



# FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

digital edition

SEPTEMBER 2021 | VOLUME 38, NUMBER 8 | BACK TO SCHOOL ISSUE



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# Around the Diocese

## Getting ready for fall

by Elizabeth Clyons

### Fifth-grader receives Math competition prize

NORWALK—Congratulations to Kennedy Do, rising 6th-grader at All Saints Catholic School in Norwalk. Kennedy received a Rising Star Mention in a competition sponsored by Math and AI Girls.

The Math and AI Girls Competition aims to encourage young girls to develop an interest in math and AI by taking part in STEM competitions at an early age. This competition also aims to encourage long-term planning of academic and career goals in STEM. The competition was open to middle school female students throughout the United States. Award recipients are selected based on their aptitudes, activities and aspirations in STEM.

Kennedy's answers and essay were considered in the final judging process and she was part of the Rising Stars group that received a mention (certificate) and a prize from Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE), one sponsor of the event.

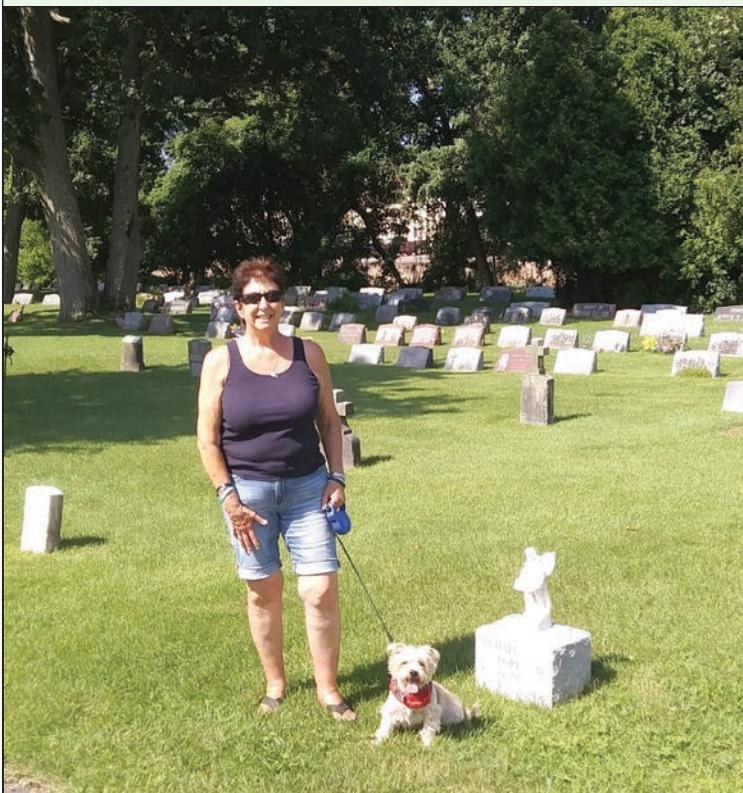
"The goal of the organization is to challenge girls to go the extra mile, to learn at school but at the same time go beyond it and learn new things as well, with support from school, teachers and parents," said Mr. Xavier Guzman, All Saints Science and STEAM teacher.

The competition has one set of problems for girls to challenge themselves and provide the best possible answers to them. In addition to the problem set, they had to write an essay about why they like STEAM and what is their ideal future in the area.

Thank you to Mr. Xavier Guzman for organizing the submissions and encouraging our students to participate!

All Saints Catholic School is a fully accredited elementary/middle school with approximately 450 students in Preschool through 8th grade. With two classrooms per grade, the school provides an environment rich in academic, spiritual and emotional learning.

(For more information on All Saints, visit [www.allsaintsnorwalk.com](http://www.allsaintsnorwalk.com))



### Praying with Peaches

DARIEN—Linda Lyons spends her mornings walking through the cemetery with her dog Peaches, looking at historic gravestones, visiting deceased family members, picking up discarded coffee cups and waiting for that still small voice of God to direct her to certain headstones, where she feels inspired to say a prayer.

A member of St. John Church in Darien and a lifelong Stamford resident, Linda has pursued her own personal ministry at Queen of Peace and St. John Cemeteries.

Linda and Peaches, who is part Maltese and part terrier, set out early in the morning for their walk, stopping to say hello to the maintenance crews, pausing for a prayer to tidy up a neglected grave and examine historical details on a monument.

# Around the Diocese

## Resurrection Vineyard keeps on giving!

FAIRFIELD—Parishioners of St. Anthony of Padua recently donated vegetables (tomatoes, peppers, squash, herbs) from their Resurrection Vineyard garden to the Thomas Merton Center in Bridgeport. Pictured (l to r) are Dr. Charles “Jerry” Hemenway, founder of the Resurrection Vineyard; Joe from Merton Center; and Joe Vaccarella, volunteer gardener.



## Stratford Knights to hold Welcome Back Charity Dinner Dance

STRATFORD—The Stratford Knights of Columbus Council #2370 will hold its Welcome Back Charity Dinner Dance Saturday October 16, 7 pm, at the hall at Holy Name of Jesus Church at 50 College Street. A complete steak dinner will be served, along with dancing to DJ Bob. The event is BYOB and will offer door prizes. Tickets are \$30 per person in advance, \$40 per person at the door, by reservation only. All reservations must be received by Thursday, October 14. To register call Bob Bradley II at: 203.513.1241. Please make checks payable to K of C #2370 & mail to attention of Bob Bradley II, 535 Cutspring Rd., Stratford, CT 06614. Proceeds of the dance will benefit Vocation Scholarships. Please bring a canned good or other non-perishable food item for K of C Food for Families Drive.



# Diocesan News

## Commissioning Ceremonies set for October 16

BRIDGEPORT— Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will commission Ambassadors of the diocesan renewal and delegates who will participate in the upcoming Global Synod on Synodality in two separate ceremonies on Saturday October 16.

“These are two very important moments in the life of the diocese as we continue the work of renewal,” the bishop said. “I am very grateful to all of the men and women who have stepped forward to deepen their own spirituality while giving of their time and talent to revitalize the Church and help to lead us forward during a time of challenge and change.”

### Global Synod on Synodality

The bishop will lead an orientation session and commissioning ceremony for synod delegates on Saturday, October 16, from 9-11 am at St. Francis of Assisi Parish, located at 35 Norfield Road in Weston.

The bishop has asked each parish and quasi-parish in the Diocese of Bridgeport to choose four delegates to participate in the diocesan portion of the Global Synod on Synodality announced by Pope Francis in March of this year.

“As you are aware, Pope Francis has mandated that every diocese in the world participate in the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops that will conclude in Rome in October 2023. The topic to be explored is the synodal nature of the Church and its impact upon our ecclesial life,” said Bishop Caggiano.

The concept of “synodality” has been a topic of frequent discussion by Pope Francis, particularly during the previous ordinary Synod of Bishops on Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment in October 2018.

In an August 23 letter to pas-



tors and administrators, Bishop Caggiano said the purpose of the diocesan participation in the process will be to solicit feedback regarding a number of questions that will be identified in the preparatory document of the synod, to be released in the fall of this year.

Each local process will conclude in April 2022 with the creation of a diocesan report that will be sent to both the USCCB and the Roman Synod Office.

“The choice of delegates will be for the pastor, administrator or priest moderator to make. They should be persons involved in the life of the parish and reflecting its diversity. Each delegate will be asked to participate in a parish-level discussion of the issues to be presented, along with the participation of the local clergy and parish staff, leading to a written summary of the parish’s feedback to be submitted to my office,” the bishop said.

One of the four delegates will be delegated the task of drafting the parish’s report, based on a template that will be provided to by the start of the new year.

The bishop also announced that Deacon Stephen Hodson has agreed to serve as diocesan delegate to the synod office. He will be responsible to keep all clergy and parish delegates informed of the process, coordinate all parish reports and draft the final diocesan report.

“I am deeply grateful for Deacon Hodson’s willingness to serve in this most important position,” the bishop said.

### Commissioning of Ambassadors

The Mass and commission ceremony for diocesan ambassadors participating in the diocesan renewal will be held on Saturday October 16, 12 noon at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport.

“We’ve been looking forward to this moment after many months of prayer and preparation,” said Bishop Caggiano. “The Mass

will be a true celebration of their commitment and commission them to begin their work in parishes throughout the diocese.”

The Mass will celebrate the commitment of almost 200 people from 25 different parishes who responded to the bishop’s call and have completed the Ambassador training program to prepare them go out into the world and welcome all back to the Church.

The men and women of all ages participating in the Ambassador formation initiative were recommended by their pastors and drawn from parishes throughout the diocese. The formation initiative was created to equip parishioners with the knowledge and tools to confidently talk to others about their faith and encourage those that may be disenfranchised with the Catholic Church to reengage with its teachings and spiritual guidance.

In Masses held last spring in Bridgeport and in New Fairfield, the bishop said “developing a spirit of perseverance and endurance alongside the desire to witness Christ in a wounded world are the qualities needed to welcome people back to the Church.”

The bishop said he looks forward to the day when every Catholic home in the diocese will be visited by Ambassadors who will affirm the faithful and welcome people back to the Church.

(For further information on the Ambassador initiative, visit: [www.bridgeportdiocese.org/call-to-renewal](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org/call-to-renewal).) ■

# Diocesan News

## Wedding Jubilee Mass to be held on September 25

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

NORWALK—In keeping with one of the most beloved traditions of the diocese, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will celebrate the annual Wedding Jubilee Mass on Saturday, September 25 at St. Matthew Parish in Norwalk.

The Mass will honor married couples celebrating 25, 30, 35, 40, 45 and 50+ year wedding anniversaries.

Patrick Donovan, director of the Leadership Institute, said that two liturgies have been scheduled in order to accommodate the large number of couples who will be honored. The first Mass will start at 10:30 am and the second Mass will begin at 1 pm.

Dr. Donovan said there will be a limit to the number of guests that couples can bring to make sure the diocese can accommodate two years' worth of anniversaries, since the pandemic prohibited the gathering in 2020.

"We certainly hope we will be able to celebrate with everyone who wishes to attend. It is a beautiful celebration of Catholic mar-



riage and of the couples who have grown in love and faith," said Dr. Donovan.

In his homily at the Wedding Jubilee Mass in 2019, Bishop Caggiano addressed the couples in attendance, "You have found the recipe for a successful, grace-filled marriage: friendship," the bishop said. "It is a life worth living and enjoying. It mirrors the very love of God."

After his homily, the bishop led the couples in a renewal of their marriage promises. As they turned to each other and joined hands, just as they had done so many

years ago, the bishop congratulated them, saying, "Upon whom are you looking? Your husband, your wife, but also your best friend. You have unlocked love's deep abiding power."

Pictures with the bishop will occur before the first Mass and in between the two liturgies. More information will be sent to registrants prior to September 25.

*(To register, please email the first name of both bride and groom, your email, and your wedding date to [weddingjubilee@diobpt.org](mailto:weddingjubilee@diobpt.org) or call Barbara at 203.416.1641.)* ■

## 2021 Diocesan Blue Mass

BRIDGEPORT—The 2021 Diocesan Blue Mass honoring fire, police and rescue workers and commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks will be held on Sunday, September 19, 10:30 am at St. Catherine of Siena and St. Agnes, 4 Riverside Avenue in Riverside.

Law enforcement, fire and emergency medical service personnel of all faiths in Fairfield County are invited to attend the Mass along with faithful throughout the diocese.

Msgr. Thomas V. Powers, vicar general of the diocese, will be the celebrant along with Father William Platt, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Agnes Parish. Police, fire and EMT chaplains serving in towns and cities throughout the diocese will also be in attendance.

"The annual Blue Mass is a special moment to honor the bravery, courage and service of our first responders," said Bishop

Frank J. Caggiano, who is unable to attend this year because of a long-standing previous commitment. "Every time they respond with duty and honor, they bring hope and healing. Once again, after nearly two years of the COVID-19 crisis we are indebted to these men and women whom we honor as hidden ambassadors of Jesus Christ. May



He always protect them."

The Blue Mass has grown into a moving and memorable commemoration of the vigilance and witness of the uniformed personnel who protect the health and safety of people every day of the year in Fairfield County.

The Fairfield County councils and assemblies of the Knights of Columbus are sponsoring the Mass again this year. Greenwich Chief of Police Jim Heavey is helping to coordinate this year's event.

The Blue Mass takes its name from the blue uniforms worn by police, fire and emergency services personnel. Founded by Bishop William E. Lori, the Blue Mass was initiated to celebrate the life and heroism of those who died during the 9-11 terrorist attacks in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington D. C. Each year it also recognizes local First Responders.

Because of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, there will be no reception this year. ■

# Queen of the Clergy

## Independent living for our senior priests

By **NICK YANICELLI**

STAMFORD—More than two decades ago, the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of the Clergy Residence has been offering was built to offer independent living for our retired priests.

We are profoundly grateful for all that our retired priests have given to our community and for being with us at life's most important moments. While our priests are so gracious in administering to the needs of others, it can be extremely easy to forget

that they, too, have needs as individuals, especially as they approach their senior years. Our elderly priests, who for decades have celebrated our marriages, baptized our children and blessed our loved ones who have been called home to God, continue to serve the sacramental community as spiritual leaders, counselors, teachers and friends.

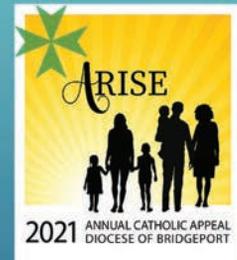
There are 78 priests in the Diocese of Bridgeport over the age of 72. The Diocese of Bridgeport ensures that sufficient living quarters are available for them. Some of these men con-

tinue to live in parishes while others enjoy independent living on their own. Our senior priests have devoted most of their lives to us and the Church, which represents over 4000 years of service. The current residents of QOTC have amassed over 1,000 years of ministry.

We are grateful for our retired priests who are with us at life's most important moments. For priests, being a servant of God is a daily calling that extends far beyond the walls of the Church and impacts the lives of all peo-

► *CONTINUED ON PAGE 7*

# NOW IS THE TIME TO GIVE!



The "Arise" 2021 Annual Catholic Appeal is at 96% of Goal.  
Your gift, as with every sacrificial gift, is needed and can help us get there.



## Congratulations

to the following parishes for making their goal!

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St. Gregory the Great, Danbury  
St. Clement, Stamford  
Shrine of Saint Margaret, Bridgeport  
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Danbury  
Blessed Sacrament, Bridgeport  
St. Rose of Lima, Newtown  
St. Mary, Bethel  
St. Joseph, Brookfield  
St. Ann, Bridgeport  
Holy Spirit, Stamford  
Our Lady Star of the Sea, Stamford  
Holy Cross, Fairfield  
Assumption, Westport  
St. Elizabeth Seton, Ridgefield  
St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, Shelton  
St. Paul, Greenwich  
St. Thomas More, Darien  
St. Thomas Aquinas, Fairfield  
St. Jerome, Norwalk  
Holy Name of Jesus, Stratford  
St. Francis of Assisi, Weston

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# Catholic Charities

## Owens receives CCUSA Award

FAIRFIELD COUNTY—Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) is pleased to announce that Nancy Cook Owens, program director at the Room to Grow Early Childhood Learning Center, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, is the recipient of the 2021 Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan Award. CCUSA’s Bishop Sullivan Award recognizes

the job to meet the challenges of the pandemic by implementing safety protocols, remote learning, and curbside food pick-ups for the children and families in her care.”

“I was so surprised to receive this award, said Owens. “I had no idea that the Catholic Charities team was working on this. I greatly appreciate the recognition and support that

Mike Donoghue, executive director of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, in nominating Owens praised her for consistent hard work and compassion: “Nancy extends herself to address crises among her families, whether it’s to pay for the funeral of a student or to help access diapers. During the pandemic, she selflessly came into the office each and



**NANCY COOK OWENS**

es a person working at a Catholic Charities agency who has distinguished herself/himself in the area of helping children, youth and families.

Sister Donna Markham OP, Ph.D., president and CEO of CCUSA, noted the exemplary service that Owens has provided in her role at the learning center, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. “Like so many Catholic Charities staff around the country, Nancy remained on

Catholic Charities provides for me so we can carry out our mission.”

Owens started working for Catholic Charities in 1996, when she helped to open the agency’s first childhood learning center. As program director she reached out to the working poor families of East Norwalk, an economically depressed neighborhood, to make them aware of the pre-school. The school is now at its current capacity of 132 children.

every day. She’s been an inspiration to all who have walked this difficult journey with her.”

Catholic Charities has served Fairfield County with programs that feed the hungry and homeless, shelter the homeless, strengthen families, assist the physically and emotionally challenged, and deliver consultation and assistance to immigrants.

*(For more information, please call 203.416.1503 or visit us at [www.ccfairfield.org](http://www.ccfairfield.org).)*

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### QUEEN OF THE CLERGY RESIDENCE FROM PAGE 6

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ple—regardless of their race or religion—throughout the entire community. Across the cities and towns that comprise the Diocese of Bridgeport, our priests remain an integral presence at the center of extraordinary causes that enrich the lives of so many. And every day there are countless examples of priests who work so tirelessly and selflessly to make their respective communities a better place to live, all while asking for nothing in return. And all these examples share an essential common thread—they do not just enrich the lives of Catholics in the community; they enrich the lives of everyone.

Many of the residents say

Mass together in the Chapel at 11:30 am before eating together. All residents have access to a chapel, community room, library, exercise room and dining area. Most association is at mealtime and they all respect each other. Each Tuesday all the residents gather before dinner in the living room to socialize and celebrate other significant events. That said, they have the camaraderie of other priests, can come and go as they please. While they have ceased to serve the Diocese of Bridgeport as full-time parish priests, several remain highly active and continue to serve in our parishes, schools, nursing homes and hospitals across

Fairfield County

We are pleased to report that Foundations In Faith was able to approve a request to the St. John Vianney Fund for a grant in the amount of \$50,000 to support the Queen of the Clergy Priests’ Residence general operating expense. Foundations in Faith values the hard work, devotion, and dedicated services of our priests. The St. John Vianney Fund is designated to meet the needs of our retired priests who have faithfully served the people of God within our diocese.

*(Nick Yanicelli is a Foundations In Faith board member and advocate for the St. John Vianney Fund.)*

# Bethlehem House

## A true home for needy families

By **KATHY-ANN GOBIN**

STRATFORD—Bethlehem House has once again opened its doors and welcomed new families, after recently renovating one of its houses that help families experiencing homelessness get a fresh start.

A community ribbon-cutting ceremony was held to mark the new beginning not only for the refurbished house at 389 Jackson Avenue but for the many families who will be given an opportunity to begin a better life.

“As soon as we opened it up, we were able to find families in need,” said Michael Donoghue, director of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, the organization that manages the houses.

He said the need is real and believes with the moratorium on evictions, set in place during the pandemic that are now ending, the situation could get worse. “We are seeing more people who are housing insecure and for those that suffer from housing insecurity, this huge spike in housing costs is a terrible thing,” Donoghue said.

Bethlehem House is a grassroots transitional and supportive housing program.

In the 1990s, Deacon Paul Kurmay, inspired by the Holy Spirit, decided to study the issue of homelessness in the Stratford area and The Stratford Coalition for the Homeless, a private non-profit group, was born. He said they found that the biggest population of people experiencing homelessness were families.

“We explored the idea of trying to open a shelter for families experiencing homelessness and that got nowhere,” he said, partly because of zoning requirements and partly due to the stigma of the homeless and communities objecting to having a shelter in their neighborhood.

At that point the group decided to shift their focus away from homeless shelters to transitional homes for families experiencing homelessness.

They found a home on Jackson Avenue with four apartments. It was in bad shape and in need of repair. They purchased it with donated funds and grants and decided to refurbish it. This time, no zoning was required and the neighborhood welcomed the idea of having the home in good condition and occupied.

“The houses were a blight on the neighborhood before,” said Deacon Kurmay, adding that it’s remarkable

how the community came together and renovated the house with volunteer labor.

“The community wrapped itself around us. Professional qualified people donated services including rewiring the houses. There were thousands of hours of volunteer work and materials,” Deacon



Kurmay said.

The name Bethlehem house is a homage to the most famous place that housed the homeless Christ child and family and befittingly, the first house opened its doors in the year 2000 for Christmas, when the first families moved in.

The following year, the house next door, 389 Jackson Avenue, came up for sale and after some renovations, welcomed new families in 2001.

In 2005, Jenny Tetaj and her three children were one of the families to move into Bethlehem House at 379 Jackson Avenue.

“I felt safe when I stepped into that (Bethlehem) house that night,” Tetaj said. “I felt this is where I belong.”

Tetaj, who is originally from Europe and didn’t speak much English at the time, said she left an abusive husband with her three young children in tow. After staying at several shelters over the course of several months she found her way to the Bethlehem House.

“If it wasn’t for Bethlehem House, I would never be where I am today,” said Tetaj, whose children are now adults. “I thank God and all the people who were there to walk me through everything.”

“Bethlehem House helped me achieve the goals in my life,” she said, from getting a job, to driving a car and now owning a home of her own through working with Habitat for Humanity.

“I felt like I’m around people who didn’t let me down,” she said. “I like to be independent and that is exactly what they did for me.”

“I will never forget the journey,” she said and although times are a little tough now, she is currently working as an Uber driver after having lost her job in manufacturing due to the pandemic,

her spirit to succeed is still strong.

“I didn’t give up back then and I will not give up now,” she said.

It’s that sentiment of perseverance that also keeps the program moving forward.

In 2007-2008, “the coalition very generously gave the two homes to Catholic Charities to run,”

Donoghue said. Somewhere along the way the second home fell into disrepair and was not occupied for several years, until now.

Catholic Charities applied for and received a community development block grant from the city of Stratford.

With rejuvenated interest, the community and neighbors rallied behind efforts to once again, address the needs of the second home.

“We want these formerly homeless families to feel the love from the community,” Donoghue said reflecting on how neighbors helped with small projects around the house including landscaping.

The upkeep on the houses can be challenging and there’s still work to be done.

The newly renovated house will need a new roof soon and donations from community members including the Rotary Club and the Mayor’s Charity Golf Tournament, will go toward that effort, Donoghue said.

Nine families currently live in the two houses. The bottom floor of one of the houses is used for offices, meeting space and social services to assist the families with life skills and finding permanent housing. Families pay rent according to their income level and some may be subsidized through Section 8 or other means. Families live in the house for about one year.

Deacon Kurmay said, Tetaj’s story demonstrates why Bethlehem House is key to changing people’s lives for the better.

“We are getting people off the street and into a permanent home of their own,” he said.

“The neighbors are happy and friendly and supportive,” Deacon Kurmay said. “It’s a success story that builds community. It’s beautiful. This is all the Lord’s work.” ■

# Catholic Charities

## Honoring ‘the face of charity’ in the diocese

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

TRUMBULL—“It is because of people like Denis and Britta Nayden, and Gina and Al Barber that we are able to do the work

And you have not only done a remarkable job out all the years leading Catholic Charities, but you were also gracious enough when I asked you to step into the venture of creating Foundation

ing education, special needs and social service have created untold opportunity and transformed lives and made a difference in our diocese.”

The bishop said that Denis



(l-r) Al and Gina Barber, Denis Nayden and Bishop Caggiano

(PHOTOS BY CLAIRE MCCRORY)

we do. So in the name of all of us, all four of you, thank you. And God bless you,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at the reception to honor the Barbers and Naydens for outstanding service to the Diocese of Bridgeport.

More than 100 invited guests gathered under a large outdoor tent on the grounds of the Bishop’s residence in Trumbull for the event, which was jointly sponsored by Foundations in Charity and Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, the two organizations led by Barber.

They came together to recognize the extraordinary generosity and commitment of Denis and Barba Nayden and the charitable work of the evening’s guests of honor, Al and Gina Barber of New Canaan on the occasion of Al’s retirement after seventeen years of leadership of Catholic Charities and more recently for his service as founding president of the newly formed Catholic Charities Foundation.

“You have been the face of the charity, which is at the heart of the mission of the Church, that base of Catholic charities.

in Charity. You were willing to make the transition and helped give birth to a foundation, which will continue to serve the needs of the poor and the most vulnerable in our midst.”

“I just want to say to you, thank you for your tremendous, tremendous vision, commitment, energy, passion and love for those who are in need, following in the footsteps of Jesus as you retire,” the bishop said.

The bishop also offered praise to Gina Barber for her own remarkable journey in life as inspiration for Al’s work, an artist and an active volunteer in her own right.

“Gina, we are also honoring you, not simply because you have helped out all these years, but all you’ve done in your own right, because of your great love for the church and your love for those in need. You live the mission in your heart in so many quiet ways.”

In honoring Denis and Britta Nayden, Bishop Caggiano said their “extraordinary generosity and personal commitment to many diocesan ministries includ-

and Britta are always there when he asks for support and as a couple, they bring great vision and faith to the diocesan mission of serving the most vulnerable who would often have nowhere else to turn.

Anne McCrory, chair of the Foundations in Charity board and chief legal and real estate officer of the Diocese of Bridgeport organized the evening.

“With a focus on education, special needs and social services, your tremendous generosity has helped families throughout Fairfield County for nearly 20 years,” she said, “Whether through scholarships to the Bridgeport Catholic elementary school students, investing in parish religious education, supporting St. Catherine Center for Special Needs, or donating to the many social services provided by Catholic Charities, the diocese can count on the Naydens to lead by example.”

McCrory said that Denis Nayden’s notable business accomplishments are well documented, “But despite your

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

# Catholic Charities

THE FACE OF CHARITY FROM PAGE 9

tremendous successes, from GE to Oak Hill to Alpha and many others, what sets you apart is your desire to give back. With the many philanthropic opportunities knocking at your door, we are so

know that we are enormously grateful for all your help and support over the years.”

During the reception Donohue announced the launching of the Catholic Charities Fund

who attended including members of the boards of Catholic Charities and of Foundation in Charity.

“It was a beautiful and memorable evening, and we’re grateful



grateful to have you and Britta as a part of our diocesan family.”

Mike Donohue, who succeeded Al Barber as executive director of Catholic Charities in 2019, also offered praise to the honorees and all those in attendance who support the charitable mission of the diocese.

“Al provided his time and leadership but the aforementioned impact would not have been possible without the enormous generosity, advice and guidance of you and many others here today. Catholic Charities of Fairfield County doesn’t exist without the time talent and treasure of so many of you here today. Denis, I wish you and Britta could see the faces and the gratitude of all the people you have assisted. I know this tent certainly wouldn’t be large enough. Others will talk more about you later but please

within Foundations in Charity “to help us continue the legacy Barbers and the Nayden’s have built.”

He also spoke about the future of Catholic Charities and all of its service programs including its efforts to find a new home in Bridgeport for the Merton Center and the goal of building family centers around the County that will empower clients and families to move forward in their lives.

“Our focus over the next several years will be to bring all these resources together with some partner agencies to help our clients move from crisis or poverty towards a life of self-sufficiency. We will work one client at a time to help our clients build a better life,” he said.

McCrory closed out the reception by thanking all those

for all those who came out to celebrate two remarkable couples who have given so much to the diocese and served as models for all those who wish to transform lives through their leadership, volunteering and generosity,” she said.

Conceived by Bishop Caggiano and the board of trustees of Foundations in Charity, the fund will offer donors the opportunity to support the mission and specific programs of Catholic Charities now and into the future. Foundations in Charity, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, was created in 2018 to support the catholic works of charity throughout Fairfield County.

(To support the mission of charitable works of Foundations in Charity, visit the website at [www.foundation-in-charity.org](http://www.foundation-in-charity.org).)



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be  
frank”**

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# St. Catherine Center

## Joy and Gratitude dinner set

FAIRFIELD—St. Catherine Center for Special Needs in Fairfield will host its annual “Joy & Gratitude” Dinner on Sunday, October 3, at the McClinch Family Center at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull. The fundraiser will honor Elena and Steve Schlegel of New Canaan with the Leadership Award and Virginia Dwyer-Aoyama of Darien for Volunteer Service.

“Joy and gratitude are recurring themes for us at the Center,” said Helen Burland, executive director. “Along with challenges, we experience a great deal of joy in the work we do with young people with disabilities. And we are very grateful for the support of our families, friends and volunteers like Virginia and Elena and Steve. The dinner is a way to celebrate our work and those who support it.”

Elena and Steve Schlegel of New Canaan will receive the Leadership Award in recognition of their vision and commitment to the expansion of St. Catherine Center. Elena has volunteered in numerous roles at the Center since 2015. “To be with the students is so grounding,” she said. “It’s eye-opening to see how much joy they have in the little things.”

When their daughter Katherine passed away in 2018, the Schlegels asked that contributions in her memory be designated to a special fund established to support the future expansion of the Center. In May 2021, the Schlegels hosted an event to launch the Building For the Future campaign which will expand programming and double the footprint of the current facility. (See July/August issue of Fairfield County Catholic).

“We’re so excited about this endeavor with St. Catherine’s,” said Elena. “Taking something this tragic and trying to turn it around and help other people has helped us quite a bit. It has been a really great thing for our family. And it’s exactly what I know my beautiful Katherine would want us to be doing.” The Schlegels are parishioners at St. Aloysius in New Canaan.

Virginia Dwyer-Aoyama of Darien will be honored with the Volunteer Service Award for her commitment and dedication to the

development and implementation of the Library Program at St. Catherine Academy.

In 2008, when Dwyer-Aoyama was a new member of the Order



ELENA AND STEVE SCHLEGEL

of Malta, the Order’s Area Chair Jeanie Tisdale asked her if she would consider initiating a library program for the students of St. Catherine Academy and she agreed. Led by a dedicated group of volunteers from the Order of Malta, the weekly Library Program is now 13-years-old and part of the curriculum.

“The idea was for the students to experience and enjoy books read out loud and to learn to feel comfortable in a library,” said Dwyer-Aoyama. “We teach them how to check out a book, as well as how to just enjoy looking at the pictures. We hope that what we expose them to at school will give them options for using their free time at home.” During the pandemic, Dwyer-Aoyama and Jeanie Tisdale read to the students on Zoom. They are looking forward to being back in person with the students.

Dwyer-Aoyama has a degree in social work and has spent many years doing family and individual counseling and working in the substance abuse field. One of seven children, she grew up outside of Chicago. “My parents’ faith and family centered their lives,” she said. “They taught us that ‘to whom much is given, much is expected in return.’”

Dwyer-Aoyama had lived that message with her family. Volunteering at the Center has been a family affair for the Aoyamas. Over the years, each of their four children has been involved, making sandwiches on PB&J Fridays, being a guest reader for Library, singing at Mass and even constructing the

raised beds for the backyard garden. “Knowing the students at St. Catherine’s has been a significant part of our family’s life over the years,” Dwyer-Aoyama said. “We



VIRGINIA DWYER-AOYAMA

never know where saying ‘yes’ to Helen might lead.”

Dwyer-Aoyama is a parishioner at St. John’s Church in Darien.

Like many nonprofits, St. Catherine Center was unable to host its dinner last year due to the pandemic. While the event is a crucial fundraiser for the organization, it is more than that, noted Helen Burland, executive director. “Those who attend the dinner have longstanding connections with St. Catherine’s. The atmosphere is very much like family coming together. Everyone is looking forward to seeing each other again.”

Note: The venue for this event has changed from Fairfield University to the McClinch Family Center at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull.

St. Catherine Center for Special Needs includes St. Catherine Academy, a state-approved, private special education school in Fairfield, Conn., serving students ages 5-22 of all faiths who are impacted with autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities. It also includes the Adult Services Program, approved by the Department of Developmental Services, which offers opportunities for adults with disabilities to learn new skills and participate in vocational and community-based activities. The Center also offers serves as a resource for members of parishes throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport.

(For more information, visit the website at [StCatherineCenter.org](http://StCatherineCenter.org), call 203.540.5381 or email [info@stcatherinecenter.org](mailto:info@stcatherinecenter.org).)

# Parish News

## ‘Glimpse of heaven’ at altar blessing

By **FRANK DEROSA**

WILTON—On a morning beaming with a Madonna blue sky, Our Lady of Fatima parish in Wilton celebrated the Feast of

In his homily, Bishop Caggiano described a church like Our Lady of Fatima as a building like no other. “It is a sacred place where heaven and earth meet, where we find

was delighted that he had heard it.

The renovation included the placing of a statue of Our Lady of Fatima at the niche where the tabernacle formerly sat, and a new



the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary with a Mass for the dedication of a new altar, marking the renovation of the sanctuary of the 68-year-old church.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano officiated August 15, anointing the altar with oils of chrism blessed by him at the diocesan Chrism Mass in St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport during Holy Week. He was the principal celebrant of the liturgy and delivered the homily.

Imbedded in the altar stone is a relic from two early Christian martyrs, Sts. Verecundi and Severiani. Previous altars in the church have not had a relic. Before being placed here, its presence in this country included being placed in an altar in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in 1956.

Preceded by an honor guard of 16 Knights of Columbus, the bishop processed into the church as a choir, a trumpet ensemble and the organist led the congregation in the joyous hymn “O God Beyond All Praise.” Also in the procession were Father Reginald D. Norman, the pastor and two permanent deacons all wearing white and gold vestments, and six altar servers.

encouragement and consolation for events in our lives,” he said. “It is where we get a glimpse of heaven.”

While the centerpiece of the renovated sanctuary is the altar, constructed of marbleized wood, it rests beneath a towering Crucifix, designed and created in Italy, mounted on a wall painted blue in the shade of a dark storm cloud.

In a significant change, the tabernacle was transferred from a side niche to a table centered directly to the rear of the altar. Bishop Caggiano had long urged that the tabernacle be placed in a prominent position, emphasizing its importance as the place where the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is reserved—“where God is.”

In comments after the Mass, Father Norman, known familiarly as Father Reggie, said the generosity of parishioners to the We Stand With Christ diocesan capital campaign of 2018 enabled him to go ahead with plans to move the tabernacle as a vital part of the renovation.

In a lighthearted exchange enjoyed by the congregation, Father Reggie said he “got the message,” and the bishop said he

pulpit and marble cover over the baptismal font, as well as a monstrance, an altar cross, processional cross and candelabra.

In remarks after the Mass, Bishop Caggiano paid tribute to Father Reggie for his leadership in directing the renovation, calling him “a remarkable priest.”

The pastor thanked the bishop for his support in his own remarks. He also said that as the episcopal vicar for Black Catholics in the diocese, he welcomed members of Blessed Sacrament parish in Bridgeport who attended the Mass.

In a Flocknote sent to parishioners on the following morning, Father Reggie said he was “still on an emotional high” after the dedication Mass. He thanked “all who attended, prayed and helped make yesterday such a beautiful day.”

Bishop Caggiano’s presence in the parish represented the second successive year that he had been there on the Feast of the Assumption. Last year, he blessed a newly-created memorial prayer garden named for Phillip Tai Lauria, a graduate of the parish school who succumbed to an illness at an early age. ■

# Knights of Columbus

## New leader takes men 'into the breach' for Christ

By **JOE PISANI**

NEW HAVEN—When Patrick Kelly was serving as a JAG in the Navy, he had a spiritual awakening, an awakening that prompted him to leave a

“It was a bold thing to do,” he says. “I had a solid career and could have stayed but decided to leave to study theology. I moved into my friend’s basement. I didn’t know where I was being led. I just trusted. I had a desire

not only un-Christian but also tries to pull your kids in the opposite direction. As the father of three little girls, I worry about that all the time.”

Prayer is fundamental to a family’s spiritual life, he says,



PAST SUPREME KNIGHT Carl Anderson confers the medal of office on Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly.

military career as an attorney, move into his friend’s basement and enroll in the Pontifical John Paul II Institute to study the Church’s teachings on the family, marriage and love.

Today, the recently elected 14th supreme knight of the Knights of Columbus recognizes that as a defining moment in his life.

“I was working with sailors, defending them at courts-martial,” he recalls. “They were good men who very often made bad decisions, and when you got to know them, you saw they had a very difficult family life with no role models. I was dealing with them after the damage had been done, but it got me thinking so I left the Navy and went to the John Paul II Institute.”

He later realized it was the Holy Spirit guiding him.

to study this rich teaching of the Church on marriage and the family and the human person.”

It was a turning point in his life. He received his master’s degree in spring 2001, and after 9-11 he was hired by the Justice Department to work in the national security division and later did counter-terrorism work for the House Intelligence Committee before moving on to the State Department and the Office of International Religious Freedom, and then to the Knights, where he has served more than a decade in senior positions.

“The Knights was an opportunity to directly help men and families,” he said. “The challenges are enormous. It’s not easy for Catholic families to raise children in the faith because the ambient culture is

recalling his own childhood in Michigan as one of eight children in a Catholic home that prayed the rosary and spent evenings around the dinner table, talking about the Church.

Kelly’s sense of mission and Catholic purpose began early in life. A frequent topic for him, his seven siblings and his parents James and Lucille was faith, just as it is today for him, his wife Vanessa and their daughters.

“It was a very Catholic home, and one of the things we had was respect for the Church,” he recalls. “We sensed there was goodness there...and that came from our parents.”

Growing up in Grand Blanc, Michigan, he attended Catholic schools and later enrolled in Marquette University, where he earned a law degree and joined

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# Knights of Columbus

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS FROM PAGE 13

the Knights council, carrying on a family tradition begun by his grandfather and father.

“The friendship brought me in,” he said. “There was a shared vision. Those kinds of friendships in the Lord are very important,

**“Kelly’s sense of mission and Catholic purpose began early in life. A frequent topic for him, his seven siblings and his parents James and Lucille was faith, just as it is today for him, his wife Vanessa and their daughters.”**

where you’re talking about virtue and the greater things.”

Closely aligned to friendship is the sense of mission, which has been a driving force in Kelly’s life in the military, public service and the Knights.

After law school, he followed his father’s example and joined the Navy, where he was an attorney in the Judge Advocate General’s Corps, serving with them for 24 years in active duty and reserve service.

Kelly has a special devotion to St. Joseph, which has helped him as a father and in his work with the Knights, and he considers it an honor to assume his leadership during the Year of St. Joseph.

“There are few things the world needs more right now than men in the mold of St. Joseph: faithful and virtuous witnesses to Christ and his Church,” he says.

“The role of the father is so critical. It’s the number one determining factor whether children stay in the faith,” he says. “If children see their father participating in faith activities, more than likely they will stay in the faith and take it seriously.”

For this reason, the Knights produced a video series titled “Into the Breach,” which he describes as a call to battle for Catholic men, urging them to embrace masculine virtues in a world in crisis. The series was inspired by the Apostolic Exhortation for Catholic Men by Bishop Olmsted of Phoenix and its goal is to answer what it means to be a man living in today’s world.

“We are giving men a view of what it looks like to be a Catholic man,” Kelly says.

“The whole key for us is if you get the man right, you will get everything right—the marriage, the family and the parish. This is something St. John Paul II taught us. When the family starts to break down, you see all kinds of pathologies and issues.

Reaching out to young men is one of his priorities

because he believes there is a great deal of isolation in the younger generation, who may be connected by social media but are lacking in real friendship.

“The Knights offer a lot for young Catholic men,” he says. “We offer friendship with other men committed to a virtuous life. It’s important for men to connect with a noble cause, something bigger than themselves. The Knights gives them an opportunity to participate in charity and fellowship, which they might not do on their own. Together we can.”

And of course, there’s his devotion to Blessed Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights, whose example and inspiration will guide every decision he and his team make, he said.

“Father McGivney was so much ahead of his time,” he says. “He worked closely with the laity, and he showed that living your parish priesthood is a path to holiness and that you could have a major impact on the lives of your parishioners. He didn’t leave a large body of writing, but he left this legacy of holiness. He was concerned with those who were struggling with poverty and early death and alcohol. He saw what he needed to do, and he did it.”

There are many priests in that same tradition, Kelly says,

including his pastor, Father John Connaughton of the Parish of St. Cecilia-St. Gabriel in Stamford, whom he describes as “a Father McGivney priest.”

To Kelly, the mission of the Knights is particularly important at this time in history.

“Jesus gives us this great commission, and we have to be cooperators with him,” he says. “It’s a challenging time, but we need to live for something greater. For me, it’s important to always keep that in mind because we are here for a short amount of time, and the Lord expects us to work in the vineyard...to be coworkers with him and bring people to him for his glory.”

During his years as deputy supreme knight, Kelly was at the forefront of many major initiatives, including the cause of religious freedom, pro-life projects and programs to strengthen the family.

“The Knights have been involved with helping Christians in the Middle East, and we have always been concerned with vulnerable populations, the unborn, the poor, the persecuted and the aged,” he said. “And those concerns will continue, especially our pro-life work, which is part

**“And of course, there’s his devotion to Blessed Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights, whose example and inspiration will guide every decision he and his team make, he said.”**

and parcel of who we are.”

As he looks to the future, he is encouraged by the rich tradition the Knights have.

“I am enormously privileged to lead the Knights at this time, and I have a strong team of people to do it with,” he said. “Our mission is the same now as it was 140 years ago—to strengthen Catholic men and the Catholic family and to cooperate with the Church. For a lay organization to help the Church the way the Knights can is really important. These are difficult times, and it is much harder than it was 30 to 40 years ago... but we have a strong sense of mission.”

# School Sisters of Notre Dame

## *Farewell Mass*

# Sisters to move from Villa Notre Dame

WILTON—The School Sisters of Notre Dame Atlantic-Midwest Province has been discerning a potential move of its Sisters from Villa Notre Dame (VND) in Wilton. This facility, which was built by the Sisters in the 1960s, currently serves as a residence for retired and semi-retired School Sisters of Notre Dame. The need for this kind of residential space has decreased over the past several years, and data indicates that the demand will continue to decrease in the future. Therefore, the School

only beautiful apartment residences but also the common spaces, amenities, and environment to maintain their deep sense of community with one another and their social, physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being.

After the Sisters' move to their new home is complete, the SSND-appointed committee will turn its attention to the future of the VND site in Wilton. It is contemplated that a process leading to the eventual sale of the site will be pursued over the coming months. The Sisters will



BISHOP CAGGIANO celebrated the Farewell Mass.

the entire province have been engaged in prayer, dialogue and reflection. Many hours were also spent in conversation



SR. REBECCA TAYAG, Sr. Kay O'Connell and a fellow classmate gather together at the farewell ceremony celebrated on July 31 to mark the closing of the building as a residence for the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Sisters have arranged to relocate 58 Sisters to a continuing care retirement community that will accommodate the Sisters' care needs now and into the future.

An SSND-appointed committee spent a considerable period of time evaluating alternate living arrangements for the Sisters in the surrounding area. This process led to the selection of The Watermark at 3030 Park in Bridgeport, which the committee determined was the community most well-equipped to provide the Sisters with not

work with Wilton town officials and prospective purchasers in an effort to minimize apparent change on the property and to achieve local and neighborhood community-wide objectives.

The decision to move the Sisters is not one that was made lightly. "While the prospect of a new home is exciting, it comes with a great deal of sadness about leaving what has, for 60 years, been home for our Sisters," said Sister Charmaine Krohe, provincial leader for the Atlantic-Midwest Province.

For months, the Sisters of

and negotiation with the management of The Watermark to ensure that their community is the best option for our Sisters. A committee of Sisters is coordinating the logistics of the move, not only making sure that all of the aspects of the move go smoothly, but also working closely with the Sisters, their families and the management of The Watermark to facilitate this transition. Although the Sisters will miss their current neighborhood, they look forward to being part of the Watermark community. ■

# Safe Environments

## Prayer Service brings healing

By **KATHY-ANN GOBIN**

An opportunity for healing and understanding was extended to the community through a special prayer service for family members and friends of victims of child sexual abuse by clergy and others.

The emotional service at St. Marguerite Bourgeoys was organized by The Family Members

at the Church. I'm here to point out a person can be a pedophile whether they wear a collar or not," said Deacon Cann, who despite the tragedy that unfolded in his family, completed his journey to become a deacon.

"The Church's arms are open to all who come forward," he said. "We must fight the good fight of faith."

said he still has days that are tough.

As a teenager, he said, he was sexually abused for two years by a priest who taught at Notre Dame High School in Fairfield. Philipp said he felt he couldn't tell his father as a child because he didn't have the vocabulary and as an adult, after years of therapy, he didn't want to burden or hurt his then elderly father with his truth.



of Victims/Survivors and the Committee for Healing along with the support group H.U.G.S—Hope, Understanding, Guidance, Support.

"As we know, it's very important in the healing process, to come together to help one another. It doesn't happen in isolation," Father Shawn Jordan said, welcoming those in attendance and those who were attending the Mass via live streaming.

"We are here to advocate for the parents and families of the victims of childhood sexual abuse, the survivors on the journey of healing, the survivors who are still in need of healing and the victims who did not make it through the healing," Deacon Joseph Cann said tearfully as he began to share his own family's tragic experience.

Deacon Cann said his son Joseph, suffered in silence for 16 years following abuse by a priest when he was just 11 years old. He told of how his son masked the pain by turning to drugs and on the eve of his death he conceded he needed to seek help for his addiction and his traumatic childhood experience. He died from an accidental overdose in 2016. He was 28 years old.

"I'm not here to point a finger

"There are people here tonight who are walking, breathing miracles," Father Larry Carrew said. "Those that have received God's healing mercy and want to share that with others that may also be hurting."

Peggy Fry shared her story of abuse during the prayer service. Fry said she was abused at the age of 16 for about a year by a priest who was a friend of the family and would come over for dinner and attend many family functions.

"I was violated by a man, not by God," she said. "I prayed God would give me the tools to overcome this." She said during the time of her abuse she became sad, introverted, stopped smiling and lost her self-confidence...but she always had her faith.

The Committee for Healing was formed under Bishop Frank J. Caggiano's leadership and has helped with education, awareness and healing for those dealing with the lifelong impact of abuse.

"I've met courageous people who have survived," Fry said. "It is our goal to reach out to many people to spread hope."

Fellow group member Peter Philipp was among the attendees and

"I suffered life-long effects of the abuse," he said, adding that it led him to question his own sexuality as an adult and although he had the opportunity to marry women, twice in his adult life, he did not.

Fry said, her experience, however unfortunate, has not made her bitter.

"God never wanted this to happen to me, so I believe he was looking for ways to make it up to me, so he sent blessings to me," she said referring to her husband of 50 years and her children.

"I wouldn't be where I am today if I didn't have my yesterdays," she said.

Father Carrew said Jesus wants to heal us.

"The evil one works through other people to hurt people," Father Carrew said. "Give the Lord full permission to remove the hurts of the past."

*(For more information, please contact Erin Neil, L.C.S.W., Victim Assistance Coordinator at the office: 203.416.1406 mobile: 203.650.3265 or email: eneil@diobpt.org; or Michael Tintrup, L.C.S.W., Victim Assistance Counselor 203.241.0987 or email: mtintrup@ccfc-ct.org. The State of CT Child Abuse Care-line is 1.800.842.2288.)*

# Editorial

## EDITORIAL

### Welcome Back!

In the past few days, more than 7,000 students have returned to the 25 elementary and high schools sponsored by the diocese. The new school year holds great hope and promise—and also many uncertainties given the resurgence of COVID-19. While over 90 percent of diocesan teachers and staff are fully vaccinated, many of the youngest students have not yet been protected by a vaccine.

In the weeks before school began, Superintendent Steven Cheeseman’s office received many emails and calls from parents who voiced their opinions on both sides of the mask issue. However, one thing we can all agree on is the need to make the school year as normal as possible for young people.

The superintendent has announced that all students will return to in-person classes. School-wide Masses and assemblies should resume along with all extra-curricular activities, including athletics. While masks will be worn on the bus, in hallways and large group settings, there will be plenty of mask-optional opportunities throughout the day including at outdoor recess, during allotted mask-break times and when social distancing can be observed in classrooms. Each principal will make decisions based on diocesan guidelines and municipal mandates.

“Let us all be vigilant so that our young people, particularly those under 12 who at present are not protected by vaccines, can return to school with all the joy and enthusiasm that a new year brings,” Dr. Cheeseman wrote in his August 4 letter to parents. Let us also offer our thanks and prayers for all teachers administrators, students, staff and parents as they move ahead in a new school year.

### The Common Good

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano recently shared his thoughts on the pandemic going forward during his weekly radio show and podcast. His words offer an informed perspective and a plea for rediscovering the “common good” at a time of uncertainty:

“I think we have to come to terms with the fact that the pandemic will remain with us for a very long time and we have to manage how to deal with it, because I’m not exactly sure it’s going to be behind us a hundred percent. So, we need to return to some semblance of normalcy. We need to learn the correct lessons from what we have done the last year and a half, including the use of technology. But we also need to have mitigating procedures in place because I’m not sure we can sustain another lockdown, both as a church and as a larger society—when we’re not even sure of the psychological and sociological effects of the first one. As a result, there is a legitimate need to discern individual personal choice and the moral obligation to the common good. As a society, we are skewed to the first and not the second, and that plays a large factor in how we’re going to deal with this. Where do I need to see the good of the whole as really claiming my attention in choices that I make, so that the neighbor is very much a part of my thinking and my action? In a sense, that could be the long-term grace of the pandemic.”

*(Radio listeners can tune in to “Let Me be Frank” on Wednesdays at noon on WNLK-AM 1350 radio. The podcast is available at: [www.veritascatholic.com](http://www.veritascatholic.com) and the Diocese of Bridgeport website: [www.bridgeportdiocese.org](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org).)*

### In the Hands of God

With summer coming to an end, most people have long since returned from their vacation getaways and are back into the routines of work and school. But are we really rested and refreshed? How do we find peace in our lives, especially at a time of division? In these prayerful words from Father Joseph Marcello, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Church in Trumbull, we might work toward a better understanding of those questions.

“Sometimes we think, ‘If this problem went away in my life, or if I were less busy, or if I were more settled—or whatever—then I could be joyful.’ But that’s exactly backwards, because: Rest comes not when our schedules lighten up, but when we place everything squarely in the hands of God. Peace and joy come not when troubles evaporate, but when we intentionally place our trust in the Father, as Jesus did. Fear is dissipated not when the future suddenly becomes clear and all uncertainties go away, but when we return to the truth that everything is always resolved in God’s love, and that nothing escapes His watchful providence.... The rest is in the hands of God. And there is no better or safer place to be than in the hands of the God who is love.” ■



The Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport, has made the following clergy appointments:

#### CHAPLAIN

REVEREND LUKE SUAREZ, appointed as Chaplain to the Young Catholic Professionals of Stamford/Fairfield County. Effective date was August 31, 2021 for a term of three years.

#### RETIREMENT

DEACON PETER KUHN, retiring from the Diocese of Bridgeport. Effective date was September 2, 2021.

#### DEACON

DEACON STEPHEN HODSON, appointed as Synod Representative for the Diocese of Bridgeport for the Global Synod on synodality. Effective date is September 15, 2021.

#### OTHER

REVEREND FRANK HOFFMANN, appointed as *ex officio* a member of the Diaconal Vocation Advisory and Admission Board. Effective date was September 1, 2021 for a term of three years.

*Reverend Francis T. Hoffmann  
Vicar for Clergy, September, 2021*



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# Editorial



## 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me'

### A YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE

BY ELIZABETH CLYONS

*Libby Clyons is Communications Associate for the Diocese of Bridgeport. She can be reached at [elizabeth.clyons@diobpt.org](mailto:elizabeth.clyons@diobpt.org).*

Over the years, I've learned that my mood and overall outlook on life are very much affected by my surroundings. So as I begin to get settled into my new apartment, I am looking forward to making it feel more like home. I am noticing that the careful placement of a plant or hanging artwork created by a friend can make a substantial difference in making a space your own.

Since my own living space means so much to me, at this time especially, I am thinking of the many Afghan refugees currently experiencing displacement. When I think of the difficulty I experienced finding an affordable place to live, I can't even imagine the challenges these people face.

Jesus often spoke about welcoming the stranger. Matthew 25: 35-36 is well-known: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."

As Jesus and his disciples traveled throughout Judea, they had to rely on the hospitality of others along the way. Many people took

them in, even when it was unsafe to do so.

Housing is such a basic human need and yet so many people go without it. Waiting lists for affordable housing are sometimes years long. Refugees worldwide are fleeing their homes in search of safety, and still, some say there is "no room at the inn."

Whenever I think of these families, I picture the Holy Family. Would they have been turned away if people had known?

Luckily, there is some light in all this darkness. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Catholic Charities, and other faith-based groups have intensified their efforts working with the U.S. government to assist Afghan refugees who require housing and aid as they begin new lives in the U.S.

In our diocese, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County has responded to the request of Goodwin University and the University of Bridgeport (UB) to join in the effort to assist recent Afghan refugees coming to Connecticut. At the request of Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, Mike Donoghue, diocesan director of Catholic Charities, has reached out

to Goodwin/UB president Mark Scheinberg to offer his support.

Bishop Caggiano said the University of Bridgeport's initiative to offer assistance to Afghan refugees is necessary given what is unfolding in their country. "It is a commitment to stand with those who are homeless, refugees and poor. It is a pro-life issue for which I wish to express my gratitude for President Scheinberg's leadership, vision and support. I am also proud and grateful that Catholic Charities will be joining in this important work."

Pope Francis has encouraged faithful around the world to gather in prayer and fasting. "I believe that in this global world, every man and woman can do something," he said. "If small groups can sow terror, small groups can sow peace. And they can do it through prayer, which, together with fasting, which is also detachment from daily life, is a 'revolt' against war, as well as an invocation to the Lord, the Lord of history, so that He may open up paths of peace and arouse, through His spirit, the goodwill of men, of the powerful, of institutions."

Thinking about these refugees makes me realize how lucky we are to have a roof over our heads. This isn't to say there aren't difficulties in our own lives, but it puts everything in perspective when we think about those without basic needs. We can call our local Catholic Charities and offer assistance or follow Pope Francis' call for prayer and fasting. As the pope said, "small groups can sow peace." ■

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

### *St. Matthew Knights help give local Catholic schools a makeover*

NORWALK—Summer is usually a time for rest and relaxation but need knows no season so that is why the St. Matthew Knights of Columbus Council 14360 make sure to help whenever it is needed. The council has a tradition of assisting local Catholic schools with various projects to get ready for the upcoming school year.

On Saturday, August 7, the council went to work on beautifying the science playground at All Saints Catholic School. The Knights spread over 80 yards of mulch. As schools prepare to come back after the summer break it is important to spruce up the grounds for the children and make the school a welcoming and warm place.

"Anything we can do to help make the return to school even a little bit better especially during these unpredictable times is a great thing," said Council Grand Knight Anthony Armentano.

On Saturday, August 14, the Council 14360 mulching crew headed to Wilton to help their friends at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Academy in Wilton. It was a large job made much easier by a large turnout from the Knights, along with parents and students from OLF Catholic Academy. St. Matthew Knight's member AJ Cossuto of AJ's Landscaping Service, LLC donated his equipment once again to help move the mulch to the two playgrounds. "We are so thankful for Brother AJ's generosity in donating his time and equipment to this project, said Council Past Grand Knight and project chairman George Ribellino. ■



(For more information, visit [kofc14360.net](http://kofc14360.net))

# Editorial



## The people holding a troubled world together

### SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

When I gaze out across the pews at daily Mass, I see a collection of people with gray hair, thinning hair, no hair. Grandparents, widows, widowers, retirees, geezers. Some use canes or walkers, others struggle to kneel and stand. There are a few middle-agers and an occasional young person.

They have one thing in common. The Eucharist sustains them, so they keep coming back. They realize another thing. The Person who resides in that tabernacle is their hope in a troubled world—not technology, science, sports, politics, celebrities or world leaders.

Most Catholics might look at the empty church and panic—as I do occasionally—and say, “We have to bring young people back before it’s too late!”

I also look out and wonder: How is it that the most important event in salvation history is taking place right before my eyes, and there’s only a few privileged individuals to witness it? It’s more important than a presidential election, the Nobel Prize ceremonies, the lunar landing, the discovery of America, the World Series, the Super Bowl. And yet there’s only a handful to celebrate this event—the Sacrifice of the Mass.

Young people can learn from these faithfully devout seniors.

There’s Anne, estimated age 93, whose joints bother her, so she doesn’t stand for the entire Gospel, although she doesn’t seem to have a problem kneeling. She’s there every morning and then goes to the Senior Center for a program that she leads.

She’s of the most joyful and exuberant people you’ll ever meet, although whenever I crack

a joke, I don’t think she can hear me. Or maybe my jokes aren’t all that good. She smiles anyway and that makes my day.

Then, there’s Lucia, estimated age 94, who walks to church every day. She never misses an opportunity to tell me about her childhood

**“I’m also convinced the countless rosaries, novenas, candles and Communion of these prayer warriors will do more to bring God’s Kingdom on Earth than all the political movements, causes and committees we read about every day.”**

in northern Italy near the Dolomites, and her long and wonderful marriage to her late husband. Together they traveled throughout Europe, Asia and Latin America. This brief time in the morning is the most important part of her day.

Many of these seniors kneel in prayer a long time before Mass begins, and they stay to pray the rosary. They’re always there for Eucharistic adoration.

I’m convinced people like them are holding the world together with their prayers. People like them will be the ones that Jesus honors with the heavenly MVP awards someday. They’ll be at the front of the line to be recognized for what they did to spread the Gospel through small, seemingly inconsequential acts of kindness, devotion, service and sacrifice.

They’re the ones who went out into the vineyard and labored, often anonymously, to harvest souls that might have otherwise been lost.

I’m also convinced the countless rosaries, novenas, candles and Communion of these prayer warriors will do more to bring God’s Kingdom on Earth than all the political movements, causes and committees we read about every day.

So it would be wise for young people—the so-called Nones—to learn a lesson from their elders. Sit in front of the tabernacle and look for the answers. Make the Eucharist the center of your existence because it is

only through the Eucharist that you’ll be able to do great things. But always remember: You won’t be doing them. It will be Christ doing them through you, so don’t be eager to take the credit. Yes, you can learn a lot from your elders.

A man I know who was ordained to the permanent diaconate last year told me the greatest power of example in his life, the person who inspired his vocation, was his grandfather in Puerto Rico. Every afternoon, promptly at 3 pm, the old man would retreat to his room to pray during the Hour of Divine Mercy.

Can you imagine the number of souls that fellow saved by his faithful perseverance in prayer? I’d bet Jesus gave him an MVP award too. It’s amazing the profound inspiration one person can have who lets the Holy Spirit work through him or her.

Look out at the pews during daily Mass, and you will see the people holding this troubled and decadent world together. Are you worried about the world? Then it’s time to join them.

*(Joe Pisani can be reached at [joepisani@yahoo.com](mailto:joepisani@yahoo.com).)*

# Education News

## *Prep educator*

# Named to Jesuit commission on advancing women

FAIRFIELD—Dr. Donna Andrade, dean of mission and ministry at Fairfield College Preparatory School, has advanced the Jesuit mission of social justice throughout her 42 years at the school, and she was recently named to an international commission that will assess the role

General Congregation in 1995 is today, because as Father Sosa said, “The world has changed substantially since then, including the situation of women.”

The commission comprises six women, three Jesuits and one layman, representing eight countries. They have already begun work,

school did not reflect the diversity of our area. It was a predominantly white and wealthy school in a changing landscape. Our kids were predominantly white students, going into a world that was diverse, and they were not prepared for that.”

She says that the diversity pro-



**DR. DONNA ANDRADE**

and responsibilities of women in Jesuit apostolates around the world.

She is representing women in the North American continent on the Commission on the Role and Responsibilities of Women in the Society of Jesus in what she describes as a historic opportunity.

“I am so pleased that the Jesuits are looking at this issue,” she said. “They are looking at it within the Jesuit network.... And it’s exciting to me as a Jesuit educator that there are people from all over the world that I will get to meet and learn from.”

The commission was announced in March by the Rev. Arturo Sosa, S.J., the superior general of the order, and it represents a further step by the Jesuits to “more fully include and collaborate with women.” A major objective of the commission is to evaluate how relevant the previous decree issued by 34th

which is expected to take three years to complete before issuing a final report for Father Sosa, who will act on their recommendations.

Throughout her career, Dr. Andrade has been focused on the Jesuit mission.

She began teaching English literature at Fairfield Prep in 1980 and wrote a proposal in 1985 for the first diversity program for Jesuit high schools in the nation, which was replicated around the country. She eventually began organizing diversity conferences for the network of then 44 schools in 1994. At Prep, she has held a variety of administrative positions, including director of diversity and academic dean.

“When I began at Prep, the president of the school approached me,” she recalls. “I was the only person of color until 2001 in the school, and we had very few students of color, so the

program cultivates understanding on both ends of the spectrum and is mutually beneficial.

“It is important because everybody benefits,” she says. “White kids are exposed to diversity and others learn about social capital and the environment they will encounter in college and beyond in a predominantly white school and college.”

Today, Fairfield Prep is one of the most diverse schools in the area, she says, with 25 percent of the student body consisting of students of color.

“We are blessed and we are pleased,” she says. “We worked at getting that diversity over the past few decades. It is the core of our mission as a Jesuit school, which has a commitment to social justice. That includes socio-economic, political, ecological and ethical justice, which are issues we address in our curriculum.”

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

# Canonical Recognition

## Bishop welcomes Koinonia

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has issued a canonical decree formally recognizing and welcoming the Association of Koinonia John the Baptist to the Diocese of Bridgeport.

The Association of Koinonia John the Baptist is a private association of the Christian faithful, of the Diocese of Plzen, in the Czech Republic, recognized by Bishop František Radkovský on the 25 of January 1996. It has requested to establish a stable pastoral presence in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

“I impart my apostolic blessing upon the Association of Koinonia John the Baptist and its members as I welcome them into the Diocese of Bridgeport and I encourage other members of the faithful of the diocese to

join in the apostolic work of the Federation,” the bishop wrote in his decree dated August 22.

The decree notes that the bishop has been familiar with the pastoral work of the Federation since 2009 and has determined that it is for the good of the faithful for the Federation to establish a canonical presence in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Koinonia is a Greek word meaning is “fellowship, sharing in common, communion.” The mission of Koinonia John the Baptist’s charism is the promotion of New Evangelization through evangelization activities, various training programs and the formation of community. What distinguishes the Koinonia is its primary announcement of the Gospel, its openness to charismatic signs and its intense com-

munity life. It strives to respond to the needs of the Church by proposing a New Evangelization which is new in its ardor, new in its methods and new in its expression, according to the Magisterium of the Church.

The canonical name of the association is: “The Federation of Koinonia John the Baptist.” For all canonical effects, the Association of Koinonia John the Baptist of Bridgeport, CT, is the same as the legitimately established association in the Diocese of Plzen by Bishop František Radkovský.

The diocesan center for the Association will be located at 163 Our Lady of Good Counsel Church on Ortega Avenue in Bridgeport.

*(For more information on the Koinonia, visit: [www.koinoniagb.org](http://www.koinoniagb.org))* ■

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### PREP EDUCATOR FROM PAGE 20

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Andrade, the oldest of three sisters, is Cape Verdian, a colonized mixture of African and Portuguese. Her parents were the first generation in their families to be born in America.

She grew up in the East End of Bridgeport and is a lifelong parishioner of Blessed Sacrament Church, where her mother Frances worked for 15 years as parish secretary until she was 80, after having retired from the City of Bridgeport.

“My parents raised us in the Church and we went to Mass on Sunday,” she recalls. “I was a public school girl and went to McKinley Elementary School and Harding High School and took religious education and received my first communion and confirmation at Blessed Sacrament.”

She received a bachelor’s in English education from the University of Connecticut, a master’s in educational media from Fairfield University, a master’s in administration and supervision from Fordham University and a doctorate in education from Fordham.

Since the beginning, Andrade has been inspired by the mission of the Society of Jesus, which this year is celebrating the 500th anniversary of its founding by St. Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish nobleman who was hit by a cannonball during the

Battle of Pamplona in 1521, an incident that led to his conversion and the eventual founding of the order.

“My first encounter with them was a personal one,” she recalls. “In 1980, there were a lot of Jesuits in the school, and I befriended the ones who worked with me in the English and Arts Department. They would invite us over to the Jesuit residence, and I got to know them personally.”

She says it is an honor to be the only representative from North America on the commission, which will chart the course for the “role of women in the Jesuit mission, a faith that lives justice.”

Father Sosa in announcing the commission enumerated his objectives, the initial one being a review of the previous decree from 1995 titled, “Jesuits and the Situation of Women in the Church and Civil Society,” which was promulgated at the 34th General Congregation.

Among his other objectives are a review of the Society’s “structures of collaboration with women,” “strengthening the mission of the Society with the active participation of women,” and the encouragement of “mutual respect, care and solidarity between men and women.”

Dr. Andrade stresses that the commission is not just looking at the role of women in education, but in all Jesuit apostolates, including parishes, charitable work and social justice initiatives worldwide.

“It is a very Ignatian process involving discernment and how we should proceed as a commission,” she says. “We didn’t jump right into the work. Everything we do is grounded in Ignatian spirituality, which is the one thing we all have in common.”

“We will be looking at where we came from and where we want to go,” she said. The process will involve an examination of existing structures, best practices that help women and practices that impede women. And from their three-year endeavor, they will draft a report with recommendations to the Superior General.

Dr. Andrade has been committed to Catholic education throughout her career, and she is hopeful that the work of the commission will have implications for the broader Church regarding the role of women in leadership and the contributions they can provide. She stresses, however, that the issue can be a divisive one and that it is fundamentally important to have those discussions “in a way that doesn’t divide us but unites us.” ■

# Education News

## FIE invites Catholic School educators to apply for grants

BRIDGEPORT—Foundations in Education (FIE) is pleased to announce that applications to the Innovation and Leadership Grants Program opens September 15, 2021.

The grants program promotes excellence in Catholic education by supporting teachers' creative projects and professional development. Grants funded through this program are for transformative initiatives that may benefit multiple grade levels and have a long-term impact on student learning.

Now in its 5th year, this competitive program was the first of its kind in the diocese to offer innovation and leadership grants to teachers and administrators.

To date, Foundations in Education has awarded more than \$500,000 in grant funding.



Educators within the Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools are eligible and encouraged to submit grant proposals online from September 15-October 31, 2021.

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Steven Cheeseman, commented, "We are extremely grateful to Foundations in Education for continuing to make valuable investments in our schools, teachers and students. Across the diocese, educators are working hard to provide robust learning with limited resources. These grants have tremendous impact for our teachers and students."

A board appointed grants committee carefully reviews and evaluates each proposal and submits recommendations to the FIE Board of Trustees for approval. The committee is led by Dr. Julie McNamara, president emerita of Albertus Magnus College, Foundations' board member, and honoree recently

recognized by Foundations for her commitment to Catholic education.

Projects must align with the Foundation's mission to strengthen and transform Catholic education and include unique and innovative approaches to teaching that will maximize impact on student learning.

"This unique program is one that the board and I are especially proud. These grants help distinguish our teachers and schools for their excellence in education," shared Foundations in Education Executive Director Holly Doherty-Lemoine.

Peaches Bernard's Innovation Grant last year introduced STEM education to 8th graders at St. Augustine Academy in Bridgeport. Students had the opportunity to conduct scientific research, work with robotics and 3D modeling. They learned about the engineering process and did a Lunar project, which

PEACHES BERNARD'S INNOVATION GRANT LAST YEAR INTRODUCED STEM education to 8th graders at St. Augustine Academy in Bridgeport. Students had the opportunity to conduct scientific research, work with robotics and 3D modeling.

involved redesigning their Hexapod and adding a collection module to collect samples on the moon.

"We had a more interactive classroom and lessons were more creative and hands-on," shared Bernard.

"Students work collaboratively to design hands-on engineering projects that helped build their confidence and motivate them into thinking about a career in the engineering field. The students were completely engaged in each lesson and couldn't wait to start a new lesson."

Dr. Julie McNamara, observed "I am happy to chair a committee that really makes a difference. Innovation and leadership assures kids a formative experience and takes these students to a different level."

Foundations in Education is an independent non-profit initiative created to assist the Diocese of Bridgeport's ongoing mission to support Catholic education in Fairfield County by supporting innovation in academic and extra-curricular programs, fostering opportunities for the professional development of school leaders and providing tuition assistance to families in need.

*(To learn more, please visit [foundationsineducation.org](http://foundationsineducation.org).)*

# Cursillo

## Finding Christ, sharing Christ

By **JOE PISANI**

RIDGEFIELD—Jim and Cindy Bruno have seen the Holy Spirit at work in their lives, in obvious ways and almost imperceptible ways. Members of the Cursillo movement, the Ridgefield couple look for daily opportunities to bring Christ to others, and they've discovered there's plenty of work to be done because the harvest is plenty.

From baking brownies for a lonely person to discussing a book that a coworker is reading, they say the occasions to make Christ part of their personal encounters are limitless.

"Both Cindy and I recognize the importance of Cursillo," said Jim, the lay director of Cursillo in the Diocese of Bridgeport. "It gave us the training to be disciples and understand our duty as Catholics. The weekend encounter gives you a conversion experience, and then you understand you have an obligation to evangelize. On the Cursillo weekend, you realize, 'Aha! That's what it means to be a Catholic—to bring people to Christ and show them God's love.'"

Cursillo is an apostolic movement of the Catholic Church, which was founded in Majorca, Spain, in 1944 by a group of laypeople. "Cursillo" is a Spanish word that means "short course," which refers to the three-day weekend designed to help people learn to live in a Christ-like manner. The weekend is the beginning of the Cursillo experience, which also involves regular "grouping" with other members for a deeper spiritual experience.

Cindy, who is the registrar of voters in Ridgefield, has served as national chairperson for Cursillo and also as diocesan lay director.

"With Cursillo, you do some of the same things you've been doing all along, but with a different motivation, and the different motivation is to evangelize," she says. "People need to know that God loves them and is aware of them. That alone, to me, would change the world. That is part of my daily prayer—that people understand God's love and mercy."

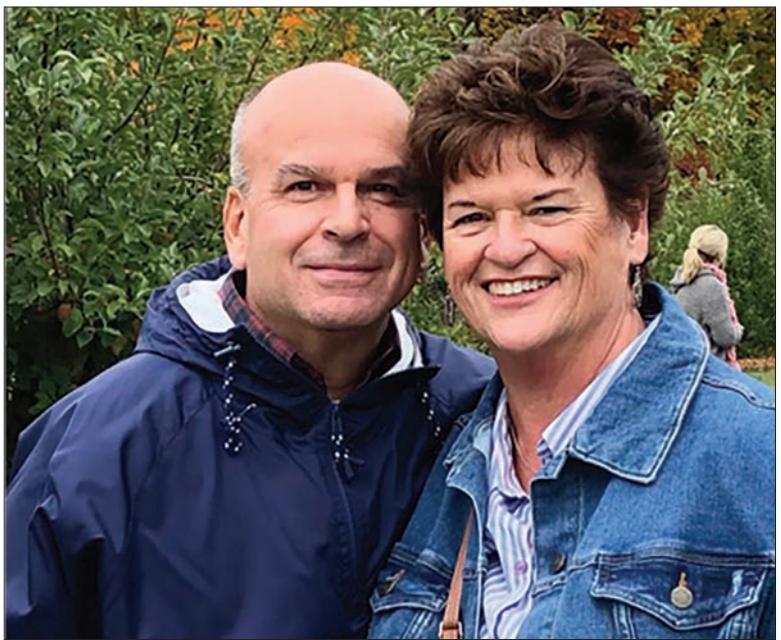
One of her talents, which gives her great joy, is baking. She has been known to bake cookies, brownies, cupcakes, bread and her

specialty, Irish soda bread, and bring her creations to others in need of a spiritual boost. During the COVID-19 pandemic, her baking skills were especially helpful when neighbors and friends found themselves isolated.

"I know why I am doing it," she says. "There are so many people who are lonely. And many

a Baptist church, they are committed to explaining the Catholic faith to him. And with their other two grandchildren, they often look for religious gifts, such as holy water fonts for their bedrooms, to give to them when they visit South Carolina.

Jim and Cindy, who have received the St. Augustine Medal



**JIM AND CINDY BRUNO**

people feel isolated because they aren't connected to God. For me, it's an opportunity to make people realize they are being thought of."

For Cindy, baking a plate of brownies for a person can give the Holy Spirit an entree to do something wonderful.

Jim, who works in logistics leasing railroad cars for a Danbury company, says he is always looking for opportunities to bring friends and acquaintances to Christ. For him, even a casual question like "What's that you're reading?" can lead to a conversation. And just saying hello to a person sitting alone at work can give him an occasion to evangelize so the Holy Spirit can change someone's life.

"Cursillo is living out our faith," he says. "When you're motivated by the Holy Spirit, you never know who you will encounter. The Spirit guides me to look for ways to bring God into a conversation."

One of their most personally rewarding occasions for evangelization is taking their grandson, seven, to daily Mass when he visits them. Although he attends

of Service from the diocese, are active in St. Elizabeth Seton Parish and involved in different ministries, including the youth group, a marriage preparation program and bringing Communion to the homebound. Cindy is also involved in the diocesan Ambassador program begun by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

"The Cursillo method isn't new, it's what Jesus did," she says. "It's evangelization through friendship. It's not an offshoot of the Church. It's living the Gospel message."

They urge anyone in the diocese who has made a Cursillo weekend to become active, and to join a weekly "grouping" session with other Cursillistas at which they pray and discuss how they encountered Christ during the week. There are hundreds of people in the diocese who have made a Cursillo, and more than 500 are on the group's email list.

Cindy "groups" with two other women, and Jim meets weekly with several men in Bethel.

"You can 'group' on the phone, through Zoom or in per-

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# Catholic Men

## Bringing men together for a faith

By JOE PISANI

When the Twin Towers fell on 9/11, Bob Saraceni was working at an executive recruiting firm in Manhattan, and within six months, he was out of work. At one point, he began painting houses and washing windows to support his family. The crisis marked a turning point in his life, and he

Bridgeport, where he has assisted 25 parishes.

"I recognized the need for this type of faith-sharing ministry through what I was missing in my own life and what I believe all men are looking for—a deeper connection with other men searching for God in their lives," he said.

After making a Cursillo week-

at Mass, she said, "Stop whining and do something." So he did.

"Once I started making an effort and took a leap of faith, things started happening," he recalled. "I believe in miracles, and in my experience, God moves in my life when I am making a leap of faith. And once I started researching this idea, God started putting people in my life."



BOB SARACENI HAS HELPED DEVELOP more than 40 men's ministries throughout America and Canada and the Diocese of Bridgeport, where he has assisted 25 parishes.

began questioning his faith.

"Despite six generations of Catholicism on both sides of my family, I wasn't really connected," he recalls. "I didn't have any peers outside of business, and I had no one to turn to for support."

Something was missing in his life, and he realized he needed deeper friendships with other men, friendships that went beyond the usual chatter about sports, the weather and work.

He set out on a journey that led him to develop ministries where men could find fulfillment in sharing their faith. In recent years, he has helped establish more than 40 men's ministries throughout America and Canada and the Diocese of

end with 30 other men in 2007, under the spiritual direction of Msgr. Frank McGrath, he was so moved that he came away committed to do something. At the time, he was attending St. Jerome Church in Norwalk.

"I remember sitting at Mass one day and felt so disconnected," he said. "I looked at the fellow beside me and realized I didn't even know the guy."

He went to the pastor, Father David Blanchfield and said, "I think we need something spiritual for men here." And the priest responded, "Yeah, good idea, why don't you do it?" And Bob took him up on the invitation.

Even his mother Marie encouraged him to act. "My mother is a woman of deep faith, and one day

St. Mary in Ridgefield was beginning a Men's Ministry, so he attended their meetings. What most inspired him was they were using Church teaching to support personal experience. They explored how God was showing up in the men's daily lives, and their discussions centered on topics like how to be a better husband and father.

"I knew men were starving for more of something they couldn't quite name," he said. "Well, it's called the Body of Christ...and this is what it feels like when you're in community."

The St. Mary ministry grew to more than 150 men with about 75 attending Saturday morning meetings to pray and to discuss

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# Catholic Men

BRINGING MEN TOGETHER FROM PAGE 24

scripture and their personal experiences of what it means to live a Catholic life.

“That was what I was looking to develop,” he said. “I did a lot of research and probably spent a good year talking to men of all different religious backgrounds.”

He also studied theology at DePaul University and consulted with his mother, a retired psychologist, who is active in the Church and has a master’s in theology.

“The experience of attending and establishing men’s ministries in other parishes has given me a deeper appreciation for the rich diversity of faith in our Catholic-Christian tradition,” he says. “Spiritually, it has opened my eyes to the reality of ‘God with us’ through relationships.”

In 2008, he returned to St. Jerome with what he had learned and began a Men’s Ministry that was so successful men from other parishes came for the spiritual fellowship. Then, he began to help create similar programs in other churches.

The format is simple. The meeting is 90 minutes long with 15 minutes of social time for coffee and doughnuts. After an opening prayer, the men share their “God sightings” from the previous week. The weekend Gospel is read, followed by a scriptural exegesis designed to help men understand its context. Then, there is a period of reflection.

“This is designed to bring out the spiritual meaning and connect the Gospel to your everyday life,” he said.

The men break up into small groups and discuss a number of questions that explore their personal experiences of God in their lives.

“Men have to think and reflect on their inner life with God,” he said. “When I write the questions, I focus on what the Gospel means for me and what life experiences the men may have relative to that Gospel reading.”

The entire group reconvenes, and the discussion leaders share what was said in their groups.

“It’s amazing what you hear,” he says. “When you have career problems or your wife of 30 years gets sick, or your child is experiencing anxiety, who do you turn to for support if you do not have solid, faith-based relationships with other men?”

He develops materials for the weekly sessions, which he sends to about 45 groups in the United States and Canada. He generally is at work developing three parish groups at a time, and he recently received a call from a man in Nova Scotia who saw his website and said, “I’ve been looking to do something like this.”

“I also have a lot of support,” he says. “There’s a SWAT team of guys from St. Mary if I need help in any way. They’ll go to

a parish and give a witness talk, attend breakfasts and invite other Catholics.”

Bob is humble about the success of his efforts and says, “I’m not interested in titles or taking credit. When I go help a bunch of guys at 6 am every week...and a year or two goes by, and there are 30 guys in the parking lot, that’s not me. It’s the Holy Spirit.”

Since 2012, he has also been doing spiritual direction after four years of training at the Mercy Center in Madison.

A resident of Newtown, he and his wife Brenda have a son Nico and daughter Isabella. Several years ago, he established a Men’s Ministry at St. Rose of Lima and is currently active in one at Sacred Heart Church in Southbury.

“This is about sharing experiences and how this faith thing is working for you,” he said. “Do you struggle with being a better dad or husband or community member? Do you wish you had men in your life you could turn to when things get tough, men who are on the same faith journey? I have never met a man who was not looking for deeper meaning in his life. We have this hunger for God that never stops, and Men’s Ministry brings men into a healthy community where they can experience their faith.”

(For more information, visit [www.mensministryusa.com](http://www.mensministryusa.com) or email: [bob@mensministryusa.com](mailto:bob@mensministryusa.com))

FINDING CHRIST FROM PAGE 23

son, but you have to have that weekly contact and touch base with one another,” he says. “Just like the early disciples went out and came back and talked about their week, it reminds you of what you could be doing better to let people know God loves them. You can’t just sit back and take a pass. It is like a weekly examination of conscience.”

Jim and Cindy made their Cursillo weekend in 1989, and since that time it has been a fundamental part of their lives, doing what is referred to as “Fourth Day” work (after the three-day Cursillo weekend). They group, giving witness talks and attend Christian leadership training. They encourage Cursillistas who are no longer active in the movement to contact Jim at [Bruno355@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Bruno355@sbcglobal.net) about reviving their

commitment.

Cursillo, which is a lay movement, is under the auspices of the bishop. Deacon Dan O’Connor was recently named Spiritual Advisor of the Cursillo in Christianity Movement to a five-year appointment by Bishop Caggiano, succeeding Deacon Tom Masaryk.

“Cursillo, which is open to other Christian faith groups, is missionary oriented,” Deacon O’Connor said. “It’s about building the Body of Christ one person at a time. The people you are going to meet are reasonably nice people who want to become better people.”

Deacon O’Connor, who is assigned to Holy Name of Jesus Church in Stratford, made his Cursillo weekend in 2004, and even before then, he had joined

the weekly Cursillo prayer group with seven other men in Newtown, where he lives.

“The ‘grouping’ keeps me there because you have the opportunity to help people understand where they are in life and how they can be better connected to God,” he says. “This ongoing connection after the Cursillo weekend lets men and women share their journey and is one of the key things that has kept me active. And as a clergy, it is something I see as a ministry.”

The beauty of Cursillo, Deacon O’Connor says, is that it gives him opportunities to pursue what he calls “extemporaneous ministries,” or “a ministry right in front of you.”

“When you see something, you do something,” he says, and thereby give witness to your faith and help others move closer to Christ.

# Catholic Schools

## OLFCA appoints Mary Ann Fleming as principal

Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Academy (OLFCA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Mary Ann Fleming as the principal of the Pre-K through 8 grade school.

Mrs. Fleming brings a great deal of expertise with her as she begins her role as principal at OLFCA which include, special education intervention, budget planning, strategic operations, and pandemic leadership. She is eager to meet and join her new community and learn about their great strengths. She expressed her commitment to the school and said, "I know Fatima is a special place. I look forward to meeting the faculty and families over the next few weeks, and as I get to know them, we can work together to ensure that the mission of OLFCA is being carried out."

Mrs. Fleming has called the Diocese of Bridgeport her home for the last 15 years at St. Joseph School in Danbury. She previously taught third-grade, middle school social studies, English and was named assistant principal there. Mrs. Fleming's assistant principal responsibilities included daily operations, communication amongst the faculty, performing

classroom observations and teacher evaluations. As an assistant principal she was closely tied to the parents and the school community.

Father Reginald Norman is enthusiastic about the upcoming school year and welcomes Mrs. Fleming to the school and parish community. Father Norman stated, "We are elated that Mrs. Fleming accepted the position. Her energy and vision align with the Fatima values, and we will only grow better with her leadership." Mrs. Fleming is committed to keeping the school's motto, "Service Above Self" in daily practice, while discovering new ways to expand Christian values within the greater Wilton community. Her skills as a leader will

**"I know Fatima is a special place. I look forward to meeting the faculty and families over the next few weeks, and as I get to know them, we can work together to ensure that the mission of OLFCA is being carried out."**

serve the Fatima Faculty and students well.

Dr. Louis Howe, Jr. recently commented on Our Lady of Fatima's Catholic Academy Facebook page as they announced her appointment, "I worked with her for two years and you are getting a real gem. We will miss her greatly, but I know she will serve your community as a great leader."

*(For more information about Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Academy, visit [www.olfacademy.org](http://www.olfacademy.org) or contact*



**MARY ANN FLEMING**

*the school's office at 203.762.8100.)*

### About Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Academy

Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Academy is co-educational, National Blue Ribbon School offering a Pre-Kindergarten 3 through Grade 8 education model. The Academy's Personalized Approach to Learning blends classroom and small group instruction with technology to provide learning that is fluid and flexible based on the ability of the student. Multi-age, child-centered classrooms offer continuous learning. OLFCA's faith-based environment nurtures the whole child and emphasizes strong moral values and respect for self and others.

Registration for 2021-2022 is now open. School tour and other information are available on the school's website, [www.olfacademy.org](http://www.olfacademy.org). The Academy is located at 225 Danbury Road, Wilton CT 06897.

*(For more information, contact Principal Mary Ann Fleming at [mafleming99@olfcatholic.org](mailto:mafleming99@olfcatholic.org).)*



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# Institute for Catholic Formation

## Bishop re-imagines the Leadership Institute

The Leadership Institute, founded out of the fourth general synod, has spent the last five years encouraging parish leaders and faith formation coordinators to reimagine formation.

Now, it seems, those who reimagine are, themselves, being reimaged.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has announced plans to rename The Leadership Institute as The Institute for Catholic Formation, effective September 19, 2021. The date coincides with the national celebration of Catechetical Sunday, which will be celebrated in parishes across the country.

“This change celebrates the growth of the original ideas on which The Leadership Institute was founded,” the bishop said. “Namely, the establishment of a school without a wall that would encourage parish ministry leaders to participate in life-long formation. Since its inception, the Institute has become much more than that. This name recognizes that accomplishment and more clearly defines the role of the Institute.”

In addition, the name change will help the faithful understand the role of the Institute in their own faith development. “Catholic formation” is a more appropriate title for all that the Institute accomplishes.

Initially funded by a single donor’s commitment, the Institute has grown in its breadth and depth, from its original outreach to ministry leaders and pastors to all the faithful. As other institutes are formed in the diocese, The Institute for Catholic Formation will focus on the myriad of formation opportunities to catechists, parents, Catholic school teachers, liturgical ministers, couples wishing to get married, and more.

The logo and website will be retained from The Leadership Institute.

### Lifelong Formation

When the Institute was founded, a concerted effort was made to avoid formation programs that had a beginning and an end. In the early days, Institute staff looked at more than 50 dioceses around the country to see how leaders were being formed. The team doing the research concluded that any program that had stages of formation (level one, level two, etc.) should be avoided, as should programs that ended in certificates, giving the impression that a person’s formation was complete.

Instead, *An Invitation to Lifelong Formation* was published in 2017, calling on all parishes to use the indicators and recommendations to envision the day when formation in a parish was not done in stages (usually tied to sacraments), rather a lifelong process, engaging the faithful in the life, mission and ministry of the parish.

Those indicators and recommendations will be updated as the Institute expands to make sure they consider the new context of faith formation in a post-pandemic Church.

### A Larger Audience

When it started, The Leadership Institute’s primary audience included those who led parish ministries. Today, that audience includes just about everyone. Current resources include:

- Online courses for Readers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and Musicians
- Formation for catechists and Catholic school teachers
- Marriage formation for engaged couples
- Post-marriage opportunities for couples seeking to grow in their faith
- Resources for families, especially parents of young children
- Online videos, quizzes, and emails for faith formation leaders and those they teach
- Parish-based formation opportunities, such as reading groups and webinars
- Under its new name, resources

will expand to include:

- A podcast by parents for parent, offering tips for raising faith-filled children
- Resources and text alerts specific to parents
- Intentional outreach to young adults
- Working with pilot parishes for improving communications
- Accompanying parishes as they reimagine ministry to middle school and high school
- Creating post-Confirmation opportunities for young people
- Overseeing the Ambassador program as part of the diocesan year of renewal
- Assisting parishes who wish to establish or improve their bereavement ministry

Additional projects, like The Family Bible Challenge, which offers families weekly reflections and quizzes for four six-week seasons each year, and The Face of Prayer, which includes daily prayers sent each afternoon via text, will continue to be managed by the rebranded Institute. The Family Bible Challenge, which began from a grant from the John Paul II Fund for religious education and youth ministry, has now been adopted by nearly a dozen other dioceses and includes more than 15,000 families.

The Face of Prayer, founded by Bishop Caggiano in 2017, has sent more than nine million prayers since its inception. Subscribers come from eleven countries and number more than 10,000 each day.

### LEAD

In 2017, The Leadership Institute launched LEAD, an online learning platform designed to help participants complete formation online. After testing dozens of pre-packaged solutions and surveying more than 100 participants, the decision was made to create our own, proprietary system, which launched in 2019. The new platform, created from the ground up, is now used by several other dioceses and national organizations around the country and has become increasingly popular

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

# Institute for Catholic Formation

== BISHOP RE-IMAGINES FROM PAGE 27 ==

with diocesan offices looking for more creative ways to engage learners. It was especially helpful during the pandemic, when programs like marriage formation needed to shift from face-to-face formation to online.

In the 2021-2022 pastoral year, participants will see even more changes to LEAD. The LEAD Academy will launch in the coming months, allowing participants to choose from among dozens of courses to complete required formation. While core courses will still be required, participants can choose from electives or from formation opportunities they participate in at the parish to earn credits needed to continue in ministry. In addition, parishes can offer their own formation opportunities and have those count towards required credits.

## Staffing

Since 2016, The Leadership Institute has been led by Patrick Donovan. Though Donovan will continue in his role as executive director, more staff will be added in the coming months to assist with the broader scope of The Institute for Catholic Formation.

"I am very grateful to Patrick for his leadership and his enthusiasm in getting the Institute off the ground," the bishop said. "Given the budget-tightening that happened during the pandemic, we are now in a position to hire the staff required to continue the efforts Patrick began."

This year, two new team members will be added: an office administrator, who will serve as an executive secretary to Patrick Donovan and help manage the Institute, and a coordinator of young adult outreach, whose primary responsibility will be

to help parishes engage young adults.

"The most disengaged population, according to Springtide Institute, is the age group 18-40," Donovan said. "We have to do all we can to help parishes reach out to this community and stem the tide of disaffiliation. This position will focus solely on young adults."

"Down the road, I would love to find funding to hire someone specific for family ministry," Donovan added, noting that nearly every faith formation study indicates the need for early childhood formation, which is, in large part, formation for parents.

## A New Context

When Bishop Caggiano met with faith formation leaders and pastors on August 25, 2021 for a Catechetical Summit, he discussed the next challenge we face as ministry leaders.

"From the early days of the Baltimore Catechism to post-Vatican II and now to a post-pandemic Church, the content of the faith has remained the same," he told participants. "The context, however, has changed."

When children were memorizing from the Baltimore Catechism, they were supported by families and communities of faith that shared the same values as those being taught in the schools and parishes. Family life has changed.

In a post-Vatican II Church, our experience of pastoral leadership and community life has changed, the bishop noted. Certainly, with the advent of hand-held technology, when suddenly everyone had a camera, phone, and computer in their hands, our experience of

virtue has shifted.

The new context for faith formation requires us to reimagine how we reach the faithful in new and engaging ways. "This is a critical moment for us as a Church," the bishop said. "Working together with this rebranded, expanded Institute, we can use this moment to improve the ways we engage the faithful...but only if we work together."

"We are standing on the edge of something very exciting and I will not lose this moment to history," the bishop told the crowd of about 100 leaders. "It is simply too important to our future."

## To Learn More

The Institute for Catholic Formation can be found online at [www.formationreimagined.org](http://www.formationreimagined.org) or be reached via email at [institute@diobpt.org](mailto:institute@diobpt.org). ■

## About Catechetical Sunday

Catechetical Sunday is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the role that each person plays, by virtue of Baptism, in handing on the faith and being a witness to the Gospel. This year, the Church will celebrate Catechetical Sunday on September 19, 2021, and the theme is: "Say the Word and My Soul Shall be Healed." Those who the parish community has designated to serve as catechists will be called forth to be commissioned for their ministry.

(For more information and resources, see: [www.usccb.org/committees/evangelization-catechesis/leadership-institute-catechetical-sunday-2021](http://www.usccb.org/committees/evangelization-catechesis/leadership-institute-catechetical-sunday-2021).)



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# St. John Parish, Darien

## ‘Music Together’ program receives annual grant

By **KATHY-ANN GOBIN**

DARIEN—The preschool music program at St. John Church in Darien will receive an annual \$10,000 grant in honor of

kinds. The house was always full of music. You couldn’t escape it,” he fondly recalled, adding that her taste in music ran the gamut from the popular rock band The Beatles to more classi-

has sparked a musical interest in six-year-old Francis Devine.

“He has been asking for piano lessons for the past year,” said his mother, Christine Devine. “I definitely credit the Music



a faithful parishioner who loved music and children.

The grant, from the Dilenschneider family, is in honor of Martha Witucki Dilenschneider. It will enhance the established Music Together program, an internationally recognized music and movement program based on the premise that music supports all learning including social, emotional and cognitive learning.

“It’s quite generous,” said Debbie Moran, director of the preschool, about the award. “This is so wonderful because we know this is a tried-and-true program at the school that we love and it will be here for years to come thanks to the Dilenschneiders.”

Robert Dilenschneider said he and his three siblings, John, Martha and Mary, decided earlier this year to honor their parents by creating a handful of awards at various educational and other institutions that had an impact on the family.

“We came up with the idea of music,” he said. “We love music and mom loved music of all

cal fare.

“The grant enables us to enhance the program and build on it,” Moran said.

Thanks to the award, there are plans for a spring concert at the school in addition to the annual Christmas concert and Dilenschneider said, one day he would like to see the children perform at Lincoln Center, an international standard for musical excellence.

Moran anticipates that the first Spring concert will be held at the church for the pre-school and church community.

Pastor Msgr. Thomas Powers said that the program is yet another way to actively involve children in the parish by sharing what they have learned in school with the greater parish community.

“It will have an impact on the kids by instilling in these children the love of music and the ability to sing and to learn about different types of music,” said Msgr. Powers adding, that’s how seeds are planted for kids to become great musicians.

The Music Together program

Together program for helping to grow that interest in music with him.” Francis will be starting piano lessons this fall and his

**“The grant, from the Dilenschneider family, is in honor of Martha Witucki Dilenschneider. It will enhance the established Music Together program.”**

little brother, Conrad, will be starting St. John Preschool this year.

“I’m excited to start all over again with the little one,” she said. “Last year, the kids were up moving and singing and having fun together outside. They weren’t even aware they were

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

# St. John Parish, Darien

MUSIC TOGETHER FROM PAGE 29

learning. It's a very interactive experience for them. It's wonderful to see the joy on their faces and the fun they were having."

The hope is this program will continue to help children appreciate music and possibly inspire a musical career to delight all those who hear them.

"I'm thinking about the audiences the music is being played to and how they are going to be lifted up and feel better about life and that's a wonderful thing," Dilenschneider said.

"Music really helps teach youngsters to be innovative, creative and melodic," said Dilenschneider's wife, Jan who is an accomplished impressionist painter.

Both reminisced about how his parents exemplified generosity, strength and wisdom.

"I thought about my life and the people who had the biggest impact on me are my mom and dad and I wanted to make a statement on their behalf," he said. The award will continue for his lifetime.

Pastor Msgr. Thomas Powers said he is grateful to have the program funded by the Dilenschneiders.

"The fund has given us freedom to do more with enhanced music lessons," he said.

The program offers all original songs accompanied by child-size musical instruments such as shaker eggs, sticks and drums for the children to use. The children also use scarves for movement exercises that help enhance their creative expression.

"It's a wonderful program that helps students evolve their natural aptitude," said Moran, who joined the school as its new director in July but she is not a stranger to the St. John community or the music program. Before her children attended St. John, many years ago, they too, participated in a Music Together program.

"It's a wonderful program and having this grant will make it even better," Moran said. "Children are naturally musical."

The award will enable more days of music classes, more instruments and professional development and coaching for teachers.

The children learn dozens of original family-oriented songs and they have the opportunity to take instruments home to play and sing at home with their families.

investment in the children of Saint John Preschool," Devine said. "We are grateful for the Dilenschneider's generous gift and support of our preschool community."



An accompanying app is available to families for downloadable music and books with photos that are appropriate and meaningful for children of all ages.

"They are such sweet songs and they are so meaningful and capture youth development in such a sweet way," Moran said. "It's a unique component of our curriculum here."

The Music Together music program is exclusive to St. John Preschool in Darien. There are about 50 children in the preschool.

"This gift is a wonderful

Msgr. Powers said it is a delight to hear the children singing and watch them use gestures to animate the songs while jumping up and down with excitement.

"It's a joyous experience," Msgr. Powers said. "It helps the kids with their motor skills, learn music and sing together."

"The award is in memory of a woman who was a big lover of music and a faithful parishioner of St. John's and loves children and loves music," Msgr. Powers said. "It brings that all together and what Mrs. Dilenschneider would have loved." ■

# St. Vincent's/Hartford Health

## Celebrating the hospital's Catholic Identity

BRIDGEPORT—“St. Vincent's is going to celebrate and keep the Catholic heritage of this hospital forever,” says William J. Jennings, newly named president of St. Vincent's Medical Center and Hartford Healthcare Fairfield Region.

Jennings recently met with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and Deacon Patrick Toole, episcopal delegate for administration of the Diocese of Bridgeport, who is on the hospital's board, to discuss recent initiatives and the ongoing relationship between the hospital and the diocese. The long history between the two institutions continues to thrive and meet contemporary needs.

In recent weeks, hospital staff have gone to parishes in the diocese to administer COVID-19 vaccinations in addition to holding the sixth “Medical Mission at Home” to provide free healthcare and support services at the Thomas Merton Center in Bridgeport.

St. Vincent's also has a food distribution on the last Friday of the month for people in need, and a free pharmacy in Bridgeport, which fills prescriptions and gives away medication to people without insurance.

“We continue to be committed to the local community and the underserved,” Jennings said. “That's not going to change. That's our mission and the right thing to do.”

One of the key elements in the relationship between the hospital and the diocese is the St. Vincent's office of Mission Integration led by vice president Bill Hoey, who is responsible for ensuring compliance with Catholic healthcare doctrine and that the hospital adheres to the Church's ethical and religious directives. The Catholic identity is firmly established with morning and evening prayer, daily Mass that is broadcast into the patients' room, the services of full-time priest chaplains and a Catholic deacon who serves as manager of spiritual care.

Jennings, himself, is no stranger to the culture of a Catholic hospital. For six years, his boss was Sr. Mary Jean Ryan,



WILLIAM J. JENNINGS

a Franciscan Sister of Mary, when he was President of SSM St. Mary's Health Center in St. Louis, a 582-bed teaching hospital that is part of the SSM Health Care System.

“She was the founder of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary,” he said. “She's an icon in health care and made a significant impression on my career.”

Jennings also served as president of the SSM St. Louis Heart Institute, which served six hospitals. He has held executive positions with BayCare Health System in Florida and the Cookeville Regional Medical Center in Cookeville, Tenn. He received his bachelor of science degree from Miami University and his master's degree in hospital administration from Ohio State University.

In 2019, Hartford HealthCare purchased St. Vincent's and its operations from Ascension for \$250 million, making it the second largest hospital in the system after the 867-bed Hartford Hospital. It also made a commitment to capital improvements as part of the system's entry into Southwestern Connecticut. Jennings says this investment will continue to extend the mission and vision of Hartford Healthcare in the region.

St. Vincent's, which has more than 3,500 associates, includes

a licensed 473-bed community teaching hospital, and a 76-bed inpatient psychiatric facility in Westport, a multi-specialty provider group and St. Vincent's Special Needs Services.

Jennings says this means there is more access to healthcare and more experts in their fields that go beyond the walls of the hospital.

“St. Vincent's is not only growing the number of providers and areas of expertise, but is also expanding geographically, with medical office buildings in Westport, Stamford and Milford,” he said.

Recruitment of physicians was a key priority last year. New providers supported the goal of growing Hartford HealthCare's institutes in the region, which include the Cancer, Ayer Neuroscience, Connecticut Orthopaedic, Behavioral Health Network, Tallwood Kidney and Urology, and Heart & Vascular Institutes.

“In just one year, St. Vincent's successfully integrated on many levels and has made great strides toward becoming a destination center and providing new access points in the communities we serve,” Jennings said.

In addition to physician offices, there is a new surgery center in Milford; a Spine Wellness Center in Westport; a home healthcare affiliation; a diagnostic imaging partnership, and outpatient physical therapy.

“We've done a lot of recruiting, we have new access points, new expertise and a rigor about engaging the community and being present in the community,” Jennings says. “Frankly, that's one of the reasons I'm sitting here...to be the face and the engagement with the community.”

Founded in 1903 by the Daughters of Charity to serve the need and vulnerable, St. Vincent's continues to reach out to the community. One of every six patients in America is in a Catholic hospital, and they exist because of dedicated women religious, who from the mid-to-late 1800s started to build a network of Catholic hospitals across America. ■

# St. Rose of Lima

## St. Rose to celebrate ongoing leadership of Msgr. Weiss

NEWTOWN—St. Rose of Lima Parish in Newtown will celebrate the leadership of Msgr. Robert Weiss on September 26 with music, food and some lighthearted fun on the parish grounds.

The celebration grew out of the announcement that Msgr. Weiss has been granted an extension to his term as pastor by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. It will also be an occasion to celebrate his upcoming 75th birthday on September 30 and other milestones.

“There is much to celebrate as Msgr. Weiss will soon observe his 75th birthday and looks forward to his 50th anniversary as a priest in May 2023. His pastoral presence and deep faith have not only led the parish through unimaginable crisis, but have also guided the recovery process in the lives of individuals and in the parish community. For that and many other reasons, I have been pleased to grant him an extension to his term—a decision, I know, that has led to great joy in the parish,” said Bishop Caggiano.

Msgr. Weiss, who has served as pastor of St. Rose since 1999, reaches the mandatory retirement age for priests on his birthday, but he and the bishop agreed that there are many compelling reasons for him to remain at St. Rose. Ordained on May 18, 1973, Msgr. Weiss stated in the letter that he wants to celebrate his 50th anniversary as a priest which will occur in May of 2023.

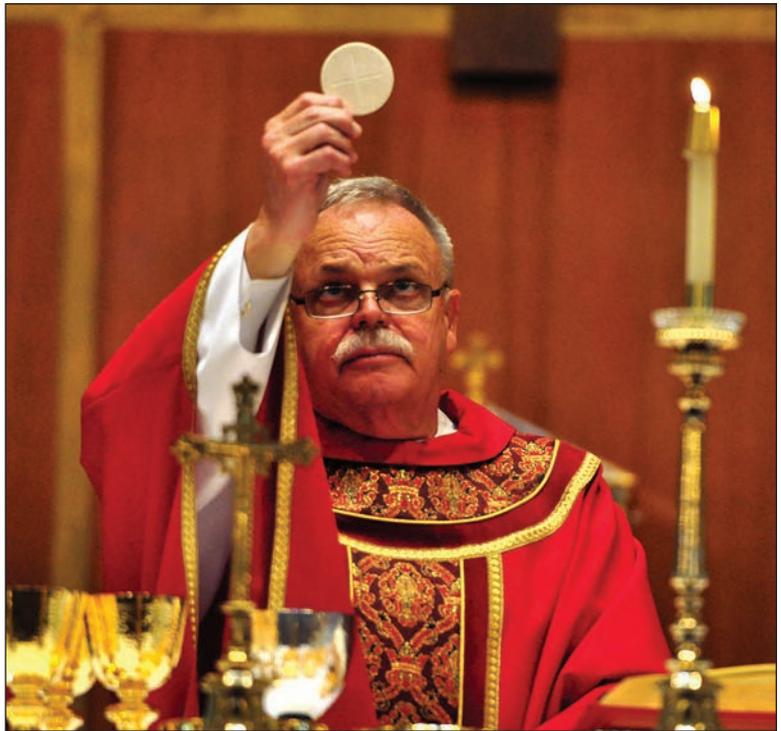
“Nothing could be more special and fulfilling than to celebrate my 50th anniversary with members of this extraordinary parish, at which I have ministered over half of my priesthood, as well as with all those who have

selflessly supported me over the last five decades,” he said.

As one of few community leaders remaining in their position since the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook School in which 26 children teachers and staff lost

forward to restoring the vibrancy and remarkable charitable works of the parish that were affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

“We had over 60 active ministries in our parish—many of which have already re-start-



**MSGR. ROBERT WEISS**

their lives, Msgr. Weiss said he feels a strong sense of obligation to help shepherd the community through the tragic event’s upcoming tenth anniversary in December 2022.

“There are still so many open wounds in our community from that day and so many events that have taken place since then that re-opened old wounds,” he said, “continuing as pastor at St. Rose allows me to be a constant voice of healing and prayer as we revisit that day and navigate the world’s refocus on us.”

Msgr. Weiss said he also looks

ed their activities,” he said.

“Bringing people back to church has been the focus for us these past few months. The parish is experiencing a re-awakening and I’m so thankful for that.”

Bishop Caggiano said Msgr. Weiss “has forged a deep bond with his parishioners has been a true spiritual father to his parish and to the people of Newtown. In his ministry we can also be assured by the power of faith to transform lives and the sacrificial giving of a priest who has walked with his people and finds true joy in serving them.”

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# Obituaries

## Sister Marie Burns

ALBANY—Sister Marie Burns died at St. Louise House, Albany, N.Y., on July 29, 2021. She was born April 5, 1933 in Trenton, N.J., to Mary Margaret (McLaughlin) and George Joseph Burns and grew up with two brothers and two sisters.

Her early education took place in local Catholic schools. On graduating from Cathedral High School in Trenton in 1951, she spent eight years as the secretary in the Chancery office for the Diocese of Trenton. She entered the Daughters of Charity from St. Anthony's Parish, Trenton, in April 1960 in Emmitsburg, Md. Following initial formation, Sister Marie served at St. Vincent's Infant Home, Timonium, Md.; Kennedy Child Center, New York, N.Y.; St. Joseph's Villa, Richmond, Va.; Labouré Center, Boston; and Seton Center, Troy, N.Y. Sister Marie then served as Executive Director at Kennedy Child Study Center in New York (1981 to 1986; where she served as the Local Community Superior from 1984 to 1986); and at the Astor Home for Children, Rhinebeck, N.Y. (1986 to 1992; where she served as the Local

Community Superior from 1986 to 1992). Sister Marie ministered as the Board Chair at St. Elizabeth Ann Residence, Troy, N.Y. (1992 to 1993); then served at Sacred Heart Residence in Cohoes, N.Y. (1993); and in administration at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, N.Y. (1993 to 2000; where she served as Local Community Superior from 1997 to 2000). Sister next served at the DePaul Provincial House in Albany (March to June 2000); Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Parish in Bayside, N.Y. (May to August 2000); Sisters Hospital in Buffalo, N.Y. (2000 to 2005); and as an educator and trustee at St. Vincent's College in Bridgeport, Conn. (2005 to 2013). In July 2013, Sister returned to Albany where she served in the ministry of prayer at St. Louise House until the time of her death.

Sister Marie's business acumen and management skills helped her to rise to the highest executive levels while continuing to promote the service of the most disadvantaged and persons with special needs. She was known as a strong force in the Daughters



**SISTER MARIE BURNS**

of Charity, who was deserving of recognition as a true servant of persons in need.

Sister Marie passed away peacefully at St. Louise House after a period of declining health. Sister Marie was predeceased by her parents; her two sisters, Patricia Guscior and Jeanne DeVaney; and her brother, Rev. John Burns, SJ. She is survived by her brother, Joseph Burns; four nieces and one nephew; many friends, and her Sisters in Community.

A Wake Service was held on August 5 at St. Louise House, 96 Menands Rd., Albany, NY. A Mass of Christian Burial followed on Aug 6 in the chapel, with interment at St. Agnes Cemetery, Albany, NY 12204.

Donations may be made, in lieu of flowers, to the Daughters of Charity, 4330 Olive Street, St. Louis, MO 63108

## St. Vincent's Swim founder passes away

TRUMBULL—Ronald J. Bianchi, age 78, of Trumbull, beloved husband of Lynette Carosella Bianchi, passed away on Saturday, July 24, 2021 with his loving family by his side. Born in Hartford on December 13, 1942, he was the son of the late Armando and Rose Santamaria Bianchi. He was a graduate of Suffield Academy and Fairfield University and held a master's degree in guidance from Fairfield University and a sixth-year degree in Educational Administration from the University of Bridgeport.

After 37 dedicated years, Ron retired as senior vice president of St. Vincent's Medical Center and the president of the St. Vincent's Medical Center

Foundation. He was instrumental in creating the Swim Across the Sound and growing it from a grassroots event into a major fund raising endeavor and was very proud of the support the Swim provided to so many people impacted by cancer. Ron raised over 350 million dollars in his career as foundation president to support the medical center.

He was well respected in the field of philanthropy. He truly loved the hospital and his role there. Throughout his lifetime, he was a member of many organizations both community and professional. He was the recipient of multiple awards from many different groups. He served on the board of the United Way and other community boards, and was a fourth degree Knight of



**RONALD J. BIANCHI**

Columbus and a district deputy.

He is survived by his beloved wife, Lyn of 53 years, and other family members.

(Memorial Contributions may be made to Swim Across the Sound c/o St. Vincent's Medical Center Foundation, 2800 Main St., Bridgeport, CT 06606. To leave an online condolence, please visit [www.abriola.com](http://www.abriola.com).)

# Sports

## Fairfield, SHU building athletic showpieces

By **DON HARRISON**

Noteworthy fact: The town of Fairfield is blessed with two Catholic institutions of higher learning: Fairfield University, founded by the Society of Jesus in 1942, and Sacred Heart University, established by the Diocese of Bridgeport in 1963 and led and staffed by the laity.

The growth of both schools through the decades borders on mind-boggling—ranging from the physical plant to academic offerings and enrollment—and now each is in the process of erecting the crown jewel of its athletic facilities. To wit:

On March 15, Sacred Heart broke ground for its \$70 million hockey and skating arena, located on its West Campus (formerly occupied by General Electric's headquarters). The 122,158-square-foot, 4,000-seat facility will serve as home for the Pioneers' NCAA Division-I men's and women's ice hockey programs and figure-skating club as well as a venue for concerts, guest lectures and other activities.

The inaugural first pucks will be dropped on a mid-January weekend in 2023, when the Sacred Heart men play host to Boston College on Saturday, Jan. 15, and the Pioneer women face Harvard the following day.

"All indications we're in great shape from the construction timetable," noted Charlie Dowd, Sacred Heart's deputy director of athletics.

Some three months later, on June 28, Fairfield U. broke ground on its \$50 million, state-of-the-art arena and convocation center, on the site of the former Alumni Hall. The 85,000-square foot, 3,500-seat structure will become the new home for the Stags' NCAA Division-I men's and women's basketball and volleyball teams, Fairfield Prep basketball, as well as a setting for convocations, concerts, lectures and community functions.

"The operative word I've used is transformational," said Paul Schlickmann, the Stags' director of athletics. "This is the finishing piece of an incredibly successful master plan, and it will have a dramatic impact on recruiting."

According to Schlickmann, the



Artist's rendering of Sacred Heart University's new hockey and skating arena.



Artist's rendering of Fairfield University's new basketball arena and convocation center.

basketball court in the new convocation center will retain the name of the late George R. Bisacca, the revered coach and athletic director who is hailed as "the father of Fairfield basketball." The Alumni Hall court was dedicated to Bisacca in November 2015.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, demolition of the 62-year-old Alumni Hall and construction of the new facility was delayed nearly a year, resulting in the projected opening being pushed back to the fall of 2022. So, this winter the Stags' men's and women's basketball games will be played at Webster Bank Arena in Bridgeport.

Sacred Heart's new hockey arena will be named for the Martire family, Frank and Marisa, who have donated \$5 million to the ambitious project. Frank Martire '69, who earned a B.S. degree in economics from the university, is executive chairman of NCR and serves as chairman of his alma mater's Board of Trustees.

C.J. Marottolo, who is beginning his 13th season as head coach of the Pioneers' men's hockey team, calls the forthcoming

on-campus facility "a dream come true for people who have a lot of passion for Sacred Heart hockey. The arena will have NHL amenities with a collegial feel."

When he succeeded Shaun Hannah as coach in 2009, SHU home games were still being played at the distant, and, according to many accounts, substandard, Milford Ice Pavilion. The shift to Webster Bank Arena was beneficial to some degree, but Marottolo recalled having to travel to the Danbury Ice Pavilion for "two home games," and, when the ice at Webster Bank was unavailable, "being forced to practice at the Wonderland of Ice."

The development of SHU's hockey arena is a collaborative among JLG Architects, the SLAM Collaborative and Dimensional Innovations. Centerbrook Architects and Planners is responsible for the design of Fairfield's new basketball facility.

Alumni and fans of both institutions can follow the construction progress of their respective new athletic showpiece at the following:

*Fairfield: FairfieldStags.com/arena.*  
*Sacred Heart: SacredHeartPioneers.com, and visit Fan Zone.*

# Local News

## Loved ones remembered at Swim memorial service

By EMILY CLARK

BRIDGEPORT—As raindrops fell early Sunday morning, over 200 people gathered at Captain’s Cove Seaport in Bridgeport for the 24th annual St. Vincent’s Swim Memorial Service to remember loved ones lost to cancer. Following Saturday’s successful Swim Across the Sound, this event, sponsored by Hartford HealthCare and St. Vincent’s Medical Center, provided families the opportunity to heal together and celebrate the beauty and contribution of each life.

“This is a poignant and emotional way to stay connected to any loved ones who have passed away,” said



Bill Hoey, vice president of mission integration for the Fairfield Region of Hartford HealthCare. “Through a combination of prayer, music, poetry and readings, it’s an incredibly pow-

erful experience of all the senses.”

Seated under a large tent on the deck at Captain’s Cove, each guest held a brilliant sunflower as bagpiper Terence Manning led a procession of the Knights of Columbus and seniors leaders from St. Vincent’s and Hartford HealthCare to begin the ceremony. In her welcoming remarks, Dianne Auger, president and CEO of St. Vincent’s Medical Center Foundation, dedicated the event to Swim founder Ron Bianchi, who passed away last year, and shared stories of the courage and love demonstrated by cancer patients and their families. Deacon Tim Bolton then offered the Invocation.

“Gracious God, we thank you for bringing us together to reflect upon and celebrate the lives of our loved ones,” said Bolton, St. Vincent’s Manager of Pastoral Care. “We call upon you, Jesus, to bring peace and consolation to all of us assembled here. May the memories of our families and friends fill our hearts with gratitude and love.”

The highlight of the service came with the reading of the names of the deceased, with each guest placing their sunflower, the memorial’s symbol of eternal life, into a large cart. As Bolton blessed the flowers, he prayed, “May these remind us of the light our loved ones bring to your heavenly Kingdom where, freed from the burdens of this life, they now dwell with you forever and ever.”

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the bagpiper and Knights of Columbus led a final procession as those sunflowers were scattered from a boat into Long Island Sound, a moving tribute and physical remembrance of the lives lost but not forgotten. ■

### DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT SEPTEMBER 5—OCTOBER 9

SEPTEMBER	YEAR
5 Rev. John E. Fay .....	1954
6 Rev. Laurence F. Flanagan.....	1985
9 Rev. Colin McKenna .....	2015
Rev. Richard Monahan .....	2010
12 Rev. Frank D. Yoia.....	1974
14 Aloysius J. Hribšek.....	2014
15 Rev. Joseph V. Rossitto.....	2004
16 Rev. William J. Conklin.....	1992
Rev. Martin Dennehy.....	2013
17 Rev. John A. Sullivan .....	1953
Rev. Robert L. Christopher .....	1958
18 Rev. Msgr. Normand A. Methé.....	2002
20 Rev. Joseph J. Maglione.....	2003
Msgr. Edward B. Karl.....	2009
23 Rev. Msgr. Edmund J. Hussey .....	1991
Rev. Frederick H. Olschefskie.....	1956
Deacon Paul Tupper .....	2013
28 Rev. Edward A. Morgan .....	1992
OCTOBER	YEAR
2 Deacon Joseph Filingeri.....	2013
Rev. Robert Morrissey.....	2014
Rev. Ralph Seraphim Rohlman .....	2017
3 Msgr. John H. Anderson .....	1967
5 Msgr. Victor Balcerak, O.F.M. Conv. ....	1960
6 Deacon William Owen Murphy .....	2017
Rev. Francis Posluszny.....	2015

# Column: Thomas Hicks



## Monasticism

### POTPOURRI

By THOMAS H. HICKS

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

Thanks to the Emperor Constantine (324-375), Christianity became the legally acknowledged religion in the Roman Empire. This came at a price for the Church. Vast numbers of people became Christians, not because they understood and accepted the Christian faith, but because it was socially advantageous to do so. The wealth, power and privilege granted to the Church was accompanied by widespread corruption.

At the same time, Roman society was characterized by decadence and futility. Many individuals came to regard the Church and Roman society as shipwrecks which had to be abandoned for the sake of one's spiritual life. This is what led to the beginning of Monasticism. Men and women withdrew into the deserts of Arabia, Egypt and Syria. The first of these was a man named Antony, who is considered to be the first monk (monk means "alone"). At the age of twenty, Antony withdrew to the desert of Egypt, where he spent eighty-five years living in solitude. He died in 356 at the age of 105. Sections of the Egyptian desert became so populated with monks they were called "cities of monks." Antony kept moving deeper into the desert to maintain his solitude.

One might ask: What was Christian about the way Antony and those who followed him lived? After all, Jesus didn't live in the desert. Jesus moved around a lot. He talked and ate with people, etc. Those who usually say these things are married, have children, have a 401K, and a marriage and a car. Jesus didn't have any of those things. We need to be open to the fact that there is a variety of ways in which people have sought to imitate Jesus, focusing on different aspects of Jesus' ministry.

Jesus did say to at least one man: "If you wish to be perfect go sell all your possessions, give the money to the poor, and you will

have treasure in heaven; then follow me" (Mt.19:21). Jesus also said: "Whoever loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Mt.10:27). Jesus even refers to someone being a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (Mt.19:12). Thus, at least in specific situations Jesus called people to give up things that in themselves are good. Jesus didn't say these things to everybody, but he did say them to particular persons. We can also recall that St. Paul urged people not to marry, to stay single, so that they can be focused on the things of the Lord (1Cor.7:27-33).

These Scriptural statements blended into what is called the Monastic life. Monasticism has lived on as a numerically small but distinguished feature of the Church's life in our own day. It is frequently said that the Monastic Orders are what the Church depends for its spiritual power. The Second Vatican Council spoke about the certain preeminence of the Monastic Orders and encouraged their growth.

Most people reach God through the medium of a married love and bringing up children and an active life fully mixed up with the things of time and the world. Many Catholics place a strong emphasis on humanitarian activities such as social justice and social work, outreach and philanthropy, respect for nature—all good things in themselves. But as Pope Francis says: "We have an inner life that cannot be neglected." We can learn from Monasticism something valuable about inner spirituality. At the heart of Monasticism are solitude and a certain separation from the world.

Solitude, being alone, is at the heart of Monastic life, and it is an important component at the heart of the Christian life. Solitude is the context for prayer. The challenge for most people is how to bring about this solitude? How do we make

solitude happen? People answer that question in different ways.

Monastic spirituality involves a certain separation from the world. There are great forces of truth, goodness and beauty in the world. However, the world also involves a set of servitudes. The Cure of Ars used to say: "How pitiable are the poor people out in the world." There is a whole network of needs and demands which worldly life imposes on people.

Again, here are some Scriptural verses: 1John 2:16: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father, but from the world." In Romans 12:2 Paul states that the Christian must not be conformed to this world." And there is the famous Mt.6:24: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." According to the Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, the contemplative Orders tell us about the importance of a certain counter-cultural perspective in our lives, living with a certain contradiction to the spirit of the age.

The wisdom of Monasticism also includes a devotion to reading, as well as detachment and renunciation in some form, a certain dying to self.

When I received my Ph.D., to give thanks and relax, I traveled to Kentucky to spend a week at the Trappist Abbey of Gethsemane—the Monastic Monastery Thomas Merton made famous. Twenty years later, when I received the designation "Professor Emeritus," I made the trip again. The number of monks at the monastery had remained solid. I treasured the week that involved Gregorian Chant, chanting psalms several times a day, silent meals, solitary walks, hours of reading, times of manual labor (I mowed lawns), the *Salve Regina* at the end of the day. There was the overall silence. I have spent time at other Monastic Monasteries beside Gethsemane, where there was much the same.

Many people do not respond to elements involved in Monastic seeking a deeper experience of God. The elements go against the ideas of most fellow human beings. Still, the Monastic life fascinates a number of people in the secular world. It appeals to the young. ■

# Catholic Cemeteries

## In wife's memory, he brings beauty to the cemetery

GREENWICH—Three times a week, Jim Colica visits the grave of his wife of 23 years, Kathy Hanson, who died last year at 66 years old. Her monument at St. Mary-Putnam Cemetery has the inscription, "Forever united in love," with two entwined hearts, and is surrounded by a bountiful array of colorful flowers that attract butterflies. Jim wanted her grave to represent the loving, caring and joyful woman she was and be an enduring tribute to their love.

In her memory, he had a statue of the Blessed Mother and the infant Jesus erected nearby with a bench for the benefit of all the families who have loved ones laid to rest there, so they can spend time in quiet reflection and prayer.

"Kathy's gravesite reflects who she was for all to see—free flowing gardens, butterflies and joy," he said. "She is the most beautiful person, inside and out, I have ever known. There was no pretense, and she was forever young in spirit, a joy to all who met her...and they never forgot her smile and joyous nature."

The retired senior vice president-Global Risk Management for GE Capital, Jim now serves as the vice chairman of the board of the newly formed corporation of Catholic Cemeteries of the Diocese of Bridgeport LLC.

For him, Catholic cemeteries are meant to create an environment of prayer and personal memories of those who have gone before us, a peaceful place of repose to pay our respects to family and friends...just as it does for him and his late wife Kathy.

"I wanted her grave to represent who she was here on Earth, what she liked and how she was," Jim says. "To me a cemetery is much more than a place where people are laid to rest. It is a lifelong representation of what those people were, and it should represent their spirit."

Because he wants others to have the same experience, the statue of Mother Mary faces toward the entire area where Kathy's grave is, for all the others buried there.

"The bench is for prayer and reflection for that section of the cemetery," he says. "This was by design. It's not just for Kathy nor me when I am next to her, but for everyone remembering their lost

loved ones."

Growing up in an Italian family in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, Jim says that paying respects to deceased family members and friends was a regular part of life for him as a

his "Brooklyn buddy," he joined the advisory board for Catholic Cemeteries in 2020, and this past July became vice chairman of the board of the newly formed Fairfield County Catholic Cemeteries of the Diocese of Bridgeport LLC.



KATHY HANSON AND JIM COLICA

boy. Many relatives were buried at St. John's Cemetery in Middle Village, Queens, and later his parents were laid to rest at St. Charles/Resurrection Cemeteries in Farmingdale, N.Y.

He believes that cemeteries can also create a compassionate community for people who are grieving lost loved ones, and very often he encounters others who share their memories with him.

"We are all there together, remembering people we love. And all those people interred there have a life story, a family and friends," he says. "When you're there, you want to feel that someone cared to memorialize them, as you look at the place where they're laid to rest."

Jim, who is a member of St. Mary Parish in Greenwich, was also responsible for the refurbishment of the St. Mary-Putnam Cemetery office known as the "Cottage." The 100-year-old structure resembles a castle, and Kathy became enamored with castles during a trip to Ireland they made to attend a wedding. Renovations to the historic building were done in her memory, and later this year there will be a dedication ceremony.

Throughout his life, and especially in retirement, Jim Colica has been committed to philanthropic work and helping others.

At the invitation of Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, whom Jim calls

After a 27-year career as a senior officer at GE Capital, he retired in 2010 and has devoted his time and efforts to charitable causes and activities supporting mental health services for children, inner city education, services for blind and disabled veterans, disaster recovery efforts in the United States and abroad in addition to diocesan outreach services.

A graduate of Fordham University, he served as a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army from 1969 to 1971 and later began his professional career as a CPA with Peat Marwick Mitchell & Co. in New York.

For more than 20 years he has been on the board of the Child Guidance Center, a mental health agency for children and adolescents in lower Fairfield County. He has also served on the board of HEART 911, an organization of police officers, firefighters, construction trade workers and surviving families of those killed on September 11, 2001, which offers assistance in times of natural disasters.

The father of three children, Jim has five grandchildren. Reflecting on his life, he says, "From a very early time, there has been something in my DNA. I don't know what it is, but I have been always trying to make a difference and help others in any way I can." ■

# Catholic Cemeteries

## He always prays for his deceased loved ones

DANBURY—Almost 90 years ago, Sam Jacobellis moved from the Bronx to Danbury with his family, in pursuit of a promise that his father could find work during the Great Depression. Sam was one-year-old, and Danbury offered new hope for his family.

“I am Italian all the way through,” he says. When his father came through Ellis Island in 1908, the immigration clerk misspelled the family name of Gacobelli and made the “G” a “J” and the “i” an “s,” he says.

Sam, who turned 90 on February 12, has been long retired from his job in the auto parts business. Now, four or five days a week, he goes to St. Peter Cemetery to visit the grave where his parents, his brother and sister-in-law, and his wife of 67 years, Kristine, rest in peace.

Sam married Kristine in St. Joseph Church on August 2, 1952, while he was on a two-week furlough before shipping out to Korea to fight in the war after basic training in Arkansas.

“I say my prayers and I take care of the area around the grave,” he says. “My dad passed away in 1967, and that’s when we bought the plot. My mother and brother took care of the arrangements. We have a big beautiful bronze-colored stone and a nice statue of St. Joseph in the middle of it.”

It is appropriate because St. Joseph was a favorite saint of the Jacobellis family. As a child, Sam attended St. Joseph School in Danbury, where the Sisters of Mercy taught him for eight years. And ever since he was a toddler, he and his family have belonged to St. Joseph Church, where he and Kristine were married and where they had her Funeral Mass.

“I lost my wife a little over a year ago. She had just celebrated her 90th birthday on January 6, and thirteen days later she was gone,” Sam recalls. “We had a Mass at St. Joseph’s and the church was packed.”

Both he and Kristine spent their retirement years together. In 1996, he left the auto parts business and had hip replacements, and she retired from her secretarial job at Western Connecticut



**SAM JACOBELLIS**

State University. After Kristine was diagnosed with cancer, Sam cared for her with the help of an aide who came in the morning to assist her and make sure she took her medication.

“Time goes by,” he says. “I’ve had a good life and raised a nice family with Kristine.”

They had a son who lives in Danbury and a daughter who works in Boston. Sam is especially proud of his two grandsons, one who graduated from College of the Holy Cross with a degree in accounting and is now working for PricewaterhouseCoopers

and the other who graduated from Dartmouth and is about to begin a job at Morgan Stanley.

Sam visits the family grave regularly to pray for his deceased family members.

“It is a very nice cemetery,” he said. “It is well maintained and the staff over there has been helpful. If I go into the office, I talk to Barbara, who is very accommodating and will help me no matter what I need, or if I want some work done around our plot.”

He says that when he passes, he will be buried with his beloved wife Kristine. ■

# Catholic Cemeteries

## Ensuring Catholic Cemeteries fulfill their mission

FAIRFIELD—From the time he was a student at Northwestern University in Chicago, Bill Damm has loved history, and in later years, he even embarked on a project to write an account of his father's service in the Merchant Marines during World War II.

It is this compelling curiosity of a self-proclaimed "history buff" that has prompted him to spend time in cemeteries, examining graves of veterans and the children who perished during the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1917.

So it's no small coincidence that he was recently named treasurer of the board of the Catholic Cemeteries of the Diocese of Bridgeport LLC.

"I am a big history buff and cemeteries have a lot of history," he says. "I also find them to be peaceful places to go and reflect. They have a religious significance as well."

Bill, who has a master's in business from Harvard Business School, is a senior finance and human resources executive with experience in financial planning, analysis, budgeting and management reporting. Before becoming an independent compensation consultant, he was senior director of compensation for News America Marketing, a division of News Corp.

He and his wife Laura have three children and belong to St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Fairfield.

Several years ago, Bill met Anne McCrory, the chief legal and real estate officer of the Diocese of Bridgeport at a Lauralton Hall event, and the discussion turned to cemeteries.

"We were talking about the Church and she mentioned cemeteries, and I told her about my interest in them," he recalled. "And she said, 'I've got the job for you.'"

From that encounter, he was invited by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano to join an advisory board for Catholic Cemeteries, and this past July, a separate LLC was established, and the advisory board was reconstituted as a managing board. Bill became treasurer with Deacon



**BILL AND LAURA DAMM**

Patrick Toole, the diocese's episcopal delegate for administration, as chairman.

Dean Gestal of Greenwich is the director of Catholic Cemeteries, a position he took at the request of Bishop Caggiano after retiring from a successful Wall Street career and working with start-ups in the dot.com world.

"Bishop Frank wanted the cemeteries to be managed in a more professional and businesslike way without losing sight of the religious mission," Bill said. "He picked Dean, and the middle of last year, the next step was to carve the cemeteries out into a separate legal entity. Bylaws were drawn up, and we established an executive committee on the board."

He said the board's job is to advocate and ensure there are adequate controls, along with internal business controls, including regular audits.

"We need to make sure that the financial management of the cemeteries is sound," he said. "In addition, we have to fulfill our mission and serve the needs of Catholics in Fairfield County and make the best possible final resting place for people who are interred. We have to ensure that financial stability and pastoral needs are fulfilled. Our parishes are important stakeholders."

The board is committed to a high level of service, he says.

"People want to know when they bury their loved ones in a Catholic cemetery that the grounds are being maintained, and there are good business practices," he says. "We have a

lot of work to do, but we believe we have the right folks in place, and we are building a professional and competent management team to oversee the cemeteries."

He also emphasizes the necessity for pre-need planning rather than at-need planning. That way there is no confusion or urgency when a loved one dies.

Of course, his fascination and love of cemeteries is still a motivating factor for him.

"To me, they are really important places to go and learn, to understand your own past and the history of the area," he says. "It is a great place to connect with those who have gone before us."

When he and Laura visited his hometown of Chicago recently, they went to St. Mary Catholic Cemetery.

"The Archdiocese of Chicago has some gorgeous cemeteries, and it was so cool to see where my grandparents and great-grandparents are buried."

Both of his parents are buried in a military cemetery 50 miles south of the city.

Laura's parents were laid to rest in a cemetery in New Brunswick, NJ, with other family members, and on occasion, he was wandered through the monuments to look at the graves of Civil War dead and the children who died during the Spanish Flu pandemic...and even the section where the family of the founders of Johnson & Johnson are buried.

"You walk around, and the more you look, the more you learn," he says. ■

# Nuestra Voz

## Santa Ana celebra 107 años de permanencia en Norwalk

Por MARICARMEN GODOY

NORWALK—El Club Santa Ana (Saint Ann) albergó este fin de semana a más de cinco mil personas que vinieron a celebrar la fiesta patronal de Santa Ana, patrona de los inmigrantes de Norwalk por más de cien años. Donde año con año antes de la fiesta popular han sacado en procesión la imagen de la madre de la Virgen María y la han llevado a la Misa junto a los cientos de fieles en la iglesia de Saint Thomas the Apostle ubicada sobre la East Avenue.

Celebración que regresa después de haber sido suspendida el año pasado por la pandemia y que mueve a más de cuatrocientos voluntarios que cocinan, preparan refrescos y bisutería para venderlos en los quioscos y además en la sección de los juegos (carnaval) para entretener a los niños y sus familias.

El único gasto que paga el Festival, acorde con Vinny Scicchitano, vicepresidente del Club Saint es la cuadrilla de policías. “Todo lo demás es trabajo donado de los miembros”, dijo.

En este 2021 el Club Saint Ann de Norwalk celebra 107 años su fiesta patronal. Club que fue fundado en 1914, en apoyo a los inmigrantes italianos que cruzaban el océano Atlántico para empezar una nueva vida en América.

“El St. Ann es un club social italiano que ayudó a los inmigrantes cuando llegaban a los Estados Unidos con vivienda, trabajo y lo que necesitaran”, dijo Scicchitano, cuyos miembros actuales son en su mayoría de cuarta y tercera generación.

Vinny Scicchitano contó todos los pormenores de los preparativos y a dónde va el dinero recaudado y cómo sus 400 socios trabajan gratuitamente para juntar más de cien mil dólares y repartirlos a los adultos mayores, al consejo de jóvenes y a la organización de derechos humanos.

Vinny, dueño de la mecánica Accurate Auto Repair de Norwalk, es un miembro de segunda generación italiana de Norwalk y viene siendo parte del Club Saint Ann durante más de 30 años; su abuelo fue uno de los



fundadores del club, su padre un miembro activo y él fue presidente por algunos periodos.

Cuando el Club celebró su centenario en el 2014, recaudó dinero para proporcionar becas para estudiantes de secundaria. Y en este 2021 siguen con la tradición. Dinero que sale del torneo de golf, así como cenas con bailes y del voluntariado del viernes, sábado y domingo en el Festival Fiesta en Norwalk en honor a Santa Ana del 23 al 25 de julio.

La fiesta de Santa Ana, fecha del santoral católico se celebra el 26 de julio, por lo que el club organiza el festival el fin de semana más cercano a esa fecha. El club ha celebrado la fiesta durante más de 57 años en Norwalk.

“Estamos tratando de llevar la tradición de nuestros antepasado y de seguir contribuyendo en la comunidad”, dijo Vinny.

Como parte del festival dentro de su entretenimiento en vivo, hay la presentación de bandas musicales locales, paseos para niños y aperitivos hechos a mano, pizza, pan y pasteles. Incluyendo chorizo y pimientos frescos, ziti con albóndigas, ensalada caprese y rollatini de berenjena. Preparados dentro de la cocina del Club con el apoyo de una cuadrilla de voluntarios.

Acorde con Vinny, cualquier residente de Norwalk puede ser miembro del Club Saint Ann, pero para ser Presidente de la Junta Directiva es necesario ser de ascendencia italiana porque así lo determinan los estatutos de la institución.

Cada miembro debe cubrir una membresía anual que tiene un costo de cien dólares y tiene acce-

so a todas las actividades del Club. La mayoría de sus socios organizan cenas, fiestas, y encuentros amistosos que deben ser pagados con dinero de sus propios bolsillos, y los mismos miembros se encargan de la cocina, limpieza y cuidados sin derecho a salario sino como parte del trabajo voluntario para apoyar en los programas y gastos del club.

“Necesitamos pagar los impuestos anuales sobre la propiedad del edificio del club, los gastos de mantenimiento de luz, agua, calefacción, etc., además sostenemos varios programas en apoyo a la comunidad. Necesitamos alrededor de 150.000 mil dólares cada año y eso solo se puede lograr con el trabajo donado”, repuso Vinny.

Anualmente cada socio debe tomar dos fechas a su cargo para trabajar sin salario a favor del Club. Por ejemplo, Vinny Scicchitano decidió tomar las riendas de dos noches de fiesta que incluía cena y baile. Entonces, formó una cuadrilla de voluntarios que le apoyaron en la compra de los productos para cocinar. Luego, delegó a otros voluntarios en calidad de meseros, anfitriones y personal de limpieza. Ellos, en cambio, arreglaron las mesas con manteles y flores, pusieron en orden la limpieza de los baños y organizaron el tráfico vehicular.

Horas antes de la fiesta, Vinny sazónó la comida con el apoyo de un chef jubilado, horneó pan y se preocupó que en la sección de vinos y refrescos esté todo surtido para el convivio. “No fue una cena difícil de preparar. Solo hicimos pasta, ensalada, pan, salchichas, pollo al horno para repartir a 250 personas”, repuso. ■

# Vocations

## ‘Seeing’ a priest

By FATHER CHRIS FORD

Priests get a lot of strange looks. Some of them, admittedly, we deserve. But, deserved or not, as soon as we walk into a restaurant, or store, or doctor’s office in our clerical attire, we can immediately feel eyes converging on us. Truth be told, it can feel a little unsettling at times. Until you realize that, while these eyes may physically be looking at you, the hearts behind them are not looking for you.

At the heart of Christianity is the Incarnation. The beauty of the Incarnation is that it shows the extent to which God loves us. God the Father did not want us to just hear about salvation, like a story passed down from generation to generation that sounds nice but doesn’t really have any impact in my life. Rather, God wanted us to experience salvation by experiencing His very presence among us. Even Good Friday and Easter Sunday find their meaning in this truth: God didn’t just appear among us. In the person of Jesus Christ, God truly dwells among us.

This presence of Jesus brings a concreteness to the reality that God is love—something that, without the Incarnation, would remain just a nice platitude. But in the light of the Incarnation, God’s love is revealed as an integral part of human history and an inescapable truth of our own lives.

When Jesus returned to heaven, He left the apostles with this promise: “Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” What a particularly strange moment to have uttered these words! What confusion there must have been in the hearts and minds



FATHER CHRIS FORD

of the disciples when they pondered the apparent discord between the words and the actions of Jesus at that particular moment. Of course, Jesus’ teachings and impact would always be felt among them, that much was certain. But Jesus didn’t just have a spiritual presence among us in mind. His promise to the Apostles was much greater: He was assuring them that the Incarnation, the moment of God dwelling in the midst of humanity, was to endure beyond what they were capable of imagining.

The priesthood is at the service of this very promise. Jesus knows that a spiritual or virtual presence is no substitute for a real presence, for the physical and tangible closeness of God. The gift of the priesthood guarantees that this presence will, in fact, endure to the end of the age. In fact, it is for this reason that priests live in our parishes, rather than commuting in from out of town:

to be the very symbol that Christ dwells among His people, not just around them.

Of course, nowhere is this reality more present than the Eucharist, the true and real presence of Christ, brought to us by the ministry of the priest. Jesus came to dwell among us as the ultimate message of God’s love for us. In the Eucharist, that presence abides, always available and always present. It is a constant reminder that, in the eyes of the Father, we are beloved and delighted in. In this way, communion becomes a new form of communication, transmitting to our hearts the reality of God’s closeness, of His presence and involvement in our lives.

This is what our hearts seek. This is the reality that is entrusted to the Church through the gift of the priesthood. And this is what our eyes should see whenever we see a priest—no matter where he is. ■

## Does the cemetery have payment plans?

Yes, we have many flexible payment plans for burial lots, crypts, and monuments. The Advisors at the Catholic Cemeteries Office of the Diocese of Bridgeport can answer your questions and assist in planning your future arrangements needs.

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# Local News

## Bishop discusses fundamental quality for priesthood

By JOE PISANI

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano offered a spiritual formula for sanctity in the priestly life at a recent “Serra Meets”, saying the fundamentally essential quality for the priesthood and anyone called by the Holy Spirit to ministry is something St. Paul urges in his First Letter to the Thessalonians: pray without ceasing.

“Praying without ceasing is not something you do. It’s a disposition of life. It’s a disposition of the heart in a man seeking to say ‘yes’ to the call to the priesthood,” Bishop Caggiano said. “My contention is that this quality is non-negotiable. This quality is what you and I need to pray that we see in the heart of every Christian, every priest and every seminarian who wishes to serve the Lord.”

Bishop Caggiano’s talk was part of the a monthly series of virtual lectures from leading clergy and experts on the topic of Catholic vocations. The series is sponsored by the U.S. Council of Serra International.

Among those who heard his talk were members of St. Serra Vocations Ministry of Bridgeport, which has as its mission encouraging and promoting vocations, and supporting priests, deacons and religious, and inspiring candidates discerning the priesthood, diaconate and religious life. For information about the diocesan club, email Telecom0711@gmail.com or call 203.249.3586.

The bishop praised the Serrans for their work and said, “You have my prayerful support for the tremendous ministry that you provide the Church as you pray for good, holy and healthy vocations and support our seminarians in so many concrete and important ways.” He also urged them to pray for those already ordained that they remain “good, holy, healthy, joyful men of faith.”

He asked the Serrans to pray daily that priests and seminarians, religious and laypeople in ministry seek the disposition of heart to pray without ceasing, which he said is not something unattainable or impractical.



“Paul said exactly what he meant every time he meant to say it,” the bishop said. “So, when he said to pray without ceasing, he meant it. It is attainable if we are clear as to what it is he is asking.”

This necessary quality in the life of seminarians and priests is not just saying prayers because it is presumed that both individual personal and communal prayer should be part of the life of every Christian and every seminarian, he said.

“It is to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. It is the relationship you have with the person of Jesus who will keep you on the path of true holiness and allow you to find him,” he said. “Praying without ceasing is the disposition of the heart that forces someone always and everywhere to keep his eyes fixed on Jesus and on his holy word and on his holy presence in the Church...and put everything else in its proper place.”

Bishop Caggiano said a problem that defines our society is that young people are “so overwhelmed, so over-extended, so overloaded, so overstimulated and so over-informed” that they stop because they can’t do any more.

“This is the modern world trying to anesthetize the restlessness of the human heart with a lot of activity,” he said.

He also told the Serrans that when they pray for vocations,

they should be praying for quality rather than quantity.

He said a “good, healthy, holy seminarian will become a good, healthy, holy joyful priest.”

“He has to be, in my terminology, comfortable in his own skin,” the bishop said. “That means he seeks an authentic moral life, a life of integrity and true freedom. He is one who is willing to live the truth, one who does not seek isolation, but community...he is a living example to others of a life that is integrated and has integrity. He is a man who will seek a personal relationship with Jesus, love the Lord with a fervent heart and love the Church. When you meet a priest or a seminarian like that, you will know.”

He urged the Serrans to pray that seminarians always choose the better over the good. “Otherwise, they can become distracted by a lot of good things, and it is better to sit in the restlessness of their lives and learn to hear the voice of Jesus,” he said. “It’s only the restlessness of the heart that allows them to let go of everything else because once they have what matters, everything else is different.”

To explain his theme, he gave the audience an image of Jesus and the apostles at the Last Supper.

“Pray that our seminarians, our priests and our bishops will accept the offer to be true friends with the Lord Jesus,” he said. ■