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Ordination of Transitional Deacons
Called to be a ‘living sacrament of service’

By JOE PISANI

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano ordained two men as transitional deacons on the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at St. Augustine Cathedral, urging them to fulfill their ministry of service by following Our Lady’s example during these extraordinary times.

“I know you are both men of great integrity, of great faith, of great prayer, of great honesty and of great transparency, and I am delighted to be able to ordain you to be deacons and one day priests of Jesus Christ” he told Guy Dormevil and Brendan Blowie.

Ordination as a transitional deacon is the last step before ordination to the priesthood, which typically occurs a year later after additional pastoral, liturgical and educational preparation.

Attendance at the ordination on June 20 was limited to family members and guests because of restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“What a wonderful day to gather on the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary,” Bishop Caggiano said. “She has much to teach us.”

Bishop Caggiano said the example of the Blessed Mother because she will teach the profound meaning of Service in Charity, just as she did to the Apostles in the Upper Room when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

“We gather in extraordinary times,” he said. “If we were not people of faith, how could we endure the challenges we are facing because they are many and they are grave and they demand action of us. And yet it is precisely because these times are challenging that I am saying to you, Brendan, and to you, Guy, do not be afraid. Have hope and have joy because the Lord has called you, and the Lord will empower you. Remember, there will be many occasions when you will have no answer to give, when there will be no clear path, but the fact you are there. And the Lord will do what you cannot do yourself.”

The ordination was followed by photos and a gathering of family and friends who congratulated the newly ordained men on the lawn outside the Cathedral.

Deacon Guy Dormevil said he was blessed to be taking a step of English as a Second Language and an associate degree in business administration.

On August 3, 2016, Bishop Caggiano approved his application to enter St. John Fisher Seminary, where he began pre-theology studies. A year later, he entered Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary in Weston, Mass., where he will continue his fourth year of theological studies in the Fall.

“After my wife’s death, my plan was to fulfill the dream of becoming a Marine officer, but in the end, it was clear to him that it may have been his plan, but not the Lord’s. Instead of commissioning as a 2nd Lieutenant, he entered St. John Fisher Seminary and completed two years of pre-theological studies before being sent to the Pontifical North American College in Rome, where he spent three years. In 2019, he received his theology degree, magna cum laude, from the Pontifical Gregorian University and has been on pastoral assignment at St. Thomas More Parish in Darien for the past year.

“I look forward to returning to Rome in the fall, where I will begin my studies for a Licentiate in Sacred Theology,” he said.
Parishes resume indoor Masses

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Masks, social distancing, PPEs and other public health measures are part of the new experience of indoor Mass for the foreseeable future during the COVID-19 crisis, but the health precautions have not dimmed the spirits of the faithful.

On the weekend of June 13-14, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, many parishioners returned to Mass inside the Church for the first time in months, and despite the face shields and sanitizers they reported being overwhelmed with gratitude to once again receive the Eucharist in person and worship together.

About thirty parishes throughout the diocese immediately resumed public worship inside their church, and all parishes are expected to begin offering indoor Masses no later than the weekend of June 27-28, the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

While the Masses looked sparsely attended as a result of the social distancing requirements (six feet of space between themselves and other individuals and family groups), priests and parishioners were delighted to once again be with one another, and they appreciated the need for ongoing precautions given the uncertainty created by the pandemic.

Re-opening guidelines call for parishioners to make a reservation to attend Mass (Mass times may change to accommodate cleaning needs) and all present are required to wear a mask as they exit their cars and during the service.

Worshippers can also expect plenty of fresh air as guidelines call for entrance and exit doors to be open at the beginning and end of Mass and, weather permitting, church windows to remain open during the service.

In a May 29 letter to the faithful, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano announced the beginning of the phase two return of Mass inside churches on June 13-14, after each pastor submitted a re-opening plan to the diocese.

Indoor weekday Masses, Funeral Masses and Nuptial Weddings have also resumed inside churches.

Given the limited seating capacity required for social distancing during indoor Masses, the bishop said that parishes can continue to offer Mass outdoors for up to 150 people (including clergy, staff, volunteers and attendees).

He has also given approval for ongoing parking lot Masses and has encouraged pastors to continue live-streaming Masses for those who are unable to get out, while public worship slowly resumes.

The dispensation of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass for all those who are vulnerable or concerned about their health or the health of loved ones will continue until further notice.

Those who return to Mass indoors in the coming weeks will find that pews will be marked with physical distancing indicators, and ushers or other volunteers will assist with directing people to marked seating. Ushers will also ensure that no one congregates in common space such as foyers, lobbies, community and multi-purpose rooms or event spaces.

In some churches, every other pew may be used if they are six feet apart, while in other, smaller churches every third pew may be required to meet safety recommendations.

The overall capacity may vary depending on the size and configuration of the church as they affect the ability to meet social distancing recommendations. As a result, larger churches may accommodate up to 100, while others may safely hold less than 50.

Reception of Holy Communion on the tongue remains permissible, as required by the liturgical law of the Church, with the admonition that the faithful should be reminded of the unique risks posed by receiving the Eucharist in this manner. Overall, it is recommended that people receive Communion in the hand for the duration of the pandemic.

Other changes call for the suspension of the procession and recessional down the center aisle, and for the faithful to refrain from singing (which is believed to propel the virus forward). Likewise, there will be no sign of peace or holding hands during the Our Father.

Given the complicated logistics of safely resuming indoor worship, training programs are in place for staff, lay ministers and volunteers. The diocesan Leadership Institute has also produced a video for lay ministers, and signage has been made available to parishes to further safeguard the health of the faithful.

All of the precautions and procedures are based on state, federal and CDC recommendations and guidelines to safeguard the health of the community during the pandemic.

The bishop said he is grateful for the tremendous efforts of priests, deacons, lay ministers and others who are diligently planning for the safe re-opening of churches.

“I recognize that the last few months have been a most difficult time for all of us. I am grateful for your patience and prayers during this unprecedented moment in our history. I very much appreciate the great sorrow and loss felt by many who have longed to return to Mass. We will also need to live with continuing uncertainties about the course of the pandemic and its full impact on our society.

However, I believe that it is also the right time to move forward in hope and faith, while taking all necessary precautions and safeguards to protect life in our community as we resume public worship within our churches,” said the bishop.

Any interested in attending Mass inside the church should contact their parish online or by phone for Mass times and other instructions.

(Visit bridgeportdiocese.org for guidelines on returning to Mass.)

Foundations in Faith doubles up on parish funding

BRIDGEPORT—The St. Francis Xavier Mission Church Fund of Foundations in Faith (SFX), made a bold commitment to emergency aid for parishes by adding an additional $200,000 to support qualifying parishes in the diocese that need help to meet their expenses as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

According to committee member Brian Young, the St. Francis Xavier Mission Church Fund is looking to distribute up to a total of $400,000 to parishes in peril.

“This is not the time to step back, we need to be on the offensive and take action”.

The SFX Fund is working to ensure that COVID-19 does not incapacitate the future of our Parishes,” he said.

Young said that COVID-19 has profoundly impacted how Catholic communities interact with their parishioners and how they reach out to those in need.

“In this challenging environment, priests, staff and lay leaders of the Diocese of Bridgeport have stepped up, harnessing technology and creativity to deliver services and the promises we make to those in need.

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(Visit bridgeportdiocese.org for guidelines on returning to Mass.)
Diocese names new Chief Development Officer

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Joseph Gallagher of Armonk, New York, has been named chief development officer of the Diocese of Bridgeport. The appointment was made by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, effective June 8, 2020.

Gallagher will be responsible for major gifts and planned giving programs and coordinating development and advancement efforts in the Diocese of Bridgeport including the Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) and the completion of the We Stand With Christ capital campaign.

“Joseph Gallagher brings extensive experience in development and marketing in both the corporate and non-profit sectors along with an understanding of the role of faith in our society, especially when it is put into action to serve others,” said Bishop Caggiano. “We welcome his seasoned leadership as the diocese moves forward in its work of renewal and evangelization.”

The diocese is currently in the redemption phase of its successful $75 million capital campaign, which has funded the development of major Foundations in Faith, Education and Charity to address long-term needs. It also manages the Annual Catholic Appeal, which funds the major programs and ministries provided by the diocese each year.

“The faithful of the diocese have shown extraordinary generosity and a willingness to invest in the mission of the Church and in the future of our young people,” said Bishop Caggiano.

“The stewardship of our resources requires the ability to develop an overall development plan and communications strategy that will advance all giving opportunities, and we believe Joseph Gallagher will provide direction and innovation as we go forward.”

Joseph Gallagher comes to the diocese from Manhattan College, where he has served as major gifts officer/advancement and as member of the capital campaign team since 2017.

Prior to joining the development field, Gallagher worked in the media business for thirty years in sales and marketing positions. Among his previous positions, he served as senior vice president of sales strategy & planning for Disney’s ABC Family Cable Network.

In the past he served as vice president, national sales for NBC Sports Regional Networks for NBC UNIVERSAL, where he managed national sales for eight sports networks. He also worked as General Manager of Ad Sales REELZCHANNEL, New York.

Gallagher made the transition from marketing to development in the not for profit sector in 2015, when he was named director of philanthropy for Carver Foundation. The Norwalk-based foundation raises revenue to operate after-school programs for more than a thousand students in unique partnership with the Norwalk Public Schools.

A native of Crestwood, N.Y., where he and his family were members of Annunciation Parish, he attended Archbishop Stepinac High School. He also coaches youth sports, soccer and basketball and has run the New York Marathon twice.

Joseph Gallagher and his wife Julie have been married for thirty-three years and have four adult children. They are active members of St. Patrick’s Parish in Armonk, where he has been involved in development efforts for the parish and helped run the Teen Life group for ten years.

The Diocese of Bridgeport is comprised of 78 parishes located in cities and towns throughout Fairfield County. It includes 410,000 Catholics and serves people of all faiths through its schools, charities, and pastoral care programs.

(Forty information on its development programs and giving opportunities, visit www.bridgepordioce.org/support.)
Parish News

St. Mary Parishioners joyful to receive Jesus again

By JOE PISANI

STAMFORD—For Father Gustavo A. Falla, pastor of St. Mary of Stamford Parish, Jesus had a clear message for Catholics as public Masses resumed inside churches on the Feast of Corpus Christi: “I want people to receive me once again.”

Over the weekend for the first time since public Masses were suspended in March because of the coronavirus pandemic, the faithful began returning to the pews of St. Mary Parish, which includes St. Benedict-Our Lady of Monserrat. Many expressed their joy at being able to receive the Eucharist again, appropriately on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Eucharist again, appropriately on the feast of Corpus Christi.

“I want people to receive me once again,” Father Falla said. “I want for people to receive me once again, not only spiritually but physically.”

Dozens of faithful gathered at St. Mary of Stamford for the 10 am Mass, one of five that were celebrated over the weekend there and at St. Benedict-Our Lady of Monserrat.

Extensive preparations went into the opening of the churches. Pews were marked off with signs and tape to ensure appropriate social distancing. People were required to register in advance and wear face masks. Upon entering the side door, they were greeted by members of the Welcome Group, who provided hand sanitizer and checked their temperatures.

“I have never seen anything like this in my life, and I never anticipated anything like this,” Father Falla said. “It is absolutely different. It really brings into perspective what it means to prepare for Mass. Before it was just a matter of coming in and setting up the chalice and getting the readings and all that, but at this point it is very important that every individual who comes in is safe and that the Eucharist will be celebrated in a proper way without giving in to all the distractions that are associated with the preparations.”

Indoor weekday Masses, Funeral Masses and Nuptial Masses have also resumed inside churches in parishes prepared to re-open in a safe and reverent manner.

Father Falla said despite the restrictions, the Catholic Church has never been closed. “Our temples have been closed, the buildings have been closed to the public, but the Church has never been closed,” he said. “We have been offering sacrifices to God daily and in prayer so we need to make the distinction between the Church being closed and a building that has been closed. Often times people think of the Church as a building.” He said he was delighted to finally be able to open the doors for public Mass.

After Mass people approached Father and expressed their gratitude and appreciation that public Masses had resumed.

Yulisa Vivieca and her daughter Ashley Peralta attended the 8 am Spanish Mass at St. Mary. “It was amazing, it felt good,” Yulisa said. “We have been at home and kept praying but to be back in church and feel the energy of the people was amazing. We even had our temperatures taken.”

At the side entrance of the church, Stefania Canneto, administrative assistant for Father Falla, was working at a registration table with Mary Catherine Herbert, checking people off the list of pre-registrations as they entered. Preparing for the Masses at St. Mary and St. Benedict required hours of work to set up the pews with tape and signs.

Mary Catherine said she voiced concerns to Father on Saturday that public Masses might be starting too soon, but her worries were allayed when “I saw all those people in church who were very happy to be there again.”

A lifelong member of the parish and a graduate of St. Mary School, she said, “I was definitely happy to receive the Eucharist, so happy I almost wanted to cry.”

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Parish News

St. Catherine’s welcomes back parishioners

By EMILY CLARK

TRUMBULL—Though they donned face masks, made a reservation online, and sanitized frequently, parishioners at St. Catherine of Siena Church in Trumbull rejoiced in the opportunity to once again attend public indoor Mass. Since mid-March, Father Joseph Marcello has looked out at empty pews while celebrating the Eucharist, but on this Sunday morning, he greeted the faithful with a wide smile and a joyous “Welcome home!”

As this pastor and his Reopening Team readied the church for the weekend’s homecoming, they acknowledged people’s enthusiasm but also recognized their apprehension due to the health concerns of COVID-19. Jim Panullo, director of parish operations, emphasized that sanitizing was the first and foremost concern. “We want to be sure that everyone feels safe. That is our priority,” he said, adding that the church building can accommodate up to 85 parishioners based on current guidelines. “We have volunteers for check-in, seating and guarding the doors, and we’re cleaning all pews between Masses.”

Those pews, though not full due to social distancing, were nevertheless occupied by dozens of parishioners who returned to a very different protocol than they remember from three months ago when the pandemic shuttered churches in the diocese. Though many have watched the live-streamed Masses, Panullo said that it’s just not the same for them without Holy Communion.

“Our parishioners have been very enthusiastic about returning, and I’ve heard from many families how much they’re looking forward to being back in church for Mass,” said Father Marcello. Such enthusiasm was felt as parishioners, standing six feet apart, waited for the doors of St. Catherine’s to open on this Corpus Christi morning. With red roses adorning the altar and mild June breezes blowing through the windows, the church was filled with a sense of renewal.

Upon entering and presenting their reservation ticket, those in attendance were then escorted by volunteers to preassigned seats as only every third pew was open. Masks, required throughout the entirety of Mass, were allowed to be briefly removed during Holy Communion. For added safety in the foreseeable future, the offertory basket will not be passed, hymnals have been removed, and the Sign of Peace has been omitted. To keep a proper social distance, parishioners are guided by blue tape in six-foot markings on the floor and yellow caution tape around the vacant pews.

Despite these changes, it was the expectation of being together again with his parishioners that excited Father Marcello. “I’m really looking forward to just seeing them again and praying with them, notwithstanding that the experience of Mass will be necessarily a little different for the time being,” he said. Many people, he added, especially those in high-risk categories, will continue to view Mass at home. That sense of community was also something that longtime parishioner Tom Matthews missed over the past few months. “It’s really good to be back,” said Matthews, a volunteer member of the Reopening Team. “I take pleasure in the routine of Mass and in the strong connection between faith and community. There was an emptiness there.”

As Father Marcello addressed his congregation, he acknowledged the suffering many have withstood during the pandemic but reminded his parishioners that Christ was ever present. “Our lives have been off balance. We are all longing for a return to a semblance of normalcy,” he said. “But throughout this time, there has always been hope. The flame above the sanctuary has never left us. Christ is powerfully sustaining us.”

Weekend indoor Masses at St. Catherine, which require an online reservation, will be held on Saturdays at 4 pm and 7:15 pm and on Sunday at 7:30 am, 9 am, and 11 am. No reservation is needed for the 7:30 am daily Mass.

Knights food drive at Assumption

NORWALK—On a beautiful Corpus Christi morning, the Brothers of Knights of Columbus Westport Council 3688 and members of councils which make up Bishop Fenwick 4th Degree Assembly 100 hosted a drive-through food drive benefiting the St. Vincent DePaul and St. Philip Church food pantries. Two pick-up trucks and two cars were filled. This drive helped to re-stock these food pantries which have been serving hundreds of families every week during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our Founder, Michael J. McGivney would be pleased to see the Knights of Columbus in action working as a team to help our families in need of food by assisting the parish pantries at St. Philip’s and St. Vincent DePaul. We are very grateful to our pastor, Father Cyrus, his staff; our councils in Assembly 100 and our District Deputy George Ribellino who was a huge help in pulling it all together,” said Westport Council Grand Knight Bill Macnamara.

The council has assisted with other food drives since the start of the pandemic and after consulting the Church of the Assumption Pastor, Father Cyrus Bartolome decided to host a food drive with the help from Bishop Fenwick Assembly 100. “My brother knights reflect the spirit of Father McGivney of fraternity, charity, and unity. There are so many people who leave no neighbor behind—especially in this time of crisis. As the coronavirus pandemic continues, our duty is to lead our families, protect our parishes and serve our communities, remembering always that where there’s a need, there’s a Knight.” Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson has challenged Knights to take this moment as an opportunity to deepen the commitment to the very principles which define the Order: charity, unity and fraternity.

Westport Council 3688 will host more food drives during the summer continuing to assist those in need.
Parish News

St. Jude’s opens wide the doors for Christ

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

MONROE—“It is with great relief, that after three months of going without celebrating public Mass inside of our churches, we can at last open wide the doors for Christ,” said Father Henry Hoffman, pastor of St. Jude Parish in Monroe.

Since the announcement of the phase one reopening (May 11), which allowed for the celebration of outdoor Mass, parishioners of St. Jude have been able to gather in some capacity.

“As much as the parishioners found nourishment through watching our live-streamed Masses and attending our outdoor masses, the real connection has once again been reestablished now that they can come together as a parish community and all together recite the Our Father, as brothers and sisters in the faith praying to our one Heavenly Father, shortly before they receiving the Body of Christ in their own church for the first time since mid-March,” shared Father Hoffman.

Parishioners shared their joy at being able to celebrate Mass in the church building.

“I am just so overjoyed to be going back to worshipping with my St. Jude Family. I have missed the love and fellowship and now rejoice as we once again praise the Lord together,” said long term St. Jude parishioner and past-Grand Knight of the council at St. Jude Parish, Jim Bifulco.

In a recent letter to St. Jude Parishioners, Father Hoffman wrote, “The patience and the perseverance of the St. Jude Parish family has truly impressed me over the past few months, as they held firm in their faith, waiting for this day, when they could once again worship in their church, a church that many of them gathered the very stones for decades ago, when the church was built.”

“When St. Jude’s was first closed to public worship, what I felt was a sense of loneliness,” shared Cathy Ritch, long-time St. Jude parishioner who volunteers as part of the church decorating committee. “I was physically separated from my God in the Real Presence, my Church building, my friends and a rhythm of life. The quiet that followed brought a certain amount of refreshment, but also helped me to realize the centrality of St. Jude Church to my life. Now that we will have finally returned to God, Church, friends and schedule, I am filled with a sense of peace. A sense that God is bringing us back. He is in control in spite of the turbulence that has occurred in the past two months. Thanks be to God!”

“I am so grateful that we will all be together again in St. Jude Church,” said long-term St. Jude parishioner Lani Birmingham.

St. Elizabeth Seton returns to Mass

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

RIDGEFIELD—St. Elizabeth Seton parishioners are joyous and grateful about being able to return to Mass, but they’ve also embraced some new online traditions along the way.

Parish volunteers graciously adopted new technology to maintain a crucial link between the church and its community during the worst of the crisis and will continue to use them.

“When we started in March, I had never done Facebook streaming before,” said Cynthia Conti, a parishioner of St. Elizabeth Seton. Conti has been coming to the church every day to assist the parish in streaming Masses on the social network. The Masses are also posted to the church website.

“Every day you learn something new to work out the kinks. By the time this is all done, I will be a pro,” Conti said, adding, “I feel honored to bring our shepherd to his flock.”

Indeed, many parishioners appreciate the ability to see the familiar faces of the priests in their parish delivering the Mass, as they watch from their homes. Outdoor Masses, which started on Ascension Thursday at the Ridgebury Road church, enabled priests to not only see the faces of their parishioners but to interact with them as well.

“Celebrating Mass to an empty pew is terrible,” said Pastor Father Joseph Prince.

“There is no eye contact, so you don’t have (the parishioners) reactions.”

It was evident parishioners were excited to see each other and Father Prince during the Mass, which congregants had to register for in advance because of the limited seating available based on safety guidelines.

“To watch the Mass online is great,” said Michele Goodman, a parishioner at St. Elizabeth Seton for 15 years. “To receive actual communion meant the most to me.”

Although Catholics watching Mass at home have been encouraged to receive spiritual communion, Goodman’s sentiment was shared by many.

“It was awesome to be able to be here. It was really awesome to celebrate the Mass again and receive the Eucharist,” said Nancy Rafferty, of Danbury.

Cindy Bruno, a parishioner for 40 years said the gathering of people at the outdoor Mass, “was a beautiful reminder of our faith and how people longed to be together.”

“Worshipping together and being together,” Bruno said, “has given the Mass a whole new meaning now.”
Parish News

St. Mary’s parishioners return to renovated church

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

BETHEL—Stop, look, remember and listen was the message shared with worshippers at St. Mary Parish on Sunday, June 14, marking the celebration of Corpus Christi and the reopening of the church for the first time following nine-months of extensive renovations.

“We mark this feast just once a year but we actually celebrate the gift of Christ himself each time we go to Mass,” said pastor Father Corey V. Piccinino, at the first indoor Mass offered since March. “Every time we receive the Eucharist we celebrate Corpus Christi, the body of Christ, becoming living tabernacles.”

Corpus Christi is the solemn commemoration of the institution by Christ of the Holy Eucharist as a sacrament and the Church’s official act of homage and gratitude to Christ for this gift.

Father Piccinino said Catholics should approach receiving communion with wonder and awe. “Behold a miracle is happening. A mystery is happening right in front of you and the greatest holy gift is given to you.”

Congregants gathered at the Mass, shared the sentiment.

“To receive for the first time (since March), it’s like my First Holy Communion. This is great,” said Edith Jaccarino of Redding. “The Mass was wonderful. It’s a joy to be back,” said fellow parishioner, Marilyn Murray of Newtown.

“We’ve been coming every day to say the Rosary,” she said.

“We part of the joy of being back is tempered by what we need to now do,” Father Piccinino said, with a nod of acknowledgment to precautions that need to be taken to keep everyone safe.

Congregants must pre-register online to attend Mass. The newly renovated church which can hold 850 people, is allowing up to 65 people in the church at a time. All in attendance must wear masks. Seating areas are roped off to maintain proper social distancing, missals and hymnals are absent from the pews and there are signs to guide people where to stand when consuming communion.

About two dozen volunteers attending the Mass made navigating the changes easy. Markers were also placed in the parking lot to maintain one empty parking space in between each vehicle.

Father Piccinino encouraged congregants to stop and take the time to look and see the ever-changing and new world we live in and listen with our eyes, ears and hearts to recognize the importance of each other and our duty to protect one another in these challenging times.

“This disease (COVID-19) is real,” he said. “We need to keep safe. That is our Christian duty.”

Father Piccinino said he has heard and understands the frustrations of parishioners wanting to return to a pre-pandemic way of life including going to church and receiving the Eucharist.

“This is not a punishment from God or from the Church. This is what is best for everyone now. We have to care about the least of our brothers and sisters (who may be susceptible to the coronavirus). We have to protect each other in that one body (of Christ).”

Father Piccinino said his cousin, thankfully, has recovered from the coronavirus after twice almost falling victim to it.

“If you don’t have a personal experience with someone who has had it, you don’t see the need for (all of these precautions),” he said.

The church has been streaming Masses on Facebook and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The live-streamed Masses have given parishioners a glimpse into the beautifully renovated church.

There is much symbolism throughout the church from the painting of the dove above the altar with light emanating from it, to the tile work on the floor that commemorates the Trinity and so much more. There is even a painting on the wall depicting the original 1883 Gothic-style church that still stands on Greenwood Avenue. A book highlighting all the changes and symbolism will be available soon.

“The renovated church is beautiful and uplifting. It gives me hope,” said Filomenia Magrino, who attended the Mass with her husband, Joseph. “It felt very peaceful to be back.” He agreed, “It’s nice to return to our Sunday routine.”

SUNDAY, JUNE 14, MARKED the celebration of Corpus Christi and the reopening of St. Mary’s in Bethel for the first time following nine-months of extensive renovations.

St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus, Norwalk merge

NORWALK—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has issued a decree merging St. Joseph Parish and St. Ladislaus Parish into one parish that will be named St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus Parish.

The decree was issued on June 19, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It will become effective on October 1, 2020, The Memorial of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, Virgin and Doctor of the Church.

Both churches, the Church of St. Joseph and the Church of St. Ladislaus, will remain open as worship sites of the newly formed St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus Parish.

As part of the merger discernment process the bishop visited the parishes on November 16 & 23, 2019, February 12 & 29, 2020, April 2, 2020 and June 2, 2020 and worked with the collaborative committee made up of parishioners from both parishes. He also brought the merger to the Council of Priests on January 23, 2020.

“This determination has been made to strengthen the pastoral care of the people of God in this area of my diocese especially through mutual coordination in the common mission of the Church and the re-evangelization of youth and to address several trends that are of serious concern, including: diminished Mass attendance, lack of sustainability in the face of diminishing income, declining sacramental celebrations, and clergy availability,” the decree states.

The territorial boundaries of the two parishes in South Norwalk have been amalgamated to form the boundaries of the newly named parish. St. Joseph Church is located at 85 South Main Street, and St. Ladislaus Church at 25 Cliff Street.

All sacramental registers, seals and parish files of the amalgamated parishes are to be properly transferred to, preserved and safeguarded by St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus Parish in accord with the norm of law.
Outdoor Masses bring praise and sunshine

Outdoor Masses

Editor’s Note: During the first phase of the re-opening, many parishes turned to outdoor Masses to resume public worship and partake of the Eucharist. The first outdoor Masses, which began on May 21, Ascension Thursday were an occasion of joy as many faithful were overwhelmed with gratitude for the opportunity to be together again. Although the hard work and creativity of priests and volunteers, parishes offered Masses in parking lots and seated outdoor settings.

Given the limited seating capacity for social distancing indoors, the bishop said parishes may continue to offer Mass outdoors for up to 150 people.

He also gave approval for ongoing parking lot Masses and encouraged pastors to continue live-streaming Masses for those who are unable to get out. The dispensation of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass for all those who are vulnerable or concerned about their health or the health of loved ones will continue until further notice.

Fairfield County Catholic is pleased to share the following profiles of this historic moment in the life of our parishes and the diocese.

Doing what it takes to be in the presence of Christ

NEW FAIRFIELD—The parking lot of St. Edward the Confessor resembled a drive-in movie theater from years ago as Catholics gathered to worship at an outdoor Mass.

The well-orchestrated first Mass of its kind at the church offered an opportunity for disciples of Christ to participate in Mass and receive the Holy Eucharist for the first time in more than two months since the state was shuttered due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“I haven’t seen you guys in so long,” Father Nick Cirillo said. “I’m so happy to see you all now,” he exclaimed as he stood under the awning of the church entryway to shelter from the persistent rain and occasional downpour. About 60 cars were lined up in the parking lot facing the entry of the church.

Churchgoers were given a list of instructions when they arrived at the church, walking them through the new procedures including tuning into 87.9 FM to hear the Mass in their cars, how Holy Communion would be distributed and a reminder to adhere to social distancing guidelines.

“My friends these are crazy days,” Father Cirillo said. “When we are willing to do what it takes to be in the presence of Christ, we rejoice that we can be together in this way,” he said.

Just as Father Cirillo was saying the blessings over the gifts, the sun began breaking through the clouds.

The glory of God is shining upon us

TRUMBULL—On a glorious Sunday morning, hundreds of parishioners gathered in their cars outside St. Theresa Church in Trumbull for an opportunity they had not had in over two months: the ability to attend public Mass and receive Holy Communion.

After weeks of logistical planning to meet the directives of the diocese, Father Brian Gannon said people had a great desire to return to Mass.

“The interest level has been so high. It’s very inspiring to see so many people here. And the glory of God is shining upon us!” said St. Theresa’s pastor with his hands outstretched to the mid-morning sun. “What a beautiful day that God has given us!”

Though many parishioners routinely watched Sunday Mass through the church’s livestreamed service, the joy of celebrating the Eucharist in community is like no other. Mary Wolpiuk, a long-time parishioner who attended Sunday’s 10 am service, felt privileged to be there. “I have really had a lot of communion with God during this absence of public Mass,” she said, “but nothing can replace the opportunity to receive Holy Communion.”

It’s good to see all of you!

REDDING—The St. Patrick Church parking lot, filled with 50 chairs, was a welcome sight for congregants attending the first outdoor mass at the parish.

“We are so happy to see you all,” Father Joseph Cervero told the congregation.

Father Cervero said prayer is the answer to fear and uncertainty, “When we are feeling uncertain or anxious go to God in prayer.”

Gratitude for the Eucharist

NORWALK—At the end of Sunday’s 11 am outdoor Mass at St. Matthew Church, Msgr. Walter C. Orlowski reached out to many parishioners who were watching by live-streaming and could not join the 50 people who had gathered on the church lawn with their chairs.

“For those of you at home, who are watching this Mass streamed live—and we’re grateful to God for your presence with us, which is in the thousands streaming live—if you want to come to the church and receive the Eucharist today at 12:15, I will give you Communion,”

Many accepted his offer. It was a simple service. They drove up, and he gave them Communion, reverently, with no conversation. He wanted them to have the opportunity to receive the Eucharist on Memorial Day Weekend, especially since the Saturday 4:30 pm car Mass had been cancelled because of rain.

He encouraged them after receiving the Eucharist to pull up on the church property or drive a short distance to St. John’s Cemetery to say prayers of thanksgiving.

Msgr. Orlowski told his parishioners, “I am grateful to God for the opportunity for us to have Mass with you, for you to worship and receive Communion.”

Mass under a cloudless blue sky

STRATFORD—After weeks of being separated from the Eucharist, parishioners from St. James Church came in their cars to a “drive-in” Mass on the Feast of the Ascension, which Father Peter J. Adamski celebrated on the roof of the sacristy, 18 feet off the ground at an altar borrowed from a mausoleum at Gate of Heaven Cemetery.

It was the first public Mass for the parish since March 15 when the coronavirus restrictions began. As Father stepped to the altar, situated in front of a window with an image of the Holy Spirit, he raised his arms in exultation and proclaimed, “Praise God!”

To get to the altar, he and Deacon Joe Kolitar ascended and descended on a scissor lift at the side of the church, or as Father described it, “I ascended on the Ascension.”

When the liturgy began, they looked out at a parking lot of 50 cars. Drivers had tuned their radios to WSJR (91.5 FM), “Radio Free St. James—the Home of the Holy Spirit” and could hear members of the music ministry singing the entrance hymn.

Above the celebrants was a cloudless blue sky. The altar linens fluttered in the gentle breeze, and Father held the pages of the Roman Missal in place with clips. A news crew from NBC taped the Mass, while pedestrians paused to watch. Across the street, two young girls were seated on chairs and observed the celebration with their father.

In his homily, Father said, “The work of salvation is not done until everyone has an opportunity to be saved.”
EDITORIAL

In praise of Catholic Schools

With the school year having recently come to a close, it is time to acknowledge the remarkable work done by teachers, students, staff and administrators when they were suddenly confronted by the need to move to online learning in March as a result of the pandemic.

The unprecedented closing of the schools created the historic challenge of immediately transitioning the 7,500 students who had been studying in the 30 different school buildings in the diocese to distance learning. Yet, by all measures, the schools did it successfully in a way that preserved academic excellence and the values of a Catholic learning community.

At a time when it has been widely reported that public schools across the nation struggled with the sudden shift to distance learning, it should be noted that Catholic schools under Dr. Steve Cheeseman’s leadership, were well prepared. The ongoing investment in new technology made possible by the generosity of donors and the hundreds of hours teachers committed to professional development and online learning communities led to the successful transition.

A recent survey of parents found that 70 percent were pleased with the schools distance learning—far higher than national average—and are prepared to re-enroll their children for the next school year.

A profound debt of gratitude goes to our teachers, students, administrators and parents who made the most of a very difficult situation. By working together they showed the strength and sustainability of faith-based learning communities that put our children first. And our congratulations go to the Class of 2020. Their spirit, determination and achievement bode well for the future of our Church and our country.

Building a just society

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has joined other bishops across the country in urging the faithful to build a just society that works toward great equality and an end to racism.

In his weekly online Mass on Trinity Sunday, the bishop issued a powerful appeal for a change of heart and conversion based on the unity and love of the Holy Trinity. He noted that the great suffering of the poor during the pandemic and the senseless killing “of a man begging to breathe” have forced us to look at the social and economic inequality that leaves so many struggling with racism and “standing on the edge of hunger and poverty” both in this country and around the world.

“We must rebuild our society one living brick at a time based on what God has revealed about himself. He calls us to dream of a world that we will build that is color blind, race blind and economic-strata blind, where all God’s children will have opportunities to live in peace and justice.

The time has come for real action, real repentance, real conversion, real commitment to effect justice, equality, charity, understanding, dialogue, respect and peace-making in every corner of our society, regardless of race, creed or color. You and I will begin to see this dream become reality, one choice at a time, one person at a time, one day at a time... For if it is not now, when? If it is not you and me, then who will do it?

In response to the bishop’s call for change, The Leadership Institute will host several webinars this summer to advance the conversation about racism and cultural diversity, (see story on page 21 for more details). The bishop has also created an ad hoc committee against racism that will begin meeting later this month. For complete details on the webinars and to register, please visit The Leadership Institute’s website at wwwFORMATIONreimagined.org.

FCC online

The August issue of Fairfield County Catholic will only be available online. If you currently receive the online diocesan newsletter, you will automatically receive the August issue when it is published. If you would like to join the 47,000 Catholics throughout the diocese who receive weekly updates, Bishop Caggiano’s videos and stories from the diocese, please sign up by entering your email address at: BridgeportDiocese.org. (Scroll down on the website until you see “sign up for our email newsletter” on the sidebar.) Fairfield County Catholic will resume its print publication in the September issue.

EDITOR’S CHOICE

First Communion Candidate Visits

RIDGEFIELD—Due to the pandemic, St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield had to postpone this year’s First Communion Ceremony. But Msgr. Royal and Father Damian Pielesz have been making special outside visits to these 120 candidates since June 1. During these visits, each child receives a special blessing and a First Communion photo frame for them to make. Parishioners thanked Msgr. Royal and Father Damian for taking the time to make these special visits and for blessing the children who had prepared to receive their First Communion this year. Parishioners took to social media to thank them for their thoughtful gesture and congratulate all the boys and girls who received this special Sacrament.

“How special, so very thoughtful!” a parishioner commented. “I’m sure this means a lot to these children and their families.”

On April 1, 2020 Census Day was observed nationwide. By this date, every home should have received 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 may be found at 2020census.gov/ en.html.
If I could but carry your cross...

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.

As a white woman I do not have the adequate words to explain how the Black community is feeling right now. So I wish to share some words from both mine and others, to hopefully bring light to different viewpoints and perspectives and create a place for healing and understanding. May we hear one another. May we listen. May we let the words change our hearts and guide our actions.

If I could but carry your cross...

How am I supposed to put words to the pain that you feel? I don't know what it's like, but I wish I could take some of the burden away from you. Can I help you carry the cross?

Like Simon helped Jesus? I will do everything I can. I'll read, I'll watch, I'll listen. I'll let your words change my heart and actions. And tell others to do so as well. I'll sign petitions, I'll vote, I'll learn. I will have hard conversations. I will be open to discomfort, and know that it will never be enough to take your pain away.

But I will continue to walk with you. Continue to be your Simon. In hopes that some day it won’t have to be this way.

An education of immersion in absence

A DAD'S VIEW

By Matthew Hennessey

Matthew Hennessey and his family are parishioners of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Stamford.

God is giving us a glimpse of our future here at Hennessey House. It’s the future we’ll be facing in two years ("gulp") when some of the gang members around here start folding their laptops and heading to college.

Our Clara, 16, is breaking free of the lockdown and spending a few weeks out west at Wyoming Catholic College. This small, classical liberal arts school is less than two decades old—still in its gangly phase. It offers what it calls an "education of immersion" in the Western tradition, "the beauty and challenges of the wilderness," and "the treasures of our Catholic spiritual heritage."

All that stuff is okay by me. WCC happens to be famous for its horsemanship program. Clara and 50 other high schoolers from all around the country are riding the trails, reading Thucydides, and not calling home.

To me, the enforced de-plugging was a big selling point. The program collects all the kids' phones on the evening they arrive, locking them up and burying the key under a cow pat. I'm sure the first days of withdrawal were difficult. Hopefully the horses weren't too spoiled by their sweaty, fidgety, gangly riders.

Paying someone to confiscate your teenager's cell is the next big "pre-college experience." Take my word.

The downside of the undigital fortnight is that Clara won't come home with a phone full of pictures of the mountains she's hiking or the stars she's sleeping under. The upside is she will actually spend some time looking at those mountains and stars and not at the mesmeric, internet-enabled ball-and-chain.

I do hope she's enjoying herself. My guess is she's learning a lot.

The downton of the Peloponnesian War, about staying up later than you should, and about the vast scope and exciting diversity of this country. Perhaps she'll get lucky and see a bison or a grizzly bear. From a distance, I mean.

So how are we, the left behind, getting on in her absence?

Depends who you ask.

"I do miss Clara," says Billy, who turned 4 this month. "Can I have a mango squeezer and some Honey Nut Cheerios in a cup?" He isn't the sentimental type. I ask Sally, who is 7, if she's noticed anything different lately.

"Not really. Will you come outside and spray me with the garden hose?" I'm not surprised the second-division siblings are less than broken up. The fact is, we are all sweltering to death in an early summer heatwave and diligently avoiding exposure to the virus.

Billy calls "the big bad worm." We are dealing with here with the beauty and challenges of our own little wilderness.

Still, Mrs. H. and I can't help but frown. "The girls' room. We've set our iPhone weather apps to Lander, Wyoming, and we check the WCC Instagram for updates constantly. It feels like we're missing a body part."

Lord, make us ready to see how do I live? Do I actually live 'what do I believe?' in the end and spend my money? Am I willing to do when I look in the mirror? Do I consider everyone equal? Do I have racist tendencies or bigotry tendencies or discriminatory tendencies in the way I speak, the way I act, the people I deal with, how I spend my money? Am I willing to look myself in the mirror and say 'what do I believe? in the end and how do I live? Do I actually live what I claim to believe when it comes to justice and equality and fairness? Because if I don't then I am contributing to the problem, I am in fact part of the problem. Because we have simple equations and equal opportunity is not just something society wants because it’s a human good—it is a divine mandate. It’s what the Savior taught us. And if we are going to claim Him as our Lord and Savior, let's have the same title He had, being a Christian following Christ the Lord, then don’t you think that's our own faith that should motivate us to change? And if it does not change us then our faith is not what we're claiming it to be." (To listen to the full Let Me Be Frank podcast visit our diocesan social media channels).
We Stand With Christ
Parish projects meet critical needs

By JOE PISANI

GEORGETOWN—We Stand With Christ is making much-needed parish projects possible, and for Father David Leopold, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Georgetown, that means a new roof. Not one but three.

Worshipping in a church that is almost 140 years old certainly has its historic appeal, but it also presents challenges when it comes to maintenance.

“Our focus was mainly on one critical need that we had for at least a year at Sacred Heart,” said Father Leopold. “The shingles on the roof of the church building were starting to deteriorate, and we had to do something.”

Water was leaking into the hallway that led downstairs, where there are offices, and Father feared that if the problem was left untreated, the interior walls of the church would be damaged. When roofers came to look at the job, they discovered there were already four layers of shingles on the roof, which had to be removed.

The work on the church and two other buildings—the parish hall and religious education center along with a garage—was completed last November over the Thanksgiving weekend. During that time, Masses were held in the hall.

Father Leopold is especially grateful to his parishioners for their pledges to the We Stand With Christ campaign, which made the work possible. “I really appreciated what they did,” he said. “I know that everybody has his or her financial strains, and I was very thankful for their participation.”

“It is kind of a mundane project, but a critical project for us because you don’t want to have a roof leaking, and the proceeds we received from We Stand With Christ enabled us to do the job before it got worse,” he said.

“Now, it looks perfect.”

Father Ian Jeremiah in Greenwich celebrated its 100th anniversary last year, and throughout its history, it has been a favorite place to worship for people in northern Greenwich and visitors who come across the border from New York State. Part of the St. Michael the Archangel Parish, it was recently renovated with funds made possible through We Stand With Christ.

Father Ian Jeremiah, pastor, said the parish’s main concern was ensuring that the chapel was handicapped accessible because there are many elderly parishioners who need assistance.

“In addition of building a long ramp, we raised the gradient of the ground to make it incline into the church entrance,” Father Jeremiah said.

In addition, they created a new gathering space outside that was farther away from the traffic. They also built a handicapped bathroom and installed new flooring and applied a fresh coat of paint and did some landscaping before it got worse,” he said.

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“We have received from We Stand With Christ are lifted, and Bishop Frank J. Caggiano can come to rededicate the chapel.

In addition to the chapel project, a major renovation of St. Michael the Archangel in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

Class of 2020 College Matriculations

Binghamton University  
Boston College (8)  
Brown University (2)  
Bryant University  
Bucknell University (2)  
Case Western Reserve University  
Colby College  
Cornell University (2)  
Dartmouth College  
Davidson College  
Drexel University (2)  
Duke University  
Elon University (2)  
Emory University  
Georgetown University (2)  
Indiana University Bloomington  
Marquette University  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Miami University, Oxford  
Middlebury College  
Northeastern University  
Northwestern University  
Providence College (3)  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Sacred Heart University  
Southern Methodist University (5)  
Stanford University  
Texas Christian University  
Tiffin College  
Tufts University  
Tulane University  
The University of Alabama  
The University of California, Santa Barbara  
The University of Chicago  
The University of Connecticut (2)  
The University of Louisville  
The University of Miami  
The University of Michigan  
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2)  
The University of Notre Dame (4)  
The University of Pennsylvania  
The University of Richmond (2)  
The University of Southern California  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
The University of Texas, Austin  
The University of Vermont  
The University of Virginia (2)  
The Vanderbilt University  
The Villanova University  
The Wake Forest University  
The Wesleyan University (2)  
The Williams College  
The Yale University (3)

Congratulations
to the Class of 2020!

Where young women become global leaders
By ELIZABETH CLYONS

In this section, Fairfield Country Catholic recognizes and congratulates the top scholars of diocesan private and Catholic high schools and congratulates all students on their success in graduating. Hats off to your great achievement and God bless you as you continue on your journey!

“This year is certainly memorable, but is not one you deserve. So many milestones you have looked forward to have been affected,” Dr. Steven Cheeseman, superintendent of schools, said to students in a recent video message about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools.

While students and their families were unable to enjoy traditional graduation ceremonies, many found new and creative ways to honor the achievement of students and encourage them to do great things in the future.

St. Joseph High School
TRUMBULL—St. Joseph High School is proud to announce that Mari Andrzejewski and Katherine Pikulik are this year’s valedictorian and salutatorian respectively.

Top scholars are never a matter of a great grade point average,” remarked Dr. William Fitzgerald, head of school. “Character, social responsibility, and leadership are just as essential in individuals whom St. Joseph High School celebrates as the best of the best. And so the faculty and administration are very proud to put forward this year’s valedictorian and salutatorian.

Mari Andrzejewski has attained the highest academic record among her class and, if permitted by the State, will deliver the valedictorian’s farewell address at the close of commencement on Saturday, July 11. Mari resides in Trumbull, Conn. Mari is president of the student council and writing resource center, a member of the National Honor Society as well as the Math, English, and Spanish Honor Societies. In addition, she is a Harvard Book Award Recipient, a Governor’s Scholar Semifinalist, National Hispanic Scholars, President’s Scholar and Service award winner, and the 2019 Barnum Festival Queen.

During her time at St. Joes, Mari has also co-founded the school’s non-profit, student-run, coffee shop, the Cup o’ Joe Café.

Katherine Pikulik, salutatorian, has earned the second highest academic average in her class and also resides in Trumbull, Conn. She is a member of the National Honor Society and is a member of SJ’s Girls Indoor and Outdoor Track & Field teams. In addition, Katherine is on the Presidential Honor Roll and a National Merit Scholar. In the fall, she plans to attend New York University as a Corporate Finance major.

“We are thrilled for Mari and Katherine,” said Mrs. Nancy DiBuono, principal. “St. Joes is a better place because of Mari and her involvement as a school leader. She is a high achiever destined to become a great leader. She is compassionate, dedicated and has a heart of gold. Katherine is an intelligent and hardworking young woman who never accepts anything but her best. Her commitment to her academic studies is admirable. They represent the best of the very best of St. Joseph High School and we could not be more pleased or proud.”

Trinity Catholic High School
STAMFORD—Trinity Catholic High School is proud to announce that Fiona Grace Willette and Maggie Carlon are this year’s valedictorian and salutatorian respectively.

Margaret “Maggie” Carlon has been a member of the
Vals and Sals

vals and sals from page 13

Stamford Youth Hockey Program from age six and continues to serve as an Assistant Coach for the Stamford Lady Sharks, working with young girls at Terry Connors Ice Rink. Furthermore, Maggie has the unique distinction of being the only female to represent Trinity Catholic on the co-op hockey team of Stamford High/Westhill and Staples High. Maggie plays golf for Trinity in the spring. For her passion and dedication and skills on the playing field, the FCIAC named Maggie one of its Exemplary Scholars earlier this year.

To further add to her distinguished list of accomplishments, Maggie has also earned “Honors with Distinction” every quarter throughout high school; highest academic average in Freshmen English and the University of Virginia Book Award. Maggie also carried a very well-balanced extracurricular plate with a heavy host of activities over her high school years. Maggie has been a member of the National Honor Society, a Student Ambassador, as well as a member of Student Council, the St. Thomas Aquinas Scholars Program and has participated in our Shark Tank competition.

Outside of school, Maggie further shows the depth of her character, as well as her kind and caring nature, in her volunteer work through her Youth Group projects at St. Leo’s Church, as well as at “Kids Helping Kids” in downtown Stamford.

“It is always safe to assume Maggie is at the top of her game, literally and figuratively, in all of her endeavors—be it in the classroom, on the ice, leading her fellow students in a project, rallying them for a cause or event or just having fun around school,” says John Carrigan, school counselor. “As her counselor, what makes her an exemplary person (and for that matter, this is also found in her brother and sister, as well) can be measured in character and kindness! The depth of care, consideration, ‘good heart’ and generosity of spirit Maggie possesses is absolutely boundless and we, as a school community, are all the richer for her sparkling presence and countless contributions to others.”

Maggie heads off to the University of Connecticut in the Fall.

Fiona Grace Willette plans to become a physician, which stems from her great admiration for medical professionals and passionate interest in the field gleaned from personal experiences of her youth. “In my eyes and estimation, Fiona will undoubtedly achieve her goal and will do so with the same dedication she has consistently demonstrated throughout her high school years,” says John Carrigan, school counselor. Fiona’s great determination and interest in the medical field is also evidenced in her community service as a Stamford Hospital Junior Volunteer; she has devoted extensive time shadowing physical therapists and has also chaired Trinity’s annual Red Cross Blood Drive where Team Trinity surpassed the Red Cross donation quota.

When Trinity didn’t have a Cross Country team, Fiona approached Dave Chiappetta to coach. She rounded up a team, helped them get in shape, and through her leadership acumen, became team captain. So committed to her sport, or perhaps even more so, to good health and conditioning, that Fiona has taken to running year-long to stay in shape and to also host team gatherings at her home.

Staying committed to her lifelong goal of a career in medicine, and further building strong perseverance and foundation skills, Fiona decided to test herself even further by applying to the West Point Military Academy Summer Leadership Experience last year where extreme endurance, physical conditioning is combined with elite leadership training. Adding her success at West Point’s prestigious program to her growing, impressive personal profile, Fiona carefully studies and pursues experiences and opportunities that build and hone her already accomplished talents, skills and pursuits. We greatly commend the various ways she finds focus, challenge and motivation. Everything she plans, pursues and accomplishes bodes so well to future success.

Winner of the Mickey Lione, Jr. Youth Excellence Scholarship, the Sikorsky and Fairfield University Excellence in Math and Science Award and the Western Connecticut Military Officers Association’s Young America Award, Fiona is also a member of the National Honor Society, and AP Scholar who has also received “Honors with Distinction” every semester at Trinity and is the recipient of the Holy Cross Book Award. She also serves as a Student Ambassador.

While our extremely busy, always active and incredibly involved future physician has always seen the world of medicine as her primary focus, there are also so many other pathways she could possibly pursue. Future leadership and service careers may certainly beckon well for her. Intensely involved in student government each year in high school, Fiona has served in every capacity, including Executive Council President in 12th grade.

“Fiona has an extraordinary work ethic. She’s extremely bright and is always looking to challenge herself on an academic and personal level. She’s a natural born leader and has never been afraid to take the reins on projects, assignments and school-wide events. She has incredible school spirit and has brought so much fun and positivity to the entire Trinity Catholic community,” says English teacher Bonnie DeAngelis.

Fiona will be headed to the College of the Holy Cross to start her college career.

Notre Dame High School FAIRFIELD—Notre Dame High School is proud to announce that Sophie Stachurski has been named the valedictorian and Maria Raiti and Ruth Salazar have been named co-salutatorians of Notre Dame’s Class of 2020.

Sophie Stachurski is a member of the inaugural Distinguished Scholars Program, as well as the Frank and Marissa Martire Leadership Institute. Sophie has established a tremendous four-year record of achievements both in and out of the classroom. As impressive as her academic record is as evidenced by her

FAIRFIELD PREP, a Jesuit, Catholic school of excellence, believes in educating the whole person. As a college preparatory school, Prep seeks to transform young boys into men of intellectual competence. That means a rigorous, hands-on education where our students learn both inside and outside of the classroom.

Open House
Sunday, October 4
www.FAIRFIELDPREP.ORG

FAIRFIELD PREP, Fiona Grace Willette, valedictorian; Maggie Carlon, salutatorian
Local News

Schools planning for a return to classes in September

BRIDGEPORT—The diocese plans to begin the next school year in September with in-person classes and the ability to make a fluid transition to distance learning if it becomes necessary, Dr. Steven Cheeseman, superintendent of Catholic Schools, said in a video to parents, teachers and students.

Diocesan plans also call for a blended learning option for students who for any reason are unable or concerned about returning to the classroom, he said.

Dr. Cheeseman said that the diocese is ending the current schools year “in a way that no one could have imagined when it started.”

Dr. Cheeseman said the pandemic has demonstrated that Catholic education is not simply “defined by buildings that house us but by parents teacher, administrators and students who together create a culture that informs the mind, forms the heart and transforms the lives of all those lucky enough to be a part of it.”

A “Return to School” task force is preparing for a back-to-school season that will be unlike any other, “but that the schools will be ready to provide student-centered learning that focuses on the personal, spiritual and academic development of students.

Dr. Cheeseman said that diocesan schools are prepared to transition from the “crisis distance learning program” they began in March to an improved remote learning process, if it is required at any time in the future.

In order to plan for the next school year the schools conducted focus groups and also asked parents to participate in a planning survey to develop “school-specific plans” that will be shared with parents.

The survey found a high degree of satisfaction with the distance learning provided by the diocese when in-school classes were suspended and more than 70 percent were prepared to re-enroll.

The survey also identified challenges faced by the parents. More than 13 percent of those surveyed reported losing their jobs during the pandemic and over 30 percent said that they had experienced pay cuts.

(To learn more about Catholic elementary and high schools and scholarship opportunities available throughout Fairfield County, visit: www.dioceseofbridgeportcatholicschools.com/find-catholic-school-fairfield-county-ct.)

Room to Grow Preschool reopens

NORWALK—After being closed for three months, Room to Grow Preschool in Norwalk “re-opened” on June 15 under COVID-approved safety protocols. During the pandemic, Room to Grow staff supported over 60 percent of its families who lost jobs by providing 4-5 days of groceries and supplies via weekly social distancing pick-ups. These efforts were supported by generous donors and partnerships with Filling In The Blanks, Al’s Angels and food drives conducted by local diocesan parishes. Room to Grow will celebrate its 25th Anniversary serving low income working families this October.

Room to Grow
Preschool reopens

OPEN HOUSE JULY 23rd
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Maria Raiti is a member of both the National Honor and Spanish Honor Societies. Maria was a recipient of the Sacred Heart University Book Award during her junior year. An excellent student in the classroom, Maria has been equally successful outside of the classroom with her numerous clubs, activities, and service work. During her high school career, Maria has been active in the Art Club, Dance Club, STEM Club, Campus Ministry, Philosophy Club, Drama Club, and Video Game Club. Maria participated in the 2019 summer mission trip to Kentucky and was planning to join the group again this summer before the pandemic ended summer travel. Maria has also been active volunteering for Campus Ministry service projects, the Girl Scouts, and the Knights of Columbus.

According to Principal Chris Cipriano, “Maria has consistently made her mark on the ND community—both in and out of the classroom. I know that much success awaits her as she takes her fantastic skill set off to college and beyond.” Maria, a resident of Bridgeport, will be attending UConn—Storrs in the Fall. Ruth also participated in the 2018 mission trip to Neon, Kentucky. She served on the Cultural Awareness Committee and was an active participant in the Girls with Impact program. Ruth was also a member of the National and Spanish Honor Societies. Her principal, Chris Cipriano, commented, “Ruth has done phenomenally well during her high school career. Her achievements have left their mark here at school, and I know she will do fantastic work in the future.” Ruth, a resident of Bridgeport, will be attending UConn—Storrs in the Fall.

Kolbe Cathedral High School BRIDGEPORT—Kolbe Cathedral High School is proud to announce Alexa Lopez as Valedictorian and Sabrina DaSilva as salutatorian for the 2019-20 school year.

Alexa Lopez has earned the highest academic standing in her graduating class. Alexa came to Kolbe Cathedral High School from John Winthrop School. During her time at Kolbe Cathedral High School, Alexa was a member of the Spanish and National Honor Societies. Alexa has also served as secretary of her school career including membership in the Philosophy Club, Peace by Justice Club, Creative Writing Club, as well as Campus Ministry. A frequent volunteer for many local service programs, Ruth also participated in the 2018 mission trip to Neon, Kentucky.

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she has been a source of comfort and friendly conversation for patients. Alexa Lopez is a bright and motivated student, a generous and responsible member of the community, and a caring and loyal friend. Alexa will continue her education at the University of Connecticut in the Fall.

Sabrina DaSilva, salutatorian, has earned the second highest academic standing in her graduating class. Sabrina came to Kolbe Cathedral High School from John Winthrop School. Sabrina was a member of the Spanish and National Honor Societies, president of her graduating class, a member of the Girl’s Soccer Team, a softball player, and an E3 peer leader. Sabrina has also been very active in the Groundworks Organization. Through GroundWorks, Sabrina began by cleaning local parks throughout the city of Bridgeport. Over time, Sabrina was given the opportunity to travel and complete restoration projects at various national parks.

Sabrina is a hard-working and humble young woman. Sabrina will continue her education at Bowdoin College in the Fall. Both Alexa and Sabrina have been valued members of the Kolbe community and the school wishes them all the best as they continue their education and pursue their dreams.

Immaculate High School

DANBURY—Immaculate High School is proud to announce Hunter Kirkman of Sandy Hook as the Class of 2020’s valedictorian and Sean Guiry of Danbury as the salutatorian.

Valedictorian Hunter Kirkman will attend Northeastern University in the Honors Program and major in Mechanical Engineering. Hunter is a Distinguished Honors student, a recipient of the 2019 Carson Scholarship, a National Merit Scholarship Program Finalist with a perfect SAT math score of 800 and he received a National Merit Corporate Scholarship from Northeastern University. He is also a Harvard Book Award recipient, a member of the National Honor Society, the English National Honor Society, the Science National Honor Society and the Mu Alpha Theta Math National Honor Society. Hunter also received the President’s Volunteer Service Award and has served on the Student Council, as President of Campus Ministry, as a member of the Peer Leadership Club, Key Club and Engineering Club and as a Student Ambassador.

Hunter Kirkman was also named Immaculate High School’s Student of the Year for the 2019-20 school year. Hunter earned this honor for consistently demonstrating school spirit and dedication to IHS, strength of character and faith in action through kindness to others, and a passion for learning and going beyond what is expected, including encouraging others to do their best.

Salutatorian Sean Guiry will attend Northeastern University, where he received a Dean’s Scholarship, and major in Computer Science and Computer Engineering. At Immaculate, Sean is a Distinguished Honors student and a member of the National Honor Society and the Science National Honor Society. Sean is a talented pianist and a three-sport athlete, having played varsity soccer, basketball and outdoor track for Immaculate, and was named a Scholar Athlete by the CAS-CIAC and was selected to the 2020 Boys Basketball All-State D1 Team and named by GameTimeCT to the All-State Boys Basketball Second Team. Sean has received the President’s Volunteer Service Award and the Rensselaer Medal for his dedication and excellence in science and math.

The Immaculate High School graduating Class of 2020 contributed over 6,006 hours to a school-wide total of 23,008 hours of community service and many students were honored and/or received scholarships from many local community service organizations and the Diocese of Bridgeport for their service and academic achievements. Seniors received numerous individual athletic SCH and CIAC leadership and sportsmanship recognitions as well as academic and music and art awards, including Commendations from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, Scholastic Arts and Writing Awards, Connecticut Association of Schools Fine Arts Awards, Halo Theater Awards and more. Other seniors were part of the CyberPatriots, Brave Engineers Team and Mock Trial teams that won regional, State and other major competitions.

Fairfield Prep

FAIRFIELD—Fairfield College Preparatory School is proud to announce Mark Ballesteros and Andrew Rios as the top scholars for the Class of 2020. These standout young men represent the top two percent of the class.

Mark Ballesteros is a four-year member of Model United Nations (Secretary-General), Debate Club (co-president), Fairfield Prep Plato Club (co-founder), Astronomy Club and Historians Club. Mark is also active in his hometown.
Humanity. He serves as a peer to the efforts of Habitat for Mission and by his dedication in Prep’s Appalachia Service through service, participating in the Appalachian service trip, and volunteering with the Church of the Assumption parish youth group. Mark will attend the University of Notre Dame in the Fall. Andrew Rios has distinguished himself academically in studying at the highest level offered at Fairfield Prep while achieving Summa Cum Laude honors level all four years and a 4.11 GPA. Andrew was inducted into the National Honor Society and French Honor Society, and was awarded the Harvard Book Award indicating his high achievement. He learns from life through service, participating in Prep’s Appalachia Service Mission and by his dedication to the efforts of Habitat for Humanity. He serves as a peer tutor on campus and in the local community where Andrew has been a teacher’s assistant at a Boys & Girls Club and by his mentoring of an autistic child at a local multicultural school.

Andrew’s extracurricular activities are many and varied, as indicated by his involvement in Prep’s Plato Club, Model United Nations Club, Mock Trial Club and Habitat for Humanity Club. Andrew is a member of the Notre Dame of Easton parish, and will take his love of learning, talents and interests to Amherst College next Fall.

Lauralton Hall

MILFORD—Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, Lauralton Hall is proud to announce that Class of 2020 valedictorian is Isabela Baghdady and salutatorian is Caron Kim. Ms. Baghdady, of Shelton, will attend the University of Pennsylvania with plans to major in philosophy, politics, and economics. An outstanding high honors student throughout her high school career, Ms. Baghdady was active in the YMCA Youth & Government (YAG) Club where she held several leadership positions including speaker of the house. A member of the tennis team, she also participated as a percussionist in Lauralton’s symphonic orchestra and jazz band and served as a peer mentor and member of student council. Ms. Baghdady was named a Yale Young Global Scholar and is the recipient of the Harvard Book Prize and the Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass Award. “Isabela’s distinction as valedictorian is well earned,” said Head of School Elizabeth Miller. “She has shown extraordinary conviction and intellectual curiosity in her academic career. As a natural leader, Isabela also behaves with thoughtfulness and compassion in her desire to serve. I have no doubt she will make great contributions at Penn and beyond.”

Ms. Kim, of West Haven, will attend Harvard University. In addition to achieving high honors all four years, Ms. Kim serves her Korean community as a volunteer language teacher and in her church as a lector, choir singer, and Sunday school teacher. She could be seen on stage in Lauralton Hall’s and Notre Dame West Haven’s annual musical productions, in Lauralton’s vocal ensembles, and in orchestra and jazz band performances where she played piano and saxophone. Ms. Kim was named a Carson Scholar, Barnum Festival Princess, and Governor’s Scholars Semi-Finalist. She also received The Yale Club of New Haven’s Yale University Book Award and the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute’s Rensselaer Medal Award. “Caron is a brilliant student and a talented musician full of kind-

FAIRFIELD COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL, FAIRFIELD – Scholars Mark Ballesteros and Andrew Rios

Congratulations Class of 2020!

“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles.” - Isaiah 40:31

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- American University
- Bentley University
- Boston College
- Boston University
- Catholic University of America
- Clemson University
- College of the Holy Cross
- Connecticut College
- Fairfield University
- Fordham University
- Lehigh University
- Marist College
- Middlebury College
- New York University
- Northeastern University
- Pepperdine University
- Providence College
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
- Sacred Heart University
- The College of William & Mary
- The George Washington University
- University of Connecticut
- University of Notre Dame
- University of Virginia
- Villanova University
- Virginia Tech

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Social Justice

Father Norman reflects on death of George Floyd

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

WILTON—“The history of our Church is rooted in social justice,” said Father Reginald Norman, pastor of Our Lady of Fatima and episcopal vicar for the Apostolate of African American Catholics. “We have always done our part and always preach that life is sacred.”

Father Reggie explained that he has spoken to his congregation about this topic in light of the recent killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis policeman and the subsequent protests following the tragedy.

“The Catholic Church is one of the few churches that takes care of everyone regardless of race or religion,” explained Father Reggie. When asked about the Church’s response to recent events, Father Reggie explained that many of our United States Bishops have spoken, including a message from the USCCB and Bridgeport Diocese’s Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. Father Reggie also said that the Offices of Black Catholics and other clergy are involved in peaceful protests.

“We are broken-hearted, sickened, and outraged to watch another video of an African American man being killed before our very eyes. What’s more astounding is that this is happening within mere weeks of several other such occurrences. This is the latest wake-up call that needs to be answered by each of us in a spirit of determined conversion,” reads the statement from the USCCB.

“The problem for the black community,” explains Father Reggie, “is that we didn’t come to America on our own. We had to fight harder for assimilation.” Father Reggie explains that even though America is made up of people who came from many different countries, the black community did not have the same choice and that makes their experience unique. “When this injustice happens we all have to speak up now—that’s what it’s going to take to change this,” Father Reggie said.

In his Pentecost Sunday homily, Father Reggie told his parishioners, “We are best when we are working at our best level possible—that is God. We remember that the followers of Jesus were given the ability to speak in different tongues so that all might hear the message of Christ...who wants to redeem all of his children.” When asked what suggestions he has for people who want to help but don’t know how, Father Reggie said, “Well first is to pray.” He also said that one must speak.

LAURALTON HALL, MILFORD – Isabela Baghdady, valedictorian; Caron Kim, salutatorian

LAURALTON HALL, MILFORD – Catherine McAuley Award, Carly Weber

“WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE that we are all God’s children and He loves all His children regardless of who we are or what we have,” Father Reggie Norman addressed all those who marched in the recent Walk for Peace and an End to Racism held in Wilton.

LAURALTON HALL, MILFORD – Isabela Baghdady, valedictorian; Caron Kim, salutatorian

LAURALTON HALL, MILFORD – Catherine McAuley Award, Carly Weber

Elizabeth Miller. “They will go to college prepared as confident, articulate, civic-minded women full of Mercy spirit toward others—qualities I know they will bring as they contribute to making their communities better.”

Meet St Joe’s Class of 2020!

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9,236 Hours of Community Service

St Joseph High School | Trumbull, CT

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McGivney Center

Virtual fundraiser bids up generosity for the kids

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—The COVID-19 pandemic isn’t pressing pause on people’s generosity, as many tuned-in to the McGivney Community Center’s virtual fundraiser “The Passport to Come and Grow.”

By the end of the night, the goal of $50,000 was reached to support McGivney’s after-school and summer camp programs. Funds will provide camp scholarships and help to pay for healthy snacks, camp activities and supplies.

DJ Allan Lamberti from WEBE 108 was the emcee for the evening, providing a fun and interactive environment. Viewers enjoyed trivia and recipes for food and drink from around the world.

Those who tuned in were able to donate by texting their desired amount to a number provided, and donations streamed in throughout the live-stream.

Witnesses to the McGivney Center’s success spoke about the truth behind the center’s tagline: “Kids at McGivney don’t come and go, they come and grow.”

“The McGivney Center is not only a place for my child to learn and grow but it also provides job stability,” said Leslie Carter, a McGivney family member who explained that her family is benefiting from the online resources the center is sending, as well as the weekly family meals being provided.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the McGivney Center has been working to ensure that they are providing for their families and the community. The center was able to offer dinner prepared by Vazzy’s, Calise’s Food Market and Layla’s Falafel by social-distancing curb-side pick-up Tuesdays-Fridays through Wednesday, June 3. The center has also been sending online after-school resources to families and has provided WiFi hotspot busses parked at convenient locations for families who need internet access.

“We are doing everything we can to keep our families strong and kids healthy,” said board member Anne McCrory, who spoke about how although McGivney is closed due to COVID-19, they are still providing resources to their families. “These kids step out of their everyday lives and they walk stronger, more confidently and with greater purpose toward something that could show every bit of potential that they have,” McCrory said.

“The McGivney Center provides hope in a very practical and regular way to the people they serve,” said Tom Matthews, board member.

> CONTINUED ON PAGE 24
The Leadership Institute

The call for change

By DR. PATRICK DONOVAN

In response to the clarion call for change in our communities, The Leadership Institute will host several webinars this summer to advance the conversation about racism, cultural diversity, and how simply by listening to one another, we can begin to affect change. In addition, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has created an ad hoc committee against racism that will begin meeting later this month. The committee includes clergy and religious, as well as lay men and women who will develop a strategic vision and practical steps for the diocesan response to sin of racism.

The webinars, which will feature experts from the field of academia and ministry, will begin on July 30, 2020 and continue every Thursday at 1 pm until September 3.

Topics include:
1. Race and the Catholic Church
2. Race and Catholic Social Teaching
3. How to have a conversation about race
4. Beyond Black: Race and Multiculturalism
5. Growing in Awareness and Knowledge
6. Teaching Peace

For complete details on the webinars and to register, please visit The Leadership Institute’s website at www.formationreimagined.org.

To assist parishes and families to begin these critical conversations, several resources have been added to the Institute’s website as well. **Looking Ahead: Parish Faith Formation**

It is clear that the way we engage young people and their families will need to change when the Fall semester rolls around. While a return to the school classroom may be possible for some school districts, the return to the traditional classroom for religious education likely will not happen for many parishes.

The problems are multi-layered. How do we disinfect a school in time for it to be used again in the evening by the parish? How can we social distance in our faith formation program when some catechists do not feel comfortable returning? How will we establish a program that delivers content and engage the family at the same time?

To answer many of these questions, The Leadership Institute has developed an online resources for parish leaders called, “Always Connected.” This tool, which is designed for parish faith formation leaders to use as they plan, encourages the implementation of planning teams that will focus not on how to deliver textbooks to students, but how to engage mom and dad (and grandma and grandpa) as they witness the faith to young people.

The reality is this: traditional classroom models of catechesis have not worked for many students for generations. We have to take advantage of this moment in history to reimagine formation. The focus, especially as we return to formation, must be on helping young people encounter the person of Jesus Christ. That requires more than a textbook or handout. It requires face-to-face conversations (even if only remotely) and a great deal of creativity.

The website, which can be found...
Obituaries

Pre-Planning helps families

BRIDGEPORT—Planning for one’s burial is not a comfort-able topic for most people, but the COVID-19 crisis has under-scored the need for pre-plan-n ing, particularly in the case of unexpected death, says Dean Gestal, director of Catholic Cemeteries.

Gestal adds that with increasing social mobility and many children of the elderly living out of state, it’s important for people to make their wishes known and prepare in advance rather than wait until a loss occurs—whether it’s a sudden or expected.

“Pre-planning your final arrangements is truly a gift to your family. When death occurs, a family is suddenly confronted with many difficult choices including financial considerations,” says Gestal.

He says that Catholic cemet-eries saw a surge in the number of deaths over the past three months, and at one point during the height of the crisis as many as 70 percent of the burials were associated with COVID-19.

In many cases the families did not own plots and had to make difficult decisions when they weren’t prepared to and hadn’t previously given any thought to final considerations.

Joe McCurdy, manager of Catholic Cemeteries for the dio-cese, says that families preparing for burial have to make decisions about many options, including traditional inground burial, purchasing a mausoleum for above-ground burial, or various niches used for cremation, which now represents about 50 percent of the burials in Catholic cemeteries.

Catholic cemeteries offer many options and services includ-ing estate lots to accommodate current and future generations of the same family, special areas on which to construct family mausoleums, entombment in community mausoleums and memorial design services.

“For those thinking of cre-mation, cremation graves and columbarium niches are available to accommodate the reverent disposition that the Church desires,” he says.

McCurdy believes that pre-need planning is the best way to ensure that you don’t have to make decisions at the last minute when you’re dealing with loss and emotional stress.

“Pre-need purchase also has financial benefits beginning with the fact that the purchase is made from current income, giving the purchaser the ability to pay for it interest-free over time on a convenient payment schedule,” McCurdy says.

Pre-planning also gives fami-lies more time to visit and select a cemetery and meet with cemetery representatives.

“People can also select the type of monument or memorial they prefer,” says McCurdy, who notes that the mobility in society is also evident in the choice of one’s final resting place. He says that a growing number of individuals may now visit cemeteries throughout the diocese and may select a grave site in a cemetery in an area other than where they lived because of the beauty of the land or other considerations for out-of-town visitors.

“There are 14 Catholic cemeteries established throughout southern Connecticut (Fairfield County) to serve the Catholic faithful and their families, providing beautiful places of prayer and reflection.

(For more on how to get this important information, call 203.416.1491, or visit the website, www.bridgeportdiocese.org/cemeteries refer to FFC and its website or tune in to Veritas Catholic Radio.)

DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT JUNE 21—JULY 31

JUNE
21 Rev. Albert D. Talbot 1962
22 Rev. Xavier Renda 2009
24 Rev. Franklin J. Corrigan 1974
25 Mgr. William A. Gemarino 2015
26 Rev. Albert A. Tomasko 1978
27 Rev. J. Barry Furey 2012
28 Rev. John J. Draper 1966
32 Mgr. Thomas P. Mooney 1956
33 Mgr. John E. Tomis 1986

JULY
1 Rev. Anthony J. Intagliata 1990
2 Rev. Alfred J. Cermody 1958
5 Mgr. John J. Hayes 1964
6 Mgr. Philip N. Salmone 1967
8 Rev. James J. Kane 1956
9 Rev. Sarah F. Flynn 1978
10 Rev. Edward F. Doyle 1981
12 Rev. Edwin Coyne 2013
13 Mgr. James P. Devine 1972
14 Rev. A. Fred Constantino 1980
17 Mgr. Walter R. Conroy 1997
18 Fr. Robert Tentekeff 2011
19 Mgr. Bartholomew J. Laurella 2004
20 Rev. John M. Ceolinho 1990
21 Rev. Peter DiMarco 2015
22 Rev. Kevin P. Fitzpatrick 2008
23 Rev. Chester Kicia, O.F.M. 2003
26 Rev. David H. Krabel 2008
27 Mgr. Nicholas P. Coleman, P.A. 1963
28 Fr. Paul Lalich 2011
29 Rev. Hubert P. Carigi 1974
26 Mgr. Francis M. Waclaszek 1978
28 Rev. William G. Mahoney 1973
30 Decon Ian Black 2006

Father Stephen J. Balint, 81

BRIDGEPORT—The Reverend Stephen J. Balint passed away on May 16, 2020. He was 81 years of age.

Stephen Joseph Balint was born in Bridgeport, Conn., on December 21, 1938, son of Stephen Joseph Balint and Helen I. (Varga) Balint. He attended St. Stephen Parochial School in Bridgeport and Fairfield College Preparatory School. He began his priestly formation at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, Conn. and then continued on to Our Lady of Angels in Albany, N.Y. He was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Bridgeport by the Most Reverend Walter W. Curtis at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport on May 22, 1965.

Father Balint served as assistant at St. Joseph Parish in Danbury from 1965–1967 and at St. Ambrose Parish in Bridgeport from 1967–1970. In 1970 he remained at St. Ambrose Parish with the new title of associate pastor of the Team Ministry. The Team Ministry was an experiment new to the diocese at that time. Father Balint continued in that position until 1971 when he became coordinator of Catholic Boy Scout Activities in the Norwalk-Ridgefield area.

From 1968-1971 Father Balint was the council chaplain for the Pomperaug Council B.S.A. and through his many years of service to the Connecticut Yankee Council in the B.S.A. went on to receive a number of honors and awards. He retired from the Diocese of Bridgeport on January 15, 2014.

A Memorial Mass will be celebrated at a future date with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano as the principal celebrant.
Lamenting the loss of a spring sports season

By DON HARRISON

Oh, what could have been. Notre Dame High of Fairfield appeared poised to capture the school’s first softball state championship this spring. All the principal players except one had returned from the 2019 squad, which established several batting records, assembled a 22-5 record and advanced to the Class M state tournament semifinals.

“This would have been our year,” declared Lancers coach Jeff Bevino. “We had everybody back except our catcher. We’d reached the state finals four years ago, the state semifinals in 2017 and ‘18, and the state semis last year. To say it’s disappointing there was no season is an understatement. Heart-breaking is more like it.”

The coronavirus pandemic was the culprit. Gov. Ned Lamont had announced the cancellation of in-school classes for the remainder of the 2019-20 academic year in early May. So, the governing body for the state’s high schools, the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC—CIAC) which had cancelled the remainder of the winter sports tournaments on March 10—was left with one choice: Cancel the spring sports season.

“The CIAC empathizes with our school communities and the experiences lost due to COVID-19,” said CIAC Executive Director Glenn Lungarini.

Bevino is understandably frustrated to see his fifth season as Notre Dame’s head coach negat- ed by the deadly disease. “The team started hitting in December up within their own family and circles when they see injustice happening, remain educated and have empathy for those whose lives are directly impacted every day. “Because unless you are black you don’t have any idea what it is like. We’ve been condition- ed—we don’t understand the struggle.”

Father Reggie gave examples of times when people of color have to be wary—“Driving while black,” being under surveillance while patronizing a store, others being nervous when they are in an enclosed space with them, just to name a few. Father Reggie explained that these are things non-POC’s have never had to experi- ence, and empathy is crucial.

“The pandemic is teaching us what is really important,” said Father Reggie. “A communal effort is far greater than our individual goal.”

Father Reggie stressed the importance of educating ourselves and of maintaining a rapport with law enforcement to ensure that last- ing change is made. “If we have the ability to speak about it things can get better. The important thing is to let people have a voice.”

Father Reggie did explain that we cannot resort to violence, say- ing that “it is not okay to fight a crime with another crime.”

“The Catholic Church teaches that life is sacred from conception to natural death,” said Father Reggie. “But we often forget those who are in the middle. We have to speak up for them just as much. Because all life is sacred.”

Father Reggie shared, “We all have a past but we have to make sure that we don’t repeat history.”

Several other important players will return, too, plus senior-to-be Monica Mojica, who was to have rejoined the squad this spring. Her high school playing career has been hampered by injuries.

“She’s a heckuva hitter. Last year, even wearing a (knee) brace, she hit a couple of home runs in a game,” said Bevino, who plans to utilize her skills as designated hitter and at first base.

Brown’s replacement on the mound? Bevino is putting his hopes on a pair of freshmen and no pandemic.

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The New Creation

The McGivney Center is providing camp hours from 8:30 am-3 pm. (The McGivney Center is located at 338 Stillman Street on the grounds of St. Charles Parish in East Bridgeport. For more information or to watch the video of this year’s fundraiser and make a donation, visit: mcgivneycenter.wixsite.com.)
The forgotten value of suffering

I’ve never been a person who could endure suffering without complaining. Even a little suffering. I wish I could learn from saints like Padre Pio, who lived with the stigmata for 50 years, or Therese of Lisieux, who died at 24 from tuberculosis after terrible suffering.

Or the 14-year-old martyr St. Jose Sanchez del Rio, who defied the Mexican military with the cry of “Viva Cristo Rey!” as they led him to his death. Or St. Josephine Bakhita, a religious sister who had been kidnapped from Sudan at 7 years old and was sold into slavery. I look at their lives and realize that kind of strength could only come from Christ.

We’ll all suffer in this life. No one is exempt. It’s part of the human experience, a result of original sin and living in an imperfect world. Suffering leads some people to anger and others to despair. Suffering leads many to atheism, and a privileged few to despair. Suffering leads many to take an even more melancholy view of the human condition, a result of original sin and living in an imperfect world.

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The coronavirus pandemic has been a time of suffering for many people, who faced illness, anxiety, loneliness, abandonment, or dying without their loved ones.

You don’t have to look far to see the face of suffering in the world. One of my friends spends the day in pain and he’s not even sure of the cause. Another suffers for a child with cancer. Another is carrying the cross of addiction. Another is living with someone else’s addiction. Another is a caregiver for a spouse with chronic illness. Another lost her job and is facing eviction.

My mother did her share of suffering. She had cancer and eventually developed Alzheimer’s. What set her apart was she never complained. I’m convinced her suffering helped bring down a lot of graces for family members and friends who might otherwise never have known Christ.

When I look at the picture of the Little Flower on my bureau and recall her short life, I ask for only a fraction of the strength she had. That strength, of course, came from Jesus, who though divine took the form of a man and shared our suffering. Sometimes he shares his cross with us, and sometimes we share our cross with him. Years after Sister told us about the redemptive value of suffering, I read St. Paul’s Letter to the Colossians, in which he said, “No, I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church…”

Such a curious concept, such a wonderful concept that another person’s conversion or salvation can be made possible through our willingness to carry a cross. There’s only one place to go when your life is afflicted with pain, emotional or physical. Sit in front of the tabernacle. Words aren’t even necessary. Jesus understands everything. And always remember to turn to Our Lady of Sorrows, who endured suffering in a way we never will and who is always there to comfort us.
Nuestra Voz

Nuevo parroco de San Jose y San Ladislaus

POR MARICARMEN GODOY

NORWALK—“Me complace informarles que después de discernir en oración y de consultar con el concejo de diáconos estoy nombrando al Padre Edison Orozco como párroco de la nueva parroquia Saint Joseph y Saint Ladislaus, iglesias que próximamente se habrán fusionado a partir del primero de octubre”, anticipó el Obispo en una carta que envió a los feligreses de estas parroquias, firmada el dos de junio.

El padre Ericson Orozco, es nacido en Manizales, Colombia, tiene 48 años y veinte años como presbítero. Fue el administrador de la parroquia Saint Charles Borromeo, de Bridgeport y vicario de la iglesia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en Danbury; en donde se ha venido encargando especialmente de la feligresía hispana.

Del blog Camino Católico en una entrevista realizada al sacerdote hace unos años atrás firmada por la periodista Carmen Elena Villa/ Zenit, manifestó: “que como misionero acoger a los inmigrantes forzados a dejar su patria por las difíciles condiciones de vida es un deber moral que como misionero acoger a los hispanos que llegan”, dijo en la entrevista, por eso es que “la diócesis está tratando de abrir las puertas de las Iglesias para ellos”.

En medio de su trabajo pastoral el Padre Orozco resalta las devociones de cada país de origen, quienes celenbran las devociones marianas de cada nación. “Eso mantiene viva la fe de los latinoamericanos que no pierdan el puente con la fe que han dejado”.

La parroquia de Saint Charles donde ha pasado la vida del Padre Orozco se conoce en el sector por ser muy activa. Cuando han ocurrido catástrofes naturales en Latinoamérica, organizan colectas de dinero y ropa. También grupos juveniles, misa de niños, eucaristía de sanación y catequesis bilingüe.

Sin embargo, para el sacerdote es fundamental que este trabajo no sea un mero asistencialismo social y que siempre esté acompañado de la oración. Por ello, promueve también un grupo de la Divina misericordia, otro de la Legión de María, jornadas de adoración al santísimo por las vocaciones – especialmente por los religiosos que se encuentran en crisis - devoción al Sagrado Corazón los primeros viernes de cada mes y el rezo del rosario los sábados.

La gente ha sido muy estricta con el sacerdote. “Lastimosamente por los escándalos, los medios le ponen morbo y la gente pierde la fe”. “Muchos tienen la fe en el sacerdote”, reflexiona el padre Ericson. “Es algo bueno y malo porque uno debe tener fe en alguien pero cuando vienen estos errores la gente tiende a apartarse”.

El padre Orozco es oriundo de Colombia donde empezó su formación sacerdotal, después pasó un año en el seminario Saint John Fisher y fue ordenado sacerdote en 1999 en la catedral de Saint Agustin por el entonces obispo Edward Egan, antes de ser nombrado párroco de la iglesia LifeBridge Community Services.

Saint Charles de Borromeo fue vicario de la iglesia de Saint Mary en Stamford y en la parroquia de Saint Peter de Bridgeport.

Tras obtener una Maestría en Salud y Terapia Psicológica en la Universidad de Bridgeport el Padre Orozco fue terapeuta en LifeBridge Community Services en Bridgeport. Desde el 2017 se viene desempeñando como vicario en la parroquia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en Danbury.

“Estoy seguro que el P. Orozco con su dedicación, santidad y tranquilidad y el apoyo de ustedes sacará adelante la nueva parroquia. Aunque lo extrañen en la parroquia de Danbury, confío que él será un gran sacerdote y que ustedes lo llegarán a apreciar tanto como lo han hecho en otras parroquias”, replicó el Obispo en su misiva.

Finalmente agradeció el trabajo del P. John Lenox de la parroquia San José y del P. Juan Gabriel Acosta, de la parroquia de Saint Ladislaus por su eficiente trabajo pastoral.

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Local News

Mission collection to focus on worldwide pandemic

BRIDGEPORT—The diocesan tradition of inviting representatives from the developing world to speak at Co-op Mission Weekend has been disrupted by the pandemic because the missionary speakers will be unable to travel to the U.S. this year. As a result Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will ask all the parishes to take up a second collection during the weekend of July 18-19 to help those around the developing world who are most vulnerable in the pandemic.

“Proceeds will be equally distributed to the Catholic Pandemic Relief Agencies in those part of our global community that have been impacted the most by this scourge,” said the bishop, who will issue a formal letter announcing the weekend.

The bishop said the COVID-19 infection rate is increasing dramatically throughout the developing world and that he is concerned for all the most vulnerable, particularly children who are battling sickness, fear and economic dislocation as a result of the virus.

Father Michael Boccaccio, director of the Pontifical Missions Office of the diocese, said he was grateful to many diocesan priests, who are natives of other countries, for their perspectives and advice in identifying Catholic relief agencies and programs to receive the donations raised in the collection.

“Our office has helped by priests from other countries who serve in our diocese and have first-hand knowledge of the needs. As a result, the generous donations of those who give will be going to Argentina, Ecuador, Haiti, India, Libya, Philippines, Vietnam, Uganda and other countries,” Father Boccaccio said.

Among the diocesan priests contacted by Father Boccaccio for their advice on better serving their native countries are Father Cyrus Bartolome (Philippines), Father Ciprian Bejan (Romania), Father Sudhir Dsouza, (India), Father Augustine Nguyen (Vietnam), Father Churchill Penn (Haiti); and Father Leszek Szymaszek (Poland).

“Our brothers and sisters, most especially the children, are surrounded in fear, turbulence and crisis. On their behalf, I sincerely plead with you to please be as charitable as your means allow,” Father Boccaccio said.

Pope Francis has established an Emergency Solidarity Fund to come to the aid of communities around the world that are being tragically impacted by the spread of COVID-19. Donations reach a variety of agencies including hospitals, small clinics, parish social ministries and programs providing basic needs such as food and shelter.

Since 1922, the Pontifical Mission Societies have been the official missionary arm of the Church charged with the work of evangelization and charitable works throughout the world. Its work also provides a vast network of aid throughout the world, particularly for the poorest mission churches of the Catholic Church. Almost every country has a national office for the Pontifical Mission Societies and a national director.

(For information or to make a donation to the diocesan collection, contact Elaine G. Bisenden, associate director, Pontifical Mission Societies Diocese of Bridgeport: 203.416.1448.)

Charities Stampede4Hunger

By AMY ZAJAC

STAMFORD—On June 20, members of Stampede, a social running group composed of runners of all ages and skill levels based in Stamford, ran 300 miles with the goal of raising $5,000 for New Covenant Center. Although the pandemic prevented them from running as a group, Stampede wanted to find a way to work collaboratively to raise money for their local community which has been hit especially hard by COVID-19. They exceeded their goal, raising over $7,500 for the only soup kitchen in the greater Stamford area.

Event co-chairs Michelle Carfagno and Samantha Bates are loyal members of the Stamford-based running group, Stampede. “After hearing that New Covenant Center is now serving double the meals it served last year during this unprecedented time,” says Bates. “As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were really wanted to find a way to give back to our local community and to those in need that have been especially impacted by the recent crisis,” stated Carfagno. Along with the support and backing of their fellow runners in Stampede, Michelle and Samantha, set a goal to raise $5,000 that will be used by New Covenant Center to feed their local community in the broader Stamford area. They were impressed by the results of the event, which also included a virtual yoga class that took place on June 18 via Facebook.

The mission of New Covenant Center is to provide a nutritious meal to all those who are hungry. By creating a safe, warm and compassionate environment, we are taking the first steps toward empowering men, women and children to reach their full potential and regain their dignity and self-respect. Since the COVID-19 crisis hit, New Covenant Center’s doors have remained open. The Soup Kitchen remains open 7 days per week serving “take out” lunch and dinner. The Soup Kitchen is distributing 500-700 meals per day up from 175 last year. New Covenant Center is also providing meals to other local non-profits; such as Pacific House, Inspirica, Building One, ARI. The Food Pantry is also open three days per week, providing 10 days of groceries for low income families.

(To learn more about New Covenant Center, visit www.new-covenant-center.org.)

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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.