


Staten Island
Sunday Advance

BREAKING NEWS ALL DAY ON [SILIVE.COM](http://silive.com)

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AS PRIESTS VANISH, PARISHES STRUGGLE

Island elementary schools also hurt by a shortage of nuns

By **LESLIE PALMA-SIMONCEK**
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

A chronic shortage of Roman Catholic priests in the United States that began in the 1970s has become acute, with more than 400 parishes in the Archdiocese of New York served by only 1,710 priests.

The church's response is having a widening impact on parishes across the city: Convents have become rectories. Rectories have converted to catechetical centers. Schools have been leased out to private enterprises, or sit vacant. Lay people, deacons and international priests are very, very important.

The shrinking number includes 855 order priests (Jesuits, Augustinians, Franciscans, etc.), 640 archdiocesan priests and 235 international priests, according to the Rev. Thomas Devery, the head of Priest Personnel for the archdiocese.

The median age for priests, Father Devery said, "is somewhere around 61." One-hundred-seventy priests already have reached

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HEADLINES

TOP NEWS FOR TODAY

MAJOR CRIMES DOWN ON ISLAND

Staten Island has seen its major crime rate in 2008 drop by 2 percent compared to 2007. But that decrease tells just part of the story. The borough's murder rate has almost doubled so far since 2007, with 20. Page A 9

CASUALTIES OF WAR SOLDIERS KILLED IN IRAQ

4,217 Since the war began
7 Last week

WEATHER WATCHER

Iris Perez of Stapleton:



'Cloudy, windy, high in the mid-60s.'

COMPLETE REPORT ON A 20

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2008:

A CONGRESSMAN SENTENCED: Rep. Vito Fossella on Dec. 8 after getting five days in jail on a DUI conviction. That arrest led to the revelation of a love child in Virginia.

THE MIGHTY FALL, A FISCAL COLLAPSE

By **STEPHANIE SLEPIAN**
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The stories that shaped the lives of Staten Islanders in 2008 carried hints of scandal and intrigue, history and hope, desperation and tragedy.

Some are linked to last year's headlines. Others will continue to be front-page news long into the new year — and maybe the next.

Below are the Top 10 stories that impacted the borough in 2008 as voted on by readers of silive.com, the Advance's home on the Web. Stories from Jan. 1 through Dec. 15 were considered.

1. FALL FROM GRACE

On May 1, Rep. Vito Fossella was still the prince of the GOP, celebrating with the Super Bowl champion

New York Giants at a White House ceremony.

His evening ended with a drunken driving arrest, which set into motion a dizzying chain of events that would throw his personal and political life into turmoil — and would fracture the borough's stalwart Republican Party.

The arrest led to revelations that Fossella, a family-values congressman with three children, fathered a fourth with a woman he romanced on a congressional junket. After days of speculation, he announced he would not seek re-election. (Democratic Councilman Michael McMahon would overwhelmingly claim the seat that had been in the hands of Republicans for 27 years.)

In October, Fossella was convicted and earlier this month sentenced to five days in jail. That sentence is on hold as the outgoing congressman's appeal sets up a jury trial.

Earlier this month, Fossella threw a well-attended thank-you event for his supporters. Even the mayor was there. While he declared he has no intention of seeking public office again, speculation remains that like his case, his political ambitions may not have ended.

2. CLIENT 9 REVEALED

The night before Valentine's Day, a man registered at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C., under the name George Fox. He waited in Room 871 for the arrival of Kristen, a young, petite brunette. He paid

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MORE TOP STORIES OF 2008 DETERMINED BY READER AND EDITOR SURVEYS



A GOVERNOR FALLS: On March 12 in Manhattan, Eliot Spitzer announced his resignation with his wife Silda at his side.



A VOTE FOR HOPE: On Nov. 4 in Chicago, President-Elect Barack Obama savored victory with his wife, Michelle.



A WIFE IS CHARGED: On March 21, Janet Mercereau left the 120th Precinct, charged with killing her fire marshal husband.



AN ECONOMY TEETERS: On Dec. 8, traders on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange reacted to the instability.

Grant City family grows by 5 in just 6 minutes

First-time mom Jamie Ferrante gives birth to 4 girls, 1 boy at University Hospital

By **MARK STEIN**
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

Consider it a post-Christmas gift — five times over.

Jamie and Kevin Ferrante of Grant City became first-time parents yesterday at 1:30 a.m. when Mrs. Ferrante gave birth by Caesarean section to quintuplets in a matter of six minutes flat, according to Jamie's father, Tony Scherillo.

In addition, the hospital where the babies were born, Staten Island University Hospital in Ocean Breeze, achieved a first as well: Its first-ever delivery of quintuplets.

"They had to all be taken care of. They had teams of doctors and nurses with each baby," the 67-year-old grandfather said. "They must've had about 40 people in the operating room. It was amazing, and they were incredible. Absolutely incredible."

The children — in order of birth — are: Allesia Louise, 2 pounds; Amanda Frances, 1 pound, 8 ounces; Emily Ann, 2 pounds, 1 ounce; Matthew Sabatino, 2 pounds, 4/5 ounces; and Ella Lilliana, 1 pound, 15/16 ounces.

"Once I'd seen them in the neonatal nursery, that's when it was real, and it was like, 'Oh my God.' I don't know what I'm going to do when I get home," said the

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A rail link to Manhattan or Jersey? It's fun to dream

Under-harbor tunnel seems like the best — and the most unlikely — commuting solution

By **MAURA YATES**
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

The Expressway clogs, the Gowanus crawls, and though it's just over 10 miles away by car, Manhattan can seem like it's years away.

A rail link would be the best solution to the traffic mess, many transit advocates say, but first come the daunting questions of timing (decades), cost (tens of billions) and placement (via Brooklyn, Bayonne or direct to Midtown).

Several plans are being kicked around that range from the feasible to the fantastical, depending on whom you ask.

Among the possibilities: A tunnel under New York Harbor connecting St. George to Manhattan that could offer commuters a 10 minute trip, shaving anywhere from a half hour to an hour or more off a commute in some cases.

Another under-harbor tube, this time connecting the borough to Brooklyn and the subway network in Bay Ridge.

A tunnel under the Kill van Kull that could someday replace the Bayonne Bridge, and offer a link between Staten Island and the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail.

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