

FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

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Synod: The Next Step

Pastoral Planning process moves forward

“The take-away from the Task Force Workshop for pastoral planning was that there is a lot of expertise available to us as we prepare our parish’s Pastoral Plan,” said Jean Benitez of St. John Parish in Darien. She attended the first Task Force Workshop, which drew 250 people to the Catholic Center in Bridgeport March 12.

Initiating a comprehensive Pastoral Planning Process in every parish was one of the major initiatives approved by delegates to the Fourth Diocesan Synod. The workshops held March 12 in Bridgeport and March 19 at St. Edward the Confessor Parish in New Fairfield show that the initiative is well underway.

Taking advantage of the energy generated by the synod, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano established the Office for Strategic and Pastoral Planning last fall, with Father Michael Dogali as episcopal vicar and Patrick Turner as director. As the timeline for the planning process goes forward, each pastor is in the process of naming a Planning Task Force. The bishop suggested that pastors might include parish trustees, members of the finance and parish councils, and other parishioners whose general understanding of the parish may be useful.

“Bishop Caggiano is leading the way for all of us,” said Benitez, noting that the bishop was on hand to speak to participants in the workshop. “What is important about this process is that, as a pastoral task force, we are not alone. The Lord is in our midst, and the diocese is providing leadership and making resources and expertise available. We want to be efficient, but this is not just a business. It’s our faith as well.”



TASK FORCE WORKSHOPS were held in March to assist Pastoral Planning teams. The process, one of the fruits of the diocesan synod, is headed by Father Michael Dogali, episcopal vicar (shown here with diocesan CFO Michael Hanlon), and Patrick Turner, director. (PHOTO BY AMY MORTENSEN)

As the process moves forward, a resource manual for the parish planning process has been sent to all parishes, and pastors have received parish sacramental and financial data extending over several years so that their task force can explore parish trends. The data includes the number of parishioners, financial information and sacramental activity (baptisms, confirmations and marriages).

“The data was compiled from information that has been sent to the diocese every fall by the individual parishes. It has been entered into a standard format so that each parish is viewing their information in the same manner,” explained Father Dogali.

“Basically, this is a snapshot of the parish,” he said. “A few times, when a pastor looked it over, the data didn’t seem correct. In that case, they called us

up and we reviewed the information with them.” In some cases parishes had been merged, complicating the numbers; in others the older information may have been incompletely recorded.

Once they have had a chance to review the data, pastors will sit down with their task forces for what might be termed a “state of the parish” meeting. From that they will begin working on a Parish Self-Assessment and Planning Questionnaire, identifying the strengths and challenges of their parish and establishing priorities for the next two years. “Each parish is different, and each pastoral plan will be different,” said Father Dogali.

“The workshops are designed to provide the Planning Task Force members with an opportunity to understand the complete pastoral planning process and time-



line, and to learn more about their roles in helping shape a vision for their parishes,” explained Turner. “This will also provide them an opportunity to interact with neighboring parishes about pastoral priorities and challenges. One of the major feedback items from the fall pastoral leaders’ workshops was a desire to interact more frequently with other parishes, and I hope these workshops will provide that opportunity.”

For many parishes, working on the questionnaire has been revealing, showing increased or decreased Mass attendance or financial warnings. Some may be pleasantly surprised by

the vibrancy of their parish but decide that more attention needs to be given in certain areas. These may be as diverse as social activities for young families or more leadership opportunities for teens.

Father Dogali has already met individually with more than a dozen pastors and will visit all the 82 parishes in the diocese over the next few months. “They’ll interact with me when they’ve worked through the questionnaire, and we’ll discuss their priorities for the years ahead. In the past, many parishes operated on a year-to-year basis. I’m making myself available to help them work through a longer-term plan for their parish.”

Once they have evaluated their data and responded to the Parish Self-Assessment, the pastor and his task force are being asked to submit the Self-Assessment to the Office of Strategic and Pastoral Planning by mid-May. Pastors may also hold a parish assembly or “Town Hall” meeting to inform parishioners of the findings gathered from the Self-Assessment and ask for additional feedback regarding the parish’s proposed goals.

The finalized plan will be submitted to the Pastoral Planning Office by the end of September.

“The goal is to help people see what is happening in their parish and respond to it,” said Father Dogali. “I’m hoping that this is the beginning of a conversation, with more collaboration among parishes.”

The workshops in March and the resources they provided bring to life a pledge Bishop Caggiano made last fall at the Synod Celebration Mass. “When we leave here today, we take the next step into renewal of our Church,” he told the thousands gathered in the Webster Bank Arena. ■



ON THE COVER

MULTI-PARISH—Good Friday procession down East Main Street in Bridgeport will be hosted by four parishes with devotions in five languages. East Main Street will be closed for the procession, and Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will be on hand when it steps off from the front of Saint Mary’s, the southernmost church on the route.

(PHOTO BY MELANIE CASTILLO/
SAINT MARY PARISH)

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Local News

Parents join Strategic Plan for Stamford schools

STAMFORD—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano introduced a new, 18-month strategic planning process for Catholic elementary schools in Stamford at a meeting held on March 8 in the Trinity Catholic High School auditorium. More than 150 Catholic elementary school parents, educators and advisory board members turned out for the presentation, which was followed by a question and answer session.

The bishop told parents he is committed to transparency and he invited them to be full partners in the process of change to prepare the schools for growth and vitality in the 21st Century. As he began a highly detailed talk accompanied by slides with financial and enrollment statistics, the bishop said that he hoped to dispel rumors about the future of the schools.

“Tonight you may be receiving information that you’ve never seen before. I will tell you all I know, so that you have the same information I have as we move forward in this process. You will

see a lot of me over the next few months,” added the bishop, who is acting as superintendent until a new schools leader is chosen in the spring.

Along with providing an overview of the vision and goals for the strategic plan, the bishop said he favored the creation of a new two-tier governing structure to oversee the four Stamford schools.

He said that the new governance model will include a Board of Members made up of the bishop, the vicar general and the diocesan superintendent of schools, who will meet once a year and serve as the sponsoring board that oversees the religious nature of the schools.

A Board of Directors composed of lay leaders will also be formed to take responsibility for finances, marketing and planning.

“The Advisory Board formed in 2005 has served Stamford very well,” the bishop said, adding that the new board will have actual decision-making authority over school finances, programs



PROVIDING AN OVERVIEW of the vision and goals for Stamford Catholic schools, Bishop Frank Caggiano spoke to more than 150 parents, educators and advisory board members at a meeting held March 8 at Trinity Catholic High School. (PHOTO BY AMY MORTENSEN)

and improvements.

“You are essential partners in what happens to our schools and our children,” the bishop told parents as he asked their help in “re-designing” the schools

He challenged them to support the effort in many ways, from

serving on committees of the new board to re-enrolling their children and encouraging others to look at Catholic schools. Under the new structure, parents will not serve as board members, but will fill key committee posts in marketing, fund raising,

advancement and academics, he said.

He said the new Board of Directors model will give the local community much more authority in running the schools. “The actual day-to-day workings of the school will be ceded to the Board of Directors that oversees the task of setting policy, budgeting and overall financial responsibility. Not all the decisions should be made at the diocesan level,” he said. “The new model creates a balance between diocesan decision makers and the school community.”

The bishop said a total of 630 students currently attend Catholic schools in Stamford, including Holy Spirit School, Our Lady Star of the Sea School, St. Cecilia School and Trinity Catholic Middle School.

Trinity Catholic Middle School serves students in Grades 6-8, while the other schools teach students in Grades Pre-K through fifth grade.

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Healing profession is a lifetime journey

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

“Health care workers are called to a ministry of healing that engages them at the deepest level of who they are as people,” said Sister Maureen McGuire, DC, at the White Mass Breakfast, held on March 6 at Testo’s in Bridgeport.

The morning began with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano celebrating Mass at St. Augustine Cathedral. “All the work you do is the work of healing, and we ask the Lord’s blessings on you,” said the bishop in his greetings. Stuart G. Marcus, MD, president and CEO, St. Vincent’s Medical Center, and Dr. John Murphy, President/CEO of Danbury Hospital, attended the event, which honors healthcare workers in Fairfield County.

During the breakfast, Bishop Caggiano presented the 2016 Father Rufin Compassionate Care Award to Lenore Snowden-Opalak, MD, of Fairfield, and to Kevin Roche of Sandy Hook, Newtown. Roche, a member of St.



KEVIN ROCHE (LEFT), AND LENORE SNOWDEN-OPALAK, MD

Rose of Lima Parish, was honored for his volunteer work visiting the sick in hospitals and nursing homes. Dr. Opalak, an internist and member of Assumption Parish in Fairfield, was recognized for her work in advancing legislation to support palliative care for those at the end of life.

Sister Maureen, who serves as executive vice president of Mission Integration for Ascension Health, the largest private health system in the United States, said that each person is unique.

“Look in the mirror or into the eyes of another and you will see a being that has never existed before and will never exist again,” she told the gathering of physicians nurses and healthcare professionals.

She said that all people are called to a “journey toward the deep self created by God who loved us into being.” She said that the “job of the human spirit” is to seek relationship and meaning throughout the journey of life.

Sister Maureen, who has

served as a Catholic Charities executive and founded one of the first transitional housing programs for women with HIV, said that there is an “essential vocational nature to the profession of healthcare.”

She said that most healthcare careers begin in the “rigor” of intense studies and training, but also require God-given talent and a calling. “God needed you to do this,” she said, noting that healthcare workers find their deepest selves in the vocation to heal others and experience the feeling that “I am who I’m supposed to be when I’m needed most.”

She said that healthcare workers are also wounded healers themselves who need support from colleagues and others in their daily work with those who are ill. She repeated the story of a doctor who said, “All my life as a doctor, people brought me their suffering and distress. They handed it to me and I took it, but I was not paying attention about where to put it.”

Sister Maureen said that it is



SISTER MAUREEN MCGUIRE, DC

important that “we realize our own need for mercy and come to experience God’s love and God’s mercy as one.”

In his homily before the breakfast, Bishop Caggiano said that people find true healing only after they’re willing to admit that they are wounded and spiritually broken.

“Doctors cannot treat our wounds if we don’t show them,” the bishop said. “Do we believe that God can heal us? If so, then it’s time for us to show him our wounds. Only through our wounds can the grace of God come to heal us because through his wounds on the cross, we are set free.”

Good Friday

Procession links parishes

By PAT HENNESSY

"From the beginning of the synod, Bishop Caggiano has wanted parishes to work together," says Father Rolando Torres, pastor of St. Mary Parish in Bridgeport.

The multi-parish Good Friday procession down East Main Street in Bridgeport, hosted by four parishes with devotions in five languages, will be one of the most visible signs of the bishop's vision. East Main Street will be closed for the procession, and Bishop Frank J. Caggiano himself will be on hand when it steps off from the front of St. Mary's, the southernmost church on the route.

The bishop began the process of inter-parish cooperation last year, when he united all 13 parishes in the City of Bridgeport

into a new vicariate, Vicariate VI. Previously most of Bridgeport had been part of Vicariate III with Fairfield and Easton, with the East Side part of Vicariate IV with Stratford, Trumbull, Shelton and Monroe.

"The intention of this new structure is to facilitate a closer working relationship among the parishes in the City of Bridgeport," said Bishop Caggiano, in his letter of March 19 announcing the new vicariate.

Collaboration between parishes began quickly, especially for the four parishes located on or near East Main Street. With a Special Events permit from the City of Bridgeport in hand, the four parishes worked out the logistics of the event, which will include participation of parish choirs and a "traveling stage," a truck with a platform on top.

The two people representing Jesus and Mary will remain throughout, but at each Station along the route a different set of parishioners will take the parts of guards, women, onlookers, and the characters of Simon of Cyrene and Veronica.

"The diversity in this area is amazing," says Father Torres. It's barely a mile and a half from Our Lady of Fatima, a Portuguese parish, to St. Mary's, which is largely Hispanic. In between lie St. Michael the Archangel Polish Parish and—most diverse of all—St. Charles Borromeo. St. Charles has Masses in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole and Brazilian Portuguese.

All of these cultures have a tradition of outdoor Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, and all of the parishes have carried forward that tradition. "Year by



LIVE STATIONS OF THE CROSS led by Bishop Frank Caggiano will process down East Main St. in Bridgeport on Good Friday. Parishioners from the four parishes along the route will take the parts of Jesus, Mary, soldiers and other roles and offer devotions in five languages.

(PHOTO BY MELANIE CASTILLO/ST. MARY PARISH)

year, we've been going around our church only," says Father Michael Nowak, OFM Conv., pastor of St. Michael's. "This will be our testimony of faith to the whole community, to let people who aren't connected to any parish know that the Catholic Church is alive and lively and that they might want to join us, no matter what their particular ethnic background."

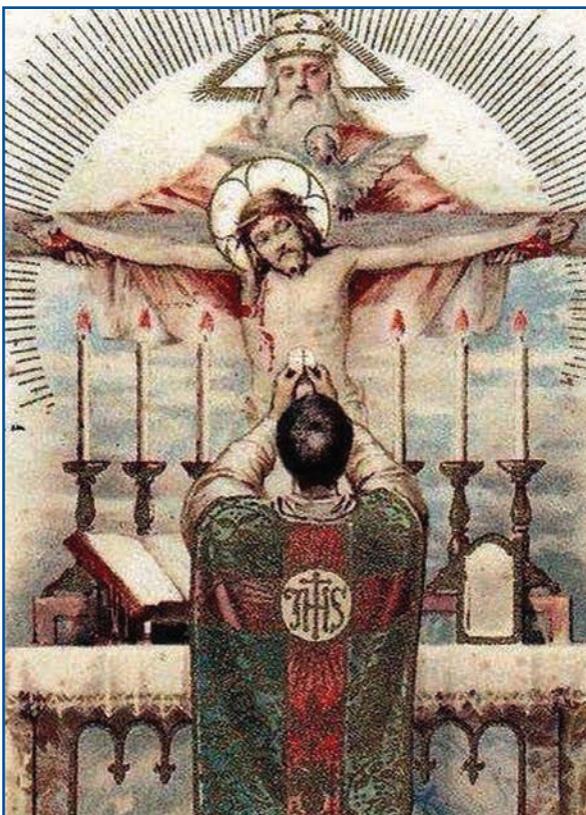
"In Portugal, Good Friday processions are held in neighborhoods, not in single parishes," adds Father Jose Alves, pastor of Our Lady of Fatima. "This is a good thing for the neighborhood, and my people will be familiar with doing it this way." Situated at the terminus of the route, Our Lady of Fatima will host the three final Stations of the Cross on its spacious grounds.

Notable for its impressive facade directly on East Main Street, St. Charles is the most culturally diverse of all the parishes, with Mass each week in four languages. "The fruits of the

collaboration may turn out to be not only closer relationships with other parishes, but also a more vibrant relationship within our parish," St. Charles pastor, Father Frank Gomez, says. "We'll have four of the stations, and each will be played out according to the language, music and traditions of one culture. I'm interested in seeing how this plays out."

All four pastors want to bring back to the community an appreciation for Good Friday as a day to reflect on God's love, a time to think about how Jesus willingly suffered and died to free people from the chains of sin. "Pope Francis said that evangelization has to start with our own example," says Father Gomez. This visible, energetic Good Friday procession will share the testimony of faith.

(The multicultural Stations of the Cross is open to everyone. For more info, call St. Mary Parish, Bridgeport: 203.334.8811 or smarychurchbpt@gmail.com.) ■



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Churches link to Walk the Cross

NORWALK—Bridgeport is not the only area responding to Bishop Caggiano's call for greater cooperation between parishes. This is the second year for The Walking of the Cross, linking six of the seven Catholic Churches in Norwalk. On March 13, a large wooden cross was carried from one church to another, connecting the churches in a special way during the season of Lent. Parishioners at each church had access to a list and map giving approximate timing and distance for each part of the walk. They were invited to walk all or part of the route, which began at 12:30 pm at St. Ladislaus and ended in time for a 6 pm Mass at St. Jerome. ■

Rite of Election

Prepared for full communion with the Church

FAIRFIELD—"My brothers and sisters, I welcome you in the name of Jesus," Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said to the more than 250 men and women who were on the journey toward full communion in the Catholic Church at the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion held at St. Thomas Aquinas Church.

"Thank you for saying yes to the Lord and going on this journey of conversion. The Church needs you. Your faith renews us and the face of the earth," the bishop said, while thanking the pastors, priests and catechists for helping to prepare them.

More than 800 people filled the church to support those preparing to enter the Catholic Church and receive the sacraments during the Easter Vigil. This liturgical rite, known as Election and the Enrollment of Names, closes the period of formation and marks the beginning of the period of final preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter. Traditionally held on the first Sunday of Lent, it is part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) process.

The Liturgy of the Word service included two readings, a



WITHIN THE WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE of a large family reunion, Bishop Frank Caggiano welcomed every candidate, catechumen and sponsor at the Rite of Election, at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Fairfield. The ceremony is a step on the journey toward full communion in the Catholic Church.

passage from the Gospel of Luke on the temptation of Jesus in the desert, and a homily by Bishop Caggiano prior to the Celebration of Election.

With bright light streaming through the stained glass windows on one of the coldest days on record, Bishop Caggiano urged the men and women to "fix

your gaze on Christ" and to realize that their faith journey is just beginning.

"None of us knows the length of the journey. For each of us it is a different amount of time, but for each day he gives us in life, we must make the glory of God real and share the love of Christ with all."

Noting that it is the presidential primary season in the U.S., the bishop said that no one has to campaign for God's love. All they have to do is be open to accepting it in their lives.

"We come here to welcome our sisters and brothers because God the Father has cast a ballot and chosen us as his beloved. None of us, myself included, is worthy but all we have to do is accept the gift of God's love," he said.

"The Lord just doesn't choose us once but over and over again, even when we fail. You and I have come here to celebrate the fact that God has chosen every one of us despite our failure, faults and darkest secrets. He will love us."

During the service, which at times also felt like a very large family reunion, every catechumen (non-baptized person) and candidate (those who were baptized but did not receive further sacraments) came forward to the altar to be personally greeted by the bishop.

First, Bishop Caggiano addressed the godparents. "And so, godparents, I ask you: have they faithfully listened to God's word proclaimed by the Church?"

"They have," the godparents answered in unison.

After this affirmation, Kimberly Quatela, coordinator of Family Faith Formation for the Office of Faith Formation, read the names of the catechumens and candidates and asked them to come forward with their godparents and sponsors.

The 250 candidates and catechumens, accompanied by sponsors and godparents, walked forward to meet the bishop and sign the Book of Election to signify their desire to receive the sacraments of initiation and be received into full communion with the Church.

The bishop greeted everyone in English and Spanish and said prayers throughout in both languages.

Speaking to the sponsors, godparents and hundreds of family members present, the bishop said those preparing to enter the Church should find that "we walk with them and support them in their journey of faith."

(For more information regarding RCIA and adult formation, contact Kim Quatela, coordinator of Family Faith Formation: 203.416.1334 or kquatela@diobpt.org)

STRATEGIC PLAN FROM PAGE 3

The bishop said he believes the Stamford schools will benefit by evolving into the current Bridgeport model of a "Catholic Academy of Bridgeport," which is legally constituted as one school with four separate campuses, each retaining its own name, identity (for example, St. Andrew Academy, etc.) and principal. Each school will also retain its Home School Association (HSA).

The academy model allows for more efficiencies, sharing of resources between schools and better planning for future investment and innovation, he said. "The downward trend in enrollment is the single biggest challenge faced by the schools," said the bishop, adding that enrollment in the four schools has been gradually declining from a high of more than 700 students in 2011. The finances of the schools have been stable, though the four schools have an aggregated \$87,000 deficit for the current school year out of an overall

combined budget of nearly \$5 million. "While the finances have been relatively stable, we need a process for growth and future vitality," he said.

The rigorous academic programs offered by the schools include differentiated instruction, Spanish language, emphasis on reading and math readiness and STEM. According to the Terra Nova Grade Equivalent, a national achievement test that measures mastery in core subjects, Grade 5 students score at a Grade 8 level in math and Grade 10 level in language arts. Grade 7 students work at a Grade 9 level in math and a Grade 11 level in language arts.

The bishop said that in addition to offering excellent academics and new technology, the schools support the mission of Catholic education through the Mass, classroom prayer, celebration of holy days and instructions in the teaching of the Church.

He said he was proud that 100 percent of the elementary school

students participate in service to parishes, schools, and the wider community.

The bishop announced that the diocese, with the guidance of a working group of advisory board members and others in Stamford, is about to retain a strategic planning group that will lead the 18-month process to redesign the schools. The new plan will take effect in September, 2017.

"There could be change but it won't come as a surprise because you will be part of the process. Everybody needs to be heard," said the bishop.

The bishop invited all parents to attend a special Open House on Sunday, April 24, which will be held at all of the Catholic elementary schools in Stamford. Representatives from the schools will speak at all parishes that weekend, and registration tables will also be set up after Mass.

(For more info, visit the website: www.dioceseofbridgeportcatholic-schools.com)

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Catholic Charities

Lessons on hunger from Irish history

By ELLEN MCGINNESS

Ireland's Great Famine, its causes and its effect on the world were at the heart of a lecture sponsored by Catholic Charities of Fairfield County (CCFC) on February 21 at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Greenwich. This special event to celebrate CCFC's 100th anniversary was the brainchild of Advisory Board member Jim McPartlan and was co-hosted by Frank Browne, former president of The Wild Geese.

Upwards of 150 people turned out to hear Dr. Christine Kinealy, founder and director of Ireland's Great Hunger Institute at Quinnipiac University. Dr. Kinealy is a world-renowned authority on Ireland's Great Hunger, often known as the Irish Potato Famine. She spoke not only on the history of Ireland's Great Famine but on how this tragedy is still relevant in

today's world.

"Ireland's Great Hunger was a famine of unprecedented longevity and severity," Dr. Kinealy told the assembly. "More than one million died, and an even higher number emigrated in a period of only six years. The Hunger changed not only Ireland, but the rest of the world as a result of mass emigration. Its legacy is still evident in Ireland today."

The Great Hunger ranks among the worst tragedies in human history. Between 1845 and 1852, a potato blight, which virtually destroyed all of Ireland's potato crops for consecutive years, coupled with British governmental indifference to the plight of the Irish, resulted in the deaths of approximately 1.5 million Irish men, women and children through starvation or related diseases, and the emigration of more than 2 million to nations

around the world.

The famine marked the beginning of the depopulation of Ireland as the population continued to decline in the following decades. Estimates of the numbers of deaths during the famine may be too low; not only were whole families swept away by disease, but whole villages were effaced from the land. What is known for certain is that, by the time Ireland achieved independence in 1921, its population was barely half of what it had been in the early 1840s.

Catholic Charities was founded in 1916 by Marguerite Boylan, the daughter of Irish immigrants. Her commitment and dedication to work with the vulnerable and all those who live in the shadows of society were clearly formulated through the Irish experience and perspective. Boylan saw the increasing poverty in Connecticut and its negative domino effect on public health issues, juvenile delinquency, and increased numbers of orphaned children. Many of those



IRELAND'S GREAT FAMINE was the topic of a lecture by Dr. Christine Kinealy (center), founder and director of Ireland's Great Hunger Institute at Quinnipiac University. Part of Catholic Charities 100th anniversary celebration, it was sponsored by (l) CCFC Advisory Board member Jim McPartlan and Frank Browne, former president of The Wild Geese.

affected by the severe poverty were Irish immigrants themselves, who still had vivid memories of the devastating effect on the Irish people during and after The Great Hunger.

Weaving together the themes of famine, hunger, political influence and the generosity of others to offer aid and support to Ireland at the time, Dr. Kinealy brought her talk into the current day by reminding the audience that hunger still exists in the modern world. However, she noted, the mission of Catholic Charities is to strengthen and empower those in need to become independent again.

"We are proud of how

Catholic Charities treats all people with dignity and respect, and we are eager to proclaim the accomplishments of the organization to all of Connecticut," said McPartlan, who is joined on the 100th Anniversary Planning Committee by Catholic Charities board members Marilyn Hart and Nancy Murphy. He has served on the Catholic Charities board since 2014 and received the St. Augustine Medal of Service this year from Bishop Caggiano.

CCFC serves more than one million meals annually to the hungry and working poor through soup kitchens and food pantries.

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Divine Mercy Shrine set

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will dedicate a new shrine to the Divine Mercy on the grounds of St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport on Sunday, April 3, beginning at 2 pm. All are invited to join the bishop and parishioners from around the diocese to dedicate this beautiful shrine, celebrate Mass and join in the singing of the Divine Mercy chaplet. A reception will follow.

As the third child born to a family of ten children, Helen Kowalska struggled alongside her family for survival on their small farm during World War I in the small Polish village of Glogowiec. Having very little education but a tremendous devotion to the Lord, Helen became a religious Sister in the convent of the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Kraków, Poland. Upon taking her veil she received the name Sister Maria Faustina Kowalska.

A short five years later, on February 22, 1931, Jesus Christ appeared to Sister Faustina bringing a message of mercy for all of mankind. In her diary that day Sister Faustina wrote: "In the evening, when I was in my cell, I became aware of the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand was raised in blessing the other touching the garment at the breast. From the opening of the garment at the breast there came forth two large rays, one red the other pale. In silence I gazed intently at the Lord; my soul was overwhelmed with fear, but also great joy. After a while Jesus said to me, 'Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the inscription: Jesus, I trust You.' The pale ray stands for water which makes souls righteous; the red ray stands for the blood which is the life of souls."

This message and devotion to Jesus became the Divine Mercy.

This message of Divine Mercy tells each of us that God loves us with no regard to how great

our sins. He wants us to realize that his mercy is so much greater than our sins and in this recognition we should call upon him with trust and receive his mercy and ultimately his joy. The devotion to the Divine Mercy challenges us to a total commitment to God as Mercy. We are called to trust him completely, to accept his mercy and be merciful as he is merciful.

In Jesus' revelations to St. Faustina regarding Divine Mercy, he asked that a feast day be dedicated to the Divine Mercy and that this feast be celebrated on the Sunday after Easter. This feast, which was previously granted to Poland and celebrated within Vatican City, was granted to the Universal Church by Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the canonization of Sister Faustina on April 30, 2000.

(For more info, contact Janet Davis: 203.416.1636 or jdavis@diobpt.org.)

Consecrated Life

Vespers conclude Year of Consecrated Life

By PAT HENNESSY

Candles cupped in their hands, representatives of the 38 religious congregations who have served the people of God in Fairfield County processed in to St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport the evening of February 2. The Vespers Service marked the conclusion of the Year of Consecrated Life proclaimed by Pope Francis. It was led by Father Robert Kinnally, chancellor of the diocese.

The yearlong Celebration of Consecrated Life was twofold, according to the Vatican: to “make a grateful remembrance of the recent past” while embracing “the future with hope.”

The choice of February 2 for the World Day for Consecrated Life was made in 1997 by St. John Paul II, connecting it to the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple and the ancient celebration of Candlemas Day; the day on which candles are blessed symbolizing Christ who is the light of the world. Those



in consecrated life are called to reflect the light of Jesus Christ to all people.

“The Vespers Service was designed to involve as many people as possible, both members of religious congregations and laity,” said Sister Nancy Strillacci, diocesan delegate for Religious. That decision included recognizing members of the Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life in the congregation, music by soloist Cidalia Kettles

and the student choir from St. Augustine Academy, and a final procession with a lay associate bearing a candle for each religious order, symbolizing the passing on of their charism.

During the service, the order names and dates of arrival in Fairfield County were called. The first religious order to serve here, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, came in 1852 to assist impoverished Irish immigrants. The most recently arrived came

in 2015: Father Christopher Johnson, OCD, of the Order of Discalced Carmelites, who is chaplain at Greenwich Hospital.

His order’s charism is to be witnesses to mercy, in whatever form that may take. “This year

prison ministry, and community outreach.

Mary Frances Malone, associate vice president for academic affairs at Fairfield University, spoke of the proud history of Catholic education, built by



has given us the encouragement to reflect on our identity as consecrated men and women, and to reflect even more on the mission we bring to the world,” Father Christopher said.

Four speakers gave testimony to the contribution of religious in education, hospital ministry,

“competent, caring, creative individuals eager to transform the world.”

“The Daughters of Charity were the ‘go to’ people if you wanted to start a hospital in your city,” said Bill Hoey, vice president of Mission and Service at St. Vincent’s Medical Center, founded by the Daughters of Charity. He pointed out that “one out of every six people in this country is served in a hospital founded by women religious.”

John Santa, a member of the Order of Malta who is deeply involved in prison ministry, praised religious women and men for their compassion. “You see our incarcerated brothers and sisters in Christ and you do not forget them.”

“You are the voices of justice, the visionaries who comfort the desperate, who bring justice to the immigrants, who assist with the homeless,” said Jane Ferreira, president and CEO for Mercy Learning Center in Bridgeport, speaking of religious in outreach ministry. “I thank you for those who we call strangers, and for loving them with open hearts. You have been a light to all of us.”

In his closing remarks, Father Kinnally referred back to the Feast of the Presentation. “This may be the end of the Year of Consecrated Life, but just as Simeon got to hold Christ in his arms you, too, hold Christ in your arms, while you hold those of us who need you. We are so grateful.”

New convent for Sisters of Nazareth

MONROE—The old convent of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth had worn a lot of faces in its time. In addition to being home for the Sisters, it had been a girl’s school, an infirmary for aging Sisters, and a Spiritual Life center. With changing times and the wear and tear on the old building, it was decided that the Sisters needed a new home.

Fortunately, their property on Route 111 in Monroe had more than enough room for them to build anew. The Sisters celebrated the 50th dedication of the old convent on December 8, then readied for the move to their new home.

The transition went smoothly. Sister Marita Ruppe, the local superior, organized committees for each phase of the move and the set-up of the new convent. Individual Sisters from other homes in New England were teamed with each of the Monroe Sisters,



BISHOP CAGGIANO DEDICATED the new chapel for the Sisters of Holy Family of Nazareth. Sisters from throughout New England came to join in the celebration.

helping them to pack, unpack and get settled in their new rooms. On Saturday night, December 19, they shared their first meal in their new home—carryout pizza! They also tested out the recliners and the television hook-ups.

The following day, December 20, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano dedicated the chapel and altar at the new Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent. Almost all of the 38 Sisters from the New England Area of Holy Family Province

of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth joined the Monroe Sisters for the dedication Mass. They were joined by Sisters Catherine Fedewa, Teresa Mika and Kathleen Ann Stadler from the order’s leadership team.

Bishop Caggiano installed relics from Sts. Callistus and Egidius in the chapel’s altar, then anointed it with oil. The four corners of the chapel also were blessed. One of the prominent features of the new chapel comes from the old one: the striking stained-glass windows were lovingly transferred to their new location, giving a feeling of welcome and continuity.

The new convent, compact, comfortable and scaled to give a more homelike feel, has gladdened the 18 Sisters who now live there. “At this size we’re in community, active and retired Sisters together,” says Sister Jude Carroll. “We’re one family again.”

Youth

CONVIVIO:
'Mercy Starts With Me'

BY DANIEL GARDELLA
AND ABIGAIL WOLPIUK

March—the month for prayer and fasting, the month for preparation for holy week, and finally the month for Convivio 2016!

The Fraternas, as well as countless volunteers, have made the seventh year of Convivio another tremendous success. Focused on the theme of uplifting the world, Convivio drew in over 200 teenagers who came from all different backgrounds to share in the love of God's mercy and forgiveness.

Here's a closer look at what one newcomer participant thought: "With this being my first Convivio, it was so exciting to see all these people who also shared the same love of God as you," said Daniel Gardella.

At four o'clock on Friday, the wait for Convivio was over and the participants came, first one by one and then in busloads. The doors of the Edgerton Theater were opened wide by the welcoming committee for them to come in.

When they had registered and

had their groups assigned, it was then time for the official start of Convivio, the opening ceremony! We started with a prayer and then the co-president of Convivio this year, Frank Mantero, gave a moving speech about making this weekend last and participating fully in the events it has to offer.

"Convivio isn't something to look at and treat like any other weekend. This is a life changing weekend. Don't let it slip through your hands," he said.

Friday's unit was focused on all the different ways that the world needs mercy. First to give a talk on this topic was Deacon Eric Silva, who will be ordained a priest this spring. He moved us all with a quote from Pope Francis, "Mercy is the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness."

Deacon Silva explained how we should never hold a grudge against someone, which is often shown in the world by saying something as simple as "I'm fine," or "Yeah, we're cool."

He said that "Mercy is like a sponge. As we squeeze it, it pours



out all over the place."

He went on by explaining that suffering is unavoidable in everyone's lives but it can be a good thing. "Incredible suffering forms the greatest saints," he said. We broke up into small groups to further our understanding of his talk. The small groups took part in deep and meaningful discussions that were a great start to our weekend.

Saturday did not bring any less enthusiasm as group leaders and participants filled the Edgerton Theater with joy and were ready for another fun-filled day. The



FOCUSED ON THE THEME of uplifting the world, 200 teenagers came to the Convivio retreat weekend at Sacred Heart University to share in the love of God's mercy and forgiveness. (PHOTOS BY AMY MORTENSEN)

day opened with a talk on "How Mercy Starts with Me." This talk was given by Monica, one of the Fraternas. The picture of how we can show mercy simply through forgiveness was shown with a scene from the parable of the Prodigal Son. This scene explained that we must realize we have done wrong and return to God and say we are sorry.

After the talk, we split up into small groups and spread out throughout the facility and examined the importance of this talk and how the parable of the Prodigal Son was a good way to exemplify how to have mercy shown to us and how we can show mercy in our lives every day.

"I thought that the skit on the prodigal son was really great. Monica showed how it has relevance in our everyday lives by paralleling it to her own life," said participant Sean Duda. The group work ended by doing an activity using Play-Doh to explain that when we sin, we leave holes in our soul that only God can fill with his endless love and compassion.

Saturday night was a beautiful and poignant evening. For two hours, we all gathered in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit for Adoration and Confession. God's mercy was certainly flowing that night; in the back of the chapel there were several priests who heard over 150 confessions. After the participants were finished they lit a candle in the front of the chapel where the Eucharist was exposed. Nearly everybody afterwards said that this was their highlight of Convivio.

The Convivio band, led by Tori Conaway and Kevin Donovan, held a concert that enlivened everybody who was present. After being

renewed by God's grace and mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, it felt amazing to be able to sing and praise God in such a loud and fun way. "It was amazing being around people who share my beliefs, but it was also just a great time to let go," said Elizabeth Holmes, another participant.

Everyone was very much "Alive" (It was the name of one of the songs) to conclude the night.

It seems like fate that the word Convivio means "feast" in Latin, because the food at Sacred Heart University was nothing short of delicious. Three days, four meals, and one full stomach later I still crave for those homemade chips. Even though Convivio started at the end of the day on Friday, we started off our retreat right with breakfast for dinner. Saturday was a day of tortillas-wraps for lunch and tacos for dinner! And on our last day, Sunday, we convened with our new friends over the classic pasta and meatball combo. Convivio is not only food for the soul, it's food for the stomach.

Convivio began on Friday night with many high school and even some college students looking to find and strengthen their relationship with God and ended with many people visibly sad that this magical and moving weekend had to end. But now, as the future of the Church, it is our job to take what we learned at Convivio and not only use it in our everyday life but also share the good news with everyone in our lives!

(Daniel Gardella, a junior at St. Joseph High School in Trumbull, is a first-time participant in Convivio. Abigail Wolpiuk, a junior at Lauralton Hall, Milford, is a peer leader.)

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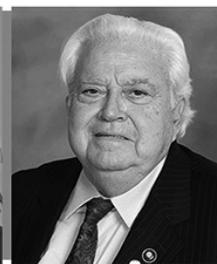
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Local News

Fatima Centennial Tour

By BETH LONGWARE DUFF

The two-year World Apostolate of Fatima USA Centennial U.S. Tour for Peace kicks off on March 21 at the National Blue Army Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Metuchen, N.J. From April 13-19 it will make three stops in this diocese at parishes in Bridgeport, Stamford and Wilton.

The tour, which features the historic International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima, commemorates the 100th anniversaries of two apparitions in Fatima, Portugal: the Angel of Peace in 1916 and the Blessed Mother in 1917. Plans are that by the time the tour ends on December 20, 2017, the Pilgrim Virgin Statue will have visited more than 100 dioceses in all 50 states.

It is not commonly known that the story of Our Lady of Fatima actually began in 1916, when an Angel of Peace appeared on three separate occasions to three young shepherd children—Lucia Santos and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto. He taught them to pray, and encouraged them to make sacrifices and spend time in adoration of the Lord as a way of bringing peace to their country.

The following spring, on May 13, 1917, the three children were with their flocks in a pasture when they witnessed brilliant flashes in the sky. Lucia later described in her memoirs the appearance of “a lady, clothed in white, brighter than the sun, radiating a light more clear and intense than a crystal cup filled with sparkling water lit by burn-



ing sunlight.”

It was the first of six consecutive monthly appearances by Our Lady, who asked the children to devote themselves to the Holy Trinity and pray the Rosary every day to bring peace to the world. Her last visit, witnessed by a gathering of tens of thousands, culminated with a spectacular solar phenomenon known as the Miracle of the Sun.

A century later, the U.S. Centennial Tour is spreading the message of Fatima and promoting devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The tour will visit states east of the Mississippi River this year and the remainder of the country in 2017.

“We’ll be giving out lots of rosaries and scapulars, and literature about Fatima,” says Program Coordinator Patrick Sabat of the Blue Army. “A lot of people go to shrines in Fatima or Lourdes or Guadalupe as pilgrims. This time, the pilgrim statue is coming to them in their local churches.”

Sandy Casablanca, president of the Blue Army in the Diocese of Bridgeport and a communicant at Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish in Bridgeport, is coordinating the tour locally. “We want people to know that Our Lady is present and that she helps us,” she explains. “It’s so important for people to go to church. That’s where we need to be with Our Blessed Mother and Our Lord.”

For Father Reggie Norman, pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton, participating in the tour was an easy decision. Parish organizers are finalizing plans for the tour’s two-day visit, including a church procession, Adoration, a movie about the miracle of Fatima, enrolling peo-

Prayer for Fatima Centennial U.S. Tour for Peace

O Queen of the Rosary, Sweet Virgin of Fatima, who has deigned to appear in the land of Portugal, we beg you to watch over our dear homeland and assure its moral and spiritual revival. Bring back peace to all the nations of the world so that all, our own nation in particular, may be happy to call you their Queen and the Queen of Peace. Amen.

Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for our country.

Our Lady of Fatima, obtain for all humanity a lasting peace.

ple in the Scapular Society and an information table with resources that people can take away with them.

“There’s also a component to teach the children about Fatima because it seems that the older people know about it but the younger people don’t,” he says. “We’re also thinking about praying the Rosary and afterwards having a small reception so we can all get together and talk about Our Lady. We want to open it up to not just our parishioners but anyone who wants to come and join us in the celebration.”

St. Mary Parish in Stamford and Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Bridgeport will also host the Centennial U.S. Tour for Peace during its week in the diocese.

(For more info on the tour, go to www.fatimatourforpeace.com.)

Education is a Human Right

FAIRFIELD—Global and local challenges converge around issues of education and poverty, said speakers at the 8th Annual Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice (CAPP) Educators; Communion Breakfast at Sacred Heart University.

Jim Ziolkowski, founder of BuildOn, an international non-profit organization, said that “The children of Burkina Faso in West Africa and the children of Bridgeport face the same challenges” of poverty and inequality.

Ziolkowski was presented the CAPP “Educator of the Year” award for his efforts in building schools and supporting poor students throughout the world.

“What needs to change in our churches and our schools?” asked Ziolkowski, whose BuildOn programs have transformed the



lives of inner-city American youth along with young people in the developing world.

He said his efforts “to break the cycle of poverty through education” have grown out of his faith and the courage of those working to change their lives.

Thomas W. Burnford, acting president of the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), said that education “is a human right based in human dignity” and that poor children in the U.S. are often stuck in failing schools.

In his talk on the importance of Catholic education, he advocated for federal government support for Catholic Schools in order to give parents the choice to better serve their children.

Burnford, who is the father of three young children in a Catholic school in his home state of Maryland, said that education is a “social justice issue and inalienable right” around the world.

He said that one of the most important challenges for Catholic education “is to make it accessible to the poor,” adding that equal education unites a society and “raises everyone up.” He said there are 6,525 Catholic schools across the United States that not only educate young people but “form them in the faith.”

He said that Catholic schools “raise the bar” on education because “to know, love and serve God,” is our mission. “We want young people to know they are not just citizens of a country but of people working to get to heaven.

Burnford said that Vatican II documents prophesized the importance of education around the globe in elevating human dignity and posited that parents should have educational choice in the selection of schools for their children.

More than 200 turned out for the Communion Breakfast, which began with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano celebrating the Educator’s Mass in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit at Sacred Heart.

The bishop told educators that they were entrusted with a “sublime mission” of educating students in the faith.

During the meeting Robert Nalewajek, president of CAPP USA, announced that Bishop Caggiano has been invited to serve on the CAPP board by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. He also honored Dr. Ralph Burke of Fairfield for his educational leadership and for his efforts in founding and guiding the CAPP Educators’ Communion Breakfast.

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World Youth Day 2016

The Black Madonna: The icon of Jasna Góra

By JANET DAVIS

Throughout Europe there are approximately 500 Black Madonnas located in various shrines and Catholic churches. On our way to World Youth Day in Krakow we will have the opportunity to visit Jasna Góra (Mount of Light) monastery located in South Central Poland on a hilltop in Czestochowa, where one of the oldest images of the Madonna and the Christ is enshrined.

According to legend, the icon was painted by Luke the Evangelist on a tabletop that was built by Jesus Christ. Over the centuries, according to the myth associated with the icon, Mother and Child traveled from

Jerusalem to northwest Hungary and finally arrived in Poland in reply to a dream of Prince Ladislaus.

Beginning in the fourteenth century the recorded history of the Black Madonna offers us improved documentation. Modern scholarship claims that "the figure is distinctly thirteenth-fourteenth century Byzantine in form." In 1430, the Hussites stole the Black Madonna and vandalized it by breaking it into three pieces and slashing it twice with a sword before they themselves fell in agony—leading to their own deaths in front of the Madonna and eliminating their ability to slash the icon a third time. In 1434, the restorers of the image

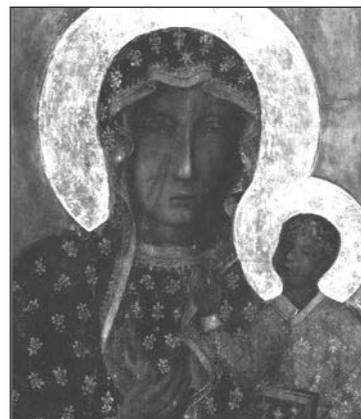
were faithful to the original in regard to its contents, with inclusion of the original sword marks.

In 1655, Poland was overrun by the forces of Sweden's King Charles X. The only remaining unconquered land surrounded the monastery, where the monks defended the portrait during a forty day siege. In time all of Poland was able to force out the invaders. The Black Madonna of Czestochowa became a symbol of national unity and was called the Queen of Poland.

Fast forward history to 1920 with the Russian invasion of Poland. Legend has it that the image of the Virgin appeared in the clouds over the city and the troops withdrew.

Be it legend or history, the Black Madonna of Poland is a powerful image of our faith. The dark pigment on the Madonna's hands and face is attributed to her age and the historical use of candles to illuminate her, which produced smoke that colored the painting. For centuries miracles have been attributed to her.

Currently, her prominence is not derived from her miracles



but by the devotion of Pope John Paul II. During his historic visit to Poland in 1979, a few months after his election as Pope, it was at the foot of the Black Madonna that he prayed. Pope John Paul II made additional visits to Czestochowa in 1983 and 1991.

Today the Polish people continue to worship the Madonna and Child, especially on August 26, the day that Saint Ladislaus reserved as the Feast of Our Lady of Czestochowa.

We will make our pilgrimage to the Black Madonna of Czestochowa on our way from Warsaw to Kraków, where we will

have just spent two days on retreat.

The monastery and the Black Madonna have an undeniable spiritual power. Upon entering the chapel we will fall to our knees and process on our knees around the perimeter of the sanctuary where the Madonna is enshrined. The walls of the shrine are covered with votive offerings from millions of pilgrims from around the world.

As you make your way around the chapel the Madonna's gaze is so intense you feel as if she is looking right at you. The icon rests in a gold frame decorated with hundreds of beautiful precious jewels and is positioned on a black and silver altar donated by the Grand Chancellor George Ossonliński in 1650. It is here that we will offer our prayers as we prepare to make our way to Kraków for World Youth Day.

I invite you to send your prayers and offerings to me via email at jdavis@diobpt.org and I will take them with us to the monastery of Jasna Góra on the hilltop in Czestochowa and lay them at the feet of the Black Madonna for you.

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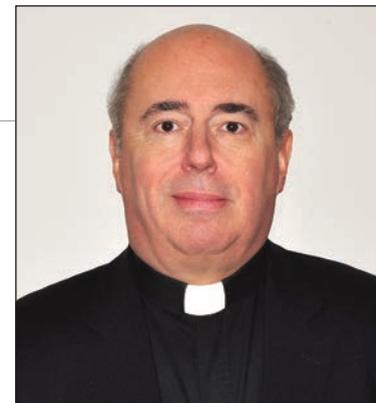
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St. Mary, Ridgefield

Pilgrimage without leaving home



By **MSGR. LAURENCE BRONKIEWICZ**

My Webster's Dictionary defines pilgrimage as "the journey of a pilgrim to a shrine or a sacred place," a trip that takes us away from our geographical home. That was not, however, true of last Lent's St. Mary Parish Pilgrimage with St. Ignatius of Loyola. Over seven consecutive weekends, the founder of the Society of Jesus brought his teaching on the spiritual life to us.

We were the first pilot parish to make the Ignatian Pilgrimage developed by Father James Bower, SJ, founder of Fairfield University's Center for Ignatian Spirituality, whose mission is keeping the spirituality of Ignatius alive and making it available to the local Christian community. As pastor of our large and active Catholic faith community here in

Ridgefield, and a member of the Center's board, I could not have been happier with the response of our parish. Over 160 of our parishioners signed up for either of our two weekend sessions, led by a team headed by Father Paul Holland, SJ, rector of the Fairfield Jesuit community.

As a result of last Lent's Ignatian Pilgrimage, I am much more certain about one thing—the hunger for a deeper relationship with God in so many men and women of all ages and backgrounds, and I strongly suspect that is the case across our diocese and beyond its borders. Last year's pilgrimage took us not to a shrine in another country but to an even more sacred place—the depths of our own hearts where we met and continue to meet our loving God. It confirmed in an experiential way the definition of prayer found in the Catechism of

the Catholic Church: "a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God" (CCC, 2558).

As we were introduced to the life of Ignatius, his Spiritual Exercises and major themes in Ignatian spirituality, we also learned new ways of praying, ways to which many, if not most, Catholics have never been introduced—like centering prayer, scriptural prayer, journaling, Lectio Divina, and group prayer with faith sharing. Beginning with an opening prayer, our sessions consisted of a 30-40 minute presentation. After a break, we were led to a particular prayer method which included a brief explanation leading into the prayer experience itself, some silent reflection on it, then some group reflection, and finally a prayer of thanksgiving for the graces received.

The reason our Parish

Pilgrimage resonated so well with our local pilgrims lies in the fact that Ignatian spirituality is a spirituality of real life, everyday life, a spirituality that can be practiced not only by Jesuits, but also by men and women, married and unmarried, of every generation and circumstance. It is not a spirituality focused for religious only, that is, for people living vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The concrete questions it raises—where is God in my everyday life? where has God been in my own life history? —are ones that we can all benefit from grappling with as we grow in our relationship with the Lord.

The teaching of Ignatius on the spiritual life offers a set of valuable tools to help anyone pay better and closer attention to God who is always at work in us. It recognizes a vitally important aspect of prayer that we don't

often think about—that the whole person prays, including the body and the feelings and the desires. I can still recall how much our pilgrims appreciated being introduced to prayer using simple bodily breathing exercises as well as prayer employing the very underutilized faculty of imagination.

We also learned that not every voice in our interior life is God's voice. Ignatius' teaching clearly addresses the importance of discernment of spirits, the need to distinguish God's voice from my own and other voices, and it helps to identify obstacles that can prevent us from recognizing God's voice in our prayer.

➤ *CONTINUED ON PAGE 27*

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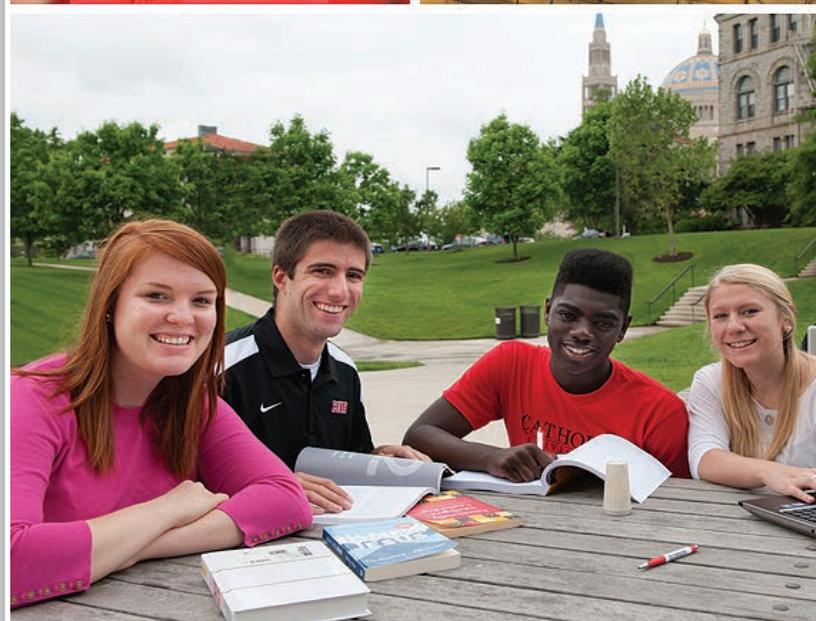
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EDITORIAL

All is Possible

Easter Sunday is like New Year's Day, only better. Instead of making resolutions and watching them wither and die, on Easter all the well-intended but failed resolutions, along with the Lenten discipline you never attempted, even the grudges you couldn't release—have all been taken up, raised in glory with Christ's Resurrection. "If Christ was not raised, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins," St. Paul told the Corinthians (1 Cor 15: 17). But Jesus did triumph over sin and death. The impossible became possible. Sinners became saints in the eyes of God.

Your sins and failures have been washed away, raised up, forgiven. The hardest thing, as you sit at Mass on Easter Sunday, is to accept that you are a saint. You didn't earn it. You barely tried to work for it. But there it is—you're one of God's people. "We have been given the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," St. Paul says. Jesus triumphed. With all your faults, God sees you as a saint. The impossible is possible.

Called to Conversion

This year more than 250 men and women from parishes throughout the diocese will receive the sacraments and formally enter the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil. Their journey was achieved after a period of formation and preparation through the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion, known to many as the RCIA process.

One of the more moving moments during the Holy Saturday liturgy is their coming forth to be welcomed into the Catholic Church and receive the sacraments for the first time. It is both a humbling and joyful gesture as they walk down the aisle in full communion with the Church.

In their newfound profession of faith, we may find ourselves wondering about the path that has brought them the Lord: Did their call to conversion come out of great loss or great need? the birth of a child or death of a loved one? Or is it simply born of silence, a love of God, and gratitude for life?

"We walk with them and support them in their journey of faith. None of us know the length of the journey. For each of us it is a different amount of time, but for each day he gives us in life, we must make the glory of God real and share the love of Christ with all," the bishop said when he met the catechumens and candidates at the beginning of Lent.

Their journey of faith is a great gift to us all as well as a reminder that we, too, are continually called to conversion. Faith is not something that is arrived at—it is a lifelong passage fashioned in our own solitude and in worship with others.

The Easter Vigil is a beautiful way to welcome others to the Church and to renew our faith. Standing outside on a chilly, early spring evening as the priest lights the Paschal Candle is the most basic expression of our need for faith and "the light of Christ" in our lives.

Moving Forward

In the last month, the diocese has moved ahead with plans to restructure and reinvigorate diocesan schools. Building on his "State of Education" address on January 6, the bishop has announced the following initiatives to sustain and expand Catholic education through new leadership and investment:

Foundations in Education: This newly created 501(c)3 is expected to lead the transformation of Catholic schools in Fairfield County. The diocese will introduce its plans at an inaugural dinner at Wee Burn Country Club on May 6, in Darien. Noted economics columnist and TV commentator Larry Kudlow of CNBC will serve as Master of Ceremonies. The goal of Foundations in Education is to invest in Catholic schools through programs that offer scholarships, support teaching innovation, and invest in leadership training. Many thanks to those who are serving on the newly created board and who have worked to make the inaugural event a success.

Partnering with Parents: The bishop met with parents of Catholic elementary School children on March 8 to ask for their participation in the strategic planning process to restructure and redesign Catholic education in Stamford. The goal is to prepare schools to grow and thrive in the 21st century as faith-based learning communities. During the meeting at Trinity Catholic High School, he told parents they are key players in planning for the future. "You are essential partners in what happens to our schools and our children," said the bishop. He challenged parents to support the effort by serving on planning committees, re-enrolling their children and encouraging others to look at Catholic schools. ■

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Farewell Madeline!

This Easter issue of *Fairfield County Catholic* is dedicated to Madeline Ghilardi of Shelton, who passed away suddenly of a heart attack in her home on March 9.

Madeline served as volunteer copy editor/consultant to *FCC* since 1993, after retiring as a professor of English at Norwalk Community College.

Born in 1931, she was 88 at the time of her passing, but most people who knew her were shocked. She looked a decade younger—she had never lost the bounce in her step, her lively spirit and her quick wit.

"Mad Mad," as she was affectionately known by her younger colleagues, came in on a monthly basis to proof the paper. She demanded a quiet workspace and brought along the American Heritage Dictionary, the AP Style Book, and the Jerusalem Bible—her holy trinity of copyediting.

Mondays before the paper went to press where always "Chinese," Mad's preferred take-out and her one reward for

pouring over the pages of *FCC* for many years. She locked herself away in a small cubicle and worked quietly until she read everything. If a typo got through after she left for the night, she'd let us know about it the next time she saw us.

So, on a rainy, morning in late, late winter, we said goodbye to Madeline at what her pastor, Father Michael Jones referred to as her "second home," St. Lawrence Parish in Huntington. A Third Order Carmelite, Madeline led the RCIA program for many years, and also served as Eucharistic Minister, Lecturer and Sexton. Her faith inspired many.

An intensely private person, Mad seldom spoke of her herself and was always interested in others. Her friends sensed that she understood life better than most and perhaps had her own share of human suffering. A deeply devout



and spiritual person, she will be remembered for her knowing smile, intellectual gifts, and great faith. Mad never judged or criticized. Whatever was wrong with the world, she took to the altar or let go off in her silent prayer.

Mad, thank you for casting your "eagle eye" on our writing and your loving eye on us. We were blessed by your company.

Brian D. Wallace
Director of Communications

CLERGY APPOINTMENTS



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

ADMINISTRATOR

REVEREND MONSIGNOR THOMAS W. POWERS, to temporary Administrator of Saint Roch Parish, Greenwich. Effective date was March 1 until a permanent provision is made for the parish. Monsignor Powers will continue to serve as Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia.

PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND BERNARDO RODRIGUEZ, Assistant Chaplain to Danbury Hospital and part-time Parochial Vicar at Saint Peter Parish, Danbury, to part-time Parochial Vicar, Saint Peter Parish, Bridgeport. Father Rodriguez will continue to serve as part-time Parochial Vicar at Saint Peter Parish, Danbury. Effective date was March 1.

CHAPLAIN

REVEREND MARCEL SAINT JEAN, Parochial Vicar of Saint Mary Parish, Stamford, to Assistant Chaplain, Danbury Hospital and part-time Chaplain, Saint Joseph's Manor, Trumbull. Effective date was March 1.

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

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Editorial



Mass Mob gets warm welcome in midwinter

A WOMAN'S VOICE

BY KATIE SCARLETT CALCUTT

Katie-Scarlett Calcutt is the mother of two and a founding member of Mass Mob of Fairfield County.

Sub-zero temperatures didn't stop Father Sam Kachuba and the St. Pius X community from offering a warm welcome to Mass Mob Seven.

Mass Mob, in a nutshell, aims to put social media (Facebook and Twitter) in the service of the Eucharist. In Fairfield County, that means bringing hundreds of people from all over the diocese together for one regular Sunday Mass at one of its parishes. This isn't a surprise visit; the pastor

agrees to the date and time of the proposed "mob" before the Facebook postings go up. The goal is to fill a church, build bonds within the diocese and grow in love for the Body of Christ. Parishes in Bridgeport, Danbury, Stamford, Norwalk and now Fairfield have welcomed "mobbers" and, in return, mobbers bring fresh faces and an energetic love for Christ.

Mass Mob Seven was no exception, as over 400 people kicked off their Valentine's Day

with the sacrifice of the Mass. Just you try to show me something more romantic than that.

To add to the romance, we all learned (or relearned) a little Latin. In order to set Lent apart liturgically, the parish is singing certain Mass parts in the official language of the Church. This, we were told, was also a wish of the parish's patron saint: that each of the faithful be confident in chant. We may have been a bit timid on our Sanctus Sanctus, but it's a long time until Easter, so there's still time to give good St. Pius X his wish.

Unlike most of the churches that have hosted Mass Mob, St. Pius X eschews stained glass, allowing sunlight to drench the congregation. It makes for good photos, as well as casts a cheer over the celebration that seems appropriate, even on the First Sunday of Lent. Drapes of Lenten purple break up the otherwise gentle pastels, giving the place a

constant Easter-vibe: a compliment considering every Sunday is a little Easter. All in all, there's a conscious simplicity to the church. Everything is where it should be, and nothing more.

The Gospel reading told us of Jesus' 40 days in the desert,

honestly brought home an aspect of Lent I'd never fully considered. Jesus didn't fast in the desert for 40 days to bring on suffering. He went to bring on silence. The heat, the sand, and the hunger were all a means to an end: to be free to focus on God.

To paraphrase Father Kachuba, our 40 days isn't (just) to prepare us for Easter: it is to prepare us for the rest of our lives. Those lives include, or rather depend on, a mission. Somehow, each of us is called to a task that only we can do: in our families, in our schools, in our workplaces. But we have to be free enough from the distractions and pulls of the world to recognize it.

Ironically, we marked Christ's victory over hunger and temptation (that sounds hard) with coffee and donuts after Mass (they were delicious). I'm grateful that, even during Lent, we have a lot to celebrate. ■

"Each of us is called to a task that only we can do: in our families, in our schools, in our workplaces."

culminating in Satan's three-fold temptation: to comfort, to power and to pride. We all know how it ends, and we never really doubt that Jesus will be able to say "thanks, but no thanks, Evil One." But Father Kachuba's



In praise of rich uncles

A DAD'S VIEW

BY MATTHEW HENNESSEY

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

Uncle Jimmy was my rich uncle. Actually, he wasn't that rich, but he worked in New York City, so we thought he was loaded. In fact, he wasn't even really my uncle. He was my great uncle, my dad's dad's brother. I had a lot of aunts and uncles like that.

We called him Uncle Jimmy to distinguish him from my father, also named Jimmy—though called Hambone by most. Uncle Jimmy wore bolo ties. Hambone didn't (and doesn't) wear bolo ties, or any kind of ties.

As if to punctuate his distinctiveness, Uncle Jimmy spelled his last name without the final "e"—Hennessey. Family lore chalked this up to a typographical error

made by a traveling insurance salesman sometime during the Spanish-American War.

During his golden years Uncle Jimmy lived near a golf course on Cape Cod. He was a widower with no children, so the time came when he needed someone to look after him. He moved down to New Jersey to live among the extended family.

Toward the end, he needed full-time care in a nursing home. This meant that the house in Cape Cod sat empty. Uncle Jimmy was more than happy to let the Hennesseys (the ones with an "e") keep his nice house company.

The place wasn't right on the beach, but it wasn't far. On Cape Cod, one never is.

For Hambone and family it was a vacation destination that was otherwise out of reach. We weren't poor by any measure, but we were far from rich. We were probably somewhere on the low side of the middle.

It's hard for any kid to know more than the basics about his parents' finances, but even if we didn't have spending money for fashionable clothes or the latest hit records, we never missed a meal or shivered in the cold. Even when times were lean, my mom and dad always managed to scrape together enough to rent a little bungalow on the Jersey shore.

My dad had grown up in our town. He'd held a variety of "helping profession" jobs as he was starting his family. He moonlighted as a bartender for extra cash. At 50, with the help of friends and family, he and my mother scraped together enough to buy the pub beside the train station. Though popular and beloved, Hennessey's wasn't the kind of place that was going to make anyone into a millionaire.

What my dad lacked in earning power he made up in what today is called "social capital." He knew everybody and every-

body knew him. Everything from the houses we lived in to the cars my parents drove to the clothes we children wore was in some way made possible by the inter-generational generosity of family and friends.

When there wasn't enough spare cash to rent a shore house, special arrangements could always be made.

A week in a bungalow on the Jersey shore is great. Cape Cod is another world entirely. We went on whale watches and took trips to Lexington and Concord. We saw Plymouth Rock and ate lobster. We spent a day wandering agog amid the madness of Provincetown. We listened to the Red Sox on the radio.

For a Jersey boy it was like going to the moon. For my parents, who were just starting to pay for college for my two older sisters, access to Uncle Jimmy's Cape Cod house was a difference-maker. When our subsidized vacation was over and we returned to what I considered

our humdrum suburban lives, I'd dream of living in Uncle Jimmy's house.

"Boy, I'd sure love to have a house on Cape Cod when I'm grown up," I'd think to myself. Well, here we are. All grown up and still no house on Cape Cod. Not even close.

But I have something even more precious. The memory of ancient Uncle Jimmy sipping whiskey in an overstuffed chair at

a Christmas party. The memory of mom and dad blushing and sputtering as our car is overtaken by a flamboyant and feathery P-town parade. The salt-water smell of teenage summers on the moon.

Those memories are worth at least as much to me now as a house on Cape Cod. Maybe Uncle Jimmy wasn't as rich as we thought he was. But he gave us more than he probably realized.

In his honor, I'm going to buy myself a bolo tie. We'll see whether I have the guts to wear it. ■

"Uncle Jimmy wasn't as rich as we thought he was."

We wish you a Happy Easter



Joe Palmieri
President

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- Holy Spirit Church - Stamford
- Christ the King Church - Trumbull
- St. John Church - Darien

ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

- St. James Church - Rocky Hill
- Basilica of the Immaculate Conception - Waterbury
- St. Mary Church - Newington
- St. George Church - Guilford
- St. Bridget Church - School Gym - Cheshire
- St. Mary Church - Lakeville

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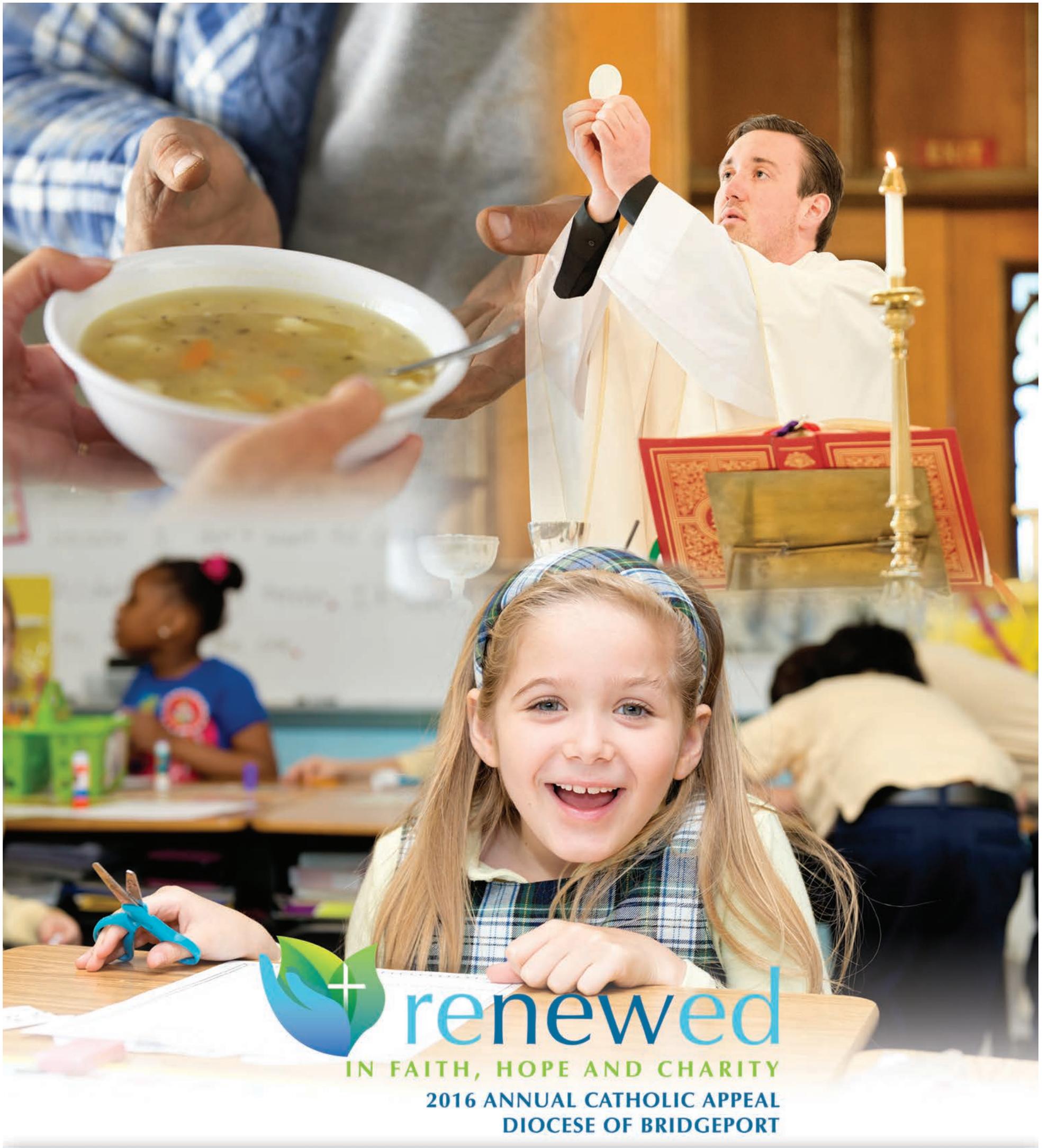
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My sisters and brothers in Christ, please accept my heartfelt appreciation for your support to your parish and our diocesan ministries. We have the opportunity to continue Christ's mission through the 2016 Annual Catholic Appeal *"Renewed in Faith, Hope and Charity."* Through your generosity we are able to provide for the vital ministries and programs that serve the marginalized in our communities and support the future of the Church in Fairfield County. Please join with me to make a gift to this year's Appeal. I ask the Lord's blessing upon you and your family.

Faithfully in Christ,

Frank Caggiano
 Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
 Bishop of Bridgeport



YOUR GIFT TO THIS YEAR'S APPEAL WILL ALLOW THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT TO...

- † Award financial scholarships to almost 2,000 children throughout the Diocese.
- † Provide more than 1 million meals to needy persons through four major nutrition programs.
- † Deliver 15,000 counseling sessions to individuals and families in crisis.
- † Ensure that 38,000 children and young adults are able to participate in religious education through the Faith Formation program.
- † Educate and train 30 men for ordination to the priesthood.
- † Care for 74 senior retired priests.
- † Provide spiritual care to 22,000 nursing home residents and hospital patients.
- † Afford our youth with meaningful opportunities to mature as holy and active members of society through a wide range of faith-based programs.



Bishop's Scholarship Fund

The Bishop's Scholarship Fund provides tuition assistance to families who attend our diocesan schools. Last year, over \$2,000,000 in scholarships was awarded through the Annual Catholic Appeal and other sources to students from every town and school who demonstrate financial need.

Catechesis, Evangelization and Lay Leadership

More than 38,000 children receive religious education in our Diocese. Youth and young adults encounter Christ and live as disciples through the High School Apostles Leadership Program, CONVIVIO, March for Life and Catholic Scouting. Marriage preparation and Respect Life ministry programs provide family faith formation and an opportunity to grow closer to Christ.

Youth Ministry

Youth Ministry brings the hope of Christ to the young as they seek to grow and participate in the life, mission and work of the faith community. This year as many as 300 young people in the diocese will travel to Krakow, Poland, to participate in World Youth Day 2016 with our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

Catholic Academy of Bridgeport

The Catholic Academy of Bridgeport is located on four campuses in the city of Bridgeport: St. Andrew Academy (PreK-8) and St. Ann Academy (PreK-8), St. Raphael Academy (PreK-3) and St. Augustine Academy (grades 4-8). Nearly 1,000 elementary school children benefit from the academic excellence, discipline and Catholic values that are imparted in the culturally, spiritually, and economically diverse environment.



Catholic Charities of Fairfield County

Catholic Charities offers hope to families and individuals to help them overcome crisis, poverty and other life challenges so they can go on to lead productive lives. Counseling, nutrition, immigration and housing programs, along with related services and resources, are available to all people in need regardless of their religious, social or economic background.

Pastoral Life and Ministries

The Appeal provides continuing formation and professional development for Clergy and Religious through Days of Recollection, support of ethnic apostolates and strategic and pastoral planning resulting from the Synod process.

Formation of Seminarians and Deacon Candidates

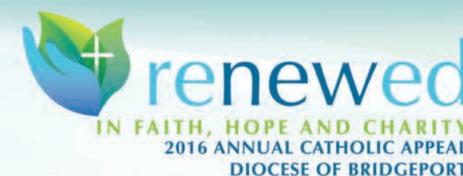
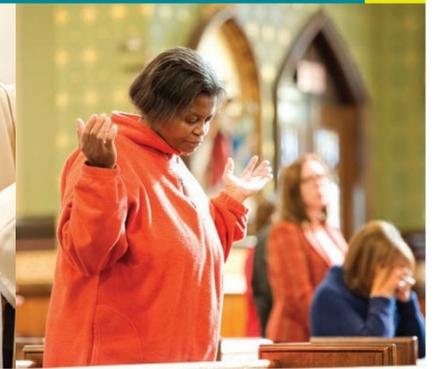
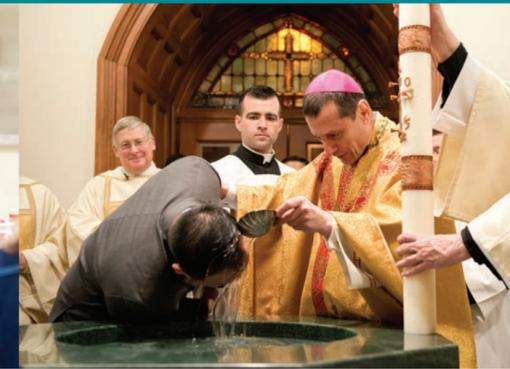
The education and discernment of men who are called to serve as priests and deacons is integral to the future of the Church. The Diocese of Bridgeport is blessed to have 30 men preparing for the priesthood at St. John Fisher Seminary and 103 active and retired deacons, with 15 deacons, in formation.

Pastoral Care of Retired Priests

The Appeal supports 74 retired priests in the Diocese who reside in independent living and at the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of Clergy Residence in Stamford. Many choose to continue to serve by ministering in parishes and other settings in their retirement.

Pastoral Care of the Sick and Elderly

Religious Sisters, priests and deacons serve in nursing homes and hospitals, visiting the sick and homebound and bringing the healing love of Christ to those in need.



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Annual Catholic Appeal Goal – \$11,000,000 Allocation of Funds in 2016

Each year, the Diocese of Bridgeport assesses its financial resources, the needs of parishioners and its ability to respond effectively and with compassion. This illustration is an overview of how your Appeal contributions will be distributed:

Bishop's Scholarship Fund	\$1,850,000
Formation of Seminarians and Deacon Candidates.....	\$1,827,000
Catholic Charities of Fairfield County	\$1,250,000
Pastoral Life and Ministries	\$1,188,000
Pastoral Care of Retired Priests	\$1,059,000
Pastoral Care of the Sick and Elderly.....	\$ 812,000
Catholic Academy of Bridgeport	\$ 667,000
Communication and Social Media	\$ 645,000
Catechesis, Evangelization and Lay Leadership	\$ 479,000
Youth Ministry	\$ 469,000

*In the spirit of financial transparency, the cost to conduct the Annual Catholic Appeal totals less than 7 cents on the dollar based on the 2016 ACA goal.

To learn in greater detail how your ACA contribution will impact your family, your parish and diocese, visit: 2016acabridgeport.com.

Ways to Give

When contemplating your level of sacrifice, please consider using the Pledge Plan. Pledging will allow a greater sacrifice by extending the payment of your gift through December 31, 2016.

GIFTS - Checks may be made payable to the Annual Catholic Appeal. Please do not send cash.

CREDIT CARD - A credit card gift may be payable online or by pledge card.

ONLINE GIVING - 2016ACAbridgeport.com.

MATCHING GIFTS - Many organizations will match gifts to Catholic Charities and Catholic Schools. Please contact 203-416-1312 for more information.

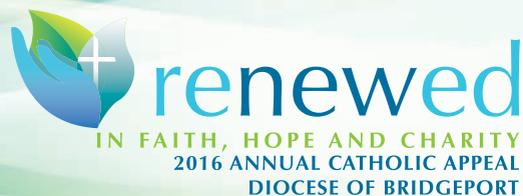
GIFTS OF SECURITIES - If you own securities that have appreciated in value, they can be given to the Appeal and their full market value becomes a tax deductible gift. Please contact 203-416-1470 for more information.

For more information, please email 2016ACA@diobpt.org or call us at: 203-416-1470.

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Parish News

Notre Dame parishioner flew with Earhart

By **DON HARRISON**

Anne Fiyalka, an upbeat, energetic resident of Easton, recently celebrated her 95th birthday. She belies her years by serving as a lector and Eucharistic minister at Notre Dame Parish and as a volunteer extraordinaire at the Easton Senior Center.

Just recently, this mother of four and grandmother of three discovered that she might be the answer to a trivia question: Who is the last surviving person to have flown with Amelia Earhart, the courageous aviation pioneer and women's rights activist?

As Anne (nee Vernoci) Fiyalka tells it: "I was 15 years old and a sophomore at Warren Harding High School when Amelia took me

and two other honors students on a flight over Stratford. I wasn't nervous, but I was in awe. It was a big thrill to be up in a plane in 1936."

The date of that once-in-a-lifetime experience for the three students—two girls and a boy—was November 5, 1936.

"If I had imagined that so many people would ask me what Amelia talked about on the plane, I would have taken notes," Fiyalka said. "I do remember it was very noisy in the plane. Afterward, I was the envy of everybody at the high school."

Amelia Earhart's visit to Bridgeport was both educational and designed to serve as an inspiration to young women. Prior to addressing some 1,400 members of the Girls' Student League in



ANNE FIYALKA

the Harding assembly hall, she requested that reporters refer to her by her maiden name and not as Mrs. George Putnam, her husband and scion of the publishing family.

"She predicted that it wouldn't be long before there would be weekly passenger and commercial trips between countries," Fiyalka recalled. She also counseled the girls to take an interest in aviation, as it is just as much a woman's world as it is a man's."

Anne Fiyalka became a staunch admirer of Earhart, who had gained world-wide fame for her 1932 solo flight across the Atlantic—the first by a woman—and her coast-to-coast, non-stop, solo trip across the U.S. later that year. In 1935, she had become the first pilot of either

gender to make the 2,408-mile flight from Honolulu, Hawaii to Oakland.

Through the years, Fiyalka has collected a binder filled with material on Earhart and on another early flyer and inventor, Gustave Whitehead, who may—or may not—have been the first to fly a powered aircraft. The German-born Whitehead flew over Fairfield for about 10 minutes on August 14, 1901—some two years prior to the Wright brothers' flight.

Many of the Earhart documents deal with her mysterious disappearance over the Pacific in July 1937. "Just seven months after she had been to Warren Harding, she took off on a round-the-world flight," Fiyalka said.

Earhart and her navigator, **▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 22**



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Ninevite Prayer Group

Prayers for reparation

DANBURY—Seven years ago, Erica Papp Faber felt called by the Lord to start a prayer group of reparation at St. Peter Parish in Danbury. “I am not a theologian, but looking around I saw that reparation for sin is desperately needed. Our Lady has asked for this many times, that we pray for the sins of the world.”

With the approval of St. Peter’s pastor, Father Gregg Mecca, the Ninevite Prayer Group of Reparation met for the first time on March 17, 2009.

Why Ninevite? “Because

Jonah walked into Nineveh preaching that the city would be destroyed in 40 days,” Faber says, recounting the Biblical story from the Book of Jonah (Jonah 3:3-10). The capital of Assyria, Nineveh was infamous for its wealth and corruption. Nineveh’s repentance and salvation from evil is noted in the New Testament, where Jesus himself praised their example (Matt 12:41; Luke 11: 32).

In Catholic tradition, an act of reparation is a prayer or devotion with the intent to repair the sins

of others, possible because we are all part of the Body of Christ. St. John Paul II wrote that, for some people, reparation is “a daily life of prayer and the unceasing effort to stand beside the endless crosses on which the Son of God continues to be crucified.” Religious orders have been founded specifically to pray in reparation for sin.

The Ninevite Prayer Group at St. Peter’s has adopted a practical way to follow this tradition in today’s busy world. They meet every Tuesday in St. Peter’s after the 12:10 midday Mass.



THE NINEVITE PRAYER GROUP at St. Peter’s, Danbury, meets weekly to pray for the sins of the world.

Beginning with the hymn “Come, Holy Ghost,” they recite the Litany of Reparation in Honor of the Blessed Sacrament and similar prayers, and read a brief bio of the life of a saint. “Most of them are obscure but very interesting holy men and women, usually one whose memorial is held that

day,” says Faber, who researches the life of a saint for each session.

The Ninevite Prayer Group completed its seventh year on March 15. Faber has compiled a book of saints for each of those years; they are available for \$10.

“Reparation was requested by Our Lady so many times, and it is so necessary, yet so few people are aware of its importance,” says Faber. “I feel that, in our small way, we are holding back the wrath of God.”

(For more info on the Ninevite Prayer Group of Reparation, email pappfaber@yahoo.com.)

AMELIA EARHART
FROM PAGE 21

Fred Noonan, embarked from Oakland on their epic journey aboard a twin-engine Lockheed Electra. By June 29, they had logged 22,000 miles and landed at Lae, New Guinea. Their next stop was Howland Island, a speck of land some 2,550 air miles away located about midway between Australia and Hawaii.

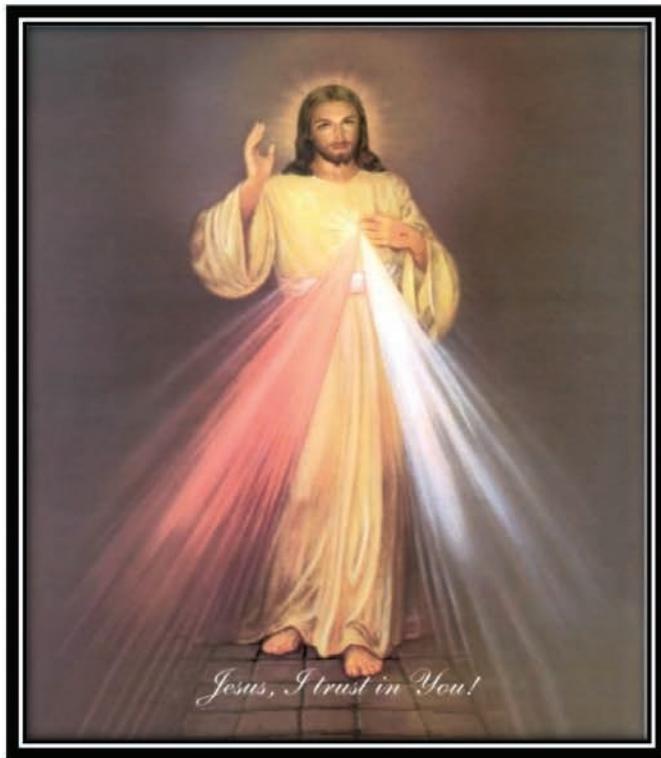
On the morning of July 2, as they neared Howland, they were unable to establish radio communication with the U.S. Coast Guard ship, *Itsaca*, stationed near the island, or to land on Howland. In one of her final messages, Earhart reported “We’re running low on fuel.”

Then they disappeared and were never seen or heard from again, despite extended searches. There are three educated guesses as to their fate:

They crashed into the Pacific; they were captured by the Japanese military and died; or they landed on Nikumaroro, an uninhabited coral atoll, survived for a while and finally died.

The latter seems to have the most substance. In 1940, 13 human bones were found near the south end of Niku, along with the remains of a man’s shoe, a woman’s shoe, a sextant box and a few other artifacts. Recently, objects including a woman’s compact and cosmetic jars from the 1930s were discovered.

The Feast of the Divine Mercy



Please join the WCSU Newman Center to honor
The Feast of The Divine Mercy.

- Holy Hour
- Sung Chaplet
- Confession (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese)
- Contemporary worship music featuring the Newman Center Worship Band
- A reception will follow afterward in the Parish Hall

Date & Time – April 3, 2016 from 3 to 4 pm.

Location – St. Peter’s Church 104 Main St, Danbury, CT 06810

HOLY WEEK & EASTER GUIDE

Church of the Holy Spirit, Stamford Holy Week 2016

MARCH 20- PALM SUNDAY

Saturday 5:15 PM
Sunday: 7:30 AM, 9:30 AM, 11:30 AM

MARCH 24- HOLY THURSDAY

7:30 PM - Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper
Adoration in the Chapel at the
Altar of Reposition until 10:00 PM

MARCH 25 - GOOD FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

3:00 PM - Celebration of the Lord's Passion
4:30 to 5:30 PM - Sacrament of Reconciliation
7:00 PM - Stations of the Cross

MARCH 26 - HOLY SATURDAY: THE EASTER VIGIL

8:00 PM - The Easter Vigil Mass

MARCH 27- EASTER SUNDAY THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Masses: 7:30 AM, 9:30 AM, 11:30 AM

SAINT MARY'S CHURCH

"The Mother Church of Norwalk" | 669 West Avenue, Norwalk | Est. 1848 | www.stmarynorwalk.net | 203.866.5546

Pastor: Rev. Richard G. Cipolla • Deacon Stephan A. Genovese
In Residence: Rev. Paul N. Check, ext. 109; Courage Office: 203.803.1564

LENT AND HOLY WEEK 2016

SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION:

Monday to Friday: 11:30 to 12:00pm
Saturdays: 3 to 4:30pm
Stations of the Cross: Fridays English:
5:00pm/Spanish 7:00pm
Vespers: Sunday, March 6, 2016 at 5:00pm

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE:

Monday Masses: 8am and 12:10pm
Tuesday Masses: 8am and 12:10pm
Wednesday Masses: 8am, 12:10pm & 6pm
7pm TENEBRAE
Thursday Confessions: 1pm to 2pm
7pm Mass of the Last Supper
8:30pm Stripping of Altars and TENEBRAE
all night vigil before the Blessed Sacrament

Good Friday: 11am

Via Crucis in Spanish;
12:30pm Stations
of the Cross in English;
3pm Good Friday Liturgy;
6:30pm Outdoor
Traditional Good Friday
Procession followed
by all night Vigil and TENEBRAE

Saturday: 12:00pm End of Vigil;

1pm to 2pm Confessions;
2pm Blessing of Food;
7pm EASTER VIGIL MASS

Easter Sunday Masses: 8am, 9:30am, 11:30am,
1:15pm in Spanish



SAINT MARY'S BOOKSTORE 203.854.9013

Offering a wide selection of books, crucifixes, rosaries, sacramentals from Italy
and the Holy Land, First Communion and Confirmation gifts, and more.

HOURS: Saturday 10am-4pm | Sunday 8am-3pm | Monday-Friday 12:45-2pm | Tuesday 6-7pm
Located in Parish Center building behind Saint Mary Church | VISA/MC ACCEPTED

SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

SHELTON • CONNECTICUT

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HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

CONFESSIONS

Monday, March 21 - 12:30-2 pm and 6-7:30 pm; Tuesday, March 22 - 6-7:30 pm

HOLY THURSDAY, MARCH 24

7 pm - Mass of the Lord's Supper (*Bilingual Service*)
8 pm-Midnight - Eucharistic Adoration (*Pastore Church Hall*)

GOOD FRIDAY, MARCH 25

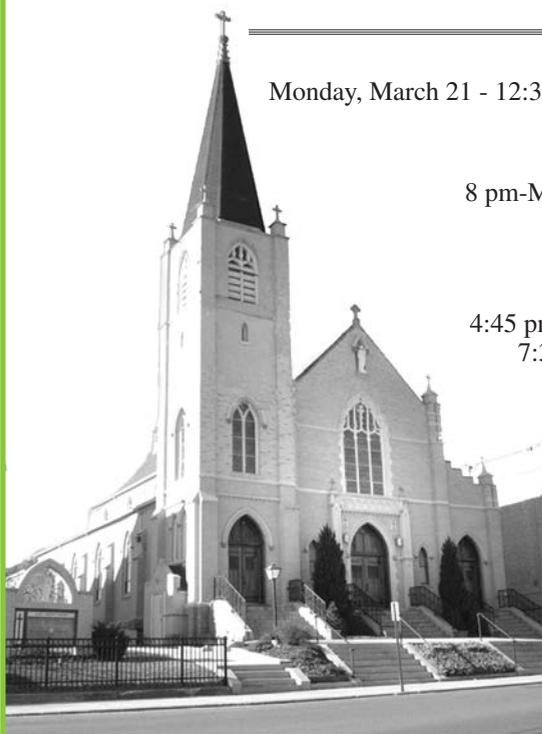
10 am-12 noon - Final Confessions
3 pm - Good Friday Service (*English*)
4:45 pm - Living Stations and Good Friday Service (*Spanish*)
7:30 pm - Passion Play (*Students of Saint Joseph School*)

HOLY SATURDAY, MARCH 26

3 pm - Blessing of Food (*Pastore Church Hall*)
8 pm - Easter Vigil Mass (*Bilingual Service*)

EASTER SUNDAY, MARCH 27

7:30 am - Mass (*Church*)
9 am - Mass with Contemporary Choir (*Church*)
9 am - Mass (*Church Hall*)
10:45 am - Mass (*Church*)
10:45 am - Mass (*Church Hall*)
12:30 pm - Mass in Spanish (*Church*)
12:30 pm - Mass in English (*Church Hall*)



St. Thomas the Apostle
203 East Ave.
Norwalk, CT



Palm Sunday Weekend, March 19/20

Confessions: Saturday: 4:30 PM to 5:00 PM
Vigil for Palm Sunday at 5:15 PM
Sunday: Masses at 7:30 AM, 9:00 AM
(*Family Mass*),
11:30 AM, and 5:00 PM

Monday, March 21
Masses at 7:00 AM and 5:15 PM

Tuesday, March 22
Masses at 7:00 AM and 5:15 PM
Confessions at 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Wednesday, March 23
Mass at 7:00 AM and 5:15 PM

Holy Thursday, March 24

No Regularly Scheduled Masses
Mass of the Lord's Supper at 7:30 PM
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to follow until 10:00 PM

Good Friday, March 25

No Regularly Scheduled Masses
Solemn Liturgy of the Lord's Passion at 3:00 PM (Main Service)
Stations of the Cross at 7:00 PM

Holy Saturday, March 26

No Regularly Scheduled Masses
Blessing of Easter Food at 11:00 AM
The Easter Vigil at 8:00 PM

Easter Sunday, March 27

Masses at 7:30 AM, 9:00 AM (*Family Mass*), and 11:30 AM
No 5:00 PM Mass

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano invites all to the Chrism Mass
on Wednesday, March 23, at 3 pm
in the Cathedral of St. Augustine in Bridgeport.



Catholic Academy of Bridgeport

Ladies luncheon raises \$100,000 for schools

By NINA RICCIO

Approximately 160 women turned out on March 2 for the sixth annual luncheon to benefit the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport. The St. Patrick's Day themed luncheon, held at Darien's Woodway Country Club, honored Sarita Hanley, long a tireless volunteer for a number of Catholic causes and a passionate advocate for the Catholic Academy.

Marylou Queally Salvati chaired the event, which includ-

ed a live auction, a raffle, and a chance to sponsor a child at the Academy through the Leadership of Tomorrow program.

Serving nearly 1,000 children from diverse backgrounds, the Catholic Academy is comprised of four Bridgeport campuses: St. Ann Academy (preK-8), St. Augustine (4-8), St. Raphael (preK-3), and St. Andrew (preK-8). Its mission is to provide a superior education in a faith-filled learning environment that nurtures the whole child, mind, body and spirit. Average tuition is

\$4,500, and 65 percent of families receive financial assistance.

It is an atmosphere, said Executive Director Sr. Joan Magnetti, RSCJ, where diversity is celebrated.

"Catholic education provides an atmosphere that allows for academic excellence and faith formation," said Alyssa Lazarus, one of three Kolbe Cathedral high school students to address the group. "I've seen firsthand the evidence of your caring and stewardship. You have enabled so many children to receive the guidance and love needed for a good education."

Guest of honor Sarita Hanley of Stamford spoke passionately about the joy she gets from sponsoring a child at St. Raphael's through the Leadership of Tomorrow program. Covering the tuition for children whose families cannot ensure that children who perhaps need it most will benefit from the discipline and tough academic standards of a Catholic education. "Especially in urban areas, Catholic school kids are much more likely to graduate and go on to higher education," she said.

In Bridgeport, the medi-



HONORED AS A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE for the Catholic Academy Sarita Hanley (right) receives congratulations from Executive Director Sister Joan Magnetti, RSCJ. Hanley, a volunteer for a number of Catholic causes, sponsors a child at St. Raphael's through the Leadership of Tomorrow program. (PHOTO BY MICHELLE BABYAK)

an income is under \$40,000. "The feeling that [my husband, Gregory] and I had when our 4- and 6-year old daughters were accepted to Sacred Heart is the same as when other parents get a scholarship to Catholic school of their choice—pure joy," she said.

Hanley, a native of Puerto

Rico, said she was particularly interested in sponsoring a Latina child, and she meets with her regularly. She has also devoted time to working with immigrants in Stamford, volunteers at Norwalk's Malta House, and is involved with both Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Charities.

St. James Parish

COMMUNITY OF FAITH

2110 Main Street, Stratford, Connecticut • 203-375-5887

Rev. Thomas Lynch, Pastor

PALM SUNDAY - MARCH 20

Mass Schedule - Saturday Vigil 4:30 pm

Sunday - 7:00 am*, 9:15 am,

11:15 am, and 6:00 pm

CATCHING FIRE, BECOMING FLAME!

Wednesdays, April 6-May 11 - *Learn how the Holy Spirit can fan the fires received in Baptism and Confirmation!*

This six session program combines prayer, discussion, dvd presentations with at home prayer and reading.

EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Monday, March 21-Wednesday, March 23

8:00 am to 8:00 pm - Parish Center Chapel

HOLY THURSDAY - MARCH 24

8:00 am - Morning Prayer

7:30 pm - Mass of the Lord's Supper and the washing of feet

GOOD FRIDAY - MARCH 25

8:00 am - Morning Prayer

12:00-2:00 pm - Personal Way of the Cross - Chapel

3:00 pm - Celebration of the Lord's Passion

5:30 pm Novena of Divine Mercy - Chapel

7:30 pm - Stations of the Cross

HOLY SATURDAY - MARCH 26

8:00 am - Morning Prayer

10:00 am - Blessing of Easter Food

3:00 pm Novena of Divine Mercy - Chapel

7:30 pm - The Easter Vigil

EASTER SUNDAY - MARCH 27

Mass Schedule - 7:00 am, 9:15 am, 11:15 am

There will be no 6:00 pm Mass

3:00 pm Novena of Divine Mercy - Chapel

(Novena will be recited daily at 3:00 pm in the Chapel concluding on Saturday, April 2 at 3:00 pm)

Join us in celebrating the Sacred Triduum



Saint Thomas Aquinas Church

1719 Post Road, Fairfield, Connecticut 06824

Rev. Victor T. Martin, Pastor

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY MASSES

Saturday, March 19 - 5:00pm

Sunday, March 20 - 7:00am, 9:00am (Family Mass),

10:30am and 12:00 noon

(Palms distributed at ALL Masses)

CONFESSIONS

During Holy Week: Monday-Wednesday following the 7:00am and 12:10pm Daily Masses

LENTEN PENANCE SERVICE

Tuesday, March 22 - 7:30pm

HOLY THURSDAY - MARCH 24

Morning Prayer - 8:00am

Mass of the Lord's Supper - 7:30pm

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament following the Mass until Midnight

GOOD FRIDAY - MARCH 25

Morning Prayer - 8:00am

Confessions - 11:00am-12:00 noon

Stations of the Cross - 12:00 noon

Passion of our Lord - 3:00pm

Tenebrae Service - 7:30pm

HOLY SATURDAY - MARCH 26

Morning Prayer - 8:00am

Blessing of Food - 2:00pm in Church

EASTER VIGIL MASS

8:00pm (Fulfills Sunday obligation)

EASTER SUNDAY MASSES - MARCH 27

7:00am, 9:00am (Family Mass),

10:30am and 12:00 noon



Catholic Academy



In keeping with the early St. Patrick's Day theme, three Irish step dancers from the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Greenwich wowed the crowd with their lively high stepping. And everyone's favorite Irishman, Father Charles Allen, SJ, of Fairfield

University, took to the stage to begin the auction. "Can I tell you a little story?" he asked, before launching into a tale that ultimately revealed that tuition at his Boston grade school was 25¢ a month. Auction items included a dinner with Bishop Frank

Caggiano and a wine tasting complete with a sommelier. "It's a fabulous charity," said Bridget Queally of Greenwich, who has supported the Catholic Academies for several years. "The kids are both impressive and inquisitive."

'Seven Last Words'

FAIRFIELD—The Center for Ignatian Spirituality will present "Seven Last Words" a meditation on the last words of Christ, with best-selling author Father James Martin, SJ, on Tuesday, March 29 at 7:30 pm in the Egan Chapel of St. Ignatius Loyola at Fairfield University.

Father Martin offers a vivid and compelling portrait of Jesus based on the Messiah's dramatic last words on the cross. He shows how deeply he understands our human struggles and why we can turn to him completely, heart, and soul.

Father Martin explains why Jesus' words from the cross are so important for the life of the believer. Jesus' final statements show, sharing all our hopes and fears with him.

Father Martin is editor at large of *America* magazine, and best-selling author of *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*, and *Between Heaven and Mirth*.

(This event is free and open to the public. For more info or to reserve a seat, contact Elizabeth Hastings: ehasting@fairfield.edu.)

& EASTER GUIDE

Saint Theresa ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Mother Church of Trumbull

Rev. Brian P. Gannon, *Pastor*

Deacon Salvatore M. Clarizio

Rev. Michael Flynn, *Parochial Vicar*

Dr. Carolina Flores, *Director of Music*

Rev. Carl McIntosh, *Parochial Vicar*

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE - 2016

MONDAY-WEDNESDAY

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

WEDNESDAY, March 23

Tenebrae Service – 7:30pm

HOLY THURSDAY – March 24

Morning Prayer – 8:00am

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

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

GOOD FRIDAY – March 25

Morning Prayer – 8:00am

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

Mary's Way of the Cross – 7:30pm

Good Friday is a day of Fast and Abstinence from meat

HOLY SATURDAY – March 26

Morning Prayer – 8:00am

Blessing of Easter Food – 12:00noon

Easter Vigil – 7:30pm

(Attendance at Vigil satisfies Obligation for Sunday)

EASTER SUNDAY – March 27

(Please note change from regular Sunday schedule)

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

CONFESSION SCHEDULE

Tuesday – 7:00pm-9:00pm

Holy Thursday – 3:30pm-4:30pm

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

Holy Saturday – 11:00am-12:00noon and 3:30pm-4:30pm

HOLY WEEK

Saint Pius X Parish

Rev. Samuel Kachuba, *Pastor*; Rev. Robert Crofut, *Parochial Vicar*; Rev. Msgr. Ernest Esposito, *Priest in Residence*
834 Brookside Drive, Fairfield • www.st-pius.org • 203.255.6134

PALM SUNDAY — MARCH 20

Solemn Compline with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament — the St. Cecilia Consort will chant the office of Compline, the Church's night prayer. Adoration will begin at 7:00 pm in the Church.

MONDAY, MARCH 21 — 7:00 pm in the Church

Pergolesi's Stabat Mater — A Lenten Musical Reflection performed by the St. Cecilia Consort.

TUESDAY, MARCH 22 — Tenebrae Service – 7:00 pm in the Church

EASTER TRIDUUM

HOLY THURSDAY — MARCH 24

Morning Prayer: 8:30 am in the Chapel; Mass of the Lord's Supper: 7:30 pm in the Church

St. Pius X will be open for visits and prayer until 11:00 pm

GOOD FRIDAY — MARCH 25

Morning Prayer: 8:30 am in the Chapel; Celebration of the Lord's Passion: 3:00 pm in the Church;

Stations of the Cross: 7:00 pm in the Church

HOLY SATURDAY — MARCH 26

Morning Prayer: 8:30 am in the Chapel;

Blessing of Easter Food — Bring your Easter basket for a special blessing: 10:00 am in the Chapel

Sacrament of Reconciliation: 2:00 to 4:00 pm

EASTER VIGIL MASS — MARCH 26 at 7:30 pm

The most important liturgical celebration of the Church's year!

EASTER SUNDAY — MARCH 27 — MASS SCHEDULE

7:30 am, 9:00 am, 10:30 am and 12 noon; Additional 10:30 am and 12 noon Masses will be celebrated in the Faith Center.

Confession — St. Pius X is a Center of Mercy

Thursdays (March 24 – November 17, 2016) 7:00–8:30 pm;

Confessions are also heard on Saturdays from 4:00–4:45 pm.



5301 Main Street • Trumbull, Connecticut 06611-4195

Obituary

Leo Van Munching, Jr., 89

DARIEN—"On behalf of the entire diocese of Bridgeport, I wish to extend my profound sympathy to the Van Munching family on the passing of Leo Van Munching, Jr.," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano on learning of Leo's death on February 14. "Leo was a wonderful man, always ready to help others. His legacy of giving in the community was based on his deep faith, concern for those in need and commitment to family."

Born in 1926 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, Leo and his family immigrated to the United States in 1933. His late father, Leo, Sr., came as a representative of the Heineken brewery and eventually established the independent Van Munching & Company as the sole U.S. import-

er of Heineken brands.

Leo served as a "Seabee" in the 35th Special Naval Construction Battalion on Oahu, Hawaii, from 1944-46. Upon discharge from the Navy, he enrolled in the University of Maryland on the G.I. Bill, earning a degree from the College of Business and Management in 1950.

Working for Van Munching & Company, he established regional offices around the country and developed the brand imagery and distribution network that led to Heineken's preeminence in the imported beer market. He married Margaret (Peggy) Pratt in 1953, and eventually settled in Connecticut, where he took over as president of the company. He remained in that role until his retirement in 1993.

His efforts as a philanthropist—often anonymous—were substantial and far-reaching. He became involved in the restoration of the Statue of Liberty in honor of his mother, Mia, who he said was greatly affected by seeing the statue as an arriving immigrant. Each year, he and his family gave leadership gifts to the Annual Catholic Appeal and to the diocesan Faith in the Future campaign.

Leo's commitment to supporting education led him to a long-standing relationship with Kolbe Cathedral High School in Bridgeport. He became involved with Kolbe in the late 1980s after he was introduced to the school by Msgr. Frank Wissel, who was principal at the time.

He became one of the original Advisory Board members after

Jo-Anne Jakab became principal in 1991. "He was a great friend and advisor to me personally, and to the school, introducing others to our mission," said Jakab, who is now Kolbe's president.

His support of Kolbe, both as a benefactor and member of the Advisory Board, prompted the Diocese of Bridgeport to honor him with the St. Augustine Medal of Service in 2012.

Leo and Peggy established the Van Munching Rehabilitation Unit at Stamford Hospital, which helps people with chronic or disabling illnesses or injuries restore their mobility and independence. The excellent care he received at the New York Hospital/Cornell Medical Center prompted him to make a founding donation to the Margaret M. Dyson Vision Research Institute. Leo was also a leadership donor to the construction of the new Darien Library, which opened in 2009. He was an active supporter of several Darien-based charities.

"His generosity transformed the lives of many people who never had the pleasure of meeting him, but whose lives had been touched by his commitment to service and personal kindness," said Bishop Caggiano. "We are all in his debt."

Leo is survived by his wife Peggy and their eight children, several of whom live in Darien; thirteen grandchildren and two



great-grandchildren. His sister, Anne Wilsey, lives in Greenwich.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Leo Van Munching at St. Thomas More Church in Darien on February 20.

"Leo was an extraordinary example of giving of one's time, talent and treasure without seeking recognition or fanfare," said Jakab. "We have been blessed by his friendship. He will be missed."

The Van Munching family suggested that memorial donations could be made to Kolbe Cathedral High School in Bridgeport. As a tribute to Leo, one board member established a challenge donation. John H. McClutchy, Jr. contributed \$25,000, hoping to encourage others to support Kolbe Cathedral High School in Leo's memory. "Before we even publicized the challenge, the board's gifts alone in Leo's memory surpassed the challenge!" said President Jo-Anne Jakab. To date, the school has received \$175,250. "This is tribute that would overwhelm a man who referred to himself as 'a simple beer peddler.' Leo is a gift that is still giving."

(Donations can be made to Kolbe Cathedral High School, 33 Calhoun Place, Bridgeport, CT 06604; Attn: Jo-Anne Jakab, president.)

FUNERAL GUIDE

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DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT: MARCH 20—APRIL 16

MARCH

20	Msgr. Francis A. Campagnone.....	2003
24	Rev. Jon C. Bokron	1993
27	Rev. Bertrand E. Parent	1973
30	Msgr. Patrick F. Donnelly.....	1993

APRIL

2	Rev. Richard R. Dunn	1999
3	Rev. Francis C. Metro	1957
4	Rev. David W. Howell	2013
	Msgr. John F. Jazowski	2010
5	Rev. Hugh F. Gallagher.....	1980
7	Rev. Stephen E. Opra	1992
8	Rev. Joseph V. Kazlauskas	1968
	Rev. Edward M. Horan	1978
9	Rev. John A. MacNeil.....	1994
13	Msgr. Henry M. Callahan.....	1956
14	Rev. Walter J. McCarthy	1968
	Rev. William J. Fletcher	1988
	Msgr. Edward D. Halloran	2001
16	Rev. Edwin F. Agonis, OFM Conv.....	1998

Nuestra Voz

Iniciativa de unidad

Por PADRE ROLANDO TORRES

Uno de los principales deseos de nuestra Iglesia en la Diócesis de Bridgeport es crear puentes que nos ayuden a unirnos como Pueblo de Dios y Comunidad de Fe. Como parte de este deseo, los pastores de la parroquias de Santa Maria, San Michael,

Probablemente uno de los problemas más graves que tienen nuestras comunidades eclesiales en Bridgeport es la falta de unidad y sobre todo la falta de comunicación entre las diferentes culturas que enriquecen a esta área de la ciudad. El ver el entusiasmo y deseo de parroquianos, pastores y pueblo, nos ayuda a

sentido de importancia que tiene y que debe tener en un día como el Viernes Santo.

Es muy lamentable que, como católicos, algunos hemos olvidado lo importante que es recordar el Camino de la Cruz en donde nuestro Señor Jesús nos mostró con agonía y sufrimiento que para llegar a la Resurrección tenemos que vivir la Cruz. Tenemos el deber de guiar y educar al futuro de la Iglesia sobre lo importante, que es recordar nuestras tradiciones.

Con este deseo en mente, queremos hacer una invitación para que este próximo 25 de marzo a las 10 de la mañana se de cita a la Iglesia de Santa Maria en Bridgeport, en donde con nuestro Obispo Caggiano haremos historia y crearemos puentes de unidad entre las comunidades de fe, caminaremos por la toda la calle principal, East Main St., hasta concluir nuestro Viacrucis en el estacionamiento de la Parroquia Nuestra Señora de Fátima.

Sea parte de este momento histórico para la ciudad de Bridgeport y nuestra diócesis.

(Para más información, llame a su parroquia.)



San Carlos Borromeo y Nuestra Señora de Fátima en la zona Este de Bridgeport han decidido hacer por primera vez un Viacrucis Interparroquial como iniciativa de unidad.

ver que estamos siendo guiados a una nueva etapa como diócesis gracias a la guía de nuestro Obispo Frank J. Caggiano. Es una iniciativa de deseo pastoral para que podamos recuperar ese

IGNATIAN PILGRIMAGE FROM PAGE 11

One of the more memorable exercises was the "Colloquy with Jesus on the Cross," colloquy meaning conversation. As we gazed at the crucifix, we prayerfully dialogued with the Lord, assisted by three questions, so appropriate for any Lenten Season preparing us to commem-

orate the Lord's Passion: How have I responded to Christ in the past? How am I responding now? What response should I be making?

At the conclusion of last year's pilgrimage, many of our pilgrims formed small faith sharing groups, some of which are still

meeting to this day. Others opted for a directed retreat week and the experience of individual spiritual direction. Twelve parishioners, I am happy to report, have chosen to begin ongoing spiritual direction relationships!

(Msgr. Bronkiewicz is pastor of St. Mary Parish, Ridgefield.)

Sending students to *The Lion King*

Many families in Fairfield County have been able to take their children and grandchildren to see a Broadway show. Recognizing that most inner-city children lack these cultural opportunities, the deaconate wives in DW Ministries are taking the third-grade class from St. Raphael Academy in Bridgeport to see *The Lion King*. Anyone wishing to assist in this project can send donations to DW Ministries, 11 Greenacres Lane, Trumbull, CT 06611. For more info, contact Ilene Ianniello: 203.394.3441.



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Column: Thomas Hicks



The problem of problems

POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

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

Much of life is difficult to understand. But the problem of evil is the problem of problems, probably the greatest single problem for religious faith. Why did God create a world so

structured as to be productive of so much pain, oceans of pain? It seems to be a world in which evil and suffering are pandemic. Why is there all this misery?

Our Christian affirmation is that Ultimate Reality is Love.

This seems to be contradicted by the immensity of evil in our world. As John Updike put it, "The world tumbles on, spewing out death and pain like an engine off the tracks ("Varieties of Religious Experience" in *My Father's Tears*, p. 109).

Genesis tells us that God created the world as an expression of his own goodness (Genesis 1:4+). But what about children with cancer, bald from chemo? How can one reconcile faith in a loving God with childhood leukemia, genetic defects in newborn children, sudden infant death syndrome, Newtown. The atheist Albert Camus said he could not accept the divinity of Christ

because of the massacre of the innocents. Camus' doctor in *The Plague*, Dr. Rieux, grounds his "No" to God in the experience of children on their sickbeds.

So many questions. What about the epidemics, tidal waves, mothers weeping for their fallen soldier sons? Why does a good mother die of cancer in her prime, while an old man who can't remember his name or hold his water goes on and on in a nursing home?

Referring to the Spanish Inquisition, Teresa of Avila stated, "I don't know how God tolerates such things." Why and for what purpose did he tolerate the horrors of the holocaust? A theologian named J.B. Metz, among others, claimed that theology could never be the same again after Auschwitz.

A horrible story from the Holocaust that stays with me is that of the sudden evacuation from Germany of nearly ten thousand Jews of the age of ninety or more, and their transportation in cattle cars to Auschwitz, where they were gassed. The image of those elderly people in that situation is of almost unimaginable misery. What answer shall we give to a horror like this? What answer *can* we give? Is God completely out of the loop? It becomes difficult to hear a priest pray to God, "All your actions show your wisdom and love."

In everyday life, I have concluded that most people increasingly experience life not as a gift but as a burden. One eventually comes to have a tragic sense of life.

The problem of why God permits so much evil and suffering in his world remains baffling. Answers such as suffering is punishment for sin or divine discipline that tests faith, that it is the result of nature acting naturally and human beings acting freely, are usually found unsatisfying; they flounder. The mystery of evil is far more complex.

I have a few ideas about the intractable nature of human evil.

What begets this monstrosity of rapine evil that characterizes our world? What keeps it alive and reproducing? A 2002 poll found that 75 percent of Catholics reject the Church's belief that Satan and demons are real. I'm in the other 25 percent. I believe in the existence of a Power hostile to God. There is the deep mys-

tery of evil at work in the world.

I am convinced of the reality of Satan, of what Paul said in Ephesians 6:13: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the ruler of the world of this darkness." First John 5:19 asserts that "The whole world is in the power of the evil one." Jesus commonly calls Satan "the ruler of this world" (Jn.12:31).

Jesus always rebuked sickness when he met it; he saw it as an enemy, not a blessing. When he justifies healing a crippled woman on the Sabbath he says: "And this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has held bound these eighteen years—was it not right to untie her bonds on the Sabbath day?" (Lk.13: 15-17).

I think it's possibly true what Thomas Aquinas said in his *Summa Theologica*, namely that God would not allow an evil to take place if he could not bring good out of it. The good is glimpsed at times. There are all those instances of goodness in the midst of evil, moments of light in the darkness. Probably this truth is usually only understood within each person's own story.

Some suffering does help to mature us, saves us from superficiality and shallowness.

If you go to the Book of Job looking for an explanation of Job's miseries, you will find that God doesn't offer one. "Then from the heart of the tempest, Yahweh gave Job His answer" (Job 38:1). He asserts that he does not have to submit himself to our interrogation. He does not have to explain himself to us (chapters 38-41).

The Protestant theologian Karl Barth refused to discuss the problem of evil on the grounds that any attempt to justify God the Creator to his sinful creatures would be an impertinence and an affront to the divine sovereignty and majesty. God needs no defenders or champions, only obedient hearers of the word.

So, I suppose the ultimate answer is that we have to accept God on his own terms, accept the incomprehensibility of God. Still, on the sure rock of God's love I think I can build my life, no matter how unlike love it may seem. Perhaps since God is Love, misery draws his solicitude and provokes a sea of grace. ■

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Column: Joe Pisani



St. Raphael on the commuter train

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

Five hours of my day are spent in a form of penance known as “commuting,” five hours door-to-door, morning and evening, at the crack of dawn and when the sun goes down—from Connecticut by car, by train and by foot, to Manhattan and back again.

I recently calculated the annual toll in hours—five hours a day for 50 weeks, totaling 1,250 hours or the equivalent of 52 days.

That’s a lot of time to be on the road, so I want it to be time well spent. At some point, you have to learn to live with it, take it a day at a time, and make the best of a bad situation.

Some of my fellow travelers read, some of them watch movies on their cell phones, many work, even more sleep. I divide my

time between reading the always entertaining New York City tabloids and saying my prayers, from the Rosary to the Divine Office, along with an assortment of novenas and devotions, and spiritual reading that includes everyone from Thomas Merton to Thomas Aquinas. When they get too deep for me, I resort to Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie, who is no relation to Chris Christie—or to Donald Trump for that matter.

It gets rather exhausting going from station to station, competing for a good seat and avoiding sick commuters who are coughing and wheezing. Commuter trains, you see, can be worse than day care.

Despite the chronic hassles, I got a spiritual insight recently when I came upon a “Prayer for Commuters to the Archangel

Raphael,” who appears in the Old Testament Book of Tobit and is one of the seven archangels, along with Michael and Gabriel, who stand before the throne of God. In Hebrew, his name means “God heals.”

“St. Raphael, Archangel,” the prayer says, “you brought healing, joy and harmony to all those you met while you journeyed with young Tobiah. I, too, place myself under your protection as I commute today. Teach me how to be a bearer of God’s healing peace as you were. Let my words and actions reflect the kindness and compassion of Jesus. Be with me today and every day as I travel along the road of life. Amen.”

I thought about the time I spend on the train platform, complaining about life when I should actually have a positive outlook and be more encouraging. Instead of grumbling about crowded

trains or late trains or even the Yankees, I should look for opportunities to “reflect the kindness and compassion of Jesus” to those I meet. You don’t have to look very far to realize everyone has problems and needs human kindness. Sometimes all you can do is listen sympathetically, and very often, that’s enough.

The litany of problems you hear during the day always gives you an opportunity to say four powerful words, “I’ll pray for you,” to any number of people—the woman whose son has cancer, the man who has to go for “tests,” the fellow who lost his job and has no way to support his family, or the woman whose daughter is having a troubled pregnancy and might miscarry.

There’s a lot of pain out there, and just as many occasions to bring the peace and healing power of Jesus to others. Once you open

yourself to the possibility of doing God’s will in your daily life and renew that commitment each morning, opportunities will present themselves like never before.

Someday when you see your life from the Divine Healer’s perspective, you’ll realize all the good that you did—many times when you weren’t even aware of the effect that a kind word, a smile, a prayer, a sympathetic ear or a little encouragement could have.

The words of the prayer say it all: “Teach me how to be a bearer of God’s healing peace as you were; let my words and actions reflect the kindness and compassion of Jesus.”

It helps to remember that on our journey in life, people—even annoying people—are put in our path for a reason by Jesus, and very often the reason is to help them when their need is the greatest. ■



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Bits and Pieces

WOMEN'S GROUP at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, will meet Mon., **March 21**, to enjoy St. Patrick's Day bingo. All are invited. For more info, call 203.261.8020.

DISCOVER LAURALTON: Lauralton Hall Academy, 200 High St., Milford, invites middle school girls and their parents to "Discover Lauralton" on Sun., **April 3**, from 1-3 pm. Registration is free; registration deadline is Thurs., **March 24**. For more info or to print a registration form, visit www.lauralton-hall.org or contact the admissions office: 203.877.2786.

EASTER SUNDAY TELEVISED MASS by Passionist Communications. Sat., **March 26:** Time Warner, Channel 97; Cablevision, Channel 30, 6 pm. Sun., **March 27:** WNYW, Channel 5, 5:30 am; Freeform (formerly ABC Family) 6:30 am; WLNY, Channel 10/55, 9 am; Salt and Light TV, 12:30 pm and 3 pm. For more info, go to www.thesundaymass.org or call 855.786.6277.

BIBLE STUDY: "A Biblical Walk Through the Mass" by Dr. Edward Sri, a five-part program of The Great Adventure Bible series, will be held Thurs. evenings at 7:15 pm and Fri. mornings at 9:15 am at St. Cecilia Parish, Stamford, starting Thurs., **March 31**, and Fri., **April 1**. For more info and to register, Vicki Alton: 203.322.8526 or VickiA@optonline.net.

RELICS OF ST. SHARBEL come to St. Anthony Maronite Catholic Church, 17 Granville Ave., Danbury, Thurs.-Fri., **March 31-April 1**. Born in Lebanon, St. Sharbel lived a life of prayer, contemplation, worship and self-sacrifice. Prayer service with the sick and homebound on **March 31** at 12 noon; evening prayer and Divine Liturgy each day. On **April 1**, Bishop Caggiano will join Bishop Robert Shaheen for 6 pm evening prayer and Divine Liturgy. For complete schedule, contact the parish: 203.744.3372 or parish@stanthonydanbury.com, or visit www.stanthonydanbury.com.

FIRST FRIDAY LECTURE at Saint Luke Parish, Westport, Fri., **April 1**, at 7:30 pm. Fr. James Bowler, SJ, from Fairfield University will speak on "The Relationship between Science and Theology." Wine and cheese reception at 7 pm. Goodwill offering. For more info, contact Mary Attanasio: 203.255.6981 or

marymadelyn1@att.net.

WEDDING JUBILEE MASS for couples celebrating 25, 30, 35, 40, 45 and 50 plus year wedding anniversaries will be held Sun., **April 17**, at St. Paul Parish, Greenwich, beginning at 3 pm. Reception follows the Mass. This will be the only Wedding Jubilee Mass for 2016. Reservations needed by Fri., **April 1**. To register, call your parish or contact Janet Davis: 203.416.1636 or jdavis@diobpt.org.

GOLDEN GALA dinner dance to benefit Immaculate High School's 50th anniversary will be held Sat., **April 2**, at the Amber Room Colonnade, 1 Stacey Rd., Danbury. Cocktails start at 6:30 pm. For ticket info, visit the Gala website: www.immaculatehs.org/goldengala or contact Michele Brooks: galarsvp@myimmaculatehs.org.

THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN Holy Spirit Fraternity invites everyone to St. Emery Parish, Fairfield, on Sat., **April 2**, at 9:30 am. Msgr. Ernest Esposito will celebrate Mass, followed by a social. For more info, call Pat Heile, OFS: 203.255.8801 or pheile5713@aol.com.

MUSIC FOR A SPRING EVENING concert by the Fairfield U Glee Club, directed by Dr. Carole Ann Maxwell, will be held Sat., **April 2**, at 8 pm at St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Riverside. Tickets: \$10 pre-sale; \$15 at the door. No charge for children. For more info or for tickets, call the parish: 203.637.3661.

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY will be celebrated by Bishop Caggiano at St. Augustine Cathedral on Sun., **April 3**, starting at 2 pm with the dedication of the Divine Mercy Shrine and celebration of Mass. Reception follows. For more info, contact the Cathedral Parish: 203.368.6777 or office.cathpar@optimum.net.

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY, April 3, celebration at St. Theresa Parish, Trumbull, at 3 pm. Chaplet of Divine Mercy, Benediction, and veneration of St. Faustina relic. There will not be a Mass. For more info, call the parish: 203.261.3676.

FEAST OF DIVINE MERCY, Sun., **April 3**, from 3-4 pm at St. Peter Parish, Danbury. Sung chaplet, Confession in English, Spanish and Portuguese, contemporary music with the Newman Center Worship Band. Reception follows. For more info, call the parish: 203.743.2707.

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Bits and Pieces

MASS OF HEALING AND HOPE celebrated on Mon., **April 4**, at 7:30 pm, St. Marguerite Church, Brookfield, with Fr. Larry Carew. For more info, call the Charismatic Renewal Office: 203.268.8253.

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. Ballroom Class: Tues., **April 5**, 6:30-8:30 pm at the Newman Center. Praise and Worship Holy Hour with Fr. Jeff Couture: Thurs., **April 21**, 6:30-8:30 pm at the Newman Center. For more info, email catholic.ya.danbury@gmail.com.

GOSPEL OF LIFE SOCIETY meets at St. Mary Parish, Norwalk, the second Sat. of each month (**April 9**) from 10 am-12 noon, after the 9 am Pro-life Mass. For more info, call Eileen Bianchini: 203.847.727 or stmarygols@aol.com.

MAGNIFICAT ministry to Catholic women prayer breakfast Sat., **April 23**, 9:30 am-12:30 pm at Tashua Knolls Golf Club, Trumbull. Cost: \$25; register by Sat., **April 11**. No tickets sold at the door. For more info, contact Fran Hood: 203.744.1856 or s.m.hood@sbcglobal.net.

VENDORS NEEDED for a tag sale at St. Mary Parish, Stamford, on Sat., **April 16**, from 9 am-3 pm. For more info, contact Sharon MacKnight: 203.327.1806 or smacknight@optionline.net.

ENCOURAGE apostolate for friends and family of loved ones with same sex attractions, meets the third Sat. of the month (**April 16**) at 10:30 am and is strictly confidential. For more info contact the Norwalk Chapter: EncourageNorwalk@gmail.com.

PASTA DINNER held at Our Lady of Good Counsel, Bridgeport, Sat., **April 16**, at 5:30 pm. Menu includes pasta with red sauce, meatballs, sausage, Italian bread, salad, dessert and beverages. Cost: \$10 adults; \$5 children 6-12 years old. For more info, call Marge: 203.372.2784.

SPRING GALA & auction to benefit Holy Spirit School, Stamford, will be held Sat., **April 16**, from 7-11 pm at the Italian Center of Stamford, 1620 Newfield Ave. Dancing with live entertainment by the Stolen Moments Band. Tickets: \$75. For more info or for tickets, email ericavisokey@gmail.com or call the office: 203.329.1623.

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

TRINITY CATHOLIC High School will host its Legacy Gala on Fri., **April 29**, at the Italian Center in Stamford. To place an ad or make a reservation, contact Betsy Mercedes: bmercede@trinitycatholic.org or 203.322.3401, ext. 303.

BISHOP MCDONNELL H.S. in Brooklyn is holding a reunion on Sat., **April 23**, for the anniversary classes of '31, '39, '41, '49, '51, '59, '61, '69, and '71. Mass at 11:30 at Our Lady of Solace Church in Brooklyn; reception at Gargiulo's Restaurant from 12:30- 5 pm. Cost: \$90/person. For more info or for reservations, contact Rita Maloney: 718.857.2700, ext. 2253 or email rmaloney@blmhs.org.

ST. THERESA SCHOOL, Trumbull, 60th Anniversary Celebration will be held Sat., **April 30**, beginning at 6 pm at Tashua Knolls, Trumbull. Guest of honor is Msgr. Louis DeProfio, pastor of St. Theresa Parish from 1971-2003. Sponsorships and tickets are now available. For more info or to make reservations visit www.stesonline.org/celebrate60 or call 203.268.3236. To donate silent auction items, contact Sonya Jarvis: 203.261.3344.

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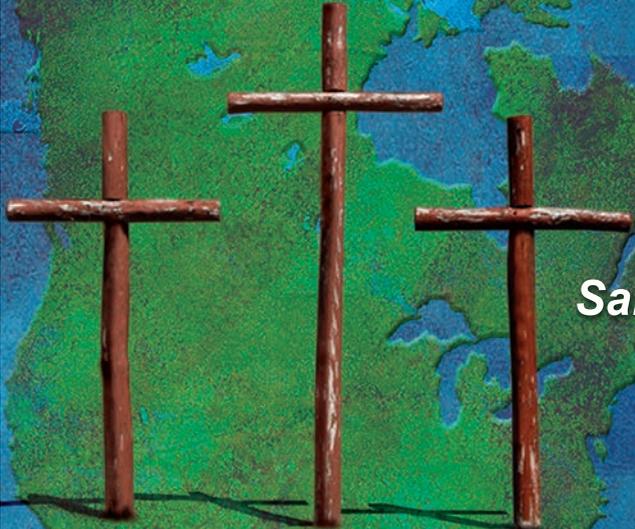
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