NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

Branches on the Vine

OCTOBER 4 - 10, 2025

Ewa Lotkowska, a member of Young Catholic Professionals of Central Connecticut, weeds the asparagus in the Franciscan Sisters' garden in Meriden. PHOTO BY SHELLEY WOLF

Sister Faith Marie Woolsey, of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist, and volunteer Matthew Ennis work together to prune an apple tree. PHOTO BY SHELLEY WOLF

YOUNG CATHOLIC PROFESSIONALS WITNESS FOR CHRIST IN THE WORKPLACE

On a Saturday in August, nearly 20 members of the Young Catholic Professionals of Central Connecticut gathered in Meriden for a "service day" to help the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist tend their orchards and gardens.

The young adults joined the sisters in picking peaches, pruning the apple trees, weeding around the asparagus and beets, weeding the flower beds and sweeping the walkways.

"We could have spent the day somewhere else, but this was the best way for us to spend a Saturday," says Joe Luchene, a member of the group, as he gathered tree branches into a wheelbarrow. On weekdays, Luchene is employed as a life coach and as a substitute teacher.

After four hours of outdoor labor, the young people prayed with the women religious and were treated to a lunch, breaking bread with the Franciscan Sisters on their patio behind the John Lateran Center in Meriden.

With the tagline "Working in Witness for Christ," Young Catholic Professionals of Central Connecticut, or YCP, is a local chapter of a national organization that seeks to help young working adults to live their Catholic faith in the workplace and out in the world.

"One thing I really like about Young Catholic Professionals is that it encompasses a lot of different aspects of life. From the title itself you'd think it's just a work-related group, but it's very wholistic," says Sister Faith Marie Woolsey, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist and an assistant chaplain for the young adult group.

"The purpose of Young Catholic Professionals is to help young adults connect their faith and their work," says Natasha Hagan, president of the Central Connecticut chapter, who works as an engineer at Pratt & Whitney. "How do you live an undivided life? How do you show up as your full Catholic self, not shying away from talking about faith?"

Those questions get answered, she says, over time during the group's monthly gatherings. Those gatherings encompass the Executive Speaker Series and Panel Discussions at various local churches throughout the Archdiocese of Hartford, the Networking Happy Hour at the Twelve Percent Beer Project in North Haven, and various special events.

The group's primary offering, the Executive Speaker Series, involves talks by senior professionals on development topics, such as leadership in the workplace. Invited speakers often share their own faith journey, providing insights on how to navigate as people of faith in a secular world. Panel Discussions explore a single virtue, applying it to everyday life.

Over the past two years, the young adults have heard from business owners and professionals working in the fields of law, accounting, marketing, sales, engineering and information technology at companies such as Travelers, Fairfield University, Aetna, Pratt & Whitney, the Knights of Columbus and Santopietro Brewing Company, to name just a few.

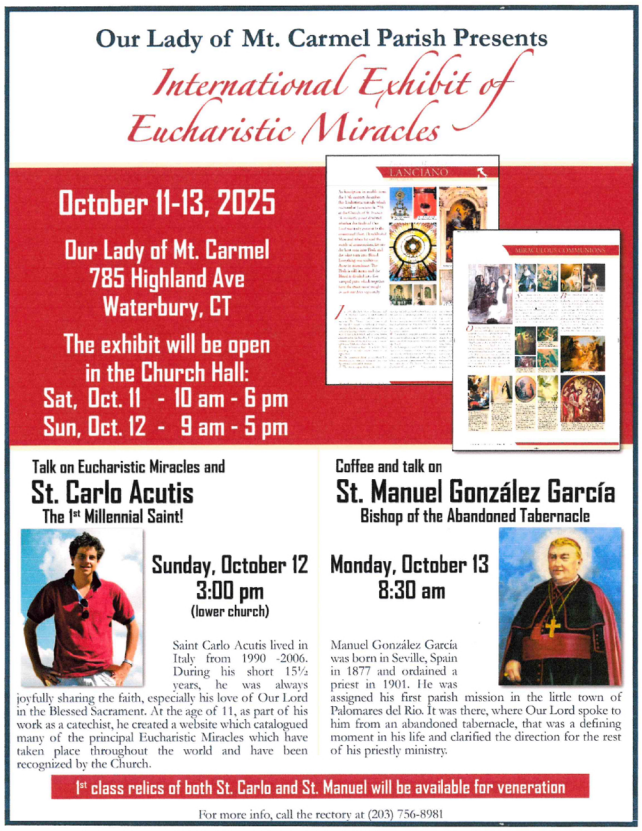
Upcoming events: In October, the group will gather for a St. Joseph Saturday Half-Day Retreat on **Oct. 4**, from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Sacred Heart Academy, 265 Benham St., Hamden. The retreat includes breakfast, lunch, Mass, confession and Adoration.

In November, the chapter will celebrate its second anniversary with a Mass of Thanksgiving & Reception celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Juan Miguel Betancourt on **Nov. 6** at 7 p.m. at St. Bartholomew Church, 45 Ludlow Road, Manchester.

All young adults and newcomers are welcome to attend. For more details, visit youngcatholicprofessionals.org/chapter/central-connecticut.

Story By Shelley Wolf

Upcoming Events



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