



# Branches on the Vine

AUGUST 9 - 15, 2025

## ARCHBISHOP TO DEDICATE A MARIAN SHRINE IN ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD



Maria Reina de la Paz Parish at St. Lawrence O'Toole Church in Hartford is being elevated to an archdiocesan shrine.  
PHOTO BY AARON JOSEPH

In August, a new Marian shrine will be dedicated in the Archdiocese of Hartford, creating a sacred pilgrimage destination where all local Catholics can deepen their devotion to Mary.

On Aug. 14 at 7 p.m., Archbishop Christopher J. Coyne will elevate Maria Reina de la Paz Parish (Mary, Queen of Peace) at St. Lawrence O'Toole Church in Hartford to the status of an archdiocesan shrine. Archbishop Coyne has already recognized the shrine through a signed decree.

"This shrine is going to become a place of hope, prayer and encounter with Mary," says Father H. Alexander Avendaño, pastor of the parish, who will also become the rector of the shrine. "Mary is the key. This is a spiritual place where we as Mary's children encounter her motherly love, and we will make sure that's going to happen here, day after day."

While the shrine is open to all, it will aim to be a welcoming pilgrimage site for the archdiocese's growing Hispanic population, many of whom have a special devotion to Mary.

For years, Maria Reina de la Paz Parish has offered daily Masses, the rosary, weeknight confessions, overnight confessions on First Fridays, and numerous Marian celebrations throughout the year – all of which factored into the parish's elevation to a shrine and which will continue to be offered.

Future plans for the shrine include regular talks on Mary, workshops and a Marian congress or full-day retreat with invited speakers and activities.

"The shrine will offer a deeper understanding of Marian spirituality. There's more than piety," Father Avendaño explains.

"There is knowledge, there's facts. This shrine will be a place where Catholics will come to learn, gain knowledge and understand the mystery of Mary in sanctification and salvation."

Longer-range plans, dependent on fundraising, call for the addition of outdoor stations of the cross, painted

icons of Mary on the ceiling, and improved accessibility and more restrooms.

Father Avendaño is preparing for a full house at 7 p.m. on Aug. 14, the day of the shrine's dedication by Archbishop Coyne, which is also the Vigil Mass for the feast of the Assumption of Mary. Pilgrims may be seated in the main church, in the lower church and can spill over onto the lawn, if needed.

The next day, on Aug. 15 at 7 p.m., on the actual feast of the Assumption of Mary, the shrine will host its first Spanish Mass with Bishop Juan Miguel Betancourt. A traveling statue of Our Lady of Fatima, which was blessed by Pope Francis in 2017 and played a role in the shrine's genesis, will be permanently enthroned at that time.

The new shrine has also been designated by the archdiocese as a Jubilee Church for the Jubilee Year of 2025, allowing pilgrims who attend between Aug. 14 and Jan. 6 to receive a special indulgence.

"Anyone who comes properly prepared and stays for Mass will be granted a plenary indulgence for the Jubilee Year of Hope," Father Avendaño says. "I would like every parish to make a pilgrimage to get the indulgence before Jan. 6, when the Jubilee ends."

For shrine offerings, visit [mrpct.org](http://mrpct.org) or download the Maria Reina de la Paz app at Google Play or The App Store. The shrine is located at 494 New Britain Ave. in Hartford.

- Story by Shelley Wolf



# Upcoming Events



08/14-08/17 WEEKEND  
**UNIQUE BOUTIQUE – TAG SALE**  
St. Bridget Church, 80 Main St,  
Manchester

The Parish of St. Teresa of Calcutta invites you to Unique Boutique, a large, quality tag sale featuring a wide range of items for sale including furniture, books, jewelry, collectibles, toys, hardware, artwork, household items, linens, glassware, sporting goods, holiday items, crafts, gardening supplies, luggage, pocketbooks and much more.

**Schedule & Admission:**  
Thursday, 08/14, 5PM-8PM – \$10 admission (includes wine & cheese while you shop)  
Friday, 08/15, 4PM-8PM – \$1 admission  
Saturday, 08/16, 9AM-6PM – Free admission  
Sunday, 08/17, 8AM-11AM – Free admission

Don't miss this incredible shopping opportunity filled with treasures for every interest!

**NEWPORT POLO CLUB**

AUGUST 16 BUS TRIP TO  
NEWPORT, RI. POLO MATCH  
U.S.A VS. JAMAICA

BYOB!

MATCH  
BEGINS AT  
5 PM

BUS WILL LEAVE AFTER THE 9:00 MASS  
COST IS \$115.00 PER PERSON.  
INCLUDES TICKET, BUS RIDE AND FOOD DURING THE MATCH

Contact Sister Fiat Marie for details  
[srfiatmarie@cheshirecatholic.org](mailto:srfiatmarie@cheshirecatholic.org)  
203-272-3531

The Office of Missionary Discipleship is currently registering people for the **"Foundations of Lay Ministry"** Classes begin on September 16 at two locations. Members of this course will learn about the essential writings on the Lay vocation, Contemplative Prayer, Catholic social teaching, and pastoral ministry, and more.



Those interested should contact Jason at [Jason.rinaldi@aohct.org](mailto:Jason.rinaldi@aohct.org) for information or to register.

## 2025 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

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



Total Goal: \$10M



89.91% as of 7/29/25  
\$8,990,723.28 pledges from  
26,885 generous donors

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

