



St. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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By DEACON NATHAN FRANKART

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SEPTEMBER 2025

St. Joseph Parishioners **Justin and Rachel Krok** Reflect on Living the Faith as a Family *Building a Foundation of Truth, Love, and Hope*

For parishioners Justin and Rachel Krok, passing the faith on to their children is one of the most important responsibilities they have as parents and as Catholics.

“It’s not just about tradition,” Justin says. “It’s about giving them a foundation of truth, love, and hope that they can carry throughout their lives. The faith teaches them who they are, that they are deeply loved by God, and that their lives have purpose. In a world that often feels chaotic and uncertain, I want them to know the peace that comes from trusting in God, the strength that comes from prayer, and the joy of living a life of service and compassion.”

The Kroks have been St. Joseph parishioners since 2020, when they moved back to their hometown of Amherst from Michigan. Justin and Rachel — both raised in the Amherst area — were married in 2016. They have two children — Adelynn, 7, and Beckham, 5. Both children are baptized and Adelynn is on track to receive her First Communion next year through the PSR program.



Justin and Rachel's wedding



The Krok family

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Nurturing *Stewardship* and *Discipleship* in Your Children as a New School Year Begins

As parents, you play a vital role in instilling values and faith in your children's lives. With the start of a new school year in September, it's an excellent time to focus on teaching them about stewardship and discipleship, two core principles in the Catholic faith. Here are some practical ways to help your kids embrace these values as they embark on their educational journey.

- **Set a Christ-Centered Example:** Children learn by example, and it's crucial to model stewardship and discipleship in your own life. Show them how to be good stewards of your time, talents, and treasures by making time for family prayer, acts of service, and charitable giving. Let them see you living out your faith in meaningful ways.
- **Teach Gratitude:** Expressing gratitude is a fundamental aspect of stewardship. Encourage your children to start each day with a prayer of thanks for the opportunities the new school year brings. Help them recognize that their education is a gift from God, and it's essential to appreciate it.
- **Get Involved in Parish and Community Activities:** Engaging in parish and community service projects can be a great way to encourage stewardship. Participate as a family in volunteer opportunities, such as food drives, community clean-ups, or visiting the elderly. These experiences will teach your children the importance of giving back.
- **Support Their Talents and Interests:** Every child has unique talents and interests. Encourage your children to explore their passions and talents, whether it's art, music, sports, or academics. These pursuits can be a way to practice stewardship by sharing their talents with others and serving the community.

- **Nurture a Prayerful Life:** Help your children build a strong prayer life. Encourage them to pray for their teachers, classmates, and school staff. Regular family prayer times can help strengthen their relationship with God and guide them in discipleship.
- **Emphasize Kindness and Compassion:** Teach your children the importance of treating others with kindness and compassion. Share stories of Jesus' love and mercy and discuss how they can emulate His example in their interactions with peers and teachers.
- **Talk About Their Academic Responsibilities:** Discuss the importance of diligence and hard work in their studies. Explain that stewardship applies to their responsibilities as students, too. Encourage them to do their best, not just for their own benefit but to honor God and be good stewards of the opportunities they have been given.
- **Share Stories from the Bible:** The Bible is full of stories that illustrate stewardship and discipleship. Read and discuss these stories with your children. For instance, the story of the Good Samaritan emphasizes helping others, while the Parable of the Talents underscores using one's abilities for God's glory.

Incorporating these practices into your family life can help your children understand and embrace the values of stewardship and discipleship as they start a new school year. By fostering a strong connection between faith and everyday actions, you are laying a solid foundation for their spiritual growth and nurturing their sense of responsibility to God and others.



A Letter from Our Pastor

Welcome to September



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

For many people, when Labor Day rolls around, it signals time “to get back to normal again.” And there is truth to this, as the opening of school calls for “getting back to a solid routine.”

In June, our St. Joseph and Nativity Parishes marked the 10th anniversary of our journey in growing as “one family in Christ with two addresses/locations and one priest.” Our relationships within and between our two parishes are bearing much fruit and paving the way for a bright future together.

Our St. Joseph Parish Day School serves both of our parishes and our communities. Our principal is Mrs. Amy Makruski, and we look forward to an exciting year of Catholic education with our STEM School designation by the State of Ohio. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, helping our students be prepared for this 21st century and its opportunities within a Catholic school environment.

Our St. Joseph Parish Day School is a real gem and adds so much value to our lives. It has a splendid history and a promising future – and is ever fresh in its newness of life. Please check out what is going on in our school through its website [sjsamherst.org] or by calling the school office [440-988-4244] for a tour and for more information. We welcome your inquiries and new school families.

Our joint Parish School of Religion [PSR] program for our children in public schools takes place on Wednesday

evenings this school year. It is under the leadership of our new PSR Coordinator, Mrs. Amy Makruski. Mrs. Makruski is also the Principal of our St. Joseph Parish Day School. An enriching year of faith formation lies ahead for us in our Parish School of Religion.

Our St. Joseph Preschool has received a “Gold Rating” from the State of Ohio. This is the top rating, and it gives us lots of reasons to be proud of and grateful for our preschool program and its leadership.

We welcome Mr. Joshua Gonzalez as our new Director of Youth Activities for the young people of our two parishes. You will be hearing and seeing more of Josh and his team, with some bright new offerings for our youth in grades 7-12.

The Music and Performing Arts and Media Ministries continue to grow and develop under the leadership of Christina Dupré, our St. Joseph Worship and Liturgy Coordinator, and her team. Stay tuned for

more wonderful news and opportunities.

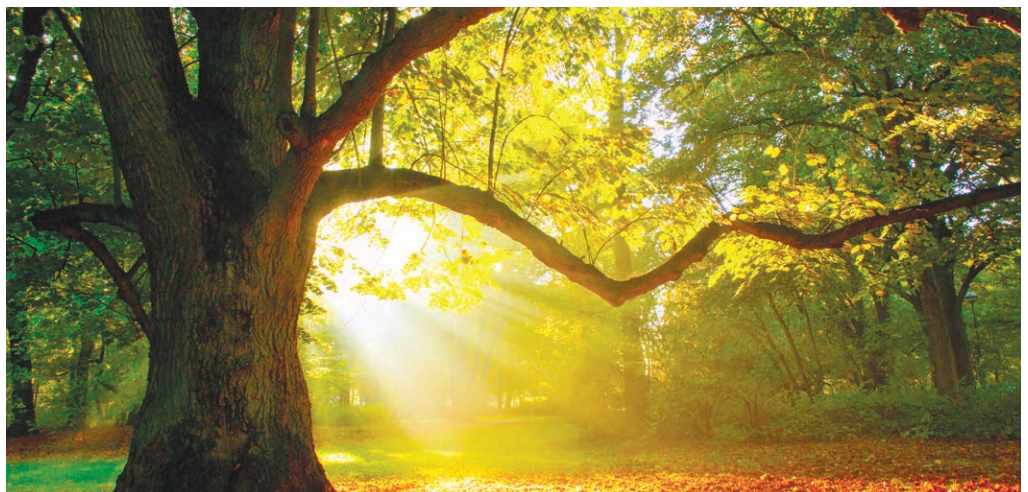
We look forward to welcoming new candidates to our Catholic family in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults [OCIA, formerly known as RCIA], which begins this fall. Anyone who is interested in examining our Catholic faith and life is welcome to participate. Please watch the Sunday bulletins and parish website for dates and times.

Welcome to September and all that this fall season has to offer. And may your routines, re-established and newly established, bring you closer to God and to each other in our St. Joseph and Nativity Parish Families.

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor



St. Joseph Parishioners **Justin and Rachel Krok**

continued from front cover

“Since we married and started having a family of our own, we always thought it was important to be active in the Catholic faith,” Justin says. “When we moved back home to Amherst, we visited many Catholic churches, but felt St. Joe’s was perfect for us. Rachel’s family has been active parishioners, and my great-grandmother and grandfather were parishioners, so St. Joe’s has a special place in my heart.”

The Krok family has always made a priority of attending Sunday Mass together.

“I was raised this way, and it was such a wonderful start to every Sunday,” Rachel says. “As I grew up, I watched my father be involved with parish activities and always set such a good example. We thought it would be a great influence for our children to see us expressing our faith regularly.”

As a family, the Kroks are busy with various sports, work, and activities — but they find the time to serve as a reminder of the importance of their faith lives. Justin is a member of the Knights of Columbus, and he serves as an usher. The family also helps tidy up after Mass on Sundays.

“My daughter really enjoys helping her dad fix all the books in the back of the pews,” Rachel says.

The Krok family makes it a regular practice to say grace before meals, and pray nightly for intentions and those in need. Rachel also seeks to bring her faith into her workplace as a registered ICU nurse in the Cleveland Clinic.

“It is very important for us to teach our children about the Catholic religion because we think faith is so important to get through everything that life gives us — the good and the bad,” she says.

For the Kroks, part of passing along the faith means teaching their children ways in which it impacts daily life. This includes practices of gratitude and leaning on God during challenging times, as well as incorporating faith in day-to-day tasks.

“I also try and stop for at least two minutes each day and reflect on everything that God has given me,” Rachel says. “In my career as a nurse, I feel that every shift is a gift to be able to help people in a way that is most rewarding. I am so grateful to be able to provide care for someone who is sick and help them get back into good health. I love that we have spiritual care available for all patients.”

“At home, I model stewardship for my children by teaching them the value of generosity, responsibility, faith, patriotism, and just being a good person to your fellow neighbor,” Justin adds.

"As I grew up, I watched my father be involved with parish activities and always set such a good example.

We thought it would be a great influence for our children to see us expressing our faith regularly."

— Rachel Krok



Justin and Rachel's wedding



Adelynn and Beckham Krok

AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE Ushers Ministry

Joyfully Serving as Spiritual Ambassadors of the Church

St. Dominic Savio once recognized that “I can’t do big things. But I want all I do, even the smallest thing, to be for the greater glory of God.” Sometimes ministries require a lot of work and time, and sometimes they require little, but each can be done for the greater glory of God.

At St. Joseph, those who participate in the Ushers Ministry play an important role in the parish. They are spiritual ambassadors who respond to the needs of Jesus in each person who comes into the Church.

Parishioner Jeff Mount has found that serving as an usher is a powerful way of expressing gratitude to God, and it’s a valuable opportunity to help build up the Kingdom of God here on earth.

“We greet parishioners and visitors before Mass, assist people who need help with seating, help gather the weekly offertory, and distribute bulletins after Mass,” Jeff says. “Spending a minute to engage parishioners in conversation often helps promote a strong community spirit.”

Contributing time as an usher is a gift, and at the Mass, an usher serves as a part of the bigger liturgy by assisting the priest and being on mission for the people. An usher is the first point of contact that a person makes when walking into the church, and this first impression can be what someone takes



*(First row) Logan Collins, Derek Collins, Grace Collins;
(back row) Ken Collins, Jeff Mount*

with them into the pew as they prepare their heart for experiencing the liturgy. A joyful smile can make all the difference, and a willingness to help can make a visitor’s experience enjoyable.

“It’s important to make people feel welcome when coming to worship,” Jeff says. “For me, I wanted to provide a helping hand to assist in the celebration of our Lord and Savior.”

Anyone can help out as an usher, and the time commitment is minimal. Arriving

about 15 to 30 minutes before Mass to begin greeting parishioners and staying a few minutes after to hand out bulletins is all that is required.

The time and talent given to the Ushers Ministry is an indication of a servant heart and a commitment to helping the liturgy run smoothly, as our ushers serve the needs of others in the present moment.



"It's important to make people feel welcome when coming to worship. For me, I wanted to provide a helping hand to assist in the celebration of our Lord and Savior." — Jeff Mount

**Those interested in being an usher may contact Jeff Mount at
440-984-4223 or JJMOUNT182@gmail.com.**

Looking Forward to a Great Year of Formation and Growth in Our Parish School of Religion

Forming young minds in the life of the Church is an important undertaking. Here in our parish community, we are blessed to have the Parish School of Religion (PSR) program that provides faith formation and sacramental preparation for parish youth.

Amy Makruski, principal at St. Joseph Parish School, has newly taken over the position of coordinator for the PSR.

"I'm looking forward to welcoming all of the students and getting to know all of the families," she says. "Forming relationships with students and families is one of my favorite parts of religious education ministries."

The PSR program provides religious education and formation to the students in both St. Joseph Parish and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish. The program is led by a group of stewards who instruct the students in faith and example. The classes run on Wednesday evenings, 5:30 to

6:45 p.m., from October to April.

"The main goal of the PSR program is to support parents, as the primary educators in faith, and the parish in raising children to be knowledgeable, practicing, and faithful Catholics," Mrs. Makruski says. "This is done through catechesis, sacramental prep, faith formation, a call to community and worship, and moral development."

While Mrs. Makruski is new to the role as coordinator, she was previously the first-grade teacher, so she is familiar with the PSR program. As she steps into this new role, she hopes the PSR program might be able to provide some service to the parish community and help with leading music for Mass a couple of times this upcoming school year. She also plans to have more opportunities to bring all the students together as a community on Wednesday nights and at weekend Masses.

The PSR program is integral to our parish community.



"It is a balance of helping children learn the components of our faith, but also setting up experiences for them to encounter Christ, understand His teachings, and see how their faith connects to every part of their lives."

— Amy Makruski

Parish School of Religion *continued from page 6*

Living as young Catholics in today's world is not without its challenges, and the PSR program equips our young people by teaching the faith so they may live it out as they grow into their vocations.

"It helps to grow disciples who know the faith, love the Lord, and are confident in living out their Catholic identity with joy and integrity in today's world, which is a very hard task," Mrs. Makruski says. "Parents cannot always do these things alone, and the PSR program helps to support this."

The PSR seeks to support the children and youth of our parishes through a variety of teaching methods,

age-appropriate curriculum, sacramental preparation, prayer, and social and moral development.

"It is a balance of helping children learn the components of our faith, but also setting up experiences for them to encounter Christ, understand His teachings, and see how their faith connects to every part of their lives," Mrs. Makruski says.

If parishioners would like to help support the PSR program by donating their time on Wednesday evenings, there is always a need for help in the roles of teachers, aides, and substitute teachers.

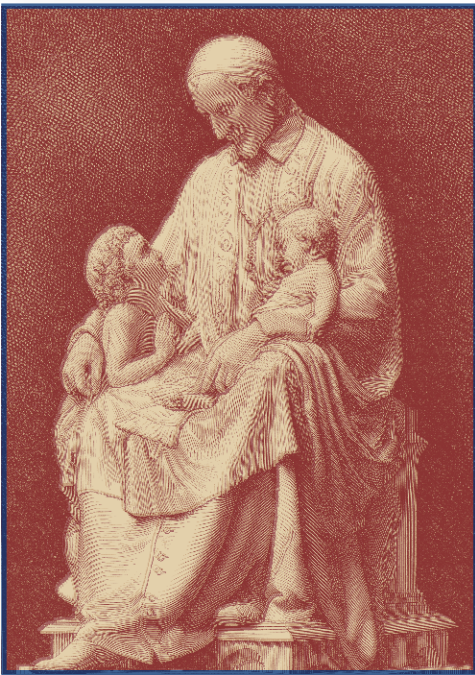


For more information, contact Amy Makruski at amy.makruski@sjs-amherst.org



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL:

A Shining Example of Faith, Stewardship, and Discipleship



St. Vincent de Paul, whose feast day is celebrated on Sept. 27, stands as a shining example of faith, stewardship, and discipleship in the Catholic Church. His life's work and enduring legacy continue to inspire Catholics around the world. As we commemorate his feast day, it's a fitting time to reflect on the importance of this remarkable saint.

St. Vincent de Paul was born in France in 1581 and went on to become a Catholic priest known for his extraordinary dedication to serving the poor and marginalized. He co-founded the Congregation of the Mission,

commonly known as the Vincentians, and the Daughters of Charity, a religious community of women dedicated to assisting those in need. His life was dedicated to serving Christ through service to the least fortunate in society.

One of the key aspects that makes St. Vincent de Paul so significant in the Catholic Church is his unwavering commitment to the poor and the downtrodden. He viewed the face of Christ in those he served and saw it as a moral and spiritual imperative to provide for their needs. His tireless efforts in this regard exemplify the concept of stewardship — the responsible and generous use of God-given resources, both in terms of material wealth and the gifts of time and talent.

St. Vincent's works were not limited to mere charity but extended to structural change. He advocated for social justice and systemically addressing the root causes of poverty. He believed in empowering those in need to help themselves, and his teachings and actions continue to guide Catholics in the pursuit of social justice and the betterment of society.

St. Vincent de Paul's life was a testament to the principles of discipleship. He recognized that following Christ meant walking in His footsteps, serving others with love and humility. He encouraged his followers

to approach their work with a spirit of service and a deep commitment to the Gospel's teachings. This commitment to discipleship became the cornerstone of the Vincentian tradition.

The Vincentian spirit remains vibrant today, with numerous organizations, charities, and Catholic communities worldwide inspired by St. Vincent de Paul's example. They continue his mission to serve the poor and marginalized, emphasizing the importance of faith, stewardship, and discipleship.

As we celebrate St. Vincent de Paul's feast day in September, we are reminded of his profound impact on the Catholic Church and society as a whole. He exemplified the true essence of faith by living out his beliefs through selfless service to others. He underscored the importance of stewardship by generously sharing his time, talent, and resources with the needy. His life serves as a model of discipleship, encouraging us to follow Christ's call to love and serve unconditionally.

In a world where poverty and inequality still exist, the teachings of St. Vincent de Paul remain as relevant as ever. His example inspires Catholics to be instruments of God's love, compassion, and justice in the world, continuing his legacy of faith, stewardship, and discipleship.



Shepherd of Souls

By DEACON NATHAN FRANKART

Pease of Christ to you! It occurred to me recently that for all these years of writing to you, I failed to mention someone pivotal to my experience as a seminarian and now minister. Although this position has changed faces over the last seven years, the bishop of Cleveland has been consistently present to me, encouraging my ongoing growth and formation.

Maybe I've shared this story already, but Bishop Malesic knew me by name before I ever met him. You can imagine the small rush of anxiety I felt when he shook my hand and confidently said, "Ah, Nathan, it's good to finally meet you." Immediately, my mind flashed with this fear, "Oh great, what did you hear?"

But no, that's what this caretaker of our diocese meant. He took the time to look over the vocation poster and commit us to memory, his seminarians. And throughout his time here in Cleveland as ordinary, Bishop Malesic continues to demonstrate his pastoral sensitivity and genuine love for the People of God. I had the recent opportunity to spend an extended period of time with him at the Fest and as his Master of Ceremonies for a Catholic School Convocation Mass at St. Ambrose.

"For you, I am a bishop. With you, I am a Christian", so says the great St. Augustine of Hippo. Such a sentiment rings true for the manner in which Bishop Malesic loves his people. Which is why his pastoral



Bishop Malesic

letter, *A Flourishing, Apostolic Church*, is worth your time. Contained within this short and accessible letter is the heart of a man who desires to instruct his people towards a greater spirit of evangelization and hope for the Church. Bishop Malesic does not pen a theological treatise on the natures of God or dive into long, drawn-out rhetoric concerning the current state of affairs. He gives an honest, clear, and

hopeful message of which he gives you.

That's right, you. He doesn't write for me or the other religious of Cleveland. He certainly doesn't write for his own sense of self-satisfaction. He writes to be close and connected to you, as a shepherd does not wish to be feared by his sheep. Consider reading this work, so that you might grow closer to a man who continues to pour himself out on behalf of his people.

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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 REPAIR WORK.

Labor Day Mass

Monday, Sept. 1 — 9 a.m. at St. Joseph Cemetery, weather permitting (In the event of bad weather, Mass will be at Nativity Parish).

No school, parish offices closed

Hospitality Tuesday

Tuesday, Sept. 2 — 8:30 a.m. at Nativity Church (following the 8:00 a.m. Mass)

Altar and Rosary Society Meeting

Tuesday, Sept. 2 — 6:30 p.m. at Nativity Parish Hall

First Day of Preschool

Tuesday, Sept. 2 — for the 3-year-old p.m. class and 4-year-old a.m. class

First Day of Preschool

Wednesday, Sept. 3 — for the 4-year-old p.m. class

First Friday Rosary

Friday, Sept. 5 — 11 a.m. at Nativity Church, refreshments to follow in the hall

First Saturday Rosary

Saturday, Sept. 6 — 9 a.m. at St. Joseph Church

"Four Pillars of Stewardship" Parish Retreat

Saturday, Sept. 6 — 9 a.m. at Nativity Parish Hall

Dinners on the Go pick-up

Tuesday, Sept. 9 and 23 — 5 p.m. at Nativity Parish Hall (drive-thru service only)

Pre-Baptism Class

Wednesday, Sept. 10 — 7 p.m. at St. Joseph School

Knights of Columbus

Tuesday, Sept. 23 — 7 p.m. at School MPR

Men's Group Meeting

Tuesday, Sept. 2 and 16 — 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Social Hall Lobby

Vincentians Meeting

Thursday, Sept. 4 and 18 — 9 a.m. in St. Joseph Conference Room

Holy Ground Youth Group

Sunday, Sept. 7, 14, 21, and 28 — 6 p.m. in St. Joseph Social Hall (Event begins with 5 p.m. Mass — meet near the Choir prior to Mass.)

Sacred Sisters Prayer and Study Group

Wednesday, Sept. 10, 17, 24 — 6:30 p.m. at O.S.E. Community Center

OCIA (formerly RCIA)

Monday, Sept. 22 and 29 — 7 p.m. at Nativity Parish Hall

Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes

Tuesday and Thursdays in September — 9:30 a.m., Mill Hollow Park