



# ST. JOSEPH PARISH

## NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

### Inside

- 2 The Spirituality of Stewardship
- 3 A Letter from Our Pastor
- 4 Vacation Bible School Makes Much-Anticipated Return to St. Joseph Community
- 5 Stewardship: Moving Toward God-Centered Living
- 6 An Inside Look at Our Sacristans Ministry
- 8 How to Pray the Rosary with Devotion and Purpose
- 9 Looking Back  
By DEACON NATHAN FRANKART

**St. Joseph Parish**  
200 Saint Joseph Drive  
Amherst, OH 44001  
(440) 988-2848  
[stjosephamherst.com](http://stjosephamherst.com)

**Nativity of the BVM Parish**  
333 South Lake Street  
South Amherst, OH 44001  
(440) 986-7011

**MAY 2025**

## Meet Parishioners

# Cathy and John Sekletar

### *Sharing in a Life of Stewardship and the Seasons of Service*

Cathy and John Sekletar have been dedicated parishioners of St. Joseph Parish for many years. “I think we’ve been here for about 45 years,” Cathy says.

They first joined the parish when they moved to Amherst from Lorain, where they had attended St. Anthony of Padua Church for many years. Their participation and involvement at St. Joseph began shortly after when their kids attended St. Joseph Parish School up through fourth grade.

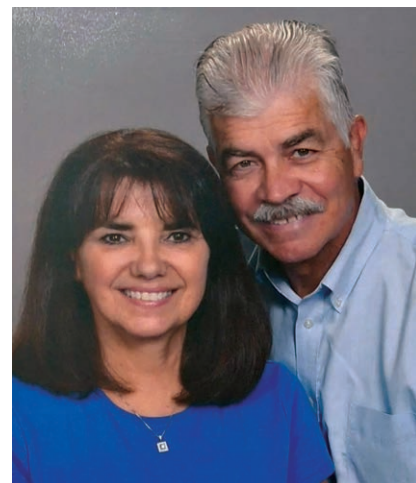
“While they were there, we were pretty much involved with whatever they needed,” Cathy says.

This included the Parents’ Club, fish fries, fundraisers, and more. As a means of supporting the school and community, Cathy and John readily stepped in whenever there was something going on. Cathy organized the Craft Fair and acted as co-chair for three years.

As their children grew, Cathy and John continued to serve in the parish. Cathy helped out with the Sunday school preschool classes and Confirmation preparation. She was also involved with the Women’s Guild for several years and helped out with fundraisers through the guild. Cathy considers her service with the Women’s Guild to be the most rewarding part. As part of this initiative, Cathy helped organize the lip sync shows in the parish.

“We ended up doing them for almost 25 years — up until COVID, pretty much,” she says. “That was a big part of ministry for me. I was the coordinator of that project and most of the money we made from those shows we earmarked for maintenance for our social hall. We bought new chairs, lighting, painting, and that’s where the money would go.”

Now, Cathy and John both serve as Extraordinary Ministers for Holy Communion. Cathy



*Cathy and John Sekletar have been dedicated parishioners of St. Joseph Parish for many years.*

*continued on page 7*

# The Spirituality of Stewardship

## *Following in the Footsteps of the Saints*

**T**he word “stewardship” has long carried with it the association of a financial obligation to the Church. Many believe that stewardship means “giving my time and money to the Church in support of its work, lest it is unable to survive and thrive.”

Indeed, stewardship does often require sacrifice of some kind. But the reality is that stewardship is not simply a guilt-laden obligation, or a “bill.” Nor is stewardship in any way comparable to a tax payment or a charitable networking opportunity at work. Instead, stewardship is a spiritual way of life – an active response to Christ’s invitation to unreservedly “come after me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt 4:19).

Stewardship is about how we respond to God’s call to discipleship, and there are many different ways we can respond to His call. We can, in turn, live the stewardship way of life simply by making small choices in our daily lives, under normal, everyday circumstances.

Nowhere in Christian history is there a more archetypal example of the variety of ways we can respond to God’s call, than in the lives of the saints. The saints represent a wide cross-section of individuals – old and young, rich and poor – living in different times in human history. Some were called to the religious life, focusing their lives on spirituality and material simplicity through prayer, and helping to form the tenets of faith. Others were individuals focused on charitable outreach, dedicating their whole lives to feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Still, others faced great adversity and challenges to their faith, and ultimately suffered death and martyrdom in loyalty to Christ and His Church.

However, the commonality that all of these individuals share is that they responded to God’s call to discipleship by utilizing the unique talents that God had given them. They did so in ways that were conducive to their individual personalities, and that actively influenced the circumstances presented to them in their respective days and times. Contemplative spirituality, charitable giving, great courage – all of these roads have led to canonization and, ultimately, eternal life with God in His glory. We are all called to do the same.

As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states in its pastoral letter on stewardship, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, “The challenge, then, is to understand our role – our vocation – and to respond generously to this call from God” (43). When thinking about the spirituality of stewardship, take some time to discern your talents, and how you can best respond to God’s call by naturally and effectively using the gifts He has given you. If you are a gregarious person, this might mean reaching out to a co-worker you don’t know very well, thus helping to create a hospitable work environment. If you are an individual who is often “on the go,” perhaps this means praying the Rosary while you are driving from place to place. If you have recently experienced a financial windfall or unexpected increase in income, this might mean sponsoring a little league team in your community by paying for their uniforms.

God has provided many roads to the Kingdom of Heaven, and in the saints, we see examples of the many roads that have been taken. Choosing the one that is best for us means that we can live stewardship as a spiritual practice and a way of life, and that we may answer His call to discipleship.





# ST. JOSEPH & NATIVITY



## A Letter From Our Pastor

# Honoring Our Lady in May

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

**M**ay is Mary's month. For centuries, Catholics throughout the world have included special devotions to the Blessed Mother in their activities during May. Best known, I am sure, are the Rosary and the widespread and ever-popular practice of crowning an image of Our Lady with flowers during this month that is dedicated to her.

May is a beautiful month, full of renewal and hope. The March winds and the April showers have done their work, and the spring flowers are in bloom. Even though the earliest signs of spring have passed, May does not quite have the look or feel of summer. It is spring at its finest! And it is not only the flowers or

trees that show new life in May. For many students, May is the month to prepare for graduations, and these students will soon move on to new phases in their lives.

And, of course, May is a month of joy for all of us who claim the Church as our spiritual home. We spend the whole month this year in the Easter season, which closes with Pentecost on June 8. The joy of the Resurrection, the glory of the Ascension, and the descent of the Holy Spirit are the themes that fill our Christian calendar.

But as we rejoice with Mary at her Son's triumph over sin, Satan, and death, we remember her faithfulness to God's will throughout her life. Indeed, she can be viewed as the model Christian steward.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops pointed to her in its pastoral letter on stewardship: "After Jesus, it is the Blessed Virgin Mary who by her example most perfectly teaches the meaning of discipleship and stewardship in their fullest sense" (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, 41).

Let us follow her example of total dedication to God as we rejoice in the blessings He gives us this month!

Gratefully in Christ,

*Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor*

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,  
Pastor

# Vacation Bible School Makes Much-Anticipated Return to St. Joseph Community

**I**t's an exciting time for our St. Joseph community, as Vacation Bible School makes its return! Parishioner Joy Rivera has been hard at work pulling together a team to bring VBS to our children.

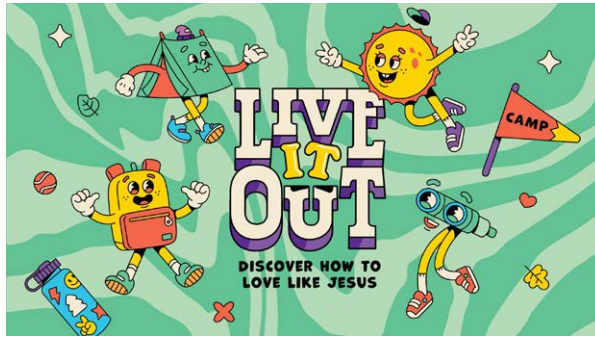
Joy recalls that when she was in college, she loved returning to help lead the music at VBS. Now she sings in the choir at St. Joseph.

"I made a joke about how I helped to plant 'music seeds' in many of our current choir members back when they attended Vacation Bible School as little kiddos," Joy says. "And now their seeds have flourished and they are still in the church making music for the Lord!"

This led Joy to wonder what it would take to bring VBS back. She knew children like her own could benefit so much from it. She made some inquiries and started looking for anyone else willing to help. Joy received some great advice from Tammy Lacey, who led VBS when Joy was a volunteer. Soon, Joy was ready to take the idea to Fr. Tim, who wholeheartedly supported it.

This summer, the VBS theme will be "Live it Out — Discover How to Love Like Jesus," which will focus on teaching children how to put their faith into action.

"Kids will learn what it looks like to follow Jesus through various Bible stories and be empowered to move their faith into action," Joy says. "The kids will walk away with tangible ways to live like Jesus, by praying, loving, serving, forgiving, and showing simple acts of kindness."



*(Standing, from left) Rachel MacDonald, Elizabeth Gonzalez, Alissa Van Dress; (seated, from left) Joy Rivera, Josh Gonzalez*

Each day the children will rotate through stations featuring storytelling, music, games, crafts, and snacks. On the last day, there will be a short program for the parents. Volunteers are needed for many different jobs — some are needed to set up and prepare, some to be present each day, some to otherwise step in to help where needed.

"There are so many ways to help, so don't hesitate to reach out," Joy says. "It was always a rewarding experience to bring the Scripture to life for our littlest members of the church. I also believe it helped me to grow in my faith as a young adult. I still have friendships I made through volunteering for VBS nearly 20 years ago."

VBS will take place Monday, July 28 through Friday, Aug. 1, from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Children who are entering Pre-K (4 years old)

through fourth grade are welcome. VBS is open to children from St. Joseph, Nativity, and those outside the parishes. There will be 120 spots available, so register early! The cost is \$25 per child. Volunteers are needed and should be VIRTUS trained. Registration will open on Friday, May 23, and close on Monday, June 2. Parishioners can register online or in person before or after Mass.

"Engaging our kids at an early age in their faith is so important, and this is a fun and exciting way to lay that foundation for them," Joy says.

**Visit the parish website to register your students or to volunteer. Contact Joy Rivera with questions at [joyrivera@stjosephamherst.com](mailto:joyrivera@stjosephamherst.com) or 440-396-7568.**





## STEWARDSHIP

# Moving Toward God-Centered Living

**I**f you were asked to explain the relationship between stewardship and your Catholic faith, could you do it?

It may, at first, seem too difficult a task. But if we take our faith seriously, we are already being persuaded to live our lives in light of Church teaching. We will therefore improve as stewards of God's gifts. So it should not be difficult to make a connection between Catholicism and Christian stewardship. However, many of us struggle with articulating this connection, or do not understand how stewardship is connected to our faith.

We often attempt to compartmentalize different parts of our lives, separating work from family, and our social life from our faith life. Then we struggle and resist when it is suggested that our faith life is our life, belonging in every part of our daily activities – at work, at home and with our friends.

An essay written by Bill McKibben several years ago in *Harper's* magazine relates that the writer once held an experiment, requesting that people record everything that came across a large cable-TV system. He then spent a year watching it, "trying to figure out what the world would look like to you if this were your main window onto it." He discovered that "you are the most important thing on earth. You sitting there on the couch clutching the remote, are the center of creation, the heaviest object in the known universe; all things orbit your desires. This Bud's for You."

This is, of course, why so many of us fail to make a real connection between stewardship and our faith. Stewardship, by definition, assumes God as the center of reality — the point

upon which everything lives and exists. But we often live our lives as if we ourselves are that point. Even our faith is geared to what "I can get out of it." If we don't like our parish's architecture, priest, music program or choir director, then we just don't contribute to the parish fund. If our parish doesn't have a youth program to our liking, a thriving singles group or a thoroughly networked senior citizen's advocacy organization, then we just move to another parish that does. We are in turn perceiving our faith in terms of "products" that we dislike, and are simply choosing not to buy.

We may also misunderstand stewardship as being primarily beneficial to ourselves, believing that God will bless us more, that we will be recognized as conscientious, or that it's simply tax deductible.

But what if we start seeing stewardship as a natural consequence of realizing that our Savior Jesus Christ is the center of life? What if we begin to intentionally will to allow God to be the dominant influence in every factor of our lives? Stewardship would then take care of itself.

The Catholic faith begins and ends with God, the Creator and Giver of every gift. How we use these gifts is a direct reflection of our personal relationship to God. Most of us are primarily self-oriented consumers of goods, and we often use our gifts for self-gratification. Our relationship with God is also usually geared toward pleasing ourselves instead of God. However, the absolute goal and essence of living the life of a Catholic steward is simple – to move toward God-centered living.

# An Inside Look at Our Sacristans Ministry

## *Dutifully Preparing the Altar for the Celebration of the Mass*



*Rita Hiser lighting  
candles by the altar*



*Kim Frankart and  
Brenda Yovan*



*Brenda Yovan setting  
up the Mass books*

**H**ave you ever sat at Mass and watched closely as the servers and priest performed what seemed to be a perfectly choreographed dance? Everyone on the altar seems to know exactly what they are supposed to be doing at any given moment during the celebration of the Most Holy Mass. Part of making sure that the Mass is able to be performed smoothly is making sure that the altar is clean and prepared properly. The altar has certain books and items that should be in specific places in order for the Mass to take

*"Being involved in church gives me a fuller appreciation of the daily opportunity of attending Mass. I have learned from other members of our faithful community as we enrich each other with prayer and working side by side." — Sue Cotton*

place. The people in charge of making sure that all of it is ready are the sacristans.

At St. Joseph, the sacristans have four main responsibilities — setting up for daily Mass and Sunday Mass, washing and ironing the Mass linens, washing the pews and woodwork twice a year, and light cleaning around the church and altar space. There are four teams, made up of two to three people who rotate every two weeks. The work is flexible and can be worked around each person's schedule.

"Being involved in church gives me a fuller appreciation of the daily opportunity of attending Mass," says Sue Cotton, a longtime sacristan at St. Joseph. "I have learned from other members of our faithful community as we enrich each other with prayer and working side by side."

At Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, there are currently two sacristans, Cindy Miller and Kathy Rokasy. While they do not do the physical setup for Mass each day, they are in charge of many aspects that help keep Mass running smoothly.

*continued on page 7*



## Sacristans

*continued from page 6*

“We take care of the altar space, all the altar linens, and we keep it clean and presentable for Mass,” Cindy says. “We also take care of the sacristy and anything the priest might need as far as supplies, cleaning robes, making sure we have enough oil, hosts, and candles. We assist Father with whatever he needs for different services, whether it be Mass, a funeral, or a Baptism. We strive to keep the church clean, beautiful, and running smoothly.”

Both St. Joseph and Nativity are currently looking for more sacristans. It is a wonderful way to get involved in the parish, to give back to the community and to learn more about everything that goes into making the Mass run smoothly. It can lead to a better understanding of the Mass and the importance of every item that is used on the altar by the priest.



*Nativity altar*



*Cindy Miller*

**If you have any questions or would like to get involved, contact Sue Cotton (St. Joseph) at 440-986-1725 or Cindy Miller (Nativity) at 440-670-1300.**

## Parishioners Cathy and John Sekletar

*continued from front cover*

helps decorate for the liturgical seasons and serves funeral meals. John also helps out as an altar server for Mass and was formerly part of the Vincentians, Men's Club, and Parish Council. He also helps out with maintenance around the church and worked alongside Cathy for the lip sync events, St. Joseph's Players.

Both born and raised Catholic, John and Cathy have prioritized service to the church in whatever way they can. As to why they serve, they say it is a matter of loyalty to God and His Church. To them, stewardship is about ongoing service.

“We're both faith-bound, it's a driving factor,” John says. “We want to do our part.”

“Even though we're slowing down a little bit, I just like being involved,” Cathy says. “Sometimes we have more time and talent than treasure, so this is a good way to give back.”

Outside of the parish walls, John is involved with a local veterans' organization and helped establish an outdoor mural for Veterans Day that's been ongoing for 15 years.

While they are now retired, John and Cathy continue to serve in our parish and community. For them, it is important to continue their service in whatever way they can.

“I think it keeps you grounded, knowing that it's not all about you,” Cathy says. “You're part of a bigger picture, even if you're only doing a little bit — that little bit is helping the community.”

*“I think it keeps you grounded, knowing that it's not all about you. You're part of a bigger picture, even if you're only doing a little bit — that little bit is helping the community.”*

*— Cathy Sekletar*

# How to Pray the Rosary with Devotion and Purpose

**A**s Catholics, prayer is an integral part of our spiritual journey, and among the most cherished and powerful devotions is the Rosary. With its beads and meditative rhythm, the Rosary offers a profound way to connect with God and reflect on the life of Jesus Christ. Whether you're new to the practice or seeking to deepen your prayer life, here's a guide to help you pray the Rosary with devotion and purpose.

**Prepare Your Heart:** Before beginning the Rosary, take a moment to quiet your mind and open your heart to God's presence. Offer a prayer asking for guidance and grace as you enter into this sacred time of prayer.

**Start with the Sign of the Cross:** Begin by making the Sign of the Cross, affirming your belief in the Holy Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — who you invite to join you in prayer.

**Recite the Apostles' Creed:** This foundational prayer expresses our core beliefs as Catholics. Recite it slowly and attentively, reflecting on the profound truths it proclaims.

**Pray the Our Father:** As Jesus taught His disciples, pray the Our Father, acknowledging God as our loving Father and seeking His will to be done in our lives.

**Meditate on the Mysteries:** The Rosary is divided into four sets of Mysteries: Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious, and Luminous. As

you recite each decade, meditate on the corresponding Mystery, contemplating its significance and relevance to your life.

**Recite the Hail Mary:** With each bead, pray the Hail Mary, honoring Mary as the Mother of God and seeking her intercession as you journey through the Mysteries.

**Conclude with the Glory Be:** At the end of each decade, offer the Glory Be, praising the Holy Trinity and acknowledging God's glory and presence in your life.

**End with the Hail Holy Queen:** Conclude the Rosary by reciting the Hail Holy Queen, asking Mary to pray for us and guide us on our journey towards her Son, Jesus Christ.

**Closing Prayer:** Finally, offer a closing prayer, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to pray the Rosary and asking for God's blessings upon yourself and your loved ones.

**Practice Consistency and Persistence:** Like any spiritual practice, praying the Rosary regularly requires commitment and discipline. Set aside time each day to pray the Rosary and allow its transformative power to enrich your spiritual life.

The Rosary is a beautiful and powerful prayer that invites us to journey deeper into our faith and relationship with God. By following these steps and approaching the Rosary with reverence and devotion, may you experience the profound grace and blessings it offers in your life.

First Friday Rosary at  
Nativity Parish, on the  
First Friday of the month  
at 11 a.m.

First Saturday Rosary at  
St. Joseph, on the First  
Saturday of the month  
at 9 a.m.

Fifth Sunday Rosary with  
the Knights of Columbus,  
held in the months  
where there are five  
Sundays, following the  
11 a.m. Mass.



## Looking Back

*By DEACON NATHAN FRANKART*

**P**ease of Christ to you! Have you ever looked back on some old project that you used to work on? I know most of us in the parish are no longer students, but perhaps there's some old family videos you have stashed away somewhere. I don't know about you, but I find listening to my voice-over recording, or reading back some of my former work to be painful — downright cringeworthy. But there is something to gain in doing so! I recently did.

I went back to my very first article I wrote in the newsletter. Can you remember? (I certainly didn't, kudos if you do!) It was a short description of seminary life, describing the "Rule

of Life" — that is to say, the schedule of classes, prayers, and community time that I was being asked to follow in October 2018. I have more or less been subject to that schedule for the better part of the last seven years. And small things have changed to be sure, but the vast majority of the time has been constant.

Wake, pray, eat, study, pray, work, pray, eat, community time, pray.

What does a habit like this do to a person year in and year out? What changes them?

You'll have to tell me. The old saying rings true, "Actions form your habits, habits form your character." I have adopted a new character through

the ordination that I received in April. But the actions informed by the "Rule of Life" have carried me to this moment.

Likewise, if you haven't done so in a while, I encourage you to do the same. Spend some time at the adoration chapel in Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (a place incredibly important to my relationship with Jesus Christ) and pray on the actions that are forming you. The only way to grow closer to the Lord is by meeting Him, and we must take the steps to walk the journey of faith with Jesus. Grace will provide the opportunity, strength, and encouragement to do so. All that is required is that we say yes.

AD SPACE



AD SPACE

This newsletter brought to you by the Catholic Communities of:

# & ST. JOSEPH PARISH NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

NON PROFIT  
US POSTAGE  
PAID

PERMIT 58  
AMHERST OH

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

NOTE: ALL ST. JOSEPH SOCIAL HALL ACTIVITIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE DUE TO CEILING REPAIR WORK.

### First Friday Rosary

Friday, May 2 — 11 a.m., Nativity Church

### First Saturday Rosary

Saturday, May 3 — 9 a.m., St. Joseph Church

### Hospitality Tuesday

Tuesday, May 6 — 8:30 a.m.

### Altar and Rosary Society Meeting

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

### Parent Club Meeting

Tuesday, May 6 — 7 p.m., School MPR

### St. Joseph Parish School Spring Concert

Thursday, May 15 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph Church

### Baccalaureate Mass

Sunday, May 18 — 11 a.m., St. Joseph Church

### Memorial Day

School and Parish Office closed

Mass location TBD — see bulletin

### Knights of Columbus Meeting

Tuesday, May 27 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph School MPR

### Vincentians Meeting

Thursday, May 1, 15, and 29 — 9 a.m.,  
St. Joseph Conference Room

### Holy Ground Youth Group

Sunday, May 4 and 18 — 6 p.m.,  
St. Joseph Social Hall (Event begins with 5 p.m.  
Mass — meet near the choir prior to Mass)

### Men's Group

Tuesday, May 6 and 20 — 7 p.m.,  
St. Joseph Social Hall

### Sacred Sisters Prayer and Study Group

Wednesday, May 7, 14, 21, and 28 — 6:30 p.m.,  
O.S.E. Community Center

### Grief Recovery Program

Wednesday, May 7, 14, 21, and 28 — 6:30 p.m.,  
St. Joseph Social Hall

### Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes

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

