



# The Parish Press

Newsletter of Saint Raphael Parish Family

Milford, Connecticut

February 2023



## A Christmas Question:

### Why Were the Nativity Sets Not in Front of the Altar? Deacon George Explains

Many parishioners have asked why the Christmas crèches were moved from their former locations, in front of the altar at St Ann's and from the Tabernacle side of the sanctuary at St Gabriel's. The relocations are based on instructions in Church documents meant to guard the sanctity of the altar upon which Jesus' sacrifice is remembered and the Eucharist is conferred, and to regulate the seasonal decorations of the sanctuary.

It is important to recognize that the Christmas crèche is an object of devotion that should foster intimate prayer. Ideally, the crèche should be in a place where people can conveniently draw near, but one that allows a distinction between the *devotion* the crèche inspires and the *worship* that is due to Jesus at Mass and whenever we enter the church. The citations below explain the proper placement of the crèche in relation to the sanctuary and the altar:

(From the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (#299): "In every church there should ordinarily be a fixed, dedicated altar, which should be freestanding to allow the ministers to walk around it easily and Mass to be celebrated facing the people."

(From the Book of Blessings (#1544): "If the manger is set up in church, it must not be placed in the presbyterium (sanctuary) but in a place that is suitable for prayer and devotion, one that is easily accessible to the faithful."

From Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship (#124-125 and 128): "Plans for seasonal decorations should include other areas besides the sanctuary. The altar should remain clear and free-standing, not walled in by massive floral displays or the Christmas crib."

These directions are not new, and certainly the former locations were chosen with good intentions, for devotional prayer and the edification of the people of God. But it is a good thing to follow the centuries-old norms of the Church. They were established so that during the Holy Mass we focus on the reason we are here – to worship Jesus as we participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacred meal. Nothing should distract us during Mass or turn our attention away from Jesus.

Please continue to enjoy the crèches in their new locations. Come with your families and your children and gaze with wonder on the infant Jesus, with his earthly family gathered around him, the Son of God come into our world, the love that was born on that first Christmas.

Deacon George



## Lent - A Time to Draw Closer to the Lord February 22 is Ash Wednesday

Lent begins with ashes, an ancient, biblical sign of repentance for sins and humility before God, and a most appropriate way to begin a season that is centered on prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

### Ash Wednesday

Mass and Ashes

8:00 a.m.

12:00 Noon

Saint Gabriel Church

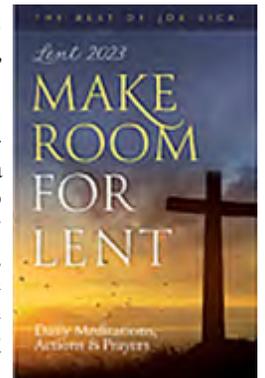
7:00 p.m.

Saint Ann Church

"Call an assembly. Gather the people," the prophet Joel calls in Ash Wednesday's first reading, a call to people of every age to seek the way of God's mercy together. Paul echoes that call in the second reading, urging the people of Corinth to work together as ambassadors for Christ. In the reading from Matthew's Gospel

Jesus cautions his disciples not to perform righteous deeds for others to see. Nor should we. Our Lenten practices of almsgiving, prayer and fasting are not meant to garner public acclaim but to lead us to ongoing conversion of heart and a deeper faith in the Lord who redeemed us.

Father Joe Sica's booklet, *Make Room for Lent*, with its daily meditations, actions and prayers, is a thoughtful and practical guide for the season. We all have days when we're neck-deep in tough times, but Fr. Sica affirms that "Lent is a prime time to make room for life and give every day a chance." Look for the booklet, a gift to you from the parish, at the doors of both churches beginning the the weekend of February 11/12. (Pick one up on your way to Coffee And.)



### February Stations of the Cross

Friday afternoons

3:00 p.m.

Saint Ann Church

February 24

Stations with

Father Michael Clay

Pray the Stations of the Cross with the parish family on Friday afternoons at 3 o'clock at Saint Ann Church and reflect on Our Lord's suffering as he made his painful way to Golgotha. The stations will be broadcast via livestream at the parish website [www.saintraphaelmilford.org](http://www.saintraphaelmilford.org) and remain available (under *Previous Broadcasts*) for later viewing. Stations will also be prayed at Saint Gabriel Church on two Friday evenings in March (dates to be decided). Please plan to pray the Stations with us.

During Lent we are called to practice self-discipline through fasting and abstinence. Please look in the weekly bulletin for ideas and suggestions that might make your Lenten journey more meaningful. As we move through this holy season let us rend our hearts, not our garments and pray with the psalmist, "Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned."

## Congratulations, Tara Hughes, 2023 New Mexico Teacher of the Year



Tara Hughes

From Milford to Santa Fe, from technical theater to inclusive early childhood classrooms, Tara Hughes has been on a journey of discovery and fulfillment that has led to her recent selection as New Mexico's 2023 Teacher of the Year.

The daughter of parishioners Ken and Pat Hughes, Tara is a 1990 Saint Ann School alum and a 1994 graduate of Jonathan Law High School. While her roommates and friends went on to study education in college, Tara was immersed in Technical Theater and Studio Art at Southern Connecticut, where she earned a B.A. in 2000.

Next step on her journey: New Mexico and The Santa Fe Opera House's highly-regarded apprentice program. Tara applied, was hired for the summer, then invited to come on in the fall to build sets for the following summer season. She was now a carpenter and welder and realized that what she loved about theater was "the production aspect - the backstage excitement of running shows, working changeovers, teaching college students the ins and outs of stage operations."

When Tara and her husband Josh moved to New Lebanon NY in 2004 she became an educational assistant (EA) at a self-contained preschool. Here she worked with an "amazing team" - occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech and language pathologist, teachers, and EAs - who came together to support students and families. Theater, she knew, is an art form that is collaborative by nature. Here she had discovered that same collaboration in early childhood special education. It was an inspiration. "I wanted to make a difference with our youngest learners because I saw the importance of early childhood intervention on students and their families." When Tara and Josh moved back to New Mexico she entered Highlands University where she received an award for Excellence in Student Teaching and graduated *summa cum laude* with a Master of Arts in Special Education in May of 2014. Six years later she received a second B.A., in Early Childhood Education, and Early Childhood Teacher Certification and graduated *summa cum laude* from Santa Fe Community College.

Tara knew last fall about her nomination as Teacher of the Year, and the state Secretary of Education had come to observe her classroom, but her reception of the award came as a "super sneaky surprise." She was called down to a meeting, rounded a corner and there were the Governor, Education Secretary, Schools Superintendent, her principal and colleagues. "I still can't believe they pulled it off without my knowing!"

As NMTOY Tara was interviewed by Here and Now on NPR ("unbelievable!"). Upcoming events include: A week in Washington, D.C. for recognition at the national level and a July trip to space camp in Alabama. ("So exciting. My 12-year-old self wanted to be an astronaut after I watched *Space Camp!*")

Tara gets back to Connecticut every summer and remembers all the great things about growing up in Milford - "the shoreline, BBQs, family, friends, fireworks and, of course, those humid summer nights." What's best about The Land of Enchantment? "I love everything about New Mexico. The people, the vibe, the diversity of cultures and the landscape. Living here gives me a feeling of being grounded to earth and a connection with nature. I can't help but feel her power with the vast desert, snow capped mountains, hot springs and the stories the land here tells."

Tara hopes that this award's platform will allow her to advocate for the importance of high quality early childhood education programs. "Inclusive early childhood classrooms provide the context for children's first relationships outside their families. When students of diverse abilities and backgrounds play, socialize and learn together, respect, kindness, friendships and understanding of differences grow. I try to build a classroom that is that safe place where my students can grow to be creative and innovative learners while discovering how to regulate emotions, improve decision making, develop relationships and an understanding that it's OK to make mistakes."

Congratulations, Tara, and thank you for sharing your story, your journey and your hopes and dreams for your students. They are blessed to have you. (And we love the headgear!)



Tara and her inclusive PreK class in Santa Fe

### Coffee And Weekend, February 11/12

Taste treats, coffee, tea, soft drinks, perhaps wine (in the afternoon), all part of February's Coffee And! You won't want to miss it.

Stop in to the Parish Center or Saint Gabriel's Hall after weekend Masses. Visit our first-ever "Mini Ministry Fair," where you can meet and mingle with the parish Money Counters and the Men of Saint Joseph, and perhaps sign on to join them in their ministries.

Look for our parish teens, too, ambassadors for this year's Souper Bowl of Caring. They'll share information about Beth-El Center, the Saint Gabriel Food Pantry, poverty and hunger. If you have Souper Bowl donations the teens will be happy to accept them. (See Souper Bowl article on Page 3 for additional information.)

The Parish Gift Shop will be open (in the Parish Center) before and after Masses, and Scrip cards will be available in the shop. Lots to see and do at Coffee And! See you there.

### Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Sunday, February 26  
12:30-2:15 p.m.

or

Tuesday, February 28  
6:30-8:15 p.m.

Beginning inside  
Saint Ann Church

### GIFT for February: Catholic Social Teaching

In the 25th chapter of Matthew's Gospel (25:31-46) Jesus describes the last judgment, when we will be judged based on how we treat "the least ones," the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. The Jesus of the Gospels spends time with them, the blind, the deaf, the lame, the outcasts, revealing a special love for those most in need.

The Catholic social teaching principle Option for the Poor and Vulnerable (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) encourages us to imitate Christ's love for these least ones by working to create a society where their needs

are always considered first. We are invited to be a part of a long Catholic tradition that continues to live out a love for the poor, the vulnerable and all the marginalized in our nation and our world through works of mercy.

For children this means that God wants us to help people who are poor, who don't have enough food or clothes, a safe place to live, or people who can help them.

This session is required for our First Communion families and Confirmation candidates with a parent, guardian or sponsor. We recommend February's sessions for all of our GIFT families and invite adults without children or teens to consider participating. Please contact Maria Tomasetti [atomasetti@snet.net](mailto:atomasetti@snet.net) or 203-988-8598, (voice or text), if you have questions or would like additional information.

### Congratulations to 7 Young Parishioners Who Met Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation in January

Victoria Aragon  
Joseph Fiordelisi  
Cole Schulze

Kayleigh Lupo  
Allison Soria

Mason Marchand  
Dante Rullo

Thursday, January 5  
Saint Ann Church

Saturday, January 7  
Saint Ann Church

Saturday, January 14  
Saint Gabriel Church

May you know the warmth of Jesus' love all the days of your lives.

### CRS Rice Bowl: Putting Your Faith Into Action



You can change lives when you participate in CRS Rice Bowl. This Catholic Relief Services' program for U.S. families and faith communities invites us to devote our Lenten prayers,

fasting and alms to change the lives of those who suffer in poverty, more than 190 million people in more than 100 countries around the world.

Hear touching stories about our sisters and brothers in need in Honduras, the Philippines and Kenya at <https://www.crsricebowl.org/stories-of-hope/intro>.

Cardboard Rice Bowls with Lenten calendars will be available at the doors of both churches by the weekend of February 18/19 and at February's GIFT sessions. 75% of your donations support the work of Catholic Relief Services around the world. 25% stay in the Archdiocese of Hartford for local efforts to alleviate hunger and poverty. Thank you for your kindness. You may contact Maria (as above) with any questions.

### Coming in July: Stellar, A Cosmic Quest! Summer VBS Camp, July 24-28

Launch kids 4-11 on a cosmic quest where they'll have a blast shining Jesus' light to the world. Registration has begun! Contact Maria, as above, for details.

### GIFT Sacramental Program Dates

#### First Communion

**Learning Session #1**  
Saturday, February 4  
10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon

**Learning Session #2**  
Saturday, March 4  
10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon

Required for children with parent/guardian.

#### Confirmation

**The Nicene Creed**  
Sunday, February 5  
1:00-2:30 p.m.

or  
Tuesday, February 7  
6:30-8:00 p.m.

**Living the Moral Life**  
Sunday, March 5  
1:00-2:30 p.m.

or  
Tuesday, March 7  
6:30-8:00 p.m.

Required for candidates

All sessions at Parish Center  
501 Naugatuck Avenue.

### Saint Raphael Parish Website

<https://saintraphaelmilford.org>

### Be Part of This Year's Souper Bowl of Caring

Proceeds from our 2023 Souper Bowl of Caring will benefit Beth-El Center and the Saint Raphael Parish's Saint Gabriel Food Pantry. You can help by:



\*Bringing non-perishable food donations, paper goods, toiletries, and cleaning supplies when you come to Mass any weekend in February. (Check the bulletin for a list of items.)

\*Bringing your items to our drive thru event on Saturday, February 11, 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the Saint Ann Parish Center parking lot, 501 Naugatuck Ave. Pull up to the doors and pop your trunk! Parish teens will gladly accept your donations. We're also grateful for Shop-Rite gift cards and monetary donations: checks payable to Beth-El Center or, for the Food Pantry, checks payable to Saint Raphael Parish, memo line: food pantry. If possible, these donations should be in a labeled envelope.

Stop by Coffee And at either church the weekend of February 11/12. Drop your donations off with our grateful teens and learn more about Beth-El Center, the Saint Gabriel Food Pantry, and poverty and hunger.

Thank you in advance for your generous support.

## February Highlights: New Mexico Teacher of the Year, Lent Begins

Read inside about Tara Hughes, New Mexico's 2023 Teacher of the Year, and her transcontinental journey of discovery.

February 22nd, Ash Wednesday, marks the beginning of Lent. Look on Page 1 for the schedule for Masses and the distribution of ashes and throughout the newsletter for opportunities for Lenten fasting, prayer and almsgiving.



We'll be a busy parish this month, especially the second weekend: the Souper Bowl of Caring, Coffee And, a Mini-Ministry Fair.

Tuesday, the 14th, is Valentine's Day. Remember to reach out to all those you love. Enjoy February.

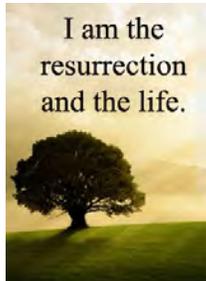
### ***The Parish Press***

A Publication of Saint Raphael Parish  
Milford, Connecticut  
Editor: Ann K. Eden  
Production Staff: Lou Eden, Nancy Vai  
Printing: Graphic Image, Milford, CT

**SAINT RAPHAEL PARISH**  
Saint Ann Church Saint Gabriel Church  
501 Naugatuck Ave.  
Milford, CT 06460-5048

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U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
MILFORD, CT  
PERMIT NO. 362

### **In Memoriam**



I am the  
resurrection  
and the life.

St. Raphael's mourns the recent loss of:  
Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI  
Carol Bakunas Anthony Giardino  
Timothy P. Casey Timothy Ross  
Kathleen Golden Frederick Kirkham  
Louann Simoncini Patricia Piroh  
Evelyn Lasse Greta Stanford  
Gerald Carpinelli June Pritchard  
Stanley Marczak Kyra Murray

May they be at peace in the splendor of heaven.

### **Meet With Bereavement Support Sunday afternoon, February 12**



The Saint Raphael Bereavement Support group will meet in the Saint Ann Children's Chapel on Sunday afternoon, February 12 at 2 o'clock. If you are grieving the loss of someone you love, please plan to be with us.

Winter's chill and early darkness can feel overwhelming, adding to your deep sadness. We invite you to join us in a prayerful, quiet place where you can reflect with others who have known sorrow and remember that life can be beautiful. You may call Joanne (203-877-4020) for additional information.

### **Submit Parish Press Info by February 9**

Please send your news, notes, photos and comments for the March newsletter to [parishpress06460@gmail.com](mailto:parishpress06460@gmail.com) by Thursday, February 9 - short month means early deadline! - or call Ann Eden (203-874-8744). Thanks.

### **We Welcome With Love . . .**

. . . the newest members of our parish family:

Amellia Harrington  
Penelope Mackenzie Ramos

Amellia received the life-giving waters of Baptism on Thursday, December 22 at Saint Gabriel Church. Penelope was baptized on Sunday, January 15 at Saint Ann Church. God bless you, little ones. May you grow in faith, in joy, in wisdom and in the love of the Lord.



### **First Saturday Rosary Devotion Concludes February 4**

The first Saturday recitation of the Fatima Rosary, which began in October, will conclude on Saturday, February 4. Come pray with us at Saint Ann Church starting at 11:00 a.m. as we honor the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

### **Update: Winter Clothing Arrives In Ukraine**

On January 3 Fr. Roman and his team (seen below) unpacked and distributed clothing and supplies shipped in November from St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church. Thank you for your kindness and generosity.

