

FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

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Pilgrimage

Christ Heals the Human Heart

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

More than 1,100 faithful throughout Fairfield County turned out on November 5 at St. Augustine Cathedral for the special Mass to consecrate the Diocese of Bridgeport to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

They sang and prayed in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Portuguese and Polish.

They were young and old, residents of the cities and suburbs, individuals and entire families who joined in praise and worship.

More than 50 members of the Diocesan Youth Choir filled the historic cathedral with song beginning with "There's a

Widness in God's Mercy," and concluding with the recessional, "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee."

Priests heard an estimated 1,000 confessions in a large white tent set up outside the massive gray granite of the cathedral walls.

Throughout the afternoon people recited the Rosary, said the Divine Mercy Chaplet, sat for Eucharistic Adoration and offered silent prayer at the outdoor shrine under a crisp, crystalline sky.

"This is a remarkable day of grace and blessing for the Diocese of Bridgeport," Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said in thanking all those who attended.

It was a day called for by Bishop Caggiano on May 19, 2015, at the conclusion of the Synod Celebration Mass when he entrusted the diocese to the protection of the Blessed Mother as it seeks change and renewal.



While 800 filled the cathedral for the Mass and consecration, more than 350 watched through live streaming in the Kolbe Cathedral High School auditorium. After kneeling in the cathedral for the consecration prayer, the bishop quickly processed over to the auditorium where the people greeted him with excited applause. The gathering then knelt on the tile floor as the bishop led them in the prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus:

"We proclaim today and every day your full sovereignty over the Diocese of Bridgeport. We



ON THE COVER

A DIOCESE RENEWED—More than 1,100 men and women filled St. Augustine Cathedral for the recent Diocesan Pilgrimage and Special Mass to Consecrate the Diocese of Bridgeport to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

PHOTO BY AMY MORTENSEN

ABOVE THE FOLD—Once again the Saint Augustine Medals of Service ceremony proved to be one of the happiest days of the year in the diocese, with individuals and couple beings recognized for their faithful witness and service.

PHOTO BY MICHELLE BABYAK

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Happy
Thanksgiving



Diocesan Pilgrimage

consecrate our diocese and our entire lives, actions, trials, joys and sufferings to your Most Sacred Heart.”

In his homily, the bishop said that most of us “live with divided hearts” that only God can heal, and that we are “drawn to false pleasures and promises that get

us into trouble.” He said the consecration Mass gives people the chance “to open our hearts to Jesus and to be healed by him.

“Now is the time for a mediocre witness of Christ to come to an end. The world is dying for the truth and for a way to Christ. We wrestle with our own hearts

when we are not what God wants us to be,” he said.

“This is the day to open your hearts to him, to show him the division that needs to be healed,” he said. “We pray that he sets us on fire with his love and sets the world on fire.”

At the end of Mass, the bishop thanked Msgr. Thomas Powers, vicar general of the diocese, for leading the planning and preparation for the diocesan pilgrimage, which included fasting and a nine-day novena.

The Adoration reflection prior to the Mass was led by Father Andrew Apostoli, CFR, a founding member of the Franciscan Friars of Renewal, and a frequent guest on EWTN television. “We live in difficult and uncertain times. In the world there are threats of violence, terrorism and war. In our country, there is political confusion and polarization,” Father Apostoli said.

“When we are consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, whether as an individual, a diocese, a religious order or nation, the Sacred Heart will bestow his love and graces in abundance.”

The diocesan day of pilgrimage was inspired by Pope Francis, who encouraged the faithful to consider a pilgrimage as an instrument of conversion. “The practice of pilgrimage has a special place in the Holy Year, because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life. Life itself is a pilgrimage, and the human being is a viator—a pilgrim travelling along the road,” he said.



Arise and Shine

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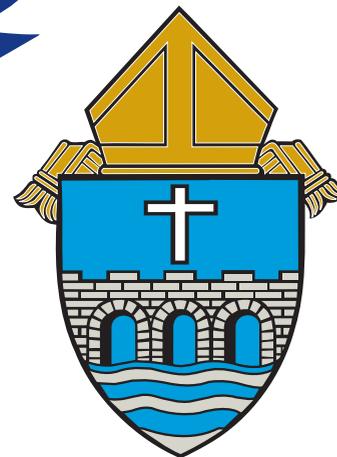
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DIOCESE
OF BRIDGEPORT

Local News

Night of Healing and Hope

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

It was an evening of hope, quiet dignity and courage, even as three adult survivors of priest sexual abuse shared disturbing and unsettling accounts of its impact on their lives and families.

More than 60 friends, family members and others turned out at Egan Chapel of Fairfield University for the service of prayer, music and personal reflection. The Healing Service was planned by a group of survivors of priest sexual abuse who worked with the diocese for months as part of the reconciliation process between survivors and the Church.

"I stand before you as a brother in faith. I am so deeply sorry for the burdens you have carried and for all that has happened to you," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano in his opening reflection after reading a passage from the Gospel of John (1:35-39).

Referring to sexual abuse as a "scourge and evil," the bishop said that it represents "a betrayal of trust that robbed young people of their innocence and damaged the entire life of the Church.

"Some of those who carried the title of 'Father' broke that trust and harmed you in a way that has changed your life forever and the lives of your family," said the bishop.

In between the readings and music, two men and one woman came forward to share their survivor reflections. "Why me?" all three said they asked themselves as they tried to come to terms with the abuse they suffered.

It was something they couldn't talk about for years: because they

thought they did something to deserve it, because they didn't think anyone would believe them, because they didn't want to upset their families.

Jim DiVasto said his abuse began at age 13 after his mother's death in an accident. He was serving as an altar boy and found solace in many Church activities. When it first happened, he was confused "and I didn't want to talk about it. It was another secret to keep."

However, as he entered his teen years, he became an over-achiever who found it difficult to socialize. In 1998, he sought marriage counseling and came to understand that the abuse "affected every relationship I had. Including with God and the Church."

DiVasto credited the diocesan Safe Environment Office and meetings with both Bishop William E. Lori and Bishop Caggiano with putting him on the path toward healing.

"They've all accompanied me on my journey. Healing is what I have been longing for and tonight makes me very hopeful."

Peggy Fry said she was 16 and very active in the parish youth group when she experienced abuse. "I was ashamed and embarrassed," but continued to practice her faith and never told anyone but her husband.

However, as stories of priest sexual abuse began to be reported in the media, she wrote letters to Church officials, both locally and nationally, and "No one responded to my cries for help."

She said she was grateful for her attorney and a Connecticut

Post reporter because they were the first people to believe her when the Church failed to respond.

She thanked her husband and three sons for standing by her and said that the abuse "stole my innocence but not my faith."

While admitting that she still has "trust issues" related to the Church, Fry said she felt that during the evening "an olive branch has been extended," and in working with the diocese to plan the event, she sensed genuine remorse on the part of the bishop and others, and "saw the doors of my Church being open and welcoming me back."

Peter Philipp began his reflection by saying, "The leadership of our Church let us down. They decided to protect the institution rather than the People of God. And some still haven't gotten it right."

Like the other speakers, he said his healing began when he realized other young people had been abused. "I used to think it only happened to me, so I never talked about it. Then I realized I was not alone in my experience," he said.

"Why me? Why didn't anyone notice?" he asked, noting that he became part of his "own cover-up, not just for a short time but for decades" because he couldn't talk about what happened to him.

Meeting other survivors and working with the Safe Environment Office has helped him to move forward, said Philipp, who taught and worked as the director of an AIDS hospice.

"How often do we pray for the sick to be made well! Healing is a



EGAN CHAPEL OF FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY

gift and we have to accept God's will," he said. "I'm planning to leave here tonight with a renewed sense of hope, risking to love and to be loved."

In a moving moment after reciting the "Our Father," the survivors walked into the gathering to share the Sign of Peace with handshakes and embraces for those who had come to support them.

Toward the close of the service, Father Jim McDevitt, pastor of St. Agnes Parish in

Greenwich, led the faithful in the "Litany of Healing." Music for the service was provided by Michele Schule, organist, and Michael Orzechowski, cantor of St. Agnes.

(For information concerning healing and victim's assistance, call Erin Neil, LCSW, director of Safe Environment and Victims Assistance coordinator: 203.650.3265 or eneil@diobpt.org; or contact Michael Tintrup, LCSW, Victims Assistance counselor: 203.241.0987 or mtintrup@ccfc-ct.org.)

Bishop inspires at All Souls Mass

TRUMBULL—Over 150 people joined Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at Gate of Heaven Cemetery for the First Annual All Souls Day Mass on November 2. Beginning this new diocesan tradition, Bishop Caggiano thanked all who were in attendance, and shared a homily that moved many to tears.

"Even though we are surrounded by the signs of an impending winter, we come here to remind ourselves that death does not have the final word," the bishop said.

Janet Davis, event planner for Bishop Caggiano, and the Office of Catholic Cemeteries, organized the Mass.

"The day will come, when God chooses, when every single person will rise from these graves—and the living and the dead will stand before God the Father and come into the Glory of everlasting life," Bishop Caggiano said. "Which means that this feast of All Souls Day is a festival of hope."

The entire Mass was live-streamed via Facebook Live. ■

Crèches of Germany

Tradition & Faith



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Closing of the Holy Door

Centers of Mercy to remain open in diocese

By FATHER JOSEPH
MARCELLO

In this reflection, Father Joseph Marcello, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull and coordinator of the diocesan observance of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, discusses some of the graces which have come in this Year of Mercy, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Some years ago, when I was serving as chaplain of St. Joseph High School in Trumbull, I'd



CLOSING OF THE HOLY DOOR—The Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy will conclude on Sunday, November 20, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. Just as Pope Francis will close the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, so Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will preside at the solemn closing of the Holy Door at St. Augustine Cathedral with a 9:30 Mass. All are welcome.

sometimes say to a classroom full of students: "Raise your hand if you like going to confession." Few, if any hands would be

raised. And then: "Raise your hand if you like *having gone* to confession." And every hand would be raised.

It's never pleasant to think about where we've missed the mark spiritually and morally. And even less so to vocalize it. But when we do precisely that, and bring our sins to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we discover for ourselves that Christ really does lift from us the burden of sin, and replaces it with his pardon and peace. All the arguments to the contrary evaporate when we experience it for ourselves. St. Augustine said, "In neglecting to confess my sins, O Lord, I would only be hiding you from myself, not hiding myself from you."

Speaking as a priest who has the privilege of regularly hearing confessions, I can say that never have I walked out of the confessional without being a lot more aware of God's presence in the world. What goes on in the

confessional is something more than earthly—it is the mysterious interplay of God's grace, which prompts us to return to him, with a human soul—wounded by sin but so loved by God—which is restored to wholeness by this sacramental encounter with God's mercy.

For this reason it's been said that the most important conversations on the planet take place in the confessional. Truly they are conversations with eternal consequences, because it is precisely through this sacrament that Christ vitiates the only thing that can stand between us and himself—sin.

St. John Vianney, the patron saint of the world's priests, who heard confessions in his parish in Ars, France, for up to 16 hours a day back in the 19th century,

► *CONTINUED ON PAGE 8*

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St. John Fisher Seminary

Fisher receives new rector

By **PAT HENNESSY**

St. John Fisher Seminary in Stamford looks forward to a new rector, Father Paul Check, who will take the helm on December 31. He succeeds Father Robert Kinnally, who has been named pastor of St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan.

Father Check brings a wide range of experience, deep spirituality and rich compassion to his new position. One of three boys, he was born in Bridgeport, but grew up in Bethesda, Md. Father Check graduated from Rice University, Texas in 1981.

He served in the U.S. Marine Corps for nine years, residing in locations as far apart as Okinawa, California and London, England, resigning as captain in 1990. He was a supervisor for Airborne Express in Norwalk and serving as a lector at St. Mary Parish in Norwalk prior to entering St. John Fisher in 1992. Father Check is proud to call himself a "Fisher alumnus."

He was ordained by Bishop Edward M. Egan in 1997. Father Check holds an STB from the Gregorian University and an STL from the University of the Holy Cross, both in Rome.

Father Check's first assignment in the diocese was as chaplain at Notre Dame High School in Fairfield. He later served as parochial vicar at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Stamford (where he started the popular "Theology on Tap" program), and at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton.

At the direction of Bishop William E. Lori he established a Courage chapter in this diocese in 2002. Courage, founded in 1980, aims to help Catholics with same-sex attraction in their spiritual growth, including life in chastity. Its partner organization, EnCourage, is an apostolate for parents, friends, and family members of those with same-sex attraction.

Father Check has been involved with both organizations for 14 years. In 2008, he was selected as executive director of Courage International. He plans to remain with the apostolate as a member of the board of directors.

Throughout the years, he has continued to be deeply connected to the seminarians and clergy of this diocese. Since 1999 he has taught moral theology and sexual and medical ethics to seminarians and permanent deacon candidates in the Bridgeport Diocese. He also taught a two-week course in moral theology to Blessed Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta every year for 12 years.

Father Check calls his time with the Courage apostolate a "tremendous blessing, in particular by deepening my understanding of the tangle and the nobility of the human heart, and of my appreciation for the beauty and efficacy of grace. My work with the members of Courage and EnCourage has changed my priesthood."

He said he also believes the apostolate has prepared him well for his new assignment at the seminary, and that he plans to share what he's learned through his involvement with the ministry with the students under his charge.

While Father Check prepares for his new role at St. John Fisher Seminary, some changes are already underway. In September, at the beginning of the fall semester, Msgr. Christopher Walsh became the academic dean of the seminary. A graduate of Fairfield University, he completed his seminary studies at the Theological College of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. and holds a PhD from that institution. He was ordained by Bishop W. Curtis in Saint Augustine Cathedral in 1987.

In 1992, he became the second editor of *Fairfield County Catholic* and diocesan director of communications. At the same time, he was appointed spiritual director of St. John Fisher. He held both positions until 1998, when he was named vocations director for the diocese. Msgr. Walsh became pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Shelton in 2005.

Through the years, he has been a member of the faculty of St. John Fisher as professor of systematic theology. In addition, he has been an adjunct professor of theology at St. Joseph Seminary (Dunwoodie) in Yonkers, NY. He is the author of *The Untapped Power of the Sacrament of Penance*.

Fluent in Spanish, Msgr. Walsh has celebrated Mass, preached and spoken on vocations at Hispanic parishes throughout the diocese.

In the wake of Msgr. Walsh's new assignment, Father Michael Dogali has become the new pastor of St. Joseph Parish in



FATHER PAUL CHECK

Shelton. Previously episcopal vicar for Strategic Planning, he brings a wide range and depth to his new position. In addition to his discussions with pastors throughout the diocese about their challenges, achievements

and long-range plans, he has been a pastor himself. Ordained in 1992 by Bishop Egan, he became pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Danbury in 2004, and was named pastor of St. Pius X Parish in Fairfield in 2011.

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Upcoming Parish Concerts

Talking with Father Rob Galea

By BETH LONGWARE DUFF

When Father Rob Galea left his native Malta for Australia 11 years ago, he was looking for “an experience on the other side of the world.” Suffice it to say, he may have gotten more than he ever anticipated.

“While I was there, I was asked to sing for Pope Benedict in Sydney,” he recalled, referring to the Pontiff’s appearance at the World Youth Day 2008 celebration. “After that, the bishop asked me to stay on.”

Since his arrival Down Under, Father Rob’s life has taken an extraordinary turn. Despite his admission that he was kicked out of his school choir because he couldn’t carry a tune, today he is a singer/songwriter under contract to a major record label with eight music projects to his credit, a stint last year on Australia’s “The X Factor” TV reality music competition, and an international fan base. Earlier this month he kicked off his “No Greater Love” concert tour of North America, including six appearances in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

“My platform is not for performance but rather for a message, and I use performance to enhance the message,” he explains. His music ministry requires a delicate balance of his priestly duties, since he’s on the road 90 to 120 days each year. When he’s home, Father Rob serves as the assistant priest in St. Kilian Parish in Bendigo in the Diocese of Sandhurst, and he



FATHER ROB GALEA

runs the diocesan Stronger Youth ministry that he helped establish in 2008.

“Young people are desperate for hope. When I came to Australia, the Church was not reaching out to them because there was too much of a generation gap,” he says. “There was a need, so I did everything I could to create a space where these young people could experience the hope and love of Christ and the Church. Seeing these teens coming to us is wonderful—I would do it all over again.”

On his website (www.frob-galea.com), Father Rob notes that music is powerful, especially

when it is used to deliver the word of God to the hearts of people. “Music is the language of the heart. Music is all about what people feel. It transcends the mind and goes straight to the heart,” he explains. “And not only that, I think it’s a universal language. It’s a language that unites us and connects us with God, because God is the inexpressible, and somehow music allows the inexpressible to be expressed.”

Father Rob’s music and message have been an inspiration to Peter DeMarco, music director at St. Ann Parish in Milford. He recalls their first meeting at the

Los Angeles Religious Education Congress in early 2015.

“Father Rob informed me that he needed a pianist for his session the following morning and asked me if I would play piano with him. Ten minutes later we were in a conference room rehearsing his music, which I quickly discovered was very powerful and beautiful,” he remembers. “The next morning I was so moved to see hundreds of people come to hear the great

contemporary music and very engaging stories by this incredibly talented and charismatic priest.”

DeMarco was so impressed by the young priest that he invited him to perform at St. Ann Parish. Once Father Rob accepted, DeMarco reached out to parishes in this diocese to arrange more performances.

“I believed so strongly in the work that Father Rob does all over the world that, since he had never been here, I made it my mission to seek out opportunities for him to share the great gift of his ministry,” he explains.

Concertgoers of all ages will experience a night of music and stories that Father Rob adjusts according to his audience. “Particularly when there’s a bigger audience, I do some interactive music,” he says. “It’s a time of retreat, of stepping back and just receiving. It’s an opportunity to let God love and encourage us.”

(In addition to a performance on November 19 in Our Lady Star of the Sea Church in Stamford at 7 pm, Father Rob Galea will perform on Sunday, November 20, in St. Ann Church, Milford, at 3 pm and in St. Pius X Church in Fairfield at 7:30 pm; Monday, November 21 in St. Ann Church, Milford, at 7 pm; and Tuesday, November 22 in Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Danbury at 7 pm. For ticket information, contact the individual parishes.) ■

CENTERS OF MERCY FROM PAGE 6

once said, “God is more eager to rescue us from our sins than a mother is to snatch her child out of a fire.”

In my experience, the Centers of Mercy which have been established in the diocese for the Jubilee Year of Mercy have been a great blessing, the full extent of which is known only to God.

At St. Catherine’s, we’ve been busy for the full hour-and-a-half nearly every Tuesday—and many weeks, even longer than that. The most important aspect of these Centers of Mercy is, I think, that with them, no Catholic in our diocese has to go more than two or three days without regularly scheduled confessions at a parish near them.

Although the Year of Mercy concludes this month, we hope

to continue several Centers of Mercy as a permanent addition to the pastoral life of the diocese.

One of the most enduring images from this Year of Mercy is the now-famous photo of Pope Francis going to confession. The Holy Father has given us his personal example of actively seeking out God’s mercy, just as he has given us this Year of Mercy, so that all of us can do the same.

Let’s all pray that this grace of mercy will be experienced by many, even beyond this special Year of Mercy—and most especially by anyone who hasn’t experienced it in a long while.

(The location of the Centers of Mercy in the Diocese of Bridgeport will be posted on the diocesan website: www.bridgeportdiocese.com.) ■

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Wednesday 6:00 pm Extraordinary Form;
Saturday 9:00 am Extraordinary Form

Saturday Anticipatory Mass:

4:00 pm, 7:00 pm (Spanish)

Sunday: 8:00 am, 9:30 am Latin High Mass,

11:30 am English High Mass,
1:15 pm (Spanish)

CONFESSION SCHEDULE:

Monday-Friday: 11:30 am-12:00 pm;

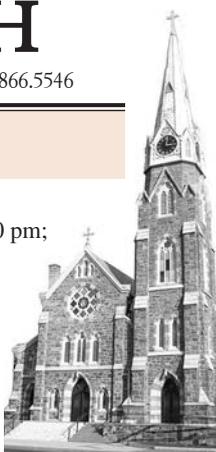
Wednesday: 5:30-5:50 pm;

Saturday: 3:00-4:30 pm

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Local News

Immigration rights explored at St. Matthew's

By ANN YANNETTI

Nearly one in seven Connecticut residents is an immigrant, according to a 2015 report from the American Immigration Council. Understanding the law and how to apply basic rights are among the many challenges faced by immigrants.

What are your rights if you're confronted by police or immigration officials in your home? What if you're stopped in your car? What about in a public place or at work?

Anthony Febles, J.D., provided answers to those questions at a recent two-hour Legal Seminar on Immigration: Know Your Rights. The seminar was

offered by St. Matthew Parish as a response to Pope Francis' call "to be a witness of mercy" in the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

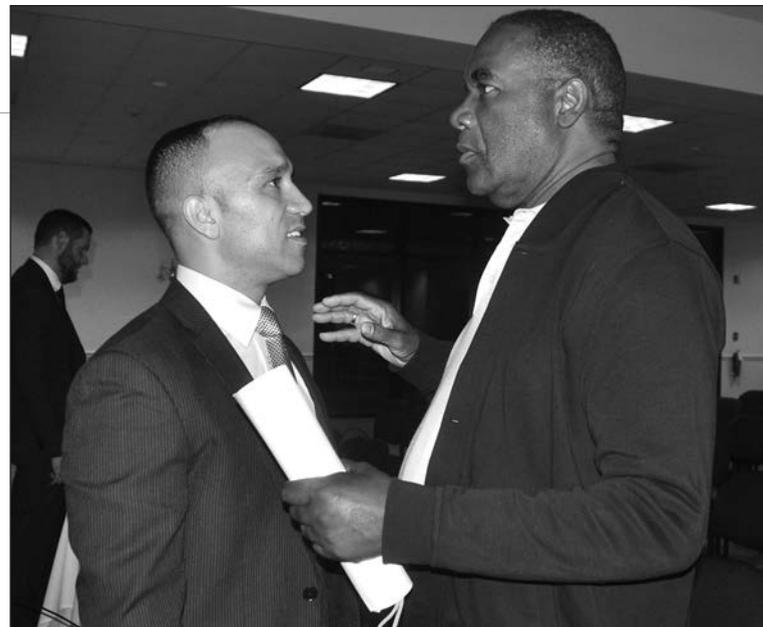
"All of us are afforded basic rights granted to us under amendments to the Constitution, regardless of immigration status," said Febles.

"These basic rights are the cornerstone of your protection and apply whether you're documented or undocumented, a citizen or a permanent resident. The right to remain silent, the right to see an arrest warrant, the right to speak to a lawyer, and the right to make a phone call."

Febles guided participants through scenarios where confron-

tations commonly occur, noting, "The police have the right to confront you in a public place. That's their job. Your job is to know your rights." He emphasized the importance of remaining respectful and considerate, yet firm, when invoking your rights.

What happens if a relative is detained by officials or deported? "Be prepared. Have a plan in place that includes keeping all documents in a safe and accessible place, pre-arranging for child-care, and creating a family-safety planning toolkit," said Febles. "As a former Marine, preparation was always something they drove home: be prepared, be prepared, be prepared."



BASIC RIGHTS are guaranteed under the Constitution, explained Anthony Febles, J.D., at a legal seminar on immigration held at St. Matthew Parish in Norwalk. "These apply whether you are documented or undocumented, a citizen or a permanent resident."

Other topics covered in the program included how to obtain legal permanent residence, when and how to bring a relative into the country, applying for naturalization and asylum basics.

During the question-and-answer period that followed, Febles was joined by Atty. Brendan L. Durrigan, Rahoul Dupervil of the City of Norwalk Human Relations Commission, and Spanish and Creole translators. The information given was specific to Connecticut residents.

"The attorneys were great. I was here to get information for a friend who is a U.S. citizen, and is hoping to bring family into this country," said Juan Mena.

Father Tomi Thomas, who opened the session with a prayer, was heartened by the seminar and engagement of program participants. "As an immigrant myself, I know how difficult it is to navigate in a foreign country. I am most grateful to Anthony and his team for offering their time and talent on this important topic."

Alexandra Joseph attended the seminar with her young sons. "It's very important that people know their legal rights, and I was happy that the attorneys were able to lend their time to give this information and answer questions."

Msgr. Walter Orłowski, pastor of St. Matthew's, spoke about his commitment to ensure that as many people as possible have access to information they need. "Whatever the Church can do, whatever St. Matthew's can do, we're here. The more information we have, the better we can help our families."

To that end, Febles, a St. Matthew Parishioner, will be available for free Immigration Consultation at St. Matthew's every Wednesday until December, from 7-8 pm. "I believe in education. And I believe in these communities," he said.

(For more information, contact Febles at 508.455.7530 or Anthony_Febles@hotmail.com.)

St. Joseph H.S. hosts Veterans Day ceremony



TRUMBULL—A moving Veterans Day Assembly was held on November 11 at St. Joseph High School gym. SJ veteran parents, veteran grandparents and veteran alumni were invited to attend the ceremony. Master Chief Richard Iannucci, USN, retired commander of the National Association of Naval Veterans Port, gave a speech from the heart about serving

our country, along with Color Guard Sergeant Michael Benedetto '03 U.S. Army/Marine Corps. Both are members of the Port 5 Naval Veterans.

The SJ community was fortunate to have the members of the Port 5 Naval Veterans Group, the oldest military service group in the country, on hand for the ceremony. The Port 5 Naval Veterans Group, with a charter dating back to 1887, conducted the event in partnership

with St. Joseph High School. Port 5 began as Naval Militia, Port 5 in Salem, Massachusetts. In 1948, the group settled into their current location in Bridgeport. The Port 5 Naval Veterans Group is made up of 960 members from all branches of the service, including the Men's and Ladies Auxiliaries. At one time, there were 40 such ports across the nation; Port 5 is the last remaining one.

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EDITORIAL

Slow Down

Some people like “crazy.” They want to shop in the middle of frenzy, stay up till daylight wrapping presents, fill the days between Thanksgiving and Christmas with frenetic activity. More of us don’t like that so much, but we do it anyway—and lose the sense of joy in the process.

Advent is an opportunity to get off the treadmill. It calls for a different attitude of mind. The long Thanksgiving weekend may be the most relaxing time to set out decorations. It’s also the first weekend in Advent. Make setting up a Nativity scene part of the weekend; do it together, not rushing, as a family. Cutting down on gifts is a choice—make that decision as a family. Go to Mass on Sunday, and don’t go shopping afterward. Another choice. Set up an Advent wreath—in truth, any four candles will work—and light one more candle each week while eating dinner together. One night a week. It can be done.

Advent prepares for the coming of Christ at Christmas. You’ll feel the joy so much more if you just slow down.

A Diocese Renewed

More than two years ago when Bishop Caggiano called for a synod, he was clear that he wanted to renew the diocese—spiritually, administratively and pastorally.

In one extraordinary week at the beginning of this month, people throughout the diocese experienced that renewal in a memorable way at the Diocesan Pilgrimage, the outdoor Mass on All Souls Day, and the Mass of Healing for survivors of clerical sexual abuse.

Almost two hundred men and women joined the Bishop at Gate of Heaven Cemetery for the All Souls Day Mass, which he hopes will become a new tradition in the diocese. Later on that same day, victims of sexual abuse gave witness to their suffering and their faith at a special prayer service. The bishop stood before them to ask their forgiveness and pledge his support to continue the healing process. What better way to close this Year of Mercy than for the bishop to reach out to those wounded by the Church!

Most notably, for the more than 1,100 who attended the Diocesan Pilgrimage at St. Augustine Cathedral, it was an afternoon of extraordinary reverence, prayer and joy. Many were inspired by the diversity, the outpouring of faith and spirit of unity as the bishop re-consecrated the diocese to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In his Facebook post after the pilgrimage, the bishop wrote, “The entire afternoon gave me great hope and encouragement as we strive to bring greater spiritual renewal to our personal lives and that of the entire diocese.”

That renewal is not of the future; it’s happening now and it’s available to all. To be certain, our bishop would be the first to say there is much more work to be done, but every day there are new ways to experience renewal in the diocese through worship, service, and leadership opportunities. That’s good news.

Faith in the Marketplace

During his homily at this year’s CAPP Business Leaders Breakfast at Fairfield University, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano asked the business men and women in attendance a simple question:

“Is there one policy or practice you can create to work for change and make the world a better place?”

“Giving witness in the marketplace is difficult. It is not often easy to be faithful to the Lord and fulfill your responsibilities. Yet it’s a question we must all ponder in our vocations and ministries. What is your plan to make change and are you ready to make it?”

In the breakfast talk that followed, Dr. John Murphy, president and chief executive officer of the Western Connecticut Health Network, demonstrated how the personal witness of a Catholic executive can serve as a strong voice of advocacy for the sick and suffering; while retired marketing executive Gail Berardino was recognized for answering the call to service in her own life through her leadership role in the American Association of the Knights of Malta as it serves the poor locally and across the globe.

The bishop has often said that the Diocese of Bridgeport is blessed with some of the most talented and compassionate laity in the United States. The CAPP Business Leaders Breakfast brought together many people who exemplify those qualities and work to witness Catholic values in their work and service. Special thanks also go out to event organizers Robert Nalewajek, President of CAPP-USA and to Bob Rooney, Fairfield County CAPP leader. Well done!

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Arise and Shine

If you heard the Diocesan Youth Choir sing at the recent Pilgrimage Mass, then you know that all those who attend the upcoming Christmas Concert are in for a real treat. Their singing at St. Augustine Cathedral was both triumphant and transcendent.

This year’s “Arise and Shine” Christmas Concert is set for Sunday, December 18, at 6 pm at the Klein Memorial in Bridgeport. Under the direction of Mary Bozzuti-Higgins, the choir is expected to reprise some of last year’s favorites such as

“Arise and Shine,” “Dark is the Silent Night,” and “Siyahamba,” as well as introduce some new songs. Noted area musicians will join the youth along with special guest Adrienne Reedy, a well known Gospel singer who will be featured in two selections, “Do You Hear What I Hear?” and “Christmas Glory, Halleluia!” Selected readings will be delivered by choir members in Vietnamese, Spanish, Igbo and English.

Last year’s Christmas concert inspired more than 1,000 people.

This year’s promises to be even better as the young choir performs a challenging program of Christmas songs and chants from different ages and cultures.

If you can’t make the concert but have interest in the youth choir or would like to support its work by joining the new St. Augustine Guild to support its work, visit the diocesan website: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/c4sings/home/.

(Tickets: \$10, student; \$15 adults. Purchase online at www.theklein.org or by calling 800.424.0160.)



CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

*The Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano,
Bishop of Bridgeport,*

has made the following clergy appointments in the Diocese of Bridgeport:

PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND TOMI THOMAS, I.M.S., returned to the Diocese of Bridgeport from India, to Parochial Vicar, Saint Matthew Parish, Norwalk. Effective date was July 1.

RESIDENCE

REVEREND ZBIGNIEW ZIELINSKI, Saint Stephen Parish, Trumbull, to Saint Jude Parish, Monroe. Father Zielinski will remain Judge for the Diocesan Tribunal in Bridgeport. Effective date was October 17.

RETIREMENT

DEACON DANIEL J. IANNIELLO, Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish, Fairfield, to retirement. Effective date was August 31.

*Monsignor Thomas W. Powers,
Vicar General, November, 2016*

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Editorial



God did the Unthinkable

CATHOLIC BY GRACE

BY DENISE BOSSERT

Denise Bossert is a national Catholic writer and columnist.

Something happens to a writer who leaves the utopia of freelance writing and exchanges it for a year in the Chicago Loop.

My apartment was two blocks from Temple Shalom, the epicenter of the Jewish neighborhood of Chicago. I felt our Jewish roots every day when I walked past the synagogue on my way to the bus stop. The Root of Jesse's Tree.

During Advent, we walk with the Abraham's offspring and relive the wait for the Messiah. We journey with our Jewish Mother, Mary, and relive the wait for the birth of Our Lord. The Shoot of Jesse's Tree.

Jesus. The Incarnate Word of

God.

One day, my colleague, a Jewish woman who became very dear to me, paused to ask why I didn't believe in the Ten Commandments. I laughed and told her, "Of course we do."

I could tell by the look on her face that she was confused. It wasn't accusatory. What I had said just didn't fit what she had been told.

She said that the Jewish people only believe in One God and that we do not.

I told my friend that we definitely believe only in One God, and her face was full of questions and doubts. "You believe in God the Father." I said. She nodded in

agreement. "You believe in his Spirit," and again she nodded.

I paused and thought a moment. I am two-thirds the way through the difficult teaching on the Trinity. "Well, we believe that God became a Man because the whole world needed to be redeemed."

"But God did not become a man." She said this as one might say the words "The Negev gets hot," or "The Dead Sea is salty."

Ok. This was where I really needed some help from the Holy Spirit she had just declared real. What should I say? And then I said it. Slowly. With conviction.

"He didn't..."
...Until he did."

And in that moment I realized that I had never been asked to defend the Incarnation, but what I had just said was the whole of it in a nutshell.

That the Incarnation was unthinkable.

It was impossible.

It was not even in the realm of the imaginable.

And then, God did the unthinkable, impossible, and unimaginable so that the holy nation that was

once a tribe and before that a family and before that a married, childless couple might become a Light to the Nations—

So that I, too, might be grafted in. The Root and the Shoot.

The Incarnation is a mystery. Like the mystery of the Trinity,

"God reached into our world and became one of us. He experienced fully our humanity."

one struggles to explain it. One can barely grasp it and make it one's own, let alone share it. But that is what we do as Advent gives way to Christmas.

We transcend the Old and enter the New. We realize that God didn't become Man. And then, he did.

God reached into our world and became one of us. He experienced fully our humanity. He became one of us to redeem us

from the fall and the curse of original sin. He invited us to become part of his Body.

And if Jesus Christ is God, if we become part of his Body, we participate in the very life of God.

The Incarnation is personal. As personal as a pregnant virgin who looks down at her own stomach and the Magnificat is uttered for the first time.

A Jewish girl. A point in time.

And my head full of thoughts like these as I passed Temple Shalom each day and made my way to the Loop in Chicago where I conversed with Margalit.

A Jewish girl whose Hebrew name means Pearl.

And a Lord, who for me, is the Pearl of great price.

So many layers of the faith to contemplate—just like the way it is during Advent.

Don't speed through these four weeks. Take it slowly. Really live and breathe it.

God became Man. He didn't; and then he did.

(Jesse was the father of the great King David of the Old Testament. He is considered the first person in the genealogy of Jesus.)



We All Make Mistakes

A DAD'S VIEW

BY MATTHEW HENNESSEY

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

We mess up. From texting instead of talking to forgetting about soccer practice to losing our temper at the dinner table, we parents make so many mistakes. This Dad does, anyway.

The kids like to have fruit shakes with frozen berries in the morning. Once, in a sleep-deprived trance, I put a spoon into a running blender. The meeting of steel blades and steel utensil caused a berry large mess. It also caused a bad word to form near

my wrist, scamper up my arm, and fly out of my mouth.

Big mistake. I may have gotten away with it though—the three year-old was the only one within earshot, and she's not that street smart.

Many of my other mistakes have come back to haunt me. How many times have I accused one kid or another of doing something wrong only to have the tables turned?

"You guys have to clean up after yourselves. Otherwise mommy and daddy have to do

it. There are five of you and only two of us. See, look here. Perfect example: who shoved all these papers and toys and shoes and junk into the closet?"

"Uh, you did Dad. When Mrs. Gayer dropped by yesterday. Don't you remember?"

"Of course I remember! I was testing you. How could I forget that? Anyway, as I was saying, let's be sure to keep the closet clean shall we?"

Parents are supposed to "model" good behavior for the young by watching what we eat, say, and do. I try; I really do. But the habits of a lifetime are hard to break. I figured out many years ago that my factory setting is sloth.

I enjoy dessert. I like the odd beer. I'm not a huge exercise guy. Some of that is my genetic inheritance, but most of it is just me. I could change if I really wanted to. Maybe someday I will.

Until then, I have to be savvy about covering up my daily mis-

takes. Little eyes see everything.

There are some mistakes that you can't hide. I'm talking here about tattoos. I have two of them. It's embarrassing. My kids can't help but see them. What can I do about it now? There isn't much.

"Listen up! Don't get tattoos kids. You'll regret it." Okay, Dad. Whatever you say, big guy.

Somehow, my oldest child has sussed out that I was once a smoker. This is one of the worst health mistakes anyone can make. I'm terribly ashamed of it. The good news is that smoking seems to have gone out of fashion in the last 25 years or so.

Teenagers these days are doing other things besides smoking to rebel. Old man that I am, I have no idea what those things are. But they'd have to be marginally less unhealthy than lighting up, wouldn't they? I can only hope that an old, faded picture of Daddy with a Camel dangling from his lips doesn't undermine

all the good I've tried to do as a parent.

We make mistakes. We're not saints—though we strive to be. Just being fully present counts for a lot. Put the smartphone down. Turn off the computer and the TV. It's all good. You get points for it.

You get points, too, for loving your spouse, and showing your kids what true marriage means—a lifelong covenant relationship built around love, respect, obedience, and openness to new life.

Of course, the real points accrue to those parents who provide an example of what it means to live with Christ at the center of everything. Go to Mass. Partake of the sacraments. Glorify the Lord by your life.

If you have those bases covered, you're doing well enough as a parent. I'd say you're more than halfway home. So go ahead and help yourself to the odd beer. You deserve it.

Interview: Bob Nalewajek

CAPP USA transforms lay leaders

By REBECCA VODOLA

"We're unique in the history of the Church," said CAPP USA President Bob Nalewajek, "because the CAPP organization is subject to both the civil law of Vatican City and the Canon Law of the Church."

The initials stand for Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice—A Hundred Years of Service to the Pope. CAPP's direct supervisor is the pope.

CAPP USA currently has chapters in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Washington, D.C. Its mission is

to evangelize lay Catholic leaders—to help form their consciences on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and support their initiatives to implement it in the various sectors of society.

St. John Paul II founded CAPP in 1993 to promote the knowledge and practice of Catholic Social Teaching among the laity, particularly business, educational and social leaders.

"When CAPP was founded, Catholic Social Teaching didn't have a good definition," said Nalewajek. "It was ping-ponged between the political Left and the Right, and they each molded it to

fit their side of the issue."

On December 4, 2004, at CAPP leaders' last meeting with then-Pope John Paul II, the Pope lamented that "Catholic Social Teaching seemed more quoted than understood," according to Nalewajek. "People were using it as an instrument to their ends."

"There is no political party for the Church. It's not a matter of Left and Right," Nalewajek said.

Nalewajek, a Cos Cob resident and member of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Riverside, said that Catholic Social teaching offers a set of principles that help form consciences and pro-

vide directives for social action. "It was St. John Paul II's hope that people would learn to use this doctrine on Catholic Social Teaching as a valid reference in the context of family, professional and civil responsibilities."

CAPP USA leaders have spent the past twelve years responding to John Paul's challenge and working to clarify any misunderstanding related to the role and tradition of Catholic Social Teaching.

One of CAPP's major projects was their work with deans of theology at the Catholic University of America (CUA) and other



BOB NALEWAJEK

colleges to come up with a normative canon for Catholic Social Teaching. In conjunction with CUA, CAPP USA developed the Certificate Program in Catholic Social Teaching around the canon and St. John Paul II's Centesimus Annus, the encyclical letter for which CAPP is named.

Nalewajek said that after having spent years defining Catholic Social Teaching, CAPP USA then faced a new set of challenges as they attempted to begin educating lay Catholics. CAPP USA had to establish itself as a trusted, legitimate organization in the Church.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano was recently invited by the Vatican to serve as a CAPP USA board member. He joins Archbishop William E. Lori and Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Washington, who serves as CAPP USA's director and national ecclesiastical counselor.

After the economic crisis in 2008, CAPP USA presented Pope Francis with a paper on solidarity in finance. CAPP continues to inform him on Catholic Social Teaching as it relates to business.

Though Pope Francis asks CAPP leaders to advise him chiefly on business matters of Catholic Social Teaching, Nalewajek added that CAPP has grown more diverse in the United States and now ministers to a broad spectrum of lay leaders.

The Certificate Program in Catholic Social Teaching is one of CAPP USA's main tools in educating lay Catholics.

"We have a long-term plan to educate leaders in business and finance, lawyers and doctors to create advisers to the Church," said Nalewajek.

Stamford parents listening session

STAMFORD—About 75 parents of students in the four Stamford Catholic elementary schools were introduced to a preliminary proposal to create one PreK-Grade 8 flagship school at the first of two public listening sessions held at St. Cecilia School.

The evening was hosted by the Stamford Catholic Schools Strategic Planning Committee and Partners in Mission, a Boston-based consulting firm hired by the Diocese of Bridgeport to guide the planning process for Catholic elementary schools in Stamford.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano commissioned a strategic planning process last February in response to declining enrollment trends and increasing debt. At present, fewer than 600 students attend Holy Spirit School, Our Lady Star of the Sea School, Saint Cecilia School and Trinity Catholic Middle School.

Members of the planning committee introduced their findings to parents, while Steve Virgadamo from Partners in Mission facilitated the discussion. Virgadamo said one charge of the committee was to begin with the question, "If we started all over today, what would we want for our schools? How would we re-imagine and re-engineer them?"

After months of research and assessment, the committee,



which includes members with education, finance, legal and construction backgrounds, recommended a single PreK-Grade 8 school model of over 540 students on either one or two campuses in Stamford. The recommendations were based on the work of the three sub-committees on finance, academics and facilities.

In her presentation of the work of the Pedagogical sub-committee, Dr. Darcy Ronan, said that the traditional PreK-Grade 8 model is gaining new adherents and that "one continuous system" is now viewed as more supportive of children than the middle school experience, which often has short and long-term negative effects on their performance.

Matthew Murphy, a member of the Finance sub-committee, demonstrated that three of the four schools are currently in deficit and are not in a "financially viable scenario" for the future. He added that a "single school model" would lead to the lowest cost per

pupil and a budgetary surplus rather than the current deficit.

Facilities sub-committee member John Lindell, who works in the construction industry, said that he and his team "crawled and climbed" through existing facilities and found a great deal of deferred maintenance needs. He said his committee also agreed that a PreK-Grade 8 school model on one or two campuses would be the best way to upgrade facilities.

All of the committee speakers agreed that the PreK-Grade 8 concept would allow for a critical mass of students and resources to ensure cost-effective, innovative, high quality Catholic education in updated facilities.

Committee members emphasized that no final decisions have been made and asked for feedback from parents in a listening session that followed their presentation.

"This is the time for us to step back, re-group, and listen to what you have to say," said Dr. Steven Cheeseman, diocesan superintendent of Catholic schools. "We have good schools but we must look to the future and ask ourselves how we can make them better to ensure that we have quality Catholic education in the Stamford region for generations to come."

The many parents who came forward to the microphone to comment on the proposal responded positively, but also voiced their concerns, questions and hopes for any final recommendations. They also expressed gratitude to the commit-

tee for their voluntary service.

A few speakers said that the connection between the parishes and existing schools is an important bridge to bring people back to the faith and expressed concern that this "holistic" experience for the children could be lost in the new model.

Class size in a larger PreK-Grade 8 school was also raised by some parents who said that their children are thriving in the smaller campuses and that classes could get too big.

Two mothers said that a renovated facility should have a gym and cafeteria; while one of the dads said he would like to see improved sports programs for elementary students.

Janet Fletcher, the mother of three children in Catholic schools, said that having two separate campuses could make it tough for parents shuttling the children around. She added that public school education in Stamford is "challenged" in the upper grades, presenting an opportunity for Catholic schools to attract students.

Parents expressed their desire that a decision be made quickly so that the community can begin to plan for the future. The work of the committee will continue as they consider the input of community stakeholders prior to finalizing the recommendation they will make to Bishop Caggiano in the coming weeks. ■

CAPP Breakfast

Healthcare can't be measured by profits

FAIRFIELD—Healthcare is not a commodity, it's a human and social right that is being threatened by over-commercializing the system, said Dr. John Murphy, president and chief executive officer of the Western Connecticut Health Network at the CAPP Business Leaders Breakfast at Fairfield University on November 6.

"I am concerned about whether the obsession with profitability will force health care institutions to forget about why they exist and what was behind their founding," he said to a gathering of 200 business leaders in the Oak Room.

The annual communion breakfast is sponsored by Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice (CAPP) of Fairfield County and by Fairfield University's Center for Faith and

Public Life.

Dr. Murphy, who continues to maintain a one day a month patient practice while running the \$1.5 billion Western Connecticut healthcare system, said that it's not possible to create a standard healthcare package that can be commoditized like other products.

He said that treating patients is a "human encounter," not a product, and that "patients don't make good consumers."

"We treat one person at a time and everyone is different," he said.

Dr. Murphy said that much of what happens to an individual's health—from a car accident to sudden illness—is often unplanned, leaving people frightened, anxious and vulnerable when they least expect it.

"If you give someone a bad

diagnosis, they are hardly listening," he added, emphasizing that they have little time or ability to shop around.

Dr. Murphy said the need to be profitable and reward shareholders often conflicts with the basic healing mission of advocating for patients and building healthy communities. "Healthcare is best delivered by a not-for-profit system," he said. "We should not only be at the patient's bedside but on his side."

Connecticut's healthcare system has its origins in the mission of the Catholic Church and other faiths to treat people who are sick, to reach out to the poor and to safeguard human dignity, he said. Murphy, a Fordham University graduate, noted that Danbury Hospital, founded in



PATIENTS ARE NOT CONSUMERS—Dr. John Murphy, president and chief executive officer of the Western Connecticut Health Network and his wife, Nancy, chat with Father Jeffrey von Arx at the recent CAPP Business Leaders Breakfast held at Fairfield University. Dr. Murphy said that healthcare is a human right based on human dignity.

1881, grew out of the work of St. Peter's Benevolent Aid Society to treat people with typhoid and tuberculosis, which were rampant at the time.

Describing himself as a strong believer in competition and the capitalist system, Dr. Murphy said it is important to check excesses, as more hospitals across the nation join for-profit systems. He added that four Connecticut hospitals are now for-profit entities.

Speaking of his own practice, he noted that what had been a \$40 drug to treat children affected by the serious condition of childhood spasms is now \$23,000 for the same vial after a big pharmaceutical company, which had nothing to do with its development, bought the rights.

"Communities have unprofitable needs," he said, adding that there's "a risk" to the system if

➤ *CONTINUED ON PAGE 33*



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Diocesan Women's Conference

'Made by Love, for Love'

By **ANDRÉ ESCALEIRA, JR.**

It can be hard to find time in one's busy schedule for an opportunity to come together with a community for the purpose of growing in faith. When it happens, however, it is truly a beautiful experience.

The Diocese of Bridgeport's Women's Conference was exactly this opportunity for 250 women from all over the Diocese of Bridgeport and beyond. Coming together at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull, these women explored their identity as God's beloved daughters in this, the third-annual conference, which centered on the theme "Made by Love, for Love."

Father Joseph Marcello, pastor of St. Catherine's, was happy to welcome everyone, saying, "Women of faith have

been the backbone of the Church from the beginning. So it was a privilege and a joy to welcome so many women of joyful faith from around the diocese and beyond to St. Catherine's for the diocesan Women's Conference. We know that the graces of that day will continue to unfold in the lives of all these women, and their families."

Kim Quatela, diocesan coordinator of Family Formation and one of the organizers of this year's conference, was pleased with the turnout and the day. "A beautiful and enriching day, which was more like a retreat than a conference, the Women's Conference gave women of all ages an opportunity to experience the beauty of the faith," said Quatela. "The Women's Conference definitely serves a need for women of all ages who



A VARIETY OF SPEAKERS at the Diocesan Women's Conference focused on a woman's unique, inherent dignity. The conference included structured and private prayer, Eucharistic Adoration and Mass with Msgr. Tom Powers, vicar general of the Diocese of Bridgeport. (PHOTO BY MICHELE BABYAK)

desire community, to be nourished in their faith."

The participants started the day off with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Morning

Prayer (Lauds), the participants gathered to listen to a variety of speakers who focused on the woman's unique, inherent dignity and her identity as a beloved daughter of God.

Keynote speaker Sister Mary Elizabeth Wusinich, SV, vicar general for the Sisters of Life, told the women in attendance that "Forgiveness can bring us back to life. There is a strength in a woman's heart to nurture those entrusted to her care."

In her talk, Sister Mary Elizabeth quoted St. Edith Stein, "When he asks us to love our enemies, he gives us the love himself. I don't have to rely on my own strength to do it."

Other speakers included

Simcha Fisher, Catholic mom and blogger, and Damon Owens, certified speaker for the Theology of the Body Institute.

Interspersed throughout the day were opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and private Eucharistic Adoration, a candlelight Eucharistic Procession, communal prayer and Catholic vendors. The moments of prayer were central to the conference, giving all of the participants an "authentically Catholic day," as Quatela called it.

"Everyone seemed very engaged and interested. And the talks were fantastic," said Rossana Goñi of the Marian Community of Reconciliation.

Tricia LaValle of Holy Spirit Parish in Stamford agreed, saying, "The talks were great. All of the speakers were awesome! I was especially struck by the idea that we have to be like icons, in order to reflect Christ to the world."

To close the conference, the women participated in Mass celebrated by Msgr. Tom Powers, vicar general of the Diocese of Bridgeport. In his homily, Msgr. Powers exhorted the participants to trust God more, saying, "Often our idea of perfection in the spiritual life is not to have struggles. But God's idea of perfection for us is to trust in him. And so we trust, not because we have everything figured out, but precisely because we don't." ■

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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2017

See you in the Sunshine State!



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2016 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

Recognizing *the* volunteers, *the* mentors *and the* prayerful servants *of our* diocese



(SAINT AUGUSTINE MEDAL PHOTOS
BY MICHELLE BABYAK)

Medal is outward sign of heartfelt faith

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

“Wear this medal with our gratitude and recognition as an outward sign of what is already in your heart and soul. The medal simply allows the world to know that what they see on the outside already exists on the inside,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano on October 15 to the 160 St. Augustine Medal recipients at St. Augustine Cathedral.

With the cathedral filled to capacity for Midday Prayer and the Award Service, Bishop Caggiano said that he was happy to “give voice” to what so many other people already knew about the recipients, that they were “distinguished by mercy, generosity, love, fidelity and witness to Christ” in their concern for others.

On a sparkling October afternoon, friends and family,

joined by pastors and deacons, came forward to stand alongside the recipients as Bishop Caggiano presented the St. Augustine Medal of Service.

They were honored for their selfless service to schools, parishes, Catholic Charities, and other diocesan ministries. Some have spent a lifetime in service to their parishes, while other recipients were young enough to be holding their newborn and young children in their arms.

Al Barber, president of Catholic Charities, called forth the men and women from the pulpit, while Patrick Turner, director of Pastoral and Strategic Planning, led the congregation in the recitation of psalms and antiphons.

“Thank you for being such remarkable people of faith,” said Bishop Caggiano in his homily.

He told the men and women that their service makes them “missionary disciples” who have answered the call of Pope Francis to be “people of mercy who make God’s love concrete in so many ways.”

He said one of the great challenges for the 21st century is the “need for an army of new leaders to bring the Church to every human heart looking for hope.”

The bishop also issued a challenge to this year’s medal

recipients “to become a Holy Reproach” through their humility and service that will inspire others to “work with you side by side and hand in hand to renew the earth.”

Noting that we live in a world where so many people, including those in the Church, are willing “to let someone else worry and let someone else do the work,” the bishop thanked the medal recipients for their leadership and witness.

After the recessional hymn, the recipients walked out into the bright mid-day sun proudly wearing their medals. A reception followed at Kolbe Cathedral High School, which shares the cathedral campus.

The St. Augustine Medal of Service was instituted in 2005 to recognize the “unsung heroes” who unselfishly give of their time and talents to build up parish communities and diocesan ministries. On one side of the medal is an image of St. Augustine of Hippo, patron saint of the diocese. The reverse features the coat of arms of the diocese.

(For a complete list of the 2016 recipients, go to www.bridgeportdiocese.com/index.php/fcc/article/2016_saint_augustine_medal_recipients.)

2016 Saint Augustine Medal of Service



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MR. & MRS. JAMES KELLY —
Nominated by Reverend Corey V. Piccinino



SAINT MARY SCHOOL, BETHEL:
MR. RICHARD SCHLEMMER —
Nominated by Mr. Gregory Viceroy, Principal



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— *Nominated by Reverend Joseph J. Karcinski, III*



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MS. LOUISE GIDEZ —
Nominated by Mr. Al Barber



CATHOLIC CHARITIES, BRIDGEPORT:
MR. JOHN GLECKLER —
Nominated by Mr. Al Barber



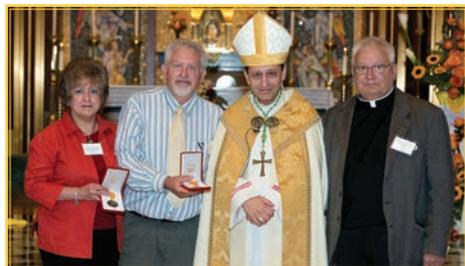
CATHOLIC CHARITIES, BRIDGEPORT:
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Nominated by Mr. Al Barber



DEVELOPMENT, BRIDGEPORT:
MR. & MRS. VINCENT VON ZWEHL —
Nominated by Mr. William McLean



SAINT ANDREW PARISH, BRIDGEPORT:
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Nominated by Reverend Eugene R. Szantyr



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Nominated by Reverend Peter J. Lynch



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IMMACULATE HIGH SCHOOL, DANBURY:
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Nominated by Mrs. Mary Maloney, President



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2016 Saint Augustine Medal of Service



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Nominated by Reverend John P. Baran



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FAIRFIELD: **Mrs. GINA BARBER** —
Nominated by Mrs. Helen Burland, Principal



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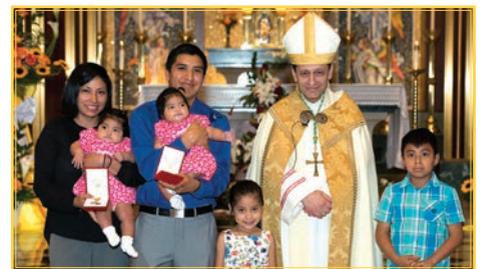
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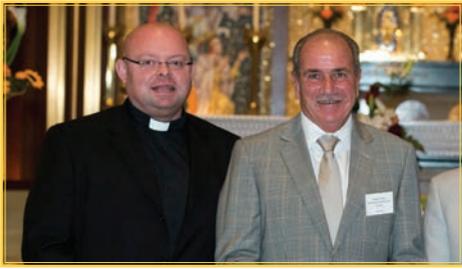
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Nominated by Reverend Miroslaw Stachurski



SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE PARISH, NORWALK:
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OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA SCHOOL, STAMFORD:
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SAINT MAURICE PARISH, STAMFORD:
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SAINT MARK PARISH, STAMFORD:
MR. & MRS. ALAN GRASSIA —
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SAINT STEPHEN PARISH, TRUMBULL:
MR. RICHARD LAVELLE —
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SAINT LUKE PARISH, WESTPORT:
MR. TIMOTHY WEISS —
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SAINT JOSEPH PARISH NORWALK:
MR. RENEL DESROSINS —
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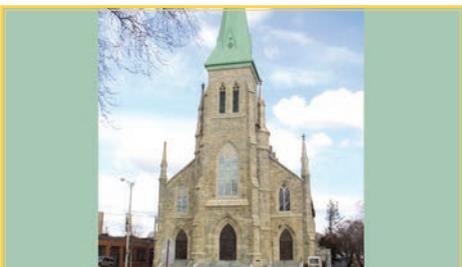
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SAINT EDWARD THE CONFESSOR PARISH, NEW FAIRFIELD:
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Advent Preparation

The adventure begins anew

By DR. FRANK DeSTEFANO

**First Sunday of Advent
(November 26-27) "A" cycle**

Reading I, Old Testament:

Isaiah 2: 1-5

Reading II, Epistle:

Romans 13: 11-14

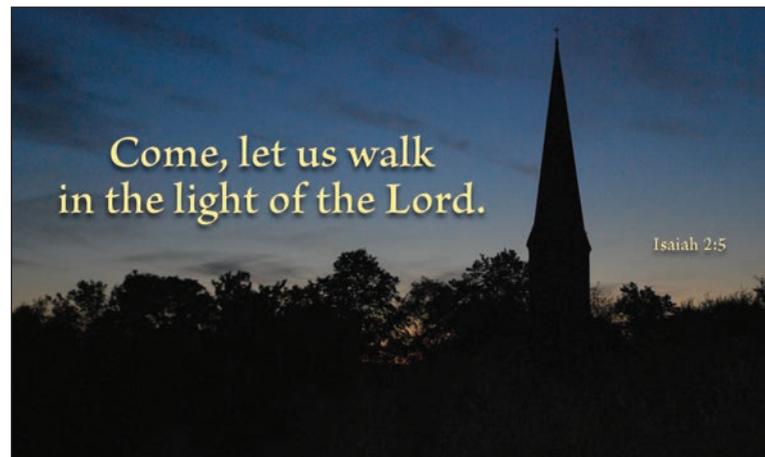
Gospel:

Matthew 24: 37-44
(Stay awake!)

A few years ago three films based on J.R.R. Tolkien's epic story, "The Lord of the Rings," enjoyed enormous critical and popular success. Issued in three successive years around Christmas time, they were a box office smash. The third in the series, entitled, "The Return of the King," won the Academy Award for "Best Picture."

Most of us know by now that both the three-volume book and the films tell the story of a great journey or adventure undertaken by a group of men, elves, dwarves, and the now-famous hobbits.

The adventure begins, however, in a smaller book of Tolkien's called *The Hobbit*. In that book this particular hobbit is woken out of a quiet peaceful afternoon



nap by a violent knocking on his door. To his amazement he is told that he must rouse himself out of his comfort and complacency and embark on a dangerous adventure whose end is far from certain. In the course of the adventure he will find that there is more to life than he ever dreamed, and that there is more to himself than he ever dreamed.

Isn't it odd that the word "advent" is contained in the word, "adventure"? Advent is not just a time of preparation for Christmas; it is a time for all of us to consider how far we have progressed on the great adventure of life. Let's consider the first

reading, which comes from the Prophet Isaiah. He sees whole nations and peoples climbing the Lord's mountain. In famous words he portrays a vision of a far off world completely different than the one we know.

"They shall beat their swords into plowshares

And their spears into pruning hooks;

One nation shall not raise the sword against another,

Nor shall they train for war again" (Is 2:4).

Before we reach this new world the old world must pass away.

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

Advent talk on Healthy Families

STAMFORD—Two themes of concern to Catholic families during the Advent season will be the focus when acclaimed national media personality and talk show host Msgr. Jim Lisante speaks at St. Bridget of Ireland parish in Stamford on Tuesday, December 6, starting at 7 pm.

Msgr. Lisante currently hosts the popular nationally syndicated radio show, *Personally Speaking*, on Sirius XM's The Catholic Channel. He recently interviewed Bishop Frank Caggiano on a show which aired on October 30. Msgr. Lisante was renowned for his Prayer Channel show *Christopher Close-Up* as well as the TV show *Close Encounters*.



MSGR. JIM LISANTE

His presentation at St. Bridget will incorporate two Advent themes: The Challenge of Belief in a Secular Culture, and The Challenge of a Healthy Family Life.

In the first half of the evening, Msgr. Lisante will address the challenges to the Catholic faith given the secular traditions of Christmas. "We spend most of our time preparing not for a celebration of the birth of Jesus but for fulfilling the demands of the season. Jesus faces a lot of competition in our society, especially around Christmas, from relatives and retailers," said Msgr. Lisante.

With parents working, busy lives, children overscheduled, and a thousand other things competing for our attention, Msgr. Lisante says the celebration of Jesus' birth can often be reduced to a sidebar.

The focus of the second half of his presentation will be the secular challenges to a healthy family life during the Christmas season. "There's less time to devote to the spiritual side of the family," explains Msgr. Lisante. "Advent is the perfect time to readjust our priorities by showing our children and grandchildren how to live our faith, both inside and outside the home."

During his recent radio interview with Bishop Caggiano, Msgr. Lisante reinforced that evangelization is everyone's responsibility. He said that sense of spiritual "welcome" should be enhanced even more at Christmas.

Msgr. Lisante is the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Massapequa, NY. He previously was the director of the Office of Family Ministry for the Diocese of Rockville Centre. In addition, he is the author of four books, *Of Life and Love*, *Personally Speaking*, *Let's Talk*, and *The Power of One*. Msgr. Lisante is a regular contributor to Fox News Channel, Newsmax, and ABC Eyewitness News. He has also appeared on PBS, MSNBC, CNN, CBS, and ABC Nightline. His columns have appeared in more than 300 newspapers nationwide and he lectures at conferences around the country.

(Free of charge; all are welcome. Tuesday, December 6, from 7-9 pm at St. Bridget's. For more information, call the parish: 203.324.2910.) ■



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Knights of Columbus Museum

Celebrating Christmas, German Style

NEW HAVEN—Christmas is fast approaching, along with all the customs we enjoy. We look forward to festive family gatherings, exchanging gifts, sharing sumptuous meals, all in celebration of the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ. In Germany, with its ancestral heritage, charming landscapes and villages and a culture deeply rooted in spirituality, one may say every day is Christmas.

This year, the Knights of Columbus Museum in New Haven is featuring the country of Germany with its 12th annual Christmas exhibition: *Crèches of Germany: Tradition & Faith*. The show opens November 19, and continues until January 29, 2017. As in the past, many of the objects on display hail from the internationally renowned Museo del Presepio of Rome, Italian Friends of the Crèche Association and the Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. The European team that assembled the exhibition has, again, produced a world-class show.

In addition to the featured exhibition, several items from the Knights of Columbus Museum's own collection will be on display, including crèches from various parts of the world. Among those on view will be a hand-carved cedar nativity scene from Mexico and a popular 120-square-foot Baroque Neapolitan diorama.

Germans have safeguarded the customs, rituals and beliefs of Christmas, handing them down from generation to generation. The country is filled with villages that seem to pop out from a greeting card, announcing *Fröhliche Weihnachten*—Merry Christmas! Quaint shops sell glittering Christmas items winter, spring, summer and fall. Nativity scenes are displayed throughout the year in churches. The joy of Christmas is evident even on sunny summer days, often evoking memories of childhood.

Although its German origins are uncertain, the crèche or Nativity scene probably was introduced by Franciscan friars. The oldest recorded German crèche was housed in the Monastery of Füssen in Bavaria and dates to 1252, shortly after the arrival of the followers of



GERMANS HAVE SAFEGUARDED the customs, rituals and beliefs of Christmas, handing them down from generation to generation. The country is filled with villages that seem to pop out from a greeting card, announcing *Fröhliche Weihnachten*—Merry Christmas! The nativities of Germany, like this one displaying the Holy Family in a typical German stable, are this year's feature at the Knights of Columbus Museum in New Haven.

St. Francis, the "poor man of Assisi," who developed the custom of a Nativity scene some 30 years earlier.

From the 16th century on, the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) is credited with spreading the tradition of the Nativity scene. Records from

this period reveal that German monasteries, abbeys and churches added elaborate Nativities. In response to increasing requests

for crèche accessories, markets known as *Christkindlesmärkte* (Christ Child Markets) began to flourish in cities such as Munich and Nuremberg.

The Knights of Columbus Museum's 16th annual Christmas Tree Festival opens Saturday, December 3, with a celebration from 11 am-3 pm. The event will offer children's crafts, a visit from St. Nicholas and live music by the Yuletide Carolers. The Christmas Tree Festival features colorful and creative decorations as students from 24 schools across Connecticut trim the museum trees with handmade ornaments featuring the customs and heritage of a German Christmas.

A Christmastime Family Day takes place December 31, from 12 noon-3 pm, with children's crafts and live music from Joyful Noise.

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

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS ANEW FROM PAGE 22

This is the reason why Advent, the season which marks the beginning of the Church year, has traditionally begun with readings reminding us of the end of the world. In today's Gospel from St. Matthew, Jesus refers to the people before the great flood. He says that, like us, they were going about their daily business without a clue of what was in store for them.

Our Lord's advice, whether it be the end of the whole world or just the end of our own little world, is the same. "Stay awake." By "awake" he means be ready, be prepared to set out on your journey.

"So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come" (Matt 24:42).

Advent has always been regarded as a season of preparation. Why is it that we prepare for everything in life but often fail to prepare for the most important thing in life? What football team

would go into the weekend's big game without practicing all week? What will they practice? Why, the very same formations and plays that they expect to use when they are put to the test. During the week they will also be in the weight room preparing their bodies for the blows to come. On game day they will put on their protective gear or armor. Only a fool would go into such combat improperly equipped.

In business it's much the same thing. Salesmen practice their presentations before facing their customers. They learn how to anticipate and overcome every objection. In politics, look how even the presidential candidates go through rigorous prepping and role play before debating their opponents.

How should we prepare for life's great adventure? Let's see if we can come up with a list of things to do this Advent season. They will help us on our way. First, let's take St. Paul's advice to throw off darkness and avoid destructive behavior: "Let us

conduct ourselves properly as in daylight, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and lust, not in rivalry and jealousy (Rom 13: 13).

It was sad a few years ago to read in the paper that two of our local Catholic universities led the state of Connecticut in arrests for drunkenness. It was even sadder to read an article about a young woman at a Midwestern university who drank herself to death while at a frat party. The paper reported that she was just one of many who would die a similar death every year. I know that television glamorizes this type of drinking, but what is so glamorous about falling into an alcohol-induced coma in a frat house or an office party?

We can all think of ways to "throw off the works of darkness," but St. Paul also urges us to "put on the armor of light." There is no better way to do so this season than by increasing our attendance at Mass.

Certainly, in this season when we should all be looking

forward to the coming of Christ, he comes to us in each and every Mass. In addition to Sunday Mass, we will celebrate the great feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, a true Holy Day of Opportunity.

Finally, I can think of no better way to counter the stress and anxiety of this mad shopping season than to attend daily Mass during Advent. We will find a half hour of peace and tranquility every day and encounter some of the most beautiful readings in the missal. We will get an opportunity to reconcile ourselves with God and our neighbor when we recite the Kyrie, the Confiteor, the Our Father and the Agnus Dei. We can offer the kiss of peace to our friends and family. We can offer thanks to God for all the good things that have been given us, and then we can approach the altar to receive the true gift of Christmas, the gift of God's only Son. ■

Saint Theresa Parish

Father Brian Gannon to talk 'men's group' on EWTN-TV

By JOSEPH PRONECHEN

On December 1, the diocese's own Father Brian Gannon will be a guest on the highly popular hour-long EWTN TV program, *At Home with Jim and Joy*.

The pastor of St. Theresa Church in Trumbull, Father Gannon got the invitation from the international Eternal Word Television Network after they learned of the success of the parish's thriving men's group, the Sons of Saint Joseph. On the show, Father Gannon will talk about the ways the Sons of Saint Joseph has inspired and involved men in the parish and how it is a model for starting such groups in parishes around the country.

Father Gannon explained that the Sons of Saint Joseph was founded six years ago with 12 men meeting at 6:30 am on a Saturday morning. It was somewhat reminiscent of the Apostles—but the group expanded quickly.

"We have over 120 men registered and usually we get about 30 or more a week at 6:30 am," Father Gannon explains. Once men attend the first time, they're

thrilled to become regular members. The pastor describes a typical reaction: "As one guy says, 'If you had asked me a year ago if I would be at church at 6:30 am on Saturday morning singing a Latin hymn, I would have told you you're crazy. But I love it!'"

The men range in age from their 20s to one 94-year-old D-Day veteran. The biggest percentage are men in their 30s through 50s, with families.

Father Gannon described the Sons of Saint Joseph as "a dynamic group of outstanding men who work very hard, love their families very much, and want to be good Catholic men in today's world."

They begin with Eucharistic Adoration. Then he or another priest gives an 8-10 minute reflection. After it the men break into small groups and discuss the particular topic in the context of being Catholic men in today's world and culture.

And they don't forget the fortification. "We have bagels. And good strong coffee to get everybody going," Father Gannon chuckles. "We make 80 cups of

coffee and go through them all!"

The reflections are not academic lectures but points to see and discuss "how does this impact me as a man?" says Father Gannon. "The thrust is that every teaching of the faith impacts us spiritually and morally, and how generous our infinite and loving God is."

General topics shift from spirituality to Church history, moral teachings and learning more about the liturgy. Topics also focus on marriage and families, the Fathers of the Church, spiritual warfare, conquering the seven deadly sins, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the masculinity of Jesus.

Speaking of masculinity, Father Gannon explains, "The reason why we chose Saint Joseph is because he would be the ultimate human father and human husband. And the fact that he is the 'terror of demons' gives us an extra incentive of devotion."

One beautiful fruit to emerge from the group is a brand new Knights of Columbus Council that has been exceptionally active in its apostolate, doing such



THE SONS OF SAINT JOSEPH has inspired men of St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull, shown here at a retreat on Enders Island, and has become a model for groups around the country. Father Brian Gannon, St. Theresa's pastor, will speak about the group on EWTN TV on December 1.

works as feeding the homeless, helping the elderly, visiting prisons and "assisting our wonderful parish in incredible ways," says Father Gannon.

The benefits to members and families keep adding up. Father Gannon explains, "The guys have said 'this has really made me stronger and has really strengthened my relationship with my family. It's led me to be a better disciple of Christ and lead my children to be disciples of Christ.'"

Wives have remarked to him how the Sons of Saint Joseph "has had such a positive effect on their husbands," he adds. That comes home to benefit their families too.

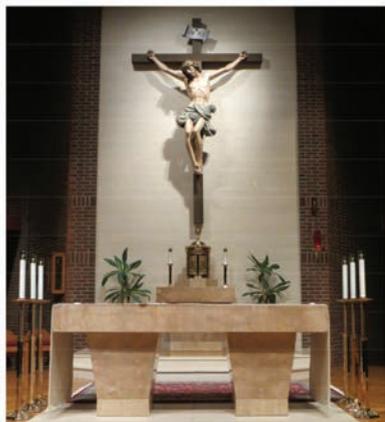
For instance, after one very informative six-week session on different apparitions of the Blessed Mother, Father Gannon notes

a number of members "started praying the Rosary more often. They came to realize that in their car and other places they can use the time to pray. They could use certain times they never thought about before to pray the Rosary." Several men then brought the practice to their families.

Looking at what the Sons of Saint Joseph is accomplishing, Father Gannon is "personally inspired by men who are so busy with work and busy with families who come devotedly and volunteer their time to help this group keep going and going."

Hearing from him, surely EWTN viewers of the *At Home with Jim and Joy* show will find that same inspiration.

(The show airs on Thursday, December 1, at 2 pm and repeats on Saturday, December 3, at 1 am and Sunday, December 4, at 10:30 am.) ■



Saint Matthew Parish

Msgr. Walter C. Orlowski, KCHS
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Directors of Religious Education

Joyfully answering God's call

By PAT HENNESSY

"Our enrollment is up and our kids are enthusiastic. They're interested in their faith," says Christine Green, who became director of religious education (DRE) at St. Paul Parish in Greenwich this fall. "The happiest time for me is when I'm here with the kids."

An active member of St. Leo Parish in Stamford, she is on the parish council there and volunteers as a Eucharistic Minister to nursing homes. She had previously worked as director of admissions at Trinity Catholic High School.

She is enthusiastic about the program she inherited and the new initiatives going forward under St. Paul's pastor, Father Leszek Szymaszek. The parish has a 9:30 family Mass, with special events planned throughout the year. The children will take part in a Christmas pageant on December 18, and special events will be held in upcoming months.

"We've also started a coffee hour once a month after Mass," Green notes. "It's a good way for parents to get to know each other and build friendships."

St. Paul's Confirmation class



"OUR KIDS ARE ENTHUSIASTIC. They're interested in their faith," says Christine Green, who became director of religious education at St. Paul Parish in Greenwich this fall. Shown here with members of the fourth grade class, Green's positive attitude is typical of the DREs throughout the diocese.

received the sacrament at the end of October. "They want to continue to be involved and helping," she says. Responding to their enthusiasm, St. Paul's will be starting a youth group this December.

"The parents and catechists here are so supporting," Green says. "They're all such a gift."

Whether she is working with the young teens or taking fourth graders on a tour of the church, Green's energy, dedication and commitment shine through. "I want to make the kids happy to come here," she says.

Her positive attitude is typical

of the DREs throughout the diocese. "I've always had a passion for religious education," says Barbara Siano, the new DRE at St. Peter Parish in Danbury.

She comes to St. Peter's via a most unusual path—after 23 years in Hong Kong. "We were newly married with no kids and came home with four kids," she says with a laugh.

Her experience in Hong Kong prepared her well for the diversity she found at St. Peter's. Her parish in Hong Kong, St. Ann's, had an international mix of families and no formal religious education program. The parents of children in kindergarten through eighth grade put together a program on their own. "We had Filipinos, Chinese, Brits and Americans," she recalls. "We had large cultural differences but one faith. I think God is very clever, because he knew he was sending me from there to St. Peter's."

Situated in the center of Danbury, St. Peter's has a large Brazilian community and a diverse Spanish-speaking one. "The Brazilian group offers religious education classes on Saturday, and there's class in Spanish on Sunday afternoon. Of course, a lot of parents opt for classes in English no matter what language they speak at home."

New this year, Siano is taking time to become familiar with the population St. Peter's serves. "It's just about being aware and being open," she says. "I want to encourage ways that we can come together—like some things with food," she says, citing the upcoming Christmas barbeque as an example.

Holiday observances and par-

ish-wide activities throughout the year will provide more chances to bring people together. "We'll just make opportunities wherever we can, and step by step we'll get there," she says. "At the end of the day, we are all the same."

Diversity of an entirely different type challenges Leslie Hernandez, DRE of two closely-situated parishes in Stamford: St. Mary's and St. Benedict-Our Lady of Montserrat (itself a blended parish.) Although both parishes have a large number of Spanish-speaking parishioners, both have a strong—and separate—sense of community. In addition, St. Mary's is home to members of the Neocatechumenal Way, a charism within the Church dedicated to Christian formation. She and her husband of two years, Fernando, are Responsibles (leaders) of the group at St. Mary's. Altogether, including RCIC and RCIA, Hernandez is in charge of a program for over 500 in religious education.

"We have one pastor, Father Gustavo Falla, one program, but separate locations and times for each parish," she says, explaining the complexity of the people she serves.

Hernandez is completely bilingual. She was born in New London and majored in social work at Eastern CT State University, completing her internship by working with middle school students. "I tell people that everything that led me here happened by accident, but it's God's plan for me to be here."

While both parishes are bilingual, with Masses celebrated in both English and Spanish, the religious education program is conducted entirely in English. "Fortunately, enough of the teachers and helpers are bilingual so that parents can communicate with them comfortably," Hernandez notes. "As in all parishes, we're doing what we can to help the children. They're happy to learn. We want to give them the opportunities to celebrate the faith and make them curious for more—make them want to come back."

"Religious education is a very special calling," says Rose Talbot-Babey, coordinator of Childhood Faith Formation for the diocese. "From Christine, Barbara and Leslie you get a sense of the joy that all DREs bring as they answer God's call."

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our entire religious
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and to the catechists
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Catholic Charities

Susan Conroy speaks at Celebrity Breakfast

By THOM GUTHRIE

Some people just light up a room with their joy and faith. Susan Conroy is certainly one of them. Whether she's addressing a room full of people or hosting a WTNN show about the saints, her every word mesmerizes. That same inner fire drove her from South Portland, Maine to Calcutta, India, where she served alongside the recently-canonized Mother Teresa.

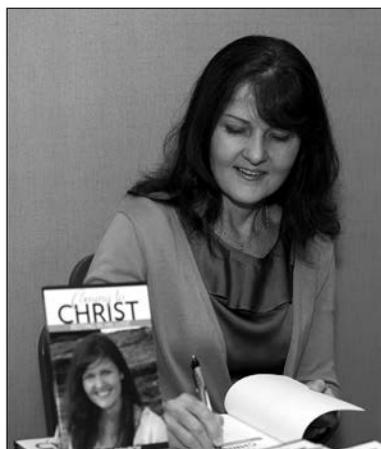
On November 3, Conroy was the guest speaker at Catholic Charities of Northern Fairfield County's Fall Celebrity Breakfast. The event, which benefited the behavioral health clinic in Danbury, raised \$50,000.

In 1986, between her sophomore and junior years at Dartmouth, where she majored

in economics, Conroy followed her passion across the world to help the poorest of the poor. As a twenty-one-year-old college student, with no prior knowledge of the area, or its languages, or even what her service might entail, she just went—knowing that she could make a difference.

Coming from South Portland, a city with less than 80,000 people, the notion of living in a bustling foreign metropolis with tens of millions of residents should have been intimidating. Instead, she simply asked passersby, in English, how to find Mother Teresa. Without even comprehending her language, they guided her straight to the proper address.

While Conroy's is most notably a life of devoted service, she also reminded attendees that her experience was an education too.



SUSAN CONROY

Mother Teresa taught her much, starting with discipline. Every day, without fail, they attended Mass together. It revitalized their connection to God, recharging their batteries for another day of doing the Lord's work. At their first Mass together, Mother Teresa acted as a Eucharistic minister. While delivering the Body of Christ, her fingers touched Conroy's lips. The young Dartmouth undergraduate began weeping, overcome with emotion by such close contact with one of the most spiritually robust people of our time. While Mother Teresa's canonization would not

take place for almost thirty more years, Conroy knew she had been touched by a saint.

Although Mother Teresa was a worldwide celebrity, Conroy saw that she never acted like she was anything but a fellow bride to Christ working alongside her Sisters to make the world a better place. While doing so, she radiated a joy and humility that awed any who met her. Her compassion, while trademark, was never forced or false.

Conroy also pointed out the immense impact Mother Teresa had on the Catholic community where she lived. She was not

from a tapestry or local legend; she performed her holy work during our lifetime. She was in the same world, even if she was thousands of miles away. There is no sense of removal, of dimmed historical perspective. She was, and is, a part of the modern world—a visible symbol of the good one person can do.

Mother Teresa also taught Conroy, and all of her charges, a great deal about the power of touch, of contact with other people. In India, the poorest members of society are deemed untouchable, and that is often meant quite literally. Wards full of dying patients would, when Mother Teresa entered the unit, call out to her. She made time for all of them, toiling for hours to share herself with those who would ordinarily be left to die in a gutter. She exemplified the dedication and humility of Jesus at its most relatable.

Conroy said that even now, her life centers around Mother Teresa's guiding maxim: "Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier," which was certainly the case for everyone who attended the Danbury event. ■



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50 years as Fisher of Men



TRUMBULL—Parishioners, friends and family filled Christ the King Church on November 6 for the Mass and reception celebrating the 50 years of priesthood of their pastor, Father Lawrence Carew. During the Mass, Father Carew shared some of the spiritual high-

lights of his priestly ministry. He told the congregation that his future plans include continuing as a chaplain in volunteer prison ministry and working with veterans suffering from post traumatic stress disorder.

Fran Karpiej, who has worked closely with Father Carew in Charismatic Renewal and traveled

with him on pilgrimages, spoke during the reception after Mass. "The Holy Spirit has given him many gifts," she said. "The ultimate pilgrimage is to grow closer to the heart of Christ."

Father Carew, at left in photo, was joined in the celebration by a large contingent of his extended family. ■

Local News

A woman's journey back to the Church

By PAMELA RITTMAN

Award-winning Catholic journalist Susan Brinkman, OCDS, discussed her journey back to the Church and toward a feminism grounded in spirituality at the Magnificat Women's Prayer Breakfast on October 1 at the Ethan Allen Inn in Danbury.

Speaking to a gathering of 65 women from throughout the

diocese, Brinkman, a staff writer for *Women of Grace* and a frequent guest on EWTN, shared her powerful testimony about the road back to her Catholic faith. Since the breakfast was held on the feast day of St. Therese, a first class relic was available for veneration.

Fran Hood, coordinator of the Diocese of Bridgeport Magnificat, The Triumph Heart of Mary

Immaculate Chapter women's ministry, welcomed Brinkman and opened the program with brief thoughts on examples of the challenges women face in life and how they can trust Jesus for help through prayer and boldness of personal faith.

Father Larry Carew, pastor of Christ the King Parish in Trumbull and chaplain of the Magnificat chapter, offered prayer for the morning programs and shared his personal stories of the significance of St. Therese in his life.

A third order Carmelite, Brinkman has written perceptively on Carmelite prayer and spirituality, the New Age movement, and the occult. However, much of her talk focused on her young life as a "birth control pill popping" woman who did not find fulfillment in much of what she was doing.

Brinkman, who had hoped to be a novelist as a young woman, spoke about her struggles with personal relationships and her frustration with the Church's teachings, particularly on women. In comparison, she had what seemed to be a successful, fast-paced life apart from the faith, enjoying all that the world offered.

She had found and purchased



SUSAN BRINKMAN, OCDS

an old Bible, which she initially bought purely for its antique value. Through it she discovered the Psalms. Then a niece asked her to be her Confirmation sponsor. Step by step she began her journey back to her Catholic faith.

Brinkman had been drawn to the feminist movement because she saw it as one that allowed women to control the choices they make in every aspect of life. Ultimately she saw that, instead, the lifestyle she had followed led to other people's ideas controlling her. She was losing her unique identity. As the onion slowly peeled back and the Holy Spirit gently revealed truths to her, she came to understand God's beautiful gift of the feminine genius and she discovered God's perfect plan for her.

In making the leap of faith back to the Church, she also found the gift that she had long sought in her career: becoming a published writer, reporter and blogger.

Hearing testimonies like Brinkman's helps women of all ages grow in their Catholic

faith. The Magnificat ministry's outreach to women is modeled after the Visitation: Mary visiting Elizabeth and the two women discussing the meaning of God's work in their lives. Breakfasts are held several times a year and offer a time for women to share with other women; a lovely gathering of ladies.

The Triumph Heart of Mary Immaculate Chapter is planning one-day retreats for women in various age groups. The next retreat will take place in January 2017 for young women ages 18 to 25. The theme is particularly appropriate for women living on their own for the first time or stepping out into the business world: "Living Out Your Catholic Faith in a Counter Culture." It will be held at St. Rose of Lima Parish in Newtown, at a date to be announced soon. In addition, monthly prayer cenacles (prayer gatherings) are held in the Trumbull and Danbury areas.

(For more information, contact Fran Hood at S.M.Hood@sbcglo-gal.net.)

Harry Connick, Jr., performs for local benefit

BRIDGEPORT—Harry Connick, Jr., said he was "honored and humbled" to be performing for a room of "good-hearted people" on November 1 at the Hyatt Regency in Greenwich for a benefit for Fairfield County's Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education. The annual benefit provides critical funding for the charity's support of programs serving the neediest adults and children in Fairfield County. This year marked the charity's 25th



HARRY CONNICK, JR.

annual benefit dinner.

"It was very special to see Harry Connick, Jr., in such an intimate setting," said Richard Stone, executive director for the Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education, "since he regularly sells out much larger venues around the world. It was a very hot ticket, and we were sold out."

Dave Price, the master of ceremonies at the event and Emmy award winning television personality from WNBC-TV, commented from the stage that it was not only rare to have Harry Connick, Jr., performing, but also to see him joining the crowd for dinner before the show.

The Inner-City Foundation hopes that the excitement generated by Harry's performance will continue to boost donations: their 25th year fundraising goal is to raise \$2.5 million this year — more than twice what they typically raise in a year. The benefit raised about \$1 million.

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Nuestra Voz

‘Sacred Heart’ en el corazón del barrio latino de Stamford

Por MARICARMEN GODOY

Hace un año, el Padre Alfonso Picone le escribió una carta al Obispo Frank Caggiano, pidiéndole permiso para comenzar un ministerio hispano en la Parroquia de Sacred Heart, ubicada en 37 Schuyler Avenue, en el pleno corazón del West Side, un vecindario cien por ciento hispano. La misiva que el religioso le escribió al obispo fue en base a un censo parroquial que fue puesto en marcha desde el primer día que el Padre Alfonso llegó a la parroquia.

“Cuando llegué a la Parroquia de Sacred Heart (Sagrado Corazón) me di cuenta de que tenía vecinos que tenían

peluquerías dominicanas, ecuatorianas, que habían tiendas puertorriqueñas, restaurantes guatemaltecos, que en las paradas de buses escolares los niños y sus padres hablaban español, y entonces me dije: ¿este es un vecindario hispano de Stamford!”, y empezó a visitar a los vecinos y a invitarlos a que acudan a la misa del domingo oficiada en inglés o italiano—y posteriormente en español.

Desde febrero de 2015 que inició el ministerio en español, el Padre Alfonso ha podido registrar a 240 personas de origen hispano que acuden constantemente a las celebraciones eclesiales, que se suman a un total de 2.000 feligreses que provienen prin-

cipalmente de origen italiano y polaco. Originalmente, los italianos fueron el grupo étnico que la parroquia fue fundada a servir.

Considera que, actualmente, el grupo étnico que reside en West Side y que acude a su parroquia en forma regular es mayormente de origen guatemalteco, seguido por dominicanos, ecuatorianos, mexicanos, salvadoreños y hondureños.

El Padre Alfonso explicó que el español es la lengua que se le exigió aprender como seminarista y, como nació en Italia y ya hablaba italiano, le fue bastante fácil de aprender el idioma. “Hago lo que puedo. Antes de officiar la Misa dominical hispana, estudio en español la



FATHER ALFONSO PICONE, the pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Stamford, comes from an Italian background. The parish was founded to serve Italian-speaking Catholics in Stamford, and still offers weekly Mass in Italian. Shortly after he arrived, Father Picone realized the neighborhood contained a large number of Hispanic families and began going door to door to invite them to the parish. He celebrated the parish's first Mass in Spanish (shown here) in February, 2015. (PHOTO BY LUCAS ROMERO)

Biblia, el orden de la homilía, las oraciones, y escucho el Ángelus que pronuncia el Papa Francisco y le pido fervorosamente al Espíritu Santo que venga en mi auxilio y que el sagrado amoroso Corazón de Jesús y María me acompañen”.

Según el Padre Alfonso, las

necesidades eclesiales de su parroquia se van presentando acorde con el día. Cuando decidió tocar la puerta de las casas de sus vecinos, se dio cuenta que no solamente era necesaria la misa dominical, sino la oración comunitaria, la confesión y la necesidad de contar con un coro parroquial, monaguillos, lectores y ayudantes para todas las celebraciones religiosas. Los niños sirven de monaguillos mientras estudian para la Primera Comunión, y a los amantes de la oración en español les dio un horario especial de reunión cada viernes a las 7 pm y les pidió que le ayuden en el ministerio de la Misa Hispana.

La parroquia cuenta con un edificio que solía ser la escuela parroquial y que necesita reparaciones. Providencialmente, una escuela “charter” ha alquilado el espacio y se ha ofrecido a hacerse cargo de la reparación y restauración, sin costo alguno. “Dios prepara sus caminos y todo lo que tenemos que hacer es ponernos en sus manos con mucha fe y devoción”, dijo el Padre Alfonso. Cuando se complete la restauración, tendrá espacio para que la parroquia enseñe educación religiosa, ofrezca clases de estudio bíblico y anime reuniones comunitarias. Mientras tanto, los feligreses continúan usando el sótano de la iglesia para la mayoría de las actividades.

En su primer año frente al Ministerio Hispano ha podido celebrar por pedido de la comunidad mexicana la fiesta de la Virgen de Guadalupe; pero también ha logrado que en la Semana Santa acudan cientos de feligreses hispanos al Vía Crucis, a la Hora Santa y a la Misa Pascual porque ofició estos servicios en español, y a las nueve de la noche del 24

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

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High School Sports

A slice of Thanksgiving Day football

By **DON HARRISON**

For aficionados of high school football, Thanksgiving is a must-circle date on the calendar. Quite often it's a game between traditional rivals. It's a crisp November morning spent with family and classmates. It's a day to return to your alma mater and relive the Thanksgiving Day games of your youth.

Four Catholic school teams in the Diocese of Bridgeport, St. Joseph, Trinity Catholic, Fairfield Prep and Immaculate, will take the field Thanksgiving morning, while Notre Dame of Fairfield plays on Thanksgiving eve. Here's a look at each game:

Wednesday, November 23

NOTRE DAME-Fairfield at Pomperaug, 6 pm: The Lancers have become more competitive under second-year coach Chris Sadler, entering the season's final three weeks with a 3-5 record.

"We're having a competitive year, but we've had some tight losses that we wish we could have back," Sadler says.

Co-captain Mike Bevino has been a two-way standout for the Lancers, picking up 530 receiving yards and scoring seven touchdowns; defensively, he's recorded 47 tackles and three sacks. A freshman running back, 6-foot-2, 235-pound Teavian Jackson, has

been a rousing surprise, leading Notre Dame with 900 yards rushing and eight TDs.

Middle linebacker Clyde Auba, a junior, has anchored the defense with 72 tackles—including 10 for a loss—and five sacks.

Thanksgiving Day, November 24

ST. JOSEPH at Trumbull, 10 am: Coach Joe DellaVecchia's Cadets have reeled off seven straight victories after a season-opening loss to Darien, ranked third in the most recent state poll.

Senior quarterback and tri-captain Cory Babineau, who became the starter mid-way through his sophomore season, surpassed the SJ record for touchdown passes in a game this fall with six against Ledyard (a 50-12 rout). Across eight games, Babineau has completed 68.3 percent of his passes (148-216) for 1,847 yards and 24 touchdowns. He's been intercepted just twice.

Another senior, wide receiver Jared Mallozzi, has shattered the school record for receptions in a season with 75 catches, generating 1,035 yards and 15 touchdowns.

Jaden Shirden, a 5-foot-7, 155-pound freshman, sparks St. Joe's ground game with 597 yards on just 136 carries—4.4 yards per carry—and has scored six TDs.

Defensively, senior free safety and tri-captain Brian Harner



SENIOR QUARTERBACK Cory Babineau's passing skills have kept St. Joseph football at the heights. (PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. JOSEPH H.S.)

leads St. Joseph in sacks with 5.5, while defensive end and tri-captain Nick Osborne, also a senior, is tops in solo tackles (27) and interceptions (5) thus far.

Last season St. Joe's defeated its intra-town rival, 17-10, and it has won 7 of the last 12 meetings.

TRINITY CATHOLIC at Wilton, 10:30 am: After a dismal 1-3 September, Coach Donny Panapada's Crusaders have won four straight games. Quarterback Nick Granata has been a force in his senior season, completing 78 of 132 passes for 1,175 yards and 11 touchdowns. On the ground, he's averaging 7.1 yards per attempt, resulting in 228 yards and four TDs.

The Stamford school boasts two fine running backs in junior Nick Melia (563 yards, 5 TDs) and senior Jonmichael Bivona (493 yards, 6 TDs).

FAIRFIELD PREP at West Haven, 10:30 am: Doug

Harrison, a sophomore running back, propelled himself into the Prep limelight with a five-touchdown, 334-yard rushing performance to spark the Jesuits past previously undefeated Shelton, 38-15, on November 3.

Prep, under first-year coach Keith Hellstern, has won five of eight games thus far, but its Thanksgiving opponent, West Haven, is undefeated and ranked No. 2 in the state.

Junior Justin Keith, the Jesuits' middle linebacker, leads the squad with 30 solo tackles and 69 total tackles.

Abbott Tech/IMMACULATE vs. **Wolcott Tech/Housatonic/Wamogo**, 10 am: The Danbury combine, a promising 5-2 thus far and coached by Rich Holmes, concludes the season at home against a three-team combine from Connecticut's Northwest corner. ■

Immaculate Achievement

DANBURY—Immaculate High School announced that it has been selected to receive the prestigious CIAC Michaels Achievement Cup, which recognizes the school's outstanding achievement in an overall athletic program for the 2015-16 school year.

Immaculate High School (IHS) is one of only 15 high school athletic programs to be given the CIAC Michaels Achievement Cup for its exemplary sports program. School athletic programs are selected based on achievement in seven distinct areas: sportsmanship; participation; athletic scholarship; athletic personnel; equity; chemical-free ini-

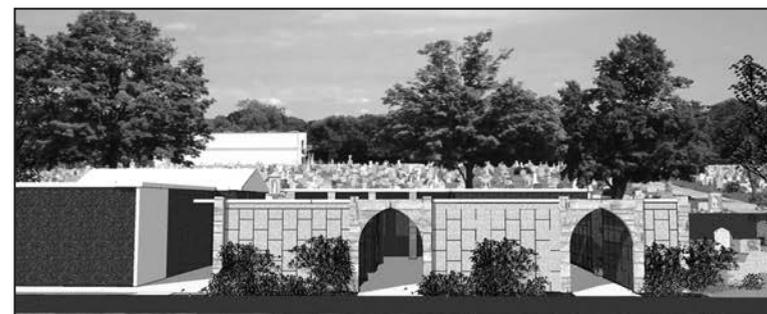
tiatives; and athletic achievement. The schools were honored at the CIAC Sportsmanship Conference at the Aqua Turf in Southington on November 17.

"Our coaches consistently go above and beyond what is expected and this should never be taken for granted," said IHS athletic director Jeff Castaldi. "They serve as exemplary role models, counselors, teachers and leaders, stressing the important attributes of what a true student athlete represents. We have a coaching staff that is second to none and for this I am thankful," he said.

The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) is a private, not-for-profit organization.

Founded in 1921, the CIAC works to develop, maintain and enforce rules of eligibility and conduct that insure equitable athletic competition among Connecticut's secondary schools. The CIAC serves as the sole governing body for inter-scholastic athletic activities in Connecticut.

"This is a true affirmation of how our athletic programs provide exemplary student opportunities beyond the classroom," said Mary Maloney, Immaculate High School's president and interim principal. "Our students and coaches continually show dedicated support of our school mission and work hard to be their very best." ■



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Obituaries

Father Dytkowski, pastor of Holy Trinity

Father Louis Dytkowski, retired chaplain, LTC, U.S. Army, died on October 22 at St. Vincent's Medical Center in Bridgeport after a long illness. Father Dytkowski was born August 25, 1934, and raised in the Hazelton/McAdoo area of Pennsylvania. His father was a coal miner.

Although he came from poverty, his parish helped him to attend boarding school and go on to SS. Cyril and Methodius Seminary in Orchard Lake, Michigan. He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Bridgeport by Bishop Lawrence Shehan in 1960.

He was a parochial vicar at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Riverside and Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Stamford before joining the Army as a chaplain in 1967. After basic training, he

served in Vietnam during the Tet Offensive. Other overseas assignments included Korea, Okinawa, AFCENT in the Netherlands, and a community chaplain in Germany. Stateside assignments were Ft. Belvoir, Va.; Ft. Sheridan, Ill.; the Tank Automotive Command, Warren, Mi.; and Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. His medals and awards include the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, the Air Medal and several presidential Unit Citations.

Father Dytkowski retired from the Army in 1992 and returned to the Diocese of Bridgeport, serving at St. Rose of Lima Parish in Newtown, Holy Cross Parish in Fairfield and St. James Parish in Stratford. He was named pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Sherman in 2002, leading the parish until 2008.

Even after he retired to Florida, Father Dytkowski continued his priestly service. He helped out at Blessed Sacrament Church in Clermont, Fla., and also ministered at the prison and in nursing homes. Summers were spent in Stratford, where he resided at St. James Rectory.

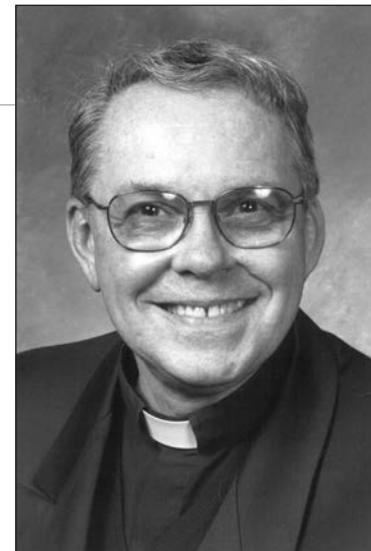
"He had a generous spirit," says Father Thomas Lynch, pastor of St. James. "He had been helped out by the parish in his youth, and he tried in his turn to help out anyone who was struggling." Because he had been far from his family for so long, first leaving home after eighth grade and then for 25 years in the army, "he really appreciated the gifts of friendship. He loved music and he loved to celebrate, and he had a support group of good friends around him."

Father Dytkowski is survived

by his sisters, Frances Sudusky of Milford and Patricia Gerety and husband Gene of Seymour.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Father Dytkowski in St. James Church. Msgr. Thomas Powers, vicar general of the Diocese of Bridgeport, was the principal celebrant. Father Lynch was the homilist.

Burial followed at St. Michael Cemetery in Stratford. ■



FATHER LOUIS DYTKOWSKI

Sister Gloria Czarniewicz, CSFN

Sister Mary Gloria Czarniewicz, a long-time educator who served in elementary and high schools throughout Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania died peacefully on August 20. She was 88 years old.

The third child of Polish immigrants, Victoria Czarniewicz was born on September 27, 1927. She began working as a bookkeeper in 1945 after attending St. Stanislaus School and graduating from Girls High School, both also in Brooklyn. When she decided to enter religious life, Victoria announced to her employer she was leaving for the convent in two weeks. According to stories she later told, her boss exclaimed, "I'll give you a raise." Though a dedicated and hard-working bookkeeper, her employer's offer did not deter Victoria from her call to religious life.

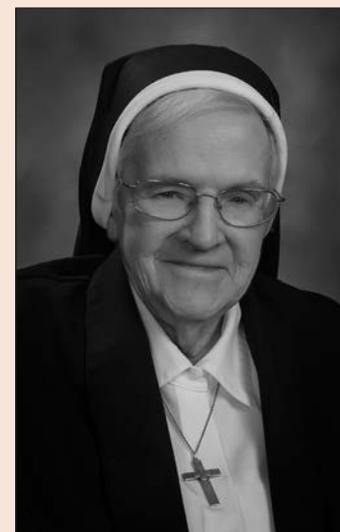
She entered the novitiate on August 18, 1951 and was given the religious name of Gloria. She professed her final vows on August 13, 1959.

Before beginning her teaching career, Sister Gloria assisted with payroll and accounts payable at Nazareth Hospital in Philadelphia. She received a bachelor of science degree from Holy Family University in Philadelphia and a M.S. in business education from Catholic University in Washington, D.C. After 47 years inspiring students both inside and outside of the classroom, Sister Gloria retired from teaching in 1997.

Sister Gloria's 65 years of religious life also included three years, from 1978-81, as treasurer of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Province, Monroe. In 1992, she was secretary for the Congregation's 19th General Chapter in Rome.

While still teaching, she also served as a driver for the Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent from 1994-97. In 2005, she retired to Immaculate Heart of Mary, where she had the opportunity to serve as the convent's part-time receptionist.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Sister Gloria on August 23 in Immaculate Heart of Mary chapel. Burial followed at Holy Family Cemetery on the convent grounds. ■



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Obituaries

Sister Marie Christel obit

Sister Marie Christel of the Sisters of Mercy died peacefully at St. Francis Hospital on August 30. Born Marjorie Scholl on Long Island, N.Y., on July 7, 1938, she grew up in Newtown and graduated from St. Peter Elementary School in Danbury.

The Scholls were a well-known family in Bethel and her father, Elwood, was purveyor of fine meats. As a devout Catholic family, the Sholls made sure that many a priest in the diocese had the chance to enjoy their meats!

She entered the Sisters of Mercy in 1958, and professed her vows on June 26, 1961. She

earned her B.A. degree in art history and a master's degree in counseling from St. Joseph College, now the University of St. Joseph. In addition, she received a M.S. degree from Central Connecticut State University.

She worked as a licensed beautician for almost a decade while pursuing her academic studies. Her primary ministry for more than 20 years



was as a creative, energetic and enthusiastic art instructor at Catholic high schools in Connecticut. Sister Marie Christel was an accomplished artist, with water color her preferred medium.

A Mass of Resurrection was celebrated for Sister Marie Christel on September 6 at St. Mary Home Chapel, West Hartford. Burial followed in St. Mary Cemetery. ■

DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT: NOVEMBER 20—DECEMBER 17

NOVEMBER

20	Rev. Francis J. Fulop.....	1957
	Rev. John F. Culliton	1967
	Rev. Hugh A. Coffey	1975
21	Msgr. Edwin F. Burke	2004
22	Rev. Stephen J. Panik	1953
	Msgr. Joseph N. Murphy	1988
23	Rev. Robert G. Pohley.....	2006
26	Deacon Joseph Lawrence Rowan	2013
27	Deacon John Barton.....	2012
	Rev. Myron V. Miller	1961
28	Deacon Wayne E. Malloy	2011

DECEMBER

1	Rev. Michael E. Kearney.....	1956
	Msgr. Alfred J. Sienkiewicz	1996
	Deacon Robert W. Becker	2000
3	Msgr. John E. Gilmartin.....	2011
	Rev. Thomas Gwozdz, OFM Conv.	2007
	Rev. Joseph A. Pisarcik	1956
4	Msgr. Joseph M. Fitzgerald	2005
5	Rev. Vincent J. O'Connor.....	1985
7	Deacon George Saulnier.....	1997
8	Rev. Rufin Kuveikas, OFM Conv.	2008
10	Msgr. Bartholomew J. Skelly	1967
	Rev. Ambrose Walas, OFM Conv.	1967
	Rev. Paul M. Spodnik	1976
13	Rev. Alfred E. Russo	2009
15	Msgr. Lawrence J. McMahon	2009
17	Rev. Kieran T. Ahearn	1997

Happy Thanksgiving

St. Vincent's Medical Center

ST. VINCENT'S HEALTH SERVICES

Column: Thomas Hicks



A strange benevolent process

POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

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

“I greet Him the days I meet Him, and bless when I understand” (Gerard Manley Hopkins)

So much in my life is done and gone. So much is so long, long ago. Sometimes it seems that

whole worlds have disappeared. I often think of wounds that I suffered and inflicted; remorse bites at me. But more often I think of all the happiness behind me. The dear, dead days of my boyhood seem the idyllic days, the good days, the magic days, the golden

weather of my life. There were tears and fear and struggle, but still the vanished springs and summers of those days seem like enchanted times when the world was sweet and filled with promise. I don't want to be that boy again—I simply liked having been him.

I find myself at a time in my life when I sense a landscape travelled, and more and more I look back meditatively on it. I do get a sense that perhaps my life has a plot, that the events of my life do have a shape and direction. I do glimpse the hand of God.

At times, I have been tempted to ask: “Am I really recognized by God?” “Am I really in God's thoughts and affection?” I am

one of billions in the world, does he have a personal concern for me? The prophet Isaiah has the Lord say, “you are precious in my eyes, you are honored and I love you” (43:4). Sometimes I feel I can believe it. Looking back, I do sense beyond and beneath the realities of everyday a Reality. I can see in my life that so much that happened stands in opposition to what was expected. When I glance over my life, I see “coincidences,” “lucky breaks,” “occurrences.” Now I think God was hidden in those “coincidences.”

Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682), a doctor in Norwich, England, wrote: “Surely, there are in every man's life certain rubs, doublings and wrenches which pass a while under the effects of chance, but at last, well examined, prove to be the hand of God.”

My father used to say, “The only thing you can count on is what you never counted on.” In Graham Green's novel *Brighton Rock*, a character says: “You can't conceive the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God.” My life-review has me think yes—a strange benevolent process has been at work. Perhaps everything that happened should have happened. God was about, but gently, even humbly.

The Scriptures frequently summon us to remember the past. Moses tells the people to “remember the days of old, consider the years past” (Deut.32:7). God is telling Moses to remind the peo-

ple of all that God has already done for them. Deuteronomy 4:9 tells us to remember the ways of God with us in the past. We need to remember the Jordans we have crossed, the battles we have won, and the lands we have conquered.

Isaiah 63:7: “The favors of the Lord I will recall...because of all he has done for me... He has favored me according to his mercy and his great kindness.” The idea is that if we remember our past, we will not fear the future. God made passable what seemed impassable, led through dead ends. So perhaps the Psalm is right: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” (Psa. 23:6).

The Catholic philosopher Gabriel Marcel spoke of how reality cannot be exhaustively defined in human terms. Hope involves a refusal to calculate possibilities on purely human grounds, a refusal to be limited by the results of our purely human calculations. There is still the incalculable—God. Hope does not predict that such and such must happen. It believes that, in the words of Julian of Norwich, “all will be well, all will be well, all manner of thing will be well.”

T.S. Eliot, at the end of his poem “Little Gidding,” echoes her quote: “One can hear at times a sentinel who moves about place to place and whispers to the world of space in the deep night that all shall be well, all manner of thing shall be well.” ■

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==== NUESTRA VOZ FROM PAGE 28 =====

de diciembre celebrará la misa de Navidad.

El sacerdote cree que los hispanos inmigrantes son una comunidad de fe que quieren dejar a sus hijos ese legado; los hijos a su vez se contagian de la espiritualidad de sus padres y poco a poco de la catequesis infantil pasan al grupo juvenil y luego a los grupos de oración y de ayuda ministerial.

William Gaitán y su sobrino Gabriel Salazar tocan en la misa en español de la 1:30 pm desde hace un año. Gaitán corrobora que el Padre Alfonso, además de abrir las puertas a la comunidad hispana, se ha empeñado en que asistan en familia a los servicios religiosos y, con las visitas que el sacerdote mantiene periódicamente a las casas, logra fomentar el valor de la unidad familiar.

Lucas Romero, maestro titular del coro, coincidió con varios feligreses en que el Padre Alfonso es una bendición para las familias del West Side y dijo haberse conmovido cuando acudió a la Primera Misa en español en febrero del año pasado y escuchó el sacerdote admitir que oró mucho para que el Ministerio Hispano sea una realidad, pidiendo a Dios señales para saber si estaba por buen camino.

(Para acudir a las reuniones del Grupo Hispano de Oración, puede comunicarse con Doña Marina Laines: 203.273.7716. Si desea ser parte del Coro Parroquial, llame a Lucas Romero: 203.820.6874. Si desea comunicarse con el Padre Alfonso Picone, puede llamar al 203.993.3133.) ■

Column: Joe Pisani



Repent, while there's still time

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

Kneeling in prayer at the corner of Lexington and 43rd Street was a prophetic-looking old guy with an unkempt gray beard and grim countenance, who was holding a sign that said, "Repent! The judgment is near!"

"This can't be a good omen," I thought, on my way to the deli for a bowl of lentil soup.

There was a wild look in his eyes, and I glanced away to avoid his stare. He had a brass crucifix, a Bible and a few other religious items laid out on the sidewalk, and he seemed to be on the verge of delivering a fire and brimstone sermon in the tradition of revivalist Congregational preacher Jonathan Edwards.

This being midtown Manhattan, everyone raced past without a thought—but maybe with a snicker or two—because panhandlers and

weirdoes, as we used to call them, seem to line the city streets lately. Was he just another quack in an endless succession of quacks? I bet they said the same thing about the prophet Jeremiah.

If this fellow was looking for some spare change, a sign that said, "Repent! The judgment is near!" certainly wasn't the way to go. That kind of shtick is more appropriate for Wall Street or Bourbon Street.

Someone is always insisting the judgment is near, but I'm wondering whether it could be nearer than we think. If so, we're unprepared. "Repenting" is such a strange concept in 21st century America. It's too biblical for our secular sensibilities. Of course, an even stranger concept is "sin." How can people ever repent if they don't believe in sin?

Instead of sin, our secular soci-

ety judges "right" and "wrong" based on political agendas. Let's be blunt: More people adhere to the political party line than to the Ten Commandments. What's tragic is that political agendas often promote activities that are sinful, and as Catholics, we always seem to be on the wrong side of the prevailing view when it concerns issues like abortion, same-sex marriage and assisted suicide. (The future doesn't look bright for traditional morality.)

The fellow on 43rd Street reminded me of preachers I encountered from time to time in Greenwich Village during the Cold War, when we were certain the end was near because the superpowers were stockpiling nuclear weapons at a relentless pace. The Cuban Missile Crisis made us realize the world could end in an instant—and it might have if it weren't for the grace of God. Prayer, you see, is an infinitely more powerful force than politics.

"Judgment" is another strange concept in our so-called enlightened society. Many of us don't really believe we'll be held accountable for the way we live our lives. As Dostoevsky once observed, "Without God all things are permissible," which is precisely what happens when you replace God with the gods of materialism,

hedonism and decadence.

In the end, we'll be judged for the good and the bad we've done. Even though God's love and mercy are infinite, can you imagine the regret you'll feel looking back on your life if you didn't try your hardest to do God's will because you were more preoccupied with pursuing money, power, possessions and prestige. God should be more than just an after-thought in our daily lives.

"Repent—the hour is at hand" has been the message of every Marian apparition for the past 175 years, from La Salette to Lourdes and Fatima, and as the 100th anniversary of the Blessed Virgin Mary's appearance at Fatima approaches in May 2017, it would be wise to recall her words.

"Men must amend their lives,

and ask pardon for their sins," she said. "They must no longer offend Our Lord, who is already so much offended."

Commenting on Our Lady's plea, Sister Lucia, one of the visionaries, wrote: "The part of the last apparition which has remained most deeply imprinted on my heart is the prayer of our heavenly Mother, begging us not to offend Almighty God anymore, who is already so much offended."

Before her death, the visionary Jacinta said: "If men only knew what eternity is, how they would make all possible efforts to amend their lives . . . mortification and sacrifice give great pleasure to Our Divine Lord."

Perhaps that preacher on 43rd Street knew more than we give him credit for. ■

CAPP BREAKFAST FROM PAGE 13

everything is measured in investor profits.

The long-time member of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Newtown said his thoughts on the role and mission of healthcare in society were formed by the writings of the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago.

"The Catholic dimension of healthcare is that it is a continuation of Jesus' healing ministry and has a sacramental quality," he said. "It is a ministry of hope grounded in the belief that God's love for us is permanent and unchanging."

Prior to Dr. Murphy's talk, Robert Nalewajek, president of CAPP USA, presented this year's CAPP Business Leadership Award to Gail Berardino for her philanthropic work for the American Association of the Order of Malta.

Before joining the Order of Malta, Berardino had a success-

ful career in management at the McCall Pattern Company.

Berardino, who is a member of the board of Fairfield University's Egan School of Nursing and Health Studies, said Malta is both a local and global organization to serve the sick and the poor.

She noted that every Malta member in the Diocese of Bridgeport is in one sense a Eucharistic Minister, "because they bring the Blessed Sacrament to more than 20 different hospitals and healthcare facilities, while also serving people in prison and at Catholic Charities soup kitchens."

She said she was very proud of Malta's support for Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem, which delivers more than 3,700 newborns each year and serves as the preferred United Nations Hospital for its four refugee camps.

Those in attendance at the annual Communion Breakfast began the day in the Egan Chapel

when Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, Father Jeffrey von Arx and members of the Jesuit Community concelebrated Mass.

"We live in a world where the status quo is not good enough. It is not of the mind of God," said the bishop, who urged business leaders in attendance to ask themselves if there is even one policy or practice they can create to work for change in their own businesses to make the world a better place.

"Too many people have fallen through the cracks or been forced into the shadows," he said, asking them to use Catholic Social Teaching as a guidepost.

"Giving witness in the market place is difficult. It is not often easy to be faithful to the Lord and fulfill your responsibilities," he said. "It is a question we must all ponder in our vocations and ministries. What is your plan to make change and are you ready to make it?" ■



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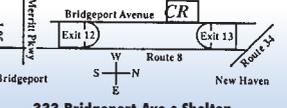
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Knights of Columbus

St. Matthew Knights win highest honor

NORWALK—Knights of Columbus St. Matthew Council 14360 has earned the distinction of Star Council for the 2015-2016 fraternal year. The organization's headquarters in New Haven made the announcement.

The award recognizes overall excellence in the areas of membership recruitment and retention, promotion of the fraternal insurance program and sponsorship of service oriented activities. The award was presented to the membership by State Deputy John Macari at the Knights of Columbus Museum in New Haven at a special ceremony on November 5. Council 14360 earned top award for third consecutive fraternal year.

In announcing the local winner of the Star Council Award, Carl Anderson, chief executive of the organization, said, "Please accept my sincere congratulations upon attaining this prestigious award. Your dedication to the order is seen in the high standard of excellence you have received. At the same time, I encourage you to carry forward this enthusiasm to meet challenges that will face the Knights of Columbus in the years ahead. May this award be a reminder and inspiration to the members of your council to continue to promote the ideals of Columbianism for the good of the Church, your community, and the order."

The goals of the Knights of Columbus Council at St. Matthew's is to perform acts of charity. Providing those in need with a range of support from financial to tactical help in dealing with a wide variety of challenges, the council members work together to foster the founding principles of their order: charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism. Over the last year the council has conducted food drives for St. Matthew Food Pantry, hosted youth activities for the parish and Family & Children's Agency, assisted Al's Angels and conducted painting and remodeling projects for Malta House and Notre Dame Convalescent Home. The council also provides Thanksgiving meals to veterans at Homes for the Brave and coordinates a supply drive with the council and local Norwalk schools. In addition, the council donated \$20,000 to local charities.

"All of us at Homes for the Brave have been incredibly blessed by the remarkable support and assistance that the Knights of St. Matthew Council 14360 routinely provide. They support all of our events and have even created some of their own to help us better serve the men and women who reside with us," said Homes for the Brave CEO/executive director Vincent Santilli.

"I am very humbled by receiving this prestigious award for all three years as Grand Knight but to be honest the best reward is seeing the smiles on the faces of those we help. I am so blessed to be surrounded by my brothers who are great men of faith in action. Each and every member of the council helped make an impact in our parish and local community. I also want to thank the great parishioners of St. Matthew parish for their continuing support," said Past Grand Knight George Ribellino, who led the council as Grand Knight from 2013-2016.

The council is poised to continue their work in the community under newly elected Grand Knight Scott Criscuolo. "This is a great finish to a tremendous three years with George as Grand Knight. I just hope I can keep the tradition going of sustained success in this council,"



GETTING READY FOR WINTER, (r) members of Knights of Columbus St. Matthew Council worked to winterize windows and clear out old equipment at Notre Dame Convalescent Home in Norwalk. These and other activities to assist the community earned the Norwalk Knights recognition from the Star Council in New Haven (top).

Criscuolo said.
(For more information go to saintmatthew-knights.com.)



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Bits and Pieces

NOTRE DAME High School (Boys' and Girls') Class of 1966 is planning a 50th Reunion for the spring of 2017. If you are interested in working on the Class of 1966 Reunion committee or would like to receive more information, contact the Alumni Office: tmarzik@notredame.org or 203.372.6521 ext. 242.

AL'S ANGELS Holiday Toy Drive needs 10,000 toys this year. If you, your company, retail business, school, etc. would like to host a toy drive, contact Al Diguido at adiguido@yahoo.com.

VENDOR CRAFT FAIR will be held at St. Stephen Parish, Trumbull, Sat.-Sun., **Nov. 19-20**. Sat., 9 am-4 pm; Sun., 8 am-1 pm. There will also be a food truck on the grounds. For more info, call Debbie: 203.558.7399.

35TH REUNION for Notre Dame Catholic High School Class of 1981 will be held Fri., **Nov. 25**, from 7-11 pm at Vazzano's Four Seasons. Cost: \$65/person. ND alum from the classes of 1978 thru 1984 are invited to join us. RSVP to Fred Garrity: fredgarrity@gmail.com; Zoli Szabo: ZJS195L10@earthlink.net; Angelo Ciambriello: Agmmy3kids@aol.com; Jolynn Catandella-Colon: Della4746@aol.com.

CAR RAFFLE: St. Mary Parish, Bethel, is raffling off a 2016 Buick Encore AND a 2016 GMC Canyon pickup truck from Ingersoll Auto of Danbury. Tickets: \$100 each; one ticket wins both cars. Drawing will take place Sat., **Nov. 26**, at 6:45 pm. Winner need not be present. Tickets can be purchased after Masses on selected Sundays or at the parish office. For more info, call the parish:

203.744.5777.

MONSTER MINI GOLF with Catholic Young Adults of Greater Danbury (CYAD), ages 18-35. Come play mini golf and enjoy a night of fun and friendship. Cost: \$9 per person. Tues., **Nov. 29**, from 7:30-9 pm at 14 Starr Rd., Danbury. For more info, email catholic.ya.danbury@gmail.com or join us on Facebook: Catholic Young Adults of Greater Danbury.

ST. CATHERINE'S PLAYERS announces audition calls for its 2017 production of Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. Auditions held Tues., **Nov. 29**, and Wed., **Nov. 30**, starting at 7:30 pm at St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Riverside. This is the Broadway version of the show with mainly adult principals and an ensemble of all ages. Children must be at least eight years old or in third grade. Come with a prepared song, not from *The Little Mermaid* score, and sheet music. For more info, visit www.stcatherinesplayers.com or email stcatherinesplayers@gmail.com.

DIVORCED AND SEPARATED Catholics are invited to join "Hearts Renewed," a support group for divorced or separated men and women. Meetings are held in Fairfield on the first and third Fri. of every month (**Dec. 2**; **Dec. 16**) at 7:30 pm. For more info and for directions, call Bette: 203.338.0503 or Peggy: 203.834.1287.

CHRISTMAS FAIR at St. Jude Parish, Monroe, will be held Sat., **Dec. 3**, from 10 am-4 pm (snow date Sun., **Dec. 4**). This event features craft artisans from around Connecticut and nearby states. Interested crafters can email stjudechristmasfair@gmail.com or call the parish:

203.261.6404 or Elizabeth Edgerton: 203.258.3354.

SECULAR FRANCISCAN Holy Spirit Fraternity invites everyone to St. Emery Church, Fairfield, on Sat., **Dec. 3**, at 9:30 am. Father Gene Szantyr will celebrate Mass, followed a Christmas party in the parish hall. For more info, contact Pat Heile, OFS: 203.255.8801 or pheile5713@aol.com.

HOLLY FAIR sponsored by the Women's Group of St. Margaret Mary Parish, Shelton, will be held on Sat., **Dec. 3**, from 9 am-4 pm. Food, vendors, raffles, a Cookie Walk and a visit from Santa. For more info, call Sharon: 203.305.6503 or email smwspicer@gmail.com.

BOOK SALE will be held at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, on Sat.-Sun., **Dec. 3-4**. Sat., 10 am-3 pm; Sun., 8 am-12 noon. Proceeds will go to Heart of Mary School in Haiti. For more info, call 203.218.3932.

TRADITIONAL LATIN MASS is celebrated at St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish, Brookfield, the first Sun. of each month (**Dec. 4**) at 4 pm. For more info, call the parish: 203.775.5117.

JOIN IN PRAYING the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary for Persecuted Christians from your home/car/office the

first Tues. of every month (**Dec. 6**) at 7 pm with a conference phone number. How? Before 7 pm, call 877.216.5269 and type in the pin number 96869.

MASS OF HEALING AND HOPE will be celebrated at St. Marguerite Parish, Brookfield, with Fr. Larry Carew on Mon., **Dec. 7**, at 7:30 pm as part of their Advent Healing Service. For more info, call the Charismatic Renewal Office: 203.268.8253.

HOLY DAY of obligation: Join the Catholic Young Adults of Greater Danbury (CYAD), ages 18-35, for Mass for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and a social following. Thurs., **Dec. 8**, from 8-10 pm at WCSU Westside Campus, Room 218, 43 Lake Ave. Ext, Danbury. For more info, email catholic.ya.danbury@gmail.com or join us on Facebook at Catholic Young Adults of Greater Danbury.

GOSPEL OF LIFE SOCIETY meets at St. Mary Parish, Norwalk, the second Sat. of each month (**Dec. 10**) from 10 am-12 noon, after the 9 am pro-life Mass. For more info, contact Eileen Bianchini: 203.847.5727 or stmarygols@aol.com.

CATHOLIC UNDERGROUND meets the second Sat. of every month (**Dec. 10**), from 7:30-10 pm at St. Ann Parish in the Black

Rock section of Bridgeport. It's an evening of Adoration, Reconciliation, prayer, music, and fellowship. This month will have a concert with Alec Chambers. For more info, go to CONNected Catholics: www.conncatholics.org.

WOMAN'S GROUP at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, will have their Christmas luncheon at Roberto's Restaurant in Monroe on Mon., **Dec. 12**, at 12 noon. For more info, call 203.261.8020.

ENCOURAGE apostolate for friends and family of loved ones with same sex attractions or gender ID issues, meets the third Sat. of the month (**Dec. 17**) at 10:30 am and is strictly confidential. For more info contact the Norwalk Chapter: EncourageNorwalk@gmail.com.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT at St. Luke Parish, Westport, Sun., **Dec. 18**, at 8 pm will include the adult and children's choirs, an organ-piano duet and a Nativity Pageant. Free of charge. For more info, call 203.227.7245.

MOMs+DADs prayer/support group for those with Down Syndrome, their family and friends meets the third Thurs. of every month (**Dec. 21**), at 7:30 pm at St. Mary Parish, Norwalk, parish center. For more info, contact strapostolate@optimum.net. ■



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