

Branches on the Vine

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

APRIL 18 - 24, 2026

Albertus Magnus Students Swap Spring Break for Ohio *Mission Work*

- Story by Joe Pisani

Six students from Albertus Magnus College of New Haven went on spring break. But they did not go to Florida; they traveled to Ohio to perform mission work. They were part of the first Albertus Magnus Spring Break Mission Trip to Columbus, where they did service work for different ministries of the Dominican Sisters of Peace, whose motherhouse is located in the capital city.

“Going to Florida may be cool, but doing community service and helping people out who are in need is more impactful than sitting on the beach,” says Owen Griswold of New London, a junior majoring in criminal justice/pre-law.

For him, the highlight of the week was the four hours the group spent packing 2,760 meals for the Columbus-based LifeCare Alliance. The nonprofit organization distributes the meals to homebound residents.

“Jesus was all about helping people and giving back, and that is what we did.”

Service is a fundamental part of life at Albertus Magnus and one of the four pillars of the Dominican charism – prayer, study, community and service. The college was founded in 1925 by the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs, now known as the Dominican Sisters of Peace.

“That’s how we live our lives every day,” says Sister Cathy Buchanan OP, the campus minister who organized the trip. “All 19 Dominican colleges and universities have the same four pillars, so there is a shared culture, no matter where they are. When we go to conferences, we talk about the different pillars and what

they mean to us. Since service is one of our pillars, students know from the day they arrive that’s what they’re buying into.” Sister Cathy, who made her first vows three years ago and is now temporary professed, knows about service. After a 27-year career in law enforcement, she was looking forward to retiring to Florida and sitting on the beach. But God had a different plan, she says, which includes working with young people and starting a new life with the Dominican Sisters of Peace. She describes the spring break in Ohio as “amazing.”

“Everything went perfectly, considering this was our first time going,” Sister Cathy says. While there, the Albertus students also met fellow students from Ohio Dominican University.

During the week, the group toured the Martin de Porres Center, a place dedicated to spirituality, education and the arts, and had an opportunity to do farm work and feed the animals at nearby Shepherd’s Corner, the Dominican ecology center. Also, they visited the Dominican Learning Center, which offers adult learning classes

in ESL, GED and Adult Basic Education. In between their service work, the students were able to pray, meet many of the 150 sisters who live in the Dominican Motherhouse, and give them thank you cards of appreciation during Catholic Sisters Week, celebrated March 8 to 14. “Jesus was all about helping people and giving back, and that is what we did, just as Jesus did,” says Griswold, who is a resident assistant and an admissions ambassador at Albertus.

The trip had special meaning for him since he became a Catholic last year at the Easter Vigil, when he was baptized, received First Communion and was confirmed.

He made the decision to enter the OCIA process after talking with another student at the National Dominican Preaching Conference. Before that time, he says, “I didn’t have much faith at all.”

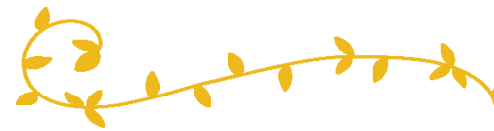
Sister Cathy says the Albertus Magnus students, who were inspired by their experience this year, have already begun preparing for a spring break mission trip next year.



Sister Cathy Buchanan, OP, introduces students from Albertus Magnus College to the Dominican Sisters of Peace living at the Columbus motherhouse during lunch.



Upcoming Events



APRIL 24 @ 7PM
SEEN: A NIGHT OF HOPE & HEALING
 St. Paul VI Parish, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Hamden

Join us for a Holy Hour and Reception including Adoration, prayer teams, guided prayer, support and resources for those struggling with pregnancy loss or infertility. Registration required. Please reach out to m.ricci@hamdencatholic.org to RSVP.



APRIL 27 @ 7PM
SPEED NETWORKING AND MENTORING
 Holy Angels Center, Meriden

Join Young Catholic Professionals Central Connecticut and meet inspiring professionals, connect with other young adults, and walk away with practical insight for your career and faith. Food and drink will be provided. We will be having Stations of the Cross and prayer at 7PM, and the speed networking and mentoring will start at 7:45PM.



MAY 2 @ 4PM
LATINO VOCATION DISCERNMENT NIGHT
 St. Augustine Parish, Hartford

Join us for 4PM Vigil Mass, followed by free dinner and a Q&A panel of speakers from all different vocations. Registration required. Email kathleen.pencz@aohct.org to RSVP.



MAY 8 @ 6PM
SEEN: A NIGHT OF HOPE & HEALING
 The Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Waterbury

All are welcome for a night of prayer and support for those experiencing infertility or pregnancy/child loss. We will have welcoming remarks, Mass, a reflection, Adoration with Praise and Worship, and a reception to follow with light refreshments, veneration of relics, resources, community, and opportunities to meet with Religious Sisters and Prayer Teams. Registration required. Please reach out to hello@waterburybasilica.org to RSVP.



APRIL 24 @ 7PM
YCP SPEAKER EVENT
 Bl. Michael McGivney Parish, St. Mary Church, New Haven

"AI. Faith. Your Career. Are They Compatible?"
 Come join Young Catholic Professionals Central CT for our next Executive Speaker Series Event! Come enjoy light refreshments and networking along with a talk by Omar Kouatly on AI and faith in the workplace. We look forward to meeting you there!



MAY 8 @ 6PM
WOMEN'S HOLY HOUR & DINNER
 St. Bridget of Sweden Parish, Cheshire

Are you seeking peace and direction? Join us for an evening dedicated to women's vocational discernment. We'll begin with a Holy Hour featuring beautiful music, prayerful silence, and a reflection. Please stay for a free dinner and community fellowship. Registration required. Email cdemiany@ascjus.org to RSVP.



MAY 9 @ 9AM - 2PM
DAY WITH MARY | RETREAT
 Precious Blood Parish, St. Agnes Church, Milford

Join us for a Marian Eucharistic Day Retreat with the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate. Day will include: Holy Mass, Confession, Conferment of the Miraculous Medal, Fatima Video, Benediction, Marian Procession, Conferment of the Brown Scapular, Recitation of the Rosary and talks by Franciscans. Inclement weather, check status www.daywithmarywest.org Retreat is FREE, bring a snack!



MAY 10 @ 10AM **Adults \$50**
MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH
 Holy Family Passionist Retreat Center, West Hartford

Children 4-12, \$15 | Children under 4, Free
 Come celebrate Mother's Day with a special Mass for mothers and families, and then enjoy a delicious gourmet brunch prepared by our chef. Visit www.holyfamilyretreat.org/calendar.



MAY 13 @ 7:30PM
CANDLELIGHT ROSARY PROCESSION
 Our Lady Queen of the Apostles Parish, St. Mary Church, Derby

Join us in celebrating the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima! We will gather in front of the church to start the procession. The rosary will take place indoors if it rains. Coffee and cupcakes social to follow!



MAY 13 @ 5:30PM - 9PM **\$50**
COUPLES' EVENING RETREAT
 Holy Family Passionist Retreat Center, West Hartford

Please join us as we explore the beautiful concept of marriage as a spiritual friendship. How is marriage a Trinitarian-like expression of love, with Christ at the center? How can deep, intentional listening with "the ear of the heart" cultivate a marriage rooted in spiritual friendship?

Offered both in-person and online via Zoom. Includes dinner with wine and cheese. Visit www.holyfamilyretreat.org/calendar.



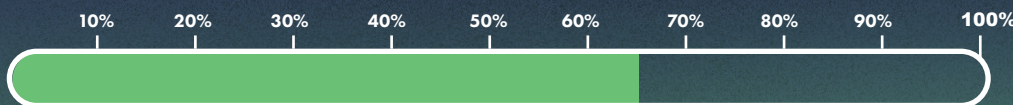
MAY 15 - 17 @ 6PM **\$300**
MEN'S RECOVERY RETREAT
 Holy Family Passionist Retreat Center, West Hartford

We invite men in recovery into a peaceful atmosphere where you can rest, renew your spiritual life, and deepen your sobriety. Hear an inspiring lecture, catch up on some rest, and care for yourself as we care for you in mind, body, and spirit. Our Matt Talbot weekends are open to ALL people, from ALL backgrounds, regardless of whether or not you are a member of a church.

The retreat begins on Friday with a buffet dinner from 6 - 7:30PM and concludes on Sunday around 11AM. Generous scholarships are available. Call Marty V. at **860-250-6246** for scholarship information.

2026 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

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



Total Goal: \$10M 65.39% as of 4/7/26

\$6,539,236.35 in pledges from 18,160 generous donors

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www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal