



FROM THE CENTER

A Newsletter for Friends and Benefactors of Saint Benedict Center Across the Country

Award-Winning Pro-Lifers

The Saint John the Baptist Pro-Life League of IHM School received the 2026 Ruth V. K. Pakaluk Pro-Life Youth Award from the Diocese of Worcester, a prestigious recognition of their outstanding commitment to the pro-life cause.

The award was presented on March 25, 2026, during the diocesan Mass for Life at the Cathedral of Saint Paul, celebrated by Bishop Robert McManus. In a letter dated March 2 announcing the award, the Respect Life Office wrote, "We are grateful for your tremendous leadership and the beautiful formation of the young men and women at Immaculate Heart of Mary School, which sets an example to others of what it means to build a Culture of Life. We are delighted that Bishop McManus has selected you to receive this award."



Bishop Robert McManus stands with the Saint John the Baptist Pro-Life League and IHM faculty after awarding the Ruth V. K. Pakaluk Pro-Life Youth Award.

The League has been part of student life for over 25 years. Members meet monthly to discuss current issues, lead weekly Divine Mercy devotions, host a 5K race, and host the annual Pancake Breakfast. They are presently selling tickets for their 3rd annual Pro-Life Dinner on May 16, 2026. The guest speaker this year is Fr. Robert McTeigue, S.J.

Not limiting its activities to Harvard, MA, the League runs its own website and has also sponsored several pro-life billboards over the years. Usually, each board displays for a few months, but this year, it is maintaining a billboard in Worcester, MA, for the entire year, aiming to touch many hearts and souls.

For many years, they participated in the Washington, D.C. March for Life, but this year, they took the much shorter trip to the Connecticut March, bolstering a nearby pro-life group and visiting the Divine Mercy Shrine.

God bless these young pro-lifers!



Left: The League's present billboard in the city of Worcester, MA.

Mission in Asia

As immigration rules continued to shift, Sister Mary Anne found herself in a difficult position: while waiting for her Green Card, her recently renewed visa expired, leaving her with no choice but to return to Singapore in February to apply for a new one.

Back home, her religious life flourished rather than paused—her ministries multiplied. She addressed confirmation classes, gave talks at Legion of Mary gatherings, and decorated the Paschal Candle for the Carmelites, who graciously hosted her as an extern. She visited the sick and prayed with them, both in hospitals and at funerals.

One of the most exciting experiences was participating in an adult catechism class. Although Sister is fluent in Mandarin, she cannot communicate with her grandmother, who speaks a dialect. Upon learning about a class in that dialect, she attended in hopes of connecting more deeply with her family. The class was led by Andrew Goh, an 88-year-old Malaysian layman who rides his scooter across Singapore, ministering to the elderly and homebound and catechizing them. He has baptized over 2,000 people and is the godfather to 520. Sister was invited to share her vocation story, taking center stage in a class that proved both delightful and inspiring. Andrew is a remarkable man, full of zeal, making converts in a country where only 7% of the population is Catholic.

No matter where she goes, Sister—always in her traditional habit— attracts the attention of strangers, giving her countless opportunities to evangelize and distribute Miraculous Medals. Her return to Asia proved fruitful, enabling her to plant seeds of faith and foster true devotion to Mary among local Catholics. We are thankful to say that

she is scheduled to return home to Harvard, MA at the end of April! *Deo gratias!*

Top: Sister visited Cardinal Goh of Singapore during Chinese New Year and exchanged a pair of oranges with the Cardinal as is the traditional Chinese custom. Mandarin oranges are exchanged in pairs symbolizing prosperity for the new year.

Above: Vocation talk for a confirmation class at Saint Teresa's Church.

Right: Sister Mary Anne with some of the Legionaries from the Legion of Mary's East Curia in Singapore after giving a Lenten Retreat which is part of the Legion's apostolate.



Hosanna!

The blessing of palms asks God to “bless these branches and grant that what Thy people today bodily perform for Thy honor, they may perfect spiritually.” In this spirit, blessed palms are kept in homes as sacramentals, and sometimes, are buried at the corners of a property with prayers for safety. Farmers would place pieces of the palms in buildings and fields for protection.

Each year, the palm bouquet made at the monastery typically includes five roses, symbolizing Our Lord’s five wounds, and a cross, representing our redemption. Leaves, ears of wheat, and other decorations woven from palms complete the bouquet. The celebrant carries the bouquet in procession while hymns of praise to Christ the King are chanted. Afterwards, it is placed in the sacristy until the beginning of next Lent, when it will be burned to provide the ashes for Ash Wednesday.



Palm Sunday, one of the most significant feasts in the Catholic year, commemorates Christ’s triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, five days before His betrayal and condemnation. The same crowds who had proclaimed Him King with cries of “Hosanna to the Son of David” soon turned to “Crucify Him.”



Some School Bus!

For years, the IHM Band relied on rented passenger buses for parades. A decade ago, Brother Peter took on the role of bus driver when we acquired our first bus— a 2000 MCI, 55-passenger coach, with 1 million miles on the odometer! The Sisters created logo artwork, and our “new” bus hit the road. Over its ten years at the monastery, “the magic bus” logged another 400,000 miles: three trips to Washington, D.C., many journeys to our camp, and countless parades and band events. Eventually, it was clear its days were drawing to a close.

This year, the old bus made its farewell journey, and the Brothers came back with a “new” replacement! The 2003 MCI coach, boasting just 315,000 miles (and no rust!) is ready to begin a new chapter at SBC. Some updates are needed—including installing a restroom. But soon, the Sisters will design a new decal for its side—you’ll know when we’re in your area!

50 Years Later...

Immaculate Heart of Mary School and its grounds have undergone a remarkable transformation over the past 50 years. As our grounds have expanded, clear signage has become increasingly important. Recently, the



Dirusso brothers generously carved, donated, and installed a beautiful new sign. Additional signs have helped visitors navigate our 15-building campus, designating various buildings and areas. This spring, more signs will appear—including one at the front entryway of the new building, another marking “Lourdes Valley” behind the elementary school, and others guiding guests to Saint Joseph’s Sports Fields.

Anyone who recalls the original ranch house that became IHM School

would hardly recognize the facility it has become today. After the library moved to the third floor of the new wing,

its former space was transformed into a bright office and conference room. The most recent improvement involved relocating the principal’s office from a small cubicle on the third floor to a newly constructed, easily accessible room off the main entrance. What a wonderful change! We can’t stop praising this new and improved building. Thanks be to God.



Above: Sisters admire the new signs.

Left: The old library has been transformed into the new principal’s office with a conference room beyond!



Calling All Campers!

When Mr. Patrick Trimble (Sister Gabriel Marie’s father) volunteered as a security guard at Morning Star Camp a few years ago, he got more than he bargained for. During his time at camp, the Sisters showed him an old bell that needed to be fixed and mounted in a central location to call campers to events and meals. Recognizing that this would require more work than expected, Patrick loaded up the bell at the end of camp and took it home with him to Indiana.

Unbeknownst to the community, Patrick went further than a simple repair. At the beginning of this new year, he returned in his large pickup truck, not only with the restored bell but also with a stunning wrought iron framework to mount it. This piece of metal artwork features the logos of Morning Star Camp and Montfort Camp on either side and will be installed on stone pillars in a central camp location. May God bless Patrick for going above and beyond our requests; the bell will serve as a literal resounding reminder of God’s blessings!

Way of the Cross in Harvard

In November, after years in storage, the Brothers installed the final marble Stations of the Cross along the wooded path that had been prepared for them. These Stations originally came from the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace in Colebrook, NH, before the shrine was sold.

Once installed, winter snows made the Stations accessible only by skis. Now that spring has returned, the full collection—culminating in the lifesize Calvary scene—is walkable again. Their restoration was possible thanks to the Brothers' hard work and to Mr. Mark Fisher, who manufactured and installed L-braces to secure each station and spent hours restoring each marble center to its original splendor.

At the entrance to the Way of Calvary, the original marble monument displaying donors' names was preserved as a lasting tribute to their generosity. We are honored to have this beautiful addition on our monastery grounds. May this Way of the Cross inspire the faithful for generations to come and remind us all of the enduring power of Christ Crucified and the generosity of those devoted to Him.



Mary the Queen

With the help of an aerial lift and four Brothers, the lifesize marble statue of Our Lady Help of Christians was installed in the cupola of the new school building on the afternoon of October 28, 2025. After the statue was set, the cupola was completed, and new lighting was added inside and outside, making the setting even more impressive.

The title “Help of Christians” was especially important to Saint John Bosco, a beloved patron of IHM. It is fitting that she now watches over us. The statue stands out during the day and shines at night, always reminding us that she is our Mother and Queen.

New Shrines in Memory of...

Visitors will notice that two new shrines now stand on the convent grounds! A beautiful stone base now supports a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the road to our cemetery. Sister Martina Marie's uncle and aunt, Enrique and Ana Arriola, deeply devoted to their Faith, their Mexican heritage, and Our Lady of Guadalupe, inspired this shrine. They were also generous supporters of the Center.

Closer to the monastery workshops, stands an impressive life-size statue of Saint Joan of Arc, commemorating Sister Maria Veronica's First Profession. Generous gifts made this possible. We look forward to planting flowers and further beautifying these new places of prayer and reflection on our monastery grounds.



Above: Sister Martina Marie stands by the Guadalupe shrine in memory of her relatives on the convent grounds.

Left: Sister Maria Veronica by the new Saint Joan of Arc Shrine in commemoration of her First Profession.

May They Rest in Peace



Dennis E. Olden, 89, passed away on October 28, 2025. Both he and his wife Elaine, are long-time friends and supporters of Saint Benedict Center. He faithfully attended IHM Chapel every Sunday and holy day. After his career which

included the management of Satellite Tracking at a Radar Site for MIT, Dennis volunteered at the monastery for many years, working in our printshop and helping with photography. May God bless and reward him for his generous help!



Lucille M. Vail, 74, passed away peacefully at home in Lowell, MA, on December 14, 2025. Wife of John Vail (†2024) who started and coached our basketball team for many years, Lucille was a devoted wife, mother and homemaker. Tremendously devoted to her Catholic Faith, she was in the Legion of Mary for several decades, a catechism teacher at Saint Rita's in Lowell, a volunteer at Heartbeat International in Billerica and a prayer warrior.

May she rest in peace.



Robert J. Tashjian, 95, passed away Tuesday, January 12, 2026. Dr. Tashjian served as our veterinarian, generously caring for our animals without charge for over 30 years. When he retired, the Sisters regularly visited him at the Saint Francis

Nursing Center. During one of the visits, he expressed a desire to become Catholic. Father Becker, our chaplain, baptised him on April 15, 2023. May God grant him eternal rest and reward him for his kindness.



Jean Knowlton, 101, passed away on March 7, 2026—just three months short of her 102nd birthday. Affectionately known as “Babcia” by all the Sisters, she was the mother of Janet Noonan, a devoted pro-lifer, dear friend, and wife of Tom Noonan, the Boston Santa Claus who visits IHM each year.

Babcia often joined them on visits to Morning Star Camp and IHM, where she was loved by everyone. May she rest in peace in the merciful hands of Jesus.