



# ST. JOSEPH PARISH

## NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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**JULY 2023**

### MEET PARISHIONERS

## Mario and Carolyn Lombardi

*Grateful to Serve as Members of Our Faith Community*

If you compiled a list of our ministries at St. Joseph's, Mario and Carolyn Lombardi could probably check off many in which they've been involved during their 46 years as parishioners here. From Parent Club and fish fries to Bingo, to Marriage Encounter, the Engaged Couples Ministry, and our Parish School of Religion, they have certainly done a lot. They also helped start the Confirmation program and were involved with the Parish Renewal program.

Mario and Carolyn both served as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion at St. Joseph's for more than 40 years. They brought the Eucharist to the homebound, nursing homes, and the Lorain Community Hospital for many years. Carolyn continues as an Extraordinary Minister for Mass.



*Mario and Carolyn Lombardi*

"It's such a blessing to distribute the Eucharist," she says. "I especially loved being able to bring it to those who couldn't attend Mass."

In addition, Mario and Carolyn had been Parish Council members, with Carolyn serving as president for several years. Mario was also part of the Planning Commission and is most proud of working to make the cemetery larger during that time.

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# The Work is Not Easy

BY NATHAN FRANKART

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*If you are considering some new growth in your spiritual life, or contemplating joining a new ministry or getting more involved at the parish — take your pick, all great ideas! — be prepared! Be energetic and excited, but anticipate the struggles, difficulties, and the unexpected surprises.*

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Peace of Christ to you! As you are reading this, I am in the midst of learning, training, and sweating at Maxwell Air Force Base for Officer Training School. I can assure you that for as uncomfortable as this experience is — I mean really, who thought putting a school in Alabama in summer would be enjoyable? — it will all be well worth it! Getting the opportunity to serve in the military and still be a seminarian for the Diocese of Cleveland is such a blessing indeed!

The most interesting aspect of this training so far would be the counterintuitive nature of chaplain training. You would think it would involve a significant amount of time for personal prayer. Perhaps that would also include some less strenuous exercising and general training than a regular officer trainee would receive. And yet, a majority of my time is spent on doctrine, field exercises, intensive classes that require significant studying, and a complex understanding of the various levels and structures of the Air Force. In fact,

it often feels like I'm training to be a bureaucrat instead of a chaplain.

Although not intentional, there is something to be gained in this experience. There is an idealized version of practicing and ministering the faith perhaps in my own head that I would be good to part with. The reality of working within the military means there are constraints of time, availability, and access to when and whom I can serve as a chaplain's assistant. I have orders to follow, after all.

If you are considering some new growth in your spiritual life, or contemplating joining a new ministry or getting more involved at the parish — take your pick, all great ideas! — be prepared! Be energetic and excited, but anticipate the struggles, difficulties, and the unexpected surprises. Just because you're doing something good for yourself and the Church doesn't mean it will be easy!

# ST. JOSEPH & NATIVITY

*A Letter from Our Pastor*

## Using Our Time, Talent, and Treasure for the Good of Our Nation



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

**A**s we celebrate our nation with the Fourth of July holiday to start the month, it is important for us to reflect on the connections between Catholic stewardship, discipleship, and American patriotism.

As Catholics, we are called to be good stewards of the gifts that God has given us, including our time, our talent, and our resources. This means using these gifts in ways that honor God, build up our communities, and serve our fellow human beings. In doing so, we are living out our calling as disciples of Christ.

American patriotism, in its best form, is a natural outgrowth of Catholic stewardship and discipleship. It is a recognition that we have been blessed with a great country, with a rich history and diverse culture, and with opportunities to live out our faith in the public sphere. It is a call to use our gifts and our resources to make our country a better place, to serve our fellow citizens, and to uphold the values that make our nation great.

At the same time, it is important to remember that American patriotism is not the same as blind nationalism.

We are called to love our country, but not at the expense of our faith or our commitment to justice and the common good. We must always be willing to critique our country when it falls short of its ideals and to work for change when necessary.

As we celebrate the Fourth of July holiday, let us remember that our Catholic faith calls us to be good stewards, faithful disciples, and patriotic Americans. Let us pray for our country, for our leaders, and for all those who strive to make it a better place. And let us commit ourselves anew to using our gifts and our resources to serve others, to work for justice, and to build up the common good.

May God bless you and your families, and may God bless the United States of America.

Gratefully in Christ,

*Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor*

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,  
Pastor



# Women of Faith High Tea Event Offers a Great Day of *Fellowship, Faith and Tradition*



*Cindy Miller helps prepare for the High Tea.*



*Stephanie Sierra was invited to speak on her experience with Divine Mercy.*

Since 2012, the women of our parishes have gathered each year for an afternoon of tea, fellowship, and faith. Now, after two years without the event, Sue Cotton and Maria Maldonado were thrilled to bring back the Women of Faith High Tea for another year.

“From the very beginning, Maria and I wanted this afternoon tea to have a spiritual theme that could inspire new ideas and renew our spirits,” Sue says. “We wanted to be with other women of faith who have journeyed along their path.”

This year, the tea was held on Divine Mercy Sunday, April 16, and took Divine Mercy as its theme. As both a social event and a time for spiritual renewal, Stephanie Sierra was invited to speak on her experience with Divine Mercy.

“She explained what Divine Mercy is and how she had been introduced to ‘Jesus, I trust in You,’” Sue says. “For a closing, the majority of us walked from our social hall to the main church for the Divine Mercy Chaplet, sung by one of our music directors, Ed Klimczak.”

The High Tea is made possible by many volunteers. The kitchen support team, made up of gentlemen volunteers, ensures that all the ladies have a chance to enjoy the event. The serving was done this year by 12 fourth-graders from Girl Scout Troup 50731, all led by a senior student who returned after serving four years ago.

“I like getting the young girls involved, whether they are Girl Scouts or a Leo Club from the high school,” Sue says. “It is great to have them experience a ladies’ tea.”

The event is truly an opportunity to enjoy some of the finer things. The menu is light and refreshing, consisting of tea and scones, fruit, chicken croissant sandwiches, and an array of cookies. The tables are set on lovely tablecloths with an assortment of unique and fine china.

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## Women of Faith High Tea Event *continued from page 4*

“I like the use of all the different china that gets pulled out of the cupboards, by the members and other women that join in on this celebration,” Sue says. “I like to hear the stories about this teacup of Grandma’s, or about china purchased at a garage sale.”

The High Tea has drawn an array of attendees over the years. It has been hosted at St. Joseph and, more recently, at Nativity. Women of all ages are welcome. For some, a High Tea brings back memories while, for others, it is a new experience. Sue remembers one year when four generations of one family were present. For those who put in time to prepare and host, as well as those who attend, it’s a beautiful afternoon of fellowship and spiritual refreshment.

“There is a lot of work before and during and after, but the committee glows for days after,” Sue says.



*It's time for tea!*

## Mario and Carolyn Lombardi *continued from front cover*

“We ended up doubling the size of the cemetery,” he says. “And the day it opened, it was all paid off.”

Mario also worked with the City of Amherst in order for the street behind the parish to be named Fr. Lawrence N. Martello Drive.

“He was very touched that the parish did that for him,” Carolyn says.

Holiday decorating at St. Joseph’s is another favorite activity for Carolyn. She feels this has been a fun way to get to know people and spend time with other parishioners.

One of the Lombardis’ more recent endeavors is joining the Resurrection Choir, which sings at Funeral Masses. It’s been a great ministry that they enjoy doing together.

“Most people don’t expect it for their loved one,” Mario says. “It’s very rewarding.”

For about 20 years, Carolyn and a group of women met with Sister Jean Glorioso for prayer. This group of women was and still is very special to Carolyn. They continue to get

together once a month even though Sister Jean has passed away.

As cradle Catholics, Carolyn and Mario have always made it a priority to stay involved — even when they were busy raising four children. St. Joseph’s has become home.

“It is a good group here,” Mario says. “We have a lot of friends. People are very open and talk to each other. They make you feel at home.”

Having been actively involved for all these years, Mario and Carolyn would give the same advice to others — get involved, and you won’t regret giving time to the parish, even if you are busy.

“When you get involved, whether you are working at a fish fry or Bingo, you get to know people,” Carolyn says. “That’s where you forge relationships. You always get more out of it than you put in.”

In their free time, the couple enjoys traveling and visiting their grandchildren who live throughout the United States.

# Community Shares in a Joyful Spring



*The 2023 Baccalaureate Mass*

*Our community enjoyed a busy, yet joyful spring season full of celebrations – the Baccalaureate Mass, Confirmation, First Communion, kindergarten graduation, the SJS May Devotional, and the Spring Concert.*



*Confirmation*



*Eighth Grade Graduation*

## Full of Celebrations and Activities



*First Communion*



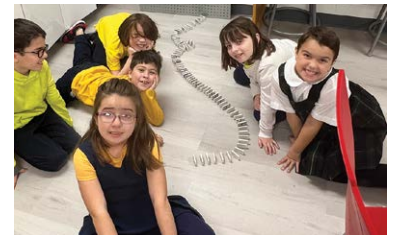
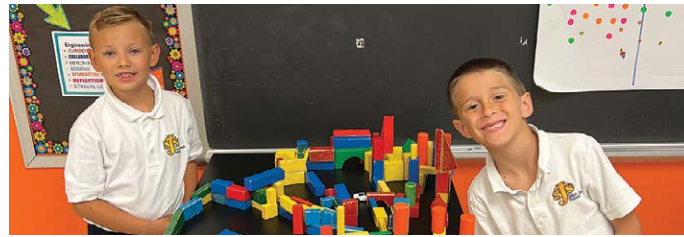
*Kindergarten graduation*



*The SJS May Devotional*



*The Spring Concert*



# Exploration Model Helps Form Parish School Students into Leaders of Tomorrow

*"Growing Learners Who Are Ready for Anything the Future Holds"*

Children are naturally curious and enjoy exploring. In traditional education models, children are led by teachers who tell them what to do. But at St. Joseph Parish School, there's a new approach to learning that encourages children to lead and learn in a self-directed way, called "exploration."

"Exploration is an opportunity for students to do just that – explore," says Amy Makruski, Principal at St. Joseph Parish School. "If we want our students now to be leaders in the future, we have to teach them to be leaders of today! Exploration is a way for our students to feel empowered. They have their own voice and their own direction in deciding what they will learn, how they will learn it, and how they will share that learning with others."

The exploration-driven model is something that was introduced to the school for the first time in the 2022-2023 school year. The plan is to continue this format moving forward. All students, from kindergarten through eighth grade, participate in the exploration learning format.

"We move from a format of guided inquiry and exploration in the younger grades to independent inquiry, research, and exploration in the older grades," Mrs. Makruski says.

Given our ever-changing and advancing world, it is possible the careers of today's children may not yet be established, says Mrs. Makruski. This means students may need to be ready for various unseen challenges and new experiences in years to come.

"In having that knowledge, it is our responsibility to grow learners who are ready for anything the future holds," she says. "One way we can do that is by helping them learn to develop and foster passions, to research and use their time

to learn new things and then, support them as they present this learning to an authentic audience."

Students are divided into groups with a "mentor" teacher who helps support them in their projects. In order to help bring out their natural interests and talents, the students are intentionally matched with a teacher who has expertise in the subject to support their projects.

"So a student's mentor can change from project to project, which has really helped to get the most out of our students and allowed our staff to join them on their adventures in a personal way," Mrs. Makruski says.

On the surface, students gain knowledge about the topics they find interesting and learn new skills or hobbies along the way. But Mrs. Makruski says the benefits are deeper than that, providing students with life skills that will help them for years to come.

"Each project takes on its own path for each student and it is our position to help facilitate that and help them to reach their goals," she says.

Given how the students are encouraged to grow in their natural talents, the program has a connection with stewardship, too.

"Everything we do here centers on our purpose here on earth and how we can serve others," Mrs. Makruski says. "These projects use the talents and interests of the students to help them sort through how they can serve and better the world around them and to help them consider what their future vocation may be. We believe that by giving them multiple opportunities early in life to experience many fields this world has to offer, they will grow to be well-rounded citizens of the future."

**For more information about St. Joseph Parish School, visit [sjsamherst.org](https://sjsamherst.org).**



## The Staffeld Family:

### *Growing in Stewardship Together through Life's Stages*

The members of the Staffeld family know that life calls us to adapt. Through their involvement at St. Joseph, they've learned that God always provides the right place to be when changes happen. Since moving to the area in 2012, Ross and Susan have grown in their faith, had a son, Ryker, and found their priorities shifting as God calls them to greater things.

"We just want to be good examples to Ryker of how to serve," Susan says. "If there are opportunities we can bring him into, we're happy to — maybe it's an opportunity to go serve meals at Catholic Charities, or a drive at the church. We encourage him to tithe, showing him how to be a good steward in different ways."

Early in their time at St. Joseph, Susan experienced the Women's Renewal. The experience impacted her and she joined the Renewal Team until she had Ryker. Susan encouraged Ross to go on the Men's Renewal.

"It took me seven or eight years to commit to it, but it was a blessing in disguise," Ross says. "I enjoyed it so much that I decided to become part of the team."

The Women's and Men's Renewals, which have been replaced by our active Men's Group and Women's Group, gave both Susan and Ross a chance to get to know other parishioners, get a taste of being involved, and refresh their love for the Church and the sacraments.

"Prior to the renewal, I was kind of just going to church," Ross says. "I definitely became more active after and then again when my son was born."

Ross encouraged his boss to attend a Renewal and the Staffelds witnessed the waves that come from one stone being tossed into the water.

"It's neat to see how one person can influence someone else," Susan says. "One thing can lead to another and really impact a person's life."

When Susan had Ryker, who is now 5 years old, she realized that she would have to make adjustments. At the



*The Staffeld family*

same time, her son brought so much meaning to the things for which she chose to give her time.

"Having a child, my time commitments were more difficult," Susan says. "But I found that I wanted to be an inspiration for my son. I wanted to do something visual."

So Susan began to serve as a lector which fits this stage of her life perfectly. She anticipates that as Ryker grows up and gets more involved at the school, she'll adapt again and involve herself in ways that include the whole family.

"Maybe when Ryker gets older we can find something to do together," she says.

While their involvement shifts with life changes, the community that the Staffelds have found is so important to them. Their love for the community and service helps them approach each life stage with an open heart.

"Look at where you are in your life now and see where God could be calling you," Susan says. "Maybe in a different part of your life, look around to see what else is out there."

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200 Saint Joseph Drive, Amherst, OH 44001

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**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.

## The 2023 Carlo Acutis School Chapel Dedication

