing it to new life and reform, but to become once again a voice that is uncompromising in the world…showing the world the way of the will of God. There is much to do, but I am so grateful you are doing what you are doing now. For now more than ever, you are the light in the darkness…who are not afraid to love and do not what you want but what God wills in you, and for that I and the Church are deeply grateful.”

With the Thanksgiving holiday around the corner, the bishop reflected on his gratitude for the medal recipients and what it means to give thanks:

“Next week, as you know, we will join our sisters and brothers throughout the country to celebrate the day of Thanksgiving. For those of us here in faith, we do that every day when we come to the altar to give thanks to Almighty God. But on that day, above all others, we give thanks to God for our country for the principles upon which it is founded, for the common good we form as Americans of every religion ethnicity culture and way of life…as in all things, we face challenges, but we commend our country to the Lord’s mercy, love and providence.”

The bishop thanked the recipients once again before the closing of the ceremony, “I am very grateful, in light of that day to come, for each and every one of you who are the honorees. Thank you for your witness, generosity, faith, courage and what you do to make God’s will real in the world.”

St. Augustine award recipients inspire gratefulness

(Saint Augustine medal photos by Amy Mortensen)
2018 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

SAINT ANN PARISH, BRIDGEPORT: MR. ANDREW SEPERACK — Nominated by Reverend Elio Albano Sosa, IVE, Pastor
SAINT AUGUSTINE ACADEMY, BRIDGEPORT: MRS. MARIA GOUNTAS — Nominated by Dr. Debi Boccanfuso, Principal
SAINT ANN ACADEMY, BRIDGEPORT: MRS. GRACE JOERGENSEN — Nominated by Mrs. Patricia Griffin, Principal
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC & PASTORAL PLANNING, BRIDGEPORT: MS. LORRIE WESOLY — Nominated by Mr. Patrick Turner, Director
OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENT, BRIDGEPORT: MR. KENN DEVANE — Nominated by Deacon Patrick Toole, Episcopal Delegate for Administration
CATHOLIC CHARITIES, BRIDGEPORT: MS. MARY ANN MURTHA — Nominated by Mr. Al Barber, President
CATHOLIC CHARITIES, BRIDGEPORT: MS. KATHY DIGIOVANNA — Nominated by Mr. Al Barber, President
CATHOLIC CHARITIES, BRIDGEPORT: MR. DANIEL CASAL — Nominated by Mr. Al Barber, President
CATHOLIC CHARITIES, BRIDGEPORT: MRS. KATHLEEN KEENER — Nominated by Reverend Corey V. Piccinino, Pastor
SAINT CHARLES Borromeo Parish, BRIDGEPORT: MR. HAROLD & MRS. BARBARA GABIANELLI — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Chris Walsh, Parochial Administrator
BLESSED SACRAMENT PARISH, BRIDGEPORT: MS. BALBINA ORTIZ — Nominated by Reverend Joseph J. Karcsinski, Parochial Administrator
BLESSED SACRAMENT PARISH, BRIDGEPORT: MS. INA MARIANO — Nominated by Reverend Joseph J. Karcsinski, Parochial Administrator
SAINT MARY PARISH, BETHEL: MRS. EUGENIA MASTROBARTOLOMEI — Nominated by Reverend Rolando Torres, Parochial Administrator
SAINT GEORGE PARISH, BRIDGEPORT: MRS. GABRIELLE VITOLLO — Nominated by Reverend Vorayut Yambua, Pastor
SAINT ANDREW PARISH, BRIDGEPORT: MRS. EUSEBIA HERNANDEZ — Nominated by Reverend Rolando Torres, Pastor
SAINT ANDREW ACADEMY, BRIDGEPORT: MRS. BARBARA PORTER — Nominated by Mrs. Lori Wilson, Principal
SAINT AUGUSTINE ACADEMY, BRIDGEPORT: MRS. MARY GRANTON — Nominated by Dr. Debi Boccanfuso, Principal
SAINT CHARLES Borromeo Parish, BRIDGEPORT: MR. JEAN-JACQUES TIEUX — Nominated by Reverend Rolando Torres, Parochial Administrator
SAINT GEORGE PARISH, BRIDGEPORT: MRS. LYNN MCNULTY — Nominated by Reverend Rolando Torres, Parochial Administrator
KOLBE CATHEDRAL HIGH SCHOOL, BRIDGEPORT: MR. GABRIEL ZAYAS — Nominated by Mr. Henry Rondon, Principal
OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL CHAPEL, BRIDGEPORT: MS. LINDA LANDONE — Nominated by Deacon John DiTaranto, Pastoral Administrator
OUR LADY OF FATIMA PARISH, BRIDGEPORT: MRS. INES TEIXEIRA DA SILVA — Nominated by Reverend José B. Alves, Pastor
SAINT MARY PARISH, BRIDGEPORT: MRS. MARY K. MCCOY — Nominated by Reverend Corey V. Piccinino, Pastor
SAINT MARY SCHOOL, BETHEL: MRS. MARY JANE MCCOLLOM — Nominated by Mr. Henry Rondon, Principal
SAINT MARY SCHOOL, BETHEL: MR. GARY MCCOLLOM — Nominated by Ms. Patricia Griffin, Principal
KOLBE CATHEDRAL HIGH SCHOOL, BRIDGEPORT: MR. ANDREW SPERANCE — Nominated by Reverend Elia Alkanous Sons, IVE, Pastor
SAINT MARY PARISH, BRIDGEPORT: MRS. EURIPIDE HERNANDEZ — Nominated by Reverend Rolando Torres, Pastor
2018 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

SAINT MARGARET SHRINE, BRIDGEPORT:
Mr. Pasquale D’Ambrosio — Nominated by Reverend Giandomenico Flora, Rector

SAINT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL PARISH, BRIDGEPORT:
Ms. Teresa Stykowiska — Nominated by Reverend Norbert M. Stachelski, O.F.M. Conv., Pastor

SAINT PETER PARISH, BRIDGEPORT:
Ms. Patricia Garcia — Nominated by Reverend Bernardo G. Rodriguez, Parochial Vicar

SAINT RAPHAEL ACADEMY, BRIDGEPORT:
Mr. Jimmie Schneider — Nominated by Sister Christine Hoffner, Principal

THE CATHEDRAL PARISH, BRIDGEPORT:
Mr. Joseph & Mrs. Annette O’Neill — Nominated by Reverend Michael Nowojody, Pastor

SAINT JOSEPH PARISH, BROOKFIELD:
Mr. Robert Goodman — Nominated by Reverend George F. O’Neill, Pastor

SAINT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL PARISH, BRIDGEPORT:
Ms. Teresa Stypulkowska — Nominated by Reverend Norbert M. Stachelski, O.F.M. Conv., Pastor

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE PARISH, DANBURY:
Mr. Daniel Guachun — Nominated by Reverend John Jairo Perez, Pastor

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY PARISH, DANBURY:
Mrs. Irene Vendinha — Nominated by Reverend Jose Brito-Martins, Parochial Administrator

SS. CYRIL & METHODIUS PARISH, BRIDGEPORT:
Mr. Gregory Mikułka — Nominated by Reverend Canon Andrew Todd, ICRSS, Pastor

IMMACULATE HIGH SCHOOL, DANBURY:
Mr. Mike & Mrs. Debbie Basile — Nominated by Dr. Patrick Higgins, Principal

SAINT JOSEPH PARISH, BROOKFIELD:
Mrs. Patricia Spitzebaden — Nominated by Reverend Shawn W. Caster, Pastor

SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT PARISH, DANBURY:
Mr. Roger Gavagan — Nominated by Reverend Michael Dunn, Pastor

SAINT PETER PARISH, DANBURY:
Mr. Alvaro Tovar — Nominated by Reverend Gregg D. Mecca, Pastor

SAINT JOSEPH PARISH, DANBURY:
Mr. Matthew & Mrs. Tara Chila — Nominated by Ms. Katie LaForgia-Petrone, Principal

SAINT PETER SCHOOL, DANBURY:
Sister Martha Rupke, C.S.F.N. — Nominated by Mrs. Marylou Torre, Principal

SAINT PETER PARISH, DANBURY:
Ms. Alvina Fedor — Nominated by Reverend Gregg D. Mecca, Pastor

SAINT JOSEPH PARISH, DANBURY:
Ms. Antonia Stalzer — Nominated by Reverend Samuel V. Scott, Pastor

SAINT JOSEPH SCHOOL, DANBURY:
Mr. Matthew & Mrs. Tara Chila — Nominated by Ms. Katie LaForgia-Petrone, Principal

SAINT JOSEPH CATHOLIC ACADEMY, BROOKFIELD:
Mr. Jeff & Mrs. Tina Ross — Nominated by Mrs. Marylou Torre, Principal

SAINT MARGUERITE BOURGEOYS PARISH, BROOKFIELD:
Mrs. Patricia Spitzebaden — Nominated by Reverend Shawn W. Caster, Pastor

SAINT PETER’S SCHOOL, DANBURY:
Sister Martha Rupke, C.S.F.N. — Nominated by Mrs. Marylou Torre, Principal

SAINT JOSEPH PARISH, DANBURY:
Ms. Antionia Stalzer — Nominated by Reverend Samuel V. Scott, Pastor

SAINT JOHN CATHOLIC ACADEMY, BROOKFIELD:
Mr. Jeff & Mrs. Tina Ross — Nominated by Mrs. Mary Maloney, Head of School & Mrs. Pamela Fallon, Director of Ed
2018 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

Saint John Parish, Darien:
Ms. Patricia Parlette — Nominated by Reverend Francis T. Hoffmann, Pastor

Saint Thomas More Parish, Darien:
Mrs. Patricia Cato — Nominated by Reverend Paul G. Murphy, Pastor

Notre Dame Parish, Easton:
Mrs. Anne Fynika — Nominated by Reverend Michael P. Lyons, Pastor

Assumption Catholic School, Fairfield:
Ms. Janey Adams — Nominated by Mr. Steve Santolo, Principal

Holy Cross Parish, Fairfield:
Mr. William Sekelsky — Nominated by Reverend Alfred F. Pacisci, Pastor

Holy Family Parish, Fairfield:
Mr. Joseph & Mrs. Marie Graziano — Nominated by Reverend Norman J. Guilbert, Pastor

Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Fairfield:
Mr. Gregoire Mata — Nominated by Reverend Peter A. Cipriani, Pastor

Saint Anthony of Padua Parish, Fairfield:
Ms. Jennifer Romano — Nominated by Reverend Michael A. Becaccio,Parochial Administrator

Saint Catherine Academy, Fairfield: Mrs. Lynn Witenbe — Nominated by Mrs. Helen Burbank, Executive Director & Mr. Eric Spencer, Director of Education

Sacred Heart Parish, Greenwhich:
Mr. Stephen & Mrs. Sally Archer — Nominated by Reverend David C. Leopold, Pastor

Notre Dame High School, Fairfield:
Ms. Lonnie Denehy Trotman — Nominated by Mr. Chris Cipriano, Principal

Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Fairfield:
Ms. Mary Beth Brown — Nominated by Mrs. Patricia Kopcik, Principal

Saint Emery Parish, Fairfield:
Mr. Bill & Mrs. Erin Russell — Nominated by Ms. Jo Ann Mathieson, Principal

Saint Pius X Parish, Fairfield:
Mr. Jack & Mrs. Paula Finnigan — Nominated by Reverend Samuel Kachuba, Pastor

Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish, Fairfield:
Ms. Jennifer Parlette — Nominated by Reverend Victor T. Martin, Pastor

Saint Thomas Aquinas School, Fairfield:
Ms. Bill & Mrs. Erin Russell — Nominated by Ms. Jo Ann Mathieson, Principal

Sacred Heart Parish, Greenwhich:
Mr. Edward & Mrs. Nancy Fox — Nominated by Reverend Buse Raja Selvaraj, Pastor

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Greenwich Catholic School, Greenwhich:
Mrs. Mary Beth Brown — Nominated by Mrs. Patricia Kopcik, Principal

Saint Mary Parish, Greenwhich: Mr. Robert & Mrs. Sonja DeBolt — Nominated by Reverend Cyprian P. LaPietro, Pastor

Saint Michael the Archangel Parish, Greenwhich:
Ms. Collette Jenson — Nominated by Reverend Ian M. Jeremiah, Pastor
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SAINT PAUL PARISH, GREENWICH:
Mr. Joseph & Mrs. Eleni Filapi — Nominated by Reverend Joseph A. Prince, Pastor

SAINT ROCH PARISH, GREENWICH:
Mr. Paul Capitalli — Nominated by Reverend Carl D. Meister, Pastor

SAINT JUDE PARISH, MONROE:
Mr. Robert Pawlak — Nominated by Reverend Henry Hoffman, Pastor

SAINT ROSE OF LIMA PARISH, NEWTOWN:
Mr. James & Mrs. Kelly Gahro — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Robert E. Weiss, Pastor

SAINT JOSEPH PARISH, NORWALK:
MRS. MARIA J. SERRANO — Nominated by Reverend Peter F. Lenox, Pastor

SAINT EDWARD THE CONFESSOR PARISH, NEW FAIRFIELD:
Mr. Martin & Mrs. Margaret Wusik — Nominated by Reverend Nicholas A. Cirillo, Pastor

SAINT JUDE PARISH, NORWALK:
Mr. Nicholas Ward — Nominated by Reverend F. John Ringley, Pastor

SAINT MARY PARISH, NORWALK:
MRS. RONALEE GRANT — Nominated by Reverend David W. Blanchfield, Pastor

SAINT ROSE OF LIMA SCHOOL, NEWTOWN:
Mr. Paul & Mrs. Carrie Sirois — Nominated by Mr. Bardhyl Gjoka, Principal

SAINT ROSE OF LIMA PARISH, NEWTOWN:
Mr. James & Mrs. Kelly Gerbo — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Robert E. Weiss, Pastor

SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE PARISH, NORWALK:
MRS. JOAN TRACEY — Nominated by Reverend Miroslaw Stachurski, Pastor

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SAINT PAUL PARISH, REDDING RIDGE:
Mr. Michael J. Handy — Nominated by Reverend Joseph A. Prince, Pastor

SAINT PHILIP PARISH, NORWALK:
Ms. Ralph & Mrs. Kali DeMauro — Nominated by Reverend Sudhir D’Souza, Pastor

SAINT ELIZABETH SETON PARISH, RIDGEFIELD:
Mr. Richard & Mrs. Ellen Adamski — Nominated by Reverend Joseph A. Prince, Pastor
2018 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

SAINT MARY PARISH, RIDGEFIELD:
Ms. ELLEN MILLER — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Lawrence K. Bratkowski, Pastor

SAINT MARY SCHOOL, RIDGEFIELD:
Ms. CHRISTOPHER & Mrs. GINA Spano — Nominated by Mrs. Anna O’Boyle, Principal

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA PARISH, RIDERFIELD:
Ms. ROBERT & Mrs. LISA ROSEN — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Alan F. DeClercq, Pastor

SAINT MARY PARISH, STAMFORD:
Mr. JOSEPH MAIDA — Nominated by Mr. Scott E. Smith, Principal

SAINT MARY PARISH, STAMFORD:
Mr. DAVID & Mrs. JANE SCHWARTZ — Nominated by Reverend Gustavo A. Falla, Pastor

SAINT MARY PARISH, STAMFORD:
Mrs. ITALIA MALAGISI — Nominated by Reverend William M. Quinlan, Pastor

SAINT CECILIA PARISH, STAMFORD:
Mr. FRANK CAVENEY — Nominated by Reverend Albert G. Pinciaro, Pastor

SAINT BRIDGET OF IRELAND PARISH, STAMFORD:
Mr. RICHARD & Mrs. JANE CAPRARO — Nominated by Reverend Edward McAuley, Pastor

SAINT BENEDICT-OUR LADY OF MONTSERRAT, STAMFORD:
Ms. ALICIA SANCHEZ — Nominated by Reverend Gustavo A. Falla, Pastor

SAINT LAWRENCE PARISH, STAMFORD:
Mr. JEFF & Mrs. ROSE CURTIS — Nominated by Reverend Alfonso Picone, Pastor

THE CATHOLIC ACADEMY OF STAMFORD, STAMFORD:
Mr. MICHAEL J. RADUZZO — Nominated by Ms. Patricia Brady, Head of School

HOLY TRINITY CATHOLIC ACADEMY, SHELTON:
Mrs. ARLENE CLANCY — Nominated by Mrs. Lisa Lanni, Principal

HOLY NAME OF JESUS PARISH, STAMFORD:
Mr. ZYGMUNT & Mrs. LINDA ZAJKOWSKI — Nominated by Reverend Pawel M. Hrebenko, Pastor


SAINT JOSEPH PARISH, SHELTON:
Mr. HERNAN & Mrs. DOROTHY SOSA — Nominated by Reverend Michael F. Dogali, Pastor

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Mr. MICHAEL J. RADUZZO — Nominated by Ms. Patricia Brady, Head of School

Trinity Catholic High School, Stamford:
Ms. JOSEPH MADARIAGA — Nominated by Mr. J. Smith, Principal

HOLY TRINITY PARISH, SHERMAN:
Mrs. JEANNE HERNON — Nominated by Reverend Richard Gruaz, Pastor

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Ms. ELLEN MILLER — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Laurence R. Bronkiewicz, Pastor
2018 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

Saint Leo Parish, Stamford:
Mrs. Judy Sanelli — Nominated by Reverend James D. Gross, Pastor

Saint Maurice Parish, Stamford:
Ms. Barry & Mrs. Carlos Johnson — Nominated by Reverend Alfred A. Riebeau, Pastor

The Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist, Stamford:
Mr. Thomas & Mrs. Patrick Boggs — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Stephen M. DeGiauanni, Pastor

Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Stratford:
Mrs. Rose M. BieLEN — Nominated by Reverend Mariusz M. Olbrys, Parochial Administrator

Our Lady of Grace Parish, Stratford:
Mrs. Michelle Moore — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Martin P. Ryan, Pastor

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Saint James School, Stratford:
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Our Lady of Fatima School, Wilton:
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Saint Patrick School, Weston:
Mr. Richard LaPierriere — Nominated by Mr. Salvatore Vittoria, Principal

Saint Joseph High School, Trumbull:
Ms. Tom & Mrs. Mary DiSasso — Nominated by Dr. William Fitzgerald, President

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Fairfield County Catholic
December 2018
Catholic Scouts

Father Cervaro celebrates Mass for Boy Scout families

REDNING—On October 12-14, hundreds of Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and their families from the Connecticut Yankee Council’s Pomperaug District converged on the John Sherman Hoyt Scout Reservation in Redding for a weekend of fun and learning. Scouts camped and cooked in the woods, learned essential survival and safety skills, all while getting to know more about the BSA’s High Adventure destinations in the United States.

One troop, however, believed there was a key piece missing from the weekend’s packed agenda: Catholic Mass. Troop 68 committee member Ben Strong resolved to provide the missing piece not just for this fall’s camporee, but also for each of the main camping events this year. The CT Yankee Council plans on organizing three camporees annually: a Fall Camporee in October, a Spring Camporee in May and the annual favorite Klondike Derby in January.

Strong reached out to St. Patrick Parish in Redding to see if a priest would be available and willing to meet the scouts in the woods, where they are. What he found was a most enthusiastic reply. Father Joseph Cervaro celebrated Mass for Boy Scout families with more than 35 people in attendance: Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and their families. Dylan Dos Santos and Nick Strong of Trumbull’s pack 468 and Sean Murphy of Trumbull’s pack 68 provided the readings. In his homily, Father Cervaro reminded the scouts that the central values of our Catholic faith mirror those of the scout oath and scout law: to put God before all things and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Also in attendance were Sean and Kevin Murphy, great-nephews of Father John Conlisk, who was pastor of St. Patrick from 1977 to 1989. Prior to Father Conlisk’s service, St. Patrick was a mission church of St. Mary in Bethel then of Sacred Heart in Georgetown.

BSA troop 68 is chartered by Father Brian Gannon of St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull Conn. It is the only BSA troop in Trumbull chartered by a Catholic Church, and is very proud of their Catholic association.

The CT Yankee Council plans three main camping events this year

Eleanor is tremendously competent in what she does, and I have confidence in her,” Bishop Caggiano said. “She certainly is very well respected by the people of the parish and has a keen pastoral sensitivity to them and their needs. I am very confident she will do a great job.”

Patrick Turner, director of the Office of Strategic and Pastoral Planning, said the leadership model of Parish Life Coordinator has been implemented in dioceses across the country from Los Angeles to Indianapolis, as well as many Northeast dioceses, as many undergo reconfigurations as a result of the declining number of clergy in recent decades. One of the primary purposes is to allow the priest as the sacramental minister to focus on the sacraments and to allow a lay person, as administrator, to focus on the various aspects of parish life.

Turner said that when he and Bishop Caggiano met with the parish leadership about the appointment, they were excited and supportive of the change.

“As our Church looks to increase lay involvement in our parishes, this is an ideal opportunity for us to implement this model,” he said. “St. Anthony of Padua Parish is fully ready for this type of leadership. Eleanor has been there as a full partner with Father Baran in the life of the parish community, and she has the theological and pastoral credentials to do this. This is someone who has been formed in ministry and administration for a number of years.”

In her new role, Dr. Sauers will have the decision-making authority for the parish and be responsible to Bishop Caggiano. She will work with the Parish Council and the community to develop a pastoral vision and mission, in addition to overseeing the day-to-day operations and administration of the parish, including its financial management and strategic planning. She will also be responsible for recruitment, training and management of employees and volunteers and work with a sacramental ministry team that will be named by Bishop Caggiano.

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Father Carducci D’Amico, 83

BRIDGEPORT—Father Carducci D’Amico, born on November 1, 1935, returned to his Heavenly Father on Friday, November 23, 2018 in Cercemaggiore, in the province of Campobasso, Italy.

“Many in the Bridgeport area fondly remember Father D’Amico for his energy, vision and commitment to the renewal of St. Margaret Shrine,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

“He also served as associate pastor in the shrine in 1978. Many parishioners remember that he used his own talents as a carpenter and mason to begin the restoration of the original chapel and ground of the shrine.

In 1973, Father D’Amico was welcomed into the Diocese of Bridgeport as assistant to the late Msgr. David Bannon, pastor of St. Peter Church in Bridgeport. He also served as associate pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Stamford.

He entered the Seminary of the Somascan Order in Corbetta, Milano at the age of thirteen. There he completed his secondary school studies and in 1954 professed vows in the Order of St. Jerome Emiliani. Father D’Amico obtained a degree in philosophy and went on to attend the School of Theology at Saint Anselm University on the Aventine Hill in Rome.

On March 14, 1964, he was ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Giuseppe Ferretto in the Basilica of Saint Alessio. Father D’Amico retired on March 12, 2009 and returned to Italy, where he resided in his last years.

Father Giandomenico Flora celebrated a Memorial Mass for Father Carducci S. D’Amico at St. Margaret Shrine, 2523 Park Avenue, Bridgeport on Saturday, December 1, 2018 at 5:30 pm.

Sister Pietrina Mazzola, MPF

Sr. Pietrina Mazzola, MPF, 96, died early Sunday morning, Nov. 25, 2018, at St. Joseph Hall, Villa Walsh, Morristown, N.J.

Born and raised in New York City, in 1922, Sr. Pietrina entered the Religious Teachers Filippini in 1937. She received her habit in 1938, and made her religious profession in 1941.

In 1960, Sr. Pietrina moved to Connecticut where she remained for the rest of her professional ministry. She administered as principal in the following schools: St. Sebastian, Middletown, Conn.; St. Anthony Bristol, Conn.; and Sacred Heart, Stamford, Conn. Although Sr. Pietrina retired in 2009, she continued to volunteer her time at St. Peter, Torrington, and then the Montessori School at Queen of Apostles in Bristol, Conn. Visiting hospitals and nursing homes were also part of her continued ministry during these years of retirement.

Through her many years in Connecticut, Sr. Pietrina also served as local superior. She further ministered as Provincial Councilor for the Queen of Apostles Province for two six year terms. In 2004, Sr. Pietrina received the Pro Ecclesia Award from the Diocese of Bridgeport, Conn., a papal award conferred for distinguished service to the Church.

Sr. Pietrina became a resident at St. Joseph Hall, Home Healthcare Center for the Filippini Sisters in late September 2018, two months prior to her passing. She will always be admired as a faithful community member of the Filippini Sisters.

Sr. Pietrina was predeceased by her parents Santo Mazzola and Josephine Leone and many devoted nieces and nephews.

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Deceased Clergy of the Diocese of Bridgeport December 16—January 19

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

January
2 Rev. Robert J. McDermott........................................ 1989
3 Msgr. Pierre A. Botton ........................................... 2010
4 Msgr. Francis Medynski ......................................... 2008
5 Msgr. William J. Fox ............................................ 1962
7 Rev. Walter E. Bozek ............................................ 1995
8 Rev. Mr. Edward R. Kovacs .................................... 1999
9 Rev. Gerald T. Devore ........................................... 2011
10 Rev. Mr. Hugh Sweeney ......................................... 1990
14 Rev. Daniel J. Deegan ........................................... 1976
14 Rev. M. Joseph Joaquin ......................................... 2013
15 Msgr. Harry L. Hale ............................................. 2003
15 Msgr. G. Robert Hanover ..................................... 1992
16 Rev. Thomas B. Gloster ......................................... 1956
18 Rev. Edward J. Small, SJ ....................................... 2010
19 Rev. Andrew L. Horvat ......................................... 1973
20 Rev. William D. Thompson ..................................... 2004
Immaculate Sports

Improbable title trifecta

By DON HARRISON

Winning one state championship is a cause for celebration at any high school. Capturing two state championships in the same season doubles the pleasure. But three seems unfathomable.

Immaculate of Danbury achieved that rare trifecta this fall, winning its first CIAC state field hockey title and earning state championships in both boys and girls cross country. The Mustangs came oh-so-close to a fourth state title in November, but the girls’ soccer team came up short against Old Lyme in the Class S championship game, 2-1.

Immaculate put the exclamation point on its Class S field hockey championship by defeating top-seeded Granby Memorial, 3-0, in the title game at Wethersfield on November 18. The Mustangs, who finished 20-3, were seeded third in the tournament.

“We have many great players, but the biggest factors in our success are camaraderie and teamwork,” said Shannon Horosky, the head coach who across nine seasons has transformed Immaculate’s field hockey program from mediocre to contenders to champions.

“There were stars galore this fall. Senior center halfback Madison Halas, a co-captain since her sophomore season, was selected to the Connecticut High School Coaches Association’s All-State team for the third straight year. She was joined on the All-State team by classmate Kristen Cronin and junior goalie Lauren “Lala” Oskam. Sophomore Celia Preveza was selected to the All-State second team.

“Kristen suffered a torn ACL in the (South-West) league semi-final game last year,” Horosky said. “So I’m so pleased that she was able to come back and play so well.”

Halas scored the first Mustangs’ goal in the title-game victory over Granby, and junior Molly Coyle registered the other goals.

Horosky, who operates a Danbury-based fund-raising company, Apex Leadership, with her husband, was overwhelmed by the support her team received from alumni this season. “We must have had 36 alumni reach out and congratulate the girls,” she noted.

In cross country, Immaculate’s boys’ squad notched its first Class S state title in school history while the Mustangs’ girls team raced to their fourth straight state championship and sixth in the past seven seasons on October 26 at Wickham Park in Manchester. “It’s about tradition,” said Brian Hayes, who coaches both teams. “It’s all about believing and hard work.”

For the Mustangs, it was about balance, too. Drew Mitchell, a junior from Brookfield, placed eighth in the state championship meet, covering the 3.1-mile course in 17:24. He was closely followed by Mustang teammate Ryan McNerney in 10th position (17:31), and then James Sullivan, Parker McKenzie and Logan Plaisted, who finished 13th, 14th and 15th, respectively. The Mustangs’ 60 points edged runner-up East Catholic of Manchester with 68 points.

Immaculate was a dominant victor in the girls’ race, putting up 31 points to second-place finisher Haddam-Killingworth’s 78. Senior co-captain Angela Saidman finished third with a 19:42 clocking—just eight seconds faster than teammate Allene Doherty in fourth position.

Hayes, who gives credit to new assistant coach Chris Houser for this season’s successes, was also pleased by his girls’ team’s performance at other, more competitive venues.

“We finished second in the State Open (November 2) and third in the New Englands (November 10th),” he said. “We were second to Danbury in the states, just one point behind.”

Hayes, who just completed his 14th season at the helm, has been named Connecticut’s Coach of the Year in girls’ cross country by the U.S. Track & Field Cross Country Coaches Association.

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The Leaking Cistern

When I was 12 years old, my daddy took me to the circus. There were clowns and elephants and dancing bears. And a beautiful lady in pink tights flew high above our heads. And I had the feeling that something was missing. I said to myself, “Is that all there is?” When Kroft asked what else there could be, Brady’s only response was, “I wish I knew, I wish I knew.”

At the peak of her fame and fortune, with 157 singles and 33 double titles behind her, and having been inducted into the Tennis Hall of Fame, Chris Evert married fellow tennis star John Lloyd. They seemed to have it all: a passionate courtship, romantic trips around the world. They chronicled their marriage in a biography titled Lloyd on Lloyd. In that text Chris Evert tells of a special date-night she had with her husband: dinner at an expensive restaurant, followed by a movie, followed by some drinks at an expensive Club. When they came home, Chris put her head against a wall and said, “Jack, there has to be more than this.”

I believe that everyone carries around inside himself/herself a sense that something is missing, a certain emptiness, a restlessness, a sense that something is missing, a feeling within for something more. The Catholic mystic, John of the Cross, gave the image of “The Leaking Cistern.” The cistern cannot contain all the water that is needed to slake thirst—it always leaks. It was John’s way of saying that nothing in this world could ultimately satisfy. We are searching for God. There is in the human spirit a desire for God. We sense an absence at the core of things. Even though many people seemingly behave without regard for God or for the spiritual realm, there is a spiritual hunger. The Italian spiritual writer, Romano Guardini, claimed that there is in each person an instinct for worship, to establish a relationship with the Creator Who placed us here. We reach out for the Infinite, the Ineffable. We know at some fundamental level that we long for something sacred. I believe this, and the longer I live, the more evidence I see that God pursues us. It is a story happening in every human life—God’s search for humans. There’s Jn.6:44: “No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me,” and John 15:16: “You did not choose me but I chose you.” There’s 1 Jn.4:19: “We love because He first loved us,” and 1 Jn.4:10: “not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son.” The Book of Job has Job proclaim “You hunt me like a lion” (16:16).

What’s going on, whether we know it or not, is a person seeking God and God seeking the person. As a heart yearns for the streams of water, So does my soul yearn for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and see the face of the Lord? (Psalm 42:2).
Column: Joe Pisani

The left hand versus the right hand

I recently met a man whose philosophy of philanthropy is entirely different. Let’s call him Tom, because he refused to let me use his name. Why all the secrecy? He doesn’t work for the CIA or the FBI. He just doesn’t want to reveal his identity because he wants no recognition.

I can say he is a retired surgeon who lives in Southern Connecticut and started a very successful business that provides a corporate service. But that’s where any similarities with other businesses end.

You see, after operating expenses are accounted for, all the profits go to charity. His strategic plan, you might say, is a simple one. He makes money and he gives it away. He takes no salary and he shuns notoriety.

Tom’s company provides scholarships for students who would otherwise not be able to attend Catholic schools, it finances programs for victims of human trafficking and it supports orphanages in countries like India. He has given away thousands of dollars, but you won’t see his name on any scholarship, any building, any program. You won’t see his name ... period.

“I want purity of purpose,” he says. “It’s not about me at all. I have been blessed for reasons that I don’t understand. Whatever resources I have, I figure, God trusts me to do with them what he wants done. I am just a steward.”

He prays about which causes and charities to support and trusts the resources will come.

“When Christ calls us to do his will, he always provides,” he said. “Everything we do, we see, and one day when we are with him, the only thing that will matter will be his assessment of what we have done. Nothing else.”

As a young man, he had the same vision that most of us have about the purpose of life: “You work, you do your best and plan for your retirement and then you hang out.”

But as time went on, his relationship with Christ grew deeper and he developed a spiritual maturity.

“Now I look at this part of my life’s journey as a time when I want to be devoted to fulfilling the mission that I seem to have been assigned,” he said.

His father was an Italian immigrant who was a butcher and gave not from his surplus but from his want. And his mother always reminded him to give to others who were deprived and she told him, “There, but for the grace of God, go I.”

“If you do things for other people and allow yourself to be directly or indirectly rewarded or recognized for what you have done, then that’s your reward,” he says.

Pope Francis once said that when we do something good for others, we should be discreet and not try to attract attention.

“Jesus teaches us that good should be done without clamor and without ostentation, without sounding the trumpet. It must be done in silence,” he said. “Jesus always acts with discretion. He does not want to impress people; he is not looking for popularity or success.”

By Joe Pisani

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Save a life
donate a kidney

By Joe Pisani

When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your almsgiving may be in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” — Jesus

I’ve been having trouble with my right hand. I have trigger finger from too much text messaging, but even worse, my right hand keeps telling my left hand what it’s doing ... if you get my meaning.

When I give a panhandler a few bucks, I let people know, or if I donate to one of the many worthy causes out there, the news is broadcasted from the right hand to the left hand to the world. When I was at Walmart recently, I gave a few dollars to help a woman’s organization and I put my name on a paper flower that was displayed on the wall. My right hand didn’t resist. Neither did my left hand. Neither did I.

When it comes to giving in its various shapes and forms, it’s about recognition—a donation for my high school, my college, a monastery, a soup kitchen, a church restoration or a scholarship. My name is on bricks and plaques and lists. I do nothing in secret, as Jesus recommends. Play the trumpets, please.

My Dad desperately needs a kidney transplant.
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Book Review

Heroic Navy chaplain armed only with faith

By JOE PISANI

Monsignor Stephen M. DiGiovanni, historian, author and pastor of The Basilica of St. John the Evangelist in Stamford, tells the compelling story of Father Capodanno’s life, his missionary work in Taiwan and Hong Kong, and his service as chaplain during the Vietnam War, in a new book titled, “Armed with Faith: The Life of Father Vincent R. Capodanno, M.M.”

Servant of God Father Capodanno, who died at 38 on a hill in Vietnam during a fierce firefight on September 4, 1967, stands as an example for priests in our troubled time. A Navy chaplain, he often said that where his men were he wanted to be. He shared hardships and the deprivations of war with them and was known among Marines as “the Grunt Padre.”

Throughout his 16 months in Vietnam, he was a humble hero, who never told his family about the military awards and decorations he received. He was a priest so committed to his Marines and to his faith that he ultimately died for them and was posthumously awarded our nation’s highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor. Now, he is being considered for a much higher honor — sainthood.

Vincent Capodanno was the youngest of ten children and named after his father, a native of Gaeta, Italy, who came to the United States in 1901 and worked as a ship caulker in New York City. Vincent attended P.S. 44 on Staten Island, where his classmates voted him “Best Looking” and “Best Dresser.” At the time, he wanted to be a doctor and he claimed as his motto, “Do a good turn daily.”

After graduating from Curtis High School, he began taking night classes at Fordham University. He attended daily Mass and Eucharistic adoration in the evening, and by the summer of 1949, he considered applying to the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, known as Maryknoll. He was inspired by the stories of missionaries that he read in the society’s magazine, The Field Afar.

Vincent Capodanno was ordained on June 14, 1958 by Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, and began his new life as a priest in Maryknoll, which actor Gene Autry famously described as “the Marine Corps of the Catholic Church,” Monsignor DiGiovanni said.

After seven years of missionary work in Taiwan and briefly in Hong Kong, he asked to be assigned as a Navy chaplain, and on December 28, 1965, he received a commission as lieutenant in the Navy Chaplain Corps. Soon after, he was sent to Vietnam.

On September 3, 1967, Father Capodanno said Mass in a village near Da Nang before moving out with the Marines on Operation Swift in the Que Song Valley. A fierce battle began without warning, when a few companies of Marines confronted a regiment of 2,500 North Vietnamese. Two platoons of M Company from Father Capodanno’s battalion were being overrun by the enemy. Eyewitnesses recalled that through the intense fighting, Father Capodanno was running unarmed from one wounded Marine to another on the battlefield to administer last rites, encourage them, tend to their wounds and pull them to safety.

He was wounded by rifle fire and then an exploding mortar shell. His arms and legs were bleeding and part of his right hand had been blown off, but he refused assistance from a corpsman and told him instead to help the others. He refused to leave the battle even though he was bleeding and choking from tear gas.

In his eulogy at Father Capodanno’s funeral, his friend and fellow chaplain Eli Takesian told the congregation, “Hearing the fatal news, a young Marine tearfully came to me and asked, ‘If life meant so much to Chaplain Capodanno, then why did he allow his own to be taken?’ ‘The answer is in your question,’ I replied. ‘It was precisely because he loved life—the lives of others—that he so freely gave of himself.’ His was the pilgrimage of a saint. Even to the end, he faithfully held to the precept of Our Lord that ‘greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'”

Monsignor DiGiovanni’s book is a moving account of bravery and faith and Father Capodanno’s unselfish concern for servicemen in the struggle of battle. It is the story of a man who eschewed the glories of the world to follow Christ, even unto death. Equally important, Father Capodanno stands as an inspirational example of everything that Christ intended a Catholic priest to be.

Monsignor DiGiovanni had been asked to serve as the chairman of the historical commission of Father Capodanno’s cause for sainthood by Archbishop for the Military Services USA Timothy Broglio. (For more information about Servant of God Father Vincent Capodanno, visit: www.Capodannoguild.org.)
Saint Matthew Parish

Journey to the Holy Land

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

Fifty-three parishioners, two ordained priests and one permanent deacon and his wife from St. Matthew Church in Norwalk, St. Mary Church in Stamford and St. Benedict Church in Stamford traveled to the Holy Land this past October.

The pilgrimage began in a prayerful way as the bilingual group gathered for two meetings before the trip in order to pray, build community and learn about where they would be going on their journey.

“About a year and a half ago, this was Father Abelardo’s idea to me. He approached me and I thought it was just a great opportunity to bring our parishes together for a journey to the Holy Land,” said Msgr. Orlowski of St. Matthew Parish.

Each day, the pilgrims began their journey at 8 am and ended it at 7 pm.

Upon arrival, Msgr. Walter, Father Abelardo and Deacon Mark celebrated Mass at St. Peter’s Church in Jaffa, Tel Aviv. They led the pilgrims to sites including King Herod’s Theater and Palace in Caesarea, where St. Paul was tried and sentenced, and the first Gentile was baptized.

Pilgrims were able to visit the Basilica of the Annunciation and celebrate Mass on the Mount of Beatitudes and the Church of Peter’s Primacy.

“Yesterday we were in Nazareth at the Blessed Mother’s house, where the Angel Gabriel appeared to her, which is now a basilica. At Cana, our pilgrims renewed their wedding vows,” Msgr. Walter shared on Facebook, on the second day of their journey.

Pilgrims spent an afternoon on the Sea of Galilee, singing, dancing and casting their nets. They visited Capernaum, the Church of the Transfiguration, the baptismal site on the River Jordan and the birthplace of Our Lady.

“Each day, we had scripture preparation for the places we were to visit. So we read the scripture everyday together out loud on the bus,” shared Msgr. Walter.

Pilgrims were also able to walk the Via Dolorosa, the Way of the Cross. “We were crushed by the crowds, but we kept our eyes firmly on the Cross,” remembers Lorraine DeRosa, one of the pilgrims from St. Matthew Church.

The group visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where they prayed at Golgotha and venerated the slab on which Jesus lay, the Church of the Nativity, the Shepherds’ Field and the Basilica of Gethsemane.

The pilgrims’ last day in the Holy Land was spent at the birthplace of John the Baptist and the site where St. Peter denied Jesus three times.

Msgr. Walter shared, “I have an affinity for the Shepherds’ Field, where the angels proclaimed the Good News and the Church of the Nativity, Jesus’ birthplace. I was one of the few in the group whom they allowed to go down the steps below the sanctuary over the spot where He was born. I had the opportunity to get down on my hands and knees and pray. It was a magnificent spot, as was the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Christ died. The Mount of Beatitudes was another magnificent spot and of course, the Sea of Galilee—in which we journeyed out to the sea.”

Msgr. Walter shared that this bilingual group became one, having shared all they did on their journey and that a reunion of the group is already being planned, saying, “I think a journey to the Holy Land is a very personal experience for a priest. It helps us to align ourselves more with the very life of Jesus Christ and the opportunity to serve as Christ served, to walk in His footsteps. But in a sense, I think the journey also brings us all together as one. One in Christ. One in faith. One in understanding how much this means to us in our own spiritual lives. It’s truly a life-changing experience. We had the opportunity to celebrate Mass every day in special places. There were so many facets to the Holy Land—it’s hard to say what is the most special. They all have a profound effect on our spiritual lives. You know, you make the trip as an individual, but in many ways, you become one with Christ on your journey.”

Arise and Shine
CHRISTMAS CONCERT
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2018
7:30 P.M. DOORS OPEN AT 7:00 P.M.

DIocese of Bridgeport Choir for Youth

The Klein Auditorium
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The joyful sounds of Christmas
Youth Choir to perform on December 21st

By EMILY CLARK

It seems few things inspire the Christmas spirit more than the joyful music of the season, especially when it is performed by young people eager to share their faith through song. One such special group is the Diocesan Youth Choir (C4Y) which is preparing for their fourth annual “Arise and Shine” concert at the Klein Memorial Auditorium in Bridgeport on Friday, December 21.

With over 135 singers from children in grade six through seniors in college, this is a musical journey in which the students and their director showcase a passion for song and a devotion to God. “This is so exciting for them!” said Mary Bozzuti-Higgins, a professional performer and opera singer who has directed C4Y since its inception in 2014. “This is a special night—a feast for the eyes, ears, heart and soul.”

With a seven-piece ensemble, including piano, oboe, flute, trumpet, violin, trombone and percussion, the program will include traditional carols and contemporary favorites. Beginning with the customary first piece “Arise and Shine,” Bozzuti-Higgins has also chosen singer favorites like “Mary, Did You Know?,” a modern Christmas classic, and “Believe,” a selection from the popular movie The Polar Express.

In addition to the regular choir, dozens of former C4Y members will be returning from college to participate, sharing that their devotion to their faith does not end when they graduate. “We have 40 alumni performing,” said Bozzuti-Higgins, who holds the Dress Rehearsal with dinner, cookie swap, and gift exchange for the entire choir the evening before the concert. “It’s so much fun for them that they keep coming back!”

Such reactions from the young people involved validate the original purpose of C4Y, which grew from the 2014 Synod. “This was the brainchild of Bishop Caggiano,” said Bozzuti-Higgins. “He is so passionate about young people and wants to keep them growing on their faith journey. We are so lucky to have him as the Shepherd of our diocese! We also have an amazing of array of dedicated and talented young people.”

This dedication begins long before the Christmas season, as students start practicing in July and attend one of six weekly rehearsals Bozzuti-Higgins holds at various locations throughout the diocese during the school year. At a recent rehearsal at the Catholic Center in Bridgeport, students were consistently encouraged by their director who called out “Gentlemen—good job! Ladies, together now!”

When she then suggested the group review The Polar Express selection, one 6th grader whispered to his friend, “Ooo, I love ‘Believe’!”

With their feet keeping time with the music and their hands holding folders emblazoned with “C4Y,” sopranos, altos, tenors and bass joined voices in the memorable refrain, singing, “We find ourselves again on Christmas Day....”

In sharing a devotion to their faith through a passion for their music, the youth of C4Y will surely bring joy to all those who believe in the glory of this season.

(Tickets online: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/faith-formation or phone 203.416.1670.)
FAIRFIELD—On Sunday, December 2, Holy Cross Church in Fairfield was full of family and friends who gathered for the annual Mass Celebrating People with Special Needs, hosted by Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs.

“Even though it is just the first Sunday of Advent... today is like Christmas,” proclaimed Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, who celebrated the Mass. Twelve young people from eight parishes received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and First Holy Communion. “This is one of the most important days of your life,” Bishop Caggiano said. “Thank you for saying ‘yes’ to Jesus.”

Each year, Saint Catherine Center offers the opportunity for individuals with special needs to receive one or more Sacraments of Initiation outside the typical faith formation program. Gail Milkosky, director of parish and community support for the Center, worked with directors of religious education throughout the diocese to coordinate preparation and participation.

Members of the Knights of Columbus Honor Guard, Saint Catherine Center board members and staff joined the celebration and a student from Saint Catherine Academy and an adult participant from the Center’s Day Program gave the readings for the Mass. “I thank the parents, sponsors and godparents who support these young people,” Bishop Caggiano said. He also acknowledged the staff of Saint Catherine Center for their work with young people with special needs. “They don’t just serve them,” he said, “They love them.”

“It’s so important that we remember that everyone is welcome in our Church and should feel included,” said Helen Burland, executive director of the Center. “This beautiful Mass reminds us of that.”

(For more information, visit the website at: StCatherineCenter.org, call: 203.540.5381, or email: info@stcatherinecenter.org.)
Advent/Christmas

Seminarians sing ‘Lessons and Carols’

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

NORWALK—Low notes of chanting reverberated through the beautifully ornate St. Mary’s Church in Norwalk for a Sunday evening “Lessons and Carols,” as a prayerful and reverent way to welcome in the Season of Advent.

On this First Sunday of Advent, December 2, over 100 people including children and families gathered together to enjoy the evening filled with the sounds of Advent. Seminarians processed in to Veni Emmanuel and sang hymns such as Savior of the Nations, Come, Comfort, Comfort Ye My People and Lo, He comes with Clouds Descending.

The seminarians of St. John Fisher in Stamford, accompanied by Father Paul Check, rector and Father John Connaughton, director of vocations, joined in Advent song with David Hughes, director of music and Samuel Schmitt, organist and choirmaster of the Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport.

The Festival of Lessons and Carols is a service of Scripture and song that dates to the late 19th century. In this service, the faithful listen to nine Scripture lessons which recount the Fall, the promise of a Messiah, the Incarnation, and the Great Commission to preach the Good News. Each lesson is followed by a carol or other song that reflects on the lesson’s message and a brief prayer.

Readings included the angel Gabriel salutes the Blessed Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26-38), John the Baptist appears in the wilderness, proclaiming the baptism of repentance for sins (Matthew 3:1-12) and many others.

One reading, The Season of Advent from St. Charles Borromeo, explained the importance and holiness of the Season of Advent in the following way: “The Church asks us to understand that Christ, who came once in the flesh, is prepared to come again. When we remove all obstacles to his presence he will come, at any hour and moment, to dwell spiritually in our hearts, bringing with him the riches of his grace. In her concern for our salvation, our loving mother the Church uses this holy season to teach us through hymns, canticles and other forms of expression, of voice or ritual, used by the Holy Spirit. She shows us how grateful we should be for so great a blessing, and how to gain its benefit: our hearts should be as much prepared for the coming of Christ as if he were still to come into this world.”

St. John Fisher Seminary is an initiative of the Diocese of Bridgeport to prepare college-aged men and young adults for entrance into major seminary and eventual ordination to the Catholic priesthood. The St. John Fisher Seminary program exists to provide young men with a place in which they can come to a deeper relationship with Christ Jesus as they discern whether He is calling them to His priesthood.

(For more information, please contact Fr. John Connaughton, vocation director by phone at: 203.322.5331 or by email at: vocations@diobpt.org.)
St. Matthew Knights give thanks by serving others

NORWALK—Norwalk’s Knights of Columbus St. Matthew council 14360 joined the Catholic Daughters of the America’s St. Matthew Court 2640 to provide and deliver a full Thanksgiving meal for the residents of Homes for the Brave for the sixth consecutive year.

In addition, Grand Knight Scott Criscuolo and past Grand Knight George Ribellino helped serve the meal along with George’s wife Heather and daughter Mia. “Our men and women both loved the food and we could not be more appreciative. What a blessing St. Matthew Council 14360 and Catholic Daughters Court 2640 have been to us. Your Thanksgiving visit and the meal you delivered was a wonderful blessing,” said Homes for the Brave CEO/Executive Director, Vince Santilli.

The day after Thanksgiving, for the fourth consecutive year, some members of Knights of Columbus Council 14360 joined forces with brother knights from Norwalk Council 46, New Canaan Council 2287, Westport Assumption Council 3688 and Knight of Columbus Bishop Fenwick Fourth Assembly 100 to hand out coats for children in need at St. Joseph Church in South Norwalk as part of the Knights of Columbus Coats for Kids initiative. The coats were purchased by the four Knights of Columbus councils and Fourth Degree Assembly with money generated from the council’s respective fundraising activities.

The council wrapped up the long weekend by helping deliver a donated freezer to Malta House in Norwalk and string lights around the St. Matthew Church campus. “It’s great to see Knights and parishioners help decorate our beautiful parish grounds for the season of Advent,” said Council 14360 Grand Knight Scott Criscuolo.

(For more information, please go to www.saintmatthewknights.com.)
St. Joseph Parish

Advent ‘Lessons & Carols’

SHELTON—St. Joseph Parish in Shelton welcomed in the Advent season with a Lessons and Carols concert on Saturday, December 8 at 7 pm. The concert featured festive seasonal hymns accompanied by readings from the books of Isaiah, Matthew, Luke and John presented by members of the parish. Carols included O Come, O Come Emmanuel, O Holy Night, Ave Maria, Silent Night, Hark! The Herald Angels Sing and more.

The concert featured vocalists Krista Adams Santilli and Ron M’Sadoques, violinist Darwin Shen, flutist Monica Attell, cellist Tom Hudson and pianist Yuan Wang. The congregation joined together in joyful song and enjoyed a light reception afterward!

Darien Garden Club donates

DARIEN—The Garden Club of Darien donated over 200 hand-made holiday arrangements to the clients of Catholic Charities’ Meals on Wheels of Lower Fairfield County program. Columbiettes Auxiliary 5833 (Stamford) helped deliver the floral arrangements to the Meals on Wheels of Lower Fairfield County clients.

Advent Reconciliation

Saturday December 15 11 am-1 pm
Tuesday December 18 6:30 pm-8:30 pm
Saturday December 22 2 pm-3:45 pm

Christmas Schedule

CHRISTMAS EVE — MONDAY, December 24th
4:00 pm with Children’s Pageant, 5:30 pm, 7:00 pm, 10:30 pm, and 12:00 Midnight Mass

CHRISTMAS DAY — TUESDAY, December 25th
9:00 am, 10:30 am, and 12:00 noon

SOLEMNITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, VIGIL
New Year’s Eve — MONDAY, December 31st
Vigil Mass — 4:00 pm

SOLEMNITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
New Year’s Day — TUESDAY, January 1st
9:00 am, 12:00 noon, and 5:00 pm

PARISH GUIDE

Our Lady of the Assumption Church
545 Stratfield Road, Fairfield
Rev. Peter A. Cipriani, Pastor • Rev. Michael F. Flynn, Parish Vicar

Advent Reconciliation

Saturday December 15 11 am-1 pm
Tuesday December 18 6:30 pm-8:30 pm
Saturday December 22 2 pm-3:45 pm

Our Christmas Mass Schedule

Christmas Eve
4 pm (Church), 4 pm (Hall), 5:30 pm and 11 pm

Christmas Day
7:30 am, 9 am, 10:30 am, 12 pm

Solemnity of Mary (January 1)
5:30 pm (vigil) 7:30 am, 12:10 pm and 5:30 pm

The Parish Family of St. Matthew
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Norwalk, Connecticut 06854
203-838-3788
www.stmatthewnorwalk.org

Christmas Schedule

CHRISTMAS EVE — MONDAY, December 24th
4:00 pm with Children’s Pageant, 5:30 pm, 7:00 pm, 10:30 pm, and 12:00 Midnight Mass

CHRISTMAS DAY — TUESDAY, December 25th
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9:00 am, 12:00 noon, and 5:00 pm

CONFESSIONS
TUESDAY, December 18th 1:00-2:00 pm and 7:00-8:00 pm
SATURDAY, December 22nd 11:00 am-12 noon, 3:15-4:00 pm, 5:00-6:00 pm
A la Virgen de Guadalupe
Mariachis, cánticos y aplausos

POR MARICARMEN GODoy
NORWALK. El P. Juan Gabriel Acosta, pastor de la iglesia Saint Ladislaus, dio una bendición especial para que Dios proteja a la comunidad, sobre todo aquella que es devota de la Virgen María, y de esa manera se dio por iniciado las fiestas en honor a la Guadalupana, Emperatriz de América, evento preparado con muchos meses de anticipación por el Grupo Guadalupano de Norwalk.

En las afueras del restaurante El Río, lugar en donde se cocinaron más de 500 raciones de comida para brindar a los feligreses que acudieron a las celebraciones mariachis los devotos de la Virgen junto al sacerdote rezaron, cantaron y recibieron la bendición especial.

Luego, el domingo al mediodía, desde el restaurante Los Portales que está ubicado frente a la Estación de Policía de Norwalk salieron junto al mariachi Emperadores de Puebla en procesión. En el Trayecto iban cantando y a su vez gritando vítores en honor a la Guadalupana: “¡Que viva al Virgen de Guadalupe! ¡Qué viva Cristo Rey! ¡Qué Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe! Un aplauso para el mariachi que ha tocado en este frío a la Guadalupana”, se escuchó muy constantemente en las cuadras que duró la procesión.

Y eso dio paso a que cantaran con constancia el himno popular mariachi que se oye en la Basílica Nacional de la Virgen de Guadalupe: “La Guadalupana, la Guadalupana, a Juan Diego la Virgen le dijo: Este será el hijo, este será el hijo, este será el hijo para el Tepeyac”.

Después de la procesión y la misa en donde el P. Juan Gabriel volvió a darles una bendición especial, el público asistente a la fiesta se ubicó en el sótano de la iglesia y desde ahí fueron atendidos con un almuerzo típico mexicano, mientras el mariachi Emperadores de México cantara una y otra vez temas del repertorio azteca.

Durante el evento, Alberto de la Rosa, coordinador y fundador del Grupo Guadalupano, agradeció al público el apoyo y les informó de la presencia del abogado de Inmigración Felipe Berns, quien indicó que vendrá a Saint Ladislaus cuantas veces sea necesario para darles información sobre las leyes y reglamentos acerca de Inmigración. El P. Juan Gabriel, puesto un sombrero de mariachi cantó Mujeres Divinas y El Rey, lo que dio ocasión a que los presentes se animaran y empezaran cantar acompañados por el mariachi tal como lo hizo Marlon.

The focus of the group has been serving those in need around the community and beyond and includes everything from visiting with senior citizens at Meadow Ridge, cleaning up school yards in Norwalk, stuffing Christmas stockings for soldiers serving overseas, working in food banks and homeless shelters, and painting a 102 year old resident’s home in Easton as part of the HomeFront Project.

(For more info call 203.664.1387.)
Advent/Christmas
Notre Dame Service Day

FAIRFIELD—“I am tremendously proud of our entire school community for rallying around this event each year. Knowing that hundreds of lives will be touched in one way or another today is fantastic. Service Day is a great example of Notre Dame fulfilling our mission to build character, faith and intellect,” said Notre Dame High School Principal, Chris Cipriano, commenting on the school’s annual Service Day.

Notre Dame’s Service Day is coordinated by Jessica Medoff, director of campus ministry, and is part of the school’s celebration of Catholic School’s week and its 26 Acts of Kindness campaign.

“While a tremendous amount of planning and coordination goes into making the day possible, today fulfills and supports a core component of the school’s mission and certainly helps to put smiles on faces of all those involved,” commented Jessica Medoff.

Volunteers visited 41 different work sites in Fairfield, New Haven and Litchfield counties.

Take a look at all of the wonderful work of Notre Dame Fairfield students in the ND Service Day 2018 video!

The vision of Notre Dame High School is to be the model of secondary education in the state of Connecticut. It achieves that with demanding academics coupled with a supportive learning community, a range of enriching extracurriculars, a competitive sports program, and a fierce commitment to service—all guided by Catholic values. Above all, they strive to instill in each student a sense of moral responsibility. Because, after all, leadership is worthless if it’s not guided by ethics.

St. Theresa School honors Veterans

TRUMBULL—In honor of Veterans Day, the middle school students of St. Theresa in Trumbull honored several local veterans for their service to our nation during a moving ceremony.

The veterans honored in the ceremony were from World War II, Vietnam War, Korean War, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

During the ceremony, the school’s student council officers each gave a message of thanks to the veterans in attendance and to all the veterans who have served our nation, both living and deceased. The school choir also performed the school’s alma mater and a band member played taps on the trumpet.

Afterwards, the veterans had a moment to share several stories from their experience of service.

“The stories that the veterans shared enabled all of the students in attendance to realize the importance of serving our country,” said middle school social studies teacher John Agostino.
Advent/Christmas

St. Bridget’s Ministries

STAMFORD—St. Bridget of Ireland Parish in Stamford’s Ministry for the Homeless, Hungry and People in Need offers support and help to those in need through many different projects. Richard Capraro is coordinator for the group, which includes 35 active members.

They recently conducted a joint project with Congregation Agudath Shalom, a synagogue in Stamford, called Two Faiths, One Heart in which they collected 1,170 food items and donated $400 to a Thanksgiving Food Drive at Inspirica, with whom they have a partnership.

St. Bridget’s also held a Christmas in July drive in which they collected and donated 2,000 items to the New Covenant Center in Stamford. “This, to me, is something positive that will keep the Church going,” said Capraro, “I believe it is what the bishop is telling us and what the Pope is telling us.”

Bishop confirms sixteen youth at St. Augustine

BRIDGEPORT—Sunday, November 25, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano joined the Vietnamese community at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the canonization of the Holy Vietnamese Martyrs. It was a blessed occasion, during which Bishop Caggiano confirmed 16 students and one adult!
Thank you to all of our friends for joining us last month in celebrating Shepherds’ 20 Years of Changing Lives… One Student at a Time…

To learn about how you can become a part of Shepherds’ next 20 years, call 203.367.4272, or email info@shepherdmentors.org www.shepherdmentors.org

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STAMFORD—Over 275 friends of New Covenant Center attended the 8th Annual Harvest Table at the Italian Center in Stamford on November 8, raising over $200,000—an increase of $75,000 over last year! Guests enjoyed delicious hors d’oeuvres in our Harvest Marketplace, had the chance to bid on 90 silent auction items and participate in a “Pledge to Support” component to the event. Throughout the evening, the New Covenant Center paid tribute to the thousands of volunteers who served the hungry in their first 40 years. Three generations of volunteers have helped provide over 600,000 meals this past year in New Covenant Center’s Café and Food Pantry.

(New Covenant Center, a program of Catholic Charities, is located at 174 Richmond Hill Ave., Stamford, CT 06902. For info call 203.964.8228 or visit: www.newcovenantcenter.org.)
Advent/Christmas

Teddy Bears with Love program celebrates 20 years

FAIRFIELD—Fairfield University’s Office of Alumni Relations and Student Alumni Association are once again hosting the Teddy Bears with Love Drive, and are accepting stuffed animal donations through Friday, December 7. Celebrating the program’s 20th year, Fairfield University is inviting the community to make this year’s drive the most successful yet by donating a new, unused teddy bear or stuffed animal this holiday season.

Teddy Bears with Love was founded in 1999 with the goal of providing children across the country with a “teddy bear hug” during the holiday season. Heading into its 20th year, Teddy Bears with Love has collected nearly 21,000 new teddy bears and stuffed animals for children’s charities, thanks to the generosity of the Stag community. Alumni from across the country have helped in this effort, hosting regional chapter collection events and drives in their local schools and businesses, to ensure that as many children as possible received a plush embrace from a stuffed animal during the holiday season.

The Franciscan Children’s Hospital in Boston, Yale New Haven Children’s Hospital, and Hour Children in Manhattan are among charities across the country that have benefitted from the efforts of Fairfield’s Teddy Bears with Love Drive.

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) recognized the program with its Affiliated Student Advancement Programs’ Award for 2008 Outstanding External Program, and the 2011 Outstanding “ Tried & True” Program in CASE District 1. The program also received distinction with a 2014 Yale New Haven Hospital Auxiliary “Toy Closet Award” for consistent support of the Toy Closet Program.

“Teddy Bears with Love is an impactful program that brings joy to those in need during the holidays,” said 2018 Student Chair and Student Alumni Association Director of Community Service Kathryn Peters ’20. “I am excited and honored to be the chair for our 20th anniversary and hoping for great success. It is amazing to see Fairfield University students, alumni, and members of our community coming together to support this wonderful cause. It makes me very proud to be a Stag!”

To participate in the 2018 Teddy Bears with Love Drive, please donate a new, unused teddy bear or stuffed animal (all donations must have original tags) to a local Fairfield alumni chapter, or directly to the Office of Alumni Relations. For more information including alumni chapter event details please visit fairfield.edu/teddybears.

Teddy bear drop off and mail in address:
Office of Alumni Relations
Fairfield University
1073 North Benson Road
Fairfield, CT 06824
fairfieldteddybears@gmail.com

We wish you a Merry Christmas from Fairfield University!

Fairfield University

Grace
Glory
Peace

Merry Christmas!

Returning home for the holiday?
Winter registration is open for undergraduates until Dec. 19th
Visit fairfield.edu/wintersession for more information.
‘Peace Light’ comes to Danbury

DANBURY—Each year, a child from Upper Austria fetches a light from the grotto in Bethlehem where Jesus was born. The light is carried in two blast proof miners’ lamps on an Austrian Airlines jet from Tel Aviv, Israel to Vienna, Austria from where it is distributed at a Service of Dedication to delegations from across Europe who take it back, with a message of peace, to their own countries.

Austrian Airlines then flies the miners’ lamps containing the Peace Light from Bethlehem to New York City. This year, the light arrived at JFK on Saturday, December 1. Upon arrival, the Peace Light was transferred through a ceremony at Our Lady of the Skies Chapel.

Gary Allen Prybylski, long-time member of St. Peter’s Church, and his son who attends religious education classes there, were Peace Light coordinators this year and brought the Peace Light to St. Peter Church in Danbury on Friday, December 7 from 7-9 pm.

On Friday, St. Peter’s, along with other churches in Danbury came together to welcome the Peace Light and stand together for peace throughout the world.

“Our aim is to see this Peace Light offering grow year by year in the Greater Danbury area and to share this message of peace and harmony with as many people in our community as possible,” said Prybylski.

This beautiful evening consisted of lighting candles, having a bonfire, light refreshments and joining together in the name of peace.
Knights of Columbus Christmas Tree Festival

Some of the Diocese of Bridgeport schools have the privilege of being a part of the Christmas Tree Festival at the Knights of Columbus Museum. This festive display showcases the creativity and imagination of students from elementary schools across Connecticut whose handmade ornaments and trim colorfully decorate the museum’s two dozen Christmas trees in the theme of the annual Christmas crèche exhibit, which this year is “Christmas In Poland.”

Students handmade their ornaments and took a field trip out to the museum to decorate their tree. Prior to decorating their tree, the museum treated them all to hot chocolate and a snack, a craft project and a tour of the “Christmas In Poland” exhibit.

The display is open until February 3! If you visit, you can be a part of the people’s choice award and vote for our schools!

December 2018
BECOME YOU

at Trinity Catholic, as WE did.

At Christmas, we are grateful for the academics, the community and our Faith.

Come see what all the excitement is about.

A College-Preparatory Environment Soon to be Pre-K 3-12 on One Campus.

Trinity Catholic High School

We wish you a Merry Christmas

Merry Christmas from "THE ACADEMY"

From all of the children and faculty of The Catholic Academy of Stamford, we wish you the gifts of the Christ Child this Christmas and always.

Schedule a visit on Take-a-Look
Tuesday, Jan. 29 (Lower School, 1186 Newfield Ave)
or Thursday, Jan. 31 (Upper School, 948 Newfield Ave) during Catholic Schools Week.

For more information, contact Mrs. Mary Margarone, Director of Admissions, at 203-322-6505.

www.catholicacademystamford.org
To the employees of the Diocese of Bridgeport,

As we reflect on Christmas, let us also be thankful for our health and wellbeing.

St. Vincent's Health Partners wants you and your family to be as healthy as possible.

Sometimes it can be difficult to get the care you need when you need it! Imagine: you or a family member has just come home from the hospital. With this service, you may receive a call from one of our staff, making sure that you have what you need to get well.

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Questions? Call us: (203) 275-0210 or email us at: Clinical.Integration@StVincentsHealthPartners.org

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