



FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

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CLASS OF 2021 COMES BACK STRONG

Inside this issue



4 Bishop ordains Father Guy Dormévil



16 Service of Remembrance honors those lost to COVID-19



19-23 Vals and Sals Annual graduation round-up

| ON THE COVER | CONTENTS | | | |
|--|----------|--|----|--|
| <p>A young graduate of St. Thomas pre-school in Fairfield was among the hundreds of diocesan elementary and high school students who enjoyed commencement ceremonies in recent weeks. It was a school year like no other—and a strong finish!</p> <p>PHOTOS BY CHRISTINA RODRIGUES</p> | 6 | DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT Get to know the office | 15 | WE STAND WITH CHRIST St. George Church receives grant |
| | 8 | ANNUAL CATHOLIC APPEAL Closing in on \$8.1 million goal | 17 | TRUMBULL CATHOLIC YOUTH DAY Teens encouraged to 'find your fire' |
| | 9 | AMBASSADOR FORMATION INITIATIVE Bishop celebrates Mass for Ambassadors | 18 | CATHOLIC SCHOOLS Dr. Cheeseman thanks teachers |
| | 10 | ST. MATTHEW, NORWALK Father Jeff Couture installed as pastor | 27 | HARTFORD HEALTH & ST. V'S News from our local hospitals |

Around the Diocese

A season of new beginnings!

by Elizabeth Clyons

C4Y auditions continue!

BRIDGEPORT—Incoming 8th through 12th graders recently auditioned for a spot in the diocesan youth choir, C4Y.

“It was wonderful to hear the singing talents of these students at auditions. They’re going to make this upcoming year of music truly spectacular,” said Emily Lomnitzer, coordinator of C4Y.

Make-up sessions will run throughout the summer. Sign up for a slot at the C4Y webpage (www.bridgeportdiocese.org/c4ysings/youth-choir-catholic-diocese). There are many spots still available!

The final choir roster will be sent out by the end of June and rehearsals are planned to begin in August. Please email Emily.Lomnitzer@diobpt for more information or for questions.

(Follow the Instagram page for updates: @C4YSings.)



Holy Spirit Fraternity meets, welcomes new members

FAIRFIELD—The Holy Spirit Fraternity in Fairfield met in person for the first time in 14 months on May 15, with the fraternal joy of the Rite

Padua in Fairfield.

The fraternity met virtually from March 2020 to April 2021. John and Pat waited patiently for the Rite of Admission to be in person as was in keeping with the guidelines of the national Secular Franciscan Fraternity.

149 South Pine Creek Road in Fairfield. Secular Franciscans are a community of Catholic men and women in the world who seek to pattern their lives after Christ in the Spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

l-r: Pat Torpie, John



of Admission for John Otis, parishioner at St. Aloysius in New Canaan and Pat Torpie, parishioner at St. Anthony of

Holy Spirit Fraternity, Secular Franciscan Order, meets the third Saturday of the month at St. Anthony of Padua Parish,

Otis, Marilyn Mitchell, OFS, Minister and Amy Nepomuceno, OFS, formation director.

Around the Diocese

Remembering those who served

BRIDGEPORT—Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) volunteers place flags on the graves of vet-

erans in preparation for Memorial Day at Gate of Heaven Cemetery, 1056 Daniels Farm Road in Trumbull.

Many people throughout the

diocese paid a visit to one of the 14 diocesan cemeteries to offer a prayer and remember those who have died, particularly all those who served the country.



St. Rose 8th-grade: 'this class will always be a family'

NEWTOWN—This Sunday, June 6, St. Rose School held its graduation ceremony at St. Rose Church for the 8th grade class of 2021. Wearing caps and gowns (boys in blue, girls in white), the graduating class processed in two-by-two to the front pews of the church followed by teachers from grades K-8, Mr. Gjoka, Sister Thaddeus and former principals Mrs. Mary Maloney (now president of Immaculate High School) and Sister Colleen Smith.



Mass was celebrated by Msgr. Robert Weiss followed by the bestowal of diplomas, highest average awards and scholarships. Two students spoke about their years at St. Rose School and their hopes for this class going forward.

They said that no matter when they came to St. Rose, many started in preschool but many joined in subsequent years including a group in 8th grade this year, the class is and always will be a family. After the ceremony graduates gathered on the steps of the church to do the traditional cap toss.

Diocesan News

Bishop ordains Deacon Dormévil to the priesthood

By **JOE PISANI**

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano ordained Deacon Guy Dormévil to the priesthood on Saturday, the Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, urging the widowed father of two adult children “to become through grace a father of a larger family so there will be thousands who will have the privilege to call you ‘Father’ for you will be their spiritual father.”

“In the years ahead, you will have the occasion to defend them by teaching them the truth, by preaching it fearlessly, which I know you will do, for you will preach what you truly believe in your heart of hearts,” Bishop Caggiano said. “You will defend God’s people, your new family, your larger family, in a time when there is so much that threatens them, and you will protect them as you will continue to protect your natural family by giving them entree into the mystery of God’s

my whole family, my friends, the Church’s leaders, and the Church community at large. I pray that I can be the image of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who wants me to be merciful and generous in my mission, as he has been toward me. I count on the continuous prayers of the people of God, and I pray to remain a good and faithful servant to the Lord and to them.”

A resident of Norwalk, he was born in Haiti to Gustave Dormévil and Angélie Louis Charles, where he was raised along with his 15 siblings. He was married for 29 years to the late Magalie Adolphe, who died of cancer in 2015. He has two children, Guyvensky Marcus Dormévil, 29, of Norwalk and Guylendy Bernadette Dormévil, 26, of Marietta, Ga., and a grandson, Marcus Alexander Dormévil of Norwalk.

Father Dormévil was given a sustained ovation by the congregation as he was brought before the bishop as a candidate for

and said it is one word through which we can understand the gift of the ministerial priesthood. It is a salutation offered by God’s people every time they greet a priest.

“In the first stage or season of your life, when you met the love of your life, Magalie, and fell in love and entered into the mystery of sacred matrimony, you began to discover in the intimate love the two of you shared how creative and powerful that love is meant to be,” Bishop Caggiano said. “The two of you gave forth life in the power of God, and your beloved daughter and son are with you this very day. And they have had the privilege to call you ‘Father’ for many years.”

The bishop said that Father Dormévil had modeled his life on the example of St. Joseph, foster father of the Savior and head of the Holy Family and that he protected his wife and children “by not simply providing food and shelter but by the example of your Christian life to give the spiritual food of



grace, by leading them in prayer and by feeding them the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ—the food that brings us entree unto eternal life.”

St. Augustine Cathedral was filled with joyful members of the Haitian community who turned out for the ordination.

“I can’t even express the profound gratitude I have toward God who called me, an unworthy servant, to such a holy mission, through my sharing of the priesthood of Christ, and I pray that he will incline my heart according to his will,” Father Dormévil said. “I have received incredible support from my two children, my siblings,

ordination. He prostrated himself while the Litany of Saints was sung. Then, he knelt before the bishop who laid his hands on him, followed by dozens of priests who also imposed their hands, invoking the Holy Spirit.

After the prayer of ordination, he was vested with a stole and chasuble, which were presented by his son and daughter. The bishop anointed his hands as a preparation for the sacred duties he will perform. Then, the bishop handed him a chalice and paten, which signified the central importance of celebrating the Eucharist.

In his homily, Bishop Caggiano reflected on the meaning of “father”

fidelity, perseverance, love and mercy. You discovered the power and beauty of being a father, and now in this last year to become a grandfather.”

Bishop Caggiano said that God planted a second seed in Dormévil as a young man, recalling that people recognized his spiritual qualities and would jokingly refer to him as “Father Guy.”

“Guy, you do not need me to tell you how many lives you have touched already, how many lives you have already blessed, how many people have been inspired by your fidelity and witness, and how much your family loves you,” the

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Diocesan News

==== BISHOP ORDAINS FROM PAGE 4

bishop said. “And now the Lord will ask you to put your hand to the plow and in this very troubled

Father Dormévil described the path that led him to the priesthood, through St. John Fisher Seminary

as an immigration inspector to take refuge in the U.S. He has worked as a Burger King clerk and man-



THE NEWLY ORDAINED FATHER DORMÉVIL extends one of his first-blessings as a priest. Father Dormévil will become priest moderator at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Quasi-parish in Stamford and be assigned to serve at the Church of St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus in Norwalk.

and challenging world, lead God’s people as one of his fathers, as his priest.”

On the Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the bishop invoked her maternal protection and intercession for Father Dormévil and said, “She will guide you and protect you. She will and she has all your life, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, through your formation and whatever lies ahead.”

He also prayed to St. Joseph for Father Dormévil because, he said, “You are so devoted to St. Joseph and have served the people of St. Joseph Parish in Norwalk for many years. You have a deep devotion to the Quiet One, who without many words did great things. I pray that Joseph the father of the Holy Family will guide you as you continue to be the father of your family and the father of our greater family, unto the glory of Jesus Christ.”

Then, the bishop announced that Father Dormévil will become priest moderator at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Quasi-parish in Stamford and be assigned to serve at the Church of St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus in Norwalk.

After the Mass, as Bishop Caggiano processed out of the Cathedral, he received vigorous applause from the Haitian community.

and then Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary in Weston, Mass.

“I have been a devoted and very active layman since my childhood,” he said. “I always nourished the desire of becoming a permanent deacon even though many people kept saying I should be a priest. However, when Father John Riviera Gomez popped the question to me following my wife’s death, it only took me a few minutes to say yes. May the will of God be done. I have a great family and my children are the greatest blessing of my life, but I have never been happier than during the time I spent in priestly formation through my five years in the seminary.”

Father Dormévil celebrated his first Mass on Sunday, June 13, at St. Joseph Church in Norwalk. Msgr. Joseph Malagrea, pastor of Holy Cross Church in New York and chaplain of the Haitian National Renouveau Charismatic Group was the homilist and concelebrant, along with Father Edicson Orozco, pastor of the Church of St. Joseph and St. Ladislaus, Father Gerard Frantz Desruisseaux, episcopal vicar of the Haitian Community, Father Jean Ridley Julien, former chaplain of Haitian/American Center, and Father Brian Kiely, rector of Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary.

Father Dormévil left Haiti in 1988 when he had to leave his job

ager, a certified nursing assistant, a grocery store produce clerk, and then as a produce manager for 19 years. He attended college part-time and received a certificate of English as a Second Language and an associate’s degree in business administration. He also earned non-degree credits at University of Connecticut and Sacred Heart University.

On August 3, 2016, Bishop Caggiano approved his application to enter St. John Fisher Seminary, where he began pre-theology studies. A year later, he entered Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary.

In October 2009, he received the St. Augustine Medal of Service from the Diocese of Bridgeport. In 2014, at the fourth diocesan synod, he served as delegate of the Haitian Community and St. Joseph Parish. Currently, he is a member of the Haitian National Charismatic Committee in New York.

Quincy Réginald Dormévil, Father Dormévil’s great-nephew presented the first reading and Romelle Thomas Etienne, his niece, gave the second reading in French.

“Due to my involvement in the Church, many people used to call me Father Guy,” he recalled. It was my dream to become a deacon, but I never thought about being a priest, because I didn’t feel worthy of such a great blessing. ■

2021 ACA

Development department 'Arises' to the challenge

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—With the "Arise" 2021 Annual Catholic Appeal (ACA) well underway, it is important that we recognize

laboratively to achieve our mission while serving our donors and supporting the people of the diocese."

Gallagher, a member of St. Patrick Parish in Armonk, N.Y., explains that his role in the

diocese.

"Our donors are important to us because they allow us to help the people of the Diocese of Bridgeport who require assistance with food insecurity and mental health issues,



DEVELOPMENT TEAM (1-r) Pam Rittman, Joe Gallagher, Janis Baldino, Bob O'Brien, Rosa Rodriguez, Pat Hansen and Kristen Pluchino make up the Development Department for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

the hardworking and dedicated Development Department of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

The Development Department facilitates funding from generous donors for a variety of programs and ministries throughout the diocese including the Annual Catholic Appeal. Development implements strategies and works with departments within the curia to identify needs and create plans for funding initiatives and ministries that will help to enrich the spiritual lives of individuals and families, continue the Catholic faith and provide for the vulnerable in communities served by the diocese.

For example, the department helped execute the We Stand With Christ capital campaign; supports the three foundations of the diocese, and fundraises for the Call to Renewal and various initiatives such as the Teledoc health program. Their overall focus is to support the ministries and programs of the Diocese of Bridgeport.

"We are a small team, explains Joe Gallagher, chief development officer for the Diocese of Bridgeport, "but we are one that works very col-

Development Department goes hand-in-hand with that of the greater mission of the diocese. "To do this job effectively, you have to understand and live the mission," he says. "That is how our donors approach things, as well. Giving is an essential part of the Catholic faith, and it is central to what we do in development."

The ACA is tied to the essential ministries of the diocese: faith, education and charity. Generous donations made to the ACA benefit the training of seminarians and deacons, caring for retired priests, scholarships for families in need so they can access Catholic education, and providing funding for ministries throughout the diocese.

"We act as a liaison for the bishop, where our job is to listen to our parishioners and make the bishop aware of their prayers, thoughts and concerns," Gallagher says. "We are blessed, in our diocese, to have numerous generous donors," says Gallagher. "Thanks to them, we are able to serve those most in need."

Especially during the pandemic, this funding is crucial to the well-being of people throughout the

both of which have been particularly needed during this pandemic," says Patricia Hansen, director of development operations for the diocese.

Hansen, a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Fairfield, manages the processing of donations made to the Diocese of Bridgeport, Foundations in Charity and Foundations in Faith. She has developed relationships with donors to the ACA and the We Stand With Christ capital campaign and has managed donor-related events.

A volunteer in her home parish, as well as her experience working in departments throughout the chancery, Hansen has seen first-hand the benefits that arise from generous donations to the ACA. Pat and her husband Glenn have co-chaired their parish ACA for a number of years.

"Without support for the ACA our ministries would suffer," says Hansen. "Donors support pastoral care, catechesis, our Seminarians and retired priests, as well as Catholic education."

Pamela S. Rittman, director of development and the Annual

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

2021 ACA

DEVELOPMENT FROM PAGE 6

Catholic Appeal, describes her work for the ACA as that of service. “The work we do provides for ongoing support of critical services that impact the lives of thousands of people every day and is a humbling responsibility.”

Rittman, who is a parishioner at the Basilica of St. John in Stamford, plans and manages the Annual Catholic Appeal, and other fundraising initiatives. During the We Stand With Christ capital campaign she was instrumental in raising funds for several parishes and working with pastors and donors on executive committees. “I enjoy speaking with parishioners and donors on the phone or at events. Many reach out for prayer and we are honored to pray for them,” says Rittman. “It is wonderful to work with Bishop Caggiano and help him fulfill his vision for the diocese, Rittman says.

“Whether it is inspiring someone to give to a ministry that provides a meal, assisting a seminarian in the discernment process, providing tuition so a family can afford to send their child or children to a Catholic school or other ministries, the work I have been a part of makes it possible,” she says.

“With the help of our generous donors, and anyone who can give a gift, we serve those who need support the most and provide for the future of the Church,” says Rittman. “We are grateful to all.”

Robert O’Brien, We Stand With Christ capital campaign director and major gift officer, builds relationships with donors and informs them

about funding opportunities that align with their interests. He also works with pastors and lay leaders to achieve their parishes’ long-term fundraising goals. O’Brien is also highly involved with initiatives related to increasing engagement with the young adults of the diocese.

“Our team’s role is to build relationships with the donors that God is calling to strengthen His Church in Fairfield County,” says O’Brien, who is a parishioner of St. John Basilica in Stamford. “In doing so, we also shine light on the amazing ministries and programs happening throughout our diocese.”

“The ACA gives us the opportunity to support Catholic causes outside of our immediate parishes,” O’Brien says. “By bringing our neighbors closer to Christ, the Annual Catholic Appeal offers a unique option: the chance to make an eternal impact. In a world with numerous other giving opportunities, what can be more meaningful than this?”

Kristen Pluchino, development associate and a member of Our Lady of Grace parish in Stratford, feels that she is contributing to the mission of the diocese through her work by taking her faith and turning it into something actionable. Her work is centered on spreading awareness of the ACA and helping to increase participation in it.

“Supporting the ACA is vital to helping those in need in the community through various programs focused on faith, education and charity,” she says. “The last year has

been especially challenging but it has been inspiring seeing firsthand the generosity of those in our Catholic community.”

Rosa Rodriguez, development associate and a member of The Cathedral Parish in Bridgeport, explains that there is so much need, especially in the past year with COVID-19. “As Catholics, we put our heart into what we do,” she says. “We see the importance of supporting faith, education and charity throughout the diocese of Bridgeport and believe that the Annual Catholic Appeal will help us see that those needs are met.”

Janis Baldino, development associate and a member of St. Andrew Parish in Bridgeport, says she is proud to play a small part in this investment for the future of the parishes in the Diocese of Bridgeport. “It is part of our commitment to our faith and a sincere desire to serve the needs of the diocese,” says Baldino. “As we count our blessings, it is important to support our neighbors in their time of need. I believe the past and current generosity of our parishioners expresses the love of their parishes and the willingness to make an investment in the Church and its missions.”

(Gifts can be made securely either online on the Annual Catholic Appeal website at 2021ACABridgeport.com donate page tab or by texting the word, APPEAL to 475.241.7849 on a smart phone or calling 203.416.1470. ACA gifts can be mailed to the Catholic Center at 238 Jewett Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06606.)

\$8.1 Million Annual Catholic Appeal Goal



We are so close to our goal, now is the time to make your gift.

Help Bishop Caggiano meet the Annual Catholic Appeal goal that supports critical programs and services that impact the life of every parishioner and those on their journey to follow Christ. More than 11,400 donors have already made their pledge, you can too.



- **Provide** over 1.3 million meals each year, 10,000 counseling sessions and housing assistance through Catholic Charities
- **Award** over \$2.7 million in financial assistance for Catholic education through the Bishop’s Scholarship Fund for young people across the Diocese
- **Ensure** children and young adults have opportunities to participate in religious education programs
- **Educate** and train 23 men for ordination to priesthood in our Diocese
- **Train** and educate 8 men for ordination to the Permanent Diaconate
- **Care** for 74 senior priests in their dignified retirement
- **Afford** our youth with meaningful opportunities to mature as holy members of society through a wide range of faith based programs
- **Respond** to spiritual, educational and social needs of persons with disabilities through the St. Catherine Center for Special Needs

Please make a gift today at 2021ACABridgeport.com or text APPEAL to (475) 241-7489

For more information please call (203) 416-1470

Before the Dog Days of Summer begin, make your Annual Catholic Appeal gift!



Fr. Peter with Mohawk

Fr. Reggie with Sammy

Diocesan Renewal

Ambassadors are a sign of hope

By KATHY ANN GOBIN
AND BRIAN D. WALLACE

BRIDGEPORT—In “Masses of Thanksgiving” held at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport and St. Edward the Confessor Parish in New Fairfield, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano prayed for the men and women participating in the Ambassador Formation initiative and first sessions and invited them to share their thoughts on the Ambassador Formation initiative.

The bishop told the ambassadors that he is inspired by their faith and grateful for their willingness to step forward as signs of hope and renewal in the diocese. He said that developing a spirit of perseverance and endurance alongside the desire to witness Christ in a wounded world are the qualities needed to welcome people back to the Church.

The bishop announced the Ambassador initiative in his February 17 pastoral exhortation, “Let us Enter the Upper Room with the Lord.” In his letter the bishop wrote, “I will need the assistance of co-workers who will not be afraid to go out into their communities to invite people to encounter the Lord and His mercy.”

More than 200 people from 25 different parishes have responded to the bishop’s call to renewal by completing the first phase of Ambassador training that will help prepare them to go out into the world and welcome all back to the Church.

St. Augustine Cathedral

There was a spirit of joy and excitement at St. Augustine Cathedral as many of the Ambassadors met together in person for the first time and reflected on their formation experience.

The men and women of all ages were recommended by their pastors and drawn from parishes in Bridgeport, Stratford, Trumbull, Shelton and Fairfield.

“It’s great to be with you take a look at what the Lord is doing in your own life as you move forward in this ministry,” the bishop said in his greeting before beginning the Mass. “Tonight we are gathered in the upper room, where He will feed and nourish us for the task ahead.”

The bishop was joined in celebrating the Mass by Father Michael Novajosky, who is leading the Ambassador formation initiative for the diocese.

Father Novajosky read the from the Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (2: 5-20) that set the

theme for the evening: “So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

In his homily, the bishop said that as part of their work the diocesan Ambassadors will go out to large and small groups as well as individuals and seek to bring the truth and the love of Christ to all whom they encounter.

“Remember who is going out; Christ in you and me—not you, not me!” the bishop said. “When people you meet look into your eyes, they will be looking into the eyes of the Lord, and you will become ever more his Ambassadors. This is the seed of renewal we have been waiting for.”

He told the Ambassadors that the task at hand “is not to judge others,” but to lead them toward the truth of Christ.

After Mass the bishop led an informal listening session. Referring to those in formation as “pioneers,” he thanked the Ambassadors for being first class to go through program.

Standing in center aisle of the cathedral, the bishop welcomed their thoughts and comments of and offered some of his own reflections.

Many of the Ambassadors told the bishop that the formation program has been a life-changing experience and an opportunity to deepen their faith. They also thanked Father Novajosky for his leadership and for the quality of the online videos.

St. Edward the Confessor

Men and women from many Danbury area parishes gathered at St. Edward the Confessor Church for Mass with the bishop and an opportunity to share insights and collaborate about the role of ambassadorship in the church.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano celebrated the Ambassador Thanksgiving Mass joined by seven priests from surrounding parishes.

“It’s encouraging to see the excitement and enthusiasm from the people,” said Father Michael Novajosky, who is overseeing the initiative for the diocese.

“There are a lot of people looking for something right now and a lot of people need an invitation,” said Linda Schneider, a parishioner of St. Joseph in Danbury.

Bishop Caggiano said he was grateful for all that attended the Mass and have been involved with the Ambassador program. He said the desire to be involved in the program shows a desire to deepen their relationship with the Lord.

He said the faithful should

be, “living vessels of the presence of Christ allowing people to see through us to Christ and find their way home.”

“People leave the church because they are wounded for whatever reason but you and I are sent to be the healer and the balm to invite them home.”

The bishop acknowledged it is a challenging task and that every situation will be different but worthwhile.

“This is not a list of things to do, it is a life to be lived (by example),” Bishop Caggiano said. “It’s time to no longer apologize for what we believe in. We are joyful in living (our faith).”

“You will go out into the world to be ambassadors to enter into people’s lives and invite them gently (back to the Church),” he said.

Richard Bruno, a parishioner of St. Mary in Bethel agreed. “You have to do it delicately. You have to bring them back little by little,” he said. Bruno is involved in several outreach programs at this church including the Knights of Columbus, teaching RCIA and leading a prayer group.

Schneider said while teaching catechism during the pandemic via Zoom to help children prepare for Holy Communion, an added benefit was having parents engage in the classes simply because they could overhear what was being discussed. For some, she said, it reinvigorated their desire to reengage with the church in a more meaningful way.

“I’m really excited about being able to reach out to other people,” said Marianne Fahey, a parishioner at St. Gregory the Great in Danbury. “It brings you to another level in your faith.”

Attendees also thanked the bishop for his guidance and for offering masses online during the pandemic.

“When people ask, ‘What is the state of faith in Fairfield County?’” the bishop said, “the answer will be, ‘It is alive and well.’”

When ready, the ambassadors will be sent out into their community under the care of their pastor to invite those who have left active participation in the life of the Church to return home.

The bishop asked the Ambassadors to keep the date October 16 free on their calendars for a diocesan event of celebration and commissioning when they will go out into the community. He said he looks forward to the day when every Catholic home in the diocese will be visited by Ambassadors who will affirm the faithful and welcome people back to the Church. ■

Parish News

Father Jeff Couture installed as pastor of St. Matthew

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

NORWALK—Hundreds gathered at St. Matthew Church on Saturday, June 5, to witness Bishop Frank J. Caggiano preside over the installation Mass of the church's new pastor, Father Jeffrey Couture.

"We are living in an extraordinary moment in the life of St. Matthew's family," Bishop Caggiano said. "We come here in great joy as the parish family of St. Matthew to pray for Father Couture as he officially begins his ministry as your pastor."

Pastor Jeff, as he is known by many, stepped into the role following the passing of beloved pastor Msgr. Walter C. Orlowski, Jr., who had shepherded the church for 26 years. Msgr. Orlowski, whose priesthood spanned over 40 years in the Diocese of Bridgeport, passed away unexpectedly in December.

"It's humbling and hopeful," said Father Jeff, as he greeted the congregation after Mass. "I'm following one of the best pastors."



The pageantry of the Knights of Columbus ushered in the bishop and Father Jeff at the beginning of Mass on the Feast of Corpus Christi.

During his homily, Father Jeff made three promises to the congregation. He promised that as their shepherd he would gather and protect them and nourish their spiritual needs.

He said he will reach out to those that have strayed from the Church and bring them back to the fold. He also said he would protect those entrusted to his care with prayer and guidance.

"I will preach the truth, even if it is truths that are not popular," he said, then added in his characteristically light-hearted way, "I'll

just blame the bishop." To which the bishop quipped, "Then it goes back to the pastor," a moment that was met with applause and

Michele and brother Chris, but by those in the congregation that have had an opportunity to get to know him.



FATHER JEFF COUTURE WAS INSTALLED as pastor of St. Matthew Church in Norwalk by Bishop Caggiano on Saturday, June 5.

laughter from the congregation, fitting for the joyous occasion.

Thirdly, Father Jeff said he wants to continue the bishop's initiative to revere the Eucharist.

"I will bring the sanctity of the Eucharist, that true presence and teaching in everything I do, to you," said Father Jeff, who also announced that perpetual adoration will soon be available at the church.

Father Jeff thanked the congregation for being so open and welcoming to him in the weeks leading up to this day.

"It is the great legacy of (Msgr. Orlowski's) ministry, that this parish thrives," said Bishop Caggiano, adding that when he was contemplating who would be best to continue the good work at St. Matthew parish, Father Jeff was an obvious choice to honor the legacy of Msgr. Orlowski and build on it.

"He's a man of joyful heart. A man who loves to laugh and smile," Bishop Caggiano said. "He is filled with zeal and energy and passion. I know you are in very good hands."

Father Jeff's family agreed. "He puts his heart and soul into everything he does," his mother Judy Couture said. "I'm very proud of him." A sentiment echoed not only by both his sister

"I couldn't miss this (Installation Mass)," said parishioner Bonnie Baron, as she waited in line after Mass to greet and congratulate Father Jeff. Baron, a parishioner at St. Matthew's for more than 50 years, lost her husband just two days after Msgr. Orlowski died. She said Father Jeff comforted her and helped her through a very difficult time.

Parishioner Kathy Cossuto was introduced to St. Matthew Church more than 45 years ago through her husband, who has been a member of the parish since he was a child.

"I want Father Jeff to feel welcome," she said. "I want to encourage him and support him. Monsignor would have wanted that too."

Many well-wishers stayed after Mass to offer congratulations and support to Father Jeff. It was also an opportunity to partake in refreshments and for fellowship among parishioners who may not have seen each other during the pandemic.

Bishop Caggiano counseled Father Jeff and told him that one of the most fulfilling things for a priest, is to be a pastor.

"We pray that God will bless you with many years of happy and joyful service and ministry here at St. Matthew," Bishop Caggiano said.

"I promise you I will do the best I can," Father Jeff said. "I'm not perfect but I will do everything I can, to do the best I can." ■

Editorial

EDITOR'S CHOICE

St. Mary's parishioners create beautiful carpet in honor of Corpus Christi



BRIDGEPORT—On the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, the community of St. Mary in Bridgeport built a carpet with acerrin and flowers in front of the church. Parishioners from Guatemala, Mexico, Peru and Colombia helped to create the carpet. This custom originates in Guatemala but parishioners at St. Mary's wanted to give thanks to the Lord in a special way for his love and the Eucharist!

EN LA SOLEMNIDAD del Cuerpo y la Sangre de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo, la comunidad de la parroquia St. Mary en Bridgeport construyó una alfombra con acerrin y flores frente a la iglesia. Algunos feligreses de Guatemala, México, Perú y Colombia ayudaron a crear la alfombra. Esta es una tradición que es original de Guatemala, pero los feligreses de St. Mary's querían agradecer al Señor de una manera especial por su amor y por la Sagrada Eucaristía.



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Editorial

EDITORIAL

Remembering Their
Courage and Service

“You are women and men of courage when the rest of the world was afraid,” Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said to healthcare workers at the recent Mass of Thanksgiving he celebrated in their honor at St. Joseph Church in Brookfield on Memorial Day weekend. “I thank you for allowing us to have hope at this time. You were light in a period of ever-growing darkness.”

The bishop spoke for all of us when he commended healthcare workers for their diligence and dedication of service especially during the uncertain times surrounding the coronavirus pandemic.

During his homily, Bishop Caggiano recalled a time when he was teaching as a college seminarian and a five-year-old child asked, “Why didn’t God heal everyone and save time?” A thought-provoking question that many of us have surely pondered during times of sickness and especially during these past almost 16 months of the pandemic.

The answer to the question is found in our baptismal responsibility to continue the work of the Lord Jesus by becoming healers in his name. “You and I are called to be the healers of His love in this world. That is our discipleship,” he said, praising all frontline workers “for being the hands, feet, voice and heart of a healing God” to those suffering during these challenging times of sickness and loneliness.

The bishop also acknowledged the heroism and sacrifice of all those who have served their country. “This is the weekend we remember all those who have fallen in defense of our country and I’d like to think that we can add to that list those who have fallen in the line of duty in healing. They gave their lives so that others may have life. They followed fully and completely in the footsteps of Jesus.”

As the pandemic continues to recede and we resume our active lives, we must never lose sight of all those—past and present—who risk so much to protect, serve and heal. At this hopeful moment, let us commit to memory their courage, sacrifice and service and pray for their protection.

Invite Someone Back!

Now’s the time to invite your friend, neighbor or family members back to Mass. If you haven’t seen them at Mass for a while, let them know that you miss them. A recent snapshot of Mass attendance throughout the diocese found that most parishes are between 58 and 60 percent of pre-pandemic levels. There may be lingering health concerns on the part of some who have not returned to Mass, while others may simply be confused about what to expect. That’s why it’s important to let them know that they no longer need to register or wear masks if they’ve been vaccinated—and that almost every restriction has been lifted. Parishes are doing everything they can to move forward in a safe and welcoming manner, and their doors are wide open! It’s time to welcome all back to the Lord’s Supper and to the shared life of prayer and worship that sustains us.

Summer Prayer

As we luxuriate in the early days of Summer, we are pleased to share this prayer from our friends at The Catholic Telegraph. It expresses the hopefulness and gratitude we feel as we resume our lives!

*May we make our homes places of relaxation,
joy, love, peace and safety.*

*May we be generous and considerate,
not thinking only: about ourselves,
but helping others enjoy the blessings of the summertime.*

*Lord God, Creator of all things,
guide our steps and strengthen our hearts
during these months of summer and vacation days.*

Grant us refreshment of mind and body.

*May we constantly strive to make a meaningful difference
in the lives of our loved ones, and in the world around us*

As we enjoy the warm days of summertime.

Amen.



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

PASTOR

REVEREND JOSE ABELARDO VASQUEZ, from Parochial Administrator to Pastor of Saint Charles Borromeo Parish Bridgeport. Effective date was June 1.

PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR

REVEREND JOSEPH GILL, from Parochial Vicar, the Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist, Stamford, to Parochial Administrator, Saint Jude Parish, Monroe. Effective date is June 30.

PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND ROLANDO ARIAS-GALVIS, completion of Graduate Studies, Casa Santa Maria, Rome, to Parochial Vicar, The Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport. Effective date is July 1.

REVEREND TIMOTHY IANNACONE, appointed to Parochial Vicar, Saint Edward the Confessor, New Fairfield. Effective date was May 1.

TRIBUNAL

VERY REVEREND ARTHUR MOLLENHAUER, reappointed as Judicial Vicar. Effective date was May 10, 2021 until August 31, 2022.

REVEREND LUIS ANTONIO ALICEA RIVERA, reappointed as Defender of the Bond for Matrimonial and Ordination Cases and Promoter of Justice for Matrimonial cases until August 31, 2022.

GRADUATE STUDIES

REVEREND WILLIAM QUINLAN, extension time of graduate study for the Fall semester through December 31, 2021.

RESIDENCE

REVEREND PAUL R. SANKAR, from Saint Francis of Assisi, Weston, to Saint Matthew Parish, Norwalk. Effective date was May 1.

REVEREND PETER F. LENOX, from Sacred Heart Rectory, Georgetown, to Saint Emery Rectory, Fairfield. Effective date is July 1.

REVEREND CHRISTOPHER FORD, from Saint Gregory the Great Parish, Danbury, to Saint Jude Parish, Monroe. Effective date is July 15.

OTHER

REVEREND BRENDAN BLAWIE, appointed to Summer Assistant, Saint John Parish, Darien. Effective date is July 1 until August 31, 2021.

REVEREND CHRISTOPHER FORD, appointed to Director of Campus Ministry for the Diocese of Bridgeport. Effective date is July 1. Father Ford remains Chair of the Vocations Team.

REVEREND DONALD GUGLIELMI, reappointed to Saint Joseph Seminary as Instructor and Spiritual Director for a term of one-year. Effective date is July 1, 2021 until June 30, 2022.

DEACON

DEACON RAMON LUIS RIVERA, incardinated with the Archdiocese of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Released from Diocesan Assignment

REVEREND BRUCE ROBY, to the Diocese of Honolulu. Effective date was May 10.

*Reverend Francis T. Hoffmann
Vicar for Clergy, June, 2021*

Editorial



Summer invites us to welcome new beginnings

A YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE

BY ELIZABETH CLYONS

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

The past few summers, I've found myself gearing up for a move. Such is the life of a twenty-something, when many of us are still trying to figure out where we want to be and what we want to do.

At one point in my life, I would have found this daunting, but I've learned to embrace the change and get excited for new opportunities. Moving isn't the most joyful of activities in and of itself, but as I become increasingly able to envisage a future I desire for myself, it's easier to get excited about change and the opportunity for growth it presents.

As I begin to plan what I want my new space to look like, to feel like and to consist of, I realize that my excitement mirrors that of the coming days of summer itself. With its beautiful weather and increased down-time for relaxation, summer always presents a chance to take a deep breath, regroup and renew.

This summer in particular seems to be one of great promise for many. After a year of

stagnancy, it is exciting to hear talk of vacation plans, party plans and even, dare I say, travel plans. As the sun shines through, we begin to shake off the year we've just had and welcome the gentle breeze of the coming months.

There is an underlying layer of joy to everything we do these days. As we slowly begin to gather together once again, each moment is a prayer of gratitude. This natural movement of life seems that way again... natural. And we realize how resilient we are as humans, how we can adapt and change, how we learn what we need to and move forward. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble (Mark 6:34).

We emerge, faces toward the sun. Things are new and different. It may take some longer than others...but we can walk with them on their way, giving them the time and space they need, while encouraging them also to grow and adapt.

Parishes and schools around the diocese have begun planting gardens and beautifying their outdoor spaces. St. Anthony of Padua in Fairfield started constructing and planting a vegetable garden with plans to donate the produce to the Thomas Merton Center in Bridgeport. Students at the Catholic Academy of Stamford measured, seeded and watered a garden full of future zinnias and marigolds that should

bloom in time for school's return. Doors are open and parishioners are returning to in-person Mass. All around the diocese, life is springing forth.

We have all experienced a world of

change in recent months, but my prayer is that we embrace these coming summer days with renewed vigor and hope—of new opportunities...of new beginnings. ■

“With its beautiful weather and increased down-time for relaxation, summer always presents a chance to take a deep breath, regroup and renew.”



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Editorial



Jesus, the personal assistant who never fails

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

While I'm lying in bed in the morning, halfway between sleeping and waking, I say, "Good morning, Jesus," which is how St. Teresa of Calcutta began her day. I believe it's best to learn from the best.

From then, it's all downhill because I start to think about what the day ahead has in store for me, and my response can vary from anxiety to anticipation and outright terror. You never know what a new day will bring. I suppose I have to work on trusting Jesus more and take a page out of St. Faustina Kowalska's book and pray, "Jesus, I trust in you."

Somewhat compulsively, I start mentally cataloging what I have to do—the dentist needs to replace a worn crown, I have to grade 52 tests, the dog needs to go to the vet for surgery. (My wife says I'm more afraid than the dog, and she's right.)

During those early moments, when I'm previewing the upcoming events, which have the potential to turn into full-blown crises, I turn to Jesus dozens of times for backup.

"Jesus, help me because I have to get those papers corrected. Jesus, help me, may Bella be all right. Jesus, help me finish this project on time. Jesus, are you listening?!" Of course, he's always listening, but I ask just to remind myself, not him.

This pattern continues throughout the day. "Jesus, may that check arrive. Jesus, may this meeting go well. Jesus..." The good thing is that I know he doesn't get tired of listening to me, the way some other family members do.

However, when I think about this nonstop petitioning and pleading, which I call "prayer," I'm a bit embarrassed because it seems like I'm turning Jesus into my personal assistant. Do this, do that, don't forget this, I really need you to do that.

I'm also embarrassed because I seem to be always asking for something. How selfish, how narcissistic. It reminds me of when my daughters were kids and repeatedly came to me with requests...which they still do as adults. "Dad, can you pick up my car at the garage? Dad, run out and get a pizza. Dad..." You get the idea.

But back to Jesus.

First of all, he's infinitely older and infinitely wiser than we are, so I think he's pleased when we ask him for help, especially when we pray for someone else's needs. Plus, he's not thin-skinned, which means to say he understands human nature and our seemingly insignificant needs.

At the same time, I'm absolutely convinced he appreciates an occasional thank you for everything he does, so lately I've

been trying to sprinkle gratitude in my daily prayers.

"Thank you, Lord, for another day." "Thank you for my family, most of the time." "Thank you for my friends because I realize you gave each of them to me for a specific reason."

I help them, they help me, and together we grow spiritually as we move toward salvation... even that annoying friend, who is helping me learn to be patient and tolerant.

In addition to my prayers of petition and thanksgiving, there's another prayer I say, which goes something like this: "Jesus, how's your day going? Is there anything I can do to help?"

Believe me, you don't have to ask twice. He'll answer that prayer almost immediately.

I'm beginning to think that's the most important prayer of all. Whenever I read news stories about global atrocities, disdain for God, violence in the cause of righteousness, and the pandemic of hatred, I think that Jesus must still weep over this sad and sorry world. He must be as discouraged in his humanity as when he walked the Earth. So, I pray, "Jesus let me help. Show me how."

To me, this is a way of turning my will and life over to God, which is the greatest gift we can give him. When we do that, he can use us in ways we least expect.

We don't even have to search for opportunities because he'll bring them to us...the same way he brought that person to me who had a kind word after I pleaded, "Jesus, help me."

That person was the answer to my prayer, and you can be the answer to another person's prayer. ■

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We Stand With Christ

FIF grant updates technology

By **JOE PISANI**

BRIDGEPORT—When Father Andris Alexis Moronta arrived at St. George’s Lithuanian Roman Catholic Church for his new assignment as parochial administrator, he realized immediately his biggest challenge would be the lack of what he calls “technology infrastructure.”

He knows what he’s talking about because he studied computer science at State University of New York Stony Brook before discerning his vocation to the priesthood.

“I am not afraid of technology,” Father Alexis says.

And now, through a grant from Foundations in Faith to overhaul the technology and communications of the parish, Father is optimistic about the future. He is live-streaming Masses and services, using Facebook and working on the parish website. In addition, he is increasing the security around the church because the grant financed 12 security cameras along with a laptop and projector and screen for the faith formation program. Next, he is planning to install lighting outside the church.

“It reassures the people to know we have a security system,” he said. “I have been a priest in difficult places, and this for me is another blessing to help us preach the Gospel. The security cameras and technology enhancement let me reach out to the faithful of the parish. This is a big, humongous opportunity for me to bring the Gospel to people through the resources they have given us.”

St. George is the second church in the Diocese of Bridgeport, after Blessed Sacrament, to receive the Francis Xavier Technology & Communication Enhancement Grant for missionary parishes, from Foundations in Faith, which is supported by the We Stand With Christ Campaign.

Kelly Weldon, executive director of Foundations in Faith, said, “Father Alexis has done an outstanding job advocating for St. George Parish. He was eager to learn how Foundations in Faith could be tapped to enhance pastoral care for his parishioners.”

It began with a St. Francis Xavier Immediate Need grant for a boiler last fall because there was no heat in the rectory for the priests and staff, she said. Next, he received a John Paul II mini-grant for religious education so the children of the parish could get books in addition to online access.

Later, Weldon and Liz Tamarkin of Newfound Consulting LLC met with Father to assess the scope of the technology upgrade and implement the changes with the parish team.

“The project is very thorough and done in partnership with the parish team,” she said. “The beauty is that each parish has a unique set of needs, yet there are common elements and learned best practices that can be applied. Liz has a holistic approach that allows for security, phones, internet, computers, sound systems, live streaming, Google classrooms, website and online giving to all work together.”

Tamarkin said that Father Alexis has a vibrant vision for technology growth at St. George’s and that the pandemic added an additional layer of technology with limited parish resources.

“We focused on extending Mass capacity for his parishioners with an audio-visual arrangement for the Parish Hall that includes a projector, screen and Chrome cast,” she said. “Beyond the pandemic, this is used by the faith formation program in addition to the new laptop for the director of religious education.”

The pandemic made in-person faith formation very difficult, she said, and Father Alexis wanted to make sure he was serving as

many of his students as safely as possible. Security was another area of concern, and the grant made the purchase and installation of a central monitoring system possible with multiple internal and external cameras on the campus.

Because of the grant, the parish team was able to convert to Microsoft 365 for collaboration and cloud storage, online giving, website expansion, and replacing the phone system, she said, bringing Father Alexis’ technology vision for his parish community far into the future.

“Our parishes with financial burdens—our missionary parishes—did not have the technology they needed to do these things,” Weldon said. “And Joe Sindelar, vice chairman of Foundations in Faith and the board advocate of the St. Francis Xavier Fund, has been the catalyst of this initiative. He pushes for better and for more.”

Father Alexis says that many of the goals he has had since coming to St. George a year ago could only be accomplished with the assistance of Foundations in Faith. “I appreciate all they have done for us,” he says.

(Weldon urges anyone who would like to donate or support the St. Francis Xavier Technology & Communication Grants or other initiatives of Foundations in Faith to contact her at kelly.weldon@foundationsinfaith.org.)

ICF grant for kitchen and family space

NORWALK—The Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education announced today that it has awarded a quarter of a million dollars to Malta House in Norwalk, Connecticut. The \$250,000 award is to support Malta House’s new building, which opened recently, and specifically went to build their new kitchen and family gathering place.



(l-r) Christopher Bell, Malta House Board of Directors; Carey Dougherty, Executive Director of Malta House; Monsignor Scheyd, Founder of Malta House and former Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education Board of Directors; Joel Miller, current Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education Board of Directors.

A plaque in the new Malta House kitchen says the following: With thanksgiving to The Inner-City Foundation for Charity & Education for providing the most basic human needs to Fairfield County since 1992.

The Inner-City Foundation announced late last year that it would be dissolving after almost 30 years of supporting the needy in Fairfield County via education and social service support. This gift to Malta House represents the first of many awards to be announced later this month.

Service of Remembrance

Bishop: In the face of death, 'We are people of hope'

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano remembered all those who died of COVID-19 and the living who continue to grieve them during a solemn and spare Vespers service on the Solemnity of The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

After processing into the St. Augustine Cathedral led by the parish altar-servers, all wearing masks, the bishop said that we are still struggling with the pandemic, something that we wish never had happened and hope that it will never happen again.

The Service of Remembrance was attended in-person at the Cathedral and also live-streamed online. Parishes throughout the diocese joined in the commemoration by conducting evening prayers to commemorate the Sacred Heart of Jesus and remember those who died during the pandemic.

During the service, Father Juan Gabriel Acosta, pastor of the Cathedral Parish, read the names of the nearly 40 parishioners who have passed away from COVID-19 over the last 16 months.

In his homily, the bishop said that when the virus first started to take lives, we didn't even have a name for what we now know as coronavirus or COVID-19.

"Tonight we remember those who died of this insidious virus, and those who are mourning and still feel the grief and pain and suffering of their loss. We are people of hope. We lift up the dead to God's mercy and the living to his consolation and



VESPERS AT THE CATHEDRAL—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and Deacon John DiToronto conclude the Vespers service on the Solemnity of The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. "We lift up the dead to God's mercy and the living to his consolation," the bishop said in his reflection.

strength," he said.

The bishop said "the hidden killer has taken the lives of more than 3.5 million people across the globe, each with its own face and name and personal history. Each and all were precious children of God and made in his image and likeness."

On the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the bishop said that the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross "gives meaning and purpose to our own suffering. We believe in a savior who has walked before us in his own suffering."

One of the most difficult burdens for many during the pandemic was that they could not hold the hands of those they loved who were alone and frightened, the bishop said.

He praised the doctors and nurses who were by the side of dying patients and said the Lord was also

with all those who suffered.

"The gentle shepherd was there with them in their struggles and pain and until their last breath. When we couldn't go to them, he did. He is also there sitting with the grieving and he gives them the courage and strength to keep living."

The bishop said we will all ultimately "enter into the same mystery of death with hope" in the Sacred Heart of Jesus "who suffered for us, so our own suffering would not have victory over us."

After his final blessing and before the recessional the bishop stopped to pray before the statue of the Blessed Mother.

The evening service included the chanting of Psalms, the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, and a reading from the Letters of St. Paul, "We were dead in our transgressions." ■

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Youth News

Teens encouraged to ‘find your fire’ at youth event

By **EMILY CLARK**

TRUMBULL—“The words you speak and the lifestyle you lead will show the world that Jesus means something to you. So, I ask you, my young friends to unlock

helping teens in the area “find their fire” for Christ, grow in their faith, and unite as a community, especially after months apart due to COVID-19 restrictions. With funds awarded from the grant and with leadership from their priest

do this again because I really missed these kinds of activities. I always had a fire in my heart when I came to events like this. Now, my heart is on fire again.”

Sam Aca, a teen from St. Peter’s Church in Bridgeport,



FIND YOUR FIRE: Trumbull Catholic Youth Day was the culminating project of the year for St. Theresa Apostolic Youth (STAY), a recipient of the 2021 Youth in Action grant from Foundations in Faith.

the fire of the Holy Spirit, for that fire will come to bless, empower and transform you all.”

With these words of spiritual encouragement, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano addressed over 75 teens at the Mass which opened “Find Your Fire: Trumbull Catholic Youth Day” at St. Theresa Church on Sunday, May 23. This event, appropriately held on the Feast of Pentecost, was the culminating project of the year for St. Theresa Apostolic Youth (STAY), a recipient of the 2021 Youth in Action grant from Foundations in Faith.

“We remember today the gift of fire,” the bishop continued. “The Holy Spirit came to enlighten the minds of the apostles. We come here because you and I have fire that needs to be unlocked.”

When members of STAY originally drafted the proposal back in November, their goal for a Catholic Youth Day included

and mentor Father Flavian Bejan, it appears this project did just that, drawing dozens of young people from the parishes in Trumbull as well as those in Stratford, Bridgeport, Shelton, Bethel, and Danbury.

Following the 4 pm Mass celebrated by Bishop Caggiano, the teens gathered in the fields and lots behind St. Theresa School to enjoy games of spike ball, volleyball, gaga ball, and corn hole under a bright late afternoon sun as music streamed from iPhones and speakers. The food truck Fryborg offered burgers, hot dogs, fries and sandwiches at no cost to the attendees, as all goods were covered by funds from the grant.

While waiting in line for a burger, Jackie Lenard, a senior at St. Joseph High School, reflected on the joy she felt at coming together. “It’s been over a year,” she said, regarding the months of relative isolation. “It’s so good to be able to

echoed Lenard’s thoughts on reemerging from the pandemic, saying, “Being here is like opening up the church again. The youth have all been at home and away from Mass. I love being part of something like this—and it’s a lot of fun too!”

That fun continued throughout the afternoon and into the evening when everyone gathered again around 7:00 inside the church to hear guest speaker Justin Fatica, the co-founder of Hard as Nails Ministries, a national Catholic organization based in Syracuse, N.Y. With remarkable charisma, Fatica encouraged the teens to “be the compassionate people God called you to be.”

“Jesus has brought you here tonight, and He wants to make a breakthrough in your life,” he said, moving up and down the aisle and speaking directly to the attendees. “Pray that you can accept the call you have from Him, and you will never be the same.” ■

Catholic Schools

Herculean feat kept schools open

By **DR. STEVEN CHEESEMAN**

BRIDGEPORT—As the school year winds down, we breathe a sigh of relief that we have made it through what has certainly been a year like no other and as I reflect on this past year, I am overcome with a tremendous sense of gratitude.

Let me begin by expressing my thanks to our parents and families. Thank you for putting your faith in our Catholic schools and for all your flexibility and understanding as each school navigated the sometimes choppy waters of the past year and a half.

Thank you to our students for your cooperation with COVID-19 protocols, your willingness to go with the flow, and for the optimism and positive energy that you displayed as you mastered new learning models and, often, the disappointments of missing traditional events.

I am especially grateful to the administrators and teachers. You pulled off a herculean feat to allow our students to experience in person classes this year. While many surrounding schools left their families feeling let down, you showed up and you met the challenge. There is no greater evidence of the love you have for your students and no greater example of your mission-minded focus. I can only imagine how difficult this year was for you—balancing in person, online, and “zoomed in” students. Completely virtual was hard enough, but I have been to a few meetings where half the group was in person and the other half was on zoom and each time I left those meetings in awe of your ability to balance the two.

I also want to thank the many benefactors who supported our schools this year: Through your support we were able to make chrome books available to schools and to the students who needed them, we were able to provide over 1 million dollars in additional financial assistance, we were able to provide counseling services for students and a telehealth program to support parents and faculty.

All of you—teachers, parents,

students, administrators and benefactors—worked together and as a result our Catholic schools were open all year with minimal disruption. Our ability to deliver in person learning along with the supports provided to students who had to learn remotely helped lead to demonstrated academic growth in our students. While many surrounding schools—and schools throughout the nation—lament huge learning losses, our benchmark data shows that, for the most part, our students made academic gains and showed appropriate grade level growth. While we didn’t have the same high level of growth our



schools usually have, the fact that we still had growth with all the interruptions of the past year and half is, to me, pretty amazing.

Your hard work is also paying off in enrollment growth. At this moment, we more students registered in Catholic schools for next year than we have attending this year. And while I am guarding my optimism, I am hopeful that for the first time in a very long time we will actually have an overall increase in Catholic school enrollment for next year.

Speaking of next year, I know many of you are asking, “what the fall will look like?” While we will continue to monitor the levels of transmission and the impact it is having on our communities, I am comfortable saying that we will have a near normal looking start to the year and we will be able to reduce the need for social distancing and that we will lift the mask mandate for the fall. It is still recommended that children have masks indoors when in close contact, but it will be option-



DR. STEVEN CHEESEMAN

al. Additionally, unless we are forced by government action, we will not mandate the vaccine for students. Although we had hoped to have some additional guidance by the CDC or the state by now, we have decided to not wait and to make a decision based on the facts available to us today. The facts that influenced our decision include:

The significant reduction in the number of cases and levels of virus transmission along with the expectation that this trend will continue

The fact that many studies—including those published or cited by the American association of pediatrics—indicate that children have significantly decreased susceptibility and infectivity rates compared to adults

The fact that we have a near 90% rate of vaccination among teachers and staff in our schools diocesan wide

Of course, we announce these decisions today with the caveat that if the level of transmitted cases rises significantly over the summer we may have to reconsider some or all of them. Let’s pray that does not happen.

I am personally so excited for all the possibilities next year will bring for our schools and our students as we emerge from this pandemic stronger than we were before and, at least for myself, more appreciative of the gifts we have been given and for the commitment of the people who make up our Catholic school community.

I pray you all have a joy-filled summer of fun, relaxation and laughter. May God bless you and may Our Lady continue to shower Her blessings on our Catholic school community. ■



PHOTO BY CHRISTINA RODRIGUES

Class of 2021 comes back strong!

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

As schools continued to adapt to the changing academic world due to COVID-19, students proved their resiliency and their ability to thrive in the most difficult circumstances. This graduation year is truly one of celebration, as many schools were able to hold commencement ceremonies once again.

St. Joseph High School

TRUMBULL—St. Joseph High School is proud to announce that Joseph Harrington and Helen Mahoney are this year's valedictorian and salutatorian respectively. At its commencement ceremony, held on June 5, the school conferred diplomas upon 228 students who boast a 100 percent college acceptance rate.

Joseph Harrington has attained the highest academic record among his class and delivered the valedictorian's farewell address at the close of commencement on Saturday, June 5. Joseph resides in Fairfield and currently serves as president of the Writing Center, a captain of the Boys' Varsity Tennis Team, and member of the National Honor Society, Jazz Band, Coding Club and Student Ambassadors. Joseph is also a Harvard Book Award recipient, Commended National Merit Scholar and a member of Math, English, Spanish and Music Honor Societies. Additionally, he has represented St. Joes multiple times as a Western Region and All-State Euphonium instrumentalist. Joseph is heavily involved in scouting, having served as the senior patrol leader of his troop and as a chapter chief in

scouting's national honor society, the Order of the Arrow. Joe is currently wrapping up his Eagle Scout project and application and, in the fall, plans on attending The University of Notre Dame to study economics and political science.

Helen Mahoney resides in Stamford. She is president of the National Honor Society and has led the initiative to make and deliver over 10,000 sandwiches to the New Covenant Center. She is a member of the Math, English and Spanish Honor Societies. Helen is also a Yale Book Award recipient, an AP Scholar with Distinction and a Bausch + Lomb Honorary Science Award recipient. During her time at St. Joes,

all that is St. Joes," said principal, Nancy DiBuono. "James is a leader through example and his strength of character is noticed by all. Helen is a talented student with a strong work ethic. She sets high standards for herself and is a leader both in and out of the classroom. We know they are both destined for greatness."

Kolbe Cathedral High School

BRIDGEPORT—Kolbe Cathedral High School graduated 69 students on June 3 at St. Augustine Cathedral. Kolbe Cathedral High School is proud to announce that Lucas Pettway and Kelly Mecatl are this year's valedictorian and salutatorian, respectively.

Lucas Pettway has attained the



SAINT JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL, TRUMBULL – Joseph Harrington, valedictorian; Helen Mahoney, salutatorian

as a presidential scholar, Helen has been an active member of the drama and debate clubs, as well as president of the Online Writing Resource Center and vice president of Student Ambassadors. She was also a starting defender on the 2017 Varsity Girls' Soccer State Championship team. In the fall, Helen will attend The University of Notre Dame as a Glynn Family Honors Program Scholar, majoring in Mathematics.

"We are so proud of these two very talented students who embody

highest academic record among his class and delivered the valedictorian's farewell address at the close of commencement on Thursday, June 3. Lucas resides in Stratford and is currently a member of the Holy Spirit Chapter of the National Honor Society, the Oscar Romero Chapter of the Spanish Honor Society, the KCHS Excellence in Mathematics Award, and recipient of the Mary Silliman Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution Bronze

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Vals and Sals

CLASS OF 2021 FROM PAGE 19



KOLBE CATHEDRAL HIGH SCHOOL, BRIDGEPORT – Lucas Pettway, valedictorian; Kelly Mecatl, salutatorian



American History Medal. Lucas is a student-athlete leader on the Cross Country and Outdoor Track teams as well. Lucas is the recipient of the Presidential Leadership Scholarship and in the fall, he plans on attending the University of Connecticut.

Kelly Mecatl resides in Bridgeport. She is a member of the Holy Spirit Chapter of the National Honor Society, recipient of the KCHS Excellence in Science Award and KCHS Outstanding Service Award for exhibiting outstanding spirit, enthusiasm, and service to her fellow students, to her class and to the school throughout her high school career. In the fall, Kelly will attend New York University, the recipient of the University Grant.

“Lucas and Kelly embody all of the qualities of what It means to be a Kolbe Cathedral Cougar,” said principal, Camille Figluzzi. “Both students lead through example and exhibit strength of character in all that they do. We know they are both destined for greatness in their future journeys.”

Immaculate High School

DANBURY—Immaculate High School graduated 108 seniors at its Commencement Liturgy on Saturday, June 5 at St. Rose of Lima Church in Newtown. The seniors were recognized for their many scholarships and academic, athletic, arts/music, community service and other awards they earned over the school year, and for their resilience and Mustang spirit in sticking with their studies and commitments during the last few months of virtual school.

Zachary Meyerson of Danbury is the Class of 2021’s valedictorian and Meryl McKenna of Brookfield

is the salutatorian

Zachary Meyerson will attend Cornell University where he received and will major in neuroscience and global/public health. Zachary is a Distinguished Honors student, a recipient of the 2020 Cornell Club award for academic excellence, recipient of the Excellence in Graphic Design and Arts as well as the St. Thomas Aquinas Award, President’s Award for Outstanding Academic



IMMACULATE HIGH SCHOOL, DANBURY – Zachary Meyerson, valedictorian; Meryl McKenna, salutatorian

engineering. Meryl was recognized as a National Commended Merit Scholar in 2020. At Immaculate, Meryl received a four-year merit scholarship, is a Distinguished Honors student and a member of the National Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta Math Honor Society, the Science National Honor Society and is the recipient of the Isabelle Farrington Academic Excellence Award. She is a talented three-sport varsity athlete, having played varsity soccer, tennis and outdoor track for Immaculate, and was named a Scholar Athlete by the CAS-CIAC, served as captain of her soccer team, named SWC Championship Most Valuable Player and was invited to play on the All Academic Team in 2020. Meryl has received the President’s Volunteer Service Award and the Rensselaer Medal for her dedication and excellence in science and math.

Mark Radigan of Danbury was named Immaculate High School’s Student of the Year for the 2020-21 school year. Mark earned this honor for consistently demonstrating school spirit and dedication to IHS, strength of character and faith in



Excellence, the Isabelle T. Farrington Academic Excellence award. He is a member of the National Honor Society, Science National Honor Society, National English Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta Math Honor Society and a two time award recipient of the CT Science and Engineering Fair. Zachary is a three-time recipient of the President’s Service Award for his service at Jericho Partnership, Maplewood Senior Living and Ann’s Place.

Meryl McKenna will attend Washington University in St. Louis, where she will study biomedical

action through kindness to others, and a passion for learning and going beyond what is expected, including encouraging others to do their best.

Completing the Top Ten graduating senior list are Alexis Demko of Danbury who will attend Assumption University, Ailene Doherty of Danbury who will attend Cornell University, Grace Garvey of Bethel who will attend Bucknell University, Caitlin Fanella of New Milford who will attend Fairfield University, Ethan Goodman of Newtown who will

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

Vals and Sals

CLASS OF 2021 FROM PAGE 20



NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL, FAIRFIELD – Sarah Sportini, valedictorian; Rose Linkasamy, salutatorian

attend Xavier University, Nicholas Iannetta of Danbury who will attend St. John’s University, Alexa Pannese of Monroe who will attend Western Connecticut State University and Kaitlyn Segreti of Danbury who will attend Bucknell University.

Of the 108 members of the Class of 2021, 100 percent of those students who applied to colleges and universities were accepted and were awarded college scholarships and grants totaling \$28 million. The top ten percent of students achieved a SAT score average of 1375.

Notre Dame High School

FAIRFIELD—Notre Dame High School held its 62nd annual graduation ceremony on Sunday, June 6. At the ceremony, Christopher Cipriano, principal, announced that the 127 graduates had set a school record, receiving over \$28 million in college scholarships and grants.

Sarah Sportini from Stratford has earned the distinction of valedictorian at Notre Dame High School in Fairfield. Sarah has exemplified Notre Dame’s mission of character, faith and intellect. She has completed 469 service hours and received the Presidential Service Award for two years, is an active member of Campus Ministry, a member of the Student Leadership Institute, served as vice president of the Horizons Club and is a member of the varsity girl’s golf team. Sarah has served her local community as an appointee to the State of Connecticut Student Advisory Council on Education, a member of the Stratford Partnership for Youth and Families Youth Committee, as well as serving on their Advisory Bureau. She was also the Stratford

representative for the CADCA Training where she joined students from around the world in Texas to develop strategies addressing youth substance abuse. During her time at Notre Dame, Sarah has been the recipient of the Duke

Dame Student Council. She also served as a center and defenseman on the girl’s ice hockey team, the number three player on the girl’s golf team and captain of the cross-country team. Outside of school, Rose has a talent for filmmaking. She has attended the New York Film Academy and the Solar Productions Film School as well. Rose will be attending College of the Holy Cross this fall studying Chemistry and Calculus.

Chris Cipriano, principal, shared, “Sarah and Rose exemplify what it means to be a Notre Dame student. Both ladies have served as a role model for others in both their character and faith and have lived our mission since their freshman year. They are well prepared for their future and I am excited to see their accomplishments and successes in college and beyond.”

Principal Cipriano also



CARDINAL KUNG ACADEMY, STAMFORD – Elizabeth Lancaster, valedictorian; Miriam DaPonte, salutatorian

LaTorre, Jimmy Olayos and Sister Marion Reilly scholarship awards. She was also the recipient of the 2020 Excellence in STEM award sponsored by Fairfield University School of Engineering and Sikorsky, as well as a recipient of the Sacred Heart University Book Award and the St. Thomas Aquinas medal from the Diocese of Bridgeport. In the fall, Sarah will be attending the honors program at the University of Connecticut.

Rose Linkasamy from Fairfield has earned the distinction of salutatorian. Rose has been an active member of the Notre Dame community and an example of someone who lives the school’s mission every day. Rose has been the president of the Key Club and French Club. She was selected to be a participant of the Link Crew and elected as treasurer of Notre

announced the recipient of the Most Outstanding Senior at graduation. Voted by the faculty, Rose Baker of Trumbull received the prestigious honor in recognition of her academic excellence and contributions to the Notre Dame and local communities. Most recently, Rose, as a member of the school’s Leadership Institute, coordinated a St. Baldrick’s fundraiser for pediatric cancer research, raising over \$11,000.

Cardinal Kung Academy

STAMFORD—Cardinal Kung Academy is proud to announce that Elizabeth Lancaster and Miriam DaPonte are this year’s valedictorian and salutatorian respectively.

Elizabeth Lancaster has attained the highest academic grade point average among her class and will

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

Vals and Sals

CLASS OF 2021 FROM PAGE 21

deliver the farewell speech at the June 15 commencement. Elizabeth, residing in Greenwich, served as a student ambassador, a member of the National Honor Society, a committee member of the Amplify podcast program and a yearbook committee member. Elizabeth is an accomplished pianist, playing for over ten years. She intends on taking a gap year volunteering and working before embarking on college life.

Miriam Da Ponte will also address her class as salutatorian at the commencement exercises. Miriam, born in Italy and then living in Guam, now resides in Bridgeport. Volunteering is a way of life for Miriam and she has developed a heart for service with her family as missionaries for the Neocatechumenal Way. Miriam is a member of the National Honor Society and a key player on the volleyball team. She plans on studying Architecture and Design at Sacred Heart University.

Lauralton Hall

MILFORD—The Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, Lauralton Hall celebrated the graduation of the Class of 2021 on June 5, conferring diplomas to 88 young women.

Class of 2021 Valedictorian Catherine (“Katie”) McLaughlin



LAURALTON HALL, MILFORD – Catherine (“Katie”) McLaughlin, valedictorian; Erin Paranal, salutatorian

is the daughter of Mr. Dennis McLaughlin and Dr. Teresa McLaughlin of Milford. A top high honors student all four years, Katie was a three-season varsity athlete in lacrosse, swimming and indoor track. She also was co-president of Lauralton’s Engineering Team, whose design for a remotely operated helitanker for fighting fires won the 2021 Sikorsky STEM Challenge.

Katie served since freshman year as a Student Council officer,

most recently as president and as captain of Lauralton’s varsity swimming and lacrosse teams—while earning All SCC this year for varsity track and field. She also served the Special Olympics as a volunteer swim teacher and team coach since 2018.

Among many honors, Katie earned the Yale Book Award and the Sikorsky Aircraft Excellence in STEM Award. She also was named a Connecticut Scholars Program Semi-finalist and an SCC Scholar Athlete. She was honored senior year as an SCC Scholar Leader and was the recipient of the Connecticut Association of Schools Scholar Athlete Award and the Robin Lewis-McGovern Memorial Award for swimming & diving.

“Katie has excelled as a passionate and dedicated student and an effective team player—an inspiration to those around her,” said Lauralton Hall Head of School Elizabeth Miller. “We are thrilled for her achievements as she pursues her pre-med career at the University of Virginia.”

Lauralton’s Salutatorian is Erin Paranal, daughter of Mr. Ernesto Paranal and Mrs. Christine Paranal of West Haven. In addition to achieving high honors all four years, Erin is the recipient of



Erin also participates in the Music Ministry at Our Lady of Victory Parish and has served as a dedicated aid for the Veterans Affairs Hospital in West Haven. This fall she will attend Sacred Heart University where she has been accepted into the Thomas More Honors Program and is the recipient of multiple academic scholarships. Erin plans to pursue her interests in computer science and music.

Erin also was named the recipient of Lauralton Hall’s highest honor, the Catherine McAuley Award. This annual award, named for the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, is presented to the senior who best demonstrates the Lauralton mission of Mercy values including compassion, courage, spirit of volunteerism, and sound academic performance.

Head of School Elizabeth Miller described Ms. Paranal as “a committed scholar, full of integrity, and wonderfully humble...a kind and selfless young woman. We will miss hearing her beautiful soprano at Mass and onstage and her willingness to always lend a hand to others. We are so proud of her achievements.”

Fairfield College Preparatory School

FAIRFIELD—Fairfield Prep is proud to recognize two outstanding scholars for their academic accomplishments and personal excellence, achieving in the top two percent of the Class of 2021. Matthew Hansen and William Weber have distinguished themselves by their fulfillment of Fairfield Prep’s Jesuit goals for “Graduates at Graduation”: Open to Growth, Intellectually Competent, Religious, Loving and Committed to Doing Justice.

Matthew C. Hansen’s academic achievements are extraordinary, attaining summa cum laude honors for all years while taking the strongest course of study offered. Matthew has been recognized with Commendation by the National Merit Scholarship program, and is a member of the National Honor Society. He is the recipient of the Dartmouth Book Award in recognition of his scholarship and received the prestigious Jesuit Schools Network Award at graduation as a young man who has distinguished himself as well rounded and committed to doing justice in generous service to God. In Prep’s Campus

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

Vals and Sals

CLASS OF 2021 FROM PAGE 22

Ministry program, Matt has served as an usher, lector and Eucharistic Minister at school Masses. He attended and then led a Kairos



FAIRFIELD COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL, FAIRFIELD – Matthew Hansen and William Weber

Retreat, and was named Co-chair of the annual Freshman Retreat, an event with 300 participants and leaders. As the Head Altar Server at his home parish St. Margaret Mary, he trains new servers. Matt participated in the Ignatian Family Teach-In held in Washington, D.C., and the Urban Plunge immersion trip. At school he has been a member of both the track and freshman soccer teams. In the community, Matt has volunteered service for the Spooner House and the Hero Box project. Principal Dr. Tommy de Quesada praised his qualities, “Matt has been an exceptional leader by example during his time at Fairfield Prep because of his academic success and his passion for serving others.” A resident of Shelton, Matt will attend the University of Notre Dame in the fall.

William J. Weber, known as Billy, is a true scholar who has achieved summa cum laude honors all years while taking the strongest course of studies offered. He was awarded the Brown University Book Award in recognition of his scholarship and love of learning, and is a member of the National Honor Society. At graduation, he received the St. John Berchmans, S.J., Award as a young man of conscience and compassion in service to others for the greater glory of God. He has dedicated his efforts and talents to supporting Prep’s Music program by studying and performing in Symphonic Band all years. In Campus Ministry, he greatly valued his own Freshman Retreat, and chose to lead the experience his junior and

senior years. Additionally, he participated in the Sophomore, Kairos and Christian Leadership retreats. Billy has devoted his service ener-



gies to volunteering at the Precious Blood Parish food pantry and to assisting at a local rehabilitation center. Leading retreats, providing academic assistance to underclassmen as a peer tutor, serving as a mentor in the music program, and being a positive presence on campus all demonstrate Billy’s selflessness and care for others. Principal Dr. Tommy de Quesada commended his dedication and



SACRED HEART, GREENWICH – Isabel DeVita, valedictorian; Piper Gilbert, salutatorian

compassion: “Billy’s love for Prep was evident in his commitment to his studies, his love for the community and the respect afforded to him by his peers and the faculty.” A resident of Milford and member of St. Mary’s Parish, Billy will attend Boston College in the fall.

Sacred Heart

GREENWICH—Sacred Heart, Greenwich is proud to announce

Isabel DeVita and Piper Gilbert as valedictorian and salutatorian, respectively.

Isabel DeVita was a member of many clubs at SHG, including Admissions Club for all four years (co-chair junior year), head of Barat Buddies club sophomore and junior year, and head of Campus Ministry club senior year. She played varsity soccer and ran varsity track all four years, as well. Her favorite academic classes were English and real world filmmaking. As a senior, Isabel won the four year achievement award in real world filmmaking, four year achievement award in campus ministry, and the valedictorian cup award. She won first place documentary at Sacred Heart Film Festival, outstanding documentary interview award at New Age Film Festival and outstanding documentary award at New Age Film Festival. Her favorite activities outside of school include watching movies and reading. In the fall, Isabel will attend University of Pennsylvania, intending to study political science and cinema and media studies.

Piper Gilbert was a member of Speech and Debate and Mock Trial clubs at SHG, and was a member of the softball team. Over all four years, her favorite classes were AP



Spanish Literature, AP Physics C, AP World History, Scripture & the Arts, Theological Foundations, and Honors Physics. As well as the distinction of salutatorian, as a senior Piper received the Premio de Excelencia in Spanish Studies award and the Four-Year Music Award. Her favorite activities outside of school include skiing, theatre and reading. In the fall, Piper will attend Dartmouth College. ■

Catholic Academy

Record-Breaking fundraiser

By **SUSAN CECERE**

FAIRFIELD—On May 17, the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport held its 9th Annual Golf Classic at the Country Club of Fairfield. The event, held in honor of longtime supporters Barbara and Brad Evans, raised more than \$560,000 for need-based scholarships and it was the best-grossing fundraiser in the history of the school. The Evans's have been actively engaged with the Academy for the past 13 years. Mr. Evans has served as board chair since 2015.

Twenty-four foursomes enjoyed a day of golf under blue skies and temperatures in the 70's then joined an additional 80 guests later in the day for a cocktail reception, where speaker and alumna Jennifer Melo wowed the crowd with her testimony. A soon-to-be freshman at Princeton University, Melo grew up in Bridgeport with her single mother, Rosanna, who was also in the audience. "Coming from a family where no one had ever received or pursued a higher education, she had a dream that one day she would be able to watch her only daughter walk across the stage and receive her diploma. Equipped with a goal she would work tirelessly to ensure, she turned to the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport."

Melo said the staff who educated and shaped her throughout her middle school years at the Academy were "unparalleled," adding, "I knew I could count on them for anything. I felt so much love, support and generosity throughout my years there. The foundation I was given at CAB gave me the confidence in high school to form so many close bonds with peers and staff and to pursue leadership positions. I launched clubs, service projects and grew in wisdom."

Melo plans to focus her college studies on international relations, third-world development and economics, and hopes to make a difference in Brazil's socio-economic challenges, the country of her family's origin. "The children there with no educational opportunities, and the people struggling to keep a roof over their heads and food on their tables is what I choose to dedicate my life to. All of my academic and social accomplishments, all of my sweat and tears, and everything I have done that has proven me worthy to attend Princeton University I did not do for myself, but for them, the nation and humanity.... As a society, we cannot ignore the possibility of unrecognized genius that goes to



BISHOP FRANK J. CAGGIANO PRESENTS Barbara and Brad Evans with an award for their longtime support of the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport.

waste due to lack of opportunity."

Speaking directly to the audience, Melo added, "If the world was deprived of generous people like all of you, I would not have had the opportunity to be where I am today. Educational donors are not only making monumental impacts on people's entire lives—like mine—but they are investing in the most powerful means to reach universal harmony. It's not just students that donors impact, but humanity as a whole."

Following Melo, a robust live auction took place with items including a threesome of golf at National Golf Links, a "Taste of the Track for Two" at Monticello Motor Club, a 1:1 Zoom with former PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi, and a 6-course chef's tasting at Southport's renowned Paci Restaurant.

Next was a paddle raise for scholarships since 85 percent of the Academy's nearly 800 students cannot afford the annual tuition of \$5,150 and the school must raise \$2.1 million each year alone for this. Midway through, one guest spontaneously offered to match the next \$30,000 in gifts. Once that was matched, another guest unexpectedly offered to match the next \$25,000 in pledges. When that too was matched, unbelievably yet another guest offered to match the next \$20,000 in gifts. The atmosphere was absolutely electric with participation bubbling up from every corner of the venue.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano then invited Barbara and Brad Evans to the podium where he presented them with an award for working tirelessly on behalf of CAB students, faculty and staff. "Their commitment to education and giving back can be witnessed throughout their lifetime together," said Caggiano.

Mrs. Evans, a graduate of the Eliot Pearson School of Education at Tufts University and an elementary school teacher for many years, sits on the board of the Partnership Schools and is a former board

member of The Southport School, the Mercy Learning Center and the Collegiate School. Barbara has worked to foster significant alliances between many of these organizations and the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport in an effort to take curriculum and social-emotional learning to the next level.

Mr. Evans, a graduate of Dartmouth and Columbia Business School, and a senior advisor at Morgan Stanley where he has worked since 1970, is equally passionate about education initiatives, particularly in inner cities. He is the founder and co-chair of the Horizons Summer Enrichment Program at Sacred Heart University and a board member of Wakeman Boys and Girls Club and Foundations in Education. As a board member for more than a decade and current board chair for the past six years, Mr. Evans has worked to grow the board, develop strong subcommittees, increase enrollment, build new partnerships, and welcome its newest executive director—all while keeping the board focused on its mission.

The Evans's have been dedicated to supporting scholarship funds, as well as founding and funding a program called the New Student Initiative. "Their humility, integrity and lively faith in action reveal their belief that through generosity and care for others, especially the marginalized...they are continuing God's work in this world," said the bishop.

The evening culminated with recognition of the first-ever class of Leaders of Tomorrow (LOT) students and their faithful sponsors. The Catholic Academy of Bridgeport launched the LOT program in 2013 with 11 donors sponsoring 11 students. Today, 46 donors fully or partially sponsor 88 students. The applause was hearty and heartfelt as seven of these original LOT students and their sponsors or representatives were recognized together. All of these 8th graders were accepted into excellent private high schools, and many received merit-based awards for their grades, test scores and community service.

The Golf Classic was a success on every front and countless lives will be changed because of the generosity and support of so many individuals, groups, and family foundations.

(To find out more about the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport or to make a donation toward need-based scholarship, please visit: www.catholicacademybridgeport.org or call 203.362.2990.)

Vatican Project

Making digital space a place of encounter

By JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES
| CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

VATICAN CITY—The Catholic Church can break new ground in fostering dialogue in the often-polarizing space of the digital web, said participants in a Vatican communications initiative.

The initiative, “Faith Communication in the Digital World,” was sponsored by the Vatican Dicastery for Communication and brought together 16 young communication specialists from around the world to address “how the church can and should be present online.”

The U.S. participants chosen by the Vatican were: John Grosso, director of digital media for the Diocese of Bridgeport, Connecticut; Alexandra Carroll, communica-



JOHN GROSSO, DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL MEDIA for the Diocese of Bridgeport.; Alexandra Carroll, communications manager for social mission for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development; and John Lilly, communications specialist for the USCCB’s Office of Public Affairs, are pictured in Rome June 11, 2021. They were in Rome for the “Faith Communication in the Digital World” project, sponsored by the Vatican’s Dicastery for Communication. (CNS PHOTO/JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES)

Carroll told CNS that she, like her colleagues, feels the weight of the “immense responsibility” of their roles in communicating the church’s solidarity with all people,

people to pray for him—asked in a way that deeply touched them.

Speaking in Spanish, Carroll recalled, the pope “stopped—and I remember because he made eye contact with me—and he broke into English and said, ‘Pray for me because I need it.’ But then he looks back at us and he goes, ‘Not against (me) but in favor of me.’”

The words, she explained, struck her because it reminded her of those who often take to social media and accuse the pope of causing division.

“I have a mentor who says that prophets are either believed or killed,” Carroll told CNS. “Pope Francis has been opening our eyes and refocusing our orientation, not changing anything. He’s calling us back to the call of the Gospel,” especially in serving the needs of the poor and the vulnerable.

Grosso told CNS that being near the pope made him feel near to someone who “radiates holiness just with his smile and affection” but also someone who is “carrying a heavy burden, the heavy burden of the church and of the world.”

“You can see it on him, and he does it with joy and with love,” he said. “So, when he looks at you very sincerely and asks, ‘Please pray for me, not against me,’ I reflect a little bit on what I’ve seen these past several months—but also for his entire pontificate—on social media, it’s sort of a call that I take very personally and very seriously.”

“There has been so much difficulty and challenge to Pope Francis, and this is a man doing his very best for the church, and I believe that with every fiber of my being,” he said. ■



tions manager for social mission for the U.S. bishops’ Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development; and John Lilly, communications specialist for the U.S. bishops’ Office of Public Affairs.

The 12-month program, which includes meetings in Rome and online, is designed to develop proposals that will address “the main problems and issues users currently face with the internet.”

“The COVID-19 crisis has led to an increased sense of urgency felt by many in the church to learn an effective communication approach and to ensure a social media presence that witnesses an evangelical ‘style,’” the dicastery said.

Speaking with Catholic News Service June 11, Grosso said that while there isn’t a “one-size-fits-all” solution to polarization on the web, the Catholic Church can help to ease tensions by “encountering and accompanying one person at a time on their journey of faith in digital media.”

especially those on the margins.

“It was a great reminder of just how important my job is,” she said. “Sometimes I forget when I’m endlessly scheduling social media posts and wanting to be done with scheduling social media posts,” but the gathering reminded her “that it’s so much more.”

For Lilly, social media posts on popular sites, such as Twitter, can often make “things seem very black and white, but that’s not real, that’s not how things are” in life.

Being in Rome and meeting with communicators face-to-face, he added, helped “to break down those walls” and as well as “frame your perspective a little bit broader, whereas I don’t think you get that on social media.”

A highlight for the three U.S. participants was meeting Pope Francis June 9 after his weekly general audience.

While briefly addressing the group, the pope—who often asks

New Covenant Center

NCC hybrid event raises spirits and funds for those in need

STAMFORD—New Covenant Center held their first-ever combination live fundraiser and live stream event. Over \$155,000 was raised, so far, at the 17th Annual Celebrity Soiree event at Woodway Country Club in Darien.

Married Fairfield County couple Hannah Storm of ESPN and Dan Hicks of NBC Sports entertained the crowd with sports stories and New Covenant Center Advisory Council member Jose Rivera was awarded the 6th Annual Founder's Award. The most moving moment of the evening was 13-year-old Katie Pineda's reading of her mother Norma's appreciation of the groceries and other services she receives from New Covenant Center.

"As we look ahead, there is much work to be done. First, we must get our guests back inside the center so they can eat their meals in a dignified environment, while resuming other services such as showers, haircuts, job skills training and immigration counseling. Feeding the hungry in our soup kitchen/café and food pantry is our core mission but providing a safe environment and long-term solutions and self-sufficiency for our guests is important," states Director John Gutman.

New Covenant Center has been operating with mostly 800 volunteers staying at home, but still providing meals and sandwiches to guests and other area non-profits.



A NIGHT FOR NCC—(l-r) Mike Donoghue, Jose Rivera, Hannah Storm of ESPN and Dan Hicks of NBC Sports and John Gutman.

The mission of New Covenant Center is to provide a nutritious meal to all those who are hungry. This is accomplished from their 8,000 sq. ft. facility located at 174 Richmond Hill in Stamford. The facility includes an efficient and modern kitchen, a welcoming dining area, expanded food storage area and refrigeration, a spacious food pantry area and additional space for other services. New Covenant Center serves almost 5,000 unduplicated people annually. Stamford's one and only soup kitchen serves over 600,000 each year, providing 200,000 meals to soup kitchen/café guests (2x per day and to several other non-profit agencies' clients). An additional 400,000 meals are served from the food pantry, providing disadvantaged families

with groceries, meat, vegetables and produce.

Founded 41 years ago, New Covenant Center is an inter-faith project of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, serving the homeless, elderly, disabled, working poor and children. No one is turned away. There are no requirements to enter the New Covenant Center doors, except a mutual exchange of respect and dignity.

(For more information on the Celebrity Soiree and to view the event video in its entirety, please go to www.event.gives/nccsoiree2021 or contact Leisa Hinds Simpson at lhinds-simpson@ccfc-ct.org. To learn more about the services provided by New Covenant Center visit their webpage at www.new-covenantcenter.org.)

St. Luke Parish helps India



WESTPORT—The people of St. Luke Parish, Westport have been blessed for many years with spiritual guidance from two priests who originally came from India. Father Thomas Lakra was with the parish for many years and returned to ministry in India and Father Kumar currently ministers at the parish.

Father Thomas recently wrote to current pastor, Msgr. Andy Varga, responding to the prayers and get-well wishes sent to him by the clergy and people of St. Luke as he himself struggled with COVID-19. In his email, Father Thomas vividly described the widespread suffering and death in India from the virus and the lack of medical equipment.

Significantly absent from his email was a request for help other than continual prayers, but Msgr. Andy and the people of St. Luke felt they must help. Parishioners determined that a monetary collection was the quickest and most efficient way to respond to the need.

In just over a week, led by Msgr. Andy, who created a beautiful Pentecost prayer card to emphasize the spiritual message with Pope Francis' "A Prayer in the Time of COVID," the parish raised over \$17,000. The money will purchase several oxygen concentrators for hospitals in the care of religious orders in the home dioceses of Father Thomas and Father Kumar.

Healthcare News

Jennings named President of St. Vincent's

BRIDGEPORT—William M. Jennings will join Hartford HealthCare as president of its Fairfield Region, which includes St. Vincent's Medical Center. He will also be a system-level senior vice president.

Vincent DiBattista, the current regional president, will continue to lead major system initiatives, focusing on the successful integration of clinical practices and programs, until his planned retirement in September 2022.

Mr. Jennings, 53, comes to Hartford HealthCare from Tower Health, a seven-hospital system in Southeastern Pennsylvania, where he is an executive vice president and president and CEO of the system's flagship 714-bed Reading Hospital. Prior to his current role, Mr. Jennings was executive vice president for Yale New Haven Health and CEO of Bridgeport Hospital for eight years.

"Bill Jennings is a healthcare leader with great vision and passion for improving the health of the communities we serve" said Jeffrey A. Flaks, Hartford HealthCare's president and CEO. "In addition to

his deep expertise, we are excited about Bill's strong alignment with our core values and drive to make healthcare more accessible, more affordable, while delivering higher levels of quality and service."

Prior to his leadership of Bridgeport Hospital, Mr. Jennings was president of SSM St. Mary's Health Center in St. Louis, a 582-bed teaching hospital serving a diverse community and broad geographic region. He also served as president for the SSM St. Louis Heart Institute, which served six hospitals. He has held executive positions with BayCare Health System in Florida, and the Cookeville Regional Medical Center in Cookeville, Tenn. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from Miami University, and his master's degree in Hospital Administration from The Ohio State University.

Mr. DiBattista, who first joined HHC in 2015 as President of HHC Medical Group, has led the Fairfield Region since it began as part of Hartford HealthCare in October 2019.

"We are extremely grateful for



WILLIAM M. JENNINGS

Vince's transformational leadership that successfully integrated St. Vincent's into HHC, while enhancing access for patients throughout Fairfield County, and recruiting many talented experts to better care for the region," said Mr. Flaks. "Further, we are delighted that he will continue to advance key strategic priorities across our healthcare system."

Mr. Jennings will begin at Hartford HealthCare on July 19. ■

Medical Mission comes to Merton Center

By ELIZABETH CLYONS

BRIDGEPORT—St. Vincent's Medical Center/Hartford HealthCare ran a free medical clinic,



ic, offering support and services to those in need on Saturday, June 5.

The clinic was by appointment only and no insurance was required. It was available for guests of the Thomas Merton Center and neighborhood residents. One hundred

people were selected in advance and invited to come to the Merton Center to be treated by the St. Vincent's team on-site.

"It was a successful event,"

said Bill Colson, director of the Thomas Merton Center. "It was a great opportunity for Thomas Merton Center's guests, staff and volunteers to be part of the Medical Mission which served about 60 percent of our guests and neighboring residents."

Colson explained that the Medical Mission complimented the Merton Center's Eat Smart Pantry's mission to provide healthy foods to low-income neighborhoods with food deserts.

"As we know the lack of healthy foods has a direct impact on one's health," Colson said. "Guests were able to receive an array of free services, including medical exams, blood pressure and cholesterol checks, podiatry services, free reading glasses and important nutritional information. We sincerely thank St. Vincent's / Hartford Health Center and all their dedicated staff and volunteers for a great experience."

(For more information on how you can help the Thomas Merton Center by making a donation or volunteering your time, visit the program website at www.themertoncenter.org.) ■

Catholic Cemeteries

Work progresses on St. Catherine Mausoleum

TRUMBULL—Foundations are in place for the St. Catherine of Siena Mausoleum at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery and construction is expected to be completed by March 2022, according to Paul Jordao, a partner in Northeast Mausoleum of Pennsylvania.

“Now that the weather is broken, things are starting to roll along,” he said. “We are really enthusiastic to be building such a unique mausoleum.”

Jordao, who is a partner in the company with Kevin Fisher, said the design is very modern, and at the center will be a large courtyard garden, landscaping and natural light. It will be enclosed with 10-foot glass panels and the interior will have three skylights to allow more light to enter.

The St. Catherine Mausoleum will have almost 700 crypts and 608 niches for cremains, centered on a bronze life-sized statue of the Risen Christ from Italy.

Dean Gestal, director of Catholic Cemeteries, said, “It will be a beautiful granite building with a glass atrium from the floor to the ceiling in the middle, and the mausoleum will have three alcoves and be in the shape of a cross. The front of the building will be granite and open glass.”

Jordao said the interior finish will be adonis beige marble with an epoxy terrazzo floor, and the exterior has local natural stone veneer and Giallo Santa Cecilia Granite from Brazil.

At the entrance to the mausoleum will be a magnificent bronze life-sized statue of the Risen Christ, to be sculpted in Italy by Cody Swanson, a recognized sculptor who teaches at the Florence Academy of Art, said Father Joseph Marcello, pastor of the Parish of St. Catherine of Siena. It will be based on Gianlorenzo Bernini’s statue of the risen Christ, which stands atop the tabernacle in St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City.

“When families come to this mausoleum for committal services or to visit the tombs of their loved ones, they will be greeted by this statue, and it will remind them very powerfully of the victory of Jesus Christ over death, which is the bedrock of our faith,” Father Marcello said.



A committee headed by Father Marcello and Deacon Patrick Toole, episcopal delegate for administration of the Diocese of Bridgeport, is conceptualizing religious art for the mausoleum. Among the features that will be incorporated into the building will be panels containing the Beatitudes.

“One aspect of the design that I think will be especially meaningful will be the eight mosaic panels placed in the interior of the mausoleum, which will list the eight Beatitudes,” Father Marcello said. “Back in 2014, Pope Francis said, ‘At the end of the world, we will be judged. And what questions will we be asked there? What will these questions be? What is the protocol by which the judge will evaluate us? We find it in Chapter 25 of the Gospel of Matthew. The Beatitudes...are the questions that we will be asked on Judgement Day. We will not have titles, credit or privileges on which to stake our claims. The Lord will recognize us if, in our turn, we recognized him in the poor, in the hungry, in the indigent and the outcast, in those who suffer and are alone.... This is one of the fundamental criteria for evaluating our Christian life, which Jesus calls us to measure up to every day.’”

Construction of the mausoleum, which is the first the diocese has constructed in 30 years, is being done by Northeast Mausoleum LLC of New Hope, Penn., a general contractor specializing in the cemetery industry.

The mausoleum is divided into four chapels, St. Therese, Christ the King, St. Stephen and St. Catherine. These will be centered around the open-air garden court and four columbariums.

The mausoleum will offer multiple crypt options including singles, tandems, slide-overs and

single and double couches. All of the columbarium niches in the mausoleum will be glass.

The mausoleum will be adjacent to the St. Monica Mausoleum, built 25 years ago with 550 crypts and a number of niches, which have all been sold. The current project also entails refurbishing the existing building, which will include a sales office and a portable altar.

Gestal says half of all interment services are cremation but that 75 percent of them do not receive a final resting place and are often kept in homes or dispatched outside instead of in a sacred place.

As a result, Catholic Cemeteries has begun an outreach with bereavement programs to reach people who may have strayed from their faith and are unaware of the rules for a proper Catholic burial.

Most of the niches in the new mausoleum will have a glass front and be lit from the inside, where the urn will reside. They may also be personalized with a place for mementos of the deceased person. In addition, vase holders and picture frames will be available for the shutter fronts of the crypts.

Catholic Cemeteries has been reaching out to parishes because Gestal wants to encourage the faith community to participate in the diocese’s ministry to the families of the deceased.

After the St. Catherine of Siena Mausoleum is completed in the fall, plans will be developed to construct additional mausoleums in Darien, Danbury and then Greenwich, Gestal said. The demand for above-ground burial is growing.

(For more information about the Catherine of Siena Mausoleum or for inquiries, visit stcatherinemaus.com or email dtotten@diobpt.org or call 203.416.1491.)

Sports

Pioneers' Chestnut is 'the real deal'

By **DON HARRISON**

FAIRFIELD—A post-season college football game on the final Saturday in April? Improbable, you say? But in the era of a worldwide pandemic, anything seems possible.

Its fall 2020 season aborted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Sacred Heart University came oh-so-close to upsetting Delaware, the nation's fifth-ranked team, on April 24 before coming up short, 19-10, in the opening round of the 2021 NCAA Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) Playoffs.

"It was 12-10 in the fourth quarter," explained Pioneers head coach Mark Nofri. "Our kids didn't back down. We went down there and gave them everything we had." Indeed, SHU outgained the undefeated Blue Hens in total offense, 236-199.

Delaware was unable to contain Julius Chestnut, Sacred Heart's All-American junior running back, who put up a game-high 138 yards, including the Pioneers' lone touchdown on a seven-yard dash in the opening quarter.

"He's the real deal, without a doubt the best we've ever had," Nofri said of the Bowie, Md., native. "He has great vision. He can cut on a dime and not change his speed when he cuts. A lot of backs get caught from behind; Julius doesn't get caught."

A solidly built 6-foot, 230-pounder with pro potential, Chestnut led the nation's FCS Division in rushing with 171 yards per game during the abbreviated 2021 spring season. In addition to being selected to the Associated Press' All-American team and the Northeast Conference's Offensive Player of the Year, he was a finalist for the Walter Payton Award (FCS Offensive Player of the Year), named for the late Chicago Bears' Hall-of-Fame running back.

Chestnut has rushed for 3,063 yards across 28 games and three seasons, trailing only Sacred Heart record-holder Keshaudas Spence, who accumulated 3,745 yards over four seasons (2011-14).

Sacred Heart won three of four games during the shortened season, capped by a 34-27 overtime victory over Duquesne for the



JULIUS CHESTNUT

NEC championship on April 11 in Pittsburgh. Marquez McCray's 29-yard pass to Naseim Brantley coupled with Noah Gettman's extra point proved decisive.

Gettman, a junior from Daytona Beach, Fla., set Pioneers records that afternoon with an 82-yard punt—"It went at least 60 yards in the air," Nofri noted—and a single-game average of 56.7 yards per punt.

Frank Alfano, a senior cornerback from Trinity Catholic High in Stamford, was among five Diocese of Bridgeport athletes on the 2021 SHU roster. He was a solid contributor on defense.

Nofri, 51, joined the SHU coaching staff in 1994, just three years after the Pioneers' debut season, when they attracted national attention with a winning (5-4) record. He paid his dues by serving as an assistant across 18 seasons and under six head coaches, including founding coach Gary Reho and Jim Fleming, who guided the Pioneers to an undefeated 2001 season (11-0), their first NEC title and Mid-Major National Championship.

In 2012, Nofri was appointed interim head coach when the incumbent, Paul Gorham, was ill

and forced to retire, and "interim" was removed from his title the following fall when he led Sacred Heart to a 10-3 record and its first appearance in the FCS post-season playoffs.

In all, Nofri's Pioneer squads have won 54 games and lost 43, and he's been voted NEC Coach of the Year four times, including this spring.

The immediate future? He believes it's quite bright but challenging. The Pioneers' 11-game schedule this fall includes a trip to Dartmouth, a long-time Ivy League power, and home games at Campus Field against Bucknell, Morgan State, Merrimack, Central Connecticut, Duquesne (on Parents' weekend, Oct. 23) and Wagner.

Virtually all of the important components from the spring season are intact, even including the return of All-American offensive lineman J.D. DiRenzo, a 6-foot-6, 315-pound behemoth, who will compete as a graduate student.

"My expectations are high," Nofri said, "but we'll have a target on our backs."

Down the road? UConn and Yale will make their first appearance on the Sacred Heart football schedule in 2023. ■

Sports



Undefeated team honors beloved coach

ANGELINA AND HER FATHER COACH JIM MCKENNA

By **KATHY-ANN GOBIN**

SHELTON—Joy, laughter and tears were all part of the Holy Trinity Catholic Academy girls' varsity basketball team championship celebration.

The undefeated team, coaches, parents and staff gathered at the school to celebrate the 2019-2020 season by unveiling a championship banner in the school gym and a special plaque to honor one of their coaches, who was killed this year in a car accident.

Assistant Coach Jim McKenna, father of teammate Angelina, was killed early New Year's Day on his way home, when according to police, another driver crossed the double yellow line on Whitney Avenue in Hamden and the vehicles collided head-on.

"It's bittersweet to be here celebrating our championship and his legacy," said Assistant Coach Aurelio Gracia, who coached with McKenna at the school for three years.

The celebration, delayed a year due to the coronavirus pandemic, was now missing a beloved member of the winning team. McKenna would have been with the team to celebrate their successful season if the coronavirus pandemic had not shut down the country before the

end of the school year.

"He enjoyed coaching the team, he cared for the team," Gracia added. "He really had a good connection with the girls."

The connection the team had amongst themselves and with their coaches was evident this night, as people gathered while a slideshow of photos highlighting the team's successful year played on a big screen in the gymnasium. The photos of joyous smiles of victory, punctuated with high-fives, was the backdrop to teammates reminiscing about a successful season while enjoying a dinner of salad and pizza.

"It softens my heart that people came out to honor him in such a special way and especially since it is connected to what he loved, which is basketball," said Gina McKay, Angelina's mother.

She said coaching their daughter and the team was his newfound purpose in life after a career in law enforcement with Metro-North Police. The Army veteran who served in Desert Shield/Desert Storm and was a reservist at the time of his passing, wanted to spend more time with his daughter, often picking her up after school.

"He spent his time teaching the girls so they could develop and become good players. He helped to build their confi-

dence," McKay said. "He wanted to teach them leadership skills so they could excel in their academic life and sports journey."

Before the unveiling of the banner and the presentation of a plaque in McKenna's honor, the coaches, school staff and McKay and her daughter, Angelina shared a few stories about what Coach Jim meant to the team.

"Coaching is a love and a passion, and I was blessed to coach with Coach Jim and Coach Aurelio (Gracia)," said Head Coach Michael Wilson, who was overcome with emotion recalling shared times with his late friend.

"Basketball teaches us so many life lessons and in life you must work hard to accomplish your dreams," said Wilson. He thanked the girls for their hard work and for their ability to make the coaches laugh, especially after a long day.

Everyone appreciated the dedication and drive that helped propel the team to success.

"He was so proud of his daughter, so proud of the girls," Wilson said. "To remember him this way, is an honor and a privilege to us. We know he is here in spirit."

Lisa Lanni, head of school, said McKenna's impact on the school community, especially the sports community, will not be forgotten. ■

Column: Thomas Hicks



Loneliness

POTPOURRI

BY THOMAS H. HICKS

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

People are reluctant to admit to loneliness, it seems to denote failure. But Loneliness is one of the most universal human experiences. A great amount of research has been done concerning loneliness. These studies have found such interesting facts as: there is greater loneliness among single elderly people living with relatives than among those who live alone; there is no less loneliness in small friendly towns than in the big cities; loneliness is not identical with solitude; many married people feel lonely, as do many college students and high school seniors; etc.

According to Chinese tradition, there are two kinds of people who experience the most tormenting loneliness: the parent who has lost a child and the old widower. The Buddha said, "There is no greater sadness than separation."

The parents who have lost a child are afflicted with one of the greatest and deepest losses possible to humans. The wound is usually incurable, refusing to be healed. The parents grow old in the missing. Many a father has thought he buried his hopes and dreams when he lost his child. A father said: "Being his father was the thing I was best at, and I find it paralyzingly hard to go on without it." What he remembered most about the grieving with his wife was the tears. Even much later after the death of their child, every morning he and his wife would awaken and look at each other, and cry for their dead child.

I remember a father trying to tell me about the death of his only child, a college-age daughter. His face took on the kind of desperate and frozen quality men's faces take on when they don't want to cry. It's a tactile fierceness, heart breaking to behold.

I've heard mothers speak of how they can't rest not knowing exactly where their departed child is. One mother told how in her dreams she goes to find the child, often

crying out, "Where have you gone beloved? Where are you little son? Are you afraid, wherever you are? Are you crying? Please God, love him for me, Please God."

*And we wept that one so lovely
should have a life so brief...*

*So gentle and so beautiful should
perish with the flowers.*

(William Cullen Bryant, "The Death of the Flowers")

At some point in a long happy marriage something like fusion takes place, and when a wife dies, not only does the person die but a world dies with her. When my wife died my world collapsed like a circus tent unstrung from its moorings. I lost a sense of self; I lost my confidence; my tolerance for stress was greatly reduced. The flame went out; the shoulders folded dejectedly; My memory irrepressible returns to her passing. I could see death in her face. It was as if she were going away from me, and I couldn't hold her back. She looked at me as if she was bidding me good-bye, then some force drew her over the sill and closed the door, so to speak. Then I heard the nurse's voice say, "She's gone." After that, a growing loneliness enveloped me. Even after so many years, it is always awful coming back to the empty house and being overwhelmed with the recognition that she was gone forever. There's the dreadful stillness in the house.

There are times when I catch myself looking for her—even expecting to see her. Sometimes I expect to hear her footsteps or voice. Sometimes it feels as if she went on a journey without me, and I feel like calling out: "Where are you? Come back! We have things to do."

I have memories of certain occasions, for example, feeling her shoulder pressed against mine as we listened to music or watched TV; her helping me get my arms into the sleeves of my coat; rainy day trips home where I found sup-

per waiting, found love waiting. I remember the times together writing a list for the store. Now one of my most difficult times is pushing a cart through grocery aisles, trying to look purposeful.

There are all those mornings of rising alone. It was an effort just to get up and get from one place to another. Long nights and lonely dawns.

Barren of her companionship, there was nothing I wanted to do, nowhere to go. I came to hate having to show up everywhere alone. I measure everything into before and after. I count the years we should have had together. There are the walks never taken.

Grief feels so like fear. The bereft widower is often alone and afraid. It's not something that ever goes away. It constantly keeps you company. It is something you learn to live with. You work around it. You often use TV to shelter against the inexpressible loneliness. I envy men who could watch their wives grow old with them.

*But O for the touch of a vanished hand
and the sound of a voice that is still.*

(Tennyson, "In Memoriam of M.H.H.")

We say how Jesus understands all our sufferings because of all the suffering he went through. But as someone said, Jesus never lost a child or a wife.

Parents who have lost a child and aging widowers experience the most acute and crippling loneliness. There's the grief we can't resolve. It turns even happy times wistful. In certain ways, the wound widens and deepens with the years. Some words from Jeremiah would apply.

Jer. 14:19,22: "Why have you struck us a blow that cannot be healed? O Lord our God, we set our hope on you, for it is you who do all this."

Parents of a deceased child and bereft widowers expect a reunion with loved ones in the life to come. A mother who lost her son at Newtown said that when she dies the first voice she expects to hear will be God's saying, "Well done thou good and faithful servant," and the second voice will say "Hi Mom." I expect to hear my wife's voice say, "What took you so long?" She was mine and shall ever be.

*How long it is since she with whom I lay
O Lord, has left for thine my widowed bed.
Yet still our spirits mingle, as our clay,
and still half living yet, and I half dead.*
(Victor Hugo)

Foundations in Charity

Diocese to honor Naydens, Barbers for years of service

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano today announced that the Diocese of Bridgeport will honor Al Barber and his wife Gina for their years of service to Catholic Charities, along with Denis and Britta Nayden for their longtime support of the diocese's charitable mission.

"We will be blessed and fortu-

Charities began many new ministries, especially services related to hunger, housing and mental health in support of the marginalized in Fairfield County. Gina has been a tireless volunteer at the St. Catherine Center for Special Needs as well as the Thomas Merton Center and St. Camillus Center in Stamford."

Denis and Britta Nayden

early and steadfast commitment helped shepherd us through the early years and led to a vibrant mission," said Charles Chiusano, chairman of Saint Catherine Center Board of Directors. "They fully embrace the call to care for God's most vulnerable as they continue to provide philanthropic leadership for Saint Catherine Center as we



YEARS OF SERVICE—(l-r) Denis and Britta Nayden, and Gina and Al Barber.

nate to recognize and honor two remarkable couples who have left a lasting impact on the diocese in their caring, their generosity and their leadership. Their concern for others has respected and supported the dignity of so many in our diocese. We look forward to the evening to express our sense of gratitude and appreciation," Bishop Caggiano said.

A reception in their honor will be held Thursday, August 26, at Bishop Caggiano's residence in Trumbull and is being jointly sponsored by Foundations in Charity and Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, the two organizations which Barber led.

Al recently announced his retirement as executive director of Foundations in Charity, a position he held since it began two years ago, following 16 years as president of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County.

"In his years of service, Al has been the face of charitable works throughout the diocese," Bishop Caggiano said. "Under his stewardship, Catholic

have been "tremendous supporters of Catholic Charities and the diocese for many years," Bishop Caggiano said. "Last year, they gave a \$100,000 matching grant to Foundations in Charity, and their long-term support of the St. Catherine Center for Special Needs has provided educational programs for children and adults with severe physical and emotional disabilities, who might not otherwise have such opportunities."

The special education school in Fairfield provides an alternative for children whose needs were unmet in other settings, said Helen Burland, executive director. The Academy expanded to include an adult service program, beginning in 2015, which provides a continuum of services for young adults who have completed their formal education.

"Britta and Denis Nayden were among the founding donors who brought to life the dream of a safe, loving and supportive learning environment for children with special needs. Their

embark on a significant expansion project. We are grateful for their continued support."

Denis Nayden spent almost 27 years at GE Capital Corp., ultimately becoming Chairman of the Board and CEO, where he was responsible for 20 separate businesses, \$555 billion in assets, and 90,000 employees in 35 countries. He has gone on to lead several international companies since leaving GE Capital.

Over the years, Al Barber has been front and center, supporting Catholic Charities, whether speaking at a parish to promote the mission, introducing a speaker at a celebrity breakfast or auctioning off anything put in front of him.

He graduated from Holy Cross in 1967, joining GE in the finance training program and spent the next 27 years in nine different businesses. He served at GE Capital and as the CFO of NBC, becoming the first president of CNBC in 1990. He

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 33

Foundations in Charity

New fund announced to benefit Catholic Charities

By **JOE PISANI**

The Catholic Charities of Fairfield County Fund has been established to support the charitable ministries of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Conceived by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and the Board of Trustees of Foundations in Charity, the fund will offer donors the opportunity to support the mission and specific programs of Catholic Charities now and into the future, according to Anne McCrory, the chair of Foundations in Charity Board. "While we hope to expand our reach to other Catholic mission work in the county, right now we are committed to Catholic Charities, as the scope of what they are doing in our county is extraordinary and truly lives the mission of the Church" says Michael McNulty, a trustee of Foundations in Charity. Foundations in Charity, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, was created in 2018 to support the catholic works of charity throughout Fairfield County.

Accepting foundational gifts for both endowment and current needs, the fund will also provide an ideal support option for planned giving, McCrory said.

"We have heard from many

of our supporters who are giving sacrificial gifts to the agency now that they also are looking for options to support Catholic Charities after they are gone," she said. "At the same time, many long-term residents of Fairfield County who are now living else-

launched at an August 26 event to be held at the episcopal residence in Trumbull, which will honor Al Barber and his wife Gina for their years of service to Catholic Charities, along with Denis and Britta Nayden for their longtime support of the dio-



FOUNDATIONS IN CHARITY
IMPROVING LIVES TOGETHER

where can opt to support Catholic Charities in their estate planning. The Catholic Charities of Fairfield County Fund is ideal for this purpose."

"There is a tremendous desire for those planning their estates to ensure the charitable works of the Catholic Church can continue long after we are all gone," said Bishop Caggiano, emphasizing that many of the faithful are looking for a specific way to endow the works of charity into the future. Foundations in Charity will do this by establishing this fund, which allows donors to support the mission and programs of Catholic Charities through operational support or endowment growth.

The new fund will be

cese's charitable mission.

The event is being jointly sponsored by Foundations in Charity and Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, the two organizations which Barber led.

Barber recently announced his retirement as executive director of Foundations in Charity, a position he held since it began two years ago, following 16 years as president of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County.

(For more information about the launch of the Fund and how you can make a gift in honor of Al and Gina Barber and support the mission of charitable works, as well as the support of Denis and Britta Nayden to the diocesan ministries, go to the Foundations in Charity website at www.foundationsincharity.org.) ■

DIocese TO HONOR FROM PAGE 32

left in 1994 and became CEO of Bingo King, the largest provider of bingo products in the world. After several other corporate positions, he was appointed the president of Catholic Charities, where he served for 16 years. In 2019, he became the first executive director of Foundations in Charity.

Gina has spent years as a dedicated volunteer in many diocesan ministries. In addition, she has become a diocesan statue restorer and welder of beautiful metal crucifixes.

At the August 26 reception, the Catholic Charities of Fairfield County Fund will be launched. Conceived by Bishop Caggiano and the Board of Trustees of the Foundations in Charity, it will allow donors

to identify a particular area of work or mission within Catholic Charities, which they wish to support, or even the organization itself and all of its ministries now and into the future, according to Anne McCrory, the chair of Foundations in Charity Board, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation created to support the work of charitable ministries.

Accepting foundational gifts for both endowment and current needs, the fund will also provide an ideal option for donors considering estate planning, McCrory said.

"We have heard from many of our supporters who are giving to the agency now that they also are looking for options to support Catholic Charities after they are gone," Mike Donoghue, the

Executive Director of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County emphasized. "In addition, this fund will allow many long-term residents of Fairfield County who are now living elsewhere to support Catholic Charities in their planned giving. The Catholic Charities of Fairfield County Fund is ideal for this purpose."

(For more information about the reception at the Bishop Caggiano's residence in Trumbull on August 26 to honor the work of Al and Gina Barber supporting the mission of charitable works, as well as the support of Denis and Britta Nayden to the diocesan ministries, go to the Diocese of Bridgeport website at: www.bridgeportdiocese.org or the Foundations in Charity website at: www.foundationsincharity.org.) ■

Nuestra Voz

Mil peticiones a los pies del Santísimo en el convento de monjas de St. Birgitta

Por MARICARMEN GODOY

DARIEN—La pandemia cerró las puertas del convento de Santa Brígida (Saint Birgitta) durante tres meses, sin embargo, no fue impedimento para que llegaran más de mil nombres de personas con COVID 19, a quienes pusieron como “prioridad” en sus oraciones diarias e intensificaron la adoración al Santísimo las 24 horas del día, confeccionaron más rosarios para obsequiar a las familias y tejieron a crochet decenas de tapetes para usar en la capilla como purificadores.

La pandemia para las monjas del claustro de Saint Birgitta no solo fueron meses de oración profunda, sino también lidiaron con sus propios dolores. Todas ellas se contagiaron de COVID 19, la hermana Superiora, Sor XXX, no sabe cómo llegó el virus al convento, pero gracias a la profunda fe de las religiosas y los cuidados debidos todas ellas superaron la enfermedad y volvieron con fuerza sus oraciones diarias con la intención de que Dios se apiade del mundo y haya una cura para enfrentar la pandemia.

Durante los tres primeros meses de la pandemia el convento se mantuvo cerrado. Las religiosas vivían en oración y silencio la mayor parte del día. El Santísimo Sacramento estuvo en exposición todo el día por lo que por horas pasaban en oración y meditación como parte del regalo a Dios para que la pandemia cesara.

Sin embargo, no fue razón para que todas las monjas no se contagien del corona virus, que lo superaron sin ningún inconveniente, que a decir de la madre Superiora: “No había que desesperarse, solo le ofrecimos humildemente nuestras oraciones a Dios y confiamos en su misericordia para que se cumpla su voluntad. Y su voluntad fue devolvernos la salud”.

Mientras superaban el contagio a puerta cerrada, seguían haciendo sus tareas diarias dentro de la inmensa casa que es el convento. Las flores, los patios, los cuartos de huéspedes y la capilla estuvieron bien cuidados en espera de volver a la normalidad, mientras vivían de los donativos de los vecinos de Darien y del apoyo de la Diócesis de Bridgeport.

Como el convento es adaptado a manera de hotel para personas que buscan conectarse con la vida espiritual, las seis monjas y las tres

aspirantes que viven ahí, trabajan de camareras, cocineras, recepcionistas y en la limpieza.

Poco a poco el Convento de Saint Birgitta está volviendo a recibir sus huéspedes. En su mayoría son sacerdotes o miembros del clero o creyentes que vienen a encuentros espirituales, a reuniones religiosas o sencillamente a descansar, meditar, entrar en oración o vivir en medio del silencio de las monjas.

La madre Superiora, que es de origen hindú, admite que pertenece a la Congregación de las “Brigidianas”, desde hace 22 años. Antes de llegar a Darien vivió en Roma ahí aprendió italiano, el idioma oficial de su convento.

En este momento tiene a su cargo tres aspirantes estadounidenses, una monja de Filipinas, otra de India y tres monjas mexicanas. Dos son de Michoacán y una de Puebla. Ellas hablan entre sí italiano e inglés. Casi nunca español porque es necesario la convivencia de todas, admitió la Superiora.

Saint Brigitte, tiene 700 monjitas, 250 conventos alrededor del mundo, el Convento de Santa Brígida tiene entre sus muros a tres religiosas nativas de México, quienes viven el carisma de su fe a través de la “hospitalidad y la oración por la unidad de la iglesia cristiana”; mientras atienden a los huéspedes que buscan paz y recogimiento espiritual. La última en llegar es la hermana Amelia nativa de Puebla con apenas cinco años en el convento. Tres en Italia y dos en Darien.

El convento de las “Brigidianas” refundado en el tiempo de la Reforma por la ahora santa Elizabeth Hesselblad, una inmigrante de origen sueco que vino de niña junto a sus padres a New York y se recibió como enfermera para luego abrazar la religión católica después de haber profesado el luteranismo; cuenta con una vista paradisiaca de un brazo del mar del océano Atlántico, una casa de ejercicios estilo colonial, un jardín bien cuidado lleno de flores e inmensas piedras; bajo el cuidado amoroso de las religiosas.

Las hermanas Fabiola Gutiérrez, y Amelia, son nacidas en México; tiene en común una vida monástica dedicada al trabajo y la oración y el haber crecido en el campo en medio del maíz, frijoles y el ágape. Fabiola nació en Jalisco, está en el convento



como religiosa por 20 años. Los dos primeros años hizo su postulante en Roma.

Fabiola pidió al párraco de su iglesia que le diera una guía para ingresar a un convento y él le refirió a las brigidinas por medio del obispo de Colima, un estado que colinda con Jalisco. Nunca tuvo miedo de ingresar al convento aunque separarse de la familia fue una prueba de fuego para ella. Dejó a sus padres y 10 hermanos, es la sexta de sus hermanos y cuando los visita disfruta de la familia a plenitud aunque siempre busca un momento y lugar para recogerse en la oración. Al salir de la secundaria decidió ingresar al convento y duró tres meses en México como aspirante e hizo tres años en Roma como aspirante, un año de noviciado, para luego seguir la profesión de sus primeros votos, luego los renovó por cinco años y finalmente hizo sus votos perpetuos. Para llegar a los votos perpetuos debió estudiar las Constituciones o Reglas y vivir bajo el carisma de su apostolado que es la hospitalidad y rezar por la unidad de la iglesia.

Amelia, es tímida y risueña. Pidió permiso a la Superiora para no hablar con la prensa sino para ir a regar agua a las “flores del Señor”. Dijo tener 33 años pero parece de apenas 20. Siempre sonríe con timidez y tiene el Rosario en su mano y a medida que la Superiora y su compañera hablan ella mueve las cuentas del Rosario.

La hospitalidad, no es más que abrir las puertas de su convento para personas que quieren hacer retiros o ejercicios espirituales sin importar la religión que profesen y ofrecerles un techo, una comida y un lugar cómodo para que puedan meditar, discutir y orar dentro o fuera de la capilla del convento. A decir de la hermana Fabiola: “La hospitalidad no es más que ser una ama de casa dedicada a los quehaceres domésticos para que la familia se sienta bien llegada y feliz dentro de su hogar”.

Vocations

We need not fear our unworthiness

By **FATHER CHRIS FORD**

Ordination day is quite an emotional adventure. The years of prayer, study and sacrifice come to fruition in the reception of one of the most beautiful gifts God has to offer. The result, for many men, is often tears. When the tears come, they typically come at the points you might expect, if you've ever had the privilege to witness an ordination: the moment when you prostrate yourself in supplication while the Litany of Saints is chanted, the moment that the bishop lays his hands on your head, or the moment you are vested by a beloved mentor in the vestments of your new office.

I remember vividly, however, that at my ordination to the diaconate in May 2018, the tears came at quite a different and unexpected moment, especially since it is a moment that is repeated not only at ordinations, but at every Mass we attend or celebrate. As I stood in the pew next to my parents before I was called forward, Mass began as it typically does: with the Sign of the Cross, the greeting, and the invitation to recall our sins. Then, together, we proclaimed these words: "I confess to Almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned..."

Suddenly, I was overcome with emotion. Here I am, on the

verge of receiving the great gift of ordination and of laying down my life in total service to God and His people. Yet, as I confessed my sinfulness along with my brothers and sisters, I found myself face to face with a powerful reality: my own unworthiness to assume the office to which I was being called.

The truth is quite simple: there is not a single bishop, priest, or deacon that is truly worthy of the office in which we serve and of the gift we have received in ordination. But there is a beauty in that truth that is even more profound, since it speaks to the immense mercy and faithfulness of God, who never abandons His people.

The temptation when we encounter the call of God in our lives is to echo the words of St. Peter when he recognizes who is calling him: "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." We fear what love demands of us. We fear that our own weaknesses will be obstacles to the work that God is trying to effect in and through us. But the creativity of God's mercy is just the opposite. Our own weakness becomes the very conduit through which God's true power shines forth. The fact that He is able to work the miracles of forgiveness of sins and the transformation of bread and wine into His true presence



FATHER CHRIS FORD

through such weak, human vessels, is a testament, not to us, but to the fact that there is nothing that is stronger than God's love—not even our own ever-present sinfulness.

When we find ourselves faced with our own unworthiness, Jesus responds as He did to Peter on the shores of Galilee: "Do you love me? Feed my sheep." In the grace and presence of Christ, we do what we can—as much as we can, for as long as we can. And, at the end of the day, everything we were able to do and everything we failed to do remains secure in God's hands. And we no longer need to fear our unworthiness. We need only renew our response each and every day: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Because at the end of the day, as Pope St. John Paul II once said, "He is asking you to love Him. All the rest will ensue." ■

Lomnitzer ordained Transitional Deacon

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano recently ordained seminarian Colin Lomnitzer to the transitional diaconate, urging him to preach the Gospel fearlessly to a "world that is so prideful it dares to believe that we are not made in God's image, but that God is made in our image."

At times, he said, the world will be hostile, "But as I've come to know you, I know that you will preach in season and out of season because you are a young man committed to know and live the truth, so I ask you to preach it fearlessly so that the world might find its way back to the one who is the Truth, Jesus Christ."



Ordination as a transitional deacon is the last step before ordination to the priesthood, which typically occurs a year later after additional pastoral, liturgical and educational preparation. Deacon Lomnitzer, a lifelong parishioner of the Parish of St. Catherine of

Siena in Trumbull, celebrated his first Mass as deacon there on the Solemnity of Pentecost with Father Joseph Marcello as the principal celebrant. His first assignment will be at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Danbury. ■

Vocations

Over 400 attend Gala for Redemptoris Mater

DANBURY—Redemptoris Mater, the Diocesan Missionary Seminary of Bridgeport, held its 4th annual gala Sunday and honored Archbishop Leonard P. Blair of the Archdiocese of Hartford and Kelly Weldon, director of Foundations in Faith, for their efforts in furthering the work of the seminary.

The event, which attracted more than 400 guests to the Amber Room Colonnade in Danbury, was hosted by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and Father Marco Pacciana, rector of the seminary.

The Redemptoris Mater Seminary is under the direction

of Father Pacciana, along with Father Giandomenico Flora, the spiritual director. Redemptoris Mater (Mother of the Redeemer) seminaries 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 missionaries for the New Evangelization as diocesan priests to serve the local church or in any part of the world the bishop chooses.

Bishop Caggiano in his opening prayer praised the seminarians, who are studying for the Diocese of Bridgeport and the



Archdiocese of Hartford, and said that one day “we hope to see them ordained to be your sacred priests.”

Father Pacciana expressed his gratitude and said, “I am very happy and grateful for all of you coming tonight for your support.” He talked about the founding of the seminary and the formation of the seminarians, and added, “We are here as a community because this is what the Church is—a community of people who have witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ and have witnessed him in their lives.”

The seminary in Stamford was established in 2015 on the Feast of Immaculate Conception, and he said it was further blessed when Archbishop Blair asked for a section of the seminary to prepare men for vocations in the Archdiocese of Hartford. “And tonight, we honor him for his great support,” Father Pacciana said.

He said the seminarians have been very enthusiastic to start working on their new house in Stamford, formerly St. John Fisher Seminary, and he then introduced the men currently in formation and 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.”

Kelly Weldon was recognized for her “tireless support” on behalf of the seminarians and the mission of Redemptoris Mater.

In accepting the honor, she said, “Take a look around the room. We see such beauty and diversity in age, culture and gender. This is what God intended fellowship to look like.”

She invoked the words of Bishop Caggiano, who said, “Pastoral care is all about discipleship. How we encounter and learn about Christ and then reach out and include others, especially the most vulnerable on our life-long journey of faith.”

She explained there are nine

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 36

DECEASED CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT JUNE 20—JULY 31

JUNE

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|------|
| 20 | Msgr. John J. Bumstead..... | 1996 |
| 21 | Rev. Albert D. Talbot | 1962 |
| 22 | Rev. Xavier Renda..... | 2009 |
| 24 | Rev. Frankln J. Corrigan..... | 1974 |
| | Msgr. William A. Genuario | 2015 |
| 25 | Rev. Albert A. Tomasko | 1978 |
| 27 | Rev. J. Barry Furey..... | 2012 |
| 28 | Rev. John J. Draper..... | 1966 |
| 30 | Rev. Arthur E. Norton..... | 2004 |
| | Msgr. Thomas P. Mooney | 1956 |
| | Msgr. John E. Tomis | 1986 |

JULY

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Rev. Anthony J. Intagliata | 1990 |
| 2 | Rev. Alfred J. Carmody | 1958 |
| 5 | Msgr. John J. Hayes | 1964 |
| 6 | Msgr. Philip N. Salmone..... | 1967 |
| 8 | Rev. James J. Kane..... | 1956 |
| 9 | Rev. Sean F. Flynn..... | 1978 |
| 10 | Rev. Edward F. Doyle..... | 1981 |
| | Deacon Stephen Sebestyen..... | 2011 |
| 12 | Rev. Edwin Coyne..... | 2013 |
| 13 | Msgr. James P. Devine | 1972 |
| | Rev. A. Fred Constantino | 1980 |
| 17 | Msgr. Walter R. Conroy | 1997 |
| | Fr. Robert Terentieff..... | 2011 |
| 19 | Msgr. Bartholomew J. Laurello..... | 2004 |
| 20 | Rev. John M. Conlisk..... | 1990 |
| | Rev. Peter DeMarco | 2015 |
| | Rev. Kevin P. Fitzpatrick..... | 2008 |
| | Rev. Chester Kicia, O.F.M. | 2003 |
| | Msgr. John J. Wigh | 1995 |
| 21 | Rev. David H. Krahel..... | 2008 |
| 22 | Msgr. Nicholas P. Coleman, P.A. | 1963 |
| 24 | Fr. Paul Lalic..... | 2011 |
| 25 | Rev. Hubert P. Carrig..... | 1978 |
| 26 | Msgr. Francis M. Wladasz..... | 1959 |
| 28 | Rev. William G. Mahoney..... | 1973 |
| 29 | Deacon Ian Black | 2006 |

Vocations

REDEMPTORIS MATER FROM PAGE 35

pastoral care funds in Foundations in Faith and that it has a special commitment to vocations and seminarians, retired priests and missionary parishes.

"It is our pleasure to support Redemptoris Mater with an annual grant each year because of your remarkable work nurturing and forming these young men," she said. "Vocations are of critical importance, and we all need to make it a priority to support this work."

She said: "When I first met the Redemptoris Mater seminarians, it was striking how these young men embody the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, in particular their gift of courage, leaving their families and their countries, to be fully immersed in a new culture as they discern and begin forming for the priesthood. Upon becoming priests, they will receive word of where they will be sent to, perhaps another foreign land to do their missionary work, evangelizing in their words and deeds every step of their journey."

Foundations in Faith is a 501c-3 recognized charity that is committed to supporting and transforming pastoral ministries in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Weldon joined the organization in 2019. She is also a member of the newly formed Diocesan Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism.

She attended Catholic University of America, where she met her husband Chris, who was a law student. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in social work, she began her career in roles that combined social work and law. She worked at the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in the Witness Aid Program and later with children in foster care, representing their interests at Family Court hearings.

She and her husband Chris have three adult children.

Archbishop Blair received a standing ovation for embracing the Neocatechumenal Way when it first came to the Archdiocese of Hartford and began catechesis and evangelization. Today there are six communities and two new ones are being formed. In 2019, he requested that a section be opened in the seminary in Stamford for vocations from the archdiocese, which currently has three seminarians in formation.

Archbishop Blair was praised for being an embodiment of his motto, "Feed my sheep."

Upon accepting the award, he said, "Thank you for that gracious introduction...I didn't know I was that good." He applauded the work of the Redemptoris Mater Seminary and said its efforts will truly benefit the archdiocese and the new evangelization.

"I have had a lot of experiences of different places and different situations in my priesthood of 45 years and as bishop since 1999. It has spanned all the changes and challenges in our Church, which are tied to changes and challenges in our world," he said. "And I was very struck to hear the voices of the popes in the video, all speaking about the importance of evangelization...and yet sometimes I am discouraged that when it comes to evangelization and moving the Church forward, we have been a Church of documents, a Church of words, as if we know what we need to do and yet how do we do it? What is the divine spark, what is the inspiration, what is the movement of God that will bring about this new evangelization that we all thirst for and long for?"

He said he was happy to embrace the Neocatechumenal Way because it is about the movement of the Holy Spirit and about the fruits of evangelization.

"It is so encouraging for this to be happening in the Church and taking the form here in Connecticut as the Redemptoris Mater seminary by providing future priests and offering a way forward for all of us with the marks that it is the grace of God."

He said he was profoundly grateful to welcome the seminarians on behalf of the Archdiocese of Hartford to be part of this movement, this gift of the Holy Spirit that bears fruit.

"There is nothing more important than that," he said. "By the fruits, you shall know them...and the evangelization that takes place in people's lives."

Archbishop Blair, born in Detroit, was named the Archbishop of Hartford on October 29, 2013, and installed in the Cathedral of Saint Joseph on December 16, 2013.

He was ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Detroit on June 26, 1976, fol-

lowing studies at Sacred Heart Seminary College, Detroit; the North American College, Rome; and the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. Archbishop Blair holds a bachelor of arts in history from Sacred Heart Seminary College; a bachelor of Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University; a licentiate in Theology with a specialization in Patristics and the History of Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University; and a doctorate in Theology from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), Rome.

On July 9, 1999, he was appointed as Titular Bishop of Voncariana and Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit, and his episcopal ordination took place on August 24 of that same year. He was then appointed as Bishop of Toledo, Ohio, in 2003, being installed as the Seventh Bishop of Toledo on December 4, 2003. In 2013, he came to Connecticut, being appointed and installed as the fifth Archbishop of Hartford.

Over the years, he has served on several committees of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, including the Committee on Women in Society & the Church; the Committee on Catechesis; and the Subcommittee on the Catechism, which he chaired. In recent years, he also served as the chair of the Committee on Evangelization & Catechesis and as a member of the Doctrine Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee on Religious Liberty. He currently serves as the chairman of the Committee on Divine Worship.

In gratitude Bishop Caggiano offered the final blessing and said, "This night has been an occasion of great joy as we have come together to celebrate what connects us. So as we leave this place, may our hearts be renewed that we may be ever more joyful, that we may be ever more confident that you, Heavenly Father, will help us to meet all the challenges before us, that we may bring the Good News to the world. We ask that you continue to bless the men in formation, and guide them in your grace that if it is your holy will, bring them to the altar of ordination that they may lay down their lives in service to your people." ■