

# Branches on the Vine

News from the Archdiocese of Hartford · November 23 - 29, 2024



## 'SAINTS RETREAT' SPARKS CURIOSITY AND IMAGINATION IN FAITH FORMATION STUDENTS



*Jaxon Krzynowek, dressed as St. Francis of Assisi, joins his mother, Wieslawa Krzynowek, for the "Saints Retreat" at Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Plainville.*

Jaxon Krzynowek came dressed in a brown hooded habit with a rope belt, noting he wanted to be like St. Francis of Assisi, the saint who some said could speak to the animals. "He loves animals," his mother, Wieslawa Krzynowek, said of her son. That's why he picked St. Francis.

Madelyn Sweeney and her mother found their inspiration online. They read about St. Elizabeth of Hungary, who, through a miracle, turned bread into roses. Madelyn came dressed in a long, flowing blue gown with a yellow basket full of colorful flowers and a half loaf of bread. "We had the props," her mom, Melissa Sweeney, explained.

These creative costumes were a highlight of the "Saints Retreat," a family-friendly event held earlier this month at Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Plainville.

Designed as a fun, educational kickoff for the start of faith formation classes, the event attracted 85 children in grades one through 10, along with some of their parents.

"I'm trying to bring the kids together with their parents to learn about the saints because the saints were amazing and they could really spark fire," Joseph Savidge, the religious education coordinator for Our Lady of Mercy Parish, said prior to the event.

As a child, he was captivated by the courage of St. Joan of Arc. "It's just amazing that a 15-year-old girl would lead the French army and the 100 Years' War," he said. "How did she ever talk that king into letting her lead an army – a young girl who was illiterate and who couldn't ride a horse?"

Savidge hoped that during the Saints Retreat, each child would find one saint that spoke to his or her heart.

"I think they are wonderful role models," he said, "because we don't have a lot of good role models today."

At the Saints Retreat, David Plau, a long-time catechist, author and publisher of the Saints Sticker Book by Sticker Book Publishing in Newtown, asked the children, "Who do you look up to? Who is someone you respect in your life?"

Hands immediately shot up. The children's answers? "My dad and little brother," "Taylor Swift because she's kind," and "Simone Biles."

In response, Plau passed out copies of his workbook to every child and guided them through an interactive discussion about the saints.

"We are all called to be saints," he told the students and parents. "Everybody in this room could be a saint. It's not impossible. We can all work toward being a saint in our everyday lives."

Plau shared his loved for his personal favorite, St. Rose of Lima, noting she is "the patron saint of those with family problems and those ridiculed because of their faith." The youths then found her color-coded image and stuck it on the page next to her color-coded biography.

Plau quizzed the youths about many other saints, sharing brief tidbits from their bios and asking, "Who am I?" The students had many correct answers, identifying the various saints, as they shuffled through pages of stickers.

Plau touched on familiar saints from the time of Christ to lesser-known saints in history and up to the present day. More than a dozen saints, ranging from St. Peter the "rock" to the Blessed Mother to St. Mary Magdalene, were presented before the break.

"St. Mary Magdalene, she's the one who tells us we don't have to be perfect," Plau reminded the students. "We just have to keep trying to get closer to God."

For more information on the Saints Sticker Book, visit [stickerbookpublishing.com/products/saints](https://stickerbookpublishing.com/products/saints).

*Story and photos by Shelley Wolf*



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# UPCOMING EVENTS

**Tuesday, December 3 - Wednesday, December 4  
at 6:30 PM**

*Two-night Parish Mission · Corpus Christi Church,  
Wethersfield*

Join Christ the King Parish in Wethersfield for a two-night Parish Mission on Dec. 3 and 4, 6:30 p.m., at Corpus Christi Church. Father Nick Melo will present an introduction to the Jubilee Year of Hope, reflecting on Pope Francis' Papal Bull for the Holy Year.

**Saturday, December 7 at 7 PM**

*Holiday Showcase to Benefit Schools in Bristol ·  
St. Paul Catholic High School, Bristol*

The 19th annual Holiday Showcase of Stars will take place on Dec. 7, 7 p.m., at St. Paul Catholic High School in Bristol. Everyone is welcome to be part of this wonderful community tradition so bring your friends. Proceeds benefit St. Joseph and St. Matthew schools in Bristol. For more information, call 860.585.6039 or 860.329.5144 or [debbiedoll24@gmail.com](mailto:debbiedoll24@gmail.com).

**Sunday, December 15 at 7:00 PM**

*Lessons and Carols · St. Anthony Church,  
Prospect*

The Festival of Lessons and Carols will be held on Dec. 15, 7 p.m., at St. Anthony's Church in Prospect. The public is invited to attend.

For more events, please visit:  
[archdioceseofhartford.org/events](http://archdioceseofhartford.org/events)

To submit an event for consideration, please  
email: [communications@aohct.org](mailto:communications@aohct.org)



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## Jubilee Year Pilgrimage to Rome

Join Father Emmanuel Ihemedu, pastor of St. John Paul the Great Parish of Torrington, in autumn of 2025 for a 13-day Shrine Tour to Rome and other locations in Italy, including Venice, Padua, Florence, Siena, Pisa, Assisi, Loreto, Macerata, San Giovanni, and Rotondo. Cost is only \$4,490 per person from New York. Early registration is highly encouraged and is first come, first served basis.



# 2024 Archbishop's Annual Appeal



**90.18% as of 11/15/24**  
**\$9,018,196.30 of \$10M goal**

