

# FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

MAY 2020 | VOLUME 37, NUMBER 5 | CRISIS UPDATE

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE



4 *Catholic Cemeteries respond to the crisis*



8 *Parishes ramp up food drives*

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# 2020 Annual Catholic Appeal

## Emergency appeal leads to strong response

By **BRIAN D. WALLACE**

BRIDGEPORT—Response to the emergency needs outlined in this year's Annual Catholic Appeal has been strong, personal and encouraging, says Pamela Rittman, director of the ACA for the diocese.

The appeal, which was suspended in March as the pandemic closed down the state, was re-launched in a April 20 letter to the faithful from the Bishop Frank J. Caggiano urging people to give.

"I come to you in this emergency to ask for your help to ensure that the Annual Catholic Appeal, which has provided basic human services of food, shelter, education and counseling to many in the past can be maintained and, to the extent possible, be expanded to the many others who are facing real hardship for the first time in their lives," the bishop said in his letter.

Rittman said that people throughout the diocese have heeded the bishop's urgent call for help. The re-started campaign is nearing the halfway mark toward its \$9 million goal to fund the major ministries of the diocese.

"We're off to a very good start but we have a lot more work to do to reach our goal, and for this appeal to be a success, we need everyone to give whatever is possible. The bishop has spoken many times in the past about how we are one diocesan family. That is truer than ever as so many are struggling and concerned about the future," she said.

Rittman said she's very encouraged by a few trends in this year's Appeal, including an increase in first-time givers and the growing number of people

who are making a second gift to the Appeal as they become more aware of the needs and the overall diocesan response. "As we open the mail and read the many kind notes that accompany gifts, we are personally touched," says Rittman. "Donors thank the bishop and diocesan staff for their service. I talk to donors who are empathetic about what we are all going through they tell me they want to support their parish and pastor and they continue to give."

"These are unusual times," said Rittman, "and now more than ever the ACA is responding to the emergency needs of people throughout the diocese. A strong response this Spring is crucial in our ability to provide resources to diocesan ministries in a time of crisis."

Rittman said the response to the ACA has also been lifted by significant support from our leadership donors who want to ensure that diocesan ministries are available when most needed by the people of Fairfield County.

Rittman said the pandemic very quickly taxed diocesan and parish resources as more people needed help and services had to be re-designed to reach out to them.

Catholic Charities nutrition programs and soup kitchens reported a tripling of demand for meals in some locations and a surge in the number of families coming forward for groceries provided by its food pantries. The demand for counseling has increased due to anxiety and stress. Likewise, diocesan schools had to make a quick pivot to distance learning for more than 7,000 students in Catholic schools, and ministries such as the Leadership Institute made the transition to online marriage

prep, faith formation and other training.

She said the diocese has been able to quickly respond to distance learning due to the support of a very generous donor who invested in new technology that provided the platform to implement. And past support from all donors to the Appeal's programs and ministries now serves people in crisis.

To support the request for emergency help the diocese has released its second 2020 Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) video, "New Faces of Need." The video offers a brief glimpse into three lives struggling with the pandemic; a man experiencing homelessness who relies on the New Covenant Center for food and

to help rebuild his life; a mother who visits the food pantry to help feed her family and students from The Catholic Academy of Stamford who miss their classmates but are appreciative of the online learning provided by the school.

In the first video the bishop praises the heroic response of all frontline workers during the crisis and he noted that many people who never had to ask for help in the past have come forward to seek food and other assistance.

Rittman hopes the video series, filmed and donated by Brian Russell of Fairfield, demonstrates the impact of the coronavirus on every aspect of the diocese from sacramental preparation and ongoing catechesis to schools,

charities and other ministries. The videos can be viewed at [www.bridgeportdiocese.org](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org).

"As the human toll from this terrible pandemic continues to increase in our midst, I am aware of the great suffering that a growing number of our neighbors are experiencing. Your generosity allows us to continue the mission of the Church and provide for these "new faces of need" in our midst," said Bishop Caggiano in announcing the video.

*(Please join those who have already given by using the envelope in this issue. You can also make a gift online at [www.2020ACABridgeport.com](http://www.2020ACABridgeport.com) or text the word APPEAL to 475.241.7849. All donations of whatever amount will help us to help those in need.)*



## ANNUAL CATHOLIC EMERGENCY APPEAL

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- supporting Hospital Chaplains and deacons on the frontlines

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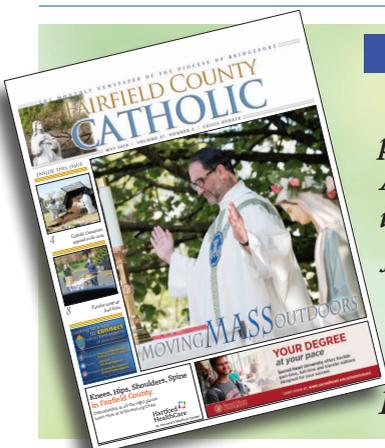
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### ON THE COVER

*Father Peter Cipriani, pastor of Our Lady of the Assumption Parish in Fairfield prepares for the celebration of Mass outdoors as public Mass resumes in the diocese.*  
Photos by Amy Mortensen

### CONTENTS

- |     |   |    |  |
|-----|---|----|--|
| 6-8 | <b>PARISHES RESPOND</b><br><i>Pandemic efforts abound</i>               | 13 | <b>SHEHAN &amp; MCGIVNEY CENTERS</b><br><i>Programs provide assistance</i> |
| 9   | <b>SAFE ENVIRONMENTS</b><br><i>Virtus training continues online</i>     | 15 | <b>THE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE</b><br><i>Formation for the 'new normal'</i>   |
| 10  | <b>COLUMNIST MATTHEW HENNESSEY</b><br><i>The (Holy) Spirit of Radio</i> | 17 | <b>VIRTUAL TELEHEALTH</b><br><i>Charities responds to need</i>             |
| 12  | <b>WE STAND WITH CHIRST</b><br><i>Parish projects underway</i>          | 23 | <b>ST. VINCENT'S</b><br><i>A prayerful celebration</i>                     |



# Latest News

## Diocese begins 'outdoor' Masses

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—As *Fairfield County Catholic* prepares to go to press, many parishes throughout the diocese are resuming public worship by introducing outdoor Masses.

The diocese is the first in Connecticut to resume public Masses since they were suspended on March 16, as a result of the rapid spread of the Coronavirus in Fairfield County and the stay-at-home orders issued by the state.

In a May 1 Letter to the Faithful Bishop Frank J. Caggiano approved optional outdoor Masses beginning on May 21, the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord, as the first phase in a plan to resume the celebration of Mass with the faithful during the pandemic. It will remain in effect until church buildings and other indoor venues can be safely reopened for worship.

Under the plan announced by the bishop, the resumption of public Masses in outdoor settings is optional and each pastor will make the final decision for his parish.

Many parishes are expected to move forward with outdoor Masses in the coming days as they work out the logistics of the reservations and social distancing that will be required to safeguard the health of all involved while protecting the sacredness of the liturgy.

"There are a number of parishes that are opting to immediately begin the outdoor celebration of Mass as the diocese takes this important step forward in the resumption of public worship. I am grateful to the pastors who have done a wonderful job of creating plans that allow us to worship outdoors for the time being in a safe manner for all who come," said Bishop Caggiano.

The bishop said he hopes to have more news about the "full return to church buildings for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass," and that he understands the hardship that laity and priests have experienced during this time "when we have not been able to come together as a family around the Lord's Table."

Within hours of the bishop's announcement to resume Masses, thousands visited the diocesan



website to learn more.

The bishop, in consultation with pastors, also issued highly detailed guidelines which outline the sacramental and logistic considerations of moving Mass outdoors and limiting the number of people in attendance to safeguard the health of laity and clergy.

Under the plan, a pastor can choose to hold outdoor Masses with seating limited to 49 people outdoors, or in parish parking lots where people will remain in their cars except for coming forward for the reception of Holy Communion.

The diocese will constantly re-evaluate and update the plan based on the needs of the faithful and the course of the outbreak over the coming months.

The bishop said he believes that the shelter-in-place mandates saved many lives, but that it is now time to move ahead cautiously and safely with a phased-in resumption of Masses.

- Out of the ongoing concern for the health and safety of all parishioners, the bishop announced that he will continue to dispense with the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.
- The guidelines also suggest that anyone who is vulnerable or in the high risk category should consider remaining sheltered at home for the time being.
- The resumption of Mass will require a system of reserva-

tions to ensure social distancing and an orderly and reverent return to the sacraments outside of the church building.

- The bishop will also continue to celebrate his online 8 am Sunday Mass, which is live-streamed on the diocesan website ([www.bridgeportdiocese.org](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org)), and he has encouraged pastors to continue their live-streamed Masses.

The plan was developed by the bishop after consultation with pastors and diocesan officials. It allows each pastor to make the final decision about holding an outdoor Mass, the location on parish grounds, the distribution of Holy Communion, and the Mass times throughout the weekend.

If outdoor seating is chosen, people will be seated on chairs that will be arranged with proper social distancing.

The number of cars that can be accommodated in a parking lot Mass will depend upon the size of the lot or field that will be used, the need to distance cars six feet apart from each other and allow for the safe exit of any car in case of an emergency.

The bishop has asked each pastor to draft a parish plan for this first phase of resumption of public Mass to ensure that the particular needs of his parish are properly addressed.

"The guiding principle behind all such planning is to ensure the safety and health of the faithful

and clergy, while preserving the sacredness of our liturgy and worship," he said.

The bishop acknowledged the great hardship experienced by the faithful during the suspension of public Mass and said he and priests very much look forward to seeing people return to worship.

"I wish to express my sincere thanks for your patience, perseverance and fidelity during this most difficult time, when public Masses were suspended. While



it has been a great sacrifice for all of us, especially those who have watched a relative or friend fall ill, buried a loved one or remained in isolation and even fear," he said,

"I believe that observing the state's shelter at home order has saved many lives. On behalf of all priests of the diocese, permit me to say how much we have missed you and look forward to welcoming you

back home to your parish home."

Deacon Patrick Toole, secretary of the curia and episcopal delegate of administration, said the resumption of Mass beginning with outdoor Mass will require great care and due diligence. "We feel that we can make our churches as safe or safer than other essential businesses and services, and we are committed to doing that"

He said that pastors are developing their own reservation systems or using a system that has been licensed by the diocese, and they will be notifying their parishioners how to sign up for Masses at their particular parish. Reservations are most likely going to be taken online or by calling the parish office.

The diocesan planning process, developed based on information provided by health experts, assumes that the COVID-19 virus will remain a threat for some time with possible outbreaks in the Fall and Winter. The goal is to protect the faithful from any possible relapse while moving forward and preparing for the full re-opening of churches to the extent possible.

The diocese is currently working on plans for the return to church, which will include deep cleaning, ongoing sanitizing, the

wearing of masks, proper social distancing, and the renewal of other restrictions including the suspension of the Sign of Peace and reception of the Communion through the chalice.

To view the complete guidelines for outdoor Masses and for further information visit the diocesan website at [www.bridgeportdiocese.org](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org), or contact your parish.

# Catholic Cemeteries

## Serving mourners during COVID-19 crisis

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—On a clear, blustery and unseasonably cold May afternoon after mourners have departed St. Michael Cemetery in Stratford, men in hazmat suits return to the gravesite.

From the distance they could be healthcare or emergency workers, but they are diocesan cemetery staff who are finalizing the burial, working quietly and with purpose and dignity to fill in the grave.

Like many recent deaths, the latest is COVID-19 related. It's very tough on families who must limit the amount of mourners and on the workers themselves, who must take extra precautions to safeguard themselves and the grieving families.

Dean Gestal, director of Catholic Cemeteries for the diocese, says that in many ways they are the often unseen "First Responders" in the coronavirus pandemic. Like other essential workers, their work potentially exposes them to people including family members who may have tested positive for the coronavirus.

Every day they are prepared to safeguard their own healing while being sensitive to grieving families and friends who are losing loved ones during the pandemic, Gestal says.

"It's nice to see the guys get some recognition as first responders," he says. "I'm proud of our men. They've done some heroic work under challenging conditions."

During the crisis when funeral Masses cannot be said in churches, Catholic cemeteries have been working closely with pastors and priests to support the graveside Rite of Committal and final prayers that separate the deceased from mourners.

Catholic Cemeteries have also come to the aid of the diocese recently by distributing 100 reusable masks and four face-shields for each parish to use as they gradually resume public worship.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said that he is very grateful to Catholic Cemeteries and the staff for their often unseen efforts in the overall diocesan response to the pandemic as they do the dif-



ficult work of burying the dead and serving families.

"During this most unprecedented crisis we have seen sacrificial giving on the part of so many people who work under difficult and stressful conditions. Our cemetery workers have compassionately provide essential services, while helping to safeguard the lives of others," says the bishop. "We are indebted to them for their service and strong sense of mission."

The bishop added that the work of Catholic Cemeteries employees is an important ministry of the diocese as "they make it possible for family members to the respectful burial of their loved ones in order to give effective witness to the importance of Christian burial and belief in the resurrection of the body."

According to Gestal the number of burials has tripled in recent weeks and he estimates that two-thirds of the burials are coronavirus-related deaths, which has required new policies that ensure the safety of staff and mourners.

He said that 31 workers including office staff, manage the six most active diocesan cemeteries located in Greenwich, Stamford, Norwalk, Stratford, Trumbull and Danbury.

While Gestal is proud of the

response of the men and women who are providing service to those who have lost loved ones, he says the situation has put extra stress on the workers and their own families as they take extra precautions to safeguard the health all involved.

Most noticeable to those at funerals is the personal protective equipment worn by cemetery workers who prepare and close the graves while assisting families who attend the burial.

James Lee of Sandy Hook, manager of St. Michael's Cemetery in Stratford, is one of the workers who puts on protective gear each day. He says that he and the workers have gotten the routine down and can quickly get in and out of their suits.

The Tyvek suits are sanitized, while the gloves and masks are disposed. He says the suits can get very warm, which may be a challenge in the hot summer weather.

"I'm concerned but not worried," says Lee, who recently transferred from St. Peter's Cemetery in Danbury to St. Michael's in Bridgeport, which is busier and has more burials.

Lee says that given all the uncertainties surrounding the virus, the men are doing everything they can to promote prac-

tices at the cemeteries that keep them and the mourner safe.

One of the most difficult things for him and other workers is managing the need to limit the number mourners who gather. Consistent with the governor's recommendations, the cemetery has tried to limit the gathering to no more than ten people at the gravesite but that has proven challenging. That number may change later this Spring as the governor gradually re-opens the state but it will remain a continuing challenge.

"People are understandably emotional. They've lost a loved one and tend to forget," he says. Sometimes five or more people will get out of a single car," and other mourners may wait at a distance to pay their final respects.

Lee said he concerned state may be open too early, and he wonders what will happen on May 20 when state gradually reopens.

Catholic Cemeteries Manager Docelle Totten says that changes in cemetery policies as a result of the coronavirus have been challenging but are meant to achieve a balance between compassion and safety.

"It's difficult to tell family members that they can't be present when the casket is lowered

into the ground but it's for their protection," he says.

Totten has noticed a shift in recent weeks from inground burial to interring after cremation. He believes that many who lost a loved one during the apex of the crisis may have waited and are now more comfortable coming to the cemetery for burial.

Totten says that working with families, many of whom are dealing with unexpected deaths, reinforces his belief in "pre-need" planning so that people do not have to make difficult decisions in a crisis.

He says that one source of stress and even contention among families dealing with the loss of a loved one is the difficulty of reaching agreement on the funeral and burial. Many family members have moved out of town and bring unresolved emotional issues to the decision.

Dean Gestal agrees and says the pandemic is a reminder that individuals and families need to be better prepared.

"No one wants to think about it, but the purchase of cemetery property and making arrangements for burial in advance of need, is a wise thing to do. Unfortunately, the loss of a family member is something we must be prepared for," he says.

Gestal, who came out of retirement to manage the cemeteries after a successful career in finance, says we may be looking at a new normal.

"This is going to be with us for a long time and it's changing the way we're going to live. We're not quickly going back to a new normal. This insidious disease affects families in so many ways, even hugs between children and grandchildren," says Gestal.

He adds that his staff is available to work with people on pre-need planning, which has many benefits including "you and your loved ones make the decisions around your funeral together and you do not leave important arrangements to others. Likewise, your children do not have to make difficult decisions regarding your funeral arrangements and are clear in what your wishes are."

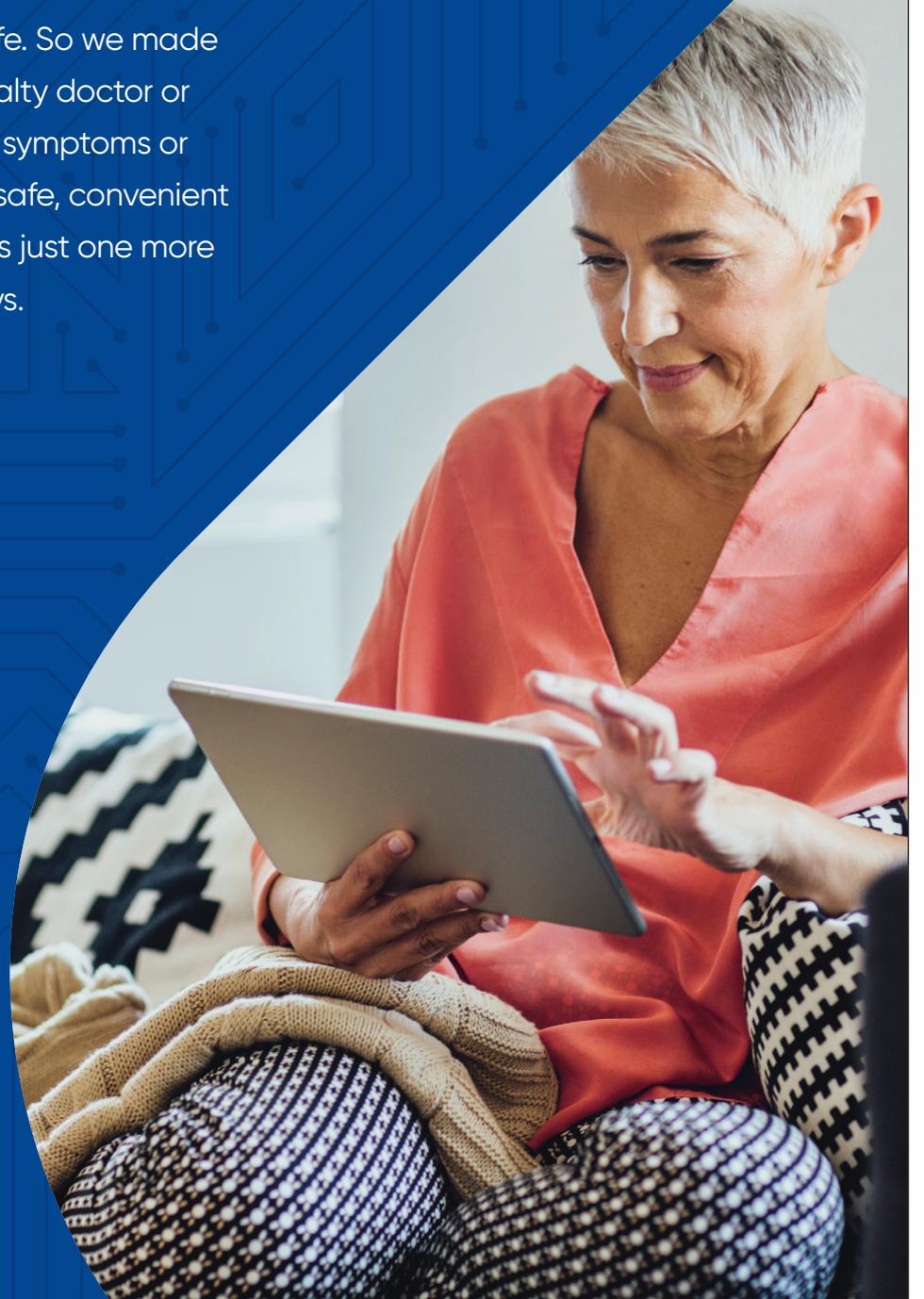
(For more information call Catholic Cemeteries at 203.416.1494 or [www.bridgeportdiocese.org/cemeteries/home](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org/cemeteries/home).)

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# Parishes in Pandemic

## Virtual 'Fireside' chats connect parishioners

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

DANBURY—At a time when many are searching for reassurance and yearning for connection, the clergy at St. Gregory the Great Parish in Danbury are offering just that.

Father Michael Dunn and Father Christopher Ford have recently begun holding "Fireside at 4" live chats on Facebook, during which parishioners can ask questions and engage in virtual conversation.

The idea came about after a conversation between Father Ford and Father Dunn. They discussed wanting to open up an opportunity for casual conversation to parishioners. Devon McCormick, pastoral assistant at St. Greg's, had the idea that they structure it in a way similar to "Theology on Tap" events, where



CONNECTING VIRTUALLY—Father Dunn and Father Ford of St. Gregory the Great Parish in Danbury have recently begun Fireside at 4 chats as a way to connect with and reassure parishioners during the COVID-19 pandemic.

people send in questions for the clergy members to answer.

"Really, we just wanted another way to reach out to our community," McCormick explains. "Both Father Dunn and Father Ford have such a wonderful relationship with our parishioners—they are seen as approachable and accessible in a

way that I think is really special, so we knew that we needed to give the parishioners an opportunity to talk with them as they normally would at any of our events."

McCormick explains that the response from parishioners was immediate. After getting the word out early in the week, the

fireside chat had over 900 views total, with over 100 tuning in for the live conversation. Views came from all over, including Massachusetts, Indianapolis, Ohio and Texas.

"The truth is, most of our parishioners typically only see us at Mass or for very brief moments afterwards," explains Father Ford. "So, I think we see this as an opportunity for two things. First and foremost, for us to be able to minister to our people in whatever way we can, even if that's electronically. We certainly have to be creative in these challenging times to make sure our people know their shepherds are still there for them, still caring for them. But at the same time, it's also a chance for us to share with them a little more about who we really are—as priests, as men and as fellow pilgrims on this journey to heaven."

"A reason why we did this is that people are hungry right now," says Father Dunn. "Being home bound, unable to come to Mass and with little to do, they are looking to be nourished and fed spiritually. Proof of this is the great amount of people that are tuning into our live streaming Masses, Stations, Divine Mercy and others. We have a great opportunity right now to evangelize a captive audience, and an audience that because of the pandemic, is turning to God and looking for something more, looking for God in all this. At the same time through the "Fireside at 4," we can minister from home and nourish our own souls as well."

After an opening prayer, Father Dunn opened up the conversation by commiserating with the viewers that this has been a very difficult time for us all. "But it can also be used as a very fruitful time," he said.

Father Dunn and Father Ford discussed that they have tried to turn this time into a more grace-filled one by enjoying the extra time for rest, taking time to read and get outside. Both priests expressed that spending time in prayer and spiritual reading has helped them remain joyful during this difficult time.

They then opened up the question to parishioners, curious as to how everyone was doing. Suzanne Cura, principal of St. Gregory the Great School was available to film and read questions aloud.

Father Ford explained that the hardest thing for him as a priest is that most of what they do is centered on people, and the way that they have had to do that has radically changed. They are ministering to people more over the phone, rather than in person, which presents a challenge.

"Being able to minister to people and serve people is what feeds us," said Father Dunn, "and although we've been able to feed our priesthood in other ways, not having that aspect is very difficult."

When asked how one can find God in all of this, Father Ford reassured listeners that God can bring the good out of any situation, no matter how dire. "Faith, hope and love are always available," he said, "they are always choices that

## St. Gregory the Great Parish offers assistance during pandemic

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—The coronavirus pandemic, while forcing people to keep their distance from one another, is drawing communities closer to help others in need.

Mid-way through March when it became apparent that the coronavirus pandemic was not slowing down, Devon McCormick, a pastoral associate at St. Gregory the Great Parish in Danbury decided to organize a donation drive to support her community through this health crisis.

"We will accept anything people are willing to give, cleaning supplies, Clorox wipes, things like that are really helpful now," she said. A storage container with a hand-made "Food Drop Off," sign sits outside the parish office door in a building behind the church on Great Plain Road.

McCormick said she started the donation drive as an effort to help the St. Gregory community of parishioners, by collecting and delivering items in need to people who are older or

homebound or simply don't want to go out during this time.

The generosity of the community has enabled donation efforts to also address the needs of the Greater Danbury area.

Donations are being sent to local pantries and food kitchens such as the Daily Bread Food Pantry and Dorothy Day House. Those organizations and many like them, are helping to share the goodwill of others by accepting donations that are collected at various community drives and distributing them to people in need.

"We have some additional expenses during this period but we also have an ongoing need," said Daily Bread Food Pantry board chair, Debbie Landzberg. "The number of households we serve each week has increased by almost 40 percent in recent months, with many new households showing up each time we open."

St. Gregory's has collected almost \$1,000 so far and the money is being used to purchase much needed items that have not been donated or are in short supply.

"You always hope for it to be an overwhelming response



FEEDING THOSE IN NEED—Devon McCormick, a pastoral associate at St. Gregory the Great Parish in Danbury decided to organize a donation drive to support her community through this health crisis.

but you can't expect that at this time. This isn't going to be like a Thanksgiving food drive with tables covered with items," McCormick said. It's a challenging time. Many people are being told not to come out or be in contact with others, so we're not seeing a tremendous amount of donations."

McCormick said all donations are sanitized before they are distributed. "Whatever is given is good. It's going to help, even if it's one can. There are families

that are food insecure and we are here to help."

St. Joseph in Danbury has organized an outreach ministry team to connect with parishioners who may need groceries dropped off to their home or a phone call to have someone to talk to during this time.

"This season of Lent has taken on a new meaning," said St. Joseph Pastor Rev. Samuel Scott. "This time of

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

# Parishes in Pandemic

## Community, worship, the sacraments amid COVID-19

By JOE PISANI

### Despite COVID-19, a parish stays connected

STAMFORD—As the coronavirus crisis was intensifying, Father John Connaughton, pastor of the Parish of St. Cecilia-St. Gabriel, received a call, asking him to anoint a parishioner suffering from COVID-19. When he arrived at Stamford Hospital, the nurse helped him put on a face shield, a mask, gloves and a protective garment and only then did he enter the room to anoint the man, who was unconscious.

Almost overnight, his ministry changed. Other priests have had to stand by the door to pray with sick and dying patients, and many have only been able to talk with them by phone. When he returned to the hospital a few days later, Father Connaughton was not allowed to administer the anointing of the sick, and he expects he may not be allowed to do so again until the pandemic ends.

“Our biggest challenge has been trying to remain connected with people in the parish since there has been a forcible separation and no public Mass,” he said. “I have been trying to learn from the example of other priests how to maintain that connection as much as I can.”

To stay in contact with his people, he regularly puts spiritual reflections on the parish website, live-streams Mass and prayer services, and sends updates by email and text-message.

“It is a painful thing for people not to be able to receive the sacraments and not come together in community and worship God,” he said. “We are no longer talking about how many people are missing Mass, but how much they are missing Mass. That is one consolation—to hear them express their sadness at not being able to come to Mass.”

At St. Cecilia-St. Gabriel, he emphasizes the importance of coming together to worship God and of developing a relationship with the Lord, two practices that complement each other.

“Part of the suffering right now is that we are not able to do that in a way we are accustomed to,” he said.

A regular part of the pastoral ministry for Father Connaughton and Father Mariusz Olbrys, the parochial vicar, is to reach out to their flock to see how people are doing.

“We are calling to check up on them. We have a big list, so it will take us a while to do it, but I’ve already received messages from parishioners expressing their gratitude for the calls,” he said. “It means a lot to them right now.”

### Praying for his parish before the Blessed Sacrament

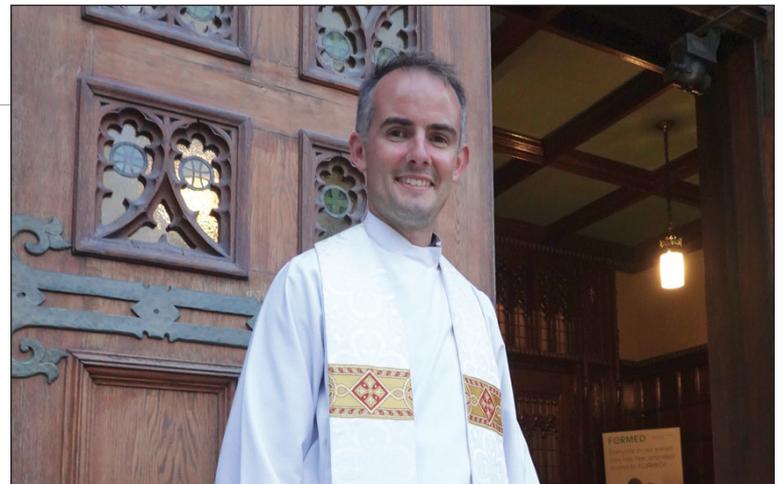
STRATFORD—On many mornings, Father Peter Adamski, pastor of St. James Church, finds himself on his knees at 3 am in the rectory chapel, praying before the exposed Blessed Sacrament and asking for the graces his parishioners need to confront the coronavirus crisis.

He also shares Jesus with his parishioners, who are invited to drive through the church parking lot and pray to the Blessed Sacrament, which is visible in the monstrance in a rectory window.

For Father, it is an enduring reminder that God is always with us.

“I know the Lord is not abandoning us,” Father Adamski says. “He can never do that because he is pure love.”

That fundamental fact of faith has made some of the challenges more bearable. Since the restrictions on public gathering were instituted, he has had several deaths in the parish. The first was a dear friend, who was in Bridgeport Hospital. Father was able to hear his confession, give him Viaticum and the Apostolic Blessing. A week later, he died.



FATHER JOSEPH GILL

At the time, he said a funeral liturgy without a public Mass and later performed a graveside service at the cemetery.

There is an intense longing among his parishioners for a return to community worship and the sacraments.

“We have been getting lots of calls from people who have a longing in their hearts to be back in the community and to be able to receive the Blessed Sacrament,” he said. “Some of them are elderly and cannot come to confession.”

He explains to them how

to make an Act of Spiritual Communion and an Act of Perfect Contrition, which requires that the penitent promise to go to confession as soon as possible.

The last time Father celebrated Mass publicly, he was able to distribute 500 holy cards with a prayer for protection against the coronavirus. They had just arrived that Friday. For him, the timing was providential.

When asked about the pandemic by anxious parishioners, Father says, “God is not punish-

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

## For St. Aloysius seniors, teenagers reflect face of Christ

By JOE PISANI

NEW CANAAN—Does Christ have a teenager’s face? For Dorothy, a senior in St. Aloysius Parish, he does. She first met Luke, a teenager who belongs to the youth ministry, at a social event held shortly before the coronavirus crisis. A friendship developed between them, and during the quarantine, Luke regularly checked up on her. Shortly afterward, Dorothy sent this email to Father Rob Kinnally and Youth Minister Chris Otis:

“I am so grateful for the help I received from a member of your youth group, Luke McPhillips, who sat at my table at the Trinity Tea.... He called me a few times to keep in touch and I always enjoy chatting with him. He offered to shop for me and previously I said ‘no.’ However, the last time he asked me, I was inspired to say ‘yes,’ since I felt it was important for me to let him exercise his kindness and generosity by letting him have the experience and satisfaction

of doing community service.

I emailed him a list and told him there was no emergency and to go with his mother whenever she goes and personally fill a cart with my items. I was stunned a few hours later to get a text from Luke that they were on the way to



my house with all the items on my list.... When they left, I had to sit down to catch my breath, because they took my breath away by their kindness and thoughtfulness.”

It is a time of crisis. It is a time of kindness.

Chris Otis has always believed that service is fundamental to getting young people active in the church. Service combined with

prayer and worship. So when the coronavirus pandemic changed the world and the town of New Canaan, she and the teenagers in the St. Aloysius youth group reached out to the seniors of the parish, many of whom were alone and isolated.

In recent weeks, the teenagers and their families have called seniors to talk, to pray, to buy groceries and to be representatives of Christ during a fearful and tumultuous time.

As Otis says, “This situation is helping us all understand that we are not just a building—we are the Body of Christ, whether we are praying, worshipping and

serving in one another’s physical presence or responding to Christ’s call in creative and different ways. At the core of what we are trying to do at St. A’s is help our young people understand that they are called to a relationship with Christ and called to put their faith into action by being a reflection of him.”

StAY—St. Aloysius Youth—has more than 200 young people involved in service projects.

More than 70 teens and their families have been reaching out to help seniors by regularly calling them, praying with them on the phone and helping them by shopping for groceries, picking up prescriptions and connecting them to the Internet so they can watch Mass online.

The outreach is a response to a challenge from Father Rob Kinnally, pastor and diocesan chancellor, who urged them to continue to “be a reflection of Christ” even during this crisis.

“Our town is really trying very hard to get seniors to stay  
▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

# Parishes in Pandemic

## Food drives benefit Charities

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

FAIRFIELD COUNTY—The coronavirus pandemic has seen many parishes stepping up to give back in any way they can. One way is through drive-through food drives, where food can be collected for donation in a safe and sanitary way.

The first weekend of May, both St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull and Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton conducted drive-through food drives, both of which were huge successes.

St. Catherine of Siena's Social Justice and Charitable Outreach Group raised more than \$3,000 in cash and food donations from nearly 100 feet of tables. Donations were delivered to the Trumbull Food Pantry, Blessed Sacrament Parish and the Thomas Merton Center, all of which are experiencing extraordinary need right now.

Father Joseph Marcello, pastor, reflected that "Many families who



came to help were wearing masks. They had big smiles under their masks, which I could see in their eyes, as they were here because they wanted to help. It's attributed to St. Francis of Assisi that it is in giving that we receive." He continued: "We don't know who the recipients of this food will be other than that they are hungry and in need. And we know that not one of those cars would have come on that day had it not been for Jesus Christ, who came so that we might have life, and have it more

abundantly."

Our Lady of Fatima Parish's event collected much needed food and supplies for the Thomas Merton Center. The event raised well over \$9,000 in donations, including grocery store gift cards.

Father Reginald Norman, pastor, said he was "deeply moved by the success of this event." Volunteers filled two vans with food before donations were even counted. Father Reggie guessed donations would come in at well over \$3,000—and he was right!



"The drive was a great success because we came together and worked as a community with one common goal: feed those less fortunate than us," said Father Reggie, who said his parishioners did a great job spreading the word on social media and through word of mouth. "I believe that people want to help and when given an opportunity, they rise to the occasion. We are blessed and the people in my community are very generous."

Catholic Charities of Fairfield County expressed their sincere gratitude for all donations to the Thomas Merton Center, which is working hard to protect the poor and vulnerable in the community

who have been hit hardest by this crisis.

At this time, the Thomas Merton Center remains open. The soup kitchen is serving take-out breakfast and lunch six days a week and providing 300 meals per day, which is a 40 percent increase. The food pantry is providing 10 days of groceries for low-income families and distributing excess food when available to local shelters and churches. The Merton Center is also preparing and sharing meals with surrounding services.

(For more information on Catholic Charities of Fairfield County and their many services, or if you are interested in donating, visit: [ccfairfield.org](http://ccfairfield.org).)

## 'Drive-thru' blessings

GEORGETOWN—It was a message of hope at a time when people needed hope the most.

With public Masses suspended, Father David Leopold, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Georgetown, offered parishioners a "drive-thru" blessing on Easter Sunday, complete with music provided by the Folk Group.

"After the suspension was extended beyond Easter, we decided to acknowledge the arrival of Easter with an outdoor blessing from 10 am to noon that abided by the restrictions," Father Leopold said. "Each time cars came through, I tried to bring the spirit of hope that Easter evokes, asking for God's blessing. People need hope in the uncertain times in which we are living."

While Father said the prayer, Father John Insera, parochial vicar, blessed the cars from a distance with holy water.

Members of the folk group provided music and performed on the lawn nearby.



"I was so grateful that they volunteered and stayed the whole time," Father said.

Some of the more than 50 cars had family members and a few bicyclists also came through. Several non-parishioners who witnessed the blessing decided to stop by, which made the event evangelical. The morning began with a few cars but toward the end, the entry was backed up. The priests stood by a table with lilies, daffodils and hyacinths, and a basket was set up, where people could make a donation to the church.

In a letter to parishioners titled, "We Sure Could Use a Little Good

News Today," (from a song by Anne Murray), Father wrote, "We have and always will have the best news possible—Christ Has Died, Christ Has Risen, Christ Will Come Again!"

"Easter season is just brimming with good news," Father said. "The parishioners were appreciative and had their spirits uplifted that they were able to come out and receive the blessing and know that the church is open every day for private prayer from 7:30 am to 8 pm."

(To see a slideshow of the Easter blessing, visit Sacred Heart of Georgetown's website at [www.sacredheartgeorgetownct.org](http://www.sacredheartgeorgetownct.org).)

## St. Jerome's food 'drive-by drive'

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

NORWALK—St. Jerome Parish in Norwalk's Social Concerns committee usually holds a monthly parish food drive, but with the usual schedule on hold due to Covid-19 concerns, parishioners were left wondering what they could do to help.

Meanwhile, Kathy Rohr, administrative assistant and parishioner at St. Jerome's, also affectionately called the "ring-leader"



of the drive-by, began thinking of a way to connect Father David Blanchfield and Father Rojin Karickal with their parish family, while still maintaining social distancing rules.

Thus, the idea for a "drive-by" food drive was born.

Rohr borrowed some cones from All Saints Catholic School and set up a drive through. "At one point we had to establish three lanes to keep cars off the road. It was 35 minutes straight of car after car," said Rohr. Traffic was managed by Jeff Rohr and Jim Howe. Parishioners made signs and shouted out greetings to their beloved priests, who waved from the sidewalk. Many brought homemade cards for essential workers, which was part of a project for religious education students.

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

# Safe Environments

## VIRTUS training continues virtually

By **KATHY-ANN GOBIN**

BRIDGEPORT—It's not business as usual but business activities are continuing throughout the Church community and Catholic school systems to prepare for the eventual reopening of the state.

Staff, contractors and volunteers throughout the Diocese of Bridgeport have not stopped working behind the scenes during the coronavirus pandemic.

As projects on church and school campuses continue with such work as painting, plumbing, roofing and cleaning, it is mandated that everyone on school or church property, in the Diocese of Bridgeport, must first be VIRTUS trained. VIRTUS programs are designed to help prevent wrongdoing and promote "rightdoing" within religious organizations. The VIRTUS programs empower organizations

and people to better control risk and improve the lives of all those who interact with the Church.

To accomplish the task of training individuals while social distancing is in effect, the Church, much like many businesses around the world has turned to technology and virtual meetings.

Erin Neil, L.C.S.W., director of Safe Environments & victim assistance coordinator for the diocese, has been coordinating online VIRTUS classes through Zoom to help keep projects on schedule and ready a team of volunteers eager to help in various ways throughout the diocese when activities resume.

For the past few weeks, for the first time in the diocese, VIRTUS classes are being held virtually. This innovative solution has also opened an opportunity for contractors on renovation projects to



receive the proper training while gathered on the job site.

"We are able to do the class while there are a group of contractors on a bench watching the child safety course," said Neil, adding that this arrangement offers convenience and ensures everyone is properly trained.

It also allows peers to take the class at the same time at home as well.

After successfully registering for a session online, the registrant receives a Zoom invitation by email with a link to click on to join the training at a certain time.

For people who don't have access to technology, they can delay VIRTUS training to a later date. In-person classes will once again be offered when the restrictions on gatherings are lifted.

In the meantime, Zoom class-

es have not only offered a new way for people to participate but it has also given many a glimpse into the lives of others that they may not have had otherwise.

The surprise visit of a family member, specifically a family pet, is often a welcome and heartwarming conversation starter.

"If you see my cat in the background, don't be alarmed, she likes to jump around and be on camera," said Diane Scott, Safe Environments program assistant and a recent facilitator of a VIRTUS training session.

"I've never had this many people in my living room," Scott joked, just before starting a traditional roll call of attendees.

"Welcome to my home," she said.

"We won't make a mess," a participant responded amid laughter from the group.

The friendly banter is a pleasant  
➤ *CONTINUED ON PAGE 21*



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## EDITORIAL

Faith and Hope  
in the Pandemic

A pandemic was not anything that most of us expected back in January when we exchanged New Year's wishes. It's not the way we thought we would be celebrating Easter and ushering in Spring.

Now we're almost a month past the apex when hospitals were filled with patients on ventilators and streets were eerily empty. We watched first responders and essential workers put their lives on the line. They kept us going—and as things ease a bit—we shouldn't forget that.

In the darkest moments, when we held our breath and looked for any gesture of hope, our priests inspired and reassured us. They flew over the diocese with the Blessed Sacrament, they walked our streets blessing each home, they heard curbside confessions, held adoration from rooftops, anointed the sick in our hospitals and said final prayers at the graveside.

We also saw how essential and resilient our diocesan ministries are. Teachers made a quick transition to distance learning, and Catholic Charities staff and volunteers moved food operations outside and fed hundreds of hungry and homeless, along with a growing number of families facing hunger for the first time in their lives. Catholic cemeteries employees donned protective gear to bury the dead—they are still doing it.

Historians tell us that pandemics change societies and entire civilizations. As yet we have no real tally of the full human and economic loss, and we have no idea of how long this will endure. And what of us? Should we pray for things to go back to the way they were? Learn to make the most of the "new normal?" or pray for a better world going forward?"

As we prepare for outdoor Masses, health experts warn that we should continue to practice social distancing and ready ourselves for recurring waves of the virus in fall and winter. In the meantime we pray for a vaccine and effective treatment. We've come to expect miracles of our healthcare workers—and in many ways they deliver.

Yet our prayers also take us to a different place. It is important to remember that in the early days when the world blinked in fear, many people turned to the power of prayer—perhaps even those who haven't prayed in a while or have turned away from religion. In our helplessness and vulnerability we called down God's mercy and asked to be spared.

Our technology saves lives and our faith puts us in touch with the source of all life. Faith alone leads us to the deepest questions of meaning and existence, and transforms the suffering and loss that are inevitable in the human condition.

"We have also been reminded that in our darkest hour, the Lord did not abandon us," Bishop Frank J. Caggiano wrote in his recent letter announcing the approval of outdoor Masses in the diocese. In doing so, Bridgeport became the first diocese in the state to resume public Masses. The announcement is also a moment to reflect on the gift of our bishop's leadership during the crisis. More than anyone he has understood the anguish the laity has felt during the time we have been unable to worship together, and he has borne the burden of safeguarding lives while continuing the sacramental life of the Church. He has urged us to reach out to the most vulnerable during the crisis, to stop taking the people around us and the blessings we have for granted, and to deepen our spiritual communion with all Catholics. Most importantly to be open to the presence of God in our lives.

"Divine interventions are not as uncommon as people think. In fact, they happen to us all the time. God is always speaking to us in different ways and his presence is available to us," the bishop said in a recent reflection on Our Lady of Fatima. In the uncertainty of the coming months, we would be wise to heed the bishop's words—to look for God in all the places of our lives—our suffering as well as joy—and know that He will not abandon us.

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

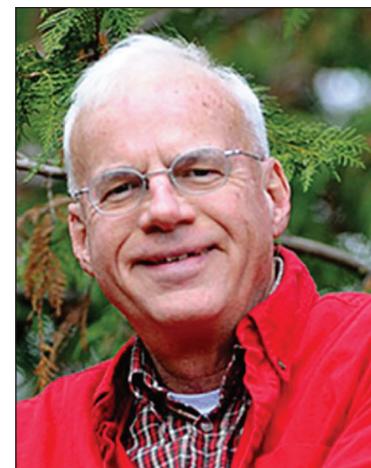
## Celebrating Father Charles Allen!

FAIRFIELD—When Fairfield University recently announced the retirement of Father Charles Allen, S.J. the news was immediately met by an outpouring of affection and gratitude for the priest who has served most joyfully and faithfully.

According to Fairfield Patch, a motorcade of nearly 600 vehicles, including one float, wound its way through Fairfield University's campus, to celebrate the priesthood of Rev. Charles Allen, S.J., for his 40 years of service to the University, Prep, and the greater Fairfield and Bridgeport communities.

"Father Allen's tireless efforts on behalf of the Blue Mass Committee, Catholic Charities and other diocesan ministry will be deeply missed. Father Allen brought such good cheer and thoughtfulness to so many of our events, that both I and the entire diocese will always remain grateful," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

Father Allen will be retiring at the end of May and leaving Fairfield to reside at the Campion Center in Weston, Massachusetts.



## CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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

## PASTOR

FATHER PETER J. ADAMSKI, from Parochial Administrator, Saint James Parish, Stratford, to Pastor, Saint James Parish, Stratford. Effective date was March 1.

MONSIGNOR THOMAS W. POWERS, from Moderator of the Curia, to Pastor, Saint John Parish, Darien. Effective date is September 1. Monsignor Powers will remain Vicar General.

## PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR

FATHER FRANCIS T. HOFFMANN, from Pastor, Saint John Parish, Darien, to Parochial Administrator. Effective date is July 1-September 1.

## PAROCHIAL VICAR

FATHER FRANCIS ELDRIDGE, SA, new to Diocese from the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, to Parochial Vicar, Saint Mary Parish, Stamford. Effective date is June 30.

FATHER LANH T. PHAN, from Episcopal Chaplain, Kolbe Cathedral High School,

Bridgeport, to Parochial Vicar, Saint James Parish, Stratford. Effective date is June 30. Father Phan will remain Administrator for the Holy Vietnamese Martyrs Catholic Community.

FATHER BRUCE F. ROBY, from Parochial Vicar, Saint Mary Parish, Stamford, to Parochial Vicar, Saint Matthew Parish, Norwalk. Effective date is June 30.

FATHER MARCEL SAINT JEAN, to Part-time Parochial Vicar to Saint Joseph Parish, Norwalk. Effective date is June 30. Father Saint Jean will remain Assistant Chaplain of Norwalk Hospital.

## CHAPLAIN

FATHER SAMUEL S. KACHUBA, to Chaplain Veritas Radio (Veritas Catholic Network, Inc.) Effective date was May 5. Father Kachuba will remain Pastor for Saint Pius X Parish.

## RETURNED TO DIOCESE

FATHER SILVESTRO R. BALAN, returned to Diocese to assist at Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque Parish, Shelton.

Effective date was March 26.

## RETIREMENT

FATHER DAVID C. LEOPOLD, from Pastor, Sacred Heart Church, Georgetown, to retirement. Effective date is August 31. Father Leopold will continue as Spiritual Director with the seminarians in the St. John Fisher Program, and reside at St. Theresa's Rectory.

DEACON D. THOMAS MACK, from Diocese of Raleigh, to retirement. Effective date was March 28.

DIOCESAN VOCATIONS TEAM  
(NEWLY CREATED)

FATHER CHRISTOPHER J. FORD has been appointed Coordinator. Effective date was May 1.

FATHER PAUL N. CHECK has been appointed a member. Effective date was May 1.

FATHER JOSE A. VASQUEZ has been appointed a member. Effective date was May 1.

*Monsignor Thomas W. Powers  
Vicar General, May, 2020*

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# Editorial



## This uncertain season calls for us to embrace waiting

### A YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE

BY ELIZABETH CLYONS

*Libby Clyons is Communications Associate for the Diocese of Bridgeport. She can be reached at elizabeth.clyons@diobpt.org.*

As Christians, we are no stranger to waiting. The Israelites wandered 40 years in the desert. They waited for the coming of the Messiah. The disciples spent three days believing their friend and teacher was dead. We have seasons of Lent and Advent which are centered on waiting. Our whole identity, in a way, is built around waiting, for we are the people who believe in things

that we cannot see.

Therefore, we know more than most that although waiting can be uncomfortable it is also necessary and formative. Especially when it comes to the health and safety of others, shouldn't we embrace this time of waiting more than ever, instead of fighting against it?

Of course it is uncomfortable, of course we long to hold our loved ones close, of course we yearn for the day we can once

again congregate together and receive Our Lord. But, as He said to us, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18: 20). He is still with us, no matter where we are. While we remain at home in order to keep others safe and healthy, He is still with us. While we patiently wait for this storm to pass, He is still with us.

As Bishop Caggiano has mentioned in his letters and online reflections, there are many things we can do deepen our spiritual communion and to make this time of waiting fruitful—nourishing our minds, as well as our bodies and spirit. I don't know about you, reader, but I would rather embrace discomfort and remain at home than put one more person through the suffering that accompanies COVID-19. Wouldn't we much rather live in this temporary

discomfort than aid in bringing on a much more lasting and widespread discomfort?

How can we use this period of waiting in the best way possible? How can we embrace it for the betterment of ourselves and others? Luckily, we live in an age where there are so many resources available to us. Read that series you never had time to crack open, plant the outdoor garden you've been wanting to cultivate, use the extra down-time for prayer, spiritual reading, or exploring the outdoors. Connect with those in your household in ways you may not have been able to before, write a hand-written letter to family members who live far away.

This time is unprecedented. But instead of pushing for a return to normalcy, let us craft this new normal in a way that can benefit not only ourselves but those

around us. What is He telling us we should be doing with this time? I can almost guarantee that all He wants from us is a little bit of our time—to sit with him, to reconnect, to let Him love us.

I would love to hear from you. Let me know how you are using this time! We've heard from so many of our parishes about the creative, loving and spiritual service projects they have undertaken.

Maybe we can continue to inspire each other to do that next thing.

My hope is that by the end of all this, we can look back and say we did everything we could to make it better for others. That we did what we could to ease suffering—small acts of staying home, wearing a masks, and remaining six feet apart. That even though it was uncomfortable, even though it was difficult, we embraced this time of waiting and we were better for it. ■



## The (Holy) Spirit of Radio

### A DAD'S VIEW

BY MATTHEW HENNESSEY

*Matthew Hennessey and his family are parishioners of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Stamford.*

Steve Lee had no idea what he was doing. It was a Monday morning in July. He'd just arrived at work and was sitting in his car in the parking lot. A moment earlier he'd punched some numbers into his cellphone. Now it was ringing.

A voice came on the other end. It was a deep voice. Resonant. Steve recognized it as the one that had been coming out of the speakers a moment before: "If you think the Lord might be calling you to bring Catholic radio to your community, give me a call." For reasons Steve still doesn't really understand, he did.

"Hello, this is Jack Williams," said the voice, which belonged to the head of EWTN Catholic Radio. Steve hesitated. Silence. "Hello?" said the voice again.

"Hi, Jack. My name is Steve. I don't really know why I'm calling you."

The two men talked for a while and figured it out. Steve, a 47-year-old Ridgefield resident, heard himself tell Jack that he felt called to start a Catholic radio station in Connecticut. Jack talked him through the steps for making that happen. When Steve hung up, he was confused. What was going on? Where had this come from?

That night he started a novena. "I asked the Lord for two things," he said. "Number one, please let me know if I should be getting involved with this. Should I be trying to start a Catholic radio station? And number two, Lord, if you truly want me to do this, please bring some people into my life who can help."

Steve went back to his regular routine. Before getting into bed he'd pray, asking God for the same two things. A few nights in, he figured he should tell his wife, Roula, what he was praying for.

"When did you lose your mind?" she asked.

Steve didn't have a good answer, but he assured her that he'd tried to shake the radio-station idea. It was refusing to be shaken. Roula said she was on board, with one condition: "If you're serious about this, you need to speak to a priest."

Steve called a friend, Father Paul Check, who said he thought the idea was a good one. Prayer number one answered. Father Check then put him in touch with his brother, Christopher, who runs Catholic Answers, a national apologetics outfit with a big footprint in digital media, radio, and publishing. Prayer number two answered.

With God throwing up green light after green light, Steve hit the books. He started researching the business of running a non-profit radio station. Next thing he knew he was attending a Catholic radio conference in Georgia.

"It was like I was drinking from the firehouse. I wanted to be as prepared as possible. And then I wake up and I'm like, 'What am I doing?

I've got a job. I've got a mortgage. I don't have any experience.'"

It was decision time. Roula, who only months before had strongly implied to Steve that he'd maybe gone loco, now encouraged him to lean on his faith: "Just keep going and see what happens."

Steve took the plunge. He left his job and founded Veritas Catholic Network. He started raising money. Every time it seemed like there wouldn't be enough, something or someone came through. Every time he needed a benefactor to walk into his life, the Lord made it happen.

"I'm nobody," Steve insists. "And yet God has done some pretty awesome stuff for this to come about. It's definitely the Holy Spirit at work."

The truth is: Steve's not nobody. He's a New Canaan native and Boston College grad who earned an MBA at UConn and spent a dozen years working for big money on Wall Street. He and Roula have three sons. That alone makes him somebody in my book.

In December 2018, more than a year after his parking lot moment, Steve plunked down a not insignificant sum to buy a local radio station, WNLK-AM 1370, and a "translator" that will one

day put the station on FM 103.9. The Federal Communications Commission approved his broadcast application.

On August 21, 2019, Steve flipped the switch and Veritas went live. The station mostly features EWTN content for now. Its flagship production is "Let Me Be Frank," Steve's one-hour weekly conversation with Bishop Caggiano airing Wednesdays at noon. You can also download it as a podcast.

Here comes the commercial: Bishop Frank, as you know, is a great teacher and wonderful talker. He's funny, inspiring, thought-provoking, and—surprise, surprise—knows his subject matter. He and Steve are a companionable pair. I never miss an episode.

Veritas is hoping to launch a second original program soon. It will be aimed at teenagers. The ultimate goal is to get a morning drive-time show going. That's good. Faithful Catholics in Fairfield County deserve a healthier option than the trash talk, dirty jokes, and smutpop that typically rule the airwaves.

Steve Lee's humility may be why the Lord selected him for the job of bringing Catholic radio to the Bridgeport Diocese. God always has his antennae up for "nobodies." ■

# We Stand With Christ

## Parish projects update

By **JOE PISANI**

When the We Stand With Christ capital campaign began, the Church of the Holy Spirit in Stamford decided what it needed most was a renovated parish hall, where parishioners could come together as a family. Their initial plans were modest, but their generosity in the campaign was so “extraordinarily generous,” according to Father Luke Suarez, that the project became much more ambitious.

The church reached 200 percent of its goal, and work began in March on the first renovation in almost 25 years. The central focus of the project is a 120-inch screen and high-definition projector.

“The scope of the project would have been much smaller, except for the overwhelming gen-

erosity of our parishioners,” said Father Suarez, who was installed as pastor the end of last year. “My hope is we will have a space that will bring us together as a community so that we can then come upstairs to pray and give worship to God.”

Stephanie LaPointe, business manager of Holy Spirit, said the renovation of the hall, which is in the church basement, will provide new audio and visual technology and a staging area, which has the screen at the center and a high-definition projector for movies.

As Father Suarez puts in, the parish currently isn’t “cutting edge, but bleeding edge” with only a 55-inch television in the hall.

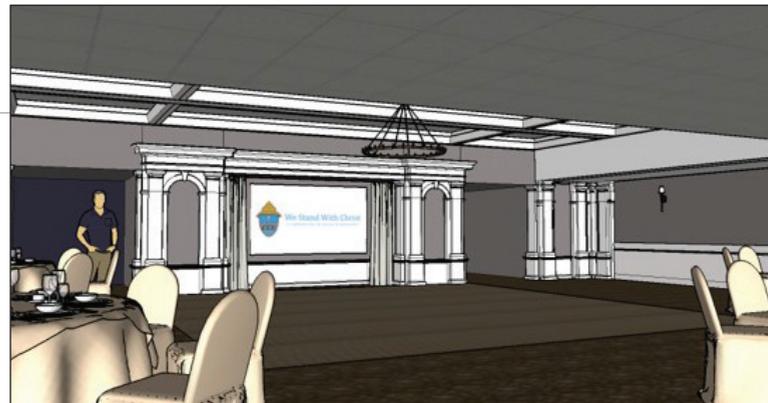
The new arrangement will let Father use the hall for additional space during Christmas and Easter liturgies that can

be projected downstairs on the wall. The technology can also project an image on the wall that can be used as a background for speakers, prayer services, Bible study and faith formation, which will benefit the parish ministries, LaPointe said.

In addition, the hall furnishings will be completely upgraded with a new floor, windows, bathrooms, improved lighting, storage areas and double doors that lead outside.

Father said the renovation fulfills every requirement the ministry heads had ... and much more. The scope of the project, which is expected to be completed in three months, would have been much smaller had it not been for the success the parish had with the We Stand With Christ campaign.

“Holy Spirit is an amazing parish,” Father Suarez said. “It is



a real family that wants to keep building up the community, and this will give us a space where we can gather.”

LaPointe, who has been a parishioner for almost 20 years, said, “This is the kind of parish where when you go to Mass, you know everyone sitting around you, and you celebrate Mass as a family.”

For Father Sudhir DSouza, pastor of St. Philip Church in Norwalk, the money from the We Stand With Christ campaign provided much-needed funds to replace the roof of the church, which had been leaking for several years. The roof repair was completed in December in time for winter.

“The campaign went well for us and the pledges started turning into cash,” he said. The parish surpassed its original goal, and for many of the working families, it represented a true sacrifice, said Father, who has been pastor for

three years.

If things go as planned, there will also be installation of LED lighting in the entire church in the coming months, and a renovation of the chapel is in the planning stages.

One of the primary goals of the We Stand With Christ capital campaign was to address the long-term needs of parishes for future generations.

The campaign has raised more than \$100 million of its \$75 million goal, making it the largest and most successful campaign in the history of the diocese. In recent months, parishes and diocesan ministries have begun benefiting from the campaign and started addressing the long-term needs.

The campaign has designated 50 percent of the funds raised for parish needs, and the remaining 50 percent will be invested in Foundations in Education, Foundations in Faith and Foundations in Charity. ■

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- **WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON?** The Annual Catholic Appeal, which was included in the first year of each parish's capital campaign, has begun for 2020. The goals for the parishes have been lowered this year based on the success of the campaign. Thank you for your continued support!
- **QUESTIONS?** We want to hear from you with any concerns or issues you are experiencing. Contact the campaign at 203.648.9050 or at [Campaign@WeStandWithChrist.org](mailto:Campaign@WeStandWithChrist.org).

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to this campaign and the many wonderful programs and projects that will benefit from your support!

# Cardinal Shehan & McGivney Centers

## Providing innovative programs during a pandemic

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

### Taking steps

BRIDGEPORT—“We are all in this together,” Lorraine Gibbons, director of the Cardinal Shehan Center and McGivney Center, continues to reassure her staff. Although working from home is out of the ordinary for the centers, which offer enrichment programs for youth in Bridgeport, Gibbons says she and her staff are “absolutely pivoting” to make sure they are providing for families and the greater community in this time of need.

From the very beginning of the pandemic, both Shehan and McGivney Centers have stepped up to fill the needs of their members and the greater community.

Gibbons sent out emails to staff and board members, asking them to create resource tool kits to be sent daily to families of the centers. These toolkits provide a wide-range of helpful information, including cooking, literacy and math, just to name a few.



Members of the Shehan Center also have access to basketball tip videos, posted twice per week on Facebook Live in order for players to keep up their skills and to encourage them to engage in fun, outdoor activities.

Gibbons explains that the Shehan Center, which hosts a sewing program, has partnered with a local tailor to make masks to be distributed to those in need. So far, the center has donated 50 masks to Homes for the Brave, a local non-profit serving Veterans, and 1,300 gloves to a local homecare

agency serving senior citizens.

### Feeding program is a ‘win-win’

In response to a survey, which was sent out to center families to gauge how they are doing in terms of remote learning, keeping busy with activities and access to food, Fairfield County’s Community Foundation and a private donor were able to provide grant money for a dinner service program.

Through this grant, both the Cardinal Shehan Center and McGivney Center are able to offer dinner prepared by Vazzy’s,

Calise’s Food Market and Layla’s Falafel by social-distancing curbside pick up Tuesdays-Fridays through Wednesday, June 3.

Gibbons calls this “a win-win—keeping restaurant employees employed and also feeding our families.” This program is currently able to serve 50 families of four.

### WIFI access through mobile hot-spots

Gibbons and her staff were able to make a deal with AT&T to secure three mobile hot-spots. Using two Shehan Center busses and one McGivney Center bus, the plan is to bring WIFI access to those who may not have it, but need it for work and school.

The busses will park in selective locations, where families will be able to drive up, park and use the internet access they need. Larger lots are being scouted out, which should allow for about 8 or 10 cars at a time.

Gibbons and her staff are hop-

ing to begin testing by this Friday (May 1), and hope to start providing the service the following week.

“This idea is one way I engage my staff during this time,” says Gibbons. “I remind them that it is a great way to serve our community—where we work, live and serve our kids. Why not further reach out to our families in any way we can.”

The City of Bridgeport’s Lighthouse Program through the Department of Youth Services has offered to cover the costs of the mobile hotspot program.

“This is a beautiful partnership with local community centers, schools, and a wonderful corporation—AT&T,” says Gibbons, expressing her gratitude to all who have stepped up to help during this time.

(For more information on the Cardinal Shehan Center and McGivney Center visit: [shehancenter.org](http://shehancenter.org) and [mcgivneycenter.wixsite.com](http://mcgivneycenter.wixsite.com).)

### ST. ALOYSIUS SENIORS FROM PAGE 7

at home, and we are working with the town,” Otis said. “They sent out a list, and we have reached out to 180 of our elderly parishioners in 135 households.”

“Much of it is talking to them because they’re lonely,” Otis said.

A regular ministry of StAY is Service to Seniors, which hosts inter-generational events, such as the Trinity Tea, which several months ago filled the parish hall with teens and seniors enjoying conversation, dancing, singing and laughing.

“There is nothing that makes your heart swell more than when you can stand back and watch young people do what God is calling them to do,” Otis says.

Many such events are held on Sundays because, as Otis recalls, a senior said to her, “Sundays are the hardest day for us because we go to church and come home, and then we are alone.”

In addition to putting on events, Service to Seniors encourages visits to the homebound.

“Last year, we encountered a woman who was dying,” Otis says. “We called ourselves ‘The Sunshine Club’ and visited her and prayed with her—and she told

the kids, ‘I am praying for you.’”

Teenagers at St. Aloysius also regularly attend 5 pm Sunday Mass in addition to Eucharistic adoration, prayer services, retreats and mission trips.

A fundamental part of the youth ministry is service, Otis says. “That is so dear and close to my heart.”

Service work includes ministry to Breakthrough Options in Norwalk and the Thorpe Family Residence in the Bronx, where students mentor the children of single mothers. St. A’s Buddies helps teens and young adults with special needs. There are also Midnight and Breakfast runs to New York City, service at the New Covenant Center Soup Kitchen and typically two annual mission trips, including one to Kentucky, in cooperation with the Christian Appalachian Project and local churches and town officials, to deliver Christmas stockings to children in need.

“Everything we do and all our service opportunities have teen leaders, and I work with them. They plan and come up with the mission. They pray and lead,” she said. “They are called to con-

tinue their own relationship with Christ and put their faith into action.”

Otis assumed the job of youth minister eight years ago. She and her husband John, who have three sons, moved to New Canaan 24 years ago and joined St. Aloysius Parish. Right from the beginning, they got involved with parish activities.

Otis eventually left her work in sales and took over the youth ministry and started to do things in what she describes as a “non-traditional way.” She developed a program that was based on the three pillars of prayer, service and worship. When she arrived, the one component that had been lacking was service.

“Our young people were saying to us that if they were going to show up, they wanted to do something,” Otis said. “Young people have this desire to serve others and to love others, and we have to give them the opportunity. They’re hungry for these opportunities. They want to be part of the Church, and it is so important to cement this desire. We have to put into place ways for our teens to answer God’s call.”

### SACRAMENTS AMID COVID-19 FROM PAGE 7

ing us. He is not a vengeful God. He is a merciful and loving God, and we need to turn to him now more than ever. We need to pray like we’ve never prayed before and ask him for his help and his peace.”

### ‘This is a time to make us stronger’

STAMFORD—God works all things for the good for our salvation ... and all things include the coronavirus, Father Joseph Gill, parochial vicar at the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist, says.

“Everything that God allows is an opportunity to turn back to him with greater fervor. Our lives and our futures are in his hands, and that is something we can often forget in our technological world,” Father said. “Our lives and our world are in the hands of God, and nothing happens without his permissive will.”

Father has been encouraging people to make the best use of their time, and that means prayer, fasting, spiritual reading and growing closer to their families...rather than binge-watching Netflix.

“It should be a time that will make us stronger and a time to turn in on ourselves. People should reflect on their lives,” he says. “I’ve seen incredible spiritual proof that people are coming back to the faith after many years.”

He sees evidence in the confessions that he has heard on the front steps of the Basilica for several hours on Thursdays and Saturdays. Masses are live-streamed daily and on Sundays, which can have as many as 500 people watching from as far away as Ireland and Sri Lanka.

“One thing I have found very edifying is the Eucharistic hunger of people. They are asking, ‘When can we have Mass again? When can we have the Eucharist?’” he said. “I pray that their hunger is stoked and that it can grow.”

It is also a time for priests to reflect, he said.

“All my ministry ultimately flows from my union with Christ, so fasting and prayer for my parishioners is the greatest act that I can do,” he said. “It involves asking for God’s grace upon my people, so I have been spending a lot of extra time in prayer to bring God to the people. I have been getting myself out of the way to allow God to do his work.”

# Diocesan Schools

## 'Normal' carries a new meaning

By PAT HENNESSY

"There was no interruption," says Joanne Salageanu. "From the first week of the shutdown, the girls went to school as they always had."

The difference, as every parent knows, is that "going to school" no longer involves a yellow school bus at the front of the driveway. But for the Salageanu daughters, Adriana, a seventh grader at Our Lady of Fatima Academy in Wilton, and her sister Anais, a freshman at St. Joseph High School in Trumbull, the day follows very much a normal routine.

"I go in at 8:15 to see that the girls are up," says Joanne. "They're already dressed for school and we'll have a quick breakfast together. Then each girl goes to her room and logs on to her classroom."

School days, which had always provided a structure, still do so. When Adriana logs on to Google Meets at Our Lady of Fatima, she'll join in morning prayer and hear the day's announcements, then head for the classroom.

"They never missed a beat," says the girls' father, Adrian. "The schools have done a fantastic job. At Our Lady of Fatima and St. Joe's as well, they were well positioned to deal with this crisis, and our kids did not miss anything. It's very much like a normal school day."

Our Lady of Fatima's principal, Stanley Steele, gives high marks for the leadership of Dr. Steven Cheeseman, superintendent of schools, and the entire team at the Superintendent's Office, in helping make this adjustment a smooth one.

"He is hands down the best superintendent I've worked for in 34 years," Steele says. "Because of the Personalized Learning Initiative, kids were already using this technology in certain areas throughout the school day. It was a pretty seamless transition for our teachers."

He was also quick to thank Alan Barnicle, coordinator of Personalized Learning, Stacy Clements, personalized learning coach and the entire Personalized Learning team, for their rapid response to any wrinkles in

instruction that did appear. "Alan and team were right there, and patiently answered all my questions," he says. "They are hands on and make solutions happen."

The seamless transition shows in Adriana's math class, in which the Personalized Learning Initiative already had her using a strong computer component. Adriana and her classmates are working on the conversion of percentages and fractions to decimals. "Mrs. Galass uses a whiteboard and goes through the steps of the conversions," Adriana explains. "If one of us doesn't get it, we raise our hands and ask questions. To make sure we understand, she'll give us pages of examples that we finish on the computer and hand in."

On Friday morning, Adriana joins the school for 9 am Mass, usually celebrated by Father Reggie Norman, Our Lady of Fatima's pastor. Students go to the parish website, [www.olfwilton.org](http://www.olfwilton.org). They click the red "watch live" button and attend Mass with their classmates. (All parishioners can join, too.) Each student submits a photo of the

Mass attended, so their teachers have an attendance record.

At the high school level, Anais and her fellow students at St. Joseph were already well versed in using the latest technology to enrich their instruction. This experience helped to make the transition effortless. Whether she is studying the part of Romeo for her World Literature Class or joining in conversations in French Class, Anais is deeply engaged in her freshman courses. "For religion we are studying the Old Testament, so before Holy Week we read in Exodus so we could see how that connected to the Last Supper."

Mass and other campus ministries continue, too, under the leadership of St. Joe's chaplain, Father Eric Silva.

Anais is an enthusiastic member of St. Joseph's school choir. Participation in the group gives her a sense of music history and culture through the selections they learn, and it gives her a chance to feel what it's like to perform onstage. "Onstage" has new meaning, too, in today's environment. "We all wore our



A NEW NORMAL—For the Salageanu sisters, Adriana, a seventh grader at Our Lady of Fatima Academy in Wilton, and her sister Anais, a freshman at St. Joseph High School in Trumbull, the switch to online learning has already become routine.

choir polo shirts and recorded St. Joe's alma mater. Then it was posted online. That was such a neat thing!"

More than simply keeping on top of subjects academically, important though that is, the diocesan schools' response has created a new wave of school spirit. Whether that means Adriana working independently on a science project or Anais joining in an online performance, the enthusiasm they show gives an upbeat meaning to a frequently used phrase "a new normal." ■

## Immaculate students receive Arts awards

DANBURY—Two talented Immaculate students received Connecticut Association of Schools 2019-20 Outstanding Arts Awards: Elizabeth Flaherty '20 of New Fairfield for performing arts and Elizabeth Varda '20 of Brookfield for visual arts. Award recipients are those who "excel in the performing and visual arts...and demonstrate scholarship and leadership."

Elizabeth Flaherty's teacher has described her as creative and hardworking, and believes that with her abilities she will go on to do great things "Elizabeth is a strong, confident musician which allows her to lead both musically and logistically. She is a leader of the a capella club and a regular performer in all the community outreach events our choir is a part of, she sings in the diocesan youth choir and she is a lead in our musical, "Once



On This Island," said Mrs. Jen Doherty, IHS choir director.

Elizabeth will attend the University of Connecticut as a digital film/video production major. Besides singing, she plays the piano and trumpet. A cast member of Immaculate's musical productions of "Fiddler on the Roof," "Grease" and "Pippin," Elizabeth was cast as Mama

Euralie in "Once On This Island" this year. "I also played Gerry Dunbar in Immaculate's drama production of 'Play On'" earlier this year, and I am co-president of Immaculate's a capella club, a member of the honors chorus and a member of Tri-M Music Honor Society," she noted. "During my time at Immaculate I have developed myself both musically and

academically through the help of my fellow performers and friends, but also through the guidance of teachers and staff. Without these people I'm sure I would not be the person I am today and I would be dearly missing their presence in my life," Elizabeth said.

IHS art teacher Leslie Quinn said that Elizabeth "Lizzie" Varda received the award for visual arts because, in part, of her willingness to expand her skills over her four years at Immaculate High School. "In those four years she has evolved into an accomplished artist. Lizzie has the ability to not only make art but to write and talk about her work, be it ideas, processes and use of materials. She gives the viewer a window into what goes into her artwork," said Mrs. Quinn. She noted that while Lizzie is proficient in many areas, her strong talent is costume design. Lizzie designs costumes for Immaculate's Spring Musicals

and regional theater, receiving a Halo award last year for costume design for Immaculate's production of "Pippin." "Lizzie brings vitality and humor to the classroom and her extracurricular and work commitments seem effortless, the mark of a true professional," Mrs. Quinn noted.

Lizzie is also still deciding which college she will attend, but she plans to be a fashion design major. "I do a lot of fashion designs and pattern designs for textiles so that is my favorite art to do. I love to use and experiment with different materials like oil paint, wallpaper and more. I have done the costumes for IHS theatrical productions of "Twelfth Night," "Grease," "Our Town," "Pippin," "Play On!" and "Once On This Island," she said, adding: "I have been doing art at IHS my teachers, who believed in me and my art." ■

# Leadership Institute Update

## Reimagining formation for the ‘new normal’

By **PATRICK DONOVAN**

BRIDGEPORT—The restrictions placed on large gatherings give The Leadership Institute the opportunity to make some important innovations to our formation programs. This new normal in which we seem to be living calls for creativity and offers a chance to look at the ways we engage others in faith formation in a new light.

### Marriage Formation Reimagined

The new marriage formation program will debut in July. (June marriage prep will take place as scheduled on June 13 via Zoom.)

The new program will combine online learning with mentorship from a “veteran” married couple at a reduced cost (\$195 vs \$220). Couples will continue to register and pay for marriage formation online through The Leadership Institute’s site. This shift allows us to better accompany couples in their journey towards marriage and offers couples the opportunity to work at their own pace. Evaluations over the last few years have shown that couples appreciate the one day of preparation for its efficiency but are left wanting more because of its fast pace and exclusion of some materials.

### Four-part Marriage Formation:

**Part One**—An Introduction to

the Sacrament of Marriage

This is a one-hour gathering to introduce couples to the marriage formation process and provide an understanding of the sacrament of marriage. For the foreseeable future, these meetings will take place online. When advised that it is safe to gather in large groups, couples will be able to participate in the introductory meeting either in person or virtually. Sessions will be held once per month and couples will select which session they wish to attend when they register.

**Part Two**—Online Content

Following the introductory meeting, couples will use LEAD, the online learning platform for The Leadership Institute, to complete the rest of their formation. The diocese will continue to use the Unveiled videos and instructional material we currently use, but it will be distributed via The Institute’s online portal. Couples will work through this material at their leisure, but must complete this portion of the program within 90 days of beginning. It is strongly recommended that couples complete this part of formation no less than two months prior their wedding.

**Part Three**—Assignment and Review

When couples have finished with the online content, they will be asked to meet again with their mentor couple or share a simple assignment with them through

the online portal.

Once the mentors have marked the couple’s formation as complete in LEAD, the system will automatically generate their certificate of completion which they can give to the priest or deacon who is officiating their wedding.

**Part Four**—Meeting with Clergy

The final step in marriage formation is the meeting between the couple and the clergyman officiating their wedding.

To launch this program, The Leadership Institute is seeking the assistance of couples willing to help accompany those preparing for marriage. If you qualify and would like to assist, please email Patrick Donovan, director of the Institute at [institute@diobpt.org](mailto:institute@diobpt.org).

Couples who wish to serve as mentor couples should meet the following qualifications:

- Be married more than five years
- Be in a valid Catholic marriage
- Have some working knowledge of technology and, especially, Zoom
- Be willing to commit to about five hours a month to meet with couples, offer feedback, and join in ongoing formation.

“We are looking for a variety of couples,” Donovan said. “Interfaith couples, older couples, couples with young children, and empty nesters. It is important that we offer those preparing for marriage an assortment of voices that

can speak to the realities of being married in today’s world.”

### Parish Formation and LEAD

In the coming weeks, a committee will begin to meet to offer plans for parishes for faith formation when programs resume in the fall. The committee will offer suggested models of formation that include a hybrid of virtual meetings and face-to-face gatherings that follow the appropriate social distancing rules that have now become the norm. The committee’s recommendations will be made by mid-June.

To assist parishes, the Institute is upgrading its learning platform. In March 2020, The Leadership Institute launched, LEAD, a completely redesigned learning portal.

“After testing more than 70 platforms and a few false starts with vendors who could not deliver what our learners needed, we decided to build our own,” Donovan said. “To do this, we partnered with Fivable, a web design company in South Carolina who also created the Institute’s website. By creating our own platform, we are able to avoid per person costs and create a learning environment that fits the unique needs of our participants.”

As we look towards formation in parishes in the fall, it has become clear that we will need to alternate plans in place. Formation in fall 2020 will look very little like it did in fall 2019.

To assist parishes, we are adding new features to LEAD. These features include:

### Moving marriage formation online

The ability for instructors to respond one on one to learner’s assignments within the platform so that responses are archived and follow all safe environment protocol.

- Ability for parishes to create learning paths for each grade in their parish program or a collection of grades.
- Ability for catechists and parish leaders to upload videos, images, worksheets, or any other content that you may create or receive that you wish to deliver to your students and/or families.
- Ability to create assignments. These could be as simple as having young people upload a reflection or as complicated as asking young people to upload a video project.
- Integration of Zoom within

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

## ‘Giving tree’ displays masks and sanitizing pads

WESTPORT—Recently, Church of the Assumption in Westport displayed washable face masks on a “giving tree” in front of the church.

Hand-sewn, washable masks were donated by members of the Filipino Community of Fairfield County, along with prayer cards for anyone who would like one.

Also included were sanitizing prep pads donated by the Knights of Columbus.

Anyone who is in need of these products are welcome to come and take them.

“What’s usually a tree filled with lights at Christmas time is now a tree hanging facemasks,” read the weekend bulletin.

“We just put up the masks this morning and already half of them are gone,” said Father Cyrus Bartolome, pastor of Church of the Assumption.

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



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# News from the Superintendent

## Online learning until the end of the school year

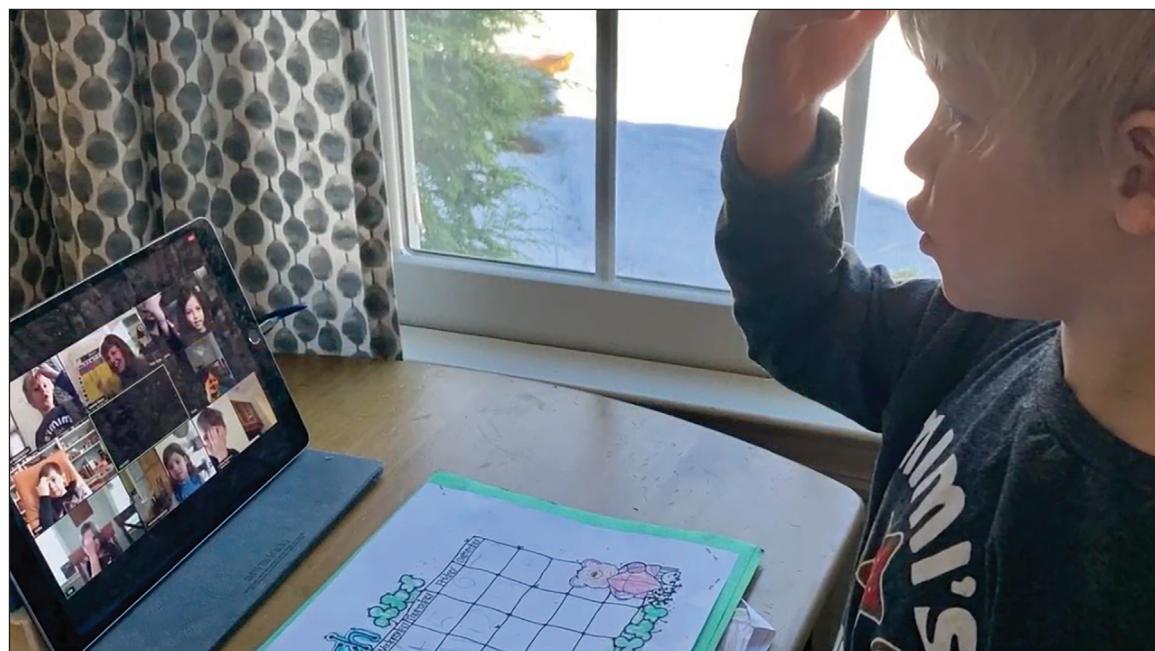
BRIDGEPORT—In a video sent out to all schools, parents and teachers on May 6, Dr. Steven Cheesman, superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport, announced that distance learning will remain in effect until the close of the school year.

"I come to you with an announcement that many of us felt was inevitable but one we were hoping we didn't have to make," said Dr. Cheesman. "In keeping with the announcement made by Governor Lamont, our Catholic schools will continue distance learning throughout the remainder of the school year."

Dr. Cheesman said it was a difficult decision to make, but one that has been made easier by the cooperation and commitment of teachers, parents and students to continue to Catholic education during the pandemic.

On March 13, Dr. Cheesman announced that all diocesan sponsored Catholic elementary and high schools would end in-school classes effective March 13 and begin implementing their distance learning instructional plan on Monday, March 16.

Dr. Cheesman started by



thanking teachers for their hard work in making a "mostly seamless" transition to distance learning for the 7,500 students who had been studying in the 30 different school buildings sponsored by the diocese.

Referring to the "herculean effort" of teachers Dr. Cheesman said that spent hundreds of hours in professional development and online learning communities to make the success-

ful transition.

Speaking directly to students scheduled to graduate from Catholic elementary and high schools in June, Dr. Cheesman said "This year is certainly memorable, but is not one you deserve. So many milestones you have looked forward to have been affected," pledging to find a way at a later date to express pride in their achievements.

Dr. Cheesman said the sudden move to online learning has been a "learning curve" for

everyone including parents. He thanked them for their patience and commitment to Catholic education.

"The closure of 30 schools buildings across diocese was never something we imagined we would have to do," Dr. Cheesman said. "We will continue to work as hard as we can to ensure our teachers have the resources they need so our young people can receive a quality Catholic education."

He encouraged parents to reach

out to schools or use the online help desks if they have any questions.

Dr. Cheesman said that if anything, the pandemic has demonstrated that Catholic education is not simply "defined by buildings that house us but by parents teacher, administrators and students who together create a culture that informs the mind, forms the heart, and transforms the lives of all those lucky enough to be a part of it."

He said that over the coming months he and his team would be working to ensure a safe, clean and nurturing school environment in the Fall.

The Office of the Superintendent has already begun designing plans for what the Fall school year will look like, with various options to fit the many scenarios that the next few months may bring. Dr. Cheesman said that whether we continue to learn through distance learning or find ourselves back in the classroom, the safety of our students is top priority as well as our academic programs, where we will continue to offer a quality Catholic education.

(For more information on Catholic schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport, visit [www.dioceseofbridgeportcatholic-schools.com/coronavirus-updates](http://www.dioceseofbridgeportcatholic-schools.com/coronavirus-updates).) ■



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### ST. JEROME FROM PAGE 8

"It was an awesome experience to meet our beloved parishioners with a distinctive spirit, enthusiasm and joy," said Father Rojin. "The whole event was really uplifting!"

Masked and gloved volunteers were kept to a minimum, although many parishioners offered to help. Food donations were transported by Matt Rohr, Jimmy Howe and Anthony Vayda (three high school seniors from Notre Dame in Fairfield) and Jack Rohr (an NDF alum and current LaSalle University junior).

The parish's Sewing Brigade, which has been making masks and surgical caps for various hospitals, nursing homes and agencies, passed out masks to parishioners in need. Masks were distributed by Aimee Russo and Daniela O'Callaghan.

Parishioners also had the opportunity to make monetary donations to both Person-to-Person Agency in Norwalk, whom the food donations were for, and the parish itself.

The event collected over 1,000 food items weighing in at 1,275 pounds along with \$2,592 in cash and checks for Person-to-Person. "St. Jerome's Social Concerns Committee has worked with this local agency for years," says Rohr, who sorted donations along with Dina Howe. "They are a pillar of the community in caring for the needs of our neighbors."

"Last Saturday when a parade of parishioners in cars came by to drop off food for the hungry and wave to Father Rojin and myself, it felt like Easter," shared Father David. "The community came alive in Christ to feed the needy and it was all done in the bright, warm sunshine. Alleluia!" ■

### 'NEW NORMAL' FROM PAGE 15

the platform.

- The addition of notifications via email and text that are tracked and hide the contact information for all parties to protect the personal information of learners.
- That last feature is really exciting. Parishes that use LEAD will be able to send notifications to learners (including students) via email or text, meaning that some third party platforms that cost parishes will be unnecessary.

More information about the platform, including the new features and the bulk purchasing of Zoom licenses for parishes, will be shared with parish leaders in the coming weeks.

For more information, contact: Patrick Donovan, Th.D.  
Executive Director  
The Leadership Institute  
203.416.1657  
[pdonovan@diobpt.org](mailto:pdonovan@diobpt.org) ■

# Charities 'Telehealth'

## Provide counseling in crisis

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

FAIRFIELD COUNTY—With the COVID-19 pandemic leading to an increase in anxiety and depression, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County has pivoted to a virtual telehealth counseling model. This service, which has been around for ten years, is now more widely available. “With telehealth we can now provide these services to anyone in the diocese as our clients do not need to be near our Danbury or Norwalk offices,” said Executive Director Mike Donoghue.

Although there is a lot to be said about providing counseling face-to-face, Richard Madwid, director of Behavioral Health Services explains that telehealth offers a convenience during this

crisis, the benefit of which cannot be denied.

“The shift to telehealth has challenged us in terms of the ability to create an interpersonal relationship with clients,” which he explains is easier when one can observe behavioral data such as body language and other observational behaviors.

That being said, all counselors were provided with webinar training and have stepped up to meet the learning curve.

Madwid explains that they have seen fewer cancellations with telehealth, with a “no-show” rate down to zero. “To our favor, we are the largest provider of Medicare and Medicaid in Fairfield County,” says Madwid, adding that many insurance providers have relaxed regulations previously inhibiting telehealth

counseling. Video is no longer required, meaning that clients who do not have access to a webcam can still receive counseling over the phone. Having access to video can add an extra element to sessions, though, as Madwid explains that being able to see a client or therapist and their surrounding environment helps foster that interpersonal relationship.

Catholic Charities of Fairfield County’s counselors have retained their caseloads as of mid-March, but Madwid explains that many new clients have been calling in due to coronavirus-related concerns. “Understandably, many people are affected by being shut-in, and are experiencing fear of being affected by the virus, losing work and being unable to pay their bills,” says Madwid, explaining that there has been a



WITH THE COVID-19 pandemic leading to an increase in anxiety and depression, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County has pivoted to a virtual telehealth counseling model. This service, which has been around for ten years, is now more widely available.

dramatic increase in those calls.

With both children and parents being home, some families are finding it difficult to get used to the changing dynamic and are experiencing newer or worsening conflicts. Behavioral telehealth is available for those clients as well, offering family sessions. Madwid explains that they are taking steps toward creating more group therapy sessions to target “COVID-induced anxieties,” which he explains is a much-needed development.

Catholic Charities’ Behavioral Health program has also recently conducted professional development trainings for Diocese of Bridgeport Schools.

“As a director, I have been thinking a lot about the future of behavioral health,” explains Madwid, adding that Catholic Charities will continue to offer telehealth, as the counseling model changes following COVID-19. “There is a lot to be said about the convenience of telehealth,” he says. “It is the future of our work.”

### About Behavioral Health

Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, Inc. has been a leader in providing affordable and accessi-

ble mental health services to economically disadvantaged individuals and families for over fifty years and is one of the only providers of subsidized mental health services in the region. It is accredited by the Council on Accreditation and licensed by the Connecticut Department of Public Health and the Department of Children and Families.

Clinic staff consists of skilled master level and licensed clinicians with training in various mental health disciplines, including counseling, clinical social work, medication management, and marriage and family therapy. The Medical Director is a board certified psychiatrist. Each year, the clinics deliver thousands of clinical sessions. Free counseling services are provided to people living in the Danbury area who are living at the 150% poverty level and who are uninsured. The funding for this program is provided by the Department of Social Services and the program is only offered in the Danbury clinic.

*(To make arrangements for individual or group telehealth services call: 203.743.4412. Most commercial insurances are accepted in addition to Medicare and Medicaid.)*

# NCC virtual breakfast serves wisdom and thanks

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

STAMFORD—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and Rabbi Jay TelRav of Temple Sinai in Stamford delivered some memorable and inspiring breakfast conversation at the recent Celebrity Breakfast to benefit New Covenant Center in Stamford.

An estimated 700 guests went online to join the “virtual” breakfast that was live-streamed courtesy of NBC studios in Stamford.

Seated at an anchor desk usually reserved for sports analysis the bishop and the rabbi reflected on profound questions including the impact of the pandemic on faith, the mystery of evil and the unprecedented challenges faced by so many during the crisis.

In his introductory remarks, Mike Donoghue, newly named executive director of Catholic Charities, said that those who missed the breakfast live-stream can watch it online ([www.newcovenantcenter.org](http://www.newcovenantcenter.org)), and that there’s still time to make a donation to help



New Covenant Center reach its \$150,000 goal to help feed the hungry, homeless and growing number of unemployed in the Stamford area.

“I’m proud of our work here at New Covenant Center, an interfaith project with many different religions working together helping our neighbors in need,” said Donoghue.

Donoghue said that NCC is open 365 days a year and depends on the generosity of 800 volunteers. He said he was grateful to the NCC staff “who are running into the fire every day to help the most vulnerable while most of us are sequestered at home.”

The bishop began the conversation by thanking Rabbi TelRav and the congregation of Temple Sinai for their long-time service to New

Covenant Center through preparation of monthly meals and for preparing and serving the meal on Christmas day.

He and the rabbi then traded thoughts on spiritual challenges raised by the pandemic and the need to engage young people in their faith traditions.

John Gutman, executive director of New Covenant Center, said that since the onset of the pandemic, NCC has gone from serving 175 meals a day to 700 to those “who are hungry, homeless and jobless.”

*(To make an online donation, visit [www.newcovenantcenter.org/donate](http://www.newcovenantcenter.org/donate). For more information, contact Leisa Hinds-Simpson [lhinds-simpson@ccfc-ct.org](mailto:lhinds-simpson@ccfc-ct.org) or 203.964.8228.)*

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# Obituaries

## Brother Priests pass away in Stamford

STAMFORD—Msgr. Roger J. Watts and his brother, Rev. Canon Albert W. Watts, both priests of the Diocese of Bridgeport for over 60 years, passed away within two weeks of each other recently in Stamford Hospital.

Canon Albert Watts, 88, died on Friday morning May 1. He followed his older brother, Msgr. Roger Watts who passed away on April 22, at the age of 91.

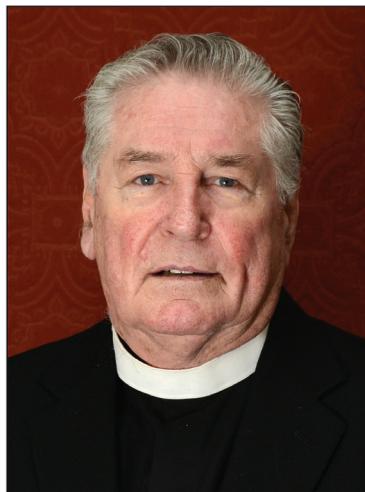
The men, affectionately known to many throughout the diocese as the “Brother Priests,” were ordained on the same day, June 5, 1959, in St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport by the Most Rev. Lawrence Joseph Shehan, first Bishop of Bridgeport, while their parents watched from the pews.

“Msgr. Roger and his brother Canon Albert had a great love for the Church, their fellow priests, and for each other as they shared a lifetime of priestly ministry. They continued to work joyfully and faithfully throughout their retirement to serve the People of God in our diocese. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Canon Watts and for the consolation of his family,” said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.



REV. CANON ALBERT W. WATTS

Writing about the gift of a vocation in 2014, Father Albert Watts recalled the day when he and his brother, Roger, were ordained to the priesthood. “It is like yesterday that Bishop Lawrence J. Shehan (later Cardinal) laid hands on us during ordination 55 years ago as we lay side by side on the sanctuary floor while our parents in the front pew watched and listened as the choir prayed the Litany of Saints. There are some families that are blessed with God having called two brothers to the priesthood. But it



MSGR. ROGER J. WATTS

seems we were especially blessed because we were called and ordained as priests together on the very same day, June 5, 1959, at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport.

### Msgr. Roger J. Watts

Following his ordination in 1959, Msgr. Watts early assignments included service as a parochial vicar in the parishes of St. Maurice, Glenbrook; Saint Joseph in Shelton and Saint Mary Parish in Ridgefield. In 1978, he was appointed pastor of Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in Stamford.

Msgr. Watts served as pastor of St. Cecilia Church in Stamford from 1984 until his retirement in 1999. Residing at the Catherine Denis Keefe Queen of Clergy Residence in Stamford, he continued to celebrate Mass and help out in many parishes during his retirement years.

Early in his career, he was the principal at St. Mary School in Ridgefield, as well as a priest in the parish there. He also taught at Central Catholic High School in Norwalk from 1966 to 1973.

Msgr. Watts also served as spiritual director of the Catholic Family and Community Services, an office of Catholic Charities. He was a member of the Presbyteral Council and moderator of the Stamford District Council of Catholic Women.

Father Watts was born on March 26, 1929 in Fall River, Massachusetts. He undertook his seminary studies at the Oblate

Scholasticate in Washington, D.C. and Saint Mary Seminary in Baltimore.

### Father Albert Watts

Among his assignments in Diocesan parishes, Father Watts served as pastor of St. Ambrose Parish, Bridgeport from 1977 to 1980, and served as parochial vicar at St. Augustine Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport; St. Cecilia Parish, Stamford; and St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, East Norwalk.

His out-of-state assignments include appointments as parochial vicar in Queen of Peace Mission, Lakeland, Ga., and St. William's Parish, Tewksbury, Mass.

Father Albert Watts was appointed defender of the bond in the diocesan Tribunal in 1989 and pro-synodal judge in 1981.

A native of Fall River, Mass., he studied at Our Lady of Hope Seminary, Newburgh, N.Y.; the oblate College in Washington, D.C.; and the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. ■

## FUNERAL GUIDE

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### DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT MAY 24—JUNE 20

| MAY  |                                   |      |
|------|-----------------------------------|------|
| 24   | Rev. Mark Grimes.....             | 2008 |
| 25   | Rev. Joseph A. Ganley.....        | 1957 |
| 26   | Msgr. William Loughlin.....       | 2014 |
| 27   | Rev. Joseph F. Sohovich.....      | 1957 |
| 28   | Rev. John P. McNerney.....        | 1969 |
| 29   | Msgr. John J. Barney.....         | 1973 |
|      | Rev. Harry Holbrook.....          | 2005 |
| 30   | Rev. Adelard A. Jalbert.....      | 1960 |
| 31   | Rev. Dennis A. Szocs, O.F.M.....  | 1985 |
| JUNE |                                   |      |
| 1    | Rev. Msgr. Jean C. Tetreault..... | 2003 |
| 2    | Rev. Thomas M. Ford.....          | 1992 |
| 3    | Rev. Michael F. Blanchard.....    | 1982 |
|      | Rev. Richard J. Grady.....        | 1993 |
|      | Deacon Kenneth Stroud.....        | 2016 |
| 5    | Msgr. Peter P. Dora.....          | 2017 |
|      | Msgr. John Hayes.....             | 1964 |
| 6    | Rev. Thomas J. Hanley.....        | 1954 |
|      | Msgr. Edward J. Howley.....       | 2012 |
| 7    | Rev. James J. Dennis.....         | 2003 |
|      | Deacon Kevin Moore.....           | 2019 |
| 8    | Msgr. Bernard S. Scanlon.....     | 2004 |
| 9    | Msgr. James G. Lengen.....        | 1999 |
|      | Rev. James J. O'Malley.....       | 1996 |
| 13   | Deacon Anthony LaBua.....         | 1988 |
| 14   | Msgr. William F. Kearney.....     | 1974 |
| 15   | Msgr. John H. Landry.....         | 1967 |
| 19   | Rev. Robert S. McBride.....       | 1982 |
|      | Msgr. Frank Wissel.....           | 2014 |
| 20   | Msgr. John J. Bumstead.....       | 1996 |

# Sports

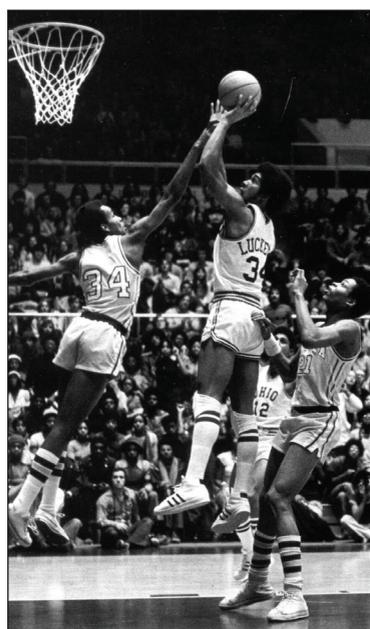
## Five from diocese named to All-Century teams

By **DON HARRISON**

The extraordinary basketball talent in the Diocese of Bridgeport's high schools has been well-documented across the decades... state championships and all-state selections by the dozens. And so, it is hardly surprising that three diocesan schools are represented on the recently released Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Association's (CIAC) All-Century boys and girls basketball teams.

Kolbe Cathedral, Bridgeport: Walter Lockett '72, Chris Smith '88 Trinity Catholic, Stamford: Amanda Pape '03, DaShena Stevens '08 St. Joseph, Trumbull: Rick DiCicco '73

The all-star teams (25 males, 25 females) were selected to mark



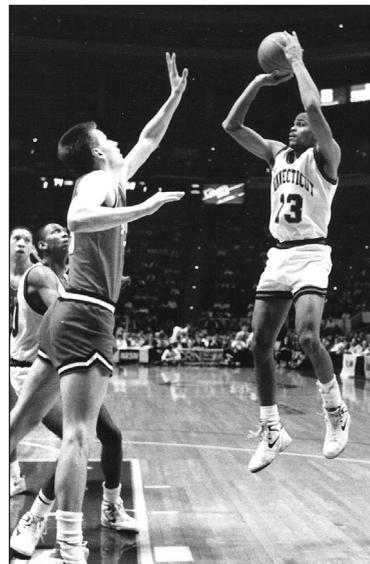
**WALTER LOCKETT**

the CIAC's 100th anniversary, and included input from current and former coaches, longtime high school basketball writers and others associated with the sport through the decades. Selections were based on the player's high school career, and not necessarily

on his or her accomplishments in college or pro ball.

Lockett, whose image adorned the cover of the Nov. 27, 1972 issue of Sports Illustrated even before he played a game at Ohio University, and Basketball Hall-of-Famer Calvin Murphy of Norwalk High are generally considered Connecticut's greatest high school players.

Lockett still holds the New England career scoring record with 2,691 points (31.1 points per game). As a senior at Kolbe, the lanky 6-foot-3 swingman averaged a mind-boggling triple double—39.8 points, 16 rebounds and 13 assists—and was named



**CHRIS SMITH**

National Player of the Year. Three times he was selected to the New Haven Register's All-State Team.

Kentucky, UCLA, Providence, Maryland and a multitude of other institutions with elite basketball reputations recruited Lockett, but he elected to attend Ohio U., which played in the Mid-American Conference. After a lackluster freshman season, he began to approach the heights he reached at Kolbe, averaging 22.9 and 25.3 points per game the next two seasons. He was voted Mid-American Player of the Year as a sophomore.

The Detroit Pistons were impressed and selected Lockett on the second round of the 1975 NBA draft. Alas, his professional career was curtailed by recurrent knee injuries and he was released by the club in early October.

Smith was a two-time all-state selection (1987, '88) at Kolbe Cathedral, a 6-3 point guard who,

as a senior, averaged 28.2 points and 10 assists a game and was named to the Parade High School All-American team.

Unlike Lockett, he chose to continue his basketball career close to home—at the University of Connecticut. This decision paid dividends. Smith surpassed the Huskies' career scoring record with 2,145 points across four seasons and topped the squad in scoring his final three years, 17.2, 18.9 and 21.1.

As a sophomore, he was the catalyst behind the Huskies' 1989-90 season in which they established themselves as a national power. UConn assembled a 31-6 record, captured their first Big East championship and advanced to the NCAA Tournament's Elite Eight. Smith was voted MVP of the Big East Tournament. His ultimate honor as a collegian, though, came several years later when he was selected to UConn's All-Century team.

Chosen by the Minnesota Timberwolves on the second round of the 1992 NBA draft, Smith played three seasons for the club, appearing in 224 games



**RICK DICICCO**

and averaging 5.1 points.

DiCicco played for the legendary Vito Montelli at St. Joe's, earning all-state recognition as a junior and senior (1972, '73). He established still-standing school career records with 1,660 points and 1,210 rebounds, and soared for 433 rebounds one year.

"He could dominate inside, he could dominate outside," recalls Montelli. "He was a great athlete, the best I ever had."

The headline of a February 2007 feature, "The Competitive But Self-Effacing Pape," tells it all. Few played the game harder, fewer still were reluctant to talk about their achievements.

At Trinity Catholic, Amanda was the epitome of the student-athlete, earning high marks in the classroom—a 3.9 GPA one semester as a senior—and amassing a Crusader record 2,429 points. She was the facilitator behind Trinity's back-to-back Class S state titles as a junior and senior, earning all-state honors both seasons.

At Sacred Heart University, Pape became the cornerstone of the Pioneers' most successful four-year period (87 wins, 34



**AMANDA PAPE**

losses), capped by the school's first Northeast Conference championship and automatic berth in the NCAA Tournament. She was

voted both 2006 NEC Player of the Year and MVP of the conference tournament.

Pape departed with a plethora of Sacred Heart records, including 2,045 career points. The Connecticut Sports Writers' Alliance took note of her myriad of accomplishments by naming her the state's 2007 Female Athlete of the Year.

Stevens, a 6-1 center, secured all-state recognition three straight years (2006, '07, '08) at Trinity



**DASHENA STEVENS**

Catholic, and sparked the Crusaders to the Class S state title as a sophomore.

At St. John's University, Stevens excelled at forward, scoring 1,515 career points and an All-Big East selection as a sophomore (14.3 ppg., 7.6 rpg). In addition to her personal accomplishments that year, she led the Red Storm to a 25-7 record and the first of five successive NCAA Tournament appearances. ■

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# Column: Thomas Hicks



## Demands of Charity

### POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

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

“Life is a chance of learning how to love” (A.E. Brooke).

When he was very ill, St. Francis of Assisi asked that a message be sent to a certain Countess in Rome, asking her to come and bring some of her honey-cakes which he so liked. She came.

There is a lovely simplicity about this story. I see it as an example of what Gerard Manley Hopkins called “delicious kindness.” The distance from Rome to Assisi is 109 miles, or 174 km., a long trip in the days before cars, trains and planes. The Countess comes with her honey-cakes and affection.

That tale is contrasted with something Claire Booth Luce told when she was 75 years old and

was asked: “Do you have any regrets?” She answered, “Yes, I should have been a better person, kinder, more tolerant. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and I remember a girlhood friend of mine who had a brain tumor and called me three times to come and see her. I was always too busy, and when she died I was profoundly ashamed. I remember that after 56 years.”

As I get older, faces come back to me from the past. There are tears I would like to dry and ask forgiveness for the favor that I didn’t do that I ought to have done. There were the opportunities for charity that I put off.

It is the small everyday kindnesses which count for so much; kindness expressed in small

things, in the quite ordinary, banal daily life. As someone put it, it’s our “little nameless unremembered acts of kindness” that are so important.

There are two explicit dictums given by Christ. The first is that ours is not to judge or condemn, but to love and be merciful. The second is that whenever our neighbor has need of us, he or she takes on a mysterious likeness to Christ.

Let me string out a series of quotations that relate to the demands of charity.

Ephesians 4:32: “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.”

2Timothy 2:24-25: “Act kindly to everyone...forbearing, correcting an opponent with gentleness.”

“You must become gentle; never any harsh words, never a harsh tone; never take on a harsh look, always be gentle.” (Therese of Lisieux)

“Charity is certainly greater than any rule. Moreover, all rules must lead to charity.”

(St. Vincent de Paul)

“Charity consists in bearing with those who are unbearable.” (St. Alphonsus Liguori)

“Try never to say an unkind word. It can do so much damage.” (Father Walter Burghardt, S.J.)

Related to that last quote, one can note that the word “benediction” means to “speak well.”

When we speak well of someone we bless them. How important an encouraging word is. We are all starved for affirmation. One of the deepest of human needs

is the desire for acceptance and approval by others. What a kindness it is to make people feel they are important. We can do this by giving a person the spotlight when we can. Find something right about things she or he says or does. Support someone’s dreams and plans. Say words like “right”; “sure”; “of course”; “you’re right”; “good idea”; “I’m with you.”; “you bet.”. (Cf. Patricia R. Madison, *Improv Wisdom*, p.31)

It takes so little to compliment. Mark Twain said “I can live for two months on a good compliment.” There is the Spanish proverb: “one compliment can warm three winter months.”

St. Benedict put it this way: “One complimentary word is more valuable than the most precious gift.”

“Be kind” wrote Philo of Alexandria, “for everyone is fighting a great battle.” There are those private worlds of suffering around us, there is the suffering that inevitably touches all human life. We can come to the point when having seen so much unhappiness and misery in the world that we can’t bring ourselves to cause any more sorrow, even a minor sorrow.

It was Sigmund Freud who said “If we cannot remove all suffering, we can remove some, and mitigate some.” A wise woman said to me, “in times of suffering, don’t say ‘call me if there’s anything I can do’; make concrete offers.”

Listening attentively is an important part of Christian char-

ity. “If you do not close your ear to others you open God’s ear to yourself” (St. Peter Chrysologus).

Christian charity is not an easy matter. Here are some of the demands of Christian charity.

We do not get even; we take no opportunities for small revenges; we do not reciprocate; we let go of resentments; we forget insults; we bear wrongs patiently without causing more suffering and evil; we bear no grudges; we don’t indulge in the luxury of “feeling hurt”; we make excuses for people; we are not envious, we rejoice in the good fortune of others without envy; etc.

Sometimes charity shows itself if one just doesn’t make things any worse, and sometimes it shows itself by learning when to let other people alone.

The Catholic writer, Hillaire Belloc, wrote someplace that we must be unfailingly courteous.

Courtesy is something less than courageous holiness yet it seemed to him that the grace of God is in courtesy. Much the same could be said of good manners, it shows respect.

To end: two more quotes. Pope John XXIII, when asked what his most important function was, said “I learned that my most important function was to be a steady source of kindness.”

And finally, John of the Cross wrote: “In the evening of life you will be judged on love.

The only question asked will be ‘have you loved well?’ Learn then to love and forget yourself.” ■

## Thank You Jubilarians

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### 70 YEARS

Dorothy Mary Leising

### 60 YEARS

Regine Marie Bruder  
Lillian Corriveau  
Mary Shawn Kavanagh  
Daniella Marie O’Sullivan  
Maryann Sheehan  
Theresa Torsonne

### 50 YEARS

Maxine Poppa



Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger, Foundress School Sisters of Notre Dame

### ST. GREGORY THE GREAT FROM PAGE 6

social separation—a fast from so much of what we enjoy and find meaningful, a wilderness of fear, chaos, and uncertainty—has plunged us into a deeper Lent that we ever dreamed of earlier in the year. We will find our hearts purified anew to be strengthened and be the hearts and hands of our Lord during this time.”

The collaborative effort of individual community drives and well-established organizations such as the Daily Food Pantry, founded in 1984, offers productive ways for people to contribute to easing the burden of others.

Donations from grocery stores are down since stores are

struggling to keep shelves stocked during this pandemic.

But besides monetary and food donations, a donation of time is crucial too.

“We are seeking volunteers,” Landzberg said. “We do need more male volunteers to do the heavy lifting of stocking the pantry shelves.” Volunteers, who think they may have been exposed to the coronavirus, are asked to stay away from the pantry for now, while others follow safety protocols by wearing gloves and covering their faces.

The pantry now readies pre-packed bags of food to distribute to families, instead of having families select individual items. This limits

the amount of people inside the pantry and adheres to social distancing practices.

In addition to meeting the physical needs of the community, St. Gregory the Great Pastor Michael Dunn, encourages people to cherish this gift of time.

“Use this time, although it’s a scary time, to pray the rosary, take a walk, do something you normally do not have a chance to do in our hectic life,” said Father Dunn, adding that he has been catching up on spiritual books he’s been meaning to read. “It is a time of grace where we can really draw closer to Christ and build our relationship with him.” ■

# Column: Joe Pisani



## A free gift that's priceless

### SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

The coronavirus pandemic gave me a glimpse into the void, and it was frightening. Not the void in prevention. The void in the lives of family members and friends who have no faith to turn to.

What did I see? Many people, instead of looking to God for comfort and strength, were turning to politicians, celebrities and commentators. One turned to the universe. Now, I'm not taking anyone's spiritual inventory. I admit the universe has its place—and we have our place in it—but I wouldn't turn to it for solace when I could have the real deal, aka Jesus.

If there is any lesson this should have taught us, it can best be described in the words of a priest who told me, "God is in

==== VIRTUS TRAINING FROM PAGE 9 =====

way to begin the meeting before the more serious discussions of protecting against child abuse or the abuse of vulnerable adults.

Of course, the in-person class experience is more personal and preferred, especially if a person recalls or needs to report an allegation of abuse. The diocese has professionals on stand-by to help anyone by phone.

The course not only helps educate people about the types of behavior to look out for, but it helps attendees spread the word about resources that are available to other organizations as well. For instance, many attending the class inquired about using this program in public school systems.

This is probably the way to go forward," Neil said, referring to offering online instruction in addition to in-person classes. "It's a wonderful way to bring people together during this time while we are socially distant."

(To register for a VIRTUS class go to [www.virtusonline.org](http://www.virtusonline.org).)

charge." COVID-19 showed us how helpless we really are when we're stripped of the illusion of self-sufficiency.

Or course, there are many who think they're in charge rather than God. In a much-publicized press conference, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said, "The number [of cases] is down because we brought the number down. God did not do that. Faith did not do that. Destiny did not do that. A lot of pain and suffering did that."

I certainly don't mean to minimize the efforts of many individuals, but let's give God his due too. For myself, I'd rather put my faith in God than the New York Department of Health. The proud and the arrogant have faith only in themselves. The humble put their faith in God.

The good news is that several

polls showed many Americans turned to their faith more during the coronavirus pandemic. One fourth of all Americans said their faith grew stronger, according to a poll by the Pew Research Center. Sadly, 7 percent of those surveyed said, "I am not a religious person and this hasn't changed." As my mother used to say, "Some things never change...or if they do, they change for the worse."

A poll by Fordham University showed that "62 percent of Catholics had been helped at least somewhat by their faith" compared with 95 percent of Evangelicals and three-fourths of mainline Protestants. Maybe Catholics should work a little harder on that. In addition, the poll concluded that people who attend church regularly got the greatest help from their faith.

Faith doesn't necessarily solve a crisis, although that could very well happen. But faith helps you get through the crisis because you realize, to paraphrase St. Paul, out of everything comes good because of God.

At one point during our self-quarantine, my wife Sandy said, "We're so blessed to have our faith," and for once we agreed wholeheartedly without any reservations.

All my life, I've heard people say, "Faith is a gift," and as simple as that sounds, I never completely understood what it meant.

Where would any of us be without faith in Christ right now? If you don't have it, ask for it. If you see someone who doesn't have it—and there are many—ask God for them. If your faith is weak and you want it stronger, sit in front of the Blessed Sacrament and you'll be given the graces you need. Simply say, "Jesus, I trust in you." And say it often.

Yes, faith is a gift so cherish it...and ask for more. Ask for a stronger faith. Say thank you every day for this gift—that rare pearl of inestimable value—because only with faith will you be able to endure challenges,

crises and suffering and still be joyful, hopeful and peaceful.

There's nothing more precious than our faith. Out of that faith flows everything. Through that faith, we inherit eternal life.

Faith helps us trust in Jesus even though the rest of the world thinks that trust is misplaced and foolish. It's a fact of faith that God is with us on our best days and most assuredly on our worst days. Having faith in Christ doesn't insulate you from suffering, but at the end of the day, it's the only security you need. It ensures you that even when you are confronting trials and tragedies, you will have the peace and joy that only Jesus can give.

Yes, faith is a gift...and all you have to do is ask for it.

==== VIRTUAL 'FIRESIDE' FROM PAGE 6 =====

we can make no matter what is going on around us."

Father Dunn shared, "my hope is that when this is over, maybe this can serve as a rebirth for our faith and Church."

Both Father Dunn and Father Ford shared books that they are reading during this time, and parishioners requested they share a list of the books, along with a synopsis and what

they liked about them.

Parishioners were glad to see that both Father Ford and Father Dunn were able to maintain their good sense of humor despite the current climate.

Rest assured, these chats will continue every Sunday at 4 until public Mass is reinstated.

("Fireside at 4" chats will be available to view on St. Gregory's website: [www.stgregdanbury.org](http://www.stgregdanbury.org).)

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# Nuestra Voz

## Fiesta de la Ascensión

Por MARICARMEN GODOY

NORWALK—Las iglesias de la Diócesis de Bridgeport reportaron miles de intenciones puestas a los pies de Jesucristo en honor a las madres, por la salud de los enfermos y en memoria de los fieles difuntos víctimas del Corona virus. En tanto que el obispo Frank Caggiano anunció la apertura de los servicios religiosos para este jueves 21 de mayo, fiesta de la Ascensión del Señor, bajo estrictos protocolos de sanidad preparados previamente por los párrocos acorde con las condiciones propias de sus iglesias.

La iglesia de Saint Ladislaus de Norwalk reportó que se cer-

raron las peticiones con 600 intenciones e igualmente la iglesia de Saint Mary en Bridgeport la cifra ascendió a 900 intenciones. Intenciones que fueron tomadas para ser expuestas durante las misas del tiempo pascual que hoy son transmitidas vía Internet en las redes sociales.

Acorde con el padre Juan Gabriel Acosta de Saint Ladislaus de Norwalk, las 600 intenciones fueron colocadas en el Altar Mayor y estarán presentes durante todo el mes de mayo en honor a las madres; plegarias que este año se dispararon porque hoy los fieles han volcado sus vidas a Dios ante el miedo y la esperanza que produce la pandemia del Covid-19.

En Bridgeport, la semejanza fue igual. El padre Rolando Torres, colocó en su Face Book: “cerramos las intenciones de la Santa Misa con 900 pedidos”.

Mientras cada iglesia reporta su trabajo pastoral local en forma virtual, el Papa Francisco pidió al mundo juntarse en oración y ayuno el pasado 14 de mayo y el movimiento mariano pidió que a la una de la tarde alrededor del mundo se unan para rezar el Rosario en honor a la Virgen María.

El 13 de Mayo, fiesta en honor a la Virgen de Fátima en honor a la aparición de la Virgen a los tres Pastorcitos de Fátima, las iglesias realizaron homilias en diferentes horarios durante todo el día. El P.



CON LA CERTEZA DE QUE DIOS no nos ha abandonado en este tiempo obscuro y siguiendo los protocolos dictados por los expertos de salud, el Obispo dio la orden de abrir los servicios religiosos; mientras miles de intenciones siguen colocadas en el Altar Mayor de cada iglesia

Rolando Torres puso un anuncio muy original en su Face Book llamando la atención de sus fieles y en su programa Alfa y Omega transmitido por la Radio María y en Face Book Live habló al respecto.

“Hoy en la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Fátima misa en vivo a las 6:30 pm”, posteó. Además leyó la carta que el Obispo Frank Caggiano envió a los feligreses de la Diócesis de Bridgeport, anunciando la apertura de los servicios religiosos previsto para el jueves 21 de mayo, en la fiesta de la Ascensión del Señor, previo a protocolos de sanidad estrictos.

“En nombre de todos los sacerdotes de la diócesis, permítame decirle cuánto lo hemos extrañado y espero darle la bienvenida de regreso a sus hogares parroquiales. También se nos ha recordado que en nuestra hora más oscura, el Señor no nos abandonó”, escribió el Obispo en su carta.

El proceso de planificación asume lo que la mayoría de los expertos en salud vienen diciendo que la amenaza del virus COVID-19 estará por algún tiempo. Cualquier cosa que se planea debe evitar una posible recaída para erradicar a este asesino silencioso de nuestro medio. Como resultado se avanzará de manera gradual, sistemática y responsable para reanudar el culto público salvaguardando la salud y la seguridad del clero y fieles.

Los asientos a la Misa estarán limitados en cada celebración debido a los requisitos estatales de distanciamiento social y otros mandatos de salud. También se reconoce que las personas mayores, que son las más vulnerables, deberían considerar permanecer refugiadas en sus hogares por el momento. Por esta razón cada parroquia debe continuar transmitiendo en vivo la celebración de la Misa mientras el culto público se reanuda lentamente.

La primera fase del plan para reanudar la celebración de la Misa con los fieles es de naturaleza opcional y permanecerá vigente

hasta que los edificios de la Iglesia y otros lugares cerrados puedan reabrirse de manera segura para la adoración. Para aquellas parroquias que desean ofrecer misa al aire libre, se puede usar uno de los dos formatos posibles. El primer formato permitirá a los asistentes sentarse en sillas que se organizarán con un distanciamiento social adecuado. Asientos individuales al aire libre hasta 50 personas.

El segundo formato permitirá que quienes asisten a misa permanezcan sentados en sus autos. El número de automóviles que pueden participar en una misa al aire libre dependerá del tamaño del estacionamiento, la necesidad de distanciar los automóviles a seis pies de distancia entre sí y permitir la salida segura de cualquier automóvil en caso de emergencia. El lugar al aire libre y el formato para la misa serán designados por cada párroco.

Con el fin de garantizar un proceso ordenado para la celebración de la misa al aire libre, se han establecido una serie de pautas que detallan muchas de las preocupaciones que deben abordarse, incluido el uso de un sistema de reservas parroquiales en línea o por teléfono para cada misa, la creación de normas detalladas para la distribución de la Sagrada Comunión de manera segura y otras consideraciones litúrgicas. Estas normas se publicarán en nuestro sitio web diocesano.

Cada párroco debe redactar un plan para esta primera fase de planificación para asegurar que las necesidades particulares de su parroquia sean atendidas adecuadamente. El principio rector de toda planificación de este tipo es garantizar la seguridad y la salud de sus fieles y clérigos, al tiempo que se preserva la santidad de la liturgia y culto.

Mientras se da este primer paso adelante, el Obispo Caggiano dijo estar orando para que el Señor Jesús continúe bendiciendo a las familias en este tiempo de desafío. ■

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# St. Vincent's Medical Center

## Bringing Christ to staff and patients

By **JOE PISANI**

BRIDGEPORT—It was an unconventional Easter celebration at the height of the coronavirus crisis. An Easter celebration with a doctor, a priest, a deacon and a hospital administrator, who brought Christ to hundreds of people in their units, their rooms and their labs on the day the Son of God rose from the dead.

The group of four started on the 10th floor of St. Vincent's Medical Center and worked their way down through every unit, singing, praying and preaching in a celebration that reminded people of an ancient message: the Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

"It was an incredibly moving experience on Easter Sunday for the people who were on the front lines taking care of pandemic patients," said Bill Hoey, vice president of mission integration at Hartford Healthcare, St. Vincent's Medical Center. "We gathered people around the nurses' stations for the service—housekeepers, nurses, nurse's aides and doctors joined us."

For him, the service was an example of bringing the Church to the people, and it was inspired by a long-held desire of Dr. Jemi Samuel, the medical director of the hospitalist service, who believes prayer can change the world.

A number of years ago, she was moved by the biblical story of Hannah in the Book of Samuel, who in her barrenness pleads with God for a son and gives birth to the prophet Samuel. Hannah's prayer praising God for this miracle is one of the most moving in the Old Testament.

Hearing that reading, Dr. Samuel wondered what she could do for the glory of God, and during this Holy Week when churches had no celebrations, she realized they could bring Easter to the frontline staff at St. Vincent's. Dressed in her scrubs, she even visited patients in isolation units while singing hymns of praise that included "In Christ Alone" and "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today."

The group comprised Dr. Samuel, Hoey, Father Hyginus Ndubueze Agu, chaplain, and Deacon Timothy Bolton, manager of the pastoral care department.

The itinerant service included



hymns, prayers and blessings by Father Agu, a reading from the Book of Psalms by Hoey, and the Gospel of St. Matthew and a homily by Deacon Bolton.

Dr. Samuel greeted the staff and said: "Blessed Resurrection Sunday to all. This is an unusual Easter Sunday for all of us. No church gatherings, fear and anxiety all around us and an uncertain future ahead of us. Remember that the first Easter was celebrated by very few in front of an empty tomb, who were hiding from Romans and were unsure of their future and security. The Resurrection of Jesus gave them hope, and they were assured of their future in heaven."

Deacon Bolton's homily asked, "How do we know Jesus is risen? What is the manifestation? It is right here in front of us as each and every one of you do God's work."

After Father Agu led everyone in a closing Hallelujah, the group moved on to the next unit, the laboratories and the kitchen. Dr. Samuel went alone into the five isolation units for COVID-19 patients and sang hymns.

"The staff was amazed and deeply grateful to see us on Easter Sunday walk onto their unit and lead them in a prayer service," Hoey said. "This year, Easter had the same meaning but a different observance at St. Vincent's for the people in the trenches who are caring for the sick and the dying. To me, it represented the Church at its finest." Hoey believes people will long remember the celebration and be able to say, "That year, the Church came to me."

In his role, Hoey is responsible for ensuring compliance with Catholic healthcare doctrine, which, he says, sets St. Vincent's apart from secular hospitals.

"We have an agreement

between Hartford Healthcare and Bishop Caggiano to remain a fully Catholic ministry," he said. "We are the only Catholic hospital in the Diocese of Bridgeport, and we think that is critically important."

Fundamental to that, St. Vincent's fully adheres to the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Healthcare Services, promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The 77 directives define how a Catholic hospital must conduct itself and make clear the procedures and medical interventions that should not be provided, such as abortion and assisted suicide, Hoey said. The mission of Catholic healthcare is based on

reverence for every human being and access to care for the poor and underserved, the uninsured and the underinsured, children, the unborn, single parents, the elderly, those with incurable diseases, racial minorities, immigrants and refugees.

"Simply put, we don't turn anybody away," he said.

In addition, there is a sacramental presence at St. Vincent's made possible by four priests, three deacons and almost 40 extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist.

"We provide a full array of Catholic sacraments at a time when people are open and receptive to receiving them," he said, "including Communion, sacrament of the sick, confession and baptism for newborns who are in danger."

Hoey, who has been at the hospital for more than a decade, said its Catholic identity is firmly established. There is morning and evening prayer, daily Mass that is broadcast into the patients' room and the pastoral services of priests and deacons.

He said that one of six patients in America is in a Catholic hospital, in large part due to women religious who from the mid-to-late

1800s started to build a vast network of hospitals across America.

"In 1903 in Bridgeport, Connecticut, if you were not a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant, you could not go to the only hospital in the city, so a group of doctors approached the pastor of St. Patrick's Church and asked him to open a hospital that would treat everybody."

Father James Nihill traveled to Emmitsburg, Maryland, and enlisted the services of Sister Laura Eckenrode and six young Daughters of Charity, who came to Bridgeport and in two years raised \$250,000 to build St. Vincent's Hospital.

"Where are the people who are not going to Church going to be reconnected?" he asked. "When you have a life-altering diagnosis or a life-shattering event and you end up in the hospital, what a wonderful opportunity to see the Church in action. The more we can get our priests and deacons visiting people in the hospital, the better. What an opportunity to reconnect with people. When does evangelization take place? When people are in crisis ... when people are in need." ■

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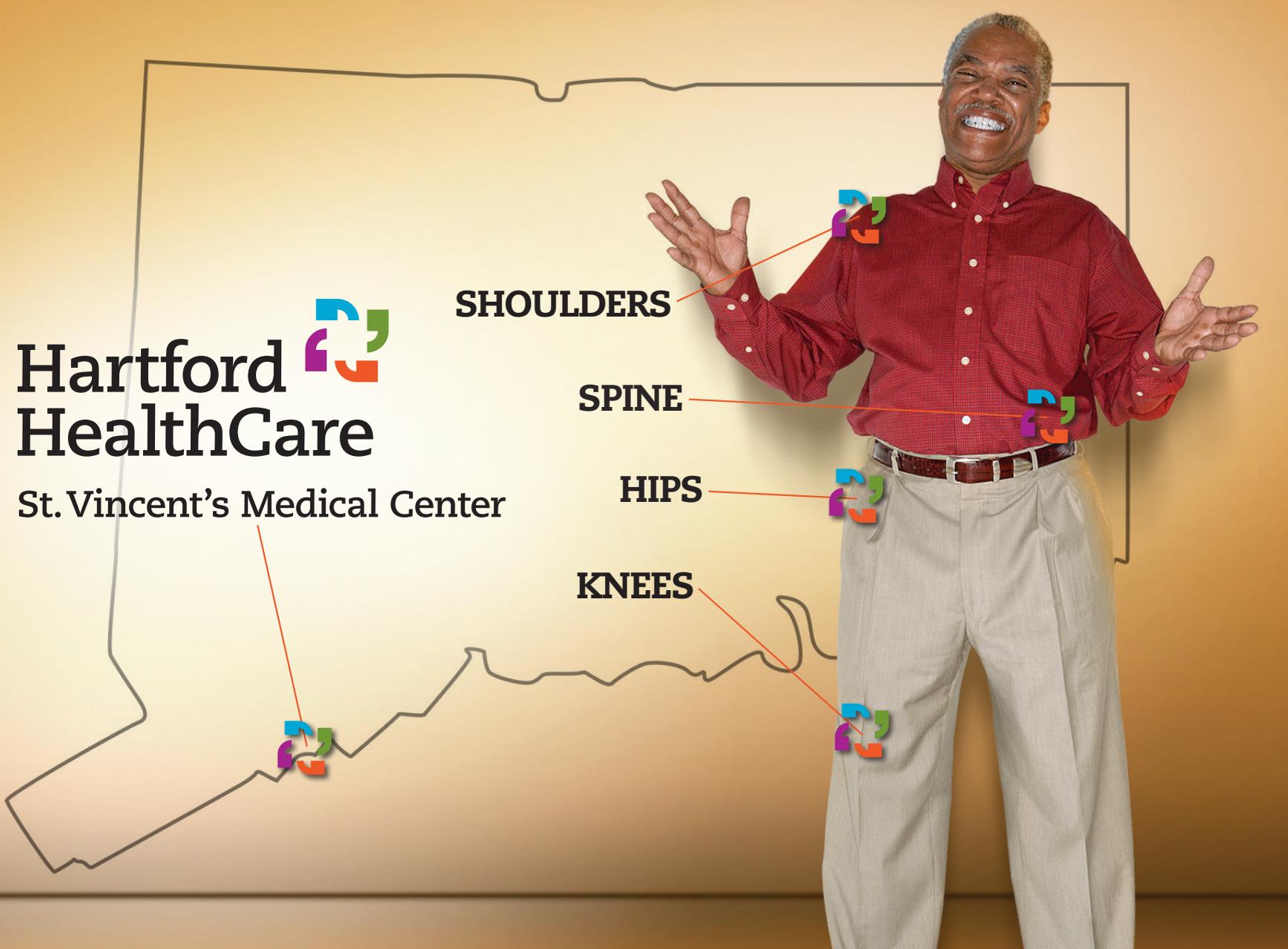
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