



FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

FEBRUARY 2022 | VOLUME 39, NUMBER 2 | LENTEN ISSUE

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7 *Lunar New Year Traditions of faith and family*



18 *Innovation & Leadership FIE awards grants*

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

Facebook: [Diocese of Bridgeport Bishop Frank J. Caggiano](#)

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40 WAYS TO PREPARE FOR EASTER

See Lenten Calendar on page 17

- 1 Return.** It's Ash Wednesday. Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return. As you receive your ashes, reflect on the the great love Jesus has shown us through his death on the cross. Return to that love.
- 2 Pray.** Commit to spending more time in prayer during this Lenten season. Add brief moments of prayer to your day by praying a breath prayer such as (inhale) "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God," (exhale) "Have mercy on me, a sinner."
- 3 Fast.** In addition to fasting on the prescribed days of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and abstaining from meat on all Fridays in Lent, commit to fasting or abstaining on other days. Donate the money you would've spent on those meals to an organization working to eliminate hunger and food insecurity.
- 4 Give.** Select an organization that is committed to works of mercy — feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, instructing the ignorant, and so on. Learn how you can give both your time and money to support the work of the organization and do so.
- 5 Grow.** Start seedlings for spring planting. Use the plants as a reminder to grow in your relationship with God during this Lenten season.
- 6 Repent.** Conduct a daily examination of conscience and resolve to turn away from sin and repent for sins of the past.
- 7 Refrain.** When considering what to "give up" for Lent this year, consider refraining from behaviors such as mindlessly scrolling social media, binge watching shows, or other activities that distract you from God and those around you. Use the time for prayer, journaling, or checking in with a friend or loved one.
- 8 Confess.** Restore your relationship with God by receiving the healing and forgiveness offered through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Check with your parish to find confession times.
- 9 Reduce.** Go through your home and identify clothing, books, toys, and other items no longer needed or used. Donate the items that are in good shape and may be used by others.
- 10 Rest.** Make an effort to get to bed earlier each night. Or mark off an afternoon or evening on your calendar for intentional time to rest. Even Jesus took naps.
- 11 Visit.** Arrange a time to visit someone who is homebound or those who are in a nursing home, prison, or other residential facility. Pray for all who may feel lonely, isolated, ignored, or forgotten.
- 12 Remember.** Visit the cemetery to clean up the gravesite of a loved one or otherwise remember and honor those who have died. Pray for their souls and for all who love them.
- 13 Listen.** Add a Catholic podcast or Christian music to your weekly playlist. Don't forget "Let me be Frank," the podcast from Bishop Caggiano.
- 14 Move.** Exercise and fresh air are good for the body and the soul. Go for a walk, run, or hike. Look for signs of new growth or renewal. Thank God for the gift of creation. Consider praying the Rosary as you go.
- 15 Learn.** Make an effort to learn about the injustices that exist, especially those that affect people in your community. Listen to those who have experienced discrimination, racism, prejudice, poverty, and violence. Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide you to find ways to make the world more just for all God's children.
- 16 Clean.** Choose an area in your home to clean. As you clear out the clutter and scrub the surfaces, recognize how cleaning our physical space can help us to eliminate the clutter in our hearts and minds.
- 17 Cook.** Commit to at least one night a week to dinner at home. Plan a menu, buy the ingredients, and enjoy the laughter and conversation that comes with cooking and dining together. As you ask God to bless the food, thank him for the gift of family!
- 18 Read.** Take a few minutes to read the Gospel for Sunday. Reflect on the words of scripture. Ask God to open your heart and mind to better hear his word during Mass this weekend.
- 19 Advocate.** Contact local, state, or national leaders, encouraging them to work toward the common good. Research Catholic Social Teaching or read Pope Francis' encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* to learn more about the Church's teaching on the common good.
- 20 Drink.** Water, that is! Choose one week to drink only water. Or abstain from coffee, soda, alcohol, or another favorite drink during that time. Donate the money you would've spent on other beverages to an organization that helps people access clean water.
- 21 Recommit.** If you have neglected your Lenten sacrifice or commitment, challenge yourself to begin again.
- 22 Linger.** Refrain from rushing. Stay a few minutes longer at the end of Mass to pray. Sit at the dinner table to enjoy the company and conversation. Try to be more intentional and relish the gifts that God has given you.
- 23 Attend.** Try to attend one additional Mass each week. Arrive a few minutes early to prepare your mind, heart, and spirit to intentionally receive Jesus in the Eucharist.
- 24 Carry.** Journey with Jesus on his way to Calvary by praying the Stations of the Cross. Remember what Christ suffered for love of us.
- 25 Forgive.** Make an intentional effort to mend any strained relationships by asking for and offering forgiveness. Ask God to help you forgive, as he forgives us.
- 26 Recognize.** God is always present. Train yourself to be more aware of the divine presence in your daily life by praying the Examen. Download the Reimagining the Examen app to use as a guide.
- 27 Write.** Hand-written letters are becoming a lost art. Write a note to your spouse, child, parent, or best friend, sharing your love and appreciation for him or her. Share some of your hopes and prayers, too.
- 28 Relieve.** Allow caregivers to take time for themselves. Offer to babysit or provide respite care to those who care for others.
- 29 Feed.** Donate money or food to your local food bank or volunteer to serve a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
- 30 Adore.** Find an opportunity to adore the Eucharist.
- 31 Thank.** At dinner, invite each other to say a prayer of thanks.
- 32 Share.** Tell your friends and family about your Lenten journey.
- 33 Recycle.** Remember that the earth is God's creation.
- 34 Rise.** Get out of bed fifteen minutes earlier each day.
- 35 Smile.** Smile at everyone you meet.

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- Locations:
- The Catholic Center – Bridgeport
 - The Mansion at St. Phillip's Church – Norwalk
 - Our Lady of Fatima – Wilton
 - Green's Farms Train Station – Westport

*Same day results if tested by 12pm, next day results if tested after 12pm. Samples collected on Saturday or Sunday are reported Monday. Turnaround times are on-average and not a guarantee. Holidays may affect turnaround time.



PROGRESSIVE DIAGNOSTICS

Around the Diocese

Celebrating Catholic Schools

by Elizabeth Clyons

Schools throughout the diocese commemorated Catholic Schools Week the week of January 30-February 3. The theme for National Catholic Schools Week 2022 was "Catholic Schools: Faith. Excellence. Service." Schools typically observe the annual celebration week with Masses, open houses and other activities for students, families, parishioners and community members. Through these events, schools focus on the value Catholic education provides to young people and its contributions to our Church, our communities and our nation.

Celebrating Scouts

TRUMBULL—Recently, Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Scouts BSA Members and Scouters joined parishioners at St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Trumbull to celebrate Scout Sunday. What a wonderful way to recognize scouts for their contributions in citizenship and service!



Immaculate High School has a lot to celebrate

DANBURY—In their first Mock Trial round, Immaculate High School's team members were recognized for their outstanding performance in a civil case regarding an injury sustained by a player in a soccer tournament. Sponsored by Civics First, Mock Trial is a unique program that teaches an understanding of trial law along with language and communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills in a real-life trial setting with students competing against their peers throughout the state.



Celebrating Black History

BRIDGEPORT—In celebration of Black History Month, Kolbe Cathedral hosted an African Drum Program that got the students on their feet!

Kolbe Conversations

BRIDGEPORT—Kolbe Cathedral High School's next Kolbe Conversations celebrity breakfast will be at the Patterson Club on Thursday, March 24, from 7:30-9 am. The featured guest will be Pete Bevacqua, chairman of NBC Sports. There will be a wide-ranging conversation with him on the current state of sports television and streaming with unique insights related to the Olympic Games, NFL football, Golf (U.S. Open, The Open Championship, Ryder Cup, PGA Tour), NASCAR, IndyCar, Premier League Soccer, Thoroughbred racing (Kentucky Derby, Preakness, Belmont Stakes) and Notre Dame football. Armen Keteyian, 11-time Emmy Award-winning journalist, will moderate the discussion. For more information visit: www.kolbe-caths.org.

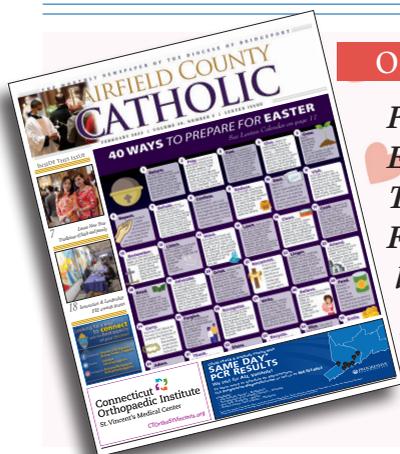


Culture Day at CAB!

BRIDGEPORT—Students at St. Augustine Catholic School dressed up in cultural garb or wore something that represented their culture as part of Catholic Schools Week—specifically the day that honors the community.



"Part of what makes St. Augustine so special are the many diverse cultures represented among our student body," said Principal Allison Hurtt. "We were thrilled to see so many students dress up. We teach our students that difference is good. We do not all need to be the same—God made us each unique for a reason and those differences should be recognized and celebrated. The city of Bridgeport is exactly that—diverse and beautiful. Our kids recognize that this is an amazing part of our community."



ON THE COVER

PREPARING FOR EASTER—This Lent, The Institute for Catholic Formation did the heavy lifting and provided a poster full of resources to make your Lenten load a little lighter.

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Diocesan News

Special St. Augustine Medal of Service set

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will be celebrating a special Mass on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saturday, March 19, 11 am at St. Augustine Cathedral in recognition of all the clergy and religious who are serving in hospitals and nursing homes in the diocese.

“All parishioners are invited to come as we honor St. Joseph, Hope of the Sick, and as we demonstrate our deep gratitude to the clergy and religious providing pastoral care to those in hospitals and nursing homes,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

Each of the clergy and religious in attendance, who work in hospitals and other healthcare settings throughout the diocese, will be presented a Special St. Augustine Medal of Service.

“Our chaplains and other staff have served heroically in caring for the needs of the ill, the elderly and their families during the pandemic, and I want to show my personal gratitude to them for their generous and courageous ministry,” said



SPECIAL SAINT AUGUSTINE MEDAL OF SERVICE

In Recognition of Clergy and Religious in Pastoral Care

Saturday, March 19, 2022

Saint Augustine Cathedral at 11:00 am

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will be celebrating a special Mass on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary in recognition of all the clergy and religious who are serving in hospitals and nursing homes in the Diocese.

Each will be presented a Special Saint Augustine Medal of Service.

All parishioners are invited to come as we honor Saint Joseph, Hope of the Sick, and as we demonstrate our deep gratitude to the clergy and religious providing pastoral care to those in hospitals and nursing homes.

Bishop Caggiano.

“This is a way for pastors and the lay faithful throughout

the diocese to show their appreciation to the clergy and religious serving in pastoral care,”

he said.

The bishop said that that the pastoral care teams in

healthcare settings ministered to those in need when, in most cases, when others—including local clergy, were not permitted to make pastoral or personal visits in hospitals and nursing homes due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The St. Augustine Medal of Service was instituted in 2005 to recognize the “unsung heroes” who unselfishly give of their time and talents to build up parish communities and in diocesan ministries. Since that time, hundreds throughout the diocese have received the medal at the yearly prayer service ceremony.

The conferring of medals at the special Mass in March will mark the first time that the medals have been presented outside of the annual ceremony.

Pope Francis had proclaimed a “Year of St. Joseph” from December 8, 2020, to December 8, 2021, to mark the 150th anniversary of the declaration of St. Joseph as patron of the universal church. He said St. Joseph is an example of sacrificial fatherhood and purity and as an intercessor in healing and fighting the world’s evils. ■

Dr. William Atwood named first Diocesan Director of Music

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

BRIDGEPORT—Dr. William H. Atwood will become the first diocesan director of music Ministry of the Diocese of Bridgeport as of March 2, 2022, Ash Wednesday.

Dr. Atwood’s appointment was made by Bishop Caggiano and announced by Father Peter Lenox, episcopal vicar for liturgy and worship, following careful consideration of all who auditioned for the position within the search process, which began last fall.

“In the establishment of a new diocesan sacred music program, Dr. Atwood will foster a musical repertoire which spans across the

centuries of the great treasury of sacred music, up to and including liturgical music of the present day,” said Father Lenox. “Please join me in welcoming Dr. Atwood, and pray that he will be blessed in abundance by God as he begins this new and important ministry in our diocese.”

As diocesan director of music ministry, Dr. Atwood will be responsible for directing sacred music for all diocesan ceremonies and pontifical liturgies which take place throughout the diocese, and serve as Cathedral organist.

Father Lenox said that Dr. Atwood’s musical direction will not only benefit the diocese, but also The Cathedral Parish.

Under the supervision of the pastor of The Cathedral Parish, he will act as the parish director of music, where he will serve as parish organist and direct the parish music program

Dr. Atwood will also create a new diocesan choir which will offer their musical talents at all such ceremonies and liturgies, but will also craft a musical program to encourage the active participation of the faithful within the liturgical rites.

A graduate of the Hartt School of Music of the University of Hartford, Dr. Atwood obtained both a master’s of music in Sacred Music from Westminster Choir College of Rider University and a doctorate

of musical arts in Sacred Music from the Catholic University of America. Dr. Atwood has 25 years of experience in directing the sacred music programs of parishes across the states of both New England and the mid-Atlantic region—including three years’ experience as the diocesan organist for the Diocese of Metuchen.

He is an active member of the American Guild of Organists, the National Pastoral Musicians Association and the Church Music Association of America. Presently, Dr. Atwood is the director of music and coordinator of liturgical ministries of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull, where he has exer-



DR. WILLIAM H. ATWOOD

cised his musical talents in the augmentation of their sacred music program since his arrival there in 2015.

Dr. Atwood can be reached at his office, which will be located at The Cathedral Parish Offices at 170 Thompson Street in Bridgeport. ■

Diocese launches 2022 'Bishop's Appeal'

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—"A Bridge Home," is the theme of the 2022 Bishop's Appeal which launched in all parishes at the end of January. The appeal is the major source of funding for ongoing diocesan ministries and new initiatives to unify the diocese and celebrate the faith.

"I am very grateful for your support this past year as we met the needs of our sisters and brothers whose lives were upended by COVID-19, especially the poor in our midst. This was possible because of your faith and generosity," Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said in a letter that has gone out to parishioners across the diocese.

"In my recent December Pastoral Exhortation, "Let us Go Forth from the Upper Room," I proposed a three-fold mission to teach and preach the Gospel with clarity and conviction, transform our local communities into spiritual families united in faith, and to create bridges to those persons who feel neglected by the Church or whom the world considers, "outcasts,"" the bishop said.



engage the young, invite people back to Church, and celebrate the truth and beauty of the Catholic tradition.

According to Joe Gallagher, chief development officer of the diocese, this year's Appeal goal of \$8.1 million remains unchanged from last year and will support these vital new initiatives while continuing to feed the hungry, reach out to the most vulnerable, foster vocations and so much more to promote the life of faith in our diocese.

"A Bridge Home" is the theme—highlighting hope, renewal and evangelization in our diocese, and it asks people to build bridges to one another in a way that supports unity and reaches out in service to all those in need," Gallagher said.

This year's appeal will also continue the successful "Parish Partnership" in which each parish will determine how to utilize any funds that are raised over the appeal goal set for the parish. Last year, many used their over-goal funds to partner with parishes that are pastorally vibrant but financially challenged.

Gallagher said a new Bishop's Appeal Advisory Committee has been created to replace the Pastor's Advisory Committee (PAC). This new committee consists of pastors and lay representatives and will be chaired by Father Paul Murphy, pastor of St. Thomas More Parish in Darien. Additional members of the new committee include Father Jose A. Vasquez, Father Henry Hoffman, Father Luke Suarez, Brian Young, Mary Jo Dyer and Patrick O'Keefe.

"I would like to thank the prior chairs, Father Reggie Norman and Father Mike Jones for their many years of service to the PAC and for agreeing to serve on the new advisory committee," Gallagher said, who noted that the advisory committee will provide strategic advice regarding the Bishop's Appeal.

Pam Rittman, director of the Bishop's Appeal, said that "A Bridge Home" is a call to missionary discipleship, and to support new initiatives including the expanded Institute for Catholic Formation, a resource center that will invite, engage and connect people of all ages to our parishes; The Bridge, a mentoring program for young adults, and the Sacred Heart Guild, which will celebrate and inspire through the truth and beauty of Catholic tradition as discovered in sacred arts, music and culture.

The 2022 Appeal also helps to support the more than 200 men and women Ambassadors who are now going out to the community to welcome people back to Church. A second cohort of Ambassadors will be commissioned this year.

"The appeal invests in services that continue to engage those in their faith and build a strong bridge to so many who are struggling. Now it is more important than ever to support our bishop's mission to reunite our Church, affirm our faithful and welcome others back," Rittman said.

Pledges can be made online at www.2022BishopsAppeal.org; or text the word APPEAL to 475.241.7849.

We are grateful to the parishioners of the Diocese Bridgeport who generously supported the 2021 "Arise," Annual Catholic Appeal during a challenging year as we continued to navigate COVID-19. Below is a list of the totals achieved by each parish.

The Appeal raised \$8.5 million dollars supporting works of charity, pastoral services, faith and ministry, education and faith formation. Through your generosity we expanded services to meet the educational, spiritual and daily needs of individuals and families, especially those experiencing job loss and income reduction. Through the "parish partnership program," launched last year, the diocese was able provide 100 percent of funds raised over the parish goal back to the parish for their own use or to assist other parishes struggling financially. A total of \$453,900 was directed to parish operations and various churches in need.

We also extend our gratitude to our parishioners, pastors, administrators, and volunteers of the "We Stand With Christ" Capital Campaign for meeting and exceeding their capital campaign goal and meeting 100 percent of the Annual Catholic Appeal.

Individual Parish Results

	Pledged	Goal	%	
DEANERY A	Blessed Sacrament, Bridgeport	\$14,736	\$11,700 125.95%	
	Our Lady of Fatima, Bridgeport	28,025	21,000 133.45%	
	Saint Andrew, Bridgeport	40,948	40,600 100.86%	
	Saint Ann, Bridgeport	25,773	23,200 111.09%	
	Saint Charles Borromeo, Bridgeport	15,076	21,800 69.15%	
	Saint George, Bridgeport	12,392	12,100 102.41%	
	Saint Mary, Bridgeport	19,877	20,100 98.89%	
	Saint Michael the Archangel, Bridgeport	32,385	32,100 100.89%	
	Saint Peter, Bridgeport	24,329	23,700 102.65%	
	Saints Cyril and Methodius, Bridgeport	6,555	11,000 59.59%	
DEANERY B	Shrine of Saint Margaret, Bridgeport	33,295	25,500 130.57%	
	The Cathedral, Bridgeport	52,217	48,500 107.66%	
	Holy Name of Jesus, Stratford	41,322	37,500 110.19%	
	Our Lady of Grace, Stratford	65,758	67,800 96.99%	
	Our Lady of Peace, Stratford	42,720	42,400 101.00%	
	Saint James, Stratford	80,441	78,500 102.47%	
	Saint Joseph, Shelton	54,054	68,000 79.49%	
	Saint Lawrence, Shelton	167,882	162,000 103.63%	
	Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, Shelton	45,882	43,350 105.84%	
	Saint Mark, Stratford	114,000	110,000 103.64%	
DEANERY C	Christ the King, Trumbull	45,525	52,500 86.71%	
	Saint Catherine of Siena, Trumbull	130,072	136,300 95.43%	
	Saint Jude, Monroe	134,567	84,600 159.06%	
	Saint Rose of Lima, Newtown	234,801	204,500 114.82%	
	Saint Stephen, Trumbull	59,575	78,600 75.80%	
	Saint Theresa, Trumbull	125,722	143,900 87.37%	
	Holy Trinity, Sherman	40,925	50,400 81.20%	
	Immaculate Heart of Mary, Danbury	17,820	16,800 106.07%	
	Our Lady of Aparecida	28,030	28,000 100.11%	
	Our Lady of Guadalupe, Danbury	28,481	22,100 128.87%	
DEANERY D	Sacred Heart, Danbury	32,560	32,100 101.43%	
	Saint Edward, New Fairfield	166,639	159,300 104.61%	
	Saint Gregory the Great, Danbury	93,082	70,700 131.66%	
	Saint Joseph, Brookfield	133,157	116,000 114.79%	
	Saint Joseph, Danbury	83,953	112,000 74.96%	
	Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys, Brookfield	42,759	65,700 65.08%	
	Saint Mary, Bethel	166,629	142,500 116.93%	
	Saint Peter, Danbury	80,773	58,000 139.26%	
	Our Lady of Fatima, Wilton	129,027	178,000 72.49%	
	Sacred Heart and Saint Patrick	69,448	78,600 88.36%	
DEANERY E	Saint Elizabeth Seton, Ridgefield	103,580	90,500 114.45%	
	Saint Francis of Assisi, Weston	103,845	91,200 113.87%	
	Saint Mary, Ridgefield	248,858	241,000 103.26%	
	Assumption, Westport	157,305	146,300 107.52%	
	Holy Cross, Fairfield	16,455	14,700 111.94%	
	Holy Family and St. Emery	52,231	69,300 75.37%	
	Notre Dame, Easton	38,575	54,100 71.30%	
	Our Lady of Assumption, Fairfield	92,324	123,900 74.52%	
	Saint Anthony of Padua, Fairfield	113,855	111,100 102.48%	
	Saint Luke, Westport	187,726	185,500 101.20%	
DEANERY F	Saint Pius X, Fairfield	235,655	234,600 100.45%	
	Saint Thomas Aquinas, Fairfield	184,070	158,000 116.50%	
	Saint Jerome, Norwalk	79,898	69,200 115.46%	
	Saint John, Darien	317,436	215,000 148.00%	
	Saint Mary, Norwalk	84,787	81,200 104.42%	
	Saint Matthew, Norwalk	128,779	154,000 83.62%	
	Saint Philip, Norwalk	47,990	59,800 80.25%	
	Saint Thomas More, Darien	456,009	398,650 114.39%	
	Saint Thomas the Apostle, East Norwalk	46,678	62,800 74.33%	
	Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist, Stamford	68,526	93,500 73.29%	
DEANERY G	Holy Name of Jesus, Stamford	22,046	32,300 68.25%	
	Holy Spirit, Stamford	104,717	80,700 129.76%	
	Our Lady Star of the Sea, Stamford	95,853	86,500 110.81%	
	Sacred Heart, Stamford	37,740	36,500 103.40%	
	Saint Bridget, Stamford	40,114	47,200 84.99%	
	Saint Clement, Stamford	47,355	36,600 129.39%	
	Saint Leo, Stamford	123,050	129,700 94.87%	
	Saint Mary, Stamford	36,055	58,600 61.53%	
	Saint Maurice, Stamford	33,825	46,800 72.28%	
	St. Cecilia-St. Gabriel	126,932	134,000 94.73%	
DEANERY H	Sacred Heart, Greenwich	36,766	36,500 100.73%	
	Saint Mary, Greenwich	302,355	328,900 91.93%	
	Saint Michael, Greenwich	252,545	279,500 90.36%	
	Saint Paul, Greenwich	132,587	100,200 132.32%	
	Saint Roch, Greenwich	38,699	45,600 84.87%	
	DEANERY I	Unspecified Parish	\$432,875	\$0 NA
		We Stand With Christ Parishes	\$1,236,800	\$1,236,800 100.00%
		Grand Total	\$8,491,842	\$8,102,200 105.00%

2021 WE STAND WITH CHRIST PARISHES & QUASI PARISH

The 2021 We Stand With Christ capital campaign parishes of St. Catherine of Siena-St. Agnes, Greenwich; St. Joseph-St. Ladislaus, Norwalk; St. Aloysius, New Canaan all met their 2021 Annual Catholic Appeal raising \$1,236,800.



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Danbury Hospital
Norwalk Hospital



Parish News

St. Mark students take on the Chalice Challenge

STRATFORD—St. Mark School actively seeks ways to put faith into action. This year, students, faculty and staff are participating in the “Chalice Challenge,” an initiative presented by the Diocese of Bridgeport Office of Vocations.

On a bi-weekly basis, a golden chalice gets passed from one grade to another. While a class has the chalice, they commit to praying each day for parish priests, for diocesan seminarians, and for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

St. Mark is one of twelve schools in the diocese that is intentionally praying for more people to hear and answer God’s call.

Grade 2 volunteered to be the first class to take on the “Chalice Challenge.” Second-grade teacher

Amelia Justo shared, “Our students are preparing for their First Holy Communion and learning about the chalice helps them understand the mystery of the Holy Eucharist and Jesus’ infinite love for us. The students love admiring the chalice and praying in front of it.”

St. Mark Principal Melissa Warner commented, “The Challenge is a wonderful opportunity for students to learn what a vocation is and the need our Church has for priests and the religious to serve their brothers and sisters in Christ.”

According to third-grade teacher Breanna Miller, students truly enjoyed taking time out of their busy days to pray for priests who strengthen our relationship with God.

Students wrote prayers such as:

“I thank all the priests for teaching us about Jesus in Mass.”

“I am happy that the priests help us to be followers of Jesus like the disciples.”

“I think it’s beautiful that we are saying prayers for our priests and nuns and for those people who want to enter the priesthood,” commented Nicholas, a fourth-grader who has wanted to be a bishop for as long as he could remember.

According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, in 2020 there were 35,513 priests in the United States, 18,036 permanent deacons, 41,357 religious sisters and 3,801 religious brothers.

The “Chalice Challenge” is not the only initiative that St. Mark School has adopted this year to increase awareness of



CHALICE CHALLENGE—St. Mark School students committed to praying each day for parish priests, for diocesan seminarians, and for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

vocations. Students also participated in the CT Council Knights of Columbus Vocation Poster Contest, when students in grades 2-8 were asked to depict priests, brothers and/or sisters in action and service.

Diocesan Vocations Director Father Christopher Ford visited St. Mark School in the fall to thank students for their participation in the contest. Students were excited to meet with Father Ford. They shared with him their aspirations in life, and what they thought God wanted them to aspire to. Father Ford answered

questions about the Catholic faith and about the daily life of a priest, nun or religious ministries.

“Priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life are promoted through prayer and education efforts,” shared Father Ford. “The greatest way we can do this is by inviting people to first grow in their relationship with Jesus, become His disciple, then listen and respond to the particular way the Lord wants us to serve.”

“As it takes a village to raise a child; it takes an entire Church to raise a priest,” added Father Ford. ■

A Bridge Home 2022 BISHOP'S APPEAL



- + HOPE
- + RENEWAL
- + EVANGELIZATION

The Bishop’s Appeal supports services that continue to engage those in their faith and build a strong bridge to so many who are struggling.

It is more important than ever to reunite our Church, affirm the faithful and welcome others back.

When you make a gift to the Appeal you are part of building that bridge.

PLEASE MAKE YOUR GIFT TODAY
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Parish News

A celebration of culture and faith

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—In celebration of Lunar New Year, or Tet, the quasi-parish of the Holy Vietnamese Martyrs recently held a community Mass at St. Augustine Cathedral.

Father Philip Lành Phan, parochial vicar at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton and administrator to the Holy Vietnamese Martyrs Parish celebrated the Mass assisted by Deacon Joseph Huong.

During the homily, Father Phan encouraged the young people of the community to make an effort to go home to Vietnam at least once in their lives to fully experience and feel the spirit of the Lunar New Year celebration.

“Those of us who grew up in Vietnam have great experiences and memories of the Lunar New Year,” said Father Phan, who likened the festivities to that of Thanksgiving here in the United States, when families gather together. “There is a lot of cleaning, cooking, preparations and welcoming of guests.”

He said that for the Catholic Vietnamese community, Tet is



LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION—Parishioners of the quasi-parish of the Holy Vietnamese Martyrs recently gathered to celebrate the new year, pray and give thanks.

celebrated over the span of four days. On the eve of the new year, they give thanks to God for the past year. On the first day of the new year, they pray for peace. On the second day they pray for the repose of the souls of their ancestors. On the third day they

pray for the sanctification of their work and their studies.

“You are Americans,” Father Phan addressed especially the young people in the congregation, “but we have our roots and heritage as Vietnamese. As we celebrate, we remember where

we are from and where we are now.” Father Phan expressed the importance of remembering that Vietnamese Americans should live their lives humbly, holding on to their culture while also being good citizens of where they live and serve.

As part of the ceremony, members of the community brought gifts to the altar such as rice cakes, wine, flowers and fruits. As Tet is also a Harvesting Celebration, the gifts represent offering to God what we have been blessed with during the year as a sacrifice and offering of thanksgiving.

Members of The Eucharistic Youth Group, a National Vietnamese American Youth Movement in the US and around the world, assisted in serving the Mass, as well as proclaiming readings and prayers.

“Tet, or Lunar New Year, is our ancient ancestral celebration,” said Father Phan. “In modern time, the Western Calendar has been adapted and used widely in Vietnam, but long ago our ancestors used the moon phases to calculate the months and seasons of the year for planting and other celebrations.”

“It’s still relevant and important to us in our time,” he said. “And Tet is the biggest and most joyous celebration in our culture, as family and friends will come back home and get together for this occasion.”

Fostering strong relationships between parishes

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

MONROE—The parish families of St. Jude in Monroe and Blessed Sacrament in Bridgeport have worked together in a way that is inspiring parishioners and unifying the diocese in faith and charity.

Both St. Jude Parish in Monroe and Blessed Sacrament parishes in Bridgeport are connected through the Parish Partnership Program and exemplary leadership of Father Joseph Gill, parochial administrator of St. Jude and Father Henry Hoffman, former pastor, along with Father Joseph “Skip” Karcsinski, pastor, Blessed Sacrament.

Launched last year as part of the Annual Bishop’s Appeal, the Parish Partnership Program is fostering strong relationships between parishes



PARISHIONERS OF Blessed Sacrament and St. Jude come together in prayer and fellowship

in the diocese. It allows 100 percent of the funds raised over the parish Appeal goal to be directed to the parishes operations or programs, or to partnering with a parish that is pastorally strong, but may be struggling financially.

“When Father Skip came to Blessed Sacrament from St. Jude’s, the parishioners of St. Jude demonstrated their love

and support for him by adopting us as a sister church,” said John Torres, who co-chairs the Blessed Sacrament Church fundraising committee with his wife Beatrice.

The Bishop’s Appeal enabled St. Jude parishioners to continue to support Father Skip in his endeavors at Blessed Sacrament Church in a very tangible way.

“The bishop allowed church-

es who exceeded the campaign to donate the excess pledge to another church and St. Jude thought about us!” Torres said.

Both parishes met the fundraising goal for the Bishop’s Appeal. St. Jude parishioners decided to donate half of their additional funds to Blessed Sacrament to assist Father Skip in his work there.

“It was divine intervention,” Torres said. “Our boiler had to be replaced. It could not be repaired. The extra funds replaced the boiler system in the church house. We are so grateful.”

The church house is also home to the parish food pantry which serves more than 300 registered families.

“The timing was absolutely providential,” said Father Skip in a letter to St. Jude’s parishioners. “God bless you for making the replacement possible. The Lord’s work and our distribution of gro-

ceries continues uninterrupted, thanks to you! We would have closed our doors without your help and prayers.”

“The needs of Blessed Sacrament were very great. We wanted to share the money with somebody we knew would steer it well to the poor,” said Father Joseph Gill, who became the parochial administrator of St. Jude in July of last year.

“It’s such a blessing to be able to give to those less fortunate, in a way that we know where it’s going,” said Father Gill. Here we can see a very practical benefit like the boiler, thanks to the funds we were able to donate. The parish will continue to direct 50 percent of the over-goal funds to Blessed Sacrament.”

St. Jude parishioner Lori Black, who has known Father

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Synod On Synodality

Our shared journey of faith

By DEACON STEPHEN HODSON

WESTPORT—Pope Francis' worldwide initiative known as the Synod on Synodality is a golden opportunity to see God's goodness resplendent in the Body of Christ, His Church.

A couple of weeks ago, an elderly parishioner read St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians with clarity and understanding. The message was clear: God has created each of us as integral members of the Body of Christ. I did not know the name of the man that read but I complimented him after Mass on his clear and authentic reading. It caused me to question, "How well do I really know the other members of this Mystical Body?" I had seen this gentleman before, but did not even know his name.

Later that Sunday, this same man participated in a Synod virtual "listening session." When his time came to speak, he expressed how he felt that sharing our individual faith experiences would allow for the Holy Spirit to work through our personal witness and inspire conversion in others. He then shared how, after losing his

mother at the age of nine years old, he developed a serious stuttering challenge. He said that it was very difficult for him. While he was a student at Fordham University, a professor invited him to take a Public Speaking class. The student said that he had a speech impediment, but the teacher suggested he try the course. At the first class, the professor stood next to the student and told the other students, "We will need to be patient with this new student because he stutters."

The content and experience of the course, the kindness of the professor and classmates, along with this student's efforts, helped the young man surmount his speech impediment. This former student, now the same adult who was the lector at Mass, attributed his overcoming his stuttering problem to God. He called it a "miracle."

I have been asked if the information gathered from this synod, also known as our "collective journey of faith" will get to the hierarchy of the Church and effect change. I can assure you that by the ever-present grace of God, inspired change will occur. The



SYNOD ON SYNODALITY—Deacon Stephen Hodson serves as diocesan delegate to the synod on synodality. Local parishes have already begun conducting listening sessions with their groups of delegates.

eternal Father, creator of all things, through Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit will unite, the Bride of Christ—our church from the bottom up, just as He did through the first Apostles.

With approximately 1.3 billion Catholics and almost 8 billion people in the world we have numerous opportunities to share what God has done for each of us. This sharing may include some of our hopes

and dreams, but also our disappointments and failures. Sometimes our journey with others can be as important and fruitful as the destination. If each of us deeply listens with our heart to just one person, the magnitude of God's mercy will unite us.

I believe that our attentive and kind listening to another will elicit their truthful, honest and courageous effort to speak their mind

with the knowledge that they will be heard. This can enable healing, greater communion, opportunities for deeper participation in the life of another and in the community of the Universal Church. It will empower us fulfill the mission for which we were created.

Every opinion matters. Every person matters. Jesus healed one person at a time and called the lowly to use their gifts and talents to share the Gospel in word and deed. Some became leaders, but all, including the leaders, modeled Jesus and became servants.

Many parishes have had several "listening sessions," both in person and remotely. All sessions, hopefully, begin with prayer and a scripture reading and end in prayer. We welcome all voices, near and far, whether you currently come to church, attend elsewhere, no longer attend, or have moved away.

Please consider being a part of this incredible spiritual initiative. Contact your parish office, synod delegates or pastor to find out the dates that your parish intends to hold sessions. You may also, RSVP to any of these upcoming sessions:

St. Luke Church: In-Person Session, Community Room, 49 Turkey Hill Road North, Westport, CT 06880 March 6, 2022, 10 am. RSVP to: stlukesynod@gmail.com

St. Anthony Church, 149 S Pine Creek Rd, Fairfield, CT. March 13, 2022, 2 pm. RSVP to: office@stanthony.org or 203.259.0358

St. Luke Church, Community Room, 49 Turkey Hill Road North, Westport, CT 06880. Zoom session on March 13, 2022, 2 pm. RSVP to: stlukesynod@gmail.com

St. Edward's Church: In-Person Session, Church Hall, 21 Brush Hill Rd., New Fairfield, CT March 27, 2022, 12 noon. RSVP to: dan.joslin7@gmail.com

St. Edward's Church: In-Person Session, Church Hall, 21 Brush Hill Rd., New Fairfield, CT March 31, 2022, 12, 7 pm. RSVP to: dan.joslin7@gmail.com

St. Edward's Church: In-Person Session, Church Hall, 21 Brush Hill Rd., New Fairfield, CT April 2, 2022, 12, 5 pm. RSVP to: dan.joslin7@gmail.com

(Deacon Stephen Hodson is diocesan delegate to the global Synod on Synodality office and also a member of the pastoral ministry team of St. Luke Parish in Westport. He is leading the listening process in the diocese in response to the call of Pope Francis to "journey together" to unify the Church as the Body of Christ.)

St. Luke's synod delegates gather

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

WESTPORT—A group of synod delegates from St. Luke's Parish recently gathered virtually for one of at least ten listening sessions planned for the duration of the global Synod on Synodality.

"We think of them more as sharing sessions," explained Maria O'Kelly, synod delegate for St. Luke's and the facilitator of this particular session. "We want to know what people think."

O'Kelly said that it is important for the delegates from St. Luke's to be comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings, as the goal of the synod is to listen. "We want to understand where people are on their journey and where they want to see the Church go," she said.

The delegates from St. Luke's are off to an early start in conducting their listening sessions and O'Kelly said the

group is very enthusiastic about their roles. Participants come to meetings prepared and they have a lot to share.

Meetings begin with a welcoming and introduction of delegates, followed by prayer, a Scripture reading and an overview of guidelines. The rest of the meeting is set aside for listening and sharing.

Delegates have touched on topics such as the inclusivity of women in the Church, serving the LGBTQ community, ministering to divorced and remarried Catholics and how to get families back to Mass.

"We want people to be able to speak what is in their hearts and on their minds," O'Kelly said.

In a recent reflection, Deacon Stephen Hodson, diocesan delegate to the synod office, shared a similar sentiment. "This Synod on Synodality, our collective journey of faith is comprised of all of the individual members working as integral parts of this Body of

Christ," he said.

Deacon Hodson is also a member of the pastoral ministry team of St. Luke Parish in Westport. He is leading the listening process in the diocese in response to the call of Pope Francis to "journey together" to unify the Church as the Body of Christ.

Pope Francis has convened the Synod on Synodality, lasting from October 2021-October 2023. During this time, appointed delegates from parishes around the world will meet to effectively hear the concerns of those around us, to deepen our understanding of who we are as a community in Christ, and to begin the healing process that needs to occur within the Church.

There are five delegates from St. Luke's, and the group plans to rotate facilitators for the remaining listening sessions.

O'Kelly mentioned that it is important for the group to be flexible with the times they schedule to meet, because they want

everyone to be able to participate and feel included. "We want to give everyone a chance to speak."

She said the group of delegates each take on tasks that play to their strengths.

"Everybody listening to each other and hearing what is on everyone's mind is a tremendous thing for the Church," said O'Kelly.

What's next for the synod: Each local process will conclude in August 2022 with the creation of a diocesan report that will be sent to both the USCCB and the Roman Synod Office. One of the four delegates will be delegated the task of drafting the parish's report, based on a template that will be provided to by the start of the new year. At this time there will be a closing Mass of Thanksgiving for all the delegates.

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

Diocesan News

Meet the Appeal vice chairs

By **JOE PISANI**

GREENWICH—Paula Summa and Jim O’Neil of Greenwich, the newly named 2022 Vice Chairs of the Bishop’s Appeal, have accepted their leadership post because of their desire to help young Catholics and their commitment to Catholic education.

Their belief in Catholic education led them to say, “yes,” when they were asked to be the vice chair couple of the 2022 Bishop’s Appeal, which has the theme “A Bridge Home,” inspired by the vision Bishop Frank J. Caggiano articulated in his Pastoral Exhortation, “Let Us Go Forth.”

“This theme is meant to highlight hope and renewal underway in our Church and our lives,” Jim O’Neill said.

A central focus of the appeal is the young people of the Diocese of Bridgeport, who confront many challenges in modern society and need the support of the Church to navigate them.

“I’m encouraged by what the bishop wants to do with respect to children and young people,” Jim said. “We live in a world where many families are dealing with so many competing activities that you wonder when they have time to even do their homework. There aren’t enough hours in the day to engage them.”

Developing programs for younger generations is fundamental to this year’s appeal. “We have to figure out how to do it,” Paula, who is a catechist of St. Paul Parish in Greenwich, where she and Jim are parishioners said. “How do we communicate the

faith and make it resonate?”

The Bishop’s Appeal, formerly the Annual Catholic Appeal, highlights hope, renewal and evangelization. It will invest in services to engage people in their faith by offering opportunities for discipleship, in addition to helping those who are struggling. The goal of the appeal is \$8.1 million, which is the same as last year. Each parish will be allowed to determine how funds are used that are raised in excess of its goal.

“Paula and Jim bring a wealth of knowledge from their professional and personal lives; they are passionate about the bishop’s vision to build a bridge and bring people back to their faith. They especially care about reaching and inspiring our youth

► *CONTINUED ON PAGE 26*



JIM O’NEILL AND PAULA SUMMA

Immaculate to honor Msgr. Powers

DANBURY—Immaculate High School (IHS) will honor Anthony W. Cirone, Jr., of Newtown, Conn., and Msgr. Thomas Powers of Darien, Conn., at their 17th Annual Gala “Together Again on Broadway” for their support and commitment to Immaculate High School, Catholic education and their communities. The event will be held at the Amber Room Colonnade, Danbury, on March 26.

Anthony T. Cirone, Jr. will receive the Nancy K. Dolan Leadership Award. He has been an Immaculate High School board member in numerous capacities since 2010 and currently serves as the vice-chairman of the board of directors as well as a member of the board finance committee which he chaired for over six years. Tony has assisted with the financial stewardship of the school as well as serving as an advocate for the school to the local business community. After spending several years working in a large Connecticut-based firm, he returned to Danbury to begin his own CPA practice in 1992. Tony is now the man-



ANTHONY W. CIRONE, JR

aging partner of CironeFriedberg, LLP, a leading regional CPA firm serving middle-market, privately held and family-owned businesses and individuals with a full range of tax, audit, accounting, and business advisory services with office locations in Bethel, Shelton and Darien, Conn.

While attending WCSU, Tony met his wife, Jen. They are the proud parents of Immaculate alumni Mike ‘15, Lauren ‘17, Kristen ‘19 and their youngest, Julia ‘23. Each of their children graduated from St. Rose School in Newtown.

An active leader in community



MSGR. THOMAS POWERS

and professional organizations, Tony is a member of the boards of directors of the Western Connecticut State University Foundation, Ancell School of Business at Western CT State University, the associate board of directors, Nuvance Health, and The Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce where he also serves as treasurer. He is a coparticipant of Union Savings Bank as well as an active member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and The Connecticut Society of Certified Public Accountants.

Msgr. Thomas Powers will

receive the Lifetime Achievement Award. Msgr. Thomas W. Powers, son of Thomas, Sr., and Margaret Mary, was raised in Newtown, Conn. with his three sisters, Kathleen, Susan and Meghan, and his younger brother, Christopher. While at Immaculate, Msgr. Powers played football and tennis, was engaged in several clubs and activities and served as student council president his senior year. He attended the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, where he graduated in 1987 earning a Bachelor of Arts in economics and minoring in finance. Upon graduation, Msgr. Powers worked as a financial consultant with Andersen Consulting in New York City, followed by one year in Puerto Rico with the Center for Social Concerns of the University of Notre Dame.

In 1992, he entered St. John Fisher Seminary in Trumbull and later earned a bachelor’s degree in Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University and a licentiate from the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family. Msgr. Powers was ordained a priest on May 24, 1997.

After serving as parochial

vicar at St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull from 1998 to 2001 and as the spiritual director of St. John Fisher Seminary and chaplain of Trinity Catholic High School in Stamford from 2001 to 2005, Msgr. Powers was assigned as an official in the Congregation for Bishops in Vatican City from 2005 to 2015. During that time, he lived at and served as a spiritual director at the Pontifical North American College. While in Rome, he was also tapped to be the “English-language voice of the Vatican” during Christmas Midnight Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica. In 2010, Monsignor Powers was named a “Chaplain to His Holiness” by Pope Benedict XVI.

In 2015, Msgr. Powers returned to the Diocese of Bridgeport to serve as vicar general. Since October 2020, while continuing in the role of Vicar General, he has been pastor of St. John Parish in Darien.

(For more information about the Gala, contact Jeannie Demko, director of events, at jdemko@myimmaculatehs.org or call 203.744.1510 ext. 158.)

EDITORIAL

'That They May Be One'

In this reflection first printed on Bishop Frank J. Caggiano's Facebook page, the Bishop urges all to share in the unity that Jesus gives us through the power of the Holy Spirit. His words represent important instruction as the diocese prepares to go out in mission through its Ambassadors and Synod delegates to build unity and renew the diocese.

"These words of Jesus from the Gospel of John (Jn. 17:21), 'That They May Be One,' summarize what my heart desires for our Church as we go into mission near and far.

The unity that Jesus desires in this passage is for his followers to share in the unity that Jesus enjoyed with his Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the heart of discipleship because it is an invitation to share in a personal, eternal relationship with the Father, through Jesus, in the Holy Spirit. We are invited to share in the very life of God through the grace of adoption, received in baptism and strengthened by sharing the Holy Eucharist, which is our Communion with the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. To be one with God is the aim, mission and destiny of every believer. Our mission as disciples is to invite everyone to accept this invitation and to accompany them to deepen it each day.

Sadly, what I see in the life of the Church is growing acrimony, division and combativeness. Such tendencies do not lead to the unity that Christ invites us to enjoy. For how can we be united to Christ if we are dividing His Mystical Body, which is His Church? How can we have a relationship with the Lord whom we cannot see if we discard, fight against, refuse to dialogue or disrespect the members of His Body whom we can see? So I believe that the time has come to work for greater unity in our Church through a recommitment of respect, an attitude of welcome, a stance of listening, a desire to accompany and a commitment to speak the truth with merciful love.

I invite you to make greater unity—both in our Church and throughout society—the hallmark of our mission in the months ahead. Since it is our Lord's desire, what else do we need to act?"

To read more of Bishop Caggiano's reflections you can follow him on Facebook: www.facebook.com/BishopCaggiano.

Synod Listening Sessions Underway

Listening Sessions for the global Synod on Synodality are now underway in parishes throughout the diocese. Deacon Stephen Hodson, Diocesan Delegate to the Synod, reports in this issue that many parishes have already conducted listening sessions and many more will host sessions throughout the spring.

Deacon Hodson said some parishes are holding more than one listening session either after Mass or in smaller group settings. Sessions are being conducted by lay delegates from each parish, with teams including both men and women. The response has been positive with many people throughout the diocese eager to share their perceptions on the challenges the Church faces and the opportunities for change and renewal.

When Bishop Frank J. Caggiano commissioned parish synod delegates last October he said, "A synod is a process of the coming together of the people of God to share collective wisdom about where the church should go and how it should be responding to the needs and signs of the times. At this time, Pope Francis is asking all of us to take this 'Journey Together' under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

Many thanks to Deacon Hodson for leading this effort, and for the energy, compassion and commitment to listening on the part of all the delegates now at work in our parishes. We are grateful their response to the Holy Father's call and for the vital witness they are providing as the diocese prepares its report for the Global Synod of Bishops in 2023.

A Bridge Home

The 2022 Annual Bishop's Appeal is underway and it is an invitation to help shape the future of the diocese. In addition to funding ongoing ministries that feed the hungry, educate children and care for the vulnerable, this year's appeal will support new initiatives that are designed to build bridges back to Church: for those who have been away as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, and for others who may have been alienated in the past or feel unwanted. The Appeal unifies us in generosity, in vision, and in creating a community of compassion and faith that transforms lives in Christ. Please consider giving generously at www.2022BishopsAppeal.org.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Celebrating with our voices

SHELTON—The youth choir at St. Joseph in Shelton, under the direction of Music Director Dan Hortsman, has been lifting up their voices in song. Front row: Daniel Horstmann (Music Director), Jillian Buckley, Monica Cable, Evan Jang, Michael Hyland, Szilvia Cimino. Second row: David Martin (Instrumentalist), Michael Rothberg, William Quincy, Charles Tavalato, Sebastian Fox, Father Michael Dogali (pastor). Absent: Vincenza Silence.



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 MARCIO ANTONIO BUENO DA SILVA, appointed Parochial Administrator of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Danbury. Effective date was January 21.

OTHER

REVEREND JAKOV VIDOV, appointed Vice Rector and Prefect of Studies of the Redemptoris Mater Diocesan Missionary Seminary for a term of three years. Effective date was January 6.

REVEREND LOURDURAJ PITCHAI O.PRAEM, assignment has ended and is returning to ministry in India. Effective date was January 31.

Reverend Francis T. Hoffmann
Vicar for Clergy, February, 2022

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Editorial



Using our God-given talents

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.

As I grow older, I notice more and more that we all have strengths and weaknesses. My sister is getting married in May, and the role of maid-of-honor comes with many tasks to complete and things I have to plan. I always had an inkling that this wasn't my strong suit, but I am now learning just how much that is the case.

It is hard not to take this as a personal failing. Some people are

so good at the little details that go into planning trips and parties and know just how to wrangle the troops together to get things done in a way that is efficient and productive. And in our hustle-and-bustle world, those traits are often revered. But that is just not me. I am much happier working behind the scenes—gathering decorations and coming up with verbiage and creative signage.

This is becoming more apparent in my professional life, as well.

I would much rather take notes on a meeting, than present information to a group. It is why I am a writer and an editor, rather than a teacher or an event planner.

That being said, all different kinds of people are required to get things done and make the world turn. There is a balance needed in all things. We need creative thinkers just as much as we need analytical thinkers. As James 1:17 says, "every perfect gift is from above."

We all make up the Body of Christ with all our multitude of gifts and talents. "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10-11). As long as we are using our talents for good and for the greater glory of God, we can't go wrong!

One of the great reliefs of getting older, for me, is that now I have the vocabulary and self-awareness to know where my

strengths and weaknesses lie and can actively seek out situations in which I can capitalize on my strengths.

When we are younger, we don't always have the authority

"God instructs us not to hide our talents from the world but instead to share them and use them to serve others."

to be able to choose those situations. I have found that this knowledge has made a big difference in the way I live my life as an adult. It has taken years of experience to learn where my appropriate boundaries are and what situations it is necessary and healthy to push myself.

God instructs us not to hide

our talents from the world but instead to share them and use them to serve others. "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16). I have enjoyed writing this column because I do feel like I am letting my light shine. I love hearing from readers, and when they can find some wisdom from and connection to something I've written, it makes me feel like I am doing something good.

As Lent approaches, perhaps we can offer our gifts and talents to the Lord. Whether that be offering to help plan a fundraiser at a local parish, offering to take notes at the next youth group meeting, or lifting our voice in song at Mass. How can we serve our community with our God-given talents, and how can we give thanks to the one who bestowed them upon us? ■



What we 'failed to do'

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

It began like any other Mass until we got to the penitential rite and started praying: "I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done...and in what I have failed to do."

It was as if I heard those words for the first time. You know the words because you've said them thousands of times. In my case, I never took them as seriously as the "what I have done" sins, which typically include swearing, lying, gossiping and other unseemly misdeeds I'll leave for the confessional.

As Catholics, we have countless "do nots" built into our

brains, but what about the elusive things that fall between the moral cracks in the "what I failed to do" category? I'm not just talking about feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and giving someone a drink of cold water. Or putting more cash in the second collection or missing Mass.

I'm talking about the small situations where someone needed compassion, and I was there to help...but didn't. I'm talking about the times when people needed something simple, and I could have fulfilled that need, but was "too busy."

I have the feeling that Christ put me there for a purpose, and instead I walked away because it was inconvenient, or I figured it was someone else's

responsibility. Unfortunately, "someone else" wasn't around but I was.

For example, the time—or times—I didn't answer the phone because it was a relative who always needs money, probably because of a gambling problem. The time I didn't answer the phone because the person who called constantly complains, and I didn't want to listen to more grumbling about COVID-19 mandates or Donald Trump or whatever was on that day's agenda. And the time I didn't respond to an email from a friend who had surgery because I was tired of his attacks on the Church. And the time I didn't call back when a friend left a message on the answering machine, only to learn later that he was getting a divorce and needed to talk.

Sometimes I have this haunting vision of Jesus giving me my life review, and he pauses at the incident where I said to a person, "I'm too busy to deal with this," and walked away.

Then, he tells me, "I sent that person to you for help." Uh oh.

It's easy to do things for people when you get something

in return, such as recognition, praise, a pat on the back, your picture in the paper, or a certificate of appreciation. But the real challenge is the unseen service to people who are annoying and can't repay you in any way.

When I think of these so-called sins of omission, I recall that scene in "A Christmas Carol" when the ghost of Jacob Marley visited his former partner, Ebenezer Scrooge, rattling his chains. He came to warn Scrooge about the chain which he had been forging for years...because of what he failed to do.

Before leaving, Marley leads Scrooge to the window, and he looks out on that cold Christmas Eve to see the night filled with phantoms, who are terribly distraught because they want "to interfere for good in human matters but had lost the power forever."

It was too late for them to do the good, which they failed to do in life.

One of the spiritual works of mercy is comforting the afflicted, and sometimes that means nothing more than listening with compassion or having a few kind

words for someone who's lonely or distraught.

Have you ever been sick and wondered, "Why hasn't my son (or daughter) called to see how I am?"

Have you ever been depressed and thought to yourself, "I don't have anyone I can confide in?"

Have you ever waited for the results of a medical test, and no

"It's easy to do things for people when you get something in return, such as recognition, praise, a pat on the back."

one else seemed to care about your anxiety?

Have you ever lost a beloved pet, and people just didn't seem to appreciate the depth of your grief?

We live in an age afflicted by spiritual viruses called "self-interest" and "narcissism," and because of them, many of us "fail to do" what we should be doing. ■

School News

St. Joseph students 'rock' acts of kindness

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—Hundreds of acts of kindness were pledged and thousands of dollars were raised during the second annual St. Joseph School fundraising campaign.

A telethon-style rock concert, held in the school gymnasium and broadcast live on Vimeo for students logged in at home to participate, raised more than \$14,000 for the school.

"It's an exciting way to kick-off the kindness campaign for the

children," said Megan Cerullo, director of advancement and marketing for the Main Street school.

Students emailed family and friends to raise funds for the school and in return the students pledged to perform acts of kindness at home, in school or in the community.

"This beautiful premise aligns so well with our Catholic school mission to promote a life full of compassion, empathy and gratitude, and further fosters the importance of service that we aim to

instill in our children's lives," said Dr. Louis Howe, school principal.

Dr. Howe co-hosted the rock concert with 4th-grade student Caio Ninja as members the DOC rock band, Disciples of Christ. Both were dressed in rock attire with Howe donning platform black boots, a purple jersey and a black mullet wig.

Howe sang rock songs with Christian themed lyrics such as "Born in Bethlehem," to the tune of Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the USA," and "Because He



Rocks," to the tune of "I Wanna Rock," by Twisted Sister.

Students at home and those in the gymnasium were encouraged to rock along with air guitar, drum or keyboard antics. Staff members interacted with students at home via text chats during the evening.

Between songs, each grade from pre-K to eighth-grade would announce what organization they would be partnering with to help. A representative of that organization spoke briefly about the organization and what it means to have the support from the school.

"Thank you for doing what you have to do to donate to our organization," said John Gentile, president and co-founder of the Connecticut Youth Leadership Project, an organization empowering youth with disabilities to realize their potential. Fifth graders pledged to fill backpacks for the organization.

Second-graders pledged to make handmade tie blankets for new moms at Birthright, a pro-life organization helping new moms. Eighth-graders pledged to collect

food for Hillside Food Outreach and students from the National Junior Honor Society will deliver the food and stock the pantry shelves for the organization.

"The children of St. Joseph School serve year-round and this campaign is a wonderful way to continue their commitment while also helping keep our special school financially healthy," Howe said.

Howe said funds raised for the school will go toward the bathroom renovation project as well as enhanced security measures at the school.

In addition to the acts of kindness for the charity partner organizations, a percentage of the money raised by each grade up to \$500 will be given to each organization.

Local snack business, Lesser Evil, sponsored the campaign by donating snacks for the event and donating a full-size bag of popcorn to each family at the school.

(Anyone who wishes to support the children on their kindness mission can contribute at donate.raise-craze.com/sjs.)

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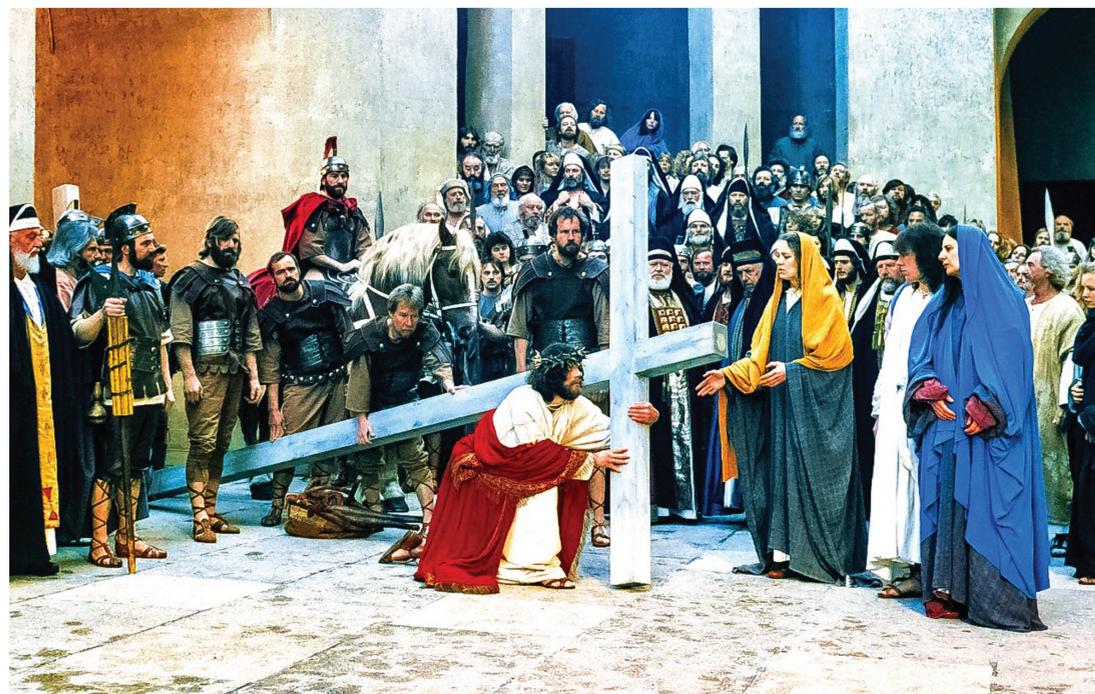
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STRONG RELATIONSHIPS FROM PAGE 7

Skip during his ministry as a parochial vicar at the parish before he began shepherding the congregation at Blessed Sacrament almost 10 years ago, agreed.

"So many of us are blessed in so many ways and we wanted to give back in a personal way, in addition to the Bishop's Appeal," Black said.

Black frequently donates food to the pantry and many parishioners from St. Jude volunteer to help organize and distribute the food alongside volunteers from Blessed Sacrament.

Volunteers and food pantry clients, "feel loved, wanted and welcomed," Black said.

"If Father Skip is involved in it, he is in it up to his eyebrows," Black said. "He has help but he is always in the thick of it. To see how hard he works and how dedicated he is, makes others want to do more."

Parishioners from both parishes gathered at St. Jude to pray the Rosary together, on a recent Sunday afternoon, to further enhance the relationship between the two parishes.

"We hope to establish a relationship that is more than financial, one that truly brings together the body of Christ," Father Gill said.

Torres says that is exactly what's happening as members of Blessed Sacrament volunteer at St. Jude when needed.

"It has been a remarkable relationship that exemplifies our Catholic faith and doing God's work," Torres said. "I am so grateful for them."

"It feels good. It's like family. Yes, we live cities apart but we never miss a beat to help one another," Torres said. "We've developed life-long friends because of this."

Young Adults

Gathering for Mass and fellowship

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

STAMFORD—More than 50 young adults gathered at St. John the Evangelist on the Feast Day of Our Lady of Lourdes for commemoration and fellowship.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano celebrated the Friday evening Mass, sharing a touching story about his visit to Lourdes and encouraging those gathered not to be enthralled with the trappings of this world but to seek guidance and healing from Our Lady.

“We are all suffering in spirit with the sins you and I bear,” Bishop Caggiano said. “Our Lady is the one who will lead us to the cure that each of us may need.”

The Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes commemorates the first of 18 appearances of the Virgin Mary to a 14-year-old French peasant girl. The young girl’s visions occurred between February 11 and July 16, 1858, near the town of Lourdes. A natural spring at a nearby grotto is associated with the power to heal.



BISHOP CAGGIANO RECENTLY celebrated Mass on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes for more than 50 young adults throughout the diocese.

Bishop Caggiano said when he visited Lourdes many years ago, he saw a young boy on crutches who was being assisted by his parents. He said the boy’s face exuded an unmistakable joy.

“While he was seeking healing of his body he was already healed in spirit,” Caggiano said.

Caggiano reflected on the evening’s Gospel reading of the wedding in Cana and encouraged everyone to pray for healing and much like Our Lady in the Gospel instructed, “Do whatever He tells you, There is healing there.”

“What is it in your life that you are seeking healing for? Do not be afraid to ask Our Lady for that healing, for she will lead us,” he said.

The bishop greeted the young adults in attendance as they left the Mass and walked across the street to a local sports bar and restaurant for camaraderie and fellowship. Many discussed how the meaning of the Mass resonated with them.

“I think we overcomplicate

things,” said Lauren Sanchez, who agreed with the bishop about being steadfast against the temptations of the modern world.

“It’s important to be open to receiving the Spirit and grace and not put conditions on it. Let Him guide you,” said Sanchez, who attended the Mass with her husband of eight months, Jamie.

Young adult group member Laurel Faque was happy to be a part of a group that shares the same values.

“It’s easier to be connected to your faith when you have people of the same age on the same journey,” she said. “It strengthens us. It strengthens our faith.” Her husband Jeremy Faque, agreed.

“It’s such a broken world,” he said. “Our Lady can guide the way. It’s a good thing to remember especially on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.”

(For more information on additional local Young Adult Catholic events, please email StamfordYoungAdultCatholics@gmail.com.)

Online young adult retreat hosted by SSND

The North American Vocation Team (NAVT) of the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) invites women ages 18-45 to an online retreat Sunday, February 27 from 2-5 pm EST (1-4 pm CST) via Zoom.

Sister Kathleen Storms, SSND, will facilitate the retreat. More information and registration for the Zoom link is available at ssnd.org/events/2-27-22. Registration will close Friday, February 25.

Through discernment, contemplative listening and other spiritual practices, retreat participants will become more grounded in God and aware of the interconnectedness of all life in the heartbeat of God.

“The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures,” stated Pope Francis (2015) in

“Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home” para. 240.

“The global pandemic, climate change, fires, floods, droughts, displacement of peoples and political unrest have shaken us to our very roots. It is all the more imperative that we become grounded in our relationship with God who is the source of all life, bond with others who value our interconnectedness and find ways to act together to realize a world of peace, justice, and love,” explained Sister Kathleen.

Sister Kathleen Storms, SSND, is a spiritual director and retreat facilitator with more than 45 years of experience. After serving on staff at the Loyola Spirituality Center in St. Paul, Minnesota, in the early 1990s, she founded the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry in Mankato, Minnesota, where she served until 2003 when she was elected to the provincial council for six years. She then became director of Our Lady

of the Prairie Retreat Center in Iowa for seven years and most recently served on the SSND General Council in Rome since 2018. Her specialties include leadership for a sustainable future, Laudato Si’ and Integral Ecology formation, the Enneagram and Visio Divina—Art in Prayer.

The NAVT accompanies young adults as they discern God’s call while informing them about the mission and charism of SSND, an international community of almost 2,100 women religious founded in Bavaria in 1833. The SSND mission is to proclaim the Good News, directing their entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent. Continuing the sacred work of their foundress, Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, School Sisters of Notre Dame transform the world through education, giving special emphasis to women, young people and those who are poor.

(Learn more at ssnd.org.)

Online retreat for young adult women ages 18+

Grounded
in the
heartbeat
of God



“The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures.” Laudato Si’ #240

Sunday, February 27, 2022

2-5 p.m. ET | 1-4 p.m. CT
12-3p.m. MT | 11 a.m.-2 p.m. PT



Facilitated by Sister Kathleen Storms, SSND

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is the *only* concern of
our hearts

Learn more and register
for the Zoom link at
ssnd.org/events/2-27-22



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Ambassador Initiative

Becoming an Ambassador for Christ

By **DEACON JOHN
DITARANTO**

I am sure that I can speak for so many families and friends when I say that we are tiring of the pandemic and ready for a return to “normalcy.” No matter the source we use to get our news, (TV, radio, online, etc.),

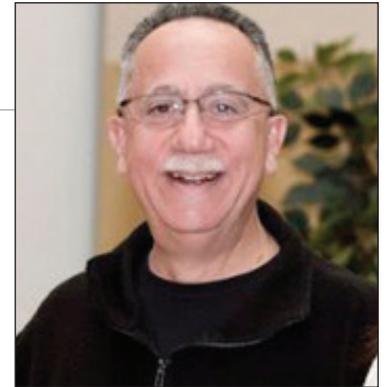
the first four words we typically hear are either COVID-19, coronavirus or pandemic. It is so easy to be distracted and feel hopeless. It has impacted and continues to impact every facet of our lives and our “Church-life” is no exception.

But there is hope! I was so inspired by the reading from St.

Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians, “As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.” Simply stated: We need each other to gather in our faith and become the Body of Christ!

I am currently leading the Ambassador ministry for Bishop

Frank J. Caggiano in our diocese. The goal of this invitational ministry is to invite Catholics to a greater involvement in the life of their parishes, attendance at Sunday Mass and, if needed, personal accompaniment to address those issues that are stumbling blocks to active participation in the life of the Church.



DEACON JOHN DITARANTO

I have recently begun the second wave of this incredible formation experience and I would like to invite you to join me on this journey. This formational experience begins with an invitation to study, prayer and reflection, continues with a specialized catechesis and concludes with learning skills of evangelization and group dynamics.

If this offer intrigues you, please join me on this journey! To take that first step, reach out to me for more information at: ambassadors@diobpt.org.

“So, we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us” (2 Cor 5:20). ■

Safe Environment Tip Did you know

One of the very best tools we have to keep children safe and avoid hiring mistakes is by requiring all employees and volunteers to complete a standard written application and by conducting a thorough reference check in addition to criminal background checks. A thorough criminal background check conducted by M.Y.B. Inc., is required for all adults working or volunteering in the Diocese of Bridgeport before they begin and is completed when they register for VIRTUS training.

State of Connecticut

To report abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult or an incident of child pornography in the Diocese of Bridgeport involving any person from the Church, call DCF at: 1. 800.842.2288 and Erin Neil, L.C.S.W. at: 203.650.3265 or Michael Tintrup L.C.S.W. at: 203.241.0987. You may also contact a Third-Party reporting hotline at: www.lighthouse-services.com/diobpt or call: 833.990.0004 or fill out a written report of abuse or neglect at the following link: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/safe-environments/incident-report-of-an-allegation-of-abuse-or-misconduct.



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St. Vincent's Medical Center

Seminarians minister in hospital setting

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—"It has been a great blessing for me to accompany the people of God at St. Vincent's," said Férry Galbert, one of three diocesan seminarians participating in Pastoral Care training at St. Vincent's Medical Center.

"Given they are predisposed to many existential questions, I want to reassure them that their lives matter and to remind them that they are known and loved by God even amidst their hardship," said Galbert, who worked as a Registered Nurse before entering the seminary.

As part of seminary formation, seminarians receive a wide variety of pastoral experiences, from working with the poor to youth ministry to ministry to the sick. Currently, because of its proximity to the diocese, seminarians studying at St. Joseph's Seminary (Dunwoodie) in Yonkers are able to receive training and undertake pastoral ministry to the sick at St. Vincent's Medical Center in Bridgeport.

During this experience, seminarians are given the opportunity to learn how to minister to patients in a hospital setting—something that is a regular part of being a parish priest, but not something many priests have exposure to prior to ordination.

Father Chris Ford, vocations director and director of campus ministry, was the first one to complete this training in 2016/17.

"During this experience, seminarians work with experienced hospital chaplains, and are taught the different strategies and methods of pastoral care for the sick—beyond the administration of the Sacrament of the Sick," shared Father Ford.

He said seminarians also receive training and formation on different issues around healthcare, such as the maintenance of Catholic values in a healthcare setting and the application of ethical and religious directives.

"Of course, more than the specific applications in a healthcare setting, one of the greatest benefits of this time in the hospital is how it strengthens the seminarians to minister in a variety of circumstances and settings," said Father Ford.

"The formation provided by



(PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN ABRAHAM, HEARST CONNECTICUT MEDIA)

the staff at St. Vincent's forms the men on how to be more present to someone they are ministering to—how to really listen to them, to honor where they are and what they are going through, and how to respond not just to the circumstance, but to the person."

In addition to Galbert, who worked at Stamford Hospital, the other seminarians participating in the training are Andrew LaFleur and Miguel Betancur-Lenis. All three are scheduled to be ordained to the transitional diaconate this summer.

Bill Hoey, vice president of mission services at St. Vincent's Medical Center, expressed that providing formation experiences for seminarians is part of St. Vincent's mission to maintain its Catholic identity.

"It is another way that we strengthen and enhance our relationship with the diocese," Hoey explained.

St. Vincent's Medical Center sees itself as a full ministry of the Catholic Church, assured Hoey. "We get to do a special kind of ministry," he said. "When people come to the hospital, we have chaplains who are able to connect with people at a time of need, when they may be even more receptive to a message."

Hoey said that exposing people to the incredible opportunity that presents itself in being able to visit people when they are in the hospital can be eye opening.

Deacon Tim Bolton, manager of pastoral care at Hartford

Healthcare-St. Vincent's Medical Center and coordinator of vocations for the Diocese of Bridgeport, has seen six or seven seminarians go through this training in the last five years. "It is a great collaboration between St. Vincent's and the diocese," he said.

Deacon Bolton spoke of the importance of learning to be with people who are ill, even if

we feel we don't know the right thing to say. When seminarians practice pastoral ministry to the sick, they are learning how to sit in the trenches with those who are ill. "We give them a chance to practice it and they begin to develop their pastoral identity," said Deacon Bolton.

He recalled Pope Francis likening the Church to a "field

hospital," saying, "we have to go out and be with people where they are."

"I only have words of gratitude towards Deacon Bolton and all the members of the chaplain's office, said Miguel Betancur-Lenis. "They are a true face of the Church, and they work every day to shine the love of Christ upon each patient of the hospital. Through gentle words and natural smiles, they bring love and comfort to those who need it the most. They are a sign of love and peace for everyone, doctors, nurses, patients and visitors."

"My experience at St. Vincent's has been nothing but edifying," said Andrew LaFleur. "It is a great joy to bear the light and presence of Christ to all of those we encounter. It is also a great privilege to be a part of a hospital that has a long history of caring for those most in need when the society would not care for them."

"The desire is to give young men who are going to be ministering to a church that is changing in front of our eyes, the training they need to do so," said Deacon Bolton. "These are outstanding young men."



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Reverend Michael Dogali, Pastor

2022 LENTEN SPEAKER SERIES March 8, 15 & 22 at 7:00 pm In the Main Church

Tuesday, March 8

Dr. Joan Kelly

Lecturer—Sacred Heart University
Suffering & Death in the Christian Tradition

Tuesday, March 15

Reverend Brian Konzman, S.J.

Special Assistant to the President for Institutional Planning
Fairfield College Preparatory School—Fairfield, CT
Fasting as a Spiritual Exercise

Tuesday, March 22

Sister Sally Norcross, C.N.D.

Pastoral Minister—St. Matthew Parish, Norwalk
Spending Lent with Mary

The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be offered each night
7:30 – 8:00 pm.

Loaves and Fishes

Lenten Initiatives: two ways to give back

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

FAIRFIELD COUNTY—Lent is a time of giving, and the Diocese of Bridgeport is presenting two different initiatives for those who wish to give back to those in need this season.

Loaves and Fishes

The Loaves and Fishes campaign focuses on asking the Catholic community to make a Lenten sacrifice by considering a weekly “meager meal” with the proceeds normally spent on a more expensive meal donated to feed the hungry in our midst. Donations can be made online at www.ccfairfield/donate or via check made out to Catholic Charities and mailed to the Catholic Center (238 Jewett Avenue, Bridgeport CT 06606). Posters and flyers with QR codes linked to donating will be placed in the back of diocesan parishes.

“Food insecurity continues to be the number one issue impacting the many individuals and families

in the community struggling to make ends meet due to the pandemic,” said Mike Donoghue, executive director of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County. “Thanks to the generosity of the community, Catholic Charities has been a leader in providing food to many of the most vulnerable members of our community. Catholic Charities is one of the largest providers of food resources in Fairfield County serving well over 2 million meals since the pandemic began. Please consider a donation.”

Catholic Charities Feeding Programs supported

New Covenant Center – Stamford

- Open 365 days per year serving lunch and dinner each day
- Has not closed even one day since the pandemic began
- Soup Kitchen serves 300-400 meals per day up from 150 per day pre-pandemic
- Food pantry provides 1000 families with 10 days of groceries each month

Thomas Merton Center – Bridgeport



- Provides breakfast and lunch on weekdays, 52 weeks per year
- Soup Kitchen now serves 300-400 meals per day up from 150 per day pre-pandemic
- Eat Smart Food Pantry provides 700 families with 10 days of groceries per month
- **Morning Glory Breakfast Program – Danbury**
- Serves hot breakfast on weekdays to 100+ individuals daily
- Non-food pantry provides household staples to over 1000 families
- **Meals on Wheels Program - Stamford / Norwalk**
- Meal deliveries to homebound elderly have increased more than 50% since the pandemic began
- Our Meals on Wheels drivers

often the only human being many seniors see each day

Room to Grow Pre-School Food Pantry - Norwalk

- Launched food pantry to serve the 60%+ of school families struggling due to the pandemic
- Weekly food distribution ensures all students and siblings are fed nutritious meals

Lenten Rice Bowl

Each Lent, Catholic families across the country unite to put their faith into action through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Through CRS Rice Bowl, families learn about how our sisters and brothers across the globe overcome hardships like hunger and malnutrition, and how

through Lenten alms, we have the power to make the world a better place for all.

“Now more than ever our brothers and sisters around the world need our help and this Lent, we would like to encourage as many people as possible to participate in CRS Rice Bowl,” said Father David Roman, parochial vicar at St. Aloysius Parish.

Every donation helps provide lifesaving support to more than 140 million

people in more than 100 countries. All you have to do is pick up a rice bowl in the back of your church and fill it with cash and change. If you don't see cardboard bowls in your parish, no worries, you can make a donation online here: www.support.crs.org/donate/change-life-lent.

CRS Rice Bowl supports hunger and poverty alleviation efforts both around the world through CRS and also here in the U.S., with 25% returning directly to help in our diocese. This global/local connection is important as communities in the U.S. and around the world continue to struggle with the economic impacts of COVID-19.

“I'd like to encourage every family to creatively journey with CRS around the world this Lent by incorporating some International Lenten recipes into their meatless Fridays,” encouraged Father Roman.

“There is an extensive list of meatless recipes from the various countries that we serve, it can be accessed for free here: www.crsricebowl.org/recipe. And be sure to donate the money saved each week by not eating meat on Friday—about \$3 per person per meal—to CRS Rice bowl to help feed those in need around the world!”



Ash Wednesday (March 2)
Services w/ Ashes: 7am, 5:30pm, 8:30pm
Masses w/ Ashes: 9am, 7pm

Holy Thursday (April 14)
Mass of the Lord's Supper: 7pm

Good Friday (April 15)
Morning Prayer: 9am
Liturgy of the Lord's Passion: 3pm
Stations of the Cross: 7pm

Holy Saturday (April 16)
Morning Prayer: 9am
Great Vigil of Easter: 8pm

Easter Sunday (April 17)
Masses 7:30am, 9:30am, 11:30am

Exodus 40
We take commitments to pray, fast, and give alms together as a parish, along with a weekly Zoom Rosary on Thursday nights at 9pm

For Youth
Our Lenten Youth Encounters are on March 11 & April 1, 7-9pm in the Social Hall.
“Passion of the Christ” movie is March 27, 5:30pm

Confessions
Every Saturday from 3-4pm
Monday, March 21 at 7pm (part of Lenten Mission)
Sat/Sun, March 26/27 – Before & After all Masses
Monday, April 11 – Diocese-wide Confession Monday (see Diocese of Bridgeport website for locations)

Stations of the Cross & Adoration
Every Friday in Lent from 7-8:30pm

Lenten Mission w/ Sr. Megan Thibodeau, SOLT
Come hear Monroe native Sr. Megan speak about “Living Faith, Hope, and Love” to rejuvenate your spiritual life and your relationship with the Lord!
Sunday, March 20: 7pm, with Rosary
Monday, March 21: 9:30am
Monday, March 21: 7pm with Confessions
Tuesday, March 22: 9:30am
Tuesday, March 22: 7pm with Adoration

20th Century Martyrs Relics
Come see hundreds of relics of twentieth century Catholic martyrs who shed their blood for Christ, and learn about their amazing stories!
In the social hall after every Mass on the weekend of April 2nd & 3rd.

Lenten Booklets
Available for free in the back of church, or in the parish office

LENT 2022

40 WAYS TO PREPARE FOR

Easter



1 Return. It's Ash Wednesday. Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return. As you receive your ashes, reflect on the the great love Jesus has shown us through his death on the cross. Return to that love.

2 Pray. Commit to spending more time in prayer during this Lenten season. Add brief moments of prayer to your day by praying a breath prayer such as (inhale) "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God," (exhale) "Have mercy on me, a sinner."

3 Fast. In addition to fasting on the prescribed days of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and abstaining from meat on all Fridays in Lent, commit to fasting or abstaining on other days. Donate the money you would've spent on those meals to an organization working to eliminate hunger and food insecurity.

4 Give. Select an organization that is committed to works of mercy — feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, instructing the ignorant, and so on. Learn how you can give both your time and money to support the work of the organization and do so.

5 Grow. Start seedlings for spring planting. Use the plants as a reminder to grow in your relationship with God during this Lenten season.



6 Repent. Conduct a daily examination of conscience and resolve to turn away from sin and repent for sins of the past.



7 Refrain. When considering what to "give up" for Lent this year, consider refraining from behaviors such as mindlessly scrolling social media, binge watching shows, or other activities that distract you from God and those around you. Use the time for prayer, journaling, or checking in with a friend or loved one.

8 Confess. Restore your relationship with God by receiving the healing and forgiveness offered through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Check with your parish to find confession times.

9 Reduce. Go through your home and identify clothing, books, toys, and other items no longer needed or used. Donate the items that are in good shape and may be used by others.



10 Rest. Make an effort to get to bed earlier each night. Or mark off an afternoon or evening on your calendar for intentional time to rest. Even Jesus took naps.



11 Visit. Arrange a time to visit someone who is homebound or those who are in a nursing home, prison, or other residential facility. Pray for all who may feel lonely, isolated, ignored, or forgotten.

12 Remember. Visit the cemetery to clean up the gravesite of a loved one or otherwise remember and honor those who have died. Pray for their souls and for all who love them.



13 Listen. Add a Catholic podcast or Christian music to your weekly playlist. Don't forget "Let me be Frank," the podcast from Bishop Caggiano.



14 Move. Exercise and fresh air are good for the body and the soul. Go for a walk, run, or hike. Look for signs of new growth or renewal. Thank God for the gift of creation. Consider praying the Rosary as you go.



15 Learn. Make an effort to learn about the injustices that exist, especially those that affect people in your community. Listen to those who have experienced discrimination, racism, prejudice, poverty, and violence. Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide you to find ways to make the world more just for all God's children.

16 Clean. Choose an area in your home to clean. As you clear out the clutter and scrub the surfaces, recognize how cleaning our physical space can help us to eliminate the clutter in our hearts and minds.



17 Cook. Commit at least one night a week to dinner at home. Plan a menu, buy the ingredients, and enjoy the laughter and conversation that comes with cooking and dining together. As you ask God to bless the food, thank him for the gift of family!

18 Read. Take a few minutes to read the Gospel for Sunday. Reflect on the words of scripture. Ask God to open your heart and mind to better hear his word during Mass this weekend.



19 Advocate. Contact local, state, or national leaders, encouraging them to work toward the common good. Research Catholic Social Teaching or read Pope Francis' encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* to learn more about the Church's teaching on the common good.

20 Drink. Water, that is! Choose one week to drink only water. Or abstain from coffee, soda, alcohol, or another favorite drink during that time. Donate the money you would've spent on other beverages to an organization that helps people access clean water.

21 Recommit. If you have neglected your Lenten sacrifice or commitment, challenge yourself to begin again.



22 Linger. Refrain from rushing. Stay a few minutes longer at the end of Mass to pray. Sit at the dinner table to enjoy the company and conversation. Try to be more intentional and relish the gifts that God has given you.

23 Attend. Try to attend one additional Mass each week. Arrive a few minutes early to prepare your mind, heart, and spirit to intentionally receive Jesus in the Eucharist.



24 Carry. Journey with Jesus on his way to Calvary by praying the Stations of the Cross. Remember what Christ suffered for love of us.



25 Forgive. Make an intentional effort to mend any strained relationships by asking for and offering forgiveness. Ask God to help you forgive, as he forgives us.



26 Recognize. God is always present. Train yourself to be more aware of the divine presence in your daily life by praying the Examen. Download the Reimagining the Examen app to use as a guide.

27 Write. Hand-written letters are becoming a lost art. Write a note to your spouse, child, parent, or best friend, sharing your love and appreciation for him or her. Share some of your hopes and prayers, too.

28 Relieve. Allow caregivers to take time for themselves. Offer to babysit or provide respite care to those who care for others.



29 Feed. Donate money or food to your local food bank or volunteer to serve a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.



30 Adore. Find an opportunity for Adoration at a local church and spend an hour with our Lord in the Eucharist. Be still and listen for his still, small voice in the silence.

31 Thank. At dinner, invite each family member to share 1-3 things for which they are grateful. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God.



32 Share. Tell a family member, friend, or perhaps coworker the role God and your faith plays in your life.



33 Recycle. Remember that the Earth is our shared home, a gift from God entrusted to our care. Make an effort to reuse and recycle, as well as to reduce pollution and consumption of goods.

34 Rise. Get out of bed fifteen minutes earlier than usual. Use the extra time to pray or read the Gospel of the day. Perhaps you'll just sit with God in the silence, enjoying the sunrise and your first sip of coffee. Thank God for the gift of a new day.

35 Smile. Show others kindness by smiling, doing a favor, or offering encouragement and support.



36 Plan. Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Vigil are beautiful celebrations of Christ's great love of us. Plan how you will participate and prepare yourself to enter into his suffering, death, and resurrection!

37 Welcome. Invite someone to join you for Mass during Holy Week or for Easter.



38 Memorize. Select a Bible verse and commit it to memory. Recite it when you need to be reminded of God's promises.



39 Connect. Participate in a parish mission, reflection, or retreat. Use the opportunity to connect with other members of the Body of Christ. See the diocesan website for options.

40 Silence. On Good Friday or Holy Saturday, designate time to be silent and reflect on Jesus' death and resurrection, we have been redeemed. Although we will die, our lives will not end, but be transformed.

Celebrate.
Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed!
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Foundations in Education

2022 Grants in Innovation and Leadership

By **THERESA SCIALLO**

BRIDGEPORT—“Being an educator is never easy but the last two years have been an adventure and you have risen beyond the challenge,” reflected Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano to the Catholic school educators awarded 2022 grants in innovation and leadership.

“Tonight is a festival of creativity and imagination and thinking beyond what is before

“We encourage teachers to dare to dream to create an innovative opportunity for their students,” explained Foundations’ executive director, Holly Doherty-Lemoine, CFRE. “Donors to Foundations in Education make this program possible and we are grateful to all who value innovation and leadership in the classroom. Thanks to their generous support, we are able to help strengthen and transform Catholic education.”

creative vision with Foundations’ Board of Trustees, grant committee members and donors assembled for the occasion.

The event was sponsored by Milestone C, a Connecticut-based education company whose mission is to shape future STEM leaders. Founder and CEO David Conelias commented, “Foundations in Education and Milestone C are like-minded organizations; supporting one another is the first step to secur-

Xavier Guzman \$7,750

- *Catholic Academy of Bridgeport-St. Augustine Academy: Classroom 3D Printer by Peaches Bernard & Jennifer Mozdzer \$2,000*
- *Catholic Academy of Bridgeport-St. Raphael Academy: Happy Hollow Sensory Play Area by Kara Justo \$8,000*
- *Greenwich Catholic School, Greenwich: “Media Matters” - Content Creation, Video Editing, and Making Real-World*

Photography to tell a Story by Christin Peloso \$5,000

- *St. James School, Stratford: Art Room by Claire Barber \$4,000*
- *St. James School, Stratford: Putting Play in Our Day, the Kindergarten Way! by Christie Crosby \$2,500*
- *St. Joseph High School, Trumbull: Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Router Machine by Harvey Mamrus \$14,450*
- *St. Joseph High School, Trumbull: Virtual Reality*



us; stretching the limits and looking at new horizons,” added the bishop. “The fact that you took the time to create innovative grants to the benefit of our young people is another testimony of the great educators that you are.”

The awards reception, hosted by Foundations in Education, was held at Sacred Heart University’s Discovery Museum, on Thursday, February 3.

Foundations in Education is pleased to announce twenty-three grant awards totaling \$142,000 to benefit Catholic schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport. In its 5th year, this competitive program was the first of its kind to offer innovation and leadership grants to teachers and administrators.

The grant program promotes excellence in Catholic education by supporting teachers’ creative projects and professional development. Grants funded through this program are intended for transformative initiatives that benefit multiple grade levels and have a long-term impact on student learning.

Educators submitted grant proposals from September 15 – October 31, 2021.

This year, Foundations received thirty-one grant proposals from sixteen of the twenty-five Diocesan-sponsored Catholic schools in Fairfield County. The grant requests totaled nearly \$215,000, 50 percent more than the available funding.

A grants committee carefully reviewed each proposal and submitted recommendations to Foundations’ Board of Trustees for approval. The committee is led by Dr. Julie McNamara, president emerita of Albertus Magnus College and a Foundations board member. Dr. McNamara is joined by Sr. Mary Grace Walsh, George Coleman, Fraser Randolph, Henry Rondon, Paula Summa, Executive Director Holly Doherty-Lemoine and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Steven Cheeseman, ex officio.

The awards ceremony celebrated in Bridgeport gave grant honorees the opportunity to share their

ing the future of a young generation. Our primary focus is to help support schools to remain at the cutting edge of academics and leadership development.”

Thanks to the generosity of donors, Foundations in Education continues its ongoing commitment to strengthening and transforming Catholic education.

Foundations in Education is an independent non-profit initiative created to assist the Diocese of Bridgeport’s ongoing mission to support Catholic education in Fairfield County by supporting innovation in academic and extra-curricular programs, fostering opportunities for the professional development of school leaders and providing scholarship assistance to families in need. To learn more, visit www.foundationsineducation.org.

2022-2023 Innovation and Leadership Grants

- *All Saints School, Norwalk: Learning While Observing by*

Connections by Noelle Debes, Rebecca Steck, Patrick Ledley & Cara Groglio \$9,660

- *Holy Trinity Catholic Academy, Shelton: Embracing Cultural Diversity by Jean Feige \$2,991*
- *Holy Trinity Catholic Academy, Shelton: Enhancing Future Learners with LiteTouch Interactive Touchscreens by Cindy Nizzardo \$9,370*
- *Immaculate High School, Danbury: Podcast 101 by Anthony Pellegrini \$2,500*
- *Immaculate High School, Danbury: Integrate “Real World” Data Collection and Analysis into Physics Labs by Anthony D’Ausilio \$11,106*
- *Kolbe Cathedral High School, Bridgeport: CAD: Empowering the Future of STEM by Dan Routhier & Laura Grover \$14,996*
- *Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Academy, Wilton: Growing for Good at Malta House by Rose Highland \$1,150*
- *St. Gregory the Great School, Danbury: Point and Press: Using*

Set Up by Nancy DiBuono & Coleman Daley \$14,750

- *St. Mark School, Stratford: Reinventing the Way We Look at Art by Sarah Carrano \$5,995*
- *St. Mark School, Stratford: Engaging and Empowering Interactive Minds by Melissa Warner \$7,300*
- *St. Mary School, Ridgefield: Science in PreK by Stephanie Kyriacou \$750*
- *St. Peter School, Danbury: Technology, Equipment, and NGSS - Oh My! by Suzanne Puglisi & Catherine Vill \$4,000*
- *St. Peter School, Danbury: Tiny EL Techies by Valerie Boyle \$7,000*
- *St. Peter School, Danbury: Tomorrow’s Leaders are Today’s Book Lovers by Teresa Lazzara \$5,000*
- *St. Rose of Lima School, Newtown: Exploring Scientific Wonders in Kindergarten by Donna Rahtelli \$1,500*
- *St. Rose of Lima School, Newtown: Listening Center Imagination Station by Jeanne Vitetta \$750*

Seton Collaborative

New collaborative offers a 'transformational opportunity'

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

WESTON—"I see this as a transformational opportunity for schools and parishes because there is so much potential," says Elise Major, newly named chairperson of the Seton Collaborative, an important step forward in the overall diocesan effort to more fully resource schools and parishes.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano formally launched the Seton Collaborative last fall when he appointed retired Fairfield University chief operating officer Kevin Lawlor as executive director. This month he announced that Elise Major has agreed to serve as board chairperson of the collaborative, which expects to bring management expertise and best practices, beginning with financial expertise and information technology to schools and parishes in the coming months.

"I can't think of a better person than Elise Major to lead the board," said Bishop Caggiano, who until recently co-chaired the board with her through its formative stages. "Over the past few years I have worked closely with Elise and she has constantly inspired me with her good judgement, experience in leading educational change, and commitment to the students. And underlying all that is a deep faith and understanding of the role of Catholic education in forming, informing and transforming the lives of young people."

While area business leaders will quickly identify with the value of a shared service or management

organization, it translates into a very simple and important diocesan mission: free-up educators and priests to focus on their core ministries, while the collaboration takes care of business.

"We want teachers to be teachers and pastors to be pastors without the burden of becoming

"We want teachers to be teachers and pastors to be pastors without the burden of becoming business administrators."

business administrators," she says. "The Seton Collaborative will offer them effective support that will lead to greater efficiencies and use of resources," she says.

The Weston resident and parishioner of St. Francis Parish, where she serves as the first woman trustee, Elise has been working with Bishop Caggiano and Deacon Pat Toole, diocesan vicar for administration, to launch the new diocesan entity. She has seen the concept work in other educational and organizational settings and is excited about its potential for the diocese.

Her volunteer service in leading the collaborative was born out of her early service as a "Room Mom," which led to her work as president of middle and high school Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO)

in Weston. She was elected to the Weston Board of Education in 2013 and served a four-year term. That experience led to her becoming an associate of the development team for Achievement First, a network of 41 schools with 15,000 students in the region. Their mission is to provide equitable access to great schools for all children.

The mother of two grown children, Ryan (26) and Erin (24), said she and her husband, Glenn, whose family has deep Weston roots, watched their children thrive in Weston public schools, where many students go on to the top colleges in the nation, and she wanted to make sure that the young people in more challenged school districts have the same opportunity.

"I understood the full privilege our kids had going to a very well-resourced public school and I realized that in cities close-by, students faced a very different scenario," she said, noting that the schools often lack critical resources.

A strong commitment to Catholic education led her to join the diocesan Education Commission, a group of educa-

tion, business and institutional leaders empaneled by Bishop Caggiano in 2014 to plan for the future of Catholic schools. As part of that effort, she has worked to build resources for the Bishop's Scholarship Fund and the Foundations in Education (FIE) Gala.

When the bishop determined a need to provide more operational resources to schools, he asked Elise to join Deacon Pat Toole in researching successful educational management organizations. Their research led to conversations with groups across the country in an effort to learn what practices the diocese might adapt to its own operations. As the concept developed, the bishop saw the value in making it available to parishes across the diocese that are looking for new ways to increase collaborative efforts and enhance resources.

Under the direction of Kevin Lawlor, the Seton Collaborative will meet with Catholic school principals in March for a presentation on the financial and information technology services that it hopes to make available beginning in the next school year.



ELISE MAJOR

It has also engaged the National Executive Service Corps (NESC) to conduct interviews that will help shape services.

Major has great confidence in the venture because of Lawlor's leadership and the quality of the board members who bring considerable business success and experience along with a commitment to Catholic schools and parishes.

"It's really about collaboration. Our goal here is to develop a strong partnership with our schools and parishes so that we can implement best practices across the diocese," she says.

The Seton Collaborative has been incorporated by the diocese as a separate 501C3 corporation (not for profit). Additional board members, personnel and services will be announced over the next six months.

(For more information on the Seton Collaborative, contact: Kevin. Lawlor@Setoncollaborative.org) ■

Saint James Parish

† Lent / Easter 2022 †

"Come back to the Lord with all your heart. Leave the past in ashes and turn to God with tears and fasting, for He is slow to anger and ready to forgive." Joel 2:13

Ash Wednesday

Mar 2—Masses at 8:00 a.m.
12:10 p.m.
6:00 p.m.

Devotional Opportunities

Stations of the Cross
Fridays at 7:00 p.m. (Preceded by Adoration at 6:30 p.m.)
• Mar. 4, 11, 18, 25
• Apr. 1, 8

Eucharistic Adoration

Practice the art of solitude and silence
- Parish Center Chapel (Mon.—Fri. 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.)
- Also available 24 hours a day in the window of the rectory.

Rosary

4:00 p.m.—Livestreamed each day on Facebook.

Women's Retreat

Sat., Mar. 19, 8:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.
"Come Back to Me With All Your Heart"

Men's Retreat

Sat., Mar. 26, 8:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.
"Our Walk Through the Desert"



Easter

Holy Saturday ~ April 16
7:30 p.m.—Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday ~ April 17
8:00 a.m. Mass
10:00 a.m. Mass (Livestreamed)



Sacrament of Reconciliation

Tuesdays—Mar. 8, 15, 22, 29, Apr. 5 (7:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.)
Saturdays (12:15 p.m.—1:30 p.m.)
Reconciliation Monday—April 10 (Monday of Holy Week) [3:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.]

Holy Week

Holy Thursday ~ April 14

8:00 a.m.—Morning Prayer
7:30 p.m.—Mass of the Lord's Supper and the Washing of Feet

Good Friday ~ April 15

8:00 a.m.—Morning Prayer
12:00 p.m.—2:00 p.m.—My Personal Way of the Cross (Parish Center Chapel)
3:00 p.m.—Celebration of the Lord's Passion
7:00 p.m.—Stations of the Cross

Holy Saturday ~ April 16

8:00 a.m.—Morning Prayer
10:00 a.m.—Blessing of Easter Food (in church)

2110 Main Street, Stratford, CT ♦ 203-375-5887 ♦ Rev. Peter J. Adamski, Pastor
*** Please visit our website (stjamesstratford.com) to view any updates to the Lent/Easter Schedule ***

ST. PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATION—

The Monroe Knights of Columbus are sponsoring a St. Patrick's Day celebration concert, Saturday, March 5, at the Rev. Msgr. John Sabia Social Hill, 707 Monroe Tpke, Monroe Conn., at 7:30 pm. The event will be cabaret style and feature the songs and humor of the Keltic Kick Band. Food and soft drinks will be available for purchase. The event is BYOB. Tickets are \$20. Proceeds will support the Knights' charitable programs.

For further information and tickets, please call Bill Davoren at: 203.521.5445 or Eric Terkildsen 203.241.3141.



March for Life

Pro-life advocates prepare for Connecticut March

By JOE PISANI

BRIDGEPORT—More and more Catholics are beginning to stand against abortion as the Supreme Court considers a ruling that could weaken or overturn the Roe v. Wade decision, which since 1973 has led to 63.5 million abortions in America, according to Maureen Ciardiello, coordinator of Respect Life & Project Rachel for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

“The diocese is coming together with the ‘respect life’ people, especially in cities like Stamford, Danbury and Bridgeport,” she said, where they have stood in peaceful and prayerful witness outside abortion clinics and

showed 71 percent of Americans support legal limits on abortion and a majority of Americans—54 percent—oppose taxpayer funding of abortion. The poll also found that 81 percent of Americans believe laws can protect both the mother and her unborn child.

Among the sponsors of the Connecticut March for Life are the Connecticut Catholic Conference, March for Life Education and Defense Fund, the Family Institute of Connecticut, and the Connecticut Pregnancy Care Coalition. For more information, go to www.CTMarchforLife.org.

*The itinerary is as follows:
9:30 am—The doors open for*

bans most abortions after the 15th week of pregnancy.

She praised the efforts of a pro-life group in Danbury. The contingent of 55 people came from area parishes, including St. Edward the Confessor and St. Joseph, to take part in the Pro-Life Rosary Rally in front of Planned Parenthood in Danbury on January 22, the 49th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision. The rally was organized by Eric Huff and Don Mallozzi of the Respect Life Ministry of St. Edward the Confessor in New Fairfield.

“It has taken quite a few years for people to get out and pray,” she said. “Now they have some really phenomenal people there, and a lot of positive things are happening. They are being peaceful and trying to help women and assist them with their needs.”

“The Sidewalk Advocates for Life are doing training,” Ciardiello added. “One or two counselors try to engage with the women and determine what they can do to help them so they will reconsider the decision to have an abortion.”



is provided to prepare counselors for their ministry. People from the Greater Danbury Area and New York are welcome to join. Membership is not required to benefit from the training, which is available to pro-life believers of any denomination,

returned to the parish, she said.

“People are getting out there peacefully and prayerfully,” Ciardiello said. “More and more people are recognizing the importance of speaking up in a prayerful response. It is important legislatively to express our opinions,



as well as “secularists, scientists, legal and humanity supporters,” he said.

Anyone interested in training (virtually or otherwise), with or without joining the Danbury chapter, or in the work of the group should contact Tom at tai32@gmail.com and visit the Sidewalk Advocates for Life website for further information.

Even though they could not attend the Washington march, Catholics throughout the diocese attended prayer services on the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision, Ciardiello said.

Parishioners from St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull had Mass and Eucharistic adoration, and people prayed in front of Planned Parenthood on Main Street, Bridgeport. They were joined by Father Elio Sosa, pastor of St. Ann Church in Bridgeport.

The Parish of St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull held its annual Holy Hour for Life. During Eucharistic Adoration, they prayed a Pro-Life Scriptural Rosary, concluding with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

In Stamford, at St. Bridget of Ireland Church, a large group, which included young adults and youth, did a rosary procession to Planned Parenthood and then

but we must also have a prayerful response to what is going on and to continue to encourage people. Some are very intimidated, and we want to encourage them to reach out to local groups. They can also reach out to me.”

She praised the pro-life efforts at St. Theresa in Trumbull, St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull, St. Aloysius in New Canaan, St. Rose of Lima in Newtown, the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist in Stamford, and St. Edward the Confessor in New Fairfield.

“It is so important that we persevere in prayer and make our voices heard in opposition to abortion to protect the lives of babies and to help mothers who are faced with the decision,” said Ciardiello. “Prayer goes a long way, and I hope more parishes start to do Holy Hours for Life. People should continue praying for an end to abortion even if they can’t get to a Holy Hour. Pray a rosary, fast, do some penance or offer up good works.”

(Ciardiello also coordinates Project Rachel, a ministry of the Catholic Church that offers a program to help post-abortive women in the healing process. For more information, contact Ciardiello by phone at 203.416.1445 or email at mciardiello@diobpt.org.)



Planned Parenthood facilities.

Following the success of the 49th annual national March for Life on January 21, which brought tens of thousands of people to Washington D.C., there will be the First Connecticut March for Life on Wednesday, March 23, 2022, at the State Capitol in Hartford.

“There is a strong hope that the court will either overturn Roe or send the issue back to the states, which is a good thing because many states are already passing pro-life laws to protect the unborn,” said Ciardiello.

She cited a recent Knights of Columbus/Marist Poll that

a pre-march program, tentatively at Bushnell Theater at 166 Capitol Avenue in Hartford.

10 am—A short pre-march program begins at the Bushnell until 11 am

11:15 am—The Connecticut March for Life begins at the Bushnell.

Noon—The rally begins at the State Capitol.

Ciardiello said it is important for Catholics to pray and make their voices heard because later this year the Supreme Court will announce its decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, an appeal by Mississippi to remove a lower court’s injunction on a law that

She praised the faithful who conduct vigils at the abortion clinics in Bridgeport, Stamford and Danbury. There are chapters of Sidewalk Advocates for Life in Stamford and Danbury, and she urged people to get involved in their counseling ministry, whose goal is to provide “a peaceful, prayerful, loving and law-abiding sidewalk outreach” to women and staff outside abortion facilities so they can pursue “life-affirming alternatives.”

The program leader of the newly formed Danbury chapter is Tom, who is seeking volunteers to become counselors and/or prayer partners. Free training

February 2022

Apostolate of Black Catholics

Father Reggie discusses ongoing challenges

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—In commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. day, Father Reggie Norman, pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton and vicar for the Apostolate of Black Catholics in the Diocese of Bridgeport joined Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and Steve Lee on the Veritas FM podcast Let Me Be Frank.

Father Reggie explained that the Black Apostolate was formed back in the 1960s when a lot of Black Catholics weren't welcome in the mainstream church—many having to resort to worship in basements.

“One of the great things about Vatican II was that it allowed a lot of Black and African people who came from other cultures and celebrated differently to be able to express those cultural differences while serving God in the Catholic Church,” said Father Reggie. He explained that he sees it as his job to facilitate that.

“There are a lot of Black Catholics who don't necessarily worship at a parish but would like to come together for some feast days like Dr. Martin Luther King Day, Kwanza, Black History Month, and the feast of Pierre Toussaint.” He sees himself and the apostolate as a conduit to reach out to these individuals, as well as those who have left the Church for various reasons.

“Culturally, there are things that affect us as Black Americans who happen to be Catholic that we have to address as well,” said Father Reggie.

The Wilton pastor touched on how he has been working behind the scenes with a group of lawyers to help expunge the records of a lot of Black individuals, especially with the legalization of marijuana. He explained that there are a lot of people who have felonies and other criminal records that would have a better life if they were cleared up.

“But ultimately our job as vicars is the same for all of us.” Father Reggie continued, “It's to bring people of faith together, to celebrate and to be part of that big Church. It's not little individual silos, but one big Church that may celebrate differently and look differently, but one God is



FATHER REGGIE NORMAN, PASTOR of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton and vicar for the Apostolate of Black Catholics in the Diocese of Bridgeport, was recently featured on Veritas Radio's Let Me Be Frank.

serving us all.”

Father Reggie described America as a big pot of gumbo, rather than a melting pot. “It takes all different ingredients to make it taste good. They can still stand on their own, but together they make a dynamic gift.”

“I think that's our other job—to show the non-black Catholics what it is we do and why we do it. There are a lot of things that we can offer the Church that they don't even know exist and the history behind it,” said Father Reggie.

He went on to explain that when he gets down or in a bad mood the first thing he does is put on Gospel music and his mood immediately lifts. “Gospel music has a history all the way back to the slaves,” explained Father Reggie. “That's how they endured—through that love of music that was soothed the soul and told of a better way. All of the Gospel music, even back then in slavery, led them to a higher belief in God. And God's plan is in action. Don't give up hope. That's why we've survived during the most difficult times; we've never given up hope. That's one of the great things I love about the Black community. No matter the adversity, there's always hope somewhere. We just have to tap into it.”

Father Reggie explained to listeners that there is great diversity within the Black American

community. “They label us by our skin and they just put us all together, but the reality of it is when you say Black, you are talking about a really mixed pot.”

As the conversation went on about the treatment of these

“But ultimately our job as vicars is to bring people of faith together, to celebrate and to be part of that big Church. It's not little individual silos, but one big Church.”

Black communities in America, Father Reggie touched on how racism is diametrically opposed to God, because God said, “Love one another as I have loved you.” He continued, “Yet we operate here on earth as if we're separate and so different. God loves all of his children.”

Father continued to unpack how the Church is in a hard position. “No matter what the Church does, it's going to hurt someone in someone's mind because we, as humans, have developed the feeling that if

you're not doing what I want you to do, you're wrong.”

Father Reggie said that often, we only hear the voices of those on extremely opposite sides and the voices in the middle get silenced. He stressed how important it is for us to respect and to listen to each other, otherwise, there is no way to move forward.

Father went on to explain that there were many Catholic priests that marched alongside Dr. King, and a lot of social justice legislation came about because of the work of the Church. He cited the fact that in order to make a change, the person in the position of the oppressor has to grant it, and often the Catholic Church would have to step in and pressure the oppressor to do the right thing. Father Reggie lamented that now, the Church is pulled in many different directions and is finding it difficult to fight in so many arenas at once.

Bishop Caggiano agreed that “we need to speak clearly and we need to speak unequivocally about the sin of racism.”

The bishop and Father Reggie discussed the importance of having a dialogue and being open to new understanding. They continued on to discuss how racism is so ingrained in society that often people don't even realize that it is happening.

They discussed how

Eurocentric conditioning had an effect on art and culture, which is difficult for people of color who have never seen God portrayed in their image. “One of the beautiful things for me is when I went to Africa, and everywhere Jesus was Black. And what you see in some Black Catholic churches, if they're all Black, they have a darker Jesus and the apostles as well,” said Father Reggie.

“You never know what someone's been through unless you've walked in their shoes,” Father Reggie said. He explained that one of the things that he loved about Dr. King was that he always advocated for peace.

The bishop and Father Reggie discussed the talk about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that Father Reggie was invited to deliver at Sacred Heart University on January 17, the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's death.

Father Reggie gave an overview of what he was going to touch on in his talk. “I plan to tell people I love our country. But again, our country has a bad history that it's never addressed. At some point you have to acknowledge that you've hurt people, and if you don't acknowledge that they can't be healed.”

Father Reggie said he planned to discuss what Dr. King would say if he were alive today, and what would the world look like? “I also want to end in hope because it is a college campus. I want them to be engaged to peacefully, to make the change and not to settle for anything less.”

“Let Me Be Frank” is a podcast/radio show from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport and Veritas Catholic Radio featuring the Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport. Each weekly episode features Bishop Frank's honest opinions about recent Catholic news, reflections on Sunday's Gospel, questions from diocesan faithful, and frank discussion of topics of faith and Catholicism. The live version of the radio show broadcasts Wednesdays at noon on WNLK-AM 1350 radio. The podcast is posted shortly after the program concludes. You can subscribe and listen to podcast episodes anywhere you get your podcasts. ■

Obituaries

Deacon Daniel N. Myott, 84

DANBURY—Deacon Daniel N. Myott, 84, of Danbury, beloved husband of Phyllis Myott, died peacefully at Bethel Healthcare on Thursday, January 27.



DEACON DANIEL N. MYOTT

“It is with great sadness I must inform you of the death of Deacon Daniel Myott,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. His joyful life of love for family, Christian witness and service is a model to celebrate. He will long be remembered and cherished by the faithful of St. Gregory the Great Parish. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Deacon Daniel and for the consolation of his family,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano in announcing Deacon Myott’s passing.

He was born in Portland, Maine on September 15, 1937, son of the late Norman and Madeline (Huston) Myott. Dan was a Veteran of the United States Air force during peacetime, where he served as Staff Sergeant

for the 131st Tactical Fighter Squadron, stationed in Germany and in Northern Africa. Dan’s degree in electronics and passion for engineering led to a 37-year career at scientific instrument maker PerkinElmer, where he worked in various positions in sales and service.

During a snowy day off in

an early PerkinElmer training program in the Poconos, Dan skied up to a tow bar line and met the love of his life, Phyllis Becker. Dan and Phyllis married after a whirlwind courtship and embarked on the adventure of their lives after children Felicia, Michelle and Paul arrived in short order. Their life together spanned 57 years and was wreathed in love, laughter and faith, and culminated in the arrival of Dan’s pride and joy, his nine grandchildren—triplets Daniel, Katharine and Joseph Dixon, William, Adele and Timothy Whitlock, and MaryKate, Amanda and Christopher Myott. Dan has bequeathed to each of them his love of skiing, camping, travel, fast cars, sailing and family vacations at the ocean. But the greatest gifts he has passed along is how closely he cherished family and friends and his infectious sense of humor.

Dan was a man of deep faith and was ordained a deacon in the Catholic Church in 1992. He served at St. Gregory the Great parish, where he and Phyllis have been devoted parishioners for over 50 years. Dan lived his vocation fully and was happiest serving others—he felt his calling was to serve the least among us, and he spent countless volunteer hours at the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen, Shelter for the Homeless, and Americares. His favorite parish ministries were administering the sacrament of baptism and ministering to the aged at Glen Hill Center. He will be greatly missed and remembered fondly by the St. Gregory the Great family, who supported Dan after he suffered a debilitating stroke in 2007.

In addition to his cherished wife of 57 years, Dan will be deeply missed by his three children, Felicia Dixon, Michelle Whitlock, and Paul Myott, his loving son-in-law Thomas Dixon, as well as by his devoted grandchildren, his brother, Stephen Myott and his wife, Linda, and Dan’s sister, Susan Downes. He will also be missed by a wonderful circle of friends, with whom he shared a truly unique bond. Finally, he will be missed by all who were lucky enough to know his warm smile and caring embrace.

Faith, Hope and Love: St. Jude’s Lenten Mission

MONROE— Are you interested in more Faith, Hope and Love in your life? That is the theme of this year’s Lenten Mission at St. Jude Parish in Monroe.

Sister Megan Mary Thibodeau, General Sister Servant (Major Superior) of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity will be speaking at all of the Masses the weekend of March 19-20. She will give talks Sunday, Monday and Tuesday evenings at 7 pm and a short talk after morning Masses on Monday and Tuesday. The Rosary will be prayed Sunday evening, Confession will be available on Monday evening and Adoration on Tuesday evening.



SISTER MEGAN MARY THIBODEAU

Sister Megan grew up in Monroe and attended St. Jude School, Luralton Hall and Franciscan University of Steubenville. Her mother, Bonnie Thibodeau and her sister, Tara Valle and family, are parishioners of the parish.

The Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity is a missionary order serving the poor throughout the United States, Central America and Asia. Sister Megan currently lives in Corpus Christi, Texas at their headquarters. Sister is the first religious vocation from St Jude.

(St. Jude Parish is located at 707 Monroe Turnpike in Monroe, Conn. For more information, visit: stjudec.org.)

DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT FEBRUARY 20—MARCH 19

FEBRUARY

- 20 Msgr. Andrew J. Hajus1988
- 22 Msgr. George B. Curtiss1982
- 23 Msgr. Miroslav J. Myschshyn.....1980
- 24 Rev. Joseph E. Russo1998
- Rev. Walter J. Seekamp2012
- 26 Msgr. Henry E. Flanagan1966

MARCH

- 1 Rev. Leonard M. Conlon1976
- 5 Msgr. John J. Pitonak1990
- 8 Rev. Boleslaus Rarus2005
- 10 Rev. Raymond H. Stephenson.....1990
- 12 Rev. Leo Suwinski2005
- 13 Deacon Joseph L. Cross2003
- 14 Rev. Vincent P. Cleary1989
- 15 Msgr. Francis J. Sugrue.....1977
- Msgr. Edward G. Zibell.....1978
- Rev. William J. Galya1994
- 16 Deacon Joseph J. Farley.....2013
- 17 Rev. Daniel F. Golden1955
- Msgr. John F. Murcko1975
- Msgr. Francis X. McGuire1993
- 18 Msgr. Donald M. Paolucci1990
- Rev. John Fay2006
- 19 Rev. Bartholomew J. O’Shea.....1959

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Sports

Gillen receives Lapchick Award

By **DON HARRISON**

Peter Gillen may not have approached Mike Krzyzewski—Duke’s legendary Coach K—or the late Pat Summitt of Tennessee in college basketball lore. But few would dispute that the 1968 graduate of Fairfield University was a highly respected head coach across 20 seasons at three NCAA Division-I schools.

Gillen’s teams at Xavier University, Providence College and the University of Virginia won 64 percent of their games (392-221) and advanced to post-season play no fewer than 16 times (nine NCAA tournaments, seven NITs).

This past September, Gillen joined Coach K, Summitt, the late Dean Smith, Lou Carnesecca and other notables on a prestigious plateau. He was presented the Joe Lapchick Character Award at the foundation’s annual luncheon at the Wyndham New Yorker Hotel.

The award commemorates the memory of Lapchick, a member of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, who excelled as a coach at the collegiate and pro levels, and who played for the Original Celtics in the 1920s and ‘30s. His St. John’s University teams won four National Invitation Tournaments and he coached the New York Knicks to three straight NBA finals.

“I am very flattered and humbled to be mentioned in the same sentence as Joe Lapchick,” Gillen told the gathering, “even for a day, because he represents all that is right...honor and integrity, morality and respect.”

Nancy Lieberman, one of the notable pioneers in women’s basketball as a player and coach, and Len Elmore, a former University of Maryland All-American and NBA player, were this year’s other Lapchick recipients.

Peter Joseph Gillen, born and raised in Brooklyn, N.Y., got hooked on basketball at Brooklyn Prep. The 6-foot guard scored many, if not most, of his Prep points on long-range, two-handed set shots.

After graduating high school in 1964, he enrolled at Fairfield, then a little-known Jesuit institution about to elevate its men’s

basketball program to Division-I status. The late George Bisacca, who doubled as the Stags’ head coach and director of athletics, recruited several first-rate players to ensure a successful entry into D-I. Many of their names (Mike Branch, Pat Burke, Jim Brown, Billy Jones, Charlie Phillips) may be found in the University’s Alumni Athletic Hall of Fame.

Gillen’s playing career at Fairfield, though, was decidedly modest. For the record: 15 games, 22 points, 1.5 ppg. “I was a back-up to the back-ups,” he chuckled. “As a sophomore, I made the varsity as a walk-on, but thanks to Coach Bisacca, I was on scholarship my final two years.”

Pete, however, excelled during the spring on the Stags’ baseball team, which had a new head coach, Don Cook ‘63. Gillen was the regular second baseman for all three varsity seasons and served as captain as a senior.

“I couldn’t think of anyone more deserving of a character award in Joe Lapchick’s honor than Pete Gillen,” said Cook, who succeeded Bisacca as AD. “Pete was and is a class act any way you define it. While I know he was honored based on his basketball and broadcasting accomplishments, he was an outstanding baseball player at Fairfield and an even better teammate. The traits for which he was honored are embedded in his DNA.”

“Pete was always loyal, respectful and humble, and I might add, one of the funniest human beings on the planet. After a tough loss, I’d have Pete sit with me on the team bus. By the time we reached campus he had me laughing so much I almost forgot we got shut out that day.”

Broadcasting has become an integral part of the Gillen repertoire. After leaving Virginia in 2005 and “happy to keep my toes in basketball,” he joined the CBS Sports Network as a college basketball analyst. He’s now in his 17th year providing insight and humor at televised games across the nation.

Gillen paid his dues as a coach. After graduating cum laude from Fairfield with a B.A.

degree in English Literature, his lengthy apprenticeship including two seasons as head coach at his alma mater, Brooklyn Prep, and two more at another Brooklyn high school, Nazareth. And then he spent a decade toiling as an assistant coach at Hawaii, Virginia Military Institute, under the late Rollie Massimino at Villanova, and at Notre Dame under Digger Phelps.

During the final weeks of his season in Hawaii, Pete married Ginie Scarlata, whom he’d met two years earlier at the wedding of former Stags teammate Art Kenney. Their union encompasses 45 years, and both Gillen children, Brandon and Shannon, joined their dad at the Lapchick luncheon.

In 1985, Gillen finally made the quantum leap professionally, becoming head coach at Xavier of Cincinnati, the nation’s fourth oldest Jesuit university. He experienced his greatest success there, guiding the Musketeers to seven NCAA Tournaments, seven 20-plus win seasons and six Midwestern Collegiate Conference titles in nine seasons. His Xavier teams won 72.9 percent (202-75) of their games.

“My first six years our teams went to the NCAA Tournament. Few coaches have done that,” he said. Then, a typical self-deprecating comment: “Good players make great coaches.”

Seeking “a new challenge,” he moved on to Providence, where he led the Big East Friars to back-to-back NIT appearances, including a 91-79 victory over Fairfield in the opening round of the 1996 tournament. “To play against your alma mater is tough and emotional,” he noted.

Gillen’s third PC squad—which he considers his best—advanced to the 1996-97 NCAA Tournament’s Elite Eight, upsetting Marquette and Duke, and defeating Chattanooga en route to the quarter-final stage. Then Providence came oh-so-close to upsetting Arizona, the eventual national champion, before bowing, 96-92, in overtime.

“We’d tied the score, there was 3.9 seconds to go (in regulation), and we had the ball,” he remembered. “If I’d had a better out-of-bounds play, we would

have been there,” meaning the Final Four.

After four seasons and a 72-53 ledger at Providence, Gillen signed a seven-year contract with Virginia of the Atlantic Coast Conference. During his tenure, the Cavaliers competed in the 2001 NCAA Tournament and four NITs, compiling a 118-93 record.

Notable postscript: The affable Gillen is a member of the New York City Basketball Hall of Fame. ■



PETE GILLEN PLAYED SPARINGLY at Fairfield University, but as a head basketball coach, he was a success at the University of Virginia, Providence College and Xavier University.



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Column: Thomas Hicks



Immortal Diamond

POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

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

The year 2022 is already almost two months old. God created the world and with it time. We are temporal beings. I have difficulty comprehending the enormous time spans geologists and astronomers speak of. When a geologist tells me that the earth is 4.5 billion years old, or an astronomer that a star is ten million light years away, I think of how my life is bounded by hours, days, weeks and months. A million or a billion years have little meaning.

Lately, I frequently recall my boyhood time, those lost days never to be relived. There was all the dreaming and hopes of those days, so many hopes which have lost their wings. There was the boyhood sense of time. Time stood still for a while. A day could seem endless. June and summer seemed an infinity of time.

With aging, days seem so brief and slip away so easily. The realization that the early hours of a morning are already spent saddens me. The afternoon slipping away brings a gloom, and the evening advancing into the moat of lost time brings melancholy. The days are used up so quickly one by one. In his Ode, *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, Gerard Manley Hopkins compares the transitoriness of life with the sand slipping inevitably through an hourglass (stanza 4). Shakespeare put it this way: "like the waves make towards the pebbled shore, so do our minutes hasten to their end."

I grow more and more conscious of our earthly span of time. "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:16). How many more chances will I have to welcome the Spring? We can't dam the flow of time. I think of all the years passed, with their thousands of days and hundreds of thousands of hours. Sometimes I wonder about the rains and snows

of my years. How many were there? How many drifting clouds have passed above me; how many winter winds have pounded me; how many gardens have flowered and faded around me?

We are given the gift of years, but as we grow older time can become an enemy. Our infirmities make us notice that part of our substance has been spoiled and engulfed—an end product deposited by time.

Life involves the destruction of much that is close to one and most dear. I think of all the people I loved who are gone. Family and friends die, while children flower, etching time and mortality even more sharply. Time steals that which we love. I want to keep everyone I love from leaving. But time keeps slipping them away.

The Second Vatican Council stated that God's Spirit directs the unfolding of time (*Gaudium Et Spes*, 26). It also says that we are made for God, made to move to all that God is: the fullness of love, faith, peace and joy."

There is a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins titled *That Nature is a Heraclitean fire*.

It was one of the last poems Hopkins wrote, shortly before his death at age 44 in 1889.

The poem begins with a description of clouds; the movement of clouds across the sky is described. The poem pictures cloud shadows on the walls and buildings, sunlight through trees. Hopkins then moves on to a description of the winds. He gives a description of a cloudy, windy day after a rainstorm. The opening lines convey a delight in the world of nature.

Then Hopkins writes of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (535- 475 BC). Heraclitus wrote about fire being an essential element in the world. What he meant by that was the idea that everything was in a state of flux,

continually changing. More specifically, "fire" was Heraclitus' way of indicating that everything which had been created would eventually be destroyed. He spoke of "Nature's bonfire."

Heraclitus observed that nothing is stable. All things are subject to time and annihilation. It is a world where nothing lasts. Everything, no matter how beautiful, must die. This includes human impermanence. Humans, too, must suffer obliteration like everything else. Humans too are destined to be put out like a candle.

Hopkins' reflections continue to spiral downward. But then, with the dramatic word "Enough," he turns to ideas about the Resurrection, which counters the darkness of human extinction. Hopkins declares humans to be "immortal diamonds." A diamond is something that was previously buried in the earth but is as permanent and immutable as anything we know. It is something solid and everlasting. A diamond is something that can reflect and sparkle with a light that shines on and through it. A diamond suggests something permanent and unchanging. Hopkins is saying that we humans have eternal worth. We shall rise and bloom to fade no more.

There is the resounding affirmation of the last lines of the poem:

"In a flash, at a trumpet crash, I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am, and this Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, is immortal diamond.

Is Immortal Diamond."
(Jack—workday, ordinary human; joke—foolish person; poor potsherd—shard of broken pottery; matchwood—something that spends itself in a short, temporal flame, short lived)

Hopkins also wrote: "All life death does end and each day dies with sleep. Now it is all death life does end, and each day lives forever."

(In Westminster Abbey, the most notable religious building in England, the traditional place of coronations, there is the "Poet's Corner." This is a wide wall where slabs of stone are embedded.

The stones contain the names of famous poets and a few words most associated with the poet. In 1976, Hopkins was established in Poet's Corner. The slab bearing Hopkins' name also has the words "Immortal Diamond.") ■

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St. Jude Parish

Hundreds view exhibit of Eucharistic miracles

By **JOE PISANI**

MONROE—More than 500 people from throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport came to St. Jude Parish recently to see an exhibit of 159 Eucharistic miracles from around the world, created by Blessed Carlo Acutis, a 15-year-old who documented them before dying of leukemia.

The awe-inspiring exhibit strengthened their faith in what has been called “Our Greatest Treasure”—the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Father Joseph Gill, parochial administrator of St. Jude, said: “In this post-COVID world when fewer people are attending



Mass, it is so vital to rekindle a Eucharistic amazement and joy at so great a gift: the True Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. As St. John Vianney said, ‘If God could have given us something greater, He would have done so, but there is nothing greater He could have given us than Himself.’”

The exhibit helped strengthen our faith in the Real Presence, Father Gill said, adding, “God has done over 150 amazing, documented, scientifically verifiable Eucharistic miracles, but at every Mass we have an equally amazing, hidden miracle when Christ Himself becomes present on the altar. I pray that this exhibit helps stir up a burning love for the Blessed Sacrament.”

Parishioner Fran Bifulco, who was responsible for bringing the Vatican International Exhibit of Eucharistic Miracles to St. Jude, said: “Heaven touched Earth this weekend and blessed us with sunshine instead of snow as hundreds of people gathered to see the work of a 15-year-old who so loved the Eucharist and used his computer talent for evangelization rather than isolation.”

The Italian teenager, whose cause for sainthood is before the



FATHER JOSEPH GILL, parochial administrator of St. Jude, recently welcomed an exhibit of 159 Eucharistic miracles from around the world, created by Blessed Carlo Acutis.

Vatican, created the exhibit, which has been viewed in dozens of countries across five continents and in thousands of parishes and university campuses. He spent four years on the project, which has received praise throughout Europe and the United States.

The exhibit at St. Jude consisted of 159 panels with photographs and historical descriptions that provide a virtual visit to the places where the miracles occurred and prove that Jesus is really and truly present, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Blessed Sacrament.

Although his parents were not religious, Acutis developed a love for the Eucharist at an early age and often said, “The Eucharist is my highway to heaven” and that “being close to Jesus” was his life plan.

“This is what we need to bring our youth back,” Bifulco said. “They really need to see this exhibit because so many Catholics are unaware of the many miracles that prove the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.”

She said people came from all parts of the diocese and included a large group of children, who Father Gill instructed about the miracles and explained this fundamental mystery of the Catholic faith.

“The children were just amazing,” she said. “They were so good and wanted to be there and were interested in what Father was teaching them.”

At one point, they gathered at a table with one of the volunteers, Shirley Tartaro, and were coloring pictures of Blessed Carlo.

Sister Barbara Sudol of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth was among the viewers with several other sisters from the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Convent in Monroe. “This is a beautiful display of Eucharistic adoration, and it is uplifting to see many people come to enjoy it and profit from it,” she said.

Among the attendees was a large family praying for a miracle for their 61/2-month-old son, John Paul Jude, who was born with a rare disease, Bifulco said.

The mother told Bifulco and her husband Jim: “I believe we were called to be here at St. Jude, and we are being called to have Blessed Carlo intercede for a miracle...and if not my son can still have a friend in him.”

Acutis, who was born in England and raised in Italy, was an ordinary teenager with a special love for Jesus. He played soccer, enjoyed computer games and doing practical jokes. He was declared blessed on October 10, 2020, after a miracle in Brazil was attributed to his intercession, and in a short time, he has earned the nicknames of “God’s influencer,” “Cyber-apostle of the Eucharist” and the “First Millennial Saint.”

As an amateur computer programmer, Acutis was able to catalog the miracles before he died, and they can be found on a website he designed—www.miracolieucaistici.org. The website has been translated into 17 languages, including Vietnamese and Swahili.

“You can’t just look at the exhibit without knowing about Carlo,” she said. “He was a faith-filled young person, a regular kid who did something on his computer that will resonate with youth. That’s why I feel so strongly about this. This is a teenager. This is not an old person talking. Carlo is part of their generation.”

She said that ever since Acutis

made his first Holy Communion he was in love with the Eucharist and received it as often as possible, in addition to praying the rosary every day because of his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Acutis loved Assisi and would often go there. In the tradition of St. Francis of Assisi, he used his money to buy sleeping bags, which he distributed to the homeless living on the streets.

He died of leukemia in 2006 at 15, and his body was interred at

age and suggested that his use of the computer resembles the efforts of the first disciples who traveled on foot to bring the Good News of Christ to people.

Pope Francis said Acutis is a role model for young people today, who are victims of “self-absorption, isolation and empty pleasure.”

“All these miracles took place over the centuries, but I believe miracles are still happening today, and we need to recognize them,” she said. “Carlo was so moved



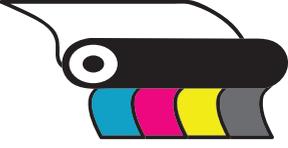
Assisi. It was later exhumed and put in a tomb in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Assisi, where he is dressed in jeans, a track suit jacket and sneakers. His heart, which is considered a relic after his beatification, is in a reliquary in the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi.

Pope Francis has called Acutis a model of holiness in the digital

by the Eucharist that he used his computer skills to bring these miracles to the world so that you can believe if you have doubts. We need something positive in the world today—something to give us hope.”

(Those interested in bringing the exhibit to their parish, contact Bifulco at fran_gargano@hotmail.com.)

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Nuestra Voz

Llega por primera vez el ‘Niño Doctor de México’

POR MARICARMEN GODOY

NORWALK—La misa del domingo a la hora del mediodía en la iglesia de Saint Ladislaus, no sólo fue para anunciar a las nuevas ayudantes del ministerio de la comunión, sino para presentar por primera vez la imagen del “Niño Jesús Doctor de los Enfermos de México”, quien vino traído traído en romería a la parroquia de Saint Joseph un 28 de abril del 2013, como parte de la tradición del pueblo azteca en su advocación y devoción.

Acorde con el P. Edicson Orozco, párroco de las fusionadas iglesias, Saint Joseph y Saint Ladislaus, ubicadas en el corazón de South Norwalk, una región poblada por inmigrantes de Latinoamérica y el Caribe, la venida en paseo (romería) del Niño Doctor, quien tiene su casa en la iglesia de Saint Joseph, se debe a la importancia de vivir en unidad y en comunión compartiendo la fe y la devoción para recordarle a sus feligreses la forma en cómo la inocencia de un niño hace tanto bien a la vida en comunidad.

Por eso, cuando un grupo de devotos del Niño Doctor, presidido por Don Jorge Ramírez, nativo de Tepeaca-Puebla, le pidió en

el 2013 al P. Frank llevar la imagen del Niño Jesús Doctor a la parroquia de San José, el párroco de ese momento, no solo que ofició la misa en su honor, sino que les dio el salón comunitario para hacer una fiesta.

Acorde con Ramírez, durante



esta última década la imagen del Niño ha sido en forma de fotografía, pero gracias al Padre Orozco que les motivó a que adquirieran la imagen en forma de escultura, lograron comprarla en México en el 2021 y pudieron traerla hasta Norwalk, donde a partir de este año estará empotrada para siempre en el altar de la

iglesia de San José

El Padre Edicson Orozco, en cambio, puso en perspectiva la tradición mexicana no solo como una fuerte devoción en la advocación (nombre) del Niño, sino porque al ser un pueblo inmigrante esta celebración adquiere

un sentido de pertenencia, un sentido de vivir la cultura a la distancia y eso produce, en un pueblo con fe, en una celebración que trae unidad y comunidad entre los parroquianos.

Pero, no solo Don Jorge Ramírez y la Hermandad del Niño que trajo la imagen oficial en romería, cumplió con la



tradición de fe católica de Puebla, también lo hicieron muchos de sus paisanos como don Noe Saavedra y la señora Carmen Ramos, que llevaron al templo sus imágenes para celebrar la fiesta de la Candelaria, conocida como la Presentación del Niño en el templo ante los doctores de la ley.

Por eso, la señora Carmen dijo que el Niño Doctor de Puebla se encuentra sentado en una silla o en un trono, porque ya salió del pesebre y pasó a la edad en donde los niños judíos eran presentados

al templo y como era el Hijo de Dios, irradió en luz.

La Hermandad del Niño Jesús Doctor de los enfermos, venido de Tepeaca-México, la conforman: Mario y Janeth Sánchez, Edgar y Clara Jiménez, Esteban y Silvia Hernández, Jorge y María Ramírez.

La próxima fiesta del Niño, donde será empotrado en el Altar será el próximo 30 de abril del 2022, día en que se celebra el Día del Niño en México, donde se agasajará a los infantes con bolsas de dulces y juguetes. ■

APPEAL VICE CHAIRS FROM PAGE 9

and young adults who will carry on the Gospel and we look forward to working with them and exploring new ideas,” said Pam Rittman, director of development and the Bishop’s Appeal.

“Paula and Jim were instrumental in helping St. Paul Parish exceed its 2021 Appeal goal by 32 percent and it made perfect sense to ask them to take on an expanded role for the 2022 Appeal” according to Joe Gallagher, chief development officer for the diocese.

Paula and Jim say it is crucial to have greater participation in the Bishop’s Appeal and for Catholics to realize we are one faith community, with needs that extend beyond our parishes.

Jim emphasized the importance of expanding the participation in the appeal and said: “We have to cast a wider net and get more people to participate in the life of our Church, to follow

Jesus’ words and his mission. We do wonderful things, but I think we can do better.”

Both Paula and Jim are products of a Catholic education, which has shaped their lives. And it is an experience they want others to share.

Paula grew up in Port Chester, N.Y., and attended Holy Rosary School, where she was taught by the Salesian Sisters and later the Sisters of Charity at the Academy of the Resurrection in Rye.

“I am a product of a generous donor who gave me a full scholarship and he never wanted me to know who he was,” she fondly recalls. “I’m sure I wasn’t the only one and that he did it for multiple people. I was always curious about him. Why would he pay for me to go to school?”

“We came from different backgrounds, but we all had one thing in common,” she recalls.

“We were engaged in the faith. Academically, the quality was fantastic, and so was the character of the students and the people we interacted with. It was very different from what I would have experienced in public schools. We all shared the same value system. It was an all-girls school, and we weren’t shy to assume leadership roles and became successful in different professions.”

Jim attended Our Lady Queen of Peace School and was taught by the Presentation Sisters and later the Irish Christian Brothers at Monsignor Farrell High School in Staten Island. That experience defined him and created lifelong friendships and a strong value system.

“Both my parents are no longer with us, and I wish I had the opportunity to thank them for making the sacrifice to send me to Catholic school. It was

such a great experience. In those days, parents had to spend \$25 a month to send kids to high school, and it was a challenge. So how can we help out now, to whatever extent we can, when tuition is much higher? In today’s world, it’s a struggle for parents to send their kids to a private Catholic school.”

Jim is a non-practicing CPA, a retired IBM financial executive and board member of Atradius Trade Credit Insurance. He has a BBA in accountancy practice from Pace University and an MBA in finance from Columbia University. He served as the non-executive treasurer and board member of the United Way of Westchester and Putnam. Currently, he serves on the finance council of Saint Paul Church and the finance committee of Foundations in Education.

Paula has had many years of experience in various financial

and general management positions at IBM. She held positions as CEO of IBM Digital Sales and CFO posts in IBM’s Global Geographic Units and Global Financing, Latin America Unit and Small and Medium Business Units, as well as other financial executive roles. She has a bachelor of arts degree and a master’s in accounting, as well as an MBA in accounting and finance from Pace University. She was a member of the Pace University Lubin School of Business Advisory Board, and she was recently named to the Board of Trustees of Foundations in Education.

(As we begin the 2022 Bishop’s Appeal, A Bridge Home, thank you for your support. To make your gift or learn more, please visit, www.2022BishopsAppeal.org or text the word, APPEAL, to 475.241.7849. If you have questions, please call 203.416.1470.) ■

Vocations

Vocations myth-busters

By **FATHER CHRIS FORD**

Over the next several months, we will “pull back the curtain” and tackle some of the most common myths around priesthood.

Vocation Myth 1: Priests are Lonely

Although it will be long gone by the time you read this, as I write this month’s article it is Valentine’s Day. While many people have plans for a fancy dinner or special event with a loved one, my plans are a little different. This evening, I will be celebrating Mass for religious sisters in a local community. In many ways, it is fitting. Priests are meant to be the image of Christ on earth and religious sisters are considered brides of Christ. So, what better place for me to spend Valentine’s evening! But thinking

about the difference in how my evening will be spent does bring up an interesting point, one I hear time and time again: the priesthood must be a lonely life.

Nothing could be further from the truth! First of all, at the heart of the priesthood is God’s love for his people. We are surrounded by people, constantly bringing them to encounter God’s love and mercy. My calendar is full of events, meetings, masses, fellowship—all opportunities to find myself loved by the people of God that have been entrusted to me in my role as spiritual father.

It is also important to realize that priests are not single. They are celibate. And although it may not look like it from the outside, yes, there is a difference! When you are single, your heart has not been given to anyone in partic-

ular and you are free to live that way. In celibacy, however, your heart has indeed been given to and belongs to another. To live celibacy is offer your entire heart to God and His Church. As a priest, my heart is not available or “on the market.” It espoused to God, His Church, and His people. This becomes a great gift! My life is busy. The demands of ministry are great. But because my heart belongs to the one who makes those demands of me, there is nothing holding me back from responding with generosity and trust. I also go forward with the confidence that my heart rests in the hands of the One who I can be confident will never break it.

Priesthood is also lived in fraternity. There is a bond between a priest and each one of his brother priests. This is far deeper than the

bonds of a fraternity someone may have joined in college. As priests, we all share in the one Priesthood of Jesus Christ. Because we share that, we are connected to one another in mysterious and profound ways, such that another priest’s sorrows become our sorrows and their joys become our joys. Even if we are not the closest of friends, because we share this bond of priesthood we can always call and count on each other in moments of need or just to share in fellowship.

And, at the end of the day, priests are people too. We come from families, though some may not be as close by as we would like. And we do have friends—some people who knew us before we became priests and some whom we have encountered at different stops along the way.



FATHER CHRIS FORD

Many of these friends really become like a second family to us, giving us support and encouragement when we need it the most—or perhaps just a home-cooked meal from time to time!

Do priests, at times, live what might seem like a solitary life? Yes, that can happen for brief moments. But lonely? Far from it. I may not have gone out to a fancy restaurant with someone special on Valentine’s night, but I was gathered around the table of the Lord with His brides, celebrating the real love that sustains us all. ■

Re-energizing our personal relationship with Christ through Confirmation

By **DEACON JOHN DITARANTO**

BRIDGEPORT—It seems that lately, as people are returning to Mass on Sunday, there has been so much talk about the sacraments and getting back to “normal.” Friends and families are returning to Mass, going to Confession and receiving communion. If you are thinking, “Am I ready for all of this? I have never been Confirmed. Should I consider receiving this sacrament now? I wouldn’t even know where to start...”

Let the Institute for Catholic Faith Formation—and your local parish—help you prepare.

The reception of the Sacrament of Baptism is the entryway by which we are incorporated into the Church. It is a formal acceptance of Christ’s invitation, when he commanded his Apostles: “Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and

of the Holy Spirit” (MT28:19). Though we may not remember the actual celebration, many of us were baptized as infants and continued our journey with Christ by receiving the



sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.

For others, life got in the way. Perhaps our family moved, or we were overwhelmed with school. Some may simply have walked away from faith formation. No matter the reason, and there are too many of them to name, some

of us—some of our family and friends—never had the opportunity or the desire to receive the final sacrament of Catholic Initiation—the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Yet as an adult, something triggers a calling in us to receive that final, essential sacrament that completes our full initiation into the life of Christ. When that happens, you may wonder, “Is it too late?” Our Catechism tells us that “Every baptized person not yet confirmed can and should receive

the sacrament of Confirmation. Since Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist form a unity, it follows that “the faithful are obliged to receive this sacrament at the appropriate time” for without Confirmation, Baptism is certainly valid and efficacious, but Christian initiation remains incomplete (CCC 1306).

Many parishes offer workshops or courses to help adults prepare for Confirmation. Bishop Caggiano delegates the authority to confirm to each pastor for one Mass on Pentecost Sunday. If you are among those who missed the chance to be confirmed as a young person, now is the time to prepare.

If your parish does not offer formation for adults who lack confirmation, please join the Institute team on March 26, 2022 for workshop. We begin at 9 am and will meet at St. Thomas the Apostle in Norwalk. Pre-registration is required. If you are over the age of 18, a practicing Catholic, and lack only Confirmation, please save the date and join us.

www.formationreimagined.org/event/adult-confirmation-spring-2022

of us—some of our family and friends—never had the opportunity or the desire to receive the final sacrament of Catholic Initiation—the Sacrament of Confirmation.

If you lack more than Confirmation (perhaps you also missed First Holy Communion or Reconciliation), please contact your local parish to set up a time to meet with the clergy or faith formation coordinators. Many parishes are preparing adults now so they are ready to join the Church at the Easter Vigil.

Finally, if you are struggling with your own decision or wish to offer some encouragement to others, consider this: “The reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace” (CCC 1285).

As a baptized person, you are “sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit” and are strengthened for service to the Body of Christ! What better way to awaken a sense of belonging to Christ’s Church and thereby deepen your personal bond with Jesus as you walk with Him on your journey through life! ■

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