

# Catholic TRANSCRIPT

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2017

WWW.ARCHDIOCESEOFHARTFORD.ORG

## ARCHBISHOP'S DESK

At the crossroads  
of faith and culture

PG. 4

## IN THE KNOW WITH FATHER JOE

Apologetics or apologizing?

PG. 12

## HARTFORD BISHOPS' FOUNDATION

Foundation seeks  
to rekindle connection  
between Church, society

PG. 24



*'They are my heroes'*

**Eileen's work at the food pantry  
feeds her spirit**

## THINGS TO DO

■ The program **“Laughter — God’s Healing Power”** will be presented by Marie DiBenedetto from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Feb. 1 at Our Lady of Calvary Retreat Center in Farmington. DiBenedetto is a retired nurse and graduate of the Mercy Center’s School of Spirituality. She will use jokes and personal stories to illustrate the body’s response to laughter. The cost of \$30 also covers lunch. Reservations are due by Jan. 25.

**To register or for information about other programs, contact the retreat center at 860.677.8519, [olcretreat@sbcglobal.net](mailto:olcretreat@sbcglobal.net) or [www.ourladyofcalvary.net](http://www.ourladyofcalvary.net).**

■ The 10th annual **Archdiocesan Marriage Enrichment Celebration** will be held 5-9 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 4 at Mary Our Queen Church, 248 Savage St., Plantsville. The event will give married couples an opportunity to celebrate the sacrament with laughter and prayer, with a focus on the theme “Weddings, Wines and Miraculous Times: Jesus’ Gift at Cana.” The Mass also will be celebrated. The cost of \$25 per couple includes dinner and a wine tasting. To register, contact Tom and Donna Finn at **860.621.7858** or [dfinnmspt@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dfinnmspt@sbcglobal.net). Jan. 29 is the registration deadline.

■ The Hartford Area **Lay Carmelite Community** meets 6-9 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month at St. Luke Church in Hartford. The next meeting will be Feb. 8. Information is available from Susan Okamoto at **860.231.8893**.

■ The Office for Catholic Social Justice Ministry (OCSJM) of the Archdiocese of Hartford will sponsor a Catholic Relief Services (CRS) **Lenten speaker tour** on Feb. 24-26 featuring Cecilia Suarez, head of office at CRS Mexico. A native of Mexico, Suarez works to improve the lives of the most vulnerable populations in her home country through peace-building, human rights promotion and community development. Suarez will visit Catholic high schools on Feb. 24. On Feb. 25, she will speak in Spanish at the Hispanic Catechist Encounter in Bloomfield. She also will speak in Spanish after the 12:30 p.m. Mass at St. Rose of Lima Parish in Meriden. Information is available at [lynn.campbell@aohct.org](mailto:lynn.campbell@aohct.org).

SEE FULL CALENDAR AT  
[WWW.CATHOLICTRANSCRIPT.ORG](http://WWW.CATHOLICTRANSCRIPT.ORG) 

## CATHEDRAL OF SAINT JOSEPH SCHEDULE



**DAILY MASSES**  
Monday–Friday:  
7:30 a.m. and 12:10 p.m.  
Saturday: 9 a.m.

**CONFESSION (RECONCILIATION)**  
Sunday: 10–10:30 a.m.  
Wednesday: 11:30 a.m.–noon  
Saturday: 2:30–3:45 p.m.

**WEEKEND MASSES**  
Saturday Vigil: 4 p.m.  
Sunday: 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.

*The Cathedral is open daily 7 a.m.–5 p.m.*

**GET CONNECTED**

- [cathedralofsaintjoseph.com](http://cathedralofsaintjoseph.com)
-  [Facebook.com/CathedralOfSaintJoseph](https://www.facebook.com/CathedralOfSaintJoseph)
-  [@HtfdCathedral](https://twitter.com/HtfdCathedral)
-  [@CathedralOfSaintJoseph](https://www.instagram.com/CathedralOfSaintJoseph)

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE: JAN. 29**

**HISPANIC CATECHIST ENCOUNTER IN BLOOMFIELD: FEB. 25**

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM ARCHBISHOP BLAIR’S PUBLIC CALENDAR:

- Archbishop Blair will preside at the **Rite of Election** at 3 p.m. on March 7 at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford.
- The Archbishop will celebrate a **St. Patrick’s Day Mass** at 10 a.m. on March 12 at St. Mary Church in New Haven.
- The Archdiocese of Hartford’s Foundation for the Advancement of Catholic Schools (FACS) will sponsor the annual **Archbishop’s St. Patrick’s Day Breakfast** at 7:30 a.m. on March 17 at the Hartford Marriott Downtown.
- Archbishop Blair will preside at the annual **St. Joseph Medal Award Ceremony** at 3 p.m. on March 19 at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford.

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## At the crossroads of faith and culture

Welcome to the *Catholic Transcript* magazine, a new full-color publication that will dynamically advance the tradition of a beloved, respected, award-winning newspaper with roots going back to 1829.

In magazine format, the *Catholic Transcript* will continue to be the communications centerpiece of Catholic news and information for our archdiocesan family of faith. And its visibility and relevance will be greatly enhanced thanks to its digital presence, social media interconnectivity, evangelizing content and distribution 10 times a year to more than double the number of Catholic households than in the recent past.

All this is a direct response to the Your Voice Counts survey, in which a majority of respondents and focus group participants requested content that is more evangelizing and catechetical in nature, while at the same time not neglecting news about the archdiocese and the Church at large. We are eager to share the Good News of the Gospel with everyone, even to the “peripheries” outside our own comfort zone, in the words of Pope Francis, in the hope of drawing them to Christ and into the communion of Catholic faith and practice.

The Second Vatican Council taught that “the Gospel fully discloses humankind to itself and unfolds its noble calling” (GS, 22). The Gospel favors the development of culture, and authentic culture brings people closer to the Gospel. You can look forward to reading personal witness stories in these pages in future issues. They will embody our shared commitment to what our Catholic Church believes and teaches about faith and morals in answer to the human search for truth, love and communion with God and one another. While you will definitely see some familiar columnists, also expect to read articles by a spectrum of new writers representing diverse age ranges and cultural perspectives. Most assuredly, anticipate that there will be articles about pastoral planning in every issue.

It is my hope that you enjoy reading this first issue of the *Catholic Transcript* magazine and will find yourself inspired to share it with family and friends.

In other words, please consider using it as an evangelization tool to convey and celebrate your Catholic faith.

Mindful that growth is the only sure sign of life, we are reinvigorating existing and introducing other new communications vehicles, too, again in direct response to Your Voice Counts survey feedback. For example, we have more than doubled our archdiocesan social media platforms to reach a much wider audience, especially millennials and other young adults. In the near future, the Archdiocese of Hartford will make available the myParish app, which will be available free of charge to all parishes as yet another new way for Catholics to be connected with their faith, their parish community and archdiocese; the app will provide local, national and international news about the Church.

As Lent leads us to Easter and its celebration of resurrection, rebirth and hope, may we heed Pope Francis’ words: “The Church which ‘goes forth’ is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice.” Why? Because “an evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved them first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast” (*The Joy of the Gospel*, 24).

I hope and pray that the *Catholic Transcript* magazine will be an important source of spiritual enrichment for you, and an instrument that draws many more sheep into the loving embrace of Christ the Good Shepherd. †



# En la encrucijada entre la fe y la cultura

Bienvenidos a la revista *Catholic Transcript*, una nueva publicación a todo color que dinámicamente llevará delante la tradición de un querido, respetado, galardonado periódico con raíces que se remontan al año 1829.

En formato de revista, la *Catholic Transcript* continuará siendo la pieza central de comunicación de noticias católicas e información para nuestra arquidiocesana familia de fe. Su visibilidad y relevancia se verán mejoradas gracias a su presencia digital, su interconexión con los medios de comunicación social, su contenido evangelizador y su distribución de 10 veces por año, llegando a más del doble del número de hogares católicos a los que se ha llegado recientemente en el pasado.

Todo esto es una respuesta directa a la encuesta Your Voice Counts, en la cual la mayoría de los encuestados y los participantes de los grupos de enfoque pidieron contenido más evangelizador y catequético, sin dejar de lado las noticias sobre la Arquidiócesis y la Iglesia en general. Estamos dispuestos a compartir la Buena Nueva del Evangelio con todos, incluso con las “periferias” fuera de nuestra propia zona de confort, en palabras del Papa Francisco, con la esperanza de llevarlos a Cristo y a la comunión de fe católica y su práctica.

El Concilio Vaticano II enseñó que “el Evangelio revela plenamente la humanidad a sí misma y desarrolla su noble vocación” (GS, 22). El Evangelio favorece el desarrollo de la cultura, y la cultura auténtica aproxima a las personas al Evangelio. En los próximos números podrá encontrar lecturas con testimonios personales. Estas representarán nuestro compromiso común con lo que nuestra Iglesia Católica cree y enseña sobre la fe y la moral en respuesta a la búsqueda humana de la verdad, el amor y la comunión con Dios y entre nosotros. Definitivamente contará con algunos columnistas conocidos, pero también podrá leer artículos escritos por un amplio espectro de nuevos escritores de diversas edades y perspectivas culturales. Sin duda, podemos anticipar que también habrá artículos sobre la planificación pastoral en cada nuevo número.

Espero que disfrute leyendo este primer número de la revista *Catholic Transcript* y que se sienta motivado a compartirla con familiares y amigos. En otras palabras, úsela como una herramienta de evangelización para transmitir su fe católica.

En respuesta directa a la información obtenida en la encuesta Your Voice Counts y teniendo en cuenta


que el crecimiento es el único signo seguro de la vida, estamos revitalizando e introduciendo otros vehículos de comunicación. Por ejemplo, hemos más que duplicado nuestras plataformas de medios sociales arquidiocesanos para llegar a un público mucho más amplio, especialmente a los de la generación del milenio y otros jóvenes adultos. En un futuro cercano, la Arquidiócesis de Hartford pondrá a disposición la aplicación myParish, que estará disponible gratuitamente para todas las parroquias como otra nueva manera para que los católicos estén conectados con su fe, su comunidad parroquial y la arquidiócesis, así como con las noticias locales, nacionales e internacionales sobre la Iglesia.

La cuaresma nos conduce hacia la Pascua y a su celebración de resurrección, renacimiento y esperanza, escuchemos pues las palabras del Papa Francisco: “La Iglesia en salida es la comunidad de discípulos misioneros que primerean, que se involucran, que acompañan, que fructifican y festejan”. ¿Por qué? Porque “...la comunidad evangelizadora experimenta que el Señor tomó la iniciativa, la ha primereado en el amor (cf. 1 Jn 4:19); y, por eso, ella sabe adelantarse, tomar la iniciativa sin miedo, salir al encuentro, buscar a los alejados y llegar a los cruces de los caminos para invitar a los excluidos” (*La Alegría del Evangelio*, 24).

Espero y oro para que la revista *Catholic Transcript* sea una importante fuente de enriquecimiento espiritual para ustedes y un instrumento que atraiga a muchas más ovejas al amoroso abrazo de Cristo el Buen Pastor. †

## **“Ven y sígueme”**

¿Sigues al Arzobispo Blair y la Arquidiócesis de Hartford en las redes sociales?

 @ArchbishopBlair

 @ArchdioceseOfHartford

 Facebook.com/ArchdioceseOfHartford



## God's purpose, not mine

### PARENTING

**W**e gathered around the kitchen table for dinner, accompanied by the usual bickering, grumbling and hilarity. Our children ranged in age from 10-16 and they were really good kids. They just liked to argue. A lot.

My husband Peter did not want to have the conversation I was about to begin. He feared that the children would blame themselves for my odd behavior. I insisted that they already blamed themselves, and besides, we're family. They deserved to know what was going on. If I was battling a physical illness, we wouldn't withhold the truth. Why should we withhold the truth in this case?

"This case" was my struggle with some amorphous mental illness. The previous year, I'd been incorrectly diagnosed with clinical depression after having suffered in silence for far too long. Unfortunately, I still didn't have a correct diagnosis. I was depressed, confused, irritable and ghastly thin. Most days, it was all I could do to get out of bed. Some days, I couldn't even do that.

As dinner drew to a close, I cleared my throat and began. I noted that I'd been crying a lot, listless, lying on the couch for days and not my normal self. The three older kids indicated that they had noticed. I filled them in on what I had done to seek treatment. I also told them honestly that, thus far, nothing had worked. I assured them that their dad and I would continue to seek an accurate diagnosis, then pursue effective treatment. In the meantime, we wanted them to know that none of this was their fault. We stressed that we loved them very much and that they were free to ask questions at any time.

The three older kids seemed somewhat familiar with

mental illness. To my delight, they had none of the prejudices held by previous generations. To them, a mental illness was no different from diabetes — a medical condition that is serious but, in most cases, treatable.

The youngest child, however, was combative. "How can you be sad if there's nothing to be sad about?" she charged in frustration. "Why can't you just be happy?"

The older kids jumped down her throat. "It's an illness! She can't control it!" hollered the 15-year-old. "Torrie, Mom is sick. It's a sickness. That's all," added the 16-year-old gently.

But the 10-year-old continued her rant, so I intervened and wrapped up the conversation. Later, I spoke privately with the older kids. I explained that Torrie's frustration had nothing to do with insensitivity or prejudice; it had everything to do with the fact that she had not yet reached puberty. "Once a kid is an adolescent," I said, "the brain is able to deal with abstractions. I'm sure that in 18 months, Torrie will totally get it." The kids were skeptical, but agreed not to battle their youngest sibling.

Six months later, I finally received a correct diagnosis. I was suffering from bipolar disorder, a mental illness marked by uncontrolled mood swings thought to be caused by chemical fluctuations in the brain. Fortunately, bipolar disorder is usually treatable, so, with a lot of hard work and tremendous family support, I am fat and sassy again.

I'm making it sound easy. It was not. Actually, it was horrible — and our youngest was still combative.

It took about two years for my condition to stabilize, by which point our youngest was in middle school. One day, I took her aside and asked if she was embarrassed that her mom had a mental illness.

She didn't understand the question.

"Mom, you're sick. If you're sick, you're sick. Why would I be embarrassed?"

I wanted to kiss her, except that that would have embarrassed her far more than any mental illness.

Throughout my healing process, our parents and friends were incredible, bringing meals, touching base and reminding me how much I was loved.

The final step came when I began to feel God's gentle nudge to write about my struggle. "Are you out of your mind?" I asked God bluntly. "It was horrible enough to live through it. Why would I want to write about it?"

God sweetly persisted until I acknowledged that it was time for me to stop feeling ashamed. I didn't do anything wrong; I simply had an illness. And so, reluctantly, I wrote about it, and spoke about it, and owned it.

I hate having a mental illness; I think I'll always hate it. But in all things God works together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. I wish he'd picked a different purpose for me, but this is what I have. To God be the glory. †



**M. REGINA CRAM**

is a writer, speaker and author. She and her husband live in Glastonbury and have four children and seven grandchildren.

# WHEN DID CHARITY BECOME A CRIME?



**JOE PISANI**  
of Orange is a writer whose work has appeared in Catholic publications nationwide. He and his wife Sandy have four daughters.

**W**hen I arrive for work at the Chrysler Building, a group of panhandlers is standing across the street outside St. Agnes Church, waiting for handouts from people leaving morning Mass. One fellow is in a wheelchair, another has a cane and another has his Starbucks Venti-sized cup held out so you can toss in some coins, or, even better, a dollar bill.

By midday, the morning shift is gone and there's a new group at the doorway, which includes a woman in a walker, a man with a sign that says he can't work because of a disability and a fellow who just smiles at everyone and greets them with, "Hi, buddy, have a nice day. Can you spare some change?"

Panhandlers, or, to use the more biblical term, "beggars," provoke a lot of anger in modern America. A few times when I was waiting for the morning train, I gave a buck to a guy who had a sign that said he was an out-of-work veteran — and my fellow commuters tore into me. They said I was a fool. They insisted the so-called hard-luck vet probably had a bigger house than I do and was driving a BMW, while I have to get by in a Toyota with 100,000 miles on the odometer.

They scoffed and said I had committed a grave offense: "encouraging scam artists." It was a lot of abuse for the alleged crime of handing someone a dollar bill. (Just to set the record straight, I'm no paragon of charitable giving.)

Maybe the guy wasn't down on his luck, but you can't conduct a needs test every time someone asks for a handout. I'm also convinced our society has a serious moral blindness if begging provokes reasonably well-off people to anger.

A friend who teaches at a Catholic high school recently took his class to the inner city to do volunteer work, and the response of some students to the disadvantaged people they met

was unsettling: They should get jobs. They should stop spending their money on drugs. They've been on welfare for generations.

Pope Francis has been vocal about the importance of charity. During one audience at St. Peter's, he said, "When going down the street, we cross a person in need or a poor man comes knocking at the door of our house ... in these instances what is my reaction? Do I turn away? Do I move on? Or do I stop to talk and take an interest? If you do this, there will always be someone who says, 'This one is crazy, talking to a poor person.'"

Christ was pretty explicit about giving. One thing he never said to beggars was, "You're a fraud. You have no business asking these hard-working people for money." (And he didn't obsess over whether they had a flat-screen TV and a six-pack of Heineken in the refrigerator.)

However, Christ did say, "Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back."

All around the city, you'll meet people in need, lying on the sidewalks in sleeping bags, wandering the streets with no shoes and rummaging through recycling bins and trash cans. People who are down on their luck.

In New York, it has become such an epidemic that exasperated city officials have suggested a solution: If you stop giving to them, they'll go away. Last year, one of the tabloids fueled the debate by

writing a story about a panhandler who, with his dog, made \$200 an hour and went home to a rent-controlled apartment.

We live in a world where there's clearly an inequitable distribution of wealth, as Pope Francis often says. Very often, those of us who have enough want more and think that we've been unfairly denied when we don't get it. Even if you factor in the need to save for retirement and pay for college educations, many of us still have sufficient resources to live good lives and give charitably.

What I've noticed is that greedy people — in every income bracket — are never satisfied with what they have. Studies on philanthropy often show that the per capita rate of giving is generally the lowest in states where the per capita income is the highest. Part of the problem is that we're too busy comparing ourselves with people who have more than us. If we compared ourselves to people who have less than us, we might be more compassionate — and charitable.

This much we can be sure of: God is love and God is all about giving with a cheerful heart. And always remember that he'll reward us for what we give to others, far beyond our wildest dreams. †

## Donate Your Car!



Most types of motorized vehicles accepted, running or not. All proceeds benefit children and families in need in Connecticut



**Catholic Charities**  
Archdiocese of Hartford

For more information, visit  
[www.ccaoh.org](http://www.ccaoh.org)  
or call 855-660-4483







## This Season, give a gift that lasts a *lifetime*.

“Education is the powerful weapon for changing the world.”  
-Nelson Mandela

We invite you to make a gift to the Foundation for the Advancement of Catholic Schools. **YOUR** gift *will* truly make a difference. Your generosity guarantees more children will have the opportunity to receive a first-rate education in an Archdiocese of Hartford Catholic school, a gift that will last a lifetime.

### ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Number of Students Enrolled.....	13,459
Percentage of Non-Catholics.....	20%
Percentage of Seniors graduating.....	100%
Percentage going on to further education.....	99%
Test scores are outstanding in all areas of standardized testing. Particular areas of strength include critical reading and writing.	
Average cost per student.....	\$7,072
Value.....	Priceless

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CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

#### PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR UPCOMING EVENTS:

17th Annual Archbishop's Saint Patrick's  
Day Breakfast- March 17, 2017

FORE FACS GOLF CLASSIC at Shelter  
Harbor Golf Club- May 15, 2017

Archbishop's Columbus Day Breakfast -  
October 6, 2017

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## COMING SOON:

*A free parish app  
for your smartphone*

PARISHES OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF  
HARTFORD SOON WILL BE OFFERED  
THE MYPARISH APP, AN ELECTRONIC  
LITURGICAL AID FOR ANDROID AND  
APPLE SMARTPHONES AND TABLETS.



The myParish app was developed by Diocesan & Trinity Publications, which states on the [myParishapp.com](http://myParishapp.com) website that it “helps build stronger Catholic communities and better engage the New Evangelization.”

Features include icons for messages between parishioners, a calendar of parish events, daily and Sunday readings, parish and school information and news, uploaded homilies, Mass and confession times, bulletins and more.

Each parish's administrator of the app can tailor its features to reflect the needs and preferences of the parish.

Parish bulletins, podcasts, prayers, spiritual readings, special events and more can be accessed through the app.

The app will be free and available to all parishes as part of a new working relationship that the archdiocese has forged with FAITH Catholic, which supports the publishing efforts of more than 30 dioceses throughout the United States, according to Karin A. Nobile, special assistant to Archbishop Blair. †

*Come Away and Rest Awhile...*

 **HOLY FAMILY**  
PASSIONIST  
RETREAT CENTER

West Hartford, CT  
860.521.0440  
[www.holyfamilyretreat.org](http://www.holyfamilyretreat.org)

# Flexing spiritual muscles

**One summer in my college years, I worked the morning shift at a local gym to earn some extra money. Each day when I arrived at 4:25 a.m., without fail, the regulars were already there, waiting for me.**

I was always in awe of those dedicated few, and while they never said anything, I know they were not thrilled when I showed up at 4:31, a minute after the gym was supposed to open, because I hadn't biked there fast enough or had hit the snooze button.

These people were dedicated to their physical health in a way that many of us can't understand. I know I certainly can't, and I even raced on a triathlon team in college. There are plenty of gym rats and exercise nuts out there, but how many do you know who arrive at the gym at a time many of us still consider the middle of the night?

When I stop to think about my own habits — personal fitness, spiritual fitness, diet, exercise and such — those early morning risers come to mind. I'm not thinking of rushing to the gym in the wee hours of the morning anytime soon, but it does make me stop and wonder about how I can be more disciplined, and what areas I maybe should pay more attention to.

There are examples galore of ways to aid in physical well-being at the start of a new year. Just ask the membership staff at the local gym what their favorite time of year is. But, I would guess that church attendance doesn't surge the same way every January. Are there ways we can exercise more of our spiritual health in the new year?

If Sunday church attendance is already a habit, there are plenty of other ways to engage more fully in our spiritual lives this coming year. It could be making it to a daily Mass or special prayer service once a week. Maybe, for some, it's getting to Mass on all of the holy days of obligation in 2017. Maybe it's adding another five- or 10-minute period of prayer time to our day. Maybe it's cracking open a Bible



more often, or, as in my case, really, at all. Maybe it's considering a return to confession.

Advent and Lent are common periods to set the spiritual reset button, try something new or engage in an activity or fasting that will bring us closer to God. Is there something you can put on your resolution list as an addendum this year? Or something that can be a new addition altogether? Is there something that probably shouldn't wait until the month and a half before Easter?

At the start of 2016, my husband and I decided we were going to make resolutions that catered to three aspects of our health: emotional, physical and spiritual. We decided to make a poster with a list of things we wanted to accomplish in the year, and we weren't going to shy away from any idea, no matter how unlikely it seemed.

A tougher list would just push us harder to follow through, we said.

Well, it seems even making the poster was too ambitious, because I found the poster board in our closet the other day. It's still blank.

But that poster board is actually going to make it to the wall this year, and with a little luck, hard work and some of that channeled energy from those summer gym rats, we may be able to look at it again a year from now knowing that we at least accomplished our spiritual health goals for 2017. †



**ANNA JONES**

*is a writer who lives in New Haven. She and her husband are members of the St. Thomas More Chapel and Center Community at Yale University.*

## Transformative Encounters in The Gospel of John

St. Thomas Seminary, Bloomfield  
Saturday, March 25, 2017 • 12:30-4:30 pm  
(sign-in and light refreshments at noon)

Presenter: **Dr. Harold Attridge**  
Sterling Professor of Divinity, Yale University

**All are welcome!**

Donation requested.

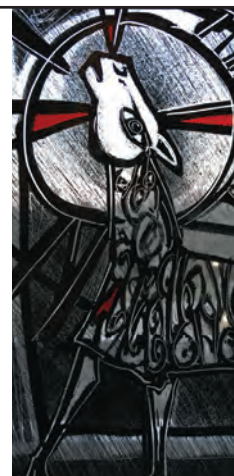
**Registration Required**

by March 17, 2017

Register online at

[www.orehartford.org](http://www.orehartford.org)

860-242-5573, ext. 2679



# WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED

## A JOURNEY OF HOPE

**At the request of Father Timothy O'Brien, then-pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in New Hartford and Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Harwinton, Archbishop Leonard P. Blair decreed the merger of the two parishes on Oct. 1, 2016. To share the thoughts of parishioners involved in the process leading up to the merger, the following questions were posed to a few key people from both parishes. Below is a synopsis of their answers:**

**Q** As part of the archdiocese's ongoing pastoral planning, your parishes have been involved in a merger. Where are you in the merger process?

**A:** A merger committee was formed and we are currently in the final stages of the first half of the process. We have received incorporation as a newly merged parish with the name Our Lady of Hope. Mass times have been adjusted; finances and records are being reviewed and will be combined effective Jan. 1, 2017. The second half of the merger, and frankly the hardest, will be to bring the two communities together and to make an honest assessment of the buildings, properties and full resources of the parish, making sure they are aligned with the future needs and abilities of the parish community.

**Q** How long ago was the process started?

**A:** The process started with the official linking of the parishes approximately five years ago. The formal merger was announced in the fall of 2016. We began meeting and planning in earnest toward the end of 2015.

**Q** Has this been a collaborative effort, and if so, in what ways?

**A:** Yes. We have key people from both churches who have played an important role in moving things forward. To create a name for the new parish, the merger committee

oversaw a selection and voting process in which most parishioners were involved. After the linking occurred, Father O'Brien began merging some of the ministries and brought together much of the administrative staff, eliminating duplication, improving efficiency and lowering costs, which benefitted both parishes.

**Q** What were some of the initial reactions of the parishioners?

**A:** Reaction was mixed. Some were very fearful that one of the parishes would close. Some worried about losing their individual identity as a church. Others saw it as an exciting opportunity to combine the best of both parishes to make something even better. Because not everyone is aware of the decline of the church membership that we have already experienced, and that is still to come, some have resisted the change. But most of those people are resigned to, or coming around to, understanding what needs to be done for the greater good of our faith community.

**Q** How have those reactions evolved?

**A:** People really like the name Our Lady of Hope and most are very positive, but some still fear a closure in the future. Some people resist going to the other church for Mass. Others are looking forward to the future with our new parish administrator, Father Michael Ruminski.

**Q** What have been the greatest impediments to progress?

**A:** Parishioners resistant to change, fear and uncertainty. And because there is no comprehensive guide to mergers, we have had to take it upon ourselves to create a merger plan while consulting with the Office of Pastoral Planning.

**Q** How have these impediments been addressed?

**A:** Through ongoing communication, repetitive messaging, transparency, empathy and fairness. Being optimistic by promoting a vision of a viable and sustainable future for our faith community.

**Q** What would you say are the benefits of merging?

**A:** Survival. We are two parishes that

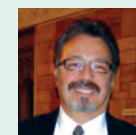
have seen a decline in participation and financial support while continuing to support two full campuses. We will become a smaller but stronger single parish, better able to serve both communities. We will see greater attendance at Mass, create streamlined operations, retool/repurpose our ministries and provide opportunities for new talent in leadership roles. All these possibilities will help promote longevity and ensure a vibrant parish for this generation and the next.

**Q** What, if any, are the liabilities?

**A:** There is still resistance on the part of some parishioners who want to keep things the way they have always been. We also run the risk of losing parishioners. The good news, however, is that the majority of people are excited for what is to come. There are those who recognize that in spite of the risk of potential disappointing outcomes, such as closures, we can nonetheless have a smaller version of a parish that will be made up of very committed people.

**Q** What advice would you pass on to others thinking about or going through a similar process?

**A:** Start talking about the process early. Give people a chance to share their feelings, good or bad. Have a timeline and a precise plan for everything that will need to be done. People will respect frankness, clarity and honesty. If the merger results in the eventual closing of one of the churches, it is better to share that information as soon as possible rather than telling them later and making them feel like the process was not honest. Ultimately, it's vital that people accept the facts, make the best of their particular circumstances and work together for the greater good of the community. †



**DEACON ERNEST SCRIVANI, T.O. CARM.**

*is the director of the Office of Pastoral Planning*

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GETTY IMAGES

# Apologetics or Apologizing?

**Q DEAR FATHER JOE:** Whenever I hear people talking about apologetics, I get confused. It sounds like apologizing, and I don't think we need to apologize for our faith! What am I misunderstanding?

**YOUR FAITH  
IN THE  
KNOW WITH  
FATHER JOE**



**FATHER  
JOE KRUPP**

is a former  
comedy writer  
who is now a  
Catholic priest.  
@Joeinblack

**A** First, let's define apologetics. It's a tougher thing to do than you would think, because the word is flexible enough to be used in a few ways.

These days, when we say we are apologizing, what we are usually doing is asking someone's forgiveness in an informal way: "I apologize for laughing when your team fumbled and my team scored."

Believe it or not, its original usage was different: to apologize meant to explain one's behavior or to defend oneself. In fact, the word "apology" comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which means "speak in return, defend oneself." The first time I heard of this was when I read Socrates' *Apology*, which was his public defense at his trial for numerous charges. Socrates stepped forward, addressed each of the charges and explained why he was innocent, or, in some cases, why he was guilty, but why what he was guilty of was a good thing.

Over time, the usage of the word has evolved and, as I mentioned earlier, we tend in common speech to use it to mean, "I'm sorry."

However, the original intent of the word has remained, and it is used in religious and philosophical schools. For example, we have what you probably ran into: Catholic apologetics.

So, what is Catholic apologetics? Defined loosely, it is an attempt to use reason, Scripture and tradition to defend the Catholic faith and/or teaching.

We can use apologetics to explain Catholic teaching or doctrine to those who have "why" type questions. We can also use apologetics to defend our faith when an atheist or non-Catholic Christian asks for more information from us.

Now that we have an understanding of what apologetics is, I hope we see that apologetics is, to some extent, the call of every Catholic.

In 1 Peter 3:15-16, we see these words from our first pope: *"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame."*

We can and should use these words as a fuel to guide us into a deeper knowledge of what we believe and why we believe it.

With that in mind, my first challenge here is to grow in understanding our faith. There are so many resources out there that I dare say it would be a crazy thing for me to attempt to whittle it down into a list.

Get on Google and type “Catholic apologetics.” Go to your library and look for good Catholic resources. Pick one topic and research it so that you can understand the reason we believe what we believe. In 1926, a noted Catholic apologist named G.K. Chesterton wrote “The difficulty explaining why I am Catholic is that there are 10,000 reasons all amounting to one reason: that Catholicism is true.” You’ll find that to be accurate once you dive in — our ancient faith is beautiful!

So, now you are “armed.” You have a deeper understanding of our faith and you are ready to defend that faith with your learning. In a sense, you have the “Why?” and now you are looking for the “How?”

In my opinion, a key guiding factor in how to defend our faith is to remember the words of the lesser-known saint, Kenny Rogers. He once said, “You’ve got to know when to hold ’em, know when to fold ’em, know when to walk away, know when to run.”

With the advancement of social media, our society has become much more combative than I remember us being in the past. Our social media feeds are filled with anger, criticism, virtue signaling and all sorts of noise.

Right now, if a person were to develop an interest in the Catholic faith and got onto Facebook or Twitter to see what Catholics are saying, they’d see a lot of Catholics posting about why Pope Francis is wrong or how priests are celebrating Mass. They’ll observe a whole lot of complaining and anger, but not much love. In my opinion, we are our own worst enemies.

Apologists stay away from that complaining, nitpicking and angry world, because they understand that truth is strong and doesn’t need our manipulations or anger. People will move toward Catholicism because of the truth and beauty in it, not because we humiliated them, beat them down and/or argued better than them. This sort of virtuous behavior will in and of itself be a profound witness to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

A good Catholic apologist knows that love must be the only reason we engage in a discussion/argument about our faith. Share with those who ask out of genuine curiosity. Share with those who ask because they want to know. Walk away from the need to win

and make sure you only engage out of love and/or because of love. In short, we don’t have to bite at every piece of bait thrown in front of us.

Always, always, always remember that truth is a person: Jesus Christ. We do not want to abuse truth or use it as a weapon to bludgeon people who irritate us. If someone asks questions and sincerely wants to know, meet them in that holy curiosity and bring truth with you. Share what you’ve learned with joy and good humor.

Let God do the rest — it will blow you away.  
Enjoy another day in God’s presence. †

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What do you say when ...  
**A CO-WORKER ASKS YOU  
ABOUT BEING CATHOLIC?**

---

## YOUR FAITH THEOLOGY 101

**T**heology 101 offers some ways of approaching various questions Catholics may encounter from co-workers, family and friends regarding the practice of the faith. Of course, we must remember that nothing can replace the power of witnessing to the Good News through our own actions and words, combined with our willingness to accompany others on their faith journey.

---

### THE QUESTION:

*My co-worker told me over lunch that she was raised Catholic and used to go to Mass, but gave it up because she found it boring. She said she wishes she could get out of it what I do — what can I say to encourage her?*

---

### DIGGING DOWN

■ This is an interesting comment. On the one hand, this co-worker has given up going to Mass because it was boring. In other words, she lost interest in the Mass. On the other hand, she looks at you, who presumably attends Mass regularly, and sees in you something that she desires. The question, of course, is what is it that she finds so desirable in terms of what she thinks you get out of Mass? So the starting point is determining what has actually piqued her interest, rather than focusing on the reasons she found the Mass boring.

---

### BUILD UPON THE FOUNDATION OF DESIRE

■ Boredom ultimately involves problems of engagement. Albert L. Winseman, in his book *Growing an Engaged Church: How to Stop 'Doing Church' and Start Being the Church Again*, writes that engagement is ultimately tied to how deeply one feels about something, a feeling that leads to commitment. It involves getting and giving; belonging and growing.

Winseman also identifies indicators of engagement. Some of these indicators are knowing what is expected of us, having spiritual leaders who care about us as people, having our spiritual needs met and feeling that our participation is necessary for the mission.

Boredom, or disengagement, can occur when these indicators are in short supply. This is why it is so important to focus on the spark of desire expressed in the co-worker's statement. For example, if it is the peace you seem to get from the Mass that is attractive to her, to what do you attribute this peace? It is upon this spark that you can begin to engage your co-worker in dialogue, learn about her and, hopefully, grow with her.

---

### FULL CIRCLE

■ Your engagement with your co-worker about what it is the co-worker believes you get out of Mass can provide an opportunity to evangelize, or share the Good News, about the Mass. Of course, you want to evangelize in a way that will hopefully lead to the co-worker's desire to re-engage with the Mass.

Ideally, the Mass, in the sharing of God's word and Christ's body and blood, builds a community that cares for one another, belongs to one another and supports the spiritual growth of its members. In other words, the Mass involves getting and giving; belonging and growing. †

---

## FANNING THE FLAME

■ **When someone expresses the desire to get from the Mass what you get from the Mass, consider the following:**

**1.**  
**Invite them to attend Mass with you.**

**2.**  
**Invite them to a prayer group or a Bible study.**

**3.**  
**Encourage them to explore a Catholics Returning Home program, and go with them.**

**4.**  
**Create a safe space for them to continue to discuss their faith journey with you.**

**Accompaniment and dialogue are keys, as the faith journey of each person must be respected and honored.**

### DOUG CULP

*is the CAO and secretary for pastoral life for the Diocese of Lexington, Ky. He holds an MA in theology from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.*





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YOUR STORY  
COVER STORY

# 'They are my heroes'

## Eileen's work at the food pantry feeds her spirit

**I**t's 9 o'clock on a Thursday morning, and a dozen volunteers are organizing food and clothing donations for the many people who will visit the Cathedral of St. Joseph food pantry in Hartford. Before the doors open, Eileen Morse gathers the volunteers to form a prayer circle to ask for God's blessing as they help their neighbors.

Morse is 80 and a dynamo, one of those people you'd think is decades younger if you didn't know better. She has coordinated pantry volunteers since 2004. It's one of the many ways she contributes to her parish community and to the common good.

To her, the pantry is a ministry right out of the Gospel, a service that enhances her life, but is also a service performed in the name of God.

She has learned firsthand that the pantry is a lifeline for many people of diverse backgrounds. A good listener with an approachable personality and

contagious laugh, Morse is familiar with many of the pantry's clients, and many of them know, appreciate and respect her. She has heard their stories. She knows whose birthday is coming up. She knows who's graduating, and has been invited to family celebrations. She knows which woman relies on the pantry to help feed her grandchildren and is aware of the veteran who has fallen on hard times.

Francis Shannon and his guide dog Lady visit the pantry every week. He says he first went there for assistance at the suggestion of the police, who showed



up after he was robbed. Not only was he able to receive groceries from the pantry, but the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, another cathedral ministry, provided him with rental assistance.

Morse says of the pantry clients, “They are my heroes because they face so much adversity, but still have the faith and courage to keep going.”

The need to help the underserved grows every year, she said. When the cathedral food pantry opened almost four decades ago, it was confined to a small closet stocked with canned goods. Today, it is equipped with five large refrigerators and space for stacked boxes of food donations that never go to waste.

“Anyone who goes to bed feeling safe, warm, clean and nourished should fall down on their knees and thank God,”

Morse says, “because there are more and more people all over the world who are not blessed with these privileges.”

On one particular Thursday, Morse and the volunteers helped more than 200 people. “On average, we usually serve about 150 people, so today’s number is high,” she says. When she considers the number of people who have gone to the cathedral’s food



**STORY BY  
MARIA ZONE,**

*the communications  
director for the  
Archdiocese of  
Hartford.*

**PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
Bob Mullen**

## DONATE!

These are only a few food pantries available through parishes or Catholic organizations in the Archdiocese of Hartford. Call your local parish to find out if it runs one.

### **CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOSEPH FOOD PANTRY 860.249.8431**

140 Farmington Ave., Hartford  
Pantry hours: Thursday from 10 a.m. to noon

- Serves 600 people a month.

### **ST. VINCENT DE PAUL MISSION FOOD PANTRY 203.757.0411**

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Pantry hours: Monday-Saturday, 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

- Serves 350 people a day.

### **MALTA/ST. JUSTIN FOOD PANTRY 860.724.3331**

230 Blue Hills Ave., Hartford  
Pantry hours: Saturday, 9 to 11 a.m.

- Serves 500 people a month.
- On every other Saturday, free health clinics are available.

### **ST. ANN SOUP KITCHEN AND FOOD PANTRY 203.562.5700**

930 Dixwell Ave., Hamden  
Pantry hours: Every other Friday, 9 to 11 a.m.  
Call for an appointment.

- Serves at least 200 people a month.
- Please call pantry to confirm that hours have not changed.

### **HOUSE OF BREAD SOUP KITCHEN 860.549.4188, ext. 202**

27 Chestnut St., Hartford

- Serves breakfast and lunch.
- Serves 2,000 meals a week.

### **ST. GEORGE FOOD PANTRY 203.453.2788**

33 Whitfield St., Guilford

- Serves 150 people a month.
- Call for information.



Anyone who goes to bed feeling safe, warm, clean and nourished should fall down on their knees and thank God because there are more and more people all over the world who are not blessed with these privileges.”

— EILEEN MORSE

**ON AVERAGE,  
THE CATHEDRAL  
OF ST. JOSEPH  
FOOD PANTRY  
SERVES ABOUT  
150 PEOPLE  
PER WEEK.**

pantry for basic items, she says, “I often wonder how many people Jesus fed” during his earthly ministry.

Father James A. Shanley, rector of the cathedral, says Eileen makes the world a better place. “She shares her gifts with the people in the community not because she has to, but because she wants to. She tackles her responsibility at the cathedral pantry not as a job but as part of her day-to-day existence. Her ability to help others will never go unnoticed and is cherished by so many.”

Morse says that the Holy Spirit motivates her to help others.

“I always feel that I never have to worry because God provides. I’m just doing my work. It is God’s will. His hand is in the pantry. I had no idea that I could do this, but he did,” she says.

Although she’s not planning the encounter anytime soon, she says that when she reaches heaven and sees God, “I hope he is happy to see me, and he has a lot of chocolate.”

In the years that Morse has been running the ministry, its services have expanded. In addition to distributing canned goods, frozen meats, bread and cereal, the pantry also hands out diapers, toiletries and clothing. It even collects and distributes pet food, and offers financial assistance through the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Morse credits her extremely dedicated volunteers for making it possible for the pantry to provide a wide array of resources to the community.

“I need a lot of help,” she says.

She gets it. She says she doesn’t have to chase people to do the work because once she gets them to try volunteering at the pantry, they love it and come back on their own. Some have been coming back faithfully for more than a decade.

When she talks about the pantry’s volunteers, she

chokes up. “They are my family.”

A parishioner of the cathedral for 59 years, Morse says she feels obligated to reach out to people in any way that she can. She had been an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist, which enabled her to administer Communion to the sick in hospitals and to people who were homebound. She conducts a prayer group that meets once a week for small group discussion and is otherwise active in parish life.

“This cathedral means a lot to me; it is my spiritual home. Most of my friendships are formed here,” she said, including many people who visit the food pantry.

Morse loves to sing and was a member of the cathedral choir for 40 years, until her voice gave out, she says. Word is that her pipes work just fine when she is cheering on her UConn women’s basketball team, though. She was in Indianapolis to urge her team to successful victory in the NCAA championship run last year.

Morse’s drive to help others is nothing new; she says that she’s always “been this way.” In addition to crediting the Holy Spirit, she salutes her dad, whom she describes as a faith-filled man, for likely having the most influence on her. One of her fondest memories is of reciting the rosary with him every morning during Lent when she was a young girl.

“We are all on a spiritual journey,” she says.

Morse says that her loving family — she has four daughters, 11 grandchildren, one great-grandchild and another on the way — is always around to support her many activities and lend her a helping hand.

Although nobody sees signs of a slowdown, Morse knows she cannot run the pantry forever and is training people for the day that she must retire. She wants to ensure that the pantry ministry will continue for many more decades.

With her rooting it on, how could it not? †



ARCHBISHOP  
OFFERS HIS  
VISION AT



FRASSATI  
ON TAP

**Over the din rising from the Stony Creek Brewery downstairs, New Haven's Frassati on Tap hosted an "upper room" gathering of young adult Catholics. Archbishop Leonard Blair fielded their questions, many of which homed in on his vision for the Archdiocese of Hartford.**



**STORY AND  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY GEORGE  
GOSS.**

*a freelance writer who received a master's degree in journalism in December 2016 from the City University of New York and has been awarded a fellowship at the National Catholic Reporter.*

The archbishop gave candid answers to tough questions, including some about the future of the Church.

"A big concern of mine is sitting right in front of me today: the young people of the Church," Archbishop Blair said. "I want to see a Church with a lot of young faces."

Acknowledging the demographic freefall among church-goers in their 20s and 30s, he emphasized the importance of a sense of mission, whether in parishes or universities.

"FOCUS is the kind of thing that we have to support," Archbishop Blair said in reference to the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, an organization that aims to win the hearts of college students, strengthen their faith and

send them into the world.

As for the parishes, the archbishop said that many of the 212 churches throughout the archdiocese have Sunday Masses that are not even half full.

"Sometimes, when you have two or three parishes that are just hanging on, they come together and create one, new dynamic parish that gives a whole new breath of life," Archbishop Blair said.

He singled out Waterbury as the epicenter of a coming pastoral planning intervention.

"There are 16 parishes there, and this is the city that's absolutely changed from its old industrial days," Archbishop Blair said. "We have a parish there with only 20 parishioners left."

Acknowledging how the great Catholic strongholds in New England have fallen to increasing secularization — Hartford/New Haven is ranked No. 1 in the United States as the most secularized region, according to the Barna Group's "The State of the Church 2016" report — Archbishop Blair urged those gathered to get involved in providing a compelling personal witness of their Christian faith to their coworkers, friends and all they meet.

"The *Catechism* is only dry bones if it doesn't have heart," Archbishop Blair said.

Afterward, many expressed their gratitude for the archbishop's presence.



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“He’s very centered on Christ and I love listening to him,” said Santina Scarcella, who is on the core team for the young adults’ group Crossroads4Christ in Columbia and who attended the most recent World Youth Day, in Krakow, Poland. “Some of those questions were pointed and controversial, but he really did a great job answering them.”

Father Matthew Gworek, 29, parochial vicar of St. Mary Parish in Branford, also remarked that the questions were tough, but that the archbishop “handled them with grace.”

Michelle Dupuis, a member of the young adult group at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford, liked Archbishop Blair’s description of the Holy Spirit as the wind in the sails of the Church.

And Alex Soucy, a member of Frassati New Haven’s core team, was impressed by how — amid all the talk of cultural upheaval and the challenges facing those pursuing Christian vocations, whether married or religious — Archbishop Blair brought it back to a personal encounter with Christ.

“He really emphasized the importance of prayer in our vocation,” Soucy said. “And how, as long as we truly want to do God’s will in our lives, he will lead us to where we are most called.”

Archbishop Blair’s visit on Oct. 16 was part of the Frassati on Tap series of discussions about the faith sponsored by Frassati New Haven, a group for young adults, at the brewery. †

## WHO WAS PIER FRASSATI?

Those who think of saints as shy and reclusive people who disdain this life while pining for the next world will be surprised by the figure of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, a practical joker known by friends as “Robespierre” or the “Terror.” Today’s laity, especially young people who are looking for a role model, find someone to identify with in this strapping young outdoorsman who combined political activism and work for social justice.

Frassati was born on April 6, 1901, into a well-known and influential family in Turin.

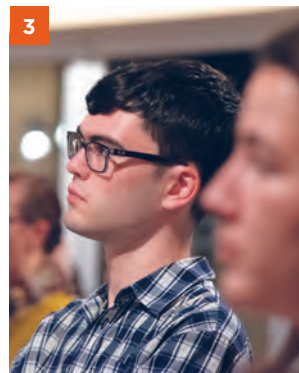
Photos of his student days show a handsome, magnetic youth, always laughing in the center of the group. Among his friends, Frassati was the life and soul of the party, a keen mountain climber and hiker, who involved himself in Catholic social programs and vigorously opposed the communists first, and then the rise of Fascism.

In private, he had an intense life of prayer and love for the sacraments; what money he had he gave away to the poor of Turin, in whom he saw Christ. Frassati considered the priesthood but became a third order (lay) Dominican. Among other activities, he was a member of Catholic Action, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the Popular Party.

Helping in the slums during a polio epidemic, he contracted the disease and died at the age of 24 on July 4, 1925. — *Biography adapted from catholiceraid.co.uk*



2



3

**1. Archbishop Leonard Blair answers questions. Listening in the background, are, among others, Emily Naylor, head of Frassati New Haven, and Father Matthew Gworek, parochial vicar at St. Mary Parish in Branford.**

**2. Richard Lee asks Archbishop Blair a question as Grace Koo looks on.**



4

**3. Andrew Butler, a member of Frassati New Haven, listens intently.**

**4. Raymond Gilbert of Crossroads4Christ Young Adult Group.**



5

**5. The archbishop addresses more than 100 young adults at the Frassati on Tap gathering on Oct. 16 at the Stony Creek Brewery in Branford.**

# Bishops' foundation seeks to rekindle connection between Church, society

To Father Steven C. Boguslawski, it was an extraordinary show of unity, a moment last June that defined community.

Already reeling at news of the Orlando nightclub massacre, the city's Asylum Hill neighborhood learned the tragedy had hit close to home: Two Aetna employees had been killed in the attack.

Archbishop Leonard P. Blair reached out to his neighbors, opening the doors of the Cathedral of St. Joseph to Aetna employees who wished to remember their colleagues, Christopher Andrew Leinonen and Stanley Almodovar III, at a noontime Mass.

Father Boguslawski recently recalled the sight of hundreds of employees walking together across the street to attend the service.

"I have chills now talking about it because it was so moving to see this mass of people who came together to pray for everybody who was victimized," Father Boguslawski said.

It's this sense of community the Archdiocese of Hartford hopes to strengthen with the formation of The Hartford Bishops' Foundation, a group of more than 40 local leaders in business, government, education and civic organizations who plan to meet regularly to discuss — and ultimately implement — a strategic plan of special projects and efforts aimed at improving the lives of those living in Hartford, New Haven and Litchfield counties.

Chief executive officers of major companies and prominent lawyers have already signed on, as well as educators and directors of nonprofits. Though issues involving the Catholic Church will figure most prominently in the foundation's work, foundation members said those issues often touch a much broader community.

Members said they wanted to be a

part of the group because of its belief that human beings are responsible to each other, regardless of religion. And that responsibility, members said, requires understanding the key issues of the day, whether it is how to better coordinate fund-raising or making sure key church services continue for those in need.

"Those things transcend any one religion," Oz Griebel, president and chief executive officer of the MetroHartford Alliance, and a foundation member, said.

A similar "philanthropic paradigm," as Archbishop Blair calls it, dates to the late 19th and early 20th century when Hartford's insurance and finance leaders — referred to at the time as the city's "bishops" — worked together to address the social and economic challenges in and around Hartford.

"We're evoking something from the past to teach us something that we can do today," Archbishop Blair said.

In the past, Archbishop Blair said, it was not unusual for clergy to foster civic engagement beyond the Church and he said he is hoping the foundation, comprising members with varied religious and non-religious backgrounds, can revive that.

"Things have changed greatly in the Church and society and I think we want to rekindle that necessary connection between the Church and the civic society for the common good," Archbishop Blair said.

And with religious participation declining among Americans, which for Catholics has contributed to the closure of churches and parochial schools, connecting with the world outside the cathedral walls, Archbishop Blair said, can be an effective way to help the Archdiocese of Hartford plan for the future.

"The archdiocese is at a crucial moment in its history," Archbishop Blair said. "Internally, we're embarking on a major plan of pastoral planning and we have to do that. Parishes and Catholic schools of 2016 are not the world of 1955, '65 or even '95 when it



**STORY BY  
ALAINE GRIFFIN,**  
*an award-winning  
reporter for  
the Hartford  
Courant.*







**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Since this article appeared in the *Hartford Courant* on Oct. 2, 2016, 32 men and women have joined the board of The Hartford Bishops' Foundation, including general chair Jim C. Smith, chairman and CEO of Webster Financial Corporation and Webster Bank, and chairs James P. Torgerson, CEO of Avangrid, Inc., and James M. Loree, president and CEO of Stanley Black & Decker, Inc. The article is reprinted with permission.

comes to our buildings and the way we're put together. And, of course, my challenge as a bishop is to invite people to have a wider vision of what our mission is as a Church." A vision, Archbishop Blair added, that must take into account how the Church is configured not only by buildings, but also in people's minds.

"A self-referential church that's only interested in self-preservation is failing in its mission," Archbishop Blair said.

First up on the list of initiatives, he said, is the creation of a master plan and fund-raising for the development of a Cathedral of St. Joseph campus with public gardens, a front plaza, a community meeting hall and an illuminated steeple and cross.

Church leaders say the cathedral not only needs to be more easily accessible and welcoming to visitors but also should be more identifiable to those seeking outreach and help from the various services the Church already provides, whether it is groceries from the food pantry or medical services and housing assistance from Catholic Charities.

"We're already so engaged but it's often taken for granted or not known by the community," Archbishop Blair said. "We want to situate our presence and our contribution as a local church within the wider civic context."

Theresa N. Becker, retired vice president of General Re-New England Asset Management, and a Catholic member of the foundation, agrees.

"The Catholic faith here really needs a strong leader but also a strong place to worship," Becker said. She said she supports raising money to refurbish the cathedral so it stands as a welcoming center for the community.

"One of the things Archbishop Blair recognizes is

that what we need as a society is faith and the ability to practice your faith, whatever that faith may be," Becker said.

The cathedral, she said, could be a place for everyone to worship.

"In these times when people are really looking for answers to all of the craziness in the world, why wouldn't it be?" Becker said.

As it is, interfaith cooperation has been in play at St. Joseph's for many years. When the cathedral had to be rebuilt after a fire destroyed it in 1956, Protestants and Jews contributed funding, helping out the Roman Catholics who provided the majority of the funding at the time.

"A great cathedral like ours in a community like this is traditionally, historically, more than just a place of Catholic worship," Archbishop Blair said. †

**THE ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE OF DIACONATE FORMATION IS NOW PREPARING TO ACCEPT NEW CANDIDATES TO THE DIACONATE FOR CLASSES STARTING IN THE FALL.**

Any Catholic man between the ages of 35 and 60 interested in becoming a deacon should speak to his pastor. There will be two inquiry sessions at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield on Sunday, March 12 and Sunday, March 26, 2017 from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. Candidates must attend both sessions along with spouses.

**For more information and to pre-register by March 8, Call: 860.242.5573 ext. 7447 Email: [mary.ellen.horan@aohct.org](mailto:mary.ellen.horan@aohct.org)**





PHOTO BY PETER HYZDAK/NEW HAVEN REGISTER USED WITH PERMISSION.

## *First merged parish: a model of vitality*

### **NEW PEOPLE, NEW SPIRIT, SAME MISSION**

After two North Branford parishes merged to become St. Ambrose Parish last January, the result is a vibrant, well-integrated faith community that is better poised to further the mission of the Church, according to parishioners and administrators.

STORY BY  
MARY  
CHALUPSKY

St. Augustine and St. Monica became the first parishes in the Archdiocese of Hartford to merge last year. And despite initial growing pains, parishioners are reaping the benefits of more streamlined operations along with a seemingly endless menu of opportunities for expanded faith-formation, evangelization, community-building and outreach to the community at large.

“It’s really been a wonderful opportunity,” said Father Robert L. Turner, pastor of St. Ambrose. “Having the parishes come together shows that we share the same faith, we are one community, we can better manage the assets of the two parishes together rather than separate and we are able to do more

with fewer resources.”

Since the merger, St. Ambrose has bolstered its offerings for young people by hiring a full-time youth minister for grades 7-12. It also has launched Alpha, a faith formation program for adults and teens; and Relit, a video and discussion program that teaches parishioners how to evangelize.

“We’re trying to increase the vibrancy of the parish as we bring people together,” said an enthusiastic Cyndie Baker, parish operations manager.

Charged with overseeing its ministry to young people are Judy Derbacher, faith formation coordinator, who works with grades one through six, preparing them to receive the sacraments of the

Eucharist and reconciliation; and Rose Cassidy, who was recently hired as a full-time youth minister for junior high and high school students.

To maintain and build its connection with young people, the parish offers an intensive confirmation preparation program that continues with other activities offered for teens.

Beginning in the ninth grade, students participate in Alpha, an interactive faith formation program consisting of a video, dinner and discussion that runs from September through December. Lessons from Ascension Press continue the confirmation preparation through the 10th grade.

In addition, teens coordinate a

◀ From left, Cyndie Baker, St. Ambrose Parish operations manager; Father Robert L. Turner, pastor of St. Ambrose Parish; Deacon Ernest Scrivani, director of the Archdiocese of Hartford's Office of Pastoral Planning; and Deacon Joe Marena, St. Ambrose Parish business manager, on March 21 in the St. Augustine Church Celebration Hall Chapel in North Branford, where daily Mass is celebrated.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
ON ST. AMBROSE PARISH,  
VISIT [WWW.NBCATHOLICS.ORG](http://WWW.NBCATHOLICS.ORG)



monthly Youth Mass on Sundays at 6 p.m. that is followed by Life Teen, a national program designed to lead teens to Christ. And for fun and socializing, students participate in trips, including those to Six Flags and a night under black lights at Skyzone Trampoline Park in Wallingford.

Adults, too, continue to enjoy a number of ongoing parish organizations and events, as well as new faith formation and parish activities, some of which have been created since the merger.

The 11-week, interactive Alpha program is available as an evangelization tool for adults in the spring. Also offered is an eight-week series, "Follow Me: Meeting Jesus through the Gospel of St. John" — a guide to a personal encounter with Christ.

Also new to the parish are a lecture series covering topics such as faithful citizenship and wellness and a Biblical Walk with Mary series offered during both Lent and Advent.

A convenient Mass schedule continues to be maintained at both locations, along with other parish events and activities for the community of 2,000 families.

Father Turner was appointed administrator of the linked parishes of St. Monica and St. Augustine in 2013.

Located less than five miles apart, both churches paralleled national trends showing a drop in Mass attendance, decreased financial

support and participation in sacraments over the years, as well as a shortage of priests to staff both locations. Yet each location was maintaining its own administrative, financial and human resources functions, as well as similar ministries and organizations.

Father Turner began to explore better ways to lead the parishes forward. Discussions to merge the two communities began in October 2015. Parishioners from both churches — trustees, finance committees, parish councils and other ministries — met with the archdiocesan Office of Pastoral Planning to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each location, talk about a strategic plan and explore available opportunities and options, namely, to remain open, close, merge with another parish, or merge with the intent to close one parish.

According to Father Turner, the linked parishes held "many meetings," provided meeting minutes to those who could not attend and kept communication and discussions flowing.

In the end, "the people realized we would be better off coming together" as one community of faith, he said. The decision was presented to the archbishop, who consulted with the archdiocesan priests' council; and the official decree to combine the parishes was issued on Jan. 1, 2016. Both parishes kept their buildings.

Parishioners, some of whom admit to initially resisting changes, now see the benefits.

"Personally, I like it," said Mike Proto, of the restructuring. "It's opened up the opportunity to bring the community together and draws upon the strengths of both churches. To me, it works and has been a positive experience for many of us."

Agreed David Walker, a St. Augustine parishioner for 26 years: "It's been beneficial to the community. We've always been one town, so now it brings the community together."

"I like it," added his wife Meg. "I like the experience of building our community ... especially for our youth. The involvement offered by the parish is better now for young people."

Father Turner is pleased with the results of the merger.

"Parishioners have said, 'This is great. I'm getting to know people who I haven't seen from the other side of town.' There are more activities, more events, and the shared staff is a better reality," he said. "And with shared resources, we're able to do more for the community in terms of ministry."

Betsy Foye, who serves as an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist at St. Monica, said she is making new friends.

"It's been different and we're still working things out, but the goal is good and everyone is trying to make it work." †

▲ Scenes from the St. Ambrose Parish picnic, held last August at St. Augustine Church.

PHOTOS BY MARY CHALUPSKY

## OBITUARIES:



READ FULL OBITUARIES AT  
[WWW.CATHOLICTRANSCRIPT.ORG](http://WWW.CATHOLICTRANSCRIPT.ORG)



■ **Father James C. Rush**, 73, of West Hartford, retired co-pastor of St. Gabriel Catholic Church in Windsor, died Nov. 19, 2016.



■ **Father Thomas B. Campion**, 89, of West Hartford, who had given 27 years of service at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield as a teacher, director of athletics and coach, died November 30, 2016.

## CATHOLIC CHARITIES REFUGEE PROGRAM EARNS AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

■ Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Hartford has received a certificate of outstanding achievement for its Migration, Refugee and Immigration Services program from the U.S. Bishops' Office of Migration and Refugee Services.

Archbishop Leonard P. Blair of Hartford was notified of the award in a letter dated Nov. 7 from Auxiliary Bishop Eusebio Elizondo of Seattle, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration.

"On behalf of the USCCB Committee on Migration and all the bishops of the United States, we express our deepest appreciation for the hard work and tremendous dedication of your refugee resettlement program staff," the letter says.

Bishop Elizondo points out that there was an increase of 15,000 refugees admitted to the United States in the past year, and that the Hartford program more than met the challenge.

"The dioceses welcomed almost 23,500 refugees and SIV (special immigrant visa) cases," the letter says. We commend your diocese in particular as one that went beyond 100 percent of the original number of refugees projected. ..."



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## SCHOOLS GEAR UP FOR NATIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

■ Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Hartford have a variety of special activities planned during National Catholic Schools Week Jan. 29 to Feb. 4.

The annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States starts on the last Sunday in January each year. This year's theme is "Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service." Schools typically observe the annual celebration week with Masses, open houses and other activities for students, families, parishioners and community members. Through these events, schools focus on the value Catholic education provides to young people and its contributions to our Church, our communities and our nation.

Although the Archdiocese of Hartford leaves observances of Catholic Schools Week up to each of its schools, the schools typically schedule activities using the following calendar:

- **Sunday:** The school's place in the life of the parish;
- **Monday:** The school's contribution to its local community;
- **Tuesday:** The talents and accomplishments of the students;
- **Wednesday:** The school's contribution to the local community, state and nation;
- **Thursday:** The school's preparation of students for faith-filled vocations, whether in religious life, family life or Church or civic life;
- **Friday:** The school's faculty, staff and volunteers;
- **Saturday:** The school's families, past and present.

At St. Mary School in Milford, for example, students are scheduled to speak at all weekend Masses; an open house with tours will be held from 9-11 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 31; and the student body will have such activities throughout the week as a Crazy Socks Day and Favorite Team Day and an ice cream social.



▲ **Michael S. Griffin**, superintendent of Catholic schools for the Archdiocese of Hartford, and **Sister Mary Grace Walsh** of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the archdiocese's provost for education, evangelization and catechesis.

**TWO PRIESTS ARE INCARDINATED**

■ On Aug. 24, 2016, Reverend Ivan Dario Ramirez and Reverend Israel Rivera were incardinated into the Archdiocese of Hartford by Archbishop Leonard P. Blair.



Father Ramirez, who was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Duitama-Sogamoso, Colombia, South America, in 2003, has served faithfully in the Archdiocese of Hartford

for more than five years. During that time, he served as parochial vicar at St. Mary, St. Rose and St. Isaac Jogues, the Catholic Communities of East Hartford North. He is the pastor of St. Lawrence O'Toole Parish in Hartford.



Father Rivera, also of the Diocese of Duitama-Sogamoso, was ordained in 2005. He also has served faithfully in the Archdiocese of Hartford for more than five years.

During that time, he was a chaplain at St. Paul Catholic High School in Bristol. Father Rivera was appointed administrator of St. Mary Church in New Britain in 2013, and in August of 2014, was named pastor.

Their incardination into the Archdiocese of Hartford means that they now answer to the Archbishop of Hartford and have the rights and duties of diocesan clergy in the archdiocese.



**EIGHT ACCEPTED TO START ON THE ROAD TO THE DIACONATE**

▲ Eight men have admitted to candidacy for ordination to the permanent diaconate at a liturgical rite at which Auxiliary Bishop Christie A. Macaluso presided on Nov. 20 at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield. The men are, from left in back, Carl Gorman, Robin Gingras, Confesol Rodríguez, Alberto Ruiz, Anthony Bergeron, Paul Travers, Alan Bielawski and Angel Garcia. In front are, from left, Father Aidan N. Donahue, director of the Diaconate Continuing Formation Committee; Bishop Macaluso; and Deacon Robert Pallotti, diaconate director. For information about the program, call 860.242.5573, ext. 7447.



**MORE THAN 500 GATHER TO CELEBRATE OUR LADY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE**

▲ Six men carry a statue of Our Lady, Mother of Divine Providence, toward the sanctuary on Nov. 19 at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford, as more than 500 people look on at the start of a Mass in Spanish in observance of the feast. Our Lady, Mother of Divine Providence, is the principal patroness of the island of Puerto Rico.

**APPOINTMENTS: The Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair, STD, has made the following appointments:**

■ **Reverend Janusz Kukulka:** to Parochial Vicar of Holy Spirit Parish, Newington, effective Nov. 18, 2016.

■ **Very Reverend Christopher M. Ford:** to Administrator of St. Lucy Parish, Waterbury, in addition to duties as Rector, Basilica of the Immaculate Conception Parish, Waterbury, Administrator of the Shrine of St. Anne for Mothers Parish, Waterbury, and Episcopal Vicar for the Waterbury Vicariate, effective Nov. 23, 2016.

■ **Reverend John Powers, C.P.:** Renewal of Priestly Faculties until Dec. 31, 2017, effective Nov. 15, 2016.

■ **Reverend Michael A. Ruminski:** to Administrator of Immaculate Conception Parish, New Hartford,

and Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Harwinton, effective Nov. 25, 2016.

■ **Reverend John R. Mariano:** to Parochial Vicar of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception Parish, Waterbury, in addition to duties as Parochial Vicar of SS. Peter and Paul and St. Leo the Great parishes, Waterbury, effective Dec. 1, 2016.

■ **Reverend Joseph M. O'Neil, M.S.:** Renewal of Priestly Faculties until Dec. 31, 2017, effective Nov. 28, 2016.

■ **Reverend Daniel James Sullivan:** to Administrator of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Hamden, in addition to duties of Priestly Ministry at St. Joan of Arc Parish, Hamden, effective Jan. 23, 2017.

■ **Deacon Roger R. Albert:** Senior Status,\* effective Feb. 18, 2017.

■ **Reverend Ryan M. Lerner:** to Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Hartford, in addition to duties as Secretary to the Archbishop, effective Dec. 12, 2016.

■ **Reverend George S. Mukuka, J.C.L.:** to Judicial Vicar of the Archdiocese of Hartford pro tem, in addition to duties as Administrator of St. Timothy Parish, West Hartford, effective Dec. 12, 2016.

*\*Because deacons and priests have received the sacrament of holy orders and therefore never retire in the canonical sense, the term "senior priest" describes their status.*

— REVEREND RYAN M. LERNER, CHANCELLOR

PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH

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## YOUR COMMUNITY ANNIVERSARY

BY JACK SHEEDY



Archbishop Blair is the principal celebrant at the annual Caribbean Mass at St. Justin Church in Hartford.

## Archbishop Blair celebrates his 40th anniversary as a priest at a multi-ethnic Mass

Every fourth Sunday in June since 2008, the Archbishop of Hartford is invited to preside over a special Caribbean Mass at St. Justin Church in Hartford. When Archbishop Leonard P. Blair accepted the invitation in 2016, organizers did not realize the June 26 event would coincide with Archbishop Blair's 40th anniversary of priestly ordination.

"I think I found out when I was reading something from the cathedral that he was celebrating his 40th anniversary," said organizer Beverly Plummer, director of religious education at St. Justin/St. Michael parishes.

"And I said, 'Wait a minute, this is the same day.' And we thought maybe he would cancel, but he kept his appointment," said Ms. Plummer, who also is the head of the Hartford chapter of Caribbean Catholics of North America.

Sure enough, Archbishop Blair processed down the aisle of St. Justin Church, flanked by honor guards carrying flags representing the United States, the Vatican and several Caribbean islands, while Mass attendees were dressed in colorful Caribbean garb, organizers said. There were steel

pan drummers, a Haitian choir and members of the Caribbean American Dance Company.

The Caribbean Mass at St. Justin's was already a tradition when Father Emmanuel Ihemedu became pastor in 2010. "But what I did was make it more pronounced and have only one Mass between the two churches on that day," he said.

"The highlight, as far as I'm concerned, is that we showcase how strong we are in our diversity," Father Ihemedu said. "We have people [at St. Justin's] from all over the Caribbean islands. We have people from Jamaica, from Trinidad and Tobago, from Saint Lucia, from Guyana, from Haiti. And over at St. Michael's you have mostly African-Americans and Hispanics. It doesn't matter where



◀ Beverly Plummer, head of the Hartford chapter of the Caribbean Catholics of North America, at the lectern.

▼ Members of the congregation move to the music provided during the Caribbean Mass last June at St. Justin Church in Hartford.



## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2016-2017 Archdiocesan Distinguished School Leaders



### Rev. Francis T. Carter

St. Bernadette Parish, New Haven  
*Distinguished Elementary School Pastor*



### Mrs. Patricia O'Neil Tiezzi

St. Rita School, Hamden  
*Distinguished Catholic School Administrator*

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we come from; our identity is, first and foremost, that we are children of God.”

The Mass attendees included parishioners from both churches. As in previous years, members of both parishes enjoyed a parish picnic with Caribbean food following the Mass.

Ms. Plummer said, “The way we celebrate Mass together, we all come together from all races and it’s all unity; they’re all united in one, singing together. And that’s what people look forward to. The church is packed. And especially when the archbishop is present, people love that, when the shepherd takes care of his flock.”

Kay Taylor-Brooks, St. Justin’s parish council president and co-president of the parish’s pastoral planning council, said, “As

Catholics, we all want to celebrate Mass in our own culture, and so we celebrate our Caribbean Mass with Caribbean liturgical music.”

She said Archbishop Blair “thoroughly enjoyed” the Mass and the picnic that followed. “The archbishop was there in the line getting his food like everybody else,” she said.

Myles Hubbard, an advisor to the planning committee for the Caribbean Mass, said Archbishop Blair enjoyed the homily delivered in a lively fashion by Father Celsus M. Auguste, pastor of Our Lady of La Soie in the northeastern section of Dominica. Mr. Hubbard, who took notes at the Mass, reported that Archbishop Blair said, “I am inspired by the dynamic message and the enthusiasm and zeal expressed in Father Auguste’s

homily.”

Father Ihemedu emphasized that the diversity of St. Justin/St. Michael Parish is also its strength.

“Our God is a God of diversity,” he said. “He is God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit, but they are united.”

In a similar way, there is not one kind of tree or one kind of flower but thousands of each, he said. There is not one human culture but many, he said.

“My Caribbean message is that our diversity is how God has created us and wanted us to be,” he said. “I tell St. Michael and St. Justin, I tell them that we are the United Nations.”

Planning will begin early in 2017 for the 10th annual Caribbean Mass, scheduled for Sunday, June 25. †

“  
*We showcase how strong we are in our diversity. ... It doesn’t matter where we come from; our identity is, first and foremost, that we are children of God.*  
”



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