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The Lenten Journey

7 Commuters stop for ashes and prayer

“Commuters stop for ashes and prayer”

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Lenten Offerings

As the Lenten Season begins, people around the diocese joined together in prayer for our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. Pope Francis renewed his invitation to everyone to make Ash Wednesday a Day of Prayer and Fasting for Peace in Ukraine. Though Lent is a solemn season in and of itself, this year it has an extra note of solemnity as we pray for peace in our world. As groups around the diocese make Lenten sacrifices and give back to the community, we keep the people of Ukraine in our hearts.

Ukrainian-American community gathers in Stamford

STAMFORD—The large and vibrant Ukrainian-American community in Stamford recently gathered to pray for peace in Ukraine during a service at St. Vladimir’s Cathedral in Stamford. Many children of Ukrainian descent who regularly attend the School of Ukrainian Studies weekly on Saturdays and those who are members of the Stamford branch of the Ukrainian American Youth Association were at the service as well. (Photo by Christian Abraham)

Pray for peace

DANBURY—Pre-K students at St. Joseph School created water-colored sunflowers, the national flower of Ukraine, to remind us to pray for peace and love!

Lauralton Hall student helps others with ‘pajamas & books’

MILFORD—Madelyn, a junior at Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, Lauralton Hall, and a member of Christ the King Parish in Trumbull reached out to family members, friends, and the local community to support a Pajama & Book Program for The Cathedral Parish. The response was overwhelming.

St. Thomas sports teams thrive

FAIRFIELD—St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School in Fairfield has added three new sports teams in recent years—and they are certainly something to celebrate! Its golf team has been running since fall 2018. What started with 12 players is now up to 24 players from grades 5-8. It is an 8 week season and they host a tournament against the Fairfield public schools. Their emphasis is on etiquette and sportsmanship. A tennis team started in spring 2019. They had to cancel the season in 2020 but in 2021 it came roaring back with 36 players from grade 6-8. Their 2022 season will begin in April. This year, St. Thomas launched a Ski Club at Mohawk Mountain with 58 students signed up. It is open to all grades at the school with different chaperones and required lessons (at least 1 if you don’t have a parent attending) requirements.

First Reconciliation

NORWALK—Congratulations to all the youngsters at St. Jerome Parish who received their First Reconciliation! May they feel God’s love around them always.

ON THE COVER

“Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.” Bishop Frank J. Caggiano distributes ashes at St. Augustine Cathedral. Photo: Amy Mortensen

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Reconciliation Monday set for April 11

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—“Reconciliation Monday” will once again be held in the diocese on Monday, April 11, 2022. A total of 25 parishes located throughout the diocese will offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation from 3-9 pm, so that the lay faithful may experience God’s mercy as Holy Week begins.

Confessions will be heard both in the afternoon and evenings, so that everyone who wishes to receive the sacrament can do so before the Easter Triduum.

“I ask all the faithful to consider participating in this unique opportunity to receive the gift of forgiveness that only Christ can give. The Lord wishes to free each of us from the burden of our sins. Should we not then use this time to shed the baggage of our sins and accept His freedom with joy?” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

According to Msgr. Thomas Powers, vicar general of the diocese, the bishop has asked pastors to ensure that penitents have the option of confessing anonymously or face-to-face. COVID-19 protocols will be left to the discretion of each pastor.

Last year, thousands across the diocese turned out for Reconciliation Monday. Many people also took to diocesan social media to encourage each other to attend confession, sharing their experiences from last year’s Reconciliation Monday.

“Many people have misconceptions about what Confession really is. It is not solely a spiritual exercise during which you tell the priest your sins. Rather, it is a profound encounter with the Lord Jesus, who through the words and actions of the priest, meets us in our sinfulness and forgives, liberates and empowers us with the Holy Spirit so that we can go forth and sin no more,” said the bishop after last year’s Reconciliation Monday.

“Reconciliation Monday” will be hosted from 3-9 pm at the following parishes:

Deanery A (Queen of Peace)
1. St. Andrew Parish: 435 Anton Street, Bridgeport
2. St. Ann Parish: 481 Brewster Street, Bridgeport
3. St. Augustine Cathedral: 359 Washington Avenue, Bridgeport

Deanery B (Mystical Rose)
1. St. James Parish: 2070 Main Street, Stratford
2. St. Lawrence Parish: 505 Shelton Avenue, Shelton
3. St. Mark Parish: 500 Wigwam Lane, Stratford

Deanery C (Queen of Martyrs)
1. St. Catherine of Siena Parish: 200 Shelton Road, Trumbull
2. St. Rose of Lima Parish: 46 Church Hill Road, Newtown

Deanery D (Our Lady, Queen of Confessors)
1. St. Peter Parish: 104 Main Street, Danbury
2. St. Edward the Confessor Parish: 21 Brush Hill Road, New Fairfield
3. St. Joseph Parish: 163 Whisconier Road, Brookfield

Deanery E (Seat of Wisdom)
1. St. Mary Parish: 55 Catoonah Street, Ridgefield
2. Our Lady of Fatima Parish: 229 Danbury Road, Wilton

Deanery F (Queen Assumed into Heaven)
1. Our Lady of the Assumption Parish: 545 Stratfield Road, Fairfield
2. St. Pius X Parish: 834 Brookside Drive, Fairfield
3. St. Thomas Aquinas Parish: 1719 Post Road, Fairfield

Deanery G (Mother of Divine Grace)
1. St. Aloysius Parish: 21 Cherry Street, New Canaan
2. St. Thomas More Parish: 374 Middletop Road, Darien
3. St. Matthew Parish: 216 Scriber Avenue, Norwalk

Deanery H (Cause of Our Joy)
1. The Parish of St. Cecilia-St. Gabriel: 1184 Newfield Avenue, Stamford
2. St. Mary of Stamford Parish: 566 Elm Street, Stamford
3. Sacred Heart Parish: 37 Schuyler Avenue, Stamford

Deanery I (Mary, Mother of the Church)
1. The Parish of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Agnes: 4 Riverside Avenue, Greenwich
2. St. Mary Parish: 178 Greenwich Avenue, Greenwich
3. St. Michael the Archangel Parish: 469 North Street, Greenwich

Choral Vespers to launch Sacred Heart Guild

By JOE PISANI

GEORGETOWN—The newly formed Guild of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, which promotes sacred arts in the Diocese of Bridgeport, will hold Choral Vespers on March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, at 7 pm at Sacred Heart Church on 30 Church Street in Georgetown.

The public is invited to join Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at the event, which will launch the diocesan initiative. Dr. William H. Atwood, recently appointed diocesan director of music, will direct the schola. Invitations have been sent to parishes in the diocese.

“The Annunciation is an oasis in the middle of Lent, when we can put aside our Lenten penance for a day and can have flowers and feasting to celebrate the incarnation of Christ,” said Father Michael Clark, rector of the newly formed Guild. “It is a beautiful day to start a beautiful project like this.”

Choral Vespers, the Guild’s inaugural liturgical event, is the evening prayer of the Church, and it is significant that it will be held at the same time that clergy and faithful throughout the diocese are also praying Vespers. “It is the same text, the same words that everyone else will be praying,” Father Clark said. “We will have music of the highest quality, including one piece written in 1520, which I know will make an impact.”

Pointing the way to God through beauty

GEORGETOWN—From the time he was seven, Father Michael Clark has been painting and singing—two lifelong pursuits that led him to an intimate personal relationship with the Creator through beauty.

The arts, particularly music, provided what he describes as “the golden thread in my life.” At seven, he was sent to the Anglican cathedral in Exeter, England to sing in the choir, and years later became the founding director of music at Buckfast Abbey, where he established a professional choir of men and women.

So, it is fitting that Father Clark, who was recently appointed rector of the Guild of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, an initiative begun by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, pursing a vision he articulated in his pastoral exhortation, “Let Us Enter the Upper Room with the Lord.”

The Guild, which is supported by the 2022 Bishop’s Appeal, will support programs centered on Christ in the arts and evangelization by focusing on artistic beauty in the Catholic tradition. It will seek to inspire the faithful through sacred music, painting, architecture, pilgrimages and literature, with particular attention to the needs of young people, the bishop said.

[The Guild will be launched with Choral Vespers on March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, at 7 pm at Sacred Heart Church, 30 Church Street

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 4
in Redding. The public is invited to attend. Dr. William H. Atwood, newly appointed diocesan director of music, will direct the schola. See related story.

““The Guild’s role is help Catholics focus on the arts and how important they are to evangelization,” Father Clark said.

“Whenever you encounter God, you are going to encounter beauty. Beauty is my way of accessing who God really is, and it’s not just about taste because beauty has its own language, it has its own objectivity. Beauty is not in the eye of the beholder—beauty is in the mind of the Creator. Beauty is how God expresses himself to us, and so it is essential to a proper understanding of who God is.”

In the Catholic tradition, one approach that can lead to God is that of “via pulchritudinis,” or the “way of beauty,” by which a work of art can open a person’s mind and heart, pushing us upward along the pathway to God, who is the supreme Beauty.

The Guild is one of three projects Bishop Caggiano is launching this year, which relate to the transcendentals of truth, beauty and goodness, Father said.

“Our mission is to provide a resource to promote and prosper the arts in sacred liturgy and beyond,” resource to promote and prosper the arts in sacred liturgy and beyond,” he said. “The Guild is planning pilgrimages locally, nationally and internationally, some of which Bishop Caggiano will participate in. Among the destinations will be the Holy Land, Rome, Fatima, Lourdes and perhaps Oberammergau in Bavaria, Germany. National destinations may include the shrines of the North American Martyrs, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, and Our Lady of Guadalupe in Wisconsin.

“The local pilgrimages will be about getting to know ourselves,” Father Clark said. “One of the ways to do that is to look at the beauty of the churches in our diocese. Many of us know we have historic churches, but we don’t know why they are important. Part of my work will be to write architectural guides to some of the more important churches, including the historic churches of Stamford.”

Catholic literature will also be a focus of the Guild. The oratory church has a direct link to one of the foremost Catholic writers of the 20th century, Flannery O’Connor, author of “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” and the novel “Wise Blood,” which was written during the years she lived in Redding and attended Mass at Sacred Heart Church.

“We will use that historical link as a gateway to promote Catholic themes in literature and develop an awareness of how Catholic culture has shaped the world,” he said.

Father Clark will be assisted by Liz Sweeney, who will serve as chief of staff for the Sacred Heart Guild. A graduate of Princeton, she wrote her senior thesis on the writings of Flannery O’Connor and currently teaches at Regina Pacis Academy in Norwalk. She has a master’s in education from the University of Bridgeport and served on several Catholic School boards, including Trinity Catholic High School, where she assisted the chaplains and was involved in youth ministry. She has also worked for the Leadership Institute and led a Bible study group in Greenwich.

“This is an unbelievable blessing and a pleasure to work with Father Clark,” she said. “We are doing things differently and allowing the Holy Spirit to really lead in a very fresh and new way.”

Father said Bishop Caggiano’s strong devotion to Our Lady was fundamental to the formation of the Guild and that he sought her guidance from the beginning.

In addition, Father’s own “spiritual friends”—the saints—have served as his guides in the undertaking, particularly St. John Henry Newman, “who wrote so eloquently about how to engage the culture and who understood the resistance to the Gospel and specifically the resistance to the Catholic faith.”

Father also relies on his devotion to St. Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower, who, he says, “has been a friend of mine for a long time.”

Father Clark was born in Chichester, England, to Timothy and Lesley Clark, parishioners of St. Mary’s Abbey, Buckfast, Buckfastleigh. He attended Exeter Cathedral School and graduated in 1996. He then attended Devonport High School for Boys in Plymouth.

He studied at Cambridge University, graduating with a master’s in theology and law in 2005. He studied for and was called to the bar in 2008 and practiced law as a barrister for five years. At the same time, he was singing professionally at Exeter Cathedral and later moved to Buckfast Abbey as director of music, establishing a professional choir of men and women.

In 2012, he entered the seminary to study philosophy and theology. He received an S.T.B. from the Pontifical Gregorian University in 2016 and studied at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute.

In 2016, he visited the Diocese of Bridgeport as a guest but began to discern the possibility of a call to the priesthood. He was ordained on October 12, 2019 by Bishop Caggiano at St. Thomas More Church in Darien.

“I am really excited about this project because it is at the forefront of how we are engaging our contemporary society,” he said. “We have to be flexible and be really good at taking the pulse of the prevailing culture and how people are responding to the Gospel call. . . . The bishop recognizes that the call to Christ is so urgent that we need to try every possible way to get people’s hearts and minds.”
Ordination

Ministry calls for ‘emptying of self’

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—The ministerial life is a calling to empty yourself by serving others so that they may live more fully in Christ, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said as he ordained Anh Vu to the transitional diaconate recently at St. Augustine Cathedral.

On a stormy morning, the bishop praised Deacon Vu, a native of Vietnam and former mechanical engineer, as a “man of prayer and fidelity, and a humble man” before a gathering of almost 200 family, friends, priests, deacons and religious.

“Despite the rain and the chill in the air outside, our hearts are on fire,” he said of the pride and joy many felt as Anh Vu became a transitional deacon, the last step before his ordination to the priesthood in June.

In a beautiful ceremony with readings and music performed in Vietnamese and English, Minh Ngoc Vu and Regina Denner served as Readers, and Mr. An Ngoc Phan and Mrs. Thu Thi-Le Nguyen served as gift bearers. The music was provided by the Vietnamese Choir of the Cathedral Parish.

The bishop said that every road to ordination is unique and that Anh Vu’s eleven-year pilgrimage from Saigon to his transitional diaconate involved challenges and suffering. He praised Deacon Vu and his family for their faith and sacrifice.

“Eleven years is long time but compared to eternity, it’s the blink of an eye,” he said to Anh Vu, “How blessed we are that you persevered.”

The bishop said that the sacred rite of ordination conforms a deacon to a different definition of service than the world understands.

“You are not living in action, but living in Christ. You will be a self-emptying offering—a living sacrament of service. You are being configured to a life emptied out for the good of others,” he said.

The bishop urged Deacon Vu else is afraid to go,” and he urged Deacon Vu to serve those who are alone, unwanted, and have nowhere else to turn by becoming “the face of the living God to them.”

The bishop praised Deacon Vu’s parents who were unable to attend the ordination but are expected to travel from Vietnam in June when both Deacon Vu and his brother, a transitional deacon in diocese of Brooklyn, will be ordained to the priesthood.

During the Rite of Ordination of Deacons, which followed the Gospel (Matthew 20: 25B-28), Anh Vu was called forward before the altar, where the bishop asked him to declare his resolve to accept the duties and responsibilities of the diaconate. A Litany of Supplication followed, asking for the intercession of the saints.

After the laying on of hands upon the head of the elect, the bishop led the Prayer of Ordination that invoked the Holy Spirit upon Deacon Vu to impart the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

Anh Vu was then vested as a deacon by Father Peter Vu, pastor of Our lady of Vietnam Catholic Church in Riversdale, Georgia.

Principal Concelebrants of the Ordination Mass included Father Juan Gabriel Acosta, vice-chancellor and rector, St. Augustine’ Cathedral Church; Father Francis T. Hoffman, vicar for clergy; Father Peter Lenox, vicar for liturgy and worship; Father Arthur Mollenhauer, judicial vicar; Father Marco Pacianna, director, Redemptoris Mater Seminary; Father Brian Kiely, rector, Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary, Father Joseph Marcello, director of seminarian formation; Father Vincent Daily, spiritual director Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary.

Deacon Joseph Huong, and Deacon Colin Lomnitzer served as Deacons of the Mass, while diocesan seminarians were altar servers.

The musical program was directed by Dr. William Atwood (organist and diocesan director of music ministry) and Douglas Tran (director of the Vietnamese Choir) featuring Ava Wing (soprano), Cheryl Zilinyi (alto), James white (tenor), Frank Zilinyi (bass) and Jennifer Trahan (violinist).

About Deacon Vu

Deacon Anh Vu was born into a Catholic family in Dong Nai, Vietnam on September 17, 1985. He has seven siblings. Before discerning a call to the priesthood, he was a mechanical engineer and worked in Saigon. During his seven years in Saigon, he served as sacristan, altar server and catechist for children on Sundays at Holy Family Parish in Saigon for seven years.

“In Saigon, I also went with my pastor to visit the sick in their homes and hospitals. All of these works were my first experiences in the ministry and mission of the church. Spending time with our Lord Jesus in the chapel and serving his people motivated me to enter the seminary,” he said.

In 2011, Anh Vu moved to Connecticut to study. After a long time of discernment, he made the decision to enter St. John Fisher Seminary of the Diocese of Bridgeport, where he finished his bachelor’s degree in philosophy. He earned degrees from Su Pham Ky Thuat University Saigon, Vietnam in 2008, and from Sacred Heart University Fairfield 2016.

Anh Vu is completing his studies and formation at Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary. He is a resident of Stamford and a member of The Parish of St. Cecilia and St. Gabriel in Stamford.
Ash Wednesday

Lent is a time to ‘unpack’ our sins

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Lent is a time to unburden ourselves of sin and to prepare for the only journey that really matters in life, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said in his Ash Wednesday homily at St. Augustine Cathedral.

The bishop began his homily by noting that he is never really sure how much to pack when he travels, and he usually ends up taking too much as he tries to prepare for the weather and the location.

He told the nearly 200 faithful present for the noontime Mass that Lent is about the opposite problem—the need to unpack the sins, attitudes and thoughts that get in the way of our journey toward Christ.

He said that as we begin our Lenten journey we should be asking, “What do we need to un-pack and let go of once and for all, starting with the sins—yours and mine—like stones in our luggage that weigh us down.”

Standing in the center aisle in front of the altar to deliver his homily, the bishop said that Lent is the time to keep our eyes and hearts “fixed on the Sacred Heart of Jesus,” by avoiding occasions of sin and not letting ourselves be controlled by our attitudes and possession.

“Today we receive ashes that come from burnt palms, a sign of wealth, power and privilege during the time of Caesar,” he said, “and we burn them because they get in the way of our journey toward Christ.

“St. Paul reminds us that only three things matter—faith, hope, and love,” the bishop said, “and love is the greatest of these.”

The bishop said that it is easy for people to get distracted and worry more about the trips we may take and the things of the world, but we must learn to travel “lighter and faster” if we seek to go to our home in heaven.

Before distributing the ashes, the bishop intoned as he imprinted the sign of the cross on the forehead of those who came forward to receive ashes after his homily.

“Remember that you are dust and unto dust you shall return,” the bishop intoned as he imprinted the sign of the cross on the forehead of those who came forward to receive ashes after his homily.

Deacon Joseph Huong of The Cathedral Parish assisted the bishop during Mass and in the distribution of ashes.

As the music played, the soloist sang, “Come back to the Lord with all your heart; leave the past in the ashes.”

The soloist sang, “Remember what we need in the Eucharist to invite someone, a family, an individual, someone who has not yet returned to active participation in the life of the church, home. Invite them please, so that we may continue in our mission as Catholic Christians to evangelize and bring all people to the Good News, the Gospel of Christ Jesus, our Lord.”

Following the homily, the ashes were blessed, and the dry ashes were sprinkled on the crown of each individuals’ head as the words, “Remember you are dust and unto dust, you shall return,” were recited. This method is very common in Italy.

During Lent the Lord calls us to ‘redirect our hearts’

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—The faithful, gathered at St. Joseph Church on Ash Wednesday, heard a message to redirect their lives to Christ and take up a special Lenten challenge.

“It is the Sacred Heart of Christ Jesus, our Lord, speaking to us today, calling us to redirect our hearts away from self-absorption and directing us to a life again of Christian service,” said Father Samuel Scott, during his homily at the noon Mass for the blessing and distribution of ashes.

Father Scott said Lent is a journey that seeks to, “help us to grow in the life of discipleship and in the life of Christian service.”

“It seeks to redirect the navigation system of our lives so that we move beyond ourselves and see the needs of those in our world today,” noting that Pope Francis has implored Catholics to make Ash Wednesday a special day of prayer and fasting for the suffering people in the world, especially in Ukraine, which is under attack by Russia.

“Lent helps us to redirect our relationship with God,” he said. “If we do not base our lives on Christ, all of our efforts will be in vain.”

Following the homily, the ashes were blessed, and the dry ashes were sprinkled on the crown of each individuals’ head as the words, “Remember you are dust and unto dust, you shall return,” were recited. This method is very common in Italy.

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Father Scott also encouraged everyone to go forth, “renewed in our faith, reinvigorated in the life of prayer and on fire for the love of God to help those in our midst most in need.”

FATHER SAMUEL SCOTT, pastor of St. Joseph Church, distributes ashes to parishioners as they begin the journey of Lent.
Ash Wednesday

Commuters stop for ashes and prayer

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Ash Wednesday began early as many parishioners throughout the diocese received ashes at Mass or at the Liturgy of the Word services being held throughout the day.

As people throughout the diocese hustled to work and other appointments, they have made time in their early morning commute to begin their Lenten observance. Ash Wednesday begins the Lenten journey, a 40-day journey towards Easter, towards the heart of the liturgical year and of faith.

Father Peter Adamski, pastor of St. James Parish in Stratford, greeted the faithful in the early morning dusk as they awaited their trains at the Stratford railroad station.

Some parishes such as St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull and St. Matthew’s in Norwalk held “Ash & Dash” distribution for walk-ins.

St. Matthew’s conducted its “Youth Ash & Dash” with drive-up and breakfast bag in the early morning. St. Matthew’s also reaches out through an “Ashes-to-go Bus Schedule” throughout the day in order to “meet God’s people where they are.” The visited Norwalk area businesses including Briggs Tire, Norwalk Fire Department, Darien Police, Total Look Salon, and other locations.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano celebrated the 12:10 Mass and distributed ashes at St. Augustine Cathedral. The bishop said that Lent “should be a wake-up call once a year to repent and believe in the Gospel because Jesus is the truth and the light and the way to eternal life.”

On Ash Wednesday, the ashes, made from palm branches blessed the previous year on Palm Sunday, are placed on the heads of the faithful, along with a short Scriptural exhortation, either “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19), or “Repent, and believe in the Gospel” (Mark 1:15).

“We’ve come here in the beginning of this time of penance to be reminded of the same thing. We enter into the desert for forty days and forty nights so that we may come to the cross gave his life so that you and I might have eternal life,” said the bishop.

Pope Francis asked all Catholics to set aside this Ash Wednesday as a day of fasting and prayer for peace in Ukraine.

Parishioners experience ‘Shroud Encounter’

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

BETHEL—More than 100 people gathered at St. Mary Church to learn about the mystery and intrigue surrounding one of the most sacred religious artifacts in the world, The Shroud of Turin.

“Shroud Encounter,” was presented by Russ Breault, who has been researching and lecturing on the Shroud of Turin for over 40 years.

Breault approaches the mystery with facts, a bit of humor and awe.

He likens the mystery to the popular television crime show, CSI (Crime Scene Investigation), calling the mystery of the Shroud of Turin, CSI: Jerusalem.

Breault explains how the shroud shows evidence of a man tortured, beaten and killed. Following a hasty burial, the bloody linen is all that is left for clues after the body has disappeared.

Questions of whether the body was stolen and by who or if it simply vanished remain unanswered. Many historians, coroners, archaeologists, chemists, physicists, botanists, image specialists, art experts, textile experts and others have examined or researched the Shroud of Turin.

Breault traces the journey of the shroud from Jerusalem to Turin, the controversial carbon dating in the 1980’s and how copious amounts of research over many decades, also determined that the DNA of a man was found on the linen cloth that dates back about three-thousand years.

“To say this presentation is fascinating, is an understatement,” said St. Mary pastor, Father Corey Piccinino. “It is amazing how he intertwines history, science and scripture. He does prove a lot with the scripture.”

The 90-minute presentation included scriptures from the gospels and enhanced images of the shroud projected on to a big screen on the altar.

Breault explains that translations of the gospels coupled with established Jewish tradition for burial at the time, mainly that the body be wrapped in a simple white shroud, support what we know today.

He said researchers have found that the image of the man affects one to two microfibers and does not penetrate to the other side of the cloth. The blood on the cloth has been proven to be that of a man with severe wounds and there are traces of limestone found on the fibers of the 14-foot-long cloth.

But despite connecting many dots there is no conclusive evidence.

“Whether the shroud is authentic or not, it is phenomenon. We cannot fully replicate it, even today,” he said.

Breault said four specific words taken from scripture—bought, purchased, redeemed, ransomed—convey a very important message in relation to the shroud.

“The shroud shows the price that Jesus paid,” said Breault, likening it to a receipt for a transaction, something he said he has found resonates most with people.

“Everyone loves the receipt concept. We can relate to that easily. The Catholic Church has thousands of relics. There’s only one receipt,” he said. “A transaction has occurred. There must...”

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March 2022
Ambassadors Meet

Commissioned Ambassadors join bishop for Vespers

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

NORWALK—The first and second cohort of the ambassador program milled about excitedly on Thursday evening as they prepared to pray evening prayer led by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at St. Thomas the Apostle in Norwalk.

The bishop opened his homily by acknowledging that this is a time of great uncertainty in our world given all the suffering occurring in Ukraine. He shared that he had the privilege of interviewing the Auxiliary Bishop of Lviv, who spoke of the moment when the President of the United States recognized the Ambassador to Ukraine during his State of the Union address.

“It was a moment where all of us stood as one to recognize her,” he said. “It was a moment where we can take our commitment,” the bishop explained.

Bishop Caggiano expressed that his message for the ambassadors is to work with their pastors to strengthen those already active in the faith, to invite those who have not yet come home due to COVID-19 and to reach out to those who have kept faith.

“You and I have been called to be ambassadors for the King,” said the bishop, thanking the group gathered for their commitment.

The bishop explained that in Baptism, we become ambassadors of the one who dwells in us. “We are the vessels of the presence of Christ,” he said. “You are the holy reminder of what the task is for every Christian to do.”

As this Vespers service took place the day after Ash Wednesday, the bishop acknowledged that “Lent is that graced moment where we can take our lives and place them mercifully before the Lord and ask for his mercy and forgiveness for the times we have failed to represent him and to ask for his grace to do better one choice, one day, one act at a time.”

In light of all the unrest occurring in the larger world, the bishop implored those gathered to pray for peace. “We need to pray that the innocent will not suffer or die,” he said. “We need to pray for those who, this very night, will be displaced. We need to pray for the world to find its way to a better path.”

The bishop ended his homily by stating, “let us resolve ourselves never to lose an opportunity to show the world who they are looking for.”

Following the Vespers service, the bishop opened the floor for discussion among the commissioned ambassadors.

Groups of ambassadors spoke about their experiences from parishes all around the diocese, including St. John’s in Darien, St. Mark’s in Stratford, St. Mary in Bethel and St. Rose in Newtown.

The bishop made sure to make clear that the commissioning of ambassadors is more of a changing mindset and culture rather than a program, “because that has lasting value,” he explained.

“We need to enter into the mindset of Christ,” he said, “and hear what is on their hearts.”

The group discussed the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Mass attendance. “Many people,” explained the bishop, “after going two years in the desert, may be open to what we have to share.” He spoke of the impact that things like fellowship, fraternity and sharing a simple meal together can have when bringing others to Christ.

The group also mentioned how the simple act of remembering someone’s name can create a lasting connection amongst parishioners, especially at a time when people have been so distant for so long.

“Adversity brings people together,” said the bishop.

The gathered ambassadors agreed that most people they encounter are looking for a feeling of belonging, and creating that atmosphere is of utmost importance. “We need to think of creative ways to reach out to people.”

Ambassadors shared the different ways that they plan to answer the call to action—whether it be just listening or entering into ministry with the right intention and attitude.

Celebrating Senior Nutrition Program’s 50th Anniversary

BRIDGEPORT—This March, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County is proud to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the national Senior Nutrition Program with others across the country. The theme for the 50th anniversary celebration is Celebrate. Innovate. Educate. With this theme, Catholic Charities is inviting the public to join in the observance:

• Celebrating the many accomplishments of senior nutrition programs over the past 50 years.
• Highlighting innovative approaches that have been used to support seniors.
• Educating communities so that they can understand and use nutrition services.

Nutrition is a vital component of our health and well-being, especially as we age. But in communities throughout the U.S., older adults sometimes lack access to the high-quality, nutritious food they need to remain healthy and independent.

Since 1972, the national Senior Nutrition Program has been there to support older adults by providing nutrition services across the country. Funded by the Older Americans Act, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) provides grants to states to support a network of local programs that deliver nutrition services to older adults. These programs promote healthy eating, decrease social isolation, and support better health. They also provide a gateway for older adults to access other home and community-based services such as falls prevention programs, chronic disease management services, and more.

Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, Inc. has sponsored the Senior Nutrition Program for more than 37 years serving over 400 elderly individuals on a daily basis. We provide nutritious meals through Meals on Wheels and at Senior Community Café sites to individuals 60 years and older.

Throughout March, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County will be sharing resources on nutrition, social isolation, well-being, and more. You can celebrate with us by following us and joining in on the conversation. To find our social media accounts, please visit our website at www.ccfairfield.org.

(Read more about the Senior Nutrition Program and the services we provide in Fairfield County by contacting Maureen Neuberger, director, at mneuberg er@ccfairfield.org.)
By ELIZABETH CLYONS

TRUMBULL—Godparents, sponsors, friends and family gathered on a warm Sunday afternoon to celebrate their candidates’ and catechumens’ Rite of Election at St. Theresa Church in Trumbull.

Bishop welcomes catechumens ‘with great joy’

“Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, for their courage and fidelity. “It is in those moments of quiet that you discerned that the Lord was calling you to become one with Him.”

To candidates, who will be receiving Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, the bishop assured that in completing their Christian initiation they will be washed of their sins again. “He calls us to new life.”

“Our destiny is not dust,” Bishop Caggiano said, “It is glory and everlasting life.”

We must allow the mirror to set us free, the bishop said. The bishop implored those gathered not to be weighed down by sin and temptation.

“We come here so that the Spirit will come upon you in your continuing journey to the Easter sacraments to be fortified to fight the good fight of faith,” said Bishop Caggiano.

“Armed with that truth, you and I can go into the world to preach a gospel of hope,” he continued. “The world can be healed when it finds what you have found in Him.”

“I welcome you with great joy,” he said to the candidates and catechumens, adding that he has spiritual homework for them.

“Make sure you courageously go into the desert, allow Him to raise up before you the spiritual mirror that will remind you of the truths that matter,” he said.

“You will discover that there is someone looking back at you, and His name is Jesus,” the bishop concluded.

The catechumens were then called by name and asked to stand with their godparents. They then followed along with the Rite of Election, read in both English and Spanish.

Afterward, the candidates were called to do the same.

At the end of the service, the bishop thanked Dr. Patrick Donovan, director of the Institute for Catholic Formation and his team for organizing the Rite of Election. He also thanked Father Peter Lenox, episcopal vicar for Liturgy and Worship and Dr. William Atwood, director of Music Ministry for the diocese.

The bishop asked the candidates and catechumens to thank those who brought them to this day, assisting them in formation and walking with them in their journey of Christian life.

“Never fear when it is difficult to be faithful to Christ,” the bishop assured them, “the Lord is never closer to you than when it is difficult.”

The catechumens were then called by name and asked to stand with their godparents. They then followed along with the Rite of Election, read in both English and Spanish.

Bishop welcomes catechumens ‘with great joy’

BISHOP CAGGIANO WELCOMED both candidates and catechumens to the faith during the annual Rite of Election, as they prepare to receive their full initiation to the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil.

You’re invited to our annual Spring Open House! Join us to explore our community, meet our faculty, staff, and students, and learn more about the incredible opportunities St. Joes offers.

REGISTER TODAY! www.sjcadets.org
Lenten Prayer

In this reflection, which originally appeared on his Facebook page, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano discusses the nature of prayer, and he urges us to ask important questions as we take this year’s Lenten journey.

“As we ask how the gift of prayer can bless our Lenten journey of conversion, we must begin by recalling that prayer, prayers, and prayerfulness are related but distinct realities. So, if we wish to grow in our prayers with God, let us try to understand what they mean and how they are related. Prayer is the “communication” that flows from our personal relationship with the Lord and gives expression to our desire to deepen our awareness of His presence in our lives, to share with Him our deepest concerns and desires, and to strengthen our commitment to serve Him. Prayer is an aspect of our relationship with Christ, wherein we speak with Him and He speaks with us. Such “speaking” does not always involve spoken or mental words. Rather, just as spouses can intuit what the other is thinking or feeling, prayer is establishing a relationship where we commune with Christ on the deepest levels of our life. As such, developing a true life of prayer takes a lifetime to realize.

An important tool in our life of prayer is reciting prayers, that is, formulas that have been developed over the centuries designed to raise or minds and hearts to God. Jesus Himself taught the prayer that is known as the “Our Father,” to be a tool that helped those who use it to express our love of Our Father in heaven, while sharing with him our desires and hopes. However, we must remember that reciting prayers alone, without the proper open disposition of mind and heart to God, will not achieve their true divine purpose.

Finally, the state of prayerfulness is the attitude that allows us to see God in every circumstance of life. We slowly learn to recognize His love and support in every moment of every day, especially when the world does not see Him. Developing an attitude of “prayerfulness” allows us to fulfill the command to “pray always,” that is, not to recite prayers in every moment of life which would be impossible to achieve, but to attune our eyes, minds and hearts to see God in our lives at all times (which is possible and necessary for us to remain faithful disciples in the world).

Given all this background, we can ask:

1. How faithful am I to set aside time to commune with God in prayer each day? In silence? As a priority in my life?
2. Do I recite prayers each day but do not sit in silence long enough for God to speak to me? Do I recite prayers only to fulfill an obligation?
3. How often do I challenge myself to see God’s presence throughout my day? In difficult moments? At times when no one else can see Him? If you and I reflect on these questions during the upcoming days of Lent, it will be time very well spent."

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

Solidarity with the people of Ukraine

As the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine continues to deteriorate, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has urged us to redouble our efforts to pray for the restoration of peace and justice in that war-torn country.

The bishop said we also have an opportunity to join our prayers for peace and justice with other Catholics throughout the world. An international group of lay leaders from different nationalities have arranged a 24-hour prayer chain that encompasses the entire world by asking the people of each country to stop and pray for the people of Ukraine at a commonly designated time. In the United States, the hour chosen is 7 pm each evening.

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A rest stop on the interstate of life

A YOUNG WOMAN’S VOICE

BY ELIZABETH CLYONS

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

I recently stumbled upon an Instagram post by one of my favorite contemporary poets, Morgan Harper Nichols, that stood out to me in a big way.

It was a simple drawing of a rest stop sign that said “Rest Stop: 5 miles” and in parentheses stated, “And you are not weak for needing rest.”

Morgan wrote, “How wonderful would it be if the ‘rest stop’ signs that lined the interstate also lined the interstate of life.”

I immediately reposted.

In my adult life, I’ve often found that it takes me a longer time than most to recover from busyness. I am very easily over-stimulated. After being around large groups of people—or even after simple tasks such as talking on the phone or going to the store—I need to give myself a break, sit in quiet, or lose myself in a simple task like reading a book.

I have often felt weak for needing this. So Morgan’s reminder that you are not weak for needing rest really hit home for me.

We need to pay attention to the things we need in order to be our best selves, and we need to make that clear to others. This is something I’m working on.

I know exactly how much I can take on, and I know exactly when I’m pushing myself too hard and saying yes to too many things. This self-awareness comes with practice, but I have little ways of noticing. I start to forget things and make silly mistakes, and that is when I know I need to pull back.

In our modern society, this isn’t something that is often accepted. People understand when others are physically sick, but that seems to be the only time we allow for rest.

Sometimes saying, “I just have too much on my plate right now and I simply cannot take this task on,” is not accepted. Because everyone’s busy, and everyone’s tired and everyone needs rest.

People will push back on you when you try to assert your needs.

But Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

We have a Sabbath day built-in for rest.

Jesus often took solitary time away to rest and he encouraged those following him to rest, as well. “He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat” (Mark 6:31).

As the weather starts to get warmer and spring approaches, let us turn our faces toward the sun.

We have all lived through a pandemic that drastically changed our lives for almost three years. I’d say that, alone, is a good enough reason to allow for rest.

What is life if not lived, and how can we live if we don’t allow ourselves the time?

I can’t imagine that Jesus’ disciples, upon His crucifixion, wished for anything but more quality time with their beloved one. And if we are too overwhelmed with tasks and to-do lists, when can we have that time? It is often not until a tragedy such as a loss or an illness occurs that we allow for rest.

But I challenge you (and myself) to not let it go on until then.

This Lenten season, can we listen to ourselves and those around us who are crying out for rest?

A different approach to Lent

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

This Lent, I went through the same ordeal I’ve gone through since fourth grade, when the Sisters of St. Joseph asked us what we were “giving up.” It was a daunting concept for a 9-year-old, and it’s still daunting decades later. I can almost hear Sister’s voice. Correction #1: I can actually hear Sister’s voice as she stood at the front of the class in her black habit and stared ominously at us kids, whacking her 16-inch ruler against her hand. Correction #2: There was no ruler. I just added that for dramatic effect because every person I know who was taught by nuns has a story about the “16-inch ruler.”

After she explained Lent, Sister asked, “So what are you going to give up?”

In a terrifying act of public confession or commitment—or whatever it was supposed to be—we had to proclaim our intentions, right there on the spot. A collective gulp resonated through the classroom.

My classmates did some quick thinking, and many of them resorted to the time-honored tradition of responding, “Candy.” The more ambitious students, who wanted to get into Sister’s good graces, replied, “Candy and ice cream.” I suppose it would have been terribly unsettling if someone said, “smoking” or “swearing.”

So candy it was although, truth be told, I never succeeded in my resolution. Usually around Week Four, I lapsed and snuck some Peanut M&M’s and was consumed by guilt.

Week Four, I lapsed and snuck some Peanut M&M’s and was consumed by guilt.

Correction #3: Some of you who are not familiar with the “16-inch ruler” are saying, “What’s the point of doing this?”

Correct once more. Correction #4: The point of doing this is to demonstrate the need, in a small way, for making that clear to ourselves the time?

I’d say that, alone, is a good enough reason to allow for rest.

The Lord told the prophet Jeremiah: “When you search for me, you will find me. If you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me.” So, I’m taking him at his word.

As the Lord told the prophet Jeremiah: “When you search for me, you will find me. If you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me.” So, I’m taking him at his word.

This Lent, I’d urge you to say, “Lord, help me move closer to you” as often as possible. You won’t regret it. Thank you, Sister Maria Antonia, for a prayer of immeasurable value.

And just so you don’t think I’m sitting down on the job, I also resolved, somewhat reluctantly, to give up candy so hide the M&M’s.

FAIRFIELDCOUNTRY
CATHOLIC

March 2022

11
St. Margaret Mary

Father Cervero installed as pastor of St. Margaret Mary

SHELTON—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano installed Father Joseph Cervero as pastor of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque Church and said he could be described in one word—"Goodness."

The bishop told the more than 200 parishioners in the packed church: “There is a genuine goodness in Father Joe, which you have already sensed. A goodness of heart, a goodness of spirit. What you see is what you get...and what you see is a man who wants to be your father, but also your brother in your journey of faith.”

He told the St. Margaret Mary is a wonderful parish and that it will thrive under Father’s leadership.

“Father Joe, I have every confidence that in your hands, it is in the best of hands, and I wish you every blessing as you continue your ministry here,” he said.

Father Cervero, who was previously pastor of St. Patrick Church in Redding, arrived at St. Margaret Mary last November, but his installation was postponed because of a snowstorm.

Born and raised in Bridgeport and of Italian descent—his family is from Naples—he attended St. Raphael Elementary School and then Bullard-Havens Technical High School, graduating with a bakery degree in 1974. After honing his skills in a pizzeria, he took a position as a sales expeditor at a laser research company, and it was there that the call from God, which he always felt, became stronger.

He recalled that the members of the St. Raphael prayer group encouraged him “to listen to the call,” but after giving it some thought, he concluded God was not calling him to the priesthood. Nevertheless, he scheduled a meeting with the diocese, hoping it would end his confusion.

The vocation director told him about a program for second-career vocations at Sacred Heart School of Theology in Milwaukee, where he eventually continued his studies, graduating with a master’s in divinity in 1989. He was ordained by then-Bishop Edward Egan on June 10, 1989.

He also holds an associate’s degree from Holy Redeemer College in Wisconsin and a bachelor’s from Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee.

In 2001, Father was assigned as parochial vicar to St. Edward the Confessor Church in New Fairfield, where he led the youth through volunteer work camps and helped the parish’s fundraising efforts. He has also served as parochial vicar at St. John Church in Darien and St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield. He was appointed pastor of St. Patrick Church in 2010.

In an interview before Mass, Father said: “This parish has a lot of great people with so many different groups. My staff is phenomenal. The ladies know what they’re doing, and the head of the Finance Council, Tom Jensen, is always there to help me.”

“These are people who care about their parish,” he said. “I have two deacons who always help. The men’s group is terrific, and the Knights of Columbus are very active. The parish is doing well—and I was pleased to learn that. But most of all, the people have been so welcoming and always ask me, ‘What can we do to help? It’s a great group.’

In his homily, Father talked about the faith of the patriarch Abraham and the example it provides Catholics:

“God does not say, ‘You better do this or else’—our parents do that. But God gives us a choice, he said. We are called to commit ourselves to God with the same faith as Abraham and teach our children to do the same.

“In our commitment, we live our life of faith, during good times and bad,” he said.

Likewise, he said, “The bishop installed me as pastor, and I will be committed to you.”

In his comments, Bishop Caggiano expressed his confidence in Father Cervero and also thanked the parish for its generosity to the people of Ukraine, who have been under a devastating attack by Russia since February 24. As a result, there has been a mass exodus of more than 2 million refugees.

Bishop Caggiano, who is the chair of Catholic Relief Services, said the organization has a relief effort underway in Ukraine and surrounding countries.

“To say it is a humanitarian catastrophe is an understatement; there are literally people dying on the road as they try to escape,” the bishop said. “It beggled my mind that in this part of our history as humanity, we are still going back to the barbarism of the past at the hands of—please, God, forgive me—a madman. All the people of the free world who are believers have to stand with our sisters and brothers in prayer and provide whatever generosity we can. And so I thank you for that.”

Bishop Caggiano also encouraged the parishioners to take part in the First Connecticut March for Life on Wednesday, March 23 at the State Capitol in Hartford, which follows the success of the 49th annual National March for Life that brought tens of thousands of people to Washington D.C. on January 21.

“In any way we can be of help to make that march successful, we should do so,” he said.

In his concluding comments, Father Cervero thanked the bishop, all those who organized the event and those who work for the parish, including his staff, the choir, the Knights of Columbus and his two deacons—Deacon Jeff Kingley and Deacon David Sochacki.

He added that when the original installation was postponed because of snow, he asked the bishop, “Since you’re not installing me, can I take a month’s vacation?” To which the bishop responded, “No, you’re the pastor.”

“I also thank all of you for being here because without you, I can’t do anything,” he said. “As I said in my homily, ‘If I mess up, let me know, and I will fix it.’ Then again, it’s always nice to get a pat on the head. If I do well, let me know that too.”

The congregation then gave him a standing ovation. After Mass, Linda McCormack, a parishioner for 37 years, said she was delighted to have Father Cervero as their new pastor: “I wish him many years as pastor of St. Margaret Mary, and I am looking forward to them.”

Longtime parishioner and parish bookkeeper Barbara Mariano said: “The parish has welcomed him with open arms. He’s a lovely man, a funny man and people enjoy having him here. He’s great to work for. All of us have faith and hope that he will lead our parish in a warm way. We are blessed to have him.”

Heather Moura, the coordinator of religious education, agreed and said, “Father Joe is a great guy and lovely to work for. He’s always there when you need him, and I look forward to working with him in the future.”

Pilgrimage to Greece and Turkey

Young adults called to ‘follow St. Paul’s footsteps’

BRIDGEPORT—The Institute for Catholic Formation welcomes all young adults in the diocese to join a pilgrimage to Greece and Turkey this summer! From July 22 to August 1, pilgrims will follow in the footsteps of St. Paul—visiting Thessaloniki, Philippi, Kavala, Vergina, Veroia, Kalamabka, Meteoran, Delphi, Ossios Loukas, Athens, Corinth, with a 4-day cruise to Mykonos, Ephesus, Patmos, Rhodes, and Santorini. The pilgrimage will include round-trip air from JFK or Newark, first-class hotels, all meals as per itinerary, an air-conditioned motor coach, English-speaking guide and sightseeing as per itinerary.

All entrance fees to archaeological sites, museums and monasteries are included, as well as two night ferries in exterior cabins, and all taxes and service charges.

Young adult pilgrims will have the chance to participate in daily Mass and praying of the Rosary. The price is $3,699 per person double, with a single supplement of $700. A $700 deposit is due at time of registration, with balance due by April 15, 2022.

Scholarship funds are available.

Prospective pilgrims are asked to submit a brief biography (no more than 500 words) outlining who you are, why you wish to attend, how you hope to grow in your faith, and any specific Scriptural interests.

(For more information, visit: formationreimagined.org/event/10-day-greece-turkey-pilgrimage-for-young-adults-2020)
When you make a gift to the 2022 Bishop’s Appeal, you are touching the lives of thousands of people across Fairfield County.

Every gift is an opportunity for us to come together as a family of faith to support diocesan-sponsored programs that no single parish can provide on its own.

PLEASE JOIN OTHER GENEROUS DONORS IN MAKING YOUR GIFT TODAY!
MY DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

“A Bridge Home” is the theme of the 2022 Bishop’s Appeal, formerly called the Annual Catholic Appeal, and it highlights hope, renewal and evangelization in our diocese. 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 reunit our Church, affirm our faithful and welcome others back.

I am grateful for your support this past year as we continue to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic and we once again gather within our parishes, homes and communities. This is possible because of your faith and generosity.

The Diocese of Bridgeport has a long tradition of providing programs that serve those in need and prepare for the future of our Catholic faith. This year’s Appeal goal is $8.1 million and remains unchanged from last year.

I personally invite you to join with me in making a gift and building “A Bridge Home,” one living stone at a time. We have been through much together as a family in faith, and we have much to look forward to because we are a people of hope.

I pray for God’s blessings on you and your family.

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano

A Bridge Home
2022 Bishop’s Appeal
DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

To Teach and

The Institute for Catholic Lay Leaders for those who serve in ministry and marriage. The Institute’s resource-filled children, post-wedding confirmed or join the Church.

Opportunities for discipleship: high school students involved in parish leaders and guidance connected to the life, mission.

The Bishop’s Scholarship assistance at diocesan Catholic students’ lives across Fairfield.

Tuition assistance is offered Bridgeport.

Seminarians are educated to priesthood at St. Charles Borromeo Redemptoris Mater Seminary.

Deacons share their gifts of Christ in parish communities of formation to the Diaconate.

Building Community

“The Bridge” Center for resources and mentorship to while making an impact on.

The Ambassador program welcoming back those who intentionally left the Faith.

The Sacred Heart Guild pilgrams, workshops, concerts is centered on sacred music attention to the needs of you.
Preach the Gospel

Discipleship Formation provides learning opportunities in prayer and education as well as those preparing for the sacraments. Resources include family-specific tools for raising faith-filled children and a chance for those who wish to be confirmed to do so in a hybrid learning environment.

Youth are essential to keeping middle school and high school students involved in their faith. The Institute provides mentoring for youth to faith communities to make sure young people stay connected to the Church and ministry of our parishes.

Catholic Charities Tuition Fund provides nearly 1,300 students tuition assistance to attend Catholic elementary schools every year, transforming their lives and the lives of their families.

Parishioners in need are assisted by the Catholic Academy of Philadelphia and discern their calling in preparation for the Seminary in Philadelphia and the Saint Vincent de Paul Seminary in Stamford.

Residential ministries of faith, hope and love in bringing people closer to Christ in community and ministries. Your gift supports training for men in the Seminary.

Building “Bridges of Faith” and Serving the Poor

For more than a century, Catholic Charities has put faith into action by empowering the needy and vulnerable of all faiths through nutrition, housing and counseling programs.

Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs provides academic, spiritual and life skill programs for children and adults with disabilities.

Priests and Deacons provide pastoral care for the sick and elderly in nursing homes and hospitals.

Communities of Faith

Young Adult Entrepreneurship provides new opportunities for growth in their Catholic Faith, providing local faith communities.

The Reassembly is a welcome ministry that assists parishioners who have disengaged from Sunday Mass or have disengaged.

Faithful friends evangelizes, encourages and inspires through concerts and talks that celebrate Christ in the Arts, and music, art, architecture and literature, with a particular concern for young people in our diocese.

Parishes that are pastorally vibrant and experiencing financial challenges receive emergency assistance.

The Seton Collaborative provides expertise to diocesan schools and parishes focusing on efficient and effective operations.

Retired Clergy receive the support they need to live in dignity at the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of Clergy Residence.
Ways to Give
When contemplating your level of sacrificial giving, please consider using the Pledge Plan. Pledging will allow a greater sacrifice by extending the payment of your gift through December 31, 2022.

CHECK
Make payable to the Bishop’s Appeal. Please do not send cash.

CREDIT CARD
Payable online or by pledge card.

ONLINE GIVING
2022BishopsAppeal.org

TEXT TO GIVE
To make a gift via text messaging, text the word APPEAL to (475) 241-7849. Message & data rates may apply.

MATCHING GIFTS
Many organizations will match gifts to Catholic Charities and Schools, and the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund. Please contact (203) 416-1312 for more information.

GIFTS OF SECURITIES
If you own securities that have appreciated in value, they can be given to the Appeal and their full market value becomes a tax-deductible gift. Please contact (203) 416-1470 for more information.

Court of Honor
Recognizes donors who have demonstrated extraordinary generosity to the Bishop’s Appeal. Membership is extended to any individual or family that contributes an Appeal gift of $2,500 or more.

+ Bishop’s Leadership Circle ($25,000 and above)
+ St. Teresa of Calcutta Society ($10,000 - $24,999)
+ St. Katharine Drexel Society ($5,000 - $9,999)
+ Court of Honor Partner ($2,500 - $4,999)

For more information please visit the website at 2022BishopsAppeal.org, call (203) 416-1470 or email 2022BishopsAppeal@diobpt.org.

A Bridge Home
2022 Bishop’s Appeal
DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

GOAL - $8,100,000
Allocation of Funds in 2022

Each year, the Diocese of Bridgeport assesses its financial resources, the needs of parishioners and its ability to respond effectively and with compassion. The following list is an overview of how Appeal contributions will be distributed.

TO TEACH AND PREACH THE GOSPEL $3,679,500
+ Institute of Catholic Formation $507,000
+ Faith Formation of Youth $153,000
+ Formation of Seminarians $1,065,000
+ Formation of Deacons $161,500
+ Bishop’s Scholarship Fund $700,000
+ Catholic Academy of Bridgeport $300,000
+ Communications $743,000
+ Veritas Catholic Network $50,000

BUILDING “BRIDGES OF FAITH” AND SERVING THE POOR $1,799,500
+ Catholic Charities of Fairfield County $550,000
+ St. Catherine Center for Special Needs $250,000
+ Pastoral Care of the Sick and Elderly $999,500

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF FAITH $2,046,000
+ Support of Retired Priests $1,325,000
+ Support to Parishes in Need $300,000
+ Seton Collaborative $100,000
+ Campus Ministry and Young Adult Support $100,000
+ Strategic and Pastoral Planning $83,000
+ “The Bridge” Center for Young Adult Entrepreneurship $10,000
+ Institute for Catholic Culture $128,000

Fundraising Expenses $575,000
Total ABA Goal Allocation $8,100,000

In the spirit of financial transparency, the cost to conduct the Bishop’s Appeal totals 7 cents on the dollar based on the 2022 goal. Fundraising expenses may also provide additional support to a number of these areas.
St. Mary Church
Bishop to lead Lourdes retreat

By JOE F. PISANI

STAMFORD—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will conduct a Lourdes Retreat on Saturday, May 7 at 1 pm at St. Mary of Stamford Parish with a candlelight Rosary, a Eucharistic blessing and reflections on the world’s most famous Marian shrine, where more than 7,000 miraculous recoveries have been attributed to the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Every year, 6 million pilgrims travel to Lourdes, France, to pray to Our Lady. Many go in the hope they will receive a healing at the spring the Blessed Virgin revealed to St. Bernadette Soubirous, a 14-year-old peasant girl. In the 160 years since the apparitions in the grotto at Massabielle, thousands of people have been healed in the waters, and 70 have been recognized as miraculous cures by the Church.

Bishop Caggiano took part in a Lourdes Virtual Pilgrimage held at St. Mary Church in 2019, which attracted 1,000 people and recreated a pilgrimage to the shrine. In 2020, he conducted a Lourdes retreat at the church. Those events along with this year’s retreat have been hosted by Father Gustavo Falla and coordinated by David D’Andrea of Greenwich, who attributes several miracles in his life to Our Lady of Lourdes.

“We are very hopeful we will have a lot of people,” D’Andrea said. “We missed a year because of COVID-19, but this year everything will be the same. The candlelight rosary will be said in five languages—English, Spanish, Haitian, Filipino and Italian, which the bishop will pray. There will be a procession with the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes with five priests, a talk, a Eucharistic blessing and a reception afterwards in the church hall.”

D’Andrea praised the bishop for his participation and said, “The first thing he says when asked is ‘yes.’” He also praised Father Falla for hosting the event year after year and the efforts of his staff to set it up.

D’Andrea said he has been inspired by the many people who contacted him to tell their stories. In his own life, he believes God has blessed him with miracles. He was cured of polio as a child and he survived stage-three cancer, which was diagnosed in 2014. He credits his recovery to Our Lady of Lourdes through the efforts of his cousin, Monsignor Joseph Gandurco, pastor of St. Patrick’s in Yorktown Heights, N.Y., who celebrated a healing Mass for him and brought holy water from Lourdes to bless him when he began his treatment for cancer.

D’Andrea still has that bottle of holy water and continues to share it with others who are suffering or ill. And while he has never gone on a pilgrimage to Lourdes because his condition will not permit it, he believes Our Lady was instrumental in his recovery.

D’Andrea who has undergone several surgeries said, “I have a great devotion to Mother Mary. She has always been there for me, and when I was young, my mother prayed to her that I would recover from polio. And although I am cancer-free, I faced some medical challenges this past winter.”

D’Andrea says he wants to continue organizing the annual retreats as long as he is able. “I’ve never gotten to Lourdes because it is difficult for me to travel with my health issues, but I would love to go,” he said. “My devotion to Lourdes has given me a lot of spiritual healing. I’ve had ongoing medical issues, and so far I’ve survived every one of them. I have invited many people I know to the retreat—even the ones who aren’t religious. I just told them to think about coming because it’s very special. They should get the blessing and touch the statue because it can change you.”

The Lourdes Retreat will be held at St. Mary of Stamford Parish on 566 Elm Street, starting at 1 pm and will last an hour. There is no charge; however, free-will offerings are encouraged to benefit the church.

Holy water from Lourdes will be given out, along with special prayer cards that have been touched to the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes in France. The retreat will be followed by a reception in the church hall.

(For reservations or information about the Lourdes Retreat, call St. Mary Church at 203.324.7321 or email Smmarystamtford@yahoo.com.)

KofC to host 20th Century Martyrs presentation

MONROE—St. John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter “Tertio Millennio Adveniente” wrote, “At the end of the second millennium the Church had once again become a Church of Martyrs and this witness must not be forgotten.” With this profound quote in mind, parishioner Carol Pinard’s goal was to make known the stories of the martyrs and witnesses of the 20th century. Some are known to us, but many are not. The presentation is an account of the heroism, courage and steadfast faithfulness of ordinary men and women who were willing to pay an enormous price for Christ and His Church.

Carol will share the genesis of this presentation along with stories of these martyrs and witnesses at St. Jude’s Parish after all Masses on the weekend of April 2 and 3. St. Jude’s Mass schedule is Saturday 4 pm and Sunday 7:30, 9:30 and 11:30 am. On display will be relics, letters, memorabilia collected from these martyrs from all over the world.

FIE welcomes Marina Pia DeLuca to help plan the gala

Foundations in Education is at work to create an evening to remember when the annual spring gala returns to Woodway Country Club in Darien, Conn. on May 5.

Honorees Barbara and Peter Ripp of Greenwich, superintendent of Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools Dr. Steven Cheseman, and Mutual of America will be recognized. The gala committee, chaired by Barbara and Bob Scinto are hard at work planning for an extraordinary celebration of Catholic Education.

Marina Pia DeLuca, who was the second member of the FIE staff, has returned to assist Foundations in Education in planning the event. “Marina has been a presence at each of our events and has a keen eye for what is needed to make the evening a wonderful gathering and a great success,” shared Holly Doherty-Lemoine, executive director of Foundations in Education.

Bobby D of Inspire Hearts Fundraising will be the auctioneer for the evening. In addition to the centerpiece of activity around our “Raise The Paddle for Leaders of Tomorrow” and scholarship, Bobby will be engaging attendees in a lively auction for these exclusive opportunities:

- Private reception with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at your home (date mutually agreed upon).
- All-expense-paid trip for 6 for one week at Lido Key, Fl. which includes lodging at a magnificent 12,000 square-foot, 6-bedroom home on the coast (date mutually agreed upon).
- Broadway Experience—two orchestra seats to a Broadway show.
- Lake George getaway for 14 which includes a guest cottage, direct waterfront access and dock space for up to a 30-foot boat.
- Round of golf for 2 with Eli Manning, 2-time Super Bowl Champion and former New York Giant quarterback and Frank Mara at Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, N.Y.
- New York State of Mind Package including a round trip cruise for 12 to Port Jefferson, N.Y. for dinner, 4 Tickets to a NY Giants Game, 4 Tickets to a NY Yankees Game, 4 Tickets to a NY Mets Game, and an exclusive Wine and Dinner Pairing for 8 at Il Palio in Shelton, whose Chef Margherita Aloi was previously recognized in NYC 40 under 40.

“There is something for everyone!” remarked Holly Doherty-Lemoine.

Proceeds support the mission of Foundations in Education, including tuition assistance for approximately 1,200 students through the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund as well as Innovation and Leadership Grants for teachers and administrators. Since inception, Foundations in Education Gala has raised nearly $5,000,000! Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and friends, we have been able to help thousands of students and their families over the years.

(For join Foundations in Education and help make this year’s gala the best event possible! If you wish to sponsor, contribute, volunteer or just learn more about Foundations in Education or the Gala, please visit www.foundationsineducation.org or contact Marina DeLuca at 203.416.1671 or marina.Deluca@diobpty.org, or Holly Doherty-Lemoine at holly@ foundationsineducation.org or 203.416.1642.)

MARINA PIA DELUCA

Marian Pia DeLuca
DARIEN—On Thursday, March 3, the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport held its first-ever hybrid event: a Roaring 20’s Dinner & Auction at Woodway Country Club. More than 120 people gathered in person—and dozens more tuned in virtually—as the Academy honored longtime board member Marylou Queally Salvati and the Tauck Family Foundation. Through a live auction and paddles-up, the school raised over $420,000 for need-based financial assistance for the 85 percent of its students who qualify for it. To celebrate, paper butterflies were released to coincide with the event’s “Rise Up” theme.

“I was very moved by the number of people who came out to support CAB and who gave CAB dinner a roaring success! generously, including the 70 percent of guests who were here with us for the first time,” said CAB Executive Director Angela Pohlen. “To be together enjoying great food in a festive atmosphere and with a fantastic program, all while helping our worthy students, was a blessing.”

Highlights of the evening included music by the BackCountry Jazz BeBoppers and 2015 alumna Asha-Gaye Lewis’ firsthand testimonial of her time at the Academy. “My parents came to the U.S. from Jamaica but my father died here when I was just one year old, leaving my mother a widow raising three children.” Lewis attended public school in Norwalk until 4th-grade when her family moved to Bridgeport for financial reasons. “My mom was concerned about sending me to public school there because she had only heard negative comments, but then she heard about [CAB] from my aunt whose son had graduated there and had a really positive experience. My mom was concerned about paying tuition at a private school but she prayed about it and we were able to get financial assistance. I cannot stress how grateful I am to her for applying to and sending me to [CAB] because it was the beginning of a great future.”

After graduating, she went on to Lauralton Hall and then UConn, where today she is studying to be a Physician’s Assistant. Later in the evening, Pohlen presented Salvati with a beautiful custom-made tray to acknowledge her decade-plus years of service to the Academy, including her chairing the Board’s Development Committee and also her chairing many of CAB’s Ladies Luncheons and all of its spring galas.

Whether reviewing a finance report, giving development advice, or doing a Costco run for our Golf Classic guests—despite not being a golfer herself—Marylou gives 110 percent, and it doesn’t stop there. Give her the chance to tell someone new about the good work of CAB and she is on it. She believes in our children, she believes in our mission, and she has a deep desire to help us be the best version of ourselves every single day.”

Following, Board Chair John Kreitler presented the Tauck Family Foundation with the Foundation of Distinction Award. “We would like to thank Tauck for giving us the tools and resources we need to greatly improve the lives of our students and their families and to profoundly impact our entire CAB community,” said Kreitler. Accepting the award on behalf of TFF was Interim Executive Director Kim Hein. CAB educates 900 boys and girls on four campuses in Bridgeport, 83 percent of whom live at or below the poverty level. The Academy offers a safe, nurturing alternative to Bridgeport public schools, boasts rigorous academics, provides free breakfast, snacks, and lunch to students each weekday, and offers a strong enrichment and after-school program.

(For more information, visit www.catholicacademybridgeport.org.)
Kolbe Cathedral H.S.

$500,000 grant from Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

BRIDGEPORT—Kolbe Cathedral High School in Bridgeport, Conn. announced today that it has been approved for a $500,000 grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. It is one of the largest single grant awards in the school’s 46-year history and funding will go exclusively to need-based financial aid and scholarships for its students.

“We are thankful to the Hilton Foundation for their generosity and thrilled with the size and scope of this grant,” said Kolbe Cathedral Principal Camille Figuiluzzi. “It comes at a particularly challenging time for our families, and it will be life changing for many of our students.”

Kolbe Cathedral is a small, high performing, Catholic, college preparatory school in “the Hollow” section of Bridgeport. Despite severe socio-economic obstacles in the state’s largest city, the school’s graduation rate is 100 percent with a nearly 100 percent college acceptance rate annually.

In 2021, and faced with serious pandemic interruptions, Kolbe Cathedral had a graduating class of 69 students of which 81 percent entered a four-year college upon graduation, 16 percent attended a two-year college and 3 percent enrolled in a trade/vocational school. This class received over $18 million worth of scholarships to attend these institutions.

While Kolbe Cathedral’s annual tuition of $8,650 is one of the very lowest in Connecticut, 95 percent of its students are still in need of substantial financial aid to attend. “We pride ourselves in doing more with less,” said Rick Ryan, Kolbe Cathedral’s director of development, “the Hilton Foundation grant will be split to benefit our disadvantaged students immediately and better position us to address their future tuition assistance through our endowment.”

International hotelier Conrad N. Hilton established the grant-making foundation that bears his name in 1944 to help people living in poverty and experiencing disadvantage worldwide. Today, the work continues, concentrating on efforts to ensure healthy early childhood development and sustainable livelihoods for youth, support young people transitioning out of foster care, improve access to housing and support services for people experiencing homelessness, identify solutions to safe water access, and lift the work of Catholic sisters.

Additionally, following selection by an independent, international jury, the Foundation annually awards the $2.5 million Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize to an organization doing extraordinary work to reduce human suffering. The Foundation is one of the world’s largest, with approximately $8.5 billion in assets. It has awarded grants to date totaling more than $2.4 billion, $339 million worldwide in 2021. Please visit www.hiltonfoundation.org for more information.

(For more information on Kolbe Cathedral visit www.kolbecaths.org.)

Feminine Genius Brunch

STAMFORD—Get the girls together for a beautiful spring brunch experience you won’t want to miss! Project Beloved, in cooperation with Sister Virginia Joy of the Sisters of Life and Archbishop of N.Y., will host the first-ever Connecticut Feminine Genius Brunch event on Divine Mercy Saturday, April 23, 2022, at the Italian Center of Stamford.

The Feminine Genius Brunch is a beautiful morning event for women of all ages, consisting of breakfast and a talk given by Sister Virginia Joy on the topic of JPII’s teaching on Feminine Genius, making it applicable to daily life. The brunch borrows its name from the God-given attributes endowed to all women and the brunch aims to reveal and spark these gifts in each woman’s life.

The theme of this year’s event is Mercy, Love’s Second Name. The morning will kick off with a women’s Mass at 8:30 am celebrated by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at St. Cecilia’s Church, 1184 Newfield Ave., Stamford, Conn. The brunch event will follow at the Italian Center, 1620 Newfield Ave., Stamford, Conn., from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. All women ages 15 and older are invited to attend.

Visit vendor tables, learn more about the opportunities for women in the diocese, and spend time catching up with friends new and old!

To RSVP: Tickets are $40 and advanced purchase is required at www.feminine-geniushunch-ct.eventbrite.com.

Invite a mother, grandmother, daughter (in-law), friend…and come join the Sisters of Life for a beautiful morning set aside to marvel at the mystery of God and His plan for each of us!

With questions or to take part as an event sponsor or vendor, please contact Noelle Amann at noelle.gross@gmail.com.

St. Theresa School

OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, March 31, 2022
6–8 pm, in the Auditorium

Discover how children joyfully thrive in a Catholic Classical education!

For more information, call 203-268-3236.
55 Rosemond Terrace, Trumbull
stherseschool@trumbull.org
Foundations in Faith

JPII Fund to support faith formation, religious education

By ROSE BRENNAN

BRIDGEPORT—“The Church needs your energies, your enthusiasm, your youthful ideas in order to make the Gospel of Life penetrate the fabric of society.”

It was St. John Paul II who first uttered this sentiment, not about seminarians, priests, or lay leadership, but about young people in the Church.

Now, St. John Paul II serves as the namesake for a fund supporting religious education and faith formation in the Diocese of Bridgeport. And as the primary target of faith formation efforts, Foundations in Faith would like to see young people get increasingly involved in their own learning and growth in the Catholic faith.

The St. John Paul II Fund for Religious Education and Faith Formation provides a number of funding opportunities for creative and innovative approaches to how people learn about their faith. And the largest opportunity of them all is available to parishes and ministries right now.

Parish support grants are provided through the St. John Paul II Fund in order to fund religious education and faith formation efforts at parishes and other programs in the diocese. While young people are usually the target of these efforts, Foundations in Faith has supported adult faith formation programs in the past as well.

“Funding parish programs for religious education and youth ministry is awesome, because you see so many excellent initiatives,” said Kelly Weldon, Foundations in Faith’s director. “I am inspired and filled with hope. The Catholic faith is alive and on fire. You just need to know where to look.”

Religious education and faith formation is a pretty large umbrella. And some parishes have taken some creative approaches to move these essential efforts forward.

For instance, St. George Parish in Bridgeport took learning about the faith out of the classroom and onto the stage. Their parish support grant helped fund the creation of a youth choir, which had its first performance this past Christmas Eve.

Since arriving at St. George Catholic Church on July 1, 2020, my dream and prayer was to have a children’s youth choir,” Father Alex Moronta, pastor of St. George, wrote in Fairfield County Catholic in January. “The children and youth of St. George have a great desire to share their musical talent and their love for God, and they do this all for His Glory and Honor, and God blesses their love for him with great spiritual fruits.”

The Church of the Assumption Parish in Westport chose to take youth faith formation outside of the classroom as well—literally. The youth group there used their parish support grant to create a prayer garden, which was built by the youth group and is used and enjoyed by parishioners of all ages.

Youth minister Michele Harding said she observed many parishioners enjoying the garden during warmer months. And as the weather turns to spring again, Harding said she observed many parishioners of all ages.

“Youth minister Michele Harding said she observed many parishioners enjoying the garden during warmer months. And as the weather turns to spring again, she already has a few volunteers offering manpower and plant donations for the garden.”

But Harding has been especially impressed by the determination and commitment of the youth group.

“Never underestimate what teens can do,” she said. “They managed to shovel and spread two and a half tons of gravel in an hour.”

But it doesn’t always need to be young people at the focus of faith formation. In fact, St. Paul Church in Greenwich chose to target another audience entirely—parents. The church’s parish support grant is funding a four-time forum where parents learn about the essential role they play in their children’s faith formation.

Essentially, parents are the primary religion teacher, even before religious education begins. According to Christine Green, the director of religious education at St. Paul, participating in the program has had a positive impact on many parents, allowing them to engage with certain aspects of Catholicism more deeply.

“First Communion parents came up to me after the meeting and asked me to help them understand the Real Presence deeper, as it was a concept they always had trouble with,” Green said. “I was excited that they felt comfortable enough to do that.”

In total, 15 ministries throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport received funding via a parish support grant last year. Those grants totaled $87,500, once again cementing the program as Foundations in Faith’s largest.

And now, the invitation is open for even more parishes to apply for these grants. They’ll be able to do so until April 1.

(To see how would someone apply? They’d simply need to go to Foundations in Faith’s website and navigate to the “Current Opportunities” page. Once there, they can fill out an application for their proposed program. Best of all? They can request up to $10,000 from Foundations in Faith to fund that program.)

ST MARGARET SHRINE
a diocesan shrine

The “Original” Italian FEAST OF ST. ANTHONY
June 17th, 18th, 19th at St. Margaret Shrine

Friday, June 17th - 6 pm to 10 pm
Saturday, June 18th - 3 pm to 11 pm
Sunday, June 19th - 12 noon to 9 pm

Special Outdoor St. Anthony Mass
and Procession Sunday, 11 am
with Bishop Caggiano

Delicious Italian Food and Family-Friendly Fun
Carnival Rides & Music
Italian Food Specialties with our famous Pizza Fritta

For more information or to volunteer call the office at 203-333-9627

2523 Park Avenue, Bridgeport 203-333-9627 SaintMargaretShrine@gmail.com
Masses: Monday-Saturday 8:15 am, Saturday Vigil 4 pm, Sunday 8, 9:30 (Italian), 11 am

Come for a visit, tour, retreat, or day of prayer.

FIF funds new technology for nursing homes

BRIDGEPORT—Last year, Foundations in Faith launched the Lourdes Fund for Pastoral Care at Catholic Nursing Homes, which would financially benefit three nursing homes previously owned by the diocese: St. John Paul II Center in Danbury, St. Camillus Center in Stamford and St. Joseph Manor in Trumbull.

When it came to pastoral care at St. Joseph Manor, Sister Elizabeth Linh Nguyen felt the nursing home’s residents could benefit from upgraded technology. The coronavirus pandemic made it difficult both for residents to gather for Mass in person and for their loved ones to visit. As such, Sister Elizabeth asked for funding for technology that would allow residents to livestream Mass and connect with their loved ones both near and far.

After a few months, Sister Elizabeth received an iPad, which she could use with residents to call friends and family, and even to attend events virtually. Later the same week, Sister Elizabeth and St. Joseph Manor received a visit from Raffaele Scotti of the Diocese of Bridgeport information technology department to set up the other, larger devices Sister Elizabeth had requested.

Following Scotti’s visit, St. Joseph Manor is now firmly situated in the 21st century. But more importantly, its residents...
We are a People of Hope and yet we know we have much to learn. Join us for a 31-day (virtual) formation event to learn more about your faith, find tips for raising faith-filled children, discuss how the pandemic has changed our Church, and much, much more. Online workshops, keynotes, and webinars will be held throughout May. More than 60 topics and speakers confirmed. All online. All free. Preregistration required.

Every night in May at 7 pm
Praying the Rosary together

Workshops:
Mondays 1 pm
Wednesdays 10 am, 1 pm, and 7:30 pm
Thursdays 7:30 pm
Fridays 10 am

Keynote – every Tuesday at 7:30 pm

Special track for clergy – Thursdays at 1 pm

Look for special workshops for:
+ Parents
+ Catechists
+ Catholic school teachers
+ Parish staff
+ Faith formation leaders
+ Seniors
+ Special needs ministry
+ Young adults
+ Youth ministry leaders

Workshops will be in English, Spanish, or Vietnamese

Plus, everyone who registers will receive a packet in the mail with prayer journal, prayer cards, Rosary, and a free gift from the Institute. Register early before these gifts run out.

SPEAKERS

Jane Angha
John Angotti
Katherine Angulo Valenzuela
Leisa Anstling
Anna Barraza

Kelsey Bell
Don Boucher
Bishop Caggiano
Mike Carotta
John Collins

Noelle Collis-De Vito
Nicholas Collura
Ivan Diaz
Robert Feduccia
Father Ford

Esther Garcia
Ann Garrido
Kathy Goller
Marcos Gonzalez Villalba
John Grosso

Lisa Harrelson
Dr. Mary Healy
Paul Jarzemkowski
Charleen Katra
Barbara Kielaszk

Dave Laidlaw
Brenner LeCompte
Father Alejandro Lopez-Cardinale
Chris Lowney
Colin Maciver

Mark Mann
Bob McCarty
Amy McEntee
Chris Miller
David O’Brien

Timothy O’Malley
Father Jorge Obregon LC
Monica Ortega & Renzo Ortega
Hosffman Osorio
Josh Packard, Ph.D.

Joe Paprocki
Mike Pats
Bertha Peralta Rodriguez
Tom Quiñlan
John Rinaldo

Juan Rodriguez
Normal Rothschadl
Dr. Karen Shields-Wright
Julianne Stanz
Dr. Joseph White

REGISTER ONLINE: formationreimagined.org
Obituaries

Monsignor Andrew Varga, 69

BRIDGEPORT—Monsignor Andrew G. Varga, pastor of St. Luke Parish in Westport, passed away on Monday afternoon, March 7, 2022. He was 69 years of age.

Monsignor Andrew G. Varga

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Msgr. Varga and for the consolation of his family,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano in making the announcement.

Monsignor Varga was appointed pastor of St. Luke Church in Westport in 1997, a position he held for 25 years. He also served the diocese as a territorial vicar and as a member of the Presbyteral Council and the College of Consultants.

He was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Bridgeport by the Most Reverend Walter W. Curtis at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport on May 6, 1978.

Andrew George Varga was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut on November 3, 1952, son of Andrew and Gizella Varga. He was baptized on November 30, 1952, at St. Stephen Church on Spruce Street in Bridgeport. He made his First Holy Communion and received the Sacrament of Confirmation at Holy Name of Jesus Church in Stratford.

He attended Saint Holy Name of Jesus School, Fairfield College Preparatory School in Fairfield and Fairfield University where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. Monsignor Varga received his priestly formation at the Theological College of the Catholic University of America, receiving a Master of Arts in Theology.

Following his ordination, his first assignment was as associate pastor of St. Matthew Church in Norwalk (1978-1983). In 1983, he was transferred to St. Theresa Church in Trumbull where he had served as a deacon. In 1991, Monsignor Varga was assigned to St. Leo Church in Stamford. In February 1992, he was assigned as temporary administrator of St. Joseph Parish in Brookfield before formally being made pastor in August of the same year.

In 1982, he was awarded a Doctor of Ministry degree from the School of Religious Studies in the Department of Theology at the Catholic University of America. Throughout his years of priestly ministry in the diocese, Msgr. Varga served on both the Presbyteral Council and the College of Consultants. Bishop Caggiano appointed Msgr. Varga as territorial vicar for Vicariate II in 2014.

He chaired the Diocesan Liturgical Commission for many years, served on the Sacred Arts Committee and was an active team member of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate, speaking at workshops around the country.

In addition, Msgr. taught homiletics in the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program for many years. Monsignor Varga was a member of the committee appointed by Bishop William Lori for the preparation and catechesis for the new English translation of the Roman Missal in 2011.

In 2008, Msgr. Varga received the great honor of being named chaplain to His Holiness.
Office of Liturgy and Worship

Father Lenox assists clergy with liturgies & norms

By JOE PISAN

BRIDGEPORT—The story about a Phoenix priest who incorrectly baptized thousands of people over a 16-year period made international headlines.

When he administered the sacrament, he said one incorrect word, and as a result the baptisms were invalidated, causing widespread anxiety and confusion in parishes where he served.

“This is a prime example of the need for sacramental norms,” said Father Peter Lenox, who Bishop Frank J. Caggiano appointed episopal vicar for liturgy and worship in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

It has been 40 years since the diocese has had an office pertaining to liturgical ministry, and he is the first person in this role to hold the title of episopal vicar. In that capacity, he serves the bishop, priests, deacons and the laity in all matters related to Sacred Liturgy, Sacred Music, and Sacred Art and Architecture.

Among his current responsibilities are the completion of sacramental guidelines for the diocese, which is on track to be completed this summer and promulgated by fall.

“Sacramental norms are important because they encourage a standardization within ritual practice in serving as a guide to the clergy who are celebrating the rites. When such norms are applied correctly, they ensure that the liturgical rites are properly executed and celebrated well, so that the faithful who are participating within them may benefit—not simply in the comprehension of what is contained within their exercise, but in granting them the capacity to profoundly enter them in a spirit of active participation. As such, their proper celebration can become fruitful and effective in their lives as Christians,” he said.

He added that the sacramental norms for Baptism are explicit as to the proper formula and to ritual requirements. These will ensure a proper and uniform celebration, while allowing for any specific local practices which the bishop may wish to implement, that would be permissible within universal guidelines.

“Now that an office pertaining to liturgy and worship exists once more, it is my hope that both the clergy and the faithful will realize its role as an essential cog within diocesan life, and how it can serve them effectively in the daily sacramental dispensation,” he said, encouraging them to become familiar with the services it provides.

“When Sacred Liturgy is celebrated well, it truly is the loving expression of Christ’s faithful to God as their Creator, their Redeemer and their Sanctifier,” Father said. “Liturgical exercise is the opportunity for us all to praise and worship God for having saved us through his Son and made us his own through signs perceptible to the senses. It becomes the vehicle through which we encounter Christ personally: within Sacred Scripture and the proclamation of the Gospel, within the re-presentation of the Paschal Mystery and of his self-offering to the Father, within the service of the priest offering the sacrifice at the altar and encouraging our active participation, and through the prayer and song of the faithful. Indeed, when liturgical ritual is well-celebrated, it becomes not only a loving exemplification of our praise to God, but a defining moment when the joy of the joy of Christian life becomes truly palpable from within the celebrating assembly.”

Father said, “My goal in assisting the clergy of the diocese is in helping them to grasp ever more deeply the genuine meaning of the rites and liturgical texts, so as to be led to an active and fruitful celebration of the Eucharist,” says Father Lenox of his role.

“I also encourage them to grow in their own ‘ars celebrandi’ (literally the ‘art of celebrating’).”

In making the appointment, Bishop Caggiano said, “Father Lenox assumes this important new ministry well qualified to provide assistance both to me and to the pastors and pastoral leaders of our diocese. He will be of great assistance to pastors and priests in matters of liturgy, worship and sacred music.”

Before the appointment, Father was in Rome as a graduate student at The Pontifical Liturgical Institute of the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm, where he completed a licentiate degree in Sacred Liturgy and a master’s (of the second level) in Liturgical Music. He has been in the position for a year at his office in The Catholic Center on Jewett Avenue.

It was when Father Lenox was administrator of The Cathedral Parish and rector of St. Augustine Cathedral that Bishop Caggiano asked him to study Sacred Liturgy in preparation for taking on a larger position in the diocese, he said.

With the completion of his thesis titled, “The Liturgical Science of the Pipe Organ as the Traditional Musical Instrument of Roman Liturgy,” he received his licentiate degree summa cum laude. It was the first time in the history of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute that anyone had written on this topic, which traced the development of the pipe organ across 24 centuries of history, detailing the instrument’s entrance into the liturgical rites and establishing the scientific basis behind its status as the traditional musical instrument of Roman liturgy.

Currently, Father Lenox is offering liturgical practicum classes for men in the fourth year of preparation for the diaconate, who will be ordained this June.

He is also working with the newly appointed diocesan director of music, Dr. William H. Atwood, who will be responsible for directing sacred music for all diocesan ceremonies and pontifical liturgies in the diocese.

“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,” Father Lenox said.

Dr. Atwood, who previously served as director of music and coordinator of liturgical ministries at the Parish of St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull, will also create a diocesan choir for all pontifical ceremonies and liturgies.

“I will be working closely with him so there can be an established musical program in the diocese from the vast treasury of...”

Continued on page 26
Scratch his skin and you come upon bereavement, uncertainty, fear, and pain” (Abraham Heschel, Man Is Not Alone, p. 69).

I’ve become convinced that somewhere in the inner life of almost everyone is a wound that has never healed. We are all wounded in one way or another, and lurking in all of us, as the Catholic novelist, Alice McDermott, put it, “there is the hunger to be comforted” (The Ninth Hour, p. 189).

I’ve also reached the conclusion that everyone is afraid of something. We all have secret fears to face. To be human is to be afraid. We are all scared and lonely. There is the essential loneliness of everyone.

I’ve come to believe that possibly the greatest struggle for most people is learning to deal with disappointment. There is no end to a disappointment, it crops up again and again. People cannot simply shrug it off. We moan for a disappointment, it crops up. We cannot always begin to feel pity. We need to be kind, for everyone is carrying a heavy burden.

Of course, the world does not only consist of the wounded, aggrieved, and disappointed. In the midst of it, existence is charged with goodness. In the midst of all there is kindness, indeed heroism, sacrifices. So much charity and decency radiate. One can get a sense of the positive and loving in humankind.

And there are so many luminous things in life: springtime, mimosa trees, blackbirds, Mozart, love, wine, dancing, the smile of a friend. There are many moments of being surprised by joy.

One can be gripped by the joy of being alive, “abounding in thanksgiving” (Colossians 2:7).

There is the grandeur of human existence. We are to enjoy life’s goodness. Life contains moments of exhalation.

Still, a fundamental, unalterable truth of life is that we will certainly encounter a lot of sadness as life goes on. Everyone has a sad tale to tell. There is the incurable sadness of human existence. Therese of Lisieux spoke of “our sad earth.” There is no doubt that life will show us all the face of loss.

The main thing I want to say is that I think that each of us is put here to help dilute to some degree the misery in the world. This is what Jesus did throughout his public ministry. “Jesus went throughout Galilee and curing every disease and every sickness among the people” (Mt. 4:23).

To some extent we all live life under the sign of the cross (Edith Stein). In the end we fade, wear out, disappear. While there is still time, we strive to be willing to be, as our faith calls us to be, stirred with a deep sense of compassion for people who just want a bit of happiness in a grim world.

We strive to show some love, affection, give some recognition, appreciation, understanding, make their world somewhat of a less lonely place. Above all, friendship is listening; listening with a deep sense of compassion for people who just want a bit of happiness in a grim world.

To some extent we all live life under the sign of the cross. The world is not perfect, it is not a Garden of Eden. We need to be kind, for everyone is carrying a heavy burden.
Sports: Remembering Rick DiCicco

Montelli’s warm memories of his greatest player

By DON HARRISON

In a half century of coaching basketball and winning 11 state championships at St. Joseph High School, Vito Montelli is adamant whenever he’s asked to name his greatest player.

Rick DiCicco, he responds without hesitation.

“He was a great athlete, the best player I ever had,” Montelli declared. “I felt very close to the guy. In fact, he was the most talented boy I’ve seen play the game.

“He could dominate inside; he could dominate outside. He had great, great hands, could jump out of the gym. He was so well built that kids wouldn’t take a charge against him. Rick was doing things kids his age couldn’t do. He was sinking three-pointers before they put in the line.”

Don’t just take Montelli’s word for it. In the spring of 2020, Eric Joseph “Rick” DiCicco III was among 25 players chosen to the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference’s (CIAC) All-Century Boys Basketball Team. Two others from the All-State team.

The University of Connecticut, building a strong program under coach Dee Rowe, was ecstatic when it recruited both DiCicco and Tony Hanson, another two-time all-stater from Holy Cross High of Waterbury. Oh, what could have been. While Hanson went on to put together four outstanding seasons and lead the Huskies to one NCAA Tournament and a pair of NITs, Rick fit right in.

As a sophomore, he scored 44 points and pulled down 25 rebounds in a 93-79 victory over Bridgeport Central. As a junior, he set a school record with a 52-point eruption against Bunnell of Stratford, averaged 29.8 points per game and was selected to the New Haven Register All-State team. As a senior he established a single-season school record with 433 rebounds and was a repeat All-State pick.

The Purple Knights, coached by the late Bruce Webster, were one of the nation’s finest Division-II programs, and Rick fit right in. He averaged 19.7 points per game and 8.9 rebounds across three seasons and was selected to the CIAC’s All-Century Basketball Team.

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So, why didn’t DiCicco continue to play the game professionally or even semi-professionally? A combination of bad luck and bad health.

The litany: Surgery on both knees. Bladder cancer. A horrific motor vehicle accident in which he nearly died.

According to “God, Family and Basketball,” Chris Ellsberry’s recent biography of Montelli, DiCicco suffered multiple bone fractures in the accident and “was placed in a sedated state for six weeks.” He required months of rehabilitation at Gaylord Rehabilitation Center in Wallingford, and, although able to walk, often relied on a wheelchair or an electric cart.

It was fitting that both Rick and Marilyn, his wife of 41 years, were present at Mohegan Sun in March of 2012 when Montelli coached his final game—winning St. Joe’s 11th CIAC state championship and his 878th game with a rousing 62-54 victory over Hillhouse.

“His wife Marilyn is an angel,” Montelli remembered. “Before the game, she came over to me and pointed. Rick was there up on the concourse sitting in his wheelchair. It was a very special moment. I used that in a pep talk prior to the game.”

On January 30, 2022, Rick DiCicco passed away at his home in Stratford, at age 66. Montelli, who recently celebrated his 90th birthday, was among the mourners at Rick’s funeral, held at Our Lady of Grace Church.

FAIRFIELD COUNTY\nCATHOLIC\n
March 2022
Por MARICARMEN GODOY

GREENWICH. Para la misa dominical en español de las 6:30 de la tarde en la iglesia de Saint Catherine, en el exclusivo sector de River Side de Greenwich, se empezó a sentir un gran movimiento en la iglesia con casi cuarenta minutos de anticipación; lo mismo sucedía en horas de la mañana en la iglesia de Saint Roch, en la de Saint Raphael y en Saint Mary, el sábado en la noche.

En Saint Catherine, el coro, que aún no se reconoce como tal, sino como un grupo de voluntarios, acompañado de guitarristas ensayaba las canciones de la liturgia y a más de poner voces primaderas y segundas para hacer armonías, colocaban a las jóvenes a cantar partes especiales. Agrupación que inició su afán en un voluntariado apenas hace un mes.

Otros fieles, en cambio, ensayaban en el púlpito las lecturas del día, las oraciones y peticiones y decidían quién recogería las donaciones, colocaban a las jóvenes a cantar partes especiales. Agrupación que inició su afán voluntario hace un mes.

Nathalia, una maestra de español de la secundaria Greenwich High School, quien sostiene que de los tres mil estudiantes de este plantel educativo, el veinte por ciento de su población es de ascendencia hispana. Dato que lo confirma el sacerdote Miguel Bernal, acorde con el Censo que determina el residendo de un 16 a 20 por ciento de población latina residiendo en Greenwich.

Ahi si entiende lo que dice el Padre Miguel Bernal, nacido en Sevilla-España, quien llegó a Greenwich el 25 de julio del 2019, el pleno día de la fiesta de San Santiago Apóstol, patrono de la madre Patria: “La realidad es que Greenwich tiene distintas zonas y la población hispana ha crecido en todos estos vecindarios.

Hay un amplio abanico de comunidad latina, hay gente sencilla que trabaja en el área de los servicios o en el área artesanal con salarios moderados; pero también hay profesionales que trabajan en el mundo de las finanzas de Manhattan (New York) o en los hospitales como médicos, o ingenieros o banqueros con salarios estupendos”, dijo.

Y es que no solo basta mirar los números estadísticos estudiadores o el Censo del 2020, sino los vecindarios de Bryon, Chickahominy o caminar la North Main Street o Putnam Avenue, para observar a latinos fusionándose entre anglos.

Vecindarios donde el Padre Miguel encontró la respuesta a lo que los feligreses de New York le decían en cada viaje anual de verano que hacia como misionero, mientras estudiaba Filosofía en la Universidad Gregoriana de Roma: “¿Por qué? ¿si se va a quedan?, ¿nosotros le necesitamos?”. Preguntas que calaban hondo en el sacerdote andaluz y que gracias al pedido del P. Carl D.McInotsh, superior de la parroquia de Saybrook, logró ingresar a “Chickehoming”, logró ingresar a la Diócesis de Bridgeport y radicarse en Greenwich.

Por eso es que la Diócesis a través del Padre Miguel, que tiene el puesto de Director del Ministerio Hispano de Greenwich, viene trabajando desde el 2019 en las parroquias de Saint Michael, en Saint Roch y desde este primero de enero del 2022 en Saint Catherine de River Side; iglesia que ha apoyado todas sus iniciativas para atraer a los hispanos”, como parte de un proyecto para coordinar toda el área de Greenwich la pastoral al servicio del hispano parlante, sin olvidar a Saint Mary, que desde hace décadas atrás viene trabajando do un ministerio hispano.

¿Por qué es necesario que la iglesia instaure un ministerio en español para hispanos? Acorde con el P. Miguel: “no importa la situación económica en la que se viva. A nosotros nos llama la necesidad de celebrar nuestra fe en nuestra propia lengua para encontrarnos en nuestra propia lengua materna; y sobretodo porque los hijos que han nacido aquí no pierdan el arraigo de sus raíces... Es un tema de conexión con el origen”.

Saint Catherine de Siena, ubicada en el vecindario de River Side, a la entrada de Greenwich, viniendo por Stamford, es famosa por producir anualmente una obra musical teatral anual con artistas juveniles de la localidad y con actores de Broadway; ahora, pasa a ser parte del movimiento hispano del poblado.

Y es que no solo la misa en español dominical de las 6:30 de la tarde está tomando fuerza, sino el llamado a través de las redes sociales para empezar un proyecto comunitario que le de permanencia a la presencia hispana dentro de la parroquia y que a su vez pueda crecer en el poblado.

Para ser parte o saber más sobre “Greenwich Hispano”, puede visitar su página de Facebook o puede llamar directamente al 646 430 2608.

Nuestra Voz

Latinos llegan al veinte por ciento de la población

sacred music across the centuries,” Father said. “This is a positive development for the diocese because it focuses on an aspect of worship that is intrinsic to helping us more actively participate in liturgical rites.”

Through the non-verbal communication of music, there is an uplifting of emotions and affects of the faithful to the Lord as an act of worship, he said. It produces an interior disposition, whereby the faithful are engaged in liturgical rites and give themselves to the Father in a spirit of joy, love and self-offering. Father Lenox, who was born in Bridgeport and raised in Trumbull, graduated from St. Michael School and Notre Dame High School. He entered the St. John Fisher Residence in Trumbull in 1993 and received a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from Sacred Heart University in 1996. He received a Master of Arts in Systematic Theology, a Master of Divinity, and a Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology (S.T.B.) from St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia and was ordained by Archbishop Edward Egan in 2000. He has served as parochial vicar at St. Andrew Church in Bridgeport, St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield and St. Benedict-Our Lady of Montserrat Parish in Stamford.

He also served as administrator of The Cathedral Parish and rector of St. Augustine Cathedral before pursuing his pontifical license in Sacred Liturgy and a master’s degree of the second level in Liturgical Music at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome.

After returning from Rome, he served as pastor of St. Joseph Church in Norwalk and administrator of Sacred Heart Parish in Georgetown.

A talented pianist and organist, Father Lenox is an expert in Sacred Music. A member of the American Guild of Organists, he was responsible for composing the renovation of the Cathedral organ. As a member of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, Father Lenox has served as a member of their board of directors and as representative for Region One, which encompasses New England. He currently serves on the Diocesan Liturgical Board, the Pastoral Ministry Committee and Diocesan Building Commission, where he provides guidance on all liturgical matters.

“I am honored that the bishop asked me to do this important work for the diocese,” he said. “It is a pleasure for me to be able to participate in the work of the Church to help people come to know and love their Savior in such a particular and intimate way so they can encounter Christ himself and exemplify him in word, deed and manner of life.”

Liturgies and Norms from page 23
**Vocations**

**Vocations Myth 2: priests only work on Sundays**

**By Father Chris Ford**

Oh, how I wish at times that this one were true! Life as a priest would certainly be much easier if the only hours we were really “on” were from confession on Saturday afternoon through Baptisms after the last Sunday Mass, but, alas, some dreams just aren’t meant to come true.

Now, while it is true that, for most priests, probably over 90 percent of the pastoral interactions we will have with our parishioners take place on Sunday morning, it is hardly the case that is the only time we are working. In fact, in many ways, we are never really off the clock.

I think it’s fair to say that we all know there is much more to life than Sunday morning for all of us. As priests, our job is to shepherd people to sanctity, to a relationship with God that plays out in every moment of their lives and transforms it into a witness and expression of divine love. And, the truth is, we all need God much more often than Sunday mornings.

Throughout the week, priests are living and preparing for those moments. We are meeting with families who have lost a loved one as we prepare and celebrate a fitting funeral to pray for the soul of the departed and the consolation of their family. We are visiting homes to bring both our presence and the True Presence to those who are unable to join the parish community due to age or sickness. We are listening to and counseling members of the parish who are going through unexpected and turbulent times. We are preparing the children of our parish for the sacraments. We are preparing new parents to take up their duty of being their child’s first teacher in the faith at Baptism. We are rejoicing with a new family at their wedding (and probably getting frustrated at the rehearsal).

And yes, at times, we are paying the bills, we are changing light bulbs, we are calling a plumber, and we are helping to set up for the carnival or bake sale—much of this right alongside you and your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Perhaps most importantly, we are continuing to work on ourselves, spending time in prayer and reflection so that we can give you the greatest gift any priest can give to his people: his own personal holiness.

And when all is said and done, we are preparing once more again for Sunday—ready to start it all over again.

So yes, I’ll see you next Sunday. But when you need me, I’ll also see you the rest of the week, too.

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**CT March for Life looks forward in hope**

**BRIDGEPORT**—The First Connecticut March for Life will be held on Wednesday, March 23, 2022, at the State Capitol in Hartford. The day begins with a 10:30 am pre-March program at Bushnell and features the noontime rally at the capital.

People from the diocese will be coming together with others throughout the state for the event to raise their voices as the Supreme Court considers a ruling that could weaken or overturn the Roe v. Wade decision.

“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 Maureen Ciardiello, coordinator of Respect Life & Project Rachel for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

She cited a recent Knights of Columbus/Marist Poll that 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.

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 bans most abortions after the 15th week of pregnancy.

She praised the faithful who attended the January 22, 49th Annual National March for Life in Washington D.C. and who conduct vigils at the abortion clinics in Bridgeport, Stamford and Danbury.

Catholics throughout the diocese, who were unable to travel to D.C. for the national March, attended local 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 returned to the parish, she said. There were also pro-life events at 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.

“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, 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.”

“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.”

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.

(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.)
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