



FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

DECEMBER 2015 | VOLUME 32, NUMBER 11 | CHRISTMAS ISSUE

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Jubilee Year of Mercy

‘Opening your heart to God’s mercy’

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

“It’s time to open our doors and hearts to those who are locked out of our lives as a result of poverty, illness, indifference and a lack of faith,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at the December 8 opening Mass for the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

“Every locked door has a key. And that key is not *something*, it is *someone*. It is the Lord Jesus himself!” said the bishop during a memorable liturgy that drew a standing room only gathering of the faithful to St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport.

The introductory rites took place in darkness behind the cathedral. Deacon Santos Garcia read from the Gospel according to Luke about the Lost Sheep (Luke 15: 3-7). “Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus Christ,” the bishop said to begin the evening.

Following the outside prayers, the bishop, priests, deacons, seminarians and Knights and Dames of Malta processed from that back plaza of the St. Augustine campus toward the front of the cathedral, accompanied by musicians from the Neocatechumenate Movement.

They entered through the Holy Door at the front left of the cathedral with the entire congregation following them and quickly filling the cathedral to capacity.

In his homily, the bishop reflected on the need for mercy in our lives, our conversation and our society.

“Jesus, the Lord, the Savior, the Redeemer of the world, has come as the door of mercy... The

door of every human heart will be opened by his love and his mercy,” he said.

The bishop continued, “My friends, we must open the door of Christ’s mercy to every human heart. Through Mary we will come to the heart of God’s



OPENING THE HOLY DOOR—More than 800 people turned when Bishop Caggiano opened the Holy Door to officially launch the Jubilee Year of Mercy on December 8 at St. Augustine Cathedral. The bishop urged people to open the doors of their own hearts to each other and the gift of Divine Grace.

mercy. I ask you to rededicate yourselves in this jubilee year to be mercy for others, to give drink to those who thirst for real love. Let us reach out to those who are imprisoned by the chains of slavery to sin.”

During the service on this Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the bishop also blessed the permanent shrine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the left side of the main altar.

After Holy Communion, the

bishop signed the canonical forms to inaugurate a Redemptoris Mater missionary seminary in this diocese.

“Tonight is an historic moment, the exciting founding of a new seminary in this diocese under the auspices of the Neocatechumenate Movement. The young men who study here will go out in mission as far away as China to bring the word of God wherever it is needed, so that every ear will hear the word of God’s mercy.”

Diocesan Chancellor Father Robert Kinnally, who also serves as director of seminarian formation, said the founding of the missionary seminary is a response to the Holy Father’s appeal to go out and preach the Gospel to all.

The rector of the Redemptoris Mater Seminary will be Father Alfonso Picone, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Stamford. The spiritual director will be Father Giandomenico Flora, rector of St. Margaret’s Shrine in Bridgeport.

“This evening has been a remarkable moment of grace,” said the bishop in thanking all those who made the evening possible. “May the Jubilee of Mercy bring us all closer to God’s goodness and love!”



Christmas joy

Last weekend we celebrated Gaudete Sunday. The word *Gaudete* is Latin and comes from the first word of the introit (opening verse) of yesterday’s Mass. It means “let us rejoice” and reminds us that our expectation for the coming of Christmas will soon be fulfilled. However, it also reminds us of the spiritual gift of joy—a gift that God our Father wishes to give us every day of our lives.

In order to understand the true meaning of joy, we must contrast it with another desire that we all have—the desire to be happy. Happiness is that state of life when our immediate desires are met and everything around us is in its proper place. Happiness can take many forms, depending upon the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Its pursuit is normal and understandable, for everyone wishes that they and the ones they love be happy in this life.

However, the great challenge in the pursuit of happiness is that it is a fleeting reality. At best, even if I find that all my needs are met today, tomorrow may find me in different circumstances, facing challenges and troubles. What we discover is that the happiness of yesterday is gone. The challenge with the pursuit of happiness, as we commonly understand it, is that it is dependent on factors outside of our control. Happiness in this life by definition cannot last forever.

Joy is very different from happiness. Divine joy is a gift from God that comes into the heart of any person who dares to believe that God’s love for you and me will never falter, even when we face trials and challenges. Joy is the abiding sense that “we will be OK,” even when we face suffering, sorrow and loss. It is a contentment that is not dependent upon the circumstances of our lives and an assurance that the world cannot give.

On Gaudete Sunday, the Church reminds us that Christ never promised that our lives as His disciples would be easy. On the contrary, He commands us to take up our cross and to follow in His footsteps. However, at the same time, the Lord also offers us the gift of joy to help us to endure our cross in times of challenge and to recognize that when we are happy, we are not the authors of our destiny but all that we have in this life is sheer grace.

Do you wish to have a joyful heart? If so, let us reflect upon the love that Christ has for us and remember that His love will never fail.

May you and your family be embraced by the full love of Christ during this Christmas Season and find true joy throughout the New Year.

Frank Caggiano

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano

ON THE COVER

Students in the lower school of Catholic Academy on the St. Raphael campus sing in the recent Christmas pageant that drew parents and friends for a joyful evening. The young people in grades 1-3 lit up the Christmas season with their spirited performance. Schools and parishes have hosted Advent and Christmas concerts and fairs throughout the diocese.
(PHOTOS BY AMY MORTENSEN)

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Local News

Safe Environment audit caps year of renewal

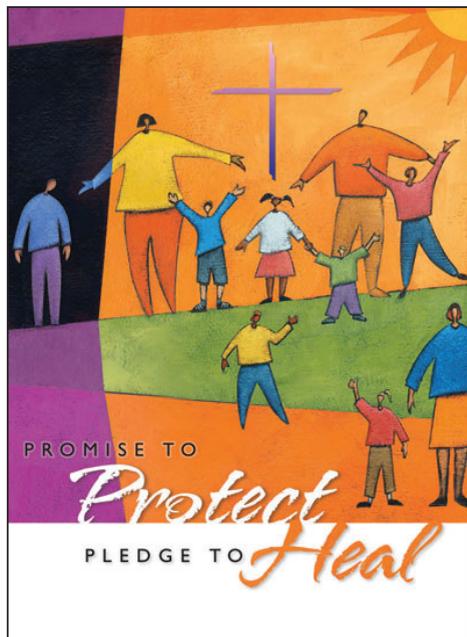
By BRIAN D. WALLACE

The Diocese of Bridgeport has been found compliant with all audited articles within the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* for the 2014/2015 audit period.

The announcement was made by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano after receiving notice from StoneBridge Business Partners of Rochester, N.Y., a national financial auditing firm specially trained to review diocesan compliance to the USCCB charter.

The year's comprehensive audit included an onsite visit from the StoneBridge audit team in early November and also phone interviews conducted with pastors, directors of Religious education (DREs) and others.

"The children of the diocese and the adults who work with them are safer because of the efforts of our Safe Environments office, our schools, parishes and other institutions," said Bishop Caggiano. "As a diocese we are working together to prevent abuse, and I'm grateful to all those who are at work every day



to protect our children."

The diocesan audit response was led by Erin Neil, L.C.S.W., director of Safe Environments & Victim Assistance coordinator, and Anne McCrory, chief legal officer for overseeing the effort to renew programs.

"The auditors were impressed that we train everyone in our safe environment program, including

those not typically in direct contact with children," said Neil. "We also implemented online re-certification and for the first time, parents can log in to ensure that someone has been background checked."

The successful audit was also a reflection of a major effort on the part of the diocese to update programs, initiate a comprehensive re-certification process and introduce online innovations in the past year.

Bishop Caggiano began the effort by reconstituting the diocesan Sexual Misconduct

Review Board, expanding their role and mandating quarterly meetings to ensure that policies and procedures related to Safe Environments are reviewed regularly. He also re-promulgated all Safe Environments policies:

- Between July 1, 2014, and June 30, 2015, the diocese completed 12,137 criminal

background checks

- 20,000 Safe Environment Handbooks were printed and distributed across the diocese, and approximately 10,000 were accessed electronically. Executive Summaries are now signed by all diocesan personnel
- VIRTUS re-certification online and background checks are now renewed every five or 10 years based on a person's level of scheduled contact with children.
- During the first 6 months of 2015, 6,037 people completed the online VIRTUS re-certification. This step required a massive diocesan-wide effort to update local VIRTUS databases.
- In 2015 VIRTUS launched an update to their program and Bridgeport was the first diocese in the country to use the new online training module.
- All Safe Environments policies were updated to guidelines on cell phone and technology safety, and reporting protocol for suspected child pornography.

Neil said the auditors also reviewed the diocesan outreach

to victims to ensure that there is a prompt response consistent with state law and USCCB charter provisions to any allegations.

Among the suggestions made by StoneBridge for program improvement are increased training to Catholic students in public schools and religious education programs by offering parents supplemental materials; development of an audit process for parish programs; and completion of the recertification effort.

Neil said that in 2016, the Office of Safe Environments will offer continuing education opportunities which expand upon the VIRTUS child sexual abuse prevention course, mandated reporting, bullying awareness and prevention, sexual harassment and other safety issues which impact children and the adults who work with them.

(The VIRTUS videos have been updated to include translations and subtitles so that the course material will be available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Vietnamese and Korean. For more info, go to bridgeportdiocese.com/safeenvironments.)

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Catholic Charities prepares for 100th anniversary

BRIDGEPORT—In January of 1916, long before there were safety nets of federal agencies or government programs, a group of dedicated laity, religious and clergy met in Bridgeport to help the needy and vulnerable. They founded the Catholic Charitable Bureau, known today as Catholic Charities of Fairfield County.

Catholic Charities of Fairfield County (CCFC) will celebrate its 100th anniversary throughout 2016 with a series of events, beginning with a Mass on January 23 at 5:30 pm at St. Matthew Church in Norwalk with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

Serving as chairs for the 100th Anniversary Planning Committee are three Catholic Charities board members: Marilyn Hart, Jim McPartlan and Nancy Murphy.

Hart is a sales professional at Tiffany in Greenwich. She and her family are parishioners at St. Thomas More in Darien. Jim McPartlan, a retired investment

banker, is also a member of St. Thomas More and a resident of Rowayton. Nancy Murphy, a parishioner of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Newtown, also serves on the board of Catholic Charities of Northern Fairfield County.

"Our team is proud of how Catholic Charities treats all people with dignity and respect, and we are eager to proclaim the accomplishments of the organization to all of Connecticut," said McPartlan, who has served on the Catholic Charities board since 2014 and received the St. Augustine Medal of Service this year from Bishop Caggiano.

Before the end of its first year of existence, the fledgling organization that would become Catholic Charities had formed child care for the women working in the Remington munitions factory and assisted with housing, recreational and educational programs and health care.



PREPARING FOR 100TH—Al Barber, president of Catholic Charities meets with the chairs of the 100th Anniversary Planning Committee at the Catholic Center (l-r: Al Barber, Marilyn Hart, Nancy Murphy and Jim McPartlan. Charities will launch the observance with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Caggiano and host a year of events and activities throughout Fairfield County.

That concern has continued throughout the years. Today, CCFC serves 10,000 individuals annually and is the largest private family service agency in Fairfield County. They alleviate hunger, support the elderly, offer counsel-

ing to those with overwhelming challenges, assist immigrants, provide state-of-the-art childcare, and make permanent housing available to the marginalized and less fortunate. In 2014, CCFC served nearly 3,000 meals daily to the

poor, needy and elderly totaling more than 1 million meals annually from their soup kitchens, meal programs and food pantries.

"We don't do what we do for Catholics," said Al Barber, CCFC president. "We do what we do for all people because we are Catholics. Just as in the past, we will continue to serve the needs of the times, whatever they are."

The 100th Anniversary events, including the celebratory Mass, an exhibit at the Fairfield Museum and History Center (opening January 21) and a gala in the fall, are markers of a hundred years of service. These and a myriad of other activities will highlight the breadth and depth of the organization's work.

Even as they do so, the programs of CCFC are already engaged in serving all people for the next 100 years.

(For more info on Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, visit www.ccfairfield.org.)

News

Diocese launches Planned Giving website

BRIDGEPORT—The Diocese of Bridgeport has launched a Planned Giving website to provide information and guidance for individuals and families interested in giving a donation to the diocese as part of their legacy.

Pam Rittman from the Development Office said the diocese formally launched a Planned Giving program in 2014 when it formed the St. Augustine Legacy Society. This new website is easy to navigate and provides detailed information on planned giving.

Rittman said that many people believe estate gifts are associated with affluent giving, but planned giving also assists people of modest means who want to make an impact with a sizable gift and are not able to while they are living. It's also a way for their legacy to continue by deciding where to direct their gift.

"Charitable giving does not

require great wealth. What it does require is generosity of spirit—the desire to share what you have for the benefit of others," Rittman said. "Many people have been able to make very significant gifts to their parishes through planned giving."

Rittman said the diocese developed the program to help parishioners and donors understand what planned giving is and confidently take steps to begin the process. Universities and other non-profit organizations have programs in place, and it is only natural that the diocese provides the means for parishioners to learn and continue their personal legacy while helping the Church.

"We have an excellent advisory board. Members who are professionals in finance, estate law and planning are conducting planned giving seminars at a number of parishes with a solid



response. We want to instill a sense of trust and make it easy for people who wish to leave a gift to the Church to understand that the process is and is consistent with their wishes.

"We all have special interests and causes that we care about, such as our retired priests or future funding for the seminary, and planned giving offers an opportunity for someone to plan that gift for the future so their legacy continues on. It's not com-

plicated and we can help people navigate the system."

Rittman said there are many ways to remember the Diocese of Bridgeport or a parish through estate planning. "The ultimate value of your contribution will not be measured in dollars and cents. It will be measured in the difference it makes for the betterment of the diocese or your parish."

A planned gift can be as simple as naming the diocese or a

parish in their will. Or it can be a "back-up plan:" naming the diocese, a parish or a particular ministry as a "contingent beneficiary" in their estate, which means that if some other condition of the plan is not met (such as another beneficiary passing away before the donor), the gift goes to the charity.

It costs nothing to set up the gift. Most gifts are made through a will, revocable trust, life insurance policy, or retirement account and will make a big difference to the diocese, but will not cost the donor anything.

There are tax benefits. Many planned gifts are offset by savings in federal or state taxes. This is especially true of gifts from an IRA or similar retirement account.

(For more info, visit www.bridgeportdiocese.com/plannedgiving or call Pam Rittman at 203.416.1479.) ■

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|  <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: white; border: 2px solid white; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">\$50</p> <p style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Reading or math textbook Inner-city Catholic School</p> |  <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: white; border: 2px solid white; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">\$25</p> <p style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Provide warm breakfast for 25 people through Morning Glory, Danbury</p> |



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Synod: the Next Step

Bishop calls for 'co-responsibility' in renewal

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

At the first post-synod session, delegates were impressed and energized by the wide range of initiatives already underway in the diocese to implement synod recommendations.

Almost 200 delegates, who had gathered for the past year to discern the final synod rec-

ommendations, returned to St. Catherine of Siena Family Center in the Nichols section of Trumbull for an update and overview.



ommendations, returned to St. Catherine of Siena Family Center in the Nichols section of Trumbull for an update and overview.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano explained that he called for the post-synod session not only to inform delegates of the progress on many issues, but also to give them the opportunity to hold the diocese accountable.

He began the meeting with a call for "co-responsibility" as the diocese moves forward on many fronts to renew its life of worship, service, catechesis and evangelization. "We are all in this together and we're not going to do it alone. There are lots of potential

leaders in our parishes. It's time to challenge them to give more of their time and talents to help the Church evangelize."

He announced that each parish will host a Discernment Day in the fall to engage parishioners and ask them to use talents in service of the church. "God has blessed them with many talents and we will ask them to give one

back for the good of the Church."

In a wide-ranging discussion of current initiatives, the bishop told delegates that the Catholic Service Corps is moving ahead with a pilot program. He said he was excited that the efforts include both Fairfield University and Sacred Heart University along with parishes.

The bishop said while youth service is the goal of the service corps, the program will have a formative core that "raises theological questions and brings young people into worship by opening a new door to walk through. We need to build theological reflection into each chapter through prayer experience and

adoration."

He said the diocese will formally launch the Youth Corps with a Mass on February 27, at 4 pm at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport.

Likewise, the diocese is close to hiring a director of the new Catholic Leadership Institute that was unanimously supported by synod delegates during the discernment process.

During the session the bishop also offered an overview of finances and measures the diocese has taken to eliminate debt and improve overall viability.

He reported that some diocesan elementary schools continue to lose enrollment and face financial challenges, which will be addressed in the school strategic planning process. Rising health care premiums continue to be a burden on both schools and diocesan finance.

The diocese currently has only two major income sources, the Cathedralium, or 15 percent tax on parish revenue, and the Annual Catholic Appeal. He said he would like to add income from foundations that support education and other diocesan missions, and also expand income from related or affiliated organizations such as Catholic Cemeteries.

In addressing diocesan debt, he said that at the recent "Financial Summit," the diocese presented an inventory of properties that are not "mission essential" and can either be sold or leased to support its work and help to bring in revenue for synod initiatives.

The bishop said that parishes own 92 percent of the Church-held property in Fairfield County, but the diocese is looking only at the property that it owns. Parishes are separate both canonically and corporately.

Patrick Turner, director of Strategic and Pastoral Planning for the diocese, gave an overview of the Strategic Planning process now underway throughout the diocese.

He said that as part of the planning process, each parish will be given a statistical "snapshot" by the diocese based on data that they have submitted. He said each parish will be free to respond to synod challenges in their own way and that the



process will lead to 82 individual plans that will come to the bishop for approval.

"A parish may find that they do a good job with liturgy and worship, and have a great welcoming ministry, but the Faith Formation numbers are trending down. So that needs to become a priority in their planning."

He said that while many parishes are participating in the DiscipleMaker Index program provided by the Catholic Leadership Institute, others are forming focus groups to better understand the attitudes and concerns of parishioners.

Turner also gave a progress report on the Catholic Service Corps, the Diocesan Leadership

Institute, the Liturgical Commission, the Catechetical Taskforce and other initiatives underway.

The bishop said that while he believes synod initiatives will work to renew the diocese, they all depend on the "one-on-one" person evangelization efforts of Catholics throughout Fairfield County.

At the end of the session the bishop blessed the synod medallions that were presented to all delegates.

"I ask that the Lord bless these medallions that are a reminder of what you have done for us and the hopeful future that lies ahead in his love for each of us," the bishop said. ■

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Diocesan Financial Report

Budget: short-term challenges and positive trends

BRIDGEPORT— Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and the Finance Committee of the Diocese of Bridgeport have released the previously approved fiscal year ending June 30, 2016 operating budget which projects a total of \$22.1 million in revenues and \$22.5 million in expenditures.

Michael Hanlon, CPA, chief financial officer of the diocese, said this fiscal year's operating budget reports both an increase in income and spending, while the diocese continues to work towards efficient, cost-saving opportunities and reorganization

the projected \$400,000 shortfall.

"However, that number reflects a conservative estimate of projected revenues and controlled increases in certain expenditures. We are taking necessary steps which should allow the diocese to return to a balanced operating budget (achieved in FY 2015) and build towards long-term financial stability."

He said plans include seeking alternative sources of revenue, reduction of long-term debt obligations and related interest, lean and efficient operations and viability planning for our schools and parishes.

The Bridgeport Roman Catholic Diocesan Corporation Operational Budget July 2015 - June 2016

Revenue

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Annual Catholic Appeal | \$8,693,000 |
| Cathedraticum | 6,133,368 |
| Rental and Other Income | 3,537,290 |
| Contributions and Bequests | 2,343,176 |
| Cemeteries' Contribution | 1,437,000 |
| Total Revenue | <u>\$22,143,834</u> |

Expenses

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Salaries and Benefits | \$11,378,742 |
| Grants and Contributions | 4,229,996 |
| Office, Postage and Printing | 1,895,850 |
| Contracted Services | 1,186,139 |
| Professional Fees and Services | 1,027,100 |
| Occupancy and Insurance | 1,004,431 |
| Travel, Seminars, Dues and Other | 954,334 |
| Interest | 501,296 |
| Other Supplies and Expense | 380,213 |
| Total Expenses | <u>\$22,558,101</u> |

Deficit from Operations - Before Depreciation \$(414,267)

measures to support the new initiatives launched by the synod.

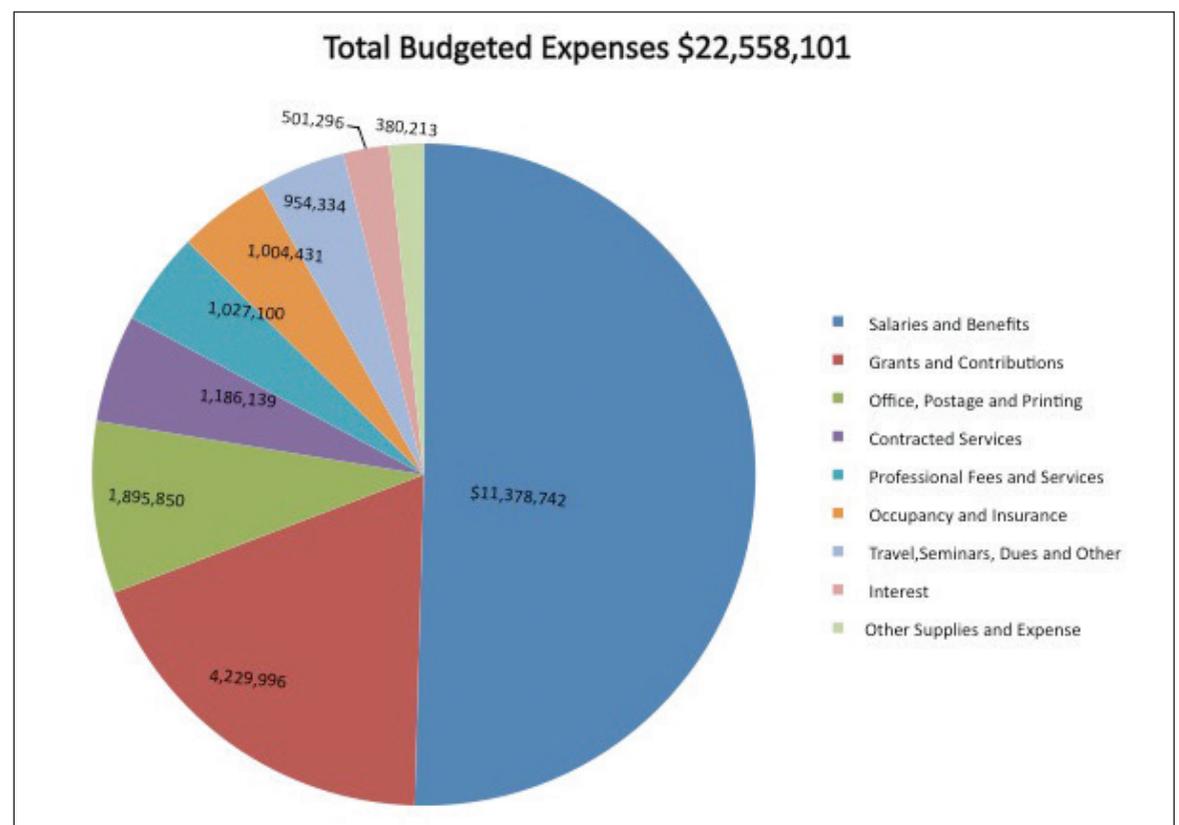
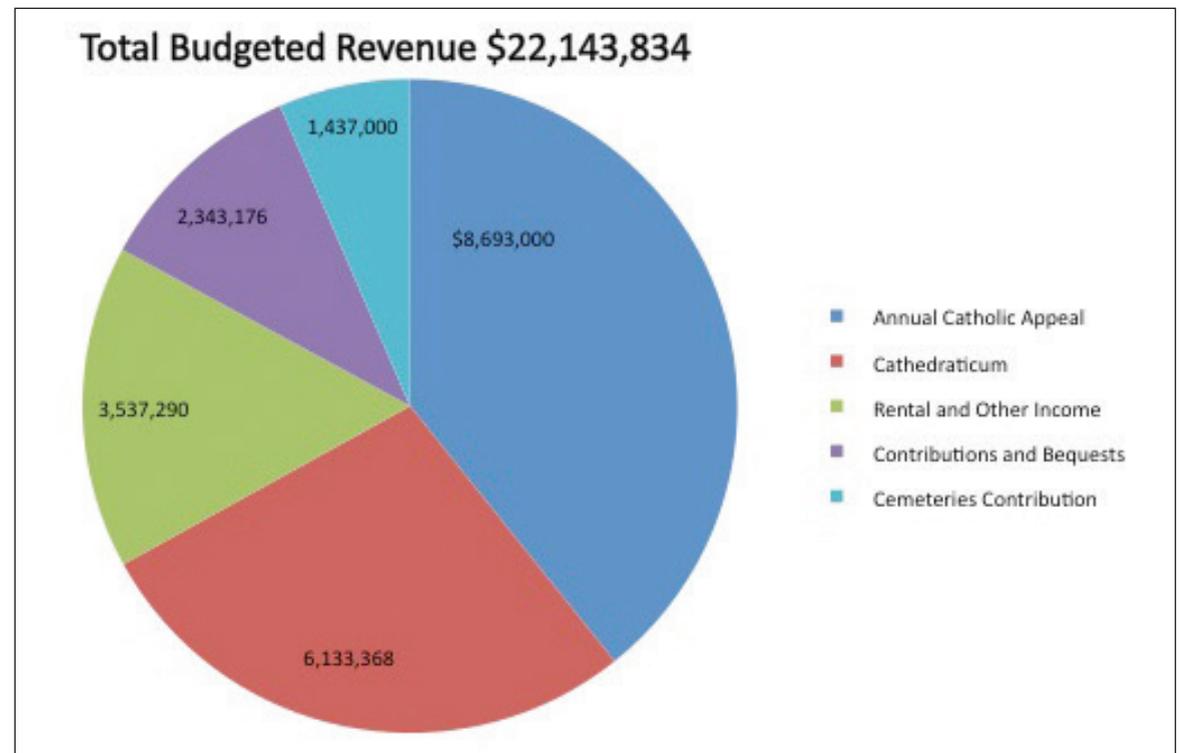
The two major sources of revenue for the annual operating budget are the Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) and Cathedraticum or 15 percent tax on parishes to support the work of the diocese.

"Included in the expenditures are budgeted salary increase for our loyal and dedicated Catholic Center employees, who have not had salary increases in several years," said Hanlon.

He said that increased benefit costs related to healthcare and other benefits and additional grants and support to programs and schools have contributed to

"Our salaries and benefits remain the largest portion our total operating budget at approximately 50 percent of our expenditure with an additional 20 percent earmarked for grants, support for programs and scholarships as well as other school support.

"Healthcare costs are increasing at an alarming rate and we were able to control these increases to approximately 4 percent by seeking competitive bids for all employee benefits. Many diocesan entities are struggling with the inability to pay their health care premiums to the diocese (the diocese is self-insured for all entities), with strategies being developed to assist these entities



in remaining current with their obligations.

Hanlon said the recent Financial Summit, held at the bishop's residence in Trumbull, brought together members of Finance, Real Estate and Strategic Planning councils to review an inventory of diocesan properties that could be sold, leased or leveraged in some way to support the Church's mission in Fairfield County and reduce inherited debt obligations.

The diocese is also continuing to move forward in its efforts to seek a buyer for the current Catholic Center facility in the North End of Bridgeport and move to new, smaller campus within the city on other diocesan owned property. The Jewett Avenue building, now on the market, is too large and inefficient and does not lend itself to present needs.

Likewise, the new Education Commission established by Bishop Caggiano this year is cur-

rently working on review of all schools to determine how it can best assist the efforts to strengthen enrollment and finances.

In December 2013, Bishop Caggiano took a major step toward financial transparency when he released audited financial statements. Audited financial statements since December 31, 2010 can be found online.

(To learn more, visit the diocesan website: www.bridgeportdiocese.com/financialreports.)

Diocesan Financial Report

Diocese releases audited financial statements

BRIDGEPORT—The Bridgeport Roman Catholic Diocesan Corporation has released its Combined Financial Statements with the Report of Independent Certified Public Accountants for December 31, 2014, and also The Faith in the Future Fund, Inc. financial statements and Independent Auditor's Report for years ending June 30, 2015 and 2014.

"One of Bishop Frank Caggiano's first priorities was to provide a clear, transparent and comprehensive account of the finances of the diocese each year, and we issue the audit reports in the spirit of transparency and public trust," said Michael Hanlon, CPA, chief financial officer.

The diocesan combined financial statements include the activities and all programs and ministries related to the Diocesan Corporation including Faith in the Future Fund, Inc., St. John Fisher Seminary, Catherine Denis Keefe Queen of Clergy Residence for retired priests, the Newman Center at Western Connecticut State University, Catholic Cemeteries operations, *Fairfield County Catholic* newspaper, life use and rental properties for elderly residents and other pastoral care programs and activities sponsored by the diocese.

The diocesan combined financial statements report total reve-

nue, support and other changes of \$48.4 million compared to \$37.9 million in 2013, and total expenses from operations before depreciation of \$47.4 million compared to \$46.5 million last year. Income from operations before depreciation exceeded \$900,000 for the year ending December 31, 2014.

The diocesan combined audit report shows that net assets decreased \$42.7 million, which is directly related to the increase in pension and other post-retirement benefits. Pension-related obligations increased by \$39.3 million, caused by a decrease in interest rates and use of new actuarial tables projecting a longer lifespan for retirees as of December 31, 2014. An additional decrease of \$2.4 million was a result of the distribution of assets to a legally separated entity.

The Faith in the Future Fund, Inc. audit report, an endowment fund created out of a capital campaign led by the late Cardinal Edward M. Egan when he was Bishop of Bridgeport, shows disbursements in excess of \$938,000 during fiscal year ending June 30, 2015. During August 2015 the Board of Directors also approved an additional distribution of \$850,000 to support diocesan programs, schools, and scholarships. The fund reports total assets of approximately \$24.2 million and



MICHAEL HANLON

\$25.3 million as of June 30, 2015 and 2014, respectively.

Hanlon said the diocesan fiscal policy is focused on eliminating long-term debt while reducing operating expenses, and that the audit reflects the progress the di-

ocese has made in those two areas over the past year.

"Last year the diocese embarked on developing comprehensive strategies to eliminate our debt and move towards the path of financial stability and viability by leveraging our real estate holdings, identifying alternative sources of revenue, creating foundations to support our core missions, and continuing cost cutting measures in operations," Hanlon said. Since December 31, 2014, the diocese had significantly reduced its Knights of Columbus loan to \$8.1 million from the original \$15 million obligation obtained in August 2012, and it has paid down an additional \$2.6 million since the financial statements were issued on December 4, 2015.

Hanlon said that while the increase in pension and other postretirement benefit obligations

has caused a negative impact on the net assets of the diocese, this is a long-term liability, and that funding and other strategies are being examined to manage this obligation. It will not affect the ability of the diocese to pay its current and ongoing obligations to all those employees who have earned these retirement benefits.

He said some of the biggest challenges the diocese continues to face going forward include the rising costs of medical benefits, caring for an increasing number of retired priests, restoring certain schools and parishes to financial stability and growth, and continuing to explore alternative sources of revenues while controlling expenses for new programs and initiatives to renew the diocese.

(The complete audited reports are available online. To learn more, visit the diocesan website: www.bridgeport-diocese.com/financialreports.)

"Diocesan fiscal policy is focused on eliminating long-term debt while reducing operating expenses."

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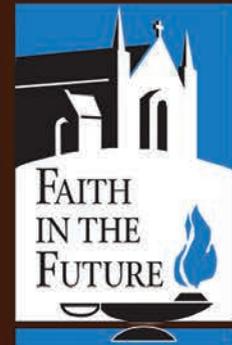
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STEWARDSHIP REPORT

DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT



MISSION STATEMENT

The Faith in the Future Fund, Inc. was established to raise, manage and disburse funds to support pastoral missions in the Diocese of Bridgeport. The funds are endowments and other restricted contributions that are utilized throughout Fairfield County.



LETTER FROM BISHOP FRANK J. CAGGIANO

Dear Friends in Christ,

In 1995, our Diocese embarked on a successful endowment campaign called Faith in the Future that was intended to, in the words of then Bishop of Bridgeport Edward M. Egan, “assure the continuance of Catholic education in our midst, continue to foster priestly vocations, advance religious education for our public school children and sustain our ongoing ministries and charities.”

I am deeply grateful to the thousands of faithful Catholics who provided generous support to Faith in the Future. The benefits that this campaign has provided to our Diocese are countless – benefits that will continue to enhance the financial and spiritual life of our Diocese for generations to come.

You have entrusted us with the wise and prudent management of your financial contributions to Faith in the Future. As stewards of your gifts, we have a responsibility to report to you how these gifts are being used to further the work of the Church in Fairfield County. I am pleased to share with you this stewardship report on the Faith in the Future Fund, Inc.

With heartfelt thanks for your commitment to our Diocese and prayerful best wishes for you and your loved ones, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

**Frank Caggiano*

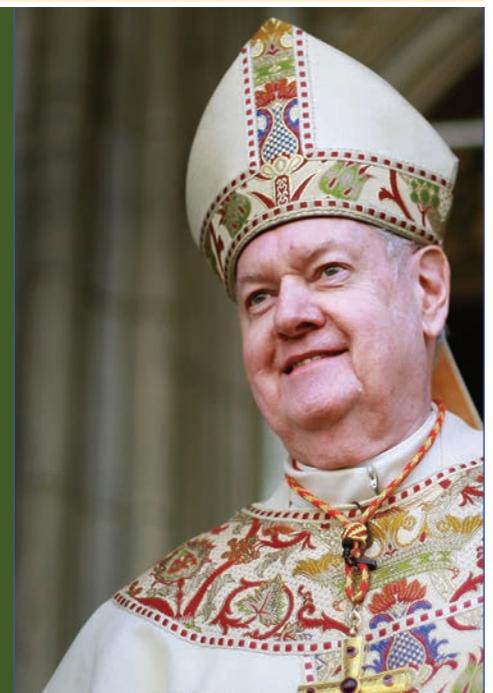
Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of Bridgeport

FAITH IN THE FUTURE CAMPAIGN AND FAITH IN THE FUTURE FUND, INC.

INTRODUCTION

In 1995, Bishop Edward M. Egan authorized and the Diocese of Bridgeport conducted the Faith in the Future campaign to provide a source of endowed support for various ministries of the Diocese. In 1996, the Diocese established the Faith in the Future Fund, Inc., a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation to manage the funds raised by the campaign.

For the years ending June 30, 2015 and 2014, the Fund distributed \$938,225 and \$59,356 to support the various programs and ministries of Faith in the Future. During August of 2015 the Board of Directors of Faith in the Future approved an additional distribution of \$850,000 to support the various programs and ministries.





FAITH IN THE FUTURE ENDOWMENT FUNDS

EDUCATION

Funds are utilized to provide scholarships, program support and specialized resources in an effort to keep tuition affordable within our diocesan high schools and elementary schools.

VOCATIONS AND SEMINARY EDUCATION

Funds are utilized for the development of vocation awareness and the education of our future priests.

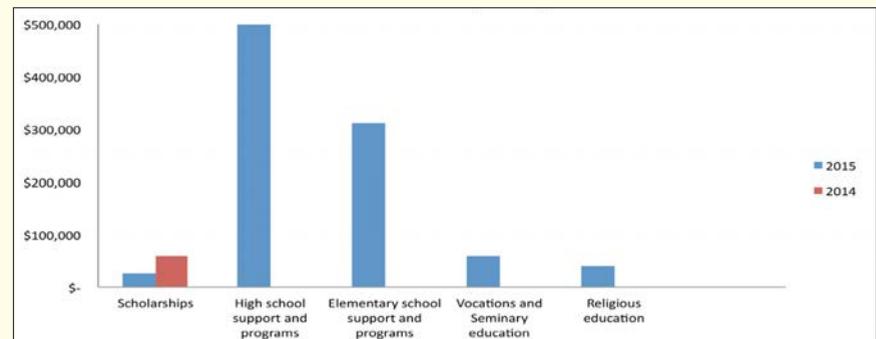
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Funds are utilized to support religious education programs and for the training of catechists and retreat teams.

FAITH IN THE FUTURE FUND, INC. STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF JUNE 30,

| <u>ASSETS</u> | 2015 | 2014 |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| Cash and cash equivalents | \$ 44,666 | \$ 3,411 |
| Investments | 22,309,468 | 23,410,593 |
| Due from the Bridgeport Roman Catholic Diocesan Corporation | 1,859,010 | 1,866,688 |
| Total assets | <u>\$ 24,213,144</u> | <u>\$ 25,280,692</u> |
| | | |
| <u>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</u> | | |
| Liabilities: | | |
| Accounts payable | \$ 9,000 | \$ - |
| Scholarships payable | 27,080 | 31,953 |
| Total Liabilities | <u>36,080</u> | <u>31,953</u> |
| Net Assets: | | |
| Unrestricted | - | - |
| Temporarily restricted | 3,958,061 | 5,125,094 |
| Permanently restricted | 20,219,003 | 20,123,645 |
| Total Net Assets | <u>24,177,064</u> | <u>25,248,739</u> |
| Total Liabilities and Net Assets | <u>\$ 24,213,144</u> | <u>\$ 25,280,692</u> |

FAITH IN THE FUTURE FUND, INC. PROGRAM EXPENSE DISTRIBUTION YEAR ENDED JUNE 30,



| | 2015 | 2014 |
|--|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Scholarships | \$27,080 (3%) | \$59,356 (100%) |
| High school support and programs | \$500,000 (53%) | - |
| Elementary school support and programs | \$311,145 (33%) | - |
| Vocations and seminary education | \$60,000 (7%) | - |
| Religious education | \$40,000 (4%) | - |
| Total | \$938,225 (100%) | \$59,356 (100%) |

FAITH IN THE FUTURE FUND, INC. STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES YEAR ENDED JUNE 30,

| | 2015 | | | | 2014 | | | |
|--|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| | Unrestricted | Temporarily Restricted | Permanently Restricted | Total | Unrestricted | Temporarily Restricted | Permanently Restricted | Total |
| Support and Revenues: | | | | | | | | |
| Contributions | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 95,358 | \$ 95,358 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 124,983 | \$ 124,983 |
| Investment (loss) income, net | - | (169,529) | - | (169,529) | - | 2,660,839 | - | 2,660,839 |
| Total support and revenues | <u>-</u> | <u>(169,529)</u> | <u>95,358</u> | <u>(74,171)</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>2,660,839</u> | <u>124,983</u> | <u>2,785,822</u> |
| Net assets released from restrictions | 997,504 | (997,504) | - | - | 59,356 | (59,356) | - | - |
| Program Expenses: | | | | | | | | |
| Scholarships | 27,080 | - | - | 27,080 | 59,356 | - | - | 59,356 |
| High school support and programs | 500,000 | - | - | 500,000 | - | - | - | - |
| Elementary school support and programs | 311,145 | - | - | 311,145 | - | - | - | - |
| Vocations and Seminary education | 60,000 | - | - | 60,000 | - | - | - | - |
| Religious education | 40,000 | - | - | 40,000 | - | - | - | - |
| Total program expenses | <u>938,225</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>938,225</u> | <u>59,356</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>59,356</u> |
| Management and General: | | | | | | | | |
| Professional fees | 59,279 | - | - | 59,279 | - | - | - | - |
| Bad debt | - | - | - | - | - | - | 116,278 | 116,278 |
| Total management and general expenses | <u>59,279</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>59,279</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>116,278</u> | <u>116,278</u> |
| Total expenses | <u>997,504</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>997,504</u> | <u>59,356</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>116,278</u> | <u>175,634</u> |
| Change in net assets before transfer | - | (1,167,033) | 95,358 | (1,071,675) | - | 2,601,483 | 8,705 | 2,610,188 |
| Transfer of net assets | - | - | - | - | - | 500,000 | (500,000) | - |
| Change in net assets after transfer | - | (1,167,033) | 95,358 | (1,071,675) | - | 3,101,483 | (491,295) | 2,610,188 |
| Net assets at the beginning of the year | <u>-</u> | <u>5,125,094</u> | <u>20,123,645</u> | <u>25,248,739</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>2,023,611</u> | <u>20,614,940</u> | <u>22,638,551</u> |
| Net assets at the end of the year | <u>\$ -</u> | <u>\$ 3,958,061</u> | <u>\$ 20,219,003</u> | <u>\$ 24,177,064</u> | <u>\$ -</u> | <u>\$ 5,125,094</u> | <u>\$ 20,123,645</u> | <u>\$ 25,248,739</u> |



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Women's Conference

Faith, Love and Mercy: A Day of Reflection

By BETH LONGWARE DUFF

Hundreds of women from across the Diocese of Bridgeport gathered in Greenwich recently for the Second Annual Women's Conference. The theme for the day of reflection and prayer was "Faith, Love & Mercy."

Conference organizer and Director of Respect Life Ministry Maureen Ciardiello said the day offered a special gift for attendees. "Women lead extremely busy lives, and the time we give to our spiritual lives is often relegated to the bottom of our list along with ourselves," she noted. "The annual conference is meant to give women a pause in their busyness and make time to grow

closer to Christ."

In addition to Mass celebrated by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and opportunities for Confession and group reflection, participants were treated to presentations by two dynamic guest speakers: Father Peter Cameron, O.P., editor-in-chief of *Magnificat* and author of numerous books; and Sonja Corbitt, a scriptural evangelist who works across print, broadcast and digital media.

Using his most recent book—*Made for Love, Loved by God*—as a springboard for his talk, Father Cameron addressed some of the obstacles and misconceptions that conspire to prevent people from recognizing and accepting God's unconditional love. He then

proposed four basic truths about God's love:

God loves us because he is good, not because we are. "I'm not bringing anything to the Love table. The table—everything—is being created by this God who has loved me into existence," explained Father Cameron. "The fact that you exist is proof that God loves you."

God loves us just the way we are right now. "This mystery is one that needs to be embraced—it makes all the difference in the world," he said, adding, "The best way to go to Jesus is with your corruption."

Only God's love makes us worthy of God's love. "We say, 'I'm not worthy of his love.'



THE ANNUAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE gives women a chance to make their own spiritual life a top priority and take time to grow closer to Christ.

Guess what? We're not! Who cares? Leave it aside! His love makes us worthy of his love," he emphasized.

God loves us as he loves himself. For many people, love has limits; when we reach those limits, love fades. "Sometimes we imagine God loving us that way, but he loves us as a friend, almost as an equal," Father Cameron elaborated.

That's not to say that his love

is without suffering, because suffering is a part of all love.

"The moment you love someone with a strong, deep love, fear is introduced because you're afraid of losing that person," he said. "God, who is love, uses suffering for redemptive purposes." He concluded with a quote from Mother Teresa: "Suffering is a sign that we have come so close to Jesus on the Cross that he can kiss us and show that he is in love with us by giving us an opportunity to share in his passion."

Corbitt, a Nashville wife and mother of two, was raised and held a leadership position in the Southern Baptist Church before converting to Catholicism. She says her personal journey gives her a unique perspective of her adopted faith and her issues with submission to authority.

"I had to go back to God's authority in my life," she related, recalling when she left the Southern Baptist Church and was searching for a new spiritual home. "I went back to the early Nicene Fathers to discover if I could tolerate the teachings of the Church—and many of them I could. It took me a while, but eventually I had a friend who said to me, 'Either the Church has the authority to teach you, or she doesn't.' And I said, 'OK!'"

Like Father Cameron, Corbitt based her talk on her latest book, *Unleashed*, which she readily admitted is not a word most people would associate with Catholics. "I actually didn't call it that—my publisher did—but it is the truth of my story," she said. "We're talking about our toxic relationships, our terrible circumstances, bad habits and very intense, sometimes wayward desires, and how the Holy Spirit uses them. Even though they seem either painful or difficult for us, they have to be freed, and the Holy Spirit is the only one who can do that for us." ■

Redemptoris Mater Seminary to open

BRIDGEPORT—"Tonight is an historic occasion," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano on December 8. After Holy Communion the bishop sang the canonical form establishing a Redemptoris Mater Seminary in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

"After a long period of reflection, prayer and discernment under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are founding a new missionary seminary in this diocese," the bishop said. "Priests from this diocesan missionary seminary, under the auspices of the Neocatechumenate Way, will go out in mission as far away as China or the Philippines to bring the word of God wherever it is needed—including our own diocese."

Redemptoris Mater (Mother of the Redeemer) international seminaries prepare clergy to be sent anywhere that there is a need. Inspired by St. John Paul II, the first Redemptoris Mater Seminary was opened in the Diocese of Rome in 1987. As of 2013, the number of Redemptoris Mater seminaries worldwide rose to 100, on five continents, with more added since.

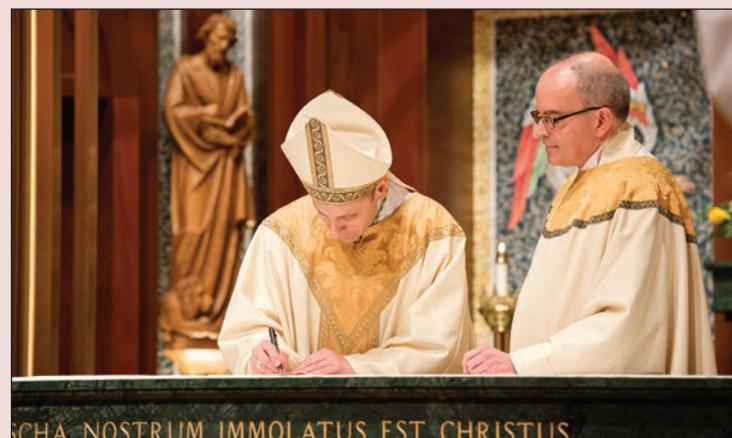
Over 2,000 men formed in these seminaries have already been ordained to the priesthood. There are eight Redemptoris Mater seminaries in the United States and its territories. The one in the Diocese of Bridgeport, to

tor of Sacred Heart Parish, who has been named rector of Redemptoris Mater. "The difference is that they are being trained as missionary priests. Part of their formation is to spend two years after ordination in service to any

inarians have a specifically international character, coming from different nations. The seminary's connection to the Neocatechumenal Way, with its emphasis on fostering an adult faith, means that many of the young men will had thorough preparation both in education and experience before entering the missionary seminary. After ordination, the bishop may appoint them to a parish or may end them to other dioceses of the world where bishops have asked for help.

Father Giandomenico Flora, rector of St. Margaret's Shrine in Bridgeport, will be the spiritual director of the seminary. The first class of seminarians are currently finalizing their paperwork. While they will study with their diocesan counterparts, they will live in community, some at Sacred Heart with Father Picone and others at St. Margaret's with Father Flora.

"These seminaries are the fruit of the Second Vatican Council, and initiative of St. John Paul II," says Father Picone. "It is a beautiful miracle to begin this seminary with the Diocese of Bridgeport." ■



AN HISTORIC MOMENT for the diocese, Bishop Caggiano and Father Robert Kinally, diocesan chancellor and rector of St. John Fisher Seminary, sign the canonical forms to establish a Redemptoris Mater Seminary in this diocese. (PHOTO BY AMY MORTENSEN)

be opened in January 2016, will be the ninth in this country.

"In regard to their studies, they will be taking the same classes as the seminarians at St. John Fisher Seminary, studying at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield and a Dunwoodie Seminary in Yonkers," says Father Alfonso Picone, pas-

diocese in the world.

Like all Redemptoris Mater seminaries, this will be a diocesan seminary, erected according to canon law by the diocesan bishop, and the students who undergo formation at these seminaries are ordained to the secular clergy of the diocese."

The Redemptoris Mater sem-

Remembering Thomas Merton

‘Are You the One?’ The challenge of Advent

By CARLENE JOAN DEMIANY

In 1963, when the Second Vatican Council was underway and when civil unrest and fear permeated American society, Trappist Monk Thomas Merton (1915-1968), writer, mystic and social reformer, wrote an essay reflecting on Advent. It was this relatively unknown essay entitled “Advent: Hope or Delusion” that Father Daniel Horan, OFM, brought to his audience, when he delivered his lecture, “Thomas Merton and the ‘Advent’ of Christ in our Lives.”

The lecture, given on December 12 for an audience of over one hundred gathered at Fairfield University’s Dolan School of Business, drew upon the essay to consider Advent in Merton’s spiritual thought. A free event sponsored by the Diocese of Bridgeport Year of Consecrated Life Committee, the lecture celebrated both the end of this year as well as Merton’s one-hundredth-birth year.

It was, indeed, a celebration of Merton’s enduring thought for our age as the young and passionate Franciscan, Father Dan, drew upon the essay to consider the spiritual meaning of Advent in the midst of our changing and violent world. Using Merton’s own words in “Advent: Hope or Delusion,” Father Dan presented Merton’s call to embrace the present tense of Advent.

Sometimes when in the midst of Advent, we set our eyes on the future—to the celebration of Christmas, to the second coming of Christ, to the days when God’s kingdom will reign on earth. Merton’s Advent challenge is to embrace the hope that Christ is present in the world without denying the world’s present tragedies. He writes, “Our task is to seek and find Christ in the world as it is, and not as it might be.”

Merton warns against an Advent faith that slips into cheerful hope as a way to ignore the sufferings of our time. As Father Dan explained, Advent becomes a delusion for Merton when we look around at injustices, simply turn on the radio, and sing (to the turn of “Deck the Halls”), “I’m-gonna-go-and-do-more shopping-fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la.”

The spiritual task of Advent



FATHER DANIEL HORAN, OFM

is to hold in tension the hope of Christ’s active presence in the world without denying that for many the world is a hopeless place.

It was Father Dan’s focus on Merton’s sense of Advent as a present instead of future time that resonated with audience member Griffin Oleynick, a recent gradu-

ate of Yale’s PhD program. “He is getting us to think of Advent as a present time,” said Oleynick. “We live in a violent world, our own lives our messy, but it is in that messiness that we are asked to find Christ.”

During Advent, Merton challenges us not only to find Christ

present in the world, but to find Christ present within. According to Father Dan, “Transformation in Christ, for Merton, takes the form of a lifetime of conversions.” Merton saw Advent as a time of hope in conversion. It is a time to hear, personally, the question John the Baptist wants Jesus to answer when he is in prison awaiting execution. John sends his messengers to Jesus, and they ask him, “Are you the one? Or is there another?”

“Are you the one?” is the question Merton says the world asks all followers of Christ. In the face of violence, the world wants to know, are you the one following the Prince of Peace? Are you a Christian? The present of Advent demands a responsibility to be the kingdom now. Advent calls for a time of conversion, a

time to be present to Christ now, and a time to grow in deeper relationship with him.

The connection Father Dan highlighted between Thomas Merton and John the Baptist resonated with Sister Nancy Strillacci, ASCJ. “Thomas Merton had this prophetic voice and we think of John the Baptist having that prophet’s voice,” she says. “He tells us to prepare the way of the Lord. Merton also tells us to prepare the way of the Lord by forsaking the trappings of our culture. By doing so, we are more receptive to God.”

The enthusiasm and challenge of Father Dan’s lecture was a fitting way to honor Merton’s one-hundredth birthday and the continued legacy he holds within the hearts of American Catholics. ■

FCC interview with Erin Neil

For the twelfth consecutive year, the Diocese of Bridgeport has passed the audit required by the USSCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, and Erin Neil, LCSW, is proud to have led the diocesan Safe Environments effort from the start. She believes that the diocese has responded to the trauma of child abuse by becoming one of the safest places for children anywhere and by helping other institutions to understand the issue and initiate their own child protection programs. FCC spoke with her shortly after the diocese received news of its successful audit.

What should people take away from the auditor’s report?

The audit confirms that we’re still actively taking every step possible to protect children and prevent abuse. We’ve been in full compliance with the Charter for 12 years. And we’re continuing to change to respond to new risks related to technology issues such as cell phone related problems.

We’ve come a long way in



our recognition and response to the problem.

I would say there’s an increased awareness that it’s a national, societal problem that exists in families, other institutions both public and private, and that it is not unique to the Catholic Church. Within the Church, there is a general recognition that we’re doing everything possible on the prevention side—because so many people have been involved in the trainings and background checks.

There have been some criticisms that the Safe Environments programs

are almost too intrusive and get in the way of teaching and ministering to children.

For those who feel it’s too much or over the top, I would say that they may not have met people whose lives have been touched by child abuse. Our job is to do all we can to prevent it. That requires an ongoing conversation about some of the ways predators gain access to children. People have to understand the risk even though they haven’t had a problem. I think we’re at a point where people feel a sense of safety but we can never become complacent.

Has all the heightened awareness led to more accusations?

We receive an average of ten calls weekly related to a concern that someone may have and want to discuss. People may simply be planning a trip with children and want to make sure they’re complying with policy. Many calls regard questions about situations in the home environment or boundary issues such as touching or inappropriate language. People may sense something isn’t right or that they need more training to determine if it’s a problem. It’s good that people are reporting these concerns early because increased awareness does create a higher wall for the predators. It’s better to anticipate a situation that can be misinterpreted than to put a child at risk by not being aware.

Of all the steps you’ve taken, which has had the greatest impact on protecting children from abuse?

The policy of having two or more adults present in all activities involving youth! This standard in itself makes it more difficult for anyone to be alone with a minor. That was one of most important things we could have put in place. ■

EDITORIAL

Refuge

They're knocking on our gates. They're pouring out of their home countries, literally walking across countries and continents: men, women and children who live in the wrong place, at the wrong time.

We know that Mary and Joseph left home and found no room at the inn. But at first, they thought they could head home as soon as Mary was strong enough to make the trip. Instead, lethal leaders killed all the children in their town. They were on the run, carrying nothing but the clothes on their backs.

The distance from Bethlehem to Cairo is 262 miles. It would have taken nearly a month to go that distance, on foot, carrying a child, with robbers and physical dangers threatening every day. Egypt was a foreign country, a different people, a different language—a very different religion. They were welcomed.

We all get the moral of this timeworn story. All we have to do is take it to heart.

Christmas Wish List

This is the time of year for gratitude for the many gifts we receive. So *Fairfield County Catholic* has created its own "wish list" of those we wish to thank for living their faith and making our parishes and communities more caring places. As we await the light of Christmas and speed toward a New Year, we'd like to offer our thanks:

...For the 8,000 people who turned out for the Synod Celebration Mass at Webster Bank Arena, not only making it an historic day in the life of the diocese, but also a joyful one.

...For the 82 young men and women in the new Diocesan Youth Choir and for their "Arise and Shine" Christmas concert.

...For the 300 synod delegates who met at St. Catherine of Siena Family Center throughout the year to help plan for the future of the diocese.

...For this year's 120 St. Augustine Medal Recipients for being the "building stones of the Church." Many have given a lifetime of quiet and selfless service to their parishes.

...For everyone who is at work teaching, guiding, and coaching our children; forming them in the faith as well as in academic and life skills, and preparing them to contribute to their communities and the Church.

...For all of the donors, large and small, who stepped up with sacrificial giving to support the Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) and other initiatives throughout the diocese.

...For every man and woman who shares their professional and personal talent by taking the time to serve on a board, parish council or other leadership group.

...For the hundreds of soup kitchen and parish food pantry volunteers who help feed the hungry, lonely and abandoned and create a sanctuary of mercy every day of the year in Fairfield County

...For our priests, deacons, and religious who are at the center of worship and faith experience in our parishes. They see us at our best and worst and are always there in times of crisis.

...For Pope Francis and his historic visit to the United States. In a dark and uncertain time, he has urged us to find joy and mercy at the core of our faith.

...For our tireless Bishop, who seems to be everywhere at once, working non-stop to teach, inspire and challenge us. He leads with his profound words and personal witness as he moves the diocese to renewal.

We wish all a joyful and Merry Christmas and a blessed and Happy New Year.

Opening Doors

December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, proved to be a remarkable evening in the life of the diocese. The bishop opened the "Holy Door" at St. Augustine Cathedral to usher in the Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis. He was not expecting a large gathering on a Tuesday evening in a busy month, but more than 800 faithful filled the Cathedral to standing room only. And it was truly an event that united the diocese: drawing young and old, suburban and inner city residents, those who have been here for generations, and those struggling to make a new life here. "Every locked door has a key. And that key is not something, it is someone, it is the Lord Jesus Himself!" said the Bishop during a memorable liturgy. It was a grace-filled moment, and another sign of renewal as we take joy in the bishop's words, "Jesus, the Lord, the Savior, the Redeemer of the world, has come as the door of mercy... The door of every human heart will be opened by his love and his mercy."

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Santa enjoys breakfast at Trinity Catholic High School

STAMFORD—Santa took a break from his role in *Miracle on 34th Street* at Trinity Catholic High School to have a brunch with parents and friends, and spend time with the youngest theatergoers.

The play ran Friday-Sunday, with weekend matinees. Breakfast with Santa was from 12 noon-2 pm prior to the Sunday matinee. Santa and all the elves were part of the school's production.



CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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

DIRECTOR

REVEREND MICHAEL A. BOCCACCIO, Pastor, Saint Philip Parish, Norwalk to Director of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Effective date was November 18. Father Boccaccio will continue to serve as Pastor, Saint Philip Parish.

REVEREND JOHN CONNAUGHTON, Parochial Vicar, Saint Thomas More Parish, Darien to Diocesan Director of Vocations. Effective date is January 1, 2016. Father Connaughton will remain in residence at Saint

THOMAS MORE PARISH.

FACILITATOR

REVEREND REGINALD NORMAN, Pastor, Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Wilton to Deacon Candidate Facilitator. Effective date is January 1, 2016. Father Norman will continue to serve as Pastor, Our Lady of Fatima Parish.

RETIREMENT

REVEREND MONSIGNOR JOSEPH J. CUNEO, Diocesan Tribunal to retirement. Effective date is December 31.

REVEREND MONSIGNOR

JERALD DOYLE, Diocesan Tribunal to retirement. Effective date is December 31.

REVEREND WILLIAM VERRILLI, Diocesan Tribunal to retirement. Effective date was December 1.

OTHER

REVEREND MONSIGNOR THOMAS W. POWERS has been appointed to serve as a member of the College of Consultors. Effective date was December 1.

Reverend Ian Jeremiah,
Episcopal Vicar for Clergy
December, 2015

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Editorial



Calmer Advent

A WOMAN'S VOICE

BY KATIE SCARLETT CALCUTT

Katie-Scarlett Calcutt is the mother of two and a founding member of Mass Mob of Fairfield County.

“I love waiting,” said no one ever. Not only is it inconvenient and tiresome, it is gauche. “Gotta run. My Uber is here! Hope your cab comes soon. That’s so quaint!”

Sometimes, however, it is only in the stillness and sacrifice of waiting that we hear the message of the moment. Paradoxically, waiting can be a most productive thing.

If there is any time of the year to master this elusive art of waiting, this powerful practice of presence, it is Advent. I sometimes forget that, for much of

human history, God’s solution to death and sin was unknown. The Israelites had a covenant, sure. God had freed them lots of times. But the specific details of the Messiah and his Kingdom were yet to be seen. Prior to the Annunciation, mankind waited in the dark.

Then came Gabriel with a request for Mary.

Amid the cold of winter, we, too, wait in the dark. But we know the Christmas story; we know what we are waiting for! So the darkness isn’t scary or stifling. Instead, it can serve to

turn us inwards—to ourselves, our homes, our families—so we can prepare a place for Jesus. But how? I have to make a serious effort to celebrate Advent as its own beautiful season, rather than that thing with the wreath we have to survive before Christmas. Here’s our plan:

Center our table around the Advent Wreath and our living room around the Nativity. There are few things my kids love more than fire, so the Advent wreath automatically makes the season awesome. And they love checking to see if Baby Jesus is in his manger yet: nope, not yet! Maybe looking for Jesus isn’t quite as fun as searching for that “Elf on the Shelf,” but that is only because Jesus is such a better hider.

Hold off on Christmas music. Fear ye not! Some songs associated with the season—such as Come O Come Emmanuel and Rosa Mystica—are very much Advent-worthy. Others—anything about Santa, “Silent Night,” etc.—have to wait. We cheat

when we are out shopping and gleefully listen to whatever they have pumping through the stereos. It feels like contraband, which only heightens the fun.

Finish our Christmas shopping before Advent. Nothing pulls me away from waiting quite like the

“There are few things my kids love more than fire, so the Advent wreath automatically makes the season awesome.”

stress of buying presents for loved ones. I especially love bragging to my mom about this one. “Yep, Mom. I’m all done. Sorry you aren’t. Guess you really raised a go-getter.”

Don’t throw a Christmas party. This one is kind of easy

because throwing parties stresses me out anyway. We go to parties if we are able, and have a great time when we are there. After all, we are the Calcutts, not the Scrooges.

Fast. For us, that means simpler meals. Less meat. No Christmas cookies. More lentil soup. Less pizza and beer (sorry, honey). But, don’t pity us because....

We break it up with feasts. When I look at the calendar of feast days in December, I chuckle. There’s so much to celebrate, there’s hardly any time for serious fasting. St. Nicholas? Alright kids, leave out your shoes for a big surprise. Our Lady of Guadalupe? She’s a pretty big deal, so we should probably have cake. Immaculate Conception? Hot dog, it’s a solemnity! Let’s go paint the town.

Can we do it? I think we can, especially because I know it will only make December 25 all the more special. Wow! Christmas is almost here. I can’t wait! ■



Merry Christmas from the Family

A DAD'S VIEW

BY MATTHEW HENNESSEY

Matthew Hennessey and his family are parishioners of St. Aloysius in New Canaan.

We’re still a few weeks out, but the Christmas excitement is building.

The Advent wreath is on the table. The nativity has been assembled. Lists are being written and revised.

Mild weather has added a layer of complexity to the preparations. Not a single snowflake has yet fallen from the sky. Unseasonably high temperatures are forecast well into the future.

I’ll take as much of this as I can get.

What suits the adults, however, doesn’t seem to suit the kids. They want snow—lots of it, piles

of it, driveways full of it. They want to wake up in the morning, mount their sleds, and glide right out the door.

They want icicles and hot chocolate and popcorn and wet mittens and rosy cheeks.

As shoveler-in-chief, I offer glory and praise to God for clear skies and windshields without frost. The children pace furiously and stroke their nonexistent beards. The shovels gather dust in the garage.

“We can’t have it all,” I tell them. “Sometimes it snows and we wish it wouldn’t. Sometimes it doesn’t and we wish it would. You just gotta roll with it.”

“Pssshhhhhfffftttt,” comes their scowlish reply. These kids know what winter is and they want it all. “Give us wind chill,” they say. “Give it now.”

Eleven year-old Clara authorized the expenditure of a few hard-earned dollars. She bought an ornament for her grandmother. It was carved from an olive branch by Christians in the Holy Land.

Clara plainly took as much pleasure in finding the right gift for someone special as she did in helping the beleaguered Jerusalemites. God love that child.

Magdalena loves when the radio station moves to the Christmas format. She could listen to Jose Feliciano sing “Feliz Navidad” all day. Sometimes it seems like we do. I don’t mind it so much—the first five times.

Managing a seven year-old’s Christmas expectations is trickier than it ought to be. If you totaled up everything our Paddy put on his list this year, you’d be looking at the cost of a new laptop computer.

I suppose someday in the not-to-distant future he might actually

want a new laptop computer. Until then, he’ll settle for a Star Wars-themed Lego set. It just so happens that the one he has in mind costs \$300. Heaven help us all.

Even Sally, about to turn three, wants in on the action. That’s the benefit of having older siblings. When something exciting is happening, you feel the energy. It could be good, or it could be bad, but it’s exciting. And it’s happening.

“You can take a nap if you want to, old man,” she says (with her eyes). “Ain’t no way I’m missing this.”

I’m sure none of my kids would turn down a temporary transfer to a different family. Allegedly, there are families out there where you don’t have to fight with your siblings over who gets to light the pink candle. In some families, everyone gets everything they want for Christmas and mom and dad aren’t constantly talking about Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Well, tough nougies, as we used to say. Just be glad you don’t get a lump of coal in your

stocking like grandpa did when he was your age.

My wife and I have a birthday-and-Christmas pact: no presents. For each other, that is. Violations are tolerated, but only infrequently and with caveats. Religious tchotchkes seem to be acceptable. Joke presents are okay, too.

What I like most about our pact is that it allows us, in a small way, to tune out the commercialism. It allows us to concentrate on the real meaning of Christmas: family, charity, and, of course, the birth of Our Lord.

It allows me to ask her what she wants for Christmas, and her to reply with a piece of Christina Rossetti’s famous poem:

What can I give Him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;

Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

God bless your family this Christmas. ■

Consecrated Life

Father Michael Nowak, pastor St. Michael the Archangel Parish

Meet Father Michael Nowak, OFM Conv. The Order of Friars Minor Conventual is a branch of the Franciscan Order founded by Saint Francis of Assisi. They have accepted the call to minister to all peoples, particularly to work among the urban poor. Within that framework, the superiors in Poland have commissioned Franciscan priests to work among Polish immigrants in several countries; including, in this area (Our Lady of Angels Province), the cities of Boston, Clifton, N.J., and Bridgeport.

Name: Father Michael Novak, pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Polish Parish in Bridgeport.

Hometown: Sztum, Poland, a small town in northern Poland near the tourist destination of Malbork, famous for its impressive medieval castle.

**Order/Institute/
Congregation:** Order of Friars Minor Conventual (OFM Conv.)

Years in Vowed Profession: "It's been 16 years since I entered the order. I took my final vows in 2004 and was ordained to the priesthood in 2006."

Ministry, now or formerly: "After a couple of years of parish work, I spent a year in Ireland, serving the Polish people who had emigrated there. I didn't have very good English and I spent most of the time with my community. It was frustrating: I was only 27—I wanted to change the world."

"I came here in 2014. We have a Polish parish in Danbury and Stamford, and this is a convenient meeting place for members of our community from New Jersey and Massachusetts. Father Stefan Morawski, our former pastor, has been a kind and patient support for me. Even more, Father Peter Lynch, the head of this Vicariate, has given me great assistance in helping me learn my way around the area."

St. Michael's celebrates two Masses in English and two in Polish each weekend, and one in

each language during the week. The parish is home to 600 families coming from a wide area around Bridgeport. The Polish school held on Saturday has 150 students enrolled, and St. Michael's holds a Retreat Day every month.

A favorite image or title for Jesus that resonates with me: "Jesus on the cross. This is our Franciscan tradition, going back to St. Francis himself, but it is also my own. I try to pray the Way of the Cross every Friday."

Person who influenced my faith life: "My pastor in Poland, Father Anthony. He was very poor and humble. He never had a car, never, but he had a lot of books and he opened his library to the people. He was a rock. He always supported me; he let me become an

altar boy when I was five years old, and when I decided to join a religious order he encouraged me, even though he would have rather wished that I become a parish priest."

A Connecticut place I especially like: "I go to the sea. Seaside Park in Bridgeport is magnificent. West Haven has a beautiful beach, too. In Poland, all our places are by the sea, and when I was in Ireland I'd go to the sea whenever I could."

If I could have lunch with a saint it would be: "St. Maximilian Kolbe, of course, and St. Pio. My first dream in entering the priesthood was hearing Confession. My first Eucharist was a high point, but my dream was always of hearing Confession and offering God's love and forgiveness."

Something I most appreciate about community life:

"Conventual means to live in community. This is a problem today, when so many of us live in parish rectories. Spending time together, talking, eating, walking, praying and listening—being together. We try to be in touch with our Polish Franciscan communities in Clifton Park and Boston, and schedule retreat days together as often as we can."

An interesting fact about me: "I play the guitar—when I was in the seminary we had a band and published a couple of CDs. I start every homily here with a guitar. Music is part of my life."



FATHER MICHAEL NOWAK, OFM Conv., pastor of St. Michael Parish in Bridgeport.

Slogan that I would give my life: "I would quote the philosopher and novelist Umberto Eco: 'Who reads books, lives twice.' I read every chance I get."

What I would say to someone considering choosing Consecrated Life: "People think that religious life is boring. I've worked in radio, had a music band, learned English. It's a very interesting life. The Franciscan Order makes that possible. Whether we end up next in Kenya or Vietnam, we know that there are brothers there to welcome us." ■

Visit with Pope Benedict

ROME, Italy—"Thank you so much for facilitating our meeting with His Holiness Benedict XVI," Father Donald Kloster wrote Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. Father Kloster, now a missionary in Ecuador, had asked Bishop Caggiano to write a letter on his behalf for a brief meeting with Pope Emeritus Benedict. "It's a meeting I will forever remember!"

The meeting took place on October 15. Father Kloster was joined by his sister, Dawn Cox, her husband Michael and their daughter Hanna.

"The visit was surreal," Father Kloster wrote Bishop Caggiano after the event. The family group had a Swiss Guard Corporal drive them up to the Vatican Gardens, near where the Holy Father was finishing his afternoon Rosary at the Fatima Grotto. "It lasted about 10 minutes and the Holy Father was very joyful. He is now 88 and looking a bit frail, but his smile and his manner

were as engaging as always. The Swiss Guard Corporal said he receives very few people these days."

During the audience, the Pope Emeritus was interested in hearing about the mission in Ecuador as well as the Diocese of Bridgeport.

"You were with me in the audience (especially in my conscious intentions) as I asked the Holy Father to bless my mission and the Diocese of Bridgeport. I presented him with a small photo album of the parish and school. He was especially enchanted with my 11-year-old niece. He asked her several questions about her school and her extracurricular activities. Bishop Georg Ganswein (papal secretary to both popes) took the photo on my sister's i-Phone."

Bishop Ganswein allowed the group to walk around the Vatican gardens after the audience. "It was like being in a dream," Father Kloster wrote. "One of the biggest surprises for me was the extensive collection of cacti



AN UNFORGETTABLE VISIT—Father Donald Kloster received an invitation to visit Pope Emeritus Benedict, along with (l-r) his sister Dawn Cox, his niece Hanna, and brother-in-law Michael (PHOTO BY PAPAL SECRETARY BISHOP GEORG GANSWEIN)

growing along one of the service roads."

They spent about half an hour in the upper gardens. "As we came down from the area near the grotto, Bishop Ganswein was exiting Pope Benedict's residence and accompanied us for a few minutes. He was very personable

and a bit surprised I spoke German. But his English is just about perfect and I'm beginning to lose vocabulary in German."

Father Kloster and his family attended two Masses in St. Peter's on the side altar of Sts.

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

Catholic Charities

Father Morris captivates Danbury gathering

By ROWENA DALY

Nearly 300 guests laughed, cried and cheered, even though it was 7:30 am on a Thursday morning, as Father Jonathan Morris, a *New York Times* best-selling author, a nationally recognized television commentator and a pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish in the South Bronx, regaled the crowd with stories about finding “Serenity in Tough Times.”

Father Morris is a native of Cleveland, Ohio (but a diehard Michigan Wolverine fan). He was ordained in Rome on December 24, 2002. His foray into mass media was as a theological advisor for Mel Gibson’s epic religious film *The Passion of the Christ*. Most recently, he served as a consultant for the NBC hit series, “A.D.: The Bible Continues.”

His latest book, “*The Way of Serenity: Finding Peace and Happiness*

in the Serenity Prayer” (2014), focuses on a powerful meditation that is too often overlooked by those outside of the recovery community: “Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, The courage to change the things I can, And the wisdom to know the difference.”

“I say the prayer every day and I encourage people to pray, think and act when grappling with major decisions,” said Father Morris.

In September Father Morris did act by heroically rescuing a man who was attacked by two pit bulls outside the South Bronx parish. Francesco Bove, the 62-year-old Italian immigrant, was meeting Father Morris to review church restoration work when police say a woman ordered her two dogs to attack him.

When Father Morris ran out the church and saw the horrific injuries, he ripped off his shirt to



(PHOTO BY MICHELLE BABYAK)

use as a tourniquet and stem the loss of blood.

‘I feel I’m dying,’ Bove told Father Morris after the attack, which was caught on video from an apartment overhead. Father Morris administered last rites to the artist.

Bove did survive and told Father Morris that his faith in

God was renewed.

“His stories, sad, funny, or happy, illustrated the importance of acceptance and a willingness to be active in changing what you can,” said attendee Jim McPartlan of St. Thomas More Parish in Darien. “Together, the entire crowd read aloud the Serenity Prayer. It was beauti-

ful, and then Father Jonathan commissioned us to live a life of peace and acceptance. Grace filled the room.”

The Celebrity Breakfast is a primary source of funding for the Catholic Charities programs in the greater Danbury area. Proceeds from the breakfast benefit the Behavioral Health Clinic, the Morning Glory Breakfast Program, the Family Loan Program, the Homeless Outreach Team, the Community Support Program, Recovery Pathways and New Heights.

This year, the breakfast raised \$71,233: \$15,000 for the Family Loan Program, which assists working families to obtain financial assistance for car repairs, medical bills or a security deposit; \$55,000 to support the work of the Catholic Charities Danbury Counseling Center; and the remainder to the Morning Glory Breakfast Program. ■



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Mass and Reception in Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County

Please Join
The Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
and the Board of
Catholic Charities of Fairfield County
for the
100th Anniversary Mass & Reception
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Norwalk, Connecticut

✠

Reception immediately following Mass

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RSVP: 203.416.1333 or online at
www.100thanniversarymass.eventbrite.com
www.ccfairfield.org



2016 EVENTS CALENDAR

| Month | Event |
|------------------------|---|
| January 23..... | Opening Mass & Reception – St. Matthew, Norwalk |
| Jan. 21 - Feb. 7 | 100 Years of CCFC Exhibit – Fairfield Museum |
| February 5 | Souper Bowl game – Webster Arena |
| February 27 | Evening of Chance – Morning Glory |
| February | Irish in 1916 Lecture |
| March | County-wide food drive |
| April 2 | Spring Gala – Northern Fairfield County |
| April 19 | Celebrity Breakfast – New Covenant Center |
| May | Celebrity Breakfast – Thomas Merton Center |

| Month | Event |
|-------------------|---|
| May | Celebration of Hope – New Heights Center |
| June | Aetna 100th Golf Outing |
| September..... | Half Marathon |
| September 24..... | 100th Gala Celebration – Stamford Marriott |
| October | Celebrity Breakfast – Northern Fairfield County |
| October | Walk-a-thon for the Homeless – Morning Glory |
| November..... | Harvest Table – New Covenant Center |
| December | Celebrity Breakfast – Norwalk programs |
| December | 100th Closing Event/Christmas Concert |

CALENDAR IN PROCESS...MORE TO COME!

Jubilee Year of Mercy

The Three Mercy Popes

By **FATHER MATTHEW MAURIELLO**

The Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy was opened by Pope Francis on December 8, 2015. In a way, this is the culmination of the great work begun by "The Great Mercy Pope," Pope St. John Paul II, who was elected to the papacy on October 16, 1978.

Pope John Paul had previously served as the Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, and was well acquainted with the writings of St. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938). It was to her that the Lord Jesus Christ entrusted his message and image of mercy in 1931 and asked her to be his messenger of mercy. She was canonized by Pope John Paul II on April 30, 2000, and that same day, the Pope established that Mercy Sunday be celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter.

Throughout his long pontificate, the Pope consistently proclaimed the message of God's love and mercy and urged the faithful to be witnesses to it. In a homily delivered on August 17, 2002, at Krakow-Lagiewniki, he told those gathered there, "Apart from the mercy of God, there is no other

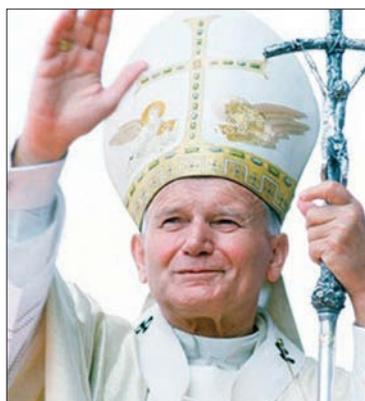
source of hope for mankind."

It was on the Vigil of Mercy Sunday, April 2, 2005, that Pope John Paul II "returned to the house of the Father" with his passing. He was beatified on Mercy Sunday, May 1, 2011, and canonized on Mercy Sunday, April 27, 2014.

The second Mercy Pope is Pope Benedict XVI, who was elected to the papacy on April 19, 2005 and resigned on February 28, 2013. It was his desire to continue emphasizing the "message of mercy" begun by his predecessor.

In 2006, he was approached by Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, the Archbishop of Vienna, Austria, to give his approval for the First World Apostolic Congress on Mercy. Pope Benedict heartily did so and was the celebrant of the Opening Mass on April 2, 2008 in St. Peter's Square. This was also the third anniversary of the passing of Pope St. John Paul II.

At the conclusion of the Mercy Congress on Sunday April 6, Pope Benedict told the participants: "Yes, the first World Apostolic Congress on Mercy has ended and it now becomes a



mandate: go forth and be witnesses of God's mercy, a source of hope for every person and for the whole world."

I was privileged to participate in the Congress on Mercy, since Bishop William E. Lori had invited me to serve as the USA coordinator for the event. I became a member of the international planning committee. It has been a great blessing in my life to learn more about the great gift of the Lord's mercy that, of course, precedes Sts. Faustina and John Paul II, who were chosen by the Lord to help promulgate the message of the abundant mercy of the Lord.

Subsequent Mercy Congresses were held in Krakow, Poland, in October 2011, and in Bogota,

Colombia, in August 2014. The next Mercy Congress will be held in Manila, Philippines, in January 2017. There have also been regional Mercy Congresses, such as the North American Congress on Mercy held in Washington, D.C., in November 2009. The invitation of Pope Benedict XVI to go forth and proclaim the message of mercy is being put into action.

The third mercy pope is our present Holy Father, Pope Francis, who was elected to the papacy on March 13, 2013. At the age of 17, he had a personal experience of the Lord's mercy on the Feast of St. Matthew, September 21, 1953. After going to Confession in his native

Buenos Aires, he felt his heart touched by the tender love and mercy of God in a profound way and experienced the call to religious life and to follow the example of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order.

The motto of Pope Francis is: "Miserando Atque Eligendo" which means: "Having Mercy and Choosing." This is taken from a passage in the homily of the Venerable Bede (672-735) for the Feast of St. Matthew and refers to the call of Matthew, tax collector, to be an Apostle. Pope Francis chose this motto when he was named a bishop in 1992 and has kept it in his papal coat of arms.

(Father Mauriello is pastor of St. Roch Parish in Greenwich.) ■

POPE BENEDICT FROM PAGE 14

Processus and Martinian. "They were the first century martyr jailers of saints Peter and Paul. St. Peter baptized them in a miraculous spring that appeared in the prison. That altar is a favorite of mine since the mosaic of St. Anthony Marie Claret is on the Gospel side of the altar. He was the great missionary-minded bishop of Cuba who lived in the 19th century."

Father Kloster was ordained by Bishop Edward M. Egan in St. Augustine Cathedral on July 1, 1995. He had served his deacon internship at St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield and celebrated his first Mass there. He later served at Our Lady of Grace Parish in Stratford. Called to the mission field, he has been the parish priest in Mary Immaculate of the Eucharist Parish in the Diocese of Guayaquil, Ecuador.

The industrial city, located near the Pacific coast, has a population of three million, making it

the largest city in Ecuador. There are about 36,000 people who live in his parish. Although about 82 percent are Catholic, few attend Mass regularly. Father Kloster is working hard to change that.

"We go door to door evangelizing twice a month," he said. "We have six Eucharistic Processions through the streets every year and anywhere from 150-200 parishioners attend the one-hour walk. We have just instituted (three months ago) a monthly vigil every First Friday into First Saturday with four hours of nocturnal adoration in between two Masses. There have been incredible spiritual fruits.

When he arrived in the parish, only two percent of the baptized Catholics were coming to weekly Sunday Mass. "Now, we are up to five percent and I hope we will soon pass six. All of the parish prayer groups are growing (there are five of them now) and

the Catechism classes now have 750 children and adolescents as well as another 300 adults. I have 106 catechists. We have about 350 children in our parish school and a parish high school of about 200. The grade school is in the morning and the high school in the afternoon/evening since they both use the same building. We have two daycare centers and a senior activity center. Now I need to find another priest to help me!"

It's no wonder Pope Benedict was interested in learning of his parish.

"It truly was a fairy-book like visit. It will be indelibly inscribed in my mind and heart," Father Kloster said. He added with great diffidence, "I am just an ordinary priest in one of the poorest parishes in the world. I'm very grateful for the audience, but still baffled as to why my request was even granted in the first place!" ■

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Greenwich Catholic School Gala

Bishop celebrates success of Capital Campaign

GREENWICH—On November 4, over 80 guests attended a dinner at Tamarack Country Club in celebration of Imagine, Greenwich Catholic School's first-ever capital campaign, which was publicly launched a year ago.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano was in attendance and addressed the guests with praise for the school's accomplishment in raising \$1.9 million toward the renovation of the current upper school building. "For a Catholic elementary school to accom-

plish this is outstanding, and I applaud the faith, hard work and generosity of the volunteers and donors who have given of themselves to Greenwich Catholic School."

Chaired by current school parents Brian Condon and Dr. Andrew Sama, Imagine is the largest fundraising initiative in the school's 45 year history. Phase 1 of the project includes the renovation and expansion of the upper school building, which houses the middle school grades: 6, 7, and 8. The current

building is over 50 years old and is functionally obsolete. Plans call for adding two additional classrooms, renovating and resizing the existing classroom space, and equipping the building with energy efficient systems.

Groundbreaking is scheduled for the spring of 2016.

Greenwich Catholic School was founded in 1970 and is located on a 38 acre campus at 471 North St. in Greenwich. GCS includes Kindergarten through eighth grade, as well as a three-year old program



"I APPLAUD THE FAITH, hard work and generosity of the volunteers and donors who have given of themselves to Greenwich Catholic School," said Bishop Caggiano, attending the school's fundraising gala with Superintendent of Schools Sister Mary Grace Walsh and Principal Patrice Kopas.

Charities breakfast supports education and counseling

NORWALK—Catholic Charities of Fairfield County's held its 23rd Annual Norwalk Celebrity Breakfast at St. Matthew Parish on December 3. Nearly 230 people attended the breakfast, raising funds to support the life-changing programs in the city including the Behavioral Health Programs and the exemplary pre-schools of Room to Grow, which serve nearly 200 children ages 3, 4 and 5. Among the officials present were Mayor Harry Rilling of Norwalk and Robert Mallozzi, first selectman of New Canaan.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano opened the breakfast with a prayer and shared his thoughts on the work of Catholic Charities in Norwalk. The featured speaker, Father Charles Allen, SJ, executive assistant to the president of Fairfield University and university chaplain, entertained the audience with inspirational stories about his years work-



ing with young adults in higher education.

The breakfast raised \$21,000 that will provide essential support for individuals and families in need of counseling and an opportunity to enroll in pre-school.

"This is the best result this breakfast has ever had," commented Al Barber, president of Catholic Charities.

called Little Angels and a Pre-Kindergarten program for four-year-old children.

(For more info on Greenwich Catholic School, visit www.gcsc.org.)

To schedule a tour or receive an admissions packet, call 203.869.4000. For more info on Imagine or to contribute to the campaign, go to www.gcsc.org/imagine.html.



TO OUR FAMILIES,
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St. Vincent's Medical Center

Cancer survivors share stories of gratitude

BRIDGEPORT—Stratford resident Celida Rossillo and ESPN anchor Nicole Briscoe had never talked publicly about their experiences with cancer before but each had a message of hope and gratitude to share at the 20th Annual St. Vincent's SWIM Across the Sound Breast Cancer Luncheon. The sold-out audience raised over \$102,000 to help the St. Vincent's Elizabeth M. Pfriem SWIM Cancer Center provide breast cancer screenings, education, holistic support, and financial assistance to underinsured women in the greater Bridgeport region.

"I'm a Chicago Cubs fan so I'm loving that they were in the pennant race... I'm happily married with a beautiful daughter... and we went to Disney World

and had an incredible time together," Briscoe began. "Why am I telling you this? Because when I was 21, I heard the three scariest words you can hear: 'You have cancer.' But that was immediately followed up with: 'You're going to beat it because we caught it early.' Early detection is our greatest weapon and that's why I've been able to live my life and fully experience so many amazing moments."

Nicole Briscoe became a SportsCenter anchor and studio show host in early 2015 after working in various roles in ESPN's NASCAR coverage from 2008-14. In addition to anchoring SportsCenter, Briscoe also contributes to ESPN's Baseball Tonight: Sunday Night

Countdown and X Games coverage as a reporter.

"I remember having to choose between buying my college books, paying my rent, or buying my medication," Briscoe shared. "These are choices that so many people don't have to make thanks to the SWIM Across the Sound."

Last year, the St. Vincent's Mobile Mammography Coach visited 37 sites and screened approximately 300 women, targeting those who are un- and under-insured, high risk, and elderly. All donations raised from the luncheon will be used to fund programs to increase access to mammography and prevention services for women at risk in our community. The SWIM also provides wigs, prostheses, medical assistance, free transportation to

treatments and appointments, day-care scholarships, and support groups and services. Thanks to the money raised, more women will receive financial assistance during a time of significant hardship.

Celida Rossillo of Stratford found St. Vincent's Medical Center Foundation at a very difficult time in her life. She was diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer in November 2013. Following her diagnosis, she lost her job and struggled to make ends meet.

"The SWIM became a lifeline that allowed me to keep a roof over my kids' heads and keep the lights on during our darkest days," she explained. "What amazes me the most is all the people who come out for the SWIM Across the Sound... peo-

ple I don't even know... helped me. All of you helped me keep my home for my babies. I cannot thank you enough."

Following the emotional experiences Briscoe and Rossillo shared, Dianne Auger, president and CEO of St. Vincent's Medical Center Foundation, addressed the gathering of survivors and supporters. "Your strength, power, and grace inspire us to do all we can to lift the burdens that you, and hundreds of individuals like you, live with as you battle cancer. Every week, the SWIM office responds to individuals and families, each with their own multifaceted stories of struggle and survival. It is our sincere hope that we are so successful today that we put ourselves out of business." ■

DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT: DECEMBER 20—JANUARY 23

DECEMBER

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|------|
| 26 | Rev. Vincent P. Cleary | 1965 |
| 27 | Rev. Ignatius Baraniak, O.F.M. Conv. | 1980 |
| 29 | Msgr. James H. Grady | 1967 |
| 30 | Rev. M. Joseph McCarthy | 2006 |

JANUARY

| | | |
|----|----------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Rev. Michael J. Flynn, C.S.Sa. | 1995 |
| 2 | Rev. Robert J. McDermott | 1989 |
| 3 | Msgr. Pierre A. Botton | 2010 |
| 4 | Msgr. Francis Medynski | 2008 |
| 6 | Msgr. William J. Fox | 1962 |
| 7 | Rev. Walter E. Bozek | 1995 |
| 8 | Rev. Mr. Edward R. Kovacs | 1999 |
| | Rev. Joseph P. Biondino | 2001 |
| 9 | Rev. Gerald T. Devore | 2011 |
| | Rev. Mr. Hugh Sweeney | 1990 |
| | Rev. Robert Nemeth, O.F.M. Conv. | 1998 |
| 13 | Rev. Daniel J. Deehan | 1976 |
| 14 | Rev. M. Joseph Joaquin | 2013 |
| | Msgr. Joseph A. Sullivan | 2001 |
| 15 | Msgr. Harry L. Hale | 2003 |
| | Msgr. G. Robert Hanover | 1992 |
| 16 | Rev. Thomas B. Gloster | 1956 |
| 18 | Rev. Edward J. Small, SJ | 2010 |
| 19 | Rev. Andrew L. Horvat | 1973 |
| | Rev. William D. Thompson | 2004 |
| 20 | Msgr. George D. Birge | 2015 |
| | Msgr. Ralph P. Buongervino | 1994 |
| | Msgr. Andrew T. Cusack | 2004 |
| | Rev. Andrew L. Farkas | 1967 |
| | Rev. Robert E. Onze | 2010 |
| 22 | Rev. Felix P. Werpechowski | 1972 |
| | Rev. John Mitchell | 2006 |
| 23 | Rev. James J. McCormick | 1965 |

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December 2015

St. Elizabeth Seton

Stained-glass windows complete Ridgefield Church

By BETH LONGWARE DUFF

When St. Elizabeth Seton Church was built in the north end of Ridgefield in the late '70s, it was designed to blend in with the rural character of the neighborhood. The interior is dominated by soaring wooden beams that support the contemporary structure, creating a sense of openness and providing congregants an unobstructed view of the sanctuary. Massive floor-to-ceiling windows allow abundant sunshine to pour in while offering a calming connection to the natural habitat outside. Improving upon the prevailing sense of quiet reverence would seem impossible, but a recent addition has done just that.

Thanks to the generous gift of a long-time parishioner, the interior of the church has been

transformed by the installation of three custom-designed stained-glass windows, which was formally dedicated on November 22 during a ceremony presided over by Bishop Frank Caggiano and Father Joseph Prince, pastor of the parish.

While each window has its own unique theme and color palette, they all share an overriding design element that was a very deliberate choice, according to Bill Hinson, the artist who conceptualized and created them. "Father Prince relayed the concern that parishioners didn't want to lose the ability to see the trees and change of seasons, so we used so-called antique glass, which is mouth-blown, rather than machine-made glass because it tends to be more transparent rather than translucent," he

explained.

The Eucharist window—located behind the altar, tabernacle and crucifix—portrays the breaking of bread by Jesus and the two disciples at Emmaus. Earth tones dominate the scene, which recalls the "fruit of the vine, and work of human hands" prayer over the gifts during Holy Mass. The Baptism window provides a stunning backdrop for the baptismal font, depicting in watery blues and greens the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The Confirmation window surrounds the side entrance to the church and features the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire ablaze in shades of red and orange. The central image of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton with two children at her side connects her legacy ministry of faith formation



with the parishioners in her care.

The windows were the idea of Romy Soviero, who approached Father Prince a few months after the death of her beloved husband Joseph in January 2012 with a proposal for a memorial in his name. Three companies vied for the project, which was awarded to Durhan Studios of Long Island. The project was approved by Bishop Frank Caggiano and the Diocesan Commission for Buildings and Sacred Arts earlier this year. Installation of the windows was completed in early November.

Soviero, who collaborated with the studio throughout the project, says the windows exceed her expectations. "They are very unique, and Joe would

love them," she said. "I've taken a number of friends to see the windows, and they all said, 'WOW!'"

Father Prince says he was inspired to add stained-glass to the sanctuary after a trip to Chartres Cathedral in France several years ago. When he initially broached the subject to parishioners, there were some who expressed reservations. Once the windows were installed, however, those objections faded away. "I've gotten more positive comments from people, and they appreciate that one family offered the windows as a gift to the parish—I've heard that again and again and again," he said, obviously pleased with the outcome.

Mother Dolores Hart

By CARLENE JOAN DEMIANY

When Mother Dolores Hart, O.S.B., a contemplative nun from the Abbey of Regina Laudis in Bethlehem, Conn., discovered she was expected to speak about Mary, she thought, "What? I'm a convert. They know more about Our Lady than I do!"

But this convert revealed a life-long consideration of Mary's Assumption when she spoke at St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan in October. Mother Dolores' talk was the featured address given at the October meeting of Our Lady's Guild. In order to promote devotion to Our Lady, the Guild hosts a monthly program, which includes Mass, praying the Rosary, brunch, and a speaker to reflect on Mary. After brunch, Mother Dolores began her talk before an audience of one hundred that included members of Our Lady's Guild, St. Aloysius parishioners, and guests. Mother Dolores, in full Benedictine habit, opened with



"OUR LADY IS YOUR MOTHER," Mother Dolores Hart told members of the Ladies Guild at St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan, joined here by parochial vicar Father Cyrus Bartolome.

her first memories of devotion to Our Lady. Her great aunt, a Sister of St. Joseph, would take her into her closet to pray the Rosary.

There in that closet with Rosary beads between her fingers young Dolores listened as her aunt shared stories about the life of Mary. What captivated her most was the Mystery of Mary's Assumption. "I pondered that," reflected Mother Dolores. "I pondered that all my life." What she pondered was Our Lady's

bodily assumption into heaven, and Our Lady's willingness to assume the role God asked her to play in the history of salvation—the role of becoming the Christ-bearer.

Her consideration of Our Lady fully assuming this role initially sparked Mother Dolores' interest in acting. In her young life, she understood Mary as fully assuming a role and thought, "I bet that is like an actress, because

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

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Sports

ND girls are state champs

By DON HARRISON

At the season's midway point, disappointment was etched into the faces of the Notre Dame High School, Fairfield, girls' soccer team. The Lancers' won-lost record stood at 4-7, and one of those defeats, originally a win, was reversed because it was played over two days.

"We had injuries to some key players and our chemistry wasn't as good as the previous year," recalls Coach Wayne Mones. "It took time for them to realize the season was slipping away."

An abundance of talent combined with a renewed resolve paid dividends. Notre Dame never lost another match in 2015, winning eight games and tying twice, the latter coming against Old Lyme, 2-2, in the CIAC Class L state championship game at Municipal Stadium in Waterbury. The Lancers were state champions—or co-state champs—for the first time in school history.

"Coming from 1-and-15 as a freshman to a state championship as a senior is a big deal for me," says tri-captain and center

midfielder Bryanna D'Arcangelo, who will depart as Notre Dame's all-time leader in career assists (70). "I think we scored like three goals my freshman year, and we won four games with three ties my sophomore year."

Much of the credit for the turnaround goes to Mones, who arrived at Notre Dame some 18 months ago as head coach and guidance counselor. His soccer credentials are as impressive as they are lengthy. He played the game for two of the most well-respected coaches in the state, Ralph King at Brien McMahon High in Norwalk and the late, legendary Joe Morrone at the University of Connecticut.

Mones also coached the boys' team at the former Central Catholic High in Norwalk (reaching the Class S state final in 1986) and the men's squad at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury. Combined, that represented nearly 30 years.

"He's an amazing coach," says junior forward Samantha "Sam" LaValle, who has put up a school-record 64 goals in her two seasons at Notre Dame, 34 of which were registered this year.

"He's kind of crazy sometimes. He's very loud and not afraid to tell you what he's thinking."

LaValle's arrival as a transfer from Pomperaug High in Southbury coincided with Mones' appearance at the school. Joining tri-captains D'Arcangelo, goalkeeper Sierra Chavez and defender Raina Ceryak, defensive center-mid Nazae Craw and other important returnees, the 2014 Lancers assembled a 15-6-1 record and advanced to the semi-finals of the Class S state tournament. Both LaValle and D'Arcangelo were selected to the All-State team, an achievement LaValle repeated this fall.

This season of promise began with a succession of injuries, notably the torn ACL that placed Ceryak on the shelf until the 2015 state tournament semi-final. Notre Dame shut out Bolton, 2-0, in that game.

Ceryak also appeared in the



NOTRE DAME HIGH'S GIRLS soccer team had ample reason to smile after tying Old Lyme for the Class S state title—the school's first—on November 21. Tri-captains, left to right, Raina Ceryak (25), Sierra Chavez and Bryanna D'Arcangelo hold the trophy.

championship against fifth-seeded Old Lyme, an afternoon in which goals by LaValle and Erika Quinones gave Notre Dame a 2-0 lead at halftime and visions of its first state title. Old Lyme finally broke through against Chavez, who had 16 saves in the final game of her career, and knotted the score at two.

D'Arcangelo appeared to put the Lancers ahead again with 5:18 left in regulation, but her goal was disallowed due to an

offside call. Neither side was able to score during the two overtime periods. LaValle had some personal satisfaction: She was voted co-MVP of the championship game.

"We had a nice run," Mones says. "We've had resiliency all year. That's our staple and that's who we are. I didn't think we would be able to withstand it when we were on our heels at 2-2, but we turned it around again." ■

Coaching great passes away

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

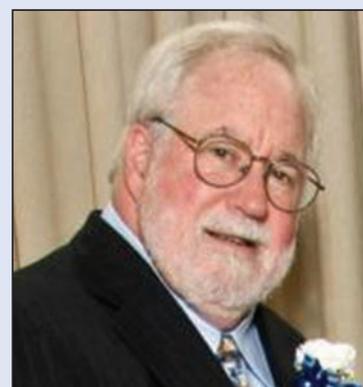
Legendary Notre Dame Girls High School basketball coach Stephen Nemerlut, 71, of West Haven passed away on November 30 at St. Vincent's Medical Center after a long struggle with Parkinson's Disease.

He is being remembered by many former students, players and colleagues as a kind and gentle man, a Hall of Fame coach, and first and foremost a great teacher who never gave up on a student or player.

He is survived by his loving wife, Mary Ann Braun Nemerlut and his older brother, Father Bob Nemerlut of Bloomfield, Ind., along with other family members.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Coach Nemerlut on December 3 at Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Fairfield. Burial followed in Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Trumbull.

Steve Nemerlut was inducted into the Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of



COACH STEPHEN NEMERLUT

Fame in 2008 and was also a member of the Notre Dame High School Athletic Hall of Fame. It was a great moment for the man many remembered as a shy and skinny kid who could not play organized school sports because of health challenges.

During his thirteen years of coaching (1977-89), his Notre Dame teams compiled an overall record of 227-44 and nine league championships. The Lancers qualified for the state tournament each year Steve coached and advanced to the State Tournament finals in 1987, 1988, and 1989.

A graduate of Notre Dame High School, he went on to graduate from Fairfield University in 1967 and began teaching science at St. Andrew School in Bridgeport, where he was also head coach of the boys' basketball and baseball teams. Steve ultimately realized that teaching and coaching were "one and the same."

In 1977, he began coaching girls' basketball at Notre Dame Catholic High School. His team won the regular season and the first MBIAC playoff tournament and Steve was named the first MBIAC Coach of the Year.

In 1978, he began teaching biology and geometry at Notre Dame. In 1984, Steve married Mary Ann Braun, who became his assistant coach. In 1988, he was selected as the *Connecticut Post* Coach of the Year as his team again won the league championship and advanced to the CIAC State Finals.

He was always quick to credit his players for his many victories and he was proud that thirteen of his players received college scholarships. ■

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Column: Thomas Hicks



Caressed by the smiles of yesterday

POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

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

“Oh that I were as in the years past!... As I was in my flourishing days, when God sheltered my tent.” Job 29:1,4

My brother gave me the two shoeboxes he found in the corner of a basement closet. The shoeboxes contained curling, yellowing snapshots. Some photos were in five-and-ten-cent store frames.

When I opened the boxes many of the beloved faces of the past reappeared, and how impossibly young they all looked—those people I loved most in my life, people I loved and learned from, people who loved and shaped me.

There's my father in a yellowing picture. How young he was

then. Looking at that snapshot I see that I am now old enough to be that man's father. There's a picture of my father and me. We're in Forest Park. I am two. I come up to his midthigh, confident of his absolute protection. His face is full of patience and endurance.

A picture of my Mama at the age of twenty-three shows a young woman with a tranquil face, triumphant in its young beauty. She's the mother who lives on in me and will always be part of who I am. I hold the picture close to me and kiss it.

There are photos of my grandfathers in straw hats, bekerchiefed grandmothers, uncles, aunts, cousins. There are photos of my uncle Joey, the only one who remembers the day I roller-skat-

ed too fast down the hill, how I fell, how he picked me up and called me by my childhood name, Tommy.

There are childhood friends and schoolmates. To think of them can bring tears. I wonder where these people are now. I pray for them—those friends of my childhood. I carried something of them with me, I wonder if they carried something of me on their way?

There's a picture of a girl sitting beside me on a wall somewhere. Her pink dress flares tantalizingly above two acrylic legs. I don't know who she is!

Most of the photos seem to have been taken in the velvet of summer days. I recall the distant summers of my boyhood as enchanted times. They were the good days, the magic days, the golden weather of my life “when I was a boy with never a crack in my heart (W.B Yeats, “The Meditation of the Old Fisherman”). John Updike wrote “perhaps we meet our heaven at the start of life and not the end of life” (“Midpoint”).

Still, the childhood photos of me always seem to show frightened eyes, a somewhat sad kid. I think it's a gaze of sadness

unchanged in me.

The photos show a world that appears sweeter, safer. They belong to a world that is gone from us, a culture that has vanished. All photographs testify to time's relentless melt, to the pathos of time past. Almost all the people in the photographs in those shoeboxes had a look of indestructible youthfulness. And yet they all faded, dwindled, and dissolved. Susan Sontag wrote how photographs state the vulnerability of lives; they are “the inventory of mortality.”

All those vanished summers; all the happiness behind me. General MacArthur said it well: “My days of old have vanished, they have gone glimmering

through the dreams of things that were. The memory is one of joy, caressed by the smiles of yesterday (Farewell Speech at WestPoint).

I'm not quite sure what William Faulkner meant, but I have a sense of it when he observed, in “Requiem for a Nun,” that “the past is never dead, it isn't even past.”

And it was Pavel Florensky, the Russian philosopher and priest, who, in 1919, first said: “The past has not passed away, but is eternally preserved somewhere or other and continues to be real.”

“O! Call back yesterday, bid time return” (Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 5.1)

MOTHER DOLORES FROM PAGE 19

an actress has to assume a part you are going to play.”

Mother Dolores transitioned to describe her prodigious acting career. The audience devoured her stories about her role in the Golden Age of Hollywood. She shared what it was like kissing a young Elvis Presley in the film *Loving You* and the joy of her friendship with Anthony Quinn, whom she affectionately referred to as Tony. Everyone roared with laughter when she described her unexpected meeting with Alfred Coccozza, who would change his name to Mario Lanza.

The audience was in the palm of her hand as she continued to share memories from her ten films. But, Mother Dolores then connected these memories to her devotion to Our Lady. She said whenever she would assume a new part in a film, her mind would return to Our Lady. The word ‘assume’ was the word she would always associate with Mary.

While starring on Broadway, Mother Dolores sought a time of rest at the Abbey of Regina Laudis. Her blue eyes sparkled as she recalled her first visit to the Abbey. “The minute I put my foot on the land, something in my heart leapt,” she revealed. “I thought this is where I belong.”

Mother Dolores then shocked the world with her decision to leave Hollywood at the height of her career and enter the strict Benedictine convent. Despite the allure of fame, wealth, and an engagement to be married, Mother Dolores said yes to the unexpected vocational change God asked. And when she assumed this vocation, Our Lady was present.

As she spoke her final words, Mother Dolores said, “I had to assume my mission. I know that each one of you must also assume yours. And when you do, Our Lady will be with you and in you and is your mother.”

It was her focus on Our Lady that resonated with a young member of the audience. Nolan Fitzpatrick, a student at Norwalk Community College, said, “It was her words that ‘Our Lady will be with you and in you and is your mother,’ that I will remember. Anyone who is Catholic needs a firm understanding of Our Lady. You can tell she is very wise.”

Mother Dolores reminded each audience member that when they say yes to God and assume a vocation, Mary is present. Mother Dolores assumed her vocation as a contemplative nun. And this is the role that has been the most rewarding.

“Yes, she left a comfortable life. Yes, she left fame but she found peace and joy,” explained parochial vicar of St. Aloysius Father Cyrus Bartolome. “And in the end, she found something greater than this world could give.”

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CHRISTMAS CONCERT: "Lessons and Carols" presented by the St. Gregory the Great Parish, Danbury, Church Choir and Youth Group on Sun., **Dec. 20**, at 2 pm. For more info, call the parish: 203.797.0222.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT will be held at St. Luke Parish, Westport, on Sun., **Dec. 20**, at 3 pm. Adult and children's choirs, organ/piano duet, carol sing-a-long and Nativity pageant. Reception follows. A goodwill offering will be appreciated. For more info, call the parish: 203.227.7245.

ADVENT ADORATION: Take a break from the holiday scurrying and rest in silence with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in St. Patrick Church, 169 Black Rock Tpk., Redding Ridge, Tues., **Dec. 22**, any time between 7-9 pm. For more info, call the parish: 203.938.2253.

CATHOLIC YOUNG ADULTS of Greater Danbury (ages 18-35) meet at the Newman Center (off the campus of Western CT State University) #7 8th Ave., Danbury and other nearby locations. Christmas Party at the Newman Center: Tues., **Dec. 22**, from 6:30-8:30 pm. Celebrate the birth of Our Lord with food, fun and a White

Elephant grab bag. Fri., **Jan. 15**, Ice Skating at the Danbury Ice Arena, 1 Independence Way, Danbury, from 8:30-10:30 pm. Tues., **Jan. 26**, Game Night from 6:30-8:30 pm at the Newman Center. For more info, email catholic.ya.danbury@gmail.com or call 203.417.2695.

MASS OF REMEMBRANCE for the Loss of a Child will be held on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, Mon., **Dec. 28**, at 7 pm at St. Ann Parish in the Black Rock section of Bridgeport. Fr. Peter Lynch, pastor, will celebrate the Mass. Refreshments follow the Mass. For more info, contact Maureen Ciardiello: 203.416.1445 or respectlife@diobpt.org.

VOLUNTEER TUTORS needed for Mercy Learning Center. No experience necessary. Volunteer tutors are paired with one or more adult female students. The time commitment is four hours a week between 8 am and 5 pm, Mon.-Fri. All tutoring is done at Mercy Learning Center. Upcoming training sessions will take place Fri., **Jan. 8**, and Fri., **Jan. 29**, from 9 am-3 pm (lunch is provided). Mercy Learning Center, 637 Park Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06604. For more info, contact Lynn Gabriel or Sandy Santy: 203.334.6699 or lynn.gabriel@mercylearningcenter.org or sandra.santy@mercylearningcenter.org.

"ENTERING CANAAN" day of prayer and healing for women suffering from a past abortion will be held Sat., **Jan. 16**. Come begin your healing

journey and experience God's hope and mercy. For more info and confidential registration, contact Maureen at Project Rachel Ministry: 203.416.1619 or projectrachel@diobpt.org.

ENCOURAGE apostolate for friends and family of loved ones with same sex attractions meets the third Saturday of the month (**Jan. 16**) at 10:30 am and is strictly confidential. For more info, contact the Norwalk chapter: EncourageNorwalk@gmail.com.

PRAYING FOR YOUR UNBORN CHILD: prepare a spiritual layette for your newborn child on Wed., Jan. 20, from 7-8:30 pm at St. James Parish Center, Stratford. Learn how to pray for the spiritual, physical, emotional and psychological good health of your son or daughter. Cost of program: \$15,

includes book, "Praying for Your Unborn Child" by Francis and Judith MacNutt. For more info or to register, call 203.375.5887 or email bredgate.stjamesparish@gmail.com.

PILGRIMAGE TO HOLY LAND with Fr. Arthur Mollenhauer, **Feb. 11-21**: a 9-day visit to the Holy Sites in

Israel. Cost: \$3,285 includes round-trip flight from NY, 8 nights' accommodation double occupancy w/breakfast & dinner, most lunches, tour guide, transportation, all entrance fees and tips. For more info, call Sharon MacKnight: 203.327.1806 or email smacknight@optonline.net.



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MARCH FOR LIFE: Fri., **Jan. 22**. Parishes across the diocese are organizing buses for the day through Rally Bus. To find a Rally Bus location, go to rallybus.net/bridgeportmarch/.

If you are interested in requesting a location, contact Rally Bus representative Tyler Lomnitzer: tyler.lomnitzer@rallybus.net or 203.414.6734. March for Life Rally info can be found at marchforlife.org/mfl-2016/rally-march-info. For local info, contact Maureen Ciardiello: 203.416.1445 or respectlife@diobpt.org.



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St. Margaret's Shrine

Bishop blesses Neapolitan Presepio

By PAT HENNESSY

“Any person who goes to see a presepio anywhere in the world goes to see the source of our joy—Jesus Christ, our Lord,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, blessing the classic Neapolitan Presepio at St. Margaret's Shrine in Bridgeport.

Bishop Caggiano celebrated Gaudete Sunday at the Shrine with an outdoor Mass in Italian, concelebrated with Father Giandomenioco Flora, rector of the Shrine, and Father Grazioso Artuso.

The Mass was preceded by carols of the season with music by Dan Wolgemuth, St. Margaret's organist, and Jeff Pietrangeli. The Italian choir, singing in both Italian and English, was led by cantor Lucia Palmieri.

“What the Lord promises us is not happiness but joy,” the bishop said in his bilingual homily. He explained that the Latin word “Gaudete” means “Joy” or “Rejoice.” “Happiness does not last,” he said, “On this Sunday of Joy, let us ask for happiness, certainly, but don't worry about the things that do not last. Let us seek joy with all our hearts. Let us seek it for the rest of our

lives.”

Among the guests and dignitaries attending the blessing of the presepio was U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal, who has a bond of affection for the Shrine and its parishioners.

After Mass, the bishop led the congregation to the small structure housing the newly-completed presepio. For those who aren't familiar with it, a presepio is a Nativity scene with figures depicting everyday life in Naples during the 18th century, from milkmaids to bakers, cobblers to blacksmiths. Each figure, down to the freshly baked loaves of bread and the butcher's trimmed meats hanging on a rail, is a finely crafted miniature work of art.

The original presepio was the Nativity crèche created by St. Francis of Assisi. It spread worldwide, but none became as elaborate as those from Naples. Because so many Italian families settled in the Bridgeport area,

they brought that tradition with them.

The Nativity scene at St. Margaret's Shrine is sponsored by the Bridgeport Area Cultural Italian Organization (BACIO), with the encouragement of Len Paoletta, a former mayor of Bridgeport and the president of BACIO.

It was designed by artist Armando Palumbo. “Growing up in Italy during World War II wasn't easy,” recalls Palumbo. “Since we didn't have toys or many social activities to occupy our time, my brothers and I would go out into the fields during the summer and fashion figures from fresh farm clay for the Christmas presepio. We baked the figures in the hot summer sun and when they dried, we'd paint them.”

The Palumbo family migrated to America after the war. “During my first visit to St. Margaret's Shrine, I



knew I wanted to be part of this holy place,” says Palumbo, who has worked on many shrine projects over the years. He designed and built the twenty-foot wrought iron sculpture of Jesus on the cross that stands on the hill above the building housing the presepio.

He received authorization in early 2012 to begin the project, which included major structural work to contend with water problems, replacing the roof, and preparing the entire building before work on the presepio itself could begin. “When you see how impressive this is, you realize how much work went into it,” said Deacon Faust, the Shrine's administrator.

The workmanship, the creative craftsmanship and the love that inspires this classic presepio is now open for all to see.

“St. Margaret's Shrine is really a miraculous place,” added Deacon Faust. “I hope more and more people discover its charm, not only during the Christmas season but throughout the year.”

(The presepio will be open for viewing during the Christmas season: Monday-Friday, 12 noon-4 pm; Saturday, 3-6 pm; Sunday 9 am-1 pm. For more info, call St. Margaret's Shrine: 203.333.9627 or email saintmargaretshrine@gmail.org.)



(PHOTOS BY QUA LE)



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Advent/Christmas

Habitat/Pope Francis House nearing completion

By PAT HENNESSY

Dedication, laughter, energy, the satisfaction of hands-on helping and more than a touch of the spirit of Christmas giving warmed the rooms of an unheated house as a crew from St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Fairfield became the latest volunteers to work on the Pope Francis House for Habitat for Humanity in Bridgeport.

With a cold drizzle outside on this December day, plans for finishing the siding were put on hold and the crew moved inside. Painting was the order of the day. Whether they came with plenty of experience or were learning a new skill on the job, the volunteers pitched in with enthusiasm.

The Pope Francis House in Bridgeport is one of 52 around the country being built with the assistance of an anonymous donor. The donor gave each Pope Francis House \$60,000, asking that parishes and high schools contribute their "sweat equity" and cash donations to complete the project. Work on the house is progressing, but it will require an additional \$70,000 to purchase materials and finish.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano gave his blessing to the project, which held its groundbreaking at 51 George St. last May, and encouraged parishes to participate with volunteer help and contributions. The diocese adopted the Habitat for Humanity of Coastal Fairfield County project in recog-



EXPERIENCED OR NOVICES, a crew of volunteers from St. Anthony Parish in Fairfield geared up for a day of work on the Habitat for Humanity Pope Francis House in Bridgeport.

nition of the visit of Pope Francis to the United States in September and his call to serve the poor and homeless. Donna Spigarolo, a

member of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Fairfield and a longtime Habitat volunteer, is serving as coordinator of the effort.

Notre Dame High School students not only collected more than \$220 in their cafeteria toward the project, they scheduled two work days at the site as part of their Campus Ministry. St. James Parish in Stratford, which can point with pride to a long history of supporting Habitat for Humanity, donated over \$1000 to the home. Both Sacred Heart University and Fairfield University are participating with volunteers and donations.

Teachers from Roger Ludlowe Middle School and Tomlinson Middle School got together to help out with a day of volunteering. The work was done in memory of educator Ed Brennan, who served as a principal in both the Fairfield and

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 36



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Philippians 4:8

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Advent/Christmas Carols of the season!

GREENWICH—Friends of St. John Fisher Seminary were treated to a special evening when diocesan seminarians sang carols of the season at the Church of St. Mary in Greenwich.

More than 200 people



turned out for the evening, which included a gala reception and comments by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano following the program.

Members of the newly formed Serra Club of Bridgeport, a network of clubs committed to serving as a catalyst for vocations, helped out with the evening's festivities.

Attorneys help Caroline House



BRIDGEPORT—Kids and moms at Caroline House in Bridgeport received a welcome pre-Christmas visit from local members of the St. Thomas More Society, an organization of Catholic lawyers. The mission of Caroline House is to enable immigrant women and children to reach their full potential through education in English and life skills. Although the women come from different countries and backgrounds, they share similar challenges and life circumstances.

Working from a wish list for the women and children at Caroline House, the attorneys brought gifts of necessities that included diapers, tissues, kitchen trash bags and baby wipes. Instead of toys, gifts for the preschool children included mittens and sweatshirts.

"Thank you for your kind donation to the Caroline House," said Sister Peg Regan, SSND, executive director. "Your caring support to our organization will make a difference for the women and children."



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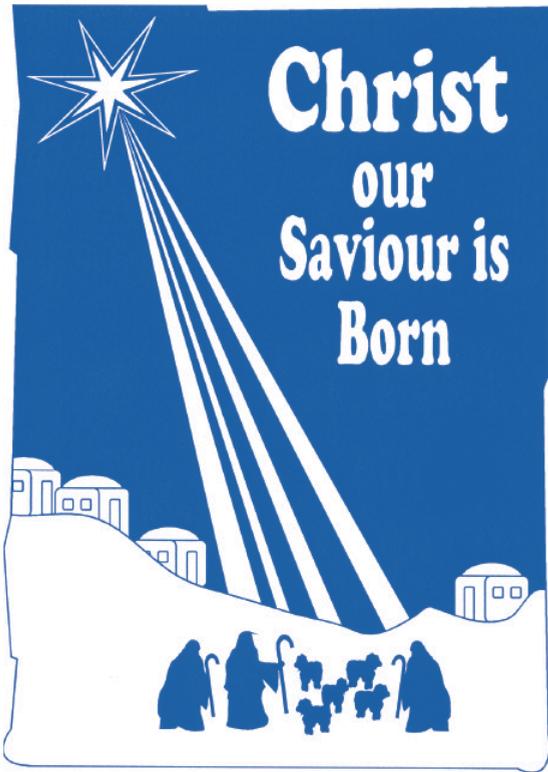
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— Deacon Bill Koniers

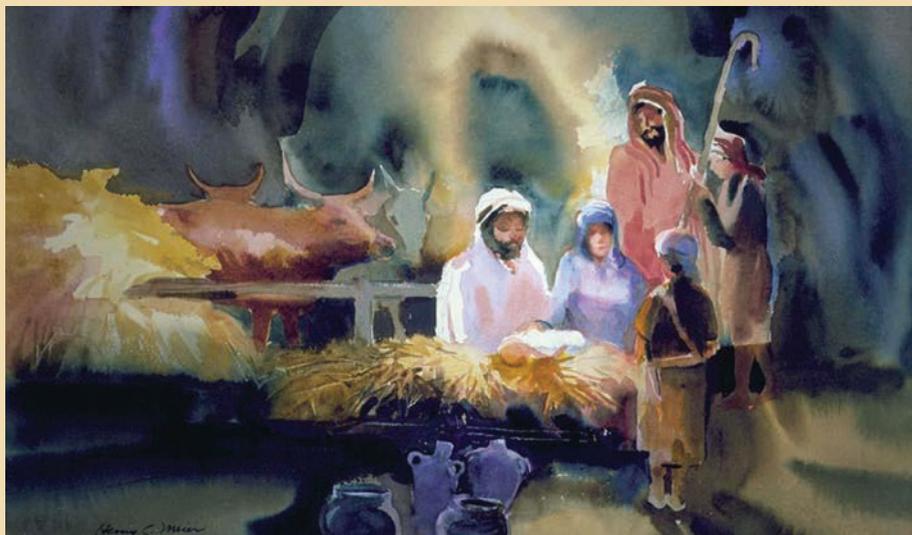


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Crèches of Central Europe

Knights Museum offers a European Christmas

NEW HAVEN—The Knights of Columbus Museum’s 11th annual Christmas exhibition, “Joy to the World: Crèches of Central Europe,” opened November 21 with more than 75 Nativity scenes on loan with origins from seven nations: Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

Items on display represent the rich artistic tradition and cultural heritage of the region, such as the Polish szopka, the German Christmas pyramid, the wooden crèche of Austria and the paper Nativity of Czech Republic.

Crèches have been a popular part of Western Christianity for more than 800 years. Introduced in Italy by St. Francis of Assisi, they served as a way for everyday people to reflect on Jesus’ mod-

est birth. Through the centuries, crèches have developed into large and ornate displays in communities as well as humble presentations for homes.

The Knights of Columbus Museum has acquired crèches from various parts of the world. In addition to the featured exhibition, on display this year are seven items from the museum’s collection. Among them are a hand-carved cedar Nativity scene from Mexico, three Polish szopki and a 120-square-foot Baroque Neapolitan (Italian) diorama.

The museum’s 15th annual Christmas Tree Festival, featuring 24 trees decorated with handmade ornaments and trim by Connecticut schoolchildren, opened with a celebration December 5. Other events include



a Christmastime Family Day scheduled for December 27 and a presentation on the history and distinction of the szopka, “The Polish Nativity: A Beautiful

Palace for the King of Kings,” by Connecticut artist and iconographer Mark Czarnecki, planned for January 16, 2016. The Knights of Columbus

Museum extends gratitude to the following lenders: Glencairn Museum; L’Oratoire Saint-Joseph du Mont-Royal; Loyola University Museum of Art/The James and Emilia Govan Crèche Collection; Museo del Presepio of the Crèche Association; Mr. Leos Prysinger, President of Citizen Association Braun’s Nativity Scene, Czech Republic; and University of Dayton/Marian Library/International Marian Research Institute.

(Joy to the World: Crèches of Central Europe and the Christmas Tree Festival continue until January 31, 2016. The museum, at 1 State Street in New Haven, Connecticut, is open 10 am-5 pm daily, except Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, with free admission and parking.) ■



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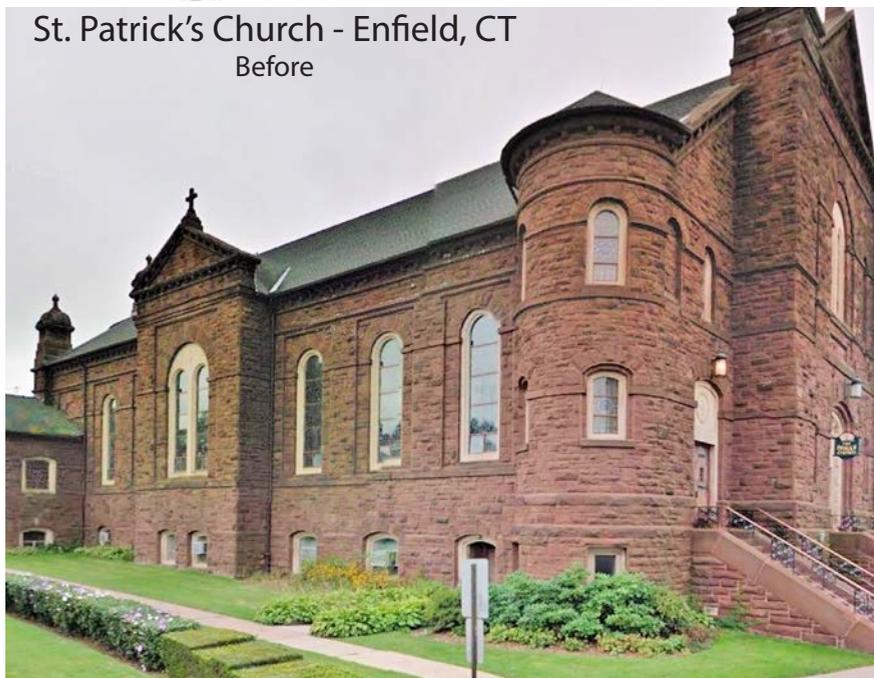
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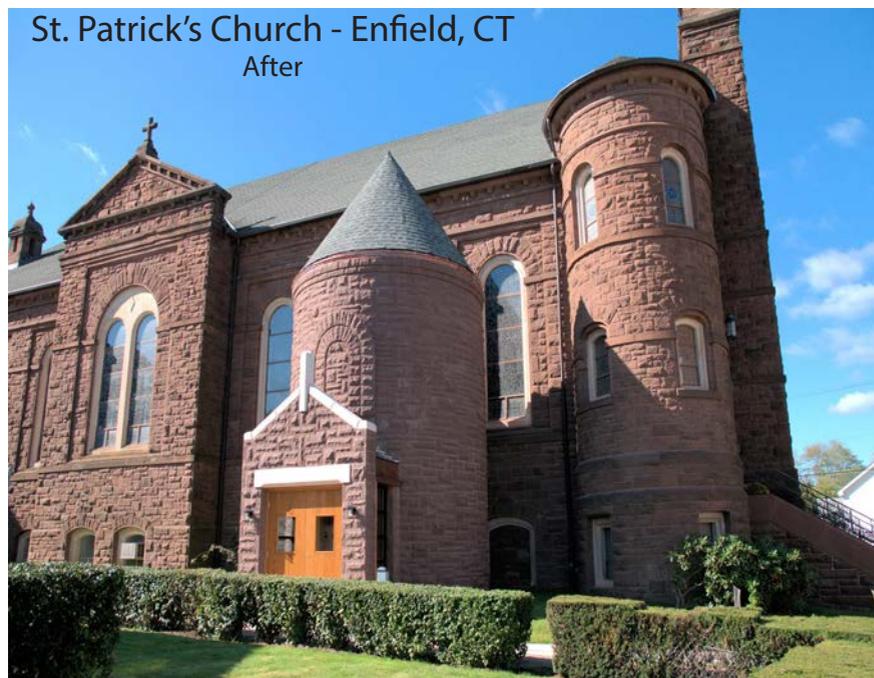
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St. Patrick’s Church - Enfield, CT
After



Elevator Project

This towering brownstone building, which has housed the Roman Catholic congregation since the mid - 1880’s is sited close to the corner of Pearl and High Street. The stairs leading up to the church are very steep and slippery and bringing caskets into the church for funerals is very difficult and sometimes dangerous. Also, with an aging congregation the steep steps present a problem, especially in the winter months. Because the church is in a Historical Zone, plans had to be approved by the planning and zoning board as well as Enfield’s restoration committee.

Integrated Solution

The old existing small elevator was outdated and didn’t solve all of the problems. Baker Liturgical Art, designed a round tower similar to the existing towers that bookended the church. This new elevator design, allowed for handicap access to the basement of the church as well as the nave for wheelchairs, the elderly and coffins. The outside of the tower was matched using remnants from bridge abutments and old buildings. The vestibule windows are trimmed from the floor to the ceiling in custom oak, and the aluminum frames are designed to accommodate stained glass windows in the future.

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'Dreams of the Nutcracker'

A crooked line between the Pope and Paris

By **FRANK DEROSA**

A rollercoaster has fewer ups and downs than in this tale about a Fairfield County couple. It begins 20 years ago.

Back in 1995, in his homily at a Mass he celebrated at Aqueduct Race Track in Queens, Pope John Paul II told a receptive throng of 70,000 that children deserved to live with their parents in a "secure, affectionate and morally correct environment." And that was precisely what this Catholic couple, seated excitedly among the faithful, was eager to provide for the eight-week-old infant in the mother's womb. But for good reason they were filled with apprehension.

"I was considered high risk of having a healthy baby since I was

almost 35 having my first child," said Mary Bozzuti Higgins. And she had already experienced a miscarriage at 12 weeks.

"I remember feeling like being at the papal Mass would be a special blessing for us this time," she said. Jory, her husband, thought the same. "The alignment of seeing the Pope and expecting a child was pretty special," he said."

But in a reminder that God can write straight with crooked lines, pregnancy tests that followed were sending disturbing messages. A series of ultrasounds—eventually totaling more than 20—was revealing that the unborn child was at risk for a genetic disorder. Doctors found choroid plexus cysts in the baby's brain, seen rarely, and commonly found in Down syndrome infants.

A special blood test to determine Down syndrome or the chance of a stillborn birth produced "crazy numbers," Mary recalls.

The would-be parents did what you might expect. "Jory and I prayed like crazy for a healthy baby, but we were scared to death," Mary said.

As time went on and without recommending the procedure, the medical professionals explained to them that an amniocentesis test could identify a genetic problem. Even though it was a remote possibility, it could also result in a miscarriage or possibly induce a spontaneous abortion. The decision to do so left up to Mary and Jory, they quickly ruled out that option.

Months followed filled with uncertainty and tears, and the

ultrasounds continued biweekly, till the day fervent prayers were answered when Katherine entered the world. But there was, indeed, one health issue: she was born with syndactyl toes in both feet, meaning the second and third toes were connected and could not spread apart.

Enter Dr. Glenn Feole, then a Westport pediatrician, whom Mary remembers as devoted to reciting the Rosary. Should we have the toes separated surgically? the couple asked him when he examined her at birth. No, he said. And this is how they remember his reaction: "Not only would it be painful, but God made them that way. . . and maybe she'll be a ballerina and have great balance because of them."

It was like his lips to God's

ears, as the expression goes.

Today, Katherine, now 19, dances with the Corps de Ballet of the prestigious Paris Opera Ballet, the oldest national ballet company in the world, founded in 1669. The contract she received was the first the company has given to an American ballerina since the great Maria Tallchief in 1947.

The road to the City of Lights began when Katherine was not yet four. Mary and she were at the local library and the child's eyes were drawn to the figures of ballerinas on the covers of videotapes: "The Nutcracker," "Swan Lake" and "Coppelia." "I had to take them home," said Mary, "and she spent hours watching them and twirling around with the dancers."

There soon followed years of



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'Dreams of the Nutcracker'

training and excelling at local dancing schools up until her second year of high school. Urged on by a dedicated instructor, she enrolled in the Royal Ballet School in Antwerp, Belgium. It was a decision her parents accepted with mixed emotions, happy that she could follow her dream but saddened by the separation.

Understandably concerned about Katherine's well-being living so far from their home in Wilton, Mary and Jory took comfort in knowing that she stayed in Antwerp with a Catholic family, and, importantly, made Mass each Sunday, "thanks to 11 years at Our Lady of Fatima School begin-

ning in pre-K," said Mary, and thanks to her parents, of course.

Katherine's training continued for three years, during which she became a star among her peers, dancing and receiving awards in competitions not only in Belgium, but in more than 10 other nations, like Finland, Switzerland and Russia.

Last year, her training and academic schooling in Antwerp completed, her journey into the world of professional ballet was launched, but with another ride on life's rollercoaster: an exhilarating invitation and a heartbreaking disappointment. She received a contract to join Moscow's cele-

brated Bolshoi Ballet, but Russian bureaucratic red tape during the Crimea annexation stalled all efforts to obtain a visa. Sadly, she saw that opportunity pass by.

So, Jory took Katherine to Europe, where she auditioned with Monaco's Les Ballets de Monte Carlo and the Paris Opera Ballet. Both offered a contract. In late October, Katherine performed with the Paris Corps de Ballet for the first time. An acquaintance of Jory's in Paris who attended the performance said, "She was wonderful. She had a magnificent presence."

Mary, who directs the Diocesan Youth Choir for

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, and Jory, a dean at Wilton's Middlebrook School, have provided Katherine with the type of environment encouraged by the late pontiff two decades ago. They are doing the same for daughters Caraline and Sheila, both high schoolers. "Katherine's successes took her far away from her sisters who love her and look up to her," said Mary.

For Katherine, the crooked lines have straightened out. Who's to say that prayers don't work? ■



(PHOTO COURTESY OF SAM ASAERT)



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and HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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Rev. Henry Hoffman
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Rev. Msgr. Richard Shea
Deacon John DiTaranto
Deacon David Flynn
Deacon John Tuccio

Saint Jude Roman Catholic Church
707 Monroe Turnpike (Rt. 111)
Monroe Connecticut, 06468
203.261.6404

Holiday Schedule 2015-2016

We invite you to attend our Christmas and New Years services listed below.

SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD — CHRISTMAS

Christmas Eve — Thursday, December 24th, 2015
4:00pm Mass in church and 4:00pm Mass in social hall
5:30pm Mass in church and 5:30pm Mass in social hall
Children's Nativity Pageant after 5:30pm Mass upstairs
11:45pm Festival of Carols
12:00 Midnight Mass

Christmas Day — Friday, December 25th, 2015
7:30am, 9:00am, 10:30am, 12:00pm

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

New Year's Eve — Thursday, December 31, 2015
5:30pm Vigil Mass

New Year's Day — Friday, January 1, 2016
9:00am, 10:30am, 12:00pm



Advent/Christmas

HABITAT HOUSE FROM PAGE 27

diocesan school systems. “Ed was a committed Christian and a wonderful human being. We were honored to work in his memory on this important project,” said Spigarolo, who had been a close friend.

Habitat for Humanity wants potential donors, volunteers and

the wider public to understand that a Habitat house is not a free gift. Potential donors put in 500 hours of sweat-equity in lieu of a cash down payment (400 hours for a single mom), and must take classes in financial planning, parenting, and English as a Second Language

when necessary. Although unable to afford a conventional mortgage, they hold stable—though low-paying—jobs, often working three jobs in a two-parent home.

Marlon and Magaly Zepeda and their children, along with Magaly’s mother, Milagros, who is a severe asthmatic, will live in the home when it’s complet-

ed. In addition to working as volunteers during the project, the couple will purchase the four-bedroom home, which is just down the street from St. Augustine Cathedral where they are parishioners.

Completion scheduled for February 2016, is hopefully in time for Valentine’s Day.

“We’re hoping that area parishes will step forward to adopt the project in the spirit of Pope Francis,” says Spigarolo, “and we’re very grateful for all those who have participated.”

(For more info on volunteering or to make a donation, call Donna Spigarolo: 203.556.4728 or email donabahr@optonline.net.)



Saint Thomas Aquinas Church

1719 Post Road • Fairfield, Connecticut 06824 • 203.255.1097

Rev. Victor T Martin, Pastor

Christmas 2015 Schedule

Daily Mass

on Thursday, December 24
7:00 am ONLY

Christmas Eve Masses

Thursday, December 24

4:00 pm - Children’s Mass
6:00 pm - Children’s Mass
8:00 pm - Christmas Eve Mass
11:30 pm - Adult Choir Concert
12:00 - Midnight Mass

Christmas Day Masses

Friday, December 25

8:00 am, 10:00 am, and 12:00 noon

Feast of Mary Mother of God

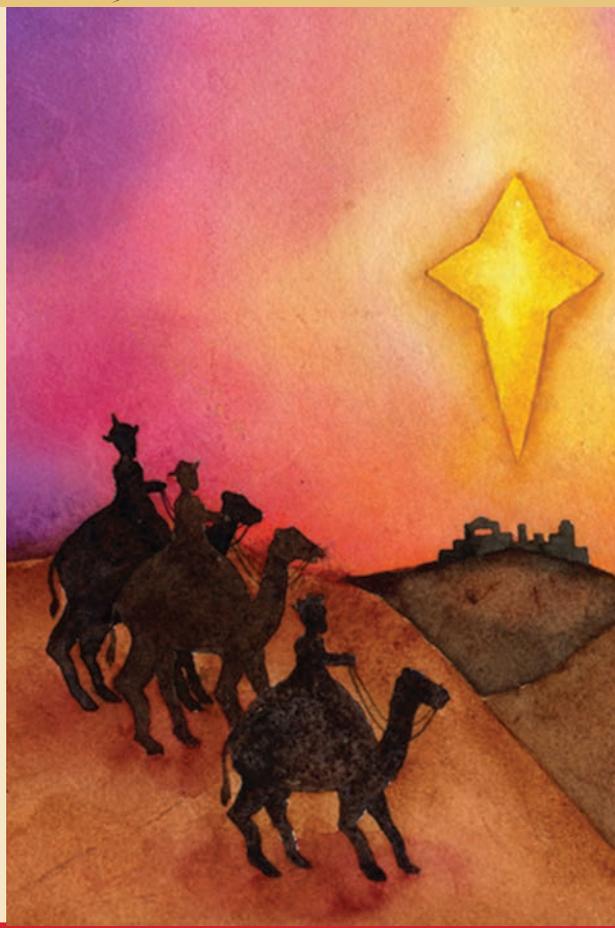
New Year’s Eve - December 31

5:00 pm Mass

New Year’s Day Masses

Friday - January 1, 2016

8:00 am, 10:00 am, and 12:00 noon



St. James Church

2110 Main Street, Stratford, Connecticut – 203-375-5887
www.stjamesstratford.com – Rev. Thomas F. Lynch, Pastor

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Thursday, December 24 – Vigil Masses: 4:00pm and 6:00pm

A Mass in celebration of the Lord’s birth at 11:00pm

Friday, December 25 – 8:30am and 10:30am

Make a promise to your God today by making a greater commitment in 2016 to open your heart to experience God’s intimate love by your consistent participation in Sunday Eucharist.

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

Saturday and Sunday Masses, December 26 and 27

Families will have the opportunity to write their family name on a votive candle as a way of thanking God for His presence in their family in 2015 and ask for a greater openness for their family members to His love in 2016.

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Thursday, December 31, Vigil Mass: 4:30pm

Holy Day Masses – Friday, January 1, 2016, 8:30am and 10:30am
Pray a rosary on the Holy Day for greater peace in this world.

SAINT JAMES NEW YEAR’S DAY OF PRAYER

Friday, January 1, 2016

1:00pm-3:00pm Eucharistic Adoration in Parish Center Chapel

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

God’s holy Word among us - An opportunity to come forward, reverence the Gospel book, and make or renew your commitment to love and pray with God’s Holy Word in the Scripture.

Saturday, January 2 – Vigil Mass: 4:30pm

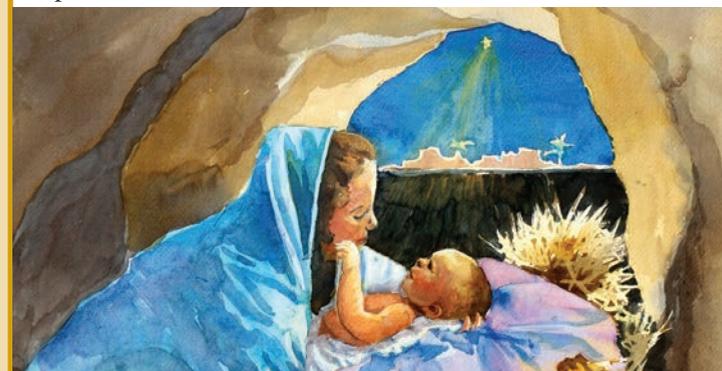
Sunday, January 3 – 7:30am, 9:15am, 11:15am, and 6:00pm

REMEMBRANCE FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE DIED

Saturday, January 9 – Vigil Mass: 4:30pm

Sunday, January 10 – 7:30am, 9:15am, 11:15am, and 6:00pm

All Masses will be dedicated to those children who have gone before us in faith. All parents are encouraged to attend and light a special candle.



Merry Christmas!



Christmas

Deacons' wives grow in community

By PAT HENNESSY

"Deacons are together in formation and attend study days together. As deacons' wives, we hardly knew each other. There was a total lack of community and support," says Ilene Ianniello.

The wife of Deacon Dan Ianniello, who assists at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Fairfield, she had been thinking about this problem for years. Exploring what was being done in other dioceses, she zeroed in on a couple of models that might work here.

Janie Jennings, whose husband, Paul, is assigned to Holy Spirit Parish in Stamford, had

go hand in hand: they decided to hold monthly luncheons in each of the three areas of the irregular geographic triangle that makes up Fairfield County. That gives women the chance to socialize with others nearby, while planning the social outreach most needed in their own communities.

"When we all got together, we picked outreach to food pantries as our main focus. Women in each area decided the program that could most use their help," says Ianniello. "They knew the local situation. They looked for places that were small and didn't have a lot of support."

The women chose programs as



ENCOURAGED by Deacon's Wives Ministries, these youngsters from Holy Spirit Parish religious education program collected goods to help local food pantries.

recognized the same problem, as had Pat Murphy, wife of Deacon William D. Murphy at St. Gregory the Great in Danbury.

"Up in the woods here, we were trying to begin friendships and build a support system for each other," says Pat Murphy. "In the spring we made baskets for all the shut-ins—things like hand lotion, soaps, candles and magazines. We also tried to remember retired deacons."

"We had a foundation of camaraderie because my husband was in the class of '02, and there were twelve of us," says Janie (Mary Jane) Jennings. "We knew each other, but most events were really for the men; we got invited along. We needed things that we could do as women in our own right."

Already working with other deacon's wives to do what they could, Jennings and Murphy were quick to join Ianniello's plan to organize more formally for fellowship and ministry. The two aspects

diverse as the St. Joseph Parenting Center in Stamford, the Black Rock Food Pantry in Bridgeport, and St. John's Episcopal Church Food Pantry in Newtown. They already have five school and religious education programs signed up to do a drive for them, with more expected soon.

As a result of further outreach, St. Joseph Parenting group was able to fill over 70 backpacks for school-children, while the women responded to a call from the Catholic Academies in Bridgeport by gathering \$400 worth of pens, pencils, crayons, markers and glue sticks.

Once the outline of the Deacons' Wives Ministry was in place, Ianniello met with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano to discuss the possibility of making the ministry more formal. With his blessing, DW Ministry, Inc. was formally incorporated as a charitable organization on June 1, 2015.

Meeting regularly for lunch

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

CHRISTMAS

Parish Guide



SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

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2015 ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE



CONFESSION SCHEDULE

Immediately after all weekend Masses on December 19-20

Monday, December 21: 12:30-2 p.m.

Tuesday, December 22: 6-7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 23: 6-7:30 p.m.

CHRISTMAS EVE, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24

4 p.m. – Mass in Church

4 p.m. – Mass in Pastore Church Hall

4 p.m. – Christmas Pageant Mass (*Shelton High School*)

9 p.m. – Spanish Mass ("*Misa del Gallo*")

12 Midnight – Midnight Mass

CHRISTMAS DAY, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25

7:30 a.m. – Mass

9 a.m. – Mass (*Contemporary Choir*)

10:45 a.m. – Mass

12:30 p.m. – Mass (*Spanish*)

12:30 p.m. – Mass in Pastore Church Hall (*English*)

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Saturday 3–6pm

Sunday 9am–1pm



Christmas Mass Schedule is as follows:

December 24th, Christmas Eve: 4 pm, 10 pm, Midnight

December 25th, Christmas Day: 8 am, 9:30 am in Italian, 11 am

2523 Park Ave, Bpt 203-333-9627 SaintMargaretShrine@gmail.com

Masses: Mon–Sat 8:15am, Sat Vigil 4pm, Sunday 8, 9:30 (Italian), 11am

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

Advent/Christmas

Teens spend 'Night in a Box'

NORWALK—Twenty-nine teens from St. Jerome Youth Group in Norwalk gathered recently for the third annual "Night in a Box," to join in prayerful solidarity with the homeless and witness their hardships.

Night in a Box is a national program to bring teens together to raise awareness and money to fight homelessness in the U.S. "TOTAL," St. Jerome's youth group, decided several years ago that homelessness in Norwalk should be the focus of our service.

"The teens and adults try and walk a little while in the shoes of a homeless person and Night in a Box is an opportunity to do just that," says, St. Jerome Youth Minister Daniela O'Callaghan.

The teens gathered at two o'clock in the afternoon, partici-

pated in service projects such as raking elderly parishioners leaves and visiting the local homeless shelter. They ate a simple dinner, heard from a representative of the local homeless shelter, prayed together, and in the evening built shelters out of cardboard boxes in the church parking lot where they would spend the night.

"The kids finally got to their makeshift beds around 1 am," says O'Callaghan. "About 2:30, the first of three rain showers came through. Most everyone stayed put during the first down-pour, but by the third many kids came inside the youth room. Everyone woke up, stiff, cold, a little wet and really tired. We cleaned up our boxes and ended our journey with Mass."

Christina Ronzitti, one of the seniors, told St. Jerome parishio-

ners during the Mass about the experience, and ended by reminding everyone to be grateful for all their blessing and to never forget the homeless right here in their community. ■



DEACON WIVES FROM PAGE 37

leads to recognition of needs, their own and that of others. One woman may take care of get well cards; someone else takes prayer chain requests; emails keep wives who are sick or shut in connected with group news. "We are working now to connect back to deacon's widows, too," says Ianniello.

A retreat is planned for April at St. Birgitta's in Darien, which will probably become an annual event.

While they expand care for elderly members of the group, DW Ministries is also putting action in place to recognize the newest deacons' wives. At the most recent deacon ordination in June of this year, the wives were presented with a pin commemorating their husbands' ordination.

"It's a nice way to acknowledge our contribution to our husband's ministry," says Anita Flynn, whose husband, David, serves at St. Jude Parish in Monroe. "It is important to the wives that someone recognizes their sacrifice and time." Under Canon Law, a married man must have the approval of his wife before applying for the diaconate.

As Christmas approaches, the young children in the first, second and third grade in Holy Spirit Parish, Stamford, religious education program held a prayer service with their DRE Patricia Lavelle and donated cans, jars and bags of much needed food to assist the ministry's outreach. On December 22, thanks to so many people responding to a request from DW Ministries, every child in St. Raphael Academy will have a gift chosen specifically for them—241 gifts in all. "I see so many good things happening," concludes Ianniello. "We're networking all the time, so if anyone has a need—whether it's one of our women or a group need in this diocese—we can find some way to fill it. Whatever the Lord is calling us to next, we'll be there." ■

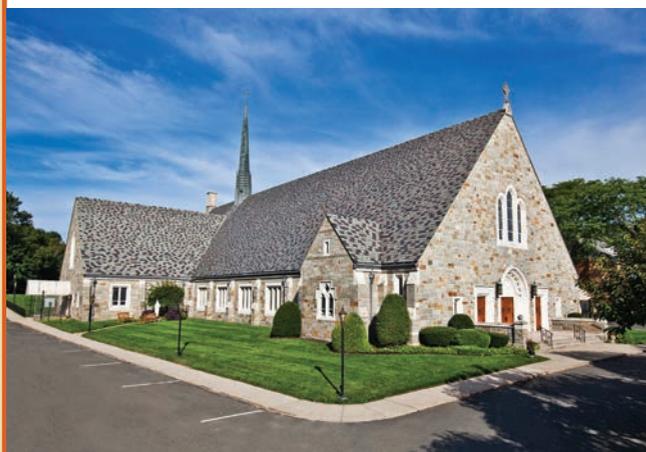


Saint Theresa

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Mother Church of Trumbull

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Rev. Michael Flynn, *Parochial Vicar*
Rev. Carl McIntosh, *Parochial Vicar*
Deacon Salvatore M. Clarizio
Dr. Carolina Flores, *Director of Music*



5301 Main Street • Trumbull, Connecticut 06611-4195

CHRISTMAS 2015

Sacrament of Penance

Saturday, December 19
3:00-4:15pm

Wednesday, December 23
4:00-5:15pm; 7:00-8:00pm

Thursday, December 24
10:30am-12:00 noon

Masses Christmas Vigil

Thursday, December 24
4:00pm, 6:00pm and 12:00 midnight
*Christmas Concert at 11:30pm
before Christmas Eve Mass*

Christmas Day

Friday, December 25
7:30am, 10:00am and 12:00 noon

New Year's

Solemnity of Mary, The Holy Mother of God
Holy Day of Obligation

Thursday, December 31
Vigil Mass at 4:30pm

Friday, January 1
7:30am, 9:00am and 12:00 noon



St. Matthew R.C. Church

216 Scribner Avenue Norwalk, CT 06854 — www.stmatthewnorwalk.org
203-838-3788

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

CHRISTMAS EVE - THURSDAY, December 24th
4:00 pm, 5:30 pm, 11:00 pm
Christmas Carol Sing-a-long at 10:30 pm

CHRISTMAS DAY - FRIDAY, December 25th
9:00 am, 10:30 am, 12:00 pm

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD
NEW YEAR'S EVE - THURSDAY, December 31st: Vigil Mass - 4:00 pm
NEW YEAR'S DAY - FRIDAY, January 1st: 9:00 am, 12:00 pm

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD
SATURDAY, January 2nd: Vigil Mass - 4:00 pm
SUNDAY, January 3rd: 7:30 am, 9:00 am, 10:30 am, 12:00 pm, 5:00 pm

CONFESSIONS

Every Saturday: 3:15 pm - 4:00 pm
Every Tuesday during Advent: 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Christmas Reflection

The poor are always with you...

In New York City, there's a big debate going on about "giving." I don't mean holiday giving or tossing spare change into the Salvation Army kettle or going to the posh annual fundraiser at the Met or writing a check for your favorite charity before the end of the year. I mean giving to so-called panhandlers, vagrants and the homeless, although I prefer a much simpler characterization—the poor.

On many streets in Manhattan and around Grand Central, beggars—which is probably the more biblical term—hang out, sometimes lying in sleeping bags on the sidewalk and soliciting passersby.

In response to what is seen as a growing epidemic, Police Commissioner Bill Bratton suggested that panhandlers would disappear if people stopped giving them

money, or as one tabloid headline suggested, "Ignore them & they'll go away." Who would have thought giving to the poor could be such a politically contentious issue?

The New York Post fueled the flames even more with a page one story about a familiar fellow in midtown who panhandles with his doe-eyed dog to generate sympathy. The headline screamed: "\$200 an hour—Bum boasts: It pays to be a beggar." At night, he reportedly goes home to a rent-controlled apartment and lives the good life.

I don't think it matters whether a beggar has a nice apartment or drinks Heineken with his prime rib. Cheerful giving is what counts, and we don't do it often enough.

I'm always inspired by the story of St. Martin of Tours, who gave his cloak to a beggar, and

that night Christ appeared to him in a dream, wearing the cloak. You never know when and where Jesus will pop up. When I go to Mass at St. Agnes Church in Manhattan, sometimes there are three people out front, holding cups and looking for a handout. I usually try to give a few dollars because in my personal judgment, I don't want to discover that the woman in the walker, whom I ignored, was actually Jesus.

Have our hearts been hardened to the needs of others? We live in an era when most of us have more than we need, an era characterized by materialism and what Pope Francis says is an inequitable distribution of wealth. The tragic reality is that the more we have, the more we're desensitized to the deprivation of others.

How contrary that attitude is to the philosophy of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, a 13th century princess who donated many of her family's possessions to the poor. After her husband died, she joined the Third Order of St. Francis and started a home for the destitute, the sick and the dying and personally cared for them. She did all this before her death at 24.

God, who is Love, is all about giving, and the closer we grow to him spiritually, the more we'll want to give. I'm also convinced he puts needy people in our path so we can help them, not only at Christmas but every day of the year.

There's another spiritual principle at play here. God will never be outdone in generosity, so if you give, he'll repay you in ways unimaginable. But if you grasp



JOE PISANI

and hoard, you'll always want more and never be satisfied.

Regardless of what the Police Commissioner says, don't miss an opportunity to give, because it will be given back to you when you least expect it in ways that amaze you.

And always remember the example of St. Elizabeth, whose feast day prayer says, "O God, by whose gift Saint Elizabeth of Hungary recognized and revered Christ in the poor, grant through her intercession that we may serve with unfailing charity the needy and those afflicted."

Even in New York City. ■



Saint Pius X Parish

Rev. Samuel Kachuba, *Pastor*; Rev. Robert Crofut, *Parochial Vicar*,
Rev. Msgr. Ernest Esposito, *Priest in Residence*

834 Brookside Drive, Fairfield • www.st-pius.org • 203.255.6134

CHRISTMAS EVE MASSES:

- 4 pm – Church
- 4 pm – Faith Center
Community Room
- 4 pm – Religious
Education Center
- 6 pm – Church
- 11 pm – Church

CHRISTMAS DAY MASSES:

- 8 am – Church
- 10 am – Church
- 12 pm – Church



*A Merry & Blessed Christmas to all
The Clergy and Parishioners
of St. Pius X Parish*



SAINT MARY'S CHURCH

"The Mother Church of Norwalk" | 669 West Avenue, Norwalk | Est. 1848 | www.stmarynorwalk.net | 203.866.5546

Pastor: Rev. Richard G. Cipolla • *Deacon* Stephan A. Genovese
In Residence: Rev. Paul N. Check, ext. 109; *Courage Office:* 203.803.1564

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION:

- Monday, December 21: 11:30am-12:00pm
- Tuesday, December 22: 11:30-12:00pm
- Wednesday, December 23: 5:00-5:45pm
- Thursday, December 24: 3:00-4:30pm

CHRISTMAS EVE MASSES:

- Thursday, December 24: 4:00pm
& 7:00pm (Spanish)
- 11:00pm Rosary by the Crèche
- 11:30pm Christmas Carols
- 12:00 Midnight Mass

CHRISTMAS DAY MASSES:

- Friday, December 25: 8:00am,
9:30am (Solemn Mass),
11:30am, & 1:15pm (Spanish)

NEW YEAR'S EVE MASSES:

- Thursday, December 31 - 8:00am and 12:10pm

SOLEMNITY OF MARY/

OCTAVE DAY OF CHRISTMAS MASSES:

- Thursday, January 1: 8:00am, 12:10pm, 5:30pm
(Solemn Mass), & 7:30pm (Spanish)

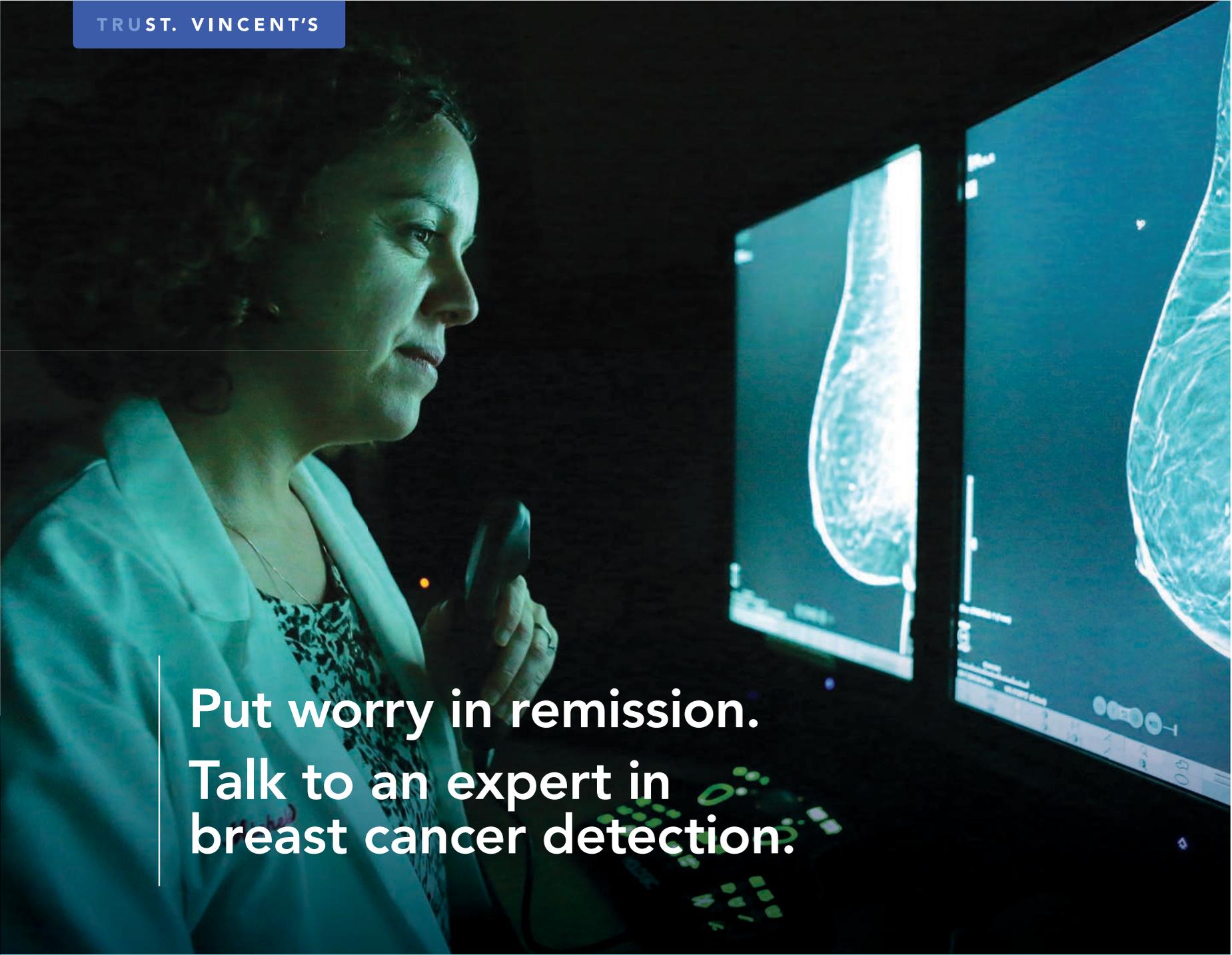


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