Bishop Gavels Synod into Session

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Synod 2014

Our synodal journey has begun! On the weekend of September 19 and 20, the Fourth Synod of the Diocese of Bridgeport began when I signed the canonical decree during the Vespers Service at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport, followed by the first General Session at St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull. The energy and excitement was contagious.

Before a packed Cathedral on Friday, September 19, I had the privilege to commission the synod delegates who professed their faith by reciting the Creed. We prayed for the Holy Spirit to guide us and God the Father to give us the gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord.

And these gifts are not just for the synod delegates; they are for all of us in Fairfield County. For the delegates cannot discern the will of God alone. They will need the support, the ideas, and the prayers of all the faithful.

We will search; we will ask; we will discern ways to empower the young Church; to build our communities of faith—our families, our parishes, and our schools. We will find new and creative ways to reestablish the credibility of our Church and awaken the world through the works of charity and justice. We will offer our helping hands in new ways, through new technologies, one person at a time.

We will implant the Cross of Jesus Christ into every community in this great diocese, because when you and I look upon the Cross of Christ, we look upon the love of a God who will forgive all sin, heal every broken heart, give hope to every despairing person, and bring darkness to light. A God who will not leave a single person behind. And my friends, far too many of our family members and our neighbors do not believe this is the case.

On Saturday, September 20, nearly 400 general delegates, theological experts, ecumenical observers, the synod commission and various committee members participated in the seven-hour session. They heard data-driven presentations on each of the four themes of the synod, along with a general demographic overview of Fairfield County and the Diocese of Bridgeport to provide a solid understanding to all present on the scope and scale of the issues before us. Delegates also had ample opportunity for discussion in small groups and to present feedback before the full session.

The presentations that were given to the delegates are now available on the Synod website at www.2014synod.org/gss, and I want to encourage all of you to review those presentations and to carefully consider the questions that I challenged the delegates to consider and pray over before the second General Session on November 15. I would ask you to provide feedback and questions that can be brought before the general delegates. Talk to each other; talk to the delegates from your parishes. Encourage your pastors to provide opportunities for discussion and feedback within your own parish community.

Our diocese has many challenges; some that are unique to us; and others that are being faced by the Church across the country and around the world. We need to properly identify those challenges in order to offer ideas and solutions that will not just scratch the surface of the problem, but really seek to understand and address the deeper roots.

Are you ready to begin? I know I am. What lies before us excites me and gives me great hope. If you are ready to begin, I invite all the faithful of us to roll up our sleeves and let us be on our way.
Local News

Bishop announces reorganization plans

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

On September 9, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano told a gathering of more than 500 lay leaders, pastors and synod delegates that it is important to “get the diocesan house in order” as the 350 delegates of Synod 2014 begin their work to help plan for the future of the Catholic Church in Fairfield County.

In his first State of the Diocese Address at All Saints School auditorium in Norwalk, the bishop outlined the pastoral, administrative and financial challenges facing the diocese, and said he expects to make a State of the Diocese address a yearly event under his tenure. At the end of last year, he also released all of the financial statements of the diocese.

He began his talk by outlining some of the stark pastoral challenges that face the Church as a result of changes in the secular culture and the sexual abuse crisis within the Church.

Mass attendance has dropped and sacramental observance—in the form of fewer baptisms, marriages and confirmations—has also decreased. Other barometers are equally challenging; only 20 percent of all Confirmation students remain active in the faith after five years from their Confirmation. Likewise, “the largest Christian church in the U.S. is the Catholic Church: the second largest is former Catholics,” he said.

He said that the synod, which convened its first General Session in September, will address these pastoral challenges.

“The synod is one of the most important initiatives of my episcopal service and I ask for prayers for its success,” he said. “Its purpose is to allow us, with Christ’s grace, to learn from our past but not be paralyzed by it, to face our pastoral challenges at their roots, and to move forward in faith together.”

Much of his talk focused on the financial challenges which parishes, schools and other ministries face, and the strategic planning process the diocese is about to launch.

“As the bishop, I have an obligation to ensure that the work of the diocese, its organization, processes and procedures, reflect the best practices that I ask all our parishes and schools to adopt. I believe in leadership by example. So before we ask any other institution to undergo change, the diocese must go first,” he said during the address.

In addition to announcing a major restructuring of the administrative offices of the diocese, the bishop announced that he is exploring the possibility of moving the Catholic Center out of the existing building in the North End of Bridgeport to a new location downtown. He said the current building is too large and expensive to maintain and does not meet contemporary needs.

The bishop also announced that the diocese will move St. John Fisher Seminary from its current location in Stamford to the site of the bishop’s residence in Trumbull in order to prepare for the growing number of vocations to the priesthood.

The diocese will introduce a new social media app in November for I-phone and Androids to assist people seeking Mass times and other information about parishes and diocesan ministries.

Bishop Caggiano was forthright about financial challenges.

“Most importantly, we are working to ensure long-term financial sustainability of the diocese. Our two major financial challenges are related operational deficits and accumulation of debt, and for the first time in many years we will end the fiscal year 2014 without a deficit.”

He added that he will lead the way by adopting best practices that will lead to cost savings and greater efficiency in Catholic Center operations. The bishop is committed to lowering the operational costs for the Catholic Center by at least $500,000 more for the 2015 fiscal year. He also announced plans to increase revenue by leveraging the diocese’ real estate assets to generate income that will help fund operations.

In praising the 35 diocesan elementary and high schools for their faith-based education, he added that he will lead the way by adopting best practices that will lead to cost savings and greater efficiency in Catholic Center operations. The bishop is committed to lowering the operational costs for the Catholic Center by at least $500,000 more for the 2015 fiscal year. He also announced plans to increase revenue by leveraging the diocese’ real estate assets to generate income that will help fund operations.

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And over the next year, the synod surely will—with plenty of input from the youth. The next youth consultation session with Bishop Caggiano is set for Saturday, January 10, at 2 pm at Trinity Catholic High School in Stamford (Michael Lenard, a sophomore in Sacred Heart University’s John F. Welch College of Business, is a youth delegate for the synod. For more info, visit www.2014synod.org or www.deb-youth.com.)

First Youth Consultation a vibrant success

By MICHAEL E. LENARD

The Immaculate High School gymnasium was filled with scores of teenagers on Saturday, September 27. These young people had taken the time out of their schedules to manage, and lack of confidence—to name a few. So, as of Saturday, we have identified many of the problems. The next step: How do we fix these issues?

There was an uplifting spirit to the afternoon—one of hope and excitement for the future of the diocese. A few teenagers shared their positive experience and opinion of the consultation. Ciaran Kager, a student at Ridgefield High School, was very pleased with the session, and hopes that it will have a substantial impact on the synod. “I thought it was really successful,” he stated. “It was great to hear such honest opinions today.”

Western Connecticut State University student Brenna Kornska was also happy with the consultation, and is excited to “see these thoughts and comments come into being.”

“It was a great way to connect to the youth with the bishop,” said Brian Dineen, a freshman at St. Joseph High School in Trumbull. “It helps create a personal relationship to the Church for the youth. It makes the Church more attainable and real.”

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Synod 2014 First General Session

A time for questions

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

The First General Session of Synod 2014, held on September 20, came to a close after seven hours of tightly formatted presentations and discussions about the challenges and opportunities facing the Catholic Church in Fairfield County.

Almost 400 delegates, observers, and invited experts filled the St. Catherine of Siena Family Center in the Nichols section of Trumbull to absorb study committee reports built around the four major themes of the synod: empower the young Church, build up communities of faith, foster evangelical outreach and promote works of charity and justice.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano set the tone for the day when he told delegates, “This is a day of all questions and no answers. We need to saturate ourselves in the data and suspend judgment about solutions.”

In the comments made by many of the delegates who came to the microphone during the four discussion periods, it was clear that the spirit of Pope Francis hovered over the day in the optimism over his papacy’s ability to inspire Catholics to look at the faith through new eyes.

Many common threads emerged in the statistics and the discussions about the nature of faith in contemporary society. Among the challenges identified were:

- The growing number of Catholics who have left the Church
- The early exodus of young people from the Church, which begins in their teens and accelerates in their twenties
- The sense that many Catholics are “sacramentalized but not evangelized,” and live without the joy or spirit of faith
- The impact of poverty on Catholic families and the gap between affluent and poor parishes
- The irony that many parents in the diocese drop off their children for religious education but do not personally participate in the Church or bring their children to Mass
- The opportunity to use social media to bring the Gospel to the marketplace of ideas
- The need to let youth speak for themselves
- The need for continued healing from the sexual abuse crisis while continuing to reach out to victims and assess the impact on the Church
- The challenge of balancing the beauty and truth of Catholic tradition with new approaches to prayer, worship and catechesis
- The need to share resources between parishes
- The mandate to bring people to an encounter with Christ in a way that is not intimidating or judgmental

Deacon John DiTaranto, ➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

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Respect Life

Saint John Paul II Center re-dedicated

By PAT HENNESSY

The 50th anniversary of Pope John Paul II Care and Rehabilitation Center in Danbury has become a special reason to celebrate this year. Thirty years and one day after Bishop Walter W. Curtis cut the ribbon on the new health care center in 1984, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will cut the ribbon on the newly-renamed facility.

Pope John Paul II, their exemplar and namesake, has now become their patron saint. He was—and is—an inspiration, speaking strongly about human worth and dignity, a symbol of spiritual hope and courage even as illness weakened his body. “I admitted the first patient,” recalls Sister Frances Smalkowski, CSFN, then a nurse at the facility. At that time, she says, they had 110 beds and programs for skilled nursing care, outpatient care, adult day care and community outreach. There are now 141 beds, and services have expanded to include rehabilitation, specialized dementia care and hospice.

Sister Frances actually missed the original ribbon cutting; she was busy with patients during the ceremony. She is now the director of pastoral care at St. John Paul II. Father Paul Merry is the center’s chaplain. Sister Rita Ashwell, CSFN, and Patricia Baker round out the pastoral staff, assisted by the center’s volunteers.

The center offers residents daily Mass, a quiet side chapel for personal meditation, and a variety of worship opportunities from May crowning and the Rosary Society to Bible studies. Mass is televised for those who can’t come to the main room, and a Protestant Service is available on a regular basis.

Bishop Curtis envisioned the new health care facility to be a center of health, hope, and kindness. That spirit is strongly present 30 years later. “One of the biggest compliments anybody could give is ‘We feel comfortable, we feel warm, we feel welcome!’” says Stephanie Vitko-Aniolek, St. John Paul II’s administrator.

When the diocese decided to sell Pope John Paul II and the other diocesan nursing homes, “the dreams of serving healing and making whole transitioned in their form, but not in their essence,” says Sister Frances. Her greatest joy was the opening up of the center’s dementia unit, which is now home to 48 patients. It is now in the process of becoming a Homestead Unit, Genesis HealthCare’s name for a home-like environment for those afflicted with Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of dementia.

“The emphasis is on the programming,” says Vitko-Aniolek. “Routine and structure are so important for patients in this unit. We’re always asking, ‘How can we make this more home-like?’” The center has already created “neighborhoods” within the unit to make patients more comfortable in their surroundings.

“One of the things I like about this ministry is that we get to know patients over the long term,” adds Sister Frances. “We know the needs of each person.”

Sister Rita, in particular, enjoys spending time with patients in the dementia unit, and Father Paul Merry regularly connects with the 53 patients who have come to St. John Paul II for short-term rehabilitation.

Bishop Caggiano first visited the center in May. “He was so kind,” Sister Frances recalls. “He walked every hall in the building and celebrated Mass with the residents.”

His upcoming visit and re-dedication will see a gathering of supporters of St. John Paul II. In addition to the residents, guests will include visiting nurses, staff from Danbury Hospital, local officials and priests and volunteers from area parishes. The Mass will be televised for residents who cannot attend.

(Other information on the St. John Paul II Center will take place Wednesday, October 29, from 1-5 pm, starting with a Mass of Rededication celebrated by Bishop Caggiano. For more info, call 203.702.2743. For more info on the St. John Paul II Center, visit www.genesiscc.com/SaintJohnPaulII)
STAMFORD—New Covenant House of Hospitality has launched a $1.5 million “Funding the Future” capital campaign to raise funds for relocation to a new facility and to plan for future program needs.

The capital campaign was announced by Paul Harinstein, chair of the Advisory Board of New Covenant House of Hospitality, and Al Barber, CEO of Catholic Charities, which sponsors and manages NCH.

The house of hospitality, which has served the poor of the greater Stamford area for almost 40 years, officially signed a lease for 8,200 square feet, located at 174 Richmond Hill, on September 1. Renovation work on the new site will formally get underway on October 13, at 8 am with a “Kickoff Construction Event,” involving community and corporate leaders including Stamford Mayor David Martin.

The soup kitchen benefits from the commitment of hundreds of interfaith volunteers. It will continue to serve three meals a day at its current location at Yerwood Center until the new site is ready.

Barber said the NCH food pantry, which provides groceries to poor families, will be the first to move to the new site, hopefully some time early next year.

To date the campaign has raised $425,000 with unanimous board participation. Harinstein, a member of Temple Sinai in Stamford, is hoping the public phase will expand awareness of the historic role played by NCH in feeding the working poor, homeless and hungry of the region.

Capital Campaign Committee members include Laure Aubuchon of New York City; Michael Boyd of Greenwich; and Paul Harinstein, Moira Colangelo, Bob Dorf and Linda Koe, all from Stamford.

“We are getting word out to businesses, philanthropic givers and the religious community and corporate leaders including Stamford Mayor David Martin. We are really excited about the potential of this new site,” Harinstein said.

The Greater Stamford area is among the most affluent in the nation. The area has seen a rise in the number of people living below the poverty line—80,000 people in the greater Stamford area for example. In 2007, NCH served 40,000 meals. The number of programs that will number of programs that will try that will enable guests to shop and select a wide range of healthy food. The center will also house immigration services, English as a Second Language courses, a clothing closet, shower facilities, and space for job training and other skill building courses.

Harinstein said that when it moves to its new space, NCH hopes to expand its partnership with other community organizations to better serve its guests. Americare will station a weekly mobile medical clinic staffed by doctors at the facility parking site. Stamford Hospital will provide a monthly mammography van. Person to Person will staff the clothing outlet. The Family Center will provide counseling to families or individuals in need.

NCH, the only soup kitchen in the greater Stamford area, gives low-income people the chance to enjoy three meals daily at no charge. The food pantry offers alternatives for families unable to eat at the soup kitchen by providing bagged groceries—ideal for working families who need a supplement of food to make ends meet each month.

NCH also feeds children from working poor families with its after-school programs that reach out to children at the Yerwood Center and Inspirica, the former St. Luke’s site.

(Ne Covenant House of Hospitality is located at 90 Fairfield Ave. in Stamford. For more info, call 203.964.8228, email helpnch@gmail.com or visit www.nchstamford.org.)

St. Joseph Scholarship Gala: ‘Living the Mission’

TRUMBULL—The St. Joseph High School community celebrated the Sister Catherine Fanning Privilege and Responsibility Awards at the 2014 Scholarship Gala held September 12 at Race Brook Country Club. With nearly 200 guests in attendance, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and the William H. Pitt Foundation, Inc., were honored for their strong legacy of keeping quality Catholic education accessible.

The funds raised will support St. Joseph’s mission of providing financial assistance to those pursuing a premier college preparatory education.

“This year’s gala and theme of ‘Living the Mission’ represents a major milestone for us at St. Joseph High School. When we host this biannual Scholarship Gala, our community turns out in impressive numbers to raise money, giving hope to students who are in need of financial support, and this year we have donors and benefactors who went above and beyond,” said Rebecca Santoli, executive director of advancement.

“Bishop Caggiano has really become our bishop, the bishop of this diocese. We were happy to honor his commitment to Catholic education, but clearly Bishop Frank is committed to the entire mission. If you were around the county this week, you bumped into him at every turn. That he could find time to celebrate with us is remarkable.”

Bishop Caggiano has really become our bishop, the bishop of this diocese. We were happy to honor his commitment to Catholic education, but clearly Bishop Frank is committed to the entire mission. If you were around the county this week, you bumped into him at every turn. That he could find time to celebrate with us is remarkable. His presence was a gift, as was his message,” remarked Dr. William J. Fitzgerald, St. Joseph’s president.

Dr. Fitzgerald concluded, “This year’s gala put the spotlight where it belongs—on students in need. Quality Catholic college preparatory education becomes harder to afford each year, but our benefactors responded. The event raised nearly three times the scholarship aid that we did in recent years. The committee successfully conveyed the message—it’s about the kids. And they put on quite a party as well. Hats off to them.”

Our students are very fortunate to have the support of the St. Joe’s community of family, friends and alumni,” commented Michele Gomez Krasnai, director of Alumni Affairs and St. Joseph High School Class of 1989. “We thank them once again for their thoughtful generosity.”

The gala featured performances by pianist McKenna Mase, Class of 2016, who welcomed guests. Steve D’Agostino, Class of 1981, kept the feet moving with “Songs from the Great American Song Book.” Live auctioneer Eric Hummel’s mantra, “Remember, it is for the kids,” kept the focus on the mission. The premier prize was dinner with Bishop Caggiano, an honor that went to St. Joseph High School board member Joseph Pagliaro, Jr. ’86, of Shelton.

(For more info, contact Dana Christos, director of Strategic Marketing & Communications: 203. 378.9578, ext. 306 or email dchristos@sjcadets.org.)
BRIDGEPORT—Family issues, including the need for the Diocese of Bridgeport to offer programs that support families in living the faith, were prominent at last weekend’s consultation with the Hispanic community.

About 140 people of all ages gathered at St. Peter Parish in Bridgeport to discuss concerns specific to Spanish-speaking Catholics in the Diocese. The session was held largely in Spanish, with some comments made in English.

“The whole reaction to the synod was very positive,” said Sister Gustavo Falla, vicar for Spanish-speaking Catholics in the diocese. “I thought that the concerns people brought to the Hispanic Consultation Session were applicable not only to Hispanics; they were applicable to the concerns and needs of people throughout the diocese.”

Speakers came forward with questions on marriage preparation, many expressing a desire for deeper preparation before marriage and for support and enrichment programs for married couples, said Father Falla, who moderated the session.

As at other sessions, the low attendance of youth at Mass was a concern. “There is a lot of peer pressure in public schools,” Father Falla noted. “It’s not cool to be spiritual.”

Parents also pointed out that most Hispanic youth have to work, usually in lower paying jobs that often include night and weekend hours, making it difficult to attend Mass. “There were many helpful responses to the bishop’s question of why are Hispanic youths leaving the church in greater numbers,” observed Martha Missimer, a member of the Synod Commission. “One was that the youth are getting mixed messages from the adults in their families—family life does not necessarily mirror Catholic teaching.” She points out that this, too, is an echo from the general session.

Speakers noted that, in many of their native countries, the Church is the only source for help, a trusted place of help and hope in every need from the corporal to the spiritual. “It was suggested that many Hispanics leave the Church here because it is not a place of community for them and it does not always provide what they need. It was my perception that the Hispanic community felt more ‘disconnected’ from the rest of the diocese,” Missimer said.

Many participants agreed that the Church needs to better inform and educate adults on all aspects of the Catholic faith, an issue also addressed in the general session.

There was an expressed feeling that parishes cherish their separate identities, and speakers called for parishes and organizations to work more closely together. “Why do we have such a difference between one parish and another?” was a frequently asked question.

Deputy Synod Director Patrick Turner said that, during the session, the bishop asked members of the Hispanic comm-

munity what the Catholic Church may learn from the success of the many evangelical churches that are attracting former Catholics. He said the bishop also expressed strong support for the Cursillo Movement in its ability to inspire and deepen faith.

“The bishop also asked those in attendance for their thoughts on both creating unity and respecting diversity in parishes that have multiple ethnic and cultural communities within them,” Turner said.

Consultation Sessions will be held after the second and third General Sessions, set for November 15, 2014 and February 7, 2015, at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull.

(For reports on the listening sessions and other information, visit the synod website: www.2014synod.org.)

BISHOP CAGGIANO EMPHASIZES that “young people are the Church.”

FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

Spanish-Speaking Consultation

Faith and family dominate discussion

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October 12: Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Missa sine nomine à 4 (Palestrina)
October 19: Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Missa Mi-Mi (Ockeghem)
October 26: Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King: Missa Ego flos campi for double choir (Padilla)

with the St. Cecilia Student Schola
Saturday, November 1, 9:00am: All Saints’ Day: Missa Fons bonitatis ( plainsong)
with the St. Gregory Student Schola
November 2: Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost: Missa L’homme armé sexti toni (Josquin)

with the St. Gregory Student Schola
Monday, November 3, 7:30pm: All Souls’ Day: Missa pro defunctis (Brumel)
November 9: Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost: Missa Cantate (Sheppard)
DANBURY—News Anchor for WNYW FOX 5 News Ernie Anastos will be the featured speaker at the Annual Catholic Charities of Danbury Celebrity Breakfast on October 30 at 7:30 am in The Amber Room in Danbury.

“Ernie Anastos is a distinguished Emmy-award winning news anchor at WNYW FOX 5 in New York City, the nation’s top television market and media capital of the world,” said Al Barber, president of Catholic Charities. “He was recently awarded an honorary degree by Sacred Heart University and he represents a credible, authoritative and compassionate voice.”

Proceeds from the breakfast will benefit Catholic Charities programs, including counseling and behavioral health, and a wide range of family and community services.

Event chairs are Lisa Donovan of St. Edward the Confessor Parish, New Fairfield, and Claudia Menezes and Sally Savoia, both of St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield. In addition to being a distinguished and popular anchor for the Fox flagship station WNYW-TV in New York, Anastos is the creator and host of “Positively Ernie,” an upbeat program that presents people who help make the world a better place. Anastos gained national experience as a news anchor and substitute host for ABC’s “Good Morning America” and the “CBS Morning News.” He covered the major stories that shaped the last three decades and interviewed top world leaders. A member of the New York State Broadcaster Hall of Fame, Anastos has won more than 30 Emmy Awards and nominations. He is also the first New York TV anchor to receive the coveted “Lifetime Emmy Award,” the highest honor given for accomplishments in the television industry. The New York Times described Anastos as the “ubiquitous anchorman” who has captured the love and respect of New Yorkers.

As a seasoned anchor, he has covered major stories in the New York area, including live coverage of breaking news, political conventions and special events. On September 11, Anastos anchored award-winning news coverage of the World Trade Center attacks.

Catholic Charities Danbury has served people of all faiths in the greater Danbury area since 1939. It provides counseling, adoption services, a family loan program, intensive family preservation, parent education programs, and other services. It is located at 405 Main St., Danbury.

(For more info, to purchase a ticket or to make a donation, visit Catholic Charities online: www.cfairfield.org or call Lisa Donovan: 845.278.4689.)
Red Mass and Breakfast

A closer look at contraception mandate

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

FAIRFIELD—Noted Jones Day Attorney Noel J. Francisco said that his firm took on the HHS Birth Control Mandate because it is a clear violation of religious freedom, and there is a need to protect the “minority view” even if it is unpopular.

Speaking at the Red Mass Breakfast held on September 28 at Fairfield University, Attorney Francisco, Jones Day partner and head of the Government Regulations Practice Group, said the contraception mandate in the Affordable Care Act conflicts with the rule of law and represents an assault on religious liberty.

Francisco, an expert in litigation concerning separation of powers, has been working as a part of the team of litigators at Jones Day who have been providing pro bono support for those entities claiming that the HHS contraceptive mandate presents a violation of the religious freedom.

Speaking to a gathering of 200 Catholic attorneys, judges and other legal professionals, Francisco said that Jones Day is pursuing 16 other legal professionals, Francisco said the litigation is “about religious liberty and larger legal issues,” not about birth control.

He said the mandate represents “a complete misunderstanding of the Church,” essentially dividing it into “a religious wing and social wing,” when it decided that the Church is exempt from the mandate but groups like Catholic Charities and Catholic hospitals must apply for an exemption.

“Insurance coverage for birth control is still written into the plan in invisible ink,” he told the gathering, noting that no accommodations are acceptable to the Church because they ask others to do something immoral on its behalf.

“Can you force Catholic organizations to undertake conduct that is abhorrent to their beliefs?” he asked adding that the First Amendment is intended as “a bulwark” against this kind of intrusion.

He said that many people now understand the First Amendment as guarding against religious intrusion, but the original intent of the Establishment Clause was the opposite in that it was meant “to build a wall between the federal government and everyone else,” so that government didn’t over-reach.

Attorney Francisco said the contraception mandate uses churches for “administrative convenience” when there are many other ways in which government could easily provide contraception to those who cannot afford it.

He added that “the administration is hostile to the minority view of the situation and is clearly out to break the back of religious hold-outs.”

He said that the birth control mandate is clearly a violation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which was unanimously approved by both parties and signed into law by President Bill Clinton.

In a question and answer session that followed, Attorney Francisco said that he expects many cases to work their way to the Supreme Court over the coming year because the issue is ultimately about religious liberty.

He said that religious freedom is ultimately not simply about the “freedom to worship, but the exercise of religion, which is up to the adherents to define,” nor the government.

He said that in every case, the lawsuits that have been brought forward are not just about “faith as the four walls of a church,” but the exercise of faith beyond that in the larger society.

Attorney Francisco, who was recently named one of “The 100 Most Influential Lawyers in America” by the National Law Journal, was introduced by Anne McCrory, chief legal and real estate officer of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Francisco said the court’s recent decision in the Hobby Lobby Case, which ruled that corporations with religious owners cannot be required to pay for insurance coverage of contraception, is not an indication of how the court will rule on cases involving Church sponsored nonprofit agencies who are appealing the “accommodation.”

He concluded by saying that if the court does not reverse the birth control mandate, he believes it will open the doors to ordering Catholic hospitals to perform abortions and for other Catholic groups to provide abortions as part of health insurance coverage.

In the Red Mass, held in the Fairfield University Egan Chapel prior to the talk, Bishop Frank Caggiano challenged attorneys to not only practice law with integrity and resolutely, but with humility.

“I ask you to consider the gift of humility as a cornerstone of your ministry and your vocation in administering the law,” he said during his homily.

Reiterating to attorneys during his homily as “custodians of the law and guardians of the common good,” Bishop Caggiano said, “It’s not easy to administer the law at a time when people wonder what the common good is in a diverse and secular society.”
Merton Center celebrates 40 years of hospitality

By PAT HENNESSY

“In essence, the Merton Center is a house of hospitality,” says Jon Vaccarella, a member of the Advisory Board. “We’re helping people who can’t always help themselves.”

Now celebrating its 40th year, the first soup kitchen in Fairfield County took its official name, Thomas Merton House of Hospitality, from the Trappist Monk Thomas Merton, a famed poet, writer and powerful advocate of social justice.

Starting a soup kitchen was a new idea in the early 1970s. There were no blueprints to go by in 1974 when four concerned individuals began inviting people from the streets of Bridgeport to share a meal with them.

Hospitality is at the heart of the Merton Center, which now provides breakfast, lunch and a day shelter Monday-Saturday to approximately 300 people daily. “Most of the people who come here don’t have the resources to eat every day,” says Vaccarella, adding that the soup kitchen and food pantry see more people at the end of the month, when working families may find it hardest to make ends meet.

As times changed over the past decades, the needs of the guests Merton serves have changed as well. In response, the center has developed programs that address issues such as housing, healthcare needs, parenting issues and youth at risk. The grand opening of its renovated food pantry was held October 9, and the center has a thrift store, run by its guests. It also has space for personal support services.

“It’s a place where you can have a post office box, a place to take a shower,” Vaccarella says.

A member of St. Pius X Parish in Fairfield, Vaccarella made his first connection to the Merton Center almost 15 years ago, when a co-worker at Merrill Lynch invited him to play Santa Claus at a Christmas party there. “It was the most powerful experience of my life,” he recalls. “When we walked out at the end of the party, my friend said, ‘Hey—Santa is supposed to say Ho Ho Ho! Santa isn’t supposed to be crying.’”

He’s been Santa every Christmas since.

Another intense experience came while he was showing his 13-year-old daughter around the Merton Center. She looked at the shower area and asked, “Why don’t they just shower at home?” Her eyes grew wide with surprise when the young teen learned that, in Fairfield County, many people have no place to call home.

His involvement with the Merton Center has led Vaccarella to the Catholic Charities Board, and he has been involved with the Anniversary Gala, which will honor Merton’s forty years of service to the Bridgeport community. “This will be an opportunity to celebrate the history of the Merton Center. We’ll have friends of Merton and past Celebrity Breakfast speakers, and Bishop Frank Caggiano will be our keynote speaker.”

The gala will include a special tribute to Father Charles Allen, S.J., for his outstanding—and very much enjoyed—work as the emcee of Celebrity Breakfasts over the years.

Bishop Caggiano has made works of charity—faith in action—one of the themes of the Fourth Diocesan Synod. “In a county like ours, there should be no one who is homeless; no one who is hungry; no one who is alone,” he said in his homily at Solemn Vespers for the success of the Fourth Diocesan Synod in June. “Works of charity make the community more credible, and by making the community credible, we will bring many to great faith in God who is love himself.”

Vaccarella echoes the bishop’s commitment. “The Merton Center couldn’t survive without volunteers. People have so many gifts, not only financial wealth but mental wealth, physical wealth, spiritual wealth. There are a lot of ways that you can help and live out your faith.”

(The Anniversary Gala to celebrate the Thomas Merton Center’s forty years of service will be held Saturday, November 22, at 6:30 pm at the Patterson Club, 1118 Cross Highway, Fairfield. For gala tickets or to be a sponsor, contact Janet Barker, 203.367.9036, ext. 15, or jbarker@ccfc-ct.org. For more info on the Merton Center, go to www.themertoncenter.org.)
WE’RE BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE!

New Covenant House of Hospitality is moving to a new site at 174 Richmond Hill Ave., Stamford, CT. The new site, located diagonally across from our current facility, will enable us to serve more people during challenging times and also help them to live more independently:

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BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP…

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Feeding the hungry…We serve and distribute 700,000 nutritious meals a year to the hungry, homeless and working poor of our region. In recent years, the need has tripled in our own backyard.

Our doors are open every day of the year…Providing a warm welcome, a hot meal and a caring heart. No one goes hungry. We also provide additional social and medical services in partnership with other community organizations.

Welcoming the stranger…Now we need you to join us. More than $425,000 is already in with unanimous support from our Advisory Board. Your gift will help ensure we have the means to provide a meal to every hungry person who comes through our door.

“For almost 40 years, New Covenant House has served as a sanctuary for the working poor, hungry and homeless of the region. Together, people of all faiths have welcomed the stranger and built bridges to those who are vulnerable and neglected.”

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano

Please contribute at: nchstamford.org/capital-campaign
or send a check to: New Covenant House Capital Campaign
P.O. Box 10883, Stamford, CT 06904
St. Ann Parish

Field builds community

By PAT HENNESSY

“This is such a family kind of neighborhood,” says St. Ann’s pastor, Father Peter Lynch. “It’s a community that likes to come together. That’s what Black Rock is all about.”

In keeping with that neighborhood feeling, the open parcel of land adjacent to St. Ann Church in the Black Rock section of Bridgeport, commonly known as “St. Ann’s Field,” has become an asset to the entire community. Activities fill the field year round. Youngsters from St. Ann School burn off energy here on field days. The parish Boy Scouts have camped there. So have the Knights of Columbus Squires Circle. St. Ann’s has hosted a four-parish youth retreat in the field—with a bonfire to close the day.

On any summer’s day, you may have seen moms with strollers, neighbors talking beneath the trees or youngsters cavorting on the grass.

This summer, St. Ann’s Field has been home to two distinct activities that strengthen community ties. For the past two years, families flocked to the field for popular concerts on Tuesday evenings, often bringing a picnic supper, or maybe a pizza and a Frisbee.

“It’s beautiful here,” says Cathy Palazzolo, who has brought her two young daughters to hear folk music on an August evening. This night’s offering, the Bedlam Brothers, a string band with local roots, plays American and Celtic music on instruments as varied as fiddle and banjo, accordion and hammered dulcimer. The mild summer evening, lengthening shadows and golden sunlight enhance the traditional melodies.

“There’s nothing like fresh air and music in the summer,” observes Father Lynch as the band tunes up.

Those leisurely concert evenings gave birth to a new, and extremely popular, initiative this year. Karyn Leito and Michelle Margo, both young mothers with kids in St. Ann Academy, had been talking with Father Lynch, tossing around ideas for the field.

“Michele and I said how neat it would be to have a farmer’s market here, and Padre said, ‘Do it!’ We had no idea what we were getting into,” recalls Leito. “We didn’t know thing one about running a farmer’s market.”

They enlisted the support of Patti Popp of Sport Hill Farm in Easton, Wholesome Waves and Greater Bridgeport’s Farmer’s Market Coalition. Starting from there, they put together a farmer’s market that supports local farms and vendors, offers healthy, organic food and draws people from all over the area to buy food, eat—and talk their way through the market’s offering. The last weekend of each month featured an artisan market with unique local crafts. Each Saturday, between 9 am and 1 pm, 600-700 people come through the market.

“The summer concerts or farmer’s market aren’t intended to make money for the parish,” Father Lynch emphasizes, “These are just a service to the community.”

The concerts have finished for the year. The Farmer’s Market will conclude with a Black Rock Farmers Market Hootenanny on October 25. The concerts have finished for the year. The Farmer’s Market will conclude with a Black Rock Farmers Market Hootenanny on October 25. Local artisans and musician Oh, Cassius will be the morning’s feature. A fairgrounds atmosphere will pervade the rest of the afternoon, with games, fair food, beer tasting and a Haunted House. The fair, co-sponsored by Walrus & Carpenter Gastro Pub, will benefit the Black Rock Farmer’s Market, Black Rock Food Pantry, St. Ann Parish and.

Healthy Local Produce from Black Rock Farmer’s Market, the brainchild of Michelle Margo (left) and Karyn Leito, gets the seal of approval from Father Peter Lynch, St. Ann’s pastor.

(Photograph by Amy Mortensen)

October 2014
Parish News

St. Philip Parish 50th Anniversary Celebration

By Father Sudhir D’Souza

NORWALK—As Scripture proclaims, it is fitting that we thank God with a jubilee for fifty years of life. And it is a special joy when a faith community celebrates fifty years of its existence. The year 2014 has been a very special year for the St. Philip Parish community in Norwalk as we celebrate “Fifty Years of Bringing All to Christ.”

“Seeing the enthusiasm and excitement shown by the volunteers who organized activities for the anniversary, as well as the participation of so many members of the parish, has been uplifting to me,” said St. Philip’s pastor, Father Michael Boccaccio.

The kickoff of the yearlong celebrations was the Solemn Mass on Thanksgiving Day 2013 presided by Father Boccaccio. Almost 60 families who were part of the “Founding Families” were invited and honored and recognized at the Mass. The Mass had a few nostalgic moments when some of the founders shared with the congregation their cherished memories of the parish founding.

As with all great things, St. Philip’s had humble beginnings. Father Leonard Conlon, then pastor of St. Mary, the Mother Church of Norwalk, was named in 1964 by Bishop Walter W. Curtis as pastor of the newly-formed St. Philip Parish. The church was to be erected on Oak Hill, a former Lockwood family estate located on France St. and North Ave. The 8-acre property had been purchased by the diocese in 1947. The first couple of years were spent in raising funds to build a new church. Parishioners today who were among the founding families remember that the effort included a door-to-door drive. The first Mass was celebrated on Easter Sunday, April 6, 1969, by Bishop Curtis in the strikingly modern, award-winning church that recalls the tent for the Ark of the Covenant pitched in the desert during the Forty Years of wandering toward the Promised Land.

St. Philip has been active in the Norwalk community, especially with its outreach programs, visits to the sick and home-bound, food pantry, among other activities; the feather in the crown being the “30-Hour-Famine.” For the past 11 years the children and the youth of the parish have raised over a quarter of a million dollars towards eradicating world hunger.

For the past 50 years St. Philip Parish has offered all a warm and friendly place of spiritual worship and faith. Included are some remembrances by parishioners:

Mavis Mennino—“Our family became part of the St. Philip family 49 years ago. I have been blessed to be a part of this wonderful community and have met and worked with some great people.”

Kathi Sontag—“In St. Philip I found a welcoming community. Father Boccaccio is a wonderful, caring pastor who makes a point to meet all the new families. I’ve had many opportunities to learn and grow in my faith, understand Catholic teaching, serve others and to love the Lord more deeply because of the St. Philip family.”

Ann and Jerry McGuire—“St. Philip Parish has been an important part of our lives for 45 years. We joined the parish when Mass was held in the school basement. Our four children received their sacraments and attended St. Philip School, where they received an excellent foundation. The supportive atmosphere, opportunities for faith formation, and service have been a major blessing in our lives.”

St. Philip’s Solemn Anniversary Mass will be celebrated on October 19 at 11:30 a.m., with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano presiding. A luncheon will follow the Mass.

(St. Philip Parish 50th Anniversary Celebration)

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FATHER D’Souza is parochial vicar at St. Philip Parish. For more info, visit www.stphilipnorwalk.org.
EDITORIAL

Respect

Whether discussing abortion or immigration or the HHS mandate, it has become impossible to avoid Respect Life issues in social situations. Emotions run high on these loaded issues, especially when the activities (or lack thereof) of our federal government get added to the mix.

Emotion can get so high, even in a situation as relaxed as a late-season barbeque, that civility goes right out the window.

So here’s a suggestion: start by respecting yourself. That’s neither as obvious nor as easy as it sounds. If you regard yourself highly, you won’t use vicious words in your discussion with others. You won’t use an insulting tone of voice. You won’t add to the anger quotient of the conversation. Your expression won’t be one you’d be embarrassed to see on Facebook.

When the topic is intense, that’s a hard discipline to maintain. You know where this goes next: respect the person who disagrees with you. Very, very hard to do. Keep in mind that, however misguided, obnoxious and downright pigheaded they may be, God loves them every bit as much as he loves you. Ouch.

This doesn’t mean that every opinion is equally valid, or that we should be silent on issues that call out for our witness. It does mean that, if we exercise respect ourselves, others may respect us, too.

With any luck, they may respect us enough to listen to our opinions.

Change is underway

After months of planning and preparation, delegates across the diocese recently sat down to a full day of work and discernment at the First General Session of Synod 2014.

As the synod begins, there is a new sense of optimism and energy in the diocese. In earlier listening sessions and consultations many faithful came forward to express their hopes and concerns for the Church. Now, the synod is searching for solutions.

Running parallel to the energy of synod is the bishop’s plan for reorganization articulated in his “State of the Diocese” address that drew more than 600 to All Saints Catholic School in Norwalk.

Those in attendance were impressed by Bishop Caggiano’s candor, sense of transparency and leadership. He squarely outlined challenges to parishes, schools, and other ministries. Perhaps, most importantly, he announced that he will lead the way by making the administrative changes within the Catholic Center.

“As the bishop, I have an obligation to ensure that the work of the diocese reflects the best practices that I ask all our parishes and schools to adopt. I believe in leadership by example. So before we ask any other institution to undergo change, the diocese must go first,” he said.

So this coming year will be filled with many new initiatives as the synod addresses the pastoral challenges and the diocese gets its own house in order through administrative, financial and organizational changes already underway.

From the start, the bishop has made it clear that some challenges are unique to our diocese, while others are shared by the Church across the country and around the world. Moving ahead will involve the inevitable tension between becoming a more welcoming and inclusive Church while not losing sight of timeless teachings and traditions.

Yet, we should be reassured that along the way Bishop Caggiano is proving to be a unifying force; constantly probing, questioning, and challenging, but also gathering us into the understanding that our real work is bringing people to an encounter with Christ and the joy in living a life of love and faith.

Soup’s on!

This has been a busy season for Merton Center in Bridgeport and New Covenant House of Hospitality in Stamford, both sponsored by Catholic Charities. New Covenant House has announced plans for its move to a larger facility across street from its present location and for the launch of its capital campaign that will make the move possible. Meanwhile in Bridgeport, Merton Center, the first diocesan soup kitchen, will be celebrating its 40th year with a gala at the Patterson Club in Fairfield on November 22.

Both Merton and NCH have earned the respect and support of the community, and have also become symbols of interfaith cooperation. Catholics throughout the diocese should rightly take pride and comfort knowing that throughout the diocese should rightly take pride and comfort knowing that Merton Center and New Covenant House in a special way by supporting their efforts to feed the poor and most vulnerable among us.

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

**Pastor**

REVEREND CIPRIAN B. BEJAN, from Episcopal Chaplain, Notre Dame High School, Fairfield, to Pastor, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, Shelton. Effective date was September 15.

REVEREND FRANK HOFFMAN, from Parochial Vicar, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Riverside, to Pastor, St. John Parish, Darien. Effective date was September 15.

**Administrator**

REVEREND JAN JEREMIAH, to Administrator, St. Pius X Parish, Fairfield. Fr. Jeremiah will continue to serve as Episcopal Vicar for Clergy and Director of the Office of Clergy and Religious. Effective date was October 1 and ending November 30.

**Parochial Vicar**

REVEREND ALPHONSE AROKIHAM, from Summer Assignment, St. Elizabeth Seton Parish, Ridgefield to Parochial Vicar, St. Rose of Lima Parish, Newtown. Effective date was October 6.

REVEREND MARK D’ SILVA, new to the Diocese, to Parochial Vicar, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Riverside. Effective date was October 4.

**In-Residence**

REVEREND FRANCISCO GÓMEZ-FRANCO, to In-residence, St. John Parish, Darien. Fr. Gómez-Franco will continue to serve as Secretary to the Bishop. Effective date was September 15.

**Episcopal Chaplain**

REVEREND LUKÉ SUAREZ, from Parochial Vicar, St. Rose of Lima, Newtown, to Episcopal Chaplain, Notre Dame High School, Fairfield. Fr. Suarez will reside at St. Ann Parish, Bridgeport. Effective date was October 6.

**Sabbatical**

REVEREND MICHAEL DOGALLI, to sabbatical in Rome. Effective date was October 1 and ending November 30. Fr. Dogalli will resume as Pastor, St. Pius X Parish, Fairfield on December 1, 2014.

**Special Assignment**

REVEREND MICHAEL DOGALLI, from Pastor, St. Pius X Parish, Fairfield, to Episcopal Vicar for Strategic Planning of the Diocese of Bridgeport. Effective date is January 1, 2015. Fr. Dogalli will continue to serve as Pastor of St. Pius X Parish, Fairfield through December 31, 2014.

REVEREND MICHAEL JONES, to Episcopal Vicar for Development of the Diocese of Bridgeport. Fr. Jones will continue to serve as Pastor, St. Lawrence Parish, Shelton. Effective date is January 1, 2015.

REVEREND MONSIGNOR FRANK MCGRATH, is released from his diocesan assignment as Pastor, St. John Parish, Darien. Msgr. McGrath will assume the position of Chaplain for Ave Maria School of Law, Naples, FL. Effective date was September 14, 2014.

REVEREND FREDERICK SAVIANO, from Administrator of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque Parish, Shelton, to return to full time assignment as Director of the Office for the Propagation of the Faith for the Diocese of Bridgeport. Effective date was September 15.

The following men have been appointed to serve as Assistant Masters of Ceremony to the Bishop

REV. LUKE SUAREZ, DEACON LOUIS HOWE, DEACON JEFFREY KINGSLEY,
DEACON PATRICK TOOLE, DEACON GERALD LAMBERT

Reverend Ian Jeremiah, Episcopal Vicar for Clergy Personnel

October, 2014

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October 2014

Inner Reformation

Catholic by Grace

By Denise Bossert

Denise Bossert is a convert and a syndicated columnist. Her column has been published in 60 diocesan newspapers.

fallen-away Catholics just stop practicing any kind of faith, but many go in search of something else. There is something they don't like, something they want to see changed, and they are tired of tapping their feet, waiting for the Church to see it the way they see it.

We are a people who want change, we want it now, and we'd really like it if the Catholic Church agreed with our point of view. When we realize that isn't likely to happen, we are out the door and on a mission to find the faith community that sees truth as we see it.

Truth is unchanging (Psalm 199:160). Sure, new things come up now and then, and Mother Church knows that a definitive answer on the things the culture proposes must be weighed carefully. She consults Sacred Scripture and Church Tradition and faithful theologians. She gathers the input of bishops from all over the world. She ponders the entire deposit of wisdom given to her by the Holy Spirit.

The frustrated one doesn't have time for all that waiting, pondering, and praying.

I'm a preacher's daughter and a convert to the Catholic faith. It provides an interesting point of view. Christian division grieves me. I simply cannot celebrate the genesis of denominationalism. I affirm the good I see in those of other faith communities, of those who through no fault of their own find themselves outside the Church. But Reformation Day?

No, I see nothing to celebrate in that.

Why celebrate Christian division? Why delight in the fact that so many have gone a different way and left the Sacraments behind—the Eucharist behind?

We know that Christian division hurts. We know Our Lord prayed for Christian unity for his apostles and for those who would come to believe through their words (John 17:20). So, what do we do when we see posts about Reformation Day or we hear that someone else has left the Catholic Church for another faith community?

When we are tempted to get irritated, frustrated or discouraged, let's remake it into a day in which we reform the inner man. We do a deep and thorough examination of conscience. We do our own gut check. What do I need to change? What is out of sorts in me?

When we are frustrated by Christian division and a culture that still holds on to anti-Catholic bias, let's call for a day in which we make acts of true reformation and reparation. Let us reform our attitudes toward the poor, the unborn, the immigrant, those who can do absolutely nothing for us. Let’s figure out what we can do for them.

Let us reform our dreams and goals. Let’s put Christ and his Church at the top of our list. Let’s reform our silent acceptance of another’s rejection of the faith. Let’s determine to seek that one out and share the joy we have in our Catholic faith. Let’s pray with Our Lord, “Father, make us one.”

For you see, the faith does not need to be reformed. We need it. The teachings do not need to be refabricated, recalibrated. We need it.

Let's have a little more renewing of the heart and mind. Reformation of the inner man. That is the true reformation that leads to Christian unity.

Paralyzing diagnosis, amazing child

A Dad’s View

By Matthew Hennessey

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

Father Pat Angelucci was director of Salesian High School in New Rochelle, N.Y., but he'd cross the border to celebrate a Mass or two on Sundays at St. Michael's in Greenwich. Dan and Susan Schuller always made it a point to say hello. They loved his homilies.

One Sunday, Father Pat read Claudia Minden Welsz’s poem, “And God Said ‘No.’” I asked God to take away my pride, / And God said ‘No!’ He said it was not for Him to take away, / But for me to give up.

It made a big impression on the Schullers. They were shortly expecting their fifth child and there had been a hiccup in the pregnancy. A doctor saw something wrong with the baby’s heart. I asked God to make my handicapped child whole, / And God said, ‘No!’ He said her spirit is eternal, / While her body is only temporary.

Worried, Susan started going to daily Mass at St. Michael’s. “I was clinging to the basics,” Susan told me recently. “I was clinging to the faith. I thought that if I took communion, then the baby did, too.”

I asked God to grant me patience, / And God said, ‘No!’ He said patience is a by-product of tribulation! / It isn’t granted—it is earned.

A week later, the Schullers were in the delivery room. They were stunned when the doctor said he saw signs of Down syndrome. Even though Susan was over 35, they had refused all prenatal tests. They knew they would never abort a child.

I asked God to give me happiness, / And God said ‘No!’ He said He gives blessings, / Happiness is up to me.

The diagnosis was so sudden, so final, that Susan found she couldn’t speak. For a few days, Dan had to do the talking for the both of them. Doctors filed in and filed out. Baby Michael was taken to the NICU. “I think we need a copy of that poem,” Dan said.

I asked God to spare me pain, / And God said ‘No!’ He said, ‘Suffering draws you apart from / Worlly ties and brings you close to Me.’

The Schullers were back at St. Michael’s the following Sunday. Dan joined the receiving line to tell Father Pat what had happened. But before Dan could speak, Father Pat pulled out a copy of the poem. “You asked for this?” he said. Dan was dumbfounded. “I didn’t ask for it, but I do need it,” he answered.

I asked God to make my spirit grow, / And God said ‘No!’ He said I must grow on my own, / But he will prune me to make it fruitful.

After a week or so, things began to stabilize. Susan got her speech back. Michael’s health improved. To this day, Father Pat says he truly thought Dan had asked him for a copy of the poem. Susan took it as a sign that God was planning to walk with them on their journey. I asked God if He loved me, / And God said ‘Yes!’ He gave me His only Son, who died for me, / And I will be in heaven someday / Because I believe.

But what surprised the Schullers was just how many others would join them on the journey. They met countless families in Fairfield County who’d been through the same thing, so they decided to form a group to help, inspire, and support. Since Down syndrome is caused by a third copy of the 21st chromosome, they called the group 21 Strong.

“Giving someone hope is the greatest blessing,” Susan told me. “I benefited early on from other families who gave me hope. To be able to share that blessing with others is such a gift. The diagnosis is paralyzing, but the children are just amazing.”

I asked God to help me love others / As much as He loves me, / And God said, / ‘Ah, finally you have the idea.”

October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month. If you or someone you know has had a baby diagnosed with Down syndrome, don’t hesitate to reach out to Susan at 21Strong2010@gmail.com. Or visit www.21Strong.org to learn more about the happy, healthy families in our area who know the joy of raising a child with Down syndrome.

Oh, and get yourself a copy of that poem. You didn’t ask for it, but you need it.
Respect Life

Respect Life Month!

Upcoming Pro-Life Activities:

40 Days for Life
Prayer and witness will continue through Sunday, November 2, All Souls Day. (For more information, visit www.40daysforlife.com/bridgeport, or contact Christine Murphy: 203.438.4866 or cmurphy1224@comcast.net.)

Respect Life Mass
Sunday, October 12, 10:30 am
St. Mark Parish, Stratford
Bishop Caggiano will be the principal celebrant and homilist at this annual pro-life Mass. The theme for this year’s respect Life month is inspired by a quote from Pope Francis: “Each of us is a masterpiece of God’s creation.” (For more info, contact the Respect Life Ministry: 203.416.1445 or respectlife@dioctp.org)

Morning of Prayerful Remembrance
For all who are seeking healing from abortion
Saturday, October 18, 10 am-1 pm
St. Mark Parish, Ridgefield
The service will include Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, and intercessory prayer. The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available for those who seek its healing comfort. (For more info, contact the Respect Life Ministry: 203.416.1445 or respectlife@dioctp.org; or Lumina: 877.586.4621 or lumina@postabortionhelp.org.)

Mass celebrates all children

Parents appreciate the gathered photos after a Memorial Mass for Children held at St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Church in Brookfield. The Mass was held on October 2, the Feast of the Guardian Angels.

The Mass celebrated the lives of all children, both living and deceased. In particular, parents, relatives, and friends who have suffered the loss of a child were invited to join in the celebration of their lives before God at the Eucharist.

During the celebration, Father George Sankoorikal, St. Marguerite’s pastor, dedicated a new, permanent memorial to the parish’s children. “Our greatest help in struggles is our faith,” he told parents in his homily. “Look to God to comfort you.”

Jenny Hubbard, mother of six-year-old Katherine Hubbard who died in the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, spoke after Mass.

“I clung to my prayers and devotions,” said Hubbard. She had learned the prayer of the guardian angels from her father, who also taught it to her children.

“In the midst of the crashing waves, God is there—right there with us,” she told parents at the Mass. “Whatever the waves, know that God is not sleeping but is there supporting you.”

(Photos by Trish Cratty)”

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Respect Life

Down syndrome Mass for families

Father Greg Markey, pastor of St. Mary Parish in Norwalk, celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the intentions of those with Down syndrome, their family and friends on September 17, the feast day of St. Robert Bellarmine.

St. Mary’s is the home in this diocese for MOMs+DADs (Mother of Mercy Spiritual Divine Advocate for Down syndrome), a prayer/support group for mothers, fathers, relatives, teachers and friends of individuals with Down syndrome.

“We gather once a month to pray the Holy Rosary with meditations for the Down syndrome community,” says Andee Schanne, whose son, Robert, has Down syndrome. “We support one another by sharing experiences and knowledge learned over the years, and by our faith. One of the important messages we wish to share is that there is support and help for families with children with Down syndrome, and our desire is to reach others with the message of hope and love.”

One of the ways families express their love and thanksgiving is through the Mass. Love was the main theme of Father Markey’s sermon, which included a perspective on the difference between our culture’s expectations and God’s plan.

“Having a child with Down syndrome is just one of the examples of how people can be thrown off course and distraught over life not meeting expectations, he said, only to later learn what great joy or personal growth was in store under God’s providence. It is important to share these lessons, so that more people can see past expectations and trust in God’s plan.

“Our children with Down syndrome are beautiful gifts from God,” says Schanne. “They teach us how to live and how to love beyond measure. We are so blessed to have them in our world and in our community. Like Jesus, they are an example of pure love walking in our midst.”

Father Markey ended his sermon with this quote from St. Robert Bellarmine, “Love is a marvelous and heavenly thing. It never tires and never thinks that it has done enough. It tackles work no matter how arduous and in its vocabulary is nowhere to be found the word ‘impossible.’"

(Credit: RESPECT LIFE)
Respect Life

Prayer and witness

BRIDGEPORT—On September 24, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano gave public witness to his support for life by helping to launch the 2014 “40 Days for Life” in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Standing outside the Summit Women’s Center in Bridgeport, the bishop joined a large crowd of pro-life supporters and led them in praying the Rosary for the protection of innocent life in the womb. “People really appreciated his presence and his public support for life,” said Maureen Ciardiello, diocesan director of Respect Life Ministry. Prayer is at the center of 40 Days for Life. The pro-life effort takes a peaceful approach to evil of abortion through prayer and fasting. Participants are asked to pray for women who are at risk of having an abortion and their unborn children; men and women who carry the pain of a past abortion experience; workers at Planned Parenthood facilities and abortion centers; and for repentance and healing throughout our nation. (For more info, visit www.40daysforlife.com/bridgeport, or contact Christine Murphy: 203.438.4866.)

Remembrance

RIDGEFIELD—“Our Morning of Prayerful Remembrance and Intercession is a beautiful service for all who are seeking healing from abortion,” says Maureen Ciardiello, director of the Respect Life Ministry for the Diocese of Bridgeport. “It is not focused only on women who have had an abortion but includes parents, grandparents, siblings, health care providers and all those who have been impacted by abortion.”

The Service of Remembrance will be held Saturday, October 18, at St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield, starting at 10 am. It is sponsored by the Respect Life Ministry and Lumina/Hope & Healing After Abortion. “We’re all impacted by abortion,” says Theresa Bonopartis, who developed the Remembrance Service. “This service focuses on God’s mercy, his love and his forgiveness.”

Bonopartis is the director of Lumina, which offers healing retreats for women, men, siblings and those who suffered an abortion. In addition, Lumina provides training for clergy members and mental health professionals. Bonopartis has directed a number of healing retreats at Villa Maria Guadalupe, the retreat center of the Sisters of Life in Stamford.

During the service at St. Mary’s, volunteers from area parishes will read testimonies from those who have been impacted by abortion. “It’s not just the moms,” stresses Bonopartis. “Often these will be from parents who feel they didn’t offer their daughter enough support in her time of crisis, or a counselor who directed a girl to an abortion center. Sometimes they are testimonies from siblings who have learned that a brother or sister was aborted. These are the hidden wounds of abortion; their testimonies speak to the heart.”

The service will include Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, and intercessory prayer. The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available for those who seek its healing comfort. (For more info, contact the Respect Life Ministry: 203.416.1445 or respectlife@diobpt.org; or Lumina: 877.586.4621 or lumina@postabortionhelp.org.)

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Respect Life

Mass for People with Special Needs

FAIRFIELD—On a beautiful Sunday afternoon in September, families from around the Diocese of Bridgeport gathered for the annual Mass for People with Special Needs. It was a time to come together to celebrate as a community.

What a wonderful way to begin our school year, commented Helen Burland, executive director of the St. Catherine Center for Special Needs. “We are also happy to see some of our graduates and their families return to participate in this Mass. Holly Flynn and her son, Tom, a recent graduate of St. Catherine Academy, were among those who returned. “This is such a special place,” Holly said. “The Academy had a profound influence on Tom.”

Following Mass, all were invited to a reception in the gymnasium, which provided for time to catch up with old friends and to make some new ones.

(For more info, go to www.stcatherineacademy.org.)

Dr. Edward Lenard (a St. Catherine Academy board member) and his son, Steven, receive Communion from Bishop Caggiano. (Photo by Michelle Babyka)

Students from St. Catherine Academy as well as members of parishes from around the diocese served as readers, gift bearers and singers. The seminarians from St. John Fisher Seminary assisted in the Mass and Father Bob Kinnally concelebrated with Bishop Caggiano.

This annual event is organized by Michelle O’Mara, newly-designated director of Pastoral Care and Outreach. “The beauty of this Mass is its simplicity. We are encouraging all to participate. Our goal is to fully engage all, regardless of challenges in their lives to be active in their communities.”

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Pro-life info

This November, the Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference, Archdiocese of Hartford Pro-Life Ministry, Diocese of Bridgeport Respect Life Ministry and the Family Institute of Connecticut are starting a series of information sessions for Connecticut Catholics and friends.

The first in the series will be held Monday, November 3, at St. Theresa Parish, Trumbull, from 7-9 p.m. The session will draw on local experts to discuss physician assisted suicide, hospice care and current events at the state legislature.

Future events around the state include: Thursday, November 6: St. Mark the Evangelist, 467 South Quaker Lane, West Hartford, 7-9 p.m; Saturday, November 8, at St. Mary’s, 731 Main St., Branford, 9:30-11:30 am; Thursday, November 13, at St. John the Evangelist, 574 Main St., Watertown, 7-9 p.m.

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DR. EDWARD LENARD (a St. Catherine Academy board member) and his son, Steven, receive Communion from Bishop Caggiano. (PHOTO BY MICHELLE BABYKA)

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Workplace Spirituality

“House of Hope” food drive to help vets

BRIDGEPORT—St. Vincent’s Health Services and Aquarion Water Company are launching the Annual “House of Hope” Food Drive, running from September 15 until November 14, to help reduce hunger throughout the Greater Bridgeport area. A ribbon cutting was held on September 15 at the House of Hope at the entrance to St. Vincent’s Medical Center. Visitors to St. Vincent’s Medical Center, employees of the health system and Aquarion, and the public are being asked to drop off donations in the “House of Hope”—a special shed located at the hospital entrance for the duration of the drive.

Items collected will be delivered to area food banks and to a veterans’ group. Last year more than six tons of food were donated, and organizers hope to surpass that total this year.

This year’s collection will benefit the Spooner House in Shelton, Bridgeport Rescue Mission, the Thomas Merton Center and the St. Vincent’s Family Health Center and, for the first time, the Port Five Naval Veterans organization of Bridgeport. All branches of the armed forces belong to the Port Five group, which will redistribute donated food to other veterans’ organizations. Plans call for Port Five to use the turkeys donated to host dinners for veterans in need.

“We are happy to once again partner with Aquarion to help bring food to so many families in our region,” said St. Vincent’s Health Services President Stuart G. Marcus, MD, FACS. “Our employees and the public have displayed great generosity and enthusiasm for this project, which is well aligned with the mission entrusted to us by the Daughters of Charity to serve the poor and vulnerable. We are very pleased this year to expand our reach to area veterans and in this small way thank them for their service.”

“Aquarion is delighted to partner with St. Vincent’s Health Services to offer assistance to...continued on page 23

Blessing of Hands

FAIRFIELD—A total of 98 nursing students participated in Sacred Heart University’s third annual Blessing of the Hands ceremony in what has become a moving and meaningful tradition. The event took place in the University’s Chapel of the Holy Spirit on September 19 before a full house of family members and nursing school alumni.

“We began this program because we wanted to focus on tradition as that is a theme that resonates with our students,” said Kim Foito, clinical assistant professor of nursing. “The onset of the clinical experience is a milestone. The nursing faculty at Sacred Heart recognizes the value of spirituality, and this celebration embodies the great significance our hands represent in healing.”

After having their own hands anointed by Father David Buckles, the nursing faculty blessed the hands of the students. The group included juniors who are starting their clinical rotation and seniors who will continue this year.

“I truly felt blessed after the ceremony had ended. I think that it was such a beautiful ceremony that really encompassed so many different aspects. I felt the spirituality aspect of the ceremony and the presence of God upon all of us as we embraced our calling,” said Jamie Bennardo ’16.

“I am really thankful for all of the hard work of the professors putting on such an amazing ceremony for the students and their families.”

Added Elisa Robiglio ’16, “My family and I thought that the ceremony was beautiful! It was very well put together and really caught the attention of the crowd. It made us nurses feel special.”

“Ceremonies such as this are often held during Nurse’s Week to recognize the caring and competence of this profession. The hands are a critical tool for nurses, and we thought this would be a meaningful way to celebrate this stage of the students’ nursing education. We hope students will come away with a sense of spiritual awareness and realize their faculty are celebrating their commitment to caring,” Foito said.

“The blessing of the hands ceremony was very special because it made me think about all we are going to do with our hands as nurses in the future. Sometimes all the patient needs is a simple touch,” concluded Tara Rasmussen ’16.

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Nuestra Voz

Los nuevos mártires

Por PADRE BERNARDO RODRIGUEZ

Quisiera reflexionar sobre la persecución que los cristianos están sufriendo en el Oriente Medio, lea Síria e Irak a manos de los islamistas extremistas. Es una reflexión a vuelta pluma, quizá provocada por la parálisis que el mundo Occidental está mostrando ante estos crímenes que, un día sí y el otro también, rompen nuestra tranquilidad los medios de comunicación.

Repetir que la “sangre de cristianos es semilla de nuevos cristianos” queda muy bonito, pero no aparta el dolor que se siente ante semejante espectáculo de la barbarie humana y percibimos que, no importa los adelantos técnicos y científicos del siglo XXI, el hombre es capaz de regresar a sus instintos más atávicos y crueles en un instante. Aunque sea políticamente incorrecto, no podemos borrar de un plumazo la responsabilidad que los líderes musulmanes tienen sobre esta masacre. Solo tras meses y miles de mártires, se ha empezado a oír alguna voz de los ulemas protestando por la masacre, casi nunca condenando esas acciones. Y para nosotros esos mártires quedan muy lejos, como si fuera algo que no nos afectara. Y no nos damos cuenta que los tenemos en casa, y que si alguien no los para allí, tendremos que defenderlos de ellos aquí. Los que me conocen saben que jamás voy a promover la violencia y que prefiero seguir al Maestro cuando nos dice: “Si te dan en una mejilla, pon la otra”.

Entonces, ¿qué podemos hacer? Los cristianos estamos perdiendo espacios en nuestra sociedad desde hace un montón de años, sin que abramos la boca. Hemos aceptado sin protestar que se quite la Cruz de las escuelas, que se quiten los Diez Mandamientos de los juzgados, que se nos inunden los medios de comunicación con porquería, que se enseñe a nuestros hijos auténticas barbaridades que minan el sentido original de la familia humana.

Dicen los científicos que la naturaleza odia el vacío, y es verdad. Los espacios que nosotros dejamos, otros los ocupan. Y los que los ocupan son los que tienen en mente destruir la familia, el Evangelio y la Iglesia. Piensen que ya los tenemos en casa, son los mismos que en otras culturas matan los cuerpos, aquí nos matan el alma.

Amigos, hay que recuperar esos espacios y, en principio, no perder ni un espacio más. Aquí hay que emplear el viejo adagio de San Benito: “Ora et labora”, traducido: Ora y trabaja. Nos toca hincar las rodillas y pedir a nuestro Padre que proteja nuestras familias, que nos dé valor y que perdone nuestra flojera. Y tenemos que trabajar y eso se traduce a saltar en cuanto uno de nuestros valores sea atacado. El ejemplo, de los movimientos “Pro vida”, cuando nuestros obispos nos piden firmas para presentar nuestro derecho ante el Congreso estatal o federal, cuando en nuestra localidad haga falta protestar contra el alcalde o la Junta Educativa, escribiendo a las cadenas de TV cuando nos denigren, insulten o promuevan valores contrarios. Son tiempos recios los que nos toca vivir y necesitamos cristianos convencidos, llenos de Dios, para devolver los valores cristianos a esta sociedad.
Creating Community

BY AUDREY COZZARIN

What could be better on a warm summer Friday night than getting together with friends? A group of young adults who attended the August “Summer Splash” in Stamford gathered again on September 12 at St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan to brainstorm about future events.

A dozen young adults from diocesan-wide parish affiliations discussed about how best to go forward on a grassroots level to bring Catholic young adults (YAs) together.

Julie Rodgers, MCR, director of the diocesan youth ministry, was a special guest. Her wise focus on three essentials for any effort was welcomed by all: Future events and opportunities for YAs should include service, spiritual formation, and community. She also mentioned the Convivio youth events, where YAs are welcomed as mentors and performers. Her sister in community, Elisabeth Ketteler, provided additional valuable recommendations.

Jill Monroe, who works in the communications office of the diocese, highlighted the many YA events being offered through individual parishes, which are listed on the diocesan website calendar. Monroe also spoke about a “Parish App” for smart phones and Facebook, as well as other Internet and social media routes to promote communication between young adults.

Other special guests included Marie Pelletier and Greg Pin, both of whom are dynamic event-planners.

Ideas for future events include more large gatherings of “the tribe” such as the “Summer Splash;” smaller, more intimate groups for worship and friendship; networking; singles events; talks with guest speakers on topics of relevance to YAs and life challenges; volunteering at homeless shelters and nursing homes; and field trips to sacred destinations.

Mary Thierry (St. John’s, Stamford) and Theresa Raytar (St. Theresa’s, Trumbull) have stepped up to be co-chairs of this diocesan-wide group.

Young Adult Ministry is active and dynamic, and invites all 18-35 year olds to join with their peers in faith, service, and fun. What could be better?

(Check Out Young Adult Ministry co-chairs Mary Thierry and Theresa Raytar at diobyai@gmail.com to volunteer ideas and help with future events.)

ST. ANN’S FROM PAGE 12

St. Ann Academy.

As the season’s activities quiet down, the field will again be home to strollers and youngsters after school hours. Come winter, you might spot dads pulling little ones on sleds or snow angels on new-fallen snow.

Father Lynch may have a few ideas up his sleeve for the quiet months. During last year’s many snows, he observed how quickly snowmen popped up in the field. “Kids liked to come build them,” he notes. “Maybe we’ll try a snowman building contest if weather goes that way again.”

If so, St. Ann’s field will be building community again, with top hats, button eyes, carrots—and lots of energy and laughter.

(St. Ann Field is located at 481 Brewster St., in the Black Rock section of Bridgeport. For more info on the Harvest Fair, call 203.368.1607 or visit www.stannblackrock.com.)

YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY Planning Meeting discussion group met at St. Aloysius Parish. Co-chairs Mary Thierry (l) and Theresa Raytar took notes during the meeting.
Lars Pederson hopes Cadets keep success rolling

BY JOE RYAN

The numbers do not lie about the St. Joseph High School athletic program and the success the Cadets have achieved over the past four decades, but to just look at numbers is a big mistake.

St. Joe’s has been a consistent winner because of the quality of the players they have produced—like Lars Pederson.

The senior wide receiver grew up in Vermont and Massachusetts but had ties to Fairfield County through his grandparents and relatives. It was through those bonds he discovered St. Joseph’s and the Cadets legendary success. He wanted to be a part of that. Still more, being part of the school’s tight-knit community has made him and his team more aware of important issues as well.

Pederson had just finished practice on a typical New England fall afternoon. The on-field session was played through a misty rain but the sky broke, letting through the last beams of sun as he stood in the parking lot talking about the school. Pederson was in a bit of a hurry because he and his teammates were on their way to watch a movie about Women’s Rights which one of his teachers, Mrs. Lassard, was showing in hopes of inspiring support for the advocacy of protecting women from violence and other suppressive threats.


The Cadets finished the job in 2013. They won their eleventh championship. The Cadets had Pederson fast start. In as a big reason for the team’s success rolling with a plate in his shoulder. The hardware did not slow down the team. Pederson’s year was in peril because of an injury he sustained during the summer. He had shattered his collarbone but played the rest of the season with a plate in his shoulder. The hardware did not slow down the budding star as he and his team got back on the winning track.

The Cadets finished the job in 2013. They won their eleventh CIAC championship.

“Last year, we knew we had a tough schedule but to come out and do the things we did was unbelievable,” said Pederson. “You could go on and on naming the guys who led us. It was something very special and something we’ll have forever.”

The Cadets had Pederson returning this year with star running back and fellow senior Mufasha Abdul Basir, but there were some holes to fill. Pederson pointed to new players stepping in as a big reason for the team’s fast start.

Everybody was wondering how we were going to replace this guy or that guy, but this whole off-season we knew we had athletes who were hard workers,” said Pederson. “With that, we can still play the way we have the past few games.”

Pederson hopes they can keep the success rolling into December with maybe an FCIAC title to go along with another state crown. He has already committed to play football at Cornell and hopes to study applied economics and management at their exclusive Dyson Business School.

His father, Mark, and mother, Wendy, have inspired him to pursue a career as an entrepreneur. They both started their own businesses and Pederson would like to find his own success in the business world.

But for now, he would like one more ride to a championship.
Malta book urges prison reform

BY BRIAN D. WALLACE

The statistic shocks each time you read it: roughly 7 percent of the world’s population is being held in prison and jail around the globe. This figure is a bit more than 6 percent of the U.S. population. It’s a troubling figure, particularly to a group of Catholic laymen of all political persuasions who gathered together over the last few years to research the topic and advocate for reform.

The result is The Justice Imperative, How Hyper-Incarceration Has Hijacked the American Dream. Published by the Malta Justice Initiative (2014), the 173-page paperback is as much an act of activism as it is a meticulously researched work. Though it includes many charts and detailed footnotes, the book is easily accessible and makes a compelling and highly readable case for prison reform.

John Santa of Southport, chair of the Malta Justice Initiative and a leading advocate of rebuilding the criminal justice system, served as the driving force for the project along with William J. Fox, director of the Malta Initiative. Brian E. Moran acted as lead writer of the volume, which benefited from the collaboration of a writing committee.

Connecticut’s prison population has soared from 3,800 to 17,000 since 1980, mostly with non-violent drug users. Annual spending on prisons now exceeds $1 billion, with a cost of $51,000 per head to house each inmate.

The book points out that over 95 percent of Connecticut’s prisoners are eventually released, most without adequate supervision and ill-equipped to succeed on the outside. Half end up back in prison. The rate of recidivism exacts an enormous cost in the state budget and a devastating human toll. Beyond that, it just isn’t working.

As the authors note, the staggering and budget-breaking price tag of this hyper-incarceration is often justified by the myth of low crime rates, when in fact it has often yielded diminishing returns.

How did we get to a point with so many people locked up and such disappointing results? There is plenty of blame to go around, but The Justice Imperative is not interested in pointing the finger. It is more committed to building consensus to make significant changes in the system and restore the American dream.

The book explores a wide range of issues beyond cost. It offers a hard look at what goes on inside Connecticut prisons, what part of the population is in prison, and the ongoing “scarlet letter” that makes it difficult and often impossible to re-integrate prisoners into society.

But unlike many books that stop with critical analysis, The Justice Imperative explores “no-entry” diversion and prevention programs, juvenile justice in-school programs, and other best practices that can lead to reform.

It is also very detailed about goals and recommendations, outlining suggested legislative changes, incarceration alternatives, and re-entry processes. Along the way it looks at the rising rate of incarceration of women, with its tragic consequences for children and families, and makes strong recommendations of “evidence-based” reform.

While offering a convincing look at the need for reform and more humane policies, the book does not take its eye off the suffering of victims and the impact of crime on their lives.

“In advocating for reform, we recognize that victim’s rights must not be minimized. Many offenders have committed heinous crimes. Such crimes warrant severe punishment, including the removal of offenders’ status as free members of society and the curtailment of their ability to inflict further harm on the general public,” says Fox, noting that the losses suffered by crime victims is often devastating and irreparable.

But the book makes it clear that the present system isn’t working well for anyone, and it’s a very costly incursion in the wrong direction.

Santa admits it’s a battle for “hearts and minds,” but he and others offer mounting and convincing evidence that by making changes now, we can lower the crime rate, lessen the number of repeat offenders and move toward a more just society.

Santa, who recently received an honorary degree from Fairfield University for his commitment to social justice and community activism, said that he sees hopeful signs in the fact that all sides are coming together to advocate for prison reform. He notes that both The New York Times and the Wall Street Journal have recently run editorials calling for prison reform.

“Our criminal justice system costs the taxpayer too much, fails at rehabilitation, exacts a life-long toll on offenders and does not yield corresponding societal benefits. Of late, the political left and right have found common ground in advocating for change. It is our fervent hope that by educating the public about the serious issues confronting the criminal justice system, hearts and minds will be changed, thereby enhancing the potential for more positive outcomes and needed reform,” he said.

(For more information on the Malta Justice Initiative or to purchase a copy of The Justice Imperative, go to www.amazon.com or www.thejusticeimperative.org, or phone Kathy Taylor. 203.605.1544. For more info on the Malta Justice Initiative, go to maltajusticeinitiative.org.)
Youth

A WYD message from Bishop Caggiano

The following is the text of a memorandum from Bishop Frank J. Caggiano to deans, pastors, administrators, ethnic apostolates, campus ministers and youth ministers.

I wish to announce that the Diocese of Bridgeport has contracted the services of Dube Travel Company to assist us with our arrangements for World Youth Day, Krakow, Poland, 2016. The Opening Mass is scheduled for Tuesday, July 26, 2016 and the Closing Mass is scheduled for Tuesday, World Youth Day, Krakow, Poland, for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

In the meantime, you may contact Julie Rogers at 203.416.1449 or youthministry@diobpt.org should you have any questions. Please know that I appreciate your continued support as we begin to prepare for World Youth Day, Poland 2016.

BLUE MASS FROM PAGE 9

wide open, and the stained-glass windows tipped up to let the fresh air in on a beautiful morning. Bishop Caggiano, who celebrated his first Blue Mass in the diocese, said the huge steel cross was uncovered in the mist and fig of dust that settled over the World Trade Center after the terrorist attacks.

He said the workers “found an enormous gift, an act of grace” when they came upon the cross “made of the mangled steel that had been at the very fiber of one of the towers.”

The bishop said that the lesson in the aftermath of 9/11 is that “Christ is never closer to us than in the moment of our suffering. But God doesn’t just stand in solidarity with us.” He said that although as Christians, “We must learn to live in the shadow of the cross, the story does not end at the Cross” but goes on to the resurrection and new life.

“Our story ends in the victory of God over violence and all those things that are not of him,” the bishop said. “There is a broken heart in this world that does not find a place in the heart of Jesus.”

During his homily, the bishop turned to the uniformed officers who lined the side walls of the church, and thanked them for their service, “which is Christ-like in their mission to protect others from harm, never to abandon them in need and often to suffer with those they try to save.”

Noting that their badges as First Responders mark them as persons of “faith and integrity,” the bishop said, “But the greater badge you carry is the one in your heart because you have been signed by Jesus Christ. May the cross of Christ always be your badge of honor and love.”

At the conclusion of Mass, he presented awards to the 2014 Blue Mass Honorees, while Father Charles Allen described their contributions to the community. Bishop Robert Muschett of the Stratford Police Department was honored for his selfless dedication to the community and professionalism and his ability to defuse tense situations.

Lieutenant Mathew Deysenroth, City of Bridgeport Fire Department, has served as a key figure in organizing donations to the Bridgeport Fallen Firefighters Foundation as well as organizing the Fill-A-Boot drives for Muscular Dystrophy and the Annual Walter Flynzt Memorial Golf Tournament each fall.

Fairfield Police Officer Tiffanie Bennett of Fairfield was recognized for her off-duty efforts that led to the rescue of a man suffering from dementia and reported missing by his family. She has also volunteered to take on the extra responsibility of mentoring college students wishing to explore a career in law enforcement.

Norwalk Police Officer Christopher Holms piloted a DARE program in one middle school and also runs a two-week DARE summer camp, which this year had 35 campers. In 2011, Officer Holms took on the development of the Norwalk Police Explorer Post and has grown that program to approximately 40 weekly participants.

Officer Christopher Nugent of the Shelton Police Department led investigations resulting in the arrests of several burglary suspects, drug suspects and a person who broke into cars stealing GPS units and a graffiti vandal.

Retired Police Captain Robert Robinson has continued to lead the department’s Honor Guard and has contributed significantly to the annual Blue Mass.
Father Aloysius Hribsek, former pastor of Holy Cross Parish

FAIRFIELD—Father Aloysius Hribsek, former pastor of Holy Cross Parish in Fairfield, died on the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross, September 14, in Stamford Hospital. He was 92 years old.

Father Hribsek, who lived at the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of Clergy retired Priests’ Residence since 1996, served as pastor at Holy Cross Parish for twenty-three years.

Born on October 28, 1921, in Yugoslavia, he attended local schools there. His studies for the priesthood were done at the Pontificio Ateneo Salesian in Turin, Italy, and Salesian College, Aptos, Calif. His ordination to the priesthood as a Salesian took place at Mary, Help of Christians Church, Watsonville, California, on June 29, 1949. He was incardinated into the Diocese of Bridgeport in 1959.

His first assignment for the diocese was as a faculty member at the former St. Mary High School in Greenwich.

“As a Salesian priest, Father Hribsek’s first love was teaching, through which he enriched and inspired the lives of his students with his own love of learning,” says Father Alfred Pecaric, the current pastor of Holy Cross.

“The traumatic experience of his narrowly escaping the invading Partisan Communist party under Tito after WWI served to deepen his spirituality.”

He was an assistant at Sacred Heart Parish, Byram, before becoming administrator and then pastor at Holy Cross. In addition, Father Hribsek served on the Priests’ Council. His life-long love of learning led him to complete advanced studies at Fordham and Columbia Universities and the Catholic University of America.

“Father Al,” as he was affectionately known by his parishioners, grew to love the parish through which he enriched and inspired the lives of his students with his own love of learning,” says Father Alfred Pecaric, the current pastor of Holy Cross.

“The traumatic experience of his narrowly escaping the invading Partisan Communist party under Tito after WWI served to deepen his spirituality.”

Father Hribsek spent part of his early years of retirement in his native Slovenia assisting Salesian Fathers working in that newly formed, independent country. On his return he was appointed administrator of St. Margaret Mary Parish in Shelton and later chaplain at Villa Maria Retreat House in Stamford.

“Many marveled that after his retirement, he would drive back and forth to Connecticut from his home in Florida,” recalls Father Pecaric. “When asked how he did it, he simply replied: ‘Oh golly gee, I know the road like the back of my hand,’ as he placed his trust and fate in the hands of Our Lady, Marija Pomoćnica-Mary Auxiliatrix-to whom he had a great devotion.”

Father Hribsek’s body was received at Holy Cross Church on September 17. Father Pecaric was the celebrant and homilist at the funeral Mass. The Mass for Christian Burial was celebrated for Father Hribsek on September 18, at Holy Cross.

Deceased Clergy of the Diocese of Bridgeport: October 12—November 15

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<td>31 Rev. Francis D. McKenna</td>
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Rosary Mysteries present an exploration of faith

By PAT HENNESSY

“The Rosary is a ‘pocket catechism,’ so to speak, reviewing for us the most important points of our faith,” says Erica Papp Faber, who has just published *Mary’s Lifeline: The 20 Rosary Mysteries.*

A writer, translator, editor, and author of several books, Faber is an active member of St. Peter Parish in Danbury. *Mary’s Lifeline* contains a photo of a Rosary showing prayers to be said on each section, and the words of those prayers—so necessary in a world where praying the Rosary is no longer practiced by many Catholics.

Prayed with understanding, the Rosary connects to God’s saving message as reflected in Sacred Scripture. Obedience to the will of God is the main thrust of the Joyful and Sorrowful mysteries. In the Glorious mysteries, we see how total abandonment to the will of God is rewarded in ways totally beyond mere human expectations.

The Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious mysteries are familiar to most Catholics. The Luminous Mysteries, on the other hand, were first proposed by Pope John Paul II. They concentrate on the person of Jesus during the three years leading up to his passion.

Each individual mystery is considered in turn, accompanied by relevant Scriptures and brief, clear reflections. Each is accompanied by a color photo, most of them from a church or chapel in this diocese. Poems, prayers and the music to original hymns are sprinkled throughout the pages.

*Mary’s Lifeline* offers new views of familiar mysteries that may seem to have exhausted all possibilities. In the reflection on the Birth of Our Lord, Faber compares the defenseless baby Jesus to the openness to rejection of Our Lord in the Eucharist. “In Bethlehem, his total helplessness and vulnerability laid him open to the bloody persecution of Herod; in our tabernacles, he leaves himself vulnerable to our indifference and coldness. Can we not warm him with our love and presence?”

Catholics who already pray the Rosary with devotion will find *Mary’s Lifeline* a valuable resource to widen their understanding of the faith. For those who are new to the Rosary, or those who question why Catholics give Mary such exalted attention, Faber has a moving reply: “Why do we ask Mary to pray for us? Because on our own, we are all merely dirty-faced, snotty-nosed little waifs, and the best we have to offer God is a scrunched-up dandelion! We give it to Mary, our heavenly mother, and she straightens it up, and with a smile, hands it to Jesus: ‘Look at what your little one is offering you!’ And Jesus will see, not our dirty faces and snotty noses but the beauty of his mother, and will accept our poor offering for her sake.”

(*Mary’s Lifeline: the 20 Rosary Mysteries* can be purchased from Erica Papp Faber for $9.95 plus shipping. Call 203.797.9072.)

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For my birthday, I got a Starbucks gift card, a bow tie, a few mystery novels, and a booklet with a novena to Blessed Margaret of Castello because I was born on her feast day. She’s the “Patron Saint of the Unwanted,” and you can’t find a cause more in keeping with the spirit of 21st century America, where the ranks of the “unwanted” are calculable.

We live in a country where 1.2 million babies are aborted each year—more than 20 percent of all pregnancies—and where infanticide, otherwise known as partial birth abortion, is gaining acceptance. It’s a country where there’s growing legislative support for what was once called “assisted suicide” but has now been euphemistically rebranded “Aid in Dying.” (With the right branding, anything can be made socially acceptable.)

Blessed Margaret, patron of the unwanted, pray for us... we need it.

The “unwanted” have many different faces. They’re the unborn, the incurably ill, the handicapped, the elderly, the poor and the dispossessed. But they share one thing in common: Their dignity as human beings is trampled on by a callous society, which despite its technological advances, wealth and so-called progressive values can’t tell the difference between right and wrong.

“Little Margaret,” as she was known, was born in 1287 to a family of noble ancestry near Florence. She was an only child and a scandalous disappointment to her parents because she was born a hunch-backed dwarf, who was blind, lame and, according to her biographers, very ugly. At six years old, her parents made her leave the castle and imprisoned her for 13 years to keep her out of sight. Despite her poor health and deformity, she was intelligent and full of goodness, and she loved God with a contagious fervor.

When she was 20, her parents took her to the town of Castello to seek a miraculous cure, but ended up abandoning her in the church. Blind, lame, alone, she lived as a beggar on the streets for a year, until the poor townspeople adopted her as one of their own.

In our age with its pre-natal testing and eugenic abortion, Little Margaret would have never been born. Richard Dawkins, author and celebrity atheist with a million followers, recently wrote a piece titled, “How choosing life is justified in public opinion on the day of kindergarten.” Dawkins is wrong. Taking life is wrong. Life is the true source of happiness. Dawkins is wrong. Taking life is not right. It is possible to speak in a certain sense of a war of the powerful and rejects it when it is affected by any limitation, handicap or illness. It will not stop suffering and will certainly not promote happiness.

Little Margaret eventually became a member of the Dominican Third Order and spent her final years doing acts of charity and mercy, visiting prisoners, assisting the sick and poor, and comforting the dying, until she passed away at 33. Did her life have purpose? To God it did. Despite her personal suffering, she brought joy and love to many others afflicted by a spiritual illness common in the 21st century—they felt “unwanted.”

In 1609, she was declared blessed, and her incorrupt body lies under the altar at the Church of St. Dominic in Castello. Blessed Margaret, patron of the unwanted, pray for America.
A growing number of foreign-born Catholics.

The Latino population in Fairfield County has seen a 16 percent increase; now totaling 144,593, with growing populations in Norwalk, Danbury and Bridgeport. Nationally, Hispanics now represent 45 percent of Catholics in the U.S., and 70 percent of the growth in the Church over the past 50 years.

One of the more striking statistics presented by Deacon DiTaranto was the early exodus of youth from the Church and parish life. “Catholics who leave, leave early,” he said, pointing out that 48 percent of those who leave the Church do so by the age of 18. That number jumps to 79 percent by the age of 23.

Bishop Caggiano, who has made reaching out to youth a priority, responded to the statistics by saying, “One of the first questions I have to ask myself as bishop is: ‘Are we causing this?’ Is the behavior of the institutional Church making this worse?” We have to re-establish the credibility of the parish community for young people, because their search for God does not require them to be with us.”

Delegate Bob Rooney of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Riverside gave the presentation on the “Build up Communities of Faith” theme. He noted that the American family portrayed on “Leave It to Beaver” has morphed into the complexity of the “Modern Family” portrayed in today’s media. He said the changes in the American family are here to stay and the Church “must figure out how to adapt to this new reality.”

Rooney said that three communities of faith: parishes, schools and families, “are interconnected and the Church needs to do more to strengthen them.”

In his presentation on “Fostering Evangelical Outreach,” Father Peter Towsley said that “Evangelization is not proselytizing,” but drawing people to the joy of faith by love, tenderness and patience, so that “everyone can have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ through the Church.”

Father Towsley said as society’s values become more secular and less Christian, we must “bring the Gospel to the streets and bring Jesus Christ to the marketplace.”

Catholic Charities Chief Operating Officer Michael Trintrup delivered the final Study Committee report on “Promoting works of charity and justice.”

He said that Catholics throughout Fairfield County are putting “faith in action” through untold social outreach in parishes, schools, Catholic civic groups and other ministries.

He told the gathering that poverty is the root cause of many of the problems in Fairfield County including homelessness and mental illness. At nearly 8.8 percent, or 90,000 residents in Fairfield County, are living below the poverty line.

Trintrup also provided an overview of the impact of Catholic Charities services in Fairfield County, including 1.5 million meals served each year to the poor, elderly and homeless; 15,000 counseling sessions to help keep families together, and over 200 housing units that shelter those who would otherwise be homeless.

In his closing remarks, the bishop noted that unlike other states, Connecticut does not have regional government and the Church plays a major role in unifying Fairfield County. “There are very few other institutions that actually cover the whole county,” he pointed out.

The bishop also said that in the next General Session for delegates “the work of discernment will begin” when delegates seek to find solutions to the many questions they have explored in the research and study phase.

The second General Session for delegates is set for November 15 at St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull. In between General Sessions, the synod will also host consultation sessions with youth, deacons, religious, priests and the Hispanic community.

(For more info, visit the Synod 2014 website: www.synod2014.org)
PRAYER INTENTIONS: are offered in the chapel of St. Jude Parish, Monroe, every Thurs. from 7-7:30 pm. To add your intentions, call the office: 203.261.6404.

ASSUMPTION PARISH, Westport, invites all to stop in to pray for peace: Mon. & Wed. from 8 am-5 pm and Thurs. to pray for peace: Mon. & Wed. at 7:30 am. For more info, call 203.227.5477.

ST. ANDREW PARISH, Bridgeport, prays the Rosary every Mon. night at 7 pm. For more info, call the office: 203.374.8118.

ENCOURAGE apostolate for friends and family of loved ones with same sex attractions meets monthly on Sat. mornings at 10:30 am at a location close to Interstate 95. For more info, contact the Norwalk Chapter: encouragenorwalk@gmail.com.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS at Assumption Parish, Fairfield, will be held the weekend of Oct. 11 & 12. For more info, call Vincent Masolo: 203.367.1030.

DAY OF RECOLLECTION for St. Vincent’s nurses, alumni and friends will be held at St. Joseph’s Manor lodge, Trumbull, on Sat., Oct. 18 from 9:30 am-3 pm. Cost: $10. For more info, call Irma: 203.333.5045.

PARENT/CHILD/TEEN grief support group for children and young teens will be held at Assumption Parish, Fairfield. There will be eight sessions every Wed. afternoon Oct. 15-Dec. 10 (not Nov. 26) from 4:50-5:30 pm. For more info, call Eileen Epperson: 860.435.0288 (working with parents); or Ruthellen Griffin: 860.482.6419 (working with children).

CURSILLO ULTREYAS are held around the diocese: Thurs., Oct. 16, at St. Mary Parish, Bethel; at 7:30 pm; and Mon., Oct. 20, at St. Bridget of Ireland Parish, Stamford at 7:30 pm. For more info, contact Jeanette: jkovacs@snet.net.

CENTERING PRAYER program will be offered at Holy Family Parish, Fairfield, on Sat., Oct. 18, from 10 am–1 pm in the ADM office, 70 Laurel St. Bring a brown bag lunch. For more info, or to register, call Carol Piscitelli: 203.912.7119.

WINE TASTING and silent auction will be held at St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Weston, on Sat., Oct. 18. Tickets: $30. Purchase tickets online at Al’s Angels: www.alsangels.org.

BIBLE STUDY: “Priest, Prophet, King” will be offered at St. Andrew Parish, Bridgeport, the week of Oct. 19-24 at 7 pm each evening. For more info and for reservations, call 203.374.8118.

WOMEN’S GROUP at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, will meet on Mon., Oct. 20, at 10 am. Featured speaker will be Father Peter Ciprani. For more info, call 203.261.8020.

MASSES OF HEALING AND HOPE sponsored by the Charismatic Renewal Office will be offered Mon., Oct. 20, at 7:30 pm at St. Lawrence Parish, Shelton, with Father Bill Egan; Mon., Oct. 27, at 7:30 pm at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, with Fr. Larry Carew; and Mon., Nov. 17, at 7:30 pm at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, with Fr. Carew. For more info, call 203.268.8253.

ST. JUDE NOVENA, Monroe, will begin Mon., Oct. 20, and end Sat., Oct. 25. Mass, petitions and homilist, followed by fellowship, beginning at 7:30 pm. On Sat., the Novena will be at the 5:30 pm Mass. For more info, call 203.261.6404.

HOMECOMING WEEKEND & 5K Color Run, will take place Fri.-Sat., Oct. 24-25 at St. Joseph High School, Trumbull. For more info, visit www.sjcadets.org/homecoming; to register for the 5K Race, visit www.sjcadets.org/colorrun or call 203.378.9378, ext. 324.

HARVEST FAIR at St. Andrew Parish, Bridgeport, will take place Sat., Oct. 25, from 10 am-5:30 pm. For more info or to be a vendor, call the parish office: 203.261.6404.

WOMEN’S CONFERENCE with Bishop Caggiano will be held Sat., Oct. 25, at the Trumbull Marriott. Includes breakfast & lunch. Cost: before Oct. 20: $50; at the door: $55. For more info or to register, email WomensConference@diobpt.org or call 203.416.1445.

HARVEST FESTIVAL on Sat., Oct. 25, from 1-5 pm at St. Ann Field, Black Rock, Bridgeport, will feature games, food, a haunted house and beer tasting by CT breweries. For more info, visit the Black Rock Farmer’s Market Facebook page or call 203.386.1607.

WINE & FOOD TASTING at Greenwich Catholic School, Greenwich will take place on Sat., Oct. 25, at 7 pm. To purchase tickets, go to www.gcsct.org or call 203.869.4000, ext. 139.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION at St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Riverside, will feature Ginger Katz, author of “SONNY STORY,” a drug prevention book, on Sun., Oct. 26 at 11:45 am. For more info, call 203.637.3661, ext. 329.

CONNECTIONS! Ministry for Catholic singles 40 and over will meet Mon., Oct. 27, in St. Mary Parish, Norwalk, gym. Carol Pinard will speak on “Martyrs and Witnesses of the 20th Century.” Suggested donation: $10. For more info or to RSVP, go to connectionsfairfield@gmail.com.

PUB THEOLOGY: “Mass Appeal” with Fr. Peter Lynch will explore the meaning of the Mass. Come be surprised the last Wed. of every month (Oct. 29) from 6:30-8:30 pm at Walrus + Carpenter Smokehouse/GastroPub, 2895 Fairfield Ave., Bridgeport. For more info, contact St. Ann Parish: 203.368.1607, or on Facebook at St Ann Black Rock/EDUCATION RAFFLE: St. Lawrence School Tuition Raffle will award one $25,000 tuition prize to be paid to any K-12 school, college or university. Tickets: $100 each; only 1,000 tickets will be sold. Drawing will take place on Fri., Oct. 31.
Broadway actress to emcee benefit

GREENWICH—The Twenty-Third Annual Benefit Dinner for the Inner-City Foundation For Charity & Education will take place on October 18 at the Hyatt Regency Greenwich. The black tie gala begins with a reception at 6:30 pm, followed by dinner at 7:30 pm. Valisia LeKae, the 2014 Grammy Award nominee for Best Musical Theatre Album and the 2013 Tony Award nominee for Best Lead Actress in a Musical, will be master of ceremonies. In addition to her nominations for her performance in Motown The Musical, LeKae also appeared on Broadway in The Book of Mormon, Ragtime, 110 in the Shade, and The Threepenny Opera. She was also nominated for a Drama League Award, Outer Critics Circle Award, and won the Theatre World Award.

The evening will feature a concert performance by the Tho Wop Project, featuring cast members from Broadway’s hit shows Hairspray, Jersey Boys, Sister Act and Motown The Musical—including Tony nominee Charl Brown—performing a selection of doo-wop hits and inspired renditions of contemporary songs. They will be accompanied by a band of Broadway veterans including accomplished Broadway musical director Sonny Paladino.

Marc B. Lautenbach, president and CEO of Pinney Bowes, is the corporate committee chair for the event. Janie and Dean Gestal of Greenwich are the benefit committee chairs. They are being assisted by Audrey and Daniel Dornier, Helen and Dan FitzPatrick, Vitma and Dick Matties, and Bill Mitchell who are serving as co-chairs of the benefit committee.

For more information, or to purchase tickets or to make a donation, visit www.incentcityfoundation.org, or call 203.416.1496.
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