

Branches on the Vine

SEPTEMBER 20 - 26, 2025



Father Joseph Benicewicz, a member of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual, poses in St. Paul Church in Kensington, where he was the pastor until his death on Sept. 6, 2024.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. PAUL SCHOOL



"Father Joe" was a leap year baby, whose Feb. 29 birthday arrived only once every four years. In February 2024, the last leap year, St. Paul School students surprised him with handmade posters, cards and a birthday sash.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. PAUL SCHOOL

Father Joseph Benicewicz will never be forgotten by all those who knew him, especially by the parishioners, faculty, staff and students at St. Paul Parish and St. Paul School in Kensington.

As the former pastor of the parish and school, the Franciscan priest, who died unexpectedly on Sept. 6, 2024, is being remembered fondly this fall through a memorial scholarship, Masses, a run and a walk.

Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, four students are benefiting from the "Father Joseph Benicewicz Memorial Scholarship." According to Principal Jill Conaway, four student families received \$250 each for a total of \$1,000 in scholarships. "It's to keep his memory alive going forward," Conaway says.

The scholarships were distributed to students who are practicing Catholics with a financial need, in keeping with Father Benicewicz's values.

"It was important to Father Joe to never turn away families in need, who were committed to having a Catholic education for their children," says Kelly Esposito, director of admissions and marketing, who noted the school also offers other forms of financial assistance.

The priest – who served as a teacher, principal and school president in previous

FATHER JOSEPH BENICEWICZ REMEMBERED WITH MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP, RUN AND WALK

assignments – loved to spend time with students. Before his passing, he led the St. Paul School children weekly in Mass and prayer, visited them in their classrooms, and even attended their basketball games.

As soon as teachers heard the news of his death last year, they suggested the scholarship in his name and began raising funds for the endeavor. The principal and advancement director got the ball rolling by setting aside a small portion of funds from the "Lion's Pride Fun Run," an already existing annual school fundraiser, to establish the Father Benicewicz Memorial Scholarship Fund. The school's next Lion's Pride Fun Run is slated for Oct. 9.

The admissions director and athletic director also partnered to start the "Father Joe Memorial Basketball Game" in which the basketball coaches challenged the boys and girls varsity team players, all while wearing "Father Joe" T-shirts. Proceeds from ticket sales and concessions went to the scholarship fund. Next year's game is already set for Feb. 7 from 1 to 3 p.m.

Additional scholarship donations are accepted throughout the year and

processed through the Advancement Office, where each contribution is recorded and acknowledged, Esposito says.

Over at St. Paul Church on the weekend of Sept. 6, 7 and 8, near the anniversary of his death, the entire parish just celebrated three memorial Masses, offering special prayer intentions for Father Benicewicz.

Additionally, this coming October, St. Paul Parish will host the "Father Joe Memorial Walk and Gathering on the Parish Green" on Oct. 5, following the 12 p.m. Mass. The 3.1-mile walk will begin at 1:30 p.m.

Polish food will be available for purchase from Belvedere in New Britain – one of Father Joe's favorites. The event will also include games and music.

For more about the scholarship and St. Paul School events, visit ourschool.stpaulkensington.org. For more about the memorial walk with St. Paul Parish, visit stpaulkensington.org.

- Story by Shelley Wolf



Upcoming Events



09/26 FRIDAY 6:30PM
YOUNG ADULT CANDLELIGHT SERVICE & COOKOUT AND CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT
Our Lady of Knock Parish - St. Patrick Church, 110 Main St, Farmington

Welcoming All Young Adults to socialize with other young adults (age 21+) from surrounding parishes for a fun evening! Enjoy a Candlelight service at St. Patrick's Church in Farmington followed by a Cookout & Cornhole Tournament!

There is no fee, any monetary donation is welcomed. No registration is required - All are Welcome!! These events take place on the fourth Friday of every month with the exception of November and December - so mark your calendar and enjoy the fun! If you have any questions, please contact the Parish Office, 860-673-2422.



09/28 SUNDAY 9:30AM
FEAST OF ST. MICHAEL ITALIAN MASS AND BLESSING FOR FIRST RESPONDERS
St. Michael Church, 29 Wooster Pl, New Haven

Join us in celebration of the Feast of St. Michael with an Italian Mass at St. Michael Church in historic Wooster Square in New Haven on Sunday, September 28 at 9:30AM, celebrated by Fr. Joe MacNeill. All active and retired Police Officers and Firefighters are invited to attend for a special blessing, as St. Michael is the patron saint of first responders. The homily and blessing will be in English. The Southern Italian Religious Societies at St. Michael will host a breakfast in the church hall after Mass. All are welcome!



JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CONNECTICUT

GREATER HARTFORD REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Bringing together 100+ churches and organizations

27 September 2025

8:15-9:15 am - Registration & Breakfast
9:15 am - 12 pm - Conference

Location:

South Church | 277 Main St., Hartford

HUMAN TRAFFICKING 101
Learn how to recognize trafficking in CT

PANEL DISCUSSION
with survivors and advocates
A survivor's journey from grooming to thriving

WHAT'S MY ROLE?
The critical role of church and community

To Register Scan here

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For more information:
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92.80% as of 9/9/25
\$9,280,201.80 pledges from
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