



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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AUGUST 2025

MEET ST. JOSEPH PARISHIONERS

Rob and Cindy Giacobbe *Joyfully Embarking on the Faith and Stewardship Journey with Family*

Family life and parish life go hand in hand. So it's no surprise that Rob and Cindy Giacobbe, lifetime parishioners at St. Joseph, are serving here as well.

"We grew up in Amherst going to St. Joseph Church," Rob says. "We met in seventh grade. There's no lie I can tell her from when I was growing up. She's known me our whole adolescent and adult life."

"We have 24 years married and 28 years together," Cindy adds. "But really our friendship started before that as 11 and 12-year-olds."

This longtime relationship is rooted in a community that Rob and Cindy have known their whole lives. For Cindy, parish involvement is a family tradition.

"My earliest memories are watching my parents serve in many capacities," she says. "My parents were in the choir. My mom was a soprano. My father played guitar. They did RCIA, Pre-Cana, Men's Weekends, Women's Weekends, retreats — I grew up knowing that's what grown-ups do. I was a



Rob and Cindy Giacobbe

student at St. Joe's and it was ingrained in me."

Cindy and Rob serve in many capacities as well.

"We stay active with church," Rob says. "The last five years, I've gotten more involved, but Cindy's always been involved. I make guitars — I'm currently making one for the church. My passion is helping people. I've been in

public service — in the military and with the police, and now with the fire department."

Rob served in the Army, then in law enforcement in Huron, and is now a firefighter in Amherst.

"That's in addition to my full-time job," he says. "I work maintenance for Amherst public schools."

With such a servant's heart, Rob is also an Extraordinary Minister at Mass and brings Holy Communion to residents at Amherst Manor. Cindy is also an Extraordinary Minister, but her biggest impact is teaching.

"I've been teaching sixth-grade social studies for 27 years," Cindy says.

About 15 years ago, Cindy was led to

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Nurturing Young Stewards and Disciples: *The Role and Importance of Youth Ministry*



As Catholic parents, one of our most significant responsibilities is to instill the values of our faith in our children. We strive to raise them as disciples of Christ, guiding them to live their lives in accordance with the teachings of our Lord. One essential way to achieve this is by actively involving our children in youth ministry programs. These programs not only help our young ones grow in their faith but also instill the principles of stewardship as a way of life.

Youth ministry plays a pivotal role in shaping young minds and hearts. It provides an environment where adolescents and teenagers can explore their faith, deepen their relationship with God, and engage in service to the community. Let's delve into why this involvement is so crucial.

- **Spiritual Formation:** Youth ministry programs create a space for spiritual growth and formation. They offer opportunities for prayer, worship, and reflection, enabling our children to build a strong foundation in their faith.
- **Faith Community:** These programs help young Catholics build connections with their peers who share their faith. In a world that often pulls young people in various directions, these relationships offer a support system that strengthens their faith journey.
- **Service and Stewardship:** Youth ministry emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community. By participating in service projects, young Catholics learn the value of stewardship, cultivating a sense of responsibility to care for the world and its people.

Now, let's look at some of the best Catholic youth ministry programs available to parents and their children:

- **Life Teen:** Life Teen is a widely recognized Catholic youth ministry program that engages teenagers in a

dynamic way. It combines faith formation, community building, and service, making it a holistic approach to youth ministry.

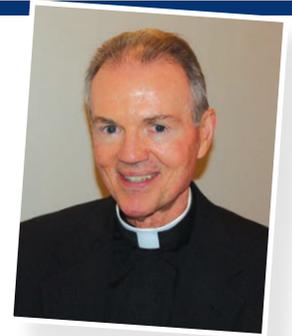
- **EDGE:** This program is designed for middle school-age youth and focuses on equipping them with the basics of the Catholic faith. It offers a fun and engaging atmosphere while fostering spiritual growth.
- **Steubenville Youth Conferences:** These conferences bring together thousands of Catholic youths for an intense weekend of worship, teaching, and fellowship. They inspire young Catholics to dive deeper into their faith.
- **Catholic HEART Workcamp:** This program combines mission trips with faith-building experiences. Teens not only learn about their faith but also actively practice it through service projects.
- **NCYC (National Catholic Youth Conference):** Held every two years, NCYC is a massive gathering of Catholic youth from across the country. It offers a chance for young Catholics to connect with their faith on a national scale.

Involvement in these youth ministry programs equips our children with the tools they need to become committed disciples of Christ and stewards of God's creation. They inspire a lifelong commitment to their faith, encouraging them to actively live out the Gospel message through acts of love and service.

As Catholic parents, let us embrace the opportunity to nurture our young disciples through youth ministry. By doing so, we ensure that they not only live as followers of Christ but also develop a deep understanding of stewardship, setting them on a path to lead a life rooted in faith and love for others.

A Letter from Our Pastor

Stewardship: A Positive Way to Live



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

There is something about the month of August that is glorious. Summer is still in full force – the lazy, hazy days are with us, and some still have vacations on the horizon. And yet, back-to-school preparations and a return to the busy-ness of life are just around the corner.

We are at that point in the year when some things are coming to an end and other things are beginning all at once. However, isn't that the way it always is? The Russian playwright and short-story writer Anton Chekhov once said: "People don't notice whether it is winter or summer when they are happy." There is certainly truth to that statement. You might say it is a stewardship statement.

You may be wondering how to make a connection between Chekhov's quote and stewardship. But the connection is found quite simply in the word "happy." I once heard someone say in a presentation about stewardship that people who live stewardship as a way of life are almost always happy. And there is a reason for that.

Stewardship is a positive way to live. It means being grateful and centering our thoughts on gratitude. In other words, our focus is on the good things in life, not on the bad. This does not mean we have perfect health or that all is ideal in our family, that we always sleep well at night, or that we enjoy everything that happens to us or around us.

However, it does mean that when

the good happens, we thank God. We recognize that good and are filled with a sense of joy and gratitude.

You and I know people like that, don't we? We know people who always seem filled with joy, regardless of what may be happening to them or around them personally. To me, these kinds of people are stewardship people — the kind of people we all need to strive to be.

No doubt you have heard that living a life of stewardship means living with an "attitude of gratitude." That is not easy, for you or for me. But it is certainly worth striving for, with God's grace.

As we watch our summer season finish

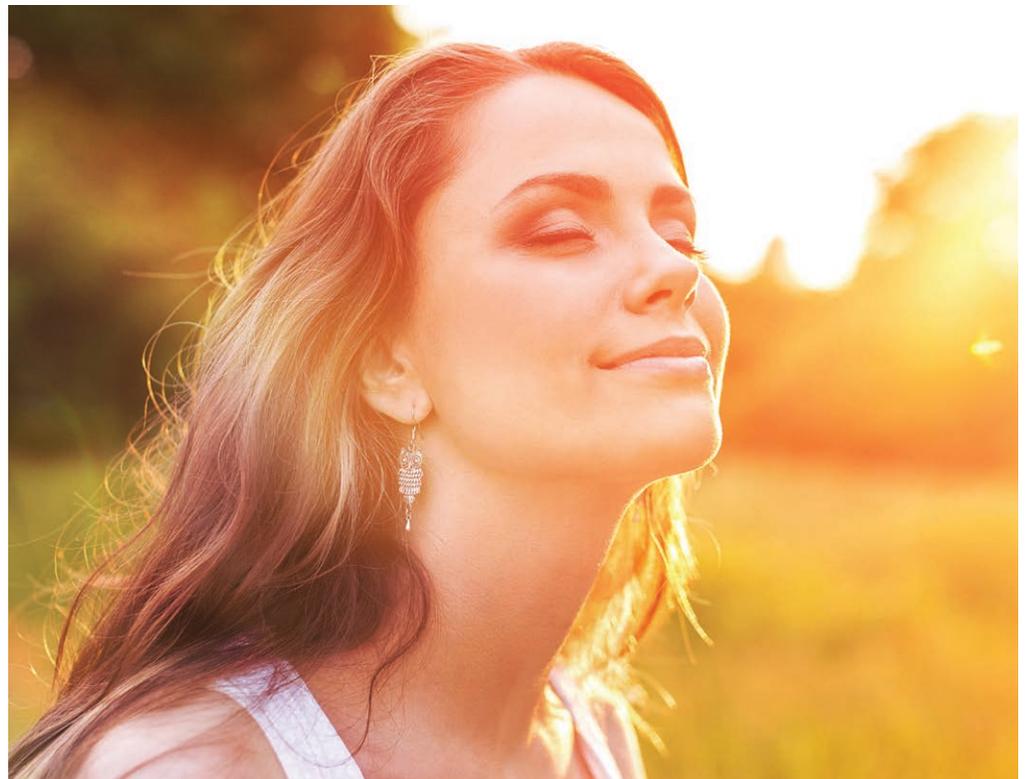
and the busier times of the year begin, let us concentrate on how God has blessed us. If we do that, I truly believe that we can be those people Chekhov described. If we are happy, it will not matter what time of year it is.

I am grateful for you, for your support, your prayers and — most of all — for your presence in my life. Thank you, and may God continue to bless us all.

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor



Meet St. Joseph Parishioners Rob and Cindy Giacobbe

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teach catechism as well.

“My first service was teaching PSR,” Cindy says. “There was a plea by the curriculum director, desperately needing teachers. The last thing I want to do after teaching all week is teach, but I felt the Holy Spirit nudging me.”

The couple has three daughters, each eight years apart — Ashley, Emma, and Gillian. Cindy started teaching PSR when Ashley was in high school.

“This was back when the Confirmation program culminated junior year,” Cindy says. “It was a three-year program with service hours and Sunday evenings at a facilitator’s house. I served as a catechist and facilitator. High school kids came to my house one Sunday a month for three years. I provided my home, snacks, and lessons. That was a big commitment. It was the Holy Spirit tapping me to teach. I’ve been a teacher since I was 22. I’ve taught in public schools my whole career. God used that experience to help in the church.”

Rob and Cindy also participated in Pre-Cana and Cindy has served as a lector. Their example of service pays off.

“Emma’s in the choir,” Rob says. “Gillian’s an altar server. We try to be good examples of faith in action to our children.”

“Gillian has now been recruited to sing in the choir,” Cindy adds.

Raising their children in faith is paramount to the Giacobbes.

“We always pray together as a family,” Rob says. “They need to have a personal relationship with Jesus. You need to pray and talk to Him like He’s in the room. If you have a problem, give it to God. Don’t stress about things you can’t control. Don’t be afraid to talk about God to strangers. It comes up all the time in conversations. Don’t be afraid. It’s important.”

“When I face our Lord, I want to be able to say I did my best,” Cindy adds. “I hope when Rob and I are long gone, our girls can say, ‘Mom and Dad served, so now we’re going to serve,’ like I can say about my parents.”

For the couple, staying as active as possible is essential.

“Our faith has grown more as we’ve gotten closer to each other and closer with God,” Rob says. “It’s been quite a journey.”



(From left) Emma, Gillian, Rob, Cindy, and Ashley



(From left) Gillian, Cindy, Emma, Rob, and Ashley

“When I face our Lord, I want to be able to say I did my best. I hope when Rob and I are long gone, our girls can say, ‘Mom and Dad served, so now we’re going to serve,’ like I can say about my parents.”

— Cindy Giacobbe



**Join Us on
Sunday, Sept. 21
for Plenty of
Fellowship and Great Food**

Parish Picnic Offers a Fun Football Party for All

It's that time of year again! The Parish Picnic is upon us, and the planning committee has been hard at work preparing a great day for everyone to enjoy!

This year's picnic will take place on Sunday, Sept. 21, after the 11 a.m. Mass. The food and fun will be located in the St. Joe's social hall. This year's picnic has a football theme, with CYO athletes coming to visit and interact with the kids. The Cleveland Browns-Green Bay Packers game will be shown, so fans can keep an eye on the action while enjoying the festivities.

Maria Mrosek has been on the picnic committee for three years and has served as chair for the last two of them.

"We are all so excited for this event!" she says. "I have never been on a committee that is so engaged and excited about what they do. We have so much fun putting everything together, and we have it so well organized at this point that it isn't a chore to do it. It is a great group that is so enthusiastic about making this event a great time for everyone!"

With hot dogs, pulled pork, and sides, there is plenty of great food for everyone. Games, activities, and treats are prepared for the kids to enjoy. A photo booth will be set up for friends and family to capture all the fun of the event. Parishioners are encouraged to wear their favorite football jerseys from elementary school, high school, college, or an NFL team!

Raffle prizes will be awarded to those who bring in food donations for our St. Joseph Vincentian Ministry. Some prizes include gift cards and home theater products, and the committee is working on a very special grand prize for one lucky winner! Raffle tickets are earned for every canned food item that is brought in.

In addition to a canned food donation, attendees are encouraged to bring a dessert to share. Otherwise, all food, drinks, and activities are provided.

Many different ministries within the parish help to make this event a success. Servers, those who prepare the food, and volunteers who help with games and activities come from many

different ministries across the parish. Additional volunteers are welcome to help and can do so by contacting Maria.

"This event is really a part of the hospitality of the parish," Maria says. "We get the kids engaged in these events so they feel the closeness of the parish. They grow up here year after year, and they participate more as they grow up. I believe that being involved in these events helps them understand stewardship better and how it affects the parish."

All are invited and encouraged to come and take part in this fun day of fellowship. Enjoy good food and fun while getting to know more of the parish community.



Picnic planning committee members — (front row, from left) Marge Daidone, Tracy Shamhart, Lynda Pecchio; (second row, from left) Lisa Fitzpatrick and Suzanne Strader; (back row, from left) Kathy Flynn, John Fitzpatrick, Joe Danicki, Lillian Zaworski, Maria Mrosek, Carol Bullock, Jim Pecchio and Ron Dickinson; not pictured — Ed Hamerlinck, Matt Bernard, Mallary Rospert, Jim Strader



Sharing in fellowship and great food at last year's picnic



Young attendees enjoying time together at last year's picnic

For more information on getting involved, contact Maria Mrosek at mrosekmaria440@gmail.com or 440-985-2707.

Looking Forward to Another Great Year at St. Joseph Parish School

Principal Amy Makruski Discusses Goals and New Developments as New Year Gets Underway

Excitement is in the air this time of year, as students of all ages and their families prepare to return to school. At St. Joseph Parish School — where the mission is “to provide a Christ-centered environment where dignity, leadership, excellence, and collaboration guide us to become the best versions of ourselves” — parents and students can look forward to another year of rigorous academics and sound spiritual formation. Principal Amy Makruski hopes significant achievements from last year will set the tone for a successful 2025-26 school year.

St. Joseph Parish School serves children from preschool through eighth grade. The school is one of four STEM-designated schools within the diocese, meaning the school places emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in its curriculum, encouraging problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Mrs. Makruski notes some other

ways the school has been recognized for its high standards.

“Our preschool received a gold rating from the Ohio Department of Children and Youth,” she says. “The day school (K-8) went through the process of becoming re-accredited for the next five years through the Ohio Catholic Schools Accrediting Association. The STEM designation through the Ohio STEM Learning Network and the Ohio Department of Workforce and Education is also valid for the next five years. With all of these accomplishments, we will continue to focus on moving our students forward in purposeful ways.”

Parents value a Catholic education not only because of the rigorous and engaging academics, but also because of the faith teaching and character formation. Mrs. Makruski’s goals for the new year include aspects from each of these educational pillars.

“A top priority is to deepen our students’ and their families’

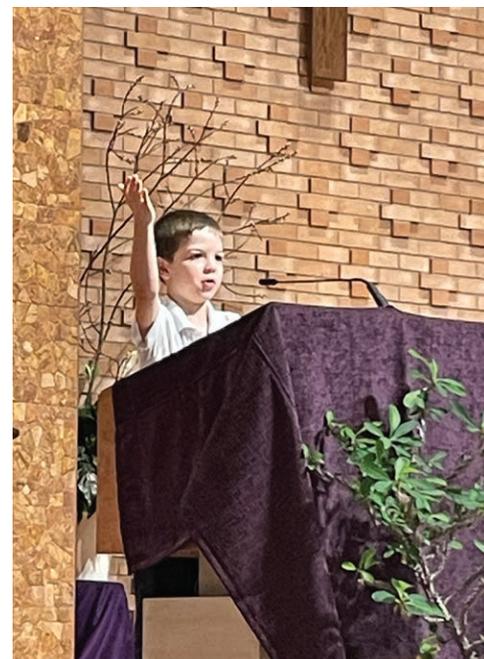
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Third-graders use collaboration time to build together.



Our preschool staff received their Gold Award banner.



All grades help lead worship at Mass. First-grader Owen leads a reading.

Looking Forward to Another Great Year at St. Joseph Parish School

continued from page 6

relationship with Christ, as well as provide opportunities for them to serve the world around them,” she says. “My goal is to support our mission for every student to become the best version of themselves, as our mission proclaims.”

In order to bolster the school’s academic program, Mrs. Makruski says the staff will focus on metacognition, a term that means thinking about one’s own learning process. The goal is to encourage students to be inquisitive and fully engaged in the daily lessons, as well as to empower teachers to tailor classroom activities to meet the diverse learning styles of the students.

“We want to help students to ‘think about their own

thinking’ to increase engagement and further differentiate content,” Mrs. Makruski says.

Even with teaching methodologies and best practices in place, Mrs. Makruski notes that the key ingredient in a healthy school culture is love, and she wants to ensure that this virtue is at the root of all that takes place within the building.

“Ultimately, my goal is to help every child and family who walks through our doors to feel loved and seen,” she says. “With the support of our dedicated teachers, staff, and families, I believe the 2025-26 school year will be a year of great growth and grace.”



To learn more about St. Joseph Parish School, visit sjsamherst.org.



Third-graders work on their Starting a Business PBL.



Students work on a fun building project.

“Ultimately, my goal is to help every child and family who walks through our doors to feel loved and seen. With the support of our dedicated teachers, staff, and families, I believe the 2025-26 school year will be a year of great growth and grace.”

— Amy Makruski

YOU ARE INVITED!

Annual Parish Retreat

The

FOUR PILLARS

OF PARISH STEWARDSHIP

HOSPITALITY, PRAYER, FORMATION, SERVICE

“I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly.” (Jn 10:10)

Our Lord wants only the very best for us. In turn, we should want to give Him our very best! Spend some time with Him and with your parish family, discovering what it is the Lord especially wants for you at this time in your life. We have a God of abundance. Let Him show you all He has in mind for you — to receive and to share!

The retreat will include inspiring talks by Fr. Godfrey Mullen from the Cathedral of St. Peter in Belleville, Ill., time for quiet reflection, and brief small-group discussion. There is no cost to attend. A light continental breakfast is available starting at 8:30 a.m. The Retreat will start promptly at 9:00 a.m. and a catered lunch will be served at 12:25 p.m.

I truly hope that you can participate and ask that you please RSVP no later than August 25. You will be receiving an email to RSVP to this Retreat. After clicking on the “sign-up” button in the email, you will be taken to a page where you can click on either the “I will attend” or “I will not attend” button. To complete the RSVP be sure to click on the “Sign me up!” button. If you prefer, you can RSVP to the parish office at 440-988-2848.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Fr. Tim O'Connor,
Pastor



Retreat Leader -

Fr. Godfrey Mullen, OSB, is the rector of Cathedral of St. Peter in Belleville, Ill. Professed as a monk of St. Meinrad Archabbey in 1989, he was ordained a priest in 1994. After returning from studies to the abbey in 2001 and earning his PhD in Liturgical Studies from the Catholic University of America in 2003, he taught seminarians, lay students, and deacon candidates for 12 years. He also held several administrative posts in the seminary at St. Meinrad. In 2012, he became pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Huntingburg, Ind. In 2013, Bishop Charles Thompson assigned him to be rector of St. Benedict Cathedral, and three years ago he began working to develop stewardship as a way of life at the cathedral parish. With stewardship now thriving at St. Benedict, he began his new assignment at Cathedral of St. Peter in Belleville, Ill in 2022.

St. Joseph & Nativity of the BVM
Saturday, September 6, 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
St. Joseph Social Hall

Fighting the Good Fight

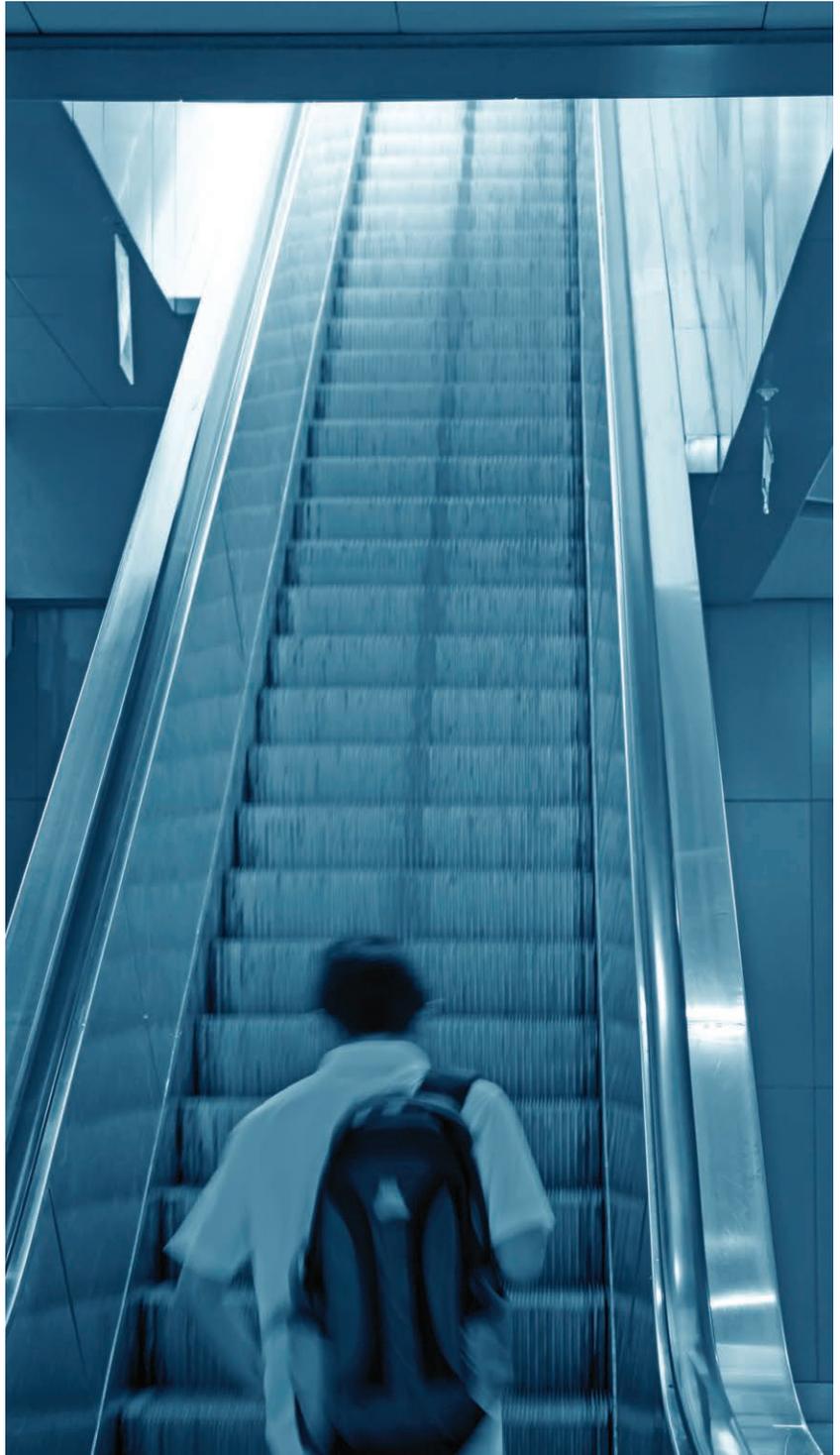
By DEACON NATHAN FRANKART

Pease of Christ to you! I encourage you to pray for me, particularly as you read this message, as in all likelihood, I will be on my silent retreat with the rest of the graduate school seminarians. “Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more.”

Pardon my Shakespearian phrase — it might be often said, and in my case, particularly pertinent. I have not spoken much when it comes to the realm of “spiritual warfare,” as I am sure some of you have heard from podcasts or different homilies before — I haven’t found it in my experience of studying and growing the faith to resonate deeply with me. However, as I approach one last semester of formation in the seminary, the concept of engaging in a spiritual battle is one worth visiting for myself and all of us as we grow in our spiritual life.

I had a friend in college once tell me that “Holiness is walking up a downward escalator — if you aren’t going up, you’re losing ground.” That, in brief, is spiritual warfare. We, of course, never need to fight or work for the effects of our Baptism or in the reception of the other sacraments, but we do need to show up. The work of “walking up the escalator” — or making ourselves available to the grace which God wishes to work in our hearts and in our lives — will occasionally be something that feels difficult to obtain, or quite frankly, just might feel boring. I wish I could tell you that I’ve enthusiastically gone to every single time of prayer when I scheduled in my time of prayer. It might surprise many people when I say that it’s already happened more than once where I will be sitting in my room at the end of a long day in parish ministry and realize, “I didn’t stop at all to spend time with Jesus!”

That is spiritual warfare, fighting to ensure that the times and places and people that we feel resolved to pray for actually make it into the habit of our lives. So many people want to talk about the spiritual battle of demons and the Accuser, beating back the temptations of the Evil One and his tricks. There exists a time and place for such discussions, but the more common and prevalent battle that we face is the spiritual battle of our time and energy.



AD SPACE

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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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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, Aug. 1 — 11 a.m., NBVM Church

First Saturday Rosary

Saturday, Aug. 2 — 9 a.m., St. Joseph Church

Hospitality Tuesday

Tuesday, Aug. 5 — 8:30 a.m., Nativity Parish Hall

Altar and Rosary Society Meeting

Tuesday, Aug. 5 — 6:30 p.m., Nativity Parish Hall

Wonderful Women

Tuesday, Aug. 12 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph School MPR

The Assumption of Mary – Holy Day of Obligation

Thursday, Aug. 14 — 7 p.m., Vigil Mass at St. Joseph Parish

Friday, Aug. 15 — 9 a.m., Mass at St. Joseph Parish

Friday, Aug. 15 — 12 p.m., Mass at Nativity Parish

Preschool Orientation Meeting

Monday, Aug. 18 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph School

Kindergarten Orientation Meeting

Wednesday, Aug. 20 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph School

St. Joseph School Walk-Through for Students and Family

Sunday, Aug. 24 — 12 p.m., St. Joseph School

First Day of School for Grades 1-8 and Kindergarten with last names A-L

Monday, Aug. 25

First Day of School Kindergarten with last names M-Z

Tuesday, Aug. 26

Knights of Columbus Meeting

Tuesday, Aug. 26 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph School MPR

First Day of School for ALL Kindergarten

Wednesday, Aug. 27

Knights of Columbus Fifth Sunday Rosary

Sunday, Aug. 31 — 12 p.m., St. Joseph Church

Men's Group Meeting

Tuesday, Aug. 5 and 19 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph Social Hall Lobby

Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes

Tuesdays and Thursdays in August — 9:30 a.m., Mill Hollow