

Branches on the Vine

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

APRIL 25 - MAY 1, 2026

SEEN Events Offer Grieving Parents Avenues to Healing

- Story by Shelley Wolf

Families who have experienced infertility, the loss of an unborn child or a stillbirth often suffer in silence. But there is hope and healing for the invisible pain of child loss.

"SEEN," which stands for "Supporting Everyone Experiencing Neonatal Loss," is a series of events intended to acknowledge the life lost and to provide spiritual support for grieving families.

There is one upcoming spring event: Friday, May 8 at 6 p.m. sponsored by Immaculate Conception Parish at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, 74 West Main St., Waterbury.

"Parents love that baby with all their heart from the first moment," says Valerie St. Jean, associate director of adult and family life ministries for the Archdiocese of Hartford. "When a parent loses a baby, the sadness is almost too much. And the loss is not recognized.

"There will be prayer, adoration and other ways for people to experience the presence, love and mercy of Jesus."

"The name 'SEEN' is important because very often, nobody knows what happened. The parents hold it inside," she explains. "But we're here to affirm the dignity of the life lost. As Catholics, we believe that life begins at conception, and every soul has meaning and purpose."



Roses, candles and religious images set a quiet and prayerful tone for a SEEN gathering.

SEEN events allow parents to come forward to acknowledge their loss, meet other parents, gain spiritual nourishment and find ways to begin healing. The Basilica event will offer both spiritual and practical resources for coping with the loss of a child, whether the loss was due to a miscarriage or occurred after birth.

The evening event at the Basilica will include Mass, adoration, the veneration of relics, and a reception with resource materials. It will also feature a ministry of presence, including prayer, reconciliation, and counselors as well as art and journaling therapies.

"These events offer those suffering a safe place to grieve and to process their emotions, to be comforted and guided by spiritual support through our Catholic teachings," St. Jean stresses.

"There will be prayer, adoration and other ways for people to experience the presence, love and mercy of Jesus. Expanding upon other resources and forms of prayer, can help people process their grief in different ways. The Basilica has done an amazing job

of finding resources to help people," she adds.

The SEEN concept was started as a grassroots effort in 2020 by interested parishioners at Blessed Michael McGivney Parish in New Haven and has been quietly circulating to other parishes around the archdiocese in slightly different formats to reach more Catholics.

This past week, a SEEN event was also sponsored by St. Paul VI Parish at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, 2819 Whitney Ave., Hamden.

While the events are parish-driven, the Archdiocese of Hartford's Office of Faith Formation and Parish Life is offering its support and guidance, recognizing SEEN events as creative forms of support to reach the hearts of those who are suffering.

SEEN events are free, with many resources and services being donated, including music, food and materials. All interested families are welcome to attend.



Upcoming Events



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!



APRIL 26 @ 5 - 9PM
**BENEFIT NIGHT FOR HAITI
MINISTRY**
American Flatbread, The
Shoppes at Farmington Valley,
Canton

Enjoy dinner and support feeding & educating
almost 500 students at St. Thérèse School in
Llanois, Haiti at the same time! Dine in or take out -
it all counts! Visit www.ourladyofknock.org/haiti
for more information.



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.



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 cdomiany@ascj.us 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.

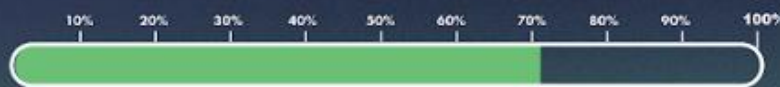


MAY 15 - 17 @ 6PM \$300
MEN'S RECOVERY RETREAT
Holy Family Passionist Retreat
Center, West Hartford

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. 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.

2026 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

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



Total Goal: \$10M 71.21% as of 4/14/26

\$7,120,816.65 in pledges from 19,703 generous donors

WE ARE
ONE



www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal