



FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

JANUARY 2013 | VOLUME 30, NUMBER 1 | CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK ISSUE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



5 *New O'Keefe Academic Center at St. Joseph's H.S.*



17 *Bioengineering studies at Kolbe-Cathedral H.S.*

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Prayers for Newtown

(PHOTOS BY MICHELLE BABYAK)

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Newtown Tragedy

St. Rose at center of national tragedy

The death of 20 children and six faculty members at Sandy Hook Elementary School just before Christmas plunged nearby St. Rose of Lima Parish into the center of a national tragedy.

A total of eight children from St. Rose died in the shooting on December 14 and were buried by Msgr. Robert Weiss, pastor of St. Rose, during the following week.

In the glare of the international news media that descended on the town, Msgr. Weiss became a symbol of compassion and a healing presence as people of all faiths struggled with the murder of innocent children.

The parish of 3,500 families, founded in 1869, sits just below the historic Newtown flagpole on Church Hill Road. Newtown holds the distinction of being the site of the first Catholic Mass in Fairfield County, which was celebrated on July 1, 1781.

Within hours of the shooting, hundreds of reporters and network satellite trucks were set up on or near parish grounds.

As shock and sadness set in, words of condolences and offers of help came immediately from across the world. By the end of the next week, Msgr. Weiss received more than 15,000 letters of support and concern. Many of them had to be held for security screening.

Pope Benedict XVI urged all to dedicate themselves to acts of peace in the face of such "senseless violence." After reciting the Angelus on December 17, the Pope, speaking in English, said



he was "deeply saddened" by the shooting. "I assure the families of the victims, especially those who lost a child, of my closeness in prayer," he said. "May the God of consolation touch their hearts and ease their pain."

Archbishop William E. Lori, former Bishop of Bridgeport, was in Rome when he learned of the tragedy and immediately sent word of his prayers and concern for suffering families. A letter from Archbishop Lori, who was a frequent visitor to St. Rose of Lima Parish, was also read at all Masses on the Sunday following the tragedy:

"Since that moment, my heart has been heavy, and I can't stop thinking about everyone in Newtown, especially the victims, the children, and their families..."

"I have been thinking very much of the words of Blessed John Paul II, who once said, 'To receive Jesus Christ means believing that in the history of humanity, even though it is marked by evil and suffering, the final word belongs to life, and to love, because God came to dwell among us, so we might dwell in him.'"

Diocesan Administrator Msgr.

Jerald A. Doyle concelebrated Mass at St. Rose with Msgr. Weiss on the Sunday following the shooting. He was joined by other diocesan officials who reached out to support the parish and attend funerals throughout the week.

"On this Gaudete Sunday we realize how quickly our joy can be turned to sorrow and how our faith can be challenged," Msgr. Doyle said in his message to parishioners.

In his homily he thanked St. Rose's parochial vicars, Fr. Ignacio Ortigas and Fr. Luke Suarez, for their prayerful work with families and assured parishioners that the diocese would reach out to the community and provide support through Catholic Charities.

Later that morning, Newtown and State Police became aware of threats from an anonymous caller and recommended that the church be evacuated. During Fr. Luke's homily, Msgr. Weiss stepped calmly to the pulpit and asked people to leave. Within minutes, SWAT teams were searching the church and the rectory with weapons drawn.

During the week that followed, priests throughout the diocese

rallied to Msgr. Weiss's side, with often as many as ten priests and deacons on the altar with him during funerals. Among them were Fr. Robert Kinnally, director of vocations; Msgr. Kevin Royal, director of clergy and religious personnel; Msgr. William Scheyd, pastor of St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan; and Msgr. J. Peter Cullen, pastor of St. Michael Parish in Greenwich.

St. Rose of Lima Deacons Richard Scinto, Norman Roos and Daniel O'Connor assisted at funerals and worked with grieving families throughout the week.

Families and staff were also comforted by the presence of Fr. John Insarra, now a parochial vicar at St. Mary Parish Greenwich. Fr. Insarra had served at St. Rose for six years until 2009 and felt compelled to reach out to those who were suffering. "I feel like it is my family," he said.

Neighboring parishes and pastors also reached out to St. Rose and to the grieving families. Fr. George Sankoorikal, pastor of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish in Brookfield, and Fr. Corey Piccinino, pastor of St. Mary Parish of Bethel, along with Deacon Joseph Gill consoled families. At Danbury Hospital, Fr. Ray Petrucci, chaplain, and Fr. Sam Scott, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Danbury worked with staff and family members.

Priests throughout the diocese marveled at the strength, compassion and depth of faith of St. Rose of Lima parishioners. It was clear that the parish's strength during a crisis reflected its vitality and depths as a faith community.

The trauma of the shootings was also felt at St. Rose of Lima School, which was under imme-



remembering

- Charlotte Bacon, 6
- Daniel Barden, 7
- Olivia Engel, 6
- Josephine Gay, 7
- Dylan Hockley, 6
- Madeleine Hsu, 6
- Catherine Hubbard, 6
- Chase Kowalski, 7
- Jesse Lewis, 6
- Ana Marquez-Greene, 6
- James Mattioli, 6
- Grace McDonnell, 7
- Emilie Parker, 6
- Jack Pinto, 6
- Noah Pozner, 6
- Caroline Previdi, 6
- Jessica Rekos, 6
- Avielle Richman, 6
- Benjamin Wheeler, 6
- Allison Wyatt, 6
- Rachel D'Avino, 29
teacher's aide
- Dawn Hochsprung, 47
principal
- Anne Marie Murphy, 52
teacher's aide
- Lauren Rousseau, 30
teacher
- Mary Sherlach, 56
school psychologist
- Victoria Leigh Soto, 27
teacher



ON THE COVER

Frank Middleton, a St. Rose of Lima parishioner, joins hundreds of others who attended Sunday Mass following the killing of 20 children and six staff members at Sandy Hook Elementary School. The parish buried eight of its own children and struggled to come to terms with the violence and loss. Parishioners were joined in their grief by people across the world who sent letters, prayers, spiritual bouquets and donations to help support the grieving families.

ABOVE THE MAST: Sandy Hook, a little known section of Newtown, is etched in the nation's conscience as a community of faith and love in the face of tragedy. PHOTOS BY MICHELLE BABYAK

CONTENTS

- 6 **MALTA FUNDRAISER**
For Bridgeport Catholic Schools
- 10 **LATE VOCATIONS**
A boon for the Church
- 13 **MATT HENNESSEY**
Questions without Answers
- 14 **MANDARIN CHINESE**
Lessons for Students
- 18 **ST. CATHERINE ACADEMY**
Explores Adult Services
- 21 **YOUTH: HAPPY**
To Call Trinity Home
- 24 **WHY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
Dr. Bill Fitzgerald
- 26 **BITS AND PIECES**
For the New Year



Newtown Tragedy

diate lockdown after the Sandy Hook shootings. Children waited in the church as SWAT teams cleared the building. The school then closed for the following week in order to shield children from the ongoing trauma of the funerals and the crush of the press corps.

In the interim, representatives from Catholic Charities and the diocesan Child Protection Office worked with faculty and parents to prepare them for the return to classes on January 3.

While St. Rose struggled with the loss of eight of its children, St. Stephen Parish, at the foot of the Route 25 Connector in Trumbull, also buried one of its own.

On Friday morning, the life of Mary Greene Sherlach, 56, wife of William Sherlach of Trumbull, was celebrated in Mass of Christian Burial said by Fr. Stephen Gleeson, pastor, during a wild wind and rainstorm. A native of Endicott, NY, Mary served as school psychologist and lost her life while trying to protect the children.

"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends," Fr. Gleeson said in his homily while surrounded by priests and deacons from the parish. He remembered Mary as a caring and loving mother and professional.

Keeping Vigil

(The following impressions and observations were drawn from attending the funerals held at St. Rose of Lima Parish for the children slain in the Sandy Hook shooting.)

By early evening on the day of the shooting, more than 750 mourners crowded into St. Rose of Lima Church in stunned and grief-stricken silence for a Vigil Mass, while

outside another 1,000 surrounded the church and pressed up against the open windows to pray and listen to Msgr. Weiss's words. The church parking lot was filled with reporters and familiar nightly-news TV anchors, many of them visibly moved and shaken by the shootings.

Almost immediately the church grounds became the site of outdoor shrines. People brought flowers, stuffed animals, roses, and Santas. They knelt to pray and light a candle.



Msgr. Weiss made the decision to leave the doors of the church open 24 hours a day as parishioners and people from the community kept a constant prayer vigil.

Everyone in the parish seemed to know someone who was personally affected by the tragedy. They came to pray, to publicly mourn and to let the families who lost a child know that their grief was shared by the entire community, and that for a while life had stopped for everyone.

Msgr. Weiss was the first clergy on the scene after responding to a request from Newtown Police. Accompanied by Fr. Ortiz and Fr.



they learned of the death of their young ones.

"The parents knew in their hearts that the children were gone," said Msgr. Weiss to one of many news crews that followed him in the coming days. "It was a privilege just to be present with them. As broken as they were, the love in the room was phenomenal even after such a great loss.

"Twenty children are with the Lord now. They were taken too young and too innocent," he said, struggling for composure.

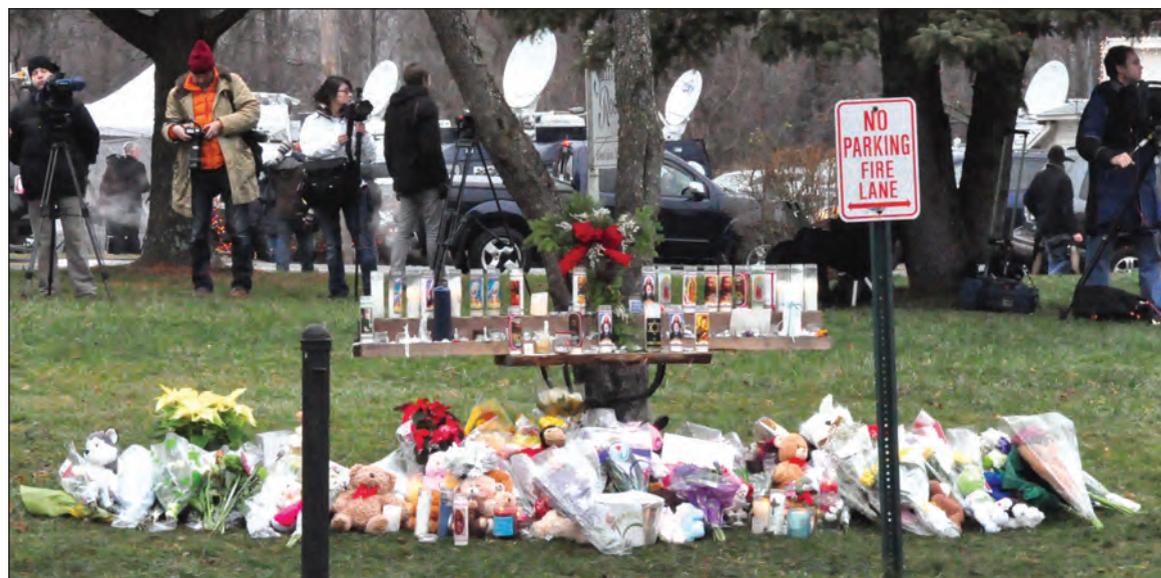
A Week of Funerals

- Beginning Tuesday of the week after the shootings, Msgr. Weiss performed eight funeral Masses for the children, one following another, often two in the same day.
- St. Rose was filled to capacity for each funeral, leaving as many as two hundred people mourning outside, listening to the hastily rigged PA system that allowed them to follow the Mass and hear the eulogy as blustery winds swept across the parking lot.
- A row of twenty-six candles impressed a white light across the front of the altar, one for each child and school staff member.
- Police officers from surrounding towns donated their time to help direct traffic and support Newtown personnel. Police and fire officials also formed an honor guard for the funeral processions. The Knights of Columbus were ever present, helping to clean the church between funerals and direct traffic in the jammed parking lot.
- Boxes of tissues were placed in the pews and on windowsills.

Parents seem to hold their children closer to them.

- More than 30 motorcycle policeman escorted the grieving families to the church, the red and blue light bars on the back of the cycles twinkling and gleaming in the overcast sky like Christmas bulbs on a family tree.
- Throughout the week the murmur of distant sirens drawing the procession nearer became the imminent thunder of motorcycle engines as they turned into the church driveway.
- As one funeral began at St. Rose, another passed by on Church Hill Road on the way to a different church. The steeple chimes sounded continuously as if forming a pulse for the town. Grown men wept in the street. People on the sidewalks bowed their heads and blessed themselves as the funeral procession passed.
- The twisted roots and gouged earth of large trees uprooted by super storm Sandy were still visible along many of the roads now lined with hand-painted angels and prayer signs.
- A delegation of over 300 firemen journeyed to Newtown for the funeral of Daniel Barden, who had wanted to be a fireman when he grew up, standing at attention while the family arrived and then filing into the church where they stood two-deep in the aisles during the service. Outside, a circle of FDN "Pipes & Drums" musicians played "Amazing Grace" as the families walked into the somber afternoon.
- All week mourners couldn't get warm; they shivered in the damp and cold wind that battered the church grounds.

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Newtown Tragedy

NATIONAL TRAGEDY FROM PAGE 3



Once inside, the shivering turned to an inner trembling made of the anxiety, anger and exhaustion.

- Eight times Msgr. Weiss reached into the idling limousine to draw the grieving family into the church; eight times he embraced the parents at the Kiss of Peace; eight times he sprinkled holy water on the coffin and commended the children to their final rest.
- Mourners took in a breath at the size of the small white caskets that were wheeled down the center aisle. A large picture of each child was placed alongside the altar.
- After Communion, the comforting music of "Silent Night," the solemn finality of "Ave Maria," and the haunting recessional, "All I ask of you is forever to remember me as loving you."
- Many mothers delivered the eulogies with their husbands standing beside them. Laughter mingled with sobs as they described the foibles and funny antics of their children who were so vividly and lovingly recalled.

- "Only a mother's love could give them the strength to do that," said Msgr. Weiss, who joined in the spontaneous applause as the couple returned to their pew.

Remembering the children

We learned that Daniel ran like the wind... that Catherine "with a C" wanted to be a caretaker of animals; that Jessica was a devoted "big sister" who loved horses; that James loved to eat, belt out a song, and work with his dad in the backyard.

That Olivia was going to play an angel in the Living Nativity; that Caroline was a talented artist and athlete; that Grace loved seashells and fashion and lit up all those around her; that Joey, who was autistic, "couldn't speak but she could love..." and she enjoyed spooning her peanut butter from the jar.

The children from St. Rose of Lima Parish who died at Sandy Hook School are Daniel Barden, 7; Olivia Engel, 6; Josephine Gay, 7; Catherine Hubbard, 6; James Mattioli, 6; Grace McDonnell, 7; Caroline Previdi, 6; Jessica Rekos, 6.

In his homilies Msgr. Weiss did not offer easy answers, but said that the Church was the only place that the parents and the community could take something so unspeakable and begin to find healing in God's presence.

He repeated that the courage and openness he found in parents of the slain children gave him the strength to minister to the parish.

... "We have no answers, but we all have hearts, and they belong to you today."

... "If you think you're over the anger, you're not." It's okay to be angry, even at God," but you have to let it go because anger is a dead-end."

Many of the parents who had buried children earlier in the week came back for the funerals of the children yet to be buried.

Throughout the week Msgr. Weiss mentioned that many parishioners and townspeople told him that they wanted to get rid of their video games and guns. He told them that was a good start but the real task was to build a "culture of life."

The last funeral, on Saturday, was held for Josephine "Joey" Gay. After Mass, her "big sister" helped

pushed the small white casket out of the church. Outside, mourners were surprised by sparse snow flurries that would have delighted a child, swirling over the pavement with no intention of sticking.

"There is too much darkness in this world and not enough light," Msgr. Weiss said repeatedly, urging everyone to make changes in their own life. "If these twenty children don't change us, nothing will." ■

A Mother's Faith

Fairfield County Catholic is honored to print this extraordinary letter from Jenny Hubbard, mother of six-year old Catherine Hubbard, who lost her life at Sandy Hook School in Newtown. The depth of her faith and strength of her love are an act of grace and a gift to all those struggling with the tragedy.

When I close my eyes I see Catherine cradled in the palm of His hand. I see her softly giggling. She is opening her arms to all the animals. She is sending us comfort in ways that only God's angels could know how. She is with God, she is at peace.

When I could not find her, I felt a calm fill my heart and I knew in that moment she was with God. I knew that she was safe, safer than I could ever make her. I miss her. There will be a hole in my heart that widens each time I remember something so simple that was so Catherine. Each time I feel that my tears will not stop, I am pulled back to a place of peace and find comfort that Catherine was called to a job much bigger than I can even fathom. I know that God has a specific purpose for us and while I may not understand right now how I will muster the strength to fulfill His purpose, I must remain centered on His face. He will provide what I need to move forward. He will provide the soft nudges to help me feel confident that I am doing what He intended.

We are all put where we are for a very specific reason. My daughter, along with the victims of Sandy Hook School, brought a world to their knees in prayer. Twenty babies and six adults were able to do what some thought never possible. They have set the stage for us and we have a responsibility to continue what they started. We have a responsibility to continue to serve our children and help them be rooted in their faith. We are bound to this place and must bring our children's understanding of faith to a new level.

So many people are talking about getting back to normal. I am not sure that that is really what we want. Are we willing to accept that normal includes allowing our children to not feel safe in their schools? Are we willing to say that normal is a place where 1st graders, teachers and administrators being brutally killed is acceptable? I pray that we do not go back to normal. I pray that we find a new normal that is restored in faith. I pray that we continue to draw on God's love and peace. I pray that the world is comforted knowing that they are wrapped in God's cloak.

This week our son asked how God would do this? We told him, God didn't do this. We are human, we have free will, there are people that do not listen to God's voice and decide to take their own path. When we stop listening to our hearts, we stop listening to God's voice. We stop acknowledging that we are in this place for a very specific reason. As you celebrate the New Year and settle back into the lives you led prior to December 14th, I pray that you know that you are exactly where you need to be and that you hear God's gentle voice helping you find the words that you need to say. I pray that we find comfort and solace knowing that God loves each one of us and will wrap each one of us in his arms when the days become too much. I pray that the world returns to their faith. ■



Diocese of Bridgeport establishes funds for Sandy Hook Elementary School Tragedy, Newtown, CT

BRIDGEPORT—In response to the overwhelming number of calls and outpouring of offers of support to all those affected by Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy, the Diocese of Bridgeport has established funds to aid the community through counseling and St. Rose of Lima Parish.

In acts of kindness, goodwill and support, people from across the nation and around the world have been calling the diocese and St. Rose rectory, pledging financial support to those affected by the events of last Friday.

As a result, the Diocese of Bridgeport has set up two funds: St. Rose of Lima Parish Fund to help the parish as it continues to reach out to families and parishioners in the aftermath of the tragedy and through ongoing programs and services to the parish family.

Trauma Response Fund for Catholic Charities provides emergency outreach, crisis counseling and ongoing behavioral health services to all those in the larger community who come forward for help.

(Gifts can be made through www.bridgeportdiocese.com with a link

to Sandy Hook Tragedy. All gifts are tax deductible. For more information, call 203.416.1470 at the Diocese of Bridgeport.) ■



Local News

St. Joseph dedicates O'Keefe Academic Center

TRUMBULL—"On the original drawings, this was a barren room," Dr. William Fitzgerald, president of St. Joseph High School told a full house on December 2 in the auditorium of the school's new O'Keefe Center. "We had to dig a little bit to get level with the first floor. And someone said, 'as long as we have to dig, let's build an auditorium—and an art room, and some classrooms and Holy Joe's Cafe and an elevator so we are finally handicapped accessible.'"

"That has been the story of the O'Keefe Center. People came along and looked and said 'I would like to help.'"

Trumbull First Selectman Tim Herbst joined supporters of the project, touring the new wing before the dedication ceremonies. "I see a facility like this and the outstanding education in this building, and realize such wonderful things are going on here," said Herbst.

Msgr. Jerald A. Doyle, diocesan administrator, blessed the center. With him was Fr. Michael Novajosky, St. Joe's chaplain, himself a 2001 SJ graduate.

Robert and Maureen O'Keefe, for whom the center is named, personify the depth of dedication found in supporters of Catholic education. They proudly point to 18 children and grandchildren who have attended diocesan and Catholic schools and universities.

"We are all called by Christ to

spread his Good News, and by supporting SJHS we help sustain an environment where the Good News is not only preached but is also lived," say Robert and Maureen, who are members of St. Stephen Parish in Trumbull.

"St. Joseph's prepares its students for the realities of life through academic rigor, competitive sport and meaningful moral challenge. Our daughter Mary and son Joseph are graduates of SJHS, as well as our granddaughters Kaity, Kristin and Caitlin. Our granddaughter Noreen is currently a freshman."

The academic center is the result of a strategic planning process that started over ten years ago, when it was recognized that, in order to effectively fulfill its mission as a college preparatory school, SJHS needed to enhance some of its facilities as well as add new. In addition to providing proper spaces for team-based learning and development of 21st century skills, the addition allowed for improvement in overall flow through the building. The new lobby offers those entering access to the school chapel, the athletic facilities or the new media center.

The O'Keefe family was joined by a large number of generous donors and benefactors, working together to push the dream of the academic center into reality. Robert O'Keefe is a member of the Advisory Board and chair

of the Facilities Committee, as well as the chair of the Academic Center Committee. He directed the construction process through 81 weekly construction meetings.

He and Maureen are also recipients of the Sr. Catherine Fanning award, St. Joseph's highest honor. "We are pleased to have been part of this project and we are so thankful to all who have poured themselves into its successful completion," they say.

The center has a library, meeting rooms, classrooms, art rooms and a 240-seat auditorium. New courtyards and a lobby meld it seamlessly into the original façade of St. Joseph's. General Contractor Al Secondino & Son and Architect Ray Sullivan turned the conceptual designs by Fletcher Thompson into a 21st century learning center that will change the way students learn.

Dominated by a dramatic glass tower, the addition sweeps to the chapel, emphasizing the spiritual mission of the school. The foyer displays St. Joseph's motto, 'Privilege and Responsibility,' while over the chapel door, the words "Ite Ad Joseph" welcome all into St. Joseph's chapel.

The addition's look came from Interior Designer Deborah Ludorf of Paradise Hill Design in Southbury. The auditorium was the biggest challenge, she says. "I wanted to provide a space that felt collegiate and looked toward the future."



MSGR. JERALD A. DOYLE blessed the new O'Keefe Academic Center at St. Joseph High School on December 2. He is joined here by Fr. Michael Novajosky, St. Joe's chaplain and a 2001 SJ graduate, and junior Jared Quigley.

"The O'Keefe Center suits the dynamic and changing needs of education in the 21st Century," says Fitzgerald. "It will change the way we teach; it will improve the way students learn."

The response from the students themselves affirms his statement. "I look forward to spending as much time as possible in the new media center," says senior Erin Johnson. "I love how it expands my classes to more

than just the regular classroom. The only downfall is that I don't get to spend every class there!"

Classmate Dylan Spagnolo elegantly summed reaction to the academic center in a haiku called Vistas:

"Media Center,
Brand new opportunities,
Into the future."

(For images and film footage of the school, and more information, visit www.sjcadets.org.)

Norm Walker receives papal honor

BRIDGEPORT—Norman R. Walker of New Canaan, former Chief Financial Officer of the Diocese of Bridgeport was presented the Benemerenti Medal for his dedicated service to the church during the annual Christmas celebration at the Catholic Center. Diocesan Administrator Msgr. Jerald A. Doyle presented the Medal from Pope Benedict XVI to a stunned Walker, who received a standing ovation from employees and guests.

The Benemerenti medal was first awarded by Pope Pius VI (1775–1799) to recognize military merit. In 1925, it began to be awarded as a mark of recognition to persons in service of the Church, both civil and military. The medal has the word *benemerenti* (Latin for "person of good merit") surrounded by a crown of oak leaves. The medal is worn on the breast, suspended by ribbons of the papal colors.

Walker stepped down in June as diocesan CFO after seven years of service to the diocese. The former partner of PricewaterhouseCoopers came out of retirement in 2005 at Bishop Lori's request to improve the financial stewardship and accountability of the diocese. The Oregon native, who had delayed his retirement until Archbishop Lori transitioned to Baltimore, has continued to advise the diocese. Under Walker's leadership the diocese made sweeping changes in its financial systems and reporting structure, including a new Parish Finance Manual, web based accounting and digital information management.

During the luncheon, Msgr. Jerald A. Doyle, diocesan administrator, also recognized employees who have completed 25 years of service to the Diocese of Bridgeport:

Carolyn Agoglia, St. James School, Stratford; Mary Daley, St. Augustine School, Bridgeport; Michelle Durubeis, Our Lady Star of the Sea School, Stamford; Joanne Kimmel, St. Joseph School, Danbury; Audie Louis, our Lady of Fatima School, Danbury; Jo Ann Lounsbury and Diane Thyse from Sacred Heart School Little Lambs, Danbury; Linad Menz and Joanne Parrella, from St. Thomas Aquinas School, Fairfield; Vincent Pennatto, St. John Cemetery in Darien; Danny Robledo, facilities, the Catholic Center; Daniel Waldo from St. Michael Parish in Bridgeport.



Local News

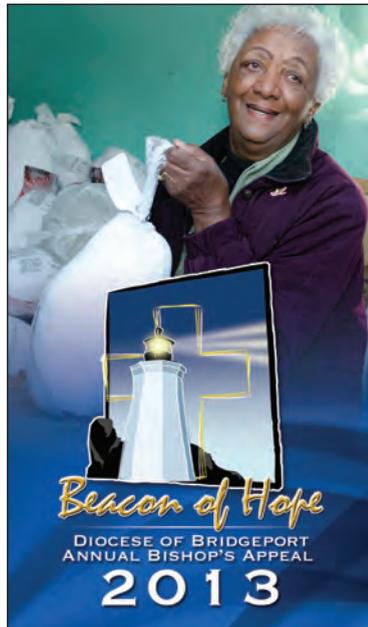
Appeal focuses on the importance of early giving

BRIDGEPORT—As the Diocese of Bridgeport awaits a new bishop, it has moved forward in preparation for the 2013 Annual Bishop's Appeal, the major yearly funding source for diocesan programs and ministries. The diocese will formally launch the Appeal in February in the 82 parishes throughout Fairfield County.

Last year's Appeal raised more than \$11.3 million to support Catholic schools, seminarians, retired priests, religious education and pastoral services, hospital and nursing home ministries, and a wide range of Catholic Charities programs including soup kitchens, food pantries, behavioral health services and shelter assistance for the working poor.

"The important work of the diocese goes on and challenges each of us to serve others through prayer, good works and acts of charity," says Msgr. Jerald A. Doyle, diocesan administrator. "Our donors understand that the Annual Bishop's Appeal is an expression of our faith and a way to directly reach out to people in need in our communities."

He adds, "The best way to prepare for our new bishop is to



continue to support the ministries and programs that serve Catholics throughout the diocese. It is important that they remain strong and responsive to the needs of our parishioners and the community." Msgr. Doyle notes that the diocese has consulted with pastors and interviewed donors as part of an overall strategy to improve information, streamline costs, and make giving easier for participants.

Jeff Machi, chief development officer for the diocese, says

that plans for this year's Appeal include fewer mailings to reduce postage and printing costs. "In 2012, the cost to conduct the Appeal was six cents for every dollar received. The largest influence of costs has been postage. We hope to encourage early donations and will arrange fewer mailings to further reduce costs and maximize funds directed to ministries," he says.

Machi says the diocese has also worked to continually improve the Appeal website, so that people can easily make gifts in a secure and convenient way. "Giving on the website ensures that your funds go directly to ministries without the cost of postage and printed materials," he says, noting that donors are contributing to a wide range of services that represent the compassion and care of the Church, often when no other source of help is available.

While unrestricted gifts are encouraged, donors have the opportunity to restrict their support to specific funding areas such as Catholic Charities, Catholic schools, seminarians, hospitals and nursing home ministries, and retired priests. Simply mark your desired area of support on the

pledge card.

Checks may be made payable to the Annual Bishop's Appeal, and a credit card gift may be payable online or by pledge card. All gifts will be acknowledged by the diocese and are tax deductible to

the fullest extent of the law. An envelope is included in this edition of Fairfield County Catholic.

(For more information go to www.2013ABA.com, or to make your gift early, pledge by emailing: 2013ABA@diobpt.org.)

Malta plans school benefit

NEW YORK—The American Association of the Order of Malta will host a cocktail reception to benefit the six Catholic inner-city schools of Bridgeport on March 4. The event will be held at the Yale Club of New York from 6-8 pm. Sean Cardinal O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston, will be the guest of honor.

going on to college. Many are the first in their families to do so," says Sr. Joan Magnetti, rscj, executive director of the CEC.

She says that all students join in prayer and a robust Catholic religious education program, while the schools are also a welcoming place for the 43% of students who are from



In addition to providing a Catholic faith environment for these children, the Cathedral Education Cluster (CEC) offers a strong academic experience. In May, 2012, national test scores reflected that more than 93% of children in the third, fifth and seventh grades could read and complete math at or above grade level.

Dan Negrea, co-chair of the event says, "Catholic schools are crucial to providing educational resources for families with fewer opportunities."

The average cost of education in the CEC is \$6,000 per student, and most families contribute approximately \$1,500 toward this amount. The remaining difference is made possible through the generous support of benefactors. Approximately 60% of the children require financial assistance to meet the cost of tuition.

"Our dedicated faculty prepare students for academic success in high school, with 100%

non-Catholic families.

"The faith-based education forms our students in a strong moral life that makes them responsible citizens for the world of tomorrow," she says.

Children in the cluster speak 13 different languages in their homes. "These schools bring profound hope to the inner-city and break the cycle of poverty through education and opportunity," Sr. Magnetti says.

The Order of Malta held a similar fundraiser for these schools in 2010, and the proceeds were used to fund 15 financial aid scholarships for needy families. It is their hope to renew these financial scholarships for the Cathedral Education Cluster again in 2013.

(If you would like to attend the reception, visit www.bridgeportcatholicschoolsfundraiser.com, or call Susan Cesere: 203.416.1466.)





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Local News

Glimpse of a closed country

By PAT HENNESSY

"Cuba is a project," our HavanaTours guide told us. "It's a socialist system under a communist party with a developing entrepreneurial spirit." What it will be in the future is up for grabs.

While the Cuban embargo is still in force, it has been eased to allow family members, humanitarian workers, and educational groups to enter the country. In October, I was able to join an educational tour, visiting schools, farms, nursing homes and medical clinics. It was a window into a country that had been cut off from most of the outside world for longer than half a century.

A bit of background: On January 1, 1959, a triumphant Fidel Castro strode into Havana, Cuba. Fifty years ago, on October 22, 1962, President Kennedy went on national television to announce that spy satellites had photographed Russian missiles, aimed at American cities, in Cuba. The world came within a blink of nuclear war.

Relations between the United States and Cuba went into a deep freeze. The Cuban embargo ensured that neither goods nor people would travel between the two countries. Isolated, Cuba turned to the Soviet Union as its only protector.

Moscow kept close relations with Cuba until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Cuba, still an extremely poor country, now has economic ties to China and a few other Communist countries. Forced to improvise,

the Cuban people have become inventive and resourceful—and fiercely patriotic, even while they resent government restrictions on their freedom.

Although Castro's government was initially hostile to the Church, I found some surprises during our trip. We visited the National Cathedral in Havana, where Mass has been celebrated without interruption right through Castro's takeover until the present time. I stopped in its Adoration Chapel and saw worshippers kneeling in quiet prayer. In smaller cities and towns Catholic churches were open, with a regular schedule of Masses.

A little post-visit digging showed a more complex Church-State history. Following the revolution, all Church property—schools, hospitals, orphanages, nursing homes—was taken by the government. Jaime Cardinal Ortega, a sharp critic of the Castro government, was imprisoned in a Communist labor camp. There he was treated badly, to use the mildest of terms.

Yet Cardinal Ortega, named Archbishop of Havana in 1981, continues to speak his mind freely. He was the key figure behind the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1998.

"In the 1980s, religion had a low profile, and was tolerated but fairly marginal," says Professor Joy Gordon of Fairfield University, who has published a number of articles on Cuba. A shift in relations with the Church, Dr. Gordon says, came after the Soviets left. "In 1991 a change in the constitution allowed believers

to be Communist party members." In a single-party state, the change was significant. "It was a shift from an atheist state to a secular state."

Palabra Nueva, the news magazine of the Archdiocese of Havana, is highly regarded. It has never been censored, nor have local Catholic newsletters published throughout the country. "Sometimes the Church is critical of the state on the part of particular policies, but the relationship is civil," Dr. Gordon says.

In particular, the government appreciates the humanitarian efforts of the Church, represented most prominently by Caritas International, which supported the nursing home we visited. The gentle presence of Sisters from the Spanish religious order of Los Hermanitas de los Ancianos Desamparados (Sisters of the Helpless Elderly), gave the home a warm, welcoming atmosphere.

Due to its isolation, Cuba is a showcase for both successes and the failures of socialism. Two areas, medicine and agriculture, emphasized very different outcomes of the socialist agenda.

Free, universal healthcare is mandated by the Cuban constitution; Cuba has more doctors, per capita, than the United States. Their highly-acclaimed medical schools have trained doctors, nurses, and health care workers for all of Latin America. Clinics like the one we toured are the basis of the healthcare system, with emphasis on early diagnosis and prevention.

Members of our group who had medical knowledge noted that, while equipment in the nursing home and medical center we visited was adequate, the devices were somewhat outmoded.

"You will see that we have medicines like penicillin, but not newer drugs," a doctor told us, explaining how the embargo, which restricts imports to Cuba from any foreign company doing business in the U.S., hinders the delivery of health care. "Not even an aspirin can come in without restriction."

For an American, the thought that this country would embargo medicines came as a shock. I checked with government officials when I came back. "The embargo allows exceptions for



THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL IN HAVANA, Cuba, has celebrated Masses without interruption through the Communist takeover by Fidel Castro and up to the present day. Nevertheless, Church-State relations in Cuba have had a complex, often difficult, history. (PHOTO BY PAT HENNESSY)

medicine and agricultural products," I was told. On the whole, though, the Trade Sanctions and Reform Act, administered by the Treasury Department, requires a specific license for exports of medicines and medical items. Certain criteria, such as on-site monitoring requirements, make acquiring updated medical equipment impossible for local clinics.

One area where the socialist economy has failed, and spectacularly so, is in agriculture.

We were taken to visit a tobacco farmer and to explore an ecological farm, both prosperous. But my view of the countryside on the way to these locations revealed miles of fertile land, former farms, reclaimed by scrub. Hillsides that should have welcomed grazing cattle were void of herds. Small local sheep seemed the only livestock, and even those were not plentiful.

"In general, Cuba has been
➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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World and National News

After Newtown, bishops call for cultural changes

WASHINGTON, DC—Disturbing trends of violence in society should prompt both policy examinations and cultural changes, said committee leaders of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

“It is time for our nation to renew a culture of life in our society,” they said a December 21 statement responding to the shooting in Newtown. They urged a reconsideration of national firearm policies, mental-health treatment availability and violence in the entertainment industry, as well as broader efforts to restore the value that society places on human life.

Offering a message of comfort and peace, the bishops extended their prayerful solidarity to all those affected by the “horrific evil.”

“No words can capture your suffering,” they acknowledged. “We look to Christ, his words and deeds and, ultimately, to his cross and resurrection. It is in Jesus that we place our hope.”



Respect for human nature is key to peace, Pope says

“Peace is not a dream or something utopian; it is possible,” Pope Benedict XVI insists in his message for the 46th World Day of Peace. The World Day of Peace was celebrated on January 1. The Pope’s message for the 2013 observance is titled “Blessed are the Peacemakers.”

In his message the Pope says that “the desire for peace is an essential aspiration” of all men. “Man is made for peace, which is

God’s gift,” he writes, adding that “peace is both a messianic gift and the fruit of human effort.”

Topics covered in the wide-ranging papal message include religious freedom, the issues of work and unemployment, the food crisis, the financial crisis, and the role of the family in education.

The theme of the Pope’s message is that peace is imperiled by ideologies that fail to acknowledge the fundamental truths of human nature.

He writes: “The denial of what makes up the true nature of human beings in its essential dimensions, its intrinsic capacity to know the true and the good and, ultimately, to know God Himself, jeopardizes peacemaking.”

These truths about human nature, the Pope emphasized, are not merely beliefs of the Catholic Church. “They are inscribed in human nature itself, accessible to reason and thus common to all humanity.”

National Migration Week observed January 6-12

WASHINGTON, DC—National Migration Week was observed in dioceses around the country January 6-12. This year’s theme, “We are Strangers No Longer: Our Journey of Hope Continues,” included a postcard campaign that calls for comprehensive immigration reform.

This year’s theme also celebrates the tenth anniversary of the joint pastoral letter, “Strangers No Longer: Together on a Journey of Hope,” issued by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano in 2003. In the pastoral letter the bishops reflected on migration between Mexico and the United States as a “sign of the times” that is necessary and beneficial, with promises and challenges.

“Catholics have a responsibility to welcome newcomers into our communities and parishes, help them integrate and provide material and spiritual support that will allow them to flourish,” said Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration. “National Migration Week is an opportunity for the Church to remember and reflect on these obligations.”

As part of this year’s National Migration Week celebration the USCCB Migration and Refugee Services launched a postcard campaign that calls on Congress to pass fair and comprehensive immigration reform that would:

Provide a path to citizenship for undocumented persons in the country.

Preserve family unity as a cornerstone of our national immigration system.

Provide legal paths for low-skilled immigrant workers to come and work in the United States.

Restore due process protections to immigration enforcement policies.

Address the root causes of migration caused by persecution and economic disparity.

“The administration and Congress should work together to secure legislation that will provide a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, provide legal means for migrants to enter our nation to work and reform the system to allow family reunification,” Archbishop Gomez said.

The observance of National Migration Week began over a quarter century ago by the U.S. bishops to give Catholics an opportunity to take stock of the wide diversity of peoples in the Church and the ministries serving them.

Christian population of England and Wales falls

LONDON, England—The percentage of residents of England and Wales who identify themselves as Christians fell from 72% in 2001 to 59% in 2011, according to census statistics released in December.

The same decade witnessed a sharp rise in those with “no religion” (15% in 2001 to 25% in 2011) and a rise in the Muslim population (3% to nearly 5%). The percentage of Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Buddhists remained nearly steady.

13 new Catholic schools to be built in Melbourne

Melbourne, Australia—The Archdiocese of Melbourne’s Catholic education office has announced that it will open 10 primary schools and three secondary schools in the suburbs of Melbourne, Australia’s second-largest city.

146,400 students are enrolled in the archdiocese’s 329 Catholic schools; enrollment has increased 10% since 2003. “This is a much higher proportion of new enrollments than we’re used to,” said the executive director of Catholic Education Melbourne, Stephen Elder. He said the schools will be in areas where new housing developments are under construction.

Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne is a leading provider of school education. It represents the sixth-largest education system in Australia, operating in the third-largest Catholic diocese in the world.

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World and National News

Bishops must re-evangelize all the Americas

ROME, Italy—In Rome in mid-December for a conference commemorating the 15th anniversary Blessed John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore said that prelates must work together to re-evangelize the Americas.

"I think it's important for us to recognize the common Christian identity of the continent of America, and for that we only have to turn to our Lady of Guadalupe," he said. "With the advent of such rapid communications, trade, with the common problems that we are facing such as the drug trafficking, there is a great need for us to work together.

"And as I observe the United States of America and as I see that all of the growth in population is coming from immigration, it is almost self-evident that we have to work together, that we have to forge, strengthen those bonds of communion and solidarity so that we can unite in re-evangelizing the whole continent," he continued.

"It's important for bishops and priests to give our people the tools they need to go forth and evangelize the world, to build this civilization of love" Archbishop Lori added. "So



often I think there are missed opportunities when preaching becomes rather general, when, in fact, our families our professional men and women our children are facing so many challenges in our culture."

World population: 32% Christian, 23% Muslim

The world population is 32% Christian, 23% Muslim, 15% Hindu, 7% Buddhist, and 0.2% Jewish, according to a new demographic study from the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life.

The Pew Forum found that 157 countries have a majority Christian population, while 49 have a majority Muslim population. The five nations with the largest Christian population are the United States, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, and the Philippines. The average Muslim (23) is younger than the average Christian (30).

Obama calls conscience clause 'ill-advised'

President Barack Obama called a conscience clause for military chaplains in the National Defense Authorization Act "unnecessary and ill-advised."

The provision ordered that no member of the armed forces may require a chaplain to perform a rite or ceremony that violates the chaplain's beliefs. Religious liberty advocates and chaplains worried that they may be required to violate their consciences by administering sacraments or officiating

at marriage ceremonies for gay service members, which would be contrary to their religious beliefs.

"The Armed Forces shall accommodate the beliefs of a member of the armed forces reflecting the conscience, moral principles, or religious beliefs of the member and, in so far as practicable, may not use such beliefs as the basis of any adverse personnel action, discrimination, or denial of promotion, schooling, training, or assignment," the bill read.

President Obama, who declared his personal support for gay marriage last year, said the bill's concerns are unfounded. "The secretary of defense will ensure that the implementing regulations do not permit or condone discriminatory actions that compromise good order and discipline or otherwise violate military codes of conduct."

Although he did not agree with the provision, President

Obama signed the 680-page bill on January 2, saying that "the need to renew critical defense authorities and funding was too great to ignore."

Catholic image found under portrait of persecutor

Curators at London's National Portrait Gallery have made the stunning discovery that a portrait of Sir Francis Walsingham—who led the persecution of Catholics under Queen Elizabeth I—is painted over an image of the Virgin Mary and Child Jesus.

The image under Walsingham's portrait, discovered by an X-ray of the painting, suggested the possibility that a Catholic artist had deliberately left a distinctly Catholic image beneath the surface. The National Portrait Gallery found a similarly Catholic image—a Flagellation of Christ—underneath a portrait of Thomas Sackville, Queen Elizabeth's treasurer. ■



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Vocations

Late vocations boon for the Church

WESTON, MA—According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, the population of Catholics in the United States has risen by more than 18 million during the last forty years. As a result, there is an increasing need for priests to serve the faithful of the Church.

Priests in the Diocese of Bridgeport attend a number of different seminaries, based on their background and theological concentration. One of them, Blessed John XXIII National Seminary located in Weston, MA, is unique in that it is the only national seminary in the United States dedicated to the formation of men 30 to 60 years of age. Established in 1964, it administered by diocesan priests.

Candidates come to the seminary from a wide variety of backgrounds, including law, medicine, business, education, sales, finance, social work and both government and military service.

"These accomplished seminarians have already contributed to their communities through a secular profession," says Fr. William Palardy, the seminary's rector. "The diversity of life experiences shared by these mature candidates enriches both the seminary community and their future ministries in the Church."

Among the priests of this diocese, one former high school teacher can claim Blessed John



"MY PATH TO THE PRIESTHOOD was not traditional," says Fr. Edward McAuley, administrator of St. Bridget Parish. At Blessed John XXIII National Seminary, which was founded to assist late vocations, he found encouragement from classmates who, like him, had been married and widowed before following a call to the priesthood.
(PHOTO BY PRICILLA MALLOY)

XXIII as his alma mater. Fr. Edward McAuley, currently administrator of St. Bridget of Ireland Parish in Stamford, had been a social studies teacher at Trumbull High School for 32 years.

Born in Stratford, where he

was an altar boy at St. James Parish, he met his future wife, Suzanne, at a friend's wedding. The couple was married in St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull, Sue's home parish, and enjoyed 23 years of marriage before she died in 1995. They

have three children, Anne Marie, Edward, and Daniel.

While it is unusual to meet a priest who has been married and raised a family, the Diocese of Bridgeport was already home to Fr. Albert Audette, Jr., a widower with four children and 14 grandchildren. At John XXIII Seminary, Fr. McAuley was in a class of 60 seminarians, about 20 of whom had followed a path similar to his and were widowers with grown children.

He was assisted in his path by another John XXIII alumnus, Fr. Frank Winn. Now pastor of St. Paul Parish in Greenwich, Fr. Winn had recently been assigned to St. James Parish when Fr. McAuley began exploring the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood. Fr. Winn had been a media analyst in Manhattan's competitive advertising world before entering the priesthood.

Fr. McAuley's first assignment was to St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull. He was parochial vicar at St. Stephen Parish in Trumbull and St. Mary Parish in Bethel before coming to St. Bridget's.

"My path to the priesthood was not traditional," he says. "Blessed John XXIII National Seminary is exclusively a seminary for later vocations to the priesthood. I found it especially helpful to find classmates who were also widowed."

At Blessed John XXIII, men

are offered a program of priestly formation in an environment specifically suited for the adult learner. "God calls us at different times," observes Fr. Robert Kinnally, director of vocations for the Diocese of Bridgeport and himself a late vocation. "God must want the value that our experiences contribute to our ministry. But it can be harder for a man with a later vocation."

He points out that both the educational and social needs of men with a late vocation are different from those of the traditional undergraduate. "I'm glad we have a wonderful place like Blessed John XXIII National Seminary. They do a great job of making the transition a smooth one, and the men really support one another."

During the almost 50-year history of Blessed John XXIII National Seminary, 600 of its alumni have served in over 130 dioceses and religious orders. Current seminarians represent 31 dioceses and four religious orders throughout the United States and beyond.

"God wastes nothing," says Fr. McAuley. "His plan is always best. At St. Bridget's, I'm definitely where God wants me to be."

(Men interested in discerning a vocation to the priesthood can call Fr. Kinnally: 203.416.1512. For more information about Blessed John XXIII National Seminary, visit their website: www.blessedjohnxxiii.edu.) ■

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Vocations

A Long Way Around

By **GEORGE CASSIDY**

A life-changing event reset Deacon Ralph Segura on his path to the priesthood.

Ralph Segura was not close to God in early life, but a double-barreled spiritual awakening and a traumatic personal event have brought him to what he believes is a comfortable, personal relationship and a meaningful vocation.

Deacon Ralph is a transitional deacon, which means that he is in his final year of studies for the priesthood. He is assigned

to St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan. St. Aloysius' pastor, Msgr. William Scheyd, asked for Deacon Ralph to be assigned since his academic work was complete and he was available for parish duties. The partnership seems to be working, since both Deacon Ralph and Msgr. Scheyd are hopeful he'll be permanently assigned to the parish after his ordination next year.

Deacon Ralph is a 50-year-old Norwalk native and this is his second stint in the seminary. Like most Catholic kids, he completed

the first cycle of sacraments in childhood: Baptism, Confession, Communion and Confirmation. From that time until well into young manhood, he remained outside the Church, living what he characterizes as a "wayward existence."

During this period, drifting through his teens and twenties, he was afflicted by unease and dissatisfaction with the apparent lack of direction in his personal affairs. Those feelings led him to explore various spiritual and secular

➤ *CONTINUED ON PAGE 19*



THE RICH PARISH LIFE of St. Aloysius Parish welcomes the assistance of Deacon Ralph Segura, a transitional deacon looking forward to priestly ordination. Here he joins teens of the parish at this past summer's Fan the Fire teen rally in Newtown. (PHOTO BY CHRIS OTIS)



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EDITORIAL

Enthusiasm
for Catholic Schools

Students think learning Chinese calligraphy is fun. They love examining the innards of a calf heart. A one-celled creature, viewed under a microscope, opens new worlds for them. The wonders of their faith, experienced in an Advent liturgy or Living Nativity, fill their hearts with joy. They are eager, curious, bursting with energy and creativity.

Catholic schools week, observed January 27-February 2 this year, will feature special Masses, open houses, and activities for students, families, parishioners, and the wider community. It's worth dropping by. Enjoy the kids' artwork. Follow the year's activities in photos posted on the bulletin board. Listen to songs from a dozen different cultures. Visit the computer room (the latest project: trace the roots of Roman architecture) and the biology lab (human anatomy, with a nervous system fashioned out of clay).

From tissue paper snowflakes in Pre-K to advanced robotics as a senior class project, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport embody this year's logo from the National Catholic Educational Association: a chart of steady growth culminating in the highest achievement of all, a cross representing the faith that underscores all Catholic education.

We have the right to boast about our Catholic schools: their high test scores, especially in math and science; their ground-breaking promotion of STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) programs; and their encouragement of multicultural education. Above all, we can boast of the love of learning students gain in our schools.

Every one of them, in their knowledge and enthusiasm, is an outstanding assertion of the success of Catholic education.

Bringing faith
to the unspeakable

Goodness exists. The words might seem like blind faith or pure folly in the face of the murder of 20 children and six adults. But it was there for the eyes of the world to see: the great dignity and love of the parents; the selflessness of teachers who ran into the line of fire and threw their bodies on top of the children to protect them; the courage and compassion of First Responders; the profound generosity of those who volunteered and donated as an act of solidarity with the bereft parents.

We will never forget the prayerful and deeply human witness of Msgr. Robert Weiss, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish. While the world was watching in shock and sadness, he became the face of the Catholic Church: compassionate, open, pastoral. His priestly presence after the horrific violence brought the Church to bear in the most intimate and powerful way in the lives of those who were suffering.

Msgr. Weiss was the first clergy person present at the school, before the world knew what happened. And throughout the ordeal, he was joined by the other priests, deacons, Sisters and lay ministers of St. Rose of Lima who worked around the clock under considerable stress to bring healing to their wounded parish.

"We're told that the loss of these children will change everything. It already has changed all of us. The question is what do we do about it. How do we change ourselves," Msgr. Robert Weiss said in one of his homilies as he challenged mourners "to build a culture of life."

It's clear we have much more work to do as a society. How could we not feel that we've failed our children? Yet the Church offers us a path toward reverence and respect for life; a place to stand before the altar broken and find wholeness in the sacrament of unity. People brought one of the worst days in American history to the Church because they had nowhere else to go with it. And in the response of priests and the embrace of a faith community, the healing began. ■

THE ROAD TO NEWTOWN

By DON HARRISON

Some would call it divine intervention. I am in no position to disagree. On the Saturday immediately prior to Christmas, my wife Patti and I made the 18-mile trek from our home in Fairfield to Newtown. Our intent was to visit St. Rose of Lima church and say a prayer for the 26 victims of the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School. No fewer than eight of the 20 slain children were parishioners at St. Rose.

As we approached the church, we found a parking lot filled with cars, many of which were police vehicles from communities throughout Connecticut. On the opposite side of Church Hill Road, nearly a dozen media cameras were in place to record...what?

Entering St. Rose through a side door, we were stunned to discover that the funeral had just begun for one of the victims, Josephine "Joey" Grace Gay, 7. Msgr. Robert Weiss, the pastor, was concelebrating the service with more than a dozen priests.

"You should be angry," Msgr. Weiss told the large gathering of mourners that included former U.S. Congressman Christopher Shays and his wife, Betsi. "But don't hold onto it."

Josephine Gay, who had turned seven just three days prior to the shootings at her elementary school, was autistic and unable to speak. But her father, Bob Gay, told the congregation, "You don't need words to say, 'I love you.'"

He and Josephine's mother, Michele, spoke about their daughter's many gifts and the life lessons she taught them. "Don't sweat the small stuff. It's all small stuff," he related. "Even the smallest of us can do great things."

All of us, big and small, can do something great for Josephine Gay and all of the other victims of this tragedy, to ensure that they did not die in vain.

It is crystal clear to me and a growing number of Americans that semi- and automatic weapons should be limited to the military and law enforcement personnel.

Adam Lanza used a semi-automatic weapon, the assault-style Bushmaster AR-15, to murder his mother, the 20 students and six educators at Sandy Hook Elementary on the morning of December 14.

Nobody—aside from the military and law enforcement—needs a weapon that can kill dozens of people within a few ticks of the clock. The NRA and other pro-gun proponents will cite the Second Amendment—the right to keep and bear arms—but keep it in context. The founding fathers drafted this amendment in a long-ago era when guns were muskets and the shooter was required to reload a bullet and gun powder after each shot.

This is a complex problem. Violence in movies, TV and video games, along with mental illness

and our current policies of closing hospitals and cutting counseling services, all contribute to these mass killings. From the elementary school in Newtown to the deliberately set fire in Webster, NY, from a shopping mall in Portland, OR, to a movie theater in Aurora, CO, from a house of worship in Oak Creek, WI, to a café in Seattle, WA.

All of these atrocities occurred in calendar year 2012. There have been too many others in the recent past, notably the killing of 32 people on the Virginia Tech campus in 2007 and the 1999 carnage at Columbine Middle School in Littleton, CO, that resulted in 15 deaths, including the two shooters.

Here is what we can do to prevent slaughters from happening in the future: Contact your representatives, and tell them that gun laws must be strengthened. Implore them to create legislation that will ban assault-type weapons and 30-round magazines from the public.

The ban won't address mental-health issues that often play a role in these heinous assaults. But taking assault weapons off the street could reduce the number of mass shootings. ■



CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

Msgr. Jerald A. Doyle, JCD, Diocesan Administrator, has made the following clergy appointments in the Diocese of Bridgeport:

MARRIAGE TRIBUNAL

FATHER MICHAEL A. BOCCACCIO, Pastor, Saint Philip Parish, Norwalk, to part-time in the Marriage Tribunal, Catholic Center, Bridgeport. Fr. Boccaccio will continue as Pastor. Effective date is February 1.

PAROCHIAL VICAR

FATHER SUDHIR D'SOUZA, Parochial Vicar, Saint Matthew Parish, Norwalk, to Parochial Vicar, Saint Philip Parish, Norwalk. Effective date is February 1.

Rev. Msgr. Kevin Royal, Delegate for Clergy Personnel
January, 2013

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

Msgr. Jerald A. Doyle, JCD
Publisher

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Circulation

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Annual Subscription Price

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Editorial



The saint who ever consoles me

A WOMAN'S VIEW

BY ANTOINETTE BOSCO

Antoinette Bosco is a member of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish in Brookfield.

On the last day of January, we celebrate the feast day of a 19th century Italian saint who first came up with the idea of a “boys’ town” to help adolescents see their worthiness because of their origin and destiny as sons of God. Even as a poor teenage farm boy, he was trying to get the attention of boys like himself, who lived in poverty and with hopelessness, hoping he could convince them not to turn to meanness and crime. Unusually strong and brilliant, he became a juggler, a magician and an acrobat and used these great talents to get the attention of these troubled

boys. The price of admission to these shows was a prayer.

His name was John Bosco, and he went on to live his whole life helping the ragged, abused and abandoned young people he met to find hope and joy. He became a priest and established schools and ministries for young ones. He ultimately founded the Salesians, a religious order with a mission to teach and care for the young ones.

Because my married name was Bosco, I became very interested in this saint. When my second son was born, I named him John Dominic. The Dominic was for St. Dominic Savio, the pupil of

John Bosco’s who died at age 15, only three years after coming to the boys’ town to learn from the priest he revered. He was proclaimed a saint by Pope Pius XII in 1954.

I remember a summer day when my John was 15. I was at the kitchen sink washing vegetables. He came up behind me, lifted me by my bent elbows and said, laughing, “Mom, you better pray you raised me right.” He was referring to his strength—so like his patron saint’s—that I always told him had to be used for the good of others. I laughed back and said, “I did, I named you after St. John Bosco.”

Born in poverty, raised by a mother who was ever concerned about his spiritual care, this boy John—brilliant, strong, a tight-rope walker, a juggler, even a magician—also had a phenomenal memory. He was known to be able to repeat the sermons he heard at Mass, word for word. He could accomplish just about anything he chose to try, like playing the violin, tailoring, blacksmithing, woodworking, making cold

drinks, liqueurs and pastries. With his tremendous skills, he could have been successful at any number of worldly vocations. But he was being called by a different voice, and he knew it. He entered the seminary.

On Trinity Sunday, June 5, 1841, John Bosco was ordained a priest in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Italy, and became known as Don Bosco, which then was the traditional manner of addressing priests. He did not know at that moment what his life work would be, but four months after his ordination, something happened that definitely changed his life. He met an orphan who was trying to keep warm inside the church, while the sacristan was shouting to him to get out. Don Bosco rebuked the man, and then started talking to the boy, whose name was Bartholomew Garelli, inviting him to come back on Sunday with some of his pals. He did, and the street boys began to come back every week, more and more of them each week. That was the beginning of what became

the “Oratory of Saint Francis De Sales,” where pupils could be trained by the new religious order Don Bosco founded, the Salesians, named for a saint he so loved, St. Francis de Sales.

As a writer, I must also admit that my tremendous admiration for Don Bosco was also inspired because he was a book-lover. In fact, he obtained printing presses for his students, and taught his boys to run them, publishing, as was written, “beautifully crafted” books. He emphasized, “How many souls have been saved by good books; how many have been preserved from error; and how many have been encouraged to do good...”

Fast forward to August, 1993: My son John and his wife Nancy had recently bought a new home in Montana, and called to tell me they were taking a trip to Colorado. I said have-a-good-time and I’ll talk to you at the end of the week. Somehow I was restless and decided to take a slow trip through Vermont to visit family members in Albany,

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 25



Questions without answers

A DAD'S VIEW

BY MATTHEW HENNESSEY

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

In our house, the questions usually start when I’m hanging the American flag on the front porch. What happened? When? Where?

Well, there used to be these buildings in New York City...

Well, a long time ago at a place called Pearl Harbor...

Well, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month...

These are not easy conversations. The answers eat away at a child’s belief that the world is filled only with goodness.

The hardest question, always, is, “Why?”

Parents everywhere struggled to explain the senseless shootings in Newtown to their naturally curious children. Parents everywhere struggled to explain it to themselves.

For me, the tragedy brought to mind William Butler Yeats’s “The Stolen Child,” a moonlit, fever-dream of a poem that exists in the slumbering space between the mortal world and the world of the fairies. Children who stumble into this supernatural realm can be lured by its residents into staying forever. The faeries whisper temptations:

Come away, O human child!

*To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world’s more full
of weeping than you can
understand.*

In his statement on the tragedy, Msgr. Jerald Doyle, the administrator of the Diocese of Bridgeport, urged Catholics to “be a true source of assurance of His loving presence in our lives.”

I think that’s right. When delivering the bad news, it’s best to remember the Good News. There is evil and there is madness—the world is full of weeping—but God loves us. We don’t know why these things happen, but we know his love remains.

At eight, my daughter Clara is now the oldest of four. Like most kids, curiosity is her greatest asset. Occasionally, however, it leads her into emotional territory that she’s ill prepared to navigate. One night, she looked up from a book and asked, “Dad, what does ‘retarded’ mean?”

“What on earth are you reading?” I said.

“It’s about President John F.

Kennedy,” she replied. I knew at once that she was asking about Kennedy’s younger sister, Rosemary, who was institutionalized by her family after a catastrophic prefrontal lobotomy at the age of 23.

Clara’s younger sister, Magdalena, has Down syndrome. This is not a conversation we looked forward to having with Clara, though we knew the questions would one day come.

I told her what the word meant, and then I told her how some use it to hurt others’ feelings.

“Why do they say it if they know it’s not nice?”

“They think they’re being funny,” I told her. “They don’t realize that they’re actually being very mean.” She just listened, quietly, mulling the notion that one person would be deliberately cruel to another.

“There is ugliness in the world,” I went on. “In fact, there are things far uglier than using a word to hurt someone’s feelings and we can’t always do much to change it.” I wondered who it was

I trying to console, me or her.

“The important thing is to remember that God is with you when you feel angry or confused or hurt,” I said, doing my best to be a true source of assurance of his loving presence in our lives.

Every time I have one of these chats with Clara, I die a little. I know I am sowing seeds that will eventually blossom into doubt and, possibly, despair. But evil exists, and there comes a point in a child’s life that she needs to know about it.

There is madness and violence. There is random death and inexplicable cruelty. But there is also redemption. Jesus suffered in order to save us through the mystery of the resurrection. There is Good Friday, yes, but there is also Easter Sunday.

Who knows why bad things happen? I certainly don’t. But I know we are called to faith. We are called to surrender ourselves to his will.

For the world’s more full of weeping than we can understand. ■



Catholic Schools Week

January 27–February 2

Schools begin instruction in Chinese

By PAT HENNESSY

“Nǐ hǎo” at St. Catherine of Siena School in Trumbull greet their Chinese teacher. The greeting (Mandarin Chinese for “hello”) is becoming familiar to students and teachers throughout the diocese as all Catholic schools begin the teaching of Mandarin this semester. Whether it is offered as an optional enrichment program, as at St. Catherine’s, or is a regular part of the curriculum, all schools will give students the opportunity to become familiar with the language of the world’s second super power.

“With the importance China has in the global economy, it

is important for our students to have an understanding of the language and culture of that country,” says Dr. Dames, who visited China this past year. “All of our schools are offering programs in Chinese this semester.”

Dr. Dames emphasizes that the decision to integrate Chinese into the curriculum of the diocesan schools won’t replace the Spanish language instruction already in place in the school system. Rather, a level of comfort with Chinese will help students develop a global awareness. “This is the 21st century,” Dr. Dames points out. “We live in a global society.”

“Our teacher is a native of China, and she’s wonderful,” says Beth Hamilton, St. Catherine’s principal. St. Catherine’s Chinese enrichment is offered to students from second through fifth grades. “The first day she brought in a panda bear, and had the students learn to tell their names to the panda. It was warm and comforting. For the ones who were shy speaking a new language, it put them at ease.”

“They absorb so fast at this age,” says Wenyan Witkowsky, who grew up in Shanghai. A former teacher in the New Haven public school system, she also runs an enrichment class at St. Thomas Aquinas School in Fairfield and at a Chinese language school, and she tutors students privately.

She teaches the class primarily in Chinese, teaching first familiar words for family—mom, dad, brother, sister, baby. The students have learned a cheerful song

“I love my family.” Repetition of the simple tune anchors the words in their minds.

As the Christmas season approached, students learned the words not only for the holiday but for snow, snowman, and presents. As the Chinese New Year approaches, they’ll learn words for the special activities and foods that accompany the festivities. Witkowsky encourages their work with the frequent encouragement of “hěn hǎo”—good job!

Students not only learn not only the words themselves but the Chinese characters for them, and practice the gentle art of producing the words. “I like to write the Chinese letters,” says fifth-grader Stephen Valluzzo, who thinks it’s cool to learn new languages. “You can travel places and know how to talk to people.”

He credits his excellent accent in Chinese to the fact that it’s his third language. He’s already familiar with a second language, Spanish, which he studies at St. Catherine’s.

While St. Catherine’s already has Chinese enrichment classes in place, St. Joseph School in Danbury started it with the beginning of the January semester. “We’re going to start off slowly,” says Lisa Lanni, St. Joseph’s principal.

St. Joseph’s was the latest diocesan school to receive national Blue Ribbon School status. Lanni plans to move from an after-school enrichment program to a regular part of the curriculum, starting in pre-kindergarten. “As they move up the ladder, it



“I LIKE TO WRITE the Chinese letters,” says Stephen Valluzzo, a fifth-grader at St. Catherine of Siena School in Trumbull. Here, he’s learning the symbols for sun, moon, and rain. All diocesan schools began offering instruction in Chinese this semester.

will become a cultural experience—especially the art aspect, which makes it creative and fun for the kids—as well as a language experience,” she says. “My goal isn’t merely for the here and now. To have these kids graduate eighth grade knowing three languages—I wish I had that when I was a kid. I’m very excited about the prospect.”

Across the diocese in Greenwich Catholic School, the pre-k and kindergarten classes will also be the first to add Chinese to their learning experience. “Greetings, colors, numbers—there are so many ways to incorporate it,” says Joan Williams, the school’s enrichment and STEM teacher. “When the youngest ones practice counting, they can learn numbers and the Chinese words for those at the same time.”

Elements of Chinese culture will be included in all areas of the curriculum. “In the middle school, the computer teacher can have them do the research on Chinese New Year,” Williams says. “The religion teacher can ask them to find the patron saints in China. Older students can research the status of the Church in China. Do they celebrate Christmas? Our aim is to have every teacher bring in a little bit.”

Following this semester, teachers will get together and share what works.

“We have to recognize the prominent position China has in the 21st Century,” says Dr. Dames. Looking ahead, diocesan schools will explore the possibility of teacher exchanges and the opportunity for study abroad for students at the high school level.

CUBA
FROM PAGE 7

struggling to expand its agriculture,” says Dr. Gordon. She notes that Cuba, a naturally fertile country, has become an importer of food. The government has acknowledged the problem and is taking steps to rectify decades of decline. “They have started converting state land to private ownership and co-ops, and offering incentives and loans to farmers.”

A one-week visit, no matter how intense, provides only a snapshot of conditions in a country largely isolated from the rest of the world. In time, hostilities between the U.S. and our near neighbor may ease. The change would benefit both countries. ■

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Catholic Schools Week

Dawn Pilotti makes a difference

BRIDGEPORT—Dawn Pilotti, the middle school social studies teacher at St. Ann School in Bridgeport, was the recipient of the “Tim Russet Making A Difference Award” presented at the 2012 benefit dinner for The Inner-City Foundation For Charity & Education on October 25.

Long a supporter of Catholic schools, the late Tim Russert had spoken on more than one occasion at the Inner-City Foundation dinner. In 2001 he established the “Making A Difference Award.” He enumerated three qualities to be possessed by a “Making A Difference Award” winner: a teacher who “goes the extra mile” one who “donates their time,” and a teacher who “stays after school to work with the kids.”

Originally, the award was to be presented annually during his lifetime. Following Russert’s untimely death in 2008, in honor of his



ST. ANN TEACHER Dawn Pilotti (right, back row) makes a difference in her students’ lives whether she’s helping them raise funds for a school in Kenya or working with the school’s Mock Trial team. Pilotti was awarded the “Making A Difference” award at the Inner-City Foundation benefit dinner.

commitment to The Inner-City Foundation, the board of directors voted unanimously to provide the funding to continue the award. The diocesan Office for Education selects the award winner.

Theresa Tillinger, St. Ann’s

principal, nominated Pilotti for the award. “She exemplifies the qualities of this award more than any teacher I have ever encountered,” Tillinger wrote in her nomination. “She has made a difference in the lives of countless children, both

in the way she has advocated for individual students and their families, and the way she has inspired groups of children to make a difference in their world.”

She gave numerous examples of Pilotti’s interaction with children, including her support of the National Parks Service BioBlitz program, her work with the school’s Mock Trial teams, and her involvement with Arts Integration projects which gained the attention of the Acropolis Museum in Athens.

Most notably, Tillinger mentioned Pilotti’s encouragement of the Free the Children movement that enveloped the entire St. Ann School community. With Pilotti’s guidance and support, students set up lemonade stands, made bottle cap jewelry, and engaged in a number of other efforts to raise money to build a school in Africa. They exceeded to the

point where the Free the Children organization chose St. Ann for their International Big Dreamers award for two consecutive years. After four St. Ann students traveled to Kenya on a Free the Children scholarship to help build the school they had raised funds for, St. Ann’s was featured in November in a “60 Minutes” television segment.

Dawn Pilotti holds a bachelor of science degree in mathematics and the history of art and archaeology from Fairfield University, post-graduate credit from the International University in Athens, Greece, and a master’s in the history of art and archaeology from New York University. She has lectured in the galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, was the former assistant director of the Walsh Art Gallery at Fairfield University and was

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

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Catholic Schools Week

St. Raphael science lab

By PAT HENNESSY

"To have this little gem of a school in the Hollow section of Bridgeport—it's an oasis of learning," says Dr. Margaret Dames, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Bridgeport, speaking of St. Raphael School.

The bright, cheerful science lab at St. Raphael's is a result of the vision of its principal, Sr. Deborah Lopez, ASCJ, and the generosity of an anonymous donor. "We are so blessed to have this beautiful space!" says Sr. Deborah. "When I came here in 2010, this donor said to me, 'What is your vision for the school? What would you like to have?'"

Her response was immediate—a dedicated science lab. "You can't do a science curriculum in a classroom anymore," she says, going on to explain that, at St. Raphael, science starts with the pre-K class. "When the youngest children come up to this floor and start setting up their growing kits,

you might as well be taking them to Harvard. They're that excited."

The donor has given \$38,000 to ensure that the lab at St. Raphael's is equipped with everything necessary, not just microscopes and test tubes but a waterproof floor that can handle water table experiments gone awry, and moveable tables that can be reconfigured to facilitate everything from group work to aerodynamics. "When the students were studying vectors, they designed their own airplanes and laid out a measured course to evaluate how far each design flew," says Sr. Deborah, smiling widely at the memory.

In stocking the lab, St. Raphael's drew on the expertise of Sr. Lisa Florio, RN, ASCJ, a science specialist who at that time was working in Pennsylvania. As luck would have it, Sr. Lisa joined the faculty of St. Raphael as their science teacher this year.

"We needed safety things first, things like a fire blanket, an ultraviolet goggle sterilizer, and eye

bath," Sr. Lisa says. "After that, the students had to learn how to use equipment, everything from graduated beakers to an electron microscope." A SMARTboard and a portable projector links slides or student diagrams to a large screen so that a class can see details as fine as the grain in a rock or surprising life in puddles of rainwater.

At St. Raphael's, students learn to view science as a whole. The three physical sciences—biology, chemistry, and physics—are explored in greater depth each year, whether students are growing plants in the younger classes, learning about the solar system in fifth grade or analyzing chemical and physical reactions in the eighth grade.

In common with schools throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport, science at St. Raphael's is integrated into the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) curriculum. They employ all these elements when they try to estimate the optimal vectors for racing Hot Wheels, or design packaging to protect eggs dropped from the top floor onto the parking lot.

Beyond that, the curriculum integrates science into visual and

language arts. "How will you describe your experiment? How will you follow up on reporting?" Sr. Lisa asks students. All summaries have to be given in well-written sentences, with correct grammar. "If you ever get published in a scientific journal, you have to be able to write correctly," she tells them.

The encouraging, welcoming atmosphere at St. Raphael's, which offers not only a pre-K class but before and after school activities, provides an atmosphere in which students can aspire to be published in journals—or succeed in any endeavor they choose.

"The generosity of our benefactor will have repercussions for



AN ELECTRON MICROSCOPE opens new worlds for Guymara Manigat, an eighth-grader at St. Raphael School in Bridgeport. A grant from an anonymous donor, the science lab at St. Raphael's prepares students for a promising future.

many years to come and will help us to prepare countless students for high school and college—and beyond!" says Sr. Deborah. ■

MAKE A DIFFERENCE FROM PAGE 15

the coordinator of school programs for the Metropolitan Museum of Art Cast Collection at Fairfield University. She teaches as an adjunct professor of Art History at Fairfield University, where she was recently nominated for adjunct professor of the Year.

"While her biographical sketch is impressive, it is her passion for educating and advocating for students of all ages that is inspiring," Tillinger wrote. "She has made, and continues to make a difference by empowering young people to know that they, too, can make a difference."

"It was an honor to recognize a person of the caliber of Dawn Pilotti," says Dr. Margaret Dames, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Bridgeport. "She exemplifies the qualities of an outstanding Catholic school educator." ■

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Catholic Schools Week

Bioengineering teaches independent thinking

By PAT HENNESSY

“Engineering is a way of thinking, a particular learning strategy,” says Jo-Anne Jakab, principal of Kolbe-Cathedral High School in Bridgeport. “It emphasizes problem solving skills—students learn by doing.”

The emphasis on hands-on learning and problem solving demanded by engineering has led Kolbe to offer engineering courses as part of their curriculum. “We have been offering engineering courses in our curriculum for four years now,” says Jakab. Engineering I, introduction to engineering design, introduces students to basic engineering concepts.

“They learn how to solve problems through critical thinking,” she explains. “They discover that it’s a trial and error process—it’s okay to make a mistake.”

Engineering II gives students a glimpse of different types of engineering, with electrical, environmental, chemical, and civil engineering components. The latest offering, biomedical engineering—the body and how it works—was added to the curriculum this year.

On one December morning

the class was concluding their study of the circulatory system by dissecting and analyzing the heart of a calf. Mostly seniors at Kolbe with a scattering of juniors, they’ve already studied the respiratory system and the lungs, and have seen how the oxygenated blood goes through the heart. They built clay models of a heart, complete with arteries and veins, and learned what a working heart should look like.

Now the discovery process begins. Working in small groups, they reference a demo on their computers as they began.

“Observe before you start cutting,” teacher Bethany Blackwood cautions. Rather than standing in front of the classroom and directing their actions, she moves from table to table, answering questions and making suggestions as needed.

Blackwood had trained this past summer with Project Lead the Way. “With this process, students don’t have a recipe to follow,” she says. “We don’t even have a textbook. Every kid has a computer, and the curriculum is on the flash drive. Links can lead them deeper into the subject, if they’re interested. They’re independently learning.”

The group around one table shows Blackwood what they are sure is the aorta, but it seems clogged with some spongy material. “Keep in mind that when something dies, organs start to change,” she advises them, affirming that they have, indeed, found the heart’s main artery.

The students in this group trace small black dots that turn out to be veins, and jump when a blood clot explodes under their instruments.

“It’s not common to have a blood clot in an animal this young,” notes Dominique Jackson, a junior who is interested in a career in forensics. She points out that the heart is unexpectedly large for a young animal. “There’s a lot of fat on it. You can tell the hormones in their feed are already working on it.”

Dominique muses that, if the hormones affect an animal this young, they probably produce a similar result in people. “I’ve never had a class where you can really cut up a heart,” she says. “It’s investigation. You don’t know what you will find.”

This February, Blackwood hopes to take the class on a field trip to the University of Pittsburgh, where Project Lead



EXAMINATION OF A CALF HEART encourages critical thinking in a biomedical engineering course at Kolbe-Cathedral High School. Teacher Bethany Blackwood encourages independent learning. (PHOTO BY PAT HENNESSY)

the Way has its headquarters, for a course on tissue regeneration.

Several Kolbe students, along with members of the High School Engineering Academy held Saturdays at Fairfield University, took part in a field trip to St.

Vincent’s Medical Center in December. They examined state-of-the-art medical equipment and heard from professionals in a field that, if they decide to pursue their interest further, they will be well prepared to enter. ■

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St. Catherine Academy

Exploring services for adults with disabilities

FAIRFIELD—What happens to young people with disabilities when they have completed their education? What will my young adult do once they stop going to school? This is a question that the staff at St. Catherine Academy was challenged to answer as students began to complete their educational program at the diocesan school for special needs children.

“We began to assist parents with connecting with agencies who provide services once a student turns 21 and is no longer eligible for education benefits,” says Helen Burland, president of St. Catherine Academy. “And then one day, we were asked, really challenged, to consider extending our program beyond the traditional age 21 to include young people who are looking for a continued learning experience with community and vocational experiences.”

St. Catherine Academy, founded in 1999, is a diocesan school that serves the academic, vocational, life and social skills needs of children with intellectual and other disabilities. The program has an elementary/middle school component; an adapted high school component and a transition program. Students are referred by their home school districts or are privately placed by their parents.

In 2012, the KOCH Foundation of Gainesville, FL, funded a grant request submitted by St. Catherine’s to support a planning year aimed at evaluating the feasibility of offering a program that would continue their mission with a continuum of services for individuals beyond age 21 with developmental or cognitive disabilities. This program would build on the mission and success of St. Catherine’s to

create opportunities for individuals to participate in community life; develop and reinforce life skill competencies; support individuals’ abilities to make personal choices for their future; and assist in maintaining relationships with family members and friends—all in an environment that treats them with dignity and respect.

The grant supported hiring a program coordinator whose responsibility is to research existing services, assess the need in the surrounding community and evaluate the feasibility and sustainability of such a program. Laura Grozier, a parishioner at St. Thomas More Parish in Darien, was hired in September and has been reaching out to current service providers to develop an inventory of services currently available. In addition, she has interviewed parents who have students and young people in



DEPENDING ON THEIR ABILITY, students at St. Catherine Academy may learn life skills like cooking or move on to web-based programs. In collaboration with Fairfield University, St. Catherine’s is looking into providing a continuing learning experience for students who have passed their 21st birthday.

order to develop an understanding of elements in a program that would be desirable. The final piece of the background research included an online survey that was sent to all school districts in Fairfield County to complete the assessment.

Beginning in January, Grozier will be collaborating with Professor Kathy Giapponi of the Fairfield University Dolan School of Business, who teaches an undergraduate class in strategic planning for nonprofit organizations. Professor Giapponi and her class will be tackling some of the elements of the plan that includes transportation, funding and sus-

tainability. This collaboration and the feasibility study was a key element of the grant.

At the conclusion of the planning year, the school advisory board at St. Catherine Academy and the administration of the Diocese of Bridgeport will meet to discuss whether or not to move forward with this expansion. This would require approval from the Department of Developmental Services of the State of Connecticut. This process can take up to six months and includes an extensive application and site visit.

As St. Catherine Academy
➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

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Vocations

===== A LONG WAY AROUND FROM PAGE 11 =====

alternatives, which were plentiful in the 1990s, trying to add value.

Eventually, they brought him back to his childhood Catholic roots. Beginning with a tentative phone call to his former parish priest and the gift of a Bible from his mother, he soon immersed himself in religion to add depth to what he felt was a two-dimensional existence.

Eventually and naturally, his religious interests focused on the priesthood as a life's work. He began his studies in the Diocese of Bridgeport, under the guidance of then Vocations Director Msgr. Stephen DiGiovanni. After taking

an undergraduate degree in philosophy from Fairfield's Sacred Heart University, he was assigned for graduate work at the North American College in Rome.

It was there that his road to the priestly life ended for the first time. At the end of his second year in Rome, just a little way short of ordination, Deacon Ralph was beset by doubts.

"Celibacy was not a concern in all this," he asserts strongly; that common stumbling block for clerical aspirants didn't figure in his decision to return to the world. Instead, he believed that he was not ready to move for-

ward to a permanent commitment. His belief, at the time, that there was "something else out in the world" led him, at the age of 36, to abandon his studies and return to a business career.

Back in the world, at first Deacon Ralph maintained just a nominal relationship with religion and the Church. However, the ennui associated with that lifestyle soon had him returning to a regimen of daily prayer and frequent attendance at Mass.

Then, late in the evening of Christmas Day 2008, the world stopped.

Returning from a shopping expedition, he stepped into the street. He woke up four days later in a hospital wheelchair. It was at this juncture

that Deacon Ralph believes God spoke to him, if not conversationally, then in the form of a strong inspirational push.

"I realized I'd been hit by a car. I couldn't see my body and didn't know how badly I'd been hurt, but two thoughts came immediately to mind. The first was that there was no use getting angry about my state of affairs. The second was that mending would take some time."

Time was what he needed just then, to determine the course of his life. "It was as if God had said to me 'Put yourself in my hands and I'll make sure things turn out all right.'"

He stayed in the hospital for a month. After that there were six months in a wheelchair and additional months in a walker. He wasn't able to return to work until spring 2010, by which time he was fully and enthusiastically committed to resuming his priestly studies.

Deacon Ralph submitted the extensive credentials required by the Bridgeport Diocese for its aspirants. On a second front, he began arrangements to enter studies in Florida in the event he wasn't accepted at home. However, Bridgeport came through, assigning him the Mount St. Mary Seminary in Emmitsburg, MD, in

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

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Sports

Under the radar, Gibson's game soars

By **DON HARRISON**

The fourth-leading scorer in the nation last season played for a college in Connecticut?

Jeremy Lamb of UConn? Not even close.

The answer is a name that too few people are aware of—Shane Gibson of Sacred Heart University in Fairfield. The Stamford-born, Killingly-bred 6-foot-2 guard had a breakout season as a junior, averaging 22 points per game, a performance that placed him fourth among all NCAA Division I basketball scorers.

Lamb, the high-profile star who would become the Houston Rockets' first-round selection in the NBA draft, checked in with a more modest 17.7 scoring average.

Dave Bike, the huge bear of a man who is in his 35th season as Sacred Heart's head coach, compares Gibson with the great-

est scorers he's coached, right up there with Division-II All-Americans Darrin Robinson and Keith Bennett.

"He's as fine a scorer as we've ever had," Bike insists. "I thought Shane set some high expectations last year and he met most of them. He was definitely a candidate for Player of the Year (in the Northeast Conference). If we had finished first or second instead of eighth, he would have been Player of the Year."

Gibson's scoring average—the highest in Sacred Heart's 14 seasons of Division-I competition—resulted from a combination of an indefatigable work ethic and a sublime shooting touch. On some evenings, he would sleep in the Pitt Center on campus and "I'd be at the foul line in the morning. Our team manager, Andrew Owens, he'd rebound all day for me."

Shane's .433 percentage from three-point range ranked 12th in

the country last winter, and he was also uncommonly accurate from the field (.510) and at the foul line (.862). He holds the Pioneers' career record for free throw percentage with .844.

Gibson reached a personal peak of 41 points (16-28 FG, 6-13 3-pointers) in a double-overtime loss to Mount St. Mary's.

An injury to his left knee in pre-season has hampered his senior year and put a damper on the Sacred Heart season, but he nonetheless entered January with a 17.0 scoring average, placing him among the top five in the conference.

In the season opener against Yale, Gibson registered 24 of his game-high 29 points in the second half and overtime, lifting Sacred Heart to a hard-earned 85-82 decision over the Elis. After back-to-back losses, Shane took charge by scoring the Pioneers' final 11 points in a come-from-behind 64-62 verdict over Stony Brook on the road.

"The knee is still affecting me, but once I get that back, I'll be back to where I should be," he says.

Basketball has been part of Gibson's life for as long as he can recall. His father, Al, coached AAU ball and also officiated the game. "My brother and I were the ball boys for his travel teams," Shane says.

He was a two-time All-State selection at tiny Killingly High School, soaring for a school-record 52 points in a game against Windham. But he wasn't widely recruited. Sacred Heart and another Northeast

Conference member, Central Connecticut State, offered scholarships, and Quinnipiac, yet another NEC member, showed some interest, but that was about it.

Credit Johnny Kidd, a Sacred Heart assistant coach, with sealing the deal.

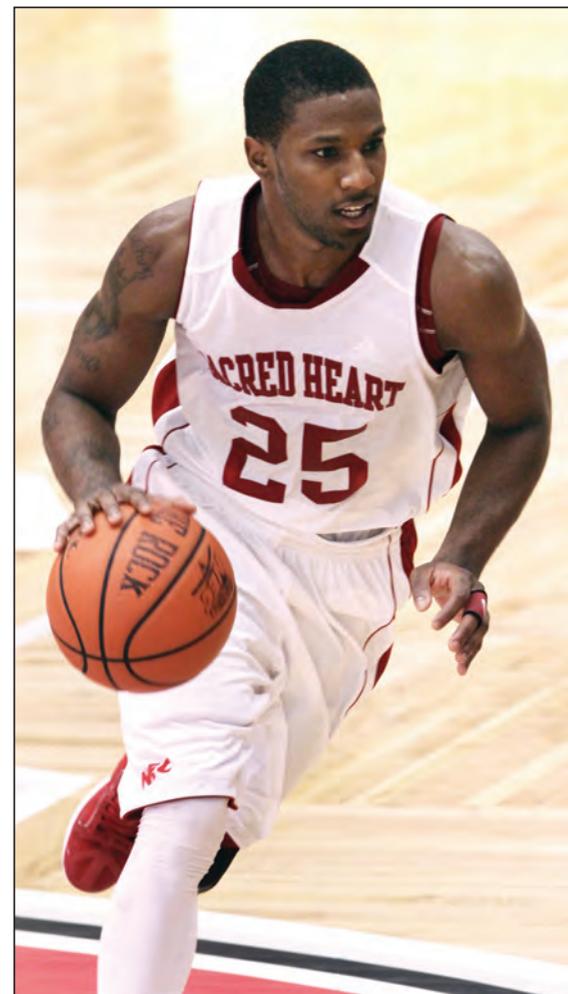
"I played in an AAU tournament at Sacred Heart when I was 16 years old, and Coach Kidd saw me," Gibson explains. "Coach Kidd was cool, and I felt that was the right place for me."

Right place also translates into community service. Gibson and his Sacred Heart teammates volunteer at Dunbar School in Bridgeport, where they mentor students in grades two to four.

Only 34 Connecticut natives have made the quantum leap

into the NBA or the American Basketball Association. Could Shane Gibson become the next?

He intends to try. "I do want to play professionally. No other job is going to satisfy me," he says, "at least at this point in my life."



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DISABILITIES
FROM PAGE 18

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Happy to call Trinity Catholic home

By SHANNON RUBIN

Are you familiar with the book *Alice in Wonderland*? It's about a girl who jumps down a rabbit's hole and discovers a world that looks pretty similar yet operates far differently from hers. After switching schools, I realize that Lewis Carroll was on to something. Unlike Alice, though, I didn't fall down a rabbit hole and discover a strange new world; instead I was driven (no bus!) 10 miles east in my new uniform (no jeans!) and discovered something that looked familiar but was anything but.

I spent my freshman year at Greenwich High School, and I just transferred to Trinity this year. On the outside, the two schools are very similar. Sure, Trinity is much smaller than Greenwich and it is a religious school, but surely they're not that different. I'm taking the same exact courses now that I would have at Greenwich High and I'm still involved in the same activities outside of and after school. How much difference can size and religious affiliation make?

The answer to that has been clear since I first set foot inside of Trinity. My "shadow day," where I followed a student around

school for the first part of the day, took place in early May. Truth be told, it didn't seem much different from Greenwich... that is, before I began to notice slight nuances.

For one, students actually SAID the Pledge of Allegiance. During homeroom, all the students stood and said the Pledge loud and clearly right after their prayer. This would never, ever happen at Greenwich. Most teachers simply ignored it when the Pledge came on. On the rare occasion where a teacher would actually stop class and encourage us to say the Pledge, only a couple of others and I could be heard muttering as we looked at the flag. Most people kept their mouths sealed, and some couldn't even be bothered to put their hands over their hearts.

I also found that the paradigms were far different between public and Catholic school kids. I remember that I kept nagging the student that I shadowed about what religion class was like and what she thought about it. The idea was so new to me, since I'd never learned about Catholicism in school before. At one point, she turned the questions on me when she asked about what I was learning in religion class

at Greenwich. I laughed and said that there were no religion classes at public schools, which surprised her. I proceeded to give an explanation about "the separation between Church and state as declared in the Constitution" before realizing what a huge dork I sounded like.

Later that day, however, I became the ignorant one. The students in the history class I was in said a Hail Mary before a quiz, and I had absolutely no clue what was going on. Before I knew it, the prayer was over, yet I was left behind, still wondering what on earth I had just experienced. I then took the quiz, which was familiar to me. This accentuated exactly what I thought of Trinity: the main parts, such as how academics were handled, were familiar, yet there were overtones which completely changed the whole feel of the school.

Since I've started this school year at Trinity, I've noticed other differences between the two schools. For example, at lunch, the most vital part of every student's day, I bring my lunch and sit with the kids who I most talk to in my classes, just like I did at Greenwich. Most people at both

Trinity and Greenwich do the same. However, at Greenwich lunches were utterly unorganized.

To give more insight into this, the lunchroom was an acre large and there were never enough seats. Those who bought their lunch normally ended up standing or sitting on the lunch table itself. This is far from the case at Trinity. I have yet to find myself lacking a chair or a space at the table that I want to sit at. (Another difference in the lunches is the food. To be honest, the cookies here are FAR better.)

The final difference I've noticed is the way that students treat one another. I don't know if it is because of the uniforms, the smaller size or the religious upbringing, but people are just overall nicer to one another here. I had plenty of friends at Greenwich, but they were only a tiny fraction of the entire student body. In most classes, I'd never talked to half of the students and I wasn't friends with the other half. If a new kid arrived in school, nobody would have known or cared.

That was far from what my experience being a new kid at Trinity was like. I simply found the table of somebody who I'd



been introduced to on orientation day and asked to sit there. Almost immediately, I was hit with a barrage of questions, ranging from how I liked Trinity to where I was from.

Not only are the Trinity kids nice to new students, they're nice to pretty much everybody.

All in all, I guess I can really just say that the slight distinctions are what make all the difference between Trinity and Greenwich High. It isn't the obvious reasons, such as the class size and religious denomination, which make the schools so dissimilar as it is the paradigms of the students and the small responsibilities granted to us by the administration. It really is like I've ventured down the rabbit's hole, and, to be honest, I like it here.

(Shannon Rubin is a sophomore at Trinity Catholic High School in Stamford.)

Life saving

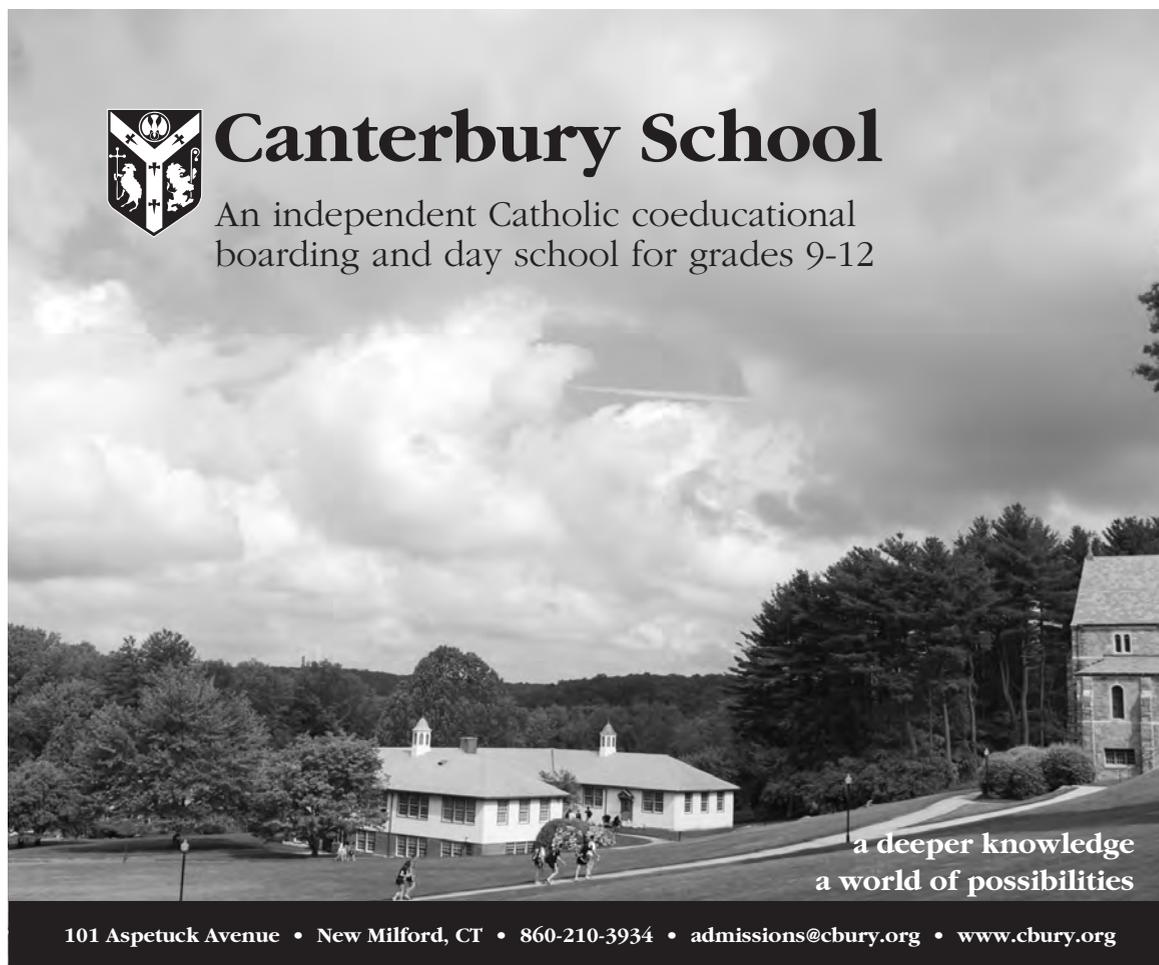


STAMFORD—Trinity Catholic High School had its first student CPR training in December. Sophomores in Dave Chiapetta's first semester health & PE class took part in a CPR and AED training program at the school. Greenwich Emergency Medical Services conducted the class training. The program, which give students a valuable insight into life-saving techniques, was made possible by the TCHS home school association.



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Obituaries

Sr. Leo Joseph, 87

WEST HARTFORD—Sr. Mary Leo Joseph Devine, RSM, died on November 30 at St. Joseph Home. She was 87 years old.

Helen Devine was born in Bridgeport on May 1, 1925. She attended St. Augustine School and Central High School before leaving home to enroll in the University of Connecticut. She entered the Sisters of Mercy on June 27, 1945, taking the religious name of Sr. Leo Joseph.

She completed her bachelor's degree at St. Joseph College in West Hartford and went on to earn a master's in education and later a PhD in higher education, both from Boston College.

Sr. Leo taught in Catholic elementary and high schools throughout the state for 17 years. She taught at the former St. Mary

High School in Greenwich from 1950-51.

Following her years as a teacher, Sr. Leo was assistant dean of the Diocesan Sisters College in Madison, and later served as dean of the graduate school at her alma mater, which had now become the University of St. Joseph. Her last assignment was as assistant administrator and director of human resources at St. Mary Home. She retired in

1996. She was known for her organizational skills, and those who knew her best remember her as gracious, fun-loving and possessed of a keen sense of humor.

A Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated for Sr. Leo Joseph on December 5 in the chapel of St. Mary Home. Burial in St. Mary Cemetery, West Hartford, took place the following day. ■



Sr. Margaret Dougherty, 74

ALBANY, NY—Sr. Margaret Dougherty, D.C., died on December 17 at the Daughters of Charity senior care residence, St. Louise House, in Albany, NY. She was 74 years old and had celebrated her 50 years as a Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul this past June.

Born in Hazelton, PA, on November 24, 1938, Margaret Mary Dougherty was one of seven children. She spent the first 22 years of her life in those coal regions. After graduating from St. Joseph College, Emmitsburg, MD, Sr. Margaret taught for a few years in a public high school in her home town before entering the Daughters of Charity in 1962.

Sr. Margaret earned a master's degree in French and another in religious education, both from the Catholic University in Washington, DC. She taught until 1973, then worked in parish ministry until she completed the requirements to be a supervisor of clinical pastoral care education and introduced that program into Sisters Hospital in Buffalo, NY. Her experience in hospital care led her to the mission field, where she served in Hungary and Ethiopia. In 2008 she came to St. Vincent's Medical Center in Bridgeport, where she ministered in pastoral care. A long illness forced Sr. Margaret to spend a year at St. Vincent's Medical Center and at Yale Medical Center.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Sr. Margaret on December 20 at the DePaul House Chapel in Albany. Burial followed at St. Agnes Cemetery, Menands, NY. ■



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15 Msgr. Harry L. Hale.....	2003
Msgr. G. Robert Hanover.....	1992
16 Rev. Thomas B. Gloster.....	1956
18 Rev. Edward J. Small, SJ.....	2010
19 Rev. Andrew L. Horvat.....	1973
Rev. William D. Thompson.....	2004
20 Rev. Andrew L. Farkas.....	1967
Msgr. Ralph P. Buongervino.....	1994
Msgr. Andrew T. Cusack.....	2004
Rev. Robert E. Onze.....	2010
22 Rev. Felix P. Werpechowski.....	1972
Rev. John Mitchell.....	2006
23 Rev. James J. McCormick.....	1965
27 Msgr. Francis G. Galla.....	1996
28 Msgr. Joseph R. McCarthy.....	1964
30 Msgr. John F. Cavanaugh.....	1990
Rev. James F. Desmond.....	1963

FEBRUARY

2 Rev. Joseph W. Kupec.....	1978
Deacon Bartholomew J. Mauceri.....	2004
3 Msgr. Martin F. Doran.....	1967
Rev. Robert F. Albert.....	1995
4 Msgr. William F.X. Casey.....	1978
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Nuestra Voz

Hipanos expresan su fe en el Niño Dios

Por SONIA BURNS

“El amor de Dios que viene a nosotros en forma humana llamamos ‘Niño Dios’. Es el regalo más grande de la Navidad, y la maravilla más grande de la Creación”, expresó Monseñor Mathew Bernelli, párroco de la Iglesia de Santa María en Bridgeport, en su mensaje de Navidad.

El Niño Dios, el personaje más importante en las fiestas de Navidad, es el centro de la fe para la familia, y el hispano, por herencia, le otorga un lugar muy especial durante esta celebración.

Nos remontamos al año 1200, cuando San Francisco de Asís decretó que la Navidad fuera celebrada con mucha solemnidad, sugiriendo que se hicieran nacimientos o pesebres parecidos a aquel lugar en Belén donde el Niño Jesús nació. Ese pesebre debería incluir los elementos y personajes que estuvieron presentes en esa noche divina. Los nacimientos deberían tener ovejas, pastores, el buey, el burro y una misa a medianoche conmemorando el gran evento para la humanidad, con un gran sermón de Nochebuena recordando el amor del Hijo de Dios al querer nacer como un Niño en Belén para salvar nuestras almas.

Muchas devociones al Niño Dios han nacido después de su llegada, y la profunda fe ha crecido en el mundo donde millones de creyentes han escogido pedir favores a Dios por los méritos de la infancia de Jesús.

Desde hace unos trescientos años, la devoción al Niño Dios se ha esparcido por Europa, América, Asia, África y Oceanía, donde la gente experimenta que, al pedir favores a Dios por medio

de los méritos de la infancia de Jesús, consigue maravillas.

La fe en el Niño Dios se siente profundamente en la Parroquia de Santa María durante la Navidad. Por seis años se ha conducido una campaña parroquial con el fin de mantener a Jesús en la Navidad como la celebración lo acredita. Con este fin los feligreses han contribuido para pagar un tablero en la carretera I-95 durante el mes de diciembre con la gran foto del



Niño Dios y el letrero de “Happy Birthday Jesus” para enviar un mensaje de fe y de aviso a todos los miles de personas que viajan durante esta temporada navideña. “Esta campaña parroquial se ha convertido en una misión para recordar lo que celebramos en la Navidad”, dice Monseñor Bernelli.

La parroquia también, por más de treinta años, ha tenido la oportunidad de observar el nacimiento que su párroco con mucho amor y dedicación expone a todos como regalo de Navidad. El nacimiento muy bien edificado es un acto de fe y de amor, que los niños, adolescentes y adultos admiran, pero también recuerdan la verdadera razón de celebrar la Navidad.

===== A LONG WAY AROUND FROM PAGE 19 =====

August 2010.

Msgr. Scheyd of St. Aloysius picks up the story at this point. “This past spring, Ralph completed his academic requirements. He was ordained a deacon and made available for parish work before his ordination.” An assignment like this is analogous to the student teaching experience required of new educators before they embark on their careers.

“I’d known Deacon Ralph from some of my earlier assignments in Norwalk,” continues the

monsignor. “When the diocese let me know he was available for assignment, I immediately asked that he come to us.”

Was the assignment to St. Aloysius a happy accident? The monsignor and deacon concur that it was. “I have the highest hopes that Deacon Ralph will be permanently assigned to us after his ordination,” says Msgr. Scheyd and the deacon smiles his assent.

(George Cassidy is a parishioner at St. Aloysius Parish.)



“EL NIÑO DIOS es el regalo más grande de la Navidad,” dice Monseñor Mathew Bernelli, párroco de Santa María en Bridgeport. En una tradición observada en todo el mundo hispano, feligreses de Santa María trajeron su Niño Jesús al altar para ser bendecido. (FOTO POR SONIA RODRIGUEZ)

“THE INFANT LORD is the greatest gift of Christmas,” says Msgr. Mathew Bernelli, pastor of St. Mary parish in Bridgeport. In a tradition observed in Hispanic parishes throughout the world, parishioners at St. Mary’s bring their images of the baby Jesus to be blessed at the altar.

La Parroquia de Santa María también anima a los feligreses, como San Francisco de Asís lo dispuso, a hacer un pesebre en sus casas con la representación del pesebre de Belén. Monseñor Bernelli insta a todos a que encuentren un lugar en sus

casas que recuerde la celebración de la Navidad.

Durante las Misas de Nochebuena, muchos feligreses traen su Niño Dios para ser bendecido. Este acto de fe demuestra que muchas familias han apartado ese lugar especial en sus ho-

gares. Las imágenes de diferentes tamaños fueron sostenidas con mucha devoción para que el agua bendita transportara a sus hogares esa fe que el Niño Dios les trae durante la Navidad.

Para Francisco Ochoa, Candelaria su esposa, y sus tres hijos Daniel, Francisco y Fernando, “es una tradición que tienen desde niños, el hacer el nacimiento en su casa, una tradición que han traído de su país natal de México”. Para ellos la celebración del Nacimiento del Niño Dios es la fiesta que celebran en familia, es el tiempo de estar unidos.

Existen alrededor del mundo muchas figuras e imágenes representando al Niño Dios, de quien los fieles han obtenido muchos milagros aumentándoles la fe. Entre las imágenes más conocidas está el Niño Jesús de Praga, El Santo Niño de Atocha, El Divino Niño, y el Milagroso Niño Jesús.

En el año 1636, Nuestro Señor, en su aparición a la Hermana Santa Margarita del Santísimo Sacramento, hizo esta promesa: “Todo lo que quieras pedir, pídelo por los méritos de mi infancia y tu oración será escuchada”.

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Music for the 9:30am Sunday Solemn High Latin Mass

January 13: Feast of the Holy Family: *Missa sine nomine à 4* (Palestrina); *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (Guerrero); *Fili, quid fecisti* (Susato); organ works of Praetorius and Guilment

January 20: Second Sunday after Epiphany: *Missa L’homme armé sexti toni* (Josquin); *Nuptiae factae sunt* (Lassus); organ works of Brahms

January 27: Septuagesima Sunday: *Missa Pater cuncta* (Mass XII); *Confitebor tibi Domine* (Monteverdi); *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (Palestrina); *Domine ne in furore tua* (Monteverdi); organ works of Boëlmann

Saturday, February 2, 9:00 a.m.: *Candlemas: Missa de Beata Virgine* (Morales); *Intemerata Dei mater* (Ockeghem); *Beata es Virgo Maria* (Verdelot); organ works of Tournemire

February 3: Sexagesima Sunday: *Missa Ancor che col partire* (Jacquet de Mantua); *Jesu dulcis memoria* (Handl); *Iniquos odio habui* (Andrea Gabrieli); *Media vita* (Gombert); organ works of Buxtehude



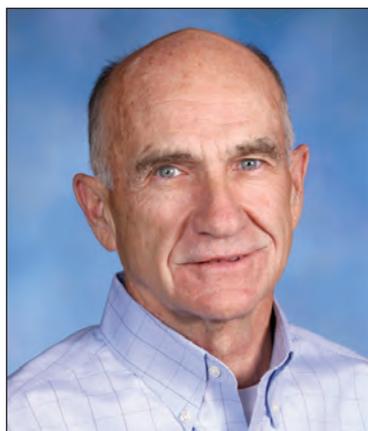
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Column



Why Catholic Schools?

GUEST COLUMNIST

BY BILL FITZGERALD, M.Div., Ph.D.

Dr. Fitzgerald is the president of St. Joseph High School in Trumbull.

Catholic schooling is flourishing in Fairfield County. Close to half our elementary schools are recognized among the top ten percent of all schools in the country. Several others are on the threshold of Blue Ribbon status. Enrollments are up at the high schools; and two high schools, Kolbe-Cathedral in Bridgeport and St. Joseph in Trumbull, are full. Where I am, at St. Joseph High School, we welcomed 230 freshmen this fall and enjoy a packed house at 830. Still, people want to know: "Why pay tuition when the public schools are so well resourced?"

My answer is always, "Seeing is believing." Spend a day getting to know the teachers, students,

and other parents and you will leave feeling that you have found a home.

Much research grant money has been spent discovering the obvious: with whom you go to school matters. Catholic schools are college preparatory schools from Kindergarten through 12th grade. Everyone graduates; everyone goes to college. Last year, 198 St. Joe's seniors won for themselves \$13 million in renewable grants and scholarships to many of the most select universities in the country. Whether you are Harvard or Housatonic bound, you follow a curriculum designed to get you into college and to see that you flourish once you are there.

Parents never have to

argue with their children over whether to take the history of the Beatles or the history of Modern Civilization. We do not waste your time or talent. Such a focused, college-oriented curriculum allows our high schools to develop strands in engineering, bio-medical studies, pre-law, advanced math. And because everyone is swimming in the same direction, it is hard for even the most distracted to lose their way.

Catholic schools regularly outperform both public and private schools on nearly every educational measure. I believe there are two reasons for this success. One is the authenticity of our teachers. There are no secrets in the classroom. Students know whether the teacher is engaged. Teachers in a Catholic school are mission driven.

Second is the engagement by parents and alumni. At St. Joe's, our science labs are modern and fully equipped. Our technology is state of the art. Our classrooms are well resourced. This fall we opened a new academic center with a spacious library and media center, three art and music rooms, a professionally designed lecture hall for 250 students, seminar and conference

rooms, all surrounded by beautiful courtyards and a grotto. Our parents and alumni do not expect the state to provide everything, nor do they believe tuition covers their responsibility. Catholic education is a family affair and, like family, it's a commitment for life.

At the end of Freshmen Week, 230 freshmen brought their families to the Bible Mass for new students. There are three times a student's name is read publically at St. Joe's: at graduation, at the junior ring liturgy, and at the Bible Mass, where each student receives a Bible provided to them by the Parent's Association. The book is handed to them by their home room teacher. To see the church filled to overflowing as the new students are formally welcomed into the St. Joe's community is to know a Catholic education is much more than a 5 on the AP exams.

The key is our faith-based education. You learn the rules in elementary school; in high school, you put them into practice. These are the years when teenagers make those moral decisions that form their character for life. Respect and responsibility are essential lessons in every

classroom experience in Catholic schools. The business community tells us that today relational intelligence is as important as academic acumen. Social responsibility develops best in a values-based environment that holds you accountable. Colleges know who we are. They know our students follow a rigorous curriculum, that our students know how to do homework, and that our students enhance the quality of life on their campuses. Moral and intellectual formation, taken together, is priceless.

I have often said that it is easy to be Catholic at St. Joe's. Our kids are like kids anywhere, but they are confident kids. They do not have to put others down to make themselves feel good, which means everyone is free to explore their own dreams and vocations. This doesn't happen everywhere. This doesn't happen by accident. It happens in those special places where people believe in each other and have faith in their calling.

Catholic schooling is something we do together. Family, faith, and friends. Make it a point to stop by one of our 38 schools and "see." I think you will stay. ■

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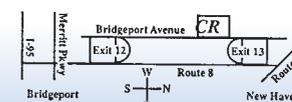
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Column



Beauty — Catch it if you can

POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

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

Lately I've had the feeling that I've walked through much of my life in a daze. I'm beginning to see with new eyes the places and people I have previously taken for granted.

Perhaps I'm beginning to cultivate what Buddhism calls "beginner's mind." I'm beginning to see things as if for the first time, regaining some elemental sense of surprise at things, at the loveliness all around me. I've come to sense that beauty is everywhere, just as suffering is everywhere. So many things I have known so long become suddenly new and beautiful to me: the path worn across an empty lot; the purr of a car coming up to my condo, the soft sequel of its breaks, and the

thump of the newspaper arriving at my door; the rumble of distant thunder; nighttime rain; the mid-morning of days.

The novelist Saul Bellow wrote: "Unexpected intrusions of beauty. That's what life is."

It is probably true to say that beauty is ultimately indefinable. Many philosophers have taken a crack at defining it. To the ancient Greeks beauty was harmonious order. Alfred North Whitehead tells us that beauty is the "harmony of contrasts." None of this helps much. Thomas Aquinas made the obvious observation that beauty is that which delights or pleases when it is seen. More interestingly, Aquinas argued that goodness and beauty,

although logically distinguishable, coincide in fact.

Still, I tend to agree with Dostoyevsky who said that "Beauty is a riddle." We probably can't define it any more than we can define love or even life itself.

There is the daily treadmill of life, the world of bills and backaches. But within all this James Joyce speaks of the occurrence of "epiphanies," moments of sudden unexpected beauty, like the sheen of the sun on a rain-wet slate of roof. He advises us to extract the sweets, the splendor and glory hidden in the humble realities of life.

There is beauty hidden in the smallest things, simple and familiar things: hearing the house come alive in the early morning; the day slowly turning into evening; winter air quiet and cold smelling of woodsmoke; star-glow and dawn; moonlight on snow; the sound of a train whistle; a chimney's sad wind song; a glass of cold water. Life is punctuated with moments of beauty. Some things are perfect and complete in themselves, they need nothing else. They are sufficient to themselves. There are many such moments of unex-

pected wonder. Earthly life is beautiful despite its sufferings and limitations.

Leo Tolstoy talked about "true impressions," those moments when we seem to comprehend something but only fleetingly. There is the wonder and beauty of it.

From time to time something glints, and we see the "deep down of things," as Gerard Manley Hopkins put it. We catch glimmers of the "more" that runs through it all. We are given certain moments to catch the corner where eternity clips time. Beauty is one of the voices of God.

In his *Confessions*, Augustine recognized God as Beauty: "Late have I loved you, O Thou Beauty ever ancient and ever new, late have I loved you."

If I can be allowed a couple more quotes, one from Keats who said "some shape of beauty lifts the pall from our dark spirits;" and a rabbi named Samuel Dresner wrote, "I did not ask for success; I asked for wonder, and you gave it to me."

I sometimes think about whether animals have a sense of beauty. Dogs, wolves, coyotes

respond to moonlight. But I don't think that it is in response to any aesthetic reaction.

It is we human beings who are challenged to be delighted with the beautiful things that come along, to sense that wonderful things do happen even in the dullest places. There is the wonder and surprise of ordinary life. We are challenged to experience every bit of beauty that is afforded us, to come alive to the hidden treasures that occur in daily life, to extract the sweets of each day.

Most of us, as we grow older, can relate to a poem by Faith Baldwin:

I have come back to quiet ways,
to things of silent wonder...
to dusk, to primrose dawns
and lamps lit,
hearth-warmed nights...
the still simplicity of gentle days.

Life is holy ground. There are seeds of beauty everywhere. We can come to relate to the request Madame DuBarry uttered with her last breath: "My Executioner, one tiny moment still." ■

≡≡≡ A WOMAN'S VIEW
FROM PAGE 13 ≡≡≡

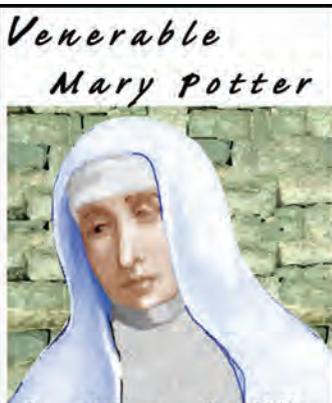
NY. Driving through a small town, I saw a library having a book sale. I stopped, of course. Then my foot felt a book that had fallen on the ground. It was a book written for young people back in 1954—"St. John Bosco and the Children's Saint Dominic Savio," by Catherine Beebe. That day, August 16, was the birth date of St. John Bosco!

Of course I bought the book to give to my son. But three days later I received the news from a sheriff in Montana that my son John and his wife had never left Montana. They had been murdered by an intruder as they slept in their bed.

In a strange way, that book, discovered so "coincidentally," consoled me. I felt St. John Bosco had gotten in touch with me to tell me he was with my son John, his namesake. I give special thanks every year to St. John Bosco on his feast day, January 31. ■

SAINTLY LIVES

BY ED WALDRON



Venerable Mary Potter

b. 1847 ~ d. 1913

WILLIAM POTTER SO STRONGLY OBJECTED TO HIS WIFE'S CONVERSION TO CATHOLICISM THAT HE LEFT HER AND THEIR 5 CHILDREN SHORTLY AFTER THEIR ONLY DAUGHTER WAS BORN.

HE EMIGRATED TO AUSTRALIA, LEAVING HIS FAMILY BEHIND IN SOUTHWARK, ENGLAND.

MARY GREW UP FATHERLESS, BUT WAS NURTURED AND GUIDED BY HER MOTHER'S LOVE AND DETERMINATION.

IN HER LATE TEENS, MARY WAS ENGAGED TO GODFREY KING, A DEVOUT YOUNG MAN WHO ENCOURAGED MARY TO SEEK GOD AND DEVELOP HER PRAYER LIFE. MARY WAS INSPIRED AND RECEIVED A CALL TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE, THUS ENDING THE MARITAL ENGAGEMENT WITH GODFREY.

MARY WAS ACCEPTED INTO THE POSTULANCY OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY, BUT WAS FORCED TO LEAVE AFTER A YEAR DUE TO ILLNESS. SHE DECIDED TO CARRY OUT A NEW MINISTRY TO CARE FOR THE SICK AND DYING. SHE WAS SOON JOINED BY 4 OTHERS WHO SHARED HER VISION. WITH THE BLESSING AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HER BISHOP, THE SISTERS SETTLED INTO AN OLD WAREHOUSE IN AN IMPOVERISHED NEIGHBORHOOD IN NOTTINGHAM.

TODAY THE SISTERS OF THE LITTLE COMPANY OF MARY, AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN AS THE 'BLUE NUNS', WORK TO PROVIDE PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALING IN 14 COUNTRIES. MARY POTTER ONCE WROTE, "IF WE GIVE UP OURSELVES, WE RECEIVE GOD'S SELF. WHEN WE GIVE UP OUR OWN WILL AND WAY, OUR OWN SPIRIT, TO WALK ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL AND HIS WAY, WE RECEIVE HIS SPIRIT, PRECIOUS HAPPY EXCHANGE, EVERY PART OF OURSELVES EMPTIED, SUBDUED, IS FILLED WITH GOD."

Bits & Pieces

WOMEN'S GROUP at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, will hold its monthly meeting on Mon., **Jan. 14**, at 10 am in the parish hall. The featured speaker will be Patti Popp, owner of Sport Hill Farm, Easton, speaking on "The Importance of Seasonal Eating for a Healthier You." All are welcome. For more information, call Pat: 203.261.8020.

"WE CARE" PERINATAL GRIEF support group meets the third Wed. of each month (**Jan. 16**) at St. Vincent's Medical Center, Bridgeport, from 7-8:15 pm. The group is for those grieving the loss of a baby through miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillborn, or newborn death. No charge; no registration required. For more information, call Sr.

Arthur Marie: 203.576.5110, or Marilyn Faber: 203.576.5716.

YEAR OF FAITH: St. Philip Parish, Norwalk, is holding a Vatican II discussion group the third Thurs. of each month (**Jan. 17**) from now through June, from 7:30-9 pm. The Jan. topics will be the decrees on the Mass Media and on Ecumenism. For more information, call the parish: 203.847.4549.

CURSILLO ULTREYAS are held at locations around the diocese: Thurs., **Jan. 17**, at St. Mary Parish, Bethel, at 7:30 pm. For more information, contact Jeanette: jkovacs@snet.net.

LUNCH & LEARN Cancer Support Group is offered free of charge at St. Vincent's Medical Center, Bridgeport, the third

Thurs. of every month (**Jan. 17**) from 12 noon-1 pm. Group is focused on patients and families who have been diagnosed with lung, colon, head & neck, esophageal, GI cancers and other solid tumors. For more information, call 203.576.6158 or email tmclaugh@stvincents.org.

OPLATEK (CHRISTMAS WAFER) DINNER will be held at Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Stamford on Sun., **Jan. 20**, at 1 pm. Cost \$25/person for a traditional Polish meal with entertainment. For more information and for reservations, call the parish 203.323.4967

MASS OF HEALING AND HOPE sponsored by the Charismatic Renewal Office will be offered Mon., **Jan. 21**, at 7:30 pm at St. Lawrence Parish, Shelton, with Fr. Ed Nadolny; and Mon., **Jan. 28**, at 7:30 pm at Christ the King Parish, Trumbull, with Fr. Larry Carew. For more information, call 203.268.8253.

SOLIDARITY AMONG FAITH GROUPS, a panel discussion hosted by St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Riverside, will take place Thurs., **Jan. 24**, from 7:30-9 pm in the parish

March for Life



On January 25, pilgrims from around the diocese will be making the trip to the annual March for Life in Washington, DC. The March is held each year during the week in which the anniversary of Roe vs. Wade falls.

"This year marks the 40th Anniversary of Roe vs. Wade and we hope to have as many pilgrims as possible join us," says Maureen Ciardiello, director of Respect Life Ministry for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Last year, a delegation of more than 400 from the Diocese of Bridgeport, including a strong contingent of youth from throughout the diocese, participated in the March for Life. Although the March is largely ignored by secular media, an AP account of last year's March noted that "It's consistently one of the largest protests of the year in Washington."

The witness of each individual who attends the March for Life aids the struggle within American culture to recognize and protect the dignity of all human life.

(The cost of the trip is \$75. Buses will depart at 5:30 am from St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull and 6 am from the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist in Stamford. Registration needed by Fri., Jan. 18. For more information or to register, contact Maureen Ciardiello: 203.416.1445 or mciardiello@diobpt.org.)

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SHARE (Sacred Heart Adult Religious Education) for the Diocese of Bridgeport is a four-year certificate program created through a partnership between Sacred Heart University and the Diocese of Bridgeport. This theology program for adults will help Catholics understand their faith and empower them to put it into action. SHARE has a no-test format. Students can take one or more classes, or complete the entire four-year certificate program from SHU and the Diocese.

Spring 2013

SHARE for the Diocese of Bridgeport courses

The Book of Revelation: The Book of Revelation stands at the end of Bible. It can be a perplexing book, and is one of the most misinterpreted books of the Bible. Most Catholics are unacquainted with this last book of the Bible. However, this "most neglected book of the Bible" is a magnificent literary creation. At first the book may appear somewhat bewildering and forbidding, but it is worthwhile to wrestle with it until it opens its riches to one. The course will help one to understand the baffling but also beautiful symbolism in which the book abounds. It will unravel the general messages of the book, e.g., the cosmic battle between good and evil, the final victory of good, how we conquer through suffering, the victims become the victors, self-sacrificing love is the ultimate power in the world, etc. The Book of Revelation is made up of

22 relatively brief chapters. As one gets into the book, one usually finds it absorbing. It is a work that demands and repays study. It makes a distinct contribution to one's understanding of Jesus and the Christian life. Use this course as a Lenten spiritual opportunity.

- 8-week course: Saturdays, February 2, 9, 16, 23, March 2, 9, 16, 23 (inclement weather makeup date: April 6)
- Time: 10am to 12noon
- Location: Sacred Heart University, 5151 Park Avenue, Fairfield
- Instructor: Dr. Thomas Hicks
- Cost: \$280

Prayer and Evangelization: (from the Greek word "euangelion" meaning "good news"). Evangelists are very ordinary people! All Christians are called to witness to the "Good News" of Jesus Christ. Baptized Christians realize that via Baptism and Confirmation they have been assigned

to the apostolate (spreading the "Good News") by the Lord Himself! This course will focus on the contemplative (prayer) and active (mission) dimensions of the spirit of Evangelization. As Saint Francis of Assisi said in the 13th century "preach the Gospel with your whole heart, your whole soul and with your whole strength, if necessary use words!" Use this course as a Lenten spiritual opportunity.

- 4-week course: Tuesday, March 5, 12, 19, 26 (inclement weather makeup date: April 9)
- Time: 7pm to 9pm
- Location: Sacred Heart University, 12 Omega Drive, Stamford
- Instructor: Dr. Joan Kelly
- Cost: \$140

To register: www.sacredheart.edu/share. For more information, contact Gina Donnarummo, Director of Adult Formation: 203.416.1446 / SHARE@diobpt.org.

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Bits & Pieces

hall. Featured speakers include Msgr. Alan Detscher, pastor of St. Catherine's; Rabbi Mitchell Hurvitz of Temple Shalom; Imam Dr. Kareem Adeeb, president of The American Institute of Islamic and Arabic Studies; and the Rev. Dr. Heather Wright of the Greenwich Center for Hope and Renewal. A light supper will be offered from 6-7:15 pm for anyone who reserves by Mon., Jan. 21. A \$10 donation for the supper is payable at the door. For more information or for reservations, call 203.637.3661 or email psloane@optonline.net. Leave your name and, if desired, request a kosher or halal meal.

WINTER WEEKEND will be held at St. Mark School, Stratford, Jan. 26-27: Winter Carnival-Sat., Jan. 26, 11 am-3 pm. Bring the whole family for moon bounces, games of skill, prizes, food, popcorn, candy, raffles, face-painting and more. Open House-Sun., Jan. 27, 9 am-1 pm. Tour our Blue Ribbon School and meet our school community. For more information, call 203.375.4291 or visit www.stmarkschool.org.

OUR LADY OF FATIMA SCHOOL, Wilton will host an Open House on Sun., Jan. 27, from 10 am-1 pm. The school offers full-day preschool & kindergarten programs, and runs

through grade 8. For more information, contact Principal Dina Monti: 203.762.8100 or visit www.olfcatholic.org.

CIVILITY IN AMERICA, a series sponsored by The Dilenschneider Group, is held monthly at the Ferguson Library, Stamford. On Thurs., Feb. 7, Civility in Education will be presented by Joel Klein, who served as chancellor of the New York City School System from 2002-11. For more information, contact Patrick Malone at The Dilenschneider Group: 212.922.0900 email pmalone@dgi-nyc.com

GOSPEL OF LIFE SOCIETY meets the second Sat. of the month (Feb. 9) at St. Mary Parish, Norwalk, at 10 am after the 9 am Pro-Life Mass. Leticia Velasquez, co-founder of KIDS (Keep Infants with Down Syndrome), will be the guest speaker. For more information, contact Eileen Bianchini: 203.847.5727 or stmarygols@aol.com.

SACRAMENT OF THE SICK and Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes will be celebrated at St. Aloysius Parish, New Canaan, on Sat., Feb. 9, sponsored by the Order of Malta. Welcome, 2:30 pm; Mass, 3 pm. Refreshments to follow. For more information, contact Kelly: klweldon@optonline.net. ■

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Director of the Connecticut Federation of Catholic School Parents

An exciting and rewarding opportunity exists for a full-time director, with an office in Hartford, Connecticut, who will be responsible for maintaining a comprehensive statewide parental alliance and legislative advocacy for Catholic schools in Connecticut.

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A Bachelor's Degree in political science or a related field is required. The selected individual will be required to register as a lobbyist with the state of Connecticut. A proven track record in administrative skills, including but not limited to, interpersonal relations, budget preparation and management, strategic planning, working in collaboration with a Board of Trustees, as well as excellent verbal communication and writing skills, is required.

A thorough knowledge and respect for the Roman Catholic Church and its teachings, as well as respect and support of Catholic school education.

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