



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

& NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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May 2017

For God and Country

John Sekletar

Faithful seems like a good word to describe John Sekletar. Originally from Lorain, he has lived in Amherst for the past 43 years, the same amount of time he’s been married to his beautiful wife, Cathy. The couple has two sons, and four grandchildren.

“I hope that people would think that my faith was strong and that helped me prevail in life, and that I was faithful to my family, my wife and God,” John says.

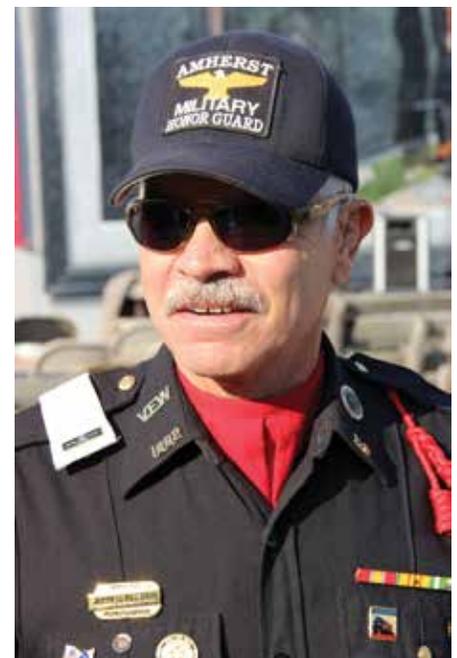
A parishioner at St. Joseph’s for over 40 years, John has always been involved in one way or another, from starting the Men’s Club in the late 80s and serving two terms on the Parish Council, to being involved with Cursillo and the Vincentians.

“My parents are both faith-oriented and I think that’s where I got it from,” John says. “I feel that my faith is very important to me and my family.”

A well-rounded man, he also began adult volleyball at the parish and participates in the annual Lip Sync Fundraiser with St. Joseph’s Players. He currently serves as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and adult altar server, and occasionally takes care of maintenance projects around the parish.

“I’m a diverse guy, I guess that’s why my wife has kept me around this long,” says John, who has had 27 different jobs in his life. “I was always resilient.”

Some of his resilience and dedication stems from his military experience, serving from 1968 to 1972 aboard an aircraft carrier during the Vietnam conflict.



John Sekletar is a dedicated veteran who is passionate about serving his parish and community.

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The Mission of St. Joseph Parish School is to form the entire child in the Catholic tradition:

Spiritually, Intellectually,
Physically, & Socially

St. Joseph Parish School

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*St. Joseph, Pray
for us!*

St. Joseph Parish School: By the Numbers

FORMING CHILDREN TO BE LEADERS FOR THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH

- 1** One Mission: To Know, To Love, and To Serve Christ
- 92** Years of Educating Students for Success in Life
- 20** Average Class Size
- 100%** of Teachers Are State Certified in Their Content Area
- 5** Days of Daily Prayer
- 1** Top Rated Security System in Lorain County
- 7000** The Number of Books in Our Library
- 3.4** GPA Average for 6th, 7th, and 8th Graders
- 180** Hours of Religious Formation Per Year
- 9** Years of Foreign Language
- 3** Sacraments of Initiation Offered
- 50%** of 2016 8th Graders Received Presidential Award for Excellence
- 100%** of 5th and 8th Graders Pass the ACRE Test
- 15** Number of Co-Curriculars
- 3** Days of After School Homework Lab
- 11** Team Members on the #1 Academic Team in the Diocese of Cleveland (2016)

A Letter from Our Pastor

Reflections on the Rosary During the Month of Mary

Dear Members of Saint Joseph and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parishes,

This month of May is dedicated to our Blessed Mother. And one of the ways that we honor her is through the Rosary.

The daily Rosary has been in my life since I was a child. It was a part of our family prayer life when I was growing up and has remained with me all of these years since.

Matthew Kelly writes about the Rosary in his book *Rediscover Catholicism*, and I found his words very helpful in my own praying of the Rosary. Matthew tells us:



There are many different practical approaches to the rosary. The first, of course, is to focus on the words. The words of the rosary are deeply rooted in the Scriptures and Christian tradition.

The Our Father was, of course, given to us by Jesus Himself (Matthew 6: 9-13). The Creed represents the first expression of Christian conviction. The first part of the Hail Mary comes from the message delivered by the angel to Mary in Nazareth: "Hail, full of grace. The Lord is with thee" (Luke 1:28). This greeting is then followed by the words Elizabeth used to greet Mary during the Visitation: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Luke 1:42). The Glory Be is the simplest expression of Christian belief in the triune God. And from the times of antiquity, Christians have placed themselves under the name of God and the sign of redemption, thus giving us the Sign of the Cross.

The words of the rosary are powerful and filled with meaning, but so are the mysteries that we use as a backdrop to each decade.

One thing is certain: your mind cannot do two things at once. This is where many people become discouraged with praying the rosary. They try to pray the words and meditate on the mystery at the same time. Impossible! We must decide between the two, choosing one or the other.

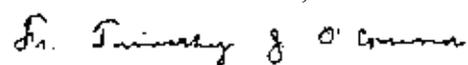
On those occasions when you choose to meditate on the mysteries [that is, the Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and Luminous Mysteries of the rosary], allow the words to float by. Get lost in the scene. Imagine yourself there.

When you choose to focus on the words, it may help to mediate on the mystery for three or four minutes before each decade.

*I also find it very fruitful to unite an intention with each decade. Offering each decade for a person or a situation helps me to stay focused, and avails me the opportunity to pray for many people in my life (Matthew Kelly, *Rediscover Catholicism*, pages 268-269).*

I hope that Matthew Kelly's ideas might be helpful to you as you pray the Rosary, especially during this month dedicated to Mary. And please remember me as you do, and I will remember you.

In Christ and His Mother,



Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor, Pastor



A Lifelong Stewardship Example in Our Community

Fritz Knoble, Chair of Nativity Parish Finance Council

Our Nativity parish community of faith is blessed with some wonderful stewards, and in particular parishioners who provide us with a model of stewardship. Included in that group is Fritz Knoble. Anyone who has ever had contact with Fritz can learn what it means to be a good steward just by watching his example.

Fritz points out that he had good stewardship mentors, as well.

“I learned about stewardship as a little boy,” he says. “I did not know what it was called then, but I saw it lived out by my parents. My dad was a doer, and he seemed to be at the parish to do whatever needed to be done. The way he reached out to others is firmly planted in my memory and in my heart. My mother was a good steward in another way – she was the one who ran the family, the disciplinarian and the one who made sure we were living life the way we should.”

Fritz understands the Church and the parish for a good reason. He has



We thank Fritz Knoble for a lifetime of giving and stewardship in relation to the Church and our parishes.

been active in a huge variety of ways for his entire life. In June, Fritz will celebrate his 89th birthday – yet, his dedication and commitment to his faith and his parish has never waned.

“I began as an altar boy, but because my dad was at the church so much, I got involved in lots of other things,” Fritz says. “One of the things I am proud of is that I have served every pastor I have ever had. That is what I learned, but that is

also the way I have learned to live happily. I was baptized at St. Joseph, but then Nativity was started, and that is where I belonged as a boy. How involved was I? I think after Vatican II, I was the first to be commissioned as a lector and an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.”

As Fritz puts it, he could “write a whole book about the church and the churches in this area.”

“I have been a part of almost every ministry at some point in time,” he says. “I taught catechism for many years. I was a money counter. I have a love of the Church.

My faith is important and it runs deep. I was blessed with a wonderful wife, Arlene, and we were married for 58 years. I was further blessed with two beautiful and wonderful daughters. There is so much I remember. I mentioned my dad – he was a childhood friend of the first pastor at Nativity, Fr. Steiger, and that may have had something to do with why he was so dedicated. Fr. Steiger used to call me his little ‘ragamuffin.’”

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“I learned about stewardship as a little boy. I did not know what it was called then, but I saw it lived out by my parents. My dad was a doer, and he seemed to be at the parish to do whatever needed to be done. The way he reached out to others is firmly planted in my memory and in my heart. My mother was a good steward in another way – she was the one who ran the family, the disciplinarian and the one who made sure we were living life the way we should.” – Fritz Knoble

A Lifelong Stewardship Example *continued from page 4*

Fritz Knoble represents the kind of person we all need to try to emulate. To list his contributions to our Catholic community in terms of time, talent, and treasure truly would require a book. At the time Nativity was built, he was the chair of the Pastoral Council. At both the 50-year and 75-year celebrations marking the anniversary of the parish founding, he served as the Master of Ceremonies.

Former President Calvin Coolidge once said, “No person was ever honored for what he or she received. Honor is awarded for what they gave.” He may have been thinking of people like Fritz. We honor and admire Fritz Knoble. We thank him for a lifetime of giving and stewardship in relation to the Church and our parishes. Thank you, Fritz. God bless you.

For God and Country *continued from front cover*

“In Navy terms, ‘Don’t give up the ship’ – you’ve always got to keep trying, don’t give up,” John says. “If you just keep the faith and don’t let it bring you down, you’ll be okay.”

But a sense of commitment isn’t the only thing that John held onto from his time in the Navy. It also gave him a passion for supporting veterans and helping educate people about our country’s history. Since retirement, John has become very involved in veterans’ organizations, including the Amherst Veterans Military Honor Guard. John also works with his son, Mike, an artist, to promote the Veterans Mural Project, which was created to honor all those who have served, are serving, and will serve our country as part of the military. Three 20-foot murals adorn the sides of 248 Park Avenue in tribute to the sacrifice made by so many.

“Our goal, when we started this, was to promote history and the arts,” John says. “There’s a lot more to freedom than what you see. Freedom was maintained by people who fought and gave their lives for it. You can’t forget your history.”

John and his son are currently working on a fourth mural to add to the building, as well as a new mural project at the Valor Home, a temporary housing shelter for homeless veterans in Lorain. They’re grateful for the support of the parish, both in honoring and praying for veterans and those currently serving, as well as the enthusiasm about the Veterans Mural project.

John encourages others to find ways to become involved, serving their parish and community.

“Things are available, you just have to look for them,” he says. “I never thought I’d do a lot of things I’ve done in my life, but you’ve got to take the leap and see what happens.”

Thank you, John, for your service to our country and our parish!



John has worked with his son, Mike, an artist to promote history and the arts through the Veterans Murals in Amherst.

If you would like to learn more about the Veterans Mural, please visit: www.facebook.com/Veterans.Mural/. The mural building is located at 248 Park Ave., at Park Ave. and Church Street.

Confirmation Brings Youth into the Life of the Church

Feb. 19 made for a cold winter's morning, as our parish community joined in an important, yet joyful celebration.

"We had about 35 students confirmed this year – mostly eighth-graders, but also a few ninth and tenth-graders," says Director of Religious Education Carol Wallington. "It was a cold Sunday, but a beautiful day. The bishop was very excited to see the kids, and Father got a wonderful note from him saying how well prepared they were. I give so much credit to my Confirmation Team for getting the kids ready for the day!"

Through Confirmation, our St. Joseph and Nativity youth completed their Sacraments of Initiation and have been welcomed fully into the life of the Church. In their preparation for this sacrament, the youth were able to discern what their faith means to them, and how they will live out that faith going forward. Having been sealed with the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, they have also been empowered to live the Gifts of the Spirit in their everyday lives.

"I think I felt closer to the Church after the Confirmation Mass," says Alec O'Quinn, who was confirmed that day. "At first, I thought that this was the end of my Catholic education, but now I know that this is just the beginning. Now that I can participate more as a full member of the Church,



I can continue to work on learning more about God."

Confirmation catechesis begins in seventh grade, running for two years until the students receive the sacrament in eighth grade. PSR students from St. Joseph and Nativity take classes together, and parish school students have their Confirmation classes during religion class. The Confirmation Team leads these programs – it consists of one seventh-grade day school teacher, one eighth-grade day school teacher, two seventh-grade PSR teachers, and one eighth-grade PSR teacher.

Starting this past year, St. Joseph has switched to the *Chosen* Confirmation program from Ascension Press.

"Each student got their own book, a copy of the youth *Catechism*, and the youth Bible from St. Mary's Press," Carol says. "The wonderful thing about *Chosen* is that they also give you a parent guide and a sponsor guide. It walks you through the lesson that each Confirmation candidate is doing, and lets you know how the candidate is doing throughout the program. This way, mom and dad and the sponsor know what's going on, and they can walk with the candidate through the sacrament.

"The kids really liked it this past year," she adds. "They thought the program's videos were good and relatable, and

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Confirmation *continued from page 6*

that the issues presented were issues that they actually deal with. There were people giving advice on how to deal with situations that they actually face.”

The Confirmation Team also educates students about the different ways in which they can get involved in parish life after Confirmation. As part of their preparation, students share their time and talent with the parish through various service experiences.

“Between seventh and eighth grade, we want the students to have done five service experiences,” Carol says. “We pulled together a youth volunteer experience application, that has them list out their strengths, and then suggests different ways they could get involved, either at St. Joseph or at Nativity. They checked off which ones they’d be interested in, and I compiled a list of names and gave them to the different ministry leaders so that whenever they needed help, they could reach out to them. I also put together a sheet with three questions to help them reflect after their service experiences. There were some very touching ones! I think they enjoyed the experience overall.”

“I was a volunteer at the Food Bank in Lorain,” Alec says. “I never realized that so many people needed food, which was sad to know. After helping out and seeing how much food comes in, I felt good because it was nice to be a part of helping those families out.”

Through these experiences, the youth are able to discern the best ways in which they can serve their community – staying involved in the life of the Church even after their Religious Education classes are over.

“It’s a great way for them to see how they can be a part of the Church going forward,” Carol says. “It’s a chance for them to get their faces out there, get to know other parishioners, learn what community is, and what it means to be stewards. These experiences are ways for them to get interested, and hopefully keep coming back. Youth ministry is a great way for them to stay involved, too. We just want them to feel like they are part of the parish.”

“It was really great to see some of them change as they went through the program,” she adds. “We have an interview process that happens in the two weeks before Confirmation, and I had the privilege of doing a lot of their interviews this year. They really blew me away with their responses, and I walked out of a lot of the interviews with tears in my eyes. It was an awesome experience.”

If you would like more information about Confirmation preparation, or if you’d like to help out by volunteering, please contact Carol Wallington at 440-988-2848.



Parish History on Solid Foundation

The foundation of our parish was built on sandstone. And our parish team member George Roling has a notebook so full of our church history that it, too, could serve as a foundation block.

George has compiled a collection of newspaper clippings, letters, photographs, and notes on the building of our present church – and this collection now is in a notebook four inches thick.

“I’ve always been interested in history,” George says. “When we were celebrating our 125th anniversary of the parish, Father asked me about it, asked me to gather as much as I can. I spent many hours in libraries and the archives at the diocese. I just went all over the place looking for stuff.”

Of particular interest are the crucifix, and statues of Mary, Joseph and the Sacred Heart that have been recently reinstalled and were in place in time for Ash Wednesday.

“I have newspaper clippings from 1920 that showed the statues in the church,” George says. “I’m 85, and they were in the old church as long as I know.”

George speculates, but says he cannot prove, that the statues may have been part of the original church that was dedicated in 1868, following the reasoning that church altars and church interiors were more ornate.

Our St. Joseph Parish has its history grounded in the work in the sandstone quarry industry, as well as the lives of the immigrants who came here for work.

According to a parish history, Fr. Louis Molon began ministering to the German immigrants who were working in the quarries. As the industry grew, so did the number of new arrivals, and soon they began working to build their own church.

The first church was made possible on Aug. 28, 1867, when the Diocese of Cleveland’s first bishop, Louis Amadeus Rappe, gave his initial approval for the construction of the church. Joseph and Susan Trost sold a lot to the parish – Joseph Trost, an official in the quarries, donated the sandstone for the church foundation.

George notes the appropriate coincidence in the parish being named for St. Joseph the Worker, and the name of



the man providing the land and actual church foundation was Joseph.

“That was one of the really exciting things I found,” he says.

Bells also were purchased for the original church and hung in the bell tower over the entrance.

“The priest wanted the bells for the 400th anniversary of Columbus discovering America,” George says. “We now have a free-standing bell tower built in 1995, and two bells have the date 1892 on them.”

Catholic education began in our parish in 1924, when St. Joseph’s School was opened on Park Avenue, with 70 students enrolled. According to the history, our school is credited with organizing the first Catholic Parent Teacher Association in the Cleveland Diocese. However, parish growth compelled the construction of a new school, and eventually, a new church.

The new school was opened Oct. 30, 1956, with 300 students, and the last Mass was said at the original church on Tenney Avenue on March 3, 1957. Parishioners moved the altars, statues and pews into the school’s new auditorium, where Mass was first celebrated on Ash Wednesday – a date George sees reflected in the relocation of the crucifix, and statues to our church this past Ash Wednesday.

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Parish History *continued from page 8*

Our present church was dedicated on March 19, 1971, on the Feast of St. Joseph. Sandstone was used for the exterior foundation stone, the altar, the baptismal font, and the pulpit, in a tribute to our area's sandstone quarries and their place in our history. The carved wooden frames from the confessional and two stained glass windows from our first church are now housed in the social hall lobby.



George Roling says that he gets calls from time to time from those who are seeking historic information about our parish. Anyone wanting to consult with him about information in his collection may call the church office at 440-988-2848.

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This newsletter brought to you by the Catholic Communities of:

& ST. JOSEPH PARISH & NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

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AMHERST OH

200 Saint Joseph Drive, Amherst, OH 44001

Address Service Requested

Fr. Tim O'Connor Serving Both Parishes

Mass:

Monday, 9:00 a.m. - *St. Joseph*
Tuesday, 8:00 a.m. - *Nativity of the BVM*
Thursday, 7:00 p.m. - *St. Joseph*
Friday, 9:00 a.m. - *St. Joseph*
Saturday, 4:00 p.m. - *St. Joseph*
5:30 p.m. - *Nativity of the BVM*
Sunday, 8:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m. - *St. Joseph*

Confession at St. Joseph:

Thursday - Individual Reconciliation 7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Saturday - Individual Reconciliation 11:00 a.m. - noon

Eucharistic Adoration (Chapel) at Nativity of the BVM:

Monday-Friday 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

ST. JOSEPH & NATIVITY of the BVM PARISHES Upcoming Activities and Events

Month of May 2017

ST. JOSEPH PARISH, AMHERST

Coffee and Donuts at St. Joseph Parish

Sunday, May 7 following the 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Masses

Blood Drive

Sunday, May 7 from 8:00 a.m. to Noon at the Social Hall

St. Joseph School Living Rosary

Friday, May 12 following the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

St. Joseph and Nativity B.V.M. Stewardship Leadership Retreat

Saturday, May 13 at 8:30 a.m., in Nativity B.V.M. Parish Hall

St. Joseph School Drama Club Show

Friday, May 19 at 7:00 p.m. in St. Joseph Parish Social Hall

Baccalaureate Mass for all Graduation Seniors

Sunday, May 21 at St. Joseph Parish 5:00 p.m. Mass

St. Joseph School Spring Concert

Tuesday, May 23 at 7:00 p.m. in Church

St. Joseph School Kindergarten Promotion

Wednesday, May 31 at 1:00 p.m. in St. Joseph Parish Social Hall

St. Joseph School 8th Grade Graduation

Thursday, June 1 at 7:00 p.m. in Church

Month of May 2017

NATIVITY B.V.M. PARISH, SOUTH AMHERST

Coffee and Donuts at Nativity B.V.M. Parish

Tuesday, May 2 following the 8:00 a.m. Mass in the Parish Hall

Nativity B.V.M. Altar Rosary Meeting

Tuesday, May 2 at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall

Nativity B.V.M. Bus Trip

Tuesday, May 9 to Jack's Casino, in Cleveland, or visit Tower City, the Old Stone Church, the Soldier and Sailors Museum, or Public Square, check the bulletin for details.

St. Joseph and Nativity B.V.M. Stewardship Leadership Retreat

Saturday, May 13 at 8:30 a.m., in Nativity B.V.M. Parish Hall

Nativity B.V.M. Altar and Rosary Society Mother's Day Bake Sale

Saturday, May 13 following the 5:30 p.m. Mass in the Parish Hall

Nativity B.V.M. Rosary and Benediction

Wednesday, May 24 starting at 7:00 p.m. sponsored by Altar Rosary Society, followed by refreshments in the Parish Hall

