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Preparation for a Synod

Synod: We need to hear from you!

Now is the moment! In the following months (March–June) the Diocesan Synod Office will collect your input: opinions, comments, observations and best practices. There are a couple of ways to do so:

A. Online:
   Just days ago we have opened a special synodal website, www.2014synod.org, where you can find the latest information about the Diocesan Synod, including the calendar of events and media connections. The site will grow and be updated regularly, so please check it often. On this website you will also find a form where you can submit your comments. The form is called “Synod Input Form G” and you can find it at: www.2014synod.org/FormG. The first page of the form asks for your name and the parish, school or institution you will be writing about. These fields are mandatory, as we cannot accept anonymous submissions. Further, the form has two sections with three questions each. The first section pertains to your specific parish, school or other diocesan institution that you would like to comment about. Here are the questions in this section:

1. What are the strengths of your parish/school/institution?
2. What areas of outreach and ministries in your parish/school/institution you like to see expanded in the future?
3. What can your parish/school/institution do to improve its outreach and ministries?

The second section of the form pertains to the Diocese of Bridgeport as a whole. The three questions here are similar to the previous section:

1. What are the strengths of our diocese?
2. What areas of outreach and ministries in our diocese would you like to see expanded in the future?
3. What can our diocese do to improve its outreach and ministries?

Since some may require a bit more time to fill out the form, the online version has an option to save your work in progress for seven days. Click “Save” link on the bottom of the form and follow the instructions. The form will be available until June 15, 2014. However, the Diocesan Synod Office would appreciate if you could please fill it out as soon as possible. Next month, the form will be available in other languages: Spanish, Portuguese-Brazilian, Polish, Creole and Vietnamese.

B. Paper Version:
   Recognizing that not everyone may have access to the online form, we are prepared to receive your input via regular mail. Kindly answer the above questions (preferably in typed form) and mail your answers to:
   Diocesan Synod Office – Input Form G
   The Catholic Center
   238 Jewett Avenue
   Bridgeport, CT 06606

   Please make sure you include your name, address, parish (school or institution) and town. Regrettably, the anonymous form submissions will not be accepted.

C. Listening Sessions:
   In addition to the form described above, you are invited to participate in the Listening Sessions with Bishop Caggiano. There will be one session per each Vicariate in the diocese, as well as sessions for Youth and the Hispanic Community. Here is the schedule of these sessions:

1. Monday, May 5 at 7:30 pm
   Vicariate I—Trinity High School, Stamford
2. Friday, May 16 at 7:30 pm
   Vicariate II—St. Aloysius, New Canaan (School Gym)
3. Saturday, May 17 at 1:30 pm
   Youth Listening Session
   Notre Dame High School
   Fairfield
4. Monday, June 2 at 7:30 pm
   Vicariate III—St. Thomas, Fairfield
5. Sunday, June 8 at 5:00 pm
   Hispanic Community—The Catholic Center
   Queen of Saints Hall
6. Tuesday, June 17 at 7:30 pm
   Vicariate IV—St. Catherine, Trumbull (Family Center)
7. Saturday, June 21 at 1:00 pm
   Vicariate V—Immaculate High School, Danbury

These sessions are open to the public and will run for about two hours each. Since we expect a good attendance, we have devised a method of participation that will allow most attendees to contribute to the discussion. Namely, the questions will pertain only to the Diocese of Bridgeport and will be in the form of “fill in the blank” to allow as many as possible to present their summaries publically in a few words. Everyone who speaks will be required to submit their full comments online via Input Form LS (www.2014synod.org/FormLS). Here are the questions for the Listening Sessions:

1. The strengths of the diocesan ministries are...
2. I would like to see the new diocesan outreach in...
3. The diocese should improve the ministry by...

Certainly, some may wish to supplement their input to the discussion. Hence, they are welcome to use the open-ended form described above.

D. Local Consultation and Process:
   In addition to the online form and the Listening Sessions, the Diocesan Synod Office will send out consultation forms to the pastors, principals and others leaders.
   CONTINUED ON PAGE 20
**Diocese launches reorganization study**

BRIDGEPORT—The Diocese of Bridgeport has commissioned the National Executive Service Corp (NESC) to begin a strategic analysis of the offices and programs at the Catholic Center. The Catholic Center houses the chancery, or diocesan curia, representing the administrative offices of the diocese. In addition to the Bishop’s office, it also includes the offices of the Vicar General, the diocesan Tribunal and Chancellor, along with other services and ministries.

“I’ve asked NESC to initiate a review of the structure and functions of the administrative and program offices to determine how best to identify critical issues and opportunities and create an administrative structure that supports the needs of our local parishes and ministries,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

“From the standpoint of good stewardship and efficient use of resources, this study is very important to the diocese, particularly as we prepare ourselves to move forward to meet the challenges of the future,” he said. The Catholic Center staff numbers about 100 employees, including priests, religious and laity. They manage and direct a wide range of offices and ministries, including diocesan schools, pastoral services, social services, development, finances, clergy personnel, communications, human resources, and other apostolates.

Representatives from NESC, a non-profit consulting group, have already met with the leadership of the Catholic Center to outline the project. The group, which includes a team of volunteer consultants with management expertise, has also worked with the diocese in the past. The Bishop said that NESC will make recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of diocesan offices and overall administration of the diocese to support its mission.

Louise Stewart, director of Human Resources for the diocese, said that NESC has met with the administrative team of the Catholic Center and has begun interviewing department directors and chancery officials. As part of the process, the NESC panel will also conduct three focus groups with priests throughout the diocese this month to get their input on the overall organization and effectiveness of programs.

“As the local parish is the key to the renewal of the diocese, we value the input of priests on how the Chancery Office can better serve the local parish by equip-ping, empowering and enabling their ministry,” Stewart said.

She said the overall Strategic Plan overview process is intended to give the diocese a sense of “what is working and not working, what is of value and not of value, along with what new programs need to be initiated.”

The six-month study is expected to make recommendations to the Bishop about organizational structure, process improvements, staffing, and key job descriptions. An implementation plan will be developed in September.

The Diocese of Bridgeport includes more than 460,000 registered Catholics in Fairfield County. In addition to its 82 parishes, the diocese sponsors 30 regional elementary schools and 5 diocesan high schools, educating 10,000 youth, the St. John Fisher Seminary in Stamford, the Catherine Denis Keefe Queen of Clergy Residence for retired priests in Stamford and a wide range of social services through Catholic Charities and other institutions.

The Catholic Center is located at 238 Jewett Avenue in the North End of Bridgeport.

(For information and phone listings, visit the website at www.bridgeportdiocese.com.)

**Michael J. Hanlon, CPA named diocesan CFO**

BRIDGEPORT—Michael J. Hanlon, CPA, of North Haven, has been named chief financial officer of the Diocese of Bridgeport. His appointment, announced by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, was effective March 3.

Hanlon will be responsible for the overall financial management of the diocese and the stewardship of fiscal resources in support of its mission and goals. This position oversees all financial and related functions, including budgeting, accounting, investments and real estate, and diocesan entities, including but not limited to parishes, schools and fund raising.

Hanlon comes to the diocese as a principal of BlumShapiro & Company, P.C., the largest regional accounting, tax and business consulting firm based in New England with offices in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

“I believe that Michael has the ability to bring a unique combination of non-profit experience, a collaborative approach and a commitment and dedication to address the challenges we face here in the Diocese of Bridgeport,” said Bishop Caggiano. “He has also found time in his successful career to remain active in his parish and his community.”

While at BlumShapiro, Hanlon managed the Shelton office not-for-profit practice, providing professional services to a wide range of entities, including human service agencies, community and private foundations, voluntary health, welfare and religious organizations, arts and cultural organizations and membership organizations.


Hanlon is a graduate of Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven, with a bachelor of science in accounting, and of the University of Hartford, where he earned a master’s in accounting and taxation.

His extensive professional and volunteer associations include board leadership positions on North Haven Youth Soccer Club; the Connecticut Junior Soccer Association, South Central District; and Christian Community Action, New Haven and the Connecticut Society of Certified Public Accountants. He is also a member of the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce Non-profit Steering Committee and an adjunct professor of accounting at Post University.

Hanlon was married to the late Nancy Larson Hanlon and is the father of two sons, Connor and Keegan. He is a parishioner of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Hamden.
Building Bridges in Faith and Charity

Irish eyes are smiling

“Jump in, kick out, hop 1-2-3-4, jump in, kick out, hop 1-2-3-4…” If you were walking through the hallways of St. Catherine Academy on a recent day you would have heard the halls filled with the lilts of Irish laughter as the students of St. Catherine were taught the fine art of Irish dance by Erin Pender-LeVine and a few dancers from The Pender-Ready Academy of Irish Dance. We, along with the students, faculty and board members were treated to a foot-stomping, hand-clapping performance by the brilliant dancers. After the performance Erin worked with the students and staff to teach them a jig step so they will all be ready to celebrate when St. Paddy’s Day arrives. St. Catherine Academy is certainly a very important ministry in our diocese. It is the only faith-based, state-approved, private special education school in Fairfield County, serving students with autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities. St. Catherine is a caring, nurturing, learning community for students with special needs ages 5 through 21. The facility at St. Catherine is intentionally designed to help students achieve their greatest learning potential academically, socially and personally. Students develop positive self-esteem and self-confidence while acquiring the necessary skills to reach their individual goals.

St. Catherine prides itself on being a school where students with intellectual and developmental disabilities are part of a community that celebrates their abilities and provides a learning experience that develops each student’s independence. The impact on the students’ lives is met or exceeded by the impact that these young people have on the lives that they touch. “We have equated our students’ impact to ripples of water—ever growing and expanding. They have taught us how to love and how to value each experience and person along the way,” says Helen Burland, president of St. Catherine Academy.

The Annual Bishop’s Appeal is a blessing in so many ways to the students of St. Catherine. “When people give to the ABA and designate their gift to St. Catherine Academy, we are able to fill the gap between tuition revenue and actual program costs,” adds Burland. “Donations from the ABA help us to offer a quality program with dedicated and well-trained staff. One example is our commitment to vocational experiences. Those of our students who are in their transition years are exposed to a variety of job sites under the supervision of the staff.”

New priest leadership for Appeal

BRIDGEPORT—“One of our major goals is to broaden the base of giving to this year’s Annual Bishop’s Appeal. It’s equally important to reaching our goal,” said Msgr. Laurence Bronkiewicz, who is the newly named chairman of the Pastors Advisory Committee (PAC) for the Appeal.

The Appeal is guided by the 13-member Pastors Advisory Committee, which works with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and the Development Office to set goals and structure the campaign each year.

More than 25,000 Catholics give to the Appeal, but Msgr. Bronkiewicz, pastor of St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield, would like to see that number grow to affirm the mission and the good works of the diocese.

The Appeal is already off to its best start in years, and Msgr. Bronkiewicz believes that is due in large part to the vision and energy Bishop Caggiano has brought to his leadership of the diocese.

“This is a transitional year for the Appeal and I think we’re benefiting from excitement that our new bishop brings to the local Church. With his decision to convocate our Fourth Diocesan Synod and his transparency in publishing financial reports, he has energized the diocese and moved us forward after a considerable period without a bishop,” said Msgr. Bronkiewicz.

The new PAC chair is equally excited about the new Chief Development Officer of the diocese, Bill McLean of Ridgefield.

“I may be a bit biased because he’s a member of our parish,” he said. “But Bill brings great communication skills, development experience and his own deep faith to the post.”

One of the challenges of the Appeal is to get people to look beyond their parish to the needs of the local Church, he says. Father Reginald Norman, vice chairman of the PAC and pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton, agrees that the Appeal is a reminder that all Catholics need to stretch a bit in their giving beyond parish walls.

As former pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Bridgeport, one of the poorest parishes in the diocese, Father Norman says that his work in both inner city and suburban parishes has given him a larger perspective on the Appeal in Fairfield County.

“We’re good at responding to global issues, but often we don’t see the need in our own backyard,” he says. “Believe it or not, people are struggling in affluent towns, and you don’t need to drive more than ten miles either way to find real poverty where people are hurting. But they often remain hidden from us.”

“The Appeal challenges us to take care of our brothers and sisters in the diocese,” he says. “No one asks to be sick, or poor or isolated, but many people suffer. The Appeal is a bridge to them.”

Like Msgr. Bronkiewicz, Father Norman would like to see more people join in giving to this year’s Appeal. He says that even if people can only give a little, their participation sends a strong message of caring.

Pastors who will continue to serve on the Pastors Advisory Committee are Msgr. William J. Scheyd, St. Aloysius, New Canaan; Father Thomas P. Thorne, Assumption, Westport; Msgr. Walter C. Orłowski, St. Matthew, Norwalk; Msgr. Robert E. Weiss, St. Rose of Lima, Newtown; Father Michael K. Jones, St. Lawrence, Shelton, and Msgr. Matthew Bernelli, St. Mary, Bridgeport.

New pastors on the PAC are Msgr. Frank C. McGrath, St. John, Darien; Father Paul Murphy, St. Thomas More, Darien; Father Joseph J. Malloy, St. Clement, Stamford; Father Michael Dunn, St. Francis of Assisi, Weston, and Father Samuel V. Scott, St. Joseph, Danbury.

The Appeal provides essential services and ministries of the Church in Fairfield County, including Catholic schools and parish religious education programs, Catholic Charities, soup kitchens, food pantries, vocations to the priesthood and religious life, parish finance services, and parish life and ministries. (For information: email at aba@diocpt.org; phone: 203.416.1470, or make a credit card donation online: www.2011ABA.com.)

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5
FAIRFIELD—Referring to the words of Blessed John XXIII, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano told a gathering of donors to the Annual Bishop’s Appeal that he didn’t come to the diocese to be a “museum curator, but rather a gardener.”

The afternoon meeting with donors was held at St. Thomas Parish as part of his vicariate receptions to launch the 2014 Appeal and listen to people throughout the diocese.

The bishop said that in the five months since arriving in Bridgeport, his vision has been evolving in terms of what needs to be done to move the diocese ahead, but that he is convinced the diocese has entered a special moment in its history. “We are living in a singular moment in the life of the Church, a singular opportunity to come together and define the future of the diocese,” the bishop said, referring to the Fourth Diocesan Synod, which he formally decreed on February 22.

Following the bishop’s remarks, he fielded questions from donors who asked him about the Voice of the Faithful, the future of Catholic schools, and what needs to be done to engage young people in the Church.

He said that he met with VOTF members in Brooklyn on a monthly basis when he was an auxiliary bishop there and he believes that their concerns for the protection of children and the integrity of priests is shared by most Catholics.

With respect to Catholic schools, the bishop said he is committed to the “principle of accessibility,” so that any young person shares access to Catholic schools both geographically and financially.

Mentioning that he has visited 17 schools since his installation, the bishop said, “There is no finer way to form our children than in Catholic schools because they are centered around Christ” and as such they represent “grace building on nature.”

He added that he was surprised to learn how little support the state of Connecticut provides to schools because New York helped with textbooks and other vital services. He would like to see tax credits increased for parents who choose Catholic schools.

When asked how the Church might counter negative images in the media and the promotion of secular values, the bishop said he believes the Church needs to be more active in social media.

“We need to jump into the new media and become missionaries in it, but young people will need to be more active in social media. I turn to Sr. Mary Grace, our vocational coordinator. Donations from the ABA help fund transportation and staff to supervise this very important program.”

St. Catherine Academy is also a place in our diocese where people can choose to serve others. Erin-Pender LeVine, a parishioner at St. Thomas More in Darien, volunteered to share her Irish dancing talents and those of her dancers, who all came from area parishes: Alexia D’Arinzo from Holy Spirit Parish in Stamford, Katie Hackett and Maggie Maeve Donoghue from St. John Parish in Darien and Maeve Sebold from St. Aloysius in New Canaan.

“St. Catherine provides us with a great opportunity to give back to our community,” she says. “I can’t think of a better way to build a bridge of fellowship, faith and compassion than spending a morning with our friends at St. Catherine and sharing our love of Irish dance with the amazing, hard-working students here.”

If you happen to find yourself at the Bridgeport St. Patrick’s Day parade on March 17, look for the students of St. Catherine Academy who will be marching. The students will have an extra skip in their step thanks in part to their newly acquired Irish dancing skills, but mostly thanks to the generosity of the people of the Bridgeport Diocese who designate some of their ABA pledge to St. Catherine Academy.

Take extra notice of the St. Catherine students’ smiling Irish eyes. We’re sure they’ll steal your heart away! (To learn about other volunteer opportunities at St. Catherine Academy, call the school: 203.540.5381, ext. 2010.)
“Love as I have loved you.”

Convivio, the annual youth congress sponsored by the Office of Pastoral Services, is very quickly evolving into one of the most exciting, prayerful and positive youth events in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Nearly 300 young people turned out for this year’s Convivio held at Sacred Heart University on March 7-9. The weekend is a mix of retreat, youth rally, and personal witness and fun to help young people grow in their faith and experience the joy of being affirmed by others. The three-day congress also involved 70 group leaders and 100 volunteers.
Deacon Formation

Deacons take first step toward ordination

BRIDGEPORT—Six men took their last step to ordination as Permanent Deacons while six others were accepted as Deacon Candidates by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at a special Mass and ceremony held recently at St. Augustine Cathedral.

The bishop conferred the Ministry of Acolyte on the six members of the Diocesan Formation Class of 2015 and welcomed the six new candidates for Deacon Formation into the Class of 2018.

The Ministry of Acolyte is the final step toward ordination. It was conferred on Anthony Caraluzzi of Bethel, St. Mary Parish; David Flynn of Shelton, St. Lawrence Parish; Patrick Shevlin of Newtown, St. Rose of Lima Parish; Jeffrey Font of Brookfield, St. Joseph Parish; Ernest Jeffers, Stamford, St. Bridget of Ireland Parish, and John Tuccio of Monroe, St. Jude Parish. They will be ordained as permanent deacons in June 2015.

The men newly accepted for the permanent diaconate program include David Rivera of St. Charles Parish, Bridgeport; Joseph Bukowski of St. Peter Parish, Danbury; Vidal Castrillon of St. Charles Parish, Bridgeport; Joseph Huong of the Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport; Joseph Kolter of St. Mark Parish, Stratford, and William Keneally of St. Aloysius Parish, New Canaan. They will be ordained deacons in June 2018.

Deacon Tony Detje, director of the diocesan Diaconate Program, said the deacon is an ordained minister of the Church with a wide range of liturgical and ministerial responsibilities. The deacon’s role in liturgical ceremonies includes administering Baptisms, witnessing and blessing marriages, officiating at wakes, funerals and burial services, administering sacraments and presiding at prayer services. Deacons also distribute Holy Communion, proclaim the Gospel, preach the homily and assist at Mass.

The origin of the permanent diaconate ministry is described in Acts of the Apostles, “So then, brothers, choose seven men among you who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit...” Vatican II called for the return of the Permanent Deacon in 1968 after a lapse of a thousand years. Today, 103 deacons serve in ministry in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Current Church law requires a man to be 35 years of age at the time of his ordination as a deacon. Candidates in the diocese must be between the ages of 31 and 60 at the time they enter the program.

NCH announces plans to relocate

STAMFORD—New Covenant House of Hospitality (NCH) in Stamford has announced plans to move from its present Yerwood Center location in order to expand services and introduce a new generation of programs.

The announcement was made by Al Barber, president of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, and Paul Harinstein, president of the NCH advisory board.

The inner-city soup kitchen and food pantry provides over 700,000 meals a year to the hungry, homeless and working poor of the greater Stamford area. It also offers a wide range of support services to help people live independently.

Barber said plans to relocate from the 90 Fairfield Avenue location to a nearby facility and to launch a capital campaign to support this relocation have been in the works for many months and are not related to the recent problems at Yerwood Center, which temporarily ceased operations earlier this month because of a lack of funding and other challenges.

He said the current location at Yerwood simply lacks the space to bring in new programs and services to meet the growing needs of people who are hungry or food-insecure in the greater Stamford area. In addition, the physical condition of the current facility is problematic and has not been addressed by the landlord, presently the Yerwood Center.

NCH is currently close to finalizing a lease for an 8,200-square-foot space across the street from its present location at the Yerwood Center. However, for the time being, its soup kitchen and other services will remain in Yerwood, while the capital campaign will finance the costs associated with the build out and operation of the new site.

Barber added that the City of Stamford, which owns the Yerwood Center building, has been a cooperative partner of NCH and is supportive of the planned move later this year.

NCH had intended to announce its planned move and capital campaign later this spring, Barber said, but recent news reports about the financial challenges at Yerwood Center led many people to inquire about New Covenant House, which has been housed there in the lower level since 1990.

“We need a space in which to grow and move forward with some very ambitious plans to serve the growing needs of the Stamford community,” said Barber. “We’re very grateful for the leadership and active support of our advisory board and their long-term commitment to New Covenant House.”

While feeding the hungry remains the core mission of NCH, Harinstein said the vision for NCH has evolved to include the provision of basic health and social services to those in need in lower Fairfield County as part of collaborations with, for example, Americares and the Stamford Department of Health. With a new and larger space to grow and move forward, the new site will enable NCH to reach many more people in need.”

For further information on the Permanent Diaconate Program of the Diocese of Bridgeport, contact Deacon Tony Detje, 238 Jewett Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06606. Phone: 203-418-1451. Email: adetje@diobpt.org.

Continued on page 24
Pope Francis has ‘added new life’ to office he holds

WASHINGTON—In his first year as the 265th successor of Peter, Pope Francis “has brought to light new dimensions of the Petrine ministry and added new life to the office he holds,” the U.S. bishops’ Administrative Committee said March 11.

He has done this in many ways, the committee said, including by consistently calling on Catholics “to look again at the fundamental values of the Gospel” and encouraging “us to be a church of the poor and for the poor, reaching out to the marginalized and being present to those on the periphery of society.”

The Administrative Committee is the highest ranking body of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops when the bishops are not in their plenary session. During a March 11-12 meeting in Washington, the committee issued the statement to congratulate the pope on his first anniversary.

Pope Francis “has set an example by choosing a personal simplicity of life, by washing the feet of prisoners, and by taking into his hands and kissing the badly disfigured,” the committee said. “His Holiness has also set in motion a process that will lead to the reshaping of the Roman Curia in a way that will enhance the effectiveness of his ministry and better serve the needs of the church in our present day.”

The Administrative Committee also noted the impact that Pope Francis’ leadership and simple lifestyle have had on the world.

“His constant outreach to the alienated, his emphasis on mercy and his sheer humanity have served as an inspiration not only to Catholics but also to other Christians and people of good will around the globe,” the statement said.

“On this first anniversary of his election, the Administrative Committee invites the prayers of all the faithful that Christ our Lord will bless Pope Francis and grant him many years of fruitful ministry as bishop of Rome, as the servant of the servants of God,” it added.

2015 meeting can help transform families, communities

PHILADELPHIA—A powerhouse team of religious, civic and business leaders will travel to Rome to plan for the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia next year.

Philadelphia Archbishop Charles J. Chaput led a news conference with Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett and Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter on March 7 at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center to announce they will lead a delegation March 24-26 to meet with Vatican officials to plan the international event. They also will have an audience with Pope Francis.

Throughout the news conference, speakers told of their confidence that the pope will visit Philadelphia in September 2015 and vowed to personally convince him to make his first pastoral visit in North America to the city for the conclusion of the eighth World Meeting of Families.

“I plan to extend to the holy father a warm, vigorous and hopefully very persuasive invitation to visit our state next year,” said Corbett, who added Nutter and other members of the delegation also would “sell” the pope and Vatican officials on making a papal visit.

“It’s only in Philadelphia that folks talk about trying to ‘seal the deal’ with the pope,” Nutter quipped.

Pope Francis has not confirmed he will attend the last day of the meeting, which past popes have done.

Archbishop Chaput announced members of the leadership team planning the World Meeting of Families event, and they include some of the heaviest hitters in Philadelphia’s civic and business spheres.

Robert J. Ciaruffoli, president of the big Philadelphia accounting firm Parente Beard, was named president of the 2015 World Meeting of Families organization, which is a separate group and not a Philadelphia archdiocesan office.

Named as co-chairs of the group were Brian L. Roberts, CEO of cable TV giant Comcast Corp.; David L. Cohen, a top executive with Comcast; Joseph Neubauer, chairman of food services firm Aramark; Daniel J. Hilferty, CEO of Independence Blue Cross; and James Maguire of the Maguire Foundation and leading philanthropist for Catholicism.
Catholic causes in the region. Corbett said he expected perhaps 1 million visitors if Pope Francis celebrates the public Mass on Sept. 27, 2015, the concluding day of the event. The most recent such meeting in Milan, Italy, in 2012 drew 1 million to that city.

Corbett also estimated the economic impact of the visit is “in the range of $100 million.”

Although Comcast’s Roberts and Cohen will not attend the meeting at the Vatican later in March, the other members and Archbishop Chaput, Corbett and Nutter will begin meetings March 25 with Vatican officials to plan logistics for the Philadelphia event. Representatives of the Pontifical Council for the Family, which sponsors the World Meeting of Families every three years in a different city and of which Archbishop Chaput is a recently named member, will meet with the delegation March 25. Later in the day a news conference in Rome will include the archbishop and Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the council.

The following day, the delegation will have an audience with Pope Francis, who was clearly on the members’ minds at the Philadelphia news conference. Corbett invited people to pray that the pope would visit Philadelphia, while Nutter addressed the logistical and security challenges of handling the expected 1 million visitors or more.

“There’s not a doubt we can do this,” Nutter said. “We do big events in the city of Philadelphia.”

Whether 1 million or 2 million people attend, “we want people to come. We will do whatever we have to do to make this a very successful and great event here in Philadelphia. You can take that to the bank,” he said.

As excited as the interested Catholics in the audience were about the prospect of the pope attending the event next year, Archbishop Chaput kept the focus on family life.

The World Meeting of Families “has the power to transform in deeply positive ways not just the spirit of Catholic life in our region but our entire community,” he said.

The meeting will run Sept. 22-27, 2015, and include three days of family gatherings, speeches and break-out sessions in a yet-to-be-announced space that would accommodate 20,000 people, the archbishop said. Programs would include discussion of economic, psychological and spiritual issues facing families, among others, he said, though he added it was too early yet for specifics.

“We will talk about problems families have today, but we want to be very positive about the family,” Archbishop Chaput said. “We hope to have all kinds of ways of helping families avail themselves of grace and holiness.”

He said that the World Meeting of Families will need to raise significantly more than the $5 million already raised, but anything left over from the conclusion of the meeting will be given to the poor.

“I hope we can give a gift to Pope Francis (for the poor),” the archbishop said. “That’s a great focus of his and I think he’d be very pleased with that.”

Papal gardens of Castel Gandolfo now open to public

VATICAN CITY—Known as the Barberini Gardens, the historic area of Castel Gandolfo has been declared open to the general public by Pope Francis, with tours available for those who are interested.

Located roughly 20 miles south of Rome in the Alban Hills, the gardens surround the Papal Summer Residence at Castel Gandolfo and include the remnants of a Roman Villa, a 62 acre farm, and the ancient papal palace.

According to a March 4 article published on Vatican Radio, director of the Vatican Museums Antonio Paolucci explained that it was the Pope himself who made the decision to open the gardens of the Pontifical Villa, “where the splendor of art and the glory of nature co-exist in admirable equilibrium.”

Having officially opened on March 1, the gardens lay on an ancient Villa built by Emperor Domitian, who was both the third and last ruler during the Flavian dynasty.

With a view overlooking Lake Albano and beyond, as well as the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea, visitors are now free to stroll throughout the ruins of the imperial theater and covered passageway where the emperor himself and his guests would walk when trying to escape from the heat.

A favorite summer getaway for Benedict XVI during his pontificate, the villa was conceded to the Holy See as one of their extra-terrestrial possessions under the Lateran pact of 1929.

Following major restoration efforts, the Villa has served as the Papal summer residence since the pontificate of Urban VIII during the 17th century, and has a small farm created by Pope Pius XI, which produces eggs, milk, oil, vegetables and honey either for local employees, or for sale in the Vatican supermarket.

Among the other secret treasures the gardens hold, visitors can also enjoy a magnolia garden, a path of roses as well as one of aromatic herbs and one of lilacs, a square of holly oaks and the breathtaking Belvedere garden, from which there is a panoramic view over Latium, out to the coastline.

Pope Pius XII, who offered war refugees sanctuary in the Villa, died there in 1958, as did Pope Paul VI two decades later.

The gardens are open to the public in the mornings from Monday through Saturday, with bookings available for either individuals or groups on the Vatican Museums website. Individual tickets cost 26 euros, while group costs vary, with a beginning rate of 450 euro for a group of 1-15 people.

Passing the Flame: A Homecoming and A Leavetaking

This year the Daughters of Charity will conclude more than 110 years of remarkable service to St. Vincent’s. The Daughters will continue their mission of caring for the poor and vulnerable in new locations where they are more desperately needed.

St. Vincent’s would like to honor the contributions of these selfless women by hosting a homecoming of Daughters of Charity who are currently or who have previously served at St. Vincent’s Medical Center, its affiliates.

Activities:

**Sunday, May 18:**
- 12 Noon Public Mass at St. Patrick’s Church
- Soup and Bread Reception in Parish Hall immediately following Mass

**Monday, May 19:**
- 9am Mass for St. Vincent’s Management Conference followed by remarks by Sr. Louise Gallahue, DOC Continental breakfast immediately following
- 11am: Daughters visit St. Vincent’s Medical Center departments and affiliate sites to greet staff
- 12:30pm lunch for Daughters and St. Vincent’s leadership
- 2-3:30pm Reception for all St. Vincent’s employees, retirees, volunteers and physicians (refreshments)
- 5-6:30pm “Passing the Flame” Ceremony and Reception for St. Vincent’s administration, boards of directors, benefactors, civic leaders and special guests

Come with the Daughters of Charity Goodspeed as they continue their mission in new ministries. As the heirs to their legacy, please join us in recommitting to that spirit and legacy of compassionate care that the Daughters have embodied over their more than 100 years of service to St. Vincent’s and the community.
State Merit Award

Fairfield U and Bridgeport schools earn Merit Award

FAIRFIELD—The New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) has announced that Fairfield University’s partnership with Bridgeport Schools has earned its 2014 Connecticut State Merit Award. NEBHE is honoring Fairfield University’s overall institutional commitment to Bridgeport public and Catholic schools, the partnership’s efforts to contribute to their mutual goals of preparing students for postgraduate success and the university’s commitment to access and success.

Fairfield University’s long-standing and multifaceted partnership with Bridgeport schools includes such initiatives as the Community Partners Scholars program, the Bridgeport Tuition Program, Project Excel and a number of community outreach programs such as the Connecticut Writing Project, teacher preparation internship programs, service-learning courses with university students tutoring K-3rd graders, the Bryant School Book Club facilitated through Campus Ministry, and enrichment programs for Bridgeport schools presented by Fairfield’s Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts.

“Fairfield University and colleges and universities have a responsibility to serve their neighbors and communities,” said Fr. Jeffrey P. von Arx S.J., Fairfield University’s president. “As a Jesuit and Catholic university, Fairfield has an even more explicit obligation. It is our mission to form men and women who will embrace their obligation to work in the service of their fellow men and women, to engage with the world as it is, and to do their utmost to transform their communities for the better. Our partnership with Bridgeport schools enriches us. It brings energy, strength, ingenuity, and love into our university community and we are deeply grateful for all the benefits that we derive from that partnership.”

“Fairfield University has been an outstanding community partner to the City of Bridgeport and our public schools,” said Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch. “The administration, staff, students and faculty are helping to improve the lives of young people in Bridgeport every day through numerous collaborative programs. We are very thankful for our partnership and are very proud of Fr. von Arx and the entire Fairfield University community for winning this award.”

“As chief academic officer for Bridgeport Public Schools and an alumna of Fairfield University, I find this partnership to be mutually beneficial,” said Amy Marshall. “Our students in Bridgeport are provided with broad based academic support and fulfilling enrichment experiences. Through their work in Bridgeport Public Schools, the students and staff from Fairfield University are living the mandate of St. Ignatius of Loyola to live a life of service above self. They are actively engaged in an environment that is rich in diversity in Bridgeport as they do their work.”

A vision for 21st century education

FAIRFIELD—The greatest crisis of 21st century education may be that “we have forgotten what it means to be human,” said Father Anthony J. Ciorra, Ph.D., at the sixth annual Educators’ Communion Breakfast, held at Sacred Heart.

The breakfast was sponsored by the Fairfield County Chapter of Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice (CAPP), the lay-led effort to promote Catholic social teaching.

In a humorous and insightful talk, Father Ciorra, who is the assistant vice president for Mission & Catholic Identity at Sacred Heart, told the more than 150 educators present that teachers must learn to slow down, enjoy the journey and be grateful for their lives rather than being resentful about what they don’t have or have not accomplished.

Mentioning that teachers changed his life, Father Ciorra said “the teachers who meant the most to me were those who loved me, people who touched my heart.”

He said that the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus reminds us that “the way of the heart is the task of education in the 21st century,” but that many have focused on achievement and constant striving.

The native of Elizabeth, NJ, and former dean of the Graduate School of Religion at Fordham University, said he recently visited Thailand for the first time and was impressed by the gentleness of the people he met while on retreat, noting that “they walked through life while we run through it.”

He said that at the end of Mass, when he exhorts people to “Go in peace,” he knows that their day, like his, is going to be anything but peaceful.

“We’re all living in the fast lane,” he said. “We as a culture have the characteristics of the addictive personality. We’re compulsive in our activity and we’re in denial. We think we’re really running the world and we can do it without God’s help or the help of others.”

Father Ciorra said he uses prayer during the day to focus on the gift of life, but urged people to realize that even priests and religious in monasteries may not live in a world without distraction and persevere.

CONTD ON PAGE 16
Civility in America

Bringing faith to the public square

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

“We are living in an age that is becoming more inclusive and less tolerant,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano to over 400 people who packed the third-floor auditorium of Ferguson Public Library to hear him speak about civility in public discourse.

The bishop’s talk was part of an ongoing series, “Civility in America,” organized and sponsored by the Dilenschneider Group, along with Sacred Heart University, Purdue Pharma, Hearst Connecticut Media, and the Stamford Public Library.

Focusing on the quality of religious discourse in a pluralistic society, the bishop said society has a long way to go both with interreligious dialogue and the increasingly polarized conversation between religion and the public sector.

The same polarization can also be seen within various faiths, he said, referring to the division within the Anglican community over the ordination of gay bishops and the tensions within the Catholic Church over the proper way to proceed with change in the spirit of Vatican II.

Speaking to a gathering of people of many faiths, the bishop said he was “deeply disturbed by the growing hostility to religion in the public square,” and the failure to recognize the role that faith plays in creating values in a culture.

“Religion has to remain. Society can’t prosper without it,” he said. “We will be impoverished beyond our imagination.”

In particular, the bishop said he was concerned about “the diminishing role of religious discussion” in the government and the media.

“Religious discussion is not welcome in health, education and social services,” and faith traditions are often marginalized, “as if they have nothing to contribute to the public dialogue.”

“There is a myth out there that today’s society is the most enlightened of all—that’s a surprise isn’t it?” the bishop said, drawing laughter from those in attendance. He questioned how a society can both think of itself as enlightened, and yet dismiss thousands of years of religious tradition and accumulated wisdom about the human condition.

Making a distinction between freedom of worship and freedom of religion, the bishop said that everyone has the right to worship in a church in our society, but increasingly people face hostility if they bring religious values to the public square.

He added that he didn’t come to Fairfield County to confine faith “to the four walls of a church.”

“I came here as a religious leader to add my voice to the state of religious discourse between the Church and the larger society,” he said. “Religion goes beyond the sanctuary to the public square. We must bring it to every aspect of our lives.”

Acknowledging that there are times when religious beliefs “collide with the prevailing understanding of the common good” in a pluralistic society, the bishop said that the difference must be worked out with public discourse, approached with respect and concern for the dignity of all people.

The bishop admitted there may be “some discomfort or hostility to religious tradition by nature of its basic conservatism, in that it conserves traditional values,” but he was also concerned that secular society may have decided that “religious partners are not worth the risk of dialogue because of the message they bring.”

Quoting St. Paul, the bishop said one way to bridge the gap between people of faith and the larger society is “to speak the truth in love.”

“Love doesn’t give in to fear. Love demands that anyone who seeks the truth listen with an open heart to the other person who has inherent dignity in the eyes of God.”

Referring to the writings of John Cardinal Newman, Bishop Caggiano said that Newman thought of society as a circle of searchers in which artists, scientists and people of all faiths would move shoulder to shoulder toward and find the same truth at the center.

When asked about the impact of social media and the Internet during a question and answer session following his talk, Bishop Caggiano said that it has had a profound impact on society, especially young people who have grown up with it.

“We’re in the middle of a maelstrom and we don’t know where it’s going,” he said, noting that the new media may even change the way people experience the sacred.

He said one of the biggest challenges facing the Church is to bring the faith to youth who may have very little knowledge of the tradition that formed their ancestors. He said many young people also suffer from low self-esteem.

“My, do not believe they are loved or lovable,” he said, adding that those who experience unconditional love from a parent can better understand the love of God for his people.

While society is changing rapidly and there are many challenges to communicate the faith, the bishop concluded by saying that personal witness is still the most powerful tool of conversion.

“There will be many competing voices, but only authentic witness brings people back to faith. The time for mediocre Catholics has come to an end. If we’re going to preach, we have to live it. Talk is cheap. Action is authentic.”

Both men were ordained in St. Augustine Cathedral by Bishop Walter W. Curtis on July 23, 1963. Both were 76 at the time of their retirement and had devoted 50 years to priestly service.

Fr. Gleeson:
Enjoying possibilities ahead

“There were challenges along the way, but I was always happy in the choice of my vocation,” says Fr. Gleeson.

For the last 36 years, Fr. Gleeson had served as pastor of St. Stephen Parish. “It was like being the father of a family. I baptized them, I married them, and I baptized their children. I can’t tell you how many times, at a First Communion, a parent would say to their child, ‘Stand there by the door with Father. I have a photo from my First Communion in that same spot.’”

The Bridgeport native grew up in St. Augustine Cathedral Parish. He went to Nathan Hale and St. Augustine elementary schools and graduated from Fairfield Prep. He entered St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield and completed his seminary studies at St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore, MD. Fr. Gleeson also holds a master’s in educational psychology from Loyola University in Baltimore, a degree he earned by doubling up on his studies while in the seminary.

Fr. Gleeson’s first appointment in 1963 was as parochial vicar at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Stamford. He later served at St. Ann Parish in Bridgeport, St. Mary Parish in Stamford and St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull. “When I was at St. Mary’s, I trained a young altar boy named Richard Murphy.”

That young man is now Fr. Murphy, pastor of Our Lady of Peace Parish in Stratford. “I was present at his first Mass.”

He was chaplain of the Boy Scouts Council and a juvenile court advisor in Bridgeport for ten years starting in 1963. “Some of those kids stayed in touch with me over the years,” he says with pleasure.

In 1968 he was named chaplain and religion teacher at the former Presentation High School (part of St. Mary Parish school in Stamford). That same year he became spiritual director of the Council of Catholic Nurses, a position he would hold for more than 40 years. Fr. Gleeson served on the Presbyteral Council and Diocesan Budget Committee from 1975-76, and was an advocate for the diocesan marriage tribunal.

He came to St. Stephen’s, which serves the lower part of Monroe as well as the north end of Trumbull, in 1977. In June of 2013 the parish held a special Mass and reception honoring the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood as well as his 36 years of steady guidance of the Catholic School in Darien.

He is particularly proud of his work in the two fiat offices, and later Our Lady of Fatima Parish. “When I started, we had about 600-650 families,” he recalls. When he left, the parish listed nearly 1,800 families. “That’s close to triple.”

To cope with his growing congregation, Fr. Palmer was named to the Presbyteral Council in 1973 and again in 1992. In 1998 he was appointed to a five-year term on the College of Consultants.

He celebrated both his silver and his golden jubilees in Our Lady of Fatima School. “It was always a team endeavor,” he says, praising the parishioners’ enthusiasm and support. Always athletic himself—he played basketball until his mid sixties—he was a big supporter of the school basketball team, going to games whenever possible.

He is particularly proud of the parish Youth Group, which sent a delegation over several summers to teach impoverished youngsters in Kingston, Jamaica. “They did a great job,” says Fr. Palmer, who joined the teens and chaperones on each trip. “They really got enthusiastic, knowing they were making a difference to a whole generation.”

Parishioners also enjoyed his musical gifts. A lover of classical music, he particularly enjoyed singing during the Christmas season. When requested, he would sing the Ave Maria or Panis Angelicus at weddings or funerals.

Retirement has opened a new door. “I didn’t say a parish Mass the first few weeks after retirement, and I felt the loss,” he says. “Now I’ve adopted helping out at St. Mary’s in Ridgefield, where Msgr. Bronkiewicz is a close friend. Fr. Victor Martin at St. Thomas Aquinas in Fairfield is my cousin, and of course St. Bridget Parish is just across the way here.”

For both former pastors, retirement brings a change, not an end. Both look forward to the fulfillment in their priestly ministry in the years ahead.
Holy Spirit Parish, Stamford

SoldierSocks serve vets

By DON HARRISON

Tube socks and baby wipes. When Christopher Meek learned that U.S. marines stationed in Afghanistan lacked basic necessities and were “living in jeeps and foxholes,” he and a colleague, Scott Duffy, sent CARE packages containing socks, baby wipes and other hygiene items to the troops. That was about five years ago.

“I’d read a letter from a marine in Afghanistan saying that they weren’t living on bases but in jeeps and foxholes, and could use such things as socks and baby wipes,” says Meek, a Stamford resident who earns his livelihood as a vice president with State Street Global Advisors in New York City.

From such humble beginnings sprang SoldierSocks, a registered 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization based in Stamford that now provides assistance in many forms to active military personnel as well as to returning veterans.

Meek and Duffy co-founded SoldierSocks, but the latter was transferred to Dallas for a few years and Meek has continued as its chairman. He estimates that he devotes about 20 hours a week to the non-profit—“more hours than my wife would like, more hours than my boss would like”—but knows it’s time well spent.

On February 19, Meek, representing SoldierSocks, traveled to Dallas for the first Military Service Initiative summit, held at the George W. Bush Presidential Center. The former President delivered the opening remarks at the event, which focused on the challenges and opportunities facing post-9/11 veterans.

“We were one of about 100 not-for-profits chosen to attend the summit,” Meek notes.

Since July 2009, SoldierSocks has shipped more than 50,000 pounds, or 25 tons, of basic essentials to U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For those returning home, SoldierSocks has launched the Veterans Education Grant Foundation, which offers partial scholarships to Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs—Meek’s alma mater—and to the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. It also presents a general scholarship for veterans to attend a trade school or college of their choice.

“We were looking to do some new things as the war wound down and the troops started coming home as veterans,” Meek explains.

“I strongly believe that as Americans, we have an obligation to ensure that our veterans returning home have the knowledge and tools they need to lead productive civilian lives.”

Last year, SoldierSocks entered into a partnership with Ekso Bionics, a Richmond, California-based company that has designed a state-of-the-art exoskeleton suit that helps disabled people walk again. The suit, which weighs 50 pounds, enables an individual to stand and walk with a natural, full weight-bearing gait. Walking is achieved by the user’s weight shifts to activate sensors in the device.

Through an ambitious capital campaign, SoldierSocks plans to purchase ten of these suits for paralyzed veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. At $110,000 to $140,000 apiece, the suit’s price tag is well beyond the means of most veterans.

In December, SoldierSocks presented its first Ekso bionic suit to Daniel Rose, a paralyzed Army sergeant from Wisconsin. “When Sgt. Rose was fitted with his bionic suit, he said, “It’s nice to stand and look the world in the eye again,” Meek related.

The non-profit’s next donation of the suit will be awarded to the Boston Healthcare System in West Roxbury on April 15—the one-year anniversary of the Boston Marathon bombings.

Meek says his “paying it forward” mentality is a tribute to his mother, a deaf-education teacher in the 1980s and ‘90s. Although a Presbyterian, Meek and his wife, Christine, a Catholic, are active parishioners at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Stamford. They are the parents of three children, Lexie, 10; Cayla, 7, and Cody, 22 months.

(For more about SoldierSocks, visit www.soldiersocks.com.)
THE DISCIPLINE OF LENT

Among the many gifts from our new Pope is his ability to make us think in a new way about being Catholic and participating in the life of the Church and its sacraments. His homily in Rome on Ash Wednesday is another example of his being able to reach us in simple and powerful language. Francis tells us that Lent gives us an opportunity to get over ourselves and start thinking of others. While teaching us the discipline of Lent—prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—he also cautions that we should not get too self-satisfied by our sacrifices, if they are not a true sign of caring and trust in God. Francis challenges the affluent to live lives free from “the obsession of possessions, from the fear of losing what they have and from the sadness of not sharing their well-being with others,” and he teaches us that Lent is most of all a time to seek “a conversion of heart,” and to change our lives for the better: “Lent reminds us that it is possible to realize something new within ourselves and around us simply because God is faithful, he continues to be rich in goodness and mercy, and he is always ready to forgive us and start all over.

A TIME FOR LISTENING

When Bishop Frank J. Caggiano announced plans for the 4th diocesan synod in January, he said that it would begin with a time of listening. The time has come with a series of listening sessions throughout the diocese set to begin in May (See page 2 for dates and other information.) The sessions will provide an opportunity to share your thoughts, feelings and hopes for the local Church with Bishop Caggiano.

The sessions, to be held in every vicariate throughout the diocese, will focus on three major questions: your thoughts on the strengths of the diocesan ministries; areas where you would like to see new diocesan outreach in the future, and what can be done to improve existing outreach.

These listening sessions are open to the public and will run for about two hours each. Those who are unable to attend can make their voices heard by responding to the questions online or sending in written responses.

In his February 22, letter announcing the Synod, Bishop Caggiano issued a challenge to us all: “Each generation and every age has faced its own difficulties; yet the gift of faith that has been placed into our heart by God always remains, and must be passed into future generations.”

Make no mistake, the Bishop has issued a generational call to change. In his many visits throughout the diocese in his first six months, the Bishop has made it clear that he came to Fairfield County to bring healing, to revitalize the diocese and to build a bridge to the future—one that will welcome people to a deeper, more joyful and loving practice of their faith.

CONVIVIO INSPIRES YOUTH

“Convivio is a weekend to reconnect with friends, make new ones, and grow in our faith. It is a weekend that offers all of us, as young adults, a chance to make our faith more personal. The sense of community we build throughout the weekend made me feel at home within the church; and Convivio 2014 helped remind me that as a Catholic, I am never alone. Leading a group encouraged me to be a leader and to step outside of my comfort zone. I was encouraged to learn more about my faith and listen with an open heart and to what members of my group shared. This past weekend was filled with a deepening of my love for the Church and for our Lord. Convivio is a place where we are invited to be ourselves and grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ.”

Katie Coyle, Group Leader

“I just have to say thank you, for all you’ve done for my children. You’ve changed Skillet’s life. This year was my son Kevin’s first year and he loved it. Thank you for being part of their lives. I really appreciate it...always.”

Maria Vaca, participants parent

“I have been a volunteer for five years of Convivio. Each year I become more and more amazed at the outpouring of love, dedication and the spirit of community from all that are involved from the volunteers, participants and parents, to even the catering staff that provide us the food. I entered into Convivio this year not sure if this was what God was calling me to do and if my time would have been better served doing something else. However, I knew I was at the right place and where God wanted me to be the second I walked into Sacred Heart and felt God’s love and presence. It has been a blessing and an honor for me to be a part of Convivio as a volunteer. What touched me the most was being able to briefly speak with our wonderful Bishop Caggiano. Hearing his talk on Saturday afternoon and how he was extremely uplifting and a great sense of peace filled my heart.”

Lena Gjonaj, Volunteer
Never underestimate the Holy Spirit in revealing those things one needs to jettison. Recently, the Holy Spirit sat me down and had a come-to-Jesus chat with me. I was replaying someone’s offense over and over in my mind. Every time I remembered the offense, I would feel the betrayal anew, which led to another act of forgiveness. My memory was hijacking me. I needed some help from the gifts of the Holy Spirit. A little wisdom. Some understanding. A helping of right judgment.

It would be so much easier to get amnesia. Forgiveness may be an act of the will, but what can a person do with an active memory? How could I stop remembering? Would I ever get out of the spin cycle I had fallen into?

With a little help from the Holy Spirit, I realized that the problem was arrogance and pride—which meant the antidote was meekness and humility.

So, each time I remembered, I would hit my knees. If I did that the very second in which my memory took me back to the offense, my hurt evaporated and peace took its place. And I mean in the very second—like when stepping out of the shower and I’m shivering cold or when snuggled down under the covers for the night. I immediately began to pray, on my knees.

Within a few weeks, I stumbled across this quote by Blessed Teresa of Calcutta: “Forgiving requires love; forgetting requires humility.” The Holy Spirit was nodding. Humility was the key. I knew I loved the offender. I truly did. That’s why I was able to forgive again and again—every time the memory took me back. Humility enabled me to let the memory go. I didn’t have to be a spiritual giant to take down the memory monster. I just had to appeal to the Holy Spirit.

When we fall into the trap of labeling other people solely in light of their sin, we stop seeing the good in that person. That’s what my confessor says, and then he adds, “Who wants to be defined by his or her worst moments?”

I certainly don’t. And it is a pretty awful existence to see others and immediately think of just one thing, that thing.

Within weeks, I began remembering the good in the one who had hurt me in the past. That’s some kind of spiritual miracle. That’s the power of God active in the life of a believer. I stopped remembering the thing, and I remembered how to love.

This is not a self-improvement program. It’s not about working on one’s bad habits. Jesus Christ changes us.

We talk about the good news and saint-making, but what does that mean? Are we really just the same people, doing the same things in all the same ways? Is the only notable difference between us and everybody else a mere label? What does it mean to be a follower of Christ? What does it mean to be Catholic?

It means that even the most ingrained habits can change. In fact, the things in us that don’t look like Christ must change! I must be conformed to the image of my Lord Jesus Christ—the One who forgives even the worst sinner—even me. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead transforms us. And the spin cycle of sin loses its hold on our lives.

Go ahead. Hit your knees. There is power there. You were meant for far greater things than relentless bitterness. You have been called to the abundant life in Christ. It’s kind of amazing that one can discover joy and freedom in the simple act of kneeling before God.

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On my knees

Catholic by Grace

By Denise Bossert

Denise Bossert is a national Catholic writer and columnist.

Imagine the surprise. My dad knew Pete well. They’d had frequent discussions about lots of things. But Pete never once talked about his service during World War II. Such silence is not uncommon among guys who saw real action.

You know the type. The old timer in the stands at the Little League game. The guy with the pins in his baseball hat. The gentlemanly usher who always greeted your family with a smile at Mass on Sunday morning.

That guy didn’t want to argue politics. That guy didn’t want to bicker about religion. He’d done enough fighting to last a lifetime, maybe two. He just wanted to watch a ball game on the weekend. He just wanted to serve his Church. He just wanted some sunshine on his face.

We owe those guys something. We owe guys like Pete. But since they don’t talk about what they saw and did for us, sometimes we don’t remember to be as grateful as we should be. It’s too bad, because soon they’ll be gone. My uncle Joe joined the Navy in 1945 at the age of 17. That makes him about as young a WWII veteran as you can. He’s 86 now.

But it’s not just the WWII guys—the so-called Greatest Generation—who are leaving us. Navy pilot Lt. commander Edwin A. “Ned” Shuman III died last year at 82. Shuman spent 17 months in solitary confinement over the course of his five years in the North Vietnamese prison camp known as the Hanoi Hilton. These guys never got the thanks they deserved.

Around Christmas 1970, Shuman and his fellow prisoners were contemplating holding a church service in their cell. This was strictly forbidden. They knew it would invoke the ire of their guards, who were not prone to Christian charity or normal human kindness. Shuman wanted to make sure the men appreciated what was at stake.

“These were not in my prayers. I was replaying someone’s offense over and over in my mind. Every time I remembered, I would feel the betrayal anew, which led to another act of forgiveness. My memory was hijacking me. I needed some help from the gifts of the Holy Spirit. A little wisdom. Some understanding. A helping of right judgment.

So, each time I remembered, I would hit my knees. If I did that the very second in which my memory took me back to the offense, my hurt evaporated and peace took its place. And I mean in the very second—like when stepping out of the shower and I’m shivering cold or when snuggled down under the covers for the night. I immediately began to pray, on my knees.

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Go ahead. Hit your knees. There is power there. You were meant for far greater things than relentless bitterness. You have been called to the abundant life in Christ. It’s kind of amazing that one can discover joy and freedom in the simple act of kneeling before God.
O’Connor named grand marshal

BRIDGEPORT—Terry O’Connor has been selected to be the grand marshal of the 2014 Greater Bridgeport St. Patrick’s Day Celebration.

The St. Patrick’s Day Parade, the centerpiece of the celebration of Irish culture, kicks off at 12:00 noon on March 17 in downtown Bridgeport. The event has become a tradition in the region, one that takes its footsteps of other grand marshals, said O’Connor, a Trumbull resident, who is executive director of the Cardinal Shehan Center and McGivney Community Center in Bridgeport. Both facilities focus on serving youth and their families with a mix of social, educational and recreational services.

He is the 32nd grand marshal of the Greater Bridgeport St. Patrick’s Day Parade in downtown Bridgeport. The event has become a tradition in the region, with help from people in many surrounding towns.

“I’m happy to follow in the footsteps of other grand marshals such as Peggy and Ed Conner, Richard and Deborah Owens, Frank Carroll Jr., Robert O’Keefe, Dr. Patrick Carolan and so many others,” O’Connor said.

According to Robert O’Keefe, past Grand Marshal, this year’s parade will include feature 650 students from the new Catholic Schools, which will feature three floats and a Creole Marching Band for St. Joseph High School in Trumbull.

The Greater Bridgeport St. Patrick’s Day Celebration Committee works to encourage and advance the culture and heritage of the Irish people by organizing and presenting a day of activities dedicated to St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland.

Terry O’Connor began his long, distinguished career in the field of Athletics as a basketball coach at Harvard University and then Fairfield University. In 1992, he became the Executive Director of the Cardinal Shehan Center. The Shehan Center is a nonprofit organization located in Bridgeport, CT. Its mission is to enrich lives through learning. It offers a variety of programs and activities that address the educational, recreational, cultural, and social needs of moderate and low-income families and young people. In over twenty years as Executive Director, he has consistently exhibited the qualities of a true community leader for the Center, as well as for the city of Bridgeport.

Over the years, Terry has received many honors and awards for his volunteer efforts and leadership roles within the community. He also serves as a Director on the board of several community organizations. It is an honor to have him as the Grand Marshal of the 2014 Greater Bridgeport St. Patrick’s Day Parade.

Schedule of Parade Events
March 17, 2014
Greater Bridgeport St. Patrick’s Day Parade, Downtown Bridgeport

• 8:00 am—Mass at Saint Augustine Cathedral
• 9:15 am—Flag raising at City Hall with The Honorable Bill Finch, Mayor of Bridgeport
• 10:00 am—Grand Marshal’s Breakfast*, Grand Ballroom, Bridgeport Holiday Inn
performance by The Lenihan School of Irish Dance

*Tickets will be $25.00 and seating will be on a first come first serve basis. Contact Nancy at 203.268.9657 for tickets.
(For further information about the 2014 parade events, please contact the parade committee chair, Katrina Shea, at 203.260.7298.)

St. Joseph High School
Spring Open House
March 25, 2014 at 7pm

We look forward to you joining us at St Joe’s for an event on campus soon!

St Joseph High School
2320 Huntington Turnpike, Trumbull CT 06611
203-378-9378

St Joseph High School
Register today! www.SJCadets.org

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A scientist, teacher and writer, Dr. Rice was recognized for his pioneering efforts in Natural Family Planning and many volunteer commitments, including his work for Conservation/Inland Wetlands Agency of the town of Fairfield.

In the Mass before the breakfast at SHU’s Chapel of the Holy Spirit, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said that it was important for teachers to remember “that we are not makers of the truth, we are only custodians. The truth belongs in God. Parents give life to their children but educators teach the art of living well. They teach faith and the values that make human life beautiful.”

(CAPP welcomes new members. For information on the Fairfield County Chapter of Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice, write CAPP, 6 Wyndover Lane, Cos Cob, CT 06607. Phone: 888.448.4788. Visit: www.capp-usa.org.)

FIRE ACCIDENTS
FIRE ACCIDENTS
By GINA DONNARUMMO

The Diocese of Bridgeport celebrated these important rites in the RCIA Process (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) on Sunday, March 9, at Saint Theresa Church, Trumbull. Thirty-five parishes attended with 81 catechumens, now Elect, and their godparents, and 158 candidates and their sponsors.

The Rite of Election and the Rite of Call to Continuing Conversion takes place on the first Sunday of Lent in every diocese. It is at this ceremony within the Liturgy of the Word that the catechumens and candidates freely and publicly respond to God’s call in their lives and have the intention to receive the sacraments of the Church (RCIA 120).

This Rite marks the turning point from formation to immediate preparations for the celebration of the sacraments at Easter. This time in Lent, called Purification and Enlightenment in the RCIA Process, is a very special time for those in RCIA. The Elect are presented the Nicene Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and participate in the scrutinies.

The scrutinies “are rites for self-searching and repentance and have above all a spiritual purpose. The scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the Elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good,” (RCIA 141).

Our Elect and candidates will receive the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist), make their professions of faith into the Catholic Church, and receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist at Easter Vigils in our parishes.

One candidate from Saint Rose of Lima Parish in Newtown said the past several months of her formation process has been a wonderful and joyful experience. You could see the love of Christ radiating from the Elect and candidates as they were individually introduced to Bishop Frank J. Caggiano by their pastor or RCIA Coordinator. Bishop Caggiano reminded them in his homily “do not be afraid.”

Sue Baldwin said, “As RCIA coordinator of St. Andrew Parish, this Sunday was a significant celebration. It is a privilege to witness the catechumens and candidates throughout our diocese and the many persons who participate in the catechesis for the Rite of the Election and Call to Continuing Conversion. The atmosphere of prayer and intent as a community was truly present.”

Please keep our Elect and candidates in your prayers as they continue on their journey of Christian formation. We thank those RCIA Coordinators, priests, religious, catechists, godparents, and sponsors who journey with them toward the Light of Christ.

(Gina Donnarummo is Director of Adult Formation in the diocese.)

March 2014
**Lenten Resource**

**New App enlivens Holy Scriptures**

By KEVIN J. JONES  
CNA/EWTN NEWS

CHICAGO—A new app featuring the full text and dramatic readings of the Bible is drawing praise from Catholic clergy who say it can help more people read or hear the Scriptures no matter where they are. Supporters call it “an audio Bible like no other,” with a host of actors and actresses and superb sound effects to help the stories come alive.

Bishop David Ricken of Green Bay, WI, said the app “makes hearing and reflecting upon the word of God easy, engaging and acceptable.”

“The New Evangelization calls us to reach out using new methods and expressions, and this tool allows people to not only read but hear and experience the word of God in their homes, cars and places of work,” he said.


With an additional purchase, users can add a full-length audio New Testament voiced by actors including Neal McDonough, Kristen Bell, Sean Astin, Blair Underwood, Malcolm McDowell and John Rhys-Davies. The audio New Testament is 22 hours long. Another optional purchase is a digital edition of the Ignatius Catholic Study Bible. The Bible text follows the audio automatically.

Fr. James McIlhone, director of biblical formation in the Archdiocese of Chicago, who is helping promote the app and develop ways to use it, called it “an audio Bible like no other.”

“Where most audio Bibles have one person reading the text, ‘Truth and Life’ has a host of actors and actresses taking the various parts,” he told CNA.

“That, coupled with the superb sound effects, allows someone to close their eyes, listen to the Bible and visualize the scene.” Fr. McIlhone said the app helps people have their Bibles with them on all their devices.

“I find more people following texts, when I give talks, with their iPhone, Android or iPad, rather than with a print Bible,” he said.

Michael Stark, a producer of the app, said his work was motivated by his adoption and his Catholic upbringing.

He was adopted through the Archdiocese of Chicago’s adoption agency, and was “always grateful for God’s graces, especially the parents I was given.”

“When the opportunity to produce a Catholic audio Bible and app was presented to me, I jumped on it,” he said. “This is my way of giving thanks to God for all the graces he has bestowed upon me.”

Stark noted that Catholics can use the app to read the Scriptures as part of a “Lenten challenge.”

“We’re encouraging people to read the four Gospels in 46 days,” he said. “Read four chapters a day. The amount of time it takes for you to do that is eight to 10 minutes.”

“Take the time to get to know God better, to know the Gospels better,” he said.

Stark said he hopes that any Bible-reading habits taken up during Lent will become a regular year-round habit.

Fr. McIlhone added that rather than giving up something for Lent, Catholics should consider giving up “a little time” and read, listen to or meditate on the four Gospels.

“This practice, we feel, could enhance the reader’s understanding of Jesus and bring them into a deeper relationship with him,” he added.

He said he has often heard that Catholics have been told not to read the Bible. While he believes this has been true in some cases, “it was not my experience.”

His grammar school education studied the stories of the Bible, and he said it was in his high school studies that he gained his “first love” for the Bible.

“Catholics have shied away from the Bible,” he said. “The essence of our faith is relationship with Jesus Christ, and the only way we can enter into relationship with Jesus is knowing him, and the means par excellence whereby we come to know him is the Bible.”

(More information is available at www.truthandlifeapp.com.)
Contemporary Stations draw positive response

By Pat Hennessy

“My kingdom is not of this world.” The refrain, one of the responses in “Jesus: Walk to Calvary,” echoes through Notre Dame Parish in Easton. The original, contemporary Stations of the Cross composed by Marlene Tubridy are offered at Notre Dame every Friday during Lent.

“I researched online for different versions of the Stations,” says Tubridy, Notre Dame’s music director. “I wanted meditations that would relate to people’s lives today.”

Notre Dame has been using Walk to Calvary as a Lenten devotion for the past three years, and has seen participation grow from a handful of parishioners to more than 60 people on some Friday evenings.

“We spoke about the Stations at every Mass before the beginning of Lent, and it was very well received,” says Msgr. Thomas Driscoll, Notre Dame’s pastor. “The number of people who come with regularity is positive, especially in a small parish like our own.”

Tubridy graduated from Juilliard School of Music in New York, where she majored in voice and studied composition. She has studied opera with La Scala in Milan, Italy, and has a Master of Arts in drama from New York University. “Whenever I needed to relax, I’d write music,” she recalls.

Tubridy and her husband, Martin, both completed courses in the Education for Parish Service (EPS) program. “Instead of just going to Mass on Sunday, I began to grow in understanding of the Scriptures, and that would suggest musical themes to me,” she recalls.

The first person to call on her musical talents was Msgr. Nicholas Grieco, then pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Weston. At that time, Tubridy was music director at St. Francis. Each May, the parish would hold a prayer service with the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The litany calls on Our Lady under her many titles, some of them centuries old, including Mother of the Church, Mystical Rose, Morning Star, and Queen of Peace.

“Why don’t you write music for that?” suggested Msgr. Grieco.

Parishioners’ reaction to the soft, sensitive music she composed surprised her. “It wasn’t just composing for my own enjoyment—I could take music to inspire them in their faith. It was like opening a beautiful gate.”

The music emphasizes simple phrases, focusing on the simplicity and beauty of the words. Although clear and contemporary, its modal tones hark back to early Church music, particularly that of the Eastern Church.

In 2000, when Tubridy started the CantiamoCHOIR (“cantiamo” means “let’s sing” in Italian), many members of St. Francis were among her founding group. “Even when it’s pop music, delivered with a sense of fun, it’s giving people a chance to relax, to take a break.”

All her concerts are benefit performances to assist local charities. “When I involve people this way, I evangelize without preaching.”

When she became director of music at Notre Dame, she again found encouragement from her pastor when Msgr. Driscoll asked her to compose songs and orchestral pieces for Mass at the parish. “It’s contemporary, but in some way still traditional, and I’ve been happy with it,” he says.

In 2006, she composed “Proclamation of Faith,” a Mass in honor of the 50th anniversary of the parish. She has since written “Mass of the People,” incorporating the new Mass translations.

“Jesus: Walk to Calvary” raised such a positive response among participants that Tubridy produced a video version, molding her music with masterpieces of religious art. The effort involved viewing literally thousands of museum paintings and mastering the intricacies of file compression to put the resulting file on YouTube.

“I’ve been excited beyond belief—just that I could learn this technology. Now there is a way to reach so many more people,” she says. “Between the images and the music, God can touch people wherever their faith is, in places we can never know.”

When it was posted on the diocesan website last Lent, the 21-minute video received over 1,000 hits. Requests have prompted it to be posted again this year.

“Jesus: Walk to Calvary” ends not with his death but with his Resurrection. “If you end with the crucifixion, you haven’t told the whole story,” says Tubridy.

The video ends with the image of an empty cross triumphant against a shaft of light, and the promise of Jesus to his disciples: “I am with you always.”

(“Jesus: Walk to Calvary” can be viewed on the diocesan website: www.bridgeportdiocese.com; at notredameeaston.org/Lent; or at marlanetubridy.com.)

Marlene Tubridy
Synod 2014

Diocese names Synod Commission Members

BRIDGEPORT—As preparations for the Diocesan Synod get underway, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, has appointed members of the newly formed Synod Commission, which will guide the work of the diocesan conclave over the next year and a half.

The Synod Commission is an advisory body that works directly with the bishop and the synod director. Members were chosen from the priests, deacons, religious, Catholic Center employees and lay leadership of the diocese. “These are the men and women of our diocese dedicated to the Lord and to the service of their communities,” Msgr. Dariusz Zielonka, Synod Director, explains. “Their knowledge, experience and leadership skills will help tremendously to prepare and conduct the discussions and events of the Synod. I am looking forward to working together with this highly qualified group.”

Msgr. Dariusz said that the Synod Commission will help to structure the many opportunities for lay men and women throughout the diocese to make their voices heard, beginning with listening sessions to be held in May and June of this year. The Synod is expected to involve more than 400 delegates in the process of planning for the future of the diocese.

Synod Commission Members:

**Priests**

Msgr. Walter C. Orłowski, KCHS
Pastor, St. Matthew Parish, Norwalk

Msgr. Walter Orłowski, Pastor of St. Matthew Parish in Norwalk for almost 20 years, is grateful to Bishop Caggiano for calling the Synod and honored to be the priest-representative on the Synod Commission. “It is an exciting time for the diocese, because the Synod gives us all an opportunity to share our thoughts and visions together as clergy, religious and laity,” he says. “Together, we will lay out a blueprint for our future which will no doubt make our Church stronger and allow us to carry on the mission of Christ.”

**Religious**

Sister Rita Petrarca, A.S.C.J.
Pastoral Associate, Saint Joseph Parish, Shelton

A former teacher and principal, Sr. Rita brings a wide variety of backgrounds to her role as representative of women religious on the Synod Commission, including her experience in parish work and provincial administration. She has served as pastoral associate at Saint Joseph’s for the past eight years. “I am excited about the idea of a Synod. In my work with parents and godparents preparing for baptism, and in marriage preparation, I often find a lack of knowledge of what our Catholic faith is all about and what it can mean in their lives. I hope that the Synod will be a time of grace in calling our diocesan community and our parishes to a deeper level of lived faith and worship.”

**Deacons**

Deacon John DiTaranto
St. Jude Parish, Monroe

In his six years as a deacon at St. Jude Parish in Monroe, Deacon John DiTaranto has covered a wide range of duties. He has performed house blessings, visited the sick in hospitals, worked with lectors, performed baptisms and assisted with RCIA and Confirmation classes. Of all of his activities, he finds his work as the spiritual director of the Emmaus Youth Group most fulfilling. “I have a consulting business working with companies on change management issues and essential leadership training,” he says. “The Synod Commission will give me the opportunity to take some of my skills in the secular world and bring them to the service of the diocese.”

**Chancery**

Damien O’Connor, Director of the Office of Pastoral Services

“I am honored to serve the diocese in this capacity,” says Damien O’Connor, the senior director of the Office for Pastoral Services. He and his family are parishioners at St. Ann Parish in Bridgeport. “The primary objective of our Catholic faith is to bring people to Jesus Christ,” O’Connor affirms. “This often involves carefully listening. We are then better equipped to serve people by formulating a strategic plan that reflects the reality of their life (and faith) experiences within the Church and ultimately bridge any gaps that exist. Put simply, the Synod will allow this process to take place. Trusting in the intercession of our Blessed Mother, I am certain that the Synod will truly serve our diocese.”

**Lay Leadership**

Carol Pinard
St. Aloysius Parish, New Canaan

As the former DRE at St. Aloysius Parish, New Canaan, for over 30 years, Pinard was diocesan director of religious education until 2013. In that capacity, she worked closely with religious educators throughout the diocese.

“The Synod is an opportunity to come together, to study and assess the needs of the Church in Fairfield County, to help create a spiritual renewal that will bring all people, young and old, into a personal and active encounter with Christ.”

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Next Steps...

After collecting all the input from the faithful of the diocese, the Synod Office will group the topics, suggestions and observations thematically. These will be presented to the bishop who will choose from them the themes for the Synod’s General Sessions. He will also announce them at the bishop who will choose from them the themes for the Synod’s General Sessions.

The Synod Office will contact them directly.

Msgr. Walter Orłowski, Pastor
St. Matthew Parish, Norwalk

Msgr. Dariusz Zielonka, Synod Director

in the diocese asking them to conduct local consultation with their respective leaders in order to submit findings for review. The Synod Office will contact them directly.

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Prayer for the Synod

Lord Jesus Christ, You told your disciples: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Trusting in your promise, we come together for our Fourth Diocesan Synod.

Send us your Holy Spirit that we may participate in this Synod with passion, imagination and love.

Give us, we pray, the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, courage and - above all - charity.

Help us to grow in unity and mutual respect.

Guide us on the path of the New Evangelization as we plan for the future of the Church in Fairfield County.

Bless our Bishop, our Clergy and the Faithful.

May all that we do reflect your divine plan.

May all that we do reflect your divine plan.

We pray all this in your name, who are Lord for ever and ever.

Amen.

Our Lady of Fatima, Patroness of our Diocesan Synod, intercede for us!

Saint John XXIII, pray for us.

Saint John Paul II, pray for us.

John Rodriguez

Planning (NFP) teachers from Couple to Couple League and have been teaching and promoting NFP in Spanish throughout this diocese as well as other dioceses nearby for about 14 years. They have been involved in the Spanish marriage prep retreats for about 10 years and have talked in the Spanish St. Cyril of Jerusalem classes on the topic of the “Family” based on the Catechism and Familiaris Consortio.

Through involvement in the Synod Commission, I want to help come up with ways to reach out to the Spanish community, to bring to the table the needs in our diocese and narrow the gap between our different cultures,” John says. “We want to find ways to spread the message of God’s plan for marriage and family.

March 2014

Synod 2014

Prayer for the Synod

March 2014

IV Synod of the Diocese of Bridgeport Calendar

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FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

Lay Leadership

Martha Missimer

St. Patrick Parish, Redding Ridge

Service to the diocese as a Confirmation catechist and a lector has been especially close to the heart of Martha Missimer of St. Patrick Parish in Redding Ridge. “My passion lies in my ministry as a spiritual director,” she says. The United States Air Force veteran is an EPS (Education for Parish Service) graduate who conducts retreats and workshops in addition to giving individual spiritual direction. She is currently the program director for the Immaculate Heart of Mary chapter of the Associates of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

“I joyfully join the Synod Commission, grateful for the opportunity to serve Our Lord Jesus in a new and exciting way,” she says. “By the Grace of God, I hope to listen well and honor reverently the voices of God’s people in our diocese as we endeavor together to build a magnificent bridge to the future.”

Lay Leadership

John Rodriguez

St. Peter Parish, Bridgeport

John and his wife, Lucy, and I have been members of St. Peter Parish for over 25 years—since before they were married. John is a member of the financial parish council at St. Peter’s. The parents of two children, they are certified Natural Family Planning (NFP) teachers from Couple to Couple League and have been teaching and promoting NFP in Spanish throughout this diocese as well as other dioceses nearby for about 14 years. They have been involved in the Spanish marriage prep retreats for about 10 years and have talked in the Spanish St. Cyril of Jerusalem classes on the topic of the “Family” based on the Catechism and Familiaris Consortio.

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Trinity hockey is back on top

By JOE RYAN

STAMFORD—Trinity Catholic hockey is back at the top of the Fairfield County Interscholastic Athletic Conference standings, which is surprising to some but not to those who know the proud tradition of the Crusader hockey program.

Lately, the Crusaders have been hit hard by the attraction of the top teams in the conference. Trinity still has a roster that is dwarfed by such powerhouse programs as Darien, New Canaan and Ridgefield.

This season the results speak for themselves because they were the number four ranked team in the state, especially in goal where junior Kyle Odieno is one of the best around. “I think he’s great,” said Darien head coach Chris Gerwig. “Let’s face it; all starts between the pipes. I think any team in the state would love to have him and he gives us a chance to win every night.”

Egan is the quiet leader who sets the tone. He works hard at both ends of the ice, which sets the tone for the rest of the team.

Assistant coach Pete Stokes called Egan a leader who could rival any of the captains in the long history of Crusader athletics in leadership intangibles.

Junior defensemen Colin Bernard is one of the best two-way blue line players around. He is a force in front of Odieno but excels at jumping into the attack. He grew up watching the Crusaders, and he is enjoying his role as an alternate captain. He also likes the team’s underdog status, which he uses for inspiration.

“I don’t want this to be taken the wrong way,” said Stokes. “I’ve been around it a long time, and we do have hockey players. The grinders, we have them and they work hard, plus with Odieno in the pipes we get away with it a little bit.”

Seniors Tyler Steinquist, Sean Epp and Carmine DeRubes are the guys who pry loose the puck in corners from the other team.

They occupy the attention of the opposition so the scorers can do their jobs. DeRubes in particular has had one of those seasons where only the coaching staff and team will truly appreciate the work he has done. The senior is a leader hitter on the team who seems to have a knack for tying up the other team’s defenders so his teammates can score.

Smith and his staff cannot be overlooked either. One of the big reasons that the Crusaders have always had continuity within their athletic ranks has been the alumni coming back and joining the coaching staffs. Stokes has spent the past two decades on the sidelines for the football teams as a head and assistant coach before becoming the assistant for the hockey program. Mike Bernard is another former player who joined Smith on the bench.

Smith is the first to talk about the contributions of Bernard and Stokes because it gives him time to work with his players on an individual basis. The Crusaders’ head man is one the best teachers when it comes to hockey skills in the area and that is one of the reasons the team gets so much out of all the players on the bench. Smith finds a role for all of them.

This year may be just the tip of the iceberg for Trinity with juniors like Matt Carlson and Drew Scanlon. Along with sophomores Jordan Skiba and Eryk Wielgos, providing a solid core with Odieno, Bernard and Northrop for future years.

Earlier in the season, Smith was talking about where the team seemed to come together and he pointed back to last season and a time when they were 2-11-1. They got hot and won five of six games down the stretch to make the tournament.

“I knew that was our make or break time of the season, heading up to Watertown to face a team with 11 seniors, and my team came through,” said Smith. “From that point we never looked back. But to be where we are this year, I think it could set us up where we can make a long run.”
NORWALK—When Bishop Frank Caggiano rounded the corner to greet the teens who had fasted for more than a day to make people more aware of hunger in the world, he was met by a loud cheer of appreciation for his support.

That same joy and excitement was shared at the Mass that followed in St. Philip Church, where more than 1,000 worshipers gathered to celebrate the yearly “30 Hour Famine” observance in an act of solidarity with the homeless and hungry.

Along with prayerful fasting, the young people raised more than $36,000 to feed the poor in ten countries served by World Vision. The international Christian relief and development organization assists 70 million people each year through child nutrition and agricultural solutions around the world.

The teens’ fast began Saturday morning, February 22, when they walked from the Norwalk Green to St. Philip’s for a prayer service and other activities. They were wearing their bright red “Tell Everyone” t-shirts to make people aware that 870 million people around the globe are hungry, and that an estimated 19,000 children die of hunger every day.

In his homily, Bishop Caggiano said that while hunger around the world is often a result of human conflict and corruption and the indifference of the wealthy, “we can put hunger to rest once and for all not simply by the money raised but when the Holy Spirit is alive in our hearts.”

“We’re going to have to do it with God and through the power of love. Only by opening our heart and mind to the Holy Spirit will that day come,” the bishop said.

The bishop drew laughter when he began his homily by noting “that the only thing that stands between 165 kids and hunger and mine,” said the bishop, who praised the teens for the “prophetic and courageous witness they have given and for their faith that we can change the world for the better.”

Reflecting on the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus tells us to “love your enemies,” Bishop Caggiano said that the young people who participated in the fast were an example of “loving until it hurts, and that means even loving those who are part of the problem, so that they may become part of the solution.”

In a moving ceremony at the end of Mass, the young people held up large black and white photos of hungry people from around the world, while the choir sang “The Least of These,” a song that asked those present to reach out to all those who are hungry both physically and spiritually.

(To make a donation to fight hunger, send a check payable to either “World Vision” or “Manna House” addressed to “Famine” at St. Philip Church, One Fr. Conlon Place, Norwalk, CT 06851. More information can be found at www.stphilip-norwalk.weebly.com.)
**Convivo Youth Congress**

**Bonding in faith and love**

“"It was my first time at CONVIVIO, and I can honestly say that it’s the best weekend I’ve ever had. I made tons of new friends from around the country, and learned so much about true love. The talks were honest and relatable, the small groups were enlightening, and the games were a blast. I’m so happy I came, and I’ll definitely be returning next year. This weekend has changed my life forever, and I will never be able to thank you enough for this wonderful Catholic experience. God bless! <3”

Marie Comeau, Participant

“For the three days of Convivio, the world as I know it stops and the Holy Spirit takes over. I am able to see the transformation of participants, who are reticent at the outset and overwhelmed with a new found joy by the end. It is a blessing for me to be a part of this special opportunity and like the participants, I am profoundly touched by the experience.”

Lee Anne Boyle, Volunteer

“I have always felt like I was the odd one out even though I have great friends at school. When I came to Convivio, I felt like I could be myself. I felt like I was loved by everyone that was a participant and a group leader even though I didn’t know most of them. Since I was a group leader I had to step out of my comfort zone. I don’t usually like to share with people I know so it was really scary for me to tell people I barely knew what I was thinking and feeling. But once I did I felt great and I still felt loved. I felt like it was a different experience for me. I was a participant last year and I was a group leader this year. I got to see what has to happen to make Convivio amazing. It was great to see all the participants were smiling and sharing and participating. Overall, my Convivio was amazing.”

Colleen Rauser, Group Leader

“Convivio 2014 was my first Convivio ever. It was an incredible experience full of love and hope. Maybe it was because the theme was love. But everyone was so happy and full of Christ’s love for each other. I just wanted to hug everyone during and after that weekend. The air was full of love. But the greatest thing about Convivio was to see so many young high schoolers that had so many incredible insights. I was afraid that the discussions would be a bit superficial and simple and maybe even awkward. I was amazed by how much the high schoolers had to share and how many insights these teens had. There is hope for our culture!”

Thibault Vincent, Group Leader

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**NEW COVENANT HOUSE FROM PAGE 7**

facility we hope to create additional partnerships with other agencies to expand services. Plans for the new facility include creating an upgraded dining area and a spacious food pantry that will enable guests to shop and select a wide range of healthy food. The center will also house immigration services, English as a Second Language courses, a clothing closet, shower facilities, medical services in association with Americares and other support to help guests.

According to Brian Jenkins, executive director of New Covenant House, it currently serves more than 1000 meals daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner as well as take home food items through its food pantry. The demographics of the soup kitchen are 90% male and 10% female, with Hispanics representing 60% and African Americans representing 30% of the guests. Very importantly, more than 250 of these meals are provided daily for inner city children at Yerwood Center and Inspirica.

The soup kitchen is clearly an alternative for low-income people to enjoy three meals daily at no charge. The food pantry offers alternatives for families unable to eat at the soup kitchen by providing bagged groceries, which is ideal for working families that need a supplement of food to make ends meet each month.

New Covenant House of Hospitality serves the greater Stamford area, which includes Stamford, New Canaan, Norwalk, Greenwich and Darien.

Guests are the poor and disadvantaged in the community, including the homeless, working poor, elderly, mentally ill, HIV/AIDS clients, the disabled and immigrants, both with and without citizenship documentation.

“Our guests are at risk due to numerous socio-economic factors including poverty, addiction, complicated health issues and/or other disabilities. When living in impoverished conditions, such as homeless shelters, there is also an inherent lack of nutrition and an increase for chronic infection and illness.” Jenkins said.

New Covenant House of Hospitality is located at 90 Fairfield Ave. in Stamford.

(For information call: 203.964.8228 or email nch@cfc-ct.org. Online registration at www.nchstamford.org.)
Lenten Resources

Lenten calendar of events

ST. ANDREW PARISH, 435 Anton St., Bridgeport—Rosary Monday nights during Lent beginning at 7 pm. All welcome.

ST. MARY PARISH, 55 Catoonah St., Ridgefield—Lenten Confessions 3–4 pm every Saturday (except Holy Saturday), 7–8 pm every Tuesday in Lent. NOIRE DAME PARISH, Easton—Stations of the Cross every Friday in Lent at 7 pm. For more information, contact Marlane: marlanetubridy@gmail.com.

LENTEN PRAYER VIGIL FOR LIFE praying the Rosary in front of the Summit Women’s Center located at 3787 Main St., Bridgeport on Saturdays of Lent at 8:30 am. For more information, http://bpt40dfl.wordpress.com/ or email bpt40dfl@yahoo.com.

“LENTSANYTH” phone app via iTunes.

“40 DAY CHALLENGE” LENT free app at www.ewtnapps.com/challenge.

LENTEN EVENING FOR FAMILIES & CHILDREN at St. Catherine of Siena, 4 Riverside Ave., Riverside, CT on Thurs., Mar. 20, from 7-8 pm led by Tom Kendzia. Tom will give a Lenten Evening of Recollection on families and children of all ages to pray, sing, and reflect on our lives. For more information, call: 203.637.3661 or www.scauth.org.

LIVING STATIONS OF THE CROSS by high school teens of St. Aloysius on Fri., Mar. 21, at 7:30 pm at St. Aloysius Church, 21 Cherry St., New Canaan. The interactive stations are designed to assist those participating through action, reflective readings and music. Teens from Youth Ministry are costumed, portraying Those on the walk of Jesus to Calvary. Teen lectors share thoughts representing Jesus speaking to his people asking all to participate in answering Jesus. As we answer Jesus, the reflective responses are geared to help us join Christ on his journey to Calvary and deepen our Lenten journey. Admission is free. For more information, contact Chris Orts, Youth & Family Ministry: 203.651.1154 or youth@stacrc.com.

LEN T TALK / RETREAT: “Unite Your Suffering with the Suffering of Christ” on Sat., Mar. 22, at St. Mark Parish, 500 Wigwam Lane, Stratford beginning with 8 am Mass. Refreshments, talk by Deacon Tony Conti, adoration, Rosary, Stations of the Cross, witness talk by Damien O’Connor, lunch. $12pp; $20/husband & wife. RSVP to Gina Donnarummo, gdonnarummo@diobpt.org or 203.416.1446; mail check made payable to “Office for Pastoral Services” to: 238 Jewett Avenue, Bridgeport.

“THE QUEST FOR PERSONAL HOLINESS” a Lenten Mission given by Fr. Thomas Hoar on Mar. 24-26, beginning with Mass at 7 pm at St. Bridget of Ireland Parish, 278 Strawberry Hill Ave., Stamford. “This Parish Mission will give you an opportunity to set aside time to rediscover the season of Lent as a time of healing, repentance and prayer preparing individually and as a Community for the coming Easter celebration.” For more information, call: 203.324.2910 or www.stbridgetofireland.org.


PARISH LENTEN MISSION: “Why?” Lead by Fr. Peter Lynch at St. Ann Church, 481 Brewer St., Bridgeport from Sun.-Tues., Apr. 6, 7, 8, from 7-8:30 pm. Confessions available at the end of the last session.

Visit www.stannblackrock.com for more information, or call parish office: 203.368.1607. All are welcome!

CONCERT “THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF CHRIST, A SACRED CANTATA” by Theodore Dubois performed by the St. Cecilia Society Choir on Sun., Apr. 6, at 7:30 pm at St. Lawrence Church, Shelton, and on Palm Sunday, Apr. 13, at 7:30 pm at St. Augustine Cathedral, Bridgeport. Under the direction of Mr. David Forbes McCaffrey, III, The Cathedral Parish Music Director, the chorus represents parishes throughout the diocese. The concert is free and open to the public. A goodwill offering will be taken.

LIVING STATIONS OF THE CROSS by St. Luke Youth Group on Good Friday, Apr. 18, at 7:30 pm at St. Luke Parish, 49 North Turkey Hill Rd., Westport. All ages, all welcome. For more information, contact Deb: 203.227.7245 or email slygroup@optonline.net.

PASSION PLAY at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull presented by our 8th grade religious education class on Apr. 7, at 7 pm. Open to all.

A HALF-HOUR CHORAL MUSIC REFLECTION: “I have returned” at Notre Dame Parish, Easton on Fri., Apr. 11, from 7-7:30 pm with Scripture readings by Dr. Tom Hicks, followed by Stations of the Cross at 7:30 pm. For more information, email: marlanetubridy@gmail.com

TENEBRAE SERVICE at St. Theresa Parish, Main St., Trumbull on Wed., Apr. 16, at 7:30 pm. This service consists of chanted psalmody, readings and responsories. The St. Theresa Schola will be singing at this service. For more information, call: 203.261.3676.

PARISH MISSION “Dare to be Holy!” at Our Lady of Grace, 497 Second Hill Ln., Stratford starts Sun., Apr. 13, and ends Wed., Apr. 16, at 7 pm. Catholic Lay Evangelist, Bill Wegner, of Good News International is conducting the mission. He will also present a shorter version of his talks on Mon., Apr. 14 through Wed., Apr. 16, at 9:30 am following the 9 am Mass. This is a great way to spend Holy Week! All are welcome. For more information, call: 203.377.0928 or link3@juno.com.

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Obituaries

Sr. Evelyn Kane, RSCJ, passionate about math

Religious of the Sacred Heart Evelyn Elizabeth Kane, educator, pastoral counseler and minister to migrant farm workers, died December 2 at Teresian House in Albany, NY. She was 92 years old. She was born in Brooklyn, New York, on September 3, 1921, the only girl among seven boys. She entered the Society of the Sacred Heart in 1942 at Kenwood in Albany, and made her final vows in 1950 at the Motherhouse in Albany, and made her final vows in 1950 at the Motherhouse in Rome. After receiving a bachelor of arts in mathematics with a minor in chemistry from Notre Dame College of Staten Island, NY, she earned a master of arts in education from the Island, NY, she earned a master's in mathematics from the University of Detroit in 1964.

A natural educator, Sr. Kane taught in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Michigan. Starting in 1967, she served at Kenwood Convent of the Sacred Heart in Albany for two years before becoming provincial secretary for education for the New York Province of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

She returned to the classroom in 1970 at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Greenwich, where she taught high school math until 1980. She loved her subject matter and was passionate about establishing a firm mathematics foundation for students. She began her pastoral ministry at St. Clement Parish in Stamford in 1983, visiting the homebound and sick of the parish. For several years she taught in the morning and served in the parish in the afternoon.

By 1990, her pastoral ministry had evolved and she also taught adult scripture classes at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Greenwich, St. Clement of Rome in Stamford and St. John’s in Darien. That continued until her retirement in 2004.

She was committed to serving the poor, especially immigrants. Sr. Kane was remembered in a Mass of Christian Burial on December 11 in the Teresian House Chapel in Albany. Burial followed in the Sacred Heart Cemetery at Kenwood.

Sr. Mary Salvator Cramer, IHM

Sr. Mary Salvator Cramer, IHM, of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary died on December 11, at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton, PA. She was 81 years old.

She was born on September 15, 1932, in Brooklyn, NY, and given the name Mary Jane. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 7, 1950, and made her final profession of vows on August 2, 1956. She received a bachelor of science degree in education from Marywood College and a master of arts degree in French from Assumption College.

Sr. Salvator served as a teacher in Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and New York. She served as pastoral minister at St. Ambrose Parish in Bridgeport in 1983 and was on the support staff of the Marian Convent in Scranton, from 1993-94. Following that, she taught at the Education Enrichment Institute in the IHM Center in Scranton until 1996. From 1996 until the time of her death, Sr. Salvator was a prayer minister at the Marian Convent and at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Sr. Salvator on December 17 at Our Lady of Peace Residence. Interment followed at St. Catherine Cemetery in Moscow, PA.
Penance and Reconciliation

Be reconciled to God and neighbor during Lent

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has encouraged Catholics to make going to confession a significant part of their spiritual lives during Lent. Priests throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport have made it easy for area Catholics to come to confession. In addition to regular hours, every parish also offers Confession every Tuesday from 7 to 9 pm.

The following resources, provided by the USCCB, offer a thoughtful overview of the role of penance and reconciliation in the lives of Catholics:

**Sin damages our relationship with God and neighbor.**

In the Gospels, Jesus teaches that love of God and love of neighbor are intimately connected (Mt 22:38-39; Mk 12:29-31). When we sin against those in need by failing to act compassionately toward them, we ignore Christ himself (Mt 25:31-46). In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, “Closing our eyes to our neighbor also blinds us to God” (Deus Caritas Est [God Is Love], no. 16).

Sin ruptures our relationship with God and also with other members of the Body of Christ (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], no. 1440). Take a moment to consider ways that you have broken any of the Ten Commandments: Are there any false “gods” (e.g., material things, pleasure, etc.) that you place above God and other people? Have you treated family members or others with disrespect? Have you lied, gossiped, cheated, or stolen?

**Sin is never an individual affair.**

Sin damages our relationships with others and all of creation. Thus, sin is never a purely individual affair and has social dimensions (Pope Benedict XVI, Sacramentum Caritatis [Sacrament of Charity], no. 20; Pope John Paul II, Reconciliatio et Paenitentia [Reconciliation and Penance], no. 15).

**Sin becomes manifest in unjust structures.**

The collective actions (or failures to act) of individuals create “structures of sin,” which “grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins” (Pope John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis [On Social Concern], no. 36).

For example, widespread poverty, discrimination, denial of basic rights, and violence result from many peoples’ actions (or failures to act) because of greed, racism, selfishness, or indifference (Reconciliatio et Paenitentia, nos. 2, 16). We are all called to consider how we contribute to structures of sin in our personal, economic, and public choices. For example, do we take into account the treatment of workers when we make purchases? How do our consumption choices contribute to environmental degradation? Are we aware and informed? Do we take the time to educate ourselves about issues that affect the community and advocate on behalf of those who are poor and vulnerable?

**We are called to examine our consciences and admit our failings.**

The Sacrament of Penance challenges us to examine our hearts inwardly and then express outwardly the ways we have failed to love God and neighbor—through both personal sin and social sin. Examining our consciences teaches us how to “look squarely at our life” to see how well we are living the Gospel (Pope Benedict XVI, Address to participants in the Course on the Internal Forum organized by the Tribunal of the Apostolic Penitentiary, March 25, 2011). Only in recognizing our failings can our hearts be converted to God so that we can receive his forgiveness and allow his grace to heal us and our relationships.

**We receive God’s forgiveness and mercy.**

The Sacrament of Penance allows us to receive forgiveness of sins and be reconciled with God, self, the Church family, and the human family—restoring our broken communion. Through Penance, we return to right relationships (Sacramentum Caritatis, no. 20).

**We work to repair the harm we have done.**

Reconciliation absolves us of our sin, but it does not repair the damage that was caused. We must do what is possible to repair the harm.

We must also consider how we can work to transform the structures of sin that threaten human life and dignity. By making amends and working to build a more just community, we can repair the damage and also restore our own spiritual health.

The whole Church community plays a role in reconciliation. We do not engage in the act of reconciliation alone.

**We are called to be forgivers and peacemakers.**

Having received the undeserved gift of forgiveness, we are called to extend the same forgiveness and mercy to others. We take up the task of being instruments of reconciliation in our communities and world, working for peace, justice, and love.

(For more Lenten resources, visit the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops website: www.usccb.org.)
Swimming Upstream

By Joe Pisani

Joe Pisani, a journalist for many years, is principal at The Dilschneider Group, a strategic communications firm.

While I was being introduced to guests at my younger sister’s birthday party, someone who had a little too much Pinot Grigio asked, “Is that your father?”

“Check the prescription on those eyeglasses,” I wanted to say. “Planned”—what a utilitarian concept. I doubt my parents planned her or my sister Kathy, who was born a year later on the same day. My father didn’t believe in long-range planning. He took life a day at a time, by our parents? For my part, I hope He’s talking about you. He’s talking about me. He’s talking about millions upon millions of “unplanned” children, whose value God understood before time began.

As parents, we may not have admitted that none of our four daughters was “planned,” at least by my wife and me. We never sat down to develop a strategic plan for parenthood with an Excel spreadsheet, a folder of Huggies coupons, and blueprints for a bigger house. In fact, we raised four daughters in a Cape Cod with three bedrooms, no dishwasher and one bathroom. The waiting lines were long and the yelling was loud.

Our daughters were surprises, and what great surprises. We welcomed them all, although we feared that four children were more than we could afford. In the end, God provided, as he always does.

Years later, however, while I was struggling to pay for college and weddings, I sometimes wondered, “Why the heck did we have four kids? A dog or two and possibly a parakeet would have been a lot less expensive.” But the truth is we wouldn’t have done anything differently.

As parents, we may not have planned those pregnancies, but God certainly did. God has a plan, and it’s always better than our plan. Sometimes, though, what He has in store for us isn’t necessarily what our first choice would be.

As he told the prophet Jeremiah: “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you. I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

One of my “unplanned” sisters became a doctor who works in the intensive care unit and has helped many families when they’re confronting a medical crisis or the end of life. The other “unplanned” sister is a social worker who counsels families troubled by abuse and poverty.

I like to think they take Christ with them in their work.

The greatest tragedy of our age is that so many children had been born and not aborted, could have changed the world for the better, in big ways and in small. They might have developed a cure for cancer or AIDS, and they might have brought Christ to the lonely, the suffering and the dispossessed.

Each one of us were created in God’s image and likeness with infinite forethought and love, although I confess that I seldom feel like a piece of fine craftsmanship and usually think of myself more as a Hyundai than a Porsche. But even our flaws were part of his plan, and the amazing thing is he loves us, flaws and all.

Years before Roe v. Wade and long before our society began to trivialize the sacredness of human life, Trappist author M. Raymond wrote, “Each human being is so tremendous that he or she merits a reverence that is really religious. For each is a creation of God; each a mirror of Divinity, each a feature or a facet on the Face of Christ.”

People who are forgotten by society, people who have no value in the eyes of a materialistic, status-obsessed culture are infinitely valued in the eyes of God.

Fr. Raymond also said, “From all eternity, God has had in his mind and will a specific task for you to perform for which no one else in all creation is fitted as you are. It belongs to you and to you alone.”

He’s talking about you. He’s talking about me. He’s talking about millions upon millions of “unplanned” children, whose value God understood before time began.

Or as Mother Angelica once said: “God knew you, loved you, and chose you before there was an angel, before there was a world, a universe or a star.”
The miracle of unbelief

First, I believe there are moments when something beckons us, something ineffable. I think everyone’s life is punctuated by these moments, moments when we sense there is a transcendent reality behind ordinary reality. In literature, again it is John Updike who expresses so well what I’m trying to say. In his famous Rabbit novels, Updike presents his main character, Rabbit, as someone who nothing he experiences is quite enough. He remains incomplete and searching, and toward the end of the novels there is a scene that takes place on a drizzling Spring evening, at the time of day when Rabbit always felt most at peace, “the moment of the day when the light dims and the weeping cherry glows in the dusk.” In this setting, Rabbit insists to himself, “Somewhere behind all this, there’s something or someone that wants me to find Him.”

C.S. Lewis put it this way when he spoke of “that unnamable something...behind the sound of wild ducks flying overhead...the mourning cowbells in late summer, or the noise of falling waves.”

A personal experience: It was a Spring Sunday afternoon, while walking through a Long Island Park, that I was overwhelmed with the presence of “something,” something supernatural. I was surrounded by trees and the sky above, with the sound of cyclists, skaters, a nearby ballgame, music. I had the experience of being grasped by some encompassing Presence, some sweet certainty. It lasted less than a minute, but when it was over, I knew that there was a supernatural presence in the world, and it flooded me with a sense of peace.

I think many people know what I’m trying to say. They too experience a kind of breakthrough. Perhaps many modern people don’t have it in them to experience this kind of thing. The words of Isaiah may apply: “He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear” (42:20). Many modern people don’t seem to sense the “deep down of things,” as the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins put it: “they don’t hear the talk the rain makes, or the music of Mozart.” But I think most people feel what I’m trying to say at one point or another in their lives.

I also think a great number of people feel something else, namely, that nothing satisfies us as we thought it would. We cannot help wondering why it was that life, even when it gave so much, after all, left us disappointed. The sphere of the transitory and temporal cannot satisfy us fully, cannot satisfy some deepest craving of our hearts. We sense we are searching for something the world is not giving us. I think that part of the inner world of everyone is this sense of emptiness, unease, incompleteness. Something is missing from our lives that we cannot even name. It’s like an ever-present white noise.

We know at some fundamental level that we long for something sacred beyond ourselves and our lives. I doubt that there are many who do not recognize this experience. What is this need within?

Finally, I feel God is evident in the world he has created. The visible contains the invisible. When I say this I’m not thinking so much of mountains, forests, oceans, stars.

For me, it’s something like a baby’s fingernails that expresses the wonder of creation. I mean, the whole process seems so wonderful. This living baby with perfect fingernails. What a lot of work, ingenuity, indeed, love, goes into making those fingernails. What love goes into making each one of us, no matter what a lousy job we make of it afterwards.

These kinds of experiences make me agree with the Protestant theologian Karl Barth, who spoke of “the miracle of disbelief.” He spoke of how it was “by the miracle of foolishness that it is possible to think of God as not existing” (Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum, 1962, p.173). We have to ask “Who turned on the lights? And whatever for?”

SAINTLY LIVES

PATRICK WAS BORN INTO A CHRISTIAN FAMILY IN BRITAIN. HIS FATHER WAS A DEACON AND HIS GRANDFATHER WAS A PRIEST. AT THE AGE OF 16, HOWEVER, PATRICK HIMSELF DID NOT KNOW GOD. THAT SAME YEAR, HE WAS KIDNAPPED BY PIRATES AND FORCED INTO SERVITUDE IN PAGAN IRELAND.

AFTER 6 YEARS IN CAPTIVITY, PATRICK HEARD A VOICE DIRECTING HIM TO GO HOME. HE ESCAPED TO THE SEAPORT, AND AFTER A SHORT PRAYER, MANAGED TO CONVINCE IRISH SAILORS TO TAKE HIM HOME TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE IRISH SEA. AFTER A LONG TREACHEROUS JOURNEY, HE WAS REUNITED WITH HIS FAMILY.

PATRICK STUDIED FOR THE SACRED MINISTRY UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF ST. GERMAIN. HE WAS ORDAINED IN FRANCE AND BECAME A SUCCESSFUL MISSIONARY AND EVANGELIST. HE LATER HAD A DREAM THAT THE CHILDREN OF IRELAND WERE BEGGING HIM TO WALK AMONG THEM AGAIN.

WHILE TENDING HIS MASTER’S SHEEP, PATRICK SPENT HIS DAYS IN CONSTANT, SOLEMN PRAYER. HE LATER WROTE "LOVE OF GOD AND HIS FEAR INCREASED MORE AND MORE, AND MY FAITH GREW AND MY SPIRIT WAS STIRRED UP..."

POPE ST. CELESTINE I, SOON COMMISSIONED PATRICK TO BE THE APOSTLE TO IRELAND. PATRICK AND HIS COMPANIONS LANDED ON THE ISLAND IN 433. HIS EFFORTS WERE MET WITH MUCH RESISTANCE FROM DRUID KINGS, BUT IN THE END, HE HAD ESTABLISHED CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES THROUGHOUT THE LAND AND WON THOUSANDS OF SOULS FOR CHRIST.
Bits & Pieces

TEENS DINNER & HOLY HOUR by St. Joseph Youth Group, 8 Robinson Ave., Danbury on Sun., Mar. 16, from 6-8 pm. All welcome—bring a friend. For more information go to Facebook: SaintJosephYG friend. For more information go to www.sjcadets.org or St. Joseph Danbury Youth Group.

PROM DRESS GIVE-AWAY at St. Andrew Parish, Bridgeport. Do you have new or gently used prom dresses, shoes or accessories you’d like to share with someone who needs them? Drop-off dresses Mar. 17-19. Set up Mar. 19, from 5-8 pm. Give-Away Mar. 20-21, from 3-8 pm. Donate: dresses, accessories, shoes or gift card for hair salons. For more information or if you’d like to volunteer contact Susan: 203.374.8118 or email baldwin143@yahoo.com.

MASS OF HEALING AND HOPE on Mon., Mar. 17, at St. Lawrence Church, Huntington at 7:30 pm with Fr. Ed Nadolny. ST. VINCENT’S “WE CARE” PERINATAL GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP Wed., Mar. 19, at 7 pm in the Ambulatory Infusion Center waiting area on level 3 of the Elizabeth Friers SWIM Center for Cancer Care. For those grieving the loss of a baby through miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillborn, or newborn death. Admission free; no registration required. For more information, call Barbara: 203.576.5110 or Marilyn: 203.576.5716 or www.stvincents.org/events.

MARCH MADNESS at Cardinal Shehan Center on Thurs., Mar. 20, at 5:30 pm. Watch the NCAA Men’s Opening Round of Games on six TV’s and enjoy food, drinks, live/silent auction and raffle at the H. Smith Richardson Country Club in Fairfield. $75pp includes three drink tickets and plenty of food! For more information, contact Lorraine: 203.336.4668 or lgbbons@shehancenter.org.

CURSILLO UTLREYA held Mar. 20, at St. Mary Parish, Bethel at 7:30 pm. For more information, email Jeanette at jkovacs@sjcadets.org. For more information on Cursillo go to: www.cursillo.org.

IMMACULATE HIGH SCHOOL 9TH ANNUAL GALA DINNER DANCE on Sat., Mar. 22, from 6:30-11:30 pm at the Amber Room Colonnade, 1 Stacey Rd., Danbury. Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will be honored with the Nancy K. Dolan Leadership Award at this year’s Gala. For more information, contact Debbie at dbalile@immaculatela.org or 203.744.1510, ext. 159.


CONNECTIONS! MINISTRY FOR CATHOLIC SINGLES 40 AND OVER invites you to The Basilica of St. John the Evangelist, Stamford on Mon., Mar. 24, in Magr. Nagle Hall from 7-9 pm (use the side entrance adjacent to the rectory). Rev. Sam Kachuba, Vocations Director for the Diocese of Bridgeport will be our speaker; presentation on the book, The Catholic Playbook—Lenten Reflections for Singles. RSVP to:connectionsfairfield@gmail.com. Refreshments and fellowship after presentation. Suggested donation $10pp.

OPEN HOUSE FOR 6TH GRADE & UP at St. Joseph High School, Trumbull on Tues., Mar. 25, from 7-8:30 pm. For more information, contact Peggy, Director of Admissions, at 203.378.9378, ext. 308 or pma-rino@sjcadets.org.

HEARTS FULL OF SPRING An evening of inspiration, spring fashion, and gourmet indulgence to benefit St. Vincent’s Women at Heart Program featuring heart attack survivor and author Eliz Greene on Mar. 25, at Mitchell’s in Westport from 6-8:30 pm with a spring fashion show for women and men. Tickets $125pp purchased online or through St. Vincent’s Foundation Office. For more information, or register https://give.stvincents.org/heart2014 or call 203.576.5451.

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP for anyone grieving the loss of a loved one is forming at St. Stephen Parish in Trumbull. A series of ten weekly meetings will be held starting on Wed., Mar. 26, from 4-5:30 pm. For more information and to register call the parish office 203.268.6217.

FOOD FOR LIFE COOKING CLASS OFFERED at ST. VINCENT’S “Food for Life: Kickstart your Health” live cooking class is a cancer survivorship program designed to advance cancer prevention and survival through nutrition education, research and live cooking demonstration on Mar. 26, from 6-7:30 pm in the Hawley Conference Center on the 4th floor of Elizabeth Friers SWIM Center for Cancer Care. Free parking is available in garage. Registration required. Call: 203.576.6158.

A DAY OF REFLECTION FOR PARISH MINISTERS “From Surviving to Thriving” on Thurs., Mar. 27, from 9 am-2 pm at Holy Family Retreat Center, West Hartford presented by Liza Peters and Janine Cote. Join us as we share the challenges and triumphs that come with parish ministry. $40pp includes continental breakfast, Mass and lunch. For more information, call: 860.760.9712 or www.holyfamilyretreat.org.

STARRY NIGHT 2014 GALA for Caroline House on Fri., Mar. 28, from 7-11 pm at the Inn at Longshore, Westport. Cocktails, dinner, live & silent auction and enjoy food, drinks, live/silent auction and raffle at the H. Smith Richardson Country Club in Fairfield. $75pp includes three drink tickets and plenty of food! For more information, email Jeanette at jkovacs@sjcadets.org. For more information on Cursillo go to: www.cursillo.org.

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**Lent at Saint Mary Church**

**LENTEN CONFESSIONS**

All 82 parishes in Fairfield County are open! Tuesday Nights—7pm to 9pm—The Lenten season reminds us that in our Christian life we must always aspire to conversion and that when we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently the desire for Gospel perfection is kept alive in believers. Starting date: Tuesday, March 11, 2014.

**STATIONS OF THE CROSS**

Starting Friday, March 7 the Stations of the Cross will be prayed every Friday in Lent: 8:45am, 5pm and 7:00pm in Spanish.

**LENTEN MISSION**

March 30-April 2—7:30pm—Parish Lenten Mission by Fr. Timothy Reid of the Diocese of Charlotte, NC—“The Passion of the Carmelites”

**LENTEN VESPERS**

Saint Mary’s Student Schola, Norwalk, CT & The Blackstone Valley Catholic Youth Choir, Hopkinton, MA—Thursday, March 13 at 6:00pm

**CHANT CLASS FOR STUDENTS!**

Five Wednesdays in Lent: March 12, 19, 26, April 2, 9 from 5:30-6:30pm Come learn the basics of singing Gregorian chant! Grades 2 to 9. FREE! To register call 203.866-5546, x 115

**LENTEN FESTIVAL OF SAINTS MOVIES**

Once again, Saint Monica Sodality of Saint Mary invites all of you to join us in this inspirational way of preparing ourselves for this Lenten Season. Every Sunday during Lent we will have Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Rosary and Benediction at 6:00pm and at 6:30pm the movie. Please come and support Saint Monica Sodality!

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**SAINT MARY’S BOOKSTORE 203.854.9013**

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

HOURS: Saturday 10am-6pm | Sunday 9-9:30am, 11am-2pm | Monday, Wednesday and Friday 12:45-2pm

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

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**Bits & Pieces**

auctions, music and dancing. To register, donate or sponsor, go to www.theclarolinehouse.org or contact Christine Paine: 203.605.2728.

**SACRED HEART ACADEMY $10,000 CASH RAFFLE**

Tickets $20 each. To download ticket form go to www.sacredheartamden.org >support SHA>Auction, or call main office at: 203.288.2309. The winning ticket will be drawn on Sat., Mar. 29. Winner need not be present. For more information contact Maryanne at mpisani@sacredhearthamden.org or 203.287.8181, x372 or www.sacredheartamden.org.

**MIDDLE EASTERN DINNER**


**CURSILO URTREYA held Mar. 31 at St. Bridget of Ireland Parish, Stamford at 7:30 pm. For more information, email Jeanette at jkovacs@snet.net. For more information on Cursillo go to: www.cursillo.org.**

**MASS OF HEALING AND HOPE on Mon., Mar. 31, at Christ the King Church in Trumbull at 7:30 pm with Fr. Larry Carew.**

**FREE BREAST CANCER SURVIVOR SUPPORT GROUP** sponsored by St. Vincent’s SWIM Across the Sound, meets Apr. 1, from 5:30-7 pm on Level 4 of the Elizabeth Pfenn SWIM Center for Cancer Care, Bridgeport. The Group provides information and resources to women dealing with breast cancer at any stage of survivorship, and patients share their questions and concerns about the disease. No reservations required, free parking. For more information, call: 203.576.6185 or www.stvincent.org/events.

**PASTA NIGHT at Our Lady of Good Counsel, Bridgeport on Sat., Apr. 5, at 6 pm. Pasta, meatballs, sausage, garlic and Italian bread, salad and dessert. $10 adults, $5 for children ages 6-12. Tickets available at the door. For more information, call Margie: 203.372.2784.**

**EASTER EGG HUNT** sponsored by St. Joseph High School Alumni on Sun. Apr. 6, from 2-4 pm—hunt starts at 3 pm sharp! $8 per child; under 2 years old free. Walkins $10 per child. Also, touch-a-truck, police car, glitter-tos and the Easter Bunny! Mail payment before Mar. 28. For more information: www.sjcardes.org/egghunt.

**WOMEN’S GROUP GUEST SPEAKER** “The Goodness of God along the path of our lives” at Christ the King Church, Trumbull, Apr. 7, at 10 am. All invited. For more information, call Pat at: 203.261.8020.

**CURSILO URTREYA** held Apr. 7 at St. James Parish, Stratford at 7:30 pm. For more information, contact Jeanette at jkovacs@snet.net. For more information, on Cursillo go to: www.cursillo.org.

**4TH ANNUAL CATHOLIC ACADEMIES OF BRIDGEPORT LADIES LUNCHEON** at the Greenwich County Club on Wed., Apr. 9, at 11 am. All welcome as we celebrate Sr. Joan Maggetti, rscj and her 50-year history in Catholic education and her current position as Executive Director of the Catholic Academies of Bridgeport. For more information, contact Susan: 203.416.1466 or scecere@diobpt.org.

**ST. ANDREW YOUTH GROUP** will have a 16-hour fast on Apr. 11-12, to help families that are struggling to buy food. Donations of non-perishable food items and gift cards to grocery stores being collected. Drop off to St. Andrew Church, Bridgeport. For more information, contact Susan: 203.374.8118 or email sbaldwin143@yahoo.com.

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**White Mass open to all**

DANBURY—The 21st annual White Mass and breakfast honoring health care professionals will be held on March 30, at 9 am at St. Peter Parish, Danbury. The Mass, open to the general public, will be celebrated by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. Breakfast will follow at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Danbury. Two Danbury area healthcare professionals, to be announced at the breakfast, will be presented the Father Rufin Compassionate Care Award. The recipients are traditionally drawn from the ranks of physicians, nurses, dentists, healthcare workers or healthcare volunteers in Fairfield County who exemplify the compassionate and loving care for the sick for which the late Father Rufin Kuveikis, a Capuchin Franciscan, was known as chaplain at Norwalk Hospital for 18 years. He died in 2008 at age 86.

Sigurd H. Ackerman, M.D., president and CEO of Silver Hill Hospital in New Canaan, one of the most highly regarded private psychiatric hospitals in the northeast, will be the featured speaker at the breakfast.

Dr. Ackerman, a psychiatrist and psychopharmacologist with expertise in eating disorders is also a professor of clinical psychiatry at Columbia University’s College of Physicians and Surgeons. He is a Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association and The Society of Behavioral Medicine. Dr. Ackerman has a distinguished background in the mind-body interface, and is the past editor of the prestigious journal Psychosomatic Medicine. As the associate director for clinical affairs and research at the Eating Disorders Institute of New York Hospital, he led a clinical research unit for mood disorders. This is the sixth year that the Father Rufin Compassionate Care Award will be presented at the White Mass breakfast.

(All healthcare workers and their guests are invited to attend the White Mass. Brunch tickets: $33. For more information and tickets, contact Jean Talamelli: 203.416.1358 or email jtalamelli@diobpt.org.)
St. Vincent’s Medical Center and MD Anderson Cancer Network™

A DREAM FOR CONNECTICUT.
A NIGHTMARE FOR CANCER.

St. Vincent’s is now collaborating with MD Anderson Cancer Network™. This new affiliation allows us to raise the bar for cancer care in the Bridgeport area by following treatment guidelines and best practices developed by The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston—one of the country’s premier cancer hospitals.

PROVIDING NEW HOPE FOR CANCER PATIENTS

For the past 10 out of 12 years, MD Anderson has been ranked No.1 nationwide in cancer care by U.S. News & World Report’s “Best Hospitals” survey. The same survey has also ranked St. Vincent’s as a leading hospital in the region. Together, we’re setting out to set new standards for care in our community.

Our exclusive local affiliation means that we have access to the pioneering evidence-based guidelines, treatment plans and best practices developed by the experts at MD Anderson. These are disease-specific guidelines for cancer treatment, prevention, detection and follow-up care. In addition, St. Vincent’s can call on leading cancer experts to advise on cases through physician-to-physician consultations.

THE ADVANTAGE OF GENTLER HANDS AND SHARPER MINDS

For years, St. Vincent’s has been dedicated to providing the best in comprehensive cancer diagnosis and treatment—with gentler hands to comfort the patient, and sharper minds to ensure the best for the patient’s health. We’re always investing resources into state-of-the-art services and programs, participating in innovative clinical trials, and continually researching new treatment options and equipment. But now is a critical time. Research done by MD Anderson in 2009 predicts that the number of new cancer cases diagnosed annually in the U.S. over the next 20 years will increase by 45%.

In order to better protect our local community, it was only natural for us to seek out an affiliation with one of the nation’s most respected cancer networks. In turn, MD Anderson conducted a thorough review of our program to make sure that we met their high standards for cancer care. And although we provide best practices and evidence-based medicine now, our collaboration with MD Anderson Cancer Network means we have access to the latest in cancer practice guidelines.

COMPASSIONATE.
ADVANCED.
COMPREHENSIVE.

For over a century, St. Vincent’s has been committed to the well-being of our community. With our new affiliation with MD Anderson Cancer Network, we can continue our mission to make sure that everyone has access to high-quality cancer care, close to home.

>> To learn more about how we’re changing cancer care for the better, visit stvincents.org.