

# FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

OCTOBER 2020 | VOLUME 37, NUMBER 8 | RESPECT LIFE ISSUE

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# Around the Diocese

## Faith and loving service behind the masks!

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

### St. Catherine of Siena hosts 4th annual kickoff weekend

TRUMBULL—St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull



launched a new Pastoral Year on September 12 & 13 on a picture-perfect weekend. Father Joseph Marcello, pastor, Deacon Patrick Toole, and St. Catherine of Siena Parish staff were joined once again by the parish's Welcome Team for their 4th annual kickoff weekend.

Masses were as full as state guidelines allow. Everyone could easily see by the smiles under every mask that friends were happy to see each other. Christ is alive and at work in the community! Even though it's an unsettled time for all of us, it's going to be a great pastoral year at St. Catherine's!



### Sacraments continue in our parishes

NORWALK—As we begin to see the benefit of following CDC guidelines, many parishes throughout the diocese have

been able to confer sacraments on parishioners once again.



Most recently, St. Jerome Parish in Norwalk confirmed teens in two separate ceremonies, allowing for family and friends to be present, while still following all social-distancing guidelines.

Also in Norwalk, St. Matthew Parish was able to confer the Sacrament of Reconciliation on more than 60 youth and RCIA candidates, divided into three groups.

It is a great joy to see our parishioners gathering to receive the sacraments once again!

### Students pray the Rosary

FAIRFIELD COUNTY—September 8 marked the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In commemoration of this special



day in the Church, students from diocesan schools prayed the Rosary together.

The third-grade class at St. Catherine of Siena School in

Trumbull walked to the Marian garden to pray the Rosary.

Fifth-graders at All Saints Catholic School in Norwalk spent time outdoors praying the Rosary



in their meditation garden dedicated to Mary.

These activities provided students with both time outside and time for prayer!



### Bible blessing to begin the school year

BRIDGEPORT—As part of a

beloved school tradition, Kolbe Cathedral freshmen received their Bibles for the new school year.

Bibles were blessed in a beautiful ceremony by their new spiritual director, Deacon John DiTaranto!

### First Holy Communions celebrated throughout the diocese

FAIRFIELD COUNTY—After a long wait for all involved, the First Communion Class of 2020 was able to receive this blessed Sacrament of Initiation.

Third-graders from St. Aloysius School in New Canaan, Assumption Catholic School in Fairfield, St. Matthew Parish in Norwalk and St. Joseph Church in Danbury were all able to hold socially-distanced ceremonies for students and their families.

God bless all the youth in our diocese who are receiving sacraments at this time! Our prayers are with you and your families.

### St. Luke's youth work on outdoor project

WESTPORT—On a beautiful mid-September weekend, St. Luke's youth group worked on phase 2 of their new garden and chicken coop. It was beautiful weather for an outdoor project! ■



### ON THE COVER

*The parishes and programs of the diocese are alive and well throughout Fairfield County with parishioners, students, and service providers making the most of restrictions and difficult days.*

Photos by  
Amy Mortensen  
and other contributors

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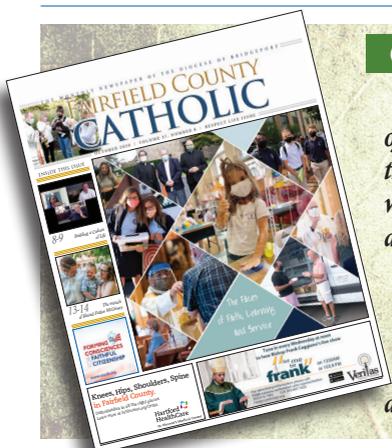
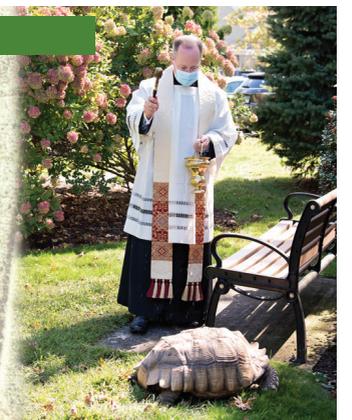
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# Diocesan News

## Re-opening moves forward in parishes

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

BRIDGEPORT—While masks and social distancing remain the order of the day at Mass, the diocese is making the most of the “new normal” and planning for the return of the faithful in greater numbers to in-person Mass.

The diocese took another step forward on October 8, when Bishop Frank J. Caggiano announced that consistent with Phase III of the State’s reopening plan, Churches will now be allowed to increase attendance up to 50 percent of capacity, which would mean that larger churches will be able to accommodate up to 200 people at one time.

In making the announcement, the bishop expressed his gratitude to the people of the diocese and acknowledged the difficulty that many have experienced as a result of restrictions placed on worship during the pandemic.

“As we take this step forward, I want to thank the people of the Diocese of Bridgeport for their cooperation. We know the level of hardship many have felt at the loss of the sacraments and the restrictions we all struggle with in the interest of public health and

safety,” the bishop said.

The bishop noted that even with present capacity, many people are fearful of returning to in-person services during the pandemic and without a vaccine available. His goal is to make Mass attendance as safe as possible for those who are returning and to take measured steps toward a full re-opening.

The bishop discussed the October 8 expansion with pastors and priests at the Presbyteral Council assembly held in late September.

Therefore, the following guidelines are now in effect as churches expand their capacity. In all cases, masks, social distancing and proper sanitizing procedures are required.

- Capacity for indoor Mass and Liturgical events—50% capacity with a cap of 200 people.
- Capacity for outdoor Mass and Liturgical events—50% capacity with 6 ft. spacing, no cap.
- Capacity for indoor events (Bible studies, prayer groups, etc.)—50% capacity with a cap of 100 people.
- Capacity for outdoor social and recreational events—150 people.

In acknowledging the hardship



people continue to experience as a result of public health measures, the bishop said the safety protocols put in place were designed first and foremost to safeguard life in the diocese.

He said that to date, there has been no widespread exposure to the virus because of Mass or liturgical services in the diocese, and that “We are doing everything possible to protect the integrity of our liturgies and the safety of our people.”

In a recent video, the bishop said that Catholics should wear masks not simply because the state mandates it, but because it is consistent with ministry and words of Jesus. “We wear a mask

to protect the elderly, the frail and those with pre-existing conditions. We wear them to save the lives of others and as an act of Christian love for our neighbors, known and unknown. We wear them in faith...”

He said the diocese is in good position to move forward with expanded capacity because of the extensive safety and preventive measures put in place in parishes and schools are working. To date there is no evidence of communal spread as a result of anyone attending Mass in the diocese.

A recent report, produced by the Thomistic Institute’s Working Group on Infectious Disease Protocols for Sacraments &

Pastoral Care, found that washing hands, social distancing and mask requirements have helped prevent the spread of COVID-19 at Mass even in cases when contagious, pre-symptomatic parishioners took part in church events.

The evidence—based on studying 17,000 parishes—suggests that church services following public health guidelines do not present a greater risk of spreading the novel coronavirus than other similar activities.

In announcing the expanded capacity in diocesan churches the bishop also reiterated that registration for Mass is still required and that parishes must not exceed the capacity allowed by state law. He said the capacity limits are in place to protect the health of parishioners, and registration is essential because it enables a parish to notify parishioners if someone should test positive for COVID-19 at a Mass they attended.

Plans for gradually increasing capacity and attendance at Church are contingent upon the low and controlled positivity rate of the virus and other developments.

(For updates and complete coronavirus health and safety protocols, visit: [www.bridgeportdiocese.org/coronavirus/home](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org/coronavirus/home).)

## Bishop re-forms pastoral council

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has announced that he is re-forming the Diocesan Pastoral Council to help chart the course of the pastoral and spiritual work of the diocese as it emerges from the pandemic and moves ahead with plans for evangelization.

“In light of the unique challenges and issues that we now face as a Church, and given its particular mandate to assist the leaders of the diocese, I believe the pastoral council will play an important role as we seek new opportunities for spiritual renewal, institutional restructuring and pastoral growth,” the bishop said.

The bishop said the recon-



vened pastoral council is an invitation for the laity to participate with him in the strategic planning process of the diocese, and that “the energy and diversity of the diocese will be represented at the table as the People of God gather

together as co-workers in the vineyard.”

He has requested the help of pastors and diocesan leaders to identify new members who will be asked to join the council. The goal is to make it representative

of the diocese in its entirety and revitalize its mission.

According to Church canon (CCC, 512, 2), “The Christian faithful who are designated to a pastoral council are to be selected in such a way that they truly reflect the entire portion of the people of God which constitutes the diocese, with consideration given to the different areas of the diocese, social conditions and professions, and the role which they have in the apostolate. Whether individually or joined with others.”

The pastoral council serves both the bishop and the diocese through dialogue and collaboration in the pastoral work of fostering holiness, communion and mission, to witness to the Gospel

of Jesus Christ and to build up His Body, the Church.

The bishop convenes the council in full session four times during each pastoral year, which run from September to June. The term of membership for commissioned members is three years.

The bishop may also convene the council in special or working committees at other times during the calendar year as may be necessary. In absence of the bishop, the vicar general will monitor the council’s meetings.

The pastoral council is expected to reconvene in November. New and returning council members will be announced in an upcoming issue of *Fairfield County Catholic*.



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Love never fails

"Since the first days of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the diocese has served those in urgent need through the Annual Catholic Appeal. Programs for food, housing, educational assistance, psychological support and spiritual consolation are experiencing a dramatic increase in the number of people being served.

Our neighbors and friends continue to face urgent need. Without the help of compassionate and loving individuals like you, we will not be able to serve all those who turn to us for assistance."

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Thank you for your generous support, may God bless you.

# 2020 Annual Catholic Appeal

## 'Emergency Funds' seeks to raise \$1.5 million

By **JOE PISANI**

BRIDGEPORT — Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has appealed to Catholics in the Diocese of Bridgeport to raise \$1.5 million as part of the Annual Catholic Emergency Appeal because of an increased demand for services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused “continuing uncertainty and suffering.”

“In the past six months we have seen a dramatic increase in

at a Shelton hotel where they receive three meals a day.

- Meet the demand for counseling services at a time when depression and anxiety are on the rise.
- Provide scholarship assistance and distance learning for all diocesan Catholic schools and students receiving sacramental preparation and religious instruction. This year has seen an increase of 800 students in Catholic schools.

respond generously and in many ways even heroically,” he said. “Given the extraordinary circumstances and the hardships many people are experiencing, the response to the appeal has been gratifying. The diocese has pulled together as a family and has shown a concern that has inspired me and made me proud.”

Joseph Gallagher, who was named chief development officer of the diocese in June, said, “I’ve been with the diocese for four

has folks who are committed to the good of the Church, and they recognize there are things that not only need to be done at the parish level but also need to be done at the diocesan level. There are people in need and there are causes that the Church must support—and they want to be part of it. The Annual Catholic Appeal provides them with the opportunity to be involved when they might not be personally.”

Father Kachuba said many of

encourage more people to give.”

He believes the COVID pandemic inspired many to give sacrificially because they realized, “We’ve got to do something because the needs are significantly higher and greater than they have been in the past.”

He has also seen greater participation in the parish’s food drive. “In some ways, I suspect the pandemic has actually brought out the best altruistic characteristics that people have,” he said.



the number of people who came to our outreach programs seeking food, housing, educational assistance, psychological support and spiritual consolation,” Bishop Caggiano said. “Many have lost family members, found themselves without jobs, are suffering ill health and are unable to return to work or unable to meet their family’s basic needs. This human suffering will not end anytime soon. In many respects, it continues to grow.”

The appeal, which has as its theme “Love never fails,” taken from St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, has raised \$6.7 million since it began in February and has allowed the diocese to accomplish the following:

- Serve an additional 700 meals a day at its soup kitchens and other non-profit nutrition programs and homeless shelters. Catholic Charities served more than 500,000 meals from March through August, almost three times the usual number.
- Provide housing for more than 70 homeless individuals

- Celebrate Masses and liturgies online through live-streaming.
- Support hospital chaplains bringing Christ to patients and families who were often separated during this crisis.

Bishop Caggiano said the pandemic has affected the Church and larger community and that many people find they are in need of assistance for the first time in their lives. He expects there will be more difficult times in the months ahead.

“Suffering has taken its face in those around us,” he said. “Many have lost family members, found themselves without jobs, are suffering ill health and unable to return to work or unable to meet their family’s basic needs. This human suffering will not end anytime soon. In many respects, it continues to grow.”

He expressed gratitude to donors who have given to the appeal during the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis. “Over the last six months, we have seen so much need and suffering in our midst, but through your generosity, the Church has been able to

months and have been struck by the overwhelming willingness of parishioners to respond during the crisis. I am very grateful to everyone.”

Gallagher emphasized the importance of the Annual Catholic Appeal, which meets the immediate needs of the diocese, as opposed to long-term needs covered by the We Stand With Christ capital campaign. He stressed that the appeal provides for the faithful in three basic areas—Catholic education, charitable services provided by Catholic Charities, and faith formation.

He said the success of the appeal is based on a partnership with parishes that are working to reach their goals. One of those parishes is St. Pius X of Fairfield, which achieved 111 percent of its goal.

When asked what the secret was, Father Samuel S. Kachuba, pastor, responded, “I did nothing. That’s the absolute truth. The most important thing is that people at St. Pius are extraordinarily generous. This is a parish that

his parishioners are committed to the work of Catholic Charities and Catholic education. Some of them were graduates themselves or have children who attended Catholic schools.

“They want to see Catholic education thrive and grow, and they recognize that not everyone can afford Catholic school, so they are very willing to make those gifts so that Catholic education can be strong for others,” he said.

In addition, many St. Pius parishioners are involved with the work of Thomas Merton Center in Bridgeport and other ministries and have seen firsthand the need that exists in the community.

“They recognize how blessed they are and want to give back,” Father said.

While the parish reached 111 percent of its goal, Father said he wished the rate of participation were higher. “We have a lot more people who participate in the regular parish offertory than who participate in the annual appeal, and that is always the biggest challenge for parishes—how to

Pamela S. Rittman, director of development and the Annual Catholic Appeal, praised Father Kachuba for the success at St. Pius.

She also said that the diocese responded to the increased need by sending letters to donors, instituting a ministry video, social media outreach and wellness calls to parishioners. She thanked those who participated in the appeal, some of whom were first-time donors and others who made two gifts.

“With the challenges and uncertainty presented by COVID-19, we have found ourselves living in a world very different than it’s ever been before,” Rittman said. “The demand for services increased tremendously, and one thing for certain is our parishioners, in the most difficult situations, continue to reach out

in compassion to one another and support not only those in most need, but the programs and services that provide for all ministry and school programs. We still need your help and are grateful for your sacrificial giving.”

# 2020 Annual Catholic Appeal

## Investing in their faith and future

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

BRIDGEPORT—Putting two boys through Catholic school is a labor of love for Janet and Sergio Bran of Bridgeport. It's also a sacrifice they're willing to make because they want their sons to carry the gift of Catholic faith throughout their lives.

Eight-year-old Alexander and 13-year-old Sebastian are students at All Saints School in Norwalk. They have been able to attend with the help of donations to the Annual Catholic Appeal's, Bishop Scholarship Fund, which provides essential tuition assistance for students in diocesan elementary schools.

"This is a big sacrifice for us, but we believe that in today's world we are making the right choices and decisions. It's easy for adults and kids to derail from our faith and from God, especially with social media.

They need a good foundation and something they can grow with and never forget. If you don't have that from the beginning, it's harder to start when the you get older," says Janet Bran.

Joe Gallagher, chief development officer of the diocese, says that the mission of the Annual Catholic Appeal in the most basic terms is to help people in the diocese—whether it's putting their children through Catholic schools, feeding the hungry, working with the most vulnerable or providing faith formation to people across the diocese.

Gallagher says that without the ACA, the cost of Catholic education would be beyond the reach of many families, especially those with more than one child in school.

Both boys were enrolled at All Saints before the family



ACA HELPS FAMILIES CHOOSE CATHOLIC EDUCATION—Thirteen-year-old Sebastian Bran and his brother, Alexander, 8, are both enrolled in All Saints School in Norwalk. The Bishop's Scholarship Fund made it possible for their parents to choose Catholic education.

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Barat Center—Tuesday, October 27th at 9:30 a.m.  
Lower School—Tuesday, October 27th at 4:30 p.m.  
Middle School—Wednesday, October 28th at 5:30 p.m.  
Upper School—Thursday, October 29th at 5:30 p.m.



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moved to Bridgeport a few years ago, but they loved the school so much, they decided that no matter where they moved, they would continue the boys at All Saints.

Janet says the school feels like one big family, and she has nothing but praise for the staff and faculty particularly as they pull together during the COVID-19 crisis to deliver academic excellence in the framework of a faith based learning community.

"Our school is doing tremendous job and I really give credit to every single person on the faculty and in the school. I believe they're doing everything possible to keep kids in school and to be safe. What I've seen is that we're in this all together and everyone's doing their best," she says.

Janet says that COVID-19 has also had a negative impact on her family's finances and on many other families from the school.

A self-employed bookkeeper, she has experienced the loss of business clients who have suffered or closed up in the downturn, and her husband Sergio's work in wine and spirits sales has become more difficult and challenging.

She says that everything in

the supermarket has become more expensive, and there are always unforeseen bills that make it difficult to make ends meet, while meeting the cost of tuition.

The financial assistance the family has received from the Bishop's Scholarship Fund has made it possible for her and her husband to keep their son Alexander at All Saints.

"We don't go out and spend money on what we don't need. Our priority is education. We just learn to cut back on other things and we're happy we can do this for the boys."

She and Sebastian, who will enter high school next year, attended an open house at Notre Dame High School and loved the school and its many programs.

Janet says she is very grateful for the support of the Bishop's Scholarship Fund and even hesitant to ask because she knows that some families are in far greater need. But it's a choice she and her husband have made and an investment in the faith and future of their sons.

"I hope that the boys will always be grateful for what they have and remember what we did for them by providing a solid

faith-based education. We're working hard for them so that they can have things we didn't have and do better than we have. We want them to take the sacrifices we are making for them and put it to good use," she says.

"Our schools play a major role in forming young people in the faith. They are safe, vibrant and academically excellent faith-based learning community. Contributions our donors make go directly to the families in need and they truly are a living legacy," says Gallagher.

Gallagher says that last year, 1,456 students were awarded \$2,798,800 in tuition assistance and more than \$1.5 million was funded through the Annual Catholic Appeal, Bishop's Scholarship Fund. With 2,546 families applying and a calculated need of \$6,813,995, parents continue to rely on the fund to make Catholic education a reality for their children.

*(If you haven't participated in this year's Annual Catholic Appeal, please make your gift online at [www.2020ACA-Bridgeport.com](http://www.2020ACA-Bridgeport.com) or text the word APPEAL to 475.241.7849 or call 203.416.1470. Thank you for your support.)*

# Diocesan Budget

## Diocese releases budget

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and the Finance Council of the Diocese of Bridgeport have approved a fiscal year ending June 30, 2021 operating budget with a total of \$19,788,090 in revenues and \$20,301,792 in expenditures, representing a \$513,702 projected deficit.

“The development of this budget with a deficit has been one of the more difficult tasks I have encountered during my tenure here at the diocese since 2014 said Michael Hanlon CPA, chief financial officer (CFO). “With the pandemic environment, we were extremely conservative in our revenue projections and have been aggressive in cutting expenses. As many of our parishes and parishioners are also suffering, revenue projections from the Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) and the Cathedraticum tax is estimated based on this uncertainty.”

The Annual Catholic Appeal and Cathedraticum tax is the major source of revenue for the annual operating budget. The ACA supports diocesan mission related programs including Catholic Education, works of charity and pastoral services, catechesis and evangelization, and clergy (vocations, formation, and retired priests). In addition, Cathedraticum, the traditional assessment on parishes to support the administration and operating costs of the diocese.

The diocese’s obligation to operate with fiscal responsibility and manage the resources continues to be a focus that was established since Bishop Caggiano’s arrival.

“We continue to be stewards of all funds entrusted to us as we continue fiscally responsible and prudent decision making at all levels of the diocesan management team,” said Hanlon.

Department leaders closely examined their preliminary budgets and reduced projected expenses to minimums necessary to functionally operate.

During this year’s budget process several requested positions were eliminated and vacant positions unfilled. Most discretionary spending within departments was eliminated, including all professional seminars and travel. “We

continue to look for opportunities for additional efficiencies in operations and reduce expenses.”

Although several positions were eliminated and new hiring curtailed, a major required position was budgeted and filled. Joseph Gallagher was hired as the chief development officer. Joe will focus on enhancing the development office activities and expand development opportunities to include planned giving from individuals and targeted opportunities directly related to the mission of the diocese.

Hanlon said that Deacon Patrick Toole, secretary of the curia and episcopal delegate for administration, recently conducted a study related to identifying potential operational efficiencies within the Queen of Clergy priest’s retirement home in Stamford. Cost savings are projected without comprising the care provided to our retired priest residents, who had dedicated much of their lives to our diocese and church.

The approved budget projects revenues to decline slightly and expenses to increase approximately 2.3 percent. Projected revenue decreases are within the Annual Catholic Appeal and Cathedraticum, totaling approximately \$1.7 million. Part of this decline is related to a strategic goal reduction for the Annual Catholic Appeal following the continuing success of the “We Stand with Christ” capital campaign. Our donors have been extremely generous to the capital campaign and is unfair to ask them also to continue to support the Annual Catholic Appeal at historic levels.

Additional reductions are related to uncertain contributions and parish payments during this pandemic time for the Annual Catholic Appeal and Cathedraticum. Additional grant funding for school related projects and bequest projections have revenue increases.

Any additional contributions and Cathedraticum payments greater than the conservative budget projections could eliminate the approved budget deficit. Also, loan forgiveness related to the federal Payroll Protection Program will positively impact this deficit.

Contributions and grants allocated from the Annual Catholic Appeal to diocesan mission-related entities represent approximately 20.7 percent of this budget. These contributions and grants support the missions of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, St. Catherine Academy for Special Needs, the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport, the Cardinal Shehan Center and the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund within Foundations in Education. Additionally these funds support vocations, seminarians and retired priests.

Diocesan schools have benefited from a multi-year “Transforming the Paradigm of Catholic Education” grant from Foundations in Education through a generous donor. These funds have increased grant revenues but are offset by additional related expenses. This grant continues to allow schools to update their informational technology systems to enhance our learning environment, well in advance and unrelated to remote learning due to the pandemic.

Salaries and benefits continue to represent approximately 50.4 percent of the overall budget, Hanlon said, noting, “market-rate salary increases have been budgeted for January 1, as our employees are dedicated to their work and are always doing more than expected.”

He said the diocese continues to work to manage and control healthcare related expenses and benefits while providing affordable comprehensive coverage for employees and their families. Although we attempt to manage our costs with progressive initiatives, budgeted healthcare benefit costs continue to rise great than inflation rates annually. The diocese pays 80 percent of employee healthcare costs and 100 percent for our clergy.

Andrew Schulz, director of real estate and Anne McCrory, chief legal and real estate officer, have continued to identify new areas of revenue while overseeing the diocesan property portfolio.

“They continue to do a remarkable job in identifying opportunities to generate alternative sources of revenue from

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

### The Bridgeport Roman Catholic Diocesan Corporation

#### Operational Budget — July 2020-June 2021

##### Revenue

Annual Catholic Appeal	\$7,100,000
Cathedraticum Assessment	6,092,200
Contributions and Bequests	3,209,318
Rental and Other Income	1,949,572
Cemeteries Contribution	1,437,000
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$19,788,090</b>

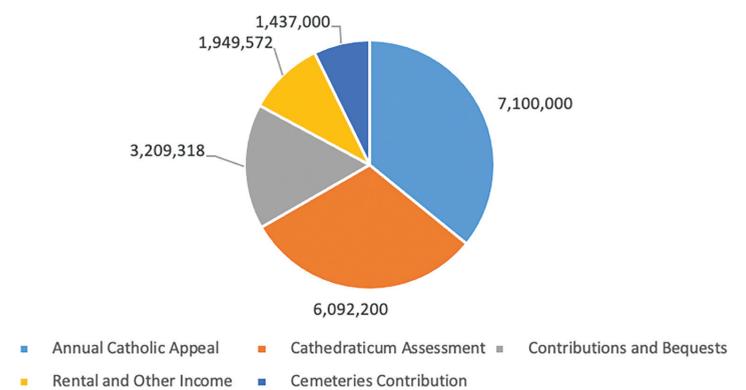
##### Expenses

Salaries and Benefits	\$10,443,167
Grants and Contributions	4,203,843
Contracted Services	2,037,524
Occupancy and Insurance	978,055
Professional Fees and Services	802,804
Travel, Seminars, Dues and Other	801,667
Office, Postage and Printing	742,717
Other Supplies and Expense	158,015
Interest	134,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$20,301,792</b>

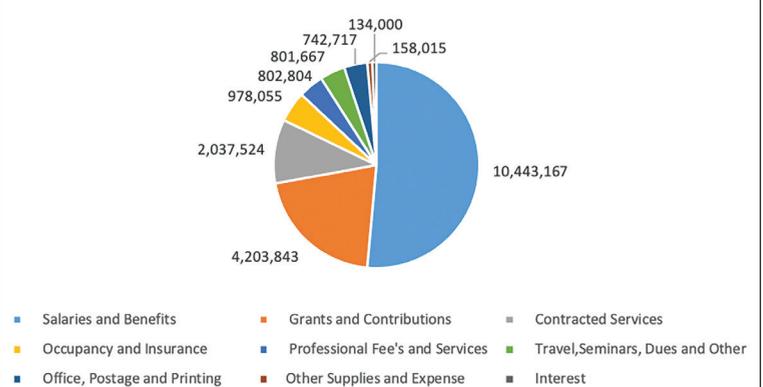
#### DEFICIT FROM OPERATIONS — BEFORE DEPRECIATION

\$(513,702)

Operational Budget  
July 2020-June 2021  
Total Budgeted Revenue \$19,788,090



Operational Budget  
July 2020- June 2021  
Total Budgeted Expenses \$20,301,792



# Building a Culture of Life

## Respect Life Month Campaign

By **JOE PISANI**

BRIDGEPORT—Throughout Respect Life Month, men and women are conducting a 40 Days for Life prayer campaign at the public entrance to an abortion facility in Bridgeport at Commerce Park on Main Street.

The vigil began September 23 and will end November 1.

“The mission of the 40 Days for Life campaign is to bring together the Body of Christ in a spirit of unity during a focused campaign of prayer, fasting and peaceful witness with the purpose of repentance to seek God’s favor in turning hearts and minds from a culture of death to a culture of life,” said the organizer, Dr. Lenore Opalak.

The campaign occurs during the annual Respect Life Month, which begins a year-long national effort to help Catholics become engaged in the cause of building a culture that cherishes every life, according to Maureen Ciardiello, coordinator of the Respect Life Ministry of the diocese’s Office of Faith Formation.

Educational programs and information are available to create awareness of the sanctity of life and show the community what it means to stand up for life.

(For more information about the program or to obtain materials for your parish or group, contact the Office of Faith Formation at 203.416.1670 or email [OfficeofFaithFormation@diobpt.org](mailto:OfficeofFaithFormation@diobpt.org).)

Ciardiello said that the theme of this year’s Respect Life Month is “Live the Gospel of Life” and takes its inspiration from Pope St. John Paul II’s encyclical *The Gospel of Life*, which was written 25 years ago.

“Now, more than ever, we need to be rooted in the words of this document,” she said. “I encourage everyone to read it—not only to read it, but to live it.”

Archbishop Joseph Naumann, current chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said, “The Gospel of Life provides a blueprint for building a culture of life and civilization of love. The important work of transforming our culture begins by allowing the Gospel of Christ to touch and transform our own hearts and the decisions we make. May we strive to imitate

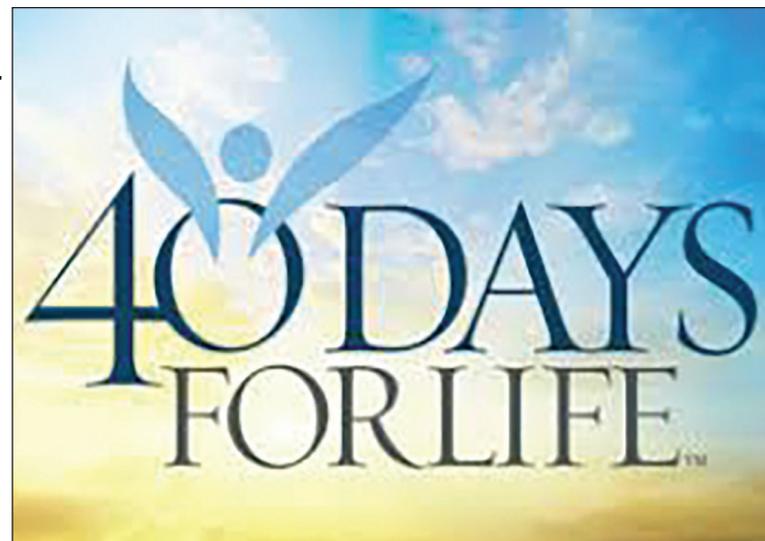
Christ and follow in his footsteps, caring for the most vulnerable among us. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, may Our Lord grant us the grace to live courageously and faithfully his Gospel of life.”

In celebrating the 25th anniversary of the encyclical, Catholics are urged to reflect on these questions:

- Do I talk about and act towards others as I would talk about and treat Jesus himself?
  - Do I inform myself of the Church’s teachings and engage in the civic arena as first a follower of Christ?
  - Do I support and advocate for laws and policies that protect and defend human life?
  - Do I help pregnant and parenting mothers in need?
  - Am I ready to support a loved one nearing death?
- Ciardiello urged Catholics to

organize Holy Hours for an end to abortion, to sponsor educational programs in their parishes and to consider donations or volunteering at Malta House in Norwalk, which is the only group home for pregnant women over 18 in Fairfield County and one of a limited number of residential programs for parenting mothers and their babies. Since its doors opened in 1998, Malta House has provided more than 8,000 nights of shelter, helped bring more than 345 babies into the world and assisted more than 320 mothers in getting back on their feet.

Earlier this year, a Marist Poll sponsored by the Knights of Columbus examined the views of Americans on the issue of abortion and found that “a strong majority of Americans wants to elect candidates who support substantial abortion restrictions and



that most Americans still reject the Supreme Court’s reasoning in the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* case.”

“Most Americans want the court to reinterpret *Roe* either by stopping legalized abortion or by returning the issue to the states,” said Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson.

According to the poll’s results, “a notable proportion (41%) of

those who identify as pro-choice are more likely to vote for candidates who support restrictions, as are more than nine in 10 who identify as pro-life (96%).”

(For more information visit [www.bridgeportdiocese.org/respect-life/home](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org/respect-life/home) or contact Maureen Ciardiello, coordinator of Respect Life and Project Rachel at [mcardiello@diobpt.org](mailto:mcardiello@diobpt.org) or 203.416.1445.)

## Prayers of remembrance and forgiveness at the Site of the Unborn

By **EMILY CLARK**

TRUMBULL—To mark the 8th Annual National Day of Remembrance for Aborted Children, a group of local parishioners gathered in prayer at the Memorial Site of the Unborn in the Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Trumbull on a recent Saturday afternoon. Beginning at the holy hour of 3 pm under the warm sun of mid-September, the ceremony included pro-life prayers, special intentions, and the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary.

Two dozen people from the Trumbull area held long-stemmed white roses and joined together to visit this gravesite, not only to remember the countless number of children who have been aborted but to also acknowledge forgiveness for those responsible.

“The children we remember here today are in Heaven,” said Tina Kelly, a member of St. Catherine of Siena Parish who has organized this event for the



8TH ANNUAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE—About 24 people from parishes in the greater Bridgeport area recently gathered in prayer at the Memorial site of the Unborn in the Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Trumbull.

past four years. “The real crux is to pray for those who did this and hope that they too get to Heaven. We want them to know that they are forgiven.”

Held each year on the second Saturday of September, the event, Kelly feels, has special significance as it occurs during the week of the Blessed Mother’s birthday on September 8. “We ask for her blessings on us today,” she said as the ceremony began.

As the group recited the “Prayer to End Abortion,” “Prayer for Forgiveness of Those Who Destroy Human Life,” and other devotions, a young girl visiting the cemetery with her family wandered toward the memorial. She paused and gently touched the vase of roses and an unlit white candle, seeming to acknowledge those unborn with the innocence only a child herself could possess. Several attendees

said this simple act of kindness reminded them of the line they had just recited: “We pray for the toddler who, like your Son, reaches out in hope to a brand new world.”

The small granite stone, inscribed with the words “In Memory of the Unborn,” is one of 11 memorial sites that have been erected throughout Connecticut. In addition to the ceremony in Trumbull, gatherings also occurred this weekend in Oakdale and Putnam and at the burial place for aborted children in Cromwell.

Kelly said that the group who gathers at Gate of Heaven Cemetery grows each year, with more and more people getting involved in the pro-life movement. “I hope they will become more vocal about their beliefs,” she said. “The Lord is merciful. We are praying for those who destroyed life, not judging them.”

“Forgiveness,” she added, “is what distinguishes our faith.”

# Building a Culture of Life

## An ongoing conversation about race

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—As the culmination of seven weeks of the well-received webinar series “Conversations About Race” hosted by The Leadership Institute, the diocesan Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism and the Apostolate for Black Catholics, last night’s “Conversations About the Conversations” brought about a lot of important discussions.

The two panelists were Janie Nneji a member of St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield and Father Reggie Norman, pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton and episcopal vicar for Black Catholics in the diocese. “I have been intensely interested in what the Church can do to heal the racial divide,” explained Nneji, who has piloted a study in her parish using Bishop Braxton’s 2015 pastoral letter, along with books and videos in order to facilitate a conversation and work toward healing.

“This is my third or fourth job,” explained Father Reggie of his role as the episcopal vicar for Black Catholics in the diocese, “but it was the one that I find the most passion in.”

Panelists began the webinar discussing highlights of the seven-week series, what moved them, change them and challenged them. Listeners were then invited to ask questions or begin discussions in the chat.

Patrick Donovan, director of The Leadership Institute shared that one of the things that was most eye-opening for him was when Gloria Purvis used the phrase “we can walk and chew gum,” referring to the fact that just because we say that Black lives matter doesn’t mean that white lives don’t and just because we say that racism in a pro-life issue doesn’t mean that we feel any less strongly about other pro-life issues. “I had never thought about it so simply,” shared Donovan.

Nneji shared that she was shocked to hear that some people had never heard it said that racism was a sin, and that racism was a life issue and contrary to the Word of God. “To me it was very important that I am also involved in many pro-life circles



A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE CONVERSATION—Janie Nneji a member of St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield, Dr. Patrick Donovan, director of the diocesan Leadership Institute and Father Reggie Norman, pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton were the panelists for the final talk in the seven-week webinar series on race sponsored by the Leadership Institute. “I have been intensely interested in what the Church can do to heal the racial divide,” Father Norman said.

and have bemoaned the fact that it is not always as womb to tomb as I would like it to be,” shared Nneji.

Panelists enjoyed how both Chatelain and Villalobos discussed how to have a conversation and how it is important to listen to others’ stories when beginning to engage with others on these difficult topics and to find common ground. “I think that was an effective tool in having a conversation,” said Nneji.

“I thought the series was excellent. As a Black Catholic, having gone back and read some of the bishop’s pastoral statements, and my disappointment is that the Church has gone to battle over many different issues and I don’t think they have raised the racism issue up to the level of concern and dedication of resources to which they should,” shared Nneji. “But I think having the conversations was a good start,” she said.

Father Reggie said that Armando Cervantes’ conversation on multicultural voices allowed listeners to see the issue of racism as a bigger picture, and to recognize other cultures that are struggling as well.

“As a Black man I’m tired of talking about this. I talk about this all day every day and sometimes it’s very frustrating because no matter how much you talk some people are just not going to get it,” explained Father Reggie, sharing that Gloria Purvis’ discus-

sion gave him a new perspective and approach and inspired him to speak up in areas where he might not have before.

Father Reggie encouraged listeners to work with their pastors and show them the way that they wish to learn more about certain issues. “You are the Church, if you can get some people together and do it, that is a start,” he said.

Panelists discussed how important it is to make sure that parishioners of color feel welcome enough to continue coming to church. “The reality is that none of us own the Church, it’s God’s Church we are just temporary stewards of it, and we should be welcoming and let anyone in who wants to celebrate God. We contradict ourselves when we say our doors are open but want to

limit who comes through.”

“We need to make sure our parishes are places of acceptance and healing and preaching and teaching and all of those things,” said Donovan.

“The Church is not a sanctuary for Saints it is a hospital for sinners,” shared Father Reggie, explaining that that’s something we all need to work on recognizing as a Church.

Panelists discussed that the diocesan Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism is currently working on developing anti-racism training for diocesan staff as well as within the parishes, as well as plans for Black Catholic History Month in November.

(To watch all the webinars from the Conversations About Race series and for a growing list of resources visit [www.formatioreimagined.org](http://www.formatioreimagined.org).) ■

## Diocesan community gathers to pray Rosary

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

STAMFORD—A statue of Mary surrounded by candles was the focal point at the beautiful St. Mary Church in Stamford on Wednesday night, as members of our diocese gathered for a socially distanced Rosary prayer service for peace and unity in the community.

“This is an effort the ad hoc committee against racism called by Bishop Caggiano has put together,” explained Father Falla, pastor of St. Mary. “We will pray the rosary on this national day of prayer, which is a beautiful day for us to come together in our nation.”

“We pray especially for those who have been victims of racism and prejudice,” prayed Father Falla.

The Rosary was prayed in English, Italian, Hindi, French and Spanish.

“It is a special day for us as we remember St. Peter Claver... a great apostle in the church, who fought against injustice and reached out to people in need, especially those who were enslaved,” explained

Father Falla.

At the end of the service, priests that were in attendance gathered at the front of the church to bestow a final blessing on the community.

the National Day of Prayer for Peace.”

Weldon shares that members of the committee arrived at the idea for the Rosary because they wanted to take a



FATHER GUSTAVO FALLA, pastor of St. Mary Parish in Stamford

Kelly Weldon, director of Foundations in Faith and a member of the diocesan Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, explains that the idea for this event was sparked from a few members’ deep-dive into the USCCB’s document on racism. “The document suggests that all people doing the work of anti-racism consider holding an event on

deliberate step toward change in a way that was humble and prayerful. “We wanted to engage the community while asking Mary to guide us in our work,” says Weldon.

For those who were unable to attend, a live-stream was made available on the diocesan website, which can now be viewed on YouTube. ■

## EDITORIAL



CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONFERENCE  
134 FARMINGTON AVENUE  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105-3784

**“Respect Life Month” 2020  
and the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *The Gospel of Life***

One year ago, even before the unthinkable effects of the pandemic and the social unrest and division that we are now witnessing, a piece in the *New York Times* stated: “The world we live in now is one in which no place is safe, no lives really matter, when it comes to violence” (9/2/19). This statement was prompted by the tragedy of repeated mass shootings in our country. To this we must now add the outbreaks of random violence and the deaths that have prompted outrage and have called into question the level of force employed by law enforcement in some cases, especially with regard to people of color.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of *Evangelium vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*), written by Pope St. John Paul. He urged the world to uphold the sacred value and inviolability of human life rather than giving way to a culture of manipulation and choice in life matters, as evidenced in abortion, euthanasia, biological engineering, ecological destruction and unnecessary recourse to the death penalty. Violating the right to life, the Pope stated, only results in the destruction of values that are fundamental not only for the preservation of the lives of individuals and families, but of society as well. This message has been strongly echoed by Popes Benedict and Francis.

Amid all the ominous polarization, acrimony and even violence that are increasing in our country, we would do well to ponder Pope St. John Paul’s teaching. He said that respect for innocent human life from conception until natural death is a “transcendent truth” that surpasses any one religion, philosophy, law code or system of government. Religion can and should serve that truth, but it does not create it. If there is no God-given higher truth about the human person than the one we feel free to create, then everything degenerates into competing views of personhood and life itself; the “force of power” prevails, and the inalienable God-given meaning of the human person, and his or her dignity and right to life, are trampled.

Until recent times the religious beliefs of the vast majority of Americans did acknowledge the transcendent truth that all innocent human life is to be respected as inviolable. Indeed, the first thing that struck the French observer Alexis de Tocqueville about the United States in 1831 was its “religious atmosphere.” He wrote: “... while the law allows the American people to do everything, there are things which religion prevents them from imagining and forbids them to do.” Religion taught virtuous behavior, which is essential if liberty is to be ordered to the common good. By bringing a moral dimension to issues, religion also helped ensure that majority rule not deteriorate into an immoral tyranny. Religion in America also created an allegiance and devotion among its adherents that counteracted the tendency of government to swallow up all aspects of life.

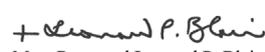
Today the withering away of respect for the transcendent truth about the right to life, and for traditional religious teaching about the sin and crime of taking innocent human life, has created what Pope St. John Paul called a “culture of death.” It is reflected in the words we cited from the *New York Times* that “the world we live in now is one in which no place is safe, no lives really matter, when it comes to violence.” In his new encyclical *Fratelli tutti* Pope Francis speaks of a “throwaway” world in which “persons are no longer seen as a paramount value to be cared for and respected” (n. 18). Hopefully the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Evangelium vitae* will be an inspiration for all people of good will to work for a “culture of life” that cherishes, serves, defends, and protects human life from conception until natural death.

Local pro-life leaders across the world are currently conducting an annual *40 Days for Life* campaign that runs through November 1. *Walking with Moms in Need* is a year of service where Catholic parishes and communities “walk in the shoes” of local pregnant and parenting women in need. And then there is *Project Rachel*, a network of caregivers, including clergy, mental health professionals and others who provide one-on-one care to those struggling after involvement in an abortion. The church continues to advocate strongly for hospice care for the dying, not death imposed by others or by suicide, and for an end to the death penalty because it is no longer needed to protect society.

For well over half a century the U.S. Bishops have spoken out nationally as a body about the evil of racism, most recently in 2018, calling yet again for Catholics and all Americans to take to heart in particular the lived experience—past and present—of African-Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans. Without equal respect and opportunity for the life and dignity of each and all we cannot hope to have a nation at peace with itself.

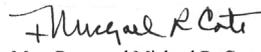
Likewise, Pope Francis has dramatically and urgently spoken of the plight of refugees, immigrants and all those who are vulnerable and at risk across the world. Our Church strives to uphold the life and dignity of every person by providing education, health care and works of charity on a large scale, and by advocating for economic justice, immigration reform, and the alleviation of the desperate plight of so many of the world’s migrants, near and far.

These are just some of the ways the Catholic Church is working to promote a gospel of life. We invite you to join us, so that, in the words of Pope St. John Paul, “together we may offer this world of ours new signs of hope, and work to ensure that justice and solidarity will increase and that a new culture of human life will be affirmed, for the building of an authentic civilization of truth and love.”

  
Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair  
Archbishop of Hartford

  
Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano  
Bishop of Bridgeport

  
Most Reverend Juan Miguel Betancourt, SEMV  
Auxiliary Bishop of Hartford

  
Most Reverend Michael R. Cote  
Bishop of Norwich

  
Most Reverend P. Paul Chomnycky  
Eparch of Stamford



## CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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

## PASTOR

REVEREND CYPRIAN LA PASTINA, from Pastor of Saint Mary Church, Greenwich, to Pastor, the Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist, Stamford. Effective date is January 31, 2021.

REVEREND MONSIGNOR STEPHEN M. DIGIOVANNI, from Pastor, the Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist, Stamford, to Pastor Emeritus. Effective date is January 31, 2021. Monsignor will continue to reside in the Basilica rectory.

## PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND JOSE MONTOYA, from St. Mary Parish, Stamford, to Parochial Vicar, St. Peter Parish, Bridgeport. Effective date was September 14.

## SABBATICAL

REVEREND SAMUEL SCOTT, will be on Sabbatical. Effective date is October 1, through November 30.

## RETIREMENT

REVEREND GERARD-FRANTZ DESRUISSEAU, to retirement. Effective date is October 1. Father Desruisseau will continue to minister to the Haitian Community and will reside at The Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of The Clergy Residence in Stamford.

MONSIGNOR FRANK MCGRATH, to retirement. Effective date is October 1. Father McGrath will continue to minister as Chaplain at the Ave

Maria School of Law in Naples, Florida.

## DEACONS

DEACON GUILLERMO BERNAL, from St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Bridgeport, to St. Joseph Parish, Shelton. Effective date was September 1.

## RESIDENCE

REVEREND FRANCIS T. HOFFMANN, from St. John Parish, Darien, to Church of the Assumption, Westport. Effective date was September 1.

REVEREND ALFRED RIENDEAU, to The Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of The Clergy Residence, Stamford. Effective date was September 18.

REVEREND COLIN BLATCHFORD, Associate Director at Courage International will reside at The Cathedral Parish (St. Augustine Rectory), Bridgeport. Effective date was September 8.

## DEANERY APPOINTMENTS AND RENEWALS

REVEREND PETER CIPRIANI, renewal of three-year term as the Dean of Queen Assumed into Heaven Deanery. Effective date was September 1.

REVEREND NICHOLAS CIRILLO, renewal of three-year term as the Dean of Our Lady, Queen of Confessors Deanery. Effective date was September 1.

REVEREND JOHN CONNAUGHTON, appointed as the Dean of Cause of Our Joy Deanery, for a term of

three years. Effective date was September 1.

REVEREND MICHAEL JONES, renewal of three-year term as the Dean of Mystical Rose Deanery. Effective date was September 1.

REVEREND MICHAEL NOVAJOSKY, renewal of three-year term as the Dean of Queen of Peace Deanery. Effective date was September 1.

REVEREND PAUL MURPHY, appointed as the Dean of Mother of Divine Grace Deanery for a term of three years. Effective date was September 1.

REVEREND MONSIGNOR KEVIN ROYAL, appointed as the Dean of Seat of Wisdom Deanery for a term of three years. Effective date was September 1.

REVEREND BOSE RAJA SELVARAJ, renewal of three-year term as the Dean of Mary, Mother of the Church Deanery. Effective date was September 1.

REVEREND MONSIGNOR ROBERT WEISS, appointed as the Dean of Queen of Martyrs Deanery for a term of three years. Effective date was September 1.

## DIOCESAN VOCATIONS TEAM

REVEREND ERIC SILVA, appointed as a member of Diocesan Vocations Team for a term of three years. Effective date was September 30.

*Reverend Francis T. Hoffmann  
Vicar for Clergy  
October, 2020*

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# Editorial



## What happens when we slow down?

### 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@diobpt.org.*

**T**he pandemic has forced us to slow down. For many, this has been a challenge, especially when we were still in a state of not knowing, unable to see family and friends, and unsure of what was to come.

Now that cases have gone down, we have slowly been able to gather in small groups again, especially outdoors. This has been a saving grace for many.

I don't want to down-play the seriousness of the pandemic,

and I recognize how fortunate I am not to have lost a loved one or a job or anything else of great importance to me. I feel grateful for that every day. I will say, though, having extra time to reflect and slow-down has truly been a blessing for me.

I have learned so much about what I truly value and what is important to me. I have learned that there were things in my life that were no longer serving me.

If I didn't have this time, I probably would have just kept

blindly going on without realizing that I was carrying things that I didn't need to anymore.

I feel like God tries to tell us these things in small ways, but when we are too busy, we tend not to notice His messages.

When we don't stop and listen and take stock of what we're feeling, we can get caught up in things that He didn't intend for us. Paths that He may not have cleared for us but that we forced our way through anyway.

I don't know what life post-pandemic is going to look like. I've gotten used to wearing a mask. I actually kind of enjoy it because it provides a convenient disguise when I'm running errands in sweatpants and don't want to be seen.

I've been able to take stock of where my priorities lie. The question of "do I really need to go there or do that thing?" or "is it worth risking my life or the life of a loved one for that par-

ticular activity?" have helped me cut my schedule down to what is more manageable for me, which makes me a lot happier in the long-run. Things that once required a drive and a meet-up can now just be a quick phone call or an e-mail, which leaves us all with so much more time to devote to meaningful connection (for all us, "that meeting could've easily been an email" folks, this is a welcome relief).

I know it's the introvert in me speaking (I'm sorry extroverts, I know this time is probably ten times more difficult for you! I hear you, I see you), but I just feel like this slower way of life is more suited to intentional living.

I don't think He wanted us to thrive in the rat race. I think He wanted us to live our lives with intention and purpose, taking stock regularly of whether what we are doing is serving Him or whether it's

just useless noise.

I turn to one of my favorite quotes from one of my favorite saints, St. Francis de Sales (the patron saint of writers and journalists, which explains why he is very near and dear to my heart). He writes, "Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset."

The whole world does seem upset. And some of that is for very good reason. And there is a time to engage in that, for sure. We have a duty as members of society and humans on this earth. But we can always return to our inner peace. We can find that grounding within ourselves and go back there when it all seems to be too much. Because only if we begin with the steadying of our own selves, can we then go out and make a difference in the world. ■



## How Father McGivney touched one family

### SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

**V**enerable Father Michael McGivney will be beatified during a special Mass October 31 at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford. Earlier this year, Pope Francis signed a decree that recognized a miracle through Father McGivney's intercession, allowing his beatification. Here is a story about how he touched one family.

Seven years ago, on August 14, the anniversary of the death of Venerable Father Michael McGivney, Phyllis Sullivan visited St. Thomas Church in Thomaston to pray to the priest who helped her family in their greatest need. It was the last parish the founder of the Knights

of Columbus served at before dying of pneumonia in 1890 at 38 years old.

Mrs. Sullivan believed her youngest son Dennis survived a massive heart attack because Father McGivney answered their prayers and interceded before the Throne of God.

For many years, as a gesture of gratitude, she tended the McGivney family grave at St. Joseph's Cemetery in Waterbury, where the priest's parents and his two brothers, who were priests in the Diocese of Bridgeport, are buried.

On October 29, 2006, Dennis, 41, went into cardiac arrest for 26 minutes after driving himself to Waterbury Hospital. Eighty per-

cent of his heart was damaged. The doctors counted him as lost and yet...

When Sister Veronica Mary of the Sisters of Life arrived at the hospital and saw her brother's condition, the thought came to her they should pray to Father McGivney. "I told my mother, 'We need to go to the tomb of Father McGivney and pray for a miracle.'"

Sister left the emergency room with her brothers John and Jim and drove to the Church of St. Mary in New Haven, where the priest's remains lie in a marble sarcophagus.

The group gathered around his tomb and prayed, begging Father McGivney to help save Dennis.

They stayed for noon Mass and when it ended, she was alone in the pew. "I prayed like I never prayed before," she recalled. "And then I heard it." It was a clear, distinct, unmistakable voice that said simply, "Tell me what I need to do."

She knew immediately it was Father McGivney, and Sister Veronica, a former nurse, gave him specific instructions about the medication, the insulin drip, the

stents and sugar levels. When she finished, the priest had left, and an amazing peace came over her.

"I sat up and thought, 'Dennis is going to be all right.'"

When they were returning to the hospital, they received a call from a friend, who said, "You got your miracle. There's no brain damage—he's going to be OK."

In the years that followed, Mrs. Sullivan visited the McGivney family grave. She planted flowers, she prayed, and she thanked Patrick and Mary McGivney, whose son had saved her son.

Dennis Sullivan died two years ago on July 1, twelve years after his miraculous recovery. At his funeral Mass, Father Jim Sullivan said, "Dennis' life was completed in a beautiful way with those additional 12 years."

During those 12 years, Dennis watched his daughter grow up, get accepted to college, pursue a career, and give him a grandson. He lived those 12 years to the fullest, in hope and in gratitude for the gift God had given him.

On that August 14, when Moira Sullivan Shapland took her mother to St. Thomas Church,

something special happened.

She, her daughters Erin, Hannah and Margaret, and Mrs. Sullivan walked into the empty church lit only by the light from the stained glass windows. They knelt in a pew near the altar and prayed.

"Out of the corner of my eye, I could see my mother turn her head toward the aisle," Moira recalls. "She kept looking and then nodded and turned to me and said, 'He seems so nice.'" The rest of them saw no one, but Mrs. Sullivan was smiling and staring at the altar.

A few moments later, she turned to Moira and repeated, "He seems so nice." Then, she told them about the young dark-haired priest who walked to the altar and genuflected, and as he was leaving, stopped at their pew and smiled at the women.

When they got to the car, Moira reached for her copy of "Parish Priest," the biography of Father McGivney, and showed her his picture and asked, "Is this who you saw?"

Mrs. Sullivan tapped the picture with her finger and said, "That's him!" ■



# Connecticut Catholic Men join the Knights of Columbus

Free on-line membership for the first year  
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To join or get more information, go to [kofc.org/joinus](http://kofc.org/joinus)  
Use promo code **MCGIVNEY2020** for this special promotion

*If you have any questions  
please email Jon Starr GA Western CT at [jon.starr@kofc.org](mailto:jon.starr@kofc.org)*

Annual membership fee is normally \$30



Scan the code  
and join today!



# Beatification of Father McGivney

## Answered prayers and miracles

By **JOE PISANI**

When Michelle Schachle went for a routine ultrasound on December 31, 2014, she and her husband Daniel learned their unborn son might have Down syndrome. The couple, who already had 12 children, saw it as a blessing for their family because they believed Down syndrome children give love and receive love in a special way.

In February, the couple from Dickson, Tennessee, returned for another ultrasound to learn that their unborn son was afflicted with a narrowing of the aorta and a fatal condition known as fetal hydrops, when excessive fluid causes swelling in the organs and tissues.

"The doctor sat us down and showed us the diagnosis and said there was zero hope of him surviving," they later recalled. "There really was no hope for him."

Their doctor also warned them that the condition could possibly lead to additional complications for the mother, so the hospital recommended an abortion.

"I was terrified of having a stillbirth; I would get sick and have 12 other children to take care of," Michelle said. "I did struggle with having a baby die inside of you. I was very afraid."

But the Schachles decided to take another path. They went home and told their family members, friends, home school community, and everyone who worked with Daniel, who is a general agent for the Knights of Columbus insurance program, urging them to pray to Venerable Father Michael J. McGivney, founder of the Knights. Father McGivney, whose cause for sainthood was before the Vatican, had been declared "Venerable Servant of God" on March 15, 2008, by Pope Benedict XVI who said his life displayed evidence of "heroic virtue."

The Schachles, who have a devotion to Father McGivney, had prayed for his canonization. Now, they sought his intercession. They needed a miracle for their 13th child ... so they prayed to the priest who was the eldest of 13 children born of Irish immigrants Patrick and Mary McGivney on August 12, 1852 in Waterbury.

To be declared "Blessed," which is an intermediate step

before canonization and a full declaration of sainthood, Father McGivney needed a miracle attributed to his intercession. At that time, the couple made the decision that if their son lived, they would name him Michael McGivney Schachle.

### Answered prayers over the years

Brian Caulfield of Wallingford has been vice postulator for Father McGivney's cause for sainthood since January 2012, and during that time he has examined hundreds of cases in which the founder of the Knights touched people's lives. Since Father McGivney's cause for sainthood began in 1997, Caulfield estimates there have been more than 1500 favors granted to individuals who prayed for his intercession — an alcoholic enters recovery, a marriage that seemed destined for divorce is saved, a woman whose cancer was considered terminal goes into remission, a man who was unemployed for years finds work.

After reviewing the reports of answered prayers from the last decade, Caulfield says there are four categories that predominate: recovery from addictions, family reconciliations, employment and a return to the Church.

"These are four things that were so important to him while he was a priest on Earth," Caulfield says. "We can believe that Father McGivney is answering the prayers of the faithful."

Many cases involve what he calls "moral miracles" in which a person's moral, psychological or spiritual lifestyle is significantly changed. The accounts are recorded on the website of the Father McGivney Guild, which has more than 170,000 members and oversees the cause for canonization.

"Father McGivney was at a stage of the canonization process in which a miracle attributed to his intercession was needed for him to be beatified, and another one is needed to be canonized a saint," Caulfield said. "The Vatican has very high standards for declaring some events miraculous and others not. What the Vatican is looking for in most cases is a physical healing that cannot be explained by medical science." He stresses that only God can perform a miracle, which is described as a suspension of the



THE MIRACLE OF LIFE—Daniel and Michelle Schachle and their five-year old son Michael McGivney Schachle

created natural order.

As part of the process, a proposed miracle is brought to the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints, which "considers almost exclusively extraordinary physical healings and recoveries since those incidents usually have verifiable facts such as medical tests and records as well as objective and widely accepted measurements for diagnosing a serious condition and declaring a person healed," Caulfield said.

In addition, there must be evidence that people prayed exclusively to Father McGivney, although additional prayers to the Blessed Mother are allowed.

"If there is a general sense that there is no apparent medical explanation for the healing and that Father McGivney was exclusively invoked, then the evidence will go to the cause's postulator in Rome," he said. If the case is strong, a diocesan tribunal is formed where the miracle occurred to gather testimony and documentation before deciding whether to refer the case to the Vatican, whose experts review the material and then determine whether to send it to a board of cardinals and the Pope for final approval. Two possible miracles that had been investigated by the Vatican were not approved.

The process is long and meticulous, Caulfield says, because "the Church does not want to declare any event miraculous that may later be called into question."

### A miracle for an unborn child

In March 2015, Daniel and Michelle went on a pilgrimage with members of the Knights of Columbus to Europe. The group visited Rome, Lourdes and Fatima, praying the rosary daily with other Knights and Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson.

During the Mass at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal, the Gospel reading from St. John told of the Roman official who came to Jesus and asked him to cure his child who was dying, Caulfield said.

"And the second they heard the words of Jesus, 'Go, your son will live,' Michelle felt as if a veil had been lifted," he said. "She felt something had changed inside of her. After they returned home, she went for an ultrasound, and when the doctor walked in and saw the ultrasound, she said, 'It looks like a very beautiful baby. You should be proud.'"

When the parents asked about the fetal hydrops, the doctor called a colleague to look, but neither of them could detect any fluid buildup.

"This is the miracle we've been praying for," Michelle said.

Michael McGivney Schachle was born more than two months premature on May 15, 2015 and weighed only three pounds. He had surgery for his heart condition and stayed in the hospital 71 days. Six months later, he was hospitalized with a respiratory illness and

almost died.

Now 5 years old, Mickey, as his family calls him, is home-schooled and loved by his parents and 12 siblings.

### Approving a miracle

When Brian Caulfield contacted the family and was able to examine the medical records, one thing stood out: "There was absolutely no medical intervention. Both doctors had said regretfully that this child will die and presented abortion as a merciful thing."

The first time Caulfield met the Schachles, he said to them: "We know you prayed and the child was healed, but he was only healed of the fetal hydrops. What would you say if someone asked you why wasn't he healed of the other two conditions?"

Daniel and Michelle looked at him in disbelief, Caulfield recalls, and said, "We never prayed that the Down syndrome or the heart would be healed because they weren't fatal."

"That is faith," Caulfield said. "They were willing to accept a Down syndrome child as a blessing. So many of these children are aborted because, unfortunately, they are not welcome. I hope this can be a great example for the Down syndrome child that a family would sacrifice anything to keep him."

For nine years, Caulfield has been vice postulator for Father McGivney's cause. At least once a week, he visits his tomb at the Church of St. Mary in New Haven and sees people praying there.

"In my own life, I have come to see him as a real friend, one who walks with me," he says. "It is a great honor to be involved in this kind of proceeding. It strengthened my faith to see that miracles really do happen. People are looking for miracles in their lives to rise above their daily troubles and tribulations, and this is a beacon of hope for them. The Schachle family are people of such strong faith. With 13 children, there can be a lot of messiness in life, but Daniel and Michelle are two people in love who staked their lives on their faith, and I hope they will become a source of inspiration for families wherever the Knights of Columbus are known."

(For more information about Father McGivney or to become a member of the Guild, which is free, go to [fathermcgivney.org](http://fathermcgivney.org))

# Blessed Father Michael McGivney

## An uncle watches over his family from eternity

By **JOE PISANI**

On April 9, 2018, John Walshe was rushed to the emergency room after complications from hernia surgery. He was bleeding internally and suffering from what he says was “the worst pain I ever felt in my life.”

As they assessed his condition, his wife Kay overheard the doctors say, “I don’t think this guy is going to make it. He lost a lot of blood.” During that time, he went in and out of an induced coma and had to be resuscitated three times.

For most of his life, John prayed for others but never himself. However, this time he knew he needed help so he prayed to his great grand-uncle, Father Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights of

Columbus, who will be beatified on October 31.

“It was the first time I prayed for myself,” John recalled. “I said, ‘Father Mike, you gotta get me out of this...please. Do me a favor.’”

Several days later, when he woke up in his hospital bed at St. Vincent Medical Center, a priest visiting St. Vincent’s was praying beside him. And standing alongside the priest by his bed, John said “I saw Father Mike in his clerical garb.” Clear as day.

“After the priest finished praying, he left the room and so did Father Mike.”

After several weeks in the hospital, John recovered from the ordeal, and today he looks back on his encounter with Father McGivney as one of many answered prayers he has heard about through the intercession of



**ANSWERED PRAYERS**—John Walshe of Bridgeport, great grand-nephew of Blessed Father Michael McGivney, prayed to his saintly uncle to ask for help after he was struggling from a surgery. It was the first time he had prayed to his uncle for himself and his prayers were answered.

heard about since he was a child.

John and his wife Kay of 26 years have two sons, Jake and Hugh, and live in Bridgeport in what he calls his parents’ “honey-moon home,” which was given to them by his mother’s family. For 40 years he had a law office in New York City. He worked for several different firms before starting his own, proudly noting that out of 150 cases he tried, he lost three—and those are the ones he remembers most.

A member of the first graduating class of St. Peter’s Catholic Elementary School, he went on to Fairfield Prep, Sacred Heart University and New York University School of Law. However, one of his fondest learning experiences was under the tutelage of his grand-uncle, Msgr. Leo Michael Finn, pastor of St. Peter’s, who taught him how to drive. And it was during those driving lessons along with country roads of Redding that John learned all about the man his family fondly refers to as “Father Mike.”

“I was about to turn 16 and I could get a driver’s license, so Father Leo used to take me out driving,” John recalls. “And while we were going through the country, he told me stories about the family and the Knights of Columbus and his three uncles who taught him how to be a priest. Those stories have stayed with me all my life.”

The “three priests” who mentored Father Leo as a young priest were none other than the McGivney brothers, Michael, Pat and John—the last two were pastors at St. Charles Church in Bridgeport and became Supreme Chaplains of the Knights of Columbus.

John also learned about Father Michael McGivney’s assignment as curate at the Church of St. Mary in New Haven, where he started the Knights of Columbus to help immigrant families and provide a Catholic fraternal organization so the men of the parish would not be attracted to street gangs.

“Father Mike’s pastor was sick and bedridden, so he had the job of running the parish,” John said. “While he was at St. Mary’s, he organized parish picnics and

▶ **CONTINUED ON PAGE 21**



## ST JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL

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#### Fall Open House

Sunday, October 25  
sjcadets.org/openhouse

#### 2-Day Entrance Exam Prep Course:

Friday, October 16 & Saturday, October 17

#### Entrance Exam (One-time test):

Saturdays: October 31 or November 14

#### Application Deadline

Monday, November 17

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his great grand-uncle.

As a Fourth Degree Knight who has been a member of the worldwide organization for more than 55 years, John often attends conventions and comes face to face with people who attributed a favor in their life to Father McGivney.

“Somebody would come up to me and say, ‘I had cancer and was given six months to live so I prayed to your uncle...and that was ten years ago,’” John said. He also recalled going to a funeral for a former state deputy of the Knights and hearing people say Father McGivney had appeared to the man during his last moments on Earth.

“I certainly was not the only guy to have an appearance from our hopefully future saint,” John said.

Brian Caulfield, vice postulator for Father McGivney’s cause for sainthood, estimates that since 1997 there have been more than 1500 favors granted to individuals who prayed to the priest. They take many forms: a troubled marriage is saved, a chronic alcoholic gets sober, a man unemployed for years finds work, and a person whose cancer is considered terminal goes into remission.

Over the years, John heard many of the stories, and two years ago he experienced it himself when he saw the man he had

# Veritas Radio

## Amplify: a radio show by teens and for teens

By JOE PISANI

When Grace Lannigan was confirmed, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano spoke at the reception and delivered a message that changed her life...and led her to begin a project that will hopefully change a lot of other young lives.

"His message was that your faith is a personal choice and from now on, it's your decision to pursue your faith further," Grace, 17, recalled. "I was sitting there thinking, 'How can I do this?'"

And then, Grace got her answer. She, her younger sister Ava and their mother Karen, had heard about Veritas Catholic Network, the EWTN affiliate, and realized what a great medium it would be to reach young people.

"We wanted to do a show led by teens and for teens—kids our age," she said, "The goal was to reach the younger generation of Catholics. Many of them are leaving the faith because they feel their voices aren't heard. We wanted to provide a platform for them."

Out of those simple beginnings came Amplify, a radio show with the slogan, "Live your faith," which will be launched on WNLK-AM 1350 this fall. Teenagers will discuss issues relevant to teens in the hope of leading them to a closer relationship with Christ and the Church. Amplify was made possible through a Youth in Action grant from Foundations in Faith, which is supported by the We Stand With Christ capital campaign. The Lannigan sisters applied for the grant under the sponsorship of Cardinal Kung Academy.

Ava, 14, said there is a need for the teen voice to be heard: "I realized that after Confirmation, a lot of kids were leaving because they didn't see how their faith applied to their lives. We will discuss common topics that all teens struggle with and how they relate to faith."

One show is about friendships, which Ava said are "Sometimes confusing and complicated so we try to bring an element of our faith into them to make sure they are good and wholesome friendships that last."

Why the name "Amplify"? "We loved that word," Ava said. "We want to amplify our faith to make it bigger, larger and better known."

The Lannigan sisters, who attend Cardinal Kung Academy in Stamford, will be joined by classmate Gabrielle Nagle and Shane Miller of Trumbull High School. Grace will moderate the discussions and Father Sam S. Kachuba, pastor of St. Pius X Parish in Fairfield and chaplain of Veritas, will guide the conversation.

Steve Lee, president and CEO of Veritas, said, "Young people are leaving the Church because they say they can't relate to it, and these students want to reach out to their peers and show them they are normal kids who like the same things...and follow Christ."

Karen Lannigan, who serves as adult mentor for the project, said parents have a large stake in their children's faith journey in a secular society. She and her husband Peter recognize the challenges the world presents and how critical it is for their children to have a grounding in the Catholic faith.

"Our culture often collides with our faith," she said. "At their age, what they have to say really does matter, and oftentimes as adults, we forget that. I love mentoring them as they explore their faith and grow in it."

When the girls approached their classmates, a dozen teens expressed interest in working on the project.

The hour-long shows, which will be prerecorded and air on Veritas, are broken into 15-minute segments that will be turned into podcasts and made available at VeritasCatholic.com, CardinalKungAcademy.org and Amplify's soon-to-be-launched site, AmplifyCatholic.com.

Grace said topics come from the teens collectively as they dialogue and develop key points for discussion. They meet with Father Kachuba, who offers a theological perspective and guides the conversation. He looks at the outline they have prepared and offers suggestions on, say, issues like reconciliation and friendship.

"We started the project in January, and the teens stayed

engaged even during the quarantine when we had Zoom meetings to talk about the topics," Grace said. "We develop the content, and as moderator I prepare questions but don't share them with the kids. Having them not know the questions leads to a more creative and authentic discussion. Father Sam takes it to the next level, and having that theological overlay is really essential."

Grace added, "A lot of young people don't understand how much the Catholic faith relates to all aspects of your life, and if you don't have it as a foundation, life is tough. High school can be hard. We really want to provide a solid foundation."

Ava said that during her Sacred Scripture class with Father Joseph Gill, there are always discussions about life.

"It is mainly an open discussion among kids, where we talk and learn about our faith, which is a similar idea to the radio show," she said. "All the different questions that we have, whether they are related to our faith or not, can help us learn more about how to solve our problems."

Their mother Karen said that another component of the Amplify project is to bring the teens' on-air presence into the community at, even like Fan the Fire.

"The girls hope that Amplify becomes a way for teens to grow in their faith and by doing so gives them the opportunity to introduce one another to Jesus, and to invite him into their lives in a real and personal way in a similar way they would introduce one another to a new friend," Karen said.

Other students from Cardinal Kung Academy assist in marketing and content development include Elizabeth Lancaster, August Berchelman, Max Miriam, Emma Anderson, MaryGrace Logsdail, Johnny Anderson, Emma Lekovic, Jude McLoughlin and Adriel Lekovic.

The Lannigans expressed their appreciation to Steve Lee of Veritas and others who made the project possible, including



YOUTH RADIO—Father Sam Kachuba, Pastor of St. Pius X Parish and Chaplain of Veritas Radio, meets with the young producers of "Amplify," a program by and for teens.

Barbara Logsdail and Janet Lancaster of Cardinal Kung Academy, which sponsored the application for the Youth in Action grant from Foundations in Faith.

Kelly Weldon, director of Foundations in Faith, praised the Amplify project and said,

"They wanted to develop a radio show by teens and for teens, and that was the whole crux of the Youth in Action grants—young people would design something they think would engage young people and get them excited about learning about their faith. They came up with the format for the show and they all had some say in the topics."

Weldon said that last fall, Bishop Caggiano asked the foundation to create Youth in Action grants to help engage high school students. Diocesan groups and

high schools are encouraged to apply for them. Their proposed projects must last a year and have components of evangelization, missionary work and a collaborative effort.

Weldon said the board has approved \$15,000 to be distributed this year and applications for grants will be available in early October. For further information, go to [www.foundationsinfaith.org](http://www.foundationsinfaith.org) and the Youth in Action tab.

Karen Lannigan said she hopes Amplify can help teenagers navigate the challenges they face in a secular society.

"When they are young, you really do have your hands on the steering wheel and you wield so much influence, but as the teen years approach, there are so many things that impact who they are and who they become," she said. ■

### Are you one of the over 14,500 donors to the We Stand With Christ campaign?

Well here's what you need to know...

- **WHERE ARE WE NOW?** 70 parishes have completed their We Stand With Christ capital campaigns. Nine additional parishes to complete their campaigns in 2020.
- **DISTRIBUTIONS?** \$21.4 million of capital campaign contributions have been distributed to parishes and the three foundations to date as approved by the We Stand With Christ Board of Directors.
- **HOW CAN YOU HELP?** Choose to fulfill your pledge online to save the costs of mailed remittances. Payments via credit card and direct debit can be made by visiting [www.GiveCentral.org/WSWC](http://www.GiveCentral.org/WSWC).
- **WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON?** The Annual Catholic Appeal, which was included in the first year of each parish's capital campaign, has begun for 2020. The goals for the parishes have been lowered this year based on the success of the campaign. Thank you for your continued support!
- **QUESTIONS?** We want to hear from you with any concerns or issues you are experiencing. Contact the campaign at 203.648.9050 or at [Campaign@WeStandWithChrist.org](mailto:Campaign@WeStandWithChrist.org).

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to this campaign and the many wonderful programs and projects that will benefit from your support!

# Catholic Schools

## Catholic Schools develop Online Catholic Academy

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—To accommodate all students during the coronavirus pandemic, Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools has established an Online Catholic Academy for students who wish to continue distance learning for the new school year.

Current students who are unable to immediately return to school in the fall or those who need to temporarily move to distance learning while their classmates are attending in-person classes will continue to receive some instruction (live and/or recorded) from their teachers as part of their school and class communities.

“The Online Catholic Academy, our remote learning program, is an extension of the Personalized Learning Initiative, explains Stacy Clements, director

of distance and blended learning and lead personalized learning coach. “It allows students to benefit from individualized and small group instruction and be members of their school communities while they are unable to be physically present in school.”

Students who are receiving at-home instruction will be assigned a diocesan learning support teacher who will coordinate the child’s education needs with the school and the parent as well as provide academic support.

Temporary and extended at-home instruction is arranged through the school principal and is coordinated at the diocesan level.

Students will continue to be part of their class and school community class and school community. While each student’s distance learning plan is personalized through conversations with the principal and diocesan distance

learning staff, students will generally receive instruction, assignments, and feedback from their classroom teacher(s) who will:

- Use an online Learning Management System (LMS) such as Google Classroom or Seesaw as directed by school leader to plan and share lessons and communicate with students and families
  - Engage students learning at home at least four days each week with instruction through live streamed or recorded mini lessons, and curated video resources (ex. Khan academy, Brainpop, Ted talks)
  - Assign and provide feedback and grades on work and assignments
  - Communicate in advance, a schedule of topics, sessions (if recording live) and assignments
- Students will be assigned



a Distance Learning Support Teacher who will provide small-group instruction and support while they are learning from home. Distance Learning Support Teachers will:

- Provide 1-1 or small group, grade level appropriate instruction twice per week for students on caseload
- Pre K- Focus on literacy and social skills
- K/1- Focus on literacy
- 2-5- Focus on Math and ELA
- Middle School- Focus on Math & ELA and provide opportunity for students to receive support in other core subjects
- Coordinate with classroom teachers to join classroom teachers’ LMS and stay abreast of upcoming assignments

• Make regular contact with students and families  
The student experience is tailored to each grade-level, to ensure that instruction will meet the needs of each individual learner.

Stacy and her team of teachers are dedicated to being sure the student experience is tailored to each grade-level to ensure that instruction will meet the needs of each individual learner. “I am so grateful for Stacy, and all the teachers, for their herculean efforts to meet the needs of our students and families, said Dr. Steven Cheeseman, superintendent of schools. This is a huge undertaking that requires flexibility and organization and is a true testament to the mission driven zeal that inspires our teachers.” ■

## Diocesan schools offer telehealth program

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—MyCatholicDoctor has recently partnered with the Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools to provide school telehealth services. As Catholic schools begin to re-open in the era of COVID-19, MyCatholicDoctor can provide the medical expertise and support that schools need to keep students and faculty safe and prevent the spread of illness.

“It was important for us to offer an extra layer of support for our families, students and teachers during these challenging times, said Dr. Steven Cheeseman, superintendent of schools. “This partnership offers additional comfort to our communities, in a time when we all need it most.”

MyCatholicDoctor is a nationwide telehealth service that brings a network of faithful medical professionals to patients through video-based health consultation on almost any smartphone, computer or

tablet.

“There are approximately 7,000 Catholic school students in the program that represent 27 Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic schools plus one independent Catholic school,” said Dr. Kathleen Berchelmann of MyCatholicDoctor. “We are also in conversation with other independent Catholic schools about joining the program,” she said.

MyCatholicDoctor made it a priority to find a way to support schools and provide medical expertise to keep students and faculty safe and prevent the spread of illness during the era of COVID-19. Services were made available to Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools beginning on August 27.

“Most of our patients come to us with concerns about COVID-19,” explained Dr. Berchelmann. “We also see patients with allergies, orthopedic injuries, ear pain and much more.”

The team of faithful healthcare professionals provide comprehensive pediatric examinations and treatment, using state-of-the-art



KATHLEEN BERCHELMANN, M.D.

equipment, including a virtual care stethoscope to listen to heart and lung sounds, and a video otoscope to look at ears and throat. Pediatricians can: order lab tests at Quest Diagnostics or your lab of choice; order x-rays and other imaging studies at your local imaging center or hospital; prescribe medications to your pharmacy of choice; fax a copy of the medical record to child’s primary care pediatrician

“School staff appropriately

take every precaution to keep contagious kids out of school,” Dr. Berchelmann explained. “But often times children with seasonal allergies or other non-contagious conditions are sent home. We are committed to supporting the school to help make these decisions about which children are contagious and which can stay in school.”

Dr. Berchelmann stated that MyCatholicDoctor physicians are committed to helping students stay connected with their primary care physicians. Doctors fax a copy of their medical record to the primary care physician (with parental consent). They also recommend that the student follow up with their primary care physician. “This is in contrast to many urgent care centers and other telehealth services that are not trying to promote primary care and the concept of a medical home,” said Dr. Berchelmann.

This is an opt-in program. If a family is interested, it is essential that they register their child at the link below. Providers ask that interested parties please take

a few minutes to provide the necessary information needed. By registering through the link below, patients and families will have access to all MyCatholicDoctor services, both in-school and at home during non-school hours.

Providers will ask for a student(s) name and birth date, as well as parent/guardian name, contact and health insurance information. This information is stored in their secure electronic health record (EHR) system and only used by MyCatholicDoctor for student care.

*(MyCatholicDoctor telehealth services are open to the public and can be used 24 hours a day. We provide diverse medical service offerings from conception until natural death. Please read our website for more information at [mycatholicdoctor.com](http://mycatholicdoctor.com). To register for the program visit [mycatholicdoctor.com/school-registration](http://mycatholicdoctor.com/school-registration). If you would like to help underwrite this wonderful program, please contact the Development Office at 203.416.1470.)* ■

# Foundations News

## Foundations invites educators to apply for grants

BRIDGEPORT—Foundations in Education is pleased to announce that applications to the Innovation and Leadership Grants Program opened September 15, 2020.

The grants program promotes excellence in Catholic education by supporting teachers' creative



HOLLY DOHERTY-LEMOINE

projects and professional development. Grants funded through this program are for transformative initiatives that may benefit multiple grade levels and have a long-term impact on student learning.

Now in its 4th year, this competitive program was the first of its kind in the diocese to offer innovation and leadership grants to teachers and administrators.

To date, Foundations in Education has funded 71 transformative grants totaling \$367,500.

Educators within the Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools are encouraged to submit grant proposals from September 15-October 31, 2020.

A grants committee carefully reviews each proposal and submits recommendations to Foundations' Board of Trustees for approval. The committee is led by Dr. Julie McNamara, president emerita of Albertus Magnus College and foundations' board member.

"It was heartening to see the unintended, but very positive consequences of several of our grants this past year was aiding students and teachers in the transition to remote learning," shared Foundations in Education Executive Director Holly Doherty-Lemoine. "All Saints, for example reported their students were able to transition to

distance learning rather smoothly, thanks to their grant," Holly added.

Craig Pucci 's Innovation Grant last year allowed 8th-graders at Catholic Academy of Stamford to take two new computer science classes: 1) Computer Science for Innovators and 2) Makers and App Creators. Students learned how to build apps for use in portable devices and program physical computing devices that address authentic real world activities and problems.

"Fortunately, both of these classes continued while we engaged in distance learning with little modification," shared Pucci. "Students were able to continue to work through various programming activities and tested them using online emulators."



"We anticipate applications will look different this year," commented Committee Chair Dr.

Julie McNamara. "With the fluidity of our current environment, the actual experiences of remote

teaching last spring and the flexibility and creativity needed to deliver lessons across platforms, we believe teachers will have some very creative ideas born from their new experience," she added. "We are eager to see the innovative and inspiring ideas they present for this round of grants."

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

(To find out more, visit [www.foundationsineducation.org](http://www.foundationsineducation.org).)

## John Paul II Youth in Action Grants 2021

BRIDGEPORT—Foundations in Faith has announced it is accepting applications for the second year of its popular St. John Paul II "Youth in Action Grants."

"We have expanded our reach based upon the tremendous success of the first-year projects and the enthusiasm of young people throughout our diocese," said Kelly Weldon, director of Foundations in Faith.

"Project ideas are by youth and for youth to enhance their Catholic faith formation experiences," said Weldon, "We invite Catholic youth and young adults to apply for this innovative opportunity to deepen their faith and share the Good News with others."

Weldon said project design should incorporate two or three elements including evangelization, collaboration, and justice and equity initiatives to dismantle discrimination.

The 2021 grant application is now live. All applications must be submitted online

and by November 13th, 2020.

- The grants are open to young Catholics in the Diocese of Bridgeport representing: 1) Catholic High Schools 2) Parish high school youth groups and 3) young adult (ages 20-35) Catholic youth groups working with a diocesan priest or a sponsoring parish
  - Each project can apply for up to \$5,000 in funding.
  - The projects that receive grant funding will run from January-December 2021
- Youth in Action Application Youth in Action Budget template

### BY YOUTH FOR YOUTH

JPII 2021 Youth in Action grant applications are live!  
Submissions due November 13th.

Funded projects will include two of these elements:

- Collaboration
- Evangelization
- Justice & Equity

View Only- Youth in Action Application (Applications must be submitted online. No hard copy or print outs of the "view only application" will be accepted.)

A dedicated group of volunteers on the Foundations in Faith

grant committee will review grant requests and make recommendations for funding to the board of trustees in early December.

(Please contact Kelly Weldon at [kelly.weldon@diobpt.org](mailto:kelly.weldon@diobpt.org) for further information.)



# Leadership Institute

## Caring for Creation:

# How can you heed the call?

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

*Laudato si: On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment was released in June of 2015.

In this encyclical, Pope Francis addressed to "every person living on this planet" for an inclusive dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. Pope Francis calls the Church and the world to acknowledge the urgency of our environmental challenges and to join him in embarking on a new path. "This encyclical is written with both hope and resolve, looking to our common future with candor and humility," says the USCCB.

On this fifth anniversary of *Laudato si*, one might be asking what he or she can do to uphold Pope Francis' call.

The Leadership Institute of the Diocese of Bridgeport has created a webpage called "Care for Creation" full of resources to help the faithful heed the call. Beginning with a prayer, the Institute offers a downloadable version of St. Francis of Assisi's Canticle of Creation, to be distributed in class, at a parish meeting or even posted at home.

Those visiting the site can then watch a video primer on *Laudato si*. In the video, Dr. Carolyn Woo, the former president of Catholic Relief Services, offers an overview of *Laudato si*, complete with explanations of climate change and why urgent action is necessary. Catholic Relief Services' mission is to carry out the commitment of the bishops of the United States to assist the poor and vulnerable overseas. It is motivated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to cherish, preserve and uphold the sacredness and dignity of all human life, foster charity, and justice, and embody Catholic social and moral teaching.

Wondering what you can do in your parishes, schools and families to take up Pope Francis' challenge to care for creation? The Leadership Institute's Care for Creation webpage offers different ideas:

**Take Stock:** Conduct an inventory of how well your ministry encourages people to care

for God's creation: Do you incorporate praying for creation? Are there opportunities to learn about the Church's teaching on the environment? Do you recycle? Do your events use more resources—including food or disposable products—than they need to? Based on your inventory, come up with at least one, practical way you can strengthen this.

**Ditch the Bottle:** Is your parish, school, or family still using plastic water bottles? Did you know that 3 liters of water is used to package 1 bottle of water? Plastic water bottles are petroleum-based. In the U.S. alone, it takes 1.5 million barrels of oil to meet the demands. An estimated 1,500 plastic bottles end up as waste in landfills or thrown in the ocean every second. Don't let your bottles contribute to this waste.

**Reduce. Reuse. Recycle:** Are there clothes, plastics, paper, or cardboard at your home, school, or place of work that could be reused or recycled? The U.S. recycling rate is around 34.5%. If we're able to get the rate to 75%, the effect will be like removing 50 million passenger cars from U.S. roads. More than 11 million tons of recyclable clothing, shoes and textiles make their way into landfills each year.

**Create a Green Team:** With the blessing of your pastor and/or principal, consider proposing a "green team" to your pastoral and finance councils. This team would evaluate parish-wide environmental costs and opportunities—like overall energy usage,

recycling, having a community garden, going solar, and participating in community clean-ups. Help your community be more mindful about its carbon footprint and how to show care for our common home.

**Save Energy At Home:** Swap out incandescent light bulbs with LED or compact fluorescent light bulbs. Old fashioned light bulbs waste tons of energy, and actually give off more heat energy than light. Install a programmable thermostat that limits when the heating or air conditioning comes on. Put inside lights on timers and outside lights on motion sensors. Replace old appliances with Energy Star appliances. Insulate your home!

**Compost Your Scraps:** Rather than toss corn cobs, banana and potato peels, apple cores and those moldy leftovers into the garbage destined for the landfill compost them. The section on landscaping provides resources on how to get started. Homemade compost can be used to fertilize plants, save money on potting soil, and reduce trips to the retail gardening center.

To help you learn more about how you and your parish, school and family can help care for the gift of creation, The Leadership Institute has searched high and low for the best resources it could find. Each clickable link takes you to the website it suggests so you can learn more.

(For more information visit: [formationreimagined.org/care-for-creation](http://formationreimagined.org/care-for-creation).)

# Institute offers online resources on Pope's new encyclical

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—On the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis signed his third encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*, meaning "Brothers and Sisters All." The encyclical asks for recognition of the dignity of each person, in order to build a more just world. The pope compiles and categorizes the main proposals of the social discourses of his pontificate, in Rome and during his trips.

The Leadership Institute has compiled a plethora of resources on the new encyclical from summaries to overviews and commentary.

"Fraternity and social friendship are the ways the Pontiff indicates to build a better, more just and peaceful world, with the contribution of all: people and institutions. With an emphatic confirmation of a 'no' to war and to globalized indifference," writes Isabella Piro, Vatican News.

The main question that *Fratelli tutti* is intended to answer is: What are the great ideals but also the tangible ways to advance for those who wish to build a more just and fraternal world in their ordinary relationships, in social life, politics and institutions?

The Pope describes it as a "Social Encyclical" (6) which borrows the title of the "Admonitions" of Saint Francis of Assisi, who used these words to "address his brothers and sisters and proposed to them a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel" (par 1). The Encyclical aims to promote a universal aspiration toward fraternity and social friendship. In the background of the Encyclical is the COVID-19 pandemic which, Francis reveals, "unexpectedly erupted" as he "was writing this letter". But the global health emergency has helped demonstrate that "no one can face life in isolation" and that the time has truly come to "dream, then, as a single human family" in which we are "brothers and sisters all" (par 8).

"The 287-paragraph document is a brisk walking-tour of Pope Francis' social teaching and well worth a read," writes Brendan Gotschall, SJ of The Jesuit Post. "In this time of social distancing, the Holy Father reminds us that we ought to love our brothers and sisters as much when they are far away as we are with them."

(To access resources available on *Fratelli Tutti*, visit *The Leadership Institute's* website at: [www.formationreimagined.org/fratelli-tutti](http://www.formationreimagined.org/fratelli-tutti).)

# Virtual family Rosary continues!

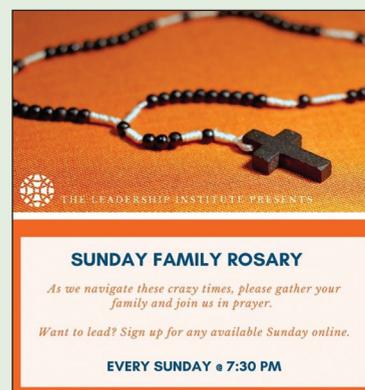
By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—When the pandemic began, The Leadership Institute started hosting virtual prayers as a diocesan family. "Several hundred families continued to gather throughout the summer and were disappointed when we wrapped up our Summer Rosary series," says Patrick Donovan, director of The

Leadership Institute. "This served as a nice compliment to the many wonderful prayer opportunities our parishes were offering."

Based on the feedback, The Leadership Institute is set to launch the Sunday Family Rosary beginning in October 2020 and continuing every Sunday at 7:30 pm. Parishes and schools will be asked to invite one family to lead.

Families who wish to sign



up to lead are invited to visit [www.formationreimagined.org](http://www.formationreimagined.org) and click the praying hands image at the top of the screen. Once they sign up, families will receive a confirmation email with complete details.

No registration is necessary for families who simply wish to join in prayer each week at 7:30 pm.

(For any questions please email [Rosary@diobpt.org](mailto:Rosary@diobpt.org).)

# Order of Malta

## Malta partners with parishes for food drives

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

FAIRFIELD COUNTY—”At a time when not everybody from our parishes are able to come together to worship, these food drives are building community outside,” said Cece Donoghue, co-chair of the Order of Malta with husband Mike, who recently partnered with parish volunteers and Malta volunteers to organize three food drives in parishes around the diocese.

The food drives benefited The Thomas Merton Center in Bridgeport, Blessed Sacrament Parish in Bridgeport and New Covenant Center in Stamford.

At a time when need has quadrupled, Donoghue explained just how important these food drives can be. The parishes that participated, St. Catherine/St Agnes in Greenwich, St. John in Darien and St. Lawrence in Shelton, raised an incredible amount of food donations for our Catholic charities in need.

On-hand to help were Father Bill Plat, pastor of St. Catherine/St. Agnes and a chaplain of the Order of Malta, Father Frank Hoffman, pastor of St. John’s and Father Michael Jones, ChM, pastor of St. Lawrence and chaplain of the Order of Malta and Deacon Frank Masso of St. Lawrence.

“In a world where we are increasingly being told that situations are beyond our control, that there is nothing we can do about them, it is life-giving and faith-sustaining to still be able to do something,” shared Father Joseph J. Karcsinski (Father Skip), pastor of Blessed Sacrament in Bridgeport.

Volunteers came from around the diocese to lend a hand. Donoghue shared that shared that Father Ian Jeremiah another chaplain for the Order of Malta came from a neighboring parish in Greenwich to help unload donations. “It is truly a heartwarming community effort,” she said.

Those who wished to donate were able to stay in their cars and pop their trunks, as volunteers were on hand for a quick and seamless unloading of donations.

Donoghue explained that the

Order of Malta, a Catholic lay religious Order, whose mission is to care for the poor and the sick and give witness to the faith, wishes to encourage other parishes to partner with them and host a drive-through food drive. “We do all the logistics,” she said. “We only need about ten volunteers from the parish to help us!”

The Connecticut area of the Order of Malta has enjoyed a longtime, collaborative relationship with Thomas Merton Center, New Covenant Center and Blessed Sacrament, working with them for years to help provide much needed resources for their programs. Historically, in Conn., the Order of Malta is a working order, doing hands-on work in the diocese, helping those in need and partnering with agencies such as Catholic Charities of Fairfield County.

“There are parishes in need that we don’t know about and possibly who don’t know about us,” Donoghue explained, expressing the Order’s desire for those parishes to reach out for their help. “If there is a parish in need of food resources we want them to be able to reach out to the Order of Malta. No one in our diocese should be going hungry.”

Donoghue explained that New Covenant Center and

The Thomas Merton Center, both programs run by Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, are serving three and four times the amount of people they served pre-pandemic. Together, both feeding ministries combined are providing approximately 1,200 meals a day, up from 300 meals a day at this time last year. Some of these meals are delivered to clients of other local non-profits, including homeless shelters who don’t have food resources. The people being served are hourly workers who have recently lost jobs, immigrants, homeless or mentally ill individuals struggling to make ends meet. Donoghue explained that it is even more important for us to support these charities at this time. “There’s a lot we can accomplish while working together,” she said.

Donoghue explained the “domino effect” of the food drives. “At a time when we are forced to be apart; having these drive-through food drives allows us to be together, while following all social distancing protocols,” she said. “Not only did the people who are food insecure benefit from these food drives but friendships were forged between members of different parishes. People of the diocese who were strangers worked together to serve others



MALTA VOLUNTEERS help to feed the hungry

in our community, especially those who are most vulnerable, with the love and respect they deserve.”

She shared that an outdoor, socially distant food drive is a great project for youth ministries, social outreach committees and other parish clubs or committees.

“Our hope is that we can make a difference in people’s lives who are suffering so much right now,” said Donoghue.

“With God, all things are possible, said Father Skip. “And God and very generous sponsors have continued to make it possible for

us to feed the hungry who come to our Blessed Sacrament Food Pantry by the hundreds. Our tireless volunteers are saddened by the numbers of clients who arrive. But amazing donations from our Catholic parishes make them even more determined to put groceries in every hand that is held out to us,” he said, thanking everyone who helped and participated in the drive.

*(If you or your parish wishes to partner with the Order of Malta to host a drive-through food drive please reach out to Cece Donoghue at: cece-donoghue416@gmail.com.)* ■

### Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

*(Never known to fail)*

Oh most beautiful flower of Mt. Carmel, Fruitful Vine, splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. Oh Star of Sea, help me and show me here you are my mother. Oh, Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth. I humbly beseech You from the bottom of my heart to succor me in this necessity. *(make request)* There are none that can withstand Your Power. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee *(three times)*. Holy Mother, I place this cause in your hands *(three times)*. Say prayer for three consecutive days and then you must publish it and it will be granted to you. Grateful. SJK

### Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

*(Never known to fail)*

Oh most beautiful flower of Mt. Carmel, Fruitful Vine, splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. Oh Star of Sea, help me and show me here you are my mother. Oh, Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth. I humbly beseech You from the bottom of my heart to succor me in this necessity. *(make request)* There are none that can withstand Your Power. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee *(three times)*. Holy Mother, I place this cause in your hands *(three times)*. Say prayer for three consecutive days and then you must publish it and it will be granted to you. Grateful. MB

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### Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

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# Inner-City Foundation

## ICF to cease operations after quarter century

BRIDGEPORT—The Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education announced today that it will be sharing its entire endowment with Fairfield County non-profits and ceasing operations. The Foundation, founded in 1992, has been in operation for 28 years in Fairfield County, and in that time has granted more than \$32 million to local programs and organizations helping needy children, families and individuals.

“We’re pleased to be able to continue our mission by sharing our sizeable endowment with local non-profits especially now, at this time that is difficult for so many,” said Executive Director Karen Barry Schwarz. “And we’re proud of our history in Fairfield County. Our mission has always been to help the neediest local children, families and

individuals through both education and critical human services, and we have been able to fund hundreds of local programs that do just that.”

“The Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education through the extraordinary generosity of its donors has played a major role in providing charitable outreach and educational opportunities in our region,” adds Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport and also President of the Foundation. “The Foundation leaves a remarkable legacy of compassion and innovation that has not only served people in need but also empowered them to succeed in their lives through education and other services. Since 1992 the Foundation has supported and shared the mission of the Church to help those



who have nowhere else to turn. I am deeply grateful to all those who assisted in this work, which has had a positive and enduring impact on so many lives in Fairfield County.”

The changing financial land-

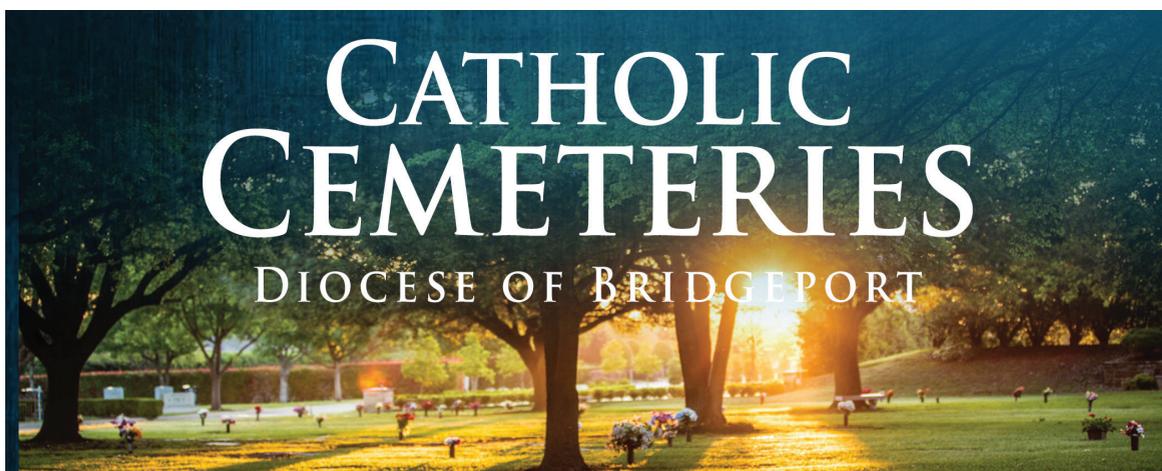
scape of Fairfield County as well as the changing nature of philanthropy have been factors in the Foundation’s decision to close, says Schwarz.

“We know that the need persists, but donations have become less available,” says Schwarz. “Connecticut corporations – historically our largest donors – have considerably decreased charitable giving or left the area, and our total charitable giving is down among individual donors. Further, our model has always been to have an annual fundrais-

ing gala, and of course we could not do that this year, and that method of fundraising is likely to be challenging in the future.”

Although the Foundation is no longer accepting grant requests, the charity will continue its mission in its final days. Many former grantees will be invited to submit proposals for grant awards; each request will be thoughtfully considered by the Foundation’s Board committees, which will remain in place until all available funds are distributed.

“Especially now, at this critical time when so many are in need, we want to use our remaining assets to fund grants rather than continue to attempt to raise funds in this new and changing environment,” Schwarz said. “Our final assets will be distributed with the same rigorous vetting process we have always used. Our former donors can rest assured that their money will be well and thoughtfully distributed to programs serving the neediest residents of Fairfield County in these final distributions, just as it has always been.”



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### DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT OCTOBER 11—NOVEMBER 14

#### OCTOBER

12	Deacon Michael Wolfer.....	2013
14	Msgr. Raymond H. Guidone .....	1965
15	Msgr. William Schultz .....	2013
16	Msgr. John V. Horgan Kung .....	2009
17	Msgr. Benedict Tighe .....	2004
18	Bishop Walter W. Curtis.....	1997
19	Rev. Cornelius J. Looney.....	1974
22	Msgr. David F. Bannon .....	1979
	Rev. Louis Dytkowski .....	2016
	Deacon Donald Fonseca.....	1989
27	Rev. Robert C. Franklin.....	1991
	Msgr. Thomas J. Whalen.....	2012
28	Deacon John Kucera .....	2007
29	Rev. Michael A. D’Elia .....	2000
30	Msgr. Leo M. Finn .....	1960
31	Rev. Francis D. McKenna .....	1989

#### NOVEMBER

3	Msgr. Joseph A. Heffernan .....	1989
	Deacon Thomas P. Freibott .....	2002
6	Rev. Bernard Dolan .....	2010
9	Rev. Stephen A. Grivalsky .....	1972
	Deacon Domingo Reverón .....	2014
10	Rev. Gerard C. Mason.....	1993
11	Msgr. Victor J. Torres-Frias .....	1995
13	Msgr. Alphonse J. V. Fiedorczyk .....	1987

# Local News

AN UNCLE WATCHES FROM PAGE 14

started a baseball team for the kids. And they say he was a pretty good ballplayer himself."

John shared another honor with his uncle, Msgr. Leo Finn, who became Supreme Chaplain of the Knights in 1939. Both went to Waterbury in 1957, where Father McGivney grew up, to unveil a statue honoring the priest on the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Knights of Columbus. He was the oldest of 13 children born to Irish immigrants, Patrick and Mary McGivney.

John was asked to unveil the statue, which still stands at the intersection of Meadow Street and Grand Street in downtown Waterbury. The event was so momentous there was radio coverage and John recalls the announcer saying, "Here's young John Walshe. He's a good-looking kid who seems to be about 10 years old." He was actually 12 and in the 8th grade.

"I had nightmares for a week beforehand because I was convinced that when I pulled the cord, that statue was going to fall on me," John recalls. "But I got to stand on the platform with all the dignitaries. After it was over, a woman came up with a pen and pad, and Father Leo reached out to take it and sign his autograph, but the woman said, 'No, I want the little boy's.'"

John also recounts the family story about how Father Mike married John's great grandparents, Rose McGivney and Edward Finn. They were married on Saturday, and the next day they left on their honeymoon to Niagara Falls and took the train from Waterbury to New York.

"They were sitting on the train together for the first time as a married couple and who walks down the aisle but Father Mike. Well, the joke in the family was that he loved his sister so much he went on her honeymoon.... My guess is he was actually going to New York to rent costumes for his theatrical group at St. Thomas Church."

On October 31, John and his family members will attend one of the most noteworthy celebrations for Father Michael McGivney, the Mass for his beatification, which will be celebrated at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in

Hartford. For his family, Father McGivney is still larger than life, a man they knew intimately from the abundance of stories that have been passed down over the

generations.

"For us, people are never gone," he said. "That's the way it is with Father Mike because we know so many stories about him.

And the reason he's so important to me and everybody else in the family is that it has been 120 years since he died, and he is still living with us. The stories and the

jokes are still being told. He was a real person."

He was a real person who is one step closer to being named a real saint. ■

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# Parish News

## A day of sunshine and sacraments

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—The tradition of First Holy Communion was celebrated at St. Joseph Church with more than a dozen children receiving the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Students from St. Joseph School and Religious Education classes, along with their families, participated in the Mass on a chilly but sunshine-filled Saturday morning.

"Today is a very special moment and milestone in the lives of our young parishioners," said pastor, Father Samuel Scott. "We are so mindful of this precious gift of the Eucharist and we recognize what a great joy this is today."

A total of 38 children prepared to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion in May but those plans were changed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Following the leadership of the Diocese of Bridgeport, the parish decided to hold three separate First Holy Communion Masses to accommodate the students and family members while adhering to social distancing protocols. This was the second group of students to receive the sacrament. A

third set of students will receive the sacrament next weekend. The Mass was also live-streamed on the parish website.

All students received the Sacrament of Reconciliation the day before receiving First Holy Communion. Father Scott and Father David Franklin heard confessions from the children the night before the First Holy Communion Mass.

Girls wore a white mask to match their beautiful white dress and boys wore a dark colored mask to match their suit.

During the homily Father Scott said it was important now and throughout life to understand, "Things aren't always what they appear to be. Sometimes they are more."

To illustrate his point, Father Scott held up objects that on the surface looked like one thing but upon further inspection were much more. For instance, what looked like a Reader's Digest book was hollowed-out and meant for keepsakes to be hidden. He also held up a figurine of what looked like a bird, but its beak functioned as a bottle opener.

He then held up a cruet with wine and a host of bread

explaining that when the priest calls upon the Holy Spirit during Mass, these become, "the Body and Blood of our Savior."

"A change that is unique but is invisible," Father Scott said.

day before with a handmade Rosary by Our Lady's Rosary Makers and an instruction booklet on how to pray the Rosary.

"The families were all so happy," said director of



FATHER SAMUEL SCOTT, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Danbury brings "the precious gift of the Eucharist" to First Communicants in his parish.

"You are receiving this as a gift from Christ Jesus. It is the real presence of Jesus. It is invisible but very, very real."

After the Mass, the children received a certificate in addition to a gift bag they received the

Religious Education, Lynn Smierciak. "You could see their smiling eyes. It's a joyous occasion despite the restrictions."

Smierciak said some families opted to wait until next year for their child to receive the sacraments while others were excited to have an opportunity to do so now.

"We've been waiting a long time for this," said Denise Maritato, whose daughter, Giovanna, received her First Holy Communion. "The kids did very well."

"We are very proud and very happy," said Margarida

Wheeler, whose son Tyler received his First Holy Communion. "This is part of why we go to Saint Joseph's, for the values. When we had this opportunity, we were very grateful."

Father Scott said we are all living stones of this spiritual temple.

"There really is no substitute of receiving Christ Jesus. We are so proud of you," Father Scott said. "We need Jesus every week to strengthen us every week and for a moral compass in our lives. This is not a one-time deal," he said. "Come every week." ■

## FUNERAL GUIDE

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# Sports

## Jaffe's legacy at Prep: History and swimming

By **DON HARRISON**

When Bruce Jaffe was a senior at a new Connecticut high school, Joel Barlow of Redding, he was voted Most Likely to Succeed. The year was 1962.

That award would come as no surprise to generations of young men who came under Jaffe's tutelage at Fairfield Prep, where he taught history for 50 years and coached the Jesuits' swimming and diving team for 46 seasons. He also coached Prep's soccer team for 33 seasons.

Jaffe, who bravely endured Crohn's disease for much of his adult life, died at age 76 on Sept. 13, 2020, and an untold number of former students, friends and admirers are mourning his passing.

"He was larger than life," said Rick Hutchinson, who swam for Prep in the mid-1980s and succeeded his mentor as head coach in 2013. "Bruce taught us that team success was more important than individual glory. In a sport that many on the outside view as an individual pursuit, Bruce Jaffe proved that high school swimming and diving provided the ultimate opportunity for teamwork."

There was no better example of that philosophy than Jaffe's final season, 2011-12, when Fairfield Prep swept all 12 of its individual meets and captured the Southern Connecticut Conference regular-season title, CIAC Class LL championship and the State Open. All three of the Jesuits' state titles and two State Open victories were achieved under Jaffe.

Chuck Berke '70, who became the first of more than four dozen Prep swimmers to earn All-



COACH BRUCE JAFFE, wearing his ubiquitous suspenders, and his final Fairfield Prep swim team had much to celebrate during the winter of 2012, including capturing both the CIAC Class LL and State Open championships.

American recognition under Jaffe, had this to say about his late coach:

"He was a most wonderfully talented guy with a great sense of humor. He always kept us focused on being gentlemen. He took an interest in us as young men. Some of the things he taught me took a long time to settle in... but they did."

Berke, who was undefeated in the 100-yard butterfly at Prep, was inducted into the school's Athletic Hall of Fame in 2019. He also distinguished himself at the University of Maryland, where he won the Atlantic Coast Conference championship and set a school record in the 200-yard butterfly. "I swam against Mark

Spitz in the 1971 (NCAA) nationals, but he won going away," he chuckled.

Bruce Norman Jaffe majored in history and chemistry at Yale (Class of 1966) and underwent training there in the ROTC. After obtaining a medical discharge, he joined the Fairfield College Preparatory School faculty that fall.

When he succeeded Dave Speno as head coach in 1967, the Jesuits' modest swimming and diving program was just seven years old. Home meets were held in Bridgeport at the Cardinal Shehan Center's four-lane, 20-yard pool. (Prep swimmers and divers now utilize Fairfield University's recently renovated Leslie C. Quick RecPlex's eight-lane, 25-meter pool, which opened in 1979.) Nobody could have envisioned the young history teacher in the suspenders becoming a living legend in Connecticut high school aquatics.

Indeed, Jaffe was the driving force behind Prep's climb to swimming supremacy in the Nutmeg State – in the beginning, quite literally. He often piloted the "Red Rocket" school bus to the team's meets, practice sites, railroad station or wherever else the team needed to be.

Hutchinson, who also serves as a guidance counselor at his alma mater, speaks of Jaffe's desire to make swimming fun for

team members. "In a sport where you basically go back and forth and back and forth; endlessly, Bruce always had time for levity," he explained. "No practice would be complete without the playful banter between grueling sets."

One of Jaffe's most recent

Prep All-Americans, 2010 freestyler Ed Becker, admittedly "came to Prep to be on the swim team.

"He was the best motivator throughout my swim career, from youth competition through college," stated Becker, who went on to captain the Yale swimmers and earn a degree from the prestigious Ivy League institution.

Away from the pool and the classroom, Jaffe was a visible presence. He served as Protestant chaplain at Prep, and cooked and served the annual Christmas dinner and Martin Luther King Jr. supper at the Thomas Merton House of Hospitality in Bridgeport. Until the onset of his recent illness a few years ago, he was an active member of the Jesse Lee United Methodist Church in Easton, where he served as lay leader, sang in the choir and frequently preached when the pastor was on leave.

He was a lifelong bachelor until age 58, when he met and wed his wife Carla; also acquiring a daughter, Romy, whom he cherished.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Jaffe's name to the National Kidney Foundation or the Bruce Jaffe Scholarship Fund at Fairfield Prep. ■

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# Column: Thomas Hicks



## Fidelity to fidelity

### POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

*Thomas Hicks is a member of St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull.*

**A** Catholic existentialist philosopher named Gabriel Marcel is not generally well-known. Yet, many of his ideas are captivating. Gabriel Marcel was born in Paris on December 7, 1889. His mother died when he was four years old. One of the things Marcel wrote about was how, although his mother had died, he always felt her presence and influence in his life. Fifty-four years later, after a 38-year happy marriage, his wife died. Marcel again wrote of how he continued to sense his wife's presence along with that of his mother. They

were gone, yet still with him.

During the First World War, Marcel served with the Red Cross, and it was in connection with his work there that he experienced some of the most life-changing encounters of his life. His job with the Red Cross was to act as liaison for the families of soldiers who were missing in action. He had to try to find out what might have happened to soldiers classified as "missing." He was constantly besieged by distraught relatives - wives, parents, etc. He spent endless days trying to obtain some jot of information about a missing

soldier so that he might be able to offer some glimmer of hope to an apprehensive family. Too often, Marcel was dispatched to announce to the next of kin the death of a dearly loved one. The "missing" soldiers became real human beings to Marcel, and he sensed how terrible were impersonal generalities. He saw how the soldier's questing loved ones were undergoing one of the most traumatic experiences allotted to human beings.

Marcel's approach to philosophy is sometimes called "Phenomenology." This is an approach which begins with a concrete individual experience and tries to describe the experience in greater depth.

Marcel writes about various significant events in human life. For example, Marcel reflects on truth, and speaks eloquently of how truth is holy, and makes demands upon us. Marcel spoke of how we are obliged to testify in a court of law if we hold a particle of light that would otherwise remain hidden. We must manifest the truth which is known to us and allow it to affect the situation at hand.

Fidelity occupies a central place in Marcel's thought. Marcel underlines Nietzsche's saying that "a human being is the only being who can make promises." For Marcel, fidelity is the foremost expression of love for another. Fidelity is maintaining presence no matter what. A faithful friend is someone who does not fail us. We feel that he is with me. Fidelity is distinguished from constancy or obligation, which

can be devoid of love.

Marcel points out that marriage is the place that most involves Fidelity. When one makes the marriage vows, s/he assumes an obligation, gives to the other a claim over oneself; one binds oneself to some future actions. Fidelity implies presence, continual responsiveness. It involves patience and humility. Fidelity enables the married couple to face life's deepest crises with courage.

Fidelity in marriage is not coercive. There are the marriages where one spouse is faithful to the other only out of a feeling of duty; fidelity is reduced to constancy, a grudging perseverance in a static, stale relationship. The other person perceives this.

Many people today devalue life commitments and fidelity, claiming that the future was unknowable. Marcel thought they were incorrectly thinking of the future as though it were like the weather, something that happened to a person over which the person had no control. Marcel believed that to some extent, not completely, but to some extent we create our future by the choices we make.

He claimed that a certain level of maturity was necessary for a person to be able to make a life commitment, but he also claimed that such a level of maturity could only be achieved by making a life commitment. One can suffer from guilt knowing that one is breaking the promises s/he solemnly made. Fidelity involves a choice. I can refuse to remain faithful to the other,

Marcel writes of how lovers

are loyal not only to one another as separate individuals but to their love, to their union, which is something more than either of them viewed as distinct individuals. Marriage constitutes a new reality - US. There is a fidelity to fidelity, a loyalty to loyalty.

Marcel goes so far as to say that, in many ways, the essence of this world is perhaps betrayal. There are all the divorces, the annulments, the domestic violence. The novels and short stories of John Updike are modern commentaries on fidelity. Updike is preoccupied with the failure of fidelity, the refusal to stay. Updike's characters hurt each and seem to lack to ability or means to do otherwise

Fidelity involves a relationship, a presence, that even death cannot destroy; it is supra-temporal. This is the experience of many who have undergone the test of death.

Marcel writes that fidelity is a major factor that gives our lives meaning. Overall, Fidelity should tell us what to do in doubtful cases. The deciding factor is loyalty to our covenants; fidelity, or loyalty, should decide our consciences.

Finally, one can note that Marcel studied the piano, and eventually attained proficiency as a concert pianist. He stated that after a Bach concert one could have the assurance that it is an honor to be a human being. He attributed to music, especially to Bach's music, his understanding of religious experience and his own religious development. Marcel was also a playwright of some significance. ■

### DIocese RELEASES BUDGET FROM PAGE 7

property leases by marketing vacant diocesan owned buildings for use," he said.

Additionally, they have marketed excess diocesan properties for sale to generate much-needed funds to eliminate the Knights of Columbus loan and funding for the frozen underfunded lay pension plan.

Proceeds from property sales should allow the diocese to eliminate the Knights of Columbus loan and related interest expense in this fiscal year. This loan has been reduced from \$15 million to \$3.5 million in the last six years resulting in decreased annual interest expense. Budgeted interest expense related to this loan is \$134,000, which could be used to enhance mission related programs.

The long-term underfunded liability obligations related to the frozen diocesan lay employee pension plan (frozen since 2008) continue to be an area of concern and challenge for the diocese.

Although steps have been taken to reduce this underfunded liability based on a strategy developed by the lay pension committee, consisting of finance council members, the long-term pension liability remains one of our largest challenges. Additional solutions and funding sources continue to be explored to fulfill all future pension benefit payments to the pension participants.

In December 2013, Bishop Caggiano took a major step toward financial transparency when he released the audited financial statements for years 2010, 2011 and 2012. Audited financial statements for the subsequent periods ending December 31, 2013 and 2014, as well as financial statements for the periods ending June 30, 2016 through June 30, 2019 have been released annually. All reports can be found online.

(To learn more, visit the diocesan website: [www.bridgeportdiocese.com/financialreports](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.com/financialreports).) ■

### St. Jude's Novena

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved throughout the world now and forever. Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us.

St. Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us.

St. Jude, help of the hopeless, pray for us.

Say this prayer nine times a day. By the ninth day your prayer will be answered.

Say it for nine days.

It has never been known to fail. Publication must be promised.

Thank you St. Jude.

RP

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DCC

# Rainbows for Children

## Grief and Loss: A community of compassion

By PAT HENNESSY

“When kids are sharing their grief experience in a Rainbows group, they’re in a happy, safe place,” says Mary Curley, coordinator of a Rainbows for All Children grief support program in the Stamford area. “But when they go to school, nobody gets it. Nobody understands what they’re going through.”

Rainbows for all Children is a worldwide grief support program for children and teenagers who have lost a parent, grandparent, sibling or other loved one, helping them through the grieving process. It has been active in this diocese since 2015, starting under Curley and co-founder Lynn Cerrone at Holy Spirit Parish in Stamford. Now Rainbows has moved further afield under the shepherding of Msgr. Kevin Royal, pastor of St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield.

As she guided kids through their grief process, Curley became aware of a lack of awareness in their wider school experience. “We’re all very fearful of going near the topic of death,” she observes. “As grownups we don’t model a way of dealing with grief and loss.” As a result, the school community—from teachers on down to students’ classmates—do not know how to respond to a child’s grief. Isolation from their peers and teachers can intensify a child’s struggles.

Recognizing this situation, Trinity High School held a Grief Awareness Day on November 19, 2019. This year, **Speaking Grief, a virtual film screening and panel discussion**

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SJK

will be hosted by Stamford’s Ferguson Library on Tuesday, November 10, at 6:30 pm. *It will be* co-sponsored by Leo P. Gallagher & Son Funeral Home. To register, go to [www.ferguson-library.org](http://www.ferguson-library.org).

In addition, with the encouragement of Bishop Frank Caggiano, Curley has developed an initiative called Grief and Loss Education (GALE), which co-sponsored the event at Ferguson Library and will offer workshops in schools and community locations to bring the understanding of the grieving process to a wider population, creating a community of caring and compassion.

“Children’s Grief Awareness Day is always held the Thursday before Thanksgiving because the holidays are such a painful time for kids who have lost someone,” notes Curley. Observances will be held at schools and community centers, which may have virtual memory walls where kids, and adults, can post the names and photos of loved ones they have lost.

Although the formal launch of GALE with a live and virtual presentation will take place during a Christmas Fundraiser at Holy Spirit Parish the weekend of November 21-22, Curley had



DEVELOPING AN AWARENESS OF GRIEF in young people, Mary Curley receives support and assistance from John Carrigan. “This is so pertinent today especially, when our community is submerged in suffering, sadness and loss of epic proportions,” says Carrigan, Director of Guidance and Student Support at Cardinal Kung Academy

already begun implementing the results of her outreach. She started by offering a grief and loss workshop session at Trinity Catholic High School to David Chiapetta’s health class students. “We wanted to give students the tools and the language to help their friends who are grieving,” says Curley, noting that almost everyone—even children and teenagers—have friends or family members who are dealing with loss. “We want kids to know that, with some support, their friends will get through this and find new strength.”

She also received support from

Trinity’s Guidance Director, John Carrigan. “The very comprehensiveness of GALE offers young people and their families a significant place to be at peace, both within, and with others,” says Carrigan, now Director of Guidance and Student Support at Cardinal Kung Academy “This is so pertinent to today especially, when our community is submerged in suffering, sadness and loss of epic proportions.”

The component for educators in GALE stems from Curley’s personal experience. Several times she has been approached by

teachers asking how to respond to a student who is struggling through grief.

“Often teachers don’t know how to manage this situation,” she notes. Teachers may see grades slip, or homework and attendance become erratic. “If a child has to pick up new chores after a bereavement, or if there are new financial worries, it helps a lot if their teacher can understand and make allowances. It’s mainly a matter of letting kids know ‘We’re here for you. We’ll support you.’”

“It’s a lot for any school family to cope with. It helps when teachers can have a conversation about loss with their kids, reassure them, and help create—for the entire school family—a culture of empathy and compassion.”

Following the official launch of the GALE program during the Holy Spirit Craft Fair, Curley will be available to book dates—hopefully in person—for workshops starting in 2021. “I’ll be speaking to children, educators, schools and community groups,” she says.

*(Schools or groups interested in learning more about Grief and Loss Education, Rainbows for all Children, or Children’s Grief Awareness Day can contact Curley at [mary@gale-us.org](mailto:mary@gale-us.org).)*

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# Nuestra Voz

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## Sacerdote carmelita se pone la vacuna experimental del COVID-19

POR MARICARMEN GODOY

No tengo ningún síntoma, no me duele nada y con la ayuda de Dios venceremos esta enfermedad", Padre Roberto Pérez. OCarm

El religioso está participando en el ensayo clínico de la fase tres de la farmacéutica Pfizer. Él contó cómo fue el proceso de selección y su experiencia en esta prueba médica.

**El Dr. Anthony Fauci quiere que el 37 por ciento de los hispanos pero solo el 16 por ciento lo hice y de ese por ciento el 11 por ciento lo hizo con la farmacéutica Pfizer. ¿Padre Roberto: Por qué decidió participar en el experimento? Es por apoyar a las ciencias o por una convicción religiosa?**

Por dos razones. Yo soy capellán en el Hospital Montefiori en el Bronx (New York) y yo veo muchos pacientes allá con mucho sufrimiento. También participé en otra vacuna experimental a finales de los años 70 de la Hepatitis B y entonces, me pregunté: ¿Bueno, la gente necesita hacer algo y no solo la gente de aquí sino la del mundo entero porque el mundo entero está sufriendo?. Entonces con la ayuda de Dios y de la ciencia esto se puede combatir.

La Arquidiócesis nos envía diariamente emails y entre uno de esos sugirieron esta idea. Luego de leer un boletín llamé a NWW Lengon, luego me hicieron una entrevista por teléfono inicial y después fue una entrevista cara a cara en las oficinas de ellos del centro. Ellos repasaron todo mi historial médico antes de aceptarme como voluntario para el estudio

**¿Cuándo fue al experimento de la vacuna de la Hepatitis B los exámenes fueron tan exhaustivos como los de ahora (del COVID) o menos exhaustivos?**

No me acuerdo mucho lo de los años 70 porque eso está tan lejos. Pero esta vez fue algo más intensivo en términos de seleccionar a las personas y porque es una pandemia.

**¿Por qué es parte del experi-**

**mento de la farmacéutica Pfizer y no de otra farmacéutica?**

Eso tiene que ver con la ética. Porque Pfizer está promoviendo una vacuna pero la vacuna no tiene células de bebés abortados. Entonces estas vacunas no son controversiales. Es una vacuna ética.

**¿Cómo y dónde lo aceptaron para que sea parte del experimento antes de ponerle la vacuna?**

Ese es un proceso ante la Arquidiócesis ellos le mandan a los sacerdotes casi todos los días a los sacerdotes y durante esta pandemia uno de los emails nos dio una sugerencia para ver si es que nosotros queríamos participar en el estudio de Pfizer

**¿Le inyectaron la vacuna experimental o el placebo? Y qué es el placebo.**

El placebo es un líquido claro que no tiene color. La vacuna es nublada. Cuando a uno le están inyectando uno tiene que virar la cara. Entonces la única persona que sabe que le están inyectando es la persona que la está poniendo.

**¿Usted sabe si le pusieron placebo o COVID?**

No, eso no lo se. Al final del estudio ellos van a decirme que me pusieron

**La farmacéutica Astra Sénica suspendió por unos días la Fase Tres del experimento porque uno de sus pacientes mostró resultados negativos presuntamente por la vacuna, aunque ya el reporte médico indicó que las molestias del paciente NO fueron por la vacuna ¿Usted NO tiene miedo de que le pueda pasar algo. Ha tenido síntomas molestos estos días?**

No tengo miedo. Las personas que van a tener una reacción negativa va hacer un porcentaje muy bajo. A través de todo esto yo nunca he tenido síntomas. Absolutamente nada.

**¿Cuándo se puso la vacuna?**

La primera dosis a finales de junio y la segunda dosis el 21 de agosto. Este lunes 22 de octubre yo tengo una cita con ellos porque ellos tienen un "follow up" (seguimiento) hasta el

2022. El seguimiento le toman la presión, le sacan sangre. Le preguntan si tienes algunos síntomas. Es una cosa muy normal. En un journal (diario) nosotros tenemos que apuntar ciertas preguntas para ver si nosotros tenemos síntomas

**¿Qué le preguntan?**

Si uno tiene diarrea, fiebre, si perdió el sabor. Etc. Ese son los síntomas del COVID

**Uno de cada tres hispanos en los EEUU tiene más probabilidades de contagiarse del COVID 19, por tanto, usted podría contagiarse. ¿Cree que en este momento la vacuna experimental que ya le pusieron le protegería?**

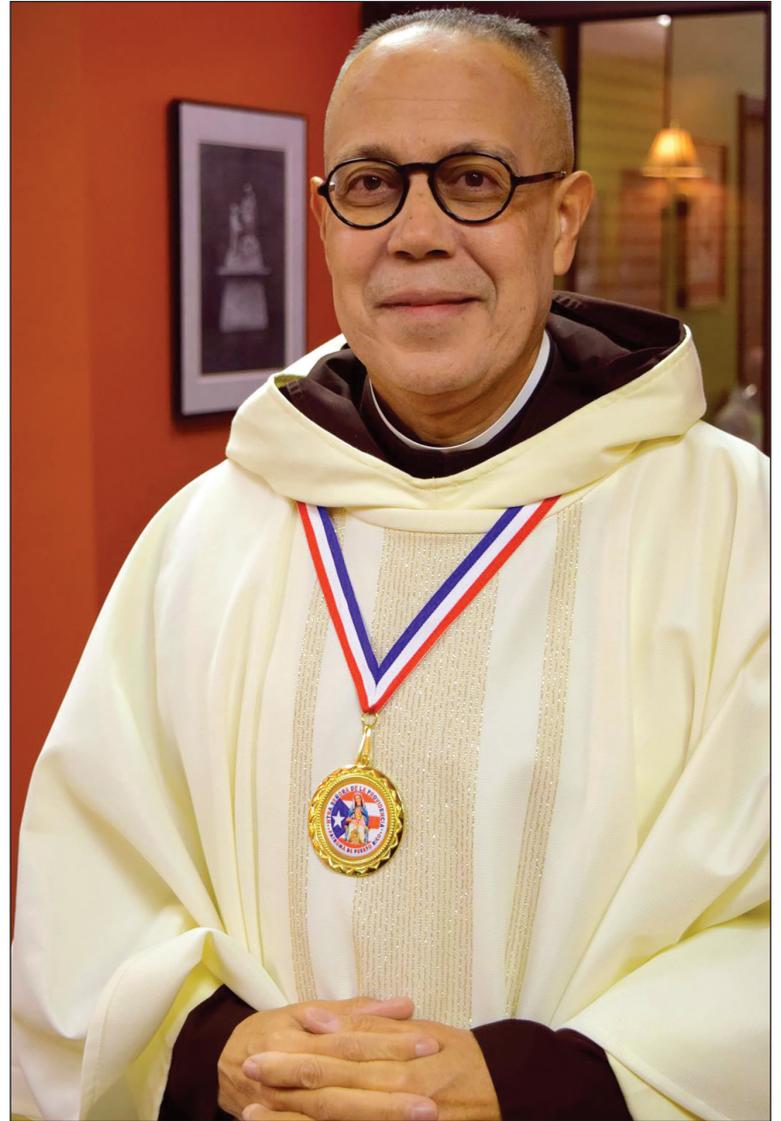
Yo tomo las precauciones necesarias. Hay que usar máscara cuando uno está en público, en los trenes, en las calles caminando. Yo veo en la calle a las personas que no usan máscara y si la usan no se ponen adecuadamente, o sea, no se tapan hasta la nariz que es lo adecuado.

**¿En estos momentos tan difíciles para la humanidad cómo la religión puede ayudar a la ciencia, o por el contrario, NO tiene nada que ver lo uno con lo otro?**

Si uno ve la historia de la ciencia y la religión en la medicina, ha habido ciertos sacerdotes que eran científicos como el P. Mendol que es el fundador de la Genética como nosotros lo conocemos. Está el Laico Copérnico que era muy católico y un sabio de la astronomía, luego el Padre de Bélgica Lematre sobre la teoría Big Bang de la explosión e inicio del mundo y en Roma está la Pontificia Universidad de las Ciencias. Y la combinación de las ciencias con la religión muy pocos católicos la conocen.

Acorde con el carisma y la misión de los Carmelitas ustedes se dedican al apostolado de cuidar a los adultos mayores enfermos terminales. ¿Cómo capellán del hospital de New York le tocó asistir con los Santos Oleos o confesiones a pacientes con COVID o no pudo ni acercárselos?

En la primera etapa del



¿SE ATREVERÍAS a ser vacunado del COVID 19?. El Rev. Padre Roberto Pérez, religioso Carmelita lo hizo y hoy está para contar su experiencia en el noticiero En Vivo con Maricarmen transmitido en La Voz Radio por 103.5FM.

COVID hice cuarentena porque tengo 73 años y creí que desde mi casa podía seguir colaborando, pero otros sacerdotes más jóvenes estuvieron en el ministerio. Yo regresé al hospital en junio, desde esa fecha hasta acá he estado atendiendo a personas con y sin Corona virus. Las personas que atienden a pacientes con COVID tienen más protocolos hay que ponerse máscara, extra capas de overoles, gafas especiales antes de entrar al cuarto y buscar la relación con la enfermera para poder ingresar al cuarto. No solo atiendo a los enfermos sino también al personal de salud.

**¿Tiene el personal de salud miedo de contagiarse?**

Es muy normal de tener miedo, sin embargo, están luchando contra esto y usando

todos los protocolos que conlleva la medicina. Yo me siento en paz, me siento bien.

**¿Si estuviera en un hospital de América Latina que no tiene el dinero para invertir en los protocolos de salud que tienen los Estados Unidos, sería usted voluntario?**

No sé cómo responder esa pregunta. En el momento en que se presente el caso ahí podré responder.

**¿Aconseja a las personas a ponerse la vacuna experimental?**

Antes de tomarse esa decisión aconsejo a las personas que entren en oración y luego decidan. Si su corazón está en paz y le dice que sí lo haga, ¿entonces? ¡Hágalo!, porque con esa decisión está ayudando a la humanidad. ■

# Vocations

## The Joy of God's Vineyard

By **FATHER CHRIS FORD**

A few weeks ago, I was speaking with a priest friend from Florida. He was just ordained this past summer, after being delayed a couple of months due to COVID. Now settling into parish life, I asked him how his first few months of priesthood had been going. As part of his response, which included detailing the business of his days and the challenges of learning priesthood in these times, he also said this: "I love being a priest and I have never been more fulfilled in my life." What a gift. Not only to his parishioners, who are incredibly blessed to be served by him, but to me as well. His joy at being a priest reminded me of a key truth in my own heart: the joy I have experienced in my first year and few months of priesthood is not just a figment of my imagi-

nation. It is the deepest reality of my life.

The priesthood is a difficult, busy, challenging life. That much is obvious to anyone who observes this life, if only for a brief moment. What is often overlooked, however, is how joyful and rewarding the life of the priest is. When lived to its fullest, we are part of the most privileged moments of people's lives. We open souls up to the reality of God's presence in Baptism. We feed them with the food of eternal life in the Eucharist. We witness as they encounter the healing presence of God's mercy in the confessional. We prepare and commend the soul home to God with trust and confidence in His closeness and care. By making ourselves available to God as instruments to serve His people, we receive grace upon grace. How many times have I been encouraged in my own

conversion of heart and my own journey of sanctity by the immense trust in God's mercy I have witnessed from penitents in the Confessional!

During the COVID shut-downs, many priests I know were reinvigorated in their thirst to minister to God's people, to be renewed and refreshed by the power of God's grace flowing through them in unbelievable ways. It has inspired new levels of creativity to make sure that the Gospel message never stops flowing into the hearts of those who need to hear it. From outdoor confessions, to masses in people's backyards, to simple phone calls and "fireside chats", the reality that the Gospel is indeed Good News for those who need it has not been lost! The service of the people of God is the heart of the ministry of the priest and it is there that we find our greatest joys and greatest



fulfillments.

When you look at our priests, the truth is that many of them would have been incredibly successful in any other line of work they had chosen to pursue. But there is something greater here! There is something that challenges us to a new level of trust in God, of love for His people,

and of joy for having been privileged to be such an instrument of mercy and grace, laboring in the Father's vineyard. O God, what a life! And it is yours, O priest of Jesus Christ!

*(Father Chris Ford is parochial vicar of St. Gregory the Great Parish in Danbury and a member of the Diocesan Vocations Team.)*

### NOTICE

#### ***Boy Scouts of America Claims regarding Sexual Abuse***

The filing of bankruptcy by the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) has once again provided a painful reminder of the crime of sexual abuse of minors. Since the Boy Scouts have had connections to parishes over the years, the BSA has asked us to assist them in notifying potential claimants of information about the bankruptcy. The Diocese of Bridgeport is committed to providing support and outreach to all victims of sexual abuse. In our victim assistance program, we provide outreach and support to all victims of abuse who contact us.

In an effort to support all sexual abuse survivors, we are providing the following information for the benefit of anyone who might have a claim against the BSA.

Do you have a claim? Anyone who was sexually abused during their time in Scouting, on or before February 18, 2020, must file a claim to have rights in the bankruptcy action. This

includes sexual abuse in connection with Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, or any entity or activity associated with Scouting. Sexual Abuse Claims include, but are not limited to: sexual misconduct, exploitation, or touching, sexual comments about a person or other behaviors that led to abuse, even if the behavior was not sexual or against the law, and regardless of whether you thought the behavior was sexual abuse or not. These acts could be between a: (1) child and an adult or (2) child and another child.

What do you need to do? You should file a claim using the Sexual Abuse Survivor Proof of Claim by November 16, 2020 at 5 pm (Eastern Time). If you do not file a timely Sexual Abuse Claim, you may lose rights against BSA, BSA Local Councils or organizations that sponsored your troop or pack, including any right to compensation.

Your information will be kept private. You can download and file a claim at [www.OfficialBSAclaims.com](http://www.OfficialBSAclaims.com) or call 1.866.907.2721 for help on how

to file a claim by mail. Scouting participants who were at least 18 years of age at the time the sexual abuse began may also have claims related to sexual abuse and should consult the appropriate claim form at [www.OfficialBSAclaims.com](http://www.OfficialBSAclaims.com).

Should you require it, more detail on the case can be found in In re Boy Scouts of America a11d Delaware BSA, LLC, No. 20-10343 (Bankr. D. Del.) or visit [www.OfficialBSAclaims.com](http://www.OfficialBSAclaims.com) or call 1.866.907.2721.

Victims of sexual abuse are encouraged to contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator for the Diocese of Bridgeport, Erin Neil, L.C.S.W., at 203.650.3265 or by email at [Eneil@diobpt.org](mailto:Eneil@diobpt.org) or Michael Tintrup, L.C.S.W., Victim Assistance Counselor at 203.241.0987. Claims of sexual abuse should be reported to the CT Child Abuse and Neglect Care-line (Mandated Reporters are required to report within 12-hours) at 1.800.842.2288. ■

## Charities to hold virtual events

### **New Covenant Center announces 10th annual Harvest Table**

STAMFORD—On Thursday, November 5, New Covenant Center will hold its 10h Annual Harvest Table. The COVID-19 safety guidelines regarding gatherings has made hosting a live Harvest Table event impossible, but the need to raise funds for the Stamford-based soup kitchen and food pantry is greater than ever. In order to accomplish this, New Covenant Center has opted to host a virtual live streamed event. This year's event will honor the Marchetti Family of Columbus Park Trattoria. Full details on the event can be found at [www.newcovenantcenter.org](http://www.newcovenantcenter.org).

This fun-filled fundraiser which will be live streamed directly from New Covenant Center will feature cooking segments from honoree Chef Michael Marchetti, highlights about how COVID-19 has impacted New Covenant Center guests, a glimpse at what 2021 will look like at New Covenant Center, and a special guest.

*(For more information on Harvest Table, please go to [www.newcovenantcenter.org](http://www.newcovenantcenter.org) or contact Leisa Hinds Simpson at [lhinds-simpson@ccfc-ct.org](mailto:lhinds-simpson@ccfc-ct.org). To learn more about the services provided by New Covenant Center visit their webpage at [www.newcovenantcenter.org](http://www.newcovenantcenter.org).)*

### **Virtual Danbury Celebrity Breakfast to support vital programs**

DANBURY—On Thursday, November 12, Catholic Charities will hold its 10th Annual Danbury Celebrity Breakfast. The COVID-19 safety guidelines regarding gatherings has made hosting a live Celebrity Breakfast event impossible, but the need to raise funds for the agency's services is greater than ever. In order to accomplish this, Catholic Charities has opted to host a Virtual Celebrity Breakfast featuring Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of the Diocese of Bridgeport as the special celebrity guest. Steve Lee of Veritas Catholic Radio (AM 1350) will host a special videotaped segment of the Bishop's radio show, "Let Me Be Frank", focusing on the work of Catholic Charities in the greater Danbury area. This, combined with a video highlighting the programs provided in the Danbury area will be featured on the event webpage, along with a call to generosity in support of the services being provided to the most vulnerable populations. Full details on the event, [www.ccfairfield.org/event/dcb](http://www.ccfairfield.org/event/dcb).

*(For more information on the Danbury Celebrity Breakfast, please go to [www.ccfairfield.org/event/dcb](http://www.ccfairfield.org/event/dcb) or contact Amy Zajac at [azajac@ccfc-ct.org](mailto:azajac@ccfc-ct.org). To learn more about the services provided by Catholic Charities in the greater Danbury area, visit their webpage at [www.ccfairfield.org](http://www.ccfairfield.org).)*



# An anniversary worth celebrating at St. Vincent's Medical Center.

IT'S BEEN A YEAR since St. Vincent's Medical Center joined the Hartford HealthCare family. And there's much to celebrate. We've brought outstanding medical expertise to the community, including more than 170 experts in cancer care, neurosciences, cardiac care, orthopedics, behavioral health, kidney and urologic care as well as primary care. We've added advanced surgical robotic technology and opened health centers throughout the region, including our new Spine Wellness Center in Westport. And our Center for Healthy Aging is helping seniors and their loved ones find the care and resources they need. We're here when emergencies strike, and continue to welcome precious new life into this world. Together, we're helping people live their healthiest lives. And there's so much more to come.

**For more information, visit [StVincents.org](http://StVincents.org).**

*Photos 1–5, October 1, 2019 St. Vincent's colleagues and Hartford HealthCare leadership celebrate. Photo 6, St. Vincent's Medical Center ICU colleagues share their heart.*



**Hartford  
HealthCare**  
St. Vincent's Medical Center