

FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

MARCH 2021 | VOLUME 38, NUMBER 3 | EASTER ISSUE

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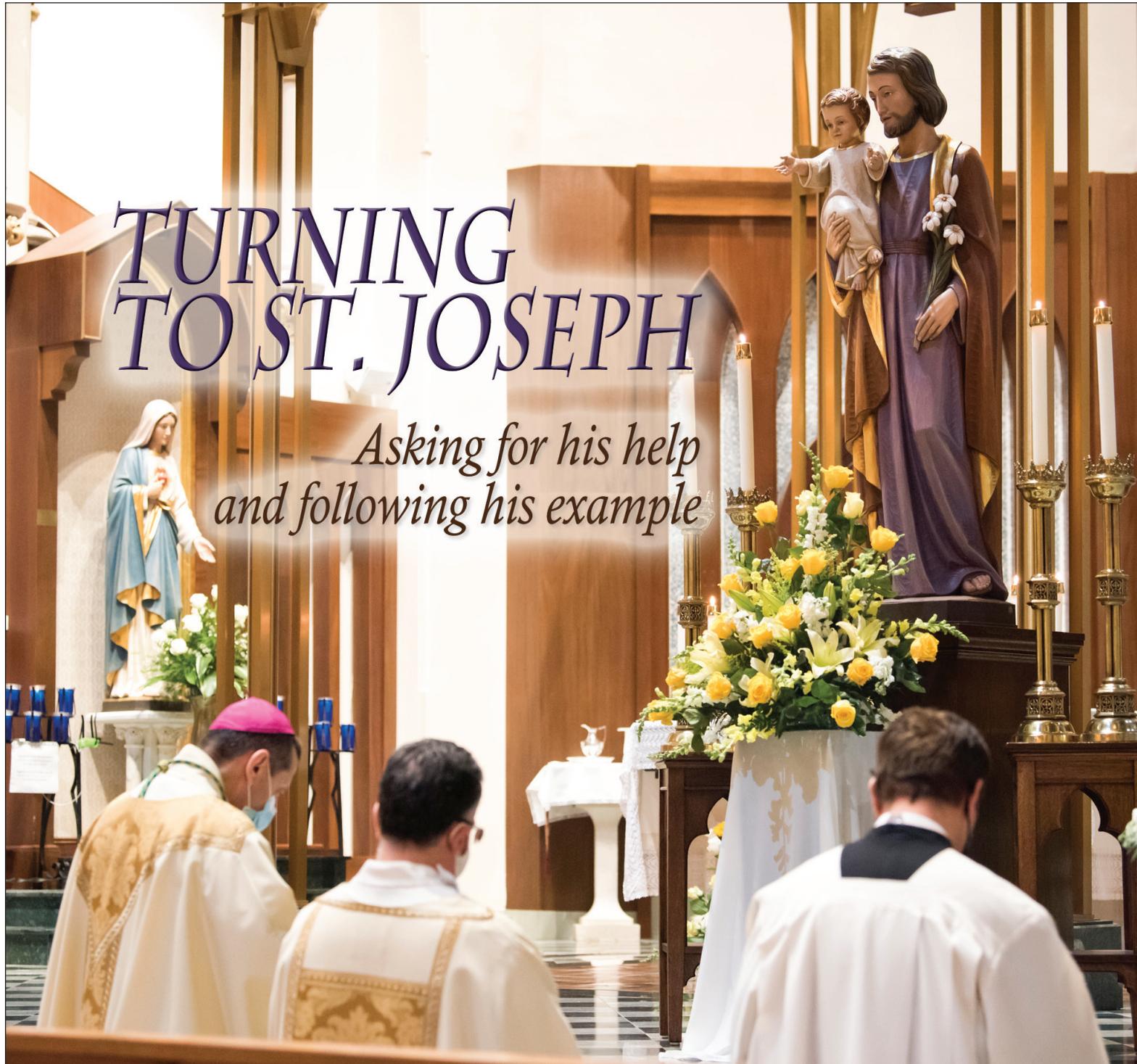
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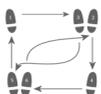
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Around the Diocese

Signs of hope in the pandemic

Priest approaching 103 still gives to ACA

BRIDGEPORT—Father Philip Brady will turn 103 this year and during his lifetime, he's developed a lot of steady habits. He says Mass every day, he prays his breviary and he still sends his check to the Annual Catholic Appeal. Father, who lives in a senior community outside Buffalo, served for many years in the Diocese of Bridgeport until retiring in 1995 as pastor from St. Margaret Mary Church in Shelton after 27 years. Since that time, he has been sending his annual check of \$1,100 to help the parish reach its goal in the appeal. One person who is especially appreciative to Father Brady for his participation in the appeal is Pamela S. Rittman, director of the Annual Catholic Appeal. Twelve years ago, when he called to make his donation, she discovered he was from the town in upstate New York where she grew up. "We immediately hit it off as friends and talked about local restaurants and the cold Western New York weather," Rittman said. "He was there when I needed him and presided over the funeral of a family member and blessed our home in upstate New York. When I visit, I make sure to stop in and see him and share the news of the diocese. To my surprise, he often knows more than I do."



Local March for Life draws faithful supporters

Recognizing the power of praying the rosary and the on-going movement to repeal Roe v. Wade, parishioners from the Diocese of Bridgeport and beyond gathered at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Trumbull, braving the chill of a January afternoon to honor the unborn.



St. Mark Students strive to be models in Christ

STRATFORD—St. Mark School in Stratford is pleased to announce a new school-wide program that teaches students the value of moral character and that the positive impact of their actions do not go unnoticed.

The program, "Models in Christ," recognizes students for demonstrating character traits based on the Catholic theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Teachers in kindergarten through grade eight nominate students as "Models in Christ" based on how they exemplify the six pillars of character at St. Mark School: respect, kindness, accountability, citizenship, perseverance and trustworthiness.



St. Jude offers Relics of the Passion Service during Lent

MONROE—St. John XXIII Council 5987 of the Knights of Columbus recently hosted The Relics of the Passion at St. Jude Parish. The collection included eight rare holy relics that would only be seen in collections generally found in Rome or the Holy Land. "The relics were set up across the entire front of St. Jude Church. The afternoon offered families a time for prayer and meditation as they contemplated the Passion of our Lord Jesus," shared Father Henry Hoffman, pastor of St. Jude.



Holy Hour for Vocations

TRUMBULL—Faithful from around the diocese recently joined together at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull to pray for vocations in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

During a time of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, the faithful prayed that young men throughout the diocese would be open to hearing the call that God has placed in their hearts to become the living instrument of His love and mercy that priests are formed to be.

(For more information on vocations in the Diocese of Bridgeport email: Vocations@diobpt.org.)



ON THE COVER

Bishop Caggiano celebrates the Pontifical Mass consecrating the diocese to St. Joseph on Friday March 19, at St. Augustine Cathedral. Faithful throughout the diocese watched the live-stream Mass.

PHOTOS BY AMY MORTENSEN

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The Year of St. Joseph

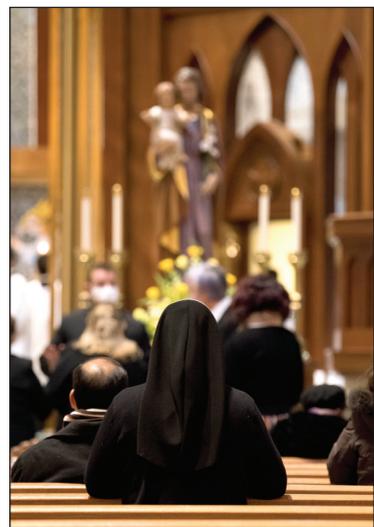
Consecration Mass launches diocesan renewal

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano launched a diocesan-wide renewal on March 19, when he consecrated the Diocese of Bridgeport to the protection and intercession of St. Joseph, the Patron of the Universal Church, during this Year of St. Joseph proclaimed by Pope Francis.

The bishop celebrated a Pontifical Mass on the Feast of St. Joseph, at St. Augustine Cathedral while pastors throughout the diocese simultaneously celebrated Mass, linking the diocese together in prayer and purpose.

Describing St. Joseph as a husband, father and saint who exemplified the saying, “Actions speak louder than words,” Bishop Caggiano said, “You and I come here, my friends, not simply to ask for his help, not simply to seek his protection, but to follow his example.”

In stark contrast to last March when the state was in lockdown, about 200 people were able to attend the Mass in person while observing the recommended six feet of social distancing, and hundreds of others participated by watching the live-stream of the Mass in their homes. The bishop



celebrated Mass and delivered his homily while wearing a blue surgical mask.

Twice during the evening—immediately after the homily and again at the end of Mass—the bishop knelt and prayed before the new statue of St. Joseph, which depicts him lovingly cradling the Christ Child in his right arm. He said new statue of St. Joseph will be formally installed and blessed at the Cathedral during a special Mass on May 2.

Calling the faithful to action, during his homily, he said, “In this singular moment in the life of the Church in this singular moment in the life of our world, now is the time we turn to Joseph to ask him to protect us, to guide us, to defend us, to inspire us to a mission that no longer needs words but faithful, humble, obedient action. For it is in our deeds that the world will see what Joseph saw. It is in our actions that the Lord will glimpse he who Joseph is carrying with his arms outstretched as a child, ready to stretch out his arms on the cross so that the love that he bore for us will set us free.”

The Mass was a culmination of a week-long Novena to St. Joseph, calling upon him to intercede for the diocese during this year of celebration, proclaimed by Pope Francis in observance of the 150th anniversary of St.

Joseph being named Patron of the Universal Church by Blessed Pius IX. The pope also issued an Apostolic Letter titled *Patris corde*, (“With a Father’s Heart”) in order “to increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal.”

In his apostolic letter, Pope Francis describe Joseph as “a hidden presence” and “a man in the shadows.” Similarly, Bishop Caggiano observed, “Today we honor a man who has no directly recorded words in all of Sacred Scripture, and yet we come here to honor him as patron and guardian, defender and protector. Of all the members of the human race—second only to the Mother of God—to this man, this simple carpenter, was given a great mission: to protect and guard the Savior and Redeemer of all things and his Sacred Virgin Mother.”

Joseph accomplished the great mission he was given through the obedience that characterized his life and the humility that was the foundation of his spiritual relationship with God. He would not have chosen to leave everything behind and go in exile to Egypt, but he followed God’s will.

Joseph was given the great gift of an intimate, personal and lov-

diocese embarks upon is a “grave one,” he said. “You and I follow in the footsteps of the carpenter. We are given the mission to be the guardians of the Truth, who is the person of Jesus alive in our midst, here in this Mystical Body.”

Echoing the theme of his pastoral exhortation, Bishop Caggiano said that just as Joseph found power in his intimate rela-



ing relationship with God, whom he was given to protect. This was the “wellspring of his power,” the bishop said. The faithful of the diocese have also been given a great mission on the day of their Baptism, he said.

“Did you and I not also receive this great task to be the protector and defender of the Lord’s presence in the world?” he said. “That faith that binds us as a family, for each time you and I are out in the world, caring for the sick, the poor and the homeless, when you did it for the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it for me.”

The mission of renewal that the

relationship with God, we must do the same.

“For that reason my friends, I have invited you into that Upper Room to sit with the Lord, his foster son and our God,” Bishop Caggiano said, referring to his “Call to Renewal” through personal prayer, reconciliation with Christ and reception of the Holy Eucharist.

For more information about the bishop’s “Call to Renewal” and other Masses and activities that are planned throughout the year, visit the special web page: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/call-to-renewal.

Holy Week

Live-streamed and online Masses to be celebrated by Bishop Caggiano

Palm Sunday—March 28

Online Mass—8 am

Holy Thursday—April 1

Chrism Mass—10 am

Mass of the Lord’s Supper—7 pm

Good Friday—April 2

Celebration of the Passion of the Lord—3 pm

Easter Vigil Mass—April 3

Mass—8 pm

All of these events will be live-streamed, and will take place at St. Augustine Cathedral. Anyone planning to attend must go to the Cathedral website and register. The Chrism Mass is using a tiered registration system, open to priests, then deacons followed by the curia.

2021 Annual Catholic Appeal

ACA supports bishop's 'Call to Renewal'

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

BRIDGEPORT—The “ARISE” 2021 Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) is off to an encouraging start with \$2.9 million pledged toward an overall goal of \$8.1 million in support of Bishop Frank J. Caggiano’s “A Call to Renewal” along with ongoing programs and ministries.

The 2021 ACA moves forward at a hopeful moment with the arrival of vaccines and many parishioners beginning to return to in-person Mass around the diocese.

“I come to you with real, joyful hope because as this pandemic begins to recede, you and I are given this wonderful opportunity, creatively and imaginatively, to set our Church on a path of growth by offering new initiatives and new opportunities to engage our youth and welcome people back to Church.”

The bishop said he is particularly grateful for those who have already generously given to the 2021 Annual Catholic Appeal, which is both looking forward to the future, but also working to address the ongoing needs of those who have been left behind as a result of the pandemic.

“This is not the time for us to turn our backs away from those

in need,” the bishop said. “For the need remains urgent, and many suffer from the effects of this pandemic and will continue to do so for a long time as we work to recover.”

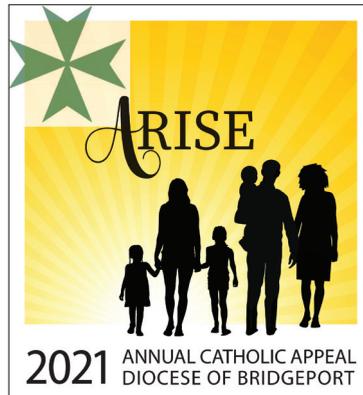
Joe Gallagher, chief development officer of the diocese, said this year’s ACA will provide the financial resources for many of the initiatives outlined in the bishop’s recent Pastoral Exhortation, “Let Us Enter the Upper Room with the Lord.”

“In his Pastoral Exhortation the bishop has issued a “Call to Renewal,” which includes the designation of Centers of Mercy and Centers of Eucharistic Adoration to enable all to deepen their faith, said Gallagher.

Likewise, orientation and training has already begun for men and women of all ages throughout the diocese who are interested in becoming “Ambassadors,” who will share their faith with others and go out into the community later in the year to evangelize in person.

Planning is also underway for the development of four pastoral centers focusing on family life, Catholic culture and sacred arts, young adult entrepreneurship and evangelization in order to move the diocese forward in renewal.

“The seed money for these new and exciting programs will



come from the ACA, and it will support the renewal efforts,” said Gallagher.

In describing “A Call to Renewal” Bishop Caggiano said it is not a formal process or program but a series of opportunities for people to deepen their faith, serve others and go out into community to address the needs of our entire family of faith. “We can become ambassadors of Christ in the world,” he said.

Pam Rittman, director of the ACA, said that in addition to supporting the bishop’s “A Call to Renewal,” the ACA continues to fund the major diocesan ministries and services available to all people in the diocese throughout the year.

“As a Catholic community we care deeply about the vulnerable and underserved parishioners within

the Diocese of Bridgeport, many of whom are members of our inner-city churches and have been hardest hit by the pandemic,” she said.

Rittman said the need for nutrition, counseling and immigration services through Catholic Charities has remained elevated throughout the crisis while some parishes have required emergency support. Many families throughout the diocese have depended on the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund to support their choice of Catholic education for their children and because of the pandemic, there has been an increase in enrollment.

“The bishop has taught us that those in need are our brothers and sisters, and we must work to help them to feel welcome in our Church as part of our diocesan families. We need to stand with them and accompany them,” she said.

Rittman said the ACA is an opportunity for the people of the diocese to invest in the future of young people and the vibrancy of the entire faith community, while also continuing to support essential ministries that do the work of feeding and sheltering the poor, reaching out to the elderly, and serving all those who are vulnerable and troubled.

She added that a new revenue sharing plan allows each parish

to designate their over goal funds to a specific ministry or diocesan mission program, another parish facing financial hardship, or for their own parish general operating needs. Each pastor, along with their parish council and finance committees, determine where the funds will be directed.

“We’re asking people to give according to their means at a time when there is much need, great hope and a shared vision for the future, and we are grateful for each and every gift no matter what people give,” she said.

Donations may be made by using the envelope in this issue or online at: www.2021ACA-Bridgeport.com. You may also donate by texting the word APPEAL to 475.241.7849 to make your pledge. Please visit the website to view the 2021 Appeal video and learn more. ■

For the 2020 Annual Catholic Appeal, the following provides a correction to the figures for St. Thomas More Parish.

- Goal—\$450,000
- Pledged—\$478,158
- % over goal—+6.3%

The diocesan Development Team would like to thank the parishioners of St. Thomas More for their commitment to supporting the ministries of the diocese.

Eucharistic ambassador formation sessions begin

By **ELIZABETH CLYONS**

Approximately 140 participants gathered virtually online recently for the first online session for the Eucharistic Ambassador formation called for by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano in his recent pastoral exhortation “Let Us Enter the Upper Room with the Lord.”

In his exhortation, the bishop requested that the ambassadors be recommended by pastors based on their love for the faith and their willingness to use the months ahead to undergo intensive personal and spiritual formation to prepare themselves to be missionary ambassadors of Christ.

The initiative began with participants watching a video, then breaking into separate break-out rooms for parishes for reflection and discussion. The main theme

of the first session was: “What do you seek?” based on John 1:38.

Father Michael Novajosky is serving as special assistant to the bishop and leader of the



FATHER MICHAEL NOVAJOSKY

initiative, which will continue with virtual sessions for the next seven weeks. The initial session presented an overview of the period of discernment/formation for

those who are participating in the ambassador training

“The program has been very well received,” says Father Novajosky, noting that well over 200 participants from more than 25 parishes and the chancery have been presented by their pastors. “It is nice to see people coming out and being interested.”

“People are happy to come just to be able to pray together and share the faith with others,” explains Father Novajosky. “They are very encouraged by the idea of going out to people, helping them live their faith and inspiring them to come back to church.”

Father Novajosky said the ambassador formation process hopes to offer in-person sessions and activities as conditions permit.

Deacon Patrick Toole, episcopal vicar for administration,

attended the first session and was encouraged by the prayerful enthusiasm of participants and the hopeful tone going forward. “The session was well done. The ambassadors were really engaged in the process and they had great discussions in their break-out groups. They were very enthusiastic about the whole concept,” said Deacon Toole.

In Bishop Caggiano’s recent pastoral exhortation “Let Us Enter the Upper Room with the Lord,” he explained to the diocesan faithful his desire to form eucharistic ambassadors.

“I will need the assistance of co-workers who will not be afraid to go out into their communities to invite people to encounter the Lord and His mercy,” wrote the bishop.

When ready, they will be sent out into their community, under

the care of their local pastor, to invite those who have left active participation in the life of the Church to return home.

“In time, this same invitation will be extended to people of good will and anyone searching for the real meaning of life. For such meaning is found only in the Lord Jesus,” said the bishop.

The first sessions are based on deepening the faith through basic questions and reflections, utilizing the program called “The Search” provided by the Augustine Institute. The formation will include a period of discernment for those who might wonder if this particular opportunity is something the Lord is calling them to do.

(For more info visit the renewal website www.bridgeportdiocese.org/call-to-renewal.) ■

2021 Annual Catholic Appeal



2021 ANNUAL CATHOLIC APPEAL
DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

GIFTS TO THE APPEAL HELP MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO:



Provide over **1.3 million meals** each year, **10,000 counseling sessions** and housing assistance through Catholic Charities



Educate and train **8 men for ordination to the Permanent Diaconate**



Award over **\$2.7 million in financial assistance** for Catholic education through the Bishop's Scholarship Fund for young people across the Diocese



Care for **74 senior priests** in their dignified retirement



Ensure children and young adults have opportunities to **participate in religious education** programs



Afford our youth with meaningful opportunities to mature as holy and active members of society through a wide range of **faith-based programs**



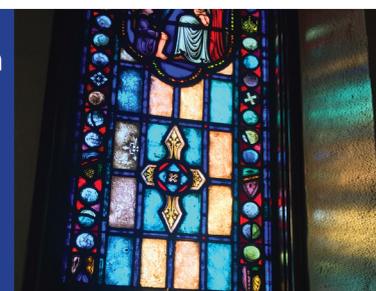
Educate and train **23 men for ordination** to priesthood in our Diocese



Respond to spiritual, educational and social needs of persons with disabilities through the **St. Catherine Center for Special Needs**

The Annual Catholic Appeal provides seed money for the Bishop's "Call to Renewal," which *celebrates*

the return to in-person Mass and supports the creation of four pastoral centers focusing on family life, culture and arts, young adult entrepreneurship and evangelization.



The Annual Catholic Appeal assists all people in the Diocese through works of faith and ministry, education and catechesis; and charity and pastoral services throughout Fairfield County.

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For more information please call (203) 416-1470



Parish Centers of Mercy

Centers of Mercy open throughout the diocese

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

BRIDGEPORT—Parish Centers of Mercy are now open throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport to offer expanded and evening Confession times along with Eucharistic Adoration opportunities.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano called for the opening Centers of Mercy as an important step in renewing the diocese and the welcoming people back to Church in his Pastoral Exhortation, "Let us Enter the Upper Room with the Lord."

"An essential ingredient in the spiritual and pastoral revival of every community of faith is fostering ever greater availability to the Sacrament of Penance," said Bishop Caggiano in making available the complete list of Confession and Adoration schedules.

"Before we invite others to experience the liberating word of God's forgiveness, should we not take this privileged time to relearn how to examine our conscience, admit our sinfulness and seek the forgiveness of our sins through the Sacrament of Penance?" he said.

The bishop said he recognized that the pandemic has created obstacles for many who wish

to approach the Sacrament of Penance and to participate in Eucharistic Adoration.

For that reason, he re-established and expanded the Centers of Mercy that were originally opened in the diocese during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (2015).

The bishop thanked the nine priests who are serving as deans (representing the territorial and pastoral boundaries of the diocese) and to all priests who will be hearing Confessions.

"As we begin our efforts to overcome the debilitating effects of the pandemic and to seize this moment as a time for spiritual and pastoral renewal, I wish to express my thanks for your consideration of this opportunity to serve the faithful of your parish and deanery," he said.

The designated Centers of Mercy, along with the parishes already offering the Sacrament of Penance throughout the diocese, will observe every protocol needed to maintain the safety of penitent and priest alike.

(For a complete list of parish Confession and Adoration schedules, visit the new Call to Renewal page on the diocesan website: www.bridgeport-diocese.org/call-to-renewal.)

Confession times along with Eucharistic Adoration

CAUSE OF OUR JOY DEANERY (Stamford)

Holy Spirit

Confessions: Tuesday 7-8:30 pm
Tuesday 7-9 pm (During Lent & Advent)

MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH DEANERY (Greenwich)

Saint Mary

Confessions: Tuesday 7-8:30 pm
Saturday 2:45-3:45 pm
Eucharistic Adoration: First Friday of the month 12:30-5 pm

MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE DEANERY (Darien, New Canaan, Norwalk)

St. Thomas More, Darien

Confession: Tuesday 7-8 pm
Saturday 3:45-4:15 pm
Sunday 8:15-8:45 am and 4:45-5:15 pm
Eucharistic Adoration: Tuesday 7-8 pm
First Friday 9:30 am-5 pm

Mystical Rose Deanery (Shelton, Stratford)

Saint James, Stratford

Confessions: Saturday 12:15-1:30 pm
Eucharistic Adoration: Drive-up only, held 24/7

Saint Lawrence, Shelton (Huntington)

Confessions: Saturday 4-4:45 pm
Sunday 11-11:30 am
Languages available: English
Eucharistic Adoration: First Friday from 9 am-6 pm

Saint Mark, Stratford

Confessions: Saturday 3:30-4:30 pm
Languages available: English
Eucharistic Adoration: Friday 1-4 pm

OUR LADY, QUEEN OF CONFESSORS DEANERY (Bethel, Brookfield, Danbury, New Fairfield, Sherman)

Saint Joseph, Brookfield

Confessions: Tuesday 7-8 pm
Saturday 4-4:45 pm (or by appointment)
Eucharistic Adoration: Tuesday 7-8 pm

QUEEN ASSUMED INTO HEAVEN DEANERY (Easton, Fairfield, Westport)

Our Lady of the Assumption, Fairfield

Confessions: Tuesday from 7-8 pm
Saturday 1:30-2:30 pm
Eucharistic Adoration: Tuesday 7-8 pm
First Friday of the month from 8 am Friday to 7:15 am Saturday

St. Pius X, Fairfield

Confessions: Wednesday 7-8 pm
Saturday 4-5 pm
Eucharistic Adoration: Tuesday 8-9 pm

Saint Thomas Aquinas, Fairfield

Confessions: Tuesday from 7-8:30 pm
Saturday from 4-4:45 pm

QUEEN OF MARTYRS DEANERY (Monroe, Newtown, Trumbull)

Saint Catherine of Siena, Trumbull

Confessions: Tuesday 6-8 pm
Saturday 3:30-4:30 pm (or by appointment)
During Lent: Tuesday 6:30-8:30 pm
Eucharistic Adoration: Tuesday 6-8 pm
During Lent: 6:30-8:30 pm

Saint Theresa, Trumbull

Confessions: Thursday 7-8:30 pm
Friday 7:30-8 am and 4:30-5:30 pm
Saturday from 3-4 pm

QUEEN OF PEACE DEANERY (Bridgeport)

Saint Augustine Cathedral

Confessions: Monday through Thursday 11:15-11:55 am (English)
Wednesday from 6:15-7 pm (English)
Sunday before and following 2:30 pm Mass (Vietnamese)
Languages available: English and Vietnamese
Eucharistic Adoration: Monday through Friday from 11 am-12 pm

Saint Charles Borromeo

Confessions: Thursday 7:30-9 pm
Saturday 11 am-12 pm & 3-4 pm (or by appointment)
Languages available: English, French Creole, Portuguese & Spanish
Eucharistic Adoration: Thursday after 7 pm Mass
First Saturday of the month after 8 am Mass until 1 pm

SEAT OF WISDOM DEANERY (Georgetown, Redding Ridge, Ridgefield, Weston, Wilton)

Saint Francis of Assisi, Weston

Confessions: Saturday 4-4:45 pm
Sunday from 4-6 pm
Eucharistic Adoration: Wednesday from 3-8 pm (in the main church)

Saint Theresa

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
The Mother Church of Trumbull

Rev. Brian P. Gannon, *Pastor* — Rev. Flavian Bejan, *Parochial Vicar* — Rev. David C. Leopold, *in Residence*
Deacon Gerald M. Lambert — Dr. Aymeric Dupre La Tour, *Interim Music Director*

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE 2021

MONDAY-WEDNESDAY

Daily Mass – 8:00 am, 12:00 noon and 5:30 pm

WEDNESDAY, March 31

Tenebrae Service – 7:30 pm

HOLY THURSDAY – April 1

Morning Prayer – 8:00 am

Celebration of the Lord's Supper – 7:30 pm

Adoration at the Altar of Repose – 8:30 pm to Midnight

GOOD FRIDAY – April 2

Morning Prayer – 8:00 am

Commemoration of the Lord's Passion – 3:00 pm

Solemn Stations – 7:30 pm

HOLY SATURDAY – April 3

Morning Prayer – 8:00 am

Blessing of Easter Food – 12:00 noon

Easter Vigil – 7:30 pm

EASTER SUNDAY – April 4

(Please note change from regular Sunday schedule)

7:00 am, 8:00 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am and 12:30 pm

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

CONFESSION SCHEDULE

Tuesday – 7:00-8:30 pm

Holy Thursday – 3:30-4:30 pm

Good Friday – 11:00 am-12:00 noon and 4:30-5:00 pm

Holy Saturday – 10:30 am-12:00 noon



HOLY WEEK

AT ST. PIUS X CATHOLIC CHURCH

Monday, March 29

Reconciliation Monday // Confession available
3 PM – 9 PM in the Church

Holy Thursday, April 1

Mass of the Lord's Supper // 7 PM
Altar of Repose available for private prayer until 11 PM

Good Friday, April 2

Morning Prayer // 8:30 AM
Stations of the Cross // Noon
Celebration of the Lord's Passion // 3 PM
Tenebrae // 7 PM

Holy Saturday, April 3

Morning Prayer // 8:30 AM
Blessing of Easter food // 10 AM, Church
Confessions // 4 – 5 PM
Easter Vigil // 7:30 PM

Easter Sunday

7:30 AM // 9 AM // 10:30 AM // Noon Masses
Overflow seating in the Community Room

CHURCH ONLINE

834 BROOKSIDE DRIVE
FAIRFIELD, CT 06824
203.255.6134 SECRETARY@ST-PIUS.ORG



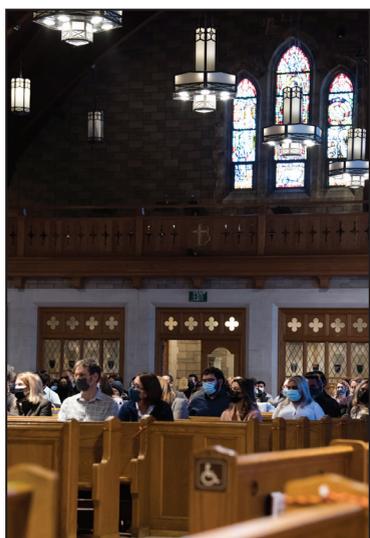
@stpiusxflld

Rite of Election

Bishop to candidates: 'You are most welcome...'

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

TRUMBULL— Bishop Frank J. Caggiano welcomed 100 men and women into full communion with the Catholic Church at Sunday's Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion at



St. Theresa Church in Trumbull. "Today the Lord, through the Mystery of the Mystical Body, the Church, is going to elect you; that is, confirm the call you have

received in the quiet of your heart; the call that was given to you by the Lord, Himself," said the bishop during his homily.

The bishop assured the participants that he and all the members of the Church would be praying for them in the weeks ahead, as they continue their preparation to receive the sacraments of initiation. "You are most welcome," the bishop said.

"There is a profound lesson to be contemplated," explained Bishop Caggiano, reminding the participants that their journey in faith is one that all the faithful must continue throughout their lives. "For the reality of the temptations in our lives are real. The tendency to fall into those temptations can be deadly, and so what is it that the Lord requires?"

The bishop explained the struggle that lies within all of us. "Temptation, my friends, is when we're given a choice between doing what is good, right and moral, or to do what is disordered or evil or sinful."

"That choice has power over

us when it engages our hearts," he said. "It is the desires of our heart that can at times get us in trouble."

The bishop explained that we cannot find peace in our hearts from what the world wants us to consume—power, pleasure, possessions, privilege, prophet, and so many other things.

"To win over temptation is not simply knowing what's right or wrong it is to contain, to train, to bring to conversion my heart and yours," said the bishop.

"And you, my friends, election candidates, as you continue this journey you are going through, it is more than an invitation to simply know what the Church teaches, but it is also to train your heart... to allow these desires to lead you to the one desire that matters—the desire you have encountered already in your hearts."

The bishop explained that in the Gospel reading of Jesus' temptation in the desert, he was teaching us how to overcome temptations. The bishop assured that Jesus did not experience temptations as we do, because



THIS YEAR'S RITE OF ELECTION welcomed 100 men and women into full communion with the Catholic Church.

His heart is singular and pure, not divided as ours is.

The bishop posed the question: How can you and I look the devil in the face and walk away? He answered: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

"St. Augustine said one sentence that has been repeated and echoed for centuries," the bishop said. "Our hearts are restless until they rest with thee, O God."

This liturgical rite, traditionally held on the first Sunday of Lent, is part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) process. It closes the period of formation and marks the beginning of the period of final preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter.

To properly adhere to COVID-19 protocols, attendees were asked only to sit together if

they were related or live together. Sponsors and godparents did not have to sit with the candidates and/or catechumens. Clergy and parish staff could sit wherever they please as well, following social-distancing guidelines.

After the homily, catechumens' and candidates' names were read aloud, as they were asked to stand with their godparents/sponsors and recite the responses provided.

All social-distancing and COVID-19 protocols were followed. The event was live-streamed at: www.sttheresatrubull.org.

(For more information regarding RCIA and adult formation, contact Dr. Patrick Donovan, executive director of The Leadership Institute at: pdonovan@diobpt.org.)



THE PARISH OF ST. CECILIA-ST. GABRIEL

The following Holy Week services will be held at St. Cecilia Church (1184 Newfield Ave) except where noted*

Holy Thursday

Mass of the Lord's Supper 7:30 p.m.
Altar Repose until 11:30 p.m.

Good Friday

Liturgy of the Lord's Passion 3:00 p.m.
Stations of the Cross 7:00 p.m.

Holy Saturday

Blessing of Easter Food 12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.
Solemn Easter Vigil 8:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday

Mass at St. Cecilia at 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
*Mass at St. Gabriel (948 Newfield Ave) at 10:00 a.m.

Welcome Home

Come Celebrate Easter at St. James Parish

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Palm Sunday, March 28

Vigil (Saturday, Mar. 27) 4:30 PM (in Church)
Sunday 8:30 AM, 11:30 AM (Outside/Rooftop) and 6:00 PM (in Church)

Holy Week

Holy Thursday, April 1

8:00 AM—Morning Prayer (in Church)
7:30 PM—Mass of the Lord's Supper and the Washing of Feet (in Church)

Good Friday, April 2

8:00 AM—Morning Prayer 12:00 PM—My Personal Way of the Cross
3:00 PM—Celebration of the Lord's Passion 7:00 PM—Stations of the Cross
(All Good Friday Masses will be celebrated in Church)

Holy Saturday, April 3

8:00 AM—Morning Prayer (in Church) 10:00 AM—Blessing of Easter Food (in Parking Lot)
7:30 PM—Easter Vigil (in Church)

Easter Sunday, April 4

7:00 AM—Sunrise Mass (in Church)
8:30 AM, 11:30 AM (both Masses will be Outside/Rooftop)
There will be no 6:00 PM Mass

Remember—You must register in order to attend any of the Masses listed above. You can make a reservation on the St. James web-site >>>> www.stjamesstratford.com.

Year of St. Joseph

'He is the Perfect Saint to Befriend Us'

By **EMILY CLARK**

TRUMBULL—As Catholics worldwide begin the observance of the Year of St. Joseph, a group of local parishioners gathered weekly in preparation for a special consecration to this Patron of the Universal Church.

Father Terrence Walsh, pastor of Christ the King Church in Trumbull, organized this prayer group around Father Donald H. Calloway's text "Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father," with the hope that his participants would grow in their love and devotion to this saint.

"Joseph is our spiritual father, a role model who intercedes for us," said Father Walsh. "He has a real effect on our lives and helps to orient our spiritual well-being."

When someone is "consecrated to St. Joseph," Father Walsh said, they make a special commitment to him, entrusting themselves entirely to his care as he leads them to God. "You have to want that consecration. It's an act of will. It's like saying to him, 'You're the boss!'" Father Walsh added.

With the Solemnity of St. Joseph falling close to Easter, many participants, including JoAnn Zimmerman, said this

prayer group was an ideal Lenten observance and would aid in centering them in their spiritual life. "I decided that this would be a wonderful way to spend this season of reflection and preparation before the celebration of Easter," said Zimmerman, a parishioner at Christ the King.

To better understand the presence of St. Joseph's paternal love, the 25 members of this group have followed the "33-Day Preparation" outlined in Father Calloway's book.

This includes short daily readings of commentary from the author, scripture passages, and inspirational words from other saints, ending with the Litany of St. Joseph. During the Monday evening meetings on Zoom, Father Walsh begins by sharing his observations and interpretations of the readings, interspersed with personal anecdotes, and then opens the conversation for participants to offer their own comments, some serious, some emotional but always unique, as every person seems to have their own reason for the saint's importance in their lives.



FATHER TERRENCE WALSH, pastor, Christ the King Parish in Trumbull. (file photos)



"The book reads like a treasure trove of stories surrounding this most silent saint," Gina Cosgrove, a member of the group, said of the text. "He is the perfect saint to befriend us, whatever our situation. I'm just beginning to appreciate what a marvelous spiritual father we have in St. Joseph."

Father Walsh said he enjoys the "beautiful camaraderie" the participants have as they look to live out their faith and help one another. "Everyone is interested in growing in their knowledge and love. We could talk for hours!"

he said, noting how quickly the 60-minute sessions fly by. "We all have the joy of the same mind and purpose. This group reminds me of coming together and breaking bread as a family."

The perspective of a "family" emerges in all the readings and discussions as participants come to better see St. Joseph as the head of the Holy Family, the loving foster father of Jesus, and the dignified, virtuous husband of Mary, "a gentleman, a protector, and a man pure of heart," writes Father Calloway. He tells readers that "now is the time of St. Joseph," as the world greatly needs him and his role as defender of the family—the foundation of society—with marriage at the

heart of creation and redemption.

According to Father Calloway, St. Joseph is also "the Increaser," having the power to increase the presence of God in one's life, which then encourages followers to spread the saint's virtues to others. As a catechist at Christ the King, Zimmerman said she often shares readings from the text with her students. "This helps them better understand Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—the models of a beautiful, loving and humble family that we should all try to emulate," she said.

"Devotion to St. Joseph has blossomed," said Father Walsh, "and is now in full bloom. The world is in need, and he is the one to help us." ■

We wish you a Happy Easter

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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.

BM

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.

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

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EMR

St. Catherine of Siena, Trumbull

St. Catherine of Siena celebrates St. Joseph

TRUMBULL—A new stained glass window depicting the Blessed of the Church was dedicated on Friday, March 19, on the Solemnity of St. Joseph at The Parish of St. Catherine of Siena.

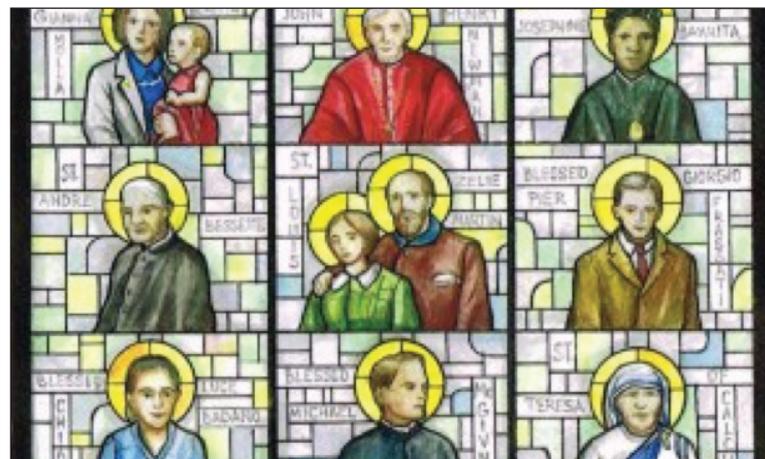
St. Joseph is the spouse of Mary, the holy Mother of God and the earthly step-father of Jesus Christ. Pope Francis has declared that this is the Year of St. Joseph, which coincides with the 150th Anniversary of the Proclamation of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church.

At this Mass, a new stained glass window was blessed and dedicated in the church. The new window depicts ten Saints and Blesseds who lived in recent centuries and who represent various states of life in the Church, as follows:

- St. Gianna Beretta Molla: wife, mother, doctor
- St. André Bessette: Religious Brother
- Blessed Chiara Luce Badano: young lay woman
- St. John Henry Newman: priest and theologian
- Sts. Louis & Zélie Martin: married couple; parents of St. Therese of Lisieux; the first married couple to be canonized together; their feast day is July 12, their wedding anniversary
- Blessed Michael McGivney: diocesan priest and founder of the Knights of Columbus
- St. Josephine Bakhita: Religious Sister
- Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati: young lay man
- St. Teresa of Calcutta:

Religious Sister and foundress of the Missionaries of Charity
The window will be located just beside the baptismal font, and its location is intentional. “The window will serve to highlight the important truth that through the Sacrament of Baptism comes the vocation to holiness in all the various states of life in the Church: marriage, single life, priesthood and consecrated,” said Father Joseph Marcell, pastor.

Father Marcello celebrated Mass on Friday, March 19, at 7 pm to give thanks to God for the life and example of St. Joseph, step-father of Jesus Christ, and Patron of the Universal Church. The Mass was live-streamed on the parish website, YouTube channel and Facebook page.



THE NEW STAINED GLASS WINDOW at St. Catherine’s depicts ten Saints and Blesseds who lived in recent centuries and who represent various states of life in the Church.

(The Parish of St. Catherine of Siena is located at 220 Shelton Road, in Trumbull. For more information

visit the Parish Website at [www. StCathTrumbull.com](http://www.StCathTrumbull.com). Or contact the parish office at 203.377.3133.)



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Wishing you a blessed and Happy Easter

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EDITORIAL

COVID-19 Vaccinations

On March 4, the Connecticut Catholic Conference issued the following statement from the state's Catholic bishops concerning the use of COVID-19 Vaccines:

"People should feel free in good conscience to receive any of the vaccines currently available (Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson) for the sake of their own health and the common good, which requires the prompt vaccination of as many people as possible. This guidance is in accord with what has been stated by both the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Holy See in Rome. At the same time, the Church continues to advocate for the creation of vaccines that do not rely on cell lines derived, even remotely, from abortion."

As most eagerly wait to receive the vaccines, we should also consider this concern expressed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in a recent statement urging universal vaccination:

"The pandemic has also revived our sense that we are a global community and that each of us is indeed each other's keeper. While the growing availability of vaccines is a clear sign of hope that this pandemic, too, will pass, that hope must be given to every human being on the planet by making the vaccines universally available. Richer nations and pharmaceutical companies must work together to ensure that no nation, no person is left behind."

Eucharistic Ambassadors

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano's "Call to Renewal" in his recent Pastoral Exhortation, "Let us enter the Upper Room with the Lord," is already bearing fruit across the diocese.

The bishop formally launched the period of renewal by consecrating the diocese to St. Joseph on March 19 in a Mass that was livestreamed from St. Augustine Cathedral on the Solemnity of St. Joseph.

One encouraging example of the renewal underway is the enthusiastic response to the bishop's call for Eucharistic Ambassadors. Earlier this month, more than 140 men and women gathered for the first session of the Eucharistic Ambassador training the bishop outlined in his exhortation letter. All told, more than 200 ambassadors from 30 parishes will participate in the evangelization effort.

We wish to extend our gratitude to all those who have stepped forward to participate in the Eucharistic Ambassador discernment and training. We ask for prayers as they begin their faith journey and seek to deepen their own spirituality as they prepare to go out into the community and invite all back to church. They are true signs of hope and a blessing to their parishes and the diocese.

Awaiting Easter

"Christ's victory is our victory," Bishop Caggiano proclaimed when he celebrated Mass in the nearly empty St. Augustine Cathedral last Easter. Throughout the darkest hours of the pandemic when the state was in lockdown due to Coronavirus restrictions, the bishop acknowledged the fear and loss that many were feeling, and he urged us to take courage in prayer and Spiritual Communion.

Now, it appears we may have turned the corner on the pandemic, and we look forward to Easter with much hope. We should take this moment to remember those whom we have lost and the many others who have suffered hardship. Let us also acknowledge that we have been blessed by the leadership of Bishop Caggiano; by the faithful witness of our pastors, priests, deacons and religious; and by all those who have given of themselves sacrificially so that our Churches, schools and charitable programs have been able to remain open during a year of disruption.

As we prepare to enter Holy Week and celebrate the most sacred mysteries of our faith, we can find strength and gratitude in Bishop Caggiano's words: "Even if we cannot fully understand the mystery of Christ's love for us, our unique observance of Holy Week assures us in quiet and ordinary ways that Christ has triumphed over suffering, sin and death itself. He will never abandon us in the hour of our greatest need. For His victory is our victory. His resurrected life is our promise of new life."

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Grosso chosen to participate in Vatican Social Media project



BRIDGEPORT—John Grosso, director of digital media of the Diocese of Bridgeport, has been chosen by the Holy See's Dicastery for Communications to be part of an international digital media program.

Grosso, a native of Stamford, was among sixteen individuals under age thirty-five from a dozen countries across the globe who were chosen to be part of the Vatican project. Since joining the diocese in 2015, he has innovated its social media program across multiple platforms and overseen the transition to live-streamed Masses and other digital initiatives during the pandemic crisis.

CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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



PASTOR

REVEREND JOSEPH A. MARCELLO, reappointed as Pastor of Saint Catherine of Siena for a term of six years. Effective date was February 1.

EPISCOPAL VICAR

REVEREND PETER F. LENOX, appointed to full time Episcopal Vicar for Liturgy and Worship. Father Lenox will remain in residence at Sacred Heart Parish, Georgetown.

REVEREND PAWEL HREBENKO, appointed to Episcopal Vicar for Polish Catholics. Effective date was February 3 for a term of three years.

PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND RAYMOND M. SCHERBA, from Assistant Chaplain Saint John Paull II Care Center Danbury, to Parochial Vicar, Sacred Heart Parish, Danbury. Effective date was February 15. Father Scherba will continue as part-time Assistant

Chaplain at Danbury Hospital.

NURSING HOME CHAPLAIN

REVEREND LOURDURAJ PITCHAI, from Parochial Vicar, Saint Mary Parish, Ridgefield, to Chaplain, Saint Joseph Manor, Trumbull and in residence at Saint Stephen Parish, Trumbull. Effective date was February 15.

REVEREND DONALD L. KLOSTER, from Chaplain, Saint Joseph Manor, Trumbull, to Chaplain, Saint John Paul II Care Center, Danbury. Effective date was February 15.

RESIDENCE

REVEREND COLIN BLATCHFORD, from Saint Augustine Cathedral Rectory, Bridgeport, to Saint Pius X Rectory, Fairfield. Effective date was February 24.

SABBATICAL

REVEREND JOHN J. INSERRA, extended sabbatical through April 30.

REVEREND BRUCE F. ROBY,

Sabbatical. Effective date is February 1, through April 30.

PRIEST COMMITTEE FOR HISPANIC MINISTRY

REVEREND MIGUEL ANGEL BERNAL RODRIGUEZ, appointed to serve on the Priest Committee for Hispanic ministry. Effective date was February 24 for a term of two years.

REVEREND JUAN GABRIEL ACOSTA, appointed to serve on the Priest Committee for Hispanic ministry. Effective date was February 24 for a term of two years.

REVEREND ROLANDO TORRES, appointed to serve on the Priest Committee for Hispanic ministry. Effective date was February 24 for a term of two years.

REVEREND JOSÉ A. VÁSQUEZ, appointed to serve on the Priest Committee for Hispanic ministry. Effective date was February 24 for a term of two years.

*Reverend Francis T. Hoffmann
Vicar for Clergy, March, 2021*

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USPS no.: 12-117. Periodical postage paid at Bridgeport, CT 06601, and additional mailing offices.

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Publisher

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Circulation

Every registered Catholic household in Fairfield County is entitled to a subscription. To cancel, change or add an address, please email: fcc@diobpt.org

Annual Subscription Price

\$20 (within diocese)
\$50 (outside diocese)

Postmaster

send address changes to:
Fairfield County Catholic
238 Jewett Avenue
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06606-2892

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Editorial



Sometimes our decisions require a 'leap of faith'

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.

During this Lenten season, I often think of the disciples and the difficult decisions they had to make in their lives.

They knew that leaving their homes to follow Jesus was the right thing to do. This was not the safe or expected decision. Presumably, they had jobs and families and other responsibilities. But they knew that they simply could not remain where they were after encountering Christ and experiencing what they had.

I am sure that people advised

them against this decision, and I am sure they had to repeatedly explain themselves to others. But they had a conviction that even though their decision was risky, the payback would be worth it. And, in fact, the payback was more than they ever could have imagined.

When we make a decision in our lives that others may not understand, we tend to be met with a barrage of unsolicited advice. Though often well-meaning, if we're not specifically seeking out advice, this can cause unnecessary pressure to explain ourselves and

our decisions—particularly if someone is young and trying to find her or his way in life.

People will always have their thoughts about what others do or don't do. The thing is, the big decisions you make in your life, especially if they are directly related to your own happiness or well-being, are ultimately between you and God.

If you have taken this decision to prayer and thought out all aspects in a meaningful and intentional way, there is no need to defend your decisions to others.

I am a people-pleaser by nature. A typical middle-child and mediator, I am always tuned-in to how what I do and say makes other people feel. This can be a great asset, but also a great drawback. I have had to unlearn these tendencies over the years, because I have learned that I cannot always be responsible for the happiness and comfort of others.

Like the disciples, we can't live our lives based on what others are

going to think. God knows the deepest desires of our hearts, and he desires for us to know happiness. He leads us to the things that he has meant for us, even if the path may seem long and winding.

If we hold onto this trust that God will guide us in our lives and in our decision-making, we simply cannot be lead astray. Because even if things go wrong, this is a lesson that we were meant to learn.

It is a tough lesson to learn in life, but we are not helping anyone by remaining in situations that no longer serve us or others. If we are unhappy in a situation, or that situation is no longer allowing us to grow in our faith, then it is time to move on. Because you simply cannot serve

others if you are not being served in any way.

It takes a deep self-awareness and a strong relationship with

"God knows the deepest desires of our hearts, and he desires for us to know happiness."

God to realize when a situation calls for change. And only you and God can know this.

As the faithfulness of the disciples teaches us, the way of the Cross leads to

Easter and new life. When you have a strong conviction and you are certain God is leading you in the right direction, listen to that conviction, and be ready to take a leap of faith.

He will not lead you astray. You don't owe anyone else an explanation. And once they see how happy you are when you live out loud, that will be all the explanation needed. ■



An ordinary Joe who does extraordinary things

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

All my life I've been surrounded by Josephs. Maybe it's an Italian thing because some of them were Giuseppe.

My father was Joseph, the carpenter. My mother was Josephine, but not the plumber. And I was Joe. Well, not quite. So that we didn't all answer at once when someone called, "Joe!" I was dubbed JoJo.

That's not bad when you're a toddler, but when you're a teenager, it can be a bit embarrassing. At your college commencement, do you really want the Dean to announce, "JoJo!" when you get your diploma?

As it was, I received my sac-

raments at St. Joseph Church in Shelton and religious instructions from the Sisters of St. Joseph and, predictably, I went to St. Joseph High School.

I confess that I resented being an "ordinary Joe" and wished my parents had named me something more flamboyant like Kent or Reginald, but I guess they figured "Kent Pisani" didn't quite fit our ethnic profile.

So I thought of myself as an Average Joe, Joe Schmo and Joe Sixpack...until I developed a devotion to my patron, St. Joseph, and realized it's an honor to be named after the husband of the Mother of God and foster father of the Son of God, whose

feast we celebrate on March 19.

It's a great year for us Joes and Josephines because Pope Francis has proclaimed "A Year of St. Joseph" in observance of the 150th anniversary of his being named Patron of the Universal Church by Blessed Pius IX.

The pope also issued an Apostolic Letter titled "Patris Corde," ("With a Father's Heart") to "increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal."

St. Joseph was an ordinary person who did extraordinary things because he accepted God's will. And he continues to do extraordinary things from heaven. He is a model for all Catholics, especially fathers, in a time when families are fractured and homes are broken.

St. Thomas Aquinas said, "Some saints are privileged to extend to us their patronage with particular efficacy in certain needs, but not in others; but our holy patron St. Joseph has the power to assist us in all cases, in every necessity, in every undertaking."

Our family always prays to him in times of crisis, and over the years, many prayers have been answered through his intercession. We have a shrine in his honor with statues that we have acquired from all over the world.

One of my favorites I found in an antique shop in Montreal. It's a hand-carved wooden statue I got when we made a pilgrimage to St. Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal during the Jubilee Year in 2000.

The Oratory, which before COVID-19 attracted 2 million visitors annually, is the world's largest shrine to St. Joseph and was built through the efforts of St. Andre Bessette, who was the doorman at Notre Dame College, where thousands of people visited him because of his gift of healing through the intercession of St. Joseph.

Early in his life, he worked in eastern Connecticut in factories and farms before returning to Canada to enter the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1870.

I also have a library of what is known as Josephology—the study of St. Joseph—with several dozen books about this great saint. One

of them, published in 1887, is titled, "St. Joseph: The Advocate of Hopeless Cases" and contains dozens of stories about the saint's miraculous intercession.

As Pope Francis says, "Each of us can discover in Joseph—the man who goes unnoticed—a daily, discreet and hidden presence, an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation."

A humble carpenter, St. Joseph is known by many titles: "Protector of Holy Church," "Hope of the Sick," "Patron of the Dying," "Solace of the Afflicted," "Guardian of Virgins," "Pillar of Families," "Glory of Home Life" and "Terror of Demons."

He has always been known to respond when people pray to him. As St. Augustine said: "What could Jesus Christ refuse St. Joseph, who never refused him anything during his mortal life on Earth?"

St. Joseph, pray for us! ■

We Stand With Christ

Young have new place to gather

By **JOE PISANI**

REDDING RIDGE—The young people of St. Patrick Church are looking forward to the day when they can begin meeting in the new Mercy Hall—the home of their new youth center.

The hall is in the original 140-year-old St. Patrick Church, which was given a complete refurbishing that included new heating and air conditioning and lighting, along with a kitchenette.

The project was made possible through the We Stand With Christ capital campaign, said Father Joe Cervero, pastor of the newly merged Sacred Heart and St. Patrick Roman Catholic Church.

“When I first got here 11 years

ago, people kept saying to me that we had to do something with the old church, but we never had the funds,” Father Cervero said. “At one point, the Scouts used it for their Eagle Scout project and repaired and painted the siding. Then, with We Stand With Christ, we got the idea that this was the way we were going to go. We would refurbish it and make it primarily a youth center, which the Knights of Columbus would also use for their meetings.”

The renovated old church was named Mercy Hall because the primary donor wanted it to be dedicated to Divine Mercy, and Father plans to hang a Divine Mercy image of Jesus there.

The parish also has a hall named after the first pastor

Father John Conlisk, which is used for community meetings, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon, and religious education classes and office space. Some cosmetic work was done there, such as repainting, floor restoration and refurbishing the kitchen.

Because the new youth center was so important to the parish, there was a very good response to We Stand With Christ, Father said. St. Patrick exceeded its goal by more than \$300,000, enabling it to retain 75 percent of future funds for parish capital projects.

The enthusiasm and commitment of the faith community was evident in its response to the campaign, which was the most successful in the history of

the diocese and benefits parishes and Foundations in Education, Foundations in Faith and Foundations in Charity, which support efforts in education, charity and pastoral ministries.

The youth group is anticipating the day when COVID-19 restrictions will be lifted, and they will be able to meet in the new hall.

Father is proud of the parish youth group, which he says has been fairly active even during COVID-19. From their homes, they did a community service project. Christmas stockings were distributed to the students, who were responsible for filling them with toiletries, such as razors, shaving cream and toothpaste. Then, they were sent to military bases in time for Christmas.



ST. PATRICK CHURCH

The merger of St. Patrick of Redding Ridge and Sacred Heart of Georgetown was completed during the first part of the year, Father said.

On June 13, 2020, after consulting with the leadership of the two parishes, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano announced plans to begin a process that would merge the churches into one new parish called Sacred Heart and St. Patrick Roman Catholic Church.

“We were both struggling
▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



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We Stand With Christ

NEW PLACE TO GATHER FROM PAGE 12

through the pandemic,” Father said. “And this is hopefully a way to combine both parishes and their resources.”

With the retirement of Father David Leopold as pastor of Sacred Heart, Father Peter Lenox, former pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Norwalk and the newly appointed episcopal vicar for liturgy and worship, began a temporary assignment as parochial administrator at Sacred Heart to assist in completing the merger.

Father Cervero became pastor of the consolidated Sacred Heart-Saint Patrick Parish on January 31. Tuesday and Thursday he is at Sacred Heart and on Monday and Wednesday, he is at St. Patrick.

Originally from The Hollow section of Bridgeport, Father Cervero, whose family is from

Naples, Italy, went to St. Raphael School and then to Bullard-Havens Technical High School with the intention of becoming a baker. His aspirations took him to Kansas State University, where he studied bakery science management for two years.

At that point, he says, “I decided that maybe I didn’t really want to do that and came home.”

He worked at County Home Bakery and Jerry’s Pizza in Bridgeport for four years and then left for a position at a laser research company, which manufactured lens and research equipment.

“Throughout my life, I was getting this inkling that God wanted me to be a priest, and I kept fighting it,” he recalls.

Although life was good for him as an expeditor at the

research company, the “inklings” continued until “God said, ‘All right, you’re here—let’s get you further,’” he said.

“By then, I was 28 and I figured, ‘Ahh, I’m too old. Guys are already ordained by that age.’”

But then Bishop Edward Egan told him about a new seminary in Milwaukee—Sacred Heart School of Theology—which was for men with other careers whom God was calling to the priesthood.

He studied there six years and was ordained at 33 in 1989 and was assigned to his first parish, St. Mary in Ridgefield.

“After I was ordained, I wondered why it took me so long,” he says.

And what about his baking skills? He still uses them. Last week he baked a cheesecake, which he says he plans to give away—at least half of it. ■

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Reconciliation Monday

Experience God's mercy as Holy Week begins

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

BRIDGEPORT—
“Reconciliation Monday” will be held again this year on Monday, March 29 in parishes throughout the diocese.

A total of 26 parishes will offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation from 3-9 pm, so that the lay faithful may experience God's mercy as Holy Week begins.

The invitation to participate in “Reconciliation Monday” was created in the joyful spirit of Pope Francis who said, “Now is the time to be reconciled with God. Staying on the path of evil is only a source of sadness.”

According to Msgr. Thomas Powers, vicar general of the diocese, because of the ongoing pandemic host parishes may offer Confessions

in a variety of venues, which would include confessionals, church bodies, parish centers or outdoor parking lots.

Each will make the determination. Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has asked that penitents have the option of confessing anonymously or face-to-face and that a distance of six feet (as recommended by the CDC) is maintained between the priest and penitent.

“Reconciliation Monday” will be hosted from 3-9 pm at the following parishes:

Deanery A (Queen of Peace)

1. St. Andrew Parish:
435 Anton Street, Bridgeport
2. St. Ann Parish:
481 Brewster Street, Bridgeport
3. St. Augustine Cathedral: 359
Washington Avenue, Bridgeport

Deanery B (Mystical Rose)

1. St. James Parish: 2070 Main
Street, Stratford
2. St. Lawrence Parish:
505 Shelton Avenue, Shelton
3. St. Mark Parish:
500 Wigwam Lane, Stratford

Deanery C (Queen of Martyrs)

1. St. Theresa Parish:
5301 Main Street, Trumbull
2. St. Rose of Lima Parish:
46 Church Hill Road, Newtown

Deanery D

(Our Lady, Queen of Confessors)

1. St. Peter Parish: 104 Main Street,
Danbury
2. St. Edward the Confessor Parish:
21 Brush Hill Road, New Fairfield
3. St. Joseph Parish: 163
Whisconier Road, Brookfield

Deanery E (Seat of Wisdom)

1. St. Mary School Hall,
183 High Ridge Road, Ridgefield
2. Our Lady of Fatima,
229 Danbury Road, Wilton

Deanery F

(Queen Assumed into Heaven)

1. Our Lady of the Assumption
Parish: 545 Stratfield Road,
Fairfield
2. St. Pius X Parish: 834
Brookside Drive, Fairfield

Deanery G

(Mother of Divine Grace)

1. St. Aloysius Parish:
21 Cherry Street, New Canaan
2. St. Thomas More Parish:
374 Middlesex Road, Darien
3. St. Matthew Parish:
216 Scribner Avenue, Norwalk

Deanery H (Cause of Our Joy)

1. The Parish of St. Cecilia-
St. Gabriel: 1184 Newfield
Avenue, Stamford
2. Holy Spirit Parish,
403 Scofieldtown Road,
Stamford
3. Sacred Heart Parish:
37 Schuyler Avenue, Stamford

Deanery I

(Mary, Mother of the Church)

1. The Parish of St.
Catherine of Siena and St.
Agnes: 4 Riverside
Avenue, Greenwich *
2. St. Mary Parish:
178 Greenwich Avenue,
Greenwich
3. St. Michael the Archangel Parish:
469 North Street, Greenwich

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Knights of Columbus

St. Matthew Knights committed to almsgiving

NORWALK—Malta House, a Norwalk organization that helps pregnant and parenting mothers, had a familiar crew of workers to put furniture together for their new home.

Volunteers from St. Matthew Church Knights of Columbus Council No. 14360 took time on a rainy Saturday morning in February to help get Malta

House is so dear to the Knights and the embodiment of the culture of life. We are blessed to be called to help," said Council 14360 Grand Knight Anthony Armentano.

Council 14360 is also sending dinner to the house every Wednesday during Lent and capping it off with Easter Sunday dinner from Dave's Planet Pizza

House and upcoming food drives, the council gathered for a special Lenten Family Mass and led Stations of the Cross with the parish family on March 12 and will lead the Good Friday outdoor Stations on the church property. Lastly, they will roll up their sleeves and help clean the church during the Triduum as the parish prepares to welcome all to celebrate our faith.

The goal of the Knights of Columbus Council at St. Matthew Church in Norwalk is to perform acts of charity. Providing those in need with a

range of support from financial to tactical help in dealing with a wide variety of challenges. Council members work together to foster the founding principles of our order: charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism. Our goal as a council is to continue to identify specific needs in our community and muster support and help to alleviate these challenges and hardships to the best of our abilities and resources.

(For more information go to: kofc14360.net. If you are Catholic man interested in putting your faith in action, join the Knights of

Columbus online for free at kofc.org/joinus and use promo code MCGIVNEY2020.)

Malta House promotes the dignity of God-given life by providing a nurturing home environment, support services and independent living skills to pregnant and parenting mothers of all faiths and their children.

Mothers at Malta House receive on-site counseling, financial education, and parental development followed by transitional and post-residential support. For more info, please go to Maltahouse.org. ■



VOLUNTEERS FROM ST. MATTHEW CHURCH Knights of Columbus Council No. 14360 took time on a rainy Saturday morning in February to help get Malta House's new home ready for moving in over the next few months.

House's new home ready for moving in over the next few months. The council has been assisting Malta House since 2009 with various painting and remodeling projects and financial assistance.

Malta House provides a nurturing home environment, support services and independent living skills to pregnant and parenting mothers of all faiths and their children.

"It is an honor and joy for our council to help such a great organization that helps women and children in need," added George Ribellino, a past grand knight and project chairman.

In the past, the council has donated funds for new mattresses, remodeled the nursery, laid tile and painted bedrooms, the common room and the kitchen at their old home on Prowitt Street in Norwalk. The staff at Malta House know who to call when they need assistance. Twelve members of the council along with three members of St. Francis of Assisi Council 17166 assembled cribs and dining room furniture.

"I am thankful for our council having such a good opportunity to gather early on a Saturday morning. The mission of Malta

in Norwalk. The council, along with Knights of Columbus Bishop Fenwick 4th Degree Assembly 100, is donating funds for additional cribs.

"The Knights of Columbus Council 14360 have been our beloved 'big brothers' for many years and never fail to put their faith into action in hands-on, meaningful ways that make our moms and babies know they are special and loved. Coming out on a Saturday morning to put cribs, beds and chairs together for our new home, bringing weekly dinners to our moms during Lent and treating our house to a special Easter dinner are all such special acts of caring, and we are so grateful and blessed," said Malta House Executive Director Carey Dougherty.

"The Knights of Columbus loves both mother and child before and after birth. We love to help a great organization like Malta House that help women during pregnancy and following the birth of their newborn children," said Ribellino

As the Church prepares to commemorate the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, the Brother Knights of council 14360 are taking up their cross in various ways. In addition to their work with Malta



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Catholic Charities

Bank of America donates masks

By AMY ZAJAC

FAIRFIELD COUNTY—Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, one of the largest private social service providers in the state of Connecticut, recently received masks from Bank of America. The aid continues an innovative partnership that has allowed the agency to provide meals to residents, served through local restaurants in Stamford and Bridgeport. Since the start of the coronavirus, protective personal equipment (PPE) supplies have been low and costs have been high, making it even more challenging for non-profit agencies like Catholic Charities to secure what is required to stay open for business. For an agency like Catholic Charities, closing because masks are not available is simply not an option.

"If we close, a single mother

is unable to pick up groceries to feed her family. Homebound senior citizens do not receive their meals delivered to their home. A person experiencing a crisis related to depression or anxiety cannot connect with their therapist for counseling services," said Executive Director Mike Donoghue. "Our services are vital in helping the most vulnerable populations in the communities throughout Fairfield County. We meet the most basic needs."

Since the start of the pandemic, Catholic Charities' programs and services have continued to thrive but many required the vital PPE in order to remain open. The Thomas Merton Center in Bridgeport remained open with a 30 – 40 percent increase in meal service provided through a grab and go format. The Morning Glory Breakfast Program in Danbury was closed, but pro-

vided 4,900 meals to homeless individuals who have been moved from shelters to the Super 8 Motel to ensure social distancing. Room to Grow Preschool in Norwalk reopened September 9 with 109 students in attendance. It was a state mandate for all students and teachers to wear masks throughout the day.

"The masks provided by Bank of America have been a blessing for our staff and clients," said Bill Colson, director of the Thomas Merton Center. "Many clients were unable to not only find masks, but they also could not afford them. They were at risk. This donation not only helped to protect staff while they served the clients, but it also helped the clients to stay safe while out in the public."

"Bank of America is committed to working with local partners that keep our families, communities, clients, and teammates safe



A MEMBER OF THE THOMAS MERTON CENTER STAFF wears a mask and gloves donated by Bank of America while handing out meals to go.

during the health crisis," said Bill Tommins, Southern Connecticut market president for Bank of America. "Throughout the coronavirus, Bank of America has joined forces with local organizations to address families' most basic needs. By supplying Catholic Charities with PPE, we're able to

help them further their mission and continue feeding families, safely, at the same time."

Catholic Charities' 36 programs provide services throughout Fairfield County. Combined, they serve over 10,000 individuals in Fairfield County, Connecticut each year. ■

Call to Renewal website launched

BRIDGEPORT—The diocese has launched the "Call to Renewal" website to serve as a guide to the Year of St. Joseph and overall renewal efforts.

The website is designed to provide information related to the spiritual and pastoral renewal of the diocese as called for in Bishop Frank J. Caggiano's Pastoral Exhortation, "Let us Enter the Upper Room with the Lord."

"I come to you now, when many may be wondering about the future direction of our Church, to invite you to begin this spiritual journey with me, seeking the Lord's grace to transform this time of suffering into a springtime of renewal for the life of the Church," he said in his introductory letter.

The website includes updates on the Year of St. Joseph, the Diocesan Ambassadors Program, opportunities for Reconciliation and Eucharistic Adoration, and more.

"I pray that you will find these resources helpful as we seek to renew our Church in Fairfield County," said the bishop.

Materials on the website include an introduction from the bishop and a link to his Pastoral Exhortation in its entirety, which is available in both English and Spanish. A professionally recorded audio version is also available for those who prefer to listen to it as they drive or perform other tasks.

The website will also feature weekly "Notes from the Upper Room" by Bishop Caggiano, along with a timeline explaining the Year of St. Joseph as well as liturgies and activities during the renewal period.

The bishop issued his Pastoral Exhortation on Ash Wednesday urging the people of the diocese to move forward in faith and evangelization. In the letter, he provides the framework that will make it possible by designating Centers of Mercy and Centers of Eucharistic Adoration throughout the diocese. He also calls for the commissioning of lay "Ambassadors" to go out into the community later in the year to share their faith and invite others back to the Church. The ambassador training is now underway in the diocese and the new website will feature many of their stories.

(To visit the "Call to Renewal" website: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/call-to-renewal or click "A Call to Renewal" at the top of our homepage.) ■

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Malta House

Malta House moving into new, larger home

By **JOE PISANI**

NORWALK—Twenty-five years ago, Michael and AC O'Rourke of Stamford dreamed of starting a home for homeless pregnant women and their babies. In 1998, Malta House opened its doors, and since then, it has served more than 600 mothers and their babies through its residential program and many more through its community programs.

This spring, as a result of a \$4.5 million campaign, it will move to the renovated former convent on the campus of All Saints School in Norwalk, increasing its capacity by 50 percent. The new home will provide 15 bedrooms, three of which will be family suites that can accommodate a mother and up to two children. There will also be classroom space, offices, a nursery, a play area for children and a chapel for prayer and Mass.

"We are really excited about the opportunity this will give us," said Executive Director Carey Dougherty. "We often have a waiting list, and sometimes we have to turn people away, which is why we are moving into a larger space where we can grow."

Over the next 20 years, the new Malta House will be able to help more than 1,500 mothers and babies, she said.

Founder Michael O'Rourke, who is executive director of Oppenheimer & Co., said: "Twenty-five years ago, my wife AC and I had a dream to open a home for homeless, pregnant women and their babies. This dream came after our beautiful son was born after 17 years of marriage and never-ending prayers for a child. We were so grateful to God for the greatest blessing of our lives and set out to ensure that every mother is given the chance to experience this same blessing and gift of bringing life to this world. The Good Lord had given us our miracle son, so it just made sense that my wife and I should help provide miracles for other women with no room at the inn... because there was no inn in Connecticut."

Malta House 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, Dougherty said. Since its doors opened, it has provided more than 8,500 nights of shelter, helped bring 355 babies into the world and assisted 335 mothers get back on their feet.

"Our goal is to empower women to live independently and provide a better life for themselves and their children," said Dougherty, who has worked at Malta House since 2017. "I always say I am blessed to have a front-row seat to see the transformative power of God's love in our moms. The encounter is nothing short of a miracle. At Malta House, we are providing this love and support. Babies are born into safety and love, and they are so nurtured in our nursery that it's the happiest place on Earth."

There are currently eight mothers at Malta House and six babies—including the first set of twins since Dougherty has been there. Three of the mothers are pregnant and five have children. The new home can accommodate 33 people—15 women and 18 children.

"Many times, we are often the last chance for keeping a mom and baby together," she said. "During COVID-19, we were only one of two shelters and congregate living programs that remained open and accepted new families."

"We were founded upon and guided by our Catholic faith, but our doors are open to any homeless, pregnant or parenting woman who needs a 'room at the inn,'" Dougherty said. "No woman should be faced with the unthinkable alternative because she doesn't have a safe place to care for her baby, and no woman should have to stay with an abuser because it's the only home she has."

Many of the pregnant women who come to Malta House are experiencing homelessness and have never lived independently or have come from unsafe or fragmented families. Malta House regularly receives referrals from hospitals, social service agencies, shelters and programs that will not accept a woman who is pregnant or a new mother.

"One thing that always catches me off guard in this county, where there is so much wealth, is that over 300 babies are born every year to mothers who live below the poverty line, to mothers who are experiencing homelessness,"



MICHAEL AND AC O'ROURKE

Dougherty said. "We believe a mother deserves every opportunity to a life of self-sufficiency and independence. Every baby deserves to be born into a world of safety and love. We are trying to be the family and support network to mothers who need to improve their lives and are looking for a future of independence."

Dougherty said Malta House assists the women with education, employment, financial literacy, health and nutrition, fitness, spirituality and parenting. There is free childcare so the mothers can go to school or work.

"We are also unique in that we continue to support our families who transition to independent living in order to ensure their continued and long-term stability," she said.

The average stay is eight months, but it can extend to 18 months until a mother has saved sufficient money and secured housing.

"Malta House is where the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist converges with the presence of Christ in the women and children we serve," O'Rourke said. "We lift our women up through education, training and spiritual counseling and introduce them to prayer. Rather than treating them as 'neutral poverty-stricken pregnant objects' devoid of virtue, we help them to become moral actors and contributors to the community. We want them to appreciate how and why they will make a difference in this world, especially since they are children of God destined for heaven."

Dougherty said success is measured by a number of criteria, such as how much money a woman has saved, steady employment, stable housing and the life skills classes she has attended.

"Sadly, most of our mothers come from fractured families,

abuse and unspeakable trauma," Dougherty said. "I think many can't imagine how they will be able to bring life into the world when they are so unsure of their own place in it. Honoring and serving our mothers the way Christ asks of us and opening our home and our hearts to them is an important part of them seeing and valuing the sanctity of life. I think it is hard to convince a woman that the child she is carrying has dignity and was chosen by God when she herself feels abandoned, discarded and unloved."

Malta House will celebrate the move with a hybrid in-person and virtual gala on May 7 at Woodway Country Club in Darien. Honorees of the "There's No Place Like Home" gala are John Altieri, board vice chair; Chris Anspach, builder; Frank Chapman, architect; Altieri, Sebor and Wieber; the Diocese of Bridgeport, and others who worked on the 18-month construction and renovation of the new home. Guests can purchase tickets for remote "live streaming" or to join the event in person.

(Tickets and sponsorships to the "There's No Place Like Home" virtual and in-person gala can be purchased at www.maltahouse.org/events. For information, contact Kim Killoy at 203.610.2358 or kkilloy@maltahouse.org.)

(To learn more about Malta House, go to www.maltahouse.org. A virtual tour of the new home can be found at: www.maltahouse.org/newhome?wvideo=ppvzd5wg94.)

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Parish News

Improvements under way at St. Joseph-St. Ladislaus

NORWALK—When Father Edicson Orozco was named pastor of St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus last year, one of the first challenges he faced was bringing together the two parishes and moving them forward as a faith community.

Four months later, with the cooperation of his parishioners and through their generosity with their time, talent and financial resources, wonderful things have occurred, he says.

“Many good things have been happening at St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus Parish since they merged

on October 1 last year,” he says. “Every beginning brings difficulties, challenges, and little victories, but little by little with the involvement of so many volunteers and parishioners, we have been able to accomplish some pastoral, administrative and financial goals.”

In recent months, they have been able to initiate physical renovations to both churches through the stewardship campaign of the parish and the enthusiastic participation of faithful members who volunteer their time.

There have been renovations

and improvements at the sacristy of St. Joseph Church and Mary’s little shrine at St. Joseph and at entrances to the rectory at St. Joseph and back entrance to St. Ladislaus.

In addition, a chapel in honor of St. Jose Sanchez del Rio is under way. The project was started by the previous pastor, Father Peter Lenox, and Father Michael Clark, with the volunteer efforts of David Riccio of John Canning Co., a historic building restoration and conservation company in Cheshire, Conn.

The project, he said, is under



IN RECENT MONTHS, the parish of St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus have been able to initiate physical renovations to both churches through the stewardship campaign of the parish and the enthusiastic participation of faithful members who volunteer their time.

the supervision of Father Otoniel Lizcano with the assistance of the volunteers of Saint Jose Sanchez del Rio “Cristeros.”

Trees on the grounds of Saint Ladislaus that were a hazardous risk were removed, Father said, through the donated work of Double L Landscaping, LLC. In addition, there were electrical updates in both churches, and three televisions were installed in

the basement of St. Ladislaus to increase the capacity so parishioners can attend Sunday Mass. This initiative was coordinated by volunteers from St. Ladislaus.

In preparation for Lent, two confessionaries at St. Joseph were redesigned. The main offices were adapted to better serve the community in keeping the necessary protocols established because

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

Veritas Radio launching new local shows

By JOE PISANI

RIDGEFIELD—Veritas Catholic Network, the EWTN affiliate at 1350 AM, will launch four new programs in the coming months, following its extremely popular “Let Me Be Frank” show, featuring Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

“We are growing and our plans will significantly expand the proclamation of the Gospel in Connecticut and New York,” said Steve Lee, president & CEO of the network. “Listenership has been going up and I am always receiving emails that say things like, ‘I just found you guys and I love it.’”

In addition, the station, which serves Fairfield County, Westchester County and Long Island, recently moved its offices to Ridgefield on the campus of St. Mary Parish.

“We are settling into our new office space and it has been a blessing,” Lee said. “All of our broadcast equipment is here and we record some of our shows from here. We are in the parish building and blessed to be right next door to Msgr. Kevin Royal and down the hall from Father Damian Piesz.”

New local programming includes “Focus on Veritas,” “The Frontline with Joe & Joe,” a talk show with Liv Harrison, who is a Catholic media personality and comedian, and a Monday to



STEVE LEE

Friday live drive-time show.

“Focus on Veritas” will be hosted by Peter Sonski, manager of education and community outreach for the Blessed Michael McGivney Pilgrimage Center in New Haven. The half-hour weekly show will be launched on Friday, April 9, at 12:30 pm and bring committed Catholics on the air to talk about their work, Lee said. It will feature segments about positive news in the diocese, such as Project Beloved in Stamford and Malta House in Norwalk, and later be available as a podcast. The first guest will be Lee, himself, to discuss the vision of Veritas Network.

“There is so much bad news out there that we wanted to focus on some of the good things that people are doing,” Lee said.

The show will follow “Restless,” which airs on Friday from noon to 12:30 pm and explores such topics as how to evangelize in the workplace and how to navigate the single life

with an eye toward marriage.

Father Joseph A. Gill of the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist is joined by Lauren Doyle, Diane Kremheller and Javier Tremaria.

“‘Restless’ is a great show, and I love listening to them,” Lee said. “I smile, I laugh, I nod my head. They are doing a great job and their audience is starting to grow.”

Lee says the show, which has been running for six months, is particularly important at a time when the second largest religious group in the U.S. is former Catholics and there is an increasing number of so-called “Nones”—young people who are abandoning the faith and claim no allegiance to an organized religion.

“When they are surveyed, they say they no longer believe the teachings of the Church and that is a failure on our part to live the Gospel and to evangelize,” Lee said. “We now have a generation of Catholics who have been catechized but never been evangelized. They have never had an encounter with Jesus.”

Liv Harrison, a Catholic comedian and mother of two children, will host a nightly talk show from 8 to 9 pm once a week, which will begin airing at the end of April.

“She is going to do a monologue and interview guests and talk about what’s happening in the world,” Lee said. “It will be lighter and funnier and have the feel of a late-night talk show. I love her energy. She has a great personality and this will be a fun show.”

“The Frontline with Joe & Joe” began airing in March and features Joe Pacillo and Joe Reciniello. It is described as “a fearless culture commentary born from America’s kitchen table.”

These “average Joes” will journey into the breach of our current American society, shining the Light of Christ,” Lee said.

Both men are devout Catholics who have been active in the pro-life movement and have helped the poor and dispossessed through their work with the Sisters of Life, the Missionaries of Charity and the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. They live in Northern New Jersey and had careers on Wall Street for many years.

Their first show will begin with an interview of Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League, whose mission is to defend the rights of Catholics. Subsequent shows will include segments with prominent Catholics, such as theologians

Scott Hahn and Ralph Martin.

“They are guys I would love to be friends with,” Lee said. “When I listen to their show, they are like two guys I’d enjoy talking with around the kitchen table.”

Veritas is also developing a live morning drive-time show from 7 to 8 am for people who are on the road, going to work or dropping their kids off at school. It will be hosted by a man and woman, who are yet to be announced, who will discuss local news and events and occasionally feature priests from the diocese and do live broadcasts outside the studio.

“Every day, there will be guests and interviews,” Lee said. “It will be a Catholic morning show that we expect to launch in May.”

“Let Me Be Frank” with Bishop Caggiano recently marked its first-year anniversary and has been tremendously successful, Lee said.

On the show, which airs at noon on Wednesday, the bishop talks about spirituality, catechetics, issues facing the Church and society, growing up in Brooklyn and many other topics.

“I get emails all the time from listeners who said that listening to Bishop Frank has enriched and deepened their faith,” Lee said. “I love to listen to his interviews, his stories

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

St. Peter Parish, Danbury

Receiving Ashes a ‘wonderful moment’

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—While the distribution of ashes marks the somber and reflective beginning of Lent, during this year of pandemic it became a moving and quietly joyful moment that brought many St. Peter’s parishioners and people throughout the diocese back to Church for the first time in months.

At St. Peter Church on Main Street, a steady stream of people entered the neo-Gothic church in the late afternoon to participate in the tradition of personal acknowledgement of sin and a desire to seek forgiveness from God.

“I think it was fantastic to be able to come to church to receive ashes today,” said parishioner Karen Scalzo.

Scalzo said she was a little concerned when she heard that ashes were being sprinkled on the head, due to COVID-related con-

tact restrictions.

“When I saw people coming out of church with actual crosses on their forehead, even if they had to use a cotton swab, I was relieved. That’s the way it’s supposed to be,” Scalzo said.

Parishes were given the option of distributing ashes either by sprinkling them on top of a person’s head or by making the traditional sign of the cross on the forehead with a cotton swab.

Pastor Gregg Mecca said he was grateful to be given the option by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and decided to use the cotton swab method since a cross on the forehead is more akin to what parishioners are accustomed.

Father Mecca said it was important to keep some normalcy to the tradition during a time when people are enduring so many changes and uncer-



AT ST. PETER PARISH IN DANBURY, Father Gregg Mecca gave ashes to parishioners by making the traditional sign of the cross on the forehead with a cotton swab, one of the two options made available this year to due pandemic restrictions.

tainty because of the pandemic. Sprinkling ashes on the top of people’s heads, rather than marking foreheads with ashes, is the customary practice at the Vatican and in Italy.

In addition to the change in how ashes were distributed, parishes also had the option to offer a time when the faithful could come to church to receive ashes

outside of Mass or the Liturgy of the Word. Father Mecca said that option was crucial in addressing the needs of the congregation especially since morning Masses were at or near COVID-restricted capacity.

“I’ve been watching Mass on TV but to be able to come into the church is wonderful,” said parishioner Laura Halas. “I feel

more connected.”

That was the sentiment shared by many parishioners who were very grateful to be able to participate in a tradition, albeit in a non-traditional way.

“Every Sunday morning, we watch Mass online,” said parishioner Ron Kreho. “We’ve been doing that for a year now but it’s so good to be here,” he said, adding that he has medical concerns and is awaiting his second vaccine shot before he will feel more comfortable being in public places.

The walk-in period allowed Father Mecca to briefly chat and reconnect with parishioners he hadn’t seen since the beginning of the pandemic.

“It’s good to see familiar faces,” he said. A sentiment echoed by many including parishioner Danielle Ford. “I miss being here and seeing everyone and the priests.”

VERITAS RADIO FROM PAGE 18

about Brooklyn and his spiritual advice. It is definitely one of our most listened to programs and I am very happy with hit.”

Last year, Lee moved Veritas to office space at St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield at the invitation of pastor and longtime friend Msgr. Kevin T. Royal.

“I mentioned to him that we might be in need of a different space, and he looked at me and said, ‘How about right here?’ Lee

recalled. “I have been blessed to know Msgr. Royal all these years. We are grateful for everything he has done and it is gratifying having his presence because he is such a holy priest.”

Lee’s programming director, John Szewczuk is also there with the administrative staff.

“Veritas would not be here if John hadn’t been at my side for the past two years,” Lee said. “I can’t say enough about this guy.

He’s the brains behind many of the things we’ve done, including pushing us to get a morning show on the air ASAP.”

The station is also in the process of constructing an FM translator that will let it broadcast on 103.9 FM.

Veritas began broadcasting EWTN Catholic programming 24 hours a day on August 21, 2019 throughout Fairfield County, almost half of Long Island and

parts of Westchester. Lee purchased WNLK-AM 1350 radio and an FM translator at 103.9 MHz from Sacred Heart University.

Listeners can also live-stream through the veritascatholic.com website and a Veritas mobile app, which is available for Apple and Android devices.

“We need to reach people where they are—in their cars, in their homes, on their phones,” Lee said. “We need to show them the beauty, truth and goodness of our faith and that will have a downstream influence that will affect families, the culture and the Church.”

Lee, who left his job in finance

on Wall Street to start Veritas, credits his wife Roula with providing him the spiritual and moral support the initiative required. Residents of Ridgefield, they are parents of three children, Andrew, Christopher and Annabel.

Lee said that visitors are welcome to stop by the office and see the operation.

Because the station is a not-for-profit and does not receive financial support from EWTN or the diocese, it depends upon its listeners. For more information about charitable donations, or advertising opportunities, visit www.veritascatholic.com.

ST. JOSEPH-ST. LADISLAUS FROM PAGE 18

of COVID-19.

“There is always something to be done,” Father said. “I am sure that many other projects will become a reality not just through the financial commitment of parishioners with We Stand With Christ capital campaign but also with their love for the new parish.”

“Now, that we are one community of faith enjoying two churches, beautiful grounds and so many diverse talents and cultures, we are becoming a strong community of faith,” Father Orozco said. “Protected by Mary’s intercession and guided by Saint Joseph and Saint Ladislaus, we are learning to walk this magnificent journey

of faith with enthusiasm and a decisive spirit.”

He said bringing the two parishes together was more than “a merger,” but rather “bringing together two beautiful communities.”

Both parishes combined will have Spanish and English-speaking communities and Haitians, Father said.

When he was named pastor, Father said, “It is a blessing to have two churches; their buildings will be used to provide pastoral services and education. It is going to be one community using two churches because in no respect will it be one taking over the other. We are bringing them together.”

St. Ladislaus was founded to serve the Hungarian community

that came to America and settled in South Norwalk around 1900. The cornerstone of the church was laid on November 25, 1909 and Masses were celebrated in the church basement a year later. The church, built in the Romanesque Revival style by Hungarian architect Odon Lechner, was dedicated on June 30, 1912.

In 1895, St. Joseph was founded to serve the southern portion of Saint Mary Parish. Masses were initially celebrated at the Music Hall on South Main Street. On April 4, 1897, the cornerstone was laid for the church, built in the Gothic revival style and designed by architect Joseph A. Jackson.

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The Ministry of Catholic Cemeteries

From Wall Street to the Church

By **JOE PISANI**

Dean Gestal has worked with some of the most successful firms on Wall Street. He built up the bond department for money management pioneer Seth Glickenhau before starting his own firm, Belle Haven Investments. After trading bonds for 30 years, he headed to San Francisco to help several startups in the dot-com world and later moved to Salt Lake City to reorganize his friend's manufacturing company.

Then, two years ago, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano called him with another challenge: to use his management and business skills

to revitalize the cemeteries of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

It was, as they say, an offer Gestal couldn't refuse, and today he is the director of Catholic Cemeteries. To him, it isn't a job, it's a ministry—a ministry to help all Catholics recognize the importance of a church burial.

"I am here because of Bishop Caggiano," Gestal says. "I enjoy him immensely. He has a great sense of the secular world and the religious world. We met and he said he needed someone to run the cemeteries and I told him I was willing to help out the Church any way I could."

In the two years that Gestal

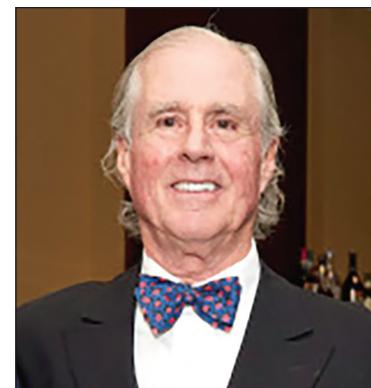
has been on the job, he has brought on new staff, launched a beautification initiative for the cemeteries, begun a program to stress the importance of planning ahead for death and started construction on a mausoleum at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Trumbull, which will have 600 crypts and 600 niches for cremains.

The diocese maintains 14 cemeteries, nine of which are active. The largest, St. Michael's, has more than 100 acres. The others are St. Mary-Putnam in Greenwich, St. John in Darien, St. John-St. Mary in Norwalk, Assumption Greens Farms

in Westport, Gate of Heaven in Trumbull, Resurrection in Newtown, Queen of Peace in Stamford, and St. Peter in Danbury. There are five inactive historical cemeteries—St. Augustine in Bridgeport, St. James in Bridgeport, St. Mary in Norwalk and Old St. Peter in Danbury, Assumption Kings Farm in Westport.

For Gestal, the cemeteries are vital to the 400,000 Catholics in Fairfield County, "bookending" their spiritual lives from baptism to burial, even for those who have fallen away from the faith.

"The Catholic cemeteries are



DEAN GESTAL

about remembrance and honoring the wishes of the Church and of family members," he said. "We are committed to providing cemetery property for the sacred religious function of burial. We are also committed to preserving these resting places as a symbol of our Catholic belief."

Cemeteries are sacred and peaceful places, he says, where we honor the loved ones in our lives who have left us. A Catholic cemetery is a place where we can share memories and show our respect in a manner consistent with the teachings of the Church.

Fundamental to this, is planning. "None of us wants to focus on death because it's not a comfortable topic," Gestal says. "All of my friends are in the same boat as I am. Have we planned for our burials and resting places? Most of us haven't even though it's a simple thing to do. Otherwise, it becomes a burden we put on our children at a time when they least need it. Our hope is to open people's minds and crack the door before it becomes a catastrophe or emergency."

His goal is to bring more people from an "at need" approach, in which families suddenly find themselves responding to a death, to a "pre-need" approach to burial services, which allows them to address the issue ahead of time, avoid anguish and confusion, and be prepared by putting their desires in their last will and testament.

"For us, this is a ministry," he said. "We have an opportunity to offer these services to all Catholics in Fairfield County. We can help them and answer their questions."

In recent months, he has added six additional counselors and plans to have two at each active cemetery in the diocese.

"They will be there to meet people when they walk through the door and educate them about what is available and how we can

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

CATHOLIC CEMETERIES

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Deacon Candidacy

Bishop challenges men to be 'authentic witnesses'

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

On Saturday, March 13 at St. Augustine Cathedral, Walter Avitabile of Westport, Edward R. Carrillo of Bridgeport and Frank Mantero of Shelton were admitted to candidacy for ordination as deacons by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

"To you I am deeply grateful. For despite the challenge we face in our world, you have come forward with generosity, with the love of your families. You have come here seeking true integrity of life, and you have done well, you have done much," he said to the three aspirants during Mass.

In addition to the family, friends and faithful who attended in-person the Candidacy Mass was live-streamed on the diocesan website

In his homily Bishop Caggiano spoke about the parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector, which teaches us "the need for humility to avoid the self-righteousness that can easily fall into the lives of anyone, most especially those who have authority, religious authority and are called to leadership."

He explained that ostensibly the Pharisees did everything correctly, and yet their intentions, their hearts, their deepest spirit was far from being righteous. The bishop explained that in the time of Jesus the hypocritical nature of the scribes and the Pharisees was well-known. "People were searching for true guides and they were lost."

The bishop posed the question, How different is that from the world in which we live today?

"We have lived through a

terrible time in the life of the church, where the few have done great harm and many in our world question our authenticity, they speak of an authenticity gap, where Christians, especially those in leadership, will say one thing but live something else," continued the bishop.

The bishop explained that this often deters people from entering a life of faith.

"While it is true that all of us are called to a life of authenticity and integrity before the Lord, it is especially of responsibility for those who are in leadership," the bishop said. "For if we do not live what we preach, our preaching is empty and it will bring no one to faith."

The bishop challenged all the faithful, including himself, to go deeper. "To avoid self-righteousness," said the bishop, "is not only to do the good, but it is also to seek those occasions where we can do more of the good."

The bishop encouraged those gathered to use these days of Lent remaining to ask themselves what is it that they can do more to be an authentic witness of God's love in the world.

"If you and I rise to that occasion, my dear friends, there will be no sinner in any of our churches, no person in any place of our Christian life, that will be left alone, sitting in the back of a church, wondering if God forgives him or loves him. For he will know that message by our words and by our witness," said the bishop.

Deacon Jerry Lambert,

Director of the Diaconate, said that "This Admission to Candidacy for Ordination, marked the end of the first year of study for Walter, Edward, and Frank. In this past year of aspirancy, these men have participated in monthly formation weekends within our diocese, while also beginning four years of theological study at Saint Joseph Seminary in Yonkers, NY."

Walter Avitabile is a member of Church of the Assumption, Westport, along with his wife Gracemary and three daughters (28, 26 and 23). He has served as a catechist, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, Reader and a member of the Knights of Columbus. Avitabile attended Salesian High School and works as a general construction superintendent in NYC on infrastructure projects. After high school, he started as an apprentice with Plumber's Local Union #2, working up to become Master Plumber.

Edward R. Carrillo and his wife, Glenda, have three married daughters (29, 26 and 23), one son (16), three grandchildren and one on the way! Carrillo is a member of St. George Parish in Bridgeport and has served as Director of Liturgical Music, co-founder of the parish youth group, a catechist and co-founder of the St. George family prayer group. Carrillo earned a bachelor's degree in computer programming in Guatemala, Central America. Carrillo has worked as a sub-contractor for the Department of Justice as well as an EOIR Interpreter. He is cur-



WALTER AVITABILE of Westport, Edward R. Carrillo of Bridgeport and Frank Mantero of Shelton were admitted to candidacy for ordination as deacons by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

rently self-employed as a general contractor.

Frank Mantero is a member of St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull, along with his wife, Angela, and their four children Marisa, Francisco, Olivia and Antonio. He has served as Deputy Grand Knight for the Knights of Columbus St. Catherine of Siena Council, is a trustee for the Knights of Columbus Msgr. Edward Halloran Assembly and a member of the board of directors for Habitat for Humanity of

Greater New Haven. Mantero holds a master's degree in internal relations from the University of Kentucky, a bachelor's degrees in both political science and Spanish from the University of Georgia. He is currently the vice president of marketing at Knights of Columbus Supreme Council in New Haven. He has held various roles in the healthcare industry in marketing, public relations and communications, including seven years at GE as director of corporate responsibility.

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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.

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HMT

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Obituaries

Rev. Joseph F. Palacino, 93

Ordained at age 55, after serving his country as a veteran of two wars, working as a chemist and running and owning his own market, Father Palacino is remembered for his kindness, compassion and willingness to accompany others on their journey of faith.

"Father Palacino had a long, remarkable and blessed life, and equally important he was a blessing to all those who knew him and were served by his gracious and loving ministry," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. "We should all live so well, so long, so faithfully as Father Joe."

Father Palacino is best remembered by many parishioners of St. Jerome Parish in Norwalk, where he served his final assignment. In a beautiful tribute to Father Palacino published in the December 26, 2020 parish bulletin, Father Dave Blanchfield, retired pastor of St. Jerome's, fondly recalled Father Palacino's courage, kindness and decency.

"Although when he came to us he was already 67, he stayed working as a full time priest for another 21 years. Our retirement age is 75, but Father Joe loved the people of St. Jerome so much that he stayed on until

health issues at age 88 forced him to retire," said Father David Blanchfield, who continues to live in residence at the parish.

"A turning point in his life was when he was drafted for the second of two wars. After already serving as a sailor during the last days of World War II, he was again drafted as a soldier in the Korean conflict. As part of God's plan and because he was a practicing Catholic, he was assigned to guard the Catholic chaplain when he was giving what we then called 'the last rites' to soldiers on the battlefield. In those moments, he got to see both the power of the Sacraments as well as the difference a priest can make in people's lives," said Father Blanchfield.

Father Palacino was born in Bridgeport on June 14, 1927, a son of the late Luigi Palacino and Providenza (Allegra) Palacino. Father Palacino is survived by his loving sister, Mary Grace Corica, of Trumbull and a devoted brother, Frank Palacino and his wife Martha, of Ocala, Fla., as well as many loving nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews and great-great-nieces and nephews.

He was also predeceased by three brothers, Liborio, Salvatore and Angelo Palacino. Father

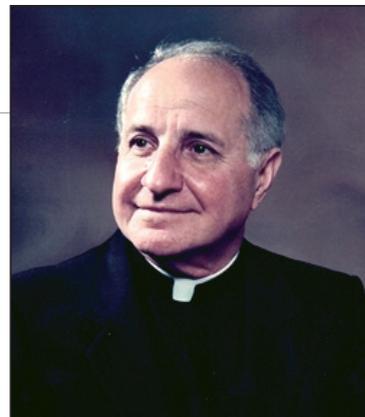
Palacino was educated at Central High School in Bridgeport before serving honorably in both the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy. He later graduated from Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Conn. and was proud to be a 4th degree member of the Knights of Columbus, Assembly 100 of Norwalk for many years.

Throughout his life, Father Palacino had many occupations, including owner of Palacino's Market and he was a chemist for nearly 20 years before he embraced his calling as a priest.

Father Palacino studied Theology at Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corner, Wis., before being ordained to the priesthood by the Most Reverend Walter W. Curtis at St. Augustine Cathedral, Bridgeport on December 4, 1982.

After his ordination, Father Palacino first served as parochial vicar of St. Joseph Church in Shelton. In 1987, he was transferred to St. Augustine Cathedral Parish. In 1994, Father Palacino moved to his last assignment, St. Jerome in Norwalk, where he continued to serve even after his retirement.

Father Palacino's body was received at St. Jerome Church to lie



FATHER JOSEPH F. PALACINO

in repose. Parishioners and friends observed social distance guidelines and greeted the family. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Monday, December 7, by Bishop Caggiano. Interment with military honors followed in Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Trumbull.

Memorial contributions may be made to St. Jerome Church or Father Joe Appalachian Project Scholarship c/o Notre Dame High School, 220 Jefferson St., Fairfield, CT 06825.

Editor's Note: *Fairfield County Catholic* regrets the inadvertent omission of Father Palacino's obituary in the January issue of the paper. We are proud to remember this remarkable priest servant who brought the healing of Christ to so many people in the diocese. ■

Sr. Grace D'Amico

BETHEL—Sister Grace D'Amico, a member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, died at Norwalk Hospital, Norwalk Connecticut, on February 27, 2021. She was 75 years old.

After profession of vows in 1965, Sister Grace began a varied ministry as grade and high school teacher, guidance and college counselor, director of development for Wilton Province SSND, director of weekend college and coordinator of post-master's program at Notre Dame of Maryland University, and associate director of educational services for the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers. She served in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Wisconsin.

At the time of her death Sister Grace was residing in New Rochelle, N.Y., and serving as coordinator for board development and ministry services for the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

A burial took place at St. Mary Cemetery in Bethel. ■

DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT MARCH 21—APRIL 24

MARCH

24	Rev. John Baran.....	2018
	Rev. Jon C. Bokron.....	1993
25	Rev. J. Clifford Grisé	2017
26	Rev. Andrew Marus	2018
27	Rev. Bertrand E. Parent.....	1973
30	Msgr. Patrick F. Donnelly	1993

APRIL

2	Rev. Richard R. Dunn.....	1999
3	Rev. Francis C. Metro.....	1957
4	Rev. David W. Howell.....	2013
	Msgr. John F. Jazowski.....	2010
5	Rev. Hugh F. Gallagher	1980
7	Rev. Stephen E. Opra.....	1992
8	Rev. Joseph V. Kazlauskas	1968
	Rev. Edward M. Horan.....	1978
9	Rev. John A. MacNeil.....	1994
	Rev. Frederick Saviano.....	2016
12	Rev. Emidio O. Gregori	2016
13	Msgr. Henry M. Callahan.....	1956
	Deacon Harold Lynch.....	2016
14	Rev. Walter J. McCarthy.....	1968
	Rev. William J. Fletcher.....	1988
	Msgr. Edward D. Halloran.....	2001
16	Rev. Edwin F. Agonis, O.F.M.Conv.	1998
17	Rev. Robert J. Usenza.....	2016
18	Rev. John E. Hanning.....	1959
19	Rev. Philip J. O'Farrell.....	1992
20	Rev. Martin J. O'Connor.....	1988
21	Msgr. Roger J. Watts	2020
23	Rev. Vincent P. Bodnar	1988

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Sports

Mr. Fitz: Voice of the Stags retires

By **DON HARRISON**

If you've attended a Fairfield University men's basketball game in the past half century, at any of the Stags' four home courts, you've heard his voice. "And the Stags take the lead..."

Jim Fitzpatrick has served as his alma mater's courtside public address announcer at all of these venues: The venerable Alumni Hall on campus. Webster Bank Arena in Bridgeport. The former New Haven Coliseum. And the long-gone decrepit New Haven Arena.

"I've worked 608 Stags games since 1971, and I've missed just five during that period," explains the amiable, mustachioed Fitzpatrick.

The reasons for his absence were beyond his control: The deaths of his parents, an annual spring break service trip to Kentucky, and "being in the hospital because of low potassium."

James Donovan Fitzpatrick's name came to the fore this winter with the announcement of his retirement from the Jesuit university, after 51 years of devoted service. Away from the basketball court, "Mr. Fitz" served as assistant vice president of auxiliary services (food service, bookstore, transportation), oversaw the Barone Campus Center as well as student activities, and befriended and mentored more students than he can recall.

During a brief ceremony on campus, Fairfield's first select-woman, Brenda Kupchick, declared February 3, 2021 "Jim Fitzpatrick Day." It was also revealed that alumni, students and staff had raised more than \$100,000 to name press row after him at what will be the new arena and convocation center on campus.

"It is impossible to adequately thank Jim for a lifetime ministry to our students and the University we love so much. You are synonymous with Fairfield and a personification of Jesuit education," said Janet Canepa '82, director of alumni relations.

There's a spiritual aspect to Jim Fitzpatrick that speaks volumes. He has been a member of Fairfield's campus ministry since his days as an undergraduate, progressing from altar boy to eucharistic minister and lector.

Then, there was his family's early involvement at a local parish, Holy Family. As Jim recalls with a wry smile: "My wife Phyllis was teaching there, and when she became pregnant, she asked me to help out. I wound up teaching eighth-grade CCD there 33 years."

A self-described "basketball junkie," Fitzpatrick arrived on campus as a student in the fall of 1966 and considered trying out for coach George Bisacca's Stags, who had concluded their second NCAA Division-I season with a lustrous 19-5 record.

Indeed, Fitz had played the game at Monsignor Coyle High School in Taunton, Mass., and even scored a basket for his high school team at Boston Garden before the eyes of two NBA legends (the Cincinnati Royals would face the Celtics in

the featured game.) He recalls: "Just before the jump ball, I saw (the Royals') Oscar Robertson and Jack Twyman standing in the tunnel. Fortunately, our center got the tap, the ball went to me. I just threw it up and it went in."

As the first member of his family to attend college, though, Fitz opted to focus on his studies and served as a student manager for the Fairfield team all four seasons as an undergraduate. But there was the occasion that first year when Lou Saccone, coach of the freshman squad, informed Jim he'd lost a few players to academics and wondered if he would come out for the team.

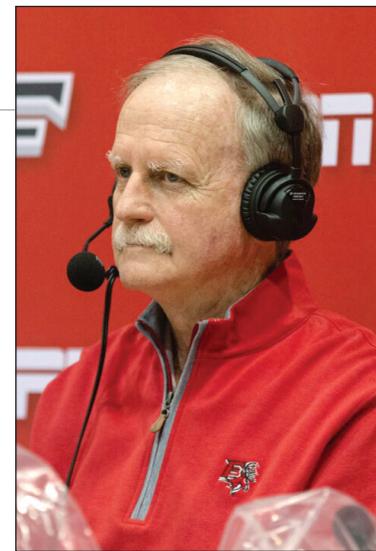
"He made no promises," Fitz recalled, smiling. "But I got into about four games, and when we played Rider in Alumni Hall, I made one of two foul shots. So,

I'm in the record books."

Ask Fitzpatrick to select the most extraordinary Stags game he's called across 50 seasons, and he responds without hesitation.

"I don't think any game can come close to the Holy Cross game in 1978," he says. "They were nationally ranked (14th), they had a great player in Ron Perry, a fine coach in George Blaney. But we blew them out, 123-103. Nobody could say after that game that Fairfield didn't belong among the East's elite."

That superb Stags team won 22 of 25 games during the regular season and featured no fewer than six Fairfield Alumni Athletic Hall-of-Famers in the making – the backcourt of Joe DeSantis and Kim Fisher, 6-foot-10 center Mark Young, forwards Steve Balkun and Jerome "Flip" Williams, and head coach Fred



JIM FITZPATRICK
(PHOTO BY PETER McLEAN)

Barakat. In 2012, Fitzpatrick, too, was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

A more challenging question for Fitz: Who is your all-time favorite Stags player?

"I'm going to upset some people with whomever I choose," he says, "but no player was more impactful than Joey D. He didn't want to lose and single-handedly could win a game by himself." ■

FIE Gala set for May 6

BRIDGEPORT—Foundations in Education's gala returns to Woodway Country Club in Darien, Conn. on May 6, 2021 with honorees Lynn and Francis X. Mara of the New York Football Giants, Inc. and Dr. Julia M. McNamara, president emerita, Albertus Magnus College.

Gala co-chairs Barbara Ripp and Xandy Duffy met with Foundations in Education staff to begin planning this year's unique event. The full gala committee will meet virtually later this month. Celebrity auctioneer Pat Tully will provide an entertaining evening of humor and high energy as guests bid on exclusive packages, including a priceless experience with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. The evening will include cocktails and dinner at Woodway Country Club, with a virtual option for the formal program.

Foundations in Education supports the mission of Catholic education in the Diocese of Bridgeport. The

annual gala brings together business, political and charitable leaders throughout Fairfield County.

Proceeds from the gala benefit Foundations in Education, including the Bishop's Scholarship Fund and Innovation and Leadership Grant Program. This year Foundations awarded 1,271 children \$2,700,000 in tuition assistance to attend Catholic schools throughout the Bridgeport Diocese. The Foundation also makes grants to teachers for innovative and leadership initiatives in our Catholic schools. This year the Foundation recognized all teachers and staff with an Amazon gift card for their innovation and leadership while teaching throughout the pandemic.

(If you wish to volunteer, sponsor, contribute or learn more about Foundations in Education or the Gala, please visit www.foundationsineducation.org or contact Megan Quinn at 203.416.1671 or mquinn@foundationsineducation.org.) ■

FROM WALL STREET FROM PAGE 20

help them make those final decisions," he said.

Catholic cemeteries offer a range of options. Traditionally, there has been full-body burial in a ground plot or entombed in a mausoleum. Since 1963, cremation has been accepted by the Church, and now about 50 percent of families choose that option. The remains, called "cremains," are placed in an urn and then laid in a niche, which is located indoors in a mausoleum or outdoors in a structure called a columbarium.

Many cemetery systems around the nation do an outreach to the parishes, with a focus on bereavement support. Gestal hopes to see parishes create teams that will help families through bereavement-focused groups so that when parents or family members die, the survivors do not find themselves with no emotional and spiritual support.

One of the challenges he faces is reaching a younger generation of Catholics who have fallen away from their faith or for whom religion is less important than their parents.

Gestal believes the construction of the St. Catherine of Siena Mausoleum at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Trumbull will allow them to change the thinking of a younger generation of Catholics so they can memorialize their parents in a respectful way by putting their cremains in a sacred place rather than in, say, a closet.

In recent months, he has also launched a major beautification initiative at the diocesan cemeteries.

"To me, cemeteries are a communal place," he says. "We have opened them up to allow people to walk their dogs on a leash. We are also planning walking tours at the St. Mary-Putnam Cemetery in Greenwich, where we have 100 acres. We want to invite people to come in because it's a peaceful place with beautiful trees and grounds."

Gestal, who with his wife Janie, is on the Inner City Foundation board, lives in Greenwich. They have been married 46 years and have four daughters and eight grandchildren. Since 1987, they have been members of the Order of Malta.

Born and raised on Long Island, he moved to Greenwich in 1978. After he graduated from Marist College, he enlisted in the Air Force National Guard and eventually started trading bonds on Wall Street. For ten years, he worked with Seth Glickenhau, where he built up the bond department before starting his own firm. After retiring from trading in 2000, he moved to San Francisco and helped launch start-ups in finance and dot-com. He later ran a company that manufactured carbon fiber wheels for racing bikes in Salt Lake City. In 2012, he returned to Greenwich. ■

Column: Thomas Hicks



A Fundamental Bond

POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

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

“A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter. He that as found one has found a treasure. There is nothing so precious as a faithful friend and no scales can measure his excellence. A faithful friend is an

elixir of life, and those who fear the Lord will find him” (Sirach 6:14-16).

Thomas Merton once said that he liked people, “but after about an hour I’m tired of being with others.” He also said, “I do know that the best way to really waste time is to get with a lot of other people: then it will be killed for certain.”

I understand what Merton was saying. For example, cocktail parties are hard work for me. There’s all the smiles you have to exude, all the effort at being charming. There’s the burden of intermingling, the vapid togetherness, the toil of exerting oneself to be congenial and to keep smiling. I remember smiling steadily while a Hungarian lady told us about what a beautiful tomb she had bought for her third husband. I spent a long time listening to a man ramble on about a trip he and his wife once made to Minneapolis. There’s the bantering and railery. And, like Merton, after about an hour I start thinking about how soon I can get out of this? There is something in me that can stand only so much

time of unrelieved socialization, hearing people comparing illnesses, all the one-upmanship, the planned summer trips, the latest guest on Dr. Phil, and then I seek solitude. We puff our jobs, balloon our travel plans.

One can note that Therese of Lisieux said “conversations with people, even pious conversations, fatigued my soul...for there is so much self-love intermingled with spiritual conversations.”

Many people claim to have many friends (politicians do it all the time). But who they’re calling “friends” are not more than affinities. People can bestow the title “friend” too generously; they are referring to acquaintances.

My life is riddled with holes where people I called friends once were. There are the lost friends. How hard it is to avoid offending somebody. One or the other makes a misjudgment, presumes, and a rift opens between them, the equilibrium is gone. Friendship is vulnerable.

The philosophers of ancient Athens wrote compellingly about friendship. Aristotle (*Ethics*) said that friends are needed for happiness, and defined a friend as “a trusted other who understands and accepts me as I am.” He also asserted that true friendship only exists among people who are good people. Cicero (*De Amicitia*) wrote how friendship ennobles human life and provides some of life’s most splendid moments. The ancient Greeks used the word *storge* to describe friendship. *Storge* refers to the love one has for comfortably familiar people. It

denotes a tender care, something maternal, something gentle.

Aristotle was right when he regarded trust as the bedrock of true friendship. C.S. Lewis put it this way: “a friend will prove himself to be an ally when alliance becomes necessary” (*Four Loves*, p.88). Overall, the essence of friendship involves unconditional acceptance, loyalty, and support. In a story by Flannery O’Connor, a boy describes a friendship he was aware of this way: “they never quarl, they like one man in two skins” (*Greenleaf*, p.299). As far back as the fourth century, Gregory Nazianzen, speaking of his friend, Basil, said “we seemed to be two bodies with a single spirit.” The Church honors Gregory of Nazianzen and Basil the Great, the two friends, with the same feast day, January 2. “Two bodies with a single spirit” implies that what happens to one’s friend, happens to oneself.

A few other characteristics of deep friendship would be: friends share a vision of life; have common interests, common delights. friendship must be about something; they can pass from light jesting to talk of the deepest things; they can dip into each other’s thoughts; friends can fall into a calm companionable silence; etc.

Sharing a common past is usually a part of deep friendships. Friendship and reminiscence go together. True friendship involves sharing memories, being able to say to each other “Do you remember?” It involves talk about “those days,” and

talking about the same people. Friends passed into different rooms of their lives together. They possess together the precious, incommunicable past. Friendship and affection mellow as the years unfold.

Truly deep friendships are gifts from God. It’s not by accident that people come together.

Certain people were born to be comrades. A famous spiritual writer named Garrigou Lagrange wrote that the continuance of friendship for more than twenty years is a sign that the friendship has a divine origin (*Life Everlasting*, p.234). Friendship is one of life’s fundamental bonds. Friends are the blessing of a lifetime. They enable us to celebrate living. They bring some of the happiest days. People can live without a deep friendship, and it seems that most people do. Still, in many ways, life has no better gift to give, and friendship should be nurtured, cared for, invested in. The best things in our lives are the loves we have known. When you have a true and close friend you have one of the best things this life has to give. Most of our hurts come through relationships, so does our healing. Social psychologists claim that psychoanalytic therapy doesn’t work much better than the untrained ear of a true friend. Friends give us life and love and God. There is the old hymn that goes: “Where there is *Caritas* and *Amor* there is God.”

Think where man’s glory most begins and ends

And say my glory was I had such a friend. (Yeats). ■

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 PLCP

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.

NS

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CM

Nuestra Voz

Nuevo sitio web, remodelan y restauran Saint Joseph y Saint Ladislaus

Por MARICARMEN GODOY

NORWALK—Desde que el Padre Edicson Orozco se hizo cargo de las iglesias Saint Joseph y Saint Ladislaus, que rigen unidas en su administración, pero que tienen vida pastoral propia; el sacerdote se ha dado a la tarea de remodelar algunas partes de sus templos y también de motivar a sus feligreses a través de sus grupos parroquiales y de un nuevo

sitio web.

El monumento a La Santa Cruz de la cerca, del Altar y del piso son los trabajos de renovación y restauración en San Ladislaus. Y la imagen restaurada del Sagrado Corazón y la renovación de la Sacristía en Saint Joseph; son los trabajos que el sacerdote puso a vista del público en las redes sociales. Además se han cortado algunos árboles para que no se dañe el agua ducto y

ampliar el parqueadero y por eso se han cortado los árboles.

“Estas son las más recientes renovaciones y restauraciones en ambos de nuestros templos. Agradecemos a todos aquellos quienes han contribuido de diversas formas para que todo esto se haga posible. ¡Infinitas bendiciones!”, posteo el sacerdote como parte de la información directa con sus feligreses.

Asimismo Orozco, el 13 de marzo en horas de la mañana, anunció que lanza una nueva página web para ambas Iglesias. “Pueden visitar la nueva página a través de este enlace”, dijo: <https://stjstlrp.org/>

Como parte del tiempo de Cuaresma camino a celebrar la Semana Santa, en uno de los boletines online la parroquia escribió: “Tanto amó Dios al mundo, que le entregó a su Hijo único, para que todo el que crea en él tenga vida eterna. Para contemplar: ¿En qué momentos he sentido más claramente el amor de Dios? ¿Cómo puedo compartir el amor de Dios con las personas con quienes me encuentro?”

El sacerdote habló sobre la muerte en la Cruz de Jesús y dejó este interrogante abierto: ¿Valió la pena que Dios haya muerto en la Cruz por nosotros?, ¿parece que no?, ¿hay mucha gente que no quiere saber nada de él, que no le interesa, que no le importa?”

Además se notificó que se ha hecho un cambio en el nuevo horario de Misas que entra en vigencia con una misa en español los domingos a las 8:30 am y



CON LAS RESTAURACIONES y remodelaciones de las iglesias, además el corte de algunos árboles para ampliar el parqueadero y evitar que se dañe el agua ducto, el P. Edicson Orozco dio por iniciada la fiesta en honor a San José, patrono de la parroquia.

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JA

12:30 pm, tanto en St. Joseph como en St. Ladislaus.

Otro de los avisos que el sacerdote informó es sobre las reuniones de los comités de finanzas y pastoral de la iglesia de Saint Ladislaus y la fiesta en honor del patrono San José, el esposo de la virgen María. Aun no se ha dado permiso para las procesiones de Semana Santa.

Calendario de Actividades de esta semana

La Misa de los domingos en inglés de Saint. Ladislaus es a las 10:30 am.

Miércoles

6:15 pm—Santo Rosario (en español)

7 pm—Santa Misa (en español)
Jueves

6 pm—Exposición del Santísimo Sacramento

7 pm—Santa Misa (en español)

Sábado

7 pm—Santa Misa (en español)

Domingo

8 am—Santa Misa (en español)
10:30 am—Santa Misa (en inglés)
12 pm—Santa Misa (en español)
5:30 pm—Santa Misa (en francés, creole)

Si usted quiere comunicarse con St. Joseph, St. Ladislaus Church. St. Joseph 203.838.4171 x 10. St. Ladislaus 203.818.9195. Rel. Ed Office: 203.866.1225, 203.803.4408.

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Vocations

St. Joseph: Model of Spiritual Fatherhood

By **FATHER CHRIS FORD**

One of the most challenging things about discerning priesthood is often the discernment of the life that goes along with it: the life of celibacy. For many young men considering the priesthood, it may very well be that celibacy is the obstacle that seems unsurmountable. I recall my own discernment of priesthood and find that wrapping my head around this life of celibacy was indeed a challenge for me as well, though not necessarily for the reasons you might think.

For me, it wasn't the idea of not having a wife and a happy marriage that gave me pause, though marriage certainly is a wonderful gift. Rather, I struggled with the idea that I would never

have the gift of having children of my own. I wouldn't have a son to teach how to throw a baseball or a daughter to teach how to ride a bike. I wouldn't have little league games or dance recitals to go to, to be able to take pride in my children's accomplishments or to be a person of comfort and consolation in their struggles. As I struggled with this reality, however, one figure came continually into my heart and mind as a model and an inspiration for the type of fatherhood to which I have found myself called: St. Joseph.

In the Litany of St. Joseph, he is referred to as "Foster Father of the Son of God." This statement reminds us that, though St. Joseph raises the Christ child as his own—indeed,

Jesus was often known as the carpenter's son—Joseph was not Jesus' natural father. Yet, that did not stop Joseph from offering Jesus and his mother every fiber of his being in love, care and protection.

It did not stop Joseph from ultimately taking Mary into his home. It did not stop Joseph from getting up in the middle of the night to lead Jesus and his mother into the uncertain safety of Egypt. It did not stop Joseph from looking with anxious concern for the child Jesus left behind in the Temple. It did not stop Joseph from teaching Jesus the carpenter's trade and the value of human work in providing for one's family. It did not stop Joseph from being a physical representation, almost a living

sacrament, of the Father's love.

In St. Joseph, then, each priest finds his inspiration and model of spiritual fatherhood. Like St. Joseph, we too come to take great joy in the people entrusted to our care, rejoicing with them in the greatest moments life has to offer. We feel the same pride as the father of the prodigal son when one who has so long been lost is welcomed back into the merciful embrace of God. Our hearts break at the tragedies endured by those we have come to know, to serve and to love.

St. Therese of Lisieux in her prayer for priests asks of God: "Bless their labors with abundant fruit, and may the souls to whom they have ministered to be their joy and consolation and in Heaven their beautiful and



FATHER CHRIS FORD

everlasting crown." Priesthood, lived to its fullest depths, can be immensely fruitful in producing spiritual children for our Heavenly Father to call his own. Just as Jesus remains the joy of St. Joseph, when a priest comes to the halls of heaven, it will be the souls that he has cared for in the name God our Father that will be his greatest pride and joy.

I will never be called "Dad." But each and every day I find new joy and new hope in being called—and being—"Father." ■

Holy Thursday evening visits to the seven churches

By **FATHER JOSEPH MARCELLO**

(Editor's note: Due to the ongoing pandemic, some parishes may not be setting up a special repository this year and may instead be reserving the Blessed Sacrament in the church's tabernacle. In either case, social distancing will be provided. Check individual parish schedules for details.)

In recent years, many Catholics have discovered or rediscovered the ancient and beautiful custom of visiting Christ in the Blessed Sacrament at seven churches on the night of Holy Thursday.

Each year, at the conclusion of the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, the celebrant, servers and the assembled faithful process with the Blessed Sacrament to a beautifully decorated repository usually located outside the church's sanctuary—either at a side shrine, in the lower church or elsewhere. This movement from the altar to the repository is an entering into the moment at which Jesus and the Apostles left the Upper Room, crossed the Kidron Valley and made their way into the Garden of Gethsemane, where Christ underwent his agony of anguished prayer.

During his time in the Garden of Gethsemane, an additional suffering for Christ was that he

found his disciples asleep during his hour of need. "He said to Peter, 'So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak'" (Mt 26: 40-41).

Through the centuries, generations of Catholics, moved by this haunting and poignant question of Christ, have themselves responded to him from their own time and place, accompanying him in his agony in the Garden by maintaining a vigil of prayer and presence with him at a repository on Holy Thursday night. There they are present before the same Christ, now in the Eucharist, who suffered in the Garden on Holy Thursday.

Some people prefer to remain in prayer at one repository, perhaps in the same church where they attended the Mass of the Lord's Supper. Others prefer to visit the Blessed Sacrament and pray in seven churches. The practice of visiting seven churches on Holy Thursday seems to trace its origins to St. Philip Neri (1515-1595) who, to foster the faith and devotion of the people of Rome, organized pilgrimages to visit Christ in the Eucharist in churches around the City on Holy Thursday. As they walked from

church to church, they would sing, pray and fast, uniting themselves with Christ in his agony.

St. Philip Neri's pilgrimage itinerary included the four major basilicas of Rome: St. Peter's, St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major and St. Paul Outside the Walls; as well as three of its minor basilicas: St. Lawrence Outside the Walls, Holy Cross in Jerusalem and St. Sebastian Outside the Walls. In St. Philip's time—and until the Holy Week reforms of Pope Pius XII in 1955—the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper was celebrated in the morning, so this pilgrimage extended through most of the day.

In our own time, the Mass of the Lord's Supper is fittingly celebrated in the evening and adoration at the repositories is maintained for some hours after Mass, with some parishes extending it even until midnight.

Young professional Emma Ryder describes her experience: "Visiting the Blessed Sacrament at seven churches is always a highlight of Holy Week. It's a mini pilgrimage that allows me to stay awake with Christ during His agony in the garden, begin to enter into the suffering with Him and sets a solemn tone for the remainder of the Triduum."

Recent college graduate Olivia Kelly concurs: "My family and I



love the Holy Thursday pilgrimage because it allows us to physically and spiritually immerse ourselves in the Paschal Mystery. Praying with our peers, we join Jesus at each stop of His journey from the Upper Room to His crucifixion by meeting Him in the silence of each church, remembering Him in the Scriptures and adoring Him in the Eucharist."

Young people have responded with special enthusiasm when they've learned of this custom, and often it's led their parents to discover it too. As Damien O'Connor describes, "Providing transportation to the seven Churches made the evening (initially) fun for my teenage daughter Ana because she and I could go with her friends. God used a fun activity to bring Ana and

I closer to each other and Him. We now go annually because of the powerful encounter of Christ we experience in the Eucharist as well as through those praying."

Parishioner Joseph Tristine echoes this: "As impactful as it is to remain in the church in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament after Holy Thursday, it is so much more profound to make it a "journey of adoration" by visiting the seven churches with friends and other parishioners. It adds a sense of pilgrimage, mission and shared devotion to the experience, while also more deeply drawing you into the night of our Lord's Passion." ■

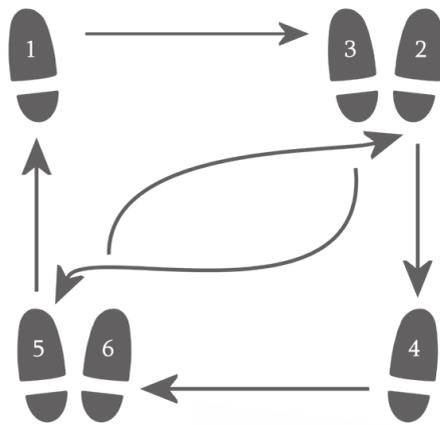
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JEP



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