

FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

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Letter from Bishop Frank

May 31, 2026 | Holy Trinity Sunday

My Dear Friends in Christ,

On the weekend of June 13 and 14, 2026, we will reconsecrate the Diocese of Bridgeport to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, joining the Catholic Church throughout the United States in a great act of faith and love as our bishops consecrate our nation to the Sacred Heart to mark the 250th anniversary of America's founding. What more fitting response to the deep hunger for faith in our time than to entrust ourselves, our families, and our communities to the Heart of the One who loves us without limit?

What does it mean to consecrate our diocese to the Sacred Heart? It means recognizing a truth we so easily forget: We belong to God. Our lives, our struggles, our joys, and our failures are not ours to carry alone. The Heart of Jesus—that pierced, burning, inexhaustible source of love and mercy—is the answer to every longing the human heart has ever known. To consecrate ourselves to that Heart is to say: “Lord, I give you what I am, and I trust in who You are.” It is an act of surrender, of hope, and of love.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is more than a pious relic of a bygone age. It is a living wellspring of grace, renewed in our time by Pope Francis's encyclical *Dilexit Nos* (He Loved Us). In it, our late Holy Father called us to contemplate the Heart of Christ, who took upon Himself our infirmities and sufferings and stands in faithful solidarity with every broken and burdened soul, a God who loves us with a human heart and invites us to let His love transform ours.

We live in a moment when that transformation is sorely needed. Look at our world: wars raging, families torn by division, communities marked by loneliness, a culture that measures persons by productivity rather than their God-given dignity. Here in Fairfield County, we see it in the rising numbers turning to Catholic Charities for basic needs, in families facing economic uncertainty, and in young people searching for a love that will not disappoint.

Devotion to the Heart of Christ will not

solve every problem, but it will draw us closer to the One who walks with us, transforming our suffering and setbacks into holiness and joy. This calls to mind the two disciples walking sadly to Emmaus on Easter Sunday, only to find their hearts burning within them as He accompanied them. He longs to walk alongside each of us in that same way. We need to open our hearts and let Him.

When we consecrate our diocese to the Sacred Heart, we are committing ourselves to allow the love of Christ to shape how we live, how we serve one another, and how we engage our neighbors, especially those who are poor, forgotten, or on the margins of society. The Heart of Jesus has a special place for those who experience discrimination or oppression, and if our consecration is to be genuine, it must move us beyond our comfort and beyond our parish doors into the streets and homes where His love is most desperately needed. We must share the love that God is so generous in giving us.

As we mark America's 250th anniversary this July, let us not forget that a nation's greatness is measured not by power or prosperity, but by fidelity to truth, justice, and charity. The consecration of our nation and our diocese to the Sacred Heart is, at its heart, a prayer: a prayer that our country and our communities be renewed from within by God's grace. We cannot build the civilization of love by our own efforts alone; we need the Heart of Christ to be the foundation of our homes, our institutions, and our common life.

I invite each of you to enter this consecration with your whole heart, not merely as words on a page, but as a sincere personal offering. Bring to the Sacred Heart whatever burden you carry today: your fears, your regrets, your doubts, your hopes for your children and grandchildren. Trust His Heart with all of it. And then ask yourself: How is the Lord calling me to make His love more visible in my family, in my workplace, in my parish, in my community?

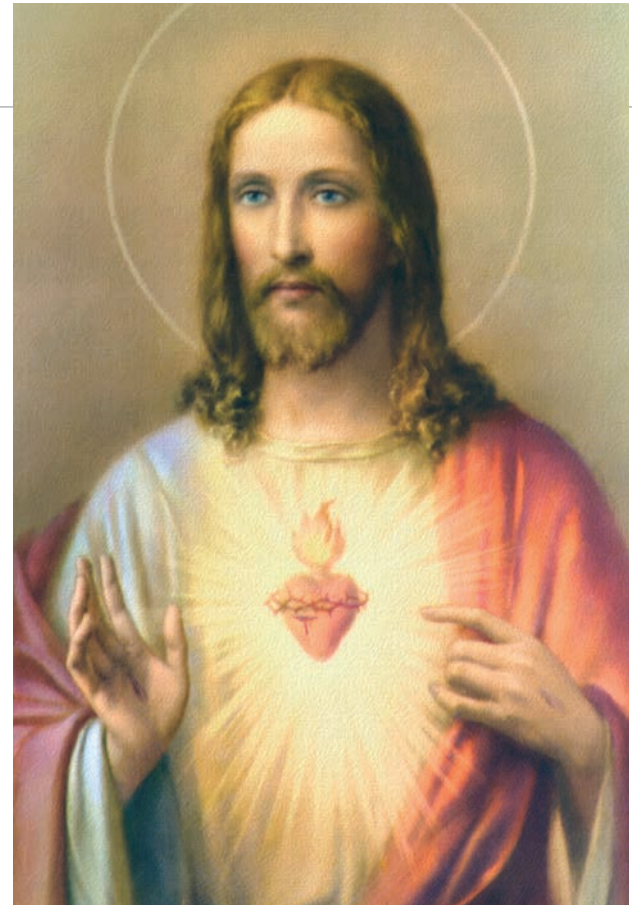
This is how consecration becomes more than a moment; it becomes a way of life. This is how the renewal we all so greatly need begins: not from the top down, but from the inside out, one heart at a time, conformed ever more closely to the Heart of Jesus Christ.

May the Immaculate Heart of Mary, who pondered all things in her own heart and stood faithfully at the foot of the Cross, intercede for us as we make this consecration. May she lead us ever deeper into the love of her Son, whose Heart is our shelter, our strength, and our hope.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of the Diocese of Bridgeport



CONSECRATION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

O Sacred Heart of Jesus,
I give myself wholly to You.
Take my heart, my thoughts, my words,
and my deeds,
that I may love what You love
and desire what You desire.
Be my strength in weakness,
my refuge in temptation,
and my guide in every trial.
Reign in my mind, my heart, my will,
and my life,
that I may belong totally to You.

Sacred Heart of Jesus,
burn within me with Your holy love,
and make me faithful to You always.

Amen

*Please pray this prayer every day for your intentions
and for the needs of the Diocese of Bridgeport.*



ON THE COVER

MATER SALVATORIS SCHOOL IN STAMFORD HONORS their patroness, Mary, under the Latin title “Mother of the Savior.” Catholics honor the Blessed Mother in a special way during the month of May, with many parishes and schools hosting May crownings or other similar celebrations. (PHOTO COURTESY OF MATER SALVATORIS SCHOOL)

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May 2026

Diocesan News

Priesthood, transitional diaconate ordinations set

By ROSE BRENNAN

SHELTON—Next month, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will ordain two men to the sacred priesthood and one man to the transitional diaconate. All are invited to attend these joyful celebrations and welcome God's newest shepherds into the fullness of their vocations.

Dominick Angiolillo will be ordained to the transitional diaconate on Saturday, June 6 at 11 am at St. Augustine Cathedral in Bridgeport, while Deacons Juan Jose Colón Jr. and Herley Mendez will be ordained to the priesthood the following Saturday, June 13 at 11 am at the same location.

The bishop will also this

year ordain Deacon Riccardo Varagnolo to the priesthood, which is set for Saturday, August 15. His official ordination announcement will run in a future issue of *Fairfield County Catholic*.

Deacon Juan Jose Colón, Jr. was born on September 14, 1994, and is one of three children of Juan J. Colón, Sr. and Rosa Rodriguez. Native to Norwalk, he received his Baptism and Confirmation at St. Joseph Church.

He graduated from Norwalk High School in 2012 and studied at the former St. John Fisher Seminary from 2014 to 2017. After a leave of absence and a four-year stint at Pepperidge Farm, he re-entered seminary

in 2022, this time at St. Charles Borromeo in Ambler, Pa.

Deacon Colón was ordained to the transitional diaconate on May 17, 2025 at St. Augustine Cathedral by Bishop Caggiano. He was then assigned to serve at Assumption Parish in Westport.

Deacon Colón enjoys both watching and playing sports. He is a diehard New York Yankees fan, and his favorite player of all time is Andy Pettitte.

"This journey has been so much more than a journey to priesthood," Deacon Colón said of his upcoming ordination. "It has been a journey to encounter God more profoundly every day



DOMINICK ANGIOLILLO



DEACON HERLEY MENDEZ TORRES AND DEACON JUAN JOSE COLÓN, JR.

and to become who God wants me to be. I am grateful to God for the love and mercy he continues to show me and I look forward to accompanying people on their journey to grow in relationship with God."

Deacon Colón will celebrate his first Mass as a priest on Sunday, June 14 at his home parish, St. Mary in Norwalk. The homilist will be Father Jhon J. Gomez, and other principal concelebrants will include Father Juan Gabriel Acosta, Father Chris Ford, Father Christopher

Redcay, Father John Ringley and Father Thomas Viviano.

Deacon Herley Mendez Torres was born in Medina, Colombia on December 2, 1988 to the late Hector Mendez and Luz Torres and is one of 11 children.

Deacon Mendez received his Baptism and Confirmation at Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Maya, Colombia, and graduated from Colegio Departamental Jose Manrique in 2007. He received a bachelor's degree in psychol-

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Three to be ordained to the permanent diaconate

By ROSE BRENNAN

SHELTON—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano will ordain three men to the permanent diaconate on Saturday, June 20 at 11 am at St. Augustine Cathedral. All are welcome to attend.

The three men are Michael J. Crane of New Canaan, Andres Grajales of Stamford and Martin Rodriguez of Bridgeport. They have backgrounds in law, data management, quality assurance—and above all, devotion to their Catholic faith and parish communities.

Michael J. Crane is a retired attorney and a parishioner at St. Aloysius in New Canaan. He and his wife Alycia, a college guidance counselor at Sacred Heart Greenwich, have been married for 36 years and have three adult sons—Matt (Katie), Michael (Megan) and Austin (Sarah). Their oldest son, Matt and wife Katie, are the parents of Jack who was born last November.

Crane entered the Diaconate Formation Program for the diocese in March 2022. He previously taught eighth grade in the faith formation program at St. John Parish in Darien for 26 years.

The only child of Rose and Harry Crane, he grew up in the Woodhaven neighborhood



MICHAEL J. CRANE



ANDRES GRAJALES



MARTIN RODRIGUEZ

of Queens, N.Y. and attended Archbishop Molloy High School—one of his life's defining experiences. He graduated from Fordham University in 1983 with a bachelor's degree in political science and then received his law degree from Fordham Law School in 1986.

Crane served as a law clerk to United States District Judge John F. Keenan for two years before working as a litigation associate at Simpson, Thacher and Bartlett. He then joined the General Counsel's Office of Ernst and Young LLP, where he was Associate General Counsel, retiring in 2021.

He will receive his Master of Arts Degree in theology from St. Joseph's Seminary and College

in May.

Andres Grajales is a member of Sacred Heart Parish in Stamford. He and his wife, Judy, a Licensed Professional Counselor, have been married for 20 years and are the proud parents of three children: Angela, 18; Mateo, 16; and Cristina, 11.

Grajales entered the Diaconate Formation Program for the diocese in March 2022. Throughout his years of service in the Church, he has been actively involved in a variety of ministries, including serving as a lector and catechist and supporting the Spanish-speaking community through young adult ministry within the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. He has also served as a Marriage

Preparation (Pre-Cana) coordinator at St. Mary Parish in Stamford, coordinated the OCIA Spanish program and was a co-founder and member of the Spanish Charismatic Renewal group at Sacred Heart Parish.

A native of Pereira, Colombia, Grajales emigrated to the United States 31 years ago. He is a graduate of Gibbs College, where he studied computer network operations. Professionally, he serves as a supply chain business expert and data analytics manager for the Americas at Coty Inc., based in New York. Over the course of his career, he has held roles in factory production, data management, process improvement and logistics.

Grajales is deeply grateful for the

journey of faith that has led him to this moment and looks forward to continuing to serve the Church and his community as a deacon.

Martin Rodriguez is a devoted member of the Cathedral Parish, where he has faithfully served in a variety of ministries over many years. His generous commitment to parish life includes service as a lector, catechist and choir member. He has also dedicated himself to preparing engaged couples for marriage through Pre-Cana classes for the Hispanic community within the diocese. In addition, he has offered leadership and guidance as a member of the parish council.

In March 2022, Rodriguez entered the Diaconate Formation Program, prayerfully discerning and responding to God's call.

Rodriguez has been blessed with 29 years of marriage to his beloved wife, Leo Flor Rodriguez. Together, they have raised four children—Aislynn, Michael, Yuliza and Yelena—and now rejoice in the gift of their three grandchildren: Owen, Arie, and Iliana.

Born in Bogotá, Colombia, he is the son of Jose and Eudoxia Rodriguez. He emigrated to the United States in 1980, where

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Appeal News

Young adults invest in Church through Appeal

By JOE PISANI

For faithful young adult Catholics, the secular world can be a lonely place—and sometimes a hostile place when they're just starting out in a career.

However, many have found spiritual camaraderie and strength in numbers in the Diocese of Bridgeport, which has ministries and events that bring young adults together for faith and fun, through the support of 2026 One in Christ Bishop's Appeal.

"For me it's important to give to the Appeal because young adults are so often told to chase material success, but these ministries help us to stay focused on our relationship with the Lord, which is what truly lasts and ultimately matters," says Emma Ratnavel, a University of Connecticut graduate and lifelong parishioner of St. Elizabeth Seton Parish in Ridgefield.

Anthony and Catalina Gullo of the Basilica of St. John the Evangelist also attend young adult events and believe "giving to the Appeal is giving to the future of the Church."

"We want to have kids," said Catalina, associate director of

faith formation at St. Catherine of Siena-St. Agnes Parish in Riverside. "And we want to raise them Catholic, and we want them to be part of the Church and feel the same community and identity that we grew up with, so if we don't give now, there won't be a Church in the future."

Anthony, a lawyer who practices in New York City, said young adults recognize their importance in the Church's future.

"I think that awareness is growing and we're seeing it in parishes and the diocese," he said. "And I really believe we're at a great point right now in terms of participation and in terms of people attending events and doing what they can, volunteering where they can, and helping out in any way possible."

In announcing the 2026 Appeal, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said: "The Holy Spirit is working powerfully in our midst, and we are beginning to see the fruits of our efforts, and those fruits are growing. Over the last few years, you have heard me say that we are in the work of renewal—of bringing new life, both individually to our own discipleship and collectively to our

common life as a Church."

Bishop Caggiano said he was grateful for the continued generosity and urged the faithful to consider a gift to the 2026 One in Christ Bishop's Appeal, which has a goal of \$8 million and will provide for works of charity, formation in faith, education and catechesis.

The Gullos, who moved to Stamford a year ago, are enthusiastic about the diocese, having lived around the country.

"As far as I'm concerned, this is the best diocese we've seen in terms of the strength of the parishes, young adult programs, engagement and growth, and the number of catechumens this year," Anthony says. "Those are reasons why we love supporting the Appeal."

Catalina said that in other places they've lived, including New Mexico and Indiana, the young adult population wasn't as significant.

"There were some families, but really no young people, no young professionals, no young married couples, so we were very much an anomaly," she said. "Now, being in a community with so many young people is really awesome."

Equally awesome, she says, is the St. Catherine of Siena-St.



Agnes faith formation program where she works, which has more than 400 children enrolled from kindergarten to eighth grade.

The couple, who met at the University of Notre Dame, believe participation of young adults in the Appeal is very important.

"It's not necessarily the quantity you give, but it's showing you're committed to the work of the diocese and to its mission," Anthony said. "The way that Catalina and I look at giving is that it's symbolic of who we are and what we stand for, so we give to things that are important to us, where we know the money will be put to good use."

They also believe that participation in the Appeal must move beyond a handful of wealthy donors.

"We're early in our careers, so we can't give as much as older donors, but I think, I just hope, that other young people realize that everything adds up," Catalina says. "It's a cumulative effect, and even if you can only give a small amount, if everyone gives, it adds up. Sometimes people think 'My gift wouldn't be substantial. It wouldn't make a difference, so why even bother?' But it does make a difference."

Ratnavel belongs to a faith-filled family and has a grand-uncle who is a retired bishop in Sri Lanka, where her parents came from. Their faith is so fundamental to them that she, her mother and grandparents attend daily Mass.

A member of a young adult choir, Ratnavel sings at different Masses throughout the diocese, including Latin Masses at St. Mary Parish in Norwalk, the Basilica and Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Stamford.

"The young adult music ministry has been especially meaningful to me," she says. "When young voices come together as a choir for young adult Masses, we can use our gifts to glorify God while building a faith-filled community."

In addition, she regularly attends Bible study and Eucharistic Adoration and has organized young adult events for figure skating, swing dancing and ballroom dancing.

She is also enthusiastic that

young people are coming to the faith like never before.

"They are returning because they are hungry for the truth and deeper meaning and want to discover what God truly made us for," she said.

Helping further that goal are the programs and groups that encourage young adults to express their faith openly and fervently.

"I think it's so important to invest in young adult ministries because it gives us an opportunity to unite with like-minded peers in our faith in a world that tells us otherwise and to stay rooted in what is eternal—our relationship with the Lord," Ratnavel says.

She encourages her peers to give to the Appeal "because when they contribute to these ministries and charities, they are supporting the future of the Church, our families and our communities, and they are helping to spread the faith to future generations and encouraging people to grow together in unity."

Pamela S. Rittman, director of development and the Bishop's Appeal, said, "Young adults are not only participants now in the life of the Church, they are its emerging leaders. Engagement from younger generations, both professionally and personally, is vital to the Church's mission. By supporting the Bishop's Appeal, young adult Catholics help carry forward a legacy of faith, service, and leadership for years to come."

(If you have not made a gift, please visit www.2026BishopsAppeal.org or call 203.416.1470. Thank you for your support.)

ORDINATIONS SET FROM PAGE 3

ogy from Minuto de Dios University in 2017 and has attended St. Joseph Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y. since 2021. He has also worked as a social support assistant, a visiting psychologist and a social worker.

Deacon Mendez was ordained to the transitional diaconate by Bishop Caggiano on December 6, 2025 at St. Peter Parish in Danbury and was assigned to serve at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Fairfield.

"I am convinced that I stand where I am today because of Jesus Christ—not as an idea, but as a living presence I have encountered," Deacon Mendez said. "Through both joys and struggles on the path to the priesthood, I have experienced his love and mercy as something real, faithful, and demanding. In prayer, the sacraments, and fraternal life,

I have learned to recognize and respond to this presence that continually draws me deeper. My desire to do God's will has become a response to a love that has proven itself true in my life. It is this same Jesus—alive and accessible—that I want others not simply to know about, but to truly encounter."

Deacon Mendez will celebrate his first Mass on Sunday, June 14 at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish. The homilist will be Father Joseph Fitzgerald, and other concelebrants will include Father Thomas Doyle, Father Oscar Mora, Father Robert Ruggiero and Father Luis Saldaña.

Dominick Angiolillo was born on February 3, 1988 to John and Jodi Angiolillo and has two siblings: Thomas and Jennifer. He was confirmed at St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull.

Angiolillo graduated from

Trumbull High School in 2006. He then attended Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, graduating with a bachelor's degree in liberal arts in 2012.

Angiolillo studied for the priesthood at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary's pre-theology program and is finishing his formation at St. Joseph Seminary.

"There are many things that brought me to this moment in formation," Angiolillo said. "Spending time in front of the Eucharist—the source and summit of our faith—infuses graces into the soul itself and changes a person. This not only gives me peace, but also allows me to put faith into action. The Eucharist and this vocation have given me purpose in life. Our vocation is a goal. Our vocation helps us to be saints in heaven." ■

THREE TO BE ORDAINED FROM PAGE 3

he continued his education, graduating from Bullard Havens Technical High School and later earning a degree from Gibbs College.

Professionally, Rodriguez has served for over 20 years as Quality Director at JV Precision Machine Company in Seymour, Conn. Earlier in his career, he worked as a machinist and an inspector at Perkin Elmer for 14 years. ■



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Your gift of service and support help sustain vital ministries that serve the most in need, nurture vocations and strengthen our parishes and families in faith.

- + **38 seminarians** receive support as they discern their vocation to the priesthood and 15 men are in formation for the Diaconate.
- + Youth and adults grow in knowledge and love of the faith through the **Institute for Catholic Formation**, while children in the Danbury area encounter Jesus through the **Formation Satellite Center**.
- + **Ongoing pastoral care** provides services to the sick, the elderly in nursing homes and hospitals, and those facing life's challenges through the Pastoral Companions Program.
- + More than **2.2 million meals** are served and **7,900 counseling sessions** are provided through Catholic Charities of Fairfield County.
- + **1,149 students** receive Bishop's Scholarship Fund tuition in partnership with Foundations in Education to attend Catholic elementary schools.

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Foundations in Education

At a decade mark, FIE names first president

Steven Velardo, a familiar face in diocesan advancement, will lead the Foundation supporting Catholic education starting June 1, 2026.

SHELTON—After ten years and more than \$29 million invested in Catholic education across Fairfield County, Foundations in Education (FIE) is entering a new, exciting chapter of growth.

Steven Velardo, currently senior director of development for leadership gifts at the Diocese of Bridgeport, has been named the inaugural president of FIE. He begins June 1, 2026.

His appointment fulfills a January commitment from FIE Board Chairman Joe Purcell, who told the Foundation's friends that a new leadership model, built around a president, would be in place by July.

"Catholic education in our diocese is one of the most powerful expressions of The One renewal underway," said Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. "Foundations in Education has been at the



STEVEN VELARDO

heart of making that education accessible, and Steven Velardo is the right leader to carry that mission into its next chapter. He knows our donors, he knows our schools, and he knows that what we are doing here matters and is transforming the lives of thousands of students across Fairfield County."

"In January, I told our friends and donors that we would have new leadership in place no later

than July," said Purcell. "I'm delighted to share that we have found that leader sooner and that he comes to us with deep relationships across our donor community and a clear vision for growth. Steven understands the trust that has built this Foundation, and he is ready to take it forward."

Velardo joined the Diocese of Bridgeport in March 2022 as a major gifts officer and was promoted to senior director of development for leadership gifts in October 2024. In those roles, he has worked alongside the philanthropic partners supporting Catholic schools, charitable outreach and pastoral ministries throughout Fairfield County.

"I have spent the last four years getting to know the families, donors and educators who make Catholic education in Fairfield County such an extraordinary gift," Velardo said. "To be asked to lead Foundations in Education at this moment is both a humbling responsibility and the privilege of a lifetime."

Before joining the diocese, Velardo held business management roles in real estate, overseeing teams and operations

across portfolios in the greater New York City region. He earned his MBA with honors from Sacred Heart University, where he was awarded the Gold Medal of Excellence in Business Administration. He lives in Shelton.

Joe Gallagher, chief development officer for the Diocese of Bridgeport, has served as interim executive director of Foundations in Education since February 2026

and will continue in that role through the leadership transition.

(Founded in 2015, Foundations in Education is the philanthropic arm supporting Catholic education in the Diocese of Bridgeport. Through scholarships, leadership initiatives and innovation grants, the Foundation has awarded more than 14,500 tuition assistance awards totaling over \$29 million in its first decade. For more information, visit foundationsineducation.org.)

Revitalization for St. Charles



BRIDGEPORT—For decades, the massive former school building at St. Charles Borromeo Parish has sat vacant. Over time, with years of non-use, it became an eyesore, and even dangerous. Many ideas were explored, plans discussed, and possibilities considered, but in the end, the building was simply too far gone to restore.

Now, something new is beginning. On May 6, demolition got underway with a boom—and with it, a story of partnership and possibility.

Foundations in Faith's St. Francis Xavier Fund stepped in with a significant two-year grant to help make this project a reality. In year one, a \$125,000 grant supported the critical work of disconnecting and capping utility lines—no small task, but an essential first step toward demolition. In July, a second-year grant of \$75,000 will help offset the cost of creating a new parking area on the site.

This transformation will both improve aesthetics and enhance safety for the neighborhood and provide much-needed parking for a thriving parish that ranks among the top five in Mass attendance in the diocese, as thousands of people attend one of St. Charles' eight Sunday Masses every weekend.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano brought together a strong network of partners to move this forward. Furthermore, real estate developer Bob Scinto, with remarkable generosity, is donating much of the demolition work—a true gift for the parish and community.

Thank You *Jubilarians*

We are grateful for your generous service to the people of God!

75 YEARS

Ann Moles

70 YEARS

Mariano Pardo

60 YEARS

Eileen Shea

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, Foundress



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The One

Ten priests study, visit Rome's sacred sites

By JOE PISANI

Father Cyrus Bartolome, pastor of Assumption Parish in Westport, recently had a chance to visit some of the most sacred sites of the Catholic Church in Rome and study preaching at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, along with nine other priests from the diocese.

It was, he said, "a wonderful and rare opportunity to step away from the pace of parish life and be a regular priest again at the heart of the Church. Looking back and finding yourself in the city of Rome, praying where generations of priests have prayed, and celebrating the Eucharist in such sacred places as the Catacombs of St. Callixtus was both grounding and renewing."

The 10 priests were part of the week-long Rome Preaching Program of the diocesan St. Jerome Center for Preaching and Biblical Studies. It gave them an opportunity to study preaching at an advanced level under the Dominicans, develop priestly fraternity and appreciate the universality of the Church by visiting holy sites, according to Deacon Patrick Toole, DMin, founder and director of the center and chancellor of the diocese.

Father Miguel Betancur Lenis, parochial vicar at St. Matthew Parish in Norwalk, said he gained "a renewed sense of priestly fraternity and a deeper appreciation for the richness of the Church's intellectual and spiritual traditions."

"As priests, we had a unique opportunity to experience Rome from a different perspective, not as leaders of a pilgrimage but as participants, and to enrich ourselves intellectually, culturally and spiritually in an atmosphere of prayer and fraternity," he said.

"I especially loved the classes at the Angelicum led by the Dominican priests."

The group also included Fathers Guy Dormevil, Férry Galbert, Chris Ford, David Roman, Claudiu-Gabriel Necularsi, Birendra Soreng, Adriano Bicchieri and Jozef Ukaj.

This was the second year Deacon Toole has taken a group to Rome, and it was a busy week. Their day began with morning prayer, followed by classes with Dominican professors, lunch, and



an afternoon pilgrimage to sacred sites, where they celebrated Mass, including St. Peter's Basilica, the Basilica of St. Mary Major, the Basilica of St. Clement and Santa Maria Sopra Minerva.

"Each of the participants had to preach once during the week, either at morning prayer or Mass," Deacon Toole said. "They also had two private sessions with a Dominican friar who teaches homiletics at Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis."

The priests each sent a video of a Sunday homily and received feedback, which they will incorporate in future preaching, followed by another round of critiquing.

"The Dominicans are known for their preaching," Deacon Toole said. "So what better place for priests to learn than at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas?"

The topics the group studied included St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas and Pope Benedict XVI on preaching, liturgical preaching and artificial intelligence and preaching.

Deacon Toole said the program relates to Bishop Frank J. Caggiano's renewal efforts and is best illuminated by the Gospel story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

"The disciples were distraught leaving Jerusalem, and then Jesus appeared and walked with them, and the first thing he did was explain all that had happened by opening the Word for them. He is the Word," Deacon Toole said. "He helped them see his death and resurrection in that light ... and then in the breaking of the bread, they recognized him."

Similarly, in the Mass, the Liturgy of the Word leads to the

summit of the Holy Eucharist.

"Preaching helps the Word come alive and be meaningful and impactful to a particular people at a particular place at a particular point in time. It prepares us to go to the heavenly banquet and receive our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament and it's all integrated into the Sacrifice of the Mass," he said.

The program, which will go into its third year next April, was made possible through the gift of an anonymous donor, who

believes it is important for priests to be immersed in the universality of the Church in Rome, experience fraternity and study preaching at an advanced level so they can proclaim the Word of God more effectively. It was developed in conjunction with Father Patrick Baikauskas, O.P., vice president of institutional advancement of Aquinas Institute of Theology, and Father Dominic Holtz, O.P., dean of the philosophy faculty at the Angelicum.

Father Bartolome came home re-energized and grateful for being able to participate in the program. He was especially moved by "celebrating the Eucharist in the catacombs and in the historical churches and major basilicas."

"There is something very powerful realizing you are part of a much larger journey of faith that goes back centuries," he said.

Father Betancur Lenis expressed his gratitude and said he appreciated the daily classes with the Dominicans.

"Father Dominic emphasized that we must trust the Holy Spirit to guide us in preparing homilies that not only catechize our parishioners but also move them to deeper discipleship," he said. "His talk made me realize that priests do not necessarily need AI to produce meaningful homilies if we continue to fill our souls with God through prayer, reading, study and service to our communities. We should also constantly pray for our priests, that they continue to renew their priesthood through prayer and pastoral service." ■

The Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano



By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See

Bishop of Bridgeport

DECREE MODIFYING THE DIOCESAN DEANERIES

Canon 374 §2 establishes that to foster pastoral care by means of common action, several neighboring parishes can be joined together in special groups, such as Vicariates Forane. These vicariates in the Diocese of Bridgeport are denominated Deaneries.

Having consulted the Council of Deans, I, Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport, do hereby modify the Deaneries in the following manner:

Queen Assumed into Heaven Deanery will be modified to include the parishes of Westport

I order that the provisions of this decree have firm and stable effect, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, even if worthy of special mention, and that they be promulgated by inclusion in the official diocesan newspaper, The Fairfield County Catholic, entering into force on **July 1, 2026**.

Furthermore, I order that the present provisions be duly communicated electronically and/or by ordinary mail to all pastors, administrators or clerics in charge of diocesan parishes, quasi-parishes, shrines, oratories and chapels that are subject to these provisions.

Given this 3rd of May of 2026, the Fifth Sunday of Easter, at the Catholic Center.

Frank J. Caggiano

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of Bridgeport

Patrick Toole

Deacon Patrick Toole
Chancellor

EDITORIAL

On the eve of *Magnifica humanitas*

We knew it was coming, but that doesn't make it any less exciting. Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical, *Magnifica humanitas* ("magnificent humanity"), will be released on Monday, May 25 and will be on the topic of safeguarding the human person in the time of artificial intelligence. It bears the date of May 15, which is the 135th anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, Pope Leo XIII's encyclical on capital and labor.

The Holy Father has made the Catholic response to artificial intelligence one of the primary concerns of his papacy. And it's no coincidence the forthcoming encyclical's date coincides with the anniversary of one addressing labor, especially since it is one of the sectors most affected by the onset of this new technology.

Some of Pope Leo's most pointed words on this subject came in November of last year at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis. And while technology allowed for the Holy Father to have a virtual encounter with some 15,000 young people gathered in Lucas Oil Stadium, he nevertheless urged prudence when using technology—AI included.

"Be careful that your use of AI does not limit your true human growth," he said to them. "Use it in such a way that, if it disappeared tomorrow, you would still know how to think, create, and act on your own. Remember: AI can never replace the unique gift that you are to the world."

And, of course, he told them not to use it to do their homework for them!

This will be the longest-form opportunity the Holy Father has had thus far to address the concerns artificial intelligence poses to the Catholic life, specifically pertaining to the social teaching principles of dignity of the human person, dignity of work and care for God's creation. I look forward to hearing his extended thoughts on artificial intelligence, as well as potentially some practical moral guidance as to how Catholics can prudently use these tools, if at all.

The Holy Father has already proven his capacity to speak clearly and thoughtfully on this issue of the day. To me, it proves that the Church is not a "thing of the past," but rather a living and breathing source of wisdom and guidance for the faithful and for the world. And I am hopeful that *Magnifica humanitas* will continue to prove this.

Join Bishop Caggiano in Mexico!

Join Bishop Frank J. Caggiano for a pilgrimage to Mexico from October 9 through 12, 2026.

The pilgrimage, titled "A Journey of Faith and Joy: Guadalupe to Girlstown," will bring the faithful through Mexico City to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe and to the homebase of the Sisters of Mary. It will be hosted by Bishop Caggiano and Chris McMahon, philanthropist and founder of MFA Wealth and Aquinas Wealth Advisors.

Pilgrims will be able to visit the tilma of Marian visionary St. Juan Diego, take a sacred walk up Tepeyac Hill where Our Lady appeared to him, partake in daily Mass—including at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, learn about the work of Ven. Aloysius Schwartz and witness the great work of the Sisters of Mary, who are transforming the lives of poor children through education, faith formation and vocational training before sending them out into the world as missionary disciples.

Space is limited, so register today for this moving and inspiring experience centering on Our Lady of Guadalupe.

(To register for this pilgrimage, visit www.worldvillages.org/events/caggiano or call 800.662.6316.)

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Immaculate alumna returns to inspire students

Before she appeared on Saturday Night Live and earned national recognition for her role in the television series *The Bear*, Abby Elliott '05 was a student walking the halls of Immaculate High School.

She returned to Immaculate as the keynote speaker of its Career Day on May 1, 2026. Elliott spoke virtually from Los Angeles, answering Mustangs' questions about success, her career and what Immaculate taught her.

"There have been a lot of ups and downs in my career. Some

of the roadblocks have been extremely frustrating and lonely," she told students. "Immaculate really taught me to pick myself back up and have faith that there's a plan for me, leading with grace and intention and, most importantly, treating people with kindness."

Elliott is widely recognized for her role as Natalie "Sugar" Berzatto on the acclaimed Hulu series *The Bear*, a performance that earned her a Golden Globe nomination. She credited Immaculate with providing "a special commu-

nity full of creativity," a foundation that helped shape her confidence, artistry and path toward a professional acting career.

"Career Day is such a meaningful tradition because it brings the Immaculate story full circle," said Jeannie Demko '88, Director of Alumni and Events. "Our alumni return not only to share their professional accomplishments, but to encourage, mentor and inspire the next generation of Mustangs. We are grateful for the time, wisdom and heart they bring back to our students each year." ■



CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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

PASTOR

REVEREND ALPHONSE AROKIAM, extended one-year term to serve as Pastor at Saint Elizabeth Seton Parish, Ridgefield, through June 30, 2027.

REVEREND JOSEPH MARCELLO, reappointed to serve as Pastor at Saint Catherine of Siena, Trumbull. Effective date was February 1, 2027, for a term of six years.

PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND JOHN OGRAH, appointed to serve as Parochial Vicar at Saint Gregory the Great Parish, Danbury. Effective date is July 1, 2026.

IN-RESIDENCE

REVEREND JOSEPH OCRAN, assigned in residence at Saint James Parish, Stratford. Effective date is

June 1, 2026, while working with Yale New Haven Hospital.

DEANERY

REVEREND JOHN CONNAUGHTON, reappointed to serve as Dean, to Cause of our Joy Deanery. Effective date is September 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

REVEREND MICHAEL JONES, reappointed to serve as Dean, to Mary, Mother of the Church Deanery. Effective date is September 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

REVEREND PETER ADAMSKI, reappointed to serve as Dean, to Mystical Rose Deanery. Effective date is September 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

REVEREND CIPRIAN BEJAN, reappointed to serve as Dean, to Queen of Martyrs Deanery. Effective date is September 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

OTHER

REVEREND FERRY GALBERT, appointed to serve with the committee for Priestly Health and Well-Being. Effective date was May 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

REVEREND GEORGE O'NEILL, appointed to serve with the committee for Priestly Health and Well-Being. Effective date was May 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

REVEREND J. ABELARDO VASQUEZ, appointed to serve with the committee for Priestly Health and Well-Being. Effective date was May 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

Father Corey Piccinino

Episcopal Vicar for Clergy and Religious
— May, 2026

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Editorials



Like the sparrow

COLLECTING MOMENTS

BY EMILY CLARK

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

Early Mother's Day morning, before the phone calls started, before Mass began, before the coffee even finished brewing, my husband stepped onto the front porch and called out to me, "There's the new mother."

"Who?" I responded, not remembering any newborn babies or expectant moms in the neighborhood.

"The robin," he answered,

more softly this time. "She's in the nest."

Of course, I thought. That's the new mom in the neighborhood. I joined him, and we peeked inside. She sat there, still as a statue, focused on keeping her little homestead warm.

Over the past few weeks, our feathered friend had built the roundest, deepest, most perfect bowl-shaped nest, snuggled halfway up one of the tall holly

bushes near our front door. Patrick noticed her first and saw how she labored to construct the (almost) hidden sanctuary, with mud and grass, twigs and roots. It was a treat to see her at work, using an innate talent and unwavering perseverance to make something most humans could not. The mini shelter grew larger and stronger until an evening windstorm, followed by some heavy rain, damaged one side. But she was back at it the next day, the repairs stronger than the original. Then, soon after, four tiny, bright blue eggs appeared. It was on those, we figured, that she was sitting early this morning.

As the coffee finished brewing, I watched the robin and wondered: If Patrick and I could see her, so could squirrels, crows and even a very determined coyote, the natural predators of suburbia seeking their next meal. Would

those eggs be secure? What if she flew off to find her own meal? What if the father wasn't nearby? Is this location she had chosen really the safe place she expected? Being Mother's Day, I felt a distinct though unusual connection with this female bird as we had both sought to build a protective space to nurture and shelter our young. Though hers were just about to hatch and mine had already flown, our purpose was the same: to create a home built around care and comfort, refuge and peace.

I remember visiting a bird sanctuary as a child and learning that in there, no harm could come to those vulnerable creatures. They were safe as long as they remained in the loving care of their protectors. That morning as we readied for Mass, I thought of how as Catholics we find shelter and peace in the sanctuary of our Lord, knowing the evils of

sin cannot truly harm those who believe. It is in God's presence that all those seeking refuge are welcomed and loved.

Suddenly startled by our presence, the mother robin was in flight. I hoped she'd come back, and once we had returned from Mass, she was, similar to the sparrow in the Psalms that "has found a home . . . where she places her young near Your altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God." And don't we, like the sparrow, yearn to place our own young near that altar, so they may be nourished by the Eucharist of the same one who gives us shelter? And, with hope and prayer, they too will return to that nest, that place of safety, warmth and comfort.

It was then that I became startled. The phone calls had begun, for after all—it was Mother's Day. ■



They held it all together

SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

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

It's tough to get old ... I guess.

Wait, let me set the record straight. I am old. OK, I got that off my chest, and I feel better already. So let me share some senior thoughts with you.

Over the years, a lot of people have said to me: "There's only old people in church. We need young people."

I guess I've said it, too, and I've often heard it from young people who are ecstatic, as we all are, that in recent years, they're coming back to and coming into the Church. There's nothing more gratifying than pictures of young Catholic school kids in the classroom, young

adult Catholics getting together to talk about their faith or go to Eucharistic Adoration, and young parents who are raising families and bringing their children to Mass.

On the other hand, I know many people—some in my own family—who made sure their kids got the sacraments and then ... poof ... their faith flatlined after Confirmation. Not just the faith of the young people, but equally tragic, the faith of their parents. According to one study, almost 80 percent of fallen-away Catholics left the Church by the time they were 23.

As I've been told and as I've often said, young people are the future of the Church. But one

morning I had another insight while I was sitting in the pew, waiting for daily Mass to start. I got to thinking: What about these old people around me and the countless others who watch Mass on TV every day? They've done considerably more than just keep the pews warm for when the next generation returns.

And even though they may not be the future of the Church, they've done something tremendously important because without them, there would be no future of the Church.

They stayed when others left. They endured what was arguably the darkest period in the Church's history. They remained focused on Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. And they often suffered the derision of family members and friends for being loyal at a time when there was little loyalty to be found.

That morning, as I looked around the church, I saw many nonagenarians. In case you don't know what that word means, don't feel bad because I had to look it up too. They're people in their 90s.

The church I go to has a lot of

them—except for one guy who's a centenarian, clocking in at approximately 103. In addition to his strong faith, he has an illustrious past because at 18 years old, when he was barely out of high school, he flew bombing missions over Nazi Germany. So I guess we owe him a debt of gratitude for saving Western Civilization ... and for staying with the Church when others were walking away.

I looked at the others sitting in their pews and praying. Several have cancer, and yet they make an effort to get up and go to Mass because it's the most important part of their day. Correction: It's the most important part of their lives.

Others are lonely, I'm sure, because very often their kids don't call for any number of reasons—they're too busy raising their own kids, they're dealing with problems at work or they're preoccupied with the challenges in their lives. Loneliness often comes with aging.

I know many of their stories because they've told me. They willingly share the details of their lives and the challenges they face

because of poor health, a dying spouse or family members who have no faith.

Yes, they deserve our gratitude because they held the church together when so many others abandoned it. They're everywhere. You'll see them in your own parishes. They're the women and men whose prayers, sacrifices, Rosaries, personal sufferings and more brought down torrents of graces during this time of renewal.

When it comes to serving Jesus and spreading the Gospel, you're never too old. Jesus has a job for everyone.

I'm convinced that someday when we get to the heavenly banquet, we'll walk into the room and see a lot of familiar faces. They'll be the faces of these humble, faithful men and women—these old men and women—who stayed committed to Christ and were loyal to the end.

So when you go into church and see elderly faces, take that as a good sign the Holy Spirit is at work, because they're holding everything together for future generations. ■

St. Mary Parish, Stamford

Bishop blesses exterior water infiltration project

By EMILY CLARK

STAMFORD—Sharon MacKnight can still picture the water gushing in, dripping onto the pews and soaking the stone floor in front of the steps to the main altar. Large buckets were strategically placed to catch the raindrops, even as Mass continued to be celebrated.

"It came down in reams, pooling everywhere, but we worked together to clean up," said this longtime parishioner at St. Mary Parish in Stamford. "I was so afraid someone was going to slip in there."

For MacKnight and thousands of others who worship at St. Mary, this had been a common sight over the last few years—the result of a water infiltration issue that ultimately caused widespread damage to both the interior and exterior of this historic stone church near downtown Stamford. Following an extraordinary collaborative effort among partner parishes in lower Fairfield County, the diocese and Foundations in Faith, renovations to the outside of the 100-year-old building were completed this past winter, alleviating the water trouble inside. To mark



this milestone event, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano presided over a solemn blessing on Sunday afternoon, May 3.

With hymns and readings in both English and Spanish, the ceremony began inside the church and drew hundreds of parishioners and guests from around the diocese to celebrate what the bishop called "a new chapter in the life of St. Mary-St. Benedict," referencing the unification of the two parishes into one back in 2020.

"This is a beautiful, priceless building. We give thanks to those who did the work, and we gather to bless the generosity of so many

people," the bishop said. "When this church was built, countless families gave sacrificially to build a house that would be dignified before the Lord. Those who would come would recognize that they stepped out of the world into a taste of Heaven, for this is the dwelling place of the Lord. This is where God's children come to worship. Let us pray that you and I will see the day when this church is totally restored and that at each Mass, we see every seat filled."

After his comments indoors, Bishop Caggiano, followed by a dozen altar servers, several lectors and brother priests, led a proces-

sion of the faithful out onto the driveway in front of the church. As a chilly wind blew under a cloudless sky, old and young, those with canes and walkers, strollers and even a guide dog joined him as the ceremony continued where this time, attendees could see firsthand the magnificent work done on the exterior.

Together with Father Juan Gabriel Acosta, pastor of St. Mary, the bishop offered a blessing: "We have come together to bless the exterior renovations. Lord God, you sent your son into our world to unite us all. He is the good shepherd, the door we enter to be safe, to find peace. May all who enter find peace, we ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen." He then led those gathered on a walk around the outside of the church, blessing it with holy water and incense.

Catechist Sandra Hidalgo was one of the many who joined in this outdoor procession.

"I love this church. It's my heart. I feel at home here, and I always want to come to Mass," she said, speaking in Spanish and English.

For Lidia Lupinacci, a parishioner for over 50 years, this beautiful building was only made more so by the repairs. Pointing to the aged and damaged doors as the crowd made its way around St. Mary's, she said, "There's still work to be done, but look at this new roof. Gorgeous, and the bricks!"

In the past, when rain fell at a certain angle, water poured into the church, so most of the gutters on each side had to be replaced due to improper construction. Additionally, according to George Schiff, project manager for the exterior restoration, to

account for missing or damaged bricks and the grout that secures them, vendors were brought in to examine it all, and some pieces actually needed to be recreated and then replaced.

"It wasn't just a matter of going down to Home Depot and picking up a brick!" he said.

Though the exterior work has been completed, it will be up to two years until the restoration can commence on the interior, as contractors must wait until everything is dry.

"It's very labor intensive," Schiff added.

With labor comes cost, and the bishop mentioned in his comments how grateful St. Mary Parish is for the financial support of so many who helped in covering the estimated \$3.25 million project. Together, St. Thomas More Parish in Darien and St. Catherine of Siena-St. Agnes in Greenwich contributed almost \$500,000, and the St. Francis Xavier Fund for Missionary Parishes, the ninth fund established under Foundations in Faith, committed \$350,000 to efforts at St. Mary's, half of which went to the water infiltration initiative.

Kelly Weldon, program officer for the St. Francis Xavier Fund, remembers learning of the water troubles just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

"When we heard about the severity—how parishioners were pulling out wet-vacs and walking by puddles as they received the Eucharist—we decided this would be a project of the SFX fund," she said. "Today, this is such a joyful event that shows the power of partnership and of bringing people together. We're really not individual churches; we are one Church."

Schiff still has vivid memories of walking into Mass, hearing the drip, drip of water in the buckets and listening to friends say, "What are we going to do?"

"It's not an overnight job," he said, "so we've got to take one step at a time."

For these parishioners, however, throughout the process of renovations—with cleaning and scaffolding, gutter work and glass repair—they, like so many, were very grateful they still had the opportunity to attend Mass. ■

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Parish News

A new pastor and era for St. Joseph Danbury

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—A celebration and a promise to work collaboratively with the congregation for the betterment of the parish and beyond was the message newly installed St. Joseph pastor Father Eric Silva delivered at his Installation Mass, concelebrated with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

“You’re in the best of hands with Father Silva, and this can become another golden age for St. Joseph’s Parish,” Bishop Caggiano said.

Father Silva is now the 11th pastor of

“Your responsibility, while continually calling me to task each and every single day, is also to pray for your pastor.”

St. Joseph’s in Danbury. The Robinson Avenue church was established in 1905.

“Good trees produce good fruit,” Bishop Caggiano said, referring to Father Silva’s parents, who were seated in the front of the packed church, along with family and friends.

Father Silva was officially named pastor of the parish on February 1 after serving as administrator of the parish for a year.

“We all pray that God will give you many years of happy ministry here at St. Joseph’s,” said Bishop Caggiano at the beginning of the Mass after describing Father Silva as a remarkable, talented, generous, hard-working and faithful priest.

The installation of a pastor is the formal public entrustment of a priest as shepherd of a parish by the bishop, the shepherd of the diocese.

During his homily, Father Silva acknowledged the tremendous responsibilities of being a pastor but also the shared responsibility with the congregation.

“The truth is that any and all authority given to a priest in any role, or in any capacity, does not belong to him at all,” Father Silva said. “The responsibilities of that priest, based on whatever authority has been entrusted to him, are very much real, but the authority is not his own,” he said referencing scripture when Jesus told Pontius Pilate, “You would have no power over me if it had not been given to you from above.”

The Installation Mass on Divine Mercy Sunday, Father Silva said, was somewhat providential, noting that St. Faustina wrote

in her diary that the Lord said to her, “I desire trust for my creatures.”

“The reason for installation, and the reason why the Church continues to entrust countless souls to flawed men, is the very same reason why we call our priests ‘Father.’ Not only as a more formal way of addressing a man who acts as a spiritual father, but because in doing so, we are making demands of that man. We are calling that man to task,” he said and then jokingly added, “I will remain silent as to how responsible your new pastor is because my family is here. Most of my friends are here as well.”

Father Silva said the responsibility of managing the business of a parish pales in comparison to the responsibility of ministering to the faithful.

“All of you are now my responsibility, for which I am eternally grateful, and at the same time, terrified, in the most humbling of ways,” said Father Silva, adding that parishioners also have a responsibility and a duty entrusted to them in perpetuity.

“Your responsibility, while continually calling me to task each and every single day, is also to pray for your pastor. Pray that I and every other pastor take seriously the duties entrusted to me,” Father Silva said.

During the Mass, Father Silva renewed his priestly promises, was presented with the parish clergy staff, lay council members and made an oath of fidelity publicly.

“I think he’s going to be a wonderful leader for the next generation of Catholic families,” said Kathleen Wakeford, a parishioner on the Finance Council.

Two sisters who were visiting the area said they were delighted they had decided to attend Mass at St. Joseph’s that Sunday.

“It was a very beautiful Mass,” said Chrysa Keating. “The priest is very warm and welcoming. He’s very intellectual and intelligent. He gave a beautiful homily.”

Her sister Mary agreed.

“His homily reflected his passion for scripture and he’s funny too,” Mary Keating said. “I found him to be very relatable.”

Parishioner Courtney Marsili, who said she has known Father Silva for many years, also agreed.

“I thought the Mass was beautiful,” said Marsili, who attended with her family and eight children. “We are so excited to be a part of this special day. We love his sense of humor.”

Following the Mass, parishioners enjoyed fellowship in the church hall where many gathered to enjoy refreshments and offer congratulations to Father Silva.



The Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano



By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See
Bishop of Bridgeport

DECREE MANDATING THE VOTIVE MASS OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY

In virtue of the office entrusted to me, I, the Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, Fifth Bishop of the Diocese of Bridgeport, in virtue of my obligation to promote the holiness of Christ’s faithful entrusted to me so that they may grow in grace through the celebration of the sacraments (c. 387), determine what follows.

WHEREAS the introduction to the section for Votive Masses within *The Roman Missal* states, “If some serious pastoral benefit is to be gained, an appropriately corresponding Votive Mass may be used, at the direction of the Ordinary, or with his permission, except on Solemnities, on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, on days within the Octave of Easter, on the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls’ Day), on Ash Wednesday, and on the weekdays of Holy Week,” and;

WHEREAS #4 of the Introduction of the Proper of Saints in *The Roman Missal* states, “The Masses contained in this Proper of Saints are also used as Votive Masses,” and;

WHEREAS the Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary is found within the Proper of the Saints;

THEREFORE, I, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, in exercise of my office as Diocesan Bishop, since a significant pastoral benefit will be gained for the faithful by helping foster devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the recitation of the Holy Rosary,

HEREBY DECREE

- 1) that all Masses celebrated each year in diocesan churches, oratories and chapels on the first Sunday of October, and anticipatory liturgies on the evening prior, are to use the Votive Mass of Our Lady of the Rosary with the proper orations of the Votive Mass, without prejudice to any laws to the contrary.
- 2) that the readings of the Masses are to be those of the corresponding Sunday in Ordinary Time for that year,
- 3) that all in attendance at the prescribed Masses are to be invited to join in the recitation of the prayer of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to take place following Holy Communion,
- 4) that the homily at the Mass is to include elements about the importance of Our Lady in our lives as disciples, with a particular emphasis on the practice and meaning of the Rosary.

I order that the provisions of this decree have firm and stable effect, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, even if worthy of special mention, and that they be promulgated by inclusion in the official diocesan newspaper, *The Fairfield County Catholic*, entering into force on **May 3, 2026**.

Furthermore, I order that the present provisions be duly communicated electronically and/or by ordinary mail to all pastors, administrators or clerics in charge of diocesan parishes, quasi-parishes, shrines, oratories and chapels that are subject to these provisions.

Given this 3rd of May of 2026, the Fifth Sunday of Easter, at the Catholic Center.

Frank J. Caggiano

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of Bridgeport

Patrick Toole

Deacon Patrick Toole
Chancellor

Regina Pacis Academy

Celebrating Latin & Greek Day

By **KIMBERLY QUATELA**

Editor's note: Kimberly Quatela is the principal of Regina Pacis Academy in Norwalk.

PROSPECT, Conn.—On Thursday, April 30, 2026, students from Regina Pacis Academy joined hundreds of Latin and Greek students from across Connecticut at the annual Connecticut State Latin and Greek Day (CSLGD) held at Holiday Hill in Prospect.

Organized by the Classical Association of Connecticut (ClassConn), the event is a full-day classical immersion celebrating the languages, history and cultures of ancient Rome and Greece.

This year's theme, Pax et Lux (Peace and Light) / εἰρήνη καὶ φῶς, set the tone for a vibrant gathering where students arrived

dressed in ancient Roman togas, tunics, stolae and Greek chitons, transforming the grounds into a lively scene reminiscent of the classical world.

The Connecticut State Latin and Greek Day features a dynamic mix of academic, creative and athletic competitions and events. Students took part in academic contests testing knowledge of Latin grammar and vocabulary, Roman history and culture, and classical mythology. Many schools, including Regina Pacis, fielded teams for Certamen—a fast-paced, buzzer-style Latin quiz bowl competition that challenges teams on a wide range of classical topics. The middle school team of students from Regina Pacis competed against mainly high school competitors.

In addition to competitive events, attendees enjoyed numerous workshops and presentations

on diverse classical subjects, from mythology and daily life in antiquity to art to literature and historical reenactments. Students also displayed creative projects and artwork related to the ancient world, allowing them to showcase their talents in crafts, posters, models and other Classics-themed displays. One sixth grade student, Tommy Taylor, came in first place for his painting of Julius Caesar.

Athletic competitions added energy and fun to the day, including soccer, volleyball and the always-popular chariot race, all conducted while participants remained in classical attire. These activities encouraged teamwork, school spirit, and friendly rivalry among the roughly 40 participating schools and over a thousand students.

A key part of this formation is the school's Latin Bowl Club,



coached by Jill Chessman, one of the dedicated faculty members at Regina Pacis. Chessman, who teaches Latin to second through sixth grades, was also a participant in this competition when she was in high school. In her Latin Bowl Club, students prepare as a team to compete at the Connecticut State Latin Day. Throughout the year, members review Latin language and grammar, Roman history and culture, and mythology through structured lessons and practice competitions. This preparation not only equips them for success at State Latin Day but also pro-

vides an excellent foundation for the National Latin Exam.

The National Latin Exam is taken by thousands of students all over the United States and internationally. It measures students' ability in Latin grammar, reading comprehension and Roman culture. Students who do well on the exam will receive an award and are honored at a school assembly at the end of the school year.

Participation in the Connecticut State Latin Day reflects Regina Pacis Academy's commitment to bringing the classical tradition to life in a joyful,

► *CONTINUED ON PAGE 21*

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First Communion



Youth News

New adult program director at St. Catherine Center

FAIRFIELD—St. Catherine Center for Special Needs is pleased to welcome Kerstin Lebel as the new Adult Program Director. With a strong background in behavioral science and a passion for supporting individuals with diverse needs, Lebel brings both expertise and heart to this role.

Lebel began her academic journey by earning an associate degree in behavioral science, followed by a bachelor's degree in psychology from Western Connecticut State University. She continued at WestConn to complete her master's degree in applied behavior analysis (ABA).

Since 2020, Lebel has built extensive hands-on experience in the field. She began her career

as an ABA therapist before becoming a Registered Behavior Technician, a role she has held since 2022. Most recently, she served as a behavior specialist at the Kennedy Collective.

Her depth of skills and experience will guide her leadership of the Adult Day Program, where she will partner with staff, families and adult participants to create opportunities for growth, independence and community engagement.

Lebel lives in Derby, Conn., and is an avid tennis player. She volunteers her time with organizations such as Acing for Autism, where she teaches children with autism how to play tennis, and First Serve Bridgeport, where she coaches underprivileged and at-risk children. Her dedication



KERSTIN LABEL

to service both inside and outside the workplace reflects the compassion and energy she will bring to St. Catherine Center. ■

Fifty years later, the dream endures

By JOE PISANI

GREENWICH — David D'Andrea, coach of the Greenwich Catholic Middle School basketball team back in the 1970s, had a simple philosophy that served him well: "My job was to hold them accountable for their dreams. It wasn't just to make them win every game. It was to make them play, have a lot of fun, learn sportsmanship, and most importantly, learn a lesson in life



PHOTO BY LESLIE YAGER OF GREENWICH FREE PRESS

on how to win, and more importantly, on how to lose."

And with his 1976 team, that philosophy proved prescient. They fulfilled a lot of dreams and made a lot of memories. They had fun and they learned sportsmanship—and for the record, they did a lot more winning than losing.

That historic Chargers team went 32-1 and was the first middle school to be undefeated in the New England Catholic Middle School Championship Tournament.

Fifty years later, they returned to their hometown for a reunion and to be honored at Greenwich Town Hall, with D'Andrea, former assistant coach Bob Tremaglio and then-principal Peter Borchetta.

The '76 Chargers, who won the regional tournament, competed against teams from six states, and under D'Andrea's leadership, those scrappy seventh- and eighth-graders accomplished things they didn't believe possible.

"I could see they loved sports and they wanted to have fun," D'Andrea recalled. "And I noticed as we went along that these guys wanted to win, and I thought, 'We have true winners here.' They were loyal to me and to one another. And they were the absolute definition of a team."

The reunion, which D'Andrea organized, took place at Greenwich Town Hall, where First Selectman Fred Camillo—a member of the team—read a proclamation in their honor and declared April 27 as "CMS Basketball Champs Day."

Camillo said, "In 1976, the young men of the Greenwich Catholic basketball team made history as the first middle school team to defeat all of its opponents in the elite New England Catholic Middle School Championship tournament to win the title; they took home the championship against some of the best competition in the region ... And becoming the first middle school team to win this tournament, they etched their names into Greenwich legend."

State Rep. Steve Meskers (D-150) gave the team a citation from the town's Hartford legislative delegation.

Rebecca Steck, head of Greenwich Catholic School, read a statement from Bishop Frank J. Caggiano that said, "Fifty years ago, as a group of young men from Greenwich Catholic Middle School, you made history on the basketball court when you won

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

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Commencement News

Fairfield University graduates nearly 2,000

FAIRFIELD—Fairfield University celebrated its 76th Commencement Exercises from May 14 to 17, honoring nearly 2,000 graduates who earned associate's, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees across the University's academic programs. The three days of ceremonies celebrated the achievements of the Class of 2026 while highlighting several important milestones, including the graduation of Fairfield University's inaugural Doctor of Business Administration cohort.

Commencement weekend began on Thursday, May 14, as Fairfield Bellarmine celebrated the graduation of the Class of 2026 at the Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts.

The Commencement address was delivered by Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, author, and educator Marcia Chatelain, PhD, who received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in recognition of her contributions to scholarship, education and public discourse.

Dr. Chatelain, Presidential Penn Compact Professor of Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, encouraged graduates to cultivate joy as a sustaining force in their lives and communities. Drawing from conversations with civil rights organizers and Jesuit educators, she spoke about the importance of resilience, humanity and compassion in a challenging world.

"The opposite of joy is not sadness or depression," she told graduates. "The opposite of joy is contempt."

Addressing the Fairfield Bellarmine graduates directly, she said: "What I want for the Class



of 2026 is to enhance their joy reserves by way of study, further commitment to learning, friendship and solidarity."

The ceremony honored Fairfield Bellarmine graduates completing associate degree programs in business, computer science, health studies and liberal studies.

On Saturday, May 16, Fairfield University's graduate Commencement Exercises were held at the Leo D. Mahoney Arena, recognizing advanced degree recipients from the University's five schools: the College of Arts and Sciences, the Charles F. Dolan School of Business, the Marion Peckham Egan School of Nursing and Health Studies, the School of Engineering and Computing and the School of Education and Human Development.

The ceremony included Fairfield's inaugural Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) cohort from the Dolan School of Business, a historic first for the university.

The graduate Commencement address was delivered by Maggie Doyne, global humanitarian,

social entrepreneur and co-founder and chief executive officer of the BlinkNow Foundation. Doyne received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree in recognition of her commitment to education, compassion and sustainable community leadership.

What began with helping one child attend kindergarten evolved into the BlinkNow Foundation and a comprehensive community model that now supports children and families through education, health care, women's programs, sustainable farming initiatives and job creation.

Recounting the setbacks and uncertainty that shaped her path, Doyne encouraged graduates to embrace failure and perseverance.

"You'll notice that the rejections and the missteps and the failures often become the moments that lead to the greatest accomplishments of your life," she said.

Doyne urged graduates to "Stay kind, stay compassionate," adding: "Use the power of your privilege by being in this room today ... to make this world better."

In one of the ceremony's most personal moments, Doyne reflected

on receiving an honorary degree after never attending college herself. "Today, I do have a really easy answer," she said. "And I'm so, so proud to say that I'm a graduate of Fairfield University."

On the morning of May 17, graduates from the John Charles Meditz College of Arts and Sciences, the Charles F. Dolan School of Business, the Marion Peckham Egan School of Nursing and Health Studies, and the School of Engineering and Computing gathered on Bellarmine Lawn to celebrate Fairfield's undergraduate Commencement ceremony.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano delivered the invocation and encouraged graduates to measure their lives by more than achievement alone, but by service to others.

"Do not let them measure their lives by the applause they earn or the titles they accumulate," he prayed, "but by the love they give and the lives they lift up." He added: "Make them women and men for and with

others. May their gifts find their meaning in service."

The Commencement address was delivered by internationally acclaimed footwear designer and entrepreneur Stuart Weitzman, who received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree in recognition of his contributions to innovation, entrepreneurship, philanthropy and ethical leadership.

Known for transforming his passion for craftsmanship into a globally recognized footwear brand, Weitzman encouraged graduates to embrace originality, resilience and creativity. He reminded the Class of 2026: "When you leave campus, take with you this one certainty—you are unique. Every one of you has something original to offer. Whatever that is, whatever makes you, you, is going to help you in finding what your meaning is in life." He added, "Have faith in yourself, not just hope. Faith will catapult you over life's hurdles. Hope alone will trip you up." ■

FIFTY YEARS LATER FROM PAGE 14

a major championship. But what you have built off the court—bonds of brotherhood, loyalty, and faith—has proven far more enduring than any championship trophy. The fact that you have gathered together speaks to something much deeper than love of sports: It speaks to the lasting power of Christian friendship forged in youth and nurtured across a lifetime."

Their reunion after so many years was a demonstration of those bonds of loyalty and faith, inspired in large part by D'Andrea, who despite his battle with cancer and other infirmities, declared, "I needed to do this. It took many years to get back together. There were guys there I hadn't seen in 50 years, and as I went along with my diseases, I kept saying to the guys, 'We gotta do this,' and I started calling all of them."

They heeded the call, flying in from as far away as Florida,

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



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Commencement News

SHU celebrates Class of 2026

BRIDGEPORT—More than 2,500 undergraduate and graduate students received degrees at Sacred Heart University's 60th commencement ceremonies on May 7 and 9 at the Hartford HealthCare Amphitheater in Bridgeport.

Graduate students gathered at the amphitheater on Thursday, May 7, to receive their master and doctoral degrees, while undergraduate students received their associate and bachelor's degrees at two different ceremonies at the amphitheater on Saturday, May 9.

Governor Ned Lamont, Sister Norma Pimentel, Alexander Clark, and Father Jeffrey von Arx, SJ, delivered keynote addresses, and each received a Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, honorary degree.

At the undergraduate ceremonies, SHU President John J. Petillo addressed the undergraduates and applauded their success. Before he gave his speech, he recognized three seniors whose recent actions "reflect the very best of Sacred Heart University,"



when they assisted with a medical emergency off campus.

"They responded with calm, compassion and care, remaining by that person's side until first responders arrived," he told the audience. "In a moment that called for character, they led with both mind and heart, embodying what it truly means to be a Pioneer."

Petillo then spoke about the way in which a college career transforms students and prepares them to shape their own futures.

"Over these years, faculty,

administrators and I enjoy as you walk across this stage knowing you have changed with knowledge, courage and purpose, ready for your future," Petillo said. "I will miss you and your greetings on campus. So, remember to come back home."

Senior Gracie Patriarco spoke at the 10 am undergraduate ceremony. The political science and global affairs double major reflected on how quickly the last four years went by and reminisced on the many experiences that led her to where she is today. She talked about the success, the failures, the discomforts and the joys. Throughout it all, she gained confidence to follow her dreams.

"Class of 2026, today we say goodbye to our favorite dining halls, the dorms where we grew up, the study spots that saw our hardest nights and our best friends who made everything worth it," said Patriarco. "We are saying goodbye to our home. Do not forget this. Hold these memories close to your heart. Call your friends. Visit often. Sacred Heart will always have a place for us."

Senior Katelyn Diaz spoke at the 3 pm ceremony. The nursing and management double major who minored in nutrition spoke about her amazing four years at SHU and how it became a family for her.

"Someone once told me, choose a place where the people and the environment reflect who you want to become, because eventually, you will become what surrounds you. And I didn't fully understand that then, but I do now," Diaz said. "Because Sacred Heart didn't just give us degrees, it gave us a community."

Looking back, Diaz said her college experience was "nothing short of amazing." She studied abroad, got involved and met

people who changed her life.

In her speech, she imparted her classmates with some lessons. The first one, "confidence isn't about having all the answers, it's about trusting yourself even when you don't," the second lesson, "your life will not go as planned, and that is exactly the point," and "third is to get comfortable being uncomfortable."

"There have been so many moments where I felt completely uncomfortable, whether it was presenting by myself or stepping into something I didn't feel ready for," Diaz said. "But every time I did it, I grew."

At the graduate ceremony on May 7, Petillo congratulated the graduate students.

"On graduation day, with diploma in hand, you will realize the most valuable thing you earned wasn't the degree," Petillo said. "It was the understanding that growth isn't a straight line, and worth isn't measured by perfection. As you step forward into the unknown, you carry a quieter confidence: not that you would always succeed, but that you would always keep learning—and that would be enough. So, as you prepare to walk from the classrooms, remain on a journey of learning and reflection."


Before degrees were conferred, Helena Medici '25, MA '26, who

earned her master's degree in strategic communication and public relations, addressed her peers. In her remarks, she reflected on personal growth, sharing that it was through growth that she ultimately discovered her sense of purpose or her "why."


"Your 'why' is the reason you keep going when things get hard," Medici said. "It's what grounds you. It's what keeps you moving forward when self-doubt starts to creep in. And let's be honest—there were moments during this journey when things got hard."

Through her inspirational words, she told her peers what they've accomplished is "truly incredible." She encouraged the graduates to believe in themselves and give themselves a chance.

"The opportunities you're hoping for? The doors you're waiting to open? They often don't open until you first believe you're worthy of walking through them," Medici said. "So, give yourself a chance. Believe in your ideas. Believe in your voice. Believe that you belong in every room you walk into. Because you do. Sacred Heart has shaped us into more than just graduates. It has shaped us into communicators, leaders, and individuals who understand the importance of serving others and leading with purpose." ■



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FIFTY YEARS LATER FROM PAGE 15

Minnesota, Maryland and Delaware and even attending through Zoom from California.

The group shared stories of that momentous year and of D'Andrea's motivation during practices, which included musical accompaniment he provided with Motown classics like the Spinners' "Working My Way Back to You" and "One of a Kind (Love Affair)."

Then, there was the time they played against Brunswick, a private school in Greenwich, and someone said their coach called D'Andrea a "turkey," which didn't go over well with the Chargers, who ended up winning 99-28. To this day, D'Andrea says he wasn't trying to run up the score and even offered to end the day.

"I also made sure everybody played," he recalled.

The members of that championship team included Jay Kavanaugh, Dwight Rochester, manager Sue Gulliver, Tom Murphy, Fred Camillo, Bill Levins, Tim Pultz, Matt Fox, Dave Hogan, Bobby Farrell, Mike Reilly, Nick Montagnese, George Prince, Russell Bailey, Chris Dehnel, Tom Farrell and Keith Ward.

Russell Bailey, who went on to become a minister, died six years ago.

In his closing comments, D'Andrea said, "It's all about those friendships you make on the court. It's not about the shots you make, the rebounds you get, how fast you run or how high you jump. It's all about the memories."

And for him and his team, the day was filled with the sweetest of memories. ■



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Guest Voices

Raising faithful teens in a digital world

By JOHN MELNIKOV

Editor's note: John Melnikov is a theology teacher at St. Joseph High School in Trumbull. A parishioner of St. Jude Parish in Monroe, he also serves as the current Grand Knight of Knights of Columbus Council 5987 at the parish.

In the moments before the bell rings to begin the school day, my students are busy getting themselves ready for their mornings by gathering books, materials and whatever else they will need for their first few classes.

Those who are already in their seats are either chatting with friends, looking over their notes, or scrolling on their phones. I always find myself wanting to encourage those on their phones to put them aside and interact with their classmates. Sometimes I do, and sometimes it actually works, but I am consistently taken aback by how the idea of actual interaction is always a second choice to scrolling social media.

As a teacher and a parent, my first inclination is to not only discourage the use of technology as a distraction but also offer warnings about how scroll-

ing can indeed become a dangerous addiction. As an adult living in Fairfield County, I am acutely aware of how ubiquitous cell phones and endless scrolling are. I may have even dabbled myself, although I will firmly deny this claim in front of my students and kids. For that reason, I have been attempting to discern how to encourage the utilization of tech in a manner

“Jesus is still calling our young people to his service. That is what matters most ...”

that is more efficacious for my students and kids both mentally and spiritually.

If you can't beat them, join them. But joining them doesn't mean jumping in headfirst with no plan.

The reality of the situation can be discouraging. Today, teens are being formed and informed more by the algorithms that dictate their social media feeds than they

are by traditional authority figures. Social media offers them a continual medium by which they can escape from the complexities of life in the modern world.

In engrossing themselves in the digital world, there is a loss of the moments where quiet contemplation lends itself to the desire to pray, think and truly experience the peace that comes from entering into a meaningful relationship with Our Lord. When a teen spends too much time comparing themselves and their lives to idealized and edited lives of others, the results can lead to a slew of mental health issues. Without a solid relationship with parents and family, these issues can lead to personally damaging habits. But what about when parents and family aren't immediately available for consultation and support?

In previous generations, the young Catholic man or woman who found themselves in that situation could turn to Jesus, his Blessed Mother, or any one of his saints for encouragement and support. While teens today can still do that—and should do that—too many of them do not know how to do that, because they have replaced the true peace

and comfort of time with the divine with the momentary dopamine hit they get when they log onto TikTok or Instagram.

The domestic church needs to face this challenge head-on. Instead of vilifying social media scrolling—and by proxy, the pastime of an entire Western generation—parents should attempt to discern how they can encourage their children to use social media in a responsible, measured way.

First off, a return to traditional family time must be made paramount. Kids need to understand that there are times when cell phones should not only be turned off but kept out of sight, and ideally, in a different room from where the family is gathering. Time limits and usage boundaries are the first steps needed to ensure that teens are not becoming too engrossed in the digital world. The times when phones are conspicuously missing are the perfect moments to reintroduce prayer. Smart phones out, Jesus in.

Parents should also do their best to make sure that the Eucharist is not only mentioned regularly but pointed to purposely as the one thing that can bring lasting peace and courage to their hectic and fast-paced lives. Time without the glow of the phone on their faces should be spent doing things and talking about things that touch their hearts. They get enough instruction at school and in their extracurricular activities.

Several Catholic prayer apps are free to download, and even more that parents can buy a subscription to. These can be pre-



JOHN MELNIKOV

sented to teens as an alternative to apps that they spend nearly all of their time on. It might take them some time to get used to using them, but I have found that after a while, my students turn to them naturally, without prompting throughout the course of their days.

While the digital world may seem overwhelming and impossible to mount a strong defense against, nothing is more powerful or transformative than grace. When we put our trust fully in him to help us lead those in our charge toward a life lived with purpose and faith, we are undertaking what is quite possibly the most important work that parents and teachers are tasked with in our modern age.

No one said it would be easy, and in fact, I don't think it is supposed to be easy. However, nothing is impossible with God. Jesus is still calling our young people to his service. That is what matters most, and we must do whatever we can and use whatever we can to ensure that our kids are, at the very least, able to hear that call. ■



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Catholic Cemeteries

Mass offers support to grieving parents

By **JOE PISANI**

NEWTOWN —They came in the pouring rain—mothers, fathers, families, from little children to women in their 90s—to celebrate a Mother’s Day Mass for grieving parents who have lost

symbolism.” Director of Bereavement Carolyn Killian welcomed them and said: “The purpose of this Mass is to let you know that you are not alone in your grief on this Mother’s Day. We want to reach out and support you in your sor-

my car, a song erupted from my playlist— ‘Bless the Wings (That Bring You Back),’ and it washed over me like a musical waterfall. “The lyrics say, in part: ‘Like the rose that blooms in the wintertime as it reaches up through the snow, the more life keeps us apart, the more love will grow. Like the seed that grows in the darkness as it reaches up to the

sun, I will always reach out for you ’cause you are the one. I bless the wings that bring you back across the shore. If I could touch you now, my darling, and love you just once more.’ “Memories of your children are not just recalling events that happened in the past,” he assured the parents, “but rather a recalling of that person in the spirit, in

the present, alive here, alive now and forever.” He said the spirits of their children are communicating from heaven, where they are residing, and just as Jesus said, “In my Father’s house, there are many dwelling places,” their children will occupy those places and wait for their parents to join them. **▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 20**



a child, including through miscarriage and stillbirth. They sat under a tent at the Little Angels Shrine at Resurrection Cemetery and found support in their common grief and assurance their children were watching over them and waiting for them in heaven, as Father Peter Cipriani, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish, celebrated Mass, assisted by Deacon Don Ross. Kenn Devane, acting executive director of Fairfield County Catholic Cemeteries, told the gathering: “I think you are the bravest people in the world. We are very, very happy you are here to share this with us. All week we hoped that it would be a beautiful day, but maybe this rain is symbolic because all of us have cried, so, Lord, we accept the

row, whether you lost a beloved child of any age, or whether you lost the dream of a child you were never able to hold.” Killian said since Bishop Frank J. Caggiano dedicated Little Angels Shrine last September, the remains of 12 babies have been interred and 82 were memorialized on the Wall of Remembrance. As Father Cipriani delivered his homily about grief, eternal life and the Holy Spirit, the pattering of rain and the voices of little children offered a moving counterpoint. When he was preparing to write it, he was challenged by the sensitivity of the occasion and sought inspiration. “As I was praying and probing my head and heart for what might be said, while driving in

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APRIL		10 Deacon Robert Blankschen 2023
26	Msgr. William A. Nagle..... 2013	Rev. Robert J. Hyl 2015
28	Msgr. Thomas J. Green..... 2018	13 Deacon Joseph Melita..... 2018
29	Rev. Joseph F. Cleary 1971	16 Rev. Stephen J. Balint 2020
	Rev. Andrew Dube 2006	Rev. Alfred J. Bietighofer 2002
	Rev. Austin R. Saunders 1986	Deacon Russell Rigg 2025
MAY		17 Rev. Miroslav L. Sultus..... 1992
1	Rev. Gregory J. Huminski 2010	18 Msgr. Charles B. Ratajczak, O.F.M. 1957
	Rev. Canon Albert W. Watts 2020	19 Rev. William H. Sullivan 1980
2	Msgr. James F. Murphy 1958	20 Rev. Nello A. Barachini 2022
3	Msgr. Michael J. Carnicke 1980	23 Rev. Thomas M. Garrick 1955
6	Msgr. John B. Hossan 2018	Deacon Hans Jakob Gram 2010
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Column: Apologetics



What's so special about Mary?

NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE

BY SUAN SONNA

Suan Sonna is the apologetics director for the Diocese of Bridgeport.

The Catholic Church has defined four dogmas about Mary: she is (1) the Mother of God [Council of Ephesus in 431 AD] who was (2) immaculately conceived [ex cathedra by Pius IX] (3) always remained a virgin [Lateran Synod of 649 AD under Pope Martin I] until she was

(4) assumed, body and soul, into heaven [ex cathedra by Pius XII]. Whenever the Church defines a dogma, she teaches with her highest, permanent authority that some teaching is in the Apostolic Deposit (Scripture & Tradition). With respect to the Blessed Virgin then, the Church is saying that Christ's Apostles taught these four beliefs about her, and so we may never dissent.

We believe as Catholics that these dogmas are true because the Church has told us so. That is the decisive evidence for us, since she, the Church, has special authority and protection from God to identify what is in the Apostolic Deposit. At the same time, we can certainly develop reasons for why the Church teaches what she does. The Church never defines a dogma without reasons, and theologians and biblical scholars can later find more evidence for the teaching.

And this is what I find remarkable about the Catholic Church: I have consistently found that my faith in her is justified. This is especially true with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Since my conversion to Catholicism from Protestantism, I have found so much evidence that the Church

is right about Mary. I will not attempt a comprehensive defense of Our Lady in this article, but I will show from one biblical datum that the Church's teachings about her make perfect sense. The biblical datum is this: Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant.

God dwelled with His people in the old covenant in the tabernacle (Exod. 25:8), and then in the ark (25:22; which is essentially a mobile tabernacle) and finally the great Jerusalem Temple, foreshadowing Christ. In the Greek Old Testament (LXX or Septuagint), which was used by Jesus and the Apostles, we see that "And Moses was unable to enter into the tent of witness [the tabernacle where the Ark of the covenant is contained], because the cloud was overshadowing [ἐπεσκέπεν] it, and the tent was filled with the glory of the Lord" (Exodus 40:35). I have emphasized the Greek word "ἐπεσκέπεν" (imperfect active indicative 3rd person singular of ἐπισκέπω) because St. Luke uses the same word in the future tense in Luke 1:35, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow [ἐπισκέψει] you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God" (NRSVUE translation).

My academic advisor at Harvard, Prof. Giovanni Battista Bazzana, remarked in our Gospel of Luke class that the first two chapters of Luke were deliberately written to echo the LXX. It therefore makes perfect sense that Luke would use ἐπισκέπω in his Gospel to communicate that God is dwelling with his people as he did in the Old Testament, meaning that Mary is the Lord's tabernacle. And once Mary visits Elizabeth, she becomes a mobile tabernacle or the Ark of the (New) Covenant. This is evident in how Elizabeth treats Mary in the same manner that King David did of the Ark. In 2 Sam. 6:9, David says, "How can the ark of the Lord come into my care?" Elizabeth says in Luke 1:43, "And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?" Perhaps the most explicit proof is that Mary stays with Elizabeth for three months (Luke 1:56) just as the Ark did with David in 2 Sam. 6:11. Luke is clear that God is "repeating" history but in a new and greater way with the Incarnation. This repetition is called

"typology": God will repeat his past actions in a greater way so that his people can identify that the same God of the past is acting today.

So, how does this typology justify the Marian dogmas? Mary is called "the Mother of God" when Elizabeth calls her "the mother of my Lord" and this mirrors David's language of "the ark of the Lord." The Immaculate Conception is evident from the typology, because the Ark was specifically made out of the finest and purest material: "They shall make an ark of acacia wood [LXX "decay-resistant wood"]; it shall be two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and outside you shall overlay it, and you shall make a molding of gold upon it all around..." (Exod. 25:10-11). Why wouldn't God make his mother pure from the beginning of her life? Mary exists totally for her Son, and doesn't her Son deserve the most perfect Mother imaginable?

The Ark of the Covenant typology also justifies the perpetual virginity of Mary, because the Bible establishes the principle that whenever God enters and dwells somewhere in an intimate way, no one may enter. Even the great prophet Moses could not enter the tabernacle when God's glory overshadowed it (Exod. 40:35). The same principle is repeated in Ezekiel 44:2: "The Lord said to me: 'This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut.'" St. Thomas Aquinas in fact used this verse to defend the perpetual virginity of Mary (Summa Theologiae, III. Q28. A. 3). Regarding the assumption, there is a remarkable Psalm that prophesizes the ascension of Christ and teaches that the Ark would somehow arise with the Lord, "Rise up, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might (132:8). This is clearly fulfilled in the Assumption of Mary.

Of course, our Protestant friends will have questions and objections. What about the brothers and sisters of the Lord? Why isn't the assumption explicitly taught in scripture? The Ark of the Covenant typology is simply a strong way to start the conversation but, of course, there is much more evidence to show that us Catholics are not off our rockers. ■

GRIEVING PARENTS FROM PAGE 19

"What child is not excited to be given his or her own room?" Father Cipriani said. "With this awareness, how are you preparing those rooms, that home for Jesus and your children? By making every effort to create a home environment for your child's spirit within yourself, where faith, hope and love reside."

He told the parents they were inspired to be there.

"Do you not feel the presence of your child with each breath you take in and breathe out?" he asked. "Wherever you go here on earth, your child is with you. Wherever they are in heaven, you are with them. I bless the wings that bring you back across the shore. This is the primary function of the Holy Spirit, recreating and renewing life."

Father Cipriani also said the grief in their hearts is an intensification of the love they had for their children.

"Has your love for your child in his or her absence lessened or rather increased since the longing for reunion is so magnified, so intensified? And though this registers as a sorrow, it should register as your child's spirit embracing your own. Why be filled with such love? So that you have more of it to give to others. This is Christ suffering from the

cross," he said.

Amy Barbato and her husband Nick have a plaque on the remembrance wall in honor of their babies who were miscarried.

"The grief surrounding pregnancy loss can be extremely isolating, and for the past five years, I have been searching for peace and closure—trying to find how I fit in," she said. "We don't have children on earth and only have ultrasound pictures and a positive pregnancy test to prove their existence. Society might not view me as a mother, but I carried eight unique souls in my womb, though their time was brief. God knows I am a mother, I know I am a mother. Having the outward acknowledgement through the Mother's Day Mass at Little Angels that we are all mothers has brought me profound peace."

Bridget Sclafani said she was grateful to have two daughters to celebrate Mass with her, although that was not always the case.

"Mother's Day can be a day of great joy, but also of unexplainable sadness," she said. "This Mass was filled with people who experienced deep loss. Although so many of us had never met, we sat together, feeling the same holes in our hearts."

On many Mother's Days, she sat in Mass with tears in her eyes as she thought of the four babies she lost.

"I looked at large families

and said to myself, 'We were supposed to have six children here with us. My family should be taking up a whole pew,'" she said. "Only recently can I accept saying I am a mother of six. Then, a moment of peace comes over me, and I picture my four babies in the arms of Jesus and the Blessed Mother. At that moment, I feel the joy other mothers are feeling on this day. I also picture them wrapped in my husband's arms. I have a family in heaven and one on earth."

In his comments, Devane acknowledged Adrienne Keogler, longtime advocate for the shrine and said that in several weeks a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe would be erected because of her encouragement. He also thanked the cemetery employees who came on their day off to support the grieving families.

Little Angels Shrine is dedicated to babies who have gone home to God, Devane said. "The consecrated ground honors the memory of all deceased children and offers a reverent place of prayer and healing for parents and others who have experienced the death of a child."

(For more information about the shrine or bereavement programs, call 203.404.0023 or visit www.littleangelsshrine.org.) ■

May 2026

Sports

Immaculate's Mingachos overwhelmed by Lifetime Achievement Award

By DON HARRISON

DANBURY—"Wow... standing here tonight is incredibly humbling. I haven't heard this much applause since ... well, since I won my last state championship. But, truly, thank you. To be recognized by a place that has meant so much to my life is something I never expected, and I accept this Lifetime Achievement Award with deep gratitude and a very full heart. Immaculate High School has never just been a school to me. It has been home."

Those were the opening words from Athletic Director Nelson Mingachos' heart-felt acceptance speech following the presentation of the Lifetime Achievement Award at Immaculate High School's annual Blue & White Gala, held at the Amber Room Colonnade on March 29.

In addition to receiving this prestigious award, the school's athletic turf field was renamed Nelson O. Mingachos Field in his honor.

The event attracted 225 attendees, including community leaders, alumni, parents and friends, for a celebration of Mustang pride, raising \$170,000 to support the school's mission to provide a Catholic college-preparatory education.

Mingachos has devoted a significant portion of his life to the Danbury-based high school, first as a student—class of 1989—then as head coach of the Mustang girls soccer team, head coach of boys basketball and finally, in 2019, director of athletics. He was inducted into the Immaculate Hall of Fame in 2000.

As a student-athlete, Nelson excelled in football and basketball at Immaculate. A placekicker capable of booting even a 52-yard field goal, he was a major contributor to the Mustangs' undefeated 1986 CIAC state championship squad, capping their 12-0 season with a 24-14 victory over Derby in the S-II bracket.

As a senior, he captained Immaculate's 1988 football team and solidified his status as one of the state's premier kickers, while on the basketball court he earned All-Wild Division recognition.

After graduation, he entered Central Connecticut State University on a full scholarship. The Blue Devils' football teams were mediocre—at best—during Nolan's varsity career, but his placekicking was first rate (topped by a 49-yard field goal). NFL scouts were intrigued, and he was sent to a NFL camp for prospective kickers in Tampa. He

finished among the top three.

"I was convinced I'd end up in the NFL," he recalled. Instead, after graduation from college, he returned home and began coaching girls soccer and boys basketball at Immaculate.

While at Central, Nelson met Kellie (Parker), the woman who would become his wife and the mother of their two daughters, Isabella, 26, and Sophia, 22, both of whom are Immaculate alumnae.

Kellie, he stated, "you have been my rock. You've stood on the sidelines through rain, snow, freezing nights, and August days when it felt like the sun had a personal vendetta against high school athletics. You've opened our home to my teams. You've listened to me replay games at midnight.... You never asked for recognition. But this award belongs to you just as much as it belongs to me."

Kellie is the owner-operator of Danbury's Goddard School, a daycare and preschool offering educational programs for infants, toddlers and pre-K students.

The Mingachos daughters played soccer for their dad's Immaculate teams, and both excelled. "Watching them compete in conference and state championships, watching them fight, celebrate and grow—those moments didn't just make me proud as a coach. They filled me with a pride only a father can understand," he said.

Both young women have entered the teaching field, Bella at Ellsworth Avenue School in Danbury and Sophia as a special education teacher in Ridgefield.

As head coach from 2004 to 2021, Nelson guided the Mustangs soccer team to 10 CIAC Class S state championships and four South West Conference titles. Mingachos won several state and regional coaching awards, including the Connecticut Sports Media Alliance Coach of the Year, and he was a national finalist for NCSAA Coach of the Year.

As head coach of Immaculate's boys basketball, Nelson has led Mustang teams to three CIAC



ATHLETIC DIRECTOR NELSON MINGACHOS and his wife, Kellie, are flanked by their daughters, Sophia (left) and Isabella, as they enjoy Immaculate High School's annual Blue & White Gala.

state titles (2012, 2016 and 2018), and 13 of his players have earned All-State recognition.

"Receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award makes you reflect. It makes you pause," Mingachos explained. "It

reminds you that the greatest achievements in life aren't banners hanging in the gym. They're the relationships built, the lives touched, and the legacy through the people we serve. I accept this honor with deep humility. ■

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REGINA PACIS ACADEMY FROM PAGE 12

faith-filled environment. By engaging directly with the roots of Western and Christian civilization, students develop linguistic skill, cultural literacy, disciplined thinking, and a deeper appreciation for the heritage that continues to shape our world.

The academy congratulates all its students who represented the school with excellence and enthusiasm on April 30. Their efforts highlight the mission of Regina Pacis Academy: to achieve academic excellence and to nurture an intimate relationship with Christ as modeled by the Apostles, by providing a Roman Catholic classical education taught by teachers loyal to the Magisterium.

(Regina Pacis Academy is an independent Catholic classical school serving students in Pre-K through eighth grade. Rooted in the Catholic intellectual tradition, the academy provides a rigorous, character-forming education that emphasizes the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty. With small class sizes, a technology-free environment, and a focus on great books, moral formation, and the liberal arts, the school deliberately limits digital distractions to cultivate deep thinking and wonder.)

(For more information about Regina Pacis Academy's Catholic classical program, visit reginapacisacademy.org.) ■

Nuestra Voz

Oran por las madres en mayo

POR MARICARMEN GODOY

DANBURY---Como parte de la tradición anual de mayo en la iglesia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en su boletín oficial del quinto Domingo de Pascua, se anunció una lista de peticiones especiales para conmemorar la aparición a los tres pastorcitos de la virgen de Padre Pedro Sosa, en una entrevista especial, habló de cómo se

sigue sosteniendo la parroquia en español y cómo la catequesis y la ayuda de otras iglesias está ayudando a evangelizar a las dos mil familias registradas en la parroquia.

Acorde con el Padre Sosa, vicario parroquial, en las apariciones de la Virgen de Fátima que sucedieron en el mes de mayo, ella mismo les decía a los tres pastorcitos “que su corazón de madre inmaculado triunfará”, de los peligros de la guerra,

de la apostasía (deslealtad), de cómo el mundo va a darle la espalda a Dios; razones para entender por qué en la iglesia de Guadalupe se aprovecha la ocasión para enfocarse en la realidad de las madres hispanas en los Estados Unidos.

Durante los nueve días de la Novena a la Virgen de Fátima se oró por las madres viudas, por las que están enfermas y sufren; madres solteras, encarceladas, por las que



han perdido a sus hijos por enfermedades o accidentes; por las tristes y olvidadas; por las maltratadas física y emocionalmente; por las mujeres que desearon tener hijos y nunca lo lograron, y por las madres de la comunidad parroquial.

Y en ese enfoque parroquial el Obispo Frank J. Caggiano de la Diócesis de Bridgeport, parroquia a la que se pertenece a la iglesia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, decidió continuar con el plan de que la parroquia siga siendo hispana, es decir, que todas las misas se sigan dando en español porque en Danbury y sus alrededores la comunidad latinoamericana ha crecido enormemente y es necesario que se siga manteniendo el vínculo entre iglesia y comunidad.

En la parroquia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, la única de la Diócesis de Bridgeport que ofrece un horario de servicios en español cien por ciento, ha crecido en estos últimos años. Hay dos mil familias registradas y con la apertura de agregar una misa más en español en la iglesia de St. Peter (San Pedro) y de traer a la parroquia al padre Frank Snell y David Klein que hablan perfecto español; ayudó a mejorar el apostolado hispano.

La iglesia de Guadalupe estuvo a punto de cerrar sus puertas el año pasado debido al crecimiento de los feligreses y la imposibilidad de sostener la parroquia; pero gracias al apoyo del alcalde de la ciudad, los departamentos de bomberos y policía se pudo controlar ese flujo poblacional con el apoyo de la parroquia de San Pedro que abrió un nuevo horario de misas en español.

En la iglesia de Guadalupe ingresan apenas 295 personas sentadas por lo que se abrió una capilla en el sótano para una capacidad de 120 personas; con un horario de cuatro misas los domingos, una el sábado en la noche; otra, de lunes de a viernes a las siete de la noche; más una misa extra los días de fiesta.

El éxito de la parroquia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en términos del aumento de feligreses parece ser porque el mensaje a la hora de la prédica en las misas es contundente. El Evangelio es dado en forma pragmática y los fieles lo captan

como una vivencia espiritual única. Además, porque le dan mucha importancia al catecismo de los niños y ahí logran vivir la experiencia de unir a las familias y de que los padres sean los primeros catequistas.

El fenómeno de la catequesis es bilingüe. Las clases para niños son en inglés porque ellos estudian en sus escuelas en este idioma; pero a sus padres les dan las orientaciones en español y debido a la afluencia de cientos de niños, el obispo Caggiano abrió una clase satélite en la parroquia de la Inmaculada Concepción.

Acorde con el Padre Sosa, esta forma de educar (en inglés) es pensando en que los niños serán la próxima generación de adultos de la iglesia y la parroquia dejará de ser hispana porque vivirá otro momento histórico.

La oleada migratoria en Danbury es notoria en la parroquia. La comunidad hispana les da a sus vecinos (anglos) que viven el materialismo capitalista un halo de fe viva. “En una sociedad segura (capitalista) solo es necesario creer en su propia capacidad, en el dinero ... Pero, nosotros, al venir de hogares arraigados de fe porque somos pueblos que hemos sufrido, tenemos como resultado que vivimos de Dios”, dijo el Padre Sosa, demostrando lo que dijo el San Juan Pablo II, “América es el continente de la esperanza” y por eso la parroquia ha adoptado festividades religiosas de los países de origen de sus feligreses.

Betty Reinoso, ecuatoriana, vive en Danbury hace más de 30 años y ha sido miembro de la parroquia desde el día en que llegó de su natal Loja. Ha visto los cambios demográficos, el aumento de comunidades como la dominicana, mexicana, brasileña y la de sus propios paisanos.

Betty, celebra la fiesta de la Virgen del Cisne en la iglesia de la Virgen de Guadalupe, pero también la devoción al Niño Divino durante la Navidad. E igualmente, doña Lucrecia Congacha, que vive seis meses en Cuenca (Ecuador) y seis meses en Danbury. Ella pasa Navidad y la fiesta del Niño Jesús en Danbury. ■

Most Reverend Frank J Caggiano



By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See
Bishop of Bridgeport

DECREE MANDATING THE CREATION OF THE HISPANIC COUNCIL OF ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS AND COMMUNITIES

Having considered the pastoral needs of the Diocese of Bridgeport and desiring to foster communion in mission, evangelization, leadership formation, and collaboration among Hispanic ecclesial movements, communities, prayer groups, apostolic groups, and related pastoral leaders; mindful of my duty to coordinate the apostolate in the Diocese and to provide suitable consultative structures for pastoral discernment; and having reviewed the revised Statutes of the Hispanic Council of Ecclesial Movements and Communities of the Diocese of Bridgeport:

I, the Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, Bishop of Bridgeport,

HEREBY DECREE:

1. The establishment of the Hispanic Council of Ecclesial Movements and Communities of the Diocese of Bridgeport as a diocesan consultative body, distinct from the Diocesan Pastoral Council and distinct from a public or private association of the faithful.
2. I hereby approve *ad experimentum*, for an initial period of three years, the Statutes of the Hispanic Council of Ecclesial Movements and Communities of the Diocese of Bridgeport, attached hereto or otherwise referenced herein, which shall take effect on June 1, 2026.
3. The English and Spanish texts of the Statutes are approved together. In the event of interpretive doubt, both texts shall be regarded as official, subject to the interpretation of the Bishop of Bridgeport.

At the conclusion of the *ad experimentum* period, the Statutes and the operation of the Council shall be reviewed and may be confirmed, revised, or replaced by the competent authority.

I order that the provisions of this decree have firm and stable effect, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, even if worthy of special mention, and that they be promulgated by inclusion in the official diocesan newspaper, The Fairfield County Catholic, entering into force on **May 3, 2026**.

Furthermore, I order that the present provisions be duly communicated electronically and/or by ordinary mail to all pastors, administrators or clerics in charge of diocesan parishes, quasi-parishes, shrines, oratories and chapels that are subject to these provisions.

Given this 3rd of May of 2026, the Fifth Sunday of Easter at the Catholic Center.

Frank J. Caggiano

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of Bridgeport

Patrick Toole

Deacon Patrick Toole
Chancellor

Vocations

In their humanity, they lead us to the divinity

By FATHER CHRIS FORD

There are certain moments in the life of the Church when we are allowed to see, almost with our own eyes, exactly what God is doing in our hearts. A priestly ordination is one of those moments.

At every Mass, heaven touches earth. Christ gives himself to his people. The sacrifice of the Cross is made present again, not as something repeated but as something living and saving, offered once for all and made present for us. At an Ordination Mass, that same mystery is at the center: a man is changed forever. He is configured to Christ the Priest, so that through his hands and voice and life, Christ may continue to teach, sanctify and shepherd his people.

One of the first striking moments comes after the Gospel, when the man to be ordained is called by name. This is easy to pass over, but it matters. God does not call people in the abstract. He calls by name.

He calls a particular man, with a particular history, a particular heart, particular gifts, and yes, particular weaknesses. The candidate answers, "Present." In that one word, he is placing his life before the Lord and before the Church.

Then, the Church asks whether he has been found worthy. This is not a declaration that he is perfect. No priest is. Rather, it is the Church saying that, after years of prayer, study, formation, discernment and testing, this man is being entrusted with a sacred mission. The bishop then chooses him for ordination, and the people respond with joy. That joy is not just polite applause. It is the joy of the Church recognizing that the Lord still provides shepherds for his people.

The man then makes promises before the bishop to preach the Gospel, to celebrate the mysteries of Christ faithfully, to pray for God's people and to unite himself more closely each day to Christ the High Priest. Then, placing his hands between the hands of

the bishop, he promises respect and obedience, acknowledging that the priest's life is not his own project but a mission received.

Then comes one of the most moving moments of the entire rite. The candidate lies prostrate on the floor while the Litany of the Saints is sung. He is face down before the altar, while the whole Church prays over him. It is an image of surrender and of death: dying to self, to ambition and to the illusion that his life belongs only to him. But it is also full of hope. He is not alone on the floor, as the Church on earth and the Church in heaven surround him.

The heart of the ordination comes next, in silence. The bish-

op lays hands on the head of the candidate. This is an ancient sign, reaching back to the apostles. Through the laying on of hands and the Prayer of Ordination, the Holy Spirit is given, and the man becomes a priest forever.

After this, the newly ordained is vested with the stole and chasuble and his hands are anointed with sacred chrism. They will be hands through which the tenderness and mercy of God reach His people.

Finally, the bishop places the paten and chalice into his hands. The priest receives the gifts of the people, bread and wine, which he is called to offer to God. In return, God gives back something infinitely greater: the Body and



FATHER CHRIS FORD

Blood of his Son. That is the heart of the priesthood.

A priestly ordination is beautiful because it reminds us that Christ has not abandoned his people. And every priest, in all his humanity and weakness, exists for this one purpose: to help the people of God encounter the living Christ, who never stops giving himself for the life of the world.

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All our benefactors are fervently remembered in a monthly Mass and in our daily prayers with heartfelt gratitude.

May God bless and reward you!

The Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano

By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See
Bishop of Bridgeport

DECREE MANDATING THE PROMULGATION OF THE DIACONATE PERSONNEL MANUAL

On January 1, 1983, my predecessor, the Most Reverend Walter W. Curtis, following the Third Synod of the Diocese of Bridgeport, published the *Pastoral Book* that contained all policies and procedures of the Diocese.

I promulgated a revision of the *Diaconate Personnel Manual* for the Diocese of Bridgeport on December 2, 2018, which was to be observed for a period of one year after which no changes were made. A further revision of the Deacon Personnel Manual was promulgated on December 8, 2023.

Now having taken into consideration additional modifications needed to address the changing circumstances that we have faced over the last few years, I the Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, the undersigned Fifth Bishop of the Diocese of Bridgeport, do hereby declare and decree;

1. That this *Diaconate Personnel Manual* shall be in effect for all deacons serving in the Diocese of Bridgeport and assigned to diaconal ministry by me or my successors effective **June 30, 2026**.
2. All norms found in any subsequent revisions of the *Pastoral Book* of 1983, as well as the *Manual* promulgated on December 8, 2023, are superseded by this updated *Deacon Personnel Manual*.

I order that the provisions of this decree have firm and stable effect, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, even if worthy of special mention, and that they be promulgated by inclusion in the official diocesan newspaper, *The Fairfield County Catholic*, entering into force on **June 30, 2026**.

Furthermore, I order that the present provisions be duly communicated electronically and/or by ordinary mail to all pastors, administrators or clerics in charge of diocesan parishes, quasi-parishes, shrines, oratories and chapels that are subject to these provisions.

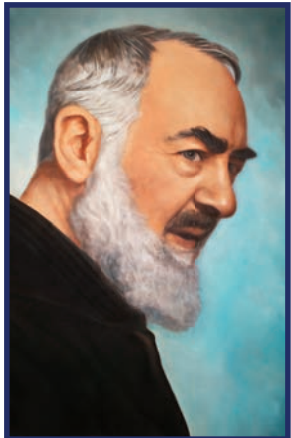
Given this 24th of May of 2026, the Solemnity of Pentecost, at the Catholic Center.

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of Bridgeport

Reverend Monsignor Robert Kinnally
Vicar General



Happy Birthday, Padre Pio!

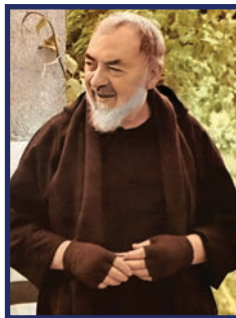


Born Francesco Forgione on May 25, 1887, to peasant farmers Grazio Mario Forgione and Maria Giuseppa Di Nunzio, Padre Pio grew up in the small southern Italian town of Pietrelcina. From the age of five, he reported daily visions of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and his guardian angel — something he did not realize was unique to him. From an early age, it was clear he would dedicate his life to God.

At 15, he entered the novitiate of the Capuchin Franciscan Friars in Morcone, Italy, where he took the name Brother Pio. He was later ordained a priest in 1910 at the Cathedral of Benevento. Throughout his life, he endured immense suffering, both physically and spiritually. He reported battles with the devil, experienced chronic illness, and most notably became the first priest in Catholic history to bear the stigmata — the five wounds of the crucified Christ.

Padre Pio spent the last 50 years of his life at the Capuchin Friary of Our Lady of Grace in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy, where he became known as a mystical priest associated with healings and miracles. Devotion to Padre Pio spread to the United States through Italian immigrants and American servicemen who encountered him during World War II and carried home the special connection they made with him. He is often called the saint of our times because many people living today knew him personally or continue to experience a deep spiritual connection to him.

As we celebrate the birthday of Padre Pio, may we be inspired by his selfless suffering, unwavering faith, and enduring love for God and others. And may we always remember that *“Prayer is the best weapon we have; it is the key to God’s heart.”*



· Upcoming Events ·

Friday, June 5 & Saturday, June 6, 2026

Book Signing and Meet & Greet

Padre Pio’s American Daughter: The Story of Mary Pyle, by Susan De Bartoli

📍 Padre Pio Foundation of America
463 Main Street, Cromwell, CT 06416

Join the PPFOA for a book signing with author, Susan De Bartoli, celebrating the launch of her latest biography, *Padre Pio’s American Daughter: The Story of Mary Pyle*. This inspiring true story highlights one of Padre Pio’s closest spiritual daughters, whose cause for Canonization is in its initial phases. Meet Susan, purchase a copy, and have it personally signed. Free and open to the public.

Friday, June 5, 2026 | 10 AM - 3 PM

Reflections on the Spirituality of Padre Pio From His Own Writings

A Special Day of Reflection and Prayer with Fr. Pio Mandato, FMHJ and Sr. Theresa May, CSN

📍 *Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles Chapel*
Holy Apostles College and Seminary
33 Prospect Hill Road, Cromwell, CT 06416

Fr. Pio, who received his First Holy Communion from Padre Pio, and Sr. Theresa will guide you on a deeper journey into Padre Pio’s life, spirituality, and enduring legacy. Celebrate Mass, hear inspiring reflections and receive a **blessing with Padre Pio’s glove**. Free and open to the public.

Scan this QR code to learn more about our upcoming events or visit: padrepio.com/events



The Padre Pio Foundation of America

Founded in 1977 to spread devotion to Padre Pio, the PPFOA carries on his mission today by preserving the places near and dear to his heart, fostering vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and carrying on Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy in his name.

