

# Branches on the Vine

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

MAY 9 - 15, 2026

## A Race Against Time: Father Joshua Wilbur Awaits a *Lifesaving Liver Transplant*

- Story by Karen A. Avitabile

Father Joshua Wilbur remains optimistic, though he has acknowledged the reality of his situation.

"I'm hopeful for the future but accepting what God has in store," the Catholic priest says. "I'm very thankful for this feeling, and I am not afraid to die."

Facing a critical, life-threatening autoimmune liver condition, the 45-year-old Father Wilbur was added to the Yale New Haven Hospital transplant waiting list in March. He is hoping for an immediate living donor.

Because his liver is failing, a transplant is essential. Without this lifesaving procedure, doctors estimate he has one or two years left to live.

"This urgent situation is rapidly deteriorating," says Father Wilbur, pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Oxford. "It's going to get worse."

Back in August 2025, he was rushed to the emergency room, vomiting blood. Doctors told him that if he had waited another 48 hours, he wouldn't have survived.

"Right now, they are keeping me stable," Father Wilbur says of his medical team.

To manage his health, the priest undergoes blood transfusions every four to five weeks at Yale New Haven Hospital in New Haven, sometimes requiring unplanned two-week hospital stays.

He notes that his intermittent health struggles present "unpredictable and challenging" obstacles; nevertheless, he maintains a commitment to celebrating Mass and fulfilling his parochial obligations when his condition allows.

Following the news of his illness last year, the St. Thomas the Apostle Parish community rallied behind Father Wilbur, holding a well-attended rosary service and ensuring he is constantly uplifted by requesting Mass intentions for him and providing heartfelt messages of prayer.

Ordained a priest in the Archdiocese of Hartford in 2018 at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford, Father Wilbur has served at Annunciation Parish in Newington, Our Lady of Knock Parish in Farmington and Unionville, and started his tenure as pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in October 2023.

The recently established website [frjoshwilbur.com](http://frjoshwilbur.com) chronicles Father Wilbur's vocational story and features a photo gallery. Additionally, the website offers insights into his medical journey and acts as a guide for potential living donors.

During a living donor transplant, a surgeon takes a portion of a healthy liver and transplants it into a recipient. Almost immediately after surgery, the livers of both the donor and recipient begin growing back to full functioning organs.

Donors must undergo a thorough medical evaluation to ensure it is safe for them to proceed as living donors. A dedicated team of doctors, surgeons and donor advocates supports every step of the process. Donors do not need to be related to the priest to be considered.

Father Wilbur's illness has deepened his own understanding of those facing difficulties. "It's given me a greater sense of empathy for those who are struggling," he adds.

This profound shift has also shaped the priest's personal outlook as well. Echoing Pope St. John Paul II, Father Wilbur is framing his own life as an act of total surrender to God's will.

To contact Father Wilbur, visit [frjoshwilbur.com](http://frjoshwilbur.com). For more information about the Yale New Haven Health Transplant Program, call 866.925.3897 and tell them you are calling about a living liver donation for Father Joshua Wilbur.



Following his ordination in 2018, Father Joshua Wilbur celebrates his first Mass at St. Thomas of Villanova Church in Goshen. PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH



# Upcoming Events



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



MAY 16 @ 9AM - 2PM  
**SPRING CRAFT FAIR**  
St. John Bosco Parish, St. Mary  
Church, Branford

St. John Bosco Women's Group is hosting a Spring Craft Fair. Interested in being a vendor? For more information email: [sjbcraftandtag06405@gmail.com](mailto:sjbcraftandtag06405@gmail.com). All our welcome to join!



MAY 21 @ 9:30AM - 3PM **\$12**  
**NEW DAY SEMINAR FOR  
THE BEREAVED**  
Sacred Heart on the Lake Retreat  
Center, Higganum

This seminar helps those who have lost a loved one with the tasks of grieving. The cost of the book is \$12.00. Reservations required. Call Sr. Patricia Cigrand **203-606-4830** or email [cigrandpatricia@gmail.com](mailto:cigrandpatricia@gmail.com). A free will offering will be welcomed.



MAY 23 @ 9AM - 2PM  
**ANNUAL TAG SALE**  
St. Raphael's Parish, St. Ann  
Campus, Milford

Come on down for some amazing deals on many unique finds! We have everything from: Tools & Hardware, Furniture & Décor, Clothing & Shoes, Home Appliances, Books, Games & DVDs, Toys... and more. Stop by to see what you can discover!



MAY 27 @ 6:30PM - 8:30PM  
**HUMAN TRAFFICKING  
AWARENESS EVENT**  
Cathedral of St. Joseph, Lower  
Cathedral Hall, Hartford

Please join us for an interactive educational event to learn about human trafficking. This program, offered by the Partnership to End Human Trafficking (PEHT), features "In Her Shoes", an exercise designed to walk participants through a day in the life of a human trafficking survivor. Following the exercise, you will learn how trafficking happens in our communities and what you can do to help. PEHT has partnered with Order of Malta American Association and the AOH Human Trafficking Task Force to bring you this unique experience designed for adults and teens 16+. There is no charge for this event, but we ask that you register [www.tinyurl.com/2f3p7k96](http://www.tinyurl.com/2f3p7k96) at this link.



MAY 31 @ 10AM  
**100TH ANNIVERSARY  
CELEBRATION**  
St. Joseph Church, Ansonia

Saint Joseph Church of Ansonia will commemorate its 100th anniversary with a centennial celebration on May 31, honoring a century of faith, community, and fellowship. The celebration will begin with Mass at Saint Joseph Church with Archbishop Christopher Coyne serving as principal celebrant.

Mass will take place at St. Joseph Church, Ansonia, and Dinner at 12PM will take place at Warsaw Park, Ansonia.



NOW UNTIL MAY 22  
**DISCOVER YOUR CALLING!**  
**NECBS OPEN HOUSE**  
New England Catholic Biblical School

Curious about Bible school? Come experience it for yourself at our Open House! All Month through May - Restarting in September! Sit in on a live class, meet our teachers, and see what real biblical training looks like. In-person or virtual. We'll personally connect you with the right teacher and make sure you have everything you need. Contact Class Coordinator [dayanee.olivieri@aohct.org](mailto:dayanee.olivieri@aohct.org) for more information.

## 2026 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

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



Total Goal: \$10M 76.51% as of 4/27/26

\$7,651,349.48 in pledges from 21,198 generous donors



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[www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal](http://www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal)