



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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DECEMBER 2025

MEET THE Rospert Family

Grounded in Faith and Expressing Love for Our Catholic Community

A long-term connection to a Catholic community is good for the soul. Mallory and Kyle Rospert know that from experience. Mallory is a lifelong member of St. Joseph and continues to foster that connection today.

"I've been going to St. Joseph all my life," she says. "I was baptized there, went to St. Joseph School, and played CYO volleyball. I went to college and came back to my hometown and went right back to St. Joseph."

Mallory met Kyle in college, and they got married at St. Joseph in June of 2022. Their daughter, Reese, was born in May of 2024 and baptized at St. Joseph as well.

"I played volleyball in college," Mallory says. "Volleyball has always been my passion. I coached CYO volleyball for the parish for a few years. We look forward to Reese being involved in CYO sports. It's a great way they learn teamwork, and friendly competition."

Kyle is also a lifelong Catholic.

"I grew up in Norwalk and attended St. Paul Catholic School," he says. "I have fond memories from those years. My best friends are people I went to school with at St. Paul. I was raised in a home built on Catholic virtues, Mass every Sunday, Holy Days, sometimes daily Mass with my dad. We'd pray the Rosary as a family, grace before meals, and Holy Water before bed."



Mallory, Kyle, and Reese Rospert

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Meet the Rospert Family

continued from front cover

I remember being late to some travel sporting events because my dad made sure we made it to Sunday Mass,” he adds. “While I wasn’t happy with him at the time, those were some of the greatest lessons he taught me. I hope to uphold these routines with my family.”

Mallory and Kyle continue their faith, building those values with their daughter.

“I go to Wonderful Women,” Mallory says. “It’s a women’s group that my sister, Olivia Toney, runs. It’s a group of women who get together. There are different presenters. I take Reese to those meetings to start getting her involved. Different parishioners do a presentation, then there’s a game, snack, and social time. I spoke at it a few times. It’s a very laid-back, fun, and inviting group.”

“St. Joe’s has impressed me since I started coming here around 2017,” Kyle adds. “It’s a very tight-knit parish. Everyone’s willing to help out, which is evident by the number of groups and committees at the parish. Fr. Tim’s homilies strike a chord with me every Sunday — as long as Reese allows us to focus! He’s the best preacher of the Gospel I’ve been around, with his ability to relay the Bible in an easy-to-understand and relatable way.”

Mallory also bakes whenever there’s a call for bakers at the parish.

“I’m on the baking team,” she says. “I do baked goods for mostly funerals or if the church has any special events.”

“It’s impossible to talk about our parish without bringing

“Faith isn’t just something we focus on at Sunday Mass. Rather, it’s something we talk and live out in our daily lives. These are things Mallory and I are striving to live by with our family.” — Kyle Rospert

up our music,” Kyle adds. “Christina Dupre, Joy Rivera, Josh Gonzalez, Elizabeth Gonzalez, and company have done an amazing job invigorating our church life through music.”

Mallory and Kyle enjoy their Catholic community here at St. Joseph and find raising their family in the Catholic faith important.

“I hope, once Reese is old enough, to be involved in the groups she wants to be involved in,” Mallory says. “I can’t wait till she can go to Vacation Bible School. It’s a memory I have. Most importantly, St. Joe’s provides a loving community. We want our kids to be molded that same way. There’s a lot of youth programs we look forward to.”

“I look forward to the family that we’re creating being a part of the St. Joe’s community,” Kyle adds. “My hope is that our family stays actively involved in the parish. Faith isn’t just something we focus on at Sunday Mass. Rather, it’s something we talk and live out in our daily lives. These are things Mallory and I are striving to live by with our family.”

Wonderful Women meet every other month on the second Tuesday at 7 p.m. in the Social Hall. Those interested can reach out to Olivia Toney at olivia.sliman@gmail.com.

A Letter from Our Pastor

The Christmas You Really Need



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

There was a very unusual auction that was held in Washington, D.C. in 1926. The items were inventions that had been patented and had become obsolete.

Even though some of them were rather comical, those 150,000 inventions really represented lots of dashed dreams and disappointed people.

Perhaps disappointment is an odd thing to write about as we enter Advent and prepare for the Christmas holiday season.

But to tell the truth, there are people who find these unsettled times disappointing because Christmas this year may look quite different from the Christmas they have in mind.

We see John the Baptist in the Scriptures (Matthew 11:2-11) maybe being a bit disappointed too. He had been preaching repentance at the Jordan River and baptizing lots of people. And then King Herod put him in prison.

John the Baptist was wondering: "This Jesus that I preached about – is He really the Messiah? I'd like to know for sure before I die." Maybe his expectations of what the Messiah should be were a bit unreasonable. And so he sends some of his own followers to ask Jesus this question: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"

And Jesus responds: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them."

What was Jesus quoting from? From the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 61. That is what Isaiah said the Messiah was going to be like. Perhaps John wasn't looking at the right signs. And so he didn't get the right message.

What are we expecting Christmas to be like this year? If our expectations are unreasonable, they can bring us disappointment.

Leo Buscaglia tells a story about when he was a boy. A present was dropped off at their home two weeks before Christmas, and it was huge. And it had his name on it. It was placed in their living room near the Christmas tree. He wondered every day what was inside.

He describes coming to Christmas morning and, as he started to unwrap it, he was already becoming disappointed. He was quite convinced that whatever was in there was not going to meet up with anything he had been imagining.

What was inside was a desk, hand-made for him by his uncle. It was a wonderful gift. But Leo says it taught him a lesson for life — that when our expectations become unreasonable, we are in for disappointment.

What are your expectations for Christmas this year? Are they reasonable, or not?

For centuries, people awaited the coming of the Messiah, and yet look how the Messiah finally came — in out-of-the-way Bethlehem, of all places.

Are we looking at God's signs for the way to be happy as Christian people? Or are we looking at the signs of materialism and personal satisfaction?

Although this may not be the kind of Christmas that you have in mind, in God's own love for you, it could well be the one that you really need this year.

"Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel."

Even in these unsettled times, we can still find reasons to rejoice if we open our minds and our hearts to Him.

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor





Stewardship and the True Spirit of Christmas

A Path to Growing Closer to Jesus

While the modern celebration of Christmas often emphasizes gift giving, feasting, and decorations, the essence of Christmas lies in a deeper spiritual connection and a call to live out the teachings of Christ. Stewardship provides a powerful framework for connecting the celebration of Christmas with a genuine spiritual transformation and an opportunity to grow closer to Jesus.

At the heart of the Christmas celebration is the story of the birth of Jesus, a divine gift to humanity, underscoring the importance of sharing and using God's blessings wisely. Thus, as Catholics, we are called to embrace this gift and embody the principles of stewardship in our lives. Stewardship is not limited to financial contributions to the Church; it is a way of life rooted in the belief that everything we have — our time, talents, and treasure — is a gift from God. Stewardship encourages Catholics to use these gifts responsibly, generously, and in a way that reflects Christ's teachings.

During the Christmas season, our time can be especially stretched with holiday preparations and festivities. Stewardship encourages us to allocate time for prayer, reflection, and acts of kindness that help us focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

Our unique abilities and talents are a divine gift, and Christmas provides an ideal opportunity to use them to serve others. Whether it's volunteering at a local shelter, caroling at a nursing home, or helping a neighbor in need, using our talents to spread joy and love exemplifies stewardship.

While monetary contributions are essential to support the Church and charitable causes, the spirit of giving should extend

beyond Christmas. Stewardship reminds us that our financial resources are not truly ours, but God's, and we are merely caretakers entrusted with their responsible use.

Living out the principles of stewardship during the Christmas season and throughout the year can be a transformative experience, deepening our connection with Jesus.

Since Christmas is the season of giving, embracing stewardship means giving from the heart. By practicing generosity, we reflect Christ's selfless love, strengthening our bond with Him and the recipients of our kindness. Recognizing the blessings in our lives and expressing gratitude fosters a deeper appreciation of God's gifts and connects us to the humility and thankfulness that Jesus embodied during His earthly ministry. What's more, Christmas is not just about receiving, but also about sacrifice. Stewardship encourages us to make sacrifices, just as Jesus did for humanity. Sacrifices could be financial, the gift of time, or even putting others' needs ahead of our own.

The celebration of Christmas in the Catholic tradition goes beyond the festive decorations, the exchange of gifts, and the joyful gatherings. It is a time to grow closer to Christ through stewardship. By acknowledging that everything we have is a divine gift, and by living it out in our daily lives, we not only honor the birth of Christ but also embody His teachings. In doing so, we draw closer to the heart of Jesus and contribute to a more meaningful and spiritually enriched Christmas celebration. As Catholics, let us remember that Christmas is a season for stewardship and a time to reflect, give thanks, and give back in honor of the true gift — the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Music Ministry Preparing for Evening of Joy and Celebration at **Christmas Concert**

Join Us for This Year's Performance on Dec. 26

Come one, come all! The Music Ministry members invite all community members, parishioners, families, and neighbors for a night of music, worship, and Christmas celebration.

"We will really bring an evening of worship and praise, of fun and Christmas, and celebration of the season," says Christina Dupre, Worship and Liturgy Coordinator.

After last year's Christmas Concert was unfortunately cancelled due to illness among Music Ministry members, the ministry is excited to present this year's annual concert for the community and beyond.

"It's a really big event that many artists from many other places come in for," Christina says. "It includes all of the music ministries, youth, adult choirs, and selected students from the school also participate. It encompasses everyone."

The concert will take place on Dec. 26 at 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Parish and is free for everyone to attend. There is an option to give a freewill donation, but there is no purchase or registration fee required.

"It's the Music Ministry doing it for the community," Christina says. "It's open to the public, those from the parish, and the community at large. It is really family-oriented."

From classical music pieces by Mozart and Bach to Christian contemporary music and orchestral accompaniment, the concert will truly have something for everybody in attendance. It is truly an eclectic combination of styles and sounds to enjoy.

The Music Ministry at St. Joseph is unique in that it brings in many young people, including both teenagers and college students. This leads to a more substantial sound in the choirs.

"They really give us a vibrancy," Christina says.

The choirs rehearse weekly on Wednesdays and began preparing for the Christmas concert in September. Christina works hard to train and rehearse the Music Ministry members so they are ready for the annual performance. The first 20 minutes of the rehearsal are devoted to preparing for Sunday Masses, with the rest of the two-hour rehearsal spent getting ready for Dec. 26.

"Every week, there is always something new we're working on," Christina says. "There's a wide variety of music that goes on normally."

The ministry will also be providing music for our Christmas Masses, along with a full ensemble, strings, and orchestration. The schedule is as follows:

Christmas Eve:

4 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph, featuring the youth choir

6 p.m. at Nativity

8 p.m. full choir Mass at St. Joseph

Christmas Day:

8:30 a.m. at St. Joseph

10 a.m. at Nativity

11:30 a.m. St. Joseph

**"It's the Music Ministry doing it for the community.
It's open to the public, those from the parish, and the
community at large. It is really family-oriented."**

— Christina Dupre

Parish School Community Joyfully Enters into **Season of Advent** *Students and Teachers Preparing Hearts for the Coming of Christ*



There's nothing quite like seeing Christmas through the eyes of a child — full of wonder, joy and excitement. At St. Joseph Parish School, the staff is blessed to witness that spirit unfold throughout the Advent season each year. This year is no different, as students eagerly prepare their hearts for the coming of Christ through prayer, service and celebration.

The school children and staff want to thank the parishes for all their support over the year. They will be making Advent prayer beads, to be handed out to parishioners. Parishioners can visit the parish website for a voice recording of prayers to pray with the students each day.

"This is a gift to St. Joseph and Nativity Parishes to help them increase their prayer time during Advent and to thank them for the love and support they show our students each year," says Principal Amy Makruski.

During Advent, staff meetings focus on the Advent themes of hope, peace, joy and love. These themes move to the classrooms through various activities, like prayer, crafts, and acts of service.

"Through simple acts of kindness, generosity, and quiet reflection, our students learn that preparing for Christmas means making room in their hearts for Jesus," Mrs. Makruski says. "It's a beautiful time of faith and community for our entire school family."

In addition, a beautiful Christmas concert is held each year, led by music teacher Gabie Whitman.

"It is a mix of secular and sacred songs to showcase the talents of our students and to praise God as we lead up to the Christmas season," Mrs. Whitman says.

Mrs. Makruski loves that each teacher brings something creative to their classroom to prepare for Christmas. Some classes have a kindness calendar, while others decorate a Jesse tree or craft ornaments for saints' feast days.

"We want to use each day with our students to its fullest extent

ST. JOSEPH & NATIVITY



to be sure they have an Advent season that is memorable and keeps them connected to Christ amongst the many other worldly things that are present at this time of year,” Mrs. Makruski says.

Another cool tradition is the Kris Kringle Shop, where the students make a donation and then can shop for Christmas gifts for their loved ones. The donations support local nonprofits — in the past three years, nearly \$10,000 has been donated to nonprofits voted on by parents.

Mrs. Makruski loves being with the students and staff throughout the Advent season. It’s such an exciting time of anticipation.

“Advent feels special because it has this sense of a countdown to the season of Christmas, and anytime there is a countdown, it builds anticipation,” she says.

As students and staff walk together through the Advent season, Mrs. Makruski hopes to notice more deeply the ways God is present and active among them.

“During Advent, I see generosity and gratitude come alive all around our school,” she says. “The students get so excited to help others and give to others. Our teachers model gratitude by recognizing students’ efforts and fostering a spirit of appreciation in the classroom.”



"Through simple acts of kindness, generosity, and quiet reflection, our students learn that preparing for Christmas means making room in their hearts for Jesus. It's a beautiful time of faith and community for our entire school family."

— Amy Makruski, Principal



Rediscovering Faith at Christmas: *Coming Home to the Church*

For many Catholics, attending Mass regularly might not be part of their routine throughout the year. However, Christmas provides a unique opportunity for fallen-away Catholics to reconnect with their faith and rediscover the beauty of the Mass. How can you use Christmas as a springboard to renew your faith and begin attending Mass regularly while actively participating in the life of the parish through stewardship?

- **Reflect on the Meaning of Christmas:** Take some time to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas. Consider why Christ's birth is celebrated worldwide and how it has impacted your life. This reflection can serve as a powerful motivator to reconnect with your faith and inspire you to attend Mass more regularly.
- **Plan to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation during the Advent season:** It will help you to personally "prepare the way of the Lord."
- **Attend Christmas Eve or Christmas Day Mass:** Christmas is an ideal time to return to the Church. Attend Christmas Eve or Christmas Day Mass to immerse yourself in the celebration of the birth of Christ. The liturgy, music, and the message of love and hope can be

deeply moving and rekindle your connection with the faith.

- **Engage with the Parish Community:** After attending Christmas Mass, make an effort to engage with the parish community. Introduce yourself to the priests and fellow parishioners. Join in parish activities and events, such as social gatherings, Bible studies, or volunteering opportunities. Building relationships within the community can make attending Mass more enjoyable and meaningful.
- **Embrace Stewardship:** Stewardship is a key aspect of Catholic faith, emphasizing the responsible use of your time, talent, and treasure for the service of God and others. Start by exploring your talents and how you can contribute to your parish. This might include joining a choir, volunteering for a parish event, or helping with charitable initiatives. By participating actively in stewardship, you become an integral part of the parish community and strengthen your connection with the Church.
- **Seek Spiritual Guidance:** If you have questions about your faith or need guidance on your spiritual journey, don't hesitate to reach out to the

parish priests or lay ministers. They can provide support, answer your questions, and offer resources to help you grow in your faith.

- **Pray and Reflect:** Take time for personal prayer and reflection. This can be done daily or weekly and will help you deepen your faith and establish a stronger connection with God. As your prayer life strengthens, your desire to attend Mass regularly will likely increase.

Christmas is a wonderful opportunity for fallen-away Catholics to renew their faith, reconnect with the Church, and begin attending Mass regularly. By reflecting on the true meaning of Christmas, engaging with the parish community, setting realistic goals, embracing stewardship, seeking spiritual guidance, and prioritizing personal prayer and reflection, you can use the Christmas season as a springboard to a more spiritually fulfilling and connected life within the Catholic Church.

Done Hitting the Books

By DEACON NATHAN FRANKART

Pease of Christ to you! This very well might be the best Advent that I've ever had, because finally, after eight years of collegiate and graduate study, I have completed all the necessary coursework. If you can believe it, that's actually LESS time than it takes most seminarians to complete their studies for the priesthood.

A fun hypothetical that I've been entertaining with some of my classmates has been this: "What's the most important thing we learned?" You can probably imagine some of our conclusions ("Make sure your lavalier microphone is off in the confessional, etc.). But the more thought I gave to it personally, the more I really started to think about the most important thing I have learned across multiple years of study in philosophy and theology.

And it is this summary that I believe states it best:

“God’s plan for humanity is that we would always be in relationship with him. In fact, we are made to be with God forever, because He made us in His ‘image and likeness.’ But humans have sinned, and this sin has caused a break in our relationship with God. Still, God had a plan to save us. He sent His Son, Jesus, to come and win us back to God. He lived, died, and rose from the dead in order to gain power over our sin and death. He laid down His own life so that we can have eternal life. Now that we have this opportunity, it is up to us to respond to His gift of grace and mercy. Jesus waits for each of us to say ‘yes’ to repenting of our sins, believing in Him, being baptized, and living a life that glorifies God, so we can live forever in Heaven with Him and as many others as possible. The choice is your own. Would you like to choose this grace today?”

This formulation of the Christian message has transformed the world for the last 2,000 years. We don't need more knowledge or lessons to better articulate this message. It's been passed on through the apostles to the bishops to the believers and to the world. And you have all you need to know to spread it as well.

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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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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.

Hospitality Tuesday

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

First Friday Rosary

Friday, Dec. 5 — 11 a.m. at Nativity Church (no luncheon to follow)

First Saturday Rosary

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

First Reconciliation

Saturday, Dec. 6 — 1 p.m. at St. Joseph Church

Feast of the Immaculate Conception Masses

(A Holy Day of Obligation) — Monday, Dec. 8
9 a.m. at St. Joseph Church
12 p.m. at Nativity Church
7 p.m. at St. Joseph Church

Parent Club

Tuesday, Dec. 9 — 7 p.m. at St. Joseph School

Kris Kringle Shop

Wednesday, Dec. 10 — St. Joseph School MPR

Pre-Baptism Class

Wednesday, Dec. 10 — 7 p.m. in St. Joseph School

St. Joseph School Concert

Friday, Dec. 12 — 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Church

No School – Christmas Break

Monday, Dec. 22 through Monday, Jan. 5

Parish Offices Closed

Wednesday, Dec. 24 through Friday, Dec. 26

Christmas Mass Schedule

Wednesday, Dec. 24 — Christmas Eve, Vigil Masses
4 p.m. at St. Joseph Church
6 p.m. at Nativity Church
8 p.m. at St. Joseph Church

Thursday, Dec. 25 — Christmas Day Masses
8:30 a.m. at St. Joseph Church
10 a.m. at Nativity Church
11:30 a.m. at St. Joseph Church
NOTE: There will be no evening Mass or Confessions on Christmas Day.

There will be no weekday Masses on Tuesday, Dec. 23, at Nativity Church.

There will be no weekday Mass on Friday, Dec. 26, at St. Joseph Church.

St. Joseph Music Ministry Christmas Concert

Saturday, Dec. 26 — 7 p.m. in St. Joseph Church.

Everyone is invited — bring your family, bring a guest, bring a friend.

Parish Offices Closed

Wednesday, Dec. 31

Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God Mass Schedule

Wednesday, Dec. 31
Vigil Mass, 4 p.m. at St. Joseph Church
8:30 a.m. at Nativity Church
10 a.m. at St. Joseph Church

NOTE: There will be no evening Mass or Confessions on New Year's Day.

There will be no weekday Masses on Tuesday, Dec. 30, at Nativity Church.

There will be no weekday Mass on Friday, Jan. 2, at St. Joseph Church.

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

Monday, Dec. 1 and 15 — 7 p.m. at Nativity Parish Hall

P.S.R.

Wednesday, Dec. 3, 10, and 17 — 5:30 p.m. at St. Joseph School
(Note: There will be no P.S.R. on Dec. 24 and 31.)

Sacred Sisters Prayer and Study Group

Wednesday, Dec. 3 and 10 — 6:30 p.m. at O.S.E. Community Center

Vincetians Meeting

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

Holy Ground Youth Group

Sunday, Dec. 7 and 14 — 6 p.m. in St. Joseph School Gym.

(Event begins with the 5 p.m. Mass. Meet near the Choir area prior to Mass.)

(Note: There will be no Holy Ground Youth Group on Dec. 21 and 28.)

Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes

Tuesday and Thursdays in Dec. at 9:30 a.m. at Nativity Parish Hall

Note: There will be no class on Christmas Day and New Year's Day.