



# FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

digital edition

JANUARY 2021 | VOLUME 38, NUMBER 1 | CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK ISSUE



## Celebrating Catholic Schools

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# Around the Diocese

## Welcoming the light of Christ

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

### St. Joseph School hosts outdoor 'Breakfast with Santa'

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—Festive merriment warmed the hearts of those willing to brave icy temperatures and blustery winds at the first annual Christmas Outdoor Festival at St. Joseph School.

"Every year we have Breakfast with Santa inside," said Megan Cerullo, president of the St. Joseph School Parent Teacher Organization. "This year we had to figure out how to continue that Christmas Spirit during these challenging times," she said.

Reminiscent of a Hallmark Christmas, the parking lot outside of the entrance to the school was transformed with evergreen garland strung on a wooden picket fence with care and accented with



red-ribbon adorned Christmas wreaths. Live Christmas trees and dozens of red and white poinsettias were available for purchase to trim homes with Christmas cheer.

About two dozen vendors from the community offered items including Christmas ornaments, clothing, homemade soaps, jewelry and other treasures.

"We love to support the school," said Carmen Alfaro, co-founder of Moda Kalon, alpaca clothing and accessories.

"It's important for the community to learn a little about the alpaca and the artisans who make the items," said Alfaro, who was wearing a stylishly warm alpaca headband. The co-founder of the business was also eager to participate in the festival since his grandchildren attend the school.

Amid the brisk winds, the laughter of children running about could be heard above familiar festive Christmas carols played in the background.

"There's just always a lot of cheer and joy here," said 11-year-old Eva Bauco, who was there with her family and shopping for treasures with her friend Alexa Hope. "It's a good way to be with other people even though it's freezing."

To combat the cold, patrons could purchase a soothing-warm-marshmallow-laden cup of hot chocolate provided by Chef Adam Moss, who also offered a mouth-watering menu that included chili, sausage and peppers and soft pretzels.

The festival also hosted a visit with Santa at the school through advance reservations and the implementation of safety and social distancing protocols. The photo-fundraiser raised about \$800 for the school. ■

### Holiday Update from St. Rose

NEWTOWN—Students and faculty at St. Rose School got in the holiday spirit with exciting news and fun celebrations.

On Saturday, December 19, St. Rose School celebrated the birthday of Sister Thaddeus, a very important member of the school community. Sister Thaddeus is a steady presence among students and families, beloved by all. Students surprised her with a visit to the convent bearing gifts and good wishes for her birthday.

It is a tradition at St. Rose School for preschool students to construct their own manger. This year was no exception, as students grabbed their paintbrushes and glitter to create their own Nativity scene.

In other exciting news, St. Rose School was able to receive 32 Chromebooks via a grant. This addition gives students in grades 2-8 one to one device integration which greatly enhances learning especially during these times. ■



# Around the Diocese



## ‘Advent spiral’ brings students and families together

RIDGEFIELD—A beautiful spiral arrangement of greenery and candles adorned the gym floor at St. Mary School in Ridgefield, as students and families were invited to a night of calm, quiet and reflection.

Parents were invited to accompany the youngest children on a journey through the spiral to the center where they were to encounter Jesus, truly present in the consecrated Eucharist.

Families were then invited to pause for a moment of prayer and adoration and light their candle from the Christ candle.

On their slow and ever-so-careful way back out of the spiral, children placed their candle on a star, adding to the ever-building brightness of the night—symbolic of their carrying the light of the world into the world!

Older children were able to make the journey on their own, each called upon according to their age.

This socially-distanced night was a great way for students and families to come together to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas! ■

# Diocesan News

## Bishop looks to year of re-opening and renewal

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has announced plans for a Jubilee Year of Renewal to celebrate the gift of the Eucharist in the lives of the faithful and to welcome people back to church in the coming months.

The bishop will formally launch the period of Eucharistic Renewal on Ash Wednesday, February 17, with the publication of a Pastoral Exhortation, *Arise with Christ: A Call to Eucharistic Renewal*.

“We want to Invite people to strengthen their own faith life and the faith life of their parish, rooted in the Eucharist, so that in this year of renewal we can go out in witness and invite people back into the life of the Church, into our worship and into a deeper discipleship,” said Bishop Caggiano.

The bishop said because Covid-19 restrictions are likely to be with us throughout the first six months of the year, the first stage of the renewal will be a time of preparation in which people are invited to online prayer, worship and formation that “will lead to a change of heart and behavior,” and a willingness to renew their faith life.

Throughout the month of January he’ll be working with pastors, diocesan ministry leaders, members of the pastoral council and others to finalize plans for the year-long observance that will include special Masses, prayer services and initiatives to further involve the laity in the work of evangelization.

In the coming days the diocese will designate nine Centers of Mercy (one in each deanery) and begin preparing volunteer “Eucharistic Ambassadors” to help lead the renewal efforts. The bishop said the training of Eucharistic Ambassadors will offer intensive prayer and formation for those “who are on fire with the faith and prepared to go out and invite others into healing and holiness.”

The bishop had been planning for a Jubilee Year of Renewal for the diocese even before the advent of the pandemic. However, he said the pandemic gives a new sense of urgency along with opportunity to renew the diocese by reaching out to people in a more engaging,

compassionate and welcoming way.

The bishop said the Jubilee Year is not a formal process but a series of opportunities to celebrate and experience coming back to the Church after a difficult year of hardship and suffering when many

that the consecration to St. Joseph will bring the Holy Family together in diocesan prayers at a time when the diocese will be working to strengthen families in their faith, particularly the young.

March is slated to be a busy month with a Penitential Day



people were unable to partake of the Eucharist. It is also another step in the ongoing effort to invite back those who have left the Church.

He described the effort as a “movement of the willing” who are stirred by the Holy Spirit to work for the renewal of the Church by deepening their own faith and witnessing it with family, friends and the larger society.

The Jubilee Year events will include a Mass for the consecration of the diocese to St. Joseph, consistent with the recent proclamation by Pope Francis designating 2021 as the “Year of St. Joseph.”

In his Apostolic Letter *Patris corde* (With a Father’s Heart), Pope Francis recalled the 150th anniversary of the declaration of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. To mark the occasion, the Holy Father proclaimed a “Year of Saint Joseph” from today, December 8 2020 to December 8 2021.

The bishop will formally consecrate the diocese to St. Joseph on Friday, March 19 during a Mass live-streamed from St. Augustine Cathedral as a result of the ongoing pandemic restrictions.

The bishop, who has previously consecrated the Diocese to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, said

of Prayer set for Priests and Deacons, and a Diocesan Day of Penance and Fasting to take place on Reconciliation Monday, March 29.

While many of the initial activities will be virtual and accessible online, the diocese will expand the number and capacity of in-person events throughout the year as the pandemic is expected to gradually recede through vaccination efforts. The timing of public events will be determined by the ability to safely gather together again.

The goal of the Jubilee Year is to help regular Mass attendees to deepen their knowledge and devotion to the Eucharist, as well as their appreciation for the Sacrament of Confession. It will also equip lay men and women with the tools needed to assist priests in invitational ministry later in the year.

The bishop and diocesan officials are currently working on a set of protocols for the conditions needed for the gradual resumption of the obligation to attend Sunday Mass (pending the vaccine rollout).

The diocese will publish all calendar items and details on a special web page that is being developed.

(For updates information visit: [www.bridgeportdiocese.com](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.com).) ■

# Diocesan News

## Bishop resumes public ministry after quarantine

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has resumed public ministry after quarantining for more than ten days following an initial positive test for coronavirus.

Through his quarantine he did

News of the positive test was posted on the diocesan website and quickly spread throughout the region. During his time in quarantine the bishop received many messages of prayerful support from the faithful.

The results of his follow-up tests (PCR and antibody)

tional test sites at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton and at Immaculate High School Retreat Center in Danbury.

The test sites are open to the general public.

For information on Progressive Diagnostics test sites and appointments throughout



not experience any symptoms and continued to work. However, he followed CDC guidelines to safeguard the lives of others until testing proved it was safe for him to return.

The bishop said he is very grateful for the prayers and well wishes he received from many people across the diocese. He also asks for prayers for all those who have lost a loved one and those who are currently afflicted with the virus.

Just after Christmas, the diocese announced that the bishop had tested positive for COVID-19 during his regular weekly test on December 28. Consistent with CDC guidelines, he immediately went into quarantine and pursued follow-up testing.

taken on Wednesday December 30 were negative and showed no antibodies to the virus. The bishop was then advised to retake the PCR test until he received a second negative result. Based on the negative result from his final test, the bishop returned to public ministry.

Bishop Caggiano was tested at the COVID-19 testing site located at Queen of Saints Hall in the Catholic Center, at 238 Jewett Avenue in Bridgeport. The diocese partnered with Progressive Diagnostics, LLC of Trumbull, a clinical medical laboratory, in response to the urgent need for more testing sites in Fairfield County. Working with Progressive Diagnostics, the diocese has opened addi-

Fairfield County, contact: [www.progressive-diagnostics.com](http://www.progressive-diagnostics.com).

**Diocesan COVID-19 Policy:** The diocese has consistently followed and often exceeded all state and local recommendations and has also added a registration feature to Mass attendance, so that congregations can be notified if any who attended a service later becomes aware of a positive test. As a result, to date, there is no evidence of communal spread as a result of anyone attending Mass in the diocese.

*(For more information, updates, and a complete listing of diocesan public health and safety measures in response to the coronavirus pandemic, visit [www.bridgeportdiocese.org/coronavirus/home](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org/coronavirus/home).)* ■

# Priesthood Ordination

## ‘Be fortified by the Eucharist’

By **JOE PISANI**

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop James Massa, auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Brooklyn, ordained Deacon Brendan Blawie to the priesthood Saturday, January 2 at St. Augustine Cathedral, urging him to be “an agent of Jesus’ healing love, fortified by the Eucharist that you give first to yourself before giving it to others.”

Father Blawie, who abandoned a childhood dream of being a Marine, left behind a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Corps to enter St. John Fisher Seminary in Bridgeport because he believed it was the Lord’s plan for him.

“There is still the Marine in you, the one who in the commercials slays the dragon and rescues the princess, the first responder who kicks in the door to save the innocent, the tip of the spear tossed into the fray,” said Bishop Massa, who is Rector of St. Joseph Seminary in New York. “The Church needs your zeal, your zeal for the new evangelization, your wholesome passion to waken people to holiness and virtue.”

Bishop Massa said he was an “old Brooklyn friend” of Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and “pinch-hitting” for him because he was in quarantine after testing positive for the COVID-19 virus.

“But just note that he offered Mass for you this morning,” he said to Father Blawie, “and unites with you as a spiritual father, profoundly proud to welcome you into this presbyterate.”

Father Blawie, who was ordained as a transitional deacon last June 20 with Guy Dormevil, was born and reared in Newtown and received his sacraments at St. Rose of Lima Parish.

“I’m just excited to be ordained. I’ve been in formation for the diocese since the fall of 2014, and this has been the goal for which I have been preparing,” Father Blawie said. “I’d like to first thank my parents, my family and friends. I’ve been blessed to be surrounded by many who have supported me during my time in formation and even support my decision to become a priest.”

Father Blawie will return to Rome because he has another 1½ years of studies to finish his Licentiate in Dogmatic Theology; however, this summer he will be

servicing full-time in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

“To have the first several months of my priesthood in Rome, the center of Christendom, is such a gift, and I’m so grateful for that,” he said. “That city has been where I received the

Mass remotely. He expressed special appreciation to Father Blawie’s parents for the example they set and their encouragement.

“In this ordination, they have the best Christmas present ever,” he said. “Today they, too, remind us that a priestly vocation is not



BISHOP JAMES MASSA, auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Brooklyn, ordained Deacon Brendan Blawie to the priesthood Saturday, January 2, at St. Augustine Cathedral.

majority of my formation for the priesthood, and the center of my theological studies, and I’m excited to return. But the diocese is my home, and this is where I am meant to spend my life in service of Christ’s Church.”

During his homily, Bishop Massa said that although Deacon Brendan was being ordained alone, “the priest is never alone because everything he does is always in communion with his brothers in Holy Orders and in relationship with all the faithful with whom he shares the gift of faith in Jesus Christ. All of us who could be here today are a concrete sign of the love that surrounds you on this day of your ordination.”

The bishop called to mind Father Blawie’s brother priests, the seminarians, old friends, his father John and his mother Karen, his family and those who because of COVID restrictions could not attend but were celebrating the

heard as a solitary invitation from God, but as a call that echoes through the encouraging words and wise mentoring of many, many people. As you give your assent to receive the sacrament, be sure to give thanks for all those who helped you discover this awesome gift. They belong—all of them—to the great crowd of witnesses from Newtown to the North American College, from Franciscan to the Angelicum.”

They are a testament, he said, that “none of us serves Jesus or follows Jesus alone,” but instead belong to “his company, which spans time and space and enfolds so many forgotten saints and forgiven sinners.”

“No man exercises his priesthood apart from his brothers in Holy Orders,” he said. “To use a favorite phrase of retired Pope Benedict, ‘We are coworkers in the Truth.’”

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# Priesthood Ordination

BE FORTIFIED  
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He said that the “Laying on of Hands,” when the bishop imposes his hands on the one to be ordained, is the effective sign of calling down the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Even those priests not here, including Bishop Caggiano from the silence of his room, will be praying down the Holy Spirit on you to fill your priesthood with the wonderful gifts necessary for making you a loving shepherd, a courageous preacher and a reverent celebrant of the people’s worship.”

Reflecting on the coronavirus pandemic, he said that people have been disconnected from their loved ones, their friends and their fellow employees for months.

“You, as a priest, draw them out of their isolation and remind them that others are praying for them, that others are ready to show up at their door with a bag of groceries, if need be,” he said.

He quoted St. John Paul II who said, “the priest is a man



who lives alone so that others may never be alone.”

“Your whole priestly ministry, Brendan, is about connecting people to God and connecting them to each other,” Bishop Massa said.

Recalling that Deacon Brendan was being ordained alone, the bishop said, “A Marine belongs to a band of brothers, just as a physician practices her arts with the aid of a team of devoted healthcare workers, none of them go it alone. No one of us carries out our work alone. We need each other in friendship and in the collaborative modes of parish life today.”

“Brendan—now to be called Father Brendan—it is time for the spirit to bring about in you this



incorporation into the priesthood of Jesus. Remember you are a fellow worker in the vineyard; remember you share the priesthood always with brothers who are like you, forgiven sinners striving for holiness; remember, my brother, with Jesus always at your side, you are most certainly never alone.”

Father Blawie is the middle of three children, with an older brother, Jack, and a younger sister, Marian. His parents, Karen and John Blawie, raised him in the faith, although he admits to not thinking much about being a priest as a young boy.

He played football and basketball through high school and earned the rank of Eagle Scout. He later enrolled in the Corps of Cadets at Virginia Tech in the Marine Corps ROTC program, before transferring to Franciscan University of Steubenville, where he earned his degree in accounting. While there, he pursued a commission with the Marine Corps, graduating from Officer’s Candidate School in Quantico, Virginia, in the summer of 2012.

Instead of commissioning as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Marine Corps, he entered the seminary for the Diocese of Bridgeport. He completed two years of pre-theological studies at St. John Fisher Seminary, before being sent to the Pontifical North American College in Rome, where he spent three years.

In 2019, he received his theology degree, magna cum laude, from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and was on pastoral assignment at St. Thomas More Parish in Darien. In the fall, he returned to the Pontifical North American College to continue his formation and begin his Licentiate of Sacred Theology in Dogmatics

at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas.

At the conclusion of the Mass, Vicar General Monsignor Thomas Powers said that Bishop Caggiano was sorry he couldn’t attend the ordination but that he was watching and praying for Father Blawie.

Speaking on behalf of his brother priests, Msgr. Powers said, “We welcome you warmly into our fraternity and look forward to having you back. You’re going to Rome now, and as a priest, I can tell you there are wonderful places to celebrate Mass, including the catacombs, the place of the martyrs, the great saints of Rome.”

He urged him to pray for those in the diocese, beginning with the bishop, his brother priests, deacons, and all the religious and the lay faithful.

“We look forward to having you come back to work with us and serve the people of God here in this wonderful diocese,” Msgr. Powers said. “So Father Brendan, congratulations.”

The Ministers of the Mass included Ordaining Bishop and Celebrant, Bishop James Massa, auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Brooklyn and rector of St. Joseph Seminary in New York. Principal concelebrants were Msgr. Thomas Powers, vicar general; Father Arthur Mollenhauer, judicial vicar; Father Robert Kinnally, chancellor; Father Joseph Marcello, director of seminarians; Father Michael Novajosky, pastor and rector of the Cathedral Parish; Father Frank Hoffmann, vicar for clergy. The Deacon of the Mass was Deacon Guy Dormevil. The vesting priest was Father Richard Cipolla. Master of ceremonies was Father Joseph Marcello. The music ministry was led by Samuel A. Schmitt, cathedral director of sacred music. ■

# Faith Journey

## A scientist whose faith sustains her and inspires others

By JOE PISANI

BROOKFIELD—As her 80th birthday approaches, Dr. Barbara Ina Anderson, a research scientist and longtime parishioner of St. Joseph Church in Brookfield, looks back on her life and says it was governed by a simple spiritual principle that will work for everyone.

“My faith journey has basically been to say, ‘Thy will be done.’ With so many good situations in my life, I have to believe that God was always there and knows more than I do about what I should be doing.”

That approach has served her well and led to a strong commitment to her family, her parish, the diocese, her professional work and the needy. Dr. Anderson, who was last year’s recipient of the St. Augustine Medal, was honored by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano in recognition of her willingness to share her time, talent and treasure for the Dorothy Day Hospitality House in Danbury, St. Joseph Catholic Academy and several parish ministries.

With her brother Hal and sister Faith, who are now deceased, she was the inspiration behind the parish’s “Helping Another Live” project, which was named in honor of Hal and was distinguished by the yellow tote bags used to collect food for the Brookfield Food Pantry.

“Barbara is a blessing to our parish as someone we can count on when we need assistance to further many of our ministries. She is a woman of great faith whose life epitomizes Christian discipleship,” said Father George F. O’Neill, pastor. “Her selfless offering of her time, talent and treasure is what makes St. Joseph Church such a welcoming and caring community. We are a better parish for her presence with us.”

Joseph Gallagher, chief development officer for the diocese who has worked with her on various projects, says, “Barbara exemplifies what it means to be an active Catholic of faith. Her devotion to her family, to St. Joseph’s, to the Diocese of Bridgeport and to the Dorothy Day Hospitality House illustrates her love and service to God.”

Dr. Anderson, who had four cousins who were priests, says her Catholic faith has always been



DR. BARBARA INA ANDERSON, a research scientist and longtime parishioner of St. Joseph Church in Brookfield, weaves on her own loom, a practice she took up while caring for her sister.

a central to her life: “My parish is like a big family to me, and I appreciate it now because I can give more time to it.”

God has been always been there for her in the good times and in the bad, she says. But life can be messy, and that’s when she applies a lesson she learned from her hobby of weaving, which inspired her devotion to Our Lady Undoer of Knots. Popularized by Pope Francis, the devotion is based on a painting of Mary untying the knots that represent the problems in our lives.

While caring for her sister Faith, who suffered from a debilitating case of Lyme disease, she took up weaving at the Brookfield Craft Center and eventually bought her own loom.

“From weaving I learned that by gently fingering the knots, they all drop out, but if you pull on them, they only get tighter,” she says. “So instead of saying, ‘my way, my way,’ I turn it over to God. It’s pride that makes us say, ‘I am right and my way is the best way.’”

While she was weaving, she had a spiritual inspiration that serves as her motto: “If you proceed at a slow speed, you will receive all that you need.”

“In our lives, if we pull on the knots, it makes the situation more difficult, but if you just drop the knot, it becomes untangled and you’re on God’s time,” she says.

For more than 40 years, Dr. Anderson was a scientist at the

Schulumberger-Doll Research Center in Ridgefield, which provided research for the world’s leading supplier of technology and information solutions to companies in the oil and gas industry.

As a woman, during the 1960s and 70s, she was a pioneer in the oil service business and gained recognition for more than 70 technical papers she authored and co-authored.

In 1997, she enrolled in the PhD program at Delft University in the Netherlands and received her degree in 2001. Her thesis work involved the complex topic of “inversion of triaxial induction data to determine resistivity anisotropy.”

She and her two younger siblings grew up on the family farm in Newtown surrounded by relatives. They drank milk from the cows and ate fresh eggs. At the time, her father was a selectman in Brookfield and later ventured into real estate, while her mother commuted by train from Danbury to New York City for her job as bookkeeper.

Dr. Anderson graduated from Newtown High School and went to Western Connecticut State University and graduated first in her class in 1963.

“I was one of those geeky kids,” she recalled. “Math and science were my favorite subjects because there was no argument with the teacher about what was the right answer.”

# Diocesan News

## Bishop appoints pastoral council

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has appointed nineteen lay men and women across the diocese to serve on the Diocesan Pastoral Council. Their term began with the first meeting in December 2020 and will continue through 2023.

Membership is drawn from laity in many parishes who were invited to serve by the bishop after being recommended by pastors and diocesan officials.

“I am deeply grateful to those who have agreed to serve. Each member has demonstrated leadership in her or his own parish, a love for their faith and a commitment to serve others through the Church,” said Bishop Caggiano.

“The council members represent the energy, diversity and hopes of the people of the diocese and ensure their voices will be heard as we gather together as co-workers in the vineyard,” the bishop said.

The bishop said he will look toward the guidance and experience of the council members as he moves forward with the Jubilee Year of Renewal for the diocese this year.

In November, the bishop announced that he was re-forming the Diocesan Pastoral Council to help chart the course of the pastoral and spiritual work of the diocese as it emerges from this pandemic and moves ahead with plans for evangelization.

“In light of the unique challenges and issues that we now face as a Church, and given its particular mandate to assist the leaders of the diocese, I believe the Pastoral Council will play an important role as we seek new opportunities for spiritual renewal, institutional restructuring and pastoral growth,” he said.

The bishop said the reconvened Pastoral Council is an invitation for the laity to participate with him in the strategic planning process of the diocese.

The bishop convenes the council in full session four times during each pastoral year, which run from September to June. The term of membership for commissioned members is three years.

Members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council with appointments from 2020-2023: Dr. Donna

Andrade, The Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Bridgeport; Erin Aoyama, St. John Church, Darien; Nancy Bosley, St. Rose of Lima, Newtown; Yvonne Grimes, St. Rose of Lima, Newtown; Bob Jeffe, St. Michael the Archangel, Greenwich; Maggie Kent, St. Mary Parish, Bethel; Sarah Young Kilcullen, St. Thomas More, Darien; Matthew Klein, St. Margaret’s Shrine, Bridgeport;

Also, Susan Liguori, St. John Church, Darien; Dr. Tamu Lucero, The Basilica of St. John the Evangelist, Stamford; Stephen Muecke, St. Thomas More, Darien; Mrs. Janie Nneji, St. Mary’s Church, Ridgefield; Carlos Perez, Christ the King, Trumbull; Deacon David Rivera, St. Charles Borromeo, Bridgeport; Father David Roman, Saint Aloysius Parish, New Canaan; Mr. Otis Shelton, St. Edward the Confessor, New Fairfield; Andy Sieg, St. Michael the Archangel, Greenwich; Ellen Stevens, St. Jude, Monroe; Kenneth Thompson, St. Bridget Parish, Stamford. ■

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### FAITH JOURNEY FROM PAGE 8

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Her sister Faith was a member of the first graduating class at St. Rose School, where her mother Barbara taught CCD. Dr. Anderson did some substitute teaching at St. Rose and took courses in computer programming and numerical analysis for her master’s degree at Fairfield University.

The computer programs she wrote helped her get a job at Schulumberger-Doll Research, and for most of her career, she worked in electromagnetic department, which provided drilling measurements for oil companies.

After her father died, she and her siblings built a house in Brookfield and moved there with their mother in 1968. At the time, Faith was in high school and Hal was in the army, so Dr. Anderson became the breadwinner for the family.

Faith, who later taught elementary school, contracted Lyme disease. After a round of antibiotics, the doctors thought she had been cured, but the disease led to cardiac problems and affected her neurologically, causing her to limp.

“Over the course of five

years, she began to decline,” Dr. Anderson said. “I was there all the time with her. She lost weight and was down to 80 pounds. Eventually, she was admitted to a nursing home. The last week of her life, they put a cot for me in her room, and I was there when she died.”

With Faith’s passing in 2017, Dr. Anderson started looking for other things to do. “St. Joseph School had opened, and I made contributions for science and field trips because of my love of science,” she said.

She often accompanied students on their excursions and was involved with them in different projects about weather, raising trout, technology and water quality.

“We also went on the bus to Shepaug Dam to watch bald eagles,” she said. “Even though I didn’t have kids, I could go places with the students, and they let me be involved. I guess I’m still a kid.”

In recent years, she has discovered other opportunities. She volunteered at Dorothy Day Hospitality House and served meals through Catholic Charities.

During the coronavirus pandemic, she made sandwiches at home and dropped them off at the church. She also has assisted the Morning Glory program in Danbury and helped served breakfast. At St. Joseph’s, she is active in the Respect for Life Ministry.

“Now that I’m at the older end of life, I see the importance of right to life for the unborn and the elderly,” she says. “When I visited my sister at the nursing home, I saw how unconnected older people can feel.”

Looking back on her 80 years and the work she has done, Dr. Anderson says, “I’ve had a good life. I’ve enjoyed it. I enjoy my work. I enjoy my hobbies. I even enjoy my retirement. I keep active in my parish, and I keep in touch with the people I worked with, and we write technical papers together. I’ve had a good, long life. I will be turning 80, and the 80 years have been pretty good. I don’t think of myself as old because there are so many things I can do.”

What’s her secret? “Thy will be done,” she says. It works every time. ■

# Diocesan News

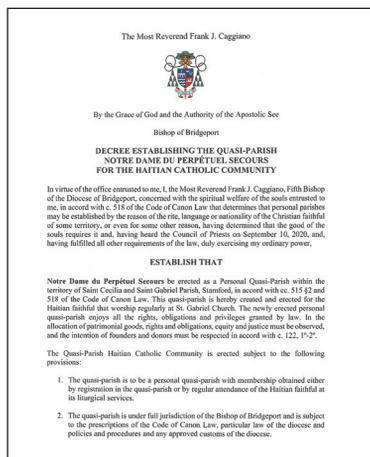
## New quasi-parish for Haitians

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has issued a decree establishing the Quasi-Parish of Notre Dame Du Perpetuel Secours for the Haitian Catholic Community. The decree was issued January 1, 2021, on the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God.

The decree proclaims that Notre Dame de Perpetuel Secours will be erected as a personal quasi-parish within the territory of St. Cecilia and St. Gabriel Parish, Stamford, in accord with cc. 515 §2 and 518 of the Code of Canon Law.

“This quasi-parish is hereby created and erected for the Haitian faithful that worship regularly at St. Gabriel Church. Concerned with the spiritual welfare of the souls entrusted to me, in accord with c. 518 of the Code of Canon Law that determines that personal parishes may be established by the reason of the rite, language or



nationality of the Christian faithful of some territory, or even for some other reason, having determined that the good of the souls requires it and, having heard the Council of Priests on September 10, 2020, and, having fulfilled all other requirements of the law, duly exercising my ordinary power,” the decree stated.

The decree indicates that the proper administrator of the qua-

si-parish will be appointed by the Bishop of Bridgeport in accord with the Code of Canon Law.

The new quasi-parish is required to establish a pastoral council and the parish will be assigned to Cause of our Joy Deanery (Stamford, Conn.).

Faculties to celebrate all the sacraments are granted to the priests who assist the proper pastor or administrator in the sacramental care of the members of the quasi-parish, by means of universal law, particular law or by decree from the diocesan bishop, the decree stated.

Over the past two years the bishop has decreed the creation of quasi parishes and newly merged parishes in order to strengthen pastoral care and the mission of the Church by addressing issues such as a decline in Mass attendance, sacramental activity, clergy availability, while building up the Church, reaching out to youth and welcoming all back. ■

## Students join vaccination efforts

FAIRFIELD—The first coronavirus vaccinations are underway in the State of Connecticut, and nursing students from Fairfield University’s Marion Peckham Egan School of Nursing & Health Studies are preparing to join a team at Nuvance Health’s Norwalk Hospital to help with vaccine clinic which began on December 22. According to federal and state distribution guidelines, vaccines are currently available in limited supply for healthcare workers and nursing home residents.

Under the guidance of Fairfield Egan faculty members, 35 senior students will be vaccinating eligible candidates with doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, and helping to manage the clinic at Norwalk Hospital. Participating students and faculty members will also be offered the opportunity to receive the vaccine.

“As men and women for others, our Fairfield nursing faculty and students are uniquely poised and eager to

participate in the COVID-19 vaccination clinic,” said Egan School of Nursing & Health Studies Dean Meredith Kazer Ph.D., APRN-BC, FAAN. “During these difficult times, we are grateful for the opportunity to do our part toward bringing this pandemic toward its

unteering to vaccinate our healthcare workers is a perfect example of this sentiment,” said Leslie Lincoln, chief nursing officer, Norwalk Hospital. “Having access to COVID-19 vaccines is a monumental milestone that hopefully will bring



PICTURED (l-r) at Fairfield’s 2018 White Coat Ceremony: Emily Goreb ’21, Sarah Uwazany ’21, and Lauren Jamieson ’21, are three of 35 senior nursing students volunteering at Norwalk Hospital’s COVID-19 vaccine clinic.

conclusion.”

“Since the first surge in the spring, we have been saying ‘we are in this together.’ Fairfield University nursing students vol-

us closer to the end of this pandemic. We welcome and thank the nursing students and their vital role in vaccinating our healthcare workers.” ■

# Year in Review

## Challenges & Achievements

By **ELIZABETH CLYONS**

BRIDGEPORT—2020 was a unique year with the pandemic dominating the news and creating a difficult “new normal in the diocese,” but it was also a year of remarkable achievement and faithful activity in spite of the lockdown and other pandemic health and safety measures. While it’s not possible to offer a list of highlights without the pandemic hovering in the background, the following list provides an overview of the many activities, achievements and advances of the past year:

### January

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano established the Quasi-Parish Our Lady of Aparecida Brazilian Catholic Community, and the Quasi-Parish Holy Vietnamese Martyrs Catholic

on liturgical practices, the diocese produced a special web page to offer the latest news, resources and information ([bridgeportdiocese.org/coronavirus](http://bridgeportdiocese.org/coronavirus)). In the first seven days alone, there were more than 6,000 views by people throughout the diocese seeking information and reassurance that the diocese is being pro-active in its approach.

Food pantries remained open. Catholic Charities of Fairfield County’s programs took measures to try and set up more to-go options at their food pantries, as well as putting together wish lists of items that are needed. “We want to be a place where people in need can come,” said Mike Donoghue, director of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County.

### April

The St. Francis Xavier Fund

re-consecrated the diocese to Our Lady under the title: Mary, Mother of the Church.

The bishop announced plans for the gradual return to public Mass beginning with the outdoor public celebration of Mass on the Ascension of our Lord.

The Diocese of Bridgeport became the first diocese in the state to resume public worship at outdoor Masses. Pastors and priests throughout the diocese continue to offer drive-through blessing, car confessions and outdoor adoration.

Food drives continued throughout the diocese, collecting much-needed donations for Catholic Charities.

With the COVID-19 pandemic leading to an increase in anxiety and depression, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County pivoted to a virtual telehealth counseling model.

### June/July

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

Bishop Caggiano ordained two men as transitional deacons on the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at St. Augustine Cathedral.

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

As the first step in the diocesan response to root out the sin of racism and bigotry wherever it may be found, Bishop Caggiano and the diocesan Leadership Institute sponsored a weekly webinar series: “Conversations About Race.”

### August

The Diocese of Bridgeport launched the Digital Edition of its award-winning newspaper: *Fairfield County Catholic*.

A gift from an anonymous donor to Foundations in Education provided funding for COVID-19 Emergency Tuition Assistance for elementary school families in the Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic

➤ *CONTINUED ON PAGE 12*



Community.

Veritas Catholic Network announced that Bishop Caggiano will have a weekly radio show about the Catholic faith that will be broadcast throughout the Fairfield County listening area.

### February

The Diocese of Bridgeport and Veritas Catholic Network launched Bishop Caggiano’s first-ever podcast, “Let Me Be Frank.” Nearly 1,000 people tuned in every Wednesday at noon!

### March

With public worship suspended in order to save lives as the pandemic worsened, the priests, deacons and lay staff members of our parishes rose to the occasion, finding innovative and reverent ways to safely minister to their communities.

In response to the growing number of calls and concerns related to the coronavirus and its impact

was launched by Foundations in Faith to assist parishes in financial difficulty as a result of the pandemic. Generous people from around the diocese continue to help these parishes by donating.

Bishop Caggiano re-launched the 2020 Annual Catholic Appeal as an emergency response to the crisis and the growing needs throughout the diocese.

Many priests continue to develop creative and innovative ways to bring Christ to the faithful through Eucharistic processions, drive-through confessions, curbside adoration and other outreach during the state shutdown.

Diocesan Schools launched their successful distance learning programs to ensure continuity of education, and teachers and staff are working remotely using various technological tools.

### May

In May, Bishop Caggiano

# Year in Review

CHALLENGES & ACHIEVEMENTS FROM PAGE 11

Schools who are suffering from the negative economic impact of the pandemic.

The board of Foundations in Faith approved \$200,000 to be disbursed to the parishes as part of the COVID-19 Emergency Fund from the St. Francis Xavier Mission Church Fund, supported by We Stand With Christ capital campaign.

Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools released re-opening plan for 2020/21 school year.

## September

After months of planning and preparation Catholic elementary and high schools re-opened for in-person classes throughout the diocese.

## October

Bishop Caggiano issued a decree permitting the earlier celebration of Christmas Vigil Masses in order to safely accommodate the larger number expected to attend.

The Leadership Institute announced the launch of the Sunday Family Rosary every Sunday at 7:30 pm beginning in October.

Catholic schools developed an online academy for students who wish to require distance learning during the school year... the schools also introduced a new Telehealth System to better serve

students and families.

## November

Bishop Caggiano re-promulgated Safe Environments in a new handbook that contains policies and practices for the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Bishop 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.

The Leadership Institute's Family Bible Challenge, which initially gathered more than 2,500 families to engage with Scripture, goes national!

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.

Catholic Charities of Fairfield County received 12,000 masks from Bank of America.

To help combat the spread



of COVID-19 in the greater Bridgeport area, the Queen of Saints Hall of the Catholic Center becomes an on-site location for both COVID-19 and antibody tests.

## December

Parishes and schools throughout the diocese embraced the Season of Advent in joyful waiting with projects, Advent blessings and service to the community.

The newly re-convened Diocesan Pastoral Council met for the first time to begin three-year terms to help the bishop with plans for renewal and evangelization.

The bishop re-promulgated funeral norms with new guidelines for all Catholic funerals in the diocese.

## EDITOR'S CHOICE



### Christmas Caroling for Life

BRIDGEPORT—Amid the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season, a group of pro-life supporters paused for an hour on Sunday afternoon to remember the unborn with a caroling event near the Planned Parenthood location on Main Street in Bridgeport. The strains of "Joy to the World," "Away in a Manger," and "O Come, All Ye Faithful" could be heard as cars whizzed past Commerce Park, many tooting horns in a show of support.

"This was an opportunity to proclaim in song the message of light and healing that Jesus brings to expectant mothers and indeed, the whole world," said Tina Kelly, who organized this event, the 13th annual at this site. "It was clear from the shouts of encouragement that people were happy we were there."

About two dozen attendees, wearing Santa hats and festive attire, represented one of many groups gathering around the country in the weeks before Christmas Eve to share the hope of the season outside abortion clinics. Aptly named the "Peace in the Womb" Christmas Caroling Day, this is sponsored by the Pro-Life Action League and, according to Kelly, is one of their most cherished events.

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# Editorial

## EDITORIAL

### Persevere until the tide turns

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano wrote the following words while in quarantine after testing positive for the coronavirus. Fortunately, subsequent tests have come back negative and he has now resumed public ministry (see story on page 3). In this reflection, Bishop Caggiano urges all to remain vigilant and pray for all those suffering in the pandemic.

“As I begin my seventh day of quarantine, I am grateful to the Lord that I have not developed any symptoms associated with the coronavirus. Unfortunately, a number of dear friends have recently contacted me by text or email and told me that they have received both a positive test result and also begun to experience some severe side effects from the virus. My heart goes out to them and their families. Let us continue to keep everyone who has been afflicted by this terrible disease in our prayers.

Given the fact that many who have recently contracted the coronavirus fell ill through small gatherings that they attended at Christmastime, I urge everyone to remain vigilant in doing all that we can to protect ourselves and our families against this terrible disease. I recognize that we are all weary of what has become our “new” way of life: wearing masks, socially distancing and frequently washing our hands. However, in those settings when we do not follow these protocols, precisely in small gatherings with family and friends, is when many have fallen ill. We need to persevere until the tide turns and this terrible disease is vanquished from our midst. Please be assured of my daily prayers for all of you, your family and friends.”

The previous reflection originally appeared on Bishop Frank Caggiano’s Facebook page. Follow the bishop for daily reflections and weekly videos.

### Share the blessing of your time

On the first day of the New Year, the feast of Mary, Mother of God, Pope Francis urged Catholics to create a “culture of care,” by sharing our blessings and our time with others.

“This year, while we hope for new beginnings and new cures, let us not neglect care,” the Pope wrote. “Together with a vaccine for our bodies, we need a vaccine for our hearts. That vaccine is care. This will be a good year if we take care of others, as Our Lady does with us.”

Referring to the Latin roots of the word “benediction,” which means to speak well, Pope Francis wrote that “We, too, are called to bless, to ‘speak well’ in God’s name.... Our world is gravely polluted by the way we speak and think badly of others, of society, of ourselves,” he said. Complaining and denigrating others “corrupts and decays, whereas blessing restores life and gives the strength needed to begin anew.”

The humility and simplicity of the Pope’s words—coming as they do at a time of pandemic and ideological division—reminds us that the passion of our ideas does not free us from caring and kindness: “Time is a treasure that all of us possess, yet we guard it jealously, since we want to use it only for ourselves. Let us ask for the grace to find time for God and for our neighbor—for those who are alone or suffering, for those who need someone to listen and show concern for them.”

### Catholic Schools

National Catholic Schools Week takes on a special meaning this year across the U.S. and in our own diocese, where the heroic response of teachers, administrators, staff, students and parents has managed to keep schools open during the pandemic.

Through much planning, preparation and hard work, our diocesan schools have continued to offer in-person learning five days a week for 7,000 elementary and high school students. It should also be pointed out that this remarkable achievement has been supported by the generosity of those who contribute to the Annual Catholic Appeal and to Foundations in Education, which have provided scholarships and tuition assistance that make it possible for parents to choose Catholic education. Every day our schools do the impossible while preparing students academically and forming them in the faith—that’s something to celebrate. ■



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

SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE BISHOP  
VERY REVEREND MICHAEL NOVAJOSKY, from Rector, the Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport, to Special Assistant to the Bishop. Effective date is January 31.

RECTOR

REVEREND JUAN GABRIEL ACOSTA, from Special Assistant to the Bishop, to Rector, the Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport. Effective date is January 31.

PASTOR

REVEREND CIPRIAN BEJAN, from Pastor, Saint Margaret Mary Parish, Shelton, to Pastor, Saint Lawrence Parish, Shelton. Effective date is January 31.

PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR

REVEREND J. ABELARDO VASQUEZ, appointed to Parochial Administrator, Saint Charles Borromeo Parish, Bridgeport, for a term of one-year. Effective date was January 2.

REVEREND KAROL KSIAZEK, appointed to Parochial Administrator, Saint Margaret Mary Parish, Shelton, for a term of one-year. Effective date is February 1.

REVEREND MARK D’SILVA, appointed to Parochial Administrator, Sacred Heart Parish, Greenwich, for a term of one-year. Effective date is January 2.

ADMINISTRATOR OF TEMPORALITIES

REVEREND COREY PICCININO, appointed as Administrator of Temporalities, Saint Joseph Parish, Danbury. Effective date was December 14.

EPISCOPAL VICAR

REVEREND GUSTAVO FALLA, appointed to continue as ex officio member of the Presbyteral Council as the Episcopal Vicar for the Hispanic Catholic Community for a period of two years.

MEDICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

REVEREND SAMUEL SCOTT, to medical leave of absence. Effective date is December 14, 2020 through June 14, 2021.

*Reverend Francis T. Hoffmann  
Vicar for Clergy  
January, 2021*

# Editorial



## Self-care is holy

### 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](mailto:elizabeth.clyons@diobpt.org).*

In Luke Chapter 5, Jesus heals a man afflicted with leprosy. This passage falls in between Jesus calling the disciples to Himself and healing the paralytic. Right in the middle of all of this, Luke 5:16 states, “but he would withdraw to deserted places to pray.”

Jesus Himself understood the importance of creating boundaries amidst His ministry and taking time to refresh Himself. We should look to His example, especially in our busy world today.

If we don't take time to make sure that we are healthy and well, how can we expect to give of ourselves to others? A good friend always tells me, “you can't pour from an empty cup.” I am realizing more and more how true that really is.

We can only truly be present to others if we first take care of ourselves. This care may look different for each one of us. It helps to think of the things that refresh our soul. For me, it's a good book, a long walk and making sure I am eating well and staying active. When I notice my focus slipping, or I start to get irritable, I know that I haven't been fully caring for myself. I

have to take a step back and do something that refreshes me, or else I won't get what I need to do done. If I simply stare at the screen forcing the work to get done, it either won't get done or it will get done poorly.

We want to give all we can to our lives at all times. We want to be fully present in our work life, in our social life and to the ones we love. But if we aren't paying attention to what our bodies and minds need, it will become harder and harder to give others the attention they need from us.

We are doing others a disservice if we just push through these feelings, because they won't be receiving us at our best or to our full capacity. Setting boundaries in our lives is of the utmost importance, especially now, when we are not only dealing with the normal stressors of everyday life, but also the added stress of a global pandemic, political upheaval and living through a new “unprecedented moment in time” every day.

It is more than understandable that we would need to take more time to care for ourselves during these days ahead, especially as we retreat from the holidays into the remainder of winter. We need to be increasingly understanding of when others say that something is just too much for them at this time. If we try and push others, instead of trusting and accepting their need to set boundaries, it could adversely affect all parties involved.

Lest I say it again, we are living in unprecedented times. We need to give ourselves some grace and give others the grace we wish would be bestowed upon us. Take the time. It will improve your life, and you can watch as it improves the lives of

**“We can only truly be present to others if we first take care of ourselves. This care may look different for each one of us.”**

those around you. Be present, and when you can't, say so and explain why. If we have the self-awareness to explain why we can't be there fully for someone or something, it may give them the vocabulary to set boundaries as well. It may give them permission to do something they didn't know they could do.

There is no rule book, but there is an example—“What would Jesus do?” He would retreat to the mountains to pray. That's all the permission you need. ■

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# Editorial



## The greatest destroyer of peace today

### SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

There is a famous photo from the Vietnam era of a teenage girl holding a flower up to a phalanx of National Guardsmen with their bayonets drawn during the 1967 anti-war protest in Washington D.C. The photo came to define the cause for peace.

I think of that photo when I see the tireless marchers who go to Washington every year to march for life. They, too, are a few, protesting a system that promotes death.

I think of that photo and I'm reminded of St. Mother Teresa, who delivered her acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize 40 years ago.

Watch the video. A diminutive sister who lived among the poor, the sick and the dying is surrounded by the world's culturally elite. It's obvious that her plea to end abortion made the assembled dignities very uncomfortable. She wasn't a professional speaker but she was an impassioned one, inspired by the Holy Spirit. She, too, was protesting a war. She was protesting what St. John Paul II called the "war of the powerful against the weak" in his encyclical *The Gospel of Life*.

His vision was prophetic: "It is a problem which exists at the cultural, social and political level, where it reveals its more sinister and disturbing aspect in the tendency ... to interpret crimes against life as legitimate expressions of individual freedom to be acknowledged and protected as actual rights."

In a Commonwealth interview, Pope Francis said: "In the world of finance, it has seemed normal to sacrifice [people], to practice a politics of the throwaway culture, from the beginning to the end of life. I'm thinking of prenatal selec-

tion. It's very unusual these days to meet down syndrome people on the street because when the tomograph [scan] detects them, they are binned."

In America, abortion is a multi-billion dollar business that takes the lives of more than 800,000 children every year. We subsidize it, we export it, and we permit it even up to birth.

But our political leaders are out of touch with the average person. A Marist Poll sponsored by the Knights of Columbus found "a strong

about children in India and Africa who die of malnutrition, "yet millions are dying deliberately by abortion, and this is the greatest destroyer of peace today." She said a culture that encourages abortion inevitably becomes a culture of violence.

"I feel that the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion because it is a war against the child—a direct killing of the innocent child," she said. "And if we accept that a mother can kill her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another? Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching people to love, but to use violence to get what they want."

Her words have come true.

In a speech at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington D.C. in 1994, she expressed hope that America would become an example for the rest

**"I think of that photo when I see the tireless marchers who go to Washington every year to march for life. They, too, are a few, protesting a system that promotes death. I think of that photo and I'm reminded of St. Mother Teresa, who delivered her acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize 40 years ago. ... She, too, was protesting a war. She was protesting what St. John Paul II called the "war of the powerful against the weak"**

majority of Americans wants to elect candidates who support substantial abortion restrictions and that most Americans still reject the Supreme Court's reasoning in the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* case."

According to the poll, "a notable proportion (41 percent) of those who identify as pro-choice are more likely to vote for candidates who support restrictions, as are more than nine in 10 who identify as pro-life (96 percent)."

In her acceptance speech, St. Mother Teresa said that many people are concerned

of the world, a place where all life is sacred.

"If we remember that God loves us and that we can love others as He loves us, then America can become a sign of peace for the world," she said. "From this country, a sign of care for the weakest of the weak—the unborn child—must go out to the world. If you become a burning light of justice and peace in the world, then really you will be true to what the founders of this country stood for." That was her vision. Is it the vision of our political leaders? ■

# Leadership Institute

## ‘True Love that Lasts,’ a new video series on marriage

By **ELIZABETH CLYONS**

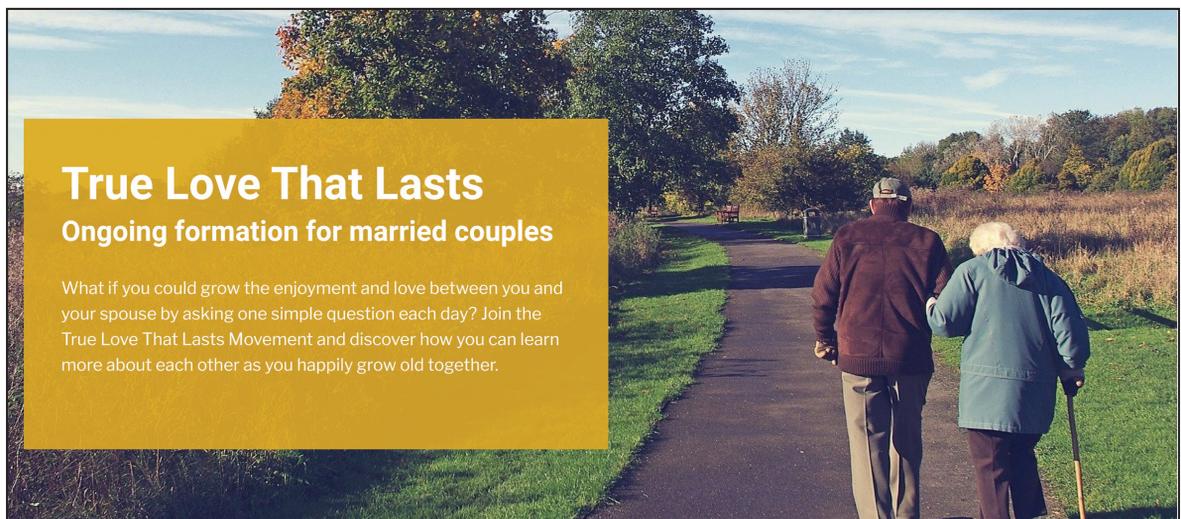
BRIDGEPORT—Dr. Jim Steffen, author of “The Secret of Growing True Love That Lasts” has been working closely with Dr. Patrick Donovan, director of The Leadership Institute on a new video series called “True Love That Lasts.”

“This movement is unique in

“In the new directory, Pope Francis challenges us to ‘make use of the valuable help of other couples with long-standing experience in marriage,’” Donovan says, quoting the New Directory. “The document goes so far as to challenge parishes and dioceses to lose the terminology, ‘marriage prep’ because it undermines the true meaning of marriage for-

happily married for some time, unhappily married and separated or divorced.

“Pope Francis is clear,” says Bishop Caggiano, “Marriage cannot be improvised. A good marriage takes commitment and hard work. By asking one question a day, husbands and wives work together to build a relationship that endures. I invite couples of



### True Love That Lasts

#### Ongoing formation for married couples

What if you could grow the enjoyment and love between you and your spouse by asking one simple question each day? Join the True Love That Lasts Movement and discover how you can learn more about each other as you happily grow old together.

so far as there is no diocese in the U.S. that has such an effort,” says Donovan, explaining that this is not just a premarital program but a program of continuing formation, to guide couples to enjoy all the benefits of married life especially growing the enjoyment and love of their spouse—even daily.

On June 25, 2020, The Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization released a new Directory for Catechesis, providing guidelines for the Church’s mission of proclaiming the Gospel through catechesis and evangelization. The timing of Steffen’s book and video series could not be better, Donovan added.

“An ongoing journey that takes a lifetime. What Jim and Carol have done is to take their own story and put it at the disposal of others. It will be a perfect tie-in to our renewed formation for the sacrament of marriage.”

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

Steffen’s book and the accompanying video series focuses on how couples can grow true love that lasts by asking just a single question a day.

To support continuing formation, The Leadership Institute has compiled resources for the following categories: newly married,

all ages to take up Jim and Carol Steffen’s challenge of growing true love that lasts.”

The Institute, in partnership with Dr. Steffen, will be hosting a five-week webinar series beginning January 21. Participants can log on at either 2 pm or 7 pm and join others in learning more about the movement and discussing Steffen’s book. The cost for the webinar will cover the supplies couples will need in order to participate.

(To join the True Love That Lasts movement visit: [www.formationreimagined.org/true-love-that-lasts-full](http://www.formationreimagined.org/true-love-that-lasts-full). To sign up for the True Love That Lasts Webinar visit: [www.true-lovethatlasts.us/christmas.html](http://www.true-lovethatlasts.us/christmas.html).) ■



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# St. Rose of Lima, Newtown

## Sandy Hook Memorial Mass: we choose to be in the light

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

NEWTOWN—“We gather for the eighth time this night to remember one of the most horrific events in this community, and certainly in this country and even our world,” said Msgr. Robert Weiss, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Church in Newtown at last evening’s Memorial Mass for the 26 stu-

Fittingly, Deacon Mike Ronan read from the Gospel of Mark, “Let the children come to me” (Mark 10:13-15).

Msgr. Weiss recalled eight years ago, when not only was the church filled to capacity, but there were over 2,000 people standing outside.

“People just needed to be somewhere, needed to be together,

to ask ourselves what are we to do, how do we bring about that change that we so desperately need?”

Monsignor mourned the potential that existed in every one of the twenty children represented by the angel ornaments on the tree.

“They never had a chance to share that,” he said. “But what they did share with us were incredible stories of sweet little children, who in their innocence taught us so many important lessons in life, lessons that we will never forget and that is the gift that God gave us out of this sadness...a legacy of twenty beautiful young children and six incredible adults. It challenged us to use well the gifts and the talents God has given us to build up rather than to tear down.”

Monsignor addressed the students gathered, saying that he remembered so many of them from years ago. “It was a difficult and challenging time,” he said, “but it was a time to grow closer together and to open our hearts and minds to what really matters—and that’s the preciousness of the gift of life, and that we need to work endlessly and tirelessly to protect that gift. No innocent person deserves to have their life taken from them, especially children.”

“And so, where do we find ourselves eight years later,” Monsignor asked, “We find ourselves still fighting for the same cause, still holding on to the same hope, still trying to understand and opening our hearts as much as we can on a day like this to families whose lives continue to be broken.”

“We are blessed to have so many of you young folks here in this church tonight,” said Monsignor.

“Many of them were your contemporaries at this age. I thank you for being here. And I thank you for being the young people of faith that you are. Because you are the reminder of how much goodness exists in this world, how much potential exists in every one of you. How every day as you mature you are discovering those gifts and talents that God gave to you, and you’re using them to make yourselves and to make us a little better, a little happier, and even a little bit holier.” ■



dents and teachers who lost their lives at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

“We made a pledge on that day that we would never forget but that we would hold these 26 in prayer and thought, as well as their families. So once again, tonight, we gather to remember.”

With in-person attendance limited as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, most mourners participated in the solemn remembrance online. Some of the young people in attendance were family members and classmates of those who lost their lives in 2012.

Msgr. Weiss read the names of each of the students and teachers as a bell tolled and students brought an ornament down the aisle of the church to be placed on a Christmas tree by the altar. “Let us pause in remembrance,” said Msgr. Weiss, after all 26 ornaments were placed on the tree.

“Certainly, this pandemic has changed so much in our lives,” said Monsignor. “Normally the Church would be full on a night like this, with people so deeply touched by this tragedy. And yet, even though the physical presence is not here, we know that their hearts and their prayers are, and so we gather as a community once again...praying for healing, for hope and for the strength and peace we need.”

trying to understand, show support, lift up spirits,” Monsignor reflected. “Even though it was dark, so many candles were lit that the darkness was being dispelled rather quickly, and we were holding on to whatever hope we thought we had left.”

“The same feeling comes over you on a night like this,” said Monsignor. “What words do you use? How do we talk about healing? How do we talk about compassion? How do we talk about love? Well, the beauty was we didn’t talk about it, we lived it. And we continue to live in that spirit, because darkness brings the best out of us when we choose to be in the light.”

Monsignor explained that he thought for sure this tragedy was going to change the world. “I thought this was going to change peoples’ attitudes about gun violence, this was going to put an end to everything, especially thinking these twenty little innocent children were taken at Christmastime.”

“But it didn’t make the change,” Monsignor lamented. “It changed the hearts and minds of some. But as we look at the headlines the past few days, and they give out numbers that are astronomical of the people who continue to die at the hands of gun violence every day in this country, in this state, we have

# March for Life

## This year join the Virtual March for Life

For 47 years, people of all faiths, denominations, races and backgrounds have gone to Washington to march for life and stand against abortion. Thousands of pro-life supporters have con-

pre-rally concert and entire roster of speakers.

“As long as the ultimate human rights abuse of the killing of pre-born babies, sanctioned by the government, continues,

Avenue and ends in front of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Matthew West, the GMA Dove Award®-winning and GRAMMY Award®-nominated artist/songwriter, will be perform-



MARCH FOR LIFE—This year on January 29, in addition to the live rally, which will be limited because of COVID-19 restrictions, there will be a virtual March.

verged on the National Mall and marched on Capitol Hill on the anniversary of the Supreme Court’s 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling that legalized abortion.

This year on January 29, in addition to the live rally, which will be limited because of COVID-19 restrictions, there will be a virtual March. The March for Life leaders are encouraging people to sign up for the Virtual March so they will be able to participate virtually.

“We marched during the blizzard of 2016, we’ve marched during government shutdowns, we marched after 9/11, we will march again this year,” said Jeanne Mancini, president of March for Life. “We’ve marched for 47 years, and no sacrifice is too great to fight this human rights abuse of abortion.”

This year’s theme is “Together Strong: Life Unites” For more information, go to: [marchforlife.org/national-march-for-life](http://marchforlife.org/national-march-for-life).

Dr. Lenore Opalak, co-leader of the 40 Days for Life campaign in Bridgeport, said that in order to include the large number of people who would usually attend the march but cannot travel this year due to pandemic restrictions, the March for Life has added a virtual component, featuring live-streaming of the

the March for Life will continue, providing essential public witness in support of the sanctity of life,” she said.

Because of the problems posed by the coronavirus pandemic, the march will be scaled down this year with the requisite masking/social distancing in place.

“It is so important that we persevere in prayer and make our voices heard in opposition to abortion to protect the lives of babies and help for the mothers who are faced with the decision,” said Maureen Ciardiello, coordinator of Respect Life & Project Rachel for the Diocese of Bridgeport. Project Rachel is a ministry of the Church that offers a program to help post-abortive women in the healing process. For more information, contact Ciardiello by phone at 203.416.1445 or email at [mcardiello@diobpt.org](mailto:mcardiello@diobpt.org).

The March for Life will be held on Friday, January 29 on the National Mall in Washington D.C. between the Washington Monument and 12th Street. The pre-rally concert will begin at 11 am followed by the rally at noon. The march begins immediately following the rally at approximately 1 pm and proceeds east from the Washington Monument, between 12th and 14th Streets on Constitution

ing at this year’s rally.

“I am honored to be performing at the March for Life,” West said. “This is an important event, and I look forward to proudly lifting my voice along with thousands of people from all walks of life as we gather together in Washington D.C. and send this message loud and clear: I believe every life deserves a voice. Every child deserves a chance.”

In addition to West, speakers will include athlete, author and Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow; Cissie Graham Lynch, granddaughter of the late Rev. Billy Graham; Elizabeth Eller, student body president at Christendom College, and Archbishop Joseph Naumann, the USCCB Chair of the Pro-Life Committee.

“People from all different walks of life, faiths, colors and backgrounds are united in the belief that life has inherent human dignity,” said Jeanne Mancini. “This year’s theme highlights diversity as the true strength of the pro-life movement and how our commitment to life has the power to unify. The world today is divided, but the pro-life movement is working for the day that abortion, one of the most fundamentally divisive acts, becomes unthinkable.”

(In order to sign up, go to: <https://p2a.co/4SvM3jT>.)

# Foundations in Education

## Bishop's Scholarship Fund Applications open February 1

BRIDGEPORT—Foundations in Education, Inc. is pleased to announce that applications to the Bishop's Scholarship Fund open February 1, 2021!

The mission of the Bishop's Scholarship Fund is to help families afford a Catholic education

- 49% raised by single parents
  - 54% qualify for free or reduced lunch
  - household's average gross income = \$56,798
- "We encourage all families who need financial assistance to apply. Consideration may be

to apply is March 15, 2021 for families with a child currently enrolled in K-8 at any of our diocesan schools and April 15, 2021 for families new to our schools.

Foundations in Education is a non-profit initiative created to



at diocesan elementary schools in Fairfield County.

In the 2020-2021 academic year, the Bishop's Scholarship Fund received 2,248 applications for tuition assistance and awarded 1,271 students in kindergarten through grade 8 nearly \$2,700,000. Awards ranged from \$300-\$3,250 per student.

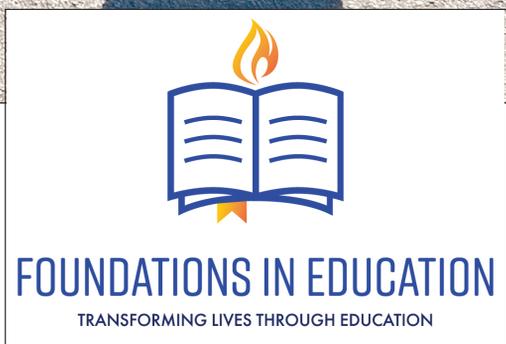
A composite of this past year's average Bishop's Scholarship Fund recipients includes:

given to families with multiple elementary school-aged children," remarked Foundations in Education Executive Director Holly Doherty-Lemoine.

Applicants apply online via the FACTS Grant and Aid application and complete all questions relative to Bishop's Scholarship Fund. The deadline

assist the Diocese of Bridgeport's ongoing mission to support Catholic education in Fairfield County.

(For more information, visit [www.foundationsineducation.org](http://www.foundationsineducation.org).)



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# Foundations in Faith

## Foundation in Faith has a ‘remarkable impact’ on diocese

By MEG MCCAFFREY

BRIDGEPORT—Foundations in Faith quickly shifted its energies and focus in 2020 to assist

for Mission Churches (SFX). With the pandemic taking hold, Foundations in Faith launched the COVID-19 Emergency Fund within the SFX Fund. This emer-

and continue to be most harshly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

“I am pleased and very grateful to be able to say that Foundations in Faith has had a



YOUTH RADIO—Father Sam Kachuba, pastor of St. Pius X Parish and chaplain of Veritas Radio, meets with the young producers of “Amplify,” a program by and for teens, which is being funded by Foundations in Faith.

parishes and pastoral ministries in the Diocese of Bridgeport suddenly faced with significant financial challenges brought on by the historic COVID-19 pandemic.

As of December 2020, approximately \$230,000 had been distributed to eleven parishes in phase I and phase II of a plan that is anticipated to include a phase III of pandemic related funding for 2021. Because churches had initially been closed, there were no regular weekly collections. Offertory money pays basic costs such as utilities, staff salaries and groceries for priests. As a result, many parishes were being forced to take drastic cost-cutting measures, according to Kelly Weldon, director of Foundations in Faith. At the same time, urban communities were hit extra hard with higher levels of unemployment and illness.

“We must be there for our brethren,” said Weldon.

The funds, distributed mainly via grants, came out of a new fund that was launched called the St. Francis Xavier Fund

agency fund has helped the worst-hit parishes confront the crisis and continue operating.

The SFX Committee continues to strive to support vibrant urban parishes. It delivered financial assistance to purchase a boiler for Saint George Parish in Bridgeport, for instance, and new gutters to prevent further water damage due to a leak at St. James Church in Stratford. Also funded was the updating of 10-year-old technology for two parishes.

These parishes have strong pastoral and lay leadership.

“They are not mission churches; they are missionary churches! We are committed to strength-based approaches that partner with pastors as they continue their outstanding ministries,” said Weldon, who was promoted early in the year to part-time director of Foundations in Faith.

This effort was reflective of Bishop Frank J. Caggiano’s belief that Foundations in Faith be a provider of stabilization to primarily urban parishes in the diocese. The urban communities were

remarkable impact on our diocese in a short time,” said Bishop Caggiano. “Under the capable and creative leadership of Kelly Weldon, it has proven to be a great resource to our parishes and our people. In particular, the innovative St. Francis Xavier Fund has proven to be an invaluable resource during the pandemic, particularly as it has been able to assist pastorally vibrant parishes with financial challenges.”

Other major developments in 2020 included Andy Aoyama being named as the new Chairman and Joe Sindelar as the Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Their appointments also speak to Bishop Caggiano’s wish that the Foundation be lay run.

Sindelar said the past year has been one of momentum and awareness, both on the development side with an increase in generous donors who have become aware of our efforts and the demand side with parishes in need reaching out for guidance and assistance. “What is truly

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

# Foundations in Faith

FOUNDATIONS IN FAITH FROM PAGE 20

exciting is the groundswell of generosity around the diocese as people discovered such a meaningful way to level the playing field and help out our sister parishes," he noted.

Against Racism, which the bishop asked to develop strategic goals and practical steps to combat racism. Members include Weldon and Board Member Susan Stone.

Dennis Keefe Queen of Clergy residence.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Education Fund provides funding to help keep tuition costs within Catholic elementary schools



Weldon said the St. Francis Xavier Fund was blessed to have an enthusiastic group of committee members and a donor willing to designate funding not to the endowment but to seed projects immediately. Funding decisions were made in days, not weeks with a focus on being nimble and ensuring the process was not onerous on the priests.

There was other vital work to do too. To answer Bishop Caggiano's "Call to Action" to fight the sin of racism, Foundations in Faith funded initiatives that are part of its continuing work to foster anti-racism training at all levels of faith formation in the Church.

The impetus for the anti-racism training was also in part inspired by 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).

Among the grants awarded to address these goals was a general operating support grant for \$4,500 to The Leadership Institute to entirely fund a seven-part webinar series, "Conversations About Race" that engaged not only the faithful in the diocese but people nationwide. Each webinar featured conversations with Roman Catholic Church leaders on how race relations can be improved in our homes, community and the Church.

They were moderated by the diocesan Ad Hoc Committee

One grant went to supporting Young Adult Catholics Against Racism to guide and work in tandem with the Ad Hoc Committee's anti-racism efforts. Another grant went to fund a pilot project taking place at St. James in Stratford, one that will serve as a prototype for other parishes that is entitled "Open Wide Our Hearts—Conversations on Race."

Meanwhile, important work continued helping pastoral ministries. Of the nine funds that Foundations in Faith aims to support, five are active and they distributed the following:

St. John Paul II Fund provides funding to parishes and diocesan organizations for innovative approaches to enhance religious education, youth ministry, and faith formation: Funds distributed this year include Program Support Grants for parish programs—\$66,800; Youth in Action grants—\$15,000; Mini-Grants—\$6,000; General Support Grants—\$22,500.

St. Charles Borromeo Fund provides funding to support the educating and forming of young men for the Catholic priesthood: A total of \$95,000 has been distributed to St. John Fisher Seminary—\$35,000; Redemptoris Mater Diocesan Missionary Seminary—\$30,000; and Office of Vocations—\$30,000.

St. John Vianney Fund provides funding for future care needs of retired priests who have faithfully served the people of God within the diocese. \$40,000 has been distributed to Catherine

affordable: \$175,000 was awarded to Office of the Superintendent of Catholic Schools.

St. Francis Xavier Fund for Missionary Churches provides funding for projects and capacity building opportunities to urban parishes that are deemed vibrant and vital to the diocese yet are in economically challenged areas resulting in disproportionate burdens: A total of \$336,500 has been distributed in the 2020 calendar year. COVID-19 Emergency Funding \$230,000; Parish Immediate Need Support—\$34,000; Capacity Building Technology Grants—\$47,5000; Parish Capital Improvement—\$25,000.

"I am deeply grateful for the investment our donors have made to Foundations in Faith," said Bishop Caggiano. "I believe the returns will be with the diocese for years to come and will continue to bless our young people along with all those who seek to deepen, celebrate and share their faith in a world that needs the healing presence of Christ more than ever."

The year ended with much promise. Foundations in Faith received more than \$25,000 from 60 donations on Giving Tuesday, held December 1, to go to the SFX Fund, which in turn the Foundation can distribute to parishes. Additionally, the We Stand With Christ campaign contributions and pledges will ensure the funding continues for years to come.

(To learn more or support Foundations in Faith visit [www.foundationsinfaith.org](http://www.foundationsinfaith.org) or email [kelly.weldon@foundationsinfaith.org](mailto:kelly.weldon@foundationsinfaith.org).)

# Catholic Education

## Blessed are those who bless others

By **JOE PISANI**

On the wall of Andy Knuth's office is the finger-painting of a cross surrounded by the signatures of seven young students with the words, "Blessed are those who

kids, they couldn't go to Catholic schools, and that's very sad. They need it the most...and they appreciate it the most."

And just as he is committed to providing them an education, they are equally committed to their

first-graders, were transferred to St. Cecilia's. From that time, he continued to support them every year right into Trinity Catholic High School. After it closed, they went to high school at St. Joseph's in Trumbull and Notre Dame in Fairfield.



ANDY KNUTH, a member of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Weston and retired founder and chairman of Westport Asset Management, believes in the mission of Catholic education.

bless others." Nearby is an eighth-grade graduation photo of the same students, who were given a shot at a Catholic education... because of Andy.

Years later, those same students are in Catholic high school and preparing to go to college because of Andy, a man who believes in the mission of Catholic education and will do what has to be done to give a chance to students who might not otherwise get a chance.

Some are setting their hopes on University of North Carolina, Boston University and Boston College, others on University of Connecticut, Villanova and Quinnipiac.

"I like to think they progressed in their education because they knew I was supporting them and they didn't have to worry," says Knuth, a member of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Weston and retired founder and chairman of Westport Asset Management. "I had a firsthand opportunity to see how these kids developed. I buy into Catholic education. If we weren't supplying scholarships to

education because of him.

Maureen Nelson recalls getting up at 5 am to take a bus to downtown Stamford and then transferring to another one that would bring her to St. Cecilia's School. Coming home, she took a bus to her cousin's house and then would go to her grandmother's and wait until her mother's coworker could pick her up and drive her home.

Today, Maureen, who is a senior at St. Joseph High School, hopes to pursue a career in medicine and has applied to Boston College and of Boston University.

"It would have been easier to go to public school, but my dad wanted my sister and me to go to Catholic school because they went to Catholic school in Haiti, and it meant so much to them," she says.

Knuth's initiative began in 2007 at the invitation of a friend who is on the bishop's scholarship committee and believes the best way to save Catholic education is one student at a time.

Knuth agreed to help reopen Sacred Heart School in Stamford, but when that plan faltered, his seven students, who were then

His commitment to Catholic education extends beyond what he has done for these seven students. Knuth also has provided other students with 4-year college scholarships, and others with scholarships to St. Joseph and Notre Dame students, in addition to giving assistance to 20 students at Assumption Catholic School in Fairfield.

"Andy's continued commitment is a powerful endorsement of the vital work of our Catholic schools and a life-changing gift to their families," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. "These students strive for excellence; however, they face very real financial hardships. His generous support allows them to stay on the path of transformational Catholic learning, where they can live out Christ's call to discipleship."

When he looks back on his involvement with the students, from childhood to their teenage years, Knuth says, "This has been an extraordinary experience for me and for them. If I had to pick out seven great kids, I couldn't pick out any seven kids who would be

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

# Catholic Education

=====*BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO BLESS OTHERS FROM PAGE 22*=====

better. I've worked with them for 13 years, and now to see them as seniors in high school is just remarkable. It has been a great experience for me and a great experience for them. If I was looking for a project to do, I couldn't have found anything better."

But his involvement goes beyond the financial because he has a special empathy for the challenges they face, and he sees similarities in his own life.

"My parents were great. We had no money, we had nothing. My mother told me, 'If you want to get ahead in life you have to go to college,'" he recalls. "And I have been very fortunate in my life."

Knuth grew up in West Caldwell, New Jersey, and later went to Dickinson College in Carlisle Pennsylvania, and like his students, he was the first person in his extended family to go to college.

His father Andrew dropped out of school after the eighth grade and grew up on a farm with six other kids.

"My father learned how to do mechanical things on the farm, and he became a really great mechanic," Knuth says.

During the Great Depression, when his father needed a job, his brother came up with a solution: "My uncle Jake was panning for gold in the Snake River in Idaho, and he contacted my father and said, 'You gotta come out here; there's gold all over the place.' So my father drove a rickety old Ford out to Idaho, and the two of them were so successful they bought a front-end loader to help pan for more gold."

That venture ended, however, after a historic devastating flood hit the river.

Andy says his parents were "the best parents I could ever have."

"We always had the support of our family, and they did everything they could to save money so I could go to college," he recalls. "My mother was a telephone operator in those days, and it cost \$1,200 to go to college."

After Dickinson, he went to New York University for his MBA and got started in finance.

"I have been very fortunate in my life, very fortunate," he says. "I don't know why God picked me out to be so fortunate, but he did. And the key to my success was an education. The only way I can see to help kids who are in a

difficult situation is through education. I see no other way."

In addition to the scholarships that Andy provides, he and his daughter Jennifer Loya started a program at the Boys and Girls Club of Bridgeport to encourage young people to go to college, and through that initiative, they have sponsored the college educations of seven additional students.

Over the years, the seven Stamford students have met regularly with him, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, they held Zoom sessions.

"There was great emotion from the kids when I told them I would pay for college or trade school," he recalls. "For all of them, it would be the first time anyone in their families went to college. It was emotional for them, and it was emotional for me. At one meeting, a

mother came up to me crying and put her arms around me and said, 'If it wasn't for you, my daughter wouldn't be able to go to such a good school.' That almost got me crying."

Going to Catholic school was so important for Emilio Montero that to get to St. Cecilia's he would take several buses across town. Now, a senior at St. Joseph High School, he has applied to colleges in the Boston area, in addition to Columbia and Villanova.

"I want to major in English because I love to write. I love reading and I like magazines like the New Yorker, which give me ideas to write about," he says.

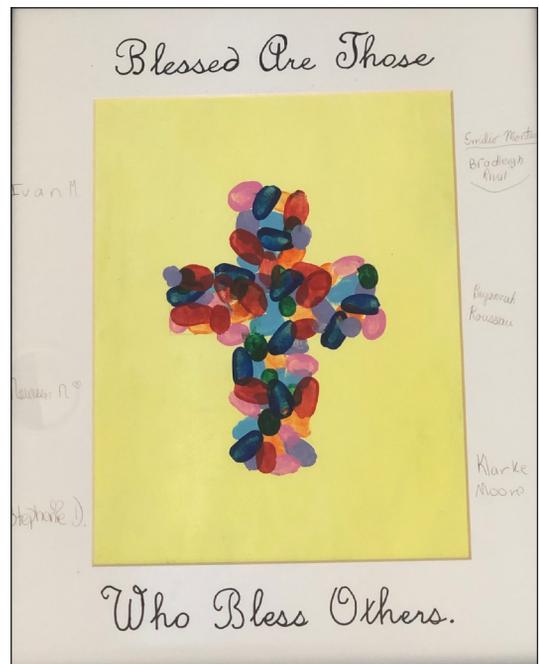
"I can't say how grateful I am to Mr. Knuth. He is a really good person who cares about us," Emilio said. "When my parents first told me about him and the financial aid, I didn't know what it meant, but later I understood, and I have been praying for him every day since then."

Ivan Martinez, a senior at St. Joseph's, wants to be a math teacher and has applied to Boston College and Villanova.

"Because of Mr. Knuth, I have been able to go to Catholic schools. Without his help, I would

probably not have the opportunity to go to college," Ivan said. "Because of him I have been able to stay close to my Catholic faith, and that is very important to me and my family."

Ivan says that he enjoys the meetings with Andy because it gives him a chance to learn more about his sponsor, and he feels



a family bond with him and the other students.

Every time, the students would meet with Andy, Maureen Nelson, now a senior at St. Joseph's, would sing a song to express how she felt.

"To me, there are no words to describe how amazing it feels that he took the time to care about us and our education," she says. "The best way I could express it was to sing a religious song that my parents and I picked...and even that wasn't enough to express the deep and profound gratitude I have for everything he has done. We are always filled with happiness to see him, and it warms our hearts that he is happy to see us. And we always pray for him."

The first time she sang for Andy was when she was a third-grader. She sang a hymn that she performs in Creole at the Haitian-American Community Center in Stamford. She translated the song into English for Andy and said the words express what she feels:

"I'm only human, I am just a human, make me believe in what I can be and all that I am. Show me the stairway that I have to climb. Lord, for my sake teach me to take one day at a time." ■

# Diocesan News

## SHU honors three saints in naming new buildings

FAIRFIELD—Sacred Heart University is announcing the names of the new twin residence halls on its Upper Quad as well as the new building that now houses the facilities management team.

connecting the third floors of Wiesel and Frassati halls that open to the amphitheater and Chapel of the Holy Spirit (lower) quad.

The Upper Quad construction will conclude in July 2021, with

and obedience, and also vow to “give wholehearted free service to the poorest of the poor.” This is accomplished by providing homes for people dying of HIV/AIDS, leprosy and tuberculo-



In keeping with its tradition of naming residence halls after people who exemplify the university’s mission and vision, the residence halls will be Teresa of Calcutta Hall and Frances Xavier Cabrini Hall, and the facilities building is called the St. Joseph Center. Students will move in at the end of January for the start of the spring semester.

SHU’s two newest residence halls mark the next step in the development of the residential village on the University’s Upper Quad that will eventually house more than 900 students. The new additions include apartments and mini-suites for four to five students totaling 357 beds. Apartments and mini-suites feature several bedrooms and bathrooms, and each floor has its own study room with integrated technology and dedicated access to laundry services. Large and small common areas are located throughout the halls and include places to study or gather to catch up with friends. In addition to the bedrooms, the halls are characterized by welcoming architectural features, such as grand entrances, spacious outdoor seating areas, large living rooms and an archway mirroring the current iconic bridge

the completion of a final residence hall for 122 students and a new dining facility that will seat 240.

Because of the hard work of the campus operations team to manage SHU’s facilities growth while keeping everything running and beautiful, it seemed fitting to name their building after St. Joseph the Worker. Saint Joseph was the husband of Mary, mother of Jesus and is considered Jesus’ lawful father. He is regarded as the patron saint of workers, and the month of March is dedicated to him in the Catholic Church. Pope Francis has just declared that 2021 will be dedicated to St. Joseph to commemorate 150 years since St. Joseph was named patron saint of the universal Church in 1870.

Mary Teresa Bojaxhiu, also known as Mother Teresa of Calcutta, was born in Skopje, which is now the capital of North Macedonia. She lived there for 18 years before moving to Ireland and then India, where she spent the bulk of her life serving the people of Calcutta. She founded the Missionaries of Charity in 1950, and as of 2020, the group had 5,167 nuns serving in countries all over the world. Members take vows of chastity, poverty

and soup kitchens, dispensaries, mobile clinics, orphanages and schools. Among the many honors she received in her lifetime are the 1962 Ramon Magsaysay Peace Prize and the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize. She was canonized in 2016, and the anniversary of her death on September 5 is her feast day.

Frances Xavier Cabrini, also called Mother Cabrini, was an Italian-American nun, who founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Born near Milan, Italy, in 1850, the youngest of 13 children, she attended a school run by the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, graduating cum laude with a teaching certificate at age 13. In 1889, Frances founded the Sacred Heart Orphan Asylum in West Park, N.Y., later renamed in her honor. She became a U.S. citizen in 1909 and went on to establish 67 schools, orphanages and hospitals. She died in 1918 and was canonized on July 7, 1946, by Pope Pius XII, the first US citizen to be canonized a saint. She was named the patron saint of immigrants in 1950.

(To download an image, visit SHU’s Photoshelter archive at: [sacred-heart.photoshelter.com](http://sacred-heart.photoshelter.com).)

# Diocesan News

## Youth in Action grants inspire service

By **EMILY CLARK**

BRIDGEPORT—Foundations in Faith has announced the recipients of the 2021 Youth in Action grants, representing groups of Catholic young adults and teens who possess the desire for collaboration, mission work and evangelization within their parishes and communities. With up to \$5,000 going to each organization, the grantees include Our Lady of Fatima Parish Youth Group in Bridgeport, St. Theresa Church youth group in Trumbull, and the Fairfield and Stamford chapters of Crossroads 4 Christ.

Now in its second year, the

donations, and distributed them to parishioners and community members in this predominantly Portuguese neighborhood. Last September during the pandemic, this youth group celebrated a grand opening outdoors and in masks, offering food in reusable bags with Bible verses printed on them.

This year, building on the success of the food pantry, the youth want to create Our Lady's Garden, transforming an old playground to plant fruits and vegetables to stock the pantry. Youth group leader Melissa Oliveira said she looks forward to combining these endeavors to provide fresh produce to the



**KELLY WELDON**

age youth ministry groups. "Parishes connecting with other parishes is a good thing," she says. "We need more of it!"

"The goal of our project is to help teens make a connection with their faith by seeing other teens practice it," said high school senior Kate Barton, who co-wrote the grant with fellow youth group member Abigail Clark. "We hope to inspire them to follow us on our journey."

Referencing the name of the project and plan for evangelization, Barton added, "We have been set on fire by our faith and want to ignite that spark in teens all over Trumbull which will hopefully lead to a future generation of eager Catholics."

Collaborating with others to reinvigorate the faith is also a goal of Crossroads 4 Christ, whose mission is to "develop intentional communities of young adult missionary disciples." The group's chapters in Stamford and Fairfield will join together and, with financial assistance from the YIA grant, create a "Meet Us at the Crossroads" project to increase the formation, evangelization efforts, and inclusion within this community, primarily through digital and multi-media programming.

The award recipients have already begun planning their projects which will be implemented during this calendar year. Weldon said Bishop Caggiano shares Pope Francis' admiration for young people and the need to work with them and learn from them, objectives made possible through the Youth in Action grants. ■



Youth in Action grants grew from Bishop Frank J. Caggiano's affinity for young people's thoughts and ideas with a philosophy of "by youth, for youth," according to Kelly Weldon, director of Foundations in Faith. "The bishop sees young adults and teens as so creative and engaged. We wanted to launch a grant specifically for teen and youth ministry," she said. With the success of the first two awards in 2020 to a Catholic high school and a Catholic Church youth group, Weldon said they decided to add a young adult category this year.

"We need shine a light on all that Catholic to reach young adults are doing and let high schoolers know about these groups," she added. "After college, this is a bridge—a next step in their faith journey."

As one of the 2020 recipients, the youth group from Our Lady of Fatima Parish applied for a second grant to further the project they began last year. With their previous award money, they opened a food pantry, collected

community.

"This project will further YIA's mission by engaging youth in a skill that is very much rooted in our Portuguese culture and connect our multi-generational parish through God's work," Oliveira said. "The older generation will pass on skills that would otherwise be lost. The youth are excited to increase their presence and responsibility."

The excitement felt among the youth at Our Lady of Fatima is mirrored by that at St. Theresa. With a desire to share the love of their faith with other teens, STAY (St. Theresa Apostolic Youth) is planning a "Find Your Fire: Trumbull Catholic Youth Day" event this summer to join with the other parishes in town as people reemerge from the COVID-19 quarantine. An engaging speaker, outdoor Mass and adoration, games, music, and food trucks will highlight this event and unite young people as one community under Christ. Weldon is excited to see four churches in Trumbull come together with their high school

# A New Year's Reflection

## Appreciate the passage of time

By **EMILY CLARK**

The texts came chiming in from friends one after another as early as 3 pm on New Year's Eve: "Happy 2021!" and "Soooo glad 2020 is coming to an end!" and "We finally made it!"

I responded to each in similar fashion, mentally replaying the challenges, too numerous to mention, that we had all faced. Even my oldest friend, who always checks in on January 1, barely said hello before uttering, "Goodbye and good riddance 2020!" as I pictured her flipping her hands in the air on her back deck in Georgia. We couldn't help but rehash the year that had just passed, for what else was there to say now that 2020 had settled into our collective memories?

Time to move on, we decided. Time to bid farewell and time to look ahead. Yes, what a time this year was. Saying this felt odd to me though, as I was never one to wish the time away, preferring to hold onto

the present and reflect on the past, all the while looking forward to the future but never wanting it to come at lightning pace. And still today, as my children anticipate the next episode of their favorite series and my students count down the days until the next vacation, I relish the moments of the here and now. This year, however, like so many others, I really was ready to wish that time away.

With all these references to the abstract idea of time, along with images of stopwatches ticking down the minutes of 2020 and the cuckoo clock that popped up on the Google doodle, I kept coming back to a line of prayer that our priest voiced in mid-December as he lit the rose candle of the Advent wreath: "May we appreciate the passage of time."

Until then, I had never thought about pausing to appreciate the way time passes, especially during this year when it seemed time could not pass quickly enough. As our Advent season of waiting and hoping came upon us, it seemed all we wanted

to do was hurry it along, not only in anticipation of Jesus' coming on Christmas but to get as far from 2020 as we could—as fast as we could.

So how could we come to appreciate this time? I didn't grasp it, until that time had indeed passed and we were on the other side of the year we wished away. For if we didn't bear witness to it, what would we have missed? Our heightened concern for one another, our days apart that made coming together all the more special, our understanding of the importance of inclusion and gratitude, our enduring trust in God to lead us through each challenge. Ecclesiastes tells us that "He has made everything beautiful in its time"—and this was our time, along with the gift to make of it what we could, even if it was no more than an appreciation.

*(Emily Clark is a teacher and writer who covers the greater Bridgeport area for Fairfield County Catholic. She and her family are members of St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull.)*

# CATHOLIC CEMETERIES

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# Responds to COVID-19

## Former editor pens a great 'Escape'

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—"Indiana Jones with a pen" is how Joseph McAleer describes the subject of his entertaining new book, a biography of a British adventurer at the turn of the twentieth century.

"Harry Perry Robinson was a journalist who found himself in history's shadow, taking part in major events but never getting the recognition he deserved," McAleer says. "Until now."

*Escape Artist: The Nine Lives of Harry Perry Robinson* was published last fall by Oxford University Press. It's McAleer's fourth book, and reviews have been glowing.

"They don't make lives like

"Those were dark days," he recalled. "We lost ten percent of our priests, and trust in the Church was eroded. It was a necessary purging and vital recognition of victims. In many respects we're still coming to terms with this tragedy."

During McAleer's 12-year tenure, which saw Bishop Egan promoted to the Archdiocese of New York and the arrival of Bishop William Lori, the diocese launched its website, produced a short-lived radio show ("Sundays with the Bishop"), and engaged a not-always-friendly press corps.

"My mantra from those days sounds corny but it works: 'Always tell the truth and you'll never have to remember what you said,'" McAleer notes.

Since leaving the diocese, McAleer joined his brothers in the family business, a global ship brokerage firm, while remaining active in his parish, the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist in Stamford. But he also stayed true to his real passion as an historian.

In fact, his third

book, *Call of the Atlantic* (2016), dealing with the American author Jack London, led to the current project.

"Jack London's first overseas publisher was a small firm run by Harry Perry Robinson in 1902," McAleer explains. "In Robinson's letters he mentioned adventures he had had in America. I was intrigued and followed the trail."

And what a trail it was, as described with gusto in *Escape Artist*. Robinson came to America in 1883, age 24, eager to make his name and fortune. He started out as a journalist, covering gold rushes out West, before settling



JOSEPH MCALEER

down in Minnesota. Marriage to the daughter of a wealthy tycoon set him up in Chicago, where he became a national voice for the railroad industry. Robinson befriended William McKinley, aiding his presidential victory in 1896.

Life took a dramatic turn, and Robinson returned to England and journalism. He was the oldest correspondent at the Western Front in World War I and was knighted for his efforts. "Sir Harry" capped his career by covering the opening of King Tutankhamun's tomb in 1923, then the "scoop" of the century.

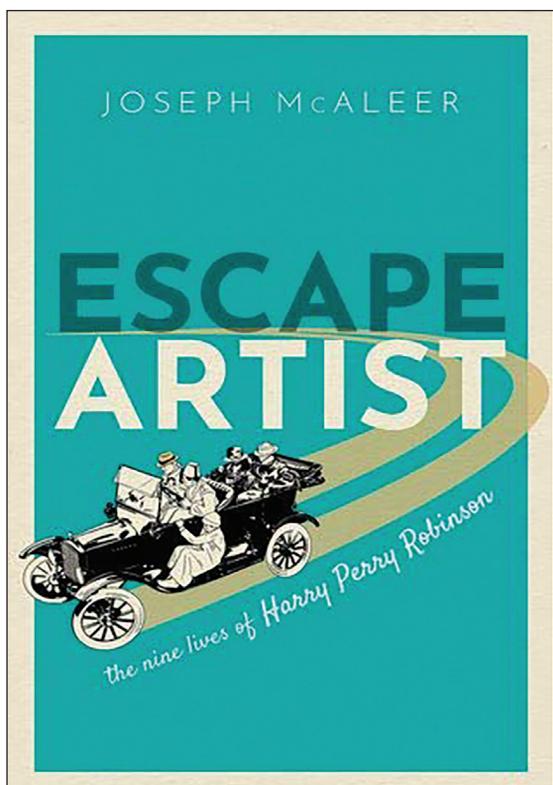
In his "spare" time, Robinson wrote books of his own, best-selling novels and collections of short stories. His non-fiction work promoted the "Special Relationship" between the United States and the United Kingdom, with Robinson convinced that global peace depended upon the two countries working together.

"Robinson had a fascinating but exhausting life," McAleer says with understatement. "He worked non-stop until a month before his death in 1930."

What's next for McAleer? He's hopeful that *Escape Artist* will be dramatized by a streaming service like Netflix. In the meantime, he's embarked on his next book, another biography, but is mum about the details.

"A woman this time, and another grand adventure," he teases, offering three tantalizing clues: espionage, Hollywood, and condiments.

*Escape Artist: The Nine Lives of Harry Perry Robinson* is available on Amazon.com in hardback and Kindle editions as well as an audiobook. ■



this anymore," praised the London Times. "Joseph McAleer has performed a valuable service in bringing [Robinson's] fine work to the fore," said *The Spectator*. *The Wall Street Journal* noted the book is "well researched" with "many virtues."

Many will recall McAleer as the former Director of Communications for the Diocese of Bridgeport and editor of *Fairfield County Catholic*. Hired by then-Bishop Edward Egan in 1998 as the first layperson to hold the office, McAleer was at the front lines during the clergy abuse scandal which exploded in 2001.

# Responds to COVID-19

## Looking to the example of St. Charles Borromeo

By JOE PISANI

“I’m thinking at this time of the saints who live next door. They are heroes: doctors, volunteers, religious sisters, priests, shop workers—all performing their duty so that society can continue functioning during the pandemic. How many doctors and nurses have died! How many religious sisters have died! All serving....”—Pope Francis in an interview with “Commonweal.”

As the pandemic spread across the country, civil authorities prohib-



THIS REPRINT OF “Charles Borromeo Giving Communion to the Plague Victims” is found at the Peoria parish that bears his name.

ited public events and religious ceremonies. The bishop told the faithful not to gather in crowds, to avoid close contact and to hold Mass outside. He urged them to pray more fervently for an end to the scourge that had already taken thousands of lives.

The politicians who hadn’t already fled did little to deal with the crisis, and in desperation, they urged the bishop to take control. He did. Priests and volunteers set up emergency hospitals to care for the sick and dying, the wealthy were encouraged to provide for the poor and the jobless, regulations for worship were issued, and safety guidelines were established. Two years later, on Christmas 1577, what is known as “the plague of St. Charles” began to abate.

Almost 450 years after the plague in Milan took tens of thousands of lives, the example of St. Charles Borromeo offers an illustration of how the Church has responded to pandemics throughout history, from as early as 165 CE and into the modern era with the Spanish influenza of 1918 and the present coronavirus crisis.

“St. Charles Borromeo is exemplary for how to lead during a pan-

demic,” says Deacon Patrick Toole of Westport, episcopal delegate for administration of the Diocese of Bridgeport, who developed many of the protocols the diocese has followed for the past 10 months. “He was really conscious of the importance of social distancing and when he had Eucharistic processions, people walked nine feet apart. He also placed altars around the city for outdoor Masses, and in one of his famous homilies, he urges religious orders and priests to care for the sick. He had a tremendous response that can teach us a lot today.”

In drafting the diocesan response to COVID-19, Deacon Toole, a retired IBM executive, worked with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and Msgr. Thomas

Powers, vicar general, and the administrative cabinet. After extensive research, he developed protocols for liturgy and public gatherings in an attempt to keep the faithful safe while allowing them the opportunity to worship.

“From my perspective, keeping our churches open is essential for the spiritual and physical well-being of our people,” Deacon Toole says. “From the beginning, we had to study the virus to see how it was transmitted, and we did our best to follow CDC protocols and guidelines to keep our churches open and our people safe.”

As part of this process, he consulted medical experts, healthcare officials, immunologists and other dioceses. He examined the prevailing—sometimes changing—theories in scientific journals to come up with guidelines for social distancing and distribution of Communion.

He also consulted the CEO of a chemical company about sanitation and ventilation in his effort to formulate directives. When parishes were unable to get supplies, the diocese set up a distribution site at the Catholic Center that provided masks, shields and sanitizer. Schick company of Milford donated face

shields, and engineering students at Fairfield University used 3-D printers to make them for parishes and first-responders.

“We realized that we needed to keep our churches safe and protect our clergy,” Deacon Toole said. “I think we’re doing everything possible to make Mass available for those who can come, and I firmly believe we are providing the safest environment under these circumstances.”

Throughout the pandemic, there has been no recorded incident when someone went to Sunday Mass and became infected, he says. Because people are required to register for Mass, this allows the diocese to notify attendees if anyone tested positive for COVID who was there.

“The Church is responding with great care and mercy,” he said. “As a community of faith, we are an essential service that must remain open.” To accommodate those who prefer not to attend in person, the diocese and parishes put technology in place so Masses could be live-streamed, including a weekly Sunday Mass by Bishop Caggiano.

“Our priests have shown amazing creativity to continue to foster the faith,” Deacon Toole said, “I give them a lot of credit for their creativity. Many offered outdoor Masses, and at my parish, St. Catherine of Siena, they are still doing outdoor drive-by confessions.”

Recognizing the importance of regular COVID testing, the diocese entered a partnership with Progressive Diagnostics LLC of Trumbull that allowed the Queen of Saints Hall of the Catholic Center at 238 Jewett Avenue to be used as a testing location for COVID-19 and antibody tests.

“We’re very proud of this initiative, which is offering an essential service to help safeguard lives in our community,” Deacon Toole said.

An estimated 1000 people a week are being tested, and future testing sites will open at diocesan locations in Danbury, Stamford, Norwalk and Wilton. As part of the agreement with Progressive, clergy are offered free weekly testing to ensure they do not have COVID when they celebrate weekend liturgies.

*(The above report is Part 1 of a three-part series by Joe Pisani on “The Church during plagues and pandemics.” Part II will cover Christian heroism during pandemic.)*

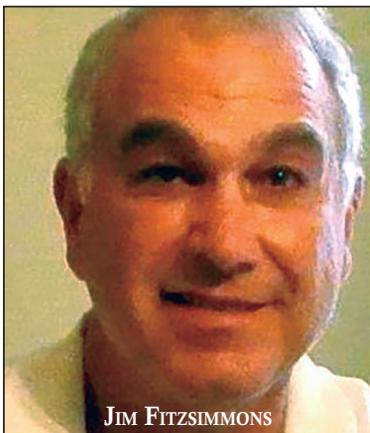
# Sports Legends

## Fitzsimmons, Foust, Nolan to Hall...

By **DON HARRISON**

No fewer than half of the Fairfield County Sports Hall of Fame's 2020 inductees have ties to the Diocese of Bridgeport. They are:

Jim Fitzsimmons, one of the most prolific high school basketball scorers in state history during his career at Fairfield Prep—he holds school records for points in a game (64) and career (1,732)—and was



JIM FITZSIMMONS

named a high school All-America as a senior when he averaged 32.5 points per game and sparked Prep to the 1968-69 Class L state title.

Deacon Don Foust, administrator at St. Margaret Shrine in Bridgeport, who spent 34 years coaching basketball at several levels in Fairfield County, all with considerable success.

Dianne Nolan, who is among the most successful collegiate head coaches in women's college basketball history, transformed Fairfield University into a perennial winner at the Division-I level and won a school-record 456 games across 28 seasons (1979-2007).

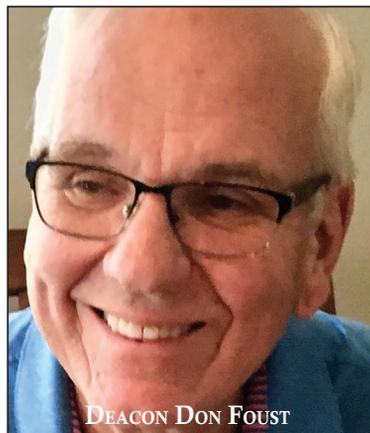
Both Foust and Nolan will be inducted into the J. Walter Kennedy Community Service Wing, while Fitzsimmons will join Barbara Reinalda, who surpassed the legendary Joan Joyce as the winningest pitcher in Stratford (Raybestos) Brakettes team history with 441 victories, in the James O'Rourke Amateur Wing.

Matt Barnes (Bethel), who will be starting his seventh season as a relief pitcher with the Boston Red Sox, and John Sullivan (Greenwich), who concluded his 10-year NFL career in 2019 as the starting center for the NFC champion Los Angeles Rams in Super Bowl LIII, will enter the Jackie Robinson Professional Wing.

The Hall of Fame, which is administered by the Fairfield County Sports Commission, Inc., will honor the six inductees at a

date to be determined. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the commission postponed its annual Sports Night gala until 2021.

Fitzsimmons, a 6-foot-3 forward with a superb shooting touch, was the catalyst behind Prep teams that compiled a 64-6 won-lost record over three seasons, capped by three straight Class L state title game appearances. Coach Bob Sylvester's Jesuits bowed to Sacred



DEACON DON FOUST

Heart (Waterbury) in 1967 and East Catholic of Manchester in '68, but turned the tables on East Catholic in the 1969 championship game.

"We only won by 10 (61-51) because they slowed the tempo," recalled Fitzsimmons, who scored 20 points and was voted finals MVP. "They didn't want to get blown out. We were up the whole way. It was great to finally get it over with. Very gratifying."

Fitz earned first-team All-State honors for the second straight year and played in the prestigious Dapper Dan Roundball Classic for high school All-Americans. He appeared to be headed for Harvard, but instead opted for a scholarship to Duke. He was leading the undefeated Blue Devils' freshman team in scoring until a ruptured disc caused him to miss the second semester.

So, he made the decision to transfer to Harvard, where, after sitting out a year, he became an instant Ivy League star. As a sophomore, Fitzsimmons established Crimson records with 629 points and a 24.2 scoring average, and was selected to the NABC All-New England first team. His two-season scoring average of 18.5 has yet to be surpassed at Harvard.

Today, Fitzsimmons resides in Charlotte, N.C., with his wife and two children, and operates several Massage Envy franchises. He was inducted into the New England Basketball Hall of Fame in 2006 and Prep's HOF in 2017.

Foust, who was ordained in 1998 and has served as St. Margaret Shrine's administrator the past eight years, says that spirituality and basketball "have been part of my entire life." He played the game at Trinity Catholic in Stamford and was a member of the freshman team at St. Bonaventure. For a while, he contemplated entering the priesthood as a member of the Franciscan Brothers.

His coaching credentials—



DIANNE NOLAN

encompassing Norwalk High, Notre Dame High of Fairfield, the University of Bridgeport, Catholic youth teams—gained him election to the Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in 2000.

A sampling of Foust's major achievements: His 1980-81 Norwalk High girls team assembled a 24-1 record and captured the Class LL state title. His 1988-89 UB women's squad went 25-5, earning the Purple Knights their first NCAA Tournament appearance and a Top 20 national ranking. And his St. Thomas Aquinas School of Fairfield team won the New England championship in 1998.

Fairfield U. women's basketball and Nolan became synonymous during her lengthy reign as coach. Her Lady Stags teams earned four NCAA tournament bids, one WNIT appearance and three MAAC regular-season and tournament titles. Five times she was voted MAAC Coach of the Year. Nolan was elected to the University's Athletic Hall of Fame in 2001 and the Connecticut Women's Basketball HOF in 2005.

In 38 seasons as a head coach—starting at St. Francis of Brooklyn and culminating with five seasons at Lafayette—Nolan's teams won 575 games, which places her in the Top 50 in all-time D-I victories. She remains in the game by doing TV color commentary for MAAC and Quinnipiac games. ■

# Column: Thomas Hicks



## God Doesn't Explain

### POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

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

The religion I grew up with had a preoccupation with saving one's soul, avoiding hell, shortening purgatory. Religion was identified with rules, regulations, customs. A certain punitiveness and pettiness was projected onto God. The childhood image I had of God was that of a Super Bookkeeper. I experienced religion as a rule-book. There was a spirituality of good works and merits. Billy Graham noted that "the trouble with many people is that they have just enough religion to make them miserable." I struggled with excessive fears of eternal punishment, and legalism.

Spirituality was devotional. There were devotions to this saint and that saint. As I remember, I rarely, and maybe never, came across saintliness. The Mass in those far off days was in Latin. The school year opened with the Mass of the Holy Spirit.

I never thought my childhood religion as ruining my childhood. It made me feel cared for.

Like many, I have problems concerning God. Let me hear someone speak of God's unbounded love and mercy, and images of the Holocaust and Hiroshima appear before my eyes—no divine intervention. Hitler and, for the most part, those who ran the death camps were baptized Catholics.

How could it possibly be good and loving to slaughter the first-born Egyptian children who did nothing wrong? And there's that description in the book of Joshua of what Joshua, under the direction of God, did to the Canaanite cities of Jericho, Ai, and Hazor. "They butchered every living thing in

the city, all the men and women, all the babies and old people, all the oxen and sheep and donkeys, not sparing anything that breathed" (Joshua 6:21).

At different times, we burned heretics and witches, forbade scientists to look through telescopes.

I don't understand why God allows children to suffer. I cannot grasp why God created pain, why so much pain, such raging pain. I don't know what is happening and what it means. As the Book of Job reveals, God doesn't offer an explanation. God doesn't explain.

There are two sayings of John XXIII that influence me. His motto was "In essentials unity, in nonessentials, liberty, in all things, charity." The other saying is the reply John XXIII gave to the question "what should the Catholic religion do?" He answered "to make the human journey on earth less sad"—marvelous. There's Theresa of Lisieux fascination statement that "in order to be holy, the most essential virtue is energy."

One of my favorite Old Testament tales is the wrestling match between Jacob and God (Genesis 32:24-31). Jacob wrestles with a divine being till the break of dawn. The divine being says "let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob says, "I will not let you go until you bless me." The divine being says "you have contended with the divine and have prevailed. Jacob then asked "What is your name? The divine being answered "Why should you want to know my name?" With that he bade Jacob farewell and blessed him... And Jacob called the place Peniel: for "I have seen God face to face, and my life was spared." Jacob boasted

that he had wrestled with God and survived. What does it all mean?

When I examine my life, there have been a few unmistakable and precious moments when God revealed Himself. For example, there was a time when I was hurrying home, alone, shriving under a downpour of rain. Another time I was on a train staring thoughtlessly at a gray overcast sky. In both situations I suddenly felt a "holy sadness" accompanied by a yearning for the Eternal. I've written before how there were a couple of times when I felt, all of a sudden, and only for a few seconds, an experience of God. There was a special consciousness of the Divine Presence, an intuitive contact. These were what Thomas Merton called "low-grade mystical graces." And Karl Rahner held that all people have these mystical moments. Indeed, Rahner. In the 1960s, famously said that the Catholic of the future will be a mystical or s/he won't be anything at all." Theologians speak of "the universal vocation to mysticism."

The Lord leads each person on the individual's own path to God. As Teresa of Avila pointed out, "Different people are led by different paths." There is the variety of ways people encounter God. God treats us individually and differently. Each of us has a unique relationship with God. There are as many paths to God as there are people living in the world. But God divides His graces unequally. He does not give everything to everyone. To some He gives more, to some less. There are a couple of mysterious Bible quotes: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious; and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy" (Ex.33:14). And there's "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me" (Isa.65:1). How does one explain these?

God will draw near in His own time. God is not predictable. He is not bound by our rules. Yet, I sense He is closing in again, and I yearn to call out to Him. ■

# Nuestra Voz

## Saint Mary celebra al Señor de Esquipulas, patrono de Guatemala

Por MARICARMEN GODOY

STAMFORD—La fiesta anual en honor al Señor de Esquipulas, patrono de Guatemala, nuevamente cobrará vida en la parroquia Saint Mary ubicada en 566 Elm Street este viernes 15 de enero a partir de las 7:00PM.

La iglesia de Saint Mary de Stamford, “viene celebrando esta fiesta desde antes que yo fuera instalado como párroco, hace ya varios años”, dijo el Padre Gustavo Falla, superior de la Parroquia, pero reconoció que será una celebración austera por la pandemia que atravesamos pero llena de fe como cada año.

Pero recordó que el 15 de enero del 2015 vino de gira Monseñor Álvaro Leonel Ramazzini, Obispo de San Marcos, Guatemala, a celebrar la fiesta del Señor de Esquipulas en la Catedral de Saint Patrick de New York, y de paso los devotos de Stamford, a la cabeza doña Alba Ruano y lograron traer al Sacerdote a Saint Mary para que celebre con ellos la fiesta de su Santo Patrono.

“Las visitas de preladados se hacen con mucho tiempo de preparación. La invitación es enviada a través de la curia y, una vez aceptada, se procede a preparar la visita del obispo invitado”, apuntó el P. Falla.

Guatemala es el país con el mayor número de migrantes y por eso cuentan con un gran número de guatemaltecos dedicados y muy fieles a la parroquia, asevera el P. Falla. En tiempos anteriores a la pandemia se reunían constantemente para preparar el evento más importante del año para la comunidad chapina. “Hay un equipo de voluntarios, bien establecido bajo el liderazgo de Alba Ruano. Desafortunadamente, como todos lo imaginarán, este año ha sido extraordinariamente difícil para coordinar detalles, como se ha hecho en el pasado”, repuso el sacerdote.

El año pasado, en plena fiesta del Señor de Esquipulas, en el Altar Mayor, el P. Gustavo anunció una Junta Directiva para dedicarse exclusivamente a este menester, pero por la pandemia la celebración de este año será sencilla, “pero muy sentida puesto que tendremos una Misa Solemne con la participación de los fieles, devotos al Señor de Esquipulas. Hemos anunciado que esta celebración se llevará a cabo el día viernes, 15 de enero a las 7 pm, en la iglesia de Santa María

de Stamford, situada el 566 de Elm Street”, acotó.

Aun cuando las iglesias tienen autonomía a la hora de realizar sus celebraciones, el Obispo de la Diócesis de Bridgeport, con jurisdicción en Stamford, Frank Caggiano, viene apoyando el esfuerzo que hace la parroquia de Saint Mary y acoge a los miembros de la comunidad guatemalteca, no solo en Stamford sino de toda la diócesis.



LA JUNTA DIRECTIVA del Señor de Esquipulas, patrono de Guatemala, de la parroquia de Saint Mary de Stamford, aun en medio de la pandemia, prepara con todos los cuidados de salud, la celebración, que desde el 15 de enero del 2014 tomó auge con la primera celebración en esta ciudad. (Foto: archivo Maricarmen Godoy)

Prueba de esto, dijo el P. Gustavo Falla: “Hace poco tiempo él condecoró al guatemalteco, Joel Aquino, junto a su esposa, Alexandra Aquino, del Ecuador, con la condecoración más alta que ofrece la Diócesis de Bridgeport, la Medalla de San Agustín”

Aun cuando los guatemaltecos son la mayor población migrante de América Latina en la ciudad, en Stamford todos los grupos parroquiales están concentrando sus esfuerzos por ayudar a la parroquia porque se está viviendo tiempos difíciles.

“La caridad entra por casa”. Normalmente, los miembros de nuestros grupos parroquiales se dedican ante todo a luchar por una vida íntegra, siguiendo las enseñanzas del Evangelio y dando testimonio del amor de Cristo es sus vidas. De ahí se desprende ese deseo por hacer obras de caridad, apoyando al inmigrante y al desvalido, enfatizó el P. Falla, nativo de Colombia.

Pero: ¿Por qué es necesario que haya la fiesta del Señor de Esquipulas? A esto el sacerdote hizo una reflexión desde un punto de vista espiritual: “Más que expresión

de la cultura, que en nuestros países latinos es tan rica y variada, nuestra expresión es religiosa, de fe. Creemos que Dios está con nosotros, nos anima, nos une, nos da un propósito y una misión a cumplir.

Para celebrar al Señor de Esquipulas, la parroquia de Santa María de Stamford, decretó que a partir del 2020 la fiesta anual del Cristo Negro Crucificado, conocido como el Patrono de Guatemala, se celebrará el último día del tiempo de Navidad, es decir, en la fecha dedicada al Bautismo de Jesús, e inicio de su vida pública. Anuncio que lo hizo público el P. Gustavo Falla, superior de la parroquia Santa María Nuestra Señora de Montserrat, durante la homilía en honor al Cristo Crucificado el sábado 11 de enero del 2020 en la misa de siete de la noche. La próxima fiesta acorde con este decreto dijo el sacerdote: “si Dios permite, será el 10 de enero del 2021, fecha que se aproximó al viernes 15 de enero del 2021.

A más del Decreto Parroquial en torno al Señor de Esquipulas, el P. Falla también llamó uno a uno a los fundadores de la Hermandad guatemalteca y cuando ya estuvieron todos juntos en el Altar Mayor, a los pies de la imagen del Cristo, dio a conocer que a partir de ese momento la organización comunitaria pasaba a tener su primera Junta Directiva y por ende aumentar la devoción a Jesús en la cruz; además servirá para que salga de ahí un representante de origen guatemalteco a la Junta Parroquial.

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

El sacerdote explicó que gracias a esto en la parroquia Santa María, desde hace años, se viene cultivando las vocaciones y prueba de esto el Padre Palma, nativo de Guatemala, ha sido ordenado sacerdote, además se encuentra trabajando en México como misionero un joven de Stamford, salido de esta parroquia.

En forma analógica también indicó que la imagen del Cristo Negro de Guatemala fue trasladado al pueblo de Esquipulas el 15 de enero hace 262, en cambio, que a la parroquia de Santa María llegó el 15 de enero del 2014, hace nueve años. ■

# Obituary

## Father John Baptiste Giuliani, 88

BRIDGEPORT—Father John B. Giuliani, a renowned painter, teacher and priest of the Diocese of Bridgeport died on January 2. He was 88 years old.

Known to generations of diocesan families as a gifted priest and homilist and one of the founders of the diocesan houses of hospitality to feed the hungry, Father Giuliani gained international recognition later in life for his beautiful icon paintings that depicted Christ, the Holy Family and the Trinity with Native American imagery. His art was hailed as a reminder of Christ's entrance into all humanity.

Father John Giuliani was born in 1932 in Greenwich, Connecticut. His early talent in the arts led him to an undergraduate degree in Fine Arts at New York's Pratt Institute. While at the Pratt School of Art in New York City, he went through a conversion experience reading Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain*, and its spiritual journey toward unity with all that is holy. He decided then to enter St. John Seminary in Brighton, Mass., and was ordained in 1960 as a priest of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

After earning master's degrees in classical literature and art, theology and American studies, Father Giuliani taught Latin, the Humanities and American Film for fifteen years at Christ the King Preparatory Seminary in Southport and at Fairfield University. He served as Chaplain of Sacred Heart University from 1968 to 1976.

One of his lasting legacies as a priest was the role he played in the diocesan effort to feed the hungry of Fairfield County. While serving as a chaplain and teacher at Sacred Heart University, he gathered his students to help found the Thomas Merton House of Hospitality in Bridgeport, and the Good Shepherd House of Hospitality in Norwalk, which would eventually become Manna House at the Open Door Shelter. Father Giuliani also served as a consultant for the founding of New Covenant House in Stamford and the Dorothy Day House in Danbury.

In 1977, with the permission of the Most Rev. Walter, W. Curtis, Second Bishop of Bridgeport, Father Giuliani embarked on a new pursuit, founding the Benedictine Grange, a small monastic community in West

Redding, Connecticut.

In 1990 Father Giuliani once again took up painting and began a year-long study of Orthodox iconography with Russian icon master Vladislav Andreyev at the School of Sacred Art in Greenwich Village. Having absorbed the traditional techniques, he went on to create a stunning series of contemporary icons with images of Native Americans as subjects. They have since been exhibited throughout the United States and the world.

In an interview with *Sojourners Magazine*, Father Giuliani explained why he was drawn to painting icons of Native Americans.

"Even though I'm not Native American, I have a tremendous amount of respect for the varied indigenous cultures of this land. Their understanding of the world of nature and of God, their emphasis on being caretakers rather than exploiters of the land—all that is wonderfully consonant with the best of Christian thought and tradition. In my work I try to celebrate a union of a common spiritual understanding, to show how a single mystery can be approached



FATHER JOHN B. GIULIANI

through diverse cultures."

Father Giuliani was the 2007 recipient of the Mother Theresa Award for Religious Art. In 2001 he was honored to be asked to create the banner for the annual Pallio in Italy. His work has been exhibited at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, the New Britain Museum of American Art, the Marian Institute in Dayton, Ohio, the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis and at the Aldrich Museum in Ridgefield, Connecticut. Several dozens of his work are in private collections throughout the country. ■

### DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT JANUARY 17—FEBRUARY 13

#### JANUARY

18	Rev. Edward J. Small, SJ.....	2010
19	Rev. Andrew L. Horvat .....	1973
	Rev. William D. Thompson.....	2004
20	Msgr. George D. Birge.....	2015
	Msgr. Ralph P. Buongervino.....	1994
	Msgr. Andrew T. Cusack.....	2004
	Rev. Andrew L. Farkas.....	1967
	Rev. Robert E. Onze.....	2010
22	Rev. Felix P. Werpechowski.....	1972
	Rev. John Mitchell .....	2006
23	Rev. James J. McCormick .....	1965
	Msgr. Thaddeus F. Malanowski.....	2020
27	Msgr. Francis G. Galla .....	1996
28	Msgr. Joseph R. McCarthy .....	1964
30	Msgr. John F. Cavanaugh.....	1990
	Rev. James F. Desmond .....	1963
31	Rev. Addison George Wright, PSS.....	2017

#### FEBRUARY

2	Rev. Joseph W. Kupec.....	1978
	Deacon Bartholomew J. Mauerci.....	2004
3	Msgr. Martin F. Doran .....	1967
	Rev. Robert F. Albert .....	1995
4	Msgr. William F.X. Casey .....	1978
	Rev. Francis Sangiovanni.....	2019
6	Msgr. Martin J. McDermott.....	1986
8	Rev. James F. McGrath .....	1971
10	Rev. William R. Nagle.....	1979
	Rev. John R. Polinski .....	2001
12	Rev. John J. Filip .....	1984
13	Deacon Matthew Ashe .....	2008
	Deacon Rodney L. Varney.....	1988

# Vocations

## Priests are people too

By FATHER CHRIS FORD

My pastor is a New York Yankees fan. I am a Minnesota Twins fan. When I arrived at the parish as a priest in 2019, there was a Yankees garden flag out front. That fall, the Yankees and the Twins played each other in the playoffs and, mysteriously, a Twins flag appeared right next to the Yankees flag.

I was discerning priesthood is that if God was calling me to be a priest, then He was calling ME to be a priest. Not some imaginary version of me, but me—with my likes, my dislikes, my aspirations, my sense of humor, and even my sins and weaknesses. He wanted it all and He would find a way to use them for His glory and His service.

Maybe the type of spirituality we develop will be able to help someone who is going through a difficult time and hasn't yet found their voice before the Father. Certainly our sinfulness and our weakness will make us much more humble and compassionate ambassadors of God's mercy.

When God calls someone to be a priest, the only type



FATHER CHRIS FORD

In some ways, this outdoor back-and-forth reflects many of the conversations that happen inside the rectory. Both my pastor and I are avid sports fans and we enjoy talking and debating things going on in the wide world of sports. But when I think back to the time when I was discerning entering seminary, it wasn't as clear to me back then that those kinds of conversations would still be such a big part of my life.

When I was younger, one of my sisters printed out a quote and put it on the wall in my room: "Be a first-rate version of yourself, not a second-rate version of somebody else." Although I did not know it at the time, it would be reflective of one of the most important lessons that I had to learn as

God works in reality. He seeks us out and finds us wherever we are. There is perhaps no better example of this than the call of the Apostles. Peter and Andrew were called as they went about their daily labors as fishermen. Nathaniel was seen as he sat under the fig tree. Matthew the tax collector was sought as he was literally in the midst of the sinful life he would have to leave behind. Wherever God finds us, He calls us and invites us to pursue something greater than ourselves, to grow in holiness and to offer absolutely everything we have to Him. He will find ways to use it all that we cannot possibly imagine.

Perhaps our interest in a particular sports team will help us to connect to someone in ways we hadn't been able to before.

of person He is looking for is someone who unabashedly seeks holiness and continuously strives for it. We are all called to conform our life to the mystery of the Lord's cross, but what that looks like is as unique as each priest's heart. In fact, if you meet the priests and seminarians of the Diocese of Bridgeport, you will find that we are all incredibly different. The plethora of gifts and talents is beyond description. Our likes and dislikes, our hobbies and activities span the spectrum. Even our spiritualities and pastoral styles find diverse forms of expression. But, at the end of the day, we all share something incredible and indescribable: the one priesthood of Jesus Christ. And that is what brings us all together. ■



*Catholic Schools*

DIOCESE CELEBRATES  
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2021

## *Faith, Excellence, Service*

# Taking 'hope' back to school

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

As elementary and high school students throughout the diocese return to class from the Christmas and New Year's break, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has praised the schools for safeguarding the lives of children while providing an excellent education during a year of unprecedented challenge.

The bishop said that Catholic schools have been places of hope for parents and students by remaining open so that young people can learn, grow in their faith and enjoy one another's company in a safe way.

"I'm grateful to Superintendent Steven Cheeseman and the principals, teachers, students and families. Together they have shown the enduring strength and value of Catholic education and faith-based learning communities. By working together our schools have been able to remain open for our students and families who depend on them," the bishop said.

Bishop Caggiano said that as diocesan schools prepare to observe National Catholic Schools Week from January 31-February 6, 2021, they have much to celebrate, most notably a successful and historic response during the pandemic.

As of this week all 25 schools are back in session for in-person learning as a result of following health and safety protocols recommended by local and state departments of health.

At present, there are about 7,000 students in diocesan schools located throughout Fairfield County, and that on any given day most are attending classes in-person.

Dr. Cheeseman credits thorough planning and preparation

along with the ongoing collaboration between schools and parents for the ability to keep schools open for in-person classes, while other systems have had to rely heavily on remote learning.

He reserves high praise for teachers for their dedicated and innovative service as "essential workers."

"It has to be pointed out at the end of the day the teachers are the heroes of the pandemic in our schools. They've gone above and beyond to make sure their students are educated whether it be remote or in person—all while they are juggling a tremendous amount of stress and anxiety as they seek to balance personal health and home with concerns of their students."



Dr. Cheeseman also gives high marks to parents for their cooperation by keeping their children at home when they're not feeling well or have any concerns that they may have been exposed to the virus.

"Our parents are very thankful to have their students in school, and they're supporting the schools effort to keep everyone safe by being vigilant and flexible when we've had temporary quarantines or made other changes necessary to keep schools open. Every day is a challenge for them and the schools, but we're deeply grateful for their response" he said.

Testing has been key to keeping the schools open and preventing the transmission of the virus in the school setting by enabling administrators to send a particular class home without shutting the entire school down after an exposure, said Dr. Cheeseman.

He said the support provided

by the diocese to make testing available through its partnership with Progressive Diagnostics has been a major resource for schools. The relationship with My Catholic Doctor has also expanded the ability to test and consult with parents.

Because of the protocols put in place, most schools in which students have tested positive have experienced only brief and limited quarantines. Dr. Cheeseman said there have only been a handful of incidents that have required some of the five diocesan high schools to go remote longer term due to staff and student quarantines.

"We haven't had any spread within the schools. Any cases have been contracted outside the school building. There has been no spread. Our principals and teachers are doing a great job following protocols," Dr. Cheeseman said.

The diocesan system has also offered an Online Learning Academy for parents who wish to have their children learn remotely at home and for students who have health conditions that require distance learning.

One of the surest signs of success is the growing enrollment that schools have experienced during the pandemic as the number of new students who are prepared to re-enroll next year based on their positive experience with Catholic education, Dr. Cheeseman said.

Open houses will be held in schools throughout the diocese during National Catholic Schools week, and Dr. Cheeseman is optimistic that parents have seen .

"Somehow we've been able to keep it all together and to give parents a reason to take a second look at Catholic education. I believe we've risen to the occasion and added to the proud and vital legacy of our school in the lives of generations of students and families," he said.

*(To learn more about diocesan schools and the upcoming virtual open houses and scheduled in-person tours, call 203.416.1638 or visit our website to learn more about each of our schools: [www.DOBCatholicSchools.com](http://www.DOBCatholicSchools.com).)* ■

# Catholic Academy

## Teaching during a pandemic

*(This reflection was written by Angela C. Pohlen, M.A. Ed; executive director of Catholic Academy of Bridgeport)*

BRIDGEPORT—It's been said that with regard to education during the looming threat of COVID-19, 'we may not all be in the same boat, but we're in the same storm.' For months now, the struggle of educating children during a pandemic has rightfully been a major topic of examination across the country. Trying to balance what we know to be pedagogically best with what will keep faculties, students and families safe, has kept teachers and administrators up nights, as it has become evident that these two prime demands are increasingly at odds. Schools have therefore found their problem-solving muscles stretched in an effort to create models that fulfill not only their professional obligation to maintain the integrity of instruction, but also to meet the larger needs of the community in which they serve, in order to do so.

At the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport, we, like everyone else, found ourselves swept up in the storm last spring when we had just under two weeks to transition all four of our campuses, St. Andrew, St. Ann, St. Augustine, and St. Raphael, to Distance Learning. In that time, we loaned out Chromebooks to all the students that needed them, addressed connectivity issues with WiFi resources and the purchase of multiple mobile hotspots, and provided over \$8,000 in groceries and grocery gift cards to help families hit hardest by illness and job loss. Our administration and faculty shifted into high-gear, vowing to keep our students on track. A standardized schedule of live instruction based on developmental appropriateness was created. Weekly faculty meetings were maintained, weekly administration meetings were established, and discipline-specific professional learning communities were created to collaborate, share best practices and problem-solve among teachers. The Office of the Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Bridgeport provided unparalleled support in terms of access to materials, resources, and policy guidance. The result was consistent 90 percent engagement across all four campuses and the authentic completion of the curriculum. And with barely a chance

to enjoy our success, we instantly jumped to evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the model in order to prepare for the fall. One overwhelming problem was identified: as parents were required to return to working outside the home, children were left home alone to attend school online.



Families were faced with the impossible choice of providing food or supervision to their children.

The tradition of Catholic education in this country is one of mission-driven success. We see education as a matter of social justice, and therefore no academic accomplishment is complete without attention to the physical and emotional welfare of the children we help to form. We spent the summer preparing our buildings physically and developing protocols for every contingency we could imagine. We established virtual learning annexes led by our own teachers to transition students who got sick or had to quarantine due to possible exposure to a temporary online learning model. This allowed them to stay up to speed with their classes and ensure a smooth return. We enjoyed 12 weeks of in-person learning and according to the Bridgeport Department of Health, our academy was the last school in the city of Bridgeport to have a positive COVID-19 case among its community, a testament to the collaboration of parents and faculty that is a hallmark of Catholic education. Throughout, we kept in regular contact with the incredible team at the Bridgeport Department of Health, led by their indomitable director, Lisa Morrissey, and watched for trends in positive cases in the city. We made the decision to execute a planned transition to distance learning during Thanksgiving to run through January 19, to allow families who chose to travel or

gather during the holidays to quarantine. However, we did not want our families to again have to be forced to leave young children at home if they could not work remotely. To address this issue, we opened what we called remote learning annexes (RLAs) on three of our campuses. All students were

transitioned to distance learning, but those families who had no way to supervise their children during the day were able to bring their children to the school building to conduct their online learning, supervised by Catholic Academy of Bridgeport staff. Each campus was capped at 50 students in order to maintain

maximum physical separation of cohorts. Whether students were at home or at the RLAs, they were receiving the same instruction, but everyone was safe and supervised, and families were supported in this real need. The RLAs were a great success thanks to the ingenuity of our principals and staff, and the collaboration with our families.

We have continued to enjoy more than 90 percent engagement with our students during our transition to distance learning and we are excited to plan for the return to in-person learning on January 19. We are in the process of planning for a free testing event for our students and staff just prior to that date, made possible by our board of directors, in order to ensure the greatest possibility of a healthy community returning to the school buildings.

We educators could never have imagined this scenario when we entered the profession and no school has had an easy time of it. However, I am convinced that as with so many things, Catholic schools are uniquely poised to lead with distinction. We have many advantages in addressing the greatest of challenges, including our mission orientedness, and the fact that our teachers and staff do not simply practice a profession but a vocation. But the greatest advantage in dealing with this pandemic, and every other issue that falls at our doorsteps, is that our schools are places of lived faith. We know and therefore act with the conviction, that with God, all things are possible. ■

# Catholic Schools

## Back to school at St. Rose!

NEWTOWN—St. Rose students are back in school after the Christmas break and very excited to be here!

Enjoy these fun photos: Preschoolers jump for joy on their first day back in the new year; two Kindergarten students exchange Advent Angel gifts on the Feast of the Epiphany and first grade students place hay out for the camels on the Feast of the Epiphany then receive coins and little kings to celebrate the day.

St. Rose School is looking forward to their Virtual Open House on January 31st and special activities for Catholic Schools Week!

(For more information on St. Rose of Lima school, visit their website at: [www.stroseschool.com](http://www.stroseschool.com).)



## Personalized learning at CAS

STAMFORD—Personalized learning has been a welcomed addition to the academic curriculum at the Catholic Academy of Stamford. It allows teachers to identify the needs of all learners through the use of diagnostic testing and tailored daily instruction. Students are given the opportunity to review skills that they missed or did not understand from prior years of instruction, as well as learn material that may be above their grade level if they are ready for that challenge.

Personalized learning has allowed students to fill in the gaps in their learning as well as reach and exceed grade level expectations by the end of the year. For example, students in second grade are able to not just review and learn skills at a second-grade level,



but many are exposed to skills such as multiplication, division and higher-level reading texts that they would not have otherwise been exposed to until third and fourth grade.

Personalized learning has allowed us to give our students the opportunity to grow as learners and to help them take ownership of their learning by providing

them the skills to attain and understand new knowledge through the use of tailored online learning paths and daily small group and individualized instruction by their teachers.

(To hear more about personalized learning at CAS and to hear directly from members of the CAS community visit: [www.catholicacademystamford.org](http://www.catholicacademystamford.org).)

# All Saints Catholic School

## Learning Academy bridges the distance for learners

By EILEEN D'ANDREA

NORWALK—"She's so much happier and more confident. We've seen such a drastic improvement in her academic and social skills. We are so grateful for our daughter's enrollment in the learning academy."

"Receiving emails like this makes my day," says Mrs. Linda Dunn, principal of All Saints

and small group instruction) and push-in teaching models as well as ongoing collaboration with regular education teachers to provide the best instruction possible for these students through modification (content, curriculum, assessment) and instructional support.

All of these traditional methods of instruction were tested when suddenly every school in

for the group.

"The personalized care shown by the academy staff was phenomenal," said a parent of a middle school student. "They checked in with my son daily and made sure his emotional as well as academic needs were being met."

"They handled it seamlessly and our teacher created such a positive space for them to share,



Catholic School. "It's been a challenging year and educators everywhere are re-thinking and re-imagining their teaching methods. I'm so grateful to our learning academy staff who have not missed a beat in working with our students to meet the goals and expectations of our curriculum."

The Learning Academy at All Saints is an academic program specifically for students who have been identified (through formal educational testing) with a diagnosed mild or moderate learning disability, have an IEP and need special education services. The classroom is staffed with a full-time, certified special education teacher who is assisted by a full-time paraprofessional. Speech and language services are also provided by Rehab Associates in Fairfield on a weekly basis.

The program uses a combination of pull-out (individual

the state switched to distance learning.

"When we launched the All Saints Learning Academy, the first and only diocesan elementary school to offer such a program, no one could have imagined we would be transitioning our students to distance learning in March," said Mrs. Dunn. "Distance learning is challenging for many students but can prove to be even more challenging for students with learning, attention or social-emotional needs."

Because of the well-established relationships already in place, the All Saints Learning Academy team was able to shift to distance learning quickly. Recognizing the stress and uncertainty of the situation of the world, staff quickly realized the importance of connection. A daily Zoom call to offer a healthy dose of love, concern and humor worked wonders

learn, and collaborate during their daily Zoom sessions," said Mrs. Dunn. "We were able to keep our students engaged, learning, and meeting the requirements and specialized instruction that they require."

Since its initial launch in the fall of 2019, the All Saints Learning Academy has grown and flourished. Launched with four students, now in its second year, the program currently has 11 students enrolled.

"We are so very happy to see how far this program has come in such a short time," said Mrs. Dunn. "Previously, these students were referred to the public school since our school was unable to serve their specific needs. Now by offering those services allows those children to remain with us and helps us to fulfill our mission to meet the needs of all of God's children." ■

# Greenwich Catholic School

## Adapting, adjusting and thriving

By NOELLE DEBES

GREENWICH—Picturing a safe return to school was never far from the minds of the faculty and staff at Greenwich Catholic School and on September 2, the hopes for returning became a reality.

The Greenwich Catholic School administrative team, staff and faculty, along with the GCS board of directors, spent the spring and summer of 2020 planning for every aspect of reopening. With the guidance of numerous educators, the diocesan superintendent, Dr. Steven Cheeseman, and state and local health officials, the school was well-positioned for success to start a most unusual and unprecedented year.

This year marks the school's 50th Anniversary, so a safe return to school in September was even more important to the students, parents, alumni and community at large.

GCS welcomed more than 65 new families from Greenwich, Stamford and bordering Westchester towns for the 2020-21 school year. In addition to their impressive plans for daily in-person learning, the academic program and student-to-teacher ratio are what helped draw new families to the 38-acre campus on North Street in Greenwich.

One key factor in reopening Greenwich Catholic School was the determination of its faculty and staff. For Patrice Kopas, principal of GCS, their desire to return, coupled with their willingness to adjust to new teaching parameters, was never in doubt.

"In the 12 years I've been at Greenwich Catholic School, not a day goes by when I'm not impressed by our incredibly talented and resilient faculty and staff," said Kopas. "Even with uncertainty surrounding the reopening of schools, I knew I could count on their loyalty, flexibility and ability to adapt."

Teachers, for their part, did everything they could to make the return to school feel as normal as possible for their classes, and they've found that students from pre-K through grade 8 are showing more resilience and determination than ever before.

"Wearing masks is part of

their daily routine, similar to bringing a backpack to school or remembering your lunch," said Nancy Cook, a second-grade teacher and K-2 team leader at GCS. "When the students see everyone around them wearing

The masks and other changes are new this year, but long-standing traditions for second-graders are also still in place. "The entire second Grade worked on their Nativity banners before Christmas. Some families displayed their



masks and following safety procedures, following the guidelines becomes second nature to them."

The teachers are also working closely with the handful of students who are learning remotely this year. Students who are learning remotely are connected to their classes during the school day by logging in with Google Meet. They are learning in real-time and participate in class discussions, which is helping the students stay connected to their teachers and classmates.

To provide extra help and one-on-one time for students learning remotely, upper school social studies teacher Jesse Koproski finds time before school or during his lunch break to contact students, and has held parent conferences via Meet as well. Carol Ann Lutz, grade 7-8 science teacher, holds hybrid extra help sessions after school, with students in the classroom and remote students participating live via Meet.

"The teachers at GCS are truly dedicated to the success and well-being of their students," Kopas shared. "They know that academic growth is enhanced by personal connections and they're doing everything they can to connect with their students whether here or at home."

banners from older siblings on social media. We are looking forward to their celebration of First Communion in the spring."

The same is true throughout the campus, where the traditional Christmas pageant was recently shared as a video that incorporated singing, seasonal skits and readings by students across grade levels. The pageant effort was led by the school's new music teacher, Ms. Joslyn Thomas, who completed the project with two volunteer videographers (GCS alumni James Shea and GCS alumni and current parent, Bryan Rooney, whose daughter entered kindergarten at GCS this year.)

"The outpouring of support from our community keeps all of us going," Mrs. Kopas added. "We are very proud of our partnership with parents. Their trust in our faculty, program and protocols make our on-going success possible."

Along with Catholic Schools nationwide, Greenwich Catholic School will celebrate Catholic Schools Week from January 31-February 6, 2021. Plans for the week are being made, with a twist on tradition, but a focus on celebrating what makes Greenwich Catholic School special—this year more than ever. ■

# Faith-based Learning

## Eucharistic Procession reflects universality of the Church

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

TRUMBULL—Miss Cecilia Vicens, before and after school care director at St. Theresa School, wanted to do something special to honor the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

“One night after Mass and receiving Our Lord in Holy Communion, He placed onto my heart the thought of speaking about Our Lady to the children in school. That is exactly what I did, and brought her to the children,” shares Miss Vicens.

On December 11, Miss Vicens’ vision came to life as grades K-8 at St. Theresa’s attended morning Mass, followed by Benediction, Adoration and an outdoor Eucharistic Procession around the St Theresa campus, which included praying the Rosary.

Miss Vicens also gave a presentation on Our Lady of Guadalupe to each class on December 10. “There is much to say about our Lady as she presents herself in the tilma,” explains Miss Vicens. “I spoke with the children about the wonders that Mary displays between union of races and the humility in her message that she brings the One True God in her womb.”

Students were able to dress in traditional clothing that reflected their cultural background, putting on display the universality of the Church.

Preschoolers and kindergarteners wore self-constructed cloaks



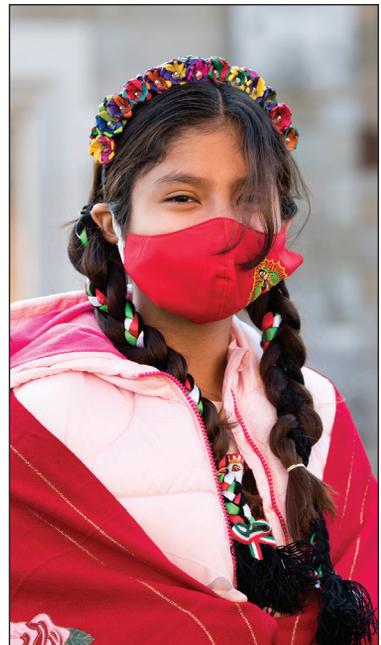
resembling that of Juan Diego himself.

During the procession, students carried flowers to be presented to Mary after the procession.

### About St. Theresa School

Saint Theresa School is a Catholic community grounded in faith, supported by hope, and surrounded by love that welcomes families and students of Pre-K through 8th grade with diverse backgrounds. We provide an academically challenging curriculum in which all students can learn within the framework of Catholic principles, recognizing the dignity and uniqueness of each student.

(For more information visit: [sttheresaschooltrumbull.org](http://sttheresaschooltrumbull.org).)



# St. Mark School

## St. Mark School earns an A+ from Niche

STRATFORD—St. Mark School, Stratford's nationally recognized Blue Ribbon School of Excellence, recently received an overall A+ rating by Niche for academics, teachers and diversity.

Niche is the leader in K-12 and college school search with the most comprehensive data on U.S. schools and neighborhoods. Its mission is to make researching and enrolling in schools easy, transparent, and free.

"As principal of St. Mark School, I know St. Mark School provides an exceptional learning environment and a warm, inclusive community that promotes positive character and growth," said Melissa Warner. "That continues to be true during the pandemic. Our teachers and students have risen to new heights and are doing superb work with in-person instruction. To be recognized for our strengths by Niche with the top ranking is gratifying for all of us who work hard to challenge and support our students' growth and achievements every day."

The newly released Niche grades are calculated using the most up-to-date data available from dozens of public sources



along with millions of reviews from students, and parents.

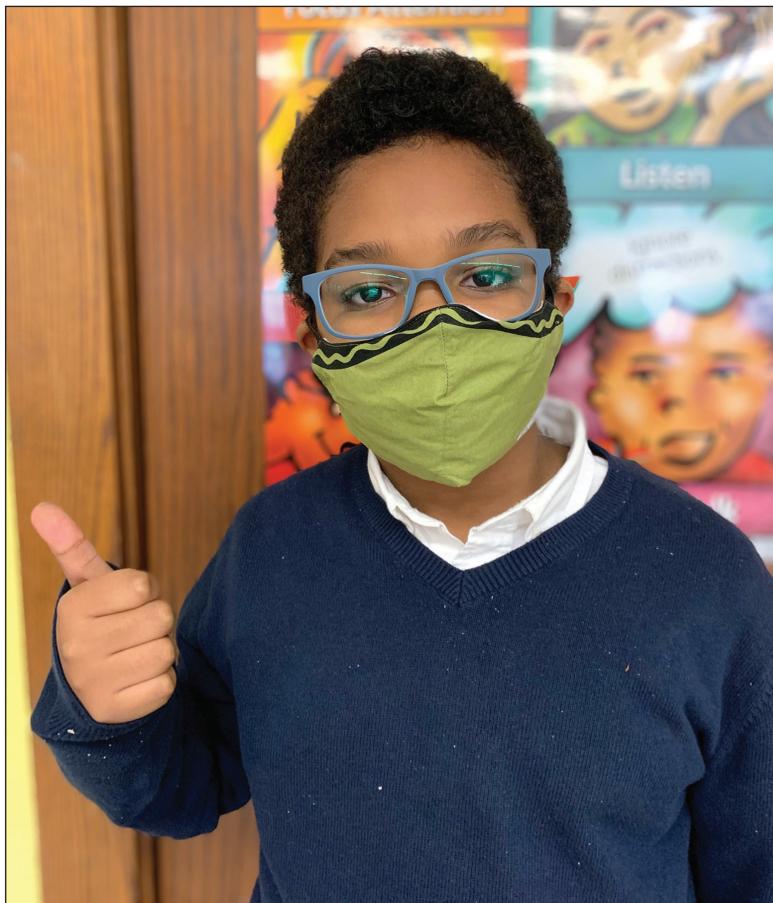
"A high ranking indicates that the school is an exceptional academic institution with a diverse set of high-achieving students who rate their experience very highly,"

according to Niche, which was founded in 2002 by Carnegie Mellon University students as an education research/review service.

St. Mark School opened its campus for in-person learning in September and continues to offer robust educational programs for students in pre-K through grade eight, including those who choose to be enrolled in remote learning. This year alone, St. Mark School welcomed 56 new students and continues to attract families looking for an exceptional in-person education.

The Biggs Family, who recently transferred their 4th and 6th grade children to St. Mark School from public school, reported, "We are so very happy to be at St. Mark School. My husband loves the homework and is thrilled that our children are being pushed more than they were before. I am so thankful for all the support and offer of help and guidance we have received thus far."

To kick off Catholic Schools Week, St. Mark School will offer School Tours for prospective families on Sunday, January 31, 2021 from 10 am–12 noon. For more information, visit the school's website at [www.stmarkschool.org](http://www.stmarkschool.org). To take a virtual tour, visit [www.youtube.be/TC1Y7zNkQy8](http://www.youtube.be/TC1Y7zNkQy8). ■





## OUR SCHOOLS

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING AHEAD

To Make All Things New

"A ROADMAP TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES FACED BY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ACROSS THE DIOCESE."  
*Bishop Frank Caggiano*

Rev 21:5



**DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT**  
**CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**  
FORMING hearts. INFORMING minds. TRANSFORMING lives.

# Letter

## FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT

From our recently published Strategic Plan, which can be read in full on our website.

# The Year In Review

## OUR SCHOOLS

Dear Friends,

While I have always marveled at the level of dedication and commitment that the members of our Catholic school communities demonstrate, this past year has left me in a state of amazement. Against a backdrop of fear, uncertainty and apprehension, I have witnessed herculean efforts by parents, administrators, board members, priests and philanthropists to ensure that the over 7000 young people in our Catholic schools received a faith-filled and academically challenging educational experience. While there were hiccups here and there, our communities persevered and improved every day. I will forever be grateful to the teachers and administrators who worked so hard to establish a sense of safety and normalcy for our students, to the donors who provided financial support, chrome books and other educational materials, and to the parents who, while balancing their own challenges, found a way to support their fellow community members. All your efforts provide the inspiration to keep us moving forward every day.

Now, as we look to our future, we must challenge some of the fundamental assumptions under which we operate in order to meet the changing dynamics of our world. We need to ensure that schools can be nimble and agile, and that school-based leadership has the capacity to anticipate and envision the future, maintain flexibility, think strategically and engage the broader community. Most importantly, as we think strategically about our future, we must always remain student centered, and faith focused.

As you read through our plan, I hope that it brings to you the same excitement for the future that it did for those who wrote it. I look forward to our work together and pray that Our Lady will shower Her blessings on our school communities; those who lead them, those who support them, those who teach in them and those who learn in them.

Sincerely,



Dr. Steven F. Cheeseman  
Superintendent of Schools

View our entire Strategic Plan and Annual Report at [DOBCatholicSchools.com](http://DOBCatholicSchools.com)



**1555**  
Students enrolled in 5 Independent Catholic schools



**4669**  
Students enrolled in our 19 Elementary and 1 Special Needs School



**2064**  
Students enrolled in Diocesan and Diocesan Sponsored 5 High Schools

**8288 STUDENTS**  
FORMED, INFORMED, AND TRANSFORMED



**100%**  
The percentage of our students that graduate from our high schools.



**99%**  
The percentage of our high school students that go onto college or the military.



**\$89,791,381**  
in college scholarships were awarded to **585** graduating seniors from our diocesan and diocesan sponsored high schools.



**BISHOPS SCHOLARSHIP FUND**  
The mission of the Bishop's Scholarship Fund is to help families afford a Catholic education. This year the BSF awarded over \$2,600,000 in aid to families at the Diocesan elementary schools in Fairfield County.

**1262 students awarded**  
**\$2,675,950 in tuition assistance**



# Strategic Priorities

## OUR STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES

### VIBRANT CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Above all else, the distinguishing characteristic of our schools must be a vibrant Catholic identity and culture. Lighting the way for young people to know, love and serve God so that they can someday enjoy eternal life in Jesus Christ is the fundamental reason our schools exist. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to educate in a way that brings students to appreciate the Truth, Beauty, and Goodness of our faith so that their experience is a full and rich one.

### ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Each school must demonstrate, through student growth measures, a rigorous and challenging curriculum. Curriculum must be cohesive and tied to Diocesan standards. At all levels curriculum, curricular materials and co-curricular activities must serve to develop the skills and talents gifted by God to each individual student so that he/she is challenged to reach his/her full potential.

### GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

Well-formed Catholic schools require strong and capable leadership. This leadership must be evidenced throughout the organization. At the Diocesan level, leadership and support services must give schools and school leadership the tools and guidance they need. At the local level, carefully selected and well formed boards must work collaboratively with knowledgeable and skilled school administrators to help create schools where academic excellence and strong Catholic identity are the norm.

### OPERATIONAL VITALITY AND FINANCIAL STABILITY

In order to ensure the vitality of individual schools as well that of the system as whole, financial stability is essential. As the Diocese is no longer able to provide significant funding to support schools, we must explore ways to promote school viability that include realistic tuition expectations, local school fundraising and a robust system of philanthropic support. Decisions on school viability must also take into account current school age population trends and demographic projections for the future.

# Review

## SCHOOLS | AT A GLANCE

2019-2020

### FALL 2019-WINTER 2020 | A Normal Year

All of our 19 diocesan elementary schools personalizing instruction for over 4,600 students.

As Winter 2020 welcomed us we began professional development and planning for the final phase of our Personalized Learning Initiative.

We continue to develop a deep knowledge of every student and personalize instruction to ensure all students achieve both academic and personal goals.

We blend the best of our Catholic schools' long tradition of academic excellence and faith-based moral development with cutting-edge learning technologies and instructional practices.



### SPRING 2020 | A New Normal

Spring brought to us a new normal with the sudden increase in COVID-19 cases, which forced school closures across the country. The work that was done in the first two years in our schools with the personalized learning initiative to develop teachers and build our technical capacity allowed the transition of over 7000 students to a distance learning program over one weekend.

We had both high-tech and low-tech components, with opportunities to send parents lesson packets with follow-up assessments by phone if needed. Our schools were also loaning out Chromebooks to families who needed one.

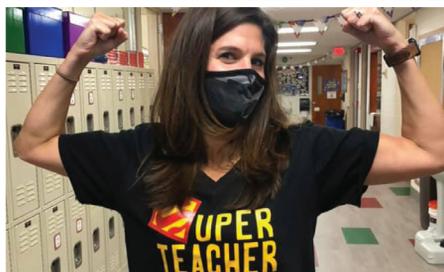
Some of our high schools moved their curriculum into the cloud and were teaching everything online so that students had full-schedule days from home.

Groups of teachers and administrators began to meet daily and continued to facilitate the sharing of best practices, materials and resources. At this point, the personalized learning team had led over 100 professional development sessions and provided a virtual help desk for teachers and parents. As a result, our distance learning program continued to get even better every day.

- Task force groups for preschool and K-12 were created. Teachers and leaders, informed by parent and teacher focus groups and interviews, began to create a plan to ensure that our schools would be prepared to welcome students back in the fall. The primary focus of the group was the return of students to a full five-day schedule of in-person instruction, while also planning for the possibility of having to make a fluid transition to a more robust distance learning plan.

### SUMMER 2020 | The Re-Opening Plan

- Using our online learning platform, students logged in and demonstrated mastery of over 2,500 skills.
- Teachers volunteered their time over the summer to work with colleagues and the personalized learning coaching team to identify and address emerging challenges related to teaching during a pandemic. These professional learning communities and professional development meetings drew in teachers over 900 times. This work helped teachers gain and share the skills and practices to feel confident in opening their classrooms safely as well as moving to remote learning if necessary.
- In July the Re-Opening Plan was issued to parents, students, and faculty. The plan was thoughtfully developed and guidelines were created with every student, parent, faculty and staff member in mind. It covered a wide range of topics related to returning to school including the use of face coverings, physical distancing, sudden building closures if necessary, temporary home instruction, and support resources for students, parents, faculty and staff.
- The impact of this pandemic touched many aspects of our families lives, one of which was financial. We were fortunate to have an anonymous donor to Foundations In Education provide funding for COVID-19 Emergency Tuition Assistance for elementary school families in our Diocesan schools who were suffering from the negative economic impact.
- As the months of planning and preparation for the re-opening of our schools got closer, Dr. Cheeseman began visiting each school to ensure compliance, to share best practices and to run through possible scenarios related to the re-opening and ongoing challenges. While he was confident that the schools could meet and even exceed government safety requirements, he knew we had to approach the school year with a sense of caution even as the excitement of the return to the classrooms came near.



### FALL 2020 | Schools Re-Open

- The new school year began with a confirmation that extraordinary steps had been taken for a safe and measured re-opening during the pandemic, which gave families, students, school administrators, teachers and staff the assurance that every possible step had been made to keep them safe in those classrooms.
- While the schools move ahead with in-person classes, the diocese has also provided remote learning options for families who prefer to keep children at home through its Online Catholic Academy. The year began with more than 175 students enrolled, and has proven to be a great success. The students receive instruction live or recorded from their teachers and are able to remain a part of their class and school communities.
- Teachers continue to rise to the challenge to maintain the core practices of individual and small group instruction based on individual student learning needs while practicing physical distancing requirements.
- Schools are prepared to move ahead with hybrid plans if that becomes necessary as a result of a spike of the virus in a given school. Any future decisions to transition to a hybrid model and full distance learning will be made on an individual school basis.
- We partnered with MyCatholicDoctor which is a nationwide telehealth service that brings a network of faithful medical professionals to patients through video-based health consultation on almost any smartphone, computer or tablet. MyCatholicDoctor made it a priority to find a way to support our schools and provide medical expertise to keep students and faculty safe and prevent the spread of illness during the era of COVID-19.
- Our students remain focused and through all of this they continue to serve those in need, which is one of the many examples of how our Catholic schools are faith-based, with values-infused curriculum that we continue to be proud of.

FORMING HEARTS. INFORMING MINDS. TRANSFORMING LIVES. FIT FOR EVERY STUDENT.



VISIT AN OPEN HOUSE IN-PERSON, VIRTUALLY OR SCHEDULE A PRIVATE TOUR TODAY

#### BETHEL

**St. Mary School | 203.744.2922**

Virtual Open House: Wednesday, Jan. 27, K-4 at 6:00pm-6:45pm, 5-8 at 7:00pm-7:45pm  
Register at [www.stmarybethelct.org](http://www.stmarybethelct.org)

Private, after school tours available by appointment

#### BRIDGEPORT

**Catholic Academy of Bridgeport**

Virtual Open House: Thursday, Feb. 4, at 6:00pm, and in-person tours available by appointment at each campus.

**St. Andrew Academy | 203.373.1552**

**St. Ann Academy | 203.334.5856**

**St. Augustine Academy | 203.366.6500**

**St. Raphael Academy | 203.333.6818**

**Kolbe Cathedral High School | 203.335.2554**

Personal tours available by appointment.

#### DANBURY

**St. Gregory the Great School | 203.748.1217**

Virtual Open House: Sunday, Jan. 31, by grade level  
Call for registration link.

Private, after school tours available by appointment.

**St. Peter School | 203.748.2895**

Personal tours available by appointment and a virtual tour is always available.

**St. Joseph School | 203.748.6615**

In-Person Open House: Sunday, Jan. 31, 10:00am-12:00pm  
Appointments are preferred. Call to schedule.

**Immaculate High School | 203.744.1510**

Personal tours available by appointment.

Virtual Open House and 360 tour available on-demand via website at [www.immaculatehs.org/visit](http://www.immaculatehs.org/visit).

#### FAIRFIELD

**Assumption Catholic School | 203.334.6271**

In-Person Open House: Sunday, Jan. 31, 10:00am-12:00pm  
Registration required at [www.assumptionfairfield.org](http://www.assumptionfairfield.org)  
Virtual tours available by appointment.

**St. Thomas Aquinas School | 203.255.0556**

Virtual Open House: Sunday, Jan. 31, 10:00am-12:00pm  
Registration required at [baturner@stasonline.net](mailto:baturner@stasonline.net)  
Private, after school tours available by appointment.

**Notre Dame Catholic High School | 203.372.6521**

Personal tours available by appointment.

**St. Catherine Academy | 203.540.5381**

Personal tours available by appointment.

#### GREENWICH

**Greenwich Catholic School | 203.869.4000**

All Open House activities are virtual  
You can register at [www.gcscct.org/admission](http://www.gcscct.org/admission)

#### NEW CANAAN

**St. Aloysius School | 203.966.0786**

Personal virtual sessions and private, after school tours available by appointment.

Virtual Open House: Thursday, Feb. 4, 6:00pm

#### NEWTOWN

**St. Rose of Lima School | 203.426.5102**

Virtual Open House: Sunday, Jan. 31, 10:00am & 2:00pm for K-8. Registration is required at [www.stroseschool.com](http://www.stroseschool.com)

#### NORWALK

**All Saints School | 203.847.3881**

Virtual Open House: Sunday, Jan. 31, 12:00pm-2:00pm  
Schedule a virtual appointment at [www.allsaintsnorwalk.com](http://www.allsaintsnorwalk.com)

#### RIDGEFIELD

**Saint Mary School | 203.438.7288**

Virtual Open House: Tuesday, Feb. 2, 7:30pm for Preschool, Wednesday, Feb. 3, 7:30pm for K-5 and Thursday, Feb. 4, 7:30pm for Middle School. Registration is required. Call to RSVP.

#### SHELTON

**Holy Trinity Catholic Academy | 203.929.4422**

Virtual Open House: Sunday, Jan. 31, 9:00am-11:30am  
Registration required at [www.holytrinitycatholicacademy.org](http://www.holytrinitycatholicacademy.org)

#### STAMFORD

**The Catholic Academy of Stamford | 203.329.7148**

Personal tours available by appointment.

**Cardinal Kung Academy | 203.329.8296**

Personal tours available by appointment.

#### STRATFORD

**St. James School | 203.375.5994**

In-Person Open House: Sunday, Jan. 31, 10:00am-1:00pm  
Appointment needed. Please call to schedule.

**St. Mark School | 203.375.4291**

In-Person Open House: Sunday, Jan. 31, 10:00am-12:00pm  
Registration is required at [www.stmarkschool.org](http://www.stmarkschool.org)

#### TRUMBULL

**St. Catherine of Siena | 203.375.1947**

Take a Look Tuesday Tours by appointment.  
Call to schedule.

**St. Theresa School | 203.268.3236**

In-Person Open House: Sunday, Jan. 31, 9:00am Mass, followed by a livestream tour from the gym at 10:00am. Call to register.

**St. Joseph High School | 203.378.9378**

Family tours available by appointment.  
Spring Open House: Wednesday, April 7, 6:30pm

#### WILTON

**Our Lady of Fatima | 203.762.8100**

Virtual Open House: Sunday, Jan. 31, 2:00pm-3:00pm  
Registration required at [www.olfacademy.org](http://www.olfacademy.org)  
Private tours available by appointment.  
followed by a livestream tour from the gym at 10:00am. Call to register.

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# St. Theresa School

## ‘Embracing the goodness of a Catholic classical curriculum’

TRUMBULL—St. Theresa School is in the first year of a three-year Catholic classical curriculum transformation. Catholic classical schools are springing up, growing and thriving throughout the country. This educational

the Catholic classical curriculum was developed in the Ancient World. In fact, it was the early Church that embraced the classical liberal arts (from the Latin, liber, meaning free), which are the tools of learning that “free” us to clearly

into the wisdom of the Catholic tradition and to form certain habits and dispositions in the souls of students. Some of the wonderful curriculum initiatives unfolding here in year one are: History of western civilization in



movement is being called “the great renewal” of Catholic education. Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, Archbishop of Denver recently wrote, “I am greatly encouraged by the renewal underway in Catholic education...the growth occurring in movements of renewal that embrace the Church’s mission to form disciples and teach the liberal arts.” It comes as no surprise that our mission as a Catholic school community begins with returning to our roots and the mission given to us by Jesus, which is the call to “make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28: 19-20). Catholic schools exemplify the great achievements of the Church throughout history: the architecture of the churches, the inspiration of poets such as Dante, the great intellectual heritage of the universities and the formation of saints.

This educational model named

see the truth of things. We can trace the roots of Catholic classical education as far back as Aristotle, and see how St. Thomas Aquinas and many other Christian saints and thinkers oriented it in the light of Jesus Christ as Logos. The Church founded the greatest universities of Europe knowing that the seven liberal arts (grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy/ physics) led to the study of philosophy and theology, which integrated and illuminated the truth of man and God. The first Catholic classical movement produced some of the finest minds and holiest saints in the history of the world. From the medieval world through the middle of the 20th century, educated Catholic Christians were formed in the unity of faith and reason, with eyes and ears to see, hear and experience the truth, beauty and goodness that sets them free.

Catholic classical education seeks both to incorporate students

grades 2-7, Saxon Mathematics in grades K-3, Handwriting and Cursive in grades K-3, Latin in Pre-K through grade 5, Sacred Music and Art and reading and studying of the “classics” with a greater emphasis on the lives of the saints. At the apex of this great transformation are school-wide Marian devotions such as Our Lady of Guadalupe celebration, Eucharistic Adoration, Rosary Processions, feasts in honor of the Saints, weekly Masses, Virtual Pilgrimages, and much more, with the goal of always keeping Christ at the center of our school, our community and our lives!

Weekly curriculum corner articles have provided updates to parents and school community. Highlighted below are two excerpts from these articles in order to demonstrate two curriculum transformations. Firstly, the reading of *Farmer Boy* in fifth grade and secondly a creative writ-

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

# Catholic Schools

## Christian service project

FAIRFIELD— Fairfield Prep students continue to volunteer and make an impact in the community. Over the holidays, junior Chase Lombra ran a two-week food drive to support New Covenant Center in Stamford, part of Catholic Charities. He collected a truck full of food donations at his home and raised nearly \$1,200 in online donations. Religious Education students at St. Thomas More in Darien also participated as part of their service program. ■




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### ST. THERESA SCHOOL FROM PAGE 45

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ing exercise in eighth grade.

“Grade five students are enjoying reading, *Farmer Boy*, a story about Almanzo Wilder and his family, in the year 1886. Life was very different during this time and, there are so many important lessons the students are learning as we read daily chapters.” (Mrs. Kathy Mulford, grade 5). This classic work of literature fits perfectly with the study of westward expansion. This year focuses on American History and Literature. By selecting and reading classic works such as those by Laura Ingalls Wilder, students acquire the skills necessary to read well, speak well and think well. Students begin to understand and internalize how language works both at the level of the individual words and grammatical structure. Reading well means reading efficiently, and it also means reading insightfully and thoughtfully. Students begin to learn how to question a story and be questioned by it. With a classic book such as *Farmer Boy*, students consider a character’s choices, the consequences of their actions and the importance of truth. They are asked to consider whether a story or a character is fair or just, whether the story is beautiful

and why. Does the story evoke feelings of happiness or sadness? Students begin to recognize the significance of symbols and foreshadowing. By reading *Farmer Boy*, Mrs. Mulford demonstrates how this story complements the entire 5th grade curriculum. Thus, learning becomes a beautiful tapestry of interconnecting themes, concepts and ideas. Students are then able to make connections within all subject areas, and learning becomes seamless and fluid, which creates greater and greater enthusiasm, awe, wonder and culminates with the sheer joy of learning.

Recently, on a beautiful autumn day, Mr. Fitzpatrick took his class eighth grade class outside to observe God’s creation in the natural beauty that surrounds them on the St. Theresa School campus. Mr. Fitzpatrick’s assignment aimed to inspire students to write about those things that they observe to be beautiful. He writes, “in order to be inspired by beauty in their creative writing, I had students go outside on a beautiful autumn day and directed them to write a poem, a short story or a journal entry that utilized descriptive language focusing on the five senses. It was my hope

that students create something beautiful based on their experience of beauty. I also hoped that their experience of nature would lift their minds to God, the Ultimate Beauty, the way St. Francis would do in his enjoyment of creation.” Providing the opportunity for children to observe and write about God’s creation educates them in the truest and fullest sense by giving them the necessary tools for learning, and by fostering wonder and love for all that is genuinely true, good and beautiful.

Education in the deepest and comprehensive sense extends beyond the classroom, and is more than just the acquisition of skills, but rather encompasses the whole of one’s life. For this reason, St. Theresa School seeks to involve the entire school community more deeply in the life of the school, and in the education of the student body. By returning to the Catholic classical tradition, our vibrant school community is one of budding saints and scholars living out the true mission of the Church bringing forth Joy to the world.

(To learn more about St. Theresa School, please visit our website at [sttheresaschooltrumbull.org](http://sttheresaschooltrumbull.org) or call 203.268.3236.) ■

# Catholic Schools

## St. Mark School's Got Milk

STRATFORD—It's not uncommon for elementary school students to have a class pet such as a rabbit, guinea pig or similar little critter. But, a cow?

Remarkably, St. Mark School in Stratford has recently adopted

St. Mark Students have the opportunity to talk directly with Farmer Nate, meet their calves, take virtual farm tours, and ask questions about milk production. Teachers and students receive photos, video updates, and activity

“The Adopt A Cow Program does more than just educate students about dairy—it inspires them to care about their health, the cows, and their local farmers,” claimed Second Grade Teacher Stacey Zenowich. “Through



not one cow, but three! Although they won't have to feed the cows or clean up after them, they will get to learn a lot about the dairy industry from virtual fieldtrips and classroom lessons.

The St. Mark kindergarten class adopted a calf named Frostee, second grade adopted Cherrio and the after school program adopted Favorite.

The Adopt a Cow Program is run through Discover Dairy, a Pennsylvania-based agricultural initiative that provides interactive lessons for students in kindergarten through 8th grade. Through hands-on learning activities and curriculum provided by Discover Dairy, students gain a deeper understanding of dairy farming in the community, economy, state and country.

St. Mark School was assigned to Dutch Hollow Farm in Schodack Landing, New York, where Frostee, Cherrio and Favorite were born in October 2020. The farm was established in 1976 by third-generation farmer Paul Chittenden and his wife, Melanie and now includes more than 700 milk cows.

sheets throughout the school year that allow them to watch their calves grow.

After School Program Director



Sarah Carrano stated, “The students are very excited to learn more about their dairy cow. It is an exciting way for them to watch a calf grow throughout the year and learn how dairy farmers are impacting our communities.”

immersive activities and technology-driven content, it's an in-classroom experience like no other.”

“I so appreciate the energy and commitment from our teachers to make this challenging year a positive, in-person experience for our students,” remarked St. Mark Principal Melissa Warner. “I am proud of everyone's efforts and the wonderful successes we are seeing as teachers offer new, unexpected opportunities to engage students.”

St. Mark School is a Nationally Recognized Blue Ribbon School of Academic Excellence, accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). To kick off Catholic Schools Week, St. Mark School will offer School Tours for

prospective families on Sunday, January 31, 2021 from 10 am–12 noon. For more information, visit the school's website at [www.stmarkschool.org](http://www.stmarkschool.org). To take a virtual tour, visit <https://youtu.be/TC1Y7zNkQy8>. ■

# Immaculate High School

## Immaculate inducts new members to National Honor Society

DANBURY—Immaculate High School recently inducted 57 students into the St. Thomas Aquinas Chapter of the National Honor Society, an affiliated chartered chapter of the National

others, have served at least 75 hours (juniors) or 100 hours (seniors) of community service and consistently demonstrate respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring and

accepted, they are expected to uphold the criteria of excellence in all four areas.

“It’s unfortunate that we can’t celebrate as we usually do, but these students should be proud to



Honor Society. Students who are inducted into the National Society are required to have a minimum 3.5 GPA. They must also have a leadership role in either the school or community, inspire positive behavior in

good citizenship. Membership is offered to juniors and seniors who meet the criteria established by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in the areas of scholarship, leadership, service and character. Once

be members. It’s more than just academics: these students provide many hours of service to the community and are leaders among their peers,” says Dana Pickney, advisor of the National Honor Society. ■

### *The following students were inducted into the National Honor Society during a virtual ceremony*

#### **Danbury Students:**

Stephanie Antonios ‘22, Nikolas Badinelli ‘22, Caitlin Doherty ‘22, William Doran ‘22, Eduardo Dos Santos ‘21, Danielle Garcia ‘22, Alexys Garden ‘21, Julia Goodwin ‘21, Wyatt Jarboe ‘22, Ernst Koch ‘22, Sara MacKinnon ‘22, Kiera McCoy ‘22, Caroline Merritt ‘22, Anish Nanda ‘22, Quy Ngoc Huynh “Victoria” Nguyen ‘21, Conor O’Keefe ‘22, Gabriela Ortiz ‘22, Mario Perez ‘22, Matthew Riggs ‘21, Lynn Sanchez ‘22, Magdalena Swierczek ‘22, Caroline Tucker ‘22, Amanda Tureaud ‘22,

Joseph Williams ‘22, Jake Windas ‘22

**Bethel Students:** Chloe Gleissner ‘22, Richard Lawlor ‘22, Audrey Quish ‘22, Christopher Suarez ‘22, Oona Tuccinardi ‘22

**Brookfield Students:** Arianna Petta ‘22, Nathaniel Varda ‘22, Alexis Walsh ‘22

**Ridgefield Students:** Patrik Backus ‘22, John Christopher Karle ‘22, Kennedy Muller ‘22

**Redding Students:** Allie Bellone ‘22, Chloe Bellone ‘22, Calista Dudas ‘22, Carolyn Jandura ‘22, Julong Williams ‘22

**Newtown Students:** Katerina Crowe ‘22, Grace McLoughlin

‘22, Sophia Pertoso ‘22, Steven Reese ‘22, Thai Sapenter ‘22

**Sandy Hook Students:** Logan McAloon ‘21, Walker Prevedi ‘22

**New Fairfield Students:** Sarra Darby ‘22, Anna Flaherty ‘22, Susan Radliff ‘22, Lilly Zuccala ‘22

**New Milford Students:** Matthew Reeves ‘22

**Bridgewater Students:** Lauren Manning ‘22

**North Salem, NY Students:** Diana DiVestea ‘22

**South Salem, NY Students:** Ryan Tappan ‘22

**Wingdale, NY Students:** Harrison Palmer ‘21

# St. Mary School

## St. Mary's remains open for in-person learning

*(A message from St. Mary School Principal Scott Smith)*

BETHEL—Navigating through these challenging times has been difficult for everyone. For educators it is especially demanding. We exist to serve but we also have a responsibility to keep everyone in our school commu-

here at Saint Mary School Bethel, this is exactly what keeps us positive and hopeful.

Early on, we made it a goal to remain open and committed to in-person learning. However, not the risk of outbreak everywhere including our small school. But just as they have done from day

critical in helping us optimize our response.

We are just a few days past Christmas break, but we have remained open for in-person learning. I feel that the next couple of weeks will be critical. We will continue to be diligent in gathering information, properly commu-



nities healthy and safe. For us in Catholic education our schools are built on the premise of family, community and service, grounded in the love of God. COVID-19 certainly has thrown a wrench into some of this, as separation and distance are a contradiction to our mission.

However, with any crisis, faith and family get us through. And

one, our families maintained their “we are all in this together” approach. They exercised caution, kept us informed and sought our advice. We were able to be proactive with the hope of being preventive. During break, we stayed connected as a team, monitored emails, checked in with each other and our health professionals. Early information has been

communicating and responding appropriately to each situation that comes our way. We are not out of the woods by any measure, but I can say with 100 percent confidence that our teachers are prepared, our students are prepared, our families will support us, and God is on our side! We will get through this together and come out stronger than ever before!

**CATHOLIC CEMETERIES**  
DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

**WE ARE HERE FOR YOU  
IN YOUR TIME OF NEED!**

TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT CALL: **203.610.3414**

