

# FAIRFIELD COUNTY CATHOLIC

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(PHOTOS BY AMY MORTENSEN)

**THE BRIDGE**

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*In service of the Church***Three different paths to the same destination**

By JOE PISANI

BRIDGEPORT—Three different men took three different paths in life and ended up at the same destination—serving as servants of the Servant, Jesus Christ.

Michael John Anthony Crane, Andres Felipe Grajales and Martin Rodriguez were ordained as permanent deacons in a Solemn Pontifical Mass on June 20, joined by close to 500 clergy, faithful and family members.

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano told the packed St. Augustine Cathedral: “Today in a special way, we gather around three brothers, and we give thanks to Almighty God for them, for the men that they are, have become and will continue to become. For the fact that they stand in our midst as husbands, fathers, grandfathers, fellow disciples, colleagues and coworkers who have gone on this extraordinary journey.”

The bishop told the candidates that Christ was with them “in the struggles of life, in the twists



BISHOP FRANK J. CAGGIANO WITH NEWLY ORDAINED DEACONS and their wives, from left, Deacon Michael Crane and his wife Alycia; Deacon Martin Rodriguez and his wife Leo Flor; Bishop Caggiano; Deacon Andres Grajales and his wife Judith. (PHOTO BY AMY MORTENSEN)

and turns of life, in the trials of life, and his blessing helped you to understand that you were not meant to walk in this life alone, so he helped you to discern the woman who was chosen for you to be your soulmate, your fortress, your guide, your rock and your companion unto eternal life.”

He praised their wives for helping them pursue their calling

and added, “We can say clearly to everyone here that without the love of your lives, you would not be here, and they will be at your side to help you do what the Lord has asked you to do.”

As deacons they are called to be Servants of the Word, Servants of the Altar and Servants of Charity, successors of those first seven deacons chosen to assist the

Apostles in the early Church.

He told the candidates their ministry will “be in the trenches of life, accompanying people and serving them in their hours of challenge, in their hours of joy as you walk with the people of God.”

However, he differentiated their service from the concept of service in the secular world.

“My friends, in our world,

when we hear the word ‘service,’ we think of an act rendered to someone else,” the bishop said. “There are many who are employed simply to serve, and they are paid to do that. Then, there are those who offer service, that is an act of good for a good cause. There are many who will serve others, but that’s not what we’re about here today. The service you are called to enter into is to build the Kingdom of God on Earth, one person at a time, so that in the name of Jesus, you will be a coworker with him.”

He said we live in a sinful, self-absorbed world, and that they would pour out their lives for others, and by walking with them, they will change many lives in Jesus’ name.

He urged them to call upon Our Lady and stay close to her, especially if they should become confused, doubtful, or discouraged, “because she is the one who knows what it means to serve.”

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*St. Catherine of Siena honors deacon***Loss of a child and a 12-year journey to the diaconate**

By JOE PISANI

TRUMBULL—St. Catherine of Siena Parish held a Mass of Thanksgiving recently for a man Father Joseph Marcello called “an extraordinary human being.”

Deacon Patrick Toole, DMin celebrated the 15th anniversary of his ordination on June 11 and was honored by the parish where he has served for 11 years.

“Deacon Toole brings to his diaconal ministry at the parish and diocesan levels a sharp analytical mind and a vibrant creativity, deep faith and piety, utter discretion, and thoroughgoing humility,” Father Marcello said. “He is one of the most admired and respected people I’ve ever met, and I’ve lost count of the number of people who seek his advice on matters large and small... We ask God to bless him and his family very abundantly, now and always.”

Deacon Toole expressed his gratitude to Father Marcello and to the parish.

“I’m very thankful for Father’s mentorship, support and friendship over these years,” he said. “Serving at St. Catherine of Siena’s has been one of the great blessings of my life. They inspire me, and it’s an honor to walk with them. It’s such a warm, faithful community with a genuine love for Jesus and for serving others. I see Christ in them.”

He said it has been a tremendous gift to share their faith at a deeply personal level.

“These people allow me into their lives, and we grow together in discipleship,” he said. “There are no words to describe it. It’s a grace-filled gift.”

In his book “From Heart to Heaven: Reflections from the Deacon’s Bench,” Deacon Toole described his journey to the diaconate, which began with the tragic loss of his daughter and led

to a 12-year search for answers.

“When my second daughter, Katrina, was born, I knew she had a serious health issue,” he recalled. “She passed away four hours later as my wife and I were by her side. This tragic event set off a lifetime search for truth and meaning at a profoundly human and spiritual level. Although I was a practicing Catholic, I admittedly lacked depth in my conviction. My daughter’s death forced me to examine what I believed, how I practiced my faith and my priorities. I spent the next twelve years studying, praying and discerning many of life’s fundamental questions.”

During this “period between death and resurrection,” he says God’s grace was transforming him, and the seeds of his vocation were planted.

Ten years after Katrina’s death, he was on a red-eye flight home to Charlotte, NC, from IBM meetings in California, reading a



DEACON PATRICK TOOLE and Father Joseph Marcello during Mass at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull.

biography of Padre Pio.

“The reporter asked Padre Pio, ‘Why do you spend twelve to fourteen hours a day in confession?’ and he answered, ‘To help souls,’” Deacon Toole said. “I thought to myself: ‘I’ve done a lot in the business world, but I don’t think I’ve done anything to help souls.’”

This epiphany prompted him to research the diaconate program. He even read textbooks and explored the curricula, but never told anyone.

“I had five young kids, and I thought, ‘There’s no way I can do this,’” he recalled.

But then, there was another grace-filled experience—a life-threatening one.

Flying home from a business trip to Canada, he was getting

sicker and sicker. He developed a high fever, a sore throat and couldn’t talk, so he rushed to urgent care, where the doctor gave him the news: “You have pneumonia.”

“Could I die from this?” he asked.

“Of course you can.”

Over the following days, as he lay in bed recuperating, he watched reports about Pope John Paul II, who was nearing the end of his life. During one TV broadcast, the news anchor asked a priest to sum up the pope’s life in one sentence and he replied: “He had many questions in life, but he found all the answers in Jesus Christ.”

In that moment, Pat Toole  
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June 2026

*'Renaissance in the Church'*

# Two ordained to priesthood

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

BRIDGEPORT—It was standing-room only at the Cathedral Church of Saint Augustine as the faithful gathered to witness and welcome the ordination of two priests to the Diocese of Bridgeport family.

Rev. Juan José Colón, Jr. and Rev. Herley Mendez Torres were each ordained as priests at a Solemn Pontifical Mass with the Rite of Ordination of Priests on June 13.

"We are blessed beyond words for the gift of the two brothers, who sit in our midst," Bishop Frank J. Caggiano said to the packed cathedral. Bishop Caggiano credited the love of family, friends, formation leaders and all those who supported now Father Colón and Father Torres.

"They persevered. They have

been changed. They are now freely ready to enter into the mystery of the ministerial priesthood," he said.

Bishop Caggiano said he was proud of both Father Colón and Father Torres, "for the men you have been forged to become in the love of Jesus Christ."

The crucified Christ, the bishop said, is the heart of the priesthood and no one is ever worthy of it.

"But God does not ask that," Bishop said. "The fact that he chose you and He will forever love you is enough."

The Bishop said this ordination comes at a special time in the life of the Church.

"We are beginning to live through a renaissance in the Church," he said, noting that St. John Paul II prayed for springtime renewal in the life of the Church.



AT THE ORDINATION in St. Augustine Cathedral are, from left, Father Christopher Ford, Director of Seminarians; Bishop James Massa, Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn; newly ordained Father Herley Mendez Torres; Bishop Frank J. Caggiano; newly ordained Father Juan Jose Colón Jr.; and Bishop Christopher R. Cooke, Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia. (PHOTO BY AMY MORTENSEN)

"We are beginning to see the first buds of that springtime as the Spirit moves throughout the world, hearts that once could never imagine coming to faith are beginning to stir. Many are hungry. Many are curious. Many are searching for a real purpose and meaning in life as they confront the emptiness of so much that the world offers," Bishop Caggiano said.

The bishop urged Father Colón and Father Torres to

unlock the power of truth.

"Use the gifts God has given you to bring many to faith and to nurture those who will be entrusted to your care—those whom you will serve and for whom you will become spiritual fathers," the bishop said, noting that this ordination day also honors the memory of St. Anthony of Padua, who preached, "let your words teach and your actions speak."

"I ask you to let your lives

teach. As is true for all of us. Let the authenticity of your lives give power to your words," Bishop Caggiano continued. "Many are searching for the truth. Be instruments of that truth."

He also asked the men to value beauty, quoting St. Augustine, the patron saint of the cathedral, who once said, "All beauty shows the transcendence of God."

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*'Truly humble before the Lord'*

# Angiolillo ordained to transitional diaconate

By EMILY CLARK

BRIDGEPORT—On the morning of June 6, the Cathedral Church of St. Augustine was filled—not only with diocesan faithful but with song, with holiness and with joy at the prospects of a remarkable young man on the cusp of becoming a priest.

Dominick Angiolillo, longtime parishioner at St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull, was ordained to the transitional diaconate at a Solemn Pontifical Mass celebrated by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. Joining the bishop were dozens of concelebrants, deacons, seminarians and members of the Knights of Columbus who gathered with Angiolillo's family and friends for the jubilant event.

After years of education, training and preparation, Angiolillo now enters his final stage of formation before he is ordained a priest a year from now.

Following the readings offered by Angiolillo's mother Jodi and sister Jennifer, Deacon Tim Bolton, director of accompani-



NEWLY ORDAINED transitional Deacon Dominick Angiolillo is joined by his parents John and Jodi. (PHOTO BY AMY MORTENSEN)

ment for the diocese, read from the Gospel of Luke. Angiolillo was then called to the altar where Father Chris Ford, director of seminarians, testified to his worthiness before the bishop, who replied, "Relying on the help of the Lord God and of our Savior Jesus Christ, we choose this our brother for the Order of the Diaconate."

In his homily, the bishop alluded to Angiolillo's years of discernment and realization, saying, "We

have all seen in you something far greater, and you discovered it with the wisdom and grace of Jesus Christ. And now, you will be configured to Christ as a servant, and a year from now, with his holy will, a priest."

He described some of the responsibilities of the transitional diaconate and called Angiolillo "well-formed and ready" for this role, noting that he is among very few men the bishop has met who is this prepared to be a ser-

vant of truth.

Reflecting on Angiolillo's character, Bishop Caggiano told the faithful before him: "I see a man who is truly humble, a man who knows his smallness before God, but that smallness becomes greater when you allow Jesus Christ to enter into your life."

The bishop then spoke to Angiolillo, saying, "You treat everyone you meet with respect, a characteristic of someone who is truly humble before the Lord. You are a kind man, friendly, welcoming, meeting people where they are. That is the first step toward serving them, and you do that in ways that you probably don't even realize."

"Dominick, the Lord is calling you to this step in your life," he added. "Never be afraid of what lies ahead. The Lord is granting you an abundance of his grace; and you will give him glory as a servant of his holy name."

Standing before the bishop, Angiolillo declared his resolve to accept the duties and responsibilities of the diaconate. He then

knelled in front of the sanctuary for the Laying On of Hands and accepted the Book of the Gospels.

As his young nephews waved from the pews and his entire family watched with awe and pride, Angiolillo was vested as a deacon by Monsignor Donald Guglielmi, STD, the spiritual director at St. Joseph Seminary.

The fraternal kiss was offered by the bishop and other deacons before Angiolillo took his place on the altar as priests prepared for the consecration. The joy on his face was unmistakable, and he beamed upon accepting the gifts from his father John and brother Thomas.

Ginny Silva of Newtown, whose son, Father Eric Silva, is the pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Danbury, understood the great joy experienced by the Angiolillo family, having known his parents John and Jodi for years.

"It's just beautiful," she said. "I look at them and think about all the baptisms, First Communions and weddings they will have

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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.*

- + **44 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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# Seminarians accompany the sick at St. Vincent's

By JOE PISANI

BRIDGEPORT—Twenty-five years ago, when Deacon Tim Bolton's wife was beginning treatment for cancer, he got a call from his pastor at St. James Parish.

"Do you want to talk to Mary Ellen?" he asked.

"I called to talk to you," Father Tom Lynch replied.

The memory of that moment has stayed with him throughout the years.

"I was kind of dumbfounded. Like nobody talked to me," Deacon Bolton recalled. "And he said words that influenced my vocation: 'I just want you to know that whatever happens, I'll walk with you.'"

Looking back, Deacon Bolton says, "He accompanied me through her death and funeral and continued to check up on me. Nobody calls a widower, and yet Father Tom would just show up."

That compassion and personal concern led him to an appreciation of the importance of "accompaniment"—walking with another person, which is best exemplified by Jesus, who walked with two dejected disciples on the Road to Emmaus after the crucifixion.

Today, Deacon Bolton, the diocesan director of accompaniment, is developing programs that will form "pastoral companions" in parishes to help those who are hurting and in need of someone to walk with them—people who may have suffered the loss of a loved one or a job, people who are sick, people who are homebound, and perhaps struggling single mothers.

The ministry, which he also describes as "spiritual friendship," is one of many supported by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano and the 2026 *One in Christ* Bishop's Appeal.

Deacon Bolton, who served as manager of pastoral care at St. Vincent's Medical Center of Hartford HealthCare for 15 years, has also created a clinical pastoral accompaniment program, which six seminarians are engaged in this summer at the hospital.

"The bishop wanted people to minister to the sick and to 'be present' to the people they were visiting," he said, "whether they're in a skilled nursing facility, long-term care or their homes."

Deacon Bolton has a degree in theology from Sacred Heart University and is a board-certified chaplain and a spiritual director certified by the Murphy Center for Ignatian Spirituality.

"I guess I've been practicing



DEACON TIM BOLTON DISCUSSES a clinical pastoral accompaniment program with seminarians, from left, Joseph Perrotta, Bill Izuazu, Pierre Doumbouya, and Pradeep Ivan Devasagayam.

this accompaniment thing a long time," he says. "It's just this big word that kind of fits everywhere. But it's not a new invention. It's what the Church has practiced since its inception."

This summer at St. Vincent's Medical Center, the seminarians are learning to be present to people in times of distress by providing "a calm, steady presence that will listen without judging, that won't attempt to fix them but will allow them to be seen by another person who listens."

The first seminarian to work with him at the hospital several years ago was Father Christopher Ford, director of seminarians, who encouraged the six men to spend the summer at the hospital—Bill Izuazu, Maximilian Lock, Joseph Perrotta, Brendan Gleeson, Pradeep Devasagayam and Pierre Doumbouya.

Several weeks into the program, Izuazu said, "I'm learning in hospital ministry that it is OK not to have all the answers, which is good news, because the people I may meet may ask questions that weren't on any of my exams. Pastoral care is less about fixing people and more about accompanying them with compassion, presence, and hope, trusting that Christ is already present in those moments."

Gleeson said that hospital chaplaincy is a ministry that extends beyond the physical walls of the patient's room, a ministry that "finds itself staring into the darkest parts of our human frailty, where wounds or illnesses affect a person's body or mind."

He said one must look even further into a person, "where there is a crying out from sufferings more piercing to one's ears than that of physical pain. This silent cry can be found in the secluded caverns of someone's heart and

soul, where the light has yet to reach—the foundational parts of a person that cannot be seen or touched by human medicine."

Chaplaincy requires seeing Christ in others, and Gleeson compared it to going into Jesus' prison cell: "If you were asked or had the opportunity, would you sit in Jesus' prison cell with him the night before his Passion? To suffer with him? Unable to fix, or change the situation, yet instead of leaving him alone, sit down with him on the cold stone and be chained together, leaning on each other in silence, only speaking the language of love. That's what chaplaincy is: to see Christ in oth-

ers and to go into the prison cell of suffering to be with the beloved."

For the seminarians, it is an immersive experience.

"These guys are really eager to learn, and they're eager to grow in their understanding of the sick," Deacon Bolton says. "What I'm doing now with them is also going to be transferable to the program I'm working on for lay people."

In the pastoral companions' program, lay people will receive formation so they can visit the sick as representatives of the parish. In addition to accompanying people during a time of crisis, he believes, there will be another benefit.

"If we can encourage a genera-

tion of fired-up lay people to visit the sick, that will reverberate, and we will be touching their families," he says. "If we're reaching into homes, where Mom and Dad are alone a lot of the time, and the kids are working or don't live there, we will be providing their parents with spiritual friendship. And some of these kids who have walked away from the faith might take a different look at the Church, if somebody from the parish is visiting their parents."

Pamela S. Rittman, director of development and the Bishop's Appeal, said ministries supported by the Appeal focus on the themes of "Accompanying our neighbor," "Fostering works of goodness" and "Celebrating the Truth in Jesus Christ."

In announcing the Appeal, Bishop 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."

(To make a gift to the *One in Christ* Bishop's Appeal, visit [www.2026BishopsAppeal.org](http://www.2026BishopsAppeal.org) or call 203.416.1470.)

## Participation up in Bishop's Appeal

FAIRFIELD—Since they first became active in the *One in Christ* Bishop's Appeal four years ago, Mark and Morgan Mooney have stressed the importance of increasing participation because they believe when more people give whatever they can, "it not only brings us closer as a church community, but also reduces the stress on individuals."

"Mark and I are happy to continue as co-chairs for the 2026 *One in Christ* Bishop's Appeal because it goes beyond just fundraising," Morgan says. "Not only do we support and believe in the mission, but we can see firsthand the many fruits it bears. Bishop Caggiano has done great things for our diocese, so it is easy to stand in support of him and of this."

Joe Gallagher, chief development officer for the Diocese of

Bridgeport, worked with Morgan and Mark more than 20 years ago at Disney and said he admired them for being strong witnesses to the Catholic faith.

"When I invited Morgan and Mark to become involved with the Annual Bishop's Appeal, I was confident their involvement would generate strong results," he said.

The couple from St. Pius X Parish in Fairfield have seen participation increase since 2023, when they started as vice chairs of the Appeal. In addition, the Appeal exceeded its goals for three years, and they hope it will again this year, as they prepare to turn over the chair responsibility to Kenn and Maureen Devane of St. Elizabeth Seton Parish in Ridgefield.

Pamela S. Rittman, director of development and the Bishop's Appeal, says that since 2022, participation grew by 700 donors.



MARK AND MORGAN MOONEY

The Appeal returns funds to the parish when it exceeds its pledge goal by June 30, and in recent years, \$660,000 was returned in 2024 and more than \$1 million in 2025.

"One of our early goals with the Appeal was to raise awareness and to increase the number of parishioners who support it," Morgan said. "It sounds so simple, but by raising participation

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

*1000 years of fidelity***Jubilarians of consecrated life honored**

By MARIE T. OATES

FAIRFIELD—Women and men of consecrated life who marked milestone anniversaries of their religious profession—totaling more than 1000 years—were honored recently at a Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano.

The bishop, who was joined by priests, religious and the faithful at St. Pius X in Fairfield, said: “It’s a mystery (the vocation to religious, consecrated life) insofar as, while I can try to describe it, it is only understood by living it, as some of you have done, day in and day out, for 75 years.”

Drawing on the tradition stretching back to St. Anthony of the Desert, who gave birth to monasticism in the West, Bishop Caggiano reflected on how consecrated life has been a continuous gift of renewal and inspiration to the Church across the centuries. He spoke of the countless hours of pastoral service offered quietly, perseveringly, by men and women who gave not just their time but their very lives.

The heart of Bishop Caggiano’s homily turned on the word “perseverance,” understood as the daily, deepening faithfulness to a living commitment.

“If you go online and look up the word ‘perseverance,’ the definition that comes back is something along these lines: It is to be steadfast, to complete a task, despite the difficulties and delays one may encounter,” he said.



BISHOP FRANK J. CAGGIANO AT THE MASS FOR JUBILARIANS at St. Pius X, Fairfield, is joined by, from left, Sr. Marylou Lyons, CND; Father Corey Picino; Sr. Sally Norcross, CND; Sr. Eileen Shea, SSND; Sr. Carol Dwyer, SSND; Sr. Donna Irvine, SSND; Sr. Thaddeus Rajca, CSFN; Sr. Mary Frances Przybylski, CSFN; Sr. Mary Ellen Genova, CSFN; Sr. Michelle Bremer, CSFN; Sr. Joan Stankowski, CSFN; Sr. Maria Linh Nguyen, LHC; and Mother Gabriela del Amor Crucificado, CEPC. (PHOTO BY PAUL HARING)

“We could not live life without perseverance, but today we gather because there are those beyond us who have chosen to be steadfast, not to complete a task, but to live a commitment, a commitment that has evolved and deepened in each passing day, a commitment not first and foremost to do anything, but to fall in love ever more deeply with the Lord Jesus, and to commit one’s life to him and to his holy will, wherever that will to one superior could lead.”

He said: “This perseverance has allowed each of you to detach from that which the world seemingly values—possessions, privilege, power, authority, self-gratification—and instead offer your heart, your mind, your will and your decisions in radical poverty, chastity, and obedience to be of service to the One who

is at the center of your life, the One I can call your spouse, your companion, your only real, true, authentic friend.”

To illuminate the paradox at the center of consecrated life, Bishop Caggiano invoked Pope Leo the Great, who preached to his people that there is a living that causes one to die and a dying that causes one to live.

In a world that has, the bishop said, embraced lifestyles that lead people to loneliness, anxiety and

emptiness, the witness of consecrated women and men stands as a luminous counter-sign, a freely chosen dying to self that opens onto an intoxicating freedom, a love that brings life not only to those who embrace it, but to all whom they serve in the name of Christ.

In honoring the jubilarians, Bishop Caggiano gave thanks for what their lives proclaim: that the love of Christ is worthy of everything. ■

### Jubilarians of the Diocese of Bridgeport

**75 years**

Sister Ann Moles, SSND  
Sister Colette Wojciak, CSFN

**70 years**

Sister Mariano Pardo, SSND  
Sister Mary Frances  
Przybylski, CSFN  
Sister Joan Stankowski, CSFN

**65 years**

Sister Michelle Bremer, CSFN  
Sister Mary Ellen Genova,  
CSFN  
Sister Marylou Lyons, CND  
Sister Ann Perin, CND  
Sister Catherine Powers, CND  
Sister Thaddeus Rajca, CSFN

**60 years**

Sister Carol Dwyer, SSND  
Sister Donna Irvine, SSND  
Sister Sally Norcross, CND  
Sister Eileen Shea, SSND  
Sister Kathy Vasselli, SSND

**50 years**

Sister Gerilyn Hunihan, ASCJ  
Father Ronald Perry, SJ

**25 years**

Mother Gabriela del Amor  
Crucificado, CEPC  
Sister Maria Linh Nguyen,  
LHC

### LOSS OF A CHILD FROM PAGE 2

told himself, “If I ever get out of this bed, I’m finally going to apply to the diaconate.”

Then, his wife Lyndy, who had prayed for him through his grief and quest for answers, came home from Mass with a brochure. She handed it to him and said, “I saw this in the back of the church and thought you should consider it.” It was a pamphlet about the diaconate program—which he had never mentioned to anyone. That afternoon he finally made an inquiry.

Today, Deacon Patrick Toole has a different life. He’s Chancellor and Secretary of the Curia for the Diocese of Bridgeport. In addition to his liturgical responsibilities at St. Catherine’s, he facilitates the St. Jerome Bible Study classes and leads the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults program.

Longtime Parishioner Jeff Wright sums up how the parish feels: “Deacon Toole has been one of the great blessings we have been privileged to experience at St. Catherine of Siena. He is a wonderful role model for me personally in the way he loves and serves our Lord. He is a gifted homilist, a caring family man, and someone who gives so much of himself to our parish and to the diocese. His faith, humility and servant’s heart have touched countless lives. He has helped make St. Catherine’s a stronger parish community, and we are all better because of his presence among us.” ■

### TWO ORDAINED TO PRIESTHOOD FROM PAGE 3

“See Him in the beauty of our tradition, our music, and the treasures handed down over two thousand years,” Bishop Caggiano said.

“Goodness should not simply be something you do. Goodness should be who you are,” Bishop Caggiano said. “In every moment of every day, you will always be a priest. And in every moment of every day, you and I have an opportunity to love—to seek the good of those around us.”

“It is a great moment for our Church, and how blessed we are that you are willing to enter into this mystery,” Bishop Caggiano said.

The bishop also implored the new priests to ask the Virgin Mary for her intercession, for protection and for advocacy.

“I promise you, brothers, that as you enter into this great gift, she will not only lead you to Christ, but she will lead you to everlasting life,” the bishop said.

Following the homily there was the Promise of the Elect, the Litany of Supplication, the

Laying on of Hands, the Prayer of Ordination, Vesting with Stole and Chasuble, the Anointing of Hands, the Handing on of Bread and Wine and the Fraternal Kiss of Peace.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist followed and then the concluding rites.

Bishop Caggiano gave a heartfelt thank you to the parents of Father Colón and Father Torres.

“I thank you for giving us the gift of your sons, which I can imagine is one of the greatest gifts you can give, but you didn’t just give them to us, you helped form them in faith,” he said.

The bishop also asked all gathered to pray in a special way for the 44 seminarians in the diocese. “Pray that they will persevere, and God will continue to bless them,” he said.

Father Torres will remain at St. Thomas Aquinas where he previously served as a deacon, and Father Colón, who was serving as a deacon at St. Mary in Stamford, will continue to serve there as a priest.

Michelle Chuchuca, a friend of the Colón family, said she remembers Father Colon attending St.

Joseph and St Ladislaus Parish in South Norwalk.

She said she came to support both priests and was also looking for some personal inspiration.

“I am discerning a religious life,” Chuchuca said. “I thought it would be a good opportunity to be in a place where so many priests and religious are saying yes.”

Supporters of Father Torres were excited for his big day.

“He’s going to be a fine priest,” said John Otis, who was attending the Ordination Mass with his wife, Chris, who is a youth minister at St. Aloysius in New Canaan.

“He was active in the youth ministry,” John Otis said. “He really dove in and helped with all of the activities.”

His wife agreed.

“I know how important it is for us to support these men when they make this big change in their life,” Chris Otis said. “My heart is just so excited for him. We need these good men for us.” ■

## 'Unity in diversity' 400 process in ecclesial celebration

By JOE PISANI

BRIDGEPORT—They sang, they prayed, they gave glory to God in a Eucharistic procession through the streets of Bridgeport during the vigil celebration of the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, which honors the Real Presence of Jesus—Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity—in the Holy Eucharist.

Almost 400 people, members of the diverse lay ecclesial movements of the Diocese of Bridgeport, joined Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at St. Augustine Cathedral for Mass as he thanked them for their work and compared them to the millions of colored tiles that compose the magnificent artwork of St. Peter's Basilica.

"Today, you and I gather as a living mosaic of Christ," he told the packed cathedral. "A mosaic made up of ecclesial movements and communities and charisms,



BISHOP FRANK J. CAGGIANO LEADS some 400 members of ecclesial movements in a Eucharistic procession at St. Augustine Cathedral. (PHOTO BY PAUL HARING)

some ancient, some new, representing the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, particularly in the life of our church in the last sixty years."

He urged them to show the Church a better way by coming together and celebrating their differences.

"Each of you have come here, perhaps with a different culture,

different language, different history, different background, and yet each of you beautiful people are loved by God beyond your wildest imagination," he said.

"Each of you, like me, are so precious in the eyes of the Lord that He would have died only for you, to save you. Even though

we come here in our uniqueness, we celebrate the fact that the mystery of the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus is not only an invitation to eat the bread and drink the cup that will bring us into life, but an invitation to also become a living communion."

Bishop Caggiano encouraged them in their work for the Church and cited St. Augustine, who wrote, "We eat the Body of Christ to become the Body of Christ."

"If I may put it simply: We receive Communion to build communion. To be able to see that in our diversity there is something that binds us together. That all of us in our different charisms and movements and communities are taking a portion of the great commission of Christ. All of us are yielding the same fruit in Jesus. Differences—whether they be language, culture, history, character, educa-



tion, training, wealth, whatever it is—make no difference in the service of Jesus Christ."

He also urged them to work against tendencies in the Church that "are not meant to unify but to harm."

"In our Church, we talk of progressives and conservatives, of people who follow Francis and people who follow St. John Paul II, of those who wish to pray in Latin or English or whatever language. Or we say, 'You do this, I do that,' 'You leave me alone, I'll leave you alone.' ... My dear friends, that will not do. You and I must show the Church a better way to be able to come together as sisters and brothers and celebrate our differences. The Holy Spirit comes in so many different forms and communities, and we must show the world that what binds us together is the Sacred Body, Blood,

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

## A 'miracle' at Our Lady of Good Counsel

By JOE PISANI

BRIDGEPORT—Four years ago when Bishop Frank J. Caggiano visited the vacant rectory of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Bridgeport, it was so dilapidated and neglected, he didn't go inside.

"I remember going to that rectory, and I got as far as the front door and backed off," he recalled. "They told me, 'Bishop, the only solution is to tear it down.'"

But then, something happened. "God had another solution," he said.

The Catholic community Koinonia John the Baptist came to the diocese and took over Our Lady of Good Counsel, which needed extensive repairs. Father Adriano Biccheri, the pastor, said people began to come forward to offer their services, financial support, materials and whatever was needed to bring the property back to life.

On Corpus Christi Sunday, Bishop Caggiano returned to the rectory and stood at the front door again. This time, after blessing the resurrected building, he went in.

It was "a miracle," he said in his comments at the ceremony.

"That building, now beautifully named Bethlehem, the House of Bread and Peace, is going to be



MEMBERS OF KOINONIA JOHN THE BAPTIST GATHER at the recent blessing of their restored rectory, named Bethlehem, where the consecrated sisters and brothers will live. (PHOTO BY OSCAR CONTANZA)

the home of our consecrated sisters and brothers, where they will be nurtured and grow in love and faith to be the seed of this miracle that's unfolding," he told the faithful who filled the church. "It is going to be their home. But I would like all of us to remember, if home is where the heart is, this building is the home of Jesus."

The bishop said they were there to celebrate three miracles: the resurrected rectory, but most importantly the Body and Blood of Jesus—the miracle of the Eucharist.

"Imagine, my friends, the Lord gives us bread from heaven every day we're willing to receive it,"

he said. "In that one act on the cross, the Lord Jesus chose to die for you and me, and for all who would believe in him. He suffered and died and rose from the dead, so the victory of Christ may be your victory and mine. And every time we come to this altar, we are receiving the fruits of his victory. We are receiving not a sign, not a symbol, not a reminder—we're receiving Jesus himself."

The second miracle is Koinonia, modeled after their patron St. John the Baptist, the voice crying in the wilderness.

"The Koinonia came to us as a great gift to go where others

maybe would not go," he said.

"To come here, to be the instruments of God's love and mercy and of his healing, so that this place could literally come back to life. And you, my friends, are the beginning, not the end—the beginning of that new life."

The bishop urged them: "Live the moment right now in this sacred place and feel the peace and joy...and in your heart recognize the power of God and what God can do."

In an interview, Father Biccheri talked about Koinonia's arrival in Bridgeport at the request of Bishop Caggiano.

"When we started the process, our resources were almost zero because the parish had no savings, and there were 25 people at the English Mass and seven at the Spanish," he recalled. "Now, the Spanish has more than 300 and the English is more than 80 ... and the rectory has been resurrected into a modern monastery for our consecrated community and offers Bridgeport an oasis of prayer."

The community includes Father Biccheri, Michele Bertaja, Marie Tauchmanova, Emiliana Traversin, Katarina Barkociova, Aide Escamilla Roman, Alexandra Dulova, Pablo Espinal Varela and Deacon Riccardo Varagnolo, who will be ordained to the priesthood at Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel on August 15.

The new building, Father Biccheri said, is a testament to the parish volunteers, benefactors and businesses that only charged for the cost of materials. Koinonia also received a grant from Foundations in Faith.

He expressed special gratitude to architect Tucker Chase; the director of the work, Ralph DeMasi and his wife Mary Ann, and John Bria of Residential Waste Systems.

The renovated building was  
► CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

# Event celebrates ethnic communities

By STEVE FILIZZOLA

STRATFORD—Eight ethnic communities came together recently to celebrate the diversity of the Diocese of Bridgeport at the first annual Multicultural Celebration at St. Mark Parish. Rain the previous night gave way to sunshine and a perfect spring afternoon for a spiritual day of celebration.

The event featured Brazilian choir members and musicians from Our Lady of Aparecida Parish in Bethel, who opened the celebration, singing passionately in their native language. Father Reggie Norman, representing the Black community, discussed the struggles of Black Catholics, especially following the end of slavery, a period during which the oppressed and neglected never lost faith.

Three Haitian choirs united to joyful and inspirational songs, which included the Magnificat, Alléluia and Dieu est si grand. A young Vietnamese brother and sis-



DANCERS FROM DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS GATHER at St. Mark Parish in Stratford. (PHOTO BY STEVE FILIZZOLA)

ter team enthralled the crowd with songs in English and Vietnamese, including “The Cross of Christ,” “Way Maker” and “Praise.”

Father Norman, vicar for the Black community and pastor of St. Mark, was delighted with the celebration.

“It’s always good when many cultures come together and celebrate our common faith and love for God, expressed in

our own unique ways,” he said. “God has shown us beauty in our diversity. We welcome all to our celebrations.”

Bishop Frank J. Caggiano celebrated Mass, during which seven languages were spoken. After praise and worship and Eucharistic Adoration, the outdoor festival began with ethnic dances being performed by Portuguese, Ecuadorian, Puerto

Rican, Haitian, Polish and Vietnamese dancers.

The Polish Folk Dance Group “Słowianie” presented several traditional Polish dances. Children and youth dancers, including those from the Missionary Families of Christ Connecticut, performed the Bangibang, Bumayah & Salidsid dances, which form a continuous story of survival, love, happiness and resilience passed down through generations.

The Rondalla of The Philippine-American Association of Connecticut serenaded the crowd with its banduria, octavina, laud and guitars, weaving melodies of timeless original Filipino music.

Haitian youth dancers performed Dékolé (Take off) and Linyon (Unity). Vietnamese dance performances included Lion Dance and Fan Dance. Youth dancers dressed in áo dài, one of the most recognizable and cherished traditional garments of Vietnamese culture.



Béttina Brutus, who led the blended Haitian choirs, offered thoughts of unity.

“It was a wonderful day spent praying, worshipping, and celebrating each other together,” she said. “It reminded us of the importance of unity despite what the world wants us to think. It highlights that we are on the same team, all children of God, sheep guided by our beloved shepherd.”

The Ecuadorian dance group Wayra Sisa, meaning “Flower of the Wind,” performed “The Immigrant Dances to Not Cry” and “A Tour of My Ecuadorian Villages.” The Puerto Rican dance group Danza y Folklore Magnificat concluded the celebration with a medley of different dances that included “Bomba, Plena and Seis Chorro.”

For two years, Bishop Caggiano has wanted to hold a spiritual and cultural celebration that demonstrates the beauty and goodness of the diocese’s ethnic communities.

“What a joy it was to celebrate together the remarkable gift of our diverse diocese,” he said. “In the beauty of so many languages, songs, and traditions, we witnessed something profound: The Catholic faith is truly universal, calling people of every nation and culture into the one family of God. Days like this remind us that our diversity is not a challenge to be managed, but a treasure to be cherished. I am deeply grateful to all the communities who shared their gifts so generously, and I look forward to many more celebrations like this one.”

During his homily, Bishop Caggiano reminded the faithful that we all come from different backgrounds, races and cultures.

Guests were treated to a selection of ethnic foods from six nations: Polish pierogi, paczki, and meat dumplings; Philippine pancit, adobo, sweet rice and cassava cake; Haitian griot, fried plantains, and paté kôdé; Vietnamese egg rolls, pork fried rice, shrimp and pork dumplings.

The Black community served collard greens. The Ecuadorian community offered food from their most traditional and folkloric dishes, while the Mexican community served tastes from the central-north portion of the country.

## THREE DIFFERENT PATHS FROM PAGE 2

“She will always be with you, even in those moments when you are exhausted or maybe even question,” he said. “Turn to her. She will guide you back to this great moment so that your ‘yes’ will echo and re-echo through the ages as you become a living sacrament of Christian service.”

After the homily, the bishop questioned each candidate to declare his resolve in accepting the duties of the diaconate. The assembly then prayed the Litany of Supplication, followed by the Laying On of Hands, during which the candidates knelt before the bishop, who as a Successor of the Apostles, laid his hands upon their heads. Then, he said the Prayer of Ordination, invoking the Holy Spirit, thus completing the Sacrament of Holy Orders in the Diaconal Order.

The newly ordained deacons were vested with a diaconal stole and dalmatic and knelt before the bishop to receive the Book of the Gospels and a fraternal kiss from the bishop and fellow deacons.

At the conclusion of the Mass, Bishop Caggiano and the entire church applauded

the men, their wives and children for the sacrifices they made.

Deacon Andres Grajales was assigned to Sacred Heart Church in Stamford,

Deacon Michael Crane to St. Aloysius in New Canaan and Deacon Martin Rodriguez to the Cathedral Parish in Bridgeport.

Deacon John DiTaranto, Director of the Diaconate, whom the bishop thanked for his service in the men’s formation, said: “It is an absolute joy for me to witness the ordination to the Order of Deacon for Michael, Andres and Martin. I have been walking this journey of discernment with them over the past four years and have been amazed at the continual growth in the love they have of Our Lord and their wives. Even though I am the Director of the Diaconate, I consider myself less of a director for these men and more of a ‘tour guide’ for their journey, observing and enjoying the many instances when the Holy Spirit has taken the lead.”

Deacon Brad Smythe of St. Joseph Church in Shelton, who celebrated the 15th anniversary of his ordination on June 11, said, “It feels wonderful coming to the diaconate ordination. It always renews my zeal, and it’s such a

blessing, especially since I was involved in teaching these guys. I got to know them, and we’re all brothers in Christ.”

Deacon Michael Crane, a retired attorney who was Associate General Counsel of Ernst & Young LLP, reflected on the work of the Holy Spirit in his life and said, “When I look back on my life, I see the moments that God has led me to this ministry, and I know I am blessed to serve the people of God for the rest of my life.”

Deacon Crane, who was appointed Vice-chancellor, praised Bishop Caggiano for the work he has done in the diocese and said, “I cannot imagine a bishop in the United States who is more supportive than Bishop Caggiano. He is leading a renewal in the diocese that is extraordinary, and he has the support of all the deacons.”

His wife Alycia called it “a long journey that ended with a wonderful and blessed event.”

Deacon Grajales, a supply chain expert and data analytics manager at Coty Inc., said that being ordained a deacon is one of the greatest privileges and blessings of his life. “I am deeply grateful to God for calling and choosing me for this ministry, and I am excited to begin this

new chapter of service in the Church,” he said. “I am especially thankful for all the people who walked with us and helped shape us into the men we are today. I am grateful for the opportunity to have completed it and to now put that formation into practice by serving our bishop and the People of God.”

He said that his prayer was simply to be an instrument in God’s hands. “Whatever good the Lord accomplishes through me, may it always lead others closer to Him, and may all the glory be given to God alone.”

His wife Judith said, “It is truly a blessing, and I am now so thankful to the Lord for calling Andres to serve. I am touched by his love and mercy.”

Father Arthur Mollenhauer, pastor of the Cathedral Parish, said, “This is a day of great grace for all of us. There are three new deacons for the Church, and we could have no better candidates. We are very blessed.”

Deacon Rodriguez, who is quality director at JV Precision Machine Company in Seymour, said, “It’s amazing. I am so overjoyed and thrilled by all the blessings the Lord has given

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

# Two Carmelite traditions in one county

By **SISTER MARIA** of Divine Mercy and **MOTHER TERESA** of Jesus, OCD

The Diocese of Bridgeport is now breathing with both lungs. That is to say, the two Orders of Carmel, which have been likened to two lungs of one body, are alive and well within diocesan borders. In September of 2025, the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of the Monastery of the Little Flower of Jesus took up residence in Danbury, while the Carmelites of Mary Ever Virgin of the Ancient Observance of Carmel arrived in Fairfield in April of 2023. That makes two Carmelite monasteries of women in one county.

So, why two monasteries? Primarily, because a diocese cannot have too many consecrated men and women religious. They have left everything to follow the Lord. By their very existence, they witness to His sustaining Love which seeks the salvation of souls. How much less can a diocese have too many wholly contemplative, cloistered nuns! Their lives of prayer and sacrifice, though hidden, bear abundant fruit for all members of the Mystical Body of Christ. They are a spiritual powerhouse, radiating the power of God's Love to all and drawing His graces down upon souls.

But why two Carmelite monasteries? The Sisters of both communities follow the same Carmelite Rule; they trace their origins back to the same Mount Carmel in the Holy Land; they wear the same Brown Scapular of Our Lady; they celebrate the same Carmelite Saints; they share the same love for solitude, silence and prayer, and they



have the same goal: union with God and the salvation of souls. And yet, they belong to two distinct, complementary Carmelite traditions. Together, they bring the fullness of the 800-year-old Carmelite charism to Fairfield County.

The Order of Carmel began in the early 13th century as a lay hermit community on Mount Carmel. Over time it became a mendicant order of men and women spread across Europe. Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) lived her religious life as a nun within the one order of Carmel. In 1562, from within the order, she began her Discalced Reform. It was a reform reflective of the spiritual landscape of Counter-Reformation Spain, emphasizing mental prayer with simplified liturgical prayer as the path to contemplation.

This was a shift from the medieval monastic approach to religious life that the order was living, with its emphasis on *Lectio Divina* and solemnly chanted liturgical prayer, leading to con-

templation. In 1593, about a decade after Saint Teresa's death, the Reform became a separate order. Thus, a distinctly Teresian tradition, and order, was born.

The Discalced Reform was immensely popular and soon outgrew the original order in numbers, so much so that today many people are surprised to learn that the original order still exists. But it does, and it is now called the

## DIFFERENT PATHS FROM PAGE 8

me." His wife Leo Flor called his ordination "an amazing blessing from God."

His cousin and brother-in-law William Orjuela, a parishioner at St. Augustine for 23 years, praised Deacon Rodriguez and said, "He is a really good servant for the people of God. He has helped in the parish for 30 years and always follows the steps of God. I am really happy for him and our family."

Deacon DiTaranto recalled the opening prayer of the Mass when Bishop Caggiano asked the Lord that "these your servants may be effective in action, gentle in ministry and constant in prayer." "Today, they begin a new journey," the deacon said, "to live a life not so much as what they have been asked to do, but more fully in who they have become."

(For more information about the diaconate program, email Deacon DiTaranto at [dnditaranto@diobpt](mailto:dnditaranto@diobpt) or visit [www.bridgeportdiocese.org/diaconate/home](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org/diaconate/home).)

## ANGIOLILLO ORDAINED FROM PAGE 3

together. It's such a blessing when a family member is a priest."

Reflecting on Bishop Caggiano's characterization of Angiolillo as a kind and humble man, family friend Dave Janny said, "I see that in him personally. Dominick will be a terrific priest. I have lots of confidence in him and what he'll do."

Many others echoed Janny's thoughts, including Andrea Manco, a friend and former coworker of Angiolillo's mother Jodi who has known the newly ordained deacon since he was a teenager.

"I'm so pleased to be here for this incredible moment in Dominick's life," she said. "When I heard the bishop talking about him, I thought 'Of course! That's exactly who Dominick is.'"

At the conclusion of Mass, Bishop Caggiano announced that the newly ordained Deacon Angiolillo would be assigned to work alongside pastor Father Joseph Marcello at St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull. His ordination to the priesthood is scheduled for next spring. ■

Ancient Observance of Carmel.

It is this tradition that the Carmelites of Mary Ever Virgin follow, treasuring Carmel's older medieval heritage. As it was for the first Carmelites, so for them Mary is everything: Prioress, Patroness, Mother, Sister and Friend. They seek to honor her and love her even as the Lord Jesus did in His life on Earth. In medieval fashion, they see Carmel as a way of life, set in motion by the Hours of the Liturgy, beginning with the solemn chanting of the Office of Matins at midnight. Theirs is a breadth of vision, inherited from the early Desert Fathers and the entire tradition of Christian monasticism, which impels them to offer to God the whole of their lives as worship, seeking above all to offer Him a pure heart for the sake of prayer.

The Discalced Carmelite Nuns in Danbury continue in the footsteps of Saint Teresa's reform. Losing nothing of Carmel's ancient devotion to Our Lady, they also recognize Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross as their "Holy Parents." Formed in their writings and those of other Carmelite saints of the Teresian Order, theirs is a depth of vision



which comes from these great saints and doctors of the Church. Schooled in their teachings and under the patronage of Saint Therese, they seek Divine union especially along the path of two hours of mental prayer each day, with emphasis on the Sacred Humanity of Christ and the Little Way of confidence and love.

The Good Lord in His Providence has willed to bring to the diocese these two monasteries with their differing approaches to the one charism of Carmel. Though the Carmelites of Mary Ever Virgin and the Discalced Carmelite Nuns are independent from each other, both communities are working together to build up the Body of Christ in Fairfield County. Or, to borrow the metaphor of perhaps the best-known and most-loved Carmelite—Saint Therese, the Little Flower—they are the beating heart of Love in the Church of Fairfield County, keeping the Diocese of Bridgeport spiritually strong.

(For further information, visit [www.MaryEverVirgin.org](http://www.MaryEverVirgin.org) and [www.carmellittleflower.org](http://www.carmellittleflower.org).) ■

## The Diocese of Bridgeport

welcomes

## the Discalced Carmelite Nuns

who are living temporarily at the Seton Neumann Retreat House in Danbury

You are welcome to sign up for our newsletter and submit prayer intentions on our website at [carmellittleflower.org](http://carmellittleflower.org)

Prayer intentions may also be shared by phone at 203-748-1187 or sent by regular mail to: Discalced Carmelite Nuns, 71 Southern Boulevard, Danbury, CT 06810



Those kindly wishing to make a donation please make checks payable to Discalced Carmelite Nuns by regular mail or donate through our website.

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

May God bless and reward you!

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# CREW celebrates Corpus Christi 600 give witness to Jesus in Eucharist



By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—A day of devotion, prayer and public profession of faith to honor Jesus present in the Eucharist was the mission of CREW – Leaders for Mary on the Feast Day of Corpus Christi.

“My hope is that our CREW members and their families will continue to be impacted by the Truth & Tradition that we showcased on Corpus Christi and that we have been showcasing all year as part of our ministry and formation,” said Mike Falbo, founder and CEO of CREW—Leaders For Mary Inc.

The group, which has 60 members from throughout the diocese, is dedicated to spiritual

formation, leadership development and accompaniment programs for teenagers and young members.

“There is power in our prayer. There is power in what is being done by the hard work, dedication, and discipline of our teens,” Falbo said. “My hope, more than anything, is that they see what they are capable of in Jesus through Mary when the world is constantly denying them their gifts and greatness.”

The event included all-day adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St. Joseph Church in Danbury, as well as Masses, confessions, praying the Divine Office and a procession along Main Street to St. Peter Church.



The Solemn High Mass in the evening was celebrated in Latin. Priests attended from nearby churches including Father David Klein, St. Peter in Danbury; Father Shawn Jordan, St. Marguerite Bourgeois in Brookfield; Father Férry Galbert, St. Joseph High School in Trumbull; Father Michael Novajosky, Georgetown Oratory of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus; Father Sean Kulacz, chaplain at Norwalk Hospital; Father Matthew Loman, St. Gregory the Great in Danbury; Father Stephen Russo, St. Nicholas Byzantine Church in Danbury; and Father Eric Silva, pastor from the host church of St. Joseph in Danbury.

Father Michael Novajosky

gave the homily, referring to the Disney movie “Snow White” and a metaphor Monsignor Ronald Knox (1888–1957) made of a supernatural mirror to explain the Eucharist.

“On this feast of the Most Holy Body of Christ, considering a mirror can help to reflect to us the truths of this teaching of the Church, and gift by the Lord of himself, for us, and to us,” Father Novajosky said.

“A mirror presents a reflection of whatever is in front of it. When we look into the mirror, we see ourselves as others see us,” Father Novajosky explained, but it is only an image. As Monsignor Ronald Knox once said, a mirror has appearance but not reality.

“Pondering the concept of a mirror, on this Feast of Corpus Christi, we can approach the Most Holy Eucharist to discover another kind of mirror. In this case, a supernatural mirror,” Novajosky said.

“What looked like a piece of bread was, you see, a kind of supernatural mirror, not reflecting as other mirrors do the appearance without the reality. It reflected the reality without the appearance.”

“[The Host] you see there is not something which you can influence, it is something which can influence you. It is not for you to dictate to Jesus Christ what he is to do. You are to model yourself on him.”

Following Mass, the procession of some 600 people, according to CREW founder Mike Falbo, escorted by Danbury, passed in front of the police department, businesses, eateries and the public library before entering St. Peter Church.

During the procession, young women, members of CREW adorned with chapel veils and dressed in white, tossed rose petals to line the roadway ahead of the Blessed Sacrament carried

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

## Eucharistic Jesus flies over Danbury

By KATHY-ANN GOBIN

DANBURY—The presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist was shared throughout the City of Danbury during the Feast of Corpus Christi from a helicopter flyover following a public procession of faith.

“The God of the Universe can give us nothing greater than that which he has already given us—that is himself,” said St. Joseph Parish Pastor Father Eric Silva, during his homily on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

On this day, the Church celebrates the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist: Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

“It is not a sign or a symbol, but the same Jesus Christ who walked the Earth 2,000 years ago, who is present in every tabernacle, in every Catholic church and chapel, in the whole of the world,” Father Silva said. “Heaven is now present on Earth.”

“Those who feast on his flesh and drink his blood will have life eternal, because life eternal has come down from Heaven,” Father Silva said.

Many people, he added, still may experience longing or feeling distant from God or that God does not answer their prayers.

“I would never feel the joy of seeing our Lord if I had not first felt a pain, a longing, a wanting to see him in the first place,” Father Silva said. “We need to admit how homesick we are for Heaven in order to appreciate the glimpse that we have to see it here on Earth.”

The remedy for that longing, he continued, is the Eucharist.

“Our Lord has given us the opportunity on this great Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of his Son, Jesus Christ, an opportunity to worship him, not just here but publicly, as we process around the church, proclaiming our Lord crucified, bringing his Body into the world. We bring him into the world so that those who do not know him might have a glimpse of him. For those who cannot see him, they may have a sense of him, for those who have yet to believe and hope in life eternal, life eternal will come to them,” Father Silva said.

Following the Mass, the congregation processed around the church before coming back inside for Benediction.

“Our Lord has given us this command and the rites of the

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 29



# AUGUST 19-23, 2026

IVES STREET • DANBURY, CT

<b>WEDNESDAY - FRIDAY</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b>	<b>SUNDAY</b>
5:00 PM - 11:00 PM	1:00 PM - 11:00 PM	1:00 PM - 10:00 PM



## Join us for Mass and Grand Procession

### Wednesday, August 19th

4:00PM: Mass with Bishop Frank J. Caggiano at St. Peter Church

5:00PM: Grand Procession down Main Street to festival on Ives Street

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## FIREWORKS ON SATURDAY

## EDITORIAL

## An offer you can't refuse...

Imagine 400 people in a church who are so on fire with the Gospel that they take to the streets in jubilant procession, following the King of Kings enthroned in a gold monstrance, walking on city streets, singing and praying as passing cars honk their horns.

You have to wonder: "Could this be happening in 21st century America?" You also have to wonder: "Who are these people?"

Who are they? St. Paul can best answer that question: "They're fools for Christ."

They're representatives of some 40 diverse lay ecclesial movements in the Diocese of Bridgeport, who joined Bishop Frank J. Caggiano on the Feast of Corpus Christi to celebrate Mass at St. Augustine Cathedral.

Among the groups were the Order of Malta, the Haitian Apostolate, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, Third Order Franciscans, the Neocatechumenal Way, Knights of Columbus, ChristLife and ethnic communities from the Vietnamese, Haitian, Latino, Black and Brazilian communities.

The bishop compared them to the tiles in the magnificent mosaics of St. Peter's Basilica and said, "Today, you and I gather as a living mosaic of Christ. A mosaic made up of ecclesial movements and communities and charisms, some ancient, some new, representing the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, particularly in the life of our Church in the last sixty years."

They came from different cultures, they spoke different languages, they had different histories, but they shared the same Catholic faith.

The bishop told them that in their diversity there was an indestructible unity, strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit, who compels them to resist the temptation toward divisiveness, which we sometimes see in the Church.

"In our Church, we talk of progressives and conservatives, we talk of people who follow Francis and people who follow St. John Paul II, we talk of those who wish to pray in Latin or English or whatever language. Or we say, 'You do this, I do that,' 'You leave me alone, I'll leave you alone,'" the bishop said. "My dear friends, that will not do. You and I must show the Church a better way to be able to come together as sisters and brothers and celebrate our differences. The Holy Spirit comes in so many different forms and communities, and we must show the world that what binds us together is the Sacred Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus."

And so, in this small corner of Connecticut, the renewal has begun. Let us, as he said, "Meet one another, celebrate one another, learn from one another and walk hand in hand with one another, so that the Church may truly begin to see the springtime of renewal that Pope St. John Paul II prayed for."

So here's the offer you've been waiting for, the offer you can't refuse: Join them ... and become a fool for Christ.

## Miracle on Ortega Avenue

Many of us have difficulty recognizing a miracle, but some of us are blessed to see the Holy Spirit at work in the middle of the humdrum of life.

For the parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel, the miracle was plain as day, as it was for Bishop Frank J. Caggiano, who went there recently to bless their rebuilt rectory. It was a building that many said should have been torn down because it was so dilapidated.

But the Christian community Koinonia John the Baptist, who took over the parish four years ago, saw things differently. To quote the bishop: "God had another solution." His solution was to bring several hundred people together—volunteers, parishioners, benefactors and businessmen—in the common cause of resurrecting the building.

After months of work, it's no longer just a rectory. For Father Adriano Bicchieri, it's "a modern monastery" for Koinonia's consecrated sisters and brothers, who call it an oasis of prayer in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

When God has a plan, God provides the solution, no matter how desperate the situation may seem. When Koinonia came to Bridgeport, Mass attendance was 32 at Our Lady of Good Counsel ... now it's 400. The Holy Spirit is at work right before our eyes.

*To our readers*

For more news about what's happening in the diocese, please visit [www.bridgeportdiocese.org](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org) And if you have a story idea, please send it to [FCCStories@diobpt.org](mailto:FCCStories@diobpt.org)



## CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

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

## PASTOR

REVEREND PETER SMOLIK, extended one-year term as Pastor to Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, Stamford through June 30, 2027.

REVEREND ARTHUR MOLLENHAUER, appointed to Saint Andrew Parish, Bridgeport. Effective date is July 31, 2026, for a term of six years.

## PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR

REVEREND TIMOTHY IANNACONE, appointed to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque Parish, Shelton. Effective date is July 1, 2026.

REVEREND DECLAN CREIGHTON, appointed to The Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport. Effective date is July 31, 2026.

## EPISCOPAL CHAPLAIN

REVEREND ANDREW LAFLEUR, appointed to Saint Joseph High School, Trumbull for a term of three years. Effective date July 1, 2026.

## PAROCHIAL VICAR

REVEREND JACOB ANIL D'SA, SDB, appointed to Saint Mark Parish, Stratford. Effective date is July 1, 2026.

REVEREND SUNIL PEREIRA, IMS, appointed to Saint Bridget of Ireland Parish, Stamford. Effective date is July 31, 2026, for a term of five years.

REVEREND MIGUEL BERNAL, appointed part-time to Saint Catherine of Siena-Saint Agnes Parish, Greenwich. Effective date was June 1, 2026. Father Bernal remains Coordinator of Hispanic Ministry in the deanery of Greenwich.

REVEREND WISDOM LARWEH, appointed part-time to Saint Edward the Confessor Parish, New Fairfield and part-time Chaplain to the Discalced Carmelite Sisters, Danbury. Effective date is July 8, 2026.

REVEREND FELIX QUARSHIE, appointed part time to the Oratory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Redding and part-time Chaplain to

the Carmelites of Mary Ever Virgin Monastery, Fairfield. Effective date is July 8, 2026.

## HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN

REVEREND SEAN KULACZ, appointed to Norwalk Hospital effective May 1, 2026, and is in-residence to Saint Joseph Parish, Danbury. Effective date was June 1, 2026.

## RESIDENCE

REVEREND WILLIAM QUINLAN, assigned in-residence to Saint Francis of Assisi Parish, Weston. Effective date is July 1, 2026, and continues to work with the canonical and pastoral work of the Tribunal.

## DEACON

DEACON MICHAEL CRANE, ordained to the Diaconate, June 20, 2026, and is appointed to Saint Aloysius Parish, New Canaan for a term of five years, and appointed to the office of Vice-Chancellor for the Diocese of Bridgeport. Effective date is July 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

REVEREND MR. DOMINICK ANGIOLILLO, Transitional Deacon, appointed to Saint Catherine of Siena Parish, Trumbull. Effective date is July 1, 2026.

DEACON JAMES MEEHAN, appointed to Saint Philip Parish, Norwalk for a term of five years. Effective date is July 1, 2026.

DEACON MARTIN RODRIGUEZ, ordained to the Diaconate, June 20, 2026, and is appointed to Saint Augustine Cathedral Parish, Bridgeport for a term of five years.

DEACON ANDRES GRAJALES, ordained to the Diaconate, June 20, 2026, and is appointed to Sacred Heart Parish, Stamford for a term of five years.

DEACON THOMAS MASARYK, appointed to Saint Andrew Parish, Bridgeport. Effective date is August 1, 2026, for a term of five years.

DEACON CHRISTOPHER GREER, appointed to Saint Anthony of Padua Parish, Fairfield. Effective date is August 1, 2026, for a term of five years.

## OTHER

REVEREND CYRUS BARTOLOME, appointed Vicar Forane (Dean) to Queen Assumed into Heaven Deanery. Effective date is June 30, 2026, through February 1, 2028.

REVEREND MONSIGNOR KEVIN ROYAL, appointed as Dean of Seat of Wisdom Deanery for a term of three years. Effective date is June 30, 2026.

REVEREND JAMES BATES, appointed to Executive Director of the Catherine Keefe Queen of Clergy Residence. Effective date is July 1, 2026, for a term of three years. Father Bates will remain Pastor of Saint Bridget of Ireland Parish, Stamford.

REVEREND DAVID ROMAN, appointed Chair of the Board of Directors for Kolbe Cathedral Preparatory High School. Effective date is June 30, 2026, for a term of three years.

REVEREND JOSEPH MARCELLO, appointed as member and chair of the Board of Directors for Saint Joseph High School. Effective date is July 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

REVEREND LUKE SUAREZ, 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 ERIC SILVA, 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 SUDHIR DSOUZA, 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 JAMES BATES, appointed to serve with the committee for Priestly Health and Well-Being. Effective date is July 1, 2026, for a term of three years.

*Father Corey Piccinino*

*Episcopal Vicar for Clergy and Religious*  
— June, 2026

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## VIEWPOINTS



## Called to carry one another

## COLLECTING MOMENTS

BY EMILY CLARK

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

Never have I doubted the kindness of strangers—the ones who hold open a door when your arms are full, the ones who share a smile in passing to make a tough day that much better, the ones who “pay it forward” in the Dunkin’ line, just because. I’ve been there and even offered these myself, though they are fleeting, often forgotten soon after the moment passes.

But what happens when, hours

from home, a stranger—or five—suddenly appears in the midst of a crisis, living out the Gospel of “love your neighbor as I have loved you”? Crisis averted—or at least subdued. And even better when it happens beside a church.

One Saturday earlier this spring, my husband Patrick and I headed up to the Hudson Valley to bike the rail trails and river walkways. The following morning, crisp air lured us outside for an early walk before Mass on the quiet streets

of the tiny village, though looking back, we should have remained inside for bagels and coffee.

Seconds after stumbling over a piece of cracked pavement in front of St. John the Evangelist Church, I lay face down on the broken sidewalk: pants ripped, hands scraped, face bloodied. I remember little of the next moments when Patrick helped me up and assessed the damage. The pants could be replaced, and the scrapes would heal in time, but my front teeth were almost completely gone, shattered when I hit the concrete. We were two hours from home—but moments from assistance.

First, two young women came by with a toddler, offering me bottled water and a towel. “Are you OK? How can we help?” The nearest walk-in? Patrick asked. “Two miles,” they answered, pointing east. “We’ll give you directions.” He took down the

details but never got their names.

Then came a jogger, who ran past us before doubling back, realizing the trauma. “My neighbor is a dentist in town. He has office hours until noon,” she explained after glimpsing my mouth. In this little village? On a Sunday morning? Patrick took down the phone number but never got her name.

Arriving at the dentist’s office, I prayed her neighbor would see me. “This way,” the receptionist said, leading me down the hall. “He can fit you in.” Within minutes, I was being X-rayed, examined and reassured. Though I’d need bonding, root canals and crowns, my nose wasn’t broken and neither was my jaw. He patched up my scrapes and offered advice, even calling our dentist in Connecticut, saying he’d send the X-rays.

We never made it to Mass at St. John the Evangelist that

Sunday, but felt God’s presence through those called to carry us, and together, prayed the rosary as we headed home. Laden with ice packs and aspirin, I felt abundantly blessed, albeit anxious and sore. In the days that followed, as I endured the dental work, I wondered if the people we encountered remembered that morning when God placed them before me. Did they realize how much we appreciated their help and empathy? Probably not, for acts of goodness to those in crisis come with no expectation of recognition. They come as a gift from the Almighty, who leads us all to act with love and open hearts.

Never have I doubted the kindness of strangers—the ones who show compassion, just because. Fleeting? Forgotten? No, not this time.

*(Emily Clark can be reached at Emily.Clark@diobpt.org.)* ■



## If you feel like you can’t go on ...

## SWIMMING UPSTREAM

BY JOE PISANI

*Joe Pisani has been a writer and editor for 40 years.*

Have you ever met a person who lost hope? You’ll find the face of despair anywhere and everywhere. A young person whose relationship ended and sees no future. An old person, married 70 years, whose spouse has died and sees no future. A person who is addicted and tried time and again to recover but can’t ... and sees no future.

The late Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, an author and teacher, once said, “Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today.”

But what about people who can’t believe tomorrow will be better than today? What do they do?

I’ve met many people, from

students to seniors, from widows to terminally ill patients, who’ve known despair, and I’ve known a fair number who are depressed because they see no future.

Sadly, some of them are young people, who should be the most hopeful. They see no reason for living, and for them it’s virtually impossible to think their way out of despair.

I’ve also known people whose addictions brought them so far into darkness they were convinced there was no hope. The fortunate ones eventually found a 12-step program like Alcoholics Anonymous, where the first steps are: 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our

lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

They had lost hope and realized that by themselves, they couldn’t pull themselves out of their despair and addiction.

A priest I knew once told the story of a man in his town who wanted to die. He was old and sick, and he insisted that assisted suicide was his “right.” He wrote letters to the editor and called legislators, urging them to pass a law recognizing this so-called right.

Then one day, the letters and calls stopped. Everyone assumed he had died or worse, taken his life. But the truth was much different. He no longer wanted to die.

A religious sister who worked with the elderly had begun visiting him and accomplished the miraculous. She didn’t cure him physically, but she reaffirmed that his life—as broken and unproductive as it may have seemed to the outside world—had value.

She showed him the love of Christ—a love we’re all entitled to, no matter our condition or health or wealth. Her compassion and caring made all the difference, and his suffering became easier to endure. Someone else saw the value of his life, and so he did too. He found hope.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says: “Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength,

**“A priest I knew once told the story of a man in his town who wanted to die. He was old and sick, and he insisted that assisted suicide was his ‘right.’”**

but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. [This virtue] takes up the hopes that inspire men’s activities and purifies them so as to order them to the kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the hap-

pineness that flows from charity” (CCC 1817-1818).

Those words, “relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.” That’s different from Thich Nhat Hanh’s teaching, which says we can create hope through our optimism.

One person who understood hope was St. Paul, who suffered a lot of adversity but never lost hope. As he told the Romans, “Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.”

Hope is a gift, and there’s only one place to find it. Sit in front of the tabernacle, where all the answers lie.

Are you having problems with your marriage? Sit in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Are you having problems with your kids? Sit in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Did a family member or friend die? Sit in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Are you having difficulties at work? Sit in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Are you facing financial troubles? Sit in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Are you depressed, despairing, guilty, lonely, angry, unloved? Sit in front of the Blessed Sacrament ... and you’ll get all the hope you need.

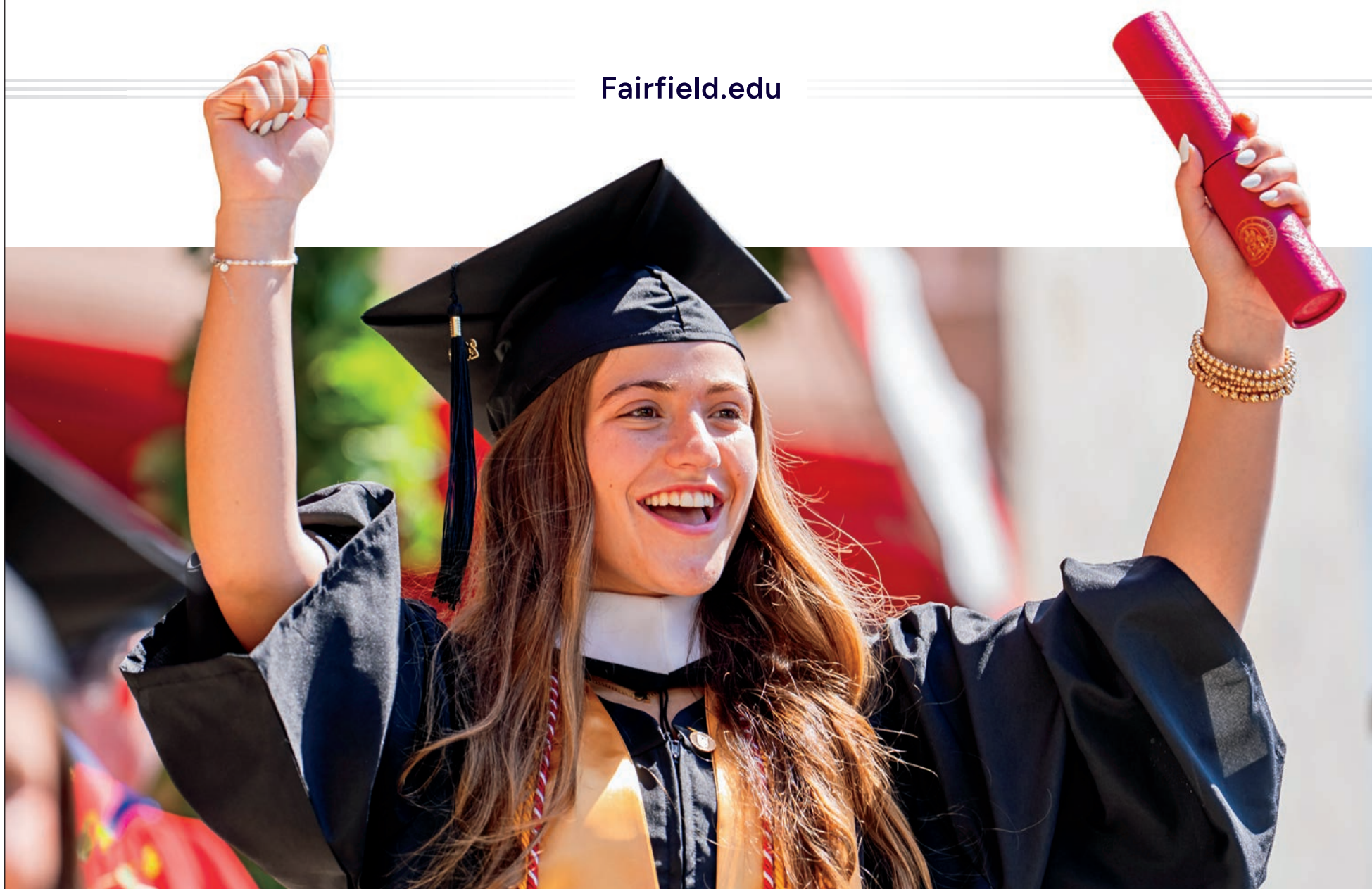
*(Joe Pisani can be reached at jpisani@diobpt.org.)* ■



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# Walk with Christ as you step into the future!

By **ROSE BRENNAN**

On behalf of everyone in the Diocese of Bridgeport, *Fairfield County Catholic* extends its heartfelt well wishes to members of the Class of 2026!

Each year, *Fairfield County Catholic* recognizes the top-ranking graduates from eight Catholic schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport, as well as Lauralton Hall in the Archdiocese of Hartford, in its annual “Vals and Sals” section.

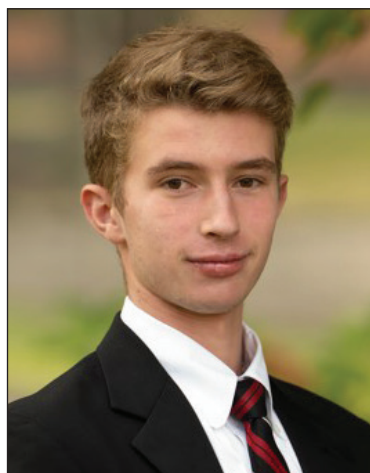
“Hats off” to these incredible graduates, and congratulations to the entire Class of 2026!

## **Cardinal Kung Academy, Stamford**

A small but proud group of 16 seniors graduated from Cardinal Kung Academy on Saturday, May 30. Among the graduates were valedictorian Gabriel Infante and salutatorian Lukas Keras.

Gabriel Infante was born in Chile and raised in London before moving to the United States at age 10, and has relent-

lessly pursued excellence in music, athletics and academics. From a young age, he has been captivated by classical piano, and by the time he was in high school, he won the Elite International Piano Competition two years in a row and performed at Carnegie Hall.



CARDINAL KUNG ACADEMY, STAMFORD – Gabriel Infante, valedictorian; Lukas Keras, salutatorian

At Cardinal Kung, Infante led the varsity soccer team as captain over the past two winning seasons and brought his skills to Inter Connecticut Football Club in Norwalk. In addition to taking an advanced mathematics curriculum (including two college-level

courses) at Cardinal Kung, Infante also developed real-world skills like Computer-Aided Design (CAD), metalworking, and auto mechanics through an engineering internship.

Infante plans to enter the Navigare Catholic Leadership and formation program in



Madrid, Spain next year, after which he will study engineering at the University of Connecticut.

Lukas Keras is known for his stellar aptitude for mathematics, his love for the fine arts and his passion for biology. Coming from a family of Lithuanian immi-

grants, Keras has demonstrated mastery in CKA’s most rigorous courses, tackling AP Calculus as a junior and taking linear algebra in his senior year. He spends his free time playing Led Zeppelin on the electric guitar, winning songwriting competitions and studying scientific art and stippling techniques. However, perhaps his greatest contributions come from his expert knowledge of moths and other insects. He has led countless youth biodiversity programs across the state of Connecticut, and he has worked with world-renowned entomologists to research and complete insect inventories for towns across Fairfield and New London counties. Keras even identified several moths never found before in the state of Connecticut.

Keras plans to continue his love of learning at Yale University this fall.

## **Fairfield Prep**

On May 22, Fairfield College Preparatory School—better known as Fairfield Prep—celebrated the young men of their graduating Class of 2026. The school extended special recognition to Ethan Nozad and James Demers, named the highest ranking students in the graduating class.

Ethan Nozad transferred to Fairfield Prep during his junior year, but engaged fully and immediately in Prep life. Upon arriving at Prep, he took a full complement of AP and honors-level courses. He engaged with the community, joining clubs and organizations and embracing the importance of service, all while building and benefiting from the Prep brotherhood.

Nozad also joined Prep’s Ethics Bowl Club and immediately met fellow students with passions and interests similar to his. He also became involved in Prep’s Crew program, a sport new to him. The training and routines aligned with his determined, disciplined and dedicated approach to achieving success in all things. He attended Prep’s Kairos Retreat and embraced service, supporting the Fuller Center—an agency that refurbishes residences and buildings, much like Habitat for Humanity—in his hometown.

Nozad plans to attend Georgetown University this fall.

James Demers was a summa cum laude scholar all four years, and is a National Merit Finalist and member of the National Honor Society. He completed

▶ *CONTINUED ON PAGE 16*

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**VALS AND SALS FROM PAGE 15**


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Fairfield Prep's mathematics curriculum and independently pursued advanced topics such as discrete mathematics and linear algebra. He is equally drawn to history, literature, music and foreign languages—teaching himself Italian to connect more deeply

activities, mentoring younger students, and fostering engagement within each group. A member of Symphonic Band throughout high school, he also competed in soccer before transitioning to cross-country and outdoor track. Outside of school, he is active in his parish



FAIRFIELD COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL, FAIRFIELD – Ethan Nozad and James Demers

with his family's heritage.

Demers also served as president of the math team, debate team and Trail Keepers Club, organizing

community as an altar server.

This fall, Demers will continue his academic journey at the University of Notre Dame.

**Immaculate High School,  
Danbury**

On Saturday, June 6, Immaculate High School in Danbury graduated 101 seniors as a part of its Class of 2026. Among them were valedictorian Emma Scheckner and salutatorian Hannah Trotman.

Emma Scheckner of Redding received a first-prize \$50,000 STEM scholarship from the Angeles T. Arredondo Foundation and was recognized as a National Merit Commended Student. A member of multiple honor societies, Scheckner received the Harvard Book Award, earned the Presidential Volunteer Service Award and founded Immaculate's Healing Hearts and Hands Club. She captained the field hockey team, helping lead the Mustangs to the Class S State Championship, and was named Connecticut's Offensive Player of the Year. She also played varsity golf, received a SWC Leadership Award and works at Uncle Leo's Bagel Store in Georgetown.

This fall, Scheckner will attend Johns Hopkins University, where she plans to study biology on a pre-

med track and play field hockey.

Hannah Trotman of Ridgefield was named a National Merit \$2,500 Scholarship winner after being selected from a national pool of more than 16,000 semifinalists, and is also an AP Scholar with Distinction. Trotman serves as communications officer for Immaculate's National Honor Society chapter and is a member of several honor societies and the Student Ambassador program. She captained the varsity ice hockey team, played varsity tennis and has been active in campus ministry, Model UN, math team and the theater program. Outside of school, she has worked at a law firm, babysat and served as a youth hockey referee.

Trotman will attend Boston

they presented possible solutions to local leaders. The program truly inspired her, and she hopes to channel her talent and energy into a career in law where she can advocate for those who are underrepresented in our society.

Dutan will continue her education at Boston University in the fall.

Daniel Rodriguez came to Kolbe Cathedral Preparatory School from Roosevelt School. Outside of his academic achievements, he is a skilled musician and can play four instruments: piano, saxophone, flute, and violin. Rodriguez has participated in the Horizons academic enrichment program since he was in grade school. He is also passionate about track and field, where he



IMMACULATE HIGH SCHOOL, DANBURY – Emma Scheckner, valedictorian; Hannah Trotman, salutatorian

College this fall, where she plans to study business analytics.

**Kolbe Cathedral Preparatory  
High School, Bridgeport**

Kolbe Cathedral Preparatory High School graduated 75 students as part of its Class of 2026. The school named Ashley Dutan as valedictorian and Daniel Rodriguez as salutatorian.

Ashley Dutan came to Kolbe Cathedral Preparatory School from Geraldine Johnson School. She was a member of the Bridge to Success Internship Program, where she interned at Assa Abloy and Denton Law Group. Dutan was among a select group of students to serve on an advisory board where she met with congressional leaders on the State Board of Education to address key issues. Dutan is a member of the Spanish and National Honor Societies, and volunteered her time as a tutor and mentor to elementary school students at the Catholic Academy of Bridgeport-St. Raphael. Through her experience in the Seeds of Fortune program, Dutan had the opportunity to learn about the causes of homelessness, and with her team,

is a thrower, and competes in the shotput, javelin and discus events.

Rodriguez will continue his education at Wentworth Institute of Technology in the fall.

**Lauralton Hall, Milford**

The Academy of Our Lady of Mercy, Lauralton Hall celebrated the graduation of the Class of 2026 on Saturday, May 30, conferring diplomas to 56 young women. Among them were valedictorian Kathryn "Kate" Jones and salutatorian Addison Harry.

Kathryn "Kate" Jones, daughter of S. Bradford and Beth Jones of Fairfield, is a dedicated three-season athlete in soccer, basketball and lacrosse. She has also served as president of the debate team and Model UN, founder of the Business Club, senior class treasurer, peer mentor and Key Club officer. She also represented Lauralton at the state level through the Connecticut State Student Advisory Council on Education.

An Archdiocesan of Hartford Summa Scholar and member of the National Honor Society, Jones has earned numerous

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

## CONGRATULATIONS!

### IMMACULATE HIGH SCHOOL

CLASS OF 2026

The Class of 2026 College Matriculations:

Auburn University  
Benedictine College  
Bentley University  
Boston University  
Bryant University  
Central Connecticut State University  
CT State Community College  
Delaware Valley University  
Eastern Connecticut State University  
Fairfield University  
Fordham University  
Gonzaga University

Gordon College  
Hampton University  
High Point University  
Iona University  
James Madison University  
Johnson & Wales University  
Kent State University  
Long Island University  
Manhattan University  
Marist University  
Mercy University  
Miami University  
Providence College  
Quinnipiac University  
Rider University

Rochester Institute of Technology  
Roger Williams University  
Sacred Heart University  
Salve Regina University  
Skidmore College  
St. John's University  
Stonehill College  
Stony Brook University  
SUNY Purchase College  
Syracuse University  
Trinity College  
University of California  
University of Connecticut  
University of Florida

University of Hartford  
University of Miami  
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VALS AND SALS FROM PAGE 16

honors, including the Harvard Book Prize, Carson Scholar Award, CIAC Scholar-Athlete Award, and Francis Warde Service Award.

This fall, Jones will attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to study management and society.

Addison Harry, daughter of Christopher and Kathy Harry

'94 of Milford, is a top High Honors student and one of only four Luralton seniors named a Summa Scholar by the Archdiocese of Hartford. Harry is co-president of the National Honor Society and is active in the Spanish National Honor Society, Spanish Club, Key Club and Polish Club.

A competitive dancer and

dedicated servant leader, Harry is a three-time recipient of the Presidential Volunteer Gold Award and earned the Francis Warde Service Award for her commitment to addressing food insecurity in the community.

Harry will attend Fairfield University this fall and plans to study accounting.

**Notre Dame Prep, Fairfield**

Notre Dame Prep of Sacred Heart University held its commencement ceremony on Friday, May 29, graduating 122 seniors for the Class of 2026. Among them were valedictorian Lucy Adams and salutatorian Emma Nagy.

Lucy Adams of Bethany, was a member of Notre Dame Prep's Distinguished Scholars Program, a Link Crew Leader, and a co-captain of the tennis team, becoming a girls' tennis First Singles Champion for the Southwest Conference. She also served as treasurer of the National and Spanish Honor Societies and was a member of campus ministry and French Club, as well as a Culture Club ambassador.



LAURALTON HALL, MILFORD – Kathryn "Kate" Jones, valedictorian; Addison Harry, salutatorian



KOLBE CATHEDRAL HIGH SCHOOL, BRIDGEPORT – Ashley Dutan, valedictorian; Daniel Rodriguez, salutatorian

Adams will attend Northeastern University this fall and plans to major in mechanical engineering.

Emma Nagy of Derby, was an International Baccalaureate and AP student and a member of the Distinguished Scholars Program. She was president of Notre Dame Prep's Model UN Club, secretary of the Spanish Honor Society and a member of campus ministry, the culture and climate committee, student council and National

Honor Society.

Nagy will also attend Northeastern University this fall and plans to study criminology and criminal justice in the John Martinson Honors Program.

"I am extremely proud of Lucy and Emma and all their accomplishments," said Dr. Chris Cipriano, head of school. "These are two individuals who have consistently exemplified what it truly means to be an ND Prep

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

Congratulations Class of 2026

WE TRANSFORM THE WORLD, ONE GIRL AT A TIME.



Class of 2026 College Acceptances

- Auburn University (4)
- Babson College
- Bates College
- Baylor University (2)
- Binghamton University (5)
- Boston College (5)
- Brock University
- Brown University
- Bucknell University (12)
- Case Western Reserve University
- The Catholic University of America
- Clark University
- Clemson University (7)
- Colby College (4)
- Colgate University (3)
- College of Charleston (9)
- College of the Holy Cross (7)
- Connecticut College
- The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art
- Dartmouth College
- Denison University (2)
- Dickinson College (2)
- Drew University
- Elmira College
- Elon University (11)
- Emerson College

- Fairfield University
- Florida International University
- Fordham University (5)
- Franklin & Marshall College (6)
- The George Washington University
- Georgetown University (5)
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- Gettysburg College (3)
- Hamilton College
- High Point University (2)
- Hobart and William Smith Colleges (2)
- Hofstra University
- Howard University (2)
- Indiana University Indianapolis
- Indiana University Bloomington (13)
- Iona University (2)
- Jacksonville University
- James Madison University (2)
- Johns Hopkins University
- Lafayette College (6)
- Lehigh University
- Louisiana State University
- Loyola Marymount University
- Loyola University Maryland (4)
- Marist University (3)
- Marquette University
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology

- Mercy University
- Miami University (5)
- Michigan State University
- Middlebury College
- Monmouth University
- Moravian University
- Mount Holyoke College
- Muhlenberg College
- North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (2)
- Northeastern University (4)
- Northwestern University
- The Ohio State University (4)
- Pace University
- Pennsylvania State University, Altoona
- Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg
- Pennsylvania State University, University Park (7)
- Princeton University
- Providence College (11)
- Quinnipiac University (3)
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
- Rider University
- Rollins College
- Rutgers University
- Sacred Heart University
- Saint Joseph's University (2)

- Santa Clara University (5)
- Siena University (2)
- Skidmore College (4)
- Southern Methodist University (7)
- Spelman College
- St. Lawrence University
- Stanford University
- Stonehill College (3)
- Stony Brook University (4)
- Syracuse University (3)
- Temple University (5)
- Texas Christian University (9)
- Towson University
- Trinity College
- Tufts University
- Union College (2)
- The University of Alabama (2)
- University at Albany, SUNY
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- University of Colorado Boulder (2)
- University of Connecticut (11)
- University of Connecticut, Stamford (2)
- University of Delaware (2)
- University of Denver (2)
- University of Florida
- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- University of Maryland (2)

- University of Massachusetts Amherst
- University of Massachusetts Boston
- University of Miami (3)
- University of Mount Saint Vincent
- University of New Hampshire
- University of New Haven
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- University of Notre Dame (2)
- University of Oklahoma
- University of Pittsburgh
- University of Rhode Island
- University of Richmond (3)
- University of San Diego
- University of Scranton
- University of South Carolina
- University of Southern California (2)
- University of St Andrews (2)
- University of Tampa
- University of Tennessee (5)
- University of Vermont (2)
- University of Virginia (4)
- University of Wisconsin (5)
- Villanova University (4)
- Virginia Tech (2)
- Wake Forest University (3)

VALS AND SALS FROM PAGE 17

student. They are both deserving of this recognition and I am confident of their continued success in college and life thereafter.”

**Sacred Heart Greenwich**

On June 5, Sacred Heart Greenwich held its commencement ceremony, celebrating 69 graduates, including nine lifers who began their education in the Lower School and 12 student-ath-

letes committed to collegiate sports. Among the graduates were co-valedictorians Arianna Chin and Claire Junius, along with salutatorian Lexi Parsons.

Clare Junius of Greenwich is the recipient of the 2025 Columbia University Book Award and the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Medal. She also received National Merit recognition. At Sacred Heart



SACRED HEART, GREENWICH – Arianna Chin and Claire Junius, co-valedictorians; Lexi Parsons, salutatorian



NOTRE DAME PREP, FAIRFIELD – Lucy Adams, valedictorian; Emma Nagy., salutatorian

Greenwich, Junius served as co-head of the Engineering Club, was an active member in Math Club and Perspectives—the school’s art and literary magazine—and the Model UN, one of the nation’s most prestigious conferences. She also volunteered at local assisted living facilities and as a peer tutor for middle and high school students. Athletically, Junius competed in varsity rowing, rowed with RowAmerica Greenwich and represented the United States on the U19

National Team.

Junius will attend Princeton University in the fall to study chemical and biological engineering and will continue her athletic commitment to rowing at the university.

Arianna Chin of Peekskill, N.Y., is the recipient of the Harvard Book Award and the RIT Excellence in Science Award. She is also recognized as a PSAT/NMSQT Commended Scholar and designated as an AP Scholar with Distinction. At Sacred Heart

Greenwich, Chin embraced leadership roles as the co-editor of award-winning art and literary magazines and was also recognized with multiple Scholastic Writing Awards in poetry and fiction. Passionate about neuroscience and medicine, Chin has conducted research on the neuroscience of music and co-founded Sacred Heart Greenwich’s Pre-Med Club. Her volunteer work spans from neurodivergent children, memory care residents

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 19



*Congratulations Class of 2026!*

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VALS AND SALS FROM PAGE 18

and individuals with special needs in Lourdes, France. Chin is a competitive varsity soccer player, earning First Team All-FAA and All-NEPSAC honors. She also served as the soccer team's co-captain, competing at both club and semi-professional levels, and was the co-president of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee.

Chin will attend Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the fall to study brain and cognitive science and will also continue her athletic commitment to soccer in college.

Lexi Parsons of Bronxville, N.Y., is Sacred Heart Greenwich's Admissions Ambassador Co-Chair, head of community service and co-founder of the Garden Program. Passionate about service and community engagement, she volunteers with local food pantries and soup kitchens, teaches religious education and tutors middle school students in mathematics.

Inspired by a transformative pilgrimage to Lourdes, Parsons plans to pursue a degree in nursing at Boston College.

**St. Catherine Academy, Fairfield**

On Wednesday, June 10, St. Catherine Academy, a state-approved private special education school in Fairfield, celebrated the graduation of three students: Melissa Lafontant, Ian Landegger and Anna Stowe. The ceremony marked a milestone not only for the graduates but also for their families, teachers and the entire school community. Each graduate leaves St. Catherine Academy having grown in confidence, independence and character.

Melissa Lafontant is known throughout the school for her calm and curious nature. She is a source of joy to classmates, teachers and staff. Lafontant's kindness has made her a friend to everyone. She has long been the shining "star" of the Academy's annual Christmas pageant, where her bright smile lights up the stage. Since starting at the Academy, Lafontant has made progress utilizing her communication device.

Ian Landegger is recognized as a leader in his classroom. He has



ST. CATHERINE ACADEMY, FAIRFIELD – (l-r) Anna Stowe, Melissa Lafontant and Ian Landegger

taken on the daily responsibility of attendance and demonstrated reliability and pride in his role. He has made significant strides in communication, especially in learning to advocate for himself. Landegger has also shown steady academic progress. He enjoys music and spending time with friends and family. He shares a special bond with his teacher, Mr. Jim, and the classroom staff, including Mr. Danny, who have supported him along the way.

Anna Stowe is celebrated for her warm, social personality and her eagerness to help others. Stowe plays a key role for Halos Café, a student-run weekly lunch program. She takes charge of collecting orders and assisting with cooking. Her love of reading and research reflects her curiosity for learning. Beyond the classroom, Stowe has experienced meaningful spiritual growth, often offering insights during prayer services and volunteering at her local parish.

As these graduates take their next steps, they carry with them the values and support of the St. Catherine Academy community. Their stories are a testament to what can be achieved with encouragement in a nurturing environment. The community at St. Catherine Academy congratulates Melissa, Ian, and Anna and wishes them continued success and happiness in all that lies ahead.

**St. Joseph High School, Trumbull**

St. Joseph High School graduated 174 seniors on May 30. Among those honored were valedictorian Rhys Ingram and salutatorian Kathyrn Murano.

Rhys Ingram is the president of the National Honor Society, as well as captain of the debate, mock trial and varsity boys soccer team. He also is a dedicated Student Ambassador and volunteer, interning with U.S. Rep. Jim Himes outside of the classroom.

This summer, Ingram will work at a law firm, and in the fall, he will attend the University of Pennsylvania to study political science and comparative literature.

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



**St. Joseph High School's Class of 2026  
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- |                                      |   |                                       |                                   |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Albertus Magnus College              | Hobart and William Smith Colleges                     | Rochester Institute of Technology     | University of Massachusetts       |
| Arizona State University             | Indiana University                                    | Rutgers University                    | University of New Haven           |
| Assumption University                | Iona University                                       | Sacred Heart University               | University of North Carolina      |
| Bates College                        | Kennesaw State University                             | Saint Anselm College                  | <b>University of Notre Dame</b>   |
| Binghamton University                | King's College  | Salve Regina University               | <b>University of Pennsylvania</b> |
| Boston College                       | Lasell University                                     | Savannah College of Art and Design    | University of Rhode Island        |
| <b>Boston University</b>             | Lehigh University                                     | Seton Hall University                 | University of Richmond            |
| Carleton College                     | Long Island University                                | Southern Connecticut State University | University of South Carolina      |
| Centre College                       | Marist University                                     | Springfield College                   | University of Southern California |
| College of Charleston                | Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences | SUNY Buffalo                          | University of Sydney              |
| CT State Community College           | Merrimack College                                     | Syracuse University                   | University of Texas               |
| Curry College                        | Michigan State University                             | Temple University                     | University of Vermont             |
| Eastern Connecticut State University | Morgan State University                               | Texas Christian University            | University of Washington          |
| Elon University                      | North Carolina A & T State University                 | The Ohio State University             | <b>U.S. Marine Corps</b>          |
| Endicott College                     | North Carolina State University                       | The University of Alabama             | Villanova University              |
| Fairfield University                 | <b>Northwestern University</b>                        | The University of Tampa               | Virginia Polytechnic Institute    |
| Flagler College                      | Post University                                       | The University of West Florida        | Wesleyan University               |
| Fordham University                   | <b>Princeton University</b>                           | Tulane University of Louisiana        | Western New England University    |
| George Mason University              | Providence College                                    | University of Connecticut             | Wheaton College                   |
| George Washington University         | Quinnipiac University                                 | University of Georgia                 | Whitworth University              |
| Georgetown University                |   | University of Hartford                | Xavier University of Louisiana    |
| High Point University                |   | University of Kentucky                |                                   |

VALS AND SALS FROM PAGE 19

Kathryn Murano is a National Merit Scholar Commended

Studies, Spanish, and Tri-M Music Honor Societies. She is



SAINT JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL, TRUMBULL – Rhys Ingram, valedictorian; Kathryn Murano, salutatorian

Student, College Board AP Scholar with Honor and a recipient of the George Eastman Young Leaders Award. She serves as vice president of the Student Ambassadors, a peer minister and a member of the National Honor Society, as well as the Math, English, Social

also a peer tutor at the Student Academic and Writing Resource Center, a member of the cross country and indoor and outdoor track teams and a member of the school chamber choir.

Murano is the lead Student Sports Journalist in an internship program with the Fairfield County

Interscholastic Athletic Conference (FCIAC), and her article on St. Joe's co-ed wrestling team earned her a Scholastic Writing Award honorable mention for journalism. She also volunteers year-round with the Trumbull Special Olympics as an assistant coach and unified partner, and she was recently selected to participate in the Yale Daily News Summer Journalism program, where her article highlighting Connecticut's Special Olympics program was published in a special Yale Daily News edition.

Murano will attend the University of Notre Dame in the fall, and plans to study English.

"Rhys and Kathryn are exceptional students who have distinguished themselves through their academic commitment, strong character and unwavering integrity," said Nancy DiBuono, principal of St. Joseph High School. "Through their leadership, dedication and kindness toward others, Rhys and Kathryn have left a meaningful and lasting impact on our SJ community. We are incredibly proud of all they have achieved and look forward to seeing all that lies ahead for them."

# Diocese gets awards

The Diocese of Bridgeport recently received six awards from the Catholic Media Association, including a third place in the category Best Blog—Expression of Faith, for Dr. Patrick Donovan, director of the Institute for Catholic Formation.

The entries, which were chosen from among 3000 submissions, were:

- **Best Video**—Catechesis: Diocesan and National News Organization—Honorable Mention—Directory of Catechesis, Diocese of Bridgeport, Institute for Catholic Formation
- **Social Media Campaign: General Interest**—Honorable Mention—First Witnesses, Diocese of Bridgeport, Institute for Catholic Formation
- **Best Use of Graphics in Social Media**—Honorable Mention—The Face of Prayer, Diocese of Bridgeport, Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
- **Best Blog—Expression of Faith**—Third Place—Institute Blog, Diocese of Bridgeport, Patrick Donovan Institute for Catholic Formation—These clear, concise essays for faith-formation leaders, catechists, pastors, and parents offer thoughtful perspectives on these ministry roles. Through self-reflection, the author engages typical experiences the target audience might encounter and gently suggests welcoming ways to handle a variety of situations.
- **Best Website**—Diocesan—Honorable Mention—First Witnesses, Diocese of Bridgeport, Institute for Catholic Formation
- **Best Diocesan Electronic Newsletter**—Honorable Mention—Holiness at Home, Diocese of Bridgeport, Patrick Donovan, Todd Kellogg, and the Institute for Catholic Formation.



DR. PATRICK DONOVAN



*Congratulations to the Class of 2026!*

Darren Bloch  
Maggie Bujdud  
Enzo Cardenas  
Tyler Compton  
Elise Fernandez  
Ryann Geoghegan

Oliver Hook  
Audrey Hudock  
Anabelle Jahn  
Yvonne Jeffers  
Sofia Koutouvides  
Caleb Kwan

Greyce Lamonthe  
Kelroy Linton  
Josephine Marsella  
Julian Moyano  
Brandon Nadolny  
Arielle Nanoukon

Lena Olszewski  
Joseph Romano  
Greyson Schell  
Nicolas Segovia  
Giuseppe Siciliano  
Emma Suarez  
Reethi Thota



THE CATHOLIC ACADEMY OF STAMFORD

400 PROCESS FROM PAGE 7

Soul and Divinity of Jesus.”

And while the mosaics of St. Peter’s are immensely beautiful, he said, the beauty of their mosaic rivaled that great art. He said to pray that other communities and movements come to the diocese

“As we meet one another, we will start to celebrate one another, learn from one another and walk hand in hand, so that the Church may truly begin to see the springtime of renewal that Pope St. John Paul II prayed for. And as we leave this church with our Lord leading us, let us show the world what it means to be a living mosaic in his honor.”

Among the groups at the Mass were the Order of Malta, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, the Knights of Columbus, the Haitian Apostolate, Third Order Franciscans, the Neocatechumenal Way, ChristLife and ethnic groups from the Vietnamese, Haitian, Latino, Black and Brazilian communities.

Sister Laura Young of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus said, “It was such a beautiful event, and I loved seeing all the different ecclesial movements

represented.” Her colleague, Sister Christine Hoffner, said she was moved by the bishop’s metaphor comparing the groups to tiles in the mosaics at St. Peter’s.

Eileen Masaryk, who represented Cursillo, talked about the importance of the Mass.

“This gathering of the ecclesial movements gives us a chance to meet, to greet, to support and to uplift one another and share in the joy of this great diocese,” she said. “It also brings what we do alive and lets us celebrate our beautiful Catholic faith. We are glowing from within, and the procession is an occasion to glow from without and tell the world about our love of Jesus in the Eucharist.”

Deacon David Flynn, a member of Serra, a worldwide lay apostolate that promotes vocations to the priesthood and religious life, said, “I’m here to support Bishop Caggiano’s commitment to the lay ecclesial movement and pray for God’s grace for their work in our diocese.”

Thom and Anita Field of Serra said, “The Mass was a wonderful celebration of the diocese’s ecclesial movements and communities

that bring everyone together in answering God’s call.”

Blanca and Rafael Grijalva of Encuentro Matrimonial talked about how their ministry helps married and engaged couples prepare through their marriage encounter programs.

Marilyn Mitchell of the Holy Spirit Franciscan Fraternity of Third Order Franciscans, who strive to follow in the footsteps of St. Francis, recalled his love of the Eucharist and said the members were happy to celebrate Corpus Christi with other communities.

Sharon Fischer, coordinator of ChristLife, a Catholic evangelization apostolate, talked about the work her members have been doing to bring people back to the Church. She was joined by 14 members of the apostolate who are reaching out to parishes in their evangelization efforts.

In his closing comments, the bishop told the gathering they were “the hidden treasure of the Church” and urged them to push forward in the cause of renewal and bring others back to receive the Sacred Body and Blood of Jesus.

600 GIVE WITNESS FROM PAGE 11

under a canopy.

“We are so blessed in our diocese to have all these opportunities to be a public witness to our Lord,” said Heather Indyk, from Regina Pacis Academy in Norwalk, who participated in the public procession.

Her friend and fellow parishioner at St. Mary in Norwalk, Kathy Hardin, agreed.

“The procession is so important,” Hardin said. “It’s a witness to others. If they don’t know what it is, maybe they will ask questions,” she said, adding that the visual of the procession communicates a lot to all who witness it.

Many people could be seen watching from windows or balconies on Main Street as the procession made its way through downtown.

“I think when people have strong faith, it’s a good thing. I’m happy to see this even if it inconveniences traffic for a few moments; that’s OK,” said Mike Kaltschnee, who came out of one of the buildings near the Danbury Public Library to watch the procession.

Tricia Reits from Saint Marguerite in Brookfield brought a friend to walk with her in the procession.

“I was in the CREW – Leaders for Mary. I wanted to come to support them,” Reits said. “[CREW] was a great experience. It helped me find time with Christ and find peace and it helped me in my own prayer life.”

The Knights of Columbus led the procession into St. Peter Church, where the faithful prayed and Father David Klein concluded the evening with Benediction.

Buses shuttled participants back to St. Joseph Church for refreshments and fellowship provided by the CREW Hospitality Committee.



# Congratulations Fairfield Prep Class of 2026

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# Catholic Academy of Bridgeport Golf Classic raises \$550,000

FAIRFIELD—The Catholic Academy of Bridgeport held its 14th Annual Golf Classic at the Country Club of Fairfield on May 18. Ninety-six golfers joined 75 additional guests for a cocktail reception and auction. The event raised almost \$550,000 for need-based scholarships.

Board Chair John Kreitler emceed the reception, welcoming guests and underscoring the fact that CAB receives \$0 per-pupil funding from the government, yet sees 100% of its alumni go on to graduate from high school with 99% going on to college or post-secondary school, compared to only 76% and 25% respectively at Bridgeport Public Schools.

“Because of these outcomes and the safe, supportive environment and academic excellence at CAB, every single one of our amazing, hardworking families make real sacrifices for their children to attend CAB, magnifying the

importance of the philanthropic funding that comes from individuals, private foundations and other charitable partners,” said Kreitler. “The need for CAB to build new partnerships like these intensifies each year as the gap between what our families can afford and the actual cost of educating their children widens each year.”

Executive Director Angela Pohlen spoke about some of the many data-informed initiatives happening at CAB: “This has become the obligation of education: to truly educate the whole child and, increasingly so, to support whole families. And the more needs we identify, the more that partnerships are essential for success. Foundations, fellow community organizations and individuals like yourselves walking alongside us in this mission is what makes miracles happen... When we harness our passions and pool our resources, we live out the Gospel

message in tangible ways. As it says in the Book of James, ‘be doers of the Word, and not hearers only’—and here today, we are doers of the Word. Together, we make a difference—a real, transformative difference—and for the proof of that truth, you need only listen to the stories of our students and alumni.”

CAB St. Augustine campus alumna Yasmiri Polanco-Jimenez then shared the impact that CAB has had on her story. The current senior at Notre Dame Prep of SHU will be attending Tufts University in the fall where she plans on majoring in Biology and becoming a veterinarian.

According to Polanco-Jimenez, “Tufts had always been my top choice academically but I really fell in love with the campus too. It had that same welcoming air I experienced at CAB. I am proud to say that I will be the first in my family



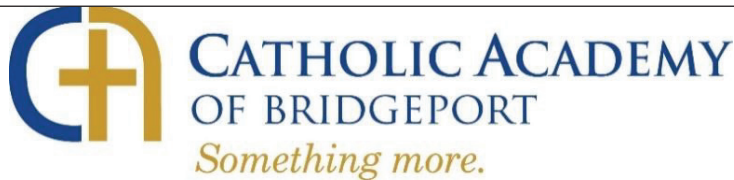
CAB BOARD MEMBER JAMIE HEFFERNAN’S FOURSOME was one of the groups who enjoyed playing in the CAB Golf Classic, to raise funds for need-based scholarships for the Academy’s students.

to attend college, and without St. Augustine, I wouldn’t have been able to achieve the things I have achieved up until today.” Polanco-Jimenez’s brother, Gustavo, who is a current CAB 8th grader and present at the event, will be attending Fairfield Prep this fall on a Magis Scholarship.

Pohlen presented Dr. Christopher Cipriano, Head of School at Notre Dame Prep of

SHU, with an award for his faith-based leadership, deeply valued partnership and support for the students of CAB. “Chris’s leadership, with Our Lady at the forefront of all he does, is truly about the kids—our kids. And you only need to walk the halls at Notre Dame Prep to know that’s true. He knows every student and they know him.”

(To learn more about CAB, please visit [www.catholicacademybridgeport.org](http://www.catholicacademybridgeport.org) or call 203.362.2990.)



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- Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet
- Fairfield College Preparatory School
- Kolbe Cathedral Preparatory School
- Lauralton Hall
- Loomis Chaffee

- Notre Dame Prep of SHU
- Notre Dame West Haven
- Platt Technical School
- Sacred Heart Academy
- St. Joseph High School
- Trumbull Agriscience

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### A ‘MIRACLE’ FROM PAGE 7

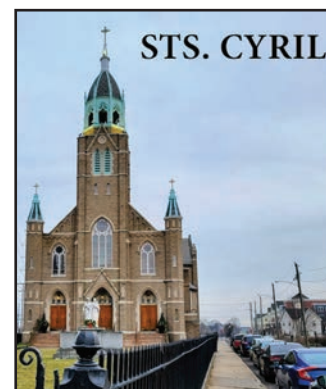
named “Bethlehem,” which means “House of Bread” because Koinonia offers spiritual nourishment to people who come to the campus, which is a center for evangelization, he said.

“In this moment, it is so important for our culture to see consecrated people giving their lives completely to the Lord,” Father Biccheri said. “The rectory will also provide communal space for families and young people.”

The group purchased the property at 163 Ortega Ave. from the diocese and is now moving forward with plans to restore the church.

Parishioner Armida Oradei said: “I have been attending Our Lady of Good Counsel for several years, and it’s just beautiful to see the enthusiasm of the parishioners, their support, and the growing attendance. The opening of the Bethlehem house will allow the consecrated and the pastor to dedicate their time to activities in the parish. This restoration could not have been achieved without all the parishioners’ help and is a testimony of God’s blessings for this entire devoted community.”

The Foundation Koinonia John the Baptist has thousands of members worldwide, including families, consecrated brothers and sisters, and priests. Individual Koinonias are centers of evangelization and spiritual life, and members get together regularly to grow in their faith and train the faithful to evangelize.



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# Bishop to Kolbe grads: Live a life of holiness

By **JOE PISANI**

BRIDGEPORT—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano told the graduating class of Kolbe Cathedral Preparatory School to “never be afraid to live a life of true holiness so you can go into the world as instruments of healing and reconciliation and true peace.”

His comments came at the end of the Baccalaureate Mass he celebrated at St. Augustine Cathedral on June 3, the day before the seniors graduated.

The bishop said that among the many things they acquired in their four years was an understanding of the need for holiness.

“I want you to know that all of us are very proud of every single one of you,” he said, “and not just because of what you have done, but because of the young men and women you have become in these four years.”

Bishop Caggiano also expressed his gratitude to the administration and faculty of

Kolbe Cathedral “and everyone who has made this school so remarkable because they do what they do—and they care about you and love you.”

Following the Mass, the Kolbe Cathedral community expressed its “heartfelt gratitude (to the bishop) for your continued support, guidance, and commitment to our mission.” In his honor, they planted two dogwood trees on the campus, symbolizing rebirth, renewal, strength and durability.

“This is one of the most beautiful gifts I have ever received,” the bishop said.

“Bishop, your leadership was important as we transitioned into the revitalization of our campus and helped us create vibrant communities and spaces to foster community spirit,” a student said.

In October 2024, Bishop Caggiano launched an initiative made possible by Gerstner Philanthropies to make Kolbe Cathedral “a beacon of hope



for students, families and their community,” starting with the creation of the Louis V. Gerstner III Center for Students and Families, which is home to programs for students and their families, including a student success center, fitness rooms, the Marian Work Study Program and the St. Joseph Parenting Center.

Bishop Caggiano concluded his

comments by telling the students, faculty, and parents in the packed cathedral that he had new plans to announce when they return.

“When we come back, I will have some exciting news to share with you that will be made possible by one person, who will help Kolbe take the next big step forward in its bright, growing and vital future,” he said.

In celebrating the Baccalaureate Mass, Bishop Caggiano was joined by Father David Roman, Deacon Joe Klimaszewski and Father Hryhoriy Lozinskyy, Kolbe’s spiritual director, who delivered the homily.

Father Lozinskyy talked about the relationship between St. Paul, the teacher, and St. Timothy, his student. He said that once Paul was imprisoned, Timothy had to move into the world on his own and stay strong through the grace of God, just as students go forward in life.

He urged the students to live a holy life and remember that sanctity should be their primary goal and not worldly success. Father Lozinskyy also told them to cultivate the special gifts that God has given them and, like Paul, focus on the spirit of power, love and self-control.

“Be strong in the grace of God,” he said, “And remember that strength comes from God.”

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*Catholic Academy of Stamford***Principal honored for 45 years of service**

STAMFORD—The Catholic Academy of Stamford community gathered to celebrate the retirement of principal Pat Brady, marking the close of 45 years devoted to Catholic education. Bishop Frank J. Caggiano presided at a Mass in her honor, joined by clergy, faculty, parents, students, alumni, board members and friends from across the Diocese of Bridgeport and beyond.

In a tribute following the liturgy, Stacie Stueber, superintendent of schools for the diocese, recalled meeting Brady soon after her arrival in the diocese nearly a decade ago.

“From the very beginning, I remember thinking to myself, ‘this is an amazing Catholic school leader,’” she said. Over the past 10 years, Stueber has worked with Brady at the Catholic Academy of Stamford and previously at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School in

Fairfield.

“She leads with faith. She leads with integrity. She leads with a calming presence, and with a sense of humor,” Stueber said. “And she always keeps the students at the center of every decision.”

Stueber emphasized that for Brady, Catholic education has never been simply a job.

“She has lived it as a vocation,” she said. “She understands that Catholic schools are not merely institutions where students learn math and reading or science; these are communities where young people discover Christ and their God-given dignity and who are formed into the people that God is calling them to become.”

Stueber praised her for doing this work “quietly and humbly, without seeking recognition, but with extraordinary impact.”

“Schools do not become strong Catholic communities by

accident,” she continued. “They become strong schools because of leaders like Pat Brady, who give of themselves completely to the mission.”

Matt Murphy, chair of the board of directors of the Catholic Academy of Stamford, offered a tribute on behalf of the school community. He thanked her for years of steady, faithful leadership, for guiding the academy with wisdom, compassion, and grace, and for forming students who graduate not only with academic strength but with the dignity, respect and compassion that mark a Catholic education. The board presented Brady with a gift in gratitude for her service.

Visibly moved, Brady offered her own reflections.

Her career began far from Connecticut.

“Forty-five years ago, I walked into a sixth grade classroom at Our Lady of Loretto Catholic School in Pittsburgh,

Pennsylvania,” she said. “I had a degree, a lesson plan, a deep desire to serve and a sense of humor. That’s it.”

She would later go on to serve as a Catholic school principal for 31 years, the last ten at the Catholic Academy of Stamford.

Brady offered thanks to the bishop, the Office of the Superintendent of Schools, her fellow principals, the board of directors, her faculty and staff, the parents who entrusted their children to her care and her family and friends.

Her closing words were for the students. “You have been



my greatest teachers,” she told them. “You’ve taught me to love, to laugh, to stay curious, and to understand that God is not finished with me yet, that we all make mistakes and need to be forgiven.”

“While leaving the Catholic Academy of Stamford is difficult,” she said, “I’ll step away knowing our foundation is strong.”

**An evening with Veritas Catholic**

By MARIE T. OATES

DARIEN—Supporters, friends, and listeners of Veritas Catholic Network gathered at the Water’s Edge at Giovanni’s in Darien for a celebratory gala under the banner “On-Air with Veritas.” The sold-out event on June 19 brought together members of the *Fairfield County Catholic* community for an evening of fellowship, faith, and lively conversation, capped by a spirited live interview that drew the crowd to its feet.

Veritas Catholic Network’s mission, drawn from the words of Saint John Paul II, is: “This is no time to be ashamed of the Gospel. It is time to preach it from the rooftops!” Since its founding, the network has grown into a trusted voice for Catholic teaching, parish life, and evangelization across the region.

The evening’s program included a cocktail reception, silent auction, and a meet-and-greet with the hosts of Veritas’ shows. Among the programming highlights is *Let Me Be Frank*, the popular podcast co-hosted by Steve Lee and Bishop Frank J. Caggiano. The podcast has become a beloved fixture for Catholics throughout the region, offering the Bishop’s characteristic blend of pastoral warmth, theological depth and candid conversation on the questions that matter most to the faithful today.

The centerpiece of the evening was a live performance of *The Front Line* with Joe & Joe, featuring special guest Sam Blair, a Navy SEAL veteran turned Catholic speaker, interviewed by host Joe Reciniello. What unfolded was far more than a polished radio segment. It was an honest, searching, and at times electrifying conversation about masculinity, faith and the call every man receives to live for something greater than himself.

Blair, drawing on his years of military service, spoke with unusual directness about what he sees as a cultural failure to form men in virtue. The solution, he argued, is not to soften the call of Christ but to understand it rightly.

“Christ is not soft,” he said. “He’s gentle because He has self-possession and immense strength that He is in control of, but

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

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June 2026

# Immaculate commencement honors 101 graduates

DANBURY—Immaculate High School's commencement ceremony recently honored the 101 graduates of the Class of 2026, whose accomplishments reflect academic excellence, faith, service and a strong commitment to community, school officials said.

Among the attendees who spoke were Danbury Mayor Roberto Alves, diocesan Superintendent of Schools Stacie Stueber, Immaculate Board Chairperson Joseph T. Draper, Monsignor Robert E. Weiss and Emma Scheckner, class valedictorian.



"Looking back upon the moments I valued most, very few of them involved material accomplishments and successes," Scheckner told her classmates, urging them to use their faith to guide their futures. "Very rarely will people remember us for every achievement, award or accolade, but they do remember how we showed up for them and stood beside them."

Scheckner of Redding was named valedictorian, and Hannah Trotman of Ridgefield

was named salutatorian.

Senior Siwei "Zane" Han of Sandy Hook was announced as Immaculate's Student of the Year and invited to address his classmates. Han, an international student from China, said his parents could not attend graduation but thanked his host family for helping make his Immaculate experience possible.

"At some point, Immaculate really did become home," said Han. "I used to think I had to be

perfect to belong somewhere. This place proved me wrong. You could be nervous. You could be uncertain. You could be lost. And someone would still hold the door, hand you a coffee, save you a room or just ask how your day was going."

All the graduates who applied to colleges and universities were accepted, and the class was offered scholarships and grants totaling more than \$38 million, a new record for the school.

Scheckner will attend Johns Hopkins University, where she plans to study biology and pursue a pre-med track.

Trotman will attend Boston College, where she plans to study business analytics. Han will attend Boston University to study biology. The Student of the Year Award recognizes a student who exhibits school spirit, strength of character, faith in action and a passion for learning.

The remaining students rounding out Immaculate's Top Ten are Ryan Beverly of Bethel, University of Miami; Alina Budzynski of Southbury,

Fairfield University; Katherine Carrasquillo of Ridgefield, Villanova University; Callie Miller of North Salem, N.Y., University of Notre Dame; Jacob Saadi of Danbury, Tufts University; Maya Tedawes of Redding, Northeastern University; Alicia Ventresca of Sandy Hook, University of Florida; and Alyssa Wright of Newtown, Providence College.

The Class of 2026 also contributed 5,609 hours to a school-wide total of 21,363 hours of community service this year. Estrella Roman of Danbury received the Gold Award for more than 250 hours of service. Bronze Awards for 100 to 174 hours of service were awarded to 15 graduates.

Since 1962, Immaculate has offered a rigorous Catholic college-preparatory education to students from 28 communities across Connecticut and New York, remaining committed "to educating the whole person in mind, body and spirit."

(For more information, visit [www.immaculatehs.org](http://www.immaculatehs.org))

## VERITAS CATHOLIC FROM PAGE 24

He is not soft." He pointed to the Passion and Resurrection as the defining act of strength in human history: a God who descends into the darkest place of all and emerges victorious, and who then extends that same invitation to every man listening.

Reciniello, a father of five who walks praying the rosary from Port Authority to Columbus Circle each morning as part of his daily commute into New York City, matched Blair's intensity with his own testimony. He spoke of the rosary as more as an essential weapon. He shared that he and his wife have not missed a family rosary in thirteen years of marriage, even amid the cheerful chaos of five children. "It is not peaceful," he admitted with a laugh. "It is not a pious rosary, but we do it, because Our Lady said so."

Both men returned repeatedly to a theme that resonated throughout the room: that holiness is not the province of an elite few but for everyone.

"We are all called to be saints," Reciniello said, "and the most masculine thing a man can do is pursue holiness, pursue the Lord, pursue love." Blair underscored the point with an observation as simple as it is demanding: the Resurrection of Christ is not a historical footnote. It is a challenge. "This demands a response," he said. "A man has a choice. We get a lifetime to make it."

(Veritas Catholic Network is available at 1350AM and 103.9FM, through the Veritas Catholic mobile app, and at [veritascatholic.com](http://veritascatholic.com).)

## Sacred Heart Greenwich holds 177th commencement

The 177th graduating class of Sacred Heart Greenwich was encouraged to listen, to not fear making mistakes, to be authentic, and to embrace innovation as they set forth in a new chapter of their lives.

In her commencement address, Linda Sanford, former IBM senior vice president of enterprise transformation, told the 69 graduates: "You are the future leaders. These skills, along with your Sacred Heart education, will prepare you not only for successful careers, but also to lead with courage, compassion and purpose in an ever-changing world."

The commencement ceremony at the all-girls independent Catholic school was held on June 5 at the campus on 1177 King Street.

President of Sacred Heart Greenwich, Michael F. Baber, said the school was honored to have Sanford, considered a pioneer in advancing women in technology, as the commencement speaker.

"Her commitment to innovation, leadership and expanding

opportunities for women reflects the very heart of our mission," he said. "We appreciate the wisdom and perspective she shared with our graduates as they prepare to lead with purpose and confidence."

During her four-decade career at IBM, Sanford played a pivotal role in driving innovation and leading large-scale organizational change. As senior vice president of enterprise transformation, she leveraged her expertise in operations research to redesign key business processes, helping IBM adapt and thrive in a rapidly evolving global marketplace.

In her address, Sanford said: "Sacred Heart Greenwich continues to focus on the spiritual, intellectual, moral and social formation of each and every one of you. I saw this and felt this in my interaction with you. So, never let go of what you learned here at Sacred Heart Greenwich. Lead with heart and act with purpose. Take it with you as you now enter the next important stepping stone of your life."

Sanford talked about her four decades at IBM and the lessons

she learned about leadership, resilience, solving difficult problems and embracing change rather than fearing it. She also has ties to the Sacred Heart Greenwich community as the grandparent of a student in the Middle School.

She shared four lessons culled from her life and career.

First, she encouraged the young women to actively listen.

Second: "It's okay to make a mistake, but only if you learn from it."

Third, she said, "Be yourself—your authentic and unique self."

Fourth, she urged them to embrace innovation: "The world and technology are changing faster and faster. In today's world, if you resist change, you very quickly become obsolete. If you embrace change, you survive. If you initiate change, you lead. So, it's best to be agile."

Among the 2026 graduating class were nine "lifers," who attended Sacred Heart since Lower School, along with 12 student-athletes, who will continue their athletic careers at the colle-



giate level. School officials said members of the Class of 2026 have earned recognition from many organizations, including the National Merit Scholarship Program, the Columbia Scholastic Press Association, the American Scholastic Press Association, the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and the YWCA.

Valedictorians Arianna Chin of Peekskill, NY, who will attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Clare Junius of Greenwich, who will attend Princeton University delivered remarks at the ceremony, along with Salutatorian Lexi Parsons of Bronxville, NY, who will attend Boston College.

(For more information, visit [www.shgreenwich.org](http://www.shgreenwich.org))

# New Voice for Beauty: Tallis Academy

GREENWICH—There is a moment that anyone who has heard a great cathedral choir will recognize: the sound rises, fills the space and something in the listener goes quiet. More than aesthetic pleasure, something sublime is happening.

It is, as Bishop Frank J. Caggiano has observed, the encounter with beauty that makes truth compelling. “Music is where art and science meet,” the Bishop has said, “because through music, reason is clothed in beauty, and thus Christ’s invitation is presented in a way that is both compelling and convicting.”

This fall, that conviction takes root in a new initiative based at Saint Paul Church in Greenwich: the Tallis Academy, a children’s choral program rooted in the great English cathedral choir tradition and inspired by the Diocese of Bridgeport’s ongoing commitment to the renewal of Catholic life through beauty.

The Academy takes its name from Thomas Tallis (1505–1585), the pre-eminent English church musician widely regarded as the father of the English choral tradition. A native of the original Greenwich in England and a devout Catholic, Tallis served all five Tudor monarchs through the turbulent years of the Reformation, producing sacred music of extraordinary beauty and craftsmanship that endures in the repertoire of the world’s finest cathedral choirs to this day. In naming the Academy after Tallis, Saint Paul’s honors both the geographical connection to his homeland and the spiritual inheritance he embodies: fidelity, artistry and the consecration of talent to the glory of God.

The Tallis Academy is designed to offer children a professional-level musical education within a supportive and purposeful community. Through a carefully structured program of vocal

technique, sight-singing, music theory, music history, and ensemble singing, young participants will acquire the skills necessary to perform great choral music to a high standard. No prior experience is required; the Academy seeks only children who enjoy singing and are eager to learn.

Alongside this rigorous musical training, students will receive age-appropriate Catholic liturgical formation, deepening their understanding of the Church’s worship and her rich sacred musical heritage. The goal is formation of the whole person: intellect, voice, character and faith. Participants can expect to develop not only musical ability but also concentration, teamwork, leadership,

and the quiet confidence that comes from mastering something difficult in the company of others.

The Academy is launching with a series of Choir Camps: enjoyable day-long events offering children a first taste of the choral tradition. These camps are designed to be welcoming and accessible, giving young singers the chance to discover their voices, learn new skills, make friends and experience the beauty of singing together.

Following the Choir Camps, the Tallis Academy will begin its Exploratory Year in fall 2026. Meeting weekly, participants will receive comprehensive instruction across all aspects of choral musicianship in a structured, foundational year that prepares them for the more



ambitious work ahead. Scholarships will be available through the generosity of founding donors.

The Tallis Academy represents exactly the kind of initiative that the Diocese of Bridgeport hopes to cultivate: a program that brings together excellence and faith, that forms young people in the tradition of the Church, and that offers the world a glimpse of the beauty that the Gospel makes possible.

(To learn more visit [stpaulgreenwich.org/Tallis-academy](http://stpaulgreenwich.org/Tallis-academy).)

## Lay Dominicans profess

By EMILY CLARK

TRUMBULL—For years, Brian Dobkowski felt he had a great life. As a spiritual—though admittedly lukewarm—Catholic, he wanted for nothing, until both personal troubles and health issues plagued him several years ago. Looking for a way to heal and ground himself, he turned to the Church.

“I began going to daily Mass and praying the Rosary,” said Dobkowski, who belongs to the Precious Blood Parish in Milford.

When a woman from a local Lay Dominican fraternity, praying with her order in the next pew, asked him to join them one day, Dobkowski hesitated at first but soon realized that opportunity was truly the answer to his prayers.

“I was praying for spiritual wisdom. This was not a coincidence,” he said. “God put them in front of me.”

After months of discernment on his part and support from well-formed lay members who live out the Dominican charism, Dobkowski and five others received a small scapular, pin and Bible during the Rite of Reception at a Mass at St. Theresa Parish in Trumbull on May 19. When asked by the presider, president David Andreotta, OP, “What do you seek?” Dobkowski and the candidates responded in unison, “That I may share in God’s mercy and yours in the Dominican Family.”

In addition to those prepared for reception, three women made their Temporary Professions, committing to live according to the Rule of the Fraternities of St. Dominic for a period of three years as their discernment continues. One man, Victor Pioli, became a fully professed member, promising to live according to that rule for the rest of his life, sharing fully in the communal life of the fraternity through leadership and service.

Once clothed with the large white scapular, Pioli stood before Father Brian Gannon, pastor of St. Theresa and religious assistant for the Our Lady of Fatima Lay Dominican Fraternity, as Andreotta said, “You have been accepted into the Lay Fraternity of Saint Dominic for life, that you may continue to eagerly serve Christ and His Church in the spirit and charism of this order.”

For Pioli, an 85-year-old parishioner from St. Theresa, this perpetual profession is bittersweet, coming six years after the death of his wife Peggy and just hours after his first treatment for bladder cancer. This evening, though, he was surrounded by friends and in good spirits.

“I’ve tried to serve God all my life,” he said. “I considered the Lay Dominicans after my retirement but thought, ‘I’m too old!’ But now I see that you are never too old to learn more about your faith.”

That sentiment was shared by Sheila Brown and Marge Hibyan, both fully professed Lay Dominicans who work with the

novices, those in a one-year formation period which includes the study of the life of St. Dominic, among others.

“This [order] really opens you up and helps you feel nourished. Never stop learning and always look to grow your faith,” said Brown.

Hibyan agreed, saying, “It’s a way to open up to prayer and community and learn about the faith.”

Hibyan has noticed growth in the order, saying they are “blossoming,” with more interest and discernment each year.

In his homily during the Mass, Father Gannon spoke of the deep relationship that the Lay Dominicans and all faithful Catholics have with Almighty God, describing “the appetite for holiness, the appetite for knowledge, the appetite for relationships and for love.”

Dobkowski has found this—and more—in his discernment with the Lay Dominicans. With a structured prayer life of morning and evening prayer, he said he has found it so easy to talk to God and to talk about God.

“One of the best parts,” he said, “is that I’m with this group, and we talk about our faith.”

(To learn more about Our Lady of Fatima Lay Dominican Fraternity, summer dates are July 16 and August 20 at 7 pm in the Lower Parish Center at Saint Theresa Parish. The annual Open House and Inquiry Night is September 21 at 7 pm with Father Brian Gannon as the keynote speaker.)

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# Malta House raises \$400,000 for in-need moms

NORWALK—Michael O'Rourke and his wife AC had just come back from a trip to Lourdes, and after 17 years of being childless, she conceived. A year later,

County Bank for almost 20 years, most recently as chairman and CEO. O'Rourke praised him for his commitment to Malta House, and the people who sustain the



MALTA HOUSE GALA HONORS former executive Robert J. Granata (second from left) joined by Bob Granata Jr., Joanne Salvatore and Michael O'Rourke, Malta House board chair.

when they were in church with their son Conor, Michael had the inspiration for Malta House.

"A woman got up and started speaking about all these women who are pregnant and don't know what to do," O'Rourke recalled. "I hit my wife with an elbow and said, 'After what God has given us, if we don't help this woman, we're out of our minds.' It was a confluence of inspiration and grace, where all of a sudden it just hit us that there was something bigger than us that was more important."

Malta House opened in 1998—one of the the only homes in Fairfield County dedicated to serving pregnant and parenting mothers experiencing homelessness. Since its founding, it has grown into a transformative ministry and provided shelter, support, life skills and hope to more than 900 vulnerable mothers and their babies, said O'Rourke, Malta House Board Chair.

The annual gala in May at Woodway Country Club was one of the most successful in the organization's history, surpassing its goal by raising \$400,000, which will help provide critical support for mothers and babies in need.

The gala honored Robert J. Granata, who served First

local community through the First County Bank Foundation.

One of the evening's most moving moments, O'Rourke said, came when former Malta House mom Looney Chery shared her story of transformation and received a standing ovation from the audience.

"When I arrived at Malta House in 2019, pregnant and uncertain about my future, I found more than a place to live," said Chery. "I found structure, support, encouragement and the space to begin rebuilding my life. Malta House helped me believe that a brighter future for my baby and me was possible."

After leaving Malta House, Chery earned an associate's degree and graduated from Southern Connecticut State University in 2023 with a bachelor's degree in sociology. She is currently pursuing a master's in student affairs administration and leadership while helping students and families across Connecticut navigate college planning, financial aid and educational opportunities.

Chery is also the founder of the College Access Collaborative of Connecticut, an organization dedicated to supporting first-generation, low-income, multilingual college students from underserved communities pursue higher education.

"We continue to cheer Looney on as she creates a brighter future for her children while lifting up others in her community," said Pamela Shilling, Malta House's executive director. "Her story reflects the resilience, determination and hope that are possible when women are given the support and stability they need. She reminds other young mothers that their circumstances do not define their future."

In an interview, O'Rourke fondly remembered the early years

when Malta House was in the planning stages and the founders met every Wednesday for pizza.

The co-founders included Hope Carter, an ardent supporter who presented the idea to then Bishop Edward Egan, the late Father Gerald Devore of St. Maurice Parish in Stamford, the late Monsignor William Scheyd, who provided the first home for Malta House at his parish's convent building in Norwalk, and Christopher Bell, who ran the operation.

"Gradually, bit by bit, we started raising money and opened in 1998, and since then we've helped over 900 moms and their babies, so it's really quite remarkable," O'Rourke said.

Malta House in Norwalk is one of the only homes for pregnant women above 18 in Fairfield County, and one of a limited number of programs for young homeless mothers and their babies.

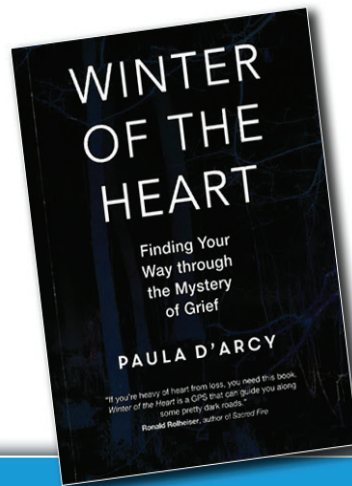
(For more information, visit [www.maltahouse.org](http://www.maltahouse.org).)



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### MAY

24	Rev. Mark Grimes	2008
25	Rev. Joseph A. Ganley	1957
26	Msgr. William Loughlin	2014
27	Monsignor William J. Scheyd	2025
	Rev. Joseph F. Sohovich	1957
28	Rev. John P. McNerney	1969
29	Msgr. John J. Barney	1973
	Rev. Harry Holbrook	2005
	Deacon Richard F. Saymon	2021
30	Rev. Adelard A. Jalbert	1960
31	Deacon Dean Finch	2018
	Rev. Dennis A. Szocs, O.F.M.	1985

### JUNE

1	Rev. Msgr. Jean C. Tetreault	2003
2	Rev. Thomas M. Ford	1992
3	Rev. Michael F. Blanchard	1982
	Rev. Richard J. Grady	1993
	Deacon Kenneth Stroud	2016
5	Msgr. Peter Dora	2017
	Msgr. John Hayes	1964
6	Rev. Thomas J. Hanley	1954

	Msgr. Edward J. Howley	2012
7	Rev. James J. Dennis	2003
	Deacon Kevin Moore	2019
8	Msgr. Bernard S. Scanlon	2004
9	Msgr. James G. Lengen	1999
	Rev. James J. O'Malley	1996
11	Deacon Harry Hall	2008
13	Deacon Anthony LaBua	1988
14	Msgr. William F. Kearney	1974
15	Msgr. John H. Landry	1967
19	Rev. Robert S. McBride	1982
	Msgr. Francis Wissel	2014
20	Msgr. John J. Bumstead	1996
21	Rev. Albert D. Talbot	1962
22	Rev. Philip W. Brady	2022
	Rev. Nicholas P. Coleman	1963
	Rev. Xavier Renda	2009
24	Rev. Frankln J. Corrigan	1974
	Deacon R. Dwyer	2021
	Msgr. William A. Genuario	2015
25	Rev. Albert A. Tomasko	1978
27	Rev. William Donovan	2018
	Rev. J. Barry Furey	2012

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# How can you argue without getting mad?

## NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE

BY SUAN SONNA

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

I was in high school when the Supreme Court decided *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the landmark decision that redefined marriage in American law. I remember as a young Baptist watching denominations schism over whether marriage is the union of one man and one woman.

I had many difficult conversa-

tions with friends after I simply became convinced in high school of the Thomistic natural law position on marriage—mind you, I was still a Protestant, but I loved St. Thomas Aquinas. Thomas' position, or simply the Catholic Church's position, is that marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman, ordered towards the creation and flourishing of a family.

Once I understood the reasons

behind why the Faith teaches what it does about marriage and sexuality, I felt secure enough to hear other people's objections without fear. It became easier to exercise self-control when someone was being difficult, because I knew my confidence was and is positively justified. I was also able to discern more easily whether someone was genuinely seeking the truth or simply wanted to get into a brawl (which did not interest me at all).

This is all to say that it is possible to argue constructively about the thorniest issues of our day. Regardless of whether you have friends or family members who profoundly struggle with the Church's teachings, there is hope. You can make an impact even if you do not convince them right away.

My first piece of advice is to thoroughly study not just your side of the case but the other side as well. You cannot really claim "justified confidence" in a position until you have studied both sides and still see your position as triumphant. Moreover, you should be able to articulate not only why the scales tip in your favor but also anticipate how an opponent might respond to your case and how you would rebut their best objections. This first step is awfully demanding, but it is necessary and rewarding if followed.

The next step is to discern the purity of your intentions. Do you just want to win an argument

with this person? Did they wound your ego? Are you more willing to let the other person feel heard rather than be refuted?

There are in fact three actions that you can take to demonstrate the purity of your intentions: (1) ask lots of genuine questions, (2) ask whether you properly understood the other person before responding, and (3) do not interrupt the other person. Interruptions are a great recipe for disaster.

However, asking good questions can actually be more persuasive than well-formed arguments, because questions force someone to think through their own position, helping them see for themselves where they might have gone awry. Also, asking if you understood the other person ensures no one's time is wasted and (trust me) they will appreciate that you care about not misrepresenting them. In fact, so many arguments spiral out of control simply because the same word is being used with a different meaning or some assumption is kept hidden.

The third step is to lower the stakes. By this I mean that you should make it less scary to have the tough conversation. Think about it: if you lose the argument, you can look really dumb and feel awful; if you interrupt the other person, they might explode and yell at you; a good friendship might unnecessarily end! Things can go

wrong in so many ways. So, what can we do to lower the stakes?

There is at least one clear answer: food. If you prepare a meal for someone or take them out to a restaurant, this gesture of kindness does a lot. It shows that you care about them, especially if you make the food yourself. It is a tangible sign of your goodness. Moreover, it is pretty hard to yell at someone when there is food in your mouth! Good cuisine naturally slows everyone down to savor rather than rage over the moment.

The last—but by no means least—important step is to reflect afterwards on the conversation. You should be honest about your tone, whether the other person felt heard, and how clear and helpful your answers were. If you don't know the answer to a question, then admit it and promise that you will investigate the matter before the next conversation. If I could make that the 11th commandment I would!

There are a surprising number of ways to have good and productive conversations. This might sound optimistic, but these tactics have helped me talk about abortion, LGBTQ+ issues, and other hot button subjects without the other person becoming enraged. In fact, it has allowed me to maintain meaningful friendships across ideological lines, sharing with others the wonderful news that the Catholic Church is their true home. ■

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### PARTICIPATION UP IN BISHOP'S APPEAL FROM PAGE 5

and sharing in this mission, it not only brings us closer as a church community, but also reduces the stress on individuals. While there is still room to grow, the movement is going in the right direction."

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."

The bishop urged the faithful to continue on this path so the diocese can do even more.

"For that, I need your help in supporting the ministries that are the foundation of our Church," he said, "and by funding the new initiatives that are giving further and even greater life to our Church."

Mark said: "Morgan and I have enjoyed being co-chairs of

the Appeal for the last two years because it has given us an opportunity to see all the amazing work the bishop and his team do throughout our diocese. It also reminds us every day how much work remains, and that it is never really finished."

Mark, who is vice president of sales and marketing for NBC Sports, is a graduate of Fordham University. Morgan, a graduate of Lafayette College, has held positions at ABC and Discovery.

"Working with the Bishop's office on the Appeal has definitely opened my eyes to the many points of pride for Catholics," Morgan says. "There is so much need in the world, even right around us. Jesus presented almsgiving as an important part of the Christian life. The Bishop's Appeal allows us as a greater Catholic community to care for our neighbor and to live out the life we are meant to lead."

Ministries supported by the

Appeal focus on the themes of "Accompanying our neighbor," "Fostering works of goodness" and "Celebrating the Truth in Jesus Christ," Rittman said.

"We feel honored to do our small part," Mark said. "The past four years remind me of the quote from the Bible that says, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.' The need can feel overwhelming, but if we all do our part, whatever that is, then we can accomplish great things together. My hope is that we had an impact on the parishes we spoke to and raised awareness of the Appeal and the ministries and services it helps each year."

*(There is still time to make a gift to the Bishop's Appeal. Please visit [www.2026BishopsAppeal.org](http://www.2026BishopsAppeal.org) or call 203.416.1470. Thank you for your support.)* ■

June 2026

**Sports**

# Fairfield Prep, St. Joe's glitter on diamond

By **DON HARRISON**

Fairfield Prep's athletic history encompasses state championships and All-State players in multiple

Mauritz, a 1994 Prep alumnus who played three seasons under long-time coach Ed Rowe, helping the Jesuits win a league title in 1993 and co-captained the

who will attend the University of Notre Dame in the fall, ranked second in hitting this season with a .481 average, and, due in part to his 26 walks, edged Lombardo in

came in the same game—"and in the same inning," Mauritz noted—in a 23-1 rout of Hillhouse on April 20. Rotondo will attend Villanova next fall.

Andrew Wong, among eight seniors on the Jesuits' roster, was scheduled to be the team's No. 1 starting pitcher, but a knee injury, incurred during Prep's basketball season, required surgery and he sat out the season.

So Mauritz studied his roster and discovered a sophomore, Jack Schachinger (7-0, 1.68 ERA), a junior, Anthony Pavano (6-1, 3.24 ERA), a sophomore reliever in Will Ryan (6-0, 1.94 ERA), and a freshman named Brayden Showah, who won two games including a 4-0 no-hitter against North Haven in the opening game of the Southern Connecticut Conference Tournament on May 22.

Chaves started his 16th season as St. Joe's head coach on a high. "We won the (state) title last year with a team of sophomores, so I thought with juniors we had a good chance to repeat," he explained.

The Cadets entered the 2026 CIAC Class M Tournament with a modest 13-8 record but proceeded to reel off three straight victories to advance to the semi-finals. Junior right-hander Harry "HT" Jones won a pair of 4-1 decisions (over Killingly and Ellington), while classmate Gavin Rovinelli blanked Nonnewaug, 7-0, with a one-hitter.

New Fairfield, though, prevailed in 11 innings and then defeated Ansonia, 5-1, to capture its first state title in baseball.

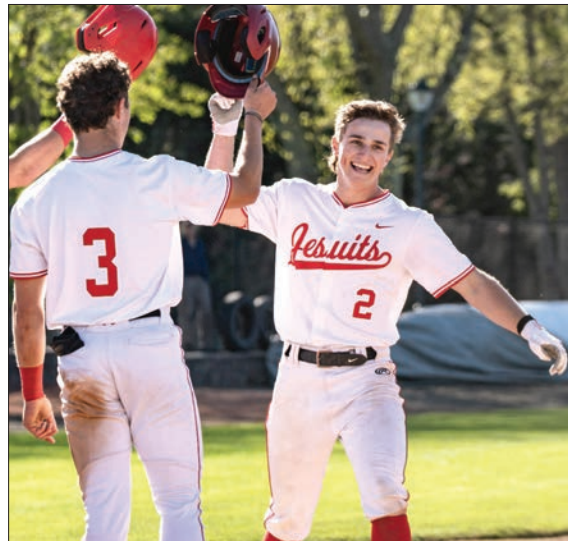
Jones, Rovinelli and another junior, shortstop Jake Rios, were St. Joe's finest players this spring. Jones and Rios shared the batting lead with .333 averages, while on the mound Jones won five of seven decisions and compiled a microscopic 1.17 ERA. He was a first-team All-State selection.

"HT is right up there with the best and he has become the most dominant I've ever had," Chaves said.

Rovinelli's numbers were exceptional, too: 6-1 won-lost record and 1.33 ERA. ■



**VINNY LOMBARDO**



**RYAN VENTRELLE**

sports, and the Jesuits' baseball coach, Rudy Mauritz, was hopeful this would be the year Prep would prevail on the diamond.

Meanwhile, St. Joseph High School was seeking its second straight CIAC Class M state championship – and fourth overall—under coach Jim Chaves.

Both schools made a strong run in the 2026 state tournament but came up short. Prep's 24-game winning streak was unceremoniously ended by Trumbull, 9-4, in the Class LL semifinals at Cook Field in Fairfield, while top-seeded New Fairfield, which hadn't appeared in a state title game in more than three decades, upended St. Joe's, 3-2, in 11 innings in their Class M semifinal matchup at Muzzy Field in Bristol.

"A state title, that's one that has eluded us in baseball," admits

1994 squad. Mauritz also chairs the Social Studies department at Prep and, it should be noted, was named the school's "Most Inspirational Teacher" in 2025.

In 20 seasons as the Jesuits' head coach, Mauritz says his current team (which finished 25-2) is unrivaled offensively. "They batted .402 this spring," he pointed out. "Our centerfielder, Vinny Lombardo, hit an even .500 (43-86), and he also led the team with five home runs, 23 stolen bases and a .802 slugging percentage." The 23 steals are a school record.

Lombardo, a senior, has committed to attending UConn, but Mauritz says that could change if "he's chosen in the Major League draft."

Both Lombardo and shortstop Ryan Ventrelle were selected to the GameTime and Connecticut Coaches All-State teams. Ventrelle,

on-base percentage, .596-.593.

Prep's senior second baseman, Cooper Rotondo, hit .323 and contributed four homers, two of which were grand slams and



**HT JONES**



**JAKE RIOS**

**EUCCHARISTIC JESUS FLIES FROM PAGE 11**

Church don't just allow for this, they almost demand that we do this," Father Silva said, "so that we can be those whom our Lord entrusted 2,000 years ago with his sacred Body and Blood, so that we can continue this so that the world will hide no longer from his most holy Body and Blood."

Shortly after, Father left the church with the monstrance for Danbury Airport and then returned, flying over in a heli-

copter to bless the church and the Danbury community.

"This is so wonderful. We are really living our faith instead of talking about it," said Patty Aparar, one of the parishioners who prayed the Rosary while waiting after Mass to see the helicopter with Jesus in the monstrance fly over the church.

Eighteen-year-old Alicia Jos, who attended with her sister and mother, was moved by the public expression of faith.

"I've never seen anything like

that before," she said as she watched the helicopter fly over. "It was emotional."

Her 12-year-old sister Angela agreed.

"I feel closer to Jesus," Angela said. "Having everyone gathered here together is nice."

"This is amazing," said Donna Scalzo, a lifelong parishioner at St. Joseph. "Who would ever think a priest would be over us blessing the parish? We are very fortunate to have him." ■

THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT PRESENTS

with **BRYAN MERCIER**

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ONE

**Nuestra Voz****En vigencia Consejo Hispano de movimientos y comunidades**

POR MARICARMEN GODOY

BRIDGEPORT—Como un paso para fortalecer significativamente la participación y la unidad de la comunidad católica hispana, el obispo Frank J. Caggiano, promulgó el decreto que ordena la creación del Consejo Hispano de Movimientos y Comunidades Eclesiales de la Diócesis de Bridgeport, un nuevo organismo destinado a promover la formación de líderes y la colaboración pastoral entre los diversos grupos hispanos presentes en la diócesis.

Según el documento, la iniciativa surge tras considerar las necesidades pastorales de la creciente comunidad hispana y el deseo de fomentar una mayor comunión en la misión de la Iglesia. El nuevo consejo reunirá

a representantes de movimientos eclesiales, comunidades, grupos de oración, ministerios apostólicos y líderes pastorales hispanos que trabajan en las diferentes parroquias de la diócesis.

El Obispo Caggiano destacó que la creación de este organismo responde a la responsabilidad de coordinar el apostolado diocesano y de ofrecer estructuras adecuadas para el discernimiento y la planificación pastoral. Asimismo, aprobó los estatutos del consejo por un período inicial de tres años, conocido en el derecho canónico como “ad experimentum”, que entró en vigor el 1 de junio de 2026.

Durante este período, el consejo desarrollará su labor de acompañamiento, consulta y colaboración con la diócesis. Al

concluir los tres años, sus estatutos y funcionamiento serán evaluados para determinar posibles modificaciones o su confirmación definitiva.

La aprobación simultánea de los textos oficiales en inglés y español refleja el compromiso de la Diócesis de Bridgeport con una participación inclusiva y representativa de la diversidad cultural de sus fieles.

La creación del Consejo Hispano representa un acontecimiento histórico para la Iglesia local, ya que ofrece un espacio formal de diálogo, coordinación y participación para los numerosos movimientos y comunidades hispanas que enriquecen la vida pastoral de la diócesis. Se espera que esta nueva estructura fortalezca la unidad entre los distin-



tos ministerios y contribuya a una evangelización más efectiva en las parroquias y comunidades del condado de Fairfield.

Las disposiciones del decreto fueron promulgadas oficialmente mediante su publicación en el periódico diocesano el *Fairfield County Catholic* y fueron comunicadas a todas las parroquias, cuasiparroquias, santuarios, oratorios y capillas de la diócesis.

Durante las últimas semanas se han realizado tres reuniones de organización bajo la coordinación

del diácono Edward Carrillo. Hasta el momento, los encuentros se han llevado a cabo de manera virtual a través de Zoom. La próxima reunión presencial será sábado, 25 de julio, en la parroquia Saint Ann en Bridgeport.

Geovanny Chalco, presidente de la comunidad hispana de la parroquia Saint Peter en Danbury, destacó la importancia de esta iniciativa para las comunidades hispanas de la diócesis. “Este consejo es importante porque permitirá que la comunidad hispana tenga una representación más visible dentro de la Diócesis de Bridgeport. El obispo ha demostrado un gran interés en acompañar y apoyar a nuestras comunidades, reconociendo su crecimiento y su aporte a la Iglesia local”, expresó Chalco.

Chalco, quien sirve en la parroquia Saint Peter desde 2007, señaló que ha sido testigo del notable crecimiento de la comunidad hispana durante los últimos 18 años. Como respuesta a esta realidad pastoral, el obispo ha asignado recientemente dos sacerdotes a que hablan español a la parroquia para atender las necesidades de los fieles hispanos.

“El crecimiento ha sido evidente. Actualmente contamos con alrededor de 400 niños participando en la formación religiosa. Antes las clases se ofrecían únicamente los domingos, pero hoy tenemos tres sesiones distribuidas entre sábado y domingo para responder a la demanda de las familias”, explicó.

La creación del Consejo Hispano busca fortalecer la comunicación entre las diferentes comunidades, movimientos y parroquias de habla hispana de la diócesis, promoviendo una mayor colaboración y participación en la misión evangelizadora de la Iglesia.

Los organizadores esperan que en los próximos meses continúen las reuniones de planificación y se incorporen representantes de distintas parroquias para consolidar este nuevo organismo de consulta y servicio pastoral.

**Supreme Knight Kelly receives John Cardinal O'Connor Award**

Knights of Columbus Supreme Knight Patrick E. Kelly received the John Cardinal O'Connor Award from the Sisters of Life at the annual Friends of the Sisters of Life Gala on June 5. The award is presented by the Sisters of Life to individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to building a Culture of Life.

“It is a great honor this evening to receive this award on behalf of the Knights of Columbus. It is doubly meaningful because of who it comes from and in whose memory it's named,” Supreme Knight Kelly said. “His Eminence, John Cardinal O'Connor was a towering pillar of the pro-life movement. With an unshakable resolve, he dedicated so much of his ministry as bishop to proclaiming the sanctity of every human life, made in the image and likeness of God. From the pulpit of St. Patrick's Cathedral and from the platform that is the Archdiocese of New York, he truly was a great prophet of the culture of life.”

The award recognizes champions of the pro-life movement, authors and lead-



SUPREME KNIGHT PATRICK E. KELLY ACCEPTS the John Cardinal O'Connor Award from Mother Mary Concepta, superior general of the Sisters of Life, at the Sisters of Life gala honoring the late Cardinal John O'Connor.

ers who embody the vision of the community's founder. While serving as the Archbishop of New York, Cardinal John J. O'Connor founded the Sisters of Life in 1991 to protect and enhance the sacredness of every human life. The award was presented by Mother Mary Concepta, SV, superior general of the Sisters of Life.

Supreme Knight Kelly noted

the longstanding partnership between the order and the Sisters of Life, highlighting Villa Maria Guadalupe, a retreat center in Stamford, established by the Knights of Columbus and entrusted to the Sisters in 2004 in fulfillment of Cardinal O'Connor's vision of a place dedicated to prayer, healing and renewal.

He also pointed to Life Fest,

the annual youth rally cosponsored by the order and the Sisters of Life, which for the past several years has brought together thousands of young people for prayer, praise, and pro-life witness before the March for Life in Washington.

“The Knights of Columbus work with all sorts of organizations, but there is no partnership that we cherish more than our close friendship with the Sisters of Life,” he said. “Speaking for the Knights, we will keep doing everything we can to support the Sisters of Life, and to protect vulnerable mothers and their children. As we prepare for the work ahead, we take comfort in the knowledge that Jesus Christ will continue to guide us.”

Past recipients of the John Cardinal O'Connor Award include former Knights of Columbus Supreme Knight Carl Anderson; Jeanne Mancini, former president of the March for Life; and Dr. Michael Brescia, a medical pioneer at New York's Calvary Hospital who revolutionized end-of-life care and treated every patient with compassion.

June 2026

Vocations

# Enter the Death Zone to reach Eternal Life

By FATHER CHRIS FORD

One of the most challenging things in the world (so I am told) is climbing the world's tallest mountain, Mt. Everest, whose summit stands at a colossal 29,032 feet above sea level. In fact, Everest is one of 14 mountains in the world whose summit stands above 8,000 meters above sea level—an altitude that is referred to in mountaineering as “the Death Zone.”

To climb above 8,000 meters (26, 247ft) is one of the most taxing events on the human body. At this height, the air contains

roughly one-third the amount of oxygen at sea level, and immediately upon entering this altitude, cells in the body actually begin to die from lack of oxygen. In other words, to achieve the highest points on Earth, little by little, you have to be willing to literally start dying.

During the Rite of Priestly Ordination, after the laying on of hands and the vesting in the stole and chasuble, the newly ordained priest kneels before the bishop and is symbolically handed the chalice filled with wine and the paten with the host placed upon it. As he hands it to the newly

ordained, the bishop says these words: “Receive the oblation of the holy people, to be offered to God. Understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord’s cross.”

This is the true charge of priesthood: not to live a life of authority and power, but one of service unto death. To live a life so conformed to the mystery of the Lord’s cross, that you are willing to be thrown into that mystery constantly. Not because it is meant to be a life of constant misery, but because the death of Christ on the cross is the very

source of our eternal life!

At the heart of the mystery of the Lord’s cross is the love of the Father, which holds back nothing, not even the life of His only begotten Son, for the sake of those whom He has claimed as His own in the sacrament of Baptism. This same love continues to call men forth to serve at the Altar of Sacrifice, not simply offering something that they have, but offering their very selves for the glory of God and the sanctification of His people.

From the gift of this sacrifice and from the self-gift of the priest himself in grace, the people of God receive the grace they need to respond generously to the call that is given to each and every one of us—the call to holiness. This is not a path that any of us can walk on our own. We need the grace of God and the mystery of His love and mercy taking root in our lives. Which is to say, we need the cross and the love that placed Jesus there.

There are remarkable heights of holiness, joy and peace that await us in the spiritual life and in the economy of grace, all in direct proportion to our will-



ingness to leave the earthly life behind, to die to self and rise to the glory of living as God’s own sons and daughters.

To enter into the mystery of the priesthood is to enter into the mystery of the Death Zone. In order to reach these heights to which we aspire, those who answer this call must, little by little, be willing to literally start dying. For it is in dying that we, and those we serve in the name of Christ, are born to eternal life.

*Father Christopher J. Ford, PhD is Episcopal Vicar for Education & Formation, Director of Seminarians and Pastor of Notre Dame of Easton Parish. For further information, visit [bridgeportpriest.org](http://bridgeportpriest.org) or email [discern@bridgeportpriest.org](mailto:discern@bridgeportpriest.org).*

## Bridgettine Sisters celebrate founder’s anniversary

DARIEN—In 1888, 18-year-old Maria Elizabeth Hesselblad came to the United States from Sweden to support her struggling family and settled in New York City,

the order founded by St. Bridget of Sweden in the 14th century, which she revitalized by founding the Bridgettine Sisters.

To mark the 10th anniversary of Mother Elizabeth Hesselblad’s can-

St. Elizabeth Hesselblad, in the chapel for all to admire.”

Today, the Bridgettine Sisters serve communities in 20 countries, and they have a mother house in Rome at the historic former dwelling of St. Bridget.

“The Bridgettine Order was made possible due to the tremendous leadership of Sister Elizabeth Hasselblad,” Sister Sabina said. “She had many accomplishments and ensured our order remained true to its roots, since she revitalized it over 100 years ago. We are profoundly grateful for her wisdom, devotion to God and her tireless commitment to the renewal of our order.”

Mother Elizabeth always wanted a convent in the United States, and almost 70 years ago, a Darien estate was given to the order by a family of Baptist missionaries, who wanted it to be used as a spiritual center.

Nestled along an inlet of the Long Island Sound, the convent’s guest house, Vikingsborg, sits on a 10-acre property. The house features a chapel for daily and Sunday Mass, a library, and meeting rooms with water views. It is a popular destination for private prayer and self-directed individual and group retreats, offering meals and overnight accommodations.

(For more information visit [www.bridgettines-usa.org](http://www.bridgettines-usa.org).)



BISHOP CAGGIANO, SISTER SABINA AND ROSE-MARIE FOX STAND at the chapel’s new window to honor St. Elizabeth Hesselblad.

where she worked as a nurse, caring for the poor and sick at Roosevelt Hospital.

She was impressed by the faith of the Irish Catholics who were her patients and became friends with two Catholic sisters, who took her to Europe. During a Corpus Christi procession in Brussels, as the Blessed Sacrament passed, she fell to her knees when she heard a voice say, “I am he whom thou seekest.”

This spiritual journey led to her conversion to Catholicism, and she eventually entered

onization by Pope Francis on June 5, Bishop Frank J. Caggiano celebrated Mass with the sisters at the Convent of St. Birgitta in Darien.

A stained-glass window honoring St. Elizabeth Hesselblad was unveiled in the chapel after Mass. The window was given by Rose-Marie Fox in memory of her late husband, William Stephen Shanahan, Jr.

“The new stained-glass window is a dream come true for the sisters at the convent,” said Sister M. Sabina. “Through Rose-Marie Fox’s generosity, we have a lasting testament to our foundress,

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A SAINT OF OUR TIME

## Celebrating the Anniversary of Padre Pio's Canonization



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After his death in 1968, those who knew him believed his holiness would one day be recognized by the Church. The canonization process began almost immediately and involved years of careful study of his life, writings, and mystical experiences. Padre Pio was first declared Venerable on December 18, 1997. He was beatified on May 2, 1999, after a miracle attributed to his intercession was confirmed. Just three years later, on June 16, 2002, following the confirmation of a second miracle, Pope John Paul II canonized Padre Pio, formally declaring him Saint Pio of Pietrelcina.

On the anniversary of his canonization, we give thanks for Padre Pio, who continues to intercede for us and offer healing, hope and renewed faith.

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He taught us that God is active in our daily lives and his words continue to guide us. Saint Pio of Pietrelcina, our modern-day saint, gave us these powerful words to live by:

*“Pray, hope and don't worry. Worry is useless.  
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