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The Thirteenth General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society

JUNE 13–16, 2013, AT SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY

Please join us for this special four-day conference featuring workshops, special presentations, and guided prayer, all based upon the wisdom and teachings of Thomas Merton.

Photo used with permission of the Merton Legacy Trust and the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University.

To register, visit www.merton.org/2013.
Students from diocesan Catholic schools marched in Bridgeport’s St. Patrick’s Day Parade.

This year, under the leadership of Robert O’Keeffe of Trumbull, the parade introduced a new Catholic Schools Division.

In the photo below (left) Sr. Mary Grace Walsh, new diocesan superintendent of schools, joined O’Keeffe in the division car to wave to people along the parade route and enjoy the day.
Local News

Shrine has “Angel” in Appeal effort

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

When you give to the Annual Bishop’s Appeal, you’re following in the footsteps of the apostles, says Angelo Cocco, who directs the appeal at St. Margaret’s Shrine in Bridgeport.

Cocco, a lifetime Bridgeport resident who served as a trustee of St. Raphael Parish for many years, is proud of the Shrine’s participation in the Appeal. “The Bishop’s Appeal should be considered an invitation from Christ to walk with him, just as he asked his disciples. We are one and the same. We may be separated by time and culture but the Appeal is directly from Christ,” says the 71-year-old retired educator.

Last year, the Shrine went over its $25,000 goal to send $32,000 in support of the Bishop’s Appeal. It was an impressive achievement given the fact that many of those who now attend Mass at the Shrine came over from Holy Rosary Parish and St. Raphael Parish as part of the parish reconfiguration plan.

When Deacon Don Foust preached at the final Mass at Holy Rosary Parish, he urged those in attendance to carry their love for the Church forward to St. Margaret’s Shrine. “You have a special light of faith that you must bring to others so they can see and share in it,” Deacon Foust told parishioners, who took him up on his word immediately. Not only did they begin attending Mass at the Shrine, but they decided to participate in the Bishop’s Appeal.

“When without even having to be asked, we took it on our own to support the Bishop’s Appeal. That made it even more wonderful as a sign of people’s generosity,” says Deacon Foust, who now serves as administrator of the Shrine. He credits Angelo Cocco for his leadership.

“He’s a guy who has been connected to the shrine his whole life; he feels a real affinity to it. His heart does the speaking for him in terms of asking people to contribute.”

Fr. Alphonso Picone, rector of the Shrine, says that when he first came to St. Margaret’s Shrine in 2006 he met Angelo Cocco and was immediately impressed with him as a man of faith and a deep commitment to helping others. “I thought he would be just right to be the Appeal’s leader,” says Fr. Picone. “That first year we reached our goal, and he has been the leader ever since. He brings the whole thing together and inspires others to give. He has helped us all to move forward.”

The Shrine has felt new energy since becoming a part of the Sodality of St. Margaret of Cortona in 2006. The Shrine has been inspired to expand the ministry of being a sanctuary to those in need. Cocco says that he has seen the power of faith in his own life, beginning with his parents and his education by the nuns at St. Augustine School, where he graduated in 1955.

“My parents raised me in an environment that taught me the importance of helping the poor. I was raised with that notion early at home and the nuns taught me to perform works of charity.”

Fr. Picone said that Angelo Cocco leads by example. “He is a person who has experienced the generosity of God in his own life and he has been able to transmit that generosity to people who don’t have the same possibilities in life.”

(St. Margaret’s Shrine is located at 2539 Park Avenue in Bridgeport.)

Scott Pelley to speak at NCH Breakfast

STAMFORD—CBS News anchor Scott Pelley will be the featured speaker at the 9th Annual Breakfast Fund Raiser for New Covenant House of Hospitality on April 23, from 7:30-9:30 am at Woodway Country Club in Darien.

“We’re honored that Scott Pelley has chosen to recognize our work through his appearance. In numerous stories all over the world, he has reported on human rights issues including hunger, whether in the Third World or our own cities in Fairfield County,” says Al Barber, chief executive officer of Catholic Charities.

Barber says that New Covenant House served 675,000 meals last year through its soup kitchen, food pantry and after-school programs.

Scott Pelley, one of the most experienced reporters in broadcast journalism, was named anchor and managing editor of the CBS Evening News in May 2011. In its first season, “The CBS Evening News with Scott Pelley” won a Peabody award and was the only network evening news broadcast to grow its audience.

Few journalists have made as wide and as deep a mark on a news organization as Pelley has at CBS News, where he’s covered everything from breaking national news stories to politics to wars and has served as the network’s chief White House correspondent. Since he brought that experience to “60 Minutes” in 2004, half of all the major awards won by the broadcast have been for stories reported by Pelley. In addition to his daily anchor role as the network’s chief reporter, Pelley continues to provide many stories to “60 Minutes.”


Pelley serves on the board of directors of the International Rescue Committee, a refugee relief agency headquartered in New York City. He is co-chair of the IRC’s Board of Overseers. Scott Pelley was born in San Antonio, Texas, and attended journalism school at Texas Tech University. He and his wife, Jane Boone Pelley, have a son and a daughter.

New Covenant House of Hospitality has been serving lower Fairfield County since 1978 by feeding the hungry in a welcoming and safe environment that helps to restore dignity and empower people who are struggling. Its guests are the poor and disadvantaged including the homeless; working poor; elderly, mentally ill; HIV/AIDS clients; the disabled and immigrants, both with and without citizenship documentation.

(To make a breakfast reservation, contact Betsy Lopez 203.964.8228 or nchstamford.org. Online reservations at www.nchstamford.org.)
“Violence against women happens everywhere,” says Sr. Maureen Fleming, S.S.N.D., who is director of outreach ministries at St. Luke Parish in Westport. In March, she was one of several representatives from religious orders, including a delegation from the Schools Sisters of Notre Dame, to attend the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, which met in New York in March.

Violence against women was the main focus of the annual meeting of the Commission. This issue is especially relevant to the School Sisters of Notre Dame who, in common with many congregations of women religious, work to help women and girls achieve their full potential. “Ending violence against them is key to the mission of our congregation,” says Sr. Eileen Reilly, S.S.N.D., director of the order’s UN aggregations, “says Sr. Eileen Reilly, director of the order’s UN aggregation,” says Sr. Eileen Reilly, director of the order’s UN aggregation.”

According to the UN Commission on human rights, human trafficking is more lucrative, worldwide, than the drug trade. While Fairfield County seems remote from the poverty of third-world countries, the Route I-95 corridor has become a pathway for human trafficking in many forms. “Women are trafficked here,” Sr. Maureen says. “Some nail spas in Fairfield County have spa workers who get_vanned in at seven in the morning from Queens, vanned back and put in rooms like cattle. Some of them have to be ‘escorts’ at night.”

Visiting one such spa, she found that the women grooms the finger and toenails of their clients spoke almost no English. “When I offered to run an English class for them right there at the spa, a large man flew out of a back room. He told me ‘No, no English’—and made sure I left,” she recalls. “That gets me a little bit crazy. These women are working in wealthy towns, and they’re modern day slaves, being kept isolated and not being allowed to learn English.”

Women in similarly isolated situations work as dishwashers in restaurants, or as cleaning ladies. Then, too, there are nannies—women working in wealthy homes who do not get medical insurance, do not get a day off, and sometimes do not get a salary. “A young woman came to me with a medical problem. She had no money to pay a doctor, and no free time to go see one,” Sr. Maureen says. When she asked the woman, who cared for the family’s young children, how much she was paid, the answer was simple—and heartbreaking. “I get meals and a place to live.” Awareness of their condition is the best hope for women trapped in these situations. “People are getting the picture more,” Sr. Maureen says of the response she gets when she speaks on the issue at women’s groups, in parishes, and at Confirmation retreats. “I tell people to become more aware. If you’re in a nail spa, try to talk to the women there. If a man comes out of a corner and makes sure I left,” she recalls. “That gets me a little bit crazy. These women are working in wealthy towns, and they’re modern day slaves, being kept isolated and not being allowed to learn English.”

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“Poverty is one of the things that causes violence against women,” she says. “The issues might be different, but whether in Africa or in the U.S., violence is the same.”

A LANDMARK SCULPTURE alongside the United Nations building in Manhattan shows a shattered world. “When we speak out for the rights of women and children, we begin to put the world together,” says Sr. Maureen Fleming, who recently attended a UN Commission on the Status of Women.
Religious Education

Carol Pinard: a gift to the Church

By PAT HENNESSY

“You cannot love what you do not know,” Dr. Joan Kelly told catechists, RCIA coordinators, youth ministers and directors of religious education at a workshop sponsored by the Catechetical Leaders of the Diocese of Bridgeport (CLDB), held at the Catholic Center in March. “You have to know the faith in order to love it.”

The CLDB workshop “Catholic Laity: Called the Gifted” was also the opportunity to pay tribute to Carol Pinard, diocesan director of religious education, who retired at the end of March.

The formation of the CLDB, with the encouragement of Bishop William E. Lori, became the centerpiece for a plan of ecclesial formation and spirituality for directors of religious education, catechetical leaders and catechists.

“Carol offered guidance, encouragement, and support to DREs, and gave them personalized, hands-on, one to one assistance,” said Damien O’Connor, director of Pastoral Services.

Prior to coming to Pastoral Services, Pinard was DRE at St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan. In that position, she oversaw the religious education of 1,600 students, with a staff of 150 teachers.

Inspired by an apostolic letter by Pope John Paul II, Pinard began research on martyrs and witnesses of the 20th century. It became the centerpiece of the Diocesan Millennium Celebration for the year 2000. Throughout the following years, Pinard has continued to give presentations on the new martyrs of the Church.

“Carol remains one of our most trusted, knowledgeable and wise servants of the Lord,” O’Connor told the gathering. “Carol’s commitment to the Church has been selfless and transformative for over 30 years.”

Carol and her husband, Bob, continue to be active members of St. Aloysius. The couple has three grown children and three grandchildren.

Before her presentation, Dr. Kelly also paid tribute to Pinard. A former diocesan director of Pastoral Services, she and Pinard had a long and close friendship. “Carol Pinard is a person of substance,” she told the gathering. “Both when she was at St. Aloysius and at the diocese, her managerial skills and the love for the Church saw to it that Catholic heritage and teaching is passed on effectively. She is a gift to the Church.”

Dr. Kelly currently teaches at the graduate level at Sacred Heart University. She is an instructor in the permanent diaconate formation program for the Diocese of Bridgeport and a member of the faculty team at St. John Fisher Seminary in Stamford. She received the Papal Cross from Pope John Paul II for her service to the Church.

Dr. Kelly’s presentation traced the position of the laity in the Church from its earliest times to the present day, drawing on the letters of St. Paul and Vatican II document Lumen Gentium (Light of the Nations), which expressed the “universal call to holiness” of all who are baptized.

“You won’t find the word ‘laity’ anywhere in the New Testament,” Dr. Kelly told the assembled educators. “In his letters, St. Paul used the word ‘saints’—saints—the holy ones. The huge division between clergy and laity came later, in the Middle Ages.”

She encouraged the DREs and catechists, as baptized “saints” in the meaning shown in the New Testament, to know and love the Catholic faith. Looking toward the modern understanding of the role of the laity, she quoted Cardinal John Henry Newman of Great Britain: “I want a laity who know their religion.”

“She gave us a wonderful summary, going through the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25
EDITORIAL

Making Hay

Easteride, the joyful Easter Season, starts on Easter and keeps going and going and going. It runs the 50 days to Pentecost Sunday, and then tacks on an extra week to reach the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity. You can keep those pink bunnies and flower baskets up through sunny yellow daffodil time, add a bouquet for the office on Administrative Professional’s Day, study cloud castles in the air on Ascension Thursday, buy azaleas for Mother’s Day and wear red on Pentecost Sunday. Trinity Sunday falls on Memorial Day weekend this year, time to breakout the grill for the first cookout of the season.

The joy of Easteride dwarfs the far shorter 40 days of Lent. And after all that Lenten sacrifice, the Sunday after Easter sees the lowest church attendance of the year. Why not? The delights of the sunlit garden are calling. “Make hay while the sun shines,” as the saying goes.

Umm, but let’s weave that hay or straw into something valuable. Find a hilltop after Mass on Ascension Thursday; while the wind swirls around you, think of how the Apostles felt when their friend disappeared from their sight. Yes, do wear red for the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, and hang out some balloons—it’s the birthday of the Church. Buy Mom a corsage for Mothers’ Day, and buy some new, new duds for yourself. You’ll lift fewer crowds bringing Mom to church than you would bringing her to brunch, and it’s still reason aplenty to dress for the day.

And that barbecue—how daring are you? Have the kids say grace before you dig in even if, to be clever, they yell “Grace!” and grab for the chips. That’s okay. They’re growing fast, like the fields of spring hay. We’re weaving, one strand at a time.

A universal appeal

With the Annual Bishop’s Appeal well underway, we can take new inspiration and hope from the words of Pope Francis, who began his papacy with a resounding call to protect human dignity and reach out to the vulnerable: “We are called to create, to protect man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love is to open up a horizon of hope,” said Pope Francis in St. Peter’s Square, teaching us that Gospel values involve everyone in the work of charity.

How moved we’ve been by the images of the Pope embracing and blessing paralyzed adults and children, and stooping to wash the feet of men and women who seemed overwhelmed by his act of humility. He has plunged into the papacy at the deepest level of Christ-like compassion for the poor and marginalized, and he has urged us to care for “the whole of humanity, especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important.”

It is not easy for many people to give to the Bishop’s Appeal each year because rising expenses at home, job loss, and other challenges have created an uncertainty about the future. Yet they give because they feel blessed and they are aware that others have even greater need.

Pope Francis compels us toward charity when he says that renewing the Church is “going to require an engagement with the person of Christ, to follow Christ poor and humble.” When we participate in the Bishop’s Appeal, we answer that universal call in our own diocese. Now is the time to become a “Beacon of Hope” for the poor and vulnerable, and all those served by the Appeal.

Spring Warmth

Perhaps the newfound warmth has been more welcome because winter has been so slow in releasing its grip. The yellow light of forsythia has flickered on and off, and the daffodils seem more tentative than usual. Yet we have moved into spring with an abundance of new life and the promise of growing warmth and lushness entering our lives. How much we need the warmth! How we are drawn to the light and the promise of growing warmth and lushness entering our lives. How much we need the warmth! How we are drawn to the light and the promise of growing warmth and lushness entering our lives.

From the Saint Rose of Lima Parish Community

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On behalf of the community and parish, we extend our gratitude to each of you who remembered us in prayer following the events of December 14, 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School. We quickly realized the universality of the Church by the pouring of support and concern that was shown to us by so many in our faith communities. The cards and letters from staff and students in Catholic elementary schools, high schools, colleges and universities reminded us of the faith to which we are called to witness through the tradition of Catholic education. No less important were the number of cards from parish religious education programs, especially the sacramental programs. We were also contacted by many Catholic organizations and groups on both the local and national levels. The list of parishes, Catholic-based groups and dioceses that contacted us is an overwhelming one.

We are also very appreciative of the number of donations sent to us to assist our parish in our continuing ministry to the community to help pay the expenses of the victims’ funerals, to support counseling programs, to provide direct aid to families and so on. Your generosity reminded us that we are not alone during this very sad and challenging time.

We also want to thank our brother priests, deacons, and religious sisters and brother for their letters of support and encouragement. Spiritual bouquets, Mass cards, hours of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, and remembrances by many prayer groups have lifted our spirits, knowing that our intentions are ever before the Lord. We also received a number of rosaries, prayer shawls, religious words of art, memorial vestments, reliquaries, books focusing on grief and healing, original and recorded CD’s and a variety of poems, spiritual reflections and meditations to help guide us in providing comfort and support.

While we tried to acknowledge every letter and gift sent to us, it became an overwhelming task. Please accept this letter as a thank you to every person who remembered us in prayer during the days immediately following the tragedy to these days of recovery and healing.

We know that the road ahead of us will be a long one, but we are given great hope by the outpouring of generosity and love shown to us. We are truly blessed by your many acts of faith and kindness. Please know that you continue to be in our prayers of gratitude for the goodness you have demonstrated to us in so many ways.

God bless,
Monsignor Robert Weiss Pastor, Saint Rose of Lima Parish Newtown, Connecticut

CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

Monsignor Kevin T. ROYAL, Delegate for Clergy, in Residence at St. Matthew Rectory, Norwalk, to Administrator, Holy Spirit Parish, Stamford. Effective date was April 7.

FATHER ROBERT J. HYL, Pastor, Holy Spirit Parish, Stamford, to Retirement, Queen of Clergy, Stamford. Effective date was April 7.

Rev. Msgr. Kevin Royal, Delegate for Clergy Personnel April, 2013
Editorial

Let’s Celebrate Pope Francis!

For Catholics, mid March of 2013 will be remembered as a momentous time of celebration for us—as glued to our TV screens we saw, and listened to, our new Pope. Hearing the name he chose—Francis—I knew deep in my heart that he was specially sent to us by our good Lord. Why? Because I was half way through reading a new biography of St. Francis of Assisi, written by Augustine Thompson, O.P., published by Cornell University Press, and once again I was moved by the goodness of this remarkable saint. Any of us who have ever become acquainted with St. Francis’s life story—via a book or the movie once made about him—remain ever moved by his dedication to poverty, his love of animals and nature, his pacifism and complete devotion to Christ. With that said, I doubt if I’d have to explain why I felt our new Pope Francis was, of course, sent to us in these troubled times by our good Lord Jesus! I also knew straight on that I’d feel like he was a “relative” when I heard that his parents had come from Italy. Why? Because that’s the country my parents came from, too. I haven’t read much yet about his relationship with his parents, but I would wager that he was a beloved son—as I was a beloved daughter—to my parents!

At Pope Francis’s installation Mass on Tuesday, March 19, he urged world leaders to serve “the poorest” and “the weakest” and the “least important.” Then—and I clapped my hands as I heard this—he added plainly, that the leaders must also protect “the environment.”

We learned right away that our new Pope would be respectful of leaders of other religions, as he promised “friendship, respect and continued dialogue” in the Catholic Church’s relationship with them. The New York Times reported that he described the spiritual bond between Catholics and Jews as “very special,” and that his outreach to Muslims was warmly received.

It was reported that as many as 200,000 people were at St. Peter’s Square in Vatican City on March 19 for Pope Francis’s installation Mass. I was well “glued” to my television set so I could participate in all the heart-warming developments so important to us Catholics.

God bless our Pope!

“A Woman’s View

Antoinette Bosco is a member of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish in Brookfield.

A Woman’s View

By Antoinette Bosco

Antoinette Bosco is a member of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish in Brooklyn.

Our sacred tradition marks us

A Dad’s View

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

“T”radition is a set of solutions to problems we’ve forgotten.” This clever comment appeared beneath a story I read about the same-sex-marriage case recently argued before the Supreme Court. The commenter, who goes by a pseudonym, attributed the line to a science fiction writer. I hunted around for the original source, but I found no other mention of it online.

Does it scandalize you to learn that I was tempted to steal the idea and pass it off as my own? I probably could have gotten away with it. It’s unlikely that the commenter, or the science fiction writer, will ever read this column.

Nevertheless, I chuckled the idea almost as soon as it entered my head. It’s wrong to steal, even when you can get away with it—maybe especially when you can get away with it. At least that’s what my parents taught me. You could say it was a family tradition.

Evidently, not everyone abides by the same rules. Stuff gets stolen all the time. We once had a baby stroller stolen from us right off the street. We made the mistake of leaving it unattended for six minutes while we dropped Clara off at St. Ignatius Loyola Day Nursery on East 84th Street in New York City.

I have often wondered about just what kind of person would steal a baby stroller from in front of a Catholic nursery school. Must have been pretty desperate.

The bulk of our secular laws are derived from traditional understandings of right and wrong. Most of us, though, don’t resist the temptation to steal simply because we are afraid of going to jail. Rather, we don’t take what doesn’t belong to us because we know in our hearts that doing so is a sin.

It’s written in the Bible—thou shalt not steal—which is good enough for me, but not for everyone, so we have evolved certain rules about the sanctity of private property. Society simply cannot sustain itself if everyone goes around taking stuff that isn’t theirs.

Thou shalt not steal is a good tradition, I think. It’s been useful. It’s served us well. It’s hard to imagine anyone arguing to pitch it overboard, though you could probably make an intellectually defensible case against it. It does seem unfair to those who were raised to see strollers left on the street as fair game.

Now, I can’t say I’ve never stolen anything. I can’t even say that I’ve always or mostly respected others’ property. I’ve fallen short in these areas. I’m a sinner. But, thankfully, as a Catholic, I have recourse to Confession.

The sacraments are a part of our sacred tradition. Our Protestant friends tend to reject the notion of sacramental confession to a priest, believing instead that sins are forgiven through faith alone. This sets us apart. Our sacred tradition marks us. It is not just what we believe—it is a part of who we are.

We observed two traditions recently in my family that held special resonance for me. The first was the Sacrament of Baptism, which is, of course, to be found in the Bible, but not in quite the same way we celebrate it. Infant baptism is frowned upon by certain Christians because in the time of Jesus only adults were baptized. Yet, our tradition is to baptize children shortly after they are born.

The ceremony was small—just family and godparents were invited—but also momentous. It is a solemn vow we take to raise our children in the faith, and taking it always hits me hard. My small, defenseless, innocent Sally, entrusted to us by a loving God knows nothing of the Vale of Tears awaiting her in this earthly life.

I get misty just thinking about it. The second was a funeral service for my dear Aunt Ronnie, my mother’s younger sister, who lost a long battle to cancer last month. A friend of hers—a deacon—gave the eulogy. He revealed that although Ronnie had been estranged from the Church, she had made her confession and received Our Lord before she passed.

Again, I get emotional. I’m a bit of a mush.

These ceremonies were, for me, poignant reminders that when we are at our most vulnerable, our sacred traditions are there to give us solace. The sacraments of our Church—Baptism, the Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Anointing of the Sick and Marriage—are special occasions to receive God’s comfort. We must safeguard them. We must be faithful stewards of tradition.

When we are young, we misunderstand the value of tradition. We think it is a tool to limit us. We are blind to its wisdom.

When we are old, we convince ourselves that tradition has outlived its usefulness. We think we have evolved beyond it. We are blind to its wisdom.

But tradition is the answer, even if we can’t remember the question.

“The ceremony was small—just family and godparents were invited—but also momentous. It is a solemn vow we take to raise our children in the faith, and taking it always hits me hard. My small, defenseless, innocent Sally, entrusted to us by a loving God knows nothing of the Vale of Tears awaiting her in this earthly life.

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**Annual Bishop’s Appeal**

**“On the go” for charity**

BRIDGEPORT—Fran Andrade is one of the familiar faces in this year’s Annual Bishop’s Appeal brochure, where she is seen handing out a turkey last Thanksgiving as part of her volunteer work in the Blessed Sacrament food pantry.

The 80-year-old retired office worker dresses warmly each year and goes out in the cold to heft the 20-pound birds. It’s a labor of love and goes out in the cold to heft the 20-pound birds. It’s a labor of love for her. “People are whole-heartedly grateful. Some are old, ill, and on fixed incomes. Others have lost their jobs and the food makes a big difference to them,” she says.

Fr. Reggie Norman, pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish, says that Fran’s charity is rooted in her love for the neighborhood and her love for the Church. “Mrs. Fran is the salt of the earth and an example of what our parish is all about. She knows that it’s the little things you do that make a difference in the neighborhood and the Church. It doesn’t matter what you ask, she never says, no. She wants to make everyone happy, and her efforts show the young kids that they need to be involved. It’s a blessing to have her.”

Fr. Reggie says that members of his parish are quick to volunteer and also are proud to give to the Annual Appeal. The parish of 480 families is already at 66% of its $10,000 goal, and he’s confident that they’ll make it.

“Our game plan is many small donations, because we don’t have people who can make a large gift. For some people, just to give $25 is a lot because they need it for food. Everyone gives a little,” says Fr. Reggie, who is grateful for Fran’s commitment to the Church. Helping out is a family tradition for the Andrades, who have lived in the East End for 40 years. Fran’s nephews and nieces and their children volunteer for the food drives and other parish activities. Her daughter, Donna, is well known to many as the academic dean and assistant principal of Fairfield Prep.

“We all pitch in and have fun, and I like to think that someone would help me if I needed it,” says Fran, who lives with her 90-year-old husband, Clifton.

Fran retired in 1997 from her work in the Chief’s Office at the Bridgeport Police Department. She had also spent many years working in the business office of the Dinan Memorial Center. She grew up in St. Patrick Parish, graduated from Central High School and Butler Business School and later moved to the East side when her brother bought a two-family house.

Fran says that, like her, parish and community volunteers are grateful for the Annual Bishop’s Appeal because they’ve seen the impact it has on the lives of so many people through the programs and services it supports.

She says that even though many people in her parish are poor, they give what they can to help others. Fran credits her deep faith to her parents, Cape Verde natives who inspired a love for the Church and her concern for others.

“Serving others is very gratifying, and I would encourage everyone to give to the Appeal and volunteer in parishes. It’s very important to support the Church and help so many people.”

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**Appeal Update:**

$4.5 million mark

The Annual Bishop’s Appeal has reached the $4.5 million mark with the contributions of almost 10,000 donors to date in support of diocesan programs and ministries. “The Appeal is one important opportunity for us to present a vibrant faith community to our new bishop when he arrives,” says Msgr. Jerald A. Doyle, diocesan administrator.

Msgr. Doyle says that even as we await a new bishop, people should be reassured the work of the diocese has gone on both at diocesan and parish level through the many services supported by the Appeal.

“The commitment of my brother priests, deacons, and sisters to serve the many ministries across the diocese is particularly heartwarming to me. Their dedication to building strong parishes, providing pastoral care to the ill in local hospitals and nursing homes, and reaching out to our retired priests proclaims the living gospel to us all,” he says.

This year’s “Beacon of Hope” campaign once again highlights diocesan schools, soup kitchens, formation of seminarians, and care for retired priests.

Among the highlights of services are the 1.3 million meals to the poor and homeless, 36,000 children who participate in religious education programs, 3,500 prisoners who receive spiritual counseling, 11,000 students in diocesan elementary and high schools, 22,000 patients receiving pastoral care in health facilities, and 600 couples who attended weekend retreats as they prepared for marriage.

(Checks may be made payable to the Annual Bishop’s Appeal, and a credit card gift may be payable online or by pledge card. All gifts will be acknowledged by the diocese and are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

For more information go to www.2013ABA.com, or to make your gift early, please pledge by emailed: 2013ABA@diobpt.org.)
Pope Francis biography

Pope Francis was born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Buenos Aires of Italian descent. He worked briefly as a chemical technician before entering seminary; he was ordained in 1969. From 1973-79 he was Argentina’s Provincial Superior of the Society of Jesus, became Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998, and was created cardinal in 2001. When he was elected by the papal conclave on March 13, he chose the name Francis in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi. He is the first pope to have taken the name, Francis, the first Jesuit pope, the first pope from the Americas and the first pope from the Southern Hemisphere.

In addition to his native Spanish, Pope Francis is conversant in Latin (the official language of the Holy See), Italian (the official language of Vatican City), English, French, German and Ukrainian. An avid soccer fan, a sport he played in his youth, the new pope has been a supporter of the San Lorenzo de Almagro football (soccer) club since his childhood. He is also a fan of tango dancing, with a fondness for the traditional music of Argentina and Uruguay known as the milonga.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born on December 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires. He was the eldest of five children of Mario José Bergoglio, an Italian immigrant railway worker born in Italy’s Piedmont region, and his wife Regina, born in Buenos Aires to a family of northern Italian origin.

At the age of 21, he suffered from life-threatening pneumonia and cysts and had part of a lung removed shortly afterwards. After earning a secondary school degree as a chemical technician and working for a few years in that capacity, he joined the Society of Jesus, entering the novitiate in 1958. He received a philosophy degree in 1963 and spent the next three years teaching literature and psychology. He studied theology from 1967-70, and was ordained a priest on December 13, 1969.

Fr. Bergoglio did the final state of Jesuit formation from 1970-71, and was novice master at the Jesuit seminary in San Miguel, a Buenos Aires suburb, from 1972-73, where he taught theology. In 1973, he made his perpetual vows in the Society, and that year was elected provincial for Argentina. After his time as provincial, from 1980-86, he served as rector of the seminary at San Miguel, where he had studied, and was pastor of a parish in the city. He went to Germany in 1986 to finish his doctoral thesis, after which he served as a professor, confessor and spiritual director.

According to Ukrainian Catholic Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, before becoming a bishop, Fr. Bergoglio was mentored by a Salesian Ukrainian Greek Catholic priest, Fr. Stefan Czmil, and often celebrated Mass with him. In 1992, he was consecrated auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires, and became Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998, and succeeded as the See’s archbishop the following year. Because of his longstanding connection with Eastern Rite Catholics and his understanding of their liturgy, rites and spirituality, he was named ordinary for Eastern Catholics in Argentina.

In addition, he had a positive relationship with Eastern Orthodox churches, which are not in union with Rome. As a...
When the white smoke went up

By SEMINARIAN ANDY VILL

The smoke was supposed to be black. At least, that is what we all thought heading down to St. Peter’s Square on Wednesday March 13th; only the second day of the Conclave to elect our new Holy Father.

It was raining and I had plans to go out to dinner with friends from home that were on pilgrimage in the Eternal City. I saw Deacon John, a brother seminarian from the Diocese of Bridgeport, with a group of Missionaries of Charity (MCs), so my friends and I walked through the sea of umbrellas towards them.

As we waited for the black smoke to billow from the chimney atop the Sistine Chapel, I learned that the MCs were friends with a priest I know in Madrid. I love being Catholic! I come to Rome from the United States and meet a group of religious sisters from all over the world who know a friend of mine in Spain! Even gathering to see the black smoke was an exciting event for the Catholics young and old who live in the city of Rome.

Just past 7 pm, people began to point to the roof of the Sistine Chapel where we saw white smoke pouring forth from the chimney! The ocean of people who were in the piazza erupted in shouts of joy! We have a Pope! The Cardinals had selected a Pope! People began to shout, “Viva il Papa! Viva!” (Long live the Pope! Long may he live!)

We didn’t even know who he was yet but we loved him because he was our Pope. The MCs I was with began to sing the Salve Regina and those of us who were near them joined in. People spread out and shouts of joy could be heard from all over the piazza and down the Via della Conciliazione, the main street leading to Vatican City State.

All sorts of people began rushing to the piazza when word had gotten out that the smoke was white. Men in chef hats and aprons emerged from restaurant kitchens, grandparents ran with their grandkids in tow towards St. Peter’s. As we waited, the giant bells of St. Peter’s Basilica rang and church bells everywhere sounded throughout the city. Before long the Swiss Guards, clad in the most regal dress I have seen them in, marched with a band from the side of the colonnade up the steps just under the main balcony of the Basilica from where the Pope would emerge. Everyone was there to see the new Pope!

After about forty-five minutes of waiting and speculating who had been elected, the Cardinal Protodeacon told us the baptismal name of St. Peter’s Basilica to proclaim: Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum: Habemus Papam! (I announce to you a great joy: We have a Pope!). Once more, the piazza overflowed with a wave of emotion and excitement!

As part of the announcement, the Cardinal Protodeacon told us the baptismal name of the Cardinal who had just been elected and the name he has chosen for himself as Pope. The crowds were still cheering when the announcement was made so no one could hear clearly what was said. Some thought that the Pope was named Gregory (most likely mishearing Cardinal Bergoglio’s last name). Others thought it was a French Cardinal who had been elected (mishearing the Pope’s name in Latin: Franciscus). I had heard people shouting out behind me that it was a Cardinal from Argentina and repeating in Italian, Che un regalo per la Chiesa! (What a gift for the Church!) I did not know who this man was, but I did know that he is my Pope.

A little more than ten minutes passed before our new Pope, Francis, emerged from the loggia out onto the balcony. Once again, a joy like I have never experienced before sounded throughout the area in front of St. Peter’s Basilica. We were able to see a close up of the Pope on the big screens that were placed throughout the piazza and he looked a bit startled. He stood there taking it all in.

After a few minutes of people cheering, the Pope spoke his first words to the world, Buona sera! (Good evening!) The crowds cheered again! How genial this man is! He began by leading us all in prayer for Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

Before the Pope gave his blessing to the world, Pope Francis asked that we take a moment to pray for him in silence, the prayer of the people asking the blessing for their bishop. As he got on his knees to pray, the 200,000 people fell absolutely silent and began to pray earnestly for him. I have never heard such profound silence. What I marvel at most is how this one man who sits upon the Chair of St. Peter can bring so many people to silence and to prayer. Finally, after blessing us, he closed by telling us, Buona notte e buon riposo! (Good night and sleep well!)

Truly, all of us who had awaited with fervent prayer the election of a new Pope did sleep well that night! I am eager to return to the Diocese of Bridgeport this June when God willing, I will be ordained a deacon as I continue on my journey towards the priesthood! God is so good to us. Now that we have a new Pope, let us continue in our prayers for a new bishop for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

(Andy Vill, a member of St. Mary Parish, Ridgefield, is a seminarian for the Diocese of Bridgeport currently at the North American College in Rome. He will be ordained to the transitional diaconate this spring.)

By SEMINARIAN ANDY VILL IN ROME—“What a gift to the Church!” I thought when the white smoke poured forth from the chimney atop the Sistine Chapel that Wednesday night and the name of the new Pope emerged. Everyone was there to see the new Pope!

After a few minutes of people cheering, the Pope spoke his first words to the world, Buona sera! (Good evening!) The crowds cheered again! How genial this man is! He began by leading us all in prayer for Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

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Bridgeport parish shares pope’s spiritual heritage

By PAT HENNESSY

“We go places where there’s the greatest need,” says Mother Blessed Sacrament, S.S.V.M., mother superior of the Sisters, Servants of the Lord and the virgin of Matará, who live in Bridgeport and serve at St. George Parish there.

Her order is part of a religious family of priests, brothers, and sisters: The Institute of the Incarnate Word (Instituto del Verbo Incarnato in Spanish). They were founded in Argentina, beginning with the religious order of priests in 1984. The official beginning of the women’s branch of the order came on March 19, 1988.

“We celebrated the 25th anniversary of all our sisters on the Feast Day of St. Joseph, the same day as the Mass of Installation for Pope Francis,” she says, her face aglow with happiness at the memory.

Although St. George’s is not as poor as some of the places where their order serves, it is a largely Hispanic parish with many parishioners facing the challenges of poverty and, in many cases, the discrimination common to new immigrants. Their pastor, Fr. Elio Sosa, I.V.E., was himself born and raised in Argentina.

“I haven’t had the opportunity to meet him personally, but I have always heard of him,” Fr. Sosa says Pope Francis. “He has always been a great priestly example for us, especially in his kindness to those most in need. Like St. Francis, whose name he has taken, he has preached more with works than with words.”

At the time the I.V.E. order was founded, Pope Francis was pastor of a parish in San Miguel, a Buenos Aires suburb. In 1992, he was consecrated auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires. Although he and the order’s founder, Carlos Miguel Buela, come from a different region of Argentina, they share many of the same elements of spirituality.

“We serve for the glory of God and the salvation of souls,” Mother Blessed Sacrament says. “By the grace of God, our founder was put in contact with Ignatian spirituality of the Jesuits, just as Pope Francis was formed by that spirituality. Our order holds a retreat based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius every year.”

Christ chooses a pope for his Church based on the needs of the time, Mother Blessed Sacrament believes. “These are very self-centered times. Our world is so full of materialism. The Pope is saying, ‘We don’t need that. Don’t focus on yourself. Find Christ in the poor, the handicapped, the sick, the ones that nobody else wants to be around.’”

Taking care of those nobody else wants is one of the hallmarks of the I.V.E. order. “In Argentina we have a place called City of Charity. It’s an umbrella name for a number of group homes called Homes of Mercy. We have homes for abandoned children, homes for the disabled and for the elderly. We have a home for mothers who have been raped, and the children of that rape. We teach the mothers to love their children, and teach the children to understand their mothers and what they have been through.”

Through the I.V.E. religious family, the people of St. George share another close link of faith with the new Holy Father. They are deeply devoted to the Blessed Mother under the title of Our Lady of Luján, patroness of Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. “The sanctuary of Our Lady of Luján is the most beautiful place for me,” says Sr. Mary, Ark of the Covenant, S.S.V.M. All the Sisters are given names taken from one of the litanies to Our Lady or one of her titles. “The shrine is not far from Buenos Aires, and we know Pope Francis has a great devotion to her.”

A beautifully detailed statue of Our Lady of Luján graces the chapel at St. George where daily Mass is celebrated.

When news of the new Pope’s home country hit the media, Fr. Sosa’s phone began ringing non-stop as friends and family called to share in the rejoicing. All of St. George, whatever their ethnic background, joined in the celebration.

“I was at the eye doctor,” says Sr. Mary, Ark of the Covenant,
He bears the image of Jesus

By Fr. Fredrick Saviano

"Habemos Papam..." With these Latin words: “We have a Pope” on Wednesday March 13, the world received the great news that the Church was no longer in suspense about how long it would take the Cardinal Electors in Conclave to choose a new successor to St. Peter. Yet the expectation was electric until Pope Francis I appeared on the Balcony above Vatican Square to reveal who he actually was. And the world went wild with joy!

A simple man—but by no means simple-minded—stood humbly before the crowd and the world almost as much bewildered as the faithful that the Holy Spirit had touched him and called him into greater service.

He brings with him a rich legacy of Jesuit training and affinity, as well as courage in the face of adversity, having weathered the iron-fisted dictatorship of Argentina’s General Jorge Videla in the '70s. Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio from Buenos Aires, Argentina, thus became the first Pope from the “New World,” and the first to take the name “Francis.”

Both of these items are of tremendous significance for us all. The Church has shown that it is truly universal, and the man whom the Holy Spirit chose is already showing the marks of humility, spontaneity, simplicity and the resolve to rebuild it as did his namesake, St. Francis of Assisi.

He has thrilled everyone (with the exception of the Vatican Security—tongue in cheek) with his love for the common people and the sick and weak. He continues, as much as possible, to mix and mingle with the crowds and touch and let himself be touched by the people he has been called to serve.

We laughed and cried with emotion as we learned that he stopped his car at the hotel where he was staying before the Conclave, on the way back to the Vatican after his election “to collect his suitcases and to pay his bill.”

Of late, we heard that he personally called the proprietor of the newspaper stand where he received his daily newspaper in Buenos Aires to thank him for the services rendered and to let him know that he would not need the daily delivery anymore.

Certainly, he bears the image of Jesus Christ whose Vicar he has now become. Many have already criticized this “dangerous” spontaneity, but I believe that he thinks more of the Model he is called to represent and the Saint whose name he chose, both of whom delighted to be among the poor and helpless, than of his personal security.

Pope Francis calls us to reflect with courage on the necessity of going back to basics. Echoing the voices of his predecessors, Blessed Pope John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, he reminds us that God is Love and that if we are to evangelize, we are to begin at the roots of Christianity. The goodness of God and his infinite tenderness and mercy can only be made manifest in and through our own actions. He reminds us, like Saint Francis, that we must “always preach the Gospel, and if necessary, use words.”

“Viva il Papa” – Long live the Pope

(Fr. Saviano, diocesan director of the Propagation of the Faith, dedicated years of service to the poor in missions in Latin America, including ten years in Argentina.)
What really impressed our parishioners was the call of Pope Francis on behalf of the poor and marginalized. That really resonated with our people because they often take care of their own right here in the parish. In an area of affluence we can take things for granted, but many people are still struggling in Fairfield County. Pope Francis has called us to be more aware of those in need and to take care of the poor. That's a message that needs to get out.”

(Fr. Norman is pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Bridgeport and director of the Apostolate of African Americans for the Diocese of Bridgeport.)

I announce to you with great joy: We have a Pope!” When the white smoke was reported, I was on the phone with my mother and told her that the cardinals had elected a new Pope in honor of her birthday. Mom observed that as he was named on her birthday, the nicest thing would be if he took her name. Someone was listening. Sure enough, he did, and my Mom, Frances, now has a Holy Father with whom she shares her faith, birthday and name.

He seems to be a great choice and a wonderful man. His motto, chosen when he became bishop, is “Lowly and yet chosen.” Let us keep our humble Holy Father in prayer as he assumes the See of Peter.

(Fr. Quinlan is administrator of Assumption Parish in Fairfield)

I never had the opportunity to meet him personally, but I have always heard of him, both as a bishop and an archbishop. He has always been a great priestly example for us, especially in his kindness for those most in need. He has shown himself to be a good father who looks after his children, caring for their spiritual as much as their material needs, an austere father sometimes, embracing poverty and above all loving the humility that he has preached through works more than through words.

My religious family “The Institute of the Incarnate Word” was born in Argentina, and like all Argentinians we have been celebrating and offering prayers to God for our new Pontiff.

(Fr. Sosa, administrator of St. George Parish in Bridgeport, was ordained to the priesthood in Argentina.)

choice of name

At his first audience on March 16, 2013, Francis told journalists that he had chosen the name in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi, and had done so because he was especially concerned for the well-being of the poor. He explained that, as it was becoming clear during the conclave voting that he would be elected the new pontiff, the Brazilian Cardinal Cláudio Hummes had embraced him and whispered “don’t forget the poor,” which had made him think of the saint. Author and Vatican reporter John Allen remarked that the choice of the name Francis sent a clear message to the Church about the new Pope’s intention to let “the Church of the spirit, humble and simple communities of equals with a special love for the least of this world ... shine through.” This is the first time that a pope has been named Francis and the first time since Pope Lando’s reign (913–914) that a serving pope held a name not used by a predecessor.

This is an exciting time in the Catholic Church! Pope Francis has been elected 265th successor of Saint Peter—the first pope in history to come from the Americas. Let us pray that following the eldership and holiness of this first pope of the Americans, we may walk faithfully and courageously behind the Vicar of Christ and behind Jesus the Lord who is the one eternal Head of the body of the Church. Christ’s Church will truly be for every age—the true Kingdom of God and Light of the world.

In this “Year of Faith” called by Pope Benedict XVI, in this first year of the pontificate of Pope Francis, we urge all to turn more deeply in to the roots of our Christian faith. Whether you grew up at St. Joseph’s as a “cradle Catholic” or joined our parish only recently, we invite you to draw closer to the Church and closer to Christ. Come join the community of faith that is Saint Joseph’s!

(Msgr. Walsh is pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Shelton.)

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(Fr. Sosa, administrator of St. George Parish in Bridgeport, was ordained to the priesthood in Argentina.)
“That is how the name came into my heart: Francis of Assisi. For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation; these days we do not have a very good relationship with creation, do we? . . . How I would like a Church which is poor and for the poor!”

Addressing the more than 5,000 media representatives March 16 who came from around the world for the conclave and his election

Pope Francis

“At the time of his episcopal ordination, a bishop is presented with a ring as a “symbol of the bishop’s fidelity to and nuptial bond with the Church, his spouse, and he is to wear it always.” The Fisherman’s Ring is the ring worn by the pope, the Bishop of Rome. It is a gold ring with an image of St. Peter, called to be “a fisher of men,” casting his nets. Above the image is inscribed the Pope’s chosen name. The ring is a sign of his authority; in the past the ring was used to create the wax seal for papal decrees. For this reason, the ring is destroyed upon the death or resignation of the Pope. The ring Pope Francis wears bears the image of St. Peter with the keys and was designed by Enrico Manfrini for Pope Paul VI. The ring was never cast into metal, and Paul VI always wore another ring that was commissioned at the time of the Second Vatican Council. Pope Paul’s personal secretary, Archbishop Pasquale Macchi kept the wax cast of a ring. At his death, Archbishop Macchi left the wax cast to Msgr. Ettore Malnati, who made a ring of gold-plated silver from it. This was offered to Pope Francis, along with several other possible rings. Pope Francis chose this ring to become the ring of the Fisherman; it was presented to him at the Mass of Inauguration on March 19.

Mssr. Robert Weiss

“We, the Church, are so blessed by the election of our new Pope. He is an example of a disciple of Christ—by his true humility and his joy and desire to be with the people. Pope Francis comes from a Jesuit education, which follows an approach to spirituality that was founded by St. Ignatius. Ignatian spirituality is rooted in our awareness that God can be found in everyone, every place, and in everything. All of life is saturated with the holiness of God. Take time to reflect on where you find God in your everyday life, whether it’s in people you know, places you visit, or things you enjoy.

(Mssr. Weiss is pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Newtown.)

Fr. David Blanchfield

Although I am writing this before Easter and, in fact, the weekend after Pope Francis was elected, I am thinking a lot about him this Easter. The first reading on the fifth Sunday of Lent was from the prophet Isaiah. It is written after something new has just happened. The Israelites have just been rescued from exile by Cyrus, the Persian King. He has allowed them to go home and has contributed to their building of the famous Temple first built by Solomon. Isaiah says, “See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” Those words were true then. Certainly they came true in The Resurrection of Jesus in a definitive way and now I hope and pray they are coming true in the election of Pope Francis at a time when the Church is in trouble and in need of newness.

(Fr. Blanchfield is pastor of St. Jerome Parish in Norwalk.)
Viva Papa Francesco!

By DEACON JOHN CONNAUGHTON

There are three moments from the night Pope Francis was elected that I will never forget.

First, there was the appearance of the white smoke. I had been in St. Peter’s Square the two previous times the smoke came out of the Sistine Chapel chimney. Both times the smoke took a moment to turn from gray to an unmistakable black. That Wednesday night, however, as thousands of people shivered under their umbrellas, once the smoke came out and people realized it wasn’t taking steady all day providentially stopped. As the umbrellas began folding up, they were replaced with flags from all over the world that started to spring up among the crowd, and you could see the excited faces of the people gathered there. One thing you couldn’t help but notice was the large presence of youth in the square. It seemed to me that the vast majority of the people there were between the ages of 20-40.

Where I was standing I found myself surrounded by a group of novices from the Missionaries of Charity who passed the time laughing and singing hymns to Our Lady in harmony. One of the sisters, a young woman from Slovakia, asked me, “Brother, do you think it will be this way when Our Lord comes again?” “Oh yes,” another sister interjected before I could respond, “only much, much better.”

Finally, when Pope Francis came out, it was clear from the reaction that most of the people there did not know who Cardinal Bergoglio was, myself included. But as he stood there on the balcony of St. Peter’s in the white cassock, there seemed to be a general realization that this man was our new Holy Father. Suddenly you could hear shouts of “Viva il Papa! Viva Papa Francesco!” as the crowd erupted in applause. But most powerful of all was the moment when Pope Francis asked the people to pray for him before he gave his first blessing to the world as pope. For almost two minutes there was complete silence among that gathering of tens of thousands in Rome.

In the short time that we’ve had to get to know Pope Francis, it is obvious that he is a man who is completely devoted to Christ and who seeks to live his life in imitation of Our Lord. I believe people will find attractive his simple and straightforward style. I also believe they will find themselves, as I have, uplifted by his message of Christ’s mercy, emboldened by his fearlessness in speaking out about the sanctity of human life and the institution of marriage, and challenged by his example of living in solidarity with the poor and those who are suffering in any way. I am grateful for Pope Francis and for the blessing of being there the night he first appeared to the world.

(Deacon Connaughton, a seminarian from St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull currently at the North American College in Rome, will be ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Bridgeport this spring.)
Habemus Papam: demos gracias a Dios por el nuevo sucesor de Pedro, Francisco I

Por PADRE ELIO ALBANO SOSA

Antes que nada veamos un poco de su vida: Jorge Bergoglio nació en el barrio porteño de las Flores, es el mayor de los cinco hijos del matrimonio formado por Mario José Bergoglio (contador, empleado en el ferrocarril), inmigrante italiano nacido en Portocamaro, provincia de Asti, y Regina María Sivori (hija de casa), nacida en Buenos Aires, hija de inmigrantes procedentes del Piamonte y Génova. Egresa de la escuela secundaria industrial “Hipólito Yrigoyen”, con el título de técnico químico. En 1957 ingresó en el seminario del barrio Villa Devoto como novicio de la Compañía de Jesús y culminó sus estudios como seminario en el Seminario Jesuita de Santiago de Chile, ubicado en la casa de retiro de San Alberto Hurtado, donde ingresó al curso de Ciencias Clásicas y profundizó sus estudios de historia, literatura, latín y griego.


Luego de una gran actividad como sacerdote y profesor de teología, fue consagrado obispo titular de Oca (Ouca, en latín) el 20 de mayo de 1992, para ejercer como uno de los obispos auxiliares de Buenos Aires. Cuando la salud de su predecesor en la Arquidiócesis de Buenos Aires, el arzobispo Antonio Quarracino, empezó a debilitarse, Bergoglio fue designado obispo coadjutor de la misma el 3 de junio de 1997. Al fallecer Quarracino lo sucedió en el cargo de arzobispo de Buenos Aires el 28 de febrero de 1998, cargo que lleva abandonado el título de primado de Argentina. El 6 de noviembre de 1998 fue nombrado también ordinario para los fieles orientales desprovistos de un ordinario de su propio rito en Argentina.

Durante el consistorio del 21 de febrero de 2001, el Papa Juan Pablo II lo creó cardenal con el título de San Roberto Belarmino. Como cardenal formó parte de la Comisión para América Latina, la Congregación para el Clero, el Pontificio Consejo para la Familia, la Congregación para el Culto Divino y la Disciplina de los Sacramentos, el Consejo Ordinario de la Secretaría General para el Sinodo de los Obispos y la Congregación para los Institutos de Vida Consagrada y las Sociedades de Vida Apostólica.

Por ser Arzobispo de Buenos Aires era también miembro de la Conferencia Episcopal Argentina, de la que fue presidente en dos periodos consecutivos desde 2005 hasta noviembre de 2011, no pudiendo ser reelegido una vez más por no permitirlo el reglamento.

Como arzobispo y cardenal, Bergoglio fue conocido por su humildad, conservadurismo doctrinal y su compromiso con la justicia social. Optó por promover el diálogo y acercarse a los distintos colectivos sociales, fuese o no católicos; así como por reforzar la tarea pastoral en las parroquias, aumentando la presencia de sacerdotes en las villas (barrios marginales).

Un estilo de vida sencillo ha contribuido a la reputación de su humildad: vivía en un apartamento pequeño en el barrio de Palermo, en el cual se alojaba en el centro de la vivienda, no en la parte más alta. Su método de trabajo fue el escuchar, no el hablar, always ayudando a las personas mayores de edad.

Francisco escogió como lema y escudo papales los mismos que tenía como obispo y cardenal. Su lema, “Miserando Aquele Eligiendo” (“Lo miró con misericordia y lo eligió”), proviene de una homilía de San Beda el Venerable: “Vidit ergo Jesus publicanum: et quia miserando aequo eligiendo vidit, ait illi, Sequere me (‘Jesús vió al publicano, y lo vió con misericordia y lo eligió, y le dijo ‘Sígueme’”). Quiero pedirles a todos que recemos mucho por nuestro Papa Francisco y quiero terminar como decía el autor inglés G. K. Chesterton: “Cristo no eligió como piedra fundamental al brillante Pablo ni al místico Juan, sino a un pillastre, un fanfarrón, un cobardie y, en una palabra, un hombre. Sobre esa piedra consiguió su Iglesia, y las puertas del infierno no han prevalecido sobre ella. Todos los imperios y los reinos han perecido a causa de su debilidad inherente y continua, a pesar de haber sido fundados sobre hombres fuertes y sobre hombros fuertes. Sólo la Iglesia cristiana histórica fue fundada sobre un hombre débil, y por esa razón es indestructible”.

(Padre Sosa, sacerdote Argentino del Instituto del Verbo Encarnado (I.V.E.), nació en 1978 y fue ordenado sacerdote el 29 de agosto del 2003 en la Plata, Argentina. Actualmente está administrador de la Parroquia San Jorge en Bridgeport.)

Seminarian Reflection: Seminarian Rolando Arias

From the moment of the announcement of the new Pontiff, the hearts of the Christians filled with an indescribable joy, knowing that the Holy Spirit always lights the way that the Church must follow.

In just a few days, Pope Francis has touched the heart of all the world’s people. Catholics, people from other religions, and even non-believers have been motivated by his humility, compassion, and love. His invitation to build a Church for the poor is a call to re-discover our vocation as children of God, united in the love of the Father, who teaches us, through Jesus Christ, that his grace and mercy is abundant in those who are in need, those who suffer, those who are abandoned, and those who have been considered less important.

Pope Francis is not only a man who manifests the Gospel in his life, he is, as well, a light of hope that the Spirit of God has kindled in order to guide the steps of those who have lost their way to the house of the eternal Father. Pope Francis is the reflection of the voice of God, talking to his children and reminding them that Jesus has never abandoned his Church and that his promises are as eternal as his love.

As a Latino, I feel immensely proud to know that the Apostle Peter of our time, Christ’s Vicar on earth, is also Latin American. He knows about the reality and suffering of our nations. He has seen the pain and the sadness that pervades many of our brothers and sisters; yet he also knows about the burning fire of faith and love of Jesus Christ that is abundant in our families and from which he was nourished, helping him to become the kind of person he is.

In these tough times for the Church, there is a light of hope and charity that will help us renew our Catholic faith and strengthen our vocation as Christians. That light is the real presence of Jesus who illuminates the way that will finally take us to the eternal mansion of heaven.

(Originally from Colombia, Rolando Arias, 31, is in his fourth year of theology at Mount St. Mary’s in Emmitsburg, MD. He will be ordained a transitional deacon in June.)
Pope Francis

Msgr. Matthew Bernelli

I was not surprised when I learned that Pope Francis lived a practical lifestyle, close to the people. His family comes from the Piedmont area around Torino, the same area of Italy that I do. It’s a poor area, mostly farmers. His family’s house was a very poor one. On one of his trips to Rome, he visited cousins who still live in the area and took some earth from their vineyard to bring home to his parents.

I understand him perfectly; we share the same mentality, formation, values. The way he was brought up is the way I was brought up. He’s a very simple guy, not interested in the trappings that come with authority. He rode the bus to work and didn’t bother with a car and a driver, and cooked his own meals instead of hiring a cook. Here I’m always turning out lights and turning down the heat. Our attitudes come from the same tradition.

I listened to his inauguration on Italian radio. He speaks fluent Italian with a little bit of French and Swiss influence, because the Piedmont area of Italy borders on those countries. What is now called ‘Italian’ was originally the dialect of Florence. That has now become the official language, taught in school and used in formal settings, but each region of Italy still has a specific dialect. Your local dialect is an intimate speech that you use when in your home area, or with your own family.

(Mgr. Bernelli is pastor of St. Mary Parish in Bridgeport. Born in Italy and ordained to the priesthood in Rome, he graduated from the Instituto Emigrante in Mexico and worked in the missions in Latin America for ten years before coming to the Diocese of Bridgeport.)

Damien O’Connor

At the dawn of Christianity and specifically within the first century, there were countless spiritualities that existed. The followers of Jesus were quite few in number. It raises the question, “how did Christianity not only grow but thrive?” Some might claim that it was due to highly intellectual thinking or profound speeches by well-educated individuals. This simply was not the case. Christianity thrived because it offered a more humane model in a terribly dysfunctional world. It was through the example of Christians that people were converted. Sacramental fellowship was offered for the first time to women, slaves, foreigners and the sick. Christians selflessly served those suffering from plagues and were unconcerned with ethnicity, race or civil status. It also goes without saying the dramatic impact that the martyrs had on the conversions of countless people. This was all an extremely compelling time and deeply inspiring for those who witnessed Christians. Pope Francis is clearly reminding us, through his actions, that we, more than ever, need to evangelize one another and it will be done most effectively through our actions!

(Damien O’Connor is diocesan director of the Office for Pastoral Services.)

Fr. Greg Markey

The many parishioners here at St. Mary Church who loved Pope Benedict XVI and who immediately embraced Pope Francis show God’s grace at work. Our Spanish Bible study class’ excitement for the first Latino Pope was inspiring and made it difficult for us to even hold classes because they only wanted to talk about the new Pope! I am looking forward to see how the Holy Spirit will use this apostle from Argentina to move hearts closer to Our Lord.

Immediately, we saw many beautiful and challenging themes in Pope Francis’ talks: the tenderness of St. Joseph as the model for our love of neighbor; it is not God who tires of forgiving but we who tire of asking for forgiveness.

(Fr. Markey is pastor of St. John Parish in Norwalk.)

Msgr. Frank McGrath

At the Mass for the Inauguration of the Pontificate of His Holiness, Pope Francis received the pallium, a small woolen vestment placed around the shoulders. It is a reminder that the pope is a shepherd who cares for the Lord’s sheep.

The Good Shepherd charged Peter to feed his lambs and his sheep; today you succeed him as the bishop of this Church, to which he and the Apostle Paul were fathers in faith. May the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, grant you his abundant gifts of wisdom and eloquence in the ministry of confirming your brethren in the unity of faith.”

God is good! He has blessed us, his Church, with a good sheep-herd. The primary work of the papacy is two-fold: truth spoken in love and unity of the flock. Pope Francis has embraced these charisms.

Now let us listen to him and accept his ministry. These first days at the beginning of his pontificate will reveal the divine inspirations in his heart and mind.

(Mgr. McGrath is pastor of St. John Parish in Darien.)

Msgr. Stephen DiGiovanni

While Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Pope Francis dedicated the resources and manpower of the Church to alleviate the sufferings of millions. He preached fearlessly, condemning government corruption and private sector self-interests alike that widened the gap between the super-rich and the poor in Argentina.

Now, as Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis will have his chance to imitate his patron, rebuilding the Church worldwide and calling to interior conversion clergy, government and economic officials, as well as all Catholics, to work for greater justice and equality for all, while fashioning public and business policies and practices that will actually enhance the dignity of each human person as the Image of God.

(Mgr. DiGiovanni is pastor of the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist in Stamford. His latest book, “The Second Founder” is now available through Trafford Publishing.)

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“We should seek not so much to pray but to become prayer.”

-St Francis of Assisi

Good Wishes and May God Guide His Holiness Pope Francis as the New Leader of the Church

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“Brothers and sisters, good evening! You know that the duty of the Conclave was to give a bishop to Rome. It seems as though my brother cardinals have gone to the ends of the earth to get him… but here we are. I thank you for your welcome. The diocesan community of Rome has a bishop. Thank you!

“Before all else, I would like to say a prayer for our Bishop Emeritus Benedict XVI. Let us all pray together for him, that the Lord may bless him and that Our Lady may watch over him.” Then the crowd prayed the “Our Father,” and the “Hail Mary,” and the “Glory Be” for Benedict XVI.

“Now I would like to give you my blessing. But before I do, I would like to ask you a favor: before the bishop blesses the people, I ask you to pray to the Lord that he bless me….

The prayer of the people for a blessing upon their bishop. Let us take a moment of silence for you to offer your prayer for me.”

The crowd kept silence while Pope Francis bowed and received their prayers.

“Now I will give my blessing to you and to the whole world, to all men and women of good will.”

After making the Sign of the Cross and uttering a prayer, Pope Francis said:

“Brothers and sisters,

“I leave you now. Thank you for your welcome. Pray for me. And we’ll see one another again soon. Tomorrow I want to go and pray to Our Lady, asking her to watch over Rome. Good night and have a good rest.”
Pope Francis draws on Jesuit spiritual heritage

Guest Columnist
By Fr. Richard Ryscavage, SJ

Fr. Ryscavage is the director of Fairfield University’s Center for Faith and Public Life and a professor of sociology.

No one was more shocked by the election of a Jesuit pope than the members of the Society of Jesus. We are the only religious order that, besides vows of chastity, obedience and poverty, take a fourth vow of loyalty to the Pope. We put ourselves at his disposal. He can send us on mission anywhere and anytime and we must follow his orders. That is why Jesuits are sometimes called the “Pope’s Soldiers.” For the first time in history one of the Pope’s Soldiers has become the Pope.

Despite the special vow, Jesuits have had at times a highly contentious relationship with the papacy. We have gotten in trouble with the Vatican for being so critical and so independent. Our founder, St. Ignatius of Loyola, urged us to learn how to “think with the Church” but we have not always followed his advice. Pope John Paul II was so frustrated that he considered suppressing the Society. He ended up circumventing the normal election process and appointing a Jesuit he trusted as the Superior General in Rome. Because of those historical tensions we never imagined that the Cardinals would elect a Jesuit to lead the Church.

Because Francis and Jesuits have not always seen eye to eye over the centuries, it was a secondary shock to learn a Jesuit would take the name of the founder of the Franciscans! When I think of Saint Francis, I get an image of someone barefoot or in sandals walking with the poor; preaching the Gospel; not making rules and regulations; loving the environment and all of creation; having a mission to reform and rebuild the Church. Could Pope Francis inspire the Church and the world to follow that vision of Saint Francis into the 21st century?

I studied theology at the Jesuit School in Cambridge Massachusetts with some young Argentinian Jesuit seminarians. We stayed in touch over the years and I remember them praising their Jesuit Provincial in Argentina, Fr. Jorge Borgoglio. They spoke of him as a great spiritual director, a humble man of God, who loved the poor but opposed Jesuits who promoted class warfare and a Marxist philosophy. So when Fr. Jorge was elected, my Argentinian Jesuit friends started texting me. They warned in a joking spirit that our new Pope does not speak English so I better improve my Spanish!

Because he is the first Pope from a developing country, we can expect him to have a different set of priorities than the concerns of a man from Europe or North America. The gap between the rich and poor in Latin America is greater than in any other region of the world. Given his care for the poor, in the spirit of St. Francis Assisi, he may speak to that problem.

He seems to have a strong pastoral nature. My friends tell me that he loves to promote prayer and to teach people about the spiritual life. One of St. Ignatius’s great gifts to the Church was the Jesuit spirituality, a method of communicating with God while living an active life in the world not in a monastery. Ignatius designed the “Spiritual Exercises” as a tool for “contemplatives in action.” This spirituality has been welcomed by lay people living busy lives and who have not a lot of time for prayer. I am sure Pope Francis will draw on that spiritual tradition in his apostolic care for the global Church.

Recently the Jesuit General, Fr. Adolfo Nicolas, called on the new Pope, who is living in the Domus Saint Martha, the modest hotel that John Paul II built inside the Vatican to house official visitors. There the General offered the Holy Father—unconditionally—“all our resources and help, be that in the theological, scientific, administrative or spiritual areas.” The General said he did so from an attitude of humility “without any kind of triumphalism” so that the Jesuits can cooperate in building up a Church “poor and for the poor.”

I am told that pervading the atmosphere in Rome these days is a feeling of hope, especially hope for renewal and reform that the Church wishes for itself as much as it wishes it for individual Christians. In his time, Saint Francis of Assisi delivered on that hope. I pray that Pope Francis of Argentina will do the same.

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A special “Family” reunion

By LORRAINE MORRONE, CRE

Fairfield County is blessed with being the location of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy (diocese) of Stamford. We contacted our “relatives on the other side of the family,” as catechist Bernice Liba put it, and took our Grade Eight families to St. Basil Seminary in Stamford for a special family reunion.

What we heard and what we saw both surprised and inspired us. On a planning meeting last October, Fr. Cyrus Bartolome, parochial vicar of St. Luke, Confirmation catechists Bernice Liba and Winnie Shay, and I were greeted warmly by our host, Seminary Rector Fr. Bohdan Danylo. As our tour guide, he took us to the beautiful chapel, where the East-West liturgical differences were easy to see, such as the presence of painted icons decorated with gold leaf, rather than statues of saints and religious figures. In fact, the color of gold was everywhere! Father explained that we would meet there for what he called “Divine Liturgy,” (we call it “Mass”).

To our delight, Bishop Paul Chomnycky of the Ukrainian Catholic Diocese of Stamford was on hand for our Confirmation families’ visit in March, and celebrated the Divine Liturgy for us. A familiar face, our pastor at St. Luke’s, Msgr. Andrew Varga, himself one-quarter Byzantine Catholic by heritage, took his place at the altar.

Fr. Danylo, dressed in red and gold vestments, gave us a brief history and geography lesson. He explained that the Ukraine is “in the middle of Christian Europe” and that the Emperor Constantine in 311 A.D. promoted religious tolerance for Christians and led to the Creed that we share from the Council of Nicea in 325. By then the Churches of the East were well established. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451 the Church of Constantinople was accorded the same kind of powers over their geographic areas enjoyed by Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria. These cities came to be known as patriarchates and were the birthplace of major liturgical families within Christianity. Over time, their traditions, customs and ways of worship developed along separate paths.

He then shifted to an updated version of the reason we were together. “We all have the need to be connected,” he said. “This is why you are here with the people who care the most for you, your parents and God.”

Fr. Danylo pointed out the meaning of the beautiful icons and windows in the chapel that surrounded and cradled us like a mother’s arms. Yet our eyes could not help but be drawn to the bright golden scene at the altar. The screen that stretched from one end of the sanctuary to the other. Called “iconostasis,” this piece is exquisitely decorated with icons of Jesus, Mary the Mother of God (“Theotokos” or the God-bearer, as she is called), and the saints. The screen functions like an altar rail and separates the sanctuary from the altar.

We found that the Liturgy was sung, not spoken. Incense was used often, and most of the time the celebrants remained behind the iconostasis screen. When it was time for the Eucharist, Fr. Danylo explained that we would receive under both bread and wine. There was no Eucharistic Cup. Instead, we were asked to tip our heads to the back, while he and the bishop placed leavened bread with wine into our mouths with a gold spoon.

It was wonderful to see, hear and touch history through this treasure of the Eastern tradition that we have within our grasp. “Our kids need to see the tradition of our faith,” said Frank Costello, whose son, Richard is a Confirmation candidate. “The explanation before Mass was great and it was personalized with the support and presence of our pastor, Monsignor Andy.”

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Fr. David W. Howell, former pastor of St. Joseph

Fr. David W. Howell, former pastor of St. Joseph Parish in South Norwalk, died on April 4 in Stamford Hospital. He was 73 years old.

“He had a tremendous mind, and he was interested in everything,” says his close friend, Msgr. William Scheyd, pastor of St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan, who had known him since childhood. “He had a great interest in current events. He was following the news even in the hospital, right up until he closed his eyes for the last time.”

A native of Bridgeport, he graduated from St. Ann School in the Black Rock section of Bridgeport and Fairfield Prep. Fr. Howell credits his vocation to the priesthood both to the priests he knew at St. Ann’s, where he was an altar boy, and the Jesuits at Prep. He attended the Jesuit-run Holy Cross College in Worcester, MA, and completed his theological studies at St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore, MD. He was ordained on May 22, 1965, at St. Augustine Cathedral by Bishop Walter W. Curtis.

His first assignment was as parochial vicar of St. Stephen Parish in Trumbull. While there, he was also a member of the faculty of St. Joseph High School in Trumbull. He served at St. Mary Parish, Greenwich; St. Joseph Parish, Shelton; and St. Cecilia Parish in Stamford before coming to St. Joseph’s as a parochial vicar. He was named temporary administrator in 1979. He served as a territorial vicar, was member of the Diocesan Priests’ Council from 1982-83, and was appointed as auditor-instructor in the diocesan tribunal in 1983.

Always interested in aircraft, Fr. Howell became chaplain of the Civil Air Patrol in 1967. He became chaplain of the International Order of Characters (IOC), an organization dedicated to improving the fields of aviation and aerospace, in 1975. Following his appointment to St. Joseph’s, he also became a chaplain to the Norwalk Fire Department and was on the Norwalk Catholic Charities board.

“The IOC was his favorite,” says his sister, Donna Kelly. “He wasn’t a pilot, she says, “but he did drive fast!”

Fr. Howell was appointed pastor of St. Joseph’s on June 25, 1986. He remained at the parish until failing health necessitated his retirement in 2008. He particularly enjoyed the rich mix of cultures at St. Joseph’s, which celebrates Mass in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. In addition, the parish is enriched by the large number of English-speaking parishioners who come from India. “One of the high points of my priesthood has been the opportunity to see the diversity of cultures that come together in worship,” he said at the time of his retirement.

He lived at the Catherine Keefe Queen of the Clergy Residence in Stamford from his retirement until the time of his death. Fr. Howell’s body was received into St. Joseph Church on April 7, where a Parish Vigil Mass was celebrated at 7 pm. Fr. Gilbert D’Souza, current pastor of St. Joseph’s, was the celebrant. Fr. John Baron, pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Fairfield, who served as a parochial vicar under Fr. Howell, was the homilist. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Fr. Howell on April 8. Msgr. Jerald A. Doyle, diocesan administrator, was the principal celebrant. Msgr. Scheyd delivered the homily.

Burial followed in the family plot in St. Michael Cemetery, Stratford.
Sports

Prep hockey, state titles now synonymous

By DON HARRISON

Hamden was the dominant high school hockey team in the early years of interscholastic competition in Connecticut, winning no fewer than 15 state championships before the dawn of the 1990s.

That was then. Fairfield Prep is now.

The Jesuits captured their eighth state title in this century and 15th overall with a come-from-behind 3-2 victory over Notre Dame of West Haven on March 19 before a capacity crowd of 3,500 at Yale’s Ingalls Rink.

“We were down two-nothing early. Notre Dame was the defending state champion and we came out a little edgy,” says Matt Sather, who divides his time as hockey coach with classroom hours as chairman of Prep’s English department. “Once we settled down, we turned the game around.

“This was a fun group,” he adds. “This is as much fun as I’ve ever had coaching.”

Building upon the successes of predecessors Marty Roos (four state titles) and Pete LaVigne (three), Sather has elevated Prep hockey to a higher level of sustained excellence. As head coach, his 15-year won-lost-tied record is 235-82-12, which computes to a .733 percentage. More impressively, his teams have won 8 of the 12 state championships in the 21st century.

Why has Fairfield Prep been so successful on the ice and in many other sports through the years?

“Good players are attracted to the school. A good Catholic, Jesuit education is important to many families,” Sather responds. “We tend to get good athletes who are attracted to all-boys school.”

The coach also points out the stability at the top of the program—the varsity and JV coaching staffs have been together for 15 years. Most are Prep alumni and “were hockey players at the school.”

Indeed, Sather was a sophomore forward on the Jesuits’ 1990-91 team that won the state title under LaVigne.

The 2012-13 team will go down in history as one of Prep’s finest. The Jesuits defeated Notre Dame no fewer than four times this season en route to an 18-0 sweep of Connecticut competition and an over-all mark of 23-1. The only blemish was a 4-3 defeat to Catholic Memorial of West Roxbury, MA, on February 20 at the Wonderland of Ice in Bridgeport.

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 24
Easter Vigil at the Cathedral

Joining in the most beautiful liturgy of the Church year, Msgr. Jerald A. Doyle, (below, center) diocesan administrator, lights the Easter Fire in front of St. Augustine Cathedral. The fire, used to light the Christ Candle, symbolizes Christ’s Resurrection. During the Easter Vigil, adults receive the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.

(Photos by Cynthia Stone)

There were a few narrow wins along the way, notably a 2-1 decision over Notre Dame-Fairfield and a 1-0 verdict over Notre Dame-West Haven.

Sather is uncertain whether there were any budding Chris Drurys or Ted Drurys—brothers who starred at Prep and went on to successful careers in the National Hockey League—on this season’s roster. But there were many exceptional players. Senior David White and another pair of brothers, Sean and Connor Henry, were elected to the Coaches on New Haven Register 2012-13 All-State teams; junior goalie Matt Beck was named to the Coaches All-State squad.

Another junior, Mike Wikman, scored two goals, including the game-winner in the third period, in the state championship game at Yale, while another underclassman, sophomore Mike Ventricelli, produced the other score that evening.

After a shaky start, Beck turned away 20 shots.

More Sports...Hoop Finishes

No fan will shout “We’re No. 2” after his or her favorite team loses in the championship game. On the other hand, three Catholic high schools in Fairfield County deserve acclaim for their runner-up finishes in the state basketball tournaments in March.

Fairfield Prep advanced to the Class LL state title game for the second time in three seasons under Coach Leo Redgate, but wound up on the short end of a 52-42 score against perennial power Hillhouse of New Haven. The Jesuits finished the season with a 24-3 record and two players, senior Tim Butala and 7-foot junior center Paschal Chukwu, were Register All-Staters.

Trinity Catholic of Stamford, competing in the championship game for the 12th time under Coach Mike Walsh, bowed to Woodstock Academy, 52-49, in the Class L finale. But there were many positives, including an over-all 28-3 record and Schadrac Casimir’s breakout senior season in which he averaged 25.8 points and was selected to the Register All-State Team.

Notre Dame of Fairfield’s girls’ team came up short against Cromwell, 42-28, in the Class M title game. Still, Coach Eric DeMarco had to be pleased with the Lancers’ 23-5 record and senior Jovan Kingwood being named to the All-State team.
One of the actions of the Holy Spirit

by Thomas H. Hicks

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

I think this erosion goes beyond that. There is something in the American character that is even hostile to the act of reading, a certain hale and heartiness that is suspicious of reading. Americans prize sociability and community, this is true even of Catholic parishes. Any turning away from human contact is suspect. Reading has fallen upon hard times.

I suppose reading can take on the aspects of a vice. But there’s something the Roman Senator Cicero wrote (well before the birth of Christ): “Why, then, should anyone reproach me… that I allow myself so much time to spend on reading? Some spend quite as much time on their business, or on games, on other amusements, or on the repose of their bodies and minds. Others waste time on long banquets, games of dice, and ball playing” (In Defense of Archias).

He’s something else by Cicero one can wish our priest-homlists would ponder: “Do you imagine that persons like me could find material for weekly speeches if I did not cultivate the intellect by reading? I am devoted to this pursuit… out of it grows my skill as an orator” (In Defense of Archias).

As already mentioned, I essentially came to a deeper understanding of the faith by way of literature. One way I’ve come to understand the Holy Spirit is as the One who puts a particular volume in one’s hand at a particular time. When I think back about books that came at the right moment and influenced me deeply, I think of works by Flannery O’Connor that made God and the reality of grace believable. I learned from her that Catholic teaching increases rather than decreases one’s vision. It is an instrument for penetrating reality. As O’Connor put it: “The Catholic writer lives in a larger universe.”

O’Connor’s novel Wise Blood was for me an influential and memorable book, some brilliant writing in which the author expressed her scorn for anti-cerebral religion, for feel-good Christians on chummy terms with God.

A novel that left its mark upon me was Barabbas by Pare Lagerkvist. It tells a deceptively simple imaginative tale about what happened to Barabbas after the crowd chose to crucify Jesus and spare his life. The book is about the Redemption, the idea that Christ died for our sins and about the universal agony of spiritual torment and disbelief. The book is clearly about modern people. The poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins made an indelible impression on my mind. Many of his verses are irrevocably imprinted in my soul. Hopkins heightened my ability to respond to reality, to see the beauty in ordinary things, to come alive to the sacred dimensions of life all around me. I met a “Christ that plays in ten thousand places,” and a “world that is charged with the grandeur of God.”

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As already mentioned, I essentially came to a deeper understanding of the faith by way of literature. One way I’ve come to understand the Holy Spirit is as the One who puts a particular volume in one’s hand at a particular time. When I think back about books that came at the right moment and influenced me deeply, I think of works by Flannery O’Connor that made God and the reality of grace believable. I learned from her that Catholic teaching increases rather than decreases one’s vision. It is an instrument for penetrating reality. As O’Connor put it: “The Catholic writer lives in a larger universe.”

O’Connor’s novel Wise Blood was for me an influential and memorable book, some brilliant writing in which the author expressed her scorn for anti-cerebral religion, for feel-good Christians on chummy terms with God.

A novel that left its mark upon me was Barabbas by Pare Lagerkvist. It tells a deceptively simple imaginative tale about what happened to Barabbas after the crowd chose to crucify Jesus and spare his life. The book is about the Redemption, the idea that Christ died for our sins and about the universal agony of spiritual torment and disbelief. The book is clearly about modern people. The poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins made an indelible impression on my mind. Many of his verses are irrevocably imprinted in my soul. Hopkins heightened my ability to respond to reality, to see the beauty in ordinary things, to come alive to the sacred dimensions of life all around me. I met a “Christ that plays in ten thousand places,” and a “world that is charged with the grandeur of God.”

How I love reading a book on a porch as rain beats down on the porch roof. And it is a real treat to settle down with a good book on a wintry evening. It’s like the perfect end of a day and the best way to welcome the night. Reading and prayer are both acts of worship to me.

Books, like good music and art, can attune the soul to God. They can give us new eyes. A book can change one’s life. A life lived in the company of books is richer and fuller than life spent in their absence. It still seems to me that books are the unique decoration of a room.

SAINTLY LIVES

by Ed Waldron

IN 1905, AT THE AGE OF 16, JOSEPH NEHME JOINED THE CATHOLIC LEBANESE MARONITE ORDER IN ST. JUSTINE AND CYPRIAN MONASTERY IN NORTHERN LEBANON. HE TOOK THE NAME ESTEPHAN AFTER HIS RECENTLY DECEASED FATHER.

Estephan was known to repeat the simple, but profound mantra throughout his life, “God can see me this way, every action he took, every thought, minute by minute, took place with this in mind, fostering an incessant desire to please God.”

He passed away after suffering from a severe fever at the age of 49. His mortal remains are incorrupt.

YEARS EARLIER, WHEN HE WAS A YOUNG BOY TENDING TO HIS FATHER’S CATTLE, HE SAW A BADGER SCAMPER INTO AN UNDERGROUND GROTTO. HE FOLLOWED THE BADGER AND DUG IN THE DIRT. THE GROTTO FILLED WITH FRESH SPRING WATER AND IS STILL THERE TODAY.

Blessed Estephan Nehme (1889 - 1939)
Bits & Pieces

YEAR OF FAITH: Adult Formation. Every Fri. morning, from 10:30 am-12 noon at the Catholic Center in Bridgeport. Catholics and non-Catholics discuss a chapter from the “United States Catholic Catechism for Adults.” For more information or to join the group, contact Gina Donnarummo: 203.416.1446 or gdonnarummo@diobot.org.

YEAR OF FAITH: St. Philip Parish, Norwalk, is holding a Vatican II discussion group the third Thurs. of each month (Apr. 18) from now through June, from 7:30-9 pm. The Apr. topic will be “Gaudium et Spes, “On the Church in the Modern World.” For more information, call the parish: 203.847.4549.

ANNUAL CAPP RETREAT: From now through June, from 11 am-4:30 pm at Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel, Bridgeport, on Sat., Apr. 20, from 11 am-4:30 pm. Day includes lunch and vigil Mass for Sunday. For more information or to register, contact Jacqueline Musante: 203.459.0344 or jmmusante@aol.com.

PASTA DINNER will be held at Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel, Bridgeport, on Sat., Apr. 20, at 6 pm. Pasta, meatballs, sausage, bread, salad, dessert, beverages. Cost: $10 adults; $5 children under 12. For tickets or for more information, call Marge: 203.372.2784.

BEATLES NIGHT will be held at St. Ann Melkite Greek Catholic Church, 181 Clapboard Ridge Rd., Danbury, on Sat., Apr. 20. Doors open 6:30 pm, show starts at 7 pm. Sgt. Lefferts and the Phony Hearts Club Band is an ensemble dedicated to paying tribute to the recordings of the greatest band of all time. Tickets: $20. Hors d’oeuvres, appetizers, prime rib, desserts, coffee, tea, and soda included in ticket price; BYOB for alcoholic drinks. Reservations strongly encouraged. For more information and for reservations, call 203.770.4974.

“ASK A PRIEST: High School Teens Gathering” will be held Sun., Apr. 21, after the 12 noon Teen Mass at Our Lady of Assumption Parish, Fairfield. Fr. Joe Sidera will answer all your questions about our Catholic Faith, Pizza, of course! For more information, contact Gregory Vigliotta: gregory.vigliotta@gmail.com.

MASS OF HEALING AND HOPE sponsored by the Charismatic Renewal Office will be offered Mon., Apr. 22, at 7:30 pm at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, with Fr. Larry Carew; and Mon., May 20, at 7:30 pm at St. Lawrence Parish, Shelton, with Fr. Carew. For more information, call 203.268.8253.

MARIAN LADIES of St. George Parish, Bridgeport, meet the first and fourth Wed. of the month (April 24, May 8). The meeting begins with Mass at 9 am. “Catholicism” is the current area of discussion. For more information, call Pat: 203.261.8020.

CURSILLO ULTREYAS are held at locations around the diocese: Thurs., Apr. 25, at St. Mary Parish, Bethel at 7:30 pm; and Mon., May 6, at St. James Parish, Stratford, at 7 pm. For more information, contact Jeanette: iovannascott.net.net.

CABARET SHOW, “A Tribute to Dean Martin” with impersonator Jack Lynn, will be hosted by the Women of St. Stephen Parish, Trumbull, on Fri., Apr. 26, at 7 pm in the church hall. Bring your own snacks and drinks; coffee & dessert will be served. Cost: $15. For more information and for reservations, call Mary: 203.452.8333.

STARRY NIGHT a festive evening held on Fri., Apr. 26, at the Patterson Club, Fairfield, will raise money for the Mother and Child Literacy program at Caroline House in Bridgeport.

The event features the Jazz Guild of Fairfield County, a live and silent auction and fantastic food. Cost: $150/ticket; registration deadline is Thurs., Apr. 25. To buy tickets, offer corporate sponsorship or make individual donations, contact Christine: 203.605.2728 or visit www.thecarolinehouse.org.

TWO CONCERTS on the theme “A Celebration of Peace & Hope for Children Everywhere” will be offered by the Holy Family Passionist Retreat Center in West Hartford. The first will be held Sat., Apr. 27, at 7:30 pm at Holy Family; the second on Sun., Apr. 28, at 2:30 pm at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph. The concerts will feature the
Mass of the Children by John Rutter. Suggested offering: $35, includes a reception after the concert. Advance registration recommended. For more information or to register, visit www.holyfamilyretreat.org or call 800.760.9705.

EXPLORE A CALLING to Carmelite spirituality the last Tues. of every month (Apr. 30) with the Lay Carmelites of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel. Meetings are held from 7-9 pm at St. Lawrence Parish, Shelton. For more information, call Joan: 203.925.1998, or Sandy: 203.929.7128.

ADMISSIONS INFORMATION gathering for Immaculate High School, Danbury, will take place Wed., May 1, starting at 6 pm at Immaculate. Parents and students, discover the difference an Immaculate education can make for you! To register, visit www.immaculatehs.org/Difference or call 203.744.1510, ext. 132.

NO IMITATIONS! A presentation to teens by nationally known speaker Chris Stefanick, will take place on May 1, at 7 pm at St. Joseph Parish, Bridgeport. Stefanick will speak to parents of teens on May 2, at 7 pm at the Catholic Center, Bridgeport. For more information, contact call Sr. Florencia, director of Youth Ministry: 203.416.1449 or youthministry@diobpt.org.

PREP ANNOUNCES $25,000 TUITION RAFFLE! Fairfield Prep’s $25,000 Tuition Raffle can be used for any K-12 schools, colleges or universities located and accredited in the U.S. Only 1,000 tickets are available for sale. Cost: $100/ticket. Raffle proceeds will benefit the Scholarship and Student Enrichment Programs at Prep. The drawing will be held at the Spring Event, Sat., May 4. Winning ticket does not need to be present to win. To purchase tickets, contact the development office: 203.254.4237 or email development@fairfieldprep.org.

Music for the 9:30am Sunday Solemn High Latin Mass
April 14: Second Sunday after Easter: Missa a 4 voce di Cappella (1650) (Monteverdi); Sarexit pastor bonus (L’Héritier); Regina cæli (Busnois); organ works of Vierne and Howells
April 21: Third Sunday after Easter: Missa Segniaduris (Lassus); Ave cæsare Aeqns provida (Victoria); Regina cæli (Victoria); organ works of Reger
April 28: Fourth Sunday after Easter: Missa in Tempore Pachhali (Gombert); Ambrosian Gloria (plainsong); Regina cæli (Cavalli) Salve festa dies (plainsong); organ works of Widor
May 5: Fifth Sunday after Easter: Missa Pange lingua (Busnois); Benedictio gentes (Palestrina); Anima Christi (Hughes); O sacrum convivium a 6 (Victoria); organ works of Buxtehude
Thursday, May 9, 5:30 p.m.: Ascension Thursday: Missa Ascendens Christus (Victoria); Ascendens Christus / Ascendit Deus (Guerrero); Omnes gentes plaudite muniba (Tye); organ works of Tournemire and Messiaen
May 12: Sunday in Ascensiontide: Missa de Beata Virgine (Guerrero); O Rex glorior (Byrd); Non vos relinquam orphans (Byrd); organ works of Bach and Frescobaldi

STORAGE is opening at St. Matthew Parish, Norwalk, offering a selection of Bibles, Crucifixes, Rosaries, First Communion sets, medals, cards and much, much more. Store hours: Sat. after the 4 pm Mass and Sun. after the 9 am and 10:30 am Masses. For more information, call the parish: 203.838.3708.

MASSAGE THERAPY is offered for cancer patients/survivors at St. Vincent’s Medical Center, Bridgeport. Program is open to patients in treatment or for survivors who have finished treatment within the last six months. For more information or to make an appointment, call 203.576.6158.

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