



# ST. JOSEPH PARISH

## NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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*By NATHAN FRANKART*

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**JANUARY 2025**

## Faithfully Fit Yoga With Cindy Miller

### Leading Parishioners and Visitors to Greater Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Health

When we think of health, the first thing that likely comes to mind is caring for our physical bodies. Of course, keeping our bodies fit is essential, but caring for our mental and spiritual health is no less essential. Faithfully Fit Yoga with Cindy Miller leads people twice a week to care for their own health in multiple ways.

Cindy's yoga classes at Nativity are more gentle yoga, and participants can adjust to their physical needs. Cindy's form of yoga follows Catholic teaching, and she offers an opportunity for meditation, prayer, and clearing the mind.

"Yoga is dear to my heart," Cindy says. "It's part of my faith, and I find so much peace through it."

The spiritual aspect of yoga is important to Cindy. It helps her practice mindfulness and aids her overall health.

"It keeps you from being all over with your thoughts," she says. "It clears my mind. I have poses that I have created to fit my faith."

Yoga for Cindy is also a way to build



community among the parish and greater community. The group that attends the yoga sessions has formed a tight bond through friendship and exercise.

"We find peace together," Cindy says. "We have gotten to know people so much better. I've met new people. We share about our lives. We are almost like a small newspaper. It's not gossip — it's sharing life together."

There are usually about 25 people attending the hour-long yoga class on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. Cindy hears a lot of wonderful comments from attendees that they

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# New Year's Resolutions

## for Faithful Stewards

**A**s we usher in the new year, it's common for people to make resolutions, setting goals and intentions for the year ahead. These resolutions often revolve around personal growth, health, or career aspirations. However, for Catholics, the new year can be an excellent opportunity to connect these resolutions to living stewardship as a way of life. Stewardship is the practice of recognizing that everything we have is a gift from God and, in return, we are called to be responsible caretakers of those gifts by sharing our time, talent, and treasure with God and our parish. By aligning our resolutions with this principle, we can live a more faithful and purposeful life.

One of the core tenets of stewardship is gratitude for the gifts we have received from God. It's essential to recognize that our resolutions are, in themselves, opportunities to give thanks. When setting goals related to personal health, for example, we can be grateful for our bodies and resolve to take better care of them. When it comes to finances, we can acknowledge the financial blessings we have and make resolutions to manage them wisely and generously.

Stewardship extends to our spiritual lives as well. Many resolutions center on personal growth and self-improvement, which can easily align with our faith. Consider setting resolutions to deepen your spiritual life, such as attending Mass regularly, praying daily, or volunteering at your parish. These actions not only enhance your own faith journey, but also contribute to the spiritual growth of your community.

Another vital aspect of stewardship is the call to be generous and charitable. In your New Year's resolutions, consider how you can integrate acts of charity and service. You might resolve to volunteer more, donate to charitable organizations, or simply try to be more compassionate and understanding in your interactions with others. These small acts of kindness reflect God's love and grace.

The stewardship way of life must begin at home with our family — our Domestic Church. Consider setting

resolutions that prioritize spending quality time with your loved ones, committing to family prayer, nurturing your relationships with each other and Christ, and strengthening your community. Building and sustaining these connections is a powerful expression of stewardship, as it promotes unity and mutual support.

Our financial well-being is another area where stewardship principles can be applied. Make resolutions to manage your finances responsibly, budget wisely, save for the future, and share your treasure with God, the parish, and community. By doing so, you are acknowledging that your financial resources are a gift from God and that you are called to manage them prudently.

Stewardship calls for self-reflection and accountability for our actions. As you work towards your resolutions, periodically assess your progress, and reflect on how well you are honoring your stewardship commitment. Consider seeking spiritual guidance or accountability from a mentor, priest, deacon, or fellow parishioner, to help you stay on track.

Incorporating stewardship into your New Year's resolutions is not just a way to set goals, but a profound way to live out your faith. It transforms ordinary resolutions into sacred commitments that align with your core beliefs as a Catholic. By being mindful of the gifts God has bestowed upon you and actively seeking to be a good steward of those gifts, you can approach the new year with a sense of purpose, gratitude, and a stronger connection to your faith.



*A Letter from Our Pastor*

## Celebrating the Gift of Catholic Education in the New Year



Catholic Schools  
United in Faith and Community



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

**A**s we begin another new year, I would like to focus on the annual celebration of Catholic Schools Week at the end of January. At the heart of our Catholic tradition lies the belief that education is a powerful means of shaping the future, nurturing young minds, and instilling the values that will guide them throughout their lives. Catholic Schools Week reminds us of the significant contribution that Catholic education makes to the holistic development of our children, and the importance of our continued support.

We are so blessed to have our Saint Joseph Parish School, and its faculty and staff, under the leadership of Mrs. Amy Makruski, our principal. Our school is here to offer an excellent Catholic education to families in our communities who would like to enroll their children here.

This week is not just a time for festivities and recognition. It is also a moment to deepen our understanding of the profound impact Catholic education has on our youth. Here are some reflections on why Catholic education matters:

- **Prayer and Faith Formation:** Mass, Confessions, daily prayer, religious studies, and faith formation are integral parts of a Catholic school's curriculum. Our children are given the opportunity to deepen their relationship with God and their understanding of the Catholic faith.
- **Values-Based Education:** Catholic schools provide an environment where faith and moral values are woven into the curriculum. Our children are taught not only the academics, but also the timeless virtues of love, compassion, and respect, which are rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ.
- **Community Building:** Catholic schools foster a sense of belonging and community. The relationships formed within these institutions extend beyond the classroom, creating a supportive and nurturing environment for our children to grow.
- **Academic Excellence:** Catholic schools have a strong tradition of academic excellence. They equip our children with the knowledge and skills necessary for their future while emphasizing critical thinking, creativity, and a commitment to lifelong learning.
- **Character Formation:** In addition to academic achievements, Catholic education focuses on character formation. Students are encouraged to become responsible, compassionate, and socially aware individuals who contribute positively to society.
- **Service and Outreach:** Catholic schools encourage a spirit of service and outreach. Students are taught the importance of giving back to their

communities, making a difference in the lives of those in need, and being responsible stewards of God's gifts.

During Catholic Schools Week, we have the chance to acknowledge the exceptional work of our dedicated educators and school staff. They are committed to nurturing the spiritual and intellectual growth of our children. Let us express our gratitude and support for their tireless efforts.

Through our prayers, volunteering, financial contributions, and active involvement, we ensure that our schools continue to provide a nurturing environment where our children can thrive both academically and spiritually.

In the spirit of Catholic Schools Week, let us recommit ourselves to the mission of Catholic education. By doing so, we strengthen the foundation of our faith, nurture the next generation of disciples, and contribute to a brighter future for our children.

I am proud of and grateful for our Saint Joseph Parish School. And I am thankful for all who have prayed for and supported our school in the past and in our own times. Happy Catholic Schools Week, everyone!

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,  
Pastor

## Adult Altar Servers Enjoy Understanding the Mass from a Unique Point of View

One beautiful aspect of the Mass is that everyone can participate. However, there is one ministry in particular that gives an opportunity to serve the Church in a very tangible way. The Adult Altar Server Ministry, which helps to ensure the Mass runs smoothly and reverently, has been especially meaningful for three parishioners at St. Joseph Parish.

Altar servers help the priest with practical tasks throughout the liturgical celebration. They play an important role in enhancing the order and solemnity of the service. And for Ross Maenza, Dan Bullock, and his son, Gabe, their stewardship in this area has enhanced their own faith lives in turn.

Ross has been involved in several liturgical ministries, serving as a lector and an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. He became an altar server less than a year ago when his friend Dan had to step back due to knee surgery. Ross says he was open to helping out, especially since he had done it before as a boy.

"I've always wanted to get back into it," Ross says. "I was an altar server in a Catholic school in Cleveland. I



*(From left) Dan Bullock, Gabe Bullock, and Ross Maenza*

hadn't done it in many years, but it was something I thought I would enjoy doing."

Dan was also an altar server as a young boy. He decided to help out because he knew the parish was short-handed. His son, Gabe, had already been serving as an adult altar server, and Dan thought it would be special to serve alongside him. Gabe, Dan, and Ross are all in the altar server rotation for the 8:30 Mass.

"Gabe is there every week, and he loves it," Dan says.

Both Dan and Ross agree that serving up front and center during the Mass gives one a special perspective.

"You get to see Mass from a different angle," Ross says. "It's different than lecturing or serving as an Extraordinary Minister. It gives you a deeper meaning to

be a part of a Mass. I look forward to it."

Dan, who has taught for the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults for many years, appreciates understanding more fully the significance of every action during the Mass.

"It gives you a different perspective of the Church," Dan says. "You see what the priest sees. It's profound. You can witness the big picture. My faith has grown because of it."

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*"Stewardship has a lot to do with being a part of the family of the Church. The more I participate, the more I get to know people. It's an extended family feel, and it's so cool to be a part of that."*

*— Ross Maenza*

## Adult Altar Servers *continued from page 4*

Men and women can become adult altar servers. There is a little bit of training involved, but Dan says that one can get the hang of it after serving once or twice.

“I understand it can feel intimidating, but if you’re up there with experienced servers, we can put your mind at ease,” he says. “After one or two Masses you would have it down pat.”

The Adult Altar Server Ministry is a beautiful example of how stewardship can bless the one who offers their time and talent. Ross says that serving has made him feel closer to the parish community.

“Stewardship has a lot to do with being a part of the family of the Church,” Ross says. “The more I participate, the more I get to know people. It’s an extended family feel, and it’s so cool to be a part of that. I would love for others to see a Mass in a whole different way.”

**St. Joseph Parish is in need of more adult altar servers to add to the scheduling rotation. If you are interested, contact Kathy Loos at 440-823-6177 or [jkmdmps@hotmail.com](mailto:jkmdmps@hotmail.com).**



## Faithfully Fit Yoga With Cindy Miller *continued from front cover*

can keep up better with their grandkids, reach higher, and just feel better overall. Besides Cindy’s love for yoga, this positive impact is another thing that inspires her to keep teaching.

“People say they don’t feel heavy when they leave — they feel light,” she says. “They feel stretched out and can walk better and stretch further.”

Yoga also helps people with their breathing. When we are stressed, we tend to hold our breath, says Cindy. Yoga helps people focus on their breathing.

“Let’s be faithful to our health — we should be faithful to that, too,” Cindy says. “When you believe and have faith, you have a strong sense within you. You are more grounded.”

All parishioners are invited to give Faithfully Fit Yoga with Cindy a try. You won’t regret taking some time to focus on your physical, mental, and spiritual health. Cindy also teaches yoga at other locations.

*“Let’s be faithful to our health — we should be faithful to that, too. When you believe and have faith, you have a strong sense within you. You are more grounded.”*  
— Cindy Miller

**Yoga at Nativity is open to men and women at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Free-will donations are accepted — all funds go to the Altar and Rosary Society.**

# Community Grows With *Dinner on the Go*

## *An Inside Look at Nativity's Meal Program*

Who doesn't love to gather around food? Dinner on the Go is a community dinner program here at the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary where folks order dinners to pick up twice a month. The concept started six years ago.

"This is the brainchild of Lynn and Derek Johnson," Karen Dancik-Abfall says. "They knew another parish that did a dinner and thought we should try it to raise funds for our parish. We said we'd be happy to help."

The core Dinner on the Go group includes Karen and her husband Dan Abfall, the Johnsons, and Gina and Doug Irvin. They started the program, but many have joined since.

"It just exploded," Dan says. "We've got over 30 volunteers on Sunday and Tuesday."

Many hours go into making the program possible.

"There's a lot of prep," Karen says. "The food has to be ordered earlier in the week. That's Dan — he's the dude with the food."

On Thursday or Friday, Dan picks everything up and takes it to the church. "Depending on the meat, I'll cook it Saturday, get it prepared," he says. "Everyone meets at the parish Sunday at 8 a.m. to prep potatoes and vegetables."

Soups are also offered with each dinner.

"That takes three to four hours to prep," Dan says. "Tuesday, we get together about noon and start cutting all the desserts. Lynn organizes the desserts, how many we need, and



*Four of the six founding members of "DOTG" (from left) Dan and Karen Dancik-Abfall, and Lynn and Derek Johnson. The other two founding members not pictured are Gina and Doug Irvin.*

who's baking them. They're dropped off at the church."

Desserts are always a surprise as the bakers are able to make whatever pie or cake they want. Everything is ready by 4:30 p.m. — with many waiting in the driveway waiting by 4 p.m.

"We say we serve from 5 to 6 p.m., but it's basically when we're ready," Dan says. "We make home deliveries to some shut-ins in the community — Carol Zelmer makes those deliveries. It's a drive-through. They pull around back and we ask their name."

"Most are pre-ordered," Karen adds. "They call Lynn to order."

Some folks ask for an extra while they're picking up — though many say one dinner could count for two. The crew is ready with some extra, but the capacity is nearly full.

"When we started, we were hoping for 50 to 60 dinners," Dan says. "We're well over 300 now."

The Dinner on the Go program started with parishioners, but now the whole community is getting involved.

"I have people at work ordering," Karen says. "It's like extended family. We have a work family, a home family, and a church family. Our church family is calling their family and friends. For \$13 you can have a delicious homemade meal. It's grown leaps and bounds. Nothing goes to waste. If we have anything left over, it's donated."

*continued on page 5*

*"We've met a lot of people that aren't in our parish that want to help because of the sheer energy of the place and how much fun it is. It's a lot of good people doing a good thing for a good cause."  
— Karen Dancik-Abfall*

## Community Grows With *Dinner on the Go*

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Dinners are on the second and fourth Tuesdays of January, February, March, April, and then September, October, and November. For only \$13, the meals include a main course, a vegetable, roll, and dessert. Soup is available for an additional \$4.

“That covers the expenses,” Dan says. “The profit goes to the church to help with general operating.”

“We do put money aside for the community,” Karen adds, with the program donating to Maybells’ Food Cupboard in South Amherst.

“We keep about \$100 for equipment and maintenance for the kitchen,” Dan says.

The kitchen has grown markedly, with two refrigerators and two freezers. Initially, the group cooked at home and brought food to the church. Now that Dinner on the Go has grown so much, the program is maxing out on how many orders it can take.

“Our capacity is around 350,” Dan says. “We’re running out of oven space.”

The program is always looking for volunteers and bakers.

“It really is a joyous time,” Karen says. “Father talks about time and talent. We’ve met a lot of people who aren’t in our parish who want to help because of the sheer energy of the place and how much fun it is. It’s a lot of good people doing a good thing for a good cause.”



**Those who are looking to place an order, volunteer, or bake with Dinner on the Go may call Lynn Johnson at 440-752-6519.**

# St. John Neumann:

## A Sainly Stalwart for Catholic Education



In Catholic tradition, the name of St. John Neumann shines brightly for Catholic education. His life and work have left an indelible mark on the Catholic Church in the United States. Born on March 28, 1811, in what is now the Czech Republic, Neumann's journey from humble beginnings to becoming a revered saint and bishop is a testament to his unwavering commitment to Catholic education.

From a young age, Neumann demonstrated a thirst for knowledge and a strong desire to serve God. His family's modest background did not hinder his pursuit of education. He learned several languages, a skill that would prove invaluable in his later work with immigrant communities in the United States. In his early adulthood, Neumann entered the seminary in Bohemia, where his academic achievements and profound spirituality marked him as a promising candidate for the priesthood.

In 1836, Neumann decided to follow his calling to serve the Catholic Church in America, a decision that would set him on a path of great significance. He was ordained a priest and embarked on his mission to the United States, a country filled with immigrants yearning for spiritual guidance and education.

St. John Neumann recognized the pivotal role that education plays in nurturing the faith and intellectual growth of the Catholic community. He observed that Catholic immigrants in the United States often faced challenges in maintaining their faith and identity in a predominantly Protestant society. Neumann saw education as a means to preserve and strengthen the Catholic identity in the face of adversity.

Neumann's early experiences in America led him to understand that the establishment of Catholic schools was essential. These schools not only provided quality education,

but also instilled in students a deep sense of Catholic identity and values. He worked tirelessly to establish parochial schools, create a diocesan school system, and promote the importance of education for Catholic children.

In 1852, he became the fourth bishop of Philadelphia, where he continued to dedicate himself to the establishment and expansion of Catholic schools. During his tenure, he increased the number of schools and introduced various reforms to ensure high-quality education. Neumann encouraged religious orders to come to the diocese and assist in the education of children, particularly those from immigrant backgrounds.

In addition to this work, Neumann played a crucial role in the foundation of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, a religious congregation devoted to education and social services.

St. John Neumann's commitment to Catholic education left an enduring legacy. His influence is still felt today, as Catholic schools across the United States continue to thrive, providing students with a strong foundation in both faith and academics.

In recognition of his remarkable life and work, St. John Neumann was beatified in 1963 and canonized in 1977. His life was a testament to the power of education in preserving the faith and nurturing the spiritual growth of Catholic communities, especially in the United States. St. John Neumann's commitment to Catholic education continues to inspire educators, students, and the faithful, reminding us of the enduring importance of quality education in the service of God. His feast day is celebrated on Jan. 5.



## Liturgy of the Hours

By NATHAN FRANKART

The bishop then asks the following: “Do you resolve to maintain and deepen the spirit of prayer that is proper to your way of life and, in keeping with this spirit and what is required of you, to celebrate faithfully the Liturgy of the Hours with and for the People of God and indeed for the whole world?”

The candidate responds: “I do.”

The problem with writing so many articles over so many years really comes apparent when you sit down to write again, and it feels like you’re repeating yourself. I am fairly certain that I have written about the purpose of the Liturgy of the Hours before. But at the risk of being repetitive with these articles, we will explore the topic again.

You’ve probably heard of priests praying for the Church many times before, but do you have an idea of what that looks like? When does it happen, and how is it offered up? For all deacons and priests, we make a promise to the whole Church upon ordination that such prayers will be done through the Liturgy of the Hours.

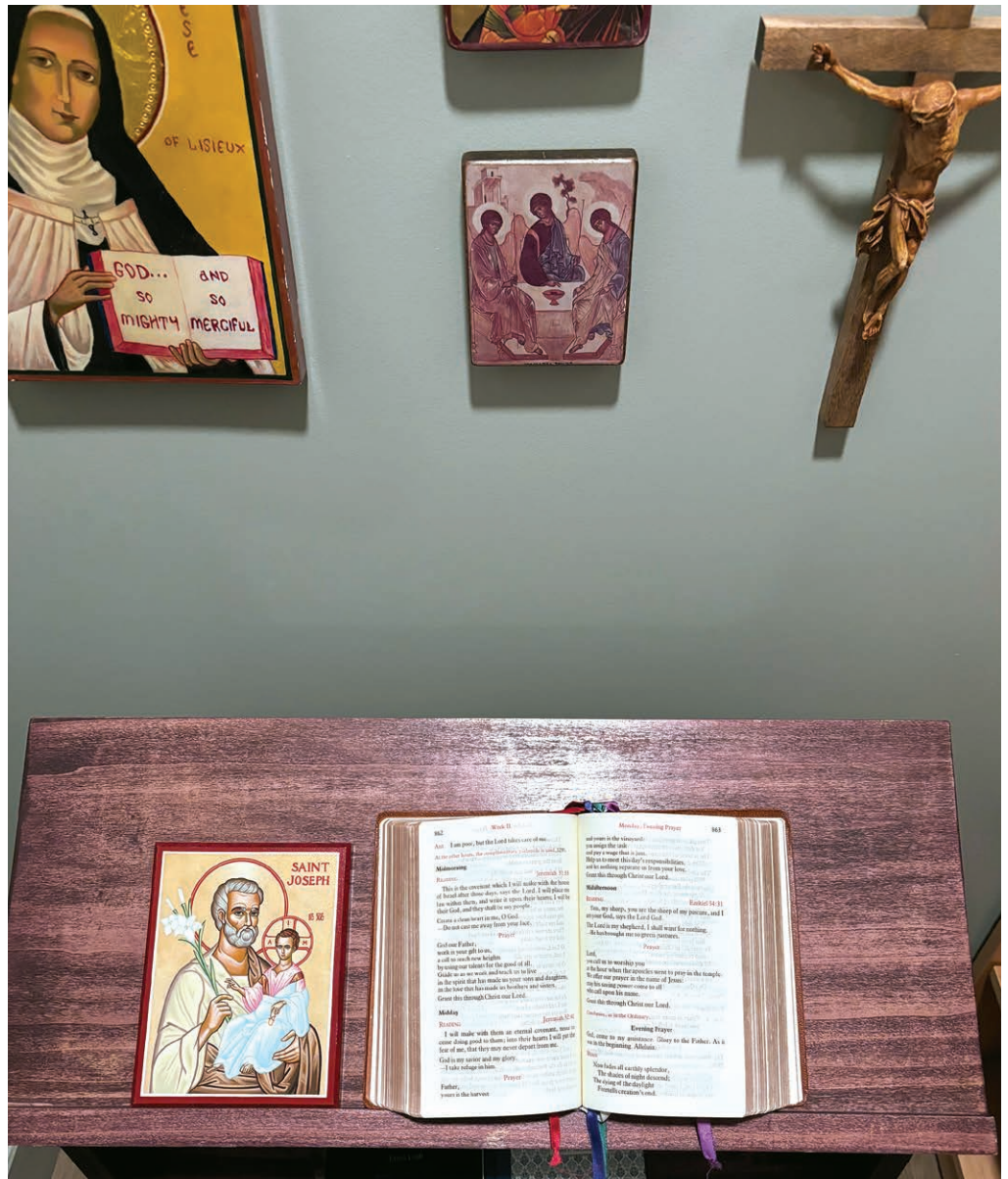
It is set up to be completed at different hours of the day: Morning, Daytime, Evening, Night and a final hour called the Office of Readings. Its content is that of a meditative dialogue on the mystery of Christ, using Scripture and prayer. It achieves this by incorporating psalms, songs of praise, homilies of the saints, and Scripture aimed to embody a particular voice. The role of the ordained is to embody and pray on behalf of the voice that is being highlighted in these readings.

When the Psalms in prayers reflect sorrow, it is offered up and prayed for those in the Church experiencing sorrow.

If it is joyful, the ordained calls to mind all who have blessed recently and offer thanksgiving on their behalf. One of the Vatican II documents says it well, that the Liturgy of the Hours “is truly the voice of the Bride herself addressed to her Bridegroom. It is the very prayer which Christ himself together with his

Body addresses to the Father.”

The ordained promise to commit themselves to these prayers every day, because the Church as Bride ought to address and share with her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. It is a divine communication, a language of love spoken on behalf of all whom the ordained know and love.



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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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200 Saint Joseph Drive, Amherst, OH 44001

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

**Happy New Year**

Wednesday, Jan. 1 — Parish Offices Closed  
Jan. 1-6 — No School, Christmas break continued

**Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God —  
Holy Day of Obligation**

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

**No Mass or Confessions**

Thursday, Jan. 2

**First Saturday Rosary**

Saturday, Jan. 4 — 9 a.m., St. Joseph Church

**Hospitality Tuesday**

Tuesday, Jan. 7 — 8:30 a.m., Nativity Church  
(following 8 a.m. Mass)

**Martin Luther King Day**

Monday, Jan. 20 — No School

**Catholic Schools Week January 26-31**

Sunday, Jan. 26 — 12 p.m. Open House, St. Joseph School

**OCIA (formerly RCIA)**

Monday, Jan. 6, 13, 20, 27 — 7 p.m., Nativity Parish Hall

**Men's Group**

Tuesday, Jan. 7 and 21 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph Social Hall

**PSR**

Wednesday, Jan. 15, 22, and 29 — 5:30 p.m.,  
St. Joseph School

**Sacred Sisters Prayer and Study Group**

Wednesday, Jan. 8, 15, 22, and 29 — 6:30 p.m.,  
O.S.E. Community Center

**Vincentians Meeting**

Thursday, Jan. 9 and 23 — 9 a.m.,  
St. Joseph Conference Room

**Holy Ground Youth Group**

Sunday, Jan. 5 and 19 — 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 January — 9:30 a.m.,  
Nativity Parish Hall