



The Parish Press

Newsletter of Saint Raphael Parish Family

Milford, Connecticut

February 2026



Lent, Our Journey to Calvary, Begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18th

We Are Drawn to the Cross



As Catholic Christians we are people of the cross, drawn there as Jesus himself declared in the Gospel of John (12:32). “When I am being lifted up from the earth I shall draw all people to myself.” One of the most beloved spiritual thinkers of the 20th century, Henri Nouwen, has written beautifully about drawing closer to the cross of Christ. “People from all times and all places have been drawn into the suffering and risen body of Jesus, who died and rose for all people, with all their differences, so that all could be lifted up with him into the splendor of God.” (*Walk With Jesus: Stations of the Cross, 25th Anniversary Edition, 2015, xi-xii*)

On Ash Wednesday we receive ashes on our foreheads in the shape of a cross, the beginning of our journey to Calvary. Look for opportunities to be *drawn to the cross*, this year’s Lenten theme, in the various activities described in the newsletter and in the weekly bulletins: Stations, reflections, confessions, an evening of prayer, a Lenten Supper and more, some this month and some in March. May we all be lifted up into the splendor of God.

Confessions Schedule for Lenten Mondays 6:00 - 6:30 p.m.

February 23 rd .	Saint Ann
March 2 nd .	Saint Gabriel
March 9 th .	Saint Ann
March 16 th	Saint Gabriel
March 23 rd	Saint Ann

The tradition of receiving ashes at the start of Lent is rooted in the Old Testament, where wearing ashes was a sign of repentance for sins and of one’s humility before God. How appropriate, then, that this ancient sign marks the beginning of Lent, a season of penitential renewal through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

In a recent interview on Catholic Review Radio, Deacon Greg Kendra said that one of the reasons we get ashes is not so much for ourselves but for other people. Those ashes say to the world, “I am doing this and I want you to hold me accountable. I am a work in progress. I am flawed and I’m trying to get better.” As Father Larry Rice has written for the USCCB in *Why Ashes?*, “Perhaps the appeal of the ashes is the expression through a physical sign of a desire for internal conversion.”

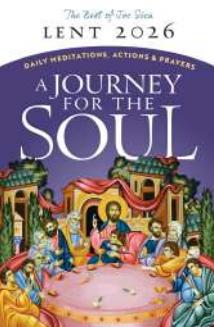
Ash Wednesday Schedule for Mass and Ashes
8:00 a.m.
12:00 Noon
Saint Gabriel Church
7:00 p.m.
Saint Ann Church

Join us for Coffee And February 21/22 (Yes, on the 3rd Weekend of the Month!)

 Fend off the February chill and hobnob with the members of that fabulous group, the Saint Raphael Parish family, the weekend of February 21st and 22nd. Stop in to the Saint Ann Parish Center or Saint Gabriel Hall after any weekend Mass. Savor the snacks, generously provided by our very kind (and talented!) parish bakers. And “take a cup” of coffee, tea, or hot chocolate. What do you think of our “wicked winter of ’26”?

Saint Raphael Parish Website

<https://www.saintraphaelmilford.org>



Lenten Reflection Booklet

A Journey for the Soul (Un Camino Para El Alma)

In *A Journey for the Soul*, also called *The Best of Joe Sica*, well-loved author the late Father Joe Sica guides us with warmth, wisdom and a touch of humor through the storms of life - disappointment, defeat, discouragement, and devastation - towards healing, hope and transformation. The booklet’s reflections, activities and prayers offer a refreshing break from everything that makes us feel stressed, rushed and overcommitted. Copies of the booklet, with a limited number in Spanish, are, as always a gift from the parish. They will be available at church doors beginning February 7th / 8th.

February Stations of the Cross

Friday afternoons
3:00 p.m. at Saint Ann Church

February 20
Stations with Fr. Michael Clay

February 27
Stations for Peace

Stations are live-streamed at the parish website and remain available under *Previous Broadcasts*.

A Fascinating Note from *A History of the Stations (Sacred Heart Church, Tampa)*

In 335, pilgrims began to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher especially during Holy Week. Egeria, a pilgrim from France, described one 4th century pilgrimage: The bishop of Jerusalem and about 200 pilgrims began “at the first cockcrow” at the site of Jesus’ agony on Holy Thursday night. They said a prayer, sung a hymn, and heard a Gospel passage, then went to the garden of Gethsemane and repeated the procedure. They continued to Jerusalem itself, “reaching the (city) gate about the time when one man begins to recognize another, and thence right on through the midst of the city. Both great and small, rich and poor, all are ready there, for on that special day not a soul withdraws from the vigils until morning.”

Pilgrimages developed *stops or stations* (14 in number) by 1731; a fixed route was established, the *Via Dolorosa*; and in 1787 Saint Alphonsus wrote the Stations most of us know best.



**More Season 5 Episodes of
The Chosen
Sunday, February 15th
2:30-4:30 p.m.**

Join us in the “Parish Center Theatre Classroom” on Sunday, February 15th for Episodes 3 and 4 of *The Chosen*, Season 5.

In Episode 3, entitled *Woes*, Jesus preaches one last time to the massive Passover crowd, and the religious leaders try to trap him in his words.

In *Caiaphas*, Episode 4, Caiaphas, afraid of public outcry—and further embarrassment—resolves to arrest Jesus quietly at night. Only one problem: no one knows how to find Him.

Kudos to the Apostolic 12 plus 2 devotees of *The Chosen* who braved the cold and the beginning of last month’s massive snowstorm to *Come and See* Episodes 1 and 2.

Just after this month’s screening, Rose Cox, her daughter Marie and daughter-in-law Sue will be heading to Charlotte, NC for **ChosenCon 2026**. They will join show creators, cast and special guests for “three unforgettable days” - February 19th-21st - “diving into the story behind the show.” Travel safely, ladies, and enjoy what the promo promises: “one wildly fun weekend.”



How A Simple Cardboard Box Can Change Lives

For more than 50 years a simple cardboard box has symbolized almsgiving during Lent. And since 1975 CRS Rice Bowl, the Lenten program of Catholic Relief Services, has raised more than \$350 million to help families in more than 130 countries around the world overcome hunger and poverty.

Look for your cardboard Rice Bowls at the doors of both churches on Valentine’s weekend and during February and March GIFT sessions. Each box contains a Lenten calendar with reflections, activities and stories, this year about our sisters and brothers in need in Ghana, Guatemala and Timor Leste, a young Southeast Asian nation, independent since 2002.

Please be aware that 75% of your Rice Bowl alms support international humanitarian programs, while 25% remain in the Archdiocese of Hartford for local efforts to alleviate poverty and hunger. With your help we can change lives at home and abroad. Thank you very much.

Questions? Contact Maria, as on page 3.

**Donna’s Creation Care Corner
Do Birds Get Cold Feet?**

On bitter days - and we’ve had our share of them this winter - when we have to pull on boots just to walk to the mailbox, we may wonder, “Do birds get cold feet?” The answer, in a word, is yes. But because of another marvel of God’s creation, their cold feet help birds survive.

Birds’ arteries, like those of other animals, carry warm blood away from the heart toward the feet while their veins are carrying cold blood from the feet back to the heart. However - and this is God’s creative marvel - countercurrent heat exchange ensures that the cold blood never reaches the bird’s heart. Instead, the heat transfers from the warmer blood in the arteries to the incoming cold blood in the veins nearby. Result: the newly heated blood is warm when it reaches the heart. Thus the bird’s body is warmed, not its feet.



In addition, the intricate meshwork of vessels in birds’ feet, *rete mirabile* or “wonderful net”, maximizes the heat exchange. One naturalist described it as “an electric blanket sewn under the skin.” (Serious bird watchers and future ornithologists might want to research these fascinating phenomena!)

So, how do cold feet help birds survive? Since the internal temperature of their feet is almost the same as the external temperature of their surroundings, precious heat from their feet does not seep into the elements. As a result, birds expend less energy and heat. According to all indications, their cold feet don’t cause birds pain. More marvels from our awesome Creator: Birds’ blood circulates so quickly that it does not remain in their feet long enough to freeze. Also, God has made their feet of tendons and bones with little muscle or tissue, and extremely few nerves or pain receptors. Finally, God has provided birds with a type of armor – the water-repellent scales on birds’ feet are made of keratin which cannot freeze; the scales insulate their feet and keep them dry.

This winter, then, whenever we tuck our feet into our cozy slippers, let us think about how God has so cleverly designed the feet of His feathered creatures in order to help them survive the harshest winters.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus observes that birds “neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them.” We are part of God’s plan when we feed His amazing winged and feathered creatures and allow them to thrive during the cold winter. God has left them in our hands.



T4S to Host Winter Family Fun Night

(Late February/Early March -

Check the Bulletin and Your Email for Event Date)



This annual night of fun and games is meant for children ages 3-10 who bring their parents/guardians! Families gather at the Parish Center (501 Naugatuck Ave.) any time between 6 and 8 p.m. and decide which fun events they want to be a part of: a cookie or cake walk, with music; winter arts and crafts; carnival games, board games; a child-friendly movie; a treasure hunt and more. There will, of course, be pizza and winter snacks.

Admission is \$5 for children (maximum of \$10 per family). Adults are free. Watch for the date and tell a friend! Bring a friend!. A good time will be had by all. All proceeds will benefit a charity selected by Teens For Service.

Summer VBS Camp Coming July 20-24

Shining a Light on Who Jesus Really Is

For Children ages 4-11. Registration opens March 1st.

GIFT Sacramental

First Communion

Session #1

Saturday, February 7th
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
Required for children
with parent/guardian
(Weekday evening make-
up session
will be scheduled.)

Confirmation Nicene Creed

Sunday, February 8th
12:30 - 2:00 p.m.
or
Tuesday, February 10th
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Candidates only
*All Sacramental sessions
will be held in a
Parish Center Classroom.*



First Saturday Fatima Rosary Concludes February 6th

The monthly first Saturday recitation of the Fatima Rosary, which began in October, will conclude on Saturday morning, February 6th at 11 o'clock at Saint Ann Church. You are invited to come and "keep Mary company" as we honor her Immaculate Heart.

Marriage as a Vocation Committee Invites You to Save A Date

A pre-Valentine treat! On February 7/8 look for a lovely invitation with its arc of roses from this recently formed parish committee.



The ball had hardly dropped in Times Square to mark the new year when Knights of Columbus, Tinto Council #47 was off and running. During the first weeks of January the Knights were pleased to support St. Gianna Pregnancy Center's Baby Bottle Fundraising Drive, an effort that raised a record-breaking \$4,100 in donations for the Center. The total is another example of the incredible generosity of Saint Raphael's parishioners. On behalf of our council and St. Gianna's let me thank for your support to the parish wide program.

For many years our council has participated in the Refund Support Vocations Program (RSVP) through which we provide moral, financial and spiritual support to our future priests and religious at all stages of their formation. We were pleased and proud to support Fr. Mitchell Kendrioski who was ordained to the priesthood in 2025 and is currently serving Bl. Michael McGivney parish in New Haven.

Archdiocesan Vocations Director, Fr. Anthony Federico has graced us with the name of a new seminarian to support. Christian Lofthouse, who is from Milford, is currently attending Mt. Saint Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland. We feel blessed to be associated with Christian, a parishioner of Precious Blood parish, and hope and pray for a long continued relationship with him as he pursues his vocation.

The Knights of Tinto Council #47 invite and encourage our Saint Raphael parishioners to join them in supporting Christian on his journey to priesthood. Please keep him in your prayers. It would be fantastic if you could drop him a card or a personal note wishing him the best. His address is Mt. Saint Mary's Seminary, 16300 Old Emmitsburg Road, Emmitsburg, MD 21727. You never know what a thoughtful note of encouragement might mean to a young man away from home.

Growing in Faith Together (GIFT) Program

Suffering and Death of Jesus (Lent and Holy Week, including Good Friday)

How appropriate that February's GIFT sessions fall during the first week of Lent. As our journey to Calvary begins, we will explore and discuss the meaning and significance of Jesus' death on the cross. We will come to see how Jesus' commitment to doing the will of God, even to the point of sacrificing his own life, serves as a model for all his followers.

We will review what Lent and Holy Week, including Good Friday, mean to us as Catholics and we will be able to consider more deeply how we can live a life of commitment to God's will, no matter the cost.

These sessions also give us the opportunity to reflect on how we can prepare ourselves during Lent's 40-day journey of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. How can we deepen our relationship with God and neighbor as we journey towards Easter?

February's sessions are required for all GIFT families, including those in our Sacramental programs. If you have questions, please contact Maria Tomasetti (203-988-8598 (voice or text) or atomasetti@snet.net.)

February GIFT

Sunday, February 22nd
12:00 noon. - 2:15 p.m.

or

Tuesday, February 24th
6:00 - 8:15 p.m.

*Sessions begin with
a pizza dinner!*

Parish Preparation Program for Adult Confirmation Begins in Mid-March



The program, which consists of six or seven classes, is open to Catholic adults (age 18 or older) who have not received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Reach out to Maria (as above) to express interest and receive an Adult Sacrament Information Form.

Program participants will be preparing to be confirmed on Tuesday evening, May 12th at the Cathedral of Saint Joseph in Hartford.

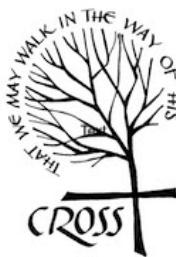
News from the Knights Submitted by Richard Wheeling

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February Highlights: Do Birds Get Cold Feet? More of The Chosen,, Lent Begins



Should we be picking up some warm but tiny boots for our feathered friends? Not necessary!. Check the article inside.

More Season 5 episodes of *The Chosen* are on tap and we have some great news from the Knights.

Lent begins on February 18th, the start of our journey to Golgotha. Read about ashes as a sign of internal conversion and about 4th Century pilgrimages and the Stations of the Cross.

Thank God for this sacred time to renew and purify our hearts. In the words of Henri Nouwen “Through Jesus’ passion and resurrection may we enter ever more fully into the presence of God.”

The Parish Press

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Milford, Connecticut

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SAINT RAPHAEL PARISH

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In Memoriam

Saint Raphael's mourns the recent loss of . . .

Brian F. Smith	Evelyn Ambriscoe
Wayne Palmer	Kathleen O'Neill
Roy Green	Florence Ponelli
Eligia "Elly" Horan	Bertha Perugini
Michael Theodoseau	

May they rejoice in God's presence, praising him for all eternity.



Bereavement Support Sunday, February 8th

Our parish Bereavement Support group will meet on Sunday afternoon, February 8th, at 2 o'clock in the Saint Ann Children's Chapel.

If you are struggling to cope with the death of someone you love, we invite you to be with us. Come share your story and ease your pain among others who have known the heartache of loss. Call Joanne (203-877-4020) for additional information.

March Newsletter Information Due February 10th

Short month means early deadline. Please submit your news, notes comments and photos for the March edition of *The Parish Press* by February 10th to parishpress06460@gmail.com or call Ann Eden (203-874-8744). Thanks very much.

Parish Lenten Supper Is on the Calendar! Friday, March 13th at 6:00 p.m.

Mark your calendars and come to share a Lenten meal with the parish family at the Saint Ann Parish Center at 6:00 p.m. on Friday evening, March 13th.

The bill of fare, catered by Lasse's:
Baked Cod Fish Dinner
Mac & Cheese
Roasted Vegetables
Tartar Sauce, Lemons, Dinner Rolls
Coffee, tea and dessert will also be provided.

\$15/ adults. \$5/ children 12 and under

Make your reservations (payment included) after all Masses on the weekends of February 28/March 1 and March 7/8.

Questions? Call Kathleen Buchanan (203-606-6476). Hope to see you there!

Parish Policy for Daily Mass Cancellations

Please remember that in the interest of the safety of our parishioners, daily Masses will not be celebrated if Milford public schools are closed or have a delayed opening.. Any Mass intentions will be rescheduled.