

FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

SEPTEMBER 2020 | VOLUME 37, NUMBER 7 | BACK TO SCHOOL ISSUE

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Looking for a way to **connect** with the best aspects of your diocese?

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*This Holy Place
Bishop re-dedicates St. Mary's Bethel*

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Around the Diocese

A 'living faith' in the pandemic

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

Putting music to the Mass

BRIDGEPORT—Online Masses have given thousands of people the opportunity to not



only worship together but also the ability to experience a variety of liturgical music to hear the word of God. Lyndy Toole is one of many musicians who have accompanied Bishop Frank J. Caggiano during his Sunday online Masses from the chapel at the Catholic Center in Bridgeport. "It is a wonderful gift to me to be able to do this," Lyndy said. "I get so much out of it," she said adding that selecting the music for the masses is an honor.

Retired executive reaches out, one phone call at a time

BRIDGEPORT—After retiring as director of sales and marketing



for Eli Lilly and Company 15 years ago, Ford Lynch walked into the Catholic Center of the Diocese of Bridgeport looking for work... and he got it. Plenty of it. Lynch, a parishioner at St. Luke Church in Westport, has generously volunteered his services and done everything from working at the Thomas Merton Center to helping at the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of the Clergy Residence for retired priests. He has assisted pastors with the Annual Catholic Appeal and delivered materials throughout Fairfield County to the many charitable organizations the diocese supports. "I do whatever I can," says Lynch. "I deliver things to churches, driving around picking stuff up. Nothing is too big, nothing is too small."

Catholic Charities lends a helping hand

DANBURY—Dozens of hot meals were distributed to families in Danbury through a collaborative effort by Catholic Charities



and two local business owners. "These meals are a lifeline for a lot of families," said St. Peter Pastor Father Gregg Mecca. "It stretches a family's budget a little farther and they get a substantial meal." About 100

families were contacted by the parish and individual meals were prepared by the Amber Room Colonnade, a catering venue on Stacey Road.

St. Catherine/St. Agnes holds Food Drive

RIVERSIDE—Due to the huge and growing need, the Social Justice Committee of the Parish of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Agnes is continuing to help Neighbor-to-Neighbor by collecting food and other living essentials in a no contact format.



Until further notice, there will be a car or SUV with an open trunk in the parking lot across from St. Catherine's church on Tuesdays from 9-11 am. Please drop your bagged grocery donations in the trunk, and we will take them to Neighbor-to-Neighbor.

St. Peter's Youth come together to worship and give back

DANBURY—Even during this difficult time, teens at St. Peter Church in Danbury have found ways to safely come together for worship and to give back to their community. Teens who are a part of St.



Peter's school leadership program (CREW) have been volunteering on Thursdays to help make sandwiches for Dorothy Day House, and on Sundays to help with registration for next year's classes.

Every other week, some of St. Peter's high school and middle school teens participate in a private Mass just for them. Twenty teens are allowed to be present, and some are involved in the liturgy as lectors and ushers.

Fairfield Life Teen weeding and harvesting

BRIDGEPORT—Fairfield Life Teen has



had a great time weeding and harvesting fresh food from the

garden at the Thomas Merton Center in Bridgeport!

Teens gathered at the Inspirica Women's Shelter

NEW CANAAN—The teens of St. Aloysius Parish gathered together at the Inspirica Women's



Shelter where they donned masks, social distanced and cleared weeds, planted flowers, mulched and painted inspirational messages on rocks to line the entrance of the shelter where women in crisis will hopefully be moving back into soon!



Celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady

BRIDGEPORT—Over 150 men and women gathered at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bridgeport to celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady! At both 8 am and 4 pm, the parish joined together to pray the Rosary and attend the Celebration of Holy Mass outside. Masks and social distancing were observed by all!

(For more information on these stories, see the online issue posted on the front page of www.bridgeportdiocese.org.)

ON THE COVER

Parishioners of St. Mary Parish in Bethel attend the re-dedication Mass after extensive church renovations supported by the We Stand With Christ Campaign.
Photo by Amy Mortensen

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Latest News

Bishop asks all to step up to support ACA

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano is asking Catholics throughout the diocese for help in closing the \$1.5 million gap between current Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) resources and the increasing needs of people as a result of the pandemic.

The bishop said in time of unprecedented crisis and much uncertainty going forward, the need for basic services and other outreach provided by the diocese has doubled and in some cases tripled.

In a new letter and video the bishop urged those who have not yet given to the appeal to join in the effort to help the diocesan family, and he expressed his appreciation for all those who have already given.

“Over last six months we have seen so much need and suffering in our midst. Through your generosity the Church has been able to respond generously and in many ways, even heroically,” he said, adding that he expects more difficult months ahead and is working to ensure the diocese will be able to respond.

“We had hoped that by the Fall this would be behind us, but

unfortunately that’s not the case,” he said.

“Love never fails” is the theme of the appeal. It is drawn from the words of St. Paul’s in Chapter 13 of his first letter to Corinthians, “So, these remain: faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest of them is love.”

The bishop said pandemic has affected every aspect of life in the Church and the larger community and that the ongoing impact of the pandemic is affecting many people around the diocese—many who have need help for the first time in their lives.

“Suffering has taken its face in those around us,” said the bishop. “Many have lost family members, found themselves without jobs, are suffering ill health and unable to return to work or unable to meet their family’s basic needs. This human suffering will not end anytime soon. In many respects, it continues to grow,” he said.

The bishop has consistently urged the faithful to pray for all those who have passed away or who are suffering from the COVID-19 virus and to be mindful of all those whose lives are struggling.

“Countless people are relying on you and me that we do not



fail—that we come to them to help feed, clothe and accompany them in fear; that we each out to the young people in our schools, and to all those suffering from the isolation. We can help them find hope.”

The bishop said that diocesan ministries funded by the Annual Catholic Appeal continue to provide “truly lifesaving” service that accompany all spiritually during the difficult journey of the pandemic.

Catholic Charities has served over 500,000 meals from March through August—two to three times the number regularly served. Counseling services have increased as families and indi-

viduals have needed to address their acute anxiety and depression along with concerns for the future. Likewise Catholic schools have increased scholarship assistance and transitioned to distance learning concerns over the future; and our school students successfully transitioned to continue their education on-line.

The bishop said that the ACA works in big and small ways to support so many good works and services throughout the diocese including faith formation, charity and education—the programs and services people rely on when they have nowhere else to turn.

While there are many challenges ahead the bishop said he

remains optimistic because he witness the great generosity of the people of the diocese—their sacrificial giving, volunteering and personal charitable acts, and the depth of their prayers during the crisis.

“Given the extraordinary circumstances and the hardships that many people are experiencing, the response to the appeal has been gratifying,” said Bishop Caggiano. “The diocese has pulled together as a family and have shown a generosity that has inspired me and made me proud.”

“What I’m asking is that if you haven’t given and you have the ability to make a gift, please step forward now to help us reach goal. When we look back on the pandemic, it will be a legacy and witness to the level of caring and compassion in our diocese,” he said.

(Please use the enclosed envelope to donate to this year’s appeal as generously as your means allow. If you prefer, you may make your gift online at www.2020ACABridgeport.com or text the word APPEAL to 475.241.7849. Our generous donors are the hands of God reaching out to those in need; all donations of whatever amount will help us to help them.)

Bishop updates COVID-19 protocols

BRIDGEPORT—In response to a recent increase in the number of COVID-19 positive cases in some parts of Fairfield County, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has issued an update of diocesan policy regarding the public celebration of Mass.

“A fundamental mandate of our Catholic faith is to protect human life,” said the bishop in a memo to pastors.

However, he notes that in recent weeks, there has been an increase in the number of COVID-19 positive cases in our area, and a few towns have added new restrictions to contain the spread of the virus.

As a result, the bishop has announced the following additional guidelines:



If there is a significant increase in the infection rate in a town, then parishioners must be notified of the increased risk through social media and the parish web-

site.

Pastors and parochial administrators may add further restrictions if necessary, to reduce the risk of infection. The following

are some examples of additional actions that may be taken:

- Outdoor Masses (weather permitting)
- The suspension of Liturgical music
- Only clergy allowed in the sanctuary
- Temperature checks as people arrive for Mass
- Anyone with a temperature greater than 100.3 degrees should not be admitted

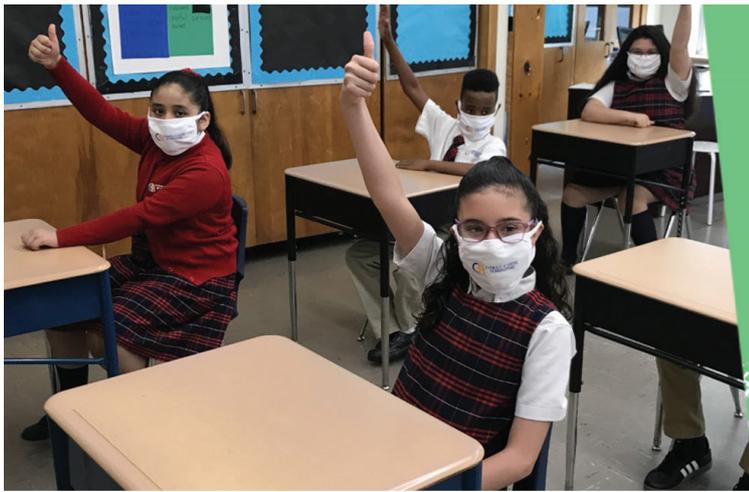
If there is a significant increase in the infection rate in a town, then parishioners must be notified of the increased risk through social media and the parish website.

Because suspension of Mass can have an impact on neighboring parishes and the diocese,

the bishop also said that the final decision to temporarily suspend indoor Mass will only be made by him or the vicar general, Msgr. Thomas Powers.

“In order to respond properly to any grave concern regarding an increase of infections in a given area and to maintain proper ecclesial supervision over the public celebration of the sacraments, especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the final decision to temporarily suspend Mass in a given parish can only be made by the bishop or the vicar general after consulting with the pastor.”

(For more information on diocesan coronavirus policies and protocols, visit the diocesan website at: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/coronavirus/home.)

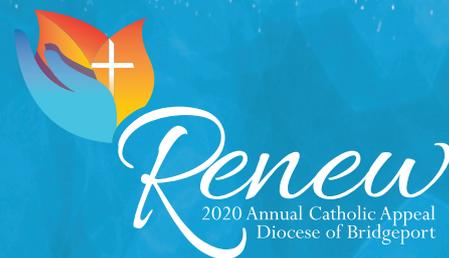


ANNUAL CATHOLIC EMERGENCY APPEAL

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began,
the Annual Catholic Appeal supports:

- Bishop's Scholarship Fund aiding 1,456 students in need.
\$2,000 is the average assistance needed for one student
- Catholic Charities serving over 1.3 million annually.
\$1,000 provides one meal a day for 500 guests
- Preparation of parish facilities for in-person and on-line Masses.
\$500 offsets the cost for the technology to run on-line Masses
and for PPE
- Catholic Charities, meeting the demand for increased
counseling services.
\$250 provides two counseling sessions

**Make a Gift Today to the Emergency Appeal
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Thank you for your generous support.

Annual Catholic Appeal

Bringing Christ to the sick and dying

By JOE PISANI

NORWALK—Every day, Father Paul Sankar, chaplain at Norwalk Hospital, sees opportunities for Catholics to come back to their faith. He encounters people who haven't been to church in a long time, and while they lie in their hospital beds, it seems that Jesus is tugging at their sleeves.

"They say hospital walls hear more prayers than church walls," Father said. "We see a lot of transformation, especially of Catholics who have not been to church in years. They see us, they talk to us, they receive Communion, and tell us they will return to church."

Father Paul and Father Marcel Saint Jean, both chaplains at the hospital, bring Christ to the infirm and dying on a daily basis.

"There isn't a greater way to serve the Lord than when I am helping a vulnerable person," said Father Marcel. "This is evident when I am present in a room with a patient. What makes it so authentic is knowing I am seeing the Lord in that patient. As a chaplain, there isn't a time when I am with a patient and not hearing the voice of Jesus resounding in my heart and ears saying, 'I was sick and you came to visit me.'"

Father Paul, who has been a full-time chaplain at Norwalk Hospital for 12 years, is in residence at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Weston. Father Marcel, a part-time chaplain there for four years, serves at St. Joseph Church in South Norwalk.

"Their ministry would not be possible without the Annual Catholic Appeal," said Father William Platt, pastor of The Parish of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Agnes in Greenwich and Director of Hospital Chaplains for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Father Platt, who was a hospital chaplain for 25 years, said, "Our chaplains continued to serve with courage through this pandemic. They have had to navigate a wide range of hospital and nursing home protocols in regard to visitation and the last rites. They have done so with skill and compassion. The Catholic Church is the only faith group that provides chaplains to public institutions free of charge. It is something in which we may take



NORWALK HOSPITAL CHAPLAINS (l-r) Father Marcel Saint Jean and Father Paul Sankar

pride, thanks to the ACA."

Father Paul recalls the case of a woman who was dying of cancer and her family asked him to anoint her. He offered to give her Communion, but she resisted because she hadn't been to church in a long time.

"I told her she could make a simple confession and receive absolution because God knows everything," he said. "She did, and the whole family was crying and thanked me. Two days later she died. It was a very touching experience for me."

The hospital setting offers many opportunities for people to renew their faith and come back to the Church, he said. So many Catholics have no parish and many are getting older and no longer practice their faith.

"We hospital chaplains visit these patients, and they are very happy to see us," he said.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they were restricted from visiting patients in their rooms and had to rely on phone calls and Zoom sessions to pray with patients who were isolated from their families. The Catholic nurses would often put them in touch with patients who needed prayer and encouragement.

Father Paul, who was a priest

in India for 15 years before he came to the diocese, said he is appreciative to Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and the Annual Catholic Appeal.

Being a hospital chaplain is a special calling, he says, which requires a priest to be available whenever a call comes in. Training includes four units of a Clinical Pastoral Education program.

Recently, he received a call from a 75-year-old man concerned about his 70-year-old brother, who was a patient.

"He told me, 'My brother was a good Catholic but stopped practicing his faith. Can you convince him to come back to the Church?' He wanted a priest to give him the sacraments," Father recalled. "He had no family except his brother. He grew up Catholic, but hadn't practiced his faith in 30 years."

Father went to see the man, who agreed to confession and then he received Communion. He was very happy and his brother was grateful to Father.

Father Paul's work also brings him in contact with people of great faith, such as a 39-year-old woman with two children who was dying of cancer.

"Father, I am ready to die; pray for me if it is God's will," she said. She was able to deal

with it because of her strong faith.

"I learn so much from the patients," he said. "Sometimes they are like saints. Despite their sickness, they are happy. And those who know they are going to die want to be at peace with God."

Father says the families of patients still call him, and occasionally he will meet someone in the supermarket who says, "Father do you remember me? When I was sick, you brought me Communion."

"It is a wonderful ministry to care for the sick, and to practice the Corporal Works of Mercy," he says.

Father Marcel, who came from Haiti and was ordained in 1996 in the Diocese of Bridgeport, also served as chaplain in Bridgeport Hospital for four years in addition to several parish assignments.

"Chaplaincy to me is a call to compassion," he said. "Through my visits and presence to the patients, I have learned patience, humility and kindness. No matter what they are going through, when I leave the room, I always hear these words: 'Father, thank you for coming. You made my day. Please come back.'"

One of his patients was an elderly woman who was

dying and haunted by guilt and hurt because she had been divorced and could not receive Communion. Father knew he had to put her at peace with Christ and help heal her troubled conscience.

"The only way to lift her up was to try to say what Jesus would say in a situation like that," he recalled. "That day in her room she said, 'Father, I feel I am being rejected by my own church.'"

"I told her, 'You are a daughter of Abraham and a beloved daughter of God. Whatever happened in your past life, whatever made you feel guilty, God will not hold it against you.'"

Father Marcel heard her confession, and she told him it gave her the most peace and happiness she felt in a long time.

"I saw a luminous face, and her countenance changed after confession because she knew she was loved by God," Father Marcel said.

From the time he was 3-years-old, Marcel Saint Jean wanted to be a priest because of the example of his mother and the Redemptorist missionaries in his parish who built hospitals and schools and set a profound example for the people. He even grew his hair long to be like them, until his father cut it one night while he was sleeping.

As a boy, everyone in the neighborhood called him "Mon Père," which is French for "My Father." Although his mother nurtured his childhood vocation, his father directed him to study civil engineering, which he did for a time.

"But the Lord really spoke to my heart, and I remembered the example of those good priests," he said. And he followed their example. In 2000, he led a campaign to build a school in Port-au-Prince to give children an opportunity to succeed in life.

"All they need is a helping hand, and I am glad that I was that helping hand," he said.

"Being a chaplain allows a priest to make Christ present in a tangible way to patients and their families through his compassion, his words of comfort and the sacraments," he says. "It lets us follow the words of Jesus who said, 'Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

Our Lady of Fatima, Wilton

Memorial garden a great gift

By FRANK DEROSA

WILTON—In a solemn and moving prayer service on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15), Bishop Frank J. Caggiano blessed and dedicated a newly-constructed memorial prayer garden on the grounds of Our Lady of Fatima Church in Wilton.

Established to honor the memory of deceased persons whose families are or were members of the parish, the prayer garden is dedicated to Phillip Tai Lauria, a graduate of the parish school who succumbed to neuroendocrine cancer two years ago at age 31.

Central to the garden is a large cross built of granite stone. Affixed to it or on its border are plaques and paving stones requested by parishioners. Among the plaques is one remembering the five parish members who perished in the 9/11 attacks on the World

Trade Center.

Bishop Caggiano, in brief remarks at the beginning of the ceremony, described the memorial as “a garden of dedication and remembrance,” calling it “a great gift.”

Noting the garden’s location at the entrance of the parish property on Danbury Road, the bishop said many people will see it and have “seeds planted in their hearts, leading them to recognize the greater meaning of life, that will point them to God and, please God, to the Lord Jesus and His Blessed Mother.”

In addressing the role played by the pastor, Father Reginald Norman, in conceiving the idea for and seeing to its completion the construction of the memorial garden, Bishop Caggiano, referring to him by the name he is known as familiarly, said, “Without Father Reggie’s vision and leadership, this shrine would not exist.”

Under cloudy skies and with a welcome cool breeze after days of humidity and heat, parishioners, wearing protective masks during the coronavirus pandemic, sat on white folding chairs placed with proper social distancing.

Because of the distancing requirements, the parish had to limit the number of congregants invited to the outdoors ceremony, held by the garden, to those whose families are remembered in the garden.

Before Father Reggie read the names of the individuals memorialized, Mary Bozzuti Higgins, who formerly led the diocesan youth choir and is the parish adult choir director, intoned the Litany of the Saints above the hum of steady traffic on Danbury Road.

As the pastor announced the names, representatives of each family walked up to receive a long-stemmed white carnation, symbolizing untainted love,



handed to them by Father Robert Balan, priest in residence who is the chaplain of Notre Dame High School in Trumbull.

First among them were Phillip Lauria’s parents, Phillip and Elaine Tai Lauria, longtime parishioners. He is a businessman and she is the executive director of the Wilton Library.

Their son, a digital media

professional in Chicago at his death, was a graduate of Fairfield Prep and Loyola University of Chicago. He was known by family and friends for his integrity, ethics, kindness and religious beliefs.

After the last name was called, Bishop Caggiano sprinkled the garden with Holy Water, and closed the ceremony by administering his episcopal blessing on the families.

With the plaques and stones unveiled, the guests stepped past the boxwood bushes bordering the garden and walked around the memorials, some taking pictures, others sitting on permanent benches placed there for opportunities to pray or reflect on the lives of the persons memorialized.

Said one of them who was visiting the garden for the first time, “This is an addition to the parish that helps to strengthen parish community.”

For Bishop Caggiano, with the summer season approaching its final month that day, officiating at the prayer service marked his resumption of public ceremonies after a short respite.

Father Reggie said erecting the memorial garden was a project funded by the parish’s share of contributions made by parishioners to the We Stand With Christ diocesan capital campaign.

He had high praise for the work of Eddie Montoya, a parishioner and head of the J.A.M. Landscaping and Construction Company, in creating the memorial garden.

The memorial will accommodate 82 plaques and 130 paving stones.

(For information contact pastor@olfwilton.org.)

Backpacks for the kids!

TRUMBULL—Nearly one hundred students from inner-city Bridgeport will begin the new school year this week with a brand new backpack and all of the school supplies they will need for a successful year of learning thanks to the generosity of parishioners at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull.

“This year has been filled with incredible challenges for everyone,” says Salvatore Spadaccino, coordinator for the Social Justice and Charitable Outreach team. He continues: “However, this response proves that the St. Catherine community clearly understands that we are all in this together and, as Catholics, we are all here for each other.”

St. Catherine’s Social Justice and Charitable Outreach team, led by Salvatore Spadaccino, conducted the parish’s annual Backpack and School Supplies Drive in August. The backpacks and school supplies collected from the drive benefitted students at



St. Charles Borromeo Church, Blessed Sacrament Church, The McGivney Community Center and the Convent of Mary Immaculate in Bridgeport, who sent their heartfelt thanks.

Other initiatives that the Social Justice & Charitable Outreach Team has worked on include: toiletry drive, hat, coat & sweater drive, Thanksgiving food drive, emergency food drives, annual parish giving tree, pro-life baby

shower and many more.

The Parish of Saint Catherine of Siena warmly welcomes anyone who is new to our area, anyone who is searching for the truth, or anyone who is looking for a spiritual home. We are joyfully and faithfully Roman Catholic in belief and practice—a community of faith, worship, service and formation—and with open hearts we invite all our brothers and sisters into a living and saving friendship

with the Lord Jesus Christ, in the communion of His One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. We are conveniently located at 220 Shelton Road in the Nichols area of Trumbull.

(For more information on the Social Justice and Charitable Outreach ministry at St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull, contact Salvatore Spadaccino at caritas@stcatherinetrumbull.com.)

We Stand With Christ

Bishop re-dedicates St. Mary Church

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

BETHEL—The commemoration of the Assumption of Mary was particularly meaningful for St. Mary Church in Bethel this year, as it celebrated the rededication of the newly renovated house of worship.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano joined Father Corey Piccinino, pastor and Father Robert Wolfe, parochial vicar, as he presided over the Saturday noon Mass and commended the leadership and great care that was taken to breathe new life into the church.

Bishop Caggiano said he was grateful for the “remarkable work as a parish family, to take a church which was worthy and beautiful in its own right and uplift it in ever greater elegance and beauty—renovated so that it can become in the next chapter of its life an enduring place where many generations to come will come here to meet God.”

At the beginning of Mass, Bishop Caggiano walked around sprinkling holy water throughout the church and on members of the congregation attending the Mass in person.

The church on Dodginton Road underwent an extensive nine-month renovation and recently opened to limited public masses in June.

“A church is a building unlike anything else human beings will put their hands to create,” Caggiano said. “It is a sacred meeting place to encounter the living spirit of God. This is holy ground; unlike any other ground you and I will walk upon.”

“When we come to this sacred place, we are invited to find the compass of our life,” said Bishop Caggiano, encouraging parishioners to not only bring what they experience in church to others in their everyday lives but to also invite others to come to church to experience it for themselves.

“Come here with your family and friends and with your neighbors and with those of whom you share your life here in Bethel and beyond. Come here to be refreshed and healed, freed and renewed and help me to bring the world to Jesus,” Bishop Caggiano said.

During the Mass, Bishop Caggiano poured and rubbed

Chrism, a consecrated mixture of oil and balsam, on the altar. A vessel was also placed on the altar, filled with incense and burned.

“As your house is filled with a pleasing fragrance, so let your church be fragrant with the aroma of Christ,” Bishop Caggiano said.

The altar was then dressed with an altar cloth, adorned with candles and flowers before the Mass continued, punctuated with the sounds of a beautiful music ministry.

“It’s incredible,” parishioner Susan Barr said after the Mass. “We’re home.”

Parishioner Michael Urban, also of Bethel said he remembers attending the original church on Greenwood Avenue, where stand-

ing-room only became routine before this church was built in 1995.

Details and the significance of all the changes in the church are documented in a book written by Father Robert Wolfe, who was deeply involved in seeing the project to completion. A copy of the book was given to all in attendance and is available through the parish.

“Being a part of something that is and always will be bigger than myself is wonderful,” Urban said. “I hope that this will continue for generations to come.”

At the end of Mass, Pastor Father Corey Piccinino thanked everyone for their prayers, dedication and contributions to help



make the church renovation a reality. “We (now) have this

timeless beautiful church to praise All Mighty God,” he said. ■

Beauty and reverence guide renovation

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

BETHEL—Timeless.

That’s the way Father Wolfe describes the newly renovated St. Mary Church in Bethel.

“When you are in church you should be unencumbered by time,” said Father Robert Wolfe, parochial vicar of St. Mary. “You should enter into eternity, leaving the outside world behind.”

The modern-styled church built in 1995 to replace the original church on Greenwood Avenue, underwent a massive transformation over a nine-month period.

As any homeowner knows, one seemingly simple project can morph into an entire house renovation.

It was no different for the Dodginton Road church.

“Originally, the goal was to redo the floor,” Wolfe said, adding that the We Stand With Christ campaign, the goal of which was to address the long-term needs of the parishes and essential diocesan ministries, began around the same time and was the impetus to take a second look to see what else needed to be addressed.

“When the church was built certain projects were left undone,” Wolfe said. This time around they wanted to not only

address the needs of the church but also make sure that added elements were not only traditional and beautiful but spiritual, historical and practical.

“The first step was the height of the sanctuary,” Wolfe said.



“We wanted to give the sanctuary more prominence than before.”

The cream-toned marble panels in the sanctuary, which represent gentleness and is reminiscent of lamb’s wool, is framed by yellow and red marble that is also reflected in the sanctuary floor and symbolizes kingship, divinity and sacrificial love.

The marble spills out into the aisles and in the center aisle, it is punctuated with three circles of white marble outlined by marble in tones of red and grey.

Red symbolizes the blood of Christ, the tones of grey not only symbolize the ashes received on

Ash Wednesday during Lent, but they also represent life on earth and the pilgrimage to Christ through regular penance, purification and progressing towards God through participation in Mass and the sacraments. White

an extra one-and-a-half seats per pew.

The form and function of the pews are also meaningful. The curved seating forms the amphitheater effect, reminiscent of temples mentioned in the Bible.

The seating also creates a cruciform when viewed from above. The cross formation can be seen from above and is visible from the loft where the organ sits. Adorning the front of the loft is a mosaic image of the original church on Greenwood Avenue built in 1882.

Not to be missed is the beautiful new addition of a Mural of the Holy Spirit, opposite the painting at the front of the church above the altar, greeting all who enter.

Careful attention to detail was placed on many other areas of the church including the lighting, sound system, Ambo, side shrines and much more.

“We should always live what we experience in church, everywhere we go,” Wolfe said.

“We’re home and the beauty of our church has been magnified,” Wolfe said adding it should be eagerly shared with others. “Bring someone to church to see it and experience it for themselves.” ■

is a symbol of purity and of heaven.

Together the three circles also embody three main concepts. The circles represent the Trinity, the three wise men who made a pilgrimage to meet the newborn baby Jesus and the Theological Virtues of faith, hope and charity.

Creating a comfortable atmosphere that encourages participation in Mass was achieved through the new pews.

“We changed from mitered to a radius style of pews,” Wolfe said. The curved seating is both pleasing to the eye and practical—since the design allowed for

Catholic Radio

Veritas radio launches programs for young Catholics

By JOE PISANI

RIDGEFIELD—Veritas Catholic Network, the EWTN affiliate that began broadcasting a year ago in the Diocese of Bridgeport, is preparing to launch three programs this fall that will be included in the lineup with the popular show “Let Me Be Frank,” featuring Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

Two shows will be directed toward an audience of young people. “Amplify” will be led by Father Sam S. Kachuba, pastor of St. Pius X Parish in Fairfield and chaplain of Veritas, and feature four teenagers from Cardinal Kung Academy in Stamford and Trumbull High School, talking about issues relevant to students to lead them to a closer relationship with Christ and the Church.

“The sad phenomenon is that young people are leaving the Church because they say they can’t relate to it,” said Steve Lee, president and CEO of Veritas. “These students want to reach out to their peers and show them they are normal kids who like the

same things...and follow Christ.”

Father Kachuba will guide the conversation, and the group hopes to continue the outreach with initiatives off the air. Grace and Ava Lannigan conceived the idea and applied for a grant from Foundations in Faith to develop a program that would reach teenagers. They will be joined by Gabrielle Nagle and Shane Miller.

“They are poised and articulate, and I am really happy about the show,” Lee said.

In addition, Father Joseph A. Gill of the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist in Stamford recently approached Lee about creating a podcast aimed at young adults.

“Young adults are leaving the church, and they don’t even understand what they’re leaving and why,” Lee said. “As we talked, I realized we should put this on the air. I met the young adults he was working with and heard them do a mock show and was very impressed.”

The show, which is called “Restless,” will explore topics such as how to evangelize in the

workplace and navigating the single life with an eye toward marriage. Father Gill will be joined by Lauren Doyle, Diane Kremheller and Javier Tremaria.

Lee says these shows are particularly important at a time when the second largest religious group in the U.S. is former Catholics, and there is an increasing number of so-called “Nones”—young people who are abandoning the faith and claim no allegiance to an organized religion.

“When they are surveyed, they say they no longer believe the teachings of the Church, and that is a failure on our part to live the Gospel and to evangelize,” Lee said. “We now have a generation of Catholics who have been catechized but never been evangelized. They have never had an encounter with Jesus.”

The third new show is “Focus,” which will feature segments about positive news in the diocese, such as the work of Project Beloved in Stamford and Malta House in Norwalk. Lee will host the half-hour week-



A NEW SPACE—Steve Lee, president and CEO of Veritas Radio (r) will be moving Veritas to office space at St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield at the invitation of pastor and longtime friend Monsignor Kevin T. Royal (l).

ly show and bring committed Catholics on the air to talk about their work.

The station is also in the process of constructing an FM translator that will let it broadcast on 103.9 FM. In addition, Lee will be moving Veritas to office space at St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield at the invitation of pastor and longtime friend Monsignor Kevin T. Royal.

“I mentioned to him that we might be in need of a different space, and he looked at me and said, ‘How about right here?’ Lee said. “I have been blessed to know Monsignor Royal all these years, and it just continues.”

The Veritas Catholic Network will have its first on-air pledge drive from October 5 to 9.

“Nonprofit radio and TV networks depend on pledge drives for their continued existence, so this is a big moment and a big event for Veritas,” Lee said. “Please pray for the success of the drive and spread the word to help us boost listenership now, well in advance of October. The more people who are listening, the more people who will give.”

The drive, which has a goal of \$150,000, will run from 7 am to 6 pm for five days and feature two nationally recognized hosts of the noontime EWTN show, “Take Two,” Jerry Usher and Debbie Georgianni. The drive, which had previously been scheduled in the spring, was delayed because of COVID-19.

Lee has also established the “St. Joseph Society” for contributors to Veritas with three different levels of giving.

“We want to recognize them and make them feel part of our family so next year, we will hold an annual dinner to celebrate Veritas, Catholic radio, our supporters and members of the St. Joseph Society,” he said.

Veritas began broadcasting

EWTN Catholic programming 24 hours a day last July throughout Fairfield County, the north shore of Long Island and parts of Westchester. Lee purchased WNLK-AM 1350 radio and an FM translator at 103.9 MHz from Sacred Heart University.

There are currently 380 EWTN affiliates in the United States. Lee believes the network, which reaches an estimated audience of 900,000 people, including 400,000 Catholics in the Bridgeport Diocese, can expand further into Westchester and New York City and eventually throughout Connecticut.

Listeners can also live-stream through the veritascatholic.com website and a Veritas mobile app.

EWTN programming includes “Catholic Answers Live,” “Called to Communion” with Dr. David Anders, “Kresta in the Afternoon,” “The Doctor Is In” with Dr. Ray Guarendi and “Christ Is the Answer” with Father John Riccardo. Veritas also simulcasts “The World Over” with Raymond Arroyo and classic programs featuring Mother Angelica and Father Benedict Groeschel.

“We need to reach people where they are—in their cars, in their homes, on their phones,” Lee said. “We need to show them the beauty, truth and goodness of our faith, and that will have a downstream influence that will affect families, the culture and the Church.”

Lee, who left his job in finance on Wall Street to start Veritas, credits his wife Roula with providing him the spiritual and moral support the initiative required. Residents of Ridgefield, they are parents of three children, Andrew, Christopher and Annabel.

(For further information about the network and its programs, visit www.VeritasCatholic.com.)

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Conversation About Race

Walking together in Christ

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—“Hopefully today is just another opportunity to grow together and have more effective action through conversation,” said Armando Cervantes, the fourth presenter in the webinar series of Conversations About Race hosted by The Leadership Institute, the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism and the Apostolate for Black Catholics.

Armando’s conversation was titled “Beyond Black: Multicultural Voices.” “Why is going beyond important?” Cervantes posed the question. “Because when we don’t go beyond, we are complicit in continuing a way of thinking, a systemic racist model of continuing to not talk about it, engage in it and discuss it.”

Cervantes explained the feeling of “battle fatigue” from having to continually fight against racism. “In some ways I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired of having to talk about this issue,” he said. “But I am happy that you are here and willing to go beyond with me. Hopefully today we can acquire new strategies to deal with old issues and maybe unlearn a little bit of what we have learned.”

The speaker encouraged listeners to have the courage to go beyond fear and safety, take responsibility for the issues one may have, and to recognize one’s feelings, limitations, frustrations, responses, intentions and desires.

Learning from multicultural voices

Cervantes discussed the USCCB’s letter “Open Wide Our Hearts.” The letter explains that what is needed is a genuine conversion of heart—a conversion that will compel change and reform of our institutions and societies, and how Catholics and all people of good will are called to combat racism.

The bishops explain that our call is to listen and know the stories of our brothers and sisters. “We must create opportunities to hear, with open hearts, the tragic stories that are deeply imprinted on the lives of our brothers and sisters, if we are to be moved to empathy to promote justice,” the bishops write.

Beyond Listening: Loving

Multicultural Voices

“God is calling me not only to listen and learn, He is asking me to love, to show genuine and authentic love to our brothers and sisters right in front of us—especially the marginalized and those on the peripheries, because those are the ones who Jesus in the Gospels would have gone after,” said Cervantes.

Cervantes discussed the USCCB document “Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers.” The document urges us to seek intentionally a cultural understanding, to develop intercultural communication skills, to expand knowledge of obstacles that impede intercultural relations and to foster ecclesial integration rather than assimilation in church settings.

Cervantes explained that people are biased because of one of these three things: fear, ignorance or guilt. These are obstacles in really getting to know and love the other. “You need to be aware of these feelings and wish to get over these barriers in order to connect with someone else,” advised Cervantes.

Anti-Racism is the goal

“I challenge you, and I challenge myself, to get to the point of not just denying racism as a problem but promoting and advocating for anti-racism on a regular basis,” Cervantes said.

“When we are willing to be comfortable in the uncomfortable then we are able to be pushed beyond that fear to be able to understand and to get to the point of loving something that is different from me,” Cervantes explained that this is the invitation we all have.

Beyond Knowing: Living with Multicultural Voices

Cervantes urged listeners to address what biases one may have, what access one has that others don’t, if one is truly an ally to the BIPOC community and their stories, and if one is complicit in institutional forms of racism.

“We all have it in some capacity,” Cervantes said of these biases. “We all have been taught stereotypes. How do you and I fight against them and how do you and I break them by getting to know someone else?”

Cervantes explained that if one doesn’t know something about a



ARMANDO CERVANTES DISCUSSES “multi-cultural” voices in the Church

particular community, it is their obligation to learn in order to break that stereotype. He urged that this can be done through sharing stories.

“The hope of today is to invite us to be thinking about our multicultural brothers and sisters,” said Cervantes. “More than ever we need these conversations. We need everyone to jump in, we’re not going to attack this problem

in one day and in one moment. It is going to come from us doing it together.”

Cervantes encouraged listeners to walk together...to listen, learn and share with those who are different than us.

“The Emmaus story in Luke 24:13-35, that is Jesus Himself giving us the example of walking with someone, of radical, active listening, of sharing,” said

Cervantes. “That is the invitation for you and I.”

Armando Cervantes

Armando brings over two decades of parish, diocesan, regional, national and international experience and leadership. Armando graduated from UC Irvine with a bachelor’s degree in Social Sciences with an Emphasis in Public and Community Service. After receiving his master’s in Pastoral Theology from Loyola Marymount University, Armando received his Executive MBA from Chapman University. Armando was one of the co-masters of ceremony for Region 11’s Regional Encuentro and the National Encuentro in Grapevine, Texas.

(To register to join the “Conversation on Race,” visit the Leadership Institute: www.formationreimagined.org. Click to view all of the resources and information about joining the conversation: www.formationreimagined.org/conversations-about-race-main.)

Catholic Charities receives Bank of America grant

By AMY ZAJAC

FAIRFIELD—Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, the largest private social service provider in the state of Connecticut, received a grant from Bank of America to create an innovative meal partnership with local restaurants in Stamford and Bridgeport. The meals purchased supported the New Covenant Center and Thomas Merton Center, Catholic Charities’ partner centers that operate two large soup kitchens and food pantries in regions that were hit the hardest by the coronavirus. Not only does this partnership support locally owned Connecticut restaurants, but it put these delicious, locally-produced meals on the plates of those who are in need throughout Fairfield County.

Before the coronavirus, Catholic Charities served over

1.3 million meals per year across the county through its soup kitchens, food pantries and senior nutrition programs. Due to the ongoing health crisis, that number significantly increased by 300 percent. Catholic Charities used the grant from Bank of America to purchase food from local restaurants in Stamford and Bridgeport to serve at the soup kitchens at the New Covenant and Thomas Merton Centers. As so many businesses had to close during the state shutdown, supporting local restaurants is critical now more than ever, as capacity remains at 50 percent for indoor dining, and many restaurants have had to permanently shut their doors.

“As the coronavirus continues to impact our residents, it is extraordinary to witness Catholic Charities provide for our most vulnerable populations and support local businesses at the same time,” said Southern Connecticut Market President for Bank of

America Bill Tommins. “At the onset of the coronavirus, Bank of America made a commitment to support vulnerable populations in the communities we serve. We are grateful that we can support organizations like Catholic Charities because they are so dedicated to helping those in need.”

“Working with Bank of America has been a blessing for our staff and guests. The project has allowed our guests to explore different food that they normally would not encounter. They truly enjoy it. Our staff loves engaging with the different restaurant owners and learning about their experiences and how they have been impacted by the pandemic, just as we have,” said Craig Adler, director of the Thomas Merton Center.

The Stamford and Bridgeport restaurants that the New Covenant Center

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

EDITORIAL

Mass guidelines
protect worshippers

Washing hands, social distancing and mask requirements have helped prevent the spread of COVID-19 at Mass even in cases when contagious, pre-symptomatic parishioners took part in church events.

According to a report published in "Real Clear Science" (August 19) on Mass attendance and COVID-19, "For Catholic churches following the guidelines, no outbreaks of COVID-19 have been linked to church attendance."

The report points out that while nothing during a pandemic is risk-free, the guidelines implemented by dioceses across the country mean that Catholics may be confident that it's reasonably safe to come to Church for Mass and the sacraments.

Over the last 14 weeks, approximately 17,000 parishes have held three or more Masses each weekend, as well as daily services, combining to equal more than 1 million public Masses celebrated across the United States since shelter-in-place orders were lifted.

The report was produced by physicians from the Thomistic Institute's Working Group on Infectious Disease Protocols for Sacraments & Pastoral Care, which released guidelines in April for reopening churches for Mass and other sacraments.

The evidence suggests that church services following public health guidelines do not present a greater risk of spreading the coronavirus than other similar activities. That's encouraging news for those who have been attending Mass or are considering returning.

In the meantime, the dispensation of the obligation to attend Mass, issued by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano in March, remains in effect if anyone has concerns for themselves or their families. Likewise, he has issued new guidelines that will be observed if any further outbreaks affect a parish or region of the diocese. (see page 3).

Many thanks go to pastors for the reverence they bring to the liturgy in unprecedented times, and to the scores of parish staff and volunteers who have worked to prepare and sanitize churches and make them as safe as possible for all those who return to Mass.

Confessors of faith

It's not enough to profess our faith, we must also become confessors of faith who give our life to its truths and let its light shine into our thoughts and actions, said Bishop Caggiano in a recent online Sunday Mass from the Catholic Center.

The bishop offered a powerful reflection on the reasons Catholics recite the Creed at Mass, and he urged all to pay closer attention to the prayer in which we profess our Catholic faith together as a community of believers.

Praying the Creed is an ancient tradition echoed in the Church since the 4th century and it "binds the Catholic family together through space and time," he said. "All those who profess faith must also confess their life to Christ for faith to make a difference... To confess one's faith is to embrace the suffering that comes with the profession of faith."

The bishop reminded us that faith has its cost as it challenges our comforts, political opinions and status in life. We should not get too comfortable with our own opinions, but always be careful to take to heart what the gospel is asking.

The bishop concluded with a challenge that can guide us at a time of division. "In the coming weeks, let's take a hard look at all of our lives with family, friends, neighbors... and in the public square... and ask the Lord to shed light into the shadows and into the parts of our life that are not professing our faith."

School's back!

We would be remiss if we failed to mention the extraordinary efforts on the part of diocesan schools to prepare for the safe return to in-person classes for more than 6,500 students in the system. Special thanks go to Dr. Cheeseman for his steady, informed and unflappable leadership in a time of crisis and uncertainty. Let's pray for our students, faculty and entire school communities as they begin the new school year.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

St. Mark 8th-grader strives for FAREness

STRATFORD—Shaelyn Averaimo, a rising 8th grader at St. Mark School in Stratford, has a life-threatening food allergy and is a strong advocate for herself and other young people like her. She and her family are members of Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE), the world's largest private funder of food allergy research.

FARE's mission is to enhance the lives and health of the 32 million Americans with food allergies and provide hope

for the promise of new treatments.

Shaelyn was recently approved as a FARE Teen Advisory Group (TAG) member.

As a TAG member, Shaelyn was invited to write an article for FARE's blog on challenges unique to teens with food allergies.

In Shaelyn's blog, "Back to School in a COVID World," the thirteen-year-old explains that in these uncertain times, the most important consideration with back to school preparation is



communication.

"I feel safe at St. Mark School because I know I have the support of my principal Mrs. Warner, my teachers and school staff along with my classmates and friends." ■



CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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

PASTOR

MONSIGNOR THOMAS W. POWERS, from Moderator of the Curia, to Pastor, Saint John Parish, Darien, changed to be effective September 30. Monsignor Powers will remain Vicar General.

PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR

FATHER FRANCIS T. HOFFMANN, Parochial Administrator, Saint John Parish, Darien, extended thru September 30.

VICAR FOR CLERGY

FATHER FRANCIS T. HOFFMANN, Vicar for Clergy (part-time), extended thru September 30. Father Hoffmann will become full-time Vicar for Clergy on October 1.

TRIBUNAL

FATHER LUIS ANTONIO ALICEA RIVERA, from Diocese de Fajardo-Huacao, Puerto Rico, for one year sab-

batical, to Defender of the Bond for Matrimonial and Ordination Cases and Promoter of Justice for Matrimonial Cases. Effective date was August 14.

RESIDENCE

FATHER JUAN GABRIEL ACOSTA, from Saint Ladislaus rectory, to Saint Monica Pastoral Center within the rooms of the Redemptoris Mater Seminary, Stamford. Effective date is October 1 through December 31.

OUT OF DIOCESE

FATHER PAUL N. CHECK, to Executive Director of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, La Crosse, Wisconsin. Effective date was August 15. Father Check will remain Director of Saint John Fisher House of Formation until May 31.

SABBATICAL

FATHER JOHN J. INSERRA, from Parochial Vicar, Sacred

Heart Parish, Georgetown, to sabbatical. Effective date was August 31 through November 30.

RETIREMENT

DEACON RAYMOND J. CHERVENAK, from Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Fairfield, to retirement. Effective date was July 23, 2020.

DEACON JOHN DEROIN, from Saint Mary Parish, Bethel, to retirement. Effective date was June 18, 2020.

DEACON DONALD NAIMAN, from Saint Joseph Parish, Danbury, to retirement. Effective date was July 7, 2020.

DEACON ROBERT E. MORRIS, from Diocese of Charlotte, NC, to retirement. Effective date is August 18, 2020.

Reverend Francis T. Hoffmann
Vicar for Clergy
August-September, 2020

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Editorial



Mothers come equipped with spider spray

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.

Coming home from a long night, I was very much looking forward to a good night's sleep. I was exhausted, emotionally drained, and all I wanted was my bed. Imagine my dismay when I opened my bedroom door to find a huge spider staring at me from across the room.

Let me give you some background. Along with airplanes and heights, spiders are my biggest irrational fear. The kind of fear that sends chills up my whole

body. So, after an already difficult night, I called my mom in tears unsure of what to do.

I give her credit for being able to understand what I was saying between breathless sobs of, "I hate it. I just want it to go away." "You want what to go away? The spider?" she said. As I look back now, it's funny. But, let me tell you, it was not funny in the moment. And this was before I noticed the hundreds of baby spiders sprawled out on the ceiling...

I may have blacked out in a moment of sheer terror because I don't remember my reaction to that. But I do remember my mom assuring me she was on her way.

To my mom, currently reading this: you came over at 1 am to help me kill hundreds of baby spiders...yes, you can be featured in my column now.

Moms just have a way of being able to make everything better. I don't exactly know when this transition to womanhood happens, when suddenly you know how to cook the best lasagna ever made and can handle killing spiders in the middle of the night, but moms just know.

I've never really had a close relationship with Mary. There was always something about her that seemed unattainable to me as a woman. I think my thought process was I know I will never be that perfect, so it just kind of makes me feel

bad about myself when I think about her perfection.

But, still, when I can't fall asleep or when I'm nervous, there's something about repeating the Hail Mary over and over

er things have happened in Nazareth. I wish we had more of those in-between years, to see those tender moments between mother and son. It helps to think about Mary as a young mother,

"I don't exactly know when this transition to womanhood happens, when suddenly you know how to cook the best lasagna ever made and can handle killing spiders in the middle of the night, but moms just know."

that settles me. It's that peace and comfort that comes from a mother, I think. Like calling your mom in the middle of the night.

I'd like to imagine that Jesus used to call on Mary when he needed help or was afraid. Maybe he needed help killing spiders in the middle of the night, I don't know, strang-

trying to do everything she could to care for her family. Maybe she's not so unattainable after all? I'm working on it.

If she's anything like the moms I know, who would do anything for their kids and their families, even kill hundreds of spiders in the middle of the night, then she's alright by me. ■



'I can't. Jesus can.'

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

A very wise man, or maybe it was a wise woman, or it could possibly have been Yoda, once taught me an important lesson: The only person you can change is yourself. And only then with extreme difficulty. Changing for the better is hard, but changing for the worse is pretty easy. Just look at the world around you.

If you're not working at spiritual improvement and trying to become holier (such a stodgy, politically incorrect word!) by trudging up that steep, narrow path, you'll find yourself with the multitudes on the wide and heavily trafficked highway that leads to darkness. There's no standing still in the spiritual life.

Not too many of us say, "My goal in life is to be holier." That doesn't sound as enticing as "My goal in life is to be richer... or more popular...or wittier... or prettier." But eventually God has a way of bringing us closer to him through a tragedy, an illness or a loss, and we discover very quickly that holiness is what life is all about.

Countless people are looking to improve, and they believe they have the key through self-help and self-transformation. It makes me wonder: If self-improvement is such a popular pastime in modern society, then why is society so messed up?

If you walk into a bookstore, while there are still some left, and go to the "Personal

Transformation" section, you'll see hundreds of titles like "7 Habits of Highly Effective People," "Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience," "Awaken the Giant Within,"

"Think and Grow Rich," "Design Your Life: Build a Life That Works for You." "Best Self: Be You, Only Better." Sounds appealing, doesn't it?

However, when it comes to spiritual growth, there's a fundamental truth: You can't truly change yourself by yourself. It requires that mystical gift called "grace," the power of God that changes everything for the better. It sanctifies us, it strengthens us, it revives us, it inspires us to virtue. And if you want it, all you have to do is ask.

Father Lawrence Carew, in his book "Six Simple Steps Into Healing Prayer," cites the example of St. Therese of Lisieux, one of the most beloved of saints, a

Carmelite nun who died at 24. Like all of us, she was burdened with human imperfection.

"While she firmly desired to become increasingly Christ-like, Therese quickly came to realize

You can't change yourself by yourself. It requires that mystical gift called "grace," the power of God that changes everything ..."

that high ideals wedded to willpower just couldn't bring it about," he wrote. "But by regularly surrendering things, like her imperfections and inabilities to love or forgive, into the Lord's mercy towards her and love for her, these weaknesses would be transformed into currents of grace carrying her into a better place."

The formula for success is simple: I can't. God can. So get out of the way and let him do what he has to do. And if you ask, and keep on asking, he'll make the necessary changes in his own time, just as he did for the Little Flower.

Your appeal doesn't have

to be grandiose or dramatic. A simple request will do, like "God, please help me with these character defects." Then, almost magically, the people, places and things in your life will direct you toward spiritual growth. The real purpose of our lives is to become holier. Not richer, not prettier, not wittier.

One last point. You'll never change if you don't examine your day at the end of every day. What did you do well? What did you fail to do? Where was God in all this? This regular practice of examining your day wasn't created by Eckhart Tolle or the Dalai Lama. It came from St. Ignatius Loyola and is called The Examen.

Put yourself in God's presence and look at your day through his eyes and in gratitude. Review what happened and acknowledge your shortcomings. Look forward with hope to the day to come.

It takes work to move forward in virtue, but you don't need a library of self-help books. All that's necessary is a willingness to grow holier and asking Jesus, your "life coach," for help. He'll move you forward even when you don't even realize it. ■

Catholic Schools

Students return to classroom

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

BRIDGEPORT—After months of planning and preparation Catholic elementary and high schools have re-opened for in-person classes throughout the diocese, said Dr. Steven Cheeseman, superintendent of schools.

While individual schools may have different start dates, Dr. Cheeseman said that he expects all 25 schools to be fully re-opened by the second week of September.

Just prior to the reopening, Dr. Cheeseman addressed parents, students and the school communities in a video that provided an overview of the extraordinary steps taken for a safe and measured re-opening during the pandemic.

"I hope you are all excited to finally get new school year underway and God willing this will be the first step in our return to a sense of normalcy," he said from his office at the Catholic Center.

In the past couple of weeks Dr. Cheeseman visited every

school to ensure compliance, to share best practices and to run through every possible scenario related to the re-opening and ongoing challenges.

Dr. Cheeseman said that the main concern shared by members of his leadership team and administrators faculty and parents throughout the system has been "the safe return of over 6,500 students to our diocesan schools."

While the schools have moved ahead with in-person classes, the diocese has also provided distance learning options for families who prefer to keep children at home through its online academy. At present, more than 150 students are enrolled in the academy: ([www. OnlineCatholicAcademy.org](http://www.OnlineCatholicAcademy.org))

Dr. Cheeseman said the schools are also prepared to move ahead with hybrid plans if that becomes necessary as a result of a spike of the virus in a given school.

Any future decisions to close a school or to make a transition to

a hybrid model and full distance learning will be made on an individual school basis.

"The decision will be made in consultation between the school administration, the Office of the Superintendent in consultation with the bishop, and the Health Department from the township within which the school is located," he said.

Factors in the decision if has to be made will be based on state guidelines and include the number of confirmed cases in the specific school and the ability of the school to mitigate risk of virus spread, he said.

Catholic schools have been able to move forward with in-person classes while many public systems can't because they have been able to meet very strict protocols developed in compliance with CDC and state guidelines for reopening schools, Dr. Cheeseman said.

"While all educators agree that students should be back in school to ensure learning and to provide appropriate socialization opportunities, not all public schools are able to meet the State and CDC requirements to bring students back full time. In most



cases it has to do with the size of the school population, the space available and the ability to schedule teachers.

"Thankfully we do not face the same issues. The smaller size of our school populations and the mission driven zeal of our teachers and administrators have allowed us to be flexible in our planning, to use space and instructional time creatively and to create school environments that are healthy, safe and nurturing."

Put simply, we are able to open because we can meet, and in many cases exceed, the requirements and guidelines of the CDC and the State of Connecticut.

As a result of the ability to provide in-person classes, Dr. Cheeseman said that many of the schools have seen an increase in enrollment and a growing number of inquiries from public school parents.

Although the intense and

comprehensive planning by the diocese has become a model for other school systems, Dr. Cheeseman said he still loses sleep at night because of uncertainty about the pandemic.

"No matter what we do, we can't answer every question because we don't know what the future holds."

However, he feels the schools are ready after "a tremendous amount of preparation and planning and the amazing work of principals" to implement the safety protocols.

Dr. Cheeseman asked for prayers for all of the students, faculty and school communities in the coming weeks. "This will be a year like no other, but we can face it together and make the best of it."

(The full re-opening plan for diocesan elementary and high schools is available online: www.dioceseof-bridgeportcatholicsschools.com/coronavirus-reopening-plan.)

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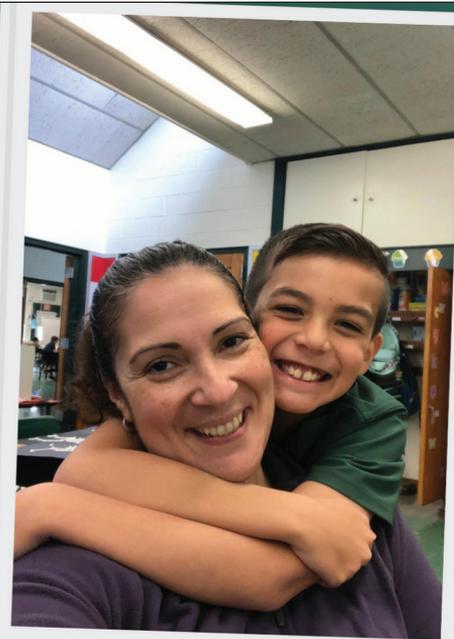
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"I am pleased with the necessary social distancing precautions The Catholic Academy of Stamford has come up with.

All the desks have been measured to be six feet apart. The kid's school supplies are kept separately to prevent any sharing of supplies or cross contamination. Despite all the new safety measures in place, the classroom still feels warm and inviting.

With all the changes going on, it's important that the kids feel their classroom is a safe and inviting place."

- Jeanette Noriega, parent of a CAS 3rd grader



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School News

New leader for Sacred Heart Greenwich

By **EMILY CLARK**

GREENWICH—For Meg Frazier, there is nothing like the first day of school—the joy and anticipation, the new notebook, the sharp pencil. Despite the challenges that accompany this year’s “first day of school,” this veteran educator is ready for her own new challenge as she assumes the position of head of school at Sacred Heart Greenwich.

With over 25 years of experience in Catholic education, Frazier brings a deep commitment to both faith and academics, guided by the mission of Sacred Heart, something that Kathleen O’Connor, chair of the school’s board of trustees, feels Frazier appreciates. “Finding an instructional leader who lives her faith and understands our unique identity is a rare gem,” said O’Connor. “The school’s Catholic identity and vision will thrive under Meg’s leadership.”

Originally from Branford, Conn., Frazier, who succeeds former head of school Pamela Juan Hayes, has worked as both a teacher and administrator at schools such as Georgetown Prep outside Washington, D.C.; Stone Ridge Academy in Maryland; and most recently at Marymount International, an all-girls, independent Catholic school in London. These positions prepared her for her newest role which came at just the right time in her career, said Frazier, adding, “I am blessed to have been in places that have inspired



MEG FRAZIER, HEAD OF SCHOOL

and brought forth my own faith. These are the beauties of being a Catholic educator.”

It was at Georgetown Prep that Frazier saw firsthand how transformative the Catholic experience could be. “Who we are is truly most important,” she said. “We pray. We come together. We are at the heart of creating community.”

The importance of a strong, faith-based community is something that Frazier hopes to enhance as head of school at Sacred Heart Greenwich, part of a global network of more than 200 schools which allows for joint ventures, programs and a mission built around five fundamental goals. Frazier said this year’s theme centers on a renewal of Goal 4, a commitment “to the building of community as a Christian value.” Though she acknowledges that the students and faculty will be challenged

as they work toward this objective due to the limitations of COVID-19, the opportunity for personal prayer; campus ministry divisions among each of the lower, middle and upper schools; and regular Masses through a virtual feed from the chapel will all contribute

to this integral part of a Sacred Heart education.

“This is our call to action—to be a good neighbor and to offer

service to others both on and off campus,” said Frazier. “Even with COVID, we can do more good and be leaders in the community.”

That call to action extends well beyond the grounds of Sacred Heart. Being part of this worldwide network gives an awareness of faith and confidence to each of the Greenwich school’s 625 girls, said Frazier. While still in London during the outbreak of COVID-19 last spring, she could attend virtual prayer services and see students, alumnae and board members come together. “I was a witness to what was going on here at Sacred Heart,” she added. “The silver lining [of the pandemic] is that this allowed us to see what is really important and to be reflective. We want all kids to feel safe and be positively engaged as we work to build a diverse and

equitable community.”

The motto for this year—“Every Girl, Everyday”—reflects not only Sacred Heart’s belief in equity and inclusion but also in the plan to bring all students back to campus for in-person learning each day, keeping a focus on safety and academics as well as social and emotional learning.

O’Connor said Frazier’s positive attitude and her commitment to the education of the whole child, the mind, body, and spirit, impressed her and the board of trustees.

“We’re all in this together. There is incredible strength in how we help and serve each other,” said Frazier, reflecting back on the importance of this faith-based community as she readies for yet another first day of school. ■

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OPEN HOUSE

November 12th

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www.cardinalkungacademy.org

Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Academy

St. Matthew Knights spruce up playgrounds

NORWALK—Summer is usually a time for rest and relaxation, but need knows no season, so that is why the St. Matthew Knights of Columbus make sure to help whenever it is needed.

On Saturday, August 8, the council put on their work boots, grabbed their rakes and wheelbarrows, and went to work on beautifying the ground of Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Academy. The Knights, parents and students spread over 70 yards of mulch for their playgrounds and gardens. As schools prepare to return to in-person learning after over three months of distance learning and summer break, it was important to the Knights to spruce up the grounds for the children and make the school a welcoming and warm place.

“Anything we can do to help make the return to school even a



A WARM, WECOMING PLAYGROUND—The kids will have a great place to play thanks to the efforts of the St. Matthew Knights of Columbus and other volunteers!

little bit better especially during these unpredictable times is a great thing,” said Council Grand

Knight Anthony Armentano. It was a large job made much easier by a large turnout from

the Knights, who assisted some parents and students from OLF Catholic Academy. St. Matthew Knight’s member AJ Cossuto of AJ’s Landscaping Service, LLC donated his equipment to help move the mulch to the two playgrounds. “We are so thankful for Brother AJ’s generosity in donat-

scaping projects including remodeling a chapel, painting of rooms at Malta House and the mulching/landscaping projects at the local Catholic schools and Notre Dame Health and Rehab Center. The Council just finished a major painting project at Regina Pacis Academy in Norwalk.



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Sunday, October 25
sjcadets.org/openhouse

2-Day Entrance Exam Prep Course:

Friday, October 16 & Saturday, October 17

Entrance Exam (One-time test):

Saturdays: September 26, October 31 or
November 14

Application Deadline

Monday, November 17

Family Tours: Available by Appointment
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St Joseph High School, Trumbull, CT
www.sjcadets.org | admissions@sjcadets.org



ing his time and equipment to this project, said Council Past Grand Knight and project chairman George Ribellino.

This is the third year Council 14360 has assisted Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Academy and has become an annual council event Carmel Bowron, one of the parents at OLF Catholic Academy, reached out to the St. Matthew Knights in 2018 since she was familiar with their work at St. Matthew Church, All Saints Catholic School, Notre Dame Health and Rehabilitation Center and Malta House. Ribellino went on to say, “Our council loves to help the local community and we are always ready to put ‘Faith in Action’ and assist those in need.”

Grand Knight Anthony Armentano praised his brothers for their efforts. “I am so proud of thankful for my Brother Knights who always answering the challenge by helping those in need. They never back down from a challenge big or small.”

The council uses the various talents of the members to take on large cleaning, repair and land-

“Catholic schools are struggling financially and have limited budgets so if we can provide labor to help save on costs, we are honored to do it,” said Ribellino.

The Council is planning to help paint the office at the school in the next few weeks.

“It’s what Knights do, ‘Leave No Neighbor Behind,’” said Armentano.

The mission of Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Academy is to provide, in a creative atmosphere, a child-centered education of academic excellence for our students from preschool through eighth-grade. It is based on Catholic principles and traditional Christian values supported by strong family commitment.

The goal of the Knights of Columbus Council at St. Matthew Church in Norwalk is to perform acts of charity, providing those in need with a range of support from financial to tactical help in dealing with a wide variety of challenges.

(For more information visit saintmatthewknights.com or olfacademy.org).

Catholic Academy

Golf Classic raises \$260,000 for inner-city students

By EMILY CLARK

The 8th Annual Golf Classic to benefit the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport was held at the Country Club of Fairfield on Monday, August 10. Clear blue skies, mild breezes and midsummer sunshine provided donors and supporters with a perfect setting for an afternoon of golf, a cocktail reception, and a lively auction that raised over \$260,000 for scholarships.

Despite some limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the event was sold out with 21 four-somes for golf and 100 guests for cocktails, all held outdoors on the shores of Long Island Sound to meet social distancing protocol. Though each of the Academy's fundraisers are important in providing scholarships for their inner-city stu-

commented on the great sacrifice parents make to send their children to the Academy, especially during these challenging times. "It's harder now, so we work harder," she said. "The more kids we can serve, the better."

Pohlen added that everyone in attendance, from the generous donors to the committed staff of educators and personnel, all remain focused on the mission of CAB in preparing students for "a successful life of leadership and service," evidenced through the powerful speeches shared throughout the afternoon.

During the cocktail reception, alumnus Janelle Rosales '16 spoke about the financial burden so many families face in educating their children and thanked the donors "for providing this opportunity to future generations. My teachers gave me a future,

a voice, and spirituality." A 2020 graduate of Notre Dame of Fairfield in the top 20 of her class with over 200 hours of community service, Rosales will attend Quinnipiac University in the fall to simultaneously pursue both a

bachelor of arts and an master of business administration.

Those opportunities are made possible by such donors as Jim and Judy Bailey, two of this year's honorees. As board chair from 2009-2014, Jim co-founded the Annual Golf Classic and along with his wife have sponsored multiple students over the years through the Leaders of Tomorrow program. In his speech introducing Jim, current Board Chair Brad Evans quoted the Baileys' oldest daughter, Elizabeth, who remembers her parents instilling in her the values of compassion, commitment and confidence.

Also honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award was Ann Marie Donnelly, who retired

from the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport in June after 37 years in education. Former students Michael Jones '06 and Onyinyechukwu Nnodum '13 praised Donnelly for her commitment to students and the difference she made in their lives.

"Mrs. Donnelly didn't let me fall by the wayside," said Jones, now a third-year Master of Divinity candidate at Howard University who also works full time at a technology company in Washington, D.C. In describing Donnelly as a "hero," Jones said, "She stood up for all her students and made sure they all succeeded. She resuscitated students through her acts of kindness and gave her life to something bigger than herself."

"She made me who I am," added Nnodum, a rising senior



A GREAT DAY FOR GOLF... and for the kids. Funds from the recent 8th Annual Golf Classic will be used for student scholarships to Catholic Academy of Bridgeport at a time when many families are struggling to pay tuition.

at Cornell University who is studying Industrial and Labor Relations. "Mrs. Donnelly was a teacher, mentor and friend."

Success stories such as these, made possible by those most committed to the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport, will continue on due to the generosity

displayed at the Golf Classic.

"We are unique," said Pohlen. "Where others see obstacles, we see potential. This is our moment in history, and when people look back to ask how we served so well, I look around and am reminded of John 13:35—"they will know us by our love." ■



dents, CAB's Executive Director Angela Pohlen said this one was especially vital due to a cancelled event in March, increased requests for financial aid, and the need for an additional \$178,000 to cover the schools' reopening and to meet standards for COVID-19 cleansing.

"This is a critical fundraiser for us," said Pohlen. "Catholic schools are the hope to a weary world, and we need to be ever more present now."

With close to 850 students among the four campuses of St. Andrew, St. Ann, St. Augustine and St. Raphael, the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport will provide tuition assistance to approximately 90 percent of its population this school year. Pohlen

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Catholic Academy

Forming minds and transforming lives

STAMFORD—For all of us, 2020 will go down as the year America addressed its first real pandemic in over one hundred years. In an instant, schools, as well as businesses, were shuttered. Both parents and students found themselves in a difficult-at-best situation of learning and working from home.

The Catholic Academy of Stamford's response was well-thought-out and superbly executed.

Working effectively together with parents, teachers and the administration, the parent/school partnership was fully in evidence. A near-immediate transition to a virtual school environment was established and implemented. Even accommodations for daily exercise and virtual "gym" classes were built into the school day.

Nimble, capable, CAS seamlessly ensured a high academic experience continued during an unprecedented crisis.

Parent/student/teacher portals for assignments and returning work were firmly established and communicated. Administrators continued to lead students and faculty in morning prayers, announcements and other engaging information on a daily basis. 100 percent of classes were led live on-line by teachers using compatible technologies for all families. In some cases, students/families needing computers or iPads were furnished them. And accommodations for even the most difficult of home situations were remedied.

As with most American families, both students and parents

alike are anxious to get back to school. The term "Back to School" itself has special meaning in the Fall of 2020.

Beginning this Fall, both the upper school (grades 6-8) and lower school (PreK 3 – grade 5) have been consolidated into a single building at The Catholic Academy of Stamford's location at 1186 Newfield Avenue, in a centrally-located suburban, tree-lined neighborhood of Stamford just ten minutes up the road from downtown.

Small class sizes, inspiring teachers and the free exercise of faith and values make for a safe environment in which a superior education can be the result. The needs of today's working families are met through early-morning drop-off and extended hours



after school.

CAS students are uniquely prepared for high school and beyond. 8th graders are offered an accredited high-school level course in Math. Advanced robotics and STEM courses are enhanced by Project Lead the Way for all students in grades 6-8.

The mission of the school proclaims a superior academic environment of personalized learning that encourages its children to discover and fully develop

their unique talents and abilities. Coupled with a focus on Gospel Values and respect, love of neighbor, treating each other fairly, and compassionately, CAS is "forming" their hearts, "informing" their minds, and "transforming" their lives.

This year, each classroom is being prepared for learning and for social distancing safety. Normally small class sizes will, in some cases, be even smaller

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

PREP



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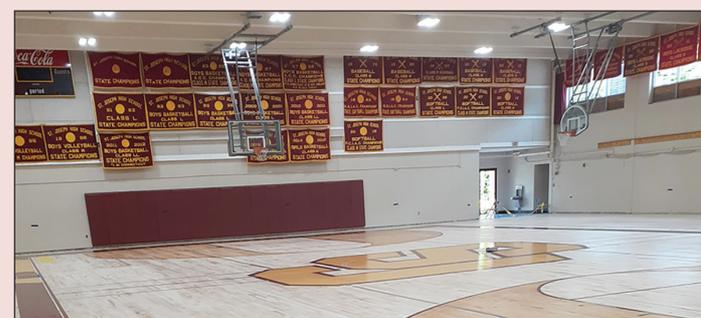


Open House
Sunday, October 4

www.FAIRFIELDPREP.ORG

Newly renovated gym SJHS unveils Vito Montelli court

TRUMBULL—St. Joseph High School celebrated the opening of their newly-renovated gymnasium and Vito Montelli Court with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony on Friday, August 28 at 8:30 am. The ceremony included a blessing by the school's chaplain, remarks from St. Joes President David J. Klein; Assistant Principal for Athletics Kevin Butler; and Chairman of the Board



Christopher Wilson.

St. Joseph High School was founded in 1962 and this is the first major renovation to the school's gymnasium, named after Vito Montelli, whose legendary coaching career lasted more than a half-century at St. Joes. The renovation included replacing and installing new floors, overhauling the bleachers, introducing energy-efficient lighting and installing a new air conditioning system.

"We are so pleased to share our state-of-the art updates in this extensive renovation," remarked St Joe's President David J. Klein. "The new gymnasium will be enjoyed by our entire community and ensures the continued academic and athletic success of our students."

"This renovation celebrates a history filled with extraordinary victories and athleticism at its finest," stated Assistant Principal for Athletics Kevin Butler. "I'm proud of all the students, alumni, family, fans and coaches that have celebrated so many milestones here, and look forward to many more to come."

"This means so much to our community," remarked Board

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

Foundations in Education

Welcomes two new board members

BRIDGEPORT— Foundations in Education, Inc. is pleased to announce the appointment of two new members to its Board of Trustees. Joining the board are Lisa Ferraro Martino and Barbara Ripp.

“We are delighted Lisa and Barbara are joining our board. They bring a level of expertise and a great deal of heart that will significantly aid us in our mission to support students and teachers,” remarked Holly Doherty-Lemoine, executive director to Foundations in Education.

Lisa Ferraro Martino has served on the gala committee for Foundations in Education for the last two years. Lisa currently serves on the visiting committee for Pediatric Oncology at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston and as an ambassador with the Parents Leadership Council of Fairfield University. Lisa has worked on a variety of committees to raise money for

schools through annual fund campaigns and fundraising events. Her volunteer work for the Catholic Church has included translating documents for the Martyrs Project and serving as a catechist for 11 years. Lisa earned her Juris Doctor from Duke Law School and holds a bachelor’s degree in English with a concentration in writing from Fairfield University.

Barbara Ripp has served on the Board of Malta House for six years and has been involved in all aspects of this home for homeless pregnant women and women with young children. As a member of the Order of Malta, she participated in prison ministry and as a mentor in the Shepherds program. Barbara is proud to report her mentee graduated from college in 2020, after four years at Kolbe Cathedral High School. Barbara also volunteers with Walking with Purpose at St. Michael’s Parish in Greenwich and has been a



LISA FERRARO MARTINO

group facilitator for the past five years. With her husband, Peter, Barbara co-sponsored the Christopher Ripp Early Learning Program, which provides after school programming for pre-school children and their parents at St. Peter School, Danbury. Retired from her career in



BARBARA RIPP

social services, Barbara earned her master’s degree from Kean University and graduated from Marymount Manhattan College with a bachelor’s degree in Sociology and early childhood education.

Foundations in Education is the realization of Bishop Frank J. Caggiano’s vision to support the Diocese of Bridgeport’s ongoing mission to advance Catholic education in Fairfield County. The primary purpose of this non-profit initiative is

to support Catholic education by providing tuition assistance for elementary school students and Innovation and Leadership grants for teachers and administrators that promote classroom innovation and professional leadership development and other education-based programs.

Board of Trustees Chair Tom McInerney, remarked, “We are honored that Lisa and Barbara have joined the board and appreciate all they bring to the table in helping to transform thousands of students’ lives in our Catholic schools.”

The two new members join the existing Board of Trustees: Chair Tom McInerney, David Cappiello, George Coleman, R. Bradford Evans, Tim FitzPatrick, Michael Hanlon, Lawrence Kudlow, Leslie Lopez, Andrea Maldon, Anne McCrory, Dr. Julia McNamara, Michele Mitola, Joseph Purcell, Bernard Reidy, Gerard Robilotti, Robert Scinto, Michael Shea, Jennifer St. Victor-de Pinho, Sr. Mary Grace Walsh, and Holly Doherty-Lemoine, ex officio.

(For more information about Foundations in Education, visit www.foundationsineducation.org.)

FIE reaches GuideStar’s highest Seal of Transparency

BRIDGEPORT— Foundations in Education has earned the 2020 Platinum Seal of Transparency, the highest level of recognition offered by GuideStar, a service of Candid.

“This step is in accordance with our long-held belief in transparency,” said Holly Doherty-Lemoine, CFRE, executive director, “and we are excited to convey Foundations in Education’s results in this user-friendly and far-reaching manner. The Platinum level allows us to easily share our up-to-date organizational metrics with all those who support our work as well as GuideStar’s online audience, which includes donors, grant-makers, our peers, and the media.”

To reach the Platinum level, Foundations in Education added extensive information to its Nonprofit Profile on GuideStar: basic



HOLLY DOHERTY-LEMOINE

contact and organizational information; in-depth financial information; qualitative information about goals, strategies, and capabilities; and quantitative information about results and progress toward its mission. By taking the time to provide this information, Foundations in Education has demonstrated its commitment to transparency and

to giving donors and funders meaningful data to evaluate nonprofit performance.

“I encourage you to take a moment to visit the Foundations in Education profile on GuideStar and see what we’re all about,” Holly added. “We’re thrilled about this step

up in communicating what Foundations in Education is doing and the progress we are making on behalf of students, their families, and teachers at Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic schools.”

(For more information about Foundations in Education, visit www.foundationsineducation.org.)

POSITION AVAILABLE

Catholic Cemeteries Field Worker

Catholic Cemeteries - Diocese of Bridgeport

Responsibilities

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Leadership Institute

True Love That Lasts: new video series

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—Best-selling author Jim Steffen's book "The Secret of Growing True Love That Lasts," found its way into Bishop Frank J. Caggiano's hands...and then the pope's!

When Steffen heard that Bishop Caggiano was on the USCCB committee on laity, marriage, family life and youth, he knew that "True Love That Lasts" was something the bishop would truly appreciate.

"In their book, Jim and Carol Steffen outline a very simple recipe for a strong and healthy marriage, said Bishop Caggiano. "By asking just one question a day, husbands and wives can work together to build a relationship that endures. I invite couples of all ages and experience to take up Jim and Carol's challenge of growing true love that lasts."

Steffen's new book is the

culmination of the author's sixty-year quest to understand how couples can stay together and enjoy marriages that thrive. "The problem has a dual nature," Steffen says, "the first is to discover what to do to grow true love that lasts and the other is remembering to do it." In the book, Steffen offers a solution to both. The book provides practical tips for couples to follow and simple questions to ask each day. The included habit builder solves the second part of the equation. With his background in time management, Steffen uses what he calls the QEP method: Quick-to-learn, Easy-to-use, Proven-to-work Method.

The book is told as a story—following John and Maria on their romantic journey as they discover how to grow true love that lasts by asking just a single question a day. "I took the idea [for a story format] from Jesus



Himself," explains Jim. "Jesus did some of His best teaching in the form of a story and I wanted this to be a story that people

could hang onto."

In 2016, Pope Francis expressed his concern over the decreasing desire in young people for marriage. He explained that this is a great concern because the family is the basis of society. This issue is what Jim and Carol Steffen address in "True Love That Lasts."

"What can we do to make the family happier so that young people will want to get married?" Jim asks.

Jim Steffen has been working closely with Dr. Patrick Donovan, director of the diocesan Leadership Institute, in order to create a video series on True Love that Lasts.

"This movement is unique in so far as there is no diocese that has such an effort," says Donovan, explaining that this is not just a premarital program but a program of continuing formation.

On June 25, 2020, The Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization released a

new Directory for Catechesis, providing guidelines for the Church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel through catechesis and evangelization. The timing of Steffen's book and video series could not be better, Donovan added.

"In the new directory, Pope Francis challenges us to 'make use of the valuable help of other couples with long-standing experience in marriage,'" Donovan says, quoting the New Directory. "The document goes so far as to challenge parishes and dioceses to lose the terminology, 'marriage prep' because it undermines the true meaning of marriage formation: an ongoing journey that takes a lifetime. What Jim and Carol have done is to take their own story and put it at the disposal of others. It will be a perfect tie-in to our renewed formation for

the sacrament of marriage, which launches in early September."

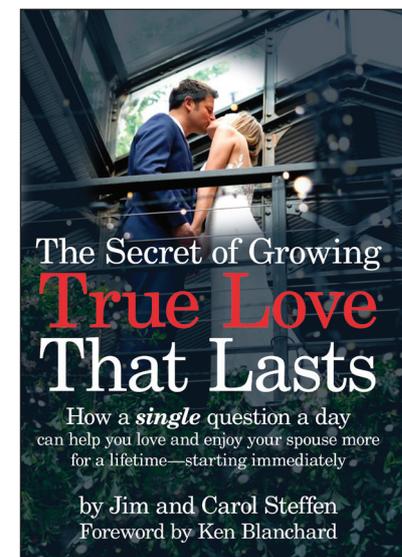
The goal of the video series is to show people that the True Love That Lasts movement is both research based and practical.

Steffen explains that one can either follow along with the book

as they watch the series, or use it to add something new, exciting and useful to their current understanding of relationships. He is most looking forward to being able to tell stories and share insights that wouldn't have been able to fit in the book.

"True Love That Lasts is not just for married couples," says Steffen, "the principles can be applied to any and all relationships."

(For more information on the True Love That Lasts video series visit formationreimagined.org; to purchase the book and accompanying materials, visit: truelovethatlasts.us.)



NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR

Peace

IN OUR COMMUNITIES

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A Rosary for Peace and Unity will be prayed in multiple languages

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Parish News

Father Edicson named pastor of St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus

By JOE PISANI

NORWALK—When Father Edicson Orozco was named pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bridgeport in 2009, he faced many challenges. The church on the East Side of Bridgeport was confronting the likelihood of closing, there were financial problems, and the buildings needed serious repair. The church, he says, “was in very bad shape.”

But by working with the Brazilian, Haitian, Spanish and English-speaking communities of the parish, things turned around.

With parishioners working together, the church survived and started to revive. During his six years as pastor of one of the most historic churches in the Diocese of Bridgeport, he enlarged the parking lot, repaired the roof and bell tower, installed chimes and returned the tabernacle to the center of the sanctuary. He also united the different communities of the parish in a common cause. Today, St. Charles is one of the most vibrant, culturally diverse parishes in the diocese.

“We did an excellent job, and all of us worked hard,” he recalls. “Even though we had a big debt, we brought it down and were able to do many things.”

As the recently appointed pastor of St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus parishes in Norwalk, which are soon to be merged, his new job will have challenges along with opportunities.

“We are not just talking about merging, we are talking about bringing together two beautiful communities that have been under the direction of two beautiful priests who have done a great job,” Father Orozco said. “But instead of working as two separate communities, we will be working as one. The purpose of this merger is to make the church stronger for the future, not just for the present. One of the things I want to let people know is that no changes will be made to damage or destroy what has been done. They will be done to make it better. People have to give me the chance to work with them even though this is something new.”

Both parishes combined will have Spanish and English-speaking communities and Haitians, Father said.

“It is a blessing to have two churches; their buildings will be used to provide pastoral services and education,” he said. “It is going to be one community using two churches because in no respect will it be one taking over the other. We are bringing them together. I know that some people are afraid to face changes, but eventually those changes will be beneficial for everyone.”

In his letter to parishioners, announcing Father Orozco’s appointment, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said, “I am confident that Father Orozco, with your collaboration and support, will carry the new parish forward with his calm leadership, his dedication and his holy example. You will find him to be a true spiritual father, who seeks only to serve and to bring others closer to Christ. Although he will be greatly missed at Our Lady of Guadalupe, I know he will find a warm welcome at St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus and be loved there as he has been in his other assignments.”

Bishop Caggiano also expressed his gratitude to Father Peter Lenox and Father Juan Gabriel Acosta for assisting Father Orozco as he prepares to assume his new pastorship on October 1.

Father Orozco is from Colombia, where he began his seminary formation before coming to the Diocese of Bridgeport in 1996. He spent a year at St. John Fisher Seminary and was ordained in 1999 by then-Bishop Edward Egan. Before becoming pastor of St. Charles Borromeo, he served as parochial vicar at St. Mary Parish in Stamford and St. Peter Parish in Bridgeport. He received his master’s degree in mental health and counseling from the University of Bridgeport in 2014 and worked as a counselor at LifeBridge Community Services in Bridgeport. Since 2017, he has been parochial vicar at Our Lady of Gaudalupe Parish in Danbury.

St. Ladislaus was founded to serve the Hungarian community

that came to America and settled in South Norwalk around 1900. The cornerstone of the church was laid on Nov. 25, 1909 and Masses were celebrated in the church basement a year later. The church, built in the Romanesque Revival style by Hungarian architect Odon Lechner, was dedicated on June 30, 1912.

In 1895, St. Joseph was founded to serve the southern portion of Saint Mary Parish. Masses were initially celebrated at the Music Hall on South Main Street. On April 4, 1897, the cornerstone was laid for the church, built in the Gothic revival style and designed by architect Joseph A. Jackson.

Father Orozco expressed his gratitude to Bishop Caggiano and the Council of Deans for



his appointment, along with his hope that the churches will serve the growing community of South Norwalk.

“All the pastoral services that we offer will bring us closer to God and be a beacon of light in the South Norwalk area,” he said. “A lot of people are mov-

ing into the area, and we can show them that following Jesus is to be one, just as he asked the Father to make us one in John’s Gospel. We will see how things go with the help of God, the protection of Our Lady, St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus because we have them working for us.” ■



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Father Joseph Koterski, S.J., celebrant

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Catholic Cemeteries

Cleaning up storm damage

STRATFORD— When Tropical Storm Isaias blew through the area in August, it left behind a week of misery for many who lost power and experienced storm damage.

The storm also presented a challenge for diocesan cemetery workers who were faced with a considerable clean-up of downed

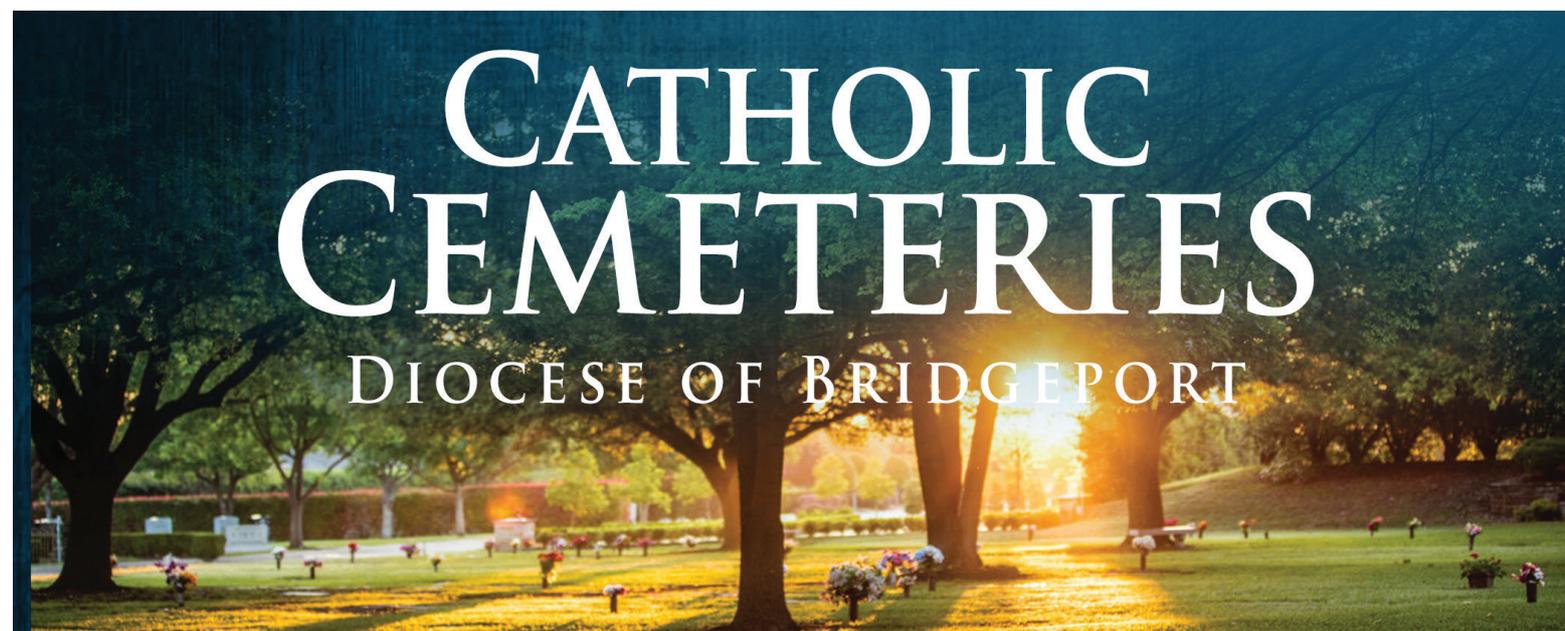
trees branches.

According to Cemeteries Manager Joseph McCurdy the storm did an estimated \$40,000 worth of damage in tree removal costs and roof repairs.

Hardest was St. Michael's Cemetery in Stratford where several large trees fell and the severe wind caused damages to the roof

of the community mausoleum, and St. Mary-Putnam Cemetery in Greenwich which experienced high winds and large trees.

McCurdy said the storm was a setback because the cemetery staff had been working hard through the spring and summer to address maintenance issues and beautify the grounds, while also respond-



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ing to Covid-19 requirements and a surge in burials.

“There are 14 Catholic cemeteries established throughout the diocese (Fairfield County) to serve the Catholic faithful and their families, and our staff works had to ensure they are beautiful places of prayer and reflection.”

McCurdy said that as of the end of August almost all of the trees and branches have been removed.



Catholic cemeteries offer many options and services including 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 further information on Catholic Cemeteries, visit online: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/cemeteries/home; Phone: 203.416.1494.)

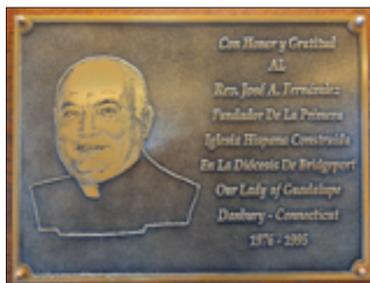
In Memoriam

Diocese mourns recent passing of five priests

By **JOE PISANI**

In less than a week, two beloved priests who served at St. Peter Church in Danbury died, leaving a faith community in shock and mourning. The loss of Father Bernardo Rodriguez and Father Paul Merry, who were known for their compassion and love of Christ, created a void in the church that will be difficult to fill.

"We were devastated by the news," Father Gregg Mecca, pastor, said. "It was really a one-two punch for us. Everybody loved Father Merry, who was such a gentle, sweet guy, and no matter what he was going through, no matter how much pain he had, he was always smiling. And the



FATHER JOSE A. FERNANDEZ

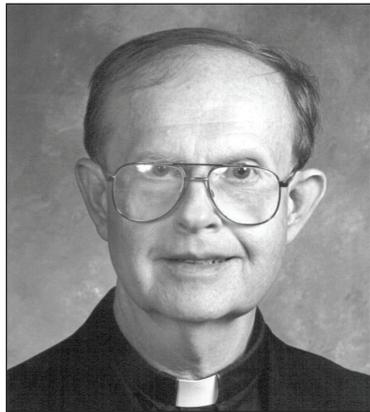
death of Father Bernardo was a total shock to everybody. He embraced our Hispanic community, who loved him and had a close friendship with him."

Father Merry, 73, was a priest in residence at St. Peter and chaplain at Saint John Paul II Center for Health Care in Danbury, and Father Rodriguez, 66, was parochial vicar.

"Father Bernardo helped knit the Hispanic community together," Father Mecca said. "Before him, we didn't have someone here full-time. He was a true shepherd with them every week, and they came to him for confession and counseling. For the first time, they had a real shepherd and they loved him and embraced him. We lost him all too soon.

"Everybody loved Father Merry," Father Mecca said. "People knew he was sick and that he was fighting cancer, but his death still came as a big shock."

In recent months, the Diocese of Bridgeport also lost Father Stephen J. Balint, 81, Father William Verrilli, 68, and Father Jose A. Fernandez, founder and first pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Danbury,



FATHER STEPHEN J. BALINT

who died on March 13 in Spain.

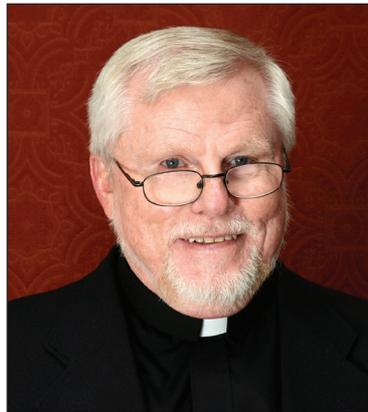
Vickey Hickey, administrator of the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of Clergy Residence in Stamford, who has known many retired priests in her 20 years at the facility said, "You never know half the things they accomplished in their mission until you read their obituary and say to yourself, 'Oh my goodness, I had no idea he did all that.'"

She recalled Father Balint as a "silent do-gooder" who had many friends at St. Ladislaus Church in Norwalk, where he was resident priest for almost 40 years. He coordinated the Hungarian Ministry and celebrated Mass in Hungarian there and at St. Emery Church in Fairfield.

"He was very special because he was very humble and loved being a priest," she recalled. "Every time he went into the hospital, his friend Bob would call and the priests here would pray for him. I would send him cards signed, 'Your Brothers at Queen of Clergy' so he would know that people were thinking about him. Sometimes I sent him a Valentine's card just so he felt he was not forgotten."

She recalled his work as the coordinator of Catholic Boy Scouts in the Norwalk-Ridgefield area. A former Eagle Scout, he was council chaplain for the Pomperaug Council of the Scouts and received many honors and awards for his service to the Connecticut Yankee Council.

Hickey also knew Father Merry well and says, "His last name described him perfectly, and when he talked to you, he would look you right in the eye, and you were the most important person in his life. He didn't look behind you, he didn't look over you, he gave you



FATHER PAUL MERRY

all the time you needed."

Hickey's aunt was a resident at Saint John Paul II Health Center, where Father Merry was chaplain.

"The residents called him 'The Mayor' of the center," she said. "He was just so wonderful. He would say Mass and walk around talking to people. On the days I couldn't go to see my aunt, I would call him and ask if he could visit her and cheer her up and he would."

She said, "He was a very humble man who touched so many people. You didn't even have to talk to him. Just his presence showed you his love."

She stood at the back of the church during his funeral at St. Peter's and said he was buried in a simple Trappist casket, a plain box with no lining and a cross on top of it. She she cried when she read the online guest book from Jowdy Kane Funeral Home, where people recalled the lifelong impact he had on them.

One friend wrote, "I could go on and on with stories of his acts of kindness toward others as my parishioners could do as well. Though he was a man of small stature, he was a 'giant' with a big heart with those who came in contact with him. It never ceases to amaze me how one life can have such a positive effect on so many other lives."

Father Rodriguez, who was born in Catalonia, Spain, studied for the priesthood in Barcelona and was ordained in 1980. He worked in prison ministry in Spain, Panama City and Connecticut.

"Father Bernardo's ministry was varied and demonstrated his care for the least of our sisters and brothers," Father Mecca said. "He left parish ministry to minister for a while to migrant workers, hospital



FATHER BERNARDO RODRIGUEZ

patients and once again, inmates for many years at Bridgeport Correctional Facility and Garner Prison. He was quickly embraced by our Hispanic parishioners. He elevated the celebration of the liturgy and brought to it excellent preaching...Father Bernardo went where there was human need and brought God's love and living-giving Word."

In recent years, he suffered from poor health and in April contracted COVID-19 and was hospitalized.

Father Mecca said that after Father Rodriguez' passing, his sister requested that his remains be returned to Spain, but she changed her mind and wrote through her son that Father chose the United States as his country and "Let him be buried there."

"He will be buried at the Priest's Circle at St. Peter's Cemetery in Danbury, where he would want to be," Father Mecca said.

Father Verrilli was remembered by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano for "his commitment to lifetime learning and faithful service as an educator and a judge in the diocesan Tribunal. A Bridgeport native, he attended Blessed Sacrament School and Madison School and graduated from Fairfield College Preparatory School in 1969. He earned a degree from Fairfield University and then began his studies for the priesthood at Theological College, Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

After his ordination on May 5, 1970, Father Verrilli served as parochial vicar at St. Andrew Parish in Bridgeport and then began teaching in diocesan schools. He was at St. Joseph High School many years and later spiritual director at Trinity Catholic School in Stamford and on the faculty



FATHER WILLIAM VERRILLI

of Notre Dame High School in Fairfield.

He received a licentiate degree in Canon Law at Catholic University in 2001 and for many years served as a judge in the diocesan Tribunal. He is survived by his sister, Sr. Marie Verrilli SND.

Father Fernandez was one of the early leaders of the Spanish-speaking community in the Diocese of Bridgeport, whose vision and faith led to the construction of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.

A man known for his great devotion to Our Lady, he is remembered by a plaque that hangs at the entrance to the church, which says, "With honor and gratitude to Rev. Jose A. Fernandez, founder of the first Spanish church built in the Diocese of Bridgeport, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Danbury, Connecticut, 1976-1995.

Originally, the Spanish-speaking community celebrated Mass in the lower-level chapel of St. Joseph Church in Danbury. The mission was named after Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The faithful were convinced that she did and began a campaign to build their own church with the slogan, "WITH GOD WE CAN." Several woman approached Father Fernandez and said, "Father, if we all put a dollar in each time we enter the church, something can be done."

In 1983, they found a five-acre parcel of land, which they purchased for \$70,000, and on June 3, 1985, Bishop Walter W. Curtis blessed the cornerstone. The church was finished on December 12, 1986, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and on Sunday December 14, the first Mass was celebrated. Father Fernandez was named the first pastor and he served until 1995. ■

Obituary

Father Frank Winn, 79

BRIDGEPORT—The Reverend Frank A. Winn, who became a priest of the Diocese of Bridgeport after a successful career in advertising, died in Providence, Rhode Island, August 31 after a long illness.

"Father Winn will be affectionately remembered by many across the diocese, particularly at St. Paul Parish in Greenwich, for his humble and joyful service. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Father Winn and for the consolation of his family," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

He was 79. Born in Providence, son of Joseph R. and Margaret M. (McDonell) Winn, Father Winn grew up in North Scituate, R.I., and attended LaSalle Academy in Providence and Scituate Junior-Senior High, graduating in 1958. He went on to earn an undergraduate degree in English and religious studies at Fordham University.

Following a long career as an advertising executive in Manhattan, Father Winn heeded a spiritual calling that would keep him active in the Catholic Church for the next 25 years. After receiving a master's degree in theology from the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington, N.Y., in 1992, he

completed a one-year residency program in Hospital Chaplaincy at Cabrini Hospital in New York and at Bridgeport Hospital, then serving in both cities providing pastoral care. After chaplaincy service,

Father Winn studied for the priesthood at Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary in Weston, Mass., a spiritual community dedicated to educating older seminarians.

He was ordained to the priesthood by the Most Reverend Edward M. Egan at St. Augustine Cathedral, Bridgeport on May 23, 1998.

Following ordination, Father Winn was appointed parochial vicar at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Ridgefield, where he said his first Mass on Sunday, May 24, 1998. He later served at St. James Parish in Stratford and went on to serve as parochial vicar of Assumption Parish in Fairfield.

In 2005, Bishop William E. Lori appointed Father Winn as pastor of St. Paul Church in the Glenville section of Greenwich where he served until his retirement in 2015.

Father Winn also served as territorial vicar for Vicariate 1 (Greenwich, Stamford and Darien) from 2006 through 2009.

In announcing his retirement due to ill health, Father Winn

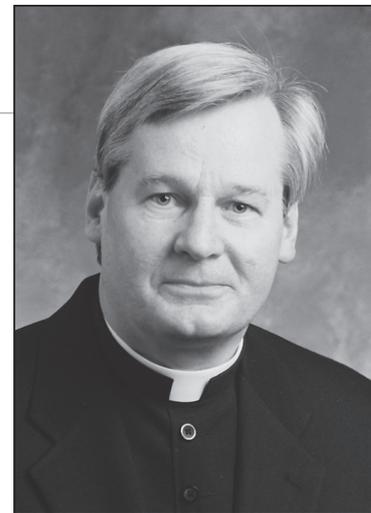
reflected on his long and joyous service at St. Paul, telling his beloved parishioners, "Many of you know the priesthood was a second career vocation for me, and these last 11 years here at St. Paul have truly been the best years of my life. This has been my home and all of you have been my extended family—it was a good match; God has been good to me."

Father Winn is survived by a sister, Marilyn Winn Seymour and her husband, David, of North Kingston, R.I.; a brother, Joseph R. Winn Jr., and his partner, Elizabeth A. Laposata, MD, of Providence; nieces Jennifer Hodge and husband William, and Jane Dickinson and husband Blake; four grand nieces; and a grand nephew.

Bishop Caggiano will celebrate the Mass of Christian Burial and Father Thomas Lynch will deliver the homily on Saturday, September 5, 2020 at 11:30 am in St. Paul Church, 84 Sherwood Ave., Greenwich, CT. Burial in St. Mary's Cemetery will be private. Relatives & friends are invited and may call at the church on Saturday from 9:30-11 am prior to the Mass. Due to COVID restrictions and limited seating and masks and social distancing are required.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the MS Society of Rhode Island in memory of John E. Seymour, Father Winn's nephew and godchild.

Arrangements have been entrusted to The Cranston-Murphy Funeral Home of Wickford. For online messages of condolence, kindly visit www.CranstonMurphy.com.



REVEREND FRANK A. WINN

DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT AUGUST 1—OCTOBER 10

AUGUST

1	Msgr. Daniel J. Foley	1999
	Msgr. John J. Toomey, P.A.	1992
2	Rev. Patrick V. Lavery	1976
	Msgr. James J. McLaughlin	1985
3	Rev. Francis E. Fenton	1995
4	Msgr. Michael J. Guerin	1981
	Msgr. James F. Leary	1994
5	Msgr. Joseph Kohut	2017
7	Rev. Thomas G. Keeney	1990
9	Msgr. John J. Kennedy, P.A.	1955
	Msgr. Frank C. Dellolio	1983
	Msgr. Richard T. Scully	1988
10	Deacon William Rowe	2013
14	Deacon Gerardo Ramos	2007
15	Msgr. Louis A. DeProfio, P.A.	2018
	Msgr. Edward J. Duffy	1977
16	Rev. Victor E. Piaskowski	1961
18	Rev. Alexander Z. Seregely	1971
20	Rev. Louis Pintye, O.F.M.	2017
21	Rev. John J. Dillon	1959
	Msgr. Thomas P. Guinan	1998
22	Rev. Michael Fay	2009
23	Msgr. Emilio C. Iasiello, P.A.	1969
24	Rev. Nicholas Calabro	2015
25	Rev. Richard Futie	2013
26	Rev. Msgr. Edward Scull	2016
	Lawrence Cardinal Shehan	1984
28	Rev. Vincent E. Finn	1958
	Rev. Edmund C. O'Connell	1973
29	Deacon Ramon Isidro	2006
	Rev. Joseph Linck	2008

SEPTEMBER

2	Rev. Msgr. Francis J. Prankus	2000
3	Rev. Msgr. John F. X. Walsh	1967
	Rev. Msgr. Thomas F. Henahan	1998
4	Deacon Matthew Skurat	2013
5	Rev. John E. Fay	1954
6	Rev. Laurence F. Flanagan	1985
9	Rev. Colin McKenna	2015
	Rev. Richard Monahan	2010
12	Rev. Frank D. Yoia	1974
14	Aloysius J. Hribsek	2014
15	Rev. Joseph V. Rossitto	2004
16	Rev. William J. Conklin	1992
	Rev. Martin Dennehy	2013
17	Rev. John A. Sullivan	1953
	Rev. Robert L. Christopher	1958
18	Rev. Msgr. Normand A. Methe	2002
20	Rev. Joseph J. Maglione	2003
	Msgr. Edward B. Karl	2009
23	Rev. Msgr. Edmund J. Hussey	1991
	Rev. Frederick H. Olschefskie	1956
	Deacon Paul Tupper	2013
28	Rev. Edward A. Morgan	1992

OCTOBER

2	Deacon Joseph Filingeri	2013
	Rev. Robert Morrissey	2014
	Rev. Ralph Seraphim Rohlman	2017
3	Msgr. John H. Anderson	1967
5	Msgr. Victor Balcerak, O.F.M. Conv.	1960
6	Deacon William Owen Murphy	2017
	Rev. Francis Posluszny	2015

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St. Joe's Sports

Will there be a season?

By DON HARRISON

In this era of uncertainty, an era engulfed by a deadly virus that has taken the lives of more than 180,000 Americans and 810,000 plus worldwide, it is difficult to plan for anything.

Joe Della Vecchia, who coached St. Joseph High's football team to an undefeated 2019 season and its third straight Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) state championship, is wondering if there will even be any scholastic football in Connecticut at all this fall.

"It's very much up in the air," he said. "It could end tomorrow."

And yet he has the Cadets' 93-player squad preparing for competition, as if there will be a semblance of a season. The CIAC gave the green light for schools to resume conditioning programs on Aug. 24, and the state's governing body for high school athletics said that teams may begin non-contact skill work on Aug. 29. The first official practices may begin on Sept. 14.

"We brought all of the weights up to the football field, and we've got 10 kids in a group working out separately," Della Vecchia explained.

Two of last season's premier players, all-state quarterback Jack Wallace and wide receiver Brady Hutchison, are the top returnees. Both are seniors. Wallace was voted Connecticut's Gatorade Player of the Year following a fall in which he passed for 36 touchdowns and set a school record for pass completion percentage (65.4, 142-217). In the state, he ranked



(l) JACK WALLACE MADE AN IMPRESSIVE debut at quarterback last fall, passing for 36 touchdowns and directing St. Joe's offense with aplomb in leading the Cadets to an undefeated season and their third straight CIAC state title. (r) Brady Hutchison was the top receiver for the unbeaten Cadets in 2019 with 58 receptions, 998 yards and 14 touchdowns.

second in TD passes, third in pass completion percentage and sixth in passing yardage (2,281).

Hutchison bounced back from an injury-plagued sophomore year to catch 58 passes for 998 yards and 14 touchdowns, all of which topped the Cadets. His yardage total placed sixth among all Connecticut players last fall. Another notable stat: He averaged a remarkable 17.2 yards per reception.

Della Vecchia considers Owen DaSilva, a 6-foot-4, 245-pound senior who will play both tight end and defensive end, a "Division-I prospect." Three members of last season's offensive line are also back: Tackles Dennis Elroy and Brian

Robertson, and guard Kenny Martin. Less-familiar names will be asked to fill the voids created by graduation.

As player, assistant coach and head coach, Joe Della Vecchia has played a role in 11 of St. Joe's 15 state titles. As a senior running back-defensive back, he co-captained the 1980 Cadets—coached by Christy Hayes—to the school's first state championship; he was an assistant to Ed McCarthy during three straight title-winning seasons (1988-89-90), and he has been the head man for the past seven championships (2009-10, 2013-14, 2017-19).

"We were hoping to piggy-back off last year," he stated. "But now we don't know."

Nine of the seniors who were major contributors to last season's seamless 13-0 record and No. 1 ranking in the state football poll, planned to continue playing football in college or prep school this fall. But, alas, due to the coronavirus, it isn't to be.

All-state defensive end Mike Morrissey (Central Connecticut State), who was voted 2019 Player of the Year by GameTime/New Haven Register, and defensive back Davee Silas (Sacred Heart) are enrolled in Northeast Conference institutions; the conference canceled its fall season. All-state linebacker Cole DaSilva (Union), co-captain-receiver Will Diamantis

(Stonehill), all-state center Nick DiIorio (Endicott) and defensive lineman Cayden Porter (Western New England) are also at colleges that won't compete this fall.

Three other 2019 stars have gone the prep-school route: Jaden Shirden, the two-time all-state running back who set St. Joe's records with 38 touchdowns and

228 points last season, enrolled at Cheshire Academy, while both all-state nose guard Jermaine Williams and all-state linebacker Alex Pagliarini are at Milford Academy. Their teams may not play competitively either.

The St. Joe's 2020 schedule? Still to be determined, but no games until October at the earliest. ■

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Column: Thomas Hicks



We are the sum of our relationships

POTPOURRI

By THOMAS H. HICKS

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

If we examine our personal histories, we will find a story of relationships. In a real sense, we are the sum of our relationships. The human person was created, designed, to be in relationship with others. We cannot be truly ourselves by ourselves. I read somewhere that a thing that does not exist in relation to anything else cannot itself be said to exist. To really grow as a human being, we need other people. We only become who we are through the relationships that shape our lives. There is Martin Buber's famous conclusion that "all real living is meeting."

Lately I've been trying to think of all those whom I've met in my life in one way or another; those who went with me along the path of life. Not too many came in a way that I planned or contrived. Most relationships sort of found me. There's a mystery to it.

People come into our lives and go out of our lives, sometimes only for a few minutes. For example, I remember, from many years ago, an early Saturday morning on the DeKalb Avenue subway station. I was standing on the platform. She was wearing a black coat. She had jeans on and was drinking coffee. One strand of her hair blew across her cheek, touching the corners of her mouth. There was some eye contact, glances. We got on the same car. We both got off at Grand Central, and then I lost her. In retrospect I wish I had approached her.

There are all the people to whom I must by now be the merest memory.

When I think back over my own life, I recall the relationships that were formal and distant. My main emotion with some people was unease. There were relationships in which we

took an immediate dislike to each other. Saint Seraphim of Sarov addressed each person who came to him as "my joy." My response to too many people was, "You again?" There were the relationships that did not stand the test of time.

Writers and philosophers of our time speak of existential isolation. They take the view that no relationship can surmount loneliness; no one has access to the real depths of another.

Albert Schweitzer said we are each a secret to the other. Freud stated that every encounter, beautiful as it may seem, only dulls the incurable wound of loneliness. Flannery O'Connor wrote "I love a lot of people, understand none of them." (Spiritual Writings, p.161). And W.H. Auden wrote:

"I'm beginning to lose patience

With my personal relations:
They are not deep,
And they are not cheap."
(Shorts)

I don't think life is exclusively like this. A number of people became very dear to me. As Carson McCullers stated, they became "the we of me" (The Member of the Wedding, p. 137). I can't imagine the world without them. They've got to be there just as naturally as trees or birds or clouds. Without them I would be incomplete; I would no longer be

me. A dear friend like this moving out of your life is almost as much of a loss as a death.

I think all people's lives involve such we-relationships. They are among the best things God handed us.

I can't help thinking that I didn't have a real biography until my wife entered my life.

John of the Cross tells us we are like a stone that must be chiseled and fashioned before being set in the building. Our relationships are instruments which God uses to chisel us. They are part of God's plan. By means of these chiseling interactions we become more the self God wants us to be. We should

"Overall, I believe there are people God has given us. I wonder if there are any accidental meetings... or is providence at work?"

After a while, I often tire of being with other people. I could be with her for hours and hours and not be tired for an instant of her.

I die as often from thee I go,
Though it be but an hour ago.
(John Donne, The Legacy)

Many happily married people feel this way.

The elderly often develop relationships in which the two of them complement each other wonderfully. There are the long years of affectionate understanding between them. Hurts and annoyances that might otherwise end a relationship no longer have the last word. They've grown very close, close to death and close to each other. They sort of fuse together in these last years.

All of us, as we age, tend to be able to discern more and more when to act, how to act, what to say, and often more importantly, what not to say. We learn not to strike the wrong note.

think of some of our relationships as artisans, present there in order to improve us.

Overall, I believe there are people God has given us. I wonder if there are any accidental meetings, or is grace and providence at work in all of them? Some people do come to us at crucial times. There are certain people who come to us like a gift from heaven. Most of our hurts come through relationships, so does our healing.

We develop an ever-deepening gratitude and wonder for all those who have loved us

I have two particularly poignant memories. One is how I felt my throat tighten when I watched an elderly woman reach for her husband's hand as they strolled down the sidewalk. The other is a memory of how my wife would make room for me beside her on a couch and spread a quilt across our laps and rest her head on my shoulder.

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Catholic Cemeteries - Diocese of Bridgeport

Responsibilities

Guiding families through end-of-life decisions and planning for burial. Advising and assisting families with immediate (At-Need) decisions and future (Pre-Need) planning; Reaching out to families before and after burials; discussing future end-of-life-plans with families and their relatives; composing sales contracts, and working with administrators to ensure proper record keeping.

Qualifications

An empathetic, organized and compassionate person with strong communication skills both in person and over the phone, committed to serving those making end-of-life decisions. Prior experience in customer service, counseling or sales a plus. Should be families with CRM software, Microsoft Suite of programs.

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For a full job description visit: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/human-resources/home.

Please send cover letter and resume to:

Decelle Totten, Catholic Cemeteries Manager: dtotten@diobpt.org

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

(Never known to fail)

Oh most beautiful flower of Mt. Carmel, Fruitful Vine, splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. Oh Star of Sea, help me and show me here you are my mother. Oh, Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth. I humbly beseech You from the bottom of my heart to succor me in this necessity. (make request) There are none that can withstand Your Power. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee (three times). Holy Mother, I place this cause in your hands (three times). Say prayer for three consecutive days and then you must publish it and it will be granted to you. Grateful. SM

St. Jude's Novena

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved throughout the world now and forever. Sacred Heart of Jesus, pray for us.

St. Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us.

St. Jude, help of the hopeless, pray for us.

Say this prayer nine times a day.

By the ninth day your prayer will be answered. Say it for nine days.

It has never been known to fail. Publication must be promised. Thank you St. Jude.

SM

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SJN

Reporter's Notebook

Attending Mass during the pandemic

By **KATHY-ANN GOBIN**

BRIDGEPORT—Catholic parishes in the Diocese of Bridgeport have risen to the challenge of flexibility and choices during these unprecedented times.

I was privileged to attend Mass at several parishes and experience first-hand how the needs of each individual congregation is being met at this time. I've been fortunate to meet many welcoming and beautiful people along the way.

For many parishes, the first step was offering outdoor Masses. Although the concept seems simple on the surface, these Masses require a lot of planning and preparation. Establishing how many people could be on site and finding a way to keep track of them was a mix of traditional and hi-tech. Some parishes updated their websites and hosted a link to online registration, while other parishes used the traditional method of having people call to register for attendance to a particular Mass. Many parishes offered both methods.

The needs of the congregation were always the first concern and offerings were adapted to ensure primarily the safety and the comfort level of participants.

The first outdoor Mass I attended was at St. Elizabeth Seton Church in Ridgefield. Individuals brought lawn chairs and self-social distanced themselves on the lawn across from the entrance of the church. On another occasion at St. Patrick Church in Redding, all chairs were appropriately distanced or set out in clusters for families in the parking lot.

Volunteers greeted parishioners and names were checked off the pre-registered list. Occasionally, a walk-in had their name and phone number added to the list if space was available. Sanitizer and extra masks were at the ready, if needed.

At St. Edward the Confessor in New Fairfield, I attended a drive-in Mass. I've only attended a drive-in movie once in my life in Hyde Park, just five years ago, so this was a somewhat unfamiliar experience.

It was very well organized with volunteers checking-in each car as they pulled into the parking lot and handing out a list of directions of what to expect. I was touched

by the level of thought, preparation and execution of this Mass.

Drivers were directed where to park their car and the lines of cars had significant space on either side in case someone had to leave. Cars with individuals who wanted to receive Communion but were unable to leave their vehicle had a magnetic marker placed on the car, so a priest could bring the Eucharist to the car during Holy Communion. Other congregants exited their cars in an orderly fashion, following the direction of the ushers and maintained the proper social distancing protocol despite the persistent rain.

It was a wonderful feeling to be surrounded by others, although alone in my car, who wanted to participate in Mass and collectively worship together. Offering peace to one another, we smiled, nodded and waved to each other through rain streaked and somewhat foggy windows. One of the most wonderful memories I have is of driving away still listening to the beautiful hymn being sung as it played on the radio in my car. My heart was filled with joy.

At St. Mary Church in Bethel, when public Masses were once again offered, every other parking space was marked to denote where to park to help maintain

social distancing.

Once inside the churches, pews are marked and there are stations for consuming the Eucharist.

So whether it's sitting outside on the grass, in chairs or in a car in a parking lot or at home watching an online service from the bishop or from my family priest, I recognize and truly appreciate the efforts of the Catholic Church to gather its flock in worship.

What I have gained through this experience, is a greater appreciation of community, love and the heartfelt wonder of being in the presence of God.

Danbury pastors reassure parishioners

DANBURY—Pastors from Danbury area churches are reassuring parishioners that safety precautions at public masses remain a top priority especially following the recent uptick in COVID-19 cases in the Hat City.

"We have gone above and beyond the government protocols and are doing everything within our power to make sure that as we come together to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass we do so safely and securely," said St. Joseph Church pastor, Father Samuel Scott at the noon Mass on Sunday, August 31.

More than six dozen new

COVID-19 cases were reported in Danbury in mid-August causing city officials to remind the community to practice social distancing, wear masks, wash hands frequently and follow state guidelines including limiting large gatherings.

"COVID is a great challenge to all of us," said Father Norm Guilbert, Jr., pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Danbury, who added that Sacred Heart is complying with the recommendations from the Connecticut Department of Health and Diocesan requirements for safety.

"We require reservations, and will begin taking individual temperatures shortly, as well as asking each Mass attendee the questions about travel, exposure, etc. We are also very careful about sanitizing after each Mass, and so far, we have been trouble-free."

St. Joseph Church on Robinson Ave. also relies on volunteers to help keep the congregation safe.

"We have outstanding ushers who graciously welcome and converse with all who arrive at our doors, and explain our policies," said Father Scott. "We sanitize the church after each public Mass. We observe social distancing. We wear masks and we are providing a sanitized and safe place for our Masses."



KATHY-ANN GOBIN

At St. Gregory the Great Parish on Great Plain Road, Pastor Father Michael Dunn said he is not only concerned about the physical well-being of his congregation but also their mental well-being.

"We are addressing the anxiety and fear on the part of many," he said. "We are encouraging people as our Lord tells us, 'Do not be afraid!' We are reminding our parishioners that faith is what is needed- faith is most important in these challenging times."

Father Dunn said the congregation has entrusted the Church and school to the Divine Mercy of Jesus. The Chaplet of Divine Mercy is prayed every Friday at 3 pm and the Rosary is prayed every Monday.

"We first and foremost must turn to our faith, never lose hope and remain confident that our God is more powerful than any disease."

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Nuestra Voz

Rosario en múltiples lenguas por la paz

Por MARICARMEN GODOY

STAMFORD. El miércoles 9 de septiembre a las 7:00PM en la iglesia Saint Mary ubicada en 566 Elm Street se conmemorará el Día Nacional de la Oración por la paz de nuestras comunidades, rezando el Rosario en múltiples lenguas.

El evento es preparado por el Instituto de Liderazgo de la Diócesis de Bridgeport (The Leadership Institute) en honor a la Festividad de San Pedro Claver, adaptado y creado utilizando recursos de la Conferencia Episcopal de los Estados Unidos para promover el Día Nacional de Oración y

Paz en nuestras Comunidades; coincidiendo en la Semana Nacional de la prevención del suicidio juvenil.

A nivel laico, en la Semana Nacional de Prevención de Suicidio (National Suicide Prevention Week) la campaña anual en los Estados Unidos de una semana de duración sirve para informar y comprometer a los profesionales de la salud y al público en general sobre la prevención del suicidio y señales de alertas de suicidio.

Pero, en el caso de la iglesia, en forma paralela, se celebra el Día de la Oración por la Paz en memoria de San Pedro Claver, presbítero.

La iglesia de Saint Mary de Stamford, acorde como demanda el protocolo eclesial iniciará con el Himno de Apertura que debe centrarse en el discipulado y en las obras de misericordia. E inmediatamente seguirá una oración por todos aquellos que ayudan a la comunidad.

Posteriormente, se realizará una oración especial en honor a San Pedro Claver que luchó con caridad para quitar las cadenas de la esclavitud.

Una de las peticiones específicas de este encuentro comunitario será para que los que gobernantes de las naciones encuentren soluciones pacíficas para resolver desacuerdos sobre las fronteras, preferencias



LA DIÓCESIS DE BRIDGEPORT ELIGIÓ a la parroquia de Saint Mary de Stamford, por su diversidad étnica, como sede de la jornada de oración nacional del próximo miércoles 9 de septiembre a las 7 pm.

Dominican Call to Holiness

Divine Grace: the Essential Power Grid for a Virtuous Life

Presented by Father Brian Gannon, Pastor and Religious Assistant

Thursday, September 24, 2020
7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Saint Theresa School Gym
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Sponsored by the Lay Dominicans, Our Lady of Fatima Affiliate, at St. Theresa Church.

For more information about the Lay Dominicans, please contact Mrs. Michelle Rowe, President orapronobis20@gmail.com 203 218.6882



Please note:

This event will be held in the school gym, a space large enough for practicing social distancing. Please wear a mask as we will be adhering to all Diocese of Bridgeport COVID 19 guidelines. Thank you.

religiosas, o diversidad étnica. Y sobre todo por la paz en nuestras familias, en nuestra comunidad, y en todo el mundo.

Si usted desea unirse al rezo del Rosario por la paz de la comunidad dentro de la iglesia, debe llamar telefónicamente para reservar su asiento al, 203 324 7321.

Señor, hazme un instrumento de tu paz

Donde hay odio, que lleve yo el amor

Donde haya ofensa, que lleve yo el perdón

Donde haya discordia, que

lleve yo la unión

Donde haya duda, que lleve yo la fe

Donde haya error, que lleve yo la verdad

Donde haya desesperación, que lleve yo la alegría

Donde haya tinieblas, que lleve yo la luz

Oh, Maestro, haz que yo no busque tanto ser consolado, sino consolar;

ser comprendido, sino comprender;

ser amado, como amar.

(Oración de San Francisco de Asís.)

CATHOLIC ACADEMY, STAMFORD FROM PAGE 16

due to the reduction and spacing of desks in each room. Teachers and staff will always utilize personal protective equipment. Interclass traffic has been minimized and rerouted for avoiding contact. All classes and hallways are sanitized each night.

It is imperative that today's educational systems implement plans that include safe reopening and in-person classes, as well as plans for possible short-turn returns to distance learning as might be required throughout the year.

"The Catholic Academy of Stamford is a special place", state Head of School Patricia E. Brady." It is a place where your child will be loved, formed and educated."

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Interested parents are encouraged to visit our website at www.catholicacademystamford.org. Space is limited. You can also APPLY online at our website as well.

By Staff | *Stamford Advocate*

Vocations

Father Chris Ford on 'Love of the Heart of Christ'

By FATHER CHRIS FORD

As tired as we may be of hearing it, we live in unusual times. And, in these unusual times, the need for the presence of Christ has perhaps never spoken louder to our hearts, as many of us have had limited access to those sure signs and channels of God's grace, mercy, and presence: the Sacraments. Of course, this limited access is temporary. Many of our parishes have resumed their regular sacramental schedules and, once again, this great gift of God's very self is held out for us to receive.

But imagine now, for a moment, a world with no priests at all...

St. John Vianney once called the priesthood, "the love of the Heart of Christ." To be able to be the instrument that draws the divine love, a love stronger even than death itself, out from the Heart of the Good shepherd and pours it out on His people, to make it real in their lives—this is what makes priesthood such a beautiful, powerful, and humbling gift. And since that love knows no limits or bounds, neither does the priesthood.

There is no way around it: we need priests! That is why every diocese in the country has a priest dedicated to promoting priestly vocations and accompanying young men who are discerning if

God might be calling them to this heroic life. Here in the Diocese of Bridgeport, Bishop Caggiano has instituted a new model for promoting vocations: A Vocations Team, consisting of myself and Father Abelardo Vasquez working in collaboration with Father Paul Check, Rector of St. John Fisher House of Formation. Each man who comes forward to offer His life to Christ as a priest has a unique story. They come from every corner of our Diocese and, sometimes, beyond its borders. The call to each heart is so personal that the discernment of that call must be as well. By entrusting this important work to a team of priests, rather than only one individual, our hope is to cast a wide net and to raise up a new generation of priests that reflects all of the best aspects of our small, but diverse, diocese.

Of course, that is not an easy mission. As Jesus left the 99 to search out the 1, fostering vocations must take on a missionary attitude. We, too, must "put out into the deep and lower [our] nets for a catch." (cf. Luke 5:4). God is calling men to the priesthood. He is calling men to lay down their lives as a bridge for His merciful



love to flood the world. We must go out, to help these men hear the voice of God whispering in their hearts and, most importantly, accompany them to echo Mary's fiat to God's will in their lives.

But the Vocations team remains only one piece of the puzzle. There is an old saying: "It takes a village to raise a child." What is just as true is that it takes a Church to raise a priest. The mission of fostering vocations to the priesthood must be inscribed on the heart of every faithful Catholic in the Diocese of Bridgeport. The creation of a Vocations Team is a sign of the collaboration that is essential

to the success of the mission to ensure the Sacraments are available for our generation and every generation to follow.

The world is changing right before our very eyes, but as the book of Lamentations reminds us, "The Lord's mercies are not exhausted, his compassion is not spent" (Lam 3:22). The Heart of Jesus is crying out for His people, to make His love, His mercy, and His presence known to them. Who will give voice to that cry for the next generation?

(Father Chris Ford is parochial vicar of St. Gregory the Great Parish in Danbury and a member of the Diocesan Vocations Team.)

SJHS UNVEILS FROM PAGE 16

Chair Chris Wilson. "The gymnasium is home to all of our school-wide ceremonies—it's where we celebrate masses, community events, assemblies, dramatic productions and cherished moments. The banners literally covering the walls showcase our enduring athletic legacy—we compete with the best, successfully."

The gymnasium renovations were fully funded through reserves built exactly for such purposes over many years of sound financial management of the St. Joes operating budget, and will not affect the school's tuition. The gymnasium will be ready for use by the first day of school for St. Joseph High School students on September 8, 2020.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES GRANT FROM PAGE 9

and Thomas Merton Center purchased food from includes the Parkway Diner, Michael's Italian Restaurant, Seasons Eats, Sunshine Cuisine, The Original Vazzy's and Rohan's Family Spice Restaurant. Combined, these restaurants helped the food centers provide over 1500 meals to local residents.

Johnny Vazzano, owner of The Original Vazzy's understands that his customers are now facing financial hardships and is doing his best to help ease that burden by offering discounts and promotions, like The Family Meal Deal. The restaurant feels that being a part of the community and maintaining a spirit of giving is a vital part of what it does. Vazzy's has always given back to the City of Bridgeport even

before the pandemic and has been a regular donor to the Thomas Merton Center. Johnny Vazzano and his staff believe that "we are all in this together."

"This project was not only very beneficial to New Covenant Center, but it was also enlightening. Our staff was able to meet the owners of these wonderful restaurants and hear their stories of how they were impacted by COVID-19. This virus knows no boundaries. It impacted these businesses, our agency and most importantly the guests we serve. The project coordinated by Bank of America helped all of us," said John Gutman, executive director of New Covenant Center.

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(To learn more about who we are and what we do, visit our website at www.ccfairfield.org. Social media is a growing and pivotal arm of Catholic Charities communication. Stay connected with all that we do by following us on Facebook: @ccfairfield, Twitter: @ccfairfelddob, and Instagram: @catholiccharitiesdob.)

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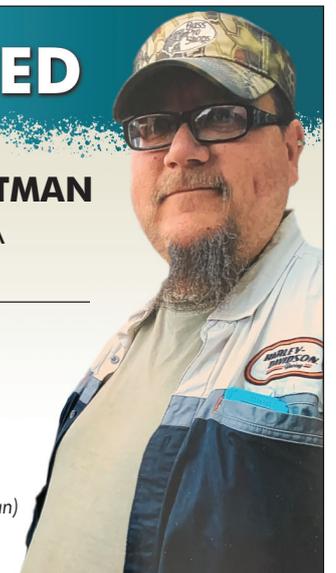
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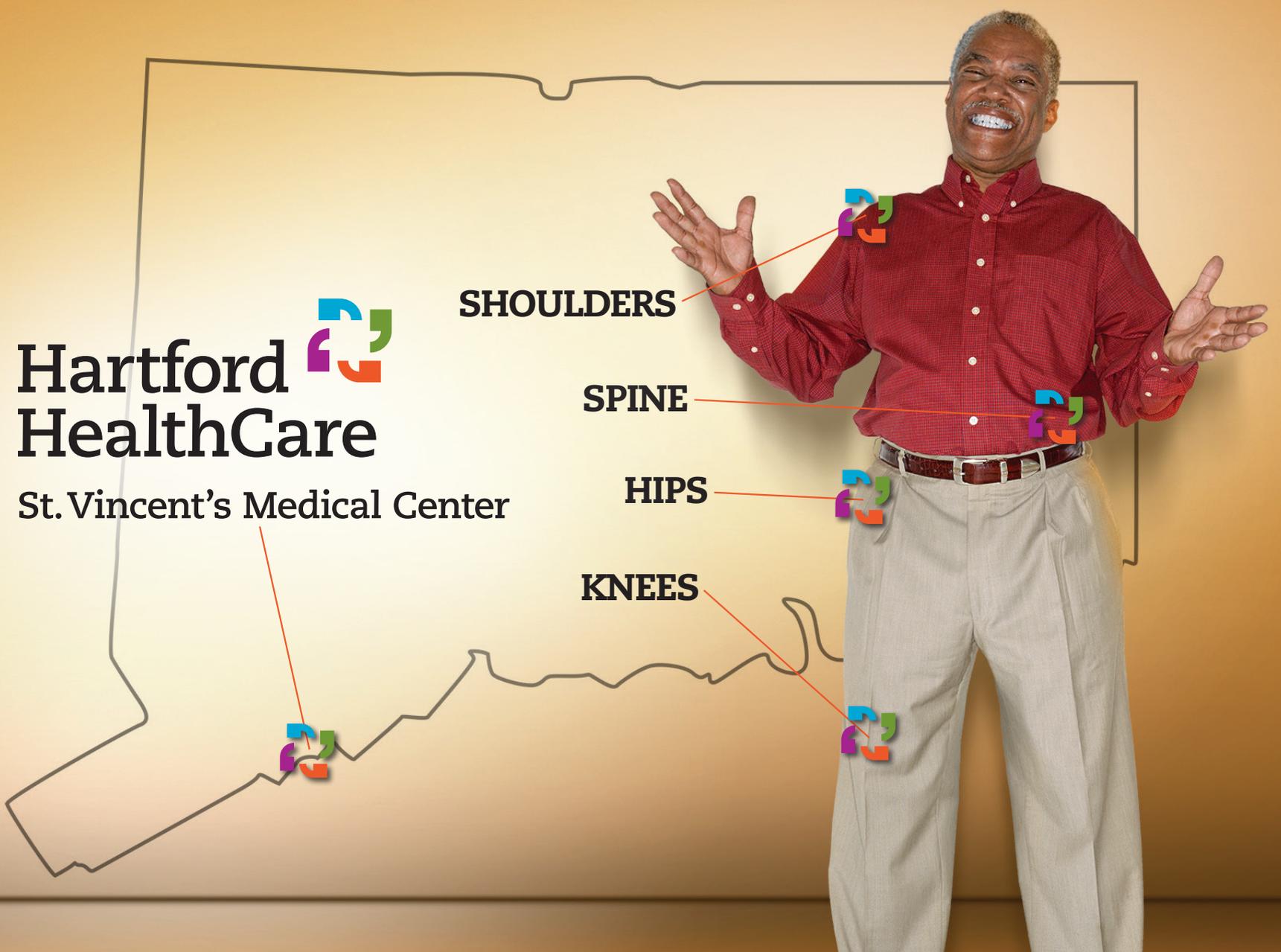
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