



# FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

FEBRUARY 2024 | VOLUME 41, NUMBER 2 | LENTEN ISSUE

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE



13-16 'One in Christ'  
2024 Bishop's Appeal



27 St. Rose bids  
farewell to Msgr. Weiss

For weekly messages from Bishop Caggiano visit:  
[www.formationreimagined.org/the-one](http://www.formationreimagined.org/the-one)

**1** **Today is Ash Wednesday.** As you receive the ashes, intentionally enter into Lent as you remember that Christ died that you may have eternal life.

**2** **Repent.** Commit to a daily examination of conscience at the end of the day and resolve to turn away from sin and repent for sins of the past.

**3** **Fasting and prayer.** Consider going beyond the prescribed Ash Wednesday, Good Friday fasting and abstinence from meat on Fridays and commit to abstaining each Wednesday and Friday in Lent.

**4** **Intercede for someone.** Is there a family member or friend who has fallen away from faith? Is there someone struggling with a particular addiction or challenge in his or her life? Pray for that person each day during Lent.

**5** **Pray for vocations.** Pray for men to hear and answer the call to the complete self-gift of the priesthood.

**6** **Go to confession.** Draw closer to Christ through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**7** **Donate.** On days that you commit to fast, place any money saved from meals into a jar. Decide as a family where you would like to contribute the money at the end of Lent.

**8** **Give something up.** When considering what to "give up" during Lent, challenge yourself to choose something that will truly be a sacrifice. Christ sacrificed it all for us. Let's draw closer to Him through joyfully denying ourselves.

**9** **Volunteer.** Step out and find ways to use your time and talent to serve others by checking out opportunities at your parish.

**10** **Attend Adoration.** Find opportunities for Adoration at local churches and spend an hour with Him. Our world is so noisy, and it is difficult in the noise to hear His still, small voice. Enter into silence with Him, the One Who loves you!

**11** **Attend Stations of the Cross.** Remember what Christ suffered for love of us.

**12** **Pray for new Catholics.** Find out if there are people preparing to enter the Church in your parish this Easter. Pray for all those throughout the diocese who will become part of the Catholic Church this Easter!

**13** **Read.** Cut back on TV and Netflix binge watching and use the extra time to read Sacred Scripture or books on the Catholic faith.

**14** **Play!** Sign up to be part of the Family Bible Challenge at the Institute for Catholic Formation.

**15** **Discover.** Explore the great outdoors and thank God for the gift of His creation.

**16** **Arrive at Mass early.** Spend 10 minutes in prayer before Mass begins to prepare your mind, your heart and your spirit to more intentionally receive Jesus in the Eucharist.

**17** **Read the daily Gospel.** Then ask God for what He is saying to you personally through the Gospel reading. Is there a word or a phrase that stands out to you?

**18** **Attend a daily Mass.** The Eucharist provides the grace, the life of Christ in us, to help us navigate this world.

**19** **Write a letter to someone who has been helpful or particularly kind to you.** Let them know how much you appreciate them.

**20** **Recommit yourself.** If you have been challenged in your commitment to "give up" something, challenge yourself to start again.

**21** **Spend time as a family reading and discussing the bible verses in the Family Bible Challenge.**

**22** **Choose a Bible verse.** Set it as the screensaver or wallpaper on your phone. Each time you open your phone, take the opportunity to remember the verse.

**23** **Give thanks.** Remember a time when you were struggling and God met you in the struggle or when you particularly felt His presence with you. Thank Him.

**24** **Testify!** Tell a friend or family member a story of how you were helped by God in a particular situation.

**25** **Clean.** Choose an area in your home to clean.

**26** **Be the Face of Prayer.**

*View the full calendar on page 12*

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# Diocesan News

*Join Bishop Caggiano on this joyful and spiritual march of the faithful!*

## Diocese announces Eucharistic Procession

By STEVEN FILIZZOLA

BRIDGEPORT—Shortly after his resurrection, Jesus accompanied two disciples on their journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus, walking with them in their grief, offering hope and finally revealing himself through the breaking of the bread.

From this Gospel account, often cited by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano as he seeks to renew the diocese, comes the diocesan 2024 Eucharistic Procession to be held this spring.

Over the past several months, Bishop Caggiano and diocesan leaders have been planning the diocesan Eucharistic Procession, which is a leg in the larger National Eucharistic Pilgrimage concluding in the 2024 National Eucharistic Congress from July 17 to 21, 2024, in Indianapolis. It will be the first national congress held since 1941.

On May 19—Pentecost Sunday—the Blessed Sacrament will arrive in Bridgeport from the

Archdiocese of Hartford. Thus begins the joyful 15-day celebration of the Holy Eucharist in our diocese.

Hundreds of faithful will march through the city of Bridgeport with Bishop Caggiano on the 19th to launch the procession in the diocese. There will also be Corpus Christi-style Eucharistic Stations and Adoration at five parishes.

Over the ensuing three days, the Blessed Sacrament pilgrimage will move through Fairfield, Ridgefield, Norwalk, Darien, Stamford and Greenwich, and it will inspire a movement of Catholics who are healed, converted, formed, and unified by an encounter with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

More specifically, the diocesan procession will proceed through seven towns and 15 parishes, with days, afternoons and nights filled with Masses, local processions, Holy Hours, and Overnight Adoration. A Rosary

procession will be held at St. John Cemetery in Norwalk and at St. Margaret Shrine in Bridgeport. Local town processions will take place in Ridgefield, Norwalk and Stamford, and several parishes will host processions on their campus. Each morning begins with the celebration of Mass, each evening ends with Overnight Adoration.

Beginning on Thursday, May 23 and for the nine days that follow, special events for all parishes will occur in every region within the diocese, including Adoration, Masses and processions. All parishes will have the opportunity to sponsor their own events or join in the regional celebrations.

Events are designed to inspire all church faithful to attend and will engage school children, young adults, and all ethnic groups.

Throughout these two weeks, other events will take place to promote communal and individual prayer and offer opportunities



to encounter the Holy Eucharist and experience truth, beauty, and goodness. Every parish and deanery, especially those that will not host the national procession, will sponsor their own spiritual events celebrating the mystery and beauty of the Eucharist.

The 15-day celebration will culminate on Saturday, June 1 with a Corpus Christi Eve Mass at Fairfield University. Over 3,000 religious and faithful are expected

to attend this Mass celebrated by Bishop Caggiano. Further details will be announced as they become available.

### Local Link in National Pilgrimage

After the Eucharistic Procession departs the Diocese of Bridgeport, the national pilgrimage will continue through New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charlotte, N.C., Washington, and then cross

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

## Regional Cooperation supports diocesan renewal

By ROSE BRENNAN

STRATFORD—In 2024, the name of the game is parish collaboration. And it's a theme that is both old and new in the Catholic community of Stratford, which is home to five parishes and new ideas for working together.

The fourth of nine parish collaboration meetings hosted by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano took place on January 20 at St. Mark School in Stratford. These regional collaboration meetings offer ways for parishes in the same geographical area to share ideas, resources



A PARISHIONER SPEAKS at the recent Parish Collaboration session held at St. Mark's School in Stratford.

and challenges and facilitate new ways for them to collaborate.

They will ultimately help support the bishop's vision of "The One," which is an effort to renew Catholic culture and bring every believer closer to Christ.

In Stratford, some of these collaborative efforts are underway—or have been for quite some time. Previously, in order to boost Mass attendance and provide more time options, the five pastors worked together to create a new Sunday Mass schedule, ensuring that beginning at 7:30 am, another Mass would begin every half hour

at one of the five Catholic parishes in Stratford. And if a parishioner of one parish attends Mass at a different Stratford parish one Sunday, the pastors also agreed to redirect envelopes in the offertory basket to their respective "homes."

But as a new year begins, so do new opportunities for collaboration. And Bishop Caggiano thinks those collaborations can help address problems the parish communities have in common.

"We have to be able to address challenges that, quite frankly, are so big that no single parish can

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

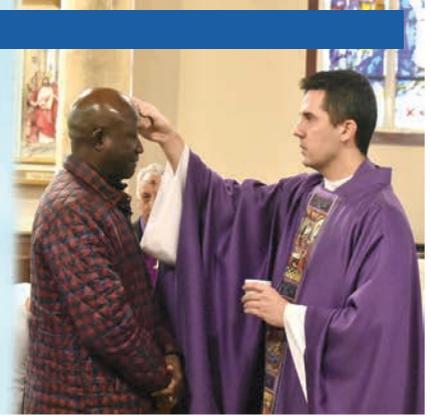


### ON THE COVER

**40 WAYS TO ENTER LENT**—You'll enjoy these prayerful suggestions on page 12. Provided by the diocesan Institute for Catholic Formation.

### CONTENTS

- 4 **ANNUAL APPEAL**  
*O'Neill, Summa to lead effort*
- 5 **SCHOOL NEWS**  
*SHU to acquire Notre Dame*
- 6 **LECTURE SERIES**  
*Father Clark discusses Gothic architecture*
- 8 **PRO-LIFE NEWS**  
*Thousands will attend CT March*
- 17 **CATHOLIC CHARITIES**  
*Loaves and Fishes campaign begins*
- 19 **CATHOLIC ACADEMY OF BRIDGEPORT**  
*Golf tourney to honor three*
- 21 **FOUNDATIONS IN EDUCATION**  
*Awarding \$150,000+ to educators*
- 22 **CATHOLIC CEMETERIES**  
*Bereavement programs scheduled*



# 2024 Bishop's Appeal

## Greenwich couple returns to co-chair Appeal

By **JOE PISANI**

GREENWICH—When Jim O'Neill and Paula Summa were asked to once again lead the Bishop's Appeal, they said yes. As Jim tells the story, his first response was "I have to check with my 'manager.'"

Fortunately, Paula gave him the green light, and the couple were reenlisted as co-chairs of the "One in Christ" 2024 Bishop's Appeal, which provides for works of charity, formation in faith, education and catechesis.

In launching the appeal with an \$8 million goal, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano encouraged the faithful to "unite as One in Christ to bring to life all the diocesan ministries, programs and agencies that deliver the pastoral care and human services that no single parish can provide on its own."

The co-chairs, who are members of St. Paul Parish in Greenwich, will be joined by Father Gregg D. Mecca of St. Peter Parish in Danbury, who is the Pastor co-chair, and Vice Chair Couple Morgan and Mark Mooney of St. Pius X Parish in Fairfield.

"When people ask for help, if we can do it—and I believe in what they're doing—I have a very difficult time saying no," Jim explained. "First of all, we want to thank all the people who participated last year and stepped up to the plate. And also say thank you to the hundreds of volunteers who work in the ministries the appeal supports. I'm awed by their dedication and the proper stewardship of the administrators."

Last year's appeal exceeded the goal of \$8.1 million. In addition, just under \$500,000 of over-goal funds was shared with our parishes.

Paula urges all Catholics in the diocese to learn more about the good works their contributions accomplish by considering giving of their time in addition to their treasure.

"I encourage people to donate and to also understand where the money is going and how it is being used," she said. "Take the time and pick one ministry that resonates with you and make it personal. Give financially and give of your time. The appeal is not just about money but also engaging



**BISHOP'S APPEAL CO-CHAIRS JIM O'NEILL AND PAULA SUMMA**

as a community of Catholics and getting back to what the Gospel is about."

Jim wants to see greater participation and encourages everyone, including clergy, to give to the extent that they can because no dollar amount is too small or too great, and all the faithful of the diocese can "participate financially, intellectually and prayerfully."

"There are thousands of people in the diocese who have not yet had the opportunity to participate, and we encourage them to

pray about it and try to give as much as they can," Paula said. "Whatever they give is appreciated."

They both caution against the attitude that says our charitable obligation as Catholics ends at our parish borders.

"We have to acknowledge our responsibilities to help others, as the Gospel tells us to," Jim said, "by contributing in the charitable works of the Church."

Among the ministries and services that benefit from the

Bishop's Appeal are Catholic education, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, and the Catherine Dennis Keefe Queen of the Clergy Residence, which provides independent living for our retired priests.

Pamela S. Rittman, director of development and the Bishop's Appeal, said it serves the community in many ways by "uniting us as One in Christ to help the needy and most vulnerable, providing supportive services that enable families to rise up out of poverty, overcome barriers and achieve self-sufficiency and independence."

Rittman said this year's appeal began in anticipation of building upon programs developed last year, "with new opportunities for continuing the work of our diocese to provide for all aspects of our Catholic faith, care for the poor and becoming One in Christ by serving one another. Our donors are generous and compassionate and we are grateful."

Jim also urges people to make their pledges to the appeal early because parishes that exceed their goal by June 30 will receive the excess for their church needs, with the stipulation that the pledges are redeemed by December 31 of this year.

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

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## SAVE THE DATE

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\$30 seniors, students, veterans

"Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these": Matthew 19:14

# Diocesan News

## Sacred Heart University to acquire Notre Dame HS

FAIRFIELD—Sacred Heart University and the Diocese of Bridgeport have reached an agreement for the university to purchase Notre Dame Catholic High School for \$15 million. The two institutions have a long history of cooperation and partnership that will be strengthened by making it official, representatives from both sides say.

The university has committed to making significant investments in the school and grounds for the benefit of the students and families of Notre Dame as well as the Sacred Heart community.

“We are excited to have Notre Dame’s students, faculty, staff and alumni officially join the SHU family,” said SHU President John J. Petillo. “We look forward to maximizing resources, making improvements and creating new and exciting opportunities for students at both Notre Dame and SHU. We welcome this chance to ensure that students continue to receive a top-level Catholic education that will prepare them for the future.”

“This partnership provides a wonderful opportunity for the growth of Catholic education in the diocese—specifically for the Notre Dame students,” said Diocese of Bridgeport Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. “The university resources will allow Notre Dame to expand as an institution while retaining its Catholic identity. We anticipate great work from the collaboration between the high school and university, but we also recognize the unique differences between high school and college students. This agreement is based on a clear recognition of the need to establish appropriate separations to ensure a true Catholic ministerial experience for Notre Dame students even as they become a part of this strong Catholic university.”

The bishop will serve on the board of Notre Dame going forward.

“Notre Dame’s ongoing Catholic identity is fundamental, and I look forward to serving the board in this critical role,” said Bishop Caggiano.

Proceeds from the sale will be used to support and strengthen Catholic secondary education through an endowment fund dedicated to providing scholarships

and financing other investments, Bishop Caggiano said.

Petillo said that Sacred Heart would invest at least \$5 million in the school and property that will likely include physical improvements, building infrastructure, technology upgrades and updated athletic facilities. This will start within six months of the closing date with an assessment to determine needed upgrades and priorities. Renovations will start over the next two years.

Since 2011, both schools have had a partnership that included sharing facilities, such as SHU’s library and Chapel of the Holy Spirit, athletics fields and more. For many years, SHU has also offered a 50 percent tuition scholarship to Notre Dame students who are accepted to the university. Since 2018, approximately 20 percent of each Notre Dame graduating class has gone on to study at SHU.

“We are two Catholic institutions that share a common mission and vision. I’m looking forward to working even more collaboratively and strengthening the long-standing academic and community relationship between our two schools,” Petillo said. “Adding a successful high school like Notre Dame to our portfolio is a natural expansion of our brand and our commitment to Catholic education and to the local community.” SHU’s portfolio includes the SHU Community Theatre in downtown Fairfield, the Sacred Heart Discovery Museum and Planetarium in Bridgeport and the Great River Golf Club in Milford.

Notre Dame will provide teaching and learning opportunities for SHU students, Petillo said. For example, faculty, staff and students from SHU’s Farrington College of Education and Human Development will have the opportunity to collaborate professionally with their counterparts at Notre Dame in new and meaningful ways that will enhance outcomes for both organizations. In addition, Notre Dame’s faculty and staff will be provided tuition reimbursement when taking classes at Sacred Heart.

Both Petillo and Bishop Caggiano emphasized that “Notre

Dame” will always be a part of the high school’s name in recognition of the school’s long history and proud and distinguished alumni.

Bishop Caggiano expressed appreciation and gratitude to the Notre Dame Advisory Board and Principal Chris Cipriano for their vision and guidance.

“I am excited about the opportunities this new relationship with Sacred Heart will provide to our school community,” Cipriano said. “As we build upon our existing partnership, I see tremendous opportunities for our staff and—most importantly—our students. I believe some of our best days truly lie ahead.”

Notre Dame chairman Paul Gleason said the board unanimously supported the acquisition: “Our strong relationship dates



(l-r) BISHOP FRANK J. CAGGIANO, SHU PRESIDENT, JOHN J. PETILLO AND NOTRE DAME PRINCIPAL, CHRIS CIPRIANO

back decades. We share a large number of alumni, many on our ND staff are also SHU alumni, Notre Dame grads have served in key positions at Sacred Heart and our students actively utilize the outstanding SHU facilities.”

Nearly 14,000 students have graduated from Notre Dame in its 67-year history. The school originally occupied what is now the Academic Center on Sacred Heart’s Park Avenue campus.

There will be a yearlong period of transition after the deal is finalized in June during which faculty and staff at Notre Dame will remain unchanged. The school’s

board will continue to serve in an advisory role.

“The agreement is a milestone for Notre Dame Catholic High School and Catholic secondary education in the diocese,” Bishop Caggiano said. “The relationship between Notre Dame and Sacred Heart is deeply rooted in the faith, generosity and aspirations of the people of our diocese. The benefits that Sacred Heart University can bring to their students and families will be enormous.”

“We want to ensure that Notre Dame Catholic High School is part of the community for many years to come,” Petillo added. ■

### REGIONAL COOPERATION FROM PAGE 3

face them alone,” the bishop said. “And that requires collaboration across parish lines.”

The Stratford parishes are among three communities acting as pilots for the Seton Collaborative, along with select parishes in Norwalk and Fairfield. In Stratford, collaboration is primarily taking place under “comprehensive formation in discipleship,” encompassing baptism, parish religious education, Confirmation, RCIA, and adult faith formation. The effort is being undertaken by Colin Petramale, the newly-hired Director of Discipleship for the Stratford parishes.

As new opportunities for collaboration emerge, the bishop said that it is still important for parish communities to retain their identity.

“Collaboration does not mean that one parish becomes less important than another,” the bishop said. “It means that all get better. Ministry is more effective when we work together.”

“The truth is that every aspect of our lives needs to be shared,” he continued. “That does not mean parishes will lose their identity. That is not the case. If anything, it will strengthen their identity, because we are a family within a family.”

The bishop asked those gathered to consider the challenges that faced their communities, and to determine which they felt was the most pressing matter. That one question would guide the remainder of the meeting, as well as possible collaborative efforts that could address those challenges.

One of the challenges mentioned was how to retain younger Catholics in parish communities, especially those who had aged out of formal religious education, as well as college students and people in their 20s and 30s.

Bishop Caggiano noted a startling statistic among this age demographic, who had been raised Catholic but no longer participated in the faith: the number one reason for that disaffiliation was perceived hypocrisy of Church leaders and higher-ups.

“What makes you different from politicians and government leaders and business leaders and everybody else out there who says one thing and does another?” Bishop Caggiano asked. “That, my friend, is fodder for real soul-searching among Christians—not just Catholics, but Christians in general. That is why, in my mind, The One is very important: we’re going to invite people, young people particularly, back to church, where I think they will sense that

we mean what we say, and we live what we (say).”

Part of the solution to that problem, the bishop said, was building parish communities and families that are welcoming and loving toward young people.

“We have to create a culture, an environment, a place which is both physical and spiritual, where young people will say, ‘My goodness, look at that! They really do care for each other. They really do know their names, and they actually care for me. This may be worth it, because what I see over here, I’m not exactly sure if it’s worth it.’”

The bishop also said in this new age of collaboration, there is a need to redefine success. To him, it can no longer be simply a numbers game.

“Would you rather have 100 people come to an event and 90 of them not be inspired, or would you rather have 45 people at the event, and all 45 of them are on fire?” the bishop asked.

To the bishop, collaboration is essential for the parishes and their congregations to become missionary in their outreach and in their relationships with each other.

(For more information on the bishop’s initiative, please visit [www.formationreimagined.org/the-one](http://www.formationreimagined.org/the-one).) ■

# Bishop's Lecture Series

## Gothic architecture: uniquely Catholic expression

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

NORWALK—Father Michael Clark took an audience of more than 150 faithful on an informative and insightful guided tour of Gothic architecture at All Saints School auditorium for the first talk in the 2024 Bishop's Lecture Series.

Advancing a series of slides on the large screen alongside of him as he spoke, Father Clark said that gothic architecture is a uniquely Catholic expression that was "rooted in light" and transformed the culture of worship and of building technology.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano introduced Father Clark and noted that he was right person to discuss sacred beauty because of his education and his ministry as the founding rector of the Georgetown Oratory and the moderator of the Guild of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Georgetown.

The bishop said the first lecture on Sacred Arts and the others to follow "are (an) extraordi-

nary opportunity to grow deeper in our faith and most especially to come to understand the different aspects of discipleship that invite us to come to know, love and serve the Lord ever more deeply."

In his 45-minute presentation followed by questions and a reception, Father Clark described Gothic architecture as the Church's own self-expression.

"All other decorative styles have been borrowed, but gothic comes from the church herself. Augustus Pugin (19th century artist and architect) described it as the only truly Christian architecture, and that's because it is the only form of architecture born from the womb of the church herself from her sacred liturgy."

Father Clark began his talk by noting that his familiarity with gothic architecture was formed as a boy when he grew up in Chichester, England.

"I have a distinct advantage when talking to you about Gothic architecture because quite frank-



ly, I grew up with it. All of us who grow up in Europe know the beauty of sacred buildings. I had the privilege of living with one intimately for many, many years. There's one cathedral in England that I know every single nook and cranny, and that means that perhaps in an unwitting way, I learnt the rules or the vocabulary of Gothic architecture from the textbook itself."

Throughout his lecture, Father Clark dropped some fascinating architectural details. He said no one has been able to replicate the incredible lightness and durability of Roman concrete (the secret ingredient is volcanic ash). The spire of Salisbury Cathedral at 404 feet from the ground is still the tallest medieval structure in the world, but the foundations of this building are only four feet deep. The massive cathedral floats on a bed of gravel on swamp land. While we approach cathedrals today as unpainted gray stone, many were once brightly painted in festive colors that we might today describe as gaudy.

Father Clark explained that Gothic architecture descends from the Roman arch, but it made significant advances and innovations in order to create the taller, more light-filled cathedrals that continue to amaze worshippers and visitors.

He said we owe a debt of gratitude to Roman ruins.

"These whale carcasses of antiquity are important to the study of architecture because they are so widely known.

They're still there to us today, and they have been studied by

architects from generation to generation."

Walking his audience through some of the basics of ancient and Medieval architecture, Father Clark said the well-known, semi-circular arch is the calling card of Roman architecture, but it had an inherent instability, because at its apex, it is relatively weak and cannot bear weight.

The Gothic discovery of the pointed arch made it possible to build soaring cathedrals because the strength of the arch, formed into vaults, rendered it capable of transferring enormous weight. Likewise, developments in medieval glass-making made it possible to have walls of windows that painted the Church's interior with natural light, he said.

"Once gothic architects discovered the pointed arch, there was no turning back. Once discovered it was unforgettable because it had that significant advantage. It also produced breakthroughs in the use of light that the Romans would have surely envied," he said.

While Gothic architecture pointed to a spiritual sublime, it was also deeply humane in its admission of light and relationship to nature.

"The engagement with the Holy Spirit directly and the humility of masons and architects in the medieval period allowed them to construct buildings ever more focused on the human person," he said.

Father Clark concluded his lecture by reflecting on the relationship between liturgy and the worship space.

"Our liturgical spaces then need to bear witness to what is

happening around us. And that is why gothic architecture is indeed, as Pugin said, truly Christian. None of this is possible in buildings that ignore doesn't directionality that pretend the sun doesn't rise in the east."

Describing human being as a union of body and soul, Father Clark said "We need to worship God in space, but in spaces that are convenient. Humans need to experience the divine in their bodies in such a way that allows us to locate ourselves in God's universe. It's the true participation in transcendent mystery that the sacred liturgy, in fact is calling us to."

Commenting that much contemporary architecture is oblivious to seasons and landscape, Father Clark said there is evidence of a Gothic renewal underway. "It's going back to those basic principles to create buildings that respond to their environment, that use the ingenuity of the people that make them and are also ecologically sound and intelligent in their design."

He also recalled the beauty and unity experienced by the priest when saying Mass in a Gothic cathedral.

"Believe me, there is nothing as thrilling as a priest celebrating Holy Mass at sunrise in a church which is truly oriented, because at the moment of consecration, it is as if all creation is recruited for the praise of its maker in the rising sun, which draws attention to the elevated host. And in that cooperation man discovers his vocation." ■

*Bishop Caggiano will be the second speaker in the series on Wednesday, May 15, 7 pm at Greenwich Catholic School. His topic is "The Eucharist: Destination of the One."*

*Each evening will begin with prayer, followed by a 45-minute talk by the guest speaker. After a short break, there will be a 30-minute period of conversation and dialogue with participants. Refreshments will be provided before and after the program begins, and Bishop Caggiano will also deliver brief remarks at all of the lectures.*

*Please register for Bishop's Lecture event online by visiting [www.bridgeportdiocese.org/bls](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org/bls) or email [bishopslecture@diobpt.org](mailto:bishopslecture@diobpt.org).*

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Games & Prizes

COOKING DEMO

YOUTH PANEL

LINE DANCING

Cancer Awareness

THERAPISTS  
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NATUROPATH

# Parish News

## Lent 2024: School of Prayer

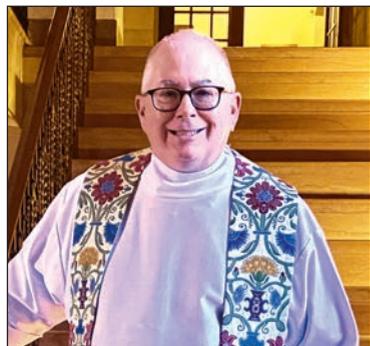
By ANNIE YANNETTI

NORWALK—Explore the rich heritage of prayer in the Church by attending the Lenten Lecture Series on Catholic Prayer. Hosted by Father Frank Hoffmann, pastor of St. Matthew Parish in Norwalk, the series of lectures will cover various aspects and kinds of prayer.

The talks will be held on Mondays at 7 pm at St. Matthew's and repeated on Tuesdays at 1 pm in the parish's Great Room.

The series begins February 12 and will run through March 19. School of Prayer sessions are designed to help participants cultivate a meaningful and authentic prayer life.

"While fasting and almsgiving are commonly practiced during Lent, prayer can be challenging for many of us. We all know the basic idea of prayer is talking to God, but the Catholic Church offers a plethora of ways to pray,



and this lecture series aims to educate and inspire attendees to become Students of Prayer," said Father Hoffmann.

Some of the topics that will be covered in the series include Distractions in Prayer, Marian Prayer, Praying in the Ignatian Tradition, and Praying with Teresa of Avila. The series will be an opportunity for individuals to deepen their understanding and practice of prayer this Lent.

In addition to serving as pastor of St. Matthew Parish, Father

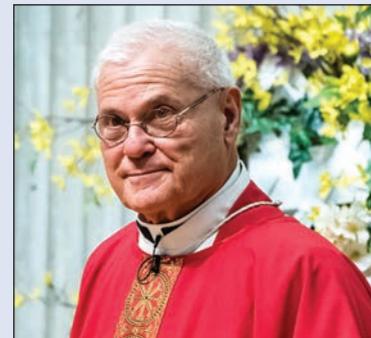
Hoffmann is Director of Ongoing Priestly Formation for the diocese. In the past he has served as Vicar for Clergy and Religious, as pastor of St. John Parish in Darien from 2014 to 2020, and as Parochial Vicar at St. Catherine of Siena Parish for nine years.

Father Hoffmann earned a Bachelor's in Religion/Religious Studies from Fairfield University (1977), as well as a Master of Arts in Religious Study from Sacred Heart University, Master of Divinity in Pastoral Ministry (1990) from Seton Hall University, and Master of Arts in Theology/Theological Studies (1991) from Seton Hall University.

*(The Monday evening session will take place in the church; the Tuesday afternoon session will take place in the Great Room, 216 Scribner Avenue, Norwalk. You can join for one session or all sessions—you choose! The talks are open to all free of charge.)*

## Holy Name to host Mission of Renewal

By RICHARD ZBORAY



STRATFORD—As part of its year-long 100th Anniversary Celebration, Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Stratford will hold a commemoration Mission of Renewal.

The Mission, titled "The Three Rs: Remember, Root, Restore," will feature presentations throughout the Winter and Spring. Presentations by Father Michael A. Boccaccio of the Tribunal Staff of our Diocese of Bridgeport will begin and end the Mission.

On Tuesday, February 27 at 6 pm, Father Boccaccio will present: "In the Beginning: The Scriptural Meaning of HOLY, NAME, JESUS". In this inaugural presentation, Father Boccaccio will offer the Biblical roots, background and meaning of these three words.

"Those words come together in empowering and inspiring ways in Scripture," Father Boccaccio said. "We will explore how Holy, Name, Jesus can open our hearts to healing, both for ourselves and for others."

Sandwiched between these talks by Father Boccaccio, Holy Name of Jesus Parish is planning a Retreat, with details coming soon.

The Mission will conclude on Tuesday, May 7 at 6 pm with

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

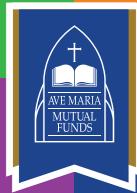
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# Connecticut March for Life

## Thousands to attend March for Life in Hartford

By EMILY CLARK

HARTFORD—Since its inception in 2022, the Connecticut March for Life has drawn thousands of faithful supporters to Hartford each spring to champion the pro-life cause and make their voices heard by legislators. This year, advocates are hoping the turnout is even larger as they gather at noon on Wednesday, March 20 for a rally at the State Capitol. The march begins at 1 pm at Bushnell Park.

With the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, many states are trying

to get the right to abortion in their constitutions, said Maureen Ciardiello, the Respect Life coordinator for the diocese.

“Every year, there are more legislative issues. We want to soften the hearts of legislators and encourage them to make good decisions,” she added. “The march is generally about safeguarding life.”

To accomplish this, supporters are urged to be present in Hartford and share their views with others, which Father Brian Gannon, pastor of St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull, consistently

encourages. Having been committed to the pro-life cause since childhood, a belief he credits to his faithfully devout mother, he believes moving people to acknowledge and embrace human life is essential.

“The pro-life culture is crucial to a healthy culture,” he said. “If you devalue one human life, you devalue all. With God’s grace, we must pray for an end to abortion.”

That belief is not only felt among adults in the diocese but among children as well, including those at St. Theresa School,



## CONNECTICUT MARCH FOR LIFE



**Wednesday, March 20, 2024**

**Rally – 12:00pm**

**March – 1:00pm**

Connecticut State Capitol

210 Capitol Ave.

Hartford, CT 06106

### Join a local bus trip

The Knights of Columbus is sponsoring reduced fares for round-trip bus rides from locations throughout Connecticut. Use the QR code or visit [rally.co/ct-march-for-life](http://rally.co/ct-march-for-life) to sign up by March 13th. Tickets are \$15.



Visit [marchforlife.org/Connecticut](http://marchforlife.org/Connecticut)  
for more information.

one of the elementary schools to attend the first Connecticut march two years ago. Many of their older students will also be present this year to witness the speeches, the solidarity, and the enthusiasm for life. Like the national march in Washington, D.C., young people make up a large percentage of attendees in Connecticut.

“It’s important to fight for innocent lives and understand how precious life is,” said sixth grader Brendan Rodgers.

His classmate Aura Boateng added, “Everyone deserves to have a chance, to grow up, and experience life. All of us being there (in Hartford) might change someone’s opinion and how they think.”

For seventh grader Marina Almeida, one powerful story from last year’s march remains with her today: that of a woman who still regrets her decision to have an abortion.

Testimonies like that woman’s have grown each year along with the pro-life movement itself as buses from around the state converge on Hartford, and people peacefully rally at the capital with signs bearing messages such as “Love Life—Choose Life.” It’s the public witness, Ciardiello said, which will prompt legislators to understand that life issues are so important to so many.

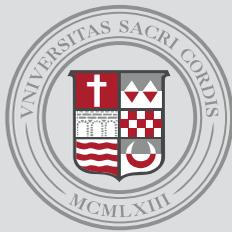
To make travel to Hartford accessible, the Knights of Columbus will once again spon-

sor reduced fares for round-trip bus rides through the Rally bus company from 12 parish locations throughout the diocese. The subsidized cost is \$15 per person. Those interested can visit [www.rally.co/ct-march-for-life](http://www.rally.co/ct-march-for-life) for the location of already registered buses. If a parish is not listed but can confirm at least 20 riders, arrangements can be made for a stop.

In addition to the Connecticut March for Life on March 20, other local pro-life events will be held in the coming months. The 40 Days for Life Spring Campaign runs from February 14 through March 24 in Bridgeport, Danbury, and Stamford. Information can be found at [www.40daysforlife.com](http://www.40daysforlife.com). Ramona Trevino, the former manager of a Planned Parenthood facility in Texas who later became a pro-life advocate, will share her story during an event at St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull on March 18.

### Current Rally Bus Location Stops

St. James, Stratford  
St. Theresa, Trumbull  
St. Rose, Newtown  
St. Edward, New Fairfield  
St. Marguerite, Brookfield  
St. Mary, Ridgefield  
St. Aloysius, New Canaan  
St. Margaret Shrine, Bridgeport  
St. Cyril & Methodius, Bridgeport  
St. Charles Borromeo, Bridgeport  
St. Mary, Norwalk  
Mater Salvatoris, Stamford (pending)



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**February 28, at 2 p.m. ET**

*“Pope Francis and the  
World Migration Crisis”*

**Archbishop Bernardito Auza**  
*Apostolic Nuncio to Spain and  
Andorra Madrid*



**March 13, at 2 p.m. ET**

*“The Enduring Legacy of  
Gaudium et Spes on Pope  
Francis’s Writings”*

**Cardinal Wilton Gregory**  
*Archbishop of Washington*



**April 24, 2 p.m. ET**

*“Conversations in  
the Spirit: Reflections  
on the Pre-Synod  
Meditations offered by  
Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, OP”*

**Cardinal Blasé Cupich**  
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## EDITORIAL

Letting Go  
of What Holds Us Back

In his reflection on Mark 1:14-20, when Peter and Andrew drop their fishing nets and follow Jesus, Bishop Caggiano writes that this invitation to discipleship sets the brothers on a path that would dramatically impact their lives. He reminds us that the beginning of Lent is the time to leave our “nets” and entanglements behind, to let go of all that holds us back, and follow Jesus to a fuller life.

“There is not a person in this Church, myself included, who does not at one time or another, cling to our nets—something in your life and mine we have not given over. During the Lenten season are we prepared to ask ourselves this question: What is it that is entangling me from following the Lord?”

We live in a self-absorbed world where it’s all about “me.” Your opinion or mine? Your thoughts or mine? Is your stance on things more important than following the Lord? Do we resist by doing things our way rather than His way? How much do we fear when people disapprove of us because we walk in the footsteps of this extraordinary Savior?

Our sins don’t just simply hold us back. They trip us. The nets literally prevent us from moving forward, whatever it is. As we begin Lent, I suggest taking a look at ourselves in the mirror and not just celebrating what we have already given up to follow Christ, but what we have not yet given. So that in the weeks of Lent, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, we may learn one day at a time to let go of what holds us back. Because only then, with His freedom, can we follow Him wherever He asks us to go.”

## Moving as One

Bishop Caggiano has spent much of the last year laying the groundwork for Diocesan renewal by calling all of us to focus on “The One,” the single invitation to all believers to grow closer to Christ and to be accompanied on their faith journey through truth, beauty and goodness. After much planning and preparation, the bishop is ramping up this invitation by asking the faithful to join in one of the 2024 Eucharistic Processions (*see story on page 3*) set for this Spring around the Diocese. It will be a 15-day event including processions, special Masses, daily and overnight adoration, Eucharistic Stations, guest homilists and special events will occur throughout the Diocese.

**Diocesan Eucharistic Procession** begins in Bridgeport at Blessed Sacrament Church—Pentecost Sunday, May 19, noon

**Processions will move through towns** of Fairfield, Ridgefield, Norwalk, Darien, Stamford and Greenwich

**The Eucharistic Processions** culminate in the Corpus Christi Mass at Fairfield University—Eve of Corpus Christi, Saturday, June 1

Those who have joined in a procession on Good Friday or other holy occasions know the great blessing it confers. When walking in unison through familiar downtowns and neighborhoods and praying publicly and in unison, we witness our faith in a powerful way and are challenged to see things through different eyes. The upcoming Eucharistic Procession throughout the Diocese is an historic invitation to celebrate the gift of the Eucharist in our lives.

Additional details and a complete listing of times and places will be available on the Diocesan website ([www.bridgeportdiocese.com](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.com)) and in the upcoming issue of *Fairfield County Catholic*. For further information email Steven Filizzola, [SFilizzola@diobpt.org](mailto:SFilizzola@diobpt.org).

The Meaning  
of Ash Wednesday

“The purpose of Lent is not only expiation, to satisfy the divine justice, but above all a preparation to rejoice in His love. And this preparation consists in receiving the gift of His mercy—a gift which we receive in so far as we open our hearts to it, casting out what cannot remain in the same room with mercy.

In laying upon us the light cross of ashes, the Church desires to take off our shoulders all other heavy burdens—the crushing load of worry and obsessive guilt, the dead weight of our own self-love. We should not take upon ourselves a ‘burden’ of penance and stagger into Lent as if we were Atlas, carrying the whole world on his shoulders. Penance is conceived by the Church less as a burden than as a liberation. It is only a burden to those who take it up unwillingly. Love makes it light and happy. And that is another reason why Ash Wednesday is filled with the lightness of love.”

*Thomas Merton—From his book, Seasons of Celebration (1965)*



## CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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

## PASTOR

REVEREND MIROSLAW STACHURSKI, appointed as Pastor, Our Lady of the Assumption Parish, Fairfield. Effective date was February 1, 2024 for a term of six years.

REVEREND DAVID ROMAN, appointed as Pastor, Saint Thomas Aquinas Parish, Fairfield. Effective date was January 31, 2024 for a term of six years.

REVEREND LEONEL S. MEDEIROS, appointed as Pastor, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception of Aparecida, Bethel. Effective date was January 6, 2024 for a term of six years.

## PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR

REVEREND DECLAN CREIGHTON, appointed as Parochial Administrator, Saint Jerome Parish, Norwalk. Effective date was January 31, 2024.

REVEREND RALPH SEGURA, appointed as Parochial Administrator, Saint Thomas the Apostle, Norwalk. Effective date was February 1, 2024.

DEACON JOHN DITARANTO, appointed as Temporary Parochial Administrator, Notre Dame Parish, Easton. Effective date was January 23, 2024 for a period of three months.

## PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND FLAVIAN BEJAN, appointed as Parochial Vicar, Saint Aloysius Parish,

New Canaan. Effective date was February 1, 2024.

## PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND CHRISTOPHER PERRELLA, appointed as Part Time Parochial Vicar, Saint Theresa Parish, Trumbull. Effective date was January 31, 2024.

## CHAPLAIN

REVEREND CHRISTOPHER PERRELLA, assignment ended as Episcopal Priest Chaplain to Saint Thomas Aquinas School, Fairfield. Father Perrella remains Chaplain at All Saints School, Norwalk.

VERY REVEREND PETER LENOX, appointed as Chaplain to the Missionaries of Charity, Bridgeport. Effective date was January 4, 2024 for a term of three years.

## SABBATICAL

REVEREND ROJIN KARICKAL, will return to India for an extended Sabbatical. Effective date was January 31, 2024.

## IN RESIDENCE

REVEREND ANDRZEJ TREDER, OFM Conv., enrolled in Ministry to serve at Saint Michael the Archangel Parish, Bridgeport.

## DEACON

DEACON WILLIAM SANTULLI, appointment as a member of the Diaconal Council representing the Deacons of Mother of Divine Grace Deanery

is renewed. Effective date was January 1, 2024 for a term of three years.

DEACON DAVID RIVERA, appointment as a member of the Diaconal Council representing the Deacons of Queen of Peace Deanery is renewed. Effective date was January 1, 2024 for a term of three years.

DEACON JEFFREY FONT, appointment as a member of the Diaconal Council representing the Deacons of Queen of Confessors Deanery is renewed. Effective date was January 1, 2024 for a term of three years.

DEACON DONALD FOUST, appointment as a member of the Diaconal Council representing the retired Deacons of the diocese is renewed. Effective date was January 1, 2024 for a term of three years.

## OTHER

REVEREND FRANCIS T. HOFFMANN, appointed to serve as the Diocesan Delegate to Consecrated Virginité. Effective date was January 12, 2024 for a term of three years.

## MEDICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

REVEREND MICHAEL LYONS, to medical leave of absence for a period of three months. Effective date was January 23, 2024.

*Deacon Gerald M. Lambert  
Episcopal Delegate for Clergy  
and Religious — February, 2024*

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# Editorials



## ‘Have I taken Communion yet?’

### COLLECTING MOMENTS

BY EMILY CLARK

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

Entering her living room on a recent chilly Sunday, I was warmed with a greeting of open arms and a wide smile. She remembers me, I thought, relieved, for sometimes she does not. Taking my hands in hers, she squeezed tight and commented, as she often does, that I needed warmer gloves. I told her I would get some.

“Just tell me your name again,” she said. I did.

“And you come every week?” she asked. I do.

She settled herself in the worn,

tan recliner. “Ah, I thought so. Come sit.”

I first met Barbara more than two decades ago when we volunteered together through our church. Though 40 years separated us, we bonded, and I had been to this same house, sat in this same room, many times. Different commitments took us in different directions until we were reunited last fall when I began bringing her holy Communion on Sunday morning. Homebound with dementia and short term memory loss, Barbara’s recollections of me

were only from the past.

As I opened my bag, she asked why I had come, despite my telling her just moments ago. She sighed and shook her head, seemingly annoyed at this disease that has robbed her of so much. Somehow, though, her wit and sense of humor remain. “So how old am I anyway?” she wondered. Ninety-two, I replied. She laughed, saying, “Well, that explains it!” A moment later, she frowned and asked, “Have I taken Communion yet?”

While I laid out the corporal and lit the tiny candle, we reminisced. I reminded her of our years working together and how my daughters—so little at the time—loved to visit and play with her hamsters. She smiled, remembering, then paused and asked, “Have I taken Communion yet?”

Opening the prayer book and placing down the pyx, I glanced at Barbara, whose mind had moved into the more distant past. She talked of her child-

hood home, gray with white shutters, and how she took a left when walking to school and a right when walking to church. Suddenly, she was with me again and asked for the third time, “Have I taken Communion yet?” On my first visit months ago,

**‘We were reunited last fall when I began bringing her holy Communion on Sunday morning. Homebound with dementia and short term memory loss, Barbara’s recollections of me were only from the past.’**

I didn’t know if Barbara would join me in prayer or even if she could consume the entire host. Though she struggles to remember so much, including when her brother died, if she ate breakfast, or whether her son came by the

day before, her recitation of the “Our Father,” “Hail Mary,” and all responses are flawless. There is no pause, no confusion. She prays and looks heavenward, taking Communion without hesitation and reverently saying “Amen.” Her mind is not on hamsters,

breakfast, or her childhood. She is fully present in her own unique way with God and with prayer. Though so much else is forgotten, Barbara retains a deep familiarity with her faith, an integral part of every one of those 92 years.

Preparing to leave, I told her that we would pray and reminisce together again soon.

“Will you be back next week?” I will.

“Have I taken Communion yet?” You have.

“Did I say all my prayers?” Perfectly. ■



## In praise of ordinary people

### SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

Still remember that fateful evening eons ago when my father opened my first report card, for my first semester in first grade at Sunnyside School in Shelton. His eyes glanced over the grades and focused on the “C” I got in some course or other. Was it art? Was it arithmetic? Was it the alphabet? I don’t remember, and I don’t want to remember because it was a dark day in my young academic life.

He didn’t respond the way modern parents typically do, with positive reinforcement, constructive criticism or encouragement. Decades later, I recall his exact words: “We don’t get Cs in this

house.” Oops. Who knew? I didn’t get the memo.

That was what you might call the first day of the rest of my life. From then on, I lived in constant fear of going home with a C or worse. From then on, my father would analyze the ups and downs of my grades as if my report card were the quarterly earnings statement of his retirement portfolio.

In my defense, I never went to kindergarten and had to learn numbers and the alphabet in the first grade, so the rest of the class was already way ahead of me. From that moment, I never got another C, although I came darn close, and if it weren’t for a few

sympathetic teachers, I would have incurred the wrath of my father.

There was Mrs. McGrath at Sunnyside School, who taught grammar, which for the life of me I couldn’t understand. I probably should have failed the final, but she had mercy on me. The irony is that years later, I taught English grammar and composition.

Brother Thellen, my Latin teacher at St. Joseph High School, showed mercy too and let me squeak by with a B when I was sure I deserved a C+. I won’t even mention calculus.

It’s sad how that frightening encounter with my father left an indelible impression on me. In addition to the anxiety, I always felt inadequate and never could do well enough.

You were expected to be at the top of the class. You had to excel on standardized tests, you had to get into a good college, you had to have a great GPA and you had to be an honors student. Later in life, you had to get the promotion, earn the bonus and stand out from the crowd.

This kind of behavior only

reinforced what Thomas Merton called the “false self.”

“Every one of us is shadowed by an illusory person: a false self,” he said. “This is the man that I want myself to be but who cannot exist, because God does not know anything about him.”

So much striving to excel. That sort of thinking can haunt you, especially when you believe God responds the same way. I was convinced God was like my father and didn’t accept Cs either. It had to be high honors on your spiritual report card if you wanted to get accepted into heaven.

But if God operated that way, the people with the longest obituaries in the *New York Times* would be the ones sitting in the place of honor at the heavenly banquet. How unfair would that be?

The good news is Jesus’ performance reviews are nothing like the reviews you’d get at Goldman Sachs. He doesn’t punish or penalize you if you’re not perfect.

There’s a saying in Alcoholics Anonymous that goes: “We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection,” which

is a wonderful attitude to have.

Jesus doesn’t expect us to be perfect, because when we start thinking of ourselves as perfect—and act as if we’re perfect—we’re moving further from him.

He just wants us to keep trying to do better every day and asking him for help, which he’ll certainly give. With Jesus, it’s OK to be ordinary. He’ll judge us by how much we love, not by how much we know.

St. Francis de Sales said it best with words worth remembering: “Have patience with all things but first with yourself. Never confuse your mistakes with your value as a human being. You are a perfectly valuable, creative, worthwhile person simply because you exist. And no amount of triumphs or tribulations can ever change that.”

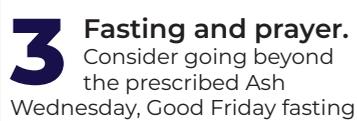
So Dad, wherever you are—and I hope it’s the good place—I guess you’ve learned by now that Jesus doesn’t mind Cs. With him, it doesn’t hurt to be an average person because he takes you where you are on your spiritual journey and helps you move forward. ■



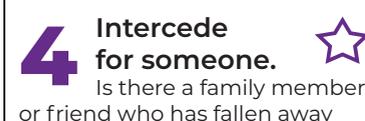
**1 Today is Ash Wednesday.**  
As you receive the ashes, intentionally enter into Lent as you remember that Christ died that you may have eternal life.



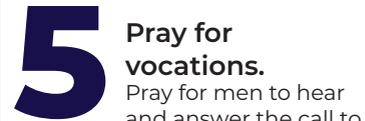
**2 Repent.**  
Commit to a daily examination of conscience at the end of the day and resolve to turn away from sin and repent for sins of the past.



**3 Fasting and prayer.**  
Consider going beyond the prescribed Ash Wednesday, Good Friday fasting and abstinence from meat on Fridays and commit to abstaining each Wednesday and Friday in Lent.



**4 Intercede for someone.**  
Is there a family member or friend who has fallen away from faith? Is there someone struggling with a particular addiction or challenge in his or her life? Pray for that person each day during Lent.



**5 Pray for vocations.**  
Pray for men to hear and answer the call to the complete self-gift of the priesthood.

**6 Go to confession.**  
Draw closer to Christ through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**7 Donate.** On days that you commit to fast, place any money saved from meals into a jar. Decide as a family where you would like to contribute the money at the end of Lent.

**8 Give something up.** When considering what to "give up" during Lent, challenge yourself to choose something that will truly be a sacrifice. Christ sacrificed it all for us. Let's draw closer to Him through joyfully denying ourselves.

**9 Volunteer.**  
Step out and find ways to use your time and talent to serve others by checking out opportunities at your parish.

**10 Attend Adoration.**  
Find opportunities for Adoration at local churches and spend an hour with Him. Our world is so noisy, and it is difficult in the noise to hear His still, small voice. Enter into silence with Him, the One Who loves you!

**11 Attend Stations of the Cross.**  
Remember what Christ suffered for love of us.



**12 Pray for new Catholics.**  
Find out if there are people preparing to enter the Church in your parish this Easter. Pray for all those throughout the diocese who will become part of the Catholic Church this Easter!

**13 Read.** Cut back on TV and Netflix binge watching and use the extra time to read Sacred Scripture or books on the Catholic faith.

**14 Play!**  
Sign up to be part of the Family Bible Challenge at the Institute for Catholic Formation.

**15 Discover.**  
Explore the great outdoors and thank God for the gift of His creation.

**16 Arrive at Mass early.**  
Spend 10 minutes in prayer before Mass begins to prepare your mind, your heart and your spirit to more intentionally receive Jesus in the Eucharist.

**17 Read the daily Gospel.**  
Then ask God for what He is saying to you personally through the Gospel reading. Is there a word or a phrase that stands out to you?

**18 Attend a daily Mass.**  
The Eucharist provides the grace, the life of Christ in us, to help us navigate this world.

**19 Write a letter** to someone who has been helpful or particularly kind to you. Let them know how much you appreciate them.

**20 Recommit yourself.**  
If you have been challenged in your commitment to "give up" something, challenge yourself to start again.

**21 Spend time as a family** reading and discussing the bible verses in the Family Bible Challenge.

**22 Choose a Bible verse.**  
Set it as the screensaver or wallpaper on your phone. Each time you open your phone, take the opportunity to remember the verse.

**23 Give thanks.**  
Remember a time when you were struggling and God met you in the struggle or when you particularly felt His presence with you. Thank Him.

**24 Testify!**  
Tell a friend or family member a story of how your faith helped you in a particular situation.

**25 Clean.**  
Choose an area in your home to clean out. Donate or throw away items and discover how cleaning our physical space can help us to clean out the clutter in our minds.

**26 Be the Face of Prayer.**  
Text the word *pray* to 55778 and receive a text alert with a daily intention from Bishop Caggiano every day.

**27 Appreciate silence.**  
Deepen your appreciation of silence by spending a few minutes in silence each day. Then a few more. Then more...

**28 Show gratitude.**  
Find an opportunity to thank the priests and deacons in your parish for their good work.

**29 Celebrate the solemnities!**  
The Solemnity of St. Joseph is on March 19 and the Solemnity of the Annunciation is on March 25. The Virgin Mary's response to the Angel Gabriel was "yes." Spend time asking the Holy Spirit for His leading and then, as Mary did, demonstrate your obedience by saying, "Let it be done to me according to Your word."

**30 Pray the sorrowful mysteries** using a Scriptural Rosary where there is a verse from scripture for each bead.

**31 Invite a friend to join you** for Easter Mass and include them in your family celebration of Easter.

**32 Plan to participate in the Triduum.**  
Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil are beautiful opportunities to remember what Christ has done for us and to enter into His passion and resurrection!

**33 Listen.**  
Take a moment to listen to the glorious Exultet which is chanted at the start of the Easter Vigil. Check out Youtube for recordings of this great prayer.

**34 Learn.** Is there a particular teaching of the Church that challenges you? Bring your concerns to your pastor and ask him to help you better understand the teachings.

**35 Participate** in a parish mission, reflection or retreat. Find options at the diocese website.

**36 Attend the Chrism Mass** at 10 am on Holy Thursday at St. Augustine Cathedral. Hear the priest renew their sacred promises and pray with the Bishop as he blesses the Holy Oils to be used in the coming year.

**37 Encourage young people.**  
Help the next generation to know the Lord's kindness and faithfulness by accompanying them.

**38 Be Reconciled.**  
Confession will be available in many parishes on Monday of Holy Week. See the Bridgeport Diocese website for locations and times.

**39 Tune in.**  
Listen to Bishop Caggiano's podcast, Let Me Be Frank, as you prepare for Easter.

**40 Rejoice!**  
Christ is Risen! Alleluia! We are an Easter people, and Alleluia is our song! Continue to celebrate Easter every day!

Join us in accompanying others and bringing Christ to all in Fairfield County



**ONE** *in Christ*

**2024 Bishop's Appeal**

DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT



The *Bishop's Appeal* allows us to unite as **One in Christ** to bring to life all the diocesan ministries, programs, and agencies that deliver the pastoral care and human services that no single parish can provide on its own.

*"I invite you, all of you, each of you, to please prayerfully consider giving generously to the Bishop's Appeal. Your gift, whether large or small, is a tangible sign that we are together as **One In Christ** as our many new initiatives to accompany others on their faith journey, carry out Christ's mission in the world. I pray that each one of us may recommit to the unity we share and the mission that is ours, to give hope to a waiting world. Thank you for your faithfulness and generosity!"*

**Most Reverend  
Frank J. Caggiano,**  
*Bishop of Bridgeport*



## Teaching & Preaching *the Gospel*

**"C**atholic school not only educates children, it nurtures their spirituality and the values of the Catholic faith. Being brought up in the Catholic Church, and having attended All Saints Catholic School myself, it is important to me that my children are raised with the same values and faith. The bishop's scholarship fund eases some of the financial burden and gives us the opportunity to keep them in Catholic school. My children are learning, thriving, and growing in Christ, and my family is eternally grateful."

**Colleen Pratt,** parent



Your support of the Annual Bishop's Appeal unites us as **One in Christ** to provide students with a strong academic foundation coupled with solid spiritual formation and moral development to nurture the entire person in mind, body, and spirit.

To learn more about all the ways possible thanks to the collective faithfulness of the faithful, visit **2024Bishop**



## Serving *Our Community*

**"**In a span of five years, my world was turned upside down. With the death of my first husband and then my daughter a few years later, and with the new responsibility of caring for my grandsons, I was at my lowest point, devastated and shattered. Gifts to the Appeal support Catholic Charities of Fairfield County and helped me when I needed it most. It's more than just money. It's hope, it's love, and it's a chance for a better tomorrow. Every bit you give helps families like mine. God works through people like you. I make sure that every chance I get, I pass along that same hope and love to others. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for being part of my journey."

**Pauline Mitchell,**  
Catholic Charities of  
Fairfield County recipient



Your support of the Annual Bishop's Appeal unites us as **One in Christ** to help the needy and most vulnerable, providing supportive services that enable families to rise up out of poverty, overcome barriers, and achieve self-sufficiency and independence.

Work that is made  
possible by the  
generosity of  
our **Appeal.org**.



## Together *in Faith*

**"**As priests, we always hope to be able to serve the people of God, but as we journey through life, we must keep in mind what our capabilities are as we grow older. Even if some of the clergy here are no longer able to go out on a regular basis to minister, they still celebrate Mass as a community and pray for the needs of our diocese. I feel very blessed to be in such a facility as Queen of the Clergy Residence where I am well taken care of, have my physical needs met and still have an opportunity to exercise my priesthood. It is amazing how over these 50 plus years, the Lord continues to use me and my gifts for the good of His Church. We all have a role to play in the life of our Church and, whether retired or active, young or old, we all have something to contribute if we but open up ourselves to the gift of God's Holy Spirit."

**Msgr. Robert J. Crofut**  
Retired Priest - Queen of  
the Clergy Senior Priest  
Residence



Your support of the Annual Bishop's Appeal unites us as **One in Christ** to support our priests in their retirement, caring for their health and wellbeing while enabling them to continue living and proclaiming the Gospel.

# Ways to Give



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P.O. Box 110410  
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Make checks payable to  
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**Please do not send cash.**



## MATCHING GIFTS:

Contact (203) 416-1312  
for more information



## GIFTS OF SECURITIES:

Contact (203) 416-1470  
for more information



## ONLINE:

Scan the QR code  
at left, or visit:

[2024BishopsAppeal.org](https://2024BishopsAppeal.org)

## BECOME A LEADER: GIVE AND JOIN THE COURT OF HONOR

The *Court of Honor* offers special recognition to those individuals or families who have demonstrated extraordinary generosity to the *Bishop's Appeal* by contributing gifts of \$2,500 or greater.

<b>+ Bishop's Leadership Circle</b> (\$25,000 & above)	<b>+ St. Teresa of Calcutta Society</b> (\$10,000 - \$24,999)	<b>+ St. Katharine Drexel Society</b> (\$5,000 - \$9,999)	<b>+ Court of Honor Partner</b> (\$2,500 - \$4,999)
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For more information, please visit [2024BishopsAppeal.org](https://2024BishopsAppeal.org),  
call (203) 416-1470 or email [2024BishopsAppeal@diobpt.org](mailto:2024BishopsAppeal@diobpt.org).

## BECOME A SUSTAINING DONOR

Sustaining gifts are secure and convenient, and they allow the Diocese of Bridgeport to better plan for current needs and future growth to make a lasting impact. They also allow your donations to be more timely and cost effective. Once you set up a sustained gift, it will repeat at that monthly amount and continue from year-to-year until you change or cancel it. *To become a sustaining donor, check the sustained monthly gift option box on your commitment card or the online giving form.*

# Lent 2024

## Warmth in the cold: Charities distributes 2,000+ coats

By AMY ZAJAC

BRIDGEPORT—As the chill of January settled in, many individuals and families across our communities found themselves without adequate protection against the biting cold. However, an act of kindness from the Zumiez Corporation offered warmth and hope to those in need.

Zumiez, a leading specialty retailer of apparel, footwear, accessories and hardgoods for young men and women, has donated their winter products to Catholic Charities of Fairfield County for more than 10 years. This year, a donation of over 100 boxes of winter garments and blankets enabled Catholic Charities' programs to distribute over 2,000 items to individuals confronting the harsh challenges of winter without sufficient clothing.

The significance of coat donations during cold weather cannot be overstated. For those experiencing homelessness or financial hardship, a warm coat can mean the difference between enduring freezing temperatures and finding some relief from the cold. Beyond mere physical warmth, these donations also provide a sense of dignity and belonging, reminding recipients that their community cares about their well-being.

The process of distributing donated coats was a collaborative effort involving the agency's soup kitchens, New Covenant Center in Stamford, and the Thomas Merton Family Center in Bridgeport. The soup kitchens served as distribution points, ensuring the items reached those who need them most. Staff and volunteers played a crucial role in sorting, organizing, and distributing the Zumiez donation, often going above and beyond to

ensure that individuals received a coat that fit properly and met their specific needs.

According to Catholic Charities' Executive Director Mike Donoghue, "The impact of coat donations extends far beyond the immediate provision of warmth. For individuals and families struggling to make ends meet, this can relieve financial strain, allowing them to allocate scarce resources to other essential needs such as food, shelter, or medical care. Moreover, the act of receiving a donated coat can foster a sense of connection to the agency and remind both donors and recipients of the power of compassion and generosity."

Bill Colson, Director of the new Thomas Merton Family Center on State Street in Bridgeport recognizes that the community navigates the cold winter months, let us remember the simple act of kindness,



ZUMIEZ PARTNERS WITH CATHOLIC CHARITIES

such as donating new or gently used coats, can have a profound impact to someone in need.

"Whether through donating gently used coats, volunteering at your local soup kitchen, donating groceries to the local food pantry, or supporting organizations dedicated to serving vulnerable populations, the community had the power to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others who are struggling now more than before due to inflation," Colson said.

Coat donations during cold

weather are crucial for individuals and families struggling without adequate clothing in harsh winter conditions. These donations go beyond providing physical warmth; they also offer dignity, relieve financial strain, and foster a sense of community connection. Additionally, volunteering and food donations play an equally vital role in supporting those in need during these challenging times. Together, these acts of generosity help create a warmer, more compassionate world for all.

## Loaves and Fishes: A sacrifice to end hunger

By AMY ZAJAC

BRIDGEPORT—During this season of Lent, millions around the world prepare to embark on a journey of spiritual reflection, self-discipline, and renewal. Rooted in the Christian tradition, Lent offers a time for believers to deepen their faith through prayer, fasting, and acts of charity. However, in recent years, there has been a growing recognition of Lent's potential to serve as a catalyst for social change, particularly in the context of fighting hunger.

Fasting, a central practice during Lent, holds profound significance beyond its religious symbolism. It is a powerful act of solidarity with the millions who go hungry every day, a reminder of the abundance that many take for granted, and a call to action to address the root causes of food insecurity.

Campaigns to end hunger have increasingly intersected with Lenten observances, as individuals and communities seek to align their spiritual practices with the imperative of social justice. Many

churches and religious organizations have embraced initiatives that combine traditional Lenten disciplines with concrete efforts to alleviate hunger and poverty.

The Catholic Charities' Loaves and Fishes Campaign encourages participants to partake in a meager meal or fast while donating the money saved to the agency's food service programs, which fight hunger and support vulnerable communities. "This dual commitment to personal sacrifice and collective action embodies the spirit of Lent, fostering empathy, compassion, and solidarity with those in need," said Executive Director Mike Donoghue.

Catholic Charities' food service programs provide critically needed assistance via our soup kitchens, food pantries, and meal deliveries to the elderly. These programs are a lifeline to the most vulnerable populations: the Morning Glory Breakfast Program in Danbury, New Covenant Center in Stamford, Room to Grow Preschool Food Pantry in Norwalk, Senior Nutrition in Norwalk

and Stamford, and the recently opened Thomas Merton Family Center in Bridgeport.

Food insecurity continues to be the number one issue impacting many individuals and families in our community struggling to make ends meet due to the rising cost of food, gas, and housing. Bill Colson, Director of the Thomas Merton Family Center observes a continuing increase in the number of people being served out of the new State Street location.

"The food pantry has exper-

rienced a 60 percent increase in the number of individuals served since first opening at the start of December 2023 and the soup kitchen cafeteria continues to welcome new guests on a daily basis with hot meals being served twice a day," he said.

Lent is a time to reorient society towards the values of compassion, justice, and solidarity. By embracing the call to fast, pray, and give generously, the community can become agents of change in the campaign to end hunger, working towards a world where

everyone has access to the nourishment and dignity they deserve. Donohue hopes that as people move through Lent this year that they "are guided by the words of Matthew: 'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.'" (Matthew 25:35)

(To learn more about the Catholic Charities annual Loaves and Fishes Campaign and its feeding programs, visit the agency website at [www.ccfairfield.org](http://www.ccfairfield.org).)

*Loaves & Fishes*  
A LENTEN OFFERING TO FEED  
OUR STRUGGLING NEIGHBORS

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Providing HELP • Creating HOPE • Serving ALL

Mail checks payable to "Catholic Charities":  
Catholic Charities  
ATT: Finance/L&F Campaign  
238 Jewett Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06606

# Holy Trinity Catholic Academy

## Shelton school unveils new windows in gym

*Editor's note: The following reflection was written by Lisa Lanni, Head of School at Holy Trinity Catholic Academy in Shelton*

In March of 2022, we embarked on the Gym Window Replacement Project. The goal of this program was to replace outdated windows in the gym with new ones that were able to provide the school and church community with protection from the elements.

Many activities occur in the gym and several entities use the gym at any given time—Holy Trinity Catholic Academy, St. Lawrence Parish, and the Knights of Columbus, to name a few. The windows that were in the gym were almost 60 years old and did not close properly and there were no screens for a majority of the windows. As a result, there would be leaves

on the floor, a squirrel came in through them on two occasions, and both the cold of the winter and the heat of the summer were keenly felt.

When we first were quoting the Gym Window Replacement Project, we were trying to achieve total replacement of awning-style windows that would tie into the existing motors that controlled the windows' opening and closing. We pursued a grant to help defray our cost and were awarded \$30,000 through the Katharine Matthies Foundation. Father Ciprian Bejan and St. Lawrence Parish also generously donated \$30,000 towards the project. At the time, the total cost of the project was \$91,000.

As our HTCA Facilities Committee looked further into the project, they decided that stationary windows would be best for our gym and that we would



GENEROUS GIFTS bring weather protection and natural light.

not need the motors any longer. We found a new company to quote the windows, which resulted in savings. We also found out that there was asbestos in the caulking of the windows that needed to be abated. Our new cost was now \$85,075. We had \$60,000 towards the project, so

we were well on our way, but more funds had to be acquired. After applying for a grant through the Valley Community Foundation, we were awarded an additional \$15,000.

The windows were ordered and it was decided that they would be installed over our

Winter Break. Thanks to the HTCA Facilities Committee, led by Mr. John Fahey, the abatement and the installation of the windows went off without a hitch over that week. There were also more savings realized when all was said and done, with the final cost being \$78,374. With the grants and the donation from St. Lawrence, HTCA had to pay only \$3,374 out of pocket. We now have beautiful windows that protect us against the elements and provide wonderful natural light. Thank you to all who were involved in this project!

*(Holy Trinity Catholic Academy is now accepting applications for students from Pre-K3 through seventh grade. Please note students must be five years old by December 31 to enroll in kindergarten. For more information please visit [www.holy-trinitycatholicacademy.org](http://www.holy-trinitycatholicacademy.org).)*



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# Catholic Academy of Bridgeport

## CAB golf classic to honor three outstanding individuals

BRIDGEPORT—On May 20, the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport will hold its 12th Annual Golf Classic at the Country Club of Fairfield. This event is the second and final major fundraiser of this academic year,



**TONY FOX**



**PAT GRIFFIN**



**JOHN KENNEDY**

with proceeds going toward the \$3 million in need-based scholarships raised annually before June 30.

“As 85 percent of CAB families live at or below the poverty level and 96 percent qualify for need-based assistance, the success of the Golf Classic is critical to our continuing to provide ‘something more’ in the city of Bridgeport,” said Susan Cecere, CAB’s

Director of Development.

The fun day includes fantastic door prizes, a delicious barbeque lunch, a full day of golf on the beautiful links-style course, and playful contests including “Beat the Nun,” where golfers can compete against CAB St. Raphael campus principal, and golfer in her own right, Sister Elizabeth Doyle, ASCJ. Foursomes usually sell out within weeks of registration opening. Following golf, there will be a cocktail reception and auction and the Academy will celebrate John Kennedy, Tony Fox and Pat Griffin, three beloved individuals who have made lasting impacts on thousands of CAB PreK-8th graders over the years.

“We are so grateful to John, Tony, and Pat for allowing us to honor them. They each have worked tirelessly on behalf of our students and helped nurture countless alumni success stories,” said Angela Pohlen, CAB Executive Director.

Pohlen and her team often refer to CAB as “the great equalizer” in a city that struggles with providing the same opportunities to its students as those living in other Fairfield zip codes.

“Despite CAB receiving \$0 per-pupil funding from the state, we do more with less and have superior results,” she says.

“We’re not just a great school for Bridgeport—we’re a great school full stop.” CAB Board Chair John Kreitler concurs. “We are able to educate each of our girls and boys for less than half of what public and charter schools spend, and raise all of our needed funding privately. We are ‘The Little Engine that Could,’ ensuring that our students achieve their immense potential and create a strong foundation to live faith-filled and fruitful lives.”

One hundred percent of CAB alumni graduate from high school, and 99 percent go on to college or post-secondary school.

(To register for golf or purchase tickets to just the cocktail reception, please visit [www.cabgolf24.givesmart.com](http://www.cabgolf24.givesmart.com), email [sceccere@diobpt.org](mailto:sceccere@diobpt.org) or call 203.362.2990.)

**John Kennedy**

*Distinguished Board Member Award*

A devoted Board member since 2004 and Chair of CAB’s

Marketing and Enrollment Committee, John utilizes his strong skill set gleaned during a career in marketing services—including working as Senior Vice President of Wirthlin Worldwide and Partner at Lippincott. John has been instrumental in helping grow CAB’s enrollment by 14 percent in the last three years. He is a graduate of Union College and lives with his wife, Carol, in Stamford, where they are active at their parish of St. Leo and proud parents of three young adult sons.

**Tony Fox**

*Alumni Service Award*

A 2010 alumnus of CAB’s St. Augustine campus, Tony has been a CAB Board member since 2018 and leads the school’s Alumni Network. He has deep roots in the community and a profound desire to give back—whether mentoring



GROUPS OF FOUR to CAB’s Golf Classic sell out quickly every year. Proceeds go to need-based scholarships, as 85 percent of CAB students come from families living at or below the poverty level.

students in need or volunteering on the Boards of the Greater Bridgeport Symphony and his alma mater, Fairfield Prep. Tony is a project manager at CBRE and has a B.S. in Engineering from Fordham University. Familial bonds mean the world to him and he cherishes times he gets to watch his younger brothers play football.

**Pat Griffin**

*Lifetime Achievement Award*

Pat has a long and successful career in education that spans

40 years. She has been an amazing principal at CAB’s St Ann campus since 2012. She was also Principal at St. Jude’s in Monroe, and a classroom teacher for over 20 years in the Dioceses of Bridgeport and Boston. Pat holds degrees in education and counseling from Salem State, Fitchburg State and Sacred Heart universities. She lives in Shelton with her husband, Gerry, and has four grown children. She is beloved by her community, and will be sorely missed when she retires in June. ■



**CATHOLIC ACADEMY  
OF BRIDGEPORT**

*Something more.*

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CATHOLIC ACADEMY OF BRIDGEPORT  
GOLF CLASSIC**

**Country Club of Fairfield**  
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**MAY  
20th**

**HONORING**  
John Kennedy  
Tony Fox  
Pat Griffin



**Limited to 24 foursomes**  
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Questions? Call 203-362-2990

**Register online!**

# Foundations in Faith

## JPII grant application window now open

By CAROL INCARNAÇÃO-SCHIRM

BRIDGEPORT—Foundations in Faith is pleased to announce applications for grants from its St. John Paul II Fund for Religious Education and Faith Formation

are now open! Each year the foundation welcomes applications from parishes and ministries in the Diocese of Bridgeport for grants up to \$10,000. Grant applicants are asked to describe their faith formation programs, identify their

leadership teams, and submit a budget along with other information pertaining to participants and the running of the program.

Last year, 27 parishes and diocesan organizations were awarded a combined total of \$119,300 in grants covering a range of faith formation programs. Approved applications included initiatives that focused on Sacred Scripture, liturgical music, on the formation for the entire family, the youth, on preparing for the sacraments, and even on missionary discipleship.

For the first time in 2023, grant applicants were asked to submit applications via Foundations in Faith's custom-made Grant Management System. Applicants must first create an account which then serves as a dashboard where they can access past applications, check grant status, and submit the required reports. The first round of mid-project reports were due in January and because of applicants' adherence to the new system, the Foundation has received valuable feedback which will instruct future improvements to the user experience.

Kelly Weldon, director of

Foundations in Faith, is grateful for the new all-encompassing system for managing the grants process.

"We owe a big thank you to Liz Tamarkin at Newfound Consulting

will time out in two hours, so it's best to become familiar with the prompts prior to beginning. Consider gathering the necessary information and jotting down



**JPII FUND FOR FAITH FORMATION**

**APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN!**  
**FEBRUARY 15 - MARCH 31**

FOR DETAILS & HOW TO APPLY VISIT:  
[wwwFOUNDATIONSINFaith.org/applications](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSINFaith.org/applications)



for working closely with us on building the GMS," she said. "For us, customization was essential. Our processes have improved tremendously by having all of our information in one place along with automated actions built into the system. And as we use the GMS, we'll continue to enhance it."

To apply for a grant, head to [wwwFOUNDATIONSINFaith.org/grant-applicant-login](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSINFaith.org/grant-applicant-login). Returning applicants will login using the same account information. New applicants will first need to create an account. Make sure to select the Program Support Grants application.

Keep in mind that once in the application form, the page

your responses in case you have to walk away from it. Remember also that a descriptive itemized budget is required. And a final tip: the best applications are detailed applications!

There's plenty of time to brainstorm with your team. The JPII Fund for Faith Formation Program Support Grant application window is open through March 31.

(For more information, contact Carol Incarnação-Schirm, Foundations in Faith Grants Manager, at 203.416.1393 or [carol.incarnacao-schirm@FOUNDATIONSINFaith.org](mailto:carol.incarnacao-schirm@FOUNDATIONSINFaith.org). Since 2019, Foundations in Faith has distributed \$5,404,015 in grants.) ■



**BISHOP'S SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

**2023-2024 RECIPIENTS**

- \$3,073,980 awarded
- 1,351 students
- \$61,688 avg. family income

**Bishop's Scholarship Fund Applications Open February 1, 2024**

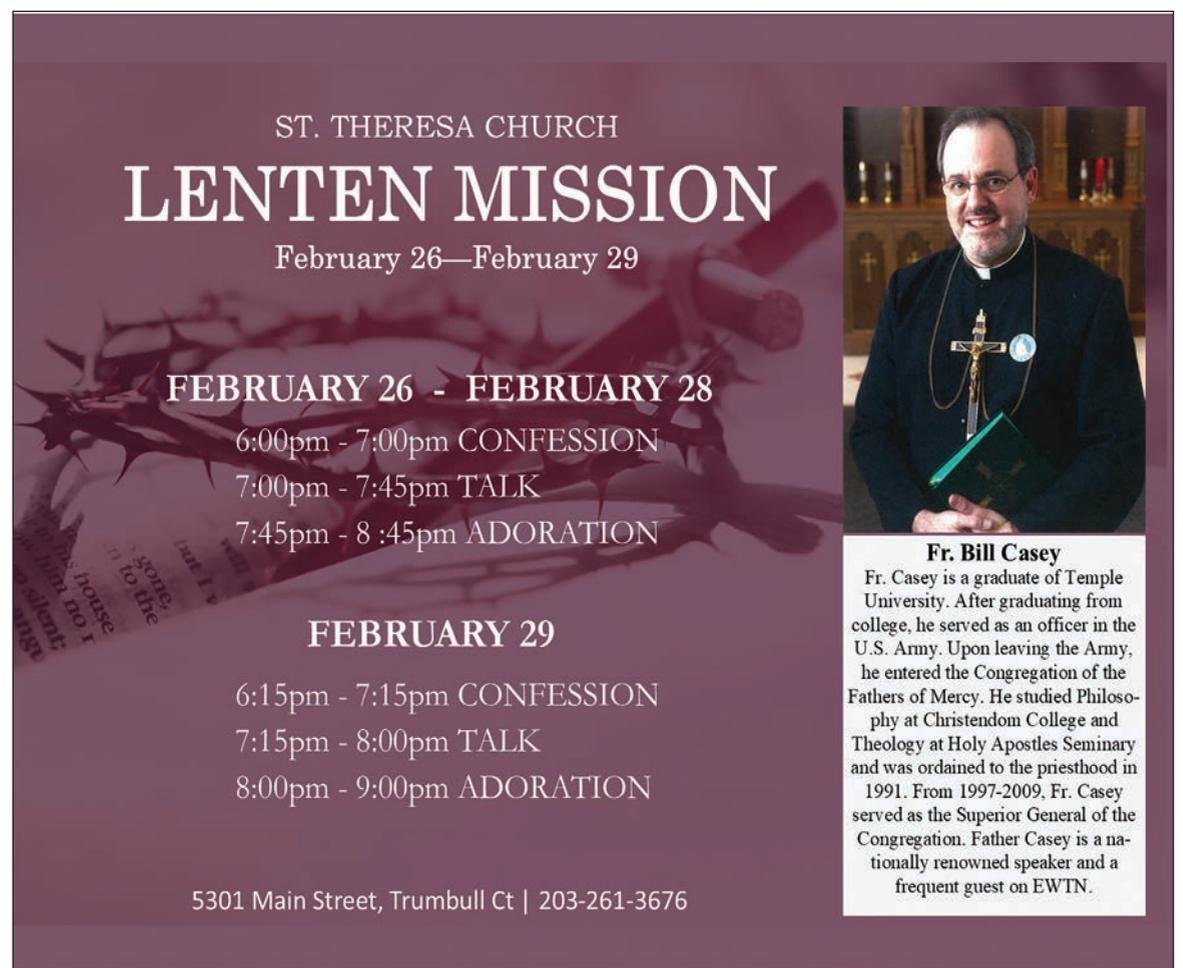
Foundations in Education is pleased to announce that applications to the Bishop's Scholarship Fund open February 1st. Families who have a child currently enrolled or are new applicants in a Diocesan-sponsored Catholic elementary school are eligible to apply for 2024-2025 tuition assistance for Grades K-8. Consideration may be given to families with multiple elementary school-aged children.

Apply online via the FACTS Grant & Aid, [www.FACTSmgt.com/aid](http://www.FACTSmgt.com/aid), and complete all questions relating to Bishop's Scholarship Fund.

**Deadline: March 15-currently enrolled families, April 15-new families**

For more information, visit [wwwFOUNDATIONSINEDUCATION.org](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSINEDUCATION.org).

**FOUNDATIONS IN EDUCATION**

ST. THERESA CHURCH

**LENTEN MISSION**

February 26—February 29

**FEBRUARY 26 - FEBRUARY 28**

- 6:00pm - 7:00pm CONFESSION
- 7:00pm - 7:45pm TALK
- 7:45pm - 8 :45pm ADORATION

**FEBRUARY 29**

- 6:15pm - 7:15pm CONFESSION
- 7:15pm - 8:00pm TALK
- 8:00pm - 9:00pm ADORATION

5301 Main Street, Trumbull Ct | 203-261-3676



**Fr. Bill Casey**

Fr. Casey is a graduate of Temple University. After graduating from college, he served as an officer in the U.S. Army. Upon leaving the Army, he entered the Congregation of the Fathers of Mercy. He studied Philosophy at Christendom College and Theology at Holy Apostles Seminary and was ordained to the priesthood in 1991. From 1997-2009, Fr. Casey served as the Superior General of the Congregation. Father Casey is a nationally renowned speaker and a frequent guest on EWTN.

# Foundations in Education

## FIE 2024 grant recipients

By **THERESA SCIALLO**

BRIDGEPORT—Foundations in Education is pleased to announce more than \$150,000 in grants awarded to educators in Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Schools for 27 projects, with award amounts ranging from \$1,102 to \$13,000. In its seventh year, this competitive program was the first of its kind in the Diocese of Bridgeport to offer innovation and leadership grants to teachers and administrators.

The awards reception, hosted by Foundations in Education, and featuring Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, was held at Sacred Heart University's Discovery Science Center and Planetarium on Thursday, February 1.

"Celebrating innovative spirit, creativity and imagination is very much at the heart of what you and I do as Catholic educators," reflected Bishop Caggiano to the Catholic school educators awarded 2024 grants in innovation and leadership. "But the leadership part really rests with you!

"While the beneficiaries tonight are our young people, I want to

say thank you to all of you for the wonderful, faithful, creative, and imaginative educators that you are!" he added.

"We encouraged teachers to dare to dream to create an innovative opportunity for their students," explained Foundations' Executive Director, Holly Doherty-Lemoine, CFRE. "To the teachers—thank you for forming young minds. You are the difference-makers! We are especially grateful you choose to teach in our Catholic schools."

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

Educators submitted grant proposals from September 15 to October 31, 2023. A grants committee carefully reviewed each proposal and submitted recommendations to Foundations' Board of Trustees for approval. Dr. Julie McNamara, President Emerita of

Albertus Magnus College and a Foundations Board member, leads the committee. Dr. McNamara is joined by Sister Mary Grace Walsh, ASCJ; George Coleman; Fraser Randolph; Henry Rondon; Paula Summa; Executive Director Holly Doherty-Lemoine and ex-officio members Superintendent of Schools Dr. Steven Cheeseman and Director of Innovation and Instructional Improvement Alan Barnicle.

This year, for the first time, the Foundations in Education Innovation and Leadership Grants Committee promoted a specific project, encouraging a group of intrepid educators to integrate Lego Education STEM Learning Tools in their instruction. Thirteen grantees across ten schools comprised the cohort of awardees who will be trained this summer on Lego Spike education.

The Innovation and Leadership Grants initiative was created from the vision of Bishop Frank Caggiano that supporting educators' creative ideas would promote innovation within all diocesan schools.

The awards ceremony celebrated in Bridgeport gave grant honor-



**FLIGHT SIMULATOR**—Former Diocesan Superintendent of Schools Sister Mary Grace Walsh attended the Foundations's annual Innovation and Leadership Grants Award Reception, held at Discovery Science Center and Planetarium in Bridgeport. She couldn't resist testing a flight simulator that the Event Sponsor, Milestone C, had on display to promote their offering of aviation courses.

ees the opportunity to share their creative vision with Foundations' Board of Trustees, Grant Committee members and Donors assembled for the occasion.

Milestone C, a Connecticut-based education company whose mission is to shape future STEM leaders, sponsored the event.

Two former awardees featured exhibits of their 2023-2024 grants they are currently implementing at the event. This year, Beth Cherico from St. James School in Stratford displayed her grant, Let's Fly-Drone Technology, and Dr. Stephanie Rugg from Immaculate High School in Danbury displayed her grant, Measuring pH & Spectrophotometry.

Cherico shared, "It's exciting to see our eighth-grade Maker Space students not only learn to fly drones, which is no easy feat, but also learn creative problem-solving, the design process, and how to apply it to academic subjects such as geography, science, and math."

Dr. Rugg commented, "Labs are critical for science classes in order for students to understand the concepts. The grant has allowed

students to do multiple lab experiments which has helped excite them, engage them, and ultimately enjoy the course even more."

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

"Our donors make this program possible and we are grateful to all who value innovation and leadership in the classroom," shared Holly Doherty-Lemoine. "Thanks to their generous support, we are able to help strengthen and transform Catholic education through these grants."

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

### 2024-2025 Innovation and Leadership Grants

- All Saints Catholic School, Norwalk: *Engineers for Tomorrow Creative Classroom* by Xavier Guzman \$6,000
- All Saints Catholic School, Norwalk: *Lego Spike Essential & Prime* by Chanda Goodwin \$4,102
- Assumption Catholic School, Fairfield: *Lego Spike Essential & Prime* by Jennifer Geaney and Kathy Andrade \$4,102
- Catholic Academy of Bridgeport-St. Augustine Academy: *Drones* by Peaches Bernard \$6,500
- Catholic Academy of Bridgeport-St. Augustine Academy: *Promoting Hands-On Learning in Middle School Science Classroom* by Jennifer Mozdzer \$1,919
- Cardinal Kung Academy, Stamford: *Lego Spike Prime* by Grace Connelly and Regan Bradley \$5,062
- Greenwich Catholic School: *Lego Spike Essential* by William Thomas \$4,102
- Holy Trinity Catholic Academy, Shelton: *Lego Spike Prime* by Brian O'Neill \$5,062
- St. Gregory the Great School, Danbury: *Innovation Zone 2.0:*

*Better and Faster Equals More Fun and Learning!* by Teresa Lazzara \$8,350

- St. Gregory the Great School, Danbury: *Lego Spike Prime* by Emily Jennings \$5,062
- St. James School, Stratford: *Arts for Everyone* by Alexander Constantine \$4,124
- St. James School, Stratford: *Lego Spike Essential* by Tracey Broderick \$4,102
- St. Joseph High School, Trumbull: *Advanced Flight Tech Gear Package* by Coleman Daley \$5,486
- St. Joseph High School, Trumbull: *Biotechnology-Biomedical Pathway Development* by Lucas Fatsy \$7,500
- St. Joseph High School, Trumbull: *Spectroscopy in the 21st Century* by Tim Tallcouch \$5,000
- St. Joseph High School, Trumbull: *Transforming Science Education to Meet Needs of the 21st Century* by E. George Marrash \$7,302
- St. Joseph High School, Trumbull: *Vex Robotics: Advanced Vex Robotics & Engineering* by Daniel McDonagh \$6,178
- St. Joseph School, Danbury: *Time Travel* by Dr. Louis F. Howe, Jr. \$10,000

- St. Mark School, Stratford: *Lego Spike Essential* by Sarah Carrano and Alexander Kennedy \$4,102
- St. Mary School, Bethel: *Interacting within the Classroom* by Scott Smith \$13,000
- St. Mary School, Bethel: *World Language and Cultures Program Improvement* by Sarah E. Herring \$1,400
- St. Mary School, Bethel: *Young Scientist Fun* by Rose Schlemmer \$1,102
- St. Mary School, Ridgefield: *PreK Outdoor Sensory Play Center* by Carolyn Swan, Jennifer Santangelo, Tricia Misurelli, Taylor Sechi, and Cathleen Curtin \$7,500
- St. Rose of Lima School, Newtown: *Lego Spike Prime* by Gina Quinn \$5,062
- St. Rose of Lima School, Newtown: *Pottery for People in Need* by Meagan Ferriter \$2,830
- St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School, Fairfield: *Lego Spike Prime* by Paul Piorek \$5,062
- St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School, Fairfield: *Visualizing the Future of Education with Virtual Reality* by Marybeth Pirrie \$10,000

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# Catholic Cemeteries

## Bereavement programs scheduled

By JOE PISANI

NORWALK—Six years ago when Nancy Mecca’s beloved husband Nick of more than 30 years died, she was so overwhelmed with grief, she didn’t think she could go on. Her world was turned upside down and nothing seemed to make sense.

“I signed up for the New Day bereavement program, and I can’t believe the difference it has made,” she said. “After such a life-changing loss, I never imagined that one day I could feel joy or happiness again.”

As she looks back and reads what she wrote during the program, she realizes now much healing had taken place.

“I tell my friends who have just lost their husbands, ‘You may think you can’t even mention your husband’s name without being overcome by emotion, but this program will really help you,’” she said.

Carolyn Killian, Director of Bereavement of Catholic Cemeteries in the Diocese of Bridgeport, said a series of New Day programs are scheduled throughout the diocese for this spring and summer.

“New Day is so effective because it addresses the practical, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of grief,” Killian said. Some examples are:

**Practical:** How am I going to do everything my spouse, parent, brother and sister or friend

used to do? Who’s going to host Thanksgiving dinner?

**Physical:** Is my trouble sleeping due to grief? Is my recent medical issue somehow connected? Why can’t I focus anymore? Am I going into early dementia?

**Emotional:** Am I going to burst into tears like this forever?

**Spiritual:** How could God let this happen to me? I always went to church every Sunday, why did my husband die?

Killian said New Day has distinguished itself for decades as a highly successful faith-based, small group support program, which provides a structured pathway so people can have an opportunity “to find a place of healing and feelings of peace and comfort.”

“We have seen young people and old people in deep grief,” Killian said. “We’ve seen many, many parents who have lost children. There are so many people struggling to figure out how to go forward with incredible loss, and this offers a way to see where God is in their grief journey.”

The nine-week program meets once a week for 90 minutes. The format includes prayer, Scripture reading, journaling and sharing responses to directed questions in a confidential setting. It is based on “The New Day Journal” created by the late Dominican Sister Mauryeen O’Brien.

The participants are guided to accept the reality of the loss, experience the pain of grief and

find a way to remember the deceased while embarking on the rest of life’s journey, Killian said.

“We rely on the comfort provided by our Lord, and the compassion extended by fellow participants, to meet the life-changing challenges presented by loss,” she said.

“The New Day Journal,” with materials in English and Spanish, is based on a textbook written by psychologist J. William Worden, a foremost authority on grief. Sister Mauryeen O’Brien, who had decades of experience as a grief counselor, put his work into a Catholic framework and developed “The New Day Journal: A Journey from Grief to Healing.”

The author of several books, Sister Mauryeen was the long-time coordinator for the bereaved at the Family Life Office of the Archdiocese of Hartford.

In addition, Killian hopes to offer another Emmaus retreat for grieving parents. The Emmaus Ministry for Grieving Parents is solely focused on the pain a parent feels at the loss of their child. Unlike most recovery programs, the Emmaus Ministry believes there is no healing without God.

Since its inception, this ministry has helped participants initiate, regain, and/or reinvigorate their relationship with God, and so begin their healing process. The retreats are offered by Emmaus Parent Companions, working with Catholic Clergy, Deacons, Pastoral Associates,

and Spiritual Directors.

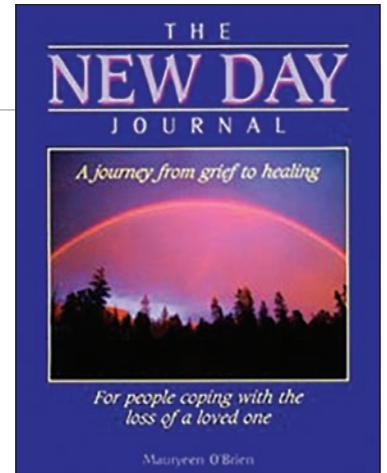
The bereavement ministry of Catholic Cemeteries also offers daily reflections for those who are grieving. Each morning, a Healing Journey message is sent by email to support people with their grief. The messages are not only for the newly bereaved but also those who have been struggling a year or many years after the loss of a loved one.

(For more information or to sign up to receive the free service, visit [www.ctcemeteries.org/bereavement](http://www.ctcemeteries.org/bereavement).)

### The following nine-week bereavement programs are offered by Catholic Cemeteries

People are urged to register soon because the sessions fill up quickly. For further information, they should visit [ctcemeteries.org/bereavement](http://ctcemeteries.org/bereavement) or call Carolyn Killian at 203.404.0023:

- **St. Catherine of Siena & St. Agnes Parish**, Riverside, March 5 – April 30, Tuesday afternoons 3:30 – 5 pm
- **Assumption Parish**, Westport, March 6 - May 1, Wednesday afternoons 2 – 3:30 pm
- **St. Peter Parish**, Bridgeport, March 6 – May 1, Wednesday evenings 7 – 8:30 pm
- **St. Michael the Archangel Parish**, Greenwich, April 3 – May 29, Wednesday afternoons 1-2:30 pm



- **St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish**, Brookfield, April 11 – June 6, Thursday afternoons 2 – 3:30 pm
- **Holy Spirit Parish**, Stamford, April 16 to June 11, Tuesday mornings 10 – 11:30 am
- **St. Thomas More Parish**, Darien, May 7 – July 9, Tuesday afternoons 2:30 – 4 pm

*The following program is sponsored by the Respect Life Ministry, Diocese of Bridgeport for anyone experiencing pain and sorrow from losing a child to abortion. Entering Canaan ministers to women, men, and siblings on their journey to healing from the pain, isolation, and silent suffering of abortion to the freedom of forgiveness, healing and peace through Christ.*

- Saturday, March 16, 2024  
Entering Canaan: A Day of Prayer & Healing  
(For information on the day or to register, contact Maureen at [203.416.1619](mailto:203.416.1619) or [projectrachel@diobpt.org](mailto:projectrachel@diobpt.org).)

## DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT FEBRUARY 18—MARCH 16

FEBRUARY	
20	Msgr. Andrew J. Hajus..... 1988
22	Msgr. George B. Curtiss ..... 1982
	Rev. Thomas Frances Elliott, CSC..... 2023
23	Msgr. Miroslav J. Myschshyn..... 1980
24	Rev. Joseph E. Russo ..... 1998
	Rev. Walter J. Seekamp ..... 2012
26	Msgr. Henry E. Flanagan ..... 1966
28	Rev. Stanley Koziol..... 2013
MARCH	
1	Rev. Leonard M. Conlon..... 1976
	Deacon Timothy Sulivan..... 2015
5	Msgr. John J. Pitonak..... 1990
7	Msgr. Andrew G. Varga..... 2022
8	Rev. Boleslaus Rarus ..... 2005
	Rev. Martin Nikodem ..... 2018
10	Rev. Raymond H. Stephenson..... 1990
12	Rev. Martin Hitchcock ..... 2014
	Rev. Leo Suwinski ..... 2005
13	Deacon Joseph L. Cross ..... 2003
	Rev. Jose A. Fernandez..... 2020
14	Rev. Vincent P. Cleary ..... 1989
	Rev. Edward Colohan ..... 2019
15	Msgr. Francis J. Sugrue ..... 1977
	Msgr. Edward G. Zibell..... 1978
	Rev. William J. Galya..... 1994
16	Deacon Joseph J. Farley..... 2013

==== HOLY NAME MISSION FROM PAGE 7 =====

Father Boccaccio’s second presentation titled “Back to the Future: The Vision of Vatican II’s PRIESTLY PEOPLE.” In this talk, Father Boccaccio will highlight the role of the laity as envisioned and refreshed by the Second Vatican Council for the purposes of “updating” (AGGIORNAMENTO, as Pope St. John XXIII named it) the Universal Church.

“Throughout our 100th Anniversary year, we have implemented activities, celebrations and opportunities for our parish family to experience ways to ‘Frame our Future on the Foundation of Faith,’” Father Bert Pinciario, pastor of Holy Name said. “The rich heritage we have received is now in our hands to mold for the present and future members of the Holy Name of Jesus family. To that end, in January, we began the work of refreshing, restoring and revitalizing our church interior to invite all who enter to a deeper relationship with our Lord. Our hopes are that the planned talks during the winter and spring will be catalysts to a spiritual resurgence of faith for all who participate as we prepare to face the future. With the Holy Spirit’s guidance, we hope that they will be both formative and transformative.”

(All are invited. Each evening will include prayer and refreshments, and end at 7:30 pm. The presentations will be held in Heritage Hall at Holy Name of Jesus Parish, 50 College Street, Stratford. The Hall is directly behind the church.) Please register at [ParishOffice@HNOJchurch.org](mailto:ParishOffice@HNOJchurch.org).)

# Sports

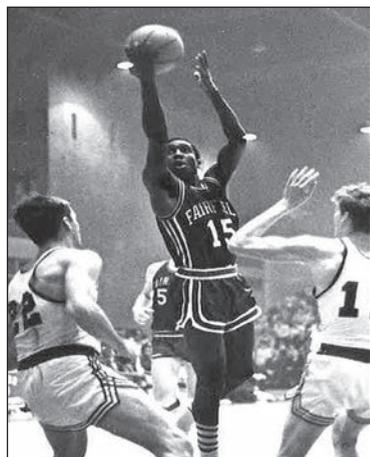
## Wayne Gibbons enters Stags' Hall of Fame

By **DON HARRISON**

FAIRFIELD—Can it be nearly 54 years ago that Wayne Gibbons scored the last of his 1,016 points for the Fairfield University basketball team? Yes, true. To be precise, on March 5, 1970, the fleet 6-foot guard and co-captain Frank Magaletta each netted 19 points in the Stags' 86-59 loss to nationally ranked St. Bonaventure at the old New Haven Arena.

More than five decades later, on the evening of January 27, Dr. Wayne L. Gibbons '70 was finally inducted—posthumously—into the university's Athletic Hall of Fame. Ten family members, including his widow, Ahto Gibbons, made the journey from Pennsylvania to attend the Hall-of-Fame dinner on campus at the Dolan School of Business.

In their collective acceptance speech, the Gibbons' three daughters, Ahmara "Mara" Gibbons Ross, M.D., Ph.D., Kristen Gibbons Feden, and Ahrin Gibbons, recounted several of their father's basketball highlights and his passion for the university.



**WAYNE GIBBONS '70**

"He was a representative student athlete; he was more than a guy who could dribble a basketball," Mara Ross said. "He was devoted to the Jesuit tradition of mind, body and spirit."

"Thank you, Fairfield, for loving our dad," the daughters declared.

So, why did it take so long? There are no definitive answers. It's clear Wayne Gibbons possessed the necessary credentials—outstanding student athlete, a lengthy career as a medical doctor—to be

elected decades earlier to his alma mater's Athletic Hall of Fame.

"He really should have been inducted 40 years ago," said Jim Hessel '70, co-captain of Fairfield's 1969-70 basketball team and Gibbons' roommate during their first two years of campus. "He simply was a bright guy, well-liked by his teammates and the student body in general, who was well aware of what was going on in the world and on campus. Great guy, great player."

In that long-ago era, freshmen were ineligible for varsity competition, but Wayne wasted no time to display his skills on the basketball court. In his varsity debut as a sophomore, Wayne scored 20 points to spark the Stags to a 65-54 victory over Canisius at the Memorial Auditorium in Buffalo, N.Y.

Less than two weeks later, he provided Fairfield with its most notable road victory of the season, sinking a 20-foot jump shot at the buzzer to transform a seeming one-point loss into a striking 63-62 win over Villanova in the Palestra.

"Wayne had the heart of a lion," recalled Bill Jones '68, captain of Fairfield's 1967-68 squad, who was among the initial

Fairfield University Hall-of-Fame inductees in 1982. "He had had great form on everything he did. It was pure."

Jones and two of Gibbons' other teammates, Art Kenney '68 and Peter Gillen '68, were among gathered at the Hall-of-Fame dinner.

As a junior, Wayne increased his scoring average from 8.4 to 13.4 points per game, and established a single-game free-throw record with a seamless 15-for-15 performance at the line against Vermont. He concluded with a team-high 25 points in the Stags' 85-64 triumph over the Catamounts in Burlington.

It appears that the Philadelphia-born and -bred Gibbons reached many of his personal heights in opponents' gyms. In Game 2 of his senior season, Wayne put up a career-high 36 points against Connecticut before a capacity crowd of 4,000 plus in the Huskies' Field House at Storrs.

UConn had been reluctant to play its new downstate rival—a newcomer to NCAA Division I—and barely escaped with a 65-64 win.

Gibbons averaged 17.5 points per game in his final season (and 13.2 for his career). When he graduated that spring—with B.S.

degree in hand—from the then-small Jesuit university, he was just the 11th Stag player to score more than 1,000 career points. And only two of his predecessors had exceeded 36 points in a game.

Gibbons studied at Yale Medical School for two years, but feeling homesick, he returned to Philadelphia, where he earned his medical degree from the former Medical College of Pennsylvania.

Described as an "old-school community doctor," Doc Gibbons served patients at small and midsize practices in medically underserved communities in the Philadelphia area for many years. A deeply religious man, he shared his faith and health-giving skills with people in developing countries, making medical mission trips to Guatemala, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Haiti and elsewhere.

"He served the needs of the sick without regard to their ability to pay," said Mara Ross, who followed her dad into the medical field and is now assistant professor of ophthalmology at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital.

Doc Gibbons continued his practice until a few months prior to his passing, at age 70, on July 24, 2019. ■

### EUCHARISTIC PROCESSION FROM PAGE 3

the Appalachian Mountains into Pittsburgh, Ohio and Indiana. At the same time, three other processions will be underway from California, Texas, and Minnesota.

This Eucharistic Procession consists of the four processions travelling a combined 6,000 miles. Each procession will proceed through various dioceses, visit holy sites, shrines, cathedrals, and Catholic universities. After 60 days of travel, the four pilgrimages will converge in Indianapolis for the 10th National Eucharistic Congress. This five-day event begins on July 17, with over 80,000 Catholics expected to attend. "The One"

While the Eucharistic Procession concludes on June 1, in our diocese, it will serve to highlight the most important reason we have begun our work in support of "The One." Our goal is to provide growing opportunities for each of us to encounter the Lord through truth, beauty and goodness, fostering communities that accompany their members in personal discipleship and lead every believer to attend Sunday Mass each week. Very simply, "The One" is our commitment to focus every aspect of the Church on bringing individuals closer to the Lord and to know, love and serve him more deeply.

Through encountering our Lord Jesus Christ, and by embracing the truth, beauty, and goodness of our faith, we will, together, fall in love with God in the ultimate encounter with Christ: the Holy Eucharist and Sunday Mass. The three years that follow will be even more profound, as we accompany one another in the truth, beauty and goodness of our faith and draw ever closer to Our Lord.

Programs and ministries for school and parish leaders and faithful will be announced in the coming months. Guilds for various professions and ministries will be created, including catechists, ambassadors, and teachers. The new diocesan Assisi Center for Environmental Stewardship will be established, as will our Life Center and the St. Jerome Center for Preaching and Biblical Studies. (For more information on the Eucharistic Procession and the bishop's "The One" Eucharistic Renewal please email: [Sfilizzola@diobpt.com](mailto:Sfilizzola@diobpt.com).) ■

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# Parish News

## ‘Binky Patrol’: Bringing love and comfort to children

By EMILY CLARK

MONROE/TRUMBULL—Knitting needles, colored yarn, and soft fabric. It is these ordinary items that have inspired a 10-year mission dedicated to comforting children. What began as a desire to bring solace to survivors of the Sandy Hook tragedy and their first responders has grown into a commitment of service well beyond this small community.

After Monroe resident Jeanne Malgioglio and a friend organized a collection of 37,000 green and

white scarves for Newtown over a decade ago, they were amazed by the incredible outpouring of love from around the world and wanted to continue their efforts for others. That is what spurred Malgioglio in 2014 to create the first Connecticut chapter of Binky Patrol, a national non-profit organization that makes and distributes homemade blankets to critically ill and traumatized children.

A parishioner at St. Stephen Parish in Trumbull, Malgioglio understands not only the importance of serving others but people’s

desire to do so. “People want to help. As kids, we learn that Jesus wants us to ‘love one another as I have loved you.’ They just need a pathway to do so,” she said.

Now, accompanied by a myriad of volunteers from around the region with their own needles, fabric, and endless skeins of yarn, she coordinates the Trumbull/Monroe chapter of Binky Patrol, helping to bring thousands of blankets to hospitals and shelters as well as organizations such as the Center for Family Justice, Malta House, Blessed Sacrament Parish, and Room to Grow Preschool, a program of Catholic Charities. In addition to these local organizations, donations have also been made to residents of Uvalde, Texas following the school shooting there and to communities in Florida and North Carolina in the aftermath of recent hurricanes.

“It keeps growing and growing,” said Malgioglio of the program. “I almost always have a garage full of blankets!” With a delivery just after Christmas, this Binky Patrol chapter has now donated a record 19,000 handmade blankets, including knit and crocheted ones for babies as well as others for older children that

are either quilted or fleece-tied, ideal for creating a cocoon of warmth and security.

“We’re always collecting because there is always a need,” she added. “Sadly, you never know when a tragedy may hit. These blankets show children that they matter and that someone cares about them.”

Those who care include groups throughout the diocese and beyond but are often concentrated within church and community organizations, including sports teams, parish youth groups, and Confirmation classes.

“Kids love making them, especially for other kids. They might earn service hours, but they do it regardless,” Malgioglio said, noting that some recipients then decide to make blankets themselves, including Trumbull resident Shane Miller.

When he awoke from surgery to repair a broken arm at age 11, Miller remembers being wrapped in a brown and white fleece binky, comforting him at that uncertain time. Soon after he recovered, Miller attended his first Bink-a-thon. “It’s what sparked my love for making these blankets,” he said.

Several years after his surgery, he organized an event through his youth group at St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull, making dozens of fleece blankets for young trauma victims. “I’ve had the privilege to visit places like the Center for Family Justice and meet recipients of these blankets. I see the impact they have on them,” said Miller, now a 21-year-old college student in Vermont.

His mother Sandy has seen that impact firsthand.

“Binky Patrol isn’t just people making blankets for sick kids,” she said. “It’s about connecting with a child who may be feeling lost, alone, or scared.”

Malgioglio is currently working to collect hundreds of binkies for children at the Head Start program in the Naugatuck Valley.

“We’re always looking for new groups to assist with making blankets,” she said. “We’re called to serve and help others. What better way than with the comfort of a binky?”—a tangible way to let a child feel protected, supported, and loved.

*(If you would like information on how your group can assist with the Binky Patrol, contact Jeanne Malgioglio at [ctbinky@gmail.com](mailto:ctbinky@gmail.com).)* ■



### POTPOURRI

By THOMAS H. HICKS

*The Potpourri column by Thomas Hicks will resume in March.*

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### 2024 BISHOP'S APPEAL FROM PAGE 4

“We’re both products of Catholic schools, K-12, and believe it is one of the key things that help people succeed and do what they want in life,” Jim said. “We support them all, along with St. Catherine Center for Special Needs and the work of the Thomas Merton Family Center. You could talk for hours about the great work that Catholic Charities does.”

Paula, who is on the board of Greenwich Chaplaincy Services, visits town nursing homes to pray the Rosary, give Holy Communion and arrange for Masses. She has high praise for Monsignor William Scheyd and the retired priests at Queen of Clergy, who always make themselves available to celebrate Mass for the elderly.

Paula was recently appointed to the Diocesan Finance Council and serves

on the board of Foundations in Education and various ministries, including as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, catechist in the parish religious education program and lector.

She has many years of experience in various financial executive and general management positions at IBM. She has a bachelor of science degree in accounting as well as an MBA in accounting and finance from Pace University. She was a member of the Pace University Lubin School of Business Advisory Board and Executive-in-Residence.

Jim is a non-practicing CPA, a member of the Knights of Columbus, a retired IBM financial executive and board member of Atradius Trade Credit Insurance. He has a BBA in accountancy practice from Pace University and an MBA in finance from Columbia

University. He also served as non-executive treasurer and board member of the United Way of Westchester and Putnam.

Currently, he serves on the Finance Council of St. Paul Parish, the Finance Committee of Foundations in Education and assists at Kolbe Cathedral High School. He is a member of the Gentlemen of St. Paul, an usher and an altar server at funeral Masses in his parish. Both Paula and Jim are members of Legatus.

*(Please prayerfully consider a gift that is within your means and know that your sacrificial gift no matter the size, will make provide for the future of our Catholic faith and the most vulnerable in our communities. You may make your gift on-line at [2024BishopsAppeal.org](http://2024BishopsAppeal.org) or by calling 203.416.1470. Thank you for your generosity.)* ■

# St. Luke's Guild

## Couple created dental center in Honduras

By **JOE PISANI**

NEW CANAAN—Forty years ago, Bill Fessler and Mary Beth O'Brien met in remote area of the Dominican Republic on a medical dentistry mission. He was in his last year at Georgetown University School of Dentistry and she was a nurse practicing at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center after graduating from Georgetown.

Their time in the Dominican Republic was the beginning of their life together, a life of putting their faith into action through service for others.

"God put us together," Dr. Fessler recalls. "Within an hour of meeting Mary Beth, I knew we were meant to be together. I was struck by how beautiful she was. The first day we were working on the same team ... and I was in love."

As soon as he got home, he told his father he met the woman he was going to marry ... and his prediction came true. They were married the following December in 1984 and that was just the beginning of their commitment to raising a family and a lifetime of service.

Today, Dr. Fessler has a private practice in Norwalk, and Mary Beth is a nurse practitioner at the Americares clinic in Danbury. The parents of four children, they are members of St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan. Mary Beth and Bill were among the initial inductees into the Saint Luke Guild and currently serve as Board Members and leaders of the Communication & Planning Team.

With much energy and passion, they have worked tirelessly to help grow the guild, and founding members of the diocesan St. Luke Guild for healthcare professionals. The couple also continues to do service work locally, at soup

kitchens, Malta House, ABC House and the Norwalk Smiles program. In addition, in 2012 they established a state-of-the-art dental center outside the capital of Honduras, which has cared for thousands of patients, most of them children.

Since founding the One World Surgery Holy Family Dental Center, the Fesslers have returned 20 times to provide care for the surrounding community and the more than 400 children at the Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (NPH), a home for orphaned and abandoned children that shares the grounds with the dental center.

"We believe that we have been tremendously blessed—as most Americans are—and when you are blessed, you give back," Ms. Fessler said. "You cannot imagine the poverty ... unless you experience it, and Honduras is the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere."

In 2011, while they were on a mission project with their daughter Erin, who was a student at the University of Notre Dame, the Fesslers witnessed firsthand the need for dental care, and it moved them to begin their project. Many of their patients did not have access to care and had never seen a dentist.

"It is a tremendous resource to the community," Dr. Fessler said.

Their daughter's roommate at college was from the family that started the One World Surgery, which is a "a medical mission organization that treats a variety of orthopedic conditions and focuses on local partnerships and high-quality care."

As a result of that trip, Dr. Fessler said, "Mary Beth and I decided to build a state-of-the-art dental clinic. I was going to buy everything brand new and bring it



MARY BETH AND DR. BILL FESSLER OF NEW CANAAN

down there and set it up. It took us a long time to get it going, but the doors finally opened in 2017."

Originally, they operated out of a makeshift dental facility, but they wanted to create a first-world center that would allow them to do advanced work, including comprehensive general dentistry, root canals and oral surgery.

Of course, once you create a world-class center, you need dentists. A year after opening, they hired Dr. Karen Chan, a Honduran dentist who works full-time at the center. Because of the Fesslers, the children at the orphanage and people in the community have access to the latest technology in dentistry in a facility founded as a Catholic mission.

"Our onsite local dentist, Dr. Karen Chan, and the team provide high-quality preventative and restorative dental care to the Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos children and local communities year-round from Monday through Friday," Dr. Fessler said.

Each year, the center provides some 2,250 dental consults and 4,000 minor dental procedures with the local team and volunteer dentists and hygienists. Their pro-

cedures include cleanings, fillings, fluoride treatments, extractions, root canals, crowns and minor surgery.

The Fesslers visit the center to work twice a year, in the winter and in the fall. While there, Ms. Fessler sees patients in the primary care unit of One World Surgery. Throughout the year, others in the dental profession from the United States volunteer and often bring their families who are provided residence on the campus of One World Surgery.

"We want to reach out to

people who have this sort of calling so they can contribute to a well-run organization," Dr. Fessler said. "It is 100 percent non-profit. We have housing and great food and take care of the families of the volunteers. It sets a great example for the kids of the next generation to serve. Every time we do this, we always come back strengthened because they give you something you can't get anywhere else. We go down there to serve, but we get so much in return that it makes us feel alive."

"When you get outside your comfort zone and your neat little world, it will make a difference in your life," Ms. Fessler says. "And if you're not in a position to physically go and serve in Honduras, you can do it in your local community. But we ask you to help us with your treasure so that we can make this a reality in Honduras."

(The Fesslers had a fund-raiser for the center in September 2022 and are planning another this spring. For further information, contact Mary Beth Fessler at [fesslers6@gmail.com](mailto:fesslers6@gmail.com) or Dr. Fessler at [wfess58@gmail.com](mailto:wfess58@gmail.com) or to donate visit [www.oneworldsurgery.org/dental-celebration](http://www.oneworldsurgery.org/dental-celebration).)

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### St. Luke's Guild

We are a diverse group of healthcare workers and faithful, practicing Catholics throughout Fairfield County. The Guild exists to encourage Catholic healthcare workers within the Diocese of Bridgeport to grow in Christian discipleship through an on-going process of encounter with our Lord, Jesus Christ, and communal accompaniment. Our mission is to help Catholic healthcare workers grow in Christian discipleship by adhering to the Guild's spiritual disciplines and inviting its members to be accompanied in faith through periodic gatherings of its members for prayer and formation.

Membership in the Saint Luke Guild is spiritual in nature and open to all healthcare workers who:

- Strive to live their Catholic faith to the best of their ability
- Pray for the Guild and its members by reciting the Guild prayer each day
- Attend the Annual Mass
- Attend formational gatherings offered for members

For more information on St. Luke's Guild or to sign up for membership, visit: [www.bridgeportdiocese.org/stlukeguild/home](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org/stlukeguild/home) or email: [saintlukeguild@diobpt.org](mailto:saintlukeguild@diobpt.org)

# Nuestra Voz

## Cada lunes desde las siete se dicta la 'Clase de Biblia'

POR MARICARMEN GODOY

BRIDGEPORT—Desde noviembre del 2023 en el salón comunitario de la parroquia de St. Mary se reúnen cien feligreses de varias parroquias eclesíásticas de Bridgeport para estudiar lo que el padre Rolando Torres llama: Clases de Biblia; donde en cada sesión estudian uno a uno de los libros de las Sagradas Escrituras con el propósito de aprender no sólo a leer correctamente los versículos y capítulos del Antiguo y Nuevo Testamento, sino de poder entender desde la perspectiva de la iglesia católica qué significa cada palabra y frase escrita.

Por pedido de varios feligreses de Bridgeport que le dijeron al Padre Torres que tienen interés en aprender sobre cómo se lee la Biblia para entenderla correctamente, el sacerdote decidió dedicar dos horas semanales del lunes de siete a nueve de la noche al estudio de las Sagradas Escrituras; y para empezar su proyecto habló con el obispo Frank Caggiano, quien le obsequió 150 biblias traducidas y editadas por la "American Bible Society", presentada por el Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, con sede en Puebla-México, organización des-



tinada a la difusión de la Palabra en toda América Latina.

Los tres primeros meses fueron dedicados a estudiar las técnicas de cómo leer apropiadamente la Biblia y luego, en varias sesiones estudiaron el libro del Génesis, el primer libro de la Biblia; a su vez a conocer uno a uno de sus alumnos que vienen de la iglesia de San Carlos de Borromeo, San Jorge, San Pedro, y Asunción.

El estudio bíblico empieza con una oración que evoca al Espíritu Santo para vivir la comunión de la iglesia en plenitud. Luego, entran de lleno al estudio capítulo por capítulo, se detienen en algunos versículos especiales por lo que el Padre Torres va tejiendo la clase con preguntas y ocurren-

cias de sus alumnos que le dan a las dos horas de encuentro un ambiente de alegría y fraternidad comunitaria.

El capítulo para estudiar en la segunda semana de febrero fue el libro del Éxodo. Con una proyección de mapas y apuntes ampliados en la pantalla, donde el sacerdote explicaba cada versículo de la historia de Moisés, el hombre que Dios eligió para liberar al pueblo hebreo de los egipcios.

Como el sacerdote es gracioso contó varias anécdotas de los faraones y narró cómo la misma historia se encargaba de borrarla cuando no protegía los intereses del imperio y puso como ejemplo que en Egipto las diez plagas que envió Dios para que el faraón libere al pueblo hebreo no es aceptado como un hecho que sucedió, aunque hay evidencia escrita en jeroglíficos que intentaron ocultar. "Ningún pueblo, menos el egipcio, quiere ser humillado mucho menos por el Dios de los esclavos los hebreos", repuso el sacerdote.

Y enseguida hizo una analogía sobre la guerra que enfrenta Rusia y Ucrania y el desliz de las declaraciones del presidente Vladimir Putin en torno a que presuntamente se equivocó con Ucrania y estaría considerando dar por terminado el conflicto bélico; además abordó la guerra entre Israel y el pueblo Palestino en la frontera Gaza y el grupo Hamas. "Yo se que pronto la guerra de Israel y Palestina va a terminar. Dios debe tener un plan para acabar con esto. Ese es su pueblo", dijo y reconoció que la guerra es por asuntos de tierras.

En ese momento empezaron las preguntas de sus alumnos en cómo fue el éxodo masivo, por dónde transitaban los hebreos

mientras se perdieron en el desierto y cuál sería la edad promedio de Moisés, mientras lideraba la liberación y cuando escribió en las tablas los Mandamientos de la ley de Dios y porqué es tan importante celebrar la pascua para el pueblo judío.

Marlon Albertore, puertorriqueño, vive en Trumbull desde hace diez años, acudía a la Catedral de Bridgeport a la misa dominical, pero desde hace un año decidió ser miembro activo de la parroquia de St. Mary. Su primera biblia recibió como un regalo de su abuela, sin embargo, es la primera vez que, junto a su esposa, toma el Curso de Biblia dictado por el Padre Torres, párroco de la iglesia St. Mary. Marlon fue quien preguntó al Padre Torres la edad de Moisés.

Rafael Romero, vivía en Stamford desde hace 23 años que vino de su natal Ecuador, vive en Bridgeport desde hace dos años y es miembro activo de la parroquia St. Mary. Curiosamente, él ya tiene estudios bíblicos porque desde siempre le ha gustado leerla. Sobresale en el grupo porque tiene un alto sentido del humor; en su país conducía camiones

y dice conocer todo su país por todos los puntos cardinales.

Deisy Castillo, también es ecuatoriana de Manta, una región costera, vivía en Mamaroneck, N.Y. y se mudó a Bridgeport hace años. Salió de su país por ser víctima violencia doméstica de su marido y al llegar a Bridgeport se refugió en la iglesia de San Carlos de Borromeo. "Cuando uno quiere conocer a alguien, ¿Qué hace?, se hace asimismo esa pregunta y a su vez responde: ¿Sale a buscarlo?, eso hice yo. Vine a buscar a Dios en donde está, en su Palabra y su palabra está escrita en la Biblia". Indicó. Deisy preguntó al Padre Torres: ¿Qué significa ¿Exodo!?, "sencillamente es salir de un lugar a otro".

El libro del Éxodo tiene como figura a Moisés desde el inicio hasta el final. Los hebreos vivieron en Egipto durante 430 años como esclavos. Éxodo recoge la historia de Moisés con la liberación del pueblo de Israel, el viaje por el monte de Sinaí y termina con la construcción y consagración del santuario o tabernáculo y el sacerdocio de su hermano Aarón y la de sus hijos.

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Father Ryan Lerner, Chaplain, St. Thomas More  
Yale University, New Haven, CT

Almost one week in...how's Lent going for you so far?

**Tuesday, February 27**

Dr. Nancy A. Dallavalle, Director, Center for Catholic Studies  
Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT  
Seeking a Lent That is Already Here

**Tuesday, March 5**

Father Carlos Castrillon Castro  
Pastor, Our Lady Queen of the Apostles Parish, Derby, CT  
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*The Sacrament of Reconciliation  
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# Vocations

## Seeing beyond the cross

By **FATHER CHRIS FORD**

When you look at the cross, what do you see? Is it meaningful? Does it move you? Do you see it for what it is or simply what it appears to be? Or, more appropriately, for what you want it to be?

Often, we are only prepared to “see Jesus” on our own terms. As we expect him. As we permit him to be seen. We want to see the miracle worker. We want to see the teacher. We want to see the revolutionary. We don’t want to see the suffering Savior.

Yet, that is what he is! And, if he were not that, then he would

be nothing at all.

How many teachers, or miracle workers, or revolutionaries have come and gone in the course of history? It is precisely because Jesus himself has suffered and died for us, because he embraced the cross that his presence is meaningful to us whenever we are confronted by the cross ourselves. And it is because he died and rose again from the dead that his presence among us endures.

Jesus is not interested in appearances; he is interested in reality, which means being a spectator is not an option for us.

The cross can only be under-

stood from the inside. If we stay at a distance, the cross is a sign of defeat. It’s why the disciples scatter. It’s why, even though Christ tells us life is to be found by embracing the cross, we tend to run from it whenever we encounter it because it demands someone of us we may not be truly ready to give: the conversion of our hearts. No longer seeking our happiness and fulfillment in the easy and fleeting pleasures of this world, but by playing the long game and committing to the happiness if eternal life - even when it is shrouded in mystery and hidden behind suffering.

This is the true mystery of

the priesthood. There is no other vocation where on a daily basis, if you are willing, you will be thrown so fully into the Mystery of the Cross—but there, you will find in a way more powerful than you could ever imagine, the faithfulness of God. Jesus proposes to us the cross, because he knows that, when united to the love of God, it is far more powerful than we could ever imagine or the world will let us believe.

Only the humility of the cross is really capable of revealing the full glory of God. Only that kind of openness to the surprises God has in store for us when all else seems lost, hoping against hope, are our eyes really opens to seeing him at every turn and recognizing that his promise to remain with us always is not empty at all, even in the face of suffering, death, and apparent defeat.

The challenge is, can I learn to really see Jesus wherever he is? Can I learn to see his face in the face of the poor, the sick, and the



FATHER CHRIS FORD

suffering? Can I feel my heart burning within me as I hear proclaimed the words of everlasting life? Can I recognize the fulfillment of the promises made in what looks to be nothing more than the smallest piece of bread or the tiniest drop of wine? Can I see the triumph of love over selfishness and sin and death in the cross that hangs on the wall or from my neck?

The cross can only be understood from the inside, from living what it proposes: that, like the very person of Jesus Christ, there is far more to the miracle of the cross than what the eye can see. ■

## Farewell, Monsignor Weiss!

NEWTOWN—The children of St. Rose of Lima School sang “This Little Light of Mine” to Monsignor Weiss on his last day as Pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish. Their cheerful and affectionate goodbyes were the last stop on Monsignor Weiss’ farewell tour that included a dinner for 600 who turned out to thank him for his prayerful and inspiring leadership as pastor for 24 years.

In his “Thank You” note in the parish bulletin, Monsignor Weiss, 77, wrote: “I am filled with gratitude for 50 years of priesthood and for all those the Lord has sent into my life throughout those years. You have enriched my life and my



commitment to serve the Lord by your incredible faith and you have been a blessed source of prayer and support. I take with me more blessings than I ever deserved and more memories than any album could hold. I am far from being a spiritual giant,

but I hope I have helped keeping us on the path set for us by Christ. So on to a new chapter. I am not sure what God’s plan is for me, but I hope I can continue to rely on your prayers, support, and good thoughts.” ■



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