

Branches on the Vine

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

MARCH 21 - 27, 2026

Club at East Hartford Parish Builds Bonds, Nourishes the Souls

- Story by Jim Tierney

At the heart of the North American Martyrs Adult Social Club in East Hartford is something simple but powerful: people who show up for one another. For many members, the club is the one place where they know they will be greeted by name, welcomed with a smile and surrounded by others who genuinely care about them.

Being a member of the Adult Social Club for St. Christopher and St. Mary churches is far more than attending a monthly meeting; it is a lifeline of friendship, purpose and joy for older adults who might otherwise feel isolated.

“There is a great sense of community.”

Jean Nowik, a member for more than 10 years, uses one word to describe why she loves the club. “Friendship,” she says.

For many older members who don’t use computers, Nowik adds, the club is their main social connection. “It’s like visiting old friends,” she explains. “There is a great sense of community.”

The club’s caring spirit runs deep. Members drive one another to gatherings, celebrate birthdays and look out for anyone who needs help. This spirit of dedication is reflected in longtime member and club president Joan Perrone.

Perrone has been part of the St. Christopher Church community in East Hartford since 1962, raising her family there and building lasting friendships through its many social groups. After her husband Frank’s passing last May, she continues helping the club thrive by working with other members to prepare and set up for the meetings, which are held at St. Christopher Church.

What keeps members, ranging in age from 60 to 95, coming back? “They like us and how we treat them,” Perrone says. “They don’t have to drive very far to get there, they like the entertainment and they like meeting up with their friends and acquaintances. I believe they have fun and laugh a lot.”

Long before each meeting begins, dedicated members arrive to prepare the hall – setting up tables, arranging name badges, testing sound equipment and making sure the smell of fresh coffee fills the room.

And when those doors open, the atmosphere shifts completely. The room erupts into laughter, whether it is triggered by someone wearing a funny hat at the Funtucky Derby, a spontaneous game of make-believe baseball or comedic antics.

The club though is serious about one thing only: making sure people enjoy themselves. The themes, decorations, speakers, entertainment, music and games are chosen with the



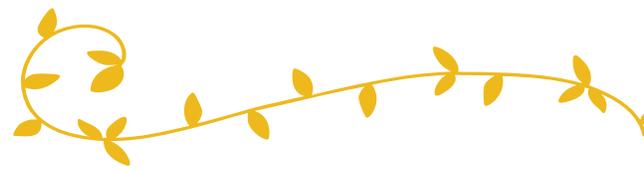
Joan Perrone is standing at the lectern where she runs meetings as president of the North American Martyrs Adult Social Club in East Hartford. The meetings are held at St. Christopher Church.

same purpose – to give members something to look forward to, to smile about and to cherish. With an aging membership and volunteers that are hard to find, the club remains a testament to what can happen when people care enough to keep showing up, Perrone says.

“I don’t know for sure how we have impacted members’ lives or relationships, but I believe we have given them some small moments of fun, entertainment and inclusion,” she says. “All I can do is try to make sure that when they come in those hall doors, they enjoy themselves. If that makes them a little happier when they leave, I’m happy.”



Upcoming Events



MARCH 21 @ 8:30AM - 5PM \$60
GOD CHOSE YOU FOR ME: MARRIAGE RETREAT DAY
 Pastoral Center, Bloomfield

The Office of Faith Formation and Parish Life invites married couples to a day retreat, "God Chose You for Me," presented by Worldwide Marriage Encounter, focused on deepening the spirituality of Matrimony and strengthening couples' spiritual connection through personal prayer. Registration required. Questions? Email Valerie.StJean@aohct.org or call 860-541-6491 Ext. 2678



MARCH 22 @ 11:15AM - 1PM
JESUS, WOMEN AND THE FAMILY OF FAITH
 Franciscan Center For Urban Ministry, Hartford

Please go to www.tinyurl.com/2v34c542 to register. These programs are free and will be at the Franciscan Center. The gatherings will include time for questions along with refreshments. Please Join us!



MARCH 25 @ 5:30PM
BILINGUAL LENTEN REFLECTION
 St. Mary Church, Derby

Before the 6pm Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord Mass, we have a recitation of the Rosary at 5:30 pm. Afterwards, we are happy to have a visit from Vivian Mestey who will share her powerful testimony of how God has been working in her life. She will bring with her the blessed Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe (a copy of Mexico City Basilica's original). There will be the opportunity for individual veneration of the Pilgrim Image.



MARCH 26 @ 6:30PM - 8PM
DISCERNING HEARTS
 183 Church St, Newington

Enjoy tea with Sisters from around the Archdiocese and other women discerning consecrated life. Questions? Contact Sr. Colleen at 860-368-0826



MARCH 29 @ 11:30AM
PALM SUNDAY BREAKFAST AND EGG HUNT
 St. Mary Church, Derby

Free Breakfast of egg sandwiches, pastries, coffee/tea/juice after Mass. Bring your own basket!



MARCH 30 @ 7PM
DIVINE MERCY TALK WITH MEG BAILEY
 St. Mary Church, Derby

Come and hear about the extraordinary graces Jesus has promised when we honor His Divine Mercy, especially on Divine Mercy Sunday. In this special PowerPoint presentation we will be introduced to the message of Divine Mercy. Following there will be adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and confession.



MARCH 31 @ 11AM
CHRISM MASS
 Cathedral of Saint Joseph, Hartford

Archbishop will bless three holy oils, the Oil of the Sick, the Oil of the Catechumens, and the Holy Chrism, for use in sacraments throughout the year. All are invited to join in celebrating in this special Mass.



MARCH 27 @ 5:45PM
\$20 Adults, Kids \$13 FISH FRY FUNDRAISER
 St. Anthony Church, Prospect

Join us for our Fish fry Fundraiser to help support our Parish. Event in Church Hall. All welcome!



APRIL 1 @ 6:30PM
EXPLORING THE JEWISH ROOTS OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST
 St. Mary Church, Derby

The Passover Seder and the Last Supper: An Immersive Experience Exploring the Jewish Roots of the Holy Eucharist: Please note, Pre-registration is required for this event so that the proper amount of food and drink can be prepared. Please call the office 203-735-3341 to register by Thursday, March 26. A suggested offering of \$10 can be brought to the event.



MAY 1-3 @ ALL DAY
RETRouvaille MARRIAGE WORKSHOP
 Windsor

If your marriage has become distant, troubled, unloving or uncaring; if you are divorced or separated but want to try again, Retrouvaille can help. Visit HelpOurMarriage.org

2026 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

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

10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%



Total Goal: \$10M 33.74% as of 3/10/26

\$3,373,622.58 pledges from 9,416 generous donors

WE ARE ONE



www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal