



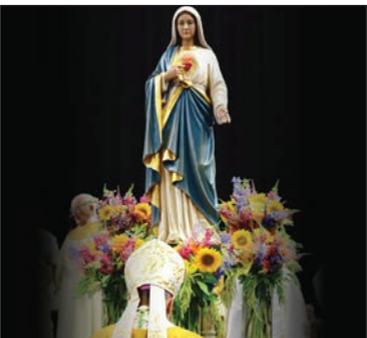
FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

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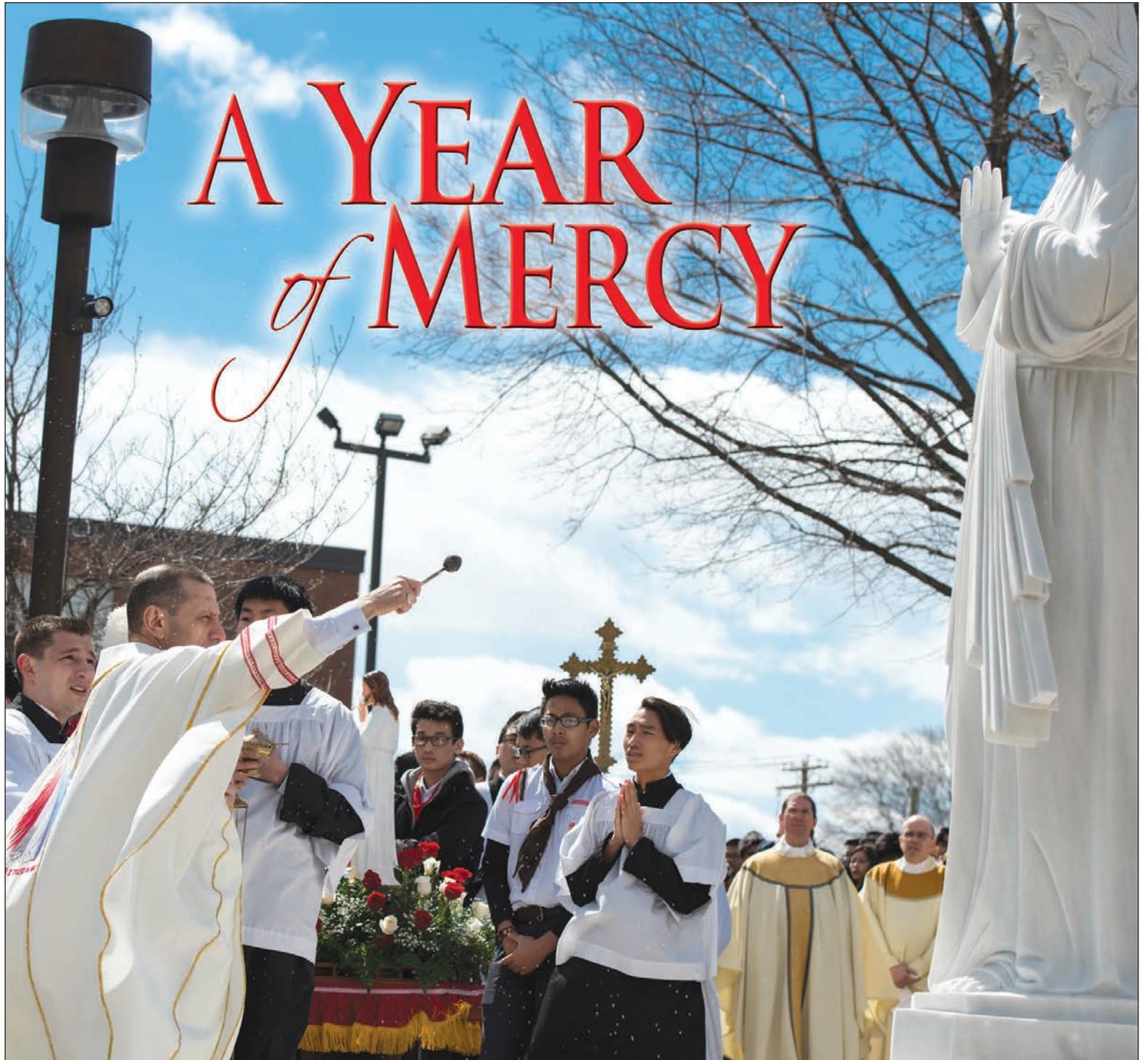


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Synod: The Next Step

Pastoral Planning process underway in diocese

By BETH LONGWARE DUFF

Parish Planning Task Forces across the Diocese of Bridgeport are getting down to the business of addressing one of the major initiatives that emerged from the Fourth Diocesan Synod last year: Setting a course for the future through ongoing, systematic and comprehensive planning for their respective faith communities.

“What was noted was that a number of our parishes operated on a year-to-year process, responding to the immediate needs, without having the occasion to step back and carefully and intentionally set priorities and identify needs to be addressed,” explained Director of Strategic and Pastoral Planning Patrick Turner in an overview of the initiative given to parishes ahead of the workshops. “This process is designed to provide that opportunity for a broader discussion of goals and a renewal of our parishes.”

Task force members, many of whom were accompanied by their pastors, received additional guidance during two Pastoral Planning 101 workshops, the most recent of which was held in mid-March at St. Edward the Confessor Parish in New Fairfield. The workshops were designed to allow participants from across the diocese to come together to share ideas and experiences and to learn best practices from local and national experts.

Prior to the workshops, each task force received a Parish Data Snapshot compiled by the Office of Strategic and Pastoral Planning from parish reports previously submitted to the diocese. The snapshots focused on sacramental trends, including the total numbers for Baptism, First



PASTORAL PLANNING 101— More than 150 parish task force members gathered recently at St. Edward the Confessor Parish in New Fairfield for a workshop on planning for the future of their parishes. The presentation included information on national and local trends and the opportunity to interact with representatives from other parishes. Each parish is presently undertaking a self assessment and evaluation as part of the process.

Holy Communion, Confirmation and Marriage performed in the parish, as well as faith formation trends like enrollment numbers for RCIA and youth religious education, senior adult programming, liturgical volunteers and Mass attendance. Financial data from the Office of Development reflecting Annual Catholic Appeal pledges, the number of donors and participation percentages were also included in the snapshots.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano asked all parishes in the diocese to complete a Parish Self-Assessment and Planning Questionnaire for submission to Father Michael Dogali, vicar for Strategic Planning, who will visit all parishes throughout the spring to discuss their particular situation.

“We’re asking the parishes to look at every aspect and to

plan—to plan better, to plan for a bright and optimistic future,” Father Dogali explained at the New Fairfield workshop. “The baseline is that all parishes are doing this. The goal is that by September 30, every parish submits a pastoral plan to the bishop. He’ll approve the program or ask the parish to revise it, and once they’re all done he wants to post all 82 pastoral plans online.”

Pastors were given wide latitude in choosing six to ten members to serve on their Planning Task Force. They were encouraged to approach parish trustees and members of their pastoral and finance councils as well as to identify lay leaders who could bring a new or different perspective to the discussion.

After reviewing the parish snapshot, the task force members will complete a parish self-assessment evaluation that outlines pastoral

strengths and challenges, projects financial resources for the near future and reviews the current condition of all parish buildings. The task force will also choose several parish priorities to be addressed over the next two years.

Participants in the New Fairfield workshop were fired up by the presentations that were made throughout the morning. “The financial overview that we got was impressively put together, and it points to major things that we need to do,” said Joao Nunes, a member of the Brazilian Catholic community in Danbury and a communicant at St. Peter Parish, during a break in the session. “We are in the position of losing ground that we need to regain. The primary way to do this is to get together like we’re doing today, facing the music and actually putting things together in such a way that things will be

different in the future.”

One portion of the presentation delivered statistics from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) showing Mass attendance, participation in the sacraments and parochial school enrollment on a steady decline in recent years. Roger Palanzo, a life-long member of Sacred Heart Parish in Danbury, said those numbers provided perspective for the diocesan discussion. “Looking at the trends nationally, it shows that some of these issues are not just diocesan issues—they’re national and possibly global and societal issues,” he said. “We have to figure out how to correct that.”

At the end of the workshop, Rosa Curillo of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Danbury was energized to make the Catholic community more vibrant. “It’s not just going to Mass on Sunday and walking out and forgetting about it,” she declared. “It’s how we can be true Catholics and wake up the community. We are a family, and that’s how we should view it!”

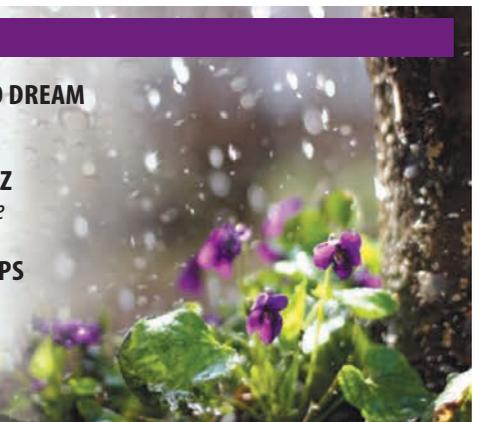
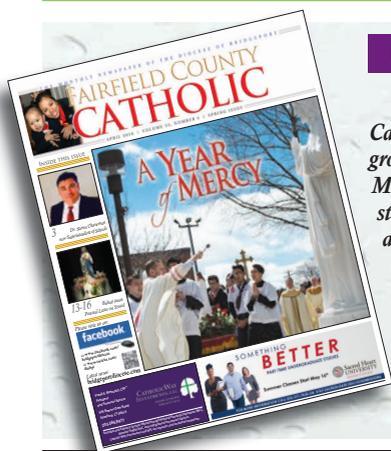
About 400 task force members attended the two workshops in March, according to Patrick Turner, who was pleased with the progress to date and eager to keep the momentum moving forward. “Now they really need to be fully engaged in responding to the parish self-assessments and identifying the challenges and strengths within their parishes,” he said of the participants. “What I loved so much about the discussion today is the feedback. People are really beginning to have an understanding about what makes a vibrant parish and how we create that within our own faith communities.” ■

ON THE COVER

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano blesses the Divine Mercy Shrine on the grounds of St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport. More than 800 worshippers filled the church to standing room only to participate in the Mass and the dedication of the shrine alongside of the Cathedral. The vision and fundraising for the shrine were the work of the large Vietnamese community that worships at St. Augustine’s. Above the fold: Members of the Vietnamese community enjoy the celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday. (PHOTOS BY MICHELLE BABYAK)

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Latest News

Bishop names new Superintendent of Schools

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has announced the appointment of Steven F. Cheeseman, Ed.D. of East Moriches, Long Island, as superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Dr. Cheeseman currently serves as associate superintendent of schools in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, Long Island, and will assume his new responsibilities in Bridgeport effective June 30, 2016.

He will be responsible for more than 9,000 students and 1,000 faculty members in the 31 elementary and high schools sponsored by the Diocese of Bridgeport. He will also chair the Diocesan Education Commission formed by Bishop Caggiano in 2014 to reorganize Catholic education and lead a strategic planning process, now underway, to insure its viability and vitality in the future.

Dr. Cheeseman succeeds Sister Mary Grace Walsh, ASCJ, who accepted the newly created position of Provost for Education, Evangelization and Catechesis of the Archdiocese of Hartford in December 2015.

"I am pleased to announce that our new superintendent is a man of great faith along with being a superb and innovative educator. At a time when our schools are taking major steps in planning

for the future, we are fortunate to draw upon his leadership skills and profound understanding of the value of Catholic education," said Bishop Caggiano.

The bishop said that Dr. Cheeseman has worked at every level of Catholic education from teacher to principal and system administrator and he brings extensive experience to the diocesan post. "He has been responsible for professional development, worked with boards, and negotiated on behalf of the diocese in the collective bargaining agreements with the diocesan high school teachers association. These skills will serve him well in his new role as leader of education in the diocese."

While serving as associate superintendent for Rockville Centre, Dr. Cheeseman was responsible for the development and implementation of diocesan-wide strategic planning along with marketing and branding efforts. He also coordinated the implementation of diocesan curriculum and worked with administrators to ensure student growth and success through data driven analysis and planning.

"As a leader in Catholic education, I truly believe that we need Catholic schools now more than ever," said Dr. Cheeseman. "Our schools must combine a clear and consistent focus on the Catholic faith and tradition along with a commitment to academic excellence. With this as our



MAKING IT OFFICIAL—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano welcomes Dr. Steven Cheeseman, the new superintendent of schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport. Dr. Cheeseman, who comes to Bridgeport from the Diocese of Rockville Centre, Long Island, will assume leadership on June 30 of this year.

focus, we can work to create a generation of young people who leave our schools academically strong and prepared to use the framework of faith as the lens with which to think critically about the world around them."

Dr. Cheeseman earned a doctorate in educational leadership and technology from Dowling College, a professional diploma in school district administration, also from Dowling, an MA in liberal arts and sciences from SUNY/Empire State College and a BA in history/secondary education from St. Joseph's College, Patchogue, N.Y. He is a certified teacher and school district administrator.

Dr. Cheeseman served as a high school and junior high teach-

er in both public and Catholic schools as well as an assistant principal and interim principal in public and Catholic middle and elementary schools. Immediately prior to his service as associate superintendent, he served for eight years as principal of his own alma mater, McGann-Mercy High School in Riverhead, N.Y.

In addition to these full-time positions, Dr. Cheeseman has been an adjunct professor at Fordham University Graduate School of Education and at St. Joseph's College, Patchogue. Earlier in his career he served as an assistant director of religious education and youth minister in his parish.

Dr. Cheeseman and his wife,

Danielle, are parishioners at St. John the Evangelist in Center Moriches, Long Island and currently make their home in East Moriches. They are the parents of three school-age children. They look forward to relocating to Fairfield County in the coming months.

The diocesan school system serves students in grades Pre-K through 12 in 31 Catholic schools in the cities and suburbs throughout Fairfield County. There are 25 elementary schools, five high schools and one special education school.

Fifty percent of diocesan elementary schools have received the Blue Ribbon Schools of National Excellence, and ninety-nine percent of diocesan high school graduates have earned admission to 300 colleges and universities nationwide.

In 2015, the new Bishop's Scholarship Fund doubled financial aid in the form of scholarships to elementary school families by distributing over \$2.2 million to more than 1,500 students, including 300 new students in the elementary schools. High school students in Catholic schools throughout the diocese are eligible to apply for scholarships this year. The largest source of support for the Bishop's Scholarship Fund is the Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA).

(For more information about Catholic schools in Fairfield County, visit the website at www.bridgeportdiocese.com, or phone 203.416.1380.) ■

Deacon information sessions set

BRIDGEPORT—Information sessions for men interested in pursuing their calling to diaconate ministry will be held at five locations throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport beginning April 25 at 7 pm. The first session will be held at Holy Spirit Parish, 403 Scofieldtown Rd., Stamford.

The evening sessions will also be held in Wilton, Fairfield, Newtown and Shelton. Each session will run approximately 90 minutes and will provide specific information on the diaconate formation and the admission process.

"If a man is interested in discerning a vocation to the diaconate, we encourage him to attend

one of the upcoming information sessions," said Deacon Anthony Cassaneto, Ph.D., director of the diaconate for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

"We know that there are diaconal vocations in our parishes. Our hope is that these sessions will spark an interest in and a desire to learn more about diaconal ministry," he said.

There are 80 active and 27 retired deacons in the diocese of Bridgeport. They minister to people in a variety of parish and institutional settings, including service as chaplains in area hospitals and healthcare facilities, Deacon Cassaneto said.

Ideally men applying to the diaconate should be between the ages of 40-60, though men 35 and older are welcome to apply.

Deacon Cassaneto said that many of the men who will attend the meeting have the support of their pastors. However, all who are interested are welcome to attend one of the information sessions. Men who elect to continue in the Inquiry process will then need a letter from their pastor to support their application to diaconate formation.

The first six months of the Inquiry period is a time of spiritual discernment and reflection. Inquirers will attend monthly

sessions at the Catholic Center before beginning formal theological studies. Those accepted as Inquirers will officially begin their discernment in January 2017.

"A man discerning his vocation to the permanent diaconate must fully participate in the Inquiry period in order to be considered an applicant," Deacon Cassaneto said.

According to the National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States, "The first stirrings of a vocation to the diaconate are often explored at a personal level and usually begin with seeking information about



DEACON ANTHONY CASSANETO

the diaconate and formation. An individual initially reflects upon the nature of his perceived call. Primacy must be given at this time to the spiritual dimension."

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

Annual Catholic Appeal

ACA reaches halfway mark

BRIDGEPORT—The Annual Catholic Appeal has reached over 50 percent of goal with more than 12,000 donors participating in the campaign, which was launched in January.

To date the campaign has raised over \$6 million of the \$11 million goal needed to fund the major ministries and programs of the Diocese of Bridgeport. The number of donors is up 3,000 from last year at this time. The theme of the 2016 Annual Catholic Appeal, “Renewed in Faith, Hope and Charity,” is resonating with parishioners across the diocese.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said that, as he travels around the diocese, people who have benefitted from the programs and services funded by the ACA often personally thank him. “They thank me, but it is our donors who make this possible, and I wish to thank all who have already given so generously and sacrificially. Faith and good works come together in the Appeal and you have spoken loudly in your concern for the suffering, vulnerable and needy among us,” said the bishop.

Bill McLean, chief development officer of the diocese, is encouraged by the early response. “We’re off to a great start but we have a lot of work to do to get the Appeal across the finish line and support the important work the bishop has put before us,” he said.

McLean is grateful to all of those who have given early to help give the Appeal its best start in years. He credits the work of the ACA chair couple and vice chair couples, along with parish Appeal chairs, for bringing new enthusiasm and understanding of the campaign across the diocese.

Julie and Rowan Taylor of New Canaan are serving as the chair couple. Their efforts have been assisted by newly named vice chair couples, Maureen and Mike Considine of Stamford, and Elena and Steve Schlegel of New Canaan, and the many men and women now serving as parish co-chairs.

The Pastors’ Advisory Committee (PAC) for the Appeal is led by Msgr. Laurence Bronkiewicz, chairman, and Father Reggie Norman, vice chair. The committee meets throughout the year to discuss strategy.

McLean said there is much good news in the early giving trends, with 30 percent of donors increasing their gifts from last year and 15 percent joining the Appeal for the first time as new donors.

St. Margaret Shrine in Bridgeport is the first parish to go over goal in the diocese, while many other parishes are quickly approaching their goals, he said.

Pam Rittman, director of the ACA, believes that the Appeal has had a very strong start because of the series of receptions hosted by parishioners and others throughout the diocese.

“We appreciate the generosity of so many who offered to host receptions and introduce donors to this year’s Annual Catholic Appeal,” Rittman said.

Among those who had made a special effort, she mentioned Father Robert Weiss, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish, Newtown; Christine and Dr. Thomas Ayoub from St. Aloysius Parish, New Canaan; Susan and Jim Larkin of St. Mary Parish, Greenwich; Cece and Michael Donoghue of St. Thomas More Parish, Darien; Jackie and Mickey Herbert from St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, Fairfield; Patricia and Paul Kuehner at St. Mary Parish, Ridgefield; Connie and Vinny Von Zwehl from St. Pius X, Fairfield; and the 2016 Appeal Chair Couple Rowan and Julie Taylor, who belong to St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan. She also offered thanks to a donor who has asked to remain anonymous.

“The receptions have really been an inspiration to those who attended. They were an opportunity to meet the bishop, learn more about the Appeal, and get a better understanding of the importance of giving,” said Rittman.

She said that the receptions held throughout Fairfield County enjoyed a strong turnout and gave people a chance to view the 2016 ACA video, which has been very well received throughout the diocese.

The video included interviews with a representative sampling of people and ministries throughout the diocese. Among those interviewed in this year’s video are Father Samuel Scott, pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Danbury; Father Andy Vill, parochial vicar at the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist, Stamford; Dr. Brian Jenkins, executive director at New Covenant House, also in Stamford; the Appeal lay co-chair couple, Julie and Rowan Taylor; and major benefactor Sarita Hanley.

“Thank you for your support,” said Rittman. “So much is accomplished through the generosity of our parishioners.”

(For more information or to give online, go to www.2016ACAbidgeport.com or call 203.416.1470.)

Individual Parish Results

	Pledged	Goal	%		
VICARIATE 1	Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist, Stamford	\$58,175	\$110,000	53%	
	Holy Name of Jesus, Stamford	\$25,810	\$42,000	61%	
	Holy Spirit, Stamford	\$100,535	\$106,000	95%	
	Our Lady Star of the Sea, Stamford	\$80,910	\$105,000	77%	
	Sacred Heart, Greenwich	\$31,345	\$50,000	63%	
	Sacred Heart, Stamford	\$18,215	\$45,000	40%	
	Saint Agnes, Greenwich	\$36,675	\$55,000	67%	
	Saint Benedict-Montserrat, Stamford	\$12,630	\$40,000	32%	
	Saint Bridget, Stamford	\$45,906	\$58,000	79%	
	Saint Catherine of Siena, Riverside	\$86,454	\$200,000	43%	
	Saint Cecilia, Stamford	\$64,275	\$105,000	61%	
	Saint Clement, Stamford	\$40,835	\$53,000	77%	
	Saint Gabriel, Stamford	\$26,280	\$57,000	46%	
	Saint John, Darien	\$140,482	\$250,000	56%	
	Saint Leo, Stamford	\$129,951	\$325,000	40%	
	Saint Mary, Greenwich	\$227,868	\$400,000	57%	
VICARIATE 2	Saint Mary, Stamford	\$25,850	\$45,000	57%	
	Saint Maurice, Stamford	\$30,685	\$60,000	51%	
	Saint Michael, Greenwich	\$299,910	\$350,000	86%	
	Saint Paul, Greenwich	\$87,135	\$116,000	75%	
	Saint Roch, Greenwich	\$30,755	\$55,000	56%	
	Saint Thomas More, Darien	\$199,825	\$500,000	40%	
	Assumption, Westport	\$122,825	\$195,000	63%	
	Our Lady of Fatima, Wilton	\$111,840	\$225,000	50%	
	Saint Aloysius, New Canaan	\$441,199	\$600,000	74%	
	Saint Francis of Assisi, Weston	\$48,925	\$105,000	47%	
	Saint Jerome, Norwalk	\$61,975	\$85,000	73%	
	Saint Joseph, South Norwalk	\$26,535	\$55,000	48%	
	Saint Ladislaus, South Norwalk	\$4,405	\$16,000	28%	
	Saint Luke, Westport	\$110,340	\$225,000	49%	
	Saint Mary, Norwalk	\$88,448	\$115,000	77%	
	Saint Matthew, Norwalk	\$73,065	\$200,000	37%	
Saint Philip, Norwalk	\$62,020	\$78,000	80%		
Saint Thomas the Apostle, East Norwalk	\$71,966	\$115,000	63%		
VICARIATE 3	Holy Cross, Fairfield	\$17,175	\$18,000	95%	
	Holy Family, Fairfield	\$39,908	\$70,000	57%	
	Notre Dame, Easton	\$32,030	\$115,000	28%	
	Our Lady of Assumption, Fairfield	\$103,868	\$150,000	69%	
	Saint Anthony of Padua, Fairfield	\$44,270	\$140,000	32%	
	Saint Emery, Fairfield	\$15,981	\$21,000	76%	
	Saint Pius X, Fairfield	\$136,200	\$275,000	50%	
	Saint Thomas Aquinas, Fairfield	\$117,133	\$200,000	59%	
	VICARIATE 4	Christ the King, Trumbull	\$49,770	\$80,000	62%
Holy Name of Jesus, Stratford		\$27,440	\$60,000	46%	
Our Lady of Grace, Stratford		\$56,505	\$88,000	64%	
Our Lady of Peace, Stratford		\$31,980	\$65,000	49%	
Saint Catherine of Siena, Trumbull		\$117,682	\$190,000	62%	
Saint James, Stratford		\$82,494	\$130,000	63%	
Saint Joseph, Shelton		\$47,096	\$90,000	52%	
Saint Jude, Monroe		\$110,917	\$190,000	58%	
Saint Lawrence, Shelton		\$136,715	\$195,000	70%	
Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, Shelton		\$37,062	\$51,000	73%	
Saint Mark, Stratford		\$111,294	\$137,000	81%	
Saint Stephen, Trumbull		\$100,130	\$125,000	80%	
Saint Theresa, Trumbull		\$75,913	\$182,000	42%	
VICARIATE 5		Holy Trinity Parish, Sherman	\$18,490	\$65,000	28%
		Immaculate Heart of Mary, Danbury	\$7,095	\$21,000	34%
		Our Lady of Guadalupe, Danbury	\$10,681	\$26,000	41%
	Sacred Heart, Danbury	\$31,670	\$42,000	75%	
	Sacred Heart, Georgetown	\$49,545	\$90,000	55%	
	Saint Edward, New Fairfield	\$109,096	\$200,000	55%	
	Saint Elizabeth Seton, Ridgefield	\$72,134	\$105,000	69%	
	Saint Gregory the Great, Danbury	\$41,880	\$100,000	42%	
	Saint Joseph, Brookfield	\$52,325	\$130,000	40%	
	Saint Joseph, Danbury	\$100,175	\$130,000	77%	
	Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys, Brookfield	\$40,533	\$73,000	56%	
	Saint Mary Parish, Bethel	\$130,556	\$160,000	82%	
	Saint Mary, Ridgefield	\$199,241	\$305,000	65%	
	Saint Patrick, Redding Ridge	\$58,310	\$60,000	97%	
Saint Peter, Danbury	\$96,007	\$120,000	80%		
Saint Rose of Lima, Newtown	\$187,929	\$235,000	80%		
VICARIATE 6	Blessed Sacrament, Bridgeport	\$8,225	\$15,000	55%	
	Our Lady of Fatima, Bridgeport	\$17,095	\$30,000	57%	
	Saint Andrew, Bridgeport	\$37,630	\$75,000	50%	
	Saint Ann, Bridgeport	\$21,738	\$51,000	43%	
	Saint Charles Borromeo, Bridgeport	\$7,603	\$30,000	25%	
	Saint George, Bridgeport	\$2,625	\$17,000	15%	
	Saint Mary, Bridgeport	\$11,655	\$28,000	42%	
	Saint Michael the Archangel, Bridgeport	\$22,245	\$45,000	49%	
	Saint Peter, Bridgeport	\$15,261	\$45,000	34%	
	Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish, Bridgeport	\$5,705	\$18,000	32%	
	Shrine of Saint Margaret, Bridgeport	\$35,664	\$33,000	108%	
	The Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport	\$35,072	\$95,000	37%	

Unspecified \$58,915
Total \$6,000,710

Catholic Charities

A morning at New Heights

By ELLEN MCGINNESS

Walking into the New Heights facility in Danbury, I smell fresh coffee. I hear some laughter, some chatter—the sounds people make when they are comfortable with each other. A tall, thin man with an easy smile extends his hand to me and says, “Hi, I’m Jonah. Welcome to New Heights.”

Although I was a stranger, the members of New Heights instantly made me feel welcome.

Operated out of Danbury by Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, New Heights is a wellness and recovery center for adults with mental health issues. But wait—don’t stop reading because of the topic. Keep reading because this is a story... about success stories. Little success stories, perhaps, but remember the old saying: good things come in

little packages.

New Heights is open to anyone who walks through the doors, as long as they identify themselves. Once inside, there’s a warm and friendly aura, including the wafts of fresh-baked brownies or cookies in the air. It’s a place that feels like a home.

Barbara Bowers, the program director, explained that New Heights’ mission is “to promote wellness and recovery through skill building, social interaction, goal setting and, ultimately, empowerment.”

To provide a full circle of professional services, New Heights works closely with the Community Support Program (CSP), a community-based support program of Catholic Charities funded by the Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services. CSP offers additional resources for linkage

and connections with managing and obtaining disability benefits, housing, substance abuse treatment, social integration, employment support and rehabilitation services to foster recovery, among other recovery interventions. CSP and New Heights work symbiotically together to make sure those in need have all the tools and support necessary to drive toward recovery and a healthier, more stable life.

“We morph our services based on the needs of our members,” explained Charles Coretto, the director for Community Mental Health Services for Catholic Charities. Understanding that the needs of those with mental health issues aren’t static, Coretto and Bowers try to keep both CSP and New Heights fluid and current so as to offer a layered support system for their clientele.

To that end, New Heights



UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS of those with mental health issues, New Heights offers a layered support system, helping members not only with disability benefits, housing and rehabilitation services but with social activities as simple, and encouraging, as working on a puzzle together in an accepting environment.

offers a plethora of classes, group sessions, and seminars on topics like how to quit smoking, how to think positively, and how to change to a healthier diet. Many group sessions are run by part-time staffers who are also members, demonstrating to their peers that the skills learned at New Heights can help move toward

recovery and more independence.

But that’s not all. There are also social activities to participate in—from puzzle-making to sweeping and cleaning up Williams Street outside to pizza nights. The end result is a club of sorts, a club with a tight membership in a safe and accepting

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Let’s Celebrate!

Come join us for Catholic Charities of Fairfield County’s 100th Anniversary Mass and family-friendly reception, featuring the C4Y Diocesan Youth Choir.

Saturday, May 7, 2016 at 5:30pm
St. Matthew Church
216 Scribner Avenue, Norwalk

For Mother’s Day weekend, bring your mothers and grandmothers to this special Mass led by Bishop Frank Caggiano. Together, we can celebrate Catholic Charities’ centennial of faith in action as well as show appreciation for the amazing women who have given us love and support throughout the decades.



While not required, it would help if you register at:
www.100thanniversarymass.eventbrite.com or call: (203) 416-1333

Personal Pilgrimage

'The Lord grabbed my hand'

By **RONNIE LAZZARO**

I am a convert from Judaism. At the Easter Vigil on March 25, 1989, I was the first adult to be brought into the Catholic Church through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) at St. Aloysius Church in New Canaan.

I was 41 years old; my godparents were my mother and father-in-law. My six-year-old son watched as I received the sacraments of Baptism, Holy Communion, Confirmation, and Marriage. (My husband and I were married by a Justice of the Peace eight years before). Four Sacraments in one night—parishioners said “if you die tonight, you’ll go straight to heaven.” Others asked if they could touch me wanting to feel the power and love of the Holy Spirit.

Nothing would ever be the same.

Although I hadn’t recognized its importance at the time, my experience of the Church had actually begun when I was eight

or nine years old. I went to church with my best friend. She went to Confession, I waited in a pew. Old wood beams, marble, candles, incense filled my senses. And then there was that crucifix. I wondered why anyone would do that.

And so it began. The Lord knocked on the door of my heart for years. When I finally opened it, he grabbed my hand and has never let go.

As if conversion was not a sufficient gift from God, he blessed me again when Msgr. J. Peter Cullen asked if I would be the parish secretary at St. Aloysius. Only God could take a Jewish girl from Queens, N.Y., bring her to himself through conversion and allow her to serve him through service to his people and his Church. I can never think of this without wonder and gratitude.

It’s been 26 years. My life twisted and spiraled in ways I could never have imagined nor would I have ever chosen: depres-

sion, life-threatening illness, numerous surgeries, permanent physical disability and the death of my son at age 28. “Is this what you meant for me?” I cried aloud.

I knew that God did not do this to me. While I was hospitalized, or in rehab facilities enduring months of physical therapy to restore a fused spine and a paralyzed leg, or mourning the loss of my child, he was there teaching me lessons in the value of suffering and patience. Giving consolation for my pain, strength for my infirmity, he protected me.

No, he didn’t do anything to me; he did everything *for* me. My life was his gift of Love to me and it was meant to be handed over as my offering of love to him.

Things have stabilized over the past couple of years. My disability won’t go away. I still mourn my son, but I continue to adjust and re-adjust to my circumstances. I must admit that “It is what it is” has become a phrase I use often.



“MY LIFE IS GOD’S GIFT OF LOVE,” says Ronnie Lazzaro (r). She will be going on a pilgrimage to Lourdes with her husband, Ralph, as caregiver.

I need a reminder from him now and again. I usually get one. Subtle at times, often loud and clear. I have experienced my own small miracles.

My latest message of Love comes by way of the Order of Malta and a wonderful sponsor. I am going on pilgrimage to Lourdes, France with my devoted husband, Ralph, as caregiver. To be at the sight of so many healings, the appearances of our Blessed Mother to St. Bernadette and her pronouncement to the little girl, “I am the Immaculate Conception,” is miraculous enough. What else could I hope for? I eagerly wait to see what is coming next from this

amazing experience.

I am forever mindful of my own history. From the Old Testament I turned the page into the new and committed myself to a new life. In doing so, the Lord took me seriously. Time and again I am given reasons to celebrate and to rail.

Each time, I am reminded of that crucifix in Queens so many years ago. It is there I am led, there that all converges—who I was, who I am, where I have been and where I have yet to go. The synagogue and the church, the rabbi and the priest, the Torah and the Gospels all intertwined propel me still towards the crucifix where we are all assured that we are loved. ■

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Health News

Veterans' Choice Program opens at St. Vincent's

BRIDGEPORT—St. Vincent's Medical Center announced a partnership to provide care through the Veterans Choice Program, giving veterans the opportunity to receive care at St. Vincent's locations throughout Connecticut.

Qualified U.S. veterans who face wait times in excess of 30 days at the VA or have to travel farther than 40 miles from their home can receive care from St. Vincent's doctors. As part of Ascension, the nation's largest nonprofit healthcare system and the world's largest Catholic health system, St. Vincent's Medical Center joins 23 other states and the District of Columbia in sustaining and improving the health of individuals and our communities by serving as an official provider of Veteran Care outside the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

"St. Vincent's is proud to provide high quality, compassionate, personalized care to eligible veterans in Connecticut through our participation in the Veterans Choice program," said Stuart G. Marcus, MD, president and CEO of St. Vincent's Medical Center. "It's always a great day when we can offer services to more patients



QUALIFIED U.S. VETERANS will have the opportunity to receive care at St. Vincent's Medical Center through the Veterans Choice Program. (l-r) Scott Brennan, Veterans Choice patient navigator, and Christopher Willey, Veterans Choice program administrator (a veteran himself), review a veteran's paperwork prior to his first visit as a new patient. (PHOTO BY CARYN KAUFMAN)

in need. When it comes to caring for those who have put their lives on the line protecting our freedom—our veterans—that is especially true."

The Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 established funding to pay for healthcare services provided to

veterans by private healthcare providers. Through the partnership, St. Vincent's physicians and other caregivers are authorized to provide primary care, inpatient and outpatient specialty care, and mental health care for eligible veterans outside of VA.

"This program is personal for so many of us, either because we served or we have a family member who is a veteran," explained Christopher Willey, Veterans Choice Program administrator at St. Vincent's Medical Center. "As a veteran myself, it's important to me to carry on the mission that I started as a Navy Corpsman and

care for my fellow service members any time they are in need." Willey, a resident of Milford, served in the United States Navy.

St. Vincent's will work with Health Net, which is designated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to implement the Veterans Choice Program and provide eligible veterans access to care in their community when the local VA facility cannot readily provide care. Ascension has established a national provider registration with Health Net Federal Services, LLC, which is a federal health benefit administrator to the VA.

Nearly nine million veterans received the Veterans Choice Card. Use of the card is strictly voluntary; veterans who qualify for VA healthcare can continue to receive care at a VA medical facil-

ity as they have in the past. The program will end when the allocated funds of \$10 billion are used or no later than August 7, 2017.

Veterans can determine eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program at www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/ or by calling the number on their Choice Card: 866.606.8198. They also can contact the Ascension National Veterans Call Center at 844.623.3003, for more information about Ascension or for assistance scheduling an appointment with a local Ascension provider who is participating in the Veterans Choice Program.

(U.S. veterans, St. Vincent's Medical Center patients, and caregivers who are interested in learning more about the Veterans Choice Program are encouraged to visit www.ascension.org/veterans.)

NEW HEIGHTS FROM PAGE 5

environment.

As an example, a CSP social worker referred one reclusive woman to New Heights so that she could learn to socialize better with others. For her first time, the woman tentatively went to the weekly Monday morning "Coffee Talk," but since that first venture into New Heights, she now attends Coffee Talk regularly. On her own birthday, she brought in cupcakes to share with the other members. The sounds of "Happy Birthday to You" resonated throughout the building.

A little success story, perhaps. But instead of spending her birthday alone, she spent it with people who celebrated it with her.

For the last decade, the New Heights staff and other partnered mental health agencies' centers have organized an annual event called "Celebration of Hope." This year's event takes place on May 4 at St. Peter Church in Danbury. It's an opportunity for staff and members alike to tell

personal stories of their road to recovery, or read a poem they wrote about it, or perhaps give a motivational speech. It's an afternoon of celebrating the positives in their lives as well as recognizing that they've achieved goals—with the help of each other.

As I was leaving New Heights, I met a young woman who told me she would be speaking at Celebration of Hope for the first time. Then she shared with me how New Heights has changed her life: "When I'm outside of this building, I can tell you what kinds of shoes people are wearing, because I'm always looking down. But in here, I look up at people's faces."

Reaching new heights, one little success story at a time.

(For more info on New Heights contact Barbara Bowers: 203.794.0819 or bbowers@ccfc-ct.org. The Celebration of Hope will be held Wed., May 4, at St. Peter Church, Danbury. All are welcome. A light reception follows at New Heights.)

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Daily Masses:
 Monday-Friday 8:00 am, 12:10 pm;
 Wednesday 6:00 pm Extraordinary Form;
 Saturday 9:00 am Extraordinary Form
Saturday Anticipatory Mass:
 4:00 pm, 7:00 pm (Spanish)
Sunday: 8:00 am, 9:30 am **Latin High Mass**,
 11:30 am English High Mass,
 1:15 pm (Spanish)

CONFESSION SCHEDULE:
Monday-Friday: 11:30 am-12:00 pm;
Wednesday: 5:30-5:50 pm;
Saturday: 3:00-4:30 pm

ADORATION:
Mondays: 8:30 am-7:00 pm;
Fridays: 8:30 am-5:30 pm



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Profile

Salvatore Giardina: Of Faith and Fashion

By NINA M. RICCIO

Living fully within his faith is as essential to Salvatore Giardina as food and water.

Giardina is the vice president of design at Dayang Alliance, a menswear company with offices in New York, and it's clear he believes that Christian values and big business can co-exist. His focus lately has been introducing a new line of menswear under the label "blujacket;" the merchandise was well received when it debuted at a trade show in January and will ship to stores in time for fall.

"I find that a reputation for telling the truth, for integrity, and for being ethical has helped my business. Suppliers have told me that they want to do business with me because they know they can trust me."

Giardina traces his strong faith back to his mother, who emigrated from Sicily with his father in 1960. Growing up in Brooklyn, she used to tell him that God was watching out for him. "It was very comforting," he says, and then recalls a time he really needed to draw upon that comfort.

"I was in the Navy, serving as

a navigator on the USS Briscoe, a small ship with a crew of about 250. It was just a training mission in the Caribbean, but suddenly we were called to the island of Grenada." It was October 1983, and the invasion of Grenada was on.

"We were all frightened because we didn't know what to expect. We were constantly hearing artillery fire." But Giardina had been taught to pray if anything was troubling him, so he pulled out the crucifix that his grandmother back in Sicily had given him. "I taped it to the chart table, half expecting to be told to take it down. But not one person said anything," he recalls.

He prayed to God to protect him and the men on his ship. Fortunately, the military action was over in two months, and no one on his ship was attacked.

Though he was on track to make the Navy his career, Giardina did an about face when his stint was over, deciding instead to finish his education at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), where he studied textile development and marketing. "To be successful in the menswear field, you have to know a lot about fabrics," he

says. Over the years, he's worked for several of the companies that make high-end designer suits, "and my advantage is that I understand fabrics better than most people."

These days, Giardina is back at FIT on evenings and weekends; in addition to his day job, he teaches anywhere from one to three classes a semester on textiles. "I've been teaching for 21 years, and if I didn't have a lot of fun with it, I wouldn't continue," he says.

He prides himself on believing that he's able to impart his values to students. The fashion world is competitive, and a lot of them think that they have to be aggressive to get ahead. "I tell them that's just not the case, and teach them to be positive and to always recognize talent in others. When you're good to people, they'll remember you when they need you," says Giardina. Even his guest lecturers have to pass a values test. "If it's someone without integrity, I won't invite them to my class, even if he or she is a bigshot."

His personal touch and power to motivate resonates with his students, and he's got the "thank you" cards to prove it. Getting those notes "is very powerful,



BIG BUSINESS AND CHRISTIAN VALUES can coexist says Salvatore Giardina, vice president of design at Dayang Alliance menswear company in New York. He shares that belief with his students at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), where he teaches on evenings and weekends.

and giving these young people encouragement is so rewarding," he says. But it's also clear he's not above a bit of showmanship. "One of my classes challenged me to wear a tuxedo on exam day, and I did. Since then, I've always held 'Black Tie Finals,' and some of my students come dressed accordingly!"

Recently, Giardina was selected to receive a lifetime achievement award in Sicily this August. The award is called Ragusano Nel Mondo, meaning it recognizes a person who has roots from that area of Sicily around the world. The awards committee selects only one person—two at most—per continent who have achieved outstanding success in their respective industries.

Giardina was chosen because, in addition to his business achievements, he has spent decades teaching and inspiring students.

Giardina and his wife, Sharon, live in Easton and have raised their two sons at Notre Dame Parish, where he is a Eucharistic Minister and lector. Closer to his heart than his business achievements is his dedication to the Order of Malta, where he is chair of the Connecticut Auxiliary. The Order's mission is to help the poor and sick and to defend the faith. With the group, he participates in ministries such as working in prisons and mentoring inner-city youth.

Last year, he was in Rome for the 900th anniversary celebration of the Order, along with thousands of other Knights from around the globe. Someday soon, he hopes to accompany the malades to Lourdes.

"I feel so fortunate to be part of this group," Giardina says. "They are the nicest bunch of people I've ever met." ■

Special Celebration for the Year of Mercy

GREENWICH—St. Mary Parish in Greenwich is delighted to announce that the Bishop of Belley-Ars in France has given permission for the relic of the incorrupt heart of St. John Vianney to visit the parish Tuesday to Thursday, May 3-5. The last time the relic was in the United States was 10 years ago.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has requested that, during this visit, we concentrate on the mercy of God given us through the Sacrament of Penance as well as prayers for an increase in priestly vocations. The bishop will celebrate Mass the evening the relic arrives, and several opportunities for Confession are scheduled

throughout the visit.

St. John Vianney (1786-1859), universally known as the "Curé of Ars," lived in France. His education had been limited during the chaos of the French Revolution. After struggling to get through the seminary he was ordained a priest in 1815. Three years later he was made parish priest of Ars, a remote French hamlet, where his reputation as a confessor and director of souls made him known throughout the Christian world.

The Curé of Ars lived a disciplined life, accustomed to fasting and long hours of prayer before the tabernacle. His holiness attracted others and he would sometimes hear confessions for 16 hours a day.

His life was driven by his love for Christ and a thirst for souls. His greatest loves were the Holy Eucharist and the Virgin Mary. It is recorded that even the staunchest of sinners were converted after meeting him.

He died August 4, 1859, and was canonized May 31, 1925. When his coffin was opened his body was found perfectly preserved, even though it was never embalmed. Today it is enshrined in a glass casket above the altar at his parish Church in Ars. As was the custom of the time, the heart was removed from the body and placed in a separate reliquary for devotion. This extraordinary relic leaves France on rare occasions to visit other Churches throughout the world. ■

Tuesday, May 3

5:30 pm—Procession and Reception of the Relic
7:30 pm—Mass for Vocations with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano
Rosary for an increase in Priestly Vocations following Mass
Also following Mass, Confession will be heard in the lower church until 10 pm
Veneration of the Relic continues until 11:30 pm

Wednesday, May 4

7 am—Church opens for veneration of the relic
Confessions will be heard in the Lower Church from 9 am-12 noon
Masses at 7 am and 12:05 pm
7:30 pm—Solemn High Mass in the Extraordinary Form

of the Roman Rite (Latin Mass according to the 1962 Missal)
Father George W. Rutler, author of *The Curé of Ars Today*, will preach the homily
Rosary for an increase in Priestly Vocations following Mass
Veneration of the Relic continues until 11:30 pm

Thursday, May 5

7 am—Church opens for veneration of the relic.
9 am—Closing Mass with Msgr. Thomas W. Powers, vicar general of the Diocese of Bridgeport, as celebrant and homilist
Relic departs immediately following Mass

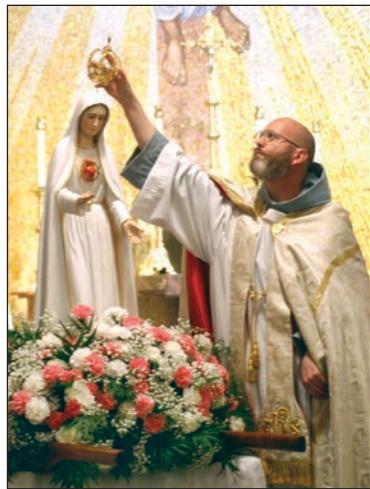
Assumption Parish, Fairfield

‘Day With Mary’ brings grace and peace

By AMY KELLEY

On a cold Saturday in February, hundreds of people gathered at Our Lady of the Assumption Parish in Fairfield to attend a Day With Mary, a one-day free Marian Eucharistic retreat aimed at bringing souls to Jesus through Mary. Father Peter Cipriani, Assumption’s pastor, said the retreat took place in a “joy-filled atmosphere.”

According to Tim Lock, a member of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish in Brookfield and coordinator of the Days With Mary in this area, attendance just keeps growing. “We went from 150 people at first to about 225 last time,” Lock said. “This may sound a little weird, but I think Mary inspires each individual person to come, whether they know it or not—like a mother making something that smells



A ONE-DAY MARIAN Eucharistic retreat by the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, a Day With Mary is aimed at bringing souls to Jesus through Mary.

really good in the kitchen, the kids wander in to see what’s cooking! We are drawn to the Day With Mary because of a spir-

itual hunger in every single soul; like a loving mother Mary brings us to the Bread of Life—her son, Jesus.”

Days With Mary are offered by the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate at parishes worldwide. In this area, Lock and other local laypeople assist in managing the logistics of the day so the friars can focus on giving talks, offering sacraments and more.

“You can never go wrong by promoting devotion to the Blessed Mother,” said Father Brian Gannon, pastor of St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull, where Days With Mary have also been held. “The more we encourage love for and devotion to the Blessed Mother, the more it brings conversions and grace to the world.”

Days With Mary take place from 8:45 am-3 pm and begin with a movie about Fatima. Faith

talks by the Franciscan Friars are interspersed throughout a day of prayer and devotions—which include the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, Eucharistic Adoration, Benediction and Mass.

Melissa Sebestyen, a parishioner at St. Mary Parish in Norwalk, has been to two Days With Mary, most recently to one held at St. Theresa’s, and her husband Steve has taken some of their older children to one as well. “It was like a one-day retreat,” Sebestyen said. “In addition to Adoration and Mass there was time for silence.”

“One gentleman told me, ‘This was the greatest day of my Christian life,’” Lock said. “Mary knows the suffering in our hearts and the solution: Jesus.”

Confession is available throughout, and according to Father Cipriani many people take advantage of the sacrament. “For

me the highlight was that we had over 100 Confessions,” he said. “That part more than anything else was really inspiring.”

Father Gannon said that at the Day With Mary at St. Theresa’s, the lines for Confession at his parish were long—“in some cases very long.”

“I thought it was amazing,” said Heidi Paris of St. Mary Parish in Bethel of the Day With Mary she attended. “I felt like I was transported with Mary for a day away from my everyday life.”

Participants bring a packed lunch; coffee, tea and cookies are provided. Attendees have the opportunity to receive the Brown Scapular and the Miraculous Medal, two long-standing Marian devotions. The day culminates in a Mass offered in honor of the Immaculate Heart.

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

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Mr. Kudlow is CNBC’s Senior Contributor. He was previously host of CNBC’s primetime “The Kudlow Report.”

He is also the host of “The Larry Kudlow Show,” which broadcasts each Saturday from 10 am–1 pm on WABC Radio and is syndicated nationally by Cumulus Media.

Mr. Kudlow is a nationally syndicated columnist. He is a contributing editor of *National Review* magazine, as well as a columnist and economics editor for *National Review Online*. He is the author of “American Abundance: The New Economic and Moral Prosperity,” published by Forbes in January 1998.



Speaker:
George Irish

George Irish retired in December 2008 as president of Hearst Newspapers to become vice president and eastern director of the two Hearst Foundations, the William Randolph Hearst Foundation of California and The Hearst Foundation, Inc. of New York, which are independent entities and separate from Hearst Corporation. Irish successfully led Hearst Newspapers as president from 1998 to 2008. Under his direction, it invested in operations and expanded its journalistic enterprise both in print and online. Irish joined Hearst in 1979 with the acquisition of the *Midland (Michigan) Daily News* and subsequently held several executive positions with Hearst Newspapers.

EDITORIAL

Something Missing

We take too much for granted. It's humdrum. Part of the routine every Saturday evening or Sunday morning—do early Mass, no music, get out fast, have the rest of the day “free.”

Something is missing. Excitement, joy, wonder, amazement. In this issue, you can catch glimpses of how much richer faith can be: a convert hanging on to God's love after the death of her child; a visitor to New Heights in Danbury feeling the joy of mental health outreach, the enrichment of a Marian retreat, the joy of a Divine Mercy celebration at the Cathedral.

Faith can be a reasonable, rational life choice. We believe it, we pray, we live it. That works, but it doesn't satisfy the spirit.

Faith can be much, much more. Seek, as the voices in this issue have, for the rich, full, wholehearted love of God. Then whatever happens in life, nothing will be missing.

After Easter

It's almost unsettling how fast we move beyond the major Holy Days and holidays in our lives—but Easter shouldn't be quickly put away like decorations for next year.

In the following reflection on Peter's reaction when two women tell him that the tomb of Christ is empty, Bishop Caggiano offers us a way to integrate the meaning and wonder of Easter in our lives every day of the year:

“The challenge for you and me is to follow Peter's example and each day ‘to run and look into the empty tomb.’ What does this mean? It means having the spiritual courage to overcome whatever complacency we may feel in our lives to accept the status quo. Spiritual complacency hurls us to accept what the world or conventional wisdom would like us to believe. In contrast, the message of Easter is that God is ready to challenge everything that the world believes or expects. We need to break through the comfort of being like everyone else, to get up and go where God calls us—to new life. Our God is not bound to what the world thinks, or says is possible, or is willing to accept. Rather, God's logic is not our logic. God's wisdom is not our wisdom. God's ways are not our ways. In the end, we need to choose whose way we will believe—the world's or God's.

Given everything that happened in Jesus' passion and death, there was little reason why Peter should have believed the women. However, his heart was preoccupied with finding Jesus and was willing to break through the temptation of complacency to find Him. And he did find Him, Risen as He promised.”

The bishop reminds us that the meaning of Easter is “Let us get up, run to the tomb and see how wrong the world really is.” That's a message to hold on to throughout the year and in the toughest moments of our lives.

A Church of Joy

Much has already been written and said about *Amoris Laetitia* (the Joy of Love), the long-awaited Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Francis, representing his prayerful reflection on the discussions and outcomes of two recent synods of bishops held in Rome on the topic of marriage and the family.

Given the reaction of secular media, along with the intense interest within the Church, it would seem that the whole world was awaiting the Pope's teaching on marriage, proper training of future priests, adoption, family prayer, sex education, the dignity of women, and children's rights.

One of the most notable aspects of the letter is the Pope's remarkable understanding of contemporary life—the challenges and complexities of marriage, relationships, and individual struggles. In his writing, he demonstrates a closeness to people and “the lived life of the Church.”

Perhaps that is why millions across the globe are drawn to him: his profound understanding of the human condition and the need we all have for compassion and healing. If there's a correction of sorts in the Pope's writing, it's not in the doctrine of the Church, but in its heart and Pastoral Mission. In this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, the Pope calls upon us to be merciful to others, to reserve judgment, and to be welcoming. He reminds us that God's love is a gift and is always abundantly waiting for those who ask for it. ■

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Lighting the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil



EASTER VIGIL—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano lights the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil on the steps of St. Augustine Cathedral in downtown Bridgeport. Thousands of Catholics gathered in churches throughout the diocese for Holy Week services.

CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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



PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND WILLIAM F. PLATT, Chaplain to Saint Vincent's Medical Center to Parochial Vicar of Saint Catherine of Siena Parish, Riverside. Effective date was April 9.

REVEREND MONSIGNOR IGNACIO BARREIRO CÁRAMBULA, new to the Diocese to Parochial Vicar of Saint

Mary Parish, Norwalk. Effective date is May 1.

RESIDENCE

REVEREND JOSEPH PARAMPATH, retired in India, to Carrollton, Texas.

DEACON

DEACON THOMAS MASARYK, Deacon of Saint

James Parish, Stratford, to Deacon, Saint Margaret Shrine, Bridgeport. Effective date is May 1.

RETIREMENT

DEACON J. RALPH HAMMOCK, Deacon of Saint Maurice Parish, Stamford, to retirement. Effective date is April 30.

Monsignor Thomas W. Powers, Vicar General, April, 2016

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Editorial



On Obedience and Discernment

A WOMAN'S VOICE

BY CARLENE JOAN DEMIANY

Carlene Joan Demiany is a parishoner at St. Thomas More, the Catholic Chapel and Center at Yale University.

The smell of beeswax hovers in my small prayer closet. A single flame from a golden candle illuminates the face of Christ on the Cross. His eyes are closed, but he looks at me. I look back, and we begin our new day.

With the disciples, I ask Jesus, "Lord, teach me how to pray." And so, we begin to pray the "Our Father" slowly. Each word receives the dignity of its own breath. I breathe the words in and out. I try to hear them in both my mind and heart. I remember that the Latin root of the word obedience is *audire*: listen, hear. I hear the words of the prayer, but I

also hear other words, words that sound loud this morning.

"I think you might be getting a little old for the life you are leading," one of my former teachers recently said. I heard the words, as I sat on her couch and held a glass of wine. My grip on the glass tightened, and I leaned back hard against the soft sofa.

"What do you mean?" I ask, tapping my feet against thick carpet.

"Well, I just think you need to be working full-time, saving in a 401K..."

I hear her list an array of other adult activities. I swirl the red wine in the glass and see tannins

sticking to the sides. I hear the words and begin to doubt if I am following God's call for my life. Similar words spoken by a friend also come to mind.

"You have two masters from Yale. You could be doing so much more."

I could be making more money, paying off student debt more quickly, and enjoying full-time work with more benefits.

But this is not the more I crave. I realize this, as I lean against my meditation pillow pressed into the wall of my prayer closet. The life I crave is the simple one I lead. It is the life of a servant, who lives in the attic apartment of a professor and his wife, cooking for them in exchange for free rent. It is the life of a contemplative who works part-time in ministry, discerns religious life and waits for God. It is the life of a writer, whose writing is grounded in prayer and a desire to co-create with God.

I finish praying the "Our Father." I open my eyes and watch the beeswax candle flicker.

The words of doubt are loud this morning. I shake my head and try not to hear the words. But I wonder perhaps if God is speaking to me through these words of others. Discernment is a challenge. It is hard to tune the ear to the pitch of God's voice.

And so, in the silent darkness of my prayer closet, I hear my heart beat. I listen. The desire of my heart remains. I long to keep walking this strange, often lonely, path God has set before me. I am obedient to this call resting in my prayerful heart, a call emerging from three times of daily prayer.

For me, this is how I live the vow of obedience in my daily life—I am obedient to the call God places in my heart. But, I must admit that some days are better than others. Some days the words of those questioning my lifestyle sound louder; some days I get tired of waiting for God; and some days I feel more burdened by student debt.

On the hard days, I turn to my Confirmation saint for strength. St. Teresa of Avila reminds me that prayer is how we conform our will to the will of God. Through interior prayer, we get to know God and what God desires for our lives. St. Teresa did not hear God's call to reform the Carmelite Order until she was in her late thirties. This always makes me feel better! ■

"Some days the words of those questioning my lifestyle sound louder; some days I get tired of waiting for God."

I close my eyes and hear old words from a friend, words that have stayed with me.

"Remember, the Church fathers say, 'Pray three times a day, and do what your heart tells you.' Listen to your heart, Carlene, you have a gift for hearing its call."



What Day Is It Again?

A DAD'S VIEW

BY MATTHEW HENNESSEY

Matthew Hennessey and his family are parishioners of St. Aloysius in New Canaan.

I've done one or two dopey things during 14 years of marriage. There was the time I paid a "repair" man \$150 to remove a child's toy that had gotten stuck in the hose on the vacuum cleaner. That was pretty dopey, I admit.

Occasionally I've overestimated my skills as a handyman. The mirror hanging at a squint angle in the bathroom is a testament to that. I often forget to bring the envelope for the collection plate.

My shortcomings are real, and I acknowledge them. But I'm usually pretty solid when it comes to remembering birthdays

and anniversaries. The problem is that the universe of holidays, feast days, commemorations, festivals, and fetes I'm supposed to keep track of is expanding, and doing so at an accelerating rate.

We celebrate more birthdays at our house than I ever thought possible (and we'll be adding a new one to the calendar this summer). Throw in track practices, piano concerts, book clubs, baseball games, swim lessons, car appointments, poetry recitations, homeschool curriculum powwows, work lunches, and parish council meetings, and this boy's mental inbox is at the bursting point

Something was eventually going to give. A few weeks ago, it finally did: I forgot our anniversary. Whoopsie daisy!

We all know how anniversaries are supposed to go. The husband makes a big deal. The husband puts on a show. The husband serves breakfast in bed, with flowers on the tray, and a gift that comes in a little, bitty box.

If I did any of those things, my wife would surely suspect a confession was forthcoming. Breakfast in bed just isn't how we roll.

If you're about my age, you remember *The Cosby Show*. It was the biggest thing going from about 1985 to about 1988. The recent scandal surrounding the show's creator and star means we will probably never see Dr. Cliff Huxtable and his family on TV again. But it was good stuff, believe me. Wholesome. And funny.

One of *The Cosby Show*'s recurring gags involved Mrs. Huxtable, played by Phylicia Rashad, giving her husband a pop quiz about the details of their wedding day long ago. What

color was her dress? What day of the week was it? What was the weather like? Who gave the toast?

If he hesitated for a second—which he always did—he'd live to regret it. She'd go frostier than a Snow Cone. How could he forget such an important day?

It was meant as a joke, of course, but I got it into my teenage head that married women care a lot about their wedding anniversaries. A lotty lot.

As with any decent joke, there is a kernel of truth in it. Women care about marriage, and about being noticed and remembered. Of course they do. But so do men. At least, this man does.

I have no need of stereotypes about married life. I know what it is. After 14 years together (15 including the pre-season) we've figured each other out. We are not the same. "Male and female he created them."

What amazes me most about

my wife (apart from her penetrating intelligence and dimensionless beauty) is her intuition. She senses trouble before it happens. She can tell a kid is getting sick by the way he puts on his coat. It's utterly mysterious to me.

It must be said that she also senses opportunity. Hitching her dreams to mine was no sure thing. She is a woman of strong faith.

I have weaknesses; too many to list here. But I'm pretty good at

making pancakes, and I did once fix the minivan's brake light all by myself without having to take it into the dealership. I think that more than made up for the \$150 I wasted on the vacuum.

The fact remains: I forgot our anniversary, and I felt bad about it. I'd lived up to the most pedestrian stereotype about marriage. I was the dopey, forgetful husband. I didn't want her to go Snow Cone on me.

Not a big deal, as it turns out. She forgot, too. ■

"We all know how anniversaries are supposed to go."

Divine Mercy Sunday

Dedication of Divine Mercy Shrine

By ALEXANDRIA FAIZ

The new Divine Mercy Shrine at Saint Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport draws your attention. The stunning statue—over ten feet high in gleaming white stone—welcomes all to what Bishop Frank J. Caggiano called during the shrine's dedication on Divine Mercy Sunday “the new main entrance to the Cathedral, showing everyone what the Church is all about—mercy.”

The statue's raised hand seems

found him.

Bishop Caggiano used the well-known Gospel passage where Jesus instructs Thomas to put his fingers into his wounds to illustrate what God's mercy really is. It must have pained Thomas to look directly at those wounds caused by being nailed to the Cross. “The deeper challenge, the deeper lesson” is that through this difficult moment Christ guided Thomas and led him to a blessed life as an Apostle who spread the Good News as far as India.

to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and they wanted to erect a local shrine. Enough funds were secured by last November to begin designing it. Donations came from as far as Westchester County and Hartford, reflecting the large Vietnamese community that the Cathedral Parish serves.

Two Bridgeport companies assisted with the design and construction: Joe Carvalho Masonry and PRE/view Landscape Architects. Though the money raised for the shrine came from



(PHOTOS BY QUA LE)

to bless the whole city below as it stands in front of the small garden between the cathedral and Kolbe Cathedral High School. At the shrine's dedication, strong winds widely dispersed the incense and prayers of the large gathering, which then followed a procession through the front doors of the cathedral to celebrate Mass. Over 800 people from parishes across the Diocese of Bridgeport and beyond attended.

Stepping into the center aisle of the cathedral to deliver his homily, Bishop Caggiano focused on the Apostle “Doubting Thomas” and how a curious fact gives us a new understanding of divine mercy. “Thomas was not in the upper room,” he pointed out. “He was not living in fear.”

Rather than huddling fearfully with the other Apostles, Thomas decided to rely on his talents and wits to cope with the horrible news that Jesus died and he tried to move on to find a “secure, comfortable life.” Thomas no longer sought out Christ, but Our Lord

Our Lord's mercy is meant to shake up our lives. “A life lived by your rules is not a life worth living” was the closing instruction. “Speak to people we don't want to talk with, heal those we want to forget.”

As is his custom, Bishop Caggiano ended the Mass by thanking the multiple people who helped make the permanent Divine Mercy Shrine possible. Leading that list was Father Augustine Nguyen, who became the first Vietnamese-American priest in the Diocese of Bridgeport in 2012 and now serves as chaplain to Kolbe Cathedral High School as well as being the main contact for the local Vietnamese Catholic community. The shrine planning committee was composed of ten people. The idea came from a meeting that Bishop Caggiano had with each parish group in preparation for the diocese's synod. Every August, the Vietnamese parishioners arrange a Divine Mercy retreat

the Vietnamese community (even the statue came by boat from Vietnam like many of the parish-

ioners' families), there is only a small plaque noting this on the far corner of the wall nearest the Cathedral's side door. The main architect Stuart Sachs explained “it was very important to them that people didn't view this statue

as from and for only one immigrant community.”

In fact, special efforts were made throughout the Divine Mercy event to include all members of the parish community, with readings in English, Vietnamese and Spanish, and live Spanish music being played as people headed to the reception in the high school auditorium.

Sachs also revealed some symbols literally embedded in the shrine. For instance, the main pedestal was taken from an old altar that was left behind after the restoration of Saint Augustine's, symbolizing the rejected stone that became the cornerstone. The statue also stands on a white circle encircled by red flowers, reminding visitors of the Eucharist and Christ's blood. Perhaps most striking is how the outdoor statue is in line with the indoor crucifix, demonstrating how that one passion and sacrifice leads to mercy for the whole world.

Bishop Caggiano announced that the statue will be lit at night, so the public knows they are always welcome at Saint Augustine's.





PASTORAL LETTER
DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT





SOLEMNITY OF EASTER : MARCH 27, 2016

My Dear Friends in Christ:

Over the past eighteen months, we have walked a remarkable Synod journey of faith as a diocesan family. It has been a journey of discovery, honest evaluation, hope for the future and a recommitment to the power of the Holy Spirit alive in our midst. It is also a journey that will continue for many years as we bring the vision of the Synod to reality. From the time when I had the privilege to convoke the Fourth Synod of the Diocese of Bridgeport on June 29, 2014 through our celebratory Mass held at the Webster Bank Arena on September 19, 2015, the Holy Spirit has been powerfully at work, leading us to greater unity and renewal.

In this pastoral letter, I offer my reflections in two ways. First, I wish to provide a summary of the vision and mission that arose from the Synod. This vision will remain the hallmark of all that will be implemented in fidelity to the mandates approved by the Synod delegates and later confirmed by me. The initiatives of the Synod provide a roadmap that we will use to realize the work of the New Evangelization in Fairfield County. For this reason, it is essential that our initiatives remain rooted in, and return to, the vision of the Synod. Only in this way will they bear lasting, spiritual fruit.

Second, I wish to reflect in a more personal way regarding the wonderful opportunity of grace that the Lord has provided our diocesan family in and through the Synod. It is a great sign of hope that our Church remains faithful to our Lord. Despite the challenges we face, we can and will confidently and joyfully move forward.



I. Early Days of the Synod: An Assessment of the Challenges We Face

The first task that needed to be tackled was to discern the challenges we face in every aspect of our ecclesial life. In order to do this, the people of the Diocese were given an opportunity to directly and personally express their hopes, fears and disappointments. To this end, I facilitated a number of listening sessions throughout the Diocese, allowing any member of our diocesan Church to give voice to the issues that concerned them. As I reflect back on those sessions, I remain humbled and profoundly grateful for the honesty, respect and deep passion that were displayed by those who spoke. They represented the diversity of our Diocese and began the sacred process of discerning the challenges as the Lord wished us to see them. In total, more than 4,000 interventions were received in these listening sessions and after they were recorded and organized, provided the starting materials for the formal work of the Synod.

When the delegates began their formal work, the first three sessions of the Synod were essentially dedicated to reflect upon the nature, scope and priorities of these pastoral and spiritual challenges. This was a period of both anticipation and frustration for many delegates. Frustration was often felt because of the well-intended desire on the part of many delegates to propose immediate solutions to address the challenges they saw. During those initial sessions, I counseled patience and perseverance, since what first appeared to be an obvious challenge usually had deeper roots, revealing a more fundamental challenge that a token analysis could easily miss. All the delegates

ultimately agreed that the sacred duty before them required neither quick nor easy solutions but an opportunity to discern lasting, transformational initiatives that followed the mind of Christ.



The challenges we finally identified had many faces, all varied and interrelated in nature. In fact, they appeared in every facet of our ecclesial life and were as different as each parish community is different. Among them was the pastoral need to foster more joyful and reverent celebrations of the liturgies of the Church, especially Sunday Eucharist; more effective preaching; the evangelization of our fellow Catholics who no longer actively practice their faith; the re-engagement of those who remain actively involved in their parishes; an effective outreach to the youth and young adults of our Church through prayer and pastoral ministry; an expansion of opportunities for faith formation, especially for adults; support for families and parents, and many more. In addition to these pastoral issues, many gave expression to the growing financial challenges faced by a number of parishes, the administrative burden borne by pastors, the need to stem the tide of those leaving our local parishes and the two-edged sword of opportunity and challenge posed by electronic technology and social media.



The challenges we face in Fairfield County are the same challenges that Catholic communities face throughout the country: the effects of demographic changes; the need to recognize and welcome cultural and racial diversity in every aspect of our Church's life; the importance of

fostering the works of charity and justice in effective ways; answering a prevailing sense of skepticism about all institutions; and helping to heal from incidents of the sexual abuse of minors in the Church and to strengthen our comprehensive safe environment programs.

After much prayer and deliberation, the Synod delegates discerned five global areas of challenge that required immediate and effective attention:

1. Liturgy and Worship: Every Catholic is called to full, conscious and active participation in the worship life of the Church (Sacrosanctum Concilium #14, 41, 48).
2. Family Life: There is a need to strengthen and support families, and to empower and assist parents as the primary teachers of the Catholic Faith.
3. Evangelization: We must create concrete plans for evangelization through our parishes, schools, ecclesial movements and communities.
4. Leadership: There is a need to continually call, form and support clergy, religious and laity in active leadership roles in the life of the Church.
5. Catechesis and Education: We must renew the ministry of faith formation throughout our Diocese, leading each person to a deepening relationship with the Lord Jesus in and through His Church. A complete list of the initiatives that the Synod approved to address these global challenges appears in the Synod Report.

II. Three Spiritual Principles Underlying the Synod and its Implementation

The Synod has given testimony to the fact that the Lord is powerfully at work among us, inviting us to write a new chapter in the life of our Diocese. I have never had greater hope for our Church than I do now. With your help, and following the promptings and power of the Holy Spirit, I am confident that we will inherit the new life that the Lord wishes to grant us if we are willing to follow His lead.



As I reflect upon the mandates approved by the Synod, it has become apparent to me that there are three spiritual principles that guided our work. Recognizing and remaining faithful to these principles is of the greatest importance because they articulate a vision that gives direction, confident assurance and hope

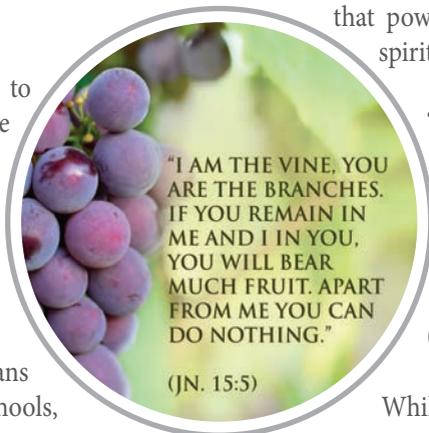
to the wonderful opportunity of grace that the Lord has provided us.

First Principle: The Centrality of Christ

The first principle became apparent mid-way through the Synod, during a spiritual exercise designed to shift the work of the delegates from the identification of the challenges we face to work on discerning appropriate

pastoral initiatives to address those challenges. The task was a simple one: to identify a single passage of Scripture that summarized the spirit, mandate and work of the Synod itself.

The consensus of the delegates identified the Lord's teaching on the Vine and the Branches found in the fifteenth chapter of Saint John's Gospel. It is this passage that powerfully illustrates the first spiritual principle:



"I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing." (Jn. 15:5)

While a great amount of scriptural exegesis has been written about this passage by scholars through the ages, in my own prayer and reflection, the meaning of this passage begins with one fact. The branches of any vine have no life apart from the vine. No branch can survive without the life, energy and nourishment that come from the vine. All the branches combined are meaningless without the vine.

In our life with Christ, the same is true for you and me. Since Christ is our Divine Vine, each of us and all that we will accomplish in our Synod journey must be rooted in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, Savior and Redeemer of all creation. The Synod powerfully reminded us that our discipleship draws its power from our personal encounter with the Lord Jesus in and through the Church. Such an encounter gives us the strength to bear witness to the Lord in our daily lives. It helps us to grow in our unity and mission as the Church. Finally, as we fall more deeply in love with the Lord, we discover the God-given power to accompany those who are searching for meaning in their lives, one person at a time. Thus, the need to discern what the Lord wills for us did not end with the signing of the Synod's decrees. Rather, it is our perpetual obligation to humbly follow the Lord Jesus, in whom we have life and hope.

In terms of implementing the Synod, the choices we make must never be motivated by our own desires, pleasures, preferences or opinions. Our work as a Church is never simply building a consensus of what we may want or think is best. We form the Mystical Body of Christ in the world, each of us as unique, individual branches nurtured by the Divine Vine who is Christ. So if we seek the spiritual and pastoral renewal of our Church, we must keep our eyes fixed on Christ.



The centrality of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit invite each of us to embrace a spirit of humility, docility and obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and the proper exercise of ecclesial leadership. Christ will lead us to renewal by accompanying our efforts, pruning away all that is sinful or no longer

effective in the mission of the Church, nourishing our work with His grace and standing with us when we suffer the most.

There is a corollary that arises from this parable that is noteworthy. For even a perfunctory glance at any vine quickly reveals that no branch is identical with any other. Rather, the splendor of the vine is precisely in its varied look. Each branch grows in its own unique beauty, yet all the branches are intimately tied to the one Vine and through it, to one another.

In spiritual terms, the Synod reminded us of the great unity in diversity that we enjoy as a diocesan Church. This diversity was powerfully manifested not simply among the delegates but in the joyful faces of the 8,000 worshippers who gathered at the Synod Mass. The Synod has called us to see strength in our diversity – a diversity of gender, age, state of life, culture, race, economic background and education. Rather than simply acknowledge this diversity in words alone, the Synod impels us to explore the depth and meaning of this diversity and allow it to mold our ecclesial life in union with one another and with Christ, the Divine Vine of which we are all branches.

Second Principle: A Spirit of Co-Responsibility

The second spiritual principle that manifested itself within the work of the Synod began with the deep, passionate desire on the part of everyone involved in the process to seize this moment of grace to help renew our ecclesial life. This passion was not satisfied simply with diagnosing the challenges before us or proposing pastoral initiatives for others to implement. Rather, the desire was to join together in the work of renewal, recognizing our different states of life while working united in a common mission. This desire revealed the fundamental need to live the principle of co-responsibility in every aspect of our ecclesial life.

A true spirit of co-responsibility recognizes that every baptized person must assume responsibility for a portion of the work of the Church in ways appropriate to one's individual state of life. Co-responsibility fosters a true spirit of collaboration, allowing every person to share his or her different gifts, talents and expertise for the good of the whole community. Such an attitude respects leadership on every level while seeking to foster cooperation rather than competition.



On a spiritual level, a true spirit of co-responsibility prevents anyone from reducing discipleship simply to a personal possession or a "spectator sport." Rather, the mission of the Church and the work of the Synod must serve as a spiritual catalyst, because we cannot achieve what the Lord has asked us to do without deepening our unity in faith, hope and love. Thus, a spirit of co-responsibility will help us not simply to admit the



challenges before us but to become part of the solution.



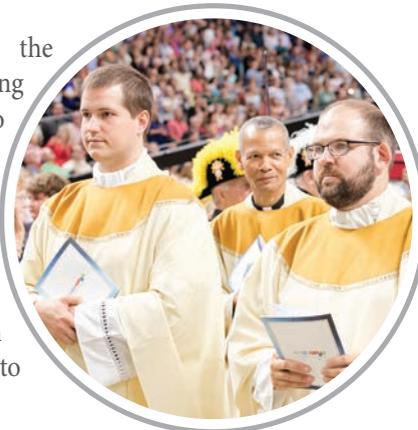
In practical terms, this spirit of co-responsibility will help animate our new pastoral planning process beginning in every parish in our Diocese, assist in the strategic planning process already underway in our schools, help renew our efforts to evangelize by adopting creative practices that can be learned from our larger society, provide badly needed administrative assistance to our pastoral leaders and help transform the way our Diocesan Curia can provide more effective service.

Third Principle: Support of Leadership In the Church

The third principle that animated the Synod was the desire to support the current leaders of our local Church while also calling forth new leaders to assist in the pastoral, temporal and spiritual mission we share.

The support that the Synod delegates desired to offer the clergy of the Diocese, especially our pastors, was the mandate to foster “healthy and holy living” among our priests. The delegates keenly recognized the large number of duties and responsibilities that many pastors bear, often quietly and at great personal sacrifice. Among those duties are growing administrative responsibilities in a time of financial constraint. Despite these challenges, our priests and deacons serve generously and faithfully each day and I am deeply grateful for the integrity of their witness, collaborative spirit and dedication to the mission of the Church.

In order to realize this mandate to assist the clergy, I began a consultation process among the priests of the Diocese last fall to identify administrative, pastoral and spiritual initiatives that will help them to live more healthy and holy lives, in greater fraternity and mutual support. A separate set of initiatives to help realize this mandate will be decided in an extraordinary assembly of the presbyterate to be held on April 21, 2016.



In recognition of the need to invite, train, form and support pastoral and ministerial leaders, the Synod mandated a number of initiatives. Central to this work will be the creation of a Diocesan Leadership Institute whose mandate is threefold: (1) to provide training, formation and ongoing support to all pastoral, liturgical and catechetical leaders throughout the Diocese; (2) to help all adult Catholics discern their personal gifts and talents that can be used in service of the

mission of the Church through their parish and school communities and (3) to provide the opportunity for all adult Catholics to grow in their spiritual life and knowledge of their Catholic faith.

Another initiative that will help foster new leadership and engage the young Church in the work of Christian service is the Catholic Service Corps. The Catholic Service Corps will provide opportunities for all the faithful, but especially young people, to deepen and broaden their Catholic faith by inviting them to embrace a life of Christian service and the call to be a missionary disciple. By giving expression to their faith through the work of their hands, many of these young people will be prepared to become leaders of our Church for the next generation.

Conclusion

Before concluding this reflection, I wish to express my profound gratitude to all those who served as delegates to the Synod. Their dedication to the process, generous commitment of time and great zeal for our Church is a blessing that has enriched both my own life of faith and our diocesan Church.

At the start of the Synod, I commended our work to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. She has always served as an anchor for the Church during its times of greatest challenge. She remains so for you and me today.

As venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen once observed, just as the moon does not generate its own light but reflects the light of something far greater, so too has Mary, from the moment of Christ’s conception in her womb, always reflected the power, glory and light of Christ, her Son. Nothing of Mary’s life was really about her — it was all about her Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. As we continue to walk the Synod together, may the same thing be said of you and me.



With every best wish and blessing this Easter for you, your families and every member of our diocesan Church, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Frank J. Caggiano

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of Bridgeport

April 2016

Malta House, Norwalk

Young women daring to dream

By AUDREY COZZARIN

“...Because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:7)

The realization that there was no safe place for homeless pregnant women in our community compelled Malta House founders Michael O’Rourke, Hope Carter, Christopher Bell and a concerned group who had a dream to create a work of mercy. Since 1998, Malta House, located in Norwalk, has provided pregnant women (and women with newborns or infants) with supportive services in a safe and nurturing environment.

As O’Rourke recalls, “These vulnerable young families often found themselves on the street or living in sub-standard conditions. Malta House was conceived not only to offer food and shelter, but also to give hope for the future.”

For those who are not familiar with Malta House, its mission to honor God-given life and lift up its residents towards a bright future is clearly in tune with the life of Jesus Christ who touched, healed, and ate with outcasts and the poor.

Lucy Freeman, Malta House executive director, says, “Malta House is where

dreams really do matter. The women we serve are strong, yet need support to recognize their strengths. We

encourage them to dream and dream big.” Freeman’s dream is to serve more families, “We dream of a facility that will allow for growth, with larger and more living spaces for pregnant women with small children and a respite room for a woman in a crisis situation.”

Potential residents come to the attention of Malta House primarily through social services and other agencies. Once accepted into the residential program—which can accommodate up to 10 families—the young women are expected to follow guidelines of good conduct, are supported in establishing a savings account



LUCY FREEMAN, Malta House executive director (kneeling, second from left), with the mothers and children in residence at Malta House.

(PHOTO BY MICHELLE BABYAK)

and in finding a part-time job or completing their education, and given skills training with the goal of independence. Teaming with other non-profits such as St. Joseph Parenting Center in Stamford, Malta House’s residents receive valuable parenting lessons and learn about nutrition and life skills both for themselves and their children.

In addition, spirituality classes are provided at Malta House on a weekly basis. Father Reggie Norman, pastor of Our Lady of Fatima in Wilton and a Malta House board member, has recently been meeting with the young women. As he explains it, “Our spirituality program is based on the needs of the individual women and the goal is to empower them to recognize their own inner strength and spirit. Individual counseling is also available to help the women overcome some of the tragedies of their past lives and to equip them to overcome and prosper in the new life and family they create.”

The residential program lasts about 18-24 months. For life after Malta House, there is the

“Partnering Success” program that provides follow-up services and outreach to guide “graduates” through the initial stages of life as parents on their own.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano values the dreams of those who seek the help of Malta House. He says, “Malta House plays an integral part in the mission of our diocese, as it allows young mothers and their children to have a healthy and holy start to their life. Malta House provides the children an opportunity to grow and be educated, and the young mothers a beginning to a life that holds promise and opportunity.”

In remarks to those attending last year’s Spring Gala, he said, “Besides financial support, the gift of your time and your prayer—the spirit of volunteerism—this is what makes Malta House a unique and successful experiment in Catholic social living.”

Kim Petrone, chair of the Malta House board of directors, invites the readers of *Fairfield County Catholic* to attend this year’s Annual Spring Gala on Saturday, May 14, at Woodway Country Club in Darien. The evening features a cocktail hour, dinner, and a live auction. In addition, Barbara M. Ripp, a long-time supporter of Malta House, will be honored.

Petrone says, “Overcoming life’s most challenging issues starts with a dream, and supporters like Barbara are key to the young women achieving their dreams.”

Malta House is supported entirely by private donations, both monetary and in-kind donations—large and small, every gift matters as our residents continue on their path to self-sufficiency.”

(For more info about Malta House and its upcoming Annual Gala: visit www.maltahouse.org or call 203.857.0088.)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF



THE REVEREND FREDERICK L. SAVIANO

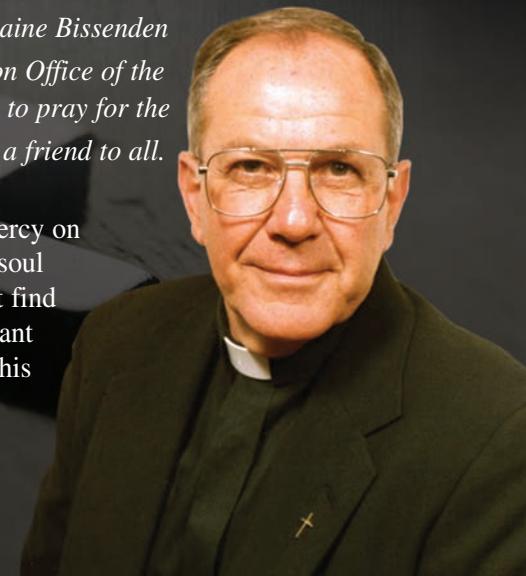
NOVEMBER 5, 1941 - APRIL 9, 2016

Faithful son of the Missionaries of LaSalette
Dedicated Missionary to South America
Devoted Priest of the Diocese of Bridgeport
Beloved Director of the Mission Office

Priest Seraphim and Elaine Bissenden
of the Pontifical Mission Office of the
Diocese ask the faithful to pray for the
repose of Father Fred, a friend to all.

Lord Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, have mercy on the soul of your priest Frederick. Establish his soul in the mansions of the righteous, where the just find repose. Forgive him every transgression and grant him the reward promised to the faithful. Make his memory to be eternal. Amen

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and to those in the tombs bestowing life.



Knights of Columbus Museum

‘Mission of Faith’

By ALEXANDRIA FAIZ

The birthplaces of American Catholicism share a similarity with the manger that served as the birthplace of Christianity: they both were humble places where extraordinary feats occurred. The approximately 78 million Catholics in the United States, nearly a quarter of the present population, can trace their faith to the hard, dangerous work done by the missionaries from the 16th to the 18th centuries. Their stories will be on display at the free “Mission of Faith: America’s Catholic Legacy” exhibit in the Knights of Columbus Museum in New Haven from April 9 to September 18.

As soon as visitors step into the exhibit, they will enter a Spanish mission, complete with walls mimicking the typical

adobe texture. Bethany J. Sheffer, museum curator, thinks that one of the main surprises visitors will learn is that the famous Alamo was really a mission. Another main theme: how incredibly little infrastructure was in place when the missionaries arrived. The re-created building that museumgoers will walk through is similar to the Alamo and the multiple Spanish missions that can still be found in Florida.

Though “Missions of Faith” surveys the influence of missionaries in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, the Spanish mission was selected as one of the main features for a simple reason: they’re still standing thanks to their adobe structures. The French missions, Sheffer explained, were made of wood and have long since deteriorated. This marks the main challenge



EXHIBITION GALLERIES recount the work of Spanish and French missionaries, and feature replicas of the typical mission structures on this continent.

faced while designing this exhibit, she added. “There were obviously no photos from that time period.” On loan from various historic sites in Florida are beads (some made by Native Americans) and everyday items like an ax blade, candlesticks, and components of

a door handle.

The museum team needed to heavily rely on maps and journal entries to retrace a lot of the missionaries’ steps. Many of those documents were penned by the missionaries themselves. One of the most notable charts is of the northern section of the Mississippi River, where Jesuit missionary Jacques Marquette accompanied explorer Louis Jolliet. Sheffer commented that, as the various orders reported back to their home countries, those written documents and maps were distributed to the general public to help foster support to continue the international campaigns.

These reports often were the first glimpse Europeans had of the New World. The Catholic missionaries in America—priests and religious Sisters—primarily came from the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans), the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), and the Company of St. Ursula (Ursulines). The richly detailed 73-volume Jesuit Relations has even been translated into English and can be viewed online.

During the four-month show, the Knights of Columbus Museum is organizing five Saturday special events which will all start at 2 pm and be free of charge. To start the series on April 16, George Burke, M.A., from Mount Saint Mary College in Newburgh, N. Y., will survey the four North American saints: Isaac Jogues, Kateri Tekakwitha, Elizabeth Ann Seton, and Frances Xavier Cabrini. The following month, on May 14, Father John Vidmar, O.P., explains how, though most missionaries came from France

and Spain, the Dominican Order came to America from England. Mary Soha, M.D., from the Tallahassee-based Martyrs of La Florida Missions follows with a dramatic retelling of the lives of Native American Christians, including Saint Kateri Tekakwitha and the 86 Florida martyrs, on June 11. Father Maurice Henry Sands, who became the new executive director of the Black and Indian Mission Office, headquartered in Washington, D.C., in 2015, will talk about Catholic missionary outreach in the 21st Century on August 20. The day before the exhibit closes, on September 17, Professor Emily Clark, Ph.D., from Tulane University will share her extensive knowledge of the New Orleans Ursuline Sisters.

A gallery challenge will engage student groups, which Peter Sonski, the museum’s education, outreach and visitor services manager, said are regular visitors. “The Knights of Columbus Museum annually welcomes over 20,000 visitors, many of whom come from Fairfield County. Patrons from that region of Connecticut have a deep appreciation for their Catholic heritage, and the museum’s exhibitions and events appeal to those interests,” he said.

The museum’s staff is ready to help teachers develop follow-up projects for home or the classroom.

(Located at One State Street in New Haven, the Knights of Columbus Museum is within walking distance of Union Station and has free parking. It is open daily from 10 am- 5 pm. To learn more about this exhibit and other museum events, visit kofcmuseum.org or call 203.865.0400.)

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April 2016

World Youth Day

Why visit Auschwitz on the WYD Pilgrimage?

By JANET S. DAVIS

Last November, on a logistics trip to Poland for World Youth Day, I visited Auschwitz-Birkenau. This notorious concentration and extermination camp was the largest in the Third Reich. Investigations into the history of the camp indicate that 1.5 million people were starved, tortured and murdered in this camp.

Between five and six million Jews were killed during the Holocaust. It is impossible to know exactly how many people died, as the Nazi soldiers murdered people by the hundreds in each of the small towns and cities they conquered. At the death camps, on the other hand, meticulous records were kept.

Auschwitz-Birkenau is the most notorious of the six concentration camps built by Nazi Germany. Its purpose: to enact the "Final Solution," whose goal was the mass murder of the Jewish people in Europe. The death camp was used first for Poles, then for Soviet prisoners of war, and then from 1942-1944 it became the main extermination camp for the Jews.

There is no guide book or instruction book on how to visit Auschwitz. I knew intellectually the history of the site but did not know how to experience it firsthand. I was horribly nervous the morning we loaded onto the tour bus with other people on the logistics trip.

The bus trip took us through some of the most beautiful countryside I had even seen, beautiful architecture and rolling landscape. We passed through small villages along the way. We arrived down a long road to an ordinary parking lot.

I had imagined a solemnity when I entered what I considered holy ground and it was not there. People were chatting and taking selfies, checking their texts. I felt it was inappropriate. Our tour guide was from Poland and her father-in-law was exterminated in the camp.

We went through the turnstile, just as more than a million other people have, to enter Auschwitz. We walked down a wide, grass-covered lane to the famous archway entering the camp that says "Arbeit macht frei," Work



MORE THAN A MILLION PEOPLE have entered Auschwitz death camp through to the famous archway entering the camp that promises "Arbeit macht frei," Work will set you free. World Youth Day 2016 youth will go to Auschwitz as part of their pilgrimage.

will set you free. This, the first betrayal against humanity.

There was a visceral connection to the atrocity of Auschwitz. The museum has thousands of symbolic articles that were taken from the prisoners when they arrived, piles of shoes, suitcases, combs and glasses. All are housed within barracks behind glass.

It was when I saw the room filled with human hair that I started to cry; I locked eyes on our tour guide and she started to cry. This is when Auschwitz-Birkenau fully became Auschwitz-Birkenau to me, the most haunting part of the museum, a memory I can't get out of my mind and maybe one I should not let escape.

Why should we bring our youth to visit Auschwitz on the 2016 WYD Pilgrimage? So that it does not happen again. It teaches all of us how fragile life is. It questions the very existence of us as human beings. We need to journey to Auschwitz so we can imagine the fear, loneliness and sadness of people who were condemned to die because of their nationality, or their religion, or their belief. We need to see and feel how intolerance can turn to hatred which turns to violence and then extermination.

But there is a bigger question for all of us who visit Auschwitz: Could I have been a part of this, could I have done this? I might not have become a willing collaborator with the Nazis, but

would I have been more interested in protecting my own interests—or merely indifferent to the plight of my Jewish neighbors? Primo Levi, an Italian Jewish writer and Holocaust survivor at Auschwitz, calls this the "grey zone," the "in between of moral complicity."

Auschwitz is now a museum. It cannot enter us completely into the brutality and viciousness that was Auschwitz-Birkenau during the occupation. But it can help each of us to start to think about our moral culpability in the world today. It challenges us to dig deep into our faith and pray for hope and love for one another.

We need to visit Auschwitz on the 2016 WYD Pilgrimage. It will change each of our lives. ■

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Kennedy Center, Bridgeport

'Beacon of hope and charity'

By NINA RICCIO

Delivering the keynote address at the 65th annual Kennedy Center dinner on April 7, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano praised the center as a community leader

Bishop Caggiano called upon those gathered to be a "beacon of hope and charity in these troubled times."

"Scripture says that a people without a vision perish, but I would like to amend that to 'peo-

ple' the late Isobel Broadhurst, as a pioneer in creating religious education programs for people with special needs. "She is a prime example of how the community is meant to be," he said.

Kennedy Center client



in supporting those with special needs.

"We live in a time of polarization," he said. "We put people in the shadows, we reduce people to simply what they can do or what they own.... Yet our community is at its best when we open our arms wide and accept everyone for what they can offer."

The Kennedy Center, which was founded in 1951 to serve children and adults with intellectual disabilities, has since expanded its programming to assist individuals with multiple needs. Individualized services for each client focus on promoting empowerment and inclusion in society.

Today, the center serves over 2,000 clients each year, from birth through seniors. Its comprehensive list of services include job training and placement, independent transportation training, supportive independent living, and family support and respite care.



BROADHURST MANOR, FAIRFIELD—named after the late Isobel Broadhurst a Kennedy Center board member and St. Pius X parishioner.

ple with an impoverished vision will always remain poor."

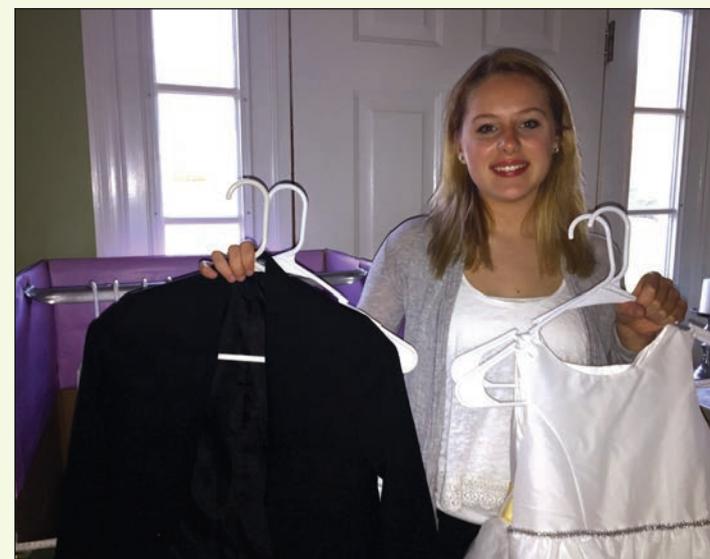
The contribution of Kennedy Center founder Evelyn Kennedy cannot be understated, he added. "She had a vision of advocacy, to allow people dignity. And she gave us the word of acceptance." He also acknowledged the recent loss of a great friend of the center,

"Ask them to protect the lives of Connecticut's most vulnerable in this upcoming year. Every call, every email is important."

An awards ceremony followed the dinner. The honorees included Sacred Heart University, which was singled out for its commitment to community service.

Marisa collects First Communion suits and dresses

SHELTON—Marisa Doyle, a junior at St. Joseph High School in Trumbull, thought about a way to help students of families who were faced with the cost of dresses for the sacra-



ment of First Holy Communion. She worked out a plan and in a matter of a few months she started "The Communion Closet" at her home parish, St. Joseph's in Shelton. As an alumna of St. Joseph Elementary School, she realizes how fortunate she was to celebrate and participate in her First Holy Communion with her classmates and wanted to give back to those that may have a need.

The Communion Closet offers a variety of communion clothing to boys and girls who will be making their First Holy Communion in the spring. Donations of gently used communion dresses, suits and accessories are now being accepted. Items can be dropped off or selected from the Communion Closet in the church hall after all Masses at St. Joseph's, 50 Fairmont Place, Shelton.

(To arrange a pickup, contact Marisa: sjcommunioncloset@gmail.com.)

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April 2016

Sports

State title highlights Immaculate's 50th year

By **DON HARRISON**

Immaculate High School is celebrating its golden anniversary, and what could be more appropriate than a state championship in a marquee sport to add luster to this milestone?

Coach Nelson Mingachos directed the Mustangs boys basketball team to a 25-3 record this season, capped by a 53-43 victory over Coginshaug of Durham in the CIAC Class S state title game at the Mohegan Sun Arena on March 19. This marked Immaculate's second state hoops championship under Mingachos in the last five seasons and its third overall.

"To win a state championship in the school's 50th year is pretty awesome," says Mingachos, a 1989 alumnus and former basketball captain. "We knew we were going to be good, but we didn't know how good."

An early (62-52) loss to in-town rival Danbury High—a semi-finalist in the Double-L state tournament—proved that Immaculate could compete with the finest teams in Connecticut. Indeed, the Mustangs defeated Notre Dame-Fairfield (the runner-up in the Class M state tournament) during the season, 71-61. Their other losses came against Pomperaug, which advanced to the quarter-finals in Class L, and Notre Dame-Fairfield in the South-West Conference championship.

"The Danbury game was closer than the final score," says



STATE CHAMPS—Under Coach Nelson Mingachos, the Immaculate Mustangs compiled a 25-3 record leading to capturing the CIAC Class S State Title at the Mohegan Sun Arena on March 19. The victory was extra special because it coincided with the 50th Anniversary of Immaculate High School.

Mingachos, "and it showed we could play well against the best."

Catholic high schools are often accused of recruiting, but the coach and Immaculate director of athletics Jeff Castaldi point out that the entire 2015-16 squad, save for freshman Mikey Basile, has Danbury roots.

Darius Smith, the Mustangs' 5-foot-8 senior captain, provided much of the leadership and the lion's share of the scoring in this title-winning season. Against Coginshaug, the point guard connected on 9 of 13 field goal attempts en route to a game-high 21 points. He concluded his scholastic career with 1,232 points.

"Coginshaug didn't have the speed to stop him and he scored

21 points, but it was also the little things he did on the defensive end that made the difference," recalls Mingachos. "Darius could be one of the best in the state. I haven't seen a point guard as good as him."

Immaculate's other guards, senior Darius Hunter and sophomore Ronan Doherty, were major contributors throughout the season, too. Hunter—"probably the hardest working player on the team; he does dribbling and shooting drills before practice," according to the coach—contributed 16 points to the victory over Coginshaug. Doherty, "a great complement to the Darius boys," has been in the starting lineup since his freshman season.

Up front, senior Alex Gerbo and junior Will Hatcher, both about 6-foot-4, handled the bulk of the rebounding and interior defensive work. Mingachos:

"Alex was on the JVs last year, but he worked hard in the off-season and became a starter. Hatcher has started two years for us."

"It took us four years to build to where we want to be," adds the coach. "It was great that we did it with home-grown kids."

Mingachos, who earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Central Connecticut State, and his childhood friend, Matt Chila, are co-owners of the Connecticut Sports Arena in New Milford. But in the fall, he devotes additional time to

Immaculate as head coach of the girls' soccer team.

Under Mingachos' astute guidance, the Mustangs have captured nine state soccer titles and compiled a 172-47-31 won-lost-tied record across 12 seasons. Isabella Mingachos, the older of Nelson and Kellie's two daughters, captained the 2015 squad that was undefeated until the South-West Conference title game against New Milford.

"We lost that one on penalty kicks, and we lost to Berlin in the Class L state tournament (quarter-finals) on penalty kicks," he says.

In the school's 50th anniversary year, there were few complaints about the Mustangs' 24-2-2 soccer record. ■

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St. James Varsity Boys win

STRATFORD—The St. James School Varsity Boys lead by eighth graders Paul Fabbri, Justin Horvath, Brian Carrafiello, Shaun Spurling, John Despeignes, Carter Courbron and Tim Gavrish; and seventh graders Tim Cox, Nate Ortiz, Anthony Torreso, Lucas Smith, EJ Fredricks, and Nick Elio; with coaches Jason Carrafiello, Paul Fabbri and Rich Courbron won their third New England CYO Tournament in last four years.

They started with victory over their first round opponent Mercymount School, RI, defeating them 54-38. In the semifinal game they defeated St. John School, Manchester, NH, 58-48 and in the Championship Game they defeated Our Lady of Victory out of the Archdiocese of Hartford in overtime 56-53 to capture the 2016 title. They ended their season with a total combined record of 47 wins and 5 losses. "This group of young men represented not only themselves but their family, their school and the Diocese of Bridgeport in which the tournament was held with extreme class, pride and professionalism," says head coach Jason Carrafiello. ■



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Obituary

Father Frederick Saviano, 74

Father Frederick Saviano died on April 9 at Bridgeport Hospital after a long struggle with illness.

In a 2002 profile of Father Saviano in *Fairfield County Catholic*, he reflected on his work as a priest while serving as Pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Danbury. "As priests we live where we work and we're always available to our people," he said. "I love them. I'm part of them, I am their priest. It's all-absorbing. No matter how difficult this job is, you have to see God's presence all around you."

Frederick Lawrence Saviano was born on November 5, 1941 in Norwalk Hospital. The son of John and Mildred Romano Saviano, he was the youngest of five boys. His father died when he was only three years old.

He grew up in Westport, and was an altar server at Assumption

Parish. He had always dreamed of becoming a priest like those of his parish. Responding to God's call at a young age, he decided on a path to missionary life.

It was his affection for the foreign missions that led him to enter the Missionaries of Our Lady of LaSalette. He completed his theological studies at LaSalette Seminary, Ipswich, MA and was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Thomas J. Riley at the LaSalette National Shrine in Ipswich, MA on May 5, 1968.

He went on to serve the missions in Argentina from 1969 to 1978 and then in the rural mission areas of Peru from 1978 to 1993.

Coming back to his home diocese, he was assigned as parochial vicar at Saint Benedict/Our Lady of Montserrat Parish in Stamford and subsequently was incardinated into the Diocese of Bridgeport in

1995. In 1996, Father Saviano was appointed pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Danbury.

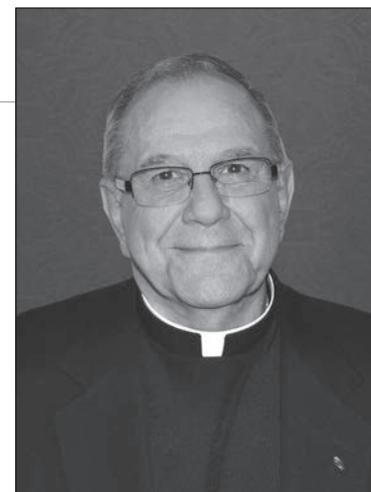
He served there until 2005, at which time he accepted a year-long pastoral assignment in parish mission work in Peru. Undeterred by declining health, he worked tirelessly with the poor of that city. Upon his return to the Diocese of Bridgeport, he resided at Saint Francis of Assisi Parish in Weston.

Soon after, he was asked by Bishop William E. Lori to head the Diocesan Office for the Propagation of the Faith, a job the bishop felt would befit him particularly well, given his multilingual skills and extensive experience in the missions. During that time he also served as temporary administrator of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque Parish in Shelton.

Father Saviano also served on the diocesan Presbyteral Council.

Well known for his benevolence, sharp sense of humor and a particular fondness for desserts, Father Fred, or Padre "Fico" as he was known to those closest to him, will be most remembered for his adoration and devotion to the Lord.

Father Saviano's body was received into his home parish of the Church of the Assumption, Westport, on April 15 by Father Robert Kinnally, chancellor of the diocese. A parish Vigil Mass was celebrated that evening with Msgr. Thomas Powers, vicar general of the Diocese of Bridgeport, as celebrant and Father Thomas Thorne, Assumption's pastor, as homilist. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the morning of April 16. Bishop Frank J. Caggiano was the main celebrant; Msgr. Nicholas Grieco, former pastor of St. Francis of Assisi, was the homilist. Interment followed at



FATHER FREDERICK SAVIANO

Assumption Cemetery, Westport.

He is survived by his sisters-in-law, Hazel Saviano and Mary Saviano, several nephews, nieces, grandnephews, grandnieces and cousins, along with many godchildren and friends around the world. His memory will be cherished by his many friends in South America with whom he kept contact through Skype and social media.

(The family asked that contributions in the name of Father Saviano be made to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 238 Jewett Ave., Bridgeport, CT 06606.)

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DEACONS FROM PAGE 3

The directory indicates that entrance into diaconal formation is not just a personal and family journey, but Church must accompany it, and that the "the parish is the primary experience of Church for most inquirers."

The deacon's role includes administering baptisms, witnessing and blessing marriages, officiating at wakes, funerals and burial services, and presiding at prayer services. Deacons also distribute Holy Communion, proclaim the Gospel, preach the homily and assist at Mass.

Deacon Information Sessions will be held at the following locations: Holy Spirit Parish, 403 Scofieldtown Rd., Stamford, on April 25; Our Lady of Fatima Parish, 229 Danbury Rd., Wilton, on April 28; Holy Family Parish, 700 Old Stratfield Rd., Fairfield on May 2; St. Rose of Lima Parish, 46 Church Hill Rd., Newtown on May 11; and St. Lawrence Parish, 505 Shelton Ave., Shelton, on May 23.

(For more information, contact Deacon Anthony Cassaneto: 203.416.1451 or dncassaneto@diobpt.org)

DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT: APRIL 17—MAY 14

APRIL

18	Rev. John E. Hanning	1959
19	Rev. Philip J. O'Farrell	1992
20	Rev. Martin J. O'Connor	1988
23	Rev. Vincent P. Bodnar	1988
25	Msgr. William A. Nagle	2013
29	Rev. Joseph F. Cleary	1971
	Rev. Andrew Dube	2006
	Rev. Austin R. Saunders	1986

MAY

1	Rev. Gregory J. Huminski	2010
2	Msgr. James F. Murphy	1958
3	Msgr. Michael J. Carnicke, P.A.	1980
9	Rev. John B. Fonseca	2002
10	Rev. Robert J. Hyl	2015

Column: Thomas Hicks



Caresses and Consoles

POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

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

“Each passing moment masks a tender face; nothing had to be, but is by Grace”
(John Updike, *Midpoint*).
April comes with triumph and

music; it caresses and consoles us. We have another Spring to hail. Winter is fled away. Now there is the joy of sunshine and lengthening days—how long the days have become! Now there is the spring sunshine clamoring at

the windows.

Mornings are full of song again, as the migrant birds make the dawn loud and sweet again. And evenings now have their special magic. There are the long Spring evenings when the soft violet dusk folds gently over the earth and fades slowly. Lovely are the willows in the half-light. “There’s something in the air That’s new and sweet and rare.”

(Nora Perry, *The Coming of Spring*)

The trees are in tender first leaf. Daffodils and tulips are up and fresh. There is the song of birds in a garden after rain, and birds singing good-bye to the day.

There are the soft warm south breezes, cherry trees blooming in a light spring rain, ducks in pairs drowsing on streams, puffy clouds lying in the sky, and new green is everywhere. How I love it all, every instant.

“And since to look at things in bloom

Fifty springs are little room”
(A.E. Housman, *Loveliest of Trees*)

April is the time when life seems to wrap us round with friendliness. Life isn’t all effort and fear. With April, I come to love the world. I feel a surge of love for God for making the world, its wonders and for making me. There is a love and praise for this world I am privileged, in my small interval of life, to witness and experience.

The marvel of existence! I can be in awe that things exist at all. The atheistic attitude that the world just happened to come into being seems ridiculous to me, and the more Springs I see, the more ridiculous it seems. There is a Power behind what Gerard Manley Hopkins, in his poem “Spring,” calls “all this juice and all this joy.”

There is a gift-like quality to

existence. It is a favor. One can be struck by the fact that things exist, that I exist. “Nothing had to be, but is by Grace.”

Still, April is always poignant because nothing stays. There is the sadness of April. It does not last, but yields to the suns of May. It must be caught and appreciated on the wing, for soon it will be gone.

Wisdom 2:78: “Let us let no flower of spring pass us by. Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they wither.”

The frailty of April speaks of our own frailty. It speaks of the fragility of coming into existence, and then going out, the trembling delicacy of life. There are many wondrous days of our lives. Let us treasure them. Life is precious and, like April, we have a short time to stay.

It is April, when all nature is blooming and benevolent. It is a reminder that God’s charity is close at hand, and a call to continue to have trust in him.

Mt.6:28-29: “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

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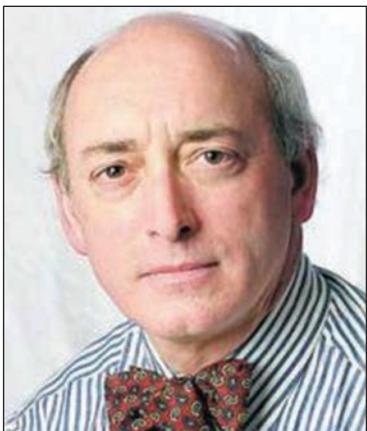
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Column: Joe Pisani



Our misguided search for happiness

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

Sometimes when I get really introspective, I'll pull my four daughters aside and ask them the big questions, the really big questions, the questions Plato probably asked his students back in Ancient Greece.

Not questions like "Why are you overcharged on that Visa card again?" Or "How could you run up a triple-digit phone bill?" Or "Why can't you listen to some decent music instead of that Lady Gaga stuff?" Instead, I'll stare them in the eye and ask, "What's it all about?" To which they promptly reply: "I'm late for my hairdresser appointment."

The Millennial Generation will give you a wide assortment of answers when you ask about the meaning of life. They'll often say, "Making a difference," "Being self-fulfilled," or "Achieving success." The most common response I hear is "To be happy"—even though they generally don't know what that means.

About 2,400 years ago, Aristotle said, "Happiness is the

==== *'DAY WITH MARY'*
FROM PAGE 9

Young Giovanna Loizzo, at 11 years old one of the youngest participants, has attended several Days With Mary and said she particularly enjoys the music and ritual of Benediction.

"The beautiful music really, really helped elevate the experience," agreed Heidi Paris. "It was so prayerful."

"People should really give it a try," Sebestyen said. "There is something there for everybody."

(The next Day With Mary will be held Sat., April 30, 8:45 am-3 pm at Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Danbury. Free of charge, no registration required. Bring a packed lunch. For more info, visit daywithmarywest.org.

meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence."

Western Civilization has been trying to achieve happiness ever since without much success. Everyone is looking for happiness in all the wrong places. Before Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and the other distractions of our age, Pope Paul VI had this to say: "Technological society has succeeded in multiplying the occasions of pleasure, but finds great difficulty in giving birth to happiness. For happiness has its

origin elsewhere: It is a spiritual thing."

For most of my life, I've been obsessed with my constitutionally guaranteed right known as "the pursuit of happiness." I was so obsessed I bought every book I could find on the topic, from pop psychology to philosophy and the musings of the Dalai Lama, C.S. Lewis and George Burns. I've read studies published by Harvard University, Gallup and other institutions that study happiness, which has become a popular topic for social research.

Unfortunately, except for a few trite slogans like "pursue your passions" and "be kind and gentle," they never really taught me much. I have a lot of friends who think they'd finally be happy if they won Powerball, and some of them try to convince God about all the good they'd do with a few billion dollars to spread around. In his infinite wisdom, however, God has other plans.

As the Greeks realized, hap-

piness is a byproduct of a virtuous life. I would venture even further, that it's a byproduct of a life spent trying to do God's Will, or as they say in the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, "We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out."

That's a pretty simple formula. A clearer path to happiness you'll never find. However, most people think the pursuit of pleasure, possessions, prestige and power is what leads to happiness. But they're only illusions. The desire for happiness comes from God. He placed it in our hearts so we'd go to him—because only in him we will find fulfillment.

All the mystics and great spiritual teachers realized happiness comes from striving to do the will of God, and we can only learn what the will of God is for us through regular prayer, silence

and meditation.

I recently came upon a prayer book, published in 1908, titled "My Prayer Book: Happiness in Goodness" by Father F.X. Lasance. What a curious concept in the 21st Century when society suggests that the greatest happiness comes from doing what you want when you want. Father Lasance wrote: "All desire happiness, but many do not attain it because they seek it where it cannot be found. ... Seek happiness in goodness, in virtue; in loving God above all things and in loving all things in God; in loving your neighbor; in doing good to others for the love of Jesus Christ."

In our cynical time, that might sound like a collection of Christian platitudes, but you'll never find happiness until you embrace that idea, however trite it may seem in a materialistic, pleasure-seeking culture.

The path is simple. Take it. Instead of the casino, go to Eucharistic Adoration. ■



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Bits and Pieces

ON-LINE AUCTION to benefit St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School, Fairfield, features 2016 Summer Olympic Packages and 200+ Items, including golf and ski vacations, local dinners, and spa treatments. The auction website, www.bidpal.net/springtoauction, is **now** live and open to the public. Tickets and sponsorship opportunities are also available at that website for the 2016 "Spring to Auction" benefit on Fri., **April 23**, at 7 pm at St. Thomas. The school will be transformed into a South American venue for the occasion, with live auction, raffles and live music by the Cosmic Jibaros. The funds raised will support students with enhanced technology, improvements to the building, and financial assistance for students in need.

WOMEN'S GROUP at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, will meet on Mon., **April 18**, at 10 am in the parish hall. Speaker Elaine DeBernardo will discuss "Market to Table," making appetizing seasonal foods. All are invited. For more info, call 203.261.8020.

JOHN MICHAEL TALBOT, Christian music legend and best-selling author, is coming to St. Jude Parish, Monroe, for three special evenings, Mon.-Wed., **April 25, 26 & 27**. Each evening begins at 7 pm and includes an

inspiring message and sacred music. Tickets are not required. A Love Offering will support the ministries of John Michael Talbot and the Brothers and Sisters of Charity. For more info, contact the parish: 203.261.6404.

"BEING CATHOLIC in Today's World" will be the topic for Bishop Frank J. Caggiano on Tues., **May 3**, at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, 1177 King St., Greenwich. Morning begins with coffee at 8:30 am; bishop's talk at 9, followed by a 10:30 Mass. For more info or to RSVP, contact Rachel Zurheide, 203.532.3540 or zurheider@cshct.org by Tues., **April 26**.

TRINITY CATHOLIC High School will host its Legacy Gala on Fri., **April 29**, at the Italian Center in Stamford. This year's honorees are: Frank J. Mercede for Legacy of Service; Steve & Christine Green for Legacy of Encouragement; Msgr. William J. Scheyd, P.A., for Legacy of Purpose. To place an ad or make a reservation, contact Betsy Mercede: bmercede@trinitycatholic.org or 203.322.3401, ext. 303.

A DAY WITH MARY, a one-day retreat, will be offered by the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, Sat., **April 30**, at Sacred Heart Parish, Danbury. The day starts at 8:45 am and includes

Mass, Sacrament of Reconciliation, Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Marian Procession, recitation of the Rosary, and more. The day ends at 3 pm. No pre-registration required. Bring a bag lunch and invite your friends! For more info and a video, go to www.daywithmarywest.org or visit Facebook at Day with Mary - West: Griswold.

KOLBE CATHEDRAL High School "Making a Difference" celebration held Sun., **May 1**, at St. Mary Parish, Greenwich. Mass: 5:15 pm, dinner follows at Gabriele's Steakhouse. 2016 Honorees: Bill Mitchell & Dr. Gerald Kuroghlian. Proceeds benefit KCHS scholarship funds. For more info, contact Jo-Anne Jakab: 203.368.2648 or jjakab@kolbecaths.org.

MASSES OF HEALING AND HOPE celebrated on Mon., **May 2**, at 7:30 pm at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, with Fr. Larry Carew; and Mon., **May 16**, at 7:30 pm at St. Lawrence Parish, Shelton, with Fr. Bill Eagan. For more info, call the Charismatic Renewal Office: 203.268.8253.

HEART OF ST. JOHN VIANNEY will visit St. Mary Parish, Greenwich, Tues.-Thurs., **May 3-5**. Bishop Caggiano will celebrate Mass on Tues., at 7:30

Assumption Parish will honor vets

CLERGY ARE INVITED to join in the 22nd Annual Memorial Day Service sponsored by the Knights of Columbus Council #11077 at Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Fairfield, on Sun., **May 29**, at 12 noon. Local veteran organizations will be participating along with CT state and local representatives, Knights of Columbus officials and community residents. For more info, contact Fr. Peter Cipriani, pastor: 203.333.9065 or Fred Coseglia, chairman: 203.371.8181.



pm. For more info, go to www.stmarygreenwich.org or call the parish: 203.869.9393.

ST. THOMAS SEMINARY, Bloomfield, reunion of graduates and non-graduates of both the high-school and the college programs will be held on Fri., **May 6**, in the Alma Mater on 467 Bloomfield Ave. Doors open at 2 pm, Mass in the chapel, 4 pm with Archbishop Leonard Blair. Reception follows Mass; dinner

at 6:30 pm. For more info and for tickets, go to www.stseminary.org or visit them on Facebook.

DENIM AND DIAMONDS, a cocktail party and auction supporting Assumption Catholic School, Fairfield, will be held Sat., **May 14**, starting at 7 pm in the parish hall. Wear your favorite jeans and your brightest bling! Cost: \$25/person. RSVP by Fri., **May 6**, to kguastelle@oloaffld.org or 203.334.6271.

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Bits and Pieces

“ECOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN FAITH,” the final First Friday Lecture of the series, will take place at St. Luke Parish, Westport, Fri., **May 6**, at 7:30 pm with Dr. Frederick Simmons, Assistant professor of ethics at Yale Divinity School. The lecture will be preceded by a wine and cheese reception at 7 pm. All are welcome. For more info, call 203.227.7245.

100TH ANNIVERSARY celebration for Catholic Charities of Fairfield County (CCFC): Mass and reception will be held Sat., **May 7**, at 5:30 pm at St. Matthew Parish, Norwalk. Bishop Caggiano will celebrate the Mass. For reservations, call 203.416.1333 or go to www.100thanniversarymass.eventbright.com. For more info, go to www.ccfairfield.org.

WOMEN'S GROUP at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, will meet Mon., **May 9**, at 10 am in the parish hall. Fr. Larry Carew will speak on “Prison Ministry.” All are invited. For more info, call 203.261.8020.

GOLF TOURNAMENT to benefit the Sacred Heart Academy Scholarship Fund will be held on Mon., **May 9**, at New Haven Country Club. Scramble format; prizes for team low gross & low net, putting contest and four hole-in-one prizes. Cost: \$225 includes entry fee, greens fees, cart, lunch, cocktail reception, dinner, contests, golfer gifts and more. For event and sponsorship information or to register, contact Maryanne Pisani: mpisani@sacredhearthamden.org or 203.287.8181, ext. 372.

THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN Holy Spirit Fraternity invites everyone to St. Emery Parish, Fairfield, on Sat., **May 14**, at 9:30 am. Fr. Milan Dimic will celebrate Mass, followed by a business meeting and social. “Come and See” if you are being called to a vocation in the Secular Franciscan Order. For more info, call Pat Heile, OFS: 203.255.8801 or pheile5713@aol.com.

TAG SALE will be held at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, on Sat., **May 14**, from 9 am-4 pm and Sun., **May 15**, after

all Masses. For more info, call 203.261.4378.

GOSPEL OF LIFE SOCIETY meets at St. Mary Parish, Norwalk, the second Sat. of each month (**May 14**) from 10 am-12 noon, after the 9 am Pro-life Mass. This month's speaker will be Tom Heckel, secretary of the executive committee and co-chair of the development committee of Malta House for women in crisis pregnancies. For more info, call Eileen Bianchini: 203.847.727 or stmarygols@aol.com.

CATHOLIC YOUNG ADULTS of Greater Danbury (ages 18-35) meets at the Newman Center (off the campus of Western CT State University) #7 8th Ave., Danbury and other nearby locations. Theology on Tap, Wed., **May 18**, at Down the Hatch, 292 Candlewood Lake Rd., Brookfield, from 6:30-8:30 pm. Fr. Peter Towsley, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, Danbury, will speak on “Slaying the Dragons in our Lives. For more info, email catholic.ya.danbury@gmail.com or join us on Facebook at Catholic Young Adults of Greater Danbury.

ENCOURAGE apostolate for friends and family of loved ones with same sex attractions or gender ID issues, meets the third Sat. of the month (**May 21**) at 10:30 am and is strictly confidential. For more info contact the Norwalk Chapter: EncourageNorwalk@gmail.com.

MASS CARDS are available from the diocesan Mission Office for all intentions. The donations support missionaries throughout the world. If you are interested in purchasing a Mass card, call Elaine Bissenden in the Mission Office: 203.416.1447.

PROJECT RACHEL Healing Ministry: During this Jubilee Year of Mercy those suffering from a past abortion are invited to begin your healing journey and experience God's love and mercy. The ministry offers Entering Canaan Days of Prayer and Healing and ongoing support with monthly gatherings. For more info, call our confidential phone line: 203.416.1619 or email projectrachel@diobpt.org. ■

International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Fatima

The world-famous International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima, traveling worldwide since 1947, is on an historic two-year journey across America to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the apparitions at Fatima. The Pilgrim Statue has already been welcomed at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Bridgeport and St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull. It will be at the following parishes through April 19:

Saturday, April 16
7:30 am-9 pm
St. Mary Church
566 Elm Street, Stamford
All day veneration;
5:30 pm English Mass;
7 pm Spanish Mass
Phone: 203.324.7321

Sunday, April 17
7:30 am-Mon.,
April 18, 3 pm
Our Lady of Fatima Church
229 Danbury Rd., Wilton
Honor Guard procession of the statue: 10:30 am Sunday Mass
Phone: 203.762.3928

Monday, April 18
6 pm-Tues., April 19, 5 am
St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Church
138 Candlewood Lake Rd,
Brookfield
7 pm Mass, all night adoration until Tues. at 5 am
Phone: 203.775.5117

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“Behold I will never forget you.
I have written your name upon
the palm of My hand.”
Isaiah 49:15-16.

CORRECTION

In the February 20, 2016 edition of the *Fairfield County Catholic*, the following source was misnamed in the Fairfield University advertisement, “Ranked Top 10 Best Roman Catholic Colleges in the U.S.” — *U.S. News and World Report*. We retract this statement. The source is not *U.S. News and World Report*. The source is *USA Today*.

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