

NEWPORT

MARCH 2024

Neighbors



ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

**Meet Father
O'Loughlin!**

*2024 Parade
Grand Marshal*

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ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

Meet Father O'Loughlin

BY LUCINDA HAHN / PHOTOS BY SARA COONEY PHOTOGRAPHY
AND FROM FATHER O'LOUGHLIN



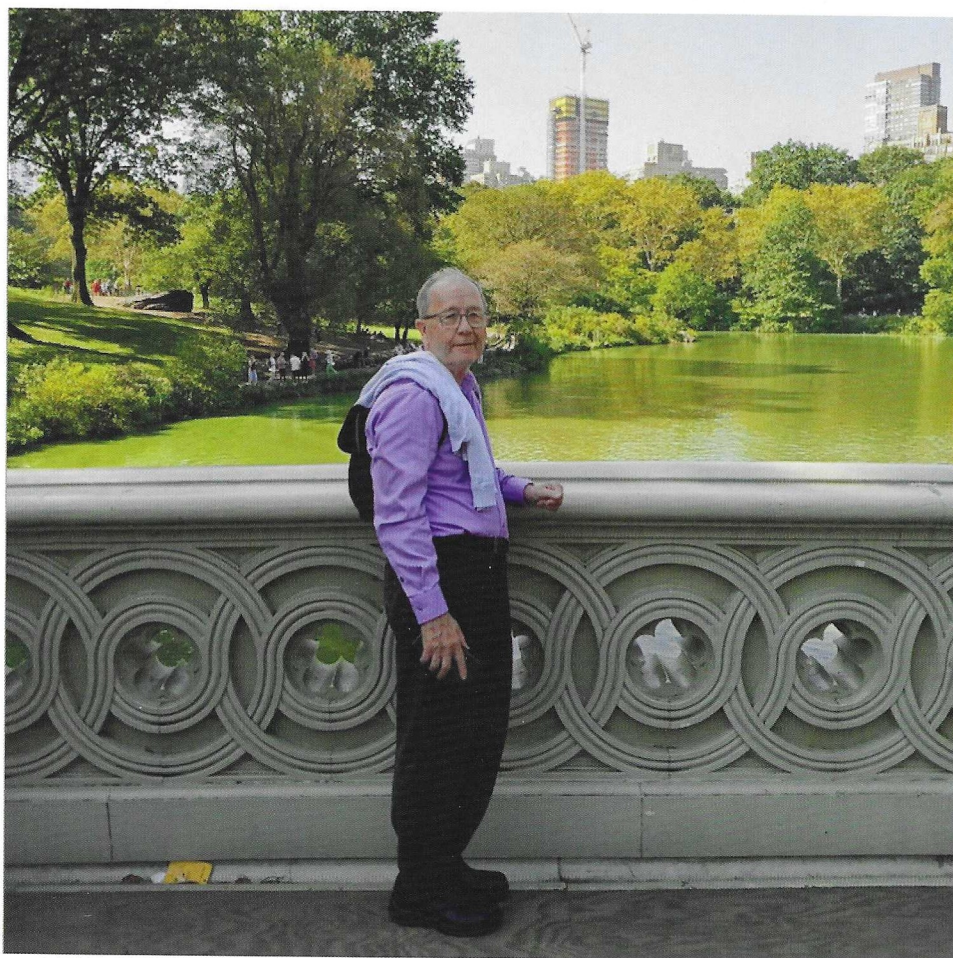
At Newport's Jesus Saviour Roman Catholic Church, where he is Pastor Emeritus

Father Francis "Frank" O'Loughlin comes from good Irish stock: His paternal grandmother, Hannah O'Connor, immigrated from County Kerry when she was just 7 years old. Some of his eight brothers and sisters even have dual Irish-U.S. citizenship (available to Americans with a grandparent born in the old country), and one sister traveled to Ireland a few years back for an extended-family reunion. "I claim my Irish roots," he says proudly.

Fitting, then, that Father O'Loughlin will preside as Grand Marshal of 2024's Newport St. Patrick's Day Parade, on March 16. Spectators will spot him walking in the parade with his sash and blackthorn stick – presented to him by the mayor during a reception at City Hall.

It likely won't be the first time most Newporters have laid eyes on him: Father O'Loughlin has been a fixture in the community for decades.

A Newport native, he was born here before his family moved to Portsmouth when he was 4 years old. There, growing up as the second oldest of his passel of siblings, he loved reading and baseball, playing in the town's Little League. When he aged out of the league at 13, with nowhere left to compete, his dad, Francis O'Loughlin Sr., organized Portsmouth's first Babe Ruth League, which continues to thrive to this day. Asked if he had any prospect of playing in college, Father O'Loughlin admits with a laugh: "I was a better high school wrestler than I was a baseball player." (He maintains a connection with the sport as a passionate, lifelong fan of the Boston Red Sox, and still gets to a couple games each season.)



In New York City, where he enjoys seeing plays

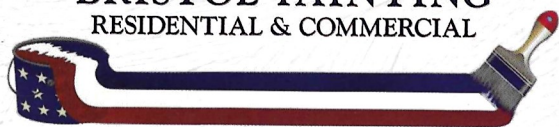
Called to the priesthood instead of the ballpark, he went to Our Lady of Providence Preparatory Seminary School in Providence, then attended Our Lady of Providence College in Warwick, Rhode Island, and St. Bernard Seminary in Rochester, New York.

After appointments at St. Joseph Church in North Scituate, St. Francis de Sales in North Kingstown and St. Ann's in Cranston, he was assigned as pastor of Newport's Church of Jesus Saviour

on April 28, 1998, and as pastor to St. Joseph's Church on July 1, 2018.

A highlight of his career was the three months he spent in Rome in 2000, enjoying a sabbatical. It was a rare opportunity to study and travel in and around the Vatican – and to meet Pope John Paul II. "That was a thrill. We'd go to the papal masses he did in St. Peter's Square. One day, I got a chance to meet him and got a photo with him. The school set it up. You're not supposed to

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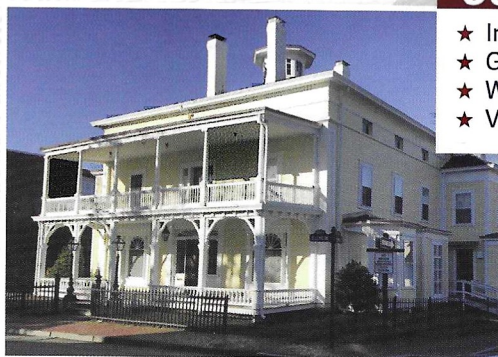


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Cheering on his beloved Red Sox

really talk to him; he just gives you a blessing. A few guys did talk to him - the guys who knew Polish!"

In 2023, he retired after 43 years. "I was ready," he says, "and I'm having a great time."

His retirement looks different than most, though. He's still busy celebrating masses all over the island. And, whenever he's asked, he pops over to see patients at Newport Hospital, where he served as chaplain for more than 25 years. "I thoroughly loved it. One thing about Newport Hospital, it's got it all, mental health, maternity, rehab, surgical - so I really was blessed to have all those different kinds of experiences," he says. "The staff were wonderful, the people were extremely receptive and affirming, and sometimes a patient would say, 'No, Father, I really don't think I need you,' and that's fine, too."



With his godchild Elea at First Communion

During his rare free time, he's making a point to visit with his many siblings, who are nearby on the East Coast and also far away. "I traveled to California to see my brother recently, and I'll see another brother, who lives in Oklahoma, in September," he says. "I've always been connected to my family, but with active ministry, you miss out on a lot of things, so I'm reconnecting." He also continues his strong affiliation with the Hibernians: He's been a member for more than 30 years, and was Hibernian of the Year in 2019.

On March 16th, he'll do his Irish stock proud when he serves as the parade's Grand Marshal. "It's a very humbling thing, for a man who was born here and lived lots of his life on the island," he says. Give Father O'Loughlin a shout-out if you see him walk by - he'll be glad to hear from you!