## Inside this issue

**A Season of Waiting and Thanksgiving**

### ON THE COVER

**St. Margaret Shrine**

at dusk. The statue
of Our Lady and the
Christ Child is one
of many prayerful settings
that draw people to the
Bridgeport shrine.

Photos by
Amy Mortensen

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Around the Diocese

Living the faith and serving others

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

Pet blessing welcomes all

RIDGEFIELD—It is a long-held Catholic tradition to hold a Blessing of the Animals on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals, merchants and ecology.

St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield held their Blessing of Pets ceremony on October 4 in the St. Mary School parking lot.

St. Mary’s welcomed everyone to participate, encouraging parishioners to bring their pets, a photo of their pets, or a special stuffed animal to be blessed. “If you don’t have a pet, come celebrate with those who do,” the flyer encouraged.

Masks were worn and all social distancing guidelines were followed.

Update from St. Rose of Lima School

NEWTOWN—On Sunday October 18, a St. Rose School family spent the afternoon creating pumpkin patches around the school grounds with the help of several 8th grade students. Preschool, kindergarten, first and second graders had time to run through their own designated pumpkin patches to find and pick their pumpkins.

Another notable moment came when a Mom made a special, “on screen” visit to the first grade classroom to read a story in honor of her daughter’s birthday. Parent participation is such a big part of St. Rose School life; it’s nice that they can continue to connect, even from a distance.

Children’s chalk Rosary

RIDGEFIELD—St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield held a Children’s Chalk Rosary on October 24. About a dozen families prayed a decade of the Glorious Mysteries together, enjoyed some delicious cider donuts, fresh fall apples and cold apple cider, and played on the playground in their rain jackets and umbrellas!

“God’s blessings rained down on this event, as parishioners gathered to share their faith, socialize, laugh and praise the Lord!” shared Carolyn Haitsch, communications manager for St. Mary Parish.
The Pumpkin Patch Project
FAIRFIELD—As fall continues, Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs’ months-long pumpkin patch project is coming to completion. Students have used their observational skills, counting and measuring, some basic botany and, of course, teamwork. The project has helped students become more aware of the seasons and their connection to the growing cycle.

The project is the brainstorm of Patty Loh, one of the Academy teachers. “In summer school I thought it would be fun to study the life cycle of pumpkins,” she said. “I bought the tray of seeds; we planted them, and within a week we had sprouts. The students were all excited.”

St. Catherine/St. Agnes food drive continues
RIVERSIDE—Generous donations have arrived to the weekly Tuesday morning Neighbor-to-Neighbor Food and Essentials Drive at St. Catherine’s sponsored by the Social Justice Committee. Donations filled three trunks and two back seats. Volunteers and staff sent out a heart-felt thank you to all who participated. The need continues! 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.

Local Knights to distribute over 300 brand new coats
NORWALK—More than 300 brand new coats will be distributed by the Knights of Columbus Coats for Kids Initiative with Family & Children’s Agency (FCA). This Initiative helps keep kids warm over the winter months by providing this necessity. To be safe during the pandemic, the Knights of Columbus and FCA decided to have the Knights set up the coats at FCA’s building in Norwalk on Saturday, October 24. Social workers picked up the coats and distributed them to the families directly. “Even though we had to change how we do the event, the most important thing is that children will receive a warm coat for the upcoming winter season,” said Project Chairman and District Deputy George Ribellino.

Pandemic can’t stop St. Mark School’s pink tradition
STRATFORD—Every October, since 2009, St. Mark School in Stratford has hosted a school wide breast cancer awareness event. Like most celebrations this year, the 2020 cut-a-thon looked a little different.

While the school could not host their traditional assembly where students shaved their heads or donated their hair to Wigs for Kids, they did manage to spread cancer awareness and raise funds for the worthy cause.

Stylists from CKC Salon and Keratin Bar in Fairfield partnered with the school once again in support of the event. They set up a mini outdoor salon on campus, where fifty-one students purchased pink hair extensions. The entire school community rallied together in the fight against

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Stylists from CKC Salon and Keratin Bar in Fairfield partnered with the school once again in support of the event. They set up a mini outdoor salon on campus, where fifty-one students purchased pink hair extensions. The entire school community rallied together in the fight against cancer. The event also included a “pink out” where students and faculty dressed in various shades of pink in an unwavering show of support.

The school raised $1,913 for the Elizabeth Pfriem Swim Cancer Center at St. Vincent’s Medical Hospital in Bridgeport. Over the past 11 years, St. Mark School has raised over $23,000!
Diocesan News

Decree allows for earlier Christmas Vigil Masses

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has issued a decree permitting the celebration of Christmas Vigil Masses beginning at 2 pm in parishes throughout the diocese on Thursday December 24, in order to provide more options to the faithful seeking to safely attend the Mass on Christmas.

The decree, issued on November 16, states that the earlier vigil time represents a one-time exemption for Christmas 2020 because of the extraordinary situation created by the pandemic, the larger number of people expected to attend Mass, and the need to socially distance and follow other restrictions to safeguard health.

"With this provision, it is my desire and hope that each parish priest or rector ensure that enough Masses are celebrated in order to allow the reasonable accommodation of all the faithful who wish to personally attend a Holy Day Mass for Christmas," the bishop said.

While the exemption is only two hours earlier than the permitted vigil time, it will enable parishes to add one or even two more vigil Masses to their schedule over the Christmas observance.

The expanded Mass schedule will make it possible for more faithful to attend Christmas Masses while at the same time following the guidelines issued by Governor Ned Lamont as the number of positive cases and hospitalizations continues to increase in Connecticut.

In a recent virtual conversation sponsored by The Leadership Institute and the Development Office of the diocese, the bishop told those who participated online that he approved the earlier vigil time because given current restrictions he wants to avoid people being turned away from Mass at Christmas—the time of year that many Catholics and their families who are not normally at Mass reconnect with the Church.

Some pastors have already created Christmas Mass schedules and many parishes will be using multiple locations (church, parish hall, school gymnasium, outdoors (weather permitting) as well as live streaming.

Masses will be scheduled to allow for ample time to sanitize the church (and other spaces) in between Masses.

In line with the bishop’s decree, the diocese has also recommended that parishes prepare for Christmas by scheduling multiple, early opportunities for the faithful to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that lines are not too long in the days before Christmas. Likewise, Christmas Pageants and live Nativity scenes must be carefully planned to ensure the safety of children and adults.

The pandemic has presented numerous challenges to worship, but pastors throughout the diocese are working to invite the faithful to the celebration of the Nativity with a tone of hopefulness and joy.

"Some will return to church on Christmas for the first time, others will long for the pre-pandemic time when they could simply ‘show up’ for Mass without signing up or signing in. These celebrations of Christmas provide us with an opportunity to extend a sincere welcome and ensure an environment that is safe and reverent," the bishop said.

In announcing the earlier Christmas vigil time, the bishop reiterated that people should register in advance for Mass because it enables a parish to plan and to notify parishioners if someone should test positive for COVID-19 at a Mass they attended. They also need to wear a mask and practice safe distancing when they are in church.

For the latest news visit: www.bridgeportdiocese.org.
Bishop re-promulgates
Safe Environments Policies

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has re-promulgated the Diocesan Safe Environments poli-
cies and practices for the protection of children, young people and vul-
nerable adults.

In a formal decree, issued on
October 30, the bishop said the
new policy and handbook will
become effective immediately and
available online in its entirety.

“As Catholics, we share a sacred
obligation to protect all of God’s
Children, especially the children, youth and vulnerable adults who entrust-
ed to our care,” the bishop said.

Printed copies of the revised
Safe Environments Handbook
along with information for report-
ing suspected abuse in the Diocese
of Bridgeport will be posted in a
central location in all Churches
and Schools, where they can be
easily accessed and a copy of the
Safe Environments Handbook
should be made available on all
school and parish websites.

“As our society and the
Catholic Church face new chal-
lenge when it comes to the prob-
lem of child sexual abuse and other
forms of abuse, we must continue
to strengthen our response to this
problem to ensure a safe environ-
ment, therefore we are issuing our
third update to our policies and
procedures relating to our imple-
mentation of the USCCB Charter
for the Protection of Children and
Young People in the Diocese of
Bridgeport,” said Bishop Caggiano.

The bishop said he is grate-
ful to Erin Neil, director of Safe
Environments, to members of the
review board and to all staff and
volunteers who worked on the report
and participate in the program.

“Our diocese has shown great
leadership in the areas of early detec-
tion, reporting and prevention of
abuse and I am grateful for the sup-
port and cooperation of our ongoing
efforts to safeguard children, youth
and vulnerable adults,” he said.

Erin Neil said the diocese remains
fully committed to upholding the
highest standards set forth in the
USCCB Charter for the Protection of
Children and Young People.

Neil said that among the key
changes contained within the 2020
Safe Environments Handbook are
the following:

• A list of numbers for report-
ing allegations of abuse of a
minor or vulnerable adult are
now located on the front cover
of the Safe Environments
Handbook
• A third party-reporting hotline
option for victims
• Procedures for reporting abuse
of a vulnerable adult
• Procedures for reporting an
allegation of abuse to police in
addition to the CT Department
of Children and Family
Services
• Procedures for reporting an
allegation of abuse involving a
U.S. bishop or cardinal
• Procedures for reporting sus-
pected boundary violations and
grooming behaviors toward
minors and vulnerable adults

The new handbook also updates
training information on identifying
early warning signs and grooming
behaviors in offenders of child
sexual abuse and abuse of vulner-
able adults and the definition of
vulnerable adult, makes changes
to the Sexual Misconduct Review
Board process to include the review
of allegations against deceased cler-
ics, and updates the definition of a
Credible Allegation.

With the publication of the new
handbook the diocese also provides
the CT Department of Children
and Family Services updated defi-
nitions of abuse. It also updates
training and criminal background
check requirements for visiting
members of the clergy.

Many of the changes and new
procedures have been made in
response to the recommendations
included in the historic 2019
Accountability Investigation and
report conducted by Judge Robert
Holzberg.

“The judge’s recommenda-
tions were designed to further
strengthen our efforts to address
the ever-growing challenges we
face as a Church and as a society
to prevent abuse and assist victims.
The bishop has incorporated them
into the policies of the diocese,”
Neil said.

In 2015, the bishop issued a
revised set of policies relating to
the implementation of the Charter
in our diocese which are to be
reviewed every five years.

Neil said the renewal of crim-
inal background checks and Safe
Environments training related to
the policies contained within the
revised 2020 Safe Environments
Handbook will continue for all
members of the clergy, lay employ-
ees, tenants, vendors, independent
contractors and volunteers.

The changes include volunteers
who do not have scheduled contact
with children, every five or 10 years
based on their ministry, utilizing
VIRTUS, Protecting God’s Children
for Adults program and the VIRTUS
database for parishes and school to
track completion of these items.

Safe Environments training will
continue annually for all students
enrolled in a Catholic School
through virtual or live instruc-
tion utilizing The Child Lures
Prevention Program, Think First
and Stay Safe and Personal Safety
Training utilizing the Netsmartz.
org program for middle school
and high school students.

Parishes will make available
Safe Environments training for
parents and children enrolled in
religious education programs
using online instruction through
the Netsmartz.org and Kidsmartz.
org videos in order to complement
the training that children receive
through their public school.

“Parents may choose to teach
this at home and opt-out of Safe
Environments training at a parish
or school by placing their request
in writing. Training materials are
publicly available and located on
our diocesan website,” Neil said.

Printed copies of the revised
Safe Environments Handbook
along with information for report-
ing suspected abuse in the Diocese
of Bridgeport must be posted in a
central location in all Churches
and schools where they can be easily
accessed and a copy of the Safe
Environments Handbook should be
made available on all school and
parish websites.

Beginning in November for track-
ing purposes, VIRTUS will have
the revised policies and procedures
uploaded to their website. Parish
employees and volunteers may log
into their VIRTUS account and sign
these electronically or your parish Safe
Environments coordinator will be able
to quickly log receipt of the handbook
into a parish VIRTUS database by
searching a person’s name.

(For assistance with this step, contact
Astrid Alvarez, VIRTUS training and
Development Specialist 203.416.1407 or
aalvarez@diobpt.org.)
Annual Catholic Appeal
Parishes step up participation

By JOE PISANI

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Father Norbert Siwinski O.F.M., pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Church in Bridgeport, discovered parishioners he never had before—from all over the world.

As part of his strategy to reach out to his faith community through Facebook and live-stream Masses in English and Polish, he touched many more people worldwide.

“Now, I have two parishes—in Bridgeport and our online visitors,” he said. “It’s so nice for me, like a big family. There are people from Texas and Arizona, where they don’t have Polish-speaking parishes, who come to pray with us.”

Not to mention visitors from as far away as Lithuania, United Kingdom, Germany and Russia.

In fact, the St. Michael Facebook page has 1,000 followers.

The enthusiasm he brings to his job as pastor for the past two years is evident. He came to America after being the pastor of a German church outside Cologne for 14 years. Father, who is half Lithuanian and half Polish, grew up in Poland.

A year ago, St. Michael’s celebrated its 120th anniversary, and for most of that time, it was a Franciscan-run parish, which today attracts visitors from all over the state, including German-speaking people who come to Father for their confessions. The only other German-speaking priest is in Boston, he says.

Father Norbert is especially proud that his parish raised more than 80 percent of its goal for the Annual Catholic Appeal.

“It was a really hard year for our parish because of COVID-19, and we had to find new solutions,” he said. “We couldn’t celebrate in the church, so I started doing Facebook live-streaming every day with evening Mass and prayer services. We are a Polish-American church, and this has become a meeting place for Polish-speaking people and many visitors come to be with us online.”

St. Michael’s also has a YouTube channel with sermons and songs, which Father calls, “a piece of home for Polish people in America.”

“For me, the Annual Appeal is very important; it is part of our identity,” he said. “While we are a Polish-American family, we are also part of the diocese. We have our own traditions and liturgy, but we belong to the Diocese of Bridgeport.”

**Participation is key**

Joe Gallagher, chief development officer of the diocese, said that over 11,270 generous donors have made over 13,700 gifts to the appeal, raising $7 million.

Gallagher said that Mass attendance and the need to live-stream, Father said that the offering is holding steady and many people are giving online or through the mail.

Reflecting on the role of the parish priest during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, he said, “We are always ready to serve them in any way possible.”

Father Joseph Prince, pastor of St. Elizabeth Seton Parish in Ridgefield, who will be celebrating his 50th anniversary as a priest next year and 25 years in his parish, believes his faith community has an astute awareness of the mission of the universal Church.

“It’s not only that we think and care about our own needs in the parish, but our people also stand up to help meet the needs of the people in the universal church,” he said.

“They are always generous and ready to contribute in any way possible. They are just lovely people.”

Father, who was ordained in India and served three years in that country before coming to America, said his parishioners are very active in charitable works and they volunteer regularly at the Dorothy Day Hospitality House in Danbury. They also have an active outreach in the community, collecting coats and clothes for the needy, contributing to food pantries and conducting a Christmas gift drive for Blessed Sacrament Parish in Bridgeport.

“They are always looking to help people and extend Christian charity to others,” he said.

St. Elizabeth Seton Parish raised more than 82 percent of its goal in the Annual Catholic Appeal. Father said, “I just really want to thank my people for their wonderful love and affirmation of my ministry in the parish and give special thanks to Bishop Caggiano for all he has done.”

Despite the limits on Mass attendance and the need to live-stream, Father said that the offering is holding steady and many people are giving online or through the mail.

Father Ciprian Bejan, pastor of St. Margaret Mary Church in Shelton, applauds his parishioners for raising 113 percent of the parish goal in the Annual Catholic Appeal.

“They are very generous; they give generously even though they are not wealthy people,” he said. “And they understand the importance of giving.”

Father Gallagher that he conducted a silent appeal. “With COVID-19 and the restrictions, I didn’t really push too much, but I mentioned the appeal to them.”

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 7
Annual Catholic Appeal

PARISHES STEP UP FROM PAGE 6

The success was gratifying, and he attributes it to their appreciation and understanding of what the appeal does.

“During the past two years, I mentioned its importance and what we do and how much can happen when we join our resources on the parish level with the diocese,” he said. “They were made aware of the good things the Catholic Church does with our money.”

He said his parishioners are also very generous with their time in charitable activities and volunteer work in the area.

“We made people aware that in addition to helping others in need throughout the diocese, they also come back to the parish,” he said. “And while COVID-19 has been challenging, with their generosity, we have been able to cover our expenses and parish life continues to move forward without having to worry about the lack of resources.”

St. Margaret Shrine, Bridgeport

Deacon Don Faust, administrator of St. Margaret Shrine, said he is constantly overwhelmed by the generosity of those who form the community of faith at the shrine located about a mile from the Catholic Center in Bridgeport. Presently, the Shrine has achieved 99 percent of its goal with nearly a 30 percent participation rate, one of the highest in the diocese.

“They’re just unbelievably generous, no matter what we ask for,” said Deacon Faust, who is grateful and proud of the response he and Father Giandomenico Flora have received as they’ve presided over the revival and restoration of the Shrine, which now draws visitors from all over the region.

The deacon is also quick to share credit for the Shrine’s high participation rate with super volunteer Angelo Cocco.

“He is just so devoted to the ACA and puts his heart into it. Angelo speaks at all of the Masses, and he is really one of the reasons for our success.”

Deacon Faust said that St. Margaret Shrine has developed into a caring and diverse worship community with about 375 people attending Mass each weekend. Masses are held outside when the weather permits and in the Shrine’s small chapel.

One other reason for success is the empathy of people for each other and an awareness that many are in need.

“We have a number of people who are suffering, even here at the Shrine. When we determined our goals last year, we allotted additional money for outreach to help with tuitions, gifts cards, and the Food Bank. As a result our people know the importance of the ACA and its ability to reach others throughout the diocese, and they’re committed to supporting it.”

Pamela S. Rittman, director of the Annual Catholic Appeal for the diocese, said the demand for services increased significantly during the COVID-19 crisis, and it continues today because of job losses, homelessness, the death of loved ones and the need for counseling.

“This is where the Annual Catholic Appeal is so important,” she said. “A gift of $5, $20 or larger, no matter the amount, makes a difference.”

Rittman said “When we think about Thanksgiving and what we are grateful for and when we look forward to Advent and Christmas in these challenging times, remember there are many people who are in worse situations, who depend on the diocese for their daily meal, for online Masses and prayer services, and for faith and formation programs. Parents of children who receive tuition assistance from the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund or who are now in need of funding receive help from the Appeal. It is a vital ministry to assist our parishioners and community as Christ calls us to do so.

Please help Bishop Caggiano assist our neighbors and friends and make a pledge at www.2020ACABridgeport.com, text the word APPEAL to 475.241.7849, or call 203.416.1470 and someone will help you make your special gift.

Does your company participate in a matching gift program? Your gift may be doubled or tripled. Please call the Development Office at 203.416.1312 for instructions on how to make the most of your generosity.
Proclaim the word in a world that runs from truth

By JOE PISANI

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano urged five candidates for the permanent diaconate to proclaim the Word of God to a “world that runs from the Truth,” during a Mass at which they were installed in the ministry of reader, a major step in their formation as deacons.

As readers of God’s Word, they will be able to proclaim it in a liturgical assembly, instruct children and adults in the faith, and prepare them to receive the sacraments. This is a milestone for the men who are discerning the vocation of deacon.

“Be a humble servant of the Truth, for the Truth itself has the power, not you and not me,” Bishop Caggiano said in his homily at St. Augustine Cathedral.

“Open your hearts in charity when you teach. Be humble before the mystery that is greater than all of us combined and allow charity to always animate what you do in service of the Lord for he will allow you to bear great fruit.”

He thanked the men for their perseverance, and their families for the sacrifices they have made so the candidates, as husbands and fathers, could be involved in the formation program.

“Allow me to begin by offering my sincere thanks to you for persevering in formation in these very difficult, challenging and unpredictable times,” he said. “It is the calling God has given to all of us to meander this world, and I am deeply grateful that you have persevered in the call you have discerned in your heart and that the Lord has brought you to—your call to come into the great mystery of the Sacrament of Service as leaven in the Body of Christ.”

Deacon Jerry Lambert, director of the Diaconate, said, “The Institution in the Ministry of Reader is a significant milestone along the four-and-a-half-year journey toward ordination. Our five candidates have begun their third year of studies and discernment. As they continue their journey, they will grow and strive for balance among the human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral dimensions of their diaconate formation.”

During the institution, Bishop Caggiano called each candidate forward and as they knelt before him and held the Bible, he said, “Take this book of Holy Scripture and be faithful in handing on the Word of God, so that it may grow strong in the heart of his people.”

The candidates who were instituted as readers were:

Christopher Greer of Westport, who received his bachelor’s degree in economics from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He has worked as a development consultant as well as a professional sports photographer. He is a member of St. Luke’s in Westport along with his wife Kristine and their two children, Kassidy and Kevin. He is involved in the adult choir as a cantor/soloist, a member of the men’s group and an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.

George Kain of Ridgefield, who holds a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from the City University of New York. He has worked as a university professor and chair in the Division of Justice and Law Administration at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury for 25 years and served as police commissioner for the City of Ridgefield for 20 years. He is a member of St. Mary’s in Ridgefield along with his wife Marilyn. He has served as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion (as well as a homebound minister to the sick), a cantor, usher, altar server and RCIA instructor. He is a member of the Knights of Columbus, an adoration chapel volunteer, a member of the Disciples for Life Parish Retreat Team and men’s ministry. He is father of daughter Grace and grandfather of Mercy.

James Meehan of Westport, who holds a bachelor’s degree in accounting from City University of New York. He has been the owner/operator of several businesses for historical window restoration, home heating oil delivery and heating/air conditioning. He and his wife Athina attend Church of the Assumption in Westport, along with their children Christopher, Andrew and Christina. At Assumption, Meehan serves as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion and reader, coordinating both ministries. He also serves in the elderly/homebound ministry, acts as financial secretary for the Knights of Columbus and is a volunteer coordinator at the Thomas Merton Center.

Rock Desances and his wife Mireille attend St. Margaret Shrine parish in Bridgeport, along with their five children. Desances serves as an usher, reader, altar server and extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. He is a member of the Knights of Columbus and has worked as dietetic assistant, food manager and health care assistant.

Vincent Pia who has worked as a writer, photographer, professional picture framer and art conservator. He is a member of St. Margaret Bourgeoys in Brookfield, with his wife Holly and children Caitlynn and Brandon. He is active in the parish, serving as a reader/lector, an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, altar server, parish Rosary leader, adult faith formation facilitator, a member of the Knights of Columbus (having previously served as both officer and director) and a former member of the choir.
Pew from ‘mother parish’

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

TRUMBULL—Wednesday, November 4, was the liturgical memorial of St. Charles Borromeo, who served as Archbishop of Milan in the 16th century, and was one of the truly great pastors and saints in the Church’s history. “The name of St. Charles is especially familiar to us here at St. Catherine’s, because our ‘mother parish’ in Bridgeport—from whose territory our parish was formed in 1955—is named for him,” said Father Marcello, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull. “There is a beautiful stained glass window of St. Charles located in the lower church of St. Catherine’s due to the fact that many pews in the lower church of St. Charles were removed years ago to make room for Religious Education classrooms.

Earlier this year, Msgr. Walsh gave us a pew that for many decades was located in the lower church of St. Charles. Generations of students of St. Charles School—including my father and grandmother—attended Mass there, and generations of faithful sat, knelt, and prayed there at Masses, Novenas, Adoration and other devotions.”

The pew became available to St. Catherine’s due to the fact that so many of our original families came,” said Father Marcello. “I am grateful to Linda Marini and her late husband Enrico for underwriting the cost of the project,” he added.

On Sunday, November 8, St. Catherine of Siena welcomed Msgr. Christopher Walsh, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish, for a special blessing and dedication at their 11 am Mass. “When we were doing the Christ at the Center project last year, I wanted to incorporate some tangible link with our ‘mother parish’ as part of that project,” Father Marcello explained.

Foundations in Education offers 2020 year end giving tips

Year-end charitable giving can have a substantial positive impact on your tax situation and overall estate plan. If you are considering giving a gift of a Catholic education, here are some tips from Foundations in Education:

1. Timing of Gift
Make sure you date and postmark checks to your favorite charity no later than December 31, 2020. Per IRS regulations, single gifts of $250 or more require a substantiation letter from your charity. For donors who itemize, the CARES Act increased the 2020 charitable deduction limit for cash contributions from 60% to 100% of adjusted gross income.

2. Gifts of Stock
Electronic transfer of stock is an advantageous, easy and quick method of contributing. Visit www.foundationsineducation.org/make-a-donation/ for stock gift instructions to Foundations in Education. Donating stock instead of cash can be a savvy tax-planning strategy since you can eliminate most capital gains and take a charitable deduction on the fair market value of the gift. Please contact your tax advisor for advice.

3. Gifts of IRA Required Minimum Distribution
If you are over 72 and required to make a minimum distribution from your IRA, you may consider using a charitable IRA rollover, also known as a qualified charitable distribution (QCD), to make your contribution. Any charitable gift made directly from your IRA to Foundations in Education counts toward your minimum distribution and is not considered taxable income. Each individual taxpayer can give up to $100,000 tax-free in any year. This form of gifting may be particularly appropriate if you are required to take a minimum distribution from your IRA but do not need additional income.

4. Donor-Advised Fund
It is not too late to set up a donor-advised fund for your charitable gifts this year. The advantage of a donor-advised fund is that you can get the deduction for making the gift this year but decide later which charities to which you want to donate the money. Most major brokerage firms can assist you. Please consult your tax advisor for advice.

5. Planning Your Estate
The end of a calendar year is a great time to update your will and estate plans. This is an important step to secure the future for your loved ones. A will legally protects your spouse, children and assets, and can also spell out exactly how you would like things handled. This simple step will allow your legacy to endure.

Contact your legal or financial advisors for assistance in planning charitable gifts with tax and other financial implications. Visit www.foundationsineducation.org/make-a-donation/ or contact Foundations in Education at 203.416.1405 or mquinn@foundationsineducation.org for information.

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Catholic Education

Mater Salvatoris Prep School to open at Trinity site

STAMFORD—The Diocese of Bridgeport and Sisters of the Company of the Savior have announced a sale of Trinity Catholic High School and a long-term lease of the campus of the former High School in Stamford as the permanent location for Mater Salvatoris College Preparatory School.

“With great joy, we move forward with this agreement, which will lead to the expansion of our presence in Stamford and a permanent location for the Mater Salvatoris College Preparatory School. The Sisters of the Company of the Savior are deeply grateful to the Diocese of Bridgeport and the ongoing support of Bishop Frank J. Caggiano to make this possible,” said the Order’s Mother General, Sister Mercedez Diez de Angulo.

The move to the former Trinity Catholic High School campus will allow the Sisters to accomplish their project of a Pre-K through grade 12 school, and enable the Sisters to gradually open a high-school division.

In addition, driven by the need to serve the family as a whole, and to meet the needs in Stamford, the Sisters of the Company of the Savior are pleased to announce the opening of a boys’ division at Mater Salvatoris. Boys and girls develop and learn differently, and in order to meet their individual needs, the school will introduce a model of single-sex classrooms in a co-ed campus, starting in first grade, as enrollment makes it feasible.

Plans for the 2021-2022 school year call for the school to enroll girls from Pre-K 3 through fifth grade, and boys from Pre-K 3 through first grade. The school will add one grade level each year through grade 12.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said that, consistent with his commitment to find the best use for the Trinity campus, the Sisters’ plan to continue the tradition of catholic education in Stamford was a major factor in his decision to move ahead with the agreement. After Trinity Catholic closed, there was a great deal of interest on the part of commercial and other interests to acquire the property.

“Our goal with regard to the future of the Trinity Catholic campus has been the preservation of Catholic education in the greater Stamford community. Many families have sacrificed and contributed to Trinity Catholic over the years, and we believe this is the best way to honor their commitment and lasting legacy while giving parents a new option for Catholic education.”

The initial proceeds from the agreement will be used to cover a portion of the debt incurred from the renovation and operational deficits of the former Trinity Catholic High School over the decade before it closed.

Under the agreement, the balance of the funds to be paid by the Sisters will not be received by the Diocese for a number of years.

The bishop said that the Sisters are working with diocesan superintendent of schools, Dr. Steven Cheeseman, to look for areas of growth and collaboration.

Mater Salvatoris school opened in Stamford in 2018, in the former Holy Spirit School building on Scofieldtown Road and it became the seventh school that the Sisters of the Company of the Savior have founded around the world. The mission of the Schools of the Company of the Savior offer a faithful development of the whole person in all aspects of life, which the campus was designed to preserve secondary Catholic education in the future.

Sister M. Maria Alguacil, C.S., head of school, said that he would look for ways to preserve secondary Catholic education in the future.

(Mater Salvatoris Prep School and the Sisters of the Company of the Savior at stamford.matersalvatoris.org. Contact us by email at stm.school@matersalvatoris.org, or by phone at 203.489.0977. The new Mater Salvatoris campus is located at 926 Newfield Avenue, Stamford, Conn.)
Seminarians to move to St. Charles Borromeo

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Beginning in January 2021, college seminarians and pre-theologians of the Diocese of Bridgeport will undertake their formation and studies at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano announced the change in seminary formation on September 16, in a letter he sent to all priests of the diocese.

“Given that fostering vocations and supporting our seminarians is a unique obligation that I possess as bishop and a successor of the apostles, I have made this decision because I am convinced that it will be to the great benefit of our seminarians and their future priesthood,” the bishop said.

The bishop made the decision following an in-depth review and analysis by ad hoc committee of curial officials who examined the long term viability of Saint John Fisher House of Discernment. The Presbyteral Council and the College of Consultors were also involved in the process.

“In order to fulfill my ministerial responsibility to provide men aspiring to the priesthood the best opportunity to be formed in the mind and heart of Christ, a few months ago I authorized the analysis,” the bishop said.

“After further analysis, I recently received the final recommendation that our collegiate seminarians and pre-theologians would be best served by attending the formation programs offered by St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia.”

The bishop said the study team was given the charge to examine every collegiate formation program of college seminarians and 61 percent of its pre-theologians go on to major seminary formation.

The bishop said the larger number of seminarians and the cultural and racial diversity of its population (35 percent of all seminarians) along with St. Charles’ strong emphasis upon human and spiritual formation (seeking to form “Men of Communion” with Christ and His Church) were all factors in his final decision. He also appreciated the possibility that a pre-theologian can earn a master’s in philosophical studies.

The seminary also has a self-contained faculty comprised of two full-time spiritual directors, a full-time psychologist and counselor and 16 full-time priests.

The bishop praised St. John Fisher House of Discernment, which has provided nearly two generations of priests. However, he said the program faced increasingly difficult obstacles to fulfill its formation and spiritual lives.

He said the diminished number of candidates residing in the house has made fostering basic human formation challenging, since peer interaction is essential to such formation.

“There are also increasing difficulties to maintain a philosophy faculty available to train our men in collaboration with Sacred Heart University. Finally, the escalating cost of training our men in our own collegiate formation program cannot be discounted in the current financially challenged situation that we face as a Church,” he said in his letter to priests.

The bishop offered his gratitude to all those who have supported St. John Fisher and diocesan seminarians, both past and current.

“I am especially appreciative of all the work that the rectors have provided the seminarians who were entrusted to their care and for all our faculty, board members and donors who have supported our men during their time at Fisher.”

In a letter to donors, the bishop thanked them for their generosity saying that there is an ongoing need for prayers and financial support as the seminarians continue their formation and seek “to grow in virtue and deepen their discernment.”

Funds that have been donated and were raised at St. John Fisher events such as the Rector’s Dinner will continue to support diocesan seminarians.

The bishop told donors that the decision to move the seminarians to a larger seminary program meets “the conditions we must consider for the appropriate human, spiritual and pastoral formation of the men who will one day minister in the diocese. We must consider both their lives as they enter formation and the challenges of proclaiming the Gospel today.”

All current seminarians have been made aware of the decision and will soon travel to St. Charles Borromeo Seminary to meet their new formators and community.

“Please pray for them as they prepare to make this important transition,” the bishop said.

Founded in 1989 by Most Rev. Edward M. Egan, the third Bishop of Bridgeport, the St. John Fisher House of discernment was created to provide young men with a place in which they could deepen their relationship with Christ Jesus while discerning a vocation. Since its inception, nearly 100 men have been ordained who spent some time at Fisher during their priestly formation. During its 31 year existence, St. John Fisher House has been located on Daniels Farm Road in Trumbull and its current location of 894 Newfield Avenue in Stamford.
Catholic Charities

Bank of America donates 12,000 masks to Charities

By AMY ZAJAC

FAIRFIELD COUNTY—Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, one of the largest private social service providers in the state of Connecticut, recently received 12,000 masks from Bank of America. The aid continues an innovative partnership that has allowed the agency to provide meals to residents, served through local restaurants in Stamford and Bridgeport. Since the start of the coronavirus, protective personal equipment (PPE) supplies have been low and costs have been high, making it even more challenging for non-profit agencies like Catholic Charities to secure what is required to stay open for business. For an agency like Catholic Charities, closing because masks are not available is simply not an option.

This donation is part of a nation-wide effort by Bank of America to immediately distribute nearly four million PPE masks to communities disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus, including communities of color, and is connected to its $1 billion, four-year commitment of additional support to help local communities address economic and racial inequality accelerated by a global pandemic. This is in addition to the four million masks the company donated earlier this year in cities across the country.

“Bank of America is committed to working with local partners that keep our families, communities, clients and teammates safe during the health crisis,” said Bill Tommins, Southern Connecticut market president for Bank of America. “Throughout the coronavirus, Bank of America has joined forces with local organizations to address families’ most basic needs. By supplying Catholic Charities with PPE, we’re able to help them further their mission and continue feeding families, safely, at the same time.”

“If we close, a single mother is unable to pick up groceries to feed her family. Homebound senior citizens do not receive their meals delivered to their home. A person experiencing a crisis related to depression or anxiety cannot connect with their therapist for counseling services,” said Executive Director Mike Donoghue. “Our services are vital in helping the most vulnerable populations in the communities throughout Fairfield County. We meet the most basic needs.”

Since the start of the pandemic, Catholic Charities’ programs and services have continued to thrive but many required the vital PPE in order to remain open. The Thomas Merton Center in Bridgeport remained open with a 30–40 percent increase in meal service provided through a grab and go format. The Morning Glory Breakfast Program in Danbury was closed, but provided 4,900 meals to homeless individuals who have been moved from shelters to the Super 8 Motel to ensure social distancing. Room to Grow Preschool in Norwalk reopened September 9 with 109 students in attendance. It was a state mandate for all students and teachers to wear masks throughout the day.

“The masks provided by Bank of America have been a blessing for our staff and clients,” said Bill Colson, director of the Thomas Merton Center. “Many clients were unable to not only find masks, but they also could not afford them. They were at risk. This donation not only helped to protect staff while they served the clients, but it also helped the clients to stay safe while out in the public.”

Catholic Charities’ 36 programs provide services throughout Fairfield County. Combined, they serve over 10,000 individuals in Fairfield County, Connecticut each year.

To learn more about who we are and what we do, visit our website at www.ccfairfield.org or follow us on Facebook (@ccfairfield), Twitter (@ccfairfielddob) and Instagram (@catholiccharitiesdob).
Reaching out to Youth

Family Bible Challenge goes national

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—The Leadership Institute’s Family Bible Challenge initially gathered more than 2,500 families to engage with Scripture.

Families tuned in from around the diocese as well as from the dioceses of Dallas, Orange, Rochester, Brooklyn and the archdioceses of Newark and New York.

Now…Family Bible Challenge is going national!

In a recent USCCB mailing, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano shared a letter inviting families around the country to participate. The bishop’s invitation was sent to more than five hundred thousand subscribers. In the first few hours, more than 2,200 families had subscribed.

“There is a strong desire of people to learn about their faith,” said Dr. Patrick Donovan, director of The Leadership Institute. “We want people to open their Bibles. In fact, when we began the FBC last year, we even gave families a Bible if they didn’t have one.”

The Family Bible Challenge takes place seasonally, usually three to four times per week. During each challenge, a theme is adopted.

With a goal of engaging both families and individuals in the Bible, The Leadership Institute sends an email each Sunday (in English and Spanish) with a passage to read and discuss. Quizzes on the material follow on Wednesday.

Seasons usually run six to seven weeks and families can join at any time and all reflections and quizzes are archived online for easy access.

The next season began on October 18, 2020 and focused on the beauty of God’s many creations. Drawing on passages from Genesis, Psalms, Daniel, Matthew, and St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, families were challenged to reflect upon how we care for creation in its many forms.

The Leadership Institute held several trivia nights last spring and slides from those evenings are now available for parishes and schools to use. In addition, the Institute has been partnering with Catholic high schools to encourage students to assist with writing future ques-

The Institute held several trivia nights last spring and slides from those evenings are now available for parishes and schools to use. In addition, the Institute has been partnering with Catholic high schools to encourage students to assist with writing future ques-

“St. Jerome tells us that, ‘ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ,’” reflects Bishop Caggiano. “I would add that amidst all the uncertainty in the world today, Scripture is one place we can find hope.”

“I strongly encourage catechists, parents, Catholic school teachers, and my brother priests and bishops to help spread the word about this great resource,” said the bishop.

(Visit familybiblechallenge.org to learn more and to sign up.)
More than 1,600 years ago, a proud, brilliant young man who thought he had everything realized he had nothing. He had friends, women, wealth and prestige, and still his heart was restless—because he didn’t have God.

That man, Augustine of Hippo, a pagan who became one of the Church’s greatest saints, said, “O Lord, our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you.” That spiritual restlessness still afflicts young people today in an age when we look to worldly pleasures and pursuits to satisfy a longing that only God can satisfy, says Father Joseph Gill of the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist, who with a group of young adults developed a podcast and video series titled “Restless” to bring them closer to God and explore issues that touch their lives in modern society.

“We are reaching out to young people through podcasts and videos because this is their language,” Father Gill said. The Restless project was made possible by a St. John Paul II Fund grant from Foundations in Faith, which is supported by the We Stand With Christ capital campaign. Restless will be broadcast on Veritas Catholic Network at WNLK-AM 1350 radio and be made available as a podcast on www.veritascatholic.com.

Father Gill will moderate discussions with three young people from Stamford and Greenwich—Lauren Doyle, Diane Kremheller and Javier Tremaria—as they explore such topics as evangelizing in the workplace and navigating the single life with an eye toward marriage. The show is expected to begin airing this October.

The Restless podcast is being recorded every Tuesday night at a studio Veritas set up in the basement at St. John’s. When Father Gill first arrived at the Basilica a year and a half ago, he had an idea to start a podcast and spoke to Kremheller, a co-founder of Catholic Adventures Stamford, a group for young adults in their 20s and 30s who have an interest in “building community and fellowship” with other Catholic young adults. They hope to explore include Catholics in political life, Catholic dating, how to read the Bible, Christian friendship and incorporating faith into sports.

“Restless” to bring them closer to God and explore issues that touch their lives in modern society.

“Father, who acts as moderator, said of his three colleagues, “They are definitely devout, and more than that, they are articulate about their faith and not afraid to share. They are also very ‘normal’ with real struggles and real joys. They work in the secular world and are respected and well-liked by everybody.”

The Restless project is intended to help young adults on their faith journey.

“It could be one avenue through which the Gospel reaches souls,” he said. “And it is meant for those young adult Catholics who want to go deeper into their faith. A lot of faithful young people feel isolated because there are not too many young adult groups in the area.

The podcasts, which will be 30 minutes long, will be available on Veritas and Spotify, a global digital music, podcast and video streaming service. Steve Lee, president and CEO of Veritas, said he is excited about the new show, particularly at a time when young people are moving away from organized religion. "Young adults are leaving the Church, and they don’t even understand what they’re leaving and why,” he said. “I met the young adults Father is working with and heard them do a mock show, and I was very impressed.”

The Restless video series has as its goal to produce faith-filled artistic expression. “People are attracted to God through beauty, truth and goodness,” Father said. “And we are looking at the way of beauty.”

He cited the example of Bishop Robert Barron’s series on Catholicism, which he said people watch over and over because of its profound message and captivating cinematography. Rather than having “talking heads,” Restless will feature different speakers and stunning video. A young volunteer who is accomplished in videography is editing the series, which will explore topics such as devotion to the Blessed Mother, the importance of confession and the meaning of life.

“It is meant for people who are seekers, people who are hungry and thirsty and want to dip their toe into Catholicism,” Father said. “My hope is that it will be used in Confirmation classes and CCD.

The videos will be uploaded to YouTube. In addition, Shalom World TV, a 24-hour television channel that broadcasts Catholic programs, has expressed interest in using the series. The 20 videos, which will be five to seven minutes long, are expected to be completed by spring and begin airing once a week in May.

Kelly Weldon, director of Foundations in Faith, which approved a grant for the project from the St. John Paul II Fund for Religious Education, Youth Ministry and Faith Formation, said, “It is really a great project, and we are super excited about it.”
Given the year we’ve had, one might easily be forgiven for asking what we have to celebrate on Thanksgiving. We are reeling after months of a deadly and disruptive pandemic and a contentious election that has divided friends and family members. Yet as people of faith, we must learn to practice gratitude, and as Americans we have much more that unites us than divides us—particularly as we attempt to safely gather round the table for Thanksgiving.

However, the answer to our brokenness and division is more lastingly found in the observance of Advent—which ultimately invites us to unite around a very different table. Writing in New Seeds of Contemplation Thomas Merton describes Advent as a graced period of time when a person can choose to abandon all that is not Christ-like in his or her life: “I begin to live in Christ when I come to the ‘end’ and to the ‘limit’ of what divides me from my fellow man; when I am willing to step beyond this end, cross the frontier; become a stranger, enter into the wilderness which is not ‘myself,’ where I do not breathe the air or hear the familiar, comforting racket of my own city, where I am alone and defenseless in the desert of God.”

This year more than ever we are in need of Advent and its call to a deeper spirituality: a spirituality found in the grace of emptying ourselves and prayerfully waiting to receive the Light of Christ in our lives. In doing so, we may find what truly unites us—and we will find abundant reasons for praise and personal thanks giving.

A Quiet Anniversary

COVID-19 has derailed many family celebrations of birthdays and other milestones in the last few months, but there’s one on the diocesan level we’d be remiss not to mention—however belatedly. On September 19, amid the many challenges facing the Church and society, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano quietly celebrated his 7th Anniversary as Bishop of Bridgeport.

What a remarkable seven years! During that time Bishop Caggiano has spent every day and nearly every hour working to renew the diocese. He has never wavered in his complete transparency on difficult issues, whether it be Church finances, the sexual abuse crisis, parish reconfiguration, Catholic education and most recently the response to the pandemic.

The bishop has led from the front, made the tough decisions—and challenged and inspired us as a family of faith. We are deeply grateful for his unflinching leadership, his authenticity and his courage!

In a recent Facebook entry published on the Feast Day of St. Augustine, the bishop reflected on the joy and responsibility of serving as the 5th Bishop of Bridgeport.

“My heart is filled with deep gratitude to the Lord and Our Lady as I look back on these last seven years in which I have had the privilege to serve as the Bishop of Bridgeport. Today I celebrate the blessings to collaborate with wonderful and dedicated priests, a curial staff that is second to none, lay leaders who are faithful, generous and committed to the faith in a diocese that is rich in beauty and diversity. My ministry continues to be a daily blessing and joy, despite the lingering challenges we continue to face as a Church.

Saint Augustine offers these words of admonition to anyone who holds an office in the Church: “The day I became a bishop, a burden was laid on my shoulders for which it will be no easy task to render an account. The honors I receive are for me an ever present cause of uneasiness. Indeed, it terrifies me to think that I could take more pleasure in the honor attached to my office, which is where its danger lies, rather than in your salvation which ought to be its fruit. This is why being set above you gives me comfort. Danger lies in the first; salvation in the second.”

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

PASTOR
REVEREND SEAN KULACZ, from Parochial Administrator, to Pastor, Holy Family and Saint Emery Parish, Fairfield. Effective date was October 25.

PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR
REVEREND JAMES BATES, appointed to Parochial Administrator, Saint Maurice Parish, Stamford for a term of one year. Effective date was November 1.

RESIDENCE
REVEREND ERIC SILVA, from Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Wilton, to Saint Pius X Parish, Fairfield. Effective date was October 1.

PAROCHIAL VICAR
REVEREND MICHAEL CLARK, from Saint Rose of Lima Parish, Newtown, to Saint Joseph Parish, Danbury. Effective date was October 19.

REVEREND TOMASZ PZYBYL, from Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Stamford, to Saint Rose of Lima Parish, Newtown. Effective date was October 19.

REVEREND DAVID FRANKLIN, from Saint Joseph Parish, Danbury, to Saint Aloysius Parish, New Canaan. Effective date was November 1.

PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL
REVEREND SAMUEL KACHUBA, appointed to the Presbyteral Council representing the Ordination Group of 0-14 years. Effective date is January 1, 2021 for a term of three years.

REVEREND JOSEPH MARCELLO, appointed to the Presbyteral Council representing the Ordination Group of 15-29 years Effective date is January 1, 2020 for a term of three years.

REVEREND COREY PICCININO, appointed to the Presbyteral Council representing the Ordination Group of 30+ active years Effective date is January 1, 2021 for a term of three years.

REVEREND ROBERT J. CROFUT, appointed to the Presbyteral Council representing the Ordination Group of the Retired. Effective date is January 1, 2021 for a term of three years.

DIRECTOR OF SEMINARIANS
REVEREND JOSEPH MARCELLO, appointed Director of Seminarians. Effective date was November 4 for a term of one year.

RETIREMENT
DEACON JOHN MAHON, from Saint Philip Parish, Norwalk, to retirement. Effective date was October 28.

SABBATICAL
REVEREND SAMUEL SCOTT, will be on Sabbatical. Effective date was October 1 through November 30.

The Most Reverend Francis T. Hoffmann Vicar for Clergy, November, 2020
The power of the ‘chosen family’

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.

Jesus Himself said “no prophet is accepted in his own town” (Luke 4:24). I have begun to realize this more and more. As I use my voice to speak out against the injustices I see, it is often the people that “knew you when,” that have the biggest problem with it. Perhaps it is our inherent nature to be resistant to change...to seek reliability in our family members, thinking that they are reflections of us instead of whole persons in themselves. Enter: the importance of the “chosen family.”

Jesus’ disciples were his “chosen family.” They traveled together, ministered together, shared conversations both difficult and deep, and became each other’s closest comrades. They had to leave their families behind in pursuit of their purpose, and I’m sure they faced a lot of backlash for this decision. There is power in these close bonds, formed through a shared journey, forged in adversity.

There is great strength in female friendship (don’t worry, there is absolutely a male equivalent as well, i.e. the “wolf pack,” but I can only speak from my own experience). We need these close friends who will offer us support, cheer us on, and not only validate us but amplify our voices. When I need reassurance, I know that I can turn to my “girl squad,” always and without fail. Some of these women I’ve known since I was in grammar school. We have seen each other through many life changes, through good times and bad, and our support for each other has remained unwavering.

In her book Becoming, Michelle Obama writes about the importance of holding these friendships close and cultivating these relationships. “My friends made me whole,” she writes, “as they always have and always will. They gave me a lift anytime I felt down or frustrated…. They grounded me when I felt the pressures of being judged…and they helped me ride out the big unsettling waves that sometimes hit without notice.”

There are many strong female friendships in the Bible, as well. Mary turns to Elizabeth when she finds out she is pregnant with Jesus, and they share their joy and take care of each other. Ruth refuses to leave her mother-in-law Ruth alone after her husband passes, vowing, “Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay” (Ruth 1:16). The women were the ones who stayed at the foot of the cross as Jesus was crucified. They held each other up and remained strong.

My friends and I have “friendsgiving” every year—a tradition where we all bring dishes and celebrate a Thanksgiving meal together sometime before we all celebrate with our biological and extended families. It is this time of year that my heart goes out to those who are estranged from their family members, or perhaps they have lost loved ones who were their closest allies. This time of year can often be a harsh reminder of the division they feel within their families, and can cause a lot of anxiety in and around upcoming gatherings.

My prayer for those people is that they can find support elsewhere—perhaps their “chosen family.” This year has been hard enough, may we practice love and acceptance this season. As Jesus sat and broke bread with his disciples; as he welcomed the outcast, the zealot, the wayward soul. Let us open our hands and our hearts, and set our tables.
"Put God first in everything you do"

BY JOE PISANI

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

Imagine for a moment that you’re looking down on this sorry planet—somewhat like God, who is the creator, redeemer and sustainer of this piece of rock and its inhabitants. Now, imagine you see countless dimwits who are arguing about why it’s offensive to say “God” because...because why? Because it might anger an atheist? Because a politician or lawyer or journalist or professor says it violates the separation of Church and State? Or because it might “trigger” some unbelievers to cover their ears and run through the streets screaming in terror?

Our parents used to say there were three topics that polite people don’t bring up in conversation—religion, sex and politics. Someone didn’t get that memo because all you ever hear about nowadays is politics and sex. Religion is the only topic that’s verboten.

A friend of mine recently discussed career opportunities with a student I knew, and they had a Zoom session because of COVID. As it turned out, the young woman, who is from a devout Catholic family, was sitting beneath a crucifix. My friend spotted it and cautioned the young woman about the importance of having a “neutral background” during teleconferences. Why? Because people might be offended by Christ on the cross. She then asked the student what they do to reduce stress. “I meditate. I do some awkward yoga poses,” I responded. “And I...pray.”

There was an awkward silence. That “pray” idea went over like a lead balloon. The doctor, who had been nodding her head in agreement with everything I said, stopped nodding when I mentioned prayer. It would have been more socially acceptable if I had replied, “I use recreational marijuana.” And I wasn’t sitting under a crucifix.

There’s a war being waged and many of us are trying to ignore it. It’s a war between people who want to remove God from society and those who should stand up for God every chance they get. Each of us has the power of the spoken word to help us—mentioning God. Never forget what Jesus said: “Everyone who acknowledges me before others, I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my Father in heaven.” There’s no sitting on the sidelines anymore.

Never forget what Jesus said: “Everyone who acknowledges me before others, I will acknowledge...” (To hear the speech, go to https://youtu.be/BxY_eJLBflk)
BRIDGEPORT—On December 2, at 7 pm, internationally acclaimed tenor Dennis McNeil will appear in the comfort of your home during a virtual fundraiser to benefit the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport. There’s no need to find something special to wear, consider the weather or, for parents, figure out who will watch the kids.

The school, which educates 800 girls and boys on the four campuses of Sts. Andrew, Ann, Augustine and Raphael, is tasked each year with raising more than $2 million to provide need-based scholarship to the 85 percent of students who cannot afford the annual tuition of $5,150.

“We are so grateful that Dennis has agreed to donate his time and incredible talent to this one-hour event, which will be broadcast free to viewers via Vimeo,” said Angela Pohlen, the Academy’s executive director. “It’s really once-in-a-lifetime to have an award-winning singer like Dennis perform your favorite Christmas songs live from his home in Redondo Beach, Calif. to your home, wherever that may be.”

While McNeil’s career took off at the Los Angeles Opera in 1988 and he has performed in much musical theater—including his role as Mr. Snow in “Carousel” more than 140 times, portraying Nikos to John Raitt’s “Zorba”—he is a versatile singer and has performed with the likes of Lionel Ritchie, Steve Miller and the Grateful Dead, among countless others. He has sung for several U.S. presidents, Supreme Court justices and Queen Elizabeth II. Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice once even accompanied him on piano. McNeil has recorded numerous albums, sung the National Anthem at many sporting events, been a featured performer honoring Medal of Honor recipients and sang at the memorial service following the explosion of the Space Shuttle Columbia.

While it is unquestionable that Candy Canes & Cocktails is a major fundraiser for inner-city education, replacing an Annual Fall Dinner that could not be held due to COVID-19, Pohlen said she wants everyone to have the opportunity to watch regardless of their ability to pay. “There are hundreds of free tickets available in addition to standard tickets costing $50, and there are many sponsorship opportunities. With the kindness and support of people across Fairfield County and beyond, I am optimistic we can raise these much needed monies and keep inner-city education alive and thriving in Bridgeport.”

(Tune in every Wednesday at noon to hear Bishop Frank Caggiano’s live show)

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BRIDGEPORT—When the cold started to set in, Father Andrés Alexis Motrona, the new parochial administrator of St. George Church, realized he had an urgent crisis to deal with...less than two months on the job. The 60-year-old boiler in the rectory was broken and there was no heat.

So with the help of the Holy Spirit and the assistance of Kelly Weldon, executive director of Foundations in Faith, he set out to deal with one of his first challenges. “The boiler had been leaking for almost two years and winter was coming. Plus we have a deficit,” he said. “I talked to Kelly, and she said, ‘Father, don’t worry. I will talk to the board and they will try to help you.’” And they did.

The parish is located on Park Avenue just outside of downtown Bridgeport and many of 440 registered families are financially challenged and struggling to support themselves during the COVID-19 crisis.

Father Alexis applied for a $10,000 emergency grant from the St. Francis Xavier Fund for financially challenged parishes, which was approved within hours, and the oil-burning boiler was replaced with a new gas boiler. The heat was restored for the rectory staff, Father Alexis and Father Eugene Szydlo, a retired priest in residence.

But there’s more to the story of St. George and its relationship with Foundations in Faith, which is funded by the We Stand With Christ capital campaign. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the parish received a $30,000 grant from the St. Francis Xavier fund for emergency needs, and recently was given a $2,000 mini-grant so he could provide religious education textbooks to students.

“At St. George, we responded with emergency funding in a time of crisis, and then we dealt with a practical and immediate need when they had no heat by providing money for the boiler,” Weldon said. “We also took it to the next step to explore an opportunity to help them with their technology and communications system enhancements. To me, this is an example of the Church engaging in social justice, and it gives us an opportunity to really help our brothers and sisters who are struggling by providing a safety net during times of crisis.”

In addition to the new boiler, the parish was given a piano by an anonymous donor with the help of the fund.

Joseph Sindelar of New Canaan, vice chair of Foundations in Faith and vice chair of the St. Francis Xavier Committee, talked about how the relationship developed with the parish: “St. George started with a request for help with a broken boiler. Next, we realized they needed help funding their CCD books, which led to an opportunity to donate a piano for their music program. And after walking the grounds, we recognized they needed help upgrading their computer systems so we are in the process of assessing their needs and leveraging the work we did with Blessed Sacrament to provide gifts for their children.

“Seeing Father’s excitement and the immediate impact SFX can offer is such a powerful and rewarding experience for the committee,” Sindelar said.

The St. Francis Xavier Fund provides support for vibrant parishes facing economic burdens, Weldon said. These parishes are characterized by strong leadership and meaningful ministries; they are in communities that experience inequities in housing, education, healthcare, employment and opportunity. And in 2020, the fund distributed $230,000 in COVID-19 Emergency Funding to 11 parishes.

Sindelar said, “My passion is to help these parishes. They are parishes that have lost donations through COVID-19, but in general don’t have money to fix something like a broken boiler. And it’s exciting to see how SFX is connecting with the parishes. There is a groundswell of support developing as we tell our stories to other members of the diocese. A true passion to help these parishes is deepening among a broad group of people, and the key is getting the story out there.”

He said the committee is now facing the challenge of how to get more people in the diocese involved in the mission, and one of our goals is to integrate parish resources and help create cross-fertilization between parishes.

“Every week we continue to make progress in getting across the message of how much need there is out there and as the story is told, more and more people are stepping up to ask how they can be involved,” he said.

In his third month on the job, Father Alexis believes all the pieces are beginning to fall into place despite the challenges.

“One of the challenges for me being a priest during the pandemic is trying to have people come to church and have a sense of faith and community,” he said.

In future months, he hopes to address the lack of internet in the classrooms and obtain a projector and computer with the help of Foundations in Faith for the students and to help evangelize young adults. Some 95 percent of the parish is Spanish-speaking.

As a seminarian, he did missionary work in Argentina, Brazil and Chile. He was ordained on March 14, 2002 by Cardinal Edward Egan.

Father Alexis is going to be incardinated in the Diocese of Bridgeport and has served as parochial vicar at the Cathedral Parish, St. Mary-St. Benedict Parish in Stamford, and St. Ann Church in Bridgeport.

Thanks to Foundations in Faith, I am able to move along with my mission in the parish,” he said.

(Kelly Weldon urged Catholics throughout the diocese to support the St. Francis Xavier Fund on Giving Tuesday, December 1, by going to the online donation page accessible through the donate button on the home page of www.foundationsinfaith.org. Anyone interested in getting involved with the committee’s work should contact her at kelly.weldon@foundationsinfaith.org.)
NEW HAVEN—The Catholic Church declared Father Michael J. McGivney, the founder of the Knights of Columbus, “blessed.” He is now one step from canonization as a saint.

Father McGivney was given his title through an apostolic letter from Pope Francis that was read by Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, as part of the Mass of Beatification at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford, Connecticut. A tapestry of Father McGivney’s portrait was unveiled in the cathedral sanctuary after the letter was read.

Pope Francis credited Blessed Michael McGivney for his “zeal for the proclamation of the Gospel and generous concern for his brothers and sisters,” that “made him an outstanding witness of Christian solidarity and fraternal assistance.”

The pope concluded that the Connecticut priest “henceforth be given the title blessed.”

The apostolic letter also announced that the liturgical memorial of Father McGivney will be observed annually in the Archdiocese of Hartford on August 13—the day between Father McGivney’s August 12 birth and death on August 14. Votive Masses in honor of Father McGivney can also be celebrated by priests for Knights of Columbus gatherings with the permission of the local bishop on any day when not superseded by another observance on the liturgical calendar.

Afterwards, Hartford Archbishop Leonard Blair offered words of appreciation to the pope.

The coronavirus pandemic necessitated that participation at the Mass was by invitation-only with the faithful able to watch the event on television or online.

Known in his day as a holy parish priest of the then-Diocese of Hartford, Father McGivney labored tirelessly to improve the condition of his 19th-century immigrant community in Connecticut. He founded the Knights of Columbus gatherings for Catholic men of New Haven, he worked tirelessly to offer spiritual support for Catholic men and generous concern for his brothers and sisters, that “made him an outstanding witness of Christian solidarity and fraternal assistance.”

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In March 2008, Father McGivney was declared a Venerable Servant of God by Pope Benedict XVI, who during his visit to New York’s St. Patrick’s Cathedral cited the “remarkable accomplishment of that exemplary American priest, the Venerable Michael McGivney, whose vision and zeal led to the establishment of the Knights of Columbus.”

Two recent books tell the story of Father McGivney and his legacy: Parish Priest (2006), his biography; and The Knights of Columbus: An Illustrated History (2020).
Father Michael McGivney

McGivney Center was named for Blessed’s brothers

By JOE PISANI

At St. Joseph’s Cemetery in Waterbury, three priests were buried with their parents in a grave marked by an 8-foot monument with a magnificent granite cross—Msgr. Patrick J. McGivney, Msgr. John J. McGivney and Venerable Michael J. McGivney, whose remains were moved to the Church of St. Mary in New Haven on the 100th anniversary of the Knights of Columbus, which he founded.

While it is often assumed the McGivney Community Center on the campus of St. Charles Borromeo Church in Bridgeport was named after Father Michael McGivney, who will be beatified on October 31 during a Mass at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford, it is actually named after his two younger brothers, Patrick and John, who played an important role in the history of St. Charles.

The new church was formed from the northern section of St. Mary parish on the East Side in 1902 to serve Irish immigrants. Father William Lynch, who was named the first pastor, laid the cornerstone for a school in 1903 and began construction on the lower church in 1907.

In 1913, he was succeeded by Msgr. Patrick McGivney, who was named the first pastor, laid the cornerstone for a school in 1903 and began construction on the lower church in 1907.

In 1913, he was succeeded by Msgr. Patrick McGivney, who was responsible for construction of the convent in 1921, and the upper church, which was completed in 1925 at a cost of $400,000. The impressive Tudor Gothic structure seated 1,400 and had stained glass windows from Bavaria, statues carved from Italian marble, main and side altars, and reproductions of paintings in St. Peter’s Basilica. For 25 years, Msgr. McGivney also served as Supreme Chaplain of the Knights of Columbus, and during World War I, he visited the battlefields and hospitals in France.

When he died in 1928, his younger brother John succeeded him as pastor and Supreme Chaplain. Msgr. John McGivney, who served until 1939, was responsible for building the rectory and parish hall, which would eventually become the McGivney Center.

The McGivney brothers were credited with making St. Charles one of the finest parishes in New England with five buildings occupying an entire city block. Today, the parish is one of the most vibrant in the diocese and serves immigrants from various ethnic communities, including Latinos from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, Haitians, Brazilians, Laotians and Vietnamese.

The McGivney Center is now, as it has been since its founding, committed to the community and loyal to its motto, “Kids at McGivney don’t come and go, they come and grow.”

What began as a summer camp program in 1992 for 50 kids now serves more than 400 youth annually; the after-school program draws students from 20 elementary schools and offers homework assistance, enrichment and recreation.

The summer program serves students, from K-to-8, providing athletic, academic and enrichment activities to stem the “summer learning loss” so that students can return to school well prepared in September.

It all began some 30 years ago, when two men from St. Catherine of Siena Church in Trumbull went on retreat...and discussed how they could make their small part of the world a better place. Tony Forni was a retired GE executive, and Greg Salmini was president of J.P. Salmini Company in Milford.

Greg listened as Tony told him about the food pantry at St. Charles Church and about an idea he had to help youth on the East Side. “Tony had looked at the gym at St. Charles, and it was a mess,” Greg recalled. “He said, “Wouldn’t it be great to refurbish this building so kids could have a safe place to go?”

When Tony had an idea, he pursued it with enthusiasm. He and Greg enlisted Stuart Schloss of Paint Products, and approached the pastor, Msgr. Joseph Potter, who gave them the green light.

They got a grant from the state and they hired contractors. In less than a year, the renovations were complete, and they named a director.

Msgr. Potter reached out to his fellow clergy in a letter dated May 22, 1991, which said, “This new McGivney Center, named after two former pastors of St. Charles, was incorporated to serve all the underprivileged of the East Side. St. Charles gymnasium, which has been serving the neighborhood children for the past few years, is now being leased to the McGivney Center for one dollar a year and is currently under renovation with money from a state grant.”

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NEW HAVEN—For many years, George Ribellino Jr. of the St. Matthew Knights of Columbus Council 14260, has been praying to Father Michael McGivney...for personal and family intentions, for a cousin who is battling a rare disease and for the priest’s canonization.

And so it was a special occasion on October 31, when he and five fellow Knights were asked to serve in an honor guard to celebrate the beatification of this Connecticut parish priest, who founded the Knights of Columbus at St. Mary Parish in 1882. Now, the Waterbury native who began what would become a worldwide Catholic fraternal organization is one step away from becoming a saint.

The church, where Blessed Father McGivney is interred in a sarcophagus, held a weekend-long festival, and on Saturday morning live-streamed the liturgy of beatification, which was celebrated at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford.

The beatification of the Knights’ founder was a joyful and deeply personal occasion for many of the faithful in Fairfield County.

Theodore Pacanowski, program director of the Connecticut State Council Knights of Columbus and member of St. Catherine of Siena Council 5806 in Trumbull, said, “For me, it’s a once-in-a-lifetime day. I’ve been a member of the Knights for over 25 years, so I have built up a devotion to Father McGivney and constantly pray to him for various things...for the family—
especially during times of sickness, for jobs or our grown kids and their families that they turn out all right.”

He said it was especially significant that a parish priest was moving closer to sainthood and would be counted among those towering saints that we sometimes consider holy beyond our imagination.

“We can associate with a parish priest,” he said. “Father McGivney was a real, live person, and we can look at the things he did and say to ourselves, ‘Gee, maybe I can model my life like that and maybe one of these days, I can be blessed in heaven with him.’”

It was also a personally meaningful day for Steve Giles of Council 185 at St. Rose of Lima Parish in Newtown, who has been praying to Father McGivney for almost 15 years. It all began when his job was transferred from Maryland to Norwalk.

“I was at the Basilica in Baltimore, and I prayed that my family would find a great place to live and that we would be in a great parish,” he recalled. “And we were fortunate to land at St. Rose because of my prayers to Father McGivney.”

Steve, whose father had been a Knight later joined the fraternity. “I believe strongly in his presence and the grace he has given me throughout the years to be a good Catholic gentleman,” he said. “To me, Father McGivney exemplifies taking care of those in need, he exemplifies compassion, he exemplifies believing in the grace of God so that you will be able to do a lot more than you think you can do … through prayer.”

A Knight for 34 years, Joe Rahtelli is treasurer of the Connecticut State Council and a member of St. Rose of Lima Council 185. “It’s an important day for everybody,” he said. “We have a strong devotion to Father McGivney and he has always been an important part of our lives.”

Emma Ryder of the Parish of St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull is engaged to David St. Hilaire, a fifth-generation Knight and past Grand Knight at St. Mary’s. She credits him with inspiring her devotion to Father McGivney.

“We just finished the novena before the beatification, and I am learning more about him,” she said. “He has been part of our relationship the whole time.”

Next June, the couple will be married at St. Mary’s, and Emma says, “We are excited to have a Blessed present for our wedding.”

George Ribellino Jr., the Faithful Navigator of Bishop Fenwick Assembly100, who came with his colleagues to serve as honor guard, said, “We are so honored that they asked us to be part of this great event. I pray to Father McGivney every day. In fact I am praying for his intercession for my cousin who is battling a rare disease. He was not supposed to live past 21 and now he is 29. Father McGivney is a man I admire, and any man who is a Knight should want to be like him.”

The festival also had all-night adoration and a prayer vigil, a panel discussion titled, “Father McGivney, a Model for Our Times,” a candlelight procession, a family rosary with the testimony of the Schachle family who prayed for a miracle for their unborn son. The miracle that was approved by Pope Francis and led to Father McGivney’s beatification involved the healing in utero of their son Mickey, now five, of fetal hydrops, which is an almost always fatal condition. A second miracle is required for Blessed Michael McGivney to be canonized and declared a saint.

On Sunday, Baltimore Archbishop William Lori, Supreme Chaplain of the Knights, and Archbishop Leonard Blair of Hartford celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving at St. Mary’s.
St. Margaret’s Shrine

A refuge for prayer and reflection

By BRIAN WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—St. Margaret Shrine has always been a popular destination during Advent and the Christmas Season, but this year in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, many visitors especially appreciate the outdoor opportunities for prayer and reflection.

Weather permitting, the shrine offers outdoor Mass on Sundays at 11 am and is open each day for visitors. Convenient off-street parking allows easy access to the rustic and reverent grounds of the Shrine, located a minute from the Bridgeport and Fairfield town line.

The natural hillside setting with its stone paths includes many life-sized carved holy statues embedded in a wide variety of grottos and alcoves that offer beautiful and unexpected opportunities for quiet prayer and petition.

Deacon Don Foust, administrator of the Shrine, says the Bridgeport landmark has been gradually rebuilt and expanded over the past decade and is now a thriving worship community in addition to serving as a diocesan shrine. Father Giandomenico Flora is rector of the Shrine.

The Shrine’s come back is one of the good news stories of the diocese. Renovations and additions in recent years, include outdoor shrines to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of LaVang and St. Pio of Pietrelcina, along with a Veterans Memorial and a powerful new memorial to the children who died at Sandy Hook.

Deacon Foust is excited by what will be the newest addition to St. Margaret’s, a shrine to the Blessed Father Michael McGivney sponsored by the Knights of Columbus.

With the Advent season beginning on November 29 this year, Deacon Faust says that he expects that the Neapolitan “Presepio,” or Nativity scene, carved into a hillside cave with figures depicting life in 18th century Naples will once again be very popular with visitors. The nativity scene includes figures depicting everyday life in Naples during the 18th century, from milkmaids to bakers, cobblers to blacksmiths. Each figure, down to the freshly baked loaves of bread and the butcher’s trimmed meats hanging on a rail, is a finely crafted miniature work of art.

“Any person who goes to see a presepio anywhere in the world goes to see the source of our joy—Jesus Christ, our Lord,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, when he blessed the classic Neapolitan Presepio at St. Margaret’s Shrine in Bridgeport in 2015.

Deacon Faust says that the new lighting installed at the shrine makes it particularly beautiful at dawn and dusk as people pass by.

“The twilight time is awesome,” said Deacon Faust who is deeply grateful to all those who have given generously of their time and resources to revitalize the shrine.

(St. Margaret Shrine is located at 2523 Park Ave. Bridgeport, CT 06604-1402. For information on its daily Mass schedule and visiting the shrine, call: 203.333.9627 or email: saintmargaretshrine@gmail.com. Visit the Website at: stmargaretshrine.org.)
STAMFORD—When Sharon MacKnight was a young girl growing up in Pawcatuck, Conn., her mother would dress her up in her finest clothes on Sunday morning so she could go to 6 am Mass with her father at St. Michael the Archangel Church. It was the highlight of her week, and years later, the source of many fond memories.

When Sharon made her First Communion, her aunt Marion gave her a statue of Our Lady of Grace, which she still has after 70 years. “She’s got a few bumps and bruises, but she’s still with me,” Sharon said. “Wherever I’ve lived, from Connecticut to California, she has traveled with me. From the East Coast to the West Coast, and now she’s in my bedroom on my bookcase, watching over me.”

For the past eight years, she has instilled that same love for holy articles in families and young people at St. Mary of Stamford Parish at 566 Elm Street. Each week, as part of her ministry, Sharon sets up a table after Mass and sells rosaries, medals, bracelets, Bibles, spiritual books and statues, many of which she has brought home from pilgrimages to Marian sites such as Fatima and Lourdes and the Holy Land.

She purchases the items with her own money, sells them and donates all the proceeds to the parish, as an act of love and gratitude. “This is a way of thanking Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary for watching over me in my professional career and my private life,” Sharon says. “I always wanted to be a wife and mommy, but that wasn’t in the plan. The reason I can do this is I have no family, and I’m a saver. My parents, George and Helen, grew up in the Great Depression, and from the time I was a little girl, I learned to save and that’s what I did.”

“Our parish community is blessed to have a parishioner like Sharon MacKnight. She has consistently given of herself for the benefit of our community,” said Father Gustavo Falla, pastor. “We thank God for Sharon’s commitment and pray that many will be inspired by her dedication.”

He said that Sharon “gives 100 percent” to the parish and also in her work at the Bennett Cancer Center in Stamford. “At St. Mary’s, which is now officially merged with St. Benedict’s, Sharon is not just the religious goods sales lady, but also the photographer, the shopper and the friend.”

After graduating from Stonington High School, Sharon enrolled in Colby Junior College in New London, N.H., and graduated with a bachelor’s degree to become a registered medical technologist. “Over 48 years, I worked in labs at different hospitals, and the reason I am doing what I am doing now is to thank the Lord for guiding me every day of my life because I dealt with people’s lives every day and helped physicians make the right diagnoses for people,” she says. During her career, she worked at Hartford Hospital, Mercy Hospital in San Diego, and for 42 years at Stamford Hospital, where she was the supervisor of the hematology department.

Sharon is also the church photographer for the St. Mary-St. Benedict parish, where she has been a member for 35 years. “When I asked Father Falla if I could bring my religious articles in the back of the church, I had no idea what would happen,” she says. “People coming into church have to walk by me. I sell statues, Rosary beads and Bibles, and I believe I have helped people increase their faith in the Lord. You just can’t imagine. One Sunday alone, I sold five statues of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Fatima and Our Lady of Lourdes.”

And many of her statues come from pilgrimage sites around the world because Sharon loves to travel and goes often to Portugal.
STAMFORD—On Tuesday, November 10, The Catholic Academy of Stamford hosted a Veterans Day Prayer Service to honor our nation’s veterans. Attending this ceremony were several local veterans, including those from the Stamford Catholic War Veterans Post and parents and grandparents of students at The Catholic Academy of Stamford.

The prayer service was led by Father John Connaughton and the 8th grade class. During the prayer service, Father John blessed a new flag for the school. At the conclusion of the service, students raised the newly blessed flag and students placed their Veterans Day rocks (which they created in art class) around the flagpole.
**Foundations News**

**Kids love St. Greg’s ‘Forest of Fear’**

**By KATHY-ANN GOBIN**

DANBURY—Wearing masks—both decorative and real—hundreds of people ventured into the woods behind St. Gregory the Great Parish for a socially-distanced night of fear-induced fun.

The second annual “Forest of Fear,” a quarter mile wooded trail of the hair-raising unexpected is filled with thrills and shrills for all who dare to enter the Great Plain Road Halloween attraction.

“Kids need to have fun,” said Pastor Father Michael Dunn, as he greeted visitors arriving on opening night. “It’s a big fundraiser, too.”

Last year, thousands visited the event which raised about $20,000 for the parish including scholarships for St. Gregory School. It was such a success, that this year more attractions were added. Father Dunn said they also extended the event by one night and increased the entrance fee to $15 per person.

“It’s very professionally done,” said Father Dunn, who worked with Gene McNamara, Bob Novella and Dave Knight to design and develop the Forest of Fear. McNamara is a parishioner and was involved in creating a popular corn maze in the neighboring town of Brookfield, years ago.

Father Dunn said he has fond memories of Halloween and this is an opportunity to help create those kinds of memories for other families while also benefiting the parish.

“My dad used to take us around as kids to Halloween attractions. I remember how fun it was as a kid and there’s not a lot of fun things for kids to do nowadays with the pandemic,” he said.

Father Dunn, who created a similar experience during his time at St. Mary’s in Bethel, said the effort is a parish and community collaboration with parish members and community businesses donating money or props to create the spooky experience.

The elaborate wooded trail, which took months to construct, promises to be quite a treat for anyone looking for a safe environment for some Halloween fun.

All safety guidelines and precautions were followed in accordance with the Diocese of Bridgeport.

All volunteers were temperature screened prior to participating in the event and for contact tracing purposes. Protective face coverings are required for all guests and are always worn by all staff.

The event also enforces social distancing, in queue lines as well as inside the Forest of Fear. Groups can walk the trail together, but no groups are combined, and attendees must maintain at least six feet from the group in front of them.

Sanitizing stations are available and there is a separate entrance and exit both decorated with pumpkins carved by students at the school.

“Some people get scared and want to run through the trail, others get scared and freeze in place,” said Terry Kennen, a secretary at the school and one of the many volunteers who make the Forest of Fear a success.

Kennen, dressed as a spider greeted guests to the event, reassuring youngsters and their families that the trail is a lot of fun and only gets truly scary when the sun goes down.

During the first hour of the five-night three weekend event, children, some wearing their Halloween best including little princesses, action heroes and monsters and their families or anyone who prefers a “no scare” experience, are greeted by friendly ghouls and goblins waving and smiling to greet them. Following the children’s hour, the trail lives up to its name.

Visitors can expect to walk through a corn maze with scarecrows and gruesome monsters lurking about, find an abandoned cabin with the unexpected inside and, of course, a Forest of Fear would not be complete without a fog-filled graveyard of the unknown. Leaves rustling underfoot, the cackle of a witch in the distance and bone-chilling screams are all a part of the Forest of Fear.

The creativity of illusions with the appropriate accompanying eerie sounds or music will trick the mind during this walk through the woods. It is quite the treat.

“It’s something fun, given the pandemic right now,” said John Esposito, Danbury Councilman, who was attending the event with his family.

Father Dunn, who initially greeted visitors as they arrived and who helped create the non-traditional corn maze portion of the trail, vanished to get into costume to play an active part in the Forest of Fear.

Children were huddled together trying to figure out which costumed character was their teacher as they entered the trail with nervous laughter of anticipation.

“We went last year in the kid version, so we thought we’d try something different and go at night,” said eighth-grader HoldenHafkimeyer, who was waiting in line with his brother and brother’s friend.

Fifth-grader Shayleigh Barrett enjoyed the trail especially the clowns, the corn maze and the one of a kind stuffed animal freaky feature.

“I’m always surprised about the effort,” said Shayleigh’s mom, Suzanne said. “It’s all church members and school members who volunteer their time. It’s totally worth bringing the family for Halloween.”

ST. GREG’S FOREST OF FEAR—The second annual “Forest of Fear,” a quarter mile wooded trail of the hair-raising unexpected is filled with thrills and shrills for all who dare to enter the Great Plain Road Halloween attraction.
At a young age she was drawn to the Church

By JOE PISANI

STAMFORD—When Juanita I. Evans was in elementary school, her friends would always complain, “I gotta go to CCD, I hate to go to CCD, I don’t wanna go to CCD.” So she asked them what CCD was all about, and they showed her their catechism and she immedi-
ately fell in love with it. She read the book and concluded, “I want to
go to CCD!” Even though she was Baptist.

Then, as Juanita describes it, her girlfriends hatched a scheme that went something like this: “We can all go together. Our mom will call your mom and say it’s OK, and you can come with us…and then we’ll tell Sister that you’re our cousin from Italy.”

“Fine, let’s do it,” I told them.

And I started going with them to catechism class every week at Sacred Heart School,” Juanita said. “They thought it was boring, but I thought it was interesting and kept going.”

Thus began a journey that led her to the Catholic Church, and
every step of the way, the Holy Spirit intensified her fervor.

One afternoon, she and her late sister Jean were walking by
a church downtown, I was amazed at

Her cousin who was Catholic
went to CCD!” Even though she was

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Foundations In Faith
Funding initiatives for racial justice

BY MEG MCCAFFREY

BRIDGEPORT—To answer Bishop Frank J. Caggiano’s call to action, Foundations In Faith is funding three initiatives that are part of its continuing work for racial justice.

The efforts come in response to Bishop Caggiano’s stirring call “for people of conscience” to work tirelessly for true change and produce “a real commitment” to effect justice, equality, charity, understanding, dialogue, respect and peace-making in every corner of our society.

“The individuals leading these initiatives are doing great work on this critical call to action and we enthusiastically approved the full funding of their grant requests,” said Kelly Weldon, director of Foundations in Faith, which supports pastoral ministries in the Diocese of Bridgeport. “The intention of these initiatives is to lead to real action and real conversion.”

Another key goal is to foster anti-racism training at all levels of faith formation in the Church.

The Leadership Institute was awarded a general operating support grant for $4,500 to entirely fund one of the initiatives, a six-part webinar series, “Conversations About Race,” which occurred each Thursday from late July through early September. It engaged noons. Among the materials the committee members have been asked to review are the “Conversations About Race” webinar, and a 2018 pastoral letter, entitled “Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call To Love—A Pastoral Letter Against Racism,” issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The letter emphasizes how “bigotry is a grave sin and is against the dignity of the human person and the divine mandate to love our neighbor as ourselves.”

Susan Baldwin, facilitator of Young Adult Catholics Against Racism, said, “There is a strong passion with our young people who are faith-filled and know that they are called to be advocates for all people suffering on the margins in our communities.”

Their goals include creating an addition to diocesan curriculum teaching in Faith Formation, as well as a producing a directive to be implemented in ministries at the parish level.

“We will keep Christ at the center of our work together,” Baldwin added.

Foundations In Faith awarded a $2,000 grant for a pilot project taking place at St. James in Stratford, one that will serve as a prototype for other parishes. Entitled “Open Wide Our Hearts—Conversations on Race,” this series of dialogues aims to help people begin the process of prayer, storytelling, self-reflection, and a call to action that will lead parishioners and other communities of faith “to name, claim, and heal the ‘sin of racism’ in our hearts,” according to the grant application.

“Racism is the elephant in the room and we need to make it front and center,” said Angie DeMello, who is serving as co-facilitator with Therese LeFever.

The first session, held via Zoom, featured twenty people. “It was amazing. People were open and vulnerable,” said DeMello, noting it was a meeting that served as an “examination of conscience.”

The “Open Wide Our Hearts” pastoral letter serves as a framework for the discussions. More meetings are on the agenda, which will include frank talks on biases and painful experiences.

“A journey of 1,000 steps begins with one step… our prayer is to live in God’s peace and harmony,” said DeMello.

(Young people interested in joining Young Adult Catholics Against Racism should email Institut@diobpt.org.)

Fairfield County Catholic
Foundations in Faith

Unpacking the new Directory for Catechesis

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—In June 2020, The Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization released a new Directory for Catechesis. The new Directory for Catechesis presents fundamental theological-pastoral principles for the ministry of catechesis while responding to current social conditions and cultural forces that shape the church’s communication of the faith.

The Leadership Institute has released great resources and developed a webinar series on the topic. The directory affirms the presentation of the Catholic faith articulated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church as a sound point of reference for instruction while drawing deeply from Scripture and the writings of recent popes, especially Pope Francis’s Evangelii Gaudium.

The video series presented on the Institute’s website will provide insights into eight new emphases which the directory proposes.

The first part of the directory is entitled “Catechesis in the evangelizing mission of the Church,” and treats the formation of catechists. The directory points out that in order to be credible witnesses of the faith, catechists have to be “catechized before being catechists.” This involves working with gratuitousness, dedication and integrity, according to a missionary spirituality that is an antidote from “sterile pastoral fatigue.”

Catechists are also called to be vigilant in performing their specific task “so that absolute protection is guaranteed to every person, particularly to minors and vulnerable person.” The Leadership Institute has developed a series of webinars, led by catechetical experts from around the country, to help members of our diocese learn more about the directory and its implications for teachers, parents, priests and catechists.

Webinar topics will include The Catechetical Process, The Catechetical Community, and a summary and discussion of implications of the directory on the community.

(To join these webinars, please visit: www.formationreimagined.org/new-directory-for-catechesis.)

2020 Catholic Scouting Awards

BRIDGEPORT—The 2020 Catholic Scout Awards Ceremony for the Diocese of Bridgeport was held on Friday September 18, at St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the gathering was by invitation only.

The ceremony began with a Scouts’ Color Guard and Pledge of Allegiance followed by their scouting promises and oaths.

Father Robert Kinnally, diocesan scouting chaplain and pastor of St. Aloysius Parish, blessed and awarded the scouting medals to young scouts throughout the diocese.

Awards that were distributed included Light of Christ, Ad Altare Dei (To the Altar of God), Parvuli Dei (Children of God), the Pope Pius XI Award, and the Pope Paul VI National Catholic Unit Excellence Award.

PREP Open House

Virtual Experience

www.FAIRFIELDPREP.ORG/OPENHOUSE2020
Obituaries

Father McCall, 90

BRIDGEPORT—Father Edward “Whitey” John McCall passed away peacefully on September 29, 2020, at home in Remanso, Bahia, Brazil, where he had served God and the people of Brazil as a missionary.

He was born in the Black Rock neighborhood of Bridgeport on April 15, 1929, to Thomas and Julia (Vasse) McCall, and attended St. Ann’s Elementary School and Fairfield Prep, where he excelled in sports both as a running back for the football team and as a southpaw first baseman.

After graduating from Prep in 1947, he entered St. Thomas Seminary where he began his studies for the priesthood followed by six more years studying philosophy and theology at St. John’s Seminary in Brighton/Boston.

Father Whitey was ordained to the priesthood on February 2, 1955, at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport and assigned as a parish priest to Sacred Heart parish in the south end of the city. He also served as principal of Stamford Catholic High and as chaplain to the Stamford Fire Dept.

After Vatican II, the Diocese of Bridgeport assumed responsibility for the parishes of Remanso and Campo Alegre de Lourdes in the Diocese of Juazeiro deep within the interior of Northeastern Brazil.

In 1965, Father Whitey traveled to Brazil with Father Joseph Potter to lead a diocesan mission in Remanso and Campo Elegre de Lourdes. One of his proudest accomplishments during his time in Brazil was helping to build a dam in the tiny interior town of Malhada, which sustains the townspeople with water to this day.

In accordance with his wishes, Father Whitey was buried in the small village of Aparecida, a 30 minute drive from his home in Remanso, in a church that he helped build.

Deacon Joseph Potter c/o Mrs. Virginia Gardner, 110 Aspetuck Trail, Shelton, CT 06484.

ANSONIA—Father Roy Henderson, age 62, of Ansonia, died on Tuesday, October 20, 2020.

He is remembered by many for his healing ministry, which brought many people throughout out the diocese to St. Andrew Parish in Bridgeport.

Ordained by the Most Rev. Edward M. Egan at St. Augustine Cathedral in 1990, Father Roy served the Lord as a Roman Catholic priest in the Diocese of Bridgeport for twenty years before taking a personal leave of absence from active ministry in 2010.

Born on November 11, 1957, he was a devoted son to his mother, Claire (d. 2019), and dedicated brother to his younger sister, Lori.

Father Michael Boccaccio celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial on Wednesday, October 28, at Saint James Church, 2110 Main St., Stratford.

Interment followed in Saint Joseph’s Cemetery, Stratford.

DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT NOVEMBER 15—DECEMBER 12

NOVEMBER

15 Rev. M. Steven Barrett, S.S. ............................................. 2000
19 Rev. John P. Odlie .............................................................. 1999
20 Rev. Francis J. Fulop ............................................................ 1957
21 Rev. John F. Culliton ............................................................. 1967
22 Rev. Hugh A. Coffey ............................................................. 1975
23 Rev. Edward F. Burke ......................................................... 2004
24 Rev. Stephen J. Panik ............................................................ 1953
25 Msgr. Joseph N. Murphy ..................................................... 1988
26 Rev. Carducci D’Amico ....................................................... 2018
28 Deacon Joseph Lawrence Rowan ....................................... 2013
29 Deacon John Barton ............................................................ 2012
30 Rev. Myron V. Miller ........................................................... 1961
31 Deacon Wayne E. Malloy ..................................................... 2011

DECEMBER

1 Deacon Robert W. Becker .................................................. 2000
2 Deacon Salvatore M. Clarizio ............................................. 2017
3 Rev. Michael E. Kearney ..................................................... 1956
4 Msgr. Alfred J. Sienciewicz .................................................. 1996
5 Rev. Mark Connolly ............................................................. 2019
6 Msgr. John E. Gilmarin ...................................................... 2011
7 Rev. Thomas Gwozdz, OFM Conv ...................................... 2007
8 Rev. Joseph A. Pisarcik ....................................................... 1956
9 Msgr. Joseph M. Fitzgerald .................................................. 2005
10 Rev. Vincent J. O’Connor ................................................... 1985
11 Deacon George Saulnier ..................................................... 1997
12 Rev. Rufin Kuveikas, OFM Cap ........................................ 2008
13 Msgr. Bartholomew J. Skelly ............................................ 1967
14 Rev. Ambrose Walas, OFM Conv ...................................... 1967
15 Rev. Paul M. Spodnik ....................................................... 1976
Sports

Sacred Heart creates Jackie Robinson Scholarship

By DON HARRISON

Jackie Robinson, the indomitable baseball trailblazer and civil rights activist, was welcomed into the Sacred Heart University community in the spring of 1972 when he received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree at Commencement. The citation captured the spirit and the passion of Robinson, stating in part:

"Most men have sympathy for the miseries of their fellow men, far fewer have compassion for them, and it is the rare man indeed who feels for them so deeply that he dedicates himself to their alleviation."

Fast forward to the evening of October 22, 2020. On a zoom video entitled “SHUand42: A Subway Series Celebration” – which featured the managers of the last New York teams to compete in a Subway World Series as well as the daughter of the Brooklyn Dodgers’ Hall-of-Fame player—the university announced the establishment of the Jackie Robinson Foundation Scholarship.

All proceeds from SHUand42 will go to Sacred Heart’s new scholarship program, which will provide four-year grants to students chosen by the Jackie Robinson Foundation following a national application process. So, how much money does the university expect to realize from this venture?

“We’re shooting for the stars, but we’ll settle for the moon,” said Bobby Valentine, the former New York Mets manager who has served as Sacred Heart’s executive director of athletics since 2013. “I think we can raise half a million (dollars).”

Valentine was joined on the virtual video by Hall-of-Fame Manager Joe Torre, whose New York Yankees defeated Valentine’s Mets, four games to one, in the 2000 World Series; Hall-of-Fame broadcaster Bob Costas and Harold Reynolds, the former American League second baseman who is now a broadcaster.

They devoted much of the evening to discussing Jackie Robinson’s enduring impact on the game and that memorable week in October 2000 when the upstart Mets came oh-so-close to winning their third World Series, but lost three one-run games and the finale by two. “If we had won one of those early games, the outcome might have been different,” Valentine noted.

Steve Kerr, coach of the NBA’s Golden State Warriors, was among the celebrity callers and he asked about the logistics.

JACKIE ROBINSON, THE BROOKLYN DODGERS’ Hall-of-Fame player and human rights activist was presented an honorary degree by Sacred Heart University President Robert Kidera at Commencement on May 20, 1972. Forty-eight years later, the university has established a scholarship in his name.

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➤ continued on page 33
National League with 29 stolen bases.)

“Bobby had such a great personal connection to the Jackie Robinson story,” said William Reidy, Sacred Heart’s vice president for advancement. “He received a visual memory through Ralph on what Jackie accomplished that year.”

Through their Stamford connections, Valentine has enjoyed a relationship with Jackie’s widow, Rachel Robinson, as well as his daughter, Sharon Robinson. Bobby recalled meeting Jackie “at an event in Stamford and an Oldtimers Day game at Dodger Stadium.”

In her appearance on the video, Sharon, an author and education consultant for Major League Baseball, said the family “was thrilled” about the scholarship in her father’s name.

“My mom founded the Jackie Robinson Foundation a year after my dad died,” she stated. “My father broke the barriers (of racism), and now young people can get the education they need to break those barriers.”

Torre, who won a National League batting title (.363, 1971) and hit .297 lifetime prior to his 29-year managerial career with the Yankees, Mets and three other clubs, was born and raised in Brooklyn. Somehow, he became a fan of the Dodgers’ dreaded rivals, the New York Giants.

Torre admired Robinson the athlete, but he was a Giants fan and “didn’t like him very much. When I was a youngster, I saw him play many times, but even more memorable I had the chance to shake his hand the year before he passed.”

Just five months after receiving his honorary doctorate from Sacred Heart, Jackie Robinson died at age 53. One wonders if he realized just how far he had carried his race—the human race.
Fidelity

Column: Thomas Hicks

The general view of physicists is that time started at a specific point about 13.8 billion years ago with the Big Bang. The Big Bang can be considered the "birth" of the universe and the beginning of time as we know it. Matter, energy, space and time began abruptly with the Big Bang. Hence it can be said that time is a creature of God. Aristotle defined time as the measure of change. St. Augustine defined it as a measure of motion.

There can be no discussion of what was going on before the Big Bang. In August, specifically, what was God doing before the Big Bang? There was no previous era. We are dealing with the mysterious idea of eternity. Augustine reflected on time as a painful affair. Time was the devourer, seeking what it might devour. Time was ever working, never at rest, bringing age upon us all (Confessions, Book One).

There is no conquest over time. No one can defeat time. Time will never relent. Time moves and everything comes to an end. There's all the brightness and beauty that could not last. How innocently time eats the days—all those lost days.

The Scriptures tell us that the sovereignty of God is over the length of our lives. Job 14:5 states that "Man's days are determined; God has decreed the number of our months and has set limits we cannot exceed." Psalm 139:16 speaks of the "Book of Life" in which "are written all the days that were set by the Lord of the universe (Colossians 1:16).

God is not our own.

Old age is an end product deposited by time. It is the time of the body's cruel betrayals that bring with them the indignities of old age. We disintegrate slowly. Those who have reached the evening of their lives have to adjust their lives to the limitations of aging. They reach what is called life's "last lap," or the "home stretch."

There's a haunting sense of passing time. There's a fear of time. An old person is now well aware of how November grinds darkly on, how November leans toward December, and December slides into Winter. Children and grandchildren grow and flower, etching mortality even more sharply. The evening is drawing in. There's a sense of time left. They find the words of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus very meaningful: "Stay with us, Lord. For it is nearly evening. The day is almost over" (Lk24:29).

When he was near ninety, the art critic, Bernard Berenson, said: "I would willingly stand at street corners, hat in hand, begging passers-by to drop their unused minutes in it."

However, many old people are ready. They have had their fill of life and seek rest from the irritations and agitations of life. There is a "ripeness" for death. There's a sense of relief that the struggle was over. It's coming to an end, and that's all right.

There is a Jewish Midrash that says: "When a fig is gathered at the proper time, it is good. The owner of the fig tree knows when the fruit is ripe and plucks it. The Holy One knows when the time of the righteous has come."

Old age brings with it the awareness that so many people you loved are gone. There's the sudden silence. The world without those loved ones is incomplete. There is no substitute for them. Many elderly people say: "It's not hard to die when everyone you loved is dead." Our faith tells us we will find one another again. Many of the elderly feel like one who is waiting and waiting for. There is a prayer to the angel Raphael, guide of Tobias, which says 'lead us toward those we are waiting to see again, those who are waiting for us, those we are looking for."

The daily dread of all old people is—when will it all stop? How many more chances will I have to welcome the Spring? When will it be my time to be shaken from the tree? There is the loneliness of age. As we age, we have to "let go" of more and more; one thing after another falls away. One can have the feeling of having outstayed one's welcome in the world. Many old people often feel superfluous and unwanted. Doubtless, one of the assets of old age is the ability to enjoy being alone. Solitude is frequently the lot of the elderly. So many men, particularly, are left an old man in an empty house. They grow old and grow sad. The old sigh for lost years; weep for the short tomorrows.

Despite it all, most of the elderly regard everyday as a gift, and have a deep gratitude for life; a gratitude for all of life's blessings.

When I think of dying, I remember my mother bending over my bed, singing in her lovely, throaty voice, "Close my eyes and have a surprise. The Sandman is coming. He's coming, he's coming." To hear that voice one second before death is what I hope for.

Let me end with an anecdote about Winston Churchill that can have a religious meaning. Churchill planned his own funeral. He directed that after the final religious benediction a bugler high up in the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral would play "Taps." Churchill then directed that immediately after the playing of "Taps," a second bugler, also in the dome would play "Reveille," the call to get up in the morning.

The Sandman is coming.
Nuevo servicio para cumplir con distanciamiento social

POR MARICARMEN GODOY

STAMFORD — La parroquia de Sacred Heart (Sagrado Corazón), ubicada en 37 Schuyler Avenue, en el centro de la ciudad, tomó la iniciativa de aumentar el sábado a las 7 pm una misa más en español, para lograr que los feligreses mantengan la distancia social y sigan fomentando la fe que en estos momentos de pandemia se ha vuelto muy necesaria.

Con esto, la iglesia tiene dos celebraciones de la Palabra en español, una el sábado a las siete de la noche y la otra, la estipulada en el calendario habitual, el domingo a la una de la tarde. Lo que, de acuerdo con el P. Alfonso Picone, párroco de la iglesia, ha dado resultados porque con el aumento de la misa y los grupos de oración, la dinámica parroquial comunitaria ha empezado a despuntar con fuerza, aunque la mayor parte de las reuniones se están realizando en el templo principal para cumplir con el distanciamiento social, bajo estrictas previsiones.

Según el Padre Alfonso, sus feligreses están regresando a la parroquia aunque sigue celebrando muchas misas vía Zoom, incluso, dijo el sacerdote, ha tenido la fortuna de ofrecer misa con participantes de otros países. “En verano murieron en Ecuador los abuelos de una de Judith Pazmiño, una de nuestras feligreses, me sorprendió mucho cuando me pidió que celebrara una misa en su memoria y lo maravilloso fue que los participantes, en su mayoría, fueron fieles para lograr que los feligreses mantengan la distancia social y sigan fomentando la fe que en estos momentos de pandemia se ha vuelto muy necesaria.”

“Están llegando muchos fieles. La gente está regresando. He tenido misas en inglés, italiano y en español muy seguido. En el caso de los italianos solo acuden adultos mayores porque sus hijos solo hablan inglés. En el caso de los hispanos, el aumento de las familias es notorio”, repuso el P. Alfonso.

Aunque el Padre Alfonso declaró que no está actuando en forma imprudente y que está tomando todas las precauciones, sin embargo, dijo: “Yo no tengo miedo al COVID-19, yo le tengo miedo a no seguir la voluntad de Dios”.

Para reflejar todo el trabajo que la parroquia está emprendiendo en estos tiempos el P. Alfonso escribió en la página web parroquial una carta a sus feligreses pidiéndoles su apoyo: “Últimamente el P. Martin DeMayo y yo hemos estado muy ocupados con bautismos, primeras comuniones, confirmaciones. Todo va bien a pesar de la situación real del Covid-19, necesitamos continuar nuestra misión dentro de nuestras familias, nuestros seres queridos, nuestros amigos y las personas que encontramos todos los días. A pesar de todo, nuestra misión evangelizadora tiene que continuar en nuestros barrios y alrededores”.

EL MINISTERIO DE BIENVENIDA, la reactivación de los grupos de oración y la nueva misa en español, han sido parte de los nuevos retos de la iglesia del Sagrado Corazón que por estar ubicada en pleno centro de la ciudad, se convierte en el centro de asistencia masiva hispana.

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pitched games in the history of
and it was one of the greatest
Morris of the Minnesota Twins
probably not. The pitcher is Jack
Some of you could, but many
remembered.
but here is the funny thing. If
I asked you to, could you name
seven of the 1991 World Series?
I provided that I may
come as holy as I should: Jesus,
grant me the grace to desire it.
This is the heart of priestly min-
istry. The path to holiness for a
priest must run through the holi-
ness of his people. But, of course,
only a truly holy priest can inspire
holiness in his people.
Regardless of our state in life,
the goal is the same for us all: to
become saints and to dwell etern-
ally in the heart of the Father. To
accomplish this task is no merely
human feat. It is always the result
of divine grace, of the action of
God in our lives. Whenever we
celebrate a saint, certainly we
rejoice in such a heroic response
to God’s love. But, even more,
we rejoice at the power of God’s
mercy to transform a life in such a
radical way. That mercy is made
available to us most powerfully
through the sacraments—which
are offered to us through the
hands of a priest.
So often, we hear of the fail-
ures and falls of priests. What we
don’t often notice or hear about
are the countless good, humble,
faithful priests who are simply
trying to lead their people to
heavenly grace. By cultivating a
deep, personal relationship with
God themselves, they are able to
introduce the people they serve
to a relationship with the only
thing that is stronger than their
own weaknesses or wounds: the
merciful love of God. These
good priests may never have their
moments of fame or fortune.
They may never even be raised to
the altar of public veneration as
Canonized saints. But the holiness
of their people is their enduring
legacy. And no legacy could ever
be greater.

Father Silva joins Vocations Team

BRIDGEPORT—Father Eric Silva has been named as the
newest member of the diocesan vocations team by Bishop Frank
J. Caggiano.
Father Silva was ordained in 2016 and currently serves as
the episcopal chaplain for St. Joseph High School in Trumbull,
where he has already been an active and committed promoter of
priestly vocations.
He is replacing Father Paul Check who will be departing to
assume his new role at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in
La Crosse, Wis.
Over the past few months, the diocesan vocations team has
been hard at work designing and beginning to implement the
vocations framework Foster, Discern, Accompany, that was first
shared with the priests throughout the diocese in May. As this
work continues, the vocations team has we wanted to give you a
brief update on the work and progress of the vocations team.
As the work of the vocations office continues to increase, the
vocations team coordinator, Father Christopher Ford, will shift
his assignment as parochial vicar at St. Gregory the Great Parish
in Danbury from full-time to part-time status. This will allow
Father Ford to dedicate more time to vocations work, including
the opportunity to visit other parishes on certain weekends to
preach and promote vocations.
The vocations team will be visiting parishes to preach and to
participate in efforts to promote vocations. For more information
email Vocations@diobpt.org.

By FATHER CHRIS FORD

When I was growing up, I
played quite a bit of Wiffle ball
with my friends. No matter long
we had been playing, however,
in our minds it was always the
same scenario: game seven of the
World Series, bottom of the ninth,
two outs, bases loaded. Whether
we were at bat, pitching or in the
field, we all had the same desire:
to be the hero that won our team
the World Series. To become a
legend. Even if it wasn’t about
sports—maybe you had your
Oscar acceptance speech tuned
to perfection. Whatever it was, it
is a desire that many of us feel or
have felt deep down inside. The
dream to achieve something so
remarkable that we will be forever
remembered.
But here is the funny thing. If
I asked you to, could you name
the winning pitcher from game
seven of the 1991 World Series? Some of you could, but many
probably not. The pitcher is Jack
Morris of the Minnesota Twins
and it was one of the greatest
pitched games in the history of
the World Series—10 shutout
innings leading his team to a 1-0
victory over the Atlanta Braves to
secure the championship. Or, even
more recently, could you name
this year’s winner of the Oscar for
Best Actress? Probably not. (It was
Renee Zellweger for her role in
Judy).
But if I asked you if you knew
who St. Peter was? Or St. Francis
of Assisi? Or Mother Theresa? I’m
sure you could all tell me some-
thing about them. You see, the
effect that the most in this
world is not fleeting earthly fame
or glory. It is holiness.
Even for priests, holiness must
be what defines our lives. There
is an old saying that there is no
one deader than a dead priest.
And, yet, on October 31, the
eyes of the Catholic world were
fixed on a simple parish priest.
Born and raised in Waterbury,
Conn., and ministering in New
Haven, Blessed Father Michael
J. McGivney became the latest
son of the American Church to
be beatified. As the founder of
the Knights of Columbus, Father
McGivney’s legacy is not one
of great earthly fame or fortune.
Rather, it is one of seeking out
those most in need and ensuring
that no one was ever beyond reach
of God’s divine and merciful love.
Each time I pray it, I am
always struck by the last invoca-
tion in The Litany of Humility:
That others may become holier
than I, provided that I may
come as holy as I should: Jesus,
grant me the grace to desire it.
This is the heart of priestly min-
istry. The path to holiness for a
priest must run through the holi-
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Regardless of our state in life,
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