



# Branches on the Vine

FEBRUARY 21 - 27, 2026



Father Martin Chouinard, center, and Father Anthony Federico, far left, chat with attendees and donors at the Archbishop's Annual Appeal Beer Tasting & Cocktail Reception at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville.  
PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH

This year's Archbishop's Annual Appeal Beer Tasting & Cocktail Reception offered frosty weather and brews in an atmosphere of warm Catholic fellowship.

Approximately 300 people braved the frigid weather Feb. 6 to gather at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville, where they shared an evening of fun and fellowship, sampled local beers and wines, and met Archbishop Christopher J. Coyne in a relaxed setting. Donors also learned how the Appeal is making a difference.

"We take care of people," Archbishop Coyne told attendees during brief remarks, sharing the many reasons the Archbishop's Annual Appeal is so vital.

Giving an update on the current landscape of charitable need, Archbishop Coyne reported hearing about college students turning to food pantries, people in cars driving up to soup kitchens, and families appearing at shelters that once served only homeless individuals.

"We're not just seeing the usual people," he said. "What we're seeing now is a lot of rent poor, with no money left for food."

Archbishop Coyne cited agencies on the front lines of providing food and shelter – House of Bread in Hartford, St. Vincent DePaul Mission of Waterbury and St. Vincent De Paul Mission of Bristol – which receive Appeal funds.

"We fill in the gaps. We never ask for credentials," the archbishop said. "We just say, 'How can we help you?'"

At the event, two invited speakers also shared their heartfelt appreciation to donors for making their ministries possible.

## ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL BEER TASTING MIXES FUN, FELLOWSHIP AND THANKS

"Malta House of Care is a great example of what can be accomplished by a grassroots organization when needs are identified and people decide to put their time, their resources and energy into meeting those needs," said Brian Sheehan, board chair for the Malta House of Care.

Today, Malta serves 1,500 uninsured individuals, providing primary medical care. With a \$1.7 million budget, the agency is funded solely by private philanthropy, Sheehan said, which includes the Archbishop's Annual Appeal.

The Appeal contributes to the Malta van and the stationary Malta Clinic located behind the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford.

"Old friends are the best friends," Sheehan said, "and all of you have been great friends to Malta House of Care, since its inception 20 years ago."

Father Anthony Federico, director of Vocations and director of Seminarians for the Archdiocese of Hartford, asked, "Do you know what gets me fired up? Now it's being a part of the Archdiocese of Hartford, as the Lord does an historic resurgence of the Catholic faith in our state.

"Since we started praying the Prayer for Priestly Vocations together three years ago," Father Federico said, "the Lord has been on an absolute heater."

In the last three years, an unprecedented 157 young men have come forward to discern a vocation to the priesthood. Another 22 are

in formation for the diaconate, 33 women have entered convents, and the archdiocese is seeing a surge in sacramental Catholic marriages.

With 30 seminarians in formation next year at a cost of \$65,000 per year for eight years each, the archdiocese must fund their education.

"The good Lord just sent us a bill for \$15 million," Father Federico said with good humor, "and that's where you come in. I want to thank you. The vocations office is funded almost entirely from your generosity."

For more information on the Archbishop's Annual Appeal, or to donate to the 2026 campaign, visit [archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal](http://archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal).

- Story by Shelley Wolf



# Upcoming Events

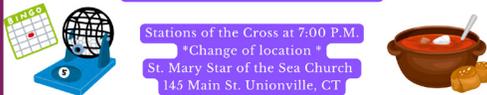


WELCOMING ALL YOUNG CATHOLIC ADULTS  
(ages 21+)

Come celebrate Lent with soup and bread followed by Stations of the Cross and bingo

Friday February 27th 6:00 pm

Stations of the Cross at 7:00 P.M.  
\*Change of location\*  
St. Mary Star of the Sea Church  
145 Main St. Unionville, CT



## BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

Are you grieving the loss of a loved one? The "New Day" Bereavement Group weekly meetings are here to help you find comfort and explore strategies in coping with grief and loss.

Our next 10-week session will begin on Tuesday, February 10, 4:30 to 6:30pm in St. Mary Hall at St. John Bosco Parish in Branford. Space is limited, pre-registration is required.

Contact Nadine Toren, 203-488-1607 x119

# Power and Grace

A Guide to the Catholic Sacraments

This Lent, you are invited to dive into the mystery of the sacraments and explore ways to deepen your experience of God's love as we encounter Jesus in these special divine gifts. Fr. Jeff will present a 4-part multi-media class on Wednesday Evenings from 7:00—8:30 p.m.

Bring your Bible and your questions.

February 25-March 18  
St. Mary Church Hall  
212 Elizabeth St. \* Derby, CT



## ARCHDIOCESE of HARTFORD

Office of Faith Formation and Parish Life

### Catholic Religious Emblems Training

for all Scouting America Leaders.  
The training will review the following emblems:  
*Light of Christ, Parvuli Dei, Ad Altare Dei, Pope Pius and Adult Awards.*

**Saturday, March 21, 2026**  
9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Pastoral Center  
2nd Floor - Conference Rm. C  
467 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield

Registration is required. 

**Questions? Contact:**  
Jennifer McClintock  
Coordinator of Faith Formation Programs & Technology  
Office of Faith Formation and Parish Life  
Jennifer.McClintock@aohct.org 860-242-5573



## Be Vigilant!

It has come to our attention that social media accounts purporting to be Archbishop Coyne's are engaging with users and attempting to solicit money.

*Archbishop Coyne does not engage with social media users through private messages and will never ask for donations in this manner.*

In addition to the Archdiocese of Hartford's social media pages, Archbishop Coyne's only official and authentic social media page is his Facebook, where you can join him at [facebook.com/ArchbishopCoyne](https://facebook.com/ArchbishopCoyne).