Chapel art tour beginning at 8:30 a.m.

**TOPIC:**
Education and the Art of Loving

**FEATURED SPEAKER:**
Michael J. James, Ph.D.
Fellow
Boston College
Roche Center for Catholic Education


REGISTER NOW!

**FIFTH ANNUAL EDUCATORS’ COMMUNION BREAKFAST**

Sunday, March 3, 2013

9 a.m. Mass – Chapel of the Holy Spirit
Sacred Heart University | 5151 Park Avenue, Fairfield, CT

**Chapel art tour beginning at 8:30 a.m.**

Breakfast immediately following.
March for Life

600,000 March for Life in nation’s capitol

Buses from the Diocese of Bridgeport joined a record crowd of marchers calling for legal protection for the unborn during the annual March for Life on January 25.

The harsh weather and overcast day did nothing to diminish the commitment and energy of the participants, many of them young people. “We are the Pro-Life Generation” said one banner carried by youth, and it summarized the hopes for the largest movement of social reform in the U.S. since the civil rights era.
Launching the Annual Appeal

Faith and Charity come together in 2013

BRIDGEPORT—“We can change the world with just a little faith” is the powerful message on the brochure that kicks off the 2013 Diocese of Bridgeport Annual Bishop’s Appeal. It was written by a young parishioner of St. Mark Parish in Stratford.

Kathleen Politica submitted the poster last year as part of a diocesan contest that encouraged children to celebrate the work of the Church.

“I wanted to show people that if one person can help someone, then maybe others will hear about it and help someone else. One person can cause great change. I hope that my poster shows that many people can help by supporting the ministries of the Annual Bishop’s Appeal,” says Kathleen.


“They are at the core of our work as a diocese and our commitment to each other.”

Pope Benedict XVI echoed those words in his recent Lenten statement. He said that faith and charity can never be separated nor opposed to each other, just as faith by itself isn’t genuine without charity.

“Faith is knowing the truth and adhering to it; charity is ‘walking’ in the truth,” the Pope said in his annual message. “Faith is genuine only if crowned by charity.”

The “Beacon of Hope” theme will once again guide the 2013 Annual Bishop’s Appeal, that will be launched in parishes throughout the diocese on the weekend of February 26-27.

Funds raised are the major source of support for diocesan ministries and social programs that benefit families and individuals throughout Fairfield County. This year’s goal is $12 million.

Msgr. Doyle has encouraged everyone to donate early in order to help the diocese save on printing and postage costs. Jeff Machi, chief development officer of the diocese, said parishioners in the 82 parishes across the diocese will begin to receive Appeal materials, including the new Beacon of Hope brochure that focuses on vocations, Catholic Charities and education.

“Having the resources and readiness to respond to needs across the diocese is an important ongoing goal,” adds Machi. “For priests, the tragedy in Newtown to the day-to-day challenges of serving the poor and helping our children, we’ve seen people turn to faith communities when their lives are in crisis. The Appeal gives the resources to respond both in the short and long term.”

Machi points out that many of the programs and services provided by the diocese are available nowhere else. Their faith-based response makes them unique and powerful when people are in crisis.

Last year more than 1.3 million dollars were raised through Catholic Charities and food pantries throughout the diocese, including the major centers such as Merritt Center in Bridgeport, New Covenant in Stamford and Morning Glory program based at Dorothy Day House in Danbury.

At a time when many individuals and families are under stress due to job loss or other problems, Catholic Charities has provided 15,000 counseling sessions related to its marriage and family therapy, medications management and other programs for at-risk children and families.

Gifts to the Appeal also make the presence of the diocese strongly felt in its outreach to the elderly. Last year, 22,000 visits to nursing homes residents and hospital patients were made by diocesan chaplains who provided spiritual care to the sick and their families.

Likewise, the Appeal helped support 48 retired priests, including 17 now in residence at the Catherine Dennis Keele Queen of Clergy Residence in Stamford. Many of these priests were beloved pastors who continue to help out on weekends in parishes across the diocese.

White Mass to honor health professionals

BRIDGEPORT—The 20th Annual White Mass to honor health care professionals will be celebrated in St. Augustine Cathedral, Bridgeport, on Sunday, March 10.

The 8:30 a.m. Mass honors physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals and volunteers across the diocese. The White Mass will be celebrated by Msgr. Jerald Doyle, diocesan administrator. Brunch will follow immediately at Tashua Knolls, Trumbull.

Dr. John Haas, president of the National Catholic Center for Bioethics, will be the featured speaker. The morning includes the annual presentation of the Father Rufin Compassionate Care Award. Fr. Rufin Kaveikis, who died in 2008, was the chaplain at Norwalk Hospital.

Parishes and healthcare organizations throughout Fairfield County have been asked to submit nominations for the award, which recognizes an outstanding, pro-life Catholic healthcare professional.

Dr. John Haas received his Ph.D. in moral theology from the Catholic University of America and his S.T.L. in moral theology from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. He also has a Master of Divinity degree and has studied at the University of Munich and the University of Chicago Divinity School. Before assuming the presidency of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, Dr. Haas was the John Cardinal Krol Professor of Moral Theology at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Dr. Haas has been a regular contributor to Our Sunday Visitor, The National Catholic Register and the Legatus Magazine. He has lectured extensively in the United States and abroad. He has testified before state and federal judicial and legislative committees on bioethical topics, including physician-assisted suicide and human cloning. He also served as a consultant to the Department of Justice on Hispanic and Family Issues during the first Reagan Administration.

Dr. Haas serves as a member of the Medical Moral Commission of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and as a consultant to the Committee for Pro-Life Activities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). For a number of years Dr. Haas produced and hosted a national television program known as “The St. Charles Forum” which was carried on the Catholic network EWTN. He is a Knight of Malta and is the Order of Malta Philadelphia area chair.

Dr. Haas and his wife Martha have nine children. They reside in Philadelphia.

The National Catholic Bioethics Center was established in 1972 to promote and safeguard the dignity of the human person in health care and the life sciences. The center’s staff consults regularly on life science issues and medical issues with the Vatican, the U.S. bishops, public policy-makers, hospitals and international organizations of all faiths.

(All healthcare workers and their guests are invited to attend the White Mass. Brunch tickets: $35. For more information and tickets, contact Jean Talamelli: 203-416-1538 or jtalamelli@diobpt.org.)
National Catholic Schools Week
Celebrating excellence in Catholic Schools

BRIDGEPORT—“May the Lord bless us as we strive to bring fourth in our young people a sense of loyalty, faith, and character,” said Msgr. Jerald A. Doyle, diocesan administrator, in opening the Breakfast of Champions. It is held at the end of Catholic Schools Week each year to recognize students who have shown excellence in academics and exemplify the Gospel values fostered through their Catholic education.

Both Msgr. Doyle and Dr. Margaret Dames, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Bridgeport, honored the parents of schools for the Diocese of Bridgeport who have made a financial sacrifice to ensure a sense of loyalty, faith, and character for their children. The ability of the students, their energy, and the variety of their interests combine to give a fascinating portrait of the life in diocesan schools.

“Abby Wolpiuk is a great student but she’s here because of her phenomenal number of service hours,” says Beth Hamilton, principal of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull.

In addition to her school activities, Abby assisted at a horse farm this past summer. “Her favorite horse is blind and deaf, and Abby would take her out and groom her every day,” her mom, Mary, relates.

Jessica Almeida is an altar server at St. Joseph Parish in Danbury, and enjoys volunteering at a local nursing home. Science is her favorite subject. “She’s been fascinated recently by microcel-lular discoveries in biology. Nothing could catch her attention faster than the teeming microscopic world in a drop of pond water. We’re thrilled and delighted to honor Amy at the Breakfast of Champions,” says her pastor, Fr. Samuel Scott. “At the same time, we’re celebrating our status as a National Blue Ribbon School for 2012.”

Owen Francis is St. Jude School in Monroe’s St. Thomas Aquinas Scholar. He’s active in sports, and math is his favorite subject. “Owen is not only a scholar and an athlete, he gives his all whether on the court or in the classroom,” says St. Jude’s principal, Patricia Griffin. “He’s one of the eighth-graders I rely on whenever I need an extra hand.” While St. Joseph’s in Danbury was chosen as a Blue Ribbon School for 2012, St. Jude’s has been nominated for Blue Ribbon status this year.

“In order to be eligible to be nomi-nated as a Blue Ribbon School, students’ 2012 standardized test scores must be among the top 15% in the nation for reading and math. “The academic achievement just gets your foot in the door,” Griffin says. “Then they want to know what makes St. Jude a special place.” It’s students like Owen, with their energy and enthusiasm, who answer that part of the equation. Over 40% of diocesan schools have achieved National Blue Ribbon status. Their nationally recognized curricular mapping process exceeds Connecticut state standards, and their values and faith, taught at home, are re-enforced in school. “I like to do numbers—variables and integers and negative numbers,” says Travis Sanders of St. Ambrose School in Bridgeport. “He’s the lead author of ‘Education’s Highest Aim: Teaching and Learning through a Spirituality of Communion.’

CAPP’s Educator Leadership Award recipient for 2013 will be Donna Spigarolo of Bridgeport because of her career of passion-ate excellence as a classroom teacher and for her active community involvement. “Donna has exemplified and demonstrated for us how to apply the principles of Catholic Social Teaching,” says Bill Fox president of the Fairfield County Chapter of CAPP.

The breakfast is sponsored by the Fairfield County Chapter of CAPP (Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice) and the Isabelle Farrington College of Education at SHU. CAPP was founded in 1993 to encourage business people, academics and other professionals to study and promote Catholic social teaching. It is named for Pope John Paul’s encyclical of the same name that marked the 100th anniversary of the landmark papal document on social responsibil-ity, De Rerum Novarum. (Tickets: $35 per person; $300 for a table of 10. Seating limited, early registration is encouraged. To register, call Sheila Moseley: 203.396.8097 or visit www.sacred-heart.edu/capp2013.)

5th Annual Educators Communion Breakfast

FAIRFIELD—The Fifth Annual Communion Breakfast for Fairfield County Educators will take place at Sacred Heart University on March 3, beginning at 9 am with Mass in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. Breakfast will follow in the University Commons. A tour of the Chapel of the Holy Spirit will be offered at 8:30 am.

Keynote speaker Dr. Michael J. James, PhD., of the Boston College Roche Center for Catholic Education will discuss, “Education and the Art of Loving.” Prior to his appointment at Boston College, Dr. James was vice president for research and professional development with the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities in Washington, DC, and a senior officer and dean of student affairs and enrollment management at Mount Marty College in Yankton, SD. He is the most recent recipient of the Outstanding Contribution to Scholarship Award bestowed by the national Jesuit Association of Student Personnel Administration. He is the lead author of “Education’s Highest Aim: Teaching and Learning through a Spirituality of Communion.”

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“He’s helpful, and attentive, and he likes to give directions.” At St. Ambrose, Travis was one of the eighth graders who decided that they didn’t want a student council, because election to that position was seen as a popularity contest. Instead, they have formed an Activity Council instead, planning events like a recent reading contest.

In addition to the St. Thomas Aquinas Medals, the diocese recognizes high school scholar-athletes with a St. Sebastian Award. To be eligible, individuals must have shown leadership as the captain of an athletic team. Additionally, the team must have shown athletic success, winning top honors in their division or league.

This year, three scholar-athletes were honored, all from Immaculate High School in Danbury. Maggie Christe is captain of the Women’s Cross Country team. Lindsay Josick and Sierra Stein are co-captains of Women’s Soccer.

Immaculate has won nine out of the last ten Class S Women’s Soccer championships, says Principal Joe Carmen. “They’re not just athletes. What they do on the field, that discipline and commitment, carries over into the classroom and community service.”
National Catholic Schools Week

At the Breakfast of Champions

More than 200 students and their parents, representing 35 schools throughout the diocese, turned out for the yearly awards breakfast at the Catholic Center. Thirty-five students were presented the St. Thomas Aquinas Medal for academic excellence and the practice of virtue. In addition, three students received the St. Sebastian Medal for their achievement as scholar-athletes.

“’We’re ambassadors for our school,” adds Maggie, amplifying Principal Carmen’s remarks. All three seniors agree that the most enduring “take away” of their years at Immaculate will be the friendships they’ve made during these past four years.

“Your academics are second to none,” said Dr. Dames in her closing remarks before conferring the medals. “With recognition comes responsibility—responsibility to yourself, your family, your friends, and your faith.”

Friendships, newspapers, blind horses, math variables, altar servers, micro-organisms—the Champions honored at the end of Catholic Schools Week represent the high standards that Catholic schools offer. Congratulations to them, their families, their teachers, and all who work together to help them, as Dr. Dames says, “achieve great things. They have made their parents proud, served their country, and most importantly, honored God by growing in their faith.”

5TH GRADE RECIPIENTS
Victoria Morgan—St. Cecilia School
Justin Silver—Our Lady Star of the Sea School
Dyel Angel Viscarra—Holy Spirit School

8TH GRADE RECIPIENTS
Giselle Acevedo—St. Peter School
Jessica Almeida—St. Joseph School
Alexandra Augusztin—St. James School
Gabriela Baghdady—St. Lawrence School
Isaac Bjorklie—St. Ann School
Isabella Capanna—St. Joseph School
Stephen Caponetti—Trinity Catholic Middle School
Jillian Casey—Assumption Catholic School
Ryan Cimmino—St. Thomas Aquinas School
John Coulter—All Saints Catholic School
Nico Di Mauro—St. Gregory the Great School
Owen Frenzio—St. Jude School
Katherine Gerstner—St. Aloysius School
Olivia Graziano—St. Theresa School
Matthew Harmonay—Greenwich Catholic School
Kiana Laude—St. Andrew School
Christopher Lopez—St. Raphael School
Danielle Marcone—St. Mary School
Cynthia Moyano—St. Augustine Cathedral School
Maria Ringes—St. Rose of Lima School
Frederick Rio—St. Mary School
Matthew Rubsam—Our Lady of Fatima School
Travis Sanders—St. Ambrose School
Alexandra Sciallo—St. Mark School
Grace Scully—St. Joseph School
Ryein Tesiano—St. Peter-Seeled Heart International
Abigail Wolpiuk—St. Catherine of Siena School

12TH GRADE RECIPIENTS
Marisa Carpanzano—Trinity Catholic High School
Andre Escaleira—Kolbe Cathedral High School
Allison Kallberg—Immaculate High School
Michael Lenard—Notre Dame Catholic High School
Emily Rauser—St. Joseph High School

ST. SEBASTIAN AWARD
Maggie Christie—Immaculate High School, Cross Country
Lindsay Yostick—Immaculate High School, Women’s Soccer
Sierra Stein—Immaculate High School, Women’s Soccer
St. Vincent’s Medical Center is Nursing Magnet

BRIDGEPORT—St. Vincent’s Medical Center is the only hospital in Fairfield County and one of only three hospitals in Connecticut to achieve Magnet recognition from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). The ANCC Magnet Recognition Program is the highest national honor for nursing excellence, the gold standard for nursing practice, and recognizes healthcare organizations that demonstrate excellence in nursing services, professionalism, teamwork and superiority in patient care. With this achievement, St. Vincent’s Medical Center joins a select group of 395 healthcare organizations out of nearly 6,000 in the country.

The Magnet designation also encompasses St. Vincent’s Medical Center’s Westport Campus, an inpatient psychiatric hospital providing behavioral health and addiction services to children, adolescents and adults.

“Magnet recognition provides our community with the ultimate benchmark to measure the quality of patient care,” says Dale Danowski, MBA, BSN, RN, senior vice president, chief operating officer/chief nursing officer. “Achieving Magnet recognition reinforces the culture of excellence that is a cornerstone of how we serve our community. It’s also the tangible evidence of our nurses’ commitment to providing the very best care to our patients, of which we are extremely proud.”

To achieve Magnet recognition, St. Vincent’s underwent a rigorous multiyear application process that demanded widespread participation from leadership and staff. The process included thousands of pages of evidence regarding patient care and outcomes and a thorough on-site review.

“The Magnet recognition reflects our dedication to delivering high quality, safe care to our patients and their families in our community and beyond. Our nurses have an incredible sense of pride and their passion is reflected in our mission to deliver the best care to every patient,” says Deborah L. Owens, MSN, RN, NE-BC, Magnet Program director. “We have an amazing nursing staff that has set the bar for excellence high. Patients and their families can be assured that St. Vincent’s nurses are among the best in the United States.”

The Magnet Recognition Program advances three goals: promoting quality of care, identifying excellence in the delivery of nursing services to patients, and disseminating nursing care best practices. Magnet recognition has been shown to provide specific benefits to hospitals and their communities, such as improved patient care, safety and satisfaction.

The ANCC Magnet recognition is another demonstration of how St. Vincent’s created a culture of high reliability regarding the safety of patients and staff. It recently was named one of only four state hospitals out of 29 to receive an “A” Hospital Safety Score from the Leapfrog Group, and also received John D. Thompson Award from the Connecticut Hospital Association for its safety program. St. Vincent’s has also been named one of the top three hospitals in the state for safety by Consumer Reports.

ENTHUSIASM FILLED THE AIR when the staff of St. Vincent’s Medical Center received the phone call announcing that they had gotten the prestigious Nursing Magnet designation.

St. V’s College “Smashing” day

BRIDGEPORT—Wielding a hammer, St. Vincent’s College President/CEO, Dr. Martha Shouldis welcomed attendees to what she described as a “smashing” day for the college and the community as participants each took a turn at smashing the existing wall to mark the beginning of construction for the campus expansion in the newly acquired building at 2660 Main St., just two blocks from the existing college.

This facility adds new teaching, learning and gathering spaces for the students and faculty. The day was a celebration of yet
“Here I Am Lord” composer reflects on music at Mass

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

Dan Schutte has composed the soundtrack for generations of churchgoers, but few people at Mass know his name or are aware that they’re singing his songs.

Standards such as “Here I Am Lord,” “The Table of Plenty,” and “City of God,” have been sung for decades in Catholic Churches across the country and around the world, making him one of most influential and successful Catholic liturgical composers.

When he joins with two younger Christian songwriters, Steven Angrisano and Curtis Stephan, on February 15 for the “Age to Age” concert at Fairfield University, it will be a great opportunity for a Fairfield County audience to meet the man whose songs they know by heart, while also enjoying the music of three generations of Catholic song writers.

Schutte’s songs are among the most requested by pastoral musicians for Catholic liturgy, and Christian recording artists including Amy Grant and John Michael Talbott have covered his work. The 65-year-old composer says that earliest songs came in response to Vatican II’s call for updating the liturgy and a return to the vernacular from the Latin Mass. He and other young students in the Jesuit community began writing new songs and playing their music at Mass at St. Louis University.

“When we started writing them, we had no idea they would have any longevity,” said Schutte in a recent phone conversation with Fairfield County Catholic.

“It’s one of those mysteries of grace. We didn’t set out to write music that would change the Church and have an impact on the faith journey of people for so many years. We were just college kids getting together who wrote these little tunes.”

However, visitors soon heard of the new music and started to come to St. Louis to hear the music of the St. Louis Jesuits. “The people who came to Mass took copies of the songs all over the country,” he recalls. “We even had Maryknoll missionaries who brought them to Zimbabwe. It all became so much bigger than we ever planned. What a wonderful miracle it really was. I believe it was the experience of the Holy Spirit working through ordinary people to do amazing things.”

Perhaps what’s remarkable about Schutte work is that, like many secular artists who have written anthems for a generation, he produced songs as a young man that have been sung continually for 40 years.

“You Are Near” was written in 1971 when he was 24 years old. In 1981, he recorded “Here I Am Lord,” “City of God” and “Only This I Want,” three of his most powerful songs. The “St. Louis Jesuit Mass” (1973), co-authored during his collaborative years, was the most used Mass settings during the 70s and 80s.

His 1996 composition of “Mass of God’s Promise” revised in 2010, continues to have wide use, and his “Mass of Christ the Savior,” released in 2012 after approval by the U.S. bishops, has quickly become one of the most widely used Mass settings throughout the English speaking world.

Schutte, who has two masters degrees and a slew of honorary doctorates, has little formal musical education, most of which came after he wrote some of his best known and most beautiful songs. While at St. Louis University, he did a year of study in music theory, harmony and counterpoint, and later he was grateful for the mentorship of Fr. Kevin Waters, S.J., at Seattle University.

As a young man in Wisconsin, he played clarinet and saxophone in his elementary and high school bands, and he was drawn to the emerging folk and rock music. Early influences were Peter, Paul and Mary; Simon and Garfunkel; and Bob Dylan. He also loved Gregorian chant, having learned it in fifth grade as part of class participation in the parish music program.

Schutte welcomes the rediscovery of traditional Church music and feels that contemporary and traditional can sit side by side as part of the rich and complex musical expression of faith around the world.

“The Vatican Council changed everything in its attempt to renew the way we sing and pray at the Lord’s Supper. Over the past 40 years, we’ve moved forward with an expanded vision and many more musical forms. As I travel across the country, I experience great diversity in the music.”

Schutte says that some people prefer to immerse themselves in Gregorian chant and traditional Latin hymns, but many others pray and worship best with contemporary spiritual music. He says music is a bridge between generations of faithful and is particularly important as churches

Catholic concert set for Quick Center

FAIRFIELD—Fairfield University’s Center for Catholic Studies has partnered with St. Anthony of Padua Parish to present three Catholic music icons in a special concert. Three of Catholic music’s most celebrated composers and musicians—Steve Angrisano, Curtis Stephan, and Dan Schutte—will perform at Fairfield University’s Egan Chapel of St. Ignatius Loyola on February 15 at 7:30 pm for a concert event entitled, “Age to Age: Generations of Faith.” The performance will cross generations and display a wide variety of musical styles.

The special concert marks the first time that the Center for Catholic Studies will partner with a parish on an event.

First launched in Dallas, Texas, last year, the “Age to Age” tour has been well received by audiences nationwide. Leaving labels of age and music—contemporary and liturgical—behind, the tour aims to unite Catholics across generations to praise God and express a shared faith. All three guitarists, men of deep faith, share a mutual respect and admiration for their craft.

Dan Schutte is one of today’s best known, most prolific and influential composers of Catholic music for the liturgy. Many of his most celebrated pieces, including “Here I Am Lord,” “City of God” and “Sing a New Song,” come from his years of collaboration with the St. Louis Jesuits.

Steve Angrisano is, undoubtedly, one of the most effective and versatile ministry leaders in the Church today. Those who are young (and young at heart) embrace the passionate message of faith, hope and love woven throughout his music and storytelling. He’s known to engage audiences with a unique blend of humor, song, and story.

As the music director for St. Ann’s parish in Coppell, Texas, Curtis Stephan maintains a music ministry that can be characterized as one of service. A lifelong musician, he received his bachelor’s degree in music and his master’s degree in Jazz studies from the University of North Texas. He specializes in both liturgical and youth-oriented events.

(Tickets for the concert are $10, and can be purchased at the Quick Center for the Arts box office by calling 203.254.4010, or toll-free at 877.ARTS396 (877.278.7396). For directions to the Fairfield campus, visit www.fairfield.edu.)

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World and National News

Mourners pay tribute NY Mayor Edward Koch

Thousands lined the streets in Manhattan on February 4, braving bitter winds to honor Edward I. Koch, the three-term Mayor of New York City. Koch, who died at 88 on February 1, was celebrated at his funeral as a transformational figure in the city’s history and a quintessential New Yorker.

“He restored the arc of our city’s history,” Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg eulogized Koch at his funeral. “He reminded us why we loved New York, and he inspired us to fight for it.”

Former President Bill Clinton loved New York, and he inspired funeral. “He reminded us why we loved New York, and he fiercely loved New York City.”

Bloomberg eulogized Koch at his funeral as a transformative national figure in the city’s history, serving from January 1, 1978, to December 31, 1989.

He is buried at Trinity Church Cemetery in northern Manhattan. He chose his own tombstone, engraved with the words spoken by journalist Daniel Pearl just before he was killed by Islamic extremists in 2002: “My father is Jewish, my mother is Jewish, I am Jewish.”

He also wrote his own epitaph. “He was fiercely proud of his Jewish faith,” the inscription reads. “He fiercely defended the City of New York, and he fiercely loved its people. Above all, he loved his country, the United States of America, in whose armed forces he served in World War II.”

Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League, knew Koch for over 20 years. “Ed was not only a man of conviction, he was the number-one person in the Jewish community that Catholics could count on to speak out against anti-Catholicism,” Donohue recalls. “He hated anti-Catholicism as much as he did antisemitism, or any other kind of bigotry. His relationship with the late John Cardinal O’Connor was special, and their mutual affection was palpable.

“Ed Koch will be missed. There was no one like him.”

State announces task force on gun violence prevention

HARTFORD—In January, Democratic and Republican legislative leaders joined to announce the creation of a special bipartisan task force on gun violence prevention and children’s safety.

The task force, formed in the wake of the Newtown tragedy, will conduct a review of current law and make recommendations on a range of potential legislation to prevent gun violence, enhance school security and ensure the availability of mental health services in Connecticut.

“I have had the privilege of representing Newtown in the state Senate for the past 14 years, and the tragic events that occurred there on December 14 require a response from our government and our society at large. I am pleased that this task force is set up to work across party lines to make legislative recommendations based on facts and evidence in the areas of mental illness, school safety and gun control,” said state Senate Republican Leader John McKinney (R-Fairfield).

“It is our sincere hope that we can come together and reach consensus on legislation that will safeguard our children and society as a whole while at the same time honor our constitutional rights,” House Republican Leader Larry Cafero (R-Norwalk) said. “Our response must be reasoned and well-crafted if we are to be successful in our common goals.”

“The evil of gun violence has touched too many Connecticut families,” said Senate Majority Leader Martin M. Looney (D-New Haven). “It is our goal to work in a bipartisan way and rise above politics to put in place common sense policies to reduce incidents of violence, increase access to mental health services and improve school security.”

The task force, which includes Democratic committee chairs and Republican ranking members, will provide recommendations to Senate and House leadership with the goal of producing a bipartisan emergency certified bill in late February.

HHS “Accommodation” offers limited reprieve

WASHINGTON—On February 1, the Obama administration announced the latest modification to its 2012 proposed “accommodation” for religious institutions that object to the federal HHS contraception mandate.

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

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

We would like to help you make the next years the finest of your life. To receive more information or to schedule a visit, call 1-800-852-3866 in Connecticut or 203-261-2229 from out of state. Units from $58,000. Inquire about our Rental Program starting from $995 per month.

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Impasse between the administration and religious employers that oppose the mandate on moral grounds. But the latest HHS mandate proposal still excludes Christian-owned businesses, as well as Catholic hospitals and universities. The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which is defending plaintiffs in legal challenges to the HHS mandate, said the modifications would not help most of their clients.

After legal experts reviewed the government’s latest proposal, they could identify only a modest improvement: Catholic dioceses will likely be exempted from the mandated contraceptive and abortion coverage. Catholic hospitals, social agencies and universities will not.

“We are extremely disappointed with today’s announcement. HHS waited nearly a year and then gave us a proposed rule that still burdens religious liberty,” said Kyle Duncan, general counsel for the Becket Fund. She called the proposed rule “a remarkable and surprising omission,” given that it was prompted in part by the DC Circuit Court’s order in the Wheaton College case. Wheaton is a Christian liberal arts college protesting the mandate on religious grounds.

U.S. bishops call for just immigration legislation
WASHINGTON, DC—Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on Migration, welcomed principles set forth by a group of eight U.S. Senators as a blueprint for reform of our nation’s immigration system. “I welcome the introduction of a bipartisan framework to help guide Congress on immigration reform,” Archbishop Gomez said on January 28. “It is an important first step in the process and sets a bipartisan tone.”

The framework released by the “Group of Eight” working group would include a path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented in the nation. It also would reduce family backlogs in the immigration system, which requires family members to wait years to reunite with their loved ones.

“It is vital that the framework includes a path to citizenship, so that undocumented immigrants can come out of the shadows and into the light and have a chance to become Americans,” Archbishop Gomez said. “It gives hope to millions of our fellow human beings.”

He pledged the support of the USCCB in pushing sound immigration legislation forward and working with Congress to create an immigration system which respects basic human rights and dignity while also ensuring the integrity of our borders. “A reformed system can protect human dignity and the homeland at the same time,” he concluded.

(More information can be found at www.justiceforimmigrants.org.)

Blessing of horses on St. Anthony’s feast day
VATICAN CITY—A special Mass for farmers and their families took place in St. Peter’s Basilica on January 17, the feast of St. Anthony (c. 250-356), the patron of monks and patron saint of animals. Angelo Cardinal Comastri, the basilica’s archpriest, celebrated the Mass, which was followed by the blessing of a procession of horses in the Via della Conciliazione.

The Italian Association of Livestock Farmers (AIA) held its traditional exhibition of farm animals, “A Farm under Heaven,” in front of St. Peter’s Square. The exhibit included cows, goats, sheep and chickens. Just as in past years, pet owners were invited to bring their cats and dogs for a free check-up from veterinarians provided by the association.

The tradition of celebrating St. Anthony Abbot’s feast day, deeply rooted in the farming community, is widespread in all of the Italian agricultural communities. In the words of the president of AIA, Dino Andena, “It is a moment of celebration that we want to share with others in order to testify to the active role of farmers and ranchers within society.”
Local News

Women’s group covers an array of interests

By PAT HENNESSY

“By choosing an organic product, you’re voting with your dollar,” Patti Popp from Sport Hill Farm, an organic farm in Easton, told the women’s group at Christ the King Parish in Trumbull. Formed slightly over a year ago, the group seeks to present a variety of speakers and activities at their monthly meetings, responding to the range of interests of their members. To open the Year of Faith this past fall they heard from Dr. Joan Kelly, speaking on “The Catholic Laity, Called and Gifted.” They’ve explored the history of Advent and shared their own traditions and memories in “Christmas Around the World,” which includes samples of ethnic cooking.

Sometimes the meetings are purely for fun, like the upcoming Valentine’s Bingo in February. “Some women’s groups are purely social,” says Dottie Moyer, who co-chairs the group with Pat Silk. “We’re trying to ensure that this has more substance to it. It’s educational, socializing and informational.”

At their January meeting, Popp, a member of Notre Dame Parish in Easton, spoke on “The Importance of Seasonal Eating for a Healthier You.” She encouraged the women to become more aware of the foods they buy, explained the nature of organic farming and seasonal produce, and discussed genetically modified foods.

Using both organically grown and heirloom squashes, she showed the women how they could modify menus in tune with each growing season. She gave them an easy recipe for squash soup and a quick way to prepare kale—one that even kids would like.

In addition to the monthly meetings, women at Christ the King have the opportunity to join smaller groups focused on a specific activity. “They’re on their own; they choose how often and when they want to meet,” Silk explains.

A knitting group joined with women from St. Rose Parish community for the elderly to make hats and shawls for the children at St. George Parish in Bridgeport. They were presented on the Feast of the Epiphany, a major feast among Hispanic Catholics. They also knit prayer shawls for families who have suffered a bereavement and lap robes for the sick or elderly.

A walking club hasn’t taken off yet, but a lively book club chooses fiction and non-fiction to share and discuss. The newly-formed Mahjong group has drawn a lot of fans. “They are happy campers; they love it,” Silk says of the fast growing group.

On the more serious side, women interested in community service have begun visits to the sick and shut-ins, a ministry that suffered a bereavement and loss of one of its members. The group seeks to provide a ministry to the sick and shut-ins of the parish.

“My goal is to get new people involved,” says Silk, who is the group’s co-chair. “Women are interested, they like to learn, they want to know more about their faith—and sometimes they just like to have fun together,” Silk concludes.

Anyone interested in joining the women’s group at Christ the King can call the parish: 203.268.8695.

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Civil Rights pioneer speaks

FAIRFIELD—Fairfield University’s annual commemoration of the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., held the last week in January, featured a series of campus-wide events designed to invigorate and inspire. The 2013 MLK, Jr. Convocation, the culmination of the celebration, featured Diane Nash, a pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement.

The theme for the 2013 Martin Luther King, Jr. observance, “The Time Is Always Right To Do What Is Right,” is based on a quote by Dr. King. Nash’s involvement in the nonviolent movement began in 1950, while she was a student at Fisk University. In 1960, she became the chair of the student sit-in movement in Nashville, TN, the first southern city to desegregate its lunch counters, as well as one of the founding students of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. In 1961, she coordinated the Freedom Ride from Birmingham, Alabama, to Jackson, Mississippi, a story that was documented in the recent PBS American Experience film “Freedom Riders.” Her many arrests for her civil rights activities culminated in being imprisoned for 30 days in 1961, while she was pregnant with her first child.

Undeterred, she went on to join a national committee, to which she was appointed by President John F. Kennedy, that promoted passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. She later became active in the peace movement that worked to end the Vietnam War and became an instructor in the philosophy and strategy of non-violence as developed by Mohandas Gandhi.

This year’s Martin Luther King Jr. Vision Awards, given to individuals who exemplify the virtues of Dr. King, were presented to Sharon Pedrosa ’13; Wylie Blake, campus minister for service; and David Brown, a faculty member in Applied Ethics.

The Memorial March, held January 29, started at the Egan Chapel of St. Ignatius Loyola. In the spirit of the Civil Rights Movement, the Memorial March guided participants around campus to various physical locations where acts of hatred and/or demonstrations for justice have taken place throughout Fairfield’s history from the 1960s to present day.
Protecting Life
Emerging clarity on life issues

By DEACON PAUL KURMAY

There are some important issues in life which take a long time to be resolved—or even discussed, for that matter. Look what it took for our state and nation to take a long, hard look at gun control legislation. Only the massacre of twenty innocent six year olds, any one of whom could have been our own child or grandchild. But at least that debate is happening, regardless of how it may all turn out. The same can be said of the national deficit “debate,” which, of course, has yet to begin.

There is another issue, though, which also begs for discussion and serious debate. It is abortion. There is probably not a single word in the American vocabulary which is more divisive or which causes more derision than abortion. To a certain extent, that is understandable. The subject represents the clash of two gigantic and fundamental human forces, both rooted deeply in America’s political, social and constitutional psyche: the right to life and the right to control one’s own body.

As a married man with two grown daughters (both of whom are mothers), I think I can appreciate the sanctity of a woman’s control over her own body, including her reproductive rights. I can well appreciate any woman being resentful of what has certainly been a patriarchal society’s telling her what she can and cannot do in that regard. As a man I am quick to admit that I cannot possibly understand completely what a woman experiences in pregnancy, nor the fears and joys sometimes associated with it.

And so, as both a father and an ordained deacon of the Roman Catholic Church, the only posture which I can possibly assume in approaching this subject is one of humility and deference, because my personal experiences alone are grossly inadequate in resolving this life and death issue.

There needs to be a national debate about when human life begins, about when a group of male and female cells actually become a human person, deserving of constitutional, legal and moral protection. It is too facile for each side to declare that the answer is obvious—human life begins either at birth or at conception—and then proceed to label those who disagree with them as morons, thereby ending all meaningful discussion.

The Founding Fathers were very clear about the importance of human life when they declared that each of us was endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, including the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. There you have it. The right to life was considered not a human invention but a divine gift. It was not created by society but was given to society to be respected and nourished. It was considered inalienable, not subject to tampering by any human body, not by the Congress, the Supreme Court or the president of the United States.

The idea of aborting a human fetus was so repugnant to the mind set of our Founding Fathers (and Mothers) that it needed no explicit rationalization or articulation. It was already embedded in the Judeo-Christian principles which were the life-blood of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and Bill of Rights. It is unthinkable that these unique political documents could ever have been advanced in the absence of that Judeo-Christian heritage.

I will leave it to Jewish and non-Jewish scholars to address the beginning of human life within the framework of Jewish Scripture, and will limit my comments to a few basic references to Christian Scripture. The defining Scripture reference is taken from John’s Gospel, in which he boldly proclaims that in Jesus Christ, the “Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” There is virtually no Christian Biblical scholar of note who would dare argue that the Word became flesh only when Jesus was born of Mary. On the contrary, Luke’s Gospel makes it as clear as can be that the moment that Mary gave her consent to Gabriel’s invitation to become the mother of the Savor that God became man in Mary’s womb. It is the six month old baby in Elizabeth’s womb, John the Baptist, who “leaps for joy” when Mary visits Elizabeth, and it is Elizabeth who asks Mary why she, the mother of “my Lord,” should come to her, even though “her Lord” was only a few days old in Mary’s womb.

It is inconceivable that any serious Christian believer would argue that the Son of God only took on a human nature at the moment of his birth. And so, one must ask where did that notion that human life begins at birth come from? Most American courts, reflecting the societal values of the day, simply assumed that life began at the moment of birth but never really tested that assumption scientifically or morally; that is, until various state legislatures began to enact criminal laws which found that the murder of a pregnant woman constituted two deaths, not just one. Those laws, to the best of my knowledge, have never been held unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court, but stand in stark contrast to the Court’s reasoning in Roe v. Wade, decided 40 years ago. When President Obama was asked a few years ago when human life began, he said that such a determination was beyond his pay scale. I was deeply disappointed by that evasion. It is not worthy of his intellectual acumen. And it is not a question for only biblical scholars to decide. It is a question that every one of us has to decide at some point in our lives. But to assume that life begins at birth is a horrible intellectual and theological cop-out, with virtually no historic basis.

It is amazing that our society created a “right” before it has answered that foundational question deliberately. The Roe majority quite explicitly chose not to decide it and left the matter to Congress, which has continued to sidestep the issue to this day.

How could the Supreme Court and we as a society simply assume that life begins at birth, in the face of overwhelming evidence, both scientific and theological, to the contrary—and then proceed to snuff out the lives of millions of unborn persons without a second thought?

More and more premature babies are successfully coming into the world at birth weights considered science fiction 40 years ago. The scientific trend towards earlier and earlier viability is a wake up call that the...
I was moved to write

Please let me express to how very touching the article about Newtown/Sandy Hook was in the Fairfield County Catholic. This sad story from the beginning has been so hard to watch and listen to and read about, yet I couldn’t not watch or listen or read all of the articles. This one in the FFC was written beautifully, and the letter from the mother, Catherine Hubbard, was as well. I usually read the FFC from cover to cover each time it reaches my door. This one moved me to write. Msgr. Weiss is a very special man. And I believe he is one of the only people who could do what he did and face this tragedy with grace and poise. God bless all of Newtown/Sandy Hook, all clergy serving the people, the families and friends. The victims already have God’s blessings. One more thing. I especially love to read the stories from the young man from New Canaan (Matt Hennese) who writes the articles about his family.

Pat Fischer
Easton

MEMORIAL WREATH—Parishioners of St. Maurice Parish in Stamford fashioned this memorial wreath to celebrate the life of James Mitsuishi and the other children killed in the Sandy Hook shootings. His grandparents are members at St. Maurice and were very touched by the wreath, which features the pictures of all the children. “Our prayers will continue for the victims of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School,” said Richard E. Gabreille, who is a St. Maurice parishioner. The wreath was on display in Stamford Government Center is available to parishes that might wish to display it as a memorial.

Jenny Hubbard’s Open Letter

Jenny Hubbard must be an incredible person. In the midst of her unimaginable suffering, she has shared with us all the powerful gift of her faith and love. Her beautiful, grace-filled words are an inspiration and a challenge for us all to choose God and to choose love. Her prayer for a return to faith in the world is my prayer and the prayer of many in this Year of Faith. I have posted a link to her letter on my Facebook page and I hope other readers will do the same or more to spread her message of faith, hope and love. The Hubbards, the other 25 families of the Newtown Angels, Saint Rose of Lima parish, Sandy Hook school, and all of Newtown have been and will continue to be in our constant thoughts and prayers.

Joe Tristine
Monroe

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Forgiveness

In parishes throughout the diocese, we regularly offer up our prayer intentions for those who are imprisoned. For most of us, those intentions may seem far off, but this month they hit home in a very painful way.

News of the arrest of Msgr. Kevin Wallin, former pastor of St. Augustine Cathedral Parish, on drug charges was shocking and left many people, including those who knew him best, dismayed. How could it have happened?

Many people, including those who knew him best, were very touched by Msgr. Wallin’s actions, but we also remember that he did much good work in his ministry. We ask for prayers that Msgr. Wallin reconciles his life and finds God’s mercy in his ordeal.

Apology Launch

Catholics throughout the diocese will notice a change in the 2013 Bishop’s Annual Appeal. You will be receiving fewer solicitations as part of the effort to save on mailing and printing costs. The success of this approach depends on donors giving early.

Diocesan Administrator Msgr. Jerald A. Doyle has reminded us that the absence of a bishop is no reason at all to hold back; the work of the diocese goes on every day through so many programs and ministries. The best way to prepare for a new bishop is to keep the good work going: in our schools, charities, parishes and other settings.

From the tragedy in Newtown to the day-to-day needs in our diocese, we have seen the importance of readiness and the tremendous healing that Church can bring in times of crisis. Please give generously.

Do it

For the past month, students at Notre Dame High School have been practicing a total of 26 Acts of Kindness. Although this particular set is in response to the tragedy in Newtown, some of the teens intend to continue the observance during Lent. “Maybe my act of kindness can overcome some evil in the world,” one teen said.

It’s something to think about. When we give up some good thing we like during Lent, we hope our small sacrifice will help us grow closer to the Lord. That gesture does, indeed, help our hearts grow in love and faith and we become better, stronger Catholics through the sacrifice. The teens are suggesting something different, though. Maybe, through a smile or an act of kindness, we can replace evil with love.

Not a “random” act of kindness; something with a personal sacrifice attached. A phone call to a less-than-favorite relative. A smile and a wave to a surly neighbor who will never smile back. A cute “thinking of you” card to a friend we haven’t thought of in years. Kindness, released into the world. And along with it, a sacrificial helping of what the Church calls “dying to self,” because you can’t expect that any of these people are going to respond back with kindness to you. No reciprocity; no quid pro quo.

So just do it: this Lent, cast your kindness upon the word. Maybe, in some way we can never see, our sacrificial kindness will overcome evil. And maybe we will never, ever, have to see the evil we have vanquished.

Reporting the Good

After the Newtown tragedy, I was going to write to the media to express sincerest gratitude to Msgr. Bob Weiss, Father Ignacio Ortigas and Father Luke Suarez, who were ministering to the families and to the residents 24/7, as well as the dozens of other Catholic priests who were there, not only assisting them, but there as a shoulder for their own brother priests, helping them carry the cross as they prepared for funeral after funeral of those little angels.

Where was the story on all of these priests? I know most people will say this is their job. And, yes, it is. I know these priests would not want any spotlight on them because this was not about them but about these lost little souls and their families and that community.

However, if you are going to bash my church when someone falls, and you seem to take glory in that, can you at least be “fair and balanced”? I suggest you go to Newtown and see how they are moving forward. Interview those wonderful priests. You can call Msgr. Weiss “Msgr. Mend”—I already have your headline.

Jenny Hubbard

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February 2013
Editorial

America’s Strongest Opponent of Slavery

By Antoniette Bosco

Antoniette Bosco is a member of St. Margaretite Bourgeoys Parish in Brookfield.

I believe that one of the best movies to come out towards the end of the year was Lincoln. It was nominated for seven Golden Globe Awards and twelve Academy Awards, but I say this is because, finally, some honest attention was given to one of the most remarkable men in our history, Thaddeus Stevens.

In the film, Thaddeus Stevens was played by Tommy Lee Jones. He was the man Lincoln called on to help him pass the 13th amendment, which put an end to slavery in the United States. I was first “introduced” to Thaddeus Stevens, America’s strongest advocate of freedom for slaves, by St. Thoeophane, my high school history teacher, back in the early 1980s. She was way ahead of her time because she cared back then for equality for all and tried to pass this belief on to her students. I don’t know how generally successful she was, but I thank God for all I learned from her—especially about our great statesman, Thaddeus Stevens. I think of him every year come August 11. He died that day in 1868.

A few years ago I had the good fortune of discovering a new book, Impeached—The Trial of President Andrew Johnson and the Fight for Lincoln’s Legacy, by David Stewart (Simon & Schuster, 2009). The author presented a detailed, amazing account of the 1868 battle between Congress and the murdered President Abraham Lincoln’s successor, southerner Andrew Johnson, seen by many at that time as racist and incompetent.

As the author tells us, “The fiery but mortally ill Congressman Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania led the impeachment drive, abetted behind the scenes by the military hero and President-in-Waiting General Ulysses S. Grant.”

Reading this book, I was appalled to learn how President Johnson, a Southerner, seemed to have had one real goal in mind, arguing for, in the author’s words, “immediate withdrawal of Federal troops and the return of complete power to the Southern states.” He attacked Negro Suffrage as forcing Southerners to “dodge themselves by sub- jection to the Negro race.” The American republic, he declared, was “the glory of white men.”

Along with this growing furor, the Ku Klux Klan was growing at astonishing rates across the South, whipping black people in the night and burning homes and courthouses. Thaddeus Stevens could take no more. Early in his career as a young lawyer, he became known for his vigorous opposition to slavery. It was understandable that he was appalled by Johnson’s squandering of Lincoln’s “political legacy of equality and fairness” when he “helped force the freed slaves into a brutal form of agricultural peonage across the South.” Stevens, now old and ill, led the impeachment move against Johnson, and even though he failed, and now was a dying man, he presented new articles of impeachment, which were ignored by the House. The author informs us, “The final count was 35 guilty, 19 not guilty. Andrew Johnson had been acquitted by a single vote, that of Edmond Ross.”

As this great statesman lay dying, there was to be one last great moment in his life, as reported by author Stuart: “On his final evening, he was attended by an aide, a nephew, his sister Loretta, and his long-time housekeeper Lydia Smith. Two black clergymen prayed with him and left. Late that night, two Sisters of Charity from a nearby Catholic hospital visited. With the consent of Stevens’ nephew, they baptized the dying man. In Stevens’ final moments, his nephew held his hand while Mrs. Smith knelt at the foot of his bed.

We tell our kids that it’s not okay to lie. Broadly, this is true. But every adult understands that sometimes we have to bend a little so as not to break. Clara wanted to know, “What does ‘a little white lie’ mean?”

“You know how mommy asks daddy if her outfit matches, and daddy if her outfit matches, and asks, ‘Does ‘a little white lie’ mean?’ I say, ‘Yup. Got him this time.”

“Yeah, I bet he was so scared to see my big hand swiping at him that he ran off. He learned his lesson all right. He knows what’s waiting for him if he comes back here. You won’t see him again. I promise.”

So lame. Why didn’t I just say that I’d gotten him? The place is probably crawling with spiders that we can’t see. What difference does one more make?

They climbed back into their beds but I knew they wouldn’t sleep. Their eyes were trained on that space between the wall and the dresser. I slipped out the door and started down the stairs. All was quiet, for about four minutes.

“Dad! He’s back! I can see him. He’s on the ceiling.” Sigh. My head slumps to my chest.

“Can you see him? Where is he? Will he come back? Oh, Daddy, please get him.”

“I think he probably crawled through a crack in the wall and went back outside.”

Silence. They don’t buy it. Another deep breath. Better think of something quick, Mr. Bloodhound Gang.

“Yeah, I bet he was so scared to see my big hand swiping at him that he ran off. He learned his lesson all right. He knows that the spider is dead and that only—to convince the children that the spider is dead that they can sleep in peace. I dismiss the stunt with a flourish.

“So everybody get nice and tucked in because there are no spiders in this room anymore. Nope. I got that one right here in my hand and he’s not going to bother anyone in this room tonight. So sleep tight everyone. See you in the morning!”

So, there’s your little white lie. A textbook example. It doesn’t exactly feel good to tell it, but the greater good is served.

Life is complicated. That’s what I’ll tell Clara when she gets a little older. You should always tell the truth. But God gives mommies and daddies the job of figuring out how to put a little peace and quiet into the world. Sometimes that takes a little white lie.

FORFAIRFIELDCATHOLIC.COM

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CONVIVIO invites teens to examine friendships

By PAT HENNESSY

“The youth have questions, but they also have answers. Convivio gives them the opportunity to talk about the things they see in society and share how they deal with that,” says Sr. Monica Zuñiga, coordinator of the High School Apostles, a diocesan youth leadership group.

Convivio, an annual worldwide high school congress led by youth for youth, will be held in this diocese March 8-10 at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield. In 2010, the Diocese of Bridgeport hosted the first Convivio Congress held in the United States.

“At that time, I wasn’t very involved in my faith,” recalls Megan Glynn. Over her years at St. Joseph High School in Trumbull, Glynn, then a senior, had experienced a growth in interest in the Catholic faith and volunteered as a peer leader at the first Convivio.

“When you’re telling people about your faith, you’re growing in faith at the same time.” says Megan. “You’re deepening your friendship with God.”

Leading Convivio groups has made her feel comfortable about living her faith, even in an environment where religious faith is rarely expressed. “Even if only a hundred people show up for Mass, on a campus of over 16,000, I know that everyone out there has a hunger for God—even if they’re hiding it. I’ve seen that for myself at every Convivio.”

Megan’s desire to change herself is another reason she joined the group. “I was helping them grow in faith and I was growing myself at the same time.”

Convivio started in 1977 with a group of young people who were united by a desire to change the world. They gathered together in a Faith Congress, and the idea caught fire. The current format, in a Faith Congress, and the idea to talk about the things they see in society and share how they deal with that,” says Sr. Monica Zuñiga, coordinator of the High School Apostles, a diocesan youth leadership group.

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Bishops encourage Confession

WASHINGTON—The U.S. bishops have released a statement encouraging Catholics to make going to Confession a significant part of their spiritual lives and to use this Lent as an opportunity to do so. "God’s Gift of Forgiveness: The Pastoral Exhortation on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation" was approved by the full body of bishops during their annual Fall General Assembly in Baltimore this past November.

"Pope Benedict XVI and Timothy Cardinal Dolan have both stressed the importance of Confession in strengthening our witness during the Year of Faith," said Bishop David Ricken of Green Bay, WI, chair of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). "The bishops have made this document available for easy distribution at the parish level this Lent, and the USCCB Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education Fordham's Doctor of Ministry program combines theory and pastoral practice to prepare students for a variety of career paths, with concentrations in:

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Gift of Forgiveness: The Pastoral Exhortation on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation" was approved by the full body of bishops during their annual Fall General Assembly in Baltimore this past November.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which falls on February 13 this year. Easter Sunday is March 30.

(The full text of the statement and the links to resources for individuals and diocesan and parish staff on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation are available online at: www.usccb.org/confession.)
Lent

Sr. Florencia Silva makes final vows

TRUMBULL—Her face aglow with joy, Sr. Florencia Silva made her final profession of vows as a member of the Marian Community of Reconciliation in Lima, Peru, on November 21. The director of youth ministry for the Diocese of Bridgeport had followed the call to join the community, popularly called the “fraternas,” in 2003.

“It was not what I had planned and definitely not what I wanted to do with my life—and not what my family had thought of either,” she told a gathering of friends at a celebration held at St. Catherine of Sienna Parish, Trumbull, in December after her return. “I had everything I wanted and did exactly what I wanted.”

But the Lord won her over with his love and led her to a surprising path. Since she joined the fraternas, the young woman from Peru has spent seven of the past nine years in this diocese, where she was one of the original founders of the community in Connecticut.

She spent the first six years as part of the campus ministry team at St. Joseph High School in Trumbull. “I remember telling my first classes over and over again that I knew I was a pretty terrible teacher but I also knew that the Lord wanted me there and therefore that I was the right person for them, exactly who they needed to grow closer to God, and that they were exactly who I needed to grow in my own holiness,” she told the gathering at St. Catherine’s.

The past couple of years as director of youth ministry has brought its own share of blessings, she says. “I have been blessed to work at the Office for Pastoral Services with a group of people who genuinely and sincerely seek to respond with generosity to what the Lord asks of them every day. To work with a team like that is a rare privilege for which I am most thankful.”

All those years ago, Sr. Florencia was so absolutely certain of her vocation that she would have happily made a perpetual profession the first day she joined the community. “I am thankful that I had to wait, because now I can say ‘yes’ to God for all the days of my life with a much better understanding of what this means. Making my perpetual promise has been a very strong experience of seeing how God fulfills his promises and how he really gives us a hundredfold here on earth and life everlasting, always exceeding all of my expectations.

“I can thank the Lord in no other way but with the total gift of myself: my time, my love, my talents and gifts: all that I am and that I have.”

Restoring the Passion is a $3.5 million capital campaign of Holy Family Passionist Retreat Center which will provide a foundation for the next 60 years of ministry:

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“Holy Family retreats strengthen the faith community in our parishes. And when people are facing difficult times, it is good to know that Holy Family is there to help, regardless of a parishioner’s financial circumstance.”

Fr. Stephen Sledesky, Pastor, St. Bridget Church & St. Bartholomew Church, Manchester, CT
Lent

“Show love and kindness to the world”

By PAT HENNESSY

Some days are really easy: “Hold a door for someone.” Others are more labor intensive: “Thank a Teacher.” Every day is different, yet collectively they add up to 26 Acts of Kindness, the response students at Notre Dame High School in Fairfield have chosen in the face of the tragedy at Sandy Hook School in Newtown.

“We were all in school when it happened,” recalls Michael King, a senior at Notre Dame this year. Aside from the shock, his first reaction was a heightened awareness that every day is special, to be appreciated as a gift from God. Then he, and the entire Notre Dame community, faced the question: How can we respond to a tragedy of this magnitude?

While the idea of performing 26 Acts of Kindness had gotten attention on Facebook and Twitter, the specific acts the Notre Dame community chose reflect the school’s distinctive character. They include donations of sports equipment for local youth leagues, books for a teen center and toiletries for a homeless shelter. On one day, students are asked to introduce themselves to someone new; on another, “let someone go in front of you in line.” Students wrote letters to soldiers far from home, thanked a teacher—and even observed Read a Book Day (“be good to your brain, too”).

“At Notre Dame, we build character, faith, and intellect,” says Principal Chris Cipriano. “Teachers talked about this tragedy in school, they began to look at their effect of their actions in the school, they began to look at their education isn’t just an academic exercise,” observes Notre Dame’s chaplain, Fr. Peter Cipriani. “It’s not just head knowledge, it’s heart knowledge. When a situation like this occurs we feel so helpless. But when we’re encouraged to respond, we realize—my goodness is more powerful than that evil.”

The teens daily actions brought with them some unexpected results. “My dad is a firefighter—he’s a first responder,” says sophomore Jeanna Emanuel. “I never really thought about it, never thought about thanking him, for what he does.” For “Thank a First Responder Day,” Jeanna wrote a note to her father. “He had tears in his eyes when he read it.”

As students saw the immediate effect of their actions in the school, they began to look at their entire effort from a fresh perspective. “At lunch, I sat with kids I didn’t really know, and I talked to people I don’t usually talk to,” says Michael King, recalling his “Be a Friend Who Listens Day” experience.

“Adam Lanza (the Newtown shooter), he was an outcast. If we continue to act kindly, serve God, serve others—and be kind to ourselves, too—maybe we can prevent this from happening another time.”

Although this act was horrific, our acts of kindness counteract it, “adds sophomore Morgan Sweeney. “I think what we do can inspire other people to take things into their own hands in a positive way.”

Morgan intends to begin that positive conversion herself in the weeks ahead. “Lent is usually time of giving up something you want. But now I’m seeing these as examples of what I can do during Lent. Instead of giving up candy, I can give to a food pantry. Or I can give up my time to volunteer somewhere.”

Fr. Cipriani expects that other students, too, will follow Morgan’s lead. “We’re called to be imitators of Christ, trying to reach for the potential that each of us has in our hearts. When we’re pro-active, when we do something, we fill the void caused by evil.”

The Notre Dame community is considering making these deliberate acts of kindness an annual event, a way of remembering the lives lost so tragically.

“When tragedies happen, I can find God in the aftermath,” says Sean Conan. “We need to reach out and show all our love and kindness to the world.”

CONCENTRATION SHOWS on the face of Notre Dame Freshman Medigne Estivene of Fairfield as she composes a thank you message to a soldier as one of the school’s 26 Acts of Kindness. The acts, large and small, were chosen as Notre Dame’s response to the tragedy in Newtown.

His parents can’t help him. They pray for someone like you.

Free cleft surgery which takes as little as 45 minutes and costs as little as $250, can give desperate children not just a new smile — but a new life.

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“Late Nite Catechism” keeps audience laughing

WILTON—“How many of you think animals go to heaven?” playwright/“Sister” Maripat Donnovan asks the audience.

Donnovan, who was educated by the School Sisters of Notre Dame at the Academy of Our Lady in Chicago, originated the role of “Sister” in the production “Late Nite Catechism” and has toured internationally to rave reviews. The New York Times has called Donnovan’s plays “Uproarious interactive theater.”

Donnovan will be bringing her latest play, “Will my Bunny go to Heaven?” for a benefit performance at Notre Dame in Wilton on March 19 – 9:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m. Every Saturday: Eucharistic Adoration in the Parish Center

For Confession and healing prayer. Fr. Tom and other clergy will be available Mon.-Fri.: 5:00 p.m. in Parish Center Chapel, Friday: 3:00 p.m. – Recitation of the Divine Office, Saturday: 6:30 a.m., 7:30 a.m., 12:10 p.m., and 6:30 p.m.

Donnovan is proud to provide entertainment that is funny and, at the same time, respectful of the Catholic faith. The production is a fundraising benefit for School Sisters of Notre Dame educational mini-

definition of human life has been left unaddressed far too long. If a 20 or 25 week old fetus can live and eventually thrive outside of its mother’s womb, by what logic or moral code can we treat it as of no greater value than a benign tumor? If, however, society should declare that fetus to be a living, human person, what legal and constitutional rights must necessarily follow? Surely and most fundamentally, the right to exist. If our constitutional system of government means anything, it must at least mean that.

The other day the nation celebrated the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a champion of civil rights for all people. It should not come as a surprise to anyone that, according to his niece, Dr. Alveda King, Dr. Martin Luther King was adamantly pro-life and, had he lived, would have been at the forefront of efforts to preserve, not limit, human life in the womb.

As with all civil rights issues, honest and open discussion is imperative. It is time now for the nation to have that discussion about the beginning of human life. What could be more urgent or fundamental?
Lent

What is the meaning of Lent?

By JULIA DECKER

Lent is a time when Christians prepare for the miraculous Resurrection of Christ. We recall the suffering that our Savior went through to ensure that we would have eternal life, salvation. Jesus was stripped of his clothes and was completely humiliated in front of the crowd that was berating him and cheering against him, but he never gave up. He only asked God once if it was at all possible for him to be relieved of his impending suffering and death. His suffering finally ended when he was nailed to the cross.

Not only Jesus but Mary, his mother, suffered. Mary watched her child be whipped, beat up, and fall down but she never showed despair. During Lent, we reflect on the suffering and we can demonstrate how this affects our lives through our words, thoughts, prayers, and actions.

When I think of Lent, I think of a time to pay closer attention to what Jesus did and how this affects our lives every day. I think of the suffering he went through so that we can have eternal life with him in heaven forever. Lent always reminds me of Jesus’ love for me, so much that he would carry the cross on his shoulders for miles despite his heaviness. The crown of thorns crushing into Jesus’ head also reminds me of his love and selflessness for others. He inspires me to be selfless and show authentic love to others especially in Lent.

For teens, life can be very challenging at times. One challenge all teens face is balancing our time. While technology provides us with many tools, it can also provide us with many distractions. Another challenge that teens face is peer pressure which can prevent us from living a peaceful life with Jesus. During Lent, teens can look at these challenges and find ways to overcome them and live a life more pleasing to God. We need to trust in the Lord that he has our lives in his hands and that he has a purpose for everything that happens in our lives.

Over the past fifteen years, my parents have taught us that we should give up something during Lent, whether it is desserts, TV or even a bad habit as a sacrifice, like Jesus sacrificed his life for us. When that sacrifice becomes difficult we were taught to say a prayer to help us be able to make our sacrifice.

Over the past couple of years, I have learned that in addition to sacrifice it is important to focus on being especially kind to someone or focus on my friendship with Jesus through prayer and Scripture. It’s about making the commitment at the beginning of Lent and keeping it throughout the forty days. If you fall down like Jesus did, it is important to get back up like Jesus did, ready to continue the journey. In addition to making personal commitments, on Fridays the Church requires us to abstain from eating meat, so this means my family will probably have a small, meatless, less decadent meal on Fridays.

When I was in grammar school at St. Mary’s in Bethel, each class would take a turn each week to read the Stations of the Cross for the rest of the school. This really helped me understand exactly what Jesus did and the pain he went through to save us. I would try to imagine what I would do if I was in his position or if I was in the position of his mother, Mary, or even the position of Simon who helped him carry his cross or Veronica who wiped Jesus’ face. Now I am at Immaculate High School in Danbury and we do Living Stations. Students reenact the stations including carrying the cross and the Crucifixion. For me, one of the most powerful stations is when the heavy cross has fallen on Jesus. The entire student body witnesses this scene, dramatized through a silhouette presentation. As students are portraying the Stations, other students read the Stations. The angelic concert choir sings beautiful songs for us to hear. It is truly a beautiful experience that Immaculate provides.

This experience reminds us of the real meaning of Lent, especially in our busy everyday lives. It gives us an opportunity to focus on our personal Lenten promises. The changes we make in our lives during Lent as acknowledgement of the importance of the Resurrection would be even more meaningful if we carried them into our everyday lives after Easter.

No matter what stage we are in our lives, Lent is an opportunity to prepare our mind and body for the Resurrection. With this year being the “Year of the Faith” we can make this our best Lent ever!

(Julia Decker is a sophomore at Immaculate High School in Danbury.)

Sacred Heart University

Sacred Heart University will undergo a comprehensive evaluation visit on April 7-10, by a team representing the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education is one of seven accrediting commissions in the United States that provide institutional accreditation on a regional basis. Accreditation is voluntary and applies to the institution as a whole. The Commission, which is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, accredits approximately 240 institutions in the six-state New England Region.

Sacred Heart University has been accredited by the Commission since 1969 and was last reviewed in 2003. Its accreditation by the New England Association encompasses the entire institution.

For the past year and a half, Sacred Heart University has been engaged in a process of self-study, addressing the Commission’s Standards for Accreditation. An evaluation team will visit the institution to gather evidence that the self-study is thorough and accurate. The team will recommend to the Commission a continuing status for the institution. Following a review process, the Commission itself will take the final action.

The public is invited to submit comments regarding the institution to:

Public Comment on Sacred Heart University
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
3 Burlington Woods #100
Burlington, MA 01803
E-mail: cihe@neasc.org.

Public Comments must address substantive matters related to the quality of the institution. The Commission cannot settle disputes between individuals and institutions, whether those involve faculty, students, administrations, or members of other groups. Comments will not be treated as confidential and must include name, address, and telephone number of the person providing the comments.

Public Comments must be received by March 7. The commission cannot guarantee that comments received after that date will be considered.
For Notre Dame quintet, this may be the year

By DON HARRISON

Some of the names you may recall: Ellen Grosso, Patrina Blow, Allison Brookins, Cindy Snyder (Acre), Elaine Agosti.

As young women, they were in the forefront for Notre Dame of Fairfield’s preeminence in girls basketball across more than 35 seasons, encompassing numerous conference titles, state tournament appearances and All-State selections. Their names may be found, along with their male counterparts, in the Notre Dame High School Athletic Hall of Fame.

“Notre Dame has a very strong tradition in girls basketball. There is a rich heritage here,” says Eric DeMarco, now in his sixth season as the Lancers’ head coach. Only one thing is missing: A state championship.

Could this be the year?

“I’ve talked about this every year. Survive and advance. Stay focused. When that happens, anything is possible,” DeMarco says. The 2012-13 Lancers offer promise. They entered February with a lustrous 13-2 won-lost record, among the best in the region, and a six-game winning streak. The 13 victories match last season’s win total (vs. 10 losses). The coach attributes his current team’s successes to balanced scoring, senior leadership and depth.

“We’ve been pretty balanced. Four players, Jovan Kingwood, Amber James, Aly Furgiuele and Briana Mann, have been scoring around 10 points a game pretty consistently. We’ve been scoring by committee.”

“We have seven seniors on the team, and we’ve played nine kids in most games.”

Kingwood, a 5-foot-5 senior tri-captain, has good athletic genes. Her father, Tyrone, was an All-State basketball player at Bassick High School in Bridgeport and an outfielder who possessed the skills to reach the Triple-A level in the Baltimore Orioles organization. He’s one of DeMarco’s assistants.

“We can do a lot this year,” says Jovan, who transferred from Trinity Catholic prior to her junior season. “The coach tried to put that into our heads.”

Another senior tri-captain, Furgiuele, who commutes to Notre Dame from Norwalk, says she was aware that the current group of Lancers had potential for greatness.

“Even in the off-season, when we played together on an AAU team, we knew we were going to be good this season,” points out Furgiuele, who, at 5-11, is the tallest player on the squad.

Notre Dame opened the season with seven straight victories, punctuated by a sweep of Bolton and Mansfield, MA, to win its Appalachia Christmas Tournament for the first time.

After successive losses to Kolbe-Cathedral and Lauralton Hall, the Lancers rebounded to start a second winning streak. Even when Kingwood and two of her teammates were out with concussions, the team managed to win a road game at Masuk of Monroe, 59-53, on January 15.

The other senior tri-captain, McKenzie Stone, is a diminutive 5-1; she provides leadership and the defensive spark. “I feel like I’m one of the stronger players on defense. Scrappy,” she says.

Stone describes DeMarco as “a very nice guy,” but admits that he can be “very tough on us. He knows how good we can be.”

DeMarco spends a major portion of his day teaching social studies at Seymour High School before making the 20- to 25-minute drive to Notre Dame. “Not being in the building during the day,” he admits, presents some minor problems, but he schedules practices so that he can fulfill his teaching obligations.

Is a Class M state title in the offing?

“To make a tournament run, you need everything to fall into place,” the coach says. “You need a little bit of luck, too.”

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WILL MY BUNNY GO TO HEAVEN?

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BRIDGEPORT—The Cardinal Shehan Center welcomed home the Fairfield University Men’s Basketball Team on January 8. The Stags had spent the past five games away, and despite being busy and tired, came to spend some time at the Shehan Center with the youth of Bridgeport. The team fit right in with the Shehan Center’s After School Program! The boys and girls played basketball, danced, and did arts and crafts with the Division I Athletes. While the Stags were able to unwind after a grueling few weeks, Shehan Center members were able to meet and learn from college athletes that attend a University right in their own community.

The Shehan Center would like to thank the Fairfield University Men’s Basketball Team for taking the time to get to know the kids and would like to wish them the best of luck with the rest of their season.

THE PROMISE of height to come: young Stacey Davis measures his potential against 7-ft. Josip Mikulic of Croatia.
Obituaries

Fr. Joseph Joaquin, former pastor of Sacred Heart

DANBURY—Fr. M. Joseph Joaquin, age 80, died on January 14. “Joe had two qualities that blended well together,” says Fr. Gregg Mecca, pastor of St. Peter Parish in Danbury. “He still had that monkish quality, that love of quiet time, that harks back to his years as an Xaverian Brother. He enjoyed his books and the study of languages. At the same time, he was always at ease with people. He was a great storyteller with a sly wit.”

Born April 29, 1932, in Lawrence, MA, he received his BA from St. John’s University in Queens, NY, an MA from Assumption College in Worcester, MA, and he completed his seminary studies at Holy Apostles Seminary in Cromwell.

A late vocation, he taught for nine years in the Ipswich, MA, public school system. Following nine years in the Ipswich, MA, and the St. Ann Club, the Sons of St. Augustine Cathedral, where he ministered for over sixteen years, Fr. Joaquin retired in 2008. Despite poor health, he was able to assist priests at St. Peter’s in Danbury, where he resided.

Fr. Joaquin, Fr. Mecca recalls, refused to let ill health discourage him. “Joe’s tag, whenever he finished a conversation, was ‘keep smiling.’ That was his personal philosophy. He was always smiling. He had a heart akin to the Lord’s own heart. I think he brought people to Christ because he was, himself, always joyful in the Lord. He said what he believed, and he believed so earnestly in the goodness of God.”

A parish vigil Mass was celebrated for Fr. Joaquin at Sacred Heart Church on January 17. Fr. David Leopold, Sacred Heart’s pastor, was the principal celebrant and delivered the homily. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following day in St. Peter Church. Fr. Mecca was the celebrant and homilist. The interment took place in St. Mary Cemetery, Lawrence, MA.

Ann Marie Tarinelli, 75, fed the homeless

BRIDGEPORT—Ann Marie Tarinelli, who volunteered countless hours to help feed and clothe the homeless under the John St. Bridge in Bridgeport, died on January 11 at St. Vincent’s Medical Center. She was 75.

Tarinelli, a long-time Trumbull resident and a member of St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull, grew up in Bridgeport. She developed and ran a non-profit organization called the Hidden Treasure Bistro. Through that, she not only distributed toiletries, adult and children’s clothing, coats and blankets, she cooked meals herself and served them to the homeless under the Route 25 overpass.

She was recently honored by the Town of Trumbull, which designated Ann Marie Tarinelli Day in honor of her service to the poor. She was also recognized by the Diocese of Bridgeport for her volunteerism.

Bill Hoey, vice president of mission and ethics at St. Vincent’s, told the CT Post that Tarinelli was an inspiration to nearly everyone she met, particularly those she fed and clothed on a weekly basis. He had met Tarinelli when he was director of Catholic Charities Bridgeport office. The Thomas Merton Center for Hospitality, home to one of Catholic Charities soup kitchens, provided Tarinelli with assistance in her ministry.

Hoey said he was always amazed by Tarinelli’s dedication. “I’m not sure what those folks are going to do,” he said. “Who steps into that role? It’s like finding another Mother Teresa.”

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Tarinelli at St. Theresa’s on January 17. Fr. Brian Gannon, pastor of St. Theresa’s, was the principal celebrant. Burial followed in St. Michael’s Cemetery in Bridgeport.

Frank Esposito, 83, Mayor of Norwalk

NORWALK—The City of Norwalk mourned the passing of Frank J. Esposito, seven term Mayor of Norwalk, who died on January 9 after a long battle with cancer. Mayor Esposito was 83.

Mayor Esposito, a Korean War veteran, grew up in Norwalk. He and his wife of 62 years, Louise, were active members of St. Matthew Parish, supporters of their local church and the Diocese of Bridgeport. They had traveled to Rome with their pastor, Msgr. Walter Orlowski, for the consistory elevating Archbishop Edward Egan, former Bishop of Bridgeport, to the College of Cardinals.

Mayor Esposito was a member of the Knights of Columbus and the St. Ann Club, the Sons of Italy (Pietro Micca Lodge), the V.F.W., American Legion, and Republican Town Committee.

“People loved him,” says current Mayor Richard Moccia. “I never knew a man who embraced the job of mayor more than Frank.”

A former businessman, Mayor Esposito served four terms in the Connecticut General Assembly, serving as assistant majority leader and minority leader. He became Mayor of the City of Norwalk in 1987 and was re-elected seven times, retiring in 2001.

In a special honor, Mayor Esposito was brought into St. Matthew Church for a wake service on January 13. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for him on January 14. Msgr. Orlowski was the celebrant.

Burial followed at St. John Cemetery, in Norwalk.
Sr. Martha Marie Healy, 84

Sr. Martha Marie Healy, the founder of Our Lady of Fatima School in Wilton and a teacher, school principal and pastoral minister for more than 50 years in the greater New York area, died of complications from a fall on December 31 at Our Lady of Consolation Nursing & Rehabilitative Care Center on Long Island. She was 84 years old and had been a professed member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 63 years.

Frances Theresa Healy was born on August 3, 1928, in Boston, MA. In 1946, she entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Baltimore and was given the religious name of Sr. Martha Mar. She made her first vows in 1949 and her final vows six years later.

Sr. Martha earned a bachelor’s degree from Manhattan College and a master’s in administration from Fairfield University. After teaching in Brooklyn, NY, she opened Our Lady of Fatima School in Wilton in 1961, and stayed as principal for eight years. She taught at schools in the greater New York area before she answered the call to pastoral ministry in 1976. Sr. Martha ministered to the sick, homebound and hospitalized, and coordinated parish outreach programs. Since 1992 she has served as a volunteer in parish ministry.

A Mass of Christian burial was celebrated for Sr. Martha on January 5 at St. Brigid Church in Westbury, NY. Burial was at St. Mary’s Cemetery in Bethel.

Sr. Mary deRicci

Sr. M. deRicci Baker, IHM, of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary died on January 6 at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton, PA.

Rita Baker was born on February 9, 1922, in Altoona, PA. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1941 and was given the religious name of Sr. Mary deRicci. She made her final profession of vows on August 2, 1947. She received her bachelor of science degree in education from Marywood College in Scranton.

Sr. deRicci served as a teacher at schools in Pennsylvania before coming to St. Ambrose Elementary School in Bridgeport, where she taught from 1958-61. She later taught at schools in Brooklyn, NY, and Baltimore, MD, and was a principal in Holidaysburg, PA. She was librarian at Cathedral High School in New York, NY, from 1989-90.

Following her teaching career she served in hospital, parish, and congregation positions. From 2000 until the time of her death, Sr. deRicci served as a prayer minister at Cathedral Convent, Marian Convent, and Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Sr. deRicci on January 11 at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton. Interment followed at St. Catherine’s Cemetery in Moscow, PA.
Nuestra Voz

Entregarle mi vida al Señor

Por LA FRATERNAL FLORENCIA SILVA

Cada uno de nosotros tiene un camino diferente a través del cual el Señor nos llena de amor a Él. Para mí, este camino de responder a mi vocación no ha sido fácil. No era lo que yo había pensado y definitivamente no era lo que quería hacer con mi vida (ni lo que mi familia quería). Pero poco a poco, el Señor me mostró que su plan era un plan de amor para mí y que nada me iba a hacer más feliz que responder a su llamado. Y Él me conquistó con su amor. No fue fácil porque tuve que renunciar a mucho y morir a mi misma: mis planes, mis deseos y gustos. Estoy muy agradecida por todo lo que el Señor me ha dado y todo lo que ha permitido en mi vida.

Han pasado ocho años desde que entré a vivir en comunidad y hoy puedo decir “sí” a Dios por todos los días de mi vida con una comprensión mucho más clara y profunda de lo que esto significa. Hacer mi promesa perpetua ha sido una experiencia muy fuerte de ver cómo Dios cumple sus promesas y cómo Él realmente nos da el ciento por uno aquí en nuestra vida.

Estoy muy agradecida al Señor por tantas bendiciones: por haberme llamado a entregarle mi vida, por haberme acompaniado a lo largo del camino. Me sobrecojo mirar hacia atrás y ver sólo eso: la gracia del Señor, su presencia, su paciencia, su cuidado amoroso, su perseverancia, su cariño, el cariño del corazón humano del Señor.

Muchas veces, a lo largo del camino, estas bendiciones han estado escondidas en momentos de sufrimiento—de cruces como la del Señor—pero que vistos con los ojos del Señor, son bendiciones escondidas en sufrimientos donde el Señor estuvo presente y está también hoy. Otras muchas de sus gracias han sido muy “pequeñas”, silentes, en el secreto de mi corazón: inspiraciones sutiles, certezas profundas e inexplicables, iluminaciones en momentos de oscuridad; un camino recorrido en la intimidad del corazón del que sólo el Señor se ha manifestado a través de personas que han sido instrumentos del amor del Señor y a las que le debo mucho y con quienes estaré siempre muy agradecida. En primer lugar mis padres y mi familia que me han enseñado, con su ejemplo, como es el amor incondicional del Señor, un amor generoso que entrega y se entrega sin esperar nada a cambio y sin buscar ningún reconocimiento.

Siete de los nueve años que tengo siendo Fraternas los he pasado aquí en Connecticut y es aquí donde he aprendido a vivir mi vida como Fraternas hoy soy la persona que soy gracias a lo que el Señor ha hecho en mi vida y a mi amistad con tantas personas. Hay tantas bendiciones que el Señor me ha dado durante mi tiempo aquí que sería imposible nombrarlas a todos, pero sólo quiero mencionar algunos.

He tenido la suerte de trabajar en la Oficina de Servicios Pastorales con un grupo de personas que tratan de responder con generosidad a lo que el Señor les pide. Trabajar con un grupo de gente así es un privilegio poco común. Ha sido una gran alegría trabajar para el Arzobispo William Lori y he aprendido mucho de su testimonio de amor al rebaño que el Señor le entregó y estoy muy agradecida al Señor por tantas bendiciones: por las Fraternas en todo el mundo que me han apoyado y me han acompañado a lo largo de estos años, en los buenos momentos y en las dificultades. Es en la comunidad donde se aprende a vivir el amor y a crecer en santidad, para mejorar y ayudar a los que el Señor pone en nuestras vidas, y estoy muy agradecida al Señor durante este tiempo y no tengo palabras para agradecerle.

Estaré especialmente agradecida por la gracia para responder con generosidad a esto que Él me pide y para que pueda ser muy, muy fácil a mis promesas por todos los días que el Señor me conceda en este mundo.

Lamentablemente, no puedo dar gracias al Señor de ninguna otra manera sino con el don total de mi misma: de mi tiempo, mi amor, mis talentos y dones: todo lo que soy y lo que tengo.

Nuestras Constituciones dicen que el Señor nos invita a brindar, responsable y libremente, nuestra humanidad a Dios para que a través de cada una Él haga llegar a las personas su palabra y su amor.

Hoy le pido al Señor que me dé la gracia para responder con generosidad a esto que Él me pide y para que pueda ser muy, muy fácil a mis promesas por todos los días que el Señor me conceda en este mundo.

(La Fraterna Florencia Silva, MCR, realizó sus compromisos de Plena disponibilidad Apostólica a Perpetuidad en la Fraternidad Mariana de la Reconciliación).

SAINT MARY’S CHURCH

“The Mother Church of Norwalk” | 669 West Ave., Norwalk | Est. 1848 | www.stmarynorwalk.net | 203.866.5546

Pastor: Rev. Gregory J. Markey
Deacon: Rev. Stephen Genovese
Choirmaster: Rev. David J. Hughes

Conferences: Monday-Friday: 11:30-12noon; Wednesday: 6:30-6:50pm; Saturday: 3:00-4:30pm
Sunday Masses: 8:00am, 9:30am Extraordinary Form Solemn High Mass, 11:30am Ordinary Form High Mass, 1:15pm in Spanish

Music for the 9:30am Sunday Solemn High Latin Mass
February 10: Quatuorquiesa de domingo: Missa Non mensae (Bralla); Missa de Angelis (Tallis); Missa Nova Domini (Byrd)
February 17: Missa de angelis (Tallis); Missa Nova Domini (Byrd)
February 24: Missa de angelis (Tallis); Missa Nova Domini (Byrd)
March 3: Missa de angelis (Tallis); Missa Nova Domini (Byrd)
March 10: Missa de angelis (Tallis); Missa Nova Domini (Byrd)
March 17: Missa de angelis (Tallis); Missa Nova Domini (Byrd)
March 24: Missa de angelis (Tallis); Missa Nova Domini (Byrd)
March 31: Missa de angelis (Tallis); Missa Nova Domini (Byrd)

Saint Mary’s Bookstore: 203.854.9013

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

HOURS: Saturday 10am-4pm | Sunday 9:9-3:00am, 11am-2pm | Monday, Wednesday and Friday 12-4:5pm
Tuesday 11-11:45am and 12-4:5pm | Thursday 12-4:5pm and 3-5:30-6pm
Located in Parish Center building behind Saint Mary Church | VISA/MC ACCEPTED
Puebla is one of the greatest Catholic cities in all of Mexico. There are so many churches in the city of Puebla that it is said one could visit a new church 365 days a year. Many of them are centuries-old architectural masterpieces and tell the story of a people whose faith enveloped their entire culture. On the outskirts of the city is the Church of San Francisco, which possesses the most unique relic in the entire city: the incorrupt body of Blessed Sebastian de Aparicio.

Sebastian was born in 1502 in Gudíña, Spain, to poor parents. He grew up on farms, tending sheep and acting as a servant to those with influence. The habits he learned from his parents, love of God and how to farm successfully, proved to be gifts that would help him for the rest of his long and varied life.

During his childhood the bubonic plague infested his region, and at age 12 Sebastian came down with the dreaded disease. The government authorities took drastic measures against those who contracted the plague, so his parents hid him in the woods under a canopy of branches.

Years later, as a Franciscan, Sebastian told the amazing story of how he was saved. “Hungry wolves tour through the region and a female wolf penetrated where I was hiding. She sniffed me, and licked me, and then abandoned my hiding place. I then began to get better.” God was showing that he still had plans for this boy.

As a young man Sebastian was assailed by temptations, so he decided that the safest way to defeat the enemy was to flee and go to America. In 1533, he arrived in Vera Cruz and settled in the newly established city of Puebla de Los Angeles. Here his knowledge began to bear fruit. Sebastian taught the native people how to use a plow for their farms; he showed them how to domesticate horses and oxen to do hard labor; he showed them how to build wagons for transporting their goods. His greatest influence, however, came with the building of roads. Sebastian is famous for having built the first roads from Vera Cruz to Puebla, and from Puebla to Mexico City. He came to be known as the “El Gallego” (the Spanish region of his origin) and he grew in wealth and influence. Sebastian, however, never lost his faith. In fact, he continued to live very simply, sleeping on the ground and eating the poorest foods. His charity extended to all, giving much of his wealth to those in need, and lending money without asking anything in return.

In 1552, Sebastian retired his road building business, bought a small plot of land, and for twenty years farmed and tended cattle. Now settled down, there was much pressure on him to marry. He was 60 years old when he married a young lady and they mutually agreed to never consummate the union. She died at a young age and Sebastian then married a second time with the same arrangement. His second wife also died, leaving him a widower at the age of 70.

After the death of his second wife, Sebastian became so ill that he nearly died. It made a deep impression on him about what is most important in life. As an old man, and in this broken condition, he felt the mysterious call to follow St. Francis of Assisi as a Franciscan. He entered the novitiate far older than his fellow friars, but his youthful fervor grew so much that he excelled in humility and obedience. Sebastian spent the last 26 years of his life as a Franciscan brother whose primary responsibility was to beg. He was a model friar and people declared that wherever Brother Sebastian went, the angels accompanied him. Even the animals followed his orders. Just by the slightest command of his lips, horses, oxen and mules would obey his words. The integrity of his life spoke of simplicity and the cross, which won many souls to Christ. Unable to swallow at the end of his life, his final suffering was compounded by the fact that he could no longer receive Holy Communion. When the friars decided to bring the Blessed Sacrament to his cell, he was so overcome with joy that he had his body placed on the bare ground where he adored the Lord in his final breath.

Blessed Sebastian died on February 25, 1600, at the age of 98 in the Church of San Francisco in Puebla. When they exhumed his body six months later, they found that his body had not decomposed. Two years later when they exhumed his body, again, it still remained incorrupt. Pope Pius VI beatified him in 1789 and today his incorrupt body can be seen at the Church of San Francisco.

The Archdiocese of Puebla in Mexico is today actively praying to Blessed Sebastian de Aparicio for the needed miracle for his canonization. May the Lord continue to hear the prayers of this noble son of St. Francis for the healing and salvation of souls.
A number of the ancient philosophers did not really believe in the gods of Greek and Roman mythology. They were able to figure out that this world, so filled with intelligibility and beauty, called for some single transhuman power. For example, Aristotle arrived at the conclusion that there was one God who made all things. He described this God as the Prime Mover and realized that this Mover had to be self-actualizing, eternal and immaterial.

Then Aristotle struggled with the question whether this Prime Mover was personal. He concluded that it was. Then there was the question, what was this person’s attitude to human beings? Aristotle concluded that this God was indifferent to us. As Aristotle saw it, for God to get involved with us would lessen God.

Many wise men of antiquity thought that God was unconcerned for us. Epictetus wrote: “It is absurd to think that God would concern himself with human affairs. These things would upset his serenity and peace. A first condition of happiness is the absence of worry. Thus God takes no interest in human affairs and is in no need of human worship.” Aristotle stated explicitly that “God is self-sufficient and in no need of the service of others, nor of their affection… God cannot have any need of human friends, nor will he have any” (Enhedon Ethics, VII, 1244B).

The Judaeo-Christian Scriptures tell us that God is personal, and, contrary to the Greek philosophers, he is concerned with humanity; indeed, they tell us that God loves humanity, and this love is not only a general love, but it is addressed to each one personally. Then we are told that what God seeks from us is something more than submission and reverence. God wishes to be loved by us. He goes so far as to say he is to be loved above all else. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut.6:5; cf. Lk.10:27).

A commandment—just our whole heart, our whole soul, just our whole strength.

Thus, we are told that this infinite act of self-existence, by whom all the rest is, makes human creatures whom he can love and be loved by them. Does God have a need for human love? Kierkegaard said that “It is God’s passion to love and to be loved, almost as if it were a weakness.”

Then we have to face the question: If God is good and loving, why is there so much ungod? If love is really at the heart of things, how can things like Auschwitz and Sandy Hook happen? What do such things mean? Why does a good young mother die of cancer in her prime while an old man who can’t remember his name or hold his water go on and on in a nursing home? Like everyone else, I find God disturbing and problematic. I don’t know what is happening and what it means.

Also, while it sounds judgmental, my experience would have me think that for the majority of Christians God’s job is reduced to doing what they ask for in prayer.

And they often search for the right formula or practice that will turn the secret lock and release the answer. A writer named J.H. Leuba stated, “God is not known; he is not understood; he is used.”

Many of us can say our thoughts are those of the Psalmist? “O God, you are my God whom I seek; for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts like the earth, parched, lifeless, and without water.”

As for myself, I’ve been on this earth a long time, and sometimes I feel that I don’t even know him, that I’ve not begun to understand him, to relate to him. But sometimes I think I do, a bit.

We have a history, he and I. I don’t think I’ve had an emotional connection with God that I would describe as having fallen in love with him. Sometimes I think of what Augustine said: “What am I to him that he wants my love?” (Confessions, Book One). I can accept that God might love me, but it is hard to believe that God could like me. It’s hard to believe that God could get excited about my company.

But a glance over my life shows me that over the years I’ve changed my image of God from that of a Scorekeeper and Enforcing Policeman, someone who was looking on approvingly or disappointingly, to that of someone who kept trying to get my attention. I see him now as something of a relentless hunter. I sense his persistent pursuit. He keeps coming. He is insistent.

There is no thought of giving up the chase; he is patient. The interesting question now is not how do I find God, but how does God find me? I’ve come to think of Christianity as a religion of a God who seeks out people, and he finds ways to penetrate our defensive deafness.

I remember something “hitting” me on a night when I was hurrying home, alone, shivering under a downpour of rain or when I was on a train staring thoughtlessly out on a gray and overcast sky. Suddenly, there was something of a holy sadness, a beautiful yearning for the eternal.

I’ve come to believe the effects of God’s love in my life. It often has been thoroughly disguised, but I do sense that so many things were as much Someone else’s doing as my own. God’s mercy knows many ways.

Experience has given me a deepening trust in God, in the certainty of his care. He has given me proof of his love. Graham Greene was right. Gratitude is the way he gets us.

God cannot force us to love him. Love is free, not forced. If it is not free, it is not love. God can only elicit it from us. Hence I’ve come to think that the precept “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deut.6:5; cf. Lk.10:27) is not a command but a promise.

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GALA CONCERT to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of St. Theresa Parish, Trumbull, will be held Sun., Feb. 10, at 4:30 pm. The New Haven Chorale, University of Hartford’s Hartt School, and the Fairfield County Choral Society will perform under the baton of Dr. Carolina Flores. For more information, contact the parish office at 203.261.3676 or visit www.sttheresatrumbull.org

ART SHOW celebrating love and St. Valentine’s Day will be held Sun., Feb. 10, from 1-4 pm, at the Manice DeForest Lockwood Mansion, on the St. Philip Parish, Norwalk, campus. The free event will feature works from SPAG members and artists from throughout Fairfield County, and champagne and chocolate tastings by local merchants. For more information, visit www.spagstudios.com.

WOMEN’S GROUP at Christ the King, Trumbull, will meet the second Mon. of the month (Feb 11; Mar. 11), at 10 am in the parish hall. All are welcome. For more information, call Pat: 203.261.8020.

PRAYING WITH IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, a six-week retreat sponsored by St. James Parish, Stratford, combines at-home study, prayer and reflection with group sharing on Wed. during Lent from 1-2 pm or 7-8 pm, beginning Wed., Feb. 13. Cost: $10 includes book. For more information or to register, call 203.375.5775.

YEAR OF FAITH: the Cathedral Parish of St. Augustine & St. Patrick, Bridgeport, is holding Holy Hours on the second Thurs. of the month (Feb. 14; Mar. 14; Apr. 11; May 16; Jun. 20; Jul. 18; Aug. 15; Sep. 19; Oct. 17; Nov. 21; Dec. 19). In Feb. the Holy Hour will be held St. Augustine Cathedral; in March it will be held at St. Patrick’s. All are welcome. For more information, call 203.368.6777 or 203.335.0106.

LIVE STATIONS OF THE CROSS will be presented by Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, campus ministry on Fri., Feb. 15, at 7 pm in the 2nd floor of the Holy Spirit. For more information, contact Vinny Ebenau: ebenauv@sacredheart.edu.

CURSILLO ULTRAYEARS are held at locations around the diocese. On Sat., Feb. 16, there will be a Day of Reflection at St. Mary Parish, Bethel, from 9 am-12:30 pm. Ultryears will be held Thurs., Feb. 21, at St. Mary Parish, Bethel, from 7:30 pm; and Mon., Mar. 4, at St. James Parish, Stratford, at 7:30 pm. For more information, contact Jeanette: jovaacs@net.net.

INDEPENDENCE DAY celebration will be hosted by the Knights of Lithuania at St. George Parish, Bridgeport, on Sun., Feb. 17, starting with a Mass at 12 noon. For more information, call 203.878.0519.

MASS OF HEALING AND HOPE will be held at St. John Parish, Darien, on Wed., Feb. 20, at 7 pm with Fr. Ray Introvigne. Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick available on request. Free will offering. For more information call the Spiritual Renewal Center: 860.887.0702.

YEAR OF FAITH: St. Philip Parish, Norwalk, is holding a Vatican II discussion group the third Thurs. of each month (Feb. 21; Mar. 21; Apr. 18). Each month’s topic will be the decree on the Vatican II document Dei Verbum, on Divine Revelation. For more information, call the parish: 203.847.4549.

MASSES OF HEALING AND HOPE sponsored by the Charismatic Renewal Office will be offered Thurs., Feb. 21, at 7:30 pm at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, with Fr. Larry Carew; and Mon., Mar. 18, at St. Lawrence Parish, Shelton, with Fr. Bob Kwiatkowski. For more information, call 203.268.8253.

“LOVE SPOKEN HERE,” a “night out” for marriage enrichment, will be held Fri., Feb. 22, from 7-10 pm at St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Weston. Cost: $15 per couple. For more information, contact Angela Mantero, diocesan director of Marriage and Family: 203.416.1627 or amantero@dioctbp.org.

MARIAN LADIES of St. George Church, Bridgeport, will meet the second and fourth Wed. of the month (Feb. 27, Mar. 13). After the 9 am Mass there will be a social, followed by the Rosary and a discussion of “Approaching God, Trusting God Within the Mystery of God,” with Pam Arsenault will be held Thurs., Mar. 14, at St. Rose of Lima Parish, Newtown, beginning with 9 am Mass. Suggested donation: $25. For more information or to register, contact Charlie Hatenbach: 914.413.2829 or teth@aol.com.


ANNUAL GALA for Immaculate High School will be held Sat., Mar. 16, at 6:30 pm at the Amber Room Colonnade, 1 Stacey Rd., Danbury. Mgr. Robert Weiss, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish, will be honored with the Nancy K. Dolan Leadership Award. Online registration now open; go to www.immaculateths.org.

LENTEN MISSION: “Approaching God with Jesus” with Fr. Bill McCarthy of My Father’s House, will be held at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, Mon.-Wed., Mar. 18-20, at 7 pm. For more information, call the parish office: 203.268.8695.

A TASTE OF GOD’S GRACE, a day retreat for women featuring Donna-Marie Cooper O’Boyle and Allison Gingras will be held at the Holiday Inn, Danbury/Bethel, from 9 am-4 pm on Sat., Mar. 23. For more information or to register, call 508.243.1113 or visit www.reconciledtodyou.com.
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