

FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

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Grandparent Tributes

clockwise from top left

Nicoletta Colucci on her grandmother Maria:

I love my grandma Maria because she was one of the most loving, courageous, and generous people I've ever known. At just 18 years old, she came to this country speaking only Italian. She was incredibly smart, had a wonderful sense of humor, and showed her love through her amazing cooking. Her greatest joy was being a grandmother.

Molly, Maisie, Mateo & Adrianna on grandparents Michelle & Deacon Tim Bolton:

Nana and Pop are the best because they always take care of us, make us laugh and take us to do fun things like mini-golfing. They are always there when we need them and we love them!

Elizabeth Clark on her grandmother Joan:

I am so lucky that I had a grandmother so close to me growing up. I loved spending time with Granny in any way, whether it was watching TV after eating her meatloaf for dinner, walking around Costco or baking Betty Crocker cookies. When I remember all these times, there is so much warmth and love

St. Anne and St. Joachim, the grandparents of Jesus

Cole, Blake, Caden, and Corey on their grandmother Renee:

Our memere gives the best hugs and has the best snacks. We love swimming with her in the pool!

Baby Justin Roger (born Aug. 4, 2026) to his grandfather Jim Stamatis:

Nice to meet you, Papa!

Nick Morelli on his grandparents Deacon David and Anita Flynn:

I love my grandparents because they are always there for me when times are tough and even when I'm struggling in faith, they are there to help me. I also love my grandparents because they always are welcome to have me over and to make food for me.

Sabrina Quigley on her grandparents Mary Ann and Patrick Toole:

My grandparents are my best friends ... please see page 15 for full tribute

Our Grandparents ... and Why We Love Them

A special edition of *Fairfield County Catholic* | pages 13-16



The Grandparents' Creed

By Harriette B. McCormack

For love lavished beyond all measure,
For happy hours always to treasure,
For bounteous meals at holiday seasons,
For wealth of memories beyond all reason,
For gifts of love fashioned with care,
For secrets shared on occasions rare,
For quality of life that examples impart,
I love my grandparents with all my heart.



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*Padre Pio novena and relics***A saint for our times comes to the diocese**

By JOE PISANI

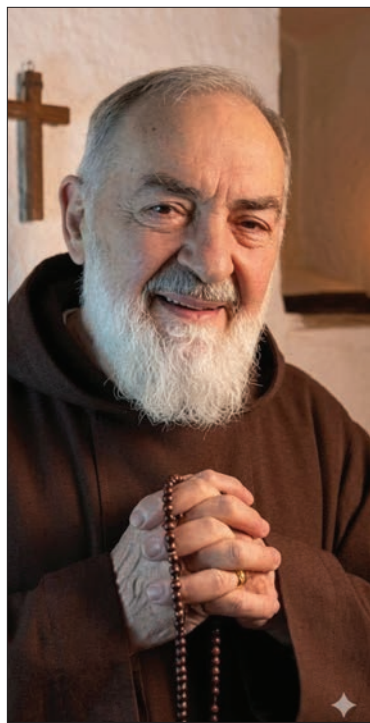
During Padre Pio's life and after his death, he was known for many extraordinary graces—the stigmata, bilocation, the ability to read souls, along with countless physical and spiritual healings and intercessions in times of distress.

Is it any wonder this Capuchin friar is one of the most beloved saints of our time?

In September, five major relics of St. Pio of Pietrelcina will travel to nine parishes across the Diocese of Bridgeport for nine consecutive nights as part of a novena in the saint's honor, which will begin on his feast day, September 23.

At each church, the evening will start with the celebration of Mass at 7 pm, followed by the Litany of St. Pio and veneration of his relics. There is no fee, registration is not required and everyone is welcome.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano says, "Padre Pio reminds us that holiness is not a distant ideal but



ST. PIO OF PIETRELcina

a living reality, offered to each of us. I warmly encourage the faithful of our diocese to come, to pray and to ask the intercession of



this beloved saint, who points us always to the mercy of Christ."

The relics for veneration are a crust from Saint Pio's wounds, a piece of his mantle, his brown fingerless glove, a handkerchief he used at Mass to wipe his tears and a lock of his hair.

Bishop Caggiano and Deacon Patrick Toole, Chancellor & Secretary of the Curia, conceived the idea for the novena after the Saint Pio of Pietrelcina Foundation gave the Diocese of Bridgeport custody of the relics.

Bishop Caggiano plans to install one of the relics in the chapel of Padre Pio at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bridgeport and another at a garden chapel in Greenwich, which will be constructed. The novena will become an annual tradition, and another is being planned for next spring.

Deacon Toole has seen evidence of a deep devotion to Padre Pio in the diocese, including the chapel at St. Charles Borromeo, a prayer group at St. Jude in Monroe and several fraternities of



Third Order Franciscans.

"Padre Pio is probably the closest thing in our time to someone you would look at and say, 'This person is walking directly in the footsteps of Christ,'" Deacon Toole said. "He embodied many of the charisms of our Lord. He was given so many graces ... and he has given people so much hope."

Just as Padre Pio dedicated his life to helping souls, the goal of the novena is to honor his memory and continue his mission by bringing people closer to Christ.

Deacon Toole believes many people are attracted to the saint because he lived in the modern era, and there are many enduring accounts of his life.

There are also countless cases of physical and spiritual healings

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

*Kolbe hoops legend honored***The Walter Luckett way: faith, family, community**

By JOE PISANI

BRIDGEPORT—He's been on the cover of Sports Illustrated. His high school basketball records from his years at Kolbe are unchallenged. He scored more points than any other high school basketball player in New England history. He's a legend in the sports world and in the community. And now, Walter E. Luckett Jr. has a street named after him, right beside the school he loves.

Several hundred people came out July 25 to pay tribute to a man beloved for his community initiatives and unselfish commitment to young people. They gathered to dedicate Walter Luckett Way at the high school he attended until 1972, when he was named National High School Player of the Year.

The Kolbe Cathedral Prep gym was filled with friends, family members, business

associates, former classmates, clergy, civic and political leaders, and residents who showed up to honor an athlete described as the "epitome of community service—a humble man of family and faith who sees the potential in people and brings them together because he knows success is never achieved alone."

One by one, they came forward to praise the star basketball player whose promising career was cut short by a knee injury, but who came back to Bridgeport to do great things for the city and for young people.

Luckett, who turned 73 on July 24, was joined by his wife Valita of almost 53 years, who has been his lifelong partner in community service and the vice president of the Walter E. Luckett Foundation, which he founded to provide programs for youth in need of additional support.

Among those paying tribute was U.S. Sen. Richard

Blumenthal who said, "Walter is a basketball star, but his real claim to fame is that he is a role model to countless kids. He's also an example that there's no limit to the good you can do if you don't care who gets the credit."

Looking into the audience, Blumenthal said Luckett has touched people from different races, ethnic backgrounds, politics and faiths, and united them in a common cause.

"He's more than just a sports star," Blumenthal said. "Walter Luckett is a great human being."

Mayor Joe Ganim, joined by members of the City Council, read a proclamation making it Walter Luckett Day in Bridgeport.

His longtime friend Terry O'Connor, former executive director of the Cardinal Shehan Center and recently retired chair of the Kolbe board, put it this way: "He's a genuine, down-to-earth guy who never flaunted his



PHOTOS BY PAUL HARING

achievements and who despite his success remained humble and committed to giving back." Luckett served with O'Connor on the boards of Kolbe and the Shehan Center.

Luckett was gracious in his response and gave all the credit to the community and those who helped him, particularly to his parents and others in the Bridgeport neighborhood where he grew up.

"I'm overwhelmed," he said. "I wanted to make sure this was a community celebration, and it is. What more can I ask for?"

His message to young people

was simple: "Education is paramount. I can't emphasize that enough. You can be the best basketball player in the world, but your backup should be your education."

Valita Luckett also expressed her gratitude, first of all to God.

"Our heart is full, full of the love and support displayed here today," she said. "The many calls, cards, texts, emails all indicated that this honor is indicative of the friendships, relationships and partnerships developed in support of Walt

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

*Youth minister Christine Otis***Receives national youth ministry award**

By EMILY CLARK

NEW CANAAN—It's 4:45 pm on a summer Sunday, and the vestibule of St. Aloysius Church is abuzz—with teenagers. These members of the parish's Youth Ministry jostle about, readying for the late afternoon Mass and the roles they will play as ushers, readers and even Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharistic. They talk. They organize. They plan.

In the middle of it all, with last-minute details to these young lay leaders, is Youth Minister Christine Otis. With her welcoming presence, she's there to remind the ushers that it's two collections this weekend, then hurries an extraordinary minister to find another as one did not show. But remember, no shorts, she cautions, even though it's summer. She's there, as one teen said, "to help us every step of the way."

Assisting during Mass is just one of the myriad of spiritual and service works that Otis has initiated since she took on this position at St. Aloysius over 15 years ago. It's a position she has embraced and made into a model for youth ministries across the country, one that does not revolve around weekly meetings but focuses on the pillars of prayer, service and worship with frequent opportunities for teens to engage with their faith. It's a position that has also earned her national recognition as the recipient of the Saint John

Paul II Parish Leadership Award. This honor, one of several National Catholic Youth Ministry Awards, recognizes those who follow John Paul II's example of serv-



ing and supporting young people in their faith journey and encourages efforts that support and strengthen young people in their daily encounter with Jesus Christ.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and Patrick Donovan, Executive Director of the Institute for Catholic Formation, both submitted letters of recommendation on Otis' behalf, citing the authentic relationships she creates, her vibrant faith and spirit of missionary outreach. "She is innovative in her approach and teaches the mighty to lift up the lowly in whatever setting that might be. Both Saint John Paul II and Chris Otis see the youth as more than just a demographic.



MEMBERS OF THE ST. ALOYSIUS YOUTH MINISTRY on their mission trip to Kentucky in July (Left). Chris Otis prays the Rosary with members of the St. Aloysius Youth Ministry on a recent Tuesday in the parish gardens.

They are beloved sons and daughters of our living God, who need to be accompanied now," the bishop wrote.

Responding to the praise she has received, Otis said, "I'm just God's little vehicle and so humbled for this award. I'm blessed to play a tiny role in their faith journey."

For her, it's all about the kids—and the Eucharist.

"We want each teen to develop a charism for what God is calling them to, for them to keep their hearts and ears open and ask, 'Where does God want me?'" she said. "We provide the opportunities, and they come. It's a perfect fit for the bishop's 'The One.' They are invited to encounter Christ in a safe place."

In many cases, this is accomplished right inside the church

at St. Aloysius through a teen Rosary as well as a monthly Holy Hour and Adoration that draws up to 80 high schoolers. Here, Otis said, they can take a break from the outside world and sit in silence with Christ. With priests in the confessionals, she believes the teens are now in the habit of going to reconciliation once a month.

"We mentor them because we want to form Catholics for life. I like to say, if you're not sure you want to go – just go and the Holy Spirit will do everything else," said Otis, who added that teens often call her the "recruiter" for her ability to convince young people to join the ministry and follow Christ.

"Mrs. Otis is the best recruiter!" said Youth Ministry member Tucker O'Reilly, a sophomore at

New Canaan High School. "She helps us grow closer to God and brings us together as a group to make connections with others."

Such connections—and the encounters that ensue from them—extend well beyond the Parish Center at St. Aloysius and environs of their own community. From transitional homes in the Bronx, where the teens offer fellowship and hot coffee to the homeless, and Malta House in Norwalk, where they babysit and cook a meal so mothers get a much-needed reprieve, Otis has shown this Youth Ministry group how to let the Word of God lead them to walk the path of social justice, inspiring them to take part in outreach, one of the tenets of her leadership award.

Msgr. Robert Kinnally, pastor
➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Two candidates accepted for priesthood

FAIRFIELD—Deacon Ernest Hart and seminarian John Guinan offered their intentions to seek ordination during the Rite of Admission to Candidacy for Holy Orders on Saturday, August 8 at the Chapel of St. Pius X Parish. During the Mass celebrated by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, the men took the next step on their journeys toward the priesthood.

As the bishop called both Guinan and Deacon Hart by name, they approached him to receive a sign of reverence. This Calling of the Candidates was followed by the Examination and the Acceptance of the Candidates. Deacon Hart was formally



From left: Deacon Chris Greer, seminarian John Guinan, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, Deacon Ernest Hart, Father Christopher J. Ford (PHOTO BY KRIS GREER)

accepted as an official candidate for the priesthood and Guinan for the diaconate.

After his homily, the Bishop Caggiano prayed: "In your kindness be pleased to bless these your sons who desire to devote themselves in sacred ministry to your service and to the service of your people, so that they may be able to take up the apostolic office worthily."

In 2011, Deacon Hart was ordained to the diaconate in the Diocese of Brooklyn before coming to Bridgeport two years ago to serve as the diocesan general counsel. He previously worked as an attorney and college professor in New York. He will be ordained to the priest-



hood by Bishop Caggiano on Saturday, November 21 at St. Anthony of Padua.

Guinan traveled to Rome in mid-August to continue his priestly formation at the Pontifical Beda College. Father Christopher J. Ford, Director of Seminarians, wrote of Guinan, saying, "John has committed himself with seriousness and humility to the work of priestly discernment and formation."



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Your gift of service and support help sustain vital ministries that serve the most in need, nurture vocations and strengthen our parishes and families in faith.

- + **44 seminarians** receive support as they discern their vocation to the priesthood and 15 men are in formation for the Diaconate.
- + Youth and adults grow in knowledge and love of the faith through the **Institute for Catholic Formation**, while children in the Danbury area encounter Jesus through the **Formation Satellite Center**.
- + **Ongoing pastoral care** provides services to the sick, the elderly in nursing homes and hospitals, and those facing life's challenges through the Pastoral Companions Program.
- + More than **2.2 million meals** are served and **7,900 counseling sessions** are provided through Catholic Charities of Fairfield County.
- + **1,149 students** receive Bishop's Scholarship Fund tuition in partnership with Foundations in Education to attend Catholic elementary schools.

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July—August 2026

Bishop's Appeal

'Saving one starfish at a time'

By JOE PISANI

When she was in seventh grade at St. Gregory the Great School, Carrie Tesbir played Veronica in the live Stations of the Cross. It was a fitting role because a year before Carrie chose Veronica as her confirmation name.

"I liked her because she stood up for her faith," Carrie said. "She knew there could be consequences if she did that, and she could get punished or hurt, but she stood up anyway and she went to Jesus and wiped his face while he was carrying the cross because it was the right thing to do."

It was a simple act by one woman that will be remembered for all eternity, and it was a simple lesson for a seventh-grader in a Catholic school, who might not have learned about St. Veronica if she hadn't received assistance from the Bishop's Scholarship Fund, which is supported by Foundations in Education and the One in Christ 2026 Bishop's Appeal.

Carrie, who will be going into eighth grade at St. Gregory's in September, has been a student there since kindergarten.

Her mother, Lorena Tesbir, who is a single parent and a second-grade public school teacher, says that it is only because of the help they receive from the fund and the parish that Carrie has been able to attend St. Gregory's.

"It is about the generosity of people over the years—people who don't even know me. People who don't have a face for me and don't have a face for my daughter have made this possible," she says. "They're willing to give to the scholarship fund to change someone's life ... and it does. There is a need overall in our society because so many people are missing something that the Church is offering—community and a moral compass."

In announcing the 2026 Appeal, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said: "The Holy Spirit is working powerfully in our midst, and we are beginning to see the fruits of our efforts, and those fruits are growing. Over the last few years, you have heard me say that we are in the work of renewal—of bringing new life, both individually to our own discipleship and collectively to our common life as a Church."

The bishop urged the faithful to continue on this path so the diocese can do even more.

"For that, I need your help in

supporting the ministries that are the foundation of our Church," he said, "and by funding the new initiatives that are giving further and even greater life to our Church."

Carrie, who runs track and cross-country, and is an honors student, says her favorite subjects are religion, math and English language arts.

"Every day I get to learn about God and the saints and the sacraments," she says. "I also like English language arts because I'm learning new words, reading stories and writing things. I like being creative."

In addition to composing essays, she also wrote sonnets after the class read several of Shakespeare's.

"I found it hard, but in a good way," she says. "It kind of pushed me to be a better writer."

Lorena says Catholic education fulfills a special need, but not everyone can afford it. A Catholic education is about much more than academic excellence, she says. There is a spiritual component that is infused in the daily lessons.

"They're teaching our kids to go out into the word and love and to bring people in, and that love heals and it grows and it inspires people," she says. "Then, people want to come to see that, and it's almost like a magnet. In a Catholic school, kids get the spiritual part and they get the moral compass part. And there's also community. We are together in God and together we're kind of changing the world."

Pamela S. Rittman, Director of Development and Bishop's Appeal, said that every gift to the Bishop's Scholarship Fund, in partnership with Foundations in Education, is "a gift of hope and opportunity."

"Through your generosity, students receive more than an outstanding education—they are formed in faith, guided by strong moral values, and inspired to live lives of compassion, service, and love," she said. "Thank you for believing in our children and for helping to shape the next generation of faithful leaders who will strengthen our Church and transform our communities."

Lorena has a favorite metaphor to describe her and Carrie's experience: "It's like we are one small starfish—my daughter and I—and somebody comes along and throws that one starfish back into the ocean. They're saving that starfish. And that's great. We have to trust the Holy Spirit is putting us where we need to go."

Ministries supported by the

Appeal focus on the themes of "faith, charity and education."

They include:

- Priests, deacons and laity being formed to preach, lead and evangelize more effectively through the St. Jerome Center for Preaching and Biblical Studies.
- Youth and adults grow in knowledge and love of the faith through the Institute for Catholic Formation, while children in the Danbury area encounter Jesus through the Formation Satellite Center.
- Those who are isolated, grieving or ill are receiving care through the Pastoral Companions Program.
- Individuals and families in



LORENA AND CARRIE TESBIR

crisis, the poor, the sick, and those searching for Christ, who are being served through Catholic Charities and other outreach ministries.

- Families receiving tuition assistance, which will help

them provide their children a Catholic education.

(There is still time to make a gift to the Bishop's Appeal. Please visit www.2026BishopsAppeal.org or call 203.416.1470. Thank you for your support and making a difference.) ■

Service honors Vietnam vets exposed to Agent Orange

TRUMBULL—Deacon Tim Bolton of St. Stephen Church delivered an invocation recently during a Vietnam veterans candlelight service on Agent Orange Awareness Day to commemorate the thousands of veterans exposed to the toxic defoliant during the war, including five from Trumbull.

August 10 marked the anniversary of the United States' first use of Agent Orange in South Vietnam in 1961. The chemical herbicide has been associated with severe conditions, including multiple cancers and long-term health effects.

"Tonight we remember those whose exposure to Agent Orange followed them home from Vietnam — an invisible wound of war whose consequences would reveal themselves only years, and sometimes decades, later," Deacon Bolton said.

He remembered Trumbull veterans by name: Fred Liggins, United States Army; Jim Grutzmacher, United States Marine Corps; Dave Wheeler, United States Army; Peter Spalthoff, United States Army; and James Carney, United States Marine Corps.

"We give thanks for their courage, their service, and for all the years of life they shared with us after returning home," he prayed. "We remember their

spouses and families who walked beside them, especially through years of illness and uncertainty—sharing burdens they never expected to carry and sacrifices that too often went unseen.

"Tonight reminds us that the cost of war does not always end when the conflict does. Some sacrifices unfold quietly over a lifetime. Some wounds are ultimately claimed by those wounds many years later. And so, as we light these candles, may their light become our promise," he added.

More than 3 million U.S. service members were believed to be exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, roughly 300,000 veterans have suffered severe health complications or died, and over 50 diseases are connected to the toxic chemical.

"We remember those who fell in Vietnam. We remember those who came home changed by Vietnam. We remember those whose lives were eventually taken by wounds received there. And we remember those who loved them and walked beside and loved them all the way home," Deacon Bolton prayed. "God of mercy, hold all our departed veterans in Your loving care. Comfort their families and friends. Bless the veterans who remain among us, especially those who still carry the visible and invisible wounds

of their service. And grant us the wisdom to build a world in which fewer sons and daughters are asked to carry the terrible burdens of war."

In his comments, former First Selectman Ray Baldwin Jr., USMC said that Agent Orange was used for 14 years throughout South Vietnam to eliminate jungles and foliage, affecting not only 3 million U.S. troops but also millions of civilians.

Over 58,000 service men and women were killed in action in Vietnam, and it is estimated that nearly 11 times that number - 650,000 - have died from Agent Orange related illnesses in the past 51 years, Baldwin said.

"Tonight we honor those we have lost, those who continue to fight illnesses related to Agent Orange, and the families who have stood beside them through every challenge," Baldwin said. "We also recognize the courage of Vietnam veterans whose service to our nation came at an extraordinary cost."

He said that the day of remembrance is more than just looking back: "It is a commitment to ensuring these veterans are never forgotten, their stories are told and their sacrifices are acknowledged with dignity and gratitude." ■

St. Charles youth spend week at summer camp

By EMILY CLARK

Thanks to a grant from Foundations in Faith, teenagers from St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bridgeport had a unique opportunity last week to experience Bible Camp. In addition to attending daily Mass and praying the Rosary, they also completed service projects, played basketball and even went to the beach, rounding out a week made possible through a partnership with St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Fairfield.

With “Chosen by God” as its theme, this camp focused on the passage from Jeremiah that reads: “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I set you apart.” It’s one that St. Charles’ youth minister Segundo Ruiz said helps the kids understand that they are special.

“I want them to know that they are here for something, for a reason, and that they have a purpose,” he said. “They are not on the street. They are here and safe.”

As inner city youth, these high schoolers are often at

home without something to do in the summer. Having grown up in Waterbury, Father David Roman, pastor at St. Thomas

people have so much to keep them engaged, spiritually and otherwise.

“St. Thomas is the host, pro-



Aquinas, understands that. After applying for the FIF grant, he was thrilled to be awarded the full amount of \$10,000 to fund this program. “It’s beyond a Bible camp,” he said, as these young

viding space with a field, cafeteria, gym, and the beach,” Father Roman explained, noting how it came together as he worked with Ruiz, group leader Fatima Molina and St. Charles’ pastor Father Abelardo Vasquez.

“We didn’t expect such a great

response and never thought we’d have something to this scale.

We’re so grateful to the diocese and Foundations in Faith. We couldn’t have done this without them.”

Over 40 boys and girls, all from St. Charles, signed up. In addition to the activities, the teens receive transportation and both breakfast and lunch from local favorites like Chick-Fil-A and Vazzy’s. The local Knights of Columbus chapter also gave \$1,000 for Bibles for each participant, which they have taken with them to daily Mass at St. Thomas.

During daily Mass at St. Thomas, campers like Juan Pablo “JP” Corona Sanchez had the chance to participate as readers and altar servers. “When I did a reading at Mass, it really touched my heart. It made me really want to follow in God’s footsteps with him by my side in my school journey,” said JP, an incoming 10th grader. “I feel very blessed that I have this opportunity.”

Eileen Marie Ortiz, who will be a high school senior in the fall, said she enjoyed the Masses and liked relaxing at the beach. “This



is a fun Bible camp. It’s not like when we were little,” she added.

Participants also engaged in service work, including delivering sandwiches to Operation Hope in Fairfield, which reinforced the theme that God has chosen them for a purpose in life.

Ruiz said he wanted a retreat-type program for those at St. Charles and has enjoyed working as a team with Father Roman and those at St. Thomas. It’s especially exciting for him to spread the Word of God to the kids, which was made easier with testimonies from diocesan seminarians. “It gives them knowledge of vocations.”

For Molina, a group leader from St. Charles, this camp provided the youth with a special encounter with Christ. “I hope the Holy Spirit touches their hearts, so they see the Church as a place for many blessings. A happy place.”



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WALTER LUCKETT FROM PAGE 2

and the contributions he made to Bridgeport, not only in sports years ago, but more importantly, to the community work he’s done to give back and share his blessings. It is certainly a humbling experience and a dream come true. For Walt to smell the roses while he is alive is an honor and a blessing.”

She mentioned the loss of many loved ones in recent years, including the recent passing of his brother Larry and said, “He [Walter] is reminded of and cognizant of the fragility of life, and the need to use time wisely and to know he still has miles to go before he sleeps.”

Later, the group gathered on the corner of Washington Avenue and Calhoun Place.

“This is a celebration of community, and I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for a lot of people,” Lockett said as the sign “Walter Lockett Way” was unveiled to a burst of applause. His street is between the school and Kolbe’s Louis

V. Gerstner III Center for Students and Families.

“This is truly awesome, and I hope it will be here forever,” he said. “I know my mother and father are looking down and smiling. The seed was planted long ago, and I am trying to provide water. You can’t do it alone.” Then, he told the crowd, “Bridgeport rocks.”

Lockett played for Kolbe from 1968 to 1972 and was named National High School Player of the Year in 1972. He scored 2691 points, still the highest total in the New England Region. As a junior, he led Kolbe to the state championship victory, and as a college freshman at Ohio University, he was featured on the cover of Sports Illustrated. From 1972 until 1975, he played for the Ohio Bobcats and was drafted by the Detroit Pistons, but an injury prevented him from playing.

He returned to his hometown, earned a degree from University of Bridgeport, got an MBA from University of New Haven and went to work at Unilever as man-

ager of community relations.

Kolbe Principal Camille Figluizzil said, “Mr. Lockett is the perfect model of an outstanding human being who cares for others and never forgets the gifts he was given. He continues to show up for the Kolbe community. He attends some of our basketball games to cheer our athletes on and impart messages that give students technical basketball cues, but more importantly positive and encouraging ways of thinking.”

Each year, he and Valita deliver an introduction to the work world curriculum each year and introduce 11th-graders to paid internships.

Lorraine Gibbons, executive director of the Shehan and McGivney centers, said, “Walter is the epitome of someone who loves the community and wants to give back, especially so students can have better outcomes. He’s really a humble person. He and Valita are all about kindness and being positive.”

'Parish Priest' is a triumph of faith

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Who better to write about the life of a parish priest on the verge of canonization than another parish priest who has spent his life teaching, ministering to the faithful and writing plays.

Father Albert J. DeGiacomo has just overseen the publication of his latest book, a play in two acts, *Parish Priest, Blessed Father Michael J. McGivney and the Founding of the Knights of Columbus* (The Giacobbe Press, Paraclete Design, March 28).

Many area residents know Father Al from tenure as a member of the English Department at Fairfield Prep in the 1980s and his occasional visits back to the diocese. Others know him nationally as a Catholic playwright who has created works on Flannery O'Connor, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day, among others.

While the play is based on facts, Father Al clarifies that it is not meant as "biography or hagiography." Rather, it offers an engaging look at the day-to-day ministry of Father Michael

McGivney and his little known talent as a theater director.

"He was a showman," says Father Al, who notes Blessed McGivney produced plays at St. Mary's in New Haven and later at Thomaston Opera House when he was named pastor of St. Thomas Parish.

During a recent visit to Fairfield to see friends and promote his new book, Father Al, a 4th Degree Knight who founded two Knights councils in Kentucky, said he conceived and wrote the play in three days after being approached by the Knights leadership at Cathedral Parish in Lexington.

The Massachusetts native and graduate of Boston College says he fell in love with the theater at the age of eleven when his parents took him to see "The Music Man." He was dazzled by the stage craft, the lighting, sets and music.

After leaving Prep, Father Al was able to unify his love for theater and for the Church when he earned a PhD in drama from Tufts University. In addition to his work in parishes, he has also served as associate profes-

sor of English and theater at Mount Aloysius College, PA and Berea College, Kentucky. Now a retired priest of the Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky, he remains active in the Jesuit Spirit Counseling ministry and is a member of the Dramatist Guild.

He credits the Holy Spirit for his inspiration in drafting the play but adds that the hard work of a dramatist was up to him. "Write, stage, re-write/revise might be the playwright's credo," he says, explaining that once the original is assembled, there is usually a long editing and creative process to bring the play to final form.

Father Al is quick to point out he's "not writing for Broadway." Rather, he feels blessed to be working in the same tradition practiced by Father McGivney. He hopes the work will celebrate the life of a saint while reigniting the parish theater tradition, which is at the heart of the play.

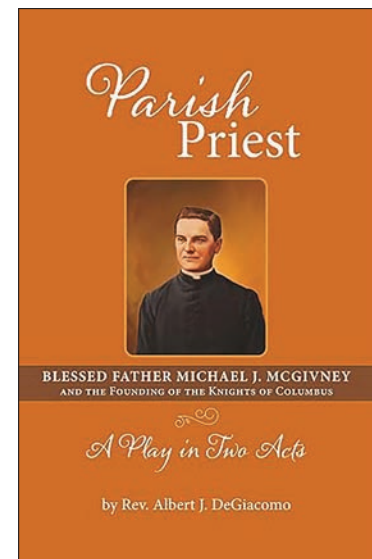
"Parish Priest" begins when the young Father McGivney is assigned to St. Mary's in New Haven after the pastor has taken ill. His goal is to erase parish debt and unify parishioners in a way that helps them discover their

own talents and abilities.

The dramatic device is a "play within a play," which offers an insight into the ministry of the future American saint and the life of his parishioners. The action switches between McGivney rehearsing parishioners in "Handy Andy" (a popular play written in 1862) to backstage glimpses of their private lives and struggles with poverty, alcoholism and illness.

As such, the play also celebrates the immigrant church. The characters are largely the Irish who lived and worked in New Haven in the 1870s. While strong in spirit, they face many hardships, including rampant disease, unsafe working conditions and discrimination against Catholics. After a devastating illness or accident, many families were left destitute in an era before health care and social safety nets.

"Father Al depicts the Catholic world of 19th century America and the drive, energy and power of the immigrant church in action, in development, in need, in pain, in humor and in spirit," said Barry Wallace, who chaired the English Department



when Father Al was in Fairfield. "From the street people to the housekeeper to the lawyers, rascals and saints, it reveals a playwright who has produced the Irish Catholic experience. With a light touch and a tear in the eye, he has recreated the world of my great-grandparents. A tremendously clever play."

The play gains dramatic tension through Father McGivney's ongoing concern for their plight, based on his own family's suffering after his father's death. As the oldest child, he postponed his seminary education and went to work in a Waterbury brass mill,

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

Irish immigrants' plight is focus of exhibit

By EMILY CLARK

NEW HAVEN—As the son of Irish immigrants who, with over one million others, escaped the famine of their homeland during the mid-19th century, Blessed Michael McGivney understood both the desperation and the resilience of those who journeyed to the United States in hopes of establishing a new life. Providing financial assistance and support to these and other immigrants who suffered a loss became his mission when he founded the Knights of Columbus in New Haven.

Today, as part of the ongoing series "In God We Trust," the Blessed Michael McGivney Pilgrimage Center invited Quinnipiac University in conjunction with Ireland's Great Hunger Museum to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States and the founding of the Knights of Columbus in 1882 with a number of evocative sculptures of the famine period. According to Bob Ferguson, a member of the execu-



utive board of IGHM, over the next year and a half, three rotating displays will bring to life the plight of Irish immigrants.

"The pieces show not only a desperate people looking to survive and going through pain and loss, but they also show that they brought with them a hope and resilience to start a new life," he said, "and that's one of the main roles the Knights of Columbus played in the immigration of people from Ireland."

Ferguson said he was specifically moved by the bronze sculpture "Disembarking" by artist John Behan, which depicts several figures descending a ramp, ready to take their first steps onto an unknown land. "It really brings home that these people sought survival and were also looking for a new hope and new world, but they knew they would never see those they had left ever again," he added.

Another sculpture currently on display shows a couple, also immortalized in bronze, gaunt but standing tall, gazing outward. Through their stance and expression, viewers can understand a single moment in the historical narrative of this period, one of immigrants who were forced

from their homes and lands. Ferguson noted that the sculptures themselves, all gut-wrenching and emotional, were chosen by the McGivney Center and are conveniently sized for display in glass showcases.

Through the exhibit "In God We Trust," McGivney Center curator Bethany Scheffer said they aim to display various topics and moments in American history that impacted the creation of the Knights of Columbus and its development over the last 144 years. One such topic is the mass immigration of people during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Irish immigrants in particular played a major role in the creation of this country, and that began when they first set foot in the U.S., as depicted in the sculptures.

Additionally, Scheffer said, "Many of the incorporators for the Knights of Columbus were either descendants of Irish immigrants, such as first Supreme Knight James Mullen, or were Irish born, such as first Supreme Advocate

and eventual New Haven Mayor Cornelius Driscoll."

Following the influx of famine victims from Ireland, Ferguson said, the population of Catholics in the United States increased dramatically. Assisting these families, especially when the father or breadwinner was lost, was one of the main roles of the Knights of Columbus from its inception. The sculptures show that, along with the desperation of people fighting to survive.

"While our exhibit mostly features two-dimensional works of art on this topic, we were thrilled to be able to include the sculptures within the exhibit," Scheffer explained. "Those that were included focus specifically on the people who risked the arduous journey across the Atlantic in hopes of starting a new life."

The exhibit "In God We Trust: The Knights of Columbus and the American Experience" runs through September 5, 2027, at the Blessed Michael McGivney Pilgrimage Center, 1 State Street, New Haven, Conn.

*25 years after 9/11***Their heroism still inspires us**

NEW HAVEN—Jimmy Quinn loved basketball. He played in high school and managed the team at his alma mater, Manhattan College. He was also a devoted New York Mets fan.

In 2001, Bobby Valentine's Mets took third place in the National League East and missed the playoffs, but they became a symbol of hope for New York City when they played the first game after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and beat the Atlanta Braves 3-2, thanks to a two-run homer from Mike Piazza in the eighth inning.

Jimmy never saw that game. He worked at Cantor Fitzgerald and was among those killed in the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

A member of Knights Council 126 in Brooklyn, he is one of the 46 Knights of Columbus memorialized in an exhibit at the Blessed Michael McGivney Pilgrimage Center in New Haven for the 25th anniversary of the attacks. Jimmy, 23, was the youngest; the oldest was 71.

The exhibit, which is open until October 11, remembers their heroism on 9/11, when four planes were hijacked and two

of them flew into the twin towers in New York City. Another crashed into the Pentagon in Washington DC, and a fourth into a Pennsylvania field after the passengers revolted against the hijackers.

In total, 2977 people were killed, thousands were injured, and many more died in the years that followed because of health issues.

The exhibit honors all the victims, their families and those heroes who risked their lives to save countless others, according to Bethany J. Sheffer, curator/registrar of the center.

"This tragedy is part of our history, and it's important for us to remember those whose lives were lost," Sheffer said. "And it's equally important for us because we are honoring those Knights who died and who played a role in the relief efforts."

The exhibit uses photos to narrate the events of 9/11. It recognizes each individual, including firefighters, police officers and civilians, by providing biographical information on the 46 Knights, who were killed in both towers, the Pentagon and two of the flights.

Among the items are a frag-

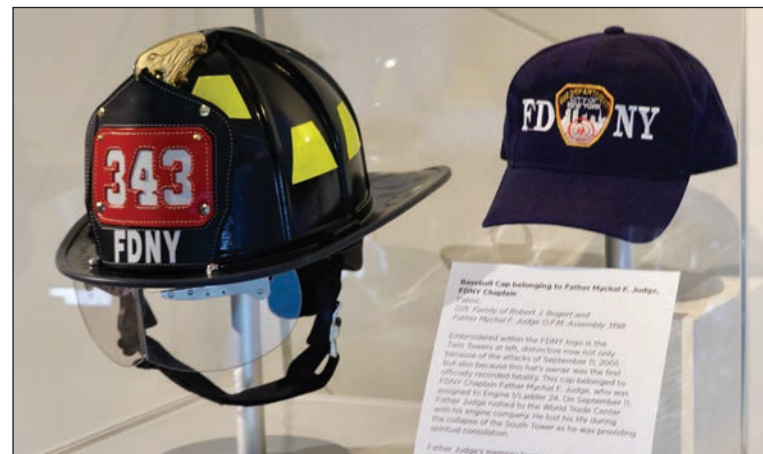
ment from one of the towers, a firefighter helmet given to the Knights by the Fire Department of New York and a FDNY cap that belonged to Father Mychal Judge, a Franciscan Friar, who was chaplain of the department and the first officially recorded fatality of the attacks.

There are rosaries that were distributed to the firefighters and law enforcement officers during the rescue response, and a gas mask worn by then Supreme Chaplain Bishop Thomas V. Daily of Brooklyn, who toured Ground Zero.

Also on display are a prayer book and a program from a Mass of Remembrance at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, which was attended by 1,100 Fourth Degree Knights on the first anniversary of the attacks.

The exhibit includes two twisted beams from the World Trade Center, which are part of the museum's permanent Wall of History gallery, and a severed street lamppost from a neighborhood close to the attack site.

Sheffer said that in keeping with the Knights' core value of



A REPLICA FIREFIGHTER HELMET from the Fire Department of New York and a FDNY cap that belonged to Father Mychal Judge, who was chaplain of the department and died in the rescue effort.

charity, it began the \$1 million Heroes Fund the day after the attacks to provide financial support for the families of all fallen first responders, including law enforcement, firefighters and emergency medical personnel who lost their lives in the rescue and recovery efforts.

When the fund ended, 419 families had been given financial

support and an existing scholarship fund was expanded to include children of first responders who were killed.

Sheffer, who was in graduate school when 9/11 occurred, said, "It was definitely a very emotional exhibit to put together, but it's so important that we are able to keep their stories alive and tell them to younger generations." ■

Memorial Mass for 9-11 attacks

By COLIN FIRDA

On September 11, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will celebrate a Memorial Mass to mark the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks in 2001. The Mass will be held at St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan at 7 pm.

Twenty-five years ago on September 11, four planes were hijacked, and two of them flew into the Twin Towers in New York City. Another crashed into the Pentagon in Washington DC and a fourth into a Pennsylvania field after the passengers revolted against the hijackers.

In total, 2977 people were killed, thousands were injured and many more died in the years that followed because of health issues.

Many people from Fairfield County died in the attacks. Whether they were on the airplanes, fighting the fires or rescuing survivors, they made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives, working to help others until the end.

We are invited to recognize that those who were lost have left this world but are not forgotten, nor have their lives ended forever. Rather, the Church invites us all to remember that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, and that whoever believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life.

"Each time we gather as a community of faith to remember those who lost their lives on 9/11, we not only call to mind sacred memories of our dear ones, but we also strengthen our belief in Christ who conquered death and opened the gates of Heaven," said Monsignor Robert Kinnally, Vicar General of the Diocese of Bridgeport and Pastor of St. Aloysius. "Our consolation comes from what we hear of God in the Book of Revelation: 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning.'"

Having a Mass offered for our departed loved ones is a way of both commending to their souls to God's mercy and a way of remembering them here on earth, bringing solace to those who mourn, he said.

All are welcome at St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan on September 11, 2026, at 7 pm for the Memorial Mass.

(Colin Firda is a seminarian of the Diocese of Bridgeport.) ■



DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

Wedding Jubilee Mass

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at 11:00 am for a Mass celebrated by Bishop Caggiano
Space is limited to four guests

St. Vincent's 'Swim' raises funds for cancer

By EMILY CLARK

BRIDGEPORT—For the last 37 years, Tom Dolan has been escorting teams in a variety of vessels over the unpredictable waters of Long Island Sound in Hartford HealthCare's annual Swim Across the Sound. As a boat captain since the early days of the event in the late 1980s, he always knew how important it was to support those with cancer – long before he himself was diagnosed with leukemia eight years ago. Now in remission, Dolan and Fair Diego, the team he currently carries, continue to take part in the Swim, knowing the impact it has on so many.

"We've all been touched by someone with cancer, but luckily, there are now more survivors. We're so fortunate to serve a lot of people through the Swim," said Dolan, who with his team, raised over \$45,000 of the more than \$500,000, as of the day of the event, making them the number one fundraising team spot.

During this year's event on Saturday, August 1, where swimmers finished at Captain's Cove Marina, Fair Diego secured first place in the classic relay, though for Dolan and so many others, this is not a competition but a chance to do for others.

In his early morning prayer at Steelpointe Harbor before



over 200 swimmers took to the water on a glorious summer day, Hartford HealthCare's Fairfield Region President Bill Jennings compared each of the participants' strokes in the Sound to the advancements in cancer care.

"We lift up the purpose of this event. May the funds raised today bring hope, healing and comfort to those facing cancer. Every stroke is more than a personal challenge. It is an act of compassion, hope, and love for others. May all that we do bring glory to God," he said.

For Dolan, it's been his Catholic faith that has sustained him through his journey from diagnosis to treatment to remission. "No question. This is one of those times when you really need your faith. It is and always was so important. Whenever I feel a

challenge, I'll stop in at the chapel and ask for help. I can't imagine going through all this without my faith," said Dolan, speaking aboard his vessel the "Queen B." He is a longtime parishioner at St. Pius X Parish in Fairfield and also attends Mass at St. Anthony of Padua.

The family of swimmer Joey Nizzardo, who, for the fourth time in as many years finished as the first solo swimmer, said they pray every time he gets in the water. A 2025 graduate of Fairfield University, Nizzardo completed the 14-mile swim in just under six hours. Like Dolan, this event is especially important to him as his grandfather is a cancer survivor. Sporting a "Fairfield" baseball cap while on the deck at Captain's Cove, the older man stood waiting for his grandson to emerge from the water.

"Joey loves swimming, so it's perfect for him to do something to benefit so many people," said his mother Sarah Nizzardo of Monroe, who, with her family, belongs to St. Jude Parish. "I have a great devotion to the Blessed Mother. As a mom, I ask her to protect him whenever he's in the water."

His aunt Cindy Nizzardo added: "I feel such pride. Joey would do anything he could to make a difference, and he knows firsthand how cancer touches a family."

Melissa Perugini of Southington, Conn. felt the same. Accompanied by her husband and children, all wearing light yellow T-shirts, they waited expectantly for her daughter Gianna, who was swimming for her second year with the Foxy Five, a team of Marist University alumni. Though she swam last year for mainly benevolent reasons, the event became personal this year when her uncle David Miller was diagnosed with esophageal cancer in October and then died this past January. She swims for Uncle Dave, her mother said.

"When he was first diagnosed, we leaned heavily on prayer. We knew this was in God's hands," said Melissa Perugini who grew up in Prospect, Conn. and attended Mass at St. Anthony Church.

As those in the water and on the docks know, this event,

now in its 39th year, is about so much more than just swimming. Matthew Kenney, Vice President of Mission Services for the Fairfield Region at St. Vincent's Medical Center, said the Swim Across the Sound connects perfectly to the mission of St. Vincent's. "We're directly helping those with cancer, the poor and the vulnerable. We want to restore their dignity," he said, referencing the living expenses, transportation, cancer education, screenings and more that funds from the Swim provide. "Each year, we get more and more volunteers to help do just that."

One of those is Dayo Sule, a U.S. Army veteran and director of laboratory services. He lost his mother from breast cancer 20 years ago and calls this event "a chance to give back by being here to support the swimmers."

That's what Dolan has done for over 30 years – be present and help in any way possible, he said. "This whole event and purpose have been so important," he said. "I'm blessed to have been involved and captained so many teams."

Following Saturday's Swim Across the Sound, the annual Memorial Service was held Sunday at Captain's Cove to honor the memory of loved ones lost to cancer with inspirational readings, musical tributes and the reading of names.

PARISH PRIEST' FROM PAGE 7

making spoons at the age of 13. The experience left him with an understanding of the vulnerability and trauma faced by widows and their children.

"Parish Priest" also offers a sobering look at many lives cut short by infant mortality and illnesses that are now routinely treated by contemporary medicine. Father McGivney died at the age of 38 from complications of tuberculosis and severe pneumonia, a common killer in that era, when the average life span was just 40 years. Father Al notes that the oldest priest in the diocese at that time was 56.

Throughout the play, Father McGivney exhorts the men of the parish to move forward in the creation of a fraternal aid society. Along the way, the reader meets an interesting cast of characters, including the housekeeper, parish lawyer, salesman and constable, who play an active role in the life of the parish. They are bound together in faith, humor, suffering and hope for a better life.

"I wanted the play to end on a triumphant note," says Father Al, who provides an upbeat ending when the curtain comes down on the wildly successful production of "Handy Andy," and Father McGivney is greeted with the news that the men of his parish have moved forward to create a mutual aid society through the founding of the Knights of Columbus. From that moment in 1882, the Knights have grown to more 2.2 million members and 17,000 councils around the world.

("Parish Priest" is formatted for actor and director use in rehearsal. It can be presented in full costume production or as a dramatic reading. The book is available on Amazon. For information on performance rights, contact Father Albert DeGiacomo at adegiacomo@cdlex.org.)

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EDITORIAL

We will never forget you

Every afternoon promptly at 3 p.m., Thalia's grandfather would slip away and go into his bedroom. He'd close the door, get down on his knees and pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy for his family. It was something she never forgot.

Alyssa's grandmother cared for her when her parents came to America to make a better life for their family. She raised her, she nurtured her, she loved her, and she assured her that even though her parents were far away, everything was going to be all right.

Alyssa eventually came to America and left her grandmother, but she never forgot her. The saddest day of her life was when she learned her grandmother had died. But then one night, she visited the young woman in a dream. She was wearing her favorite blue dress and told Alyssa that she would always be with her ... and that everything was going to be all right.

There's a popular saying that holds a lot of truth, a saying you see on plaques, decorative pillows and greeting cards that goes: "God couldn't be everywhere, so he created grandparents." Can you imagine the look on Jesus' face when St. Anne told him that?

In this issue of Fairfield County Catholic, we celebrate all grandparents and the elderly of our diocese because of the enormous contributions they have made to our lives and to the life of the Church.

They sustained their families, they taught them the faith, and they were loyal to the Church during its darkest hour. When others walked away, they stayed. Because of their loyalty, because of their commitment to Christ and because of their prayers, we have reached the springtime of renewal that St. Pope John Paul II prayed for.

Six years ago, Pope Francis established the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, to express our love and appreciation for them. This year's theme is "I will never forget you," which Pope Leo XIV chose from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah as a consolation for all seniors and a solemn assurance to give them hope.

This year the day was celebrated worldwide on the fourth Sunday in July, which was the memorial of St. Joachim and St. Anne. In the United States, however, it is observed on September 12-13. What better role model for grandparents than Jesus' grandparents? No words can adequately describe Jesus' love for his mother, and we can only imagine how dear his grandparents were to him, especially since they raised the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Our grandparents pray for us, many from their place in Heaven, others from their homes, assisted living residences and nursing facilities. We urge everyone to pray for them.

We want all the elderly in our diocese to know that we honor you, we celebrate you, we love you, and we will never forget you. You can't imagine how much we appreciate all you did. One last thought: You will never be able to imagine how much Jesus appreciates you for all you've done ... until you meet him face-to-face.

In closing

There's still time for parishes to do something special for the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly on September 12-13. We urge you to have a Mass of Thanksgiving and invite the elderly to attend. Bring a Book of Remembrance to the altar and host a reception for them. Since forget-me-nots are the official flower for grandparents, encourage grandchildren to plant them in their memory.

Also, please send us photos of any event your parish has, and we will put them in a photo gallery on the Diocese of Bridgeport website at www.bridgeportdiocese.org to be shared with everyone. Be sure to tell us a little about the event and include a name and phone number. Email them to fccstories@diobpt.org

To our readers

For more news about what's happening in the diocese, please visit www.bridgeportdiocese.org And if you have a story idea, please send it to FCCStories@diobpt.org



CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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

EPISCOPAL VICAR

REVEREND SAMUEL KACHUBA, appointed as Episcopal Vicar for Young Adult Ministries. Effective date was July 1, 2026.

REVEREND LEONEL MEDEIROS, renewed as Episcopal Vicar for Brazilian Catholics for a term of three years. Effective date was July 1, 2026.

VERY REVEREND ARTHUR MOLLENHAUER, appointed as Vicar for Canonical Services for a term of five years. Effective date was July 1, 2026.

REVEREND ROLVIN ROMERO, appointed as Judicial Vicar for the Diocese of Bridgeport for a period of three years. Effective date was July 1, 2026.

EPISCOPAL CHAPLAIN

REVEREND JUAN PUECH HELGUERO, DCJM, appointed as Chaplain of the Stella Maris School, Stamford. Effective date was August 1, 2026.

PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND GUSTAVO FALLA, appointed to Saint Thomas More Parish, Darien. Effective date was July 1, 2026.

REVEREND JOHNSON SINGARAJAN, appointed to Saint Mary Parish, Bethel. Effective date was July 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

REVEREND HENRY HOFFMAN, appointed to Saint Edward the Confessor Parish, New Fairfield. Effective date was June 30, 2026, for a term of five years.

HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN

REVEREND SYLVESTER CHUKWUMALUME, appointed to St. Vincent's Medical Center, Bridgeport. Effective date was July 1, 2026.

REVEREND JACCIUS JEAN PIERRE, appointed part-time chaplain at Yale New Haven Health, Greenwich Hospital. Effective date was July 10, 2026.

REVEREND RAYMOND SCHERBA, renewed as part-time Assistant Chaplain at Danbury Hospital. Effective date was July 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

RELEASED FROM DIOCESAN ASSIGNMENT

REVEREND OTONIEL LIZCANO, extended personal leave of absence from active ministry to remain in Columbia.

OTHER APPOINTMENTS

REVEREND PAUL MURPHY, reappointed to serve as the Dean of Mother of Divine Grace Deanery for a term of three years, beginning September 1, 2026.

REVEREND J. ABELARDO VASQUEZ, reappointed to serve as the Dean of Queen of Peace Deanery in Bridgeport for a term of three years, beginning August 1, 2026.

REVEREND ROLVIN ROMERO, appointed to serve as a member of the Presbyteral Council for as long as the office of Judicial Vicar is held. Effective date was July 1, 2026.

REVEREND FERRY O. GALBERT, appointed to serve as a member of the College of Consultors for the Diocese of Bridgeport. Effective date is August 1, 2026, for a term of five years.

REVEREND JEFFREY W. COUTURE, end of assignment as Diocesan Director of Spiritual Programming at Saint Margaret Shrine. Effective date was June 30, 2026.

REVEREND JUAN COLON, appointed to serve as a member of the Diocesan Vocations Team. Effective date was July 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

DEACON CHRISTOPHER GREER, reappointed as member of the Diaconal Council of the Diocese

of Bridgeport, representing deacons of Seat of Wisdom Deanery. Effective date is August 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

DEACON ERNEST JEFFERS, reappointed as member of the Diaconal Council of the Diocese of Bridgeport, representing deacons of Cause of Our Joy and Mother of the Church Deaneries. Effective date is September 7, 2026, for a term of three years.

DEACON JOSEPH KLIMASZEWSKI, reappointed as member of the Diaconal Council of the Diocese of Bridgeport, representing deacons of Queen of Martyrs Deanery. Effective September 7, 2026, for a term of three years.

DEACON JOSEPH KOLETAR, reappointed as member of the Diaconal Council of the Diocese of Bridgeport, representing deacons of Mystical Rose Deanery. Effective date is September 7, 2026, for a term of three years.

DEACON FRANK MANTERO, reappointed as member of the Diaconal Council of the Diocese of Bridgeport, representing deacons of Queen Assumed into Heaven Deanery. Effective date is September 7, 2026, for a term of three years.

REVEREND JUDES PIERRE JUNIOR JACQUES, part-time priest available to assist any pastor within the Diocese who seeks help to provide sacramental coverage.

REVEREND BRIAN GANNON, reappointed as the Religious Assistant for Our Lady of Fatima #117 Lay Dominican Chapter for a term of three years, ending June 29, 2029.

REVEREND TIMOTHY J. SCANNELL, assigned Ministerial faculties. Effective date was July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027 for periodic service at Saint Aloysius Parish, New Canaan.

Father Corey Piccinino

*Episcopal Vicar for Clergy and Religious
— July-August, 2026*

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CATHOLIC

Office
of Communications
Diocese of Bridgeport

100 Beard Sawmill Road, Suite 650
Shelton, Connecticut 06484-6156

telephone | 203.416.1461
email | fcc@diobpt.org

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Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano

Publisher

Marie T. Oates

Director of Communications

| marie.oates@diobpt.org

Renée A. Stamatis

Art Director | rstamatis@diobpt.org

Cristina S. Napolitano

FCC Advertising Manager

| cristina.napolitano@diobpt.org

Emily Clark

Copy Editor | emily.clark@diobpt.org

Colin J. Firda

Copy Editor | Colin.Firda@diobpt.org

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V I E W P O I N T S



Treasured Time

COLLECTING MOMENTS

BY EMILY CLARK

Emily Clark is a writer and teacher, and a member of St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull.

For kids, sleepovers hold a certain magic, the anticipation of staying up late in someone else's house, eating junk food and forgoing a routine offers a sense of adventure – even if it only happens at a friend's house around the corner. While I enjoyed those times as a child, my favorite overnight experience was undoubtedly a weekend with my grandparents in a home where the cookie jar was always full and hugs were given in abundance. How they doted on us, spoiling my brothers and me with dinner at Friendly's after

the 5 o'clock vigil at St. Thomas, followed by games of Uno late into the evening, popcorn popping over the fireplace.

Before bed, as my grandmother and the boys unrolled our sleeping bags, Grandpa allowed me a special treat. Together, carefully, we would open the glass door of the tall, stately grandfather clock in the foyer. Inside, the pendulum swung in its mesmerizing motion behind three heavy weights. In his quiet steady voice, my grandfather reminded me of the task at hand: to slowly pull each of the three weights straight up to the top where they would gradu-

ally descend over the course of the week. He did the first one, and I the second and third, each one clicking as it was lifted by my wobbly efforts. Sometimes, the pendulum needed a tap to restore the ticking, and I might be lucky enough to do that, too. We then closed the glass door, just as carefully, and so concluded my grandfather's regular Saturday night routine.

On the floor of my grandparents' den, as my brothers and I lay sandwiched together in nylon sleeping bags, I'd drift off to the gentle chimes of that clock, tolling every 15 minutes. Rarely in the daytime did I notice the chimes, but in the quiet evening hours, they and the steady tick-tock held my focus, a familiar reminder that my grandfather was near.

These sounds and routines not only connected me to him; they were a product of his own handicraft. Though my grandmother is remembered for her flower gardens and rhubarb pies, the legacy of my grandfather belongs to the four

unique timepieces he made, a hobby which defined him in the later years of his life. The one whose weights I pulled years ago now stands proudly in my own home, some 60 years after its construction.

The memories I have of my grandfather are few, as he succumbed to illness when I was still a child. Many of them, however, are hazy images with him in his basement workshop, the warm scent of fresh wood and turpentine ever present. On those weekend visits, I'd sneak away from my brothers, creep downstairs to hop onto a stool and watch him at work as he hummed a long-ago tune while sawing and measuring. He'd smile, say "How's my best girl?" and all was right in my little world.

The mechanism of my grandfather's clock has worn, the pendulum no longer swings and the chimes have gone silent from years of tolling. Tall and straight like Grandpa himself, the clock's stately presence remains, however, as does the connection



between time and tradition, reminding us that "for everything there is a season, a time to be born, and a time to die."

My affection for this man who left us too soon has little to do with what he said or did but is so much more about how he made me feel—safe, valued, included, important. Those feelings don't fade with time, as silent chimes or broken weights do but remain ingrained in our memory, like the image of a little girl and her grandfather, treasuring time together.

(Emily Clark can be reached at emily.clark@diobpt.org.)



Our grandparents ... and how they loved us

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

Joe Pisani has been a writer and editor for 40 years.

Whenever I got into trouble as a young man—largely of my own creation—I always thought "Uh oh, the end is near." But then, it seemed, I would miraculously emerge from the wreckage with only minor bruises. Figuratively, that is.

It got me to wondering, "How the heck did that happen?" and I often came to the same conclusion: Somebody prayed for me, and I'm convinced it was my grandmothers.

Don't get me wrong, my grandfathers were probably praying too, but I never knew them because they died before I was born. My grandmothers raised their families by themselves, one on the East Side of Bridgeport and the other in the Hollow.

Since both my parents had to

work to support our family, I lived with my grandmother Angelina in a second-story apartment on Sherman Street. She was an Italian immigrant, who was widowed in her early 40s and raised nine kids during the Great Depression.

Every morning, she would take me across the street to St. Mary Church for Mass, celebrated in a mysterious ancient language called Latin, which I couldn't understand and neither could she because she only spoke Italian.

The two of us knelt side by side in the back of the church, while I tried to figure out what was going on and she prayed her rosary.

Every afternoon at lunchtime, I'd lie on the floor in front of the stove with my coloring book and crayons, while she baked two sweet potatoes, one for each of us.

She sat nearby in her rocking chair, praying the rosary, and she usually dozed off around the fifth decade but always woke up just in time to take the potatoes out of the oven.

Years later, I still remember those simple pleasures and our time together. Even now, in anxious times, I'll whisper to her, "Please pray for me" because I'm convinced the prayers of grandparents are very powerful. Not to mention, Angelina means "little angel."

When I visited my maternal grandmother, she'd take me to church at St. Augustine Cathedral, where I made one of my first confessions, back in the day when three priests sat in the confessionals on Saturday afternoon.

Being a newcomer to this sort of thing, I got in the shortest line, wondering why no one else was there ... until I heard the priest howling at some poor penitent, and I quietly sidled over to the long line. It was a valuable lesson I learned at 7: People wait in a long line for a reason.

Let me make another confession: My mother often took our daughters to church when my wife and I had "better things to do." Because of their grandmother, all four of them marched in every sin-

gle May crowning at St. Margaret Mary Church in Shelton.

I lost count of the times I've seen grandparents taking their grandkids to Mass for many differ-



ent reasons, one of them being they understand what's really important. I'm also convinced grandparents are one of the most powerful spiritual forces in the universe.

Many of my students from Latin America were raised by their grand-

parents because their parents have to work. They often talk about their deep love for their grandparents, who raised them, who nurtured them, who loved them and who taught them about Jesus.

One young woman spoke of her grandfather, who always picked her up in his red truck to take her places. She was devastated when he died, and then one day, a red pickup truck drove by her house, and in that confused moment, she was ecstatic because she thought he was coming to see her ... until she remembered he was gone.

Another girl shared stories about her grandmother, who cared for her as a child. When she died in Mexico, no one told her, and she was inconsolable after she found out. A few nights later, she had a dream, and her abuelita came to comfort her and told her she'd graduate from college and grow up to be a beautiful woman ... and that they would meet again someday.

This year on World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, let's take a few moments to remember them all in a special way and say thank you for everything they've done.

(Joe Pisani can be reached at jpisani@diobpt.org.)

Catholic Charities receives food donation

STAMFORD—Catholic Charities of Fairfield County received a significant boost in its efforts to combat food insecurity from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which donated some 45,000 pounds of shelf-stable food through a nationwide initiative commemorating America's 250th anniversary, according to Mike Donoghue, executive director of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County.

About 25,000 pounds of food were delivered to Catholic Charities Stamford, home of New Covenant Center, while an additional 20,000 pounds were delivered to the Thomas Merton Family Center in Bridgeport. Volunteers from both organizations unloaded pallets of food and stocked pantry shelves.

The donation is part of a national collaboration between The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' community service platform, JustServe, and America250's America Gives initiative, which brings volunteers, local leaders, and nonprofit organizations together through acts of service. As part of the initiative, The Church of



REPRESENTATIVES OF The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Catholic Charities of Fairfield County stand at the truck that transported some 25,000 pounds of food from Utah to Stamford.

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is donating 250 truckloads of food to communities in all 50 states.

"This is a fabulous collaboration with JustServe and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," Donoghue said. "By dividing the delivery between our Bridgeport and Stamford facilities, we are able to fill the empty shelves of the Thomas Merton Family Center and prepare for the grand opening of Catholic Charities Stamford."

"The Church of Jesus Christ

of Latter-day Saints and Catholic Charities of Fairfield County share deeply ingrained values to help the poor and needy," said Warren Winegar, communications director for the Fairfield Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a Fairfield County resident. "This donation of 25,000 pounds of shelf-stable food continues our long collaboration and aims to meet the growing needs of many in our communities. When we serve alongside each other, relationships grow and differences fade, and JustServe.org is a platform for all to engage in this kind of unifying service opportunities across their communities."

Catholic Charities Stamford, home of New Covenant Center, is opening a new 13,000-square-foot regional center that will provide meals, an expanded food pantry, housing support, counseling, case management, employment resources and other services. The donated food will stock the new pantry.

New Covenant Center's soup kitchen serves some 200 people daily, providing three meals a day, 365 days a year, while its food pantry assists nearly 1,000 families each month.

Donoghue said the need continues to grow in Fairfield County, which consistently ranks among the nation's highest for income inequality, and one in six families in Stamford experiences food insecurity.

This donation builds on a partnership between Catholic Charities of Fairfield County and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Since 2020, members of the church have provided food donations, volunteers and additional resources to strengthen Catholic Charities' mission.

"More than 30 percent of all volunteer hours in the United States are generated by faith-based organizations," said Cathy Gillespie, commissioner of America250. "Service can unite us. It invites people from every background to work side by side, regardless of political or religious views."

Rosie Rios, Chair of America250, emphasized the importance of service as part of the nation's milestone celebration.

"America's 250th celebration is a unifying moment for our country, and the Church's efforts are a beautiful example of the American spirit—neighbor caring for neighbor in service and generosity," Rios said. "We are immensely grateful for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' collaboration and its continued support for this historic celebration."

For Blaine Maxfield, managing director of Welfare and Self-Reliance Services for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the effort reflects the Church's broader mission of compassionate service.

"This work reflects our commitment to help individuals through principles of self-reliance and service," Maxfield said. "These programs are far-reaching and rooted in compassion, designed to lift individuals, families, and communities



during times of greatest need. This work happens one by one. Following the example of Jesus Christ, we strive to love our neighbor. Each of us can have an impact in our own communities through service."

Donoghue said that as Catholic Charities prepares to open Catholic Charities Stamford, home of New Covenant Center, the donated food will ensure pantry shelves are stocked and ready to welcome hundreds of individuals and families from across Fairfield County.

Catholic Charities of Fairfield County is one of the region's largest private family service agencies, providing food assistance, housing support, behavioral health services, immigration legal services, early childhood education, financial stability programs, and other supportive services that empower individuals and families to overcome barriers, achieve self-sufficiency, and build brighter futures throughout Fairfield County.

(To learn more about Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, including the new Catholic Charities Stamford, New Covenant Center, and The Thomas Merton Family Center, visit www.ccfairfield.org.)

Tota Pulchra

MARIAN CONFERENCE

A Time of Retreat with the All Beautiful
Saturday, September 12, 2026
 1:00 - 6:30 pm (Check-in begins at 12:15 pm)
Saint Catherine of Siena McClinch Center
 190 Shelton Road | Trumbull, Connecticut

Theme | The Call of Beauty
 FEATURED SPEAKERS

MOST REV. FRANK J. CAGGIANO
 The Fifth Bishop of the Diocese of Bridgeport. His Excellency has had a life-long devotion to Our Lady.

FR. SAMUEL KACHUBA
 The Diocese's Episcopal Vicar for Young Adults and co-hosts two podcasts: The Tangent and Roar Like the Lamb.

FR. CHRISTOPHER ARGANO
 Former Vocations Director for the Archdiocese of NY, Pastor of St. Columba & St. Mary's (Washingtonville), and Adjunct Professor of Moral Theology at St. Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers.

ARTIST: MICHAEL CORSINI

Registration Opens August 12th
 \$20 per person (which includes dinner)
 The day includes talks, dinner, and the rosary
 Spanish translation available
 Please register by September 7, 2026
www.bridgeportdiocese.org/guilds

Honoring the gifts, guidance, and love of our grandparents

203-272-9868 ext. 303
info@johncanningco.com

"We will never forget you."

From Mason Dane and Gabriel Denby:

Our Nana [Sandra Pisani] is very special. We love spending time with her and sleeping over. She makes the cheesiest nachos with delicious guacamole. She always takes us to the toy store and for ice cream. She never says no! She also prays for our protection and future every single day. She wants us to become priests, but we're only 10, so we're not sure about that.



From the eight grandchildren of Paul and MaryJane Plouffe:

We love our grandparents because they care in ways that no one else does. They show us the unconditional love of Jesus Christ. That has really helped in our walk of faith. They genuinely care about our interests, and it is easy and fun to talk

with them. Grandfather always tells us great stories. We love listening to them before bed when we're visiting. He paints rocks with us. Nana makes a yummy breakfast and takes time to teach us things like sewing and knitting. She always comes to say goodnight.



World Day of Prayer *for* Grandparents *and the* Elderly

As a tribute to the grandparents and elderly in our diocese, we at *Fairfield County Catholic* have compiled a collection of photos with testaments of love from their children and grandchildren. This special project was inspired by the Sixth World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, which was begun in 2021 by Pope Francis.

We offer this edition titled, "Our Grandparents ... and Why We Love Them," in honor of those who did so much for us. Take some time to read the comments and look at the family photos. Since we could not include all of them in the newspaper, many more can be found on our website at www.bridgeportdiocese.org

In announcing this year's celebration, Pope Leo IVX wrote:

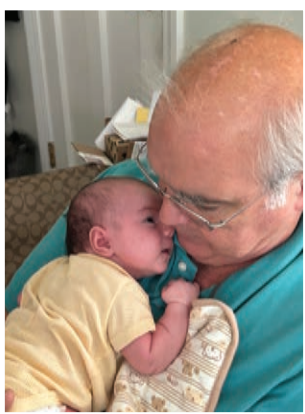
"Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord promises that he will never forget any of us. He assures us that he has engraved our faces on the palms of his hands and that his love is greater than a mother's love for her child The painful feeling of being forgotten is, unfortunately, shared by many people, and among them are quite a few elderly people.

"God's love, which forgets no one, offers itself as an act of justice and a response to the anonymity in which human life all too often ends up lost. The lives of many elderly people, in particular, seem to be covered by a veil that blurs the features of their faces and shrouds them in oblivion. This is what happens in homes where loneliness reigns and also in those care facilities where each person's uniqueness risks being reduced to a bed number or an illness.

"The celebration of the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly is an opportunity to rediscover that the Church is called to be a mother to all.

From Amelia Sucharski:

My grandparents Theresa and Tom Readey are so special, I love them!



From Valeria Jarrin:

To my grandparents, Oswaldo and Dolores, thank you for filling our childhood with so much love. Grandpa, your special songs for each grandchild made us feel unique and deeply loved. Grandma, you cared for us, educated us, and were also an amazing cook, filling our home with delicious food and beautiful memories.

Your love, lessons, and traditions will always live in our hearts.



From the grandchildren of Anne and John Connaughton:

What we love about our grandparents are the laughs, diner breakfasts, CCD lessons, and always making time for us. Oh, and there's never a shortage of ice cream in the freezer. We just love being with them!

Joe Kocinsky on his grandmother Anna Bizub Kocinsky:

She was a cornerstone of her family. She is remembered for her strength, raising two boys on her own and an unconditional love toward the entire family. As a grandmother, she planted the seeds of Catholic faith that continues to guide our family across generations.

“Children’s children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.” — Proverbs 17:6



Laura Brennan on her grandfather William Salisbury:

The defining era of my grandfather’s life came at the pivot of boy and man. Grandpa, barely 18, put on a uniform, boarded a Navy ship, and fought for America. I knew his love for fishing, and I admired his lighted Christmas village collections. I knew only homemade applesauce because he jarred enough to last us until the following fall harvest. I am grateful for our long telephone chats when he was old, and I was home with napping babies. Mostly though, I remember the one thing he most wanted me to learn: “Honor the veterans,” he said, “but never glorify war. Be terrified of the horrors of war. May they never be repeated.”



Sandy Pisani on her adoptive grandmother Bernice Romano:

At age 60, my adoptive grandmother, little Nonnie, took me in as a toddler and gave me a beautiful home and life that I wouldn’t otherwise have had. She was the kindest, most caring, loving, compassionate, giving and forgiving person I have ever known. Being Italian, she made the best homemade pasta, meatballs, gravy, pizza, ricotta pie and cookies in the world. She got to dance at my wedding and play with my four daughters before God took her home at age 99.

Gunner Piper on his grandparents Thom and Anita Field:

I have been living with my grandparents for eight years. We have gone through ups and downs as a family and we continue to work things out together. But even though we are still working out the system of being a family, we love and care for each other. I thank God every day for my family, as without them I would not be where I am today.



Abigail Clark on her grandfather Ralph Okenquist:

My grandfather Ralph was one of the most special people in my life and will forever be special, even though he is now gone. He was an inspiration to me in every way—a loving family man who constantly put everyone before himself. It is no wonder that I followed so much of what he did and loved the same activities. We shared a love of sunny-side up eggs and black raspberry ice cream (which we’d always have together on Cape Cod). Whenever I needed support, a reminder I was important, or a laugh that could fix anything, Grandpa gave me all that and so much more.



Grandson J on Sue and Tom Baldwin:

I love you for many reasons. There are too many to list. You guys are always there for me whether it’s a good reason or a bad reason. Always supporting my interests and helping me when I was feeling down. I appreciate that. Happy World Grandparents Day. I love you. Love, J

“Grandparents
are the wisdom of the family,
they are the wisdom
of a people.”
— Pope Francis

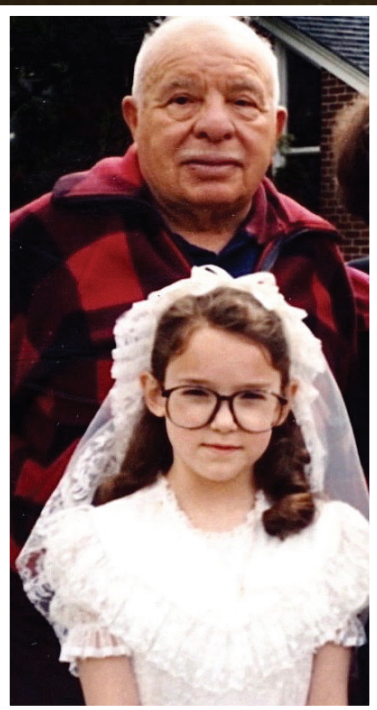
Astrid Alvarez on her grandmothers:

Remembering our ancestors as they paved the way and instilled their values in us, I personally remember abuelitas Carmen and Empera and their respective virtues of fortitude and kindheartedness. How could I forget when abuelita Empera prepared a special pasta meal for us. As it turned out, our young eyes quickly recognized the squirming weevil that inadvertently lived in her pantry and made it onto the dishes. Or abuelita Carmen’s roaring and contagious laughter and the way she used the word mijo(a) candidly referring to her grandchildren. As a personal tribute, I thank you both for passing a trace of your traits my way. I hope I honor your legacies while finding my own.



Alexandra Rose Condliffe on her grandparents Cynthia & David Condliffe and Adriana & John Ohegyi:

So blessed to have the unconditional love of four grandparents. They share their dreams and vision of beauty in God’s creation.



Julie Denby on her grandfather Philip Romano:

Many families have addiction problems. I can trace mine back to my Grandpa. At five, he introduced me to Entemann's Chocolate Covered Donuts. Every Saturday, he would visit with a fresh box (or two). We'd sit around the table, while he regaled us with stories of his truck driving days. He would also come bearing stuffed animals he won from the claw machines. Walking by that classic blue and white donut box in ShopRite transports me to simpler times. I'm a child again, and it's a lazy Saturday morning watching cartoons with Grandpa. The reason we love our grandparents isn't the treats or toys. It's the anchor to our past, the living history they provided. It's the stories of resilience we didn't appreciate at the time, but as adults truly understand.



Jim and Joan Driggs said their grandchildren did a survey on the top nine things they love about their grandparents who they call Mimi and Big Jim:

Henry 4: great backyard where I can play baseball. Pippa 4: great snuggles from Big Jim. Thomas 6: Lego Store and Lavaland trips. Teddy 7: arts and crafts with Mimi. James 8: playing sports together. Bridie 8: Mimi reads good books. Ella 10: their style—they're always looking super duper fresh. Maggie 14: their great sense of humor makes us laugh, even if we weren't supposed to. Jack 16: their countless stories told with immense emotion. What we as grandparents are most proud of are the beautiful and varied rainbow of gifts from God that each of them possesses, which bring smiles on our faces each time we are together!

Chrissy Dane on her grandparents:

Sunday dinners at Bubbie and Pop Pop's were pure magic. We inhaled the aroma of Bubbie's world-renowned pot roast while lining up by Pop Pop's bar-calounger for our weekly packs of Carefree gum. Afterward, Bubbie took us down to the basement, a secret treasure trove of junk food that our parents strictly forbade. Today, eating a single Swedish Fish instantly transports me back to that warm, love-filled childhood routine.



Sabrina and Will Quigley on her grandparents Mary Ann and Patrick Toole:

My grandparents are my best friends. They taught me how to ride a bike, encourage every dream, and always lift family, friends, and strangers alike up in prayer. They have been a constant example of joyful faith and generosity. Their love and guidance are among my greatest blessings.

Granddaughter Tessa Dunster on her grandparents Aurie and Paul Tupper:

Our grandparents taught us that faith wasn't just something to believe—it was something to live! Grandpop, as a deacon, led by a humble example. Both he and Mema filled our lives with love, laughter, and wisdom. Together, they showed us that the greatest lessons in faith and life can be joyful ones.

From the grandchildren of John and Jodi Angiolillo:

We still pray a Hail Mary each time we see an accident or for those in need of a quick prayer for help from the Blessed Mother. Thank you, Nonna. And we can still hear "and the crowd goes nuts" every time we hit a home run or perform well in anything we do. Thanks, Pop Pop.



From Deacon Edward Carrillo and family:

We are blessed to be a four generation family. Family is everything for the Hispanic community, and grandparents are the source of love and knowledge of life experiences. Luca Castro, 8, said, "I love my great-grandfather

Debora Marusa on her grandmother:

My grandmother Santina was fun even when life was hard. She took me to wrestling matches, parades and bus trips to Pennsylvania. She loved to travel, sing and dance the hula. If I could reach her today, I'd give her the biggest and tightest hug possible.

and my grandparents because they are old, and you have to be with them a lot before they go to heaven." Emmet Castro, 4, said, "I love them just because I love them." Bianca, 10, said, "They love us and take care of us." Angel, 13, said, "Because they are always with me when I need them." Maria Carrillo, 30, said, "I love my grandparents for giving me my parents and showing me the unconditional love and connection unique to grandparents and grandchildren." Genesis, 32, said, "I love them because I can see as an adult the sacrifices they made for my parents and me."



Kaitlin & Ansley on their grandmother Lillian Costaregni:

Ansley: I love my grandmother because she is the kindest, most thoughtful and loving person I know. She loves family so much and would do anything to help a neighbor or friend. My grandmother is amazing and a daily inspiration to me.

Kaitlin: My grandma is the kindest and sweetest woman. She has such a big heart and has taught me so many precious things about life. Everyone who meets her loves her, and I am so fortunate to be her granddaughter.

Deacon Chris Greer on his grandfather Bud Collyer:

My grandfather was the original voice of Superman and one of television's first game show hosts. I knew him for only a short time. What I know of him best, I know through my mother, Cynthia Collyer, who carries his faith the way he carried it: quietly, daily, and ending every conversation with "God Bless." She had her own life in front of a camera as an actress, a model, and an anchor for ABC News in Milwaukee. But what she handed down was not a career. It was a way of believing. I am a deacon today because of both of them, and many others. Impact is not measured in years. It is measured in what you pass on.



A prayer from Jake and Luke, the grandchildren of Joe and Julia Trovarelli:

Good morning, Jesus. This day is for you. I ask you to bless all things we think, say and do. I love you Papa. I love you JuJu.



Nuala Rose Matthews on her grandmother Sheelah Brown:

If you need someone to count on every time you can count on Nana. If I need a ride 4 minutes down the road, she will bring me. If I need a ride 4 hours away, she will bring me. If I want coffee she will bring me. No matter what I need or want she is there. I can always count on her and that is a reflection of her extreme devotion to Jesus Christ. She embodies him in so many ways, especially in the way she selflessly serves others.



Bianca Lima on her grandmother:

My grandma has always been an example of strength and faith. One of my favorite memories is of her teaching me Portuguese when I was little. Teaching me was one of the many ways she shared what was important to her and kept our family connected. Her strength, perseverance, and faith continue to inspire our family every day.

Hugh O'Connor on his grandmother, Mary O'Connor:

Always driven by God and a mission to nurture the next generation. Endlessly supportive, though always firm. Supportive but never soft. Worked in the service of others and God, whether in the classroom or with her family. Blessed to have such a wonderful Nana. I love you, Nana.



Conor O'Rourke on his grandmother Nana Two:

My Nana Two was the epitome of a faith-filled woman who saw Christ in each of her 26 grandchildren. She was someone who learned to thrive in the chaos of a house with 9 children, and who always made everyone around her feel special and loved. I loved my Nana Two because of how she loved everyone in her family the same way- the way that she loved Christ.

Conor O'Rourke on his grandmother Memere:

I loved my Memere for many reasons, and have more funny memories of her than I can count. She was an extremely present grandmother, and someone who I admired for the way that she approached her life. She was thrown many curveballs but always reminded us of the many miracles that the Blessed Mother had given to her, and I aspire to have that level of gratitude.

St. Peter's celebrates 175 years of faith in action

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—Generations of faithful Catholics were celebrated at a 175th Anniversary Mass at St. Peter Church offered by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano on Sunday.

"We give thanks to almighty God for 175 faithful years and

"The parish grew stronger, not weaker. Differences did not weaken us or did not prevent us from growing," the bishop said. St. Peter Parish and the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish on Cottage Street merged in 2025.

"This parish family does not belong to you or to me, it belongs to Jesus Christ," Bishop

honor of the Lord, ensuring the future of the church for generations to come.

"I love this church," said parishioner Charlie Van Zanten, as he left the 175th Anniversary Mass. "It's amazing. It's a constant in my life." Van Zanten, who was baptized and married in the church, said the beauty and the history of the church is only enhanced by the community within it and especially the work of previous generations.

"I'm amazed at their dedication," Van Zanten said.

The current congregation is doing its part to care for the Hat City landmark to ensure that it endures for generations to come by repairing the façade through funding from the "We Stand With Christ" contributions. Flowers adorning the steps of the church for the celebration were a beautiful distraction to the scaffolding set up in front of the church.

After Mass, Bishop Caggiano

stood outside the church greeting the faithful and taking photos with them. A luncheon followed the Mass at the Amber Room Colonnade on Stacey Road.

Francis Kane who lives outside of the Diocese of Bridgeport makes a special trip to worship at St. Peter Church.

"I'm blessed to be here in this beautiful church that has survived turmoil and culminates in spiritualness and tranquility," she said.



BISHOP FRANK J. CAGGIANO CELEBRATES Mass for 175th anniversary of St. Peter Church in Danbury.

for those who have come before us building our foundation," said Bishop Caggiano.

St. Peter Parish was established on March 30, 1851, by Hartford Bishop Bernard O'Reilly, for the growing Catholic community in Fairfield County.

The anniversary Mass was celebrated on the eve of the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul instead of closer to the actual anniversary because of a conflict with Palm Sunday weekend.

"This morning, we gather for truly an historic event," Bishop Caggiano said, noting the faithful and the physical church building survived the trials and tribulations of the past including two World Wars, the Depression and many other historical events.

Bishop Caggiano noted that St. Peter Church has existed through 35 presidencies, 13 popes and was established before Danbury was incorporated as a city in 1889.

"It is historic by any measure," Bishop Caggiano said, expressing gratitude and reflecting on the various immigrant communities that sought spiritual guidance at the Neo-gothic church on Main Street and persevered to nurture thousands of disciples of Christ through strife and peaceful times.

Caggiano said, adding that decisions that prospered over the past 175 years were made in the name of Jesus Christ.

"You and I follow the collective example of those who have gone before us," Bishop Caggiano said. "We are not here just to celebrate history. You and I are here to make history one day at a time."

St. Peter pastor Fr. Gregg Mecca, the 23rd pastor of the parish, has stated in church bulletins that he is thankful and proud of St. Peter Parish.

"We are a thankful parish, thankful to our forebearers in the Faith who carried the Catholic Faith to this area and steadfastly adhered to it. Thankful to them who as a community sacrificed to give us a magnificent church edifice, school, and rectory, the finest church structures in the area," he stated.

"We are grateful to Almighty God for having sustained us and given us growth in the course of our 175-year history. We pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide us, make us holy, and always be a beacon of heavenly light," Fr. Mecca added.

Bishop Caggiano said the faithful, following the example of generations past and the church's patron saint, St. Peter, should live, breathe, act and speak in



CREW - Leaders for Mary

ANNUAL

Stella Matutina

MASS & AWARDS RECEPTION

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2026



**BEGINNING WITH THE
HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS**

5:30 PM

CELEBRATED BY
THE MOST REVEREND FRANK J. CAGGIANO

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH
376 MAIN ST. DANBURY, CT 06810



**FOLLOWED BY
COCKTAILS, HORS D'OEUVRES,
AND AWARDS RECEPTION**

7:00 PM

THE AMBER ROOM COLONNADE
1 STACEY RD. DANBURY, CT 06811

We look forward to sharing a truly inspiring evening of prayer as we help further enhance our mission to save souls by forming better leaders for the Catholic Church TODAY!

Come witness the extraordinary work being done, and take part in a ministry that is deeply committed to the virtues of our Blessed Mother in purity, obedience, and humility.



SCAN TO
REGISTER



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MISSION
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DE MARIA NUMQUAM SATIS!

A new chapter at the Tribunal

By M.T. OATES

BRIDGEPORT—For Catholics in Fairfield County navigating the Church's marriage process, the Diocesan Tribunal is often the office that walks alongside them through some of the most personal questions of their lives. When a previous marriage has ended and someone wonders whether they are free to marry again in the Church, when a couple needs to understand what canon law says about their situation, when a family has a question that touches on the sacraments, it is the Tribunal that listens, explains and accompanies.

This summer, that office gains both a new leader and a new layer of support. Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has appointed Father Rolvin Romero as Judicial Vicar of the Diocese of Bridgeport and Father Arthur Mollenhauer as Episcopal Vicar for Canonical Services. Both appointments took effect July 1.

Father Romero joins the diocese after several years of canonical ministry in the Diocese of Brooklyn, N.Y., where he served as Defender of the Bond in the Diocesan Tribunal while also

serving as parochial vicar at St. Mary Parish in Winfield, Queens, N.Y. Originally from the Diocese of Virac in the Philippines, he brings to Bridgeport both judicial experience and parish experience, a combination that the Tribunal's work so often calls for. The role of Judicial Vicar carries day-to-day responsibility for the Tribunal's casework, which means leading a team of canon lawyers, advocates and support staff who shepherd individual cases from first inquiry to final decision.

"The Tribunal today is more responsive, more pastoral and more capable than it has been in many years, and that is the fruit of Father Art's leadership," Bishop Caggiano said in announcing the changes. "I am deeply grateful that he has accepted this new role, and I am equally grateful to welcome Father Romero, whose experience and pastoral heart will be a real gift to the people we serve."

Father Mollenhauer has served as Judicial Vicar of the diocese for the past eight years. During that time, the Tribunal has undergone what the bishop has called a remarkable turnaround. Cases

that once moved slowly are now handled with greater pastoral attentiveness and clearer communication. The staff has grown both in number and in skill. Petitioners who write or call the office consistently describe being treated with care, not as a file number but as a person carrying a real story.

In his new role as Episcopal Vicar for Canonical Services, Father Mollenhauer will continue to assist the bishop in canonical matters, especially those related to Church governance and special administrative and judicial concerns. He will work alongside Father Romero and the Tribunal team. The arrangement reflects something Bishop Caggiano has often emphasized in other areas of diocesan life: strong ministries are built not by one person carrying everything but by gifted people serving in the roles that best fit them.

For the faithful in diocesan parishes, the practical reality is encouraging. The Tribunal continues, now with eight years of strengthened practice behind it and a new leader stepping in who has chosen canonical ministry as his life's work. Father Romero's years as a Defender of the Bond mean he has spent considerable time on the side of the process that argues for the validity of marriages, an essential perspective in a ministry that takes seriously both the dignity of marriage and the real circumstances of those whose marriages have ended.

In announcing the appointments, Bishop Caggiano asked the faithful of Fairfield County to keep both priests in their prayers as they prepare for new responsibilities.

(Anyone who has wondered about beginning a marriage case, who has questions about a case already underway or who simply wants to understand what



FATHER ARTHUR MOLLENHAUER

the Tribunal does and how it might help is encouraged to contact them. The office can be reached by phone at 203.416.1424 or by email at tribunal@diobpt.org. More information, including an overview of the marriage case process and answers to frequently asked questions, is available at www.bridgeportdiocese.org/tribunal.)

An encounter with Christ through Camp Adore

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

MONROE—Dozens of students from across the Diocese of Bridgeport encountered Jesus Christ through spiritual enrichment and joyful camaraderie at Camp Adore at St. Jude Parish.

About 100 campers participated in the fifth year of Camp Adore camp, which this year focused on the theme of the Holy Spirit. Campers came from parishes throughout the diocese, including Stamford, Bethel, Danbury, Ridgefield and Shelton.

"Parents sign their children up for this camp because they want to have faith-filled activities for their child," said camp organizer Jessica Iannotta.

The five-day camp in June started each morning with Mass, which was followed by Eucharistic adoration and then catechesis, in addition to games, music and other activities.

"The camp helps spark the flame of their faith and to build that flame of desire for a relationship with Jesus," Iannotta said.

Pastor Father Joseph Gill said he is passionate about the spiritual formation of youth.

"We believe that every Christian, especially young children, can have a living

relationship with the Lord Jesus," Father Gill said. "In adoration, we bring the kids to Jesus and let Him lead them to His Heart!"

Iannotta said the program has grown since its start in 2021 with 30 children and is now at capacity with almost 100.

"It's so heartwarming to see that they're gravitating toward a faith-based camp over any other camp, and it's feeding their little souls. It's just so rewarding," said Iannotta.

"The kids learned all about how to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit and invite Him into their lives. They learned about the different Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, how to pray and connect to the Holy Spirit in adoration and different ways," Iannotta added.

Iannotta noted that the camp also offered something special for teen volunteers, too.

"We had a really great thing this year where we had a core group of teen leaders that have helped us with youth group activities throughout the whole year give talks to the kids and then they gave a talk to their peers, the other volunteers, as well. It was amazing," said Iannotta, noting that Father Gill also gave age-based talks to the teen volunteers as well as including a talk about

having a healthy relationship with AI.

The original founder of Camp Adore on Long Island, Heather Kidd visits the camp every year and this year she spoke to the children about how the Holy Spirit has worked in her life, Iannotta said.

Father Gill is also involved with Camp Veritas in upstate New York which was founded by Ryan Young. Young's sister Heather created a younger version of Camp Veritas on Long Island and called it Camp Adore, and then Iannotta brought Camp Adore to Connecticut.

"It's really a simple concept of alternating faith and fun," Iannotta said. "We have little mini catechesis talks. They go to daily Mass, they go to Adoration. We sing praise and worship music, but then we alternate that with fun games and snacks and crafts."

Outdoor activities on the lawn near the rectory vary throughout the week, including hula hoops, laser tag, water balloons and bounce houses.

Campers were given a Camp Adore keychain this year with the words "Come Holy Spirit" as a tangible reminder to keep

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



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Saint Catherine Center to hold annual gala

FAIRFIELD—Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs will host its annual Joy & Gratitude Dinner at The Inn at Longshore in Westport on Sunday, September 27, and honor Charles F. Chiusano, longtime board chairman, for his years of leadership with the newly created Legacy Award.

“Charles’s commitment, visionary leadership and genuine compassion have helped shape Saint Catherine Center into the organization it is today,” said Laura Grozier, Executive Director of Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs. “His unwavering dedication to our mission has created opportunities for so many

individuals and families, and he is a truly deserving recipient of our inaugural Legacy Award.”

As board chairman, he guided many of the center’s most significant milestones, Grozier said. His leadership helped establish the Adult Services Program, creating meaningful opportunities and continued support for individuals with disabilities beyond their school years.

He also played a pivotal role in the center’s building expansion, which doubled its footprint and increased its ability to serve more students and adults. In addition, his commitment to fundraising, which included many galas, special events and capital campaigns, has helped sustain and strengthen the center’s mission for nearly two decades, Grozier said. Chiusano, who joined the board as chairman in 2007 at the request of then-Bishop William Lori, retired in December 2025.

Reflecting on his involvement,



CHARLES F. CHIUSANO

Chiusano said, “Of all my accomplishments, I am most proud of the joy and relief parents feel knowing their child is cared for.” His words reflect the compassion that has defined his service and the profound difference he has made in the lives of countless families, Grozier said.

Deeply committed to his faith

and community, he has served on many civic and charitable boards throughout Fairfield and is an active member of St. Pius X Parish. In recognition of his service to the Catholic Church, Chiusano was awarded the Benemerenti Medal by Pope Francis. He and his wife, Ruth, have been married for 49 years and are the proud parents of one daughter, Christine.

The Joy & Gratitude Dinner brings together supporters, families and friends to celebrate the mission of Saint Catherine Center and honor an individual whose compassion and commitment made a lasting impact on the lives of others. Guests will enjoy an evening featuring dinner, silent and live auctions and an opportunity to support the center’s life-changing programs.

(To register for the Joy & Gratitude Dinner on Sunday, September 27, visit onecau.se/scc2026 or contact Laura Grozier at 203.540.5381.)

PADRE PIO FROM PAGE 2

through his intercession. He had the ability to read hearts and knew people’s sins even before they confessed them. He is said to have heard confessions 10 to 15 hours a day.

Padre Pio is the only priest who had the five wounds of Christ, in addition to the gift of bilocation—the ability to be in two places at the same time—even though he never left the Capuchin Friary of Our Lady of Grace in San Giovanni Rotondo in Italy, where he stayed from 1916 until his death in 1968. Today some seven million pilgrims go there each year.

“It’s quite a remarkable place,” said Deacon Toole, who made a pilgrimage in 2013. “At the friary, there is a room that contains the testimonial letters people sent supporting his cause for sainthood, and I couldn’t even count how many there were from people who claim some miraculous event or healing through his intercession. He’s one of those saints where the stories you hear just go on and on.”

Deacon Toole has witnessed Padre Pio’s intercession in his own life several times, including his vocation to the diaconate. One story he heard while teaching an OCIA class was from a young woman, who with her boyfriend had borrowed her mother’s car.

“Her mother had a devotion to Padre Pio and there was a statue of him on the dashboard,” Deacon Toole recalled. “The girl wasn’t wearing her seat belt, and they got into a serious accident. Suddenly, she felt an arm pin her against the seat. When the car stopped, she said to her boyfriend, ‘Thank you for saving me.’ But his hands were frozen to the steering wheel. ‘What are you talking about?’ he asked. In that moment, she saw the right hand of Padre Pio was broken off and lying on the floor. She believed it was the saint’s intercession that saved her.”

Bonnie Thibodeau, who started the Padre Pio Prayer Group of Fairfield County last year, said she is excited the relics are coming to St. Jude in Monroe.

“Padre Pio is still working and always pointing us toward our savior Jesus Christ, and he seems to have found our parish,” she said. “I didn’t really have a close relationship with him, but through a friend’s personal encounter with this awesome saint, I decided to pursue a relationship with him.”

Deacon Toole is hopeful the novena will honor the saint’s memory and also introduce him to many others. “I pray that people will participate in the novena and get to know this special saint more deeply,” he said.

(For more information visit: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/st-pio-novena. To view a documentary about Padre Pio’s life, visit: www.saintpioofpietrelcina.org/docudrama.)

The dates and churches are as follows:

- 9/23: The Basilica of St. John the Evangelist, *Stamford*
- 9/24: Church of the Holy Spirit, *Stamford*
- 9/25: St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, *Fairfield*
- 9/26: St. Augustine Cathedral, *Bridgeport*
- 9/27: St. Catherine of Siena Parish, *Trumbull*
- 9/28: St. Jude Parish, *Monroe*
- 9/29: St. Patrick Parish, *Redding*
- 9/30: St. Philip Church, *Norwalk*
- 10/1: Church of St. Cecilia, *Stamford*

TO OUR READERS

We ask you to please share any favors that you obtain from participating in the diocesan novena to Padre Pio and the veneration of his relics. Email your submissions to FCCstories@diobpt.org. ■



God’s Freedom vs. Worldly Freedom:

“How only the Cross and Resurrection of Christ bestow the most powerful freedom.”

Presented by Father Brian Gannon,
Pastor and Religious Assistant
Monday, September 21, 2026
at 7pm

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Formation Director
orapronobis20@gmail.com
203 218 6882

Encounter Ministry

Open house evenings set

DANBURY—The Encounter School of Ministry has scheduled free “Come and See” Open House evenings in September for anyone interested in learning more about its programs.

They will be held at St. Joseph Church in Danbury on Monday evenings from 6–9 pm and give prospective students an opportunity to experience a live class, participate in praise and worship, meet the Encounter community, and prayerfully discern whether God is calling them to deeper formation.

“Our mission is to help people discover that the Holy Spirit isn’t just part of the history of the Church—He is actively transforming lives today,” said Sarah Sorgie, associate campus director. “Encounter gives people practical tools to grow in their faith, recognize the gifts God has given them and confidently live as missionary disciples in everyday life.”

The free “Come and See” evenings are scheduled for September 14, 21, and 28, from 6–9 pm. Each evening begins with praise

and worship, followed by teaching, fellowship, and an opportunity to learn more about the school’s mission and formation.

Enrollment for the 2026–2027 academic year is now open, and an application is available on the school’s website. Classes meet Monday evenings from 6–9 pm at St. Joseph Church, 8 Robinson Ave., Danbury

For more information or to RSVP for a “Come and See” evening, visit encounterschool.org/fairfieldcounty or email fairfield@encounterschool.org.

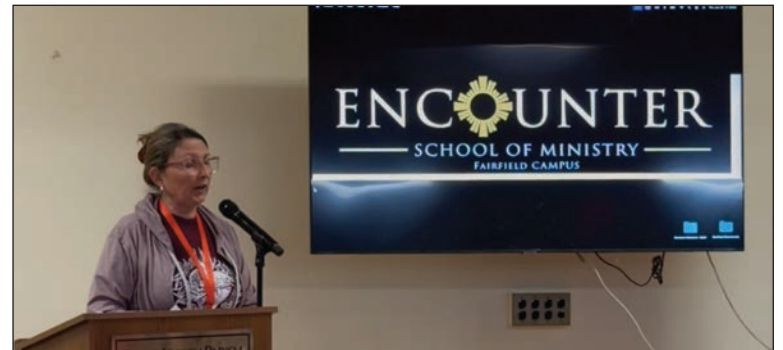
Now entering its fourth year, the Encounter School of Ministry—Fairfield County Campus continues to equip lay Catholics to live confidently in their baptismal calling through spiritual formation, practical discipleship, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Under the leadership of Campus Director Father Sean Kulacz and Sorgie, the school forms students to bring the love and power of Christ into their families, parishes, workplaces, and communities.

Begun in 2023, the Fairfield County Campus offers faithful

Catholic formation rooted in Sacred Scripture, the Catechism and the lives of the saints. The two-year certificate program equips students in the identity in Christ, hearing God’s voice, healing ministry, inner transformation, evangelization and spiritual gifts.

Students and alumni regularly serve at parish missions, healing services and retreats. Healing services have been held at St. Rose of Lima in Newtown, St. Elizabeth Seton and St. Mary in Ridgefield, St. Francis of Assisi in Weston, and St. Peter and St. Joseph in Danbury.

“We’re seeing people encounter Jesus in a deeper way and discover that the Holy Spirit is still powerfully at work in the Church today,” said Father Sean Kulacz, campus director. “When people become rooted in their identity as sons and daughters of God and learn to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, they don’t just grow personally—they become a source of renewal for their families, their parishes, and their communities.” ■



CHRISTINE OTIS FROM PAGE 3

at St. Aloysius, has seen this work in action firsthand. “When they go to the Bronx, Chris brings folding tables so that folks don’t just take something and run. She sits with them. It’s a real encounter,” he said. “She is somebody who has taken the bishop’s initiative of ‘The One’ to heart and implemented it into the ministry she leads for the parish youth.”

“For each event, we connect the Scripture to the mission and focus on what it means to be a Catholic leader, to live a moral life,” Otis explained. “We don’t just discuss the 10 Commandments; we teach them to do it. You could have a talk about why a woman shouldn’t have an abortion, and few may come. But if someone goes to Malta House on a Saturday morning, holds a baby and prays, they see those moms have it tough but made a beautiful choice.”

These opportunities exist because of the model that Otis has created. Msgr. Kinnally understands how busy teens are with homework, sports and activities during the week. “What she has provided is a way to meet every teen in this parish where they are,” he said. “There is something for every teen to connect to the ministry at any time during the week.”

This July, during their regular Summer Mission Trip to the hollows of Kentucky, a group of 21 St. Aloysius teens worked to build a ramp around the home of an elderly woman named Betty, who couldn’t use the stairs, measuring and cutting wood and weeding her garden. It’s a goal of theirs, Otis said, to make the homes in this poor, rural area warm, safe and dry.

“They do a full day of work, and it helps them to encounter Christ in a different way,” Otis said of the teens. “When you see Christ in an older woman or in the face of a young child, you can’t give up. You take strength from Christ; the Holy Spirit put us all together for a reason. And our kids become so appreciative for what they have.”

For high school senior Addie O’Reilly, it’s not only the residents of Appalachia that benefit from these encounters. “We do, too. On these mission trips, we are the hands and feet of Jesus, spreading our faith,” she said. “With Betty, who is older and alone, she is still so happy. We see Christ’s love in her.”

While Otis credits the teens – with their enthusiasm and love of God – with the success of this Youth Ministry, the teens themselves and Msgr. Kinnally know the program’s success exists because of her.

“Chris is a servant leader,” he said, acknowledging her commitment and her leadership award. “She is so attuned to the needs of our teens these days and is so aware of what they need to become better disciples. I’m so happy that she received this honor because it hopefully will get others who are working with young people to say, ‘Oh, here’s one way of doing this.’”

Youth Ministry member Maddie Kupchak said, “Our group is so unique because of Mrs. Otis. She has such a special way of connecting everybody.”

Back in the vestibule on Sunday evening, Msgr. Kinnally knows Otis just wants to be a facilitator as the teens ready for Mass but is actually making it clear that they have a role, are important and belong. “She does it with a joy and energy that says, ‘I’m so glad to see you here today.’ It’s such a warm and welcoming presence.”

In November, Christine Otis will be recognized for the Saint John Paul II Parish Leadership Award at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Long Beach, California. ■



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New head of Catholic Academy of Stamford

STAMFORD – The Catholic Academy of Stamford has named veteran educator Chris Robertson as its new Head of School.

“Mr. Robertson brings with him a wealth of experience in education, including many years of service as both a teacher and school leader,” said Stacie Stueber, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Bridgeport. “Throughout his career, he has demonstrated a strong ability to foster academic excellence while also nurturing school cultures rooted in faith, relationships, and joyful com-

munity life.”

Robertson has more than three decades of experience as a K-8 educator and school leader. He taught elementary school for 14 years before transitioning to school leadership. He recently served as principal of St. James School, where he worked with the teachers to implement new curricula and increase the school’s Catholic identity.

Under his leadership the school’s enrollment increased from 225 to 345 students, several new classes were added, the security infrastructure was enhanced and the early child-

hood program grew.

Robertson holds certifications in elementary, secondary education and in school administration. He also has a masters of science in elementary education, and a sixth-year degree in school leadership with a focus on social-emotional learning and social justice, according to the Catholic Academy of Stamford. He is the director of the Catholic Schools Leadership Development Institute and a faculty member of the Aquinas Institute for Teacher Formation.

Since officially joining the Catholic Academy of Stamford on July 1, he has been meeting one-on-one with faculty and staff.

“I am deeply impressed by the faith-filled culture and dedicated educators,” Robertson said. “The teachers at CAS love their work and their school. A remarkable education begins when children feel cared for, respected and challenged to reach their fullest potential. Based on my conversations, it is clear to me that the children at CAS are not only prepared



CHRIS ROBERTSON

for success in high school, but for lives of purpose, leadership and service.”

(To learn more about the Catholic

Academy of Stamford, families are encouraged to visit the campus, attend an upcoming open house, or go to www.CasCt.org.)

St. Joseph HS names director of enrollment

TRUMBULL—St. Joseph High School has announced the appointment of Megan Merwin as the school’s director of enrollment management.

Merwin previously served as the director of admissions, marketing & development at St. James School in Stratford and brings more than 15 years of experience in admissions and enrollment management, CRM technology, and social media marketing strategies to her new job, the school said.



MEGAN MERWIN

In her new role, Merwin will oversee all aspects of enrollment, including guiding prospective families through the admissions process and building new community partnerships. St. Joseph High School has already begun accepting applications for the Class of 2031. For further information, visit www.sjcadets.org/admissions

“Megan Merwin’s impressive background in admissions, marketing and communications and sincere passion for Catholic education make her a tremendous asset to St. Joseph High School,” said David Klein, president of St. Joseph High School. “We are thrilled to welcome Megan to our school community and look forward to the energy and strategic vision that she will bring to our Enrollment Management Office and our SJHS Leadership Team.”

Merwin has a bachelor of arts in political science and religious studies from Sacred Heart University. Early in her career, she worked as a customer service executive with the Department of Defense. She has also served as a religious education teacher in grades 7-11. A parishioner in the Diocese of Bridgeport, she is committed to the transformative value of Catholic education, school officials said.

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Application Deadline

November 11, 2026

Trumbull, CT | www.sjcadets.org | admissions@sjcadets.org

St. Joseph Parish to give ‘regards to Broadway’

By ROSE BRENNAN

SHELTON—This autumn, the bright lights of Broadway are coming to the Naugatuck River Valley, by way of St. Joseph Parish on Fairmont Place. The parish’s annual fall concert, titled “A Broadway Melody,” will take place on Saturday, October 4 at 3 pm. All are invited to attend.

Daniel J. Horstmann, who is serving as the concert’s artistic director, said the Broadway theme was envisioned as a part of the nation’s larger 250th anniversary. While it may not be a White House event, Horstmann believes that Broadway has its own place in the larger American zeitgeist.

“There’s nothing more American than Broadway and musicals,” he said. “Everybody loves something from Broadway. I think when you hear those melodies, something just sparks in you a little bit ... it transports you to another place.”

The concert will feature both

the children’s and adult choir from the parish itself, along with several vocal and instrumental soloists. It will also feature a mini pit orchestra to truly replicate the sound of a Broadway production.

While he didn’t share the full setlist, Horstmann said he attempted to span all of the eras of Broadway theater—from George M. Cohan’s *Little Johnny Jones*, which hit the Great White Way in 1904, to Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*, which opened in 2015 and was described as “America then, as told by America now.”

This span of titles and eras is part of the appeal to a family-friendly parish audience, according to Jodi Keoghan, who has served as a cantor and soloist at St. Joseph on and off for several years and will perform in “A Broadway Melody.”

“I think it’s something that everyone can relate to—not just your older generation, but the young kids of this day,” Keoghan said. “There’s a medley of songs

that’s from *Wicked*, and that certainly appeals to the younger generation and children who are familiar with those melodies. The classics that we are also doing, such as *The Sound of Music* and *The Man of La Mancha*, maybe the children are familiar with, but it certainly helps to educate them and hear beautiful music.”

Keoghan, who is a classically trained opera singer, noted that conveying emotion in music can be challenging, especially when a performer is singing in an unfamiliar language. Nevertheless, the performer must still communicate those emotions to an audience, and it is especially powerful to do so in a language the audience does understand—like Broadway musicals.

“When I sing, I am a totally different person, and that’s when I can command the stage and draw the audience into the performance so that they can feel the music that I am singing and the value of the words,” she said.

Allison Fay serves as the music

director at St. Joseph and will be leading the adult and children’s choirs in their respective numbers. She said she was excited to experience the camaraderie between the various performers during the concert, whether it’s their first or 10th performance at the parish.

Fay said she looked forward to “the collaboration between people from the church and from outside of the church, and getting to hear a range of different voices (and) a range of different instruments.”

Darwin Shen, a violinist, is returning to St. Joseph’s mini pit orchestra for “A Broadway Melody.” He believes this ensemble will be the largest instrumental group that has ever accompanied the singers—an exciting prospect for him.

“I love working with the other musicians,” Shen said. “Many of

them I’ve known for 20 years or more. Of course, it’s always wonderful presenting to the audience, but I’m also sure they will feel the joy and camaraderie amongst the musicians.”

Horstmann is very excited to present the program to the larger community in October, because to him, it is an example of what makes St. Joseph Parish unique.

“We’re just so fortunate to have a parish that’s so welcoming to the arts,” Horstmann said. “One of the reasons I love working there ... is that it’s really more like a family. And I’m excited to widen that circle and invite others into that family and feel as if you’re sitting down to watch a show with your family.”

(To RSVP to “A Broadway Melody,” please email rectory@sjcshelton.org.)

CAMP ADORE FROM PAGE 18

with them throughout the year. Donations help to support the program, and there is a \$100 cost per camper.

“It’s not just a parish camp. It’s a camp that draws people in from the whole local area. That’s really amazing too, to see how much it’s grown and spread. This year I actually had to have a wait list, which was so unfortunate to turn people away,” said Iannotta, adding she hopes other parishes in the area will offer similar camps to meet the need.

“This year was particularly amazing to me because we had more teens volunteering than ever,” said Iannotta, noting there were about 70 teen volunteers who helped with activities. “The teens want to come. They want to be fed and they get just as much out of the camp as the kids.”

Deacon David Flynn, who volunteered at the camp this year, said the turnout shows the desire by the young faithful to know Jesus.

“It’s very inspiring for me to see the children in such a sincere expression of faith,” Deacon Flynn said.

Teen volunteer Josh Sideleau, who has been volunteering at the camp since it began, said the campers were eager to bond with each other and grow deeper in love with the Lord.

“I got to help with enriching the campers’ minds by giving them a talk about the Holy Spirit and its importance in our Catholic faith,” Sideleau said.

“It’s such a special week. It’s a gift to be a part of it and see how the Holy Spirit moves in the lives of these kids,” Iannotta said.

“I just want the kids to be able to have an experience that gives them the opportunity to learn about their faith in a fun environment with their peers so that they have the ability to develop a personal relationship with Jesus by attending Mass and adoration,” Iannotta said.



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Sister Jeannette Bolduc, CND, 94

Sister Jeannette Bolduc, a member of the Congregation of Notre Dame, died at Mosaic Senior Life in Bridgeport, CT, at the age of 94.

Born in Jackman, Maine,
Sister Jeannette was the daughter
of Alice and Hormidas Bolduc.
She had three siblings: Gerard,
Theresa and Roland.

Sister completed her elementary and secondary education at Mt. St. Joseph School in St. Johnsbury, VT in 1950.

Sister Jeannette professed her first vows as a Sister of the Congregation of Notre Dame on August 23, 1956. Prior to entering the Congregation of Notre Dame, Jeannette served in the United States Navy and received an honorable discharge.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Notre Dame College,

Staten Island, NY in 1954. She continued her studies earning a Masters Degree from Fordham University in 1962 and a Doctorate degree from Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York in 1972.

Sister Jeannette was a woman deeply committed not only to her family and CND Sisters, but also to her students and colleagues. She was a Professor of Psychology for over 20 years, both at Notre Dame College of Staten Island, NY and Iona College. In 1978, Sister Jeannette was appointed Chairperson of the Department of Psychology at Iona College, New Rochelle, NY.

In 1984, Sister Jeannette began her 32 year ministry in Central America. After studying Spanish in Mexico, she served in CND missions in Guatemala.

Honduras, El Salvador and Paraguay. Her ministry as a Pastoral Associate in several cities and countries over the years enabled her to be directly engaged with the spiritual and everyday life of the parishioners. In 1990, she was appointed to accompany the CND sisters in temporary vows. She was their teacher and mentor as they deepened their commitment to religious life in the CND.

In 2016, Sister Jeanette

returned to the United States and began a ministry with the Spanish-speaking parishioners of St. Louis Parish in West Haven, CT. Sister Jeannette retired in 2023 after a multifaceted journey as teacher, mentor and spiritual companion.

She was preceded in death by



her parents, Alice and Hormidas, and her sister and brothers, Gerard, Theresa and Roland and her nephew, Jeffrey.

She is survived by her nieces Cecilia and Janice and her nephews Steven and Mark.

Sister Jeannette is mourned by her community, the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame. ■

Capt. Gosselin remembered

In a tribute to Captain Nicholas Francis Gosselin, who was killed in a remote part of Indonesia, Father Peter Cipriani said: "One of man's greatest fears is that he or she be forgotten. We all like to think that just as in life we matter, but more so after this life that we still matter and are still being thought of and when so, inspiring others to live their best lives."



CAPTAIN NICHOLAS GOSSELIN

Captain Gosselin, who was born to David and Catherine Gosselin on November 16, 1996, lived a life that his family described as “serving others unconditionally.” It was a life of adventure and exploration and service.

From a very early age, "Nicholas would build airplane dashboards, including all the gauges and levers, out of cardboard boxes," his obituary said. "At age 11, he was flying flight simulators on his computer. For his thirteenth birthday, he was given a discovery flight at Oxford Airport, where he started taking flying lessons and later had a part-time job working in the hangars."

Captain Gosselin graduated from Newtown High School and later Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts, with a bachelor's degree in aviation science. During the summers he worked in Alaska for PenAir and explored the state while biking, hiking and fishing. Following graduation, he had several jobs as a pilot and eventually returned to Alaska, where he worked for five years as a bush pilot, bringing passengers, food, medicine and supplies to villages. During his last two years, he worked as a bush pilot in Papua Indonesia.

The Gosselin family has established a memorial scholarship in his name to help future young pilots. Donations can be made to the Cpt. Nicholas F. Gosselin Memorial Scholarship Fund at Bridgewater State University, payable to the BSU Foundation and mailed to The Bridgewater State University Foundation, PO Box 42, Bridgewater, MA 02324. To make a gift online, visit www.bridgew.edu/give.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to the Gosselin family and pray, "May his soul and all the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace."

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OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT, LLC

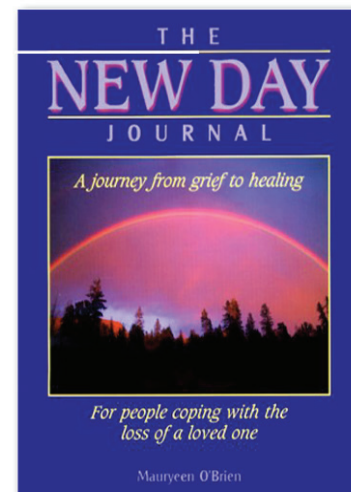
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FALL 2026

- St. Marguerite Bourgeoys, *Brookfield*
- Church of the Assumption, *Westport*
- St. Jerome, *Norwalk*
- St. Mary, *Bethel*
- St. Joseph-St. Ladislaus Parish (*Spanish*), *Norwalk*
- St. Leo, *Stamford*
- Afternoon program on Zoom



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DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DOB | JUNE 28—AUGUST 15

JUNE

JUNE		22	Msgr. Nicholas P. Coleman, P.A.	1963	
28	Rev. John J. Draper.....	1966	24	Rev. Paul Lalic.....	2011
30	Rev. Arthur E. Norton.....	2004	25	Rev. Hubert P. Carrig	1978
	Msgr. Thomas P. Mooney	1956		Rev. F. William Verrilli	2020
	Msgr. John E. Tomis	1986	26	Rev. Bernard A. Keefe.....	2022

JULY

1	Rev. Anthony J. Intagliata	1990	28	Rev. William G. Mahoney.....	1973
2	Rev. Alfred J. Carmody	1958	29	Deacon Ian Black	2006
5	Msgr. John J. Hayes	1964			
6	Msgr. Philip N. Salmone.....	1967			
8	Rev. James J. Kane.....	1956			
9	Rev. Sean F. Flynn.....	1978			
10	Rev. Edward F. Doyle.....	1981			
	Deacon Stephen Sebestyen.....	2011			
12	Rev. Edwin Coyne.....	2013			
13	Msgr. James P. Devine	1972			
	Rev. A. Fred Constantino	1980			
15	Rev. Paul F. Merry.....	2020			
16	Rev. Bernardo C. Rodriguez	2020			
17	Msgr. Walter R. Conroy	1997			
	Rev. Robert Terentieff.....	2011			
19	Msgr. Bartholomew J. Laurello.....	2004			
20	Rev. John M. Conlisk.....	1990			
	Rev. Peter A. DeMarco	2015			
	Rev. Kevin P. Fitzpatrick.....	2008			
	Rev. Chester Kicia, O.F.M.	2003			
	Msgr. John J. Wigh	1995			
21	Rev. David H. Krahel.....	2008			
	Deacon Nicholas Pratt.....	2005			

AUGUST

1	Msgr. Daniel J. Foley	1999
	Msgr. John J. Toomey, P.A.	1992
2	Rev. Patrick V. Lavery.....	1976
	Msgr. James J. McLaughlin	1985
3	Rev. Francis E. Fenton	1995
4	Msgr. Michael J. Guerin	1981
	Msgr. James F. Leary	1994
5	Msgr. Joseph J. Kohut	2017
7	Rev. Thomas G. Keeney.....	1990
9	Msgr. John J. Kennedy, P.A.	1955
	Msgr. Frank C. Dellolio.....	1983
	Msgr. Richard T. Scully.....	1988
10	Deacon Roland Joseph Blier	2022
	Deacon William Rowe	2013
11	Deacon Richard P. Kovacs	2024
14	Rev. Michael Palmer	2023
	Deacon Gerardo Ramos	2007
15	Msgr. Louis A. DeProfio, P.A.	2018
	Msgr. Edward J. Duffy	1977



NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE

BY SUAN SONNA

Suan Sonna is the apologetics director for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

I am pretty sure that I have seen multiple miracles throughout my life. An early one occurred in 2012 when my grandparents on my father's side were still alive. As they were preparing to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary, my grandfather prayed that it would not rain on his party in Northeastern India. (The British split up my tribe in the early 20th century, casting half in Myanmar and the other half in India; I'm from the Indian side.) During a summer visit to India, I awoke to a deluge outside of my window and feared that my grandfather's prayers had failed. We hopped into a car, and, as we approached the bridge connecting our part of town to his, I gasped upon see-

ing that the rain stopped at the bridge, as though an invisible line had been drawn in the ground. Coincidence? It's technically possible.

How about this story? During my undergraduate studies at Kansas State University, a religious sister prayed over a friend of mine who had injured her leg quite severely. It should have taken months for her to heal. This sister encouraged my friend after the prayer to try walking around the room. My friend said that she felt a strange burning sensation in her leg and didn't know what to make of it initially. She chose to trust the sister's words anyway and was eventually walking and then running. Coincidence? Well... maybe

there's something special about our brain and our physiology that we have yet to discover.

But how about the feminine figure of light that appeared in Zeitoun, Egypt on top of a Coptic Orthodox Church from 1968-1971? This figure was observed, sometimes with a dove over her and an infant in her arms, by approximately two million people over this span of time; the Egyptian government even shut down power in that grid, thinking it was an electrical phenomenon. The woman still appeared, unbothered and triumphant. We even have undoctored photos and firsthand testimonies from nonreligious and non-Catholics who saw something strange. Although the Catholic Church has neither officially confirmed nor dismissed this appearance, many believe that the figure of light is Mary.

The evidence for this apparition is so powerful in fact that the Protestant biblical scholar Dale C. Allison Jr. (a Presbyterian elder and distinguished professor at Princeton Theological Seminary) told me in a conversation on my podcast, *Intellectual Catholicism*, that he is open to the idea that the Blessed Virgin Mary actually appeared. He proclaimed

that this is the best attested miracle in human history. He even placed the levitation accounts of St. Joseph of Cupertino in second place.

It is entirely possible that my miracle experiences are "chump change" in comparison to these cases. Actually, given that we are discussing Our Lady (I think) and a canonized saint, I am happy to admit that much. It is technically possible that there is some hidden, natural explanation for these things, but I honestly think that there are enough credible miracle claims to put skeptics on the ropes.

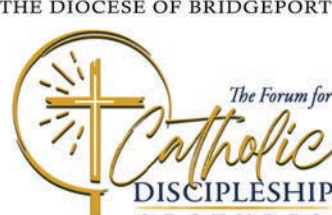
Although I have always believed that miracles occur, I never realized the enormity of the evidence. After encountering the research of Fr. Robert J. Spitzer, SJ into near-death and out-of-body experiences, the rigorously studied case of Sister Bernadette Moriau's healing and the research of my Catholic friend Ethan Muse (a former atheist and current PhD student in philosophy at Rutgers University) into Marian apparitions and Eucharistic miracles, I cannot help but feel confident that there is a God.

I am also confident that this God became incarnate 2,000 years ago and built the Catholic

Church. Aside from my research into the biblical roots of the papacy, I was especially encouraged when a friend of mine (who I will leave unnamed) returned to the Catholic Church after being nonreligious for years. This friend was something of a childhood prodigy, extremely accomplished at a young age (writing books and articles that academics could not ignore) and sports now an Ivy League education. He remained unmoved until he encountered Ethan Muse's research on miracles, and the evidence was so thoroughly convincing and specifically confirmatory of Catholicism that he returned home.

To put it mildly, I think it is intellectually respectable and defensible to affirm that miracles happen. There are, in other words, credible instances where God causes the things of this world to transcend their natural powers (like healing miracles) or demonstrates to this world things beyond it (like Mary's visits to Earth). At the same time, we should ponder these words of Jesus: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" (John 20:29). Let us praise God for performing miracles but let us trust him now simply at his word like children. ■

THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT PRESENTS

The Forum for
Catholic
DISCIPLESHIP
LECTURES

with **BRYAN MERCIER**

TITLE:
How to Bring Lapsed Catholics Back Home

Thursday, September 17
6:30-8:30 pm
Saint Catherine of Siena Parish
220 Shelton Road
Trumbull, CT 06611

Bryan Mercier
is an on-fire Catholic speaker, author, and apologist. For more than two decades, Bryan has given life-changing youth retreats, keynote talks, Parish Missions, apologetics seminars, leadership training, and more. He has been aired on TV and radio around the country including Sirius XM Satellite Radio, Ave Maria Radio, Relevant Radio, and EWTN.

Bryan is the founder and president of Catholic Truth, an organization that reaches millions of people across the globe. Catholic Truth teaches and builds up the Church using effective apologetics and evangelization, faith formation, and more than 10 social media platforms. Bryan has written two books and is working on five more.

Invite your friends and family who have questions!



Schedule
6:30 pm | Doors open,
Light Refreshments
7:00 pm | Vespers
7:30 pm | Speaker
8:15 pm | Q and A



Bringing Catholics home

Lecture series kicks off

By ROSE BRENNAN

TRUMBULL—The newest cycle of the Forum for Catholic Discipleship Lectures will begin on Thursday, September 17 at St. Catherine of Siena Parish. All are invited to attend this kickoff lecture, which will welcome apologist Bryan Mercier.

Formerly the Bishop's Lecture Series, the Forum for Catholic Discipleship Lectures exists to promote adult Catholic faith formation through encounters with truth, beauty and goodness while being accompanied in spiritual friendship along the way. The lectures bring nationally renowned Catholic writers and speakers who illuminate the path of renewal while tackling pressing catechetical, theological

and pastoral issues.

The September lecture will feature Bryan Mercier, a speaker, author and apologist, who will deliver a talk titled "How to Bring Lapsed Catholics Back Home."

Mercier is the founder and president of Catholic Truth, which teaches and builds up the Church using effective apologetics and evangelization, faith formation and social media. For more than two decades, he has given life-changing youth retreats, keynote talks, parish missions, apologetics seminars and more. He has been featured on television and radio programs across the country, including Sirius XM Satellite Radio, Ave Maria Radio, Relevant Radio and EWTN.

"I hope people will come away with useful advice, but also not a naive expectation that

all it takes to bring someone back is just a few magic words or book recommendations," said Suan Sonna, Director of Apologetics and the Forum for Catholic Discipleship. "There are things that people can do to make the process easier rather than harder. Bryan has the experience to talk about the dos and don'ts."

Doors for the lecture will open at 6:30 pm, and light refreshments will be available. Participants will then pray Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours at 7 pm, followed by Mercier's lecture at 7:30 pm. A question-and-answer session will follow the lecture.

(To register for the lecture, email bishopslecture@diobpt.org or visit www.bridgeportdiocese.org/forum-catholic/lectures) ■

Graceland: A family visit to the Presley home

By **DON HARRISON**

Patti, my beloved late wife and soulmate, and I grew up in different states and had multiple diverse interests. As a primary example, I wrote about sports to earn a living. As a young woman, she was an avid skier and played golf—the latter quite well, I’ve been told—but she wasn’t much of a sports fan.

But we did share a love for the music of Elvis Presley. As teenagers, each of us had gathered, and retained, a collection of the King of Rock ‘n’ Roll’s albums, and we enjoyed watching repeats of his televised 1968 Comeback Special.

More importantly, we were fortunate to watch him perform in person twice, and it did not require two plane tickets to Las

Vegas. In the summer of 1973, Patti and I traveled to Long Island and enjoyed his performance at the Nassau Coliseum. Much closer to home, in 1976, we were treated to an Elvis songfest at the New Haven Coliseum.

This spring, Alexis, the youngest of our three daughters, and I conceived a plan. We would fly to Memphis, Tenn., and visit Graceland, the storied Colonial Revival mansion purchased by Elvis for himself and his parents, Vernon and Gladys. The price was \$102,500. At that juncture, he was just 23 years old but had already skyrocketed to fame in 1956 with his seemingly endless string of hits—“Heartbreak Hotel,” “Blue Suede Shoes,” “Don’t Be Cruel,” “Love Me Tender,” et al.

The day of our visit, June 10th, is embedded in my mind. We had signed up for the Ultimate VIP Tour, a three-hour walk led by an experienced guide, which would encompass both the mansion (sans the closed second floor) and the grounds. Outside, we would explore the Elvis Presley Museum Entertainment Complex, the small building that housed Vernon Presley’s office, access to Elvis’ private jet, named the “Lisa Marie,” his classic cars and the family caskets—including Lisa Marie Presley, Elvis and Priscilla’s only child.

The VIP Tour is pricey, \$240 apiece (including a meal voucher), but in our opinion, well worth it.

Graceland is located at 3764 Elvis Presley Blvd. in the city’s Whitehaven neighborhood, and



DON HARRISON AND HIS DAUGHTER ALEXIS

fewer than four miles north of the Mississippi border. Opened to the public as a house museum in June 1982, it receives some 600,000 visitors annually, making it the second most visited home in the United States after the White House.

Graceland is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (1991) and was declared a National Historic Landmark (2006), making it the first site recognized for significance to rock ‘n’ roll music.

We would also recommend staying nearby at the Guest House at Graceland, located within the equivalent of a city block. The resort hotel’s accommodations are classy, the food is quite tasty, and an Elvis Presley movie is shown every evening in the theater. (Lexi and I watched Elvis’ film debut, “Love

Me Tender.”) The hotel also provides complimentary van service to and from the mansion as well as the Memphis International Airport.

What drew me to Elvis in addition to his distinctive voice and hip-shaking gyrations? Well, I’d learned about his devotion to gospel music in church, including Black churches. Gospel music was gleaned from African-American spirituals, which he first heard as a boy in Tupelo, Miss., the small town in which he was born in 1935.

One of his most popular hits was “Peace in the Valley,” the title of one of his first extended-play records. I also enjoyed his renditions of “Amazing Grace,” “I Believe,” “How Great Thou Art” and “Take My Hand, Precious Lord.” ■

Sports

Miss his commencement? Yes, and he set a track record

By **DON HARRISON**

Brenan McCabe stands by the decision he made. More accurately, he ran by that decision and everybody else.

The Immaculate High School senior chose to miss his commencement this spring in favor of competing in the CIAC State Open Championship. Compete? He merely broke the 31-year-old State Open record in the 400 meters, finishing in 46.34 seconds. McCabe’s time surpassed the 46.59 mark set by a former Olympian, Jerome Young of Prince Tech in Hartford, in 1995.

“As important as graduation is, I knew this would be my chance to show what I’ve been working for this season,” McCabe explained. “Breaking an Olympian’s meet record felt pretty nice. Not only that, but the school recognized me at the Baccalaureate Mass preceding the State Championship, so I received my diploma.”

The Mustangs’ record-setter won a bevy of honors this season, most notably Athlete of the Year by the Connecticut High Schools Coaches Association and Boys Track & Field Athlete of the Year by Gametime Connecticut.

“Brenan’s accomplishments



BRENAN MCCABE

are historic, but what makes us most proud is the character, humility and commitment he has shown along the way,” said Immaculate Head of School Wendy Neil.

McCabe’s post-season dominance began in the CIAC State Track Championship where he captured state titles in the 400m

(46.91) and 200m (21.27), exceeding state records in both categories. He closed out his extraordinary high school career by becoming the regional champion in the 400-meter dash, winning the New England Track & Field Championship held at Noble High School in North Berwick, Maine. And, yes, his 46.94 time surpassed the meet record.

Track runs (pun intended) in the McCabe family. Both parents, Amanda and Tom, competed in track at the high school level, and his dad also ran track at Providence College. His sister, Bella, 16, is a rising junior at Immaculate and on the track team.

“To have a family that is always in my corner is something I’m extremely grateful for,” Brenan said. “Through every high they have kept me humble and hungry for more. Through every low they give me the motivation and that extra push to continue forward. Every time I step on the track or into a classroom, I give 100 percent for them.”

Academically, McCabe also outperforms most of the competition, concluding his senior year with straight A’s and a 4.7 GPA. He plans to major in economics at the University of Pennsylvania and, of course, continue his track career. ■

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Nuestra Voz

Ministerio Hispano forma a nuevos Ministros Extraordinarios de Sagrada Comunión

POR MARICARMEN GODOY

BRIDGEPORT—La Oficina de Ministerios Hispanos de la Diócesis de Bridgeport está dictando durante cuatro lunes consecutivos un programa de formación para miembros de las parroquias hispanas que se dedican a servir voluntariamente como “Ministros Extraordinarios de la Sagrada Comunión”, donde recibieron formación espiritual, litúrgica y práctica para ejercer con reverencia, humildad y fidelidad; normas y principios de la Iglesia Católica y como manda la Diócesis de Bridgeport.

La capacitación, conforme con el Diácono Edward Carrillo, instructor del curso, recordó “que el Ministerio Extraordinario de la Sagrada Comunión es, ante todo, un servicio de amor a Jesús y a su pueblo y quienes reciben este llamado por discernimiento actúan como servidores que colaboran para que la Eucaristía sea distribuida de manera digna, ordenada y reverente.

“La Comunión brota del sacrificio de Cristo que se hace



MEMBERS OF HISPANIC parishes gather for a formation program to become Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion sponsored by the Office of Hispanic Ministries of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

presente en la Santa Misa. El ministro extraordinario no actúa como dueño del Sacramento, sino como un servidor de un misterio que pertenece a la Iglesia”, fue uno de los mensajes centrales compartidos durante la formación que recaló Carrillo.

Durante las sesiones se destacó que el ministro extraordinario debe vivir este servicio

desde la oración y la humildad. Su misión no es buscar reconocimiento, sino ayudar a que cada fiel pueda encontrarse con Cristo en la Eucaristía.

Recordando las palabras de San Juan Bautista: “Es necesario que Él crezca y que yo disminuya”, Carrillo explicó: “El ministro extraordinario no aparece para destacar y sobresalir; aparece para servir” y recordó que nadie se designa a sí mismo para este ministerio, sino que la Iglesia establece un proceso de discernimiento y unos requisitos específicos antes de otorgar este servicio pastoral.

Entre los requisitos se encuentran ser católico practicante, haber recibido los sacramentos de iniciación cristiana —Bautismo, Confirmación y Eucaristía— mantener una vida coherente con la fe, tener buena reputación moral y cumplir con la formación requerida por la Diócesis, incluyendo el programa de Ambientes Seguros (curso Virtuos). “El deseo de ayudar es importante, pero en la Iglesia no basta solamente con querer servir. Existe un llamado y una idoneidad que deben ser discernidos”, señaló Carrillo.

Por eso, en forma sencilla, Maury Puello, colombiana, sirviendo 15 años en la parroquia de Saint Peter en Bridgeport, opinó que los ministros extraordinarios de la comunión, aprendieron que el servicio del ministro comienza antes de acercarse al altar. “La preparación incluye la oración personal, llegar con anticipación, revisar la asignación de servicio, comunicarse con el coordinador y conocer si distribuirán el Cuerpo de Cristo

o [la Sangre de Cristo]”, repuso.

La formación enfatizó también la importancia de la presentación personal como signo de respeto hacia la Eucaristía. Los ministros deben vestir de manera limpia, modesta y apropiada, evitando cualquier elemento que pueda distraer de la solemnidad de la celebración y la importancia de la purificación (limpieza) de las manos como un gesto de reverencia antes y después de ejercer el ministerio.

“La pregunta no es solamente cómo hacemos una tarea, sino cómo nos presentamos ante el Señor. Servimos un misterio que no comprendemos completamente, pero que recibimos con fe”, compartió durante la capacitación Carrillo a manera de reflexión.

Lo que dio paso a que Carolina Maldonado, nativa de Guatemala, con 15 años de ejercer como ministro extraordinario de Eucaristía, en la parroquia Saint George, contará cómo un niño -sin hacer aun si Primera Comunión-comulgó y como creyó que era una galleta sin sabor, la botó al piso y la pisoteó; ella, llena de dolor y tristeza, antes de proceder a purificar el lugar donde cayó el Cuerpo de Cristo, catequizó a los padres y el sacerdote celebró, posteriormente, una Misa de Reparación por la ofensa.

Otro de los aspectos tratados durante el curso, fue sobre cómo los ministros deben respetar las fórmulas establecidas por la Iglesia. Al entregar la Hostia consagrada limitándose a decir únicamente: “El Cuerpo de Cristo”, y al ofrecer el cáliz: “La Sangre de Cristo” y la respuesta del fiel que recibe la Comunión debe ser: “Amén”,

como expresión de fe y aceptación del don recibido. Basado en un orden propio que debe respetarse, evitando añadir palabras, explicaciones o gestos personales que puedan alterar el rito.

Durante la formación se recordó que la Sagrada Comunión no es simplemente un momento dentro de la Misa, sino la culminación del sacrificio eucarístico. “La Misa comienza desde el primer canto de entrada hasta el último canto de despedida. Todo forma parte de la celebración”, explicó Carrillo, quien destacó que los ministros extraordinarios deben recibir primero su Comunión para luego ellos servir a Cristo en los demás. “No damos lo que no hemos recibido. ¿Cómo podemos entregar a Cristo si nosotros mismos no lo hemos recibido con fe?”, fue una de las reflexiones compartidas. El ministerio incluye también la posibilidad de acompañar a los enfermos y llevarles la Sagrada Comunión cuando reciben la autorización correspondiente.

Ignacio Andrade, de la parroquia Saint George en Bridgeport, originario de México y miembro de su comunidad parroquial por más de 20 años; hizo varias preguntas a Carrillo en torno a cómo se puede entender la consistencia pastoral con el rito y la espiritualidad que debe reinar durante la celebración de la misa para llegar a la Eucaristía con fe.

Mientras que Mildred Vela, originaria de Guatemala, perteneciente a la parroquia Saint Peter de Bridgeport, quien lleva 29 años viviendo en Estados Unidos y 13 años sirviendo como ministro extraordinario de la Sagrada Comunión; habló de la necesidad de usar las palabras correctamente. Por ejemplo, dijo: “No se debe decir limpiar sino purificar y es importante esta diferencia porque se habla desde un mundo de la espiritualidad y de la conexión con Cristo”. Además, de usar la palabra “ministro en masculino aun cuando sea una mujer”.

El ministro extraordinario de la Sagrada Comunión está llamado a ser un instrumento de unidad, fe y amor, ayudando a que cada persona que recibe la Eucaristía pueda acercarse a Cristo con reverencia, responder con fe y regresar a su vida diaria fortalecido por la gracia de Dios.

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Christ can always change your life

By FATHER CHRIS FORD

There is a memorable scene in the movie *Good Will Hunting* where Sean (played by Robin Williams) tells Will (played by Matt Damon) about the night Sean met his wife.

Sean and his friends had tickets to Game 6 of the 1975 World Series, a legendary game in Red Sox and World Series lore, but Sean wasn't there to see how it ended. Before the game, he saw a woman in a bar and decided to give his ticket away. He stayed behind because he wanted to "see about a girl."

From the outside, it seemed like an absurd decision. He was giving up the chance to witness one of the greatest games in baseball history for a conversation with someone he had never met. Yet Sean never tells the story with regret. He had encountered something that, in that moment, seemed more important than everything he had planned.

We often speak about vocation in terms of sacrifice. A

young man considering the priesthood begins to think about marriage and family. A woman discerning religious life considers the independence and possibilities she would surrender. Those sacrifices are real. Every vocation requires us to let go of certain things in order to receive another life from God.

But vocations do not begin with sacrifice. They have to begin with attraction, when a person catches sight of something beautiful in Christ and begins to wonder whether He might be worth everything.

The Gospel describes the Kingdom of God as a treasure hidden in a field. When a man discovers it, he sells everything he has and buys the field. He does so not reluctantly or resentfully but "out of joy." He has discovered something whose value changes the value of everything else.

That is the heart of discernment. The question is not simply "What will I have to give up?" The deeper question is "What

have I found?"

A vocation to the priesthood or religious life cannot be sustained by guilt, pressure or even the needs of the Church. The Church certainly needs priests and religious, but need alone is not enough to carry someone through years of formation and a lifetime of generous service. Only Christ can do that.

A vocation takes root when a person begins to recognize that Christ is not simply one good among many. He is the treasure. He is the One for whom the human heart was made. When that truth moves from an idea to a lived encounter, life begins to be reordered around Him.

This does not mean that discernment becomes easy. There will still be fears, doubts and resistance. Most people do not receive a complete plan from God

all at once. More often, the call is discovered slowly: in prayer, in the Eucharist, in service, in the witness of a joyful priest or religious, or in a persistent thought that refuses to disappear.

This is why our families, parishes and schools must help young people become attentive to the voice of Christ. We must teach them to pray, to listen and to ask what God desires for their lives. We must also give them witnesses whose lives reveal that holiness is not the loss of joy, but its fulfillment.

Sean saw something that changed his plans. Christ changes our lives. A vocation begins when we glimpse the beauty of a life with Him, and what once seemed impossible begins to appear worth the risk.

We sometimes ask why more young people are not considering the priesthood or religious life.



Perhaps the real question we should be asking is this: Have we truly helped them see the beauty of Christ clearly enough to imagine giving Him everything?

Father Christopher J. Ford, PhD is Episcopal Vicar for Education & Formation, Director of Seminarians and Pastor of Notre Dame of Easton Parish. For further information, visit bridgeportpriest.org or email discern@bridgeportpriest.org.

Young adult gala to benefit FIE

Young Catholic Professionals—Fairfield County will hold the 2nd Annual Young Adult Gala on Saturday, September 12, from 6 to 11 pm at Wee Burn Country Club, 410 Hollow Tree Ridge Road in Darien. The masquerade gala will benefit the Foundations in Education Hardship Fund, which provides emergency financial assistance to students whose Catholic education is threatened by unforeseen family circumstances.

The event is presented by Young Catholic Professionals and Catholic 203, Diocese of Bridgeport Young Adult Ministry.

When a family experiences a house fire, the loss of a parent, a serious medical crisis or another unforeseen emergency, the Hardship Fund helps ensure that a child's education can continue during life's most difficult moments.

The goal for the evening is to fund four \$4,000 scholarships.

"I'm so grateful for the work that YCP has put into this gala and excited that we can support the good work of Foundations in Education," said Father Sam Kachuba, Episcopal Vicar for Young Adult Ministries. "Our young adult community in the Diocese of Bridgeport is a great example of zeal and devotion."

(For more information, visit www.tinyurl.com/munpw2sh.)

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DIOCESAN HOLY HOURS



SHEPHERDS AFTER MY OWN HEART

An evening of Eucharistic Adoration, silence, prayer, and reflective music



Who Is This For?

- Young men discerning God's call
- Anyone who desires to pray for priestly vocations
- Those seeking quiet, reverent time with the Lord and an opportunity to reflect on a vocation to the priesthood

When

- 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM
- Thursday, August 13
 - Thursday, September 10
 - Thursday, October 22

Where

St. Pius X
834 Brookside Drive
Fairfield, CT 06824

What to Expect

- Eucharistic Adoration
- Sacred silence & guided prayer
- To speak with the Lord heart to heart



Questions?

discern@bridgeportpriest.org

Additional events:

bridgeportpriest.org/events/



Padre Pio's Feast Day Mass & Celebration

Wednesday, September 23, 2026 | 11 AM



Join the Padre Pio Foundation of America as we celebrate the Feast Day of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina!

The celebration will begin with a special Feast Day Mass at Holy Apostles College and Seminary in Cromwell, CT, followed by light refreshments at the Padre Pio Foundation of America.

Throughout the day, guests are invited to pray in the Padre Pio Chapel and visit the Padre Pio Gift Shop. Each attendee will receive a rose in honor of our dear friend and intercessor, Padre Pio.

All are welcome to attend.

Scan the QR
code to RSVP
and submit your
prayer intentions
for Mass



Mass Details

Wednesday, September 23, 2026 | Mass at 11 AM

Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles Chapel
Holy Apostles College and Seminary
33 Prospect Hill Road | Cromwell, CT

*"Prayer is the best weapon we have;
it is the key to God's heart." - Padre Pio*

Visit the Padre Pio Foundation of America



The Padre Pio Foundation of America is home to a beautiful Chapel for quiet prayer and reflection, a Gift Shop and Bookstore offering an extensive selection of religious and devotional items, and a Visitor Center featuring photos, books, and information about Padre Pio and the PPFOA.

Whether you come to learn more about Padre Pio's life and spirituality, or simply enjoy a moment of prayer, we invite you to experience the warmth and hospitality of the PPFOA.

Mention that you read about us in Fairfield County Catholic, and you will receive a small gift.



The Padre Pio Foundation of America

Founded in 1977 to spread devotion to Padre Pio, the PPFOA carries on his mission today by preserving the places near and dear to his heart, fostering vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and carrying on Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy in his name.



The PPFOA, Chapel and Gift Shop are open to the public Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.
Our Padre Pio prayer group meets daily and prays for all our benefactors and those in need of prayer.

463 Main Street, Cromwell, CT 06416 | (860) 635-4996

"Pray, Hope & Don't Worry"

www.padrepio.com

