



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

Inside

3 A Letter from
Our Pastor

4 Financial Reports

8 Holy Ground Youth Group
*Drawing Young
Parishioners Into
Communion With God
and Fellowship With
One Another*

9 "Stir Into Flame"
*By DEACON NATHAN
FRANKART*

St. Joseph Parish
200 Saint Joseph Drive
Amherst, OH 44001
(440) 988-2848
stjosephamherst.com

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

NOV 2025

GET TO KNOW ST. JOSEPH PARISHIONERS

Christian Loo AND Fiorella Lamas Castillo

*Reflecting on a New Family's New Beginnings
and a Joyful Faith Journey*

Christian Loo and Fiorella Lamas Castillo are no strangers to new experiences. In December 2023, they moved to this area and found St. Joseph.

"We were looking for both a parish and a priest to marry us," Christian says.

"We met Fr. Tim," Fiorella says. "He helped us with everything. We had our first meeting with him within four days after the first call. We started Pre Cana to get ready for marriage."

The couple was married on April 28, 2024, but their journey was just beginning.

"That preparation and the relationship we have with Fr. Tim impacted our own relationship," Fiorella says. "Christian knew he didn't have to change — he was a Christian, but he wasn't Catholic. All those things — Fr. Tim, Mass every Sunday together, Pre Cana, everything summed up — he decided to go through OCIA."

"To learn more about the Catholic Church," Christian adds.

So, Christian started attending OCIA in September 2024.

"The moderators had a deeper understanding of the passage," he

continued on page 2



Fiorella and Christian, the happy couple



Fr. Tim with Fiorella Lamas Castillo and Christian Loo as they prepared to be wed

Get to Know St. Joseph Parishioners Christian Loo and Fiorella Lamas Castillo

continued from front cover

says. “The book was *In His Light*. It went through the different historical or theological teachings, giving a more in-depth explanation of why we believe what we do and how that’s been the same since the time of Jesus. It’s bringing us close to Jesus and the apostles, linking throughout time and history to us today. I’d go to Mass not knowing why each part was being done. Learning the history, traditions, and how significant all these things were brought everything together.”

“It finished in him becoming Catholic,” Fiorella adds. “Now we’re involved more. I just started as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, and Christian just received the approval to start doing the same. Everything changed so much in a short period.”

The couple’s new formation enriches their prayer life, too.

“We started doing more things that I guess were healthy habits,” Christian says.

“We pray together during the night,” Fiorella adds. “We remember what we’re grateful for and what we would like for each other, our families, and our patients. We’re dentists, so we pray for our patients. We have recently started praying before eating.”

The two will be helping with OCIA as well, but that participation hinges on another new experience.

“We are expecting,” Christian says. “So, we’ll see how much time we have for OCIA.”

The happy couple’s baby is due on Nov. 20.

“Fr. Tim told me in a Catholic marriage, children have to be raised in the Catholic faith,” Christian says. “I’m marrying Fiorella, I love her, her values, and how she was raised Catholic. I have no problem. In part, that’s what drew me to learn more and eventually become Catholic. It’s nice we’d both be united and teaching our kids as they grow.”

Fiorella grew up in Peru, and her parents sent her to a school of Opus Dei in Lima.

“It was really important for them to raise the children in the Catholic faith,” she says. “We had Mass once a month. In May, the month of the Virgin Mary, there was a competition of the choirs of all the kids. It was beautiful. We’d sing songs for Mother Mary. We had a religion course. There was another course, OVE — we would check a virtue or value for the week and give a small conversation about that. It was important for my formation to have that early. I kept it in my heart.”

Fiorella continued her formation with a young adult group.



Fr. Tim with Fiorella and Christian on the wedding day

“I met other people, also working, who wanted to get closer to God, pursuing to be saints in their own life,” she says. “It was really nice to gather with them. It was a year and a half or two years before I moved to the U.S. When I moved, I was looking for something similar. I found a community where we are in this moment. I really appreciate that. I felt I was missing that from when I was back in Peru, so I’m really happy.”

The couple hopes to continue with OCIA if they can and to continue as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion in Mass and to the homebound, which Fiorella has done a few times.

“OCIA has been a great guide for us to understand our faith and the way we should live our faith in our daily life,” Christian says. “Catholics who were born, raised, and attend Mass weekly may not know everything as well because so much gets looked over. If we continue to learn more and dig further with OCIA, I think that’s very helpful for us.”

“We keep what we learned when we were kids, but you have to continue growing as a Catholic and in your faith,” Fiorella adds. “If you don’t, you won’t grow. God is eternal — He’s infinite. So it’s impossible for us to learn everything. At least we can continue learning about our religion and living our lives the best we can in our personal lives, in our jobs, in our relationship as husband and wife, and now as parents, continuing to grow and help each other be saints and raise our kids to do the same, to achieve sanctity.”

A Letter from Our Pastor

Ensuring Good Stewardship of Our Treasure and Examining Our Finances



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

Our annual parish financial reports for St. Joseph and for Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parishes are included in this newsletter. Each year, we are required to submit a report of the finances of our parishes to the Diocese of Cleveland as well as a report to you, the members of our parishes. And so I ask you to take a good look at these reports of money that has come in and money that has been spent over the last fiscal year, which ran from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. Also included are our budgets for the current fiscal year, ending June 30, 2026.

As stewardship parishes, we concentrate on sharing the God-given gifts of our time, our talent, and our treasure. I want to thank all of you who are so faithful to Sunday offertory each week and month through the use of your envelopes or online giving through direct debit or by credit card. You enable us to do as parishes what we do.

Sometimes people will say, "The Church should take care of that." Which translated means, "Other people should take care of that." They also say, "The Church has tons of money." A careful look at our financial reports quickly dispels that myth. We need to remember that we are the Church. Each of us is a member of the Body of Christ. And each of us is called to be a fully participating member of the Church.

As you look over these financial reports, I ask you to consider whether

or not the amount of your weekly or monthly offering might call for some adjusting. Sometimes we get used to a particular amount, and it is good to review our personal circumstances and see if this gift of our treasure accurately reflects our life right now.

Household and personal expenses are going up each year, and so are those of our parishes. Whether talking about our parishes or our households, we cannot afford to pay our bills by steadily diminishing our savings. As participating members of our parish families, what is the Lord asking of you right now in terms of sharing a portion of the treasure which He has entrusted to you?

A number of people are making their Sunday offerings by online giving through myEoffering. I have been using online giving for my own regular contributions to the Sunday offertory to St. Joseph Parish and to Nativity Parish for a lot of years now. Online giving ensures that the Lord gets our first fruits each month, that the parish receives this contribution when people are out of town, and it is also more convenient for those who use this method regularly to pay their bills.

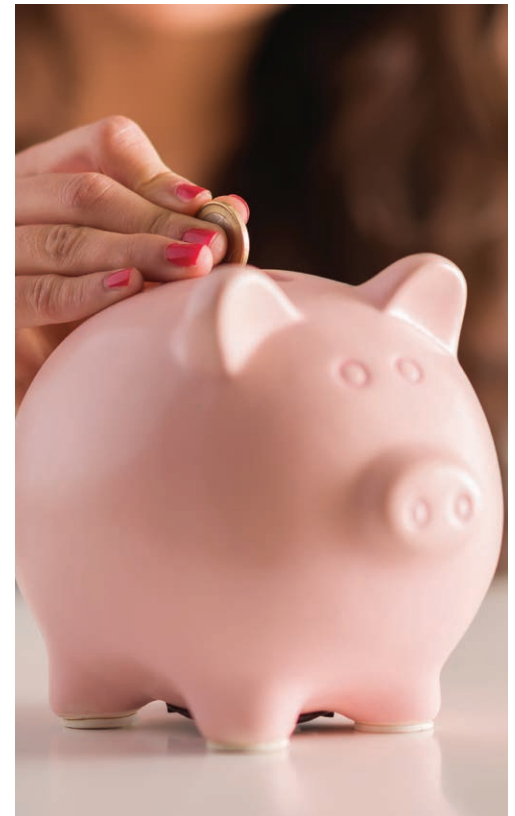
For St. Joseph parishioners and for Nativity parishioners, signing up is as simple as going to the parish website [stjosephamherst.com] and clicking on "Give" at the top of the page. This will take you to myEoffering, where you may sign up, indicate your parish, and then begin giving online.

I stand in gratitude for the goodness of the people of our St. Joseph and Nativity Parish families. Thank you so much for sharing so generously your time, your talent, and your treasure so that the Lord's work may be done. And may the Lord continue to bless you and those you love, richly and warmly.

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor



St. Joseph Parish

Statement of Church Revenue and Expenses

	Actual Year Ended June 30,		Budget Year Ending June 30,
	2025	2024	2026
CHURCH REVENUE			
Offertory Collections	\$ 908,708.40	\$ 874,197.48	\$ 920,000.00
Other Collections	18,237.70	31,386.10	20,000.00
Donations & Bequests	51,296.67	78,566.39	82,000.00
Net Bingo Proceeds	-	-	-
Net Fund Raising Income	-	-	-
Income from Parish Programs	11,017.03	11,154.65	12,000.00
Investment & Endowment Income (Loss)	91,920.65	72,911.36	70,000.00
Rental Receipts	-	-	-
Contributions from Parish Organizations	(2,258.45)	(9,822.89)	82,000.00
Miscellaneous Receipts	13,090.70	114,193.13	15,000.00
Designated Collections	44,421.50	21,866.62	40,000.00
Extraordinary Receipts	-	24,000.00	100,000.00
TOTAL CHURCH REVENUE	1,136,434.20	1,218,452.84	1,341,000.00
CHURCH EXPENSES			
Salaries, Benefits, & Taxes	447,478.39	389,954.04	418,432.00
Rectory & Household	4,212.46	3,511.09	3,850.00
Parish Office & Administration	65,370.28	54,988.37	59,250.00
Altar, Sanctuary, & Liturgical	24,169.75	20,672.97	22,000.00
Community Outreach	1,756.43	3,358.89	2,350.00
Religious Education	4,390.63	3,711.54	4,700.00
Stewardship & Evangelization	49,492.22	48,536.31	50,000.00
Utilities	40,597.73	39,996.75	42,000.00
Insurance & Property Taxes	34,827.97	30,951.67	35,000.00
Maintenance, Repairs, & Plant Operating	49,212.92	22,974.81	35,600.00
Diocesan Assessments	100,500.00	100,590.00	100,500.00
Payments to Other Schools	-	-	-
Designated Collections	44,421.50	21,866.62	40,000.00
Capital Expenditures	27,844.13	184,619.73	75,000.00
Intra Parish Transfers & School Support	-	63,690.00	-
Extraordinary Expenses	-	-	2,000.00
TOTAL CHURCH EXPENSES	894,274.41	989,422.79	890,682.00
NET CHURCH SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$ 242,159.79	\$ 229,030.05	\$ 450,318.00

St. Joseph Parish Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Fund Balance Church, School and Cemetery

	Balance at June 30,	
	2025	2024
ASSETS		
CHECKING, SAVINGS AND INVESTMENTS		
Checking Account Balances	\$ 695,075.98	\$ 628,014.64
Savings and Investment Account Balances	1,453,734.30	1,087,170.72
TOTAL CHECKING SAVINGS AND INVESTMENTS	2,148,810.28	1,715,185.36
ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE	-	1,000.00
OTHER ASSETS	-	50.00
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 2,148,810.28	\$ 1,716,235.36
LIABILITIES		
ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND ACCRUED EXPENSES		
Payable to Diocese of Cleveland	\$ 14,699.88	\$ -
Other accounts payable and accrued expenses	171.61	7,734.65
TOTAL ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND ACCRUED EXPENSES	14,871.49	7,734.65
INCOME RECEIVED IN ADVANCE	151,593.35	134,654.11
EMPLOYEE WITHHOLDING	(2,570.12)	(765.62)
DEFERRED RESTRICTED SUPPORT	166,082.27	145,245.27
LOANS, NOTES AND MORTGAGES PAYABLE	-	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES	329,976.99	286,868.41
FUND BALANCE		
FUND BALANCE BEGINNING OF FISCAL YEAR	1,429,366.95	1,061,555.38
Net Surplus (Deficit) for Fiscal Year		
Parish	242,159.79	229,030.05
School	108,534.20	92,599.75
Cemetery	38,772.35	46,181.77
Net surplus (deficit) for fiscal year	389,466.34	367,811.57
FUND BALANCE, END OF FISCAL YEAR	1,818,833.29	1,429,366.95
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE	\$ 2,148,810.28	\$ 1,716,235.36

St. Joseph Parish Statement of Cemetery Revenue and Expenses

	Actual Year Ended June 30,		Budget Year Ending June 30,
	2025	2024	2026
CEMETERY REVENUE	\$ 56,063.54	\$ 62,756.48	\$ 56,000.00
CEMETERY EXPENSE	17,291.19	16,574.71	17,000.00
NET CEMETERY SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$ 38,772.35	\$ 46,181.77	\$ 39,000.00

St. Joseph Parish

Statement of School Revenue and Expenses

	Actual Year Ended June 30,		Budget Year Ending June 30,
	2025	2024	2026
SCHOOL REVENUE			
Tuition & Fees (Includes Tuition Assistance)	\$ 1,089,564.34	\$ 1,078,443.33	\$ 1,092,500.00
Government Assistance	79,673.44	77,815.99	80,000.00
Donations & Bequests	32,633.00	7,475.21	25,000.00
Net Fund Raising	29,919.29	25,855.67	30,000.00
Net Pre-School & Latchkey	38,198.59	39,249.28	44,300.00
Other Student Receipts	112,461.28	67,902.06	105,000.00
School Support from Parish	-	63,690.00	-
Interest & Endowment Income	-	-	-
Rent Revenue	-	-	-
Other Misc Income	-	600.00	-
School Extraordinary Income	-	1,033.97	-
TOTAL SCHOOL REVENUE	1,382,449.94	1,362,065.51	1,376,800.00
SCHOOL EXPENSES			
Salaries, Benefits & Taxes	902,958.76	1,034,355.82	940,600.00
Instructional	12,688.87	13,423.00	13,000.00
Library & Technology	2,400.00	1,650.00	2,400.00
Utilities	44,254.96	37,419.65	45,000.00
Maintenance, Repairs & Plant Operating	42,757.59	53,709.40	43,550.00
Insurance & Property Taxes	18,246.86	29,711.85	17,400.00
Student Services	104,287.00	64,995.81	71,500.00
Administration	36,821.17	25,593.39	39,000.00
Faculty Residence/Convent Costs	584.99	517.05	600.00
Capital Expenditures	28,504.44	6,839.79	193,500.00
Extraordinary Expenses	80,411.10	1,250.00	-
TOTAL SCHOOL EXPENSES	1,273,915.74	1,269,465.76	1,366,550.00
NET SCHOOL SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$ 108,534.20	\$ 92,599.75	\$ 10,250.00



Nativity B.V.M. Church

Fiscal Year - July 1 to June 30

INCOME AND EXPENSE STATEMENT AND RELATED INFORMATION

	This Year 2024-2025	Last Year 2023-2024	Budget 2025-2026
Revenue			
Offertory Collections	\$135,135	\$131,009	\$136,000
Designated Collections	6,140	3,444	
Interest & Investment Income	19,633	17,812	18,000
Steak Fry/Dinners to go	21,411	28,673	20,000
Rental Income	3,080	2,640	2,800
HOS Payments	8,341	11,742	500
Other Donations & Misc. Income	2,691	3,595	2,762
Maintenance and Upkeep Env	20,338	12,938	29,500
Total Revenue	\$216,769	\$211,853	\$209,562
Expenses:			
Salaries - Clergy	\$24,365	\$23,796	\$24,500
Salaries - Lay	37,299	35,592	38,750
Payroll Taxes & Benefits	6,636	7,194	6,850
Office Expense	8,464	8,930	9,225
Household			
Altar Supplies/Missalettes	5,105	5,435	6,950
Misc. Expense	11,307	8,279	4,850
Utilities	11,262	18,708	16,754
Maintenance & Supplies & Repairs	30,107	17,372	25,983
Property Tax and Insurance	16,681	15,912	17,200
Stewardship	9,750	9,000	10,000
Diocesan Assessments	21,876	21,864	22,500
Designated Collections	6,140	3,444	
Total Expenses	188,992	175,526	183,562
Net from Normal Operating	\$27,777	\$36,327	\$26,000
Capital Expenses			
Door replacement	0		26,000
Total Capital Expenses	0	0	26,000
Total Expenses	\$188,992	\$175,526	\$209,562
Net Income over Expenses	\$27,777	\$36,327	\$0

Year End Balances	June 30, 2025	June 30, 2024
Checking/Savings Account Bal.	\$147,828	\$140,116
Investments	\$159,882	\$140,338
Total	\$307,710	\$280,454

Holy Ground Youth Group

Drawing Young Parishioners Into Communion With God and Fellowship With One Another

Youth today are searching. Searching for friendship, for belonging, and for truth. At St. Joseph, we are blessed with a youth ministry that seeks to meet our young Catholics where they are, offering a space to grow in their faith, build community, and discover their unique role in the life of the Church.

Every Sunday after the 5 p.m. Mass throughout the school year, students from 7th through 12th grades gather for Holy Ground Youth Group. With a group of committed teens and volunteers, Director of Youth Activities Josh Gonzales says it's a special gathering.

"Our nights consist of food, games, and prayer," he says. "Each night, we have a topic to dive into about our faith. The goal each night is to give the teens an environment where they can grow in communion with God, but also grow in relationship with each other."

Josh, who is studying education at Cleveland State, started in his role this year. Youth ministry has been part of his life from a young age, when he began attending youth group at his home church of St. Mary's of the Falls in fifth grade.

"It was awesome to see other kids I knew growing in their faith together," Josh says. "I've always had a passion for my faith and always wanted to share it with others. And when the position became available at this parish, I was eager to dive right in."

Holy Ground Youth Group began meeting on Sept. 7 and will meet every Sunday from 6 to 7:30 p.m. in the school gym through the end of the school year. They will discuss topics that are relevant and important to the youth themselves. In particular, they have Issue Nights, where the students have the opportunity to talk about problems they see in the world and learn together as a group how to combat them.

"Young people are the future of the Catholic Church," Josh says. "It is important to have the students become active in their faith at a young age. This will help them build a strong foundation that will be important for not only themselves and their relationship with the Lord, but also the future of the church as a whole."

Josh is presently working on service opportunities for Advent and the possibility of a spring retreat, but looks forward to hearing from the youth about what they would like to do this year. For

him, it's important to instill in the students the importance of being stewards for the Lord and showing them how to lead lives of faith. And as the program grows, Josh hopes to bring in some more adult leaders to help out.

"I would like to show the students that they are called to do their part in the Catholic Church," Josh says. "It does not have to be on a huge level. It can be as simple as showing them how to pray together, pray for one another, and the importance of Scripture. I want to teach them to be active in their faith. To live out the love for the Lord in their action over their words."



**For more information or to get involved,
contact Josh Gonzales at 440-650-7554
or charles.j.gonzo@gmail.com.**

“Stir Into Flame”

By DEACON NATHAN FRANKART

Pease of Christ to you! Does anything beat a fall bonfire? The nights are setting in faster than ever, and they bring with them that late autumn chill that would make sitting outside unbearable — that is, without the warmth of a hot, toasty fire. It captivates and mesmerizes, and for me, it often is a great moment to open up with friends and family. A fire brings on a sense of safety and community in my life.

If you blink, you might miss fire as one of the more powerful signs of divinity in the Old Testament. The burning bush, the pillar of fire that leads the Israelites in the Exodus, and the chariot of flame that calls up the prophet Elijah all communicate the power of God through the image of flame. And for us now, we have a flame that has been placed upon us “as a gift from God through the imposition of hands,” as says St. Paul in Corinthians. The Pentecost of the early disciples now rests upon all believers who call upon the name of Jesus.

My mind is drifting towards the Holy Spirit and its fiery aspects for multiple reasons. Firstly, St. Mary in Wooster just received four brothers into the Church through Confirmation a few weeks ago (one of whom I had the honor of being his sponsor), and we currently have 12 people entering the Church via OCIA. These young men and OCIA candidates all remain in my prayers as they continue their Christian journey. But in a particular way, they all represent those of us who are stirring into flame the faith of which we all received through the imposition of hands from our bishops at Confirmation.

But what must we do to keep this fire burning? Do we worry whether it will



go out or lose its heat? Is it possible that God might leave us out in the cold should the fire go down? Rather than dwell in uncertainty on these questions, wouldn't it be better to stir that flame in recognizing it is burning others? These OCIA

candidates, these young men entering the Church, and our experiences in ages past of the Father's love are what we call upon to stir that flame, to give it life and heat, so that others might gather around that fire with us. Come, Holy Spirit!

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 REPAIR WORK.

First Saturday Rosary

Saturday, Nov. 1 — 9 a.m. at
St. Joseph Church

Hospitality Tuesday

Tuesday, Nov. 4 — 8:30 a.m.
at Nativity Church (following the
8 a.m. Mass)

Altar and Rosary Society Meeting

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

Parent Teacher Fall Conferences

Thursday, Nov. 6 — 2 to 8 p.m.,
one-hour early dismissal, Grades K-8

No School

Friday, Nov. 7

First Friday Rosary

Friday, Nov. 7 — 11 a.m. at
Nativity Church, luncheon to follow
in the Parish Hall

Parent Club

Tuesday, Nov. 11 — 7 p.m. at
School MPR

Vincentians Meeting

Thursday, Nov. 13 — 9 a.m. in
St. Joseph Conference Room

XLT Adoration

Sunday, Nov. 23 — 6:30 p.m. in
St. Joseph Church
Everyone from both parishes is
invited to attend.

No School — Thanksgiving Break

Monday, Nov. 24 through Friday,
Nov. 28

Parish Offices Closed

Wednesday, Nov. 26 through Friday,
Nov. 28

Happy Thanksgiving

Thursday, Nov. 27 — Mass, 9 a.m.
at Nativity Parish

O.C.I.A. (formerly R.C.I.A.)

Monday, Nov. 3, 10, 17, and 24 —
7 p.m. at Nativity Parish Hall

Holy Ground Youth Group

Sunday, Nov. 2, 9, 16, and 23 —
6 p.m. in St. Joseph School Gym
(Event begins with 5 p.m. Mass.
Meet near the Choir prior to Mass.)
(Note: There will be no Holy Ground
Youth Group on Nov. 30.)

Men's Group Meeting

Tuesday, Nov. 4 and 18 — 7 p.m. at
St. Joseph Social Hall Lobby

P.S.R.

Wednesday, Nov. 5 and 19 — 5:30 p.m.
at St. Joseph School
(Note: There will be no P.S.R. on
Nov. 12 and 26.)

**Sacred Sisters Prayer and Study
Group**

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

"Dinners on the Go" pick-up

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

Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes

Tuesday and Thursdays in November —
9:30 a.m. at Nativity Parish Hall
Note: There will be no classes on
Thanksgiving Day.