



The Parish Press

Newsletter of Saint Raphael Parish Family
Milford, Connecticut

June 2026



Father John Brinsmade
Fresh-faced co-pastor
of Saint Ann Parish

After 45 Years of Priestly Service, Father John Will Retire

Father John's announcement came at all the Masses on a quiet May weekend. "Archbishop Coyne has accepted my request, and I will retire as of June 30th." The statement was brief, concise and . . . unexpected. "Why was this the right time to retire?" our staff reporter wondered. Father graciously agreed to the following Q&A interview.

Parish Press:: In September you will celebrate the 45th anniversary of your ordination. How does your experience of priesthood differ from what you were expecting in 1981?

Father John: In 1981, I thought I was going to change the world, but discovered you can change the world only one person at a time. My 45 years of priesthood, however, have been very rewarding. One area where my expectations did not meet reality was length of assignment. The priests I knew growing up stayed in the parish for very long terms. In the first ten years of my priesthood I served in six parishes.*

*The sixth of those parishes was Saint Ann's where, beginning in 1990 the "fresh-faced" Father John served as co-pastor with Father George Couturier. 27 years later, in 2017, Father John returned, first as parish administrator then as pastor of Saint Raphael, the "two shall become one" parish, the successful merger of Saint Ann and Saint Gabriel.

PP: What have you found most rewarding about being a priest? **FJ:** The people. In my years serving God I have met some absolutely wonderful people. I have found parishioners to be most supportive. **PP:** Most difficult/challenging? **FJ:** The changing administrative responsibilities. Being a pastor now requires so much administrative skill and savvy. It is a much more corporate experience than it was 45 years ago. The business aspects of managing a parish are so much more complex. **PP:** Most surprising? **FJ:** Becoming a co-pastor nine years after ordination. The average first-time pastorate in 1981 was about 23 years ordained.

PP: Where have you found joy in serving your flock at Saint Raphael Parish? **FJ:** I have watched Saint Raphael Parish emerge from the two communities of Saint Gabriel and Saint Ann parishes. Thanks to the openness of so many people, as Genesis 2:24 says, and as we say at weddings, "The two shall become one." I have been honored to watch this merger happen with great success. **[PP note: Father was not a bystander. His leadership, prayers and patient guidance were invaluable to the success of our becoming one parish family.]**

PP: Has there been sadness? **FJ:** Of course. Dealing with the death of parishioners, especially untimely deaths, is probably one of the hardest tasks for priests. **PP:** What will you miss? **FJ:** The day to day interaction with the parish family. **PP:** Do you have plans for your retirement? **FJ:** Nothing in particular. **PP:** Where will you be living? **FJ:** In West Haven.

PP: Why now for your retirement? **FJ:** Canon law sets the mandatory retirement age for priests at 75. Many dioceses across the country have established 70 as the retirement age. Three years ago the Archdiocese of Hartford began to offer an optional retirement for priests in the year of their 71st birthday. Currently the administrative responsibilities that are required to run a parish are quite onerous. Retiring now gives me the opportunity to transition to "senior status," relieving me of the administrative duties and giving me a less active role in the mission of the Church. It also frees me up so that I can assist at a variety of parishes throughout the archdiocese.

Congratulations, Father John! Relieved of the burdens of parish management, may you find renewed joy in your priestly ministry.

Don't Miss Father John's Retirement Party! Sunday, June 14th, 1-3 p.m. in the Parish Center

Come celebrate and thank Father John for his years of dedicated service to Saint Raphael Parish. Wish him well as he adventures into retirement!

Light menu will feature charcuterie-style selections, including fresh fruit; scrumptious choices from the dessert table; and our highly rated 5-Star punch. Share in the warm camaraderie of our parish family. Hope to see you there!



Class of 2026 Graduation Celebration Sunday, June 7th at Saint Gabriel's

Festivities begin in the church, with Mass at 11 o'clock, followed by a brunch reception in the Saint Gabriel Hall. Plans for some honorees appear on page 2. We'll post additional information in the July newsletter.

Congratulations, graduates, as you step into futures that are bright with promise. Questions about the reception? Contact Maria, atomasetti@snet.net or 203-988-8598 (voice/text).

Class of 2026 Members and their Plans (More to come in July's newsletter!)

**Middle School Grads
High Schools**

Viktoria Kmiecik
Harborside
Jonathan Law

Logan Lawless
East Shore
Joseph A. Foran

Aubree O'Neil
Zachary Santos
Penny Timmeny
West Shore
Jonathan Law



High School Grads, Work, Colleges, Intended Majors

Charlotte Baldieri
Jonathan Law
University of Connecticut
Engineering

Austin Moral
Engineering and Science
University Magnet School
(ESUMS)
U.S. Army - 16 week advanced
individual training (AIT)
as a medical specialist
Southern Connecticut
State University
Nursing

Brady O'Neil
Jonathan Law
Springfield College
Secondary Education
Will play baseball for the Pride

Lharyssa Pinho
Joseph A. Foran
University of Rhode Island
Psychology

Owsley Coda Quinn
Joseph A. Foran
University of Rhode Island
Psychology

College Graduates

Lindsay Capobianco
Sacred Heart University
Bachelor of Arts
Elementary Education
Pursuing a Master's
Degree in Education

Allyza Moral
University of NewHaven
B.S. in Biochemistry
Working full time at
Yale New Haven Hospital
Plans to pursue
a nursing degree

Confirmation at the Cathedral, May 12, 2026

Evan Joseph Dotson and Patrick Michael the Archangel Monahan received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Archbishop Christopher J. Coyne on Tuesday evening, May 12th at the Cathedral of Saint Joseph. Congratulations! Sealed now with the gift of the Holy Spirit, you are strengthened for service to the Body of Christ.



**GIFT Sacramental
Confirmation Program**

Candidates Review Session

Monday, June 8th **or** Tuesday, June 9th
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.



At Saint Raphael Parish, First Communion is a Family Celebration

On May 3rd, May 16th and May 17th, twenty-three young parishioners received Jesus for the first time in Holy Communion. Their families - Moms, Dads, siblings, grandparents, as well as the members of their parish family - watched proudly, perhaps a bit tearfully, as the children approached the Lord's table and received the Bread of Life. Love and congratulations to the First Communicants!

Scarlett Elizabeth Bernardo
Thomas James Bevilacqua
Victoria Sophia Boltruczuk
Summer Violet Bottigliero
Lucas Charles Charochak

Mason Henry Conelli
Analia Maria de la Cruz Jiménez
Myla Feliciano
Lorenzo Fetta
Lisette Garcia Santos
Luis Angel Garcia Santos

Siena Elyse Gargiulo
Austin Jackson
Frederick Kirkham
Riley Marie Holmberg
Lucy Marie Laird
Autumn LaRosa

Charlotte Marchand
Maximiliano Mesa-Estrada
Adriana E. Miquelan Rocha
Jaisa Love B. Mondejar
Molly Marcia Murphy
Evelyn Twidwell

**Registration is in Progress for this Summer's VBS Camp:
Illumination Station, *Shining a Light on Who Jesus Really Is*
Monday, July 20 through Friday, July 24, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon**

(extended day on Friday due to Closing Celebration followed by pizza lunch)

At the Illumination Station this summer's campers (ages 4 through 11) will explore a world aglow, filled with light, as they discover how Jesus shines in the darkness. They will discover the truth of who Jesus really is, the Son of God, who told the people in the temple area of Jerusalem, "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Campers will look at the various ways light illuminates and reflects, helping them understand the true nature of Jesus as the Light of the World. They will walk away knowing that Jesus is the Light they can follow forever, and how they can shine Jesus' light and love with other people.

Illumination Station's varied and fascinating Activity Centers include Spotlight Bible Study, Kaleidoscope Crafts, Glow in the Dark Missions, Mirror Ball Music/Dance, Suncatcher Recreation, and the ever-popular Neon Snacks.

Please register by July 10th so that we can be sure we have enough supplies and giveaways for all of our campers. We hope your children will be able to join us for this, our 16th annual! VBS Camp.



Suggested donation;
\$25 per child
(\$5 per day)
Scholarships available.

Registration deadline:
Friday, July 10th
Information/registration:
Maria at 203-988-8598
(cell) **or**
atomasetti@snet.net

D-Day Can & Bottle Drive June 6th Drive Supports T2T

The **D** in this year's D-Day is for **Deposit**. Please bring your deposit bottles and cans to the Saint Ann parking lot from 10 a.m.-12 noon. to support T2T, Tunnel to Towers.

Born from the tragedy of 9/11, the T2T Foundation's mission is to honor both the sacrifice of firefighter Stephen Siller, who laid down his life to save others on 9/11/21, and to honor our military and first responders who continue to make the supreme sacrifice for our country.

K of C Summer Food Drive

Tinto Council #47's 2-weekend summer food drive begins on June 6/7 and continues through June 13/14. The exemplary generosity of the people of Saint Raphael Parish in serving those in need continues to be inspirational.

On. Weekend One members of the Knights will be at both churches, handing out brown grocery bags with lists of most-needed items. They ask that you return the bag (or bags!) on Weekend Two, filled with items from the lists.

Remember, please, that hunger knows no season. The Knights are most grateful for your kindness.



Notes from the Knights - Submitted by Grand Knight Richard Wheeling

As our calendar year moves toward its June closing I'd like to share some news about state-wide events this spring that drew members from many councils across Connecticut. We also enjoyed seeing representatives from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Vermont.

The 50th Annual Blessed Michael McGivney Award Banquet was held on April 12th at Plantsville's Aqua Turf Club. Among the 520 attendees were five brother Knights from Tinto Council #47. The award, established in 1975 by the Connecticut State Council, recognizes individuals or organizations that make profound humanitarian, civic, and social contributions, and honors the enduring ideals of the Order's founder. State Deputy Kevin Glazier presented the award to Supreme Knight Patrick E. Kelly. In his profound and inspirational acceptance speech the Supreme Knight encouraged all brother Knights to continue the charitable works of the order to *all* those we encounter each day.

The CT State Council's 133rd Convention, held in Bristol in late April, highlighted some of the order's accomplishments: *With 100,000 new members the order has grown to over 2.2 million members. *The order has: distributed 1.9 million coats to needy children, donated 163,000 wheel chairs and purchased 2,000 ultrasound machines. Rev. Jeffrey Romans shared Pope Leo's positive note from this year's National Convention, "that there are tangible signs of hope for the Catholic Church." Coming next month: an update on "Night with the Knights" (formerly the Beer and Cigar event); the results of June's Food Drive and of the election of Tinto Council #47 officers for '26-'27 fraternal year.

I continue to encourage any gentlemen over the age of 18 to join our brotherhood. We need you to help carry on the work we do for Saint Raphael Parish and for our community. Please contact me if you would like to find out more. Richard Wheeling, Grand Knight at 203-520-3250.

Donna's Creation Care Corner: Why Go Native?

In the creation story in the second chapter of Genesis we read that "the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east." Imagine God's first garden, completely wild – and full of native plants. These are plants that originate in a particular region without any human intervention. God put *those* plants in *that* place by His own design. Native plants then evolved, lived, and reproduced in a specific geographic area for thousands of years – once again – without the aid of human beings.

Native plants are important because they evolved at the same time as other resident wildlife. Over time, they formed intricate relationships, not only with animals and birds, but also with insects, and even fungi and microbes. They created a balanced ecosystem which could then provide exactly the right source of food that local wildlife needs. Non-native plants simply cannot do that.

Plants, all plants, are the foundation of the entire food web; without them, no animal life can exist. Native plants are also powerhouses that provide "high-value ecosystem services": *Their deep, well-muscled root systems reduce watering needs and maintain a healthy soil structure that prevents erosion and significantly lessens rainwater runoff. Through phytoremediation, they actually cleanse groundwater before it reaches aquifers or enters waterways. Through their complex root systems native plants sequester more carbon than non-native, ornamental plants by removing it from the atmosphere and storing it in the soil.

*Despite the odds, native plants thrive in their local climate with its unpredictable weather patterns and moisture fluctuations. As a result, they need little, if any, additional watering. They can even mitigate wildfire risk. Because they possess built-in defenses against pests they don't require chemical applications, and actually protect watersheds from manmade toxins.

*Native plants provide the best possible chance of survival for the largest number of native species. Connecticut's white oak, for example, can support 500-2,300 distinct species of animals, insects, and microorganisms.

Thinking of adding native plants to your garden, but want to be sure they *are* native? Go to <https://nativeplantfinder.nwf.org/Plants> (National Wildlife Federation) or <https://www.audubon.org/native-plants> (National Audubon Society). Gardens abloom with native plants, created using God's own design will, like creation, be very good!



A native aster, hosts a pollinator in our pollinator garden.

Father John's New Adventure, Class of '26, and Native Plants



After 45 years as a parish priest, 36 of them as a pastor, Father John has decided to take advantage of an option offered by the Archdiocese and transition to senior status. You'll find his "exit interview" on page one.

The parish will honor and celebrate the Class of 2026 on Sunday, June 14th as they, too, prepare for life's many and varied adventures. May God bless and protect them always.

From her *Creation Care Corner* Donna asks, "Why go native?" Read her article on page 3 and find out.

Happy Father's Day to all the parish dads, granddads and stepdads. God bless.

The Parish Press

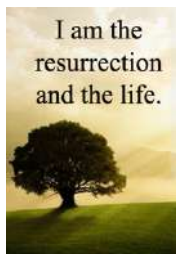
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In Memoriam



Saint Raphael's mourns the recent loss of . . .

Most Rev. Henry Mansell
Nicholas Gabriel DeGioia
Felix and Raquel Mercado
Shirley Demet Ryszard Cwiczak
Shelley Testi John "Jack" Jones
Josefa Alvarez Lorraine "Lori" Hauck

May they experience the Father's mercy and be rewarded with the fullness of his peace. And may their families take comfort in knowing that we share in their sorrow.

Bereavement Support Meets Sunday, June 14th



Our Bereavement Support group will meet on Sunday, June 14th at 2:00 p.m. in the Saint Ann Children's Chapel.

Come spend an hour in this prayerful, confidential setting. If you can, share your story with others who have suffered the heartache of loss. You may call Joanne Judd (203-877-4020) for additional information.

Submit Parish Press Info By June 15th

Please send your news, notes, stories, photos - whatever you'd like to share with the parish family in our July newsletter - to parishpress06460@gmail.com by Monday, June 15th.

Or, if you prefer, you can call Ann Eden (203-874-8744). Thanks very much. We'd love to hear from you.



Parish

tag sale MaryJo Downs, captain of our hard-working Tag Sale team, spread the news via e-mail - and she may have shouted it from the rooftops! The total Tag Sale Tally came to \$6,073.40, more than \$1,000.00 over the captain's goal.

The reactions - Wow!, Amazing!, Fantastic! - apply to MaryJo and her team as well. Job well done, everyone! Thank you very much.

No Coffee And This Month!

Our Hospitality Committee will be busy preparing for a retirement party (and you are invited). See you in July!



Got a Great Chili Recipe?

We're looking for a few more cooks to compete in our first-ever Chili Cook-off on October 24th. Interested? Call Leo Dorsey (203-876-9708).

Saint Raphael Pastoral Council for 2026-2027

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