



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

Five Individuals Receive Sacraments at Annual Special Needs Mass

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano presided at the annual Mass for People with Special Needs, hosted by Saint Catherine Center at Holy Cross Church on Sunday, November 6th. Reverend Rob Kinnally of St. Aloysius Parish in New Canaan, and Reverend Krzysztof Kuczynski, Parochial Vicar at St. Lawrence Parish in Shelton, were co-celebrants.

[View photos of the event](#)

As he prepared to offer the Sacrament of Confirmation to four young people, Bishop Caggiano asked the congregation to consider, “Who is actually doing the confirming? We normally think of ourselves confirming our Baptismal promises... but the truth is, God the Father in His great love is doing something profound before *any* response is given... God speaks to these young people in ways you and I cannot. He speaks to them in the depth of their hearts. He speaks to them without words. He speaks to them of how much He loves them, how beautiful they are to Him, how irreplaceable they are to Him.”

The four individuals who were confirmed were Diego Moreno-Rafael (St. Rose of Lima Parish), Penelope Soto (St. Peter Church), Matthew Tenecela (St. Joseph Church), and Chelsea Vizhco (St. George Church). Marcos Suarez Acosta, a student at Saint Catherine Academy (pictured at top), received First Holy Communion.

Members of the Knights of Columbus Honor Guard, Center board members and staff joined the celebration. Anna Stowe, an Academy student, and Board Chairman Charles Chiusano gave the readings for the Mass. Michelle Rivelli, a Board member, her husband Richard, and their daughter Jessie, a participant in the Center's Adult Program, offered the Prayer of the Faithful. “It is a great blessing for us to share in the experience of the Mass with Jessie and to see how involved she becomes with the prayers and the hymns,” Rivelli said.

“Today we recognize that each person is valued in God’s eyes. Our mission at Saint Catherine Center



is to give everyone a voice and today is a great example of this,” said Helen Burland, Executive Director.

Bishop Caggiano acknowledged that he was “delighted” to share this day with everyone. “I am grateful to all of you who have allowed these young people—by your witness, by your love, by your care, by your teaching, by your formation—to be here at this moment.”

“In a world that measures us by what we have and what we do, these five young people teach us a lesson we must never forget,” the Bishop concluded. “That before we do or say anything, God loves us to the end. And God loves us forever.”

Each year, Saint Catherine Center offers the opportunity for young people with special needs to receive one or more Sacraments of Initiation outside of the typical faith formation program. For more information, contact the Center at 203-540-5381.



At The Core: Focusing on Total Well-Being

When Saint Catherine Center for Special Needs was formed in 2014, the Board of Directors and staff came together to create a set of [Core Values](#) to describe what is important to us and to guide us in our work with young people with disabilities. We continue to share stories from the Saint Catherine community that show our Core Values in action.

Core Value 2: We focus on the total well-being of each person we serve.

Fundamental to our mission is to “foster the educational, spiritual and social well-being” of all of our students and adult participants. We care for each individual—mind, body and spirit. You can see this in action every day at the Center.

Adaptation and accommodation for each individual learning style is central to promoting well-being and independence. For some students, adaptive technology gives them a voice they would not have otherwise. In daily classroom conversation, Nyah and Bradley share what they are having for lunch using their AAC devices (Augmentive and Alternative Communication).



Physical exercise and movement are crucial

for total well-being. Every Friday, volunteer Eileen Bles leads Academy students in gym, in which students can choose their exercise: hopping, skipping, running backward—any fun way to keep everyone moving and having fun.

As Tyler H. gets his regular stretch-out on the mat table, Ms. Sonia prompts him to identify letters and numbers. It is a strenuous workout of mind and body that Tyler obviously enjoys.

Communication with our families about life at home helps us navigate everyday situations at the Center. When Eve was feeling anxious about her upcoming vacation, staff created a visual “social story” of all the things she and her family would do on the vacation and items they would bring. They reviewed the story each day until Eve was calm and prepared for her adventure.

Next month's Core Value: We create a supportive and welcoming atmosphere, where each person feels a sense of belonging.



GIVING TUESDAY *is November 29th*

Giving Tuesday, on November 29, is a worldwide initiative to celebrate generosity in all its forms. We experience this generosity every day in the most ordinary of activities at Saint Catherine Center (see Core Value #2, above!).

The day is also an important fundraiser for Saint Catherine Center. Tuition and program fees cover only about 75% of our costs. The rest is raised through events like our annual “Joy & Gratitude” Dinner, private grants, and individual donations. #GivingTuesday reminds us how important your support is to the “everyday” at Saint Catherine Center. And we have a matching gift – dollar-for-dollar up to \$20,000! Stay tuned!

Trunk or Treat!

Our Halloween celebration was a “Spooktacular” success, featuring witches and butterflies, bikers, Superman, and more.

[Click the image to view some photos.](#)

[View slideshow \(4 min\)](#)





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