A Catholic women’s day of reflection titled “Catholic Women: Standing Strong for Today’s Church” will begin at 9 a.m. on Sept. 9 at St. John Vianney Church in West Haven. Kathy M. Irr, certified spiritual director and retreat leader, will be the guest speaker. The title of her talk is “The Double-edged Sword of Light and Darkness and Bearing Beams of Light.” Registration will open at 8 a.m. The program begins at 9. Mass will be celebrated at 7:30 a.m. The $35 fee includes continental breakfast and lunch. Seating is limited. Sept. 3 is the registration deadline. Information is available from Paula Daisey at 203.878.5416 or padaisey@gmail.com.

St. Stanislaus, B.M. Church in New Haven will hold its annual parish picnic/harvest festival, rain or shine, from 1 to 8 p.m. on Sept. 10 at the Polish National Alliance Park, 171 N. Plains Road, Wallingford. It is open to the public. Polish and American food will be available; special Polish and picnic dinners also will be sold. Music for dancing will be provided from 1 to 5 p.m. by the Grammy Award-nominated polka band Dennis Polisky and The Maestro’s Men from Colchester, followed by contemporary music played by a DJ. Children’s activities and games will be featured. Admission: $5; children under 18, free. Information is available from Annette at 203.777.3526 or St. Stanislaus rectory at 203.562.2828.

Catholic Charities’ 25th annual Archbishop John F Whealon Memorial Golf Tournament will be held at Wampanoag Country Club in West Hartford on Sept. 12. All proceeds will benefit children in need throughout the Archdiocese of Hartford. United Bank will be the Presenting Sponsor for this event. For information, contact Peter O’Donnell at 860.728.2571 or podonnell@ccaoh.org.

The Archdiocese of Hartford’s Office of Family Life will offer a free introductory session about natural family planning (NFP) from 10 a.m. to noon on Sept. 16 at St. Joseph Church, 149 Goodwin St., Bristol. NFP is an umbrella term for modern, healthy, scientifically accurate, natural and reliable methods of family planning. The introductory session is open to the public. Registration is required. Register by calling the Office of Family Life at 860.242.5573, ext. 2683, or sending an email to Martha.Pezo-Marin@AOHCT.org.

CORRECTION: PASSIONIST FATHER DAVID J. CINQUEGRANI IS MARKING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS RELIGIOUS PROFESSION THIS YEAR. HIS NAME WAS INCLUDED IN A LISTING OF PRIESTS (JULY/AUGUST) MARKING THE SILVER ANNIVERSARIES OF THEIR ORDAINMENT.
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Responding to God’s call

At the beginning of July, in Orlando, I was privileged to attend the National Convocation of Catholic Leaders organized by the bishops of the United States. I was accompanied by 25 members of our archdiocese whom I had invited to participate because of their present involvement in the life of our local Church.

The chief theme of the national convocation echoed the theme of our own archdiocesan pastoral plan; namely, as Pope Francis says, that every Catholic recognize that he or she, by baptism and confirmation, is a “missionary disciple” called to bear witness to Christ in daily life and to invite others into our shared communion as members of the Church.

With the help of dynamic speakers who have successfully promoted a way forward for the Church in our country, the convocation tackled some of the serious challenges to faith and practice that we face today. Of the many issues that were discussed, one in particular stands out: the crisis of vocations. In my remarks at the convocation, I put it this way: An “ecclesial springtime” at the beginning of the third millennium of Christianity.

I am happy to report that our archdiocesan Office of Vocations has developed a strategic plan for the next three years to create “a culture of vocations” among us. What is envisioned involves everyone at various levels: not only the engagement of the clergy, but also parents, teachers and youth ministers, parishes, schools and colleges. Prayer is essential, but so is a communal effort to encourage and invite our young people to hear and heed God’s call. The entire plan can be found on our website at www.hartfordpriest.com.

The special focus will be our need to address the shortage of priests. As the plan notes: “We have gone from 193 seminarians in 1965 to just 19 seminarians in 2017 — statistically, the largest decrease of all key indicators, including Mass attendance, marriages, baptisms and students in Catholic schools. The problem is particularly stark when one considers that in 10 years, the archdiocese will have only 104 active diocesan priests for approximately 130 parishes. Even with our new pastoral restructuring, this can rightly be described as a crisis in priestly vocations.”

Faith assures us that God has a providential and loving plan for everyone and everything, especially his Church. However much we may think that the Church’s problems are intractable, nothing is impossible with God. As a wise churchman once observed, “The possibilities of God begin precisely where human possibilities end.” As people who are firmly convinced of the action of the Holy Spirit, we can believe in a new springtime. We need not fear the future.

To the extent that all of us are “docile to the Holy Spirit,” we can expect a new springtime of vocational commitment, too. I say “all of us” because a vocation — whether to marriage, priesthood or religious consecration — takes root and grows through the support of family, friends, parishioners and the community. It is very sad that sometimes parents are not supportive when their children indicate an interest in a religious vocation. It is equally sad when we priests do not do all that we should to promote these vocations.

With regard to the priesthood, Pope St. John Paul the Great once wrote: “Let every believer become an educator of vocations, without fearing to propose radical choices; let every community understand the centrality of the Eucharist and the necessity for ministers of the Eucharistic sacrifice; let the whole People of God raise an ever more intense and impassioned prayer to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into His harvest.”

In the spirit of these words, I ask everyone in the archdiocese to do the following:

- Educate yourself about vocations and their discernment so that you will have good information to pass on to others as an effective advocate for vocations;
- Personally invite the young people in your life to pray and to seek out God’s plan for them. If you see someone you think would be a good priest or religious sister or brother, ask if he or she has considered it. You will be serving as God’s instrument, lending your voice to Christ; and
- Pray. Jesus told us: “Pray to the Master of the harvest. ... " (Mt 16) Join the St. John Vianney Vocation Prayer Society (www.hartfordpriest.com).

Priests and religious to serve our Church in the future must come from our parishes and families today. And the future health of our world depends in great measure on the health of marriage and family life. May the Lord hear our prayers and bless our efforts for a new vocational “springtime” at the beginning of the third millennium of Christianity.
Respondiendo a la llamada de Dios

A principios de julio, en Orlando, tuve el privilegio de asistir a la Convocatoria Nacional de Líderes Católicos organizada por los obispos de los Estados Unidos. Estuve acompañado por 25 miembros de nuestra arquidiócesis a quienes yo había invitado a participar debido a su participación en la vida de nuestra Iglesia local.

El tema principal de la convocatoria nacional hizo eco del tema de nuestro propio plan pastoral arquidiocesano; es decir, como dice el Papa Francisco, todo católico debe reconocer que, por el bautismo y la confirmación, es un “discípulo misionero” llamado a dar testimonio de Cristo en la vida cotidiana y a invitar a otros a nuestra comunidad compartida como miembros de la Iglesia.

Con la ayuda de oradores dinámicos que han promovido con éxito un camino para la Iglesia en nuestro país, la convocatoria abordó algunos de los graves desafíos a la fe y la práctica que enfrentamos hoy. De los muchos temas que se discutieron, uno en particular se destaca, y este es la crisis de vocaciones.


El enfoque especial será nuestra necesidad de abordar la escasez de sacerdotes. Como se señala en el plan: “Hemos pasado de 193 seminaristas en 1965 a sólo 19 seminaristas en 2017 — estadísticamente, el mayor descenso de todos los indicadores claves, incluyendo asistencia a la Misa, matrimonios, bautismos y estudiantes en escuelas católicas. El problema es particularmente agudo cuando se considera que, en 10 años, la arquidiócesis tendrá sólo 104 sacerdotes diocesanos activos para aproximadamente 130 pastores. Incluso con nuestra nueva reestructuración pastoral, esto se puede describir con razón como una crisis en las vocaciones sacerdotales”.

La fe nos asegura que Dios tiene un plan providencial y amoroso para todos y para todo, especialmente para su Iglesia. Por mucho que pensemos que los problemas de la Iglesia son muy difíciles, nada es imposible para Dios. Como observó un sabio clérigo, “las posibilidades de Dios comienzan precisamente donde terminan las posibilidades humanas”. Como personas que están firmemente convencidas de la acción del Espíritu Santo, podemos creer en una nueva primavera. No necesitamos temer el futuro.

En la medida en que todos somos “dóctores a Espíritu Santo”, también podemos esperar una nueva primavera de compromiso vocacional. Yo digo “todos nosotros” porque una vocación — ya sea el matrimonio, el sacerdocio o la consagración religiosa — se arraiga y crece a través del apoyo de la familia, los amigos, los feligreses y la comunidad. Es muy triste que a veces los padres no apoyen a sus hijos cuando estos demuestran interés en una vocación religiosa.

Es igualmente triste cuando los sacerdotes no hacemos todo lo que debemos para promover estas vocaciones.

En cuanto al sacerdocio, el Papa San Juan Pablo II escribió una vez: “Que todo creyente se convierta en un educador de las vocaciones, sin temer proponer elecciones radicales; que cada comunidad entienda la centralidad de la Eucaristía y la necesidad de los ministros del sacrificio eucarístico; que toda la gente de Dios haga una oración más intensa y apasionada al Señor de la cosecha”.

En el espíritu de estas palabras, pido a todos en la arquidiócesis que hagan lo siguiente:

• Edúquense respecto a las vocaciones y su discernimiento para que tengan buena información y la transmitan a otros como defensores eficaces de las vocaciones;
• Inviten personalmente a los jóvenes en su vida a orar y a buscar el plan de Dios para ellos. Si ven a alguien que piensan que sería un buen sacerdote o hermana o hermano religioso, pregúntenle si él o ella lo han considerado. Así servirán como instrumento de Dios, dando su voz a Cristo;
• Oren. Jesús nos dijo: “Oren al Maestro de la cosecha...” (Mt. 16) Únase a la Sociedad de Oración Vocacional de San Juan Vianney (www.hartfordpriest.com).

Los sacerdotes y religiosas que sirven a nuestra Iglesia en el futuro deben venir de nuestras parroquias y familias hoy. Y la salud futura de nuestro mundo depende en gran medida de la salud del matrimonio y de la vida familiar. Que el Señor escuche nuestras oraciones y bendiga nuestros esfuerzos por una nueva “primavera” vocacional a principios del tercer milenio del cristianismo.
In December 1938, 29-year-old British stockbroker Nicholas Winton visited Prague to assist in Jewish refugee camps. Winton was shocked at the atrocious conditions, especially for children, who were facing almost certain death by the Nazis.

In order to get these children to safety, Winton established a small operation in Prague. He contacted European and American governments, asking them to take in children. Only Sweden and Great Britain agreed.

The British Parliament required that each child entering the country have a foster home, an entry visa and 50 pounds for return transport. Winton pleaded with the British Home Office to expedite the visas because Hitler was preparing for massive invasions and children’s lives were at stake. But the bureaucrats plodded slowly, unconcerned about Nazi incursions abroad. Exasperated, Winton had his organization forge the visas.

Transporting children to safety was an intricate operation involving
multiple trains, dangerous contacts with Gestapo agents, an English Channel crossing and a great deal of money for bribes. Winton advertised in newspapers, synagogues and churches to find foster homes and raise money. When he did not receive sufficient donations, he made up the difference himself.

As conditions for Czechoslovakian Jews worsened, frantic parents began visiting Winton. The devastating reality was that their children were slated for Nazi death camps; entrusting them to Winton was their only hope.

On March 14, 1939, the first transport of children left Prague. Bribes to Nazi officials made possible the dangerous passage through Germany. They crossed the North Sea by boat, then British trains carried them to the Liverpool Street Station in London, where foster parents waited. Winton met the transport in order to match the exhausted children with their guardians.

Seven more transports carried children to safety between March and August 1939.

On Sept. 1, 1939, 250 children boarded what was to be the largest transport from Prague. But that day, Hitler invaded Poland and closed all borders. “Within hours of the announcement, the train disappeared,” Winton later recalled. “None of the 250 children aboard was ever seen again.” All are believed to have died in extermination camps.

Nicholas Winton’s rescue operation had come to an end. He had saved 669 children.

After the war, a few children reunited with family members, but nearly all parents had died in the Holocaust without seeing their children again.

Winton said later that he was haunted by the image of hundreds of children at the Prague station awaiting the failed mission. He believed that 2,000 additional children could have been saved if more countries had helped.

Among those saved were Dagmar Simová, cousin of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; Alfred, Lord Dubs, member of the British Parliament; Joe Schlesinger, a Canadian broadcast journalist; and Renata Laxová, a geneticist who discovered the congenital abnormality Neu-Laxová Syndrome.

In later years, Winton wore a ring given to him by some of the children he saved. It was inscribed with a line from the Jewish Talmud: “Save one life, save the world.”

Knighted for his humanitarianism, by the time Sir Nicholas Winton died in 2015 at the age of 106, “Winton’s Children” had had children, and those children had had children. More than 6,000 people are alive today because of his operation.

Winton never understood why he was famous.
In St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, he explains how the Spirit of God can transform us. “You are not in the flesh,” he writes, “on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.”

In many of Paul’s other epistles, he discusses the difference between living by the Spirit and living by the flesh. For example, in his letter to the Colossians, he writes: “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust ... greed ... anger ... slander, and filthy language from your lips.” (Uh, oh. I hope Paul didn’t hear me recently when the Red Sox blew a lead late in the game.)

Paul’s list of no-no’s seems downright impossible to avoid, especially nowadays, when our secular culture encourages that behavior. Many of us are convinced it’s so difficult to avoid sin, we really don’t try very hard.

But here’s something most people don’t realize: Living a life of sin requires much more effort than living a life of virtue. I once read about a young woman in New York City who was into the wild nightlife scene. Each evening she would find herself involved in drinking, drugs and casual sexual encounters. It was wearing her out, both physically and mentally.

Finally, she sought help from a therapist, who said to her, “You know, you don’t have to keep doing that stuff.” The young woman was stunned. “You mean I don’t have to do what I WANT to do?” she asked. It was a surprising revelation and a major relief for her.

Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest ... For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.” When Jesus calls us to follow him and live a life of virtue, he doesn’t call us to DO a lot of painful, difficult, churchy-type things. He simply calls us to break free from our slavery to sin.

Throughout history, no one has ever equated being a slave with a life of luxury and leisure. Slaves are routinely worked to death at an early age. Well, it’s the same with being a slave to sin. The workload is enormous and the cost is high — both physically and mentally — and the result also is an early death.

In addition to the obvious, here-and-now price to be paid for being a slave to sin, there is a far costlier there-and-then spiritual price: eternal damnation. As a wise man once said, “No matter how many years you live, you’re gonna be dead a whole lot longer.”

If, as Jesus taught, our souls are eternal and live on forever after our bodies have died, then there is nothing more important than making sure our souls end up in heaven rather than hell. This is the primary function of the Church: to make saints and get as many souls as possible into heaven.

It’s important that our local parishes are in the business of making saints. We need to help and encourage each other to break free from the slavery of sin, and we need to spread the joyful news that God’s Spirit can dwell in us and transform our lives. Paul said this is what we must do, and Jesus said it’s easy and not a burden.

So, let’s fill our parishes with hope and joy, and let people know that it’s not a burden to become a saint. (As long as a certain someone stops swearing at the TV during Red Sox games.)

BILL DUNN is a recovering atheist who resides in Torrington. He loves Jesus, his wife and kids and the Red Sox (usually in that order). He can be reached at MerryCatholic@gmail.com.
The other day, I must have been trying to break my personal record because, in no particular order, I complained about a co-worker who was always missing deadlines (my blood pressure rises just thinking about it), an associate who is constantly promoting himself at the expense of others (they seem to populate the workplace) and an incalculable number of irritating politicians and self-obsessed celebrities that I read about in the gossip column of the *New York Post* (I thought I was justified).

But that night, when I did my daily examination of conscience and tried to look at myself honestly, instead of feeling self-righteous, I hung my head in shame.

For years, I've considered myself eminently qualified to judge my co-workers, my friends, my wife, my kids, my pets, people in the news, the White House and Hollywood — it's a long list. Then, I'm humbled when I remember Pope Francis' words, "Who am I to judge?" Not to mention my mother's advice, quoting Thumper in the movie *Bambi*: "If you can't say something nice, don't say nothing at all.

It's not that I consider myself better than, say, the Kardashians — I'm certainly not as rich or good-looking — but their decadent lifestyles seem to invite criticism. Regardless of the judgment I think they deserve, Jesus thinks differently, I'm sure. I'm judging, I'm criticizing, I'm condemning. And he's supposed to do the judging, not us. Or as he said, we should focus less on the speck in our neighbor's eye and more on the piece of timber in our own.

I always cringe when I hear the Gospel that says: "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven ... "

I've heard it a thousand times, but forget its importance when I return to daily life and think, "What fun is there if a guy, or gal, can't gossip and criticize other people?" They didn't have water coolers in Jesus' time, so the temptation to backbite may not have been as great.

My father once shared some practical wisdom with me that he acquired after 25 years in Alcoholics Anonymous. Whenever you're tempted to take someone else's inventory, you should immediately stop and pray for the person — and take your own inventory instead. That seemed like a lot to ask, especially since some people don't deserve prayer as much as a kick in the pants.

He also told me to ask Jesus for the grace to see myself as he sees me, warts and all, which can be a truly sobering experience. The crazy thing is that sometimes we condemn people for the same flaws we have and don't even realize it. As they say in AA, "You can't see the picture if you're in the frame."

That night, my prayer was for the Holy Spirit to let me know when I'm judging someone and send me the grace to stop. I also asked to see the people I'm judging as Jesus sees them so I can focus on the good and not the bad.

Every day, we meet repugnant people we'd love to avoid by walking across the street or leaving the room. They can be self-centered, nasty, greedy and dishonest, and yet Jesus puts them in our path for a reason. Perhaps to pray for them.

In addition, we never know what the other person might be going through, what hurt and humiliation he may be carrying around inside, what illness she may be suffering or what loss and emotional pain he or she lives with.

The only way to let Christ's love flow into the world is to ask Christ to let us see others as he sees them, especially those who are difficult to love. Stop and say a prayer. He'll answer it and fill you with his love for even the most annoying people. It's something I'm working on. I've also decided to take another step in the right direction and bring bottled water to work so I can stay away from the water cooler. ✝️
Come home, MILLENNIALS
Catholicism is under siege. What concerns me most is that the assault is not by the forces of radical or extremist religious groups, but by the effects of our secular society on my contemporaries, the millennial generation in America.

According to a 2015 Pew Research Study, the “nones,” or those American adults professing no faith affiliation, constitute 23 percent of the population. The growth of the “nones” has put them ahead of the number of professed (if not practicing) Catholics in America, which constitutes 21 percent. Pew’s previous study, in 2008, put the “nones” at 16 percent of the adult population and Catholics at 24 percent. The most troubling figures of these surveys show that, among younger millennials (birth years 1990-1996, ages 21-27), just 56 percent call themselves Christians, even though 80 percent were raised in religious homes.

Most researchers and demographers define millennials as those born from 1980 to the mid-1990s. This generation has also been called the “echo boomers,” in reference to their being the children of boomers.

As mid-generation millennials, born in the 1980s, my wife and I are building a family of our own. Our son Daniel was born in 2014, and we welcomed a healthy daughter on Father’s Day, June 18. Having spent the time and effort over a number of years developing and deepening our own Catholic spirituality, it is important to us to have godparents for her who are part of our faith community of practicing Catholics. Despite the fact that my wife has two sisters and I have two brothers and a sister, we struggled to find godparents who fit the bill.

All of our siblings left the faith long ago. We extended the search for godparents to our college friends, my law school classmates and people in our hometown, and still we have struggled. This led us to a greater conversation about what it means to be millennial and a practicing Catholic in America. Where has our family gone? Where have our friends gone? Why have they left the Church we were all raised in together? What could bring them back?

I believe that the culprits laying siege to Catholic millennials are modern spiritualism and a simplistic, fundamentalist view of Christianity. To use a phrase from Bishop Robert Barron of Los Angeles, I believe that the catechesis of the 1980s and 1990s in America was “beige Catholicism.” It was storybook simplistic, unassuming and wholly inoffensive. It was Catholicism, but often missed the vibrancy, beauty and earth-shaking implications of the faith.

As a result of the beige Catholicism we millennials were taught, many of us have not been exposed to the rich intellectualism of our tradition. It was only as an adult that I was exposed to some of the works of the foundational Christian authors and thinkers, like St. Thomas Aquinas’ Summa Theologica or St. Teresa of Ávila’s Interior Castle. It was many years after being confirmed that I heard of G.K. Chesterton or Thomas Merton, or understood the Christian themes in the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien or C.S. Lewis.

It was also only as an adult that I recognized that Catholicism does not require us to abandon our critical thinking skills or ignore modern scientific developments. Quite the opposite is true, in fact. Jesus Christ and his Church are the lens through which the intelligible world is given meaning, the prism through which the natural world makes sense. Our ability to examine critically the world around us, what we know, and what we do not, is the foundation of our faith.

Moreover, while millennials of our secular society are outgoing in their support of a political candidate or a secular social cause, they shy away from public displays or acknowledgements of faith or connection to a faith-based community. They believe that equality and respect for other worldviews require a public indifference or denial of belonging to the Catholic Church.

We finally found godparents for our daughter, even with the hope that the important role that they are expected to play in her membership in our faith community will bring them, as godparents, into a deeper relationship with Christ. I will continue my (sometimes feeble) attempts to live my own faith in my communities, at home, in my law practice and among my friends and neighbors. I will also heartily pray and hope that the grace of God finds the nones among us and sets them on the path of reconciliation with Christ’s holy Church, which is calling to them: “Come home, millennials.”

CODY GUARNIERI
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**Q&A WITH FATHER JOE**

**How can I invite my family and friends back to church?**

**Dear Father Joe:** I’d like to invite my “lost sheep” family members back into the crèche. How can I invite them back to the Church at the holidays and moving forward?

**A**

What a great question — it can be such a difficult thing to invite someone into practicing the faith without coming across as self-righteous or as somehow a bit “off.” A big part of the process of bringing someone back is to start with the recognition of a couple of points.

First, remember that what you are desiring is holy; it’s good. Sometimes, what we desire isn’t so good, isn’t so holy. You have in your heart a hunger to bring someone back into a communal practice of the faith and that is a blessing. You desire something good.

With that idea, I ask you to read this passage from Philippians 1:6: “He who started a good work in you will see it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus.” This good thing you desire? It came from God. He placed it in your heart and you can be confident that, however he uses you in this effort to bring someone back, he will be the one to see it to completion.

So, the last preparatory step in bringing someone back is to ask God to bless your efforts. Remember the words of the Book of Psalms, Chapter 127:1 “Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.” Your effort is inspired by God; now you are making sure it is strengthened and guided by him as well.

With this solid foundation of faith and prayer, you are ready to begin. To be clear, I’m going to offer you a few different ways to go about this: it doesn’t...
mean you have to follow it in this way — let God lead you. You may find that you mix and match these ideas or go in a totally different direction. Trust that you can follow his prompts well.

One good way to go about it is to be a bit more covert, frankly. If Mass is at 4:30, invite your friends to “Come to Mass and dinner with us.” It’s a bit less threatening to people if you make your invitation a social one. “Mass and dinner” can be a nice way to ease into the topic. This will serve as an invitation for them and a great blessing for you, as well. When they come to your house, make sure to pray before the meal. Make sure that your conversation is joyful and life-giving and that they walk away having had a lovely time.

Also, you can consider if they have hobbies or things that are a consistent part of their life that you can be a part of. Scriptures tell us that, when Jesus first met St. Peter, he got into Peter’s boat. It was only after he had been in Peter’s boat for a bit that he initiated a conversation/relationship with him. In the same way, you can “get into your friends’ boat.” Enter into their lives and bring the light and life of Christ with you. Go to their kids’ games, head off to bowl with them or whatever it is they enjoy doing.

A lot of people in our culture are “doers.” As a general rule, people like to help. Is there a project at the church where people are asking for help? Maybe some table set ups or some church cleaning? Volunteer for it and ask your friend to help. Bring them in to see you and others volunteering. Prepare any of the volunteers who are there for the fact that there will be new people coming and that you want to make sure they are welcomed and loved in that volunteering.

Hopefully, at some point, they will begin a conversation about why you go to church or why you are connecting with them. This is your moment!

Before you speak, pray and ask God to lead you in your words. I like to tell people in this moment, “Share your why.” This is the time to share why you go to church, why it is important to you and how it has made your life better. Don’t worry about defending the Catholic faith. Don’t tell them how they are wrong or their church is wrong — share how Christ is present at the Mass!

I find it helpful if you practice what you are going to say. You are going to share your heart in this conversation and, if you are like me, it’s easy to get emotional or overly passionate. I know it sounds funny, but practice what you are going to say. Keep it simple, clear and personal.

These are just some ideas. The key is to get them there and let Christ do the work. Show them through your words and example how faith in Jesus has made your life better, has made you a better person.

A final point: Do not worry about results. Do not focus on whether your efforts are successful — focus on being faithful. I often remind myself of the fact that Jesus gave us a parable where he spoke about the kingdom of heaven as a sower sowing seeds. In the end, the sower was “successful” only about one in four times. Your goal is to let Christ use you to plant a seed in their hearts. Maybe you will see it grow, maybe someone else will.

May God bless our efforts to lead people to his glorious kingdom! Enjoy another day in God’s presence.
Who’s job is it to teach youngsters about the faith?

Q: Whose responsibility is it really to teach our youngsters the Catholic faith?

A: In a few short weeks, many parish religious education programs will get under way in earnest. Like our school teachers who have to deal with the dreaded “summer slump” in the first few weeks when students return to school full time, our volunteer catechists need to pick up where they left off with faith formation programs and sacramental preparation. We “drill” our kids in the Ten Commandments, in the mystery of the Trinity, in the Mass, in the essential prayers of the Catholic faith — the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be, especially — and so much more. We pray that the foundation we’re giving them will be just that: the bedrock on
which their faith will grow and mature just as they grow and mature.

All the work that directors of religious education and catechists (not to mention priests and parents!) do in religious education leads us to ask: Whose responsibility is it really to teach our youngsters the Catholic faith? Many have lamented the fact that there have been at least two, maybe even three, generations of Catholics who have not learned the faith and so have not passed it along adequately to their children, who have stopped practicing, stopped attending Mass regularly or stopped receiving the Lord’s mercy and forgiveness of sins in confession.

Rather than look at what’s gone wrong, let’s look at what lies ahead and at what we can do together to correct or improve the situation. The Catholic Church is clear when it comes to who should take the lead in forming young people in the faith.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it this way: “Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children” (2223) and “Parents should initiate their children at an early age into the mysteries of faith of which they are the ‘first heralds’ for the children. They should associate them from their tenderest years with the life of the Church” (2225). Yes, that can mean enrolling them in religious education when they are first-graders, but it really means bringing young children to Mass from the get-go, making the sign of the cross on them with holy water until they are old enough to do so themselves and much more. Formal education in a classroom is one thing; living the faith at home with prayer time, simple instruction and, above all, Sunday Mass attendance are what parents must not neglect.

But the catechism adds this: “The parish is the eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents” (2226). Note that well: “children and parents.” Parents should review their children’s religious education lessons with them weekly; it’s good for the kids and a refresher for adults as well.

In one respect, by linking religious education with the parish, the Church is keeping things local when possible — making decisions and taking care of problems at the smallest level possible. So, yes, families have as their first responsibility to teach their children the faith. But, they need to turn to, lend their support to and call upon the parish to help them in this task — not criticize and complain about schedules interfering with soccer or dance or you-name-it. Yes, these are important, but we pray our kids will be lifelong Catholics; very few of them will be all-star, lifelong soccer standouts or prima ballerinas.

Pope Francis has said time and again that pastoral work, such as a parish religious education program, must inspire and prepare the faithful to go forth and evangelize. It’s not enough to memorize names and dates and places, though these are important in their own right. In his apostolic exhortation The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis reminded us that our parishes should be places of “living communion” between the faithful of all ages and centers of “constant missionary outreach” where all members are encouraged and trained to be evangelizers (28).

So as we prepare to launch another year of parish religious education programs, let’s keep two sets of words in mind: “parents and parish” and “educate to evangelize.” Whose responsibility is it to teach our youth the faith? As Jesus instructed his disciples, “Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” (Mk 10:14)"
Peña-Llorens would be the first to say it’s a conversation that never would have occurred a year ago. However, over the summer she and many other Hispanic/Latino Catholics in the Archdiocese of Hartford went forth as “missionary disciples” to the peripheries of the Church and of society, bringing the Gospel message to others in the Hispanic/Latino communities.

The missionaries fanned out through their local communities, approaching friends with substance abuse issues, work colleagues who had experienced a death in the family, employees at the local car wash and hair salon, parishioners who were new to their church and those who attended Mass sporadically.

Armed with a cheat sheet of thought-provoking questions to guide them, the missionaries asked other Hispanics/Latinos about their faith, their worries, their hopes and their dreams.

According to early reports from the field, some missionaries were greeted with tears, with surprise that anyone cared about the aspirations of those on the peripheries and with an outpouring of gratitude for God and for the Church.

“It was different from what we thought it was going to be,” said Griselle Cirio, a member of Christ the Bread of Life Parish in Hamden. “We were not selling our church. We were just showing God’s love for people.”

Cirio said she was equally amazed by how deep the casual conversations grew, by the aspirations people shared, by the faith they revealed and by the soul-to-soul connections made.

“What I’m learning,” she said in June, halfway through the evangelization activities, “is that people want to be heard. They have a lot of people around them, but now here’s someone who will really listen.”

Archdiocesan encuentro slated for September

All of this grassroots missionary effort and fact-finding has been preparation for the upcoming archdiocesan “encuentro,” or “encounter,” to be held on Sept. 16 at the Archdiocesan Center at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield.

The archdiocesan encuentro will draw Hispanic/Latino Catholics from more than 20 established Hispanic/Latino communities in parishes throughout the archdiocese.

The full-day event will be an...
opportunity to reflect on the realities of the larger Hispanic/Latino community, propose practical responses to their needs and aspirations, and commit to the New Evangelization.

The archdiocesan encuentro is part of the “V Encuentro,” or “Fifth Encounter,” a national initiative called by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in which the Catholic Church gathers with Hispanic/Latino Catholics, the fastest-growing Catholic community in the United States.

The bishops’ goal is to get to know and better serve the Hispanic Catholic community and, at the same time, to increase Hispanics’ sense of belonging and participation in the U.S. Church.

“The primary purpose,” explained Archbishop Leonard P. Blair, “is to bring Catholics together, especially our Hispanic/Latino members, to be inspired by the Holy Spirit for greater fidelity and enthusiasm in living the Catholic faith and bearing witness to Christ in today’s world.”

The V Encuentro is a four-year, fourfold task of intense missionary activity, consultation, leadership development and identification of best ministerial practices. The process starts at the parish level and works its way up to the national level, all carried out in the spirit of the New Evangelization. (For national objectives, see sidebar.)

Thousands of parishes across the country are participating in the missionary activities, which began at the grassroots level earlier this year.

Archbishop Blair said the V Encuentro process is very timely for the archdiocese since it is occurring in conjunction with the implementation of the archdiocese’s pastoral plan.

“Our goal of ensuring a vibrant and sustainable future is not ultimately about buildings, personnel or finances, but about rekindling the gift of the Holy Spirit for the sake of ‘missionary discipleship,’ to use the phrase of Pope Francis,” Archbishop Blair said.

“This starts at the parish level,” he added, “when individuals commit themselves to work and pray together for a way forward amid today’s challenges to faith and practice.”

“IT’S IMPORTANT TO BRING THE HEART OF GOD INTO THE PROCESS.”
—ARTURO IRIARTE
Core team trains parish facilitators

To get started here at home, the Archdiocese of Hartford created a committee to oversee and facilitate the V Encuentro process within the archdiocese.

Core team members include: Father Carlos Castrillon and Father Mauricio Galvis; Ana Maria Alstrum, director of Hispanic catechesis; Miriam Hidalgo, director of youth and young adult ministry; Arturo Iriarte, a coordinator in the Office for Catholic Social Justice Ministry; Martha Pezo-Marin, Hispanic family ministry coordinator in the Office of Family Life; Clariaga Peña-Llorens, administrative assistant in the Office of Family Life; Sister Clare Millea, director of the Office of Faith and Culture; and Sister Mary Grace Walsh, Ph.D., provost of the Office of Education, Evangelization and Catechesis.

Sister Mary Grace cited the cross-agency approach as a highlight of the initiative. “The collaboration between the priests and employees across the archdiocesan offices has provided a great deal of energy during the encuentro process,” she said.

“These individuals have been working diligently and accompanying the parish leaders during the weeks of formation and outreach and in the planning for the parish and archdiocesan encuentro gatherings,” she said during the summer.

Back in February, the core team members trained parish coordinators and others in how to organize parish-level evangelization and reflection activities. They also provided leader’s guides and mission and consultation journals, and later traveled to support the parish teams through five weeks of sessions.

Missionary disciples ask deep questions and consult

The theme of the V Encuentro at every level is “Missionary Disciples: Witnesses of God’s Love.”

In parishes, both lay ministers and parishioners responded to the call for “missionary disciples.” Groups of seven to 10 people met for five sessions. They received a crash course in how to listen attentively without judgment, genuinely befriend others as Jesus did, reach out to people on the peripheries of the Church and in society, and invite newcomers into the parish community and to a parish encuentro.

Using guidebooks, they initiated casual conversations and asked soul-stirring questions, such as:

• What obstacles prevent you from achieving your hopes and dreams?
• Do you consider yourself Catholic?
• How has God accompanied you during challenging times in your life?
• What can the Catholic Church do to welcome you and accompany you in your life?

When they got home, they recorded the responses on forms as part of a nationwide collection of data on the Hispanic/Latino community. They were also asked to reflect on what they learned about their local community and were encouraged to make written recommendations to the Church on how to better serve the people they encountered.

All of the data was compiled by the archdiocesan core team and submitted to the USCCB. The recommendations were also included in parish working documents and will be combined into an archdiocesan working document.

Core team members reflect

In addition to serving on the archdiocesan core team, Peña-Llorens is coordinator of the V Encuentro process at her own parish, St. Augustine in Hartford. There, she and Eduardo Torres jointly facilitated meetings with members of a Community of John XXIII group who volunteered to be missionary disciples. She became a believer in the process as soon as she saw the guidebooks and mission journals.

“I said, ‘Wow, this is what we need to prepare ourselves to go outside to bring in the people who are not here and to be more welcoming,’” she said.

Peña-Llorens advised the missionary disciples to get to know people first and to develop a true, caring connection, providing them with whatever they need, whether it’s food, clothing or spiritual support. “The point is to actually encounter them, and through that friendship bring them to Jesus,” she explained.

Peña-Llorens thinks the process is also a great way for longtime parishioners to get to know people who are new to the parish as well as those in the surrounding neighborhood. Greater local knowledge, she said, can lead to regional solutions that can then be passed on to Church administrators.

“Maybe the Hispanic community in Hartford has needs that differ...
from New Haven, Waterbury or Enfield,” she said.

Arturo Iriarte, originally from Chile, also serves on the archdiocesan core team. He said, “It’s been a very exciting and inspirational experience for me.”

Iriarte said he witnessed a transformation in all of the parishes he supported over the summer, especially among the missionary disciples themselves.

“It’s a beautiful thing. The ones who are reaching out are receiving the whole thing,” he said. They returned with new insights about others and about themselves, he explained. They reflected, recorded the information and made recommendations.

“It’s beautiful, but it requires a lot of preparation, reading and understanding,” he said. “It’s important to bring the heart of God into the process.”

All in all, he thought the parish-level evangelization and consultation portions of the V Encuentro process were inspired.

“This is a great opportunity for the Church,” he said.

Missionary disciples reflect

The missionary disciples themselves had unique perspectives on the evangelization component of the V Encuentro.

Edilberto Ortiz, 24, a missionary disciple of Guatemalan heritage who attends St. Augustine, said he appreciated the evangelization training, even though he had previous experience inviting other young Hispanics to the Catholic faith.

“I see it as an opportunity to develop ways to evangelize better, especially with young people,” he said.

Ana Torres, who was born in Puerto Rico and belongs to Christ the Bread of Life in Hamden, explained why she wanted to be a missionary disciple. “God made me stronger,” she said, “and I want to bring that to other people.”

As a Catholic and a social worker, Torres applauded the Catholic Church for its outreach effort to Hispanics. “This is one of the best things the Church could think of because it’s needed,” she said. “Many don’t have anyone to listen and to tell them there is hope. God is the only one who has the last word.”

Clarigsa Peña-Llorens is a member of the archdiocesan committee for the V Encuentro and a facilitator at St. Augustine Parish in Hartford.
HISPANOS/LATINOS CATÓLICOS COMPARTEN EXPERIENCIA DE BASE EN EL ENCUENTRO ARQUIDIOCESANO

Un día sábado por la mañana, Clarigsa Peña-Llorens charló con una mujer mientras ambas estaban en línea en el Departamento de Vehículos de Motor, en Wethersfield. Cuando Clarigsa se enteró que la mujer tenía una hija que no había recibido el sacramento de la confirmación, le contó sobre la clase de confirmación para adultos en la parroquia de San Agustín en Hartford y compartió su información para estar en contacto.

“Ya no tengo miedo de hablar de mi religión”, dijo Peña-Llorens. “No deberíamos de tener miedo, si lo hacemos respetuosamente.”

Peña-Llorens sería la primera en decir que esa conversación nunca hubiese ocurrido el año pasado. Sin embargo, durante el verano ella y muchos otros Hispanos/Latinos católicos en la Arquidiócesis de Hartford salieron como “discípulos misioneros” a las periferias de la Iglesia y de la sociedad, trayendo el mensaje del Evangelio a otras en las comunidades Hispanas/Latinas.

Los discípulos misioneros se distribuyeron en sus comunidades locales, se acercaron a amigos con problemas de abuso de substancias, compañeros de trabajo que habían sufrido una muerte en la familia, empleados en el lavado de autos y peluquería local, feligreses que eran nuevos en su iglesia y aquellos que asistían a la misa esporádicamente. Para guiarlos, los discípulos misioneros salieron provistos con una hojita de preguntas que te hacen pensar y, preguntaron a otros Hispanos/Latinos sobre su fe, sus preocupaciones, sus esperanzas y sus sueños.

Según los primeros informes de campo, algunos discípulos misioneros fueron recibidos con lágrimas de personas sorprendidas de que alguien se preocupara por sus aspiraciones, y estaban sumamente agradecidos a Dios y a la Iglesia.

“Era diferente de lo que pensábamos que iba a ser”, dijo Griselle Cirio, miembro de la parroquia Cristo Pan de Vida en Hamden. “No estábamos vendiendo nuestra iglesia. Sólo estábamos mostrando el amor de Dios por su gente”.

Cirio dijo que estaba igualmente sorprendida por la profundidad de las conversaciones, por las aspiraciones que compartían las personas, por la fe que revelaban y por las conexiones de alma a alma. “Lo que estoy aprendiendo”, dijo en junio, a medio camino de las actividades de evangelización, “es que la gente quiere ser escuchada. Tienen mucha gente a su alrededor, pero ahora aquí hay alguien que realmente los escuchará”.

El Encuentro Arquidiocesano está previsto para Septiembre

Todo este esfuerzo misionero y la búsqueda de información ha sido en preparación para la gran celebración del Encuentro Arquidiocesano que se realizará el 16 de septiembre en el Centro Arquidiocesano del Seminario St. Thomas en Bloomfield.

El Encuentro Arquidiocesano reunirá Hispanos/Latinos católicos de más de 20 parroquias con comunidades Hispanas/Latinas establecidas en la arquidiócesis.

El evento será una oportunidad para reflexionar sobre las realidades de la gran comunidad hispana/latina, ofrecer respuestas prácticas a sus necesidades y aspiraciones y comprometerse a la Nueva Evangelización.

El Encuentro Arquidiocesano
forma parte del proceso del V Encuentro, una iniciativa nacional convocada por la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos (USCCB) que reúne a la Iglesia católica y a los Hispanos/Latinos católicos, quienes son la población católica de más rápido crecimiento en los Estados Unidos.

El objetivo de los obispos es conocer y servir mejor a la comunidad católica hispana y, al mismo tiempo, aumentar el sentido de pertenencia y participación de los hispanos en la Iglesia de los Estados Unidos.

“El propósito primordial”, dijo el Arzobispo Leonard P. Blair, “es reunir a los católicos, especialmente a los Hispanos/Latinos, para que sean inspirados por el Espíritu Santo para vivir con mayor fidelidad y entusiasmo su fe católica y dar testimonio de Cristo en el mundo de hoy.”

El proceso del V Encuentro es un trabajo de cuatro años y cuatro etapas de intensa actividad misionera, consulta, desarrollo de liderazgo e identificación de las mejores prácticas ministeriales. El proceso comienza en el nivel parroquial y llega hasta el nivel nacional, todo en el espíritu de la Nueva Evangelización. (Para los objetivos nacionales, vea la barra lateral.)

Miles de parroquias de todo el país están participando en las actividades misioneras, que comenzaron en las bases a principios de este año.

El Arzobispo Blair dijo que el proceso del V Encuentro es muy oportuno para la arquidiócesis, ya que está ocurriendo en conjunto con la implementación del plan pastoral de la arquidiócesis.

“Nuestra meta es asegurar un futuro vibrante y sostenible, no está basada, en última instancia, en edificios, personal o finanzas, sino en reavivar el don del Espíritu Santo por el ‘discipulado misionero’, usando la frase del Papa Francisco,” dijo el Arzobispo Blair.

Y agregó: “Esto comienza en el nivel parroquial, cuando los individuos se comprometen a trabajar y orar juntos, para seguir adelante en medio de los desafíos de hoy en contra de la fe y de su práctica”.

*MUCHOS NO TIENEN A NADIE QUE LES ESCUCHE Y LES Digan que hay esperanza. DIOS ES EL ÚNICO QUE TIENE LA ÚLTIMA PALABRA*. —ANA TORRES
El comité central entrena a los facilitadores parroquiales

Para empezar, aquí en la Arquidiócesis de Hartford se creó un comité para supervisar y facilitar el proceso del V Encuentro dentro de la arquidiócesis.

Los miembros del equipo central son: el Padre Carlos Castrillon y el Padre Mauricio Galvis; Ana María Alstrum, Directora Arquidiocesana de la Catequesis Hispana; Miriam Hidalgo, Directora Arquidiocesana de la Pastoral Juvenil; Arturo Iriarte, Coordinador Arquidiocesano de la Oficina de Justicia Social Católica; Martha Pezo-Marín, Coordinadora Arquidiocesana del Ministerio Familiar Hispano, y la asistente administrativa Clarigsa Peña-Llorens, ambas de la Oficina de Vida Familiar; Sor Clare Millea, Directora Arquidiocesana de Fe y Cultura; y Sor Mary Grace Walsh, Directora de la Oficina de Educación, Evangelización y Catequesis.

La hermana Mary Grace citó el enfoque interinstitucional como un punto destacado de la iniciativa. Dijo lo siguiente: “La colaboración entre los sacerdotes y los empleados de las oficinas de la Arquidiócesis ha proporcionado mucha energía durante el proceso del Encuentro”. Y agregó: “Estas personas han estado trabajando diligentemente, acompañando a los líderes de las parroquias durante las semanas de formación, trabajo misionero y en la planificación de los encuentros parroquiales y del encuentro arquidiocesano”.

En febrero, los miembros del equipo central capacitaron a coordinadores parroquiales y otros en cómo organizar actividades de evangelización y reflexión a nivel parroquial. También proporcionaron guías de líderes y diarios de misión y consulta, y más tarde viajaron para apoyar a los equipos parroquiales durante cinco semanas de sesiones.

Los discípulos misioneros hacen preguntas profundas durante las consultas

El tema del V Encuentro es “Discípulos Misioneros: Testigos del Amor de Dios”. En las parroquias, tanto los ministros laicos como los parroquianos respondieron a la llamada del “discipulado misionero”. Grupos de siete a diez personas se reunieron durante cinco sesiones. Ellos recibieron un curso intensivo de cómo escuchar atentamente sin juzgar, cómo establecer una amistad sincera con otros como lo hizo Jesús, y cómo llegar a las personas en las periferias de la Iglesia, de la sociedad para invitar a los recién llegados a la comunidad parroquial y al encuentro parroquial.

Utilizando sus guías, iniciaron conversaciones casuales y formularon preguntas conmovedoras, tales como:

• ¿Qué obstáculos le impiden alcanzar sus esperanzas y sueños?
• ¿Te consideras católico?
• ¿Cómo te ha acompañado Dios durante los tiempos difíciles de tu vida?
• ¿Qué puede hacer la Iglesia Católica para recibirlo y acompañarlo en su vida?

Al regresar a sus hogares, registraron las respuestas en los formularios como parte de una recolección nacional de información sobre la comunidad Hispana/Latina. También se les pidió reflexionar sobre lo que aprendieron acerca de su comunidad local y se les animó a hacer recomendaciones escritas para la Iglesia de cómo servir mejor a las personas con las que se encontraron.

Toda la información fue recopilada por el comité de la arquidiócesis y será presentada a la USCCB. Las recomendaciones también se incluyeron en los documentos de trabajo parroquial y serán combinados en un documento de trabajo arquidiocesano.

Los miembros del comité central reflexionan

Además de servir en el equipo central de la arquidiócesis, Peña-

“LO VEO COMO UNA OPORTUNIDAD PARA DESARROLLAR MANERAS DE EVANGELIZAR MEJOR, ESPECIALMENTE CON LOS JÓVENES.” — EDILBERTO ORTIZ

Clarigsa Peña Llorens y Eduardo Torres facilitan la sesión 2 de los cinco sesiones de reflexión y de evangelización en la Parroquia de San Agustín, en la ciudad de Hartford.
Llorens es coordinadora del proceso del V Encuentro en su parroquia, St. Agustín en Hartford, donde ella y Eduardo Torres facilitaron reuniones con miembros del grupo Juan XXIII, quienes se ofrecieron a ser discípulos misioneros. Ella se convirtió en una creyente del proceso tan pronto vio las guías y los diarios de misión.

“Yo me dije: ¡Esto es lo que necesitamos para prepararnos para salir afuera, atraer a las personas que no están aquí, y para ser más acogedores!”, ella mencionó.

Peña-Llorens aconsejó a los discípulos misioneros que primero conocieran a las personas y desarrollaran una conexión verdadera y cariñosa, proporcionándoles todo lo que necesitaban, ya sea comida, ropa o apoyo espiritual. “El punto es tener un encuentro real con ellos y, a través de esa amistad, llevarlos hacia Jesús”, explicó.

Peña-Llorens piensa que el proceso es también una buena manera para que los feligreses de muchos años conozcan a personas que son nuevas en la parroquia, así como personas en los alrededores. Un mayor conocimiento local, dijo, puede conducir a soluciones regionales que luego pueden ser transmitidas a los administradores de la Iglesia.

“Tal vez la comunidad Hispánica en Hartford tiene necesidades que difieren de New Haven, Waterbury o Enfield”, dijo.

Arturo Iriarte, originamente de Chile, también pertenece al comité de la arquidiócesis. El dijo: “Ha sido una experiencia muy emocionante e inspiradora para mí”. Iriarte agregó que fue testigo de una transformación en todas las parroquias donde él apoyó durante el verano, especialmente entre los propios discípulos misioneros.

“Es una cosa hermosa. Los que salieron en misión también están recibiendo mucho a cambio,” el dijo. Regresaron con nuevos conocimientos sobre los demás y sobre ellos mismos, explicó. Reflexionaron, registraron la información y formularon recomendaciones.

“Es hermoso, pero requiere mucha preparación, lectura y comprensión”. Y agregó “Es importante traer el Corazón de Dios al proceso”.

En suma, pensó que las partes de evangelización y consulta a nivel parroquial del proceso fueron inspiradas. “Esta es una gran oportunidad para la Iglesia”, concluyó.

**Los discípulos misioneros reflexionan**

Los mismos discípulos misioneros tenían perspectivas únicas sobre el componente de la evangelización del V Encuentro.

Edilberto Ortiz, un discípulo misionero Guatemalteca de 24 años que asiste a San Agustín, dijo que apreciaba la formación evangelizadora, a pesar de haber tenido la experiencia previa de invitar a otros jóvenes hispanos a la fe católica.

“Lo veo como una oportunidad para desarrollar maneras de evangelizar mejor, especialmente con los jóvenes”, concluyó.

Ana Torres, que nació en Puerto Rico y pertenece a la Parroquia Cristo el Pan de Vida en Hamden, explicó por qué deseaba ser discípula misionera: “Dios me hizo más fuerte”, dijo, “y quiero llevar eso a otras personas”.

Como católica y trabajadora social, Torres aplaudió a la Iglesia Católica por su esfuerzo de evangelización y consulta, en el verano que condujo a los jóvenes, jóvenes adultos, adultos y familias hispanas católicas a vivir su vocación, llamando a los jóvenes, adultos y familias hispanas católicas a vivir su vocación, especialmente a los más vulnerables y a los que están en las periferias de la Iglesia y de la sociedad.

4. Identificar y promover oportunidades para que los líderes católicos hispanos sirvan en todos los niveles de la Iglesia y de la sociedad en general, y aumentar el número de ministros laicos y ordenados directamente involucrados en la Nueva Evangelización.

5. Estimular una nueva ola de formación en la fe y de las iniciativas de desarrollo de liderazgo que preparen a los católicos hispanos para compartir y celebrar la Buena Nueva de Jesucristo.
TEACHER RETIREMENT

Great teachers can make a difference in the lives of their students. As some of the most influential role models, teachers are responsible for more than just providing engaging lesson plans and homework. The best teachers are committed to developing the overall student — inside and outside — by imparting wisdom and important life lessons geared toward future success.

One of those teachers, Pauline Pelczar, who retired in June after a 43-year career teaching math and science at Southington Catholic School, says her greatest achievement will always be her students.

“I have always taken pride in the number of students who have gone on to become math teachers, engineers and pursued other math- and science-related careers,” says Pelczar, a Rocky Hill resident. “My best experiences were always talking to students who have graduated our school, and hearing of the progress and awards they have gone on to attain in their educational and life pursuits.”

One of those students is Shane Baldwin of Southington, who is earning his master’s degree in physiology and neurobiology at the University of Connecticut and plans to attend medical school. He spoke during a surprise farewell celebration for Pelczar, held in the school cafeteria on June 16, with dozens of parents, staff, teachers, administrators and former students. All wore buttons proclaiming “I was Mrs. Pelczar’s favorite student!”

Baldwin says he and eight other classmates from the school credit Pelczar for helping them choose careers in math and science fields. “There is one woman to thank for that: you, Mrs. Pelczar,” Baldwin told her during the event.

Many students have walked the halls since Pelczar began teaching in 1974 at the school, known back then as St. Thomas Junior High School, for grades 7-9. When the school expanded its curriculum to include pre-K through grade 8, the name was changed to St. Thomas School. Today, those same grades are still taught. But during the 2015-2016 academic year, St. Thomas and St. Dominic, also in Southington, combined their parish schools to create Southington Catholic in the former St. Thomas School building.

Many of Pelczar’s former students and the Southington community in general equate her with science, but especially math, according to the Father Nicholas Melo, pastor of St. Thomas Parish for 11 years before his reassignment in June to Christ the King Parish in Wethersfield.

“Students have excelled upon graduation in these areas because of what you have instilled in them,” Father Melo told Pelczar.

Joan Murphy, the school’s principal from 1986 to 2009, said of her, “She is an excellent, excellent teacher. It was my honor to be her principal.”

When Murphy began working at the school, she recalled, there was no computer lab. Murphy credits Pelczar for establishing the computer lab by seeking out used computers that could be donated to the school, refurbishing them and setting them up.

The school building looks pretty much as it did more than 40 years ago, with the same lockers, desks and even the same statues of Mary in each classroom. But Pelczar says teaching has changed since her early days there, when she mainly used books, chalkboards and hands-on experiments in the science lab to teach some 40 students in one classroom.

Today, classes range between 13 and 15 students, and laptops, whiteboards and other technology have replaced the books. The internet also has made learning easier because of its numerous resources and virtual science labs.
available to students, Pelczar says. As a result, students don’t need to spend as much time learning in the science lab.

“Kids have laptops and they do problems on them; they have a video teacher and all the resources that come along with it both in math and science,” Pelczar says.

Aside from teaching in the classroom, Pelczar encouraged students through extracurricular activities. She served as the club adviser and the coach for MathCounts, a nationwide math contest for middle school students aimed at increasing enthusiasm for mathematics. Several of her students have been winners at the MathCounts regional competition, held annually at the University of Hartford.

Pelczar was also the school adviser for NEED, which stands for National Energy Education Development Project, a nationwide organization that promotes an energy-conscious and educated society through energy education programs. Last April, Southington Catholic was recognized for its outstanding energy education project, and selected as the Connecticut Junior School of the Year for 2017.

Teaching at a Catholic school is not an easy calling. It requires teachers to possess an added characteristic: to be people of faith in God. Father Melo says Pelczar has always imparted her faith to her students through her quiet demeanor.

“I thank you for giving witness to and sharing your faith,” he told her, “each and every day.”

Pelczar, who was introduced to Catholic education when she attended a Catholic high school, says her strong faith in God has always been a “guiding light for me, my teaching, my students.” When her two daughters were ready to begin school, Pelczar enrolled them in Catholic schools, where they stayed from kindergarten through high school. Today, both hold doctorates.

Pelczar admits she could have accepted higher paying teaching positions at public schools, but says she stayed at the same school for all these years because of its overall Christian, caring environment.

“I have been truly blessed here,” Pelczar says. “That’s all I can say, really.”

Although she is anxious to start the next chapter of her life, which includes traveling and spending more time with her husband, two daughters and two grandchildren, Pelczar calls retirement “bittersweet” and admits that she will miss her students.

Eileen Sampieri, who took over as principal of Southington Catholic in September 2016, says she often hears praise for Pelczar from high school teachers.

“It will be hard to replace her,” Sampieri says. “She’s a phenomenal teacher and a phenomenal person.”

Longtime teacher Pauline Pelczar makes a point in her classroom at Southington Catholic during the waning days of last academic year.
Catholic school graduate, teacher, principal and parent

Testimony of the value of Catholic school education (and of a father’s love)

For Eric Frenette, Catholic school education is about more than schooling. It’s a crucial foundation for life. He should know. Not only is Frenette a graduate of St. Joseph School in Bristol, but he returned after years of public high school and college education, plus travel and marriage, to become a teacher, principal and father of a newborn and 3-year-old son Noah, who starts pre-K this fall.

He wrote about his insights in a school newsletter, and later shared his thoughts with the Catholic Transcript.

“When my wife and I were thinking about what a Catholic education would mean for my son, it made me think about my experience and the memories of this place that always held a special place in my heart,” he said. “It made me realize that what I found in Catholic education were values that I applied in my college years and adult life.”

“I’ve always had a hunger for learning and putting my best foot forward; and that helped me academically,” he said. “But there’s the other side.”

“I grew up watching my friends and families being involved in the school, and teachers who were like surrogate parents who knew me and my older brother,” he said. “That sense of community carried me throughout my life.”

“Everyone in the building is hoping that every student turns out with the best possible outcome,” said Frenette, who received his masters in school counseling from UConn.

“Catholic teaching instills the thought that it’s not just me in the world,” he reflected. “It teaches Gospel values that you’re supported by God and community.” Plus, he stated, it teaches empathy, altruism, the joy of learning, the importance of service and being resourceful, as well as having integrity, the desire to want to know as much as you can, to use that knowledge for the betterment of society, to want to always know what’s going on around you and “being proud of who you are and sticking to that.”
“Be who you say you are going to be,” he said. As St. Paul taught, “life is nothing without action. If you say you’re going to do something without backing it up, then it’s just talk,” he said.

“Kids learn by example,” he stressed. “Our theme last year was ‘preach the Gospel and if necessary use words.’ Live a good life and hopefully people will see that.

“Now looking at my whole life in retrospective, I can see how everything worked the way it was supposed to, to get me to where I needed to go,” he said.

Frenette, who was a public school teacher “with a good salary” before returning to St. Joseph School, noted, “I look back at those (early) values and decided I wanted to give back to others. It wasn’t an easy choice, but it was the right choice where the greater good took precedence. This was my way to show appreciation for those people who instilled those values in me by passing them on to other students.”

“You never realize what you take in until you grow up, look back and say, ‘Oh, it started there,’” he continued. But as he wrote in the school newsletter about the decision for his son: “He will be at St. Joseph School because of who he will be as a result.”

He wrote:

“He will be a child who has been brought up in a supportive, faith-filled community. He will be a child who was able to experience, first-hand, what a small, nurturing community is in a world that continually becomes larger and less personal.

“He will be part of a close-knit cohort, made up not just of his classmates, but of children throughout the entire school, whose families know each other well and have gone through many experiences together. From serving others in their community to awkwardly figuring out what to do at their first middle school dance, they will share many personal moments with each other and won’t just be ‘faces passing in the hall’ or ‘those kids on the bus.’

“He will see parishioners and school families assisting in his educational experience. Volunteers serving lunch, running fundraisers, or helping out at events [who] will show him that his community is invested in what he and his school are doing.

“He will also know how to take notes, study for a test, write cursive, do math in his head. ... He will know how to approach a teacher with problems or concerns. In college, he will know how to successfully adapt to larger environments and new people from his experience of transitioning to high school.

“Before he was born, it was an easy choice where Noah would be going to school,” Frenette wrote in the community newsletter. “Now ... I have to choke back the tears, realizing he is no longer the little bundle we brought home three years ago. The positive side is that we have another bundle due in September.

“As for Noah, while I technically won’t be far away, this is another step in his metaphorical journey along the path to wherever God has planned for him,” he mused. “At least I know he will be well-prepared.”
Catholic conference for men to feature author Raymond Arroyo of ‘EWTN News’

Award-winning journalist and best-selling author Raymond Arroyo of “EWTN News” will be the keynote speaker at the 10th annual Connecticut Catholic Men’s Conference on Oct. 21.

The day-long program, which will be held at St. Paul Catholic High School in Bristol, will also include presentations by Bishop Frank J. Caggiano of the Diocese of Bridgeport; Tim Staples, director of apologetics and evangelization at Catholic Answers; Fr. Glenn Sudano, one of the original eight founders of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal; and James Wahlberg, executive director of the Mark Wahlberg Youth Foundation, which he founded with his brother, actor Mark Wahlberg. Musician and evangelist Marty Rotella will serve as master of ceremonies.

Arroyo, who is managing editor and lead anchor for “EWTN News” and “The World Over Live,” is seen in more than 350 million homes on six continents each week and heard on more than 500 AM/FM affiliates and a stand-alone Sirius channel.

Before joining EWTN as founding editorial director, he worked for The Associated Press, The New York Observer and the political columnist team of Evans and Novak. Five of his adult books, including his biography of Mother Angelica, were all New York Times bestsellers. His “Will Wilder” series for young readers is a multi-book collection, and Will Wilder: The Lost Staff of Wonders was published in March by Random House.

Bishop Caggiano, who will deliver the opening talk and the homily at the closing vigil Mass, said, “I’m looking forward to participating for the first time in the Connecticut Catholic Men’s Conference, and I hope that many men throughout our diocese join me for this day of renewal and spiritual enrichment. The conference calls all men to witness Christ as husbands, fathers and individuals. It is also a celebration of fellowship and community as men from all walks of life and backgrounds come together to deepen their faith and explore their roles as men in family life and the Church.”

Father James M. Sullivan, chaplain of the conference, said the event will offer spiritual enrichment for men of all ages. Throughout the day, there will be opportunities for eucharistic adoration and the sacrament of reconciliation.

Father Sullivan, who has attended the conference as a participant and a presenter since it began, as a participant and a presenter, said it offers men valuable information and tools they can use to become better role models in their families and in society.

“People look to spiritual men and I’m always reminded of my own father,” he said. “I had a faithful father and I admired him greatly. I wanted to be like him and what was most important to him was his faith. I wanted the same thing for myself from an early age. Children want to see God reflected in their father.”

Research shows the importance of strong faith in family life; however, one of the challenges men face today is the increase in noise and distraction in society.

“The noise of the world is keeping us away from time that should be spent with God,” Father Sullivan said. “God speaks to us in silence.”

He added, “I can’t stress enough the importance of men having a strong relationship with Christ because when you have that, everything else falls into place in your family, in the workplace and in your personal relationships.”

Ken Santopietro, director of the conference, said this year’s theme is a celebration of the apostolate of the laity, taken from Acts 1:8: “You will be my witnesses.”

He said he has been a faithful attendee “ever since the first conference when Father Larry Richards challenged us to be men and to choose to do just one thing in the coming months to increase our spirituality.” What did he choose? He volunteered as a catechist and signed up to participate in an hour of eucharistic adoration; the following year he volunteered to help with the conference, and this is his fifth year as director.

What are his hopes for men who attend the conference? “To share the experiences of going to confession if it has been awhile,” he said, “listening to the best homily you ever heard on Catholicism by a professional speaker and finding the one way that it connects with your spirit and brings you home a better man.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO PURCHASE TICKETS, VISIT WWW.CTCATHOLICMEN.ORG OR CALL 860.484.7950.

TO CONTACT THE CONFERENCE DIRECTLY, EMAIL CTCA ThODICMEMSCONFERENCE@GMAIL.COM OR CALL 860.484.7950.
END-OF-LIFE DECISION-MAKING, transgender issues, young adult pro-lifers and embryo adoption are among the topics to be tackled at the annual Respect Life Conference on Oct. 14 at Holy Angels Parish Center in Meriden.

Presented by the parish’s Pro-Life Outreach Ministry, the 18th annual event will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in observance of Pro-Life Month.

After registration and hospitality, participants will be given a choice of morning workshops. Archbishop Leonard P. Blair will welcome all participants and open the conference.

The keynote speaker is Father Thadeusz (Tad) Pacholczyk, Ph.D. A priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Mass., he did laboratory research as an undergraduate on hormonal regulation of the immune response. He earned degrees in philosophy, biochemistry, molecular cell biology and chemistry. He later earned a doctorate in neuroscience from Yale University.

Father Tad worked for several years as a molecular biologist at Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School. He studied for five years in Rome, where he did advanced work in dogmatic theology and in bioethics. He has testified before members of the Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Virginia and Oregon state legislatures during deliberations over stem cell research and cloning. He has given presentations and participated in roundtables on contemporary bioethics throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe.

He has done numerous media commentaries, including appearances on “CNN International,” ABC’s “World News Tonight,” “NBC Nightly News” and “National Public Radio.” He is director of education for the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia and directs the center’s National Catholic Certification Program in Health Care Ethics.

Father Tad also writes a monthly column on timely life issues.

“End-of-Life Decision-Making: Physician-Assisted Suicide, Euthanasia, Pain Management and Hospice” is the title of Father Pacholczyk’s first talk. His presentation will offer a brief discussion of subjects families face in making morally sound health care decisions for their loved ones in chronic or end-of-life situations, including suffering, physician-assisted suicide, appropriate pain management, and hospice and palliative care.

The second talk is titled “Thinking through the Ethics of the Transgender Question.” This presentation will examine “gender dysphoria” and the expanding medical practice of hormonal treatments and sexual reassignment surgery.

Guest speakers who will moderate the morning workshops are C.J. Williams; Elizabeth B. Rex, Ph.D.; and Michael C. Culhane. Williams is the education and outreach director at Life Matters and program coordinator for the Pro-Life Future young adult network, an initiative of Students for Life of America.

Rex is an adjunct professor of bioethics at Holy Apostles College and Seminary in Cromwell and the assistant director of its St. John Paul II Bioethics Center. She also is the president of the Children First Foundation, which sponsors “Choose Life” license plates in the Northeast to help fund pregnancy care centers, maternity homes and safe havens.

Culhane is the executive director of the Connecticut Catholic Conference, the public policy office of the Catholic Church in Connecticut.

The title of Williams’s workshop is “Young Adults: Loud, Proud ... and Pro-life?” Rex will speak about “IVF, Surrogacy and Embryo Adoption: What Does the Catholic Church Teach?” The title of Culhane’s workshop is “The Role of the Catholic Conference in State Politics.”

After the morning session, Very Rev. Douglas L. Mosey will be the celebrant and homilist at the noon Respect Life Mass. Father Mosey, a member of the Basilian Fathers, is the president/rector of Holy Apostles College and Seminary.

There also will be representatives of or displays by various pro-life agencies.
APPOINTMENTS

The Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair, S.T.D., has made the following appointments:


IN YOUR COMMUNITY


ADMINISTRATORS


PAROCHIAL VICARS


CHAPLAINS


Rev. Nicola Tran: appointed chaplain, (part-time) at St. Francis Hospital, Hartford, in addition to pastoral care of the Vietnamese Catholic community, effective June 29, 2017.

SENIOR PRIEST STATUS*

Rev. Anthony J. Bruno: senior priest status, effective March 1, 2017


MEDICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE


DEACONS

Deacon Martin J. O’Connor: assigned to St. Mary Parish, New Haven effective March 1, 2017.

Deacon Rene J. Kieda: assigned chaplain, Veteran Administration Hospital, West Haven effective May 8, 2017.


Deacon Ronnie Bicknell: assigned to St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish, North Haven effective June 29, 2017.


Deacon Leo B. Conard, III: assigned to St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish, Terryville effective June 29, 2017.


Deacon William G. Dzialko: assigned to SS. Isidore and Maria Parish, Glastonbury effective June 29, 2017.


Deacon George W. Frederick: assigned to Our Lady Queen of Angels Parish, Meriden effective June 29, 2017.
IN YOUR COMMUNITY


Deacon Alan A. Germain: assigned to St. James Parish, Manchester effective June 29, 2017.


Deacon Emilio Gonzalez: assigned to Christ the Bread of Life Parish, Hamden effective June 29, 2017.

Deacon Philip J. Gosselin: assigned to St. Edmund Campion Parish, East Hartford effective June 29, 2017.


Deacon Leo R. LaRocque: assigned to St. James Parish, Manchester effective June 29, 2017.


Deacon Edwin Lopes: assigned to All Saints Parish, Waterbury effective June 29, 2017.


Deacon Angel Moriello: assigned to All Saints Parish, Waterbury effective June 29, 2017.


Deacon James F. Papillo: assigned to Christ the King Parish, Wethersfield effective June 29, 2017.


Deacon Donald H. Smith, Jr.: assigned to Our Lady Queen of Angels Parish, Meriden effective June 29, 2017.


Deacon Stephen L. Weaver: assigned to SS. Isidore and Maria Parish, Glastonbury effective June 29, 2017.


FACULTIES**


--- FATHER RYAN M. LERNER, CHANCELLOR, JUNE 30, 2017

*Because deacons and priests have received the sacrament of holy orders and therefore never retire in the canonical sense, the terms “senior priest” and “senior deacon” describes their status.

**Clergy who are not incardinated in the Archdiocese of Hartford must request permission from the archbishop to minister here; that is, they request faculties.
Together for community

Together for a reason.

Saint Francis
Hospital and Medical Center

Mercy
Medical Center

Saint Mary’s
Hospital

Johnson Memorial
Hospital

Mount Sinai
Rehabilitation Hospital

Trinity Health
Of New England