

Parish News

Bishop blesses new Padre Pio prayer group

By JOE PISANI

MONROE—Bishop Frank J. Caggiano told members of the Padre Pio Prayer Group of Fairfield County that one of the famous traits of their patron was “He told it like it is. He didn’t mince words.”

In his homily during Mass at the group’s monthly meeting at St. Jude Parish, the bishop said Padre Pio’s words cut through “the mess and confusion and chaos of this world.”

“He understood and believed and lived the basic faith that everything is due to Jesus,” the bishop said. “Everything is his, and Padre Pio gave Jesus his entire life. Every breath and everything he did was given to the Lord who was his God. That is what motivated his prayer.”

St. Pio of Pietrelcina, whose feast day is September 23, was an Italian Capuchin friar and priest, who was a mystic and shared the stigmata of Christ. He is recognized as one of the most beloved saints of the modern era.

Bishop Caggiano blessed members of the recently formed prayer group in a special service that attracted faithful from throughout the diocese and was followed by a talk by Susan De Bartoli, author of three books about the saint and one about to be published on his letters to spir-

itual directors.

In her presentation, De Bartoli, owner of Little Flower Tours and Travel in New York, shared stories about Padre Pio and his message to the world.

“If you asked him what you should do, he would say, ‘Love Our Lady, say the Rosary, and you will love God,’” De Bartoli said. “His mantra was ‘Pray, hope and don’t worry.’ And no matter what happened, he would tell people, ‘Pray the Rosary.’”

Bonnie Thibodeau, who began the group, said it has 35 members from parishes in Shelton, Newtown, Trumbull and Monroe.

“We hope that the blessing of the bishop will increase that,” she said. “Many of our members have been looking for fellowship with people with a similar devotion to Padre Pio and are finding the connection with the group to be very beneficial.”

Thibodeau’s co-coordinators are Dana Keyser and Erica Riley, who said, “I am very blessed to be able to bring Padre Pio to people.”

The group meets the first Saturday of every month at St. Jude with Rosary at 8:30 am, followed by Mass, when prayer petitions are presented during the offertory. After Mass there is a social hour and a speaker or video about the life of the saint, Thibodeau said.

Bishop Caggiano urged them to



model their lives after Padre Pio.

“If we say, ‘Jesus is my Lord and Savior,’ how often do we spend time with him?” the bishop asked. “How often do we allow him to guide our decisions and actions? Or do we find ourselves in that divided world that unfortunately afflicts even Christianity today. My friends, the Church will not find unity and true peace and true hope until we can answer the question Jesus asked the Apostles: ‘Who do you say I am?’ The answer is ‘You are my Lord, my Savior, my Redeemer and my God every moment of every day of my life.’”

De Bartoli shared stories about the saint and talked about the importance of having deep faith during crisis and suffering.

“If our faith is like a well that is filled with the Living Water, Jesus, who through the Spirit gives us every good gift, we must ask ourselves one simple question: ‘How deep is our well?’” she said. “Every day, do we return to draw that Living Water

from the well and share it with others? This was Padre Pio’s life in a nutshell. His life flowed like a river of Living Water out into the world, for he was always connected to the one true source of that water, Jesus.”

De Bartoli knew of Padre Pio as a teenager, but it wasn’t until 1995 that she visited San Giovanni Rotondo for the first time, which was the home of St. Pio until his death on September 23, 1968.

She was introduced to the saint by Army veteran Ray Ewen, who was stationed near there during World War II and served as his altar boy.

De Bartoli, who led pilgrimages for Padre Pio’s beatification in 1999 and his canonization in 2002, also assisted in developing the cause for canonization of St. Pio’s assistant, Mary Pyle, a native of New York who worked with him for 45 years.

De Bartoli said, “Along with the stigmata came remarkable spiritual gifts for Padre Pio, including healing, bilocation,

prophecy, and the ability to read hearts. But he never felt worthy of these gifts. He always remained humble.”

She called him “the saint of conversions.”

“He brought people into the Church through conversions, showed compassion during confessions and even had the ability to tell when they lied in confession,” she said. During his lifetime, he heard an estimated five million confessions.

Dana Keyser said she felt called to learn more about St. Pio and attended her first Mass with the group in November with her mother, who has multiple sclerosis and is devoted to the saint.

“Every single morning, she prays Padre Pio’s healing prayer as she seeks healing,” Keyser said. “Over the past several years, while her health has declined, her faith has deepened. She truly lives by his famous words: ‘Pray, hope, and don’t worry.’”

At that Mass, they prayed for St. Pio’s intercession for her parents and their loved ones in need of healing in mind, body, or spirit, she said.

“Each month I attend the Padre Pio Prayer Group. I add a new person to my list of intentions,” she said. “When I pray for them, my hope is simple: Whatever circumstance they find themselves in, that faith and peace will surely follow, as it has for my family, especially my mother. After all, it is only with faith that Padre Pio’s words ‘don’t worry’ truly make sense. What began as something I did for my mom’s health has grown into my own devotion.” ■

DIocese FORGIVES FROM PAGE 3

Census Bureau, Bridgeport’s median household income is \$57,394, and its poverty rate is just over 20 percent—standing in stark contrast to the rest of Fairfield County, whose median income is \$100,810.

“We have many churches with many different needs for our parishioners, and each one of those churches has its own challenges and its own needs,” Father Mollenhauer said. “The Cathedral Parish is one among those, and it has a multicultural aspect, which is a wonderful thing for our diocese. The needs ... very often in our multicultural parishes are greater than in other parishes. And so any means that we’re able to obtain to help us with our mission are extremely important to what we do.”

The Cathedral Parish serves

a community that reflects its city’s diversity. On Sunday, the parish celebrates Masses in English, Spanish and Vietnamese—as well as Igbo one Sunday each month. But with this pastoral mission comes a temporal cost—and programs like the diocese’s jubilee debt forgiveness program can alleviate some of that cost for local parishes that need it most.

“There are never enough temporal goods to help the Church in its mission,” Father Mollenhauer said. “Having a lack of resources is always one of the burdens that a pastor faces when he wants to do this type of outreach. So having those resources available—and with help of the diocese—are an important part” of fulfilling the Church’s mission. ■

FAMILY FUN CARNIVAL FROM PAGE 11

Local food trucks include Blue Rhino, Dos Chiludos, Mister Softee and the Knight of Columbus food tent (burgers, hot dogs, meatball heroes and sausage/peppers/onions. Carnival fare such as hot pretzels, popcorn, and cotton candy will also be sold, as well as water, wine, and beer.

Sandra Jester, carnival chairperson said, “We are thrilled with how many people from all over Fairfield County attend each year. The air is full of

laughter and joy as families enjoy a beautiful afternoon together. This is the 15th anniversary of the Carnival and we love how this has become part of celebrating fall for so many families in Fairfield County. With food, entertainment, rides, games, and lots to do, there is something for everyone.”

All animals and their owners are invited to a Blessing of the Animals before the Carnival on Saturday, October 4 at 11 am in the St. Francis of Assisi parking lot.

St. Francis is the patron saint of animals, and he had a great love for animals and the environment. Born in 1181, he preached that it was our duty to protect and enjoy nature and everything in it. In his honor, all pets will be blessed. People and pets of all religions are welcome.

Event sponsors are Commerce Park Children’s Dentistry and Orthodontics (Dr. Mary Ritter), Riverside Cemetery, Crisdel and Fairfield County Bank. ■