

# FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

APRIL 2023 | VOLUME 40, NUMBER 4 | SPRING ISSUE

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE



10-11 *Sacred Paschal Triduum*



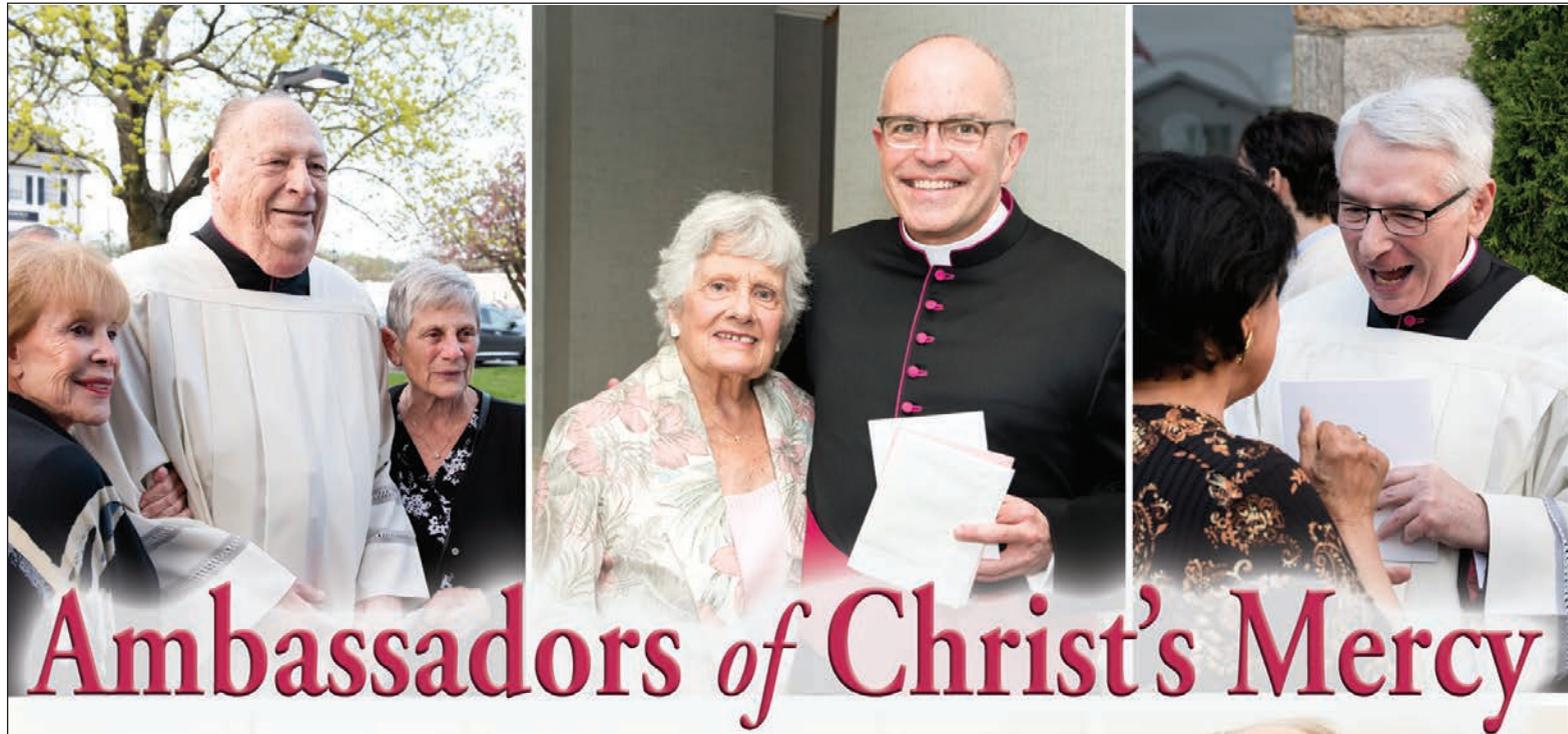
18-19 *Catholic Academy of Bridgeport Gala*

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

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

Twitter: [@diobpt](#) [@BishopCaggiano](#)

Instagram: [dioceseofbridgeport](#) [bishopfrankcaggiano](#)



## Ambassadors of Christ's Mercy



**PREP**

Be Ignited!

Learn More

FairfieldPREP.org

**PROGRESSIVE DIAGNOSTICS**

SAME DAY COVID-19 & FLU TESTS RESULTS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

Convenient Fairfield County Locations, Including:

- BRIDGEPORT: The Catholic Center, Queen of Saints Hall
- DARIEN: Saint John Catholic Church
- WILTON: Our Lady of Fatima
- NORWALK: The Mansion at Saint Philips Church
- STAMFORD: Saint Mary of Stamford Parish

888.503.8803

[www.progressive-diagnostics.com](http://www.progressive-diagnostics.com)

SCAN TO SCHEDULE

# Around the Diocese



## St. Rose of Lima confirms 100 young Catholics

NEWTOWN—One hundred eighth-graders received the Sacrament of Confirmation at St. Rose of Lima Parish on March 11—enough to warrant two ceremonies to admit them all to full communion with the Roman Catholic Church.

As a part of their path to Confirmation, the confirmands engaged in acts of service, notably collecting 221 coats for the Knights of Columbus Coat Drive, volunteering for the parish religious education office, and

working with younger students at St. Rose's Vacation Bible School.

In his homilies to the confirmands, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano shared the role they now had as adults in the Catholic Church.

"You're growing up in a world where the truth is a rare commodity ... where they want you to sit down, be quiet and not cause any trouble," the bishop said. "Who will give you the courage to stand on your own two feet ... and tell the truth even when the people around you don't want to hear it?"

## St. Jude youth group hosts Living Stations

MONROE—Following a multi-year hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic, St. Jude Parish's Living Stations of the Cross returned to the community on Good Friday, April 7.

The Living Stations, directed by parishioner Peter Blair, were portrayed by 15 members of St. Jude's youth group. Several other members of the youth group worked behind the scenes to bring the story of Christ's Passion to life.

Blair estimates 200 people attended the Living Stations on Good Friday, which exceeded his expectations. In addition, he noted participating in the program helped enrich the faith life of the youth group members.

"Not only did they provide the parish community with an opportunity to meditate in a different way on this important devotion, but they also drew closer to the Stations of the Cross and increased their knowledge of them," Blair said. "Most of them today can recite the names of each of the Stations in order, something only one or two of them could have done when we started rehearsing six weeks earlier."



## Young adults represent at Thomas Merton Center service day

BRIDGEPORT—Young adults from across the Diocese of Bridgeport participated in an Easter Day of Service at the Thomas Merton Family Center in Bridgeport on April 8.

The 28 volunteers lent their talents to the center in many different ways, from making sandwiches to serve to the Thomas Merton Family Center's guests to organizing donated coats and clearing out the garden and surrounding grounds.



"The volunteers worked quickly but also enjoyed interacting with each other," said Karen Frissora, the Thomas Merton Family Center's volunteer coordinator. "It was a pleasure to have these enthusiastic, energetic and fun young adults at the Thomas Merton Center. We had some food leftover and some of the volunteers knew of organizations that would use the food and took the initiative to deliver them that day."

Frissora is hopeful some of the diocese's young adults will come back for another day of service at the center soon.

"Thank you for a fun and purposeful day, helping to serve those in need as well as making new connections among themselves," she said.

## Upcoming Events for Young Adults

### Young Catholic Professionals Networking Happy Hour:

Tuesday, April 25 at 6 pm—*Barcelona Wine Bar, 515 West Ave., Norwalk*—YCP brings together young workers and seasoned business professionals in a variety of programs to foster Catholic identity, encourage community, and inspire action. Networking Happy Hours, held at local bars and restaurants, bring young Catholics together in a more casual setting to encourage one another through the challenges and successes of professional life. Non-members are cordially invited to this exclusive event. Please register at [www.ycp.glueup.com/event/77208/register](http://www.ycp.glueup.com/event/77208/register).

**Monthly Young Adult Mass:** Wednesday, May 10 at 7 pm—*Holy Name of Jesus Parish, 325 Washington Blvd., Stamford*—Join the Stamford Young Adult Catholics for their monthly Young Adult Mass! Adoration and Confession will be offered beginning at 6 pm, followed by Mass at 7 pm. A social will follow at the Sign of the Whale, 6 Harbor Point Rd., Stamford.

**Fairfield Young Adult Holy Hour:** Friday, May 12 at 7 pm—*St. Pius X Parish, 834 Brookside Ave., Fairfield*—Join the Fairfield young adult ministry for its monthly Holy Hour! Praise, worship and confessions will be available. A social will follow at the fire pit outside the parish rectory.

**Heart to Heart Night of Worship:** Saturday, May 13—*St. Michael the Archangel Parish, 469 North St., Greenwich*—Join the Guild of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus for an evening of Adoration, praise and worship. The evening of Adoration will also include the opportunity for Confession, and prayer teams will be available for intercessory prayer.

**Faith on Tap:** Tuesday, May 16 at 7:30 pm—*Towne Pizza Parlor, 112 Bedford St., Stamford*—Come join the Stamford Young Adult Catholics for their monthly speaker series where young adults can gather, learn more about their faith, and engage in fellowship. This month's talk, "Devotion to Mary," will be delivered by Father Justin Cinnante, O.Carm.

### Young Adult Groups in the Diocese of Bridgeport

- Basilica of St. John Young Adult Group, Stamford: [office@stjohnbasilica.org](mailto:office@stjohnbasilica.org)
- Catholic Bridge Diocesan Mentorship Program: [ceglloff@diobpt.org](mailto:ceglloff@diobpt.org)
- Crossroads 4 Christ—Stamford Chapter: [c4cstamford@gmail.com](mailto:c4cstamford@gmail.com)
- St. Aloysius Young Adult Ministry, New Canaan: [frdavid@starcc.com](mailto:frdavid@starcc.com)
- St. Edward Young Adults, New Fairfield: [stedsya@gmail.com](mailto:stedsya@gmail.com)
- Young Adult Ministry in Fairfield: [ppea@st-pius.org](mailto:ppea@st-pius.org)
- Young Catholic Professionals—Fairfield County Chapter: [peter.harrison@ycpfairfieldcounty.org](mailto:peter.harrison@ycpfairfieldcounty.org)

The next young adult events column will include events from the dates of May 21 to June 24. If you are hosting a young adult event and would like to be included in next month's column, or if you would like your group to be listed with the above young adult groups, please email [rose.brennan@diobpt.org](mailto:rose.brennan@diobpt.org) by May 12.

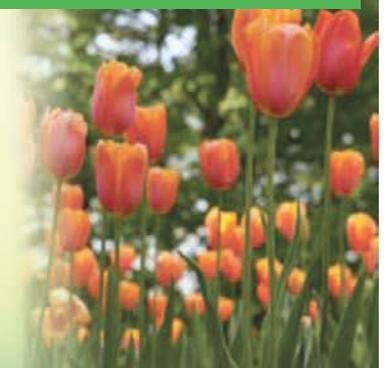
## ON THE COVER

**AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST—**  
Hundreds turned out for a special Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated by Bishop Caggiano at St. Aloysius Church in New Canaan on Divine Mercy Sunday. It was a joyous moment to honor new Monsignors Crofut, Guglielmi and Kinnally.  
Photos: Amy Mortensen

## CONTENTS

- 3 **THOMAS MERTON CENTER**  
Ground breaks at new facility
- 4 **ANNUAL APPEAL**  
Monsignor Weiss gives insight
- 14 **PARISH NEWS**  
Trumbull parish baptizes 48
- 15 **YOUNG ADULTS**  
Navigating healthy relationships

- 16 **KOINONIA JOHN THE BAPTIST**  
House of prayer has new moderator
- 21 **EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL**  
St. Pius X to launch 'Adore 365' effort
- 23 **HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS**  
Prep wins hockey state title
- 26 **NUUESTRA VOZ**  
Celebrando Semana Santa



# Diocesan News

## Monsignors are 'ambassadors of Christ's mercy'

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

NEW CANAAN—Hundreds filled St. Aloysius Parish on Divine Mercy Sunday for the Mass of Thanksgiving to celebrate the three diocesan priests who were honored by Pope Francis with the rank of Chaplain to His Holiness with the title of Monsignor.

Monsignor Robert J. Crofut, Monsignor Donald Guglielmi, and Monsignor Robert M. Kinnally, who were notified of their new titles on January 6, were honored by parishioners, friends and families in a joyful Mass and reception that followed.

Joined by more than 30 priests throughout the diocese, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano was the principal celebrant of the Mass. The bishop also welcomed Bishop James Massa, Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn and the rector of St. Joseph Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y.

"The lesson of this festival of Divine Mercy is that we who have received it must give it away to

neighbor, spouse, child, grandchild, nephew, niece, neighbor, coworker, stranger and enemy to give mercy," the bishop said as he praised the new monsignors for being "ambassadors of Christ's mercy."

"That is to meet people in their profound moments of need, to give what is good for them in that moment and to invite and lift them up to a greater fuller life and to walk with them every step of the way," he said.

Twice during the Mass, the congregation broke out into prolonged applause for the three men.

"You see my friends, you can glimpse now why we are here tonight: to honor these three remarkable priests because of their personal humility, pursuit of service and selfless giving to others," Bishop Caggiano said.

He praised the men for the "countless hours that they have served the parishioners of their many parishes, listening to their sorrow, sitting with them in their silence, offering them a shoulder to laugh on and cry on, to celebrate in

their moments of joy and to walk with them in solidarity in their moments of profound sorrow."

The bishop said that in addition to ministering to the young and old, the three men "have worked with seminarians for many years and they have not only by what they have done, the advice they have given, but the example of their priestly hearts that they have formed them so that they too can worthily carry the name 'Father' and to do for others what was done for them in their years of most important formation."

In his homily, the bishop reflected of Gospel of John (20:19-31), in which the apostle Thomas touches Jesus's wounds and cries out, "my Lord and my God," after originally doubting that Jesus had risen.

"It would have been a huge leap for Thomas to have believed that his beloved master had literally come back to life and therefore his skepticism perhaps was something to be expected. And so the Lord in his mercy met



CELEBRATING NEW MONSIGNORS—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano congratulates Monsignor Donald Guglielmi, Monsignor Robert Kinnally, and Monsignor Robert Crofut at the reception that followed the Mass of Thanksgiving on Divine Mercy Sunday

Thomas in his need," the bishop said, adding that Christ's love "raised Thomas to an ever great life, life so that he was the first to call Jesus, Lord and God."

The bishop said it was important to realize that every person in the church is a recipient of God's mercy.

"Divine mercy is not charity as the modern world understands it. Divine mercy is the generous, reckless love of God that meets us where our needs are and invites us to be lifted up to be transformed to a greater life, to a fuller life, to holiness of life. He doesn't leave us in our need, but invites us to greatness in him."

The bishop ended his homily with a challenge to priests and laity.

"How far will you and I walk in order to be that ambassador of mercy?" the bishop asked after noting that "Doubting Thomas" became the first person to pro-

claim the divinity of Jesus.

"He walked all the way to India to be the fearless ambassador of the message of mercy and salvation in Jesus Christ. And so perhaps this week as we go about our duty and business, let us ask ourselves, how far will you or I walk for mercy?"

In a brief blessing following his homily, the bishop prayed that the new monsignors would remain "humble of heart" and instruments of the "peace of Christ" in their ministries.

The beautiful music for the liturgy was provided by the St. Aloysius Parish Choir under the direction of John Michniewicz, D.M.A., Music Ministry.

(For the full biographies of Monsignor Crofut, Monsignor Guglielmi, and Monsignor Kinnally, visit [www.bridgeportdiocese.org/three-priests-to-receive-papal-honors-on-april-16](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org/three-priests-to-receive-papal-honors-on-april-16).)

# Historic day for Thomas Merton Family Center

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—"Today is an historic event by any measure because we are beginning the next chapter in this extraordinary enterprise and mission, which is the Thomas Merton Family Center," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at the groundbreaking for the new Merton Family Center in Bridgeport.

With the large doors of the new unfinished facility wide open, state, local and civic leaders and many Bridgeport pastors joined more than 150 invited guests for the ceremony and reception in the 13,000-square foot building, located at 1406 State Street in Bridgeport.

Renovation of the two-story facility is underway with the center expected to formally open next fall. When completed, the new Thomas Merton Family Center will include a dining hall, kitchen, food pantry, multi-pur-



pose room, conference room, break room, elevators, showers and 14 offices.

Describing the Merton Center as "an emblem of the Church at its very best," Bishop Caggiano said the new location will allow for an expansion of services that respect the dignity of all by welcoming them as guests.

"Whether you are poor or an immigrant or recently incarcerated or homeless or hungry, this is a home and they are our guests because they are our brothers and sisters. Everyone who comes here is respected for who he or she is in their uniqueness and even in their struggles," he said.

Speakers including

Congressman Jim Himes, Bridgeport Mayor Joseph Ganim and others praised Merton Center for caring for the most vulnerable in the city while also working in partnership with other non-profits, including Southwest Community Health Center, to provide services to a population that often lives with food insufficiency and a lack of access to housing, health and psychological care.

Mike Donoghue, Executive Director of Catholic Charities, which sponsors Merton Center, thanked all of the board members, donors, volunteers and friends of Merton Center who attended the ceremony and reception.

He said the groundbreaking marked the official launch of the public phase of the "New Home, New Hope" \$5.5 million Merton Family Center capital campaign.

To date, Catholic Charities has raised over \$4.2 million and recently has heard from an anon-

ymous donor who will provide up to \$300,000 to match any gifts that come in during the month of April.

Donoghue praised the 1,000 volunteers who help the staff serve the most vulnerable of all faiths.

"Merton Center is the first place they turn to when they experience trouble, also has been an entry point for people in need," he said.

He said the strategic plan for the new facility calls for expanded services such as food, medical care, behavioral health care, immigration legal services, ESL classes, parenting classes, job training, financial budgeting assistance— all in one location.

"We provide supportive services that enable families to rise up out of poverty, overcome barriers, and achieve self-sufficiency, self-sufficiency and independence," Donoghue said. "We

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

# 2023 Bishop's Appeal

## Appeal enhances ministry & community

*Fairfield County Catholic is pleased to publish this interview with Monsignor Robert Weiss, pastor of St. Rose Parish in Newtown and co-chair of the 2023 Annual Bishop's Appeal. This year's Appeal marks the first time that a pastor will share the co-chair role with chair couple Paula Summa and Jim O'Neill, and Appeal Vice Chairs Mark and Morgan Mooney. As a priest, pastor and Bishop's Appeal leader, Monsignor Weiss shared the following insights into the importance of the Bishop's Appeal and its role in uniting the diocese in faith and charity.*

**Q.** Monsignor Weiss, your role as co-chair of the Bishop's Appeal is another first for you and the diocese. How is it going?

**A.** Serving as pastor co-chair has been a very positive experience, especially listening to the lay couples co-chairing the Appeal with me. Not only are

they extraordinarily supportive of the mission of the diocese and the importance of the Appeal in continuing to keep the Gospel alive in Fairfield County, they are very supportive of the clergy. They have great respect for the pastors and the responsibilities placed on us and are most appreciative of our efforts in the parishes and the diocese. We sometimes forget how blessed we are to have laity supporting us in our roles and responsibilities. They value the ministry that takes place in our parishes and our diocese under our leadership.

**Q.** Please comment on your long-time role as a member of the Pastors' Advisory Committee.

**A.** I served on the Pastors' Advisory Committee since its inception. It gives the pastors on the Committee an opportunity to discuss the value of the Appeal, become aware of the many

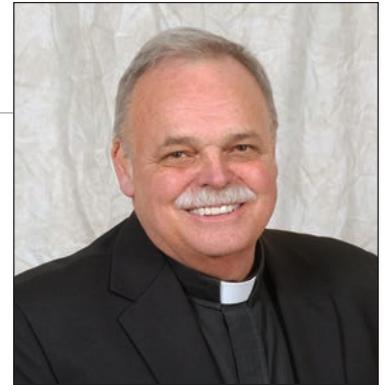
ministries the diocese is able to provide through the Appeal and have a listening ear for those pastors who have valid concerns about how effective they can be in terms of meeting their parish goal. Several of our parishes have financial constraints for a variety of reasons, and the Committee is there to guide and assist them in meeting their parish goal. Committee members have difficult decisions to make as they listen to the pastors of parishes whose goal might seem out of reach. This Committee plays an important role when it comes adjusting and finalizing parish goals.

**Q.** This year's Appeal theme is, "One in Christ" and the focus that Bishop Caggiano has placed on opportunities for encounter. Why are the programs and services funded by the Appeal so vital in achieving his vision and bringing people back to their faith?

**A.** "One in Christ" is a realistic approach to strengthening our relationship with Christ and the Church. In every generation there have been challenges for the Church. The challenges that face us today as Catholics are overwhelming as more and more Catholics turn away from the teaching of the Gospel and accept the social, moral and cultural values of contemporary society. The Diocese has set as a priority the challenge to renew the Church one person at a time using the many ministries and programs the Appeal provides.

**Q.** How does the Appeal impact the lives of all people in the Diocese of Bridgeport, whether they are a parishioner or not.

**A.** Sometimes we stay focused too often on the needs of our own parishes and forget that we are all part of the diocese. The programs and services of the diocese focus



MONSIGNOR ROBERT WEISS

on the person and the needs that person requires... "one" person at a time. It is more than we can ever imagine when we take the time to learn exactly what the diocese is able to provide because of the Appeal funds. The Appeal is critical in assuring the continuation of the task given to us by Christ himself, especially fulfilling the spiritual and corporal works of mercy for those in need.

**Q.** Many people may not realize that by supporting programs on the diocesan level, they enable the diocese to offer what one parish alone cannot provide.

**A.** Again, we have to remember that we are part both of the

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



In **May** Bishop Caggiano will **ordain** *six seminarians* to the priesthood.

Your support of the **Bishop's Appeal** provides for **future priests who will guide others on the faith journey.**



**"Being a priest, is more than a job, more than a career, it is a calling.**

As the term 'calling' implies, the call to priesthood comes not from within, but from without.

Accepting the call and vocation of priesthood is a serious commitment of one's life to follow God's call. Proper effort and care are required to determine what God's call is.

Vocational discernment is not a quick or easy task and often takes months and sometimes years to determine. Formation is focused on human, pastoral, intellectual and spiritual growth."

— FATHER CHRISTOPHER FORD, Vocations Director



Ricardo Batista Comim



Férry Galbert



Andrew LaFleur



James DiVasto



Miguel Betancur Lenis



Matthew Loman

PLEASE  
MAKE YOUR  
GIFT TODAY

Learn more at: [www.2023BishopsAppeal.org](http://www.2023BishopsAppeal.org)  
203-416-1470

Scan here to make  
your gift online



*Thank you for your support, God bless you.*

# Healthcare

## One woman's story of faith and resilience

By **KATHY-ANN GOBIN**

NEW CANAAN—One woman's journey of faith is woven into a life of resilience and hope with the help of the staff at Norwalk Hospital.

Ronnie Lazzaro and her husband Ralph have been active members of the Diocese of Bridgeport for more than three decades. A cancer diagnosis in July 2022 led them to Norwalk Hospital's Whittingham Cancer Center, a part of Nuvance Health, where Ronnie's personalized care and treatment were not only focused on her physical health but also on her overall quality of life.

"When I go to see a patient, I consider that person my only patient for the moment because for the patient that's their only cancer," said Pradip Pathare, MD, Radiation Oncology at Norwalk Hospital.

It was that personalized atten-

tion and comprehensive care that Ronnie credits in part with helping her keep her spirits up during a challenging time.

This journey started with a routine mammogram. Admittedly, Ronnie said, she was remiss and hadn't had a mammogram in awhile. This mammogram would not be routine.

"I never got a call before. As soon as I got it, I knew something was wrong," she said. "They found three different sites in the same breast. One of them was in a lymph node. Now it wasn't Stage 1. It was Stage 2. I hear what they are telling me and I'm thinking, this too shall pass," she said, as she reluctantly settled into her new reality.

"I got chemo every week until the end of November. Then I had to wait two weeks to have surgery in December followed by radiation therapy," she said, which



RONNIE LAZZARO MEETS with Dr. Lisa Phuong, DO, Medical Oncology at Norwalk Hospital's Whittingham Cancer Center, a part of Nuvance Health.

ended in March.

"I have very tired days," she said, comparing the endless appointments to managing a job. On the positive side, where she and Ralph always seem to find themselves, they now have

an extended support system of friends that feel more like family.

"The Whittingham Cancer Center has become part of my social life," Ronnie said. "I go to the infusion suite, spend four hours there, and everybody

knows my name."

"They really try as best they can to make you comfortable in what's really an uncomfortable situation," she said, adding that she has no family history of breast cancer, which is not an uncommon scenario for many women.

Indeed, her care team has become like an extended family.

"Dr. Phuong is my medical oncologist. She's very warm. Very involved," Ronnie said. "I would have no problem walking in and hugging her."

"When I started to cry, she put her arm around me. I just knew her concern was genuine. I was more than a number on a piece of paper," Ronnie said.

Dr. Lisa Phuong, DO Medical Oncology, said caring for the patient as a whole is her priority and likened the doctor-patient relationship to being similar to a

▶ *CONTINUED ON PAGE 6*



**Nuvance  
Health**

You Matter Most

Danbury Hospital  
Norwalk Hospital

# Don't let colon cancer get a head start

Nuvance Health knows it's easy to put off a screening colonoscopy, but a screening can catch colon cancer early when it's most treatable. To help set your mind at ease, our team of specialists is with you every step of the way to make you as comfortable as possible. Because what matters to you, matters to us.



**Book a pre-colonoscopy screening online**

# Catholic Cemeteries

## Book club targets the bereaved

By JOE PISANI

TRUMBULL—Once a week at St. Joseph's Center, chaplain Father Nicholas Pavia gets together with patients and friends for a different type of book club: to discuss bereavement.

Father Pavia, who says he's been an avid reader since he was a child, believes this topic is important in our time, especially in a nursing home environment, where he is confronted with death and dying almost daily.

"People are hurting because they don't know what to do with their grief," he said. "And it's important to have a ministry that will help them move along in their life because they can either be stuck in that grief or can have a new day."

Father Pavia, who was recently named chaplain of the Bereavement Ministry of Catholic Cemeteries, works with Carolyn Killian, Director of Bereavement for Catholic Cemeteries, who facilitates sessions of the nine-week New Day Program,

designed to help those who have suffered a loss.

"We are blessed to have Father Nick develop this pilot bereavement book program," Killian said. "He brings incredible dedication and compassion to his work with those who are grieving."

"Over the years, I've had many book clubs, but this one is very special," Father Pavia said. "Grief is a topic that we all can relate to, and I've known it in my own life."

The club, which is a pilot program, meets in three-week intervals from 1 to 2 pm on Wednesdays with the purpose of leading participants to an understanding of grief in their lives through the readings and the discussions, he says.

The first book they read was *Tears of God: Persevering in the Face of Great Sorrow or Catastrophe* by the late Father Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R., best-selling author, psychologist and retreat master, who hosted a program on EWTN.

The book offers advice and hope to those enduring great

sorrow and relates their personal experiences to the Catholic belief in God's infinite goodness and mercy and Christ's suffering and death on the cross.

Father Pavia, who has always been a fan of Father Groeschel's writing, recalled that shortly after he was ordained, he met the Franciscan friar in New York City at the installation of the late Cardinal Edward M. Egan. Father Groeschel asked for a blessing from the newly ordained priest, but first offered him some advice.

"Son, I'm happy that you're a priest," he said, "But before you bless me, don't do like so many others and go on and on and on. Just keep it simple."

Father Pavia took the suggestion to heart.

"When I used to watch him on EWTN, I liked his Bronx attitude," Father Pavia recalled. "He was very earthy, but knew exactly how to talk to people."

The next author he is considering for the book club is Boston College philosophy professor Peter Kreeft. A convert to Catholicism, Kreeft has written more than 80 books on theology, Christian philosophy and apologetics.

Among Father Pavia's favorites are *Love is Stronger Than Death* and *Making Sense Out of Suffering*.

"His books are good, easy reads, and they're books that let you take one sentence or one thought and use it to have a great discussion," Father Pavia said. "A book is a vehicle for listening and sharing and discussion."

In working with those who are grieving, listening is essential, says Father Pavia, who was recently appointed chaplain of the Bereavement Ministry of the diocese.

"When it comes time to listen, I ask the Lord, 'Please shut my mouth so that I listen more than I speak,'" he said.

He also believes our faith can sustain us when we are grieving.

"We grieve, but we don't grieve like the world because we have hope," he says.

He speaks from experience. His father Nicholas died at 38, and he later suffered the loss of his sister and brother.

"Each step of the way, God has given me experience and tools to help me in my priesthood," he said. "All my family life, we have known grief and death. I was only four when my father died and now I understand, especially after seeing the example of my mom, who is 94 and raised us six kids. Thank God I was born into a real human, messy family. That's why sometimes I am effective with people because they see a real human being behind the collar."

Father Pavia participated in the New Day Bereavement Program at St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Greenwich to help him cope with the loss of his sister Andrea, who died in 2011 at 47, and his brother Thomas, who died six months later at 56, leaving behind three sons and a daughter.

Father is a trained facilitator in New Day and intends to offer the program at St. Joseph's Center,



FATHER NICHOLAS PAVIA

a Genesis healthcare facility in Trumbull.

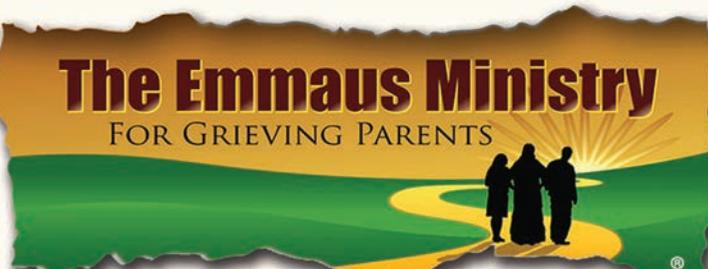
He said he agrees with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, who says we have to accompany others in small groups on their faith journey.

Father Pavia is currently a priest in residence at St. Roch Parish in Greenwich, which allows him to be close to his 94-year-old mother in Stamford and care for her.

A native of Stamford, Father was one of six children born to Carmela (Chickie) and Nicholas Pavia. Before discerning his vocation to the priesthood, he held positions at Stamford Hospital and was active in Stamford politics. He served on the Stamford City Council and later as a State Representative in the Connecticut General Assembly.

He was ordained in 2000 by then-Bishop Egan and was assigned parochial vicar at St. Stephen Parish in Trumbull, where he served from 2000 to 2007, followed by St. Joseph Parish in Shelton from 2007 to 2014, and Our Lady of Peace Parish in Stratford, where he was pastor from 2014 to 2022.

(For more information about the Bereavement Book Club or the Bereavement Ministry of Catholic Cemeteries, call Carolyn Killian at 203.404.0023 or email [bereavement@ctcemeteries.org](mailto:bereavement@ctcemeteries.org).)



**The Emmaus Ministry**  
FOR GRIEVING PARENTS

**Serving the Spiritual Needs  
of Grieving Parents**

Losing a child under any circumstance is horrific. Focusing on the spirituality of the grieving process can help tremendously.

A ministry for parents whose children of any age have died by any cause, no matter how long ago.

*Please join us. All are welcome.*

**Emmaus Ministry for Grieving Parents  
One Day Spiritual Retreat**  
at the St. Pius X Parish, Fairfield, Connecticut 06824  
June 24, 2023 | 9:30 am - 7:00 pm  
Sponsored by Fairfield County Catholic Cemeteries  
of the Diocese of Bridgeport

To register, visit [www.emfgp.org](http://www.emfgp.org) and click on Programs.  
For more information  
contact 203.404.0023 or [info@ctcemeteries.org](mailto:info@ctcemeteries.org)

### ONE WOMAN'S STORY FROM PAGE 5

marriage.

"Knowing her overall, as a person, and how to approach her helps to guide the treatment as well," she said. "The goal of the treatment is not just to cure the person of breast cancer but to help improve their quality of life."

Dr. Pathare agreed. "You are there for that patient for that moment. I can comfort the patient and rely on my expertise to help them," said Dr. Pathare. "The hospital seems to attract the very best people who have a heart not just book knowledge."

Her constant companion is her husband of 42 years. A connection that was evident to her care team.

"It's important to also have

social support and her husband Ralph has been fantastic at always being there for her," Lisa Phuong, MD, DO Medical Oncology said. "He always shows up with her to all of her appointments and has been by her side during every treatment. It is amazing to see their love and devotion to one another."

Ronnie and Ralph met about 45 years ago in New York and eloped in 1983. The couple and their son had very recently moved to New Canaan when Ronnie made the decision to convert to Catholicism, having grown up in the Jewish faith. But even though she was raised in a different faith, she recalled Catholicism having an early presence in her life

through her childhood friend.

"I loved visiting her family during Christmas. They always had Rosary beads and spiritual pictures in their home," she said, recounting going to church with her friend when she was 10 years old. "I remember sitting in the pew and looking at the crucifix and thinking, 'Why would anybody do that?' I was drawn to the cross and the whole idea of Church without understanding why."

She said when her son was about four, he asked her, "Where do you go when you die?" She didn't know what to tell him but knew she needed to introduce religion into their home but, "the context of my life was not Jewish anymore."

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

# 2023 Bishop's Appeal

*BISHOP'S APPEAL FROM PAGE 4*

diocese and our parish community. A single parish could never provide the ministries or programs the Appeal is able to accomplish, and it is our responsibility to help support the diocese as well as our parish in achieving those opportunities.

The diocese, which includes all of Fairfield County, is extraordinarily diverse in terms of ethnicity, financial stability and lifestyles. In many ways that diversity is a gift in helping us recognize the needs that exist and how vital it is for each of us to do what we are able to do with our personal resources, as limited as they might be.

*Q. Please comment on the over-goal sharing program. If the parish has made its goal, should parishioners continue to give?*

**A.** The over-goal sharing is another opportunity for us to support the Appeal. If a parish is able to raise more than their goal, the over-goal excess will be returned to the parish. It is left up

to the leadership in that parish to decide how best to use the funds. The parish can choose to use the funds for their own purposes or to assist another parish or diocesan sponsored programs.

This past year our parish donated our over-goal funds to Foundations in Charity to assist the diocese in creating a new center for Merton House in Bridgeport. I recently attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the new center in Bridgeport. It was an event that spoke of hope, faith and care for those who enter the doors of that center. I was proud that our parish is part of this new initiative to strengthen family life and to provide services to individuals that are not available elsewhere.

*Q. Many people are already stretched financially and may feel that a small donation won't make a difference.*

**A.** I recall the poor widow in Scripture who was willing to give all she had for the sake of another by her humility, generosity and her

openness to the call of the Gospel. I met a woman recently who said to me after attending a meeting that she was most likely the least wealthy person in that room but then she realized that as little as she has was still more than many others possess. We need to support this Appeal, no matter how much we have or do not have. We all can do something to keep the Gospel alive in our midst.

Every gift to the Appeal makes a difference. I have always held fast to the idea that "everyone doing a little makes a lot happen." Each of us has to be honest with ourselves in terms of our giving realizing that we have a responsibility towards others, especially those in need of our assistance.

I know that our parishioners receive an endless amount of requests for financial support, and they have to spend the time to really assess where their donation can achieve the greatest good. Our diocese has developed an open and honest financial report to help us understand the

purpose of the Appeal and the allocation of its funds.

*Q. The Bishop often has said the Appeal unites us as a diocesan family. Do you have any favorite examples?*

**A.** Every time I see the good works at St. Catherine Center for Special Needs, witness the breakfast wagon in Danbury, hear how many meals our soup kitchens serve daily, attend the ordination of our deacons and priests, listen to someone with emotional needs who was able to have counselling provided for them and see the youngest of our diocese have a Catholic education provided as their foundation, I see the Annual Appeal alive and at work in very real and practical ways.

*Q. When you see people who have received support, how does that make you feel and what does that mean to our universal Church?*

**A.** I have been blessed to be pastor in two parishes for whom the Appeal has been well received and supported. I have always felt it is my responsibility as a pastor to educate our parishioners on

the nature of the Appeal and the role of the Diocese in our lives as Catholics in Fairfield County.

*Q. What would you say to anyone who is hesitant about giving?*

**A.** When you see the Appeal at work and the effect it has on the lives of thousands through charity, service, education and the promotion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it is vital that we do all we can to support the Appeal and encourage others to do the same.

*Q. In your role as co-chair as well as pastor, you've seen the Appeal at work for many years, how has it assisted your ministry?*

**A.** As I approach my 50th anniversary of ordination, I cannot help but reflect on my ministry through the years and all that I have been given through the Appeal to help me enhance my ministry and develop a strong sense of community beyond our parish boundaries that touches so many lives. When you give and do the best you can, it comes back to you a hundredfold, and in my case a thousand-fold! ■

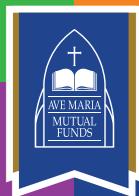
## SERIOUSLY DIFFERENT

INDUSTRY LEADER  
IN MRI... MORALLY  
RESPONSIBLE  
INVESTING

MORAL  
SCREENS WITH A  
ZERO TOLERANCE  
POLICY

CATHOLIC  
ADVISORY BOARD  
OF PROMINENT  
CATHOLICS

ACTIVELY  
MANAGED WITH  
CONTRARIAN  
THINKING



1-866-AVE-MARIA

**AVE MARIA**  
MUTUAL FUNDS

avemariafunds.com

Past performance does not guarantee future results.

Schwartz Investment Counsel, Inc., a registered investment adviser established in 1980, serves as investment adviser for Ave Maria Mutual Funds and invests only in securities that meet the Funds' investment and religious requirements.

The returns may be lower or higher than if decisions were based solely on investment considerations. The method of security selection may or may not be successful and the Funds may underperform or outperform the stock market as a whole.

All mutual funds are subject to market risk, including possible loss of principal.

Request a prospectus, which includes investment objectives, risks, fees, charges and expenses and other information that you should read and consider carefully before investing. The prospectus can be obtained by calling

1-866-283-6274 or it can be viewed at [www.avemariafunds.com](http://www.avemariafunds.com). Distributed by Ultimus Fund Distributors, LLC.

200-131-011524 | 16320271-UFD-02/22/2023

# Supplying Food to Hungry Families Is the First Step in Transforming Communities

When ministry leaders with Cross Catholic Outreach set out to transform the impoverished communities of Rosa de Lima, Guatemala, they knew addressing the urgent need for food would have to be their priority.

“You can rarely succeed with long-term mission work if you ignore basic human needs. Desperately hungry people



are understandably focused on survival, and their first goal is always to make sure their children are fed. Only when that need is addressed can they focus on programs to break the cycle of poverty and build a better future,” explained Jim Cavnar, CEO of Cross Catholic Outreach, one of the largest and most successful Catholic charities serving the poor in Latin America.

Within Guatemala, one of the countries that Cross Catholic Outreach serves, the ministry is currently working with Catholic leaders in the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima. There, extreme hunger and the medical hardships it creates have been impacting thousands of Guatemalans

without drawing much attention from the world at large, even though most of the victims are babies and young children. Fortunately, through Cross Catholic Outreach — and the support of compassionate Catholics in the U.S. — the local clergy now believe helping families escape the hardships of chronic hunger is possible.

“Malnutrition has a terrible impact on poor children, and this crisis is particularly deadly in Guatemala’s remote, rural regions. There, families live too far from hospitals and clinics capable of helping them. A serious lack of resources and inadequate food production create the perfect conditions for malnutrition to thrive,” Cavnar said. “Poor mothers are forced to choose which of their children to feed on a given day, and they watch in despair as their sons and daughters weaken, grow gaunt and lose the will to live.”

Cavnar went on to explain the major difference between hunger and malnutrition.

“Most Americans think of hunger as a temporary thing — a pain that will eventually be relieved — and, praise God, that’s often the case. A child in the U.S. may go hungry at times, but that hunger isn’t usually a life-threatening issue,” he said. “The poorest Guatemalan children may have to endure hunger for weeks or months on end, and at that point, they begin to manifest signs of mental and physical damage that may become irreversible.”

Stunted growth is one of the most common physical problems Cavnar has seen, and the harm it does to a child’s body is lasting.

Thankfully, Church leaders in Guatemala have been working with Cross Catholic Outreach on an ambitious plan to distribute food where it is needed most. [See related story on opposite page.]

“Santa Rosa’s Catholic leaders are



*Families in Santa Rosa de Lima have great faith, but the poverty in their communities is making their life a daily trial. Nutritious meals will help restore their hope.*

eager to feed the vulnerable in their diocese, but they need our help and they depend on the support of compassionate American Catholics. Contributions will allow Cross Catholic Outreach to ship large quantities of donated food to the diocese for distribution through feeding programs, schools and other diocesan outreaches.

“The more who contribute to this mission of mercy, the more we can accomplish. So we are asking for people to be generous in their response,” Cavnar said. “I’m confident we’ll have a major impact on hunger in Santa Rosa if American Catholics get

involved.”

***Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach food programs and other outreaches to the poor can contribute through the ministry brochure inserted in this issue or send tax-deductible gifts to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC02434, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The ministry has a special need for partners willing to make gifts on a monthly basis. Use the inserted brochure to become a Mission Partner or write “Monthly Mission Partner” on mailed checks to be contacted about setting up those arrangements.***

## Cross Catholic Outreach Endorsed by More Than 115 Bishops and Archbishops

Cross Catholic Outreach’s range of relief and development work to help the poor overseas continues to be recognized by a growing number of Catholic leaders in the U.S. and abroad.

“We’ve received more than 115 endorsements from bishops and archbishops,” explained Jim Cavnar, CEO of Cross Catholic Outreach. “They’re moved by the fact that we’ve launched outreaches in almost 40 countries and have undertaken a variety of projects — everything from feeding the hungry and housing the homeless

to supplying safe water and supporting educational opportunities for the poorest of the poor. The bishops have also been impressed by Cross Catholic Outreach’s direct and meaningful response to emergency situations, most recently by providing food, medicines and other resources to partners in Haiti, El Salvador and areas of Guatemala impacted by natural disasters.”

Archbishop Thomas Rodi of Mobile, Alabama, supports this mission, writing, “It is a privilege for me to support Cross Catholic Outreach. This organization funds

ministries to our neighbors in need in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and the Pacific. Through the generosity of so many, the love of God is made visible to many who are coping with the most difficult of daily living conditions.”

In addition, many of the bishops and archbishops are encouraged that Pontifical canonical status was conferred on Cross Catholic Outreach in September 2015, granting it approval as an official Catholic organization. This allows the ministry to participate in the mission of the Church and

to give concrete witness to Gospel charity.

“Your work with the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is a strong endorsement of your partnership with the work of the Universal Church,” Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco said. “By providing hope to the faithful overseas by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, delivering medical relief to the sick and shelter to the homeless, and through self-help projects, you are embodying the Papal Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*.”

# Catholic Leader Laments the Impact of Guatemala's Hunger Crisis: "You Can See the Pain in Their Eyes"

In the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima, Guatemala, most poor families rely on farming for survival, and because their remote villages are isolated, many are dependent on the success of their local harvest. This becomes a dangerous gamble in years when nature does not cooperate.

"When harvests are poor, household incomes can also dry up, leading to a critical shortage of food," explained Jim Cavnar, CEO of Cross Catholic Outreach, a respected Catholic charity working in the region. "In no time, children become hungry and start missing more meals, and the signs of malnutrition start to appear. It's tragic, and you can see the pain in their eyes." [See related story on opposite

***"This suffering must end."***

Jim Cavnar,  
Cross Catholic Outreach

page.]

When Cavnar encountered this crisis on a visit to the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima in Guatemala, it immediately reminded him of a passage in Chapter 16 of the Gospel of Luke, he said.

"There, in Luke, Jesus tells a parable about a poor man living on the doorstep of a man with plenty. The poor man's needs are ignored, though he longs for something simple — just the scraps from the rich man's table. When both die, the affluent man is rebuked for turning away from a situation he could easily have helped solve. Simply put, he ignores a neighbor in need. I believe we are faced with a modern-day example of that parable today in Guatemala, a country so close to our own."

Statistics certainly back up Cavnar's view. Guatemala — less than a three-hour flight from Houston or Miami — has the highest levels of extreme hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the fourth-highest level in the world. With their limited access to employment and educational opportunities, many of the country's remote indigenous people have begun feeling hopeless. Some have resigned themselves to eating one small meal of tortillas each day, and they are in anguish seeing their children languishing on the brink of starvation as a result.

Thankfully, in the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima, Catholic leaders are working with Cross Catholic Outreach to end extreme hunger through an ambitious plan that will also set local families on the path to long-term health through improved nutrition. In



*Most of Santa Rosa's poorest families rely on subsistence farming to survive, and when the weather or pests damage their crops, they have no savings to get through the hard times. That is when the struggle with daily hunger becomes unbearable.*

partnership with Cross Catholic Outreach, large shipments of food will be secured and distributed to those who need help most.

"My team is committed to providing the food these desperate families need, and I'm confident Catholics throughout the U.S. will join our cause by helping to sponsor those shipments," Cavnar said. "This suffering must end."

Cross Catholic Outreach's plan is simple but very cost-effective because it relies on obtaining and delivering nutritionally formulated meal packets known as Vitafood. This fortified rice product is specifically designed to improve the health of malnourished children, and is distributed to the parishes. In the parishes, the food is distributed by the parish priest and local community leaders, who determine which families have the greatest need in the community. A single container of Vitafood can make a big impact, according to Cavnar.

"Vitafood is extremely flexible. It is rice- or lentil-based, and it comes in several different varieties. It can be prepared straight from the package or flavored with additional ingredients to suit local tastes,"

he explained. Providing the optimal balance of vitamins, minerals, protein, fiber, fat and carbohydrates that a child's hungry body needs. What's more, because these Vitafood meals are donated to us, we only need to cover shipping costs to deliver the food to our partner in Guatemala. That means every dollar donated to this project can put 14 nutritious meals in the hands of a family in need."

Cavnar's current goal, is to secure the support of American Catholics to fund the effort.

"The diocese is eager for the help, and we have the logistics settled. All we need now is the support of compassionate Catholics willing to help a neighbor in need," Cavnar said. "And once we have fully addressed the hunger issues in Santa Rosa, more can be done to ensure the long-term prosperity of these people. We have big plans for Santa Rosa, and I believe the world will be stunned by the transformation of that area when our work is done. Our expectation is that thousands of lives will be changed."

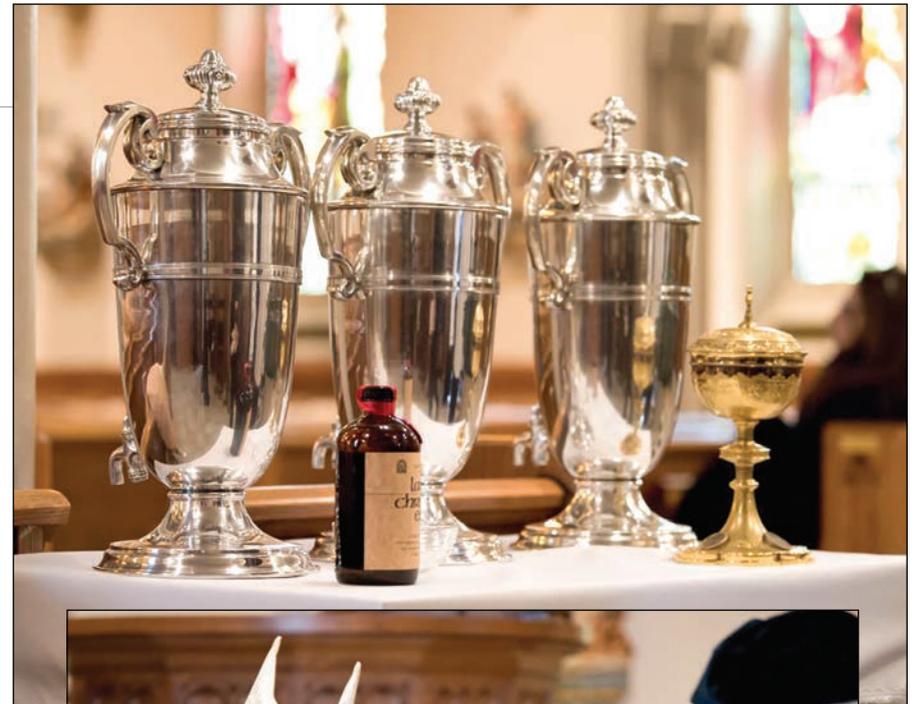
## How to Help

To fund Cross Catholic Outreach's effort to help the poor worldwide, use the postage-paid brochure inserted in this newspaper or mail your gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC02434, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The brochure also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.

If you identify an aid project, 100% of the donation will be restricted to be used for that specific project. However, if more is raised for the project than needed, funds will be redirected to other urgent needs in the ministry.



# Sacred Triduum



## Chrism Mass

On the morning of Holy Thursday each year, the Diocese of Bridgeport celebrates the Chrism Mass, in which the bishop consecrates the sacred Chrism and blesses other oils used in the sacraments.

The Chrism Mass is also an opportunity for clergy to celebrate the institution of the priesthood and renew the vows they each took during the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The Mass is among the principal manifestations of the fullness of the bishop's priesthood and is considered to be a sign of the close bond he has with his brother priests.

The diocese celebrated the Chrism Mass on April 6 at St. Augustine Cathedral. In his homily, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano called for "heroic witness" from all gathered in the Washington Avenue cathedral.

"The renewal of the Church will not come by programs or initiatives," the bishop said. "It will come from the true witness of holiness for all the baptized and for all who lead the Church."



## Mass of the Lord's Supper

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano celebrated the Mass of the Lord's Supper at St. Augustine Cathedral the evening of April 6. During the service, he invoked the acts of Jesus commemorated in the Mass, notably the institution of the Eucharist, the washing of his disciples' feet and his impending sacrifice, and how they are examples of love to be followed by all of the faithful.

"When we enter into the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are seeing the greatest act of love creation will ever know, over and over again in the one single, unrepeatably act of Jesus' self-offering, freely given so you and I may be set free from sin and death," he said. "And in that remarkable self-emptying and self-giving, in that remarkable act of love, Jesus waits until after he gives them the sacrament to show them what it really means—with their own eyes and with their own feet—to teach them what it means to love and to give."

# Sacred Triduum



## Good Friday

After a three-year hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Bridgeport Good Friday Stations of the Cross returned to the city to commemorate Christ's passion and death. Nine Bridgeport parishes participated in the procession, which included prayers in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Polish.

Father Rolando Torres, the pastor of St. Mary Parish who first conceived of the procession back in 2016, said holding a public display of witness to Christ's death is extremely important, especially on a day commemorating his death that would redeem humanity.

"We give them the message clearly that it's a day for Christ," he said. "Good Friday is not a regular day; it's the day when Christ gave us his life for our salvation. So whenever they see us walking the street in the procession, that'll help a lot of people—young people, especially—to understand that this is Good Friday. And this is a day that you should take a little bit of time to go to church."

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano also participated in the procession before traveling to St. Mary Parish in Bethel to celebrate the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion later that day.



## Easter Vigil

The Sacred Triduum culminates in the Great Vigil of Easter, which both welcomes new Catholics in to the life of the Church via the Sacraments of Initiation and is the first to proclaim Christ's resurrection. And Bishop Frank J. Caggiano celebrated the vigil at St. Augustine Cathedral the evening of April 8.

Even keeping in mind the joy of Christ's resurrection, the bishop noted that in a world marred by sin, death and other obstacles, the Risen Lord may not be as apparent to those who do not actively seek him out or believe in him.

"The world may tell us tonight, 'You who believe, where is this Risen Lord?'" the bishop asked. "And on this Vigil Night, my friends, we have an answer to give ... For we can see the presence of the Risen Lord all around us, every day, if only we dare to look, and to look with the eyes of faith so that we might teach the world how to look and recognize him."



## EDITORIAL

The Risen Lord  
Walks with Us

*In a powerful homily delivered during the Easter Vigil Mass at St. Augustine Cathedral, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano offered a meditation on the wounded and fallen state of the world and the hope we have in the Risen Lord. He asks us to reflect on the living presence of Jesus Christ in our own lives so that we might share it with others and transform the world:*

“My dear friends, the world may ask us, ‘Where is this Risen Lord that you believe in? Where are the signs of his power in grace? For you say that he has conquered death and sin and suffering, and yet the world is still filled with it. In fact, with each passing year it seems that the world becomes ever more broken, ever more confused, where war continues to take its tolls on innocent people, perhaps in the millions; where there are more and more who are turning away from God, and more and more who are no longer dedicating their lives to a life of love, kindness, respect, and forgiveness.’ The world may tell us tonight, ‘You who believe, where is this Risen Lord?’

On this Vigil, we have an answer to give; an answer we need to reflect on deeply. For we can see the presence of the Risen Lord all around us, every day, if only we dare to look. And to look with the eyes of faith, so that we might teach the world how to recognize him. Recall that Jesus rose from the dead in the middle of the night, in the quiet hours of the night. And there was no one present. The great triumphant victory that Christ had over sin and death would not come with great trumpet blasts, but came in quiet. It came humbly. But when he came, it broke the very gates of Hell.

When a person chooses life over death, you can glimpse the face of the Risen Lord. When you see someone choosing to care for those who are dying and to walk with them with dignity and compassion, you can see the presence of Jesus risen with your own eyes. When you look into the face of a newborn child, it is the face of the Risen Lord you are looking into. When you and I sit with our friends who are in distress or suffering or lonely, or anxious or despairing, there is the Risen Lord in his power coming to heal and set that person free. Every time we see faith, hope and love—but most of all love—we are looking at the presence of the Risen Lord in our midst.

Every day, in the most ordinary ways, this Risen Lord feeds us, consoles us, laughs with us, walks with us to glory. And you and I will leave this church renewed in our faith in this Risen Lord, to be his ambassadors in the world.

I ask you in the days and weeks ahead to never be afraid to love. Never be afraid to have hope and proclaim to all you meet, the Lord who has claimed your heart. And by doing that, you are making the presence of the Risen Lord as clear as the day to the world around you.

And if we persevere my friends, we will see the day when all wars will end, all suffering will be healed, and every tear will be wiped away. Because Christ’s victory is already in our midst. Christ’s victory is our victory. For that reason we can raise our voices and proclaim to a world that is waiting to see his face, ‘Christ is risen! Christ is truly risen! And come with us so that we may show you his face.’” ■

## SAVE THE DATE

Please join us on Saturday, May 20 at 11 am at St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull for the ordination of Ricardo Batista Comim, Miguel Betancur Lenis, James DiVasto, Férry Galbert, Andrew LaFleur and Matthew Loman to the Sacred Priesthood.

*All are welcome to attend this most joyous occasion!*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

Come see award-winning Christian artist Mark Schultz!



Coming  
to the Quick Center  
for the Arts

at Fairfield University  
1073 North Benson Road  
on May 5 at 7 pm

Proceeds will benefit  
Malta House  
and ministries  
at St. Francis  
of Assisi Parish in Weston

TICKETS GO ON SALE MARCH 1. TO RESERVE YOURS, CALL 203.254.4010

BRIDGEPORT—Tickets are still available for the concert by Dove Award winning, singer-songwriter, and contemporary Christian musician Mark Schultz, who is coming to Connecticut to perform a benefit concert at Fairfield University’s Quick Center on May 5 at 7 pm.

The contemporary Christian music artist has ten #1 hit singles and has sold more than two mil-

lion records in a career that spans two decades.

The Fairfield concert will benefit Malta House of Norwalk, which provides a home for pregnant and parenting mothers of all faiths in Norwalk, and the Respect for Life Ministry of St. Francis Parish in Weston. The performance will include two 45-minute sets with a 30-minute intermission.

Schultz will be playing new music along with his many hits, which include “He’s My Son,” “I Am,” and “Remember Me.”

(For more on his music, please visit: [www.markschultzmusic.com](http://www.markschultzmusic.com). Tickets cost \$50 for general seating and \$60 for premium seating and can be purchased at [www.quickcenter.my.salesforce-sites.com/ticket/#/instances/a0F6S00000m1IfXUAU](http://www.quickcenter.my.salesforce-sites.com/ticket/#/instances/a0F6S00000m1IfXUAU) or by phone by calling 203.254.4010.)

## CLERGY APPOINTMENTS



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

## PASTOR

REVEREND KUMAR XAVARIAPITCHAI, appointed to Pastor, Saint Luke Parish, Westport. Effective date was April 1 for a term of six years.

## PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND ROBERT BALAN, assigned to Parochial Vicar, Saint Lawrence Parish, Shelton. Effective date was February 1.

## DEACON

DEACON TIM BOLTON, appointed to Saint Stephen Parish, Trumbull. Effective date was April 1 for a term of five years.

## OTHER

REVEREND MONSIGNOR DONALD GUGLIELMI, appointment extended to serve as censor librorum through June 2025.

REVEREND SEAN KULACZ, appointed as Coordinator of the Priests who will celebrate Mass for the Carmelites of Mary Ever Virgin at Saint Emery/Holy Family Parish, Fairfield. Effective immediately for a period of three years.

Reverend Francis T. Hoffmann  
Vicar for Clergy  
— April, 2023

FAIRFIELD COUNTY  
CATHOLIC

Office  
of Communications  
Diocese of Bridgeport

238 Jewett Avenue  
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06606-2892  
telephone | 203.416.1461  
fax | 203.374.2044  
email | [fcc@diobpt.org](mailto:fcc@diobpt.org)

Web | [www.bridgeportdiocese.com](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.com)  
Facebook | [BridgeportDiocese](https://www.facebook.com/BridgeportDiocese)  
Twitter | [@diobpt](https://twitter.com/diobpt)

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

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano  
Publisher

Brian D. Wallace  
Executive Editor | [bdwallace@diobpt.org](mailto:bdwallace@diobpt.org)

Renée Stamatis  
Art Director | [rstamatis@diobpt.org](mailto:rstamatis@diobpt.org)

Rose Brennan  
Communications Associate  
| [rose.brennan@diobpt.org](mailto:rose.brennan@diobpt.org)

Ralph Lazzaro  
Advertising Manager | [rlazzaro@diobpt.org](mailto:rlazzaro@diobpt.org)

Ronnie Lazzaro  
Copy Editor (Consultant)

## Advertise

To place an ad contact Ralph Lazzaro: 203.667.1622

## Circulation

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

## Annual Subscription Price

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

## Postmaster

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

© Copyright 2023, Diocese of Bridgeport

# Editorial



## A lily, like Lilly

### COLLECTING MOMENTS

BY EMILY CLARK

*Emily Clark is a writer and teacher, and a member of St Theresa Parish in Trumbull.*

Many years ago, a little girl sat with her parents, her grandmother, and her baby brother in the front pew of a church on Easter Sunday. Too young to understand the profound significance of the day or the importance of the readings, she focused on the flowers adorning the altar. “Aren’t they pretty?” her mother whispered. “Those are tulips, and that’s an Easter lily, and there’s a—”

“A lily?” the little girl interrupt-

ed, a bit too loudly. “Like Lilly?” As the story goes, she turned toward her grandmother, whose name was Lillian, and gave her a quick hug. From that day forward, the little girl’s grandmother was never known as “Grandma” or “Nana” to her grandchildren, but simply “Lilly,” in honor of the beautiful Easter flower.

As that little girl, I have no memory of this morning or the realization I made during Mass, though my mother’s frequent retelling of the story has embedded

the images and the dialogue in my mind. I adored my grandmother, as any little girl would, and always connected her with Easter, from that morning when I was only two, until the day she died—frail and delicate like the flower itself. Even today, decades later, when I see the lilies appearing at the florist before Easter and take in their sweet scent, I am reminded of Lilly and the story that is as familiar to me as the flowers themselves.

In addition to the beauty of Easter and the glory of the celebration, it is also the beauty of consistency that I love about this day—the unchanging Gospel readings of Jesus’ resurrection, the traditional music prompting us to “rejoice and be glad,” and yes, the flowers, with those large, trumpet-shaped lilies in the center of every display. In a season when we focus on what is new in a religious, secular, and natural sense, sometimes we are drawn to what we know best.

Last week, following Easter Sunday, with spring break upon us and the world suddenly radiant in every shade of green, we drove

us. And, being the Wednesday after Easter, the display of lilies still adorned the altar.

Like that child of yesteryear, I

**“In addition to the beauty of Easter and the glory of the celebration, it is also the beauty of consistency that I love about this day—the unchanging Gospel readings of Jesus’ resurrection, the traditional music prompting us to “rejoice and be glad,” and yes, the flowers...”**

down to Maryland for a few days to visit old friends. After walking through bustling Baltimore, we came upon a small church with its doors slightly ajar, beckoning us in. Though miles from home, in a city and a state that I did not know well, I was nevertheless surrounded by the familiar as we quietly entered. The brilliant stained glass, the 14 Stations, and the large wooden crucifix greeted

am drawn to “consider the lilies of the field, how they grow” as Scripture advises us, drawn to both the powerful association with Easter and the loving association with my grandmother, which to me were always intertwined. As we sat for a few moments of silence in the front pew of that little chapel, the story of a little girl and her grandmother came alive for me once again. ■



## Praying on the run

### SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

I’ve developed a new style of prayer. You might call it “ad hoc” prayer or “spur of the moment” prayer, because it comes and goes as the occasion requires or, more accurately, as the Holy Spirit moves me.

Let me tell you a story. I was leaving the Italian restaurant with my take-out order of a large pepperoni pizza, gluten-free penne with Bolognese sauce, chicken milanese and a side order of broccoli rabe—so much stuff they had to pack it in a large box. On my way out, I passed a fellow coming in the double doors.

He was dressed in a leather Harley motorcycle jacket with assorted accessories, and when he saw me, he came back and held

both doors for me. It was an unexpected random act of kindness. (Don’t you love them? And don’t you just hate when someone lets the door slam in your face?)

“Thank you,” I said, immediately realizing it deserved more than a mere thank you. Of course, I couldn’t tip him because that would have been inappropriate. Sometimes all you can do is say thank you. But sometimes the occasion requires more than a thank you. It requires a grander gesture of gratitude ... like prayer.

So I uttered the first prayer that came to mind: “Lord, may I meet this guy in heaven someday, along with his family and friends ... if that’s not asking too much.” Of course, when it comes

to someone’s salvation, it’s never asking too much for Jesus.

Lately, I’ve been constantly petitioning him, when I’m on the street, on the train, in the supermarket, at the gas station, in the bank, at the stoplight—whenever my path crosses with someone in need or someone who’s shown kindness. That’s when I’ll say, “Jesus, help him please.” Or “Jesus, help her please.” Or “May we meet in heaven.”

I realize Jesus isn’t my personal assistant, but that doesn’t stop me from petitioning him as often as possible for strangers, in addition to their family members and friends, for good measure.

I have the feeling that Jesus wants us to pray for the conversion and salvation of strangers because he really wants to see them all in heaven someday, and he’ll do anything to get them there. His sacrifice for our salvation was so great that he doesn’t want anyone left out.

While he was on Earth, Jesus was always reaching out to strangers, or they were reaching out to him. Remember the Samaritan woman at the well, the Syro-Phoenician woman whose daugh-

ter was possessed, Zacchaeus, the little tax collector in the sycamore tree, and the blind man at the pool, not to mention the woman caught in adultery?

Jesus looked on the periphery for those who needed help and who very often didn’t even realize they needed help. There’s a

**“Always try to pray every day for people who may have no one to pray for them. Your simple prayers could very well be the difference between their getting into heaven and not.”**

lot of people like that today, who think they don’t need a Savior because they’re convinced they have all the answers. That can be a very destructive attitude when it comes to our spiritual lives.

Always try to pray every day

for people who may have no one to pray for them. Your simple prayers could very well be the difference between their getting into heaven and not.

I have a suspicion that when we arrive in heaven, we’ll be absolutely amazed at the number of people who are there because we took a moment to say a prayer for them. We probably won’t even remember that we said a prayer. Although we may forget, Jesus never does. He will have answered all our prayers and done a lot of heavy heavenly lifting to get them through the gates. I recently read an anonymous quote that said, “If you are praying about it, God is already working on it.”

So be generous with your prayers. Keep them short and sweet, as my father would say, and spread them around generously like the sower in the field.

All you have to say is “Lord, help them please.” As short as that is, if it’s sincere, it’s enough. Share the spiritual wealth. There are a lot of strangers out there who don’t even know what prayer is and who could use a few, especially when they least expect it. ■

# Parish News

## St. Catherine Parish baptizes 48 children in one day

By ROSE BRENNAN

TRUMBULL—Among the different Christian denominations, there are a few things that remain constant. One of them is baptism, in which a person follows Christ's example and officially begins the lifelong journey of faith.

The Catholic Church most often celebrates the Sacrament of Baptism on infants. However, for one reason or another, sometimes they miss this major milestone of the faith. But St. Catherine of Siena Parish recently opened up the sacrament to children under 7 who hadn't been baptized in its first-ever Day of Baptism on March 25.

The one-day event included catechesis and formation for parents and godparents and concluded with the Sacrament of Baptism for 48 children from 34 families.

To Father Joseph Marcello, pastor of St. Catherine's, the role baptism plays in a Catholic's life cannot be overstated.

"Baptism changes everything; it is the beginning of our life in Christ and the gateway to the sacraments," he said. "The day of baptism is more significant than the day we're born, the day we get married and so forth. Pope Francis has recommended often that everyone learn and know the date of their baptism, and I repeat that here frequently."

Getting baptized is a significant milestone in the life of a Christian. And the Catholic Church is especially adamant

about the sacrament's importance.

The Lord "commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them," the Catechism of the Catholic Church reads. "Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament. The Church does not know of any means other than baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are 'reborn of water and the Spirit.'"

But even with this directive from Church teaching, there can be obstacles to meeting it. Of course, the coronavirus pandemic likely prevented at least a few children from getting baptized, simply because it wasn't safe to do so. And even when there isn't a pandemic to consider, there may be other difficulties, like not being able to find godparents who meet the criteria the Church has.

And in these cases, according to St. Catherine's communications and media director Kate Gombos, it is important for the parish to take those first steps and invite children and their families to experience the graces of the sacrament.

"We find great joy and great success in thinking outside the box, and making some of these things available and possible,"

she said. "Families are recognizing that there's a need, and they're not going to walk through the door by themselves."

Once St. Catherine's extended the invitation of baptism to children who hadn't received it, the parish almost got more than it bargained for, to the point where it had to schedule a second session of baptisms because so many families had signed up.

And even for children who were older than the event's target audience, hosting a baptism day is already bearing fruit. Gombos noted the parish office received a call from a mother who wanted to baptize her infant child in June, who asked if her two older children could also get baptized with her youngest.

"I'm absolutely convinced that she would not have asked about (baptizing her children) if the word of this event hadn't gone



out there," Gombos said. "I think the fruit from the event is going to percolate for a long time."

In addition to providing this Day of Baptism, St. Catherine also provided godparents for families who were unable to find them. These godparents, who were selected from active St. Catherine parishioners, would not be involved in the children's lives, but would instead pray for them every single day.

The Day of Baptism took place on the Solemnity of the Assumption, when Mary accepted her calling to give birth to the Son of God. And to Father Marcello, it is an especially appropriate day to celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism.

"It is the day of Mary's 'yes' to God's plan," he said. "We

know that Our Lady will be very specially watching over and praying for the children who (get) baptized that day. And it will be easy for everyone to remember the day of their baptism: exactly nine months before Christmas."

The Sacrament of Baptism often heralds the beginning of a lifelong journey of discipleship with Christ. And Father Marcello often shares an image of that during baptisms.

"When we look up into the ceiling of the church, it looks a lot like an upside-down boat—the center of a Gothic church is called the nave, from the Latin 'navis,' which means boat or ship," he said. "The Church is the ship that carries us to Heaven. And getting onto that ship is what happens in baptism." ■

THOMAS MERTON FAMILY CENTER FROM PAGE 3

are the agency of the hand up, not the handout. And that's what happens every day at the Thomas Merton Center."

He commended Merton Center staff and volunteers for their dedication and commitment in feeding the poor every day of the week. He said that when the pandemic hit, Merton Center went from serving 200 meals to 600 daily and was providing food to groups throughout the city.

He said during the worst of the pandemic, "They ran into the fire, they never closed—not one day."

Bill Colson, who has served as Merton Center's director for 15 years, said that it has always been a "safe place to enjoy a meal, which is still at the heart of what we do." He said that in an age when people move at fast speeds and have little time for each other, the Merton Center provides "human connection, and it is often the most reliable presence in our guests lives."

Congressman Jim Himes said one of the defining features of the constituency he serves in Fairfield County is the presence of great poverty alongside the historic affluence and wealth of the area.

He said he had no doubt that

"someone slept outside in the cold last night, and some children didn't have their breakfast" nearby the new facility, and he praised Merton Center for "bridging the gap" between the two worlds.

Connecticut State Senator Tony Hwang said, "It is not lost on me that the Thomas Merton Family Center embodies family, faith and friends. Anyone who walks through those doors feels the blessing and love of God, and they know they're being loved and cared for."

Among the most moving comments came from Bridgeport Councilman Jorje Cruz, who at one time was a guest of Merton Center when he was struggling with homelessness and addiction. Cruz, who is now also a recovery specialist with the Department of Mental Health, said Merton Center had a profound impact on his life.

"When I was struggling with homelessness, Merton Center was the place that I could go and eat," he said. "And I didn't have to eat and run. I could eat. I didn't have to rush. It was a place to relax and gather my thoughts and see how am I going to go about my day. God's grace is upon this center."

God's grace is upon this staff because your love is there for the community at hand. We are going to need the Thomas Center."

Merton Center has been at its present location in the former St. Joseph German Catholic Church at 43 Madison Avenue since 1989. Founded on November 17, 1974, as a soup kitchen in downtown Bridgeport, it was originally known as Merton House.

Best known to many for the hot meals it serves daily and its take-home food pantry, Merton House also serves as a day shelter. One hundred percent of its guests fall below the poverty level or are working poor.

Merton Center, under the direction of Bill Colson, currently services 400 meals every day for breakfast and lunch. It also has a shower program for guests, a mail program to provide an address for the homeless, a food pantry that serves 425 families each month, and case management services.

(For information on the Merton Center capital campaign, visit: [www.ccfairfield.org/tmccampaign](http://www.ccfairfield.org/tmccampaign). To learn more about Merton Center and its programs visit: [www.ccfairfield.org](http://www.ccfairfield.org).) ■

### St Augustine / St. Johns County Florida



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



Former CT Resident & Diocese of Bridgeport Parishioner



Jenene Karamon, REALTOR®

[Jenene.Karamon@exprealty.com](mailto:Jenene.Karamon@exprealty.com)  
[Jenenekaramon.exprealty.com](http://Jenenekaramon.exprealty.com)

(904) 501-9912

# Parish News

## Single Catholics navigate 21st century dating

By ROSE BRENNAN

STAMFORD—Dating as a Catholic has never been easy. And with the advent of new inventions like dating apps, the scene can be even more difficult to navigate than it already was.

Luckily, a new program at St. Cecilia-St. Gabriel Parish hopes to equip young single Catholics with the tools they need to navigate 21st century dating.

The program, known as the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) Series, is a part of the larger Communitio ministry, which helps parishes minister to married couples and young families. However, Father John Connaughton, pastor at St. Cecilia-St. Gabriel, thinks young singles have something valuable to learn from the ministry—especially as it pertains to the real issue of loneliness they may confront.

“Everyone participating wants a good relationship; they want connection,” Father Connaughton said. “But a lot of ways the culture has progressed, it’s gotten kind of strange. We seem to have forgotten how to have good, healthy relationships. We’re online a lot, and we also have a consumerist approach to dating and relationships. And so we want to find somebody who will fix this feeling of loneliness that we have.”



Father Connaughton cited a 2021 study conducted by Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education, which found 61 percent of young adults feel what they described as “serious loneliness.” While these feelings can be combatted by relationships of any kind, he is hopeful that participating in a dating group like the one at St. Cecilia-St. Gabriel will help young adults have healthier and more fulfilling romantic relationships to help combat these lonely feelings.

“There’s this crisis of loneliness in our society,” Father Connaughton said. “Hopefully what the course will do is help people to have a better understanding of how to enter into good, healthy relationships ... and how to become more self-aware and recognize the pattern of habits they’ve developed over

the years that have gotten them into unhealthy relationships.”

According to Communitio’s data, parish communities largely tend to serve intact families in their ministries—making single adults an underserved population. But by serving them with programs like the RAM Series, Father Connaughton said, they can help those adults enter into fulfilling relationships, which will hopefully evolve into fulfilling marriages and families with children.

Father Connaughton says the program currently serves about 25 young people. One of these participants is Bettina Brutus, who heard about the program from a friend’s recommendation.

According to her, she went in blind and not knowing what to expect, but is glad she made the decision she did.

“When I walked in, I was a little nervous, but everyone was so friendly,” Brutus said. “It also helped that everybody came from different parishes, so you were meeting new people (and) it was kind of like we were all in this together.”

Part of the RAM Series consists of watching informational videos and reflecting on them. Brutus particularly liked some of the videos that featured a father and a daughter reflecting on a different dating issue and offering their unique points of view.

Those perspectives “helped to break it down,” Brutus said. “And they gave us guidelines and steps, not only saying these are the things you should do, but the steps to actually get to it.”

Brutus also liked one resource that showed five different aspects of a relationship, including trust, physical touch and reliability. According to the program, the levels of each aspect should be as even as possible, and no one aspect should be markedly higher than any other in a relationship

that is healthily progressing.

But one of the biggest things Brutus learned was self-awareness, and the role it plays in developing a romantic relationship.

“It forces you to learn things about yourself,” she said. “There were a lot of questions that you don’t really sit down and think about, so it forces you to have a self-evaluation. And then with that, plus the knowledge they’re giving you, you can apply that to your dating life and make it a much easier process.”

Dating isn’t easy. But with programs like the RAM series, Father Connaughton thinks it can lay a foundation of sanity in an at times fraught dating landscape.

“I think the Church is supposed to be a bastion of sanity in the midst of the sort of madness of the world,” Father Connaughton said. “One of the things that has been great about this program is it shows the sanity of trying to live as God intended us to live. We need relationships, and we want strong relationships and healthy relationships. And this has been a way that we can hopefully start doing that and helping people with that.” ■

### ONE WOMAN’S STORY FROM PAGE 6

Someone mentioned RCIA to her and the seed was planted. After she dropped her son off at nursery school one rainy day her dilemma of whether to go shopping or into a nearby church changed her life. She walked into the parish office she said and told the secretary, “I want to talk to someone about converting.”

At the following Easter Vigil, Ronnie received the Sacraments of Initiation and the Sacrament of Matrimony, as she and Ralph hadn’t been married in the Church.

Ronnie then began volunteering at St. Aloysius Parish, where she had been fully initiated into the Church. She ultimately became the parish’s secretary, and upon retirement, she started proofing a book on the history of the Diocese of Bridgeport and working as the copy editor for the *Fairfield County Catholic*.

When it comes to the many obstacles she has faced, Ronnie credits her resilience to God.

“I’ve never considered myself to be particularly strong. I have no doubt that God has been with me through everything,” she said.

Ronnie and Ralph lost their son about 10 years ago. It seemed to Ronnie that the cancer diagnosis was only one more step on her life’s journey.

“You think you will never get over the loss when in fact, it is preparation for the next chapter,” she said. “Life goes up and down. Sometimes the water is over your head, and sometimes you’re floating on top,” she said, reflecting on years past. “God insulates me from the negativity. He has blessed me with a loving husband, a great care team and most important—faith.” ■

## ST MARGARET SHRINE

a diocesan shrine

The “Original” Italian FEAST OF ST. ANTHONY  
June 9th, 10th, 11th at St. Margaret Shrine



Friday, June 9th - 6 pm to 10 pm  
Saturday, June 10th - 2 pm to 11 pm  
Sunday, June 11th - 12 noon to 9 pm

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

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

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

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

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

# Our Lady of Good Counsel

## New priest looks to the future in Bridgeport

By JOE PISANI

BRIDGEPORT—Father Adriano Biccheri came to the United States to bring people back to Jesus with a Gospel message that is ancient, but still new.

Recently named priest moderator of Our Lady of Good Counsel Quasi-Parish, Father Biccheri is a member of a community called Koinonia John the Baptist, which is an association of Christian faithful committed to spreading the Gospel as part of the New Evangelization.

"This is my first experience in this nation, and I see the people of Connecticut have a tremendous gift and put themselves in service of Jesus," he said. "I love it here because they are accustomed to giving themselves in voluntary service, and for this, I am grateful. I see the beauty of the people of Connecticut and not the negative. There are things deeply Christian in this nation."

Koinonia is a Greek word that means "fellowship, sharing in common and communion," and its mission is "to promote the New Evangelization through activities, training programs and the formation of a community."

Joining Father Biccheri are Sister Maire Close, Brother Michael, Sister Letizia, Sister Aide and Sister Diana Laura.

A house of prayer has been formed at Our Lady of Good Counsel, and people are encouraged to do the same thing in their homes and invite their family, friends and neighbors for one hour a week of reading the Word of God, praying and furthering the fundamental mission of



FATHER ADRIANO BICCHERI WAS RECENTLY named Priest Moderator of Our Lady of Good Counsel Koinonia John the Baptist.

Koinonia, which is to draw people back to the Church.

Father Biccheri said it was a privilege to collaborate with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, who was responsible for bringing Koinonia to the diocese a year ago.

"It is the plan of the Lord for true grace," he said. "We have a great person leading our diocese."

Father Biccheri said the Koinonia came to Our Lady of Good Counsel to "build it up like an oasis."

"We accepted this proposal because of the vision of Bishop Caggiano to renew the diocese with the New Evangelization, which is the charism of Koinonia," he said.

Despite plans to close the parish over the years, the bishop saw the faith of the people and believed that if it was the Will of God to keep it open, the Lord would provide. And then the Koinonia community came.

Father Biccheri said the

bishop gave the community "a Christmas gift" by celebrating Mass on the Solemnity of the Epiphany there on January 8, when the English- and Spanish-speaking members came together to worship. At that time, he appointed Father Biccheri as the priest moderator of Our Lady of Good Counsel Koinonia John the Baptist.

"The members of the parish were open to us and our community, which is founded on the Word of God, service and friendship," Father Biccheri said. "The active members of the parish share the same passion to transform the church into a center of evangelization and were happy to join these efforts."

The Koinonia programs include a "School of Evangelization," with courses to help people grow in the Lord and share their faith with others. There is a "Philip Retreat," offered in Spanish and English, which is inspired by the story in Acts of the Apostles when St. Philip baptized the Ethiopian. The longest program is the "Paul Course," named after St. Paul, which lasts 15 days and teaches people how to evangelize.

"When I think about our church, I think the best way to live together is involving the people in different ministries, so I am fascinated how it serves the Holy Spirit, giving room for people to grow in different ways, from children to young people, adults and the elderly," Father Biccheri said. "With the grace of God, I would like to foster the gifts of everyone. They have a great sensitivity to the presence of the Lord within them."

Father Biccheri said older parishioners work in harmony with the newer Spanish members, who have young children. During Spanish formation classes, the English-speaking members assist by caring for the children of the Spanish-speaking members.

The evangelization courses are designed "to rediscover our relationship with the Word of God and our spiritual gifts," he said.

The quasi-parish, which is at 163 Ortega Avenue, has two Sunday Masses, one in English at 9:30 and one in Spanish at 11:30.

Father Biccheri, 46, was born in Citta di Castello—between Assisi and Florence—and came to the United States last year.

"My roots are very Catholic, and I knew the Lord Jesus in a personal way when I was 19; I belonged to an ecumenical prayer group and discovered the charismatic renewal," he recalls. "After a year, I met Koinonia in Rome, and practically from the first meeting, the Lord gave me a lot of signs he was calling me into that community as a consecrated brother. When I was 20, I entered the first year of discipleship in the community of Rome."

Last year, he celebrated his 25th anniversary of consecrated life. In Koinonia, there are several years of prayer, service and evangelization before ordination, which generally occurs after a man is 30 years old.

Father Biccheri has served in Rome and Sicily, helping to build another center of evangelization. Later, he became the director for the National School of Evangelization in the Czech Republic. He also had several pastoral assignments. He holds a doctorate in moral theology from the Accademia Alfonsiana (Alfonsianum) in Rome, and taught moral theology at Augustinianum/Marianum for three years before moving to Mexico for another assignment.

In addition, Father Biccheri served as the secretary to the founder of Koinonia, Father Ricardo Arganaraz, and traveled around the world, promoting the New Evangelization.

"I received a lot of experience being with him and seeing how the Lord was using this man of faith," Father Biccheri said. "That was a tremendous experience. I

had the privilege to meet many people of faith, and the Lord accompanied me to let me know these wonderful people. I am very blessed to be here with Bishop Caggiano, who is a very spiritual person and a man of faith."

Father Adriano first came to the United States in 2005 and stayed for a month to help set up a Koinonia house of prayer in New York at a parish in the Red Hook neighborhood of Brooklyn.

The Bridgeport community is currently making renovations to the rectory of Our Lady of Good Counsel. Father Biccheri says the Blessed Mother is actively interceding on behalf of their efforts.

"She is sending workers to restore the rectory, and little by little, the Lord is sending collaborators," he said. "Before Christmas, we restored the basement, thanks to the collaboration of a family, who would come in the evening after their day's work and repainted it for free."

He said the presence of Our Lady is so important.

"The people love the Virgin and asked her for intercession to keep the parish alive," he said. "And she sent them a community of evangelizers to bring love to the parish."

Koinonia began in 1979 after Father Ricardo Arganaraz had a powerful experience of the Holy Spirit. The Argentinian was on the track to become a papal nuncio but left the Vatican because he realized the Lord was calling him to something different. He withdrew to a secluded mountain area in Italy with three others to pursue a life of prayer, work and study.

During those early years, while living in solitude, they laid the foundation for what would become a worldwide association. As the community increased so did its evangelization efforts, attracting larger numbers of the faithful, who were hungry for a life of prayer, sharing and evangelization in the tradition of St. John the Baptist.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, the apostolate spread through Northern Italy to Europe and Asia and North America. The worldwide community of 15,000 people, includes families, consecrated brothers and sisters, and priests.

### START MOVING LLC & JUNK REMOVING

Residential Moves | Packing & Unpacking | Junk Removal



866.910.4267

It's our mission  
to help reduce  
the stress and worry  
of moving!



254 Berkshire Road | Sandy Hook, CT 06482 | Fully licensed and insured

April 2023

# Parish News

## ChristLife: Knowing, following & sharing Christ

By SHARON FISCHER

“You bring me souls.” These are the words I hear when I think about the ChristLife program. That is our “soul” purpose to exist.

ChristLife is a 21-week program to encounter Jesus, who he is, why we need to know him ever deeper, how we follow him and how can we share him with others. We minister locally under the name of ChristLife Fairfield.

The first seven weeks are called “Discovering Christ” and focus on Jesus, who he is, why the Resurrection is so important, how can we become more intimate with him and how he shows us the Father’s Love.

An evening at “Discovering Christ” consists of dinner, opening prayer, a video on the night’s topic prepared by ChristLife International, which is headquartered in Maryland and whose purpose is to re-evangelize Catholics to become missionary disciples. Our purpose is to bring Catholics and all who will come to the series to a fuller relationship with Jesus, or get to know him for the first time.

After the video there is discussion of the night’s topic in small groups led by ChristLife leaders. Questions are encouraged. All this is done in a welcoming, loving, nonjudgmental environment. We are here to learn and open our hearts to Jesus.

The next seven weeks are called “Following Christ” in which we try to grow closer to the Lord by building a better prayer life which includes Scripture reading and participating in the Sacraments.

The last seven weeks are called “Sharing Christ” in which we learn to share our beloved Jesus in everyday life, whether with a struggling neighbor trying to find meaning in life or in casual conversation with someone who seeks the cause of our peace and joy.

There is no charge for any of the series or dinners. We live by the donations of others. Our resources are the Lord’s Providence, through individuals, parishes and the Knights of Columbus. Last year we were also blessed with a grant from Foundations in Faith’s St.

Therese Fund for Evangelization. So, thank you to all Fairfield County Catholics for your support and encouragement. We started in Fairfield in 2018 through the request of Father Peter Towsley and people from 18 parishes have participated.

We are open to all the parishes and any seeking soul regardless of affiliation. Come fellowship with us as we talk about Jesus.

Who should come? Anyone who is seeking the meaning of life, has doubts or questions where their life is heading, looking for a deeper spiritual life, or wants to grow closer to our Lord.

Any person that comes and humbly seeks the Lord will find a closer relationship with Jesus. It is not we who work that miracle, it is the Holy Spirit who gives to the soul that comes seeking, opening their mind and heart, and receiving the graces God wants to give them. It is the humble seeking, soul that will be filled. I have no doubt, I

have seen it often. To paraphrase Scripture; People who seek, find; when they knock, it is opened to them; and those who ask, receive. People who come “with all the answers” might not be open at the moment, but a seed is planted that the Holy Spirit will nourish.

Each of the three series has a full Saturday retreat at one of our local parishes (so far, St. Pius, St. Thomas Aquinas, Our Lady of the Assumption in Fairfield, Holy Cross and Holy Family-St. Emery). Our Fairfield pastors have been so generous with us, especially Father Sam Kachuba at St. Pius and Father Victor Martin at St. Thomas Aquinas in the use of their facilities. Remember, we are beggars with no resources but the Providence of God through the generosity of others.

The Lord is blessing our ministry. How do we know? From the encouraging comments of priests who have heard confessions at our retreats and tell us to keep up



the good work, from people who have come as guests and return to serve others as volunteers at future sessions, and especially from the remarks on the surveys we take after a seven-week series is completed, such as:

“Gave me strength and knowledge to stand my ground on my faith,” “made me want to return to Church,” “increased my prayer life and witnessing to others,” “deepened my relationship with Jesus,” “basically a quiet person, but now I joyfully spread the word of God to others”, “I am more understanding and forgiving to the shortcomings of others,” and many, many more beautiful witnesses to God’s transforming love.

We have also started a group called “Live ChristLife” for those who have attended the ChristLife program and want to continue what was started in ChristLife. We have retreats, gatherings and programs on spiritual topics. Our next event will be a day of reflection and fellowship at St. Margaret’s Shrine on June 4.

God is doing a mighty work, one soul at a time. And we are thrilled to be part of it. We are servants in the field doing whatever He asks.

*(The next “Discovering Christ” series will start on October 5 at St. Pius Parish in Fairfield. For more information or questions go to christlifefairfield@gmail.com or ChristLife.org.)*

## St. Pius to launch Perpetual Adoration

By JOE PISANI

FAIRFIELD—Seven years ago, Father Samuel Kachuba started getting emails from high

school students, who asked if they could stop by after sports

hours a day, seven days a week. Over time, he noticed that more and more people were coming during the day to be with Jesus, including police officers



school students, who asked if they could stop by after sports and clubs to spend time in prayer at the chapel in St. Pius X Parish. In fact, there was so much interest, he decided to keep the doors open as much as possible, and eventually “as much as possible” turned into 24

hours a day, seven days a week. Over time, he noticed that more and more people were coming during the day to be with Jesus, including police officers

who would stop by for a few minutes of prayer. Now, the parish is about to begin perpetual Adoration at the Mother of God Chapel for not only St. Pius X, but also parishes throughout the area, through its “Adore 365” effort, which will begin May 13. They are enlist-

ing people in order to have two adorers, or “guardians,” for every hour of the week.

“This opportunity for perpetual Adoration will let the rest of the world participate in the same kind of monastic schedule as nuns and priests, who pray throughout the night and day,” Father Kachuba said. “We can also share in perpetual prayer. The Lord is always present for us in the Eucharist in the tabernacle, and perpetual Adoration is an invitation from him ‘to come and see, to come and spend time with me.’”

The other benefit, he says, are the fruits that come from adoration of the Eucharistic Jesus.

“The individual who participates in perpetual Adoration and commits to an hour of prayer every week is receiving so many graces just by making that time for prayer ... and they become an intercessor for others,” he said.

Research shows that parishes with perpetual adoration have increased participation in Sunday Mass, an increase in sacramental

life—notably the Sacrament of Reconciliation—an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and increased activity in community service, charitable works and evangelization.

“You will start to see the fruits that come from Adoring,” Father Kachuba said. “People also uncover their ability to sacrifice doing Adoration overnight, or whatever time they choose. It reminds them they have the capacity to put aside time for prayer, and that it’s something they really can and should do. This becomes such a comfort to them.”

During the pandemic, Father Kachuba began praying about the possibility of starting perpetual Adoration, but the time wasn’t right to launch the initiative. There was the additional consideration that it would require a lot of work for one priest to undertake in addition to running the parish.

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

# Catholic Academy of Bridgeport

## CAB gala raises \$550K+ and transforms lives

DARIEN—It was a “Night Under the Stars” on Thursday, March 30, when the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport (CAB) held its annual spring gala at Woodway Country Club. More than 170 people gathered to honor the legacy of The Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education. Through a live auction and paddle raise, the school raised over \$550,000, with proceeds going toward need-based financial assistance. 93% of CAB’s 920 PreK-8th grade students qualify for scholarships, despite annual tuition being only \$5,200, and this year, CAB must raise \$2.5M+ for this expense alone.

Highlights of the evening included a performance of “A Million Dreams” by students in CAB’s Alegre Program for the Performing Arts and a moving



AUDREY DORNIER, who accepted the Philanthropic Legacy Award on behalf of ICF, is pictured here with her husband Daniel (left) and CAB Board Chair John Kreidler. (PHOTO BY AMY MORTENSEN)

firsthand testimonial by 7th-grader Angelica Macedo. Macedo enrolled at CAB only this past

fall but testified her life has been transformed in just seven months. “The person who stands

before you tonight is a different person from the one who would have stood here before you a year ago,” Macedo said. “That person was angry, frustrated, and discouraged.” A strong student most of her life, Macedo began struggling in 6th grade at the Bridgeport magnet school she had attended since Kindergarten. “My classmates started giving me a hard time and many of my teachers were unsupportive. One even

she never knew. She is going to be Confirmed this spring and has asked Principal Griffin to be her sponsor. “The opportunity to grow and become a responsible person while being supported at St. Ann has been a gift,” Macedo said. She recently made the High Honor Roll and was chosen to attend a Leadership Institute at Fairfield University. “I am setting goals, working hard, and confident I will achieve my dreams. I



CAB 7TH GRADER ANGELICA MACEDO IS PICTURED here with Executive Director Angela Pohlen (left) and Pat Griffin, Principal of the Academy’s St. Ann campus. (PHOTO BY AMY MORTENSEN)



### Invest in a child's future

When you sponsor a PreK-8th grader, you not only provide financial support to a student in need, you also instill the confidence a child requires in order to succeed in elementary school and beyond.

**The return on your investment has no limits!**



★ Full sponsorships \$5,000

★ Partial sponsorships \$2,500

**Help bridge the gap between the cost to educate a child at the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport and what families can afford to pay.**

Call 203-362-2990 or email [scecere@diobpt.org](mailto:scecere@diobpt.org) to learn more.



told me I used to be smart when I was younger but she didn’t know what happened to me—like there was now something wrong with me.” Macedo started to feel alone, unmotivated, and like no one at school cared.

Macedo’s mother suggested a switch in schools. “After visiting CAB’s St. Ann campus, my mom said, ‘This is the place. We can’t say no if they’ll accept you.’ Principal [Pat] Griffin was willing to give me an opportunity and saw in me what my mom saw in me: that I am smart and that if I set my mind to something, I can achieve it.”

At St. Ann, Macedo said no one made fun of her for wanting to be a serious student, and classmates were respectful. “I now had people who could relate to me and my issues and had a safe space to talk about anything without being judged. I also was no longer distanced from God.” Since coming to CAB, Macedo said she has become passionate about religion and is learning things about her faith

have all of you to thank. Without your generosity, my parents would not be able to send me to a school that has truly changed my life.” Macedo ended her speech to a standing ovation from the moved attendees.

Later in the evening, the Most Rev. Frank J. Caggiano presented the Philanthropic Legacy Award to the former Board members and staff of The Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education, nearly one dozen of which were in attendance. He individually acknowledged Dick Matteis, who, he said, “did so much to help plan for the night from afar,” and expressed his gratitude to each member, noting, “Each of you and every former Board member and staff member of the Foundation have been—and are—living out the Judeo-Christian adage that ‘to whom much is given, much is expected.’”

Accepting the award on behalf of the Foundation was Audrey Dornier, who noted that over

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

April 2023

# Catholic Education

## FIE trustee appointed school superintendent of Archdiocese of New York

By **THERESA SCIALLO**

BRIDGEPORT—Foundations in Education, Inc. congratulates Trustee Sister Mary Grace Walsh, ASCJ, Ph.D., on her appointment as Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of New York, recently announced by Cardinal Timothy J. Dolan, Archbishop of New York.

In his letter to the community, Cardinal Dolan noted the choice was made “after an extensive search process, wide consultation, and much prayer.”

“Sister Mary Grace is no stranger to the Archdiocese of New York. A member of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a religious congregation of women with a particular devotion to education, she has served in

**“Sister Mary Grace is a dedicated champion of Catholic education and a woman I admire greatly.”**

the Archdiocese as both a teacher and principal in our Catholic schools,” Cardinal Dolan wrote.

Since July 2020, Sister Mary Grace has served as president of Cor Jesu Academy, a college preparatory school for young women in St. Louis, Mo. Prior to her position at Cor Jesu Academy, Sister Mary Grace served four and a half years in the Archdiocese of Hartford as the Provost for Education, Evangelization and



**SISTER MARY GRACE WALSH, ASCJ, PH.D.**

Catechesis and the President of St. Thomas Seminary.

Prior to serving the Archdiocese of Hartford, Sister Mary Grace served nine and a half years in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Initially serving as Deputy Superintendent, Walsh was named Superintendent of Catholic Schools by Bishop Caggiano in October 2013, almost immediately after the bishop’s installation. As part of the diocesan reorganization undertaken by the Bishop in October 2014, she was also named Secretary for Catholic Education and Faith Formation.

Born and raised in New Haven, Walsh earned a B.A. in English from Albertus Magnus College, an M.A. in Educational Administration and Supervision from St. Louis University and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration/Church

Leadership from Fordham University.

Sister Mary Grace joined the Foundations in Education Board of Trustees in December of 2017. In addition to her many contributions as a trustee, Sister Mary Grace is a vital member of the Innovation and Leadership Grants Committee, responsible for reviewing grant proposals submitted by Catholic school educators. The grant program promotes excellence in Catholic education by supporting teachers’ innovative projects that have a long-term impact on student learning.

“Sister Mary Grace is a dedicated champion of Catholic education and a woman I admire greatly,” shared Holly Doherty-Lemoine, Foundations in Education’s Executive Director. “We wish her continued success in her newest endeavor with a promise of our prayers.” ■

## A star is born

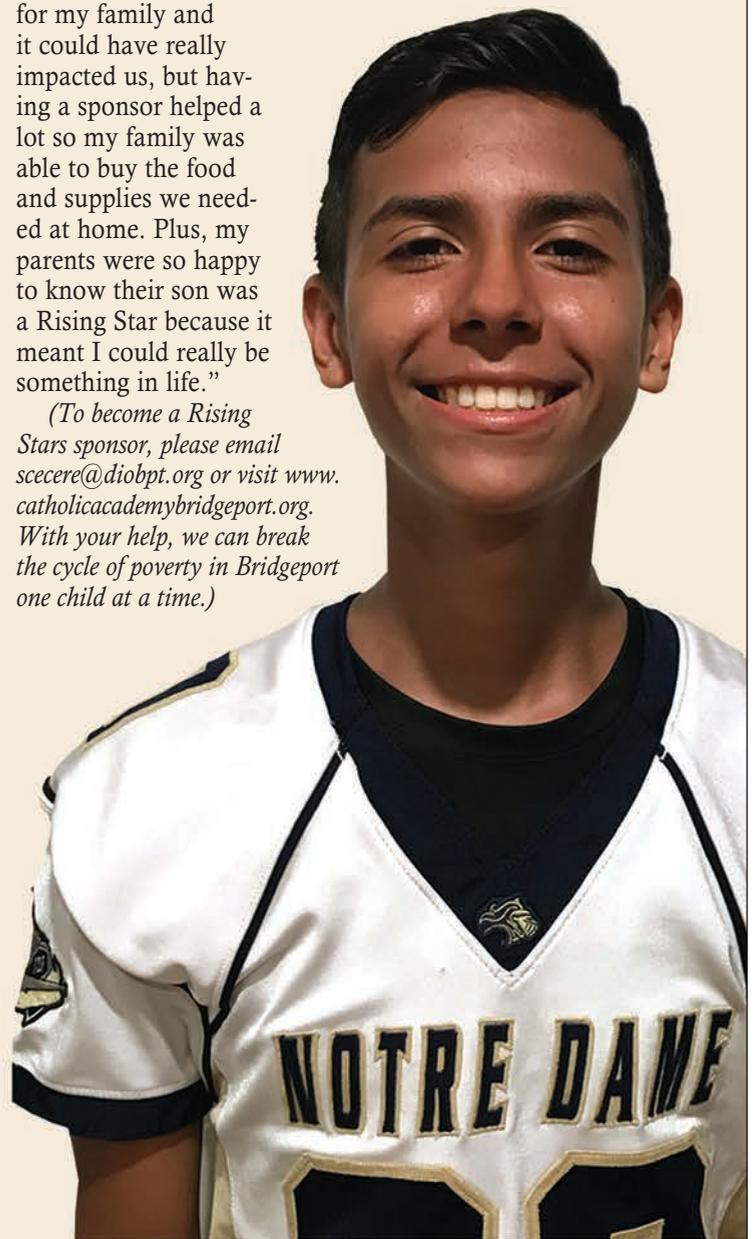
In 2013, the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport (CAB) launched a program where individuals could help subsidize the cost for a PreK-8th grade student to attend one of its four campuses. What began with 11 students being sponsored has grown to nearly 80 children today; what has also grown is family need.

Of the 920 students who attend CAB, 93% come from families that cannot afford the annual tuition of \$5,200. So Rising Stars sponsorships, which are \$5,000 per student per year, is a crucial component in the \$2.5M+ CAB is tasked with raising annually for need-based scholarships. (Notable is that the State pays over \$18K to educate each Bridgeport public school student, while CAB gets \$0 in such funding, yet it costs CAB just \$7.5K to produce its superior results.)

Justin Jimenez, a 2021 CAB alumnus, is one of the many students whose lives have been positively impacted by the Rising Stars program. He was among the first class of sponsored students back in 2013, and in his initial letter to his sponsor, he wrote, “I will try my best in school.” And try his best he did. In fact, Jimenez went on to receive straight A’s nearly every year he attended CAB. He is currently enrolled in Notre Dame High School’s High Honors Program and is a member of NDHS’s football and track teams. In fact, his relay team recently broke the NDHS 4x200-meter record. Jimenez hopes to study mechanical engineering in college someday.

When Jimenez reflects back on his time at CAB, he says, “The teachers going step by step through every subject we learned really helped prepare me for high school. The tuition was a little expensive for my family and it could have really impacted us, but having a sponsor helped a lot so my family was able to buy the food and supplies we needed at home. Plus, my parents were so happy to know their son was a Rising Star because it meant I could really be something in life.”

*(To become a Rising Stars sponsor, please email [scecere@diobpt.org](mailto:scecere@diobpt.org) or visit [www.catholicacademybridgeport.org](http://www.catholicacademybridgeport.org). With your help, we can break the cycle of poverty in Bridgeport one child at a time.)*



### CAB GALA FROM PAGE 18

the course of 30 years, the Foundation awarded \$10.6M to CAB. “Twenty years ago I was brought on the Board by Helen Ix FitzPatrick,” she said. “Chief among our tasks was fundraising...communicating our message of ‘love thy neighbor,’ and...making sure the money we raised went to organizations who were real-

ly doing a good job at helping people.” Dornier recognized the parents, teachers, administrators, Board members, children, and alumni of CAB for their perseverance and dedication to bettering the lives of families through education, noting they have brought meaning to the lives of all who support them. “To Rich and Cindy Stone, Karen Schwarz, all

the assistants and volunteers for our annual dinners, and to all who served on the Board of The Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education over the last 30 years, we honor you,” Dornier said.

*(To learn more about CAB, please visit [www.catholicacademybridgeport.org](http://www.catholicacademybridgeport.org) or call 203.362.2978.)* ■

# Catholic Education

## St. Joe's Stuff-a-Bus is 'us being third'

By EMILY CLARK

TRUMBULL—"Still hungry." Even after an abundance of donated goods stocked pantries and soup kitchens during the holiday season, these words describe thousands of residents throughout Fairfield County, hungry for food to sustain them through the winter.

Even after continued service to their communities during the school year, these words describe hundreds of students at St. Joseph High School, hungry to keep on helping their neighbors. And this was the motivation behind the Trumbull high school's largest in-person service event in three years, culminating in the first annual "Still Hungry" Stuff-a-Bus food drive.

Beginning on Ash Wednesday, students and families started piling bags of canned goods and boxes of cereal in the front lobby of school. Then, on Saturday,

February 25 from 8 am to 3 pm, the drive was opened to the public so members of the community could contribute as well.

The result was four St. Joe's buses filled with non-perishables and ready for delivery to the Bridgeport Rescue Mission, Sterling House Community Center in Stratford, St. Vincent de Paul Food Bank in Derby, and the Thomas Merton Center in Bridgeport.

Deacon Jeff Font, director of campus ministry at the school, said this project resonated with his students who were looking for additional opportunities to serve.

"The pantries are depleted," he said. "When I asked around about what was needed, they always said 'food.' So many (in this area) go to bed hungry. It's such a huge number, so we thought about what we could do."

To increase donations and community engagement, St. Joe's

partnered local Catholic elementary schools and area businesses. At St. Mark School in Stratford and Holy Trinity School in Shelton, young students had their own food drives then brought the goods to St. Joe's.

Parents offered to involve their workplaces by setting up boxes for donations, and other organizations such as the Stamford Medical Group and Nabisco made significant contributions. Volunteers could also provide gift cards or sponsor a seat on the bus with a monetary donation.

"We're all under the same Catholic umbrella and want to live the Gospels," Deacon Font said. "Christ reminds us to 'love thy neighbor' which connects to our motto of 'God first, others second, I am third.' It's a way of almsgiving, a Lenten mission. And this," he added, nodding toward the collection of food, "is us being third."



Seniors Teagan Cavaliere and Stephanie Alves agreed. As peer ministers and members of a theology class who work with Campus Ministry, they played a role in coordinating this project through publicity efforts and organizing collections in their own communities of Stamford and Oxford.

"We're putting our mission into action with an emphasis on charity," said Cavaliere.

For those benefitting from these donations, they couldn't have come at a better time. Leanne Reynolds, the director of resource connections at Sterling House, said her staff was sorting through their last canned goods from Thanksgiving and welcomed the delivery from St. Joe's.

"I'm amazed at how much was donated. This was awesome!" Reynolds said, adding

that they were especially grateful for the variety of donated goods including condiments and bags of flour and sugar. "It's really so thoughtful. The amount of food we got will go a long way to fill our shelves and better help the families we serve."

The success of the Stuff-a-Bus drive has prompted Deacon Font and his students to make this an annual event, continuing to assist those who rely so heavily on these resources.

"There is a need right here in our backyard," he said, "And it's not going away."

Though the students and volunteers who stuffed the buses on that chilly February afternoon said that they are "still hungry," many residents in neighboring communities are not, all because of the generosity of others. ■

## Mrs. Hutvagner honored for 50 years service

By EMILY CLARK

TRUMBULL—How does a teacher sum up 50 years in the classroom, remembering the challenges, successes, relationships, and of course, the students? For Marianna Hutvagner, the response comes in just a few words: "Every year and every child is a gift."

This June, Hutvagner will retire from teaching, having spent all but two of her 50 years in the first grade classroom at St. Theresa School in Trumbull, a classroom that her husband painted decades ago in vivid primary colors. That same paint, she said, remains on the walls today, bright and welcoming like Hutvagner herself, who has greeted the changing times and the hundreds of children with her loving smile, open arms and strong faith.

Upon graduating from Sacred Heart University, Hutvagner spent four years in the convent before leaving to

become a teacher. The principal of St. Theresa School at the time hired her on the spot, she said, but at the end of her first year, she was transferred to the school at Christ the King and then to the one at St. Catherine, which were all part of a Trumbull consortium of Catholic schools. After two years away, Hutvagner returned to St. Theresa—and to a classroom of 35 first graders.

"I've stayed ever since," she said, teaching, nurturing, and supporting each child. "I haven't had to 'work' a day in my life. I've never had any trouble, except for a few bumps in the road. I always want to challenge students and make them feel special."

Though educational methods and the curriculum itself are quite different today than in 1972, the inherent needs of a child have not changed, and Hutvagner keeps that in the forefront of her teaching.

"I ask myself, how do I want them to feel in my classroom?" she said. "Are they safe? Are they learning? Do they feel noticed? Do they know they are part of



something? A lot of them say they don't want to go home at 3 o'clock!"

To assist with classroom lessons, parents have often come in to work with students on reading and writing while Hutvagner teaches the others. She remembers one parent volunteer saying to her, at the end of an engaging lesson with much excitement and obvious learning, "You look like you're having too much fun!" Laughing at the memory, Hutvagner added, "And I was!"

St. Theresa School principal Barbara Logsdail said Hutvagner's students are so attentive, understanding how much

she cares for them.

"She knows how to manage a class and doesn't need to raise her voice or get angry," Logsdail said. "The children don't ever feel that they can't learn something."

In addition to educating six-year-olds in the basic skills of reading, writing, math and science, for Hutvagner, sharing God's word each day was one of the reasons that kept her in a Catholic school.

"The joy of my life is to teach the faith to these children," she said. "It is not always easy to understand for little ones, but I tell them, 'As you grow and develop, you're going to hear it again and again.' I want them to fall in love with Jesus."

It's no doubt that these many students, several of them now priests and dozens more returning to her classroom with children of their own, have learned to love the Catholic faith because of this teacher's devotion.

In 1986, Hutvagner began coordinating a Nativity Mass in which her first graders, dressed

as the Holy Family, shepherds, angels, and stars, "did everything, even the readings!" she said. Each of them also brought a wrapped gift to the altar during the offertory so those less fortunate could have a Christmas party.

Additionally, Hutvagner and her late husband Francis established a rose garden behind St. Theresa School, which still blooms each spring.

Lori Pia, a longtime friend and colleague of Hutvagner's, has seen firsthand this teacher's commitment to her faith and her students. "

She treats each child with respect and every year with a fresh outlook, tweaking her curriculum to fit the uniqueness of each class," Pia said. "Like her school's patron (St. Therese), she never traveled the world winning souls for Christ, but in Mrs. Hutvagner's own little corner classroom, she has touched the lives of many souls."

Reflecting back on these 50

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

April 2023

# Guild of the Most Sacred Heart

## Through art, children see beauty of faith

By EMILY CLARK

GEORGETOWN—Last spring, when the Guild of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus was founded by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, its mission was to promote the sacred arts in the diocese. Since then, events such as the Gaudete Market, Heart to Heart Evenings of Adoration, and the Burns' Night Scottish celebration have drawn scores of men, women, and families to the Guild's oratory at Sacred Heart Parish in Georgetown.

As the Guild's scope continues to broaden, a program was



ing the projects, Keogler added details about the halo and mentioned that Giotto is considered the father of the Renaissance.

"I plug in the history as they're painting, so they get a holistic type of experience and feel the joy of creating," she said.

It's a joy that resonated with the children, including one 11-year-old from New Fairfield.

"It's really fun, and I like drawing with everyone," he said. "The religious artwork is so nice."

Pausing to look at his project, he added, "And I think our Lord appreciates it."

These classes have also been meaningful to the parents, who see how the whole family benefits from what the children are discovering about art and Christianity.

"They come home with such

wonderful pieces and I love that they are using their talents and learning about their faith," said Lenore Yastremski of Danbury, whose sons Thomas and John attended the class. "We witness it at home too. This is reaching us all."

The success of this program is also reaching Father Michael Clark, rector of the Guild and an artist himself, who recognizes how the arts are sometimes neglected in school and wants to change that through continued programming, especially for the children.

"Art can make the soul visible," he said. "Art speaks in a language that doesn't need words. That's God's language."

And it is a language that these young children are quickly learning to understand through the beauty of their own creations. ■



"How do I put the mouth in?" a little girl wondered. "Any way you want to," her teacher answered.

Walking around and check-

developed this winter specifically designed for its youngest members—a children's art school.

After a successful initial class in November, coordinators launched two six-week sessions on Saturday mornings throughout January and February—one for children ages five through seven and the other for older children ages eight to 14. For longtime area art teacher Adrienne Keogler, this was an opportunity to immerse her young students in sacred art and to teach them different creative techniques, all the while sharing in the beauty of their Catholic faith.

"They're excited to create beautiful pieces of art," she said. "And all creation speaks of the Creator. They are seeing God in the artwork."

With a goal of "blending art and teaching faith," each week Keogler introduced the children to a different theme, such as the ancient catacombs or the Renaissance, and then instructed them through guided drawing on how to create images associated with the art history.

Following a short lesson, students referred to printed pic-

tures as models for their own artwork which was all hand-drawn and painted using various mediums, depending on the age group. When focusing on the Presentation, specifically the turtle doves, Keogler introduced the younger group to liquid watercolors while the older ones used chalk pastels.

"I really believe children are capable of so much. They are very receptive because they can make it what they want," said Keogler, who gives them the freedom to experiment with colors and designs of their own while keeping the work rooted in the Christian themes. "We go where the Holy Spirit takes us."

On a recent Saturday morning, the older class immersed themselves in the work of Italian artist Giotto di Bondone, specifically the mosaic of an angel. While sacred music played in the background, the children chatted with each other at tables, mixed watercolors and occasionally called to Keogler for guidance.

"Do you think the head of my angel is too big?" asked one boy, to which Keogler replied, "No, it's perfect, actually."

**ALTARS  
of  
RECONCILIATION**

Erin Shaw  
Tony Tiger  
Bobby C. Martin

**Mar. 25 – Aug. 13**

**Rushnyky**

**Sacred Ukrainian Textiles**

March 25 – September 10

Opening March 25

Blessed Michael  
**McGivney**  
Pilgrimage Center

1 State Street, New Haven CT 06511  
Free Admission & Parking

@FatherMcGivney

Open Wednesdays-Sunday  
10 AM-4PM  
michaelmcgivneycenter.org  
203-865-0400

# Obituaries

## Father Albert Audette, Jr., 90

BRIDGEPORT—Father Albert D. Audette, Jr. died on Sunday evening, April 1, 2023 at his home in Naples, Fla. He was 90 years of age.

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

**“A former fighter pilot, Father Audette will be remembered in gratitude by many throughout the diocese as a gifted and accomplished priest with a remarkable life story and a deep love for God, country and family.”**

A former fighter pilot, Father Audette will be remembered in gratitude by many throughout the diocese as a gifted and accomplished priest with a remarkable life story and a deep love for God, country and family. He brought his great faith, life experience, energy and intelligence to his ministry of service in parishes in Bethel, Danbury, Brookfield

and Stamford.

Albert David Audette, Jr. was born in Central Falls, R.I., on June 12, 1931, the son of Albert D. Audette, Sr. and Mary Kennelly Audette. He was baptized July 6, 1932, at St. Theresa Church in South Attleboro, Mass., received his First Holy Communion on May 18, 1941 at St. Patrick Church in Cumberland, R.I. and the Sacrament of Confirmation at St. Theresa Church in South Attleboro, Mass. on May 12, 1942.

Father Audette attended St. Raphael Academy. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Nebraska and Master of Business Administration from George Washington University. He also studied at the Foreign Service Institute and the National Defense College.

Father Audette served in the United States Air Force from

1952 to 1981. During these years, he attained the rank of Colonel. In the early years of his military career, Father Audette served as a jet fighter pilot (flying many missions in Vietnam during the war), test pilot and instructor pilot. Among the many honors he received during his military career, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Cross of Gallantry. Later, he served as an attaché to the Ambassador to Portugal.

On July 10, 1954, he married Mary Ann Poling at the Church of the Assumption in Topeka, Kan. They raised four children together. Sadly, Mary Ann passed away in 1989. After some time, Father Audette discerned a vocation to the priesthood and requested admission to serve in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Father Audette received his priestly formation at the St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Overbrook, Pa. He was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Bridgeport by Bishop Edward M. Egan at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport on May 29, 1993.

Following his ordination, his first assignment was as parochial vicar of St. Mary Parish



FATHER ALBERT D. AUDETTE, JR.

in Bethel, where he served until 1996. In January of 1996, he was assigned as administrator of St. Peter Parish in Danbury. Later that year, he was named pastor of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish in Brookfield. His next assignment was as pastor of St. Peter Parish in Danbury, where he served from 2002 until his retirement in 2007.

Upon his retirement, Father Audette took up residence at the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist in Stamford. He went back to school and obtained a Masters in Mental Health, and after receiving his degree, opened

the Roman Catholic Center for Mental Health and Spiritual Direction in Stamford which focused on providing care for those unable to afford it.

In addition to his parish responsibilities, Father Audette served as Coordinator for Ministry to the Newly Ordained.

Father Audette’s Funeral Mass will take place at St. Joseph Church in Alexandria, Va. Father Brian Gannon will be the homilist. Interment will follow at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors. The date and time will be announced at a later date.

## FUNERAL GUIDE

*Harding*

FUNERAL HOME

NEIL F. HARDING  
JOHN J. HARDING

203.227.3458  
hfh210@optonline.net  
www.hardingfuneral.com

210 POST ROAD EAST WESTPORT, CT 06881



“Quiet Dignity Without Extravagance”

Affordable Direct Cremation  
Title XIX Welcome

**County Cremation Service**

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

## DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT APRIL 23—MAY 27

<b>APRIL</b>		9	Rev. John B. Fonseca.....	2002	
27	Rev. Bertrand E. Parent.....	1973	10	Rev. Robert J. Hyl .....	2015
23	Rev. Vincent P. Bodnar.....	1988	13	Deacon Joseph Melita.....	2018
25	Msgr. William A. Nagle.....	2013	16	Rev. Stephen J. Balint .....	2020
	Rev. John Smolko.....	2020		Rev. Alfred J. Bietighofer .....	2002
28	Msgr. Thomas J. Green.....	2018	17	Rev. Miroslav L. Sultus.....	1992
29	Rev. Joseph F. Cleary .....	1971	18	Msgr. Charles B. Ratajczak, O.F.M.....	1957
	Rev. Andrew Dube .....	2006	19	Rev. William H. Sullivan .....	1980
	Rev. Austin R. Saunders .....	1986	20	Rev. Nello A. Barachini .....	2022
<b>MAY</b>		23	Rev. Thomas M. Garrick .....	1955	
1	Rev. Gregory J. Huminski .....	2010		Deacon Hans Jakob Gram .....	2010
	Rev. Canon Albert W. Watts .....	2020	24	Rev. Mark Grimes .....	2008
2	Msgr. James F. Murphy .....	1958	25	Rev. Joseph A. Ganley.....	1957
3	Msgr. Michael J. Carnicke, P.A.....	1980	26	Msgr. William Loughlin.....	2014
6	Msgr. John B. Hossan.....	2018	27	Rev. Joseph F. Sohovich .....	1957

April 2023

# Sports

## O'Hara adds 19th state title to Prep hockey

By DON HARRISON

HAMDEN, Conn.—Vin O'Hara has joined an elite club at his alma mater, Fairfield Prep.

When the 2022-23 Jesuits stunned top-seeded Notre Dame-West Haven, 3-0, in the CIAC Division I state championship hockey game on March 22 at Quinnipiac University's M&T Bank Arena, O'Hara became just the fourth head coach to direct Prep to a state hockey title. This was the school's record 19th.

That this was O'Hara's first year at the helm made it all the sweeter.

"I'm very fortunate to be here. I love hockey," he declared. "It's not a job. I don't need an alarm clock for the 6 a.m. practices (at the Wonderland of Ice in Bridgeport)."

As a student athlete, O'Hara was a defenseman on the Jesuits' 2000 and 2001 CIAC state championship teams, the latter year—as a senior—earning All-State recognition as well. Those back-to-back titles represented the first two of the 11 won by his predecessor, Matt Sather.

When Sather decided to relinquish the reins after 23 seasons, after compiling a 359-143-22 won-lost-tied record and tying Hamden High's Lou Astorino's record of 11 state championships, it seemed apropos for O'Hara to succeed the man he calls "my mentor" and considers a close friend. Vin had spent the previous nine years as a Prep assistant coach.

O'Hara, who was voted Connecticut's Coach of the Year by GameTime, inherited an outstanding array of players from Sather's 2021-22 squad—nearly all of whom he had coached on the junior varsity. Juniors Blake Baksay and James Murphy stepped up to provide the lion's share of the offense this winter, with right-wing Baksay on top with 26 goals and 37 assists. Murphy, a center, generated 20 goals and 25 assists.

Two of Murphy's goals were registered in the state title game, the first coming in the opening three minutes and the second, an empty-netter, with just 35 seconds remaining in the contest. Baksay produced the Jesuits' other goal in the second period.

"They are dynamic players



and scorers, highly intelligent players. Both are members of the National Honor Society," O'Hara said. "They were in our front line with senior captain Will Huntington."

Another Prep senior, goalie James Heber, appeared to save his finest performance for last. The Wilton resident turned back 42 Notre Dame scoring attempts in the championship game, several of which were deemed improbable.

He also recorded a shutout (with 17 saves) in the state semi-final, a 5-0 decision over Greenwich at the Quinnipiac rink.

In late January, James, along with his mother and sister, were forced to deal with the sudden death of his father. Remarkably, he did not miss a game.

"We won all eight games after his return," O'Hara pointed out. "He allowed just 13 goals during that span." Indeed, with Heber at

the net, the Jesuits kept opponents scoreless during the season's final 100 minutes and 34 seconds.

Prep actually won its final nine games to finish with an 18-6 record and the top rank in GameTime's final 2022-23 state poll. The Jesuits defeated Notre Dame-West

Haven in three of their four meetings this winter, including a 4-3 overtime decision to capture the Southern Connecticut

Conference (SCC) title.

Both Baksay and Murphy were first-team selections on GameTime's 2022-23 All-State team, while Heber and classmate Colin Woodward, a defenseman, were selected to the second team. The Connecticut High School Coaches Association (CHSCA) placed Woodward on its Division-I All-State first team and Baksay on the second unit.

Shortly after being appointed head coach last June, O'Hara joined the Prep faculty as an English and social studies teacher. "Matt (Sather) and I co-teach an English class," he noted. O'Hara, 39, lives in Fairfield with his wife, Donna, and their two daughters, Lily and Madeline.

For the record: The founding coach of the Jesuits' hockey program, Marty Roos, guided Prep to its first four state titles (1978, '79, '80, '81). His successor, Peter Lavigne, was at the helm for the next three (1991, '95, '96), and then came Sather (2000, '01, '04, '05, '07, '08, '11, '13, '14, '18, '19). ■

## Kolbe stands strong in state tournament

By DON HARRISON

UNCASVILLE, Conn.—Kolbe Cathedral High School's girls' basketball team entered the 2023 CIAC State Tournament with a 10-10 record and a No. 16 seeding. But Lisa Hodges, who had returned to coach at her alma mater after a four-year absence, saw potential in her young team. And she was so right.

In the span of 13 evenings in March, the resurgent Cougars walloped 17th-ranked Wamogo by 55 points; upset top-seeded Bolton, 51-48; slipped past eighth-ranked Coventry, 48-44, and whipped fourth-ranked Windham Tech, 64-35. Suddenly, Kolbe was scheduled to face Northwest Catholic in the Class S championship game at Mohegan Sun Arena on March 18.

"For the most part, they rose to the occasion," said Hodges, who had guided Kolbe Cathedral to five state titles and one runner-up finish

during her first seven seasons as head coach and also served as athletic director of the Bridgeport-based school.

"Bolton was very good; they'd lost only one game and they had a potent press. But we outscored them, 19 to seven, in the final quarter," she continued. "Our girls finally understood my expectations. If we do X-Y-Z, we're going to do well. They were so happy we did well."

Sparked by juniors Skylar Miller and Amaris Timmons, the Cougars took charge early in the title game against 10th-ranked Northwest Catholic, building a 13-point lead in the second quarter and leading, 33-24, at halftime.

But the West Hartford school rallied in the second half and emerged with a 74-65 triumph and its fourth state title. Maeve Rushin, a 6-foot-1 junior and daughter of 1995 UConn All-American Rebecca Lobo, was instrumental in the Lions' comeback, pulling down a team-high 13 rebounds and scoring 10 points.

"We had a couple of missteps,

and our immaturity, which had been lurking all season, reared its head," Hodges noted.

For Kolbe, both Timmons and Miller finished with 19 points, and Timmons recorded a game-high 14 rebounds.

Hodges, who is employed as an accountant, was stunned to receive a phone call from K-C Athletic Director Roderick Ricketts last fall, informing her that "we're in the market for a (head) coach." At first, she pooh-poohed the offer, but reconsidered and decided to return. Now, she's planning to come back for the 2023-24 season.

Timmons became Kolbe's offensive and defensive leader this winter, averaging 13 points and 9.5 rebounds per game, and shooting 51 percent from the field. The 6-foot junior also blocked 72 opponents' shots—or 3.1 per game. Other



AMARIS TIMMONS

notable returnees are Miller, a 6-foot forward, and Rachel Cherrington, the Cougars' 5-6 junior point guard.

The most notable departure from Kolbe's 2022-23 runner-up squad is senior Jaden Patrick, who averaged 10 points and 7.4 rebounds this past season. ■

# Column: Thomas Hicks



## Some thoughts about atheism

### POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

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

Western culture has become increasingly secular. The spirit of our age seems to involve the denial of transcendence. Many consider the development of atheism as a sign of progress.

There is the growing number of self-confessed atheists. According to a 2008 survey, only two percent of the U.S. population was atheist, while 10 percent were agnostic. In 2018, it was estimated that 26 percent of Americans were atheists. This was much higher than the three-to-11 percent rates that were consistently found in surveys.

There is the New England Skeptical Society made up of Humanists and Freethinkers of Fairfield County. This society hosts a virtual event titled "The Skeptic's Guide to the Universe." The Italian Catholic Bishops Conference concluded that 30 percent of the Italian population is atheist – around 18 million people. More college students are

calling themselves atheists. Non-religious identity has become increasingly important to many ("nones"). At Harvard University, there is the "Harvard Humanist Chaplaincy". The young have been invited to imagine, with John Lennon, the positive effects of a world with "no religion." In the academic world, the working assumptions seems to be that every serious person is an atheist. There are atheist websites, blogs, journals, conferences that provide a network of support for atheists.

One cannot deny that atheists can live fulfilling lives that are meaningful and happy. The Catholic theologian Karl Rahner was sympathetic to contemporary atheism. Atheists deserve to be taken seriously. Atheists I know describe themselves as trying to salvage the best that life has to offer right now. They claim that this life is quite enough to give their lives meaning as well as intellectual satisfaction. They settle into a comfortable unbelief.

Many see their atheistic lifestyle as something that can contribute to a better world.

The "New Atheists" (e.g. Dawkins, Harris, Hitchens) would have Judaism, Christianity, and Islam simply disappear, after which we should be able to go on enjoying the same lifestyle as before, only without the nuisance of suicide bombers and TV evangelists, without worrying about getting blown up by God-inspired fanatics. They compare God to belief in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny.

The Second Vatican Council stated "believers can have more than a little to do with the birth of atheism. To the extent that they neglect their learning and growing in the faith and the Scriptures they must be said to conceal rather than reveal the authentic face of God and religion" (*Gaudium et Spes* 19-21). It's true—most criticisms of religion are of immature religion.

My own thinking about atheism involves some basic questions: How and why did the big bang start? How and why can something come from nothing? How and why did the constants of the universe arise to create the perfect conditions for human life? How and why did consciousness evolve from which we have purpose and meaning?

For me, the big questions are: What is it all about? Why are we

here? Who are we? Why is there a world?

Atheists commonly respond by telling how the universe is old enough to have allowed chance and physical laws ample time to experiment with different chemical and environmental combinations. There have been billions of years of evolution.

The claim is made that truth can be attained only by science. Atheists in general insist that only what can be measured is real. Science alone can give a reliable knowledge of reality. The late Carl Sagan insisted that modern science would engender the same awe as religious faith.

Science can say a lot, but it can't say everything. There are channels other than science through which we experience and understand the world. There are works of art, literature, music, philosophy and theology—dimensions of reality that science can't reach.

There are a couple of other problems I have with atheistic claims. For example, atheists avoid the idea of creation by claiming that the universe is eternal. That would imply that there would have occurred in the past an infinite number of events, and the number of future events is potentially infinite. I have trouble with the concept of beginningless time.

A few other thoughts: One can marvel at the eye's capacity for vision, how many different sorts of parts the eye has and how precisely their functions must be coordinated to produce vision. This is repeated in organ after organ. To me, this points to the hypothesis of a super-

natural architect who arranges things by an enormous intelligence. Overall, I think God is the animating force of the entire evolutionary process. There is an incomprehensible power with limitless knowledge that started the whole universe going in the first place.

I do think that, to some extent, many people become atheists so they don't have to worry about pleasing and being judged by God.

Atheists claim that only evolutionary biology can provide an account of why people are religious. I think that so many people are religious because God has structured our nature towards himself. This world on its own is not enough to satisfy the human hunger for meaning and happiness. Human beings are ultimately understood in relation to God. Augustine was right: "You have made us for Yourself O Lord, and our hearts are ever restless until they rest in Thee." There is a gravitational pull towards God.

The Protestant theologian Karl Barth said that atheism is a ridiculous invention. Sometimes I have a sense of what he meant. People act as if humans were alone, as if their deeds were carried out in the dark, as if there were no God Who saw, no God Who knew.

Shortly before his death, in the spring of 1980, the hard-core atheist Jean-Paul Sartre made a startling disclosure: "I do not feel that I am the product of chance, a speck of dust in the universe, but someone who was expected, prepared, prefigured. In short, a being whom only a Creator could put here: and this idea of a creating

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 27



NEW  
ENGLAND'S  
LARGEST  
RELIGIOUS  
SUPPLY  
COMPANY!

PATRICK  
& SONS

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

*A Family Business That Cares*

Retail shopping online at:  
[www.churchgoodsgifts.com](http://www.churchgoodsgifts.com) or call: 800-243-6385  
For Parish supply needs call: 800-243-6385  
or visit our website: [www.ChurchGoods.com](http://www.ChurchGoods.com)

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

Happy  
Mother's Day!  
from your favorite florists!



Hansen's Flower Shop  
Fairfield  
203.255.0461  
[hansensflowershop.com](http://hansensflowershop.com)



Bruce's Flowers  
Norwalk  
203.846.1665  
[brucesflowers.com](http://brucesflowers.com)



Beachwood Florist  
325 New Haven Avenue, Milford  
203.878.3717  
[beachwoodflorist.com](http://beachwoodflorist.com)

# Parish News

ST. PIUS ADORATION FROM PAGE 17

"I realized that God was going to have to help me because I was stretched too thin," he said. "By myself, I wouldn't be able to do this, and lo and behold, a young woman, Angelica Martinez, called and asked to meet with me."

He first met Martinez 16 years ago when he was a transitional deacon at St. Mary Parish in Norwalk.

"She talked about this desire in her heart to help parishes start perpetual Adoration, and said that God had inspired this," Father Kachuba said. "We realized we already had so many things in place, including a chapel that's open 24 hours a day, where Jesus is present, so it was really a question of organizing it and getting things going."

Today, Martinez is coordinating the effort with a team of volunteers and is excited about the future.

"When Father said, 'Yes, let's do it,' I knew this was the Lord's gift to us," she said. "The Lord has humbled me, and he has continued to just ask me to show up and he will do the rest. I recognize I can't do anything by myself. He has had me on a journey to trust him through others and to seek out help. He has

also provided me with all these volunteers, and I am so grateful for each one of them."

Martinez said that right from the start, the Lord and Our Lady have led her in the effort to create perpetual Adoration chapels.

"I am eternally grateful, and I recognize the beauty of what we are building," she said. "This is so important because it is he who is. Now, the Lord will be available to us, his children, at all times in the Eucharist."

Father Kachuba says that Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has often encouraged parishes to provide adoration chapels.

"I want to respond to that because I agree with him wholeheartedly," he said. Especially during this time of Eucharistic Revival, it seems right to call people into a deeper sense of reverence for the Eucharist—all of us, priests, nuns, laypeople, it doesn't matter. We can all come and spend that time in prayer."

Father Kachuba also said: "A perpetual Adoration chapel is never just parish-based. It is a call from the Lord to everyone to come and pray. You always have people from other towns and other parishes because it is meant to be a service to the whole

community as a place of prayer. That's a really beautiful component of it."

The parish currently has Eucharistic Adoration in the church from 7 to 8 pm every Wednesday, along with Confession; and in the chapel on First Fridays from 9 am to 9 pm. Otherwise, the chapel is open all day for prayer.

"The tabernacle is there, and Jesus is waiting for them," Father Kachuba said. "Several years ago when we started First Friday Adoration, I was really moved by the way people responded and made the commitment to come. They come every month, and we always have people signing up who are very faithful. It has been a tremendous gift."

He tells the story of a man who isn't Catholic but comes

several days a week to spend an hour in the chapel in the presence of the Eucharist, and being there with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament "has done wonders for his spiritual journey."

"When you create a space where people can come to pray in Eucharistic Adoration, really, truly amazing things can happen," he said. And not just for adults, but also young people in youth ministry and those discerning a vocation."

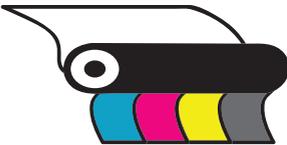
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament played an enormous role in Father Kachuba's vocation, and if not for regular Adoration, it would have taken him much longer to figure out what his call was, he said.

"So many times at youth events and retreats and service trips, I've seen the way young

people respond to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament," he said. "It's incredible. It seemed that 10 years ago, I had to convince adults that kids could handle Adoration. Then, they would see it happen, and watch how teenagers, high school students and even younger students responded to being in the presence of the Lord. They're so reverent. It's beautiful. It shocks a lot of folks. I've always believed that if you bring kids in front of Jesus, you can let Jesus do the rest."

*(If you are willing to commit to giving the Lord one hour a week at St. Pius X Parish at 834 Brookside Drive in Fairfield, and wish to receive more information about Adore 365, email saintpiusxadoration@gmail.com and include your full name and phone number. To sign up, visit www.st-pius.org/adore365.)*

**Proud printers of  
Fairfield County Catholic**



**Trumbull**  
PRINTING

Please contact us for a FREE consultation, print samples & quote. We also offer a simple online quote request form.

**205 Spring Hill Road, Trumbull CT 06611**  
**203.261.2548**  
**www.TrumbullPrinting.com**

Newspapers • Publications • Shoppers • Catalogs • Magazines • Directories  
Coupon Books • College Course Catalogs • Free Standing Inserts  
Business and Financial Periodicals • Advertising Supplements

## DON'T GO IT ALONE



**Calling All Young Adults in the Diocese Ages 18-39**  
**SIGN UP TO BECOME A MENTEE!**



**Take advantage of this opportunity to learn from parishioners across our diocese that are willing to help you succeed in your career or life goals**

- Resume writing
- Career planning
- Networking
- Job searches
- Spiritual guidance
- Goal setting
- Communication skills
- Interviewing
- Internships

The program consists of one monthly meeting with your mentor for 6 months. Meetings can be held in person or via Zoom.

**www.formationreimagined.org/bridge**



# Nuestra Voz

## Semana Santa celebrada en Danbury

POR MARICARMEN GODOY

DANBURY—La presencia del Padre Harry Prieto que pertenece a la iglesia de St. Mary del poblado de Bethel a pocos minutos de la iglesia de St. Peter, ubicada en la Main Street, en el área histórica de la ciudad, fue la garantía para que en este templo también se celebre la Semana Santa en español, tanto como las confesiones, liturgia del Viernes Santo y la misa del domingo de Ramos, Jueves Santo y la de la Pascua de Resurrección.

En la iglesia de St. Peter que está en pleno centro de la ciudad, Delani Africane, de ascendencia salvadoreña, de once años, fue una de las servidoras del Altar (monaguillo) que ayudó a los fieles a encender las velas en la ceremonia de la Vigilia Pascual; entre ellos a Ofelia Bruno, nacida en Veracruz, con más de veinte años de acudir a la iglesia y en sus palabras: “para renovar su fe y su amor a Cristo”.

Acompañamiento que lo hizo durante la Semana Santa en la ceremonia del Jueves Santo con la renovación del sacerdocio, la del Viernes Santo con la Adoración de la Cruz, el sábado en la Vigilia Pascual de la luz y

el domingo en la misa en español de la 5:0PM en la Pascua de Resurrección.

El Viernes Santo, en la ceremonia de conmemoración de la muerte de Jesús, el Padre Harry Prieto, que vino ayudar desde la parroquia de St. Mary de Bethel, reflexionó sobre cómo Jesús siendo el hijo de Dios cumplió su misión en el mundo quien no fue excepto de la traición por parte de Judas o de ser negado por Pedro; reflexión hecha con el fin de entender de quién fue Jesús, porque cargó la cruz hacia el calvario por el sufrimiento de todos y cómo fue un sacerdote que no hizo sacrificios de animales, sino que se sacrificó asimismo inmortalizando su vida por la humanidad.

Reflexión que el domingo de Gloria, en cambio, fue diligente para explicar que sin la resurrección no hay vida. El mismo Jesús dijo: “Yo soy la resurrección y la vida” (Juan 11:25) y esa es la garantía para que los creyentes sepan que luego de la muerte hay una vida eterna.

En su mensaje a sus fieles el Padre Gregg Mecca, párroco superior de la iglesia de St. Peter (San Pedro) dijo: “El Señor ha resucitado de entre los muertos, levantándonos a nosotros.



La Cuaresma han terminado y hemos fortalecido nuestros votos bautismales de renunciar al pecado...”

Además dio la bienvenida a la plena comunión con la iglesia a tres nuevos miembros de la parroquia de origen hispano, quienes estudiaron durante este año y fueron presentados para recibir el sacramento de la Eucaristía (primera comunión) y la Confirmación.

Carolin Rodríguez, Franklin Paccha, y René Yanza, fueron presentados como tres jóvenes

aspirantes a recibir la Primera Comunión y Confirmación, quienes recibieron su instrucción bajo el programa de catequesis en español para adultos conocido como RCIA, teniendo como maestro a Álvaro Tovar, un joven colombiano que trabaja voluntariamente preparando a niños y adultos para que reciban los sacramentos. Ceremonia que se realizará el día de Pentecostés.

En el boletín semanal el Padre Mecca habló de cómo San Gregorio de Nacienceno (ca. 329-390) compuso un sermón de

Pascua en el que contrasta al ser humano con el Señor y escribió: “Hagámonos como Cristo, ya que Cristo se hizo como nosotros. Hagámonos de Dios por Él, ya que Él por nosotros se hizo Hombre... Él fue deshonrado para poder glorificarnos; Él murió para poder salvar a nosotros; ascendió para atraer hacia sí a nosotros...”

Aunque el obispo Frank Caggiano ha pedido a la Diócesis que se haga un censo dos veces por año para saber exactamente cómo y de dónde vienen los feligreses a la Diócesis de Bridgeport, el Padre Mecca acepta que es difícil tener un número puntual de miembros, porque la iglesia cuenta con una población flotante del poblado de Bethel y de fieles que acuden a la parroquia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe; además de un aumento constante de nuevos inmigrantes que cruzan a diario la frontera y llegan a Connecticut.

“Creo que cada fin de semana tenemos en las misas y ceremonias religiosas un promedio de 900 personas. La mayor parte de miembros de la comunidad son de Ecuador y hemos notado que después de la pandemia hay nuevos fieles que también vienen de este país”, dijo el Padre Mecca.

Por eso, una de las preocupaciones y medidas que está tomando la iglesia a la hora de dictar los cursos para padrinos de los sacramentos es asegurarse que sean personas que profesen la fe católica y que estén cercanos a sus ahijados porque se convierten en modelos a seguir. ■

## CATHOLIC PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

203.377.7908



Magtype  
Computer  
Resources

magtype.com

Mac / PC and Technology  
Questions, Training & Support

IT SUPPORT • NETWORKING • WEB DESIGN  
email: support@magtype.com

ZHON'S  
HOME DECORATING LLC

CUSTOM ORDERS  
FREE QUOTES

RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL  
UPHOLSTERY SERVICES

OVER 20 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE | FABRICS

Reupholstery | Window treatments | Cushions | Slip Covers | Foam Rubber

2320 MAIN STREET | FIRST FLOOR | BRIDGEPORT, CT 06606

203.449.3384 | 203.336.5230

ZHONS.UPHOLSTERY@HOTMAIL.COM

UNITED SEWER & DRAIN CLEANING, INC.

RESIDENTIAL EMERGENCY DRAIN CLEANING

MUNICIPAL • COMMERCIAL • INDUSTRIAL

24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE • LICENSED & INSURED

377-8704

OR  
1-800-422-3724

Office: 534 Surt Avenue • Stratford

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

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



Law Office of James M. Hughes

Elder Law/TITLE 19/MEDICAID-Planning

Veteran's Benefits - "Aid & Attendance"

Estates/Probate/Real Estate

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

April 2023

# Vocations

## ‘Stay with us, Lord’

By FATHER CHRIS FORD

In this Easter season, one of the more popular encounters with the Risen Lord is the Road to Emmaus. We know the story. As evening draws near and their hearts burn within them, two disciples who hadn't even recognized Jesus as drew near and walked with them on the way, now press him to stay. Why? Because, more than anything else, it is the presence of God that opens us up to the deepest burning desires of our hearts – and, at the very same time, fulfills them.

The desire that burns in the disciples' hearts, and in our own

hearts, is itself a gift authored by God, who makes us long for what he already wishes to give us. There are many things we want in life, but our desires tell us more than what we want. They tell us what we are prepared to receive.

What God wants to give us is himself. The prayer of the disciples teaches us in a particular way that our role is to let the desire for God well up into a prayer that he can never ignore. The first condition of receiving the gift of God is quite simply to ask for it.

This is perhaps made most clear in the mystery of the

Eucharist. Not long after the disciples make their plea for him to remain with them, Jesus disappears from the midst. But the bread he broke, the bread through which had opened their eyes to recognize him, remained.

When they first ask Jesus to stay, the disciples just wanted him to stay for the night. But Jesus answers their prayer in a remarkable and unexpected way. He finds a way to stay with them – and us – even to the end of the age. The lesson of Emmaus, then, is that it is in the Eucharist that we find the surest fulfillment of our deepest desire: that God stays with us.

When our hearts encounter something powerful, our deepest instinct is to stay in that moment. It is difficult to pull ourselves away from a beautiful sunset or an inspiring piece of art. When we hear a stirring piece of music, the notes seem to linger in our minds well beyond the moment they stop sounding.

The disciples who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus recognized the power of the moment they were in and the power of the person that confronted them. And, when it appeared that this might be taken away from them, they pleaded, “stay with us.” Even though they did not



know who was standing before them, the desire to remain in his presence welled up in their heart and their acknowledgement of their desire moves Jesus to grant it a way they never expected. Jesus sees in their hearts the openness to receive him and he offers to them, and to us, the most profound and enduring gift of his True Presence: The Eucharist and the priesthood that brings it to us. ■

## Three men set for Rite of Candidacy

BRIDGEPORT—On Sunday April 23 at 8:30 am at St. Augustine Cathedral, Michael Crane of New Canaan, Andres Grajales of Stamford, and Martin Rodriguez of Bridgeport will be admitted to candidacy for ordination as deacons.

The Rite of Candidacy Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. The Mass is open to all who wish to attend. In addition to the family, friends and faithful who attend in-person, the Candidacy Mass will also be live-streamed on the Cathedral website

Deacon Jerry Lambert, director of the diaconate, said that Admission to Candidacy for Ordination marks the end of the first year of study for the three men who have participated in monthly formation weekends within the diocese, while also beginning four years of theological study at Saint Joseph Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y. In addition, their wives have participated in the “wives formation” program.

Biographical information on the the three aspirants who will move forward in their journey of discernment:

Michael J. Crane, 61, is a member of St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan, where he

serves as a Stephen Ministry Leader and Leader of the Men's Spirituality Group. He also served as a Religious Education teacher at St. John in Darien.



Reflecting on the call to diaconate formation, Crane said “The process of discernment and formation is a blessing. I hope to be worthy of the diaconate ministry and to be a faithful servant of God in our diocese. I ask that you pray for me, my family, and my brothers in discernment and their families.”

After graduating from Fordham University and Fordham Law School, (J.D., 1986), attorney Crane served as a Law Clerk for United States District Judge, John F. Keenan, United States District Court for

the Southern District of New York. He was also Associate General Counsel of Ernst & Young LLP from 1993-2021.

He and his wife, Alycia, are the parents of three grown sons: Matt, 31; Austin, 27; and Andrew, 24.

Andres Grajales, 45, is a member of Sacred Heart Parish in Stamford. His parish ministry and community service includes the Spanish young adult ministry (Charismatic renewal movement) and Marriage Prep/Pre-Cana coordinator, and service as RCIA Spanish Coordinator.

“The Lord reminds me constantly—‘Be not afraid!’ He continues to help and prepare me through formation, and I never feel alone. The process of discernment brings me closer to the Lord and my brothers in formation and this is invaluable. I ask the Lord to continue to guide us every step of the way on the call to the diaconate formation.”

A graduate of Gibbs College where he studied Computer Network Operations, he currently serves as Senior Manager, Americas Supply Chain BPX (Business Process Expert), Coty

Inc, New York. In the past he has held a variety of posts including Supply, Network Operations, and Logistics.

He and his wife, Judith Pazmino, are the parents of three children: Angela, 15; Mateo, 12; and Cristina, 8.

Martin Rodriguez, 52, is a member of the Cathedral Parish, where he has served as a member of the Parish Council, Lector, and Catechist.

“There are moments in life when the Lord calls us, and we do not listen. For many years I thought this was not for me, but the Lord kept calling and calling. Finally, I said, ‘I hear you, Lord. Lead the way,’” he said.

He is a graduate of Gibbs College and Bullard Havens Tech in Bridgeport, and is currently serving as Director of Quality at JV Precision Machine Company in Shelton since 2005.

He and his wife LeoFlor Rodriguez are the parents of four children: Aislynn, Micheal, Yuliza and Yelena, and three grandchildren: Owen, Arie and Iliana.

(For more information about the permanent diaconate and the formation program, please contact Deacon Jerry Lambert, director of the diaconate at [dnlambert@diobpt.org](mailto:dnlambert@diobpt.org) or 203.416.1451.) ■

==== MRS. HUTVAGNER  
FROM PAGE 20

years, from the days of her shag haircut and bell bottom pants through the coronavirus pandemic and virtual learning, Hutvagner said that although she will miss the students and the supportive community at St. Theresa, she is ready to give the responsibility to others.

“God has blessed my life to instill the faith and the truth in these children,” she said.

Though Marianna Hutvagner won't be in the front of that primary-colored classroom this fall, the students will still see her, now as the volunteer helping them with reading or tending to the rose garden with the little flowers, in the spirit of St. Therese.

A Spring Gala honoring Marianna Hutvagner will be held on Saturday, April 29 at Whitney Farms Golf Course in Monroe.

(For more information, please contact the St. Theresa Parish Rectory at 203.261.3676.) ■

==== THOMAS HICKS COLUMN  
FROM PAGE 24

hand refers to God.” (*Is Man the Measure? An evaluation of contemporary humanism*, Norman Geisler, Baker, 1983, p. 46-47.)

The 19th-century mathematician, Bernhard Riemann, once said: “I did not invent those pairs of differential equations. I found them in the world, where God had hidden them.”

Finally, there's St. Paul's interesting statement: “God has made the whole world prisoner of unbelief that he may have mercy on all.” ■

# Great Primary Care Starts Here



Don't delay care that could impact your health.

*Appointments right away.*

**Call today 866.592.2450**

## Quick access to outstanding primary care

- Preventative medicine
- Annual wellness visits
- Health management
- Diagnosis and treatment of illness and injuries
- Covid, flu, shingles and other vaccinations
- Online access to your medical records
- Virtual visits

**Hartford**   
**HealthCare**  
Medical Group