

Branches on the Vine

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

AUGUST 15 - 21, 2026

Archdiocesan Teens Journey Together *to Steubenville East Youth Conference*

- Story by Shelley Wolf

Parish youth ministry groups from throughout the Archdiocese of Hartford journeyed together for the first time to the Steubenville East Youth Conference in Springfield, Mass., where they encountered Christ through the sacraments, dynamic speakers, Eucharistic Adoration and high-energy praise and worship.

Approximately 300 high school-age teens, chaperones and clergy from 16 parishes attended, boarding buses from Hartford and other points around the archdiocese for the three-day conference, slated July 24 to 26, all heading to the MassMutual Center in Springfield. The conference drew 1,500 attendees from throughout Southern New England.

"To my knowledge, this is the first time the Archdiocese of Hartford organized a trip to the Steubenville East Youth Conference to bring multiple parishes together," says Joshua Kay, associate director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries for the Archdiocese of Hartford.

The archdiocese spearheaded this year's trip and invited parishes to join in, recognizing that not all parishes are experienced with travel logistics, Kay notes. So, his office took on that role and freed up parish youth ministers for mission.

"In other words, they got to be a youth minister to their teens for the duration of the trip," Kay explains.

Father Hector Rangel, pastor in solidum for Blessed Michael McGivney Parish in New Haven, and Father Daniel Valente, parochial vicar for Our Lady of Sorrows Parish and the Cathedral of St. Joseph, both in Hartford, accompanied the teens, providing priestly spiritual support.



Teens are moved by praise and worship music during the Steubenville East Youth Conference at the MassMutual Center in Springfield, Mass. PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH

Before leaving town on Friday afternoon, the travelers were treated to a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Christopher J. Coyne at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford, followed by a mini retreat that included games and a keynote talk by Kay, titled "Worth the Wait," comparing what the world deems as worthy to what God says is actually worthy.

At the Steubenville East Youth Conference in Springfield, where this year's theme was "Worthy," a number of speakers shared how all are loved in the eyes of God. The teens also took part in Mass and the sacrament of Reconciliation.

The conference was an opportunity to experience the wider Catholic Church, grow in personal faith and make new friends.

For Gabriel Cardichon, 15, a youth ministry teen from St. Paul VI Parish in Hamden, this spiritual experience was a first. "This was my first ever time going to the Steubenville East Conference, but it definitely won't be the last. It was one of the best times I've ever had," he says.

The highlight for Cardichon was the Eucharistic Procession, in which priests carried Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament around the stadium for the purpose of Eucharistic Adoration.

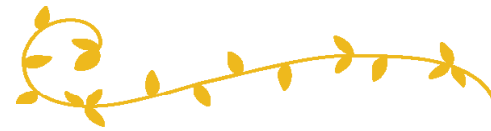
"There was a moment where I felt especially close to God, and that was during the Eucharistic Procession on Saturday," Cardichon recalls. "It was probably because Jesus was literally right in front of me and seeing so many people my age get so emotional, which I've never seen before in my life. Usually, I don't cry happy tears, but on that night, I couldn't hold it in. Definitely one for the ages."

The teen also received a holy reminder that he plans to cherish. "The second-best moment was when I got my tiny saints (the keychains) blessed by a priest," he says. "I'll never be losing those."

Steubenville Catholic Youth Conferences are produced by Franciscan University of Steubenville and hosted by Life Teen.



Upcoming Events



AUGUST 24 @ 6:30PM - 8:30PM
ENCOUNTER AND MISSION AT THE HEART
OF EVANGELIZING CATECHESIS
 Archdiocese of Hartford Pastoral Center,
 Bloomfield

Join us for an evening Workshop presented by Dr. Stella Marie Jeffrey and hosted by the Office of Missionary Discipleship. Register before August 21 to Jason.Rinaldi@aohct.org to reserve your seat! Parish groups welcome! We hear the importance of having an encounter with the Lord. All of us are meant to encounter the Lord and allow this encounter to change and shape us, thus we become children of God, his disciples sent on mission to share this divine love. This workshop will include an exercise in evangelization.



SEPTEMBER 9 @ 6PM \$25
OPEN DOORS, OPEN HEARTS WITH FR. RAY
KELLY | A BENEFIT CONCERT FOR IMMACARE
 Northwest Catholic High School, West Hartford

Join Ireland's beloved Singing Priest, Fr. Ray Kelly, for his only CT performance! Enjoy an unforgettable evening of inspiring music, laughter, and heartwarming stories while supporting ImmaCare's mission to serve individuals experiencing homelessness. Inspired by Fr. Ray's Open Road, Open Heart tour, this special concert celebrates hope, compassion, and new beginnings. 100% of proceeds benefit ImmaCare.

Tickets start at \$25. Doors open at 6:00 PM.
 For tickets or information contact Teresa Wierbicki at [860-580-5644](tel:860-580-5644) | twierbicki@immacare.org or scan the QR Code.



AUGUST 24
FORE FACS GOLF CLASSIC
 TPC River Highlands, Cromwell

Join the Foundation for the Advancement of Catholic Schools for a day on the green driving for impact! Honoring the legacy of Archbishop Henry J. Mansell, this annual event unites business leaders, families, and community partners to support Catholic education and fund scholarships for children in need. Net proceeds power the FACS mission to transform lives through education. Visit FACSHartford.org or scan the QR code to learn more, register, or sponsor today!



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!



SEPTEMBER 8 @ 7AM - 9AM
CATHOLIC CHARITIES
HELP AND HOPE BREAKFAST
 Cathedral of St. Joseph, Hartford

Join Catholic Charities for the 2026 Help & Hope Breakfast featuring UConn Coach Dan Hurley. This inspiring morning celebrates hope, resilience, and the power of community while supporting Catholic Charities' mission of providing help and creating hope. Visit www.ccaoh.org/hope for info and sponsorships availability.



SEPTEMBER 12 @ 9AM - 3PM
LOURDES IN A DAY PILGRIMAGE
 Cathedral of Saint Joseph, Hartford

Experience the grace and healing power of Lourdes right here in CT! Join Archbishop Coyne, Bishop Reidy, Bishop Rosazza, and Fr. MacNeill for a day of prayer and renewal. The event is fully handicap accessible, and a complimentary lunch will be served. Please RSVP by September 2. Register with Mark Sullivan at lourdesinaday@gmail.com or scan the QR Code.

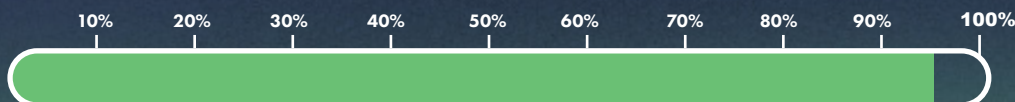


AUGUST 22 @ 4:30PM \$15
YOUNG CATHOLIC PROFESSIONALS
HARTFORD YARD GOATS BASEBALL GAME
 Dunkin' Park, Hartford

Join YCP Central CT for a night at Dunkin' Park in Hartford for a good 'ol Yard Goats game! YCP Belong Members: Complimentary ticket. Non-members: Discount courtesy of YCP Central CT at \$15 per ticket. Gates open at 4:30PM and the game starts at 6:10PM. Email info@ycp-centralconnecticut.org to RSVP.

2026 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

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



Total Goal: \$10M 97.63% as of 8/4/26

\$9,762,837.71 in pledges from 27,021 generous donors

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



WE ARE
ONE

www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal