Bishop Caggiano celebrates the Pontifical Mass consecrating the diocese to St. Joseph on Friday March 19, at St. Augustine Cathedral. Faithful throughout the diocese watched the live-stream Mass.

Photos by Amy Mortensen
March 2021

Around the Diocese

Signs of hope in the pandemic

Priest approaching 103 still gives to ACA

BRIDGEPORT—Father Philip Brady will turn 103 this year and during his lifetime, he’s developed a lot of steady habits. He says Mass every day, he prays his breviary and he still sends his check to the Annual Catholic Appeal. Father, who lives in a senior community outside Buffalo, served for many years in the Diocese of Bridgeport until retiring in 1995 as pastor from St. Margaret Mary Church in Shelton after 27 years. Since that time, he has been sending his annual check of $1,100 to help the parish reach its goal in the appeal. One person who is especially appreciative to Father Brady for his participation in the appeal is Pamela S. Rittman, director of the Annual Catholic Appeal. Twelve years ago, when he called to make his donation, she discovered he was from the town in upstate New York where she grew up. “We immediately hit it off as friends and talked about local restaurants and the cold Western New York weather,” Rittman said. “He was there when I needed him and presided over the funeral of a family member and blessed our home in upstate New York. When I visit, I make sure to stop in and see him and share the news of the diocese. To my surprise, he often knows more than I do.”

St. Mark Students strive to be models in Christ

STRATFORD—St. Mark School in Stratford is pleased to announce a new school-wide program that teaches students the value of moral character and that the positive impact of their actions do not go unnoticed. The program, “Models in Christ,” recognizes students for demonstrating character traits based on the Catholic theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Teachers in kindergarten through grade eight nominate students as “Models in Christ” based on how they exemplify the six pillars of character at St. Mark School: respect, kindness, accountability, citizenship, perseverance and trustworthiness.
Local March for Life draws faithful supporters
Recognizing the power of praying the rosary and the on-going movement to repeal Roe v. Wade, parishioners from the Diocese of Bridgeport and beyond gathered at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Trumbull, braving the chill of a January afternoon to honor the unborn.

St. Jude offers Relics of the Passion Service during Lent
MONROE—St. John XXIII Council 5987 of the Knights of Columbus recently hosted The Relics of the Passion at St. Jude Parish. The collection included eight rare holy relics that would only be seen in collections generally found in Rome or the Holy Land. “The relics were set up across the entire front of St. Jude Church. The afternoon offered families a time for prayer and meditation as they contemplated the Passion of our Lord Jesus,” shared Father Henry Hoffman, pastor of St. Jude.

Holy Hour for Vocations
TRUMBULL—Faithful from around the diocese recently joined together at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull to pray for vocations in the Diocese of Bridgeport. During a time of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, the faithful prayed that young men throughout the diocese would be open to hearing the call that God has placed in their hearts to become the living instrument of His love and mercy that priests are formed to be. (For more information on vocations in the Diocese of Bridgeport email: Vocations@diobpt.org.)
The Year of St. Joseph

Consecration Mass launches diocesan renewal

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano launched a diocesan-wide renewal on March 19, when he consecrated the Diocese of Bridgeport to the protection and intercession of St. Joseph, the Patron of the Universal Church, during this Year of St. Joseph proclaimed by Pope Francis.

The bishop celebrated a Pontifical Mass on the Feast of St. Joseph, at St. Augustine Cathedral while pastors throughout the diocese simultaneously celebrated Mass, linking the diocese together in prayer and purpose.

Describing St. Joseph as a husband, father and saint who exemplified the saying, “Actions speak louder than words,” Bishop Caggiano said, “You and I come here, my friends, not simply to ask for his help, not simply to seek his protection, but to follow his example.”

In stark contrast to last March when the state was in lockdown, about 200 people were able to attend the Mass in person while observing the recommended six feet of social distancing, and hundreds of others participated by watching the live-stream of the Mass in their homes. The bishop celebrated Mass and delivered his homily while wearing a blueurgical mask.

Twice during the evening—immediately after the homily and again at the end of Mass—the bishop knelt and prayed before the new statue of St. Joseph, which depicts him lovingly cradling the Christ Child in his right arm. He said new statue of St. Joseph will be formally installed and blessed at the Cathedral during a special Mass on May 2.

Calling the faithful to action, during his homily, he said, “In this singular moment in the life of the Church in this singular moment in the life of our world, now is the time we turn to Joseph to ask him to protect us, to guide us, to defend us, to inspire us to a mission that no longer needs words but faithful, humble, obedient action. For it is in our deeds that the world will see what Joseph saw. It is in our actions that the Lord will glimpse he who Joseph is carrying with his arms outstretched as a child, ready to stretch out his arms on the cross so that the love that he bore for us will set us free.”

The Mass was a culmination of a week-long Novena to St. Joseph, calling upon him to intercede for the diocese during this year of celebration, proclaimed by Pope Francis in observance of the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph being named Patron of the Universal Church by Blessed Pius IX. The pope also issued an Apostolic Letter titled Patris corde, (“With a Father’s Heart”) in order “to

Holy Week

Live-streamed and online Masses to be celebrated by Bishop Caggiano

Holy Thursday—April 1
Chrim Mass—10 am
Mass of the Lord’s Supper—7 pm

Good Friday—April 2
Celebration of the Passion of the Lord—3 pm

Easter Vigil Mass—April 3
Mass—8 pm

All of these events will be live-streamed, and will take place at St. Augustine Cathedral. Anyone planning to attend must go to the Cathedral website and register. The Chrism Mass is using a tiered registration system, open to priests, then deacons followed by the curia.
increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal.”

In his apostolic letter, Pope Francis describes Joseph as “a hidden presence” and “a man in the shadows.” Similarly, Bishop Caggiano observed, “Today we honor a man who has no directly recorded words in all of Sacred Scripture, and yet we come here to honor him as patron and guardian, defender and protector. Of all the members of the human race—second only to the Mother of God—to this man, this simple carpenter, was given a great mission: to protect and guard the Savior and Redeemer of all things and his Sacred Virgin Mother.”

Joseph accomplished the great mission he was given through the obedience that characterized his life and the humility that was the foundation of his spiritual relationship with God. He would not have chosen to leave everything behind and go in exile to Egypt, but he followed God’s will.

Joseph was given the great gift of an intimate, personal and loving relationship with God, whom he was given to protect. This was the “wellspring of his power,” the bishop said. The faithful of the diocese have also been given a great mission on the day of their Baptism, he said. “Did you and I not also receive this great task to be the protector and defender of the Lord’s presence in the world?” he said. “That faith that binds us as a family, for each time you and I are out in the world, caring for the sick, the poor and the homeless, when you did it for the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it for me.”

The mission of renewal that the diocese embarks upon is a “grave one,” he said. “You and I follow in the footsteps of the carpenter. We are given the mission to be the guardians of the Truth, who is the person of Jesus alive in our midst, here in this Mystical Body.”

Echoing the theme of his pastoral exhortation, Bishop Caggiano said that just as Joseph have invited you into that Upper Room to sit with the Lord, his foster son and our God,” Bishop Caggiano said, referring to his “Call to Renewal” through personal prayer, reconciliation with Christ and reception of the Holy Eucharist. For more information about the bishop’s “Call to Renewal” and other Masses and activities that are planned throughout the year, visit the special web page: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/call-to-renewal. 

consecration Mass from page 4
By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—The “ARISE” 2021 Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) is off to an encouraging start with $2.9 million pledged toward an overall goal of $8.1 million in support of Bishop Frank J. Caggiano’s “A Call to Renewal” along with ongoing programs and ministries. The 2021 ACA moves forward at a hopeful moment with the arrival of vaccines and many parishioners beginning to return to in-person Mass around the diocese.

“I come to you with real, joyful hope because as this pandemic begins to recede, you and I are given this wonderful opportunity, creatively and imaginatively, to set our Church on a path of growth by offering new initiatives and new opportunities to engage our youth and welcome people back to Church,” the bishop said he is particularly grateful for those who have already generously given to the 2021 Annual Catholic Appeal, which is both looking forward to the future, but also working to address the ongoing needs of those who have been left behind as a result of the pandemic. “This is not the time for us to turn our backs away from those in need,” the bishop said. “For the need remains urgent, and many suffer from the effects of this pandemic and will continue to do so for a long time as we work to recover.” Joe Gallagher, chief development officer of the diocese, said this year’s ACA will provide the financial resources for many of the initiatives outlined in the bishop’s recent Pastoral Exhortation, “Let Us Enter the Upper Room with the Lord.”

“In his Pastoral Exhortation the bishop has issued a “Call to Renewal,” which includes the designation of Centers of Mercy and Centers of Eucharistic Adoration to enable all to deepen their faith, said Gallagher. Likewise, orientation and training has already begun for men and women of all ages throughout the diocese who are interested in becoming “Ambassadors,” who will share their faith with others and go out into the community later in the year to evangelize in person.

Planning is also underway for the development of four pastoral centers focusing on family life, Catholic culture and sacred arts, young adult entrepreneurship and evangelization in order to move the diocese forward in renewal. “The seed money for these new and exciting programs will come from the ACA, and it will support the renewal efforts,” said Gallagher.

In describing “A Call to Renewal” Bishop Caggiano said it is not a formal process or program but a series of opportunities for people to deepen their faith, serve others and go out into community to address the needs of our entire family of faith. “We can become ambassadors of Christ in the world,” he said.

Pam Rittman, director of the ACA, said that in addition to supporting the bishop’s “A Call to Renewal,” the ACA continues to fund the major diocesan ministries and services available to all people in the diocese throughout the year.

“As a Catholic community we care deeply about the vulnerable and underserved parishioners within the Diocese of Bridgeport, many of whom are members of our inner-city churches and have been hardest hit by the pandemic,” she said.

Rittman said the need for nutrition, counseling and immigration services through Catholic Charities has remained elevated throughout the crisis while some parishes have required emergency support. Many families throughout the diocese have depended on the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund to support their choice of Catholic education for their children and because of the pandemic, there has been an increase in enrollment.

“The bishop has taught us that those in need are our brothers and sisters, and we must work to help them to feel welcome in our Church as part of our diocesan families. We need to stand with them and accompany them,” she said.

Rittman said the ACA is an opportunity for the people of the diocese to invest in the future of young people and the vibrancy of the entire faith community, while also continuing to support essential ministries that do the work of feeding and sheltering the poor, reaching out to the elderly, and serving all those who are vulnerable and troubled.

She added that a new revenue sharing plan allows each parish to designate their over goal funds to a specific ministry or diocesan mission program, another parish facing financial hardship, or for their own parish general operating needs. Each pastor, along with their parish council and finance committees, determine where the funds will be directed.

“We’re asking people to give according to their means at a time when there is much need, great hope and a shared vision for the future, and we are grateful for each and every gift no matter what people give,” she said. Donations may be made by using the envelope in this issue or online at: www.2021ACA-Bridgeport.com. You may also donate by texting the word APPEAL to 475.241.7849 to make your pledge. Please visit the website to view the 2021 Appeal video and learn more.

For the 2020 Annual Catholic Appeal, the following provides a correction to the figures for St. Thomas More Parish.

- Goal—$450,000
- Pledged—$478,158
- % over goal—+6.3%

The diocesan Development Team would like to thank the parishioners of St. Thomas More for their commitment to supporting the ministries of the diocese.

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By ELIZABETH CLYONS

Approximately 140 participants gathered virtually online recently for the first online session for the Eucharistic Ambassador formation called for by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano in his recent pastoral exhortation “Let Us Enter the Upper Room with the Lord.”

In his exhortation, the bishop requested that the ambassadors be recommended by pastors based on their love for the faith and their willingness to use the months ahead to undergo intensive personal and spiritual formation to prepare themselves to be missionary ambassadors of Christ.

The initiative began with participants watching a video, then breaking into separate break-out rooms for parishes for reflection and discussion. The main theme of the first session was: “What do you seek?” based on John 1:38.

Father Michael Novajosky is serving as special assistant to the bishop and leader of the initiative, which will continue with virtual sessions for the next seven weeks. The initial session presented an overview of the period of discernment/formation for those who are participating in the ambassador training.

The program has been very well received,” says Father Novajosky, noting that well over 200 participants from more than 25 parishes and the chancery have been presented by their pastors. “It is nice to see people coming out and being interested.”

“People are happy to come just to be able to pray together and share the faith with others,” explains Father Novajosky. “They are very encouraged by the idea of going out to people, helping them live their faith and inspiring them to come back to church.”

Father Novajosky said the ambassador formation process hopes to offer in-person sessions and activities as conditions permit.

Deacon Patrick Toole, episcopal vicar for administration, attended the first session and was encouraged by the prayerful enthusiasm of participants and the hopeful tone going forward. “The session was well done. The ambassadors were really engaged in the process and they had great discussions in their break-out groups. They were very enthusiastic about the whole concept,” said Deacon Toole.

In Bishop Caggiano’s recent pastoral exhortation “Let Us Enter the Upper Room with the Lord,” he explained to the diocesan faithful his desire to form eucharistic ambassadors.

“I will need the assistance of co-workers who will not be afraid to go out into their communities to invite people to encounter the Lord and His mercy,” wrote the bishop.

When ready, they will be sent out into their community, under the care of their local pastor, to

FAIRFIELD COUNTY
CATHOLIC
March 2021

A Call to Renewal

Eucharistic ambassador formation sessions begin

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

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7
2021 Annual Catholic Appeal

GIFTS TO THE APPEAL HELP MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO:

- Provide over 1.3 million meals each year, 10,000 counseling sessions and housing assistance through Catholic Charities
- Award over $2.7 million in financial assistance for Catholic education through the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund for young people across the Diocese
- Ensure children and young adults have opportunities to participate in religious education programs
- Educate and train 23 men for ordination to priesthood in our Diocese
- Educate and train 8 men for ordination to the Permanent Diaconate
- Care for 74 senior priests in their dignified retirement
- Afford our youth with meaningful opportunities to mature as holy and active members of society through a wide range of faith-based programs
- Respond to spiritual, educational and social needs of persons with disabilities through the St. Catherine Center for Special Needs

The Annual Catholic Appeal provides seed money for the Bishop’s “Call to Renewal,” which celebrates the return to in-person Mass and supports the creation of four pastoral centers focusing on family life, culture and arts, young adult entrepreneurship and evangelization.

The Annual Catholic Appeal assists all people in the Diocese through works of faith and ministry, education and catechesis; and charity and pastoral services throughout Fairfield County.

Please make a gift today at 2021ACABridgeport.com or text APPEAL to (475) 241-7489
For more information please call (203) 416-1470
By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Parish Centers of Mercy are now open throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport to offer expanded and evening Confession times along with Eucharistic Adoration opportunities.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano called for the opening Centers of Mercy as an important step in renewing the diocese and the welcoming people back to Church in his Pastoral Exhortation, “Let us Enter the Upper Room with the Lord.”

“An essential ingredient in the spiritual and pastoral revival of every community of faith is fostering ever greater availability to the Sacrament of Penance,” said Bishop Caggiano in making available the complete list of Confession and Adoration schedules.

“Before we invite others to experience the liberating word of God’s forgiveness, should we not take this privileged time to relearn how to examine our conscience, admit our sinfulness and seek the forgiveness of our sins through the Sacrament of Penance?” he said.

The bishop said he recognized that the pandemic has created obstacles for many who wish to approach the Sacrament of Penance and to participate in Eucharistic Adoration.

For that reason, he re-established and expanded the Centers of Mercy that were originally opened in the diocese during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (2015).

The bishop thanked the nine priests who are serving as deans (representing the territorial and pastoral boundaries of the diocese) and to all priests who will be hearing Confessions.

“As we begin our efforts to overcome the debilitating effects of the pandemic and to seize this moment as a time for spiritual and pastoral renewal, I wish to express my thanks for your consideration of this opportunity to serve the faithful of your parish and deanery,” he said.

The designated Centers of Mercy, along with the parishes already offering the Sacrament of Penance throughout the diocese, will observe every protocol needed to maintain the safety of penitent and priest alike.

(For a complete list of parish Confession and Adoration schedules, visit the new Call to Renewal page on the diocesan website: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/call-to-renewal.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Languages available</th>
<th>Confessions</th>
<th>Eucharistic Adoration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saint Mark, Stratford</td>
<td>3360 Main St, Stratford</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Tuesday 3:30-4:30 pm</td>
<td>Tuesday 1-2 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Lady, Queen of the Rosary, Queens of Peace</td>
<td>2515 Main St, Stratford</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Saturday 4-4:45 pm</td>
<td>Tuesday 7-8 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen of the Holy Rosary</td>
<td>335 Main St, Stratford</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Monday 5-7 pm</td>
<td>Tuesday 7-8 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Mary, Mother of the Church</td>
<td>2247 Main St, Stratford</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Tuesday 3:30-4:30 pm</td>
<td>Tuesday 7-8 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother of Divine Grace</td>
<td>2245 Main St, Stratford</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Wednesday 11-11:15 am</td>
<td>Tuesday 7-8 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Thomas More, Darien</td>
<td>2201 Main St, Darien</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Tuesday 3:30-4:30 pm</td>
<td>Tuesday 7-8 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Joseph, Brookfield</td>
<td>2180 Main St, Brookfield</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Saturday 4-4:45 pm</td>
<td>Tuesday 7-8 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Assumed into Heaven</td>
<td>2160 Main St, Brookfield</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Tuesday 3:30-4:30 pm</td>
<td>Tuesday 7-8 pm</td>
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Confession times along with Eucharistic Adoration

**CATECHUS OF OUR JOY DEANERY (Stamford)**

**Holy Spirit**
Confessions: Tuesday 7-8:30 pm
Sunday 1-4 pm (During Lent & Advent)
Eucharistic Adoration: First Friday of the month 12:30-5 pm

**St. Mary, Mother of the Church DEANERY (Greenwich)**
Confessions: Tuesday 7-8:30 pm
Saturday 2:45-3:45 pm
Eucharistic Adoration: First Friday of the month 12:30-5 pm

**Mother of Divine Grace DEANERY (Darien, New Canaan, Norwalk)**
Confession: Monday 7-8 pm
Saturday 3:45-4:15 pm
Sunday 8:15-8:45 am and 4:45-5:15 pm
Eucharistic Adoration: Tuesday 7-8 pm
First Friday 9:30 am-5 pm

**Mystical Rose DEANERY (Shelton, Stratford)**
Confession: Tuesday 7-8 pm
Saturday 3:45-4:15 pm
Sunday 8:15-8:45 am and 4:45-5:15 pm
Eucharistic Adoration: Tuesday 7-8 pm
First Friday 9:30 am-5 pm

**Saint Lawrence, Shelton (Huntington)**
Confessions: Saturday 4-4:45 pm
Sunday 11-11:30 am
Languages available: English
Eucharistic Adoration: First Friday from 9 am-6 pm

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Eucharistic Adoration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saint Augustine Cathedral</td>
<td>555 Broad St, Bridgeport</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Monday 11:15-11:55 pm</td>
<td>Tuesday 7-8 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saint Francis Borgia</td>
<td>1224 Main St, Bridgeport</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Wednesday 6:15-7 pm</td>
<td>Tuesday 7-8 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saint Cecilia</td>
<td>1200 Main St, Bridgeport</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Thursday 7-8 pm</td>
<td>Tuesday 7-8 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Charles Borromeo</td>
<td>1180 Main St, Bridgeport</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Friday 7:30-8 am and 4:30-5:30 pm</td>
<td>Tuesday 7-8 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Francis Assisi, Weston</td>
<td>1000 Main St, Weston</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Saturday 4-4:45 pm</td>
<td>Tuesday 7-8 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Confession times along with Eucharistic Adoration

**QUEEN OF THE HOLY ROSARY DEANERY**

**Queen of the Holy Rosary, Queens of Peace**
Confessions: Tuesday 3:30-4:30 pm
Eucharistic Adoration: Tuesday 7-8 pm
Saturday 4-4:45 pm (or by appointment)
Eucharistic Adoration: Tuesday 7-8 pm

**Our Lady of the Assumption, Fairfield**
Confession: Tuesday 7-8 pm
Saturday 11:30-2:30 pm
Eucharistic Adoration: Tuesday 7-8 pm
First Friday of the month from 8 am Friday to 7:15 am Saturday

**Queen of Martyrs DEANERY**

**Queen of Martyrs, Queens of Wisdom**
Confession: Tuesday 7-8 pm
Saturday 3:30-4:30 pm (or by appointment)
Eucharistic Adoration: Tuesday 7-8 pm
Saturday 4-4:45 pm

**Saint Francis Assisi, Weston**
Confessions: Saturday 4-4:45 pm
Sunday 4-4:45 pm
Eucharistic Adoration: Wednesday from 3-8 pm (in the main church)
Rite of Election

Bishop to candidates: ‘You are most welcome…’

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

TRUMBULL—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano welcomed 100 men and women into full communion with the Catholic Church at Sunday’s Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion at St. Theresa Church in Trumbull.

“Today the Lord, through the Mystery of the Mystical Body, the Church, is going to elect you; that is, confirm the call you have received in the quiet of your heart; the call that was given to you by the Lord, Himself,” said the bishop during his homily.

The bishop assured the participants that he and all the members of the Church would be praying for them in the weeks ahead, as they continue their preparation to receive the sacraments of initiation. “You are most welcome,” the bishop said.

“There is a profound lesson to be contemplated,” explained Bishop Caggiano, reminding the participants that their journey in faith is one that all the faithful must continue throughout their lives. “For the reality of the temptations in our lives are real. The tendency to fall into those temptations can be deadly, and so what is it that the Lord requires?”

The bishop explained the struggle that lies within all of us. “Temptation, my friends, is when we’re given a choice between doing what is good, right and moral, or to do what is disordered or evil or sinful.”

“That choice has power over us when it engages our hearts,” he said. “It is the desires of our heart that can at times get us in trouble.”

The bishop explained that we cannot find peace in our hearts from what the world wants us to consume—power, pleasure, possessions, privilege, prophet, and so many other things.

“To win over temptation is not simply knowing what’s right or wrong it is to contain, to train, to bring to conversion my heart and yours,” said the bishop.

“And you, my friends, election candidates, as you continue this journey you are going through, it is more than an invitation to simply know what the Church teaches, but it is also to train your heart… to allow these desires to lead you to the one desire that matters—the desire you have encountered already in your hearts.”

The bishop explained that in the Gospel reading of Jesus’ temptation in the desert, he was teaching us how to overcome temptations. The bishop assured that Jesus did not experience temptations as we do, because His heart is singular and pure, not divided as ours is.

The bishop posed the question: How can you and I look the devil in the face and walk away? He answered: prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

“St. Augustine said one sentence that has been repeated and echoed for centuries,” the bishop said. “Our hearts are restless until they rest with thee, O God.”

This liturgical rite, traditionally held on the first Sunday of Lent, is part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) process. It closes the period of formation and marks the beginning of the period of final preparation for the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter.

To properly adhere to COVID-19 protocols, attendees were asked only to sit together if they were related or live together. Sponsors and godparents did not have to sit with the candidates and/or catechumens. Clergy and parish staff could sit wherever they please as well, following social-distancing guidelines.

After the homily, catechumens’ and candidates’ names were read aloud, as they were asked to stand with their godparents/sponsors and recite the responses provided. All social-distancing and COVID-19 protocols were followed. The event was livestreamed at: www.sttheresatumbull.org.

(For more information regarding RCIA and adult formation, contact Dr. Patrick Donovan, executive director of The Leadership Institute at: pdonovan@diobpt.org.)
Year of St. Joseph

‘The Perfect Saint to Befriend Us’

By EMILY CLARK

TRUMBULL—As Catholics worldwide begin the observance of the Year of St. Joseph, a group of local parishioners gathered weekly in preparation for a special consecration to this Patron of the Universal Church.

Father Terrence Walsh, pastor of Christ the King Church in Trumbull, organized this prayer group around Father Donald H. Calloway’s text “Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father,” with the hope that his participants would grow in their love and devotion to this saint.

“Joseph is our spiritual father, a role model who intercedes for us,” said Father Walsh. “He has a real effect on our lives and helps to orient our spiritual well-being.”

When someone is “consecrated to St. Joseph,” Father Walsh said, they make a special commitment to him, entrusting themselves entirely to his care as he leads them to God. “You have to want that consecration. It’s an act of will. It’s like saying to him, ‘You’re the boss!’” Father Walsh added.

With the Solemnity of St. Joseph falling close to Easter, many participants, including JoAnn Zimmerman, said this prayer group was an ideal Lenten observance and would aid in centering them in their spiritual life. “I decided that this would be a wonderful way to spend this sea-

nified, virtuous husband of Mary, “a gentleman, a protector, and a man pure of heart,” writes Father Calloway. He tells readers that “now is the time of St. Joseph,” as the world greatly needs him and his role as defender of the family—the foundation of society—with marriage at the heart of creation and redemption.

According to Father Calloway, St. Joseph is also “the Increaser,” having the power to increase the presence of God in one’s life, which then encourages followers to spread the saint’s virtues to others. As a catechist at Christ the King, Zimmerman said she often shares readings from the text with her students. “This helps them better understand Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—the models of a beautiful, loving and humble family that we should all try to emulate,” she said.

“Devotion to St. Joseph has blossomed,” said Father Walsh, “and is now in full bloom. The world is in need, and he is the one to help us.”

The perspective of a “family” emerges in all the readings and discussions as participants come to better see St. Joseph as the head of the Holy Family, the loving foster father of Jesus, and the dig-

of reflection and preparation before the celebration of Easter,” said Zimmerman, a parishioner at Christ the King.

To better understand the presence of St. Joseph’s paternal love, the 25 members of this group have followed the “33-Day Preparation” outlined in Father Calloway’s book. This includes short daily readings of commentary from the author, scripture passages, and inspirational words from other saints, ending with the Litany of St. Joseph. During the Monday evening meetings on Zoom, Father Walsh begins by sharing his observations and interpretations of the readings, interspersed with personal anecdotes, and then opens the conversation for participants to offer their own comments, some serious, some emotional but always unique, as every person seems to have their own reason for the saint’s importance in their lives.

“The book reads like a treasure trove of stories surrounding this most silent saint,” Gina Cosgrove, a member of the group, said of the text. “He is the perfect saint to befriend us, whatever our situation. I’m just beginning to appreciate what a marvelous spiritual father we have in St. Joseph.”

Father Walsh said he enjoys the “beautiful camaraderie” the participants have as they look to live out their faith and help one another. “Everyone is interested in growing in their knowledge and love. We

FATHER TERRENCE WALSH, pastor, Christ the King Parish in Trumbull. (file photo)
TRUMBULL—A new stained glass window depicting the Blessed of the Church was dedicated on Friday, March 19, on the Solemnity of St. Joseph at The Parish of St. Catherine of Siena. St. Joseph is the spouse of Mary, the holy Mother of God and the earthly step-father of Jesus Christ. Pope Francis has declared that this is the Year of St. Joseph, which coincides with the 150th Anniversary of the Proclamation of St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church.

At this Mass, a new stained glass window was blessed and dedicated in the church. The new window depicts ten Saints and Blesseds who lived in recent centuries and who represent various states of life in the Church, as follows:

- St. Gianna Beretta Molla: wife, mother, doctor
- St. André Bessette: Religious Brother
- Blessed Chiara Luce Badano: young lay woman
- St. John Henry Newman: priest and theologian
- Sts. Louis & Zélie Martin: married couple; parents of St. Therese of Lisieux; the first married couple to be canonized together; their feast day is July 12, their wedding anniversary
- Blessed Michael McGivney: diocesan priest and founder of the Knights of Columbus
- St. Josephine Bakhita: Religious Sister
- Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati: young lay man
- St. Teresa of Calcutta: Religious Sister and foundress of the Missionaries of Charity

The window will be located just beside the baptismal font, and its location is intentional. “The window will serve to highlight the important truth that through the Sacrament of Baptism comes the vocation to holiness in all the various states of life in the Church: marriage, single life, priesthood and consecrated,” said Father Joseph Marcell, pastor.

Father Marcello celebrated Mass on Friday, March 19, at 7 pm to give thanks to God for the life and example of St. Joseph, step-father of Jesus Christ, and Patron of the Universal Church. The Mass was live-streamed on the parish website, YouTube channel and Facebook page.

(The Parish of St. Catherine of Siena is located at 220 Shelton Road, in Trumbull. For more information visit the Parish Website at www.StCathTrumbull.com. Or contact the parish office at 203.377.3133.)
Local News

March 2021

opportunities in the digital media, opened up new evangelization through his efforts we have said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. "Through his efforts we have part of the Vatican project," distinction and has been chosen to that John Grosso has earned this Church. to better serve the mission of the dicastery announced “Faith Communication in the Digital World” and invited candidates to apply for the project with the opportunity to sharpen their digital media abilities and develop skills useful for work in Catholic organizations, institutions, congregations and in their local dioceses to better serve the mission of the Church. The diocese is very proud that John Grosso has earned this distinction and has been chosen to participate in the Vatican project," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. “Through his efforts we have opened up new evangelization opportunities in the digital media, which will play an increasingly important role in the future of Church communications.” Bishop Caggiano said that as the Catholic Church seeks to embrace new and effective ways of communication during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media and mobile applications have been utilized as key tools in communicating the Gospel message, particularly to youth and young adults.

Grosso said he was humbled to be selected for the project, and he believes that although social media can be a hostile and difficult environment, it gives the Church the ability to accompany others where they are in their life journey. "I love the Church. I feel at home in the Church. But my whole life, I’ve watched many of my friends leave it, and I’ve been powerless to stop it. Here in my part of the United States, there is a crisis of trust in the Church, a crisis of belief in the Eucharist, and a crisis of relevancy. When I hear Pope Francis say ‘go to the margins,’ I think of digital media. Digital media is a way to reach rich and poor, connect young and old, and help orient them towards Jesus and His Church." Grosso will join other young professionals in weekly virtual meetings, which include lectures by internationally renowned experts and individual coaching on specific topics related to digital communication and social media. The group will engage in individual and group work assignments throughout the project. The 12-month program, launched digitally this month, also includes two week-long trips to Rome where the group will gather in person.

Under Grosso’s leadership, the diocese has been the architect of diocesan social media strategy with steadily growing Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. Additionally, more than 50,000 people now receive the diocesan email newsletter, which includes videos from the Bishop and latest news updates. Grosso also created the “DOB Social” website to connect all parishes, schools and organizations to diocesan social media. Based on his success in Bridgeport, he has been increasingly invited by dioceses across the United States via Zoom meetings and personal appearances to share his knowledge of social media and best practices.

Brief Bio: In addition to his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Boston College, John earned a Masters Degree in Corporate Communications and Public Relations at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield. He graduated at the top of his class in August, 2017 with a 4.0 GPA. Previously, he served as the diocesan coordinator for 2016 World Youth Day in which using social media he organized and formed a group of 240 people to Poland for ten days. John serves on the Advisory Board of two organizations close to his heart: the Murphy Center for Ignatian Spirituality at Fairfield University, and Sister to Sister: All Africa Conference.

John recently married Nicole Perone on April 27th, 2019, in a Mass celebrated by Bishop Frank Caggiano. They are members of St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan, where they were married.
On March 4, the Connecticut Catholic Conference issued the following statement from the state’s Catholic bishops concerning the use of COVID-19 Vaccines:

“People should feel free in good conscience to receive any of the vaccines currently available [Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson] for the sake of their own health and the common good, which requires the prompt vaccination of as many people as possible. This guidance is in accord with what has been stated by both the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Holy See in Rome. At the same time, the Church continues to advocate for the creation of vaccines that do not rely on cell lines derived, even remotely, from abortion.”

As most eagerly wait to receive the vaccines, we should also consider this concern expressed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in a recent statement urging universal vaccination:

“The pandemic has also revived our sense that we are a global community and that each of us is indeed each other’s keeper. While the growing availability of vaccines is a clear sign of hope that this pandemic, too, will pass, that hope must be given to every human being on the planet by making the vaccines universally available. Richer nations and pharmaceutical companies must work together to ensure that no nation, no person is left behind.”

Eucharistic Ambassadors

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano’s “Call to Renewal” in his recent Pastoral Exhortation, “Let us enter the Upper Room with the Lord,” is already bearing fruit across the diocese. The bishop formally launched the period of renewal by consecrating the diocese to St. Joseph on March 19 in a Mass that was livestreamed from St. Augustine Cathedral on the Solemnity of St. Joseph. One encouraging example of the renewal underway is the enthusiastic response to the bishop’s call for Eucharistic Ambassadors. Earlier this month, more than 140 men and women gathered for the first session of the Eucharistic Ambassador training the bishop outlined in his exhortation letter. All told, more than 200 ambassadors from 30 parishes will participate in the evangelization effort. We wish to extend our gratitude to all those who have stepped forward to participate in the Eucharistic Ambassador discernment and training. We ask for prayers as they begin their faith journey and seek to deepen their own spirituality as they prepare to go out into the community and invite all back to church. They are true signs of hope and a blessing to their parishes and the diocese.

Awaiting Easter

“Christ’s victory is our victory,” Bishop Caggiano proclaimed when he celebrated Mass in the nearly empty St. Augustine Cathedral last Easter. Throughout the darkest hours of the pandemic when the state was in lockdown due to Coronavirus restrictions, the bishop acknowledged the fear and loss that many were feeling, and he urged us to take courage in prayer and Spiritual Communion. Now, it appears we may have turned the corner on the pandemic, and we look forward to Easter with much hope. We should take this moment to remember those whom we have lost and the many others who have suffered hardship. Let us also acknowledge that we have been blessed by the pandemic. Earlier this month, more than 140 men and women gathered for the first session of the Eucharistic Ambassador training the bishop outlined in his exhortation letter. All told, more than 200 ambassadors from 30 parishes will participate in the evangelization effort. We wish to extend our gratitude to all those who have stepped forward to participate in the Eucharistic Ambassador discernment and training. We ask for prayers as they begin their faith journey and seek to deepen their own spirituality as they prepare to go out into the community and invite all back to church. They are true signs of hope and a blessing to their parishes and the diocese.

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

PASTOR
REVEREND JOSEPH A. MARCELLO, reappointed as Pastor of Saint Catherine of Siena for a term of six years. Effective date was February 1.

EPISCOPAL VICAR
REVEREND PETER F. LENOX, appointed to full time Episcopal Vicar for Liturgy and Worship. Father Lenox will remain in residence at Sacred Heart Parish, Georgetown.

REVEREND PAWEŁ HREBENKO, appointed to Episcopal Vicar for Polish Catholics. Effective date was February 3 for a term of three years.

PAROCHIAL VICAR
REVEREND RAYMOND M. SHERBIA, from Assistant Chaplain Saint John Paul II Care Center Danbury, to Parochial Vicar, Sacred Heart Parish, Danbury. Effective date was February 15. Father Scherba will continue as part-time Assistant Chaplain at Danbury Hospital.

NURSING HOME CHAPLAIN
REVEREND LOURDURAJ PITCHAI, from Parochial Vicar, Sacred Heart Parish, from Saint Augustine Cathedral Rectory, to Chaplain, Saint Joseph Manor, Trumbull and in residence at Saint Stephen Parish, Trumbull. Effective date was February 15.

REVEREND DONALD I. KLOSTER, from Chaplain, Saint Joseph Manor, Trumbull, to Chaplain, Saint John Paul II Care Center, Danbury. Effective date was February 15.

RESIDENCE
REVEREND COLIN BLATCHFORD, from Saint Augustine Cathedral Rectory, Bridgeport, to Saint Pius X Rectory, Fairfield. Effective date was February 24.

SABBATICAL
REVEREND JOHN J. INSERRA, extended sabbatical through April 30.

REVEREND BRUCE F. ROBY, Sabbatical. Effective date is February 1, through April 30.

PRIEST COMMITTEE FOR HISPANIC MINISTRY
REVEREND MIGUEL ANGEL BERNAL RODRIGUEZ, appointed to serve on the Priest Committee for Hispanic ministry. Effective date was February 24 for a term of two years.

REVEREND JUAN GABRIEL ACOSTA, appointed to serve on the Priest Committee for Hispanic ministry. Effective date was February 24 for a term of two years.

REVEREND ROLANDO TORRES, appointed to serve on the Priest Committee for Hispanic ministry. Effective date was February 24 for a term of two years.

REVEREND JOSÉ A. VÁSQUEZ, appointed to serve on the Priest Committee for Hispanic ministry. Effective date was February 24 for a term of two years.

Reverend Francis T. Hoffmann
Vicar for Clergy, March, 2021
Sometimes our decisions require a ‘leap of faith’

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.

During this Lenten season, I often think of the disciples and the difficult decisions they had to make in their lives.

They knew that leaving their homes to follow Jesus was the right thing to do. This was not the safe or expected decision. Presumably, they had jobs and families and other responsibilities. But they knew that they simply could not remain where they were after encountering Christ and experiencing what they had.

I am sure that people advised them against this decision, and I am sure they had to repeatedly explain themselves to others. But they had a conviction that even though their decision was risky, the payback would be worth it. And, in fact, the payback was more than they ever could have imagined.

When we make a decision in our lives that others may not understand, we tend to be met with a barrage of unsolicited advice. Though often well-meaning, if we’re not specifically seeking out advice, this can cause unnecessary pressure to explain ourselves and our decisions—particularly if someone is young and trying to find her or his way in life.

People will always have their thoughts about what others do or don’t do. The thing is, the big decisions you make in your life, especially if they are directly related to your own happiness or well-being, are ultimately between you and God.

If you have taken this decision to prayer and thought out all aspects in a meaningful and intentional way, there is no need to defend your decisions to others. I am a people-pleaser by nature. A typical middle-child and mediator, I am always tuned-in to how what I do and say makes other people feel. This can be a great asset, but also a great drawback. I have had to unlearn these tendencies over the years, because I have learned that I cannot always be responsible for the happiness and comfort of others.

Like the disciples, we can’t live our lives based on what others are going to think. God knows the deepest desires of our hearts, and he desires for us to know happiness.

“God knows the deepest desires of our hearts, and he desires for us to know happiness.”

He leads us to the things that he has meant for us, even if the path may seem long and winding. If we hold onto this trust that God will guide us in our lives and in our decision-making, we simply cannot be led astray. Because even if things go wrong, this is a lesson that we were meant to learn.

It is a tough lesson to learn in life, but we are not helping anyone by remaining in situations that no longer serve us or others. If we are unhappy in a situation, or that situation is no longer allowing us to grow in our faith, then it is time to move on. Because you simply cannot serve others if you are not being served in any way.

It takes a deep self-awareness and a strong relationship with God to realize when a situation calls for change. And only you and God can know this.

As the faithfulness of the disciples teaches us, the way of the Cross leads to Easter and new life. When you have a strong conviction and you are certain God is leading you in the right direction, listen to that conviction, and be ready to take a leap of faith.

He will not lead you astray. You don’t owe anyone else an explanation. And once they see how happy you are when you live out loud, that will be all the explanation needed.
An ordinary Joe who does extraordinary things

By Joe Pisani

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

“I confess that I resented being an “ordinary Joe” and wished my parents had named me something more flamboyant like Kent or Reginald, but I guess they figured “Kent Pisani” didn’t quite fit our ethnic profile…. So I thought of myself as an Average Joe.”

“A Pope Francis says, “Each of us can discover in Joseph—the man who goes unnoticed—a daily, discreet and hidden presence…”

By JoE PisaNi

Editorial

“Il my life I’ve been surrounded by Josephs. Maybe it’s an Italian thing because some of them were Giuseppes.

My father was Joseph, the carpenter. My mother was Josephine, but not the plumber. And I was Joe. Well, not quite.

So that we didn’t all answer at once when someone called, “Joe!” I was dubbed JoJo.

That’s not bad when you’re a toddler, but when you’re a teenager, it can be a bit embarrassing. At your college commencement, do you really want the Dean to announce, “JoJo!” when you get your diploma?

As it was, I received my sacraments at St. Joseph Church in Shelton and religious instructions from the Sisters of St. Joseph and, predictably, I went to St. Joseph High School.

I confess that I resented being an “ordinary Joe” and wished my parents had named me something more flamboyant like Kent or Reginald, but I guess they figured “Kent Pisani” didn’t quite fit our ethnic profile. So I thought of myself as an Average Joe.

As Pope Francis says, “Each of us can discover in Joseph—the man who goes unnoticed—a daily, discreet and hidden presence.”

My family always prays to St. Joseph because he accepted God’s will. He is the model for all Catholics, especially fathers, in a time when families are fractured and homes are broken.

St. Thomas Aquinas said, “Some saints are privileged to extend to us their patronage with particular efficacy in certain needs, but not in others; but our holy patron St. Joseph has the power to assist us in all cases, in every necessity, in every undertaking.”

Our family always prays to him in times of crisis, and over the years, many prayers have been answered through his intercession.

We have a shrine in his honor with statues that we have acquired from all over the world.

One of my favorites I found in an antique shop in Montreal. It’s a hand-carved wooden statue I got when we made a pilgrimage to St. Joseph’s Oratory of Mount Royal during the Jubilee Year in 2000.

The Oratory, which before COVID-19 attracted 2 million visitors annually, is the world’s largest shrine to St. Joseph and was built through the efforts of St. Andre Bessette, who was the doorman at Notre Dame College, where thousands of people visited him because of his gift of healing through the intercession of St. Joseph.

Early in his life, he worked in eastern Connecticut in factories and farms before returning to Canada to enter the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1870.

I also have a library of what is known as Josephology—the study of St. Joseph—with several dozen books about this great saint. One of them, published in 1887, is titled, “St. Joseph: The Advocate of Hopeless Cases” and contains dozens of stories about the saint’s miraculous intercession.

As Pope Francis says, “Each of us can discover in Joseph—the man who goes unnoticed—a daily, discreet and hidden presence, an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation.”

A humble carpenter, St. Joseph is known by many titles: “Protector of Holy Church,” “Hope of the Sick,” “Patron of the Dying,” “Solace of the Afflicted,” “Guardian of Virgins,” “Pillar of Families,” “Glory of Home Life” and “Terror of Demons.”

He has always been known to respond when people pray to him. As St. Augustine said: “What could Jesus Christ refuse St. Joseph, who never refused him anything during his mortal life on Earth?”

St. Joseph, pray for us!”
We Stand With Christ

Young have new place to gather

By JOE PISANI

REDDING RIDGE—The young people of St. Patrick Church are looking forward to the day when they can begin meeting in the new Mercy Hall—the home of their new youth center.

The hall is in the original 140-year-old St. Patrick Church, which was given a complete refurbishing that included new heating and air conditioning and lighting, along with a kitchenette.

The project was made possible through the We Stand With Christ capital campaign, said Father Joe Cervero, pastor of the newly merged Sacred Heart and St. Patrick Roman Catholic Church.

“When I first got here 11 years ago, people kept saying to me that we had to do something with the old church, but we never had the funds,” Father Cervero said.

“At one point, the Scouts used it for their Eagle Scout project and repaired and painted the siding. Then, with We Stand With Christ, we got the idea that this was the way we were going to go. We would refurbish it and make it primarily a youth center, which the Knights of Columbus would also use for their meetings.”

The renovated old church was named Mercy Hall because the primary donor wanted it to be dedicated to Divine Mercy, and Father plans to hang a Divine Mercy image of Jesus there.

The parish also has a hall named after the first parish Father John Conlisk, which is used for community meetings, such as Al-Anon, and religious education classes and office space. Some cosmetic work was done there, such as repainting, floor restoration and refurbishing the kitchen.

Because the new youth center was so important to the parish, there was a very good response to We Stand With Christ, Father said. St. Patrick exceeded its goal by more than $300,000, enabling it to retain 75 percent of future funds for parish capital projects.

The enthusiasm and commitment of the faith community was evident in its response to the campaign, which was the most successful in the history of the diocese and benefits parishes and Foundations in Education, Foundations in Faith and Foundations in Charity, which support efforts in education, charity and pastoral ministries.

The youth group is anticipating the day when COVID-19 restrictions will be lifted, and they will be able to meet in the new hall.

Father is proud of the parish youth group, which he says has been fairly active even during COVID-19. From their homes, they did a community service project. Christmas stockings were distributed to the students, who were responsible for filling them with toiletries, such as razors, shaving cream and toothpaste. Then, they were sent to military bases in time for Christmas.

The merger of St. Patrick of Redding Ridge and Sacred Heart of Georgetown was completed during the first part of the year, Father said.

On June 13, 2020, after consulting with the leadership of the two parishes, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano announced plans to begin a process that would merge the churches into one new parish called Sacred Heart and St. Patrick Roman Catholic Church.

“We were both struggling through the pandemic,” Father said. “And this is hopefully a way to combine both parishes and their resources.”

With the retirement of Father David Leopold as pastor of Sacred Heart, Father Peter Lenox, former pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Norwalk and the newly appointed episcopal vicar for liturgy and worship, began a temporary assignment as parochial administrator at Sacred Heart to assist in completing the merger.

Father Cervero became pastor of the consolidated Sacred Heart-Saint Patrick Parish on January 31. Tuesday and Thursday he is at Sacred Heart and on Monday and Wednesday, he is at St. Patrick.

Originally from The Hollow section of Bridgeport, Father Cervero, whose family is from Naples, Italy, went to St. Raphael School and then to Bullard-Havens Technical High School with aspirations to become a baker. His aspirations took him to Kansas State University, where he studied bakery science management for two years.

“At that point, he says, “I decided that maybe I didn’t really want to do that and came home.”

He worked at County Home Bakery and Jerry’s Pizza in Bridgeport for four years and then left for a position at a laser research company, which manufactured lens and research equipment.

“Throughout my life, I was getting this inkling that God wanted me to be a priest and I kept fighting it,” he recalls.

Although life was good for him as an expediter at the research company, the “inklings” continued until “God said, ‘All right, you’re here—let’s get you further,’” he said.

“But then Bishop Edward Egan told him about a new seminary in Milwaukee—Sacred Heart School of Theology—which was for men with other careers whom God was calling to the priesthood.

He studied there six years and was ordained at 33 in 1989 and was assigned to his first parish, St. Mary in Ridgefield.

“After I was ordained, I wondered why it took me so long,” he says.

And what about his baking skills? He still uses them. Last week he baked a cheesecake, which he says he plans to give away—at least half of it.
Palm Sunday

Holy Week challenges us to ‘clear our vision’

FAIRFIELD—Holy Week invites us to see Jesus not with the eyes of the world but through the eyes of faith, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said in his homily for the Mass for Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion.

The bishop celebrated his weekly online Mass from St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Fairfield. He was assisted by Father Victor Martin, pastor, and Father Larry Larson, parochial vicar.

“Perhaps you and I at times look at our life, our circumstances and our work through the eyes of the world, and this week is meant for us to clear that vision. To remember through whose eyes we should live, move, see and have our being. It is easy to fall prey to voices around us, to live life in a way other than what Christ asks us,” the bishop said.

In addition to “celebrating anew the great mystery of our redemption,” Palm Sunday offers an opportunity to better understand what Christ is asking of us as his followers, he said.

After reading the account of the Passion in the Gospel of Mark (15:1-39), Bishop Caggiano explained that in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus was given a welcome that was reserved for Caesar, who had “conquered nations and subjected people.”

The strewing of palms was a symbol of Caesar’s earthly power and authority.

Those who welcomed Jesus with palms judged him “with the eyes of the world,” because they mistakenly expected Jesus to overthrow civil authority. They believed that “conquest and brutality should be met with military conquest and more brutality.” Violence begets violence,” the bishop said.

“That is not why Jesus came to Jerusalem. He came to bring another form of power that meets conquest and brutality with forgiveness and mercy, and allows the world a better way, a divine way to live,” he said.

Holy Week extends the same challenge to us as it did in the time of Jesus. He does not promise earthly victory, but asks us to accompany him to Calvary and not to run away as the apostles did.

“The path is not easy. We cannot escape suffering. Whoever dares to love must dare to be willing to suffer. It is the only path that leads to the empty tomb and that leads us to eternal life.”

The bishop said Holy Week invites us to reenact the great mysteries of our faith, and to remember that “what was begun in the Upper Room” is the same sacrifice Jesus offers his believers today.

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The bishop concluded his homily by noting that each year the palms blessed today that are unused palms will be gathered and burned to make the ashes of next Lent “as a sign of our faith and the promises that truly matter, and they are not the promise and ways of the world.”

“And when the smoke clears we see life as it is truly meant to be seen. We have that opportunity again during these days of our redemption. Let us use them well so that when the risen Lord appears in our midst. We will be able to see him, follow him and give him honor and glory now and forever.”

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• WHERE ARE WE NOW? 75 parishes have completed their We Stand With Christ capital campaigns and three parishes will run their campaigns in 2021.

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Thank you for your dedication and commitment to this campaign and the many wonderful programs and projects that will benefit from your support!

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

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Let Me

Frank
Kingston of Columbus

St. Matthew Knights committed to almsgiving

NORWALK—Malta House, a Norwalk organization that helps pregnant and parenting mothers, had a familiar crew of workers to put furniture together for their new home.

Volunteers from St. Matthew Church Knights of Columbus Council No. 14360 took time on a rainy Saturday morning in February to help get Malta House’s new home ready for moving in over the next few months. The council has been assisting Malta House since 2009 with various painting and remodeling projects and financial assistance.

Malta House provides a nurturing home environment, support services and independent living skills to pregnant and parenting mothers of all faiths and their children.

“It is an honor and joy for our council to help such a great organization that helps women and children in need,” added George Ribellino, a past grand knight and project chairman.

In the past, the council has donated funds for new mattresses, remodeled the nursery, laid tile and painted bedrooms, the common room and the kitchen at their old home on Prowitt Street in Norwalk. The staff at Malta House know who to call when they need assistance. Twelve members of the council along with three members of St. Francis of Assisi Council 17166 assembled cribs and dining room furniture.

“I am thankful for our council having such a good opportunity to gather early on a Saturday morning. The mission of Malta House is so dear to the Knights and the embodiment of the culture of life. We are blessed to be called to help,” said Council 14360 Grand Knight Anthony Armentano.

Council 14360 is also sending dinner to the house every Wednesday during Lent and capping it off with Easter Sunday dinner from Dave’s Planet Pizza in Norwalk. The council, along with Knights of Columbus Bishop Fenwick 4th Degree Assembly 100, is donating funds for additional cribs.

“The Knights of Columbus Council 14360 have been our beloved ‘big brothers’ for many years and never fail to put their faith into action in hands-on, meaningful ways that make our moms and babies know they are special and loved. Coming out on a Saturday morning to put cribs, beds and chairs together for our new home, bringing weekly dinners to our moms during Lent and treating our house to a special Easter dinner are all such special acts of caring, and we are so grateful and blessed,” said Malta House Executive Director Carey Dougherty.

“The Knights of Columbus loves both mother and child before and after birth. We love to help a great organization like Malta House that help women during pregnancy and following the birth of their newborn children,” said Ribellino.

As the Church prepares to commemorate the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, the Brother Knights of council 14360 are taking up their cross in various ways. In addition to their work with Malta House and upcoming food drives, the council gathered for a special Lenten Family Mass and led Stations of the Cross with the parish family on March 12 and will lead the Good Friday outdoor Stations on the church property. Lastly, they will roll up their sleeves and help clean the church during the Triduum as the Parish prepares to welcome all to celebrate our faith.

The goal of the Knights of Columbus Council at St. Matthew Church in Norwalk is to perform acts of charity. Providing those in need with a range of support from financial to tactical help in dealing with a wide variety of challenges. Council members work together to foster the founding principles of our order: charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism. Our goal as a council is to continue to identify specific needs in our community and muster support and help to alleviate these challenges and hardships to the best of our abilities and resources.

(For more information go to: kofc14360.net. If you are Catholic man interested in putting your faith in action, join the Knights of Columbus online for free at kofc.org/joinus and use promo code MCCIV/NEY2020.)

Malta House promotes the dignity of God-given life by providing a nurturing home environment, support services and independent living skills to pregnant and parenting mothers of all faiths and their children.

Mothers at Malta House receive on-site counseling, financial education, and parental development followed by transitional and post-residential support. For more info, please go to Maltahouse.org.
Malta House

Malta House moving into new, larger home

By JOE PISANI

NORWALK—Twenty-five years ago, Michael and AC O'Rourke of Stamford dreamed of starting a home for homeless pregnant women and their babies. In 1998, Malta House opened its doors, and since then, it has served more than 600 mothers and their babies through its residential program and many more through its community programs.

This spring, as a result of a $4.5 million campaign, it will move to the renovated former convent on the campus of All Saints School in Norwalk, increasing its capacity by 50 percent. The new home will provide 15 bedrooms, three of which will be family suites that can accommodate a mother and up to two children. There will also be classroom space, offices, a nursery, a play area for children and a chapel for prayer and Mass.

“In 1998, Malta House opened its doors, and since then, it has served more than 600 mothers and their babies through its residential program and many more through its community programs.

“The new home will provide 15 bedrooms, three of which will be family suites that can accommodate a mother and up to two children. There will also be classroom space, offices, a nursery, a play area for children and a chapel for prayer and Mass.

“We are really excited about the opportunity this will give us,” said Executive Director Carey Dougherty. “We often have a waiting list, and sometimes we have to turn people away, which is why we are moving into a larger space where we can grow.”

Over the next 20 years, the AC and I had a dream to open a home for homeless, pregnant women and their babies. This dream came after our beautiful son was born after 17 years of marriage and never-ending prayers for a child. We were so grateful to God for the greatest blessing of our lives and set out to ensure that every mother is given the chance to experience this same blessing and gift of bringing life to this world. The Good Lord had given us our miracle son, so it just made sense that my wife and I should help provide miracles for other women with no room at the inn... because there was no inn in Connecticut.”

Malta House is the only group home for pregnant women over 18 in Fairfield County and one of a limited number of residential programs for parenting mothers and their babies, Dougherty said. Since its doors opened, it has provided more than 8,500 nights of shelter, helped bring 355 babies into the world and assisted 335 mothers get back on their feet.

“Our goal is to empower women to live independently and provide a better life for themselves and their children,” said Dougherty, who has worked at Malta House since 2017. “I always say I am blessed to have a front-row seat to see the transformative power of God’s love in our moms. The encounter is nothing short of a miracle. At Malta House, we are providing this love and support. Babies are born into safety and love, and they are so nurtured in our nursery that it’s the happiest place on Earth.”

There are currently eight mothers at Malta House and six babies—including the first set of twins since Dougherty has been there. Three of the mothers are pregnant and five have children. The new home can accommodate 33 people—15 women and 18 children.

“Many times, we are often the last chance for keeping a mom and baby together,” she said. “During COVID-19, we were only one of two shelters and congregate living programs that remained open and accepted new families.”

“We were founded upon and guided by our Catholic faith, but...”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21
our doors are open to any home-
less, pregnant or parenting woman
who needs a ‘room at the inn,’”
Dougherty said. “No woman
should be faced with the unthink-
able alternative because she doesn’t
have a safe place to care for her
baby, and no woman should have
to stay with an abuser because it’s
the only home she has.”

Many of the pregnant women
who come to Malta House are
experiencing homelessness and
have never lived independently
or have come from unsafe or
fragmented families. Malta House
regularly receives referrals from
hospitals, social service agencies,
shelters and programs that will not
accept a woman who is pregnant
or a new mother.

“One thing that always catches
me off guard in this county, where
there is so much wealth, is that
over 300 babies are born every
year to mothers who live below
the poverty line, to mothers who
are experiencing homelessness,”
Dougherty said. “We believe a
mother deserves every opportuni-
ty to a life of self-sufficiency and
independence. Every baby deserves
to be born into a world of safety
and love. We are trying to be the
family and support network to
mothers who need to improve their
lives and are looking for a future of
independence.”

Dougherty said Malta House
assists the women with education,
employment, financial literacy,
health and nutrition, fitness, spiri-
tuality and parenting. There is free
childcare so the mothers can go to
school or work.

“We are also unique in that we
continue to support our families
who transition to independent
living in order to ensure their con-
tinued and long-term stability,”
she said.

The average stay is eight months,
but it can extend to 18 months until
a mother has saved sufficient money
and secured housing.

“Malta House is where the Real
Presence of Christ in the Eucharist
converges with the presence of
Christ in the women and children
we serve,” O’Rourke said. “We lift
our women up through education,
training and spiritual counseling
and introduce them to prayer.
Rather than treating them as
‘neutral poverty-stricken pregnant
objects’ devoid of virtue, we help
them to become moral actors and
contributors to the community. We
want them to appreciate how and
why they will make a difference
in this world, especially since they
are children of God destined for
heaven.”

Dougherty said success is mea-
sured by a number of criteria, such
as how much money a woman has
saved, steady employment, stable
housing and the life skills classes
she has attended.

“Sadly, most of our mothers
come from fractured families,
abuse and unspeakable trauma,”
Dougherty said. “I think many
can’t imagine how they will be able
to bring life into the world when
they are so unsure of their own
place in it. Honoring and serving
our mothers the way Christ asks
of us and opening our home and
our hearts to them is an important
part of them seeing and valuing the
sanctity of life. I think it is hard to
convince a woman that the child
she is carrying has dignity and was
chosen by God when she herself
feels abandoned, discarded and
unloved.”

Malta House will celebrate the move
with a hybrid in-person and virtual
gala on May 7 at Woodway Country
Club in Darien. Honorees of the
“There’s No Place Like Home” gala
are John Altieri, board vice chair; Chris
Anspach, builder; Frank Chapman,
architect; Altieri, Sebor and Wieber;
the Diocese of Bridgeport, and others
who worked on the 18-month construc-
tion and renovation of the new home.
Guests can purchase tickets for remote
“live streaming” or to join the event in
person.

(Tickets and sponsorships to the
“There’s No Place Like Home” virtual
and in-person gala can be purchased
at www.maltahouse.org/events. For
information, contact Kim Killoy at
203.610.2358 or killoy@maltahouse.
.org)

(To learn more about Malta
House, go to www.maltahouse.org.
A virtual tour of the new home can
be found at: www.maltahouse.org/
newhome?wvideo=pvzd5wg94.)

Malta House Moving from page 20

Malta House

FAIRFIELD COUNTY
CATHOLIC

March 2021

21

Save the Date!

MALTA HOUSE
ANNUAL GALA
FRIDAY, MAY 7, 2021
6:30 P.M.
WOODWAY COUNTRY CLUB
DARIEN, CONNECTICUT

CELEBRATING OUR HONOREES
JOHN ALTIERI AND
THE MH2 DREAM TEAM
Catholic Charities

Bank of America donates masks

By AMY ZAJAC

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

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

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

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

“Bank of America is committed to working with local partners that keep our families, communities, clients, and teammates safe during the health crisis,” said Bill Tommins, Southern Connecticut market president for Bank of America.

“Throughout the coronavirus, Bank of America has joined forces with local organizations to address families’ most basic needs. By supplying Catholic Charities with PPE, we’re able to help them further their mission and continue feeding families, safely, at the same time.”

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

Call to Renewal website launched

BRIDGEPORT—The diocese has launched the “Call to Renewal” website to serve as a guide to the Year of St. Joseph and overall renewal efforts.

The website is designed to provide information related to the spiritual and pastoral renewal of the diocese as called for in Bishop Frank J. Caggiano’s Pastoral Exhortation, “Let us Enter the Upper Room with the Lord.”

“I come to you now, when many may be wondering about the future direction of our Church, to invite you to begin this spiritual journey with me, seeking the Lord’s grace to transform this time of suffering into a springtime of renewal for the life of the Church,” he said in his introductory letter.

The website includes updates on the Year of St. Joseph, the Diocesan Ambassadors Program, opportunities for Reconciliation and Eucharistic Adoration, and more.

“I pray that you will find these resources helpful as we seek to renew our Church in Fairfield County,” said the bishop.

Materials on the website include an introduction from the bishop and a link to his Pastoral Exhortation in its entirety, which is available in both English and Spanish. A professionally recorded audio version is also available for those who prefer to listen to it as they drive or perform other tasks.

The website will also feature weekly “Notes from the Upper Room” by Bishop Caggiano, along with a timeline explaining the Year of St. Joseph as well as liturgies and activities during the renewal period.

The bishop issued his Pastoral Exhortation on Ash Wednesday urging the people of the diocese to move forward in faith and evangelization. In the letter, he provides the framework that will make it possible by designating Centers of Mercy and Centers of Eucharistic Adoration throughout the diocese. He also calls for the commissioning of lay “Ambassadors” to go out into the community later in the year to share their faith and invite others back to the Church. The ambassador training is now underway in the diocese and the new website will feature many of their stories.

(To visit the “Call to Renewal” website: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/call-to-renewal or click “A Call to Renewal” at the top of our homepage.)
NORWALK—When Father Edicson Orozco was named pastor of St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus last year, one of the first challenges he faced was bringing together the two parishes and moving them forward as a faith community.

Four months later, with the cooperation of his parishioners and through their generosity with their time, talent and financial resources, wonderful things have occurred, he says.

“Many good things have been happening at St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus Parish since they merged on October 1 last year,” he says. “Every beginning brings difficulties, challenges, and little victories, but little by little with the involvement of so many volunteers and parishioners, we have been able to accomplish some pastoral, administrative and financial goals.”

In recent months, they have been able to initiate physical renovations to both churches through the stewardship campaign of the parish and the enthusiastic participation of faithful members who volunteer their time.

In addition, there were electrical updates in both churches, and three televisions were installed in the basement of St. Ladislaus to increase the capacity so parishioners can attend Sunday Mass. This initiative was coordinated by volunteers from St. Ladislaus.

In preparation for Lent, two confessionaries at St. Joseph were redesigned. The main offices were adapted to better serve the community in keeping the necessary protocols established because of COVID-19.

“There is always something to be done,” Father said. “I am sure that many other projects will become a reality not just through the financial commitment of parishioners with We Stand With Christ capital campaign but also with their love for the new parish.”

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

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

New shows in the coming months

By JOE PISANI

RIDGEFIELD—Veritas Catholic Network, the EWTN affiliate at 1350 AM, will launch four new programs in the coming months, following its extremely popular “Let Me Be Frank” show, featuring Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

“We are growing and our plans will significantly expand the proclamation of the Gospel in Connecticut and New York,” said Steve Lee, president & CEO of the network. “Listeningship has been going up and I am always receiving emails that say things like, ‘I just found you guys and I love it.’”

In addition, the station, which serves Fairfield County, Westchester County and Long Island, recently moved its offices to Ridgefield on the campus of St. Mary Parish.

“We are settling into our new office space and it has been a blessing,” Lee said. “All of our broadcast equipment is here and we record some of our shows from here. We are in the parish building and blessed to be right next door to Msgr. Kevin Royal and down the hall from Father Damian Pielesz.”

New local programming includes “Focus on Veritas,” “The Frontline with Joe & Joe,” a talk show with Liv Harrison, who is a Catholic media personality and comedien, and a Monday to Friday drive-time show. “Focus on Veritas” will be hosted by Peter Sosnki, manager of education and community outreach for the Blessed Michael McGivney Pilgrimage Center in New Haven. The half-hour weekly show will be launched on Friday, April 9, at 12:30 pm and bring committed Catholics on the air to talk about their work, Lee said. It will feature segments about positive news in the diocese, such as Project Beloved in Stamford and Malta House in Norwalk, and later be available as a podcast. The first guest will be Lee, himself, to discuss the vision of Veritas Network.

“There is so much bad news out there that we wanted to focus on some of the good things that people are doing,” Lee said.

The show will follow “Restless,” which airs on Friday from noon to 12:30 pm and explores such topics as how to evangelize in the workplace and how to navigate the single life with an eye toward marriage. Father Joseph A. Gill of the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist is joined by Lauren Doyle, Diane Kremheller and Javier Tremanta.

“‘Restless’ is a great show, and I love listening to them,” Lee said. “It smile, I laugh, I nod my head. They are doing a great job and their audience is starting to grow.”

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

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

Liv Harrison, a Catholic comediene and mother of two children, will host a nightly talk show from 8 to 9 pm once a week, which will begin airing at the end of April. “She is going to do a monologue and interview guests and talk about what’s happening in the world,” Lee said. “It will be lighter and funnier and have the feel of a late-night talk show. I love her energy. She has a great personality and this will be a fun show.”

“The Frontline with Joe & Joe” began airing in March and features Joe Pacillo and Joe Reciniello. It is described as “a fearless culture commentary born from America’s kitchen table.”

These “average Joes” will journey into the breach of our current American society, shining the Light of Christ,” Lee said.

Both men are devout Catholics who have been active in the pro-life movement and have helped the poor and dispossessed through their work with the Sisters of Life, the Missionaries of Charity and the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. They live in Northern New Jersey and had careers on Wall Street for many years.

Their first show will begin with an interview of Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League, whose mission is to defend the rights of Catholics. Subsequent shows will include segments with prominent Catholics, such as theologians Scott Hahn and Ralph Martin.

“They are guys I would love to be friends with,” Lee said. “When I listen to their show, they are like two guys I’d enjoy talking with around the kitchen table.”

Veritas is also developing a live morning drive-time show from 7 to 8 am for people who are on the road, going to work or dropping their kids off at school. It will be hosted by a man and woman, who are yet to be announced, who will discuss local news and events and occasionally feature priests from the diocese and do live broadcasts outside the studio.

“Every day, there will be guests and interviews,” Lee said. “It will be a Catholic morning show that we expect to launch in May.”

“Let Me Be Frank” with Bishop Caggiano recently marked its first-year anniversary and has been tremendously successful.

On the show, which airs at noon on Wednesday, the bishop talks about spirituality, catechetics, issues facing the Church and society, growing up in Brooklyn and many other topics.

“I get emails all the time from listeners who said that listening to Bishop Frank has enriched and deepened their faith,” Lee said. “I love to listen to his interviews, his stories about Brooklyn and his spiritual advice. It is definitely one of our most listened to programs and I am very happy with hit.”

Last year, Lee moved Veritas to office space at St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield at the invitation of ➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 25
Receiving Ashes a ‘wonderful moment’

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—While the distribution of ashes marks the somber and reflective beginning of Lent, during this year of pandemic it became a moving and quietly joyful moment that brought many St. Peter’s parishioners and people throughout the diocese back to Church for the first time in months.

At St. Peter Church on Main Street, a steady stream of people entered the neo-Gothic church in the late afternoon to participate in the tradition of personal acknowledgement of sin and a desire to seek forgiveness from God.

“I think it was fantastic to be able to come to church to receive ashes today,” said parishioner Karen Scalzo.

Scalzo said she was a little concerned when she heard that ashes were being sprinkled on the head, due to COVID-related contact restrictions.

“When I saw people coming out of church with actual crosses on their forehead, even if they had to use a cotton swab, I was relieved. That’s the way it’s supposed to be,” Scalzo said.

Parishes were given the option of distributing ashes either by sprinkling them on top of a person’s head or by making the traditional sign of the cross on the forehead with a cotton swab.

Pastor Gregg Mecca said he was grateful to be given the option by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and decided to use the cotton swab method since a cross on the forehead is more akin to what parishioners are accustomed.

Father Mecca said it was important to keep some normalcy to the tradition during a time when people are enduring so many changes and uncertainty because of the pandemic. Sprinkling ashes on the top of people’s heads, rather than marking foreheads with ashes, is the customary practice at the Vatican and in Italy.

In addition to the change in how ashes were distributed, parishes also had the option to offer a time when the faithful could come to church to receive ashes outside of Mass or the Liturgy of the Word. Father Mecca said that option was crucial in addressing the needs of the congregation especially since morning Masses were at or near COVID-restricted capacity.

“I’ve been watching Mass on TV but to be able to come into the church is wonderful,” said parishioner Laura Halas. “I feel more connected.”

That was the sentiment shared by many parishioners who were very grateful to be able to participate in a tradition, albeit in a non-traditional way.

“Every Sunday morning, we watch Mass online,” said parishioner Ron Kreho. “We’ve been doing that for a year now but it’s so good to be here,” he said, adding that he has medical concerns and is awaiting his second vaccine shot before he will feel more comfortable being in public places.

The walk-in period allowed Father Mecca to briefly chat and reconnect with parishioners he hadn’t seen since the beginning of the pandemic.

“It’s good to see familiar faces,” he said. A sentiment echoed by many including parishioner Danielle Ford. “I miss being here and seeing everyone and the priests.”

At St. Peter Parish in Danbury, Father Gregg Mecca gave ashes to parishioners by making the traditional sign of the cross on the forehead with a cotton swab, one of the two options made available this year to due pandemic restrictions.

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Veritas Radio from page 24

pastor and longtime friend Msgr. Kevin T. Roya.

“I mentioned to him that we might be in need of a different space, and he looked at me and said, ‘How about right here?’ Lee recalled. “I have been blessed to know Msgr. Roya all these years. We are grateful for everything he has done and it is gratifying having his presence because he is such a holy priest.’”

Lee’s programming director, John Szewczuk is also there with the administrative staff.

“For the last two years,” Lee said. “I can’t say enough about this guy. He’s the brains behind many of the things we’ve done, including pushing us to get a morning show on the air ASAP.”

The station is also in the process of contracting an FM translator that will let it broadcast on 103.9 FM.

Veritas began broadcasting EWTN Catholic programming 24 hours a day on August 21, 2019 throughout Fairfield County, almost half of Long Island and parts of Westchester. Lee purchased WNLK-AM 1350 radio and an FM translator at 103.9 MHz from Sacred Heart University.

Listeners can also live-stream through the veritas catholic.com website and a Veritas mobile app, which is available for Apple and Android devices.

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

Lee, who left his job in finance on Wall Street to start Veritas, credits his wife Roula with providing him the spiritual and moral support the initiative required.

Residents of Ridgefield, they are parents of three children, Andrew, Christopher and Annabel.

Lee said that visitors are welcome to stop by the office and see the operation.

The station is a not-for-profit and does not receive financial support from EWTN or the diocese, it depends upon its listeners. For more info about charitable donations, or advertising opportunities, visit www.veritascatholic.com.
The Ministry of Cemeteries

From Wall Street to the Church

By JOE PISANI

Dean Gestal has worked with some of the most successful firms on Wall Street. He built up the bond department for money management pioneer Seth Glickenhaus before starting his own firm, Belle Haven Investments. After trading bonds for 30 years, he headed to San Francisco to help several startups in the dot-com world and later moved to Salt Lake City to reorganize his friend’s manufacturing company.

Then, two years ago, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano called him with another challenge: to use his management and business skills to revitalize the cemeteries of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

“It was, as they say, an offer I couldn’t refuse,” Gestal says. “I told Bishop Caggiano, ‘I enjoy him immensely. He has a great sense of the secular world and the religious world. We met and he said I needed someone to run the cemeteries and I told him I was willing to help the Church any way I could.’”

In the two years that Gestal has been on the job, he has brought on new staff, launched a beautification initiative for the cemeteries, begun a program to stress the importance of planning ahead for death and started construction on a mausoleum at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Trumbull, which will have 600 crypts and 600 niches for cremains.

The diocese maintains 14 cemeteries, nine of which are active. The largest, St. Michael’s, has more than 100 acres. The others are St. Mary-Putnam in Greenwich, St. John in Darien, St. John-St. Mary in Norwalk, Assumption Greens Farms in Westport, Gate of Heaven in Trumbull, Resurrection in Newtown, Queen of Peace in Stamford, and St. Peter in Danbury. There are five inactive historical cemeteries—St. Augustine in Bridgeport, St. James in Bridgeport, St. Mary in Norwalk and Old St. Peter in Danbury, Assumption Kings Farm in Westport.

For Gestal, the cemeteries are “about reverence and honoring the wishes of the Church and of family members,” he said. “We are committed to providing cemetery property for the sacred religious function of burial. We are also committed to preserving these resting places as a symbol of our Catholic belief.”

Cemeteries are sacred and peaceful places, he says, where we honor the loved ones in our lives who have left us. A Catholic cemetery is a place where we can share memories and show our respect in a manner consistent with the teachings of the Church.

Fundamental to this is planning.

“None of us wants to focus on death because it’s not a comfortable topic,” Gestal says. “All of my friends are in the same boat as I am. Have we planned for our burials and resting places? Most of us haven’t even though it’s a simple thing to do. Otherwise, it becomes a burden we put on our children at a time when they least need it. Our hope is for people’s minds and crack the door before it becomes a catastrophe or emergency.”

His goal is to bring more people from an “at need” approach, in which families suddenly find themselves responding to a death, to a “pre-need” approach to burial services, which allows them to address the issue ahead of time, avoid anguish and confusion, and be prepared by putting their desires in their last will and testament.

“For us, this is a ministry,” he said. “We have an opportunity to offer these services to all Catholics in Fairfield County. We can help them and answer their questions.”

In recent months, he has added six additional counselors and plans to have two at each active cemetery in the diocese.

“They will be there to meet people when they walk through the door and educate them about what is available and how we can help them make those final decisions,” he said.

Catholic cemeteries offer a range of options. Traditionally, there has been full-body burial in a ground plot or entombment in a mausoleum. Since 1963, cremation has been accepted by the Church, and now about 50 percent of families choose that option. The remains, called “cremains,” are placed in an urn and then laid in a niche, which is located indoors in a mausoleum or outdoors in a structure called a columbarium.

Many cemetery systems around the nation do an outreach to the parishes, with a focus on bereavement support. Gestal hopes that the dioceses create teams that will help families through bereavement-focused groups so that when parents or family members die, the survivors do not find themselves with no emotional and spiritual support.

One of the challenges he faces is reaching a younger generation of Catholics who have fallen away from their faith or for whom religion is less important than their parents.

Gestal believes the construction of the St. Catherine of Siena Mausoleum at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Trumbull will allow them to change the thinking of a younger generation of Catholics so they can memorialize their parents in a respectful way by putting their cremains in a sacred place rather than in, say, a closet.

In recent months, he has also launched a major beautification initiative at the diocesan cemeteries.

“To me, cemeteries are a communal place,” he says. “We have opened them up to allow people to walk their dogs on a leash. We are also planning walking tours at the St. Mary-Putnam Cemetery in Greenwich, where we have 100 acres. We want to invite people to come in because it’s a peaceful place with beautiful trees and grounds.”

Gestal, who with his wife Janie, is on the Inner City Foundation board, lives in Greenwich. They have been married 46 years and have four daughters and eight grandchildren. Since 1987, they have been members of the Order of Malta.

Born and raised on Long Island, he moved to Greenwich in 1978. After he graduated from Mariot College, he enlisted in the Air Force National Guard and eventually started trading bonds on Wall Street.

(For further information about the Catholic Cemeteries of the Diocese of Bridgeport, visit the website: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/cemeteries. Or call: 203.610.5414.)
Deacon Candidacy

Bishop challenges men to be ‘authentic witnesses’

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

On Saturday, March 13 at St. Augustine Cathedral, Walter Avitabile of Westport, Edward R. Carrillo of Bridgeport and Frank Mantero of Shelton were admitted to candidacy for ordination as deacons by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

“To you I am deeply grateful. For despite the challenge we face in our world, you have come forward with generosity, with the love of your families. You have come here seeking true integrity of life, and you have done well, you have done much,” he said to the three aspirants during Mass.

He added that the men and faithful who attended in-person the Candidacy Mass was live-streamed on the diocesan website.

In his homily Bishop Caggiano spoke about the parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector, which teaches us “the need for humility to avoid the self-righteousness that can easily fall into the lives of anyone, most especially those who have authority, religious authority and are called to leadership.”

He explained that ostensibly the Pharisees did everything correctly, and yet their intentions, their hearts, their deepest spirit was far from being righteous. The bishop explained that in the time of Jesus, the hypocritical nature of the scribes and the Pharisees was well-known.

“People were searching for true guides and they were lost.”

The bishop posed the question, How different is that from the world in which we live today? “We have lived through a terrible time in the life of the church, where the few have done great harm and many in our world question our authenticity, they speak of an authenticity gap, where Christians, especially those in leadership, will say one thing and do something else,” continued the bishop.

The bishop explained that this often deters people from entering a life of faith.

“While it is true that all of us are called to a life of authenticity and integrity before the Lord, it is especially of responsibility for those who are in leadership,” the bishop said. “For if we do not live what we preach, our preaching is empty and it will bring no one to faith.”

The bishop challenged all the faithful, including himself, to go deeper. “To avoid self-righteousness,” said the bishop, “is not only to do the good, but it is also to seek those occasions where we can do more of the good.”

The bishop encouraged those gathered to use these days of Lent remaining to ask themselves what is it that they can do more to be an authentic witness of God’s love in the world.

“If you and I rise to that occasion, my dear friends, there will be no sinner in any of our churches, no person in any place of our Christian life, that will be left alone, sitting in the back of a church, wondering if God forgives him or loves him. For he will know that message by our words and by our witness,” said the bishop.

Deacon Jerry Lambert, Director of the Diaconate, said that “This Admission to Candidacy for Ordination, marked the end of the first year of study for Walter, Edward, and Frank. In this past year of aspirancy, these men have participated in monthly formation weekends within our diocese, while also beginning four years of theological study at Saint Joseph Seminary in Yonkers, NY.”

Walter Avitabile is a member of Church of the Assumption, Westport, along with his wife Gracemary and three daughters (28, 26 and 23). He has served as a catechist, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, Reader and a member of the Knights of Columbus. Avitabile attended Salesian High School and works as a general construction subcontractor for the Department of Justice as well as an EOIR Interpreter.

Edward R. Carrillo and his wife, Glenda, have three married daughters (29, 26 and 23), one son (16), three grandchildren and one on the way! Carrillo is a member of St. George Parish in Bridgeport and has served as Director of Liturgical Music, co-founder of the parish youth group, a catechist and co-founder of the St. George family prayer group. Carrillo has worked as a sub-contractor for the Department of Justice as well as an EOR Interpreter. He is currently self-employed as a general contractor.

Frank Mantero is a member of St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull, along with his wife, Angela, and their four children Marisa, Francisco, Olivia and Antonio. He has served as Deputy Grand Knight for the Knights of Columbus St. Catherine of Siena Council, is a trustee for the Knights of Columbus Msgr. Edward Halloran Assembly and a member of the board of directors for Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven. Mantero holds a master’s degree in internal relations from the University of Kentucky, a bachelor’s degrees in both political science and Spanish from the University of Georgia. He is currently the vice president of marketing at Knights of Columbus Supreme Council in New Haven. Mantero has aled various roles in the healthcare industry in marketing, public relations and communications, including seven years at GE as director of corporate responsibility.
Foundations News

FIE Gala set

BRIDGEPOR T— Foundations in Education’s gala returns to Woodway Country Club in Darien, Conn. on May 6, 2021 with honor ees Lynn and Francis X. Mara of the New York Football Giants, Inc. and Dr. Julia M. McNamara, president emerita, Albertus Magnus College.

Gala co-chairs Barbara Ripp and Xandy Duffy met with Foundations in Education staff to begin planning this year’s unique event. The full gala committee will meet virtually later this month. Celebrity auctioneer Pat Tully will provide an entertaining evening of humor and high energy as guests bid on exclusive packages, including a priceless experience with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. The evening will include cocktails and dinner at Woodway Country Club, with a virtual option for the formal program.

Foundations in Education supports the mission of Catholic education in the Diocese of Bridgeport. The annual gala brings together business, political and charitable leaders throughout Fairfield County.

Proceeds from the gala benefit Foundations in Education, including the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund and Innovation and Leadership Grant Program. This year Foundations awarded 1,271 children $2,700,000 in tuition assistance to attend Catholic schools throughout the Bridgeport Diocese. The Foundation also makes grants to teachers for innovative and leader ship initiatives in our Catholic schools. This year the Foundation recognized all teachers and staff with an Amazon gift card for their innovation and leadership while teaching throughout the pandemic.

(If you wish to volunteer, sponsor, contribute or learn more about Foundations in Education or the Gala, please visit www.foundation sineducation.org or contact Megan Quinn at 203.416.1671 or mquinn@foundationsineducation.org.)

DECEASED CLERGY: DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPOR T
MARCH 21—APRIL 24

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Sr. Grace D’Amico

BETHEL—Sister Grace D’Amico, a member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, died at Norwalk Hospital, Norwalk Connecticut, on February 27, 2021. She was 75 years old.

After profession of vows in 1965, Sister Grace began a varied ministry as grade and high school teacher, guidance and college counselor, director of development for Wilton Province SSND, director of weekend college and coordinator of post-master’s program at Notre Dame of Maryland University, and associate director of educational services for the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers. She served in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Wisconsin.

At the time of her death Sister Grace was residing in New Rochelle, N.Y., and serving as coordinator for board development and ministry services for the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

A burial took place at St. Mary Cemetery in Bethel, Connecticut, on March 5, attended by family, friends and some sisters at 11:45 a.m.

At 11 am, the community at Villa Notre Dame in Wilton prayed over the hearse with a farewell blessing. A Memorial Mass will be offered at the Villa at some time in the future.

Arrangements were by Cornell Funeral Home, Danbury, Conn.
Mr. Fitz: Voice of the Stags retires

BY DON HARRISON

If you’ve attended a Fairfield University men’s basketball game in the past half century, at any of the Stags’ four home courts, you’ve heard his voice. “And the Stags take the lead…”

Jim Fitzpatrick has served as his alma mater’s courtside public address announcer at all of these venues: The venerable Alumni Hall on campus, Webster Bank Arena in Bridgeport. The former New Haven Coliseum. And the long-gone decrepit New Haven Arena.

“I’ve worked 608 Stags games since 1971, and I’ve missed just five during that period,” explains the amiable, mustached Fitzpatrick.

The reasons for his absence were beyond his control. The deaths of his parents, an annual spring break service trip to Kentucky, and “being in the hospital because of low potassium.”

James Donovan Fitzpatrick’s name came to the fore this winter with the announcement of his retirement from the Jesuit university, after 51 years of devoted service. Away from the basketball court, “Mr. Fitz” served as assistant vice president of auxiliary services (food service, bookstore, transportation), oversaw the Barone Campus Center as well as student activities, and befriended and mentored more students than he can recall.

During a brief ceremony on campus, Fairfield’s first selectwoman, Brenda Kupchick, declared February 3, 2021 “Jim Fitzpatrick Day.” It was also revealed that alumni, students and staff had raised more than $100,000 to name press row after him at what will be the new arena and convocation center on campus. “It is impossible to adequately thank Jim for a lifetime ministry to our students and the University we love so much. You are synonymous with Fairfield and a personification of Jesuit education,” said Janet Canepa ’82, director of alumni relations.

There’s a spiritual aspect to Jim Fitzpatrick that speaks volumes. He has been a member of Fairfield’s campus ministry since his days as an undergraduate, progressing from altar boy to eucharistic minister and lector.

Then, there was his family’s early involvement at a local parish, Holy Family. As Jim recalls with a wry smile: “My wife Phyllis was teaching there, and when she became pregnant, she asked me to help out. I wound up teaching eighth-grade CCD there 33 years.”

A self-described “basketball junkie,” Fitzpatrick arrived on campus as a student in the fall of 1966 and considered trying out for coach George Bisaccia’s Stags, who had concluded their second NCAA Division-I season with a lustrous 19-5 record.

Indeed, Fitz played the game at Monsignor Coyle High School in Taunton, Mass., and even scored a basket for his high school team at Boston Garden before the eyes of two NBA legends (the Cincinnati Royals would face the Celtics in the featured game.) He recalls: “Just before the jump ball, I saw (the Royals’) Oscar Robertson and Jack Twyman standing in the tunnel. Fortunately, our center got the tap, the ball went to me. I just threw it up and it went in.”

As the first member of his family to attend college, though, Fitz opted to focus on his studies and served as a student manager for the Fairfield team all four seasons as an undergraduate. But there was the occasion that first year when Lou Saccone, coach of the freshman squad, informed Jim he’d lost a few players to academics and wondered if he would come out for the team.

“He made no promises,” Fitz recalled, smiling. “But I got into about four games, and when we played Rider in Alumni Hall, I made one of two foul shots. So, I’m in the record books.”

Ask Fitzpatrick to select the most extraordinary Stags game he’s called across 50 seasons, and he responds without hesitation.

“I don’t think any game can come close to the Holy Cross game in 1978,” he says. “They were nationally ranked (14th), they had a great player in Ron Perry, a fine coach in George Blaney. But we blew them out, 123-103. Nobody could say after that game that Fairfield didn’t belong among the East’s elite.”

That superb Stags team won 22 of 25 games during the regular season and featured no fewer than six Fairfield Alumni Athletic Hall-of-Famers in the making – the backcourt of Joe DeSantis and Kim Fisher, 6-foot-10 center Mark Young, forwards Steve Balkun and Jerome “Flip” Williams, and head coach Fred Barakat. In 2012, Fitzpatrick, too, was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

A more challenging question for Fitz: Who is your all-time favorite Stags player? “I’m going to upset some people with whomever I choose,” he says, “but no player was more impactful than Joey D. He didn’t want to lose and single-handedly could win a game by himself.”

...
**Column: Thomas Hicks**

**A Fundamental Bond**

**Potpourri**

By Thomas H. Hicks

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

“A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter. He that as found one has found a treasure. There is nothing so precious as a faithful friend and no scales can measure his excellence. A faithful friend is an elixir of life, and those who fear the Lord will find him” (Sirach 6:14-16).

Thomas Merton once said that he liked people, “but after about an hour I’m tired of being with others.” He also said, “I do know that the best way to really waste time is to get with a lot of other people; then it will be killed for certain.”

I understand what Merton was saying. For example, cocktail parties are hard work for me. There’s all the smiles you have to exude, all the effort at being charming. There’s the burden of interminning, the vapid togetherness, the toil of exerting oneself to be congenial and to keep smiling. I remember smiling steadily while a Hungarian lady told us about what a beautiful tomb she had bought for her third husband. I spent a long time listening to a man ramble on about a trip he and his wife once made to Minneapolis. There’s the banter and raillery. And, like Merton, he liked people, “but after about an hour I’m tired of being with others.” He also said, “I do know that the best way to really waste time is to get with a lot of other people; then it will be killed for certain.”

Aristotle was right when he regarded trust as the bedrock of true friendship. C.S. Lewis put it this way: “a friend will prove himself to be an ally when alliance becomes necessary” (Four Loves, p.88). Overall, the essence of friendship involves unconditional acceptance, loyalty, and support. In a story by Flannery O’Connor, a boy describes a friendship he was aware of this way: “they never quarrel, they like one man in two skins” (Greenleaf, p.299).

As far back as the fourth century, Gregory Nanzianzen, speaking of his friend, Basil, said “we seemed to be two bodies with a single spirit.” The Church honors Gregory of Nazianzen and Basil the Great, the two friends, with the same feast day, January 2. “Two bodies with a single spirit” implies that what happens to one’s friend, happens to oneself.

A few other characteristics of deep friendship would be: friends share a vision of life; have common interests, common delights. friendship must be about something; they can pass from light jesting to talk of the deepest things; they can dip into each other’s thoughts; friends can fall into a calm companionable silence; etc.

Sharing a common past is usually a part of deep friendships. Friendship and reminiscence go together. True friendship involves sharing memories, being able to say to each other “Do you remember?” It involves talk about “those days,” and talking about the same people. Friends passed into different rooms of their lives together. They possess together the precious, incommunicable past. Friendship and affection mellow as the years unfold.

Truly deep friendships are gifts from God. It’s not by accident that people come together.

Certain people were born to be comrades. A famous spiritual writer named Garrigou Lagrange wrote that the continuance of friendship for more than twenty years is a sign that the friendship has a divine origin (Life Everlasting, p.234). Friendship is one of life’s fundamental bonds. Friends are the blessing of a lifetime. They enable us to celebrate living. They bring some of the happiest days. People can live without a deep friendship, and it seems that most people do. Still, in many ways, life has no better gift to give, and friendship should be nurtured, cared for, invested in. The best things in our lives are the loves we have known. When you have a true and close friend you have one of the best things this life has to give. Most of our hurts come through relationships, so does our healing. Social psychologists claim that psychoanalytic therapy doesn’t work much better than the untrained ear of a true friend. Friends give us life and love and God. There is the old hymn that goes: “Where there is Caritas and Amor there is God.”

Think where man’s glory most begins and ends
And say my glory was I had such a friend. (Yea’s).
Nuestra Voz

Nuevo sitio web, remodelan y restauran Saint Joseph y Saint

Por MARICARMEN GODOY

NORWALK—Desde que el Padre Edicson Orozco se hizo cargo de las iglesias Saint Joseph y Saint Ladislaus, que rigen unidas en su administración, pero que tienen vida pastoral propia; el sacerdote se ha dado a la tarea de remodelar algunas partes de sus templos y también de motivar a sus feligreses a través de sus grupos parroquiales y de un nuevo sitio web.

El monumento a La Santa Cruz de la cerca, del Altar y del piso son los trabajos de renovación y restauración en San Ladislaus. Y la imagen restaurada del Sagrado Corazón y la renovación de la Sacristía en Saint Joseph; son los trabajos que el sacerdote puso a vista del público en las redes sociales. Además se han cortado algunos árboles para que no se dañe el agua ducto y ampliar el parqueadero y por eso se han cortado los árboles.

“Estas son las más recientes renovaciones y restauraciones en ambos de nuestros templos. Agradecemos a todos aquellos quienes han contribuido de diversas formas para que todo esto se haga posible. ¡Infinitas bendiciones!”, posteó el sacerdote como parte de la información directa con sus feligreses.

Asimismo Orozco, el 13 de marzo en horas de la mañana, anunció que lanza una nueva página web para ambas Iglesias. “Pueden visitar la nueva página a través de este enlace”, dijo: https://stjstlrcp.org/

Como parte del tiempo de Cuaresma camino a celebrar la Semana Santa, en uno de los boletines online la parroquia escribió: “Tanto amó Dios al mundo, que le entregó a su Hijo único, para que todo el que crea en él tenga vida eterna. Para contemplar: ¿En qué momentos he sentido más claramente el amor de Dios? ¿Cómo puedo compartir el amor de Dios con las personas con quienes me encuentro? El sacerdote habló sobre la muerte en la Cruz de Jesús y dejó este interrogante abierto: ¿Valió la pena que Dios haya muerto en la Cruz por nosotros?, ¿parece que no?, ¿hay mucha gente que no quiere saber nada de él, que no le interesa, que no lo importa? Además se notificó que se ha hecho un cambio en el nuevo horario de Misas que entra en vigencia con una misa en español los domingos a las 8:30 am y 12:30 pm, tanto en St. Joseph como en St. Ladislaus.

Otros de los aviso que el sacerdote informó es sobre las reuniones de los comités de finanzas y pastoral de la iglesia de Saint Ladislaus y la fiesta en honor del patrono San José, el esposo de la virgen María. Aun no se ha dado permiso para las procesiones de Semana Santa.

Calendario de Actividades de esta semana

La Misa de los domingos en inglés de Saint. Ladislaus es a las 10:30 am.

Miércoles
6:15 pm—Santo Rosario (en español)
7 pm—Santa Misa (en español)

Jueves
6 pm—Exposición del Santísimo Sacramento
7 pm—Santa Misa (en español)

Sábado
7 pm—Santa Misa (en español)

Domingo
8 am—Santa Misa (en español)
10:30 am—Santa Misa (en inglés)
12 pm—Santa Misa (en español)
5:30 pm—Santa Misa (en francés, creole)

Holy Thursday

Rediscovering the tradition of evening visits to the ‘seven churches’

By FATHER JOSEPH MARCELLO

(Editors note: Due to the ongoing pandemic, some parishes may not be setting up a special repository this year and may instead be reserving the Blessed Sacrament in the church’s tabernacle. In either case, social distancing will be provided. Check individual parish schedules for details.)

In recent years, many Catholics have discovered or rediscovered the ancient and beautiful custom of visiting Christ in the Blessed Sacrament at seven churches on the night of Holy Thursday.

Each year, at the conclusion of the evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper, the celebrant, servers and the assembled faithful process with the Blessed Sacrament to a beautifully decorated repository usually located outside the church’s sanctuary—either at a side shrine, in the lower church or elsewhere. This movement from the altar to the repository is an entering into the moment at which Jesus and the Apostles left the Upper Room, crossed the Kidron Valley and made their way into the Garden of Gethsemane, where Christ underwent his agony of anguish prayer.

During his time in the Garden of Gethsemane, an additional suffering for Christ was that he found his disciples asleep during his hour of need. “He said to Peter, ‘So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak’” (Mt 26: 40-41).

Through the centuries, generations of Catholics, moved by this haunting and poignant question of Christ, have themselves responded to him from their own time and place, accompanying him in his agony in the Garden by maintaining a vigil of prayer and presence with him at a repository on Holy Thursday night. There they are present before the same Christ, now in the Eucharist, who suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane, as three of its minor basilicas: St. Philip Neri (1515-1595) who, to foster the faith and devotion of the people of Rome, organized pilgrimages to visit Christ in the Eucharist in churches around the City on Holy Thursday. As they walked from church to church, they would sing, pray and fast, uniting themselves with Christ in his agony.

St. Philip Neri’s pilgrimage itinerary included the four major basilicas of Rome: St. Peter’s, St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major and St. Paul Outside the Walls, as well as three of its minor basilicas: St. Lawrence Outside the Walls, Holy Cross in Jerusalem and St. Sebastian Outside the Walls. In St. Philip’s time—and until the Holy Week reforms of Pope Pius XII in 1955—the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord’s Supper was celebrated in the morning; so this pilgrimage extended through most of the day.

In our own time, the Mass of the Lord’s Supper is fittingly celebrated in the evening and adoration at the repositories is maintained for some hours after Mass, with some parishes extending it even until midnight.

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Young professional Emma Ryder describes her experience: “Visiting the Blessed Sacrament at seven churches is always a highlight of Holy Week. It’s a mini pilgrimage that allows me to stay awake with Christ during His agony in the garden, begin to enter into the suffering with Him and sets a solemn tone for the remainder of the Triduum.”

Recent college graduate Olivia Kelly concurs: “My family and I love the Holy Thursday pilgrimage because it allows us to physically and spiritually immerse ourselves in the Paschal Mystery. Praying with our peers, we join Jesus at each stop of His journey from the Upper Room to His crucifixion by meeting Him in the silence of each church, remembering Him in the Scriptures and adoring Him in the Eucharist.”

Young people have responded with special enthusiasm when they’ve learned of this custom, and often it’s led their parents to discover it too. As Damien O’Connor describes, “Providing transportation to the seven Churches made the evening (initially) fun for my teenage daughter Ana because she and I could go with her friends. God used a fun activity to bring Ana and I closer to each other and Him. We now go annually because of the powerful encounter of Christ we experience in the Eucharist as well as through those praying.”

Parishioner Joseph Tristine echoes this: “As impactful as it is to remain in the church in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament after Holy Thursday, it is so much more profound to make it a ‘journey of adoration’ by visiting the seven churches with friends and other parishioners. It adds a sense of pilgrimage, mission and shared devotion to the experience, while also more deeply drawing you into the night of our Lord’s Passion.”

March 2021
One of the most challenging things about discerning priesthood is often the discernment of the life that goes along with it: the life of celibacy. For many young men considering the priesthood, it may very well be that celibacy is the obstacle that seems unsurmountable. I recall my own discernment of priesthood and find that wrapping my head around this life of celibacy was indeed a challenge for me as well, though not necessarily for the reasons you might think.

For me, it wasn’t the idea of not having a wife and a happy marriage that gave me pause, though marriage certainly is a wonderful gift. Rather, I struggled with the idea that I would never have the gift of having children of my own. I wouldn’t have a son to teach how to throw a baseball or a daughter to teach how to ride a bike. I wouldn’t have little league games or dance recitals to go to, to be able to take pride in my children’s accomplishments or to be a person of comfort and consolation in their struggles. As I struggled with this reality, however, one figure came continually into my heart and mind as a model and an inspiration for the type of fatherhood to which I have found myself called: St. Joseph.

In the Litany of St. Joseph, he is referred to as “Foster Father of the Son of God.” This statement reminds us that, though St. Joseph raises the Christ child as his own—indeed, Jesus was often known as the carpenter’s son—Joseph was not Jesus’ natural father. Yet, that did not stop Joseph from offering Jesus and his mother every fiber of his being in love, care and protection.

It did not stop Joseph from ultimately taking Mary into his home. It did not stop Joseph from getting up in the middle of the night to lead Jesus and his mother into the uncertain safety of Egypt. It did not stop Joseph from looking with anxious concern for the child Jesus left behind in the Temple. It did not stop Joseph from teaching Jesus the carpenter’s trade and the value of human work in providing for one’s family. It did not stop Joseph from being a physical representation, almost a living sacrament, of the Father’s love.

In St. Joseph, then, each priest finds his inspiration and model of spiritual fatherhood. Like St. Joseph, we too come to take great joy in the people entrusted to our care, rejoicing with them in the greatest moments life has to offer. We feel the same pride as the father of the prodigal son when one who has so long been lost is welcomed back into the merciful embrace of God. Our hearts break at the tragedies endured by those we have come to know, to serve and to love.

St. Therese of Lisieux in her prayer for priests asks of God: "Bless their labors with abundant fruit, and may the souls to whom they have ministered be their joy and consolation and in Heaven their beautiful and everlasting crown." Priesthood, lived to its fullest depths, can be immensely fruitful in producing spiritual children for our Heavenly Father to call his own. Just as Jesus remains the joy of St. Joseph, when a priest comes to the halls of heaven, it will be the souls that he has cared for in the name God our Father that will be his greatest pride and joy.

I will never be called “Dad.” But each and every day I find new joy and new hope in being called—and being—"Father."