

Branches on the Vine

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

JULY 11 - 17, 2026

Treasures of Our Faith: *The Reliquary at St. Stanislaus Church in Bristol*

- Story by Jim Tierney

A renewed devotion to the saints has brought new life to a historic collection of relics at St. Stanislaus Church in Bristol. Inspired by a powerful experience at the National Eucharistic Congress in 2024, parishioners rediscovered relics that had rested for decades and created a new reliquary display to share them with the faithful.

In July 2024, several parishioners of St. Stanislaus Parish attended the National Eucharistic Congress, where one of the most popular attractions was a large relic display. Visitors often waited hours before the exhibit even opened, and once it did, steady lines formed throughout the day as people came to venerate and pray at the site of the relics. The experience revealed a deep spiritual hunger to encounter these tangible connections to the saints.

When the group returned to Bristol and suggested obtaining a relic for the parish, then-Pastor Tomasz Sz-tuber shared unexpected news: the parish already possessed a collection of relics that had been stored in the rectory for many years. But significant work remained to prepare the relics for public veneration.

Many of the reliquaries had dulled or tarnished over time, and some had become slightly warped. In fall 2024, the parish formed a committee to plan the project, raise awareness and develop educational materials around an initiative called, "Treasures of Our Faith."

The restoration effort brought together local craftsmen to restore the reliquary and modify an antique cabinet to house the collection. Their work not only preserved the beauty of the reliquary, but highlighted the care the Church takes in safeguarding these sacred objects.

The Catholic Church has long maintained strict processes to ensure the authenticity of relics, according to parishioner Michelle Fox, a former medieval historian who assisted with the relic project.

Each relic is typically enclosed in a small metal container called a theca with glass on one side, Fox notes. Inside is a Latin identification label known as a *cédula*. The relic and label are sealed with red silk thread and an ecclesiastical wax seal, preventing tampering and confirming that the relic has remained unopened since authentication. Many relics are also accompanied by a certificate of authenticity, or *authentica*, issued by a bishop or the Vatican.

These safeguards developed over centuries help to prevent fraud and protect the sacred character of relics. The Catholic understanding of relics, Fox says, can be compared to family photos or memorials: they are physi-

cal objects that connect to the memory and sacrifice of a real person.

"Although relics have sometimes been associated with conversion and miracles, Catholics do not believe they possess magical powers," Fox says, pointing out a distinction between praying with relics and Eucharistic Adoration and worshipping the Real Presence. "Catholics are not worshipping the physical object, nor the saint from whom it came," she adds. "Worship is reserved for God alone and any miracle that may occur when praying with a relic comes from God working through them."

Last year, the restored reliquary was unveiled on All Saints' Day. Leading up to the feast day, the parish offered bulletin articles, homilies and a half-day educational seminar exploring the biblical origins of relic veneration, the lives of the saints and the proper way to venerate relics. The celebration concluded with a procession of the relics at the opening of the Vigil Mass.

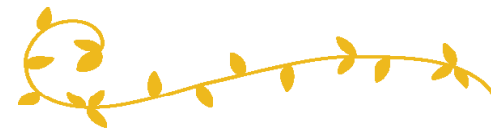
The reliquary is available for private prayer whenever the church is open. Parish officials plan to revive the tradition of displaying individual relics on the feast days of their saints.



Michelle Fox holds a book which identifies relics in a case inside St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish in Bristol. She helped to restore a collection of relics and reliquaries that had been in a closet for several years. PHOTO BY KAREN A. AVITABILE



Upcoming Events



JUNE 4 - AUGUST 27 @ 6 - 8PM
SUMMER ALPHA YOUNG ADULT GROUP
St. Margaret Mary Church,
Rectorly Basement, South Windsor

Welcome to all people ages 18 to 39 years old. Join us for food, friendship, faith, and fun, every Thursday throughout the summer! Every week we share pizza, watch faith-based videos, and participate in small group discussions. If you have any questions, text 860-816-6149. Our welcoming group would love to have you join us!



JULY 16 - 19
88TH ITALIAN FESTIVAL
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church,
Waterbury

Join us for our 88th Annual Italian Festival in Honor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel! Delicious Italian food and entertainment. All are welcome!
Thursday, July 16th – 5 - 10PM
(Feast Day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel)
Friday, July 17th – 5 - 10PM
Saturday, July 18th – 2 - 10PM
Sunday, July 19th – 11AM Mass with Procession, 1 - 8PM.



JULY 18 @ 5PM \$20
ST. MARTIN OF TOURS FAMOUS BBQ
St. Joseph Church Grounds, Canaan

Join us for St. Martin of Tours Famous Chicken BBQ, with Potato, Coleslaw, Corn on the Cob, Bread, Beverage and Ice Cream Cups! Our Event is on Saturday, July 18th from 5PM until sold out! Price is \$20 Adults - \$10 Children. Drawing for Great Raffle Prizes will be in the evening.



JULY 24 - 26 @ 7PM
TRIDUUM IN HONOR OF GOOD SAINT ANN
Blessed Michael McGivney Parish,
St. Michael Church, New Haven

The Saint Ann Society would like to invite you to the annual Triduum in honor of good Saint Ann. The dates of the Triduum will be July 24th, 25th, and 26th (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) at 7:00pm. The Triduum begins with two nights of rosary and prayers invoking the intercession of Saint Ann. The third and concluding night is a Mass with a reception afterward. Please extend this invitation to anyone whom you feel may benefit from this experience or just wants to join us. Also, we are always actively looking for women who may want to become new members of the St. Ann Society.



JULY 29 @ 5:30PM
HOLY HOUR TO PRAY FOR THE END OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING
All Saints - Todos Los Santos Parish,
The Shrine of St. Anne, Waterbury

Human trafficking is a grave offense against the God-given dignity of every person. An estimated 27 million women, men, and children worldwide are exploited through sex and labor trafficking.

The Human Trafficking Task Force of the Archdiocese of Hartford invites you to a bilingual Eucharistic Holy Hour to pray for victims and survivors of human trafficking, and for an end to this exploitation. This service, to be held on the eve of World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, will be in English and Spanish.

Following the Holy Hour, attendees are welcome to stay for the Parish's daily Mass at 6:30 P.M. or to speak with Task Force members about ways to support awareness, prevention, and survivor assistance through this important ministry.

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 93.08% as of 6/30/26

\$9,307,898.50 in pledges from 25,648 generous donors

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



WE ARE
ONE

www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal