



FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

NOVEMBER 2022 | VOLUME 39, NUMBER 10 | THANKSGIVING ISSUE

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Around the Diocese

Events in full swing

Trick or treat, Sisters!

STAMFORD—The Villa Maria Guadalupe received some unexpected visitors on Halloween night: a pair of trick-or-treaters!

The two trick-or-treaters paid a visit to the Sisters of Life at the Villa Maria Guadalupe to see if they had any candy.



While the sisters couldn't find any candy, they gifted the boys with two Mary pendants.

However, the sisters did come out to spend some time with the boys and their family. And while candy is certainly a treat, so is Christian fellowship – especially with a community's youngest members.

Notre Dame supports Think Pink pledge

FAIRFIELD—Notre Dame High School raised over \$1,600 for the Norma Pfriem Breast Center



at Bridgeport Hospital. In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, students, parents and staff were invited to purchase "Think Pink" T-shirts, with a portion of each sale benefiting the good work underway at the Pfriem Center.

"We are so grateful for Notre Dame's continued support of the Norma Pfriem Breast Center during Pink Pledge each October," said Kate Haft, special events coordinator. "It's inspiring to have students raise life-saving funds each and every year, so that all women in our community can receive the treatment and services they deserve, regardless of their ability to pay."

"I am grateful to the Notre Dame community for their generous support of our Think Pink campaign," said Dr. Chris Cipriano, principal of Notre Dame. "Our school is grounded in the principle of service to others, and it is through events like these that we are able to carry out our mission of helping those in need. I am truly proud of our Lancer family."

Mass for moms at St. Catherine

TRUMBULL—Mothers, grandmothers and daughters of all ages turned out for St. Catherine of Siena Parish's first-ever Mother-Daughter Sunday on October 16.

Father Joseph Marcello, pastor of St. Catherine's, offered a special blessing for moms and daughters at the Sunday Mass, which was followed by refreshments in the parish's family center.

The attendees also learned some special dance moves from Tina Romer, a catechist at St. Catherine's and a professional dance teacher.



Giving Tuesday to benefit missionary parishes, mental health

By ROSE BRENNAN

BRIDGEPORT—As the most wonderful time of the year approaches, the faithful of the Diocese of Bridgeport have the opportunity to give to the best of both worlds.

The Diocese of Bridgeport has selected two crucial ministries for its parishioners to support on Nov. 29 – Giving Tuesday. The first is Foundations in Faith's St. Francis Xavier Fund for Missionary Parishes, which supports vibrant inner-city parishes facing socioeconomic challenges. The second is Foundations in Charity's Mental Health Matters campaign, which will support mental health services provided by Catholic Charities of Fairfield County.

Both target areas are in need of support. As temperatures begin to drop, some parishes in the Diocese of Bridgeport will have difficulties paying their heating bills during the winter months. Many of the parishes can just meet their financial needs, meaning they might be one broken boiler away from financial disaster.

In addition, mental health support is crucial now more than ever as the world navigates to the other side of the coronavirus pandemic. According to the National Institute of Health, nearly half of the Americans surveyed in a 2021 study reported recent symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorders, and 10 percent of them reported their mental health needs were not being met. These effects were highest among children, racial and ethnic minorities, people with housing and financial insecurity and healthcare workers, among others.

Luckily, both Foundations in Faith and Foundations in Charity can provide crucial support for both of these efforts. And the impact they make can be life-changing for members of the communities they help.

For example, St. Augustine Cathedral barely made it through last winter with its boiler on its last legs. It was becoming quite costly to heat and cool the cathedral, so the leadership explored using geothermal energy to do the job. Unfortunately, the parish couldn't afford the upfront costs—until the St. Francis Xavier Fund intervened.

"The St. Francis Xavier Fund stepped forward and provided an unprecedented two-year grant totaling \$400,000 to make the first geothermal parish project happen here in the diocese," said Father Art Mollenhauer, pastor of The Cathedral Parish. "Our hearts and hands are warmed by this generosity."

Foundations in Charity provides financial support to Catholic Charities of Fairfield County's many programs—including mental health support. Programs include mental health counseling, as well as specific programs for adults living with mental illnesses and disabilities.

It might be difficult to choose which initiative to support, but this Giving Tuesday, you don't have to! All donors have the option to split their gift between both initiatives.

Thank you for helping Foundations in Charity and Foundations in Faith provide essential services to the more vulnerable people and parishes in our communities. ■

ON THE COVER

Outdoor All Souls Day Masses were celebrated across the diocese on November 2. Hundreds turned out to commemorate their loved ones in six Catholic cemeteries including St. John Cemetery in Norwalk.

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Diocesan News

Community gathers for Bellarmine groundbreaking

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

FAIRFIELD—Representatives of Fairfield University and the Diocese of Bridgeport gathered with community leaders, state officials and program supporters to express gratitude and celebrate a historic milestone in the collaborative development of the new Fairfield Bellarmine initiative.

A remarkably warm November sun graced the hilltop groundbreaking ceremony of Fairfield University's Bellarmine Campus, located at 1596 Boston Ave., in Bridgeport, Conn. Extensive renovations are planned for the site, formerly home to St. Ambrose Church, in preparation for the fall 2023 opening of Fairfield Bellarmine.

In the Jesuit tradition of serving urban communities and opening access to education for all, Bellarmine will offer strong professional preparation and enhanced academic support to low-income and first-generation students. Building upon Fairfield's rigorous liberal arts traditions, students will be able to pursue a two-year associate's degree from amongst four academic tracks: liberal arts, business, computer science and nursing and healthcare. Graduates will be prepared to either pursue further studies toward a bachelor's degree or embark on a meaningful professional career.

Fairfield Bellarmine admission director Nakia Létang welcomed those gathered and introduced vice provost and executive direc-



HISTORIC COLLABORATION—Bishop Caggiano and Fairfield University President Dr. Mark R. Nemeč are joined by university staff at the Bellarmine campus groundbreaking. The initiative will re-purpose the buildings at the former St. Ambrose Parish site.

tor Father Kevin O'Brien, S.J., to offer the invocation. Father O'Brien fittingly opened with a prayer written by St. Ambrose to bless the new Bellarmine Campus property, which he noted has been "consecrated by the lives of countless people over the years."

Father O'Brien prayed that those in attendance "commit ourselves anew to serving the students and community who will further bless this ground by their presence. As we prepare for their coming, dear Lord, give us vision, creativity, persistence and

holy boldness. Please also bless and protect all those who will labor here, renovating this space in the upcoming months."

Dr. Mark R. Nemeč, Fairfield University's president, offered gratitude to local community leaders, particularly Mill Hill and East End neighborhood rehabilitation NRZ representatives, state officials, members of the Society of Jesus, the bishop and staff of the Diocese of Bridgeport, and Fairfield faculty, staff and administrators "for their faith in this project, not just to this point, but through to fruition and for generations to come."

Invoking Fairfield University's 500-year-plus Jesuit tradition, President Nemeč said

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

Seton Collaborative can be 'transformative'

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

FAIRFIELD—The Seton Collaborative was officially launched with a mission to help grow and renew the Church by unlocking the talents and skills of people within the diocese and beyond.

"For the Church to grow, we need to collaborate," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at the launch event, held October 26 on the Fairfield University campus. "Everyone gathered around a single vision will lead the Church forward. What excites me is the transformation!"

The bishop spoke to a group of about 65 benefactors and supporters who attended a special evening that began with Mass in the Egan Chapel of St. Ignatius Loyola, followed by dinner in the Dogwood Room in the Barone Student Center.

The group gathered to celebrate the launch of the Seton Collaborative, learn more about the mission of the new innovative non-profit organization and share their thoughts on how best to engage with the initiative.

"We live in a time of many challenges," the bishop said during his homily. "We live in a world that thrives on competition and division. You and I have come here to affirm a better way,



LAUNCHING SETON COLLABORATIVE—The bishop spoke to 65 invited guests recently to formally launch the collaborate, which will provide much needed business, information technology, and operations resources to parishes and schools.

to build on what we have and to work on initiatives that are collaborative."

Those Seton Collaborative initiatives include partnering with both diocesan schools and parishes to provide them with financial, operational and other support and expertise and promote greater collaboration and support among them.

The bishop said the valuable resources within the diocese are not being used to their full potential.

"At this moment in our life, we have talents and gifts that are hidden because of the structure we have," he said, referring to the duplication and redundancy of services each parish and school must employ. "For the Church to be renewed, we must unlock the talents that have been given to us.

And for the Church to grow, we need to collaborate.

The bishop noted many parishes have already begun to collaborate on formation efforts, youth services and other projects.

The Seton Collaborative is named after St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, founder of the first Catholic schools in the United States. She is the patron saint of Catholic education.

Kevin Lawlor, executive director of the Seton Collaborative, explained during a presentation following dinner that utilizing resources efficiently throughout the diocese will enable schools and parishes to focus on what they do best—ministering to children and parishioners, not being distracted by day-to-day business requirements.

"Each school and each parish is a small business," he said, noting principals and pastors might not have the time or expertise needed for the demands and nuances of running one. "As an organization built from the ground up to be a service organization, Seton will offer the best in school finances, IT and other services."

In fact, the Collaborative has already begun working with schools to streamline payroll and accounting systems and provide additional training and support to ensure stronger financial systems.

This fall, some schools are being supported with the first-ever IT Help Desk. Lawlor said as the Seton Collaborative expands, parishes will also be able to take advantage of additional shared services.

Lawlor said streamlined services can give back time—a precious commodity—back to these organizations. And that time can be better utilized ministering to God's people.

"We are not effectively passing the faith onto our children, who are leaving the Church," Bishop Caggiano said. "My mission with the pastors is to help them imagine what could be."

The savings realized by not duplicating activities at every parish affords the Collaborative the opportunity not only to compete

with the secular world to recruit and retain top-notch talent, but also gives families the opportunity to work within the diocese to satisfy both their financial and spiritual needs—using their talents and gifts to work for God.

"We want to make the best of the best available to all our parishes and schools," the bishop said. "If we don't work together, we're not going to survive together. The potential here is transformative."

The bishop said as important as this initiative is for the survival of the Church, it is just as important that the people who make up the church are provided opportunities to evolve with the changes. For instance, the Collaborative is working to provide training for those affected by any of the potential changes.

Leading with compassion to preserve the character of the parishes and schools, the bishop said, is a top priority. And those in attendance agreed.

"The vision is spot-on, and I think the Collaborative will bring even ... more value than the original intention of tactical operations," said James O'Rourke, who attended the event with his wife Measi—the founder of St. Joseph Parenting Center. "The most important thing is that it

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

*Give thanks to the Lord for He is good,
His love endures forever.*

PSALM 118:1

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and your family this Thanksgiving season.*

Diocesan News

Reimagining faith formation

By ROSE BRENNAN

BRIDGEPORT—What can a community do to make a vision a reality? This was the question posed to several parish catechetical leaders by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, who assembled at the Catholic Center on October 26 to reimagine how faith formation should look in the diocese.

Answering this question was of particular importance to Bishop Caggiano, evidenced by the whiteboard that gradually became a mind map of faith formation as the meeting progressed.

"I'm using a prop for the very first time in years," the bishop said, pointing to the whiteboard. "That shows you how important this meeting is."

To Bishop Caggiano, there are two essential components to faith formation: encounter with Christ and accompaniment. And the bridge between the two components is grace.

The bishop first focused on encounter, asking the catechetical leaders about the most effective way to encounter Christ. Surprising no one, the answer was Mass, in addition to prayer

and the sacraments.

But according to the bishop, up until now, the focus hadn't really been on Mass. But that would change, if he and the catechetical leaders had anything to say about it.

"Everything we're going to talk about ultimately has to lead us to the sacraments," he said. "Right now, the centerpiece for most of our young people is the classroom: learning about the faith so they can graduate, to be honest. So part of what we're going to have to do is move the center of gravity."

The bishop and the catechetical leaders also noted there were other ways people could encounter Christ. They could be moved by the witness of their loved ones. They could encounter him through their own gifts and talents. And, of course, they could encounter Christ through truth, beauty and goodness—three particular focus areas for Bishop Caggiano.

There are obstacles to those encounters, however, the bishop noted. For instance, he said, many young people believe faith and religion are obstacles to reason—which can prove difficult in a secular culture that teaches that

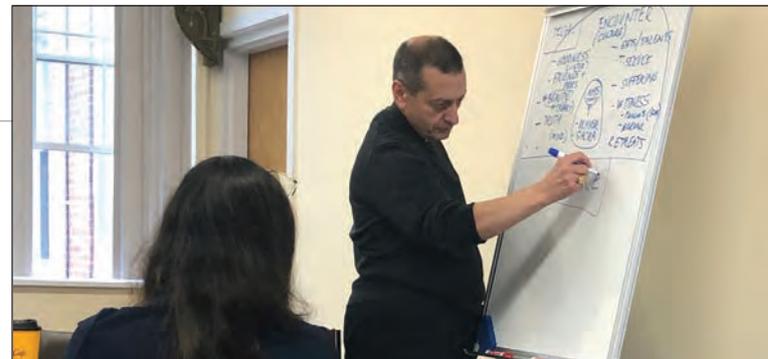
truth is scientific and demonstrable. They may also believe the human person is a spirit enclosed in a body, and is therefore a subjective reality—standing in the way of understanding what makes someone a human being.

And then, of course, there is the understanding of history and one's place in the world and in the eternal scheme of everything. Bishop Caggiano found a way to illustrate this through the images taken by the James Webb Space Telescope, which helped demonstrate the vastness of the universe.

"In that scheme, you are 14 years old (and) you're being introduced to all this," he said. "How can you possibly want me to believe that a single historical event on a dump of a hill, in the middle of nowhere, on a speck of a planet that is one of trillions of planets has eternal significance?"

It then becomes the job of a community to ensure young people overcome these obstacles in order to have a true encounter with Christ. And then, the bishop said, through grace, the focus can shift to accompaniment.

So, who accompanies young people in their faith formation?



BISHOP FRANK MEETS with parish catechists at the Catholic Center.

Bishop Caggiano noted parents play a vital role, but might need to have an encounter with Christ themselves before they can accompany their children on the same journey.

"These parents ... were denied a lot of this; the Church never gave it to them," the bishop said. "If we ask our parents to do more than they are capable of doing, we are creating a situation of guaranteed failure."

Bishop Caggiano recognized many parents and their families might feel overwhelmed by their many daily responsibilities. However, he said, they might also need to reevaluate their priorities for their children, and focus on the "best" before the "better" and the "good."

"You're going to give ... your children every good opportunity that there is," Bishop Caggiano said. "If you say to me, 'Father, I don't have time for Mass,' the answer is wrong, because that is best. Mass is best. Some (choices)

are better, some are good. And you have to figure out the hierarchy of what is best, better and good."

But accompaniment doesn't begin and end with parents, he said. It is important for the parish staff and clergy—as "incubators of faith formation"—to be contiguous and unite over their shared faith.

"If they are not praying together on a regular basis, we have a major problem, if they're not reaffirming their belief that Christ has died, Christ is risen and Christ will come again," the bishop said.

This holistic understanding of faith formation—with encounter and accompaniment—created what the bishop called "The One," a term he borrowed from a conference he recently attended in Washington.

"A competent leader is someone who can manage an organization," Bishop Caggiano said. "A transformational leader knows the one priority, and everything else serves it. What I've just described here ... is The One for me." ■

Valerie Bien-Aime heads new multicultural office

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—Valerie Bien-Aime of Bridgeport has been named Diversity Program Manager of the newly created Office of Multicultural Diversity of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

"The office will provide support and recognition to all multicultural and ethnic communities and advance the unity of all believers as the diocese continues to grow as one family in faith," said Deacon Patrick Toole, Chancellor and Episcopal Delegate for Administration of the Diocese of Bridgeport, who announced her appointment. "Valerie Bien-Aime's background and multicultural experience will serve as an important resource for this new office as we seek to further unite the diocese in worship, fraternity and service."

Bien-Aime comes to the diocese from Fairfield University where she served as a diversity



VALERIE BIEN-AIME

program coordinator in the Office of Student Diversity and Multicultural Affairs. She also served as an operations coordinator for the university's Office of Student Life.

Deacon Toole said the need for the office grew out of the increasing number of apostolates in the diocese, which now include communities for African-American, Haitian, Spanish-speaking, Brazilian, Filipino and

Vietnamese Catholics.

"As a diverse and culturally rich diocese, we have much to celebrate as people of faith who are united in worship," he said. "The new Office of Multicultural Diversity will be an opportunity for all to share in that richness as a means of renewing our diocese and making it more welcoming."

Through the office, the diocese will launch a 3-step initiative, including working with episcopal vicars, planning and facilitating diverse community building programs, and working with diocesan leadership and advisory boards to expand the diversity of membership.

Bien-Aime is proud of her lifelong Catholic education and believes that it has prepared her for her new post of working with pastors and parishioners.

"Overall, my Catholic education was a great experience," she said. "I think it taught me a lot of things I wouldn't have learned

in other schools and set me down this path. I believe it is important to integrate Christ into everything I do, and that belief has shaped me as a person."

She said her goal in the position is to make sure everyone in the ethnic communities feels

welcome and included, and to understand the Church values them, their life experiences and their heritage.

"Like many others, I've spent most of my life aware that I came from a diverse background," Bien-

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All Souls' Day

Regaining perspective on what really matters

By BRIAN D. WALLACE,
KATHY-ANN GOBIN,
ROSE BRENNAN
AND ANN YANNETTI

TRUMBULL—As we remember the faithfully departed on All Souls' Day, it is also a moment for us to regain perspective on what truly matters in life, said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at the All Souls' Day Mass he celebrated November 2 in the new St. Catherine of Siena Mausoleum at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Trumbull.

More than 350 faithful turned out for the yearly Mass to pray for their deceased loved ones and all the faithful departed, while also witnessing the blessing of the newly finished mausoleum. The bishop said it was a magnificent day to bless the new building, which he praised as "a testimony to our Catholic faith."

All Souls' Day Masses were also celebrated throughout the diocese in Catholic cemeteries in Stratford/Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwalk, Darien and Greenwich. All of the arrangements for the day were sponsored and coordinated by Catholic Cemeteries.

The bishop celebrated Mass at the chapel altar before the Italian marble statue of the Risen Christ in the foyer. The new cross-shaped mausoleum features an open atrium at its center, uniting the four wings.

On a stunningly beautiful day with newly fallen leaves drifting across the cemetery grounds in the light wind, the bishop said, "We pray not only for the dead, but also for one another."

He reminded the men and women in attendance that "no one will escape the mystery of death. You and I will stand before God in the fullness of our life, and others will be praying for us."

The bishop said that as a lit-

tle boy he treasured All Souls' Day because "it cuts through the nonsense and distractions that prevent us from living in faith and love."

"No one of us is sinless, we can't un-make the consequences of our sins," he said, but Christ can do that for us. "He laid down his life so our sins can't be held against us. If Christ had not died for our sins, we would be dead forever."

Bishop Caggiano said that with one sentence we are able to proclaim to the world makes the cemetery a place of hope and new life, "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again."

After his homily, the bishop formally offered the prayer of blessing, "Grant that this mausoleum, placed under the sign of the Cross, may, by the power of our blessing, be a place of rest and hope. May all those buried here

gifted with Holy Water from Lourdes and red and white carnations, which many placed on the graves they visited after Mass.

The St. Catherine of Siena Mausoleum includes 600 full-body crypts and 500 cremation niches. Four Trumbull parish "wings" are included in the mausoleum, including Christ the King, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Theresa and St. Stephen. Terrazzo flooring and custom built benches are available for visiting with loved ones. Multi-colored glass mosaics of the eight Beatitudes surround the atrium, which connects to the St. Monica Mausoleum via a glass walkway.

Gate of Heaven Cemetery and the new St. Catherine of Siena Mausoleum are located at 1056 Daniels Farm Road in Trumbull.

(For more information or inquiries, visit www.stcatherinemaus.com,



sleep in your peace. May this place be a place of comfort to the living and a sign of their hope for unending life."

Following Mass, Bishop Caggiano thanked the priests and deacons who participated in the Mass, and noted that Father Joseph Marcello, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Nichols, played a major role in the beautiful design of the mausoleum. He also praised Deacon Patrick Toole, Chancellor of the Diocese, for the instrumental role he plays in major projects and diocesan renewal, and Dean Gestal, Executive Director of Catholic Cemeteries, for his leadership and vision in bringing the cemeteries into a new era.

Those in attendance were

call 203.742.1450, ext. 155 or email info@ctcemeteries.org

St. Peter Cemetery

DANBURY—More than two hundred people gathered on All Souls' Day at St. Peter Cemetery to offer prayers for the journey of the faithful departed seeking eternal life with God.

"It is on this day we remember those who are in need of repentance to get to heaven," said Father Michael Dunn, pastor of St. Gregory the Great Parish in Danbury.

At the gravesite Mass under a white tent, Father Dunn said when a loved one dies or during the annual commemoration of All Souls' Day, it is common to contemplate what will happen to



our soul.

"The truth is that our souls do live on after this world," he said. "For Christians, death is the journey for life after the grave. All souls in purgatory don't go to hell; they eventually go to heaven. We need to pray for the souls in purgatory. The Church teaches they cannot pray for themselves."

Father Dunn said the faithfully departed are still a part of the Church family, and as such need our prayers.

"They need our help to get to heaven," he said. "The souls in purgatory are tomorrow's saints in heaven; by praying for and helping one soul in purgatory, we will cover a multitude of sins and help save our own souls in the process. They are indeed yearning to enter into heaven, and once there, they will be eager to pray for us."

The altar was adorned with a red and white carnation flower arrangement, and red and white carnations were given to those in attendance, many of whom placed the flowers on the graves of loved ones. Holy Water from Lourdes was also given to those in attendance.

"I think it's great to have Mass here," said Carolyn Troccoli, who placed flowers on the graves of loved ones before and after the Mass at the Lake Avenue Extension cemetery.

Maria Cefaloni of St. Joseph Parish in Danbury has been attending the gravesite Mass for years. She said being near the loved ones

she is praying for makes the experience more special.

"I got emotional in the service," she said.

She was not alone on this unseasonably warm and bright fall day where sunglasses doubled to protect eyes from the glare of the sunlight, as well as hide teary eyes weeping for those who have passed.

Grief was lifted, even if briefly, as families and friends left the Mass and could be heard sharing cherished memories of loved ones.

St. Michael Cemetery

STRATFORD—The month of November usually ushers in a few months of bitter cold with it. But this All Souls' Day, it was unusually warm, perhaps to warmly welcome many to remember their departed loved ones at St. Michael Cemetery on the border of Stratford and Bridgeport.

No one was happier about the warm weather than Father Aberlardo Vasquez, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Bridgeport, who celebrated the All Souls' Day Mass at the cemetery with Deacon David Rivera, also of St. Charles.

"Today, when I was coming to this place, I was giving thanks to Jesus," Father Vasquez said. "First, I said, 'Thank you for this beautiful weather.' This is a gift. And I'm more happy now that I see your faces here."

Notably, the faithful in attendance were also joined by several

All Souls' Day

members of the Missionaries of Charity from Bridgeport—the only members of that religious order in Connecticut. They were also joined by members of Catholic Cemeteries who distributed Holy Water from Lourdes and carnations at the conclusion of Mass.

In his homily, Father Vasquez noted his first experience of praying for the departed came from his grandmother, whom he would often see praying the rosary.

“A few times, I approached my grandma and I said, ‘What are you doing?’” he said. “Many times, she said the same thing: ‘I’m praying for the souls in purgatory. I’m praying for family members.’ (And) she used to mention to me names of my family members who had died.”

Father Vasquez noted his grandmother and mother led by example, praying the rosary for all the faithfully departed. And now that he is a priest, he often does the same thing. In

love, as well, Jesus Christ, who is on the cross,” he said. “Every time I see the cross, I see a person ... who gave up his whole life for me. He went to the cross and gave his whole life because he loved me unconditionally.”

To Father Vasquez, love’s true nature is one of sacrifice. Christ certainly knew and understood that, as would the largely-elderly crowd at Mass on All Souls’ Day.

“I know how much you love the people you have lost,” he said. “I know how much you miss them. But ... don’t lose hope in God. Sometimes life is difficult. All of these things that we are living with in this moment, we think, ‘What is going on in the world?’ Don’t lose hope. Jesus is with us. His love is with us.”

St. John Cemetery

NORWALK—More than 300 people attended the outdoor All Souls’ Day Mass held at St. John Cemetery in Norwalk. Under

on them. Isn’t that an awesome thought? To think that we’re actually helping grace move in the soul. We do that when we pray.”

Two more aspects of praying for the dead, Father Couture added, include the communal and healing nature of prayer.

“Because we are baptized, we have the power to communicate with our Heavenly Father, and with those who have died,” he said. “Jesus gave that to us. So when we pray, we’re having a conversation with them.”

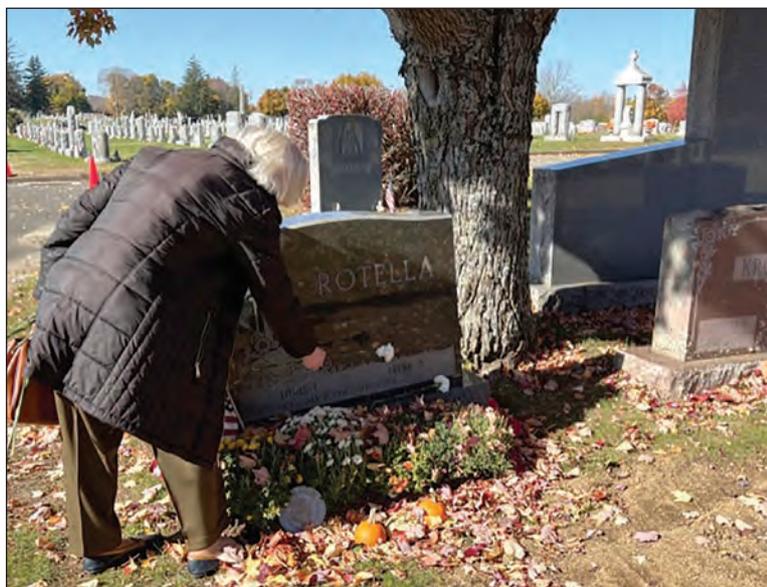
Father Couture emphasized that while sanctifying grace heals the soul we’re praying for, it actually helps us, too.

“When I talk to kids, I tell them they must pray to their loved ones who have passed, because not praying for them is like ignoring them when they



were alive,” he said. “When we pray for somebody, the prayer heals the wound of grief and transforms it into a vision of hope. That’s why we’re here today: to help sanctify the souls we pray for, to communicate with them, but to also find healing in those prayers.”

As people processed out, Catholic Cemeteries personnel distributed red and white carnations to place on the graves of loved ones. They also distributed Holy Water bottles from Lourdes to each attendee. After the Mass, Father Couture led a rosary procession through the cemetery. ■



doing so, he said, his family gave him a powerful tool to connect with his deceased loved ones: in prayer. He called back to one reading that day from the Book of Wisdom.

“They said ... the souls of the just are in the hand of God,” Father Vasquez said. “We truly believe those who got called to himself, now are in a better place.”

As a priest, Father Vasquez said he remembered three things that stand at the center of all he does: faith, love and hope. And he reminded everyone by attending Mass, they were performing an act of all three.

“As we love the people that we have lost in the past years, we

a brilliant sun, with blue skies and springlike temperatures, the faithful joined in prayer for the repose of souls of all the faithful departed.

“When someone passes, the first thing we’re told to do is pray,” said Father Jeff Couture, pastor of St. Matthew Church in Norwalk, who officiated the outdoor gravesite Mass. “How does prayer work? The church teaches that prayer is sanctifying. So every time we pray for a soul, we help sanctify that soul. Sanctifying grace is a grace to heal, to perfect and to purify the soul. When we pray for a soul, we’re participating in God’s power to sanctify them and heal them. We’re conferring grace

A day of ‘homecoming’

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—“This is first and foremost a day to say thank you to our Lord. Thank you for choosing them as priests and for choosing us who have come after them,” said Monsignor William Scheyd on November 5 at the special Mass of Commemoration for Deceased Priests and Deacons.

“We owe them a debt of gratitude,” Monsignor Scheyd said. “Each and every one was chosen by God to do his work and be ministers of the Gospel. Just as God has chosen us in our faults and failings.”

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, who served as principal celebrant, was joined by diocesan priests and deacons and their wives for the yearly Mass for Deceased Clergy—celebrated yearly on the first Saturday in November. He said that during this month of All Saints and All Souls observances, the Mass is an opportunity to pray for the repose of souls of deceased clergy and to offer thanks for their lifetimes of service.

In his homily, Monsignor Scheyd said that remembering deceased clergy and bishops

unites the diocese in faith and reminds us of the promise of our own “homecoming and participation in the union of souls given through baptism.”

ings,” he said, adding priests should take confidence in the Lord’s love “because Jesus died for our sins and redeemed us in his Resurrection.”



Monsignor Scheyd said he recently visited the Priests’ Circle at St. Michael Cemetery in Stratford and was surprised to see that many of the early priests of the diocese died in their 30s and 40s and were not blessed with long lives.

He said that while, to many, the life of a priest may look placid on the outside, that all priests have their challenges, including being too hard on themselves as they try to live up to the privilege of their priestly ministry.

“All priests are chosen by God to do what we do. God has chosen all of us in our faults and fail-

Monsignor Scheyd delivered an affectionate remembrance of the Most Reverend Walter W. Curtis, the second Bishop of Bridgeport, noting that October marked the 25th anniversary of the bishop’s death in 1997.

He said Bishop Curtis was born in 1913, grew up in Jersey City, and was named the second Bishop of Bridgeport in 1961 at the age of 48. He retired in 1988 and died at the age of 84.

Curtis was a “man of his times,” Monsignor Scheyd, who was ordained by Bishop Curtis

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

Catholic Marriage

Couples celebrate Wedding Jubilees

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

BETHEL—The reflection of the face of God was shining from the dozens of couples gathered for the Wedding Jubilarian Mass, remarked Bishop Frank J. Caggiano as he celebrated marriage milestones with the couples at St. Mary Parish on October 22.

“I know I am looking into the face of God in you,” the bishop told the more-than 80 couples and their families gathered at the Dodgingtown Road church. “It’s a great blessing to me, to be here with you, to pray with you and celebrate with you.”

The Mass honored couples throughout the diocese celebrating wedding anniversaries of 25, 40, 45 and 50 or more years.

The Knights of Columbus Pavia Council No. 48 added elegance and pageantry to the event with their swords drawn to create an arch for the entry of the bishop and priests.



“Thank you for your fidelity to a covenant in a world where marriage is a contract,” the bishop said. “The Church and I are deeply grateful.”

The bishop commended the couples on their “unbreakable bond of love” and for the beautiful example of marriage they share with their families, communities and the world by the way they lived their married lives every day.

During the Mass, the couples were asked to stand and turn to one another for a “renewal of commitment.”

Husbands in unison said, “Blessed are you, Lord, for by your goodness I took (wife’s name) as my wife.” Wives then reciprocated with the same prayer, saying their husbands’ names.

The couples then all recited the prayer, “Blessed are you, Lord, for in the good and bad times of our life, you have stood lovingly by our side. Help us, we

Wedding Jubilee couples 2022

Mr. & Mrs. Kevin & Mary Ann Barney—45 years

Mr. & Mrs. Alan & Frances Bianco—50

Mr. & Mrs. Patrick & Louise Brady—40

Mr. & Mrs. Gerard & Susan Callahan—52

Mr. & Mrs. E. James & Dorothy Callahan—55

Mr. & Mrs. Ivan & Frances Capella—61

Mr. & Mrs. Edward & Mary Ann Caskin—40

Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence & Kathleen Chizak—55

Mr. & Mrs. Gennaro V. & Rosemarie Cito—60

Mr. & Mrs. Ernest & Cynthia Conti—59

Mr. & Mrs. Robert V. & Kathleen Coppola—50

Mr. & Mrs. Alfonso & Donna Corsino—45

Mr. & Mrs. Leopold & Jacqueline DeFusco—25

Mr. & Mrs. Robert & Patricia Della Selva—50

Mr. & Mrs. Jeremiah & Barbara Dineen—60

Mr. & Mrs. John & Kathleen Donnelly—50

Mr. & Mrs. Robert F. & Eileen Doyle—64

Mr. & Mrs. Douglas & Kathleen Ebert—40

Mr. & Mrs. John M. & Rosemarie Egan—40

Mr. & Mrs. Francis T. & Mary Fedanick—50

Mr. & Mrs. Mario & Anne Federici—50

Mr. & Mrs. Thomas & Mary Sue Feige—40

Mr. & Mrs. Thomas & Anita Field—52

Mr. & Mrs. Edward M. & Loretta Firgeleski, Sr.—55

Mr. & Mrs. Robert & Sharon Fischer—55

Mr. & Mrs. James & Barbara Fletcher—50

Mr. & Mrs. John F. & Frances Flynn—63

Mr. & Mrs. John & Linda Fracassini—50

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph & Kathleen Gansert—50

Dr. & Mrs. Paul & Linda Gargano—53

Mr. & Mrs. Alessio & Angela Giannitti—40

Mr. & Mrs. James & Maureen Hance—25

Mr. & Mrs. James C. & Kathleen Hedtke—50

Mr. & Mrs. George & Naomi Hippeli—50

Mr. & Mrs. Steve & Patricia Hira, Jr.—50

Mr. & Mrs. Stephen W. & Patricia Hutton—40

Mr. & Mrs. Philip & Marion Kallinikos—50

Mr. & Mrs. Thomas & Patricia Keane—40

Mr. & Mrs. Lou & Jude Knoop—60

Mr. & Mrs. Michael S. & Linda Kosko, Jr.—45

Mr. & Mrs. Steven C. & Mary Ellen Kother—40

Mr. & Mrs. Paul & Jennie Kravitz—25

Mr. & Mrs. Nelson D. & Carol Ladue—50

Dn. & Mrs. Gerald M. & Jane Lambert—50

Mr. & Mrs. Mark & Sandra Lefler—55

Mr. & Mrs. Ronald V. & Peggy Ann Lesko—61

Mr. & Mrs. Andrew & Jeanne Loewengart—25

Mr. & Mrs. Dino & Graciela Mandarino—40

Mr. & Mrs. Michael J. & Diane McNamara—40

Mr. & Mrs. John & Mary Ann Mirkov—40

Mr. & Mrs. Domingos & Magda Moura—25

Mr. & Mrs. James & Nancy Mullins—50

Mr. & Mrs. John D. & Elaine Noonan—63

Mr. & Mrs. Thomas F. & Mary O’Leary, Jr.—60

Mr. & Mrs. Paul & Patricia Orsino, Sr.—52

Mr. & Mrs. Domenic & Patricia Paniccia—50

Mr. & Mrs. Robert A. & Maria Panza—45

Mr. & Mrs. Peter R. & Carol Pavone—50

Mr. & Mrs. Scott & Lorraine Pennoyer—50

Mr. & Mrs. Michael J. & Jo-Ann Petreycik—25

Mr. & Mrs. John E. & Barbara Pezzullo—50

Mr. & Mrs. David S. & Suzanne Podejko—50

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph J. & Janet Racanello—45

Mr. & Mrs. Walter & Gudrun Rosenbush—50

Mr. & Mrs. Vincent & Ellyn Rossi—40

Mr. & Mrs. Tom & Beth Salvador—25

Dn. & Mrs. Robert A. & Kathleen Salvestrini—58

Mr. & Mrs. John P. & Frances Scippa—50

Mr. & Mrs. Roger W. & Caren Silhavey—50

Mr. & Mrs. James & Joanne Squezello—50

Mr. & Mrs. Richard K. & Barbara A. Squires—50

Mr. & Mrs. Richard & Cynthia Stone—50

Mr. & Mrs. Francis & Mary Sullivan—61

Mr. & Mrs. Ronald J. & Donna Sylvestri—45

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph B. & Anna Thampoe—64

Dn. & Mrs. William C. & Caryl Timmel—51

Mr. & Mrs. Fulvio & Elide Tramontina—60

Mr. & Mrs. John & Sue Tschirhart—50

Dn. & Mrs. John & Helen Tuccio—40

Mr. & Mrs. Michael & Joann Urban, Jr.—52

Mr. & Mrs. Harry & Lien Vu—25

Mr. & Mrs. Dennis & Christine White—45

Mr. & Mrs. Robert & Yvonne Wilkins—58

Mr. & Mrs. Kazimierz & Regina Wadolowski—50

Catholic Marriage

pray, to remain faithful in our love for another, so that we may be true witnesses to the covenant you made with humankind.”

According to the bishop, love is not only a pleasant emotion, but an act.

“You see the power of love: to give life where there was none,” Bishop Caggiano said to the couples, many of whom were joined by their children and grandchildren. “You have brought life to the world and the Church.

“Thank you for being the face of God in our lives. My prayer for you today is that God will continue to bless you for many more years,” he said.

Each couple received a congratulatory letter from Bishop Caggiano, a certificate commemorating their years of marriage, and a wedding prayer, as well as a small white box with chocolates tied with a silver ribbon, courtesy of St. Mary Parish.

“It was a beautiful service,” said John Nooman, who attended with his wife, Elaine. The couple, who are parishioners at St. Mary Parish in Ridgefield, have been married for 63 years.

“I thought it was lovely,” Elaine Nooman said of the Saturday morning Mass. “We’ve been very blessed.”

The Noomans’ advice for considering marriage? Elaine said, “Go in it for the long haul,” while John added, “Take it very seriously.”

Richard and Barbara Squires from St. Elizabeth Seton Parish in Ridgefield, celebrated “50 years and counting” of marriage at the Jubilee Mass. The couple said it’s very important for young people to stay close to their faith and the Church.

“The Church is your touchstone,” Barbara said. “Never lose sight of that, and the fact that God forgives.”

The couple, who has one child and one grandchild, said, “Be sure to pass the faith onto your children.”

“Parochial education is important,” Richard Squires said. “It truly forms and shapes people for the future.”

“I think it’s absolutely important in these times to celebrate these positive things,” Barbara said of the Jubilee Mass. “It comes at a time when we need it. I applaud the bishop’s efforts. This is such a wonderful way to bring people together. It sets a good example.” ■

≡ VALERIE BIEN-AIME FROM PAGE 5

Aime said. “Being an immigrant myself, I saw the world in a different way than those who were born here. Many of us are here, but people don’t know we’re here. We want to support a sense of belonging and recognition.”

She believes the new office can help not only to foster a sense of

recognition and belonging to people who are new to the diocese but also bring people of the diocese together to share their gifts and talents, deepen their collaboration and create a more welcoming Church.

Born in a small village outside the city of Port-au-Prince, Haiti and raised in Bridgeport, Valerie

Bien-Aime attended St. Raphael School and Kolbe Cathedral High School before earning her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Fairfield University. In her free time, she enjoys playing rugby and is a member of the Fairfield University “Lady Yankees” team. She and her family are long-

time members of St. Charles Borromeo Parish.

For further information contact Valerie Bien-Aime, BA, MA, Diversity Program Manager for the Diocese of Bridgeport, 238 Jewett Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06606. Call 203.416.1613 or email: valerie.bien-aime@diobpt.org. ■

www.scinto.com

A riddle from Bob Scinto

At R.D. Scinto, we believe in 2 four letter words. One begins with an “L”, and describes the way we feel about our tenants.

The other begins with a “D”, and describes what motivates all of our actions. These two words are not used nearly as often as they should be.

Do you know what these words are? If you need help, call and ask for Bob at (203)929-6300.



EDITORIAL

Pope's Plea for Unity

Pope Francis marked the recent opening of the 60th anniversary observance of the Second Vatican Council by pleading for the Church to "overcome all polarization and preserve our communion."

"How often, in the wake of the council, did Christians prefer to choose sides in the church, not realizing that they were breaking their mother's heart! How many times did they prefer to cheer on their own party rather than being servants of all? To be progressive or conservative, rather than being brothers and sisters?" he asked.

In a time of intense political division, Pope Francis cautioned us not to see the church through the lens of our own politics or opinions, but to seek unity in Christ. "The unity of the Church is not the result of our own effort, it is a work of God."

"Let us be careful: Both the 'progressivism' that lines up behind the world and the 'traditionalism' that longs for a bygone world are not evidence of love, but of infidelity," he said. "They are forms of a Pelagian selfishness that puts our own tastes and plans above the love that pleases God, the simple, humble and faithful love that Jesus asked of Peter."

The Pope concluded his remarks with this timely prayer for unity based on our shared gratitude: "You who desire that we be a united flock, save us from the forms of polarization. And we, your church, with Peter and like Peter, now say to you: 'Lord, you know everything; you know that we love you.' We are your sheep, your flock, and we can only be so together and as one."

Bishop's Sunday Mass

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has begun celebrating Mass at St. Augustine Cathedral on Sundays at 8:30 am, and the faithful throughout the diocese are welcome to join him.

We encourage our readers to accept the bishop's invitation and make a special effort to attend a Sunday Mass at the Cathedral during the year. His intention is to unite the diocese in prayer and provide additional support for the Cathedral Parish, which over the past year has seen many improvements to its grounds and overall campus.

Throughout much of the coronavirus crisis, the bishop celebrated an online Sunday Mass at the Catholic Center chapel. The Mass was discontinued as people were able to return to worship in person. However, many have missed the bishop's weekly Mass and homily and have asked him to resume live-streaming. As a result, the bishop is hoping that those who can't participate in person because of health restrictions will now join him online every Sunday.

For those who plan to attend in person, St. Augustine Cathedral is located at 399 Washington Avenue in Bridgeport. The live-stream will be available Sundays at 8:30 am on the St. Augustine Cathedral website (www.thecathedralparish.org), while the replay will be available on the Diocese YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/c/BridgeportDiocese/streams) once Mass concludes.

In Thanksgiving

In a recent homily, Bishop Caggiano noted that at a time of discontent, it is tempting to fret over what needs to be done or to be unhappy with the way things are. However, he said that it is always important to leave room for gratitude in our lives—regardless of our own shortcomings or the state of the world. Likewise, in his many reflections on the role of thanksgiving in our lives, the bishop has reminded us that gratitude is the basis of our faith.

"As Christians, ours is a faith of thanksgiving for the many gifts and blessings that God has given us. Everything we have, we owe to God's love and providence. For Christians, a spirit of thanksgiving should be the foundation of every day of our lives. The Eucharist, which we receive during the celebration of Holy Mass and we believe to be the source and summit of our Catholic faith, is derived from the Greek word, eucharistia, which means "thanksgiving," he said.

In the coming days, we have two opportunities to practice gratitude—Thanksgiving on November 24 and the beginning of Advent on Sunday the 27. As we start a new spiritual year in Advent, we can begin by offering gratitude for our lives and thanking the many volunteers who will be serving the poor, homeless and hungry on Thanksgiving Day through our Catholic Charities and parish programs.

In that spirit, we wish you and your family a most Happy Thanksgiving and a blessed Advent as we prepare in gratitude for the gift of Christ in our lives!

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Deacon Candidates urged to 'Build Bridges to God's People'

BRIDGEPORT—"Live what you proclaim, take it to heart, build bridges to God's people who are hurt, alone, lonely and lost," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano as he instituted three deacon candidates to the Ministry of Lector during his weekly Sunday Mass at St. Augustine Cathedral.



(l-r) Frank Mantero of Trumbull, Walter Avitabile of Westport, and Edward Carrillo of Bridgeport took the next step in their formation and discernment which ultimately leads to their ordination as deacons of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

"These three brothers are not asked by the Church to read words, but to proclaim salvation given to us in Jesus Christ, and they will do it beautifully, competently and clearly," said the bishop.

In a brief ceremony immediately following the Gospel, the three men, dressed in suits, were called by name to the altar.

After bowing reverently each candidate was presented a Bible by Bishop Caggiano, and made the profession of faith.

As lectors, they will now be able to proclaim the readings from sacred scripture at Mass, as well as announce the intentions within the Prayer of the Faithful.

Before giving the final blessing, the bishop called for applause for the Deacon candidates and their wives. He also thanked Deacon Jerry Lambert, Director of the Diaconate, and Deacon John DiTaranto, Coordinator of Continuing Diaconate Formation, for their leadership in preparing the men for ordination.

He then praised the candidates' wives for their role in encouraging and supporting their husbands' formation. The three women brought the gifts forward, and Angela Mantero, wife of Deacon Candidate Frank Mantero, delivered the first two readings.

For more information about the permanent diaconate and the formation program, please contact Deacon Jerry Lambert, director of the diaconate at dnlambert@diobpt.org or 203.416.1451.

PHOTO BY MICHELLE BABYAK

CLERGY APPOINTMENTS



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

PASTOR

REVEREND ROBERT WOLFE, appointed to Pastor, Saint Edward the Confessor Parish, New Fairfield. Effective date was November 1, 2022 for a term of six years.

REVEREND MARK D'SILVA, appointed to Pastor, Sacred Heart Parish, Greenwich. Effective date was November 1, 2022 for a term of six years.

DEACON

DEACON GEORGE KAIN, appointed Moderator of the Annual Diocesan Blue Mass.

NURSING HOME CHAPLAIN

REVEREND BRUCE ROBY, appointed as part time Assistant Chaplain, Saint Camillus Health Care Center, Stamford. Effective date was October 11, 2022.

CHAPLAIN

REVEREND KRZYSZTOF KUCZYNSKI, released from current assignment as Parochial Vicar, Saint Lawrence Parish Shelton, to Catholic Chaplain in The Archdiocese for the Military Services of the Armed Forces. Effective date is January 20, 2023.

RESIDENCE

REVEREND AUGUSTINE OKOROAFOR, assigned to Saint Ann Church, Bridgeport. Effective date was October 1, 2022.

VERY REVEREND PETER LENOX, assigned to Saint Raphael Rectory, Bridgeport. Effective date was November 1, 2022.

OTHER

REVEREND MARCO PACCIANA, recalled to the Archdiocese of Newark effective October 15, 2022.

Reverend Francis T. Hoffmann
Vicar for Clergy — November, 2022

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Editorial



Soup is good food

COLLECTING MOMENTS

BY EMILY CLARK

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

When night falls earlier, days grow cooler, and we all begin to snuggle into our homes as winter approaches, my thoughts turn to what radiates comfort and warmth. It's not the pellet stove whirring in the family room or my mother's crocheted afghan or our cat curled against me on our sofa. My thoughts turn to soup.

I grew up humming

Campbell's jingle, "Soup is good food," in my head while I sipped my bowl of alphabet soup and, in college, I devoured the "Chicken Soup for the Soul" books, taking both inspiration and nourishment from the simplest pleasures. I remember the fable of "Stone Soup," marveling at the traveler's ability to feed so many with so little.

Whether it's a get well wish for a sick friend, a light meal to break a fast, or a quick supper

when we're running late, few could deny the healing, comforting qualities of soup, aside from its obvious deliciousness. What's better than a cup of clam chowder or a pot of beef barley simmering on the stove? And when it's a pot as large as the one my grandmother handed down to me, it begs to be shared.

With that in mind, we decided to host a soup exchange party with the neighbors last week, gathering everyone to share their favorite recipes and break bread—truly—over steaming bowls, enjoying the meal, the stories, and the laughter that come from easy companionship.

When friends arrived carrying crockpots filled with spicy chili, tomato soup, lentils, and white bean and kale, the aromas enveloped the house. Oh, which to try first? We cupped bowls in

our hands, felling the warmth. Ladles were dipped, salads were tossed, and drinks were passed, nourishing us and countering the autumnal chill.

"We hunger and thirst, not just for a tasty soup or the pleasure of companionship but for the joy that comes from them."

In a worldly sense, a good meal unites friends who enrich our lives and bring us together while the food we consume sustains us. We hunger and thirst, not just for a tasty soup or the pleasure of companionship but for the joy that comes from them as well. When

partaking in a different meal, though, one that nourishes not our bodies but our souls, we are enriched in a greater, more sacred sense.

At Mass, God provides spiritual sustenance through the Eucharist and reminds us that he is "the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger." Whether through bread or wine, soup or salad, we remember that it is God himself who nourishes us.

With the crockpots emptied and take-home containers filled, the neighbors left, promising to share all the recipes, so the warmth and comfort could continue as the weeks turned even cooler. Through the spicy chili and white bean and kale were so much better than the alphabet soup of my childhood, I was reminded that yes, in its many forms, soup is good food. ■



My first atheist encounter

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

I still remember the first time I met an atheist. I wish I could say it was as memorable as the time I met Henry Kissinger or Mike Love from the Beach Boys, but it was just upsetting.

I was 13, and until then, everyone I knew believed in God even if they didn't go to church. My uncle invited me to dinner with their neighbors, and during the conversation I mentioned God—this was back in the days when you could talk about God without being assaulted—and the fellow immediately informed me: "There's no God. This is all there is, and when it's over, it's over."

That combative, self-assured statement startled me. I tried to

debate him, but like most atheists, he had all the answers. To make matters worse, he was a lawyer, and I was a teenager struggling to punch up and relying only on the Baltimore Catechism and what the Sisters of St. Joseph taught me. Nevertheless, I clung to my beliefs based on faith, and he clung to his based on intellectual pride.

Since then, I've met scores of atheists in the most unlikely places. A growing number are college students, who fancy themselves too smart to believe in God. Consider Harvard University, where a reported one out of three students is atheist or agnostic. That same mentality exists in Hollywood, where it's trendy to

deny God's existence, and the entertainment industry typically portrays believers as immoral ignoramuses.

I've discovered that disbelievers share common characteristics: They're too smart for God. They blame God for the pain in their lives. And they're too proud to believe there's a God more intelligent than they are.

I've also encountered another species of atheist I classify as "the lazy atheist" or "the indifferent atheist." They don't care whether God exists because they're obsessed with more important matters like the pursuit of pleasure, prestige and possessions. Some were never given the tools to find God and grew up in families that didn't care whether God existed.

I remember the time my friend's 5-year-old son came home from school, confused and anxious, and asked, "Mommy, who's God?" I don't remember her answer, but I do remember thinking, "How did it ever come to this? Her priorities are all messed up."

From the beginning, kids should have a relationship with God even if they don't study the

Baltimore Catechism—although it helps. Remember these foundational principles:

"Who is God?" God is the Creator of Heaven and Earth and of all things—that includes you. "Why did God make you?"

"If you ask with a sincere and humble heart, God will give you all the proof you need. But you have to ask."

God made me to know him, to love him, to serve him in this world and to be happy with him forever in the next.

Pretty simple stuff. Pretty profound stuff, actually.

Today, there is a growing number of militant anti-theists, such as the late Christopher Hitchens—author of "God is Not Great"—along with Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins and the angriest of all, novelist Sir Philip Pullman. Their thinking is often based on

the premise there can't be a God because of the way his followers behave. While our behavior can be abominable, it doesn't disprove God's existence. It only proves we don't live up to the ideal.

When it comes to atheism, the basic ingredients are always anger, pride and intransigence. Vicka Ivankovic, one of the reported seers at Medjugorje, offered this insight:

"Blessed Mother says that those people who are in hell are there because they choose to go there. We all know there are persons on Earth who simply don't admit God exists, even though he always tries to nudge them onto the path of holiness. They just say they don't believe, and they deny him. They deny him, even when it is time to die. And they continue to deny him after they are dead. It is their choice. It is their will that they go to hell. They choose hell."

Pray for them. It's their only hope. Anyone who doubts God's existence has a simple recourse, as a Sister of Mercy once told me: all you have to do is ask. If you ask with a sincere and humble heart, God will give you all the proof you need. But you have to ask. ■

An Historic Moment

Msgr. Powers installed as NAC Rector in Rome

By ANNE McCRORY

ROME—Monsignor Thomas W. Powers was installed as the Rector of the Pontifical North American College on October 13, in the Vatican City State of Rome. It was a proud moment and well-deserved honor for him as he officially took the reins to head the college where over 120 seminarians from the U.S., Canada and Australia study toward ordination.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano attended and concelebrated with other dignitaries, and other diocesan clergy were well-represented at the celebration of the Installation. Monsignor Stephen DiGiovanni, the noted scholar of the college and author of two books on the history of the college was present, as well as Monsignor William Millet, noted college faculty member and diocesan priest with many years of service in Rome, and Father Matt Mauriello. Father Brendan Blawie and Father Juan Gabriel Acosta, both pursuing graduate degrees in Rome, were present as well.

The Mass of Installation took place at the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception on the

campus of the North American College. Monsignor Powers' installation and the 69th anniversary of the dedication of the chapel in 1953 were both celebrated at the Mass.

As the procession into the chapel commenced, accompanied by the beautiful rendition of "Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven" by the college choir, the significance and reverence of the moment, both for Monsignor Powers and for the college were apparent. A beautiful mosaic of Our Lady served as the backdrop for the Mass.

The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Robert P. Deeley of Portland, Maine, the current chair of the Board of Governors for the college. Bishop Deeley represented the entire board and offered gratitude to Monsignor Powers in his homily, acknowledging the humble servant that he is through his service to the Church and praying for him.

"We invoke, in a special way, the intercession of Mary for Monsignor Powers, that the Lord Jesus he encounters might watch over him in carrying out the responsibilities his new office places on him," Bishop



DIOCESAN DELEGATION—On hand for Monsignor Powers installation in Rome were Father Brendan Blawie, Bishop Caggiano, Monsignor William Millet, Monsignor Stephen DiGiovanni, Father Juan Gabriel Acosta, Father Matthew Mauriello, Suzanne Pasini, Diocesan Chief Legal and Real Estate Officer Anne McCrory and husband, Hugh.

Deeley said.

In addition to Bishop Caggiano, concelebrants of the Mass included Cardinal Lazarus You Heung-sik and Archbishop Andres G. Ferrada Moreira, the prefect and secretary of the Dicastery, respectively. Also in attendance was Cardinal George Pell, prefect emeritus of the secretariat.

More than 100 seminarians and well over 100 priests in attendance at the Mass watched in silence as Monsignor Powers took the vow of fidelity, express-

ing his loyalty and willingness to serve as rector and sought the Lord's grace and intervention for his service. All present witnessed this oath, and experienced the promise of the future for the North American College under Monsignor Powers' leadership. At the banquet that followed the Mass, Monsignor Powers recognized and thanked all present for the event. He spoke of his gratitude for those who demonstrated their faith in him with his appointment.

"You are my first priority," he said, speaking directly to the seminarians. "None of my other duties, important as they are, will ever come before being your spiritual father. What an honor it is to have that role."

Monsignor Powers went on to recognize the history and tradition of the college and the wisdom of those who came before him as role models.

"Why this is the Lord's will for me, especially given that there are so many talented alumni of this college who could be standing in my place this evening, I do not know," he said. "But I will do my best to do exactly what we ask the men in formation here

to do: to trust completely in the Lord, to embrace his holy will and, with our Blessed Mother, to give a resounding 'yes' to all that he asks."

As he concluded, Monsignor asked for prayers for the seminarians in their study and work, that "(t)he Lord will use their eyes to seek out the suffering; he will use their mouths to preach his Word, to console the sorrowing and to make himself present in the Eucharist; he will use their hands to give life in the Spirit, to strengthen the sick and dying, to heal those burdened by sins; and he will use their feet to go to the periphery and bring home the lost sheep."

Bishop Caggiano offered the final blessing for the evening and noted the obvious respect that the seminarians have already developed for Monsignor Powers since his arrival in late June. He prayed for the success of Monsignor Powers' tenure as rector and for the success of the seminarians in their study and growth.

While admitting the real loss felt in the Diocese of Bridgeport for the fraternity and leadership of Monsignor Powers, the bishop expressed the pride of the diocese. ■

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Safe Environments

Mass of Healing is also a time for joy

By BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—“Joy is not found in happiness, but in the knowledge that God will not abandon us,” Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said at the Mass of Hope and Healing for Victim Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse and their families on October 19 in the Catholic Center chapel.

Speaking to members of the diocesan Victim Survivors group and invited guests, Bishop Caggiano reflected on the Gospel of John, 16:29-33, “In the world, you will have trouble, but take courage.”

The bishop said the sexual abuse of children has brought profound suffering and great hurt, and that it was “an evil that has touched the lives of everyone in

this room.”

He said that the suffering has also brought the group together and put its members “in the path of healing,” which is an occasion for joy, even in the midst of their continuing struggles.

“Rejoice always, St. Paul tells us,” the bishop said, noting that the Apostle Paul was no stranger to suffering and hardship in his life. However, Paul understood that when Christians gathered together in prayer, Jesus would be in their midst, which is always a cause for joy.

The bishop said that the Mass was also an occasion for joy because as the pandemic recedes, it was the first time in two years that the victim survivors group could get back together for Mass and enjoy one another’s company

in person.

He said that all victims work to find healing “one day, one step, one moment at a time,” and he invited all victims of abuse to become “part of the family we have formed.”

This Mass was offered in remembrance of those who have not survived child sexual abuse, including the late Joseph Cann, Jr., son of Deacon Joseph Cann, who delivered welcoming remarks and proclaimed the Gospel.

Deacon Cann said his son Joseph suffered in silence for 16 years following abuse by a priest when he was just 11 years old. He died from an accidental overdose in 2016, when he was 28 years old.

Deacon Cann said his son sought healing from his child-



BISHOP FRANK J. CAGGIANO, ASSISTED BY DEACON JOSEPH CANN, celebrated Mass for victims and survivors of clerical abuse at the Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Center on October 19.

hood trauma “and also wanted to do what he could so that it won’t happen again.” He said the pain of losing Joseph will stay with him and his wife for the rest of their lives, until they are reunited in heaven.

He thanked Bishop Caggiano and Erin Neil, director of the diocesan Safe Environments program, for all they’ve done to listen and bring healing to victims.

Group member David D’Andrea delivered a post-Communion reflection that urged people to come forward for help.

“I’m here to address you both as a survivor of sex abuse by a priest and a member of the diocese Hope and Healing committee. I was abused when I was 13 by my pastor at my church.

“I won’t go into details, which I already have many times in the past few years. But to explain to those of you who may be joining us today by TV, the best thing I ever did was come forward and be completely honest and share everything with Bishop Frank.

The time and listening ability he gave me made me feel very comfortable. That is the most important because it’s understood you may have a concern about what will happen and how you will be treated.

“We are here for you—to listen, talk, as much or as little as you wish. I hope I reach at least one person today to come forward. Please try to come forward and reach out to Erin, myself or the bishop. I assure you it will help you to open up and bring a blessed healing process. Our prayers will always be with you and our hearts open,” he said.

The Mass was recorded and is available on the diocese website.

(For information concerning future opportunities for healing and victim assistance, please contact Erin Neil, L.C.S.W., Director of Safe Environments and Victim Assistance Coordinator at 203.650.3265 or eneil@diobpt.org, or Michael Tintrup, L.C.S.W., Victim Assistance Counselor at 203.241.0987 or mtintrup@ccfc-ct.org.)

Accountability Sunday set for December 4

BRIDGEPORT—Accountability Sunday is set for December 4, across the diocese. All diocesan parishes, schools and certain entities across the diocese will simultaneously issue their financial reports to the faithful using a standardized accounting reporting model.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano instituted Accountability Sunday last year to ensure financial transparency, communicate to all parishioners and donors that good stewardship is being practiced, and provide a standard report that is consistent and straightforward.

Michael Hanlon, CPA, chief financial officer of the diocese, said that in order to ensure uniformity and consistency in reporting, the diocese has created a standardized template that will now be used by all parishes and schools. Every entity is required to report annually the results of their financial activities for the fiscal year ending June 30.

The individual reports will



be made accessible either via parish bulletin or parish websites, school websites and the diocesan websites.

“We had a very positive response last year,” said Hanlon. “People told us they appreciated the transparency and uniformity in reporting. This hopefully allows everyone a simple method to understand the financial conditions of reporting diocesan entities. I believe it’s a way to show our gratitude and respect for those who give sacrificially to support their parish or other entities and the larger work of the Church.”

Hanlon said that the Accountability Sunday financial statements are designed to be

accessible so that the average person in the pew who may not have experience reading financial reports could understand the financial details. He added that the reports may show that without other revenue sources, including fundraising activities undertaken by parishes and schools, many would report operational deficits.

The Diocese of Bridgeport publishes its yearly budget and Consolidated Financial Statements in Fairfield County Catholic and on its website.

(To view the diocesan reports visit: www.bridgeportdiocese.org/finance-services.)

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Young Adults

A home in the Church for Stamford young adults

By ROSE BRENNAN

STAMFORD—Wednesday evening might not be the most eventful for someone in their 20s or 30s. They might finish up a day of work, go home and cook dinner, and maybe relax on the couch and watch a game or favorite TV show.

But for several young adults in the Stamford area, one Wednesday each month is a time to celebrate their faith.

About 40 young adult Catholics attended this month's Young Adult Mass at Holy Name of Jesus Church in Stamford on November 9. The two-hour event is held on the second Wednesday of each month, and is a time for this group to con-

nect with their Catholic faith and with each other.

Scott Hill is a member of the Stamford Catholic Young Adult group. He's also one of the main organizers of their monthly Mass—an event he prides on being as hassle-free as possible.

"We want to make it as easy as possible for people to come," he said. "There's enough barriers for people to come during the week, for all kinds of reasons. Everyone works, so if they don't have to sign up or they don't have to register, it just makes it that much easier."

The Mass might be the main draw of the monthly event, but it's not its only component. It actually begins with the Rite of Exposition

at 6 pm, followed by an hour of Eucharistic Adoration. Confession is also offered in the hour before Mass, which concludes with the Rite of Benediction.

Eucharistic Adoration is proving increasingly popular among younger Catholics. Paul Jarzembowski, assistant director of youth and young adult ministries for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, noted this might be because Adoration offers centering peace and quiet to this demographic of Catholics that is often plagued by constant distractions.

"The world of young adults is very noisy, competitive and stressful," Jarzembowski said in an interview with America



Magazine.

This month's young adult Mass was celebrated by Father Christopher Ford, the Diocese of Bridgeport's director of vocations. He began his homily not necessarily with a reflection on the Gospel or on the writings of a particular saint, but with a recounting of a pivotal scene in the classic Christmas movie, "Home Alone," in which Kevin McCallister must defend his home against two burglars.

"His house is a place where his family comes together, the place where his family shares love," Father Ford said. "And he knows this. Even though his family has treated him poorly, even though his family has at times ignored him, even though his family has literally left him home alone. So he defends his house."

Father Ford also noted that day marked the Feast Day of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica. A day commemorating a building might seem a bit odd within a faith that usually celebrates feast days remembering the lives of saints, but Father Ford said like Kevin McCallister defending his home against the burglars, it wasn't really about the bricks and mortar that comprised a physical building like the Lateran Basilica—but what that building represents.

"To celebrate the dedication of the church building is really to celebrate the dedication of the Body of Christ, of the Church itself," Father Ford said. "It's not the bricks and the mortar that made this place home. It's not the bricks and the mortar that made this place sacred. It's the fact that it is here in this space, through one another, through the mysteries of the Sacraments, through the mystery of God's presence

among us in the Eucharist—the humanity and the divine come together."

As a result, Father Ford said, it is important to protect the whole body of the Church—in the same way Christ did in that day's Gospel reading, driving the moneylenders out of the temple.

"I don't think I'm going to surprise anyone when I say that in many ways, we are under attack," he said. "But there is real consolation here. There is real hope here because of Jesus—because he not only leads you to his church, but he promised that he would be present in it forever."

While the monthly young adult Mass is the flagship event for the Stamford young adult group, they also offer a monthly Faith on Tap. And according to Hill, two events per month is ideal for the time being.

"We're trying to do maybe less, but do it better," he said. "We figured two quality events each month would be just what we need to do."

To Hill, it's important that young adults who take their faith seriously get to know each other. And he hopes by providing these events—especially the young adult Mass—meaningful and faith-filled friendships can form among the diocese's young adults.

"If you go to church in Stamford or in Fairfield County on a regular basis, there's no reason you shouldn't know the other young adults who do so as well," Hill said. "You're not meant to carry the faith alone."

The next young adult Mass will be offered on December 14 at the Basilica of St. John in Stamford. Adoration and Confession will begin at 6 pm, and Mass will begin at 7 pm. A social will follow.

Oktoberfest event unites diocese's young adults

By ROSE BRENNAN

WESTON—St. Francis of Assisi Church in Weston hosted an Oktoberfest for the diocese's young adults on October 22—a first-of-its-kind event for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Lilliana Delmonico serves on the Diocesan Young Adult Council, and was one of the main coordinators of the Oktoberfest. She believes having events like this is essential to supporting the development of faith and fellowship among young adults in the diocese.

"These young adult events ... it's important to invest in them because it allows young people to form relationships with each other, and thus form relationships with God," she said. "They do that just by having this understanding ... there's other people that feel the same way they do, have the same beliefs they do, and run their lives the same way. And I think that's kind of missing in society."

The Diocesan Young Adult Council received support from the parish's Knights of Columbus chapter, who served food and drink at the event, and Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, who celebrated Saturday Vigil Mass at the event. That evening's Gospel reading included



the oft-quoted adage, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exhausted."

Bishop Caggiano reflected on the message of humility by offering a comparison to the photographs taken of outer space by the James Webb Space Telescope, which helped to illustrate just how expansive and all-encompassing God's universe truly is.

Among many who saw them, the telescope's images "created almost an existential crisis in the lives of many who had successfully avoided what I would like to call the 'ultimate questions' until they literally had it in front of their face as a photo," the bishop said. "What they were is being graced, whether they realize it or not, in a moment of great humility, the inescapable truth of ... admitting that in the grand scheme of all that

exists, we are all quite small."

Why was this realization so earth-shattering to so many, the bishop pondered? To him, it took the focus from themselves to the glory and grandeur of the sheer size of the universe.

"To add insult to injury in a society that tells you and me, 'My life is all about me, my opinion is what counts, the world revolves around me,' you have the inexplicable and uncontroversial truth that no, it doesn't," Bishop Caggiano said. "And yet, my friends, you and I come here to worship, to come here in faith, to recognize that humility is the path to holiness."

Following Mass, the young adults in attendance gathered for food and fellowship in St. Francis' parish hall. Many young adults stayed for the program's entire run time until 9 pm—a full four hours.

Delmonico is hopeful this and future events for young adults will spark and sustain Christ-centered connections. After all, it's already done that in her life.

"I think that having this group of people that I've found recently ... it's really allowed me to tap into my faith more and actually make it something that is not just for me. It's for other people," she said. ■

Schools

FIE celebrates a record number of 'Leaders of Tomorrow'

By ROSE BRENNAN

STRATFORD—Young people are the leaders of tomorrow, especially if Foundations in Education has anything to say about it. And when children demonstrate they are up-and-coming leaders, the foundation feels they should be recognized.

Foundations in Education recognized 107 Catholic grammar school students at its annual Leaders of Tomorrow breakfast—the largest pool of honorees since the foundation's inception. The honorees, their families, education sponsors and other supporters of Catholic education gathered at Vazzano's Four Seasons Banquet Hall on October 27 to honor these very special children.

"You, as leaders, are selected by your principal as children of good character, academic promise, and leadership potential," said Holly Doherty-Lemoine, Foundations in Education's executive director. "In my mind, that's a pretty big deal, and I hope you are proud of yourselves, because we sure are, too."

Each year, one Leader of Tomorrow is selected to deliver remarks at the breakfast. This year's speaker was Gabner Cineas Jr., a seventh grade student at St. James School in Stratford. He was able to share how Catholic education has touched him, his family and his life.

"My Catholic education has impacted my life in many ways," he said. "It has strengthened my relationship with God. I have grown in my faith because he has been a part of my school day for as long as I can remember. From morning prayer with Principal Robertson to my community service time on Friday afternoons, I am reminded that God is with me always, and that I have been called to give back and to serve

others as Jesus did."

Foundations in Education's board chair Thomas McInerney also delivered remarks at the event, noting the breakfast honored three types of heroes: parents, teachers and the students themselves.

"The students ... are in many ways our heroes because they're starting out on a path that's going to change a lot of people's lives over the next several decades," he said. "We're excited about that for them."

Following McInerney's remarks, Foundations in Education presented each student with a certificate, and had them pose for a photograph with their school principal, their scholarship sponsors and Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

Notably, two kindergarten students represented the youngest demographic of honorees: Khaliyah-Jay Erskine from Catholic Academy of Bridgeport-St. Andrew and Felicity French from Holy Trinity Catholic Academy in Shelton.

Bishop Caggiano connected with the young people in the room at the end of the event. In recognition of the approaching Thanksgiving holiday, he asked the students in the room what they were thankful for.

Answers varied among the students, ranging from their parents, friends, school and scholarship sponsors. But the bishop noted the adults in the room might have a different answer: the students themselves. And he noted on Thanksgiving Day, not only would he be thankful for them, but he would pray for them specifically at Mass that day.

"God has given you many gifts and talents, and you will always—with God's grace—develop them," Bishop Caggiano said. "One day, every single one of you in this room can become a leader of our country, our community and our Church." ■



2022-2023 Leaders of Tomorrow

All Saints Catholic School, Norwalk

Mia Alvarado, Grade 7
Abigail Fermin, Grade 3
Nicole Toro Madrigal, Grade 2
Lorena Sosa, Grade 1
Stacey Thomas, Grade 7

Assumption Catholic School, Fairfield

Alexander Carrillo, Grade 7
Leah Gutierrez, Grade 3
Edoardo Porzio, Grade 6
Josnyel Rivera, Grade 6
Andrew Smith, Grade 6

Cardinal Kung Academy, Stamford

Owen Berchermann, Grade 8

Catholic Academy of Bridgeport – St. Andrew

Khaliyah-Jay Erskine, Kindergarten
Jayleen Ordonez, Grade 2
Elizabeth Restrepo, Grade 4

Catholic Academy of Bridgeport – St. Ann

Esteban Kotlajic, Grade 4
Victoria Rosa, Grade 6
Valerye Small, Grade 6

Catholic Academy of Bridgeport – St. Augustine

Effenberg Torres Alferez, Grade 4
Gabriel Cruz, Grade 6
Jace Jimenez, Grade 6

Catholic Academy of Bridgeport – St. Raphael

Nicolas Dutan, Grade 3
Madison Fox, Grade 1
Mariah Fox, Grade 1

Catholic Academy of Stamford

Emily Brewer, Grade 6
Sophia Davis-Eleck, Grade 8
Angeluqe Dawson, Grade 7
Greyce Lamothe, Grade 5
Sophia Moreno, Grade 8
Ange Munianga, Grade 8

Greenwich Catholic School

Daniella Alvarez-Rivera
Samantha Botero, Grade 6
Sofia Gorog, Grade 5
Mariana Profili, Grade 7
Sage Pun, Grade 2

Holy Trinity Catholic Academy, Shelton

Felicity French, Kindergarten
Brian Keaney, Grade 8
Roberto Lopez, Grade 8
Isabella McAfee, Grade 6
Aria Wedderburn, Grade 6

St. Aloysius School, New Canaan

Matthew Calle, Grade 8
James Frattaroli, Grade 6
Marta Oliinyk, Grade 5
Veronika Oliinyk, Grade 8

St. Catherine of Siena School, Trumbull

Alessia Cardozo, Grade 8
Ava Cardozo, Grade 3
Daniel De Freitas, Grade 8
Hanaelle Laforest, Grade 6
Ryan Ramirez, Grade 5

St. Gregory the Great School, Danbury

Shayleigh Barrett, Grade 7
Alexander Chauvin, Grade 3
Gabiella Cubides, Grade 4
Nicoy Hall, Grade 8
Logan Murphy, Grade 7
Justin Pani Vizhco, Grade 5

St. James School, Stratford

Gabner Cineas, Jr., Grade 7
Baruch Israel, Grade 7
Atheana Leung, Grade 6
Olivia Merwin, Grade 7
Rooney Pannozzo, Grade 2
William Pannozzo, Grade 1
Harper Wright, Grade 3

St. Joseph School, Danbury

Brianna Lekaj, Grade 6
Rafael Sousa Lopes, Grade 4
Tristan Nelson, Grade 4
Leticia Raposo, Grade 4
John Rountos, Grade 6

St. Mark School, Stratford

Ayden Baez, Grade 5
Eric-Mason Daniels, Grade 4
Avani Jacobs, Grade 8
Mila Maiers, Grade 7
Emmett Mallon, Grade 7
Valentino Valdez, Grade 3

St. Mary School, Bethel

Enzo Araujp, Grade 8
Ethan Mariduena, Grade 2
Enzo Pereira, Grade 1
Adeline Perillo, Grade 4
Caiden Phillips, Grade 7

St. Mary School, Ridgefield

Adrianna Bulfamante, Grade 7
Allison Danial, Grade 8
Hunter Oliva, grade 7
Xavi Sanchez, Grade 5

St. Peter School, Danbury

Genesis Castro, Grade 1
Iker Castro, Grade 3
Jayden Contreras, Grade 2
Aaron Gonzalez, Grade 4
Samantha Nugra, Grade 4
Monica Quinde, Grade 2
Mariluz Saldana, Grade 5
Danielle Smitherman, Grade 8
Nayeli Tapia, Grade 1
Steven Tapia, Grade 7

St. Rose School, Newtown

Alexandra Anzalone, Grade 4
Gabriela Dias, Grade 6
Kinsley Floody, Grade 1
Hannah Lee, Grade 6
Colin Lyons, Grade 6

St. Theresa School, Trumbull

Brooklyn Burgos, Grade 4
Angel Lopez Carrillo, Grade 4
Laiz Costa, Grade 6
Sophie DeCastro, Grade 8
Maria Luiza Goncalves-Brandao, Grade 6

St. Thomas Aquinas School, Fairfield

Thomas Clifford, Grade 7
Adrianna Diaz, Grade 4
Nicholas Landino, Grade 4
Brynn Podpolucha, Grade 5
Moriah Powell, Grade 6
Victoria Powell, Grade 3

Catholic Schools

Living the faith in all he does

By ROSE BRENNAN

STAMFORD—Harold Spitzfaden believes faith is something that ought to be lived out each day. And whether it's as the chair of the Catholic Academy of Stamford's board of directors, the co-owner of Senior Care Authority or anything in between, he integrates his faith into everything he does.

Spitzfaden's journey with Catholic education began when he was a child. He attended Catholic grammar and high schools in New York and New Jersey, and pursued his undergraduate degree at Seton Hall University. He also received several advanced degrees: a law degree from Seton Hall Law School, an MBA from Rutgers University and an L.L.M. from New York University.

Despite having a mix of both Catholic and secular education, Spitzfaden believes there's something special about the Catholic education system.

"It was with me for so long, and I have so many good feelings about it," he said. "I always wanted to give back a little bit because it gave so much to me. I can always think of the nuns and all the people that put time and effort into my development."

Spitzfaden's involvement with Catholic education in the Diocese of Bridgeport began when he was asked to join the Catholic Regional School System in Stamford. Once the home of several parish grammar schools, the landscape of Catholic education in Connecticut's second-largest city has evolved significantly over time.

Spitzfaden noted even as the number of parish grammar

schools decreased, they still faced financial difficulties. He was asked to join a financial advisory board assembled by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano to determine the future of Stamford's Catholic schools.

Ultimately, the advisory board determined the best path forward was to consolidate the parish grammar schools into one school—which would become the Catholic Academy of Stamford. The school would be an independent company with a corporate structure, while still providing a Catholic education to young people in Stamford.

The Catholic Academy of Stamford opened in 2017, making use of the former St. Cecilia School and the first floor of the former Trinity Catholic High School. The financial advisory committee that helped conceive of the idea of the Catholic



CATHOLIC ACADEMY OF STAMFORD—Board Chairperson Harold Spitzfaden is flanked by CAS Head of School Ms. Patricia Brady and Father John Connaughton, pastor of St. Cecilia – St. Gabriel Parish.

Academy of Stamford ultimately became the school's board of directors, which Spitzfaden currently chairs.

The academy faced its share of obstacles in its early years. Trinity Catholic High School closed, meaning the school couldn't continue to use the first floor of the building and had to relocate the entire student body to the St. Cecilia campus. And then the coronavirus pandemic meant the school had to shift to remote learning during the spring of 2020.

Despite these challenges, Spitzfaden was particularly proud of how the Catholic Academy of Stamford's community ensured their students received a quality education during the pandemic—noting they were able to go back to school in-person as early as the fall of 2020.

Spitzfaden also noted the school actually benefited from the pandemic, as many parents with children in Stamford's public school system transferred their students to the Catholic Academy of Stamford during that time so they could have more in-person learning opportunities.

"The public schools closed down quite a bit because of the pandemic," he said. "We never closed down. We stayed (with) in-person learning ... except in the spring" of 2020.

Spitzfaden believes the future is bright for the Catholic Academy of Stamford, noting it recently undertook a strategic plan for the years to come. The plan addresses eight domains: academics, advancement, Catholic identity, enrollment and marketing, facilities, finance, governance and student life.

This strategic plan also implements regular input from the parents in the Catholic Academy of Stamford's community. And

Spitzfaden believes their views are vital to the academy's future success.

"What we've tried to do over the last two or three years is ... connect with the parents," he said. "There's been a lot of angst in Stamford in terms of Catholic schools—the closing of Trinity and the movement of our building—so creating that connection with the parents and getting their confidence and having them enjoy the experience."

But chairing the Catholic Academy of Stamford's board of directors isn't the only way Spitzfaden lives out his faith. He is also the co-owner of Senior Care Authority, a senior care consulting group and placement service. The organization assesses senior adults' mental and physical needs and connects families to resources and communities. Placement services are provided at no cost to the family.

"We work very closely with the families to help them find a safe and appropriate place for their loved ones," he said. "I also work with seniors and their families to help them in whatever counseling they may need, whether it's financial or legal or whatever additional ... needs they may have."

Spitzfaden is passionate about the work Senior Care Authority does because it supports and ties into his Catholic values. And for him, it brings his life full-circle from the Catholic education he received to the work he does with the community now.

"It feels like a continuum from my days in Catholic school: what I've learned, the work I do with Catholic Academy of Stamford," Spitzfaden said. "This also is just an additional way of reaching out, reaching people and helping people in need. It doesn't get any better than that." ■

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Catholic Charities

Monsignor Weiss honored at Celebrity Breakfast

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—Trusting in God and being open to seeing the good that surrounds us were some of the messages shared at the annual Catholic Charities of Fairfield County's Celebrity Breakfast.

Hundreds of people gathered at the early morning annual event, which helps raise money for numerous Catholic Charities' community programs that deliver care to those in need. The event was held at the Amber Room Colonnade in Danbury and featured honoree and guest speaker Monsignor Robert Weiss, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Newtown.

"It's much easier to look for the good because there is good," he said. "I do wear rose-colored glasses," he jokingly added.

Monsignor Weiss, who has been the pastor of the Church Hill Road parish for the past 23 years, shared his journey of the priesthood and how it was grounded in his family life.

"Vocations really do come from family," he said, giving those gathered a glimpse into the early life of his parents, when his father converted to Catholicism at the surprise and delight of his mother so the couple could have a church wedding to fast-forwarding to his senior high school "skip day" when he snuck into the school and on that day heard the calling to become a priest.

"Are we encouraging our sons to be priests?" he asked. "We have to stay open to the possibility that the grace of vocation is in that young man."

Monsignor Weiss went on to attend St. Bernard Seminary in Rochester, N.Y., where he witnessed first-hand the good works of the Catholic Charities organization.

"Catholic Charities was there to restore and bring so much peace," he said. Ordained in 1973, Monsignor Weiss will celebrate 50 years as a priest next year.

He said he treasures his vocation as a priest and being invited into people's lives during times of happiness and of sorrow.

Monsignor Weiss, who said he suffers from post-traumatic



HONORING MONSIGNOR ROBERT WEISS—Hundreds turned out for the Catholic Charities Celebrity Breakfast at the Amber Room in Danbury. Monsignor Weiss was presented with a bronze-finished sculpture in recognition of his humility and tireless services and for "walking with us on our journey during times of trial."

stress from the day a shooter killed 26 people at Sandy Hook Elementary School, tearfully recalled returning to St. Rose of Lima and seeing students, including alumni, praying the rosary.

Later, he said, when he turned on the television that night to try to drown out the nightmare of the day, the first words he heard were, "You'll never walk alone," from the movie *Carousel*.

"I know I'm never alone," he said, reflecting on that moment almost 10 years ago.

Catholic Charities presented Monsignor Weiss with a sculpture by Timothy P. Schmalz inspired by the poem, "Footprints in the Sand." The sculpture depicts Christ carrying a person and leaving a trail of just one set of footprints in the sand, symbolizing when Christ carries us through troubled times.

"Father Bob, you've been carrying so many of us for so many years and we are so grateful," said Michael Donoghue, Executive Director of Catholic Charities, as he presented the sculpture to Monsignor Weiss.

The bronze-finished sculpture was inscribed with the words, "In recognition of your humility and tireless service to others. Thank you for walking with us on our journey and during times of trial, through your love and devotion, ensuring we never journey alone."

"It was a beautiful rendition of a life well-lived and an inspiration to all of us," Bridget Guertin, a parishioner of St. Joseph Parish in Danbury, said of Monsignor Weiss' heartfelt speech.

Steven Santoli, assistant principal at Immaculate High School in Danbury, agreed.

"Father Weiss is always very relatable," he said. "It's inspiring

to see someone connect with the kids so well. They are doing something right" at St. Rose of Lima School.

During the event, Catholic



Charities also highlighted the new Catholic Advocacy Program (CAP), which provides residents of Fairfield County with a hand-up when facing difficult situations and to connect them with resources in their local area.

The organization also spotlighted the work of the Morning Glory program led by Tamara Espinal and her team to ensure those in need can have a good breakfast to begin their day. The Morning Glory Breakfast Program has served more than 100,000 meals since opening in October 2007.

Monsignor Weiss said his life as a priest has been a blessing and a gift and he shared powerful advice with those gathered.

"Just do what God wants you to do and he will give you the grace to do it," Monsignor Weiss said. ■

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Women Gather at St. Matthew

Walking with Purpose guides women to become 'oaks of righteousness'

By EMILY CLARK

NORWALK—Hundreds of women from the Diocese of Bridgeport and beyond gathered at St. Matthew Church in Norwalk on October 20 to hear Lisa Brenninkmeyer share stories of inspiration and hope through her talk “Strong Yet Tender: Building Resilience in an Age of Trauma.”

The creator of the popular Catholic women’s ministry program, “Walking with Purpose,” Brenninkmeyer opened with the question, “How can we become strong and resilient women in the midst of heartache?” Often, she said, the answer lies in scripture.

Brenninkmeyer began by connecting with her audience through personal anecdotes. As a child, her mother-in-law lost her home to the Nazis in World War II, then as an adult buried several

children, including an infant and a four-year-old. Through it all, Brenninkmeyer said, she never lost her faith and did not let the trauma define her.

This philosophy has sustained Brenninkmeyer as well, even as she lost a child of her own through a miscarriage years ago. When a nurse helped her face that anguish and realize she was not alone, Brenninkmeyer shared that she also asked her, “Why do you think you can minister to women if you’ve never had suffering?”

“When the suffering is our own, it’s deeply personal. Some days, it is so hard and so heavy, but seeking help for mental health is not a weakness. I don’t want trauma to be the last word,” Brenninkmeyer said, referencing a passage from scripture that brings comfort to many: “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.”

Using the metaphor of the “oaks

of righteousness” from Isaiah 61, Brenninkmeyer emphasized how God wants to strengthen women to establish deep roots so they are able to bend, but not break.

“These trees are often not in a greenhouse, but in a dark forest,” she said. “Are you lost in such a forest, desperate to find a way out? Do you think God has left you alone in the woods? No, God is with you. He will provide you a haven in the trees.”

“We all carry wounds in this life,” she added, acknowledging the suffering that those in the audience might be facing. “Even when we’re wounded, we can help others by connecting with them. Strength comes from knowing you are not alone.”

Continuing with the call for women to be “oaks of righteousness,” Brenninkmeyer lectures on the two trees God identified: the Tree of Life and the Tree of the

Knowledge of Good and Evil. For Adam and Eve, there was no suffering, trauma, depression, anxiety or suicide—until man decided not to obey God. The results of the Fall, she said include the complete loss of sanctifying grace and the real subjugation of Satan.

“But God has not left you in the forest alone,” Brenninkmeyer said. “Scripture tells us that Jesus died on a tree. He reversed the effects of the Fall. Surrender to him here in the wilderness and become oaks of righteousness.”

Brenninkmeyer ended her talk with attendees bowing their heads in prayer.

“If God is distant for you, call out to him,” she said. “Tell him—I need you desperately, and I want you in my life.”

Following the lecture, Brenninkmeyer held a meet-and-greet and book signing, with copies of her *Walking with Purpose*



LISA BRENNINKMEYER—shared stories of inspiration and hope with women who attended the talk at St. Matthew Church.

Bible studies available for purchase. The women’s ministry, which launched in 2008, is active in close to 500 parishes throughout the United States, Canada and Europe, including many in the Diocese of Bridgeport. These groups work to deepen the faith of their members by helping them know God personally.

“He sees into the depths of your soul and loves you,” Brenninkmeyer said. “Through him, we are called to help women and be a source of comfort because of our own suffering.” ■

BELLARMIANE FROM PAGE 3

that “for Fairfield University, this Bellarmine campus, this Bellarmine initiative, is all about answering our call to do more. This Bellarmine initiative answers Fairfield’s call to serve ever broader populations in ever more innovative ways. To be a university of the 21st century which recognizes that nothing is more empowering, nothing brings a human more fully alive than higher education.”

In his remarks, Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, Bishop of the Diocese of Bridgeport, urged those gathered to take stock of “the historic step we are taking

together” for the particular benefit of the young people of Bridgeport. He praised Dr. Nemeč as an educational leader “with a deep, burning passion to serve young people, in all their needs, from whatever walk of life they come from,” and thanked him for being a driving force behind the vision for Fairfield Bellarmine.

Noting that the new Bellarmine Campus property is situated “on one of the highest—if not the highest geographical points in the city of Bridgeport,” Bishop Caggiano urged the approximately 60 people gathered for the groundbreaking ceremony

to take in the autumnal beauty of the surrounding city below, and to know that “this campus will always be a beacon.”

“May it be a beacon of hope to the whole city, that good people can work together for a greater good: Church, state and community,” the bishop prayed. “And let us resolve ourselves to provide the example of the good that people can do together in a world that is so divided, so broken and so fractured. This college will be a reminder—to everyone of good will—of what we are still capable of doing together.” ■

SETON COLLABORATIVE FROM PAGE 3

will be done with compassion and in a way that is governed by God. It will be a benefit to the community.”

The bishop urged those gathered to support the Seton Collaborative efforts in any way they can.

“This is an opportunity for collaboration among all parishes and schools for the renewal of the whole church,” he said.

For information on the Seton Collaborative visit: setoncollaborative.org or email: info@setoncollaborative.org. ■

HOME COMING FROM PAGE 7

in 1965, and later served as his vicar general, said the bishop was profoundly changed by his participation in Vatican II. When he returned from the Second Vatican Council in Rome, the bishop sold the episcopal residence in the Brooklawn section of Fairfield and moved into two rooms at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport.

He said that Bishop Curtis—who was a moral theologian—adopted a lifestyle of simplicity. He enjoyed city life, having people around him, and fully engaging in the life of the Cathedral Parish. He also looked forward to the yearly food festival—waiting each year to enjoy the Belgian waffles.

When the L’Ambiance Tower construction project collapsed in 1987, taking the lives of 28 construction workers across the street from the cathedral, Bishop Curtis was among the first to be on the scene of the disaster, and he immediately began ministering to workers and families. He also stood beside the family of the last victim at 1:30 am, when the boy was recovered later in the week.

Throughout the long search-and-rescue process, he inspired many as he stood outside praying the rosary each night in the chilly spring weather.

“He was a priest and a bishop of great kindness, goodness and compassion,” Monsignor Scheyd said.

After the homily, Bishop Caggiano led the Universal Prayer: “God, the Father Almighty, raised Jesus from the dead, and he will give life to our own mortal bodies. We pray to him in faith.”

The priests responded, “Lord, bring us to life in Christ.”

The bishop concluded the prayer with these words: “grant, Lord, we pray, that as our faith is built on the Risen Christ, so too may our hope be steadfast, as we await the resurrection of your faithful from the dead. We make our prayer through Christ, our Lord.”

Before giving the final blessing, Bishop Caggiano thanked Monsignor Scheyd for the glimpse he offered into the life of Bishop Curtis, and said the Mass for Deceased Clergy was “a day of thanksgiving and intercession, and a gesture of thanks for those who came before us, and upon their shoulder we stand.” ■

Congratulations and Thank You!

Father Rogerio Perri, Pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Bridgeport and Bishop Frank Caggiano honor St. Augustine Medal of Service recipients Maria Isilda Rosa and William Powe at the recent Daytime Prayer Service and Awards Ceremony.



Religious Women

Missionary Sisters share love of Blessed Sacrament

By JOE PISANI

BRIDGEPORT—By Mother Anna Rodriguez's own admission, she was a "wild child," ready to party and willing to miss a few days of work at Dictaphone in search of adventure on road trips with her friends.

Until something changed her. More accurately, someone changed her—Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, who led her to the Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Immaculate.

That was 41 years ago. Today, the Bridgeport native is mother superior of the congregation on Wordin Avenue, one of many houses in Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Africa, Mexico, the Philippines and soon Vietnam.

Five missionary sisters work and live together in the Convent of Mary Immaculate, which had previously been part of St. Stephen Church in Trumbull.

"We are not many, but thank God, we do a lot as a community," Mother Anna said.

As part of their day—which includes three hours of Eucharistic adoration—they run the Mary Immaculate Day Care Center and Pre-K for nearly 50 students from the West End of Bridgeport, who come from different denominations and different countries, including Colombia, Brazil and Ecuador. The sisters speak to their students in three languages: English, Spanish and Portuguese.

They also conduct catechism classes and faith formation programs at St. Peter Church in the West End and help out at St. Ann Church in Black Rock. They also provide food and pastoral counseling to those in need in the community.

Mother Anna, who teaches the 4-year-olds, said that fundamental to the education of their students is regular prayer time and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel.

"Our charism, first and foremost, is adoration," she said. "So we try to get people to come in and visit the Lord."

The sisters hold retreats for people as part of the faith formation programs, which include adoration "so they can realize who Jesus is."



MOTHER ANNA—works with young people at the Mary Immaculate Day Care Center and Pre-K in the West End of Bridgeport.

"Twice a month, we do this with the students in faith formation, from seventh grade to high school," she said. "We have a little chapel in the school and have adoration with them. We like to do that so they can have an encounter with Jesus. They need to know sound doctrine, but they also need to experience the love of Jesus in their lives."

Mother had a similar encounter when she was a young woman, which inspired her to leave behind her career and her boyfriend and enter the order.

"I used to love adventure, and I would pick up and go on a road trip because I always liked to have fun," she said. "I loved to travel, and my mother Anarosa would say, 'You're crazy. You're going to lose your job.' I was a wild girl. I wasn't a religious girl, although I went to church once in a while. But I believed in God."

She credits her father Virigilio—who was a convert to Catholicism—with developing her faith.

"My father was the first one to know that I was going to enter the convent," she said. "I trusted him so much. He converted to Catholicism, but his family had no faith at that time. After he found the Catholic Church, he was faithful for the rest of his life, and he was a good example for the rest of us."

Mother Anna's boyfriend, who was devout, deserves credit for introducing her to Eucharistic adoration.

"He was very holy, and before we went anywhere, he would say, 'We have to go to adoration,'" she said.

She was introduced to the Missionary Sisters when she was a member of the Children of Mary at St. Anthony Church on Colorado Avenue. One day, Mother Superior told them there

was a girl from Puerto Rico staying at the convent who was going to take her first vows. Anna attended the ceremony and felt inspired to learn more.

Then, on September 8—the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary—while Anna was at church, she was invited into the chapel, where she felt her calling.

"I was before the Blessed Sacrament, and I wondered, 'What am I feeling?'" she said. Her father was also there, and she remembers asking, "Dear Lord, what am I going to do?"

Mother Anna has always been a lover of animals and horses, and she immediately thought of the blinders that horses wear in the mountains near cliffs, so they can stay focused and not be distracted by the things around them.

A voice told her: "Put the

frame on, just like you put on your horse. Look forward and not to the side—and I will be there."

"And that's when I said, 'The Lord wants me to be a sister,'" she said.

Mother Anna has been with the order for 41 years and superior of the Bridgeport convent for three. She previously worked for several years in Mexico and the Philippines.

"The community is a strong part of my life," she said. "The community is one of my pillars to do my mission. I trust them, and they are always there for me. It has been my family."

The Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Immaculate began in Spain in 1896 and have been in the Diocese of Bridgeport for almost 65 years,

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

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ADVENT / CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

Confessions

Saturday (12/3) - 12:15 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Saturdays (12/10, 12/17) - 12:00 p.m.—3:00 p.m.
or by appointment

Regular Mass Schedule

Saturday—4:30 p.m. (Vigil)
Sundays—8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

Christmas Mass Schedule

Saturday, December 24—4:00 p.m., 10:00 p.m.
Sunday, December 25—8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m.

Feast of the Holy Innocents

Feast Day Mass
Wednesday, December 28—8:00 a.m.

The Mass will be dedicated to those children who have gone before us in faith.
(All parents who have lost a child are encouraged to attend and light a candle in memory of their child.)

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Saturday, December 31, 2022—4:30 p.m. (Vigil)
Holy Day Masses—
Sunday, January 1, 2023—8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m.

Feast of the Epiphany

Saturday, January 7, 2023—4:30 p.m. (Vigil)
Sunday, January 8, 2023
8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

Beloved Sons

Thursday, December 1, 7:00 p.m.
in the Parish Center
Saturday, December 17, 6:30 a.m.
in the Parish Center

Open the gospel for the following weekend and share your thoughts with a group of like-minded men.

Grieving Losses

Monday, December 5, 7:00 p.m.
in the Parish Center

Prayer and support during this holiday season for those who have experienced any type of loss.

Advent Retreat for Women

What Wondrous Love is This?
Saturday, December 10,
8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
in the Parish Center

Join us for prayer, reflection, sharing and fellowship. Call the Parish Center to register or email Ruth at receptionist@stjct.org

Advent Evening of Scripture and Song

Tuesday, December 13, 7:00 p.m.
in the church

Reflections through scripture and song on our Advent Journey

High School News

Kolbe golf tournament raises friends and funds

By RICK RYAN

MILFORD—On a beautiful fall day, Kolbe Cathedral High School hosted its second annual fundraising golf tournament at the Great River Golf Club in Milford on October 10.

The event drew 92 golfers and raised over \$43,000 for the Bridgeport high school. Participants included board chair Terry O'Connor, vice chair Kevin Grimes, treasurer Jon O'Herron, Jr., and board members Jeff Tengel, Robert Aufiero, Martin Anderson and John Sites.

Major sponsors included the O'Herron Family Foundation, the Paloian Family Foundation, Kaulbach Charitable Foundation, Maximilian Kolbe Scholarship, Trumbull Taiwan Associates, Reckson, M&T Bank and MacKenzie Painting.

"We are thrilled with the second year turnout and increased support we received from spon-



sors, donors and participants," said Rick Ryan, Kolbe Cathedral's director of development. "We have always done a lot more with a lot less here at Kolbe Cathedral, so \$43,000 will go a long way in support of our critical mission to empower our underserved students with a rigorous education and Catholic values."

The day started with lunch, then golf, followed by a post-tournament reception with the announcement of raffle and tour-

namment winners.

"Kolbe Cathedral is grateful to all participants, and particularly the new friends that we made with our golf tournament," said Camille Figluizzi, principal of Kolbe Cathedral. "I'm especially proud of our students Madison Andujar, Leonardo Burke, Juan Montoya, Emily Andino and Luis Cruz, who volunteered their time on a day off to work at the event. I'm also thankful to the members of the Fairfield Prep

gold team who came out to support our kids and our school."

Kolbe Cathedral is a small, private Catholic college preparatory school located in the heart of Bridgeport. Formed by the Diocese of Bridgeport in 1976, it continues to be a much-needed beacon of hope and an instrument of personal transformation for its diverse, multicultural, co-ed student population in the

Hollow section of the largest and poorest city in Connecticut. In spite of the adverse economic and social conditions, and in stark contrast to the city's public schools, Kolbe Cathedral graduates 100 percent of its students and boasts a near-100 percent college acceptance rate. The mantra to the school's students is simple and effective: "Work hard and be nice." ■

IHS 'kicks off' eSports

By AMY POLACKO

DANBURY—When freshman Ryan Beverly heard over the loudspeaker that Immaculate High School was starting an eSports program using video games, he thought, "Sign me up!"

"The thought that I could play video games as a sport was crazy to me," Beverly, a Bethel resident said.

eSports is short for "electronic sports," and takes the gaming experience to a whole new level. And yes, it is a sport—and one that more colleges and universities across the country are recognizing.

Beverly is one of about a dozen students at Immaculate High School who are a part of the Immaculate Mustangs eSports Team that launched this fall. He's already been elected captain, and the team has won three matches in a row.

"People don't realize how much teamwork is involved in eSports," Beverly said. "When I played video games alone, it was all about me, but this is a real team sport. I have already made a lot of new friends."

The Immaculate eSports coach, teacher Ryan Blecharcyk, could not agree more.

"It's exciting," said Blecharcyk, who is a gamer himself. "It's a great way to engage students in a kind of serious sportsmanship that was never in the school environment before."

Even if students don't go into the gaming industry, eSports teaches valuable life skills.

"This is a great opportunity for students who don't usually participate in sports perhaps to focus on working as part of a team, utilizing strategic thinking, doing ... risk assessments, building social skills and contributing to the school community at large," Blecharcyk said.

Nelson Mingachos, Immaculate's athletic director, says the school applies the same high standards for eSports players as they do for any of their other student athletes.

"We pride ourselves in staying on the cutting edge of trends in sports and giving our Mustangs exciting new opportunities," he said.

eSports is recognized by the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) and Immaculate's eSports squad is playing other teams up and down the east coast. The team meets several times per week for practices—just like any other sport—and has weekly matches. The team also had tryouts and selections for a starting roster.

As for the team's future, members hope to have shirts and gear, just like every other sports team, soon. Plus, they hope to attract new teammates as the word gets out about eSports.

"I tell people to give it a chance," Blecharcyk said. "Look at it for all the aspects you experience on a traditional sports team—we're doing the exact same thing. And it's really fun." ■

Notre Dame Fairfield

Kicks off 26 Acts of Kindness campaign

By NICHOLAS GREW

FAIRFIELD—Notre Dame High School has launched its 10th annual 26 Acts of Kindness campaign in memory of the lives lost in the Sandy Hook tragedy. Each school day will celebrate individual acts of kindness such as "Be Positive Day," "Put a Smile on Someone's Face Day" and "Be Kind to the Environment Day."

At the same time, the Notre Dame community hosts a series of collections to benefit individuals in need, including pet food, blankets and sleeping bags, socks, gently used coats, canned food and toiletries. Students will also take on a letter-writing campaign to express gratitude, veterans and first responders.

With the help of students and staff, principal Dr. Chris Cipriano initiated the program

Notre Dame High School – 26 Acts of Kindness Calendar						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	Say "Good Morning" <i>It's important you just take a moment.</i>	Hold the Door, Open for Someone Today	Thank the ND Support Staff <i>Thank a service worker who makes our community a better place.</i>	Collection: Donate a can of cat or dog food for CT Humane Society	Thank a Soldier <i>Write a thank you letter to a US soldier. All will read these letters.</i>	
	World Kindness Day -- Wear Blue Today	"Be Kind to Yourself" Day <i>Remember, you matter. Practice positive thinking and be kind to yourself with yourself.</i>	Collection: Donate Blankets and Sleeping Bags for the homeless	Thank Your Parents/Guardians Grandparents Day <i>Be all that they do for you.</i>	ND Service Day 2022	
	Tell a Random Stranger to Have a Nice Day <i>Have that smile just might make their week.</i>	Collection: Donate new socks for the homeless	Thanksgiving Break Begins	Thanksgiving	Thanksgiving Break	
	Say "Please and Thank You" Day	Collection: Donate Used Coats/Sweatshirts for the homeless	Helping the Community: Support Today's Make Bank Collection for Stella House			

back in 2012.

"The 26 Acts of Kindness has become a core school tradition," Cipriano said. "Each year, our students, faculty and staff come together to spread kindness and positivity throughout the broader community area. Given all of the challenges facing our world, it is a joy to facilitate opportunities for young people to focus on helping others."

The capstone of the 26 Acts

of Kindness campaign is the annual Service Day event. On November 18, the entire student population, joined by faculty and parents, will travel across the state to complete a day of service at a wide range of non-profits, churches, service organizations and educational institutions. In one day, the Notre Dame family will complete over 3,000 hours of service. ■

Parish News

Father Reggie Norman named president of NABCA

By ROSE BRENNAN

WILTON—Father Reginald Norman, pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Church in Wilton, has been elected president of the National Association of Black Catholic Administrators. Headquartered in the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. NABCA provides a forum for Black Catholic leaders to address the needs and concerns of the communities they serve.

Father Norman was named as the Diocese of Bridgeport's episcopal vicar for Black Catholics under then-Bishop William E. Lori, and has served in that role since the early 2000s. It was through this appointment that Father Norman first learned of and became involved with NABCA.

Although Father Norman had been involved with NABCA for quite some time, being elected as the organization's president came as a complete surprise to him.

"I was actually scheduled to run the election," Father Norman said. "I got a few nominations and I thought nothing

of it, because when we go to our actual meeting, we also take nominations from the floor. When we got there, we went to get the nominations from the floor and there (were) none. Someone said, 'I move to close nominations,' and lo and behold, I am the president."

As president of NABCA, it will be Father Norman's job to lead the organization, run the organization's meetings and promote the unique beauty and gifts of the Black Catholic community.

When situations of injustice arise, it will also be Father Norman's job to author and issue statements on those events, as well as collaborate with Church leaders across the country to address those issues.

"One of our mottos is 'Justice delayed is justice denied,'" he said. "In our Catholic Church, we always speak about respecting life from conception until natural death, which is great. We've done the bookends well, but sometimes we forget about the people in the middle."

While Father Norman's new role will be on the national stage, he has been doing similar work in the Diocese of Bridgeport for many years. He sees his work as president of NABCA and as the Diocese's episcopal vicar for Black Catholics as two roles that go hand in hand.

Part of that role will be recognizing and celebrating the different pockets of believers and the different and unique ways in which they worship. And part of that intersection comes with celebrating events of particular significance to Black Catholics.

"There are Black saints and Black holidays," Father Norman said. "We'll celebrate Black History Month, we'll celebrate Dr. King, Juneteenth, all of those things because they're important to us. As history may not have treated us well, our job is to make sure we get treated better as we go forward, and that we're inclusive."

There are many ways to affect and promote change in the way marginalized groups are treated. And part of what Father Norman



FATHER REGGIE NORMAN meets with NABCA leadership in Washington, D.C. shortly after being elected new president. Father Norman is pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilton and Episcopal Vicar for Black Catholics in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

admires about NABCA is its presence in places of power that might be able to usher in that change.

"We're not out there picketing things; we'd rather be at the

board room or in the offices, changing things and making people aware in a loving and inclusive way," he said. "It's not us versus them, it's we together." ■



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Christmas in a Castle

NEW HAVEN—Around the globe, the annual celebration of Christmas is filled with popular customs and displays. Some follow from Christian tradition and the birth of Christ 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem. Others originate from distinct cultural practices in various nations and world regions. Each year, the Knights of Columbus features Nativity scenes and seasonal art as the highlight of its Christmas exhibition at the Blessed Michael McGivney Pilgrimage Center.

The Center's 2022 show, Christmas in the Castle, brings a popular collection to New Haven. The exhibit, which opened November 11 and continues through February 5, 2023, includes nearly Nativity scenes, from Glencairn Museum collection in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, in a setting designed to replicate the



immersive environment of the museum's architecture.

Glencairn has featured its annual World Nativities exhibition since 2009. The museum, which occupies the former home of the Raymond and Mildred Pitcairn family, is temporarily closed during a comprehensive infrastructure renewal of the historic castle-like house. In the spirit of the Christmas, however, the Glencairn collection is on view at the McGivney Center.

The Center also maintains the Knights of Columbus collection of Nativity scenes, comprising 300

artworks from around the world. A selection of these is displayed as part of a complementary exhibition in two additional galleries. Items range in size from a Nativity in a walnut shell to the Center's popular, 100-plus-figure Neapolitan diorama.

Another staple of the season at the McGivney Center is its Christmas Tree Festival. Annually, the Center welcomes Connecticut Catholic elementary school students to decorate its many Christmas trees. This year, 20 schools will visit to adorn dedicated trees with creative, handmade ornaments.

The McGivney Center, formerly the Knights of Columbus Museum, is located at 1 State Street in New Haven. It is open Wednesdays through Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with free admission and parking. More information is available at 203-865-0400 or michaelmcgivneycenter.org. ■

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Foundations in Education

FIE announces 2023 gala committee chairs

By **EMILY CARRIERO**

BRIDGEPORT—Foundations in Education is pleased to announce Jennifer and Christopher St. Victor-de Pinho of Ridgefield, Conn. will lead the Foundations in Education 2023 Gala, "Let There Be Bright!"

The gala will be held at Woodway Country Club in Darien on Thursday, April 27, 2023. Proceeds from the gala will benefit Foundations in Education in their mission to support tuition assistance for low-income children and innovation in the classroom.

Jennifer, a former member of the core management team at Bridgewater Associates in Westport, joined Foundations in Education's Board of Trustees in February 2020. Prior to her work

with Bridgewater, she served as the tax director for BD (Mergers and Acquisitions) at GE Capital Americas and was Tax Counsel at UBS AG for many years after initially starting her career at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher and Flom.

Jennifer earned her undergraduate degree from Haverford College in Pennsylvania, her Juris Doctor from Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C., and her master's in tax law from New York University. She has volunteered on the Foundations in Education Gala Committee since 2018. She serves as the audit committee chair for both Foundations in Education and St. Andrew's Society.

Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Andrew St. Victor-dePinho is an attorney specializing

in corporate finance and taxation. He currently serves as a managing director for the UBS Group, a leading international bank headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland. He was previously a managing director and senior vice president of the Bermuda-based insurance company, XL Catlin Ltd.

Chris holds a B.A. in history from the University of Virginia and law degrees from Washington and Lee University and Georgetown University. He is passionate about European history and is currently finishing his M.S. in history at the University of Edinburgh.

Chris is a frequent speaker at financial services industry conferences and client events and has been a guest lecturer in law at several universities, including the University of Chicago and Georgetown University. He also serves as a patron and benefactor of various charities in the U.S. and U.K. and serves as a member of several charity boards, including the St. George's Society of New York and the St. Andrew's Society of New York. He also serves as a pension commissioner for the town of Ridgefield, Conn.

Chris served as a commissioned officer in the United States Navy Reserve for 21 years, and currently serves as a Lieutenant Colonel and Commander, 88th Area Command, New York Guard. In 2018, Chris succeeded his father to the Scottish title of Baron of Pentland, becoming the 29th baron. The following year, Chris succeeded to the title of Baron of Lochawe, becoming the 37th baron. He also volunteered with Foundations in Education,



CHRISTOPHER AND JENNIFER ST. VICTOR-DE PINHO will chair Foundations in Education's annual gala, set for April 27, 2023.

assisting the scholarship process in 2017.

The St. Victor-de Pinhos are joined on the Gala Committee by Marigle Barrigan and Barbara Ripp of Greenwich, Lisa Ferraro Martino of New Canaan, Christa FitzPatrick of Darien, Michele Mitola and Jody Myers of Fairfield and Mary Donovan of Stamford. The Gala will see the return of famed auctioneer Bobby D of Inspire Hearts Fundraising, who helped Foundations in Education raise over \$1.3 million last year. Proceeds will support the mission of Foundations in Education, including tuition assistance through the Bishop's Scholarship Fund, as well as Innovation and Leadership Grants for teachers and administrators.

To learn how you can support Foundations in Education, to volunteer with "Let There Be Bright!" or to join the committee, please visit foundationsineducation.org or contact Emily Carriero at emily@foundationsineducation.org.

Headquartered in Bridgeport, Conn., Foundations in Education's mission is to strengthen and transform the mission of Catholic education in the Diocese of Bridgeport by supporting innovation in academic and extracurricular programs, fostering opportunities for the professional development of school leaders in innovation and leadership and providing scholarship assistance to low-income families. ■



FAIRFIELD COUNTY
Catholic Cemeteries
A MINISTRY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT

St. Mary-Putnam to host a Tree of Remembrance during the season of Advent and Christmas.

St. Mary-Putnam Cemetery invites you to hang an ornament on our "Tree of Remembrance" in memory of a loved one who has passed.

The tree will be located at 399 North Street in Greenwich, Connecticut. Individuals and families may bring their ornament to the cemetery office to be placed on the tree or choose a complimentary ornament to be placed in honor of their loved one.

The tree will be available to the public beginning Monday, November 28, 2022 and will remain up until Friday, January 6, 2023.

The public is invited to join us for the lighting of the remembrance tree which will include a special blessing, music, and complimentary refreshments on Thursday, December 1, 2022, at 6 pm. (Rain date: Friday, December 2 at 6 pm).

This is a family friendly event and the opportunity is open to all families in the community who have experienced a loss and wish to honor a loved one during the holiday season regardless if your loved one is with us or not.

Please note:
We respectfully request you do not bring ornaments that are of great sentimental or financial value.

203.742.1510 | info@ctcemeteries.org

MISSIONARY SISTERS FROM PAGE 19

working with children and students from different parishes and offering retreats to adults.

In 1960, three sisters came to Bridgeport to serve the growing Hispanic community, and they lived in a house on Pine Street, working with Our Lady of Providence Church.

"Mother General always wanted to come to the United States when the order started to do missionary work," Mother Anna said.

First, they want to Brazil,

and then Mother Carmen came to America, staying in Albany, N.Y., as she began to search for the right location.

"It was God's doing," Mother Anna said. "One of the sisters suggested Bridgeport, and Mother fell in love with it, and then Bishop Walter Curtis offered us the house."

And with the Missionary Sisters came Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and a commitment to Eucharistic adoration. Their founder, Bl. Maria Emilia Riquelme y

Zayas often said, "The Eucharist is paradise on earth. Adoration is my hour of heaven, my recreation and spiritual rest."

Her followers share that vision of bringing Christ in the Blessed Sacrament to others through adoration and working as missionaries in a world that has lost faith.

As Bl. Maria told them, "The Missionaries must be ready and willing to go and proclaim the love of God to the ends of the Earth." ■

Fall Gala

Vietnamese community celebrates at annual event

By ROSE BRENNAN

BRIDGEPORT—Fundraising galas have become a yearly highlight for many different missions and organizations of the Diocese of Bridgeport, but one in particular manages to draw people

covered by either the diocese or by the Cathedral Parish, where the Vietnamese community worships. However, other trips and retreats require funding from the community itself—and that funding often comes from the money raised at the fall gala.

spent a lot of time decorating her family's house and making it look beautiful. She then majored in fine arts in Vietnam, taking classes in basic arts, graphic design and fine art pedagogy.

According to Sister Teresa, egg "painting" doesn't actually use paint. Instead, the eggshells are baked with sand to create color—and the hotter the sand, the deeper the color.

"If you use color, you will no longer see the gloss on the eggshell," she said. "The color of the egg painting is almost warm ... making viewers feel close, friendly. (The) light yellow color makes the painting noble, luxurious, and attracts (viewers') eyes."

Sister Teresa's portrait of the



from across New England, along with members of the diocese's Vietnamese-speaking community, who turn out for a night of food, dancing and overall celebration.

The Vietnamese apostolate at the Holy Vietnamese Martyrs Quasi Parish hosted its annual fall gala September 24. The fall gala originally started as a way for the Vietnamese quasi parish to raise money for their activities. And Father Philip Phan, administrator of the quasi parish, took up the tradition from previous administrator Father Augustine Nguyen and continued to host the fall gala every year.

"Every year, we organize a fundraising event ... in order to attract people to come and to be entertained," Father Phan said. "And to help us with the money for us to cover the whole year of activities. So the youth group and the parish activities and everything will depend on that night."

This gala plays a special role in the Holy Vietnamese Martyrs Quasi Parish's community. The community is one of four "quasi parishes" in the diocese, which are established by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano "by the reason of rite, language or nationality of the Christian faithful of some territory."

Larger events, like the community's celebration of the Feast Day of the Vietnamese Martyrs and Lunar New Year, are often



However, Father Phan said, the event is about more than just fundraising.

"It's very meaningful," he said. "It's not only about money, but about our activity (and) to make our community get together."

According to Father Phan, one person is put in charge of each element of the fall gala, including set up, refreshments, entertainment and more. There is a lot of planning and moving parts, but because the event has become an annual tradition, it all runs like a well-oiled machine.

One important part of the fall gala is the auction. The big ticket item this year was a portrait of the Virgin Mary made entirely out of eggshells. The piece was made by Sister Teresa Xuan Nguyet, a Vietnamese religious sister.

Sister Teresa always had an interest in art, and as a child

Virgin Mary ultimately sold for \$6,500, which the quasi parish community donated back to the Vietnamese religious sisters to thank them for their support of the congregation.

Father Phan stressed the importance of having a specific Vietnamese apostolate among the diocese's faith communities, especially where the quasi parish's youth and young adult members are concerned.

"Our goal is to catechize and to be good examples for the kids to live their Catholic faith," he said. "And even (if) they go to the mainstream culture, they still keep the faith that is very unique to our Vietnamese heritage."

The quasi parish has one more large event on the calendar for this year: the Feast Day of the Vietnamese Martyrs on November 20. Mass will be cel-



VIETNAMESE APOSTOLATE—Among the items at the fall gala was this stunning portrait of the Virgin Mary was made entirely of eggshells by Sister Teresa Xuan Nguyet, a Vietnamese religious sister.

brated at 2 pm, and there will be a reception afterwards in recognition of their congregation's patron saints. The community also plans to host a Lunar New Year gathering next year on January 22. Mass will be celebrated at 2pm, and there will be a reception afterward.

While both events will celebrate specific aspects of Vietnamese culture, Father Phan

stressed everyone is welcome to celebrate with them. After all, it is the many different cultures and faith traditions that belong to the diocese that make it the colorful tapestry that it is.

"We are Americans, but it is good to keep our heritage, to keep our traditions," Father Phan said. "When we get together like that, we feel like our own people." ■



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THANK YOU!

Shari Mellinger (*Director of Elementary Faith Formation*) and our entire team of catechists for your time, sacrifice, and efforts in sharing God's love with our children!

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Spiritual Roots

Reverend Mr. Cyril I. Gorman

By **PATRICK GORMAN**

"Miss Liberty soon came to bid us fond farewell ... I could not explain the lump in my throat. It was a moment full of deepest thoughts ... that old status that represents our land, the best in the world. Till that great day we shall, with God's help, once more look upon her who guards, not with arms, but love."—Diary entry by Cyril Gorman—New York Harbor, November 7, 1919—12:40 pm.

As a child, my father's family (the Gorman and Gallagher families) spoke often of their ancestor Cyril, a young man who died while in formation to the Holy Priesthood. Cyril was my father Rober Gorman's middle name, given to him nine years after Cyril Gorman died in 1922.

I remembered listening to two of Cyril's siblings, Francis (Ike) and Gertrude (Gert) speak of their love and admiration for their brother, Cyril, who had died of tuberculosis in Belgium at age 28. While I listened to the accounts of young Cyril's life, at the time, I did not appreciate the great faith that Cyril Gorman possessed and the sense of adventure that led him to priestly for-

mation in Belgium, shortly after the conclusion of World War I.

Several months ago, I was given copies of letters and a diary written by my great-uncle, Cyril I. Gorman, who was born in 1893 and raised in Bethel, Conn. As I read the letters and the diary accounts this year, I was moved by the love that Cyril expressed to his parents, the singular pursuit of his vocation to the Holy Priesthood, and his accounts of the people he had met along the way.

I connected with my Gallagher relatives (Phil, Julie and Steve), who still reside in the Bethel area. They were pleased to hear of my interest, and provided dozens of additional letters, writings, photos and accounts of the life of Cyril Gorman. My interest in Cyril's life was no longer lukewarm, but became an intensive pursuit to learn more about his short life.

Cyril I. Gorman was born on August 10, 1893 to John P. Gorman and Julia T. McHugh Gorman. He lived in Bethel, Conn., with his siblings John, Gertrude, Joseph, Mary, Henry and Francis Gorman. They were faithful parishioners of St. Mary Parish in Bethel.

Cyril was named for his Aunt

Bridget McHugh, who left Bethel in 1889 to join the Order of the Good Shepherd and took the name Sister Mary St. Cyril. Cyril attended local schools in Bethel before entering St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, Conn., where he discerned his call to the Holy Priesthood.

One of Cyril's close friends at St. Thomas Seminary was Harry O'Brien, who became Archbishop Henry J. O'Brien, first archbishop of Hartford, Conn., from 1945 to 1968. Cyril and O'Brien studied together at St. Thomas Seminary, the Grand Seminary of St. Bernard in Rochester, N.Y., and at the American College in Louvain, Belgium. After his death at the American College, Cyril's personal effects were given to O'Brien for safekeeping and to be given to the Gorman family in Bethel.

In the diary entry at the beginning of this article, Cyril Gorman described leaving New York City on November 7, 1919 on the S.S. Rochambeau, bound for Havre, France. In his diary, Cyril communicated what life was like at sea for 11 days. He made lifelong friends on this journey, and wrote of some harrowing days at sea, with many passengers becoming ill with seasickness.

Cyril traveled extensively throughout Europe from late 1919 until early 1922, describing in detail his visits to historical sites, museums and many churches, cathedrals and basilicas. In a letter to his Aunt Peg dated November 30, 1919, he described the devastation of the aftermath of World War I that he witnessed while traveling from France to Brussels, Belgium.

"Broken bricks, mortar, dirt, rusted barbed wire, shell holes, old trenches (some filled in and some not), broken bridges—old shells still lying in the fields—we saw it all—and yet a whole year has gone by since Armistice Day," he wrote. "Everywhere there is destruction; orchards and farms bare—woods all shot away, and houses reduced to ruins, but the people are working; the fields are all ploughed and harrowed—and soon the grass and flowers will hide the traces of at least part of this horrible nightmare."

In a letter to his father, dated January 7, 1921, Cyril writes that he and other members of the senior class at the American

College were ordained as deacons on the Feast of the Epiphany.

"Well, it was a feeling that a chap doesn't soon forget as he wears the vestments for the first time," he wrote. "It is a long, hard, grinding battle, this life of a seminarian, John P., but it has its rewards, its days of joy, both here and hereafter. Yesterday was for me one of the stepping stones to what will, I hope—be a day of great joy home in Bethel someday soon."

By all accounts, Cyril Gorman continued his studies at the American College in Louvain, in anticipation of ordination to the Holy Priesthood in mid-1922.

Sometime in late 1921, Cyril became ill from symptoms of tuberculosis. There are accounts that he was sent at some times to the mountains of Switzerland, with the hope that the environment may assist his breathing. However, he returned to Louvain in early 1922, with the firm knowledge that he was gravely ill from tuberculosis. Many of Cyril's relatives in Bethel had also died from tuberculosis, supposedly from contact with dairy cows on the family farm.

The staff and fellow seminarians at the American College in Louvain dedicated themselves to



REVEREND MR. CYRIL GORMAN

caring for Cyril Gorman in his final days. Father Charles Curran wrote to Cyril's parents to communicate to them that their son died peacefully, surrounded in his last hours by three priests, 30 seminarians and five sisters.

The community at Louvain prayed for Cyril and accompanied him in his suffering and death. Father Curran said that Cyril was able to receive the sacraments of Holy Communion, Confession and Anointing of the Sick. Among Cyril's final words were the final words of Jesus himself: "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."

Cyril also prayed to St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary for the grace of a holy death. Before he died, Cyril asked Father Curran to write to his family to assure them of his love. Cyril said, "Just send a card to my friends, address it: To my pals, Bethel Conn., and it will get there

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT NOVEMBER 20—DECEMBER 17

NOVEMBER

20	Rev. Hugh A. Coffey.....	1975
21	Msgr. Edwin F. Burke.....	2004
22	Rev. Stephen J. Panik.....	1953
	Msgr. Joseph N. Murphy.....	1988
23	Rev. Robert G. Pohley.....	2006
27	Deacon John Barton.....	2012
	Rev. Myron V. Miller.....	1961
28	Deacon Wayne E. Malloy.....	2011

DECEMBER

1	Rev. Michael E. Kearney.....	1956
	Msgr. Alfred J. Sienkiewicz.....	1996
	Deacon Robert W. Becker.....	2000
3	Msgr. John E. Gilmartin.....	2011
	Rev. Thomas Gwozdz, OFM Conv.....	2007
	Rev. Joseph A. Pisarcik.....	1956
4	Msgr. Joseph M. Fitzgerald.....	2005
5	Rev. Vincent J. O'Connor.....	1985
7	Deacon George Saulnier.....	1997
8	Rev. Rufin Kuveikas, OFM Conv.....	2008
10	Msgr. Bartholomew J. Skelly.....	1967
	Rev. Ambrose Walas, OFM Conv.....	1967
	Rev. Paul M. Spodnik.....	1976
13	Rev. Alfred E. Russo.....	2009
15	Msgr. Lawrence J. McMahon.....	2009
17	Rev. Kieran T. Ahearn.....	1997

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Sacred Arts Guild

'Soul lights' & 'soul cakes' at Georgetown Oratory

By LIZ SWEENEY

GEORGETOWN—"Soul lights" lit up the night for the Guild of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus for All Souls' Day earlier this month. Father Michael Clark, rector of the Guild, celebrated a Requiem Mass in remembrance of all the souls who have gone before and continue on into eternity.

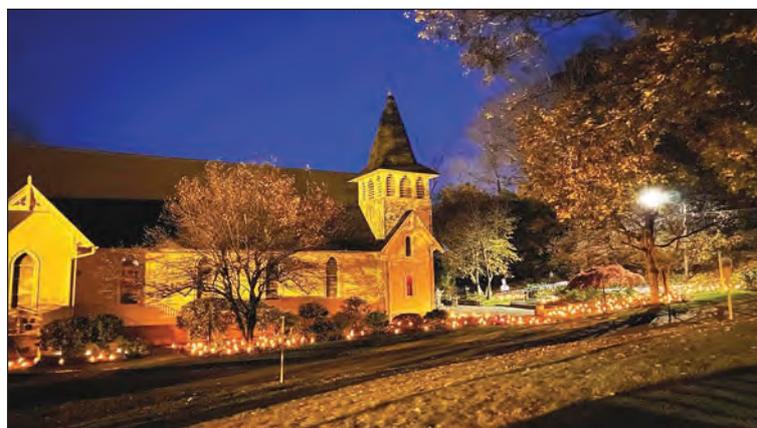
The Georgetown Oratory overflowed with souls praying in earnest for all of the faithful departed. A 13th century Gregorian chant, "Dies Irae," is part of the liturgy for All Souls' Day. It reminds both of the certainty and terror of facing judgment, and yet the hope the faithful have that Christ has taken away their sin and received the

punishment they deserve.

In the daily practice of meditating on "memento mori"—Latin for "remember that you die"—souls, rather than fearing death, can experience tremendous gratitude for the mercy that is given by God, so rather than terror, each person is "filled with hope my anxious mind."

Father Clark's fervorino pointed to this same great hope believers have. In the beautiful visual of all the lanterns lighting the Georgetown gardens, each of the believers knew with new certainty that their loved ones lived on, even as the light shone in the darkness.

"Who amongst us has not wondered, 'What will happen to me on that day, when I shall pass through the gloomy portal



LIGHTING UP THE NIGHT—Sacred Heart Church, home of The Georgetown Oratory, was washed in candlelight for the special All Souls' Day Requiem Mass celebrated by Father Michael Clark, rector of the Guild of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

of death?" Father Clark said in his sermon. "Perhaps it is the one thing that scares us the most. The one that even gives

those with great fortitude a weak trembling in the knee—the fear of the unknown. And yet, our great shepherd of the sheep has been passed from death to life. Death has been swallowed up in victory."

There was a weight of sorrow as the names of 250 departed souls were read out into the crisp November night. And yet the sorrow was tempered with the hope engendered by seeing the lit lanterns, knowing that the souls of loved ones have not disappeared but continue on and are in real need of our prayers."

"Each of those lights represents a person—not just an idea or principle, but a person, a person who has lived and died, a person dear to one or more of you," Father Clark said. "And in so doing, we are caught up into that great mystery of time and space. A mystery that doesn't frighten us—a mystery, rather, that should excite us with its majesty, because you and I are not created for nothing."

Many cars slowed as they passed the church, with curious onlookers stopping and wondering, the 'soul lights offering a moment to open eyes and hearts to the reality of death, and the reality of life to its fullest.

After blessing the lanterns with holy water and incense, Father Clark read the names in the Bede Roll—a list of people to pray for—prayers were prayed, and the assembly lingered to marvel both at the beauty and the opportunity to stand at the doorstep of eternity in the beauty of the gardens.

Those in attendance were offered "soul cakes" baked by Guild cooperators. An English medieval tradition, soul cakes were given out in Hallowtide. Young children and the poor would go door-to-door asking for soul cakes in exchange for the promise to pray for a deceased loved one of the home. This is the root of the modern Halloween tradition of trick-or-treating.

Over 250 soul cakes were baked to represent the 250 souls remembered by the lanterns. Those who enjoyed the cake-swere encouraged to choose someone from the Bede Roll to pray for in exchange for the soul cake. After all, one day, those same souls would come to life again—eternally.

"The bodies committed to the earth will rise again," Father Clark said. "Not in (corruption), but as St. Paul says, being clothed with incorruptibility. And so when we process out from this church into the darkness of night, we do so with the hope of resurrection aglow in our hearts. We need never be afraid, if Christ is on our side." ■

Hearts set ablaze at Night of Worship

By LIZ SWEENEY

STAMFORD—The Guild of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus celebrated its second Night of Adoration on October 22 at Church of the Holy Spirit. Mother Clare Matthias, Superior General for the Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal, gave an impassioned "fervorino"—a heartfelt talk on the heart of Jesus set ablaze for each of us.

Mother Clare shared her love and support for the Guild's "Heart to Heart" ministry.

"It is a blessing to be in this inaugural time of this new movement, this new ministry of his Spirit that is all about being with Jesus, loving, worshipping and being on fire with love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament so that this day and night would catch fire, grow and ignite the earth," she said. "Our hearts would burn so that others' hearts would burn, because his heart is already burning for us."

Mother Clare finished her fervorino with a prayer: "It is your touch, Lord, that can make our senses come to life.

It is your touch that can raise the dead. And we ask that you raise us up and give us a heart of true

aging and lifting up hearts through his meditations. As the candles of those



worship for you. Make our hearts ablaze for you and your heart is ablaze for us."

Following Mother Clare's powerful talk, Deacon Férry Galbert led the assembly in Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Michael Corsini, a worship leader, led those present in praise and worship, encour-

present continued to burn into the night, each person was encouraged to be light, reflecting Christ's true light in the darkness.

The next Night of Worship will be held on December 17 at 7 pm St. Jude Church in Monroe. Doors will open at 6:30 for praise and worship. ■

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Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity.

CCC 2304

DAY 1

Commit to making Advent a season of peace.

Individually or as a household, designate time each day for prayer and silence. In the busy-ness of the season, make time to rest in the peace of Christ.

DAY 3

Read and reflect on Philippians 4:4-9.

"Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (v. 7).

DAY 5

Pray the Prayer of Saint Francis.

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope..."

DAY 7

Make peace with God.

Go to confession and experience God's healing mercy through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

DAY 8

Seek peace in your relationships.

Try to resolve conflicts with family, friends, or colleagues. Reach out to those with whom you need to seek or offer forgiveness.

DAY 12

Ask for the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace.

Pray the Rosary, the Litany of Loreto, or another Marian prayer.

DAY 16

Read and reflect on John 14:27.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you . . ."

DAY 17

Pray for the survivors of abuse and all who experience violence.

Ask God to bring an end to their suffering; to heal them in mind, body, and spirit; and to grant them peace through justice.

DAY 21

Reach out to those experiencing depression, anxiety, or otherwise struggling during this season.

Offer a prayer for those who need comfort and healing.



DAY 2

Pray for an end to war

and for those who live in areas where there is ongoing conflict and unrest, including Ukraine, Afghanistan, Venezuela, and Syria.

DAY 4

Do an internet search for organizations—locally, nationally, or globally—that work to end violence.

Consider how you may offer support through prayer, volunteering, or donations.

DAY 6

Pray for all victims of gun violence, including street crimes, mass shootings, domestic violence, and self-inflicted gunshots.

Pray for those who have been killed or injured, as well as those who have survived and those who carry the non-visible wounds of gun violence.

DAY 11

The Eucharist has been called the "sacrament of peace."

Christ is our peace, bringing peace and unity among all people (see Ephesians 2:14-22). Pope Benedict XVI wrote, "All who partake in the Eucharist must commit themselves to peacemaking in our world . . ." Consider these words the next time you receive the Eucharist.

DAY 15

Write thank-you notes or deliver sweet treats to police officers, first responders, and medical workers who witness the outcomes of violence on a regular basis.

Pray that God will protect them physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

DAY 20

Embrace practices that help you feel a sense of peace.

Spend time in Eucharistic adoration, take a nap, go for a walk, chat with a loved one, have dinner by candlelight, listen to music, or simply sit in silent, prayerful gratitude.

DAY 24

Pray for those who are discouraged and feel a sense of despair regarding the condition of the world.

Pray that we all may remember and be comforted by the words of Jesus: "I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world." (John 16:33)

DAY 9

Send a card or note to those who are grieving or experiencing Christmas without a loved one for the first time.

Pray for those who have died and for all who love them.

DAY 13

Take time to learn about saints

who were committed to peace and justice, such as Saint Oscar Romero or Saint Martin de Porres, or saints who experienced violence or discrimination, such as Saint Kateri Tekakwitha or Saint Josephine Bakhita. Ask for their intercession on behalf of all those who endure violence, discrimination, bullying, human trafficking, and other forms of injustice.

DAY 18

Pray for those who abuse others.

Ask that God replace hatred with love and violence with peace, so that they will stop inflicting harm, seek healing, and accept just punishment.

DAY 22

Work to end violence against the most vulnerable—the unborn, the young, the poor, the infirm, and the elderly.

Look for ways you can contribute time, effort, or money to organizations that advocate for the vulnerable, offer charitable services, and work to bring about just systems that honor the dignity of all people.

DAY 10

Pray for those who experience the violence of racism and discrimination.

Pray for an end to racism and the policies that perpetuate it. Ask the Holy Spirit to open all our hearts so that we may acknowledge the sin, seek reconciliation, and work toward healing and equality.

DAY 14

Take 26 seconds today

to change the world. A smile. A wave. A kind word. What else?

DAY 19

Evaluate the media you consume and the language you use.

Do they promote violence and hate or peace and justice? Ask the Holy Spirit to guard your heart and your mind so that all that you do may be done with charity.

DAY 23

Pray for those whose peace-keeping efforts prevent them from being with their loved ones.

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the military, police, public safety, medical providers, and others whose service helps ensure the safety of others.

DAY 25

Celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace! "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:5).

Sports

Immaculate Boys win 2nd state cross country title

By DON HARRISON

DANBURY—Immaculate High School's girls' cross country program has been dominant in the past decade—winning no fewer than six CIAC state championships during that span. But the boys' team? Not so much—just one state title ever, in fact.

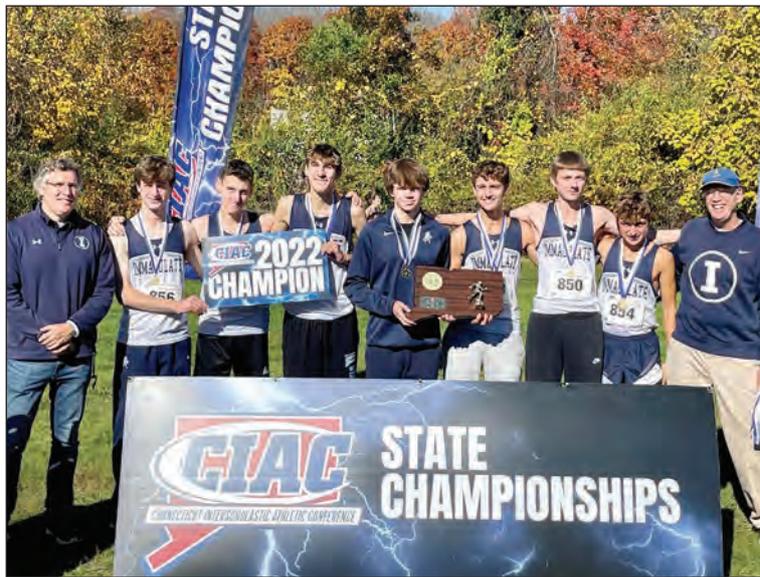
But now? Make that two. Coach Christopher Houser's balanced Mustangs upended defending champion Hale Ray High School en route to capturing the 2022 CIAC Class S boys' championship on October 29 at Wickham Park in Manchester.

Senior co-captain Seamus Reidy literally led the way with a 16:57 time to finish second in the race, just 14 seconds behind Hale Ray's Mike Kraszewski. Lorenzo Lopes—a

freshman with considerable promise—and senior co-captain Ben Gasparrini placed seventh and eighth respectively, with times of 17:16 and 17:22. Yet another Immaculate runner, sophomore Trevor Fuller, finished 11th with a 17:42 clocking. All four earned All-State recognition.

"We took third place in the states last year," said Houser, who is in his third year as head coach of the Mustangs' boys and girls squads, after two seasons as an assistant. "And we saw that we could win the state title if we put in a year of hard work and a summer of distance running. All of the boys worked considerably hard. We did it."

Another senior, Cole Ross, and juniors Hunter Brown and Seamus Downey also contributed to Immaculate's successes this fall.



CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONS—Immaculate High School Coach Christopher Houser and members of the Cross Country team celebrate their 2022 State title at Wickham Park in Manchester.

Reidy, who joined the Mustangs' cross country team as a sophomore, had placed third in

the 2021 Class S championship race with a 17:34 time.

Houser, who also teaches social studies at the Danbury school, has a proud athletic history. He ran both cross country and track at Horace Greeley High in Chappaqua, N.Y., and later at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. His high school coach was none other than his father, Steve Houser.

"My father was a long-time coach at Horace Greeley," Houser explained. "When I became head coach here, I knew I needed a good assistant. My dad has been with us all three years."

In 2018, when Houser was in his first season as assistant cross country coach, Immaculate's boys team won its first state title (Class SS). The head coach was Brian Hayes, who was also the architect behind the school's dominance in girls cross country from 2012 to 2018.

Prior to his retirement from coaching, the United States Track and Cross Country Association selected Hayes as its 2018 Girls Cross Country Coach of the Year in Connecticut.

Immaculate's girls' cross country team finished ninth in this fall's state race at Wickham Park. Senior Keelin Bremner distinguished herself with a fifth-place finish—at 20:54—to earn All-State honors.

Another Diocese of Bridgeport school—Kolbe Cathedral High School of Bridgeport—placed sixth in the Class S boys state race. Senior William Vargas led the way with an 18:23 time and 24th place finish. ■

ND girls' soccer team wins SWC championship

By NICHOLAS GREW

FAIRFIELD—The Notre Dame girls' soccer team won the Southwest Conference Championship on November 2 in a hard-fought battle against Brookfield High School.

After 100 scoreless minutes, the Lancers secured their victory in a 3-1 penalty kick shootout, with goals scored by Sara Rieger of Ridgefield, Isabella Chimento of Norwalk and Veronica Rrapi of Monroe—all from the Class of 2024.

With this win, Notre Dame earned its very first soccer league title.

"Having come up short in the past, we've spent the entire season working toward this game," said junior Sarah Lardi of Monroe. "Brookfield was a tough competitor and we knew it was going to be a challenge, so winning was an incredible feeling."

For Rrapi, the championship title was not the only award received. During the trophy

ceremony, the Notre Dame goaltender was also recognized as the tournament MVP.

"All the hard work we put in this season led to this moment, and I'm glad we made it hap-

pened on his team's victory.

"My girls are fighters, so resilient," Mones said. "They wanted a different result from last year's upset in the SWC semi-final and set a goal of



AFTER FALLING TO BROOKFIELD HIGH in last year's conference semifinals, Notre Dame High School brought home this year's championship title in a rematch on November 2.

pen," Rrapi said.

As the Lancers set their sights on the state tournament, Coach Wayne Mones of Trumbull

being the first Notre Dame (soccer) team to win the SWC Championship. I couldn't be prouder." ■

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Column: Thomas Hicks



What's it all about?

POTPOURRI

By THOMAS H. HICKS

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

“A human being requires meaning, a reason for being; something that gives direction to his life. A human being must be able to answer the question ‘Why?’ or ‘What for?’” (Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*).

The Second Vatican Council’s writing *Veritatis Splendor* speaks of “the obscure riddles of the Human Condition” (50). There are questions that tend to close in on one with the years: Why did God bother to make the world? How does the world function? To what purpose do we exist in that world? What are we here for? What’s the story about? Does it have a plot? Does it all make sense? Does it have any ultimate meaning? Why am I me? Is there an intelligent plan behind all the pieces of my life? Do I have a value beyond time? As we grow older, these questions become

more persistent.

One can be audacious giving answers to these questions. One might consider how it sounds for any human being to claim to know God’s will. For a believer, one would be more accurate to admit what St. Paul says about the ways of God being inscrutable: “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or has been his counselor?” (Rom. 11:33)

There’s the way Isaiah puts it: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (55:8-9).

We want to think that our lives mean something, count

as something more than just a momentary blip in the universe. We want to think that there is something more to life than randomness. We want to make sense of our own world.

Here are some negative views offered by some well-known people:

John Paul Sartre: “All existing things are born for no reason, and die by accident. It is meaningless that we are born, it is meaningless that we die.”

Leo Tolstoy: “The more intelligent we are, the less do we understand the meaning of our life, and the more do we see a kind of bad joke in our suffering and death.”

Arthur Schopenhauer wrote: “We have not to rejoice, but rather to mourn at the existence of the world, its non-existence would be preferable. It is something which at bottom ought not to be.”

Clarence Darrow: “Life is like a ship on the sea, tossed by every wave and by every wind; a ship headed for no port and no harbor, with no rudder, no compass, no pilot, simply floating for a time, then lost in the waves.”

There’s Shakespeare’s *MacBeth*: “Life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” There’s

Beckett’s characters waiting, waiting endlessly for the never-appearing Godot. And there’s Sisyphus condemned forever to the pointless pushing of that rock.

We want to make sense of our own personal world. There is the fundamental role that an individual plays in making meaning for himself. Frankl called us to realize that life expects something of us. John Henry Newman said: “God has commanded some work of me.” Confucianism places great emphasis upon “knowing the mandate of heaven”—a sense of being chosen to fulfill some transcendent command. God expects something very definite of us.

Carl Jung coined the expression *Noogenic Neurosis* which involves a loss of the feeling that life is meaningful. The individual sees no purpose in his life. Many people have lost a sense of purpose in their lives. Many realize that they have taken the wrong road. Jung also stated that such a person needed to regain a religious outlook.

I think almost everyone lives for something and wants to belong somewhere, wants to make sense of reality. I expect everyone seeks a cause or purpose to give his life meaning. Almost everyone has an interpretation of human existence. The Existentialist philosophers teach that we create our own meaning; there are no absolutes. There is the miracle of our own personal existence, and each of us plays a part in creating meaning for ourselves. One multi-billionaire stated that his goal was to die with more toys than the next guy.

A friend told me that for him, the meaning of life was to get through life with as much dignity and satisfaction as he could, doing as little harm as possible. Secularists have a materialistic view of human life and try to dodge religious questions.

One of my convictions is that what the earth gives us is often beautiful, but is too poor to satisfy us fully. We are all trying to get from this world more than she can rightly give (cf. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, Vatican II).

Something is missing.

We have all experienced this to one degree or another. Even in our most satisfying times, we are aware of limitation. No matter how happy our lives are, this feeling of incompleteness or discontent never fades out. Nothing finite ultimately satisfies us. People are hungering for more than this world offers. Various worldly things are offered to give us that fundamental satisfaction, but they never keep their promise.

I think everyone knows what I mean. Everyone carries about inside himself a certain emptiness—a sense that something is missing. Chesterton said, “Even at home, I am homesick.”

C.S. Lewis asserted that the primary purpose of our lives—the reason for our existence on this planet—is to establish a relationship with the Person who placed us here. Until that relationship is established, all of our attempts to attain happiness—our quest for recognition, for money, for power, for the perfect marriage or the ideal friendship, for all that we spend our lives seeking—will always fall short, will never quite satisfy the longing (Armand Nicholi, Jr., *C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud*, p. 104). When 66 years old, the atheist Sigmund Freud spoke of a “strange longing,” thinking there might be a life of quite another kind.

A mother once said to me, “Children are one of the great sources of meaning; they are gifts of God. The only trouble is they’re not God, they are only children. So I became restless again.”

As for myself, my Christian religious faith has it that the ultimate structure of reality involves a redemptive participation in the sufferings of Christ, and that we are destined to participate in the divine nature. Our final fulfillment is found in what is called the Beatific Vision of God seen by our risen bodies.

“The glory of God is man fully alive, but the life of man is the vision of God” (St. Irenaeus, cf. *Signs, Superstitions, and God’s Plan: The Human Quest for Meaning*, Brian Schmissek, Paulist Press).



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Supporting Vocations

Remembering Monsignor Varga

WESTPORT—Parishioners and friends gathered at St. Luke Parish on October 29 for a Mass and reception with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano in memory of Monsignor Andrew Varga. It was an opportunity to celebrate his life and support vocations in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

The warm and welcoming event was hosted by Father Kumar Xavariapitchai and Connie Von Zwehl, founder of the Monsignor Andrew Varga Scholarship Fund. She established the fund as a way to provide for diocesan seminarians in memory of Monsignor Varga, with the hope that other parishes will consider a similar program in the future to honor deceased priests.

Von Zwehl reflected on her parents' dedication to St. Luke Parish as one of its founding families, and how grateful she was that she was able to attend her mother's funeral service



SCHOLARSHIP FUND TO SUPPORT VOCATIONS—Father Kumar Xavariapitchai, Administrator of St. Luke Parish in Westport, Connie Von Zwehl, founder of the Monsignor Varga Scholarship Fund, and Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, gathered at the reception held recently to remember Monsignor Andrew Varga and to support seminarians in discerning their vocations.

at St. Luke's on the weekend when Bishop Caggiano officially reopened parishes during the coronavirus pandemic.

Walter Lohotsky, a close friend of Monsignor Varga, shared memories of him as

a wonderful friend. Bishop Caggiano also reflected on fun, warm memories, including Monsignor Varga's exceptional culinary skills, while focusing on the need for more seminarians and to pray for all priests.

The Blessed Michael McGivney Society was recently established in the Diocese of Bridgeport to support the educational and formation needs of seminarians in the diocese.

"It offers opportunities to accompany our seminarians on their discernment journey as they consider a calling to the priesthood," said Pam Rittman, director of development and of the Annual Bishop's Appeal. "Connie established the scholarship to honor Monsignor Varga and to help defray the cost of educating our seminarians. She graciously offered to match every donation contributed."

(Contributions to the Monsignor Varga Scholarship can be made at www.bit.ly/3DqmmDp or sent to the Diocese of Bridgeport Catholic Center, 238 Jewett Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06606. Please make payments out to the Diocese of Bridgeport and specify the gift is for the Monsignor Varga Scholarship.)

==== GORMAN
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all right, and say Cy sends all his best regards and says goodbye."

"I telegraphed 'Cyril died Saint,' for there were many extraordinary indications of his sanity," Father Curran wrote. "He offered his sufferings to our Lord for all who were dying that night and were less prepared than he was. That is what we call a heroic act of charity."

Cyril also prayed for his seminarian classmates, that they "attain to the ideal of the priesthood, Jesus Christ, our high priest."

The rector of the American College, accompanied by all students, conducted the body from the infirmary to the chapel; there the remains were to lie in state, for although God did not see fit to allow him to live and to be ordained a priest, he was a sub-deacon, consecrated to God in a very special manner, and had the right to enter the sanctuary.

Father Curran wrote to Cyril's family with the details of the funeral services. There

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 30



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Nuestra Voz

Entre el purgatorio y la solemnidad de los santos

POR MARICARMEN GODOY

BRIDGEPORT—En la misa y en el programa Alfa y Omega transmitido por Radio María y en las redes sociales del Padre Rolando Torres, párroco de la iglesia Saint Mary (Santa María) de Bridgeport, a propósito de la celebración de las fiestas en honor al día de todos los santos y de los fieles difuntos, habló de la necesidad de la oración para que las almas que se encuentran en el purgatorio transiten al descanso de la vida eterna.

Para la homilía del Día de los Santos el sacerdote pidió a los feligreses que traigan a sus niños vestidos como santos y también que asistan con sus familias. Su sorpresa, fue ver el lunes, fiesta de todos los santos, a las 6:30 de la tarde la iglesia y la capilla llena, tal como si fuera domingo. Además, muchos niños vestidos con túnicas o con trajes tradicionales de los países de sus ancestros.

“Cuando dieron como alrededor de las 6:45 de la tarde,

salgo de la sacristía, estaba terminando de prepararme y miro la iglesia llena y la capilla con los niños vestidos de santos, ¿para mí fue?: ¡celestial!. Llevo seis años en la comunidad de Santa María y veo por primera vez la casa llena en una fiesta en honor a todos los santos”, dijo el Padre Torres.

¿Pero cómo hacer algo por las almas? Acorde con el Padre Torres, llorar o lamentarse por la muerte de un familiar o de alguien cercano debe ser en un primer estadio, pero la mejor manera de hacer algo real por un ser conocido o por alguien que ni siquiera se conoce, es orar por sus almas para que -si están en el purgatorio-puedan purificar sus pecados e ir al cielo.

“Ore por el alma porque está necesitada más de una oración que de un lamento. Hay alguien que siempre necesita de sus oraciones”, dijo.

Y contó la historia sobre el Padre Pío cuando aun el vivía en el Monasterio de Saint Geovanny: “Todos los monjes escucharon que afuera del con-

vento había cientos de personas que pasaron gritando: ¡Gracias Padre Pio!, ¡gracias!, ¡gracias!, pero al salir el monje encargado al portón se dio que no había nadie afuera...al prepuntarle al otro día al Padre Pio, ¿Qué sucedió?, el respondió: Fueron las almas de los soldados de la guerra que pasaron por aquí agradeciendo”.

“El purgatorio no es un infierno. Lo aclaro. El purgatorio es un lugar de purificación y se afirma que las plegarias por el alma de los muertos, la celebración de la misa y las indulgencias pueden acortar la instancia de una o de varias almas que estén en dicho estado”, dijo el Padre Torres.

Acorde con la doctrina católica, es como un fuego purificador que no es eterna porque esa persona no está empedernida por una opción del mal. Purgas el dolor, las penas, lo que dijo o no dijo, lo que se le olvidó.

La existencia del Purgatorio es una verdad de fe. Santo Tomás de Aquino afirma que



negar el Purgatorio es cometer un error contra la fe fundada sobre la enseñanza explícita de la Sagrada Escritura con referencia al juicio y a la exigencia de una pureza perfecta para entrar al cielo.

Según el Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica “cada hombre, desde el momento de su muerte, recibe en su alma inmortal la retribución eterna a través de un juicio particular que pone su vida en relación a Cristo. Por eso, o pasará de través una purificación o entrará inmediatamente en la beatitud del cielo, o bien se condenará para siempre. ■

GORMAN

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were listings of those present at the Funeral Mass, including Father Fulton J. Sheen—later Bishop Fulton J. Sheen—from the American College. Monsignor J. de Becker, rector of the American College, sang the Solemn Funeral Mass.

Cyril's family asked to have his body sent back to his hometown of Bethel, Conn. His body was embalmed by Sister Elizabeth and Sister Eleanor, and sealed in a double casket. Monsignor de Becker, Father Curran and a delegation of six students accompanied the body via a hearse to a funeral coach to Antwerp, bound for New York on the S.S. Lapland via the Red Star Line.

Cyril Gorman's body arrived in New York City and was received by his family. A Funeral Mass was celebrated at St. Mary Parish in Bethel. His pallbearers were members of the Pavia Council 48 of the Knights of Columbus at St. Mary's.

The Reverend Mr. Cyril I. Gorman is buried alongside his parents, John P. and Julia McHugh Gorman, at St. Mary Parish Cemetery in Bethel.

(Editor's Note: Patrick Gorman of Newtown is a descendant of Cyril Gorman. He and his wife, Ginny, are members of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Newtown.) ■

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Vocations

Setting our faces toward the divine

By **FATHER CHRIS FORD**

Have you ever wondered what the real difference is between professional athletes and the very best amateurs in the same sport? Often, it isn't talent. It's determination and sacrifice, the willingness to go after this goal with everything I have—even if it means leaving other things behind. Some are successful because they are determined.

When, as Luke says in his Gospel, Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem, he knows what lies ahead: the cross. But he also knows, trusting in the promise of the Father, that the Resurrection is never far behind.

Jesus knows, and is trying to get the Apostles—and us—to under-

stand that true glory is not found in this world, but in being the Father's son or daughter, and being the instrument that makes the Father's love known to all the world.

And so, earthly attachments mean nothing to Jesus—neither do earthly suffering and even death. Because in the midst of it all, what really matters is what the Father is doing.

So, if I really want to discern what God is calling me to in life, I first have to ask myself this question: Am I convinced that God is worth it—that Jesus is worth it?

Have I encountered the love of God in my life in such a way that I am determined enough to leave everything behind, setting my face toward whatever lies ahead, because I have come to know that

the Father will be there every step of the way? Because whatever God is calling you to do is going to require some form of sacrifice!

Because sacrifice isn't meant to be empty, giving things up just for the sake of giving them up. Sacrifices are made for something greater, something whose value exceeds whatever it is we have given up. The real challenge is when we find that greater good and we have to step out into the unknown, letting go of the safety and security of what we have known for the sake of what is being placed before us.

That cuts to our hearts because it forces us to make a decision about what we really value. And often, the sadness is more profound as I come face to face with the truth that out of fear or weak-

ness, I'm not as willing to give it up for what my heart really desires as maybe I thought I would be.

Because the temptation is to think that eternal circumstances or factors are the source of our happiness and freedom. But true freedom comes from within—from the confidence that we have as beloved children of a faithful heavenly Father and that, as a result, faith, hope and love are always available to us—no matter what we have to face or leave behind.

What's really beautiful, though, is that Jesus doesn't demand this or force it out of us. He loves it out of us. He invites us to choose in freedom the path he has laid out before us in love.

And the way I come to know that Jesus is worth it is by placing



FATHER CHRIS FORD

myself in his loving gaze, especially through moments of prayer—to feel him looking at me and loving me into a generous, courageous, determined response. In that gaze, I come to know that no matter what I am called to leave behind, the inheritance the Father offers me will always be greater.

It may not always be easy. But it will always be worth it. ■

Fond farewell for Father Marco

By **JOE PISANI**

STAMFORD—Father Marco Pacciana, who led Redemptoris Mater Diocesan Missionary Seminary of Bridgeport for five years of growth and expansion into a new home, has left to take an assignment as rector of a seminary in Quito, Ecuador.

"We are grateful for Father Marco's joyful and faith-filled leadership in the formation of the seminarians entrusted to him. Father Marco has been a true partner in the important work of preparing men for the sacred priesthood. We will miss him even as we send our prayers and best wishes as he starts his new assignment," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, who was responsible for bringing Redemptoris Mater to the Diocese of Bridgeport in 2015.

During Father Pacciana's years as rector, the seminary celebrated the first ordination of one of its seminarians to the transitional diaconate, and he is expected to be ordained to the priesthood next year. In May 2020, the seminary moved into a new home at 894 Newfield Avenue—the former St. John Fisher Seminary—where Father Pacciana launched a renovation that is still underway.

There are currently 15 seminarians in the house: 12 in residence and three on mission. Of them, 11 will be assigned to the

Diocese of Bridgeport and four to the Archdiocese of Hartford.

"I loved my years in Bridgeport," Father Pacciana said. "It was my first experience as a rector, and working with Bishop Caggiano was a beautiful grace. We had a wonderful working relationship and a strong



bond. No matter where I go, Bridgeport will always be in my heart. This place formed me. It is where I started as a rector."

Father Pacciana was honored for his work during a reception at Sacred Heart Church in Stamford prior to beginning his new assignment at the Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Quito. He expressed his heartfelt affection and appreciation for the men in the seminary he is leaving.

"The closest thing to being the father of a family is being the rector of a seminary," he said. "I was in the house the whole time,

and it was a beautiful family atmosphere, where I saw these men maturing from the time they entered until now, when they are close to ordination. The important thing has been for me to be there for them so they could see there was someone who cared for them—someone who also

corrected them when necessary and gave them a strong word. Sometimes I was tough, sometimes I was soft. And sometimes we laughed."

Redemptoris Mater seminarians are under the auspices of the Neocatechumenal Way, a 55-year-old charism in the Church dedicated to Christian formation and the New Evangelization. The seminaries form men as missionary diocesan priests to serve the local church or in any part of the world the bishop chooses.

The Stamford seminary was

established in 2015 on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception through the efforts of Bishop Caggiano. It was first located at Sacred Heart Church in Stamford.

Father Pacciana was previously a parochial vicar at St. Mary Church in Plainfield, N.J. A native of Bari, Italy, he grew up in the town of Ginosa and was introduced to the Neocatechumenal Way at age 19. From then his life changed and he was led by the Lord to the priesthood and a strong commitment to the mission of Redemptoris Mater seminaries.

Father Pacciana said the Neocatechumenal Way is founded on small Christian communities in parishes worldwide. Begun in Madrid in 1964 by Spanish artist Kiko Arguello and lay missionary Carmen Hernandez, the Way has spread to 900 dioceses in 105 countries with 25,000 communities in 6,000 parishes. Its goal is the formation of Christians committed to the Word of God, the Eucharist and strengthening the Church. In the Diocese of Bridgeport, there are 15 communities in five parishes.

Father Pacciana pointed out the process for the approval of a Redemptoris Mater Seminary can take years. However, Bishop Caggiano's request was approved within two weeks, which to him

is a sign God wanted it here.

Redemptoris Mater international seminaries were inspired by St. John Paul II and his call for a "New Evangelization." The first seminary opened in 1987 in Rome, and today there are 127 seminaries on five continents.

Since they began, more than 2,000 men have been ordained to the priesthood, and some 1,500 seminarians are in formation worldwide. Even though they have an international character, they function as diocesan seminaries with the same theological formation, except these young men also do mission work for two years.

The Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Stamford opened in 2016 under the direction of Father Alfonso Picone, pastor of Sacred Heart Church. It was the ninth in the United States.

Several years ago, Archbishop Leonard P. Blair of the Archdiocese of Hartford asked for a section of the seminary to prepare men for vocations in the archdiocese.

"We need priests to spread the Gospel of Christ wherever there is a need," Father Pacciana said.

Of the men in formation, Father said: "They are not angels, but they said yes to the call of God in their lives and were pulled away from their families, their friends and their countries to come here to become missionary priests." ■



Another **First**

for Connecticut Orthopaedic Institute

Last year, Connecticut Orthopaedic Institute at MidState Medical Center became the **first in the nation** to achieve Advanced Certification in Spine Surgery from the Joint Commission, a national accrediting agency. Now, Connecticut Orthopaedic Institute at St. Vincent's Medical Center has earned the same designation, **making it the first in Fairfield County with this designation**. We are proud to provide the most advanced care available to people with spine issues, along with an unequalled patient experience.



For more info, visit CTOrthoInstitute.org

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