

Branches on the Vine

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

AUGUST 1 - 7, 2026

Archdiocesan Employee Venerates Mortal Remains of *St. Francis of Assisi*

- Story by Shelley Wolf

Fulfilling a dream, an employee of the Archdiocese of Hartford got the rare opportunity to get a little closer to St. Francis of Assisi.

Meriline Sarkar participated in a rare exposition of the body of St. Francis, whose mortal remains were made visible for veneration for only one month (Feb. 22 to March 22) in Assisi, Italy, to commemorate the 800th anniversary of his death.

"I thought, 'I cannot miss this opportunity,'" says Sarkar, an administrative assistant for the Archdiocese of Hartford's Metropolitan Tribunal, who saw the event advertised online in the fall of 2025.

St. Francis of Assisi's relics have been viewed by the public only once in 800 years. The recent viewing attracted 370,000 pilgrims, who had to register online for their visit.

"St. Francis of Assisi is just so inspiring," says Sarkar, who admires the saint for his humility and Gospel-inspired way of living. "I wanted to see him. I felt a pull. I couldn't stop myself, even though I didn't have the money for the trip."

In the interim, she landed a new job with paid vacation time, which made the pilgrimage possible. "It's like God lined it up," she says with gratitude. Sarkar, now a U.S. citizen, traveled to Rome alone, then joined five priests from her homeland of Bangladesh for the final leg to Assisi.

The Basilica of St. Francis, which houses the saint's remains, was built in Assisi in the saint's honor in 1230. Now a papal basilica, the care of the saint's remains are overseen by the Order of Friars Minor Conventual (Franciscan Conventuals).



Meriline Sarkar stands in front of the Basilica of St. Francis, the site of St. Francis of Assisi's tomb, built in 1230 in Assisi, Italy. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Waiting outside to get in, she says, "I waited anxiously praying. Then we were led inside by a monk and shown the church."

The pilgrims were led to a glass container, where St. Francis' bones were laid. "I touched the case and started crying," Sarkar says, as she prayed to the saint. "It was overwhelming. He has always been my favorite, with his humble story."



Pilgrims pray over the exposition of the body of St. Francis of Assisi in the Basilica earlier this year. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Sarkar also saw the famous San Damiano crucifix, from which St. Francis heard a voice commanding him to "repair my house." "I saw the cross he used to kneel before and pray to. That cross is still hanging," she reports.

Sarkar enjoyed the small town of Assisi. "It's so beautiful. It's a Medieval town and still has cobblestone streets. You need great endurance to walk up and down," she says.

While in Assisi, she also prayed at the tombs of St. Clare, one of the first followers of St. Francis, and St. Carlo Acutis, the first millennial saint.

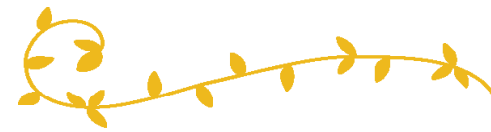
Then there was the site of St. Francis' father's house, which is topped by a church. "There's a statue of his parents holding a piece of garment," she says, referring to the garments St. Francis rejected, along with his father's worldly textile trade, for a life devoted to Christ and lived in poverty, humility and fraternity.

St. Francis, a lover of peace, the poor, and the natural world, founded the Franciscan orders and later received the stigmata of Christ.

Though his remains are no longer on view, visitors are still welcome to visit the Basilica of St. Francis and to pray at his tomb. For more information, visit sanfrancescovive.org/en/home.



Upcoming Events



JUNE 4 - AUGUST 27 @ 6 - 8PM
**SUMMER ALPHA YOUNG
ADULT GROUP**
St. Margaret Mary Church,
Rector's 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!



AUGUST 13 - 16
UNIQUE BOUTIQUE TAG SALE
St. Teresa Of Calcutta Parish,
St. Bridget Church, Manchester

Come join and explore at the St. Bridget Church Tag Sale! On Thursday, August 13th from 5pm - 8pm admission fee is \$10.00. Thursday admission includes wine and cheese while you shop. Admission Friday, August 14th from 4pm - 8pm is \$1. Admission on Saturday, August 15th from 9am - 4pm is free. Admission on Sunday, August 16th from 9am - 11am is free.

Items for sale include furniture, books, jewelry, collectibles, toys, hardware, artwork, household items, linens, glassware, sporting goods, holiday items, crafts, stationery, gardening supplies, luggage, pocket books and much more!



AUGUST 6 - 8 @ 5PM - 10PM
**HOLY ROSARY'S ANNUAL
ITALIAN FESTIVAL**
Our Lady of the Valley Parish,
Holy Rosary Church, Ansonia

Our Annual Italian Festival offers wonderful Italian food, featuring our handmade meatballs, lasagna, pasta e fagioli, porchetta, fried calamari, fried dough and more! Don't forget to grab some Italian pastries for dessert! Enjoy live music, dancing, raffles, and fun for the kids. Bring your family and friends and your appetite!



AUGUST 7 @ 6PM
**HEALING MASS WITH ANOINTING
OF THE SICK**
St. John Paul the Great Parish, St. Peter
Church, Torrington

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 Mass. Let's come together, share our stories, and experience the transformative power of faith.



AUGUST 10 @ 8:30AM
**30TH ANNUAL FRANCISCAN GOLF
CLASSIC**
Stanley Golf Course, New Britain

Come play golf at our annual Franciscan Golf Classic benefiting the Franciscan Life Center and Franciscan Home Care and Hospice Care, Monday, August 10, 2026. Bring a foursome, be a sponsor, be a dinner guest at the beautiful Stanley Golf Course in New Britain, CT. There are great opportunities to win prizes. The cost per player is \$195.00. To learn more visit franciscanlifecenter.square.site or call 203-237-8084.

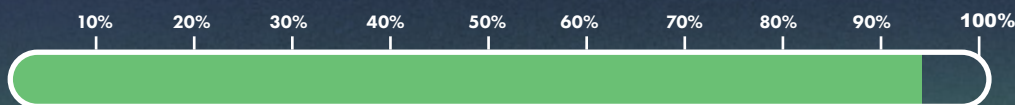


AUGUST 15 @ 2PM \$25
**ST. JUSTIN - ST. MICHAEL MULTICULTURAL
JAZZ & GOSPEL FESTIVAL**
St. Justin - St. Michael Parish Lawn, Hartford

Join us for the 6th Annual St. Justin - St. Michael Jazz & Gospel Concert celebrating diversity through music, food, and fellowship in a welcoming atmosphere. Delicious food included in the ticket price and amazing door prizes. Tickets cost \$25 per person; kids under 12 are FREE. Don't miss out on this joyous community event! Prepare for a day of incredible music and good vibes. Call the Parish Center Office 860-246-6897 for tickets and information.

2026 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

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



Total Goal: \$10M 95.93% as of 7/20/26

\$9,592,507.09 in pledges from 26,454 generous donors

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



**WE ARE
ONE**

www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal