

The Inland See

News from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington



January 10–16, 2026

Vocations profile

Father Sahaya Paul Sebastian



The call to Holy Orders reaches out to people at different points in their lives; sometimes late, sometimes early. In rare instances — as in the case of Father Sahaya Paul Sebastian — the vocational calling occurs before the person is even born.

“I’m from a Catholic family” Father Paul explained. “I get my faith from my mom’s side, my home parish, where my dad is from, has about 1,100 Catholic families. My mom’s family is deep in the faith, in the same family, out of the five sisters my grandpa had, three are religious sisters.” Raised in the faith from the beginning, Father Paul felt the call to the priesthood early on, in part because of the prayers of his mother; “I am one of five sons. I am the second oldest — the first, my older brother, died stillborn. My mother prayed, promised to God, that the next child would become a priest if he lived.”

As Father Paul grew older, the call to the priesthood persisted; “I remember from the time I was five years old I would walk to Mass with my mother each morning, people would ask me while we walked what I wanted to be when I grew up, and I always said ‘I want to be a priest.’” As soon as he was able, Father Paul enrolled in seminary; “Some priests have beautiful stories in which they say, ‘This is the turning point in my faith,’ for me, from the beginning of my life, even before, this was always my vocation. I can’t say I never had doubts or second thoughts, but I felt like it was God’s plan, and I’ve been a priest for 10 years now.”

Shortly after his ordination, Father Paul felt called to missionary work. “I remember during an Ignatian retreat meeting a priest who was a missionary in Madagascar, he was talking about how he had to drive 450 kilometers to celebrate Mass. He’d bring two spare tires because the roads were so rough, part of the way was by boat, and he had to bring meat to bait the crocodiles away. It sounded like such an adventure ... I knew I needed to be a missionary.” Writing to his bishop just over a month after his ordination, Father Paul describes his initial enthusiasm being tempered by reality; “They told me to wait, first they were looking for a place for me in Germany, but we already had missionaries there. Then they looked in France, but my diocese already had, like, 11 priests there.”

Father Paul’s chance finally came in 2018, when he was granted a missionary assignment in Barton, Vermont, arriving

in the United States on August 12 of that year. “I was at St. Paul in Barton for 10 months, through my first winter, then I was in Lowell for two years, and finally I came here (to Blessed Sacrament in Stowe) in 2021.” While Vermont is a far cry from Father Paul’s initial idea of missionary work, he says he wouldn’t want it any other way. “Everything is a surprise here” he said, “but the love the people have shown me will stay with me forever.”

“I was surprised by how empty Vermont is” Father Paul laughed. “In India, you go outside, there are people everywhere. Here there are just trees! And then, in October 2018, seeing snow for the first time was such a surprise, seeing how silent the world became in winter was remarkable. Back home, there’s always noise, always people talking, vehicles, stuff going on ... but here, it’s people.” By the same token, Father Paul also notes, the silence extends into Vermont’s churches. “Back home, we count families, not individual people — even a small parish has a few hundred families. Here, if you have 60 or 70 people in the pews, that’s considered good.” Father Paul’s missionary experience reflects a new reality of missionary work in the Church; whereas in centuries past, missionaries traveled to places where the faith was new and growing, nowadays they more commonly travel from freshly-evangelized locales to places where the faith has begun to decline. India is one such place where the faith has experienced explosive growth; in the early 1900s, there were fewer than 200,000 Catholics in the entire subcontinent. Today, there are over 23 million Catholics in India, with that number projected to reach 30 million by the end of the next decade. Indian priests are an increasingly common sight in dioceses with flagging numbers, such as Europe and the United States.

“Everything was new, everything a surprise” Father Paul said. “But I have loved being here. Vermont is truly a special place ... the tremendous love and faith of the people here has been the biggest surprise of all.” For the diocese’s Year of Vocations, Father Paul encourages young men to discern a call to the priesthood by first cultivating an interior life: “It starts with prayer. Set aside time each day to pray, and be open to what He has to say — regardless of what that may be.”

VTC • Evan Wing

Diocesan Event Calendar • vermontcatholic.org/events



01|12 MONDAY
Senior Citizen Luncheon
St. John Vianney Parish Center, S. Burlington • 12 - 2 pm

A healthy, hot meal will be offered at no charge, and free-will donations are also being accepted to support the program. Following the meal, Isaac Desranleau will share a brief reflection on ways we can pray for and make faith connections with young adults in our lives. Please join us and bring a friend!



01|12 MONDAY
Newman Series on the Parochial and Plain Sermons
Via Zoom • 7:30 pm

Fr. Matthew Rensch will present on The State of Grace. The sermon will be read at the meeting; no need to prepare beforehand. Zoom link: vermontcatholic.org/event/newman-series-on-the-parochial-and-plain-sermons/



01|14 – 02|11 WEDNESDAYS
Become a Mentor to an Incarcerated Woman
Via Zoom • 5:30 pm

Mercy Connections is seeking women across Vermont to join its Vermont Women's Mentoring Program, a powerful initiative that supports incarcerated women as they transition back into the community. For registration link, go to: vermontcatholic.org/event/become-a-mentor-to-an-incarcerated-woman/. For more info on this 5-week training course, please contact Joanne Nelson at jnelson@mercyconnections.org or at (802) 846-7164.



01|17, 24 SATURDAYS
SoulCore
St. Andrew Parish Hall, Waterbury • 9 am

Activate your mind, body, and soul: stretch, strengthen, and pray. SoulCore is an integrated faith and fitness class to the prayers of the rosary with a self-paced workout. Bring a mat and water. Suggested \$10.



01|19 – 02|24 MONDAYS OR TUESDAYS
The Genius of Tolkien
Immaculate Heart of Mary, Williston • Jan. 19 – Feb. 23 • Mondays at 6:30 pm
St. John Vianney, South Burlington • Jan. 20 – Feb. 24 • Tuesdays at 1 pm

Just in time for the re-release of the Lord of the Rings film trilogy in theaters! Using a series from the Formed platform, we will uncover biblical connections to Tolkien's characters, offering a unique lens on human experiences. Each session will begin with a short video, followed by discussion.



01|24, 02|21 SATURDAYS
St. Peter's Church Preservation Committee BINGO
St. Peter Parish Hall, Vergennes • 5 - 8 pm

Doors open at 5 pm and games start at 6 pm. This is a family friendly event. All cash prizes, 50/50 raffle. Refreshments sold. This event is sponsored by the St. Peter's Historic Preservation Committee to benefit the on-going restoration efforts for the bell tower and the church. Please join us!



01|26, 02|02, 09 MONDAYS
SJV Book Group — Praying for Our Adult Sons and Daughters
St. John Vianney, S. Burlington • 9:30 - 11 am

Please join us for our book group on Praying for Our Adult Sons and Daughters: Placing them in the heart of God, meeting in the Fellowship Room of the Parish Center. Books will be \$10 each; sign up by January 4 to order yours. Learn more at: stjohnvianneyvt.org/sjv-book-group.



02|01 SUNDAY
Eucharistic Healing Service
St. John the Evangelist, St. Johnsbury • 3 - 4:30 pm

Father Lance W. Harlow will conduct a Eucharistic Healing Service featuring Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament along with praying over by Father Harlow.



02|07 SATURDAY
St. Peter's Cemetery Association Bingo
St. Peter Parish Hall, Vergennes • 5 - 8 pm

Doors open at 5 pm, Bingo starts at 6 pm. This is a family friendly event. All cash prizes, 50/50 raffle. Refreshments sold. This event is sponsored by St. Peter's Cemetery Committee to benefit the on-going efforts for cemetery improvements.



02|07 SATURDAY
Annual French Canadian Tourtiere Supper
Holy Rosary, Richmond • 5 - 6:30 pm

Join us for a delicious traditional French Canadian Tourtiere Supper including: Pea Soup, Tourtiere (meat) Pie, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans and Desserts. Reservations suggested

— online: KK1L.com/KnightsMeatPieDinner2026 or call/text Ron (470) 588-5515. Sit down or Take-Out available. \$17 per person. Hosted by the Knights of Columbus Council 4684.



02|13 FRIDAY
Essex Community Dinner
Holy Family Parish Hall, Essex Jct. • 5:30 pm

Essex Community Dinners are provided in order to grow and promote our community! These meals are free to all but donations are appreciated to cover parish expenses. Take-out dinners are also available, starting at 6 pm.



02|14 SATURDAY
St. Padre Pio Prayer Group
Holy Family, Essex Junction • 8 am

The Padre Pio group meets the second Saturday of each month, at Holy Family. We begin with the Rosary at 8 am followed by Mass at 8:30 am. Special Intentions for the intercession of Saint Padre Pio and then learning about Padre Pio's life, ministry, and spiritual gifts.



02|14 – 03|21 SATURDAYS
Grieving with Great Hope
St. Catherine of Siena, Shelburne • 10 am - 12 pm

Grieving With Great Hope is a bereavement program based on Catholic teachings, developed by Good Mourning Ministries (GMM) and presented on the FORMED website. The program consists of five weekly sessions. Each session will include watching a video, time for personal reflection, and small group sharing. All conversations are confidential and no one may share in discussion outside of session. This offering will be limited to 25 participants. Note that no new participants will be added after the second session.



HOW TO GIVE

Online:
vermontcatholic.org/donate

Call:
802.658.6110 x 1102

Mail:
Bishop's Annual Appeal
55 Joy Drive
South Burlington, VT 05403

