

Father O'Connor's Homily for 26 January 2025
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time-C
Catholic Schools Week

Nehemiah 8: 2-4a, 5-6, 8-10
1 Corinthians 12: 12-30
Luke 1: 1-4; 4: 14-21

To our Saint Joseph Parish School families, our dedicated teachers, staff and volunteers – and those of our area Catholic colleges, high schools and elementary schools – happy Catholic Schools Week!

To all of you, our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parish Family members – thank you for your commitment to and support for Catholic education.

This Sunday from 12:00 Noon until 1:30 PM, Saint Joseph Parish School, under the leadership of our principal, Mrs. Amy Makruski, welcomes you to an Open House. And our Knights of Columbus will be hosting “Coffee and Donuts” for you there in our School Gymnasium.

Saint Joseph Parish School has received designation from the State of Ohio as a STEM school – with a curriculum emphasizing Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, in a Catholic learning environment, preparing our students for the job-market of this 21st century.

Whether or not you have school-age children, please come and see our/your school.

All students are now eligible for up to a full-tuition scholarship through Ohio EdChoice and/or local tuition assistance. A Catholic education is now more affordable than ever. What a blessing we have right here in our gem of a school.

And a way that all who pay taxes to the State of Ohio can help our Catholic schools financially – at no cost at all to the donor – is through the Angel Scholarship Fund. Contributions to the Angel Scholarship Fund provide tuition assistance for students who attend a Catholic school, K-12. And donors may receive a tax credit of up to \$750 for single persons – and up to \$1500 for married couples who are filing jointly – against their Ohio State tax liability.

In other words, the State of Ohio allows you to “spend” some of the state income taxes – that you must pay anyway – to provide tuition assistance for students in our Catholic schools – including right here at Saint Joseph Parish School in Amherst.

And some more good news: the Angel Scholarship Fund 2024 deadline has been extended up until 15 April 2025. Thank you to all of you who have already signed-up. There is more information in this weekend's bulletin about the Angel Scholarship Fund opportunity.

An American woman was doing some shopping in London, England and needed some advice on the merchandise. She looked up at a clerk and the clerk just stood there lifelessly and ignored her. She looked around the store and everybody seemed to be frozen stiff. She was very uneasy.

All of a sudden, everybody came back to life. And then she realized what was happening. It was November 11th, Armistice Day, Veterans' Day, and in Great Britain, at noon on that day, everyone stops for a reverent two minutes of silence to remember those fallen in war.

Sometimes in life we can feel like we are a bit disconnected with everyone around us and we don't know how to fit in.

A newly-retired man decided that it was time that he started to do some traveling. He made some arrangements, got his passport and was getting his visa. The official asked him, "Would you raise your right hand, and do you promise to do all in your power to uphold the Constitution of the United States, both here and abroad?" Puzzled, he asked, "All by myself???"

We can sometimes feel like we have a ton of responsibility on our shoulders and that we are carrying it all by ourselves. And so Saint Paul gives us an instruction today in his first letter to the Corinthians:

He says, "If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? And if the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?" Saint Paul says that all of the parts of our bodies, with their different functions, are important, and they all work together as a unity. And so do we as parts of the Body of Christ, the Church. We all have a part to play and we all need one another.

There was a want-ad in a newspaper that said: "Seeking a co-author for a book on self-reliance." Now that does sound a bit silly, doesn't it? But yet, it's true. We need one another.

I came across a little poem that is a bit cute, but still drives home a point:

Dick needs Jane, and Jack needs Jill
And Tom is Jerry's chum.
Need we mention Mutt and Jeff
And Tweedles Dee and Dum?
Sherlock Holmes and Watson
Were as thick as any thieves,
And don't forget that Adam
Was a bosom friend of Eve's.
Like ham and eggs and curds and whey,
Good friends go well together.
They're salt and pepper, fish and chips
And stars 'n stripes forever.
Yes, friendship is a fact of life
From Shreveport to Shanghai.
As Orville said to Wilbur,
"It's the only way to fly!"

Our need for community is not a weakness – it is a strength. We are members of the Body of Christ. Community is right at the core of the life of the Church.

There are things that you can do that I don't know how to do, and I'm sure there are some things that I can do that maybe you can't do. So what do we do? We help each other.

We are grateful stewards of God's bountiful blessings. We develop God's gifts to us of time, talent and treasure. As a sign of our gratitude, we share a portion of our gifts generously according to the ways we have been blessed. And we receive gifts from others according to our needs.

One author wrote: "God forbid that the President of the United States would end up in the hospital for two weeks. But if he did, the United States government would continue on, wouldn't it? But, if all of those people who collected our trash throughout the United States went on strike for two weeks, we would be in deep, deep trouble, wouldn't we?"

We are all important in God's eyes, no matter what we do or where we live, no matter what our age or our stage in life.

This past Wednesday, 22 January, the Church in the United States observed "A Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children." The 52nd March for Life took place in Washington, DC on this past Friday,

24 January. Its theme this year, “Life: Why We March,” reminding us of the basic truth that every life has inherent dignity from the very start.

What do we as Catholics believe, as do so many other people of good will? We believe that our human lives began not at our birth, but nine months earlier at the moment of our conception. And every human life is worthy of dignity and respect from that first moment of life until that last moment when God, the Author of Life, calls us home.

Children in the womb are part of the Body of Christ too. We who have already been given the opportunity to be born need to defend the rights of those waiting to be born. We are all members of the Body of Christ. And every life matters.

I will leave you with a story:

A lady was attending a jazz concert in New Orleans. She noticed, down in the first row, a little boy who kept waving his hands in the air, and it was irritating her. “Why can’t he just listen to this great music like everybody else does?” And then she realized he had special needs, and that was how he responded to the sounds.

The band leader was very perceptive. After the intermission he said to the audience, “Now I need all of you to help with this next number. I’d like you all to put your hands in the air and wave them to the beat – and really feel the rhythm of this piece.” And they all did, with gestures.

Later on the woman reflected that that little boy’s different response to the music became the shared response of the whole crowd. He had taught them another way to appreciate those great sounds. And it was beautiful.

We all have talents that we can share. We all have needs that others can fulfill.

Why is this so? Because, many though we are, we are members of Jesus’ Body, the Church. And we are one family in Christ.

How blessed we are to be included and to belong. And how blessed we are to welcome every brother and sister to be included and to belong to this family too.