

Branches on the Vine

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

SEPTEMBER 12 - 18, 2026

A Circle of Women Echo St. Pio's *Devotion to Prayer*

- Story by Karen A. Avitabile

A group of women inspired by St. Pio of Pietrelcina's deep devotion to prayer gathers weekly at the Padre Pio Foundation of America in Cromwell to pray for others.

"We pray from our hearts to Padre Pio," says prayer warrior Donna Morales of Cromwell. "He's drawing me here and we pray for the needs of the community. It's a calling."

For the past 20 years, Morales and three other women have been the core group of the Padre Pio Prayer Group which meets three mornings each week. Surrounded by statues, artwork and holy relics of St. Pio, they pray together, share intentions and support one another in faith in Our Blessed Mother of the Holy Innocents Chapel on the campus of the Padre Pio Foundation of America.

The group remembers in prayer all daily intentions left by guests to the Foundation, those who leave them on the website or call them in, says Julie Fitts Ritter, executive director of the Foundation. "We get letters and calls from all around the world asking for prayers," she says. "Our prayer group is powerful."

Through his intercessions, St. Pio of Pietrelcina, widely known as Padre Pio, has been celebrated for extreme physical healings, conversion, renewal of faith, and spiritual and temporal blessings. His spiritual advice centers on his signature catchphrases: "Pray, hope, and don't worry" and "Worry is useless." The saint also advised that "prayer is the best weapon we have."

Born on May 25, 1887, in southern Italy, St. Pio is considered a notable saint. Entering the novitiate of the Capuchin friars when he was 15, he



Three days a week, the Padre Pio Prayer Group meets at the Padre Pio Foundation of America in Cromwell to pray for the intentions of others. Some members of the group are, back row, left to right: Maria Pata and Marie Sorensen. In the front row are Donna Morales, left, and Luanne Gagliardi. PHOTO BY KAREN A. AVITABILE

suffered both physically and spiritually. The five wounds of Christ's Passion appeared on his body on Sept. 20, 1918.

"Our prayer group is powerful," says Maria Pata of Cromwell, adding that prayers are extended to Pope Leo XIV, priests, the souls in purgatory, an increase in vocations and many other intentions. "Once you leave you feel peaceful."

Deep personal prayer routines remain a priority for the women apart from the group. "We continue our prayers outside of here," says Berlin resident Luanne Gagliardi. "We're bonded in a spiritual sense. What is most rewarding is you see the fruits of your prayer."

For Marie Sorensen of Berlin, the prayer group "keeps us grounded in our faith," she says, adding it is an opportunity to be part of a larger community. Outside of their prayer sessions, the women have become friends and get together socially.

For the past 15 years, Father William Trauba, a Capuchin priest from Mexico, has served as spiritual director of the Prayer Group. He participates virtually in the prayer sessions on Wednesdays.

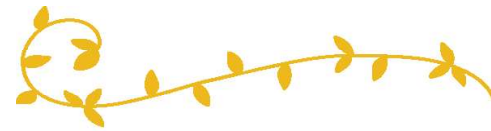
"We pray from our hearts to Padre Pio," he says.

The Foundation, at 463 Main St., in Cromwell, is open Mondays through Fridays and on the first Saturday of each month. Visitors are invited to take part in the Padre Pio Prayer Group on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., in Our Blessed Mother of the Holy Innocents Chapel. Also, visitors may pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet in the chapel Mondays through Fridays, from 3 to 3:30 p.m.

On Sept. 23, 1968, St. Pio died in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy. He was canonized on June 16, 2002. To mark his feast day on Sept. 23, a Mass will take place at 11 a.m. in Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles Chapel on the campus of nearby Holy Apostles College & Seminary in Cromwell. Refreshments will follow at the Foundation. To R.S.V.P. or for more information, visit padrepio.com/events or call 860.635.4996.



Upcoming Events



SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER DATES
THE POWER OF A PRAYING PARENT
St. Catherine of Siena, West Simsbury

Do you worry about your children or grandchildren? Join us for a four-session retreat to discover the power of a praying parent who creates a sacred space for God in their home. "Come" (Matt. 14:29). Email kostelni@cua.edu or scan the QR code to register. Morning session offers a light lunch; evening session offers hors d'oeuvres and small plate meal.



Sept. 23, 30, Oct. 7, 14 @ 10AM – 12:30PM OR
Sept. 26, Oct. 3, 10, 17 @ 6:15PM – 8:30PM



SEPTEMBER 19 @ 4PM
**OUR LADY OF SORROWS CHURCH
ANNIVERSARY MASS AND GALA**
Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Hartford

Vigil Mass at 4:00 PM. Hors d'oeuvres starting at 5:30 PM and gala dinner at 6:00 PM in the Church Hall. Come celebrate the conclusion of our 130th anniversary year with a special Mass and gala. We will be honoring all our past Saint Joseph Medal recipients. Tickets are \$50.00 each. Contact Joanne Whitehead (860) 202-7118 or Ana Alfaro (860) 881-6088 or the Parish Office (860) 233-4424 to purchase tickets.



SEPTEMBER 22 @ 10AM - 11:30AM
**FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT, THE HEART OF
JOHN'S GOSPEL**
Archdiocese of Hartford Pastoral Center,
Bloomfield

Join us for a mini course on the Gospel of John - Tuesday mornings at the Pastoral Center in Bloomfield beginning September 22. Email Dayanee.Olivieri@aohct.org to register. The spirituality of this Gospel unfolds gradually as each character encounters Jesus, whose mission is sustained by the abiding presence of the Spirit - a presence that strengthens us in our own daily struggles with the world.



SEPTEMBER 20 @ 7:15PM
**FOR HUMANITY'S SAKE: POPE LEO XIV
AND THE AI REVOLUTION**
St. Thomas More Golden Center, New Haven

A public discussion of Magnifica Humanitas, the pope's long anticipated response to the breakneck advance of artificial intelligence and the implications for human flourishing. Join us for this multi-sided conversation with a panel of distinguished experts about the document's premises, arguments, and response thus far, as well as its potential influence on the most consequential technological development of our time. Visit stm.yale.edu to reserve a spot.



OCTOBER 3 @ 5PM
TRANSITUS OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI READING
Prince of Peace Parish, St. Teresa of Avila Church,
Woodbury

Join the Rosa Mystica Fraternity of Secular Franciscans for the beautiful Franciscan tradition following the 4PM Mass at St Teresa of Avila Church. The Transitus is a reading of St. Francis's passage from Earthly Life, through Death, into Eternal Life. A celebration of hope, resurrection, and the promise that our lives are merely changed, not ended. Following the reading, all will be treated to almond cookies St. Francis's favorite treat! Contact Prince of Peace Parish for more information at **203-263-2008** or **prin-**



SEPTEMBER 18 - 20
**RETROUVAILLE MARRIAGE
WORKSHOP WEEKEND**
Windsor

If your marriage has become distant, troubled, unloving or uncaring; if you are divorced or separated but want to try again, Retrouvaille can help. Retrouvaille provides tools to communicate better, resolve conflicts fairly, and re-discover why you fell in love in the first place. Contact us today at helpourmarriage.org or **(860) 837-0447** for information or to register.



SEPTEMBER 25 @ 7PM
**MORE THAN MONEY: WHAT IT MEANS TO
LIVE GENEROUSLY**
St. Thomas More Chapel, New Haven

Come join Young Catholic Professionals Central CT (All professionals from 18-39) for our next Executive Speaker Series Event! Enjoy light refreshments and networking along with a talk by Scott Zuffelato the Vice President of Philanthropy of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. We look forward to meeting you there! Email info@ycpcentralconnecticut.org to learn more.



SEPTEMBER 18 @ 6PM
**FACES OF HOLINESS: SAINTS THROUGH
THE AGES**
Saint Patrick's Church, Collinsville

An evening of faith, community and art. Learn the inspiring stories of 12 saints expressed through visual art. Each work invites us to reflect on the profound faith, history and spiritual witness of these holy men and women. Feel free to drop in for as long as your schedule permits. Refreshments will be served.

2026 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

Scan the QR code to learn how you can make a lasting impact!

10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%



Total Goal: \$10M 99.76% as of 8/27/26

\$9,976,113.10 in pledges from 27,566 generous donors



*This figure does not include bequests given to the Archbishop's Annual Appeal

www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal