



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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Meet Sharon Del Valle

Longtime St. Joseph's Parishioner Lives Out Her Faith With a Heart to Serve

Serving in a ministry doesn't have to be complicated or time-consuming. We each have a place to serve, whether in the choir, the Parish School of Religion, or as a gardener. Sharon Del Valle is thankful to serve with two ministries that she enjoys, and that also speak particularly to her gifts.

For most of her 25-plus years as a St. Joseph's parishioner, Sharon has served as a lector. She was serving as a lector before she and her family moved to Amherst from Lakewood in 1995.

"I always loved reading to my kids, and lectoring came easy for me," Sharon says. "I enjoy this, and it's not time-consuming."

Sharon is also a co-leader for the prayer line. Every other week, her task is to check the prayer line phone line daily and email out any prayer requests that have been submitted.

"I wanted to get more involved in church, and this was something I knew I could help with," Sharon says. "Anyone can pray. This is a great way to help others."

In addition, Sharon spends a lot of her day in prayer and has a devotion to the *continued on page 7*



Whether you are young or old, Sharon Del Valle would encourage you to find your niche. Consider how you might use your talents to get involved at our parishes.



Celebrating the **EASTER SEASON**

Easter Sunday fell on the final day of March in 2024, but even when the glorious day comes to a close and the calendar turns to April, remember that Easter is far from over — the celebration of the greatest feast day of the Church year continues for the next 50 days.

On Easter Sunday, we celebrate Christ rising from the dead, following His gruesome passion and death. On that glorious Sunday – three days after He died – Christ fulfilled His promise, “Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days” (Jn. 2:19) and the promises of the Old Covenant, “I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. They will strike at your head while you strike at their heel” (Gen. 3:15).

Through His resurrection, Jesus broke the chains of sin and death, opening for us the way to eternal life. Yet, His mission was not yet over. He was back with His disciples, showing them that what had been promised to their fathers had been fulfilled.

“Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” (Lk. 24:46-48).

Yet, again, there is still more.

After all, Jesus is not still walking the earth, showing us Himself, is He?

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus Ascended to His Father’s right hand. That day falls on May 9 this year, but the Feast of the Ascension is a moveable feast and will be celebrated this year on May 12. And 50 days after Easter, the Father sent His Spirit, just as Christ promised He would.

And with that (the feast we now celebrate as Pentecost, which falls on May 19 this year), Christ’s salvific mission was accomplished, and it is with the celebration of that great feast that we conclude the Easter season — a season of joyful recognition of the salvation Christ won for us.

Having been beaten and killed for our sins, Christ rose from the dead breaking the bonds of sin. Then, after He ascended to His rightful place in heavenly glory, the Lord sent the Spirit, and now, armed with the power of the Spirit, the Church serves as the sacrament of salvation on Earth — offering us sanctifying grace (a share in the life of Christ Himself) through the sacraments.

As you can see, the Easter season offers us a time to commemorate some of the most important events in the history of salvation. In fact, it can rightly be called the most important season of the Church year, for it is now — during these 50 days — that we celebrate the fruits of Christ’s sacrifice.

Today, though Christ has won the victory over sin, we are all still living in a tainted world. We still feel the effects of sin because we do not yet fully partake of the fruits of Christ’s victory. That we will only know when (and if) we, by the grace of God, enter eternal glory in the heavenly kingdom.

Let us all take the time this Easter season to thank God for the gift of salvation. Spend time reflecting on how much we have opened our hearts to the grace He pours upon us. May we all be more aware of the glory Christ has won for us, and, in so doing, willingly detach ourselves from the fruits of this world so that we may be more receptive to the fruits of His grace.

A Letter from Our Pastor

The Great Sunday and Its *Fifty Days of Joy*



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

Everyone knows the number “forty” is associated with the season of Lent. As the hymn puts it:

*Lord, who throughout these forty days,
for us did fast and pray,
Teach us with you to mourn our sins
and close by you to stay.*

In repentance for our sins and in preparing to renew our baptismal promises at the Easter Masses, we follow Our Lord’s example and teachings about the place of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in our lives.

But not everyone knows that the number “fifty” is associated with the season of Easter. It begins with the Easter Vigil Mass, the first Mass of Easter, and it concludes with Pentecost Sunday fifty days later. The Easter season is “a week of weeks” — that is, seven weeks of seven days, plus one day for the Feast of Pentecost. And this whole season was named “the Great Sunday” by St. Athanasius and it is properly observed as “Fifty Days of Joy.”

I think that, for many people, forty days of penance comes more readily than does fifty days of rejoicing. An example

might be that it is easier to hold a frown for a long time than it is to hold a smile.

And yet, these Fifty Days of Joy hold out a challenge to us that is to our mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual benefit. These days speak to us who can be burdened with depression, discouragement, and disappointment. They assure us that Jesus has truly conquered the sin and death of this world and that, even now, we already share in His victory.

As another popular hymn puts it:

*Alleluia! Alleluia!
Hearts to heaven and voices raise.
Sing to God a hymn of gladness.
Sing to God a hymn of praise.
He who on the cross as Savior for the
world’s salvation bled,
Jesus Christ, the King of Glory,
now is risen from the dead.*

There is so much to ponder about what Jesus did for us by His passion, death, and resurrection that one day alone, Easter Sunday, is nowhere near enough time to take in all the facets of Jesus’ gift of Himself to His Heavenly Father for all of us.

So this year take the time that these Fifty Days of Joy offer us to do just that: to rejoice in the victory of

Jesus Christ. Do this by attending Mass every Sunday. Why? Every Sunday during the Church year is known as “a little Easter.” We cannot get enough of Easter in just one season of fifty days. So we celebrate His Easter victory every Sunday all year long.

Take this joy into your prayer and reflection, your reading and time with the Lord in prayer and adoration, especially during these Fifty Days of Joy.

And do not hesitate to enjoy some fun activities with your families and friends. If the truth be told, sometimes it can take more effort to be joyful than to be penitential. But it is worth every bit that it takes to bask in the joy of this Easter season.

As Mother Teresa of Calcutta advises us, “Never let anything so fill you with sorrow that you forget the joy of the Risen Christ.”

I wish you and all those you love a grace-filled Easter season as we mindfully celebrate “the Great Sunday and its Fifty Days of Joy.”

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Fr. Timothy J. O’Connor,
Pastor



Join Us for Our Family Italian Dinner Night on **April 27**

*Free Event Hosted by Knights of
Columbus Holy Family Council 4891*

We are thrilled to announce an exciting event that has been in the making for nearly five years! Thanks to the vision of Fr. Tim and the dedication of the Knights of Columbus, Holy Family Council # 4891, we are delighted to invite all parishioners of St. Joseph and the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary to a Family Italian Dinner night in the St. Joseph Church Social Hall.

This free event promises an evening filled with delectable food, delightful company, and a strong sense of community for individuals of all ages.

Steve Frankart, a devoted member of the Knights since 1998 and of the St. Joseph council since 2018, reflects on the origins of this wonderful idea.

“The idea came forth during a meeting that our local K of C council was having with Father Tim back in 2019,” Steve says. “He envisioned a family-friendly evening that everyone could enjoy. We planned to have the first dinner in April of 2020, but we all know what happened then.”

Despite the setback caused by COVID, the Knights remained steadfast in their commitment to Father Tim’s

vision. After much anticipation and discussion, it has been decided that this April will be the perfect time to finally bring this vision to life.

Rooted in the principles of charity, unity, and fraternity, the Knights of Columbus was established in 1882 by Father Michael McGivney. Today, the Knights continue to uphold their mission of empowering Catholic men to live out their faith in various aspects of their lives.

“The idea of hosting and serving a family Italian Dinner night matches perfectly with the mission of the Knights of Columbus,” Steve says. “Supporting each other and the parish, along with serving the members of the parish, instills pride in the council and contributes to our Stewardship way of life by sharing our time and talents.”

Mark your calendars for Saturday, April 27, as we come together for this special occasion. Doors will open at 6 p.m., and the festivities will continue until 8:30 p.m. Stay tuned to the bulletin for more information, and we eagerly anticipate seeing everyone there!

Msgr. Thomas McGread: The Father of Catholic Stewardship in America

In recent Catholic history, few figures stand out as prominently as Msgr. Thomas McGread, known as the “Father of Catholic Stewardship in America.” His visionary leadership and commitment to the principles of stewardship transformed not only his parish but also the entire Diocese of Wichita. Msgr. McGread’s pioneering efforts continue to influence the Catholic Church, emphasizing the importance of stewardship as a way of life.

Msgr. Thomas McGread was born in Ireland in 1928 and his early life was marked by a strong sense of faith and a desire to serve the Church. He was ordained a priest in 1953 in Dublin, Ireland, and came to America shortly thereafter, serving in various capacities within the Diocese of Wichita.

Msgr. McGread’s journey to becoming the Father of Catholic Stewardship began when he was appointed pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Wichita in 1968. At the time, the parish was struggling financially, and he faced the daunting challenge of revitalizing it. Msgr. McGread was guided by a profound sense of faith and a deep belief in the principles of stewardship.

He introduced a unique approach to parish life, emphasizing the three Ts of stewardship: Time, Talent, and Treasure. Msgr. McGread encouraged parishioners to dedicate their time and talents to the church community, not just their financial resources. This shift in perspective was a significant departure from the prevailing model of merely focusing on financial contributions.

Under Msgr. McGread’s leadership, St. Francis Parish experienced a remarkable transformation. The principles of stewardship became central to the parish’s mission, with



parishioners actively participating in various ministries and volunteering their time and skills. The result was not only a revitalized sense of community, but also financial stability.

Msgr. McGread’s innovative approach to stewardship at St. Francis Parish did not go unnoticed. One of his crowning achievements was leading the economically challenged St. Francis of Assisi parish school out of the depths of debt to become one of the best and biggest parochial grade schools in the state.

In 1968, the school had about 50 students and by 1999 had grown to 800. Msgr. McGread taught that stewardship is a way of giving, not out of a need, but rather a need to give. Because of the success of stewardship giving at St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Bishop Eugene Gerber introduced the concept to the diocese, and it was eventually adopted by other dioceses throughout the nation.

Msgr. McGread’s stewardship model gained national recognition. He was invited to speak at the first International Conference on Catholic Stewardship. His presentations and teachings left a lasting impression on the Catholic Church, leading to further adoption of stewardship principles across the country.

While he passed away in 2013, Msgr. McGread’s legacy lives on. His life and work serve as a testament to the transformative power of stewardship when applied with faith, dedication, and a commitment to the well-being of the Church community. His leadership at St. Francis of Assisi Parish and within the Diocese of Wichita has left an indelible mark on the Catholic Church. His life and work continue to inspire Catholics to embrace stewardship as a way of life, strengthening both their faith and parish communities.

*Msgr. McGread’s life and legacy is chronicled in the 2011 book, **Grateful and Giving: How Msgr. Thomas McGread’s Stewardship Message Has Impacted Catholic Parishes Throughout the Country**, by Deacon Donald McArdle. The book is available on Amazon and at <https://grateful-and-giving.company.site>.*

Parish School Drama Club Gets Ready for **Upcoming Musical Presentation**



The Drama Club cast, 2022



The Drama Club crew, 2022



The Drama Club crew, 2023

Our St. Joseph Parish School students are blessed with so many talents. And the students in our school’s Drama Club are looking forward to sharing their talents with the entire community as they present their upcoming musical production of *Newsies Jr.*

“Community members and parishioners are welcome!” says Kristin Kermes, play director and teacher. “Our performances this year are on May 3 and 4 at 7 p.m. in the St. Joseph Social Hall.”

Mrs. Kermes is working alongside music director Gabie Whiteman and technical director Justin Bilewicz. The Drama Club is an after-school program offered to any St. Joseph Parish School students in fifth through eighth grades. The students audition each year for a musical.

“When I began teaching at St. Joe’s 10 years ago, the Drama Club already existed, but was very small, and usually only performed plays,” Mrs. Kermes says. “I was asked to step in as director part way through that year, and have been in charge ever since. I ran the club on my own for four years, and then was blessed to be joined by Mrs. Whiteman in 2017, allowing us to perform our first musical.”

Around 35 students are participating in this year’s production. They rehearse twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays either in the Social Hall or the school, to prepare for the performance.

“When we begin meeting in November, our meetings mainly consist of various theater games designed to get kids ‘out of their shell’ and help them figure out if Drama Club is for them,” Mrs. Kermes says. “We hold auditions starting in December, which requires students to practice and perform a preselected song, and to do various cold readings from a closed script. Once our show is cast, official rehearsals begin in January. We typically work through the show one song or scene at a time.”

One of the core beliefs at St. Joseph is that “every person is a gift from God,” and the faculty encourages the students to

Join Our Students on May 3 and 4 for Production of Newsies Jr.

view one another with this perspective in mind. The faith is integral in the school's inner workings and comes into play with participation in the Drama Club as well.

"Every student brings their own unique gifts and talents, bestowed by God, and we recognize and celebrate everyone's unique contribution," Mrs. Kermes says. "We also open rehearsals and performances with prayer, asking God to bless our efforts."

Participation in the club can also help students be better stewards of the talents God has given them, says Mrs. Kermes. In choosing to use their gifts in the Drama Club, they are sharing them by bringing joy and entertainment to others.

For more information about the upcoming production or St. Joseph Parish School, visit sjsamherst.org.



Getting ready for the production of Newsies Jr.



The Drama Club cast of the production of Footloose

Meet Sharon Del Valle *continued from front page*

Blessed Mother, praying the Rosary each day. Her faith has gotten her through some difficult times, such as when her husband, Lucas, passed away in 2015.

"If I didn't have my faith and kids, I don't know that I would be here," Sharon says. "My faith carried me through a very difficult time."

The parish family has been a great comfort to Sharon. Her children went to St. Joseph School for a while, and she got to know many people. The faith community means a lot to her.


Being raised Catholic, there's a real familiarity with the Catholic faith. Sharon loves that she can attend Mass at other churches, and everything will be much the same.

"I love the familiarity of it," she says. "It's a real comfort to me."

Sharon has five children. Three of her children live in Cleveland, one is in Columbus, and another is in Michigan. She feels blessed to have four grandchildren. In her free time, she enjoys kayaking, reading, walking, and spending time with family. Sharon also spends a lot of time with Lucas' family. Her parents are both living, and she likes to spend time with them.

Whether you are young or old, Sharon would encourage you to find your niche. Consider how you might use your talents to get involved at our parishes.

"It's good to give back to your fellow parishioners and God," Sharon says.



The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage

A Journey of Faith and Unity

As part of the ongoing National Eucharistic Revival, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has announced a significant event for Catholics across the nation, the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, scheduled to take place from May 17 to July 16, 2024. This pilgrimage is a unique and spiritually enriching journey designed to deepen the understanding and reverence for the Eucharist and foster unity within the Catholic community.

The Significance of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage

- » **Renewal of Eucharistic Devotion:** In recent times, there has been an increased emphasis on the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Catholic faith. This pilgrimage serves as a vehicle for the faithful to rekindle their devotion to the Eucharist, reinforcing its centrality in our spiritual lives.
- » **Unity in Diversity:** The USCCB pilgrimage is a unique opportunity for Catholics across the country to come together in unity. It transcends geographical boundaries and emphasizes the universality of the Catholic Church. By participating, Catholics can experience the diverse tapestry of their faith community.
- » **Spiritual Formation:** The pilgrimage will offer resources and opportunities for spiritual formation. Participants will have the chance to deepen their understanding of the Eucharist, engage in prayer and reflection, and grow in their faith through a series of catechetical sessions, liturgical celebrations, and devotions.
- » **Evangelization:** The pilgrimage is an excellent platform for evangelization. As Catholics gather to celebrate their faith, they can share their beliefs and experiences with others, potentially leading to conversions and a broader understanding of Catholicism.

How Can Catholics Participate?

- » **Attend Local Events:** The pilgrimage includes a series of local, regional, and national events. Keep an eye on announcements from our diocese or parish about events and gatherings in your area. Attend these events with an open heart and a spirit of reverence.
- » **Volunteer:** Offer your time and talents to help organize and facilitate local events. Volunteering is a wonderful way to contribute to the success of the pilgrimage and serve your faith community.
- » **Promote Awareness:** Share information about the pilgrimage with your friends, family, and fellow parishioners. Encourage them to participate and join you on this spiritual journey.
- » **Engage in Prayer:** Pray for the success of the pilgrimage and for its intended spiritual impact on individuals and the Church as a whole. The power of prayer is immeasurable.
- » **Prepare for Reconciliation:** The pilgrimage often involves a call to reconciliation. Prepare your heart for this sacrament, as it is a vital part of renewing one's relationship with the Eucharist and with God.
- » **Reflect and Share:** Take time for personal reflection during the pilgrimage and consider sharing your experiences and insights with others. Use social media, personal blogs, or local faith groups to share your spiritual journey.


The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage is an opportunity for Catholics to come together in a spirit of faith, unity, and devotion to the Eucharist. It is a time to deepen one's connection to the core of Catholicism and to celebrate the richness of the Church's diverse community. By actively participating, Catholics can contribute to the renewal of faith, foster unity, and deepen their spiritual connection with the Eucharist.

For more information on the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage — part of the USCCB's ongoing National Eucharistic Revival — visit www.eucharisticpilgrimage.org.



Many Dwelling Places

by NATHAN FRANKART, Seminarian



Pease of Christ to you! You might expect something joyous this month because of our annual Easter celebration. And we will get to that Easter joy, but first, I wanted to address something else. Let's give a real, tangible frame to view our Easter joy through.

At my internship, I have done a number of burials. The Catholic Church has multiple rituals surrounding the end of life, such as anointing of the sick and the Funeral Mass. But as it turns out, I am able to perform what is called "the final commendation and burial" for families that have deceased loved ones, this usually taking place at the graveside. It's short, pointed, and done while standing next to the final resting place of those who have passed on to God.

And yes, it's difficult. It can be awkward, quiet, and uncomfortable. Everyone grieves differently, and how they choose to express that grief in tender moments such as these gives me a much deeper insight into what I am stepping into and what comes to the life of priestly ministry. Without Christ's resurrection, there would be nothing to pray for, nothing to do rather than to gather into that uncomfortable, grief-filled moment, and stand in silence. And yet, this is not what we do. Rather, we are equipped with prayers because Christ has conquered death.

But what do the prayers of the burial rite say? What are we actually praying for when I approach this ritual with the families who struggle with their loss?

"There is sadness in parting, but we take comfort in the hope that one day we shall see (him/her) again and enjoy their friendship. Although this congregation will disperse in sorrow, the mercy of God will gather us together again in the joy of His kingdom. Therefore let us console one another in the faith of Jesus Christ."

Christ is risen, and in the depths of our sorrow, we can still pray for others to enter into eternity with Him. Christ is risen, so death may not be the end, and our joy will be made complete with our loved ones in God's eternal embrace.

Christ is risen, and we have hope.

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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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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.

Upcoming Events

No School — Spring Break

March 29 - April 8

RCIA meeting

Monday, April 1 — 7 p.m.,
Nativity Parish Hall

Hospitality Tuesday

Tuesday, April 2 — 8:30 a.m.
(following 8 a.m. Mass),
Nativity Church and Hall

Altar and Rosary Society Meeting

Tuesday, April 2 — 6:30 p.m.,
Nativity Parish Hall

First Friday Rosary

Friday, April 5 — 11 a.m.,
Nativity Church

First Saturday Rosary

Saturday, April 6 — 9 a.m.,
St. Joseph Church

Parent Club Meeting

Tuesday, April 9 — 7 p.m.,
School MPR

Finance Council Meeting

Monday, April 22 — 7 p.m.,
Parish Conference Room

Knights of Columbus Meeting

Tuesday, April 23 — 7 p.m.,
School MPR

Wonderful Women

Tuesday, April 23 — 7 p.m.,
St. Joseph Social Hall

Grade 2 Jesus Day

Wednesday, April 24 — 5 p.m.,
St. Joseph Social Hall

First Holy Communion

Saturday, April 27 — 10 a.m.,
St. Joseph Church

Family Italian Night

Saturday, April 27 — 6 p.m.,
St. Joseph Social Hall

Vincentians Meeting

Thursday, April 4 and 18 — 9 a.m.,
St. Joseph Conference Room

Holy Ground Youth Group

Sunday, April 7 and 21 — 6 p.m.,
St. Joseph Church

Dinner on the Go

Tuesday, April 9 and 23 — 5 p.m.,
Nativity Parish Hall

PSR classes

Wednesday, April 10, 17, and 24 —
5:30 p.m., St. Joseph School

Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes

Tuesdays and Thursdays in April —
9:30 a.m., Nativity Parish Hall