



Branches on the Vine

APRIL 26 - MAY 2, 2025

LOCAL PRIEST PUBLISHES BOOK **EXPLORING PATHS TO CONVERSION**

Story by Shelley Wolf

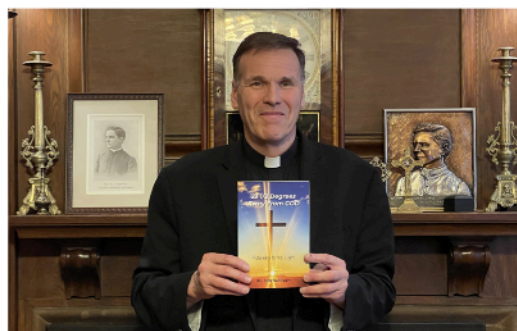


PHOTO BY SHELLEY WOLF

Father James M. Sullivan, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Waterbury, poses with his book, *23 1/2 degrees Away from God: Returning to the Light*, in the rectory of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception.

In his book *23 1/2 Degrees Away From GOD: Returning to the Light*, Father James M. Sullivan traces his family's history back to the town in Ireland where his father was born. He's on a mission to discover whether the seemingly tall tales his father told about traveling to church on Sunday were really true.

That's the charming start to Father Sullivan's book, which sold all 1,500 copies of its first printing in 2024. Now in its second printing, the book is expected to be available again in time for the Easter season.

The book is sprinkled with fond recollections and lessons learned from his parents, siblings and time spent as a building contractor. However, Father Sullivan, now rector of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception and pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Waterbury, insists the book is not a memoir.

"I didn't want it to be a memoir," he says in an interview with Catholic Transcript Online. "I just tied it to the small things in real life. God is big on the little." The book's purpose, he says, is to explore the many paths to conversion in adults of all ages.

Published by Highbury Press in Waterbury, the book features a cover photo of Waterbury's Holy Land USA at sunrise, which was taken by Father Sullivan's brother, John Sullivan. The second printing includes a forward written by Archbishop Leonard P. Blair.

Written in accessible language, the paperback book discusses human nature and conversion through the eyes of a priest, drawing inspiration from personal anecdotes and various perspectives on conversion.

A first-time author, Father Sullivan took three years to complete the manuscript, writing on his days off and while on retreat. Before he became a priest, he always wanted to write a book on human nature, he says, but never did.

"And then, as a priest, you see conversions all the time, people coming back to church and their reasons why, and what touched them and how their life was affected," he says. "So, I decided to write a book on conversion because every person ultimately desires it, to become closer to the source of all love and life.

"I have a special calling for those who are somewhat lost," Father Sullivan adds. "Maybe because I was in the building profession for so many years

and in the working world, I feel like I really know the heart of the average person. Many have good hearts but don't know God. I want to show them who Christ is."

And everyone needs ongoing conversion, the priest says, to avoid "spiritual stagnancy."

In the pages, Father Sullivan also shares a priest's thoughts on the importance of Christian marriage, Catholic confessions, Mass attendance and vocations to the priesthood and religious life. And he doesn't forget to share the joy of the priesthood. "I believe a lot of vocations are out there. They just need to be encouraged and touched," he says.

The book urges all readers to find their calling and to pray for guidance. It prompts readers to pray and to listen in prayer, with special emphasis on listening.

All proceeds from the book go to Immaculate Conception Parish. The second printing will be available sometime after Easter. To order a copy, keep checking the publisher's website at highburypress.com and highburypress.com/fatherjimbook.



Upcoming Events



04/24-06/12 THURSDAYS 6:30PM - 8PM

PARADISUS DEI: THE MYSTERIES OF ROSARY "GLORIOUS MYSTERIES"

Holy Spirit Hall, 183 Church Street, Newington

This will take you deeper into each of the Glorious Mysteries each week, followed by a brief discussion and ending with praying the Rosary together. Questions? Contact Angelo Marchetti 860-202-1612, angelomarchetti2367@outlook.com



05/02 FRIDAY 6PM

MASS OF HEALING

St. Peter Church, 99 East Main St, Torrington

Experience the Power of Healing — In these challenging times, many of us carry burdens – be it physical ailments like cancer and kidney disease, emotional struggles like depression, anxiety, PTSD and grief, or spiritual battles. **YOU'RE NOT ALONE.**

Reconnect, find solace, and embrace the healing powers of our divine physician, Jesus Christ. A special Healing Mass with anointing of the sick will be celebrated by Rev. Emmanuel Ihemedu, pastor of St. John Paul the Great Parish in Torrington. The evening begins with the Divine Mercy Chaplet followed by the Mass. Let's come together, share our stories, and experience the transformative power of faith. Remember, Jesus is still in the business of healing.



05/14 WEDNESDAY 10AM - 3PM

DAY OF RECOLLECTION: STAR OF THE SEA-WITH MAUREEN O'BRIEN

St. Edmund's Retreat, 1 Enders Island, Mystic

Are you longing to connect more deeply with the Blessed Mother? Join us on the island this May as we let go into her love amid nature's beauty. In this program we will read scripture, share together, pray, ponder and rest surrounded by the sea and Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Lourdes, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Come and discover fresh pathways to Mary and how she leads us to her Son. We are invited to Mass at 9:00 a.m. \$75, includes lunch. 860-536-0565.



5/16 FRIDAY 7PM

SEEN: A NIGHT OF HOPE AND HEALING FOR PREGNANCY/INFANT LOSS AND INFERTILITY

St. Mary Church, 5 Hillhouse Ave, New Haven

Women and families suffering from pregnancy/infant loss and infertility are invited to a Night of Hope and Healing at St. Mary Church in New Haven.

Join us for a Holy Hour and Reception, including prayer teams, guided prayer, grief counselors and fertility specialists, and more.

Please RSVP for food purposes at tinyurl.com/seenhollyhour2025. Hosted by Blessed Michael McGivney Parish and the Archdiocese Office of Faith Formation and Parish Life.

Save the date: Mass of Remembrance October 17, at St. Francis Church, New Britain.

2025 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

**Scan the QR code
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Total Goal: \$10M

**57% as of 4/14/25
\$5,699,650 pledges from
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www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal

