

Notes from Ministries for January 28, 2020

Parish Council Meeting

YOUTH MINISTRY

November 2019

After both middle and high school groups assembled 45 Backpacks for the needy (filled with socks, hats, gloves, toiletries and food), Father Skip from Blessed Sacrament picked them up to distribute as he sees fit.

High school group then met on November 20th for a pot luck Thanksgiving Dinner. Middle School met the following evening for dinner and a special “giving thanks” exercise.

December 2019

We kicked off a very busy month decorating the trees in the rectory and decorating cookies to be sold at the Christmas Fair. Father Cyrus was very generous to invite the group(a first for youth group) and 20 teens showed up, thrilled for the invitation.

Middle school met the next night, December 5th for a special Advent Service Project. We had 25 middle school children show up, bringing supplies for care packages for the children in the pediatric wing of Norwalk Hospital. The packages were filled with hospital approved snacks, treats, playdoh and new balls and toys. They also made get well cards. Parents were so generous with their donations that we were able to donate extra treat bags for dozens of family members spending time with their sick children. Packages were also set aside and delivered to the Missionaries of Charity in Bridgeport.

The weekend of December 7-8th was a busy one with a constant stream of teens and middle school helpers working at the Christmas Fair. They greeted fair goers, sat the tables, passed out snacks, helped in the kitchen and ran the tag sale area both days. Middle school group then met on December 19th for a year end Christmas celebration of pizza and a Yankee Gift Swap. A terrific and hilarious time was had by all. High school group ended the year with a trip into NYC on the 21st to shop at the Bryant Park Christmas shops, mass at St Patrick’s, and a late lunch at Tommy Bahamas.

January 2020

Everyone got back to school on the second of January, a large middle school group (18) met on Wednesday the 8th for a special event focusing on spiritual New Year’s Resolutions. We started a prayer wall and did something special for Mrs. Romano to mark her birthday. Also this month, I delivered art and classroom supplies that we had been collecting since our kick-off to a program in need. The Luis Munoz Marin School in Bridgeport had an art teacher who was completely out of supplies and everything was much appreciated.

Our high school group was postponed while they prepared for and took mid-terms. High school then met on Wednesday, the 22nd, for pizza, they made care packages for Assumption Youth Alumni, and then performed a New Year’ service by cleaning Roncalli house. They are quite good with floors!

Our 7-8th graders met Thursday the 23rd, 26 came to learn about the rosary. We then prayed a decade in the church before returning to the Youth Room to make prayer bracelets and necklaces which will be given out to those residents we visit at Notre Dame Rehab.

Our teen/tween visitation ministry then spent Saturday, January 25, at Notre Dame Rehab for a bingo afternoon. The teens helped bring residents into the room, helped with bingo cards, and refreshments. All the residents really enjoy seeing young people.

I am re-structuring the middle school program to add in some Wednesdays so we have full use of the facilities such as the gym. I am also splitting the group into one for 6th graders (and inviting 5th graders in), and another for 7-8. There is a huge maturity difference between most of the 6th graders and those in 7-8th. Additionally, there are so many middle school members that the size of the event can be unmanageable. The change will allow me to better tailor the event to the different age groups.

Respectively submitted, Michel Harding Youth Minister

SOCIAL CONCERNS MINISTRY

October 2019

Blanket Collection - We collected 97 blankets (52 new and 45 gently used.). Helen Thiemann arranged the collection and distribution to: Bacharach Community/Gillespie, Open Door, Nicholas A. Madaras House, Child Guidance Center and Dorothy Day.

Sock Collection - The total collected was approximately 277 new pairs. They were distributed to: Family and Children Agency, Soup Lady Legacy and Missionaries of Charity.

November 2019

Gifts of Plenty Collection - We collected a total of \$7,441 in food gift cards. Most of the cards were distributed to these recipients: Westport Human Services, Bacharach Community, Open Door, Gillespie Center, Merton, Dorothy Day, Soup Lady Legacy, Missionaries of Charity, Adversity to Prosperity, Park City Charity, St. Joseph's Church Pantry, Blessed Sacrament Church.

December 2019

Angels – More than 800 Angels were placed on the trees. The gifts were either delivered or picked up by the recipients in time for Christmas. Some of the recipients were: Bacharach, Gillespie, Westport Human Services of Westport; Adversity to Prosperity, Missionaries of Charity, Sister Theresa Tremblay, Female Soldiers, Forgotten Heroes living at the Nicholas A Madaras House, Blessed Sacrament of Bridgeport; Open Door, High Road School, Child Guidance Center of Norwalk; Dorothy Day of Danbury, and individuals from our parish family.

As always, I want to thank everyone who helped with this project but special thanks go to the DeMarco and Marcarelli families, owners of the Triple S Company, for lending their truck and for helping us with deliveries.

January 2020

Winter Warm-Up Collection - We are in the middle of this collection. Special thanks to Theresa Amaral for her hard work in coordinating this collection.

Ongoing Activities

Merton Center/Food Kitchen Social Concerns members (and other volunteers) serve breakfast to the clients of Merton Center the third Friday of the month.

Soup Lady Legacy From approximately October to May, Mike Palumbo and Joe Esteves serve soup Sunday mornings to the homeless underneath the John St. bridge in Bridgeport. They are carrying on the legacy of Linda Cervero who made soup for the homeless for approximately 25 years.

Prayer Network People continue to request prayers to the nearly 75 members of this ministry, who pray daily for those in need of prayer. Liz Lazarou is a very caring coordinator of these request. A.C.T.S. was formed to answer simple requests from our parishioners for a ride to church, an appointment, etc.

Respectfully submitted by Connie Luppino

POPE FRANCIS FOOD CLOSET

The food closet is doing very well. We are helping 22/25 families each month. Each family receives a \$35.00 food coupon and two to three bags of food, depending on the size of their family. At Thanksgiving. The Harding Family donated 18 turkeys and a Shop Rite food Card. Many of our families were able to share a meal with their family. They were all very grateful. We receive weekly generous donations from our parishioners and also from an anonymous family through Amazon. We are truly blessed in being a part of this Ministry

Ronnie Estony

KNIGHTS OF CONUMBUS

Fraternal Mass – Our next Fraternal Mass will be planned for February, 2020.

Merton House – **Each Month on the third Saturday**, Knights and their families will staff the Saturday breakfasts. With the aid of the parish, the parish Knights continue to serve about 150-175 meals. This effort has been underway since 2014. Our goal is to fund this financial endeavor through our council funds in the coming months in the third quarter of 2020.

Support of Patriotism and Veterans

On Sunday, November 10, our Council participated with four other K of C Councils in the Norwalk Field of Flags event honoring veterans who lost their lives during WW II; Korea; Vietnam; Afghanistan; Persian Gulf etc. This event was covered by Channel 12 News and provided good publicity for the K of C.

On Sunday, December 22, 2019, our Council 3688 visited the VA Hospital in West Haven along with three other K of C Councils to present Christmas gifts to over 375 hospitalized veterans, who served in the military conflicts dating back to WW II.

On Friday, January 17, our Council 3688 participated in a recognition dinner for Knights in Norwalk, Wilton, New Canaan and Westport who served in the U.S. Military. Our Council had three veterans honored – Harrison Valente, Nick Battaglino and Bill Macnamara

Membership Drive – A membership drive is planned for the 2ndth quarter to recruit good Catholic men to become Knights of Columbus, following in the footsteps of the venerable, Father Michael J. McGivney, who in 1831 founded the Knights of Columbus in the basement of St. Mary's Church in New Haven, CT on the Yale University campus. Young men are needed to continue the work of the Knights of Columbus. There are currently over 1.9 million members in the Knights of Columbus, worldwide. The plan is to post a K of C sign to identify with our parish. We have added two new members to our council in the past two months: **Tom Harding** and **Tony Palmer**, who is the first Knight to receive all three degrees at a new exemplification program on January 1, 2020 at St. Mary's Church in New Haven, CT. The exemplification program is no longer

secret and is open to family members. The K of C Supreme office in New Haven is implementing many new programs to attract younger men. Our goal is to add one new member each month between now and June 30.

Activity Plans for the 1st Quarter 2020 – St. Patrick's Day Dinner on March 14, in McGrath hall for all members of the parish and friends in the community. The meal will be catered.

Additional Activities – We are becoming more active in the parish, working closely with Father Cyrus to make a difference in the Westport community

Meetings - Members of the Knights of Columbus Council meet on the 1st Tuesday of each Month at 7:30pm unless otherwise posted.

Respectfully submitted, Bill Macnamara, GK, K of C Council 3688

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Classes are going very well; we did however lose a grade one teacher due to health reasons. This class joined the other Sunday first grade. We continue to use the Pflaum Gospel Weeklies for our text along with videos. Confirmation classes use the Chosen Program. We are in the process of preparing our second graders for First Reconciliation which will be held on March 10 at 4:30pm for our Tuesday students and March 14th at 3:30pm for our Sunday students

First Communion is scheduled for both sessions on May 10, at the 10:30 and 12noon Mass with the crowning of the Blessed Virgin Statue.

The next step for diocesan catechist training is online modules. We have not yet received the modules but are told by the end of January they will be on line and ready for our use. The online components is to be accomplished in stages and is due June 1, 2020.

On January 14, we completed the Hugs for Soldiers" project, making Valentine cards for our deployed troops around the world. This project was very well received by our students who understood the sacrifice these men and women make for our country. Their cards were thoughtful and very colorful.

MARY'S MANTLE SHAWL MINISTRY

We have resumed regular Thursday knitting/crocheting gatherings making shawls for anyone who would like to take one to someone who is ill. We have a new member who joined this January.

CHRISTMAS FAIR

The fair took place on December 7 & 8, In McGrath Hall. It went very well. All classes participated in the Theme Basket Project for our Annual Christmas Fair. We made approximately \$9,000.

FAMILY LIFE

On December 15th, after the 5:00pm Mass we had our first annual blessing of the outdoor creche and lighting of the tree, and open house at the rectory which was extremely well attended.

We are in the process of planning our Annual Lenten Activities Easter Basket Drive.

Respectively Submitted, Cathy Romano

WESTPORT REHAB CENTER

We are currently serving 28 Catholic patients at the WRC. We go room to room every Wednesday to give Holy Communion and then meet the rest of the patients in the third floor Community room for Communion and the Rosary. Joe Murray goes on Sundays to give Communion when he is in town. He is currently in Florida until Feb.

Laura Cotter and Judy York are in Florida for the winter so we are down to 3 of us for the winter: Jennifer Talbot, Nancy Engel and Marilyn Moran. Father Cyrus celebrates Mass on the last Tuesday of the month. We took the patients a small gift that the ladies in the office put together with help from Helen Theimann

There are 3 non-Catholics that we see for a blessing at their request. Deacon Bill has talked to me about helping out at the WRC but we need to get together to make a plan for his involvement.

Marilyn Moran

REPORT ON CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

Our 7th & 8th graders are well underway with their studies of the CHOSEN program. This dialog approach has been challenging but slowly they are participating more fully.

All of our students have been asked to serve six hours of community service using the guidelines of the Corporal & Spiritual works of mercy. They have been invited at various times to join with the Youth Group in some of that service.

With Confirmation scheduled for Saturday, March 28, Confirmation candidates are in the final stages of preparation. We have 60 candidates who will be presented at Confirmation.

We plan to have a special instruction on Eucharistic Adoration for our 7 & 8th graders in March. All 8th graders will receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to Confirmation. They will also be coming to Stations of the Cross during Lent.

Many of our private school candidates are on break from mid-March to the end of month. To make up for what they will miss, we will offer an opportunity for them to come to classes and instruction on Adoration in February.

A catechist meeting was held in January to get feedback on the program and discuss possibilities for next year. These will be presented to Father Cyrus in the next few weeks.

We had good attendance at the blessing of the creche and lighting of our Christmas tree. Many of our families were present at the 5 p.m. Mass that day.

In January our Confirmation candidates participated in a "Hugs for Soldiers" project, sending Valentine cards to our deployed troops around the world. This was in conjunction with other parishes and organizations as well the Methodist Church. This project was very well received by our students who demonstrated a great understanding of the sacrifice these men and women make for our country.

Marie Vandall, Confirmation Coordinator

ALTAR SERVERS

The Christmas Services were all covered despite the fact that the season began earlier than usual due to a late Thanksgiving. Volunteers stepped up to serve Masses regardless of their scheduling and we are very grateful to the children and their families for their dedication.

On Saturday, December 21, Fr. Cyrus and I hosted a gathering for all the Altar Servers at McGrath Hall in the Church. The children enjoyed pizza, salad, holiday cookies, sweets and holiday music. It was wonderful listening and watching the children interact as some of them have only met at the Altar during service. Fr. Cyrus awarded the children with beautiful crosses which purchased in Italy and I included a Christmas card in appreciation for their devotion to serving. Everyone loved their crosses and let the party happily wearing their gifts.

Thank you and God Bless, Juany Fumai

BOOK GROUP

We met for our Advent gathering on 4 December for a reading and reflection on several Advent scriptures and commentaries by contemporary spiritual guides. After soul food we shared body food as the members brought cookies to be eaten then and to be brought home for family members.

In February we are to begin reading (for 8 weeks) *THE LAMB'S SUPPER*, *The Mass as Heaven on Earth* by Scott Hahn. We hope this selection on understanding the mysteries of the Mass will deepen our love for the Eucharist as we journey in Lent toward Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter.

BEREAVEMENT GROUP

Our weekly meeting on 18 December was our Christmas celebration at which we explored our hopes and fears without our departed loved ones for the approaching set of holidays. Then we shared companionship as we ate the nibbles brought by the members.

The 8th of January we again commenced our weekly meetings. Death is extremely disruptive and changes every aspect in our lives. People from various areas in Connecticut join us. All are welcome.

FIRST FRIDAY PRAYER/DISCUSSION GROUP

Each meeting has a different focus. December was Advent/Christmas. In January we shared ideas, readings and hopes for PEACE. February we will consider Lent and its meaning at this point in our lives. Unfortunately, we members experience illness and other major changes in our lives. Faith and community, we all agree, are major sources of support and comfort.

HOME BOUND

The ministers of this service are faithful to those who cannot join us either temporarily or perpetually at liturgy in church. The home bound are deeply grateful for their visits. A small Christmas gift was given each home bound person and those in the health facility serviced on Wednesdays by Assumption's ministers.

A need was expressed concerning home bound persons who choose not to receive the Eucharist (dementia/non-Catholic persons) but would like companionship occasionally. This will be considered.

Peace and health and happiness in 2020. Helen Thiemann