



FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

MAY 2022 | VOLUME 39, NUMBER 5 | SPRING ISSUE

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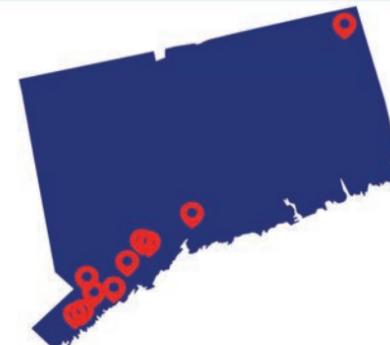
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Around the Diocese

Easter Around the Diocese

by Elizabeth Clyons

Easter was a time of joy for all, as parishes around the diocese celebrated liturgies commemorating Our Lord's Resurrection.

Chrism Mass

TRUMBULL—At this year's Chrism Mass, celebrated at St. Theresa Church in Trumbull, when priests renewed their priestly vows, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano thanked them for ministering generously and unselfishly during the challenging and difficult past two years. "I am grateful for how you have strengthened people in times of great need, and only God knows how many ways you have stood before your people. Thank you for being agents of healing and faithful to your ministry. You have accompanied those with broken lives, and you have become a vehicle of the Holy," the bishop said to more than two hundred priests, deacons and religious who gathered for the Mass.



Good Friday

FAIRFIELD—"As Jesus carried his Cross, the world went about its business," Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said at the Celebration of the Passion of Our Lord on Good Friday at Our Lady of Assumption Church in Fairfield. He said the world still turns away from the true meaning of the Cross. Parishioners of all ages—some carrying young children in their arms and others elderly and supported by a cane or the arm of a family member—genuflected before the Cross and blessed themselves in somber silence.



Mass on Holy Thursday

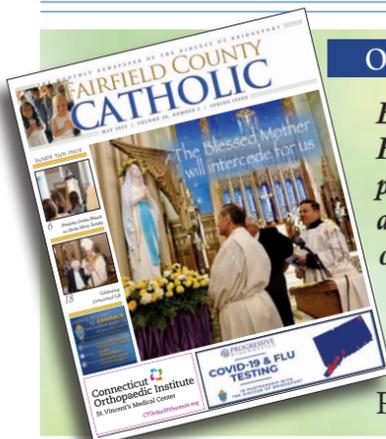
BRIDGEPORT—At Mass on the evening of Holy Thursday, celebrated at St. Augustine Cathedral, the bishop said that Jesus, in his great love, gives this gift to those who are not worthy, those who do not deserve it and those who could never earn it. "So reckless, so generous and so merciful is our redeemer, our gentle shepherd." The bishop posed a question to the congregation: How much work do we have to do in our own lives so that we



might follow in the footsteps of the Savior? "We come here to receive the Eucharist so that we might do for one another what he did for us," said the bishop that we might kneel before one another and wash each other's feet in the works of kindness, mercy, forgiveness, patience and understanding."

Easter Vigil

BRIDGEPORT—"This is the night of Christ's victory over sin and death," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano during his homily at this year's Easter Vigil celebrated at St. Augustine Cathedral. "And through Him it is the night of our victory, as well." The bishop spoke specifically to those who would be baptized and confirmed that evening, saying, "you have come to faith, you have come to recognize the Savior whose victory is ours today." The bishop said, "There are many in the world who want to hear the words 'Christ is Risen, Christ is truly Risen.' May we, by our words, but more importantly by our actions, bring that victory to a waiting world."



ON THE COVER

Bishop Caggiano and Father Gustavo A. Falla pray to the Blessed Mother at the recent Our Lady of Lourdes Retreat held at St. Mary Church. Over 1,000 attended. Story on page 8.

PHOTO BY JOE PISANI

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Fostering faith and community



Diocesan News

Six men to be ordained to transitional diaconate

NEW CANAAN—On Saturday, May 21, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will ordain six men as transitional deacons for the Diocese of Bridgeport. The Ordination Mass will be celebrated at 11 am at St. Aloysius Church in New Canaan. Ricardo Batista Comim, James DiVasto, Férry Galbert, Miguel Betancur Lenis, Andrew LaFleur and Matthew Loman will all be ordained.

Ordination as a transitional deacon is the last step before ordination to the priesthood, which typically occurs a year later after additional pastoral, liturgical and educational preparation.

Ricardo Batista Comim was born in São Paulo, Brazil to Valdinei Comim and Marcia dos Santos Batista Comim. He currently resides in Stamford. Batista Comim attended Seton University in South Orange,

New Jersey from which he graduated in 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts in theology.

James DiVasto was born in Stamford, Conn. to James and Lena DiVasto. DiVasto graduated from Saint Anselm College in Manchester, N.H. He served as a complaint administrator for the Knights of Columbus Supreme Office for 37 years.

DiVasto's first Mass as a deacon will be celebrated by Father Joseph Gill at St. Jude Church in Monroe on May 22, 2022 at 11:30 am.

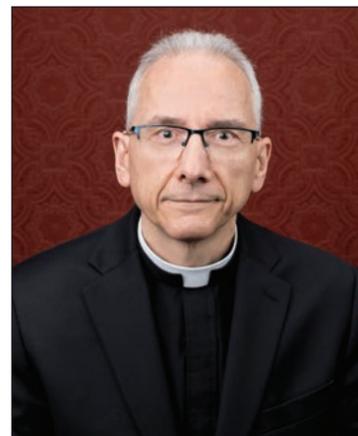
Férry Galbert was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti to Soimil Saint Preuve and Yvonne Lops. He currently resides in Norwalk and is a parishioner of the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist in Stamford. He graduated from Norwalk Community College in 2014 with an associate degree in nursing and Sacred Heart



RICARDO BATISTA COMIM

University in 2019 with a bachelor's in philosophy. He has worked as a data register at the basilica and as an RN at Stamford Hospital.

Galbert's first Mass as a deacon will be concelebrated by Msgr. Stephen DiGiovanni and Father Cyprian Lapastina at St. John's Basilica in Stamford at



JAMES DIVASTO

12 noon on May 22, 2022.

Miguel Betancur Lenis was born in Medellin, Colombia to Humberto de Jesus Betancur Piedrahita and Miryam Stella Lenis Velez. He currently resides in Danbury and is a parishioner of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. He has received his theology degree



FÉRRY GALBERT

while studying at St. John Fisher Seminary.

Betancur Lenis' first Mass as a deacon will be celebrated by Very Reverend Arthur Mollenhauer and Father John J. Perez at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Danbury at 6 pm on May 22, 2022.

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Bishop commissions twenty-six Ambassadors

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—The world wants to see Jesus with their own eyes, but they will see you," Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said to the 26 men and women whom he commissioned as ambassadors during the Pontifical Mass on the Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday.

There was a spirit of joy and fraternity as the newest cohort of ambassadors gathered at St. Augustine Cathedral with friends and family members for Mass and the commissioning ceremony after months of discernment and formation.

"The Church needs an army of ambassadors," to help heal wounds and bring people back to the Church, the bishop said, as he thanked the men and women for joining the initiative as part of overall diocesan renewal.

In his homily the bishop reflected on the account of "doubting" Thomas in the Gospel of John, in which Jesus appears to his disciples after his resurrection.

"Thomas comes to the faith when he can see the Lord with



BISHOP FRANK J. CAGGIANO COMMISSIONED 26 men and women as ambassadors during a Pontifical Mass on the Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday.

his own eyes and put his finger in the Lord's wounds," the bishop said. He asked the ambassadors to focus on the wounds of Christ, because "they help us understand why you and I are here today."

The bishop asked the men and women to think about the reason that Christ still had wounds when he appeared to his disciples in his Glorified Body.

"Love hurts, love creates wounds, and some wounds are so profound that they live forever," the bishop said. "Jesus carries his

wounds forever as a sign of his love for us. From the wounds of Jesus, you and I have eternal life."

The bishop told the ambassadors that their ministry of welcoming people back to the Church will most likely be accomplished in small measures that bring Christ to the wounded, one person at a time.

The ambassadors may accompany others over a cup of coffee or in small gestures of compassion because "hearts break in different ways." But they should not

under-estimate the power of their witness as people seek mercy and healing in the face of their own suffering.

"You may actually see the spiritually dead come back to life," the bishop said, assuring the ambassadors that they will gain confidence if they remember, "why you are there and the wounds that set us free."

After the homily, the bishop stood before the altar to impart a blessing on those who were commissioned and prayed:

"Fill the hearts of these young missionaries with the Holy Spirit, so that becoming all things to all people, they may lead many to you, the Father of all, to sing your praises in your holy Church."

"Lord, look kindly on these your servants who have been chosen to act as ambassadors of the Gospel message given to us by your Son. They are now to be sent forth as messengers of salvation and peace, marked with the sign of the Cross.

Send your abundant blessings upon them as they embrace this important ministry and make their work fruitful for their par-

ishes and our diocese."

Following the blessing of the ambassadors, the bishop blessed the Crucifixes and presented them individually to the newly commissioned who came forward before the altar. He was assisted by Deacon John DiTaranto, director of the Ambassador initiative.

Bishop Caggiano concelebrated the Mass with Father Birendra Soreng, pastor of St. Mark Parish in Stratford. Father Peter Lenox, vicar for liturgy and worship, served as master of ceremonies. Deacon DiTaranto served as deacon of the Mass.

To date, more than 160 men and women have been commissioned as ambassadors, an initiative called for by Bishop Caggiano in his 2021 Pastoral Exhortation, "Let us Enter the Upper Room with the Lord." In his letter the bishop wrote, "I will need the assistance of co-workers who will not be afraid to go out into their communities to invite people to encounter the Lord and His mercy."

(For those who would have an interest in serving as an ambassador, or for questions, visit: mayambassadors@diobpt.org.)

Annual Bishop's Appeal

2022 Bishop's Appeal supports Faith Formation

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

(Editor's note: As we go to print, over 11,200 donors have donated to the Annual Bishop's Appeal, with 80 percent of the \$8.1 million goal raised. A gift to the Bishop's Appeal helps fund programs throughout the diocese including the Institute for Catholic Formation, an integral part of faith formation in the diocese. The Institute not only provides youth, young and older adults faith formation and the training for liturgical programs and responsibilities such as catechist, Eucharistic minister, Mass reader, etc., but it offers an array of programs for families, Catholic scouting, young adults parish groups and gatherings, and strengthens the marriage journey through preparation, wedding jubilees and supporting life-long love. Parishioners who benefit from the Institute share their stories below.)

BRIDGEPORT—Chris Green has been serving as director of Religious Education at St. Paul Parish in Greenwich for five and a half years. The program currently consists of just over 300 children. Green also covers Baptism preparation at the parish.

"I love serving the families of St. Paul and feel blessed that God sent this opportunity to me," said Green, whose main role is supporting the parents of the parish family in their role as the first and most important educators of the faith. "I cannot think of a higher honor," she said.

Green explained that she sees God in each of the children she encounters, which has strengthened her own faith more than she ever imagined it would. "Each unique family has its own distinct needs and being of service to them is a blessing. From baptism preparation

to the years beyond Confirmation, I want to be there for them."

Green said that the most important way she can serve parishioners is to be as prepared in her role as possible. She credits Father Leszek P. Szymaszek, pastor of St. Paul's for his support with faith formation programs at the parish, as well as the diocesan Institute for Catholic Formation and Dr. Patrick Donovan, who serves as executive director.

"Father Les is always available to meet with the classes and offer the sacraments, which is such a blessing," said Green. "The students really enjoy the time he devotes to them, and he is always available to answer their questions and mine."

Green praised the Institute for Catholic Formation for offering many opportunities for growth for DREs and catechists who

Green calls "the heartbeat of any faith formation program."

"The workshops the Institute provides for the parish faith formation leaders are so valuable—from youth ministry training, to online LEAD classes, to workshops on the most important topics facing the Church today, they are there to support you."

Green said that Dr. Patrick Donovan has been a particular help in that he has instituted twice monthly "check-ins" that all the parish faith formation leaders are invited to attend via Zoom. "This has fostered a real sense of community that was sorely lacking," said Green.

"The Bishop's Appeal supports ALL of these programs and without these funds those of us in daily and personal contact with the parishioners of the Diocese of Bridgeport would not have much

support in our positions and therefore not fully be able to spread the message that Christ commanded us to spread," Green stated.

Elaine and John Iannarone of St. Jude Parish in Monroe began volunteering with diocesan marriage formation approximately ten years ago. Until March of 2020, they facilitated and presented at in-person sessions. When the program pivoted to Zoom sessions due to the pandemic, the Iannarone's adapted their format as well.

The couple has been involved in various marriage preparation programs since 1984. They were a presenting couple for two years at Catholic Engaged Encounter and served as diocesan coordinators. They were also involved in the Sponsor Couple Program, an in-parish program for engaged couples at St. James in Stratford.

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

A Bridge Home 2022 BISHOP'S APPEAL



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Please join over 11,000 people who are supporting this year's Appeal and make your gift today!

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Thank you for your support, God bless you.

Learn more at: www.2022BishopsAppeal.org
203-416-1470



Annual Bishop's Appeal

ABA FROM PAGE 4

"We believe strongly in marriage formation and feel called to minister to the engaged," shared Elaine. "Early on in our marriage, and to this day 40 years later, our own marriage formation program had a powerful impact guiding our marriage in a healthy direction keeping us focused on how to live a sacramental marriage daily. We know first-hand that a good marriage formation for an engaged couple can make a major difference in their marriage."

Elaine said that working with the engaged in this capacity helps her and John spiritually by strengthening their sacrament of marriage. "It gives us a chance to awaken the couples to Christ alive in their daily lives."

Elaine also shared that the programs offered through the Institute for Catholic Formation help her and her husband grow spiritually. She enjoys how they

are easily accessible, especially those that strengthen marriage and prayer.

Joanne Santulli and her husband, Deacon Bill, have been involved in both marriage preparation and RCIA at St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan for about ten years.

"As a leader in our parish's RCIA process, we help those who are thinking about converting to the Roman Catholic faith," explains Joanne. "It's a process that takes place gradually. Participants learn the truths and values of our faith in an open and welcoming environment over many months. We go to Mass together and discuss the scriptures. We walk on their journey with them for a while."

In marriage prep, Deacon Bill and Joanne help couples who are embarking on a new life journey together to understand the dynamics of their relationship with each

other and with God. "Many are stressed with planning their wedding, working full time jobs and adjusting to a life that involves their spouse's family," she said. "Marriage prep helps them think about how they will handle all these things now and in the future, and how their spiritual life needs to be a big part of it."

Joanne said she feels very blessed to have the opportunity to serve in these roles. "I learn from the participants and their questions. It deepens my faith and inspires me to learn and be more involved. In community we learn from one another."

"As I pray for the future of engaged couples and those participating in RCIA, I also ask God for the grace and wisdom to inspire them," she said.

Joanne reflected on this year's Bishop's Appeal theme "A Bridge Home." "Faith formation is crucial to the future of our Church," she said. "We need to build bridges and feed all Catholics of



every age with opportunities to deepen their faith. That is done through a variety of modalities which are funded by the Appeal."

Joanne sees the value in the faithful participating in parish events, volunteering to serve in different ministries, reading online courses and articles, and helping the disadvantaged and needy.

"We need to bring young couples back home to the Church," said Joanne. "Marriage prep is one of those bridges, and RCIA is another huge program in faith formation. We need to help one another hear the call of God and decipher what God is calling us to do."

"Formation programs provide the tools through a variety of means to grow and present the

truth and beauty of our Catholic faith," said Pam Rittman, director of development and the Bishop's Appeal. "In addition to the Sacraments, these programs are life giving for family and community building. Your gift to the Appeal helps countless individuals discover and continue their relationship with the Lord. Thank you for helping them along their journey."

(The Diocese of Bridgeport is committed to providing current, engaging faith building programs that help every person in our diocese. Gifts to the Bishop's Appeal make it happen. Be sure to check the Institute of Faith Formation website for programs and ongoing events at: www.faithformationreimagined.org.)



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Feminine Genius Brunch

‘The ordinary becomes extraordinary in Him’

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

STAMFORD—Hundreds of women gathered to celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday with a Mass led by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at the Parish of St. Cecilia-St. Gabriel followed by the first Connecticut Feminine Genius brunch hosted by the Sisters of Life.

“In the eyes of God all that is ordinary is to become extraordinary in Him,” Bishop Caggiano said during his homily.

Bishop Caggiano noted how the apostles were very ordinary men until chosen by Jesus.

“They were destined to become extraordinary,” he said. “We are here because Christ has called us; because in our ordinariness his grace is calling us to bring his grace, mercy and hope to our ordinary lives.”

Bishop Caggiano encouraged the women to have the courage, “to allow our love for him to shine through in this world that is becoming dark,” by practicing being more Christ-like in word and witness.

“You are already a genius in Christ,” he said, adding that the commitment to bring the message of Christ to others through love and courage in everyday life is a gift.

“Thank you for taking the time to be here today,” he said. “It is an Easter gift of encouragement and joy. Open your hearts to the message that comes to you this morning. May your work today begin to bear great fruit.”

The Mass was followed by

brunch at the Italian Center of Stamford and the topic for the day was, “Mercy, Love’s Second Name.”

“It’s very inspirational to see so many women,” said Marge Mullen, who attended the event with her sister Cathy and their mother, Sharon. “It’s a nice thing to do with other women,” she added.

The afternoon was filled with fellowship, friendship and faith with enlightened words and conversations about embracing what it means to give and receive mercy.

“Mercy is an undeserved love of God,” said Sister Faustina Maria Pia, one of the Sisters of Life to speak at the event, who also attended the morning Mass.

“I did nothing to receive this enormous gift of life,” Sister Faustina said, adding that trust is what allows us to receive God’s mercy. “God loves us just because we are his daughters. Our mistakes do not define us.”

“This inward healing of mercy is what we are aching for,” she said, adding that Divine Mercy Sunday, the second Sunday of Easter, is akin to baptism and the purity of restoration to better receive God’s love and mercy. “God’s mercy is for all of us. Pray for mercy in the whole world.”

Formed in New York by Cardinal John O’Connor, the Sisters of Life is a religious community of women who give themselves fully to the protection and enhancement of the sacredness of every human life, beginning with the most vulnerable.

“As women we have this unique capacity for love,” said Sister Virginia Joy, the keynote speaker at the inspirational brunch. “The cry of every human heart is love.”

“The most spectacular thing that happened to us is that we were loved into existence by God himself,” she said.

Sister Virginia Joy said depression, anxiety and unfulfillment could all be thought of as a divine invitation to look to God.

“Sin has made the heart tangled, hardened because of sin. Sin is its own punishment,” she said.

“Our job is to see the people God puts in our path and love them the way they need to be loved,” she said. “Mercy is both a gift we receive and a duty; something we receive and give to others.”

In 1995, Pope John Paul II



THE SISTERS OF LIFE recently hosted the first Connecticut Feminine Genius Mass, followed by brunch at the Italian Center in Stamford.

wrote a Letter to Women, which emphasized the important role women play in society and the Church. The Pope spoke of the distinct attributes of women—receptivity, sensitivity, generosity and maternity—all of which make up the feminine genius. The Connecticut Feminine Genius brunch borrows its name from those God-given attributes endowed upon women.

“He looked at all of creation and said it was not complete without you,” said Sister Virginia Joy inspiring women to be proud of their role in the Church, the family and the world.

“It was a very moving speech,

and it was nice to see everyone come together,” said Kristin Schneider, a parishioner of The Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist in Stamford.

Fellow attendee Jennifer Marciano agreed.

“I love the fellowship and being around other Catholic women,” Marciano said. “It’s a great community with a shared purpose.”

Sister Virginia Joy challenged the women to, “leave here with a new resolve. Ask Him what His designs are for you,” she said, adding, “Saints are ordinary people with extraordinary openness to God.”

A call to prayer and action

BRIDGEPORT—In response to the May 2 leak of the Supreme Court’s draft on abortion written by Justice Samuel Alito, Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Archbishop William E. Lori, of Baltimore, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities, issued a statement that called on the Catholics “to unite in fasting and prayer” on the feast of Our Lady of Fatima. The bishops asked that the faithful pray for several intentions:

- For the nation, “the integrity of our judicial system” and that all branches of government “be dedicated to seeking the common good and protecting the dignity and rights of the human person, from conception to natural death.”
- For Roe vs Wade and Casey to be overturned.
- For the conversion of the

hearts and minds of those who advocate for abortion.

- For a new commitment to building an America where children are welcomed, cherished and cared for; where mothers and fathers are encouraged and strengthened; and where marriage and the family are recognized and supported as the true foundations of a healthy and flourishing society.

- For Mary’s intercession and guidance as the Catholic Church “continues to walk with mothers and families in need and continues to promote alternatives to abortion, and seeks to create a culture of life.”

On May 12, Archbishop Lori and Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, chairman of the Committee for Religious Liberty, issued a follow-up statement that urged Congress “to stop pushing abortion as a solution to the needs of women and young girls” and to “embrace public policy initiatives that protect both mother and child.”

Locally, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano discussed the challenges on his weekly Veritas Radio show (1350 AM and 103.9 FM) and podcast with host Steve Lee. Bishop Caggiano joined other bishops in describing the court leak as a “grave injustice,” and he said that while the draft was encouraging, the legal issue remains complicated.

“It’s a hopeful and encouraging moment, but it’s also a time when we have to recognize that those of us who wish to protect unborn life have more work ahead—our work is not finished by any stretch of the imagination.” The bishop cautioned that it is important to remain vigilant because issues may be decided on a state by-state basis. He also urged the faithful to remain compassionate, open and helpful to women who are seeking forgiveness and healing through the Church.

(To listen to the bishop’s podcast, visit: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/dobsocial/podcast)

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Ordinations

TRANSITIONAL DIACONATE FROM PAGE 3

Andrew LaFleur was born in Bridgeport to James LaFleur and Pamela Smith LaFleur. He currently resides in Bridgeport where he attends St. Ann Parish. He graduated from Sacred Heart University in 2019.

LaFleur's first Mass as a deacon will be celebrated by Father Eric Silva at St. Ann Parish at 9 am on May 22, 2022.

Matthew Loman was born in Derby, Conn. to Wallace Loman and Irene Lazowski Loman. He currently resides in Derby, where he attends St. Michael the Archangel Parish. Loman graduated from Southern Connecticut State University in 2000 with a bachelor's in geography and elementary education. He then received a Juris Doctor from Quinnipiac University School of Law in 2005. In his work experience he has served as a camp counselor, teacher and associate attorney.

Upcoming Ordinations:

Ordination of Deacon Colin Lomnitzer to the Priesthood

BRIDGEPORT—On Saturday, June 4, 11 am at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will ordain Deacon Colin Lomnitzer to the Sacred Priesthood.

Lomnitzer has been in formation since 2016. He was ordained a transitional deacon on Saturday, May 22, 2021.

Ordination of Deacon Anh Vu to the Priesthood

BRIDGEPORT—On Saturday, June 11, 11 am at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will ordain Deacon Anh Vu to the Sacred Priesthood.

He was ordained a transitional deacon on Saturday, March 12, 2022.

Five men to be ordained to the permanent diaconate

BRIDGEPORT—Five men will be ordained as deacons by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano on Saturday, June 25, 11 am at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport.

The five men are Christopher Greer of Westport, George Kain of Ridgefield, James Meehan of Westport, Rock Desances of

Bridgeport, and Vincent Pia of Brookfield.

The men became candidates for the diaconate on October 26, 2019, received the ministry of reader on October 17, 2020, and received the ministry of acolyte on December 11, 2021.



MIGUEL BETANCUR LENIS



ANDREW LAFLEUR



MATTHEW LOMAN

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A riddle from Bob Scinto

At R.D. Scinto, we believe in 2 four letter words. One begins with an "L", and describes the way we feel about our tenants.

The other begins with a "D", and describes what motivates all of our actions. These two words are not used nearly as often as they should be.

Do you know what these words are? If you need help, call and ask for Bob at (203)929-6300.



Our Lady of Lourdes

Our Blessed Mother will intercede for us

By JOE PISANI

STAMFORD—On the eve of Mother's Day, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano held a retreat honoring Our Lady of Lourdes, urging several hundred people to seek the spiritual healing the Blessed Mother will always give through her intercession with her Son.

Recalling the healing waters of the Marian shrine in France, where the Blessed Mother appeared to a young peasant girl, he said, "What is it you are seeking to be healed? Is it your body? Is it your spirit that is troubled and distressed? Are you seeking healing for your soul that is burdened by sin and by the brokenness that we have created in our relationship with God, with our neighbor and with ourselves? Whatever it is, my friends, offer it to Our Lady on this day."

The Lourdes Retreat at St. Mary of Stamford Parish included a candlelight rosary, solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction and a homily on the world's most famous Marian shrine, where more than 7,000 healings have been attributed to the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Every year, 6 million pilgrims travel to France, to pray to Our Lady. Many go in the hope they will receive a healing at the spring she 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.

In his homily, the bishop said, "It is fitting that we come together in a church dedicated to our celestial Heavenly Mother on the eve of the day we remember our natural mothers, living and deceased, to say thanks for all they did for us and have done for us, to care for us, to nurture us, to form us, and to send us out into the world. There are no words to express thanks to our mothers and grandmothers without whom we would not be here."

He also reminded the congregation, "Our Heavenly Mother has been there in every moment

of every day of your life and mine, since we were conceived in the wombs of our natural mothers. What words can you and I say to express our gratitude for so great, so rich, so deep a love that she has for you and me. Being here today may be a start, a token of the thanks we owe to the great Mother of God."

As rain fell outside that Saturday afternoon, Bishop Caggiano said, "Life would not be possible without water."

Water is celebrated in the Book of Genesis when God created the waters and divided them,

"He reminded the congregation that when they seek healing, they need to know what they are asking because healing is not the same as a cure. Healing goes much deeper."

he said, and God uses the natural goodness of water to be the symbol and vehicle of everlasting life.

At the Easter Vigil, which recounts salvation history, there is a reading from the Book of Exodus when God leads his chosen people from slavery to freedom.

"He does this by splitting the waters of this world as a sign of the liberation to come through water that will be from the new Moses, who would be born from the Virgin to whom you and I have come to give thanks," he said.

When Jesus, the new Moses, began his ministry, he brought the true purpose of water to fulfillment at the hands of his cousin John the Baptist, when he entered into the Jordan River to be baptized.

"Jesus had no need to be baptized for he had no sin to repent of, no sin to be forgiven," the bishop said. "He entered into the waters of the Jordan for only one reason, for by entering into the waters, he might bless all the waters of this world so they could

become vehicles of his liberating power—liberation not from the slavery of this world, but from the slavery of the Father of Evil and of sin and death."

Three years later, as Jesus hung upon the cross, at his feet stood his mother. On that day he became the "holocaust and sacrifice for the sins of all creation" so that we might be forgiven our sins.

"On that day, after he commended his Spirit, we are told from Sacred Scripture that the soldier took his lance and pierced the side of Jesus, and out flowed blood and water," Bishop Caggiano said. "And it was that water from the side of Christ—water from this natural world—that became supernatural water in which we are saved, in which baptism was born, in which you and I can receive by grace what Christ had been given. So that you and I would become one with him in his victory on Calvary. Those are the waters of everlasting life."

In a similar way, Our Lady uses water at Lourdes as a sign of healing, a font of blessings that come from her Son, he said. "Because Bernadette trusted the lady who appeared to her, she used her bare hands, and dug from the earth and revealed a font of water—healing water given by Our Lady through the grace of her son. This water has become a source of healing in our modern, troubled world. Water once again became the vehicle of new life."

He reminded the congregation that when they seek healing, they need to know what they are asking because healing is not the same as a cure. Healing goes much deeper.

He reminded them of a basic truth of our faith: "You and I may think we know what is best for ourselves and those we love...but as much as you love them and strive to love yourselves, God loves us and our family and our friends and our children and our grandchildren far more than we could ever love them, and he knows what is best for them. So ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock on the door of the Heart of Jesus and be prepared to be amazed by what the waters of Lourdes can give through



THE RECENT LOURDES RETREAT at St. Mary of Stamford Parish included a candlelight rosary, solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction and a homily on the world's most famous Marian shrine, where more than 7,000 healings have been attributed to the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes.

the heart of Our Lady from the heart of her Son."

Three years ago, Bishop Caggiano took part in a Lourdes Virtual Pilgrimage at St. Mary Church, which attracted 1,000 people and recreated a pilgrimage to the shrine. That event, along with this year's retreat, was hosted by Father Gustavo A. Falla, pastor, and coordinated by David D'Andrea of Greenwich, who attributes several miracles in his life to Our Lady of Lourdes.

"We are so grateful to be able to come back again," D'Andrea said. "I know the Holy Spirit is here, and there will be healings. We are happy so many people attended. We missed a couple of years because of COVID-19, but this year everything worked out well. The candlelight rosary was said in five languages—English, Spanish, Haitian, Filipino and Italian, in which the bishop prayed. There was a procession with the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, a wonderful homily by the bishop, a Eucharistic blessing and a reception afterwards."

The five Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary were led by Mary Catherine Herbert in English, Regina Ferrari in Brazilian Portuguese, Walter Valenzuela in Spanish, Father Falla in French and Bishop Caggiano in Italian.

D'Andrea praised the bishop for his participation and said, "The first thing he says when asked is 'yes.'" He also thanked Father Falla for hosting the event and the efforts of his staff to set it up.

After the retreat, Father Falla said, "The Blessed Mother is calling people. She is inspiring us in the midst of what we're going through. Our Mother brings us together. We cannot forget that motherhood is so important to our society, to our Church and to our faith."

Sharon MacKnight, who offers religious items for sale at the church and donates the proceeds to the parish, set up her holy articles on a table in the vestibule. She has gone on two pilgrimages to Lourdes and recalled the story of Our Lady asking St. Bernadette to have a church built on the site of the apparitions.

"When I saw the cathedral the Blessed Mother built, I cried. It was magnificent," she said. "Our Lady is very special to me. I love her." She also obtained a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes for the church, and it was carried into the church in a procession.

Bishop Caggiano thanked D'Andrea and Father Falla for organizing and hosting the event.

D'Andrea said he has been inspired by many people who told him their stories. In his own life, he believes God has blessed him with healings. He was cured of polio as a child and he survived stage 3 cancer, which was diagnosed in 2014.

He credits his recovery to Our Lady of Lourdes through the efforts of his cousin, Monsignor Joseph Giandurco, pastor of St. Patrick's in Yorktown Heights, NY, 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.

"I have a great devotion to Mother Mary," he said. "She has always been there for me, and when I was young, my mother prayed to her that I would recover from polio." ■

Parish News

St. Anthony of Padua receives climate grant

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

FAIRFIELD—St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Fairfield has recently received a Victory Noll Sisters Small Grant from the Catholic Climate Covenant for their work on the parish’s “Resurrection Vineyard” garden.

This past summer, St. Anthony’s Values the Environment (S.A.V.E.), an environmental component of the parish’s social justice committee, started the garden as a way to give back to the local community. Parishioners and community members have made generous donations over the past few months, and the garden is growing in size, but hopefully the money from the grant will help it yield even more.

The Covenant’s small grants program was announced last summer, and these are the first winners. Half of the funding for the first year

of the program came from the Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters (aka Victory Noll Sisters) and the other half from generous donors. The program was overwhelmed with more than 230 applications from Catholic groups for grants of up to \$1,000.

Among the grant winners are college campus ministries, parishes, elementary and high school creation care programs, charities agencies, state Catholic conferences, men and women religious communities, and many others.

Funds will go to a wide variety of ecological and Laudato-Si’-inspired projects including community gardens that provide healthy produce for food programs, educational efforts to bring greater awareness of Laudato Si’, Pope Francis’s encyclical on the environment, growing tree canopies around schools and parishes, and instituting recycling and composting projects



to dramatically cut waste in school and parish cafeterias.

Jerry Hemenway, Jr., St. Anthony’s parishioner and a member of S.A.V.E., said the idea for the parish garden was based on the combination of desires to contribute, serve and sustain the community, especially those most in need, and to participate in God’s plan to ‘love our neighbor as we love ourselves.’

“At St. Anthony’s, this past season, we were thrilled beyond our wildest expectations that our little Resurrection Vineyard Garden was so successful, producing several thousand vegetables for the Merton Center. Sabine, the director, her dedicated staff, and the adults and children served are always so appreciative when we show up twice weekly with the freshly grown veggies. They even

asked us to take over their garden and greenhouse on the side of the building, to which we gladly agreed,” said Hemenway.

Hemenway said the group was thrilled to receive the grant from the Victory Knoll Sisters, will allow them to expand the gardens and add a much wider variety of vegetables, herbs, flowers, seeds and composting bins.

“Our wonderful group of loyal gardeners, many who have expertise in different facets of growing the vegetables and flowering plants, have developed a warm camaraderie, that has bonded us proudly as parishioners, helping and serving others, and on a small but significant level, nurturing our planet and humanity,” said Hemenway, who added that the group at St. Anthony’s is happy to discuss and assist other diocesan parishes who are interested in starting their own garden. ■

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EDITORIAL

Singing Alleluia
in a broken world

As we near the end of the Easter Season and approach the celebration of the Feast of Pentecost on June 5, it is a good time to explore the meaning of Easter in a war-torn and troubled world. In this reflection, which was written by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano for Hearst Newspapers, he asks important questions and leads us to find answers in examining our own actions and the truths of our faith.

"At first glance at the news and the state of our world, it may seem challenging for any of us to sing the song of alleluia. We may struggle in a very particular way to see the signs of such new life in our broken world. Where are the signs of Easter in the midst of so many tragedies and such profound suffering?

If we reflect upon the larger world, we need look no further than the atrocities and humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Ukraine. Innocent men, women and children are suffering unspeakable torture, fear, suffering and death at the hands of invaders waging an illegal, unjust and criminal war.

I need not describe the scenes we have seen in real time since I am certain that they have burned themselves into our memories perhaps for the rest of our lives. So we can ask, where are the signs of Easter's promise of new life amidst so much pain?

Likewise, we can look closer to home and try to make sense of the rising tide of violence in our communities and streets. To see the recent attacks in a Brooklyn subway station—the same one that I traveled through all the years I attended high school—the scenes of wounded young people, a chaotic stampede and senseless violence and injury perpetrated upon innocent bystanders who were simply going about their ordinary lives, is shocking and deeply unsettling. Once again, we can ask, where are the signs of Easter's promise of new life amidst so much pain?

We celebrate Christ's victory over sin and death as a twofold invitation offered to all who believe in Him, carry his name as Christians or seek to live a life of good will. Easter invites us to follow in His footsteps to realize our final victory over sin and death in the glory of Heaven. However, it also challenges us to work for the victory over sin in the countless moments of our everyday lives.

While we cannot stop destruction when someone chooses to be an agent of sin and death, we can serve as Christ's hands, eyes, feet and heart in the world, and do what we can, despite the cost, to claim His victory wherever we can. It is in such acts of kindness, mercy, forgiveness, understanding, accompaniment, assistance and peace-making that we show the world that Christ is truly risen, alive in our hearts and leading us forward to share the signs of His Risen life with every person we meet.

Where are the signs of Easter's promise of new life amidst so much pain? They are waiting for you and me to show them to the world."

A Bridge Home

Good news from this year's Annual Bishop's Appeal: it is at 80 percent of its goal! Over 11,200 parishioners have generously contributed to the Appeal.

To date, the 2022 Bishop's Appeal, A Bridge Home, has raised more than \$6.5 million toward the overall \$8.1 million goal, and a total of 14 parishes are over goal.

Likewise, leadership giving remains strong. There are 346 leadership donors, a 30 percent increase over a year ago. The leadership giving has contributed to gains in the average gift size of \$491 and is 11 percent higher than last year.

Pam Rittman, director of the Annual Bishop's Appeal, said the response has been remarkable given the challenges that so many people face with inflation and other expenses. She believes that people are giving out of a deep sense of gratitude in their lives and an understanding that others may not be as fortunate.

Special thanks go to Pam Rittman and Joe Gallagher, chief development officer, for their work in structuring and guiding the campaign, and to Father Paul Murphy, who has done a great job as the new head of the Appeal Advisory Committee.

Now is the time to deliver more good news by making your gift today and help achieve the goal by the target date of June 30. Pledges can be made online at www.2022BishopsAppeal.org; or text the word APPEAL to 475.241.7849.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Our Lady of Assumption Church Re-opens

FAIRFIELD—After a fire last November that led to months of renovations, Our Lady of Assumption Church re-opened in time for Easter. Bishop Frank J. Caggiano visited the parish for the Celebration of the Passion of Our Lord on Good Friday and noted that it was the first liturgy in the church since fire and smoke caused significant damage to one area.

Father Peter Cipriani, pastor of Assumption, said the parish had received its certificate of occupancy from the town just days before the Easter weekend. Parishioners were delighted to move from Mass in the parish hall to the beautifully renovated church with new lighting, a fresh coat of paint and other repairs.

"It doesn't get any more dramatic, any more appropriate, after what we had gone through with the fire to have this grand reopening in time for Easter," said a joyful Father Cipriani. "It's just appropriate on so many levels, a moment of renewal—you can't write a better script."

Our Lady of Assumption Parish was founded in 1922. The period of the church's construction (1939-1940) coincided with an era of great artistic and architectural revival in America. The church was built in the Norman Gothic style and was made constructed with granite blocks quarried in the neighborhood.

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



CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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



PASTOR

REVEREND PETER TOWSLEY, appointed to Pastor of Our Lady of Peace Parish, Stratford. Effective date was May 2, 2022 for a term of six years.

PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR

REVEREND KUMAR XAVARIAPITCHAI, appointed Parochial Administrator, Saint Luke Parish, Westport. Effective date was April 7, 2022 for a term of one year.

PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND JUSTIN RAJ, from Saint Mary Parish, Stamford, to Parochial Vicar Saint Mary Parish, Ridgefield. Effective date is July 1, 2022.

CHAPLAIN

REVEREND NICK PAVIA, appointed as Chaplain to Saint Joseph Manor, Trumbull. Effective date was

May 1, 2022 for a term of three years.

RECTOR

VERY REVEREND ARTHUR MOLLENHAUER, appointed Rector of the Cathedral and Pastor of the Cathedral Parish. Effective date is July 1, 2022 for a term of six years. Father Mollenhauer will continue his appointment as Judicial Vicar for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

DEACON

DEACON DON ROSS, appointed to serve at Saint Pius X Parish, Fairfield for term of 5 years. Effective date was May 1, 2022.

RETIREMENT

REVEREND EDWARD MCAULEY JR., to retirement. Effective date was May 1, 2022.

DEACON WILLIAM C. TIMMEL, Retiring from the Diocese of Bridgeport. Effective date was April 12, 2022.

GRADUATE STUDIES

REVEREND JUAN GABRIEL ACOSTA, assigned to pursue a Licentiate in Canon Law at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Effective date was August 2022-2025.

REVEREND CHRISTOPHER FORD, assigned to pursue a Ph.D. in Administration and Supervision—Church and Non Public School Leadership. Father Ford will continue his current assignments.

INCARDINATION

REVEREND CHURCHILL PENN, Incardinated into the Diocese of Bridgeport

RESIDENCE

REVEREND NICK PAVIA, assigned to reside at Saint Roch Parish, Greenwich. Effective date was May 1, 2022.

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

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

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Circulation

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

Annual Subscription Price

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

Postmaster

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



Time is sacred

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 have always been fascinated by the idea of time travel. My favorite books and movies all center on the manipulation of time and space and what we, as humans, would do if we had autonomy over it.

As I grow older, time is something I never seem to have enough of, and I constantly wish for more. There never seems to be enough time to get laundry done, go grocery shopping, finish multiple projects and read all the books you want to read (because

that, of course, is the highest on my priority list).

In actuality, as I get older, the highest thing on my priority list is quality time with my friends and loved ones. It is my “love language,” as they say. Time with my closest people is what fills me up and gives me the strength to do all those other things on the weekly task list.

My current goal, now that life is returning to an almost “pre-pandemic” state of busyness, is to try and retain some of that

time that I so greatly miss. I am taking all the necessary steps in my life to get there. Of course, this requires some changes and shifts in priorities, but I feel that it is essential to make these changes for my health and well-being.

My sister's wedding is just a few days away as I write this. She is getting married at our home parish of St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull where we went to school and received all our sacraments. I am looking forward to it with great anticipation. I know it will be a hectic day, but I am making it my goal to remain present and not get caught up in the schedule but rather enjoy every moment.

My most considerable excitement for the day, besides celebrating my sister and soon-to-be brother-in-law, is being able to see friends and family that we haven't seen in a while and have everyone gathered together at once.

We tend to glorify busyness

in our modern world, but I relish challenging that. Our worth isn't defined by how busy we are; our value is defined in Christ. He cre-

we should say them at birthdays and weddings and happy celebrations so that things never get left unsaid.” I loved this sentiment.

In light of the recent acts of violence in our country, this is even more pertinent. The time we have with our friends and loved ones is even more sacred. I don't want to have to look back and wish I could time travel in order to say and do the things I wanted to, in order to tell the people I love how much they mean to me.

Jesus' message was love, and I feel like we are losing sight of that.

We need more love; we need more understanding, and we need more time. All we need to do is look to His example of how He treated and loved others and we have all the answers we need. ■

“As I get older, the highest thing on my priority list is quality time with my friends and loved ones... Time with my closest people is what fills me up and gives me the strength to do all those other things on the weekly task list.”

ated us all in His image, and in that, we can find peace.

I read something recently to the effect of “we shouldn't save saying all the wonderful things about our loved ones for funerals;



Only the Eucharist can save the world

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

It was a world much like our own...150 years ago in France. There was war and rumors of war. Catholics were under attack by the press, parishes were in disrepair, religion was ridiculed by atheistic intellectuals, and the government harassed the Church because of its teachings.

A Catholic woman from Tours believed there was only one hope to combat this spiritual and political assault: a return to the Eucharist.

As a result, Mlle Marie Marthe Emelie Tamisier spent ten years petitioning the clergy to hold a Eucharistic Congress. During that time, she led pilgrimages to holy sites where

Eucharistic miracles had occurred and inspired by her friendship with Father Peter Julian Eymard, who was later canonized, she promoted Eucharistic adoration as a response to the militant atheism of the era.

Although she received little recognition in her lifetime, she was eventually successful in her campaign to have a congress in Lille, France in 1881. The theme of the First International Eucharistic Congress was “The Eucharist Saves the World,” which would be a provocative concept today when two-thirds of professed Catholics don't believe in the Real Presence of Christ—Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity—in the Blessed

Sacrament.

Pope Leo XIII, who approved the first congress, which was followed by 51 more, proclaimed: “Our belief is that the renovation of the world will be brought about only by the Holy Eucharist.”

Think about those words. Do we believe that? We live in a world in much need of renovation, and Christ in the Eucharist is our only hope in a world gone seriously wrong. As they said in 1881: The Eucharist saves the world—not political movements, not governments, not social causes, not corporations, not academia. How strange that must sound to people who think the Eucharist is nothing more than a 2,000-year-old symbol.

We should never forget the unequivocal words of Jesus, which have inspired countless non-Catholics to come into our faith: “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food and my

blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.” (John 6:53-56)

Eucharistic Congresses bring together clergy, religious and laity to give witness to the fundamental doctrine of the Real Presence with open-air Masses, adoration, prayerful devotions, and talks.

Beginning this June 19 on the Feast of Corpus Christi (Latin for the Body of Christ), the Bishops of the United States are launching a three-year revival of devotion and belief in the Real Presence. It will lead up to the first National Eucharistic Congress in the United States in nearly fifty years, which is expected to bring 100,000 Catholics to Indianapolis.

“God wants to see a movement of Catholics across the United States, healed, converted, formed, and unified by an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist—and sent out in mission ‘for the life of the world,’” the bishops said in a statement.

St. Teresa of Calcutta did not use complex theological terms when she talked about the power and mystery of the Real Presence.

“The time you spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the best time you will spend on Earth,” she said. “The good news is Jesus is here with us TODAY—Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity—in the Holy Eucharist. Although Jesus comes to us under the appearance of bread and wine, his presence is as real to us now as he was flesh-and-blood-real to his disciples when he walked this Earth. He can perform miracles, heal us, teach us, and love us. We can talk to him, and he can speak to us.”

Always remember that the Eucharist—and only the Eucharist—saves the world. If that sounds preposterous, you need to strengthen your faith in the power and glory of the Blessed Sacrament. Sit before Christ in adoration and ask him to give you the graces you need because until we truly believe the Eucharist saves the world, it won't be saved.

As Servant of God John Hardon S.J. once said: “Without faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, there is no Catholic Church.” ■

A Pathway to Higher Education

Update: Diocese and Fairfield University work together on Bellarmine College Proposal

In recent news stories, there have been a number of public statements made about our efforts with Fairfield University to establish a junior college for young people in the city of Bridgeport. We would like to address some of the misconceptions expressed, and also explain why this project could be so vital for our diocesan family, the neighborhood and the community.

In the spring of 2021, Fairfield University and the Diocese of Bridgeport began discussions about the Bellarmine College program, which we hope to locate in one wing of the Catholic Center facility located at 238 Jewett Avenue in the North End of Bridgeport.

The college would serve primarily as a bridge program for young people from traditionally underrepresented communities so that they might have two years of college-level preparation and instruction, allowing them then to transfer to a four-year institution. There would be no—or only very minimal—cost to the students. The plan calls for no more than 200 students to attend at one time—half in the morning, half in the afternoon—with no residential component.

In order to move ahead with planning and preparation, we sought the city's approval for use of the facility as a two-year college program. As part of that process, we met with a small group of area political leaders and neighbors on April 28, to explain the concept, listen to concerns and answer questions about the plan, which calls only for the interior renovation in our existing Catholic Center facility. The exterior of the building and the grounds of the property would be preserved and enhanced.

A mailer inviting residents to discuss the project was sent to over 5,000 neighboring households. The open house meetings were lightly attended with some in attendance opposed to the Catholic Center location because of concerns about increased traffic and other issues, though a few nearby neighbors favored



the project. Those who voiced opposition made it clear that they would like the Bellarmine College program to find a home in the city, but at another location.

The proposal brings two historic ministries together: the transformative role of Catholic education and the power of the missionary Church to serve the most vulnerable who lack access to resources that could change their lives and communities. So, we are first and foremost mission-focused. Beyond that, the plan enables us to preserve the building and grounds, while also providing this exceptional opportunity to young people—many of whom may also live near the North End location.

We urge neighbors to consider this overview:

- In a fact sheet distributed to those who attended we pointed out that there would be no net increase in traffic because of the low-density use we are proposing.
- The diocese will be moving some ministries to other locations and expects to have at least 50 fewer employees, and a reduction in the number of
- visitors on its side of the building. The 75,000 square foot building is too large a space for the 150 employees who use it on a daily basis, and the stately structure, built in 1917, requires maintenance and updating for contemporary use.
- There is no financial gain for either Fairfield University or the diocese in the program. On the contrary, both the diocese and the university will invest in the building and incur other expenses in order to fulfill this educational mission.
- We've extended an invitation to meet with the political leaders opposed to the project and that invitation has been declined. That invitation remains open.
- The diocese and Fairfield University are open to feedback and suggestion from the neighborhood and are willing to place restrictions on the zoning permit.
- We envision a campus that will also be open to neighbors for continuing education, community meeting space, and park-like grounds.
- The presence of universities boosts property values in the community, supports business



It represents a further step in the “Pathways to Higher Education” partnership between the diocese and the university, which has transformed lives by providing scholarships and other educational resources to the under-served in our community.

Finally, we believe in discussing this project that it is also important to review the historic contribution that Catholic institutions—our parishes, schools, hospitals, and universities—have made to the life, prosperity, and health of our communities. We have been good neighbors and good citizens.

In this spirit, we urge all to support the Bellarmine College program proposal that represents the best kind of investment in Bridgeport, its young people, and its future.

- and creates employment and other opportunities.
- The goal has always been to maintain the Catholic Center at the Jewett Avenue site while returning half of the building to educational usage. The University has held several informational and consultative meetings, seeking feedback and guidance from local community leaders and administrators from surrounding school systems who have expressed their support for the plan. We also consulted the mayor and city planning and economic development leaders to make them aware of the proposal. The model for the program is based on a Jesuit peer school that combines intensive education and support services by locating the program in the community, where the students live and have access to public transportation.

Bellarmino College at a glance:

- The proposed plan for the building involves no expansion of facilities. All renovations will be to the interior of the building.
- Academic spaces will include five classrooms and a computer lab in addition to learning commons and offices for career and support services.
- The course schedule is designed around morning and afternoon sessions, so that there will be no more than 100 students on campus at a time.
- Students will be between the ages of 18 and 22, live nearby, and demonstrate high potential, and otherwise lack access to higher education.
- The Campus plan will not have overnight residency. ■

Foundations in Education

A celebration of Catholic Education

By **THERESA SCIALLO**

DARIEN—"My elementary school principal told me that the power of becoming extraordinary lies within me, if I were to find God through all of life's obstacles," said Luka Silva, student speaker and former Bishop's Scholarship Fund recipient, at Foundations in Education's annual Gala held recently in-at Woodway Country Club in Darien.

Luka shared a memory with more than 220 guests who gathered in person for the premiere fundraising event that supports Catholic education in Fairfield County. The Fairfield University student said that the principals advice changed his life forever, he thanks God every day for having grown academically and spiritually under the guidance of Catholic professionals and the Diocese of Bridgeport.



"I wholeheartedly believe that I would not be the man I am today without the Catholic school system that has instilled in me valuable lessons and progressive values," he added. Luka's education journey started in St. Theresa School in Trumbull and continued to Notre Dame High School. He is currently pursuing International Business

and Finance degrees at Fairfield University.

The gala committee, chaired by Bob and Barbara Scinto, worked together for months to plan an exciting and colorful event to celebrate Catholic education and to raise visibility

and support for Foundations in Education, and its mission to strengthen and transform the mission of Catholic education in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

At their first in-person gala since 2019, Foundations surpassed the fundraising goal, raising over \$1.3 million. Proceeds support Foundations in Education and most notably the Bishop's Scholarship Fund tuition assistance, which strives to make Catholic education more affordable for families.

Guests enjoyed a gourmet meal and a lively program including a live auction and a "raise the paddle" to support student scholarships, all while reconnecting, enjoying each other's company and supporting a great cause. The event also included an awards presentation to distinguished

contributors to Catholic education. The 2022 Gala Honorees included:

Dr. Steven Cheeseman, for his inspiring leadership as Superintendent of Schools throughout the pandemic and commitment to transforming students and Catholic education.

Barbara and Peter Ripp, for their extraordinary philanthropy and personal commitment to Catholic education.

Mutual of America Financial Group, for their exemplary commitment to Catholic education.

"Our honorees give of themselves all while embodying Christ's love in action," shared Holly Doherty-Lemoine, executive director of Foundations in Education. "Their contributions, both individually and collectively,

➤ *CONTINUED ON PAGE 18*

FIE extends app deadline

BRIDGEPORT—Foundations in Education is pleased to announce the application deadline for Bishop's Scholarship Fund tuition assistance has been extended for new K-8 families.

The mission of the Bishop's Scholarship Fund is to help families afford Catholic elementary school tuition in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Now in its 8th year, the fund has awarded over \$17.5 million in assistance to thousands of students attending diocesan schools in Fairfield County who demonstrate financial need.

The deadline is being extended for a limited time, as funding permits, as a result of a continued surge of interest from public school families. The hope is the extension will continue to boost enrollment and encourage consideration of Catholic education.

Foundation in Education's Executive Director Holly Doherty-Lemoine observes, "During the pandemic, many new families saw firsthand the difference Catholic schools make in the lives of students. Now is a great time to assure your child's academic future by enrolling in one of our Catholic schools."

According to the Office of the Superintendent, student enrollment has increased by 11 percent this year, which is the highest in decades.

The application process is streamlined for convenience. Applicants apply online via the FACTS Grant and Aid application at www.FACTSmgt.com/aid. Schools can assist new families with the application process.

Bishop's Scholarship Fund tuition assistance is made possible through donors to Foundations in Education.

"We have a lot of great donors who really believe in the value of Catholic education because they received so much from their own Catholic education or have seen the great work Catholic schools are doing," said Doherty-Lemoine.

(For more information, visit foundationsineducation.org.)

Leaders of Tomorrow... and Today

BRIDGEPORT—"My heart is filled with gratitude. I just want to thank those of you in the room who are investing in the lives of these remarkable young women and men," shared Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at the annual Foundations in Education Leaders of Tomorrow Reception.

Leaders of Tomorrow (LOT) represent students from diocesan elementary schools who have demonstrated financial need and are identified by their principals as possessing strong academics, good character and leadership potential.

Speaking to the students, the bishop added, "We are here because God has given you so many gifts and talents and we see that in you. We call you leaders of tomorrow but whether you realize it or not, you are also leaders of today."

The annual breakfast reception brings together LOT students, their families and principals, and the donors who sponsor a portion of their tuition. Over 200 gathered in person this year on April 7 at Vazzano's Four Seasons

Restaurant in Stratford to celebrate the sixty-six Leaders across the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Donors to Foundations in Education who direct their giving to Leaders of Tomorrow help subsidize the cost of a Catholic elementary school tuition for one or more students by providing for each child's tuition up to \$6,000 per year, partial at \$3,000 per year, or a quarter at \$1,500 per year. As an investor in the education of a child, these special donors provide a life-enhancing gift and help transform the life of a student as well as their own through the gracious and selfless act of giving.

Foundations in Education Board of Trustees Member, Andrea Maldon, shared her perspective as an LOT sponsor.

"I support the entire mission of Foundations in Education, but Leaders of Tomorrow is my favorite aspect. It is so special to be able to meet your sponsored student in person and to get to know them."

Maldon added, "A Catholic education is priceless in so many ways. I was a student who benefited from a Catholic education

in the Diocese of Bridgeport many years ago. As an adult, seeing and reflecting on how my parents sacrificed to give me one of the greatest gifts they could—the foundation of a Catholic education—makes me want to give back so that more students can benefit from that very same environment."

This year's LOT student speaker, Sophie DeCastro, who is in the seventh grade at St. Theresa School in Trumbull, was also able to share her gratitude.

"I would like to thank the donors of Foundations in Education and principals that have made this opportunity possible for us and our families. Your kind donations are very appreciated by everyone here today. Without your support, I do not think I would be attending Saint Theresa School today. May God bless all of you."

(*Leaders of Tomorrow is a unique program of the Bishop's Scholarship Fund. If you are interested in sponsoring a student, or wish to learn more, visit: www.foundationsineducation.org.)*)

Young Adults

A journey toward faith

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

NORWALK—A chance meeting followed by an unexpected lunch date in college led Mariana Martins to refocus on her faith. “This is what I’ve been meant to do,” said Martins, who also spearheads efforts for the Young Adult Ministry at St. Edward the Confessor in New Fairfield. Martins is a social worker for a non-profit organization in Fairfield County.

“I want to build something here,” said the recent college graduate with a master’s degree from Sacred Heart University. Martins said she wants to help grow the faithful young adult community where she lives and works in Fairfield County. Although her faith journey reads like a roadmap with many detours, each turn was directing her home to the Church.

Martins, whose family is from Portugal, said she was brought up in a very Catholic household where prayer, confession and praying the Rosary were as much a part of life as any other routine daily activity. She said college life changed that.

“When I went to college, I was still practicing but not to the degree I was before,” she said, noting demands of daily college life including an expanding social calendar and other obligations left little time for her to focus on her faith. “I got distracted; I became worried about other things. I was not practicing as much,” she admits.

Martins joined a sorority in her sophomore year at Western Connecticut State University and saw her campus involvement and activities increase. The following year she met missionaries from Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) who par-

ticipated in a meet and greet at the university. After speaking with a female missionary of her own age, she learned about the Newman Center. The two exchanged numbers and Martins was invited to join a bible study hosted by the group.

“For a month and a half, I said, ‘I’m busy,’” but persistence from her new friend paid off. “I finally decided to go one night, and it was completely eye opening. It was the sower and the seed story. Are you in the rich soil or on the rocks?” “That day I was like, ‘Wow! I’m really not where I need to be in my faith.’” She decided to stick around and learn more.

Sometime later, “I was having a rough day and getting lunch when who did I see, the missionaries and people from the Newman Center. They invited me back to the Newman Center to have lunch with them and we



MARIANA MARTINS

talked for a bit.” That conversation led to another invite, this time to a trip to Indianapolis, Indiana for a conference. Martins, leaped at the chance to travel with her new friends. “I thought this would be a great opportunity to see another state.”

After registering, and in preparation for the conference, she started attending bible study more regularly. “It completely changed my life,” she said. “At that time, I really hadn’t encountered young adults that were practicing the faith and out doing other things too,” she said. “The way they were living out their faith, was very attractive to me.”

Martins was so moved by the experience she decided to merge her two worlds and started her own bible study specifically for Greek life members. During her senior year at university, she also became the president of the Newman Center. “Everything fell into place because I believe God wanted me to have all of that,” she said, adding that other members had similar experiences. “We don’t want to leave the world. We want to live in it, and practice our faith,” she said.

She witnessed how her openness about her faith made others more comfortable to do the same. “They would talk about bible study at Greek life events, prioritize praying more often and participate in adoration.”

Graduation in 2020, amidst a pandemic, perplexed her with a question about purpose. As the baton was passed for leading the Newman Center and career choices were looming, she decided to pursue a master’s degree in social work at Sacred Heart University. Martins made it her mission to find other people her own age that were practicing their faith and living it out.

She turned to her foundation and her home parish, St. Edward the Confessor, and reconnecting with Father Nick Cirillo, pastor, who she also knew from her days at the Newman Center, opened the

doors to getting to know Father Tim Iannacone and Father Robert Wolfe as more than just parish priests. A meaningful friendship in faith was born. “I never really had a conversation with them until that day,” she said. “They are like the coolest priests ever!”

Through the guidance of the two young priests, the young adult ministry at the parish, which focuses on addressing the needs of those between the ages of 18-35, has grown. There are more than a dozen active young adult ministries throughout the diocese. These programs are made possible and supported by the entire Diocese of Bridgeport through the support of the Bishop’s Appeal.

The theme for the appeal this year is “A Bridge Home,” highlighting hope, renewal and evangelization throughout the diocese. The Appeal invests in services that continue to engage those in their faith and build a strong bridge to many who are struggling.

“Mariana is a prime example of someone who has found a ministry and taken on a leadership role in that ministry,” said Father Iannacone. He said her work with the core team of people organizing the events has helped increase awareness and attendance at the group’s activities and in the parish.

“Parishioners have seen all the good work coming from this ministry and all the young adults coming to Mass,” Father Iannacone said. “They can see their money at work,” he said referencing how, “the Bishop’s Appeal not only helps the diocese, but it in turn, helps the young adult ministry as well.”

Iannacone said contributions from the Bishop’s Appeal and organizations such as Foundations in Faith have helped the Young Adult Ministry at St. Edwards meet the needs of the young community and foster growth. The group has many opportunities for fellowship

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

Young Adult Connection

1 Saint Edward the Confessor Parish
New Fairfield
stedsyoungadults.com
Contact Fr. Robert Wolfe:
Frwolfe@Saintedwardchurch.org

2 Saint Gregory the Great Parish - Danbury
stgregdanbury.org/youth-group
Contact Priscilla Wanderley:
pwanderley@Stgregdanbury.org

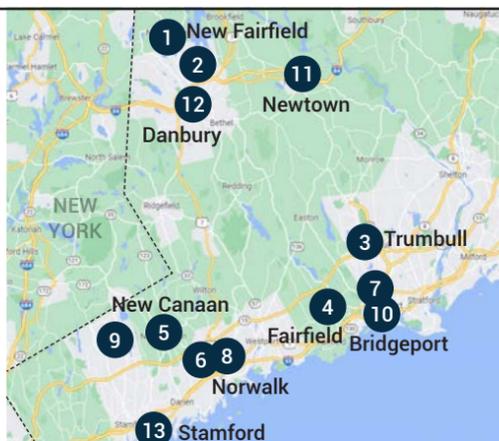
3 Saint Theresa Parish - Trumbull
Contact Theresa Raytar:
raytar.theresa@gmail.com

4 Saint Pius X Parish - Fairfield
crossroadsforchrist.org
Contact: ppeana@st-pius.org
or text SPXFFLD to 84576

5 Saint Aloysius Parish - New Canaan
starcc.com/youngadults
Contact Rev. David Roman: frdavid@starcc.com

6 Saint Matthew Parish - Norwalk
stmatthewnorwalk.org/pray-eat-meet-for-young-adults/
Contact Cassandra & Mitchell Holbrook:
SMYforJ@gmail.com

7 Our Lady of Fatima Parish - Bridgeport
Contact Jennifer Dinis: Jennifertdinis@gmail.com
f Our Lady of Fatima Bridgeport @olfp_bpt



8 Saint Mary Parish - Norwalk
stgregdanbury.org/youth-group
Phone: Esther Flynn at (203) 866-0040

9 Holy Spirit Parish - Stamford
crossroadsforchrist.org
Contact: c4cstamford@gmail.com

10 Saint Charles Borromeo Parish - Bridgeport
www.stcharlesbridgeport.org/34
Contact Rev. Abelardo Vasquez:
FrVasquez@diobpt.org or (203) 333-2147

11 Saint Rose of Lima Parish - Newtown
www.strosechurch.com/young-adult-ministry
Contact Rodd Blessey: blesman4@att.net

12 Our Lady of Aparecida Brazilian Catholic Community - Quasi Parish - Danbury
Contact Gabriela Pereira: (203) 730-9071 or
G.pereira11@live.com

13 St. Mary Parish - Stamford (En Español)
Divine Mercy Young Adult Group
Contact Franklin Catu:
franklincatu1@gmail.com

Foundations in Faith

FIF awards over \$1.1 million in support grants

By ROSE BRENNAN

BRIDGEPORT—Every year, Foundations in Faith invites several organizations throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport to apply for general operating support grants. These grants, which are available by invitation only, help support the crucial work of pastoral ministries in the diocese.

At Foundations in Faith's spring board meeting, the board of trustees approved over \$1.1 million in grant funding to support these efforts through six of its nine funds.

The heavy hitter of the evening was the St. Charles

Borromeo Fund for Vocations and Seminarians, which awarded \$589,000 in general operating support grants. These funds will be divided among the diocesan Office of Vocations, Redemptoris Mater Seminary and the Diocese of Bridgeport seminarians.

The Office of the Superintendent received two general operating support grants. One was from the St. John Bosco Fund for Special Needs in Catholic Schools, totaling \$50,000. The other was from the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Fund for Catholic Schools, totaling \$265,500. Both will support the educational needs of Catholic

school students throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport.

The Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of the Clergy Priests Retirement Residence in Stamford received a \$196,300 general operating support grant courtesy of the St. John Vianney Fund for Retired Priests. The grant will support the needs of the many priests who call Queen of the Clergy home.

The Lourdes Fund for Pastoral Care at Catholic Nursing Homes awarded a \$1,400 general operating support grant to the St. John Paul II Center in Danbury to support the needs of the nursing home's



AT FOUNDATIONS IN FAITH'S spring board meeting, the board of trustees approved over \$1.1 million in grant funding to support these efforts through six of its nine funds.

FIF plans for fellowship, faith and fun this summer

By ROSE BRENNAN

BRIDGEPORT—Summer is just around the corner. For most of us, that probably means vacation time, soaking up the sun and enjoying the warmer weather.

But for Foundations in Faith, the arrival of summer also heralds the arrival of a new grant opportunity for parishes in the city of Bridgeport.

The new program, known as "Summer Fun and Fellowship," is an offshoot of the foundations' mini grant program, and seeks to fund summer religious education and faith formation programs at parishes in the city of Bridgeport. These mini grants will be provided through the St. John Paul II Fund for Religious Education and Faith Formation.

"We are planting seeds in fertile ground," said Kelly Weldon, Foundations in Faith's director. "We want Bridgeport parishes to have collaborations with neighboring parishes, multi-generational inclusive connections and an eagerness to continue faith formation during the summer months. Shining a spotlight on fellowship and

fun builds faith communities and a true sense of joy."

The Summer Fun and Fellowship program emphasizes three elements. First, programs seeking funding must incorporate faith formation in some way. Second, programs must incorporate fellowship, whether among different groups in a parish or among other parishes in Bridgeport. Finally—and perhaps most importantly—the young people in the program need to have fun.

How might a parish meet these criteria? Well, a youth ministry's members might be too young for a Theology on Tap event, but maybe they could do something similar with a Taco Tuesday. Or maybe a youth ministry could have a "S'mores and the Saints" event where they learn about the lives of some of the Church's greatest saints while roasting marshmallows. They could even invite some of the diocesan seminarians to an ice cream social to fellowship and talk about vocations to religious life.

The possibilities are really endless, so long as they emphasize faith formation, fellowship and fun.

"Summer is a time to recreate and re-create," Weldon said. "Let us celebrate our young people with fun and exciting projects.

Ask them for their ideas and we bet they have a winner."

Although Summer Fun and Fellowship is a new program, it will largely follow the application process of Foundations in Faith's mini grant program. This means anyone interested in applying for a Summer Fun and Fellowship grant should get in contact with the foundations and share their idea with the staff. If they think it's a good fit, the foundations will provide the applicant with a mini grant application. Applicants can request up to \$2,000 in funding for their Summer Fun and Fellowship grant.

For Weldon, evidence that young people have been engaged in the project idea will really make an application stand out.

"Bridgeport parishes have a proven track record of creative Catholic community connections," Weldon said. "Summer Fun and Fellowship mini grants are meant to be fertilizer in a garden well seeded."

Applications for Summer Fun and Fellowship grants are open now and will close on June 10. ■

residents. And finally, the St. Catherine Center for Special Needs in Fairfield received a \$500 general operating support grant from its eponymous fund.

These grants will be incorporated into the fiscal budgets for each of the organizations. They'll have access to the monies awarded by the grants beginning July 1.

Outside of the general operating support realm, Foundations in Faith's board of trustees also approved \$113,000 of donor

designated funds for the St. John Paul II Fund for Religious Education and Faith Formation. These funds will go toward the fund's parish support grant program, whose recipients will be determined at the board's next meeting in June.

March 22 certainly proved to be a busy evening for the Foundations in Faith board of trustees. Its support of pastoral ministries in the Diocese of Bridgeport is a reflection of the priority they place on these words. ■

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Constance Mary Carrigan
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Mary Rosanne Mensik

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Special Events

Veritas event features Bishop on live radio show

By JOE PISANI

FAIRFIELD—Several hundred people came out for a dose of faith and fun to watch a special live broadcast of the popular “Let Me Be Frank” radio show and hear Bishop Frank J. Caggiano discuss everything from the perfect recipe for pasta sauce to his youthful aspiration to be Mayor of New York and his vocation to the priesthood.

The event, held at Fairfield University, was a fund-raiser for Veritas Catholic Network (1350 AM and 103.9 FM) and was hosted by Liv Harrison of “It’s Not That Late” and emceed by Joe Pacillo of “The Front Line” with music by the “Restless” band with Father Joseph Gill.

Bishop Caggiano praised Steve Lee, president & CEO of Veritas, for bringing Catholic radio to the diocese and said, “Veritas Radio has truly become

a station that informs, inspires, challenges and celebrates our faith.”

Lee, who began Veritas three years ago, said its mission is to share the truth of the Gospel and the fullness of the Catholic faith by broadcasting faithful and entertaining programs on multiple media platforms, including radio, mobile and social networks and through community engagement. An EWTN affiliate, it broadcasts Catholic programming 24 hours a day throughout Fairfield County and parts of Long Island and New York.

“Tonight’s event kicks off another stretch of tremendous growth for Veritas so we can really become a force for the Church in this area, to bring as many people to Christ as possible this year and beyond,” Lee said.

During the hour-long segment with Bishop Caggiano, Harrison

peppered him with questions about everything from pasta sauce to his vocation and his childhood in Brooklyn.

The bishop applauded Steve Lee and encouraged people to listen to Veritas.

“Radio has a greater reach than any other medium to this day,” he said. “All the hours we spend in a car can be productive or wasted time. Veritas can make your car a sacred space.”

“Let Me Be Frank” airs weekly at noon on Wednesday and can be listened to as a podcast on iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher or Amazon Podcasts.

Kelly Weldon, director of Foundations in Faith, said the foundation provided a grant to Veritas to underwrite the costs of “Let Me Be Frank,” which is ranked among the top ten percent of all podcasts. She praised the show and thanked Lee and his team for “delivering a pow-



SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE, including Father Joseph Gill, came out for a dose of faith and fun to watch a special live broadcast of the popular “Let Me Be Frank” radio show and hear Bishop Frank J. Caggiano discuss everything from the perfect recipe for pasta sauce to his youthful aspiration to be Mayor of New York and his vocation to the priesthood.

erful talk show that is changing hearts and souls.”

The grant to Veritas was made through the newly launched St. Therese Fund for Evangelization.

“The foundation sees the ‘Let Me Be Frank’ radio show as an innovative way to evangelize,” she said. “I wonder if our Catholic high schools, our youth groups, our Catholic ministries, and soup kitchens all tune in for a good listen, followed by reflection and discussions? How cool would it be if the show could be accessible in prisons, detention homes and beyond?”

John Mitchell, chairman of the Veritas board, thanked the guests for their generosity and said that an anonymous donor was willing to match the first \$10,000 of gifts for their evangelization appeal.

Lee offered special praise for Jen Mitchell and Shannon Goetz, “who spearheaded, organized, and ran the whole thing... from the first spark of inspiration for the idea of this different type of gala, to putting together a team and the six months of planning and work that went into it, to the herculean effort they and their team put in standing on their feet for 10 hours.”

“I am immensely grateful for what they did,” he said. “I grew up with both of them, went to school with them, and our parents were all dear friends. They are dynamic and inspiring, faithful women and I am blessed to have their friendship.”

Alessandro Marchetti, who has helped Lee with various projects since the beginning, was pleased to be at the event “surrounded by other Catholics.”

“This is an initiative that brings the Lord to everybody,” he said. “When two or three

are gathered in his name, he’s there.”

He praised Veritas for the work it has done as part of the New Evangelization and for not “watering down the Gospel.” He prayed that the Holy Spirit would continue to “guide this great enterprise.”

Paul Bernetsky, director for leadership of Franciscan University in Steubenville, came to Connecticut for the event and praised Lee for his commitment to his faith and Veritas, and recalled that when Lee graduated from college, he did an internship at an apostolate Bernetsky ran in Washington D.C.

Additional local Veritas programs include “Restless” with Father Joseph Gill and young adults who discuss life as Catholic Millennials in the modern world, at noon on Friday, and “The Tangent” with Father Sam Kachuba, a weekly show at 12:30 pm on Friday that focuses on “good news, good works and good folks in Connecticut, New York and beyond.”

Lee encourages people to listen through the Veritas app, which is available for Apple and Android devices and offers great reception, along with podcasts and live-streaming. The app has listeners all over the world, from South Africa to England, Canada, Florida and California. It is available at the Apple App Store and Google Play by searching for Veritas Catholic Network. Or you can visit: www.veritascatholic.com/listen.

There are some 400 EWTN Radio affiliate stations in the United States. Lee says Veritas reaches an estimated audience of 900,000 people, including 400,000 Catholics in the Bridgeport Diocese. ■

Catholic Scouts: Earn your Emblem Awards!

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

FAIRFIELD COUNTY—As the 2022 Annual Catholic Scouting Awards approach, the diocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting want to encourage scouts, families and unit leaders around the diocese to consider their progress toward earning Catholic Religious Emblem Awards.

A number of emblem awards are available to scouts, including Light of Christ (designed for Cub Scouts 6-7 years old), Parvuli Dei (designed for Cub Scouts, 8-10 years old), Ad Alarte Dei (designed for any youth of the Roman Catholic Faith who is registered in a BSA troop or crew), and Pope Pius XII (designed for Venturing Crew members and Boy Scouts, 15 years old and older). Additionally, if a scout earns all four badges, they can



receive a 5th award for their completion.

In order to earn an emblem award, scouts must work with their family or council through a workbook. This workbook is targeted for their age group and often parallels what scouts are learning in their faith formation or religious education classes.

Once they complete the workbook, a local pastor verifies their completion.

“Duty to God is a big part of

the scout honor code,” said Stephen Prostor, chair of the diocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting.

Please save the date for the 2022 Catholic Scouting Awards, which are scheduled for June 3, 2022 at 7 pm at St. Aloysius Church located at 21 Cherry St, New Canaan, CT 06840.

(For more information, visit: www.formationreimagined.org/family-scouting) ■



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including our two principal initiatives –
The Bishop's Scholarship Fund and Innovation & Leadership Grants,
ultimately benefitting students and teachers
across the Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic schools.*

To make a donation or learn more about Foundations in Education,
please contact Holly Doherty-Lemoine at holly@foundationsineducation.org.



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In Honor of Jubilarians

Celebrating the beauty of consecrated life

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

DANBURY—More than 90 women religious recently gathered at St. Joseph Church in Danbury to participate in a Pontifical Mass celebrating Consecrated Life followed by a reception.

Celebrated by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, the liturgy was said in honor of Jubilarians celebrating their 25th, 50th, 60th, 65th and 70th anniversaries of consecrated life. Most notably, Sister Marie Anna Motz of the School Sisters of Notre Dame celebrated her 80th anniversary!

During his homily, the bishop reflected on the beauty of consecrated life, the witness of the religious profession in daily life, and the many capacities in which they serve; such as teaching, nursing, feeding the poor, working with the homeless, chaplain work, contemplative life and how that witness makes a profound effect for everyone including him.

In a moving moment, all the religious renewed their vows together.

After Mass all the gathered shared a delicious meal in the



BISHOP FRANK J. CAGGIANO RECENTLY celebrated a Pontifical Mass for Consecrated Life in honor of Jubilarians celebrating their 25th, 50th, 60th, 65th and 70th anniversaries of consecrated life. Most notably, Sister Marie Anna Motz of the School Sisters of Notre Dame celebrated her 80th anniversary!

parish hall and each Jubilarian received a rose from Bishop Caggiano.

Susan Baldwin of the Office of Clergy and Religious, remarked that the Mass was beautiful and served as a reminder that our lives should be centered around the Holy Eucharist. Moments that stood out to her were: witnessing the renewal of the vows, hearing the sisters sing together and meeting Sister Marie Anna Motz. “The religious teach me

every day to think of others first,” she said.

In lieu of gifts, the religious asked that a donation be made on behalf of each Jubilarian to Catholic Relief Services.

Father James Vattakunnel, who celebrated his 25th year of ordination, concelebrated Mass along with Father Frank Hoffmann and Father Samuel Scott. Deacon Don Naiman assisted.

Music was provided by Dr.

William Atwood, diocesan director of music ministry and Laura Intravia, cantor.

Special thanks are in order to those who worked to make this event so special: The Office of Clergy and Religious with a committee including; Sister John Vianney SSND, Sister Maria Iannuccillo SSND, Laurie

Furey from the diaconate office, Father Frank Hoffmann, vicar for clergy, Susan Baldwin from the clergy office, Dr. William Atwood, music director, Father Peter Lenox, vicar for liturgy and worship, Anne Leclercq from St. Joseph Church in Danbury and Renee Stamatis from the Communications Office. ■

CATHOLIC EDUCATION FROM PAGE 13

have transformed the lives of countless students and teachers throughout Fairfield County,” Lemoine added.

The evening began with members of the Children’s Choir at St. Mary School in Ridgefield leading guests with their angelic voices from the cocktail reception to the grand ballroom. Under the direction of Miss Emma Giorgio, the students sang “Let There Be Peace on Earth” and “Amazing Grace.”

During the live auction, World Champion Auctioneer Bobby D of Inspiring Hearts Fundraising drove up bidding as guests raised their paddles on a variety of donated items including:

Private reception with Bishop Frank Caggiano

All-expense-paid trip for six for one week to Lido Key, Fla. that includes lodging at a magnificent 12,000 square-foot home right on the coast

Lake George getaway for fourteen that includes a main house, boathouse on the lake, a guest cottage, direct waterfront access and use of 2 kayaks and a canoe

Round of golf with 2-time Super Bowl Champion and former New York Giant quarterback Eli Manning and Giants V.P. Frank Mara at Winged Foot Golf Club

Broadway Adventure Package that includes two orchestra seat tickets to a top tier Broadway performance

New York State of Mind Package that includes a sunset cruise and dinner for twelve, four tickets to N.Y. Yankees, N.Y. Mets and N.Y. Giants, and wine pairing dinner for eight at Il Palio Restaurant.

Auctioneer Bobby D found a donation level for all guests to raise their paddle, from \$60,000 to \$100 in support of Bishop’s Scholarship Fund and its special initiative, Leaders of Tomorrow. The Leaders of Tomorrow program grants scholarships to students who have demonstrated financial need and are identified by their principals as possessing strong academics, good character and leadership potential.

In this past year, Foundations in Education awarded nearly \$2.5 million in Bishop’s Scholarship Fund tuition assistance to nearly 1,200 students. The Leaders of Tomorrow program awarded \$337,000 to 66 elementary school students. Additionally, \$142,000 was awarded to teachers for their creative projects through the Innovation and Leadership Grants Program.

Foundations in Education offers special thanks to the many donors and sponsors of the evening whose generosity assures hundreds of students will receive assistance this year. Lemoine stated, “We are grateful to the very loyal and generous donors who believe so strongly in our mission. Your contributions quite literally transform lives! Thank you from the bottom of my heart for continuing your support of our students and teachers.”

Foundations in Education relies on the extraordinary generosity of donors to make their programs possible and the promise of a Catholic education a reality for families across Fairfield County.

(For more information or to find out how your donation can transform lives, visit www.foundationsineducation.org.) ■



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May 2022

St. Catherine Academy

Knowing they are loved: faith in their lives

By VIRGINIA WEIR

FAIRFIELD—Every Friday during prayer service at St. Catherine Academy, Philip offers a litany of intercessions—praying for his family, classmates, teachers and individuals he knows who are sick or struggling. He even prays for Cobalt, his pet parakeet that passed away. It is not always easy to understand exactly what he is saying, but the sincerity of his petitions is clear. “Philip brings his whole self to prayer,” noted his teacher Sr. Cheryl Driscoll, RSM.

His mother, Karen Palilla, agreed. “When we’re in the car, Philip will often roll down the window, look up to the sky and say, ‘Thank you, Jesus, for the sky.’ He seems to be an unusually faith-filled individual.”

Although individuals with special needs cannot often describe their spiritual experience, its impact is evident in multiple ways—sometimes in exuberance, sometimes in calmness; in the enjoyment of music and ritual, but most especially in the joy that their presence brings to others.

Msgr. Robert Weiss, pastor at St. Rose of Lima in Newtown and a Center Board member, referred the Palillas to the Academy when Philip and his family was struggling to decide what school environment would be best for him. Msgr. Weiss has witnessed Philip’s development over the years.

“Philip’s faith is simple, uncomplicated and joyful,” he said. “I have seen the influence he has had on our parishioners. His smile is contagious! When he was younger, he would often walk through the church at the Exchange of Peace reaching out to anyone who would shake his hand. That simple gesture of shaking hands reminded all of us what Jesus calls us to be as a community that brings peace and joy to the world, starting right here in Newtown.”

A Community of Inclusion

Spiritual development is an important part of the mission of St. Catherine Center. To foster this, Academy students learn the basics of the Catholic faith in religious education class. The prayer service each Friday sup-



BRINGING A SPECIAL FAITH TO PARISH COMMUNITIES-- Anna, a student at St. Catherine Academy, speaks with Rev. Ciprian Bejan, Pastor at St. Lawrence Parish in Shelton, after a recent Mass.

ports and reinforces that through prayer and song. The Center also hosts an annual Mass Celebrating People with Special Needs, where young people with disabilities from the diocese receive the sacraments with their families participating.

“As a Catholic school, we are focused on the Gospel and what Jesus teaches,” said Eric Spencer, director of education at the Academy. “It’s a simple message—of caring and being kind to each other, forgiving each other and asking God for help when we need it. This is basic to all faiths, really. And all faiths are welcome at St. Catherine Center.”

Kari Iyer, an Academy student, is Hindu. Her parents, Hema and Easwar, are familiar with the Catholic faith both from friends and from attending Catholic schools and faith-based colleges. Last December Kari was the Star of Bethlehem in the annual Christmas Pageant. “We were so happy that Kari was being included,” Easwar said. “For us what is important is for Kari to participate in events with her classmates and friends, so she has a sense of belonging to her school and her community.”

“Deep down in their hearts the students know they are loved, and they are grateful for it,” said Sr. Cheryl. “Each of them internalizes it in their own way. They show it more than they can talk about it.”

“Our overall goal is to create

an environment with acceptance and inclusion at its core,” said Helen Burland, executive director, “where all feel valued and respected.”

Integrating into the Community

Integrating into a faith community is often an especially difficult experience for families of children with special needs. Parents worry about their children’s behavior being disruptive and whether they will be welcome.

“When our daughters were very young, Mass was typically attended in the cry room with one or all of us crying!” said Michelle Rivelli, mother of Jessie in the Adult Program. “Those were difficult and stressful times, as Jessie wanted to run up and down the aisle and would throw a tantrum and scream.” She offered Jessie candy for appropriate behavior. Physical reinforcement also helped to calm her. “I was a regular, standing in the back of the church, swinging her by her ankles,” Michelle said.

To help Jessie, Michelle and her husband Richard Zangrillo created a “social story” with pictures of parts of the Mass so that she could follow along. Jessie now enjoys the ritual, and when the family goes to church she is the one prompting them for the next reading or hymn.

“Although it is difficult to know what Jessie understands about God, she often smiles and

displays more joy during the consecration and after receiving Communion,” Michelle said. “Because she is always fully present in any given moment, seeing her during Mass has enriched our own experience as we share this time with her.”

Deirdre Rajkowski, Ryan’s mother, had a similar story, with early years spent in the cry room with his brother. Now, Ryan looks forward to church and the opportunity to socialize with the priests and parishioners at the 7 am Mass at St. Aloysius Church in New Canaan. “Now that he is older, church has become a great community,” Deirdre said. “We have to keep refocusing during Mass because he wants to wave, smile, and blow kisses to everyone. It’s clear from their reactions and the look on their faces that he’s had a significant impact on them, bringing them a little bit of happiness to start their day.”

Mary Ross was too nervous to attend the rehearsal for her son Patrick’s First Holy Communion, even though they had practiced and involved the whole family. “The priest was not too sure Patrick understood,” she related. “He held up the host to our blind son and asked, ‘Patrick, do you know what this is?’ Bob [my husband] told me that Patrick responded in a loud voice, ‘It’s the Lord, Jesus Christ!’” Surprised and humbled, the priest then asked Patrick to pray for him.

She continued, “Along the way, many people have questioned what Patrick really knows. His deep understanding and connection to his faith stand as evidence to us that he is more in tune with what Jesus wanted us to know than most of us.”

Different Avenues for Spiritual Experience

For Patrick, music is a spiritual experience. “Patrick loves the music in church,” said his mother, who attends St. Anthony of Padua Church in Fairfield. “He learned all the words and tunes to many hymns and sings them at home.” Among his favorites are “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” and “I Am the Bread of Life.” He can recognize the Responsorial Psalm by the music alone.

Anna Stowe, a student (pictured below), also enjoys music and camaraderie in her church community at St. Lawrence Church in Shelton. For a while she sang in the C4Y Diocesan Youth Choir, and is now taking singing lessons. “I like to sing because it makes me feel happy and energized,” she said. “On Eagle’s Wings” is one of her favorite hymns. “The song makes people feel better who are having tough times.” Anna likes to talk to people at church and hopes one day to be a Reader.

Ryan also enjoys the socializing at St. Aloysius. Every few months, the parish hosts a gathering for the special needs members and church teenagers called “St. A’s Buddies,” where they play games, sing and dance. This type of peer interaction is beneficial to all participants.

As Jessie’s mother Michelle said, “Our daughter’s presence at Mass demonstrates the simple yet profound message of how a diverse community of people coming together can share in God’s message of love, regardless of their challenges.”

“It is as if, through their vulnerability, our students and adults are more open to receive and share God’s love,” said Helen. “There is something for all of us to learn in that. As we enter the Easter season, a time of renewal, it is an especially good time to contemplate this. Faith is ever present at St. Catherine Center—a living and authentic expression of God’s love.” ■

Diocesan Appointment

Colombian priest is new vicar for Hispanic affairs

FOR MARICARMEN GODOY

DANBURY—In his homily during a Sunday afternoon Mass celebrated recently at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Danbury, Father John Pérez, a native of Bello-Antioquia, Colombia, and a priest for the Diocese of Bridgeport, spoke about his new appointment as episcopal vicar for Hispanic Catholics.

The bishop formally announced the appointment on February 28, 2022, under canonical norm 476-481. Father Pérez officially began his new role on March 1. He will also continue to serve as pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish.

“As Father Pérez begins his new work, I ask that you keep him and the vicariate’s work in service to our Hispanic brothers and sisters in your prayers. He is a man of deep faith and eagerness to serve, and I am grateful that he has accepted this assignment,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. “I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to Father Gustavo Falla who retires from this ministry after many years of service to the Spanish-speaking faithful of our diocese.”

In the Diocese of Bridgeport, over 25 percent identify their ethnicity as Hispanic, and nearly 40 percent of all young Catholics

in the diocese now identify as Hispanic. According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Hispanics comprise about 40 percent of Church membership in the United States. Nationally, fifty percent of American Catholics ages 14 to 29 are Hispanic and 55 percent of Catholics under 14 are Hispanic.

Father Pérez asked for everyone’s support and understanding because his new responsibilities may mean that he will spend less time in the parish. “The bishop has appointed me to a new position, this means that he has given me more work,” Father Pérez quipped, “but I will continue here in the parish as always,” he said, and was greeted by the applause of his parishioners.

As episcopal vicar, Father Pérez will bring together the twelve Hispanic parishes that make up Fairfield County, sixteen Hispanic priests and five Anglo priests who speak Spanish and maintain Hispanic ministries in their parishes.

Father Pérez said he is looking forward to his added assignment as vicar for all Hispanic affairs in Fairfield County.

Father Pérez said that when the bishop first asked him to consider the leadership post, he asked for time to think it over because

of the full-time responsibility of running a parish.

Thanks to the support of his associate parish priest Father Pedro Sosa and Deacon Rafael Regús, Father Pérez decided to accept the request of the bishop.

“I have always told Bishop Caggiano: ‘count on me for whatever you need!’ and these words must become deeds. In addition, I made a vow of obedience and I must fulfill it,” he replied.

From the moment his appointment as episcopal vicar of the Hispanic ministry took effect, he began to contact his fellow brother priests and deacons of Hispanic origin or who speak Spanish, to be of service to them and learn about how they are working on the issue of evangelization within their parishes.

He said evangelization is a major focus of the vicariate and that involves children’s catechism, movements of Hispanic leaders, premarital training courses, spiritual retreats—all offered in Spanish.

In Father Pérez’s sights is the need to reestablish the Rachel’s Vineyard program that was conceived to give support to pregnant women who find themselves in need, and rethink pre-marital courses to encourage more face-to-face opportunities. In addition, he is committed to the Virtus



FATHER JOHN PÉREZ

training program for parish staff and volunteers in order to ensure Safe Environments and protect children and vulnerable adults.

Father Pérez also wants to make sure that all the courses and guides that are given in each parish are translated into Spanish. He said that some parishes have 100 percent Hispanic membership, such as his own parish in Danbury, and others may have growing numbers of Hispanic faithful such as parishes in Shelton and four Greenwich parishes.

Another issue that is of interest to the new vicar is to continue preserving the Ministry of Music in Spanish. He said he wants to ensure that the parishes have their choirs use the native instruments of each region and that the songs in Spanish continue to be attached to the liturgy.

“Hispanics see an expression in music and that makes it an

ecclesiastical custom and that is why we need native voices and the understanding that is necessary to continue reinforcing vernacular music as part of evangelization,” he said.

Father John Pérez, a native of Colombia, came to the Diocese of Bridgeport in 1999 thanks to the diocese’s director of vocations who asked Cardinal Eagan for his transfer.

He was ordained on May 17, 2003, at St. Theresa Church in Trumbull by Bishop William E. Lori. His first assignment was as parochial vicar at St. Mary Parish in Stamford, effective May 31, 2003. He also served as parochial vicar at St. Peter Parish in Danbury, as parochial vicar of St. Mary and Our Lady of Montserrat Parish, before serving as pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Danbury for the past eight years. ■

YOUNG ADULTS FROM PAGE 14

with a spiritual component, with unique themed gatherings such as Hawaiian night, trivia night and an upcoming karaoke night. Those types of activities have a strong appeal for the younger generation emerging from college life, where organizations such as the Newman Center at Western Connecticut State University help build a bridge to a faith-filled future.

“We are welcoming people into a place where Christ is dwelling in fellowship with one another,” said Angelica Bakhos, program coordinator for the Offices of Campus Ministry and Vocations.

The Newman Center, named after its patron John Cardinal Newman and supported by the Diocese of Bridgeport through the Bishop’s Appeal, seeks to help recognize, develop and cultivate the gifts of all God’s people at the Danbury campus by creating a space where the “why” questions of life can be explored and answered more fully.

Bakhos said weekly dinners hosted at the center are open to faculty and students to help encourage fellowship. Plans for a talk series and other social events are in the works. “The funding from the diocese really helps us accomplish the unity and mission within the diocese and within Fairfield County,” Bakhos said. Some of the funding helps support efforts to provide everyday items such as toothbrushes, deodorant or tissues to help students feel more comfortable, she said. Funding also helps provide for food pantry bags for students on the go looking for a quick meal.

Good conversations fostered by fellowship help connect people to their desires for God whether they realize they have a need for him or not, Bakhos said. “We want the Newman Center to be their home away from home,” she said. ■



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A Cause for Sainthood

Shelton Carmelite, Father Valabek, supported cause of priest martyred by the Nazis

By JOE PISANI

SHELTON—Redemptus Maria Valabek believed there were saints among ordinary men and women...and he spent his life looking for them.

A Carmelite priest, Father Valabek grew up in Shelton and later became the postulator general of his religious order, responsible for researching candidates for sainthood and directing their causes through the Vatican.

"He took his job very seriously, and it was his goal to find examples of people living ordinary everyday lives who were saints that could inspire the average person to be good and follow Christ," said his niece Theresa Waldron, a parishioner of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque Church in Shelton.

One of the causes he oversaw was that of St. Titus Brandsma, a Carmelite friar who was martyred by the Nazis in the Dachau concentration camp in 1942 and canonized by Pope Francis on May 15.

Father Brandsma grew up on his family's dairy farm in the Netherlands. As a young man, he felt called to the religious life, so he joined the Carmelite monastery. As much as he was drawn to contemplative prayer and education, he also felt a calling to the worldly profession of journalism.

It was his faith and his love of journalism that motivated him to take a stand against the Nazis in the years leading up to World War II when he criticized them in the harshest terms. "The Nazi movement is a black lie," he once wrote. "It is pagan."

Ultimately, it was his courage in resisting the Nazis that led to his imprisonment and martyrdom.

One of the foremost authorities on St. Titus Brandsma was Father Valabek. Born and raised in Shelton, he was Postulator General of the Causes of Saints from 1981 to 1995, during which time he researched Carmelites who were considered candidates for beatification and canonization.

He died at 69 on August 5, 2003 as a result of injuries he sustained in a car accident in New York. However, he was blessed to attend the beatification of Father Brandsma by Pope John Paul II in



1985, along with his niece Theresa.

"He was a brilliant man who spoke more than ten languages," said Waldron, who is Director of Resident Lifestyle at Benchmark Senior Living in Shelton. "He was a good person down to the core and definitely a father figure to me growing up."

His office, which overlooked St. Peter's Square, was only a ten-minute walk to the Vatican, where he often heard confessions at St. Peter's Basilica, she said.

"He was also instrumental in starting the Third Order of Carmelites at St. Lawrence and other Third Order Carmelite communities around the world," she said. "He was just such a great man and so pious. He read his devotions every morning and said Mass every day."

In a tribute to Father Valabek, Tom Zeitvogel, T.O. Carm., described him as "a Carmelite friar who has endeared himself to the hearts of a multitude of Lay Carmelites throughout the world." Zeitvogel saved some 55 letters from Father Valabek, and over the years, he encountered him on many retreats, which he regularly conducted for Lay Carmelites.

Father was also known for his love of the Boston Red Sox.

"The only time I ever saw him get upset was when he was watching a game, and he got so wound up," Waldron recalled. "He loved the Red Sox. Before he died, I was talking to him, and I said, 'Hopefully the Red Sox will win the

series.' And I said something like, 'Pray for them. Let's give it two years.' They won after he died."

When her daughter was born, she was named Francesca in honor of her great-uncle, whose birth name was Frank, Waldron said.

Father Valabek was born in Shelton on July 3, 1934 to Frank and Anna Valabek and graduated from St. Joseph School. His father was from Slovakia and his mother from the Czech Republic. While his sister Ann attended Shelton High School, he went to St. Albert's Junior Seminary in Middletown, N.Y. In 1953, he entered the Carmelite novitiate in Williamstown, Mass., and was ordained to the priesthood on July 25, 1960.

He spent 40 years of his Carmelite ministry in Rome in various positions, including Master of Students and head of the Theology and Spiritual Section at the College of St. Albert, Dean of Regina Munda College, and editor of the magazine "Carmel in the World." He was the author of six books, several about St. Titus Brandsma.

Father Valabek taught in Rome at the Collegio San Alberto and returned to the United States every summer, traveling, preaching and raising money for the Carmelite missions. He frequently visited Father Philip Brady, then-pastor of St. Margaret Mary Church, and occasionally filled in.

Being the Postulator General of the Carmelites, his job was to promote causes for beatification and

canonization.

"I shall never forget the many times he would share with me the stories of the lives of Carmelite laity in the far-flung regions of the world who lived even hundreds of years ago. But how baffled he was that so many of them have not yet been officially canonized," Zeitvogel wrote. "In the same conversation, he would always marvel at the heroic holiness being lived out by many Lay Carmelites today."

Father Valabek, who was 8 years old when St. Titus Brandsma was martyred, was very proud when the Carmelite friar was beatified, Waldron said. "He always wanted to share the story about the concentration camp."

Pope John Paul II beatified him on November 3, 1985 as a martyr for the faith and said his optimism "accompanied him even in the hell of the Nazi camp—until the end he remained a source of support and hope for other prisoners."

St. Titus was recently canonized along with several other blessed after the Vatican confirmed miracles that were caused through their intercession. He offers a model for our era about the importance of speaking the truth and upholding our faith in the face of tyranny.

Ordained in 1905 in Rome, Father Titus returned to the Netherlands to work in Catholic education and taught philosophy to Carmelites in formation and later at the Catholic University of Nijmegen. The bishop of Utrecht appointed

him spiritual adviser of 30 Catholic newspapers. And as Adolf Hitler consolidated his power in Germany, Father Titus criticized the Nazis in his columns and lectures.

After the Nazis invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, Father Titus resisted their pressure to use Catholic newspapers and education to spread propaganda. He also defended the Jewish people, including Jewish children who attended Catholic schools, and said, "the Church in carrying out her mission makes no distinction between sex, race or people."

He argued his case but was unsuccessful in dissuading the Nazis. The Gestapo trailed him as he visited editors throughout the Netherlands, telling them to resist the pressure to run Nazi advertisements and articles.

When he was arrested in 1942, he told the detaining officer, "Imagine my going to jail at the age of 60."

He was asked why he disobeyed the state regulations and responded, "As a Catholic, I could have done nothing differently." He later wrote, "If it is necessary, we, the Dutch people, will give our lives for our religion."

Eventually, Father Titus was transferred to the German concentration camp in Dachau, where he was kept under close watch. On many occasions, he secretly blessed prisoners, heard confessions and led the Stations of the Cross in violation of the explicit orders of the Nazis.

His biographer, Father Boniface Hanley, O.F.M., wrote: "From the moment Titus entered the camp, his calmness and gentleness infuriated his captors. They beat him mercilessly with fists, clubs and boards. They kicked, punched and gouged him, drawing blood and oftentimes leaving him nearly unconscious in the mud."

When he was admitted to the infirmary on July 26, 1942, a nurse gave him a lethal injection. Later testifying about him for his cause for sainthood, she vividly recalled the face of the priest, "who had compassion on me" and gave her his rosary.

She said, "He told me that if I were to pray a lot, I would not be lost," and that he would pray for her. ■

St. James Middle School

Bringing parents and students together

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

STRATFORD—St. James School recently hosted an information night for 5th-grade parents and students. The parent-student experience was established to help those families with students moving on to middle school and answer any questions they might have.

Principal Chris Robertson walked attendees through the mid-

dle school program as a whole, touching on how they approach behavior issues, developmental issues, the change in schedules, and how they go about creating a kind and safe culture.

Each middle school teacher made an introduction and walked through their curriculum for the year and all the exciting things students will learn and experience.

Three current middle school stu-

dents offered advice and answered questions from students and parents. Attendees were then invited to take a walk through the Science Fair that was going on in the gym.

"The middle school at St. James has really helped me to grow not only as a student but as a person as well," said Noel, a current student at the middle school.

When asked the incoming middle schoolers how they felt about having no locks on their lockers, one student raised his hand and said, "We don't need locks because we are responsible, and we know how to make good choices."

Jessica Curran, whose son Noel is a soon-to-be graduate of the middle school program, also has a fifth-grader, Xavier, who is about to enter the program. "We were excited to attend this event because we felt it was important for Xavier to hear first-hand about the dynamics, expectations and wonderful things he will experience in the next three years at St. James," she said. "It is in these middle school years when students at St. James School—who have lived and learned the Gospel from a young age—will be challenged to apply these morals and values to their academics, relationships and extra-curriculars as autonomous individuals. This is why St. James School provides an education like no other!"

Her husband, Richard, agreed, "We couldn't be more happy with the excellent education our children have received at St. James School. The emphasis on faith-based learning and living, particularly at the middle school level, is what differ-

entiates this education and makes it so valuable."

Each family was given an "exit ticket" where they were able to leave any questions they had but may not have asked during their time at the session. All feedback was positive, and all were grateful for the time the staff took to walk them through everything.

The goal of the session was to give parents the opportunity to ask questions and fully understand the goals of the middle school program at St. James.

"The middle school years can be a challenging time for parents and children," said Principal Chris Robertson. "At St. James, we know our parents recognize the value of our academic program. We also want our families to understand that we work hard at cultivating a culture of kindness and respect. The outcome is a middle school where we see more positive and socially healthy behaviors. No school is perfect, but at St. James, our students strive to be their best selves for each other and their community." ■

DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT MAY 22—JUNE 25

MAY	23	Rev. Thomas M. Garrick	1955
		Deacon Hans Jakob Gram	2010
	24	Rev. Mark Grimes	2008
	25	Rev. Joseph A. Ganley	1957
	27	Rev. Joseph F. Sohovich	1957
	28	Rev. John P. McNerney	1969
	29	Msgr. John J. Barney	1973
		Rev. Harry Holbrook	2005
	30	Rev. Adelard A. Jalbert	1960
	31	Rev. Dennis A. Szocs, O.F.M.	1985
JUNE	1	Rev. Msgr. Jean C. Tetreault	2003
	2	Rev. Thomas M. Ford	1992
	3	Rev. Michael F. Blanchard	1982
		Rev. Richard J. Grady	1993
	5	Msgr. John Hayes	1964
	6	Rev. Thomas J. Hanley	1954
		Msgr. Edward J. Howley	2012
	7	Rev. James J. Dennis	2003
	8	Msgr. Bernard S. Scanlon	2004
	9	Msgr. James G. Lengen	1999
		Rev. James J. O'Malley	1996
	13	Deacon Anthony LaBua	1988
	14	Msgr. William F. Kearney	1974
	15	Msgr. John H. Landry	1967
	19	Rev. Robert S. McBride	1982
	20	Msgr. John J. Bumstead	1996
	21	Rev. Albert D. Talbot	1962
	22	Rev. Xavier Renda	2009
	24	Rev. Frankln J. Corrigan	1974
	25	Rev. Albert A. Tomasko	1978

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May 2022

Sports

KC standout's twin passions: Basketball, chess

By **DON HARRISON**

Ty Staples-Santos has gained state-wide acclaim for his skills as a point guard at Kolbe Cathedral in Bridgeport. The 6-foot senior tri-captain capped

hard to keep in front of.

"From the beginning, the entire staff thought Ty would be our next great player. We all felt that he had the work ethic to do it."

Staples-Santos is just the 12th

on the cover of Sports Illustrated even before he played his first collegiate game at Ohio U., still holds the New England career scoring record for high school players (2,691 points). Smith's name still appears atop the list of UConn's all-time career scorers (2,145 points) and he went on to play three NBA seasons with the Minnesota Timberwolves.

What sets Staples-Santos apart from Lockett, Smith and those other earlier Cougar stars, though, is his passion and skill set for another game: Chess. Indeed, Tyrell Malachi Staples-Santos is the co-founder of the Kolbe Chess Club and serves as an instructor for other students. He's also a member of the Fairfield County Chess Club.

"My dad introduced me to the game when I was 7 or 8. He used to play my uncle at the kitchen table," Ty explained. "My dad used to crush me all the time, but then I started to beat him on occasion. Then I started to challenge people at the barber shop, and I used the money I won to pay for the haircuts."

The Kolbe Chess Club meets each Monday after school from 2:30-4:30 pm, and Ty pointed out that "we had five kids when we started and now we're up to 12."

In the 2021-22 season's opening game, Staples-Santos scored 34 points in a stunning 81-27 rout of Warren Harding, establishing a new career high in the process. But what made the event even sweeter was the fact that Ty's father, Anthony Santos, was in attendance as a member of Harding's 2000-01 state championship team that was being honored that evening.

In late February, Ty put forth another 34-point game, this time in a 75-56 victory over Newtown.

He considers Pfohl "a great coach," an opinion supported by the Cougars' three state championships and four runner-up finishes under his tutelage. Across 20 seasons, Pfohl's Kolbe teams have won 401 games and lost 90 (.817 percent).

Staples-Santos: "When I was a freshman coming in, I thought I could have started. But coach put me on the bench. He was molding me. I was the starting point guard the next three years."

As a youngster, Staples-

Santos regarded LeBron James as his basketball hero, but as he's matured, he's made a switch to a much younger NBA star, the Memphis Grizzlies' 22-year-old point guard, Ja Morant. "I've emulated the way he plays," Ty says of Morant, who averaged 27.4 points and 6.7 rebounds this season.

So, what's next for Ty? He's considering a post-grad year before attending college, possibly at Cheshire Academy or Notre

Dame Prep in West Haven.

Staples-Santos was pleased that teammate Najimi George, a 6-4 sophomore with considerable potential, was named to GameTime's All-State Third Team. Other players from the Diocese selected to the GameTime all-star squad:

Second Team: Finn Miller, Notre Dame-Fairfield.

Third Team: Bailey Coleman, Notre Dame-Fairfield; and Max Manjos, Fairfield Prep. ■



TY STAPLES-SANTOS, Kolbe Cathedral's All-State senior guard, is described as "a magician with the basketball." He's also quite adept at another game: Chess.

his high school career this season by sparking the Cougars to a 24-4 record and into the championship game of the CIAC Division III State Tournament. He was selected to both the GameTime and Coaches All-State basketball teams, and competed in no fewer than three post-season all-star games.

"He's a magician with the basketball...arguably the best in the state," says K-C coach John Pfohl. "He's bright, he can score and pass, and in open court he's

Kolbe Cathedral player chosen to the prestigious GameTime—formerly New Haven Register—All-State Basketball Team. He averaged 19.2 points, 6.0 assists and 5.8 rebounds per game this winter, figures that attest to his all-round skills on the court.

Two of his Kolbe All-State predecessors, Walter Lockett and Chris Smith, rank among the finest players in Connecticut history; both were elected to the CIAC's 25-player All-Century Team. Lockett, whose likeness appeared

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Column: Thomas Hicks



Found by God

POTPOURRI

By THOMAS H. HICKS

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

For many of us, youth is gone, and the days are upon us that please us not. Life's drama can grow wearisome and leave one with a sense that one has had one's fill. Death comes on the scene; it is less abstract, more real. With aging one is more open to the realization that we have an appointment with death. Death is there, somewhere ahead of us. It is an appointment we cannot break. Therefore, it is not unexpected that, as one ages, there is an inquisitiveness about God, and one is disposed to a growing interest in spirituality.

For many believers, there is a kind of spiritual maturing. One can feel that one has lived a life of faith stuck in the shallow end of the pool. Many of the old things begin to lose their luster. There's a realization that that which was good for yesterday, may not be right for today. There's Paul's metaphor in First Corinthians 13:11: "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways." Earlier in the letter (1Cor.3:2), Paul made the same point: "Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as spiritual people... but only as mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food; for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready."

Many people's conception of God changes with time. Many were raised to connect God with rules, regulations and customs; and God was looking on approvingly or disapprovingly. For many, this might not be cutting it anymore. People want more from religion than rules. Strikingly, many are more open to more silence and contemplative practices.

John 6:44 states that "no one can come to me (Christ) unless the Father draw him." John 4:19 states that "He first loved us." These words imply that we do not get to God by our own efforts we are found by God. Holiness is not something achieved by one's own actions, but is a gift from God. Sanctification is primarily the work of God. St. Basil the Great made the puzzling statement that "love of God is not something that can be taught or achieved." Another quote: "Bernard of Clairvaux declared: "You would not seek God at all, nor love God at all, if you had not been sought and first loved."

These verses also imply the idea of God's persistent pursuit, and that God leads each per-

son as He sees that person has needs. In her book, *Ways to the Knowledge of God*, Edith Stein asserts that the way to God is different for each individual. John of the Cross stressed that no two people travel the same route to God. The spiritual world is God's territory, and God adapts Himself to His creatures. Different humans are led by different paths. Each person's spirituality is custom designed.

These citations imply that there are as many ways to draw near to the Divine as there are people in the world. God has endless ways to draw people to Himself.

Something Therese of Lisieux wrote is a component to the idea that each person's life with God is unique. Therese wrote: "I wondered why God has preferences, why all souls don't receive an equal amount of grace. He caresses certain privileged souls from cradle to grave (*Story of a Soul*, p. 13).

This statement is echoed in Isaiah 33:19: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy." There is also

God's enigmatic statement in Isaiah 65:1: I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask." Thus, God does give more to some, to some less. It's His unfathomable choice. It is perplexing, puzzling, mysterious. God is master of His own gifts.

Sometimes, when I'm on a train platform, or in a train seat, I wonder how God presents Himself to, or is apprehended by the person standing or sitting near me.

There is the scene in the third chapter of John's Gospel where Jesus tells a Pharisee named Nicodemus about being "born again"—referring to a spiritual rebirth. Jesus goes further and says: "The wind blows where it will, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know from where it comes, or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (Jn.3:1-8). The implication seems to be that the kind of rebirth Jesus has in mind is elusive and mysterious and entirely God's doing.

Allied to these citations is that of Philippians 1:6 where

Paul says: "I am sure that God, who has begun this work in you, will bring it to completion." We should learn to think of ourselves as God's work, God's handiwork. From my own experiences, I've found that any notable experience of God feels much more like Someone has found me.

It is God who sanctifies us. God does not love us because we are good. God loves us because He is good.

A few more observations: As the number of persons participating in our churches is dramatically decreasing, the number of persons in the country interested in spirituality is proportionally increasing. Contact with the worldly may arouse a longing for the spiritual. Spirituality is the hook back into the faith.

Many moderns stress that they are spiritual, but not religious. I don't think one can be spiritual and not religious. However, people can be religious and not spiritual.

Finally, there is Julian of Norwich's (d. 1413) statement that "most people are spiritual babies." ■

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May 2022

Books: Letters from Italy

An enduring love that began with a photo

By JOE PISANI

Almost 75 years ago, Orazio Dell'Olio saw a photo that enchanted him, a photo of a smiling young Italian woman, who was walking arm-in-arm with her friends through the piazza. He couldn't get her out of his mind, so he took the bold step of writing to her...but only after asking her cousin for permission. His letter, dated January 4, 1950 from New York City, began:

*"Dear Signorina,
"I truly hope that you permit me to write to you because I feel in my heart that I am so in love with you. That is why I pray that you accept this dream of love that has yet to begin between us. I would be so proud to have you write to me."*

Nicoletta accepted Orazio's invitation, beginning a transatlantic correspondence. Over two years, their 22 letters nurtured a relationship that lasted more than 60 years and was blessed with 58 years of marriage, four children, two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. And through it all, their love and devotion overcame the crises and challenges they confronted.

Dr. Mario Dell'Olio, their youngest child, has chronicled their story of family, faith and love in his book "Letters from Italy: A Transatlantic Love Story," recounting the saga of the Dell'Olio family, which settled in Bridgeport and later moved to Trumbull.

"They loved each other unconditionally and were each other's best friend," Dell'Olio said. "They were so different from one another, and despite those differences, they loved each other and supported each other through every phase of their lives and were a united front with us, their children. It's not that they didn't disagree, but nothing got personal."

Dell'Olio, a graduate of St. Raphael School and Trumbull High School, is chair of the music department and ethics teacher at Marymount School of New York. Previously, he taught at Fairfield College Preparatory School, where he established the music program and led a choir that performed for Pope John Paul II. He earned his bachelor's degree in psychology and master's in education from Fairfield University and has a doctorate in sacred music and a



THE PHOTO OF NICOLETTA and friends that Orazio saw and decided to write a letter to her, beginning their love story.

master's of music in voice.

To write "Letters from Italy," Dell'Olio relied on hundreds of stories that his mother and father told him about their culture and heritage and personal lives.

"I came to know Nicoletta and Orazio as individuals who grew up during the Second World War, fought to survive in a country mired in economic ills, and took a leap of faith, traveling thousands of miles to create a life in a foreign land," he wrote.

After two years of corresponding, the couple met in person in November 1951, when Orazio traveled back to Italy to see her for the first time...even though his best friend told him he was taking a big chance to leave the U.S., since he wasn't a citizen. That didn't stop him.

"He was so eager to see her that he jumped off the train on a country road with all his luggage," Dell'Olio said. Fortunately, he was able to hitch a ride into town with the milkman, and knocked on her door at 6 in the morning. When Nicoletta heard his voice, she pinched her cheeks—on the advice of her cousin—and prepared to meet the man who had shared his fervent feelings for her in his letters.

"He came in and sat on the edge of her bed," Dell'Olio said. "He told her, 'You are the most beautiful girl in the world!'"

They spent a chaperoned month together, during which time all her relatives met him, and then on December 29, 1951, they were married. Orazio returned to America, and Nicoletta followed nine months later, arriving the day before

Thanksgiving in 1952.

Thus began a relationship between two people in love, who shared the joys and adversities of life for six decades. While they built their life together in America, they had to learn a new language, work in factories and start from nothing, he said. In this new country, they were known as Larry and Tina.

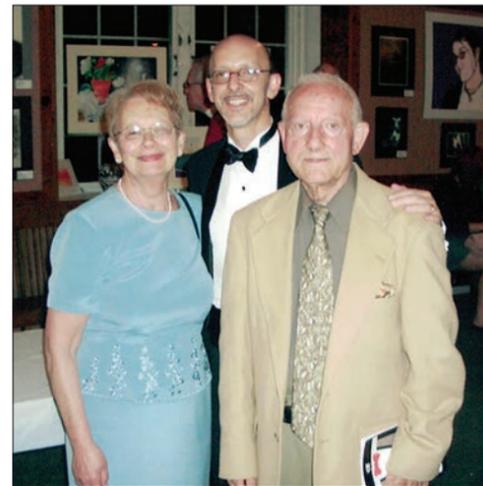
"They were Italian immigrants during the 1950s, whose struggles and determination helped shape and form them into the parents who raised me and my three siblings," Dell'Olio said. "I discovered that there is so much more to whom they were and are than what I experienced as their youngest child."

Tina, whose strong faith has been an inspiration to her family, was orphaned at six. As a girl, she would go and talk to a statue of Our Lady.

"I don't have a mother and father, and now you must be my mother," she told the Blessed Mother," Dell'Olio said. "Her faith was always central to our lives, and that is why traditions were so important and Sundays were sacred."

Their lives centered on St. Raphael Church in Bridgeport, where Mario and his siblings Frankie, Marisa and Annette attended school. At one point, their late cousin Msgr. Frank Dell'Olio was associate pastor of St. Raphael before being appointed pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Fairfield.

Looking back, Dell'Olio says, "Family and faith are the most important things they imparted to us." And there were occasions when their faith and love served



DR. MARIO DELL'OLIO AND HIS PARENTS.

them well in trying times. He still recalls his parents' 25th anniversary, when they went on a trip to Italy and Tina suffered an aneurysm...and his father's unwavering devotion helped carry her through.

"I remember the image of my mother's Rosary beads—and the doctor taking them out of her hands as she was going under." Her devotion was just as strong for Larry, who developed Parkinson's disease in later life. Over the years, his physical and mental condition deteriorated and put a strain on the family.

On the day he died, February 17, 2010, Ash Wednesday, "Tina took her place beside him in the narrow bed and held him in her arms. She could tell he was in pain.... She was beside him, holding his head when he breathed his last breath."

In the years following Larry's death, Tina would read her precious letters to Mario, who was the only child who spoke Italian. From these letters and her memories came the inspiration for him to write "Letters from Italy."

"Each line would spark more memories and tales of family drama," he recalled. "During those sessions, I got a glimpse into the 18-year-old girl whose dreams were well beyond her imaginings and the reality of her life in the small town of Bisceglie. I discovered that my father, who rarely showed emotion, was a hopeless romantic who swept Mom off her feet with his heart-felt poetry written on elegant stationery. Revealed in decades of oral history and now in letters long forgotten were tales of two idealistic dreamers that I had only

ever known as Mom and Dad."

The process of writing the book began four years ago, when Dell'Olio said to Tina, "Mom, I would love for you to read the letters to me." For hours, he sat at his computer while she read them and offered vivid recollections of the past.

He also did considerable research about Italy before and during World War II, Fascism, the economic crises, immigration and the millions of Italians who came to America looking for a better life.

"Letters from Italy" ends with the last letter that Tina, now 90, wrote to her beloved Larry. She wrote:

*"Dearest Orazio,
"It has been over 10 years since you left this earth, and I can still feel your presence within me. Not a day goes by that I don't turn to ask you something. There are moments I wish I could share a thought or a fear with you and must be content with my own thoughts. I speak to you every night before I go to sleep. When I awaken during the night, I reach out to touch you, but find the empty place beside me."*

"We spent 58 beautiful years together and raised a family that we were both proud of. I picture your face smiling at me at each special moment we shared. You promised me back in Bisceglie that we would have a home of our own that was bigger and better than the house my parents left me, and you were so proud when we crossed that threshold."

"I marvel at how we first came to be. From that tiny photo your brother sent you from Italy, you chose me. What drew your eyes to me, Orazio? What was it about me that drew your attention? And what gave you the courage to write to me? So many questions remain unanswered. But what is certain is the fact that the photo transformed both our lives beyond our imaginings. The tiny image of five young people strolling in the piazza started us on this fantastic journey together..."

(Editor's note: "Letters from Italy," published by Black Rose Writing, is available on amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.) ■

Nuestra Voz

Orar y promover para que haya vocaciones sacerdotales es trabajo constante

POR MARICARMEN GODOY

BRIDGEPORT—“Orar para que florezcan y perseveren las vocaciones sacerdotales es una tarea de todos los miembros de la iglesia porque sin ellos no hay sacramentos, es decir, la celebración de la eucaristía (misa) o la confesión”, explica el Padre Abelardo Vásquez, miembro del Equipo de Promoción Vocacional de la Diócesis de Bridgeport.

Por eso, es que la Diócesis de Bridgeport viene organizando constantemente Horas Santas y promoviendo el Club Vocacional para lograr que haya nuevos sacerdotes y que perseveren en su llamado vocacional.

Conforme con el Padre Vásquez, todos los sacerdotes de la Diócesis son los encargados de promover y atraer las vocaciones sacerdotales, sin embargo, hay un equipo de tres de sacerdotes que se encargan directamente de reclutar y promocionar las vocaciones en la Diócesis.

El Padre Vásquez, junto al padre Chris Ford y el padre Eric Silva están diseñando una campaña de acompañamiento de los jóvenes hacia el sacerdocio, escuchándolos y atendiendo en su descubrimiento para definir y encontrar su vocación. “Eso, implica, un acompañamiento que

principal llamado es la santidad”, dice el P. Vásquez

La vocación, en su vocablo, significa escuchar y atender el llamado de Dios sobre cómo desde nuestras habilidades podemos responder a Jesús a nuestra misión. En la Diócesis se viene fortaleciendo el grupo de laicos llama-



lleva al discernimiento vocacional donde los jóvenes descubren su llamado vocacional que puede ser el sacerdocio, la vida religiosa u cualquier otra vocación, pues el

do “Serra”, que se dedica a orar básicamente por las vocaciones sacerdotales; además, cada parroquia dentro de sus iglesias realiza las Horas Santas dedicadas espe-



cialmente a este cometido.

E igualmente, en la iglesia de Saint Charles Borromeo se están desarrollando encuentros mensuales donde los jóvenes de las escuelas secundarias (high school) fraternizan junto al sacerdote y oran por su vocación, hacen deporte, ven películas y cenar; con el fin de -que en medio de ese momento de felicidad- descubran el llamado de su vocación.

Actualmente, el P. Vásquez debido al aumento de feligreses de origen hispano junto con el P. John Pérez, Vicario de Asuntos Hispánicos, están diseñando maneras de evangelizar y fortalecer los grupos de oración vocacional y las reuniones juveniles para promover y acompañar a todos los jóvenes que se sientan el llamado el Dios dentro de la Diócesis de Bridgeport.

Por ejemplo, en la iglesia Saint Charles de Borromeo, se reúnen el fin de semana una vez por mes alrededor de 17 jóvenes para hablar de su vocación, orar y divertirse. Ese mismo modelo, pudiera ser implementado en todas las parroquias de la Diócesis de Bridgeport. “El deseo de servir “in persona christi” a los demás es lo que hay que sembrar en el corazón de los jóvenes”, dice el P. Vásquez a manera de reflexión; considerando que, de esos 17 adolescentes, 10 son de origen hispano, los otros son caucásicos y también de Brasil y Haití.

Con estos modelos evangeli-

zadores se están acompañando a los jóvenes que llegan de otros países y a los nativos. La experiencia y formación misionera de los sacerdotes junto con el liderazgo del P. Vásquez busca fortalecer las vocaciones, siguiendo el mandato de Jesús de “dejar a padre y madre”, abandonar su tierra y siguiéndolo todo por Jesús”.

Siguiendo los protocolos de la Diócesis para asegurar la tranquilidad de las familias la Diócesis de Bridgeport viene desde hace mucho tiempo atrás siguiendo al pie de la letra el programa “Virtus” que forma y enseña como tener un comportamiento profesional, disciplinado y respetuoso con todos sus feligreses.

Las vocaciones, conforme a la Diócesis, es un tema que no puede desvanecerse. Incluso, en el tiempo de la pandemia donde los jóvenes no podían reunirse en forma presencial, oraban y conversaban en forma virtual. Los seminaristas asisten a sus clases de Filosofía y Teología en los seminarios del país acompañados por el equipo de vocaciones de la Diócesis. Y, con la fuerza de la oración comunitaria se pide a Dios para que perseveren en el llamado sacerdotal.

Si usted es un joven que busca orientación vocacional, puede llamar al P. Vásquez, al 203.416.1625 O puede ir a la página Web bridgeportpriest.org o enviar un correo a: discern@bridgeportpriest.org

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Vocations

‘I gave you my son to be a priest’

By **FATHER CHRIS FORD**

The ordination and first Mass of a priest are filled with many beautiful traditions. But one of the most heartwarming traditions belongs not to the priest, but to another important figure in his life: his mother.

During the Rite of Ordination, after the Litany of Saints and the laying on of hands and the vesting of the new priest in the vestments of his new office, his hands are anointed with Sacred Chrism, that they might be sanctified for ministry. The priest then goes into the sacristy and uses a special cloth, known as a manitergium, to wipe the excess chrisms off his hands. He then saves this linen, now stained and scented by the chrisms for his First Mass the next day. At the end of that Mass, in the course of his thank you message, tradition holds that, with

the final thank you of the day, the priest will hand this piece of cloth to his mother. She will hold onto it until the Lord calls her home and, when she passes, she will be buried with it. Finally, when she stands before the judgment seat, Jesus will ask her, “What did you do for me?” She will show him this stained and scented cloth and respond, “I gave you my son to be a priest,” and the gates of heaven will open before her.

It is a beautiful story and tradition that speaks to a larger truth: how often the person from whom we learn to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd is our mother. Much like our Blessed Mother at Cana, the gift of faith from our mothers whispers into our hearts, “Do whatever He tells you,” thus empowering her children not only to hear the voice of the Shepherd, but to fol-

low Him wherever He may lead.

Though it is true that in His earthly life, Jesus reveals to us the face and love of the Father, I can’t help but think that, in naming himself the Good Shepherd, He is revealing to us a love that we find most often in our mothers, love that is gentle, yet unyielding—unconditional, yet striving.

I can’t help but think of the classic story *Make Way for Ducklings* and the statue in Boston that commemorates it. Mrs. Mallard teaches the little ducklings all they need to know about being ducks. Then, under the watchful eye of their mother (and with the help of a few friends along the way), the ducklings find their way to the garden where their father is waiting, and they live happily ever after.

May our mothers always do the same for us! May they teach



FATHER CHRIS FORD

us what it means to be true and good children of God, so that we too may come to dwell and graze in the beautiful and abundant pastures where our Father is waiting for us.

It is something that I have repeated often: if we need priests, then we don’t just need priests!

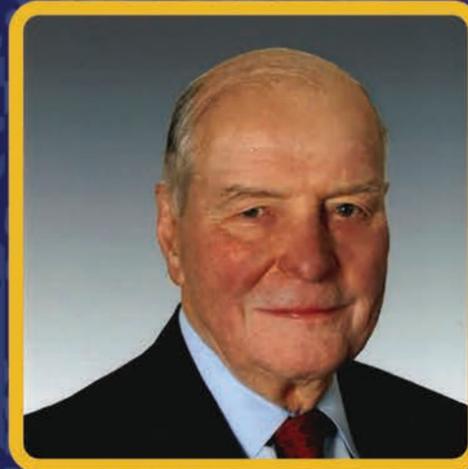
We also need mothers of priests, and fathers of priests, and siblings and cousins and friends and parishioners of priests. But most of all, we need mothers of priests. We need people who are willing to help young men hear and respond to the voice of a Good Shepherd—all with the love only a mother can give.

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