



FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

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ON THE COVER

ALLY'S ANGEL CARD—This colorful nativity scene of the Guardian Angel hovering over Bethlehem was painted by Ally Fallon, who attends St. Thomas Aquinas School. Her joyful work won a nationwide contest sponsored by the Holy Childhood Association. Ally designed the picture as part of a class project to help poor children in mission countries throughout the world. "Angels look after you and show up when you need help," she says.

(Above the mast) Angels and Christmas lights abounded during the recent Remembrance Tree lighting hosted by The Cathedral Parish in Bridgeport.

PHOTO BY AMY MORTENSEN

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Local News

Most vulnerable sliding through safety net

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

A growing number of people who have never sought charitable support are showing up in soup kitchens, food pantries and counseling programs provided by Catholic Charities across the Diocese of Bridgeport.

The lingering effects of the recession and unemployment, the high cost of housing and the ongoing state and federal budget cuts have left people struggling to stay afloat while there are fewer resources available to help them.

"Many people have gone under in the past year," says Catholic Charities Vice President Sandy Cole. "When times got tough, many of them went to their credit cards and then borrowed from friends and family to get by. Along the way, they've lost their jobs, homes and emotional stability."

Michelle Conderino, director of the Morning Glory feeding program and Homeless Outreach Team in Danbury, says that she has seen a 15% increase in the number of adults coming to the Morning Glory breakfast program at Dorothy Day House this year.

"We were kind of surprised because we thought most people were over the hurdle," says

Conderino. "These are people who never needed help before, don't know how to ask and are sometimes ashamed to come forward."

After struggling with job loss and health care problems, many are simply tapped out and have nowhere else to turn.

"We are finding a lot of people who timed out of unemployment and have burnt out all other resources" Conderino says. "In the past, they would have been caught by our prevention programs before becoming homeless. The services just aren't there anymore to keep them from falling through the cracks."

Many of the newly homeless are likely to be over 50 years old and to have worked their entire lives. Now, when they need help, there is



HOMELESS OUTREACH— "These are people who never needed help before," says Michelle Conderino, of the newly poor and homeless served by the Homeless Outreach Team and Morning Glory feeding program. In the photo above Conderino, who serves as director of the programs, makes oatmeal for guests at Dorothy Day House in Danbury. "The services just aren't there anymore to keep them from falling through the cracks."

very little, Conderino says. "They never thought they would be in the position to need services, and the state's services haven't really

been targeted toward them."

Conderino says that people misunderstand the nature of homelessness in Fairfield County. While many struggle with substance abuse and chronic mental health problems, others simply can't find housing they can afford.

"The perception is that people aren't working, but they are. They just don't make enough to sustain themselves in an apartment and pay for everything else. You can't find a one bedroom apartment in Danbury for under \$900."

In Bridgeport, Merton Center Director Mark Grasso says that he and the staff have seen a doubling of the number of people visiting the food pantry in the past year. "That's been kind of a shocker for us. Now we have over 500 people coming in for bags of food. We're just seeing a lot more people who simply can't make ends meet, and the bad economy has finally hit them," he says.

At New Covenant House of Hospitality in Stamford, Director Brian Jenkins reports that his food pantry has experienced an increase of about 75 new people a month coming in for bags for

groceries to bring home and feed families. "Most of them are working people, many immigrant day laborers who we haven't seen before and may not see on a regular basis," says Jenkins, who explains that many come in on months when their hours are cut and they can't make ends meet.

"We're doing our job if they come here to save money on their food budget and that prevents them from becoming homeless," says Jenkins, who notes that NCH serves almost 750 meals a day between its breakfast, lunch and dinner offerings and its after-school program for local children.

Cole says the recent \$63 million budget cuts in mental health services announced by the Malloy administration will lead to a \$57,000 decrease in Catholic Charities programs that directly serve the homeless and those suffering from chronic mental illness. She says the cutback in mental health services will be more expensive in the long run, because many people suffering from chronic illness who have functioned well with the proper medication are no longer receiving benefits and will ultimately end up in emergency rooms and

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

"Blessed Gifts" for Christmas and all occasions

BRIDGEPORT— Blessed Gifts launched a Gift of Giving Campaign for Christmas that enables donors to send cards to friends and loved ones while making gifts to support vital ministries and programs of the diocese.

"You can make a gift in honor of or in memory of someone, or simply let someone know you're thinking of them and supporting good works in their name," says Pam Rittman, who is coordinating the effort for the diocesan development office.

Rittman said that some of the most popular gifts cards this year are those that enable the diocese to feed the hungry. Many donors purchased \$50 cards that provide Christmas dinner for two families at the Merton Center; \$100 worth of groceries for families to take home from diocesan food pantries; and \$250 to sponsor an eve-

ning meal for retired priests at the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of Clergy Residence in Stamford.

"The response has been enthusiastic," Rittman says, "because people are looking for a way to make a meaningful and memorable gift that reflects the values and faith of those who are honored by it."

Patricia Thomas, a parishioner at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Fairfield, recently purchased a Blessed Gift in honor of her father by purchasing grocery bags to serve hungry families who visit New Covenant House of Hospitality food pantry in Stamford.

Thomas says she likes Blessed Gifts because it gives her a way of personalizing the giving by selecting to support an act of charity that is important to her faith.

She made her first Blessed Gift when the program was launched last Christmas and was very pleased by the response, so this year she looked forward to the new giving opportunities.

"Christmas changes a lot as we get older and it's nice to place the emphasis on giving rather than receiving—especially when we have so much," says Thomas, who is vice president of the Ladies Guild, which made and sold Advent center pieces this year to support parish programs. "This is a great way to help those in need by supporting ministries that reach out to them," she says.

Donors simply visit the diocesan website, select a gift to put in their "shopping cart," and they can print or email a card to send to a family member or friend to whom the gift is dedicated. If they prefer, the diocese will mail



the card. Their gift is directed to the appropriate ministry. Donors can also shop through the envelope included in this issue of *Fairfield County Catholic*.

In addition to providing Christmas giving opportunities, Blessed Gifts offers giving

opportunities for "All Occasions" throughout the year including birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day, anniversaries, sympathy cards, weddings, First Communion, and Confirmation.

(To shop on the Blessed Gifts website, go to www.blessedgifts.org.) ■

Travel

Bethlehem, City of Bread and King of Kings

By FR. TERRY WALSH

“And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern Israel.” Matthew 2:6

Last month, the Bridgettine Sisters, whose convent is in Darien, arranged a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in honor of the 100th anniversary of the re-constitution of the Order of St. Bridget of Sweden, as well as the “Year of Faith” pronounced by our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI.

I was invited to attend and eagerly joined the group of 27 for what would be my first visit to Israel. We traversed the country for 10 days. From Jerusalem we visited Galilee, Nazareth, and Cana in the north, and Jericho in the east. We journeyed from the depths of the Dead Sea to the momentous heights of Mount Tabor and Mount Carmel. Truly, it was an unforgettable experience.

Our overnight flight from New York to Tel Aviv landed on a Saturday afternoon and we went straight to Jerusalem. Upon entering the City of David, the city lights lit up the domes and the wall surrounding the Old City stretched around our view. Our bus turned up one of the five hills surrounding the city and we arrived at the Bridgettine Convent.

Our pilgrimage began and ended with Holy Mass at the convent in the “City of Peace.” And yet, in these tumultuous times, peace in the Holy Land seems so fragile. Barrier walls have been constructed around the city, as well as in various other places around the country that serve to divide territory between Israelis and Palestinians. The Israelis call it the “Envelope of Jerusalem,” protecting the city from harm, while the Palestinians refer to it as the “Wall of Shame,” dividing families. Even in the Christian churches, there is division among the Catholic, Orthodox, and Armenian religions, dividing up “territory” within the churches



THE HOLIEST OF HOLY PLACES in Bethlehem, the spot where Jesus was born. The star-shaped silver marker is surrounded by devotional lamps and icons.

themselves.

After Mass, we made our way to Bethlehem. We arrived at the checkpoint guarded by soldiers wielding machine guns. As we crossed the threshold into Palestinian territory, there was a notable decline in economic prosperity. Many have taken flight from Bethlehem in recent years. I quietly wondered what sort of “checkpoints” our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph might have had to endure as they made their way from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the census decreed by Caesar Augustus. Did they have enough food to sustain them throughout their long and difficult journey? Were they able to have adequate shelter? Were the people along the way as cold-hearted as those they would later encounter in Bethlehem?

Indeed, after their long and difficult journey from Nazareth, Mary and Joseph were greeted with the frosty Wall of Spiritual Poverty, closely guarded by uncaring people who were suffering the effects of hard-heartedness. Although Mary was very near her time to give birth, all they heard was, “No room at the Inn!”

Little did the people of Bethlehem know that the one who came to conquer the hard-heartedness of mankind was in their midst. Little did they realize he would be born into the world right here in Bethlehem so that cold hearts

could become warm, so that love and kindness could, with the help of his grace, wash away fear and despair and thereby heal spiritual infirmity.

The same seems true today. Our Lord has come, he is in our midst, yet “walls” of spiritual poverty abound. Bethlehem reminds us that we need to prepare a worthy place for Him in the “inn” of our hearts and humbly beg him to take up residence in our souls and so heal us.

Early the next morning, we traveled a short distance along the hillside down into a valley of fields where we arrived at a chapel constructed in the midst of several excavated caves, which had served as shelters for the humble shepherds and their sheep during the time of our Lord. It was here in these fields that man first heard the joyful exaltation, “Gloria in excelsis Deo!”

St. Luke writes: “And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch in the night. And the angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of

the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, ‘Be not afraid . . . for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord’” (Luke 2:8-11).

And there we were, standing in this holy place, seemingly



THE ICON OF THE VIRGIN MARY of Bethlehem is said to be the only icon in the world depicting the Blessed Mother with a smile.

unchanged from 2,000 years ago, pondering the joy of the shepherds. Indeed, the Prince of Peace had burst into the world to give

life. He teaches us that we must be “poor in spirit” —acknowledging our spiritual poverty—in order to receive the healing graces that come to us most abundantly through sacramental Confession and the Eucharist.

We gathered in the chapel in the Shepherd’s Field for Mass and sang the Hymn of Praise, “Gloria in excelsis Deo!” in the very place where it was first proclaimed. We sang with the angels, as Jesus was about to become present in the Eucharist upon the altar here in the fields of Bethlehem, “The City of Bread!”

After Mass, we made our way up to the birthplace of our Lord, just as the shepherds had done after they were greeted by the angels on that first Christmas night. We met pilgrims from around the world who had, likewise, come to honor our Lord.

The Church of the Nativity, commissioned in 326 A.D. by St. Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine, was built over the cave where Mary gave birth to Jesus. The Emperor Justinian replaced Constantine’s church in 530 A.D., building the larger church which still stands today. Roman Catholics, the Greek Orthodox, and the Armenians control various parts of the Church of the Nativity.

We entered the church through the “Door of Humility,” a small doorway that can only be entered on foot with one’s head bowed. It was a gentle reminder to “bow” one’s heart, too, in this holy place. We joined the long line of pilgrims who patiently waited to enter the grotto and venerate the very place where Jesus was born.

As the line moved through the church, inching its way closer to the steps that led into the cave, we passed beautiful icons depicting the Nativity. The most unique icon, the Virgin Mary of Bethlehem, depicted Mary smiling as she held her newborn Son. It is said to be the only icon in the world of Mary smiling.

The guard standing by the narrow entrance directed pilgrims into the Grotto of the Nativity. There we knelt before the silver star-shaped marker in the floor and prayed for a few moments, contemplating how the whole

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

Local News

St. Ann school on 60 Minutes

It started in a sixth-grade classroom and ended up on nationwide television. Students from St. Ann School in Bridgeport were the centerpiece of CBS's *60 Minutes* segment on a Free the Children project to build a school in Kenya.

Viewers couldn't feel Africa's stupendous heat, smell the dust, or feel the ache in young muscles after a day spent mixing cement and hauling concrete blocks. What they could see, though, was the depth of commitment the students from St. Ann's brought to their project. That commitment extends to the entire school community, which financed the project through bake sales and handmade bracelets and a bevy of fundraising activities.

The journey from the Bridgeport classroom to Kenya and on to nationwide attention began when social studies teacher Dawn Pilotti showed her class Oprah Winfrey's "Building a Dream" documentary about the school she opened for girls in South Africa.

"Our sixth-grade curriculum compares cultures," explains Pilotti. "Oprah's response to the situation poor children suffer in South Africa fit with what we teach about the Gospel values of compassion, justice and service."

The documentary hit home

with Javell Watson, who had grown up in poverty in Jamaica. "I started to cry because I could feel their pain," recalls Javell, now 18 and a student at Bridgeport's Central Magnet High School.

St. Ann's has always aimed to encourage initiative in its students. Even so, Pilotti was surprised that, during recess, several students were back at her door. "They came to me and said, 'We have to do something. We have to build a school.'"

The school featured on *60 Minutes* isn't St. Ann's first. The first one was in the African country of Sierra Leone. Following that, the students raised funds for their counterparts in earthquake-devastated Haiti. During the 2010-11 school year, the newest crop of leaders—Gabriella Torres, now a sophomore at Lauralton Hall in Milford, Cynthia Rivera, a freshman at Kolbe-Cathedral High School in Bridgeport, and seventh-graders Joey Hopkins and Magdalena Dutkowska—connected with Free the Children.

When Craig Kielburger, founder of Free the Children, spoke at the New Canaan Teen Center last November, he referred specifically to the "extraordinary St. Ann's School of Bridgeport." He told his listeners "It's students

like these that give me hope for the future."

"He told me, 'You're one of the most active clubs in the United States!'" says Pilotti.

This summer the students' fundraising efforts paid off when Gabby found herself, boots on the ground in Kenya, leading the



A WIDE BAND OVER HER HEAD helps Magdalena Dutkowska distribute the heavy weight of water on her back. Young women in Kenya carry water this way daily. Magdalena was part of a contingent from St. Ann School who traveled to Kenya to help build a school with Free the Children. She is joined in the photo at left by some of the school's new students, who might otherwise not gain the chance of an education. The St. Ann students' efforts were featured on the CBS television program *60 Minutes*.

delegation to help build their latest school.

More than heavy work, heat, dust—and the traditional Masai gift of a goat—the students brought home some hard lessons.

"People need to know that poverty is a real thing," Joey told the television audience. "Kids starving at four or five years old

is a real thing in the world. They need to know that not everyone can just go downstairs, turn on a tap, and get a glass of water. Not everyone has a proper education. You should really be thankful for

the things you have."

Most of all, Joey told the television audience—especially the young—"They need to know that they can be the change in the world." ■

St. Pius X Dinner Dance

GALA EVENING—(l-r) Dr. Robert and Kathleen Russo, Grace and Ruben Rodriguez, and Grace and Eugene Fairfield were presented St. Pius X Service Awards at the St. Pius X Faith Center Dinner Dance Gala held at The Country Club of Fairfield. Parish Trustees Denis Sullivan and Ernest Pierson, along with their spouses, served as hosts for the evening. Fr. Paul Fitzgerald, S.J., senior vice president of Fairfield University was the featured speaker.

"The assistance that participants gave us by means of the Gala is of critical importance to the completion of our new Faith Center building," says Fr. Michael Dogali, pastor of St. Pius (center above). The new, 14,000 square foot Faith Center includes a small chapel, a library, choir room, parish offices, and a large community room for various functions. The Faith Center is expected to be completed in Spring 2013. ■



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Local News

Pax Christi awarded to Prep senior

By PAT HENNESSY

David Maloof II, a senior at Fairfield Prep and a member of St. John Parish in Darien, has been awarded the Eileen Egan Peacemaker Award from Pax Christi. David received the prestigious award for his work in helping to create a basketball facility at a Palestinian Christian refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon.

Pax Christi (the words are Latin for “the peace of Christ”) is a global Catholic peace movement with branches in more than fifty countries. The United States branch has its headquarters in New York City. Nationally-renowned winners of Pax Christi Peacemaker Awards have included actor Martin Sheen, whose passion for social justice comes from his Catholic faith; the celebrated Jesuit priest author and peace activist, Fr. John Dear, S.J., who has also been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize; and Sr. Helen Prejean, America’s



leading advocate for the abolition of the death penalty.

The award was based on David’s efforts, over the past several years, to create a basketball court and add a ping pong table to the refugee camp. Before that, the only sports outlet for children in the camp was a dirt soccer field. This past summer, at the request of camp leaders, he

returned with his father to run a basketball clinic for children at the camp.

David’s understanding of the importance of service is woven throughout his life. It began in his early years at St. Aloysius School in New Canaan and was fostered by the attitudes and activities of his family, who have always been active in parish and community projects to help the less fortunate. That understanding has matured at Prep, where a focus on Ignatian Spirituality aims to lead each student to become “a man for others.”

“We want the guys to develop a mature theological approach to social justice,” says Matt Tellis, who teaches theology to juniors and seniors at Prep. “We want them to figure out what their values are and how that impacts their lives.”

David’s journey to Lebanon and ultimately, to the Pax Christi award began when his father (also named David) became interested in tracing the family’s roots. David’s great-grandfather had come to America in an early wave of Lebanese immigration, arriving here in 1914. His father made contact with some cousins still living in Lebanon and arranged for a visit. At that time David was still in middle school.

“My dad felt that, with so many issues going on in the country, going just to the tourist part wouldn’t help us understand the country,” he explains.

So the elder Maloof contacted the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, a papal agency for humanitarian and pastoral support. They put together a tour that included both the country’s tourist attractions and locations that highlighted tensions in Lebanon and throughout the Middle East, including the Dbayeh camp for Christian refugees located just outside Beirut. The injustice implicit in the camp’s existence was an eye-opener for a young man about to enter eighth grade.

“They’re called refugees, but the Christian Palestinians have been there for about 80 years,” David explains. “The Lebanese have ruled that they can live in these camps, but they can’t become Lebanese citizens. They can’t build roofs on their houses,

because under Lebanese law a roof would make them permanent residences.” They can have a piece of tin over the top to keep out the rain, but that’s all.

David points out that he grew up in a generation that has seen practically everything, thanks to streaming video, the Internet and YouTube. Even so, “to meet people, to put myself in their

they pitched in to finish an entire basketball court. “It looks like a full court in the U.S.,” David says.

This year camp officials invited David and his dad back to run a 10-day basketball clinic. Although his sport of choice at Prep is wrestling, David had played basketball at St. Aloysius, and plays at the YMCA in



A STRIKING CONTRAST: coached by Fairfield Prep senior David Maloof, youngsters at Dbayeh refugee camp in Lebanon energetically practice their basketball skills. Behind the court lies an abandoned prison. David has been named a recipient of the prestigious Pax Christi Peacemaker Award for his work to build the basketball court.

position, to reflect that this would be your entire life, with very few opportunities for anything different—they can’t become doctors or lawyers. Even registering to create a business or get a drivers’ license is very difficult for them.”

Ignatian spirituality is sometimes referred to as the “spirituality for decision makers.” David couldn’t change Middle East politics, but in conversations with camp directors he learned that American basketball was becoming an international sport and was gaining a following in Lebanon. This was something he could work with.

With the help of a Garage Sale at St. John’s, and two New Year’s Day Polar Bear Swims in Newport, RI, (for one, David and his sister, Julia, did the swim as Power Rangers; this year he and his uncle did it at Batman and Robin), David raised enough funds to build a basketball hoop at the camp and supply the kids with basketballs, with money left over for a ping pong table and equipment.

David’s contribution snowballed. The Italian Embassy had volunteered to build a water tower for the camp. When they saw the kids playing basketball,

Darien. “We set up three teams, taught them defensive drills, had them practice free throws and run layup lines,” he explains.

Corey Dennis, a theology teacher at Prep and David’s wrestling coach, has known him well over his years at the school and is proud of his efforts to help the youngsters at the Dbayeh camp. “Dave doesn’t see this as service, he sees this as justice,” he says.

In the interest of making his contribution more consistent in the future, David will be contacting universities in Beirut in the hope of getting student volunteers interested in continuing the basketball clinics. The family hopes to return to Lebanon in 2014.

David hasn’t yet picked his college choice. He knows, though, that he would like to study international politics, with an eye to working in the State Department or the U.N. “Your whole life should be about helping others—it’s not something you do on weekends,” he says. “It started with my family, and Prep has really clarified this for me.”

David, along with other winners, will be presented with the Pax Christi award at a formal ceremony in the Spring. ■

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Catholic Charities

Breakfast with Fr. Allen

NORWALK— Saying Mass every day and in many places around the world has been the “greatest joy” in his life, Fr. Charles Allen, S.J., said at the 21st Annual Celebrity Breakfast of Catholic Charities.

The event, held at Shorehaven Country Club in Norwalk, raised more than \$12,000 for the behavioral health programs and Room to Grow Early Childhood Center sponsored by Catholic Charities in Norwalk. Betty Hunter of Norwalk, president of the Advisory Board, served as chair, while board member Ed Bagnulo of Westport was the master of ceremonies for the event.

“If I couldn’t offer Mass, I wouldn’t want to do anything,” Fr. Allen, who is special assistant to the president of Fairfield University, said. “The experience

of the Mass unites us in love, charity and oneness with Christ.”

In a talk that was humorous and reflective, Fr. Allen mentioned that he never gets upset when people arrive late, because his father and family arrived late for Sunday Mass for years. “Our church had an upstairs Mass and a downstairs Mass,” he recalled, “And my father waited outside to see who was preaching at each one before he decided to go in.”

With his trademark humor, Fr. Allen said wedding Masses are among his favorite to celebrate, but he often warns the bride to “beware of the flower girls, who will upstage them every time.”

He described one recent wedding, where flowers were strewn beautifully down the center aisle by two flower girls while the youngest innocently followed behind pick-



ENCORE! — (Above) Fr. Charles Allen, special assistant to the president of Fairfield University, did the honors once again at the 21st Annual Celebrity Breakfast of Catholic Charities of Norwalk. With his mix of humor and thoughtful reflection, Fr. Allen entertained and enlightened the gathering of 160 friends of Catholic Charities.

WAITER! (left) Msgr. William Scheyd, pastor of St. Aloysius parish in New Canaan, wore the waiter’s apron and served breakfast to the men and women at his table. He then got to collect large tips to support the counseling and child care programs of the agency.

PHOTOS BY AMY MORTENSEN



COMMUNITY LEADERS—Betty Hunter of Norwalk, president of the Catholic Charities Advisory Board, and Norwalk Mayor Richard Moccia get together at the Celebrity Breakfast held at Shorehaven Country Club.

ing them all up. The congregation reacted with laughter.

He discussed memorable Masses in his life, including one last summer at an orphanage for severely disabled young people in Nicaragua, and one in a remote Philippine village, where the people lived without any modern technology or convenience yet sang American Christmas carols as part of their recessional hymn.

Fr. Allen said that while celebrating Mass for young people in other countries, he often finds himself thinking of the children served by Room to Grow in Norwalk and other diocesan programs that serve young people in Fairfield County.

Fr. Allen was introduced by Michael Tintrup, acting chief operating officer of Catholic Charities, who noted that

Catholic Charities sponsors 33 social programs throughout the diocese. Tintrup thanked the men and women who came to support the agency’s work in Norwalk. “What’s being done in our name and in Our Lord’s name every day leads to a restoration of lives,” he told them. “I’ve seen the healing that takes place. We are grateful for your continued support for those who are marginalized in this society.”

Catholic Charities of Norwalk provides counseling, center-based childcare adoption, and mental health services to Norwalk, New Canaan, Wilton and Westport. The counseling and family service office is located at One Park St., Norwalk. Room to Grow Childcare Center is located at 208 East Ave., Norwalk.

(For more information on Catholic Charities services in Norwalk, call 203.750.9711 or email jgauthier@ccfc-ct.org.)

Kudlow is good company

Noted financial commentator, CNBC-TV host, and economist Larry Kudlow speaks at the recent Annual Catholic Charities of Danbury Celebrity Breakfast, while board member Attorney Fran Pennarola looks on. Almost 200 community, business and Church leaders turned out for the event, which raised \$32,000 for the mental health and nutrition programs of Catholic Charities.

During his talk, he took time to praise the work of Catholic Charities for their efforts in empowering people and helping families in crisis. Kudlow, a parishioner of St. Patrick Parish in Redding, discussed his own struggles with substance abuse as a young man and how embracing the Catholic faith and seeking professional counseling helped him to take control of his life. He also focused on the need for economic growth and job creation. In an interesting question and answer session, Kudlow talked about alternative energy, the fiscal cliff and financial challenges ahead.



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World and National News

Concentrate on Jesus, not end-of-the-world prophecies

VATICAN CITY—Christians should not concern themselves with predictions of the end of the world, Pope Benedict XVI told his midday audience on November 18. The Pope's comments focused on the day's Gospel reading from Mark, chapter 13, particularly verse 32: "But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

The Pope said that Jesus, in speaking about the end times, "wishes to ensure that his disciples in every age remain unmoved by dates and predictions." The essential thing for Christians, the Pope observed, is union with Christ.

In speaking about the end of the world, Jesus uses Old Testament imagery to describe "a future that exceeds our own categories of comprehension," the Pope said. Most important, Jesus reminds his disciples that their focus should be on "a new center: Himself, the mystery of his person, his death and resurrection."

In Biblical language, the Pope continued, "the Word of God is the origin of creation." With the Incarnation, the Word of God



Pope Benedict XVI started tweeting in six languages from his own personal handle @Pontifex on December 12.

takes on flesh and Jesus becomes "the true firmament that guides man's thoughts and actions on earth."

Pope Benedict now tweets

VATICAN CITY—On December 3, the Vatican announced that Pope Benedict XVI will begin tweeting under the handle @Pontifex, a term for the pope that means "bridge builder" in Latin. Within hours of the announcement, he had more than 250,000 followers, and the number increases every time

the screen is refreshed. The Pope launched his Twitter account on Wednesday, December 12, in his general audience. He had been taking questions in advance on matters of faith via the hashtag #askpontifex. Many of those may be touched on in those first tweets.

The Pope's presence on Twitter is the latest initiative aimed to reach the Church's 1.2 billion followers, especially young people. "The Pope's presence on Twitter can be seen as the 'tip of the iceberg' that is the Church's presence in the world of new media," the Vatican said in a statement.

Rector of largest U.S. Episcopal church became Catholic

HOUSTON, TX—Rev. Larry Gipson, who was once rector of St. Martin's church in Houston—where his parishioners included former U.S. President George H. W. Bush—has entered the Personal Ordinariate of St. Peter, set up to welcome Anglicans in the United States who seek to enter the Catholic Church.

"I'm thankful to the Episcopal Church," he said. "I spent my life there. All my friends and people I love are in it. I do not in any way wish to denigrate it. I'm not angry. I was seeking something that I've been longing for, for a long time."

Rev. Gipson, who has been attending Mass regularly at the church of Our Lady of Walsingham in Houston, has been studying for ordination into the Catholic priesthood. This year, the ordinariate has already ordained 24 priests, with 69 in preparation.

"I was an Episcopal priest for

42 years," Rev. Gipson said. "I can't imagine not being a priest. I'm anxious to get back to priestly work."

Access to needs, not dollars, is standard for defining poverty

VATICAN CITY—Poverty must be understood not only in terms of a shortage of money, but also in terms of a lack of access to education, health care, and other assets, Peter Cardinal Turkson, the president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, told Vatican Radio. He spoke to Vatican Radio ahead of the 'Why Poverty' initiative that took place

adding, "Lately we have begun to include the right to energy and clean water. Basically, we're invited to widen this concept to what makes for healthy living, as it's not just what you have in your pocket."

He called Catholic Social Teaching one of the most powerful tools for human development. It provides, he says, "the basic sense of human dignity which generates various forms of human rights."

Rising number of Catholics in U.S. Congress

WASHINGTON, DC—Following the 2012 election, the number of Catholics in Congress will rise from 156 (29%) to 161 (30%). 56% of members of the new Congress are Protestants: 14% are Baptists, 9% are Methodists, and 8% are Presbyterians. In addition, 6% of members of the new Congress are Jews, and 3% are Mormons.

In the 113th Congress, 54% of Catholics in the House of Representatives, and 67% of Catholics in the Senate, will be Democrats.

Swiss Guards release Christmas CD

VATICAN CITY—The Swiss Guards, in conjunction with harpist Daniela Lorenz, have



SWISS GUARDS form in procession in St. Peter Square, Vatican City.

November 29.

Cardinal Turkson observed that in the past, someone living on \$1 a day was defined as poor. But the problem might be better defined in terms of access to education, health care, and fair wages. "One may be able to make \$1 a day and still have no access to these things," he said,

released a CD, "Weihnachten mit der Schweizergarde" (Christmas with the Swiss Guard).

"Most of them are German Christmas songs, so they are well known in the German part of Europe, but they are just instrumentals, without singing, without lyrics," said one of the five Swiss Guards who joined

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Carmela A. Dupuis

Executive Director

World and National News

in recording the CD, which was recorded at the studios of Vatican Radio. It features five Swiss Guards and Paraguayan harpist Daniela Lorenz performing well know favorites such as "Little Drummer Boy," Silent Night and Adeste Fideles as well as a number of other German and Italian carols.

The CD is available at iTunes and at several European online vendors.

Church urges 'circle of protection' for poor in budget debate WASHINGTON, DC—



Catholic social teaching's concern for human life and dignity stood front and center as the role of the federal spending was debated by political leaders and assessed by the electorate in a presidential election year.

Throughout the debate, the chairmen of two committees of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) renewed their call for a "circle of protection" around federally funded programs benefitting poor and vulnerable people.

"Our ongoing concerns remain centered on the care for the poor and most vulnerable in society," said Bishop Stephen E. Blaire of Stockton, CA, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development. "We cannot neglect them as we seek to stabilize our political economy. "While it is certainly a good to be accomplished in terms of creating a more stable economy with a balanced budget, it would not be beneficial to have such efforts result in a wider gap between those who are rich and those who are poor. The common good requires that the people who are hurting the most will not be hurting even more as a result of efforts that are being taken to

improve the economy," he said.

Meanwhile, Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, chairman of the bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace, called for continued funding of poverty-focused international assistance, which encompasses programs such as HIV/AIDS treatment, disaster aid, refugee services, health care, support for small farmers and aid to orphaned children.

Such spending—totaling \$20.2 billion in fiscal year 2012, comprising about 0.6 percent of the

federal budget—helps promote human development and builds peace among nations, he said.

At the same time, Fr. Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA, focused his agency's message to Congress during the budget negotiations on preventing drastic cuts in funding for social service programs as well as protecting the charitable tax deduction that has existed since 1917. "Our concern is that they don't try to take the easy way out, which is seen as cutting the services to the poor," Fr. Snyder told *Catholic News Service*. "That's too easy, and too often the poor become the folks on whose backs the budget gets balanced."

Man hurls paint cans at Poland's Black Madonna

WARSAW, Poland—On December 9, a man hurled cans of paint at Poland's most sacred icon in an attack that failed to damage the Black Madonna of Jasna Gora but shocked many in the staunchly Catholic country. The 58-year-old attacker was detained by guards at the monastery holding the revered depiction of Mary and the baby Jesus in the southern city of Czestochowa, police said.

The icon is shielded by a protective plate of glass and was unharmed.

The monastery became a symbol of national pride after Poles successfully defended it against invading Swedish troops in the 17th century. According to legend, the sacred image was painted by St. Luke and helped repel the foreign soldiers. Solidarity leader Lech Walesa kept his 1983 Nobel Peace Prize medal at the monastery for safekeeping beyond the reach of the country's then communist rulers, who regarded the award as part of a Western plot.

Thousands of Poles make pilgrimages to the monastery every year to see the icon.

Catholic School in Quebec loses religious freedom case

MONTREAL, Canada—An appeals court in the province of Quebec has ruled that a Catholic school is legally obliged to offer a state-sponsored ethics course that conflicts with the teachings of the Church. The school, a Jesuit institution located in Montreal, had taken its case to court after the education minister refused to allow the school to substitute its own ethics course, taught from a Catholic perspective, for the government's curriculum.

Loyola High School first took legal action in 2008, when an education minister refused to grant equivalency to the school's Morals and World Religions course. The minister argued that Loyola's course is taught from a Catholic viewpoint, whereas the state course requires religions to be taught from a secular and religiously neutral perspective.

Marie Bourque, vice-president of the Catholic Parents Association of Quebec, said the decision infringes on the rights of parents to choose an education for their children in line with their faith and values. Both the Catholic Church and the UN Declaration of Human Rights state that parental rights in education are essential and must be upheld.

Loyola High School is now weighing an appeal to the Canadian Supreme Court.

China punishes faithful Catholic bishop

SHANGHAI, China—China's government-controlled Catholic bishops' conference

has revoked its recognition for Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin as an auxiliary of the Shanghai diocese in the latest in a series of punishments for the bishop after he resigned from the Catholic Patriotic Association.

Bishop Ma has been under house arrest since his ordination in July. At that ceremony he announced that he was leaving the Patriotic Association, and he conspicuously declined to share Communion with other bishops who were ordained without the Vatican's approval.

Bishop Ma had originally been ordained with the approval of both Rome and Beijing. Chinese authorities quickly revoked their approval, however, after his highly public rebuke of the Patriotic Association. Both the Patriotic Association and the bishops' conference, established by the government, have been denounced by Pope Benedict XVI as clear efforts to exert political control over the Church.

Catholics and Muslim cooperate in promoting justice

ROME, Italy—"Catholic and Muslim Cooperation in promoting justice in the contemporary world" was the theme of the eighth colloquium of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the Centre for Inter-religious Dialogue of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organisation (ICRO). The meeting was held in Rome from November 19-21.

Both sides expressed their awareness of and concern for current challenges, including the economic crisis, the environmental issue, the weakening of the family as a basic institution of society and threats to world peace. The participants, recognizing both areas of commonality and difference, focused on common ground and shared values, including the belief in one God.

The next colloquium will take place in Tehran, Iran, in two years.

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Local News

St. Emery celebrates
80th anniversary

On November 11, St. Emery Parish in Fairfield held its 80th anniversary celebration, an occasion which also observed their patron saint's Feast Day, November 5.

The celebration included a Sunday Mass enriched by an honor guard from the Knights of Columbus.

A luncheon followed in the parish hall. In honor of the parish's Hungarian heritage, a

typical stuffed cabbage dinner was served, including bread and butter, stuffed cabbage, kielbasa and mashed potatoes, and ending with honey cookies, tea and coffee.

Fr. Steven Balint, pastor of St. Ladislaus Parish in South Norwalk, the other parish in the Diocese of Bridgeport boasting of Hungarian heritage, said the grace in Hungarian.

The history of St. Emery's is the tale of Hungarian immigrants who settled in this area determined to build a church, a parish, and a community of their beloved Catholic faith. Under the guidance of the Franciscan Friars and founding pastor, Fr.

Benedict Biro, O.F.M., the parish was formed in 1932 and placed under the patronage of Saint Emeric (Emery) of Hungary. St. Emery's Church was dedicated on November 5 of that year.

While St. Emery's continues to treasure its Hungarian roots, over the years it has welcomed new parishioners of every ethnic heritage. Its association with the Franciscan Order ended in 2011, and St. Emery's became a parish community under the Diocese of Bridgeport, in close association with the Church of Holy Family in Fairfield. Fr. Guido Montanaro, pastor of Holy Family, is St. Emery's parish administrator. ■



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VULNERABLE FROM PAGE 3

state hospitals.

"It's devastating. This is the largest hit I've seen in my 23 years here," Cole says. She's concerned that many people aren't aware of the impact that the cuts will have on the most vulnerable in our society.

Mark Grasso says the cuts to the Food Stamp program will put an additional strain on non-profits that do most of the heavy lifting when it comes to feeding the poor in our state. "Take a look around at who's feeding the poor. It's the churches and non-profit groups that are doing the work even as demand increases. The federal government has never really been in the emergency food business," says Grasso, who notes that places like Merton Center and its volunteers have really been challenged by the growing demand and the need to improve the quality of food provided.

Conderino says the newly impoverished group of people who are over 50 often end up living in their cars and are at risk for serious problems. Eventually they may wander into Morning Glory for breakfast or into a shelter as they become increasingly desperate.

One thing that all agree on is that at a time of budget cutting on the state and national level, non-profits that receive state grants to care for the homeless and mentally ill are a bargain for tax payers.

Conderino says that as a taxpayer as well as an outreach worker, she is infuriated by waste and committed to results. "I like to remind people that non-profits are the best at being efficient and effective. Every dime is put into client use and looking at long-term solutions. People should know we use best practices and invest the money in things that work. We have a 90% housed rate on discharge for our homeless clients. We're moving them forward."

Cole says Catholic Charities agrees that Catholic Charities programs mental health programs not only help people in crisis but, "As a non-profit, we can provide community-based services at a fraction of the cost of the state, which is intrinsically more bureaucratic and has so many levels. But with the proposed cuts, we will have clients coming our way and no real way to serve them." ■

Local News

Chinese students add new perspective to Trinity

By PAT HENNESSY

"It's hard to be away from home at such a young age," says Anthony Pavia, principal of Trinity Catholic High School in Stamford, speaking of the Chinese exchange students at Trinity. "You have to admire their courage and their determination."

Eleven Chinese students arrived at Trinity this semester through a program sponsored by Eduboston, which specializes in providing educational opportunities in the U. S. for middle and high school age students from all over the world. Begun in Massachusetts, the company has expanded to Connecticut for the first time this school year.

This semester, Eduboston has placed students not only at Trinity but at Notre Dame Catholic High School in Fairfield and St. Joseph High School in Trumbull. There are currently 15 Chinese students studying in diocesan high schools through the program, with more to join them in the upcoming semester.

"America is the most powerful country in the world," says Wengan Zheng, who is a senior at Trinity this year, explaining why he made the sacrifice to study here. "I want to learn how the American people think and bring that back to China."

The two elements that have struck him most forcefully are the independence of American students and the emphasis our culture puts on relationships. "You sit down at the table at dinner and talk as a family," he observes. "Outside of the family, you learn how to communicate with others

to make a relationship better."

Wengan and the other exchange students at Trinity also want to go on to higher education here. "Universities in the United States are the best," he says. It's easier not only to get into an American university but to succeed there with a few years in high school behind them.

"As little kids in China we learned English but it was different from American English, and it wasn't useful," explains freshman Gabby Cui. "We learned grammar, and there was a lot of reading."

She adds with a laugh, "Sometimes, in class, we know the grammar better than the American kids."

Gabby's dream is to attend Columbia University in New York. Beyond that, her ambition will come as a surprise to those who suppose all Chinese students to be interested in math and science. "I love all things about fashion," she says. "My mom wants me to be a designer."

Other Trinity classmates are still finding their footing, learning to fit in with the encouragement of their host families. "I have a good family," says Tom Deng. "They want to learn about China and Chinese tradition. I was surprised about that."

Tom and classmate Calvin Shi enjoy the additional benefit of friendships they've made as members of Trinity's football team. "I've made many friends because of the team," says Calvin. "Some of them have the same classes I do and the same homeroom. One of my friends lives near our house. Sometimes his father will pick me up and bring me over there."

"In many ways it's easier for the boys," observes Pavia. "They're less inhibited. You see them with their teammates, giving high fives and slapping each other on the back. Socially, it's a little harder on the girls. I think that,



over time, their academic success will help their social confidence."

The students and their host families get strong support from Eduboston. "We try to see that they're blending in socially and academically," says Rose Nanista, a member of St. Matthew Parish in Norwalk, who is in charge of the Connecticut exchange program.

A support group for students



SAMPLING THE CAKE, (Above) Chinese exchange student Gabby Cui enjoys an American birthday party with "sisters" (l-r) Gemma and Kirstyn at Kirstyn's 15th birthday. Welcoming host families are key to making the students' experience successful.

THEY'RE ALL WINNERS! (Left) Rick Chen flashes a high five at an impromptu Go Kart outing for Chinese exchange students at Trinity Catholic and their host family.

and their host families provides outings that can focus on cultural enrichment or something fun—like an afternoon racing Go Karts. Students and their families may go to New York City during the holidays or visit Washington, DC. Upcoming events might include a Christmas Party.

"All of it is new to them," says Nanista, whose family is hosting two students in addition to their own teenage daughters.

Pavia believes that the exchange students are not the

only ones who benefit from the exchange program. "They bring a different perspective to the classroom. Just by being here, they make all our students more open to different cultures. They make Trinity a classroom of life, a classroom of the world."

(Eduboston is looking for host families who can give an international student a warm family atmosphere for the upcoming semester. Interested families can call Nanista: 203.984.6541.)



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Local News

Vaccaro inducted into Vets Hall of Fame

Carmine Vaccaro, a member of Holy Spirit Parish in Stamford and a 4th degree Knight in the Knights of Columbus, was one of a dozen men inducted into the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame on November 12.

Vaccaro served as a U.S. Navy hospital corpsman during the Korean War.

State leaders headed by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy and Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman paid tribute to the veterans during the induction ceremony, which was attended by Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner Linda Schwartz and state Senator Carlo Leone of Stamford, the co-chairman of the legislature's

veterans committee.

The Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame was established to increase the awareness of the lifetime contributions of veterans after completion of their military service. It is not a military hall of fame, the Commissioner's Office emphasizes. "Those selected for the honor of induction are veterans who honorably served their country through military service and who continue to serve and

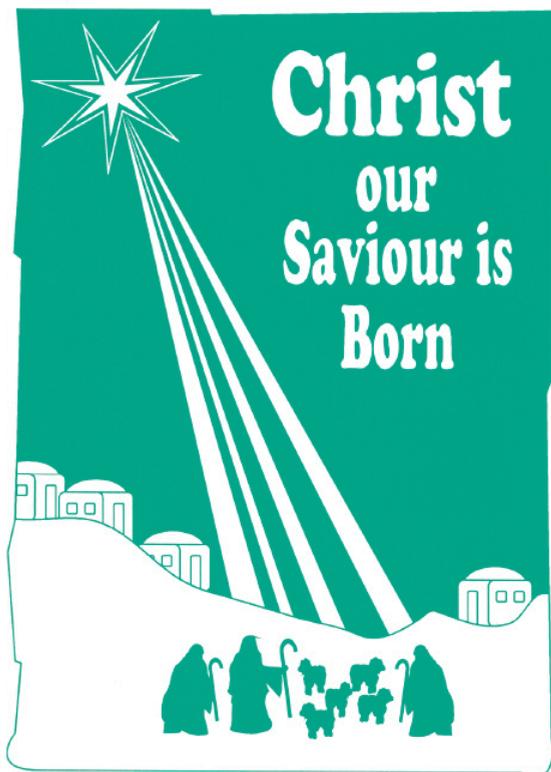
inspire their fellow man," their nomination form states. "They all have made significant impacts on the lives of others and their communities."

Vaccaro graduated from New Haven State Teachers College, and earned three separate master's degrees: from New Haven State, Fordham University and Fairfield University. He served as a teacher in the Stamford Public School system for 36

years, teaching science and physical education.

His love of sports—he had played football in college—led to him to work as a referee, officiating games for high school football, soccer, wrestling, volleyball, basketball, baseball and softball. At 82 years young, he still works as the official timekeeper for sports at Darien High School.

Much as he loves sports, Vaccaro's first love is his Catholic



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Local News

faith and his home parish, Holy Spirit. Living the Gospel message, he not only volunteers at Holy Spirit but with the Knights of Columbus, American Legion, Food Bank, New Covenant House of Hospitality, Toys for Tots and other charitable organizations.

He told *The Stamford Times* that one of his biggest joys is the time he spends at Smith House Nursing and Rehabilitation Center working as a Eucharistic minister, holding prayer services and doing the readings at Mass. "Whenever they need some kind of religious help, I offer my services," he told the *Times*.

Recognition of veterans through the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame began in 2005. The first group of inductees that year included the 41st President of the United States, George Herbert Walker Bush. To date, sixty-one veterans of Connecticut have been honored.

"I was willing to serve, and if I had to serve again, I would," Vaccaro told the *Times*. "I want to be remembered as one who gave back and was unselfish. My community gave me so much that I want to give back to my community. I want to be known as one who did not take, but who gave." ■



CARMINE VACCARO IS CONGRATULATED by Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman at the induction ceremony for the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame, established to recognize the lifetime contributions of veterans to their community.



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EDITORIAL

Tough Choices

Advent was days away and Christmas lights were already lending cheer to dark streets when the State of Connecticut announced a budget that would cut food stamps, aid to needy families, and mental health programs. (See the story on page 3.)

Large deficits have left the state to face difficult choices, and the cut-backs challenge Catholics and all people of goodwill as we prepare to celebrate this most joyous season.

We decorate our homes at Christmas, defying the darkest time of year. We visit and exchange gifts, sharing warmth and love. In every church at every Mass around the entire world, Catholics will pray for the poor and afflicted, and most importantly we will celebrate the birth of the "King of Kings," who humbled himself to be born a little baby: homeless, cold, and vulnerable.

There are other babies out there. If Christmas means anything, it means we can't ignore them— not-yet-born babies carried in their mothers' womb, little ones still needing baby food, kids in troubled families that need a little counseling to keep things together.

Christmas carries a challenge this year. The Babe of Bethlehem calls Catholics to read the news, plow through the statistics, become involved in the budget process, make our voices heard. It's not fun, it's not tinsel. It is a part of the real work of Christmas as we celebrate the light of Christ in the world.

Christmas Blessings

The diocese comes to life in a very special way at Christmas each year. People are busy making preparations; parishes are hosting advent prayer services and concerts; social concerns committees are ready to reach out by feeding the hungry and delivering presents to the poor; and our priests are in full swing with the myriad of parish activities that make our lives more fulfilling and joyful.

Blessings abound in our diocese, and we have so many gifts to put under our tree: vibrant parishes, remarkable schools, compassionate social services, devoted priests, deacons, sisters and religious, and the shared expression of our deep and abiding faith together—all the makings of a great Christmas.

Perhaps Christmas has even more meaning because it is nurtured by the generous and faithful giving by so many throughout the year. On behalf of the diocese, we thank you for your support, and wish our readers and their families a very happy and holy Christmas.

Silent Night/
Evening News

In the continuous loop of Christmas standards on the radio, the 1966 version of "Silent Night" by Simon and Garfunkel is seldom played, perhaps in part because its message dims the Christmas spirit. The rendition begins with their sweet infusion of harmonies over a whispering of the evening news. As the carol builds, their voices grow fainter, almost spectral, while the news report gets louder, just short of strident. The effect is disturbing, because it jolts us out of a warm Christmas feeling to face the reality of the harsh and ugly news we live by. As adults we know the world does not change from one Christmas to the next, and that peace on earth remains elusive. But the child in us wants to believe otherwise, and as people of faith, we must. In his stories, Charles Dickens gave us Christmas as a change of heart, opening of the spirit, and a renewed sense of generosity, but the Church gives us even greater expectations: that we can share in the light of Christ and fulfill our deepest longing for union with God. Perhaps it's time we turn down the volume of the nightly news and find peace in the true gift of Christmas. ■

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Christmas in the Year of Faith

"In the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph..."
(Luke 1:26-27)

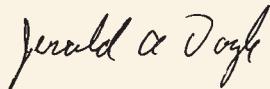
Have you noticed that many of the symbols that we have associated with Christmas over the years are now called by secular names? Christmas trees are called Holiday trees, Christmas greetings and cards are Holidays greeting, and most public displays are now just lights and Santas. Nativity scenes outside homes have been replaced by countless holiday lights and blowup Santas with no hint of a symbol related to the birth of Christ. We adapted many symbols from pagan cultures a long time ago and made them holy. Now it seems like we are giving in to the new pagan cultures of political correctness and secularization.

The symbols we associated with the birth of Christ, like any symbols, helped us express the true meaning of Christmas beyond words. They helped bring us to a reality far deeper and considerably more meaningful than words can express. Not unlike any master painter or sculptor, we could never truly capture with our Christmas symbols that which we all hope for with great anticipation, the birth of our Lord. Nevertheless those inadequate symbols and their specific association with Christmas brought us great joy. Ironically the so-called politically correct secularized names of the symbols today feel empty. This should be of no surprise. A symbol that is no longer associated with our Lord and is now meant to stand alone will be nothing more than a fleeting pleasure, a generic object. As with all pleasures, they are temporary, come to an end, and in many cases make us feel empty and desiring more.

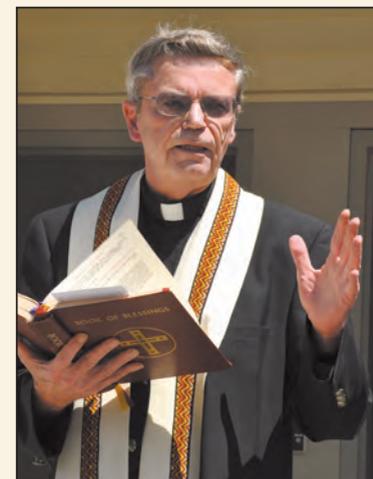
The secularization of our Christmas symbols easily leads to a devaluing of the Feast of the Nativity. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that we now refer to Advent as the "Christman Season" and we completely abandon any observation of the real Christmas Season, celebrated in our Liturgy through the Epiphany to the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. How many Christmas trees go up on the weekend after Thanksgiving and come down on December 26? We are now asking each other, "did you finish your Christmas shopping?" rather than asking, "What are you doing this Advent to prepare for Christmas?" The answer to the first question is inconsequential. The answer to the second question gives meaning to our life in Christ.

During this Year of Faith we are being called to revisit our Catholic faith by studying it, embracing it and living it. This will lead us to take up our journey of faith with the Lord all over again. For many of us the secular world has ground us down and we've forgotten the sustaining joy of Christmas. May I suggest that, based in prayer, we tell the real story of Christmas because it is the greatest story ever told.

May you have a Blessed and Merry Christmas and joyous New Year.



Msgr. Jerald A. Doyle, Diocesan Administrator



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Editorial



Advent symbols link the Old and New Testaments

A WOMAN'S VIEW

BY ANTOINETTE BOSCO

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

Every year, a week before the coming birth of the Christ Child, I begin my celebration of the “O Antiphons.” And just about every year, when I mention this to someone, I get asked, “What are they?” And I answer:

“The O Antiphons are verses that link the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah with the fulfillment of these in the birth of Christ—and they are meant to be read, one each day, during the last week of Advent.”

I have to admit that I was unfamiliar with the “O Antiphons”—despite my many years of Catholic education—until some 20 years ago, when

I was visiting Mother Placid, a nun friend at the Abbey of Regina Laudis in Bethlehem, CT, sadly recently deceased. She and her niece, Mother Praxedes Baxter, both acclaimed artists, were making some eye-catching stained-glass pieces in their blacksmith shop. When I asked her what these were, she smiled and told me they were “O Antiphon symbols.” I admitted I had never heard of these.

So, Mother Praxedes explained to me that they were “prayers directly linked to the Hebrew scriptures prophesying the coming of a Messiah.” And she went on, explaining that each verse begins with an exclamation

tion that is identified with Jesus: “O Wisdom..., O Adonai..., O Root of Jesse..., O Key of David... O Radiant Dawn, Rising Sun..., O King of Nations... O Emmanuel...” and thus, they are called the ‘O Antiphons,’

“It’s the ‘O’ that touched me, like a cry of wonder that a child might express,” this nun artist said, revealing she was moved to translate these titles for the Christ-to-come into an art form. “These symbols themselves, like the star, the rising sun, even the key, are archtypes—images that come through time, preparing us for who Christ is. They’re very rich in that sense of preparing us for Christ who is coming.”

Going on, Mother Praxedes told me the O Antiphons had Benedictine roots. “The prayers were probably written in the fourth century, compiled from Hebrew scriptures. But it was Pope Gregory the Great, who had been a Benedictine monk, who introduced these prayers as O Antiphons into the Roman breviary (priests’ prayer book) in the sixth century. That’s how ancient these prayers are!”

Another dear friend, the late Brother Aelred Seton, was equally helpful to me in learning more about the origins of the Advent/Christmas season. “In the first three centuries, the feast of Christmas wasn’t celebrated at all. It was around the fourth century that the feast of Christmas came into being. This was prompted by the Aryan heresy which denied the humanity of Christ. It then became logical to celebrate a feast that brought Christ’s humanity to the fore.

“Interestingly, the Emperor Aurelian had established a pagan feast, Solis Invictus, ‘the feast of the unconquered son,’ on December 25 in their calendar, which tied into the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year. Since it made sense for the Church to capitalize on ‘Christianizing’ existing pagan feasts, the Church introduced the feast of the Nativity on that day.”

The first reference to Advent “occurs in Spain in about 380 A.D. Christians were told that from December 17 to the Epiphany (January 6), they shouldn’t miss church,” Brother

Aelred told me. By the sixth century, when Pope Gregory assembled the O Antiphons, these were, in a way, a patchwork quilt of references from Hebrew scriptures. They are drawn from Exodus, Isaiah, Genesis, Habakuk, Wisdom and others.

“In the Middle ages, churches in Germany and Paris sometimes added two or four more O Antiphons, like O Virgin of Virgins... O Gabriel, Messenger of Heaven... O Jerusalem... O King and Peacemaker... O Lady of the World,” Brother Aelred said, adding his own belief that the O Antiphons are “wonderful because they derive their imagery from both our Jewish and Christian heritage.” Truly—they are—as we can read:

December 17: O Wisdom, who came forth from the mouth of the Most High, stretching from border to border, arranging all things firmly and pleasingly, come to teach us the way of prudence.

December 18: O Adonai, and leader of the House of Israel, who

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 17



The fine art of delayed gratification

A DAD'S VIEW

BY MATTHEW HENNESSEY

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

My son Paddy tells me he wants Santa to bring him a Shrek costume. Paddy is four.

“A costume is really a Halloween kind of thing, don’t you think?” I say.

“Well, yes, but, I really want dat for Chrissmas,” he says, eyes wide, brows raised. Paddy’s diction is not always so good. He sometimes sounds like Dean Martin after a late set at the Sands.

“You know that Santa doesn’t bring us everything we ask for, right?” I raise my own eyebrows. “But I’m a really, really good boy

dis time,” he says.

“I know you are. Even so, he doesn’t bring us everything we ask for.”

“Yeah, I know dat,” he says, eyes suddenly narrow. “The fing is, I really want a Shrek costume.” Putting aside why anyone would want to dress up like a giant green ogre for Christmas, I thought this little exchange a fine opportunity to introduce my boy to the concept of delayed gratification. Learning to delay gratification is the key to happiness, they say. The earlier you master this, the better.

“I think we should shoot for

Halloween on this one buddy. You can wait that long for something you really want, right?”

No kid wants to hear this. Not at Christmas time. I confess to not being very good at delaying gratification myself. Most of us are pretty bad at waiting for the things we want. This is true whether we want a big promotion, true love, or a Shrek costume. It’s just tough to wait.

I feel for Paddy, though, because I remember what it was like. As a kid, you want what you want when you want it. You need what you need when you need it. Waiting is hard.

For Catholics, Advent is all about waiting. It’s a hopeful waiting, but boy is it hard. It takes real effort. As Saint Paul said, we must train ourselves “to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age, as we await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of the great God and of our savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

I don’t know about you, but I’d count myself lucky to live the

ideals of either temperance or justice or devotion, never mind all three. If I could do this even for a single day I’d dance a jig. Successfully pulling off the hat trick over the course of a lifetime seems a tall order for all but the holiest among us.

I recently heard a busy and popular writer describe his daily despair at having to respond to an inbox full of emails. Every day, he said, feels like putting a canoe into a stream. The water’s current immediately begins carrying you backward. You paddle all day against the current and, if you’re lucky, you end up back where you started.

The cultural current during Advent is strong. It pulls us all toward instant gratification and the empty trappings of what so many simply refer to as “the holiday season.” Black Friday. Wish lists. A great picture of the kids to put on a card. It’s so easy to get swept away by the current. Don’t get me wrong. Trimming the tree and watching the kids open presents is part of what makes life

worth living. But it’s not the main thing. Not even close.

Fr. George Rutler, who is the pastor of the Church of Our Savior on Park Avenue in New York City, recently wrote that “Advent is awkward because its mysteries of Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell are not the sort of things counter-tenors dressed as elves sing about.”

Taking our faith seriously in a world of instant gratification is awkward for sure. Focusing on God while everyone else is focusing on tablets and smartphones is bound to set us apart. But following Christ is no day at the mall. We endure the suffering and pain, the setbacks and turnarounds, because we know that our reward lies not in this world but in the next.

It’s a hard paddle upstream. Especially during Advent. If we’re lucky, we’ll end up back where we started.

And if Paddy’s lucky, he’ll eat Christmas dinner dressed as a giant green ogre. ■

Advent/Christmas

Knights of Columbus Canadian Crèche Exhibit

By JOSEPH PRONECHEN

Advent and Christmastide in Connecticut this year brings the eighth annual Christmas Crèche exhibit at the Knights of Columbus Museum in New Haven. This time the museum is presenting over 80 examples of crèches from our neighbor to the north in a show called "Joyeux Noel Christmas in Canada."

As ever, the crèches bring a sense of joy, wonder, and in some cases, awe. Some bring unexpected smiles for a number of reasons, such as the simple scene with figures made from potato paste.

It's one of the most unusual examples; many other crèches or representations of the Holy Family are made of much more

standard materials, such as wood, cloth and ceramics, not to mention resin that appears to be stone, porcelain, painted plaster—and even a stable made of moose horns.

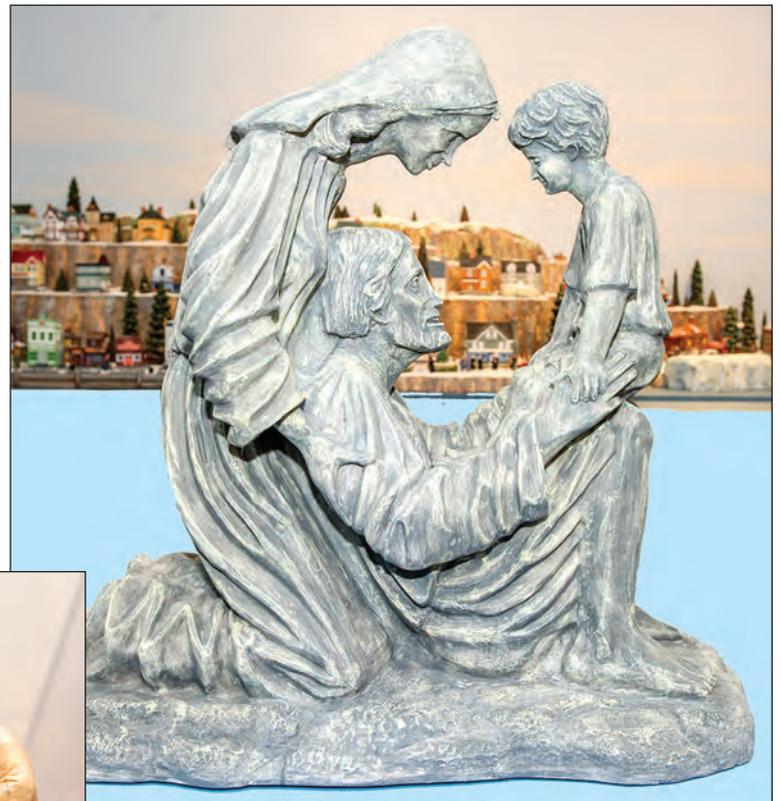
The crèches come in different sizes. Some can easily fit a space the size of a dinner plate, while the largest spans an entire wall of over 15 feet in one of the four gallery rooms filled with the crèches.

It's no surprise there are quite a few examples of crèche figures carved from wood. Canadian woodcarvers represented in this show are masterful artists, working mostly in their preferred pine. But don't envision the typical knotty pine here. The kind of pine they use gives the Holy Family and all the accompany-

ing figures a honey tone and an incredible smoothness. A few individual examples even resemble ivory.

Among these sets are ones from Antonio Caruso. Italian-born and now a resident of Canada, Caruso is one of Canada's finest professional artists. It's no wonder when you see his exquisite and intricately carved figures that look as if they're ready to move about.

One of Caruso's prime examples is the scene with shepherds and sheep in awe of baby Jesus and presenting gifts of fruit to the



Some of the crèches are a true surprise to us south of the Canadian border but are likely familiar to those in the northern climes of Canada.

Among the most prominent are the Inuit Nativity scenes. Naturally, the Holy Family are Eskimos, the stable becomes an igloo, Jesus is on a sled, and the sheep turn into seals and a polar bear.

Similarly, there are American Indian crèches, too. Everyone is dressed as Native Americans, including an angel that flies over the tepee in adoration of the Christ Child.

Other surprises come from the number of Nativity scenes set inside cutout ceramic jugs or eggs. These containers are colorful and decorative, almost like a Fabergé egg.

Grandmaster wood carver John Schnerger traces his family carving roots back to the 18th century, and the three dioramas by him in this exhibit are detailed scenes placing the Nativity on a Canadian farm. The Holy Family is comfortable in a barn, animals feed in the wintry yard, one farm-

er goes about his chores while another approaches the babe in the manger. The scene is like a Canadian Currier and Ives set in the 1940s.

The largest display is the panorama of Christmas in a Canadian Village that stretches the entire wall of one exhibit room. All the townspeople, small ceramic figures known as santons, seem to be celebrating the birth of Christ at Christmas. They

represent all kind of people and occupations in the village.

This diorama is one of many on loan from Riviere-Érémite's crèche museum in Northern Quebec. The town is known as Canada's "Bethlehem."

Another major portion of the crèches is on loan from the Oratory on St. Joseph's on Mont Royal in Montreal.

(A fine show for the Christmas season, *Joyeux Noel Christmas in Canada* runs through February 3, 2013. Bonus exhibits include the 12th annual Christmas Tree Festival featuring Christmas Trees decorated by school children. For details, call the Knights of Columbus Museum: 203.865.0400.)



The Apostolate of African Americans

is hosting a day to celebrate our Cultural Diversity and Gifts

Saturday, December 29 starting at 3:00pm

Blessed Sacrament Church

275 Union Avenue, Bridgeport

The day will feature:

Kwanzaa Celebration

African Drummers

Celebration of our elders

MAAFA21

A talk about Our Lady of Kibeho and many fun activities for the kids

We will end the day with a light traditional meal.

To join us in the celebration please R.S.V.P. to Fr. Reggie pastor@blessedsacramentbpt.org

(Reservation is required so that enough food can be prepared)

Kwanzaa celebrates seven core principals (Nguzo Saba): Unity, Self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith.



Advent/Christmas

Ally's Angel card reaches the Pope

By PAT HENNESSY

When Pope Benedict opens his Christmas cards this year, he'll see one that was designed by Ally Fallon, now a seventh-grader at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School in Fairfield.

Ally's design of the guardian angel hovering over the stable in Bethlehem won a nationwide contest sponsored by the Holy Childhood Association, part of the Pontifical Mission Society. "I like angels because they're pretty and, like—powerful," says Ally, explaining her choice of subject. "They look after you and show up when you need help."

"This is a huge honor," says Fr. Frederick Saviano, diocesan director of the Propagation of the Faith, another branch of the Mission Society. "There isn't a first, second and third place. There's only one—and it's the one the national director of the Pontifical Mission Societies, Fr. Andrew Small, OMI, is using as his personal Christmas card, including the one he sends to the Pope."

Although Ally (the oldest of triplets) is interested in art, drawing was not the central focus of the project. The heart of her sixth-grade service program was concern for poor children worldwide. Her class cooperated throughout the year with The Holy Childhood Association to learn about and



THE FALLON FAMILY, including prize winner Ally (center) attended a special celebration in Washington, DC.

help children in mission countries throughout the world.

The association recently changed its name to the Missionary Childhood Association. The change emphasizes its care for the childhood in mission areas with stress given to those areas of greatest poverty. The association has developed activities to teach youngsters in the United States about the needs of the world's poorest children and invites them to pray and to offer financial help. In this way, students in the U.S. as well as children in the missions learn that they are all part of the one Body of Christ.

"We had little boxes to put money in," Ally explains. "It would go to the missions for milk or pencils. A dollar could buy, maybe, 75 pencils in countries that are really poor."

A year spent thinking about poor children made Ally look at her own life through new eyes. "I don't really like milk that much," she admits. "My mom puts it on

the table every night at dinner, and I force myself to drink it. I know she puts it there because you need milk; it's nutritional. In some countries, kids have only dirty water to drink."

Just as Ally's prize-winning card did not happen in isolation, her awareness of the plight of other children comes as part of a planned development that begins very young. "At St. Thomas, service begins in kindergarten," says Principal Patricia Brady. "Our kids understand that service is not merely a program, it's a call from our baptism."

Kindergartners learn the value of the elderly, starting with their own grandparents. First-graders grow in compassion by corresponding with elderly parishioners. By the second grade, they are creating decorations for the residents at local nursing homes, and visiting them for a social.

Through the years the awareness of St. Thomas students expands, taking in retired priests

and religious, sick children, and the poor in their community. By eighth grade, they will understand their baptismal call to respond to the needs of the world through social justice activities, including making a dinner for nearby Project Hope soup kitchen and helping at the local YMCA.

In the seventh grade this year, Ally and her classmates learn about the work of Catholic Charities from Richard Madwid, director of behavioral health in the Bridgeport office (and a St. Thomas alum), and organize a mitten and hat drive for the families served by Sr. Theresa Tremblay in Bridgeport.

Meantime, this holiday season has been an extraordinary one for Ally and her family. The entire family, including her sisters Kelly and Molly, was invited by the Pontifical Mission Societies to a



special celebration held December 8 at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC. Ally's card was prominently displayed in the Shrine.

Through this Christmas and beyond, Ally's guardian angel will be a visible presence when she goes to bed each night. "I keep a picture of my drawing in my room, and I look at it before I go to sleep. It gives me comfort, knowing that my angel is watching over me." ■

ADVENT SYMBOLS FROM PAGE 15

appeared to Moses in the fiery flame of the burning bush, and gave him the Law on Sinai: Come to redeem us with outstretched arm.

December 19: O Root of Jesse, who stands as a sign of the people, in whose presence the kings of the earth will remain silent, whom the peoples shall entreat: Come to free us, now do not tarry.

December 20: O Key of David, and staff of the House of Israel, who opens and no man closes; who closes and no man opens; Come and bring forth from the prison house the one who is bound in darkness and in

the shadow of death.

December 21: O Radiant Dawn/ Rising Sun, brilliance of Eternal light and sun of justice: Come, and enlighten those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

December 22: O King of Nations, and their desired one and cornerstone, who makes both one: Come, and save man whom you formed from slime.

December 23: O Emmanuel, king and lawgiver, desire of the nations, Savior of all people, come and set us free, Lord our God.

Joyful Christmas to all! ■

Merry Christmas
AND A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR!

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Feature

The young Sister and the iconic Chinese Cardinal

By FRANK DeROSA

The thirty-something Chinese Sister, wearing a modified habit, was eager to chat as my wife and I settled into our seats behind hers in the Vatican's Pope VI Audience Hall about a half-hour before Pope Benedict XVI's weekly audience. Attracted by our speaking English in the midst of a multi-lingual sea, she quickly struck up a conversation. Her own English was impeccable as she explained that she was in Rome en route to her homeland for ministry in a parish after studying theology in the United States for a couple of years.

An engaging and cheerful model of a happy woman religious, she occasionally interrupted our back-and-forth, while we awaited the Holy Father's entry, by standing up to aim her digital camera and click off images of the stage decorations and the faces of pilgrims to show her folks back home.

Our exchanges triggered thoughts in my mind of how the faith is practiced in China, what with six million Catholics torn almost fifty-fifty between those who tolerate the Communist government-approved Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and those who defy it as members of the illegal underground Church. Where, I wondered, did the Sister fit?

I've had a long curiosity about the Church in China, from the brilliant and prophetic way the 16th-century Italian Jesuit missionary Fr. Matteo Ricci laid the foundation for Catholicism there and whose cause for canonization began in 1984, to the pioneering Maryknoll missionaries like Brooklyn-born Bishop Francis X. Ford, who preached the faith there for three decades before dying in a Chinese Communist prison in 1952 and whose canonization cause has also begun.

Likewise, I've been fascinated by the riveting story of the courageous Cardinal Ignatius Kung Pin-Mei, the Bishop of Shanghai, who was arrested in 1955 and spent three decades in prison for refusing Communist demands to renounce the pope, sever ties with Rome and give allegiance to the Catholic Patriotic Association.

Before he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1960, he defiantly told the chief prosecutor: "I am a Roman Catholic bishop. If I denounce the Holy Father, not only would I not be a bishop, I would not even be a Catholic. You can cut off my head, but you can never take away my duties."

After his release from an ordeal that included stretches of time in isolation, he was freed in 1988 to come to the U.S. for medical reasons, with the help of the late Bishop Walter Curtis. He lived his declining years in Stamford, dying there in 2000 at age 98.

I thought about Cardinal Kung as we talked with the Chinese Sister about her work. Did she minister within the Patriotic Association or the outlawed underground Church? I think I knew, but I didn't want to make her uncomfortable with a pointed question. So I asked generally about the two strains in China's Catholicism. Diplomatically, she replied, "We all pray to the same God." I asked one more question: "Have you ever heard of Cardinal Kung?" After a pause, she said no. I left it at that.

I repeated the exchange for Joseph Kung, the Cardinal's nephew, who maintains contact with the Catholics who practice undercover in China and in whose Stamford home his uncle lived until his death. "I'm disappointed," he said, "but I'm not surprised."

But the persecution the Cardinal endured under the Communists isn't forgotten among those who practice surreptitiously, says Msgr. Nicholas Grieco, the retired pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Weston and founding editor of *Fairfield County Catholic*. "There, he's an icon."

Efforts have been made so that the memory of the deceased prelate wouldn't fade. Joseph Kung formed the Cardinal Kung Foundation several years ago to provide spiritual and financial support for underground priests, seminarians and religious. Msgr. Grieco is a board member. Remarkably, it currently assists materially almost 100 seminarians who are studying for advanced degrees at universities in Rome, Spain and France.

And his name is being kept



POPE JOHN PAUL II embraces Cardinal Kung at his consistory in Rome.

alive spiritually. Archbishop William E. Lori, now in Baltimore, when he was still Bishop of Bridgeport asked Msgr. Stephen DiGiovanni, pastor of

St. John the Evangelist Basilica in Stamford, to take initial steps toward beginning the cause for Cardinal Kung's canonization. It began this year with three days

of prayer, on October 11-13. The hope is that the next diocesan bishop will officially open the cause, Msgr. DiGiovanni says.

There's a further connection between Cardinal Kung and St. John's. It was there that his funeral Mass was celebrated March 18, 2000. At the end of the days of prayer in October, the parish was consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as the Cardinal had done for the Diocese of Shanghai.

While the Chinese Sister in Rome claimed not to recognize Cardinal Kung's name, we found her devotion to her vocation clear and impressive. What a challenge it must be to work in an environment so hostile and restrictive that would attempt to extinguish the memory of a brave man of faith. ■



Saint Theresa

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Mother Church of Trumbull

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Rev. Karol Ksiazek, *Parochial Vicar*
Deacon Salvatore M. Clarizio
Dr. Carolina Flores, *Director of Music*



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CHRISTMAS
SCHEDULE - 2012

Sacrament of Penance

Saturday, December 15
3:00-4:15pm

Friday, December 21
4:00-5:15pm; 7:00-8:00pm

Saturday, December 22
11:00am-12:00 noon; 3:00-4:15pm

Monday, December 24
10:30am-12:00 noon

Masses

Christmas Vigil

Monday, December 24

4:00pm, 6:00pm and 12:00 midnight
Christmas Carols precede the Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

Tuesday, December 25

7:30am, 10:00am and 12:00 noon

New Years Day

Feast of Mary,
The Mother of God

Monday, December 31

Vigil Mass at 5:30pm

Tuesday, January 1

7:30am, 9:00am, and 12:00 noon

Travel

BETHLEHEM FROM PAGE 4

world changed the moment Jesus was born in this sacred place.

There was a smaller niche adjacent to the spot where the manger was kept. Imagine the Blessed Virgin Mary kneeling there, adoring her son! "And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). Jesus has come to feed the world—if only man would receive him.

From there, we visited the "Grotto of the Lady Mary" or "Milk Grotto," where it is believed the Holy Family stayed on their flight into Egypt during the slaughter of the Innocents. While Mary was nursing Jesus, a drop of milk fell to the ground. A white powder then covered the cave. Since then, many infertile couples have come to consume the powder and

have gone on to have children. Others have been cured of various diseases. Indeed, through the intercession of Our Lady of the Milk, there have been more than 2,000 testimonies of miracles in recent years. A church was built over the cave in 385 A.D.

As twilight approached, we visited the Bridgettine Convent in Bethlehem, and from its rooftop gazed upon the city, wondering when the walls of division would finally be conquered.

(Fr. Walsh is parochial vicar and DRE at the Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist in Stamford. His pilgrimage memoir continues in THE EAGLE, the monthly journal of the Basilica. Read it online at www.stjohnsstamford.com/the-eagle.) ■

STEPS LEAD DOWN to the Grotto, the cave where Jesus was born.



ALL VISITORS to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem must enter through the "Door of Humility," bowing their heads.



CHRISTMAS *Parish Guide*

Saint Thomas Aquinas Church

1719 Post Road • Fairfield, Connecticut 06824 • 203.255.1097

Rev. Victor T Martin, Pastor

Christmas 2012 Schedule

Advent Penance Service

Tuesday, December 18 – 7:30 pm

Daily Mass on Monday, December 24, 7:00 am ONLY

Christmas Eve Masses

Monday, December 24

4 pm - Children's Mass; 6 pm - Children's Mass
8:00 pm Christmas Eve Mass; Adult Choir Concert 11:30 pm;
and 12:00 am - Midnight Mass

Christmas Day Masses

Tuesday, December 25

7 am, 10:30 am, and 12 noon

No 7 am Mass on Wednesday - December 26th

Feast of Mary, Mother of God

New Year's Eve - December 31 – 5 pm Mass

New Year's Day Masses

Tuesday - January 1, 2013

7 am, 10:30 am, and 12 noon

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE 2012-2013

CHRISTMAS MASSES

CHRISTMAS EVE, MONDAY

VIGILS AT 4:00 AND 5:30PM

MASS IN SPANISH, 7:30PM

CHRISTMAS MASS, 10:00PM

CHRISTMAS DAY, TUESDAY

7:00, 9:00, 10:30AM, 12:15, 5:30PM

NEW YEAR'S MASSES

SOLEMNITY OF MARY

MONDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2012

VIGIL AT 5:30PM, AND

7:30PM VIGIL MASS IN SPANISH

TUESDAY, JANUARY 1, 2013

7:00, 8:00AM AND 12:05, 5:30PM

*Prayers and Blessings to our Friends and Parishioners
during the Christmas season and for the New Year*

REV. MSGR. FRANK C. WISSEL, PASTOR
REV. RICHARD J. GEMZA, PAROCHIAL VICAR
REV. JHON GOMEZ, PAROCHIAL VICAR
REV. JOHN INSERRA, PAROCHIAL VICAR
AND THE STAFF OF ST. MARY PARISH

ST. MARY CHOIR CHRISTMAS CONCERT

ADULT AND YOUTH CHOIRS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16 AT 3:00PM

(SUGGESTED ADMISSION \$10 - CHILDREN FREE)

178 GREENWICH AVENUE • GREENWICH, CT 06830 • 203.869.9393 • FAX 203.625.4760

SAINT MARY CHURCH
A Roman Catholic Community in Greenwich, Connecticut

Advent/Christmas

Feed My people

MONROE—"Just over two years ago my buddy was working part time at Stop & Shop," recalls Hank Banville, a member of St. Jude Parish. "He told me that they had to throw away a lot of food every day if the bakery

items didn't sell from the day-old shelf."

Banville checked with the manager, and found that his friend's account was indeed accurate. The manager was happy to let Banville have the baked goods

to bring to soup kitchens. At first, Banville started doing it by himself about three times a week, going to The Thomas Merton Center and Bridgeport Rescue Mission among others.

"Talking it up—which I can

do," the gregarious Banville says, "I was able to get several guys from St. Jude's to help out. Now we have enough men to cover the whole week! One of them comes in from Milford, in gratitude for being able to receive a kidney

transplant from his wife who just happens to be visiting my wife downstairs with the other 'girls.'"

The men's favorite stop is a visit to Homes for the Brave on lower Park Avenue. The organization provides housing,



Saint Pius X Parish

A Roman Catholic Community in Fairfield

834 Brookside Drive, Fairfield, Connecticut 06824-2420

Tel. (203) 255-6134 | Fax (203) 255-5232 | Web Site www.st-pius.org

Pastor: Reverend Michael Dogali | In Residence: Reverend Monsignor Ernest Esposito



Children's Christmas Pageant & Dinner Theater

Saturday, December 15 – 6:30 pm – Religious Education Center

Children's Christmas Pageant & Blessing of the Crèche

Sunday, December 16 – 4:00 pm – Religious Education Center

All Christmas Masses will be celebrated in the church

Christmas Eve Masses - 4:00 pm, 6:00 pm, 8:00 pm & 11:00 pm

Christmas Day Masses - 8:00 am, 10:00 am, 12:00 pm

Solemnity of Mary, The Holy Mother of God

Monday, December 31 – Vigil Mass at 5:30 pm

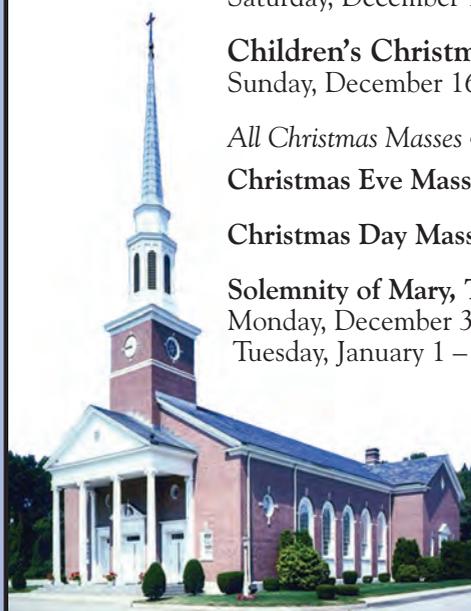
Tuesday, January 1 – Holy Day Masses: 8:30 am and 11:00 am

The Epiphany of the Lord

Saturday and Sunday, January 5 and 6 – Receive a blessing for your home at all Weekend Masses.

Baptism of the Lord

Sunday, January 13 – Children baptized in 2012 will receive a special blessing during the 9:00 am Mass.



St. James Church

2110 Main Street, Stratford, Connecticut
203-375-5887 - www.stjamesstratford.com

Rev. Thomas F. Lynch, Pastor

COMMUNAL PENANCE SERVICE

Wednesday, December 19 – 7:30pm – Church

Individual confessions will be offered at the end of the service.

BLESSING OF EXPECTANT PARENTS

Saturday and Sunday Masses, December 15 and 16

A blessing will be given to those awaiting the gift of a child.

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Monday, December 24 – Vigil Masses: 4:00pm and 6:00pm

A Mass in celebration of the Lord's birth at 11:00pm

Tuesday, December 25 – 7:30am, 9:30am, and 11:30am



THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

Saturday and Sunday Masses

December 29 & 30

Families will have the opportunity to write their name on votive candles as a way of thanking God for His presence in their family in 2012 and asking for a greater openness to Him in 2013.

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Monday, December 31, Vigil Mass: 4:30pm
Holy Day Masses – Tuesday, January 1, 2013, 7:30am, 9:15am, and 11:00am

SAINT JAMES NEW YEAR'S DAY OF PRAYER

Sunday, January 1, 2013

1:00pm-3:00pm Eucharistic Adoration in Parish Center Chapel

REMEMBRANCE FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE DIED

Saturday, January 5 – 8:00am Mass

A special candle will be lit in remembrance of the children who have gone before us in faith. All parents who have lost a child are encouraged to attend.

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

God's Word is among us - A celebration of our commitment to open our hearts to God's word by reading, studying, and praying Sacred Scripture daily

Saturday, January 5, 2013 – Vigil Mass: 4:30pm

Sunday, January 6, 2013 – 7:30am, 9:15am, 11:00am, 12:45pm, and 6:00pm



Advent/Christmas

vocational training and job placement and others services to help veterans, leave homelessness behind. "The vets especially enjoy the pastries," Banville reports.

The men have also donated bakery items to eight churches of different denominations, including the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, St. Charles Borromeo and St. George, all of which have

needy families among their parishioners.

The men call their program Feed My People. "All the guys get great satisfaction doing it," Banville says. When he bags the bread and pastries at Stop and Shop, Banville explains to shoppers that these items would be thrown away if the men weren't picking them up.

"Then I tell them about Sr. Theresa Tremblay at the day care center as she saw two large sheet cakes that I brought her," he goes on. "She said, 'Oh, that's wonderful! We're having a birthday party for one of the children tomorrow.... And the family is too poor to afford a birthday cake!'"

"Many of the shoppers choke up on that, as do I." ■

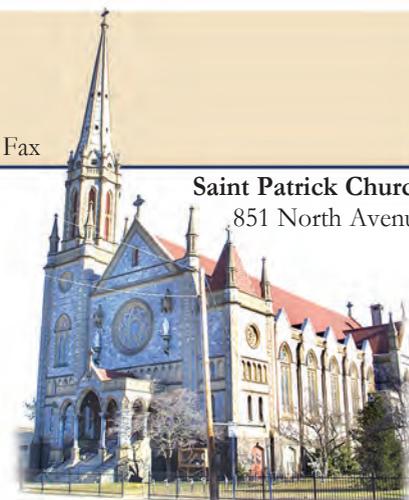
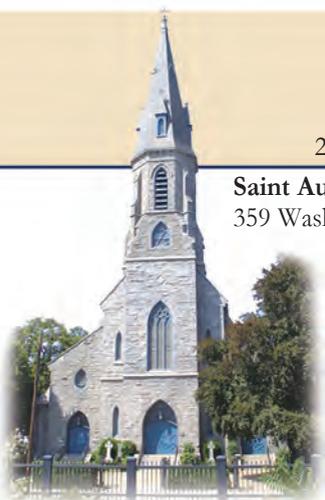


The Cathedral Parish

170 Thompson Street, Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604
203.368.6777 and 203.335.0106 - Parish Offices • 203.690.1491 - Rectory • 203.368.6386 and 203.335.0107 - Fax

Saint Augustine Cathedral Church
359 Washington Avenue

Saint Patrick Church
851 North Avenue



Rev. Peter F. Lenox, *Administrator*

Rev. Peter Ha Dinh-Dang, Rev. Sean R. Kulacz, Rev. John Pius Mwago *Parochial Vicars*

Rev. Gustavo A. Falla, Rev. Jean-Ridly Julien, Rev. F. John Ringley, *In Residence*

Rev. Mr. Alix Africot, Rev. Mr. William J. Bissenden, Rev. Mr. Santos Garcia,

and Rev. Mr. William A. Koniers, *Deacons*

David F. McCaffrey, *Director of Music*

Christmas Season Mass Schedule

Regular Sunday Mass Schedule

Vigil Masses:

4:00pm English Mass:
St. Augustine Cathedral Church
4:00pm English Mass:
St. Patrick Lower Church

Sunday Masses:

7:00am English Mass:
St. Augustine Cathedral Church
8:30am English Mass:
St. Augustine Cathedral Church
9:00am English Mass:
St. Patrick Upper Church
10:00am English Mass:
St. Augustine Cathedral Church
12:10pm English Mass:
St. Patrick Upper Church
12:15pm Spanish Mass:
St. Augustine Cathedral Church
2:30pm Vietnamese Mass:
St. Augustine Cathedral Church
5:30pm English Mass:
St. Augustine Cathedral Church

Vigil Masses of Christmas

Monday, December 24th

4:00pm English Mass: *St. Augustine Cathedral Church*
5:30pm English Mass with Organ and String Quartet/Mass with the Living Gospel portrayed by the children of the Parish:
St. Patrick Upper Church
7:00pm Vietnamese Christmas Pageant:
St. Augustine Cathedral Church
8:00pm Vietnamese Mass: *St. Augustine Cathedral Church*
9:00pm Christmas Carols and Organ works:
St. Patrick Upper Church
9:30pm English Mass with Organ and Choir:
St. Patrick Upper Church
11:15pm Christmas Carols and Organ works:
St. Augustine Cathedral Church

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

Tuesday, December 25th:

12:00am Solemn Midnight Mass with Organ and Choir:
Rev. Msgr. Jerald Doyle, celebrant. *St. Augustine Cathedral Church*
This Mass will be broadcast by radio on WSHU 91.1FM and on WICC 600AM
9:00am English Mass: *St. Patrick Upper Church*
10:00am English Mass: *St. Augustine Cathedral Church*

12:10pm English Mass: *St. Patrick Upper Church*
12:15pm Spanish Mass: *St. Augustine Cathedral Church*

Vigil Masses of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Monday, December 31st:

8:00pm Vietnamese Mass: *St. Augustine Cathedral Church*
10:00pm to 11:00pm Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament:
St. Patrick Upper Church
11:00pm English Mass: *St. Patrick Upper Church*

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Tuesday, January 1st:

9:00am English Mass: *St. Patrick Upper Church*
10:00am English Mass: *St. Augustine Cathedral Church*
12:10pm English Mass: *St. Patrick Upper Church*
12:15pm Spanish Mass: *St. Augustine Cathedral Church*
5:30pm English Mass: *St. Augustine Cathedral Church*

Merry Christmas to one and all!

Advent/Christmas

Joyful healing

BRIDGEPORT—"Tuesdays are days of joy and healing for the residents of Bridgeport Manor," says Cristine Francoeur, the director of the recreation department of the nursing home.

Every Tuesday, residents eagerly await the celebration of the 9:30 am Mass with music, songs, and readings. It gives them a sense of life, comfort, hope and above all closeness to the Lord.

The Mass is celebrated by Fr. John Punnakunnel, who resides

at Christ the King Parish in Trumbull. A retired priest, Fr. John is always on the go. You will find him visiting the sick in hospitals, in nursing homes, hearing confession, with the youth, and above all at the celebration of the Mass.

Fr. John holds close to his heart the words Blessed Pope John Paul II (then Cardinal Wojty) wrote to the poor, the sick, and the suffering at the close of Vatican II: "Know that you are not alone, separated, aban-

doned or useless. You have been called by Christ and are his living and transparent image."

At Bridgeport Manor, Fr. John is assisted by the dedication of volunteers, including (at left in photo) Robert Jordan of St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull, Robert Rouse of St.

Ann Parish in the Black Rock section of Bridgeport (at right), and Sisters of the Missionaries of Charity, whose convent is in St. Peter Parish in Bridgeport.

Together they, and all who care for the sick and elderly, embody the words of the familiar saying: "Those who give love gather love." ■



SAINT MARY'S CHURCH

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

Pastor: Fr. Greg J. Markey • Parochial Vicar: Fr. Richard G. Cipolla • In Residence: Fr. Paul N. Check, Director of Courage • Deacon Stephan Genovese • Choirmaster: David J. Hughes

Music for the 9:30am Sunday Solemn High Latin Mass

December 16: Third Sunday of Advent - *Messe de Toulouse* (anonymous, XIV C.); *Beatus Joannes* (Guerrero); *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (Ockeghem); organ works of Bach

December 23: Fourth Sunday of Advent - *Missa O Virgo simul et Mater* (Palestrina); *Ecce Virgo concipiet* (Byrd); *Veni Domine et noli tardare* (Guerrero)

The Midnight Mass of Christmas - *Missa Nasce la gioja mia* (Palestrina); *Psallite unigenito* (Praetorius); *Hodie Christus natus est* (Poulenc); *Verbum caro factum est* (Lassus); *O magnum mysterium* (Victoria)

The Mass of Christmas Day - *Missa Dies sanctificatus* (Palestrina); *Viderunt omnes* (Pérotin); *Puer natus est* (Byrd); *Iam nubes / Iam novum* (anonymous, XIV C.); *Dies sanctificatus* (Palestrina); organ works of Bach and Widor

December 30: Sunday in the Octave of Christmas - *Missa O magnum mysterium* (Victoria); *Pastores loquebantur* (Clemens non Papa); *Et venerunt festinantes* (Clemens); organ works of Tournemire and Messiaen

Tuesday, January 1, 5:30pm - The Octave Day of Christmas - *Missa Quaeramus cum pastoribus* (Morales); *Mirabile mysterium* (Willaert); *Noe, noe psallite* (Mouton); organ music of Grigny

THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY — SUNDAY, JANUARY 6 — 9:30am

Solemn Pontifical Mass at the Throne celebrated

by His Excellency Athanasius Schneider Auxiliary Bishop of Astana, Kazakhstan
Ecce sacerdos magnus (Hassler); Mass for Five Voices (Byrd); The Gregorian Mass of the Epiphany: *Ecce advenit*; *Videntes stellam* (Lassus); *Cum natus esset Jesus* (Morales)



SAINT MARY'S BOOKSTORE 203.854.9013

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

HOURS: Saturday 10am-4pm | Sunday 9-9:30am, 11am-2pm | Monday, Wednesday and Friday 12:45-2pm | Tuesday 11-11:30am and 12:45-2pm | Thursday 12:45-2pm and 3:30-5:30pm
Located in Parish Center building behind Saint Mary Church | VISA/MC ACCEPTED

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

SPECIAL EVENTS:

Posadas, December 15-23, 7:00pm

Christmas Lessons and Carols,
December 14, 7:00pm

SACRAMENT OF

CONFESSION:

Monday-Friday, December 17-21:

11:30am-12:00 Noon

Wednesday, December 19: 6:30-6:50pm

Saturday, December 22: 3:00-4:30pm

Monday, December 24: 2:00-4:00pm

CHRISTMAS EVE MASSES:

Monday, December 24: 8:00am,
4:00pm and 7:00pm (Spanish)

11:00pm Rosary by the Creche

11:30pm Christmas Carols

12:00 Midnight Mass

in the Extraordinary Form

CHRISTMAS DAY MASSES:

Tuesday, December 25: 8:00am,

9:30am (Latin), 11:30am,

and 1:15pm (Spanish)

HOLY FAMILY AND NEW YEAR'S
EVE MASSES:

Monday, December 31 -

8:00am and 12:10 Noon,

7:00-12:00 Midnight,

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Benediction at Midnight Reception

SOLEMNITY OF MARY/
NEW YEAR'S DAY MASSES:

Tuesday, January 1:

8:00am, 12:10pm, 5:30pm (Latin),

and 7:30pm (Spanish)

Advent/Christmas

Lobby mural brings out school spirit

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

Who would have thought that a new lobby mural could energize an entire school and leave people feeling even better about their faith and about Catholic education!

That's what happened recently at St. Joseph School in Shelton when Shelton artist Armando Palumbo unveiled his painting, "Jesus and the Little Children," based on the passage from the Gospel of Matthew, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14).

Msgr. Chris Walsh, pastor of St. Joseph Parish, is delighted by the gift from Palumbo and the excitement it has caused in the school community. "It was really a gift out of nowhere," Msgr. Walsh says. "We always say it's hard for an 80-year-old school to compete with the flashy new buildings of public schools, but when you walk in now and look at the painting, it sums up Catholic education with our Lord at the center of the lives of the children."

The life-size mural, measuring 70 by 80 inches, was completed using tempera and pastels on plaster. Jesus and the children are pictured in a beautiful field of wild flowers, birds and ripe apples tumbling off a tree symbol-

izing the fruits of knowledge.

Msgr. Walsh says that the diverse group of children pictured in the mural reflects the multi-cultural heritage of the school. Palumbo also worked two of his grandchildren into the mural.

St. Joseph Principal Victoria Rossi said the mural moved her to tears when she first saw it because it spoke to her of

and joyful and shows off what the school is all about—family, learning and love for Jesus."

Palumbo said he offered to paint the mural as a form of thanks for his wife of 50



everything that is good about the school. "It really stands for what we're all about: Christ and the children. And everybody's included in the painting just as the children are all included in Christ's love. Our school is a big family with children from Columbia, China, Africa and so many places," she says of the nearly 200 students in Pre-K through grade eight.

Principal Rossi said that the children were so excited about the picture after it was unveiled that she could hear them asking their parents to come into school and look at it with them.

Angela Mantero, enrollment coordinator for St. Joseph School and the mother of two St. Joseph students, said she enjoys seeing the students gathering in front of the mural and socializing before and after school. "It just changes the whole feeling of the school. We had been talking for some time about brightening the lobby, not knowing exactly what we wanted to do, and then Mr. Palumbo came forward. What he did was amazing."

She says his colorful mural replaced a dusty old trophy case that people stopped noticing long ago. "Now we have a front hallway that is more welcoming



SCULPTOR Armando Palumbo donated his painting of "Jesus and the Little Children" to St. Joseph School.

years, Rose, whom he first met at the parish. Rose is a graduate of St. Joseph School, as

are the couple's two grown sons. Palumbo, who worked professionally as a commercial artist,

was born in Troia, Italy, and is the descendant of artists. As young boy, he and his brother would go out into the fields and fashion fresh farm clay into figures for the *presepio*, the traditional Italian nativity scene.

His grandfather painted a mural of Joseph the Carpenter in the Troia Cathedral, and Palumbo himself had long

thought about creating a mural with children for St. Joseph's, where he has been a long-time parishioner.

The 72-year-old artist is pleased by the reception his mural has received but says his first love is sculpture, preferably working in wrought iron. Visitors to St. Margaret's Shrine in Bridgeport are familiar with his 20-foot "Gateway to Heaven" cross sculpture, among other works he has completed.

The mural took six months to complete, and in addition to Palumbo's generosity, other parishioners stepped forward to help with the framing, lighting and installation.

His work has earned much praise, but he says the "thank you" that has meant most to him has come from the children themselves.

"The greatest gift ever has come from the kids. Each one from first to eighth grade sent me a thank you card, which they made with crayons. To me they are little masterpieces. I put them all together and will cherish them the rest of my life." ■

Sacred Heart UNIVERSITY

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SHARE (Sacred Heart Adult Religious Education) for the Diocese of Bridgeport is a four-year certificate program created through a partnership between Sacred Heart University and the Diocese of Bridgeport. This theology program for adults will help Catholics understand their faith and empower them to put it into action. SHARE has a no-test format. Students can take one or more classes, or complete the entire four-year certificate program from SHU and the Diocese.

Spring 2013 SHARE for the Diocese of Bridgeport courses

Sacraments of Healing: With this course, we will study the theology and history of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick.

- 4-week course: Wednesdays, January 9, 16, 30, February 6 (inclement weather makeup date: February 20)
- Time: 7:30pm to 9:30pm
- Location: Sacred Heart University, 5151 Park Avenue, Fairfield
- Instructor: Msgr. Christopher Walsh, PhD.
- \$140

The Book of Revelation: The Book of Revelation stands at the end of Bible.

It can be a perplexing book, and is one of the most misinterpreted books of the Bible. Most Catholics are unacquainted with this last book of the Bible. However, this "most neglected book of the Bible" is a magnificent literary creation. At first the book may appear somewhat bewildering and forbidding, but it is worthwhile to wrestle with it until it opens its riches to one. The course will help one to understand the baffling but also beautiful symbolism in which the book abounds. It will unravel the general messages of the book, e.g., the cosmic battle between good and evil, the final victory of good, how we conquer through suffering, the victims become the victors, self-sacrificing love is the ultimate power in the world, etc. The Book of Revelation is made up of 22 relatively brief chapters. As one gets into the book, one usually finds it absorbing.

It is a work that demands and repays study. It makes a distinct contribution to one's understanding of Jesus and the Christian life. Use this course as a Lenten spiritual opportunity.

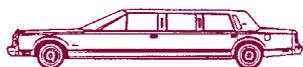
- 8-week course: Saturdays, February 2, 9, 16, 23, March 2, 9, 16, 23 (inclement weather makeup date: April 6)
- Time: 10am to 12noon
- Location: Sacred Heart University, 5151 Park Avenue, Fairfield
- Instructor: Dr. Thomas Hicks
- \$280

To register: www.sacredheart.edu/share.
For more information, contact Gina Donnarummo, Director of Adult Formation: 203.416.1446 / SHARE@diobpt.org.

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Sports

Trinity Catholic starts anew

By DON HARRISON

It's all a matter of perspective.

A 19-7 won-lost record and a second-place finish in the conference would be reason to rejoice for the majority of the state's high school basketball teams. Not so for Trinity Catholic and Coach Mike Walsh, who had won the CIAC Class M state title the previous winter. No, they deemed the 2011-12 season a minor disappointment.

"We were very talented, but we didn't seem to have chemis-

try," Walsh recalls. "We had new kids coming in but..." The words end, but the meaning was clear. Trinity Catholic didn't quite jell and finished behind St. Joseph—the ultimate Class LL state champion—in the FCIAC Eastern Division.

"At least we kept it in the diocese," the coach says with a chuckle.

For Walsh, whose credentials across 32 seasons encompass 542 victories, six state titles, a multitude of All-State players (including three-time picks Rashamel

Jones and Dave McClure) and the prestigious Gold Key Award from the Connecticut Sports Writers' Alliance last January, the new season presents challenges as well.

Four important faces from last season have departed—but two were unexpected. Jason Boswell, the 6-foot-5 junior who averaged 17 points per game and was an All-FCIAC selection, moved to Greensboro, NC. Seven-one Paschal Chukwu, a sophomore who was beginning to refine his court skills, transferred to



SENIOR CO-CAPTAIN SHADRAC CASMIR, a fleet 5-10 guard, was a second-team All-Stater as a sophomore. He, with classmate and co-captain Tremain Frazier, coupled with Brandon Wheeler's abilities at forward, present a solid foundation for Trinity's Crusaders.

Perhaps the greatest joy in retiring is knowing you can live life to its fullest.



Maintaining your independence and helping you enjoy life is our only goal at Carmel Ridge and Teresian Towers. Located on the grounds of St. Joseph's Manor, our unique retirement community provides the support and security you may need to live life to its fullest, including 24-hour medical and security services, nursing staff, shopping transportation, and optional meal plan. Day-to-day living is enhanced by an on-site chapel, library, recreation hall, crafts room, swimming pool, and nearby golfing.

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ule a visit, call 1-800-852-3866 in Connecticut or 203-261-2229 from out of state. **Units from \$58,000. Inquire about our Rental Program starting from \$995 per month.**

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A non-denominational facility owned by the Diocese of Bridgeport. Professionally managed by Winn Residential.

Fairfield Prep.

"We lost four of our top seven players," says Walsh, who also said goodbye to captain Kevin Epp, the 2012 class salutatorian who entered Notre Dame University, and guard Kevin Leumene, now at Eastern Connecticut State. "At least we developed him for somebody else," he says of Chuckwu.

The proverbial cupboard isn't bare, though. The backcourt of Shadrac Casmir and Tremain Frazier, coupled with 6-4 Brandon Wheeler's abilities at forward, present a solid foundation on which to build. Shadrac and Tremain, who were named co-captains, are seniors and three-year starters.

"Casmir was a second-team All-Stater as a sophomore. He's very quick with the ball and led us in assists; he also shoots the three," Walsh says. "Frazier is a shooting guard who had a lot of playing time last year and got better as the season progressed."

The squad has been bolstered by the arrival of four members of Trinity Catholic's Class S state quarterfinal football team—the Crusaders' first state playoff appearance in 19 years. Their names are Dan O'Leary, Sean Brown and Pat Kineally, all

seniors, and junior Neno Merritt. The 6-2, 230-pound Sean Brown rushed for 242 yards and four touchdowns in the 49-28 loss to North Branford in the quarterfinal game at Guilford.

"We're hoping their success in football will carry over to basketball," Walsh says. "They're good athletes, but they'll need some time to get into basketball shape."

Walsh, now 65, considers himself a lucky man. A basketball aficionado for as long as he can remember, he played the game at then-Stamford Catholic and on the freshman squad at Iona College, before financial needs forced him to leave the team and take a part-time job. He spent a few seasons at his alma mater as assistant coach to Gary Liberatore before taking the reins in 1981.

It took a while for his Crusaders to win their first state title (1996), but they've since come in rapid succession (1999, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2011). Trinity Catholic is now one of Connecticut's dominant programs.

"I've got a loving wife (Lisa) of 37 years, five kids and three grandchildren. I love what I do," Walsh says. "I'm really blessed."

Youth

I absolutely love Christmas!

By ANDRE ESCALEIRA

Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Holiday Doorbuster Deals. This is the “new” Christmas, or so we’re told. But Christmas is so much more than just the time to get a good deal at a department store. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to be like us and to save us. It’s the most wonderful time of the year!

Christmas is my absolute favorite season of the year. It’s great! Not only is there no school for a week (which is great in and of itself), but everyone’s so happy, and not with a meaningless, fleeting happiness, but a seemingly inexplicable joy that radiates from within. Plus, there’s time to spend with family that you might not see for the rest of the year, not to mention that Jesus is born!

Honestly, I absolutely love Christmas. Everyone is so joyful, people come together in the “Christmas spirit” to help those in need, kids are excited for Santa; it’s just awesome. During Christmas time, everyone radiates joy, a joy that seems inexplicable, but that actually comes from knowing that your savior is going to come into the world! You get to celebrate this awesome day with your family too!

I know that there are family members that I might not get to see all year, except for Christmas time; my Tia is a perfect example. She’s my great aunt and I very rarely get to see her. She’s a typical, lovable, eighty-seven year old Portuguese avó. When she gets to see all of us, like at Christmas time, she lights up, happy to see all of us. Her joy at seeing us makes us happy, too. Being able to see family, like Tia, makes the day so much better. I love Christmas!

Unfortunately, though, many people don’t seem to understand the true meaning of Christmas; people don’t experience the profound joy of Christmas. Year after year, stores open earlier on Thanksgiving and stay open later on Black Friday to accommodate Christmas shoppers; companies encourage millions to spend countless hours online shopping; the mall decorates before



Halloween and Santa comes soon after; an average person will spend about forty-two hours preparing for Christmas (that’s

almost two full days!). Instead of Christmas being the religious, family-oriented celebration that it used to be, it has changed,

becoming yet another ordinary day, except that it has lots and lots of gifts. Everyone gets excited for these gifts, and not for the right one: the gift of a savior!

As a teen, I see this consumerized mindset a lot, not only in peers but in adults, too. Christmas seems to be becoming less about CHRIST and more about where to get the best gifts, how much you spend, and where to shop. This consumerization brings us “Happy Holidays,” too. Since Christmas is no longer about Christ and is instead about money, gifts, and materialism, there’s no significance behind the “holiday,” and it becomes just that, another holiday.

It’s frustrating to see it happening. To see people misunderstand the great dignity and

enormity of Christmas, to see them miss the importance of such a monumental day is saddening. Jesus Christ came into the world on Christmas! Just thinking about it makes me grin from ear to ear! To see people miss the real meaning behind Christmas is sad, especially in my peers.

Combating this consumerized mindset is tough and it’s a definite challenge that we teens have to face. If we don’t stand up for the true meaning of Christmas, it’ll just disappear, because we are the future! This Christmas, let’s place the emphasis on Christ, not on gifts, because Jesus is the reason for the season!

Merry Christmas everyone!
(Andre Escalera, a member of St. Andrew Parish in Bridgeport, is a senior at Kolbe-Cathedral High School.)

Reality check at St. Joe’s High School

TRUMBULL—Chris Herren, former college and NBA standout, spoke to St. Joseph High School students and the greater St. Joe’s community in November about the difficulties of drug and alcohol addiction and how much more difficult those troubles are when begun in the teenage years.

“I know you don’t want to be here,” he began. “I sat where you are when I was 18. ‘What am I going to listen to, another drug addiction story?’”

Herren said, he too, given his privileged beginnings, thought he was always above the wasted lives he’d seen and heard in those student assemblies. He wasn’t. It took him 14 years to finally walk away from the addiction that began at age 18, took away his scholarship to Boston College, ruined his career in the NBA, and left him sleeping between dumpsters behind the 7-Eleven.

Sober since 2008, author of *Basketball Junkie* (memoirs), and founder of The Herren Project as well as Hoop Dreams, Herren today travels across the nation to share his story with high schools, youth groups, professional and athletic organizations.

ESPN featured his journey in the film “Unguarded.”

It was after first seeing this film that St. Joseph’s athletic director, Jim Olayos, was prompted to make contact. “Chris is a real life testament to the addiction and recovery process—and proof that anyone can fall prey to these challenges. If he’s able to help one individual—just one family—then he is making a positive change,” says Olayos.

Echoing the sentiment, Dr. William Fitzgerald, president of St. Joseph High School, says, “I remember watching Chris play at B.M.C. Durfee High School in Fall River. He was a wizard with a basketball. However, what he is doing with his life today is far more meaningful than his best day ever on the court. He’s paid a high price, but what he gets from saving so many kids from his mistakes must be very satisfying.”

It was a both a compelling and heart-rending few hours Chris Herren spent with the community. The students—many moved to tears by his blunt honesty and candor—erupted into a standing ovation at the end of his speech. Herren’s parting advice to them: “Conquer you before you conquer anything. Be a pro at being yourself.”



MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER Chris Herren takes time to speak informally with St. Joseph seniors. Students, parents and area residents filled St. Joe’s gym to hear Herren’s talk on drug and alcohol addiction. Following the talk, students lined up for forty-five minutes to thank Chris personally. He stayed and chatted with every one of them. (l-r) Ben Carapezzi, DJ Jones, Herren and Troy Deering.

Obituaries

Deacon Barton, 92

STRATFORD—Deacon John Barton, age 92, a former deacon of St. James Parish, died on November 27 at his home.

He graduated from Central High School and was a World War II U.S. Army veteran, serving as a medic in the European Theater. Injuries sustained during his military service led to three years of hospitalization at the Newington Veteran's Hospital.

Deacon Barton, who worked for Avco-Lycoming in Stratford for 32 years, was a member of the Disabled American Veterans and the Raymond Goldbach VFW Post 9460, and a 4th degree member of the Knights of Columbus.

He was in the first diaconate program of the Diocese of Bridgeport. Ordained in 1978, he was assigned to St. James Parish, where he established their "Coping" bereavement program. He also served as a member of Hospice through the VNA of Stratford.



"Deacon Barton took his experience in life—being sick for years as a young adult and losing his son at a young age and, with God's power, transformed these wounds

into a gift of healing for the sick and those who have lost a loved one," says Fr. Thomas Lynch, pastor of St. James. "This became his ministry and his passion in life."

Deacon Barton is survived by his wife, Dorothy Snurkowski Barton and daughter Deborah Ann

Barton. He was predeceased by his son, John.

Deacon Barton was received into St. James Church at 4 pm on November 30 for a parish wake. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for him the following morning, December 1. Msgr. Jerald Doyle, diocesan administrator, was the principal celebrant. Fr. Lynch delivered the homily.

He was interred with full military honors at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Trumbull. ■

Sr. Sara Mooney, OSU, 91

East Patchogue, NY—Sr. Sara Mooney died October 12 at Brookhaven Hospital, NY. Born in 1921 in County Monaghan, Ireland, she entered the Congregation of the Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk in Blue Point on Long Island in 1940 and professed her final vows five years later. She received a bachelor of arts degree in education from Manhattan College and her master's from St. Rose College in Albany, NY.

Sr. Sara ministered for many years as a teacher in New York, principally in Queens and Long Island and in Connecticut. She taught at the former St. Maurice School in Stamford from 1959-62. Following her years of teaching, she ministered for several years from 1977-89 as a home healthcare aide.

In 1998, after many years of active service, Sr. Sara retired to the St. Ursula Center in Blue Point, where she continued in a ministry of prayer.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Sr. Sara on October 15 at the St. Ursula Center Chapel in Blue Point, followed by interment at the cemetery of the Ursuline Sisters there. ■



Sr. Marie Julie Condon, 83

WILTON—Sr. Marie Julie Condon died of cardiac arrest on November 3 at Lourdes Health Care Center in Wilton. She was 83 years old.

Gerardine Marie Condon was born in 1929, in Boston, MA. Upon graduation from high school in 1946, she entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was given the religious name Marie Julie. She professed her final vows in 1955.



She earned her bachelor's degree in education from Villanova University in 1957. Sr. Marie Julie taught in Philadelphia and New York before coming to the former St. John School in Darien where she taught from 1964-68.

When her years of teaching concluded in 1976, Sr. Marie moved to Wilton to serve the Sisters living at Lourdes Health Care Center and the Motherhouse.

In 1982, after earning a master's degree in counseling from the University of Bridgeport with a focus on geriatrics and gerontology, Sr. Marie Julie focused her ministry on pastoral counseling. In 1986, she returned to the Wilton motherhouse to assist the elderly sisters. She served there before retiring in 2001.

A Mass of Christian burial was celebrated for Sr. Marie Julie on November 6 in the Chapel at Villa Notre Dame. Burial followed at St. Mary Cemetery in Bethel. ■

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Nuestra Voz

La Verdadera Navidad



COLUMNISTA INVITADO

POR EL DIÁCONO JUAN ACOSTA QUEVEDO

El Diácono Acosta, colombiano, un diácono transitorio de la Diócesis de Bridgeport, está acabando sus estudios teológicos en Mount St. Mary Seminary, Emmitsburg, MD, en preparación para su ordenación al sacerdocio el año que viene.

¿Por qué la navidad no tiene ese impacto espiritual que debiera tener?

Sin duda alguna la navidad se ha convertido en una de las épocas más esperadas y especiales para la mayoría de nosotros, especialmente porque es una época animada por festividades, alegrías, regalos, vacaciones y buenos recuerdos tal y como lo fue desde sus orígenes en contextos paganos. Para nosotros los cristianos, la navidad tiene un significado aún más importante porque esta época del año nos recuerda el evento del nacimiento de nuestro Salvador Jesucristo.

Por muchos siglos y años los cristianos han dado significado y sentido a la navidad a través de

expresiones de fe y devociones tales como el rezo de la “novena de aguinaldos”, “las posadas”, villancicos y peregrinaciones, y con esto, celebramos que Cristo se hizo hombre para salvarnos; Él es el precio de nuestra alegría y libertad. Sin embargo, con el pasar de los días, el verdadero sentido cristiano de la navidad se ha ido deteriorando para muchos hombres y mujeres quienes experimentan en su diario vivir las secuelas de una sociedad cada vez más secularizada y alejada de los planes de Dios.

Si preguntáramos cuál es la primera imagen o significado que viene a la mente cuando escuchamos la palabra “navidad,” de seguro habría variedad de respu-

estas. Para algunos navidad se ha convertido en época de adornos por doquier, culinaria, regalos para complacer a los seres que apreciamos y queremos, incluso, emoción por la llegada de “Santa Claus”. Para otros, navidad es sinónimo de tráfico y largas filas, endeudamiento, fiestas, borracheras, resacas, accidentes, quemados, vacío interior, tristeza, y claro está, compras, compras... y más compras.

No pretendo juzgar nuestros pensamientos o la sociedad a la que nos estamos acostumbrando a vivir, ni tampoco se trata de juzgar nuestras creencias, pero este es un espacio oportuno para hacer un alto en el camino y preguntarnos a nosotros mismos por qué la navidad no tiene ese impacto espiritual que debiera tener en nuestros tiempos actuales. El propósito es rescatar las enseñanzas de nuestros abuelos y no dejar en el olvido lo que ellos mismos nos transmitieron con tanta devoción y dedicación, porque en su sencillez y “simplicidad” nos dieron ejemplo de una fe fundada en los principios morales y cristianos; en su sencillez nos enseñaron que la única

y verdadera navidad es la que recuerda y celebra el nacimiento de Jesús entre los hombres.

Durante estos domingos de Adviento, tiempo de preparación para la navidad, la Palabra de Dios nos ha propuesto una serie de reflexiones en torno al mensaje profético sobre la esperada venida del Mesías; a través de signos sobre la proximidad de los últimos tiempos, de la llamada a la conversión y de la figura del mensajero, somos invitados a prepararnos para recibir a Cristo, quien está a la puesta esperando una respuesta por parte del hombre.

Dios no nos pide que abandonemos nuestra vida ordinaria, pero sí nos pide un cambio radical en nuestro interior, un cambio que exige en sí mismo apertura a su palabra y a su mensaje. Por eso, en medio de nuestras fragilidades y de una fe quizás inmadura es lógico pensar que aún podemos reunirnos en familia en torno a la mesa, al árbol, al pesebre y a los regalos para celebrar la navidad con gozo y alegría reconociendo que en nuestro interior Dios mismo es quien nace para hacernos libres.

Desde el punto de vista etimológico, la palabra navidad significa “nacimiento” y para nadie es un secreto que nacimiento es sinónimo de nuevos tiempos, de algo que ha salido a la luz y empieza a existir. Entonces es momento que Dios mismo sea la luz que deba nacer en nuestro interior, la nueva esperanza que nos lleve más allá de nuestros apegos humanos y rescate el verdadero valor de nuestra vida.

Porque Cristo al hacerse hombre rescató nuestra dignidad humana. Dios siendo Dios aceptó hacerse hombre para compartir nuestros sufrimientos y enseñarnos que para Dios todos somos iguales, para liberarnos de nuestras esclavitudes y heredarnos el Reino que se nos fue prometido desde antiguo. Este es el misterio más grande que celebramos en la navidad y por el cual cada gesto, signo o palabra debiera rescatar el centro de nuestra fe y esperanza, Jesucristo.

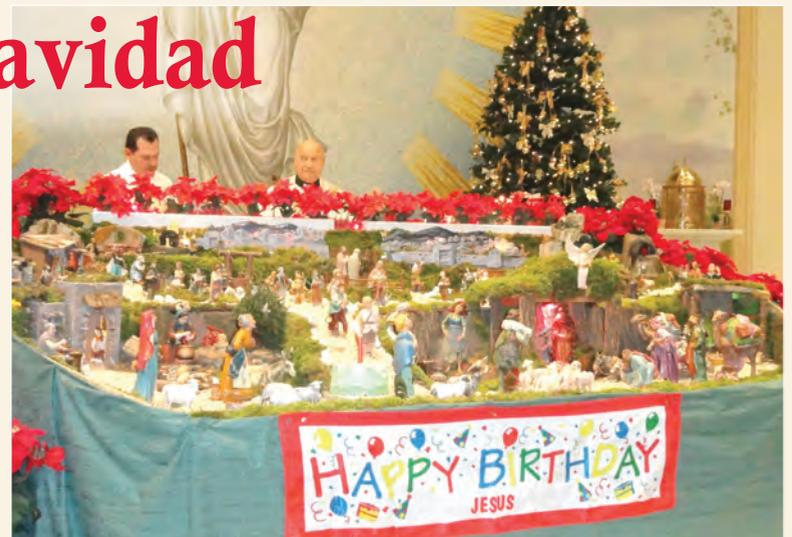
Quizás esta no sea la invitación que nos hacen las propagandas de televisión durante la navidad ni la motivación que nos lleve a celebrar esta época de gran valor para los cristianos, pero sí el lenguaje por el cual compartimos la angustia que nos toca vivir, plagadas de sufrimientos, gemidos, dolores y desesperanzas, especialmente para aquellos quienes su fe es mucho más frágil y por los cuales muchas veces nos alejan de Dios y de la verdadera razón de ser de la navidad. Pero en medio de esta realidad de nuestra propia humanidad somos invitados a meditar sobre la libertad prometida: “levanten la cabeza porque está cerca su liberación...” (Lc 21,28b). Con estas palabras el evangelista Lucas pone en boca de Jesús el llamado a la esperanza, la cual es posible si interpretamos los signos de los tiempos que vivimos reconociendo en ellos la presencia y el paso de Dios porque esto es navidad, la única y verdadera “fiesta” que recuerda la presencia de Dios hecho Hombre entre los hombres. ■

DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT DECEMBER 16—JANUARY 12

NOVEMBER	YEAR
28 Deacon Wayne E. Malloy.....	2011
DECEMBER	
3 Msgr. John E. Gilmartin.....	2011
17 Rev. Kieran T. Ahearn	1997
19 Rev. Philip Morrissey	2008
26 Rev. Vincent P. Cleary.....	1965
27 Rev. Ignatius Baraniak, O.F.M. Conv.....	1980
29 Msgr. James H. Grady.....	1967
30 Rev. M. Joseph McCarthy	2006
JANUARY	
1 Rev. Michael J. Flynn, C.S.Sa.	1995
2 Rev. Robert J. McDermott.....	1989
3 Msgr. Pierre A. Botton.....	2010
6 Msgr. William J. Fox.....	1962
7 Rev. Walter E. Bozek	1995
8 Rev. Mr. Edward R. Kovacs	1999
Rev. Joseph P. Biondino	2001
9 Rev. Gerald T. Devore.....	2011
Rev. Mr. Hugh Sweeney.....	1990
Rev. Robert Nemeth, O.F.M. Conv.	1998
13 Rev. Daniel J. Deehan.....	1976
14 Msgr. Joseph A. Sullivan	2001

Feliz Navidad

In the nativity scene on display at St. Mary Parish in Bridgeport, Mary and Joseph adore their newborn baby while the village life of Bethlehem swirls in animation around them. Visitors see a steam rising gently from the pot on the fire, while a man noisily chops more wood and others go about their daily tasks. The display draws crowds of admirers every year.



Column



The Power of Prayer

GUEST COLUMNIST

BY MARTIN TRISTINE

Martin Tristine is assistant to the superintendent of diocesan Catholic schools.

If you were like me, you learned your prayers at an early age. We learned by memorizing the words. We didn't necessarily understand the meaning behind the words and quickly fell into the habit of saying the words—not praying the words.

Recently, I had an experience that demonstrated to me how powerful prayers are and how responsive Jesus and Our Blessed Lady can be.

I am a 67-year-old man, assistant to the superintendent of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport. I am married to an extraordinary woman and together we have four married children, whose spouses have fit perfectly into our family and have given us 11 grandchildren.

I was reasonably healthy, took pretty good care of myself, although I could have exercised more. I never had a heart problem.

On April 23, Holy Saturday that year, I was shredding some old documents. I was at it for two hours, when I began to experience heaviness in my chest and dizziness. I stopped the shredding and rested for the afternoon. The symptoms went away and stayed away Easter Sunday and Monday. On Tuesday I went to work and again experienced heaviness and dizziness, but in typical male fashion I ignored the symptoms and went about my business through the whole day. That night the heaviness became more severe as did the dizziness.

It got to the point where I

became a little fearful, but of course I didn't call 911, convincing myself that this would pass. Even so, it became somewhat concerning, so I prayed to Jesus and Our Lady and immediately felt totally at peace even though the symptoms continued.

The next day I went to my son, a physician, who examined me and immediately sent me to a cardiologist. A heart biopsy confirmed sarcoidosis of the heart. Sarcoidosis of the heart is an extremely rare disease that has affected very few men. It is so rare that the treatment protocol is still trial and error. In my case it didn't work.

A week later I was taken to St. Vincent Medical emergency room, barely able to breathe or walk. Tests determined that my heart was barely functioning. I was put into ICU and arrangements were made to transport me to Westchester Medical Center the next day. I overheard a nurse discussing my condition and stating I could die that night. When I asked the staff doctor to confirm that, he did. Again, I started to pray and, again, I felt complete and total peace, no fear, almost joy.

The next morning I was taken by ambulance to Westchester

Medical Center where I met Dr. Alan Gass, head of the transplant unit. He explained the transplant process to me, including the need to be approved by the transplant committee to be put on the transplant list. I was told that because of my blood type, I might have to wait as long as two months.

The next day, my youngest son's wife brought with her pictures of my family and a beautiful poster of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Our family has had a special devotion to Our Lady since my oldest grandson was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of two and a half. My wife had acquired a beautiful framed poster of Our Lady which we hung in my grandson's room. Over several years he was cured. So Our Lady secured a special place in our hearts.

Dr. Gass came in that day and asked who the poster represented. I explained the story of Our Lady. As many of the floor nurses came into my room to ask about the poster, I explained the story many more times. Dr. Gass asked me to pray for a 17-year-old transplant patient who was not doing well and asked me to put him on the prayer lines I was on.

One of my sons, an attorney, had a contact in Mexico City and he emailed him and asked him to arrange for a Mass to be said for me and Dr. Gass's patient at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Mass was said on a Monday, and when I asked Dr. Gass how his patient was doing, he told me he started to improve that same day.

After I arrived at Westchester, I had to remain flat on my back and could not move my right leg. Because the poster of Our Lady was always in my vision, I was peaceful and even joyful. I felt the lack of mobility was a privilege and the time passed quickly.

A few weeks later, on June 8, Dr. Gass was in my room next to my bed watching the monitors as we talked. Suddenly, I nearly passed out and received a powerful blow in the back. I had just suffered a ventricular fibrillation and Dr. Gass told me the blow was from the defibrillator, which started my heart again. Dr. Gass had still been a little uncertain about giving me a transplant up until then, but the episode convinced him I needed a heart.

The next day, the transplant coordinator called to tell me they

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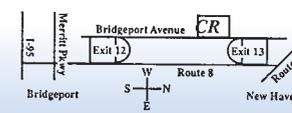
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Column



Alive to happiness

POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

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

“Howso’er it be, life is good.” (Goethe)
An uncle once told me that “we are boats in a storm. You just ride it out and hope that the boat holds together.” Shakespeare put it his way when, in *King Lear*, he wrote of how we “bide the pelting of the pitiless storm.”

Surely, there is too much pain and weariness in life, too much loss, too much fear. We all meet our difficulties, disappointments, tragedies—all the ills that flesh is heir to. I see the Cross everywhere.

However, despite everything, there is the delight in being a human being. What life gives us is often beautiful.

There is the ordinary human happiness we find, e.g., in times of completion, the last stroke as you complete painting a room or a fence, the final sentence on a term paper, attaching the last shelf of a bookcase you have built. There is the joyful moment

that accompanies the conquest of a skill: mastering riding a bicycle, being able to completely play a piece of music, etc. Exercising a skill easily and well is one of the great joys in life. There is the sensation of happiness that accompanies some earned success.

The lives of all of us contain these types of moments of exhilaration, instants of the joy of life.

There are some moments in my life that I would have frozen if I could. They encapsulate being “alive to happiness.”

There was a certain sunrise, an experience of the magical first light of day. One spring morning I was up before sunrise and stepped out onto my deck. The stars were just beginning to dim

as first streaks of light were in the sky. The world seemed hushed and waiting. Then a robin called, a tentative call as though asking who else was awake. How fresh it all was, how pure. Then came the roseate hues of dawn. The clouds were edged with crimson just before the sun rose. I sensed the sheer wonder of creation, felt thanksgiving for existence. The world appeared like a precious gift. I felt so glad for life.

I had an exquisite moment at a family Thanksgiving gathering. After the meal, the family had gathered in a circle, and such a sweet sociability prevailed. There was such a depth of harmony. Conversation was easy and natural, making a kind of music out of the different voices. A fire was crackling in the background. There was such a sense of belonging and peace, a feeling of calm and safety; a strong sense of belonging with my own people, in my own space. I had such a simple sense of happiness, indeed, a sense of being at home in the world.

Another moment was the twilight of a lovely mid-summer day. The sun was setting, tranquil and sated. I was with a friend in a car

outside the Swirl ice-cream shop in Redding. We watched a family enter the shop; a mother, father, and two young daughters.

The mother was stunningly beautiful. The father had a tall, athletic figure. His face registered patience and tolerance. His clean, tieless white shirt open at the collar and expensive-looking tailored black pants gave the impression of a prosperous business man recently returned from work.

From the daughters one heard excited squeals and girlish giggling.

Emerging with their ice-cream, the family sat at a picnic table. In the lovely blue twilight they clustered together. The daughters debated a bit who was “squishing” whom. Silhouetted against an opal sky, the family seemed as though they had achieved some maximum family compression. Just for a time now they were all together; they seemed so happy.

Eventually, they would disperse. The daughters would grow up, leave home. But on a tender July afternoon, in the lovely blue of the soft dying day, they were still molded, it might seem, forever together. It all seemed to me

like one of the luminous things in life.

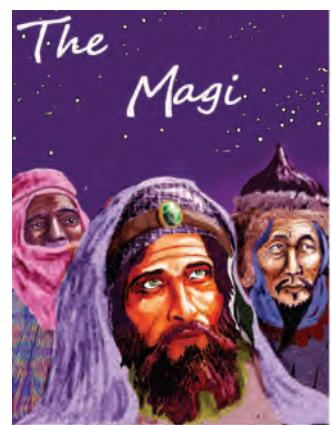
In her *Story of a Soul*, Therese of Lisieux noted that “life is often burdensome. What bitterness, but also what sweetness.” To be human is to take on the weight of suffering, separations, failures. We can feel we get nibbled to death by the world. But to be human is also to rejoice and live in wonder. The world has sweet flavors to offer. It can give so much bounty.

Psalm 90 says: “Give us joy to balance our affliction.” And possibly God does. There is an ebb and flow.

I like something St. Gregory the Great wrote: “The present life is but a road by which we advance to our homeland. We are subject to frequent disturbances so that we do not have more love for the journey than for the destination.”

We can be so charmed by the beauty of the journey that our steps are slowed. It is for this reason that the Lord makes the path through the world difficult. Otherwise, we might want to stop by the roadside for a picnic and a sleep in the sun. ■

SAINTLY LIVES BY ED WALDRON



AFTER JESUS HAD BEEN BORN AT BETHLEHEM IN JUDAEA DURING THE REIGN OF KING HEROD, SOME WISE MEN CAME TO JERUSALEM FROM THE EAST. "WHERE IS THE INFANT KING OF THE JEWS?" THEY ASKED. "WE SAW HIS STAR AS IT ROSE AND HAVE COME TO DO HIM HOMAGE." WHEN KING HEROD HEARD THIS HE WAS PERTURBED, AND SO WAS THE WHOLE OF JERUSALEM.

HE CALLED TOGETHER ALL THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND THE SCRIBES OF THE PEOPLE, AND INQUIRED OF THEM WHERE THE CHRIST WAS TO BE BORN. "AT BETHLEHEM IN JUDAEA, THEY TOLD HIM, "FOR THIS IS WHAT THE PROPHET WROTE: AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, IN THE LAND OF JUDAH, YOU ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH, FOR OUT OF YOU WILL COME A LEADER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL." THEN HEROD SUMMONED THE WISE MEN TO SEE HIM PRIVATELY. HE ASKED THEM THE EXACT DATE ON WHICH THE STAR HAD APPEARED, AND SENT THEM ON TO BETHLEHEM. "GO AND FIND OUT ALL ABOUT THE CHILD," HE SAID, "AND WHEN YOU HAVE FOUND HIM, LET ME KNOW, SO THAT I TOO MAY COME AND DO HIM HOMAGE."

HAVING LISTENED TO WHAT THE KING HAD TO SAY, THEY SET OUT. AND THERE IN FRONT OF THEM WAS THE STAR THEY HAD SEEN RISING; IT WENT FORWARD AND HALTED OVER THE PLACE WHERE THE CHILD WAS. THE SIGHT OF THE STAR FILLED THEM WITH DELIGHT...



AND GOING INTO THE HOUSE THEY SAW THE CHILD WITH HIS MOTHER MARY, AND FALLING TO THEIR KNEES THEY DID HIM HOMAGE. THEN, OPENING THEIR TREASURES, THEY OFFERED HIM GIFTS OF GOLD AND FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH.



BUT THEY WERE WARNED IN A DREAM NOT TO GO BACK TO HEROD, AND RETURNED TO THEIR OWN COUNTRY BY A DIFFERENT WAY.



~ Matthew 2: 1-12

GUEST COLUMNIST FROM PAGE 28

had a heart which looked to be a good match. It was 20 days after I had been put on the transplant list. Dr. Gas said they had never had a heart for my blood type become available so fast. When I thanked him for all he had done, my Jewish doctor turned to the poster of Our Lady of Guadeloupe and said “It was her, not me.”

I had the transplant on the evening of June 9. The recovery and rehab went so well that I was released on Father’s Day June 19, just ten days after the transplant.

I am back at work, loving my family and appreciating life more than ever. When I pray, I don’t just say the words—I pray them. I have personally experienced the love of Jesus and our Blessed Mother. ■

Bits & Pieces

HURRICANE SANDY TOY DRIVE sponsored by Al's Angels is taking place now through Thurs., **Dec. 20**. Drop off new, unwrapped toys at 1175 Post Rd., Westport, 2nd floor, rear entrance parking. Toys go to NY tri-state areas hit hardest by the hurricane. To make a financial donation, go to www.alsangels.org. For more information contact Al DiGuido: 203.254.1759.

TONY MELENDEZ CONCERT to benefit St. Benedict/Our Lady of Montserrat Parish will be held at West Hill High School, Stamford, on Sat., **Dec. 15**, at 7 pm. Tickets: \$20. For more information, call the parish: 203.323.7379 or email pobando@optimum.net or sharonmarcia@optmum.net.

SHOP ST. MARY'S BOOKSTORE for the finest Catholic gifts for Christmas: books for all ages and a wide range of rosaries, crucifixes, artwork, and more. Open daily after the 12:10 Mass until 2 pm; Sat. 10-4 pm and Sun. 11-2 pm. Located at 669 West Ave. Norwalk, behind St. Mary's Church. For more information, call the parish: 203.866.5546.

"WE CARE" PERINATAL GRIEF support group meets the third Wed. of each month (**Dec. 19; Jan. 16**) from 7-8:15 pm. The group is for those grieving the loss of a baby through miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillborn, or newborn death. No charge; no registration required. For more information, call Sr. Arthur Marie: 203.576.5110, or Marilyn Faber: 203.576.5716.

YEAR OF FAITH: St. Philip Parish, Norwalk, is holding a Vatican II discussion group the third Thurs. of each month (**Dec. 20; Jan. 17**) from now through June, from 7:30-9 pm. The Dec. topic will be *Lumen Gentium* (On the Church). For more information, call the parish: 203.847.4549.

CONNECTIONS, a new spiritual and social opportunity for singles 35 and over, will launch on Sat., **Jan. 5**, at Holy Family Parish, Fairfield, following the 4:30 pm Mass. Its mission is to bring together singles 35 and older for friendship, social get-togethers, spiritual talks, and community outreach. Connections will offer a variety of events throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport. For more information, contact Fr. Norm Guilbert at Holy Family: 203.336.1835 or fnorm@gmail.com. (Facebook page coming

soon.)

CURSILLO ULTREYAS are held at locations around the diocese: Mon., **Jan. 7**, at St. James Parish, Stratford at 7 pm; and Thurs., **Jan. 17**, at St. Mary Parish, Bethel, at 7:30 pm. For more information, contact Jeanette: jkovacs@snet.net.

FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP is offered at St. Vincent's Medical Center, Bridgeport, first Tues. of each month (Tues., **Jan. 8**.) from 4-5:30 pm for adult patients, family members and friends who are coping with a diagnose of: leukemia, lymphoma, multiple myeloma, and Hodgkin's disease. No reservation required. For more information, call 203.576.6158 or email tmclaugh@stvincent.org.

THE JOURNEY FOR CONTROL, an interactive monthly diabetes education workshop will be held at St. Vincent's Medical Center, Bridgeport, the second Thurs. of the month (**Jan. 10**) from 6-7:30 pm. Space is limited. To register, call Diane Sheehan, APRN: 203.576.6168.

GOSPEL OF LIFE SOCIETY meets the second Sat. of the month (**Jan. 12**) at St. Mary Parish, Norwalk, at 10 am after the 9 am Pro-Life Mass. Maureen Ciardiello,

Televised Mass



CHRISTMAS MASS will be televised on WWOR, channel 9, at 8 am on Christmas morning. The Mass will also air on WLNY, channel 10/55, at 9 am. Throughout the year, Sunday Mass is televised on the following stations: WNYW, Channel 5, at 5:30 am; ABC Family, 6 am; and WLNY, Channel 10/55, 9 am. In addition, THE NET Vigil Mass (formerly The Prayer Channel) Time Warner, Channel 97; Cablevision, Channel 30, has a televised Mass at 6 pm on Saturdays.

director of the diocesan Respect Life Ministry, will be the guest speaker. For more information, contact Eileen Bianchini: 203.847.5727 or stmarygols@aol.com.

OPLATEK (CHRISTMAS WAFER) DINNER will be held at Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Stamford on Sun., **Jan. 20**, at 1 pm. Cost \$25/person. A traditional Polish meal, together with entertainment. For more information and for reservations, call the parish: 203.323.4967

MASSSES OF HEALING AND HOPE sponsored by the Charismatic Renewal Office will be offered Mon., **Jan. 21**, at St. Lawrence Parish, Shelton, with Fr. Ed Nadolny; and Mon., **Jan. 28**, at 7:30 pm at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, with Fr. Larry Carew. For more information, call 203.268.8253.

JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME a 15-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Cairo and Rome will be hosted by St. Mary and St. Benedict-Our Lady of Montserrat parishes in Stamford with Fr. Rolando Torres starting Sat., **Feb. 11, 2013**. Cost: \$4,023 includes transportation and hotels, guides, a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee, breakfast and dinner, and tips. For more information, contact Fr. Torres: 203.324.7321 or rolandomalak@gmail.com.

SPRING VACATION CRUISE to benefit the Playground Improvement Fund at St. Lawrence School, Shelton, will take place on **Apr. 13-20**, on the RCCL Oasis of the Seas. For more information, call 203.402.0632.

ITALY AND MEDJUGORJE, a pilgrimage tour with Fr. Marcel St. Jean, will take place **June 23-July 5, 2013**. Visit the historic cities of Venice, Padua, Siena and Assisi before traveling to Medjugorje. Return to Rome in time to attend the Wednesday Audience with the Holy Father. Price: \$3,899 includes airfare, hotels, sightseeing, breakfast and dinner. For more information, or to make reservations, call Fr. Marcel Saint-Jean: 203.434.7208. ■

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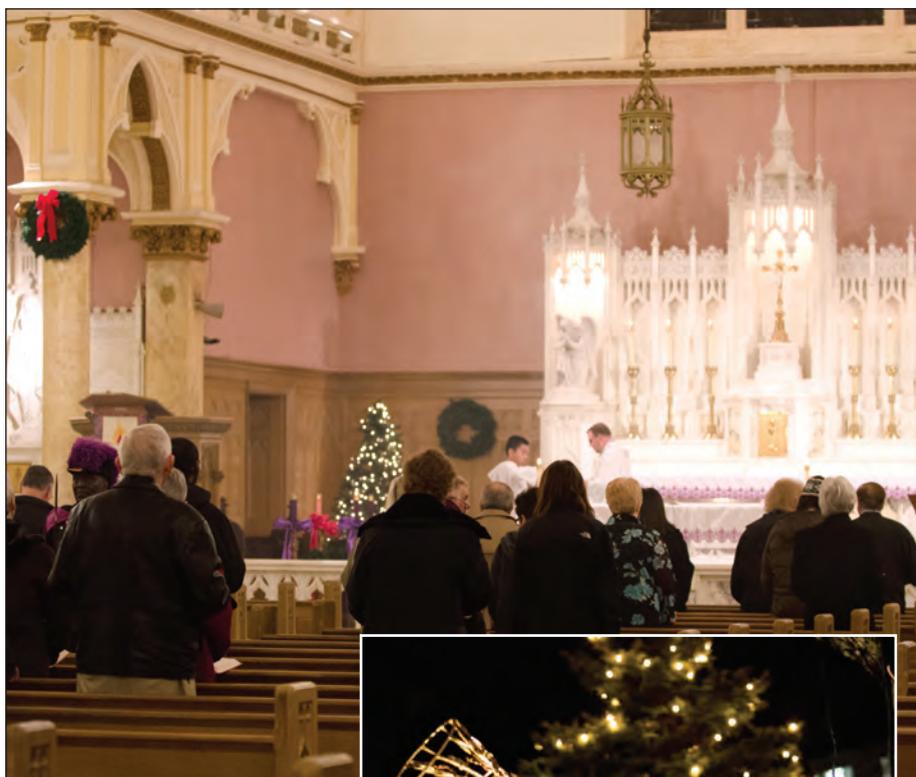
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Merry Christmas

Cathedral Parish lights the Remembrance Tree



There was much to remember and be thankful for as nearly 200 parishioners of The Cathedral Parish braved the chill and persistent rain for a prayerful and joyous Remembrance Tree lighting on December 7 at St. Patrick's Church in Bridgeport.

For the first time, the annual tree lighting ceremony included members of the combined parish that brought together parishioners from St. Augustine and St. Patrick parishes.

The grounds of St. Patrick's Church on North Ave. were graced with a beautiful nativity, angels, and a Remembrance Tree to celebrate the birth of Christ. The large, living spruce tree on the front lawn was surrounded by four decorated dogwood trees and angels. A beautiful nativity, which was built by the parishioners, was proudly displayed.

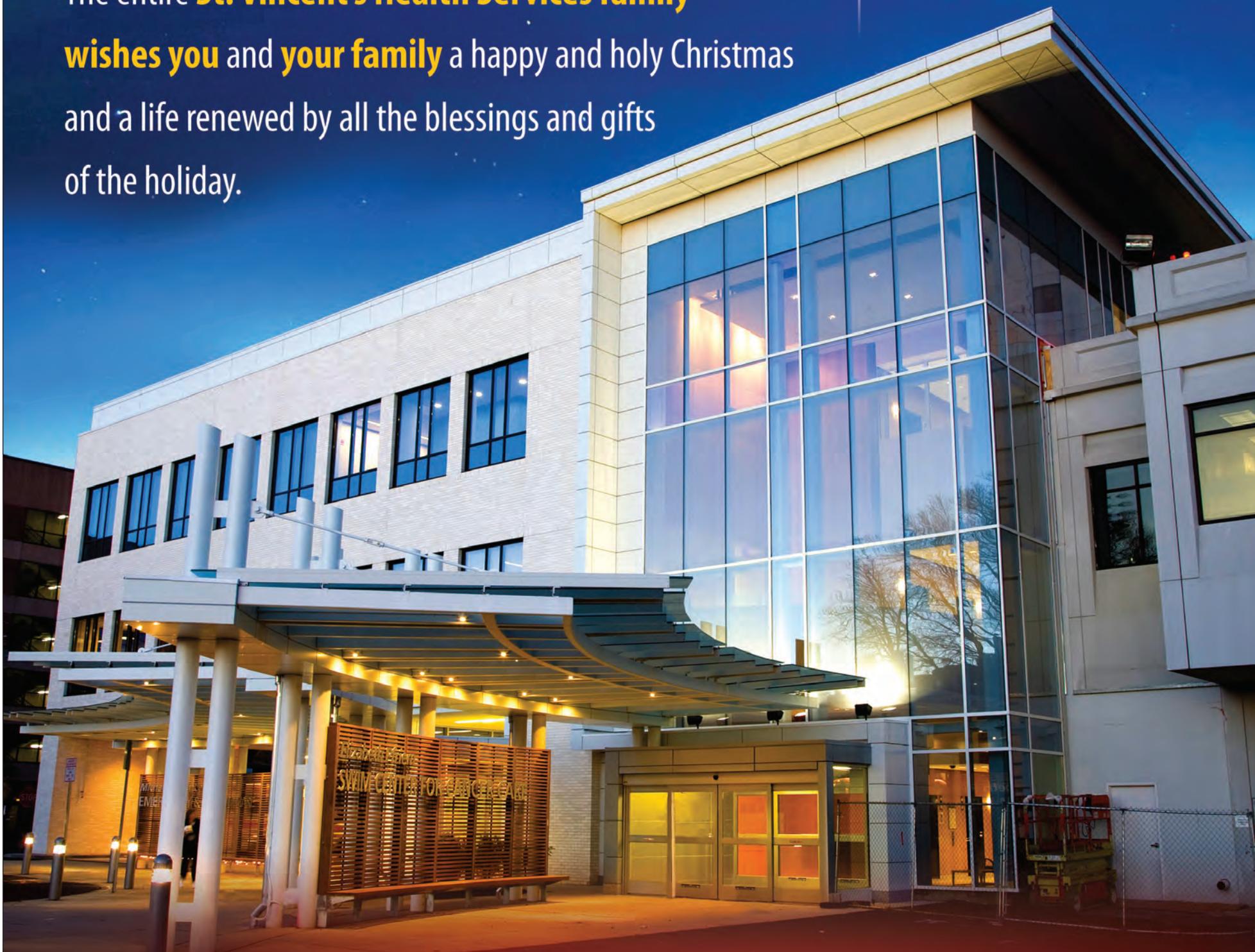
The lights on the tree represent parishioners and friends of the parish, both living and deceased. Individual and family names are displayed on a banner in the church printed in a Remembrance Book and commemorated in a bright light on the tree.

The Christmas Tree lighting was held after the 5:30 pm Mass celebrated by Fr. Peter Lenox, administrator of The Cathedral Parish. The Knights of Columbus served as honor guards for the ceremony, held on the anniversary of the attacks on Pearl Harbor in 1941.



TRUST. VINCENT'S

The entire **St. Vincent's Health Services family** wishes you and **your family** a happy and holy Christmas and a life renewed by all the blessings and gifts of the holiday.



CHRISTMAS TRADITION AT ST. VINCENT'S — Lindsey Flavell, 11, of Trumbull adds figures to the lobby creche that greets visitors to St. Vincent's Medical Center. She is the daughter of St. Vincent's Physician Services Director Laura Flavell.

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