Around the Diocese

Joy and Service

Christmas around the diocese is always a very special time of joy, service and worship.

Students participated in Nativity plays and concerts; adults volunteered in soup kitchens and parishes; people of all ages reached out to the poor, the elderly and the most vulnerable among us. Many thanks to all those around the diocese who went out of their way to ensure that no one was forgotten at Christmas, and that the “Light of Christ” was shared with all those in need. Many thanks also go out to our pastors, priests, deacons and religious for the beautiful liturgies and prayer services!

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BRIDGEPORT—“Renew” is the theme of the 2020 Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) launched by the diocese in January.

“We speak of renewing the Church, and renewing the Church is a spiritual exercise,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. “It is bringing hope where there may not be a message of hope. It is bringing faith into action in the lives of people in need. It is to mentor young people and show them a better way, which is the way of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

This year’s ACA goal of $9 million will fund ongoing operations, programs and initiatives sponsored by the diocese to reach out to the poor and needy, educate and form young people in the faith, promote vocations, support retired priests, and create vibrant ministries that evangelize and serve all those in need in Fairfield County.

The bishop said most parishioners throughout the diocese will be resuming the normal Annual Catholic Appeal, having completed the public phase of the “We Stand With Christ” capital campaign.

The capital campaign was an effort to provide for the strategic, long-term programs of the Diocese of Bridgeport by investing 50 percent of donations in endowments in three newly created foundations in education, charity and faith. These lay-run endowments will provide investment income that will make the ministries of the diocese financially secure for the future. The remaining 50 percent of funds provide for parish projects and improvements, many of which are already underway.

The bishop said that as successful as the “We Stand With Christ” capital campaign has been, the day-to-day needs and operating expenses of the diocese require the Annual Catholic Appeal to fund ongoing, day-to-day operations and unplanned needs.

Those needs continue to grow and will never totally go away. However, my hope and expectation is that in the next few years, our Annual Catholic Appeal will diminish in the amount we will ask for and need. As the capital campaign endowments grow, we hope to reduce the yearly Annual Catholic Appeal parish goals,” he said.

During this period of transition to a new funding model, Bishop Caggiano has asked every parishioner to resume their yearly gifts to the appeal.

Last year, the annual appeal was suspended in many parishes because the capital campaign was underway; however, a portion of the gifts were designated to provide for yearly needs in the diocese.

Bishop Caggiano expressed his sincere gratitude to the faithful who gave to the capital campaign and urged them to help continue the renewal that has begun in “the healed and vibrant Church in Fairfield County.” He also asked that they join him in bringing a “message of reconciliation, of hope, of new life to our communities and to the larger community that we share with others of every faith and way of life.”

“We live in continually challenging times, but those challenges are opportunities to evangelize, to preach and to bring a message of hope, to do the works of the Church, to be faithful disciples in the world,” Bishop Caggiano said. “And so I thank you and I ask as always that you be as generous as possible, as you and I do this work of renewing the Church in hope of renewing the face of the whole world.”

Pamela S. Rittman CFRE, Director of Development and the Appeal, said, “When I think of ‘renewal,’ it reminds me of a fresh start. The Annual Catholic Appeal is just that—to renew or start again each year. Without the vital ministries the Appeal supports, we cannot continue to serve those in need and continue the Gospel message on a daily basis each year.”

She said that over the past two years, the diocese has worked to secure the future through a financial commitment made through the We Stand With Christ capital campaign for long-term, strategic planning that will serve future generations in perpetuity.

“Now, we continue with our annual commitment to the day-to-day funding for our ministries that the capital campaign does not provide for,” Rittman said, adding, “The faithful of Fairfield County have always been generous in their leadership, personal and financial resources at the parish and diocesan levels and we are grateful for their support and look forward to a successful 2020 Appeal.”

This year’s chair couple are Jason and Roxanne Melaragno of Holy Family Church in Fairfield and the vice chair couple are Daniel and Kelly Anne Murphy of the Parish of St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull. Parish chairpersons and pastors will launch the Appeal in January and the first letters will be sent out in February. The Appeal will be concluded by the end of June although gifts will be accepted through December 31, 2020, Rittman said.

People also may make a pledge by texting the word APPEAL to 475-241-7849. (For more information or to donate please go to 2020ACABridgeport.com or call 203.416.1470.)
March for Life 2020: Standing in solidarity to fight abortion

By EMILY CLARK

The annual March for Life will take place this year on January 24 in Washington, D.C., with tens of thousands of pro-life supporters gathering on the National Mall to defend the right to life for the unborn. As the pro-life movement continues to grow throughout the United States, many faithful from the Diocese of Bridgeport plan to make the pilgrimage to the nation’s capital on the 47th anniversary of Roe v. Wade to be part of one of the world’s largest peaceful protests.

“Anybody who goes comes away with a stronger understanding of what pro-life is all about,” said Dave Janny of St. Theresa Parish who coordinates a bus trip to the March from Trumbull. “There is such positivity for the cause and a renewed hope of ending abortion.”

That feeling of positivity emerges through a setting that is non-threatening and peaceful, one of love and not hate, added Janny. He felt that last year’s March for Life was one of the best due to strong conservative views and the presence of many lawmakers. “This is the most pro-life presidential administration we’ve had in a while,” he said.

Such thoughts were echoed by Eileen Travers of St. Joseph Parish in Shelton who with her husband Wayne has attended the March for Life for the past four years. “It is empowering to stand with people who share the same worldview,” she said. “We get encouraged and energized to fight harder for life really lift you up, and the entire rally is a continuous prayer for a change of heart.”

With high school and college-aged youth comprising about a third of all participants, Janny sees that involvement as a “very hopeful sign as we continue to fight.”

“Pro-life is Pro-woman,” the March for Life Education and Defense Fund encourages supporters to remember “the bravery of our founding feminists. They birthed the 19th amendment and were our real life heroines. They called abortion ‘the ultimate exploitation of women’ and not only recognized the rights of our very smallest children, but they knew that abortion at its core also harms us as women.”

The need to join together in solidarity for the most defenseless among us – the unborn – is a common belief for those attending this event each year, such as John Angiolillo of St. Theresa Parish. He feels this event brings more awareness and education to those in the March who want to tell their story, such as one large group whom he acknowledges each year.

“These women were all born to a mother who was raped,” said Angiolillo. “These women are doctors, lawyers, school teachers, nurses, and many other professions, all professing thanks to God for their mother’s choice not to abort, but to give life.”

As people of all ages, ethnicities and religions come together from across the United States and bond with one another in the chill of January holding signs which proclaim, “Unborn Lives Matter” and “Choose Life – Your Mother Did,” one cannot help but feel buoyed by the enthusiasm and hope vibrating throughout the capital.

“It is truly inspiring to be in Washington for the March,” said Travers. “It is truly inspiring to be in Washington for the March,” said Travers. “This is the most pro-life presidential administration we’ve had in a while,” he said.

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“There is an emboldened cry,” he said. “This is a commitment, a pilgrimage. And pro-life is winning.”

PREPARING FOR THE MARCH—Faithful throughout the diocese will travel to Washington D.C. for the January 24 March for Life in the National Mall. “Pro-life is Pro-woman” is the theme of this year’s march.
Safe Environments

2020 Sexual Misconduct Review Board

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has reconstituted the Sexual Misconduct Review Board of the Diocese of Bridgeport with the announcement of new board members, renewal of current members and the retirement of long-time members of the board.

The bishop said that adding of new board members is consistent with certain recommendations of retired Connecticut Superior Court Justice Robert Holzberg included in his Clerical Sexual Abuse Accountability Report on sexual abuse in our diocese that was issued in October after a year-long, independent investigation.

Among the judge’s recommendations for the Review Board was the recruitment of members with strong mental health experience, as well as the addition of more women, abuse survivors and family members of survivors. The judge’s report also recommended that the diocese maintain “an accessible list of Review Board members’ credentials and board mission.” Board members and their brief bios are available on the diocesan website, “Pledge to Protect (www.bridgeportdiocese.org/pledge).” The web page outlines the full and comprehensive child safety programs of the diocese and the measures taken to achieve the mission of the board, that is, to prevent abuse, heighten awareness of warning signs, investigate allegations and remove abusers.

“At a time when we welcome new board members, I am also deeply grateful to all of those who have served over the years and continue to serve in this most difficult capacity. They have acted with great integrity and responsibility in all of their deliberations. The review board has also helped us move forward in areas of prevention, early detection and evaluation of all reported cases of abuse,” said Bishop Caggiano in recognition of two retired board members, Liane Pioli and Dr. Thomas Flynn.

“Their collective professional experience and personal commitment have provided a valuable service during a time of crisis. Members of the board have played an integral and active role in ensuring that the protection of children remains of greatest importance to the Diocese of Bridgeport and its mission.”

Review Board members, effective as of January 2020, include: Thomas V. Ayoub, M.D., Chief of medical staff at Norwalk Hospital (retired) and currently serves on the Board of Trustees for the hospital. He received his undergraduate degree in 1976 from New York University. He earned his medical degree in 1984. Dr. Ayoub is certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and is also certified as a Menopause Practitioner by the North American Menopause Society. He’s an active member of St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan.

Bill Hoey, MAHCM, LCSW, is vice president of Mission Integration, St. Vincent’s Medical Center in Bridgeport, part of Hartford Healthcare. Prior to joining St. Vincent’s, Hoey served as vice president for Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Bridgeport, overseeing all aspects of the multi-program agency including the implementation of a program of clergy and victim assistance counseling for victims of sexual abuse. He also serves on the Sacred Heart University Nursing Department Advisory Board. He holds a bachelor’s degree in sociology from St. Anselm’s College, a master’s in social work from Fordham University, and a master’s in Health Care Mission from the Aquinas Institute of Theology in Saint Louis.

Rev. Lawrence F. Carew, is the retired pastor of Christ the King parish in Trumbull since January 2017, shortly

Policy updates

Ministerial Advisory Committee

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has issued a revised policy governing the Policy for the Assignment of Clerics with an Allegation of Ministerial Misconduct in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

“This new policy is presented for both the protection of our community of faithful and for the maintenance and protection of the integrity of the priesthood,” the bishop said.

“Given the increased awareness and concern for allegations regarding clergy behavior related to adult misconduct and abuses of power, I am grateful for the continued guidance of the Ministerial Committee regarding incidents of clergy complaints and challenges, whether those be related to finances, substance abuse or ministerial behavior that goes against our code of conduct and policies,” said the bishop.

The committee reviews cases in which the bishop must consider action regarding a priest or deacon’s assignment, including temporary or permanent removal or suspension.

In 2014, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano announced the formation of a Ministerial Advisory Committee to review cases involving clerics accused of misconduct that involves adults or occurs in the exercise of his ministry. The revised policy includes updates and one major procedural change.

“The key differences is that the committee will receive an update on all allegations of misconduct/complaints against clergy. While some of these may not warrant involvement or recommendations of the committee, the bishop believes it critical that the members of the committee be apprised of all the complaints that are received,” said Anne McCrory, chief legal officer of the diocese.

The scope of the allegations reviewed by the committee includes inappropriate sexual behavior with adults, willful or negligent financial mismanagement, harassment, substance abuse or pastoral neglect.

McCrory said the committee is separate from and does not address allegations of sexual abuse of minors and determinations of suitability for ministry based on these allegations. That work continues to be reserved for the Diocesan Sexual Misconduct Review Board, mandated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

The advisory committee reviews all credible reports of ministerial misconduct and assesses the action plan to address the issue.

The policy states that the diocese has received a credible report of any allegation of ministerial misconduct by a priest or deacon not involving a minor, the vicar general or the bishop will immediately refer the matter to the proper civil authorities, if indicated.

Additionally, it creates a mechanism for parishes, including lay leadership, to be notified and consulted regarding the assignment of a priest or deacon.

“It remains a priority for me to hear the perspective of the committee with regards to how I address these sensitive issues and to determine that any allegation is properly reviewed, taken to civil authorities if necessary and that responsible and transparent actions be taken immediately,” Bishop Caggiano said.

The committee draws on the expertise of the lay community, including mental health professionals as well as clergy. A complete list of members is included below.

The advisory committee may be asked to review the nature of the offense and help to prepare an appropriate rehabilitation plan. If the bishop proposes to return a priest or deacon to ministry, before such assignment is made, the vicar general or his designee will meet with the priests, deacons, staff and parish lay leaders to review the proposed placement. Parish leaders will be briefed with a summary of the original offense and a report on the measures taken.

If the assignment is made, it will ordinarily be made on a provisional basis, requiring that the vicar for clergy visit the parish after a six-month period to review the overall assignment. If the report is positive, the assignment will then be made permanent.

Bishop Caggiano said it is important that the advisory committee and its recommendactions respect the rights of victims, seek a plan of rehabilitation for the offender and is transparent in its communications with parishioners.

Under the revised policy, the bishop will determine whether the cleric should be removed from ministry while the investigation is ongoing. Such a decision will be affected in part by the nature of the misconduct involved and the type of investigation to be conducted. If civil authorities are involved, the diocese ordinarily will allow the authorities to complete their investigation before taking any further action on the matter. In fairness to the cleric involved, conducting a thorough investigation in a timely manner will always be a priority.

During the investigation of any allegation, the diocese presumes the innocence of the accused priest or deacon and will take all appropriate actions to protect his reputation. If the allegation is deemed not to be

> CONTINUED ON PAGE 10
Diocesan Finances

Diocese releases audited Financial Statements

BRIDGEPORT—In the continued practice of full transparency, the Diocese of Bridgeport has released its Consolidated Financial Statements for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2019.

The consolidated audited report is posted online on the diocesan website. The diocese has continued its strategy of prudent management and stewardship as it reports positive operational results for another year. The audit report presents a strong financial position with an increase in assets and net assets and a slight decrease in liabilities.

“We are striving towards our goal of long-term financial sustainability for the diocese in which transparency is key. We are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that we are good stewards of all resources entrusted to us and prudent decision making on the use of those resources,” said Michael Hanlon, CPA, chief financial officer of the diocese. The release of this report should give confidence to our faithful Catholics who want to learn how their donations and gifts are being used to fulfill the diocesan works of mission and administration.

“Our priorities continue to be the presentation of clear, timely and comprehensive financial picture of the diocese, particularly as Bishop Caggiano continues his vision for the Diocese with completing initiatives, mission-related programs and investments in the future,” Hanlon said. The audit report was issued by our auditors on December 19, 2019, meeting the issuance deadline established by the diocesan audit committee.

The diocesan fiscal policy continues to focus on a strategy of financial stability, viability, long-term growth and sustainability, he added.

Hanlon said he was again pleased to learn that the Diocese of Bridgeport ranked again near the top of a recently released Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) nationwide annual report on diocesan financial transparency practices and policies.

The VOTF study reviewed the financial transparency and accountability of 145 dioceses and 32 archdioceses by analyzing transparency practices and policies. On a scale of 0-100, the Diocese of Bridgeport received a score of 92 for its policies and disclosures toward financial transparency. The only deduction (8 points) is related to the diocesan policy for parish collection count teams and collection bags. The diocese will evaluate the need to change these policies within the issuance of an updated “Parish Finance Manual” this spring.

The VOTF analysis affirms the fact that we continue to follow transparency and not-for-profit industry best practices mandated by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano upon his arrival in 2013. Under Bishop Caggiano’s leadership, we remain committed to full financial transparency and best practices,” he said.

The newly released consolidated financial statements as of June 30, 2019 reports operational revenues, support and other changes totaling $44.2 million ($46.4 million – June 30, 2018), and total expenses from operations before depreciation of $41.0 million ($43.5 million – 2018), resulting in income from operations before depreciation of $3.2 million ($3.6 million – 2018) surplus from operations. The audit reports positive operational results for the third consecutive year, a goal targeted by the Bishop and the Diocesan finance council several years ago as part of the turn-around strategy.

Additional revenues and other changes from non-operating activities and other pension-related expenses, resulted in an increase of net assets totaling $1.8 million for the year ending June 30, 2019 compared to an increase in $7.8 million for the year ending June 30, 2018, on a consolidated basis. This large decrease is related to the prior year contribution related to the sale of the Augustana Homes, an elderly housing facility and the dissolution of those related entities in December 2018.

Employee benefits and insurance programs continue to be the largest categories within the financial statements totaling $17.5 million, or 42.6% of $41.0 million in total expenses before depreciation ($20.1 million, or 46.3% of $43.5 million – 2018). Religious and lay personnel costs total $10.7 million or 26.2% of total expenses ($10.4 million or 23.9% – 2018).

And grants and contributions totaled $5.5 million or 13.4% of total expenses ($5.0 million or 11.5% – 2018). Grants and contributions to support semi-nary formation, mission related, educational and youth programs include the St. John Fisher and Redemptoris Mater Seminaries, Bishops Scholarship Fund with-in Foundations in Education, Catholic Charities, the Cardinal Shehan Center, St. Catherine’s Center for Special Needs and other diocesan-related programs.

The consolidated diocesan statement of financial position reports as of June 30, 2019 total assets of $96.6 million ($95.7 million – 2018), liabilities of $43.9 million ($44.8 million – 2018) and total net assets of $52.6 million ($50.9 million – 2018).

“We are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that we are good stewards of all resources entrusted to us,” said Bishop Caggiano.

Additionally, a funding strategy will be developed for the post-retirement medical benefits for our retired priest. Although the priest pension plan is sufficiently funded, their post-retirement medical benefits are paid as incurred and future liabilities account for approximately $14.1 million or 32.1% of total liabilities as of June 30, 2019 ($13.8 million or 30.8% of June 30, 2018). This increase is related to costs of actuarial projections for future medical costs and a reduction in the retirement age for priests (from age 73 to 71). The multi-employer lay pension plan, will continue to be a focus of a sub-committee of the Diocesan Finance Council which was formed early during 2017 to explore alternatives and develop recommendations to resolve the underfunding of the lay pension plan. As of June 30, 2019 and 2018, the lay plans assets exceeded benefit obligations exceed the fair value of its assets by approximately $92.5 million and $79 million, respectively. A decrease in a discount rate used in actuarial valuations, an annual adjustment based on discount rates, resulted in the increase in this liability. This liability is only required to be disclosed in the Diocesan and related entities audited financial statements due to accounting rules for a multi-employer plan.

“As we continue on our path of stability, viability and sustainability, we continue to search for alternative sources of revenue, examine all operational expenses, to eliminate our outstanding debt and seek solutions to the underfunded status of the multi-employer lay pension plan,” Hanlon said Deacon Patrick Toole, the episcopal delegate for administration, has continued his review of all Catholic Center departments, to ensure efficient and effective operations. His recent evaluation of cemetery operations resulted in the termination of an agreement with Catholic Management Services as the projected revenue growth did not materialize. The reorganization of cemetery operations will focus on pastoral needs, physical and other improvements to our cemeteries, efficiencies in operations and a strategic vision for enhanced resources to support the 15 diocesan cemeteries in Fairfield County. During the spring of 2020 a much needed mausoleum addition within the Gate of Heaven cemetery in Trumbull will break ground.

“Continued on page 21.”
CAPP Business Breakfast

‘Let’s Change the World’

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

FAIRFIELD—Formerly known as the Pinstripe Mass, this year’s Catholic Business Forum Mass and Brunch is sponsored by Fondazione Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice (CAPP). The event is open to all business and professional leaders and will be held on February 9 at Fairfield University.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, assistant ecclesiastical counselor to CAPP in the United States, will be the main celebrant and homilist at the Mass.

Featured guest speaker Robert A. Nalewajek, executive vice president of CAPP-USA and past director of FCAPP-Vatican plans to speak on the topic: “Let’s Change the World—Catholic Social Teaching is the Way.”

At this year’s event, in addition to business leaders, invitations were sent out to all diocesan high schools, with the expectation that each school send around seven students and one facilitator to the event. In addition, Fairfield University extended invitations to select students, faculty, administrators and trustees.

“Our Church calls on the laity to be God’s voice in the world,” comments Nalewajek. “It is our special task to order and throw light upon all the affairs of the world in line with the teachings of Jesus Christ. That is our unique and special mission,” he said.

“How can we do this?” Nalewajek poses the question. And the answer? — “Implementing Catholic social teaching in society.”

The purpose of the forum is threefold: educational—the integration of Catholic social teaching and business, formative-Catholic social teaching in action, and mentoring—students will be mentored by members of the CAPP community post-event.

Students will be given pre-read material and will be asked to come prepared with questions. Post-event, the facilitators from each school will work with CAPP to assign a mentor to their group.

Students will be encouraged to meet with their facilitator and mentor post-event to discuss potential projects that could be proposed based on what they have learned.

If the facilitator believes a particular project has merit and would like to move forward with implementation, there may be an opportunity for the students to apply to Foundations in Faith for a grant up to $5,000 to help fund their project.

The ultimate goal of the forum is for local business leaders and students to make materially present Catholic social teaching in action within the local community.

“Our challenge as Catholics is to develop a strong, committed group of lay women and men, rich in faith and theologically prepared to be present in public life to explain, develop and implement Catholic Social Teaching,” says Nalewajek.

The morning will begin with a Mass in the Egan Chapel, celebrated by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and will continue with brunch in the Oak Room.

The cost is $50 per person or $400 for a table of eight. Limited seating is available so register today at: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/CBF.

FEATURED SPEAKER—Robert A. Nalewajek of Greenwich will be the featured speaker at the upcoming CAPP Business Forum Mass and Breakfast at Fairfield University on February 9. Mr. Nalewajek, executive vice president of CAPP-USA, is committed to promoting Catholic Social Teaching among the laity in order to change the world.

About Robert A. Nalewajek

Robert A. Nalewajek received his bachelor’s degree from Niagara University and his master’s from the University of Southern California. He currently serves on the board of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, is on the Steering Committee for the Bridgeport Diocese “Annual Appeal,” is a Knight of the Order of Malta (served on the American Association’s “Education and Defense of the Faith Committee”) and is a member of Legatus. Nalewajek led the US introduction of the Vatican based Fondazione Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice and was subsequently elected a Director at the Vatican. Pope Francis bestowed on him the award of ‘Knight Commander’ of the “Pontifical Equestrian Order of St. Gregory the Great.”

Bob is married to Dolly Nalewajek and they are parishioners of St. Catherine of Siena/St. Agnes parish in Greenwich. They have a son and daughter and are grandparents of four (and, hopefully, counting).
EDITORIAL

Hope in the New Year

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano recently led a retreat for the seminarians of Theological College at the Bon Secours Retreat Center in Marriottsville, Maryland. His reflection on “unpacking the mystery of Christian hope” gives us “hope” for the New Year.

“Christian hope is the holy desire to seek heaven and its glory and to be eternally fulfilled in God. It is the confident trust that God will maintain His promises to us and lead us, if we so desire, to a life of eternal joy and peace. Hope gives us the ability to persevere in times of trial, energizes our works of charity, is rooted in our personal encounter with the Lord who reveals that we are His beloved, despite our faults and failures, and finally, hope reminds us that the Lord is always with us.

In our time when we are facing so many challenges, life can give us many reasons to become discouraged or lack hope. For a believer, at such times we need to revisit the Cross of Jesus Christ. What will we discover at its foot is renewed hope. For if Christ loved us to the end on Calvary, why would He not lead us now, despite our challenges, to victory over every obstacle that stands between us and heaven?”

‘Renew’

‘Renew’ is the theme of the 2020 Annual Catholic Appeal, but it also signals the renewal now underway in schools, parishes, diocesan ministries and other services. Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has made it clear that 2020 is the year to consolidate efforts and move forward with the renewal of the diocese and its institutions.

Over the past five years Bishop Caggiano has led administrative and pastoral initiatives to address challenges during a time of change and challenge, to make better use of resources, to invest in the vitality of our institutions and to rebuild the local Church.

Beginning with the Synod in 2014, much hard work has been put in place to build the foundation to achieve the synod goals of empowering the young Church, inviting back Catholics of all ages, making our parishes more welcoming and reaching out through evangelization. Along the way, the laity has been enormously generous of their time, talent and treasure. The We Stand With Christ capital campaign has recently gone over $100 million in pledges to support the long-term needs of the diocese through the new Foundations in Education, Charity and Faith.

One of most visible signs of renewal is the large number of parish projects underway to renovate or expand churches and parish facilities. Most recently, St. Pius X celebrated the renovation and rededication of the restored church, while many other parishes are moving forward with their plans. Other initiatives are renewing our parishes and schools to create restored church, while many other parishes are moving forward with their plans. Other initiatives are renewing our parishes and schools to create restored church, while many other parishes are moving forward with their plans. Other initiatives are renewing our parishes and schools to create restored church, while many other parishes are moving forward with their plans.

Our task now, blessed by the bishop’s leadership, is to continue the renewal already in our midst so that we may become an even more healed and vibrant Church here in Fairfield County.

National Catholic Schools Week

National Catholic Schools Week will be celebrated across the country from January 26 to February 1. Total Catholic school student enrollment in the U.S. for the current academic year is 1,789,563 with 1,239,649 in elementary/middle schools and 549,914 in secondary schools. At present, the total combined enrollment of elementary and high schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport is 7,500 students. As reported in this issue (see page), the “Make All Things New” initiative is now underway in the diocese to ensure the long-term stability and vitality of Catholic education. As the schools move forward with this important process, we thank all those parents and students who chose Catholic education, who work in our schools, and who have given generously to support them. Together we can ensure the gift of Catholic education is there for the next generation.

FAIRFIELD COUNTY
CATHOLIC

Editor’s Choice

SHU Hockey Team visits Bishop Caggiano

BRIDGEPORT—Members of the Sacred Heart University hockey team recently present him with a hockey jersey.

The Bishop thanked the players and coaches, said the was proud of the team and took the opportunity to pray with them before the picture taking ceremony.

Among the group Zakarai Schneider, 16, of Bethany, who joined the Pioneer men on the ice a few weeks ago and has become a team member. Zakarai, who had Downs Syndrome and plays with the Southern Connecticut Storm Special Hockey program, signed a letter of intent, becoming the first youngster formally connected to a Sacred Heart team through Team Impact, a national non-profit effort to connect chronically ill and challenged young people with college teams.

The Pioneers, tied for third in Atlantic Hockey’s preseason coaches poll after reaching the league quarterfinals last year after a strong second half, are enjoying another strong season. They play their home games at Webster Bank Arena in Bridgeport. The next home game is set for January 25 in Bridgeport against Yale University.

(Credit: Facebook/Shuigred.com/sports/m-hockey/index)}
Editorial

Leave the light on a little longer this year

A Young Woman’s Voice
By Elizabeth Clyons
Libby Clyons is Communications Associate for the Diocese of Bridgeport. She can be reached at elizabeth.clyons@diobpt.org.

I have a confession to make…my Christmas decorations are still up. Luckily for Catholics, we can conveniently use the excuse that the Christmas season technically lasts until The Baptism of the Lord on January 12 (or the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple on February 2, if we want to get really technical).

But something in me just did not want to take down the lights this year. There was something about their warm glow that I just didn’t want to lose, because the doldrums of winter just seem so long without them.

What is it about winter that always seems so melancholy? I know it’s coming every year and yet every year I brace against it. Is there a way to hold on to the magic of Christmas a little bit longer? One could argue yes, of course, Jesus is always with us. But there still is something especially magical about a baby in a manger. I am almost moved to tears every time I gaze upon a Nativity scene. I don’t know if it’s the vulnerability of it all that pulls on my heartstrings, or if it is the silence, the stillness, the holiness.

My family experienced some health scares in 2019. So in 2020 my focus is on wellness—mind, body and spirit. I bought essential oils and downloaded a meditation app. I made some doctor’s appointments I had been putting off, trying to will wellness into existence with almost equal exuberance as my determination to keep the lights on.

But it’s the spiritual side that is tripping me up a bit this year. I’ve lost some trust. And maybe this is part of growing older, or maybe it’s circumstantial…or maybe it’s something else. I’m trying to do what works for me—to form an adult faith.

Is it okay if picturing the Christ child as a vulnerable baby as part of a young immigrant family in a stable is what works for me this year? Can the tears that come to my eyes be my own prayer, even if that’s all I can muster?

If Christmas lights until February works for me, can that be okay too? Can I leave the lights on a little bit longer? Can I sit in their warmth and feel held by God in the Light of Christ, if that’s the only way?

My hope is to remain in these moments, to take each of them as they come and embrace them. There’s a beach down the road from where I live. I run to the end of the road and back every day. Some mornings I wouldn’t stop at the beach because I was in too much of a hurry but this year I am going to stop every morning. I am going to take it all in—no matter the weather.

The ocean reminds us that there are days when things will be tumultuous, but there are also days when a peaceful calm will wash over us. And we can experience each of them with the same openness.

And we can leave the lights on.

The man in the mirror and me

A Dad’s View
By Matthew Hennessey
Matthew Hennessey and his family are parishioners of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Stamford.

At 50, you have the face you deserve. I think I read that somewhere. Probably in a magazine. Remember those? I’m not 50 yet, but not far off. If what the magazine said is true, I deserve a boiled ham. The kind you deserve. I think I read that somewhere.

I am still your dad. I am still your husband. I am still your dad.”

Goodness, I oughta just skip it. Such stubborn as I am able to muster is an insult to the other parts of my face. It comes in patches and soft. Mostly white. After a few days I look like a fuzzy molding ham. The shavedown is a relief. “Hey kids, daddy’s back!” “Yay! Where’d you go?” “Nowhere. Just shaved. Do I look different?” “Uh.. . . different than what?” “Never mind. As you were.”

My in-laws moved up to New Hampshire almost 20 years ago. The patch they staked out was pristine, deep in the woods, isolated. We loved going there to get away from all the madness at home, in what we thought of as civilization. Lately when we go, it feels like civilization is coming with us. Some of those swaying trees have been cleared out. There are houses going up on the street. Now, when the wind blows right, you can faintly hear the traffic on the nearby interstate.

In another 20 years, I’m guessing Chi Chi’s patch will seem a little less innocent, a little less wild. Just like my face.
‘Forgetful of Myself’ Award
Malta honors Betty and Tom Flynn

By MIKE DONOGHUE

DARIEN—The CT Area of the Order of Malta recognized long-time members Betty and Tom Flynn with the Forgetful of Myself award at their annual dinner on October 12, at the Country Club of Darien. The Forgetful of Myself award is an annual recognition of a longtime member or couple who have been instrumental in building the Order of Malta in Connecticut and who are outstanding examples of the order’s charism to defend the Catholic faith and serve the sick and the poor with Christlike humility.

Betty and Tom Flynn are long-time active members of St. Aloysius Church in New Canaan and were invested into the Order of Malta in 1991. They are parents to nine children, eight boys and one girl. They were both graduates of the Education for Parish Service program (EPS), a theology education program which Betty served as a board member and co-director. Betty served as the Hospitalist for the CT area for many years organizing many service programs and spiritual activities. Betty created the Malta Forum, a popular local event where she invited well-known speakers to come to discuss important moral and religious topics. Betty and Tom also served as Eucharistic ministers at St. Camillus Nursing Home, bringing the Eucharist to the sick and homebound for more than 25 years.

Tom Flynn, a beloved pedicu-matrician in New Canaan, created and chaired the Diocese of Bridgport’s White Mass for medical professionals, running the event for more than 20 years. He also designed, organized and led a Bio-Ethics Lecture series for many years, determined that his colleagues consider the moral and ethical demands of their profession in addition to innovations in science and medical practices. Tom volunteered his services for many years at Hospital Sacre Coeur in Milot, Haiti and subsequently served as a board member and later its president, raising funds and coordinating volunteers. The fruits of Tom’s work were evident when the earthquake struck Haiti in 2010. The hospital is now a teaching institution for Haitians and serves 50,000 patients annually.

The Order of Malta is a 900 year old lay religious order dedicated to defending the Catholic faith and serving the poor and the sick and is very active in the Diocese of Bridgeport. (For more information contact Coxe or Mike Donoghue, Malta CT Area chairs, at: areachair@malact.org)

THE FORGETFUL OF MYSELF AWARD— Mike Donoghue, new executive director of Catholic Charities and his wife, Coxe (top), who lead the Fairfield County Chapter of the Order of Malta, presented the award to Betty and Tom Flynn (center) of New Canaan, for bearing witness to the Order’s charism of defending the Catholic faith and serving the sick and poor.

Bridgeport’s White Mass for medical professionals, running the event for more than 20 years. He also designed, organized and led a Bio-Ethics Lecture series for many years, determined that his colleagues consider the moral and ethical demands of their profession in addition to innovations in science and medical practices. Tom volunteered his services for many years at Hospital Sacre Coeur in Milot, Haiti and subsequently served as a board member and later its president, raising funds and coordinating volunteers. The fruits of Tom’s work were evident when the earthquake struck Haiti in 2010. The hospital is now a teaching institution for Haitians and serves 50,000 patients annually.

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APARTMENT FOR SALE
GREENWICH, CT - 2 BR, 1 bths completely renovated - pet friendly apt. 1100 sf with washer/dryer in the unit. Low common charges. Walk to Metro North, town & grocery. $525K Call Joanne 203-981-4882; joanne.gorka@sothebysinternationalrealy.com
Youth News

Advisory Council update

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano recently announced the formation of the Youth Advisory Council to coordinate and enhance parish, school and diocesan ministry on behalf of youth and young adults in the diocese. At the second formal meeting of the full 36-member council held this past Saturday, Bishop Caggiano remarked, “There is already leadership in youth and young adult ministry throughout our parishes. Our goal with the Youth Advisory Council is to empower that leadership, and to connect it so that we can learn from each other and plot a course for the future of youth ministry in our diocese.” The council had their inaugural meeting in early October.

“You are a group of individuals whose major purpose is to connect the dots,” the bishop addressed the council at their recent meeting. Expressing his hopes for the future of the council, he shared, “I want to see the principles of truth, beauty, and goodness in everything that we do.”

The bishop said he will attend all Youth Advisory Council meetings. The group will be coordinated by an executive committee, which will meet monthly.

Merton Center makes holiday impact

BRIDGEPORT—The Thomas Merton Center in Bridgeport had an extremely successful Thanksgiving holiday. According to Director Craig Adler the local soup kitchen and pantry was able to serve more people than ever thanks to donations from local donors, including one area teen.

Fourteen-year-old Jason Lambert of Trumbull organized his own food drive after being inspired by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano’s “We Stand With Christ” campaign. He collected enough nonperishable grocery items to stuff an SUV, which he delivered to the Thomas Merton Center’s Eat Smart Marketplace food pantry just in time for Thanksgiving.

“With Jason’s help, our food pantry distributed groceries to approximately 305 families during the week of Thanksgiving. This represents somewhere between 900 and 1,000 individuals being fed through the pantry alone,” states Adler. In addition to meals distributed by the food pantry, the soup kitchen served breakfast to 120 individuals the day before Thanksgiving and a Thanksgiving meal to approximately 200 people.

Center staff, volunteers and guests were surprised by a visit from Bridgeport Mayor Joseph Ganim who stopped by on Wednesday to spend time talking with guests before getting behind the counter with his staff to serve lunch to those in attendance.

The Thomas Merton Center, a program of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, Inc., is located on Madison Avenue in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The Thomas Merton Center is committed to providing a loving, safe and hope-filled community atmosphere that responds to the needs of its guests and residents and respects the dignity of each person.

For more information on how you can help the Thomas Merton Center by making a donation or volunteering your time, visit the program website at www.themertoncenter.org.)
New Coalition for Youth Ministry
Fairfield parishes adopt new model

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

FAIRFIELD—“We thought that doing it alone wasn’t fruitful as it could be together,” Jes Nayden said, as she and Paola Peña discussed, with excitement, their newly formed youth ministry coalition—Fairfield LifeTeen, which currently consists of teens from St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Pius X parishes in Fairfield.

These two women, along with fellow leader Robby Nayden and their core team of volunteers, hope that the group will eventually grow to include other parishes in Fairfield, saying, “If it is the Lord’s will He will make a way.”

“God was bringing up in prayer being a united effort in youth ministry,” said Peña, adding, “Maybe this is the change that we need.”

And that vision “came to life” at the group’s recent kick-off event, where both parents and teens were invited, the women explained, boasting a turnout of around 40 teens so far. “And the word continues to spread,” said Peña, who explained how the group’s new branding and social media presence is generating new interest and how family involvement is even creating a basis for Fairfield Edge, St. Pius X’s middle school group.

“It feels like something new,” said Peña. Nayden continued, “It is challenging us to think of new ways to do what we’re doing.”

The leaders of the group meet regularly to create an atmosphere of intentional planning. “We need to keep up with the ways youth are changing,” said Nayden, “and by combining our gifts and talents, we feel that we can bring young people into an encounter with Christ.”

And this encounter is the goal of Fairfield LifeTeen, as well as having teens “grow in their faith and community and surrender their lives to God,” the women agreed.

The women discussed the importance of fostering this sense of belonging and unity. In an age when youth are often searching for a purpose or identity, they said, they want their teens to feel that they are not alone in asking questions.

Nayden and Peña referenced the similar model of success currently being carried out in Newtown. United, led by Rod Blessey, along with Monica and Renzo Ortega, includes youth from both St. Rose in Newtown and St. Joseph in Brookfield.

About Fairfield LifeTeen
Fairfield LifeTeen is a newly formed youth ministry coalition, is now serving teens from St. Thomas Aquinas Parish and St. Pius X Parish in Fairfield. The goal is to bring young people grades 9-12 to an encounter with Christ through prayer, fellowship, retreats and trips.

St. Louis Jesuits to bring ‘Coming Home Concert’ to Fairfield

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

FAIRFIELD—“Here I Am, Lord,” “Be Not Afraid,” “Sing a New Song”—who doesn’t love these classic hymns that so many Catholics grew up with? After their final concert in St. Louis in September, three members of the St. Louis Jesuits decided to bring a smaller version of that program to a few different areas of the country.

“There were so many people that sent us their regrets that they just couldn’t manage the long travel from the East coast,” commented Dan Schutte. So he, Tim Manion and Roc O’Connor, SJ wanted to continue the SLJ legacy with a Coming Home Concert. This much anticipated event will take place on Sunday, February 16 at 4 pm at the Quick Center for the Arts.

The continuing legacy of the St. Louis Jesuits’ music is that it lives not in hymnals but in the hearts of people of faith,” said Schutte. “For all these years we’ve never imagined ourselves as performers but rather as servants of the people. At our concerts we always invite people to sing with us because the spotlight is on God, not on us,” he said.

The group will be joined by the choir and instrumentalists from St. Anthony of Padua in Fairfield.

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As we began to imagine where we might offer such an event, Fairfield became a perfect choice,” explains Schutte, who for the past eight years, has been invited to join the music ministry at St. Anthony of Padua Church for Holy Week. “Over those years Fr. John Baran and the staff became dear friends and I’ve truly come to consider St. Anthony’s my home parish,” says Schutte. “I’ll be such an honor to present this concert in partnership with them and be joined by their choir and musicians for this celebration of God’s love and grace.”

About the St. Louis Jesuits
The St. Louis Jesuits, “a companionship of composers,” as their website cheerfully proclaims, “bring together composers, directors of music, organists, and other musicians for the purpose of creating and performing music of the highest possible artistic merit, in keeping with the Jesuit tradition of For God, not on us,” he said.

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St. Pius X, Fairfield

‘Restore All Things In Christ’

By MICHELLE ONOFRIO

FAIRFIELD—On Saturday, January 11, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano celebrated a Mass of Dedication at St. Pius X Parish in Fairfield to dedicate the newly restored church and consecrate the altar. With Father Sam Kachuba, pastor of St. Pius X, Father Tim Iannacone, parochial vicar, and other diocesan and visiting priests concelebrating, it was a beautiful Mass to mark this historic event in the life of the parish.

St. Pius X was selected by the diocese to be a pilot parish in the We Stand With Christ capital campaign in 2018. The funds accrued from this campaign went directly toward the Restore All Things in Christ project. Far from being just a renovation, this project was a true restoration of the church to its original beauty, when the church was built sixty-six years ago. Entrusted to Baker Liturgical Art, LLC, of Plantsville, Conn., the goal of the restoration was to maintain the church’s Colonial style, while enhancing its beauty. Brian Baker, president of Baker Liturgical Art and Wojciech Harabasz, principal of Hara-Arch LLC, achieved this by maintaining the light, brightness and simplicity of the church’s interior, while crafting liturgical elements of high quality. “We wanted to keep it so that as soon as you walked in, you knew that you were in St. Pius,” said Father Sam.

Before consecrating the new altar, Bishop Caggiano spoke about the spiritual significance of the altar, itself, saying it is “the place where heaven and earth kiss...what goes on here is more than meets the eye...because it meets the heart.” The beautifying of a worship space helps to “create a worthy living temple that we might find our way on our pilgrimage to heaven,” he said. His prayer for the parish and those gathered in it that evening was “that this place will resound to the glory of God.” After his homily, Bishop Caggiano deposed the relics of Sts. St. Pius X, Eugenius, Candidus, Andrew the Apostle, Jean-Marie Baptiste Vianney, and Catherine of Siena in the altar and anointed it with sacred chrism.

The proposal for the renovation of the church was put forward before St. Pius was chosen as a pilot parish in the We Stand With Christ campaign. There were many practical needs that needed to be addressed: the pews were 60 years old and starting to crack, the carpet was also old, worn and in need of replacement, the linoleum tile in the floor contained asbestos and the church had not been painted in at least a decade. Once St. Pius was selected to be a pilot parish, Father Sam saw this campaign as an opportunity to go forward with the restoration project.

Work on this restoration project began in September and was finished in time for Christmas Eve. “The miracle of this entire project,” said Father Sam, “was that there was nothing major that delayed anything. Everything went just so smoothly—it was fantastic.” There were some complications with the floor, once the carpet was taken up: the concrete base floor in the nave was damaged, and marble in the sanctuary had been ruined by the installation of carpet. “Once we saw that, we were able to repair it. That way, the new floor went on a proper surface,” he said.

A new marble floor has been installed in the sanctuary, and the nave is now porcelain tile. In the vestibule, the floor contains the Coat of Arms of the parish’s patron saint, Pope St. Pius X. The Coat contains the words of the saint’s motto: Instaurare Omnia in Christo, which translates to “Restore All Things in Christ.” The inspiration for the restoration project. This sentiment is echoed throughout the church, especially through one of its original features that has been restored: the altar rail. The altar rail, also referred to as the “communion rail” or the “people’s altar,” is an extension of the altar for the people. While it can be used during Mass for the reception of Holy Communion (parishioners are able to receive the Eucharist kneeling, if they wish), it can also be used as a place for prayer anytime. As Father Sam highlighted in a recent homily to his parishioners, the “rail” component of the altar rail is meant to provide support—physically, as people approach the altar for Communion, and spiritually, as they rely upon the grace, love and mercy of God to sustain them in their lives.

The gate of the altar rail came from a former chapel of an orphanage in Brooklyn that was operated by the Sisters of Mercy. On the gate are the images of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This gate’s original location is particularly meaningful for parishioners, who see it now, as it reminds them of their adoption by God as His sons and daughters, and that, through Jesus and Mary, the rewards of eternal life have been won for them.

The sanctuary area was also restored through the addition of a marble altar, Blessed Sacrament Throne, ambo, side shrines and baptismal font. The type of marble used is similar to that seen in the liturgical elements in St. Thomas Aquinas Church (also in Fairfield), a symbol of the unity that exists in the Catholic faith, particularly in its churches.

Elements that are original to the church include the crucifix that is displayed above the tabernacle and the statue of Pope St. Pius X, which is now located in a side shrine to the left of the altar. The Confessors have also been restored to their original location in the church, instead of the entryway, as a symbol of the constancy of God’s mercy through the sacrament. Ryan Walsh, a long-time parishioner of St. Pius and a current college freshman, saw the renovations for the first time at the Mass of Dedication. He said “It was beautiful: different enough to look completely new and familiar enough to let me know that I was at my home parish.” The young people of St. Pius were indeed on Father Sam’s mind as plans for the renovations unfolded. “This parish will be where major family events will take place. All these important things will happen here: baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, weddings and blessings.” I wanted this church to be something they would look forward to coming back to...
January 2020

Catholic

Congregation of Notre Dame

CND celebrates founder’s 400th birthday

By MARYANN CALABRESE, CND

In this age of the ‘selfie’ one might find it interesting to know that a remarkable woman of the 17th century, whose life and legacy marked both Church and society, had no portrait made in her lifetime. In an age when we can craft the portrait we want the world to see, it’s also interesting to note that the one image painted at her death was refashioned in succeeding centuries to make her more look appealing. Who was this woman who cared little for appearances, who wrote, “Let us be known by our works, by the sound education of children…by our love for God’s word and by virtue.”

St. Marguerite Bourgeoys was born in Troyes, France on April 17, 1620. Her “true portrait” was uncovered by art restorer Edward Korany in 1962. Knowing little about Marguerite, Mr. Korany was asked what the freshly uncovered image said to him. He replied, “Compassion.” How does one’s truth speak through a death portrait after 262 years?

Marguerite Bourgeoys’ story begins 400 years ago in a France that was dealing with the effects of both international and civil wars. She would have encountered displaced persons, those seeking refuge in the city of Troyes and the abject poor who had lost everything as a result of these conflicts. Changing weather conditions resulting in frequent crop failures and famine added to peoples’ suffering.

Marguerite’s response was initiated by a spiritual encounter in 1640 that left her “so moved and so changed that I no longer recognized myself.” It happened during a procession when the Rosary was being prayed and she came upon a statue of Mary at the Benedictine monastery. It was a transformation, witnessed by her family and others, that would lead to another – that of helping establish a new form of religious life for women in the church, unclerstoned; in Marguerite’s vision modeling the life of Mary who, knowing herself changed, sets out to companion her cousin Elizabeth in the last stages of her pregnancy.

But it was the cloistered sisters of the Congregation de Notre-Dame in Troyes that gave Marguerite’s response a concrete form. An “extern” of the Congregation, Marguerite became knowledgeable in an educational theory and practice that she saw as the means of empowering young girls and women, especially those who were poor, to transform their lives and those of their families. The next step was to “set out” as educator in the nascent settlement of Ville Marie (present day Montreal), in 1653. In the five years it would take before there were children to teach in this frontier settlement, Marguerite helped shape the life of this community dedicated to Mary with her skills as catechist, social worker, marriage broker, and primarily, as support to the women who would be the first educators in faith in their families.

In time, Marguerite attracted women who would join her in this endeavor, forming the first unclerstoned order of women in North America. The Congregation de Notre Dame of Montreal, birthed by a pioneer on the periphery of the Western world, today honors the vie voyageur of Mary, “a life,” Marguerite believed, “that ought to have its imitators.”

CND Sisters and lay Associates in Canada, the United States, Japan, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, France and Cameroon set out today in response to needs reminiscent of those witnessed by Marguerite herself: persons displaced by poverty, global conflict and climate crises, with the belief that education is liberating and empowering, and compassion speaks the truth of God’s love and presence as we journey. In the Bridgeport Diocese members of the Congregation minister in Bridgeport, Norwalk, Ridgefield, Stamford and Wilton.

Leadership Institute announces 2020 Pilgrimages

Following two successful pilgrimages for young adults to the Holy Land, The Leadership Institute has announced plans for three pilgrimages for 2020.

Greece and Turkey August 7-17, 2020

The first pilgrimage option is open primarily to young adults, age 21-35 and will take participants to Greece and Turkey. Following in the footsteps of St. Paul, the group, which is limited to 20 participants, will visit Thessaloniki, Philippi, Kavala, Vergina, Veroia, Kalamaka, Meteora, Delphi, Ossios Loukas, Athens, Corinth, with a 4-day cruise to Mykonos, Ephesus, Patmos, Rhodes and Santorini.

The pilgrimage departs from New York on August 7 and returns on August 17, 2020. The cost is $3,599 per person, based on double occupancy. Some scholarship money is available.

The pilgrimage cost covers all hotels and lodging, breakfast and dinner each day, our guide, entrance fees. The group will celebrate Mass each day and unpack the letters of St. Paul as a group each morning and evening.

Only ten spaces remain for the pilgrimage to Greece and Turkey, so participants are strongly encouraged to email the Institute to sign up quickly.

The second and third pilgrimage opportunities in 2020 are open to everyone and will be daylong pilgrimages to various holy sites.

Pilgrimage to Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception May 6, 2020

Spend a beautiful day in May at our nation’s largest church dedicated to Our Lady. Our early morning departure will be from the Catholic Center in Bridgeport.

We will say the Rosary and prepare ourselves for the visit of this great Basilica as we journey. Upon arrival we will have Mass followed by free time for lunch. A tour of the Basilica will follow and will include the Lourdes Chapel and Mother of Africa Chapel, the Trinity Dome Mosaic, the recently completed crowne jewel of the Shrine. We will also see the mosaics of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception. Once outside, we will the Rosary Walk and visit the prayer garden dedicated by Bishop Caggiano in 2017. The cost for the pilgrimage is $145 per person and registration is now open.

Pilgrimage to the Cloisters and Shrine of Mother Cabrini November 14, 2020

This pilgrimage will celebrate immigrants and the important role Mother Cabrini played in welcoming the stranger. We will depart from the Catholic Center in Bridgeport and, upon arrival, tour the Cloisters and museum, which opened to the public in 1938. This branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art is devoted to the art and architecture of medieval Europe.

Later, we travel down the road to the Shrine of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, where we will celebrate Mass, venerate the precious remains of Mother Cabrini and hear a presentation on Mother’s life and work.

The cost is $125 per person and registration is now open.

To register for any pilgrimage, visit wwwFORMATIONimagined.org and click events. If you have any questions, please email Patrick Donovan at institute@dioctpt.org.

Save the Date Diocesan Ministry Day March 7, 2020

The Leadership Institute has announced From Encounter to Accompaniment: Diocesan Ministry Day 2020. The event will take place at All Saints School in Norwalk and will begin at 8:30 am and end at 4 pm.

Join Bishop Caggiano for Mass and then spend the day learning more about your faith. Our musical guest for the day is Tony Melendez, who will also offer workshops in English and Spanish. Speakers include staff of the USCCB, priests and women religious from around the diocese, and lay men and women who will share their experiences and best practices on a variety of topics.

During the day there will also be a special track for members of parish pastoral councils, led by Rich Curran, founder of Parish Success Group.

All are welcome: catechists, liturgical ministers, Catholic school teachers, parents, or anyone who wishes to learn more about their faith and how to share it with others effectively. More information is available online at www.FORMATIONimagined.org.
By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—A joyous evening to celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany was also a welcoming prelude to establishment of a quasi-parish at St. Peter Church in Danbury.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano presided over the celebration with Father Leonel Medeiros, episcopal vicar for Brazilians and St. Peter’s pastor Father Gregory Mecca.

The bishop will visit again later this month on Saturday January 25, 7:30 pm to celebrate Mass and officially sign the decree establishing the quasi-parish.

A quasi-parish is created for the faithful that worship regularly at a parish and it recognizes the language or nationality of the Christian faithful in the area. The Brazilian community has grown in Danbury and there is a Brazilian Catholic Community Center nearby on Liberty Street.

At the beginning of the bi-lingual mass, a statue of Our Lady of Aparecida, a title of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was presented to the bishop. The statue, with a dark blue robe of richly embroidered cloth emblazoned with the flags of Brazil, was placed on the altar amid a ring of flowers and resounding applause from the packed church.

Our Lady of Aparecida is widely venerated by Brazilian Catholics, who consider her as the principal patroness of Brazil. Historical accounts state that the statue was originally found by three fishermen who miraculously caught many fish after invoking the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Epiphany Mass celebration was an affirmation of faith in action. “Epiphany is a call to action,” Bishop Caggiano said during his homily. “We have come here because we have work to do. We must bring his presence to a world that is going dark.”

“I have come here to encourage you and to support you, but you have encouraged me and support me in ways you don’t know,” he said commenting on the joyous celebration, show of faith and uplifting service with musicians and songs sung in Portuguese.

“This Christ child we adore is the savior of every person and of all creation,” Bishop Caggiano said. “For without him we have nothing but with him we have everything.”

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“We must do this by our words and actions. Every word that comes out of our mouth should be to glorify our Lord,” he said. “We bring the light to the world by our words and actions.”

Relating how the three kings walked thousands of miles searching for the infant Jesus in order to see the light of the world, the bishop asked each person to contemplate how far each is willing to walk to bring the light to the world.

After the presentation of the gifts of bread and wine, groups of children were blessed by the bishop as they brought baskets for offerings and placed them on the altar. The congregation followed and placed their monetary offerings in the baskets.

“It is time to rebuild God’s Church,” said Father Leonel, “As the bishop said, we must bring Christ’s light to the world.”

“It’s time for us to move forward, yes we have made mistakes, but we must look to the future. We must build from within to help repair the Church by going to Mass every Sunday, by volunteering; so Christ may be seen as truly alive in this very church and in our community,” he added.

At the end of the Mass, Bishop Caggiano was presented with a framed picture of the church in San Damiano, at the edge of Assisi, where St. Francis heard Christ say three times from the crucifix: “Francis, go repair my house.”

“The bishop said it was evident that the community was committed to rebuilding the Church and in fact, was actively doing so now. His message to the youth of the congregation: “You are the present of the Church. You are going to lead the Church forward into the life that was promised to it by Jesus Christ.”

Bishop Caggiano said this would be the first of many visits he intends to make as the quasi-parish gets established.
Serra Club
Praying for Vocations

WESTON—In the early evening, a group of faithful from churches around the diocese gathers at St. Francis of Assisi Parish to pray for a special intention, a cause so important it will affect the future of the Catholic Church—vocations.

They are members of a worldwide apostolate begun 85 years ago called “Serra,” in honor of St. Junipero Serra, the 18th century priest and Franciscan friar who founded missions along the California coast in San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Monterey, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo. He is recognized as patron saint of vocations to church ministry.

The Serra Club of the Bridgeport Diocese, which meets on the fourth Thursday of the month, supports activities and prayer so that more men and women will enter the religious life at a time when there has been a steady decline in vocations.

In recent years, there are fewer priests to serve the 300,000 registered Catholics in the diocese. Since 2014, 43 priests have retired and 13 have been ordained. Because of the shortage, an increasing number of parishes have only one priest in residence, and many have taken on a diocesan assignment in addition to their work as pastors.

Anita Field, a member of the group, says that throughout the day she prays for vocations because they are fundamental to the life of the Church.

“Without priests, we will have no Church,” she said. “And without their moral fiber, we are really lost. We need to be focused on something greater than what most of the people in the world are focused on.”

Daily prayer for vocations and seminarians is a regular practice for the 19 members, whose stated mission is to “vigorously respond to the call to promote and support vocations to the ministerial priesthood, the permanent diaconate and consecrated life in the Catholic Church.”

Before their meeting, members pray in front of the tabernacle, confident that Christ is listening because, as he said, “The harvest is great, but the laborers are few; pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

“Praying daily for vocations and our seminarians has made me a more prayerful and more disciplined individual,” said Thom Field, president of the club. “I ask for the intercession of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit in the lives of young seminarians.”

A convert to Catholicism 26 years ago, Field says he embraced the Catholic faith and is saddened by the crisis in the Church, which has had a negative effect on vocations.

The sex-abuse scandal has dramatically impacted our ability to recruit people for the religious life,” he says. “I remember the days when parents were proud to have their son become a priest. Today, they try to talk their kids out of it, but we need to help them understand that the priesthood is an honorable and sacred vocation.”

Fr. Jeffrey Couture, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi and chaplain of the group, said that to succeed in their mission, Serrans must commit themselves to the basics of spiritual warfare because Satan will always tempt them into thinking there’s an easier way.

“All of us, as a group, need to do more,” he said. “We need to do holy hours. We need to pray the rosary. We need to pray together during Eucharistic adoration.”

At a recent meeting, club members discussed plans to create a vocation ministry at St. Francis of Assisi that would pray for vocations and also provide resources and opportunities to encourage young people to consider the religious life.

Serra International was begun in 1935 by four Catholic laymen in Seattle and is recognized by the Vatican as the “lay vocational arm of the Church” with more than 1,100 clubs in 46 countries that claim over 20,000 members.

The Bridgeport chapter began through the efforts of Deacon David Flynn of St. Jude Church in Monroe, who in 2014 while in formation for the permanent diaconate undertook a project to create a vocation ministry in his parish, which ultimately led to forming a Serra Club in the diocese.

“What appealed to me was the personal formation and growth in holiness for the members,” he said. “The activities are important, but the foundation of these activities rests on prayer and the individual’s spiritual formation and growth in personal holiness.”

At times, it seemed the effort was floundering, but he credits prayers to the Blessed Mother by several people, including his wife Anita, with bringing it to fruition. The Bridgeport club was chartered on April 28, 2015 at a Mass celebrated by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at St. Pius X Church in Fairfield.

“It is really surprising how things work with prayer,” Deacon Flynn said. “No matter how hard we work for something, it doesn’t get done on its own. You have to do it with prayer because then you are following God’s will.”

The three goals of the club are: “To promote and support vocations to the ministerial priesthood and the permanent diaconate of the Church as a particular vocation of service, and support priests in their sacred ministry; to encourage and promote vocations to the consecrated life in the Church; and to assist members to recognize and respond, each in his own life, to God’s call to holiness in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit.”

What is particularly rewarding for Serrans are the friendships that develop with seminarians, and they regularly hold events to become acquainted with them, including a family barbecue. As Deacon Flynn puts it: “Sierra hugs trees. Serra hugs the clergy.”

Some priests he knows who were ordained 50 years ago still remember the influence and support that Serra provided for them when they were in formation back in the 1960s … and knew that every day someone was praying for them by name. Gene Casciaro of St. Bridget of Ireland in Stamford, who has been a member of the Serra Club since it began, says he currently prays for seminarian Joseph Cain.

In our era, despite the decline in vocations, God is still calling men and women to the religious life, Deacon Flynn said. However, many of them cannot recognize the call because they did not receive the necessary faith formation when they were growing up.

To encourage more vocations, Serra offers resources for parishes that want to start a vocation ministry, and Bishop Caggiano has asked pastors to encourage parishioners to become active in the Serra Club, Field said.

Bob Nelson of St. Mary in Bethel said, “We are always looking for new members because we are devoted to this cause. It is a vocation to pray for vocations.”

(For more information about the Serra Club of the Diocese of Bridgeport or how you can join them in their efforts, email serrarbridge@gmail.com or fjlcbR07@optonline.net)
Local News

Making sense of death and dying

By EMILY CLARK

BRIDGEPORT—“The Catholic life is a hard one to live in but a great one to die in,” said Peter Kreeft, Ph.D., as he opened his lecture on death, judgment, heaven and hell to a group gathered at the Catholic Center last Saturday morning. A distinguished professor of philosophy at Boston College, Kreeft shared beliefs and anecdotes associated with the Catholic understanding of death in his talk entitled “The Last Things,” which was co-sponsored by The Leadership Institute and Catholic Cemeteries and presented in conjunction with the revised Funeral Norms of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

In discussing the preparation for and process of death and dying, Kreeft said that everyone yearns to know how to get to heaven, and the answer is very simple: trusting in God. “If you know Him, you know everything,” he said. “It is there in heaven that you’ll meet God face to face. He will deliver you from all your sufferings.”

“The Catholic Understanding Of Death”—Peter Kreeft, Ph.D., distinguished professor of philosophy at Boston College, shared beliefs and anecdotes about the Catholic understanding of heaven, hell and judgement. His talk was sponsored by the Leadership Institute and Catholic Cemeteries. “It is there in heaven that you’ll meet God face to face. He will deliver you from all your sufferings.”

In understanding judgment, said Kreeft, though it is there in heaven that we will look back on our lives, “You don’t need to be joyful and how loving God is,” he said, “you don’t need to be scared of the fire and the demons, destruction. It is in hell, however, where the pain is most agonizing, for those there are tortured by the absence of God’s love. Kreeft believes hell is the loss of everything with its fearful image of fire and destruction.”

“As the last face of death, the lover is the golden chariot coming to fetch us to take us to His castle forever,” said Kreeft, adding that we must see life on Earth as just the beginning. He reminded the attendees of St. Augustine’s famous passage from Confessions: “Our heart is restless until it rests in You.”

In understanding judgment, he said, we must see it as a fundamental virtue which we are granted upon death. “We hope the vast majority of us get to heaven,” Kreeft said. “God shows us the way, but we must go through the pains of purgatory.” We would gladly exchange any physical pain on Earth for eternal bliss in the next life, he added, for the a seed —small and invisible. From that seed grows a flower, for that seed grows a flower, for that seed grows a flower, for that seed grows a flower, for that seed grows a flower, for that seed grows a flower, for that seed grows a flower, for that seed grows a flower, for the lover who gives us life and the lover who gives us meaning.

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Sister Nancy O’Neill, CND ministered to the deaf

Sister Nancy O’Neill, CND (Sister St. Alberta Francis) died peacefully at Lourdes Health Care Center in Wilton, Conn. on October 12.

“Sister Nancy O’Neill was a wonderful person,” shared Father Nick Pavia, pastor of Our Lady of Peace Church in Stratford, who worked closely with Sister, ministering to the deaf community in the diocese. “Her first love was God, then music, then her ministry with the deaf community,” he said.

“She had a wonderful sense of humor and I learned so much from her.” Father Pavia explained that the deaf do not see themselves as disabled, and that was something he and Sister Nancy O’Neill were always trying to advocate for.

Born in Boston, Ma., in 1933, she was predeceased by her parents, Francis Leroy O’Neill and Alberta M. (Macpherson) O’Neill. She graduated from Cardinal Cushing High School in South Boston, Ma., in 1950 and entered the Congregation of Notre Dame in Montreal the following year. She made her first vows in 1953 and her final profession in 1959.

Sister Nancy began by teaching music and piano in Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island and later served as school librarian. She became religious education coordinator at parishes in Kentucky and Pennsylvania and in 1984 became religious education coordinator at the Boston School for the Deaf and Aphasic Children in Randolph, Ma. She continued ministering with the deaf and hearing impaired in Revere, Ma., and then in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

In 2011 she went to Andrus Retirement Home in Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y. and later went to Lourdes Health Care Center in Wilton, Conn., where her prayer focused—most appropriately—on the deaf in the Diocese of Bridgeport, Conn.

Throughout her years there, her cheerfulness and gratitude to all in the face of her own diminishment were an inspiration to those around her.

Sister Nancy was predeceased by her sister Frances Gillis and her brother Don, and is survived by her sister Frances Gillis and her brother Fred and a number of nieces and nephews. She will be deeply missed by them all, as well as by her CND family and friends. A wake and funeral were held at Villa Notre Dame in Wilton, Conn. on October 15.

For further information, please contact Cornell Funeral Home at 203.748.4833.

Obituaries

Sister Gencarelli

Sister Daria Gencarelli, a member of the Little Workers of the Sacred Hearts (POSC), entered into eternity on December 16, 2019, lovingly cared for by the sisters of her religious community. Born on December 11, 1935 in Luzzi (Calabria) Italy, she was the daughter of Luigi and Rosaria (Cafone) Gencarelli. Sister Daria is survived by her brothers Gennaro and Francesco of New Jersey, her sister Giulia of Stamford and her sister Angela Bruno of Luzzi, Italy. She is also survived by 21 nieces and nephews and several great-nieces and great-nephews.

Sister Daria faithfully served as a religious sister for 67 years. In 1954, she left Italy to begin assignments in her congregation’s nascent missions in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Washington, D.C. In 1960, she was assigned to Our Lady of Grace Convent/School where she remained until her passing. A gentle soul with an infectious smile, Sister Daria always cared for the smallest children attending Our Lady of Grace. She was able to make any child feel loved and secure, calming their anxieties even on their first day of school. She will be missed by the generations of children she nurtured and the parents she befriended. To the sisters in her community, she was a maternal presence, a calming influence and a model of religious life. She lived the charism of her congregation with great humility and unending devotion.

The Nicholas F. Cognetta Funeral Home, 104 Myrtle Avenue, Stamford, Conn. 06902 is honored to assist the Sisters with the arrangements. You may leave messages of condolence online at www.cognetta.com.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be sent to the Little Workers of the Sacred Hearts, c/o Our Lady of Grace Convent, 635 Glenbrook Road, Stamford, Conn. 06906-1409.

Funeral Guide

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Deceased Clergy of the Diocese of Bridgeport January 19—February 15

January

19 Rev. Andrew L. Horvat ................. 1973
20 Rev. William D. Thompson .......... 2004
21 Rev. Robert F. Albert ............... 1995
22 Rev. Martin F. Doran ............... 1967
23 Rev. Felix P. Werpechowski ....... 1972
25 Rev. James F. McCormick ......... 1965
26 Rev. Robert E. Onze ............... 2010
27 Msgr. Francis G. Galla .......... 1996
28 Msgr. Joseph R. McCarthy ........ 1964
29 Msgr. John F. Cavanaugh ....... 1990
30 Rev. James F. Desmond .......... 1963
31 Rev. Addison George Wright, PSS .. 2017

February

1 Rev. Joseph W. Kupec ................ 1978
2 Rev. Deacon Bartholomew J. Maucci .... 2004
3 Rev. Robert F. Albert ............... 1995
4 Rev. William F.X. Casey ............ 1978
5 Rev. Francis Sangiovanni .......... 2019
6 Rev. Martin J. McDermott ......... 1986
7 Rev. James F. McGrath ............ 1971
8 Rev. William R. Nagle .......... 1979
9 Rev. John J. Filip ............... 1984
11 Rev. Deacon Matthew Ashe ....... 2008
12 Rev. Deacon Rodney L. Varney .... 1988

January 2020
**Sports: St. Joe’s Football**

**Perfection results in a three-peat**

By DON HARRISON

A question was put to the Cadets’ veteran coach: Did Joe Della Vecchia envision an undefeated 2019 football season for St. Joseph High School?

The Cadets’ veteran coach responds immediately. “You think about it every year, it’s in my DNA,” he says. “You always figure out a way to beat (opponents).”

The fall of 2019 was oh-so-sweet for Della Vecchia and his squad. A seamless 13-0 record, capped by a hard-earned 17-13 victory over previously unbeaten Hand of Madison in the CIAC Class L title game on December 14 in New Britain. It represented the Cadets’ third straight state championship—albeit in different divisions. They prevailed in Class S in 2017 and Class M in 2018, moving up each year because of their success the previous fall.

Victory No. 13 also served two other purposes: It vaulted St. Joe’s past Hand and put St. Joe’s ahead in the state-championship game against Hand of Madison.

On the defensive side of the ball, no fewer than four Cadet seniors were named to all-state teams. Defensive end Mike Morrissey, a frequent disruptive presence in opposing backfields, was selected to the GameTime/Register team and chosen Player of the Year.

Linebacker Cole DaSilva, who topped the Cadets with 113 tackles, gained a place on all three all-state teams, although relegated to the second unit on the Walter Camp squad. Nose guard Jermaine “Whopper” Williams who weighs in at 310 pounds, made both the Coaches and Walter Camp teams, while linebacker Alex Pagliarini was picked on the Walter Camp team.

Still another St. Joe’s senior, center Nick DiLorio, was a second-team Walter Camp selection. Eight days after their state championship victory, Della Vecchia and most of his squad attended the New York Jets-Pittsburgh Steelers game at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, courtesy of Steelers’ linebacker Tyler Matakevich—the first St. Joe’s alumnus to play in the NFL. “He bought tickets for 45 of our players and yours truly,” Della Vecchia says with pride.

On offense, the Cadets’ senior quarterback Austin Jose was named Walter Camp Player of the Year and was selected to the Coaches’ All-State team.

Another junior, wide receiver Brady Hutchison, rebounded from an injury-plagued 2018 season to catch 58 passes for 998 yards and 14 touchdowns—all of which led the Cadets.

When Hutchison came back, he changed the entire dynamic of our team,” Della Vecchia says. “You can’t teach him to get open. He just has the knack.”

As the new placekicker, senior Austin Jose proved a worthy successor to the graduated Luke Kirby, connecting on 83 of 85 extra-point attempts and supplying four field goals—most notably the 37-yarder that snapped a 7-7 tie in the state-championship game against Hand of Madison.

Shirden attributes some of his football success to his lineage. His father, Duane Shirden, was a fine running back on Stratford High’s 1988 state championship team, and later served as head coach at his alma mater for 10 seasons. “My grandfather, James Shirden, was an outstanding two-sport athlete in North Carolina,” Jaden says.

Shirden was voted Player of Year by the Connecticut High School Coaches Association, and was selected to all three All-State teams, Coaches, GameTime/New Haven Register and Walter Camp Football Foundation. He’s also among three candidates for Walter Camp Player of the Year.

“I thought we had a shot to go undefeated (this season),” he says. “The defense was doing the job all season, and we had guys on offense step up.”

Perfection results in a three-peat.
Column: Thomas Hicks

Immortal Diamond

By Thomas H. Hicks

Martin Heidegger, was asked how he could better lead our lives and he said we should spend more time in graveyards.

At St. Charles, I read dates on gravestones and measure the years. There are many early leavings. One thinks about the lives of these young people, what were their expectations, the dreams that never came true, the disappointments, the unrequited loves. All that trapped forever. All the promises, the unrequited loves. They never had the chance to marry or look into the eyes of their own first child, to finish college and launch a career. They never got to experience the joys and pains of middle age and growing old, they never got to grow old surrounded by love.

Parents feel that it is not right to live when one’s child has died, that one should somehow have found the way to give one’s life to save their child’s life.

Why do infants die? Is there something that bears the mark of God’s wisdom and providential care? Does eternal life give those whose life was cut short the opportunity to live the life they were intended for, and for which they were born? Will their lives be completed somewhere, somehow? Can they somehow live to the full a human life after they have died?” (cf. Jurgen Moltman, The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology, pp.117-118)

The gravestones tell that taken to the grave are countless “golden years.” How many people have stood in front of these gravestones imploring “Come back to me.”

This poor potsherd is Immutable Diamond. Is immortal diamond. (potsherd = broken pottery)

Save the date

St. John Fisher Seminary 3rd Annual Rector’s Dinner

“Farming Fishers of Men”

Honoring
Msgr. Kevin Royal
Gene and Susan Goodman

May 16, 2020

Indian Center of Stamford | Stamford, CT

For more information and updates on the event please visit: sjfisherseminary.org
Column: Joe Pisani

A model for all grandparents

Swimming Upstream
By Joe Pisani

I’ve often wondered what kind of grandparents St. Anne and St. Joachim were. Did St. Anne dote over Jesus because he was her only grandchild? Did St. Joachim slip him a piece of candy when Mary and Joseph weren’t looking? Did they spoil him with gifts at Hanukkah? Did they babysit?

Grandparents play an important role in the development of every child—even the Christ Child—and although their efforts were never recorded by the Gospel writers, you can be sure Anne and Joachim did their part and can serve as an example for Catholic grandparents everywhere. After all, look at the outstanding job they did raising Our Lady.

With Baby Boomers among the growing ranks of grandparents, it’s more important than ever to step up to the plate and set a good example the way that their predecessors in the Greatest Generation did. My daughters still amuse themselves with stories about my mother and father. I only hope I can do as well, although sometimes I have my doubts.

Grandparents are fundamental to family life now that both parents are often in the workforce. I recently got stuck behind a school bus and noticed that boys and girls were getting picked up by smiling grandparents. I guess grandparents are an inexpensive resource in a competitive job market. I know from firsthand experience because my wife, Sandy, and I regularly watch our 3-year-old grandson Gabriel, although I confess it’s more work than play, and by the time we get home, I’m ready for a nap...and so is the dog.

Both my parents worked to support our family, and for a number of years I lived with my grandmother on the East Side of Bridgeport. She was an Italian immigrant who was widowed in her early 40s. She raised nine kids during the Great Depression with no safety net, and she raised them by herself. During the years I lived with her, she would take me across the street to St. Mary Church for daily Mass, which was celebrated in a mysterious language called Latin that I couldn’t understand.

Every afternoon at lunchtime, I would lie on the floor of her apartment in front of the stove with my coloring book and crayons, while she baked two sweet potatoes, one for her and one for me. Then, she sat nearby in her rocking chair, praying the rosary. Very often, she would doze off but miraculously wake up just in time to take the potatoes out of the oven.

Years later, I still remember that simple pleasure and those moments together. And years later, I still have a devotion to the rosary because of her. Even now, in anxious and frightening times, I’ll whisper to her, “Please pray for me,” because I’m convinced of the intercessory power of her prayers. Appropriately, her name was Angelina, which means “little angel.”

Back when our children were young, our oldest daughter would stay with my parents on the weekend because four kids could not possibly go out to dinner, we let him lead us in prayers, and whenever we go out to dinner, we let him lead us in grace, to the amusement of other people in the restaurant.

Grandparents are an inexpensive resource in a competitive job market. I know from firsthand experience because my wife, Sandy, and I regularly watch our 3-year-old grandson Gabriel—but they tend to be a better power of example for my children—Lennox, Mason and Gabriel—but they tend to bring out the last vestiges of the peculiarity obsession ended, however, when I introduced him to Mike and Ike candy. He would have eaten the whole box if I didn’t stop him.

Then, I asked, “What do you like better, broccoli or Mike and Ike?” His response was instantaneous—“Mike and Ike!” Hey, that’s what grandfathers are for. I’m really proud that his parents are teaching him to say his prayers, and whenever we go out to dinner, we let him lead us in grace, to the amusement of other people in the restaurant.

Grandparents are a strong example of faith. It’s something that grandchildren will always remember. St. Anne and St. Joachim, please pray for us grandparents and our families.
**Nuestra Voz**

**Con fe y folklore se vive la fiesta en honor al Señor de Esquipulas, patrono de Guatemala**

STAMFORD. Para celebrar al Señor de Esquipulas, la parroquia de Santa María de Stamford, decidió que a partir del 2020 la fiesta anual del Cristo Negro Crucificado, conocido como el Patrono de Guatemala se celebrará el último día del tiempo de Navidad, es decir, en la fecha dedicada al Bautismo de Jesús, e inicio de su vida pública.

El P. Gustavo Falla, superior de la parroquia Santa María Nuestra Señora de Montserrat, durante la homilía en honor al Cristo Crucificado el sábado 11 de enero, dio el decreto para que salga de ahí un representante de origen guatemalteco a la Junta Parroquial de la iglesia.

La misa de Acción de Gracias celebrada con todo fervor por el sacerdote colombiano, trajo muchos datos históricos que datan del siglo dieciséis cuando el Cristo fue traído de Europa a Guatemala y que con el paso del tiempo por el humo de las velas encendidas la imagen tallada en madera tomó el color negro, descartando otras versiones populares que hablaban de que la imagen del Señor de Esquipulas fue enviado a confeccionarse a propósito en ébano.

Igualmente, dentro de los datos originales de la Parroquia, el P. Falla también habló del fervor a Jesús en advocación al Señor de Esquipulas, que tenían los fieles guatemaltecos y que poco a poco han ido fomentando como tradición trasplantada en Stamford.

El sacerdote explicó que gracias a esto en la parroquia Santa María, desde hace años, se viene cultivando las vocaciones y pruebas de esta imagen del Cristo Guatemalteco, que es el mismo que tiene en su santuario en Esquipulas, patrono de Guatemala, que la devoción que recorre toda Centroamérica y hoy por hoy el mundo hispano de los Estados Unidos.

**St. Francis of Assisi, Weston**

**Welcomes renowned speaker Jeff Cavins**

WESTON—On March 20 and 21, Jeff Cavins will be speaking at St. Francis of Assisi, located at 35 Norfield Rd. in Weston.

Jeff Cavins is a much sought after Catholic inspirational speaker. He is an evangelist, author and biblical scholar. Cavins is the creator of the popular Great Adventure Bible Study program where he unlocks how to read the Bible in a way that is understandable and relevant in today’s world. It helps readers discover the story of salvation history and how we fit into God’s plan. Cavins was also the founding host of the television show “Life on the Rock” on EWTN and of the Morning Air radio program on Relevant Radio.

The main event at St. Francis is Saturday March 21, from 9:45 am to 3 pm (with check-in starting at 8:30 am). Cavins will conduct a seminar entitled ‘The Activated Disciple: Taking your faith to the next level’. As he says in his book, “Practice Is Over. It’s Game Time.”

Cavins will talk about moving beyond believing and practicing to becoming an activated disciple. His real-world message inspires people on how to imitate God in order to become an instrument for him to transform the world. The cost is $100 which includes the Activated Disciple book and Kerygma card ($25 value) as well as lunch.

On Friday, March 20, from 7- 8 pm (which check-in started in 6:30pm), Cavins will give an engaging talk on his conversion story, ‘A rebel returns to his faith’. This will be followed by a book signing. Cost for this event is $25, or $15 if both events are registered.

“We are excited to be hosting Jeff Cavins as part of our Lenten Mission program”, said Rev. Jeff Couture, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi. “We are especially pleased to open this to the Catholic community in Fairfield County. It’s a wonderful opportunity for all of us, together, to renew and reactivate our faith during Lent.”

Registration is required by March 6 and can be made online or by mail. Online registration is at: www.osvonlinegiving.com/1439/DirectDonate/73694. Or mail a check payable to St. Francis of Assisi at 35 Norfield Rd, Weston CT 06883. Please indicate Jeff Cavins in the memo section. This event is sponsored by the St. Francis of Assisi Women’s Guild.
THE PARISH OF ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA in Trumbull will hold a Holy Hour for Life, on Wed., Jan. 22, from 7-8pm. Everyone is welcome. It is especially for those who will not be able to travel to Washington, DC, but would like to join in the prayers for and witness to the sanctity of life. For information, call 203. 377.3133.

CATHOLIC YOUNG ADULTS OF GREATER DANBURY will gather on Fri., Jan. 24, at 6:30 pm for dinner at Two Steps in Danbury, followed by DJ ice skating at Danbury Ice Arena. The Catholic Academy of Stamford Take-a-Look Dates—Come and see our teachers and students in action. Visit our class rooms. Tues., Jan. 28–PreK–Grade 5 (Lower School); 9-11 am, Thurs., Jan. 30–Grades 6-8 (Upper School) 9-11 am. Call Mary Margarone, Director of Admissions at: 203.322.6507 to arrange a personal visit with your child.

84th ANNA FUSCO PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY SHRINES OF CANADA—Join Fr. Michael Novajovsky to visit the Holy Shrines of Canada from Mon., July 13-Thurs., July 16. $650 per person, double occupancy. Passports required. An all-expenses paid trip to PA at Sight & Sound Theatre for the performance of “Jesus Christ Superstar.” For more information or to book. Contact: 203.213.6882 or email: oraproinfo@optonline.net

TRINITY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL is having a Night of Unity in Christ on Tues., Jan. 28 from 7-9 pm. Join us for an evening of worship, music, prayer and testimonies.

ST. MARY IN BETHEL’S MEN’S MINISTRY will be hosting a special Diaconate Discovery evening on Thurs., Jan. 30 from 7-8:30 pm at St. Mary Church Hall. Deacon Tim Bolton, vocations coordinator for the diocese will host a discussion on the role on the permanent deacon in our Church today and on the diaconate discernment and formation process. For more information or to register, contact: stmarys06801@gmail.com.

JOIN FATHER BRIAN GANNON for an amazing pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Trip is from Feb. 19 to March 3, 2020. Cost is $3698 per person. Price includes round trip economy air, all hotels, sightseeing, transfers and most meals. Call Virginia at 203.402.0632 or email v@email.com for more information or to book.

DIACONATE DISCOVERY EVENINGS will be a consistent space to wonder, explore, pray and share with other men of faith regarding serving the Church as a Permanent Deacon. They will take place on Thurs. evenings and the dates are as follows: St. Bridget of Ireland, Stamford; Feb. 6.

ST. ANNE’S CHURCH IN BLACK ROCK is having a Valentine’s Dance and Dinner on Sat., Feb. 8 from 7-11 pm. Tickets are $15 per person and include admission, meal, beverage and dessert. Kids under age 10 are free. For more info contact 203.368.1607. All, especially the sick, the frail and the handicapped are invited to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and World Day of Prayer for the Sick on Sun., Feb. 9 at Blessed Sacrament in Bridgeport. Mass will be celebrated and the Sacrament of the Sick will be offered. Refreshments will follow. Welcome begins at 11:15 am. Mass celebrated at 11:30 am.

ST. ANNE’S CHURCH IN BLACK ROCK will be hosting a 15-session prayer and life workshop beginning on Mon., Feb. 10 from 7-9 pm. For more info contact: 203.213.3643.

ST. PETER’S CHURCH IN DANBURY is hosting a Date Night on Fri., Feb. 14 at 7:30 pm featuring a silent film with an accompanying commentary by Peter Kraskins. Tickets are $20. Visit: www.stpeterdebarr.org/events/speedy-silent-film-with-organ-accompaniment.

COME AND SEE if you are being called to a vocation in the Secular Franciscan Order. The Secular Franciscan Holy Spirit Fraternity invites everyone to St. Anthony of Padua Church in Fairfield on Sat. 9:30 am on Sat., Feb. 15 with Fr. Michael Boccaccio. After Mass, there will be a social and meeting held in the Parish Hall. All are welcome! For further information, call Fran Karpie, OFS, at 203.452.7040 or pasoteachers.com.

STAFFORD KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS #2370 will hold their annual St. Valentine’s Charity Dinner Dance Sat., Feb. 15 at 7 pm at Holy Name Hall, Trumbull. Complete with steak dinner, dancing, BYOB and door prizes. $25 per person, $50 per couple at the door. All reservations must be received by Thurs., Feb. 7. Please by calling Chip Krahnke at 203.581.2516 before 7 pm. Pre-pay discount $45 per couple if payment received by Feb. 7. Please make checks payable to K of C #2370 & mail to attention of Bob Bradley II, 535 Cutspring Rd., Stratford, CT 06614. Proceeds for Vocation Scholarships. Please bring a canned good or other non-perishable food item for KofC Food for Families.

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA CHURCH IN RIVERSIDE is offering a 7-week Bible study on Second Corinthians from Mon., Feb. 10–15, Thurs., March 12-17, and Wed., March 20–25. On Mon. evenings from 7:30-9:30 pm and Tues. mornings from 10-11:30 am. There is a $30 materials fee ($22 for First Corinthians students) which is to be paid the 1st day of class. Cash or check accepted. Registration online: www.stc-sta.org/faith-formation/adults.

THE ST. LOUIS JESUITS COMING HOME CONCERT CONTINUING THE LEGACY will be held on Sun., Feb. 16 at 4 pm at the Quick Center for the Arts, Fairfield University, with funds supporting the Murphy Center for Ignatian Spirituality of Fairfield University. Tim Manion, Roc O’Connor, SJ and Dan Schutte will perform some of their classic songs. For details visit www.stlouisjays.org or call the Parish Office at: 203.268.6217.

SAVE THE DATE—International Speaker Jeff Cavins will be speaking at St. Francis of Assisi in Westport Fr., March 20-7 pm and on taking your faith to the next level on Sat., March 21 from 9:45 am-3 pm. Registration is required by March 6 and can be made online or by mail. Online registration is at: www.oswonalinegiving.com/1439/DirectDonate/73694 or mail a check payable to St. Francis of Assisi at 35 Norfield Rd, Westport CT 06883. Please indicate Jeff Cavins on the form. This event is sponsored by the St. Francis of Assisi Women’s Guild.

APRIL 1, 2020 CENSUS DAY will be observed nationwide. By this date, every home will receive an invitation to participate in the 2020 Government Census. Once the invitation arrives, each household should respond by phone, by mail, or online. More information about the upcoming census can be found at www.census.gov. See information at: www.2020census.gov/en.html.

ST. JUDE’S 31ST ANNUAL LIVING STATIONS—This Good Friday, Fri., April 10, St. Jude Parish in Monroe will hold their 31st Annual Living Stations at 7 pm in the church. PLEASE JOIN FATHER MARCEL at Christ the King Church in a 2 days, 1 night bus trip to PA at Sight & Sound Theatre from Feb. 3-12 for $425.00. Departure June 2-3. Price $315 (including ticket for the show, hotel, meal and city tour). For info call: 203.434.7208 or call: marcelsinjeyean@gmail.com.

SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE TO HOLY LAND, ITALY AND MEDITJURGE—Sept. 14-28 NY/ NY PRICE: $4,399.00. (Including: airline ticket, taxes, first class hotels, breakfast and dinner daily, sightseeing, transportation to JFK, tips. For reservation please contact Fr. Marcel St. Jean, Christ the King Trumbull, 203.434.7208 or email: marcelsinjeyean@gmail.com, THE 2000 HAIL MARYS Every first Saturday of the month at Saint Gabriel Parish in Stamford, 30-40 devotees gather to pray 2000 Hail Marys between 6 am and 3 pm in the St. Philip Neri Chapel.

CONFESSION AND ADOPTION is offered every Tuesday from 7-8:30 pm at St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull. The opportunity for both anonymous and face-to-face.

PERPETUAL EUCHARISTIC ADOPTION! Spend time, heart to heart with Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist at Our Lady of Fatima Perpetual Eucharistic Adoption Chapel of St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull. The Chapel is open 24 hours, 7 days a week. If interested in making a weekly holy hour as a Eucharistic Guardian, please visit our website at: StTheresaTrumbull.org or call the Parish Office at: 203.261.3676. Office Hours are: Mon.-Fri., 8-3 am-4:40 pm.

VATICAN II: THE POWER AND PROMISE discussions led by Deacon Brian Kelly will take place on the third Thurs. of every month through April 2020, St. Luke’s in Westport at 7:30 pm. Dates are as follows: Feb. 20, March 19, April 16.

ST. PHILIP’S FOODFAST —24 hours of fasting, fun, service, prayer, learning and fundraising. Sat., Feb. 22-10 am with a 30 minute prayer service including a traditional blessing of candles. Refreshments to follow. Baby sitting will be provided of charge. For more information please contact Knights of Columbus McGivney Council 29 at: KofC@gmail.com or call: 203.744.9562.

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP for anyone grieving the loss of a loved one will meet at St. Stephen’s Parish, Trumbull. A series of ten weekly meetings with experienced counselors will begin on Thurs., March 18, from 4:50 pm. Registration required in advance. For info., call the Parish Office at: 203.268.6217.

IT HAS NEVER BEEN KNOWN TO FAIL. The 2000 HAIL MARYS for Life, on Sat., July 23rd. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved throughout the world now and forever. Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us. St. Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us. St. Jude, help of the hopeless, pray for us. Say this prayer nine times a day. By the ninth day your prayer will be answered. Say it for nine days. It has never been known to fail. Publication must be promised. Thank you St. Jude.
Wherever you may need advanced orthopaedic care, there’s one place you can find it — at Hartford HealthCare’s St. Vincent’s Medical Center. We offer acclaimed specialists and the latest procedures, and are now part of the health system that performs the most orthopaedic surgeries in Connecticut. Learn more at StVincents.org/Ortho.
Members of Committees formed by Education Commission of the Diocese of Bridgeport have been visiting schools and meeting parents as part of the “Make All Things New” strategic planning process to ensure the vitality of Catholic schools.

The goal of the initiative is to address challenges of changing demographics, declining enrollment, Catholic identity and financial issues that have an impact on Catholic education.

Demographic analysis demonstrates that the overall number of school age children has decreased by an average of 10 percent over the past ten years in Fairfield County and many towns where the diocese maintains schools have seen population decreases of more than 18 percent. At present, the total combined enrollment in diocesan Catholic elementary and high schools is 7,500 students. Dr. Steven Cheeseman, superintendent of Catholic schools, said the Education Commission will make recommendations to Bishop Frank J. Caggiano by the end of February and decisions will be announced in March about educational and structural models that will be used in schools going forward.

“We’re looking at improving academics and deepening Catholic identity as part of this strategic plan, at the same time, we are working to strengthen school leadership and operational viability,” said Dr. Cheeseman.

In a letter sent to all parents and educators on November 21, the bishop announced the initiative by noting that “It is clear that the changing demographic and financial pressures faced by many families in Fairfield County will require us to take bold action now to ensure that a vibrant Catholic school system will be affordable, accessible and excellent well into the future.”

While the bishop indicated it may be possible that the plan will call for the reorganization, closure or consolidation of school facilities, he said the paramount goal of the process will be to ensure the long-term stability and vitality of Catholic education.

“Such vitality will be marked by the optimum utilization of our resources, ensuring appropriate class sizes and guaranteeing a quality Catholic education for students well into the future.”

Since that time, the five committees empowered by the committee that focuses on ensuring that Catholic identity is woven through the fabric of each school. The committee has been working with pastors, principals, teacher and others to focus on recommendations for improvement.

“By December we held ‘State of the Schools’ meetings to provide parents with an overview of demographic challenges and to review financial and enrollment trends. Our hope is that by sharing all the facts, challenges and opportunities, we can mobilize parents at the school level in new and creative ways.”

Dr. Cheeseman said the initiative is an outgrowth of the Strategic Plan “Transforming our Future” published in 2017 and that by strengthening the operational structure of our schools we can work to a full implementation of our personalized learning program. He explained, “While we will look at various models such as multi-age classrooms, STREAM schools and classical academies that provide parents more choice and respond to contemporary needs, any model that might be selected by a school will have to fit into the personalized learning program which, when fully implemented, will provide a personalized learning plan for each student.”

(For more information on the “Make All Things New” vitality process, visit the schools website at: www.dioceseofbridgeportcatholicschools.com/to-make-things-new-2020/#viability-review-committee.)
Aquinas Fellowship Program

Faith-filled teachers transform school classrooms

By PAT HENNESSY

“You learn through immersion. Like going to another country to learn a language, being fully immersed you learn so, so much,” said Katie Curry, one of the first Fellows accepted into the Aquinas Fellowship Program (AFP).

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano had launched the Aquinas Fellowship Program in November of 2018 with a challenge: “Are you ready to take up the Lord’s call to be a missionary disciple by serving as a Catholic educator? If you are, then the Aquinas Fellowship Program is waiting for you.”

AFP is designed to form spiritually strong educators who are committed to Catholic education. The Fellows work towards a cost-free master’s degree at Fairfield University while teaching full-time in a diocesan school. They receive an annual living allowance of $15,000 and are given encouragement and spiritual support as they balance life, college and teaching.

The program took active life on August 15, 2019, when the first three Fellows, Katie Curry, Nicole Rabito and Tiffany Tubby, entered the doors of St. Joseph Catholic Academy in Brookfield to begin the new school year.

“We couldn’t be happier,” said Pam Fallon, director of education at St. Joseph’s. “They are Fellows and therefore academically excellent, but more than that, they’re awesome disciples to these students. They are witnesses to their faith.”

Each participant accepted into AFP lives in community with other Fellows. These first three live in the former convent on the grounds of St. Gregory the Great Parish in Danbury. Participants commit to a minimum of four years—two years as a Fellow as they live in community and complete their degree and two as a paid employee of the diocese thereafter.

This demanding schedule is assisted by the support given by the AFP’s structure. “The balance of school and teaching can be overwhelming,” noted Curry, who is teaching social studies and English language arts at St. Joseph’s. “If I were alone, I don’t think I could handle the stress. It’s great having one another. Being able to come home when I’m stressed out and there’s someone else who is going through the same thing—we can talk to one another.”

The program also provides mentors and spiritual support. Program Coordinator Danielle Cheeseman sees the Fellows every other week. “She always brings us a home-cooked meal,” Curry said.

Father Michael Dunn, pastor of St. Gregory’s, is their spiritual advisor and is always on hand for community dinners, and their house has a chapel that they use regularly for prayer and relaxation and sharing.

The three Fellows came to the program from very different paths.

Katie Curry is originally from Long Island. She graduated from Fairfield University with a bachelor’s in communication and had an internship in social media. She has always been active in campus ministry; at Fairfield, she was co-leader of Campus Ministry, head of Lectors, and co-president of Students for Life. As part of her service she ran a drama club for middle schoolers and realized that she wanted to be a teacher.

“I love that age group,” she says of her middle school students. “I think they’re hilarious. She remembers being that age all too well “It’s hard being 12 or 13. You don’t like yourself at that age. I want them to know that I care about them as persons. It’s hard for kids to see young people who are excited about your faith. I’m close in age to them. I’m able to play off that.”

Tiffany Tubby, also from Long Island, graduated from Queens College, N.Y., in 2010 with a dual major in media studies/sociology. Sharing her gift of media and art, she has worked in after school and summer programs, art therapy, assistant teaching, mentoring and facilitating anti-bullying workshops. For the last year and a half, she lived in Dorchester, Ma., serving at Project Hope, a Catholic organization that assists immigrants and underserved women and children.

“I am beyond grateful for this opportunity,” said Tubby, who teaches art and is an assistant counselor not only at St. Joseph’s but at St. Gregory the Great School and Immaculate High School, both in Danbury. She is currently part of the new MSW program at Fairfield.

Nicole Rabito is Danbury born and bred and graduated from St. Gregory the Great School. She had been active in faith activities, co-directing Bible Vacation Camps and teaching religious education at St. Gregory. When she went to a liberal arts college in New Hampshire, people around her did not participate in a life of faith. For a while she stopped going to church, but “I felt like something was missing and a piece of me was gone.”

When she began going to Mass again, she felt whole. Even though she was majoring in film, she realized teaching was her calling. “It brought me true happiness. Working with and watching children grow is what I love to do and have a passion for.”

At St. Joseph’s she has the chance to explore two different areas of interest: assistant teacher in grades K-1 and religion teacher for grades 6-8.

“When the middle schoolers see us and they know that we’re filled with faith and want to participate in the Catholic Church—it’s vital for them to see that,” she said. “They should not be ashamed of or ever feel alone like I did in the beginning of college without any support. I want them to know that participating in their faith is fun and will make them feel closer to God and his presence in their lives every day.”

As the school year progresses, Rabito found herself increasingly drawn to working with the younger students. “My goal is to teach Kindergarten or First Grade after this program. I want to make them want to learn. My assistant teacher position in their K-1 classroom at St Joseph’s is so beneficial and I am learning a lot.”

Professional development, a sense of community and spiritual growth are integral to the Aquinas Fellowship Program.

“We have support and love and guidance and listening all rolled up into one,” said Curry. Through the AFP, these talented, faith-filled teachers, and those to follow, will renew and transform Catholic school classrooms.

(The window for applying to the next Aquinas Fellowship cohort opened October 1. To see details or to apply, visit dioceseofbridgetoncatholic schools.com/aquinas-fellowship-program. For any questions, email afp@diobpt.org.)
Learning Academy at All Saints School

‘It makes me feel happy in class’

By PAT HENNESSY

Last year I didn’t want to go to school,” said a student at All Saints Catholic School in Norwalk. “I wasn’t really good at religion and ELA (English Learning Arts). Now I like coming.”

This student gained new-found confidence at school from his participation in the Learning Academy at All Saints. The pilot program for students with mild to moderate learning disabilities began this past fall with special education teacher Barbara Thompson and aide Lindsey Connors. As envisioned by the strategic plan for Catholic schools during the Diocesan Synod, it started with a small number of students in grades 3-6, with All Saints chosen because of its central location and the enthusiastic participation of the school’s principal, Linda Dunn.

It was an immediate success. “It’s wonderful to see how the program has transformed these children into more successful students,” said Principal Dunn. “They’re more confident. They’re getting up in front of science class and making a presentation.”

Thompson, the special education teacher, has more than 40 years’ experience in special education. More importantly, she’s experienced and passionate about her goals. “Every day I love coming here,” she says. It shows. “Mrs. Thompson helped me learn phonics and my reading improved a lot,” said a young girl in the program. “It makes me feel happy in class.”

Thompson’s classes are lively, but intense. During December, she placed Christmas-themed words around the room. When phonics students picked one, they had to work out its parts. Most adults would have trouble separating the elements in the word “Nutcracker,” but the students can do it. The first syllable is a simple consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) construction: N-U-T. Then CR is a consonant blend, ACK is a collection of letters found in many words, and ER is a common ending. They can be learned once and then recognized when students see them again.

“When students can decode words, they can read more fluently, and they want to read more,” Thompson said.

One ELA class at All Saints is reading Harry Potter, so when she works with reading-challenged students at that grade level, Thompson will read a chapter aloud with them and lead a conversation in the themes it explores. “They can go back to their classroom and participate in the discussion. It makes them more part of their class.”

“We learn that Harry Potter is different, and some people don’t like that,” said a student in this session. “It should be that everyone likes each other.”

Math can be another challenging topic for special education students. This day, Thompson is setting out money from a game called Payday.

“Because it’s hands on, they’re interested,” Thompson explained as she set out the bills, tens, hundreds and thousands, each denomination a different color. “If they want to buy something, first they pay their bills. Then they see how much they have left to spend.”

As students participate in the game, addition and subtraction can move on to multiplication, as their “payday” hits $1,000—ten $100 bills.

“When they go back to their classroom, math is not a foreign language. It’s familiar to them,” said Thompson. When a formerly withdrawn student participates in class discussions, when a child starts to enjoy reading, when math begins to make sense, students with learning disabilities become independent and self-confident.

Parents’ response has been enthusiastic. “Our first class was filled right away, and we have a waiting list,” said Principal Dunn. “There is so much interest that we’re considering the possibility of hiring another teacher next year.”

(For more information, contact Director of Admissions Denise Vuoso: 203.847.3381, ext.1.)

Foundations in Education Gala Committee set

RIVERSIDE—On Thursday, January 9, the Foundations in Education Spring Gala Committee and Honorees Lynn and Frank Mara met to kick off efforts to make the upcoming event on April 23 the most fun and successful to date! Hosted by Xandy and Jack Duffy at their Riverside home, the brainstorming session was led by Executive Director Holly Doherty-Lemoine and featured expert auctioneer Patrick Tully, board members and gala committee members.

The committee discussed gala goals, the event program, sponsorships and how to secure auction items that “can’t be picked off the shelf.”

The Spring Gala is Foundations in Education’s premier fundraising event. Gala proceeds benefit Foundations in Education including Bishop’s Scholarship Fund and Innovation and Leadership Grants. This year Foundations awarded 1,456 children more than $2,700,000 in tuition assistance to attend Catholic schools throughout the Bridgeport Diocese. The Foundation also made grants to teachers of more than $133,000 for innovative and leadership initiatives in our Catholic schools.

If you wish to volunteer, sponsor, contribute or learn more about Foundations in Education or the Gala, please visit www.foundationsineducation.org or contact Megan Quinn at 203.416.1671 or mquinn@foundationsineducation.org.
DANBURY—Immaculate High School is pleased to announce that Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has appointed Wendy Neil of Redding as principal. Ms. Neil has served as interim principal since July 2019 and before that she was a teacher and program leader at Immaculate High School.

Ms. Neil began teaching AP US Government, International Relations and Social Studies at Immaculate in 2013. She also continues to lead the school’s Model UN and Mock Trial teams, is the IHS Social Studies Department Chair, is a member of the Diocese of Bridgeport’s Innovative Teacher Committee and has served as a lead member on an Immaculate High School self-observation committee that helped Immaculate receive New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation in 2019. A talented and committed educator and administrator, Ms. Neil is dedicated to providing students an excellent Catholic faith based and college preparatory educational experience.

“I am very honored to be named Immaculate High School’s principal, I am happy to serve our school and faith, and I look forward to continue working with Immaculate’s excellent faculty and staff, wonderful parents and especially our amazing students,” said Ms. Neil. “Immaculate High School is a unique place that emphasizes faith-based values and compassion as well as a modern college-preparatory education, and I am excited to be part of the team that nurtures our students and prepares them for the future,” she added.

Ms. Neil began her teaching career in 1994 and earned a bachelor’s degree in Secondary Education and a bachelor’s degree in History, magna cum laude, from Springfield College. She holds a master of arts in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Virginia Polytechnic Institute. She brings a perspective as a parent, teacher and administrator to Immaculate High School—Ms. Neil is the parent of two alumni, J. Bailey Bellone ’17 and Colby Bellone ’19, and current sophomores Allie Bellone and Chloe Bellone.

“As a well-respected visionary leader, Ms. Neil has established networks of collaboration that support our school’s compelling mission, academic excellence and operational vitality. Her effective school leadership and commitment to our students, teachers and parents is immeasurable. The school community is very blessed to have Ms. Neil serve as our new school Principal,” said Mary R. Maloney, president of Immaculate High School.

Immaculate High School encourages students to find success in academics, athletics, fine arts and clubs and is ranked in the top ten of all Catholic high schools in the State of Connecticut by NICHE. One of the more affordable private high schools, Immaculate High School is also among the highest ranked Catholic high schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport and continues to attain the highest SAT scores in the diocese.
Immaculate High School

CyberPatriots win fourth State Title

DANBURY—The Immaculate High School CyberPatriots placed first in the Platinum Division in the Connecticut Regional National Youth Cyber Defense Competition sponsored by the National Cyber Education Program. This is the fourth time that the team won the State competition, having won the State title in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Additionally, a second IHS CyberPatriots team placed third in the Gold Division at the State competition.

Team 1 reached the State competition by placing first in the qualifying round—Platinum Division and then taking first place in the second round, and will now compete in the regional competition on January 25. The top 25 teams from the regional round advance to the National Competition.

“Immaculate High School has a strong STEM program and commitment to students who wish to learn more about technology, engineering and science,” said Dave Cirella, IHS Director of IT and the CyberPatriot’s advisor. “This commitment shows in the success of our CyberPatriots, who consistently win important competitions in the area of cybersecurity, a very important need in our modern world. The dedication and hard work of these students is commendable,” he noted.

Team 1 members are: James Mok ’20 of Sandy Hook, Logan McAloon ’21 of Sandy Hook, Kolbe Mosher ’21 of Newtown, Ethan Goodman ’21 of Newtown, Kieran Doolabh ’20 of Danbury and Aiden Doolabh ’23 of Danbury.

Team 2 members are: Anish Nanda ’22 of Danbury, Ricky Lawlor ’22 of Bethel, Lauren Manning of Bridgewater ’22, Steven Reese ’22 of Newtown, Perry Ghosh ’21 of Newtown and Andrew Riotto ’20 of Pawling.

Ethan Goodman ’21 of Newtown, Kieran Doolabh ’20 of Danbury and Aiden Doolabh ’23 of Danbury.

In addition to a college-preparatory academic program that offers over 33 Advanced Placement classes and a STEAM curriculum featuring advanced technology, a Cisco certification program, renovated science labs and engineering classes and a Certified Nursing Associate program, Immaculate High School has an award-winning Fine Arts program, a student career internship program, athletic teams that have won SWC and State Championships, 44 clubs and a Campus Ministry and community service program that instills faith, compassion and reverence for others. Immaculate High School, founded in 1962, is a private, non-profit Catholic college-preparatory institution serving students from 28 communities in Connecticut and New York.

Top row, (l-r): Dave Cirella, Kieran Doolabh, Anish Nanda, Ricky Lawlor, Logan McAloon, Kolbe Mosher, Ethan Goodman; second row: Perry Ghosh, Aiden Doolabh, Andrew Riotto, Lauren Manning, James Mok; not pictured: Steven Reese

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Join the Shepherds’ Team!

Each spring, dozens of deserving Bridgeport and New Haven area incoming high school students and their families come to Shepherds seeking to join our successful program.

What’s needed are people. People who share the desire to change a life. Sign-up today to become a Shepherds mentor or sponsor and see your life changed too.

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Catholic Schools

Students show how to ‘Keep Christ in Christmas’

NORWALK—In celebration of the true meaning of the Christmas season, nearly 140 students from All Saints Catholic School in Norwalk recently submitted entries in the Knights of Columbus’ annual Keep Christ in Christmas poster contest coordinated by St Matthew Council No, 14360 in Norwalk.

According to the rules of the contest, posters were required to be the original work of the student and to reflect the theme of Keep Christ in Christmas. “It was extremely difficult for us to single out individual students for their work,” commented Council 14360’s Deputy Grand Knight and KCIC Poster Chairman Chris O’Connor. We were impressed by the thought and creativity the students put into their posters, and we thoroughly enjoyed judging them.” After much debate, the following students (one per grade level) were honored for their posters by the judging committee:

Grade 1: Parker Rosa
Grade 2: Fiona Ward
Grade 3: Niovi Kamargiannaki
Grade 4: Olivia De Leon

Each winner received a special certificate and a gift card to a local movie theater. The winning entries will be submitted at the state level to be judged.

“We would like to thank Mrs. Linda Dunn, All Saints’ principal, and all of the students who submitted entries in this year’s contest,” said Council 14350 Grand Knight, Anthony Armentano. “Once again, they reminded us what Christmas is truly about.”

The Keep Christ in Christmas Poster contest is a way to promote the true spirit of Christmas in our homes, schools, parishes and communities. This initiative is a great way to spur children’s creativity and participation in the season, while bringing an understanding to the true, spiritual meaning of Christmas.

The goals of the Knights of Columbus Council at St. Matthew Church in Norwalk are to perform acts of charity, providing those in need with a range of support from financial to tacti-
“As I visit our schools, I feel the joy and enthusiasm that radiates from our students as they share the many ways by which they have come to know Christ and understand the true breadth of His love for them.”

Bishop Frank Caggiano
A MESSAGE from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

I hope that you will share my excitement as you read through our annual report of the Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport. We have chosen the theme of “Together we make it happen” for this year’s report as it so perfectly captures the way in which our schools many successes have been achieved.

Chief among those successes has been the tremendous academic growth experienced by students participating in our personalized learning program, the new programs in our high schools that focus on areas such as engineering, nursing, leadership, and computer science, the growth of our new classical high school division, the implementation of new social-emotional awareness programs in many of our schools, and a renewed focus on ensuring that Catholic identity is intentionally woven into all facets of school life.

I know that you share my gratitude for all the teachers, administrators, parents, alumni, benefactors, clergy and religious who have dedicated so much of their time, talent and treasure to provide the best Catholic education possible for the young people of this Diocese. Together, we make it happen.

This year has also included a serious analysis by the Diocesan Education Commission at the impact of the changing demographics of our Diocese. Knowing that in the past 5 years, the townships in which our schools are located have seen, on average, an almost 20% decline in school age population, requires that we carefully plan for the future of our schools. As this report is sent to print, the commission continues its research, discussion, data analysis, benchmarking, and school visits so that it can present a formal recommendation to the Bishop in late winter/early spring. By facing this challenge proactively, we can ensure that we will have a vibrant system of schools well into the future.

Strong Catholic schools are more vital today than ever before and we must work to ensure that high quality, faith-filled schools are affordable and accessible for future generations of students in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Together, let us work to create a generation of young people who leave our schools academically strong and prepared to use the framework of faith as the lens with which they think critically about the world around them.

May your new year be filled with joy, and may Our Lady shower her blessings on each of you and on our entire Catholic school community.

Sincerely,

Dr. Steven F. Cheeseman
Superintendent of Schools
Dear Friends,

As Superintendent of Schools, I wish to express my gratitude to each of you and on our entire Catholic school community. May your new year be filled with joy, and may Our Lady shower her blessings on you. We are living in a time where our young people are being asked to think critically about the world around them. To be strong and prepared to use the framework of faith as the lens with which they will view the world is more important than ever before. Strong Catholic schools are more vital today than ever before and we must work together to ensure that we will have a vibrant system of schools well into the future.

Knowing that in the past 5 years, the townships in which our schools are located, have seen, on average, an almost 20% decline in school age population, requires that we carefully plan for the future of our schools. As this report is sent to print, the Diocesan elementary schools in Fairfield County, have awarded over $2,700,000 in aid to families at the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund.

This year has also included a serious analysis by the Diocesan Education Office that we carefully plan for the future of our schools. As this report is sent to print, the Diocesan elementary schools in Fairfield County, have awarded over $2,700,000 in aid to families at the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund.

The Diocese of Bridgeport school system serves 8848 students – pre-kindergarten through high school. This includes 20 elementary schools, 5 high schools, 4 diocesan middle schools, 5 parochial middle schools, and 2 diocesan high schools, all located in Fairfield County.

More than $88 million in college scholarships were awarded to 625 graduating seniors from our diocesan high schools.

I hope that you will share my excitement as you read through our annual report. "Together we make it happen" for this year’s report as it so perfectly captures the essence of Catholic education and the energy that is generated by the partnership of parents, students, teachers, and staff.

I know that you share my gratitude for all the teachers, administrators, parents, alumni, benefactors, clergy and religious who have dedicated so much of their time and effort to ensure that every student is given the opportunity to develop their individual potential. What sets Catholic schools apart is our foundation of faith; a Christ-centered learning environment that is intentionally woven into all facets of school life. Each school is distinct, each has its own charisma and culture. While the components that ensure success come together differently in each school, the ingredients in each Catholic school family are the same: committed parents, eager students, dedicated teachers and administrators, and a partnership of parent volunteers is in the functioning of today’s Catholic schools. We impart to parents in our local community that the benefits of volunteering are manifold, including knowing your child better as a student and friend, making meaningful connections with other families, faculty and staff and - perhaps most importantly - being able to have a positive impact on the current and future success of the school."

Kate O’Connor, Parent
St. Rose of Lima School, Newtown

"Being an active school volunteer has shown me how essential the partnership of parent volunteers is in the functioning of today's Catholic schools. We impart to parents in our local community that the benefits of volunteering are manifold, including knowing your child better as a student and friend, making meaningful connections with other families, faculty and staff and - perhaps most importantly - being able to have a positive impact on the current and future success of the school."

Kate O’Connor, Parent
St. Rose of Lima School, Newtown

VISIT AN OPEN HOUSE OR SCHEDULE A TOUR TODAY

BETHEL
St. Mary School
Open House: Wednesday, January 22, 6:00pm - 7:30pm

BRIDGEPORT
St. Andrew Academy
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 12:30pm - 2:30pm
St. Ann Academy
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 12:30pm - 2:30pm
St. Augustine Academy
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 12:30pm - 2:30pm
St. Raphael Academy
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 12:30pm - 2:30pm
Kolbe Cathedral High School
Open House: Tuesday, January 21, 9:00am
Tuesday, February 25, 9:00am

BROOKFIELD
St. Joseph Catholic Academy
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 10:00am - 12:00pm

DANBURY
St. Gregory the Great School
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 1:30pm - 3:30pm
St. Peter School
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 10:00am - 12:00 noon
St. Joseph School
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 10:00am - 12:00 noon
Immaculate High School
Call to schedule a tour

FAIRFIELD
Assumption Catholic School
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 9:00am - 11:00am
St. Thomas Aquinas School
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 10:00am - 12:00pm
Notre Dame Catholic High School
Information Session: Thursday, April 30, 7:00pm
St. Catherine Academy
Call to schedule a tour

GREENWICH
Greenwich Catholic School
Open House: Tuesday, January 28, 9:00am

NEW CANAAN
St. Aloysius School
Open House: Wednesday, January 29, 9:00am - 11:00am

NEWTOWN
St. Rose of Lima School
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 11:30pm - 1:30pm

NORWALK
All Saints School
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 12:00pm - 2:00pm,
Monday, January 27, 8:30am - 10:00am and
Tuesday, January 28, 8:30am - 10:00am

RIDGEFIELD
Saint Mary School
Open House: Wednesday, February 5, 9:30am - 10:30am

SHELTON
Holy Trinity Catholic Academy
Open House: Tuesday, January 28, 8:00am - 11:00am
Wednesday, January 29, 6:00pm - 8:00pm

STAMFORD
The Catholic Academy of Stamford
Open House (Lower, Preschool - 5):
Tuesday, January 28, 9:00am - 11:00am
(Upper, Grades 6-8): Thursday, January 30,
9:00am - 11:00am
Trinity Catholic High School
Call to schedule a tour
Cardinal Kung Academy
Open House: Monday, January 27, 6:00pm - 8:00pm

STRIFFORD
St. James School
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 10:00am - 12:00pm
St. Mark School
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 10:00am - 1:00pm

TRUMBULL
St. Catherine of Siena
Open House: Tuesday, January 28, 8:30am - 10:30am
St. Theresa School
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 10:30am - 11:30am,
Monday, January 27, 9:00am - 10:30am and
1:45pm - 2:30pm
St. Joseph High School
Open House: Friday, March 13, Wednesday, April 8 and
Friday, May 8
Morning Information Sessions: 7:30am - 8:30am

WILTON
Our Lady of Fatima
Open House: Sunday, January 26, 2:00pm - 4:00pm

DOBCCatholicSchools.com
A special Christmas story

By JOE PISANI

FAIRFIELD—Almost 2,000 years ago a Greek physician named Luke sat down to write the greatest story ever told, a story that has touched countless lives throughout history. On Friday, the students of Saint Catherine Academy gave the Christmas story special meaning as they retold St. Luke’s account of the birth of Jesus with a message of faith, hope and love for everyone.

The 16th annual Christmas Pageant, titled “A Cousins’ Christmas,” was performed to a standing-room-only audience at the St. Catherine Center for Special Needs and was, in the words of Executive Director Helen Burland, “Our gift to people who support us and to the families who trust us with their children each day.”

Sixteen students presented a narrated series of tableaux from the Nativity story, beginning with the angel Gabriel’s message to Zechariah that his elderly wife Elizabeth would have a child, who would be John the Baptist, the herald of his cousin Jesus. It was followed by the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, the Visitation, Joseph and Mary’s journey to Bethlehem, the birth of the Christ Child in the manger, the Nativity remind us daily of the true meaning of Christmas and the birth of Jesus. Seeing students respond to the message and let them demonstrate their abilities.

The pageant is the culmination of a month-long learning experience for the students, which gives them opportunities to practice language skills and gross motor skills, to follow multi-step instructions, and to sing familiar and new songs.

Sister Cheryl Driscoll, RSM, the director of the play and teacher at the Academy, said, “Every year, the students fully embrace the experience, exceed all our expectations and demonstrate that they really understand the true meaning of Christmas and the birth of Jesus. Seeing students respond to the message and the reverence with which they approach their roles, confirms that they understand.”

Sister Maureen Ulatowski SSND, who has assisted in the production for 16 years, said rehearsals began a week before Thanksgiving and that she is always inspired by the pageant. “You see these special-needs children shine and come through at an event like this. This is the real gift of Christmas. Our students know that this is what Christmas is all about.”

Eric Spencer, director of education, said, “Preparing for the pageant is such a wonderful experience for our school community. Not only do students and staff interact in unique, authentic ways, but our rehearsals of the Nativity remind us daily of the true meaning of Christmas.”

The pageant, which is an honored tradition at the Academy, tells the story of the Nativity from a different perspective each year, such as that of the Old Testament prophets, the Gospel writers and the Little Drummer Boy. “A Cousins’ Christmas” saw the Nativity through the eyes of Elizabeth and Zechariah, parents of John the Baptist and cousins of Mary. The production, based on the Gospel of Luke, was written by Mollie Mitchell, a former teacher at the Academy who now teaches theology at St. Joseph High School.

“I prayed about it and this is what came to me,” Mitchell said. Her husband, the Rev. Amjad Orozco, rector of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Huntington, said that Mollie comes from a close-knit family with many cousins who are dear to her, so the theme of a “Cousins’ Christmas” was familiar to her. He said his parish adapted her script for its pageant, which was performed last week.

The Academy cast included St. Luke played by Antonio Orozco; Zechariah, Vincent DiProperzio; Angel Gabriel, Philip Palilla; Elizabeth, Tanisha Delgado; Mary, Lindsey Paul; Joseph, Fabricio Almeida; Inn Keeper, Maggie McDonald; Shepherds, Frank Maldonado and Luke Norris; Angels, Briana Beliard, Elise Hilton and Nyah Holmes; the Three Kings, Philip Palilla, Antonio Orozco and Ronald Scott; and narrators Anna Stowe and Eric Spencer.

Ms. Burland thanked the many volunteers, staff members and groups that made the pageant possible and said the work of Saint Catherine’s is based on three simple principles: “Faith makes all things possible. Hope makes all things work. Love makes all things beautiful.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37
Christopher Ripp Early Learning Program

Intervention benefits parents and pre-schoolers

By THERESA SCIALLO

DANBURY—“Research indicates that the most effective Early Learning Childhood education programs, especially those in low-income communities, include parent education,” explained Holly Doherty-Lemoine, executive director of Foundations in Education as she describes the vision of the Christopher Ripp Early Learning Program.

This early intervention program, piloted at St. Peter School in Danbury, was created through a $1 million gift from Peter and Barbara Ripp to Foundations in Education in memory of their son, Christopher.

The Christopher Ripp Early Learning Program assists parents of three and four year olds, as the primary educators of their children, by providing them with tools to help nurture social, physical, emotional and academic growth in a faith-filled, family-centered learning community.

Mary Lou Torre, principal of St. Peter School, is excited to announce that now in its second year, due to its popularity, enrollment in the program is at maximum capacity.

The program runs three days a week after school for multiple 6 weeks programs and includes activities such as enrichment in math, literacy, spiritual life, art, movement and community building. Parent sessions occur three times during the six-week session and include family dinner, adult-geared discussions in finance, nutrition and health and family activities partnered with their child. Families and children are supported as they travel together on an academic and spiritual journey.

A grateful parent, Estafania Chin, shared, “Leo learned a lot from the program. I have seen a big change in him. His social skills are impressive. As a family, we love the food! The engagement you guys provide is amazing! Here, the kids teach us. At home, we tell them what to do.”

“The benefits of this program are immense for both children and families,” explained Principal Torre. “This program has afforded our students an opportunity to get a head start on their educational learning pathway. It is heartwarming to watch the excitement and joy the children display.”

(For more information about the Christopher Ripp Early Learning Program or other transformative initiatives provided through Foundations in Education, visit www.foundationsineducation.org.)
Catholic Schools

Cardinal Kung Academy provides a Classical Program for High School students

BRIDGEPORT—The Bridgeport Diocese enjoys a breadth and diversity of education-al options offered at its schools. Now it can count a classics program among its many choices. Cardinal Kung Academy, in its second year, offers an honors-track classical program. Here the maxim “ever ancient, ever new” reigns. The school employs methods used for centuries, yet the approach seems revolutionary. There are no laptops or smart devices at CKA—not even cellphones are allowed on campus. Instead, the tried and true formula of “books + teacher + rapt student = an education” holds true. Students are required to read the great works of Western Civilization, mostly in original texts. Students round out their education with Latin, drama, art, music in addition to the conventional high school subjects of math and science.

The choice of Latin might be obvious. Latin was the language of scholars for millennia. It forms the basis for grammar and most of the romance languages. It is integral in the science, medical, theology and law fields. And it is the language of the Church. But the seminar, or “Socratic method,” requires more explanation. Its name originates from the approach of Socrates himself, who would teach his disciples in engaging and directed conversations. The great universities of medieval and Renaissance Europe traditionally followed this method, sometimes known as scholastic disputation. Cardinal Kung Academy follows this traditional model in many of its classes: students read the original texts of seminal works and then come to class to discuss them. These seminars require the students and teacher to engage in intense conversation with each other and with the profound and provocative writers and thinkers of the past. This education in independent thinking is transformative, both educationally and professionally.

As Dr. Kimball, a CKA teacher, says, “This style of education is designed to spur dialogue and engagement. It allows us to see each other’s faces and encourages students to ‘lean in’ to the conversation. Shy and quiet students are nurtured and become comfortable slipping into the conversation. The students and the teacher are on the same level as equals in the conversation, and everyone focuses on the text. Our curriculum is more than classical. It is also Catholic. We honor our shared identity as people made in the image of God. We think the best way to see God’s presence in each other is to see each other face to face. In our discussions, we become a community committed to pursuing the truth even when it is difficult or when we disagree. The conversation around the table further pushes us to grow by making us face up to our weaknesses and strengths—and we learn that we are stronger when we work together.”

The integration of the coursework is key to its success. The readings and discussions encountered in the seminar are bolstered in other classes. For instance, when students read Homer or Virgil in Literature class, they are also learning about the warfare, government and geography of the Trojan war, the naval battles at Salamis, the art of ancient Roman times, how to perform a play by Sophocles in ancient Greek custom, how to translate speeches of famous Roman orators from Latin, etc. This model continues each year of high school as students’ progress through history from ancient to modern times.

Students and teachers alike are grateful for the opportunity of this unique education at Cardinal Kung Academy. And families across the diocese are grateful to be able have such a variety from which to choose for their children to grow in wisdom and grace. In the words of our diocese’s patron, St. Augustine, “Education is the food of youth, the delight of old age, the ornament of prosperity, the refuge and comfort of adversity, and the provocation to grace in the soul.”

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ST JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL
Catholic Schools

Children’s Grief Awareness support makes a difference

STAMFORD—Trinity Catholic High School (TCHS) recently participated in its first ever Children’s Grief Awareness Day, a day that seeks to bring attention to the fact that support can make all the difference in the life of a grieving child.

Children’s Grief Awareness Day began in Pennsylvania in 2008 from a desire on the part of students to do more to bring attention to what their grieving classmates were coping with, for the most part in silence.

This initiative grew to include hundreds of schools and organizations, along with local, state and national leaders from across the U.S., who work to raise awareness of grieving children and to change the culture in order to make death and grief a topic that can be spoken of openly and compassionately.

Before they graduate from high school, one child out of every 20 children will have a parent die—and that number doesn’t include those who experience the death of a brother or sister, a close grandparent, an aunt or uncle, or friend.

The students at TCHS joined in this opportunity to raise awareness of the painful impact that the death has in the life of a child or teenager, and to make sure they receive the support they need.

Children’s Grief Awareness Day is usually observed on the Thursday before Thanksgiving, a particularly appropriate time of year because the holiday season is often an especially difficult time after a death.

Young people who have experienced the death of someone important to them often feel like their struggles are invisible to those around them. They need people to know that the death of someone close is the beginning of many weeks, months and even years of finding ways to go on without that special person in their lives.

The Grief Awareness Day was organized by TCHS volunteers of Rainbows for all Children, a structured grief support organization.

At TCHS students marked this special day by:

• Remembering and honoring their loved ones by writing their names on their Memory Wall
• Pledging to tell three people about Children’s Grief Awareness Day
• Offering support to their classmates
• Wearing Blue Memory Ribbons
• Praying the prayers on their Children’s Grief Awareness Day prayer card

(For more information about supporting grieving children, please contact Mary at rainbowsmary.hs@gmail.com.)

HELPING OTHERS to realize the impact of grief, volunteers (l-r) Katie McCarthy (Freshman); Grayce Journick (Freshman); Theresa Lupinacci (Senior); Patrick Carlon (Senior); Sophie Thompson (Senior); and Eleanor Curley-Holmes (Senior) handed out brochures and opened discussions with their classmates.

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TRUMBULL—Holly Doherty-Lemoine, CFRE, executive director of Foundations in Education, a non-profit initiative designed to support education in the Diocese of Bridgeport, received the 2019 Best-of-Connecticut Outstanding Fundraising Professional at the National Philanthropy Day breakfast held recently at the Trumbull Marriott. The award ceremony was hosted by the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), Fairfield County and Connecticut chapters.

The New Canaan resident was recognized for her leadership role in philanthropy and community involvement and mentoring others. “Transforming the lives of children is at the center of all we do,” she said of her work at Foundations in Education. “No one is on this journey alone. Others advance our cause,” she said in her acceptance remarks at the breakfast attended by more than 200 fundraising professionals.

Foundations in Education is committed to strengthen and transform the mission of Catholic education in the Diocese of Bridgeport by supporting innovation in academic and extracurricular programs, fostering opportunities for the professional development of teachers and administrators and providing scholarship assistance to families who choose Catholic Education. (For more information visit: www.foundationsineducation.org.)

Catholic Schools

Outstanding Fundraising Professional honored

CONGRATULATIONS!—Holly Doherty-Lemoine, executive director of Foundations in Education, received the 2019 Best of Connecticut Outstanding Fundraising Professional at the National Philanthropy Day breakfast held recently at the Trumbull Marriott. She is the founding executive of Foundations in Education, which has raised millions for scholarships, professional education and leadership development in the schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

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for Life

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University of Kentucky
Louisiana State University
Loyola University Chicago
Loyola University Maryland
Loyola Marymount University
University of Maine
Marist College
Marquette University
University of Massachusetts
Merrimack College
University of Miami
Miami University Ohio
Michigan State University
University of Nebraska Lincoln
New York University
Northeastern University
Ohio Wesleyan University
Penn State University
Pennsylvania College
Quinnipiac University
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
University of Rhode Island
Rhodes College
Roanoke College
Roger Williams University
Rollins College
Sacred Heart University
Southern Connecticut State University
Santa Clara University
University of Scranton
St. Anselm College
St. John’s College
St. John’s University
St. Joseph’s University
St. Peter’s University
Stony Brook University
Susquehanna University
Syracuse University
Texas Christian University
Tufts University
Union College
University of South Carolina
University of Tampa
University of Tennessee Knoxville
University of Vermont
Villanova University
University of Virginia
Washington University in St. Louis
Western New England University
University of Wisconsin
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Xavier University
ASSUMPTION-FAIRFIELD
OPEN HOUSE
PK3-8
JANUARY 26
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

TUITION ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE
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