

St Rose School Schedules 'Blooms Benefit' Fundraiser

By ELIZA HALLABECK

St Rose of Lima School's upcoming Blooms Benefit Dinner is set to honor Sister Thaddeus Rajca, CSFN, along with raising funds to help support affordable tuition rates.

Sister Thaddeus is being honored for her "faithful service and dedication to Catholic education," as shared in an announcement for the event.

The Blooms Benefit Dinner is slated for October 21 from 6:30 pm to 10:30 pm at The Amber Room Colonnade in Danbury. Tickets should be purchased in advance, and early purchases are encouraged as seating is limited.

Tickets can be purchased online at one.bidpal.net/bloomsevent/welcome or questions about attending the Blooms Benefit Dinner and purchasing tickets can be e-mailed to advancement@srles.com.

Sister Thaddeus recently reflected that she feels excited for the event and "very humbled that they decided to honor me." She also said it is important to highlight all Catholic education and the Catholic educators and Sisters who work toward bringing children "closer to God."

"We've always been a parish and school community that centers around family spirit," Sister Thaddeus said, adding that the Blooms Benefit Dinner will highlight that spirit by gathering people together to be joyful and enjoy the company of one another.

According to St Rose of Lima School Director of Mission Advancement Laura Moulder, Sister Thaddeus is a member of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth (CSFN), a community in which she has served since September 8, 1961. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Sacred Heart University and a Master of Arts in Administration from Fairfield University.

For nine years, Sister Thaddeus served as secretary general of her ministry in Rome



Sister Thaddeus Rajca, CSFN, meets Pope John Paul II in Rome in 1992.

and she had a fellowship in Japan for a summer while she was a teacher at St Joseph High School in Trumbull. After her time in Rome, Sister Thaddeus returned to Connecticut, and was shortly afterward contacted by St Rose of Lima Church Pastor Monsignor Robert Weiss.

Monsignor Weiss recently shared that at the time he contacted her, he knew Sister Thaddeus was extremely talented and gifted. When he reached out, he told her a position was open at St Rose of Lima School.

Sister Thaddeus has now been at St Rose of Lima School for over 20 years.

She said it has been a joy for her to work with students and to see how they grow socially, academically, and with their faith and connection to God. Over her time at the school, she has served as religious educator, preschool director, and she is now teaching sixth and seventh grade religion courses.

One of her favorite things is watching children attend Mass on Fridays.

"It's a joy to see how they love their faith," said Sister Thaddeus.

Monsignor Weiss said Sister Thaddeus has a real commitment to the church and gospel.

"She has an extremely deep faith and trust in the Lord and an extremely positive attitude about life and faith," Monsignor Weiss said.

And formally recognizing Sister Thaddeus, Monsignor Weiss observed, is "overdue."

"We are truly blessed as a parish and a school to have her in our midst," said Monsignor Weiss.

In turn, Sister Thaddeus said she is grateful for both Monsignor Weiss and St Rose of Lima School Principal Dr Bardhyl Gjoka for all their support and all they do for the St Rose of Lima community.

Gjoka said Sister Thaddeus is a fine educator and she takes her job seriously in a very pro-

fessional way. She gets to know each child and educates them based on their needs, going "above and beyond" to make sure each child has a proper education and practices the school's values.

"She's truly a role model, demonstrating a love for God and a love for Catholic faith," said Gjoka.

When students of other faiths enroll at St Rose of Lima, Gjoka said he has witnessed Sister Thaddeus reflecting them and their faith in the classroom environment too.

"She makes others feel welcome, regardless of their religious background and incorporates their background into teaching in the classroom," said Gjoka.

Sister Thaddeus, Gjoka observed, helps students beyond her religious classes. She helps students develop skills that prepare them for high school and beyond.

Along with celebrating Sister Thaddeus, Gjoka said the



Sister Thaddeus Rajca, CSFN, with St Rose of Lima School students during the Lenten Mission Drive in the spring of 2022.

Blooms Benefit Dinner will help the school continue to provide quality education at an affordable tuition rate for families. The school depends on fundraisers like this, he shared.

Ana-Cristina Herrick and husband Dr Charles Herrick are co-chairing the Blooms Benefit Dinner. And Ana-Cristina Herrick recently shared that when she and her husband were asked to chair the event and honor Sister Thaddeus for her 61 years of service

to the church along with her "long-standing commitment to Catholic education, we did not hesitate."

As long-time St Rose of Lima School parents, the pair came to know Sister Thaddeus over the years.

"Shortly after meeting her, we became close friends," Ana-Cristina Herrick shared in a recent e-mail. "I enjoyed learning about her religious life, entering the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth as a young

girl, and her long career as an administrator ... But seeing her in action drew me even closer to her. I drove Sister to the Sandy Hook Fire Station the day of the Sandy Hook shooting and witnessed first-hand her ministering to the parents who had lost their children. It was truly awe-inspiring and showed me the power of God's work through her ministry."

Ana-Cristina Herrick added, "The Blooms Benefit is an important event for the school,

because it raises critical funds to assist with the school tuition fund. Saint Rose is unlike other elementary schools because it has a holistic approach to educating a child: the school nurtures the students' spiritual, intellectual, and character development, and stresses acts of service and giving back to their communities."

Education Editor Eliza Hallabek can be reached at eliza@thebee.com.