



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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By NATHAN FRANKART

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DEC 2024

Music Ministry Bringing Joyful Traditional and Contemporary Music to the Christmas Season

The Christmas liturgies at St. Joseph Parish will be filled with joyful music performed by vocal and instrumental ensembles from our Music Ministry, led by Christina Dupre, Worship and Liturgy Coordinator.

With the Thanksgiving Worship and Praise event in Saint Joseph Church on Friday, Nov. 22, at 7:30 p.m. offering a prelude to the upcoming Christmas season, the Music Ministry will continue bringing our parish family together through the talents of its singers and instrumentalists.

More high school, college, and young adult youth are making themselves heard in the ministry, through their enthusiastic participation in the contemporary worship and praise music.

“A lot of motivated youth are participating,” Christina says.

Besides the ensembles taking part in the Christmas liturgies, the ministry members are preparing for the Christmas Concert, set for 7:30 p.m. on Friday, 27 December at St. Joseph Church.

“The Christmas Concert is a combination of all the groups with traditional to contemporary music,” Christina says. “There will be selections all about Handel to Christian rock — a Trans-Siberian Orchestra type of sound.”

Besides Thanksgiving and Christmas, the Music Ministry brings life to the parish throughout the year. The congregation is brought together as a family through the music offered each week during Mass when contemporary works are introduced. The concerts then serve as musical reminders of what has taken place over the past year.



Choir members bring talents to the liturgy through service in the Music Ministry.

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SHARING THE GIFT OF CHRIST

As Catholics living in an increasingly secular world, we must remember to find ways to keep the true meaning of Christmas — the celebration of the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. Beyond the exchange of gifts and festive decorations, Christmas is a time to embody the spirit of stewardship. Stewardship involves sharing our time, talent, and treasure to reflect the love and generosity of Christ. Let's explore how to celebrate Christmas properly and reverently in the spirit of stewardship.

Stewardship of Time: A Gift of Presence

Christmas is a season to be fully present with loved ones and, most importantly, with Christ. Make time for prayer and reflection, not just amidst the hustle and bustle but as a daily practice. Attend Advent and Christmas Masses, immersing yourself in the profound liturgy. Consider participating in Eucharistic Adoration, contemplating the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Sharing your time in prayer and reflection helps deepen your relationship with Christ and your family.

Stewardship of Talent: Sharing Your Gifts

Christmas provides an opportunity to share your unique talents and skills in service to others. You can create handmade gifts, such as cards, crafts, or baked goods, to show your love and care. Singing, playing instruments, or joining the church choir can enhance the beauty of Christmas liturgies. Additionally, consider volunteering your time and talents at local charities, shelters, or organizations that serve the less fortunate. Your talents can be a source of joy and comfort to those in need during the Christmas season.

Stewardship of Treasure: Generosity and Charity

Christmas is an ideal time to practice generosity and charity. Rather than focusing solely on the material aspect of gift giving, emphasize the true meaning of giving by sharing your treasure in ways that benefit others. Support your parish and other charitable organizations financially. Consider donating to a local charity, sponsoring a family in need, or contributing to missions that serve vulnerable populations. Your financial contributions can make a significant impact on the lives of those less fortunate.

We also must remember that stewardship isn't limited to just one day; it's a way of life that can be lived throughout the Christmas season:

- **Advent Preparation:** Use the Advent season to prepare spiritually for the coming of Christ. Incorporate prayer, acts of kindness, and almsgiving into your daily routine.
- **Family Traditions:** Create family traditions that emphasize stewardship, such as volunteering together, making charitable donations as a family, or collectively choosing gifts for less fortunate children.
- **Sharing the Nativity Story:** As you gather with family and friends, take time to share the Nativity story and its profound significance. Encourage others to embrace the spirit of stewardship and share in the joy of Christ's birth.

By sharing your time, talent, and treasure, you can live out the teachings of Christ, deepen your faith, and make a meaningful impact on the lives of others. Embracing stewardship during the Christmas season transforms the holiday into a truly joyous and spiritually fulfilling occasion.



A Letter from Our Pastor

Remembering the True Essence of Christmas



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

As we approach the joyful season of Christmas, I want to take a moment to reflect on the true meaning of this holy celebration. Amid the shopping, the festive decorations, the cooking and baking, and all the excitement, it is easy to lose sight of the profound significance of Christmas.

Christmas is not just a time for exchanging gifts, indulging in delicious feasts, or enjoying the company of family and friends, although these are certainly important and beautiful aspects of the season. It is most specially a time when we come together to commemorate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is a reminder of the profound love of God for us, who sent His only Son into the world to save us from the darkness of sin and death.

To truly remember the true essence of Christmas, let us take the following to heart:

- **Advent Preparation:** Fully take part in the Advent season leading up to Christmas. Advent is a time of anticipation, reflection, and preparation. Lighting the Advent wreath candles and participating in Advent Masses and services can help us focus on the spiritual aspect of the season.
- **Prayer:** Begin and end each day with prayer. Reflect on the significance of Jesus' birth and thank God for the gift of His Son. Spend time in prayerful contemplation of the Nativity scene and ask for the grace to appreciate the miracle of Christ's incarnation.
- **Read the Scriptures:** Delve into the story of Jesus' birth as described in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Reading and meditating on these passages can deepen our understanding of the Nativity and its significance.
- **Acts of Charity:** Christmas is a season of giving, as a reflection of God's supreme gift to humanity. Consider participating in acts of charity and kindness, whether

through donations to those in need, volunteering, or simply showing love and compassion to others.

- **Simplify Traditions:** While traditions and festivities are important, consider simplifying your celebrations to emphasize the spiritual aspects of the season. Make time for reflection, caroling, Advent and Christmas concerts, and perhaps a Nativity pageant.
- **Family Devotions:** Incorporate the true meaning of Christmas into your family celebrations. Share the story of Jesus' birth with your children and grandchildren and encourage them to contemplate its significance. Together, create a manger scene to remind everyone of the central event.
- **Attend Mass:** Of course, attending Mass on Christmas is essential. The Mass is the most profound way to commemorate the birth of Jesus, receive His blessings, and be united as a faith community.

Of course, the essence of Christmas lies in the miracle of God becoming man. Let us open our hearts to the love and hope that Jesus brings, and may we share that love with others. As we celebrate this beautiful season, let us keep our faith at the forefront, and may the joy of Christ's birth fill our homes and hearts.

I wish you all a most blessed and meaningful Christmas. May the presence of Christ be felt and evident in your lives and in those you love.

Gratefully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor

Bob Kenska Reflects on Essential Projects Around the Parish and School

Ensuring Proper Care of Our Faith Community

When maintaining multiple parish buildings and a school, there is never any shortage of work. There are daily, weekly, and monthly tasks, and anything that needs to be fixed is added to the list. So, to take the best care of our resources, it's important to have a team tasked with taking care of everything.

Bob Kenska has been with our faith community for about nine months. He formerly worked as a kitchen manager and has loved his time working for the parish so far. It's been a nice change of pace, he says.

Not even a year on the job, Bob has been busy with tasks around the parish and school. This summer, all of the floors in the school were redone. In addition, tile was redone and two bathrooms were painted, making them look nearly brand new.

"Of course, the summer is a great time to do work at the school," Bob says. "We took advantage of that this year."

The next big project was to redo the kneelers in St. Joseph Church. They were taken off and the bottom legs were repainted under the leadership of John Sekletar and a team of volunteers. This project was completed in October.

Another upcoming project is taking care of some repairs and redoing the floor in the social hall. This will also be a big project.

Bob is thankful to his team, which helps with the day-to-day



Bob Kenska

operations of the church, school, and these projects. A lot goes into maintaining the social hall, making sure everything is clean and set up properly.

"You name it — we take care of it and maintain it," Bob says.

Furthermore, Bob also handles HVAC, plumbing, and electrical to the extent he can. At times, he does have to bring in an outside contractor. He previously worked at Oberlin College but was furloughed during the pandemic.

"I was always looking for a great opportunity like this one," Bob says. "This was a great opportunity for me and a good fit as far as work environment."

The peacefulness of the work really appeals to Bob. He also enjoys managing his own work.

"The people I work alongside at the church and school are so great," Bob says. "They are really nice and have been very accepting."

People have also been complimentary of Bob, and he appreciates that.

"Everyone is always so quick to say 'hi,' and they've made me feel welcome," he says.

In his free time, Bob coaches high school volleyball, which he's done for about 15 years.





THE NATIVITY SCENE:

A Symbol of Hope, Faith, and Family

As Christmas approaches, the beloved tradition of setting up the Nativity scene comes to life in Catholic homes around the world. The Nativity scene, often known as the crèche, holds profound significance in the hearts of Catholics, as it beautifully captures the essence of the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Nativity scene is a poignant visual representation of the birth of Jesus Christ, a pivotal event in the Christian faith. It serves as a reminder of the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the birth of the Savior, emphasizing the humility and vulnerability of Christ as He entered the world.

At the center of the Nativity scene, Mary and Joseph represent the loving and obedient couple chosen by God to be the earthly parents of Jesus. Their devotion and trust in God's plan inspire us to trust in His divine will in our own lives.

The infant Jesus in the manger is the focal point, signifying God's great love for humanity. His humble birth in a stable symbolizes His solidarity with the poor and marginalized, making His message of hope and salvation accessible to all.

Often depicted above the scene, angels herald the good news of Christ's birth, emphasizing the heavenly significance of this event.

The presence of the shepherds and Wise Men underscores that Christ's birth is for all people, regardless of their social or cultural backgrounds.

The Nativity scene's setting in a simple stable or cave demonstrates Christ's humility. It reminds us that God chose to enter the world in humble circumstances, offering His love and salvation to all, regardless of their station in life. The Nativity scene symbolizes the fulfillment of God's promise and the hope of redemption. It reminds Catholics that Jesus, the Light of the World, has come to dispel darkness, sin, and despair.

Creating Faithful and Spiritual Family Traditions with Nativity Scenes

- **Prayer and Reflection:** Gather your family around the Nativity scene regularly to pray and reflect on the significance of the birth of Jesus. You can use the Advent season to prepare your hearts and minds for Christ's coming by reading relevant passages from the Bible and discussing their meaning.
- **Storytelling:** Share the Nativity story with your children, emphasizing its importance in the Christian faith. Encourage your children to retell the story in their own words and discuss the lessons it imparts.
- **Advent Calendar:** Consider incorporating a Nativity-themed Advent calendar into your family's traditions. Each day, as you open a new window or door, you can discuss a different aspect of the Nativity story, adding to the excitement and anticipation of Christmas.
- **Nativity Scene DIY:** Encourage creativity by involving your children in creating a DIY Nativity scene. They can craft figures, build a stable, and paint the backdrop. This hands-on approach fosters a deeper connection to the story and the symbols.

The Nativity scene is a cherished and meaningful tradition for Catholics, representing the birth of Jesus Christ and the hope, humility, and love He brought to the world. By incorporating Nativity sets into your family's Christmas traditions, you can create a faithful and spiritual environment that deepens your understanding of the Nativity story and strengthens your connection to the true meaning of Christmas. In doing so, you will pass on the faith and love for Christ to the next generation, fostering a deeper appreciation for the birth of the Savior.

Adoration Offers Beautiful Opportunity to Spend Life-Changing Time With Jesus

When Wendy Rosso retired three years ago, she knew that she wanted to spend her time growing closer to Christ. “People would ask me what I was going to do when I retired,” Wendy says. “While I know they expected me to say I would travel or take up a hobby, I had a desire to get to know the Lord better, to grow closer to Him. I knew I needed to pray more, to know the Lord more. So when I retired, my number-one goal was to do everything I could to strengthen my relationship with the Lord.”

As part of her mission to grow closer to Christ, Wendy began spending regular time in Eucharistic Adoration. And while she was eager to grow closer to Christ, the impact of regular Eucharistic Adoration blew her expectations away!

“It has been life-changing in every way!” Wendy says. “When I think about who I was three years ago and compare that to now, I am amazed. Adoration has brought me closer to Christ and to my fellow parishioners.”

Wendy says that, while spending one-on-one time with Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration has strengthened her relationship with Christ, it has also helped her deepen her friendships with others.

“You see each other at adoration, and you have a special bond,” Wendy says. “You know that you both want to put your best effort into growing closer to the Lord and living the life He calls you to. That creates a connection that I can’t explain”

Wendy is not the only one who has experienced a deep connection to Christ and others through frequent adoration. Many of our parishioners say the same.

“I feel close to my mom who passed away,” says one parishioner.

“My prayers seem more meaningful when said before the Lord,” another says.

In truth, all those we spoke to who have made a commitment to adore the Lord in His Eucharistic presence on a regular basis say they have been blessed beyond measure by this commitment, and they encourage more of us to make an effort to spend time in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

“Once you start going, it becomes an essential part of your week,” one parishioner says.

The Eucharist is present, ready, and waiting for your visit

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Adoration *continued from page 6*

Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. At Nativity, the Eucharist is in a monstrance placed behind a tabernacle that can be opened so that the Eucharist can be exposed and we can adore Him. At Nativity, there is a keypad located in the back, by which we can gain entrance into the church and open the tabernacle. If you would like to spend time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, contact the St. Joseph parish office and ask for the code. It's as simple as that.

For her part, Wendy encourages all of us to spend time in adoration as much as we can.

"I would encourage others to go to adoration because of the ways my time with Jesus has impacted me," she says. "It has allowed me to see things through the Lord's eyes. I see things differently. I see people differently. Spending time in His presence allows me to ask Jesus to help me fix my flaws, to help me better love others. It really has changed my life."



To spend time in adoration, contact the parish office at 440-988-2848 and ask for the access code. Then make your way to Nativity and let Jesus change your life!

Music Ministry *continued from front cover*

"It's really a continuation of what's going on each week," Christina says. "We learn choral pieces that the congregation can enjoy."

The ministry's concerts are always free and open to the community — with a purpose.

"We're focusing on the fact that St. Joseph is becoming a center of the performing arts and spirituality," Christina says.

Those taking part in the ministry range in age from students in fourth grade on up.

"The nucleus of the Music Ministry is more from high school, college, and young adult," Christina says. "We've attracted quite a few. The older members are enjoying being a part of that, and the younger members are enjoying the elders' wisdom.

"My focus is a family ministry, with members of all ages," she adds. "We blend the ages together, and it seems to be working. It's much more of a family atmosphere. Parents

are singing with their kids, and I really like it. It gives a sense of connection to the youth and gives the older a sense of belonging."

Once the Christmas season has passed, Christina will begin auditions in January for *The Answer*. Besides being performed during Lent at Saint Joseph in Amherst, this play will also be performed at St. Justin Martyr Church in Eastlake, Solid Rock Community Church in Elyria, and Immaculate Conception Church in Port Clinton.

"It will have a cast of 80 to 90 people, with many from the ministry," Christina says. "It will be an opportunity for evangelization."

For more information about the Music Ministry, contact Christina Dupre at the parish office, 440-988-2848.

The Feast of St. Francis Xavier:

A MODEL OF MISSIONARY ZEAL

The Feast of St. Francis Xavier, celebrated on Dec. 3, commemorates the life and work of one of the Church's most revered saints, St. Francis Xavier, a missionary and co-founder of the Society of Jesus.

St. Francis Xavier was born in 1506 in the Kingdom of Navarre (modern-day Spain). He studied at the University of Paris, where he met St. Ignatius of Loyola, with whom he co-founded the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits. St. Francis Xavier is particularly known for his missionary work during the Age of Exploration. He traveled to India, Japan, and other parts of Southeast Asia to spread the message of Christianity. His tireless efforts and dedication to sharing the Gospel earned him the title "Apostle of the Indies."

St. Francis Xavier's life and work are of profound importance for Catholics for several reasons:

- **Missionary Zeal:** St. Francis Xavier's unwavering commitment to evangelization and the spread of the Christian faith serves as a model of missionary zeal. His journeys to distant lands to share the Gospel inspire Catholics to be proactive in their faith and to reach out to those who have yet to hear the Good News.
- **Compassion and Service:** St. Francis Xavier was known for his deep compassion for the marginalized and the poor. He worked tirelessly to alleviate suffering and bring comfort to those in need. His example reminds Catholics of the importance of service and charity in the Christian life.
- **Faith and Sacrifice:** The saint's life was marked by sacrifice and selflessness. He endured significant personal hardships and challenges in his missionary work, all while remaining steadfast in his faith. St. Francis Xavier's dedication teaches Catholics the value of faith and commitment, even in the face of adversity.
- **International Impact:** St. Francis Xavier's missionary efforts have left an enduring legacy, with millions of people in India and Asia having been introduced to Christianity through his work. His influence reaches far beyond his own time and place, emphasizing the universal nature of the Church and the Catholic faith.

Catholics can celebrate the Feast of St. Francis Xavier by attending Mass and reflecting on the saint's exemplary life and legacy. Prayers and novenas dedicated to St. Francis Xavier can be offered, seeking his intercession for missionaries and those in need.

St. Francis Xavier's feast day is a time to rekindle our own missionary spirit, whether through personal evangelization, supporting missionary efforts, or engaging in charitable works. It is a day to be inspired by his dedication to the faith, his selflessness, and his commitment to serving others. His legacy continues to influence the Church and inspire Catholics to live out their faith more deeply, by reaching out to others, helping the less fortunate, and spreading the message of Christ with fervor and dedication.



Celibacy By NATHAN FRANKART

Peace of Christ to you!

The bishop continues the rite of ordination to diaconate in this way: “Those of you who are prepared to embrace the celibate state: do you resolve to keep forever this commitment as a sign of your dedication to Christ the Lord for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, in the service of God and man?”

The ordinandi respond: “I do.”

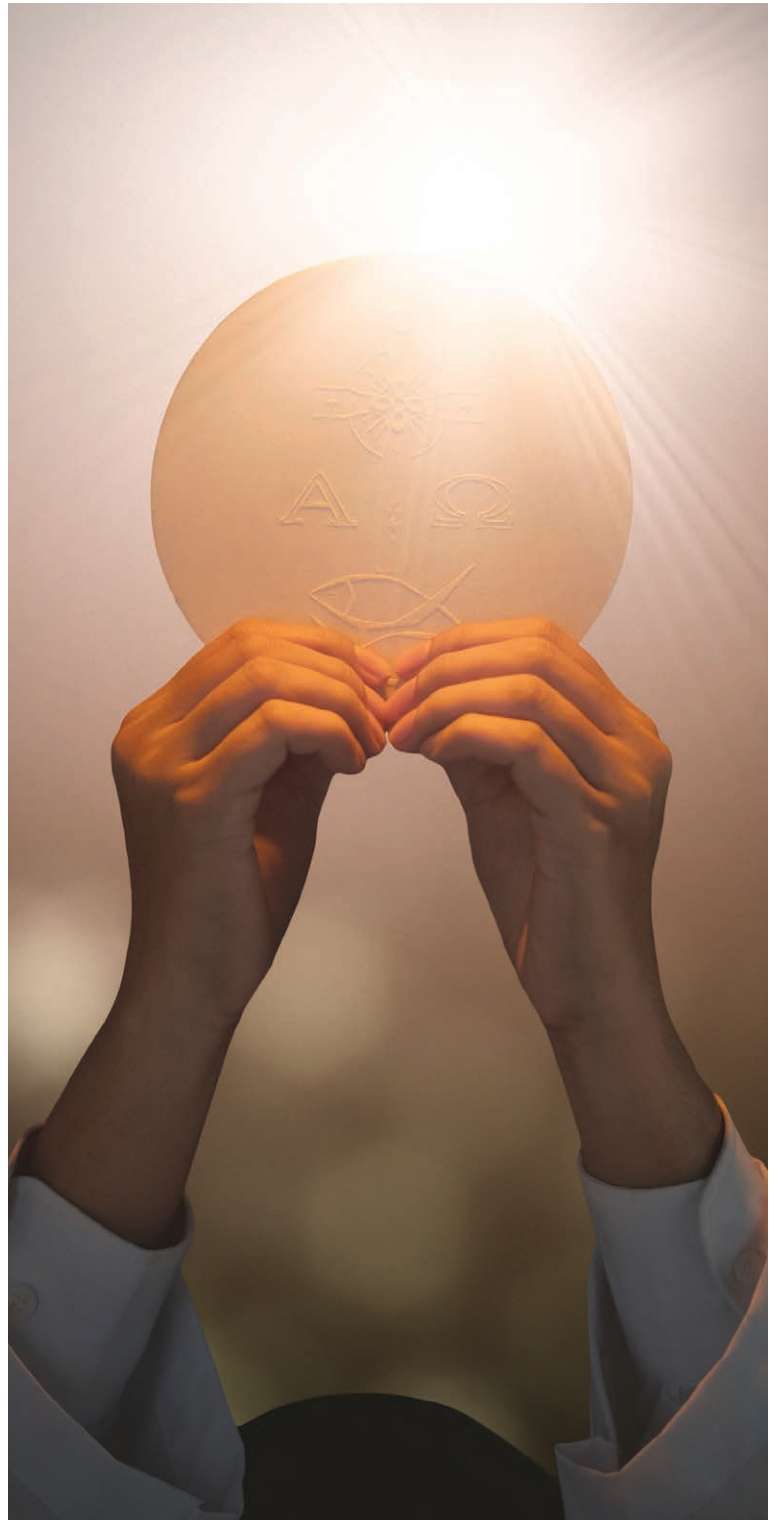
It’s funny — sometimes when we feel like we know something, it couldn’t be further from the truth. I believe most people, if not absolutely everybody in the Church, knows what celibacy is and that priests are called to live it out. What people don’t realize is *when* this vow takes place. For myself as a transitional deacon moving towards priesthood, I don’t get to “adjust course” or “stay a deacon” once I make this promise. It’s an absolute, unchanging commitment to a completely different state of life, one that connects back to the lived experience of Jesus and adopted by the Church for its ministers.

And the promise of celibacy produces one of the best and most thought-provoking questions I’ve ever heard — “Why?” Why does it have to be this way?

I can’t give you a sufficient answer in 400 words — which, again, is way harder to write these articles than any final I’m currently preparing for — but I can tell you what it means to me.

Celibacy is a gift, one that allows me to *become gift* completely, totally, fruitfully, for others. It depends on two things — intimacy with God and intimacy with the Church. The relationship between the priest and God is supposed to prefigure — or demonstrate in advance — the relationship that God desires for all His people, the eternal relationship to be enjoyed in paradise. The celibate is called to live out that reality as a symbol for the world. I rejoice to be called to such a noble demonstration.

As for intimacy with the Church, that is sustained in multiple ways. I have incredible generative friendships that bolster me socially, loving family that provides for me emotionally, and an incredible Church, the Catholic Church, that I view as my bride — because Christ views us as the Catholic Church as His bride. I too have fallen in love with it, just as God has become madly in love with us.



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This newsletter brought to you by the Catholic Communities of:

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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 Activities and Events

First Sunday of Advent

Sunday, Dec. 1

Hospitality Tuesday

Tuesday, Dec. 3 — 8:30 a.m.,
Nativity Church (following 8 a.m.
Mass)

First Friday Rosary

Friday, Dec. 6 — 11 a.m. (NOTE —
there will be no luncheon to follow)

First Saturday Rosary

Saturday, Dec. 7 — 9 a.m.,
St. Joseph Church

First Reconciliation

Saturday, Dec. 7 — 1 p.m.,
St. Joseph Church

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

— Holy Day of Obligation (moved
from Sunday, Dec. 8)
Monday, Dec. 9 — 9 a.m., St. Joseph
Parish; 12 p.m., Nativity Parish;
7 p.m., St. Joseph Parish

Parent Club Meeting

Tuesday, Dec. 10 — 7 p.m., School
MPR

Wonderful Women

Tuesday, Dec. 10 — 7 p.m.,
St. Joseph Social Hall

Pre-Baptism Class

Wednesday, Dec. 11 — 7 p.m.,
St. Joseph School

St. Joseph School Christmas Concert

Friday, Dec. 13 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph
Church

Grade 5 CYO Basketball Banquet

Thursday, Dec. 19 — 6 p.m.,
St. Joseph Social Hall

No School-Christmas Break

Monday, Dec. 23 — Monday, Jan. 6

Parish Offices Closed

Tuesday, Dec. 24 and Wednesday,
Dec. 25

Christmas Mass Times:

Tuesday, Dec. 24 Vigil Masses —
4 p.m., St. Joseph Parish; 6 p.m.,
Nativity Parish; 8 p.m., St. Joseph
Parish
Wednesday, Dec. 25 —
8:30 a.m., St. Joseph Parish; 10 a.m.,
Nativity Parish; 11:30 a.m., St. Joseph
Parish

NOTE: There will be no Mass or
Confessions on Thursday, December 26

St. Joseph Music Ministry

Christmas Concert
Friday, Dec. 27 — 7:30 p.m.,
St. Joseph Parish

Parish Office Closed

Tuesday, Dec. 31

Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God

Tuesday, Dec. 31 Vigil Mass — 4 p.m.,
St. Joseph Parish
Wednesday, Jan. 1 — 8:30 a.m., Nativity
Parish; 10 a.m., St. Joseph Parish

OCIA (formerly RCIA)

Monday, Dec. 2, 9, and 16 — 7 p.m., Nativity
Parish Hall

Grief Recovery Program

Monday, Dec. 2 and 9 — 4 p.m., St. Joseph
Social Hall

Men's Group

Tuesday, Dec. 3 and 17 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph
Social Hall

PSR

Wednesday, Dec. 4, 11, and 18 — 5:30 p.m.,
St. Joseph School

Sacred Sisters Prayer and Study Group

Wednesday, Dec. 4 and 11 — 6:30 p.m.,
O.S.E. Community Center

Vincentians Meeting

Thursday, Dec. 5 and 19 — 9 a.m., St. Joseph
Conference Room

Holy Ground Youth Group

Sunday, Dec. 8 and 15 — 6 p.m., St. Joseph
Social Hall (event begins with 5 p.m. Mass —
meet near the choir prior to Mass)

Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes

Tuesday and Thursdays in December —
9:30 a.m., Nativity Parish Hall

NOTE: We will NOT meet on Dec. 24 and 26.
It will resume on Dec. 31.