



FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

DECEMBER 2021 | VOLUME 38, NUMBER 11 | CHRISTMAS ISSUE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



6-7

*Bishop issues
Pastoral Exhortation*



11-20

*A Special
Nativity Section*

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



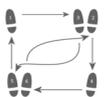
Facebook: **Diocese of Bridgeport**
Bishop Frank J. Caggiano

Twitter: **@diobpt**
@BishopCaggiano

Instagram: **dioceseofbridgeport**
bishopfrankcaggiano



Slow dancing
or speed walking.



Whatever your destination our new orthopaedic institute will get you there.
Learn more at CTOrthoInstitute.org

Connecticut Orthopaedic Institute
St. Vincent's Medical Center



The Nativity Story
Art of the Crèche

November 6 – February 6

Blessed Michael McGivney
Pilgrimage Center

1 State St. New Haven
michaelmcgivneycenter.org
Free Admission

Merry Christmas

Christmas Around the Diocese!



1



2



3

- 1 | St. Theresa School, Trumbull
- 2 | St. Thomas Aquinas School, Fairfield
- 3 | Assumption Catholic School, Fairfield
- 4 | St. Pius X Parish, Fairfield
- 5 | St. Mary Parish, Ridgefield
- 6 | St. Joseph School, Danbury
- 7 | St. Peter School, Danbury



Christmas offers the Gift of Hope

Dear Friends,

During the holy season of Advent, the Church reminds us of the gift of hope—hope that was fulfilled in the coming of the Lord, and the hope that you and I have in our hearts to be with Him forever in his second coming.

During this season of preparation and thanksgiving, please accept my profound gratitude for your dedication, witness and generosity during this most difficult time. I have the privilege of seeing your faith and generosity at work around the diocese every day of the year, particularly at Christmas when so many of you reach out to the most vulnerable.

This Christmas as we gather around the manger to see with our own eyes, the face of love in the flesh, may that Christ bless you and your families abundantly. Let us proclaim to all the world that Christ our Lord and savior is the savior of hope of love and new life in Him.

I wish you and your family a blessed Advent of great hope and the most blessed of all Christmases.

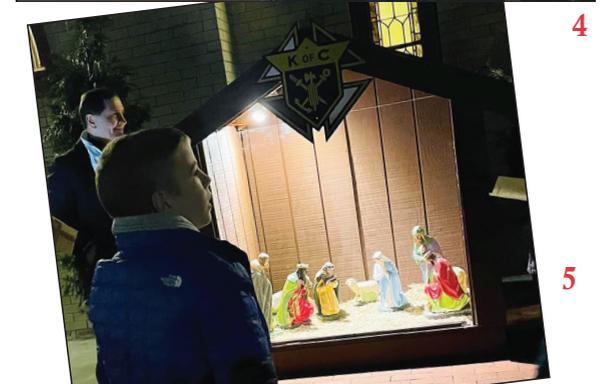
Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Frank J. Caggiano

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano,
Bishop of Bridgeport



4



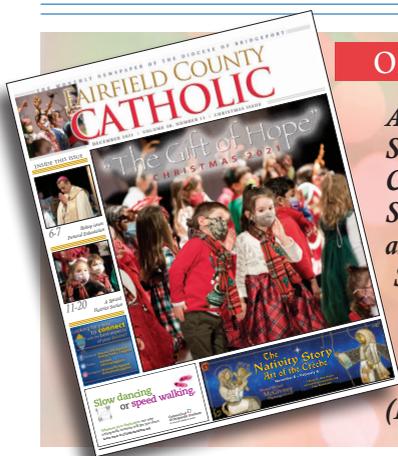
5



6



7



ON THE COVER

ACCOUNTABILITY SUNDAY—Bishop Caggiano has declared Sunday, December 5, as the first Accountability Sunday for financial reporting in the diocese. (See the story on page 3)
(Photos by Amy Mortensen)

CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|
| 4 | 'A PLACE FOR WELLNESS'
New rec center honors Msgr. Orlowski | 21 | FOUNDATIONS IN FAITH
Celebrating Missionary Parishes |
| 8 | EDITORIALS: CHRISTMAS MESSAGE
Much to be grateful for | 23 | ST. AUGUSTINE MEDAL OF SERVICE
Bishop recognizes Billy Hoey |
| 9 | A YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE
Finding joy in suffering | 25 | DIOCESAN SCHOOL
Annual Report released |
| 10 | QUEEN OF CLERGY
Msgr. Scheyd still on the job | 31 | VOCATIONS
Saying yes to the Father's will |



Diocesan News

Diocese scores 100% on VOTF financial review

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—The Diocese of Bridgeport was one of only four dioceses across the United States to score a perfect 100 percent on the 2021 Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) Report on Measuring and Ranking Diocesan Financial Transparency.

The report, released on November 12, by VOTF President Mary Fox, was based on a review of the financial transparency of all 177 dioceses belonging to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The review was conducted between June 1, and August 31, 2021 by three independent reviewers.

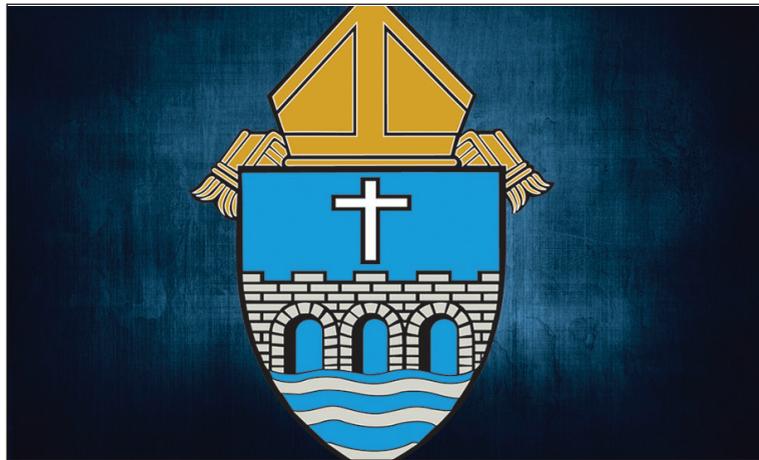
“VOTF congratulates the dioceses of Bridgeport, Charleston, Orlando and Scranton for achieving a 100 percent transparency score,”

wrote Fox in a letter to Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. The advantages of financial transparency include enhancing a sense of lay stewardship and helping to build trust in the leadership of the Catholic Church nationwide,” she said.

The 2021 report shows that overall diocesan online financial transparency scores increased from 65 percent in 2020 to 69 percent in 2021, but that only 64 percent of all dioceses posted current audited financial reports, even though those dioceses posting such reports increased from 104 in 2020 to 113 in 2021.

“Bridgeport’s score has been within the 90s (in the ‘A’ range) for the last several years. This year they posted best practices in collection security to reach a perfect score,” said Nick Ingala, VOTF director of communications.

Bishop Caggiano said the



report is welcome news and a validation of the hard work and commitment of our Finance Services department under the leadership of Mike Hanlon. “We have made financial transparency a major goal and taken major strides to make the information easily accessible to all. I’m very

pleased to have outside confirmation of that effort through the VOTF report,” said the bishop.

The bishop also recently named December 5 as the first annual Accountability Sunday in the diocese, a day in which all parishes and other diocesan entities utilize a standardized report to

the faithful on their finances and make reports available online.

This year marks the fifth VOTF annual review of all U.S. Catholic dioceses’ online financial transparency. Over the past five years, according to VOTF reviewers, overall, diocesan transparency scores have increased, and some dioceses have achieved considerable success, but much work remains to be done.

The five top-scoring dioceses had never been in the top five before this year.

The five top-scoring dioceses—Bridgeport, Charleston, Orlando and Scranton—have never been in the top five until this year. The Diocese of Bellville rounded out the top five maintaining its 2020 score of 98 percent. The poorest five performing dioceses point totals

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

‘You heard the Lord’s call and said yes’

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—“Take this vessel for the celebration of the Eucharist. Make your life worthy of service at the Table of the Lord and of His Church,” Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said to the five deacon candidates who were instituted in the Ministry of Acolyte at St. Augustine Cathedral on Saturday morning, December 11.

For the five men—Christopher Greer of Westport, George Kain of Ridgefield, James Meehan of Westport, Rock Desances of Bridgeport, and Vincent Pia of Brookfield—the Mass is the final formal step before their ordination as permanent deacons.

On a morning shrouded in fog, the gleaming cathedral lights and altar candles cast a warm glow over the joyous faces of the men, who have been in formation since October 2019. They were accompanied by wives, family members, friends, children and grandchildren who broke out into applause as they came forward for the installation.

“Congratulations, brothers, I am grateful that you heard the Lord’s call and said yes, and you have faithfully and generously walked in this journey of forma-



ONE STEP CLOSER—Christopher Greer of Westport, George Kain of Ridgefield, James Meehan of Westport, Rock Desances of Bridgeport, and Vincent Pia of Brookfield were recently installed to the Ministry of Acolyte, final step before ordination to the Sacrament of Holy Orders in June of 2022.

tion,” the bishop said, thanking the men along with their wives and all those who have supported them.

“Persevere, the best is yet to come,” said the bishop to the men who will be ordained to Holy Orders in June 2022.

The men received the Ministry of Reader on October 17, 2020. Their new ministry as acolytes includes assisting the priest and deacon at the altar during Mass. They will serve during liturgies, help distribute Holy Communion and purify sacred vessels.

Deacon Jerry Lambert, director of the diaconate office for the diocese, delivered the homily and

reminded the candidates that they will be strengthened and fortified by the Eucharist in their ministries in parishes and throughout the diocese.

Deacon Lambert said that at a time when many Catholics do not fully understand that the Eucharist is the actual, living presence of Christ, the men should focus on “the importance of reverence and the power of example” as they work “to build up the body of Christ, the Church.”

Deacon Lambert began his homily by recalling his boyhood in a small town in Illinois,

where his first “formation” was his preparation to receive First Holy Communion. He said the children never questioned the real presence, nor did his parents and grandparents, and he urged the deacon candidates to explain the Eucharist by “their example.”

He also read a passage from the Bishop’s Pastoral Exhortation, “Let us go forth from the Upper Room:” “The principal act of Catholic worship is the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Each community of faith, joined as part of the Mystical Body of Christ, realizes its full purpose, identity and mission each time we gather to worship the Lord and participate through grace in His Death and Resurrection. We must work towards offering the celebration of every Mass and every sacrament in a manner that evokes a deep sense of reverence, beauty and personal participation from all in attendance.”

After the homily each of the five men came forward to receive a chalice from the bishop, who said the Prayer of Blessing over the candidates.

The deacon candidates family members Rockshana Mary Desances and Marilyn C. Kain

delivered the readings. Beginning with the Exodus account of the Lord saying to Moses, “I will now rain down bread from heaven for you,” the readings focused on the Eucharist. Deacon Lambert read from the Gospel of John 6: 24-35, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”

Principal Concelebrants included Father Juan Gabriel Acosta, vice chancellor of the diocese, rector of the Cathedral Parish; Father Frank T. Hoffman, vicar for clergy; Father Peter F. Lenox, episcopal vicar for liturgy and worship; Father Arthur Mollenhauer, judicial vicar, tribunal of the Diocese of Bridgeport; and Father Marco Pacciana, rector, Redemptoris Mater Diocesan Missionary Seminary of Bridgeport.

In addition to Deacon Lambert, Deacon Bradford Smythe served as deacon of the Mass. Deacon Patrick Toole, diocesan vicar for administration, acted as Master of Ceremonies. Music for the liturgy was provided by Dr. William Atwood, organist; Ava Wing, cantor; and Karolina Wojteczko, cantor. ■

Parish News

'A place for wellness' honors Msgr. Orlowski

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

NORWALK— "Finally, the day is here," said Father Jeff Couture, pastor of St. Matthew Parish, on the morning of the dedication of the Walter C. Orlowski Recreation Center, Sunday, December 12.

"We want to thank Monsignor for watching over us and seeing this thing through," said Father Couture.

The center is named in honor of St. Matthew's late pastor, Msgr. Walter C. Orlowski, who began the project in 2018, and whose vision was to create an intergenerational gathering place for wellness in body, mind and spirit.

During the Mass, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano acknowledged that the celebration was taking place in Gaudete Sunday, the Sunday of Joy.

"We are not always promised that we will be happy, but we are

promised that we will have the gift of joy," said the bishop. "For joy comes from the deep trust that we have in our hearts that no matter what happens to us, challenges before us, or suffering we face, our God will be before us."

"It is the most appropriate of all Sundays when we come here to bless this recreation and wellness center in memory of Msgr. Walter," the bishop said.

"If there was a man whom I have met in my life who understood what the gift of joy was and is, it was Msgr. Walter," said the bishop. "He was always laughing and smiling. He was a man of faithfulness who suffered greatly for the Lord Jesus. He was very much acquainted with suffering, loss and challenge. He gave until it hurt and he kept on giving, and what allowed him to do that was the gift of joy, which he had in his heart."

The bishop congratulated the congregation for completing this wonderful project, which will be a benefit to parishioners and the larger Norwalk community and beyond that. "It will be a place where you will gather to recreate, to socialize, to grow in faith and friendship, but it is also a place of wellness."



BLESSING AND DEDICATION—St. Matthew Parish recently unveiled their new recreation center named in honor of late pastor Msgr. Walter C. Orlowski. The 18,000 square-foot two-story recreation center houses a court/fieldhouse, indoor walking/running track, universal workout room, tumble room for toddlers and Newman Lounge.

The bishop tasked parishioners to make it a place of joy in honor of Msgr. Walter. "May this new center be a place where people's hearts who are broken because they are alone can find friendship. May this be a place where people who are suffering and have no one to speak to about it find a willing ear to listen. May this be a place where everyone will feel welcome, be invited, and be strengthened for the work of love...so that the joy Christ promises us we will allow others to receive in their lives."

Father Jeff Couture thanked the bishop and priests who concelebrated Mass and those who had been present during the development of the recreation center. Many members of the community supported Monsignor's vision for the center and Father Jeff was sure to thank them all.



Following Mass, excited parishioners filed out of the Church and gathered around a red ribbon surrounded by balloons in front of the new rec center. The ribbon was cut to cheers and applause from the crowd.

Mayor Harry W. Rilling and

State Senator Bob Duff were present for the ceremony in support of the new center being a fixture of the community.

Those gathered were able to file into the center, as the bishop and Father Jeff blessed a plaque dedicated to Msgr. Walter, and the track inside the center which will be used by many.

Construction began on the recreation center in July of 2019.

"We're building on what we already have, to give people the training space and programs they need to encourage health in body, mind and spirit," said the late Msgr. Orlowski on the eve of the groundbreaking. "It's all about creating a parish even more welcoming than ever before—one that can be the center of people's

PLANNING TO BE IN THE SOUTHWEST FLORIDA THIS

Winter?

You are invited to join Bishop Caggiano
for a Mass and Reception in Naples.
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2022

See you in the sunshine State!

Please contact Connie Von Zwehl for further
details and your personal invitation by email
at ccvz@att.net or call (203) 216-1608.



St Augustine / St. Johns County Florida



- Ideal for relocation, retirement, 2nd home
- Contact me for information. No obligation!



Jenene Karamon, REALTOR®

Jenene.Karamon@exp Realty.com
Jenenekaramon.exp Realty.com



Former CT Resident & Diocese of
Bridgeport Parishioner

(904) 501-9912

lives. It's all for the good, all for God's people."

The 18,000 square-foot two-story recreation center houses a court/fieldhouse, indoor walking/running track, universal workout room, tumble room for toddlers and Newman Lounge, designed by the architectural firm, Doyle & Coffin Architecture and developed by Lecher Development.

St. Matthew is partnering with Norwalk Community College for the development of the Newman Center to serve the 40 percent Catholic student population at the college. The club will be based at the St. Matthew Recreational Center and open to all NCC students. Newman Centers focus on strengthening today's Catholic young adults in the faith during their college years.

(For more information,
visit: www.stmatthewnorwalk.org/recreation-center)

Primary and specialty care right in your backyard

Exceptional care so you can get back to your future

With more than 700 doctors and advanced providers throughout Western Connecticut and the Hudson Valley, Nuvance Health Medical Practices brings exceptional care closer to you. Whether you're looking for telehealth or in-person visits, our new Find Doctors tool makes it easy to search for and match with the best doctor for your health needs.

Find care today at nuvancehealth.org



Norwalk Hospital

 **Nuvance Health**
Medical Practices

Bishop's Pastoral Exhortation

Let Us Go Forth From The Upper Room

My Dear Friends in Christ:

Earlier this year I shared with you an exhortation that I hope encouraged all the members of our diocesan family to use wisely the time we had during the pandemic for our personal, spiritual growth. **Each of us was invited to pray, reflect, and to deepen our personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, both to gain the spiritual strength we needed to face the challenges of the pandemic, as well as prepare ourselves for the time when we could go out in mission into a world** that is very different from the one we knew before the pandemic struck. I believe that the changing world provides us an opportunity to reintroduce the truth, beauty and goodness of Catholic faith to our contemporary world.

We entered into our personal Upper Room imitating the example of the Apostles who once gathered in the Upper Room for the celebration of the Last Supper. On the night before He died, the Lord desired to fortify them in advance of His Paschal Mystery- His free gift of Himself for the salvation of the world. They returned to the Upper Room after the Lord's Resurrection, plagued by lingering doubts and fears, hoping that they could trust in the Lord's promise to them. It was also in the Upper Room that they received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who came with the sevenfold gifts of God's divine life and transformed them into courageous witnesses to the Lord's Death and Resurrection. The apostles left that Upper Room with a burning passion to preach the kerygma, that is, the message of salvation that comes to us through Jesus Christ, to all who were willing to listen. They went out to establish and nurture communities of faith and to search out and accompany those who were seeking true meaning and purpose in life. **The Apostles knew, as we know, that the search for the meaning and purpose of human life is found in Christ Jesus, the Lord.**

My dear friends, I recognize that the ongoing pandemic, with its unexpected twists and turns, continues to impact and endanger our lives in many ways. We need to remain vigilant, prudent and safe in all that we do so that we can protect every human life, especially the most vulnerable in our midst, against the scourge of the Coronavirus. However, I also believe that the mission of renewing our Church cannot wait until the pandemic has completely ended, since this may take many years to realize. With

courage, prudence and safety, we can begin over the next nine months to realize our first steps to re-engage the people around us in the mission of the Gospel. The urgency of this work impels us to act.

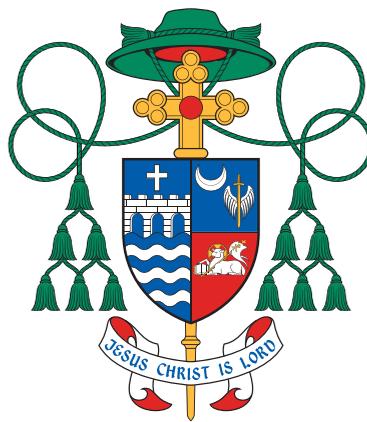
By relying upon the intercession of the Apostles, I invite you, even in small ways, to leave the comfort of your spiritual Upper Room and to go out into mission. **For while the circumstances surrounding the pandemic continue to change, our mission into the world can begin prudently and safely, seeking to bring a message of healing and hope to our neighbors, friends and people of good will, many of whom are weary of what we have endured these past 21 months.** Many are seeking healing and encouragement in their ordinary lives and they can find new life in Jesus Christ.

I. The Apostolic Age

While no age is identical with any age that went before it, I believe that our contemporary world shares some similar characteristics to the world in which the Apostles lived. It will be helpful is we reflect upon these similarities, so that we can learn from and imitate the example that the Apostles gave us. **For we cannot forget that the most explosive era of growth in the history of the Church was the first three centuries of the Church's life.** It was a time when embracing Christian faith was a crime and often the penalty incurred was death. If the Apostles and disciples could surmount such odds in service of the Gospel, we can be hopeful that our efforts can also bear great spiritual fruit.

There are three characteristics of the apostolic era that have echoes in our contemporary, secularized world. First, Roman society lacked a coherent vision of life or a universal set of values. The result was competing values, widespread confusion and dissension. Philosophers often spoke of truth in contradictory ways that had little effect upon the ordinary life of many people. The question of the meaning of life was one that many did not have the luxury to ask, given the toil and suffering they endured simply to survive. Further, the larger culture was marked by a lack of respect and protection for human life, especially unborn and vulnerable life, a hedonistic sexuality and a glorification of wealth, power and societal status. **This world, with its defective value systems, was the world in which the Apostles preached and brought many to Christian faith. They did it by preaching the message of salvation in Jesus Christ, clearly, effectively and without compromise.**

A second characteristic of the apostolic world is one that has marked every human age – the desire for authentic human community. Part of the success behind the growth of the Roman Empire was the military decision to allow conquered countries to retain their distinct cultures and languages. This permissiveness did not extend to any religion that challenged emperor worship or the adoration of pagan gods. However, what truly creates authen-



tic community is genuine love, friendship and a mutual respect that was often lacking in many communities of the Roman world, often exhausted from war, taxation and forced labor. It was into this world that the Apostles went forth to establish small Christian communities that accompanied their members during times of pain, suffering, joy and triumph. While these early communities were not free from difficulties, the Apostles and their successors always called the early Christians back to forgiveness, unity and mercy. It was these early Christian communities that consoled the first Christian martyrs on their way to death with the knowledge that their loved ones would be cared for by their ecclesial family.

Finally, the Apostles went forth into a world that left many of its citizens behind. It was a society that catered to the needs of the wealthy, powerful and influential. Many who had questions or opposed the order of society were ignored or treated with callous neglect. Among those who suffered the most were widows, orphans, the poor and those who became refugees because of Roman military campaigns. They were forced to find refuge in the shadows of society, hoping against hope that their presence would not invite active persecution or worse. **Emboldened by the power of the Holy Spirit, it was to these people that the Apostles went, inviting them to become part of a community that would not simply tolerate them but love and**

accept them. We recall the courage of Saint Paul in the Areopagus, who preached the message of salvation in Christ while listening to the concerns of his listeners and seeking to answer their questions with honesty and respect (Acts 17: 16-34). The Apostles went where others feared to go, encountering all those who were forgotten by society or struggled with their own personal questions, doubts and fears. It was from among these people that the next generation of fearless witnesses of Christian faith came forth, to the amazement of the secular world around them.

My friends, the parallels between the apostolic age and our own age are clear. We too live in a time where the truth is not known, human community is not easily found and the numbers of those whom the world considers "outcasts" is growing. As we take our first steps into our pandemic-scarred world, it would do us well to follow the example of the Apostles and trust that our work may bear great spiritual fruit as theirs did.

II. Leaving the Upper Room: Our Threefold Mission

I invite you to reflect upon three tasks. **They are (1) to teach and preach the Gospel with clarity and conviction, (2) to transform our local parish or school communities into spiritual families united in faith and (3) to create bridges to those persons who feel neglected by the Church or whom the world considers "outcasts."** While none of us can effectively realize all three of these tasks simultaneously, each of us must discern our personal part to play in this threefold mission. For our world needs the healing presence of Christ, now more than ever.

A. First Task: To Teach and Preach the Gospel

In our relativistic world, which has accepted the notion that the human person is the sole measure of all truth, morality and goodness, Christian faith has a different starting point. We understand the truth to be an objective reality that every person can discover both by the use of human reason (the natural law) and through an act of faith (divine revelation). Reason and faith complement each another in the pursuit of the fullness of truth. Further, truth is ultimately not something but "someone" who took on human flesh and reveals that the essence of human life is to love God above all things and our neighbor as God loves them. **By recognizing and embracing the truth revealed in Jesus Christ, every human person can find lasting joy, peace and purpose in life.**

As we enter into mission, let us begin by redoubling our efforts to teach the fullness of the Catholic faith, first among ourselves and then to those who are seeking a new direction in life. Our diocesan Institute for Catholic Formation will offer a variety of **formatioal opportunities so that every believer can learn the depth and beauty of Catholic doctrine, morality and the social teachings of the Church.** Many of these opportunities already exist and are ready for use. Now it is up to you and me to make the personal decision to use these opportunities to learn more deeply the fullness of our Catholic faith.

Another task before us is the need to **reimagine the faith formation for our middle school age young people.** Sadly, many of our youth do not engage in faith formation in a consistent way. They often return for the preparation needed to receive Confirmation, which becomes for some graduation from the active practice of their faith. This situation is unacceptable and demands a radical change so that we can engage our youth in a personal and comprehensive manner, through study, prayer, recreation, social life, service and participation at Mass. Work has already begun identifying new models that reimagine formation for our middle school children and teenagers and I look forward to sharing with you the progress that we will make in this regard in the coming months.

Another aspect of teaching the faith is **effectively preaching the kerygma, that is, the message of salvation in Jesus Christ.** Since the formal duty of preaching is reserved to the clergy within the context of the Divine Liturgy, a series of initiatives will be provided in the new year to help priests and deacons to study the Scriptures more intensely and to prepare their homilies with whatever assistance they may require. However, since the most effective form of preaching is not done with words but with our daily, Christian witness, every believer must examine their personal conduct and seek to live an ever more authentic life of faith. It is no mistake that one of the principal reasons cited by young adults for their disaffiliation from the Catholic Church is the hypocrisy they see among believers, especially those in Church leadership, both clergy and lay. If this is true, then a vital way for every believer to preach the Gospel is by an **authentic witness of faith.** Providing such an authentic personal witness demands ongoing conversion from all of us.

Pastoral Exhortation

We must also acknowledge that there are fundamental questions that many find hard to answer and create stumbling blocks, especially among our youth and young adults, to embrace the Catholic faith. Examples of these questions are the following: (1) What is the relationship between faith and reason? Is faith not simply a myth regarding something for which science will one day offer an explanation? (2) What does it mean to be a human person? Is my body an essential part of who I am or simply a container for my human spirit? (3) How can an historical event (i.e., the Crucifixion) have an eternal meaning? To questions such as these, the modern world gives erroneous answers, creating confusion and leading people away from faith. The time has come to correct the world's mistakes. To this end, the Institute for Catholic Formation will soon host an **apologetics series** designed specifically to answer these questions in an honest and comprehensive manner. I invite everyone participate in these presentations, both online and in person, so that we can give credible answers to the questions with which many continue to struggle.

B. Second Task: Building Communities of Faith

Given the fact that our parishes are the bedrock of our Church, I have begun work with the presbyterate of our Diocese to create a process that will strengthen parish communities to enjoy the dual benefits of growing pastoral vibrancy and financial stability. While some parish reconfiguration may be necessary in the years ahead, my desire is that each parish find concrete ways by which it can collaborate with neighboring parishes to strengthen its pastoral ministry. In some cases, such collaboration will also provide financial relief to those parishes that have not recovered from the effects of the pandemic. This process will also seek to overcome any tendency on the local level to seek an unhealthy autonomy from the Diocese and its neighboring parishes. For while a parochial spirit can strengthen a local community, it cannot be absolutized in such a way that we lose the opportunities to collaborate with neighboring parishes in ministry and administration. Likewise, no parish can consider itself separate from the mission and life of our "diocesan ecclesial family" which is composed by our parish families. This **discernment process for parish collaboration** will be a multi-year process and begin by the spring of 2022.

Furthermore, if we wish to strengthen our communities of faith, we must engage our hearts in prayer and worship. For what creates an authentic community of faith is not simply the acceptance of a shared set

of beliefs, proclaimed each Sunday in our common recitation of the Creed. A parish is more than a collection of persons but an organic, diverse family created by grace, founded upon divine truth, united in common worship and mission. It is an engagement of the heart that creates a sense of family, belonging and a desire to give back to those around you. It is this engagement of the heart that I invite you to reflect upon for there is a role to play, sometimes very simple, for each of us in this work. For example, it does not require special training to learn the names of those who sit near us at Mass and address them by name each Sunday. We offer such hospitality in our homes. Why can't we do the same in our parish homes? Such hospitality can easily lead to friendship, a sense of belonging and touch the human heart.

Engaging the heart also involves engaging the power of beauty in everyday Christian life. For example, I remember as a young boy that I was fascinated by the beauty of the stained-glass that marked my boyhood parish church. I vividly recall the beauty of the chant and hymns sung at Mass, the smell of incense and the silent whisperings of people during Mass. I still recall the times when I would visit Church with my parents and teachers to attend novenas, the Stations of the Cross and other prayer services. All these are experiences of beauty that left a lasting imprint on my heart. These memories illustrate only a small portion of the patrimony of beauty that our Church. **The time has come to unlock the power of beauty to engage human hearts and to create a sense of belonging that runs deep within us.**

To this end, I am delighted to announce the creation of the **Sacred Heart Guild**, an institute that will provide opportunities for everyone throughout the Diocese to experience the many facets of the beauty of our Catholic faith. These initiatives will include sacred music, chant, the history and meaning of church architecture, literature and poetry. The Guild will revive our diocesan youth choir, as well as provide choral training for those who wish to learn chant. It will provide opportunities for pilgrimages for people of all ages, allowing them to journey to sacred places within driving distance of our Diocese and throughout the world. Finally, a central task of the Guild will be the promotion of Eucharistic adoration as a privileged way by which the heart of adorers can be engaged directly by our Lord. More information regarding the work of the Guild will be available in the coming months.

Above all else, the principal act of

Catholic worship is the **celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass**. Each community of faith, joined as part of the Mystical Body of Christ, realizes its full purpose, identity and mission each time we gather to worship the Lord and participate through grace in His Death and Resurrection. **We must work towards offering the celebration of every Mass and every sacrament in a manner that evokes a deep sense of reverence, beauty, and personal participation from all in attendance.** We will also offer new ways to study the rich beauty of the Sacred Scriptures, grow in personal prayer, and offer opportunities for anyone who wishes to sit before the Lord in prayer in order to encounter Him in the depths of our hearts. While there has never been a time in the life of the Church when this has not been a priority, it is now of paramount importance if we wish to transform our communities of faith into spiritual homes for all.

It is from such renewed communities that we will go out in mission to invite others, one person at a time, to encounter our Lord. Our **diocesan ambassador program**, begun earlier this year, has graduated over 100 persons who are working with their pastors to support fellow parishioners, invite back those who have not yet returned to Sunday worship and engage Catholics who have ceased practicing their faith. They join the work of our **parish Synod delegates** who are listening to the faith stories of people in our communities, in order to discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit regarding the ways we can live authentic Christian faith in our complex and confused world. Pray that their efforts will bear great spiritual fruit. A second class of ambassadors will begin training in the new year.

Finally, communities of faith must enjoy the work of competent, trained and engaged leaders, both clergy and lay, who are committed to serve their people generously and faithfully. The **Institute for Catholic Formation** offers online formation courses to assist current leaders, as well as train those who wish to become leaders in their parish and school communities. I ask that all in leadership avail themselves of these opportunities for personal formation.

C. Third Task: Building "Bridges of Faith" and Serving the Poor

During my homily at my installation Mass at Saint Theresa in Trumbull, I made a reference to our common need to build bridges amongst ourselves and with our neighbors, co-workers and all people of good will. **In the eight years that have passed, I have often returned to this poignant image in my personal prayer, in part because the**



need to create such bridges has grown in urgency. For just as the Apostles sought to create bridges to those around them, so too the time has come for all disciples of the Lord to do the same.

In the months ahead, you will hear exciting news about diocesan initiatives to serve young adults, whose numbers are growing in our diocese. We will soon have the formal launch of **"The Bridge"** which will be a series of initiatives aimed at welcoming, engaging and forming young adults in the life of the Church. "The Bridge" will provide college age young people and graduates mentoring opportunities with successful Catholic business women and men who will assist them as they begin their professional careers. These mentoring relationships will also provide the tools by which interested young adults can work with me to address some of the local social problems that affect people throughout our Diocese.

In order to assist couples and families, the diocese is also sponsoring a **family missionary formation** program sponsored by *Paradisus Dei*, an ecclesial movement whose headquarters is located in Houston, Texas. This training program will feature weekly online formation sessions over the period of one year, beginning in August, 2022. Its purpose is to strengthen the spiritual and personal life of couples, while giving them the tools they will need to assist other families who are seeking spiritual assistance. Couples interested in this formation opportunity are asked to contact my office directly for more information.

We must also continue to support, strengthen and expand the life-saving work of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, whose various ministries help feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, offer healing to those suffering in body and mind and assist the newly arrived in our midst. In addition to the current work already being done by Catholic Charities, there are additional initiatives being planned to serve our elderly, immigrants, and young people which I look forward to sharing with you in the coming months.

Conclusion

Allow me to conclude by offering a deep word of thanks to our priests,

deacons and parish lay leaders who have worked tirelessly and at times heroically during these difficult months of the pandemic. **As I traveled the Diocese during these past 21 months, I have seen firsthand the courage, generosity and dedication of many, for which I am most grateful.** Also, our pastors have shown themselves to be true spiritual fathers to their people, standing with them in times of anxiety, fear and even isolation. I am deeply grateful for your continued generosity and support of the Church's life and mission on every level. It is assistance that is needed now more than ever.

For over fifty years the Church's Magisterium has been inviting us to engage in the work of missionary discipleship. Such work begins with an authentic personal life of faith, as well as the transformation of local faith communities into vibrant spiritual homes for its members. The three tasks that I have described in this exhortation lay the foundation for the launch of effective missionary discipleship throughout our Diocese. What remains is our individual decision to ask the Lord what part He wishes you and I to play in this mission. It is a question that each of us must ask and answer for ourselves.

In my 34 years of priestly ministry and 15 years of episcopal ministry I have never had a greater sense of hope for our Church than I now have. It is a hope which trusts that the Lord will keep His promise and empower us to renew His Church, one step at a time.

As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us turn to Our Lady and ask for her intercession and prayers. For just as she was a source of deep consolation and encouragement for the Apostles, she will offer the same strength to us, her children.

Join me in taking the first steps out of the Upper Room and let us be prepared for the wonders that God can do through you and me. ■

Frank J. Caggiano

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
December 8, 2021

EDITORIAL

The Reason for Hope

On December 10, when the Vatican's 2021 nativity scene was unveiled in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis encouraged Catholics to celebrate Christmas with a focus on Jesus's closeness to us.

"Let's not live a fake Christmas, please, a commercial Christmas," the pope said, as reported by Catholic News Agency. "Let us allow ourselves to be wrapped up in the closeness of God, this closeness which is compassionate, which is tender; wrapped in the Christmas atmosphere that art, music, songs and traditions bring into the heart."

"For it to be truly Christmas, let us not forget this: God comes to be with us and asks us to take care of our brothers and sisters, especially the poorest, the weakest, the most fragile, whom the pandemic risks marginalizing even more."

"This is what the nativity scene teaches us. At Christmas, God reveals himself not as someone who is on high to dominate, but as the One who humbles himself, small and poor, a companion on the road, to serve: this means the way to resemble him is lowering one's self, service," Pope Francis said. "May Our Lady and St. Joseph help us to live Christmas like this."

Many Gifts

Though 2021 has been a difficult and challenging year, we have much to be grateful for this Christmas:

- Diocesan Catholic Schools have reported an increase in enrollment as many seek faith-based learning communities.
- Bishop Caggiano has commissioned more than 100 Ambassadors to go out into the world and welcome people back to the life of the Church. Also, four delegates from each parish are at work preparing for the global Synod on Synodality to renew the Church.
- Through the sacrificial giving of so many, the Annual Catholic Appeal continues to fund core ministries, and the newly formed Foundations in Education, Faith, and Charity have created additional resources for meeting emergency needs in the pandemic and revitalizing our parishes in the long term.
- Parishioners throughout the diocese are feeding the poor and hungry, advocating for life, and sharing the Good News of the Gospel in their communities.

We are also grateful for you, our loyal readers. Our wish for you and your families is a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Let Us Go Forth

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has issued a call to renewal in his Pastoral Exhortation, "Let Us Go Forth From The Upper Room," printed in full (pages 6-7) in this issue of *Fairfield County Catholic*. In it, the bishop gives us a blueprint for the New Year and a challenge to each and every one of us to play a role in the three-part mission of teaching and preaching the Gospel, strengthening our parish communities, and serving the poor. In his video introduction to the Pastoral Exhortation, he shared these thoughts:

"I believe we have a unique moment in the life of our Church, where you and I can go out in mission to bring a message of hope to a world that needs tremendous healing. And even though we are not quite ready to go out in full force because the pandemic endures; nonetheless, in very safe and measured ways, you and I having been fortified in the upper room of your heart and mine can go out into the world to bring this message of healing and hope."

His Pastoral Letter, issued on December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, introduces concrete ways that we can "Build Bridges of Faith" to our young adults, to struggling families, to immigrants and refugees, and to those who have left the Church. It does nothing less than challenge us to re-imagine our own faith to be more loving, compassionate and prepared to engage in missionary discipleship.

As the diocese moves forward with many the new programs and initiatives outlined in the exhortation, the bishop leaves us with this challenge: "What remains is our individual decision to ask the Lord what part He wishes you and I to play in this mission. It is a question that each of us must ask and answer for ourselves."

EDITOR'S CHOICE

St. Rose of Lima community gathers at Mass of Remembrance

By STEPHANIE DEBARTOLOMEO

NEWTOWN—On Tuesday, December 14, St. Rose of Lima Parish held a Mass of Remembrance to remember the victims and their families of the Sandy Hook School tragedy that occurred nine years ago on December 14, 2012.

In his weekly message to parishioners, Msgr. Robert Weiss, pastor, said "We need to gather in hope that these children show us the way to unity and respect for life." Monsignor Weiss' message reminded the community that the strength of unity and faith they showed on that dark day left an indelible mark on the world and that continued prayer and healing can make the world a place of peace and goodness.

At the 7 pm Mass, 26 white orchids and 26 candles adorned the altar. Youth group members processed one by one to place an angel ornament on the tree in the sanctuary as each victim's name was read by Msgr. Weiss and the memorial bell was rung by its creator Marco Savo.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano was the celebrant and homilist. Referring to the tragic event, Bishop Caggiano said "We can either allow darkness...to continue its invasion, or choose the light founded in our faith and in the one...whose coming was foretold by a star that shone brightly in the darkness of night."

Bishop Caggiano then shared words of encouragement with the congregation: "You may not know what a profound example you and your sisters and brothers in Sandy Hook have provided the entire world by your courage, your love, your mercy...and your forgiveness. You have shown the world that the light of Christ is real and burns brightly right here."

At the close of Mass, Msgr. Weiss offered his heartfelt plea that his parishioners continue to pray. "I really thought this would end the violence...but where are we now? Please keep praying—for everything we do is rooted in God."

He then thanked dignitaries that attended the Mass to celebrate with their constituents including Mitch Bolinsky, Tony Hwang, Jahana Hayes, First Selectman Dan Rosenthal and Pat Llodra and Police Chief James Viadero.

At the conclusion, Msgr. Weiss invited State Senator Tony Hwang to say a few words. "It is okay to let go of our emotions. We are always here for each other. Light and faith will guide us through the unknown," he offered those in attendance.

The church remained open all day and night for parishioners and others to pray and light a candle of remembrance. ■



CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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



PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR

REVEREND ALPHONSE AROKIAM, appointed Parochial Administrator of Saint Elizabeth Seton, Ridgefield, for a term of one year. Effective date is January 1, 2022.

REVEREND NICK CIRILLO, appointed temporary Parochial Administrator of Holy Trinity Parish, Sherman. Effective date was December 15.

PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND KAROL KSIAZEK, appointed Parochial Vicar at Saint Rose of Lima in Newtown. Effective date was December 1.

CHAPLAIN

REVEREND CHRISTOPHER J. FORD, appointed Chaplain to the Superintendent of Schools. Effective date was November 1, for a term of three years.

DEACON

DEACON DON NAIMAN, appointed Chaplain to Saint John Paul II Center, Danbury. Effective date was December 1, for a term of one year.

OTHER

REVEREND MIGUEL BERNAL, appointed, Coordinator of Hispanic Ministry for the Greenwich Deanery. Effective date was November 29.

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

FAIRFIELD COUNTY
CATHOLICOffice
of Communications
Diocese of Bridgeport

238 Jewett Avenue
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06606-2892
telephone | 203.416.1461
fax | 203.374.2044
email | fcc@diobpt.org

Web | www.bridgeportdiocese.com
Facebook | BridgeportDiocese
Twitter | @diobpt

USPS no.: 12-117. Periodical postage paid at Bridgeport, CT 06601, and additional mailing offices.

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Publisher

Brian D. Wallace

Executive Editor bdwallace@diobpt.org

Elizabeth Clyons

Writer/Editor elizabeth.clyons@diobpt.org

Renée Stamatis

Art Director rstamatis@diobpt.org

Ralph Lazzaro

Advertising Manager rlazzaro@diobpt.org

John Grosso

Social Media Leader jgrosso@diobpt.org

Ronnie Lazzaro

Copy Editor (Consultant)

Advertise

To place an ad, contact
Ralph Lazzaro: 203.667.1622

Circulation

Every registered Catholic household in Fairfield County is entitled to a subscription. To cancel, change or add an address, please email: fcc@diobpt.org

Annual Subscription Price

\$20 (within diocese)
\$50 (outside diocese)

Postmaster

send address changes to:
Fairfield County Catholic
238 Jewett Avenue
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06606-2892

© Copyright 2021, Diocese of Bridgeport

Editorial



There will be suffering, but there will also be joy

A YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE

BY ELIZABETH CLYONS

Libby Clyons is Communications Associate for the Diocese of Bridgeport. She can be reached at elizabeth.clyons@diobpt.org.

I recently attended a funeral for a family friend who was my age. I have the fondest memories of us playing together when we were little. One of the things I remember most about her was her strong faith and love for God. She had many health struggles, battling cystic fibrosis her whole life, but she always carried such a light and had an aura of hope about her. She had a fiery spirit to match her fiery red hair.

She called me up last year, in the midst of the pandemic, looking for a local church that she could attend regularly. Even amongst everything that was going on in her life and in the world, she sought out a faith community. I remember having such admiration for that.

After her passing, it feels very strange to be joyful, especially at Christmas time. I am at an exciting time in my life, where doors and opportunities are opening

up along with the world, which has seemed so shuttered in the past few years. But I find myself questioning why she didn't get to continue to experience all these wonderful things as well.

I was struck by something Bishop Caggiano recently said in his homily at the Dedication Mass for the new recreation center at St. Matthew Parish in Norwalk. The Mass was celebrated on Gaudete Sunday, the Sunday of joy.

The bishop said, "We are not always promised that we will be happy, but we are promised that we will have the gift of joy. For joy comes from the deep trust that we have in our hearts that no matter what happens to us, challenges before us, or suffering we face, our God will be before us."

I immediately thought of Abby. Even as she struggled with her health, she had joy. She had

a deep trust that God had a plan for her and that her suffering was a part of that plan. She lived her life unapologetically.

Similarly, as the parish of St. Matthew celebrated the dedication of their new recreation center, many missed the presence of Msgr. Orłowski, who began the project in 2018 and for whom the center is named.

Even though the parish still mourns his loss, they were able to celebrate this joyful occasion in his memory.

The bishop mentioned that although Monsignor experienced suffering and challenges, he had the gift of joy in his heart.

Abby did too. And I think she would want us to remember that most of all. There will be suffering, but there will also be joy. And perhaps the two can exist simultaneously.

The priest who said the homily at Abby's funeral explained that

God was not just a puzzle piece in her life, but rather He was the table or surface on which she put the puzzle pieces of her life together. God was the foundation on which she built her life—and that will be my Christmas this year—the understanding that Christ is close to us.

Is this why she was able to have joy even in the face of hardship? I'd like to think it was.

As I was saying goodbye to Abby's family, her dad pulled out a small Rosary from his pocket, mentioning that she had it with her. I'd like to think it was a comfort to her, as it now will be to him.

The night before Abby's funeral I had a dream about her. We were playing together again in the backyard, our laughter that of immense joy. I think I'll hold on to that memory, and I think it is how I will always remember her. ■



Who do we follow as our true king?

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

We all know the story of the Three Kings who journeyed from the East to pay homage to a king born in a stable in Bethlehem. But this wasn't any king. It was Christ the King.

Their story, which evolved over the centuries, centers on the account in Matthew 2:1-12. The wise men heard of the prophecy and followed a star. They went to King Herod in Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage."

Herod was distraught. This was a threat to his kingship. Matthew wrote: "After their

audience with the king, they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage."

Father Dwight Longenecker, author of "Mystery of the Magi: The Quest to Identify the Three Wise Men," said, "The three kings joining the humble shepherds to worship the Christ child symbolize the equality of Christians in the eyes of the God who became poor for our sake. The kings worship the King of

Kings, and the shepherds adore the Good Shepherd."

That brief encounter with a newborn baby changed them forever. They spent their lives spreading the news about the King of Kings and were martyred for their faith. They realized Christ's kingship was infinitely greater than Herod the (so-called) Great's...and any other temporal power on Earth.

There's a lesson here, and the lesson is simple. We should give homage to Christ, not to political leaders, especially when governments increasingly promote agendas that violate our beliefs. For many Catholics, politics has become a fake faith.

At the end of the liturgical year, we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King, which Pope Pius XI established in 1925 in response to the growing and pernicious influence of secularism. In his encyclical "Quas Primas," he reminded the world that Christ is our real King, and to him alone we owe allegiance—not to a monarchy, not to a prime minister, not to a dictator, not to a president.

Living in the aftermath of World War I, Pius XI knew that kings rise and fall, leaders come and go, but Christ is forever.

In his encyclical, he said that " manifold evils in the world were due to the fact that the majority of men had thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law out of their lives; that these had no place either in private affairs or in politics.... And as long as individuals and states refused to submit to the rule of our Savior, there would be no really hopeful prospect of a lasting peace."

During these troubled times, we should remember that no matter the storms that rage across this land, ignited by political agendas, Jesus is in control. Jesus has always been in control and that everything is unfolding according to his plan.

A novena to Christ the King clearly states what our priority should be:

"Christ, our Savior and our King, renew in me allegiance to Your Kingship.

I pray for the grace to place You above the powers of this world in all things.

I pray for the grace to obey You before any civic authority.

I pray for the grace to fervently bring about Your Kingdom in my family and community.

I pray that You will reign in my mind. O Prince of Peace, may Your reign be complete in my life and in the life of the world... Christ the King, may your kingdom come!"

Like the Three Kings, there was another martyr for Christ 2000 years later. A 14-year-old Mexican boy named Jose Luis Sanchez del Rio, was shot in the head by government soldiers because he refused to renounce Christ. His crime? He was a Catholic.

The soldiers told him, "If you shout, 'Death to Christ the King,' we'll spare your life."

It was a simple choice—renounce Christ or be executed. He cried in pain from wounds they had inflicted with a machete, but he did not give in, and his last words were "Viva Cristo Rey!" Long live Christ the King!

(Joe Pisani can be reached at joepisani@yahoo.com) ■

Queen of the Clergy Residence

Senior priests—still active, still serving

By JOE PISANI

STAMFORD—A priest doesn't retire. Ask Msgr. William Scheyd, 81, officially retired January 30, 2016...and still on the job. Or more accurately, "jobs."

Monsignor, who helps out at St. Matthew Church in Norwalk and St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan, where he was pastor for 14 years, is also the head of the advisory committee for the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of the Clergy Residence in Stamford, for which he headed the building committee in the mid-1990s when he was vicar general of the diocese.

Of the 23 priests in the independent-living residence, 12 still go out and serve parishes on the weekends.

"A priest doesn't retire," Monsignor says. "The official title in many dioceses is 'senior priest,' and he can be a resident

in a parish, a chaplain at an institution or sometimes on his own with the family."

Queen of the Clergy has 33 suites, 23 of which are occupied. There are 80 priests in the Diocese of Bridgeport over 75. A few are planning to retire by the end of the year. Some of these men will continue to live in parishes while others will live on their own.

"We also take in priests who are ill," Monsignor said. "We don't have nursing care, but they bring that with them on Medicare. We have meals prepared for us and celebrate Mass every day at 11:30 am. Several priests have even done rehab here, and they enjoyed it."

They also have access to the chapel, community room, library, exercise room and dining area.

The Queen of the Clergy Residence was built to offer independent living for retired priests, through the generosity of parish-



MSGR. WILLIAM SCHEYD, head of the advisory committee for the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of the Clergy Residence in Stamford and Vicky Hickey, residential pastoral associate.

ioners, he said. It was constructed with the understanding that the facility would have to expand as a larger number of clergy reached retirement age.

It is supported by the Annual Catholic Appeal and recently received a \$50,000 grant from the St. John Vianney Fund of

Foundations in Faith.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has said, "Our retired priests recognize the wonderful generosity of our diocese in making Queen of the Clergy Residence possible. They continue to serve in our parishes, schools, nursing homes and hospitals across Fairfield

County. Most importantly, they offer prayers for all of us during their daily Mass."

Monsignor said financial support from the diocese is very important to the retired priests.

"We get meals, heat, light and laundry," he said. "We pay \$800 a month rent, and that will go up to \$1,000 a month in two years, but what we pay is immaterial."

"Priests come and go here," he said. "Everybody is welcome, and we have community night on Tuesday when the guys get together and share company so we can see one another. We enjoy one another's company."

"Most of us are in our 80s with one priest 93 years old," he said. "You don't think about age when you're that age. When we were younger, we thought of them as dinosaurs. But we laugh about it now. Most of us don't go out. One challenge is your legs. But we help one another, and if

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift.

2 Corinthians 9:15

As we celebrate the seasons of Advent and Christmas we are grateful to the donors to the Annual Catholic Appeal.

Without the kindness and compassion of people like you, we would not have been able to serve all those who turn to us for assistance.

For those who have not made a gift, there is no better time to share the charity of Christ than during the Christmas season.

Thank you to all of those who made a gift to the 2021 Annual Catholic Appeal.



Your gift supports:

- Food and housing assistance
- Mental health counseling and spiritual consolation
- Catholic Education in the Diocese through the Bishop's Scholarship Fund
- Faith Formation for people of all ages, seminarians and deacons, and all who seek to deepen their spiritual lives

Donate at
2021ACABridgeport.com

Thank you for your generous support.

Wishing Christ's peace and hope to you and your family this Advent and Christmas season.



A season of hope

DIOCESE CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS 2021

The Nativity Story: Art of the Crèche

By JOSEPH PRONECHEN

NEW HAVEN—The traditional exhibits of crèches and nativities, for years a popular favorite at the Knights of Columbus Museum in New Haven until the show had to be cancelled in 2020, is making a joyous return this year. This new, truly remarkable show is titled “The Nativity Story: Art of the Crèche.” The location is the same, but the museum is renamed the Blessed Michael McGivney Pilgrimage Center.

Crèches appear in all sizes—from one that will fit onto a saucer to one that fills an entire gallery. Crèches and nativity scenes come from around the world and from different centuries. There are traditional and non-traditional crèches, from folk art to fine art.

One of the revelations is that no matter the style or what the figures are wearing, the story of the Nativity is immediately recognizable. Some crèches contain only the Holy Family, while others have everything from a local band serenading the Child in the manger to native animals taking the place of the sheep, donkey and ox. One example from Kenya includes an elephant and a hippo kneeling before the manger and Holy Family.

From Portugal’s Azores not only does a band dressed in traditional costume welcome the baby Jesus with a song, but this time the donkey and ox are joined by a rooster. People and families who see the show will learn why this country traditionally includes a rooster in this multicolored Nativity.

Another wonderful surprise



is the various dress of the Holy Family and other figures such as the shepherds and local townsfolk. From Hungary, the colorful figures in shiny ceramics are dressed like Hungarian peasants. From a neighboring country, the Three Kings appear alone in one setting as very tall marionettes wearing traditional Czech Republic costumes.

From Africa, the Holy Family look like Maasi from Kenya/Tanzania as they wear bright red native garments. In a pueblo in Arizona, the Holy Family and all others dress in Hopi Indian style. In Italy, the huge Neapolitan scene includes dozens of townspeople, all wearing authentic 17th century clothing styles. In a mosaic done in the Philippines,

Mary wears a traditional garment of that country—in this one the Christ Child holds a small rosary.

It’s quickly apparent the crèches are descended or adapted from the European style and the figures are all clearly universal representations of the Holy Family. The reason is simple: European missionaries brought Christianity to many places in the world.

The wonders continue even in the way the crèches and figures are made of different materials, often native to the country. The crèche from the Azores adapts the locale’s typical handicraft, a small wicker basket, into the stable for the Nativity. A pair of crèches from Israel turn hollowed out trunks of an olivewood tree into the stable setting for the

Nativity. Both are quite shiny, and one include not only the Holy Family but an angel, shepherd and sheep. All the simple figures are also carved of olive-wood. One Holy Family from the Philippines stands out with its figures in iridescent native seashells and silvery wire outlines and accessories.

Of course, the amazement continues even if the crèches are somewhat familiar from different areas. Here are the likes of large porcelain figures populating an instantly recognizable older Hummel Nativity scene from Germany. Along the way, from Russia comes an extremely elaborate set of nesting dolls made of lindenwood, painted in great detail, and then lacquered for a

very shiny appearance.

The 1930-1940s Polish crèche, called a szopka (shop – kah). The manger becomes enshrined in a splendid building modeled after real Gothic churches, cathedrals and castles with elaborate steeples and domes, such as Krakow’s St. Mary’s Basilica. The Nativity is on the second level, while on the ground level Polish folk dancers arrayed in traditional Polish costumes dance for joy.

This marvelous show flows beautifully through three large galleries set up in an exceptional way. They are divided in a way to give viewers the feeling they are moving through the pages of a beautiful Christmas book. Each section—with titles that include Mary Mother of God, St. Joseph, Angels, Shepherds, introduce and emphasize the new “chapter.” These “pages” decorated with simple Middle Ages illumination designs stretch from floor to ceiling.

Paintings related to the Nativity also have a place in this wonderful show. Some were done specifically for covers gracing December issues of the Knights of Columbus’ Columbia magazine. A watercolor titled “Silent Night” was so beautiful for the 1978 issue it reappeared in 1984. A distant stable in the center is brightly lit by the ray of a single star so that all eyes, even those of a single lamb in the woods, are drawn to the scene of the birth of the Christ Child.

A beautiful painting from 1972 captures the peace and serenity of the Nativity as Mary kneels lovingly next to the Infant Jesus in the manger as Joseph, one hand holding a lantern and the other

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Christmas 2021

THE NATIVITY STORY FROM PAGE 11

on his heart, gazes with awe and reverence.

The huge 18th century-style Neapolitan crèche occupying an entire gallery can be viewed from four sides. Made in 2014 in Naples using authentic 18th century methods, it's like a perfectly preserved example from antiquity. The scene is elaborate, the characters have detailed expressions, and a radiance highlights the Holy Family who is surrounded by angels and worshippers that include the Magi, while musicians serenade them. Down in the streets some are dancing, eating outdoors at an inn, ignoring the main spiritual meaning as they go about the daily business of selling and shopping at the outdoor fish, fruit and vegetable markets. It's quite a scene.

There is so much to behold,



admire, and learn from in this wondrous, reverent show drawn entirely from the Knights' own extensive collection that it should not be missed. As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said, in part, when reflecting on crèches in 2012, "The crib is a school of life where we can learn the secret of true joy. This does not mean having

many things, but in feeling loved by the Lord, in making oneself a gift for others and loving one another."

(Free admission and onsite parking. Runs through February 6. Visit the Blessed Michael McGivney Pilgrimage Center website at: www.michaelmcgivneycenter.org when planning visit.)



ST. PIUS X CATHOLIC CHURCH

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

CHRISTMAS EVE
4 PM
6 PM
Midnight

CHRISTMAS DAY
8 AM
10 AM
Noon

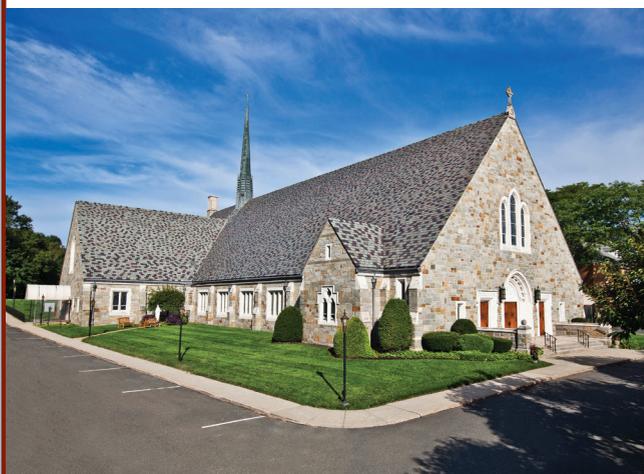
Overflow seating with simulcast available for all Masses

www.st-pius.org
834 Brookside Drive | Fairfield, CT 06824

Saint Theresa

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
The Mother Church of Trumbull

Rev. Brian P. Gannon, S.T.D., *Pastor*
Rev. Flavian Bejan, *Parochial Vicar*
Rev. David C. Leopold, *In Residence*
Deacon Gerald M. Lambert



5301 Main Street | Trumbull, Connecticut 06611-4195
www.sttheresatrumbull.org | 203.261.3676

CHRISTMAS 2021

Sacrament of Penance

Saturday, December 18 3:00 - 4:15 pm
Thursday, December 23 4:00 - 5:15 pm
Thursday, December 23 7:00 - 8:00 pm

Christmas Masses

Friday, December 24
4:00 pm | 6:00 pm | Midnight

Christmas Eve Concert

Friday, December 24
11:30 pm Before Christmas Eve Mass

Christmas Day

Saturday, December 25
7:30 am | 10:00 am | 12:00 pm

Feast of the Holy Family

Sunday, December 26
7:30 am | 9:00 am | 10:30 am
12:00 pm | 4:30 pm

Solemnity of Mary

Vigil Mass
Friday, December 31 4:30 pm

New Year's Day - Saturday, January 1
8:00 am | 12:00 pm

All Masses Livestreamed
at www.sttheresatrumbull.org

Christmas 2021

Knights continue Thanksgiving holiday traditions

NORWALK—Assisting those most in need is one of the many goals of the Knights of Columbus St. Matthew Council 14360. As part of tradition, the council recently joined forces with five local councils from Norwalk, Darien, New Canaan, Westport and Wilton on Saturday, October 30, at the Family & Children’s Agency Community Connections Center in South Norwalk.

More than 500 brand new coats were distributed during the Knights of Columbus Coats for Kids event. This event helps keep kids warm over the winter months by providing this necessity. The goal of the Coats for Kids program is to ensure that children in need across North America have a warm, winter coat. Through the dedication of councils across the United States and Canada, hundreds of thousands of new



winter coats have been distributed to children since the program’s inception. Over 5,000 brand new coats were distributed by CT Knights Councils at nine different locations over the last month.

“While our society is pushing us to purchase items for the Christmas season, we don’t want to forget those that need basic necessities for the upcoming cold winter season,” said Project Chairman and Former

District Deputy George Ribellino, Jr. “It’s great to see brother Knights come together from different councils to combine resources to help more people in need. I started this collaboration within my district back in 2015.”

FCA’s president & CEO, Rob Cashel adds, “Personally, and on behalf of Family & Children’s Agency, I cannot thank the Knights of Columbus enough for

their generous efforts to secure over 500 new coats for our clients through their Coats for Kids Initiative. During these challenging times, I am truly grateful that there are groups like the Knights of Columbus that dedicate their time and efforts to meeting critical needs in our community.”

On the weekend of November 20 and 21 for the 2nd consecutive year, Council 14360 held a Food for Families Food Drive with students from The Society of St. Theresa at Cardinal Kung Academy. The food drive was held at St. Mary’s Church in Norwalk and the response was incredible. More than 1,200 pounds of food were collected for the St. Vincent DePaul Food Pantry in Norwalk. The food collected will help feed many Greater Norwalk families over the holiday season.

“While food insecurity has

become an ever-increasing issue in the area due to the impact of the pandemic over the last two years, it is our responsibility to help lessen that burden. This is what Knights do—where there is a need, there are Knights close-by ready to jump in and do what we can,” said Council 14360 Grand Knight Anthony Armentano.

A few Council members started off the long Thanksgiving weekend on Wednesday, November 24, by assisting the St. Matthew Food Pantry with giving out 90 turkeys and hams along with hundreds of bags of groceries at the drive up Thanksgiving Food Pantry.

On Thanksgiving Day, after Council 14360 members helped usher, read and clean for the 9 am Thanksgiving Mass at St. Matthew. The Council also provided a Knights Of Columbus

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



THE PARISH OF ST. CECILIA – ST. GABRIEL MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve

Friday, December 24th

St. Gabriel Church: 4:00 p.m.

St. Cecilia Church: 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Christmas Day

Saturday, December 25th

St. Cecilia Church: 7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.

Solemnity of Mary

Friday, December 31st

St. Cecilia Church: 5:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 1st

St. Gabriel Church: 8:00 a.m.

St. Cecilia Church - 1184 Newfield Avenue - Stamford
St. Gabriel Church - 948 Newfield Avenue - Stamford

St. James Church

2110 Main Street, Stratford, CT - (203) 375-5887
www.stjamesstratford.com—Rev. Peter J. Adamski, Pastor



CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Friday, December 24—4:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m., and 10:00 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE: Masks will be required for ALL individuals (regardless of vaccination status) only at the 6:00 p.m. Mass.

Friday, December 25—8:00 a.m. and 10:00am

CONFESSIONS

Saturdays (12/18) - 12:00 p.m.—3:00 p.m.

Week of Christmas (12/21, 12/22, 12/23) - 7:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.

FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS

Tuesday, December 28—8:00 a.m.

(All parents who have lost a child are encouraged to attend and light a candle in his or her memory.)

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Saturday, January 1, 2022—8:00 a.m.

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

Saturday, January 8, 2022—4:30 p.m.

Sunday, January 9, 2022—8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., and 5:00 p.m.

Glory
to the
Newborn
King

Christmas 2021

ST. MATTHEW KNIGHTS FROM PAGE 13

Honor Guard for the Mass. At the conclusion of the Mass, the council teamed up with Bishop Fenwick Assembly 100 and the Catholic Daughters of the America's St. Matthew Court 2640 to provide and deliver a Thanksgiving meal for the residents of Homes for the Brave for the ninth consecutive year.

"Our men and women both loved the food and we could not be more appreciative. What a blessing St. Matthew Council #14360, Bishop Fenwick Assembly 100 and Catholic Daughters Court 2640 have been

to us. All of us at Homes for the Brave are extremely grateful as you made the day very special for our residents," said Homes for the Brave CEO/Executive Director Vince Santilli.

On Black Friday, November 26, council members started off the day by going to Mass at St. Matthew. After Mass, four carloads of food collected at Thanksgiving Mass were delivered to Blessed Sacrament Pastor Father Skip Karcinski. "Giving back to those in need during the Thanksgiving season is a blessing for our council. One of the most

profound ways we can truly give thanksgiving to God is through serving others," said Grand Knight Anthony Armentano.

The Council wrapped up the weekend, by hosting the Annual Keep Christ In Christmas Creche Blessing and Christmas Tree Lighting at St. Matthew Church. The newly planted Norway spruce was lit and dedicated in memory of beloved St. Matthew's 4th Pastor Msgr. Walter Orłowski. New St. Matthew pastor and council chaplain, Father Jeff Couture said the blessing. The St. Matthew youth and adult choirs led all the faithful in song with beautiful Christmas carols. The St. Matthew Knights

provided hot chocolate and cookies in the parish center Great Room to end the festive event. All parishioners received a free Keep Christ in Christmas pin as a gift from the council.

"As we enter the Advent season, it is a sincere and blessed reminder of the gift we all receive each Christmas in the celebration of the birth of Christ. The honor to serve others is a great and humble way to receive and share that Gift," said Armentano.

The goal of the Knights of Columbus Council at St. Matthew Church in Norwalk is to perform acts of charity. Providing those in need with a range of support from

financial to tactical help in dealing with a wide variety of challenges. Council members work together to foster the founding principles of our order: charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism. Our goal as a council is to continue to identify specific needs in our community and muster support and help to alleviate these challenges and hardships to the best of our abilities and resources.

(For more information, please go to kofc14360.net. If you are a Catholic man interested in putting your faith in action, join the Knights of Columbus online for free at kofc.org/joinus and use promo code MCGIVNEY2020) ■



The Parish of Saint Catherine of Siena
IN HISTORIC NICHOLS, CONNECTICUT

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve • Fri, Dec 24 • 4:00 pm, *6:00 pm

The Midnight Mass of Christmas

*12:00 Midnight. Prelude music begins at 11:30 pm

Christmas Day • Sat, Dec 25 • 8:00 am, *10:00 am, 12:00 noon

Festive Mass with Soloists and Instrumentalists at 10:00 am

* The 6pm Mass, Midnight Mass, and 10am Mass will be livestreamed on our Parish Website, Facebook Page and YouTube Channel.

Father Joseph A. Marcello, Pastor

Father Philip G. Bochanski, In Residence • Deacon Patrick Toole, Deacon of the Parish

220 Shelton Road • Trumbull, CT 06611
(203) 377-3133 • StCathTrumbull.com

Twitter/Instagram/Facebook/Flickr: @StCathTrumbull
YouTube: TheParishofStCatherineofSiena



St. Matthew Parish

ALL ARE WELCOME!
Reverend Jeffrey W. Couture, Pastor



A Child is Born

CHRISTMAS EVE
4:00pm & Live Stream | 6:00pm | 11:00pm

CHRISTMAS DAY
9:00am | 10:30am & Live Stream | 12:00pm

SOLEMNITY OF MARY
December 31: 4:00pm
January 1: 9:00am

StMatthewNorwalk.org

216 Scribner Avenue | Norwalk, CT | 203-838-3788
Msgr. Walter C. Orłowski Recreation Wellness Center
an intergenerational gathering place for body, mind, spirit



Christmas 2021

Teens set off to Indiana for NCYC

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

INDIANAPOLIS, IND.—A contingent of young people from the diocese recently attended the National Catholic Youth Conference held in Indianapolis, Indiana. Ten thousand youth from all over the country came together to celebrate life, express gratitude toward a God they are learning to talk to, and to pray.

“Get a group of teens together to talk about God and they will show you Jesus’ promise come to life: ‘where two or three are united in my name, I am in their midst,’” said Jennifer, a youth minister at St. Philip Parish in Norwalk.

The theme of this year’s conference was ‘Ablaze’—calling on the Holy Spirit to descend upon the young Church and set it Ablaze for



the Lord.

Jennifer explained that the Holy Spirit was the center of attention throughout the conference: joyful song and praise alternated with moments of prayer and witness, she said.

“NCYC was an amazing way to see how other teenagers around the country also go through the same things as I do and believe the same things too,” said Sarah Chalarca, one of our diocesan young people who attended the conference.

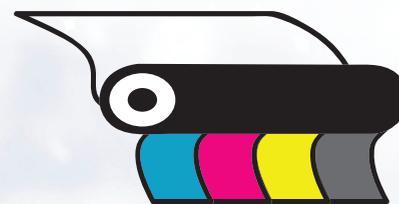
“Going to NCYC was a valuable thing,” shared Daniel Cruz. “I really got to connect more to my religion and my belief in God the Father.”

Daniel mentioned that he enjoyed the sessions he got to attend

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



Proud Printers of **Fairfield County Catholic** for more than 20 years!



Trumbull
PRINTING

Wishing you a very
Merry Christmas

205 Spring Hill Rd., Trumbull CT 06611 | trumbullprinting.com | 203.261.2548

Christmas 2021

SETTING THE WORLD ABLAZE FROM PAGE 15

with the group and speeches that helped him connect more with his faith. “We heard a speech about the fact that we have to be the light in the dark at all times. We have to be the ones that lead by example to make this world better.”

Jennifer shared that one of the most profound moments occurred during Adoration. She described it as “an intimate, yet communicative dialogue with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist that simply transforms each and every one of us.” “At the end there were no words, she said, just emotional embraces among participants.

“Adoration was a very powerful experience,” said Kyara Scialpi. “The Masses were beautiful. Everyone was connected through the same values and I will carry that with me always.”

Participants were invited to spir-

itually go to the Upper Room—the site of the Last Supper and the place where, immediately after Jesus’ ascension, the disciples returned to, devoting themselves to prayer and be of “one accord.”

“Every time we come back from NCYC, I see a marked change in the participants,” said Father Sudhir, pastor of St. Philip’s. “I feel that they have matured a little in their faith and I can discuss matters of faith comfortably with them.”

Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Christophe read a message from the Holy Father, which Jennifer said gave everyone much courage: “The Church is waiting for your yes... Jesus wants your help to build his kingdom of Truth and Light, Justice and Love, Hope and Peace. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom...”

AJ shared that he felt like part of “one big Catholic family” at NCYC. “Going to NCYC always transforms me. This event can turn anyone who is new in the Catholic Faith into a full believer,” he said.

Jennifer shared that downtown Indy was inundated with colorful flags and eclectic hats, waiting to be exchanged, as it is customary for attendees to bring a unique hat or other accessory to exchange with someone else, while using that opportunity to create new friendships.

Brien McMahon, who attended the conference for the second time spoke about the excitement he experienced on the trip. “Indianapolis, Indiana, stayed true to past years in a sense of transforming the environment and aura of the big city into an inviting safe space for all in attendance.” ■

Silent Night

Christmas music has been playing since before Thanksgiving. We hear the same secular songs over and over again.... “All I want for Christmas is you” or “Baby, it’s cold outside.” Rarely do we hear one of the most beautiful Christmas carols, “Silent Night.” This carol speaks to the very heart of Christmas. Josef Mohr was pastor of the Church of Saint Nicholas at Oberndorf near Salzburg, Austria. After the Christmas Eve program in 1818, Mohr chose the longer way home that took him up over a hill overlooking the village. Reveling in the silence of that wintry night, he remembered a poem he had written. He decided that those words might make a good carol for his congregation. He went to see the church organist, Franz Gruber, who had only a few hours to develop the melody. On Christmas Eve, the small Oberndorf congregation heard Gruber and Mohr play their new carol. It spread across Europe, and in 1834, singers performed “Silent Night” for King Frederick IV of Prussia, who then ordered his cathedral choir to sing it every Christmas Eve. Twenty years after “Silent Night” was written, the carol was brought to New York City’s Trinity Church. The rest is history as one of the most tender and beautiful Christmas carols ever written. This is certainly the carol that should be played a little more frequently as we approach December 25. ■

From the
St. Rose of Lima Parish Bulletin



We wish you a Merry Christmas

DELTA DENTAL

This holiday season, we are thankful for healthy smiles and gathering with loved ones. May this be a time of joy, peace, and hope. And may your smile be as bright as your hope for a better world in 2022.

YourSmilePower.com | 860-633-9200



Alloy
GROUP

It's an honor to be of service to the Diocese,
the Alloy Group wishes everyone a very Merry Christmas!

ABATEMENT | DEMOLITION | ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING
16 Hamilton Street, West Haven, Connecticut 06516 | 24 hour 203.932.9639 | alloygroup.com

Controlled
Air
INC.

Heating, Air Conditioning & Temperature Controls
Licenses: CT S1 302788 - RI RM1 & P/M1 0007776

Merry Christmas from
our family to yours!

Leader in creating environmentally sound &
energy-efficient HVAC designs.

- Commercial HVAC Service & Installation
- Custom Service Contracts
- 24/7 Emergency Service
- Customer Satisfaction Guarantee

21 Thompson Rd • Branford, Connecticut 06405

800-840-9101 • www.controlledair.com

Christmas 2021

Seminarians to hold Christmas concert

By **JOE PISANI**

NORWALK—The seminarians of Redemptoris Mater Diocesan Missionary Seminary of Bridgeport will hold their fourth Annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 19 at 7 pm at St. Matthew Church at 216 Scribner Ave. in Norwalk.

“I hope people will be able to join us,” said Father Marco Pacciana, rector of the seminary. “It will be an occasion to spread the Christmas spirit, but also to give the larger reality of our diocese the possibility to meet these seminarians, who—God willing—will be priests ministering in their parishes one day.”

He said the concert is offered for free with a suggested donation



of \$25 per person for those who wish to make an offering. It will be followed by a reception in the parish hall.

Those who want to attend can RSVP on the seminary’s website (www.rmbridgeport.org) or send an email to events@rmbridgeport.org. This will help

them to arrange the food for the reception and ensure that seating is reserved.

The Redemptoris Mater Seminary, currently located on Newfield Avenue in Stamford, is under the direction of Father Pacciana, along with Father Giandomenico

Flora, the spiritual director. Redemptoris Mater (Mother of the Redeemer) seminaries are under the auspices of the Neocatechumenal Way, a 55-year-old charism in the Church dedicated to Christian formation and the New Evangelization. The seminaries

form men as missionaries for the New Evangelization as diocesan priests to serve the local church or in any part of the world the bishop chooses.

Father Pacciana said that Bishop Frank J. Caggiano would be attending the concert.

In addition, the seminarians have scheduled Christmas concerts in New Britain and The Bronx.

A concert in the Archdiocese of Hartford will be held Friday, December 17 at 7 pm, at St. Joachim Parish at 544 Main Street in New Britain, which Auxiliary Bishop Juan Miguel Betancourt will attend.

On December 12, they will hold a concert at 6 pm at Sts. Peter and Paul Church on 824 Brook Ave. in the Bronx, N.Y. ■



Have a Very Merry Christmas!
Wishing you Peace and Joy throughout the New Year

From our family and staff of T. Arduini Co., Inc.
BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT

Power Point Energy
The Integrated Design Leader

*Wishing You and Yours
a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!*

DAY PITNEY LLP

Day Pitney is proud to support
Fairfield County Catholic and the Diocese of Bridgeport

Wishing you a most happy and blessed Christmas and New Year

BOSTON CONNECTICUT FLORIDA NEW JERSEY NEW YORK
PROVIDENCE WASHINGTON, DC | www.daypitney.com

St. Mark School

Spreading Christmas holiday cheer

STRATFORD—Christmas came early this year at St. Mark School, as the elementary school hosted its traditional Breakfast with Santa. Throughout the morning, over 200 people attended the annual holiday event that was canceled last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Students and families from St. Mark School and parish gathered Sunday morning for breakfast and activities with Santa Claus and his elves.

The school gymnasium was transformed into The Polar Express. Kids were able to visit Santa Claus and take photographs with him before he boarded the train to the North Pole.

Breakfast was hosted and coordinated by Stratford's Paradise

Pizza owner and St. Mark parent, Andy Tsihclas. Under Andy's leadership, members of the school community as well as Andy's family made and served waffles, eggs, bacon, sausage links and other breakfast items.

The event also featured Christmas arts and crafts, cookie bake sale and themed basket raffles. Upper-grade students and recent alumni helped with set up and clean up.

"The breakfast spoke volumes to the power of Christmas spirit and coming together," shared St. Mark parent and Event Chair Michele Rouse. "Many of us yearn for togetherness after being impacted by the pandemic."

"Breakfast with Santa is a magical time for our students and

their families," commented St. Mark Principal Melissa Warner. "Our school is especially blessed with wonderful families that dedicate so much of their time and talents into organizing events that the students happily await each year. Each year's event seems to outdo the last!" Warner added.

St. Mark School is a 2009 Nationally Recognized Blue Ribbon School of Academic Excellence and a New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accredited school, serving students in pre-K through grade 8. This year, St.

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

(l-r): Amelia Auten (grade 6), Nora Auten (K) and Stassi Tsihclas (K) visit with Santa.



 **PROGRESSIVETM**
DIAGNOSTICS

wishes you and your family a Merry Christmas
and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous 2022

Thank you Bishop Frank Caggiano, Deacon Patrick Toole
and the Bellows Family for all of your guidance and support
– Curt & Anna-Karin Kuliga

Same Day PCR Results

Convenient locations in The Catholic Center - Bridgeport,
Our Lady of Fatima - Wilton, St. Phillip's - Norwalk

To learn more or schedule a test, visit progressive-diagnostics.com
or call us at 888.503.8803



Christmas 2021

St. Leo Parish gives back this Thanksgiving

STAMFORD—More than 125 hot Thanksgiving Day dinners were presented to community members November 25 at New Covenant Center. Supporting the annual outreach activity were members of St. Leo Parish, who donated, prepared, packaged and filled to-go plates to provide a nutritious meal to all those who are hungry. Recipients began lining up outside the center midday for the food assistance program.



The November event is sponsored each year by the St. Leo Social Concerns Committee with generous support from parishioners. The NCC holiday meal includes turkey, gravy, stuffing, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce and green bean casserole, pumpkin and apple pie, muffins and fruit. Students from St. Leo's catechism program contributed colorful placemats they created and other church members contributed in many ways to ensure the success of the annual holiday event.

(For more information visit: www.newcovenantcenter.org)

ST. MARK SCHOOL FROM PAGE 18

Mark School welcomed 88 new students and continues to attract families looking for an exceptional in-person education.

(For more information, visit www.stmarkschool.org or email contactus@stmarkschool.org.)



(l-r): RECENT ALUMNI came back to help: Cali Jontos ('21), Anna Arfanis ('21), Christian Rouse (grade 7), Arianna Rouse ('21), and Nicole Bodnarik ('21)



Patrick Baker & Sons
family and staff

wish all of our friends and customers

a

MERRY CHRISTMAS

and a

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Religious gifts for all occasions. We can shop for you!
A Family Business That Cares

1.800.243.6385

Customer Service Hours 9 am-4 pm

Retail shopping online: www.churchgoodsgifts.com

Parish supply needs visit: www.ChurchGoods.com



Merry Christmas from St Joseph High School!



ST JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL

Rolling Admission Happening Now!

www.sjcadets.org | @sjcadets | (203) 378-9378

Christmas 2021

St. Rose School gets in the Spirit of the Season

NEWTOWN—The faculty and students at St. Rose School have been busy learning wonderful lessons and partaking in acts of service.

The school's "buddy teams" joined together for a Turkey Trot race and collected more than 3,500 canned goods for Faith Food Pantry in November.

The school also participated in the Knights of Columbus Coat Drive, collecting 517 coats that will bring warmth to children and adults in the community this winter.

Monsignor Bob held story time for the preschool and kindergarten classes during the Scholastic Book Fair and the whole school celebrated the 50th day '50's style!

On the Feast of St. Nicholas, kindergarten and first-grade students learned about the loving saint and discovered some treats



St. Rose of Lima Catholic School is a Christ-centered community committed to academic excellence in an atmosphere that nurtures the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical and moral development of each child. The dedicated staff partners with families to prepare students to be responsible leaders in a global society by fostering integrity, service and respect. By creating a sense of family where all are welcome, they encourage each child to develop his/her gifts and to become Christ's compassionate heart and hands in the world. They center their community of learning around the four core values of respect, integrity, academic excellence and service. Their spirituality is fostered through their close connection with St. Rose of Lima church. Students attend weekly Mass and are blessed by the continual presence of Msgr. Robert Weiss and the other parish priests.

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

in the shoes they placed outside their classrooms.

It's a joy to be on this learning adventure together.

About St. Rose School

Foundations in Faith

During the Advent season, we hold a light to the St. Francis Xavier Fund for Missionary Parishes. This fund strives to alleviate the financial burdens of urban churches that exhibit strong leadership and outstanding missionary outreach.



This partnership empowers Pastors to focus on their ministries instead of their facilities, and fosters partnership and kinship among brothers and sisters in Christ.

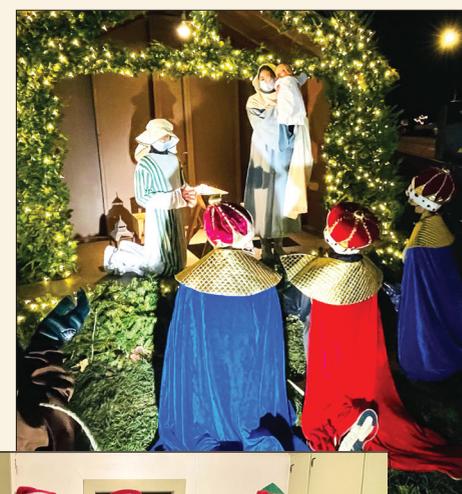
During this season of giving, please consider making a gift to the St. Francis Xavier Fund. Scan the QR code or visit foundationsinfaith.org to donate.



The St. Francis Xavier Fund
for Missionary Parishes

The joy of Christmas

ST. ALOYSIUS PARISH HAS been getting in the Christmas spirit lately! The recently hosted a living Nativity, which was a beautiful display of faith, love, and hope. Parishioners young and old gathered to appreciate the prayerful scene.



TEENS ALSO SANG Christmas carols for seniors at Brightview Assisted Living Facility in New Canaan.

Faith and Charity

A day of missionary spirit

By ROSE BRENNAN

BRIDGEPORT—The Feast Day of St. Francis Xavier was December 3, and ordinarily, it might be a day to celebrate one of the most important missionaries in the history of the Catholic Church.

And it certainly was that. But for a select group of people, it was also a day to learn, listen and take action.

On this saint's feast day, members of the St. Francis Xavier Fund for Missionary Parishes committee took a whirlwind tour of three parishes benefitting from the fund. Throughout the day, committee members were able to see the work the fund had already accomplished, and what work still remained.

The committee's first stop was St. Mary Roman Catholic Church in Bridgeport. Father Rolando Torres, the parish's pastor, gave committee members a tour of the parish's facilities, including the adoration chapel, the religious education spaces, the rectory and the sanctuary itself.

According to Father Torres, the St. Francis Xavier Fund was instrumental in upgrading the parish office's technology. This was done through a technology and communications grant provided by the fund.

Father Torres mentioned the main challenge the parish was facing at that moment was space. Many children had signed up to take religious education classes, but some had to be turned away simply because the parish didn't have the space to accommodate them all.

An "easy" fix might be to hold the classes on multiple days throughout the week. But Father Torres noted the community St. Mary's serves is largely one of immigrants. According to him, parishioners are usually working Monday through Saturday. As a result, Masses, religious education and nearly everything else the parish offers needs to be accomplished on one day: Sunday.

Following the tour of St. Mary's, committee members attended Mass at St. Augustine Cathedral. The cathedral and its sister parish, St. Patrick Church, are two other communities that benefit from the St. Francis Xavier

Fund. Mass was concelebrated by Father Juan Gabriel Acosta, pastor of The Cathedral Parish, and Father Aberlardo Vasquez, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish.

After Mass, many of the St. Francis Xavier Fund committee members gathered at St. Charles Borromeo Parish, where Father Vasquez hosted lunch for them and several clergy members, including Father Acosta, Father Alexis Moronta of St. George Parish, and Father Ivanildo Dos Santos and Deacon David Rivera, both of St. Charles.

The lunch was an opportunity for those brought together by the fund to discuss their successes, their challenges and the work that still needs to be done.

Brian Young, one of the

co-founders of the St. Francis Xavier Fund, reaffirmed his commitment to the fund's mission. To him, the fund's mission was twofold, and required collaboration. It was the priests' obligation to bring people into the pews, and it was the committee's obligation to make sure the pews—and other parish needs—were there when the parish community needed it.

But one other key element to the St. Francis Xavier Fund is collaboration and connection among brothers and sisters in Christ. According to many of the fund's committee members, it does no good to just write a check and send it to a parish in need. Donors need to understand what challenges parishes face, and as a result, they can understand where their



ON THE FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER members of the St. Francis Xavier Fund for Missionary Parishes committee took a whirlwind tour of three parishes benefitting from the fund.

efforts are needed most.

This was echoed by Father Moronta, another missionary parish pastor. He said he was "sick" of emails, and thought connection and progress were best fostered by having conversations and understanding the person on the other side.

But if the lunch between those connected by the St. Francis Xavier Fund was any indication, collaboration and kinship is something they have in abundance. And it was clear they were committed to making their connection to each other not only continue, but flourish, in the years to come. ■

It's all about the connections

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Mental health and a sense of wellbeing are all about connections, says Richard Madwid, MS, LPC, LADC, CCS, director of Behavioral Health Services for Catholic Charities of Fairfield County.

He says the COVID-19 crisis has disrupted connections between friends, family and the larger community. As a result, over the past two years Catholic Charities has seen a dramatic increase in requests for counseling and mental health services for conditions ranging from anxiety and depression to domestic violence and substance abuse.

"We've seen trauma at all levels related to our experience with COVID-19," he says. "We've had death and illness in families, a lot of job loss, which is very traumatic, and we've seen people physically hurting each other with the police involved and kids witnessing the assaults."

Anxiety and depression have been reported in people of all ages, including college students who had their semester upended and were sent home last spring during the surge, he says.



"Many of these young people who left the nest and enjoyed freedom in college found themselves back home unable to go out and essentially being quarantined. Their lives immediately changed."

Working at home also proved to be an added stress for people, particularly two-career couples, who struggled to maintain a work-life balance.

"The psychological dynamics of families coping with COVID-19 are the same whether poor or wealthy—the internal conflict and domestic violence cut across income groups. COVID-19 has induced anxiety for kids, parents and teachers—everyone reported the same thing," he says.

Mask-wearing itself has been traumatic for many people who have felt a sense of panic and confinement from working in a

mask all day.

"The masks, while necessary, created anxiety. Studies have found that when you don't see someone full-face, you lose the affirmation you get through an encouraging or friendly smile just stopped. With masks, you don't know what people are thinking, and maybe you don't even recognize someone walking on the street. That caused a great disconnect among us."

One important takeaway concerning mental health needs, Madwid says, is how the complex web of relationships we have at home, work, church and other locations help to sustain us psychologically.

"There is a strong human need for connection. As much as we need support from the family, we also need connections with the

outside world. COVID-19 disconnected us from communities and each other. We need as many connections as possible to be attached—beginning with our bonding in infancy. We also need to feel attached away from family through community, churches and schools. And many people are still not fully plugged back in."

"It's going to take a year," he believes for people to fully recover from the problems created by COVID-19. Substance abuse, in particular, is not likely to go away. In fact, it may get worse for some.

"The increase in alcohol and substance abuse during COVID-19 is not going to stop. If you look at history, it's going to get bigger. Once people get used to drinking and using substances at that level, it doesn't stop with the pandemic going away," he says.

The good news is that for most people who seek counseling, it can help them cope and regain a sense of control over their lives.

(Catholic Charities has counseling offices at 405 Main Street in Danbury (203.743.4412) and 120 East Avenue in Norwalk (203.750.9711). In-person counseling and telehealth sessions are available during the day and evening by appointment.) ■

Young Adult Ministry

Young adult group fosters faith, fun and community

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

NEW FAIRFIELD—A celebration of fellowship and an opportunity for young Catholics to deepen their faith through community, prompted dozens of young people to gather at St. Edward the Confessor Church for the first meeting of this new ministry.

About seventy people were registered for the event which was advertised in parish bulletins in the Greater Danbury area. The hope is to welcome young people from the surrounding area not just St. Edward parishioners.

Meetings are held monthly, and the ministry also hosts special events such as a Coffee House, a virtual “Evening in Roma,” an Advent Retreat, Pizza Night, and Eucharistic Adoration followed by a Wine and Cheese social.

Judging by the turnout, the invitation to gather filled a void for many young adults in the area and has created a growing interest in the ministry as it continues to grow and collaborate with other parishes.

“I want to connect with people my age,” said Alyssa Denlke. “I don’t have many friends my

age, so this is great,” she added, as she dashed off to introduce herself to someone new, and it was a shared sentiment among those in attendance.

“I don’t really get to meet the young people in the Church,” said Yan Wusik, who admittedly came to the event mostly out of curiosity. But, he said, he wasn’t

Church after the pandemic, this is one of the things that we are doing,” said Father Robert Wolfe who, along with Father Tim Iannacone, started the group for young adults.

Both say that young adults have often been overlooked in the Church, but the two young priests with the blessing of their pastor, Father Nick Cirillo, are doing



THE ITALIAN-THEMED night, “An Evening in Roma,” was replete with good food and fellowship. It was one of many gatherings of the Young Adult Ministry hosted at the church.

disappointed and plans to participate in future events.

“In terms of rebuilding the

their best to change that.

The young adult ministry is open to Catholic young adults



ST. EDWARD’S YOUTH MINISTRY—Young adults from around the diocese have been meeting at St. Edward the Confessor in New Fairfield for special events centered around faith and fellowship.

between the ages of 18-35 and consists of various social and spiritual opportunities to aid in fostering community.

Erin Lennon traveled from Brewster, New York to participate in this first gathering. “Young adults need people to walk with to Christ,” she said, referencing the inherent support group of fellow Catholics.

“Community has been a large part of my faith life and I want to invite more people to be a part of that,” she said, adding that she is looking to start a young adult fellowship group at her home parish of St. Lawrence O’Toole Church in Brewster.

“This is very cool,” Lennon said, looking around at the group gathered enjoying outdoor games and conversations. “I didn’t really know there were this many young Catholics around.”

“It’s nice to be around other people my age,” said Diane Rambadt, a parishioner of St. Edward’s. Fellow attendee, Christian Kutzy agreed,

“Walking in and seeing so many people is such a thrill. It’s so very, very nice.”

“We are journeying with them,” Father Iannacone said. “It’s good that they meet each other in the parish but it’s great for them to establish lasting relationships outside of the parish.”

He said the goal of the group is to enlighten one’s faith with charity and hope, empower the future of the Church with the spiritual tools of the past and present, and to engage the hearts of all Catholic young adults in search of faith and community.

Father Nick Cirillo is excited about the new ministry and the “heavy lifting” undertaken by the two young priests and has invited other parishes in the region to join in the effort to make the outreach available to more young adults.

“One of the aspects that makes our program unique is that we are trying to create a series of relationships between local pastors and young adult liaisons in neighboring parishes so that we can unite our strengths, activities and talent into one effort,” Father Cirillo said.

“With added input from these communities and the possibility of young adults from these churches supporting the combined ministry, we believe that great things can be accomplished for this age group.”

Father Cirillo added that St. Edward Parish is providing financial support for the launch of the ministry, and it has also applied to Foundations in Faith for a grant to assist in some of those costs.

“We hope to establish more formal relationships and partnerships with these groups as we plan larger events. We are in the process of approaching the Diocesan Young Adult Council for contacts and event advertising,” he said.

(St. Edward the Confessor Parish is located at 21 Brush Hill Road, New Fairfield, CT 06812. For more information on the young adult ministry visit: stedsyoungadults.web-node.com)

VOTF FINANCIAL REVIEW FROM PAGE 3

ranged from 17-22 percent.

“To be one of only four dioceses in this country to have achieved a score of 100 percent is very rewarding. I was happy to be consistently scoring within the 90s in previous years, but it is an honor to be able to post a perfect score on financial transparency, as measured independently,” Hanlon said.

Hanlon who had extensive previous experience in public accounting within the not-for-profit sector before joining the diocese, said the achievement would not have been possible without the leadership of Bishop Caggiano, who sets the “tone from the top.”

“The bishop put us on the path of financial transparency by posting financial reports upon his arrival in 2013. He believes that transparency is the key to rebuilding trust and following best industry prac-

tices,” said Hanlon. Financial transparency fosters trust; lack of transparency fosters mistrust.

You need the one at the top to say we are going to do this, and that has been the direction from Bishop Caggiano from day one.

The report notes that the top scores are from small to medium sized dioceses, demonstrating that size and financial resources do not determine financial transparency.

The VOTF report noted, “Excellent examples of clear, usable, comprehensive finance webpages include those of the dioceses of Biloxi, Bridgeport, Charleston, Fall River, Greensburg, Lexington and Scranton. And stresses the importance of providing easily accessible financial information on a diocesan website. Without access to financial reports and information on diocesan finance councils, budgets and the overall health of a diocese, ordinary

Catholics cannot exercise their full responsibility of stewardship or verify where their donations to the diocese go.”

The VOTF report said that having an easily identifiable central webpage containing key financial information is an important aspect of financial transparency. It said that with such a page, members of the diocese could much more easily locate financial reports and other important financial information.

Looking back five years, VOTF reported in 2017 that only 65 of the 177 U.S. dioceses posted current audited financial statements. Additionally, the 2017 report showed that 15 dioceses scored 90 percent or higher, while, in 2021, 38 dioceses achieved scores above 90 percent.

VOTF 2021 reviewers concluded that, “Although significant progress has been achieved in the

last decade, and in particular during the last three years, members of the Church in the U.S. must be vigilant if they wish to prevent financial mismanagement and abuse.”

Voice of the Faithful’s mission is to provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the Faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church. VOTF’s goals are to support survivors of clergy sexual abuse, to support priests of integrity, and to shape structural change within the Catholic Church. More information is available at www.votf.org.

“Measuring and Ranking Diocesan Online Financial Transparency: 2021 Report,” and all previous VOTF reports on diocesan online financial transparency can be read at: www.votf.org/node/1587. ■

St. Vincent's Medical Center

Recognizing a life of Catholic service

By **JOE PISANI**

BRIDGEPORT—When Bill Hoey got his master's degree in health care mission from Aquinas Institute of Theology, his wife Joan gave him a framed copy of verses from the 25th chapter of Matthew's Gospel, which says, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."

That powerful message is on display in his office at St. Vincent Medical Center, where Hoey is vice president of mission integration and has begun initiatives and programs that embody those words of Christ.

"I have that here and I look at it often," he said. "That has been my personal mission statement, and I truly believe I will be held accountable for what I do or don't do in this world."

Hoey, who has been at St. Vincent's for 12 years, was recently awarded the St. Augustine Medal of Service from Bishop Frank J. Caggiano in recognition of his service to the diocese. The medal honors people for their service to parishes, schools and charities.

"It was humbling to receive the medal and wonderfully validating," Hoey said. "I have been blessed to have a career of service and worked with virtually every disadvantaged group you can think of—the chronically mentally ill, the homeless, the hungry, undocumented folks, people suffering from addiction and HIV, and working people, when I ran employee assistance programs."

Deacon Patrick Toole, episcopal delegate for administration, who nominated Hoey for the medal, said: "Bill works tirelessly to promote Catholic moral teaching within the Hartford HealthCare Fairfield Region. I nominated him for our partnership with Hartford HealthCare and his help during the pandemic."

Deacon Toole said that with the assistance of Hoey and his colleagues, he was able to develop COVID-19 protocols for parishes in the diocese.

"Bill also set up mobile vaccine vans at two of our parishes in Bridgeport," Deacon Toole said.

Hoey, who previously was vice president of Catholic



BILL HOEY RECEIVES HIS ST. AUGUSTINE MEDAL from Bishop Caggiano in recognition of his service to the diocese.

Charities of Fairfield County, said: "In my time working at the diocese, I got to know most of the priests pretty well, and when Deacon Toole reached out to us at the height of the pandemic—when vaccines first became available—we were able to offer them to all the priests, including the retired ones."

He said it touched his heart to see them come to the medical center to be vaccinated.

"What a wonderful gift to give those men, who had dedicated their lives to the Church," he said. "To see the relief and peace of mind that the vaccine was providing them, to be a part of that and to be able to offer it to the diocese was one of the things that really sticks with me."

In his role with Hartford HealthCare, he is able to do meaningful work and stay connected with the diocese, for which he chairs the Sexual Abuse Review Committee.

Hoey is responsible for all mission services and activities at St. Vincent's Medical Center, including the Pastoral Care Department and the Parish Nurse Program.

He helped establish the Hope Dispensary of Greater Bridgeport through his work with the Primary Care Action Group, a collaboration of area health service organizations. Currently, he

serves on the National Advisory Council for the Dispensary of Hope, which is a national not-for-profit enterprise that gives uninsured patients access to life-saving medication.

"This is a free pharmacy that we've run in the city for eight years, and it provides medication to individuals who don't have insurance to pay for it," Hoey said. "It runs the gamut from hypertension medication to insulin for diabetics. Last year, we filled 11,377 prescriptions, and it's hard to put a price tag on that."

The program is an expensive one to run because it requires a pharmacist, software and security. Three days a week, it opens its doors at 2660 Main Street in a space previously occupied by an Arrow Pharmacy.

Hoey is also the executive sponsor of Hartford HealthCare's efforts to promote diversity, equity, belonging and inclusion in the regions it serves. The initiative applies not only to the workplace but also to service delivery.

One of his favorite programs, which is three years old, is the food distribution at the medical center, which on the last Friday of the month provides some 400 bags of high-protein items to the community.

"People will wait outside for hours to get a bag of groceries in

a COVID-safe manner," he said. "The food is shelf-stable and high quality and includes milk, eggs, tuna and peanut butter."

In his position as vice president of Mission Integration, Hoey is responsible for ensuring compliance with Catholic health-care doctrine, which, he says, sets St. Vincent's apart from secular hospitals.

"We have an agreement between Hartford HealthCare and Bishop Caggiano to remain a fully Catholic ministry," he said. "We are the only Catholic hospital in the Diocese of Bridgeport, and we think that is critically important."

Fundamental to that, St. Vincent's adheres to the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Healthcare Services, promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The 77 directives define how a Catholic hospital must conduct itself and make clear the procedures and medical interventions that should not be provided, such as abortion and assisted suicide, Hoey said. The mission of Catholic healthcare is based on reverence for every human being and access to care for the poor and underserved, the uninsured and the underinsured, children, the unborn, single parents, the elderly, those with incurable diseases, racial minorities, immigrants and refugees.

"Simply put, we don't turn anybody away," he said.

In addition, there is a sacramental presence at St. Vincent's, made possible by four priests,

three deacons and almost 40 extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist.

"We provide a full array of Catholic sacraments at a time when people are open and receptive to receiving them," he said. "They include Communion, Sacrament of the Sick, Confession and Baptism for newborns who are in danger."

Hoey said the medical center's Catholic identity is firmly established. There is morning and evening prayer, daily Mass that is broadcast into the patients' room and pastoral services provided by priests and deacons.

"Catholic healthcare exists to take care of the poor, the needy, the vulnerable and the least among us...and to live out the Gospel of Matthew," Hoey said. "To not have a Catholic hospital in the Diocese of Bridgeport would be a big loss."

He also emphasized the hospital's importance in evangelization and spreading the faith to people.

"Where are the people who are not going to Church going to be reconnected?" he asked. "When you have a life-altering diagnosis or a life-shattering event and you end up in the hospital, what a wonderful opportunity to see the Church in action. The more we can get our priests and deacons visiting people in the hospital, the better. What an opportunity to reconnect with people. Where does evangelization take place? When people are in crisis. There you find the Church in action...when people are in need." ■



HANSEN'S
FLOWER SHOP

Creating Memories Since 1920

Flowers - Fruit and Gourmet Gift Baskets - Plants
Open Sundays

www.hansensflowershop.com

1040 Post Road, Fairfield | 203.255.0461

Catholic Schools

Diocesan Schools Office issues 2021 Annual Report

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—The Diocesan Schools Office has issued its 2021 Annual Report, which notes that student enrollment has increased by 11 percent this year, which is the highest increase in enrollment in decades.

Total enrollment for 2021 was 8,462 students in pre-school through high school. The diocesan system includes 19 elementary schools, five high schools and one special needs school, along with five independent Catholic schools in Fairfield County.

Dr. Steven Cheeseman, superintendent of Catholic Schools in the diocese, attributes the growth in enrollment to the strong, faith-based

learning communities that helped schools remain open and responsive to students during the most difficult days of the pandemic.

“It is that gift of community that has helped our schools through the rough times caused by this pandemic. While there can be no doubt that the pandemic has challenged our schools, our leaders, teachers and families, we must acknowledge the many blessings that have come from everyone’s commitment to mission and focus on the academic success of our students,” he said.

Dr. Cheeseman also noted that the personalized learning initiative, introduced in schools prior to the pandemic, helped students and teachers overcome

many obstacles and helped students achieve growth in language and math proficiency, while other school systems reported academic losses.

In his introductory letter to the 2021 Annual Report, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano wrote, “Teaching in any given year is a difficult task, but this past year has truly put our Catholic educators to the test, and they have met every single challenge.”

The bishop said he was deeply grateful to donors who have given generously to support innovations in Catholic education and to the teachers and administrators “for their heroic leadership that has helped ensure the healthy, safe and joy-filled learning envi-



PERSONALIZED LEARNING—Dr. Steve Cheeseman sits with a student on a school visit.

ronments so that students can grow in academics and in faith.”

Among the highlights of the report is that 100 percent of students graduate from Catholic high schools, and 99 percent go on to college or the military.

The report also features schools such as Cardinal Kung

Academy (CKS) in Stamford and St. Theresa School in Trumbull that have adopted a classical education model. The classical model of Catholic education puts Jesus Christ at its center with a curriculum that focuses on the humanities supplied with art, music and Latin coursework.

The diocesan schools’ report also introduces the Seton Collaborative, an operations support network (OSN) that will support schools with financial and information technology services. The shared service organization grew out of the 2020 Strategic Plan initiative to create expertise in running the business side of the school while freeing administrators to focus on the educational mission. Kevin Lawlor, retired executive vice president of Fairfield University, is serving as the executive director.

The report acknowledges the key role played by Foundations in Education (FIE), which has awarded \$2.7 million in tuition assistance to diocesan K-8 families through the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund. The foundations (along with Foundations in Faith and Foundations in Charity) were established as part of the We Stand With Christ capital campaign. It provides innovation and leadership grants that have supported professional development and upgraded technology in the schools.

For enrollment information, contact numbers, and locations, visit the diocesan Catholic schools website: www.dioceseofbridgeportcatholicsschools.com

To read the 2021 Diocesan Catholic Schools Annual Report in its entirety, visit: www.dioceseofbridgeportcatholicsschools.com/flipbook-2021-annual-report.

Foundations in Education Gala committee kick-off

By MEGAN QUINN

BRIDGEPORT—On Sunday, November 21, Foundations in Education’s 2022 gala committee and honorees met at the beautiful Westport home of Foundation’s Board Chair Tom McInerney and his wife Paula. The occasion marked the kickoff for the committee of the 2022 Foundations in Education’s gala scheduled for Thursday, May 5, 2022.

The committee members that gathered heard from Tom McInerney, Gala Chairs Barbara and Bob Scinto, School Superintendent Steve Cheeseman and Foundation’s Megan Quinn, assistant director of development and Holly Doherty-Lemoine, executive director.

The 2022 honorees are Barbara and Peter Ripp, Dr. Steven Cheeseman and Mutual of America, represented at the kick-off event by Bob Fay and his wife Shawna. Foundations in Education will celebrate the honored guests at the



FOUNDATIONS IN EDUCATION GALA honorees Barbara and Peter Ripp, honoree Dr. Steve Cheeseman, Board Chair Tom McInerney, honoree Bob Fay for Mutual of America, and Executive Director Holly Doherty-Lemoine.

6th annual gala May 5, 2022 at Woodway Country Club in Darien, Connecticut.

At the kick-off reception, the honorees were joined by gala chairs Barbara and Bob Scinto and members of the gala committee including Jody and John Myers, Mary Donovan, Christa FitzPatrick, and Michele and John Mitola. They were joined by several members of the Foundations in Education’s board and finance committee including Tim FitzPatrick, Lizanne and Tom McDevitt, Jim O’Neill and Paula Summa, and Jennifer St.

Victor-de Pinho.

The committee discussed gala goals, the event program, sponsorships and the Raise the Paddle for tuition support. This past year, Foundations in Education awarded over \$2.7 million in tuition assistance to 1,276 students. Dr. Cheeseman spoke to the group about the recent successes seen in our Catholic schools, including increased enrollment across the diocese. He reiterated the impact Foundations in Education’s Bishop’s Scholarship Funds have on the lives of the students and their families in

making Catholic Education accessible.

The gala is Foundations in Education’s premier fundraising event of the year. Proceeds benefit Foundations in Education including Bishop’s Scholarship Fund, Leaders of Tomorrow and Innovation and Leadership Grants.

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

Missionaries to the Family

Spreading ‘the fruit of married life’

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

DARIEN—More than thirteen couples recently attended a dinner at St. John Church in Darien to learn more about “Missionaries to the Family,” an initiative to revitalize the domestic Church.

Missionaries to the Family is a lay formation and ministry initiative launched by Paradisus Dei and the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame in 2019. With four missionary couples already established within the Diocese of Bridgeport, it is the hope of Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, along with Father Peter Towsley, chaplain of Paradisus Dei, to grow this initiative even more.

The goal of Missionaries to the Family is to form modern marriages and families upon the model of the Holy Family at Nazareth. Couples discern this calling for their own family, receive the formation needed to live that life in their own homes, and share what they have learned with other couples and families through intentional, spiritual friendships and accompaniment. After their formation year, they begin their active mission work, which takes place right in their own homes and communities.

“The spirit of the initiative is for couples to live the spirit of Nazareth in their own home,” said Father Towsley, who emphasized Missionaries to the Family as an initiative rather than a movement. “We invite couples to see this initiative as a way of life, rather than a program,” he said. “It is a spiritual plan of life.”

The formation year includes online coursework covering the four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, practical training for missionary outreach, and a spiritual vision for marriage and family life. Missionary couples will also attend three in-person weekend retreats, two of which are hosted at the University of Notre Dame. Missionaries must be able to commit two hours per week for this initiative and be married in the Church.

Father Towsley, who has been involved with Paradisus Dei for over 14 years, explained that the goal is to encourage couples to encounter Christ in their own homes. “That is where Christ

wants to live in the domestic Church,” he said.

Once couples have gone through their formation period they move into their apostolate phase, during which they invite others into their home to experience what they have learned, first-hand.

Couples participating in the initiative can discern together which apostolate is best for them. They are encouraged to give back to the parish for at least two hours a week. Their work includes leading marriage preparation sessions, leading marriage enrichment efforts, hosting young adult and family small groups in their home, and even leading regional outreach to recruit other missionary couples.

“Their primary vocation is to live marriage and family life,” said Father Towsley, clarifying that the apostolate the couples choose must always fall under that umbrella.

Couples are encouraged to reach out to the peripheries to those who may need it most. “Their apostolate is a fruit of what they are trying to live in their own life,” he said.

Father Towsley explained that the hope for growing Missionaries to the Family is to establish priest chaplains, an apostle couple and mentor couples, who would work within the diocese to establish a greater presence. The plan is for the class to gather on a monthly basis after their commissioning.

“We want to make sure this sticks,” Father Towsley said.

The Missionaries to the Family initiative is currently established in 17 other dioceses, with 137 couples in formation, 111 of whom are in the field.

The first class of missionary couples completed their formation year and were commissioned in the summer of 2020. The second class will be commissioned this summer, and the third class is now being assembled and will begin formation this August. The first missionary couples have already begun their active mission work, and in spite of the pandemic-restricted environment, they are having an impact!

Adrienne and Al Keogler, parishioners of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Newtown, were one of the couples commissioned



ADRIENNE AND AL KEOGLER, parishioners of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Newtown, were one of the couples commissioned as missionaries in August 2020.

as missionaries in August 2020. “Based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church and using the example of the saints chosen for the Missionaries to the Family, the professors and teachers do a wonderful job presenting the material in a very knowledgeable and engaging way,” Adrienne explained of the program.

“The basic idea that is repeated over and over during the year of formation is that anything God wants to do through you, He first wants to give to you,” said Adrienne.

She explained that the year of formation was a year to settle in and receive, learn, refine and go ever deeper into the Faith.

“Through seven basic steps, we

are to model our homes and family life on the home of the Holy Family at Nazareth,” she said.

“Missionary work can take on a variety of forms,” said the Keoglers, “whether filling the needs within one’s own parish, or inviting others into their homes. There are many programs available through Paradisus Dei that can be used to help facilitate things. All this is to help foster a relationship and friendship with other couples, to walk with them on the journey, and to help them to find God within themselves, each other and ultimately their homes.”

(For more information, visit: www.paradisusdei.org/missionaries-to-the-family)

Paradisus Dei meets in Darien

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DARIEN—A diocese-wide initiative for families to actively live and share their Catholic faith is underway.

“I see this as the beginning of a great renewal,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano to a group of about a dozen couples gathered at an informal dinner meeting held at St. John Church in Darien.

The bishop and the couples welcomed Steve Bollman, founder and president of Paradisus Dei, a ministry that is dedicated to the renewal of marriage and family life.

“We really do need to rebuild the Church and to rebuild the Church we have to start with the domestic church,” Bollman said. He said he was called to start this ministry in 2001 with the goal of integrating Church teachings with the latest findings of modern science and the wisdom of the saints, to help families discover the superabundance of God within marriage and family life.

“Marriage takes work, but marriage brings great joy,” said Bollman, adding he wants to help young people aspire to discover the joy of married life and for married couples to be a living example of what an abundant and joy-filled married

life looks like.

Bollman shared startling statistics about families living in the United States. For instance, he said less than half of the households in the United States include married couples and the majority



of children under the age of 18 go to bed each night in a home that does not include their biological father and mother.

Recent surveys, he said, indicate that millennials have become disillusioned with institutions, such as the family and the Church. Their participation in organized religion is the lowest in recorded history and a recent survey by Nielsen Research revealed that “getting married” and “having children” were their least desirable goals in life. In fact, the marriage rate per capita has fallen 30 percent in the past generation. The Catholic marriage rate has fallen by a staggering 73 percent.

But there is hope.

“You have it in your power to change your family and begin to change this world,” said Bollman, adding that there are seven steps to a proven pathway to joy that are mod-

eled after the Holy Family.

Bollman said five of the seven steps are under every individual’s personal control and include remaining faithful to a future spouse, resisting cohabitation prior to marriage, honoring wedding vows, being charitable with money and giving time to God.

“We’re trying to get half of the people who are Catholics to do these five things,” said Bollman. “To get this message to people, we need people.”

Paradisus Dei, which is Latin for the Paradise of God and is active in almost all 50

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

Obituaries

Msgr. Nicholas V. Grieco

STAMFORD—Monsignor Nicholas V. Grieco, founding editor of *Fairfield County Catholic* and first director of communications for the Diocese of Bridgeport, passed away on November 27, 2021, at the Catherine Dennis Keefe, Queen of the Clergy Residence in Stamford, where he had been residing since retiring in 2010. He was 88 years of age.

“Monsignor Grieco served the people of the diocese well and faithfully in a variety of assignments in parishes and on the diocesan level. Many recall his optimism, his collegiality and his commitment to religious education and evangelization. As we celebrate his life of service, let us also pray for the repose of

the soul of Msgr. Grieco and the consolation of his family,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

In 2009, Msgr. Grieco celebrated his 50th Anniversary of Priestly Ordination in a Jubilee Mass Celebration held at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Weston, where he was serving as pastor.

Nicholas Vincent Grieco was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., on April 7, 1933. He was baptized at St. Frances de Chantal Church in Brooklyn, N.Y. on June 4, 1933. He attended St. Frances de Chantal Parochial School and LaSalle Academy. Monsignor Grieco’s home parish was administered by the Society of the Fathers of Mercy, and after discerning his vocation to the religious life and the priest-

hood, he entered the Society. He attended college at Our Lady of Mercy Seminary in Lenox Massachusetts. Monsignor Grieco next studied philosophy at Catholic University of America. For the first two years of major seminary, he attended Athenaeum Pontificium Angelicum in Rome, later completing his theological studies at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

Monsignor Grieco was ordained to the priesthood by the Most Reverend John McNamara at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. on June 6, 1959. The following year, as a result of changes in the Society, Msgr. Grieco requested exlaustation from the Society which was granted in July of 1960. Most Reverend Lawrence Shehan, then Bishop of Bridgeport, permitted him to report for an assignment in the diocese, and consequently, he was incardinated in February of 1964.

Monsignor Grieco’s first assignments were at St. Edward the Confessor Church in New Fairfield and Sacred Heart Church in Stamford. In August 1966, he took up residence at St. Raphael Rectory in Bridgeport and began his ministerial assignment as spiritual director of Notre Dame Girls’ High School in Bridgeport. In 1967, Bishop Walter Curtis appointed him as diocesan director of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine with residence at St. Peter Church in Bridgeport.

In 1972, Msgr. Grieco was appointed director of the Division of Religious Education in the Department of Religious Education as well as the vicariate director of Religious Education for Vicariate III. In 1979, he was also named secretary of evangelization for the diocese.

Monsignor Grieco began work as assistant at St. Maurice Church in the Glenbrook section of Stamford in 1973. His next assignment was as the director of diocesan communications in 1975 with a change of residence to St. Stephen Rectory in Trumbull. During his tenure as director, Msgr. Grieco became the founding editor of *Fairfield County Catholic*. The paper grew out of



MONSIGNOR NICHOLAS V. GRIECO

his work with “Instant Info,” a monthly newsletter published by the diocese. It began as largely calendar items and brief notices but became so popular that he started to include longer stories. The newsletter then evolved into *Fairfield County Catholic*, which published its first issue in January of 1984.

In 1986, papal honors were conferred on Msgr. Grieco when he was named chaplain to His Holiness, Pope John Paul II.

While continuing his work as secretary for communications, Msgr. Grieco moved to St. Thomas Aquinas Parish as a resident in 1987. In 1992, he was named pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Weston, once again while continuing his

work in communications. After a long and fruitful active priestly ministry, Msgr. Grieco retired in 2010 and took up residence at the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of the Clergy Residence in Stamford and for many years continued to assist in parishes in the area.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano celebrated Msgr. Grieco’s funeral Mass on Friday, December 3, at St. Cecilia Church in Stamford. Msgr. Grieco was buried at St. Charles Cemetery in East Farmingdale, Long Island, New York.

(To read the beautiful funeral homily delivered by Msgr. Thomas V Powers, Vicar General of the Diocese, visit: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/msgr-grieco-remembered-as-a-joyful-priests-priest)

DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT DECEMBER 19—JANUARY 22

DECEMBER

19	Rev. Philip Morrissey	2008
20	Rev. Msgr. Thomas J. Driscoll, P.A.	2018
21	Msgr. Constantine R. Caldas	2015
26	Rev. Vincent P. Cleary	1965
27	Rev. Ignatius Baraniak, OFM Conv.	1980
29	Msgr. James H. Grady	1967
30	Rev. M. Joseph McCarthy	2006

JANUARY

1	Rev. Michael J. Flynn, C.S.Sa.	1995
2	Rev. Joseph J. Malloy	2016
	Rev. Robert J. McDermott	1989
3	Msgr. Pierre A. Botton	2010
4	Msgr. Francis Medynski	2008
6	Msgr. William J. Fox	1962
	Rev. Msgr. John C. Sanders	2019
7	Rev. Walter E. Bozek	1995
8	Rev. Mr. Edward R. Kovacs	1999
	Rev. Joseph P. Biondino	2001
9	Rev. Gerald T. Devore	2011
	Rev. Mr. Hugh Sweeney	1990
	Rev. Robert Nemeth, O.F.M. Conv.	1998
13	Rev. Daniel J. Deehan	1976
14	Rev. M. Joseph Joaquin	2013
	Msgr. Joseph A. Sullivan	2001
15	Rev. Msgr. Ernest T. Esposito	2019
	Msgr. Harry L. Hale	2003
	Msgr. G. Robert Hanover	1992
16	Rev. Thomas B. Gloster	1956
18	Rev. Edward J. Small, SJ	2010
19	Rev. Andrew L. Horvat	1973
	Rev. William D. Thompson	2004
20	Msgr. Ralph P. Buongervino	1994
	Msgr. Andrew T. Cusack	2004
	Rev. Andrew L. Farkas	1967
	Rev. Robert E. Onze	2010
22	Rev. Felix P. Werpechowski	1972
	Rev. John Mitchell	2006

FUNERAL GUIDE

Harding

FUNERAL HOME

NEIL F. HARDING
JOHN J. HARDING

203.227.3458
hfh210@optonline.net
www.hardingfuneral.com

210 POST ROAD EAST WESTPORT, CT 06881



“Quiet Dignity Without Extravagance”

Affordable Direct Cremation
Title XIX Welcome

County Cremation Service

- ✦ Family owned for three generations
- ✦ Call for free informative brochure
- ✦ 203-254-1414 or 800-542-0218
- ✦ Handling every detail
- ✦ In home arrangements
- ✦ Memorial service facility

Sports

Stags, Pioneers embrace renewed rivalry

By DON HARRISON

The men's basketball rivalry between the two Catholic institutions of higher learning that call Fairfield home was discontinued following the 2016-17 season. Why?

Well, Fairfield University's previous athletic administration had insisted that Webster Bank Arena in Bridgeport—the Stags'



AARON CLARKE, Sacred Heart's senior guard, drives for a hard-earned basket en route to a game-high 21 points against cross-town rival Fairfield on November 20 at the Pitt Center. (Photo by Mark Conrad)

home away from home until next season—be the site for all games. But their counterparts at Sacred Heart University felt it would be more equitable if in alternate years the Pioneers' Pitt Center became the venue.

Thanks in part to the friendship between the schools' head coaches, the series resumed on Nov. 20 on the Sacred Heart campus. Before a Pitt Center-record crowd of 3,873 and a regional television (SNY) audience, each team displayed skill and tenacity, but superior rebounding combined with a deeper bench put the game in the Fairfield win column by a 71-61 score.

"I am not discouraged at all. The crowd was tremendous, the support was great," said Sacred Heart coach Anthony Latina. "I thought we got out-toughed.

They're a better team than us right now."

Jay Young, who is in beginning his third season as Fairfield's coach, thought it "was awesome" to play before an enthusiastic capacity crowd composed of fans from both universities.

"Anthony and I have been friends for a long time, and we both saw the need to establish a rivalry in college basketball," he said.

"When Jay got the job at Fairfield, I called him right away," explained Latina, now in his ninth year as the Pioneers' head coach after serving eight seasons as an assistant. "Jay and I talked, and we agreed to make it a tradition of playing each year on the same weekend."

Fairfield's new \$50 million state-of-the-art arena and convocation center, still under construction, will be the site for next season's game. The Stags have prevailed in all eight meetings of the series, which began during the 2007-08 season. The Pioneers came closest on November 21, 2015, when their late rally tied the score at the end of regulation, but Fairfield won in overtime, 83-79.

Fairfield's basketball history encompasses 73 seasons, Sacred Heart 56. Under the guidance of the late George Bisacca, the practicing attorney who served as both coach and athletic director, the Stags made an immediate splash when they entered the NCAA Division-I ranks in 1964-65, producing winning records in each of the first four seasons. Their 1965-66 squad won 13 straight games en route to a 19-5 record.

During Fred Barakat's 11 seasons (1970-81) as head coach, Fairfield competed in three National Invitation Tournaments and assembled a program-best 22-5 record in 1977-78. Since then, winning seasons have become infrequent, although the Stags captured three Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference titles and advanced to the NCAA Tournament under coaches Mitch Buonaguro (1986, 1987) and Paul Cormier (1997).

Sacred Heart, founded in 1963

by the Most Rev. Walter W. Curtis, bishop of the Diocese of Bridgeport, became an immediate success at the NCAA Division-II level. Founding coach Don Feeley directed the Pioneers to five NCAA Tournaments, highlighted by the 1976-77 team's 28-4 record and Final-Four appearance. His successor, Dave Bike, fared even better, leading SHU to 12 straight winning seasons and eight NCAA Tournaments, capped by the 1985-86 team (30-4) capturing the D-II national championship.

Bike was still at the helm when Sacred Heart entered the D-I ranks for the 1999-2000 season, but the Pioneers endured seven losing years until they assembled an 18-14 record and advanced to the 2007 Northeast Conference title game (a 74-70 loss at Central Connecticut State).

The following year, Sacred

Heart finished with the same record and result in the NEC championship game, a 68-55 loss to Mount St. Mary's before a sellout crowd of 2,774 in the Pitt Center. The Pioneers are still awaiting their first NEC title and automatic NCAA Tournament bid at the D-I level.

The future?

Latina has revitalized the SHU program, winning 20 games for the first time at the D-I level during the 2019-20 season. Picked to finish last a year ago in the NEC pre-season poll, the Pioneers exceeded expectations by placing third.

Young's second Fairfield squad lost nine of its first 10 games last season but gathered momentum and won three MAAC Tournament games before bowing to Iona, 60-51, in the title matchup. "We certainly made progress," Young noted. ■



FAIRFIELD GRADUATE student Taj Benning scores two of his team-high 15 points in the Stags' 71-61 victory over Sacred Heart before a record crowd of 3,873 at the Pitt Center on November 20. (Photo by Peter McLean)

PREP



Be Ignited!

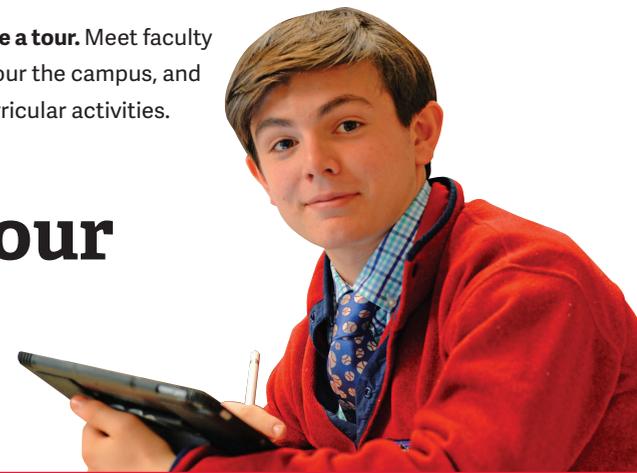
Fairfield College Preparatory School is a Jesuit, Catholic school of excellence, which transforms young men to **Be Innovative, Be Creative, Be Compassionate, and Be Men for Others**. Prep offers a rigorous academic program for boys in 9th through 12th grade, with an outstanding record of college acceptances as well as a full slate of sports and activities. In a faith- and mission-based community, our students develop their relationship with God and one another.

Students and families are invited to schedule a tour. Meet faculty and students, hear from school leadership, tour the campus, and learn about our many programs and extracurricular activities.

Schedule a Tour

203-254-4210

FairfieldPREP.org



Column: Thomas Hicks



They didn't go two by two

POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

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

Almost everybody in the world gets married—you know what I mean? In our town there aren't hardly any exceptions. Most everybody in the world climbs into their graves married.... Yes, people are meant to go through life two by two, 'Tain't natural to be lonesome." (*Our Town*, Act Two)

I called her Aunt Betty and him Uncle Gasper, even though they were not related to me.

These fictive relatives were two never-married people, childhood friends of my mother.

The friendships withstood the test of time, entering a new phase when my mother married and was willing to share her children with her two ever-single friends.

Betty and I shared the same birthday, and often the same birthday parties; this helped create a special bond between us. She once told me I was her nephew, not by blood, but by affection.

I have the warmest memories of "uncle" Gasper. He was a significant part of my youth. He provided me with profound and simple joys. There were fishing trips, firemen's carnivals, trips to baseball games, walks in the woods. Nothing was too ordinary for Gasper not to notice. I would mimic him and play a game I named "Notice Things." At times, however, I felt what Gasper wanted me to feel and owe to him a certain capacity to let life in. He left me with a legacy of allowing experiences to touch me, with a certain capacity to keep my heart in wonder at the daily miracles of life, to see the beauty in ordinary things.

About five percent of men and six percent of women over 65 years of age have never been married. The literature on older never married people is scarce, but generally it finds no differ-

ences in the mental and physical health of people who live alone and those who live with others. What makes people feel lonely is dissatisfaction with ties that they have. There is research that finds that never-married people indicate fewer symptoms of psychological disturbance and are less likely to be users of psychotropic drugs than married people (cf. Jessie Bernard, "The Paradox of the Happy Marriage," 1972). However, some literature reveals, for instance, that never-married people tend to have shorter life-spans than married people.

During my time at Sacred Heart University, by contacting a number of agencies for the elderly, some senior citizen centers and organizations for retired people in Fairfield County, Conn. I found 20 women and 18 men, never-married and over the age of 65, who were willing to be interviewed by me. My interviewees did not seem to feel especially lonely. Two of them pointed out that some surveys indicate that approximately 80 percent of married couples have seriously considered divorce. A few of the men who lived alone told how cooking for themselves, and eating in solitude were very difficult. A couple of the women also stated that eating one's solitary dinner was difficult.

If my interviews are any indication, as a group never-married people seem to have come to terms with their lives, the choices they made, and learned how to adjust. Many of them spoke of having a propensity for solitude; they were comfortable with it. As one woman put it: "I've come to the point, maybe because I've had it for so long, where being alone is often a necessity for me.

For instance, I'll go traveling with my married friends and at the end of a week I'm glad to see them go to their homes, and I'll

come to my own for the peace and solitude I have... I love my friends dearly, but to live with them, no." A few of the women said that while they missed having children, they never missed not having a husband.

My interviews would indicate that while unmarried men, compared to unmarried women are not very socially involved with either organizations or friends, they are not a group of isolates who lead emotionally impoverished lives. The picture that emerges is that of "natural loners," for whom such things as "keeping in touch with nephews and nieces are nonetheless very important.

They liked it when relatives came to them for help of some kind. The men would say things like, "They're my family. If they need help, I'm there, and I've been paid back in all kinds of ways."

A few of the interviewees pointed out that being single eliminated the burden of more relatives and their problems.

Almost to a person, the interviewees identified freedom as the most important asset of their life-style and establishing one's niche in a married world as the major problem. For instance, one woman said "most of the women I know are grandmothers, and that's what they talk about." Under disadvantages, some men mentioned "not having had someone to share victories with. After some achievement I'd have to go home alone."

No companionship in the evening was a problem. However, a number of women made touching observations like "so many of my friends who are my age don't have anyone either; So many of their husbands died in their 50s. In fact, all of my girlfriends are widows, every one of them. So, they're alone, too, That's sad."

A stereotype of unmarried people is that they are highly involved in church activities. That was far from true for my interviewees. The majority were negative about organized religion, but tended to believe in God and in Chesterton's dictum about all on earth should believe they have something to give the world that cannot otherwise be given. This was eloquently expressed

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

PROFESSIONAL NETWORK AND CLASSIFIED

Vocations Needed!

SISTERS OF THE VISITATION OF BROOKLYN MONASTERY

Ministry of Prayer in the Monastic Contemplative Tradition,
Daily Eucharistic Adoration, Monastic Community Life

For vocation information please call: 718-745-5151

VAMonastery@aol.com

BrooklynVisitationMonastery.org

ELDER CARE

A Polish man with 20 years of experience will look after an older man at night or during the day. References are available upon request. Will provide domestic help.

Please call Andrzej Gontarz at 860-797-3020 or email: andrzejgontarz57@gmail.com

203.377.7908



Magtype
Computer
Resources

magtype.com

Working from Home Remote Learning

How is that going?

IT SUPPORT • NETWORKING • WEB DESIGN
PROGRAMMING • MAC & PC COMPUTER SUPPORT

UNITED SEWER & DRAIN CLEANING, INC.

RESIDENTIAL EMERGENCY DRAIN CLEANING

MUNICIPAL • COMMERCIAL • INDUSTRIAL

24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE • LICENSED & INSURED

377-8704

OR
1-800-422-3724

Office: 534 Surf Avenue • Stratford

• CATCH BASIN CLEANING
• HIGH VELOCITY WATER JETTING
• LARGE DIAMETER POWER RODDING

• TV PIPE INSPECTION
• AIR TESTING
• JET RODDING
• VACTOR SERVICE



Law Office of James M. Hughes

Elder Law/TITLE 19/MEDICAID-Planning
Veteran's Benefits - "Aid & Attendance"
Estates/Probate/Real Estate

1432 Post Road, Fairfield, Connecticut 06824
203.256.1977 — hughes_james@sbcglobal.net
www.fairfieldctelderlaw.com

Local News

PARADISUS DEI FROM PAGE 25

states and multiple countries, emphasizes family values.

About a handful of couples attending the meeting had recently completed the program and were eager to share their experiences and encourage others.

"It's a way of living," said Mary Bangs, who traveled with her husband Deacon Kenneth Bangs from the Archdiocese of Hartford to share their experience with fellow Catholics in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

The couple completed the course in August. "We are representatives of Christ's family," Bangs said. "The program invites people to share your love of Christ through the family."

Andrienne and Albert Keogler, parishioners of St. Rose in Newtown, also attended the meeting and are the first couple commissioned in the Diocese of Bridgeport through the Paradisus Dei program.

Andrienne said she and her husband have been active in many ministries throughout their married life including the youth ministry, marriage preparation and natural family planning.

The couple has been married for 37 years and have seven sons.

"This is a program we very much believe in as a couple," she said, adding that the program helped her and her husband focus more on their faith.

James and Maria Claire Martin, parishioners of St. Theresa in Trumbull, have been married almost nine years and are excited about the family-focused

initiative.

"We feel there is a big area of need where families can support each other," James Martin said.

The couple have three children and see the program as a way to not only deepen their faith as a family but also encourage and support other families.

"We are witnesses to our children, so if we don't prioritize our faith how would they ever," said Maria Claire Martin.

"I love being in church with the kids at Mass," James Martin said.

Bollman said encounters with others at work, in the gym or at

the grocery store are opportunities for Catholic families to be a beacon of light to others.

"God needs you to go to other people," Bollman said, "to let them know He is alive in Catholics' lives."

(For more information about Paradisus Dei please visit www.paradisusdei.org.

paradisusdei.org. The next class starts July 2022. Applications for the next class are being accepted now. The cost of the program is \$5,000 per couple which is split with Paradisus Dei and with the couple's home parish. Everything is included except for transportation to and from the three retreats.)



Everything we do is guided by a single-minded philosophy: to grow our tenants and to provide excellent service for them... **a passion for service that is on the verge of madness.** If you do not believe this ad, ask our tenants. www.Scinto.com



R D • S C I N T O

R.D. Scinto Commercial Real Estate | 203.929.6300 | www.Scinto.com

THOMAS HICKS
FROM PAGE 28

by a woman who said: "I firmly believe that the good Lord has a general pattern, and we all fit into it like a huge jigsaw puzzle. The whys and wherefores we'll all know someday, but we fit into the puzzle. We get nudges, and I think I have answered the nudges that God has sent me. I fit into the pattern."

The truth of it seems to be that the unmarried state is a many-faceted creature that has its associated losses and gains. Life is a trade-off. As my Aunt Betty once put it: "For me, being unwed is just having one set of troubles instead of another."

Nuestra Voz

Posadas y fiesta guadalupana en tiempo de Adviento

POR MARICARMEN GODOY

NORWALK—El Grupo Guadalupano de Norwalk, el grupo hispano de New Canaan y la Comunidad mexicana de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Danbury, invitan a los feligreses a las fiestas patronales en honor a la Virgen de Guadalupe, e igualmente, a festejar el inicio de las fiestas de Navidad.

Las iglesias de la Diócesis de Bridgeport que mantienen feligreses de ascendencia hispana, durante el mes del Adviento o tiempo de espera al nacimiento del Niño Jesús, preparan también la fiesta patronal de la Virgen de Guadalupe; además la posada mexicana y a tradicional Novena al Niño de Sudamérica, los aguinaldos de Puerto Rico (Caribe) en honor a la Navidad.

En New Canaan, el sábado 11 de diciembre, en la iglesia de Saint San Aloysius (San Luis Gonzaga) ubicada en 21 Cherry Street, se realizará una misa de Acción de Gracias en honor a la virgen de Guadalupe, y luego, una fiesta comunitaria a manera de posada mexicana, para celebrar el inicio de la Navidad con las tradiciones del país azteca y los aguinaldos de Puerto Rico.

Durante la fiesta habrá una piñata que será rota con un palo en representación del cúmulo de los siete pecados capitales. Además, conforme con el padre

David Román, que es el encargado de la agrupación hispana de la parroquia, se compartirá un desfile de platillos latinoamericanos ya que cada familia traerá un plato de comida tradicional de su país de origen, y también habrá música que la entonará una familia de Puerto Rico.

“Tendremos una verdadera fiesta latinoamericana. Ojalá vayamos creciendo como parroquia hispana y para los próximos años tengamos un mariachi para esta época”, dijo el sacerdote, quien reconoce que San Aloysius se está convirtiendo en una parroquia con una combinación de culturas y que por ahora hay comida de varios países y música boricua para celebrar a la Guadalupeana y la Navidad.

Por otro lado, el Grupo Guadalupano de Norwalk, que por mas de veinte años celebra la fiesta patronal de la Virgen de Guadalupe, esta vez agasajará con toda la casa de par en par, luego de que los sacerdotes de las iglesias de Saint Joseph y Saint Ladislaus, dieron luz verde para que la celebración sea abierta al público sin restricción alguna, simplemente siguiendo los protocolos de seguridad sanitaria (mascarilla y sanitización de las manos).

El Grupo Guadalupano celebrará el 11 y 12 de diciembre la fiesta en honor a la Virgen de Guadalupe, patrona de México,

conocida como la Emperatriz de América Latina.

El sábado 11 de diciembre se oficiará la misa de vísperas a las 7 pm en la iglesia de Saint Joseph y terminada la homilía desde las 8:30 pm se realizará la procesión rumbo a la iglesia de Saint Ladislaus, acompañados del mariachi Emperadores de Puebla, seguidamente se rezará el Santo Rosario y continuo a esto se iniciará la serenata, conocida como las Mañanitas a la Virgen. A la madrugada, es decir, a las 12:30 am, se brindarán tamales, pan y bebidas calientes a toda la concurrencia.

El domingo 12 de diciembre, en cambio, sale la Virgen en procesión a las 11 am desde la iglesia de Saint Ladislaus hasta la iglesia de Saint Joseph, acompañada del mariachi y al llegar a la iglesia se celebrará la misa de Acción de Gracias en honor a la Guadalupeana y posteriormente se brindará comida mexicana a todos los presentes, gracias al trabajo y la colaboración del Grupo Guadalupano de Norwalk que durante varios meses viene trabajando para organizar el evento y juntar el dinero para el pago del mariachi y cubrir los costos de la comida y bebidas.

En Danbury, en la iglesia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, ubicada en 29 Golden Hill Road, la comunidad mexicana de la parroquia invita a la ciudadanía a las



EL GRUPO Guadalupano de Norwalk, como cada diciembre, se prepara para recibir en las iglesias de Saint Joseph y Saint Ladislaus a los devotos de la Morenita del Tepeyac, e igualmente, en Danbury y en New Canaan y en la gran parte de parroquias de la Diócesis de Bridgeport que mantienen feligreses de origen latino.

“Mañanitas” dedicada a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, el sábado 11 de diciembre a partir de las 11 pm. Si usted quiere comunicarse

con la iglesia de Saint Joseph puede llamar al: 203.838.4171 x10 y a Saint Ladislaus al 203.818.9195.

St. Ann students get a visit from Superintendent

BRIDGEPORT—It’s not always the students who are learning new things at school. When Dr. Steven Cheeseman visited St. Ann Academy Bridgeport he walked away knowing more about Saints than he had when he walked in—especially St. Stephen. He learned how to play the violin like the preschoolers through first graders have the opportunity to do—he did so well they even gave him a sticker! He learned what the Rally Bus was from the 5th-graders who talked about their experience running



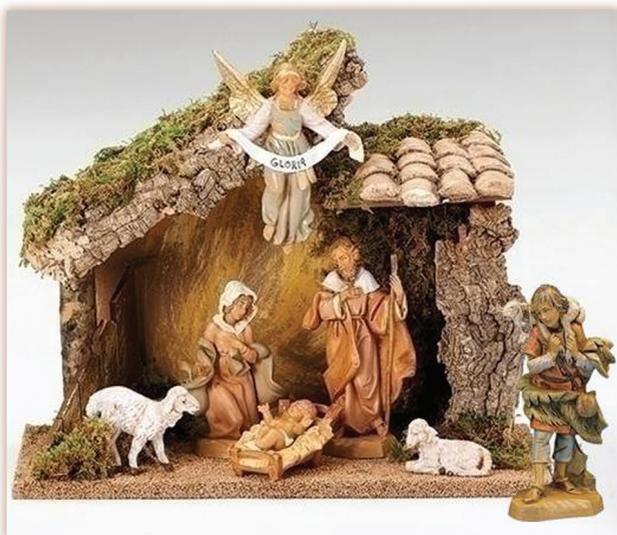
for Kid Governor. And was impressed by the conversations he had with the 6th-graders about the ancient empires—they couldn’t raise their hands high enough to share their thoughts! And of course we can’t forget all he learned about spiders, pumpkin seeds, and how grateful the 8th-grade students were to be back at school to see their friends, to meet new ones and to take on new challenges. Like Principal Pat Griffin says, “No matter what the day brings, it’s always a good day!”

NEW ENGLAND’S LARGEST RELIGIOUS SUPPLY COMPANY!

**PATRICK
BAKER
& SONS**

Religious gifts for all occasions.
We can shop for you!

A Family Business That Cares



Retail shopping online at: www.churchgoodsgifts.com or call: 800-243-6385
For Parish supply needs call: 800-243-6385, or visit our website: www.ChurchGoods.com

1-800-243-6385 | Customer Service Hours: 9 am-4 pm

Vocations

Coming to know the will of the Father

By FATHER CHRIS FORD

One of the worst mistakes any leader can make is to give his or her people a certain expectation or assignment, but not give them the resources they need to complete it. If we are going to expect something from someone, we have to empower them in a certain way to be able to meet those expectations or we are already setting them up for failure. In the world of public affairs, we sometimes hear things like this referred to as an “unfunded mandate;” We are going to require you to do this thing or implement this program, but the cost of accomplishing this task is entirely on you.

Jesus says to us in the Gospels that, “Not everyone who says to

me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). Jesus is making it pretty clear: the path to heaven is to come to know and follow the will of the Father. Sometimes, that can ask quite a bit of us, especially when we consider the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. But, even in the context of marriage and family, to follow the will of the Father in heaven requires making some difficult choices and shifting of our priorities.

The demands that love can make on us are great and, at first glance, we might think that we are not [insert: holy, smart, skilled, etc.] enough to do what

the Father is asking us to do. How can I complete the Father’s will if I am not equipped to do so? Well, here is the good news: You are equipped to do so! The Father never asks anything of us without also giving us the grace needed to accomplish it.

It may be true that, in the eyes of the world, we are not [insert: holy, smart, skilled, etc.] enough to do something, at least the way the world wants us to. But when it comes to accomplishing the will of the Father, we are always graced and blessed enough to say yes and to see it through.

Consider the Blessed Virgin Mary. When the angel Gabriel came to her and asked her to be the mother of God, the challenge was a daunting one. The fiat that Mary

gave to the Angel was a yes, not only to giving birth to Jesus, but to accompanying Him through His entire earthly life—even to the cross. This was never going to be easy. But God made sure that Mary had the grace needed to see it through—by virtue of her Immaculate Conception. What God did for Mary at the moment of her conception, He does for us at the moment of our rebirth in the waters of Baptism: give us the grace we need to say and live our yes.

Holiness is possible. Saying yes to the Father’s will is possible. Not because of our own skills or talents, but because of



FATHER CHRIS FORD

the gift of grace poured into our hearts at Baptism, strengthened in Confirmation, restored in Confession, and renewed in the Eucharist. In the sacramental life of grace, God has given us every tool we need to live in constant union with Him and carry out His will—no matter the challenging or unexpected places it might lead. ■

SENIOR PRIESTS FROM PAGE 10

somebody needs a ride, they get a ride, especially if they have to go to the doctor.”

Everybody at the residence has been vaccinated against COVID-19 and is tested regularly.

“I insist on that,” Monsignor said. “We are all very well protected, and during COVID-19, we were very strict in making sure people wore masks.”

He encourages parishioners and family members to visit their retired priests, particularly those who can’t get around.

“Unfortunately, many of us are the last members in our family,” he said. “I still have a sister who is 89 with a daughter, but some guys wake up and find they’re on their own.”

Monsignor Scheyd’s involvement with the residence began some 25 years ago—long before retirement—when then Bishop Edward Egan asked him to chair a committee to develop a place for retired priests.

Previously, Bishop Walter W. Curtis had a wing at St. Joseph Hospital in Stamford with 12 rooms for that purpose and a convalescent home alongside. However, the hospital took it over when it needed more space. During those years, Cardinal Ignatius Kung, the bishop of Shanghai, who spent 30 years in Chinese prisons for defying the Communists, lived there, Monsignor said.

When St. Joseph Hospital closed, Bishop Egan enlisted Monsignor, who was then vicar general, to explore building an independent home for priests. They visited five residences in the tristate area.

“Our priests didn’t want to be in the woods and isolated from people,” he recalls. “So, the architect and I drove around and landed here on Strawberry Hill in Stamford. The architect saw a nine-acre site on property at St. Bridget of Ireland Church and said that is what we were going with. It was centrally located, with a walking area, and near a bus line and the highway, so we could come and go as we wished.”

The original residence had 17 suites with two guest rooms and major service areas. The handicapped suites had a sitting room, bedroom, bathroom and kitchenette.

Monsignor has high praise for Vicky Hickey, the residential pastoral associate of Queen of the Clergy, who has been there for 21 years and was recruited by Bishop Egan from Maryknoll in Ossining, N.Y. This past year, the diocese also hired a business and facilities manager.

“Vicky is very efficient. Everybody here has great praise for the staff,” he said. “They are considerate and compassionate, and they are right there to help us because as you get older, sometimes you need more help with things.”

Vicky said, “I look to Msgr. Scheyd for continued guidance for the well-being of the residents and the residence. This is a great place. A lot of people don’t know what we do here. We take care of the senior priests and do a great job taking care of them. Most of the priests who are here don’t ever want to leave and go to a nursing home, so we try to have them stay here as long as they can.” ■

Bishop Caggiano presides over ministry of lector

WESTON—On December 1, 2021, Pope Saint John XXIII National Seminary was blessed to institute nine of its seminarians into the Ministry of Lector. Presiding over this special Mass was Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

The men who are in formation to become priests must be instituted as lectors, in part because they must be formed and prepared to be proclaimers of the Word of God. This role includes not only their duties in the celebration of Mass and other liturgical rites, but also by witnessing to the Word of God now and in their future ministry. The main duties of the lector at the Sunday Mass includes proclaiming in both the first and second readings. If no deacon is present, the lector may carry the Gospel Book to the altar during the entrance procession, as well as proclaim the petitions during the Universal Prayer. If no cantor is present, the lector may read the responsorial psalm. During the institution ceremony, the bishop instructs the candidates, saying, “You

will proclaim that word in the liturgical assembly, instruct children and adults in the faith

Stephen James Mullaney, Diocese of Worcester; Rayappan Rajesh Ravi, Archdiocese of



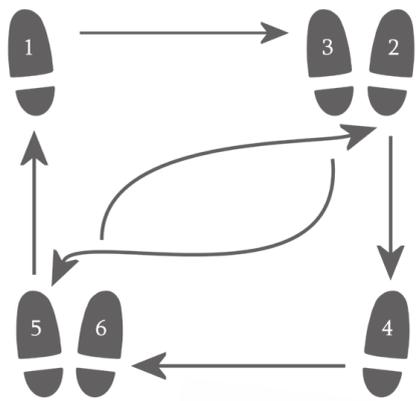
and prepare them to receive the sacraments worthily.” Through these words, the bishop is making known to the men and the faith community the new expectations in their responsibilities in the Catholic Church.

The nine men who were instituted as lectors are Thomas Gregory Dougherty, Diocese of Venice; Joseph Anthony Gonzalez, Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.; Clifton Troy Mastran, Archdiocese of Washington, DC; Barry Thomas Mongeon, Archdiocese of Boston;

New York; Nquah Lebuli John Tanyi, Archdiocese of Boston; Nelson Gerardo Tlatelpa, Diocese of Brooklyn; Gregory Bryan Zingler, Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.

We congratulate each of these men and pray that their ministry as lectors will enhance their formation to become priests and serve the faithful people of God.

(For the original article, see: www.psjns.edu/blog/bishop-frank-caggiano-presides-over-ministry-lector) ■



Slow dancing



or speed walking.

Whatever your destination,
our new orthopaedic institute will get you there.

Getting back to your favorite places and activities starts by going to see the orthopaedic experts at St. Vincent's Medical Center. With Connecticut's most experienced surgeons, sophisticated procedures and safe, concierge-level care at every step, we're a new orthopaedic destination to help you reach yours.

Learn more at CTOrthoInstitute.org.

Connecticut 
Orthopaedic Institute
St. Vincent's Medical Center