

## 2016 – 2017 ARCHDIOCESAN DISTINGUISHED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PASTOR

### Reverend Francis T. Carter



The Archdiocese of Hartford is pleased to announce the selection of Rev. Francis T. Carter, Pastor of St. Bernadette Church and School in New Haven, as the 2016 – 2017 Distinguished Elementary School Pastor. Fr. Carter's recognition was announced on September 29 at the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual HOPES Dinner.

Fr. Carter is a teacher at heart, having been involved in education for 42 years, including twelve as a junior high school English teacher and 30 as a diocesan priest and parish/school administrator. Fr. Carter attended Notre Dame High School in West Haven, then earned his Bachelor's Degree in English from Boston College and his 6<sup>th</sup> Year Certificate in Administration from Southern Connecticut State University. He pursued his priestly vocation at Christ the King Seminary in New York and was ordained on Dec. 20, 1986. Fr. Carter has served in many Archdiocesan parishes, including St. James, Manchester, Blessed Sacrament, Hamden, St. Mary, New Britain, St. Bridget, Cheshire, St. Brigid, West Hartford, and his current parish, St. Bernadette, New Haven.

A true commitment to Catholic school education characterizes Fr. Carter's service. It has been his mission to partner with his schools to insure their success and create a true parish/school community. Student needs have always been his priority – whether it be school supplies or iPads for each student, Fr. Carter finds a way to provide them. In big ways and small ways, his support of the school and its students is always in the forefront of his heart and mind. One of Fr. Carter's greatest joys has been celebrating weekly children's Masses and First Friday Masses with the school children. He creates inter-active homilies that involve the children, their families and faculty, demonstrating important lessons with the use of cards, props, and decorations.

One very special example of these Masses, remembered fondly by Fr. Carter, was the one he created for the day after 9/11. In his words:

*"I was aware that the children...were being saturated with horrifying visual images of the destruction and death caused by the four hijacked passenger airplanes. The Gospel of the day was Luke 5:1-7: after a night of not catching anything, Jesus, on the shore, told Peter and his friends to cast their nets in a certain place. They did and caught so many fish their boat was swamped and Peter was forced to summon other boats. For my homily, I created a moving boat out of cardboard and rollers, chose twelve (student) apostles: one with an umbrella sail, one, a pillow anchor, one, a cardboard telescope and rest with an empty, black, nylon net. Jesus arrived and told all of them to move to a certain place. The children did and began to pull in a six-foot wide, thirty-foot long, black, nylon net covered with 300 multi-colored paper fish. They kept pulling and covered themselves, the altar and part of the gymnasium. Later, our Apostles emerged from under the net laughing with joy. The entire school joined them. The final scene? A wall of netted fish five-feet high, twenty feet wide. I said to them, 'What is the lesson?' The answer? 'Listen to Jesus; Do what He wants.' Six years later the valedictorian at the Northwest Catholic graduation shared her most memorable event in twelve years of Catholic education. She said, 'Pulling in the fish the day after 9/11.'"*

Whether bringing joy to frightened children during a national tragedy, providing provisions for a school family that had lost their home to fire, offering constant pastoral care to the family of a child in need of multiple organ transplants, or bringing baseball cards to a child with a badly broken leg, Fr. Carter has nurtured his parish and school communities, embracing them as one family.

The Archdiocese of Hartford is proud to recognize Fr. Frank Carter for consistently sharing his love for his Catholic faith, for educating youth with the highest academic standards and Gospel truths, and for building communities united in the Church's mission.