



Branches on the Vine

MARCH 22 - 28, 2025



SEMINARIANS AND PRIEST STUDYING IN ROME THANK APPEAL DONORS

Story by Shelley Wolf

Nicholas Chapman, left, gives the thumbs up on his first day of classes at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, as Brendan Finnegan, far right, and the other seminarians enter.

Photo courtesy of Father John Gancarz

Three men from the Archdiocese of Hartford, who are studying in Rome, are thanking the donors of the Archbishop's Annual Appeal for sponsoring their priestly education and for providing them with an international formation experience.

"Thank you for your gifts," says Nicholas Chapman, "which make it possible for me to pursue the path I believe God is calling me on. This time in Rome has particularly stretched me and blessed me."

Brendan Finnegan says, "My prayer is to be able to let these experiences form my heart so that I can be an effective servant of the Gospel to you and your family, for generations to come."

Finnegan and Chapman, two seminarians for the Archdiocese of Hartford, and Father John Gancarz, a priest from the archdiocese, are all thrilled to be studying theology at universities so close to the Vatican. They are also making friends with other Catholics from around the world, and absorbing the fact that they are part of a faith that counts nearly 1.4 billion followers. The coursework is challenging and the three men are far from home, separated from family and friends even over the summers.

Still, they are grateful for the opportunity to study in Rome.

Finnegan and Chapman, both in their second year of theology studies, reside at the North American College and attend the Pontifical Gregorian University, the oldest Jesuit University in the world. It's quite different from their earlier seminary experience.

"Unlike my prior seminary," Chapman says, "where our studies were under the same roof as where we lived, it's kind of neat to 'go off to work' in Rome and come back home again after classes are done for the day."

Coursework for the seminarians ranges from Canon Law to the Letters of St. Paul to Ancient Greek. And all courses are taught in Italian. "The language of instruction and collaboration is most often Italian," Father Gancarz explains.

In addition to studying, the seminarians have volunteered in Rome to serve the poor, worked in parishes, learned Italian and Spanish, and visited sacred sites in nearby countries.

And they have marveled at the Italian people.

"The Italians typically don't get too stressed out about the little things," Chapman observes.

Father Gancarz, who last served at Sacred Heart Parish in New Britain, now lives in Casa Santa Maria, a residence in Rome for American diocesan priests. He attends the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican university, where he is working on a Doctorate in Sacred Theology with a specialization in dogmatic theology.

"In the Gospel of John we hear the words of Jesus, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6)," Father Gancarz reminds us. "The aim of all our studies is knowing more deeply this ultimate truth, Jesus Christ, and then sharing him with others."

His graduate work and the other men's undergraduate studies are thanks to the generous donors of the Archbishop's Annual Appeal.

"We are incredibly grateful for the support of the donors," says Father Gancarz. "May this time in the eternal city enrich our faith and priesthoods, to be better ministers and servants to the faithful in the archdiocese and beyond. We pray for you!"



Upcoming Events



03/24 MONDAY 7PM
STRETCH OUT YOUR HAND: AN EVENING OF MUSIC AND REFLECTION FOR LENT

St. Ann Church, 501 Naugatuck Ave, Milford

We are all in need of healing, whether of body, mind, or spirit. This Lent, can we come to God with radically open hearts, with our hands outstretched, willing to let God heal and renew us? Join Amy Ekeh and the Saint Ann Choir for a Lenten Evening of Music and Reflection on the theme of healing and hope. Be renewed, uplifted, and inspired with music, reflection, and prayer. No registration is required. All are welcome.



03/29 SATURDAY 9AM - 4PM
TENDING TO A GRIEVING HEART, WITH LISA IRISH, M.A., M.ED., B.C.C.

Holy Family Retreat Center, 303 Tunxis Rd, West Hartford

Share time and sacred space with others who are grieving and learn a little more about the Land of Loss. All types of loss invite us into a place of healing and the kindling of hope. It is our "attending to grief" that allows new life to take root. \$75, includes lunch. 860-760-9705.



04/5 SATURDAY 7PM
A "DIVINE" COMEDY OF BELLY LAUGHS, BLESSINGS, BLARNEY AND BINGO

St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Parish Center 872, Farmington Ave, West Hartford

Join Father Patrick Aloysius Misgivings for this divine presentation of stories and one-liners about growing up Catholic. From miracles and marriage counseling to bazaars and birth control, nothing escapes the good father's razor-sharp Irish wit. This hilarious interactive comedy includes a collection, a raffle and even an actual Bingo game.

DOORS OPEN: 6:00PM

SHOW: 7:00PM

Tickets - \$20 each
BYOB and Snacks

Purchase Tickets at
osvhub.com/stastm/forms/misgivings
Michael DeConti at 860-229-8292
Victor Naleski at 860-559-7160

Lent 2025
GROWING MORE DEEPLY INTO A DISCIPLE
WORKSHOP
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