

Catholic TRANSCRIPT

MAY 2020

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BRUSH STROKES FOR CHRIST

Artists convey Jesus' dignity, humanity through murals

COURAGE: WALKING
THE ROAD WITH CHRIST

BUILDING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES
THROUGH CURSILLOS IN CHRISTIANITY

A VISIT TO ST. THERESA
OF THE CHILD JESUS SHRINE



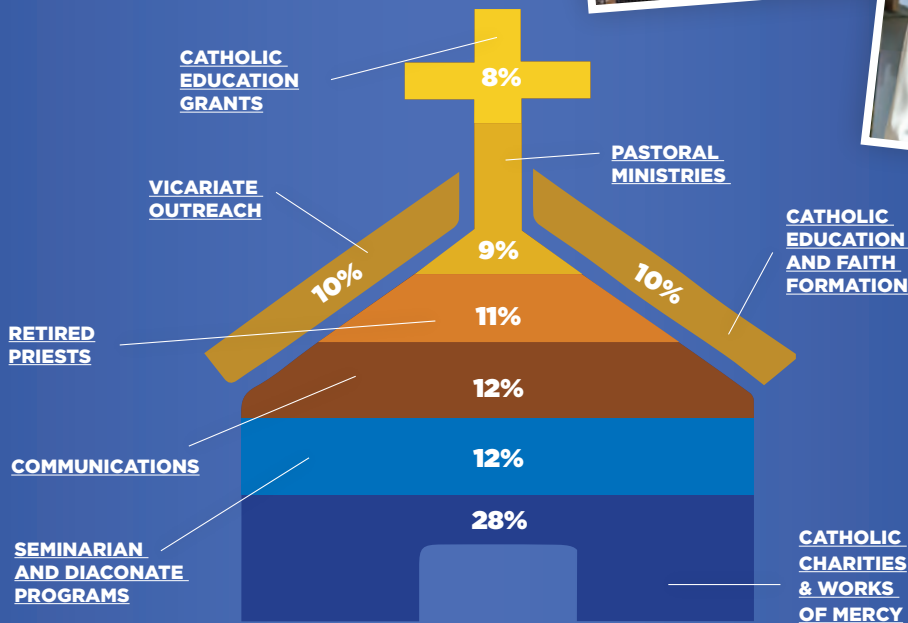
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MAY 2020 CONTENTS

FEATURED ARTICLES

8 **Brush Strokes for Christ**

Artists convey Jesus' dignity and humanity through Church murals.

14 **Walking the Road With Christ**

Archdiocese provides spiritual support for those with same-sex attractions.

20 **Building Missionary Disciples**

Cursillos in Christianity Movement brings people closer to Jesus.

26 **A 'Safe Place'**

Catholic Charities provides care for infants, toddlers.



PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH



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PHOTO BY JACK SHEEDY

ARCHBISHOP'S DESK

6 **"WHOEVER DOES THE WILL OF GOD REMAINS FOREVER"**

Whatever the situation, this crisis is a reminder that we and all our medical and scientific progress to date are not invincible.

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 EDITOR'S DESK
- 5 ON THE WEB, TV & RADIO
- 12 BIBLE GUIDANCE
- 18 SYNOD 2020
- 23 VOCATIONS OFFICE
- 24 GOING PLACES
- 27 SAINTS CORNER
- 28 MARK YOUR CALENDAR
- 30 AROUND THE ARCHDIOCESE
- 31 OBITUARIES

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ON THE COVER:

Religious murals make an artistic statement about the new identity of Christ the King Parish.

PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH



Catholic TRANSCRIPT

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God Hears Our Pleas, In Church and At Home



KAREN AVITABILE
*is the editor of the
Catholic Transcript.*

The faithful who are accustomed to attending worship on Sunday mornings could never have imagined a day that our churches would be closed for an undetermined amount of time. Unfortunately, COVID-19 forced this to happen for several weeks. This was not a decision made lightly.

Like others, I have been using television (the Mass is broadcast seven days a week at 10 a.m. on local stations and streamed live on ortv.org) and social media to stay connected to God and the local Church.

It has been a spiritual exercise of sorts to carry out our faith privately through Lent, Holy Week and Easter without a presence in church. But this experience has been an opportunity to ask God what gift we could offer him that would help us to be more of his disciples. What I have experienced is people taking time out of each day during this stay-at-home period to reflect on the teachings and to engage more in personal prayer. Many have shared their experiences online, privately in church and on television.

This health crisis has taught us that we can call on God anytime we want, in church but also in the comfort of our homes. God hears our pleas and our needs, 24 hours a day, no matter where we are. There has never been a greater time than now to turn to God in prayer, to discover how we can deepen our relationship with him and to re-evaluate our priorities.

It has been inspiring to see the different ways our archdiocesan



A staff member from the Hispanic Senior Center, a program of Catholic Charities in Hartford, assists with delivering meals to seniors during the closure of the center due to coronavirus.

COURTESY OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES

priests have creatively continued to bring the faith to their flock. And we have all heard the stories of people coming together to help not only their families and neighbors but others they do not even know. We will be bringing you some of these stories in future issues of the *Catholic Transcript*.

One example, pictured here, is how Catholic Charities continued delivering meals to seniors during the closure of its center due to the coronavirus. In partnership with the Community Renewal Team and the city of Hartford, staff at Catholic Charities remained committed daily to providing seniors with nutrition throughout the public health crisis.

Restrictions on activities and gathering in groups made it impossible to come together as a worshipping community. Even during the difficult times, let us strive to build a closer relationship to God, even in the comforts of our own homes. ❧

PRAYER TO ST. RAPHAEL THE ARCHANGEL, PATRON SAINT OF HEALING

*Blessed St. Raphael, Archangel,
We beseech you to help us in all our needs
and trials of this life,
as you, through the power of God,
didst restore sight and gave guidance to young Tobit.
We humbly seek your aid and intercession,
that our souls may be healed,
our bodies protected from all ills,
and that through divine grace we may become fit
to dwell in the eternal Glory of God in heaven.
Amen.*

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"WHOEVER DOES THE WILL OF GOD REMAINS FOREVER"

As I write this article for the *Transcript* well in advance of its publication date, we are in the throes of the coronavirus crisis, and I don't know where we will be by the time you read this. Whatever the situation, this crisis is a reminder that we and all our medical and scientific progress to date are not invincible. And if, as we all hope, a medical remedy can soon be found, we will still always be mortal beings, fragile creatures in the immensity of a created universe that is beyond our grasp.

God is the Creator and we are his creatures. We are made for love in the divine "image and likeness" with a rational and immortal soul and redeemed by the blood of God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, but creatures nonetheless. Such is the nature of love that there can be no authentic "yes" without the possibility of also saying "no." Adam and Eve said "no." Jesus and Mary said "yes," and made it possible for us to say "yes" but the freedom is still ours.

God is revealed in the Old Testament as the Lord of history. The story of the exodus shows how God's people were called out from bondage, out into a high-risk situation in the desert, totally dependent on God alone. The whole history of Israel is the story of a people being led by the hand of God. Their infidelity, which at root was a lack of trust, was denounced by the prophets, who recognized the true depths of human sinfulness and the need for God himself to create a trusting human heart in a new covenant yet to come. This was fulfilled with the advent of Christ.

Like our spiritual forebears in the desert, we, as fallen creatures, find it difficult to live with complete trust — not only that God exists, but that we are totally dependent on him for all that we are and all that we have. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: "The human being does not trust God ... He harbors the

suspicion that, in the end, God takes something away from his life, that God is a rival who curtails our freedom, and that we will be fully human only when we have cast him aside ... The human being lives in the suspicion that God's love creates a dependence and that he must rid himself of this dependency if he is to be fully himself."

Our former Holy Father goes on to say: "Love is not dependence but a gift that makes us live ... We live in the right way if we live in accordance with the truth of our being, and that is, in accordance with God's will." (Homily, Dec. 8, 2005)

Today, there is an ever greater blindness to "the truth of our being" and an ever greater desire on the part of many to "rid the world of dependency on God" and to live as if God does not exist. Even a devastating pandemic is unlikely to shake the prevailing ideologies. I'm referring to the moral relativism that most people live by today that rejects any claim to absolute truth from God that can be known by faith — or even by reason. The result is a slide into moral chaos regarding respect for life, sexuality, marriage and even the very identity of man and woman. Then, there's the materialism that often dictates the priorities in many people's lives, making material success an all-consuming passion, rather than trust in divine providence and "treasure in heaven." And secular humanism offers the promise of

a full, satisfying and ethical life without God or revealed religion, sometimes with a hodgepodge of practices derived from various religions or beliefs.

As epidemics remind us, we are all mortal. And as such, we need to heed the First Letter of John, who tells us that "all that is in the world — human nature full of desire, eyes hungry for all they see, material life that inflates self-assurance — does not belong to the Father; all that belongs to the world. And the world is passing away with all its desires; but the person who does the will of God remains forever." (1 Jn 2:16-17) **CT**



**ARCHBISHOP
LEONARD P. BLAIR**
*is the 13th bishop
of the Archdiocese
of Hartford.*



During a past visit to St. Matthew Parish in Forestville, Archbishop Leonard P. Blair blesses rosary beads.

PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH

“Él que hace la Voluntad de Dios Permanecerá para Siempre”

Mientras escribo este artículo para *Transcript* con bastante anticipación a su fecha de publicación, estamos en medio de la crisis del coronavirus, y no sé dónde estaremos para cuando lean esto. Cualquiera sea la situación, esta crisis es un recordatorio de que nosotros y todo nuestro progreso médico y científico hasta la fecha no somos invencibles. Y si, tal como esperamos, pronto se llegará a encontrar un remedio médico, seguiremos siendo seres mortales, criaturas frágiles en la inmensidad de un universo creado que está fuera de nuestro alcance.



**EL ARZOBISPO
LEONARD P. BLAIR**
*es el decimotercer obispo
de la Arquidiócesis de
Hartford.*

Dios es el Creador y nosotros somos sus criaturas. Estamos hechos para amar en su divina “imagen y semejanza” con un alma racional e inmortal y estamos redimidos por la sangre de Dios en la carne, Jesucristo, pero de todas formas seguimos siendo criaturas. Tal es la naturaleza del amor que no puede haber un auténtico “sí” sin la posibilidad de decir también “no”, Adán y Eva dijeron “no”. Jesús y María dijeron “sí”, y nos permitieron decir “sí”, pero la libertad sigue siendo nuestra.

Dios se revela en el Antiguo Testamento como el Señor de la historia. La historia del éxodo muestra cómo el pueblo de Dios fue llamado de la esclavitud, a una situación de alto riesgo en el desierto, dependiente total y únicamente de Dios. Toda la historia de Israel es la historia de un pueblo dirigido por la mano de Dios. Su infidelidad, que en esencia era una falta de confianza, fue denunciada

por los profetas, quienes reconocieron las verdaderas profundidades de la pecaminosidad humana y la necesidad de que Dios mismo creara un corazón humano confiado en un nuevo pacto por venir. Esto se cumplió con el advenimiento de Cristo.

Al igual que nuestros antepasados espirituales en el desierto, nosotros, como criaturas caídas, nos resulta difícil vivir con plena confianza — no solo que Dios existe, sino que dependemos totalmente de él para todo lo que somos y todo lo que tenemos. En palabras del Papa Benedicto XVI: “El hombre no se fía de Dios. ... Abriga la sospecha de que Dios, en definitiva, le quita algo de su vida, que Dios es un competidor que limita nuestra libertad, y que solo seremos plenamente seres humanos cuando lo dejemos de lado ... El hombre vive con la sospecha de que el amor de Dios crea una dependencia y que necesita desembarazarse de esta dependencia para ser plenamente él mismo”.

Nuestro anterior Santo Padre continuó diciendo: “Amor no es dependencia, sino don que nos hace vivir. ... Vivimos como debemos, si vivimos según la verdad de nuestro ser, es decir, según la voluntad de Dios”. (Homilía, 8 de diciembre de 2005)

Hoy en día, existe una ceguera cada vez mayor a “la verdad de nuestro ser” y un deseo cada vez mayor por parte de muchos de “librar al mundo de la

dependencia de Dios” y vivir como si Dios no existiera. Incluso una pandemia devastadora es poco probable que sacuda las ideologías prevalecientes. Me refiero al relativismo moral que vive la mayoría de las personas hoy en día que rechaza cualquier reclamo de verdad absoluta de Dios que pueda ser conocido por la fe, o incluso por la razón. El resultado es una caída en el caos moral con respecto al respeto por la vida, la sexualidad, el matrimonio e incluso la identidad misma del hombre y la mujer. Luego, está el materialismo que a menudo dicta las prioridades en la vida de muchas personas, haciendo del éxito material una pasión que lo consume todo, en lugar de confiar en la providencia divina y el “tesoro en el Cielo”. Y el humanismo secular ofrece la promesa de una vida plena, satisfactoria y ética sin Dios o la religión revelada, a veces con una mezcla de prácticas derivadas de diversas religiones o creencias.

Como nos recuerdan las epidemias, todos somos mortales. Y como tal, debemos prestar atención a la Primera Carta de Juan, quien nos dice que “porque todo lo que hay en el mundo — la pasión de la carne, la pasión de los ojos, y la arrogancia de la vida — no proviene del Padre, sino del mundo. El mundo pasa, y también sus pasiones, pero el que hace la voluntad de Dios permanecerá para siempre”. (1 Jn 2: 16-17) **CT**



El Arzobispo Leonard P. Blair visitó la Parroquia de St. Matthew en Forestville para ofrecer el Santo Sacrificio de la Misa. El Padre John Dietrich, párroco, concelebró y el Diácono James McCluskey asistió.

PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH

A man with a goatee and a woman wearing a green beanie and glasses are smiling in front of a mural under construction. The mural features a grid pattern and a faint sketch of a face. Yellow scaffolding is visible in the background. The entire image has a yellow, textured background with paint splatters.

BRUSH STROKES FOR CHRIST

*Artists convey Jesus' dignity and humanity
through Church murals.*

Story by
JOE PISANI

SUBMITTED PHOTO



Father Nick P. Melo, Tyler Hall and Sara Leombruni, left to right.



FROM THE TIME SHE WAS A CHILD, SARA LEOMBRUNI FANTASIZED ABOUT BEING A FINE ARTIST. SHE LOVED THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE PAINTERS AND IMAGINED CREATING MURALS LIKE MICHELANGELO. BUT THE ART OF 21ST-CENTURY AMERICA IS A FAR CRY FROM 14TH-CENTURY ITALY, SO IT WAS, FOR THE MOST PART, A DREAM UNFULFILLED. UNTIL SOMETHING HAPPENED.

She and her artistic collaborator Tyler Hall were approached by Father Nicholas P. Melo, pastor of Christ the King Parish in Wethersfield, who asked them to develop religious murals that would make an artistic statement about the new parish's identity and be the central focus of the church renovation. Christ the King resulted from the 2017 merger of Corpus Christi Church in Wethersfield, Sacred Heart in Old Wethersfield and St. Luke's in Hartford.

A year of consultation, planning and painting culminated in the creation of three murals — a majestic 20-by-25-foot depiction of Jesus' Ascension in the center of the sanctuary above the presidential chairs, two smaller 9-by-5-foot works of Christ's baptism in the Jordan River above the baptismal font and a painting of Christ's breaking of the bread above the tabernacle.

"We had these great open spaces in the church, and these images display who we are as Christ the King Parish," Father Melo said. And the reception has been very positive.

down, and the parish wanted art that spoke to Jesus' majesty as a king. The artists suggested a mural of Christ lifted up in glory on a cloud, surrounded by angels, while the disciples gaze in awe at him rising into heaven, as described by St.

Luke in the Acts of the Apostles.

Father Melo learned about their work through Leombruni's parents, Janet and Peter Leombruni. Peter is a member of the Building Committee at Christ the King, and Janet, who is also an artist, repainted the church's Stations of the Cross as part of the renovation.

The younger Leombruni says they recognized the importance of having a representation of Christ worthy of worship and did considerable research to prepare for the project.

"You have a certain responsibility representing an image of Jesus," she says. "He was in the center of the mural, and we knew that people would be looking up at him when they prayed."



■ FROM RENAISSANCE TO MODERN TIMES

To create a moving and majestic face of Jesus for all three artworks, the artists examined other representations, from the Renaissance to modern times. This depiction is entirely their own creation.

“We did a lot of research to find exciting paintings of the Ascension,” Hall says. “We explored the religious iconography and even the color of the apostles’ robes and the traditions as to what each one was wearing. Throughout history, certain symbols have been associated with each of them.”

Leombruni says she wanted Jesus’ face to convey his divinity and his humanity. He had to be “approachable and heavenly and have benevolence in his eyes.”

The artists presented three different designs to the parish for consideration, and once they got approval, they set out to create the murals and stay as close to the biblical account as possible. They took photos of the church spaces, and Leombruni rendered the first designs on a digital tablet. Her drawing was then imposed on the space. To prepare for the actual painting, they created a grid on the walls of the church and sketched the images in charcoal. The painting took more than three weeks.

Several female parishioners came forward and asked that women be included in the mural.

“We thought positively about this as did Father Nick, and so we added some holy women, including the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene,” Hall says. The holy women who followed Jesus witnessed the Crucifixion and the Resurrection and many believe also the Ascension. “We were happy to add them.”

Stylistically, the mural is traditional and compositionally it is modern, Leombruni says. “We wanted to make it look three-dimensional, so we added our own modern touch to the traditional style.”



Says Hall, “We definitely came in making bold changes, and all the feedback that we’ve gotten has been positive. Many people told us how inspiring the mural was. We wanted to make something that was dramatic with religious iconography because it was their place of worship.”

The color scheme of the renovated church was also the work of artists, who served as consultants on the interior design of the church.

■ A ‘DREAM’ TO BE AN ARTIST

Leombruni and Hall, who both grew up in Connecticut, now live in Manhattan, N.Y. They have been working together for 10 years on murals, large-scale paintings and theatrical back-grounds. They both attended the Greater Hartford Academy for the Arts and later the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Hall is a painter, sculptor and artist who has worked for productions such as Disney’s *Aladdin* on Broadway and as the prop-maker for HBO’s *Sesame Street*. Leombruni is an exhibiting artist who has been recognized for her illustrations. She



"YOU HAVE A CERTAIN RESPONSIBILITY REPRESENTING AN IMAGE OF JESUS. HE WAS IN THE CENTER OF THE MURAL, AND WE KNEW THAT PEOPLE WOULD BE LOOKING UP AT HIM WHEN THEY PRAYED."

— SARA LEOMBRUNI

has a background in fine oil painting and more than 16 years of mural painting experience.

"My dream since I was a kid was to be a fine artist and exhibit in the major museums someday, so it was very exciting for both of us to work on this mural," Hall says. "It allowed us to indulge in a traditional style of painting not often used in commercial work, and gave us the opportunity to take on the style of classical Renaissance painting on a grand scale, which is a real treat for an artist."

The couple, who recently began a business named *Oh my! Murals*, has been commissioned to do indoor and outdoor public murals throughout New York City for small businesses and community organizations.

■ RENOVATIONS UNDERWAY SINCE 2018

The Corpus Christi renovations began in 2018, and last November the church celebrated the 80th anniversary of its construction. The project also included a new hardwood floor in the sanctuary, carpeting in the aisles, laminate flooring under the pews and repainting of the Stations of the Cross and the interior of the church.

"As a galvanizing point, I decided to do the renovations up front to make our primary place of worship much more aesthetically pleasing and beautiful," Father Melo says.



The renovations and murals are not the only initiatives that Father Melo undertook in an effort to bring the communities of faith closer together. On the walls of the parish hall, there is memorabilia dedicated to the churches that combined to make Christ the King.

Archbishop Leonard P. Blair blessed the new parish on Nov. 25, 2018, marking the feast of Christ the King. St. Luke's in Hartford has closed, and Sacred Heart in Old Wethersfield was designated a quasi-parish called Sacred Heart of Jesus Korean Catholic Parish, which serves the Korean Catholic community.

"There is always hurt when something you sacrificed for is no longer part of your history," Father Melo says. "The community has experienced loss, and our goal is to bring people together into this new family. Time heals, and we are trying to do as much as possible to bring people together as a parish family." **CT**



In Times of Crisis and Uncertainty, God Truly Saves

"WE HAVE HEARD MANY TIMES DURING THESE LIFE-CHALLENGING MONTHS THAT 'WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.' I AM CONVINCED OF THAT AND HAVE ENDEAVORED TO BE AS PRESENT AS I CAN TO ALL ENTRUSTED TO MY CARE."

— Auxiliary Bishop Juan Miguel Betancourt



AUXILIARY BISHOP JUAN MIGUEL BETANCOURT is the ninth auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Hartford.

I am writing this column as the Pastoral Center in Bloomfield is closing for a few weeks as we all strive to slow down the spread of the coronavirus throughout our community. Barely anyone is around; it sure feels a bit eerie and gloomy.

"Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life." (CCC 1500) St. Paul considers sickness, weakness and other afflictions as part of the fallen natural order. (cf. 2 Cor 4:17) However, while illness may provoke in certain people a very negative outlook that can even make them reject God, many others find in sickness a way to search and return to him. (CCC 1501)

Moreover, others feel God's call to be compassionate toward those who are suffering. Jesus' compassion is so vast that he identifies with the suffering (Mt 25:36), making our miseries his own. (Mt 8:17; Is 53:4) And we who are his disciples should be moved to feel like him. As he showed preferential love for the sick, Jesus has not stopped to call Christians to focus our attention on those who hurt in body and soul. As he is the source of all health (1 Pt 2:24), Christ makes us share in his ministry of compassion and healing. (Mk 6:12-13)

We have heard many times during these life-challenging months that "we are all in this together." I am convinced of that and have endeavored to be as present as I can to all entrusted to my care. However, since the beginning of this public health crisis across the globe, my mind and heart have been directed to those who directly exercise the ministry of caring for the sick: physicians, nurses and all health workers.

Through their vocation in life, they have been called to "heal the sick." (Mt 10:8) And we have been named as well to accompany and to help them as the Church by doing all that we can to promote health and continually praying for all, since we believe in the life-giving presence of Christ, the physician of souls and bodies.

PRAYER FOR THE HEALING

"Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits — who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion."

— PSALMS 103:2-4

(CCC 1509) This thought has been a source of hope and strength to continue my ministry with joy and confidence in God's loving providence. (Jas 5:14-15) I trust that you feel as grateful as I am to God for their invaluable work, especially through these last months and in the time to come. Let our prayer for them be one sign of our care for one another. (1 Cor 12:8-9; 1 Jn 4:7-11)

After we overcome this challenging hardship, let us always remember that we, God's family, the body of Christ, continue to renew the Lord's mission of healing, and in his name, we demonstrate that Jesus is truly "God who saves." (Mt 1:21; Acts 4:12) **CT**

En tiempos de crisis e incertidumbre, Dios realmente nos salva



EL OBISPO AUXILIAR JUAN MIGUEL BETANCOURT
es el noveno obispo auxiliar de la Arquidiócesis de Hartford.

Estoy escribiendo esta columna ahora que el Centro Arquidiocesano ha cerrado durante algunas semanas, en el esfuerzo por frenar la propagación del coronavirus en nuestra comunidad. No se ve a casi nadie alrededor, y se siente un poco triste y sombrío.

“La enfermedad y el sufrimiento se han contado siempre entre los problemas más graves que aquejan la vida humana” (CIC 1500). San Pablo considera la enfermedad, la debilidad y otras aflicciones como parte del orden natural caído (cf. 2 Co 4:17). Sin embargo, así como la enfermedad puede provocar en ciertas personas una perspectiva muy negativa que incluso puede hacer que rechacen a Dios, muchos otros encuentran en la enfermedad una forma de buscarlo y regresar a él (CIC 1501).

Más aún, otros sienten el llamado de Dios a ser compasivos con los que sufren. La compasión de Jesús es tan vasta que se identifica con el sufrimiento (Mt 25:36), haciendo suyas nuestras miserias (Mt 8:17; Is 53:4). Y nosotros, sus discípulos, debemos sentirnos como Él. Demostrando un amor preferencial por los enfermos, Jesús llama a los cristianos a centrar nuestra atención en los que sufren en cuerpo o alma. Así como él es la fuente de toda salud (1 P 2:24), Cristo nos hace compartir

su ministerio de compasión y sanación (Mc 6, 12-13).

Hemos escuchado muchas veces durante estos meses que “todos juntos estamos en esto”. Yo estoy convencido de esto y por eso me he esforzado por estar lo más presente posible a todos los que han sido confiados a mi cuidado. Sin embargo, desde el comienzo de esta crisis de salud pública, mi mente y mi corazón recuerdan a aquellos que ejercen directamente el ministerio del cuidado de los enfermos: médicos, enfermeros y todos los trabajadores de la salud. A través de su vocación, han sido llamados a “curar a los enfermos” (Mt 10:8). También hemos sido escogidos para acompañarlos y ayudarlos como Iglesia a hacer todo lo posible para promover la salud, y orar continuamente por todos, porque creemos en la presencia vivificante de Cristo, el médico de las almas y de los cuerpos (CIC 1509). Este pensamiento ha sido una fuente de esperanza y fortaleza



para mí, continuando mi ministerio con alegría y confianza en la providencia amorosa de Dios (St 5:14-15). Confío en que ustedes se sientan tan agradecidos a Dios como yo por su trabajo invaluable, especialmente durante estos últimos meses y también en el futuro. Que nuestra oración por ellos sea un signo de nuestro cuidado de unos por otros (1 Co 12:8-9; 1 Jn 4:7-11).

Después de superar este tiempo desafiante, recordemos siempre que nosotros, la familia de Dios, el Cuerpo de Cristo, continuamos renovando la misión de sanación del Señor, y, en su nombre, demostremos que Jesús es verdaderamente “Dios que salva” (Mt 1:21; Hch 4:12). ☪

HEMOS ESCUCHADO MUCHAS VECES DURANTE ESTOS MESES QUE “TODOS JUNTOS ESTAMOS EN ESTO”. YO ESTOY CONVENCIDO DE ESTO Y POR ESO ME HE ESFORZADO POR ESTAR LO MÁS PRESENTE POSIBLE A TODOS LOS QUE HAN SIDO CONFIADOS A MI CUIDADO.

— Auxiliary Bishop Juan Miguel Betancourt



COURAGE
INTERNATIONAL

Walking the Road With Christ

*Archdiocese provides spiritual support
for those with same-sex attractions.*

Story by JOE PISANI

EDITOR'S NOTE: The people quoted in this story attend Courage and EnCourage meetings around the Archdiocese of Hartford but have requested anonymity. Therefore, the Transcript has changed their first names and is not running last names so they cannot be identified.

When David was in sixth grade, he found himself attracted to a boy sitting in the next row in class. From then on, he lived a life that he describes as confused, lonely and ashamed.

"There was no conversation about sexuality and gender in our home," he says. "My parents were devout Catholics, and we went to catechism class and Mass on holy days of obligation, but nobody ever talked about what it meant to follow Christ. There was a great discrepancy between the practice of faith and what we did."

When he turned 30 and was about to buy a house, his father asked, "You're never going to get married, are you?"

Looking back on that moment, David says, "It was the only thing he ever asked me. Ever."

Today, David is a successful business analyst and a member of a spiritual support group called Courage, for men and women who experience same-sex attractions and want to live lives that follow the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Courage and its sister group EnCour-



SDI PRODUCTIONS/GETTY

age, which is for people whose loved ones experience same-sex attractions, are a Catholic apostolate of the Archdiocese of Hartford.

"Courage can be a small group, but the leverage it has is remarkable," David says. "Listening to the stories of people who are struggling is very moving. Some people are coming from painful sexual and emotional abuse, and their memories get rekindled, which can cause great sadness and such deep despair and hopelessness ... but God visits them and sustains them."

■ COMING TO TERMS WITH SAME-SEX ATTRACTIONS

Father Robert Landback is chaplain of Courage and pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Yalesville. He meets with members of both groups regularly around the Archdiocese of Hartford.

"The person in Courage is coming to terms with something that you can't change in yourself directly," Father Landback says. "Primarily, what we teach is to learn how to live with feelings that we can't change about ourselves and to live chastely."

When Courage was founded in 1980 by Cardinal Terence Cooke, then-archbishop of New York, meetings were held at St. Elizabeth Seton Church in lower Manhattan. Today, there are 168 Courage chapters in 17 countries.

The founding members of Courage developed five goals, which continue to guide the meetings and work of their apostolate:

1. To live chaste lives in accordance with the Church's teaching on homosexuality.
2. To dedicate their lives to Christ through service, prayer and the sacraments.
3. To foster fellowship so members will not have to face their problems alone.
4. To be mindful that chaste friendships are possible and necessary in a Christian life and to support one another.
5. To live lives that serve as good examples to others.

Father Landback, who is a licensed marriage and family therapist, says some members of Courage are married to people of the opposite sex and have children, but all their lives they've had some same-sex feelings and lived with that.

"They never talked about it with anybody before or let anybody know they

were dealing with this until they came to Courage," he says. "So it's important for them to learn how to accept this because sometimes people hate themselves for having same-sex attractions."

Father Landback also is chaplain of a chapter of EnCourage, which has 15 members who have children, spouses or friends with same-sex attractions or gender difficulties. EnCourage has 100 chapters in eight countries.

"The purpose of EnCourage is to help them, to keep them from panicking, becoming reactive or self-blaming, or blaming their child and turning on their child in a way that will really damage their relationship," Father Landback says. "It is almost like a therapeutic intervention so they can make a transition toward acceptance of their situation."

■ ACCEPTANCE VERSUS APPROVAL

Lois and her husband, Bob, were the last ones to suspect their daughter was in a relationship with a woman because she'd had boyfriends and for a time shared an apartment with a young man.

"Our daughter knew from the get-go this wasn't something we agreed with," Lois says. "She was 24 and out of college and dated boys and ... we had no inclination. It's a painful thing for us. EnCourage has helped us work through our feelings and talk about them. You really have to walk the road with Christ."

Bob says he was blindsided about his daughter. "She's my daughter, but I had a hard time accepting this," he says. "I accept it in other people — but they weren't my daughter — so I took a deep breath and said, 'If that's the way she wants it, I won't put up any walls or bridges for her to cross.'"

Although they have reached the point of acceptance, Lois and Bob do not approve of the relationship. Despite being asked several times, Lois refused to go with her daughter to pick out a dress for her wedding, which she and her husband will not be attending.

"You go through a lot of grieving, like you

lost what you thought you had,” Lois says.

For a long time, she lived in what she calls “an obsessive bubble.” But EnCourage helped her get beyond obsessing about it every minute, every hour, every day.

“Now, I can move forward and live my life,” Lois says. “I love her, I will always love her, and I told her, ‘You’re our daughter and you can rely on us. That’s the way it is and will always be, regardless of what you choose.’”

Oftentimes, members are torn between accepting their loved ones who experience same-sex attractions and remaining true to the Church’s teachings on the morality of homosexual actions.

EnCourage members strive to grow spiritually through prayer and the sacraments and to foster a deeper understanding of the difficulties faced by people with same-sex attraction, Father Landback says. He adds that they also work to main-

tain a healthy relationship with their loved ones and reach out in compassion and truth, while witnessing to the importance of Christ in their lives.

■ LETTING GO AND LETTING GOD

Monica and Thomas first learned about their son’s attraction to men when he was in college. They encouraged him to talk to a priest for guidance about living a chaste life. At the time, there was no support group in the archdiocese, so they approached Father Paul Check, then-director of Courage International, who urged them to avoid debating Catholic teaching about same-sex relationships with their son and move toward accepting the situation

even though they could not approve of it.

“I was antagonistic and would always bring it up and read Scripture passages and the catechism to him,” Monica recalls. “But EnCourage made me ask, ‘Is Christ my center or are my kids?’ Jesus is the center of my life, and he is with us in this. I have learned to be more fervent in



DLEWIS33/GETTY



Father Robert Landback, pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Yalesville, is chaplain of Courage and EnCourage. He meets with members of both groups regularly around the Archdiocese of Hartford.

PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH

"HOPE IS A BIG THING FOR ME. THERE ARE PARENTS WHO STRUGGLE WITH MORE SERIOUS PROBLEMS LIKE 'MY KID IS ON OPIOIDS OR MY KID IS DECEASED.' AND THERE IS NO HOPE. WHEREAS I LIVE IN HOPE ... CHRIST IS RIGHT THERE BESIDE US. I FEEL HIS PRESENCE, AND IT MAKES IT EASIER TO DEAL WITH THE CULTURAL TSUNAMI."

— Thomas (whose real name is being withheld)

my prayers. In all our tears and suffering, Christ is right there with us, and this has deepened our relationship with Jesus."

They often find that their belief in the Church's teaching puts them at odds with their Catholic friends, who say they will alienate their son if they don't condone his lifestyle.

"They ask us, 'Why wouldn't you want to make your child happy?'" Monica said. "There are a lot of Catholics who don't believe in the Church's teaching, and we live in a culture that doesn't embrace our faith."

Despite the differences of opinion, Thomas says, they maintain a close relationship with their son, who is living with a man.

"Hope is a big thing for me," he says. "There are parents who struggle with more serious problems like 'my kid is on opioids or my kid is deceased.' And there is no hope. Whereas I live in hope ... Christ is right there beside us. I feel his presence, and it makes it easier to deal with the cultural tsunami."

Father Landback says a fundamental precept of EnCourage is loving someone you don't agree with and not making the disagreement an excuse "to hate them or manipulate them or push them out of your life." Acceptance is coming to terms with a situation they cannot change.


"Jesus didn't badger people," Father Landback says. "Jesus was there when people wanted him and he was there when people needed him, and we have to do the same thing."

■ A NEW LIFE

Today, David feels relief and hope. Courage helped him escape his confusion and misery. There are people he can talk with, and together they share their problems. Eight years ago, he married a woman who has four children.

"She loves me just the way I am and we're a very happy pair," he says. "The first thing I shared with her was my same-sex attraction, and when I entered an intimate relationship with her, I realized what changes it would require. I could never have done that without God's help. God is directing me, loving me and sustaining me."

His greatest wish, he says, is that men and women with same-sex attractions who are confused or lonely seek the support of a Courage group.

"I'm sad to think there are people in the pews facing this without the help they need," David says. "Ultimately, it is Christ who can provide what they need. God doesn't turn away when he sees people struggling. He doesn't cover his eyes." 

+ **FOR MORE INFORMATION** about the Courage and EnCourage apostolate, visit couragec.org. For a list of upcoming meetings, email Father Robert Landback at aohctcourage@gmail.com or call him at Our Lady of Fatima Parish, 203. 265.0961 ext. 2

Synod delegates broke out into small groups of discussion during planning meetings.

Preparation Underway for Historic Synod



FATHER JEFFREY V. ROMANS is serving as secretary of the synod in addition to his duties as pastor of St. Bridget of Sweden Parish in Cheshire.



EDITOR'S NOTE: While the synod closing Mass is still expected to be held at the Toyota Oakdale Theatre, it has been postponed from the original May 31 date and will take place on a date following the lifting of liturgical restrictions that will be announced in the future.

It is clear to me, as secretary of the archdiocesan synod, that the 2020 Synod: Grow and Go has already made an impact. We in the synod office are constantly receiving emails or phone calls from delegates from throughout the archdiocese who are excited to get started on furthering the mission of the Church in their local parishes. It has been such an inspiration to see so many people excited and filled with hope to bring about renewal and vibrancy in their parish and in our archdiocese.

Although the closing Mass of the synod has been postponed, work is currently underway to putting the finishing touches on the synod document. Archbishop Leonard P. Blair is working on presenting to us the synod document which, as he has indicated throughout the past few months, will not so much be a pastoral letter as it will be a map for a path forward. It is our hope that this synod document will be the spark to

ignite the same enthusiasm, excitement and joy for the Gospel that we see in the delegates who attended the synod meeting in October.

The synod meeting focused on four themes:

- **Encountering Christ.**
- **Becoming missionary disciples.**
- **Sent on mission.**
- **Collaborating in the local Church.**

THE SYNOD PRAYER

Until the closing Mass of this historic synod, please pray the "Synod Prayer," which was written by Archbishop Leonard P. Blair.

Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel we hear the voice of the Father telling us to listen to you. It is your voice that we heed. It is your way that we follow. It is your Spirit who leads us into all the truth. Look kindly upon your Church in the Archdiocese of Hartford and upon the work of our archdiocesan synod. We pray that through the synod our souls may be stirred and our hearts set on fire in order to bring new energy and zeal to the mission of our local Church. May the synod inspire us to missionary discipleship, so that filled with the faith and boldness of the apostles and first Christians, we may draw others to you and to your body and bride, the Church. At Pentecost, Mary your Mother joined the apostles in imploring the gift of the Holy Spirit. By her prayers, and those of her spouse, St. Joseph, our patron, may the same Holy Spirit inspire and direct us and the work of our synod. Through you, Lord Jesus, we give glory to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Each of us has a part to play in how we, together and individually, can Grow and Go in our life as disciples of Jesus Christ. This begins by 'growing' in the faith and in personal relationship with Jesus. And it continues in our 'going' to bring that message to others. Each of us will be challenged to find ways to work together to further the mission of the Church in our families, in our particular individual parishes and throughout our archdiocesan family of faith. ☪

HBF GRANT SUPPORTS EARLY CHILDHOOD FAITH FORMATION

Information provided by **THE HARTFORD BISHOPS' FOUNDATION**



Children work in St. Ambrose Parish's 3-to-6-year-old Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Atrium.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

As part of a \$430,750 grant, The Hartford Bishops' Foundation is supporting the cost of faith formation training courses for adults seeking to become Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) catechists for children ages 3 to 12.

"The impact of this program is priceless to these children," says Judy Derbacher, a catechist at St. Ambrose Parish in North Branford. "Children who experience Catechesis of the Good Shepherd are often far more prepared and active than they have been in our traditional faith formation courses, and this grant makes that possible for more families in our community."

First developed in Rome, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd takes a unique, Montessori-based approach to engage young children in age-appropriate, hands-on materials based on sacred scripture and liturgy.

"The Montessori method is a different way of educating a child," Derbacher says. "Rather than a lesson, a presentation is given, where the child is encouraged to think for themselves, working at their own pace."

Over the past two years, St. Ambrose Parish has renovated its classroom space into an atrium, which is a specially prepared environment where children engage in a process of reflection and interactive learning as they build a deep, lifelong understanding of Christ and the Church. Each atrium provides learning materials, activities and presentations for students to learn about topics ranging from biblical history and geography to the sacraments and objects at the altar, and to other core Catholic and moral teachings.

Thanks to supporters of the Foundation-led campaign, **Forward with Faith**, Derbacher and 30 catechists representing six individual parishes are currently undergoing training courses at St. Patrick-St. Anthony Parish in Hartford at a reduced cost. Over the next two years, The Hartford Bishops' Foundation seeks to raise a minimum of \$80 million through the **Forward with Faith** Campaign that will be invested in new programs like CGS that are designed to strengthen faith communities across the archdiocese.

"The Hartford Bishops' Foundation's support allowed for participation to become much more accessible," says Kelly Henderschedt, the archdiocesan director of Catechesis. "For many years, participants were traveling out of state to attend trainings. Being able to offer this program locally and at a reduced tuition for catechists creates so many possibilities for this program to flourish."

Derbacher shared that her parish community is already witnessing positive outcomes from the program.

"We have already seen an influx of altar servers coming out of CGS this year," she says. "The training has been such a positive experience for the adults as well. Every one of us is enamored with the program and excited to share what we have learned with others."

Henderschedt reflected on the impact the **Forward with Faith** Campaign could have on other parish communities like St. Ambrose. "Our hope is to continue seeing CGS atriums created in the future," she says. "**Forward with Faith** has the potential to make programs like CGS more affordable to parishes and families to help ensure their communities are vibrant for generations to come."



Children work with materials on Christ's "Parable of the Leaven."

SUBMITTED PHOTO

TO LEARN MORE about The Hartford Bishops' Foundation and the **Forward with Faith** Campaign, visit hartfordbishopsfoundation.org or call 860.761.7455.

BUILDING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

Cursillos in Christianity Movement brings people closer to Jesus.

Story by **SHELLEY WOLF** | Photos by **AARON JOSEPH**

Kate Harrington, a 50-something Catholic from Precious Blood Parish in Milford, was looking for something more. She longed to meet other Catholics with whom she could openly share her personal faith life.

"I was looking for more like-minded prayer folks who would understand me when I talk about my love of God and Church and Scripture," she says.

Harrington discovered those kindred spirits through the Cursillos in Christianity Movement, which has been making a comeback in the Archdiocese of Hartford in the past two years. *Cursillos*, pronounced kur-see-yos, is Spanish for "short courses" in Christianity.

A lay apostolate within the Catholic Church, Cursillos in Christianity is an evangelization movement that began in Spain in 1944. It arrived in the United States in the late 1960s and was popular in the Archdiocese of Hartford until the early 2000s, when it fell dormant as lead-

ers aged out of participation. However, in 2018 a new crop of Catholics received permission from Archbishop Leonard P. Blair to resurrect the lay apostolate as a diocesan movement. Today, it's estimated that as many as 2,000 people might be participating in Cursillo faith sharing groups across the archdiocese.

Through participation in the Cursillo Movement, Harrington says she met two other women who agreed to meet every week as part of a small "friendship group." The women met at diners in West Haven and New Haven where they would have coffee and talk.

It's great," Harrington says. "I get book



Jim and Kathy Renzulli, at left in blue shirt and rust sweater respectively, and Father Carlos Zapata in the black and gray argyle sweater, attend the Cursillo Leadership School hosted at St. Anne parish hall, part of All Saints/Todos Los Santos Parish, Waterbury.



Three leaders in the Cursillo Leadership School discuss how they see God working in their lives.

CURSILLO RETREATS, MASS

At press time, a Cursillo Women's Weekend was scheduled for June 4 to 7, and a Men's Weekend for June 25 to 28. Both weekends will be held at Immaculate Conception Spiritual Renewal Center in Putnam. For more information and updates on Cursillo gatherings, visit hartfordcursillo.org.

A Cursillo Archdiocesan Mass is slated for Sept. 26, 6 p.m., at St. Jerome Church in New Britain. Archbishop Leonard P. Blair will celebrate the Mass with Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus Peter A. Rosazza and nearly a dozen clergy members as concelebrants.

ideas and affirmations of our closest moment to Christ this week. It's so fabulous and freeing to have someone confirm for me that's real."

Sometimes, she adds, she shares her prayer intentions. "I love sharing. It renews my faith to lift someone up, and two minutes later they're lifting me up. It's so great not to be judged or disparaged. These people are excited and want to hear it. It's a fabulous dynamic."

These gatherings became so important to the group that throughout the coronavirus scare, they are continuing to reflect on their faith through FaceTime conference calls on their computers every week. "This gives faith the attention it deserves," Harrington says. "And for me, I think it helps me grow."

ONGOING FORMATION

Kathy Renzulli, Cursillo lay director within the archdiocese since April 2018, has been reaching out to former participants in the Cursillo Movement and attracting new participants like Harrington in an effort to re-energize the movement.

"The whole idea is to give people an opportunity to have a closer relationship with Christ. That's our entire mission," Renzulli says.

A former youth minister, Renzulli says she entered the movement in 1998 after a Cursillo Weekend retreat. "I had been

on many other retreats and I wasn't really looking for anything," she recalls. "But I had not seen anything like this, where people committed to ongoing formation. They had a leadership school for leaders. It was a continuous process."

At that time, she lived in the Diocese of Bridgeport and joined a small friendship group there. She later moved to the Archdiocese of Hartford and joined a similar group in Oxford. "Once I was introduced to a friendship group, I stayed with them for many years," she says. "Their support and continued Christian witness to me was something not seen anywhere else."

The Cursillo Movement, Renzulli says, is unique among evangelization move-

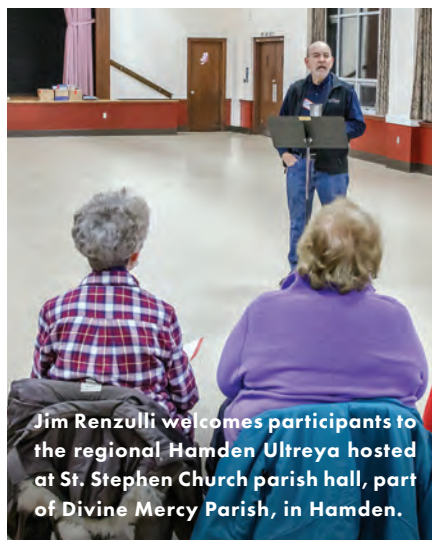
ments because of its ongoing training for leaders, the involvement and support of clergy and frequent gatherings for sustained spiritual support. It also combines a mix of personal insight from its participants with Church teaching that results in lifelong spiritual development and growth.

Active members typically invite friends to a three-day Cursillo weekend. People are welcome to continue that experience locally in weekly men's and women's small friendship group reunions. Members may also gather monthly with the larger Cursillo community in co-ed regional meetings, known as *ultreyas*, at host parishes in New Britain, Ansonia, Waterbury, Orange and Hamden.

SEEING WITH NEW EYES

A few years ago, Steve Schneider of St. Thomas Parish in Oxford was invited to gather on a Saturday morning with five other men at a parishioner's home. At the time, he had no idea how that small friendship group meeting would change his life.

After a half hour of socializing over coffee and pastry, the men reflected on how God had worked in their lives throughout the past week. They shared the impact of prayer on their personal lives, discussed what they had read on their own in various spiritual readings



Jim Renzulli welcomes participants to the regional Hamden Ultreya hosted at St. Stephen Church parish hall, part of Divine Mercy Parish, in Hamden.

and revealed anything they saw as a visible manifestation of God.

"I shared something of myself and I got a lot out of it," Schneider now says. At that time, he was grieving the loss of a family member. "I went week after week and I really fell in love with it — with the idea that I could share with other guys in my faith and in a safe place."

Through those intimate conversations with trusted friends, Schneider says he also grew closer to Jesus. He now credits the small group meetings and a subsequent retreat weekend for cementing his connection to Christ.

"I never had a personal relationship with Jesus until a few years back," Schneider says. "I'm a lifelong Catholic. I didn't really understand. I kind of showed up at Mass and did what I was supposed to. Until you fully grasp who you are

encountering, faith becomes very intellectual or is at arms length."

Schneider has found the Cursillo gatherings at all levels to be invaluable in supporting that personal faith. In addition to the weekly friendship group, he also attends the monthly Ansonia Ultreya hosted at Holy Rosary Parish in Ansonia.

"You're part of a larger community," he says. "You get to meet more people you can learn from. Everybody is there to help support our journey. We don't have all the answers but understand we're all in this together."

Schneider says he has read at least 30 spiritual and other books that have strengthened his faith, thanks to recommendations from his Cursillo friends. By listening to their faith experiences, he has also learned the value of listening. It has made him a better listener, he says, im-

proving all of his personal relationships.

But most important, he has learned to see his life through the eyes of faith. "Every week, I see something divine that I never would have noticed," Schneider says. "I can see God's work in action. It makes my faith more real."

SHARING THE EXPERIENCE

Sister Clare Millea, the archdiocesan liaison to the Cursillo Movement and assistant chancellor and director of the Office of Faith and Culture, attended a Cursillo Weekend retreat herself and the New Britain Ultreya meetings hosted at St. Jerome Church, part of Divine Providence Parish, in New Britain.

"I thought it was wonderful, and I enjoyed the weekend," Sister Clare says. "I think we were all so edified by the experiences of everybody else in the group. It's so encouraging in your own faith journey to hear other people's struggles and how God is working in their lives."

Though the Cursillo Movement is being rebuilt slowly in the archdiocese, Sister Clare says she is happy to see it make a comeback.

"I know the archbishop has said many times in my presence when the topic has come up, these prayer groups, whatever they are, are key to bringing us to a deeper relationship with Jesus," she explains. "And so he's in favor of anything that can help us to know Jesus better, to see him as a real person and as our friend, and then

go out and invite others to share the experience."

Harrington agrees. She believes the groups within the Cursillo Movement can help anyone who wants to deepen his/her connection to Christ. "I feel it's a best kept secret," she says. "It should be a best kept constant." **CT**

"EVERY WEEK, I SEE SOMETHING DIVINE THAT I NEVER WOULD HAVE NOTICED. I CAN SEE GOD'S WORK IN ACTION. IT MAKES MY FAITH MORE REAL."

— Steve Schneider



Father Joseph DiSciaccia, center, pastor of Divine Mercy Parish, shares his perspective with a small breakout group before delivering a teaching at the Hamden Ultreya. At right, participants at the Hamden Ultreya share their own personal faith experiences.

The Priest In a World Without Public Mass



FATHER MICHAEL CASEY
is the director of vocations for
the Archdiocese of Hartford.

Who would have thought of the possibility that all public Masses would be suspended and all communal worship put on hold? For most of us, that was the reality that began in late March and at the time of this writing is still in effect. The weekly worship of God has been part of our routine since before we can remember; Sunday Mass has also been a staple of our social existence. And then, one day it all stopped. This suspension of public Mass can allow us to contemplate two important points regarding the priesthood.

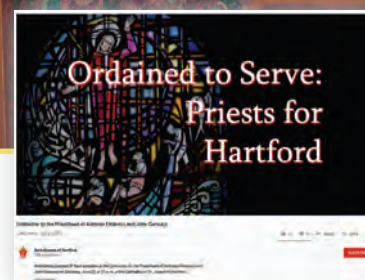
The first is that we need priests to celebrate Mass. Our experience can be likened to the visit of the third spirit in *The Christmas Carol*. A world where we cannot go to Mass is what could be our reality if men don't continue to answer God's call.

We need to use this moment as Scrooge did, to shake us out of the complacency that Mass and our priests are a sure thing. If we don't change now, and if good men do not continue to answer God's call with the encouragement of their families and the support of their community, then spring 2020 will honestly be a preview of things to come.

The second, is that as long as we do have priests, they will continue to pray for

us, whether we can physically be there or not. When he celebrates Mass privately, the priest still uses all the "we" forms of prayers. He speaks to God on behalf of all the people. Today and throughout the entirety of this time of suspension of public Masses, our priests are still bringing our prayers to God.

The priesthood is not primarily about being a community leader or a motivational speaker. The priesthood is about offering sacrifice *in persona Christi*, which means in the person of Christ. Our priests continue to pray for us as Jesus continues to pray for us. Our priest's first job always has been to pray and offer sacrifice. Maybe this time of separation from them can help us each have a re-



TO SEE A VIDEO of the ordination to the priesthood of Anthony Federico and John Gancarz at the Cathedral of St. Joseph last June, visit youtube.com/archdioceseofhartfordct.

newed appreciation for that reality.

Let's each try to appreciate the gift we have been given in this time without public Mass, so we can renew our understanding and appreciation for what the priesthood really is, and resolve to ensure that our Church has priests for generations to come. 🙏

GOD IS CALLING NEW VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD, RELIGIOUS LIFE AND THE DIACONATE. ARE YOU ONE OF THEM? If you think God may be calling you, do not be afraid. Visit archdioceseofhartford.org/vocations or call the Office of Vocations, 860.761.7456.



*“I Will Let Fall
from Heaven a
Shower of Roses”*

*Plan a pilgrimage to honor
the “Little Flower.”*

Story and photos by KAREN A. AVITABILE

EDITOR’S NOTE: During the coronavirus shutdown, St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish and Shrine remained open for private prayer and reflection but Masses did not take place. Peter Lamoria, who works in the office, reported a steady stream of people walking the grounds, praying in Church or remaining in their parked cars.

“St. Theresa, please pick me a rose flower and send it to me as a sign of my answered prayers.”

“Theresa, give me strength and peace to find love in my heart.”

“Dear Theresa, please intercede to Jesus for Stephen’s needs. Our love and thank you. Please send me roses.”

“Please pray for the world.”

These petitions to St. Theresa (or Thérèse) are real, and were recently placed in front of her statues at St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish and Shrine, the only place of pilgrimage in Rhode Island.

Founded in 1923, four months after St. Theresa was beatified, the shrine is set on rolling hills along with *Scala Sancta* (Holy Stairs) leading to a reproduction of the Limpas crucifix, a towering granite Stations of the Cross, a saints’ garden, an outdoor altar, a shrine of candles amid various holy statuary in a grotto-like structure and a rosary walk with statues of St. Theresa of Lisieux and St. Teresa of Calcutta at the entrance.

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish and Shrine in Burrillville was the first in the country dedicated to St. Theresa of Lisieux, also known affectionately as the Little Flower.

Pilgrims come from afar to honor St. Theresa who say they have a deep spiritual connection with her. Many visitors bring serious petitions for themselves or loved ones that are placed around her statues. Many visitors to the shrine have told poignant stories of favors received from St. Theresa over the years.

At age 15, St. Theresa entered a Carmelite monastery with a desire to assist God in the work of saving souls for all eternity. Although suffering loss in her own life, St. Theresa also experienced the joy of a great healing through divine grace, which she documented in her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*.

“My mission to make God loved will begin after my death.

I will spend my heaven doing good on earth. I will let fall a shower of roses,” St. Theresa says in her autobiography, which was published after her death.

St. Theresa, who died at the age of 24, was canonized on May 17, 1925, by Pope Pius XI.



The shrine’s outdoor chapel is used for the feast day Mass. This year, the feast day will be observed on Aug. 16.



A statue of St. Teresa of Calcutta, also known as Mother Teresa, is located at the entrance of the rosary walk.



Holy Stairs.

My Novena Rose Prayer

O Little Theresa of the Child Jesus, please pick for me a rose from the heavenly gardens and send it to me as a message of love.

O Little Flower of Jesus, ask God today to grant the favors I now place with confidence in your hands (mention specific request).

St. Theresa, help me to always believe as you did, in God's great love for me, so that I might imitate your "little way" each day. Amen.

— From the Society of the Little Flower, Darien, Ill.

BEFORE YOU GO

- St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish and Shrine is located at 35 Dion Drive, Burrillville, R.I. Visit the church, chapel, outdoor shrine, Holy Stairs, Way of the Cross, saints' garden and gift shop on the property.
- The outdoor grounds and the shrine are open daily from dusk to dawn, seven days a week. St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish is open daily, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., for private prayer.
- Mass is offered daily Mondays through Thursdays, 8:30 a.m. On Sundays (winter schedule), Mass is offered at 8 and 11:30 a.m. From June through September, Mass is offered on Saturdays at 4:30 p.m. and on Sundays, 11:30 a.m. Confessions are heard on Saturdays, 3:30 to 4:15 p.m. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament takes place on Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Visitors can spend the day at the shrine. Facilities are available for outdoor picnics. For more information, call 401.568.8280 or visit burrillvillecatholic.org. ☺

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- The Mass is broadcast at 10 a.m. 7 days a week on WCCT Channel 20 and now additionally on WCTX, MyTV9. It also airs at 5 a.m. Saturday and Sunday.
- Online streaming is available at www.ORTV.org live weekdays or anytime on-demand.

A 'Safe Place'

Catholic Charities provides care for infants, toddlers.

Story by JACK SHEEDY

EDITOR'S NOTE: Throughout 2020, the Catholic Transcript is highlighting some of the programs run by Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of Hartford that help individuals and families of all faiths in the community. Catholic Charities marks 100 years of service in the archdiocese this year.



Autumn Kunkel has been receiving instruction through the Infant and Toddler program. Her mom, Jaclyn, works at the Child Development Center in Waterbury.

PHOTO BY JACK SHEEDY

Catholic Charities Child Development Center in Waterbury was bustling on a crisp Friday morning, as parents led or carried youngsters into classrooms as colorful as their names: Little Monkey (for infants and toddlers), Tiger and Panda Bear (for preschool children).



Children in Catholic Charities Child Development Center in Waterbury play with each other in the Infant-Toddler program.

This facility, at 965 South Main St., houses Catholic Charities' Infant-Toddler program that provides nurturing, educational care for infants and children, ages 6 weeks to 3 years old, to working families in the Greater Waterbury area.

"We have families from different religious backgrounds," Jennifer Caraballo, director of child and family development for Catholic Charities, says. "We are the community."

Part of the mission of Catholic Charities is to partner with everyone to strengthen families and to inspire people to achieve their fullest potential, she says.

"We try to service the entire family," Caraballo adds. "That's why our programs are so very special, and that's why I have been here for 16 years, because I truly do believe in this mission."

One of the teachers, Jaclyn Kunkel, has worked at the center for nine years. She is also a parent of one of the toddlers. Her daughter, Autumn Kunkel, has been involved since she was 5 months old and she's in preschool [school readiness] now.

"From working here, I saw how the interactions were and the milestones that they meet and the guidelines, and I felt it

was like home," Kunkel says.

The Infant-Toddler program is licensed by the state Department of Public Health. Programming runs full day/ full year, with the center open Mondays through Fridays. Catholic Charities also assists children enrolled in the Infant-Toddler program with the transition to its school readiness programming for 3-to-5-year-olds.

"The parents need a safe place to bring their children so they can go to work," Caraballo says. "They're vulnerable children. They can't speak. They need a place where they can build this trust and this bond and where they know their child is going to be safe and well taken care of."

Teachers often encourage infants to crawl by placing toys around them. "We call this tummy time," Caraballo says. "In the toddler program, they do other things, like now they're getting into storytelling."

Kunkel says she plans to continue her career helping other kids even after her daughter leaves in August to attend kindergarten.

"This program has helped me a lot, especially being a single mom," she says. "I've always enjoyed kids. I love seeing from when they're first born to them reaching every milestone that they could reach. My daughter's going to be 5 in October, and she knew all her colors, her numbers, everything by the time she was 2. She's writing her own name now. She's been doing that before she was even 4 because of here." ❧



TO LEARN MORE about Catholic Charities, call 1.888.405.1183 or visit ccaoh.org.

ST. DAMIEN OF MOLOKAI: 'LEPER PRIEST' IN HAWAII

FEAST DAY: MAY 10

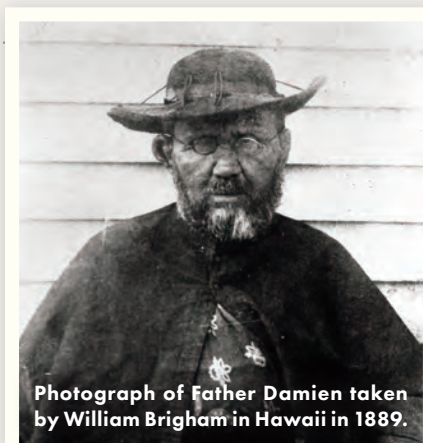
Born into a poor, Belgian farming family in 1840, Joseph De Veuster left school at age 13 to work on his parents' farm. Six years later, Joseph joined his brother in the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, taking the name Damien.

His life of mission began in 1864, when he volunteered to take his brother's place as a missionary on the Hawaiian Islands. For several years, Damien served in Honolulu, until the bishop asked for volunteers to serve the quarantined lepers on Molokai.

In 1873, at the request of the bishop, Damien left for Molokai, where he took up residence and served as an advocate for the lepers. Father Damien became

known as the "leper priest." He devoted his life to care for their physical, medical and spiritual needs and built houses, a church, a school and an orphanage. A leprosy sufferer once wrote, "He overwhelms us with his care, and he himself builds our houses."

After finally contracting leprosy himself, Damien died five years later in 1889, giving his life to the people he volunteered to serve. He was canonized in 2009



Photograph of Father Damien taken by William Brigham in Hawaii in 1889.

WILLIAM BRIGHAM / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PUBLIC DOMAIN

by Pope Benedict XVI. Father Damien's example of self-sacrifice and Christ-like care for the sick make him a saint for our times. After Hawaii became a state in 1959, St. Damien was chosen to be one of the representatives for the state in the National Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol.

St. Damien of Molokai Parish Embraces Hawaiian Aspects of Its Patron Saint

BY SHELLEY WOLF



Parishioner Betty Caruso stands beside the image she painted of St. Damien of Molokai.

COURTESY OF ST. DAMIEN OF MOLOKAI PARISH

Father John Melnick and the parishioners at St. Damien of Molokai Parish in Windsor are finding plenty of inspiration in their patron saint.

"St. Damien is an excellent example of what it means to be 'selfless,'" says Father Melnick, pastor of the parish. "He left his native Belgium to minister to the lepers at Molokai. He was not just their priest, but was their doctor, advocate and friend. He immersed himself in the community to assist them in all aspects. Ultimately, he contracted the disease himself in his last selfless act."

St. Damien of Molokai Parish was formed in 2017 through the mergers of St. Gabriel and St. Joseph parishes, and parishioners at both worship sites have made the most of their patron saint ever since. After the parish naming, they viewed a film on the life of the saint and adopted the Hawaiian symbol of welcome — the pineapple — on the signs outside of each worship site.

Parishioner Betty Caruso painted a portrait of the saint that hangs in the refectory conference room, while copies are displayed at St. Gabriel and St. Joseph churches and at St. Gabriel School. Additionally, parishioners honor St. Damien every year on the feast of Corpus Christi — this year on June 14, following the 11 a.m. Mass — with a eucharistic procession, benediction and a Hawaiian-style parish picnic.

"The celebration begins with a eucharistic procession from St. Gabriel Church down the road to a parishioner's horse farm, which is located on the banks of the Connecticut River," Father Melnick says. "We conclude the procession with benediction, with the Connecticut River as a backdrop. Then we celebrate with a parish luau, complete with a roasted pig." **CT**



May 9

KREICHER/GETTY



May 31

JANIFEST/GETTY

MARK YOUR

EDITOR'S NOTE: *At press time, the events listed here were scheduled. For questions, call the phone numbers or check the websites provided for each event.*

MASS FOR PREGNANCY LOSS AND INFERTILITY

A special Mass for anyone who has experienced infertility or pregnancy loss of any kind, including miscarriage, abortion, stillbirth or early infant death, as well as loved ones and those who support them, will be held on **May 9**, 10 a.m., at St. Joseph Church, 129 Edwards St., New Haven, with celebrant Father John Paul Walker. The event will include a candle-lighting ceremony followed by a light reception. R.S.V.P. is not required. For more information, call 203.562.6193.

EVENSONG AT ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

To promote major liturgical and cultural gifts of the Anglican tradition, OrdinariateCT puts on monthly, fully sung Evensong. The next one will be held on **May 24**, 6:30 p.m., after the 5 p.m. Mass, at St. Francis of Assisi Parish, 1755 Stanley St., New Britain. Evensong is the Anglican combination of the traditional Roman offices (daily, non-eucharistic prayer services) of vespers and compline (evening and nighttime prayers). A potluck dinner in the church basement will follow. For more information, visit ordinariatect.com.

ST. ANDREW APOSTLE SOCIETY MARKS 120TH ANNIVERSARY

St. Andrew Apostle Society, at 515 Chapel St., New Haven, is marking its 120th anniversary year in 2020. The society works to preserve the culture and traditions of the Amalfitani immigrants in New Haven and to support the local community. Contributions from businesses and individuals, as well as the dedication of its members, make this possible. A feast kickoff dinner will be held on **May 31** at Anthony's Ocean View Restaurant. To purchase a ticket, call 203.887.8772. The blessing of the fleet will be held

on **June 14** in New Haven Harbor. The Festa di Sant'Andrea is set for **June 25 to 28**, at 515 Chapel St., New Haven. The St. Andrew Festa is the only remaining Italian festival in the greater New Haven area and offers Italian food and lots of entertainment. For more information or a lineup of the entertainers scheduled for the Festa, visit ssaanewhaven.com.

WJMJ RADIO-THON SET

WJMJ is one of Connecticut's most popular radio stations and is operated by the Archdiocese of Hartford Office of Radio and Television. WJMJ is a non-commercial radio station and is listener-supported by fundraising events twice a year, including biannual radio-thons. The next radio-thon will run **June 11 to 15**. During this time, listeners will have the opportunity to pledge a donation by calling 877.342.5656 or make a credit card donation on the station's website, wjmj.org



PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH

FIND YOUR GREATNESS

The Church of the Incarnation and Christ the King Parish, both in Wethersfield, and St. Josephine Bahkita Parish in Rocky Hill are co-hosting a Dynamic Catholic event, "Find Your Greatness, Four Habits that will Transform Your Life," with Dr. Allen Hunt on **June 13**, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at The Church of the Incarnation, 544 Prospect St., Wethersfield. Based on Matthew Kelly's book, *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic*, this event will introduce you to four simple habits that will help you reach your full potential. Tickets, which are \$25, can be purchased at Dynamiccatholic.com, or by calling 859.980.7900. For more information, call 860.529.6765 ext. 6.



DR. ALLEN HUNT

SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO



June 13

SDI PRODUCTIONS/GETTY



Last Sunday of
every month

PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH

CALENDAR

YOUNG ADULTS INVITED TO CROSSROADS4CHRIST EVENT

On **June 13**, at the Hartford Marriott Downtown, 200 Columbus Blvd., Hartford, join Crossroads4Christ in finding a reason for hope in the person of Jesus Christ, and learn how to share this hope with the world. The day will be filled with inspiring keynotes, practical breakout sessions, opportunities for spiritual nourishment, ample time to connect with other young adults and entertainment. The event is open to all young adults between the ages of 18 and 39. Scholarships are available. If you are not a young adult, consider donating a scholarship ticket. Visit crossroadsforchrist.org for the time of the event, more details and registration. For more information about giving a scholarship, sponsorship and vendors, email sponsorships@crossroadsforchrist.org. Registration through May 26 is \$75 and \$95 from May 27 to June 5.

FRANCISCAN SPORTS BANQUET TO HONOR ELI MANNING

The 35th annual Franciscan Sports Banquet and Silent Auction will be held on **Sept. 1**, 5:30 to 9 p.m., at the Aqua Turf Club, Plantsville. Sports celebrities to be honored for their Christian values include Eli Manning, legendary quarterback of the New York Giants; Jackie DiNardo, head girls' basketball coach of Danbury High School; Andy Bessette, executive vice president and chief administrative officer of Travelers; Nathan Grube, executive director of Travelers Championship; Rich Marazzi, author and Major League Baseball rules consultant; Tom and Donna Finn, marriage and family advocates; Special Olympics Connecticut and others. Tickets, which include dinner, are \$65. The event benefits the Franciscan Life Center and Franciscan Home Care and Hospice Care. To R.S.V.P. and for tickets, call 203.237.8084 or visit flcenter.org.



CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOSEPH TOURS

Parishioners at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford will offer guided cathedral tours the **last Sunday of every month**,

following the 11 a.m. Mass. Tours will run monthly throughout the year and beyond. All are welcome. The Sunday tours are intended for individuals, families and small groups. Large group tours can be arranged separately by calling the rectory at 860.249.8431 to schedule an appointment. The Cathedral of St. Joseph is located at 140 Farmington Ave., Hartford. Parking is available behind the cathedral and can be accessed from Asylum Avenue, along with a handicapped-accessible entrance.

WEEKLY MASS FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED

When public Masses have resumed, St. Anthony Church in Prospect welcomes everyone to a Mass for the hearing impaired with an interpreter **every Sunday**, 9:30 a.m. For more information, call the parish center at 203.758.4056 or email stanthonymadmin@comcast.net.

HEALING MASS IN WEST HARTFORD

When public Masses have resumed, a healing Mass is held the **last Sunday of the month**, 1 p.m., at St. Thomas the Apostle Church, 872 Farmington Ave., West Hartford. The Mass is celebrated by Father Ray Introvigne with a healing prayer by Judith Hughes. Healing teams are also available. For more information, call 860.874.1431.

CATHOLIC CHURCH ANNULMENTS

Many Catholics have asked the following questions about the Church's position on divorce, annulments and marriage: "Can a divorced person receive holy Communion?" "Can a divorced person marry in the Catholic Church?" "Why might a non-Catholic consider or need an annulment?" "Does a divorced person need an annulment when the marriage was performed only by a justice of the peace?" Often, these questions and others have been met with misleading, misguided and sometimes wrong responses. For more information, contact the Metropolitan Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Hartford at 860.541.6491, visit archdioceseofhartford.org/metropolitan-marriage-tribunal or send a message to tribunal@aohct.org.



RITE OF ELECTION AND CALL TO CONTINUING CONVERSION — For the first Sunday of Lent, 282 people from 50 parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Hartford, along with their godparents, families and friends, were welcomed by Archbishop Leonard P. Blair to the Cathedral of St. Joseph for the combined Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion in preparation for reception into the Catholic Church.



AROUND THE ARCHDIOCESE



CONFIRMATION — Archbishop Leonard P. Blair confirmed 62 high school students from multiple parishes at the Cathedral of St. Joseph on the Second Sunday of Lent.





While the obituary for Rev. L. Randall Blackall was printed in our April issue, it mistakenly included a picture of his brother, Rev. John C. Blackall. Here is a re-print of his obituary with the correct photograph.

Rev. L. Randall Blackall died on Feb. 13, 2020. He was born on Jan. 18, 1929. In 1954, he was ordained to the priesthood in the Cathedral of

St. Joseph. He began his ministry at St. Ann Parish in Hamden, followed by St. Mary in Derby and St. John the Evangelist in New Haven. In 1961, he was appointed archdiocese director of Family Life. He served as a strong advocate for pro-life and developed programs for young people and those engaged to be married. He served as chaplain of the then-St. Francis Orphan Society in New Haven, was spiritual director of the New Haven Curia of the Legion of Mary, served at St. Thomas Parish in Goshen and St. Timothy Church, West Hartford. He completed his active ministry as the pastor of St. Paul Church, Glastonbury. He studied at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield and St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester, N.Y., received a doctorate of ministry degree from the Hartford Seminary and was an adjunct professor of moral theology at Holy Apostles College, Cromwell. In addition, he has edited and written several books, including *Design For Marriage* which grew out of his work with his family life ministry.



SISTER MARY CEPHA EUELL, a Parish Visitor of Mary Immaculate, died on Feb. 23, 2020, at Marycrest Convent in Monroe, N.Y. She was 95 years old and professed for 67 years. She entered the Parish Visitors on Dec. 8, 1950, professing first vows on July 2, 1952, and perpetual vows on July 2, 1955. Born in the Bronx, she graduated

from Catholic schools in New York City and from Hunter College, New York City, and the University of Dayton.

For 17 years, Sister Mary Cepha served at St. Paul's Church in West Haven doing parish family visitation and providing religious education. From 1958 to 1962, she arranged 50 public service television programs for the Archdiocese of Hartford as a participant, a director, a producer and a writer. From 1961 to 1963, she was the religious education coordinator of the Archdiocese of Hartford training catechists, surveying religious education programs and providing other services as needed.



Knights of Columbus Past Supreme Knight **VIRGIL C. DECHANT** died on Feb. 16, 2020, in Leawood, Kan. He was the order's longest-serving supreme knight, holding the office from 1977 to 2000.

He joined the Knights in 1949 and was a member of LaCrosse (Kansas) Council 2970 and St. Augustine Council 2340 in Liebanthal, Kan. A

very successful businessman, in addition to operating a private farm in Kansas, he owned and operated his own car dealership and farm equipment firm. He came to New Haven in 1967 to serve as the supreme secretary for the Knights of Columbus at its headquarters. Ten years later, he was elected supreme knight, a post he held until 2000.

As supreme knight, he oversaw tremendous growth in the order's membership as well as in its assets and insurance business, while also opening the order to greater involvement by the wives and families of its members. In addition, he forged a close relationship with the Vatican during the pontificate of St. John Paul II, leading the order to sponsor numerous renovation projects — including of the façade of St. Peter's Basilica — and working with the pope to promote the faith in Eastern Europe, which was then behind the Iron Curtain.

He held 16 honorary degrees and was named a Knight of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, a Knight of St. Gregory the Great, a

Knight Grand Cross in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre and a Knight Grand Cross in the Order of Pius IX, the highest honor granted to a Catholic layman who is not a head of state. At the time of his death, he was serving as a consigliere to the Vatican City State. In 2012, he received the Gaudium et Spes Award, the highest honor bestowed by the Knights of Columbus, awarded only in special circumstances to individuals of exceptional merit.



Rev. Thomas William Hickey, pastor of St. Mary Magdalen Parish in Oakville, died unexpectedly in his rectory residence on March 13, 2020. He was born July 25, 1949, in New Smyrna Beach, Fla., the son of the late William and Mary (Miller) Hickey. He completed theological training at Western Theological Seminary in Port-

land, Ore., and spent more than 25 years of his life as a Baptist minister.

He was received into full communion with the Catholic Church in 2002, and a few years later began studies to become a priest of the Archdiocese of Hartford at Holy Apostles Seminary in Cromwell. He was ordained to the priesthood by the Most Rev. Henry J. Mansell at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford on May 15, 2010.

Father Hickey's first assignment was as parochial vicar for St. Paul Church and St. Augustine Church in Glastonbury. In addition to part-time work teaching Scripture at Holy Apostles Seminary and his contribution on bodies like the Presbyteral Council, he would later serve as administrator and then pastor of St. Stephen Church in Hamden (which would later become part of Divine Mercy Parish), senior parochial vicar of Sacred Heart Parish in Suffield and finally, pastor of St. Mary Magdalen Parish.



Archdiocese of Hartford
Office of Safe Environment
467 Bloomfield Ave.,
Bloomfield, CT 06002



HOW TO REPORT AN INCIDENT OF SEXUAL ABUSE TO THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

If you have knowledge or suspect that a minor or vulnerable adult (an adult with an intellectual disability) has been sexually abused, in any manner, by personnel of the Archdiocese of Hartford, you are urged to report this information to:

Kathleen D. Nowosadko, Victim Assistance Coordinator
860-541-6475 • kathleen.nowosadko@aohct.org

Incidents involving sexual abuse of minors (persons under the age of 18) should be reported to: **State Department of Children and Families**
Care-line 1-800-842-2288

Incidents involving sexual abuse of vulnerable adults aged 18-59 should be reported to the: **Connecticut Department of Developmental Services – AID Division for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities**
1-844-878-8923

Incidents involving sexual abuse of vulnerable adults aged 60 and over should be reported to: **Department of Social Services for the Elderly**
1-888-385-4225



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MAY 2020

Important Information for the Community About **COVID-19**.



At Trinity Health Of New England, we are proud to be your trusted health care partner for life. We want to provide you with continual, timely information around COVID-19 to ensure you feel prepared and safe. Below is a list of resources available to you, as well as some updates about measures we have taken to ensure we are delivering the highest quality care to the people who need us.

- Trinity Health Of New England continues to partner with state and local authorities to monitor COVID-19 and ensure we are prepared. Our 24/7 incident command team is in place, led by Infectious Disease experts and clinicians.
- Our website, TrinityHealthOfNE.org provides updated information and answers to frequently asked questions.
- A **Community COVID-19 hotline**, staffed by clinicians, has been set up for our community to reach out with questions and concerns. You can reach us everyday at **1-888-786-2790** from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.
- We have opened three drive-through mobile centers to test patients for COVID-19. The centers, located at Saint Francis Hospital, Saint Mary's Hospital and Johnson Memorial Hospital, require a physician's order and proper identification. To learn more about our mobile centers, visit our website, TrinityHealthOfNE.org.
- For the protection of our patients, colleagues, and the community, all Trinity Health Of New England hospitals are currently closed to visitors, with the exception of compassionate visits. Compassionate visits include our labor and delivery units, hospice care, pediatric care, and companions for outpatient surgeries and procedures. Compassionate visits are limited to one visitor per patient at a time.

Together, we will continue to serve our communities with the same caring and excellence Trinity Health Of New England is known for. Our top priority remains the safety of our patients, colleagues, and community. Thank you for trusting us during this period of uncertainty and know that we are here for you.

