



FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

DECEMBER 2014 | VOLUME 31, NUMBER 11 | ADVENT/CHRISTMAS ISSUE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



3 *New wing announced for Queen of Clergy*



13 *St. Agnes, Greenwich celebrates 50th*

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Christ our Savior is born!

Dear friends in Christ,

Since I was a little boy, I have always enjoyed singing Silent Night at Christmas. Each time I sing this venerable hymn, I am struck by the end of the second verse: "Christ our Savior is born". These few words summarize the central mystery we celebrate every Christmas, namely, the sav-



ing birth of the Son of God into our world.

In our secular world, many ask: How is Christ the savior of the world? What is the salvation that He offers to all people? In the world in which we live, we must be ready to answer such questions, for our sakes and those of our children.

Not all religions share the same view of salvation as do Christians. For example, Hindus believe that each person is trapped in an endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Salvation is achieved when one is released from this cycle of reincarnations. It comes only to the one who realizes that everything, including oneself, is an illusion. Buddhism goes even further and states that the human soul does not exist. Those who believe in the existence of a soul are doomed to suffer. Salvation for the Buddhist is the realization of nirvana, or

absolute liberation from any sense of self, through enlightenment and the conquest of all emotions.

The Christian understanding of salvation is very different from the one presented by these religions. Salvation in Christ is the transformation and healing of the earthly life we now live by grace. The suffering, pain and hurts of this life will give way to a life of endless love, joy and peace. This new life has already begun in the power of the Holy Spirit whom we receive through faith and baptism. It is constantly nourished by the power of Sacred Scripture and the sacraments that we celebrate in the Church, especially the Eucharist. We will undergo the full transformation of our earthly life in a personal way when we die. All creation will also be transformed when Christ returns at the end of time to judge the living and dead. When that day comes, all who are saved will share fully the resurrected life of Christ.

Three characteristics mark the Christian view of salvation. First, salvation is a gift that comes from Christ. We believe that Christ is the only definitive savior of all creation. This is so because salvation can only come from God and Jesus Christ is God who became man in his birth from the Virgin Mary. Christ has saved the whole world because He conquered sin and death once and for all time through His life, death and Resurrection. Since the Lord gives to His followers a share in His very life, countless men and women have worked as missionaries to spread the Gospel of salvation to all. In other words, salvation comes to all people only through Christ. No one can come to the Father except through Him (John 14: 6).

Second, Christ's offer of salvation transforms the entire person. Salvation does not mean the eter-

nal destruction of our body. It is not solely the transformation of our souls. Rather, Christian salvation is the healing each of us will receive in Christ, encompassing body, soul and spirit. It is for this reason that every Sunday we reaffirm our faith in the resurrection of the body in the Creed. Eternal life in heaven, which will be fully revealed at the end of time, will not make us less than who we are now. Rather, it will transform us into the image of

the Resurrected Christ.

Third, Christian salvation is the process by which we are saved from what weakens us for the sake of obtaining something far greater. Through Christ's death and resurrection, we are saved from the slavery of sin and all its destructive effects, including death. Such freedom allows us to be united by grace with our loving God in this life and to live eternally in His love in heaven.

Such is the gift of salvation that Christ has given to the world. It is no wonder that the heavenly angels sang out with great joy: "Christ our Savior is born!"

May our Savior born in Bethlehem bless you and your families this Christmas and throughout the New Year. ■

Frank J. Caggiano

Most Rev. Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of Bridgeport

Buon Natale

Crèches of Italy

DEC 1
to
FEB 1

Christmastime Family Day Sunday Dec. 28, 12-3pm

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS MUSEUM

1 State Street, New Haven
kofcmuseum.org
Free admission & parking



ON THE COVER

MIGUEL LOCK, his sister *Therese*, (left) and *Elizabeth Vas* were among the carolers at last week's *Christmas Extravaganza* for children with special needs and their families. The carolers were from *St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish Youth Choir* in Brookfield. The *Extravaganza* was made extra special with the help of *Convivio* teens.
ABOVE THE MAST: Even the youngest guests enjoyed the *Mass* and the *Christmas* activities that followed.
Photos by Amy Mortensen

CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 7 | SAFE ENVIRONMENTS
2015 handbook published | 20 | NEOPOLITAN CHRISTMAS
At Knights Museum in New Haven |
| 8 | SYNOD 2014
Wrestling with challenges | 23 | REMEMBERING DEACON REVERÓN
First Hispanic deacon |
| 10 | OH WHAT A NIGHT
Merton celebrates 40th | 25 | PASSING ON KINDNESS
Kolbe Cathedral students |
| 12 | CAPP COMMUNION BREAKFAST
Honors an "angel" | 30 | CHRISTMAS AROUND THE DIOCESE
Calendar of events and activities |



Local News

Groundbreaking for Queen of Clergy

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

A large group of retired priests, donors and invited guests gathered on November 21 at the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of Clergy Retired Priests' Residence in Stamford for a groundbreaking ceremony. After several years of planning, a \$3.5 million expansion of the priests' residence is finally underway.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano described the groundbreaking as an "exciting and historic moment" for the diocese. He thanked the staff for their dedicated service to the resident priests, and he thanked the donors for making the expansion a possibility.

Directly addressing the many retired priests gathered, Bishop Caggiano said, "While it's exciting to build, what is at the heart of our celebration today is that you represent more than 1,000 years of faithful service to the diocese. We owe you a tremendous debt."

He then added, "Let his be a house of grace, health and peace for all who live here."

Msgr. William Scheyd, vicar

general of the diocese, welcomed the guests and said the expansion will serve priests for many years to come. "It does a lot for priests' morale to know that we're appreciated at this time in our lives," Msgr. Scheyd said, noting that 12 priests will be waiting to move into the new wing when it is finished in late 2015.

Msgr. Scheyd said that plans for the residence began in 1998 when he and Bishop (now Cardinal) Edward M. Egan toured other facilities. Prior to that time, retired priests, along with Bishop Walter W. Curtis, lived in a wing of the former St. Joseph Medical Center in Stamford. The independent living facility opened its doors on January 28, 2000.

Msgr. Louis A. DeProfio, director of the retired priests' residence, said that it has become a true home for priests where they can share friendship "and the common bond of brotherly love." He said it was also a place that brought them together in prayer and enabled them to live independently.

The groundbreaking ceremony was held in the community room



NOVEMBER GROUNDBREAKING—(l-r) Msgr. William J. Scheyd, vicar general of the Diocese of Bridgeport; Bishop Frank J. Caggiano; John Burns, Jr., of New Canaan, donor; Msgr. Peter J. Cullen, pastor of St. Michael Parish in Greenwich and Barbara Burns at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new wing of retirement suites at the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of Clergy Retired Priests Residence in Stamford.

of the 22,000 square foot facility with a warm fire blazing in the stone hearth at the center of the room. The bishop and others then walked out into the cold afternoon for ceremonial photos with golden shovels and hardhats.

The diocese has launched a \$3.5 million capital campaign to fund the construction of the new wing, which will include 16 suites

for retired priests. The residence currently houses 19 men ages 75 and older.

"With the groundbreaking, we begin the public phase of the campaign," said William McLean, chief development officer of the diocese. "To date, through the generosity of 60 donors, more than \$2.3 million has been raised."

By 2015, there will be 80 priests in the Diocese of Bridgeport over the age of 75. "Many of the men continue to serve in parishes and enrich the sacramental life of the diocese," McLean said.

Construction of the first 10 suites will be completed and ready for occupancy by the fall of 2015. The remaining six units will be built as the funds become available. Each retired priest will have a sitting room, bedroom, bath and small kitchenette. All residents will have access to a chapel, community room, library, exercise room and dining area.

The age of priest retirement in the Diocese of Bridgeport is 75, and most remain active by helping out in parishes on weekends, visiting hospitals and other assignments. In addition to those at the residence, many retired priests continue to live in parishes or on their own.

(To make a gift to the Retired Priests' Residence, call Pam Rittman: 203.416.1479 or make an online contribution at: www.bridgeportdiocese.com/QueenofClergy.)

Diocese putting wrap on new mobile 'app'

BRIDGEPORT—Christmas came early for Bishop Frank J. Caggiano when he unwrapped plans for the new Diocese of Bridgeport "Mobile App" at the recent Second General Session of the Diocesan Synod.

"Apps" are computer software applications designed to make information, photos and videos more readily available and accessible on smart phones, tablets and other mobile devices. Apps are increasingly being used to access online information.

"In the listening sessions and other consultations, people throughout the diocese have told us that they want to see the Church on social media, which is the new marketplace of communication in our culture," Bishop Caggiano said. "Our youth along with many adults have urged us to use social media to engage, inform and inspire people of faith."

The new mobile app is being designed and produced by Deacon Patrick Toole of



DEACON PATRICK TOOLE

St. Thomas Parish in Fairfield. Deacon Toole, an IBM executive, donated his time and expertise to oversee the project.

"I am most grateful to Deacon Toole for not only funding the project but also for providing the leadership and vision needed to build the app, which offers much promise for our diocese," said the bishop.

Almost 400 delegates and invited observers got their first look at the new app, which will

feature information on Mass times, diocesan events, prayer and support groups, volunteer opportunities, and youth news along with videos and podcasts

on Catholic and spiritual themes.

Deacon Toole said that the app will be pre-released to synod delegates and parish representatives

on January 15, 2015. Diocesan employees and youth members of the synod will also be field-testing the app before its release to the general public in February, 2015.

"It's not easy to capture the breadth of the diocese on a small mobile phone," Deacon Toole said, "but the use of social media has enormous possibilities to invite people into the sacramental life of the Church."

With a large image of the new app on the screen, the deacon walked delegates through

its many functions. The app will include "Find a Parish" and "Find a School" information that will quickly link visitors to online application forms, event registrations, directions and other information. Users can also find daily prayers and reflections, spiritual videos and links to other Church resources.

Bishop Caggiano had first announced the development of the diocesan app at his recent "State of the Diocese" address and mentioned that it had been developed in response to requests by people who attended the synod listening sessions.

During the synod listening sessions, people throughout the diocese said they would like to see more sharing between parishes and more timely information. The app directly addresses these concerns through social media, where people are most likely to search.

The app was made possible by the development of a secure private website designed by Deacon Toole, which will enable parishes

to upload and update key information on a regular basis.

The bishop has sent a letter to all pastors asking them to designate a staff member or volunteer responsible for updating the secure website with the latest parish news. Each will be issued usernames and passwords. Uploading will be easy and the diocese will provide help if necessary.

A key priority for the diocese will be the hiring of a social media person who will act as the gatekeeper for the app from the first moment of its release.

The information categories in the app were created based on the most popularly visited pages on the diocesan website (www.bridgeportdiocese.com), which records almost 21,000 visits a month.

Parallel growth has also been experienced in the use of social media. The Diocese of Bridgeport Facebook page now registers 1,679 "likes" and Fairfield County Catholics Facebook page add another 1,875 "likes."

Christmas Giving

Year-end tax strategies for benefactors

Bridgeport—With tax year 2014 rapidly coming to a close, the Development Office of the Diocese of Bridgeport would like to suggest some ways to consider making charitable donations before year's end that can benefit both benefactor and recipient alike. When considering the strategies below, please remember that the diocese is also accepting donations to the Annual Appeal through December 31, 2014.

1. Consider donating appreciated securities rather than cash

Donating stocks, bonds, or mutual funds that have appreciated over time is becoming an increasingly popular way for benefactors to support their favorite charities. The tax advantage that comes with donating securities is that the donor can deduct the full market value of the security without having to pay capital

gains taxes on the sale of the security. Also, if the cost basis of a security is in doubt, donating the security to charity relieves the donor from having to do cost-basis accounting.

2. Consider establishing a charitable gift fund

These days, establishing a charitable foundation is not only for the rich. Most investment companies offer an opportunity to establish one's own charitable gift fund, whereby donations into the fund enjoy the benefits of professional investment management.

For example, for as little as \$5,000, Fidelity Investments offers individuals the opportunity to establish their own charitable gift fund. Donations from the fund can be made to charities in amounts as little as \$50, and the gift fund allows the donor the opportunity to remain anonymous (if so desired).



Establishing a charitable gift fund is particularly effective for those who want to tithe their income (by setting aside 10 percent of their pre-tax income for charity). Funds can be added to the charitable gift fund in \$1,000 increments, so over time, the fund can grow significantly as a

result of new deposits and investment performance.

Finally, because the donations and subsequent growth within the established gift fund are irrevocable, donors can designate a particular charity or a number of charities to be beneficiaries of the fund upon the death of the benefactor.

3. Consider a charitable donation to offset the costs of converting an IRA

Roth IRAs are growing in popularity, but converting to a Roth from a traditional IRA can bring a hefty tax bill. Converting in a year in which you can claim a large tax deduction, such as a charitable donation, can be helpful in offsetting IRA conversion taxes.

The three giving strategies highlighted above are good ways to give at any time of the year, but can be especially helpful for those who find themselves in a high-income tax-bracket, and who want to take year-end steps to reduce their impending tax obligations.

Properly employed, each of the above strategies represents a tax-advantaged way for benefactors to give more effectively to their favorite charities and causes.

The Gift of Giving



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Diocese of Bridgeport

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3. The Diocese will send a card to your gift recipient or you may print one on your computer or send an e-card.
4. The Diocese will direct your gift to the selected ministry.

Questions: 203-416-1479

www.BlessedGifts.org

<div style="background-color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold; color: #e67e22;">\$100</div>  <div style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Provide meals for four families</div>	<div style="background-color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold; color: #e67e22;">\$50</div>  <div style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Wednesday Morning Breakfast for our retired priests after Mass</div>
<div style="background-color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold; color: #e67e22;">\$50</div>  <div style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Reading or math textbook Inner-city Catholic School</div>	<div style="background-color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold; color: #e67e22;">\$25</div>  <div style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Provide warm breakfast for 25 people through Morning Glory, Danbury</div>



Simply complete the envelope that is inserted in the *Fairfield County Catholic* with your gift selections.

Blessed Gifts supports your faith in action through ministries across the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Diocese of Bridgeport, 238 Jewett Avenue, Bridgeport, Connecticut 06606

Evangelization

Forming Intentional Disciples

By PAT HENNESSY

"We can't get to the Lord without the Church, but the Church and Sacred Scripture only makes sense if we have a relationship with Jesus Christ," says Father Peter Towsley, vicar for evangelization of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

To enrich that personal relationship with Jesus Christ and empower parishes to be vibrant places of liturgical worship and fellowship, form missionary disciples, and enable schools to be places where administration, staff and students are living wit-

nesses of Christ's lay faithful, the Diocese of Bridgeport is sponsoring a "Forming Intentional Disciples!" workshop.

The practical workshop is designed to help Church leaders, parish staff, principals, religious education and RCIA directors and all Catholic faithful to transform their parish and schools into places of encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. It will be held Tuesday, January 13 at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull.

Sherry Weddell, co-director of the Catherine of Siena Institute, a ministry of the Western

Dominican Province, will head the workshop. Weddell, author of one of the top-selling Catholic books and founder of the workshop by the same title, has developed formational resources that are used around the world to equip parishes and school for the apostolic formation of lay Catholics.

When you don't emphasize the personal relationship to Jesus, Weddell says, you end up with an institutional faith. That's what the majority of Catholics have now, an impersonal, mechanical, institutional faith. It lacks life.

She calls Catholics to "break

the silence" and be name-droppers—the name of Jesus, that is. Catholics need to know that a personal relationship with him is possible. "That is the beautiful gift of the Resurrection—Jesus was dead but is now alive. If he's alive, then you can know him not merely as a historical figure, but as a person. And if he's a person and alive, you can have a relationship with him."

"This has to begin with the Catholics who are in the pews every Sunday," says Father Towsley. "They're the Church, the People of God. From them it spreads to the Christmas-Easter Catholics, and then to those who have not been coming at all, and to those who know little or noth-



SHERRY WEDDELL

ing about the faith."

Weddell says that when ordinary Catholics make the conscious choice to follow Jesus as his disciples they transform parish life, and ultimately the life of the whole Church.

(The workshop is open to all interested Catholics. For more info and for registration, go to www.Eventbrite.com and search for Forming Intentional Disciples.) ■

Pope Francis to visit Philadelphia in September

The Diocese of Bridgeport was among the first to respond to the historic announcement that Pope Francis will visit Philadelphia next September.

"The diocese is organizing a group to attend this exciting event," said Angela Mantero, diocesan director of Marriage and Family. "I already have

day the Pope confirmed his visit. Mayor Michael Nutter called the Pope's visit "the largest event in the city's modern history." He noted that security concerns will be coordinated among city, state and federal authorities and police contingents from Italy and the Vatican. Nutter expressed confidence in the planning, saying,

attended by Pope Francis will take place on the evening of September 26 at the Festival of Families, a cultural celebration expected to draw up to 800,000 people.

The number of visitors coming into the city should swell dramatically during the Pope's stay. "We expect the numbers to grow each day," said Donna Farrell, executive director of the 2015 World Meeting of Families. "By Saturday, there could be close to 2 million people in Philadelphia."

Catholics will express their faith publicly with the Pope at Sunday Mass, September 27, on the steps of the art museum.

Gerald Davis, a member of St. Isaac Jogues Parish in Wayne and a trustee of St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, expressed confidence as he reflected on the Pope's visit. "I'm delighted and thrilled," he said. "People will see the city of brotherly love at its very best."

"I'll be collecting names throughout the coming weeks and putting together a list so we can contact people when a package is confirmed," Mantero said.

(For more info, or to put your name on the trip database, contact Angela Mantero: amantaro@diobpt.org, or 203.416.1627.) ■



a database of people who are interested, and we're beginning to work out our plans."

It will be "a once-in-a-lifetime chance," said Daniel Hilferty, chair of the 2015 World Meeting of Families, which will be capped by the papal visit. Hilferty made his comment during a news conference at the Philadelphia Art Museum on November 17, the

"We'll be ready."

Those challenges and others stem from the immense throngs of people expected for the week-long events. About 15,000 people are expected to attend the Meeting of Families congress at the Pennsylvania Convention Center from September 22-25. That will make it the largest convention of the year.

The first major public event

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PLANNING TO BE IN FLORIDA
THIS WINTER?

Bishop Caggiano will attend
a reception in Naples

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2015

See you in the Sunshine State!



Please e-mail Pam Rittman

at prittman@diobpt.org to join the invitation list.

Consecrated Life

Wake up the World!

By FATHER COLIN McKENNA

Pope Francis has proclaimed the liturgical year 2015 to be a year in honor of Consecrated Life. This special year of grace began on November 30, 2014, the first Sunday of Advent, and will extend through 2015 until February 2, 2016.

In this new year of grace, the Diocese of Bridgeport was quick to honor the hundreds of religious women and men who serve in the diocese. At a special



Mass in Honor of Consecrated Life on November 30 at St. Cecilia Church in Stamford, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano was the principal celebrant and homilist at a liturgy attended by

SR. NANCY STRILLACCI, ASCJ, diocesan delegate for Religious, is one of over 300 Consecrated Religious Women currently serving the Diocese of Bridgeport. A Mass in honor of Consecrated Life was celebrated at St. Cecilia on November 30.

many of the women and men religious who currently serve in

the diocese.

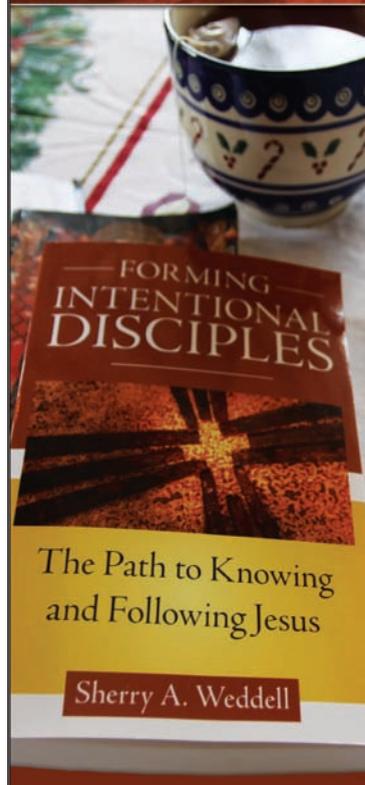
The theme of this year of consecrated life is "Wake up the World!" In his homily, Bishop Caggiano reflected on the many ways that Religious men and women "awaken" us to the presence of Jesus in our midst. "It is your witness that calls us back to the tried and true paths that will lead us to recognize Jesus Christ in the ordinary moments of daily life," he said.

Bishop Caggiano aptly summarized the feelings of many during his homily. He said, "Allow me to begin this Year of Consecrated Life by saying to each and every one of you—on behalf of all of those whom you have served and continue to serve, and whom you have touched by your presence—thank you for your fidelity to Jesus Christ, your Shepherd of Love."

He concluded: "For in a world that is forgetful of God's presence in our midst, it seems to me that consecrated life, in all of its forms, is needed now more than ever. You stand in our midst, leading us to Jesus Christ. May we always have the grace and wisdom to follow your lead" ■

FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES

WITH SHERRY WEDDELL



DATE: Tuesday, January 13, 2015
TIME: 9:00am-5:00pm
PLACE: St. Catherine of Siena Church
 200 Shelton Rd., Trumbull
COST: \$25/person includes continental breakfast and lunch

"How can we transmit a living, personal Catholic faith to future generations? By coming to know Jesus Christ, and following him as his disciples. There are immense challenges facing the Church today. Follow author Sherry Weddell through the steps that will help Catholics make the conscious choice to follow Jesus as his disciples, transforming parish life and ultimately the life of the whole Church."

For more information contact
 Fr. Peter Towsley: frtowsley@diobpt.org
 or Register at: www.eventbrite.com/e/forming-intentional-disciples-with-sherry-weddell-tickets-14047228639




WAKE UP THE WORLD!

Prayer for the Year of Consecrated Life

In addition to a program for the Mass, attendees were given a special prayer card with a prayer for this year of grace. Catholics are encouraged to pray daily the following prayer:

O God, throughout the ages you have called women and men to pursue lives of perfect charity through the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. During this Year of Consecrated Life, we give you thanks for these courageous witness of Faith and models of inspiration. Their pursuit of holy lives teaches us to make a more perfect offering of ourselves to you. Continue to enrich your Church by calling forth sons and daughters who, having found the pearl of great price, treasure the Kingdom of Heaven above all things.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Executive Director, Shepherds, Inc.

Shepherds, Inc., a non-denominational, non-profit organization*, seeks an Executive Director to strengthen the foundation of the organization and build new momentum for its mission.

Founded in 1998, Shepherds provides inner city, at-risk Connecticut youth with the opportunity of a college preparatory education at a non-public high school and the support of a positive role model to help them to achieve their potential.

We seek a strong leader who is a social entrepreneur and who has the commitment and drive to expand our base of donors and mentors and nurture our relationships with students and partner schools.

The essential qualities of our ideal candidate include: passion for our mission, ability to work with broad range of partners and constituents, demonstrated experience to motivate and lead, and a persuasive communicator.

Qualifications include: college degree, minimum five years of supervisory or management experience preferably in the nonprofit space, engagement in education initiatives, familiarity with the Fairfield and New Haven county communities. Access to a network of nonprofit funding sources is an added plus.

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If interested and qualified, please send resume and cover letter to: shepherds.search@gmail.com.

Shepherds reserves the right to close this search at any time.
Changing Lives - One Student at a Time

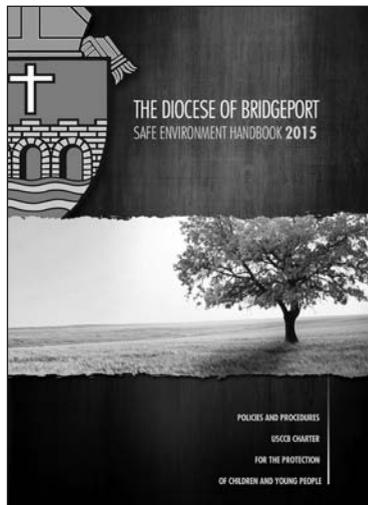
* Shepherds, Inc. is an independent 501(c)(3) and is not affiliated with the Diocese of Bridgeport or any other religiously affiliated entity.

Protecting Children

New Safe Environment Handbook Published

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano issued a formal decree on November 30, the First Sunday in Advent, re-promulgating the diocesan Safe Environments policies and practices for the protection of children and young people. The policies and procedures, in accordance with the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, have been brought together in the *Safe Environment Handbook, 2015*.

The handbook is now available online, and more than 20,000 copies of it will be printed and distributed to Catholic Center and school employees, parish staff, priests and Religious and volunteers throughout the



diocese.

Erin Neil, director of the Safe Environment Office, said that

while the diocese has had comprehensive outreach in place since 2003, the re-promulgation of the Safe Environment Program contains new initiatives and clarified policies, including the following:

Expansion of Safe Environment efforts through a re-training and awareness series to be offered in person or online on a variety of topics including the safe use of technology. A renewal schedule of 5 or 10 years will be based on category of personnel.

Renewal of criminal background checks every 5 or 10 years based on the specific category of personnel.

Issuance of a Safe Environment

Handbook which serves as an implementation guide with updates to the Sexual Misconduct Policy and Code of Conduct on the safe use of technology and mandated reporting of suspected child pornography. Executive Summaries are now available that are specific to a person's role and must be reviewed and signed by all adults who work or volunteer in any capacity in the Diocese of Bridgeport. The handbook must be re-signed whenever a person changes role, assignment or location within the diocese.

Distribution of new Safe Environment brochures that will be made available in parishes concerning the warning signs of abuse and reporting procedures.

Reconstitution of the diocesan Sexual Misconduct Review Board to include regular meetings, revised term limits and frequent policy review.

In 2015, the diocese will also work to centralize this process by recording the dates of all background checks into the VIRTUS database.

All employees, priests, deacons and Religious are required to read

the handbook and sign the executive summary included at the end of each book and online.

“Our goal is to reinforce the Diocese of Bridgeport's efforts to ensure the safest possible environment for children and young people through comprehensive policies, so that adults and minors have important information on how to identify warning signs of abuse and how to properly report suspected abuse to the diocese and to civil authorities,” said Neil.

To report suspected abuse involving a minor, recently or in the past, contact Erin Neil, L.C.S.W., diocesan director of Safe Environments at 203.650.3265; or Michael Tintrup, L.C.S.W., victim assistance counselor, at 203.241.0987.

Mandated reporters must also directly report any incident of sexual abuse of a minor to the State of Connecticut Child Abuse and Neglect care line: 800.842.2288.

(To register to attend VIRTUS, Protecting God's Children for Adults, visit www.virtusonline.org. Select “Registration” and select “Bridgeport Diocese.”)

SWIM celebrates courage

BRIDGEPORT—St. Vincent's Medical Center Foundation and the SWIM Across the Sound held the 16th Annual Cancer Survivors Breakfast on December 2 at the Bridgeport Holiday Inn. More than 400 people were in attendance, celebrating the spirit of survivorship, courage, resilience and hope.

Keynote speaker Joyce Saltman, a professor emerita of Special Education at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven and a former standup comedienne, spoke to the healing power of humor. “He/she who laughs—lasts,” was her principal message. Full of light and laughter, Joyce entertained the crowd while enlightening them to the therapeutic effects of laughter during the healing process.

Underwriting the cost of the breakfast for the 13th year was John Plasko, owner of Plasko's Farm in Trumbull. John and his wife are both cancer survivors and generously donate funds raised through their annual Corn Maze at the farm and at farmers' markets.

Among the other donors in attendance was René Stutz, president/CEO of Victorinox Swiss Army. For 20 years, Victorinox has partnered with St. Vincent's, donating



FOUNDATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Lyn McCarthy with cancer survivor and spokesperson Celida Rossillo.

proceeds from their annual warehouse sale to SWIM Across the Sound. Stutz announced that the foundation will receive a check for \$50,000 to assist the SWIM in their ongoing effort to help cancer patients and their families.

“On behalf of St. Vincent's Medical Center Foundation, I want to thank René and Swiss Army for the longstanding support they have provided to SWIM Across the Sound over the years,” said foundation Executive Director Lyn McCarthy. “Their steadfast commitment and generous gifts are what allows us to continue providing survivorship programs as well as financial assistance to our cancer patients.”

Victorinox had more to give each cancer survivor, physician,

caregiver and participant at this year's breakfast—the gift of time. All in attendance were presented with a Swiss Army watch as a token to honor their courage, spirit and success.

The true guests of honor at the breakfast—the survivors—ranged in cancer-free “age” from one to 47 years. “The SWIM has been my anchor

in a stormy sea,” said cancer survivor Celida Rossillo, who is currently in treatment for breast cancer and shared her inspirational story of struggle and gratitude.

“2014 was once again an exciting year for us at St. Vincent's and the Elizabeth M. Pfriem SWIM Center for Cancer Care,” said President/CEO Stuart Marcus, MD. “We recently marked our one year anniversary of being affiliated with the MD Anderson Cancer Network, giving us access to some of the greatest minds in cancer care. No one in Fairfield County has to travel outside of our service area to receive state-of-the-art cancer care, or support after treatment.”

Men's Discernment Retreat Day

January 3, 2015

www.bridgeportvocations.org



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When: January 3, 2015, 9 AM - 9 PM

Synod 2014

Synod wrestles with challenges

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

Delegates largely reached consensus on a wide range of issues affecting the local Church during the Second General Session of Synod 2014 on November 15, but wrestled with ways to approach youth, disaffected Catholics, and social justice issues.

More than 350 general delegates, observers, and invited guests gathered at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in the Nichols section of Trumbull to review

60 challenges related to the four major themes of the synod: empowering the young Church; building up communities of faith; promoting works of charity and justice; and fostering evangelical outreach.

Patrick Turner, deputy synod director, said that in addition to the discussion and comments made during the session, delegates made additional observations through nearly 1,000 emails that were submitted during and after the gathering.

The goal of the Synod Commission will be to reduce all of the challenges to 12 or fewer goals, so that the synod can begin to make final suggestions for addressing the issues.

Throughout the day-long session, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano challenged delegates to think outside the box and to understand the many Catholics who were not in the room. "We are all believers, but we must also give voice to those who aren't here," he said, referring to the many

Catholics who no longer participate in the life of the Church.

The bishop also announced to delegates that the diocese is exploring the possibility of commissioning a Marist Poll to survey those who have stopped attending church in Fairfield County. The day-long



session was crammed with presentations of the study committees, voting on presented materials, and comments from delegates about the many challenges and

List of Challenges and Responses

	ACCEPT AS IS	ACCEPT WITH MODIFICATION	DO NOT ACCEPT
PROMOTING WORKS OF CHARITY AND JUSTICE			
Challenge #1 There is a Need to Create an Understanding and Acceptance of Social Justice not only as a Gospel Mandate but as a Lived and Personal Experience.	76%	18%	6%
Challenge #2 There is a Need to Use Charitable Service to Help the Believer, the Non-Practicing Believer and those of Good Will to Discover Jesus.	80%	13%	7%
Challenge #3 There is a Need to Better Identify & Respond to Unmet Needs Across our Diocese and Beyond.	70%	20%	10%
Challenge #4 There is a Need to Create an Inter-Generational Diocesan Wide Volunteer Network	77%	12%	10%
Challenge #5 There is a Need to better Inform the Populace about Catholic-Sponsored Services	78%	16%	6%
Challenge #6 There is a Need to Build & Leverage a Network of Interfaith Communities Working for Social Justice	68%	17%	15%
Challenge #7 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	19% - Need to Add; 80% - List is fine		
EMPOWERING THE YOUNG CHURCH			
Challenge #8 There is a need to introduce Children into the Life of the Church as Fully and Early as Possible.	65%	28%	8%
Challenge #9 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	No Voting on this challenge		
Challenge #10 There is a need to closely examine the issue of Peer Pressure for Teens	56%	25%	20%
Challenge #11 There is a need to share the Gospel Message in a manner that resonates with Teens.	56%	34%	11%
Challenge #12 I Would Go to Church More Freely, but...	44%	36%	21%
Challenge #13 Good Youth Ministries are Tough to Find.	61%	29%	10%
Challenge #14 Let's be realistic, am I expected to practice my faith every day?	50%	27%	23%
Challenge #15 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	62% - Need to Add; 39% - List is Fine		
Challenge #16 There is a need to communicate and connect more often and effectively	73%	24%	3%
Challenge #17 "We are too busy": We Need Time for the People and Things We Love.	62%	19%	19%
Challenge #18 There is a need to help Young Adults to Fall in Love with Jesus Christ.	85%	11%	4%
Challenge #19 Things We Believe are Contrary to What the Church Teaches.	56%	25%	20%
Challenge #20 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	2% - Need to Add; 66% - List is fine		
BUILDING UP COMMUNITIES OF FAITH			
Challenge #21 There is a need for Engagement of all baptized	88%	10%	3%
Challenge #22 There is a need to overcome competing activities, influences and negative media.	75%	18%	8%
Challenge #23 There are inadequate resources to fulfill our mission - talent, finances, and tools.	73%	17%	10%
Challenge #24 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	18% - Need to Add; 82% - List is Fine		
Challenge #25 There is a lack of understanding that in order to have a deep life of faith each family member needs to develop a personal relationship with Christ that makes faith central to all aspects of daily life.	83%	12%	6%
Challenge #26 There are many poorly catechized parents and a lack of ongoing faith formation opportunities.	85%	12%	4%
Challenge #27 Faith formation, a lifelong journey, often does not include the entire family collectively as a family AND all the individuals within the family (regardless of age).	84%	9%	6%
Challenge #28 Many in the Church lack an understanding about the complexity and diversity of families and family life resulting in inadequate outreach and programs.	82%	13%	5%
Challenge #29 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	15% - Need to Add; 83% - List is fine		
Challenge #30 There is a need to understand the needs of ALL members of the parish community individually and collectively.	88%	10%	3%
Challenge #31 We must address the lack of understanding about the Church's teachings.	86%	10%	4%
Challenge #32 There is a need to create an environment of healing and understanding for the people we serve.	90%	7%	3%
Challenge #33 We must acknowledge and understand how current trends and modern culture are affecting traditional Parish organizational structures and the dynamics and demographics of Parish communities.	86%	8%	6%

Synod 2014

opportunities facing the Church.

The discussion addressing the needs of young people and teens drew the most difference of opinion, with 62 percent of delegates voting to add to or amend the challenges as presented.

Delegates discussed many challenges that prevent teens from a deeper faith life, including peer pressure, secular role models in conflict with Church teachings, indifferent parents who don't attend Mass and liturgies that are often centered on adults but don't reach out to youth.

A young man from St. Philip Parish in Norwalk said that teens did not relate to the music played

at liturgies. "We're singing songs written in the 70s," he said, drawing laughter from the older delegates. "Why can't we incorporate new music?"

Colin Lomnitzer from St. Catherine of Siena Parish, a freshman at Catholic University, quickly countered him by saying "Contemporary music by itself is not bad, and can be used at Mass and be appropriate. The temptation, however, that comes from using contemporary music is to contemporize the Mass. This leads to de-reverence of the Mass, which should never, ever happen. So we need to help people and ourselves better understand what

Mass is, and the beauty of the Mass so every aspect of it will and can be treated with this beauty in mind."

Annie Butler from St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan said the Teen Mass was a powerful experience, with all teens asked to come to the altar during the consecration. "We kneel side by side at the altar with our parents and families behind us. It's a powerful moment."

The bishop said that the synod should not make any final decisions about what youth want until he meets with them and discusses their challenges in an upcoming consultation session.



"I will defer to what the young people say for themselves," he said, drawing applause from the gathering.

Father Michael Boccaccio, pastor of St. Philip Parish, said he believed that the Church "must address liturgical practices" as they draw people to the

sacraments.

Anne Pollack, a member of Voice of the Faithful, said the synod had more work to do in including women in leadership roles and decisions about the local Church.

Sister Mary Karen Toomy

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

	ACCEPT AS IS	ACCEPT WITH MODIFICATION	DO NOT ACCEPT
Challenge #34 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	16% - Need to Add; 83% - List is fine		
Challenge #35 There is an ongoing need to strengthen both the Catholic identity and academic excellence of our schools.	81%	13%	5%
Challenge #36 There is a need to make Catholic education more accessible for those families who wish their children to attend Catholic schools.	86%	9%	5%
Challenge #37 Catholic schools lack viable financial models that are sustainable over time.	88%	6%	6%
Challenge #38 There is a need to strengthen the relationship that should exist between schools, parishes	86%	7%	6%
Challenge #39 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	15% - Need to Add; 83% - List is fine		
FOSTERING EVANGELICAL OUTREACH			
Challenge #40 There is a need to effectively preach the Gospel, to engage one another individually, to share with joy, enthusiasm, and conviction the Good News.	83%	11%	6%
Challenge #41 The Saturday/Sunday Mass experience needs to be a dynamic place of worship and fellowship that assists with a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.	78%	14%	8%
Challenge #42 Our parishes, schools and their leaders, need to facilitate and revitalize the community of faith, especially in support of the family, and as places of formation, evangelization, missionary zeal and care for the poor.	81%	12%	7%
Challenge #43 There is a need for diocesan leaders to encourage solidarity and sensitivity to the uniqueness of each parish, support parish leaders and assist with implementing standards.	74%	11%	14%
Challenge #44 Everyone in diocesan leadership needs to nurture, sustain, support and encourage those in crises of faith, both from within and those who have left the Church.	75%	15%	10%
Challenge #45 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	19% - Need to Add; 80% - List is fine		
Challenge #46 There is a need to acknowledge past and/or present sinful actions by individual members of the Church, while at the same time pointing toward the Truth and beauty of the Church as the visible Body of Christ.	56%	17%	26%
Challenge #47 There is a need to overcome our individual FEAR of evangelizing, so we might effectively and fruitfully share our faith in the person of Jesus Christ.	69%	17%	15%
Challenge #48 There is a need to prayerfully engage those at risk of leaving the Church, or those who have already gone, in a manner that recognizes them where they are in their lives, not necessarily where we think they should be.	78%	15%	7%
Challenge #49 There is a need for all those in rectory/school offices to remember that they are often providing the FIRST ENCOUNTER with Jesus Christ.	78%	11%	11%
Challenge #50 There is a need to clarify the theological and historical questions that many people have.	78%	11%	12%
Challenge #51 There is a need to more effectively evangelize and train the diocesan leaders, Clergy, Staff, DRE's, Principals and Teachers so that they may live and share the Gospel message.	75%	15%	10%
Challenge #52 There is a need for acknowledgment by those in authority for past transgressions, for the sole purpose of healing those affected.	44%	13%	43%
Challenge #53 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	20% - Need to Add; 78% - List is fine		
Challenge #54 Do versus Being: There is a need to make Social Media and Technology relevant and impactful as a means of Evangelization and Catechesis; not as something we do, but as a share of who we are as disciples of Christ.	81%	11%	8%
Challenge #55 There is a need to address the current perception that religion is a private matter and should remain in an individual's personal sphere.	68%	13%	20%
Challenge #56 Generational Gap: There is a need to engage the older generations to utilize Social Media with their insights, wisdom, knowledge and life experiences.	51%	12%	36%
Challenge #57 Impact on the Young: There is a need to better understand the formative impact that technology is having on its users, especially young people.	84%	7%	8%
Challenge #58 Best practices: There is a need to consolidate our research into the impacts of Social Media so all can leverage it.	76%	12%	13%
Challenge #59 Greatest Challenge: There is a need to prioritize our resources; time, talent and finances, to utilize all forms of Media (social, traditional, and new) to assist in the Proclamation of the Gospel and to counter the prevailing perception in the secular media.	81%	8%	11%
Challenge #60 Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?	10% - Need to Add; 89% - List is fine		

Merton Center 40th

Oh, what a night!

FAIRFIELD—Friends of the Thomas Merton Center celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the inner-city house of hospitality in a big way with a gala attended by more than 150 people at the Patterson Club in Fairfield.

The gala raised \$106,000 for the Merton Center, which first opened its doors in November 1974, when a group of eight volunteers led by Father John Giuliani walked through the back streets of downtown Bridgeport and invited the poor and homeless to lunch. The rest is history!

The 40th Anniversary Gala was the perfect night to introduce the new executive director of the Thomas Merton Center, Brian Jenkins. Brian provided a heartfelt speech on the important work of Catholic Charities and the Thomas Merton Center for the needy and vulnerable in Bridgeport.

The Thomas Merton Center for Hospitality provides breakfast, lunch and day shelter Monday-Saturday to approximately 300 people daily, and its Eat Smart food pantry provides nutritious food to over 400 families a month. Merton Center also helps



people to develop daily living skills through support groups, case management services and other programs.

Many thanks to all those who made the elegant evening a success, and to the generations of volunteers and donors who have served Merton Center so generously and faithfully. ■



GALA CO-CHAIRS—Bishop Frank Caggiano welcomed Lorraine Carrano and Jon Vaccarella to the Patterson Club in Fairfield. Lorraine and Jon were the co-chairs for the 40th Anniversary Gala.

A LIVELY EVENING—The evening featured fine food, cocktails, dancing and a live auction. The highlight of the evening was a brief reflection by guest speaker Bishop Frank Caggiano.



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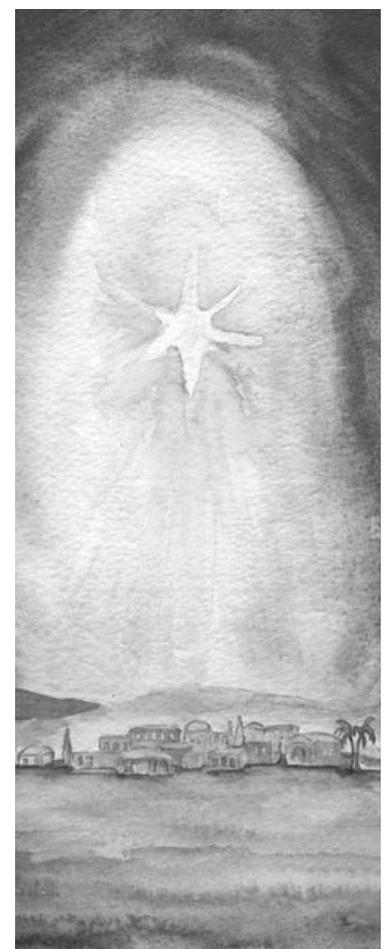
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'Meeting Ignatius for the First Time'

Ignatian Center to train lay spiritual directors

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

"We are co-workers in the vineyard," said Father James Bowler, S.J., at the launch of the Ignatian Spirituality Center at Fairfield

have always formed partnerships to testify that "in Christ we have received greater internal freedom."

More than 200 attended the launch ceremony in the Regina Quick Center on campus. In



HEROIC LEADERSHIP—Christopher Lowney, author of *Heroic Leadership*, spoke about "Meeting Ignatius for the First Time." He said the 16th century saint is more relevant than ever as people seek to find meaning in their lives.

University on November 23.

The new program aims to further invest lay men and women in the charism of the Jesuits. Father Bowler, director of Ignatian Spirituality programs at Fairfield University, said that the Jesuits

addition to training lay spiritual directors and supervisors, the Ignatian center will offer retreats and parish programs in cooperation with the Diocese of Bridgeport.

One of the major themes pre-

sented by the speakers was the need to respond to the growing number of people who struggle to find meaning in their lives, even as they pull away from the traditional faith experience.

"Each of us has a deep and abiding hunger, a deep restlessness of heart," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. "We seek the face of God and wish to encounter him, to walk in his presence. Each of us hungers for a path where God is present." He added that the new Ignatian Spirituality Center will help to bring "great grace" into people's lives.

"We are blessed to have the center begin its work here and now as we go forward in the pilgrimage of faith," said the bishop, referring to the Fourth Diocesan Synod, now underway in the diocese.

Father Jeffrey Von Arx, S.J., president of Fairfield University, said the new Ignatian Center will help to answer the questions, "What are needs in the life of the Church and in our world? Where are we needed most and how can we serve best?"

"Every generation has to re-create the faith. If we lose that, we lose the spirit," said Father Von Arx, who thanked all those present for giving witness to the Jesuit charism.

Author and businessman Christopher Lowney, author of *Heroic Leadership*, a work on Jesuit spirituality, spoke on "meeting Ignatius for the first time." He said the 16th-century saint is more relevant than ever in light of the teachings of Pope Francis and the spiritual alienation felt by many people.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, he noted that 71 percent of those who left the Church say they left because their spiritual needs were not being met. He also said that 33 percent of adults under the age of 30 are religiously unaffiliated.

Lowney said many people are stressed out and searching for the meaning of life. "We're floating along in a river of email, text and iPads, present to everything except what's most important in our lives," he said noting that the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius have spoken to generations of spiritual seekers by offering a path to wholeness.

Dr. Donna Andrade, academ-

ic dean of Fairfield Prep, who recently returned from an international conference in Spain, said that it is important to look at the "intersection between Ignatian spirituality and the world" at a time of "disruptive innovation" in technology.

She said that Ignatian spirituality can move a student from information to formation and eventually to transformation. "We don't teach subjects, we teach people," she added.

Deacon Patrick Toole, a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Fairfield, is serving as chair of the Center for Ignatian Spirituality Advisory Board. He received a blessing from Very Rev. John Cecero, S.J., provincial of the U.S.A. North East, who said spiritual directors "facilitate the encounter of so many with the living God."

St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield has been selected to participate in a pilot program for the center. The goal of the program is to introduce the parish to prayer in the Ignatian tradition. The parish will also learn how to apply Ignatian spirituality to the decision-making process in the parish.

As part of the program, the center will establish an annual symposium to explore the application of Ignatian spirituality to contemporary culture (e.g., science, business). The symposium will be held on the campus of Fairfield University and broadcast digitally. Ignatian spirituality and the current environmental crisis will be offered in the spring of 2015.

(For more info, visit the Center for Ignatian Spirituality of Fairfield University online at: Fairfield.edu/CIS, or phone Father James Bowler: 203.254.4000.)



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Assumption, Kings Highway
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Communion Breakfast at Fairfield U.

CAPP honors an 'angel'

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano set the tone for the annual CAPP Communion Breakfast in his homily at the Egan Chapel of Fairfield University, when he told the gathering of business leaders that the Gospel is an "antidote" to the current fallacy "that my life is all about me."

The breakfast was sponsored by Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice (CAPP) of Fairfield County and by the Center for Faith & Public Life of Fairfield University.

With over 200 men and women gathered for Mass, Bishop Caggiano said that an egocentric notion of the self has only managed to "create loneliness, betrayal and hurt" in the people who espouse it.

He drew laughter from the congregation when he quoted financier Peter Lynch who said, "We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like."

The bishop said that the Church teaches that the path of holiness is through a loving community. "We can't see the face of God without loving or making others the center of our lives."

He told business leaders and

other professionals "to live for others one person at a time" and that the desire to serve others is at the heart of Catholic social teaching. "My life is all about you, which may seem strange to the world but it is the way to everlasting life. My brothers and sisters, let's take that walk together."

At the breakfast that followed, marketing entrepreneur and philanthropist Al DiGuido of Westport was presented the CAPP Business Leadership Award for his work as founder and CEO of Al's Angels, which supports children affected by financial hardships and those struggling with cancer.

In accepting the honor presented by CAPP member Bob Rooney, DiGuido reminded the gathering that, like the bishop, he is a Brooklyn native.

DiGuido, a member of St. Mathew parish in Norwalk, said that true leadership isn't created when someone is given a title but by "walking the walk and leading when no one is watching."

He said that he founded Al's Angels after a Tomorrow's Children Fund event, when he listened to the stories of parents whose children were afflicted with cancer. Most were bankrupt.

He remembered driving away

from the event in a heavy rain thinking about his own three young children. "I thought, what if it were my children? What if it were me begging for money?"

He said he named the group Al's Angels because he believes the volunteers are truly sent by God to serve those who are lonely and afflicted.

Visiting young children suffering from cancer is "like touching the face of God," he told the gathering, emphasizing the importance of faith. "I've seen miracles happen. If you don't think Christ is holding your hand, I'm here to tell you that he is."

DiGuido finished his talk by challenging business leaders to build social conscience into the DNA of their organizations. "Business leaders have a responsibility to build a legacy of caring organizations. It's not just about the bottom line, but motivating and incentivizing people to do good. The world needs faith-filled leaders. Our responsibility is to the human family and no one



CAPP BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD—Business leader and philanthropist Al DiGuido of Westport (left), recipient of the CAPP Business Leadership Award, is congratulated by Msgr. Walter Orłowski, pastor of St. Matthew Parish in Norwalk, at the Communion Breakfast held at Fairfield University

else is coming forward to help the kids and families we serve."

In her keynote address Kerry Robinson, executive director of the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, articulated the same theme. Describing the Church as the "largest human-

itarian network in the world," Robinson said that the Church fosters an ethic that is "other-centered, not self-centered," and that the challenge of the laity is "living vocationally" in service of the Church and the world.

(For more info, visit www.capp-usa.com.)

John Gutman named executive director of NCH

STAMFORD—New Covenant House, lower Fairfield County's soup kitchen and food pantry, announces the appointment of a new executive director. John Gutman, a longtime volunteer at New Covenant House (NCH), brings a wide range of experience from the corporate world. Prior to joining NCH, he was CEO of his own consultancy focused on growing start-ups and mid-tier enterprises through strategic positioning and corporate sponsorship. Previously, he was senior vice-president at several media companies and director at the National Basketball Association. Gutman holds a BA from Syracuse University. He has lived in Lower Fairfield County for the past 21 years and currently resides in Norwalk.

Gutman will be responsible for leading New Covenant House, a key program of Catholic Charities, through the



JOHN GUTMAN

balance of a Capital Campaign targeted to raise \$1.7 million for a new facility scheduled to open in the spring of 2015. The "new" New Covenant House will encompass 8,000 sq. ft. at 174 Richmond Hill, a major expansion from its current 2,000 sq. ft. location.

NCH is the largest soup

kitchen in lower Fairfield County. It serves hot meals twice a day, 365 days a year. Including the breakfast program and food pantry, it provides over 700,000 meals a year. The level of its food assistance programs has doubled in the past six years.

Founded over 36 years ago, NCH is an interfaith program of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, the largest nongovernmental provider of human services in the area. NCH serves the needy and vulnerable, including the homeless, elderly, disabled, working poor, and children. No one is turned away. There are no requirements to receive services at NCH, except the mutual exchange of respect and dignity.

(To learn more about New Covenant House or to donate, go to: nchstamford.org/capital-campaign.)

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Parish News

St. Agnes Parish is 50 years strong

GREENWICH—On November 2, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano was the principal celebrant and homilist at a Mass to celebrate the 50th anniversary of St. Agnes Parish.

The parish was founded in 1963, and the first Mass in the current church was celebrated in 1964.

For its anniversary celebration, the church was overflowing with congregants and clergy. The Mass was concelebrated by the current pastor, Father Jim McDevitt, Deacon John Linsenmeyer, pastor emeritus Father Bill Carey, Father John Bambrick and St. Agnes' original pastor, Father J.

Clifford Gris .

St. Agnes Parish is presently undergoing a physical and spiritual revitalization. The church building is being renovated and many young families are joining the parish.

Joan Englert-Eaton and Jean Englert-Arcoite, twins, the first two babies to be baptized by Father Gris , some 50-odd years ago, were present for both the Mass and the celebration brunch in the Carriage Room. They celebrated the anniversary along with their mother, Patricia Englert, one of the founding members of the parish.

As part of the celebra-



FRED CAMILLO, a Greenwich State Representative, presented St. Agnes with a certificate from the CT General Assembly signed by the Speaker of the House.



AT THEIR 50TH ANNIVERSARY celebration, St. Agnes parishioners welcomed their founding pastor, Father J. Clifford Gris .

Saluting 'Mothers of the Parish'

STAMFORD—The Stamford District Council of Catholic Women (CCW) held their annual Mother of the Parish presentation on the Feast of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in October at St. Bridget of Ireland Parish.

Father Matthew Mauriello, diocesan CCW moderator and pastor of St. Roch Parish in Greenwich, was the celebrant and



homilist. The program included the praying of the Rosary and the presentation of awards. The Women's Guild of St. Bridget Parish hosted a reception following the ceremony.

The 2014 Mother of Parish Recipients are Ann Marie Canty from St. Bridget of Ireland; Stanislaw Zalewska from Holy Name Parish; Karen Sabia of Sacred Heart Parish; Rosalie Mastropaolo, Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish; Lucretia Castro from St. Mary Parish; Alicia Sanchez of St. Benedict/Our Lady of Montserrat Parish; Sue Kremheller of the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist; and Helen Foster, St. Gabriel Parish.

Priests who turned out to honor the women of their parish included (back row, l-r) Father Pawel Hrebenko, Holy Name; Father Alfonso Picone, Sacred Heart; Father Peter Smolik, Star of the Sea; Father Mauriello; Father Liam Quinlan, St. Gabriel; and Father Edward McAuley, pastor of St. Bridget.

The program was dedicated to the memory of the late Marie Walsh, past president of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women, friend of Catholic Charities, and faithful parishioner of St. Mary Parish in Stamford, who passed away in January, 2012.

tion, Father Gris  was presented with a key to the parish as a token of appreciation for his many years of service, and Tony and Judy Rocco renewed their wedding vows to mark their 65th

anniversary. Fred Camillo, a Greenwich State Representative, presented St. Agnes Parish with a certificate from the CT General Assembly signed by the Speaker of the House.



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EDITORIAL

The Giving Tree

School kids from St. Joseph School in Brookfield and teens at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Riverside filled hundreds of boxes with school supplies, toys and personal gift items to be sent to needy children around the world. Men from the Knights of Columbus distributed warm coats to children in seven Connecticut cities.

Blessed Sacrament Parish, in one of Bridgeport's most challenged neighborhoods, distributed more than a thousand bags of food to people in their neighborhood, regardless of religious background. Catholic lawyers from the St. Thomas More Society brought toys and kids clothes to the Nehemiah Commission services for children.

Teens from all over the diocese collected literally thousands of pounds of soup, pasta, rice, beans, breakfast cereal and canned goods to supply food pantries.

Why are they doing these things? On the first Christmas, Christ was born in a cold stable. Explaining the Knights coat project, Supreme Knight Carl Anderson said, "This serves as a reminder that Christmas is not simply a commercial holiday but is about giving, and celebrating God's love for us, and our love of neighbor."

You don't have to be a Knight or a school kid, a teen or a lawyer to join them. Giving trees, mitten trees and take-a-snowflake trees have sprouted in parishes, schools and religious education classrooms. Parishes have a Sunday of Giving, Weekend of Sharing, Bring a Gift and other programs throughout Advent. Take a tag off the Giving Tree. You're going shopping anyway for your near and dear. Buy a toy your own kids would love, toss in a pair of mittens, and spread the Christmas love a little further.

A Journey of Hope

It's interesting to note that Advent is sometimes referred to in Church teaching as the "little Lent," a time of fasting and penitence as we watch and wait for the coming of Christ.

Advent invites us to introduce a note of prayer and silence into the swirling music of the holiday season.

Perhaps it does us little good to fret about the commercialization of Christmas and the ever-expanding "shopping season." Even in the buying frenzy that has overtaken Christmas, the focus is still on giving to those we love—and reaching out to strangers in need. No need for humbug!

The best way to celebrate Christmas is to take it back for ourselves, to plumb the depth of the season in our own lives—and that begins with immersing ourselves in Advent.

Advent asks us to fast before we feast, to make ourselves worthy before the great gift we are about to receive. It calls for some wandering in the darkness of our own heart, so that we may be renewed in stronger light.

It is worth the wait. In his Advent message this year, Pope Francis tells us that Advent is a journey of the human family toward hope.

"The time of Advent returns us to the horizon of hope, a hope that does not disappoint because it is founded on the Word of God. A hope that does not disappoint, simply because the Lord never disappoints!"

And in his great conciliatory and welcoming spirit, the Pope adds, "Let us rediscover the beauty of being together along the way: the Church, with her vocation and mission, and the whole of humanity, the people, the civilizations, the cultures, all together on the paths of time."

"The journey is never finished," the Holy Father teaches, "Just as in each of our own lives, there is always a need to restart, to rise again, to recover a sense of the goal of one's own existence."

So, with Advent leading the way, we wish you a very Happy and Holy Christmas and all the blessing of the New Year. There's still time to take the Advent journey, and it begins with quietly lighting a candle.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Student leaders recognized

BRIDGEPORT—The Cathedral Academy Upper School, in partnership with the Walter E. Lockett Foundation, began the wonderful tradition of honoring students who exhibit leadership qualities and are role models for Cathedral Academy students. Lockett is himself a graduate of the Cathedral Academy (then St. Augustine School) and Kolbe Cathedral High School.

"Throughout his life, Walter has lived his belief that we must use and share our God-given talents and resources with others and he has a commitment to giving back to the community that gave him so much," says Principal Larry Di Palma. "His message to students is that they are unique and that they must set goals to succeed, work very hard to maximize their learning, and never give up."

Student leaders are selected for the following qualities:

- someone whose actions have



WE SALUTE THESE OUTSTANDING student leaders: Front (l-r) Amayah Algarin, Kianna Mercado, Matteo Canu and Teyvah Puttasodd. Back: Walter Lockett, Enike Etsekhome, Michelle Jimenez, Jose Dataram, Asha-Gaye Lewis, Philomena Appiah, Bryan Estrella and Principal Larry DiPalma

positively affected their classroom and/or school

- someone who has demonstrated the following traits: integrity, balance, collaboration, respect for self and others, creativity, honesty, organized, open to new ideas, ability to motivate others, empathize with others
- someone who is emerging as

a leader and shown tremendous growth from the beginning of the year.

Each marking period, students are chosen by the faculty as leaders and are honored at a breakfast with Lockett and Principal DiPalma. The first Leadership Breakfast was held on November 25.

Correction: Omitted photo of St. Augustine Medal recipients

Julia and Joseph Truglio were unable to attend the St. Augustine Medal award ceremony, but they submitted a photo taken in their home parish of St. Clement in Stamford. They were disappointed when our special St. Augustine Medal insert did not include their photo. We believe that the photo they originally submitted is lost somewhere in cyberspace.



On their nomination form for the award, their pastor, Father Joseph Malloy, wrote the following: "Joe and Julia have been dedicated parishioners at St. Clement Church for decades. They attend daily Mass. Joe, age 94, is a Eucharistic Minister, altar-server, and parish handyman. Julia, age 85, who suffered a catastrophic illness that left her handicapped, bakes for all of the various parish events. Joe and Julia have been married for 65 years. They certainly are true examples of living the Christian way of life by their total love of God, family, parish and neighbor."

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Editorial



The Christmas we need

CATHOLIC BY GRACE

BY DENISE BOSSERT

Denise Bossert is a national Catholic writer and columnist.

I have dipped my toes in the chaos of the Christmas-before-Advent scene. I've been to the mall once. I've landed on radio stations that play Christmas music around the clock—and quickly popped in my Rosary CD to escape the noise. I've seen enough of commercialized Christmas even though I have actively avoided it this year.

Advent is the only antidote.

But Advent only comes to those who know how to get quiet. It hides from those who have to hurry. It will never be found in the crowded places and packed spaces of shopping aisles and city crosswalks.

Advent waits to be invited to

your December. It will not show up on its own. It is a polite guest. It will not crash your party.

Christmas-without-Advent is a fake. An imposter. We all know it.

The Christmas we all need, the one we long for, the one we can imagine so clearly . . . it only comes to those who walk alongside Mary. In the quiet. Away from the crowds. Where Sacred Scripture comes alive and holiness is real.

It's no mirage, this Advent journey. It's not an optional side excursion on the way to Christmas. It's necessary. It's the way to Christmas. The only road to Bethlehem.

I was blessed to travel to the Holy Land twice in 2014. In fact,

I am writing to you now from Bethlehem. I stood there today, at Shepherds Field, and the idea of the crowded mall seemed so silly, so completely out of step with Advent. I knelt to pray where Christ was born, and the idea of jacking up the credit card to buy a few more presents seemed almost unholy, almost contradictory.

The two don't go together. Not when you are here. Not when you are removed from the bright lights and staged windows of Main Street America.

Today, I imagined a pregnant young woman and her beloved husband as they journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, over the rugged terrain that I have walked with my own feet, in my own Timberland boots, as my filled water bottle sloshed against my backpack, and I lifted my camera to capture the real Nazareth, the real Ein Kerem (Zechariah & Elizabeth's home), the real Bethlehem. And I cannot think of anything but the plan of salvation that brought God into our world. The part of me that can be so easily abducted and thrown into the chaos of commercialized

Christmas is gone.

But this kind of contemplation does not require an international pilgrimage—although it certainly gave me a new perspective. One can find this path—from Nazareth to Bethlehem—by doing some deliberate things.

This pilgrimage begins with receiving God, your very own personal Annunciation-moment. Christ coming to you in the Eucharist and you being sent to go forth once you have received Him. The pilgrimage is a journey with Mary from Nazareth. It happens when we take Christ with us, and we share him with family and friends, as Mary did at Ein Kerem in the hills of Judea at the Visitation. The Lord grows within us as we feed and nourish our life in the Spirit. We do this by reading, by praying, by remembering the poor, by listening to Advent songs (and waiting for Christmas songs), by eating as a family around the table with the Advent Wreath as a centerpiece, by saying a prayer for those who send us cards rather than tossing the cards mindlessly in a basket.

This pilgrimage does not require

money, or imitation snow, or double-sided wrapping paper. It only requires an undivided heart. We journey with Israel to the coming Messiah. When we set our eyes on Mary and run ahead to take hold of her mantle, we remember. That is the journey that leads to Christ.

Yes, you can make this pilgrimage through the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church. But if you are able to do it, go to the Holy Land. Some day. Some way. Go.

And kneel there, where you can imagine it all, where the real Advent cannot be usurped.

Nazareth. Ein Kerem. Bethlehem. These are real places. And the Franciscans are here, waiting for you to come and experience it all for yourself. Pilgrimage. It's part of our faith tradition, whether it is a quiet pilgrimage of the heart or a pilgrimage that takes us to the other side of the world.

We are a pilgrimage people. And we are on a mission to discover Jesus Christ and to share him with everyone we meet.

Blessed & holy Advent to you and your family, from Bethlehem of Judea. ■



Snap Out of It, Scrooge

A DAD'S VIEW

BY MATTHEW HENNESSEY

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

Some people get depressed at Christmastime. My father-in-law, Bill Reel, was one such guy. He never could get into the spirit of the season. Couldn't wait for January to come. "Christmas music is supposed to cheer us up, but it makes me sad," he once wrote.

Mr. Reel had a column in a New York City newspaper for thirty-plus years. In a very direct way, I owe whatever success I've had as a writer to him. He encouraged me to set pen to paper—set me off on this path. And he always gave good advice.

"Omit needless words." He borrowed that from E.B. White.

"One day at a time." He borrowed that from Bill W.

"Never worry about money. Enjoy your family. The money will take care of itself." I'm pretty sure that was original to him. Such good advice. I wish I was better at taking it.

Sadly, my father-in-law passed away a few years back. I still miss him terribly. Think about him all the time. I try my best to write as well—and as honestly—as he did. In the spirit of honesty, I have to say I'm having a hard time feeling

jolly this Christmas. I've got a bad case of the Bah Humbugs.

I'm not sure why. Maybe it's the constant stream of bad news. The tragedies. The protests. The violence. Maybe it's the political bickering and fevered one-upmanship I see on my social media feeds. How many old friendships have been fractured by Facebook? How many happy families have turned sour thanks to Twitter? What a waste. So unnecessary.

But that couldn't possibly be the source of my seasonal slump. Partisanship goes on all year long. It must be something else.

"Christmas is just a day like any other day," says my friend George. "What's to get so excited about?"

Well, I used to get plenty excited about it. I used to float through December like a seagull on an ocean breeze. It was an Advent updraft. As a teenager, I'd even get pumped up for Midnight Mass, which was often the only time we'd go to church all year.

Why then, this year, do I feel December 25th will come and go,

just a day like any other day?

Whatever's causing my holiday heartsick, I find myself looking deeper into the spiritual side of the season. I always heard the message to look past the commercialism of Christmas, but I don't think I ever really listened. For maybe the first time, I don't care if I receive a gift this year. I already have everything that matters anyway. No trinket or toy could come close to giving me the joy that I get from my family.

I hear folks say that Advent is a season of waiting. Maybe that's my problem—I've grown so spoiled I don't want to wait anymore. I get everything on demand. I can get an electric pineapple peeler shipped directly to my house—overnight. I have the world at my fingertips. Why should I have to wait?

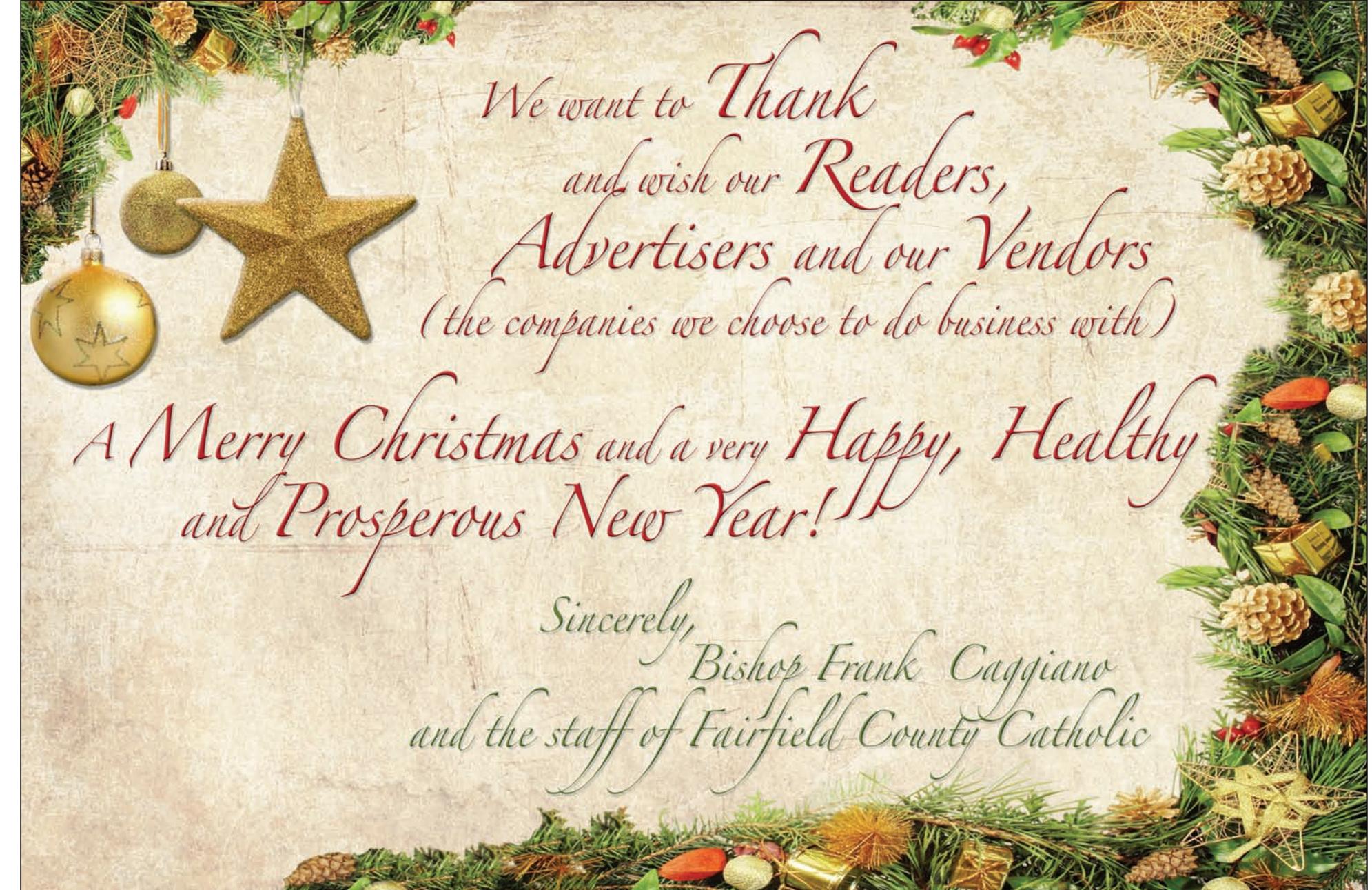
It could be, too, that the unrelenting pressure of keeping my young family fed, clothed, and educated is starting to get to me. I confess that I've been paying a little more attention to the

price of things this year than I have in years past. But whatever problems old Scrooge Hennessey has, the Holy Family surely had it worse. Homeless. Pregnant. Confused. Herod on their trail. They got through the First Noel on faith alone. Maybe I can too.

Here's what I'm going to do. Instead of waiting for the spirit of the season to turn my lump of coal into a gingerbread cookie, I'm going to take the initiative. I'm going to turn off the Internet. I'm going to put on a Bing Crosby song. And I'm going to light the Advent wreath. Then I'm going to gather the kids and read them the Nativity story.

That oughta put some peppermint in my step. That oughta get me in the mood for mistletoe. Then, when I'm properly cheerful, I'll offer up a prayer of gratitude for my dear departed father-in-law, who never let me down even when he was feeling down.

Merry Christmas to you and yours, from me and mine. See you at Midnight Mass. ■



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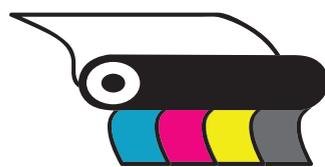
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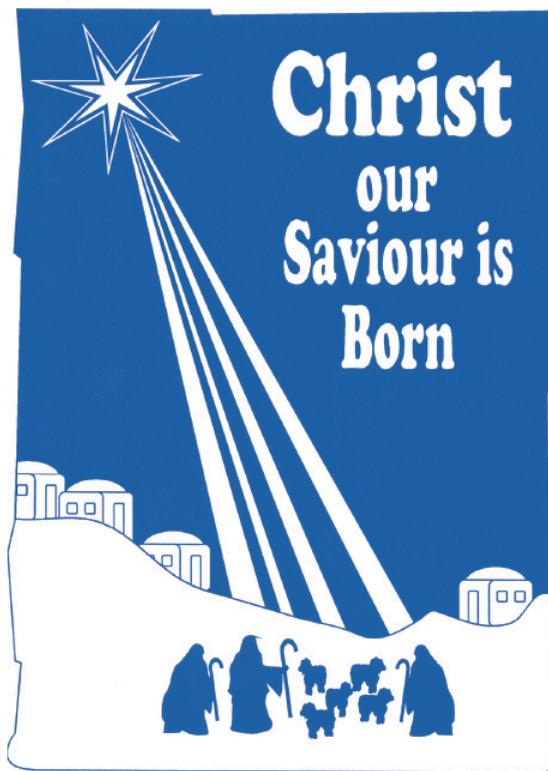
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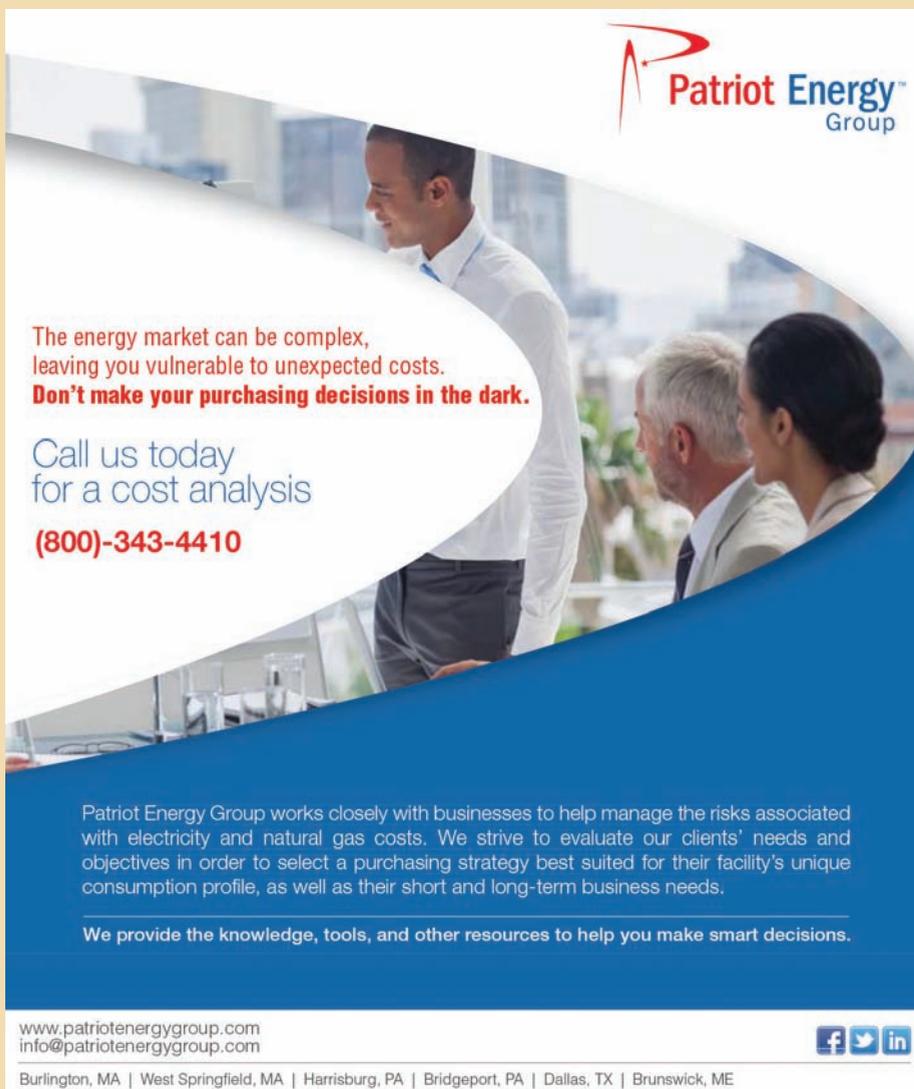
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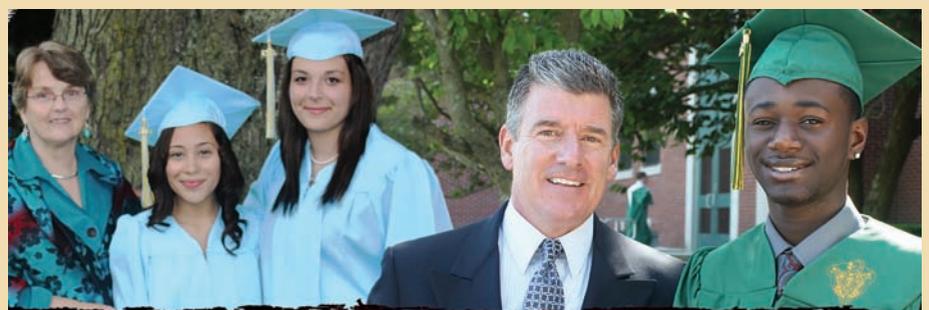
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Advent/Christmas

K of C Museum highlights Neapolitan crèches

NEW HAVEN— Neapolitan crèche-making, a distinct and widely known artistic tradition, is closely associated with Naples, the Italian city from which it takes its name. Each figure in these elaborate nativity scenes is a finely crafted work of art, employing techniques and customs dating back centuries to the Baroque era.

The Knights of Columbus Museum in New Haven is showcasing this unique art form in its tenth annual Christmas crèche exhibition, which is on view through February 1, 2015. "Buon Natale: Crèches of Italy" features two dozen Italian inspired nativity scenes. The highlight

of the show is a 120-square-foot Neapolitan diorama, with more than 100 human figures.

Crèches have been a popular part of Western Christianity for more than 800 years. Introduced in Italy by St. Francis of Assisi, they serve as a way for everyday people to reflect on Jesus' modest birth. Through the centuries, crèches have developed into large and ornate displays in public as well as within the home.

The Neapolitan crèche is perhaps the world's most recognizable and popular nativity style. It places the Holy Family in the heart of 16th-century Naples, rather than a stable in

Bethlehem. These elegant and elaborate scenes feature the Child Jesus in the midst not only of adoring angels and shepherds, but also among merchants, musicians and commoners; literally at the center of the life of the community.

The centerpiece and seven other nativity scenes are from Bottega D'Arte Presepiale Cantone & Costabile, in Naples, all designed exclusively for the K of C Museum exhibition.

Cantone & Costabile was selected last year by Pope Francis for creation of the Vatican nativity scene in St. Peter's Square. One of the scenes on display at the K of C museum was inspired



THE NEAPOLITAN CRÈCHE is perhaps the world's most popular nativity style. These intricate and elaborate scenes, on display from now through February 1 at the Knights of Columbus Museum in New Haven, place the Holy Family among merchants, musicians and commoners going about their daily lives; literally at the center of the life of the community.

by the crèche chosen by the Pope.

Artist Antonio Cantone, who installed his work at the museum in New Haven, proudly said that his crèche was the first of Neapolitan design to grace the piazza outside St. Peter's Basilica. "Pope Francis liked

how all the people were positioned in awe around the Baby Jesus," he said.

Italian-born Father Giandomenico Flora, rector of St. Margaret Shrine in Bridgeport, visited the museum and saw the artists from his native country at



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— Deacon Bill Koniers



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from



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Advent/Christmas

work installing their creations.

“The Italian tradition of the Christmas crèche is to reproduce not only the Nativity scene but also the whole town with all of its inhabitants,” said Father Flora. “The artists’ intention is to underline the humility of the Holy Family and, in particular, of Jesus who decided to come into the world in a stable without the majority of people realizing it.”

In addition to the exhibition, the museum will feature its Christmas Tree Festival, with 24 trees trimmed and decorated with handmade ornaments by Catholic school children from



across Connecticut. The festival’s opening celebration took place Saturday, December 6, with Yuletide Carolers, children’s crafts and a visit from St. Nicholas. The museum will also host a Christmastime Family Day on Sunday, December 28, from 12-3 p.m., with live music, family activities and an opportunity to enjoy the Christmas trees and crèches with extended family and friends.

(The Knights of Columbus Museum is located at 1 State Street in New Haven and is open 10 am-5 pm daily with free admission and parking. For info, call 203.865.0400 or visit kofcmuseum.org.)



Holiday Schedule 2014-2015

We invite you to attend our Christmas and New Years services listed below.

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Wednesday, December 24th, 2014
(Christmas Vigil Masses)
4:00pm Masses (church and gymnasium),
5:30pm Mass followed by Children’s Nativity Pageant
11:30pm Festival of Carols
12:00 Midnight Mass

Thursday, December 25th, 2014
(Christmas Day Masses)
7:30am, 9:00am, 10:30am, 12:00pm

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

Wednesday, December 31, 2014
(New Year’s Eve Mass)
5:30pm Vigil

Thursday, January 1, 2015
(New Year’s Day Masses)
9:00am, 10:30am, 12:00pm

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and HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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Rev. Henry Hoffman
Rev. Michael Novajosky
Deacon John DiTaranto

Saint Jude Roman Catholic Church
707 Monroe Turnpike (Rt. 111)
Monroe Connecticut, 06468
203.261.6404



Advent/Christmas

Operation Christmas Child

BROOKFIELD—St. Joseph School first and seventh-graders recently completed Operation Christmas Child; a program run by the international relief organization, Samaritan's Purse. At St. Joseph's the seventh-graders are "buddies" to the first-graders. Students packed shoeboxes filled with a variety of items for children ages 5-9. The boxes were filled with school supplies, small toys, hygiene items, and accessories. The students wrote personal notes to include in the boxes and made wrapping paper to cover them.

The shoeboxes are sent to children in need throughout the world. The first and seventh-graders, along with their teachers, felt the true Christmas spirit as they were able to spread joy through giving.



Saint Thomas Aquinas Church

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Rev. Victor T Martin, Pastor

Christmas 2014 Schedule

Advent Penance Service

Tuesday, December 16

7:30 pm

Christmas Eve Masses

Wednesday, December 24

4:00 pm - Children's Mass

6:00 pm - Children's Mass

8:00 pm Christmas Mass

11:30 pm Adult Choir Concert

12:00 - Midnight Mass

Christmas Day Masses

Thursday, December 25

8:00 am, 10:00 am, and 12:00 noon

Solemnity of Mary

Mother of God

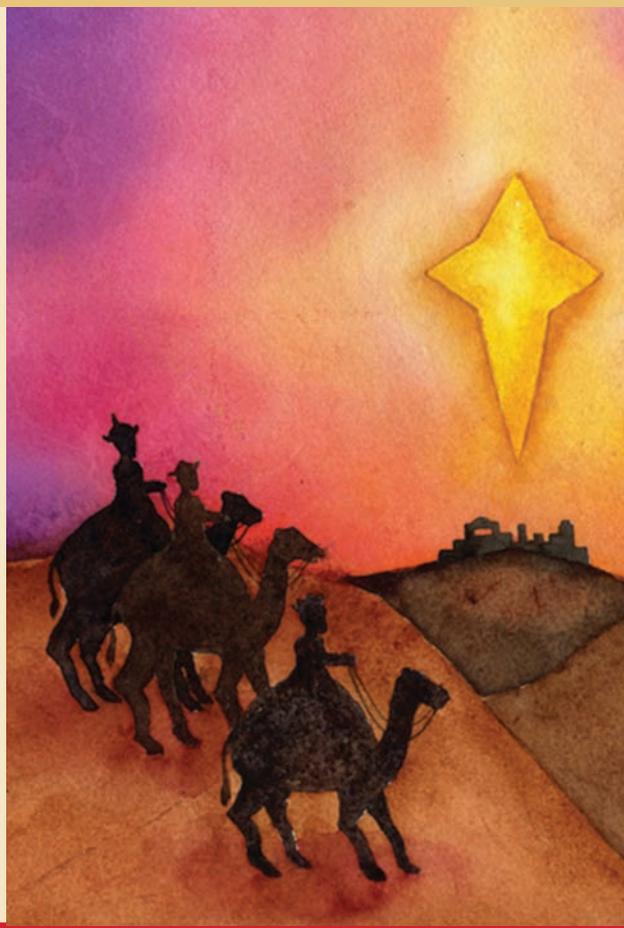
New Year's Eve - December 31

5:00 pm Mass

New Year's Day Masses

Thursday - January 1, 2015

8:00 am, 10:00 am, and 12:00 noon



St. James Church

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

Rev. Thomas F. Lynch, Pastor

COMMUNAL PENANCE SERVICE

Wednesday, December 17 - 7:30pm - Church

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

BLESSING OF EXPECTANT PARENTS

Saturday and Sunday Masses, December 13 and 14

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

ST. JAMES MINISTRY WITH WOMEN

Friday, December 19 - 6:00pm - Parish Center

Please join an Advent Retreat for fellowship, dinner, prayer and song. \$5.00 donation. Space is limited

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Wednesday, December 24 - Vigil Masses: 4:00pm and 6:00pm

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

Thursday, December 25 - 8:30am, 10:30am

Make a promise to your God today by making a greater commitment in 2015 to open your heart to experience God's intimate love by your consistent participation in Sunday Eucharist.

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

Saturday and Sunday Masses, December 27 and 28

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 2014 and asking for a greater openness to Him in 2015.

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Wednesday, December 31, Vigil Mass: 4:30pm

Holy Day Masses - Thursday, January 1, 2015, 8:30am, 10:30am

SAINT JAMES NEW YEAR'S DAY OF PRAYER

Thursday, January 1, 2015

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

REMEMBRANCE FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE DIED

Saturday, January 3 - 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 holy Word among us - An opportunity to come forward to make or renew your commitment to love and pray with God's holy Word in the scripture.

Saturday, January 4, 2015 - Vigil Mass: 4:30pm

Sunday, January 5, 2014 - 7:30am, 9:15am, 11:15am, and 6:00pm

Merry Christmas!



Nuestra Voz

El Diácono Reverón, 78

BRIDGEPORT—El Diácono Domingo Reverón, Sr., diácono de la Parroquia de St. Peter en Bridgeport, falleció el 9 de Noviembre en el Hospital de St. Vincent's, a la edad de 78 años.

El Diácono Tony Detje, director de los diáconos de la Diócesis de Bridgeport, dijo de él: "Era el hombre más espiritual que he conocido".

Su profunda devoción al Señor y dedicación al servicio de los fieles inspiró otros dos hombres a ser diáconos: su sobrino el Diácono Reynaldo Olavarría, que sirve en la Parroquia de St. Mary en Bridgeport y el Diácono Santos García, que sirve en la Catedral de St. Augustine.

El Diácono Reverón nació en Quebradillas, Puerto Rico, y en

su juventud vino a Bridgeport. Había atendido ya cuatro años de seminario en Puerto Rico. Tras llegar a esta área ayudó a introducir el Cursillo de Cristiandad en la Diócesis de Bridgeport, empezando esa labor en la antigua iglesia de St. Anthony y después en St. Peter. El Cursillo se ha extendido y convoca numerosas ultreyas a través de la diócesis.

Don Domingo fue ordenado Diácono Permanente en 1979, convirtiéndose en el primer diácono hispano de la Diócesis de Bridgeport. Poco después fue diagnosticado con un cáncer y a consecuencia de ello, perdió una gran porción de su mandíbula por cirugía. El Diácono Santos García nos cuenta: "Lo vi sirvi-

endo el altar, aún con los tubos de drenaje en su mandíbula, dos semanas después de la operación". Y sigue diciendo: "Cuando vi a este hombre y cuánto amaba al Señor, me hizo decidir que yo también quería servir como él lo hacía. Santos García fue ordenado diácono en 1987.

El Diácono Reverón fue empleado como cocinero durante 38 años por United Methodist Homes y sirvió como concejal durante el mandato del alcalde de Bridgeport Nick Panuzio.

Su esposa, Milagros, le había precedido y falleció en 2012. Estuvieron casados durante más de 55 años. El Diácono Reverón sacó de las profundidades de su amor en el matrimonio durante su trabajo en el programa



de la diócesis, Encuentros Matrimoniales. Siendo conocido por su calidez humana, paciencia y sabio consejo, respondía rápidamente a las necesidades de otros matrimonios.

Entre otros familiares en esta diócesis, sus deudosos son sus tres hijos: John, Domingo Jr., y Geraldo, su hija Gladys, sus dos nietos y cuatro bisnietos.

En la vigilia del 12 de

Noviembre, se preparó una capilla funeraria en la Parroquia de St. Peter con el cuerpo del Diácono Domingo Reverón. A la mañana siguiente, se celebró el Funeral por el diácono con el Obispo Frank J. Caggiano. Mons. Aniceto Villamide, párroco de St. Peter, pronunció la homilía. Posteriormente fue sepultado en el Cementerio de St. Michael en Bridgeport. ■

Remembering Deacon Reverón

BRIDGEPORT—Deacon Domingo Reverón, Sr., a deacon at St. Peter Parish in Bridgeport, died on November 9 at St. Vincent's Medical Center. He was 78 years old.

"He was the most spiritual man I ever met," says Deacon Tony Detje, director of deacons for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

His devotion to his Lord and to the people he met inspired two other men to become deacons: his nephew Deacon Reynaldo Olavarría, now serving at St. Mary Parish in Bridgeport, and Deacon Santos García, now at St. Augustine Cathedral.

Deacon Reverón was born in Quebradillas, Puerto Rico, and came to Bridgeport as a young man. He had attended seminary for four years in Puerto Rico; after coming to this area he helped to introduce the Cursillo movement to the Diocese of Bridgeport, starting first at the former St. Anthony Parish in Bridgeport and then at St. Peter's. Cursillo is now widespread, holding monthly ultreya meetings throughout the diocese.

He was ordained as a permanent deacon in 1979, becoming the first Hispanic to be ordained deacon in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Shortly thereafter he was diagnosed with cancer, and suffered the loss of a large portion of his jawbone to surgery.

"I saw him serving on the altar two weeks later, with tubes still attached," remembers Deacon Garcia. "When I saw this man, and how much he loved the Lord, that made me decide that I wanted to serve the way this man did." Santos Garcia was ordained a deacon in 1987.

Deacon Reverón was employed as a chef for over 38 years at the United Methodist Homes, and served as a City Council member during the administration of Bridgeport Mayor Nick Panuzio. He was predeceased by his wife, Milagros, who died in 2012. The couple were married for more than 55 years.

Among other relatives in this diocese, he is survived by three sons: John, Domingo, Jr., and Geraldo; his daughter Gladys; two grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

Deacon Reverón was received into St. Peter Church for a vigil on November 12. Bishop Frank J. Caggiano was the principal celebrant at a Mass of Christian Burial for Deacon Reverón the following morning. Msgr. Aniceto Villamide, pastor of St. Peter's, delivered the homily. Interment followed in St. Michael Cemetery in Bridgeport. ■



SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

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2014 ADVENT & CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

CONFESSION SCHEDULE

Immediately after all weekend Masses the weekends of December 13-14 & 20-21

Thursday, December 18: 12:30-2 p.m.

Friday, December 19: 12:30-2 p.m.

Saturday, December 20: 3-4 p.m.

Monday, December 22: 5-6:30 p.m.

CHRISTMAS EVE, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24

4 p.m. – Mass in Church (Organ)

4 p.m. – Mass in Pastore Church Hall (Contemporary Choir)

4 p.m. – Christmas Pageant Mass (Shelton High School)

9 p.m. – Spanish Mass ("Misa del Gallo")

12 Midnight – Midnight Mass

CHRISTMAS DAY, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25

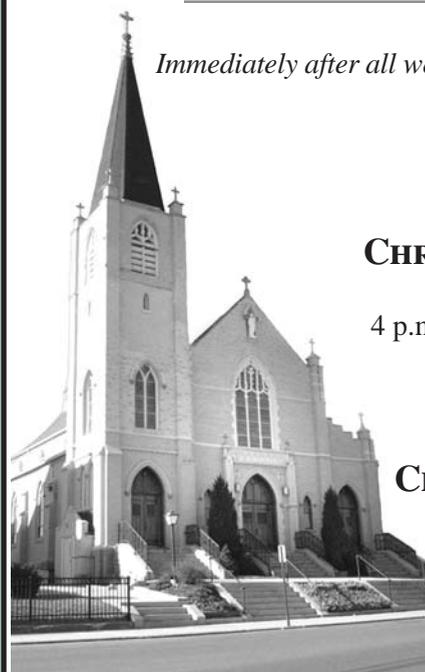
7:30 a.m. – Mass (Organ)

9 a.m. – Mass (Contemporary Choir)

10:45 a.m. – Mass (Organ)

12:30 p.m. – Mass (Spanish)

12:30 p.m. – Mass in Pastore Church Hall (English)



Advent/Christmas

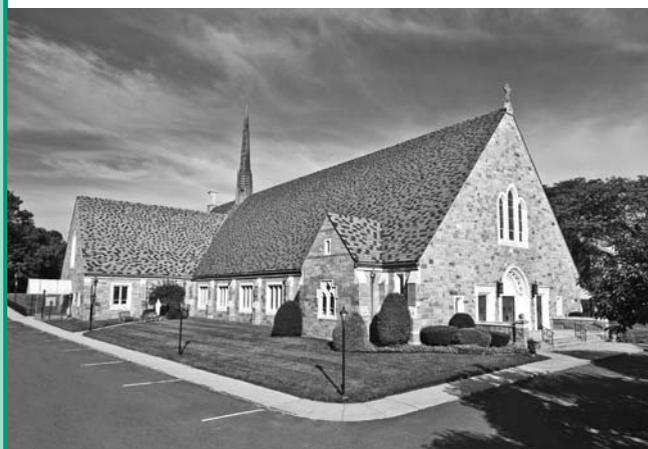


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CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE - 2014

Sacrament of Penance

Saturday, December 20
3:00-4:15pm

Tuesday, December 23
4:00-5:15pm; 7:00-8:00pm

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

Masses

Christmas Vigil

Wednesday, December 24
4:00pm, 6:00pm and 12:00 midnight
Christmas Concert at 11:30pm precedes the Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

Thursday, December 25
7:30am, 10:00am and 12:00 noon

New Years Day

Feast of Mary, The Mother of God
Holy Day of Obligation

Wednesday, December 31
Vigil Mass at 4:30pm

Thursday, January 1
7:30am, 9:00am and 12:00 noon

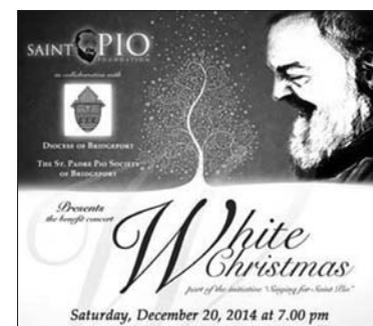
White Christmas Concert hosted by St. Pio Foundation

BRIDGEPORT—The Saint Pio Foundation is proud to announce a “White Christmas” benefit concert, to be held in St. Augustine Cathedral on Saturday, December 20, at 7 pm.

The Saint Pio Foundation is a national charity which supports educational, social and cultural projects that enhance the awareness of Saint Pio of Pietrelcina, one of the most venerated contemporary saints of the Church.

The funds raised by the foundation are used to establish Catholic medical facilities in the U.S.; a percentage of its donations support the hospital “Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza” in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy, founded by St. Pio and currently owned by the Holy See.

The not-to-be-missed event is the first organized by the Saint Pio Foundation in Connecticut. Organized with the support of the Diocese of Bridgeport and the St. Padre Pio Society at St. Margaret Shrine, it will feature performances by Italian Tenor Luciano Lamonarca, pop singer Daniela Fiorentino, guitarist Chris Remediani, the duo Balint/



Mikhailoff, and an intermission by comedian Regina DeCicco.

A special performing guest, directly from Los Angeles, will be the internationally-acclaimed singer, music producer, musician and actor Lee Curreri, star of the motion picture and television series “Fame,” who had the part of Bruno Martelli.

Guest of honor for the evening will be Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, who is also a member of the Religious Advisory Board of the Saint Pio Foundation.

(Suggested donation \$20. For info and reservations, call 203.400.5828, or email padrepiosociety@hotmail.com. For more info about the Saint Pio Foundation, visit www.saintpiofoundation.org, or call 636.220.6550.)

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The Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport

Reverend Father F. John Ringley, Jr., *Pastor*

Reverend Father Sean R. Kulacz, *Parochial Vicar*

Reverend Father Augustine Nguyen, *Chaplain to Kolbe Cathedral High School*

Reverend Mr. William J. Bissenden, Reverend Mr. Santos Garcia, & Reverend Mr. William A. Koniers, *Deacons*

Christmas Season Mass Schedule

Christmas Eve

Wednesday, December 24th

4:00pm *St. Patrick*

4:00pm *St. Augustine Cathedral*

6:00pm (Spanish) *St. Patrick*

8:00pm (Vietnamese) *St. Augustine Cathedral*

12 Midnight (Spanish-English) *St. Augustine Cathedral*

Christmas

Thursday, December 25th:

8:00am *St. Patrick*

9:30am *St. Augustine Cathedral*

11:00am (Spanish) *St. Augustine Cathedral*

12:30pm *St. Patrick*

New Years Eve

Wednesday, December 31st:

6:00pm (Spanish-English) *St. Augustine Cathedral*

8:00pm (Vietnamese) *St. Augustine Cathedral*

New Years Day

Thursday, January 1st:

8:00am *St. Patrick*

10:00am (Spanish-English) *St. Augustine Cathedral*



Care packages head to troops



FAIRFIELD—St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School students collected supplies for Project from the Heart to donate to our troops. The care package materials, which consisted of toiletries, writing material, sunscreen and some favorite snacks, were presented to the Project from the Heart administrators.

The students reached their goal of providing at least 50 care packages for soldiers in a number of different locations. The St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School Human Relations Committee is dedicated to helping their school community acknowledge our troops and veterans.

Advent/Christmas

Passing on Kindness



BRIDGEPORT—Students at Kolbe Cathedral High School carried on a loving tradition with their “Passing on Kindness” project.

When John Tyminski, a much-loved religion teacher at KCHS passed away in 2008, it was revealed that he had made and gifted blankets anonymously whenever he recognized a friend or colleague in need of comfort. In his memory, the Passing on Kindness community project

began. Students learn to crochet and knit scarves, which are then distributed throughout the region to those in need of warmth and kindness.

This has become a KCHS tradition. This year, 468 scarves were hand-made by students, blessed in St. Augustine Cathedral by their chaplain, Father Augustine Nguyen, and prepared for delivery to homeless shelters, hospitals, and soup kitchens.

Season of Giving



TRUMBULL—The Season of Giving began at St. Joseph High School on the First Sunday of Advent when Santa and his elves joined Father Mike Novajosky and the campus ministry team in opening the Advent season with prayer and song. Students, children, and parents joined in the tree lighting ceremony and took name tags off the Giving Tree. So began their preparations to make Christmas a happy and holy moment in the life of many in the Diocese of Bridgeport.



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December 14: Third Sunday of Advent: Mass for Four Voices (Tallis); *Kyrie sine nomine* à 6 (Palestrina); *Veni Domine et noli tardare* à 6 (Morales); *Gaudete in Domino* (de Wert); *Beatus Joannes* (Guerrero); organ works of Bach; with the Student Schola

December 21: Fourth Sunday of Advent: *Missa O Virgo simul et Mater* (Palestrina); *Ecce Virgo concipiet* (Byrd); *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (Ockeghem)

The Midnight Mass of Christmas: *Missa ad praesepe* (Malcolm); *Verbum caro factum est* (Lassus); *Quem vidistis pastores* (Rore); *O magnum mysterium* (Victoria); organ works of Brahms, Messiaen, and Bach

The Mass of Christmas Day: *Missa Dies sanctificatus* (Palestrina); *Viderunt omnes* (Pérotin); *Puer natus est* (Byrd); *Viderunt omnes* (Byrd); *Dies sanctificatus* (Palestrina); organ works of Vierne

December 28: Sunday in the Octave of Christmas: *Missa Praeter rerum seriem* (Rore); *Praeter rerum seriem / Virtus Sancti Spiritus* (Josquin); organ works of Bach

Thursday, January 1, 5:30 p.m.: The Octave Day of Christmas: *Missa Quaeramus cum pastoribus* (Morales); *Alleluia. Dies sanctificatus* (Léonin); *Mirabile mysterium* (Willaert); *Noe, noe psallite* (Mouton); organ works of Tournemire



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Located in Parish Center building behind Saint Mary Church | VISA/MC ACCEPTED

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

SPECIAL EVENTS:

Posadas, December 15-23, 7:00pm
Advent Lessons and Carols,
December 12, 7:00pm

SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION:

Friday, December 20:
11:30am-12:00 Noon
Saturday, December 21 3:00-4:30pm
Monday, December 22: 11:30-12:00pm
Tuesday, December 23: 11:30-12:00pm
Wednesday, December 24: 3:00-4:30pm

CHRISTMAS EVE MASSES:

Wednesday, December 24: 4:00pm
and 7:00pm (Spanish)
11:00pm Rosary by the Crèche
11:30pm Christmas Carols
12:00 Midnight Mass
in the Extraordinary Form

CHRISTMAS DAY MASSES:

Thursday, December 25: 8:00am,
9:30am (Latin), 11:30am,
and 1:15pm (Spanish)



HOLY FAMILY AND NEW YEAR'S EVE MASSES:

Wednesday, December 31 -
8:00am and 12:10pm, 7:00pm (Latin)
8:00pm-12:00 Midnight,
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
Benediction at Midnight Reception

SOLEMNITY OF MARY/ NEW YEAR'S DAY MASSES:

Thursday, January 1:
8:00am, 12:10pm, 5:30pm (Latin),
and 7:30pm (Spanish)

Obituary

Sister Madeline Follachio

Sister Madeline Follachio, RSM, of the Sisters of Mercy, Northeast Community, died

September 14 in West Hartford. One of eight children, she was born in Waterbury on February 25, 1920.

On June 27, 1938, she entered the Sisters of Mercy. This year Sister Madeline celebrated 76 years of religious life!

She was the first in her family to earn a college diploma, from St. Joseph College in West Hartford, and went on to graduate study at Fairfield and Sacred Heart Universities.

Sister Madeline taught in

many schools throughout the state, but her greatest joy were her years at Academy of Our

Lady of Mercy, Luralton Hall, in Milford where she ministered as dean of students for 14 years. In 2003 she was awarded the Claven Award from Luralton, an honor bestowed to women who have "led extraordinary lives, excelled in

their choice of fields and made significant impact on Luralton Hall."

In pre-retirement, Sister Madeline served as a para-professional in Compensatory Education for the Milford Board

of Education, tutoring middle and secondary students. She retired in 1999 but continued active ministry tutoring under the Milford Literacy Center with assignments at Bic Corporation, where she taught English as a Second Language.

Throughout retirement, she maintained an interest in women's and other justice issues. This past November, she was honored by Sacred Heart High School in Waterbury with the Rev. John Meaney Community Impact Award.

A Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated for Sister Madeline in the St. Mary Home Chapel, West Hartford the evening of September 18. She was buried in St. Mary Cemetery the following morning. ■



Sister Gilberte Desilets, DHS

Sister Gilberte Desilets, DHS, died on September 28 at the Daughters of the Holy Spirit Provincial House in Putnam, where she had been in retirement since 2001. She was 102 years old.

Born in the town of St. Gregoire, Quebec, Canada, on February 22, 1912, Gilberte Desilets entered religious life with the Daughters of the Holy Spirit in 1928 and made her religious profession on August 25, 1931, at the Motherhouse in St. Brieuc, France. She was then known as Sister Cecilia.

She taught in Connecticut and Massachusetts, coming to Holy Family School in Fairfield for one year in 1970.

In 1980 she retired from teaching and served in various capacities, including working as a dietician and in domestic services at St. Joseph Guest House in New Haven, while doing private tutoring for students in area Catholic schools.

A Mass of Christian burial was celebrated for Sister Gilberte on September 30 at the Provincial House chapel followed by burial at St. Mary Cemetery, Putnam. ■



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DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT: DECEMBER 14—JANUARY 17

DECEMBER

15	Msgr. Lawrence J. McMahon	2009
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
4	Msgr. Francis Medynski	2008
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	Rev. M. Joseph Joaquin	2013
	Msgr. Joseph A. Sullivan	2001
15	Msgr. Harry L. Hale	2003
	Msgr. G. Robert Hanover	1992
16	Rev. Thomas B. Gloster	1956

Knights of Columbus Coats for kids!

NEW HAVEN—On the day after Thanksgiving, “Black Friday,” hundreds of Connecticut children received a free, new winter coat from the Knights of Columbus.

The new coats were distributed by “K of C Coats for Kids” to children in Bridgeport, Hartford,



New Haven, Stamford, Brooklyn, Groton and Waterbury. The statewide initiative builds on a program first held in Bridgeport over Thanksgiving weekend in 2012.

Last year 2,000 coats were distributed statewide by the Knights on Black Friday.

Since 2009, in the United States and Canada, the Knights of Columbus Coats for Kids program has given away some 215,000 coats to children, providing the gift of warmth.

“On the first Christmas, Christ was born in a cold stable because there was no room in the inn,” said Supreme Knight Carl Anderson. “Today, our members are making sure that children in our state can keep warm at Christmas and throughout the winter season.”

In Fairfield County, the coats were distributed at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport and at the Knights of Columbus Hall, Council 41, in Stamford.

“For three years running, Knights in Connecticut have embraced the ‘Black Friday’ Coats for Kids distribution as a statewide tradition that helps children in a very real way,” said Anderson. “Simultaneously, it serves as a reminder that Christmas is not simply a commercial holiday, but is about giving, and celebrating God’s love for us, and our love of neighbor.”

Similar programs were held by the K of C in North Dakota, Arizona, Minnesota, and Washington, D.C.

One of the most active charitable organizations in the United States, the K of C has deep roots in Connecticut. Founded in New Haven in 1882 with charity as its first principle, it has grown to include more than 1.8 million members worldwide. Last year, Knights donated more than \$170 million and more than 70 million volunteer hours to charitable causes.



WINTER WARMTH—Children in Stamford were among those in cities throughout the state to receive warm coats this winter thanks to the Knights of Columbus. For three years running, Knights in Connecticut have embraced the ‘Black Friday’ Coats for Kids distribution as a statewide tradition.

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

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A Christmas Column



Seeing Christ where others don't

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

All year long, Linda looked for Christ in her daily life, but she did so especially at Christmas. During Mass, she'd say a simple prayer, "Lord, please show yourself to me."

She knew he was there, but she wanted a special glimpse, one that would dispel the gloom from too much holiday glitz, one that would replace the seasonal sadness with the same kind of pure

wonder and joy the shepherds must have felt, one that would reassure her that despite the daily headlines about murder and mayhem, things were going to be all right because ... the Prince of Peace was coming.

It's easy to be disappointed at Christmas. Instead of holiday cheer, there's a lot of holiday gloom that comes when your center of attention shifts from Christ to spending and partying, not to

mention the regular assaults on Christianity that occur when a politically correct teacher wants to secularize "Silent Night" by changing the words or the ACLU files a lawsuit against a small town over a nativity scene, and a national organization of unbelievers sponsors billboards attacking the existence of God.

You often find yourself looking to the skies, waiting and watching and wondering the same way people of good will watched and waited two millennia ago for a Savior and a King who would make things right that had gone so terribly wrong.

At a time of year that belongs to Christ, so many people try to push him out of the picture. When I went to the store to buy Christmas cards, there were dozens on sale, but I could find only one box with Jesus, Mary and Joseph. In the modern world, there's clearly no room for them at the inn.

But the more the world tries to push Christ out of Christmas, the more our hearts long to see him. And there's some wonderful news that's 2000 years old—"The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." Yes, The Light shines despite consumerism, commercialism and hostility.

Linda went through the usual holiday motions. She bought gifts for her grandchildren at the dollar store; she decorated her home; she wrote Christmas cards; but when she said her Rosary at night, lying in the darkness, she asked Jesus to please reveal himself to her in some small way.

I often wonder whether I

would have recognized Jesus lying in the manger on that first Christmas night—or even now. It's a gift to see him in others, a special gift.

I'm reminded of the story of St. Martin of Tours, who as a young soldier stationed in Gaul in the Fourth Century rode into Amiens on a cold winter day and saw a beggar, shivering at the gate and asking for alms.

Everyone ignored him, except Martin. Moved to pity, he unsheathed his sword and cut his cloak in half and gave it to the man. That night in a dream, he saw Jesus, surrounded by angels, and he was wearing the cloak that Martin had given him.

Christ has many faces. Many of them are shunned by the world and many others the world wouldn't even recognize.

Linda had a St. Martin experience when she visited a small town in northern New Hampshire that seemed protected from all the spiritual afflictions that corrode our society. It was a town where the stores on Main Street played traditional Christmas carols that hadn't been sanitized or censored, and where people proclaimed the name of Jesus freely without fear of offending someone. They said "Merry Christmas," instead of "Happy Holidays."

On Sunday morning, the miracle happened when Linda went to Mass at a small church nestled in the mountains. As the gifts were brought to the altar, a little boy with Down Syndrome, no more than seven years old, came forward to carry up the collection basket. It was his proudest moment when the usher handed

it to him.

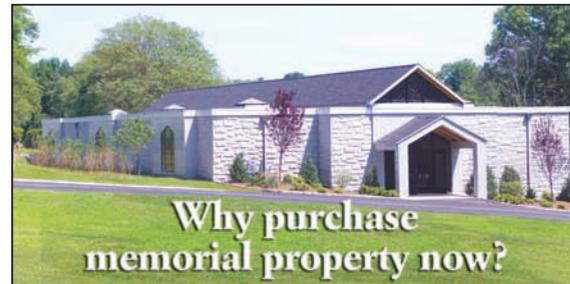
Light seemed to radiate from his smile as he eagerly grasped the basket and followed the others. He was so happy that he was skipping barefoot up the aisle and looking from side to side as if to share his pride with the congregation.

An effusive warmth filled Linda. She was looking for Christ, and here he was in this little boy, performing this simple act with such love. The Kingdom belongs to such as these. Didn't Jesus say that? In those few moments, Linda looked at the world as Jesus does, with compassion and love. A little boy taught her that lesson. Her prayer had been answered.

Merry Christmas. ■

SYNOD

FROM PAGE 9



Why purchase memorial property now?

- ▶ *Now, because....* you and your loved ones make the decisions, not others.
- ▶ *Now, because....* you are under normal emotional circumstances.
- ▶ *Now, because....* you can purchase memorial property out of current income.
- ▶ *Now, because....* cemeteries are not exempt from escalating costs.
- ▶ *Now, because* at a time of need, cemetery property must be paid for in full before it may be used.
- ▶ *Now, because....* you will have a full selection to choose from, including community mausoleums, niches and burial plots.
- ▶ *Now, because....* purchasing a burial plot in advance offers you the opportunity to pay over one year. We offer two years **interest free**, when you purchase space in our community mausoleum. The above offer is not available for those who purchase at a time of need.
- ▶ *Now, because....* the purchase of memorial property is an inevitable task.

You can make the decision now, based on one of the above reasons, or, you can wait until you HAVE to decide. Sometime in the distant future you will be thankful you have taken care of this important matter now. For details call your local cemetery!

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St. John Cemetery
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Darien, CT 06820
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(203) 869-7026

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Guest Column



SYNOD UPDATE

BY PATRICK C. TURNER

Patrick Turner is the deputy synod director for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

On November 15, more than 350 general delegates, observers, ecumenical guests, seminarians, and members of the Synod Commission gathered together for the Second General Session of the Diocesan Synod at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull.

The purpose of this session was to begin to discern, in a more concrete and detailed manner, the challenges facing our diocese. The general delegates took a number of actions during the day-long session.

- To begin the day:
- Delegates unanimously approved a declaration summarizing the activities of the First General Session on September 20, 2014;
- In response to a need identified by the study committees, the delegates unanimously approved the establishment of a new Study Committee on Communications and Technology. This issue cuts across all four previously identified themes of the synod. The committee will be tasked with examining the formational aspects and uses of technology and will also look at the appropriate and strategic uses of communications to reach the Catholic faithful and people of good will within Fairfield County;
- The delegates overwhelmingly approved a resolution to extend the appointment of the general delegates beyond the formal closing of the synod in September 2015. The purpose will be to provide the bishop and the Synod Commission a gathering of people to receive periodic reports and provide feedback on the progress of the implementation of the Synod recommendations. It is anticipated that this body will formally meet twice a year.

Delegates then heard presen-

tations from each of the four study committees and had the opportunity to provide feedback through table discussions, floor comments and emailed responses. They also were privileged to hear a discernment presentation from Dr. Joan Kelly, who is on the faculty at Holy Apostles College and Seminary in Cromwell, entitled "The Catholic Church: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic."

The four themes announced by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano in June are: Empower the Young Church, Build up Communities of Faith, Foster Evangelical Outreach, and Promote Works of Charity and Justice. Since the First General Session in September, study committees have been meeting

regularly to discuss and discern challenges within their respective themes. These study committees are made up of individual general delegates, diocesan officials, and local and national experts.

Utilizing data received during the September session, feedback and ideas submitted to the synod office through the listening sessions held across the diocese, and their own background and areas of interest and expertise, members of the study committees were tasked with coming up with a series of challenges to be presented to the general delegates.

On November 15, each of the four study committees had a block of time to present those challenges. After the verbal feedback, the general delegates then voted on each one. This was not an effort to find out winners and losers, but an opportunity to discern whether the study committees were moving in the right direction and to "take the temperature" of the general delegates to see where consensus was beginning to form. Using electronic response devices, delegates had three options to express their thoughts for each challenge:

- Accept the Challenge as presented
 - Accept the Challenge with modifications
 - Do not Accept the Challenge
- The results of the delegates' responses are available on pages 8-9.

If a delegate accepted the challenge with modifications, or did not accept the challenge, they were asked to submit an email clarification. In the days following the Second Session, the synod office received 825 emails with more than 1000 comments or clarifications from the delegates. These comments and modifications are being analyzed and will help Bishop Caggiano and the Synod Commission begin to synthesize the challenges.

There is a great diversity among the delegates, who range in age from 13 to 86, and their comments and feedback spanned the political and theological spectrum. Many of the challenges received overwhelming support, but delegates struggled to agree with other challenges and sometimes questioned the supporting information provided by the study committees. In particular, issues relating to outreach to the

youth and to those who no longer regularly attend Mass, or have left the Church, brought about the most discussion and suggested modifications.

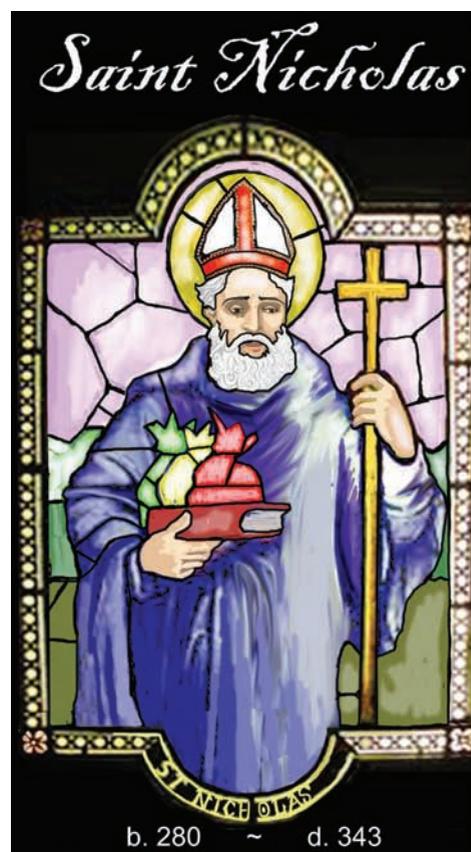
As part of the year-long discernment process facing the general delegates and the Synod Commission, Bishop Caggiano reminded those present "we must also give voice to those who aren't here."

One delegate reminded all present that the synod also needs to remember those who suffer economically within the diocese; for example, those who can't afford to send their children to Catholic schools, or must work two or three jobs in order to provide basic needs for their families. Another delegate reminded the synod office that the final document must resonate with, and speak to, all of the Diocese of Bridgeport: "the 17-year-olds, the new Americans, the single parents, the widows, the parents struggling to feed and educate their children, and those facing despair or impoverishment of spirit."

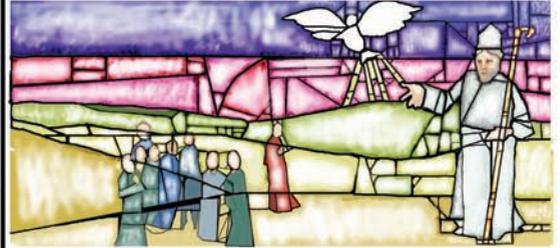
The Third General Session of the Synod will take place on February 7.

SAINTLY LIVES

BY ED WALDRON



NICHOLAS WAS BORN IN PATARA, TURKEY, IN APPROXIMATELY 280 AD. HE LOST HIS PARENTS AT A YOUNG AGE AND INHERITED A SMALL FORTUNE. AS A DEVOUT CHRISTIAN, HE DECIDED TO GIVE WEALTH TO THE POOR AND NEEDY. HIS REPUTATION FOR HOLINESS AND GENEROSITY QUICKLY SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE REGION. HE SOON WAS ELECTED AND SERVED AS BISHOP OF MYRA, GUIDING HIS FLOCK ZEALOUSLY IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.



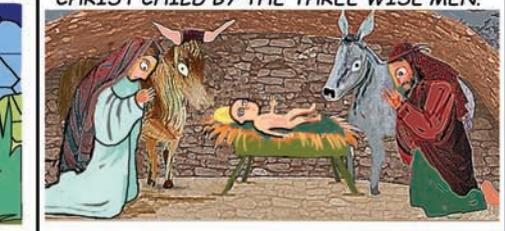
ONE POPULAR TRADITION TELLS OF A POOR MAN WHO WAS FORCED TO RESIGN HIS 3 DAUGHTERS TO LIVES OF PROSTITUTION. THE MAN WAS UNABLE TO AFFORD DOWRIES, SO NO SUITOR WAS WILLING TO ASK FOR THEIR HANDS IN MARRIAGE. NICHOLAS ANONYMOUSLY, UNDER COVER OF THE NIGHT, LEFT A BAG OF GOLD IN THE MAN'S HOUSE FOR THE OLDEST DAUGHTER. HE THEN LEFT ANOTHER FOR THE SECOND. THE FATHER WAS OVERJOYED AND SPIED NICHOLAS AS HE WAS LEAVING A THIRD BAG FOR HIS YOUNGEST. ALL 3 DAUGHTERS WERE MARRIED SHORTLY THEREAFTER.



THERE ARE MANY STORIES ABOUT HIS LIFE AND MOST ARE IMPOSSIBLE TO VERIFY. POPULAR TALES INCLUDE HIS IMPRISONMENT DURING THE ERA OF DIOCLETIAN, HIS HAND IN THE RESURRECTION OF THREE MURDERED CHILDREN AND HIS SLAPPING THE HERETIC, ARIUS, AT THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA.



ST. NICHOLAS' FEAST DAY WAS ON DECEMBER 6TH. IT WAS COMMON PRACTICE IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD TO GIVE GIFTS ON THE EVE OF HIS FEAST. THIS TRADITION BECAME ENTWINED WITH THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY AND CAME TO SYMBOLIZE THE GIFTS BROUGHT TO THE CHRIST CHILD BY THE THREE WISE MEN.



Bits & Pieces

"IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE" performed at Trinity Catholic, Stamford, on Sat., **Dec. 13**, at 7 pm. Tickets available at www.crusaderplayers.org or at the door.

CHRISTMAS CAROL SING-ALONG "Help the Homeless and Hungry," Sun., **Dec. 14**, at 3 pm at St. Margaret's Shrine, Bridgeport. (snow/rain follow signs to indoor venue). Admission is one non-perishable food item per person, collected by Operation Hope. Santa Claus for the kids. For more info, call 203.333.9627.

"LET IT GO" SING ALONG benefit at St. Joseph High School, Trumbull on Sun., **Dec. 14**, from 1-3 pm. Tickets: \$12. For more info and for tickets, go to www.sjcadets.org/frozen.

MASSES OF HEALING &

HOPE on Mon., **Dec. 15** at 7:30 pm at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull with Fr. Larry Carew; and Mon., **Jan. 19**, at 7:30 pm at St. Lawrence Parish, Shelton, with Fr. Charles Allen. For more info, call 203.268.8253.

ADVENT EVENING OF RECONCILIATION at St. Bridget of Ireland Parish, Stamford, on Mon., **Dec. 15**, at 7 pm. Prepare homes, hearts and families. Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation and prepare to meet the newborn Lord with a soul cleansed of sin. For more info, call the parish: 203.324.2910 for individual reconciliation.

"BEHOLD THE CHILD" concert at St. Luke Parish, Westport, Sun., **Dec. 21**, at 3 pm features the adult and children's choir. The concert will conclude with a Nativity tableau by chil-

dren in the religious formation program. Reception to follow. No cost; goodwill offering. For more info, call the parish: 203.227.7245.

LESSONS & CAROLS at St. Theresa Parish, Trumbull, by the combined St. Theresa Choirs on Sun., **Dec. 21**, at 4 pm. Free will offering will be taken. For more info, call 203.261.3676 or www.sttheresatrumbull.org.

TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS EVE sponsored by the Knights of Lithuania at St. George Parish, Bridgeport, Sun., **Dec. 21**, at 12 noon. For info and reservations call 203.878.0519.

TELEVISED MASS for Christmas, Thurs., **Dec. 25**, WLNY, Channel 10/55 at 9 am; WWOR Channel 9 at 8 am; Salt and Light TV: check your local listings.

CURSILLO ULTREYAS are held throughout the diocese: Mon., **Jan. 5**, at St. James Parish, Stratford, at 7 pm; Thurs., **Jan. 15**, at St. Mary Parish, Bethel, 7:30 pm; and Mon., **Jan. 19**, at St. Bridget of Ireland, Stamford, at 7:30 pm. For more info, email jkovacs@snet.net. Looking for a deeper relationship with God? What is Cursillo? Check out www.natl-cursillo.org/bridgeport/.

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE classes for teens

and adults will be offered at Our Lady of Peace Parish, Stratford. Youth classes on Tues., starting **Jan. 6**; adults, Thurs., starting **Jan. 8**, both from 7-9 pm. Cost: 8-week youth class plus book: \$150; 10-week adult class: \$200. For more info and reservations, contact Dawn: seawall96@optonline.net.

"COME & SEE" Secular Franciscan Vocations Mass: St. Emery Church, Fairfield, on Sat., **Jan. 10**, at 9:30 am. Social follows. For more info, call 203.255.8801.

GOSPEL OF LIFE SOCIETY meets the second Sat. of the month (**Jan. 10**) at St. Mary Parish, Norwalk, at 10 am after the 9 am Pro-Life Mass. Dr. Bentivegna will speak on the medical view of Ebola. For more info, contact Eileen Bianchini: 203.847.5727 or stmarygols@aol.com.

"FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES: The Path to Knowing & Following Jesus" with Sherry Weddell: Tues., **Jan. 13**, from 9 am-5 pm at St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Trumbull. How can we transmit a living, personal Catholic faith to future generations? Forming Intentional Disciples was designed to transform parish life from within. Continental breakfast and lunch included. For more info or to

register, contact Angela Mantero: 203.416.1627 or amantero@diobpt.org.

GIFT SHOP at St. Jude Parish, Monroe, is open Sun. after 9 & 10:30 Masses. Wreaths, religious articles and cook books. For more info, call Fran at the parish office: 203.261.6404.

WOUNDED WARRIORS Pilgrimage to Lourdes, France: **May 12-18, 2015**. The Warriors to Lourdes Pilgrimage for Military Personnel is a joint project of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, and the Knights of Columbus. It is designed to allow military personnel and their caregivers a time of resting, praying, healing and connecting with other members of the military from across the world. Applications and payments (if applicable) are due by Sat., **Jan. 31**. For more info, go to www.warriorstolourdes.com.

MEDICARE/HEALTH INSURANCE counseling is offered free of charge at St. Vincent's Medical Center. Individuals can meet privately with a health insurance specialist by appointment. For more info or to schedule an appointment, call St. Vincent's Volunteer Office: 203.576.5111.

(For more listings, see the calendar on the diocesan website: www.bridgeportdiocese.com.)

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Merry Christmas

Christmas extravaganza

BRIDGEPORT—Children with special needs, along with their siblings and parents, gathered for a Christmas Extravaganza at the Catholic Center in December, beginning with Mass with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. The children's choir from St. Marguerite Parish, Brookfield, provided the singing for the Mass.

"The bishop also mentioned how, in our sufferings, we feel that Jesus is far from us, but that he really is very near to us and loves us," said June Vendetti, catechist for the Cathedral Parish special education class in Bridgeport.

Teen volunteers from Convivio coordinated the extravaganza. They put on a Nativity play to entertain the children and have them experience the coming of Christ in a lively format, and guided them through arts and crafts, games, and a sing along. And, of course, no party is complete without pizza! Each child received a Convivio T-shirt, which they wore with pride.

When asked "what's your

favorite part of today?" the answers came thick and fast:

"I like crafts! I'm going to make all of them." —Alex

"The foood. I love the Hershey's kisses." —Giovanni

"The play because it was funny and I like the story of Christmas." —Sara

"Ooh do we get to color? I love coloring!" —John

Marianne Young, a member of St. Marguerite's, brought her 4-year-old niece with Down Syndrome and her older siblings to the Christmas Extravaganza on



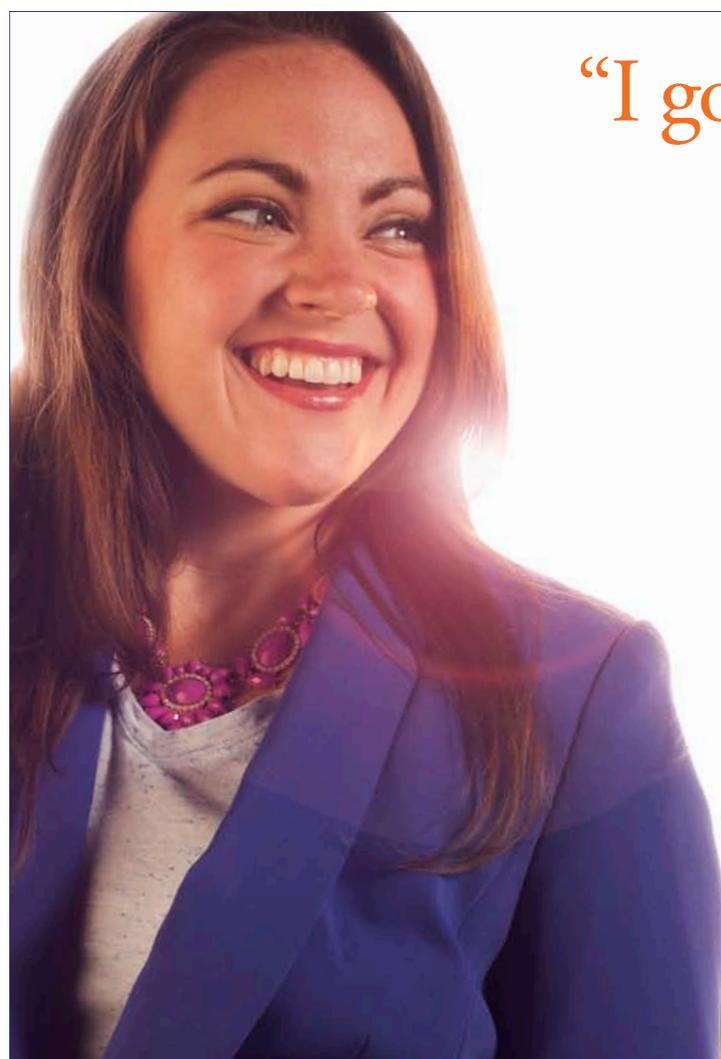
Sunday. "I appreciated the opportunity to meet other families of children with special needs," she said. "Our diocese is blessed to have Michelle O'Mara and the many volunteers who are so dedicated in their mission to serve these beautiful children and their families."

(For more info on special needs ministry contact Michelle O'Mara: 203.540.5381, ext. 2012, or momara@diobpt.org.)



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