



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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MARCH 2025

Getting to Know St. Joseph Parishioner

Laureen Suspenski

Praying, Caring, and Living Out the Faith Every Day

Laureen Suspenski has been a parishioner at St. Joseph for the past eight years, but her journey with the Church began at a young age.

Growing up at St. Anthony Parish in Lorain, Laureen's mother ensured her family was involved in the Church and serving others.

However, when Laureen moved to California, she found herself drifting away.

"I was feeling different about the Church and stayed away for a long time," she says.

Upon moving back to Ohio, Laureen met a young neighbor named Morgan Stock, who was visually impaired and disabled. Laureen credits Morgan for her conversion back to the faith.

"She always called me 'Aunt Reeny,'" Laureen says. "She would ask me to come to Mass."

It was then that Laureen returned to the faith and got involved at St. Joseph. For Laureen's first Mass as lector, Morgan attended to hear her. Morgan continued to encourage Laureen in her faith journey, and even after Morgan's passing, Laureen continued to attend St. Joseph.

"She brought me back to the Church," Laureen says, crediting both Morgan and her mother with playing pivotal roles in her current involvement in the Church.

From there, Laureen quickly got involved.



Laureen Suspenski meets with ladies from the parish — (from left) Tootie Tsacoumangos, Brenda Yovan, Laureen, Rita Hiser and Mary Jane Pasky.

She now serves in a number of ministries, readily helping wherever needed. Laureen is deeply committed to serving in the parish and giving to those in need.

"Each year I try to pick something new to get involved in," she says.

This past year, Laureen's newest initiative was the Giving Tree. She regularly serves as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, bringing the Eucharist to the homebound on Sundays. She also participates with the Vincentians, which she says has helped her to grow through serving the less fortunate — an effort close to her heart. She also helps with folding the parish bulletins monthly.

For Laureen, stewardship means giving *continued on page 5*

LENT:

A Time for Merciful Compassion and Preparation



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

Easter Sunday falls on April 20 this year. And so the season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5. So I thought I would offer some ideas for you to consider, hoping that this season of Lent will be a special time of God's grace and mercy for you and for all of the people of our parishes.

In the Gospel for Ash Wednesday (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18), Jesus recommends three ways to spend this holy season: in prayer, in fasting, and in almsgiving. I would encourage you, in the penances that you commit yourself to perform, to choose something in each category.

In the realm of prayer, maybe you would like to take on some prayer in addition to your regular ones, or maybe you would like to concentrate a bit more on the prayers that you already offer each day. Participate in weekday Mass as often as you can, in addition to Sunday Mass. Come to the Stations of the Cross on Friday evenings at 7 p.m. I also highly recommend spending some time each week in prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in South Amherst has Eucharistic Adoration each week from Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. until 10 p.m. in the Eucharistic Chapel of the church. St. Joseph Church in Amherst is open every morning and afternoon seven days each week for your prayer and adoration. These are great opportunities to spend personal time with Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

I recommend that everyone, from grade two on up, celebrate the Sacrament of Penance, the great Sacrament of God's Mercy, during Lent. It is a powerful means to personal conversion and,

while always "in season," is especially appropriate during Lent.

Confessions are heard each week at St. Joseph on Thursday evenings after the 7 p.m. Mass until 8:30 p.m., and on Saturday mornings from 11 a.m. until noon.

On Wednesday evening, March 19, from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m., we will be having our annual "Diocesan Evening of Confession." All the parishes in our Diocese who have a resident priest will have their priests in their confessionals and reconciliation rooms that evening, ready and eager to celebrate this great Sacrament of the Lord's Mercy with you. I will be available at St. Joseph Church.

St. Joseph Parish will once again host the musical drama of Our Lord's life, death and resurrection, *The Answer*, on Friday and Saturday evenings, March 21 and March 22, at 7:30 p.m. in the church.

In the area of fasting, you might fast from sin, from food or drink, or entertainment. Of course, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are both days of abstinence from meat and days of fast (that is, limited to a single full meal with two smaller meals, and without eating between meals except for liquids). And all the Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence from meat. The law of abstinence from meat obliges Catholics who are age 14 and older. The law of fasting obliges Catholics from ages 18-59.

And in terms of almsgiving, I encourage you to remember the poor with your generosity, prayers, and good works. Donations to St. Joseph Parish Vincentians — by use of the monthly envelope



in the Sunday Offertory packet — are a great way to assist people in our area who are in need. Donations to the St. Elizabeth Center in Lorain do so much to aid the hungry and the homeless. Helping the poor helps them — and helps us to appreciate just how blessed we are and how many blessings we have to share.

Let us keep our OCIA/RCIA catechumens and candidates in our prayers as they use these days of Lent as an extended retreat opportunity in preparation for their Baptism or Profession of Faith and Confirmation and First Holy Communion on Holy Saturday night during the Easter Vigil Liturgy at St. Joseph at 9:00 p.m. on April 19. Let us also keep one another in our prayers as we prepare to renew our own baptismal promises during all the Easter Sunday liturgies.

During this Lent, I pray that we are touched by God's mercy

in some very personal ways. And may we, through His Spirit, reach out with merciful compassion to those in need of our love.

Thank you so very much for all that you do to make Jesus Christ known and loved in our St. Joseph and Nativity Parish Families and throughout our communities. May you have the best Lent ever, filled with the blessings of God's merciful love.

With my prayers for you and your special intentions, I am, as always,

Gratefully in Christ,



Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor

Lenten Events

Ash Wednesday — March 5

Mass Times:

9 a.m. — St. Joseph Church

12 p.m. — Nativity Church

7 p.m. — St. Joseph Church

Soup Suppers and Rosary

Thursday, March 13 and 20 — 5:30 p.m.,
St. Joseph Social Hall

Stations of the Cross on Fridays during Lent at 7 p.m.

March 7 — *Mary's Way of the Cross* at Nativity Church

March 14 — *Stations of the Cross* at Nativity Church

March 28 — *Stations of the Cross* at St. Joseph Church

April 4 — *Stations of the Cross* at St. Joseph Church

April 11 — *Stations of the Cross* at Nativity Church

Good Friday, April 18 — *Taizé Stations of the Cross* at St. Joseph Church

The Answer: The Musical

Friday, March 21 and Saturday, March 22 —
7:30 p.m., St. Joseph Church

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at Nativity of the B.V.M. Parish

Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

For information on adoration, please call Josie Tornabene at 440-396-5429

Diocesan-Wide Evening Confession

Wednesday, March 19 — 5-8 p.m., St. Joseph Church

Reconciliation (Confession) at St. Joseph Parish

Saturdays of Lent, 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Thursdays following the 7 p.m. Mass until 8:30

p.m. — exception Holy Thursday

Good Friday following the Noon Liturgy until 3 p.m.

Holy Saturday from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Reconciliation (Confession) at Nativity B.V.M. Parish

Holy Thursday following the

7 p.m. Mass until 9 p.m.

Media Ministry

Helping Engage All Parishioners in Church and at Home



Bob Hooper



Tony Melendez



John Reinke



Jerry Gach

St. Joseph Parish’s Media Ministry is not quite a year old, but it has already had a profound impact not only for those attending Mass in person but also for those who cannot.

Tony Melendez chairs this growing ministry that televises the weekend Masses with captioning on two monitors in the church, and he also livestreams the 11 a.m. Sunday Mass with captions on YouTube.

“Parishioners attending the weekend Masses can read the speakers’ words at the bottom of the monitor screens,” Tony says. “I didn’t realize how important they were until people began coming into the back of the church to our studio to say, ‘Thank you. I can finally know what’s going on.’”

Tony recounts an incident during the livestreamed 11 a.m. Mass when the audio was accidentally cut off.

“There had been a number watching on YouTube, and when the audio dropped, the captioning stopped,” he says. “I looked at YouTube, and the viewers dropped to five. Those watching needed the captioning.”

The YouTube Mass broadcast plays an important role in helping our parishioners stay engaged in their prayer lives.

“I realized it myself that there are people who can’t come to church, especially in inclement weather,” Tony says. “They are able to watch Mass at their parish and see people they know. Fr. Tim really supports us.”

Christina Dupre, the Worship and Liturgy Coordinator for St. Joseph Parish, says there are a number of important reasons behind establishing the Media Ministry.

“The Media Ministry at St. Joseph has brought technology to the parish to help enhance the liturgy,” she says. “It’s a growing ministry and new members are joining, and it’s a ministry that will continue to grow to bring spiritual experiences to the congregation in the church and those watching online.”

There has been strong support from the Holy Father for using technology to strengthen the connection between parishioners and the Mass.

“Pope John Paul II actively encouraged Catholics to use the media, including the internet, to promote the truth and integrate the Gospel message into contemporary culture,” Christina says. “Today,

popes like Francis continue to utilize social media platforms as a means to connect with people and spread the Catholic message.”

Our Media Ministry is continuing to grow, with two new members — John Reinke and Jerry Gach — joining Tony and the others.

“Bob Hooper has been there from the beginning,” Tony says. “He is very important. Bob was very instrumental in getting the funding from the Knights of Columbus. He helped get the group started and now will fill in for anyone needing help. An additional two more will be coming on board.

“Members don’t need a lot of experience,” he adds. “They just have to have self-confidence. It’s very easy to teach. We have

everything set up, and presets for the equipment. Jerry came up with a format and we follow that to do the recording.”

Although new members are joining, there always is a need for more.

“Sometimes when people need to be away, it makes it easier to schedule and cover for each other,” Tony says. “It would be nice to have 10 in total.

“It’s a great ministry,” he adds. “It will grow and people will get used to it and it will get better. It lets people know what’s going on. We’d like to get some younger people, such as high school students — they are very confident with technology. I’d like to see the youth join.”

To join the ministry, or for more information, call Tony Melendez at 440-988-7400 or text him at 440-653-0200.

St. Joseph Parishioner Lauren Suspenski *continued from front cover*

back to her own community.

“I’ve always believed stewardship had to do more than just with money,” she says. “It includes our time, our abilities, and our possessions. Everything we have belongs to God. It’s wonderful, the people I meet at St. Joe’s. I’ve met so many wonderful people. I encourage people to attend Mass there.”

For Lauren, jumping into parish life was a seamless transition. She appreciates how warmly she was welcomed, and she has made new friendships along the way.

“I enjoy the friendships I’ve made,” she says. “When you go to someone’s home because they can’t get out, the amount of time you spend talking to them, they just blossom. They are so thankful you come to see them. When you leave there, you’re like, ‘Wow, I really helped someone today.’ You’ve made that friendship and I think that’s what I enjoy most about the parish — the friendships and the time I’ve spent there. It’s a great community, it’s wonderful.”

Laureen’s faith is integrated into her daily life, devoting time each day to prayer and caring for others.

“I don’t think about it — I just do it,” she says. “I can’t even describe it — I live my faith every day. I ask for assistance. I pray for others. That’s how I live my everyday life.”

Furthermore, Lauren encourages her fellow parishioners to get involved in the parish community — not with the expectation of getting something back, but simply because service is an integral part of our walks with Christ.

“I firmly believe if you’re going to be a part of something, you need to give into it,” she says. “You don’t give because you expect something — you just do it. Don’t ever expect something back. But when you give, you get so many things back, you see somebody smile, and you see how much they appreciate it. It’s a good feeling.”

Laureen is grateful for the ways in which St. Joseph has become a place of warm fellowship and community for her. She appreciates how she was welcomed to the parish and feels a sense of belonging there.

“I never felt that church or a parish was very far for me,” she says. “I just had to get the feeling again.”

School Community Engages in Service and

One saint that we might say is a bit underappreciated is St. Joseph. He is the earthly father of Jesus and the husband of Mary. He's associated with workers and intercedes for them. And as the patron of our St. Joseph Parish School, he is certainly not underappreciated in our community! At the end of each school Mass, the students and staff pray to St. Joseph to intercede for them.

The school honors St. Joseph each year around his feast day as husband of Mary on March 19. The feast day for St. Joseph the Worker is May 1.

"Although St. Joseph isn't one of the most prominent people mentioned in the Bible, his role in salvation history cannot be overlooked," says Principal

Amy Makruski. "He was the protector of Jesus' Mother and Our Mother, Mary, and the protector and guide for Jesus as He grew."

Mrs. Makruski loves honoring St. Joseph because he is a model of faith for all of us. Although his feast day isn't a holy day of obligation, it still has a special meaning. St. Joseph was essential in Jesus' life.

"We celebrate this day to honor the role that Joseph played in the life of Jesus and Mary and to remember the humble and trusting demeanor of Joseph as he trusted God's will for himself and his family," she says.

Mrs. Makruski believes it is a blessing that we get to celebrate St. Joseph each

year. Serving as Jesus' father here on earth was an act of service. The school celebrates with its own act of service. This year, the students and staff will be collecting boxes of cereal to donate to Second Harvest and our parish Vincentians. They will have a little bit of fun by setting up the boxes like dominoes. The gathering will also include a prayer service to honor St. Joseph.

Furthermore, in our STEM classes, each class will explore a component of woodworking and will make something to bring home.

"It is a small way for us to pay homage to the talents of St. Joseph in our school environment," Mrs. Makruski says.

Mrs. Makruski summarizes St. Joseph School's commitment to St. Joseph by



Prayer for *Feast of St. Joseph*

referring to the school anthem, the Alma Mater.

“We use St. Joseph’s example of trust, hope, and faithfulness in our daily life at St. Joseph Parish School, knowing that Jesus is our guide and St. Joseph is by our side,” she says. “Joseph’s quiet way of demonstrating strength and obedience in trying situations is not only an example for our students and staff but for our world.”

Celebrate St. Joseph’s day this year like our students by praying to him and finding a way to give back to the community!

“We use St. Joseph’s example of trust, hope, and faithfulness in our daily life at St. Joseph Parish School, knowing that Jesus is our guide and St. Joseph is by our side.”

— Amy Makruski, Principal





The

Liturgy of the Hours:

Sanctifying the Day With Prayer

What if the busy present moments that constitute our daily lives were consecrated to Christ? Each insignificant moment or mundane activity becomes another opportunity to glorify Him.

The Liturgy of the Hours is a means of not only centering the day on Christ, but also sanctifying the day, offering these moments to Him. It is a prayerful, habitual practice of the clergy and religious — yet, in ever increasing numbers, the laity are also gravitating towards these daily prayers.

Though it has undergone various developments over the years, the Liturgy of the Hours — also known as the Divine Office or the Breviary — has remained relatively the same since the 11th century. The Hours are divided into five parts of “canonical hours” — Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, Daytime Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer.

Each of the Hours includes readings of the psalms. Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer include a Gospel canticle.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

describes the prayers as “a meditative dialogue on the mystery of Christ.” Through Scripture, the Hours invite us into this dialogue, a prayerful conversation that can undergird our daily moments.

From helpful instructional videos on YouTube, to written resources through EWTN and the USCCB, there is a wealth of resources for the laity on learning how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours.

Many Catholic bookstores and even Amazon.com sell the four-volume book set that contains the complete Hours. And if using the actual four-volume set seems daunting, the websites divineoffice.org and ibrevariary.org offer the entire Liturgy of the Hours for free. An app is also available to download, therefore providing us with a means of keeping the prayers within reach throughout the day.

Whether with a faith community or in solitary prayer, saying the Liturgy of the Hours situates us within a rich tradition of Catholic prayer and consecrates the present moments of our lives to Christ.

Whether with a faith community or in solitary prayer, saying the Liturgy of the Hours situates us within a rich tradition of Catholic prayer and consecrates the present moments of our lives to Christ.

Completing the *Good Work*

By NATHAN FRANKART

After the conclusion of the promises, the elect are invited forward to kneel in front of the bishop who is seated just in front of the altar in the sanctuary. One by one, the elect place their hands into a folded position, as in prayer, pointing towards the bishop. The bishop mimics this gesture, but places his hands over the candidate who is kneeling in front of him. Then the bishop asks, “Do you promise respect and obedience to me and my successors?” The elect responds, “I do.” The bishop concludes with, “May God, who has begun the good work in you, bring it to fulfillment.” The elect then moves to the side of the altar, where upon the beginning of the litany of supplication, will lay prostrate before the altar and

congregation, laying down their lives in service to God and the world.

There’s not much more to say here, is there? I admit, my hands are jittering as I’m striking the keys to even describe it. This to me is the most powerful moment of the rite of ordination. Now that this little miniseries of promises is over, being the elect feels more real for me at this moment than at any other point in my formation. And the real feeling increases with each passing day.

God has begun good work in me as much as God has begun good work in you. Anything that we offer up to the Father in our lives — whether that be our accomplishments, relationships, or good deeds, our spiritual lives or family

lives — all of it was started through the moving of God’s grace in small and large ways. The Lord continues the good work already started and will bring it to a greater conclusion, most definitely on the Last Day, but with even more hope, we dare to believe that God will continue His activity to fulfill our lives and works in this life. I trust in this Church and the Holy Spirit working in it, and I can’t wait to represent this lifelong trust in the Spirit’s guidance through the ritualistic action of entrusting my hands into the bishops.

The ordination will take place on April 12 at 10 a.m. at St. John the Evangelist Cathedral in downtown Cleveland. Pray for me and my five other classmates!



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& 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

First Saturday Rosary

Saturday, March 1 — 9 a.m.,
St. Joseph Church

St. Joseph Finance Council Meeting

Monday, March 3 — 7 p.m., Parish Office
Conference Room

Altar and Rosary Society Meeting

Tuesday, March 4 — 6:30 p.m.,
Nativity Parish Hall

First Friday Rosary

Friday, March 7 — 11 a.m., Nativity Church

Dinners on the Go pick-up

Tuesday, March 11 and 25 — 5 p.m., Nativity Parish Hall (drive-thru service only)

Parent Club Meeting

Tuesday, March 11 — 7 p.m., School MPR

Pre-Baptism Class

Wednesday, March 12 — 7 p.m.,
St. Joseph School

No School

Friday, March 14 — Teacher Development Day

Knights of Columbus meeting

Tuesday, March 25 — 7 p.m.,
St. Joseph School MPR

No School — Spring Break

Monday, March 31 through Friday, April 4

Holy Ground Youth Group

Sunday, March 2, 16, and 30 — 6 p.m.,
St. Joseph Social Hall (event begins with 5 p.m.
Mass — meet near the choir prior to Mass)

OCIA (formerly RCIA)

Monday, March 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31 —
7 p.m., Nativity Parish Hall

Men's Group

Tuesday, March 4 and 18 — 7 p.m.,
St. Joseph Social Hall

PSR

Wednesday, March 5, 19 and 26 —
5:30 p.m., St. Joseph School (Note: No
classes on March 12)

Sacred Sisters Prayer and Study Group

Wednesday, March 5, 12, 19, and 26 —
6:30 p.m., O.S.E. Community Center

Vincentians Meeting

Thursday, March 6 and 20 — 9 a.m.,
St. Joseph Conference Room

Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes

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