

For Immediate Release
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Archdiocesan 2018-2019 Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Pastor Announced

HARTFORD, Conn. (August 23, 2018) The Archdiocese of Hartford proudly announces that Rev. James M. Sullivan, Pastor of Assumption Church and School in Ansonia, has been named the 2018-2019 Distinguished Catholic Elementary School Pastor. Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Dr. Michael S. Griffin, announced the honor at the August 23 Administrators Meeting.

According to Dr. Griffin, “Fr. Sullivan’s commitment to Catholic school education is evidenced by his exceptional efforts on behalf of Assumption School, bringing tremendous energy, creativity and leadership to calling forth the best in the school’s students, teachers and families. Since his appointment as Pastor of Assumption Church in 2015, Father Sullivan has strengthened the bonds between school and parish, and guided the school to give witness to our Catholic faith in the community.” Kathleen Molner, Principal of Assumption School agrees, stating that, “Fr. Sullivan is instrumental in demonstrating our school’s mission as he inspires the school and parish community through his kindness, dedication, and good works.” In its selection of Fr. Sullivan, the award committee noted the strong spiritual leadership he brings to Assumption School, where he hosts a daily prayer service each morning, celebrates weekly children’s Masses, and schedules annual individual meetings with every school family. He has revitalized the Children’s Liturgy at Assumption Church and created a Youth and Young Adult Ministry position in the parish to attract more young people to the faith.

His deep investment in the success of Assumption School is demonstrated by Fr. Sullivan’s regular presence at school events, his consistent involvement in School Board initiatives that increase school viability, and by his interactions with faculty and staff who he encourages to be role models of the faith for their students.

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An avid bicyclist, Fr. Sullivan has exhibited his great love for Catholic schools by organizing successful fundraisers on their behalf. The “Our Father’s Ride” in 2016, during which he biked 350 miles from Ansonia, CT to the Notre Dame Basilica in Montreal, Canada raised \$129,000 and funded the restoration of Assumption School’s third floor, creating a new gymnasium and renovating the school auditorium in a space unused for over forty years. Fr. Sullivan’s first “Our Father’s Ride” was executed on behalf of St. Peter-St. Francis School in Torrington. Along with other priests, he biked to the birthplace of Catholic school education, the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Shrine in Emmetsburg, MD, raising \$116,000 for the school. For the past two years, he and up to thirty-five parishioners have made a 50-mile walking pilgrimage of prayer to Divine Mercy Shrine in Stockbridge, MA, raising \$32,000 for tuition assistance. According to Fr. Sullivan, “Catholic education is not only for those who can afford it. In a very special way, Catholic education is for those who cannot afford it or who may need a little help.”

Fr. Sullivan was born in Waterbury, CT to very devout parents, and he attended St. Hedwig School in Naugatuck which partnered with his parents to provide him with a strong foundation in faith. After attending Kennedy High School and earning a degree in economics at Providence College, Fr. Sullivan and his brother John began a contracting business in 1987. After working for 25 years in his successful business, Fr. Sullivan felt the call to priesthood and entered St. John Seminary in Boston. He was ordained to the priesthood in 2014 and his first assignment was serving the four Churches of the Torrington Cluster prior to becoming Pastor of Assumption Church in Ansonia.

In announcing the honor, Superintendent Griffin stated that, “Fr. Sullivan devotes incredible energy and witness of his faith to his role as a Catholic school Pastor, helping students and families welcome Christ into their daily lives and respond to the call to serve God and others. His outstanding dedication to Catholic school education has greatly enhanced the Assumption School community, and we are truly pleased to acknowledge his efforts with this award.”

Upon hearing of his recognition, Fr. Sullivan shared his thoughts. “The same foundation that I received as a child, I would love in my own small way to be able to pass along to other children. ‘Reading, Riting, and Rithmetic’ are critical to the education of a child, but the last ‘R,’ Religion, is the most important and the one that ultimately lasts forever. I am most honored and grateful to receive this award on behalf of Catholic education.”

Fr. Sullivan will be officially recognized with the award at the annual HOPES Dinner, to be held on September 25 at the Aqua Turf Club in Southington.

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