



PARISH
NEWSLETTER

ST. JOSEPH PARISH

February 2016

Amherst, Ohio

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Allowing Our Words to Make A Difference

We are all familiar with the phrase “actions speak louder than words.” However, on our Christian journey, being a good steward means utilizing both words and actions. Our actions are most certainly important, but our words are equally significant, often leaving a lasting effect on a person’s experiences.

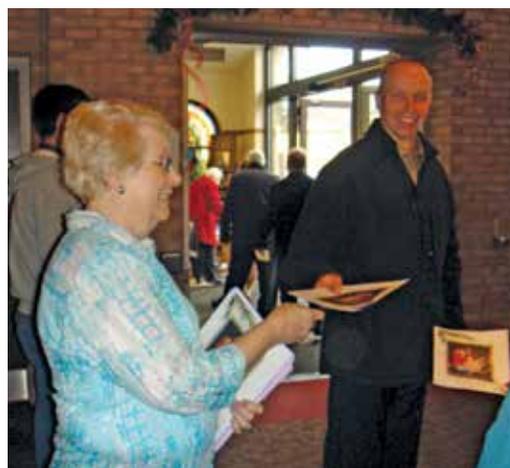
“Words matter,” says Jeff Mount, Usher Coordinator. “Being able to greet someone with a smiling face and some kind words is something that can have a lasting impact.”

As Jeff reminds us, words have the power to make a difference and create bonds between people. When it comes to stewardship, it’s easy to feel like you only have a certain talent or skill to offer. But hospitality is often an easily overlooked – but no less important – aspect of stewardship.



“You never know when someone will need that little lift or pick-me-up,” Jeff says. “It’s kind of like the whole ‘pay it forward’ notion. If you feel like you’ve been blessed and you share that with others, others try to find ways to give back.”

While some of the ushers’ tasks are generally “behind the scenes,” they do interact with parishioners at a very important moment — either when they arrive at or leave our house of worship. By sharing themselves through a smile, kind word, or small action, our ushers foster an environment that is directed towards hospitality and fellowship.



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A Letter from Our Pastor

Lent and the Blessings of God's Merciful Love

Dear Members of our St. Joseph Parish Family,

"When the kindness and generous love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of any righteous deeds we have done, but because of His mercy" (Titus 3:4-5).

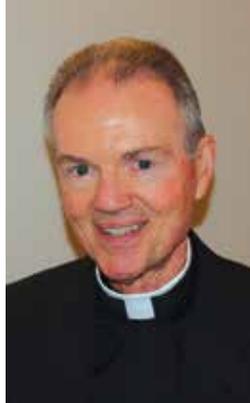
We are now in the "Year of Mercy" as proclaimed by Pope Francis. It began on Dec. 8, 2015, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And it concludes on Nov. 20, 2016, the Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. During the entire Lent and Easter seasons, we will be celebrating God's merciful love for us.

Easter Sunday is on March 27 this year. And so, the season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 10. So, I thought I would offer some ideas for you to consider, hoping that this season of Lent will be a special time of God's grace and mercy for you and for all of our parish family.

In the Gospel for Ash Wednesday (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18), Jesus recommends three ways to spend this holy season: in prayer, fasting and almsgiving. I would encourage you, in the penances that you commit yourself to perform, to choose something in each category.

In the realm of prayer, maybe you would like to take on some prayer in addition to your regular ones, or maybe you would like to concentrate a bit more on the prayers that you already offer each day. Participate in weekday Mass as often as you can, in addition to Sunday Mass. I also highly recommend spending some time each week in prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament here in church. Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in South Amherst has Eucharistic Adoration each week from Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. until 10 p.m. in the Eucharistic Chapel of the church. It is a great way and a great place to spend some time in personal prayer with Our Lord.

I recommend that everyone, from grade two on up, celebrate the Sacrament of Penance, the great Sacrament of God's Mercy, during Lent. It is a powerful means to personal



conversion and, while always "in season," is especially appropriate during Lent.

Confessions are heard each week here at St. Joseph on Thursday evenings after the 7 p.m. Mass until 8:30 p.m., and on Saturday mornings from 11 a.m. until noon.

On Wednesday evening, Feb. 24, from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m., we will be having our annual Diocesan Night of Confession. All of the priests in all of the parishes in our diocese will be in their confessionals and reconciliation rooms that evening, ready and eager to celebrate this great Sacrament of the

Lord's Mercy with you.

Our Lenten Parish Mission for St. Joseph and Nativity Parishes will take place here at St. Joseph from March 13-15. It is entitled **Pray40Days** and will be led by Fr. Michael Denk. Please be sure to save the dates. This Parish Mission will conclude with a Communal Penance Service here on Tuesday, March 15, at 8 p.m. with a number of priests present to hear confessions and offer individual sacramental absolution.

In the area of fasting, you might fast from sin, from food or drink or entertainment. Of course, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are both days of abstinence from meat and days of fast (that is, limited to a single full meal with two smaller meals, and without eating between meals except for liquids). And all of the Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence from meat. The law of abstinence from meat obliges Catholics who are age 14 and older. The law of fasting obliges Catholics from ages 18-59.

And in terms of almsgiving, I encourage you to remember the poor with your generosity, prayers and good works. Donations to our St. Joseph Parish Vincentians – by use of the monthly envelope in your Sunday Offertory packet – are a great way to assist people in our area who are in need. Helping the poor helps them, and helps us to appreciate just how blessed we are and how many blessings we have to share.

Let us keep our RCIA candidates in our prayers as they use these days of Lent as an extended retreat opportunity in

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Lent and the Blessings of God's Merciful Love

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preparation for their Baptisms or professions of faith and Confirmations and First Holy Communions on Holy Saturday night during the Easter Vigil Liturgy. Let us also keep one another in our prayers as we prepare to renew our own baptismal promises during the Easter liturgies.

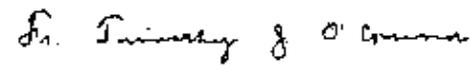
During this Lent, I pray that you are touched by God's mercy in some very personal ways. And may we, through His Spirit, reach out with merciful compassion to those in need of our love.

Thank you so very much for all that you do to make Jesus Christ known and loved here at St. Joseph Parish and in our

community. May you have the best Lent ever, filled with the blessings of God's merciful love.

With my prayers for you and for your special intentions, I am, as always,

Gratefully yours in Christ,



Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor

Upcoming Events

Daily Mass

9 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday
7 p.m. on Thursday

Sacrament of Penance

Thursdays following 7 p.m. Mass, and Saturdays
11 a.m. to noon

Wednesday, Feb. 24, from 5-8 p.m. in church

Communal Penance Service: March 15 at 8 p.m.
following the Parish Mission

Eucharistic Adoration – Lenten Wednesdays

Following the 9 a.m. Mass until closing prayers and
Benediction at 7 p.m.

Stations of the Cross

Fridays at 1 p.m. when school is in session in the
church, and evenings at 7 p.m. in the chapel.

Parish Lenten Activity – “Living the Eucharist”

Participate in small group sessions or do readings as
an individual or family.

Lenten Soup Suppers – Thursday evenings throughout Lent

First Soup Supper – Feb. 18, at 6 p.m.
(St. Joseph Social Hall)

Second Soup Supper – March 3, at 6 p.m.
(Nativity BVM, South Amherst)

Third Soup Supper – March 17, at 6 p.m.
(St. Joseph Social Hall)

Lenten Fish Fries – Fridays in Lent, 5-7 p.m.

Fish, shrimp, and combos of both offered. Pizza for
children. Served by various ministries within the parish.
Proceeds help with ministry programs.

Contact – Donna Spanski; cell, 440-670-5939;
work, 440-988-4244 (St. Joseph School). Help needed.

Mary's Way of the Cross – Friday, Feb. 26, and Friday, March 25

The Stations of the Cross, as seen through Mary's eyes.
Fifteen parishioners (women) present a small program
with meditations on each of the fourteen stations.

Contact – Sue Cotton, 440-984-2018

St. Joseph Players – “Amherst Got Talent??”

Dress Rehearsal follows the Fish Fry on Friday, Feb. 26.
Variety show on Saturday, Feb. 27.

Doors open at 6 p.m., show starts at 7:30 p.m.

Women's Tea – Sunday, March 6, at 1:30 p.m.

A gathering of women for “high tea” – a program is
offered. Contact – Sue Cotton, 440-984-2018.

Parish Mission – March 13, 14 and 15: Pray40Days

Presented by Fr. Michael Denk, begins each night at
7 p.m. at St. Joseph Church.

Palm Weaving – Thursday, March 17

7:30 p.m. in the parish social hall.

Men's Renewal – April 2-3

Contact – Kris Bussard, 440-984-5135. Help needed.

Group Drawing Parish Youth Closer to Christ

Sometimes, drawing closer to Jesus Christ can mean waging a spiritual battle. Sometimes, it can also mean waging an actual battle – a Nerf Gun battle, that is.

For the young people of our parish, Nerf Gun Nights are just one of the many fun events and activities that Youth Ministry offers. Nights like these are a reminder that Jesus really meant it when He said He came that we might have life “and have it to the full.” Marion L. Steele High School Students Bridgette Wadge, a 17-year-old junior, and Nathan Frankart, also a 17-year-old junior, explained how St. Joseph’s unique Confirmation and Youth Ministry programs have kept them and their friends coming back for more.

“I’ve been involved with the youth group ever since it started back in the fall of 2014, when John Kowalski took over the Confirmation program,” Bridgette says. “It seemed like a fun way to apply what we learned during Confirmation class and meet other kids from our parish. Nerf Gun Night, which is a capture the flag-style game night, comes to mind when I think of fun things our group has done. I think it’s fun because it is very active and draws a large variety of people.”

Nathan says he enjoys everything youth group, or IMMERSION does, especially the high-energy events, and knew that once he got involved, it was something he wanted to keep attending and maybe even help lead.

“The more and more I participate in the youth Masses, or spreading the Good News, it lets me know that I am a part



A junior at Marion L. Steele High School, parishioner Nathan Frankart says his involvement with Youth Ministry has taught him how “we all have a responsibility to live as Christ lived as an example for others”.



A junior at Marion L. Steele High School, Bridgette Wadge says the events offered by IMMERSION Youth Ministry have helped her find ways to live her faith among her peers.

of something bigger,” he says. “I feel like this is exactly what Jesus would be doing to reach out to other kids my age. We all have a responsibility to live as Christ lived as an example for others, and for me, this is one of the essential ways I do that. Nothing is more fulfilling to me than participating in the youth group.”

With Masses, opportunities for community service, and a separate group aimed at seventh and eighth-graders called Alpha, both Bridgette and Nathan say they want to encourage other kids their age to take advantage of what St. Joseph offers.

“Overall, IMMERSION has given me the confidence to be more open about my faith in daily life and stand by my beliefs,” Bridgette says. “If anyone is interested in the youth group, my first piece of advice would be to jump right in. They can come to one of our larger events to meet everyone or a small meeting if that is more comfortable. Even though our group is based on religion, that is not the only thing we talk about. There are a lot of fun personalities involved, and we are always welcoming new members.”

“Our church’s youth group is one of the safest, friendliest and happiest groups I have ever been a part of,” Nathan agrees. “There is no judgment, or expectations or awkward conversations. We all have fun together because we are all connected with our belief in God. I believe that is something truly special, and I would love to share it with more teenagers at St. Joseph.”

Got questions about IMMERSION, Alpha or Confirmation? If so, please contact John Kowalski in the parish office at 440-988-2848 x 204 or qualski6@hotmail.com.



Pray40Days:

Our St. Joseph Mission

March 13, 14, and 15

Isn't it wonderful how, when something goes well – like visiting a new vacation spot, or sharing in a new celebration like a festival – there is little question that it will be made to happen again? Well, the same can certainly be said about our upcoming Parish Mission!

Our Parish Mission in 2015 was conducted and facilitated by Fr. Michael J. Denk, our Parochial Vicar. It was so well received that Fr. Michael will once again be facilitating our mission in 2016. With the title of “Pray40Days,” it will take place on the evenings of March 13, 14 and 15, from 7 to 8 p.m.

Father is excited about this year's Parish Mission for a number of reasons.

“As I considered how to approach this year's mission, I, of course, prayed about it – and in prayer I think I realized how very blessed I am as a priest to have a regular and active prayer life,” he says. “I began to think how important prayer should be to all of us. Then I had an experience which brought this fact home to me.”

Father also shares a story, an occurrence that served to convince him that this year's mission should focus on prayer.

“I found myself with three professional men, all very Catholic, and we were discussing our faith,” Father says. “As a priest and a great proponent of prayer, I asked them about their prayer lives. The first told me, ‘I think I pray quite a bit, but it is really when time allows. I may pray, have a conversation with God, as I am driving to work, for example.’ The second man said, ‘There is a lot in my life I am thankful for. When I think of it, I say some prayers of gratitude to God because I am so grateful.’ The third told me with a very self-satisfied demeanor, ‘My prayer is very organized, Father. Each night before I go to bed, I pray a Hail Mary, an Our Father, and the Glory Be. I have done that for years.’

“As commendable as all of those prayers are, in some ways they fall short of what prayer can and should be – something which leads us to a deeper relationship with God,” Father continues. “I asked the men if I could lead them through a prayer exercise, which I did. It was, in effect, the Pray40Days effort I plan to present at our mission. At

the end of the process, they were amazed at what happened to their spiritual lives, and especially to their prayer lives.”

According to Fr. Michael, he will actually institute the mission on Ash Wednesday, but, of course, it is the three days in March that will be most crucial.

“The greatest disease we face in our society is a spiritual one,” he says. “It is a poverty greater than any other because it impacts the way we relate to God whose first and greatest commandment is, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength’ (Mark 12:30). I am going to lay out a plan for people as Lent begins. Then on the weekend of March 12-13, I will speak at all Masses to advance that. It will culminate with the three evening sessions on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday.”

As Father points out, the mission essentially will feature a three-step process.

“On the first night, we are going to examine where our prayer lives are,” he says. “Most things you have learned about prayers are not wrong. However, do you grow through your prayer life? Our approaches and results from prayer should cause us to develop faith on new levels. We may be spiritually out of shape. We all share a hunger for God and we need to address that.”

The second night, according to Father, will address the need to develop a special place for prayer. It does need to be organized, but it also needs to have the proper atmosphere for it to be most effective. Finally, the third night will speak to how to make our prayer place sacred, and the rituals we might establish to bring this to pass.

By the end of the mission, Fr. Michael feels each person should be prepared to have a deeper prayer relationship, a deeper personal relationship with the Lord.

“This is intended for everyone from grade school-age up,” he says. “I want people to come out of this experience on fire. I want God to become more real to them. I want them to receive all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I ask that people be open and to be aware of announcements and more relating to this mission.”

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Fr. Timothy O'Connor, Pastor
Father Michael Denk, Parochial Vicar

Address Service Requested

Liturgy Schedule

Mass:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday - 9:00 a.m.
Tuesday - 8:00 a.m. at Nativity of the BVM Parish
Thursday - 7:00 p.m.
Saturday - Vigil 4:00 p.m.
Sunday - 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m.

Confession:

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

Allowing Our Words to Make A Difference

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“I think it’s the whole notion of stewardship,” Jeff says. “It’s giving of yourself. You talk to people and you find out what they’re going through, and sometimes you can offer words of encouragement or you see them outside of Mass and then there is a bond, because of some kind words.”

Ideally, there are six ushers per Mass who greet parishioners, assist people in finding seats, make sure

the church is unlocked and locked at the appropriate times, and assist with the collection. While most of these tasks are straightforward, offering hospitality and kind words while performing these actions makes a difference in the lives of both parishioners and guests alike. These actions also allow for a more seamless liturgy with the least amount of interruptions possible.



If you are interested in learning more about our ushers, or would like to serve in this capacity, please contact Jeff Mount by phone at 440-984-4223 or by email at jjmount182@gmail.com.