

Branches on the Vine

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

OCTOBER 3 - 9, 2026

West Haven Parish Prays to *Our Blessed Mother* Monthly on the First Saturdays

- Story By Joe Pisani

All her life, Eva Cestari has had a devotion to the Blessed Mother — from her Catholic schooling in Minnesota to the years she and her husband Ralph prayed the rosary with their six children at home and on camping trips.

A longtime Lay Dominican, Cestari is also committed to what is referred to as the “Five First Saturdays” devotion, given by Our Lady of Fatima to do reparation for the increase of sin and godlessness in the world.

For 15 years, Cestari has prayed on all First Saturdays of each month, and with her fellow Lay Dominicans has tried to spread it to archdiocesan churches.

Four years ago, she and her friend Marla Rapini brought it to St. John Vianney Church, part of St. John XXIII Parish in West Haven, along with St. Louis Church. Parishioners do more than pray on the First Five Saturdays — they pray this devotion on the First Saturday of each month.

On Sept. 5, some 80 people from both West Haven churches came to a Mass celebrated by Father Israel Rivera. Afterward, they prayed the Joyful Mysteries of the rosary in English and Spanish followed by meditation. Father Rivera also called the children to gather around a statue of Our Lady of Fatima and blessed them.

The priest says his personal devotion to the Blessed Mother deepened during his priesthood and he regards her as the perfect role model of discipleship. “The world, with all its turmoil and suffering, needs the presence of the



Father Israel Rivera, pastor of St. John XXIII Parish, prays with children at the statue of Our Lady of Fatima at St. John Vianney Church in West Haven during a First Saturday devotion on Sept. 5. PHOTO BY JOE PISANI

Blessed Mother,” Father Rivera says. “It is her promise to Lucia, one of the children at Fatima, if we do reparation for sins, especially sins of blasphemy against the name of the Lord and her, that she will assist us at the hour of our death with the graces we need for salvation. We have to make reparation, receive communion, pray the rosary and go to confession.”

Father Rivera says the First Saturday Mass is “a wonderful display of unity of the parishioners from both churches.”

In 2023, Cestari made a pilgrimage to Fatima, Portugal, where Our Lady appeared to three shepherd children in 1917 and said: “People must amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins. They must not offend Our Lord anymore, for he is already much offended.”

The Blessed Mother later told the visionary Lucia: “I promise to assist at the moment of death, with all the graces necessary for salvation, all those who on the First Saturday of five consecutive months, shall confess, receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the rosary and keep me company for 15 minutes while meditating on the 15 mysteries of the

rosary with the intention of making reparation to me.”

The confession should be made within eight days before or after the First Saturday, and these acts should be offered in reparation for the blasphemies and offenses committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Rapini, who has prayed the devotion throughout her life, says, “It’s so important to me and to bring about peace in the world today, we need to heed Our Lady’s words. Sitting in church, praying the rosary in community and spending time with the Blessed Mother in meditation, brings me a sense of peace and encouragement that strengthens me throughout the month.” Says Cestari, “We know that in the end, the Immaculate Heart of Mary will triumph.”

St. John Vianney Church, 300 Captain Thomas Blvd., West Haven, celebrates Mass at 8:30 a.m. followed by the rosary and 15 minutes of meditation every first Saturday of the month.



Upcoming Events



OCTOBER 9 @ 6PM
MASS OF HEALING
St. Peter Church, Torrington

Experience the Power of Healing — In these challenging times, many of us carry burdens — be it physical ailments like cancer and kidney disease, emotional struggles like depression, anxiety, PTSD and grief, or spiritual battles. YOU'RE NOT ALONE. Reconnect, find solace, and embrace the healing powers of our divine physician, Jesus Christ.

The evening begins with the Divine Mercy Chaplet followed by the Healing Mass with anointing of the sick. Let's come together, share our stories, and experience the transformative power of faith. Remember, Jesus is still in the business of healing. We can't wait to see you there!



OCTOBER 15 @ 7:30PM - 8:30PM
HUMAN DIGNITY IN THE AGE OF AI
Franciscan Life Center, San Damiano Room at the Chiara Center, Meriden

Amidst growing concerns about artificial intelligence and where it is taking us, the Church offers a balanced path forward. AI can be a powerful tool and a benefit to our world—if it is guided by the right moral compass. In this presentation, we will explore Pope Leo XIV's landmark encyclical, Magnifica Humanitas. Together, we will examine what is at stake morally and socially for the human person, and discuss how we can help steer the global development of AI for the true good of humanity. Free to attend and reception to follow. Call 203.237.8084



OCTOBER 16 @ 5:30PM
HOLY HOUR FOR WOMEN'S VOCATIONS
Mount Sacred Heart Chapel, Hamden

Come pray for women's vocations with us! All are welcome - men, women, and families. Prayer will be followed by a free dinner. Contact Carlene cdemiany@ascjus.org for questions!



OCTOBER 17 @ 4PM
MARY OF THE AMERICAS / MARÍA EN LAS AMÉRICAS
The Shrine of María Reina de la Paz, Hartford

Mary of the Americas is an Archdiocesan multicultural Marian celebration that brings together Hispanic Catholic communities and participating parishes from across the Archdiocese of Hartford. The event will include the Holy Rosary and a bilingual Holy Mass, followed by cultural and gastronomic presentations representing various countries of the Americas. Through prayer, faith, music, and cultural traditions, the celebration honors the Blessed Virgin Mary while highlighting the unity and diversity of the Church. All are welcome!



OCTOBER 18 @ 1:30PM
"I WILL ALWAYS BE JOYFUL": SAINT PIER GIORGIO FRASSATI'S LIFE AND WITNESS
Bl. Michael McGivney Parish, St. Mary Church Hall, New Haven

Father Philip Nolan, O.P., editor of the Magnificat magazine, will discuss the youthful sanctity of recently-canonized Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati and his relevance for today. All welcome to attend!



OCTOBER 22 @ 7PM
HOLY HOUR AND CONSECRATION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS
Mount Sacred Heart Chapel, Hamden

Join the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for a grace-filled prayer service to entrust yourself or your family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus! Each person or family will receive a blessed image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for their home.

The ceremony will include:
Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
A special prayer of consecration
A blessing of each individual and family
A blessing of house keys



NOVEMBER 1 @ 3PM
FROM BROADWAY TO THE MET: A BENEFIT CONCERT FOR HAITI
St. James Church, Rocky Hill

You are warmly invited to an uplifting afternoon of music. Admission is free, and donations will be gratefully accepted to support our sister parish, St. Anne in Saintard, Haiti. Our program spans Broadway favorites, Classical masterpieces, and Sacred music.

Approximately 50 singers from various parishes across our diocese, as well as professional soloists Rochelle Bard and Daniel Juarez, will present beloved classics including The Prayer, Bring Him Home from Les Misérables, For Good from Wicked, Nessun Dorma, and much more. Bring your family and friends to experience this musical celebration for a wonderful cause!



JANUARY 13 @ 7PM
SAVE THE DATE REBOOT: A LIFE-CHANGING EVENT
St. Margaret Church, Madison

This high-energy, 2 hour event with internationally acclaimed speaker Chris Stefanick will awaken your faith, reignite your joy, and equip you with tools to live the life God created for you: A life of JOY! Event is perfect for everyone: friends, family, children (12+), and those who may not be actively practicing their faith. Scan the QR code to secure your spot!



2026 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

As of today, **16.69%** of all Archdiocesan parishioners raised **\$10 million** for our Archdiocesan ministries.
Imagine the difference if one in four parishioners joined in.
Help us reach **26%** participation in 2026!!



WE ARE  NE

www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal