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Bishop confers St. Augustine Medal of Service

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December 5th is Accountability Sunday Across the Diocese

November 6 – February 6

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Season of Thanksgiving

‘Hail Jesus, Truly Present!’
BRIDGEPORT—Sacred Music Composer and musician Anna Bendiksen, a parishioner of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull, has written a new hymn, “Hail Jesus Truly Present” about the Real Presence of the Eucharist.

(For more information about Anna Bendiksen’s sacred music compositions, visit: www.annabendiksen.com)

Superintendent shaves his head for breast cancer awareness
STRATFORD—Superintendent Dr. Steven Cheeseman shaved his head while students cheered him on at St. Mark School’s Breast Cancer Awareness Cut-a-thon. Dr. Cheeseman was visiting the elementary school in Stratford on the day the annual event was taking place. Stylists from CKC Salon in Fairfield partnered with St. Mark School and set up a mini-salon in the school gym. In addition to cutting hair and shaving heads, they applied pink hair extensions to 59 students. The entire school community dressed in pink and rallied together in the fight against cancer. Collectively, the school raised $2,450 in pledges and donations for the Elizabeth Pfriem SWIM Center for Cancer Care at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Bridgeport. Over $25,000 has been raised to date.

Keeping college students connected to the faith
NEW CANAAN—St. Aloysius Parish sent out almost 70 “Luv ‘n’ Care College Care Packages” in what has been an annual effort for the past eight years. The project, which is orchestrated by the youth coordinator and the mothers, helps them stay in contact with the college students and remind them to stay Mass…and that their parish family is praying for them. The project is a work of love by the mothers, who pay for the items and postage. They each bring something to include anything from mac and cheese to Rice Krispies Treats and Post-its. Then, they get together and prepare the packages, which include personal notes to the students.

Kolbe Cathedral Golf Tournament raises friends & funds
MILFORD—On October 11, Bridgeport’s Kolbe Cathedral High School hosted its first annual fundraising golf tournament at the Great River Golf Club in Milford. The inaugural Kolbe Cathedral Cup drew 88 golfers and raised almost $40,000 for the school. Participants included Board Chair Terry O’Connor, Treasurer Jon O’Herron, Jr. and board members Robert Aufiero, Kevin Grimes, Tom Reilly and John Caggiano has declared Sunday, December 5, as the first Accountability Sunday for financial reporting in the diocese. (See the story on page 3)

Call to Renewal
Bishop commissions diocesan ambassadors

Synod on Synodality
Delegates encouraged to listen

Catholic Charities
Breakfast addresses COVID impact

Annual Catholic Appeal
The benefits of legacy planning
Bishop declares Accountability Sunday

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has declared the first Sunday in December will now serve as Accountability Sunday. All parishes, schools and certain entities across the diocese will use a standardized accounting reporting model to issue their financial reports to the faithful.

This year, “Accountability Sunday” will fall on Sunday, December 5, 2021. In a letter to pastors, the bishop has asked every parish, school and certain other diocesan-related entities to publish their annual financial reports simultaneously.

“In short, the purpose of Accountability Sunday is to ensure the financial transparency, to communicate to all parishioners and donors that good stewardship is being practiced, and to provide a standard report that is consistent and straightforward,” said Bishop Caggiano.

The bishop said this new method of reporting “comes after many months of preparation and is intended to ensure that the financial transparency already in place will be manifest in a new and more uniform presentation.”

“As we take this historic step, I wish to thank you for your continued support and generosity. Please be assured of my prayers for you and your families, especially as we begin this holy season of Advent,” the bishop said.

Michael Hanlon, CPA, chief financial officer of the diocese, said that in order to ensure uniformity and consistency in reporting, Cynthia Mahony within the diocesan Office of Fiscal Management has created a standardized template that will now be used by all parishes and schools throughout the diocese of Bridgeport.

“The diocese and its related entities will use the same template to issue their annual financial reports on the same day that the parishes and schools make their reports,” Hanlon said.

According to the diocesan Parish and School Finance Manuals that were both issued earlier this year, every parish and diocesan school is required to report annually the results of their financial activities for the fiscal year ending June 30.

The individual reports will be made accessible either via parish bulletin or parish websites, school websites and the diocesan websites.

Hanlon said that in devising the form, the bishop’s instructions were to keep it accessible so that the average person in the pew who may not have experience reading financial reports could understand the financial details. He added that the reports may show that without other revenue sources, including fundraising activities undertaken by parishes and schools, many would report operational deficits.

“The idea is very simple and direct—to have everyone report financial results in the same manner on the same day in the spirit of transparency, gratitude and respect for the generosity of donors,” Hanlon said.

The Diocese of Bridgeport publishes its yearly budget and Consolidated Financial Statements in Fairfield County Catholic and on its website.

(To view the diocesan reports visit: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/finance-services.)

Safe Environments Audit shows historic progress

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—The Diocese of Bridgeport has been found compliant with all audited articles within the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People for the audit period of July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2021. The announcement was made by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano after receiving notice from StoneBridge Business Partners of Rochester, New York, a national financial auditing firm specially trained to review diocesan compliance to the USCCB charter.

It is the first time the diocese has not received a management letter with additional recommendations after the audit. Courtney Schenkelp, CPA and Thomas Engler, CPA were the lead auditors for StoneBridge.

“I am deeply grateful to our Safe Environments Office and to everyone who has made this achievement possible,” said Bishop Caggiano. “The successful audit is the culmination of years of commitment to Safe Environments on the part of so many people who have contributed to the record of zero tolerance, transparency and accountability.”

The bishop said he was also particularly grateful to the members of the Victims/Survivors Group who have stepped forward to help the diocese in its ongoing prevention efforts.

“While they have suffered greatly as a result of clerical abuse, the group members have had the courage to come forward, to help others and to work for prevention programs that make all of our children and vulnerable safer,” this most positive report is as much of a tribute to our survivors as it is to all those in the diocese who have worked so hard,” said Bishop Caggiano.

The year’s comprehensive audit included an onsite visit from the StoneBridge audit team in early November for in-person interviews with members of the Sexual Misconduct Review Board, and with Bishop Caggiano and diocesan leaders, along with phone interviews conducted with pastors, directors of Religious Education, and others.

The diocesan audit response was led by Erin Neill, L.C.S.W., director of Safe Environments & victim assistance coordinator, and Anne McCrory, chief legal officer.

“Given the comprehensive review that this audit involves, to emerge with no management letter or any recommendations is a truly amazing feat. Our Safe Environments Office at the Diocese of Bridgeport defines best practices when it comes to the USCCB Charter and the work of Erin and her team demonstrates the tremendous dedication, diligence and compassion that this work requires. We are blessed to have a respected leader in this work right here in our own diocese,” said McCrory.

“We’re very pleased to be able to say that it is extremely rare for an audit to be made without recommendations,” Neill said, thanking all of those who met with the auditor. “Throughout the interviews, they were impressed by the transparency and the extensive amount of outreach that Bishop Caggiano and the diocese have provided to survivors.”

The on-site audit reviewed in depth the diocesan implementation of all the major articles of the charter over the past 36 months.

The diocese provided over 400 pages of examples of outreach and information regarding its training programs in schools and parishes. The auditor also reviewed the diocesan Safe Environments Handbook, which was updated in November 2020, to incorporate Judge Robert Holzberg’s recommendations after issuing his independent and historic Clerical Sexual Abuse Accountability Report On October 1, 2019.

In November of last year as a result of the Judge’s report, Safe Environments guidelines were updated, particularly the reporting protocol for vulnerable adults, institutions of continuing education, and training on how to recognize and report concerns involving a person over the age of 18.

The Safe Environments office coordinates criminal background checks for volunteers and employees, and trains about 6,000 people annually as part of its prevention program.

Neill said the three-year audit focused on criminal background checks, training programs and other protocols in place to protect children and vulnerable adults, and reviewed the topics represented into the following articles of the Charter:

The U.S.C.C.B. Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People is a comprehensive set of procedures originally established by the USCCB in June 2002 for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The Charter also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse. It was revised in 2005, 2011 and 2018.

The Charter directs action in all the following matters: Creating a safe environment for children and young people; healing and reconciliation of victims and survivors; making prompt and effective response to allegations and cooperate with civil authorities; disciplining offenders and providing for means of accountability for the future.


To register to attend VIRTUS, Protecting God’s Children for Adults, please visit www.virtusonline.org. Select Registration and select Bridgeport Diocese.

(For more information, visit the Safe Environments website: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/safe-environments/home)
TRUMBULL—The Parish of Saint Catherine of Siena dedicated the addition of a beautiful new stained-glass window in the church this past March. The window, dedicated and blessed on March 19, also the Solemnity of St. Joseph, depicts five women and five men who have lived in more recent times, and have lived lives of heroic, exemplary faithfulness to God.

“Intentionally located just beside the baptismal font, the window serves 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 life,” says Joseph A. Marcello, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena.

Reflecting on the fact that St. Catherine’s Church includes many images of bishops from the early Church and the founders of Religious orders, Father Marcello continues: “Seeing only images of people who lived so long ago and in states of life far removed from our own might give us the mistaken impression that becoming a saint—actually becoming a saint!—is not really meant for you or me. In this window, we see people who look a little more like us.”

The 10 Saints and Blesseds featured in the window are:

Saints Louis (1823-1894) and Zélie (1831-1877) Martin, the parents of St. Therese of Lisieux, are depicted in the center of the window. They are the first married couple in history to be canonized together. Their liturgical feast day is July 12, their wedding anniversary.

Also depicted is Blessed Michael McGivney, the founder of the Knights of Columbus and a Connecticut diocesan priest, whose two younger brothers were also priests, and pastors of the territory that contained what is now St. Catherine of Siena Parish.

Another is Mother—now Saint—Teresa of Calcutta. People of every faith, and of none, instinctively recognized her thoroughgoing authenticity: hers was an intentional, lifelong response of heroic generosity to Jesus’ words: “Whatever you did to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me.” Mother Teresa, who saw the worst of human suffering and who experienced extended periods of interior darkness herself, never tired of saying, with a big smile: “Never let anything so fill you with sorrow that you forget the joy of Christ risen.”

In this window, we see people who look a little more like us. “Stories of Sainthood etched in stained glass”…

Additionally: St. Gianna Beretta Molla: wife, mother, doctor; St. Andre Bessette: Religious Brother; Blessed Chiara Luce Badano: young lay woman; St. John Henry Newman: priest and theologian; St. Josephine Bakhita: Religious Sister; Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati: young lay man

The Parish of Saint Catherine of Siena warmly welcomes anyone who is new to our area, anyone who is searching for the truth, or anyone who is looking for a spiritual home. We are joyfully and faithfully Roman Catholic in belief and practice—a community of faith, worship, service, and formation—and with open hearts we invite all our brothers and sisters into a living and saving friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ, in the communion of His One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. We are conveniently located at 220 Shelton Road in the Nichols area of Trumbull.

(For more information visit: www.StCathTrumbull.com.)
All Souls Day

‘Living in Christ overcomes death’

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN, JOE PISANI, AND BRIAN WALLACE

TRUMBULL—Christians overcome death by dying to themselves and learning to live in Christ, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said as he celebrated All Souls Day Mass under a large white tent at Gate of Heaven Cemetery.

“In order to be victorious over death, we need to seek it every day, and embrace every moment of our lives in Christ,” said the bishop before a gathering of over 200, many of whom were wrapped in heavy coats.

The outdoor Mass at Gate of Heaven was one of six celebrated in cemeteries throughout the diocese in commemoration of all the faithful departed and the ongoing faith journey of the living.

On a brisk day that offered the taste of approaching winter, the flames of two tall altar candles flickered in the wind, and the rustle, orange, and gold of maple leaves in the surrounding woods provided a burst of color against a gray sky.

“You and I are disciples of the crucified Christ. Let us die to ourselves, die to sin every moment, so that we may join others in the victory that await all who have the courage to die to this world so we might live forever.”

In his homily the bishop said the world too readily has dismissed the concept of sin and accepts the notion that “what is good for me is the only thing that matters.”

“Living in Christ overcomes death,” he said, especially in our time of need and the sorrow of missing loved ones. “Wherever there is love there is pain. If we didn’t love them so dearly, we wouldn’t feel the pain.”

ST. PETER CEMETERY, DANBURY—“It’s an ancient tradition to pray for the souls who have passed from this world to the next,” said Father Gregg Mecca, pastor of St. Peter Church on Main Street, who officiated at the outdoor graveside Mass at St. Peter Cemetery in Danbury.

“We are here in honor of all the deceased.”

Many of the more than 100 who gathered for the outdoor Mass huddled together against the wind finding comfort amongst one another in prayer and in knowing some of their loved ones who have passed were nearby.

Colorful fall mums dotted the landscape bringing with the bold bright colors of red, yellow and fuchsia—a hopeful energy on an otherwise cold and cloudy day.

“I thought it was lovely and touching for all the souls here,” said Debbie, who traveled to Danbury from Brewster to be at the service in the cemetery where her son is buried. “I’m glad they do this,” she said.

“The Church recognizes the need and the duty to pray for our beloved deceased,” said Father Mecca, adding that it is fitting that the day after All Saints Day is All Souls Day. “The saints in heaven help and support us,” he said, especially in our time of need and the sorrow of missing loved ones. “Wherever there is love there is pain. If we didn’t love them so dearly, we wouldn’t feel the pain.”

ST. MICHAEL CEMETERY, STRATFORD—“We gather here today to remember all of the faithful departed who are buried

He added that it is hard to be away from those we love and that some wounds never completely heal.

Following Mass the bishop expressed his gratitude to Dean Gestal, director of diocesan cemeteries, and his crew who coordinated all of the details necessary to host the outdoors Masses throughout the diocese. He then briefly visited and blessed the mausoleum now nearing the end of construction in the cemetery.

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FATHER PETER ADAMSKI at St. Michael Cemetery, Stratford.

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After Mass, all those who attended were gifted with red and white carnations, which many placed on the graves of their loved ones.

(The diocese maintains sponsors ten active cemeteries in Fairfield County. For information on Catholic Cemeteries, call 203.742.1450 Option 5 or go to www.ciccemeteries.org)
**Ambassadors Commissioned**

**Going into the world with the power of Christ**

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—“Go out together as brothers and sisters with a listening heart and a heart that doesn’t judge. We have the power of Christ,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano during his homily for The Pontifical Mass for the Evangelization of Peoples with the Commissioning of Ambassadors celebrated at the Cathedral on Saturday, October 16.

More than 200 diocesan ambassadors who have been training for a year and a half to welcome people back to the Church were formally commissioned by Bishop Caggiano, who praised them for their participation, dedication, and commitment to the program of diocesan renewal.

He said their “willingness to go out into the world that needs the Lord and is moving in the wrong direction” is important work that can bring healing to those who have left the Church and to people of good will who are seeking meaning in their lives.

In thanking the ambassadors, the bishop told them his hope is that this and other efforts by the Diocese of Bridgeport will lead help the Church into “true pastoral and spiritual renewal.”

After what Bishop Caggiano described as a period of “formation and fraternity,” the newly commissioned ambassadors were visibly joyous and inspired to begin their ministry on an unusually warm day that cleared into bright sunshine as they emerged from the Church.

Readings were delivered in English and Spanish and included St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans, “As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news!” Each of the ambassadors received a small cross that was blessed by the bishop during the Mass. “Father of holiness, you willed the cross of your Son to be the source of all blessings, the font of all grace. Bless these crosses and grant they who will preach the crucified Christ may themselves strive to be transformed into his image,” the bishop prayed.

In the “Prayer of Blessing,” the bishop prayed with outstretched hands over the Ambassadors, “Send your abundant blessing upon them as they embrace this important ministry, and make their work fruitful for their parishes and for our diocese,” he prayed. “Make their words the echo of Christ’s voice, so that those who hear them may be drawn to obey the Gospel. Felt the hearts of these, your missionaries with the Holy Spirit.”

The bishop told the ambassadors that their ministry should not simply stop at the official activities they do to welcome people back to the Church. “It should not just be those extraordinary moments,” he said, but also the small moments they share with family and friends.

He told the men and women gathered that their ministry should be infused in every aspect of their lives, “You do it by being you and showing the world who is the center of your life.”

The bishop was also quick to note that their work will not be without challenge and suffering as they seek to “be an agent of Christ’s healing” in a world that is broken, wounded and burdened with sin.

He assured them that they would never be alone as they witness to the Lord because Christ will always be with them.

“May the Spirit of the Lord be upon you, enabling you as you go through the world to bring the Good News to the lowly and to heal the brokenhearted,” the bishop said as he prayed the final Solemn Blessing over the ambassadors to conclude the commissioning.

Before the recessional hymn, “Go to the World,” the bishop thanked the pastors who con-celebrated the Mass with him and other who attended to support their ambassadors. He also thanked Father Mike Novajosky and Dr. Patrick Donovan for leading the ambassador training, and he announced that Deacon John DiTaranto will coordinate the second training cohort scheduled to begin in November.

The beautiful music for the Mass and Commissioning Ceremony was provided by the Cathedral Choir under the leadership of Paul Murray, musical director and organist.

(The next cohort of ambassadors begins early in November. Pastors have been asked to submit the names and email addresses of any new participants. Anyone with questions or those who would have an interest in serving as an ambassador may use the following email address to ambassadors@diobpt.org.)

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**‘They have gifts to give us’**

By VIRGINIA WEIR

FAIRFIELD—Sunday, November 7, was a special day for six young people from the diocese as they celebrated their first sacraments at the annual Mass Celebrating People with Special Needs, hosted by Saint Catherine Center.

Melissa LaFontant, a Saint Catherine Academy student, received First Holy Communion along with Raquel Baer from St. Peter’s Church in Danbury. Raquel also received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Four other young people were confirmed: Michael Rodriguez and Amber and Ariel Elias from The Cathedral Parish in Bridgeport; and Jose Mendoza from St. George Church in Bridgeport.

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport, presided at the joyful occasion at Holy Cross Church in Fairfield. Father Alexis Moronta, IVE, pastor of St. George Church in Bridgeport, served as concelebrant.

In his homily, Bishop Caggiano spoke of the meaning of Confirmation. “What God is confirming is how much He loves these young people, how much they are dear to Him, that they are worth everything to Him. And His love will care for them, guide them, and protect them, as His love does for us. It’s a beautiful message.”

In his homily, Bishop Caggiano reflected on the day’s Gospel about the widow who gives her last coins as an offering, in contrast to the entitled behavior of the Pharisees (Mark 12:38-44). “Who in the end is really poor?” he asked. “Because these young people are here not simply because they are cherished by God and us, but because they have gifts to give to us and our community that perhaps you and I don’t have: an innocence of heart, a generosity of spirit, a deep sense of gratitude for the little things that are done for them. And how often you and I, who have other gifts and talents, forget their gifts...as if we have a particular place that is greater than someone else.”

The bishop concluded, “This celebration gives us hope and courage to go out into the world—which basically sees things the Pharisees did—and teach them a better way. These young people will be the ones to teach that world the better way.”

Families enjoyed a reception together afterward.

The annual Mass Celebrating People with Special Needs is part of the Center’s mission to provide community outreach and support for parishes and families of children with disabilities.

(For more information, visit www.stcatherinecenter.org)
Seton Collaborative

Lawlor to lead Seton Collaborative

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Kevin Lawlor, retired chief operating officer of Fairfield University, has been named by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano to lead the new Seton Collaborative of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

The Seton Collaborative is designed to be a service organization that seeks to partner with diocesan schools and parishes to provide operational excellence and best in class support to principals and pastors. It will provide financial expertise and other operational support including information technology, to leverage economy of scale and operational efficiencies.

“We are delighted that Kevin Lawlor has agreed to serve as executive director as we launch the Seton Collaborative, which I believe will be the signature initiative to improve efficiencies and lead to the best use of resources, while freeing up our diocesan education leaders and pastors to focus on essential ministry,” said Bishop Caggiano.

The bishop said the decision to move ahead with the Seton Collaborative grew out of the ongoing work of the Diocesan Education Commission that created a strategic plan to sustain, support and promote Catholic schools, which have recently experienced a significant increase in enrollment.

“Kevin Lawlor provided valuable expertise and professional judgement in his service as a member of the Education Commission and in his many volunteer and professional contributions to Catholic education. As a senior executive, he understands the challenges and opportunities ahead, and is prepared to guide this important start-up for the diocese,” the bishop said.

While the need for the initiative was initially focused on upgrading the level of professional and operational services available to Catholic schools in the diocese, the services of Seton Collaborative will also be available to parishes, who will benefit from additional expertise in areas such as finances and information technology.

The bishop said he believes the Seton Collaborative will represent a major step forward in diocesan operations by bringing schools and parishes the professional resources that are critical to innovation, growth and development.

“I am grateful to all who have made this much needed initiative possible and who have contributed to the research and planning. The Seton Collaborative represents the investment and engagement of many talented and dedicated and faithful people,” the bishop said.

More about Kevin Lawlor: Recently Mr. Lawlor retired from his post as executive vice president and chief operating officer of Fairfield University where he oversaw human resources, legal, information technologies, student life and security along with the finances of the university.

Mr. Lawlor led the development and implementation of Fairfield’s new strategic plan Fairfield 2020 and the planning and execution of the university’s master plan, the largest construction and renovation program in the university’s history. Mr. Lawlor was also instrumental in restructuring and strengthening Fairfield’s financial posture. Most recently Mr. Lawlor led the university’s COVID-19 planning and response efforts.

Prior to joining Fairfield, Mr. Lawlor spent more than 30 years in senior executive roles at United Technologies Corporation, AAR Corporation and RBC Bearings serving most recently as vice president and GM of AAR’s Precision Systems division in Huntsville.

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Kevin Lawlor

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 8
Synod on Synodality

Diocesan delegates commissioned to the Synod

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

WESTON—It was a beautiful fall morning this Saturday, October 16, as Bishop Frank J. Caggiano commissioned synod delegates from around the diocese at a special ceremony at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Weston.

A breeze rustled through the changing leaves as delegates, chosen by their pastors to represent their parish, filed into the church.

The bishop asked each parish and quasi-parish in the Diocese of Bridgeport to choose four delegates to participate in the diocesan portion of the Global Synod on Synodality announced by Pope Francis in March of this year.

The morning began with a warm welcome, followed by a prayer service.

Addressing those gathered for the commissioning ceremony the bishop said, “You and I will listen attentively to the needs of God’s people and to the Holy Spirit, and to discern what it is the Spirit is speaking to our hearts.”

Bishop Caggiano explained that during this Synod on Synodality, delegates are being called to listen on behalf of the Universal Church, as it is the Holy Father Pope Francis who has called for this synod.

“If this synod is to bear great fruit, we must make it our business to be receptive to what is being said that the many wounds of God’s people will come to the forefront,” said the bishop.

The bishop referred to the delegates as agents of healing. He said that the delegates are being called to listen to others’ stories, their pain, in a way that offers it back up to God.

Bishop Caggiano mentioned that at noon that same day there would be a commissioning of diocesan Ambassadors, participating in the “Call to Renewal.” “You, too, are ambassadors,” said the bishop. “You are going forth to show that someone cares enough to listen.”

That caring, that listening, the bishop explained, is the beginning of healing.

“We are called to bring healing to a broken church, a broken world,” said the bishop.

Deacon Stephen Hodson, diocesan delegate to the synod office, presented those who are serving as delegates. Delegates recited the official prayer of the synod.

After the conclusion of the service, delegates made their way to the parish hall for an orientation.

Bishop Caggiano explained the uniqueness of the Synod on Synodality. “Pope Francis is piloting a new methodology on how the synod can be done in the future. It rests on answering the question: who are we as a Church?”

The bishop explained that in all the synods before this one, the bishops would be the one to hear the concerns of their people and bring those concerns to the synod delegation. He explained that that methodology will not change, but the consultation process will.

“The Holy Father wants to create a mechanism by which the entire People of God are consulted when a topic is offered,” the bishop said.

Synods will reconvene every two or three years for topics specific for which the Holy Father has discerned he needs to hear the voice of all God’s people.

The bishop told the delegates that Pope Francis wishes for these synods to be conducted in such a way that we are listening to each other and also listening outside of ourselves.

He spoke of the importance of reaching out to those who are outside the community of faith.

The bishop made clear that the goals of this synod are to effectively hear the concerns of those around us, to deepen our understanding of who we are as a community in Christ, and to begin the healing process that needs to occur within the Church.

“I am grateful that you are here and willing to take this adventure forward,” he said.

Bishop Caggiano once again introduced Deacon Hodson to address the delegates.

“It is invaluable that we gather together and listen to each other,” deacon said, “To discern the Holy Spirit guiding this endeavor.”

Deacon Hodson explained that each parish is allowed to discern the best ways of enabling a Spirit-led synod experience for parishioners. “It is important that we ask the Holy Spirit to participate,” said the deacon, leading the gathered in singing “Come Holy Ghost.”

Deacon spoke of the different ways parishes can conduct listening sessions and how each parish can tailor gatherings to fit their needs. Between one-on-one sessions, small group gatherings, and a town-hall style meeting, Deacon Hodson explained the advantages and drawbacks of each.

Each local process will conclude in April 2022 with the creation of a diocesan report that will be sent to both the USCCB and the Roman Synod Office.

One of the four delegates will be delegated the task of drafting the parish’s report, based on a template that will be provided to by the start of the new year. At this time there will be a closing Mass of Thanksgiving for all the delegates.

(For more information on the Synod on Synodality, please visit: www.synod.va/en.html)

**LAWLOR TO LEAD FROM PAGE 7**

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Alabama. At UTC he played critical roles in finance, strategic planning, M&A and program management, as well as the integration of multinational corporate units.

After graduating from Fairfield University in 1979 with a bachelor's degree in Accounting from the Dolan School of Business, he earned a master's degree in Taxation from the University of New Haven. He was subsequently named an Alfred P. Sloan Fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he received a Master's of Business Administration in Finance. Mr. Lawlor studied strategic cost management at the Harvard Business School and undertook senior executive training at the Darden School of the University of Virginia. He currently serves as a director of the Connecticut Society of Certified Public Accountants.

In addition to his professional achievements, Kevin P. Lawlor, CPA has deep roots in Catholic education having served as the chief operating officer of Fairfield University for the past eight years, he continues to serve on the Diocese of Bridgeport’s Education Commission, and the advisory board of Sacred Heart Academy in Hamden, Conn. Mr. Lawlor previously chaired the board of St Bridget School in Cheshire, Conn. Mr. Lawlor and his wife Marianne have four daughters Emma, Rachel, Abbey and Hannah and a new granddaughter Polly.

The Seton Collaborative has been incorporated by the diocese as a separate 501(C)3 corporation (not for profit). Additional personnel and services will be announced over the next six months.

(For more information on the Seton Collaborative, contact: Kevin. Lawlor@SetonCollaborative.org)
By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—Understanding and inspiration were the messages shared at the annual Catholic Charities Celebrity Breakfast.

The annual event, which helps raise money for numerous Catholic Charities’ community programs delivering care to those in need, was held at the Amber Room Colonnade and featured Dr. John Murphy, M.D., chief executive officer of Nuvance Health. The annual event helps raise money for numerous Catholic Charities’ community programs delivering care to those in need.

“Catholic Charities truly has the power to change lives. It is thrilled to be at the forefront of this critical effort,” said Ann McCorry, chair of the Board of Foundations in Charity.

McCorry said the pandemic has had a significant impact on mental health and that, locally, Catholic Charities has seen a significant increase in adults and children seeking help for anxiety, depression and trauma.

"Most of us have likely felt more anxiety, grief and loss over the past two years than we ever have before. Imagine how difficult it must be for the poor and most vulnerable members of our community, many of whom were struggling pre-pandemic then lost their jobs as the pandemic hit. We hope people will remember them on Giving Tuesday,” said Mike Donoghue, executive director of Catholic Charities.

Donoghue said since March 2020 the Behavioral Health services have experienced across the board increase: 42% increase in domestic violence cases seeking clinical help, 33% increase in chronic alcohol abuse among women seeking clinical help and 47% increase of anxiety/panic and depression among adults and children seeking clinical help.

“Many low and middle income families can’t afford mental health counseling because either their insurance doesn’t cover it, the co-pay is too high, or many private therapists won’t take Medicaid or Medicare,” said Donoghue.

“That’s why fundraising is so important because it enables us to provide this vital service ministry to individuals and families who have nowhere else to go. Through the generosity of our donors, we make sure that finances are not a barrier for any clients seeking assistance from Catholic Charities. Giving is more important now than ever because of the increased needs we see every day,” he said.

To donate to this crucial effort, visit the donate page at foundationsincharity.org. Catholic Charities will also be accepting Venmo @foundation-charity.

Catholic Charities

Responding to ‘ripple effect’ of COVID crisis

THE ANNUAL CATHOLIC CHARITIES Celebrity Breakfast was held at the Amber Room Colonnade and featured Dr. John Murphy, M.D., chief executive officer of Nuvance Health. The annual event helps raise money for numerous Catholic Charities’ community programs delivering care to those in need.

officer of Nuvance Health.

“I thank Catholic Charities for the work they do,” Dr. Murphy said as he spoke about the complex approach and collaboration needed for the community response to COVID-19.

Dr. Murphy shared his thoughts on what the medical community missed and misunderstood in the early days about the emerging virus and how the community, with the instrumental help of Catholic Charities, has pulled together for healing.

“As a health system we’ve had 14,000 people with COVID-19 come through our doors,” said Dr. Murphy, adding that about 400 souls were lost. “If you are lucky enough to survive, you are not necessarily out of the woods," he said. “Long-haulers have it very hard.” Long-haulers is the term used to describe those who have recovered from the acute phase of the illness but continue to suffer from lingering health problems.

Dr. Murphy said the obvious health challenges, the impact of the virus often has a ripple effect on families and the living in uncertainty about having the basics of daily life such as food and shelter.

Dr. Murphy said compounding the health crises was the phenomenal degree of misinformation. He cited statistics of how anxiety, depression and domestic violence have skyrocketed. “The people who are most at risk have underlying issues,” he added, noting how overdoses were the highest ever reported in the United States during this time.

“This crisis hasn’t left us,” Dr. Murphy said. “It is very real. We have to find a way out of this,” he said, adding that Catholic Charities is the compassionate connection in the community helping people navigate their way through difficult times.

“Catholic Charities is there to deal with the isolation and the deprivation COVID-19 has imposed on us,” he said, referring to some of the organization’s programs such as the Morning Glory Breakfast Program, Behavioral Health Counseling Services and Community Support Program.

“Catholic Charities is right there and helping us stay together and soldier through this,” he said.

Indeed, the Morning Glory Program with the help of Douglas Polistena, general manager of the Amber Room Colonnade has delivered more than 50,000 meals to those in need. Morning Glory program coordinator Tamara Espinal was also thanked for her efforts and commitment to making meals in her home and going out to find and deliver it to people in need during the initial months of the pandemic when many services were closed.

During the breakfast, Dr. Barbara Ina Anderson, a noted research scientist who worked at Schlumberger-Doll for over 40 years, was honored by Catholic Charities of Fairfield County for her tireless contributions to the community.

A parishioner of St. Joseph Parish in Brookfield, the 80-year-old Newtown native volunteers at Dorothy Day Hospitality House and serves meals through Catholic Charities.

“The church is now my extended family,” she said, as she accepted her recognition award.

“I take all the opportunities to be with my extended family.”

The community of programs offered through Catholic Charities truly has the power to change lives.

Jeffrey Umansky, who was recently promoted to assistant program director of New Heights, an emotional and physical wellness and recovery center run by Catholic Charities, was once a client.

“I found a place of hope and promise,” he said. Jeff said he suffers from social anxiety disorder but wanted to share his story with the group because of the profound effect Catholic Charities has had on his life.

Jeff recounted how he dropped out of school, suffered from bipolar disorder and tried a myriad of medications before he stumbled across Catholic Charities New Heights program.

“I want to provide the support that was provided to me and help make someone’s life better,” he said. “I felt a sense of purpose and empowerment. It helped me a good deal and continues to do so.”

The speeches by both men resonated with those in attendance.

“I thought Dr. Murphy’s talk was very informative and cleared up some misconceptions I had,” said Linda Moritz, a parishioner of St. Rose Church in Newtown.

Moritz said she was touched by Umansky’s story. “It was so enlightening to hear how he struggled on even though he had all those problems,” she said.

Proceeds from the breakfast will support the many programs of Catholic Charities in the Danbury area including Behavioral Health, Homeless Outreach, Immigration Services, Morning Glory Breakfast Program, New Heights/Warmline, Disaster Case Management, Pregnancy Counseling and Adoption Services.

“To see the people here in this hall, it’s an outpouring of love,” said Barbara Talarico, a parishioner of St. Peter Church in Danbury. Anthony Scalzo, a parishioner of Sacred Heart of Jesus in Danbury agreed, “It’s great to see a good turnout for Catholic Charities.”

‘Mental Health Matters’ on Giving Tuesday

BRIDGEPORT—“Mental Health Matters” will be the theme of this year’s Giving Tuesday (November 30) across the diocese.

All diocesan Giving Tuesday contributions will support the Catholic Charities of Fairfield County Fund, specifically its mental health programs.

The holiday season is upon us and Giving Tuesday, November 30, is right around the corner. Foundations in Charity is thrilled to be at the forefront of this critical effort,” said Ann McCorry, chair of the Board of Foundations in Charity.

McCorry said the pandemic has had a significant impact on mental health and that, locally, Catholic Charities has seen a significant increase in adults and children seeking help for anxiety, depression and trauma.

“Most of us have likely felt more anxiety, grief and loss over the past two years than we ever have before. Imagine how difficult it must be for the poor and most vulnerable members of our community, many of whom were struggling pre-pandemic then lost their jobs as the pandemic hit. We hope people will remember them on Giving Tuesday,” said Mike Donoghue, executive director of Catholic Charities.

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“Many low and middle income families can’t afford mental health counseling because either their insurance doesn’t cover it, the co-pay is too high, or many private therapists won’t take Medicaid or Medicare,” said Donoghue.

“That’s why fundraising is so important because it enables us to provide this vital service ministry to individuals and families who have nowhere else to go. Through the generosity of our donors, we make sure that finances are not a barrier for any clients seeking assistance from Catholic Charities. Giving is more important now than ever because of the increased needs we see every day,” he said.

To donate to this crucial effort, visit the donate page at foundationsincharity.org. Catholic Charities will also be accepting Venmo @foundation-charity.

November 2021
EDITORIAL

A Time of Listening

On the recent “Jesuitical Podcast” of America Magazine Bishop Frank J. Caggiano discussed the “Synod on Synodality” called for by Pope Francis, and the importance the Holy Father places on being a Church that listens, particularly as delegates in our own diocese prepare to play their role in the global process.

When asked what he would say to a person who believes he or she is not the type of person the Church wants to hear from, the bishop responded, “I think in part the simple message is that we care and we want you to be part of it. As in any good family, we’re not going to leave you behind. We’re going to ask. And if you’re not ready, perhaps later on, we’ll ask again, because we love you, which is as simple as that. And if one can’t honestly say that, then that’s why the synod has to melt hearts, right? For all of us, if we have friends, relatives, neighbors, who are not involved in the life of the Church, it’s like having a Sunday meal and not having your whole family, which in the modern world has become commonplace…. So, I would say, don’t give up on us. Once a part of the family, you’re always a part of the family.”

(You can listen to the entire interview by visiting the diocesan website: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/frank-caggiano-pope-francis-we-need-a-listening-church.)

We are grateful for the bishop’s leadership and for the more than 300 men and women who have agreed to serve as diocesan delegates. During the following months, they will guide efforts to listen to the faithful and issue a report as part of the global Synod process.

(For more information on the diocesan participation in the Synod on Synodality and the complete listing of parish delegates, visit: www.formazione-imagined.org/synod-on-synodality.)

On Thanksgiving

We approach this Thanksgiving on a hopeful note that we may finally be moving forward. While we remain masked and cautious given concerns of a new surge this winter, we have much to be thankful for in our own lives and in the communal life of Faith that has sustained us through the darkest and most harrowing moments of the pandemic.

There are signs of vitality everywhere in our diocese as more people return to Mass and participate in parish and charitable activities. In recent weeks the bishop has commissioned 200 diocesan “Ambassadors” to help lead the renewal, and more than 300 delegates to the global synod. He also presented St. Augustine Medals of Service to 110 men and women who came to the Cathedral for a joyful prayer service and celebration. Likewise, hundreds of faithful braved the first cold day of the season to participate in the yearly outdoor All Souls Masses in cemeteries across the diocese. In our parishes, more than 1,000 people turned out for the Healing Mass at St. Matthew’s in Norwalk, and over 400 faithful in St. John Parish in Darien turned out to venerate relics of the Saints—just to name a few signs of hope and occasions for gratitude.

“Gratitude is a simple but genuine sign of the Kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of gratuitous and grateful love,” said Pope Francis during one of his weekly general audiences. “The gratitude that comes from encountering Christ’s love and mercy is enough to bring joy and hope to a troubled world…. If we are bearers of gratitude, the world itself will become better, even if only a little bit, but that is enough to transmit a bit of hope.”

Let us take the words of the Holy Father to heart this Thanksgiving as we sit down with family and friends. Let us also be grateful for the hundreds of Catholic Charities and parish volunteers who will be serving the poor and hungry on Thanksgiving Day, so that no one will be alone or forgotten.

Perhaps in a difficult and trying year, we have more reasons than ever not simply to be grateful, but to practice gratitude. In doing so, we may find what is best in ourselves and others as we pray for a deeper unity for our families and communities.

EDITOR’S CHOICE

‘Those who give grace, need grace’

BRIDGEPORT—On Friday, November 12, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano initiated a new tradition for the diocese by celebrating a special Mass of Commemoration for Deceased Priests and Deacons at St. Augustine Cathedral. “Each year in the month of November the Church asks us to pray for the faithfully departed, both known and unknown,” the bishop said, adding that “Most priests prayed thousands of Masses for the dead during their ministry, but we tend to forget that priest and deacons also need our prayers.”

He was joined by more than 20 priests and deacons who processed in together to pray for their deceased brothers. “Those who give grace, need grace,” the bishop said, asking all those present to pray for our deceased priests, and that all people of faith will be received into the full promises of baptism and united in the glory of God’s presence.

On November 4, Bishop Caggiano initiated a special Mass of Commemoration for Deceased Priests and Deacons at St. Augustine Cathedral. “Each year in the month of November the Church asks us to pray for the faithful departed, both known and unknown,” the bishop said, adding that “Most priests prayed thousands of Masses for the dead during their ministry, but we tend to forget that priest and deacons also need our prayers.” He was joined by more than 20 priests and deacons who processed in together to pray for their deceased brothers. “Those who give grace, need grace,” the bishop said, asking all those present to pray for our deceased priests, and that all people of faith will be received into the full promises of baptism and united in the glory of God’s presence.

CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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

PASTOR

REVEREND TERRENCE WALSH, from Pastor Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, to Pastor of Sacred Heart and Saint Patrick Parish, Redding. Effective date was November 1 for a term of six years.

REVEREND RICHARD GEMZA, from Pastor Holy Trinity Parish, Sherman, to Pastor of Christ the King Parish, Trumbull. Effective date was November 15 for a term of six years.

RECTOR

REVEREND CANON FRANCIS X ALTIERI, appointed to Rector of Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish, Bridgeport. Effective date was November 4.

DEACON

DEACON RICHARD LAWLOR, reappointed as the diocesan representative to the Connecticut Men’s Conference. Effective date was October 1 for a term of three years.

RETIEMENT

DEACON GUILLERMO BERNAL, retiring from the Diocese of Bridgeport. Effective date was October 21.

OTHER

REVEREND COREY PICCININO, appointed to the Vocations Admissions and Advisory Board. Effective date was October 1 for a term of three years.

Most Reverend Frank T. Hoffmann Vicar for Clergy November, 2021

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Ralph Lazzaro: 203.667.1622
My Home Depot helper

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@dioctpt.org.

Often wish I was one of those people who could walk into Home Depot and know exactly where everything is and make a beeline right for that aisle. But, alas, I will say that I have yet to reach that level of adulthood. I usually walk around like a lost puppy until I find a representative who looks nice enough to help me.

On my most recent trip, I decided not to waste any time and went right to the person at the front of the store and told her exactly what I needed. She told me where to go and even called a representative to show me how to use the kiosk.

An introvert by nature, I tend to run my errands with my head down, on a mission to get in and get out with what I need with as little human interaction as possible. However, the woman helping me at the kiosk was so kind, I didn’t mind chatting with her while we waited for my keys to be copied. She helped me through every step of the process. She easily could’ve showed me how to use the machine and went on her way, but she was present with me the whole time. We got to chatting about the reason I was copying keys in the first place (my tendency to lock myself out of my apartment) and she shared a funny story of her own. She said “I felt like I could share that with you,” and it really made my day.

We are so used to just going about our days on autopilot, moving from one task to the next, that we often don’t stop to really be present in the moment. I’m sure this woman has a very stressful job, but she was so pleasant and that made a huge difference to me.

We all just experienced the collective trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic. I don’t really think people are fully ready to be back in the world sometimes—at least I know I’m not. We see it in the way people are driving and rushing around. There is just an underlying sense of tension, and it often feels as if we are hanging by a thread. I thought maybe we would learn but it seems that “the show must go on,” whether we are all ready for it or not.

I understand why people are so frustrated, but I think that’s why this particular encounter stood out to me so much. It reminded me so much of what the Gospel boils down to.

Jesus was always present with those He was with, no matter who they were. He extended love at every turn. Even amongst crowds of people reaching out to Him, He always seemed to find the one person who needed His mercy the most.

As we approach the holiday season, although I am absolutely overjoyed to get to celebrate with family and friends again, I want to resist the urge to act like I didn’t learn anything these past couple of years. I want to be intentional about creating more moments like this one at Home Depot.

One of my favorite Bible verses is Micah 6:8. “You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

It doesn’t seem like such a tall order when you read it that way. And yet, it is still exceptional when it actually happens.

I’m sure there will be times this holiday season when it will be business as usual and I find myself running through my daily activities. It is just one of the inevitabilities of life. But I want to really intentionally try to love others, even if I don’t necessarily “like” what I’m doing.

Maybe I’m an idealist but I think, as a society, it’s something we can work towards.

This year I am thankful for all the people who make life a little more pleasant each and every day. And Tracey at the Stratford Home Depot, thanks for your help!

A prayer to start the day right

SWIMMING UPSTREAM
BY JOE PISANI

Nikole Drummond wrote that prayer in 2009, when she was 17 and in intense pain because of a disease she was suffering. It was a personal prayer she said to remind herself that even in her affliction, her life was a gift, and that Jesus was beside her every step of the way—and that Jesus had a plan for her life and that with his guidance, she could accomplish “great things.”

Sometimes I say her prayer more than once a day because it reminds me of fundamental spiritual truth that our secular society scoffs at: Life is a gift. All life is a gift. All life is created by God, which is why abortion is such a terrible thing.

I, too, need help looking for the good in things because it’s so easy to be predisposed to see the bad. It’s so easy to be cynical in a society that cultivates cynicism. Look around you. We have come to be defined by our anger and sarcasm—a spiritual disability made worse by the media.

We certainly need help seeing the good in things. There’s considerable goodness, and if we’re open to it, the Holy Spirit will direct us.

We all need divine help to be happy because in the end, following the plan that God has for us is the only real path to happiness. We’ll never find it in the enticements the world dangles before you.
Diocesan Development

Legacy planning from a Catholic perspective

By JOE PISANI

Monsignor Thomas Powers still remembers his first day on the job. Shortly after his ordination, the Office of Clergy gave him forms to fill out, including a funeral planning sheet…right down to who would preach and what hymns he wanted. It wasn’t something a young priest typically thinks about.

But today, as pastor of St. John Church in Darien and vicar general of the diocese, he recognizes the importance of legacy planning, not only when it comes to funeral arrangements but also charitable giving, so he recently hosted a seminar at his parish to encourage more Catholics to consider issues they often don’t want to think about.

“People are not always prepared and don’t like to talk about it,” he says. “They assume that when they die, a family member will take care of it, but when a family member dies—even if it’s not sudden—the family is mourning and faced with a lot of additional burdens. But if planning is done, what a gift.”

Monsignor says it is a discussion he has had with his own parents, Tom and Margaret Mary.

“My mom has her liturgy planned, including every single hymn,” he said. “But my dad always says we can do it the next time I visit."

The seminar on legacy planning, which will be held at other parishes throughout the diocese, included Joseph Gallagher, chief development officer, Dean Gestal, director of Catholic Cemeteries, Michele Gartland, an attorney at Rucci Law Group LLC of Darien, and Thomas Kolenberg, financial advisor and board member of Foundations in Charity.

“This was a service to help our parishioners start the conversation and get the ball rolling on planning and the inevitability of death,” Monsignor said. “Many of them have not really prepared for end-of-life issues and questions, which include liturgy, legacy giving and the practical matters that come when we face death.

When someone is prepared, it is an act of charity for the family and things go smoothly. When one is not prepared, it can be very difficult and adds to the mourning process.”

Joseph Gallagher, who organized the session, said people need to be given information regarding health care directives, funeral arrangements, cemetery and burial, and estate planning.

“We want people to establish their legacy consistent with their Catholic values,” he said. “You need to plan it while you’re living. Don’t let someone else do it. Think of your legacy as what you want to live on after you are gone.”

From an estate planning perspective, Catholics can consider including their parish, the diocese or one of the three lay-run foundations—Foundations in Charity, Foundations in Education and Foundations in Faith—in their will by naming them as a beneficiary. The gift can specifically designate, say, a youth ministry, care for retired priests, education, seminarians, or feeding the poor.

“If you have devoted your life to your church, consider it as a family member,” he said. “If you have three kids and your thought is to leave each one a third of your estate, how about giving each one 30 percent and 10 percent to your parish, the diocese or the foundations?”

A major challenge is ensuring a will has been prepared.

“More than 60 percent of people do not have a will or a proper plan, or it is very old and not up to date,” Gallagher says. “Our approach has been to give people the right information so they can plan properly. We always recommend people consult an estate attorney and a financial planner.”

In addition to bequests, another option is to name your preferred organization or parish among the beneficiaries of your 401(k), IRA or annuity.

The diocese provides a checklist to facilitate estate planning.

Dean Gestal, the director of Catholic Cemeteries, understands the stress that accompanies the death of a loved one. The cemeteries have 11 family advisors in six offices. They are responsible for bereavement counseling, sitting down with the families and selling...  ➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 22
2021 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

Recognizing the volunteers, the mentors and the prayerful servants of our diocese

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—“Don’t underestimate an act of kindness in the name of Christ and what it can do for wounded and broken hearts—even raise them from the dead,” Bishop Frank J. Caggiano told the 110 St. Augustine Medal of Service recipients who gathered at St. Augustine Cathedral on Saturday, November 6, 2021.

The bishop said that no matter how broken a heart is, it can be filled with new life through the love of Christ that the medal recipients and people of faith bring to those who are suffering and in need.

The honorees were recognized for their volunteer service to parishes, schools and charities throughout Fairfield County. Among them were many married couples and individuals of all ages honored for their service.

Friends and families of the honorees filled the Cathedral with a spirit of joy and happiness as the recipients were called forward to receive the medal and have their photo taken with Bishop Caggiano. They broke into warm and spirited applause at the end of the ceremony.

The bishop conferred the medals in two separate services in order to safeguard recipients as the pandemic continues. Last year’s service was cancelled because of the surge in COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations.

‘We are about something very different here’

After an introductory hymn, the chanting of the psalms and a reading, the bishop began his homily by noting that the conferring of a medal or medallion in the ancient world was a much coveted honor that brought power, prestige and possessions. But for Christians, he said it’s a sign of something beyond earthly treasure.

“We are about something very different here. In faith we have baptized this honor, so that we can serve the Lord. We are recognizing a very different life,” said the bishop as he spoke from the center aisle of the Cathedral.

“You have not sought privilege or prestige. You have served quietly in ordinary ways and given in countless moments. You are not interested in the limelight. You do it in the name of one who said, ‘I have not come to be served, but to serve.’”

Following his homily the bishop blessed the medals, which were displayed in bright red cases in front of the altar. On one side of the medal is an image of St. Augustine of Hippo, patron saint of the diocese. The reverse features the coat of arms of the diocese.

“My brothers and sisters in Christ, we are here today to confer the St. Augustine Medal of Service upon those men and women who have been recognized by their pastors and parishes as having demonstrated a profound level of dedication to Christ and to his Church as evidenced in their extraordinary level of service,” the bishop said.

“Send down your blessings on these, your servants, who so generously devote themselves to helping others and upon the medals which recognize the sacrificial work they have accomplished in service to their parishes, schools and to various charitable works across the diocese,” he prayed.

As Al Barber, retired Catholic Charities executive, called the recipients forward, the bishop took time to personally thank each recipient.

“It is my honor to give you this medal. Wear it as a sign and symbol of one whom you’ve pledged your allegiance, one you know, love and serve. Wear this medal with dignity and pride that comes from the Lord, whose hands, feet and voice you are in the world,” he said.

Many recipients were accompanied by their pastors and parish priests, who took the time from their busy weekend schedules to support their parishioners.

The bishop said the St. Augustine medals represent the influence that can only be found in humbly serving others rather than seeking to dominate or control.

“The only power that will endure is love. Power that seeks and grasps and tries to dominate ends in nothing. And you have loved in quiet, simple and gentle ways. Do not underestimate the influence you have had on the countless lives you’ve touched by the ministry and service you give.”
## 2021 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

**Saint Bridget of Ireland Parish, Stamford:**
- Ms. Anis & Mrs. Tina Baranadion
- Nominated by Reverend Edward J. McAuley

**Saint Jude Parish, Monroe:**
- Mr. Douglas & Mrs. Norman Brussell
- Nominated by Reverend Joseph Gill

**Church of the Assumption, Westport:**
- Ms. Michael Bonaventura
- Nominated by Reverend Cyril Barlowe

**Saint Mary Parish, Stamford:**
- Mr. Arnulfo Boninacio Calvin-Colorado & Mrs. Magdaleno-Atwood
- Nominated by Reverend Gustave Falla

**Saint Maurice Parish, Stamford:**
- Ms. Doreen Condivo
- Nominated by Reverend James K. Bates

**Saint Peter Parish, Bridgeport:**
- Ms. Helen Delson
- Nominated by Reverend John J. Gomez

**Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Stamford:**
- Ms. Martha Mary Dombrowski
- Nominated by Reverend Paweł Hrebenko

**Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish, Fairfield:**
- Ms. Mary Jane Edwards
- Nominated by Reverend Victor T. Martin

**Saint Leo Parish, Stamford:**
- Mr. Joseph Esposito
- Nominated by Reverend James D. Grosso

**Notre Dame of Easton Parish, Easton:**
- Mrs. Michelle Falcone
- Nominated by Reverend Michael P. Lyons

**Parish of Saint Cecelia — Saint Gabriel, Stamford:**
- Mr. Marc & Mrs. Laura Kavelisch
- Nominated by Reverend Peter Captiani

**Saint Andrew Parish, Bridgeport:**
- Ms. Mary Lois Gudauskas
- Nominated by Reverend Milan Dimic

**The Diocese of Bridgeport Episcopal Vicar of Administration, Mr. William Horsfall:**
- Nominated by Deacon Patrick Tool

**The Parish of Saint Catherine & Saint Agnes, Old Greenwich:**
- Mr. David Junius & Mrs. Rosemary Horsfall
- Nominated by Reverend William Platt

**Saint Pius X Parish, Fairfield:**
- Mr. Thomas & Mrs. Rhianne Kelly
- Nominated by Reverend Samuel Kachuba

**The Diocese of Bridgeport Institute for Catholic Formation, Ms. Maryann Koos:**
- Nominated by Reverend Sean R. Kulczak

**Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Fairfield:**
- Ms. Marc & Mrs. Laura Kavelisch
- Nominated by Reverend Peter Captiani

**Diocese of Bridgeport Episcopal Vicar of Administration, Mr. Curt Kulczak:**
- Nominated by Deacon Patrick Tool.
2021 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

St. Margaret Bourgeoys, Brookfield: Mrs. Denise Kurpiewski & Mr. Stanley Kurpiewski (posthumously) — Nominated by Reverend Shawn Jordan

Saint Edward the Confessor Parish, New Fairfield: Mr. James Landry — Nominated by Reverend Nick Cirillo

Notre Dame de Perpetuel Secours, Stamford: Ms. Jean Stieve & Mrs. Rose Lecture — Nominated by Reverend Gay Donnell

Saint Lawrence Parish, Shelton: Mr. William Maggi — Nominated by Reverend Cyprian Bejan

Sacred Heart Parish, Greenwich: Mr. John & Mrs. Donna Mann — Nominated by Reverend Mark D'Silva

Saint Gregory the Great Parish, Danbury: Mr. Eugene McNamara — Nominated by Reverend Michael L. Dunn

Sacred Heart Parish, Danbury: Mr. Robert & Mrs. Kathleen Majza — Nominated by Reverend Norman J. Guilbert

Saint Margaret Mary Parish, Shelton: Mr. Donald Middleton — Nominated by Reverend Frank Hoffman

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Danbury: Mr. Joao Figueredo & Mrs. Maria Assuncao Monteiro — Nominated by Reverend Antonio C. de Araujo

Saint Mary Parish, Bridgeport: Mr. Luis Antonio & Mrs. Victoria Moreno — Nominated by Reverend Rolando Torres

Saint Jerome Parish, Norwalk: Mr. Jack & Mrs. Lisa O'Melia — Nominated by Reverend Rojin Karickal

Holy Vietnamese Martyrs, Bridgeport: Mr. Kenny Kim & Mrs. Linn Thu Pham — Nominated by Reverend Philip Lanh Phan

Saint Mary Parish, Greenwich: Mrs. Charlene Prizioziano — Nominated by Reverend Michael Jones

Saint Mary Parish, Bridgeport: Mrs. Nancy Rannay — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Robert E. Weiss

Saint Anthony of Padua Parish, Fairfield: Mr. Robert Sabre — Nominated by Dr. Eleanor Sauers

Saint Joseph and Saint Louise’s Parish, Norwalk: Mr. Angel & Mrs. Melissa Aquino Sandoval — Nominated by Reverend Edicson Orozco

Saint Michael the Archangel Parish, Greenwich: Mr. John E. Schmeltzer, III — Nominated by Reverend Law Jeremiah

Saint Theresa Parish, Trumbull: Mr. Mark & Mrs. Mary Smith — Nominated by Reverend Brian Gannon

Saint Therese School, Trumbull: — Nominated by Mr. Peter Schultz, Principal

Saint Philip Parish, Norwalk: — Nominated by Reverend Sudhir D’Souza

Saint Joseph School, Trumbull: — Nominated by Rev. Peter Schultz, Principal

Saint Theresa School, Trumbull: — Nominated by Mr. Peter Schultz, Principal

Saint Michael the Archangel Parish, Greenwich: — Nominated by Reverend Law Jeremiah

Saint Theresa Parish, Trumbull: — Nominated by Reverend Brian Gannon

Saint Therese School, Trumbull: — Nominated by Mr. Peter Schultz, Principal

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Saint Joseph School, Trumbull: — Nominated by Rev. Peter Schultz, Principal

Saint Theresa School, Trumbull: — Nominated by Mr. Peter Schultz, Principal
2021 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

The Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport: Mr. Marlon & Mrs. Magaly Zepeda — Nominated by Very Reverend Juan Gabriel Avila

Saint Joseph Parish, Danbury: Mr. George Zeigler — Nominated by Reverend Samuel Scott

The Catholic Academy of Stamford: Mrs. Beth Adamson — Nominated by Ms. Patricia Brady, Principal

Saint Catherine of Siena School, Trumbull: Mr. Joseph Boubard — Nominated by Mrs. Rachel Ambrosio, Principal

Our Lady Star of the Sea, Stamford: Mr. Eric & Mrs. Betty Brennan — Nominated by Reverend Peter Smulik

Saint Mark Parish, Stratford: Mr. Charles Carroll — Nominated by Reverend Berinda Sorren

Holy Cross Parish, Fairfield: Mrs. Evelyn Chomont — Nominated by Reverend Alfred Pecaric

Saint Rose of Lima School, Newtown: Ms. Michael Coppola — Nominated by Mr. Bardhyl Gjoka, Principal

Church of the Holy Spirit, Stamford: Mr. Michael DePonte — Nominated by Reverend Luke P. Suarez

Assumption Catholic School, Fairfield: Dr. Thomas & Mrs. Andrea French — Nominated by Reverend Alfred Pecaric

The Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist: Mr. Michael Coppola — Nominated by Very Reverend Cyprian La Pastina

Saint Elizabeth Seton Parish, Ridgefield: Mr. Neal & Mrs. Linda Hicks — Nominated by Reverend Joseph A. Prince

Sacred Heart and Saint Patrick Parish, Redding Ridge: Ms. Agustin & Mr. Jesse Magana — Nominated by Reverend Joseph Crevena

Sacred Heart Parish, Stamford: Mrs. Marie Loiseau — Nominated by Reverend Alfonso Picone

Saint Joseph Parish, Brookfield: Mr. Paul & Mrs. Suzanne Holko — Nominated by Reverend George F. O’Neill

St. Thomas More Parish, Darien: Mrs. Adeline Kelly — Nominated by Reverend Paul G. Murphy

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Danbury: Mr. Agustin & Mrs. Norma Magana — Nominated by Reverend John J. Perez

Saint Mary School, Bethel: Mr. Joseph Magana — Nominated by Mr. Scott Smith, Principal

Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Wilton: Mr. Frank DiPonte — Nominated by Reverend Reginald Norman

Holy Cross Parish, Fairfield: Mrs. Marie Loiseau — Nominated by Reverend Alfonso Picone

Saint Peter Parish, Wilton: Mr. Frank DiPonte — Nominated by Reverend Reginald Norman

Saint Mark Parish, Stratford: Mr. Charles Carroll — Nominated by Reverend Berinda Sorren

Sacred Heart Parish, Stamford: Mrs. Marie Loiseau — Nominated by Reverend Alfonso Picone

Saint Joseph Parish, Danbury: Mr. George Zeigler — Nominated by Reverend Samuel Scott

The Catholic Academy of Stamford: Mrs. Beth Adamson — Nominated by Ms. Patricia Brady, Principal

Saint Catherine of Siena School, Trumbull: Mr. Joseph Boubard — Nominated by Mrs. Rachel Ambrosio, Principal

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Saint Elizabeth Seton Parish, Ridgefield: Mr. Neal & Mrs. Linda Hicks — Nominated by Reverend Joseph A. Prince

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Saint Joseph Parish, Brookfield: Mr. Paul & Mrs. Suzanne Holko — Nominated by Reverend George F. O’Neill

St. Thomas More Parish, Darien: Mrs. Adeline Kelly — Nominated by Reverend Paul G. Murphy

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Danbury: Mr. Agustin & Mrs. Norma Magana — Nominated by Reverend John J. Perez

Saint Mary School, Bethel: Mr. Joseph Magana — Nominated by Mr. Scott Smith, Principal
2021 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

Saint George Parish, Bridgeport:
Mrs. Carolina Maldonado — Nominated by Reverend Alexis Morenza

Saint Francis of Assisi Parish, Weston:
Mr. Joseph & Mrs. Pan Mancini — Nominated by Reverend Augustine Nguyen

Our Lady of Grace Parish, Stratford:
Mr. Michael & Mrs. Katherine Marrella — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Martin F. Ryan

Saint Paul Parish, Greenwich:
Ms. Lynn Marley — Nominated by Reverend Leszek P. Szymczak

Saint Gregory the Great School, Danbury:
Mr. Michael Mazzucco — Nominated by Mrs. Suzanne Ciecka, Principal

Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish, Norwalk:
Mrs. Pauline Micher — Nominated by Reverend Miroslaw Stachurski

Saint Aloysius Parish, New Canaan:
Mr. Edward & Mrs. Deborah Bernard Millette — Nominated by Reverend Robert M. Kinnally

Saint Ann School, Bridgeport:
Mr. Kenneth & Mrs. Mary Moon — Nominated by Mrs. Patricia Griffin, Principal

Cardinal Kain Academy, Stamford:
Mr. William & Mrs. Elizabeth Nagle — Nominated by Dr. Alexander Miller, Principal

Saint Joseph School, Danbury:
Mr. Liam & Mrs. Mary O’Keefe — Nominated by Dr. Louis Howe, Principal

All Saints Academy, Norwalk:
Mrs. Lindsay Pignataro — Nominated by Mrs. Linda Dunn, Principal

Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Bridgeport:
Ms. Josie & Mrs. Maria Ribiero — Nominated by Reverend Augustin Perri

Diocese of Bridgeport Development Office:
Mr. Brian Russell — Nominated by Reverend Peter J. Adamski

Saint Mark School, Stratford:
Mr. Alexander & Mrs. Norine Pignuccio — Nominated by Mrs. Melissa Warner, Principal

Kolbe Cathedral High School, Bridgeport:
Mr. Rhonda Scales-Tracker — Nominated by Mrs. Camille Fuglazi, Principal
2021 Saint Augustine Medal of Service

Saint Mary Parish, Bethel:
Mr. John & Mrs. Shani Specht — Nominated by Reverend Corey Pavia

Saint Mary Parish, Ridgefield:
Mr. Robert & Mrs. Andrea Wolf — Nominated by Mrs. Anna O’Rourke, Principal

Saint Stephen Parish, Trumbull:
Mr. Michael and Mrs. Linda Lee — Nominated by Reverend Terry Walsh

Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Stratford:
Mr. Kevin & Mrs. Laurie Vallerie — Nominated by Mrs. Mary Ann Fleming, Principal

Saint John Parish, Westport:
Mr. & Mrs. Steve Maloney — Nominated by Reverend John Harkins

Holy Trinity Catholic Academy, Shelton:
Ms. Isidra & Ms. Marlyn Blodgett — Nominated by Reverend Michael Dogali

Saint Mary Parish, Wilton:
Mr. Nicholas & Mrs. Monique Marzan — Nominated by Reverend Robert Ruegg

Saint Mary Parish, St. Joseph School, Norwalk:
Mr. & Mrs. Hallahan — Nominated by Reverend John S. McCarthy

Saint Mary Parish, Good Shepherd:
Mr. & Mrs. Schmitt — Nominated by Reverend John S. McCarthy

The Catholic Academy of Bridgeport:
Mr. Dennis Boyd — Nominated by The Catholic Academy of Bridgeport

Notre Dame High School, Fairfield:
Mr. Paul & Mrs. Mary Ann Gleason — Nominated by Mr. Christopher Cipriano, Principal

Saint Mary Parish, Stratford:
Mr. Joseph & Mrs. Mary Alyse — Nominated by Reverend Nicholas Parisi

Saint Stephen Parish, Bridgeport:
Mr. & Mrs. Maloney — Nominated by Reverend Monsignor Kevin Royal

Saint Roch Parish, Greenwich:
Mr. Sylvester Picora — Nominated by Reverend Carl McIntosh

Greenwich Catholic School, Greenwich:
Mr. Fred & Mrs. Melinda DeCuro — Nominated by Mrs. Rebecca Stock, Principal

Saint Roch Parish, Bridgeport:
Mr. William & Mrs. Alicia Rodriguez — Nominated by Reverend Jose Abadzic & Mrs. Gabriella de la Paz

Saint Catherine of Siena Parish, Bridgeport:
Mr. Scott Wright — Nominated by Reverend Joseph A. Marcello

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Stratford:
Mr. Joseph & Mrs. Mary Alyse — Nominated by Reverend Nicholas Parisi

Our Lady of Fatima School, Wilton:
Mr. Kevin & Mrs. Laurie Vallerie — Nominated by Mrs. Mary Ann Fleming, Principal

Saint Thomas Aquinas School, Fairfield:
Mrs. Jeffrey & Mrs. Laure Stepanowski — Nominated by Mr. Patrick D. Higgins, Principal

Saint Peter School, Danbury:
Mr. Stephen Sweeney — Nominated by Mrs. Mary Lou Torre, Principal

Isaac Hall

Medal Award Recipients
who were unable to attend the Prayer Service

Saint Joseph Parish, Shelton:
Ms. Sandra & Mr. Mark Rose — Nominated by Reverend Michael Dogali

Saint Mary Parish, St. Margaret Parish, Bridgeport:
Mr. & Mrs. Hallahan — Nominated by Reverend John S. McCarthy

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Stratford:
Mr. Joseph & Mrs. Mary Alyse — Nominated by Reverend Nicholas Parisi

Saint Mary Parish, Ridgefield:
Mr. Nicholas & Mrs. Marilyn Rizza — Nominated by Reverend Kevin Royal

Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Stratford:
Mr. Cathy Tringese — Nominated by Reverend Albert G. Pinciaro
**28 Ways to Prepare for Christmas**

**Nov 28** Make time to pray.
Commit, individually or as a household, to a designated prayer time each day or each week. Consider exploring one of the traditional Catholic prayers each week, such as the Rosary, Luminous Mysteries, the Examen, or Morning or Night Prayer.

**Dec 1** Choose life!
Donate money or items to organizations that provide services for pregnant women or families and children. Pray that all may choose life.

**Dec 5** Go to confession.
Clear out the clutter in your heart and mind by healing your relationship with God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Dec 9** Don’t forget Saint Joseph.
In honor of Saint Joseph, Patron Saint of Workers, be sure to show kindness to workers today, especially those working in retail, hospitality, public safety, and medicine.

**Dec 14** Pray for the dead.
This time of year can be particularly difficult for those who are grieving. Send a card or note to those who are experiencing Christmas without a loved one for the first time. Pray for those who have died and all who love them.

**Dec 15** Go caroling!
Spread the joy of the season by carolling at a nursing home or other care facility or in your neighborhood. Can’t gather with others? Invite friends or family members to record a song and exchange videos.

**Dec 19** Watch a movie.
Make some popcorn and hot chocolate and settle in for a seasonal movie such as A Charlie Brown Christmas, It’s a Wonderful Life, or The Nativity Story.

**Dec 23** Reserve a gift or two.
To open on the Solemnity of the Epiphany, or Three Kings, which celebrates the Magi paying homage to the Infant Jesus, offering gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

**Dec 24** Let heaven & nature sing.
Look for simple ways to have a more environmentally-friendly holiday. Use gift wrap that is reusable or recyclable. Avoid single-use plastics. Be conscious of energy and water use. Thank God for the gift of creation.

**Dec 25** Joy to the world!
Put on some music. Prepare a feast. Rejoice! God is with us! Come, let us adore him.

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**Dec 2** Put up the nativity.
Tell the story of Jesus’ birth as you work together to set up the manger scene. For extra fun, keep baby Jesus out of the crib and let the youngest member of the family place him in the manger on Christmas morning.

**Dec 6** Celebrate the feasts!
Saint Nicholas (Dec. 6), Saint Juan Diego (Dec. 9), Saint Lucy (Dec. 13) and Saint John of the Cross (Dec. 14) all have feast days during Advent. Take time to learn about and celebrate these holy heroes.

**Dec 10** Make a grocery list.
As you plan for holiday baking or your Christmas meal, add some extra items to donate to a food pantry or organization that provides meals for those in need.

**Dec 11** Serve others.
Help a loved one put up decorations. Offer to babysit or provide respite for caregivers. Wrap gifts or shovel snow for a neighbor. Serve coffee or a meal to those who are hungry. Make a donation to a service organization.

**Dec 12** Take a hike!
Joseph and Mary journeyed to Bethlehem. The Wise Men journeyed to find the Baby Jesus. Get outdoors and reflect on your own walk toward God.

**Dec 16** Pray a 16 Christmas novena,
beginning on December 16 and concluding on December 24. Search the internet for the traditional Saint Andrew Christmas novena or learn about cultural celebrations such as Las Posadas or Simbang Gabi.

**Dec 17** O Come, O Come Emmanuel!
The O Antiphons, used during evening prayer, begin on December 17. Sing the appropriate verse of the Advent Carol each night this week.

**Dec 20** Look at the stars!
The shepherds and the Magi experienced celestial events in the Nativity story. Go out and view the night sky, giving thanks for the gift of creation.

**Dec 21** On the longest night,
reach out to those experiencing depression, anxiety, or otherwise struggling during this season. Offer a prayer for those who need comfort and healing.

**Dec 22** Bake cookies.
Consider taking sweet treats to homeless shelters, food pantries, or other organizations that serve those in poverty. (Check food donation policies first!)

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BY KATHY-ANN GOBIN

RIDGFIELD—Hundreds of parishioners at St. Elizabeth Seton Church got a pleasant surprise during a Jubilee Celebration Mass of Thanksgiving for Pastor Joseph A. Prince. Father Prince was celebrating 50 years in the priesthood.

Frank J. Caggiano granted his requests that enabled him to celebrate 50 years of ministerial priesthood at the age of 77; two years past customary priesthood retirement, to continue as pastor until the end of the year and to continue as pastor emeritus beyond his retirement.

“I just want to be with my people here. This is my family,” he said, and his congregation couldn’t be happier about that decision.

“He’s like a good father, very dependable and wise and caring and protective,” said Bob Young who attended the Mass with his wife, Mary. “His daily Mass and homilies are fantastic!”

The congregation echoed the sentiment about how caring Father Prince is of his flock and how meaningful it was for them that he took charge during the uncertain time of the pandemic by helping parishioners feel connected to the church through initially adopting outdoor Masses and soon after offering live streaming of Mass.

“The homilies relate to them because it is what they want to hear,” he said. “It’s not only giving the message from the scripture but making it relevant to their everyday life.”

Father Prince said he was fortunate to have impactful teachers throughout his life who were artful storytellers that would start a class with a story, joke or anecdote to get everyone’s attention before beginning to teach.

On this day, the homilist, Father Antony Asir, shared his gratitude for Father Prince’s guidance and friendship over the decades. Father Asir was an altar server at the time of Father Prince’s ordination in India.

He said the 50 years of service to others was a beautiful gift of love.

“We thank God that you allowed God to happen. That you allowed the desire of God to come alive in you,” said Father Asir, noting that Father Prince was 10 years-old when his father died and it was his mother and grandfather who encouraged him to become a priest, following in the footsteps of some of his relatives before him.

During the Mass, Father Prince was presented with a cloak by some of his relatives before him. It was his mother and grandfather years-old when his father died and it was his mother and grandfather who encouraged him to become a priest, following in the footsteps of some of his relatives before him.

Father’s Prince’s journey to Ridgefield was realized after a trip to Manila didn’t work out and he travelled to the United States and served as an associate at St. Mary’s in downtown Ridgefield.

“Then I just want to be with my people here. This is my family,” he said, and his congregation couldn’t be happier about that decision.

“I wanted to give them a surprise,” he said of the well-kept secret. The congregation erupted in applause after the announcement at the end of Mass on Sunday, October 24.

“It was one of the most challenging things I ever did,” said Father Prince about keeping the secret.

This World Mission Sunday was very significant because on World Mission Sunday 50 years ago Father Prince was ordained a priest.

“As I join in thanking the Lord for the 50 years of blessings,” he said at the opening of Mass.

“For you are the greatest blessing he said at the opening of Mass.

“They gave me everything I needed,” he said. “They were ministering to me and I was ministering to them. That’s what really stands out to me,” he said. “They are incredibly loving people. I’ve been so blessed.”

After Mass, many attended a celebratory lunch with Father Prince in the church’s reception hall where note paper and pens were left on the round tables for people to write congratulatory comments and shared remembrances of time together over the last 25 years.

“We made a special trip from Brookfield,” said 90-year-old Jean Gunning, who attended the Mass and the reception afterwards with her daughter Jean Llewellyn, to celebrate with Father Prince.

“We loved his homilies,” Gunning said. “He’s so down to earth. He made life simple. He said don’t worry God has a plan. You could go out of Mass with that thought in your head.”

Father Prince is looking forward to his new role in the new year as pastor emeritus.

“I will help out in every possible liturgical need in the parish and pastoral care,” he said. “What I will not be doing is anything to do with administration,” he said, adding, “it’s a serious responsibility as pastor to manage finances, capital projects, religious education and mediate between departments.

“I am deeply grateful for the many blessings I have received from my people and I ask that they pray for me to help me continue to learn more about what priesthood is all about and about what ministry is all about.”
Foundations in Faith

Vibrant and vital: understanding the SFX Fund

By ROSE BRENnan

BRIDGEPORT—The St. Francis Xavier Fund is one of nine programs overseen by Foundations in Faith. It supports nine of the diocese’s urban parishes: six in Bridgeport, and one each in Danbury, Norwalk and Stamford. It receives funding from donors and the We Stand With Christ campaign.

Foundation Director Kelly Weldon noted that the parishes targeted by the St. Francis Xavier Fund are considered “vibrant” and “vital” to the diocese, but nevertheless face continuing socioeconomic challenges. And that’s what the fund is there for: to take some of the burden off the pastors’ shoulders.

Plus, life gets in the way. And many of these parishes might not have the financial ability to meet a sudden expense, like a broken boiler or a leaking roof. But now they can get that help from the St. Francis Xavier Fund.

What sets the fund apart from the rest of Foundations in Faith’s eight other funds is its ability to provide emergency assistance quickly. While the other funds might have application periods once or twice a year, if a parish qualifies for the St. Francis Xavier Fund, they can essentially request assistance whenever they need it.

And if approved, they’ll get that funding right away. If a priest requests funding for an emergency project early in the week and his project is approved, work could begin on it by the end of the week.

The work, however, couldn’t happen without the fund’s committee, including Weldon, Patrick Turner, Brian Young, Joe Sindelar, Mike Donoghue, Father Art Mollehauer and Deacon Patrick Toole. Weldon said their commitment and energy to fulfilling the fund’s mission is “through the roof.”

The fund proved crucial during the early months of the coronavirus pandemic, when the diocese’s parishes had to shutter their doors. And as a result, no weekly offerings were coming in, meaning many churches faced financial troubles.

Luckily, Weldon said, the St. Francis Xavier Fund committee was able to step in to the tune of $230,000 in COVID-19 emergency aid grants to 12 parishes that needed help most.

According to Weldon, the fund takes a three-pronged approach with the parishes it supports. First, it alleviates emergency needs. Next, it funds and provides expertise for the parishes to strengthen their capacity. Finally, it funds strategies and partnerships to bring all of the diocese’s parishes up to a baseline of success.

“We see a need, we meet a need, we learn from the process and offer support to other urban parishes,” Weldon said. “Each parish is unique, yet common themes are emerging.”

One of those common themes was providing better digital resources for the parishes. That would allow them to utilize online platforms to hold services when gathering in person wasn’t possible and would meet additional needs as well.

“The digital divide was significant for the urban missionary parishes, so we launched the Communications and Technology grants,” Weldon said. “These grants provided the necessary technology to livestream Mass, have an online donation function, a robust website, virtual religious education programs, email and e-newsletter platforms, increased internet security and improved phone lines.”

The fund has been firing on all cylinders for the better part of two years. And it’s gotten the attention of some of the highest-ranking members of the diocese, including Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, as well.

“I am delighted and grateful to see how the SFX Fund has become a transformative process in our diocese,” the bishop said.

According to Weldon, to date, the St. Francis Xavier Fund has distributed nearly $700,000 to the diocese’s missionary parishes. And it only has plans to give more.

“The partnerships have been very successful,” Weldon said. “We are blessed.”
Giving thanks by helping others

BRIDGEPORT—Thanksgiving and the Christmas season are times of year when people are most in the giving spirit and are often most aware of the poor, homeless and vulnerable in the community, says Pam Rittman, director of the Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA). “Giving thanks by helping others” is the true meaning of Thanksgiving,” she said.

She’s hoping that the people of the diocese, particularly those who have not yet given, will close out the 2021 ACA by pushing the budget, so that it can continue during the height of the pandemic.

Rittman says that while many are no longer suffering the tremendous challenges they faced during the height of the pandemic, they continue to struggle providing for themselves and their families, while others need spiritual and psychological support to deal with anxiety and uncertainty. During the height of the pandemic our parishioners recognized the importance of the Annual Catholic Appeal in creating resources and meeting needs at every level from basic human services to education, faith formation and communications.

Many people understand that the appeal represents the generosity and compassion of the diocese for those who are hungry, homeless and vulnerable, but they may also overlook the tremendous support the ACA provides for vocations, renewal through new programs such as the current “Ambassador” initiative, and the overall spiritual life of the diocese.

Likewise, the ACA has helped to make Catholic education possible for many families through the scholarship assistance it provides. That need has only grown during the COVID crisis as more families chose Catholic schools because of their quality, safety, values and overall sense of community.

Rittman said there are many challenges ahead, but one of more encouraging signs of the past year has been the number of parishies that have participated in the new partnership program that enables more affluent parishes to share their above-goal ACA funds with parishes that are pastorally vibrant but financially challenged.

“The generosity of so many has truly united us as one family in faith, but we still need help to close the gap. We are almost there, but not quite. Let’s make every effort to meet the needs in gratitude for all that God has done for us—His blessings, protection, sustenance and mercy—during the most historic, difficult year and half.”

(To make your pledge online, visit www.2021ACABridgeport.com, or call 203.416.1470. You may also donate by texting the word APPEAL to 475.241.7499. Please visit the website to view the 2021 Appeal video and learn more.)

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.

Michele Gartland of Rucci Law Group, LLC in Darien, says that estate planning is all about making sure your wishes are known and fulfilled and documenting them properly. People who do not have wills are missing the opportunity to guide the process of how they want to have their assets distributed.

“It is a wonderful time to be generous,” she says. “Often bequests can be allocated by percentages, and you can include family members as well as causes that are important to you. The basics are having a document in place that will let people know what your wishes are, appointing an executor to carry out those wishes and settle your estate, and specifying how you want your assets distributed after you pass away.”

Gartland also encourages letting everyone know where a will is located and having a list of your bank accounts and assets that is readily accessible. It is important to know where the original will is because this is the version that will be filed with the probate court when death occurs.

Thomas Kolenberg, a board member of Foundations in Charity, and financial adviser, still recalls the discussion he and his brother Bob had with their ailing father 16 years ago.

“At the time, my father was dying and wanted a family plot,” he said. “We knew he was going to pass in a few months, so we had a frank conversation with him. As his son, I could implement his wishes.”

His father John, who passed away in 2005, gave him explicit instructions about his funeral Mass and information for an obituary and eulogy. Because of that discussion, there is a family plot, where Tom’s mother Mary was buried several weeks ago.

“My mother and father were buried together,” he said. “And I had peace of mind that we had the family plot at Queen of Peace Cemetery in Stamford and that almost all of our family will be buried in the same location. That is a comfort, knowing we respected their wishes.”

Another aspect of end-of-life planning, he said, is that it gives Catholics an opportunity to leave a charitable gift that can last in perpetuity by planning for it in their will. He recounts the story of a family who left money in a separate fund that will permit them to have Masses celebrated for the repose of their souls.

Legacy planning, he says, begins with a conversation with family members about your funeral, purchasing a cemetery plot and leaving something for the Catholic causes that are important to you.

“I can’t emphasize enough that you have to take a step—even if it’s a small step—to have a conversation with your spouse and children and start by beginning to look at your funeral,” he said. “Funeral planning is an act of charity, and we must not forget that we are all constantly in need of prayer and sacraments to earn our way to heaven.”

(For more information and to access resources such as the “Will Planning Checklist” and the “Estate Administrator’s Checklist,” visit the Diocese of Bridgeport’s Planned Giving website at www.bridgeportdiocese.plannedgiving.org or contact Gallagher at jgallagher@diobpt.org.)
Bishop urges faithful to open their hearts to immigrants

By JOE PISANI

STAMFORD—Celebrating the feast of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, patron saint of immigrants, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said that if it weren’t for “this one remarkable woman, many of us of Italian descent would not be here today.”

The bishop honored her at Mass on Sunday, November 7, 2021, at Sacred Heart Church, which is sponsored by Catholic Charities of Fairfield County. It commemorates the Italian-American founder of the religious order, who supported immigrants throughout the United States and established 67 institutions, including schools, orphanages and hospitals that cared for the poor and marginalized.

“Mother’s message today is as it has been throughout her whole life and that is love—bringing the love of Christ to the entire world,” Sr. Lucille said. “That is the message the Missionary Cabrini Sisters bring to the world. Bringing that love means feeding the poor and reaching out to those in hardship. Mother really had a devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and that is the devotion and charity she has passed on to us.”

Mother’s deep love of the Sacred Heart is what propelled her to do everything she did. It was that love of him that he shared with her, and she reciprocated that love to people she met along the way.

“That is what we are trying to do today through that same love, that same going out of ourselves to give to others, especially those who are in dire straits,” she said.

Sister Lucille, who founded the Cabrini Mission Foundation, has been recognized for her missionary spirit and service to immigrants. Established in 1998, the foundation responds to society’s needs by supporting programs and institutions of healing, healthcare, social services, teaching and caring.

A non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, Cabrini Mission Foundation seeks to maintain and enhance the works of the order’s Guadalupe Province, which encompasses the United States, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and Australia, by providing philanthropic support through endowment and donor programs. (For more information, visit www.cabrinifoundation.org)
OBITUARIES

Sister Lorraine Quinn, SSND

By SISTER KAY O’CONNELL

Editor’s Note: Sister Lorraine Quinn, SSND, known to many in the diocese for her ministry in education, died at the age of 88 on August 11, at New York Presbyterian Hospital in Queens. Her ministry in schools, parishes, and charitable settings across the Diocese of Bridgeport inspired many and left a lasting legacy of service and compassion. Her funeral was celebrated at St. Margaret’s Shrine in Bridgeport, her parish church. Burial followed at St. Mary Cemetery in Bethel. We are pleased to share this life tribute by Siter Kay O’Connell, a member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame community.

On Easter Sunday, April 16, 1933, Lorraine Agnes was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut to Clifford Stephen, a native of Chicago, and Theresa Butkus Quinn of Fairfield, Connecticut. Her big brother, three years old, “loved to steal into her room and try to hold her.” Sadly, that September he died of appendicitis. Five years later, another brother, Clifford John, arrived. He was the brother she had begged her mother for, because “all her playmates had baby brothers.” Big sister Lorraine was baptized at Assumption Church, in Fairfield. Later, First Communion and Confirmation were celebrated at Holy Family Church, also in Fairfield.

After starting in public schools, Lorraine and Cliff were registered at St. Ann School in Fairfield, in the sixth and second grades, with the Sisters of Charity. “From the first day of school with the Sisters, I knew that that is what I wanted to be,” she later wrote. For high school, Lorraine first enrolled at St. John Commercial, a two-year school conducted by SSNDs in Bridgeport offering both an academic and business curriculum. There she learned about the SSND Aspiranture in Fort Lee, New Jersey, at the Academy of the Holy Angels. Quite excited by the reports she heard, Lorraine asked her mother’s permission to go there, but “she was very unresponsive and said no.” She did not want me to leave home for school, but after a talk with one of the Sisters she gave her consent.” Her father died very suddenly during the summer of 1949, the time of her graduation from St. John’s. “But this did not change my mother’s decision,” Lorraine wrote. She graduated from the Aspiranture in 1951 and entered the Candidature in Baltimore the following August.

For the next two years as a Candidate, Lorraine took primary grades in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., and Taneytown, Md. From this last experience, she wrote, “from the example of my Superior, I began to realize the meaning of being a Sister and determined to imitate her as far as I was able.” At Reception in 1953, she received David Marie as her religious name. After first profession in 1954, she taught at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Baltimore for three years and then volunteered for Puerto Rico in 1957. This began eight happy years as teacher and principal at the grade school of the Academia del Perpetuo Socorro in Miramar, and four years as a teacher in Fajardo, and at Santiago Apostol and Notre Dame High School in Caguas.

Of her Miramar years, David wrote, “From the Sisters in Miramar I received such wonderful inspiration and example in both the religious life and professionally. I owe my deepest gratitude to these Sisters who were the instruments of the Divine Teacher. It was a perfect time for preparing to take perpetual vows.”

Returning to the States in 1970, Lorraine served as vice principal at St. Joseph High School in Trumbull, Conn. for two years, before becoming a teacher at the Academy of the Holy Angels in Demarest, N.J.

After receiving her bachelors of arts in English from the College of the Sacred Heart in Santurce, P.R., Lorraine earned two Master’s of Arts degrees—in administration from Fairfield University in 1971, and in Religious Education from Fordham University in 1976. In 1973, she began a new ministry as director of Religious Education at Immaculate Conception Parish in Norwood, N.J. for seven years. During this time she made community with SSNDs in Closter, N.J., before the council asked her to become administrator at the newly-licensed Lourdes Health Care Center in Wilton.

As director of Religious Education, Lorraine later served at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Weston, and Sacred Heart in Georgetown, Conn, as pastoral minister she was responsible for the RCIA program at Resurrection Parish in Rye, N.Y.; and for parish outreach and community building at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Bridgeport, Conn. From 2008 to 2021, Lorraine served as receptionist, registrar and life skills coordinator at Caroline House, a sponsored ministry of the Atlantic-Midwest Province offering ESL and other life skills to immigrant women from several countries.

Lorraine also offered spiritual talks, retreats and other prayer experiences to varied adult and youth groups during these years. Her extremely generous spirit, love for the needy and spiritually hunger and her manifold talents can be deduced easily from the breadth of her ministries. She was also an avid golfer until this past spring.

Only in late 2020 did Lorraine retire to VND. In July 2021, she needed care at Ozanam Hall in Bayside, N.Y. and moved into community with our Sisters there.

SISTER LORRAINE QUINN, SSND

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Hall-of-fame honors for Smith, Walsh

By DON HARRISON

Basketball was the common denominator, but Chris Smith and Mike Walsh traveled diverse paths to receive acclaim for their accomplishments.

Chris Smith made two quantum leaps following his outstanding playing career at Kolbe Cathedral High, becoming the all-time leading scorer at UConn (2,145 points) and then was selected by the Minnesota Timberwolves on the second round of the 1992 NBA draft. He played three seasons with the club.

Smith, a 6-foot-2 guard with multiple skills, excelled at every level: As a Parade All-American and two-time All-State selection at Kolbe Cathedral High School (1984-88); as a four-year star at the University of Connecticut (1988-92), where he set the still-standing career record of 2,145 points and was selected to the Huskies’ all-century team; and as the team’s all-time leading scorer at UConn (2,145 points) and was chosen Connecticut’s Gatorade Player of the Year and a three-way tie for second.

Walsh, 74, was named to the Connecticut High School Coaches Association’s Hall of Fame last year, but the dinner was cancelled because of the pandemic. So, he will be inducted at the group’s 44th dinner on Nov. 18 in Southington.

“As a coach, it’s really special to be honored by your fellow coaches. It really caps my career,” Walsh stated.

Although just a freshman, Smith was a significant contributor to Kolbe Cathedral winning the CIAC Class M state title in 1985, culminating with a 55-53 victory over diocesan rival St. Joseph of Trumbull — in triple overtime. He continued to develop his game and, as a senior, averaged 28.2 points and 10 assists and was chosen Connecticut’s Gatorade Player of the Year and a Parade All-American. UConn and Syracuse were among several Big East Conference schools seeking his services.

“I was leaning toward Syracuse,” he explained, “but my mother (Lola Smith) told me that was too far away, and she wouldn’t be able to get to many games.”

So, Christopher Gerard Smith became coach Jim Calhoun’s first notable in-state recruit, and he paid immediate dividends. As a sophomore, he was the catalyst behind the 1989-90 Huskies’ 31-6 record, their first Big East title, the school’s second regional final in an NCAA Tournament, and a No. 3 ranking in the final AP national poll.

A touch of irony. When Smith and Laettner became teammates with the Timberwolves, he saw a different side to the Duke All-American that UConn fans loved to hate. “We were teammates for three years. He was a good guy, and we hung out together a lot,” Smith said.

Smith’s NBA career was disrupted by a 10-week lock-out in 1995, and it was during that period he signed a contract to play professionally in Spain. He later played in France and Israel, but when he tore his Achilles tendon, a return to the NBA wasn’t to be.

Several years later, Walsh returned to Stamford Catholic as assistant basketball coach, and after honing his skills for six seasons under Gary Liberatore, he became head coach in 1979.


“I’ve been blessed by great players, and not just great players but hard-nosed kids,” Walsh said. “They really worked hard and did whatever I asked them to do. You know, every time we stepped on the floor, we thought we could win. The other teams… had some doubts.”

In Connecticut’s pantheon of high school coaches, Walsh ranks fourth with 633 career victories (vs. 294 defeats) and fifth in state championships. The names ahead of him are renowned: Vito Montelli, St. Joseph, 11 state titles; and a three-way tie for second.

Cleanup and repairs underway at Assumption Parish

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

FAIRFIELD—Father Peter Cipriani, pastor of Our Lady of Assumption Parish, has issued an announcement in the parish bulletin to keep parishioners aware of the unfolding situation after a fire broke out early last Sunday morning. It took 31 firefighters about 45 minutes to contain the fire, according to authorities.

In a Facebook update on Tuesday following the fire, Father Cipriani assured parishioners that “cleanup and repairs are underway in earnest” and that much of the fire damage was confined to the side area of the church called the “niche.”

In the meantime, the church will continue to hold its Masses in the parish hall until all the repairs have been made.

In his Facebook posting, Father shared a statue of Mary that was charred in the fire but still retained its shape.

“We are reminded that the Church is more than a structure… it is the Living Body of Jesus Christ of which we are all part,” he said. “Certainly, statues can be replaced. Let us not lose sight of the greater reality of the Church.”

Luckily, the damage is likely repairable, but Father expressed that the smoke damage comprises the major extent of the cleaning.

The pastor is hopeful that any repairs needed will be completed before Christmas.

Addressing parishioners before Mass that Sunday, Father said, “This is just a bump in the road, and it is a situation that I can assure you, although rather on the sad side, is certainly very manageable.”

“This is just one more reason for us to just gather together and to get closer as an extended parish family under Our Lady. I can assure you that things are definitely manageable at this point,” he continued.

Father Cipriani thanked parishioners for their outpouring of support and concern. He expressed his sincere appreciation for how readily the congregation stepped up and offered their help in any way they could.
Dr. Joan Kelly leads Catholic Identity Series

By EMILY CLARK

SHELTON—With topics ranging from Marian Devotions to the History of Catholicism in Connecticut, Dr. Joan Kelly of Sacred Heart University engaged participants with doctrine, anecdotes, and humor in a recent special lectures series titled “Catholic Identity: Renewing Our Appreciation.”

Father Michael Dogali, pastor at St. Joseph, feels talks such as these encourage people to get re-involved in Church activities after much time apart during the pandemic. “This type of ‘adult education’ is so important. It brings people together and allows them to get in touch with their faith again,” he said of these one-hour lectures. “There is something for everyone, and they’re so uplifting.”

Dr. Kelly’s first session on Historical Roots of the Creed set the foundation for the series as she focused on the meaning behind some of the Creed’s specific phrases. A discussion of the Marian Devotions included the Blessed Mother’s role in the church and how she is portrayed in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. She also detailed stories of Marian Devotions throughout history, including the Feast of the Holy Rosary in 1571 and the proclamation of Mary as the Patron Saint of the United States in 1846.

After lecturing on the Creed and the veneration of Mary, Dr. Kelly transitioned to Catholic history in Connecticut during her third session. Stories of Father James Fitzton, who celebrated the state’s first Mass in 1780, of Father Michael McGivney and the founding of the Knights of Columbus in New Haven, and of the establishment of the Diocese of Bridgeport after World War II enlightened attendees.

In recognition of the Year of St. Joseph, Dr. Kelly concluded the lecture series with accounts of how this Patron Saint of the Universal Church is portrayed in the Bible, honored throughout the world, and relatable to many. “Pope Francis wants us to see this carpenter from first century Galilee with new eyes,” she said. “We need a fresh start in our devotion to him.”

With a personal connection to this beloved saint, Dr. Kelly, a graduate of St. Joseph College (now University) in West Hartford, proudly held up her ring of St. Joseph, adorned with a carpenter’s shield, cross, crown, and lilies, before concluding this final lecture.

Father Dogali, who has known Dr. Kelly for 30 years, said she has a strong following and has always been a favorite lecturer. “She brings a female perspective to the Creed which is so important,” he said.

St. Joseph High School’s Maroon & Gold Gala 2021

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The Maroon & Gold Gala will be held on November 26, 2021. For more information or to make a gift to support our scholarship fund, visit sjcadets.org/gala

‘God’s love does the healing’

By ANN YANNETTI

NORWALK—Over 1,000 faithful participated in a Healing Mass at St. Matthew Church in Norwalk on Friday, November 5. The Mass was celebrated by world-renowned spiritual director Father James Blount, a priest from the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity, and concelebrated by Father Jeffrey Couture, pastor of St. Matthew Church. St. Matthew Church Parochial Vicar Father Sumil Pereira and Father Sudhir D’Souza, pastor of St. Philip Church also concelebrated.

Empowered with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Father Blount preached about his deep love for the Eucharist, Marian devotion, and stories of conversion and healing. “God does the healing because God is love,” said Father Blount.

Young children, teens, parents, seniors, families and religious filled the pews. After the Mass, Father Blount prayed over each person and provided everyone the opportunity to touch and pray over sacred relics including the robe of Padre Pio.

One of the many blessings of the night was the presence of the St. Matthew Choir, providing prayerful music of comfort and hope. The St. Matthew Knights of Columbus assisted with setup, ushering, crowd control and sanitizing of the church, while the St. Matthew Catholic Daughters assisted the elderly and those physically challenged.

The Friday evening Mass began at 7 pm, with Father Blount staying until 3 am to pray over each individual. On Saturday, Father Blount led a Men’s Retreat, “Men’s Role as a Catholic,” and luncheon attended by 150. The retreat was coordinated by St. Matthew Knights of Columbus.

To know the character of a community, I need only visit its cemeteries.”

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
School News

CAB honors Bishop Caggiano

GREENWICH—On October 4, during a private dinner held at Polpo Restaurant, the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport honored the Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano for his steadfast support during a private dinner held at Polpo Restaurant.

THE CATHOLIC ACADEMY OF BRIDGEPORT recently honored Bishop Frank J. Caggiano Scholars. The students will each have the majority of their tuition paid for from 1st through 8th-grade, as long as they continue to attend school on one of the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport’s four campuses: St. Andrew, St. Ann, St. Augustine or St. Raphael. To provide these special scholarships, $80,000 was raised prior to the dinner.

According to Angela Pohlen, CAB’s executive director, “We believe this is an apt honor for someone like Bishop Caggiano who has prioritized Catholic education in his ministry and leadership since coming to our diocese. He has been a most devoted board member and a true shepherd to all of us here at the Academy.”

The bishop said he was deeply grateful to be honored. “While I believe there are others more worthy of the recognition, I deeply appreciate the encouragement and support it represents,” he said. “I am delighted and extraordinarily grateful for the gift awarded to me. I cannot think of a better way to celebrate the work of Catholic education ever received.”

The night was filled with laughter and many poignant moments, and as it was also the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, the bishop’s namesake, those in attendance heard students sing a beautiful rendition of “The Prayer of St. Francis,” and then a powerful testimonial from alumna Magdalena Dutkowska.

After graduating from CAB, Dutkowska went on to graduate from Sacred Heart Greenwich and is now a senior at Fairfield University. She is triple majoring in International Studies, Spanish and Politics, and minor ing in Humanitarian Action, in preparation for a life of service in the seeking of social justice around the globe.

“Sixteen years ago, my parents made the decision to enroll me in the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport where I was able to learn and grow as an individual and a citizen of our world. I am so appreciative and grateful for this opportunity and all the opportunities that have followed. I am confident in saying that the education, skills, and life lessons that I gained during my time here have made me the person I am today,” said Dutkowska.

Cardinal Kung Academy: Saints in the family!

STAMFORD—As Catholics throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport celebrated All Saints Day on November 1, the students and families of Cardinal Kung Academy had special reason to celebrate: two of the high school students have canonized relatives.

Vincent Morlino (11th-grade) counts in his family tree St. Mary Katharine Kasper, the foundress of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ in Germany, and Natalia Benischek (9th-grade) is the great-great niece of the martyr St. Justino Orona Madrigal of Mexico.

At the All Saints Day Mass, CKA chaplain and theology teacher Father Joseph Gill preached about the various paths that the saints have taken to glory as teachers, religious, kings, parents, and more. While we have thousands of canonized saints whose stories are known to us, All Saints Day is distinct for reminding Catholics of the millions of saints whose stories are lost to history but whose love of God was just as strong. These saints, Father Gill told the students and their families, intercede for all of us and encourage us to think that even we and members of our own families are called to sainthood.

(For more information, visit: www.cardinalkungacademy.org)

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The Miracle of Disbelief

Potpourri
By Thomas H. Hicks

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

The American author, John Updike, wrote the following: “Among the repulsions of atheism for me has been its drastic uninterest- ingness as an intellectual position. Where was the ingenuity, the ambigui- ty, of saying that the universe just happened to happen and that when we’re dead we’re dead? Truth has to have more nooks and cran- nies, more ins and outs than that.”

The current secular irreligious worldview contains an astonishing number of self-described atheists. Web sites, blogs, journals, conferences provide a growing network of support for atheists. There is The American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, and as many as 90 percent of the members of the elite National Academy of Sciences state they are “nontheists.”

A vast amount of modern fiction presents life as though there were no God, and men and women had no religious side to their personalitites. Atheists deserve to be taken seriously, not treated as children. Many atheists lead meaningful lives. They often exert themselves for a better world. Humanist athe- ists often strive to bring peace, kindness, social responsibility, honesty into society. They are concerned with ending war, racism, poverty, injustice, philanthropic endeavors. Many atheists seem to make themselves at home in a world without a supernatural.

However, there’s a couple of dispositions I’ve noticed about atheists. Many seem to have decided not to deal with the “big questions,” such as: What is it all about? Why are we here? Who are we? Why is there a world? Does life have a plot? Where are we going? As someone put it: Who are we under these stars, with the wind on our faces? What should we do? What may we hope? As I hear it, atheists think you must find mean- ing in yourself. You develop your own goals. The main thing is to strive to realize one’s full potential. The world is sufficient unto itself. Let us enjoy while we can, salvage the best that life has to offer.

The Jewish writer, Isaac Singer, points out that if people do not praise God, they will end up praising themse- lves. With the denial of God, the human community mainly has itself to fall back on. A friend in an email to me sung the praises of secular human- ists saying, “they’re all wonderful people, interested in family, career, social justice. You’d love to have dinner with them…” I have had dinner with them. They were everything my friend said. I found them witty and pleasant—for about an hour; then I grew tired of them. When people give God His walking papers, then all we have is us, other people. That’s not enough, at least for me. We’re all flawed. I like people, even get along with people. But without the eternal consciousness, or whatever one wants to call it, they get boring.

I remember a time being with a group of people. I would call secular humanists who were defining heaven has having good friends, and being with intelligent, insight- ful people, complimentary of each other. I thought that according to their definition I was in heaven. The people with me were all kind- ly, thoughtful, intelligent, compli- mentary. I kept thinking then why am I getting antsy to leave heaven. We are all surrounded by finite beings, all limited in some way. It can leave us with a sense of incom- pleteness that never fades. I’ve con- cluded that people are hungering for more than this world offers. What the earth gives us is often beautiful, but it is too poor to satisfy us fully. People try to tear away from the earth more than she can rightly give. We keep sensing some- thing basic is missing. For me, the maxim of Dostoyevsky becomes more real: “I no longer am able to picture man without Him.” Human beings are ultimately understood in relation to God.

One learns to avoid mentioning anything about death to atheists. Walter Czarzak, in his book By Leadeth me, p. 147), tells how in a communist milieu, no pomp accompanies a funeral procession, Side streets are assigned to be used for funerals, which must skirt busy intersections or main thorough- fars, so that citizens would not be affected by the scene of a funeral procession.

One of the blessings of atheism is that it takes away any sense of Judgment, any awareness of sin. There is no God who saw, no God who knew.

Atheists commonly argue from the existence of evil that there is no loving God. There have been and are toxic elements in religion, but there is still the problem of good. and a long list of positives to add to the ledger: hospitals, orphanages, schools, universities, so much of the beautiful in works of art, in music, architecture, poetry.

Most atheistic writers make use of faulty notions of God. The focus is on religious fanatics, terrorists, superstitions, fundamentalists. They do not grapple with major theologians such as Karl Rahner, Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, etc.

A couple of final thoughts. Jesus never set out to prove God’s exist- ence; it was so obvious St. Francis was astonished that a philosophy course given to his Religious was taking time to prove the existence of God. St. Paul wrote that what natural men can know about God “lies plain before their eyes” (Rom.1:19). The Protestant theo- logian, Karl Barth, wrote: “By the miracle of foolishness it is possible to think of God as not existing.” There is the miracle of disbelief” (Payer, p. 29).

Augustine once said that losing the remembrance of God means for- getting life. Only when this remem- brance returns do we begin again to live. Atheism is not a natural state.

God pursues the soul. It is a story happening in every human life. Most atheists feel it at a point in their lives. The sense that there is something or Someone presses in. They hear feet overtaking them, brisk and resolute. I’m certain that great numbers feel it. They are far from settling into a comfortable unbelief. The unrest continues to surface. There is St. Paul’s saying: “God made the whole prisoner of unbelief that he may have mercy on all” (Rom.11:32).
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Líderes hispanos se reúnen en la parroquia de Saint Aloysius

Por MARICARMEN GODOY

NEW CANAAN—La hermana María, nacida en Madrid-España, de la comunidad Compañía del Salvador, con siete años viviendo en Stamford, dedicada a la educación de jóvenes, llegó hasta el salón comunitario de la parroquia San Aloysius (San Luis Gonzaga), patrono de los jóvenes, que reside en New Canaan, casada con un residente de New Canaan, quien testimonio de cómo ha visto crecer su pueblo y su parroquia en el tiempo de anticipación el “Primer encuentro de jóvenes hispanos en New Canaan, nos reunió vía Zoom, luego siguiendo los protocolos de la Diócesis de Bridgeport y finalmente, hace unas semanas atrás en forma presencial. Lo que dio inicio a que se ayude a organizar un encuentro de líderes hispanos. Encuentro, donde también estuvieron presentes las hermanas de la orden de Santa Brígida de Santa María, quienes tienen como apostolado el cuidado y hospedar a los huéspedes que vienen hasta la residencia de ellas para encuentros espirituales. Por eso, durante la convivencia juvenil se sentían abrumadas de que los anfitriones de la parroquia les sirvieron.

Acorde con el Padre David, su parroquia que trabaja bajo el carisma de San Luis Gonzaga, patrono de los jóvenes, estuvo buscando cómo educar y sumergir a sus fieles en el tamiz de dos mundos. Uno, el mundo latino y el otro el mundo anglo de New Canaan, entonces, la fórmula fue deshilar una madeja para entender que la parroquia San Luis Gonzaga, era la casa del encuentro de estos dos mundos y la mejor manera de enfrentar esa dicotomía era apoyándolas en la parte espiritual y en la parte contemplativa para que puedan discernir “los dos mundos en unidad”.

Por eso invitaron al Padre Rolando Torres, párroco de la iglesia de San Mary de Bridgeport, quien puso en relieve el amor como el elemento primordial para poder lidiar con lo mejor de los “dos mundos” y por eso le dedicaron tanto tiempo a la adoración del Santísimo y a cantar alabanzas para encontrar el armonía interna e ingresar al terreno del encuentro espiritual.

Por lo pronto, la iglesia planea reunirse el próximo 11 de diciembre a las 6:30 de la tarde para festejar a la Virgen de Guadalupe y también celebrar las tradiciones mexicanas. El siguiente paso será mantenerse conectados a través del correo electrónico para planear lo que será la extensión de la familia hispana a la iglesia de San Luis Gonzaga, para juntarlos a los tres mil feligreses que tiene la parroquia en New Canaan, que por ser enorme realiza actividades todo el tiempo. Mantiene siete misas semanales, grupos de oración, catecismo y el resurgir de la comunidad latina.

Si usted quiere ser parte de la iglesia de San Luis Gonzaga, puede enviar un email al P. David a: frdavid@starcc.com o puede visitar personalmente la parroquia ubicada en 21 Cherry Street entre las 9:00 am a 4:00 pm.
Vocations

How is God calling me to love?

By FATHER CHRIS FORD

One of the most beautiful prayers of the Church is the Rosary. With each Hail Mary, we find ourselves hand in hand with the Blessed Mother. But what makes the Rosary so incredibly powerful is not the prayers that it asks us to repeat, but the mysteries of Christ’s life it invites us to contemplate. As we do that, we come to see that the common thread of these mysteries and the aspect that shines through above all else is His love. If we contemplate the mysteries of Christ’s life with faith, the Holy Spirit, who is infinite love, reveals to us hidden and profound realities that ultimately lead us to the love that is the source of Jesus’ life and mission. Jesus did everything simply because of the love He has for us. All the mysteries of salvation have their source in love, and it is precisely this love that is the foundation of our faith. If you were to ask St. Paul, for example: In all his tribulations and trials, how did he remain united with Christ with such an unshakeable firmness? I am quite certain that he would respond, because “I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

The more we recognize God’s love for us, the more we realize that His love is inexhaustible and, more importantly, that it does not belong to us alone. It belongs to the entire world, to all who are called to a relationship with the Father in and through Jesus Christ. Though Jesus has ascended to the Father and is no longer among us physically, He still desires that his love be made known to the ends of the world. For this reason, He gives us the church and the sacraments. For this reason, He asks, “Whom shall I send?” For this reason, we are invited to find the courage to answer, “Here I am. Send me.”

As we receive the profound, sacrificial love of God into our own lives, it inspires us to offer that same gift to others. The truth is that while love is many things, it is never indifferent, complacent, or lazy. Love demands many things of us and to truly love God is also to love those whom He loves. It is not possible to love God without offering ourselves to one another. We find this truth echoed in the words of Jesus to Peter on the shore of Galilee: “Do you love me? Feed my sheep.”

We have many choices in our lives. We can do many things in a particular moment and, sometimes, it can be easier to do what is important to me. We can find many excuses why we can’t help someone: I’m late for an appointment; I don’t have enough money myself or I don’t really understand what this person needs from me. But perhaps the real reason is that we find ourselves afraid of what love is asking from us. Maybe we aren’t sure that we are actually capable of responding to the cry of love.

‘You come not to be served, but to serve’

By EMILY CLARK

DARIEN—Deacons, their wives and honored guests gathered at St. John Parish in Darien on Saturday, October 2 for the 2021 Diaconate Convocation. This day of renewal and coming together included prayer, breakout sessions, Mass celebrated by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and a keynote address by Father Michael Bruno of the Diocese of Brooklyn.

Having begun at Fairfield University in 2018 with the intention of meeting every other year, the event was cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic, making this gathering all the more special for attendees, said Deacon John DiTaranto, coordinator of Diaconate Continuing Formation, who organized the event. “We feel so blessed to be able to do this. It’s so good to be together and to be able to shake a hand again,” he said.

Following registration and breakfast, DiTaranto welcomed guests and led them in morning prayer. Bishop Caggiano then provided a review of the global synod with an emphasis on partnerships among all diocesan ministries during such challenging times. “God has put us in this moment. I don’t know why, but I trust Him,” the bishop said. “Collaboration is the air we breathe. Let us reflect on who we are and we will be stronger.”

The theme of collaboration and support resonated throughout the day’s events, notably in the words of Father Bruno. When he took to the podium, some of the 88 deacons—retired, active and in formation—recognized this dean of seminarians at St. Joseph Seminary as their former instructor. Acknowledging 2021 as the Year of St. Joseph, Father Bruno centered his address on this saint of the Universal Church, families, fathers and others, saying, “St. Joseph models for us all that deacons are called to do.” He also opened with Pope Francis’ Apostolic Letter on St. Joseph and reminded the deacons of the importance of service. “Every vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of mature sacrifice. You are the disciples of the Lord Jesus.”

Father Bruno noted the joint role that men called to the diaconate play as servants of two families: that of their spouse and children and that of the Church. The entirety of their service, he said—from the dinner tables and homework stations to the nursing homes and soup kitchens—is an opportunity to welcome Christ into their hearts, just as St. Joseph did.

“There is a balance of responsibility. That balance can be demanding, and the church recognizes that,” said Father Bruno. “Today is the day that we step back and be reminded of our various roles and responsibilities.”

As deacons, he said, men have an opportunity to connect naturally in ways that priests do not. “You are there,” he said, referencing their presence in daily secular life. “In the supermarket, at the water cooler, dare I say on the Zoom calls? You are present.” Those connections, coupled with fruitful time spent with the Lord, provide the necessary fuel for the journeys these deacons have accepted.

In all of the services a deacon undertakes, Father Bruno asks that they continue to follow the model of St. Joseph—in family life, obedience, humility and charity. “You come from behind the scenes placing your freedom at the service of others,” he reminded them. “You come not to be served but to serve.”

At the conclusion of Father Bruno’s address, attendees moved on to Mass where Bishop Caggiano in his homily tasked the deacons and their wives with a separate discussion about the saints. One person shared the talk was “informative but I did not feel overwhelmed.”

Kevin Johnson brought the entire group back together with a talk entitled “Reframing Catholic Social Teaching.”

“He allowed us to ‘let go and experience contemplation,’ and focused on our lives as an ‘encounter vs. experience,’ which made it very different from the other parts of the day,” said Deacon DiTaranto.

The deacons and their wives closed out the day with a communal Evening Prayer, one that Deacon DiTaranto described as “incredibly positive and thought-provoking.”
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