



# ST. JOSEPH PARISH

## NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

### Inside

- 3 A Letter from Our Pastor
- 4 Setting an Example of Stewardship for Our Children
- 5 The Sacrament of Confirmation
- 6 Prayer Group Serves the Bereaved: *A Loving Act of Compassion in the Face of Loss*
- 8 The Importance of Loving God More Deeply at Mass
- 9 Reflections From the Summer *By Nathan Frankart*

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**SEPTEMBER 2023**

Meet Parishioners

## Jim and Lynda Pecchio

*Grateful to Share in a Life of Faith and Service*

Many Catholics look to certain Scripture passages that guide them in their life and relationship with Christ. For Jim Pecchio, Luke 12:48 — “much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more” — encapsulates a strong faith life built on stewardship.

“I have been given so much in my life that I want to share the many gifts God has given me,” Jim says.

Of all the gifts he has received, Jim is especially grateful for his wife, Lynda. The couple has been blessed with two children and three grandchildren.

“We have shared 53 wonderful, fun-filled, and loving years of marriage,” Jim says. “She is my best friend, and I’m more in love with her each day. We share so much together.”

Both Jim and Lynda are cradle Catholics, and both grew up in large Italian families. As Jim recalls, “I was 10 years old before I realized that not everybody was Italian and Catholic.” He credits his father



*Jim and Lynda Pecchio have shared 53 wonderful, fun-filled, and loving years of marriage. They have been blessed with two children and three grandchildren.*

*continued on page 2*

## Parishioners Jim and Lynda Pecchio *continued from front cover*

for paving the way for his Catholic faith.

“I could not have progressed so far into my faith without the gifts of support, encouragement, and help from my entire family,” Jim says. “The most significant gift my father ever gave me was his faith. He shared his time, talent, and treasure by actively participating in several church-related activities.”

Jim joined St. Joseph’s in 1981, shortly after his family moved to Amherst. Jim truly lived a Stewardship way of life and first became involved by attending a Christ Renews His Parish retreat. Jim has served in many ministries over the years and is an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion at Mass and for the homebound.

“The best gift I’ve been given serving as a Eucharistic Minister to the Homebound is knowing that there were a few times when I may have

given the last Holy Communion to a resident in Amherst Manor,” Jim says. “When you come into their room the next week, and they are no longer there, you know that they now reside in heaven.”

Serving on the Stewardship Committee has been a blessing for Jim. He has learned so much from the other team members over the past sixteen years.

“What I like about working with this team is that we are helping to bring members of our church closer to Christ by enabling them to share their time, talent, and treasure in one or more of our 43 ministries,” Jim says.

In addition, Jim is also a member of the St. Joseph Vincentians and the Men’s Group. He sends a big thanks to all the parishioners who support the Vincentians.

“I always have a compassionate, fulfilling, and humbling experience

every time I place bags of food into the cars of the people we serve,” he says. “Their expression of thankfulness and relief gives me a wonderful feeling knowing that I helped alleviate a little of their hunger.”

Lynda is so inspired by Jim and all he does for the parish. She’s gotten involved in many of the same ministries.

“As a result of volunteering to help him out behind the scenes, I’ve become more deeply involved than I ever expected,” she says. “That involvement has enriched my life by bringing me closer to our parish family here at St. Joseph’s.”

In their free time, Jim and Lynda enjoy spending time with their children, grandchildren, and extended family. In addition, Lynda enjoys reading, typically she reads over one hundred books a year and Jim has an extensive collection of baseball cards.

*“I always have a compassionate, fulfilling, and humbling experience every time I place bags of food into the cars of the people we serve,” he says. “Their expression of thankfulness and relief gives me a wonderful feeling knowing that I helped alleviate a little of their hunger.”*

— Jim Pecchio

A Letter from Our Pastor

## Renew Our Efforts as Good Stewards to Give Out of Love



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

If your calendar looks like mine, we all know everything is shifting back into high gear this month. Vacations are over. Schools are back in session. Clubs, organizations, and ministries are back at work full-time. Life is suddenly more hectic. As I looked at the calendar for September, I remembered some of the important feast days coming up this month and noticed several connections to living stewardship as a way of life.

First, the Feast Day of St. Teresa of Calcutta on Sept. 5. Small in stature, but so very Catholic in everything she represented and did, Mother Teresa was an important part of my perception of what it meant to be Catholic and Christian. It is difficult to believe that she has been gone for 26 years. She was the absolute epitome of what it meant to be Catholic, to love, and to serve. She represented a living example of stewardship in our lifetimes. What she had to say about our lives and how we should live them became some of the more quotable illustrations of living stewardship that we reflect upon today. For example, she said, "It is not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving." That is our challenge as we begin the busy part of our year, to do everything we do with love.

Then, on Sept. 14, we celebrate the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The Cross has enormous meaning to us as Catholics. How many times do we make the Sign of the Cross to signify the Holy Trinity and to remember that the Cross represents so much to us? It is a renewal of our Baptism every time we make the Sign of the Cross. More than 1,700 years ago, St. Helen discovered the true cross in Jerusalem. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was built on that spot, and it was dedicated on Sept. 14, 335, thus our veneration of the Cross on that date.

When we make the Sign of the Cross, we are also indicating our discipleship, our pledge to be good stewards. Whether it is in our labors that we glorify God, in serving the Lord and others with love or constantly reminding ourselves of Christ's salvation of us on the Cross, we need to constantly rededicate ourselves to service and stewardship. This month – when we revive so much in our parishes – is a good time to do that. St. Teresa of Calcutta also said, "The needs are great, and none of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful."

Gratefully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor".

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,  
Pastor





## Setting an Example of Stewardship for Our Children

**A**s we strive to live as grateful stewards, we must remember that each of us has a responsibility to help our youngest parishioners learn what it means to live as a disciple of Christ. Jesus Himself told the disciples, “Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Mt 19:14). Christ wants children to grow closer to Him and to become His disciples, and parents are responsible for helping to lead their children to this end. The Rite of Baptism reminds us that parents are “the first teachers of their child in the ways of faith.”

An important part of faith involves living a life of stewardship, as the proper response of a Christian disciple. So, it follows that parents bear a great responsibility that comes from Christ Himself to raise their children as grateful stewards. However, it may already be difficult for adults to grasp the concept of stewardship and put it into practice in their own lives. How can parents teach their children to do the same?

First and foremost, parents can teach stewardship by setting a good example. Indeed, the example of our lives is so powerful that it can and should be a witness to the Gospel. As parents live the life of stewardship, their children will see the beauty in the stewardship way of life, and they are bound to follow suit. If parents live in thanksgiving to God for all He has given them, their children will grow to see that all we have is a gift from God. And when parents offer gratitude to God, it will surely impact their children.

Eight-year-old Suzie has watched her dad serve Communion at Sunday Masses throughout her young life.

When asked why she thinks he does this, she responds, “We need to help the priest.”

Meanwhile, her older sister, Jane, responds to the same question by explaining, “We need to serve God. He does so much for us. We should appreciate it and give back to Him.”

It is clear that by witnessing their dad’s example, the girls are beginning to understand — each in her own way — that the life of a Christian disciple involves selfless service in gratitude to God. However, it is not just their father’s example that has helped them develop this understanding. Both their father and their mother emphasize stewardship as a family practice. They spend time in family prayer, serve at the soup kitchen together, bring up the offertory as a family, and participate in other acts of service. Such involved participation in the faithful life allows the girls to bear witness to the power of serving others in thanksgiving, even at their young ages.

“We need to help other people,” Suzie says. “Jesus wants us to put other people first, and if we want to listen to Him, we need to serve others.”

As Suzie’s statement demonstrates, the stewardship way of life is not only understood or lived out by adults — Jesus wants children to be His disciples, as well. So, it is essential that parents help their children develop a true understanding of stewardship, and encourage its practice through the example of an active faith life.

May all Christian parents be not only the first, but also the best teachers of faith to their children, in what they say and in what they do.

## The Sacrament of Confirmation: *Sealed with the Holy Spirit and Bearing Witness to Christ*

**T**he Sacrament of Confirmation completes and increases the graces received at one's Baptism. In one sense, it marks the movement into a mature faith — but in another sense, it is only the beginning of one's adult life of faith. Through anointing and the laying on of hands, those who receive the Sacrament of Confirmation receive the Holy Spirit and many graces to strengthen them in their journey of faith.

At St. Joseph and Nativity, the process to prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation takes two years. Students in the seventh grade begin catechesis specifically to prepare them for Confirmation and will receive the sacrament near the end of their eighth-grade year. Angela Eads, principal of the Parish School of Religion, prepares the curriculum that the students will follow with the instruction of their teachers and catechists.

"Confirmation allows for all of us to become fully initiated members of the Church," Angela says. "We can call upon the grace of this sacrament throughout our lives."

Confirmation is a huge milestone for the students who are preparing to receive the sacrament. While most of the students were baptized as infants at their parents' request, Confirmation is an opportunity for them to complete that choice for themselves. Along with the Sacraments of Baptism and First Holy Communion, Confirmation is the final Sacrament of Initiation. Fully initiated young Catholics are prepared to take their faith out into the world, filled with the Holy Spirit, to do that to which God calls them.

Those two years of formation are crucial in helping our young people understand their place in the Church and their maturing relationship with God. We use a curriculum called *Chosen*, from Ascension Press, to guide our students as they grow in faith and are grounded in the teachings of the Church.

"Each lesson focuses on a topic where the students reflect on videos and stories to learn how these topics apply

to their own lives," Angela says. "The topics are all rooted in the *Catechism* of our Church."

In addition to the guidance of teachers and catechists, students choose a sponsor who can be a support and mentor to them through their formation and beyond. Students also choose a Confirmation saint and take that saint's name. This saint will be a constant source of prayer for them throughout their lives.

Our next class of confirmandi will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation on March 9, 2024.

In one of his general audiences, Pope Francis reflected on the Sacrament of Confirmation. "Sealed with the Holy Spirit, we are configured more closely to Christ and strengthened to bear witness to Him in our world," the pope said. "May each of us grow in gratitude for the gift received at our Confirmation and open our hearts ever more fully to the creativity of the Spirit who makes all things new."



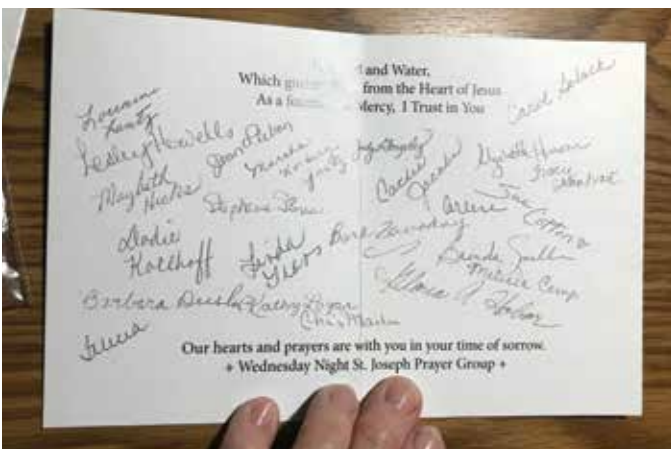
# Prayer Group Serves the Bereaved:



When a family member faces the death of a loved one, the grief and loss can be overwhelming. The immediate time after a loved one's passing can also be challenging as the tasks of planning the funeral and coordinating all of the details are so overwhelming, as well. In addition to the assistance that the parish gives to help families navigate this difficult time, the women's prayer group at the parish takes the time to send sympathy cards to family members of our parishioners that have passed away. This simple act of sending a card just lets the family members know that their loved one was a valued member of our parish.

"The ladies in our prayer group have been meeting together for many years," says Dodie Kollhoff, a member of the Wednesday evening women's prayer group. "When Sister Stefana retired, we took on this part of her ministry because we are a part of the parish and when someone loses a loved one, we want them to know that we are praying for them and keeping them in prayer. It is hard to lose a loved one. We are a community of people and we care about each other. We want to make sure that they know that."

"When you lose someone, there is a big hole in your heart," adds Cathie Jacobs, another member of the group. "It



## *A Loving Act of Compassion in the Face of Loss*

is comforting to know that someone is thinking of you and praying for you during this difficult time.”

The group is comprised of about 20 women. They fill out the cards and keep them in a box. Each month, one member is in charge of the box and will send out the cards to the loved ones of parishioners who pass away. The group receives the names of the family and contact information from the parish office so that they can send out the cards. The members have been doing this for about five or six years.

Reaching out to others and extending a loving hand doesn't have to be time-consuming or complicated. Those experiencing grief can feel very lonely or isolated, and this is a simple way to remind them that they are part of a community that is walking along with them.

“Jesus told us to love each other and care for each other,” Dodie says. “We just want those who have lost someone to know that they are not forgotten and they are being prayed for. Our hearts go out to them. Sometimes we do know them personally and others we don't. Regardless, we still care about them and what they are going through.”

This loving act of charity may be simple but it is an important role within the parish community to reach out and console those who mourn.





## The Importance of Loving God More Deeply at Mass

**W**hen young people see a person that intrigues them, that attraction becomes the topic of conversation at every opportunity. This attraction alters behavior so that we become enthralled with the other and desire to share our enthusiasm.

Imagine if we were more enthralled with the presence of Christ in our lives. Imagine if we fully recognized that Christ is truly present to us in His precious Body and Blood, and present as well in the proclamation of His Word and in the gathering of our community, praying and singing (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy], para. 14). Recognizing the living Christ in all these ways would awaken in us the desire to be with the One who is the object of our most fundamental, pure, and holy attraction to our merciful, loving, and gracious Savior.

If we were to recognize the presence of Christ in these beautiful ways, wouldn't our desire to be more completely in His presence increase? Surely our desire to be better stewards of our time with the Lord would grow. Our attention to the readings and other prayers of the Mass would bring about within us deeper communion with the One who suffered and died for us. If I recognized that God is the answer to all my pangs of hunger, that Christ is my way to the Father, and that the Holy Spirit works to convert my heart and soul every day, would I not seek to fill that hunger at the banquet of the Lamb?

While active participation in Sunday Mass is an obligation for Catholics, we also will do well to see the lovely, motherly care the Church shows us in establishing that requirement. The *Code of Canon Law* states clearly in paragraph 1247, "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass." Sometimes, we might hear that as an overbearing rule. But it might more correctly be understood as our Mother, the Church, helping us learn what is best for us. At Mass, we hear the living Word of God proclaimed. He speaks to us. We receive as hungry, needy sinners, the precious Body and Blood of Christ. We encounter Christ's living presence in our brothers and sisters worshipping God with us. If we truly understood that amazing

truth, then how might it affect our lives? How might it affect our relationships? How might it impact our decision to bring our children along to Mass? How might it awaken within us a deeper attraction, fascination, desire for the Lord?

Generally, when we find ourselves fascinated with someone, we do not decide to spend as little time as possible with them. We do not ration our time with them. We want to spend time with them, to see them, to listen to them, to get to know them, to develop a healthy, loving relationship with them.

Considering our reliance on the Lord of life and love, our fascination with His mercy, His goodness, His willingness to call us to Himself, maybe we should ask ourselves about what happens in us at Mass. As I prepare to come to Church, do I find my mind turning to a receptive welcome of the Lord, just as I'll be welcomed at the door of Church? Have I dressed for the important weekly (or daily) moment of meeting my King? Do I expect some profound wisdom from God in the readings? Am I open to correction, to challenge, to affirmation in the readings of God's Word? Do I intently pray along with the priest presider throughout the Mass? Do I make an offering of my life, along with the bread and wine? Do I genuinely hunger for the Body and Blood of Christ? And do I long for that blessing that sends me on my way with the mission to build the Kingdom?

Instead of worrying about what "counts" when it comes to Sunday Mass, maybe we should work hard at fostering our love for the Eucharist, our desire for eternal life, our attraction to the Master who calls us into a life of active discipleship. Instead of a merely heavy-handed requirement, maybe we can see more clearly that being at Mass together helps nourish us for a whole week of building God's Kingdom. Coming with those expectations, desires, and hopes, leaving early when unnecessary would disappear as a temptation instantly. Coming late because other things have taken priority would not typically happen, other obligations notwithstanding. Christ desires our company at Mass, from beginning to end. Let's draw near to Him.



## Reflections From the Summer

### *By Nathan Frankart*

**P**ease of Christ to you! Of the many training exercises, classroom presentations, and briefs endured as a part of officer training and chaplain candidate training this summer, there were a few takeaways that were significant to me personally.

The focus of the officer training was leadership — leadership in stressful environments, leadership styles and effectiveness, leadership as a follower (that one is a doozy), leadership delegation, and so on and so forth. This constant emphasis on how to be an effective leader in a professional, rigid environment was something that I did not anticipate, and I was not comfortable with in the beginning. What I anticipated to be a simple, straightforward task of being a good chaplain candidate was directly challenged by the reality of what it means to be an officer in the United States Air Force. And it was from this challenge that I saw immense growth in my own capabilities to lead airmen in their mission, and just as importantly, know how to not lose them along the way.

For every lesson that I had emphasizing the essentials of good officership, there was a balance of what it means to be a good chaplain. The mentors and instructors that I had this summer brought immense insight and care into the service I might give to future airmen. The emphasis on spiritual care in a pluralistic environment gave me confidence and hope that bringing meaning and value into the lives of airmen is possible through our Catholic spirituality. I saw the need for chaplains in the Air Force throughout the summer, and it was a fulfilling experience to know that my time was not wasted.

I will spend many, many days unpacking everything that I felt, saw, heard, and experienced. I know that Christ has much to show me through everything, and I have yet to still unpack everything. It's a worthwhile spiritual practice for everyone! Just because it is over does not mean the Lord does not want to show you something more upon reflecting and praying about the times we have already been through. You never know what Jesus will show you when you revisit the moments from the past.



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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.

## Upcoming Events

**First Friday Rosary**

*Friday, Sept. 1 — 11 a.m., Nativity Parish Church and Hall*

**First Saturday Rosary**

*Saturday, Sept. 2 — 9 a.m., St. Joseph Church*

**Parish Health and Wellness Blood Pressure Checks**

*Saturday, Sept. 2 — following the 4 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph gathering area*

*Sunday, Sept. 3 — following the 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Masses at St. Joseph gathering area*

**Labor Day**

*Monday, Sept. 4 — 9 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph Cemetery, weather permitting (Nativity BVM if it rains)  
Parish and School offices closed.*

**Hospitality Tuesday**

*Tuesday, Sept. 5 — following the 8 a.m. Mass, Nativity BVM Church and Hall*

**CYO DINE to DONATE**

*Tuesday, Sept. 5 — 11 a.m.-11 p.m., Ziggy's Pub and Grille*

**Altar and Rosary Society Meeting**

*Tuesday, Sept. 5 — 6:30 p.m., Nativity Parish Hall*

**First day of preschool for 3-year-old afternoon class and 4-year-old morning class**

*Tuesday, Sept. 5*

**First day of preschool for 4-year-old afternoon class**

*Wednesday, Sept. 6*

**RCIA information night**

*Monday, Sept. 11 — 7 p.m., Nativity Parish Hall*

**Pre-Baptism Class**

*Wednesday, Sept. 13 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph School*

**Vitalant Blood Drive to support St. Joseph School**

*Thursday, Sept. 21 — 4 p.m., St. Joseph Parish grounds*

**St. Joseph Parish Picnic**

*Sunday, September 24 — 12 p.m., St. Joseph Social Hall*

**Knights of Columbus meeting**

*Tuesday, Sept. 26 — 7 p.m., School MPR*

**Knights of Columbus Clambake**

*Saturday, Sept. 30 — 5:30 p.m., Amherst Eagles, 1161 Milan Ave.*

**Men's Group meetings**

*Tuesdays, Sept. 5 and 19 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph Social Hall*

**RCIA meetings**

*Mondays, Sept. 18 and 25 — 7 p.m., Nativity Parish Hall*

**Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes**

*Tuesdays and Thursdays in September — 9:30 a.m., Mill Hollow*