



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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JUNE 2025

MEET ST. JOSEPH PARISHIONERS

Ken and Mandy Stark

Embracing Stewardship and Sharing Gifts as a Family

Ken and Mandy Stark got involved at St. Joseph not because of any special talents. It was for one reason — a willingness to serve our Lord and parish community. The Starks joined the parish in 1993, along with their four daughters. One of those daughters now teaches at St. Joseph School, and four of their nine grandchildren attend as well.

“We are continually in admiration and respect for all of the teachers, staff, and volunteers that make this Catholic school such a wonderful environment,” Mandy says.

When Ken and Mandy moved to the parish, they first got involved in the Marriage Preparation program.

“It was an amazing group of couples who quickly made us feel very welcome and all of whom were very strong examples of married couples living out married and family life with strong faith,” Ken says.

For many years, the Starks served with the Parish School of Religion, teaching First Communion and serving as Confirmation small-group leaders. They enjoyed being



For the Starks, service to family — including their nine grandchildren — is an essential form of stewardship.

involved with their daughters' classes and supporting their faith journeys.

“From the very beginning of our involvement, it was much more about coming from a place of answering a call to be of service and not in any way about us or any personal talents or abilities,” Mandy says.

Both Ken and Mandy are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. They have also previously brought the Eucharist to the homebound and are members of the

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SUMMER STEWARDSHIP:

Sharing Time, Talent, and Treasure Away from Home

As summer approaches, many of us look forward to well-deserved vacations and time away from our daily routines. It's a time for rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation. However, we are called to live out our faith not only in our familiar surroundings but also when we're away from home. The concept of stewardship, which emphasizes sharing our time, talent, and treasure, remains a guiding principle that we can practice and uphold during the summer months.

Stewardship is not bound by location or time. It is a way of life that extends to all aspects of our existence, including our vacations and summer adventures. This concept encourages us to be mindful of our blessings and to share them in gratitude to God. Here's how we can continue to practice stewardship during the summer:

Sharing Time

Even while on vacation, we can dedicate time to our faith. Attend Mass at local churches or parishes in the places you visit (go to www.masstimes.org to find a church and Mass times anywhere). Participating in the Eucharist is a beautiful way to maintain your spiritual connection and to be part of different faith communities.

Sharing Talent

Our unique talents can be shared, even while on vacation. If you have musical skills, offer to sing, or play an instrument during Mass. If you have teaching abilities, volunteer to lead a Bible study or faith formation session in the local parish you're visiting. Your talents can enrich the faith experiences of others.

Sharing Treasure

Your financial contributions to the Church should not be limited to your home parish. Consider sharing your

treasure through the offertory at the parishes you visit during your travels. But don't forget to uphold your stewardship of treasure commitment to your home parish, even while you are away (you can register for electronic giving or mail your envelopes in during your travels). Your financial support helps maintain the churches and supports their ministries.

Engaging in Acts of Charity

While on vacation, look for opportunities to engage in acts of charity. This might involve volunteering at local food banks, shelters, or other charitable organizations. Your efforts to help those in need reflect the Catholic principles of stewardship.

Fostering Family and Community Prayer

Summer vacations often provide quality family time. Use this opportunity to foster family prayer and reflection. Gather for daily prayers, Bible readings, or discussions about your faith. Encourage and support one another in living out your Catholic values.

Promoting Evangelization

Use your summer travels to spread the Good News. Share your faith and engage in conversations with fellow travelers. You may have the opportunity to answer questions, share your experiences, and offer a positive witness to the Catholic faith.

Summer can be a time of spiritual growth, service, and witness. By practicing stewardship during our summer vacations, we remain committed to our faith, contribute to the Church's mission, and fulfill our call to be good stewards of God's gifts. Whether near or far, home or away, stewardship is a timeless and universal principle that enriches our lives and the lives of others.

A Letter from Our Pastor

Answering God's Call: A Life of Vocational Stewardship



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

This month marks a significant milestone in my life: 50 years since I was ordained to the priesthood on June 14, 1975. As I reflect on this half-century of service as a priest of the Diocese of Cleveland, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for God's goodness, for the love and support of countless people in my numerous assignments, and for the privilege of walking with so many on their journeys of faith. And I am thankful that ten of these fifty years are right here with you at St. Joseph Parish in Amherst and at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in South Amherst.

The priesthood has been a profound blessing for me, but it is only one of the many ways God calls His people to serve Him. Each of us is created with a unique purpose, and our response to God's call — our vocation — is true stewardship in action. Whether in holy orders, consecrated life, marriage, or in dedicated single life, our vocations are gifts from God, meant to be nurtured and lived in love and service.

For those called to the priesthood or religious life, the journey begins with

listening for God's voice in the quiet of prayer. It requires courage and trust, yet the rewards are beyond measure — a life devoted to the sacraments, to shepherding souls, and to being an instrument of Christ's love in the world. If you or someone you know feels even the smallest stirring toward this path, I encourage you to pray, to seek guidance, and to remain open to where the Holy Spirit leads.

Marriage, too, is a sacred vocation: one that mirrors Christ's love for His bride, the Church. Husbands and wives are called to steward their love through selflessness, faithfulness, and a commitment to raising their families in the light of Christ. In a world that often challenges the sanctity of marriage and family life, your witness as Catholic spouses and parents is more important than ever.

Likewise, the dedicated single life is also a powerful vocation. Those who remain single for the sake of serving God and others play a vital role in the life of the Church. Whether through ministry, work or personal relationships, the single vocation is a call to love and to service that bears great fruit in the world.

As I celebrate this fiftieth anniversary

of my ordination to the priesthood, my heart is filled with joy, not only for my own vocation but also for the beautiful ways in which each of you lives out your calling. God's plan for our lives unfolds according to His perfect timing, and the greatest gift that we can offer in return is our "yes."

I invite you to reflect on how God is calling you at this moment. How can you embrace your vocation more fully? How can you encourage others — especially our young people — to discern God's call in their own lives? Let us pray for one another and for an increase in vocations, that more hearts may be open to following Christ in the way He has prepared for them.

May God bless you abundantly in your own journey of faith and may we all continue to be faithful stewards of the vocations entrusted to us.

With my love and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor". The script is cursive and elegant.

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor



An Inside Look at Nativity's Ushers and Greeters Ministry

Keeping Warm Spirit of Hospitality at the Forefront for All Who Enter Our Church



(Back row) Karen Abfall, Joe Pellittieri, Dee Darin, John Rokasy; (bottom row) Dan Abfall, Ed Rak, Carol Zellmer, Kathy Rokasy



Kathy Rokasy, John Rokasy, Dee Darin, and Joe Pellittieri

As a stewardship community, we recognize Hospitality as the First Pillar of Parish Stewardship. As St. Paul wrote, "Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:2). Two simple, yet important ministries of hospitality are ushers and greeters. At Nativity, these two ministries are combined.

Greeting people as they arrive for Mass ensures that everyone feels welcome. Assisting during the Mass to seat people, take up the collection and coordinate for Communion plays a key role in keeping the liturgy running smoothly for all. Distributing bulletins as people leave after Mass is a helpful way to interact with everyone who has come to worship God as a community.

Nativity is a dedicated parish that cherishes its community.

"We are a close-knit parish and we are so welcoming of guests and visitors. We especially love when there are young families and children in the church."
— Marriane Pellittieri

Parishioners have known one another for a long time and really enjoy when the parishioners from St. Joseph Parish come to celebrate the Mass with them on Saturday evenings.

"So many of us are here visiting and praying before Mass begins," says Marriane Pellittieri, the ushers coordinator for Nativity. "We are a close-knit parish and we are so welcoming of guests and visitors. We especially love it when there are young families and children in the church."

With a small group of members who work very hard to fill this ministry, the ushers at Nativity have a great need for additional stewards to serve in this role. Most of the current ushers have been doing this work for many years, feeling a great sense of duty to serve the parish in whatever ways they need.

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Nativity's Ushers and Greeters Ministry *continued from page 4*

They step up and fill the need as often as they can, but it can be difficult when someone is on vacation or is sick.

"It is not difficult work," Marriane says. "We greet people as they enter, pass the collection baskets, and hand out bulletins as people leave. Father is coming straight from the evening Mass at St. Joseph, so we are there to make sure things are ready for Mass when he arrives. Most of us are at Mass anyway, so it isn't an additional time commitment."

Parishioners of St. Joseph who attend the 5:30 p.m. Mass at Nativity are encouraged to help with this ministry if at

all possible. It is a great ministry for families with younger children, demonstrating a tangible way for children to use their time and talent to serve the parish. To greet someone with a smile or hand out bulletins is a great job for elementary or middle school-age children.

"Being a part of the community and helping to create that community is a special role," Marriane says. "You get to know more people. You are making sure that they are seen and known. We are present with all of them and that is so important."

For anyone interested in helping with this ministry at Nativity, contact Marriane Pellittieri at mpellittieri@yahoo.com or 440-320-3875.

Meet St. Joseph Parishioners Ken and Mandy Stark

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Prayer Chain.

"The Prayer Chain is a daily reminder of all our blessings, big and small, and the ongoing, daily need for prayers for the Church and all the various situations and experiences of people around us," Mandy says.

Ken and Mandy also help make meals for the homeless.

"This is an opportunity to reflect on our blessings and help bring a bit of comfort to those who need it so much," Ken says.

Ken attended the Men's Retreat and then wanted to help plan it. The same happened to Mandy at the Women's Retreat, so this is another way they serve. Over the years, they have served as facilitators for multiple St. Joseph small-group faith formation programs. They both feel so blessed to serve — St. Joseph Parish is a special place to them.

"St. Joseph Parish has been a blessing to us," Mandy says. "Our experience has always been a warm, welcoming environment, filled with too many examples to even mention of fellow parishioners who inspire us with their involvement and contributions. They make our parish such a wonderful place to worship."

Mandy also gives her extra time in a special way. She has been making tie rosaries for St. Joseph school graduates

for several years. This is her way to support the school, which is so special to the Starks.

"Mandy prays for the eventual recipient as she makes each rosary," Ken says. "It is good to wonder how many are out there."

Ken and Mandy don't have much extra time as they both work full-time and take care of Mandy's mother.

"We are constantly reminded that service to family, including unending opportunities to serve grandchildren, is a form of stewardship as well," Ken says.

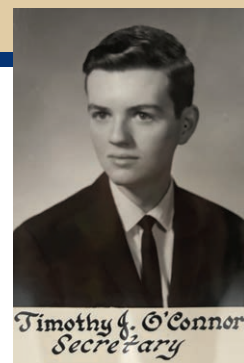
Consider how you can get involved at St. Joseph or Nativity Parish. Ken and Mandy promise you won't regret it.

"With so many options to get involved, there is a place for all of us," Mandy says.

"We are constantly reminded that service to family, including unending opportunities to serve grandchildren, is a form of stewardship as well."

— Ken Stark

Fr. Tim O'Connor Reflects on His *50 Years* in the Priesthood



Serving God and Our Faith Communities With Great Joy

Fifty years ago — June 14, 1975, to be exact — Fr. Timothy James O'Connor was ordained by Bishop James A. Hickey as a priest of the Diocese of Cleveland in Holy Family Church in Parma, Ohio. Yet, it all started long before this in Fr. Tim's heart.

The seed for the priesthood was planted when Fr. Tim was about 4 or 5 years old. His parents, Tom and Cheri O'Connor, took him and his five younger siblings to Mass every Sunday. He recalls being at Mass in the earlier church at St. Jude in Elyria at that young age. And during the Preparation of the Gifts, the Offertory, he was looking at the priest and at the cross over the altar and thought, "I could do that. I could do that."

"I believe that at the age of four or five, that was the moment when the Lord first called me to be His priest," Fr. Tim says.

As Graham Greene wrote in his book, *The Power and the Glory*, "There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in." That was the moment for Fr. Tim.

Later, when St. Jude Parish had built their new church, the pastor, Fr. Frank Kosem, who knew this story,



delivered that same cross to him. For the past 25 years or so, he has brought that cross with him to wherever he lived. Here at St. Joseph, it is located in the music rehearsal room. It has also been used here each year for the veneration of the Cross during the Good Friday Celebration of the Passion of the Lord.

Fr. Tim entered Borromeo Seminary High School at the age of 14. He went on to Borromeo Seminary College, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Philosophy. He then proceeded to St. Mary Seminary, graduating with a Master of Divinity degree and was ordained a priest. After his ordination, Fr. Tim continued his education at Case Western

Reserve University and earned a Master of Arts degree in Music Education. And then he went on to the University of Notre Dame and received a Master of Arts degree in Liturgical Studies.

Fr. Tim has had many assignments over the years, including being a faculty member at Borromeo Seminary College, a staff member of the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, and a staff member of the Worship Office, priest-secretary for nine years to Bishop Anthony Pilla, and assistant chancellor. He has truly enjoyed every assignment, but his time ministering in parishes for the last thirty years has been his favorite: the pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Avon Lake [1995-2013], the pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Akron [2013-2015], and the pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Amherst and the pastor of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in South Amherst [both from 2015 to the present].

"When you are in a parish, it's home," Fr. Tim says. "You might celebrate a Baptism or a Wedding, and then a call comes in for a Funeral. You see the whole spectrum of life in rapid succession. You

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Fr. Tim O'Connor Reflects *continued from page 6*

are with people at various stages in their lives. Sometimes, you are rejoicing with them. Other times, you are comforting them and perhaps helping them carry their crosses. Parish life is very much family life on a large scale.”

Priests in our diocese can retire at the age of 75, which, for Fr. Tim, occurred on June 3, 2024. Fr. Tim volunteered to stay an extra year to age 76, and then once again offered to stay as pastor for a second extra year, which will take him to his 77th birthday in June 2026.

“The Lord has blessed me with good health, and with two wonderful parishes to serve,” Fr. Tim says. “There is more for us to do together and I am happy and grateful to the Lord and to Bishop Malesic to be able to continue in active ministry here in our Amherst and South Amherst communities.”

Fr. Tim’s favorite parts of being a priest are celebrating Mass and hearing Confessions. “It is such a privilege to celebrate Mass,” he says. “Receiving the Eucharist is the most precious part of our Catholic faith.”

For Fr. Tim, it is important to offer the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation/Confession at times that are convenient

for people. We have Confessions at St. Joseph every Thursday evening following the 7 p.m. Mass until 8:30 p.m., and every Saturday morning from 11 a.m. until 12 noon. It is a lesson that he learned while living at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist for 14 years, and hearing Confessions six days each week. Seeing the peace that this sacrament offers to penitents was always a blessing to him. Because the Sacrament of Penance is so important to him, Fr. Tim believes that to be a good confessor, a priest must also be a good penitent. So he visits the Sorrowful Mother Shrine in Bellevue once a month for a morning of recollection, and that includes going to Confession.

Fr. Tim believes that being a priest is a wonderful way for him to live. And he looks for opportunities to invite others to take a look at this calling. He likes to say to our young people who might be interested, “I don’t know for sure what the Lord is calling you to be, but if indeed He is inviting you to be a priest, I believe that you have what it takes to be a good one.”

While Fr. Tim was the pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Avon Lake, two young men entered the seminary and were ordained priests: Fr. John Schneider and

Fr. Scott Goodfellow. And Deacon Nathan Frankart from our St. Joseph and Nativity parish communities will be ordained a priest in May 2026.

Fr. Tim is looking forward to celebrating with us his 50 years as a priest of the Diocese of Cleveland by celebrating and preaching all of the Masses on his anniversary weekend of June 14-15 at St. Joseph and Nativity Parishes.

“I have had wonderful assignments over these years,” he says. “I am grateful to be where I am. There are wonderful people here in our St. Joseph and Nativity Parishes who clearly love the Lord and faithfully love each other.”



THE FEAST OF STS. PETER AND PAUL

The Church, a Universal Family



On June 29, Catholics celebrate the feast of two of our Lord's principal Apostles, foundational human cornerstones of the Church of Rome.

The first missal reading of this feast day tells us of the miraculous deliverance of Peter from prison. This illustrates the concrete fact that despite persecutions, Christ and His chosen followers will be triumphant in this world, and in the world to come.

The second is of Paul summarizing his own "pouring out" of his life as a libation. The way in which he poured

it out is overwhelmingly significant — he gave his life as a missionary to gather all nations into God's unified Kingdom.

The Holy Gospel recounts Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah. After this confession, the "keys to the Kingdom" were conferred onto him. These "keys" became the fundamental building block supporting the ordained priesthood and episcopal government of the Church.

In a 2023 Angelus address, our late Pope Francis said to the crowd in St. Peter's Square, "It is with this true humanity that the Spirit forms the Church. Peter and Paul were real people. And today, more than ever, we need real people."

The Holy Father added, "Peter is a rock: There are many times when he is strong and steady, genuine and generous... He leaves everything to follow Jesus; he recognizes Christ, the Son of the living God; he dives into the sea to go quickly toward the Risen One."

The celebration of our catholicity is a celebration of our unity in Christ. This unity endures unto the end, as our strength and fortress in the face of evil and the trials of earthly life.

Sts. Peter and Paul remind us that our faith is founded on something much higher than ourselves, on an entity that raises horizons beyond our human frailties and imaginings. Our holy faith is founded upon the rock, Jesus Christ.

God is the one who strengthens Peter, Paul, and all the saints with His grace and mercy, Pope Francis said:

"From the rock: Is there ardor, zeal, passion for the Lord and for the Gospel in us? Or is there something that easily crumbles? And then, are we stones, not stumbling blocks, but the kind with which the Church can be constructed?"

Let us embrace all the graces which these beloved saints have won for us. Let us imitate their example, and so follow Christ with unwavering resolution. As did the Blessed Virgin, let us persevere in serving the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church in all that we say and do.



Offering up the Chalice

By DEACON NATHAN FRANKART

Pease of Christ to you!
I've been receiving a classic question lately, particularly from my other seminarian brothers who are beginning to look to me for leadership and inspiration as being one of the men who have made it near the end of formation in the seminary — “What is your favorite part about being a deacon?” And it doesn't take much reflection for me to immediately have an answer. It's the elevation at the end of the Eucharistic prayers.

This moment of the liturgy is particularly special; the gestures and symbols suggest it to be so. The Precious Body and Blood are lifted up together, in a moment where a Trinitarian doxology (prayer of praise invoking the Trinity) is offered with these newly consecrated species. But there is more to this moment than just a moment of theological praise, or a “special thing” that I get to do that others do not.

Recall the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist where the priest offers this: “Pray, my sisters and brothers, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.” All throughout the rest of this Mass, we as a community

offer something of our lives to the glory and praise of God, whether that be something that we offer in thanksgiving such as the joy of a newborn child or the celebration of a recent birthday, or the petition for a miraculous healing or desire for peace in the world. As we all kneel in reverence during the elevation and consecration, we intentionally offer up these sacrifices to Christ who will transform this bread and wine before us to His very Presence, truly and substantially, and that OUR offerings will be transformed by Christ as well. This is epitomized in the final elevation of the chalice and the patten together, where the deacon holds that chalice up with the priest.

Yes, I am holding the Precious Blood of Christ, and this is beautiful. But equally beautiful is the thought that this community of faith's offering, their sacrifices, joys, petitions, thanksgivings, intercessions, all of these prayers, I'm holding as well. They are being offered up to God the Father as we present Him His Son in the Eucharist, and I hold your prayers up to God as well in this chalice. That is something worth treasuring, now and always.

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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

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

Hospitality Tuesday

Tuesday, June 3 — 8:30 a.m.

Altar and Rosary Society Meeting

Tuesday, June 3 — 6:30 p.m., Nativity Parish Hall

Kindergarten Graduation

Wednesday, June 4 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph Church

Eighth Grade Graduation

Thursday, June 5 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph Church

Last Day of School Early Dismissal

Thursday, June 5 — 11 a.m., St. Joseph School

First Friday Rosary

Friday, June 6 — 11 a.m., Nativity Church

First Saturday Rosary

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

No Weekday Mass: Priest Retreat

Monday, June 9 through Friday, June 13

Wonderful Women

Tuesday, June 10 — 7 p.m., School MPR

Pre-Baptism Class

Wednesday, June 11 — 7 p.m., School

Knights of Columbus Meeting

Tuesday, June 24 — 7 p.m., School MPR

Knights of Columbus Fifth Sunday Rosary

Sunday, June 29 — Following the 11 a.m. Mass
St. Joseph Social Hall Lobby

Men's Group

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

Grief Recovery Program

Wednesday, June 4, 11, 18, and 25 — 6:30 p.m.
St. Joseph Social Hall

Vincentians Meeting

Thursday, June 12 and 26 — 9 a.m.
St. Joseph Conference Room

Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes

Tuesday and Thursdays in June — 9:30 a.m.
Mill Hollow

