



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

& NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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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

FEBRUARY 2026

Meals for St. Elizabeth Center *Reflecting Christ's Call to Love and Care for Our Neighbors*

As Mother Teresa often reminded us, we are called to recognize Jesus in those most in need. The people who come to the St. Elizabeth Center in Lorain are there because they are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. In response, a ministry at St. Joseph's lives out the Corporal Works of Mercy by providing supper at the shelter once each month.

Six teams take turns preparing the meal. Each team has about 10 members who work together on the meal, each from their own home, cooking for 70 to 90 men. They provide the entire meal, including dessert. Volunteers at the shelter serve the meal.

Linda Pizzoferrato saw an announcement in the bulletin about this ministry years ago, and thought to herself, "That's something I can do." Linda is in a wheelchair, so not all ministries are possible for her.

"I was a victim of a hit and run, and for years I prayed, 'God, let me show what I can give back,'" she says. "And this is what He showed me."

Linda loves serving. As she reflects on the meals she has helped provide over the years, one

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"That's all Jesus wants us to do — to keep giving. I encourage anyone, if you could cook for the first Friday of the month, to help if they could."

— Linda Pizzoferrato

HANDING ON OUR FAITH

as Stewards of God's Goodness

Many Catholic parents feel like they've failed — especially when their adult children no longer practice the faith or attend Mass regularly. Parents are often slow to take credit for their children's successes but quick to shoulder the blame when it comes to struggles in the spiritual life.

Yet, as disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to live as stewards of all God's gifts — especially the gift of our Catholic faith. Stewardship is a response of gratitude to God, and one of the greatest ways we show that gratitude is by handing on the faith to those we love. Stewardship is always about invitation, witness, and love — not pressure or guilt.

In 2005, Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, outlined the five essential marks of Catholic education — a message later published in *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools*. These marks apply not only to Catholic schools, but also to Catholic families and individuals who seek to be faithful stewards of God's grace.

1. Supernatural Vision

A stewardship life begins with a supernatural vision — recognizing everything we have is a gift from God, and our ultimate goal is heaven. From an early age, we should focus our hearts on eternal life with God. Do we speak to our children and grandchildren about heaven? Do we remind ourselves that we are stewards of this earthly life, always journeying toward eternity?

2. Christian Anthropology

Stewardship flows from understanding who we are — children of God, made in His image. Is Christ at the center of our daily lives? Are we showing through our words and actions that Jesus is the heart of our families? Stewardship begins with gratitude and flourishes when we live as joyful witnesses.

3. Communion and Community

Stewardship reminds us we are not isolated individuals but part of a greater communion — the Body of Christ. In our homes and parishes, we are called to build community, sharing life and supporting each other. Do we foster this in our families? Do we encourage generosity and self-giving?

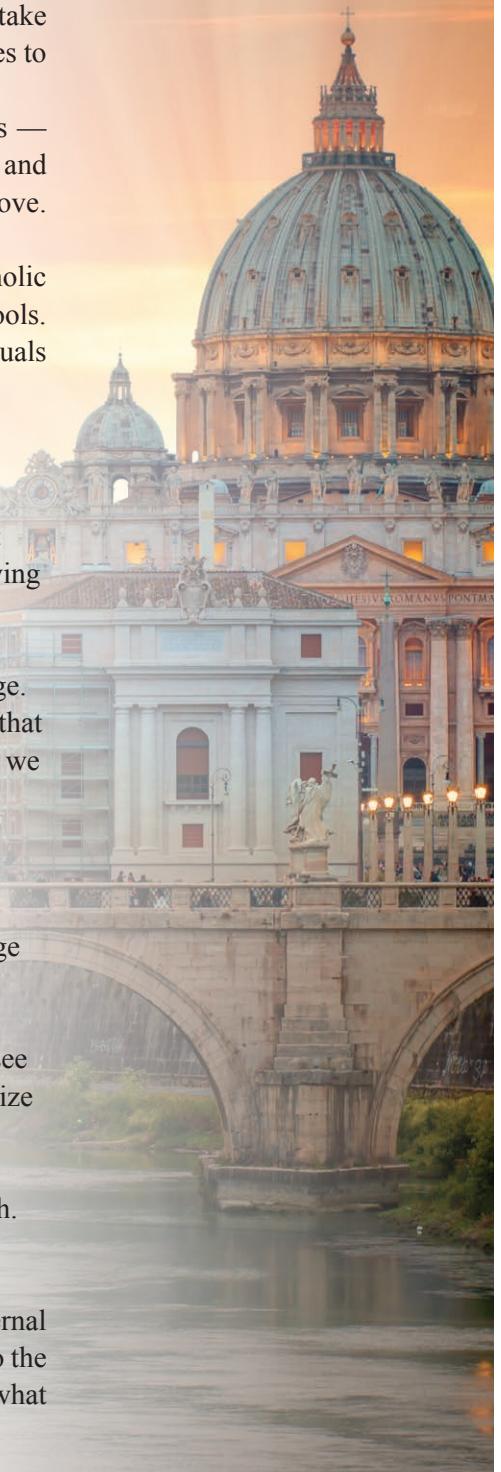
4. Catholic Worldview

A stewardship way of life shapes how we see the world. A Catholic worldview helps us see God in all things and encourages holiness in daily life. Are we helping each other recognize God's call? Are we supporting and gently challenging one another to grow as disciples?

5. Gospel Witness

At its heart, stewardship is about witness. We don't need all the answers to share our faith. What matters most is showing how Jesus and His Church have made a difference in our lives. Stewardship invites us to be living examples of God's love and generosity.

Passing on the faith is not complicated. And it's never too late. Focus on the goal of eternal life. Keep Christ at the center. Build unity and community. Encourage holiness. Witness to the joy of the Gospel. Let's help our children, grandchildren, and all our loved ones know what we're about — discipleship, holiness, and the journey to heaven.



A Letter from Our Pastor

A Season to Renew Our Hearts in Christ



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

Lent begins this year on Feb. 18, Ash Wednesday. The season of Lent invites us to slow down, to reflect, and to draw closer to the heart of Jesus. It is a sacred time when we are called to conversion — to turn away from whatever distracts us from God and to renew our commitment to living as faithful disciples. Lent is not simply a time of giving something up; it is a time of giving ourselves more fully to the Lord.

Through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we are reminded that everything we have is a gift from God and that we are stewards of His abundant blessings. Prayer deepens our relationship with Him, fasting teaches us discipline and dependence on His grace, and almsgiving opens our hearts to generosity

and compassion. These three practices — lived with sincerity and faith — lead us to a renewed awareness of God's presence and a greater love for others.

As we reflect on stewardship during this season, we can see Lent as a time of spiritual "spring cleaning." It's an opportunity to clear away what clutters our hearts so that we can make more room for Christ. Perhaps this means setting aside more time for daily prayer, attending daily Mass, or receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Maybe it means serving in a ministry, reaching out to someone in need, or being more intentional in our giving. Each small act of faith draws us closer to the life God desires for us.

When we live stewardship as a way of life, we learn that true conversion is not

a one-time event but a continual turning toward God. Lent reminds us that every day is an opportunity to begin again, to walk more closely with Jesus, and to share His love through our words and actions.

May this holy season renew our hearts in gratitude and strengthen our resolve to follow Christ with humility and joy. As we prepare for Easter, let us embrace this time of grace with open hearts, trusting that the Lord will use our sacrifices and our generosity to bring about new life in us and in our community.

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor



Parish School of Religion

Offering Opportunities to Share Faith and Stewardship Gifts

Volunteers Share Stories of Forming Our Young Catholics

Each ministry within our parishes is essential, but one that stands exceptionally high on the list is teaching children the faith. Children are not only the Church of the future, but they are also the Church of now. Jesus Himself emphasized the importance of welcoming and forming young hearts when He said, “Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Mark 10:14). Amy Makruski coordinates the Parish School of Religion (PSR). There are many dedicated teachers and volunteers, but more are always welcome — you will get more than you give when you serve children and youth.

Nicole Coughlin teaches first grade. She appreciates that materials are provided for the teachers to follow. She feels blessed to have the role of introducing these children to the faith, especially those whose families aren’t actively practicing.



“I’m grateful to help introduce them to God and Jesus,” Nicole says. “Being able to share the faith with children who might not otherwise hear it is deeply meaningful to me.”

Nicole hopes she’s helping her students share the faith with family and friends.

“The children grow in their relationship with their Savior and share what they learn with their families,” she says.

Pam Waite teaches seventh grade, which is the first year of the Confirmation program. She knows that by teaching, she’s following her calling.

“We are called to evangelize, and I truly believe the Holy Spirit called me to volunteer in PSR,” Pam says. “Serving in this ministry is my response to that call.”

Sue Miller teaches fifth grade. She appreciates that PSR allows the children to ask questions about the faith and to pray with one another. As a former teacher at St. Joseph’s, teaching PSR has allowed her to continue her calling.

“The children build a small faith family where they pray for one another and truly care about each other’s lives,” she says. “It’s meaningful to see them at Mass, knowing they have another adult encouraging their faith journey.”

Tom Januzzi teaches eighth grade, which is the second year of the Confirmation program.



“I begin each class with a decade of the Rosary, including Scripture readings and shared prayer intentions,” he says. “This helps students walk through the life of Jesus while learning about the Holy Spirit and Mary’s role in salvation history.”

All four teachers have found that their faith has grown through their involvement in PSR. Tom says he has learned things that he never learned as a child.

“Class preparation and student questions have made PSR the highlight of my week and have been invaluable to my faith formation,” he says.

As Sue says, her faith has grown “tremendously.”

“I have enjoyed thinking about my faith and researching things to make sure I’m imparting correct information,” she says. “I have deepened my prayer life to include different kinds of prayers so I can teach them to my students. I have studied Bible passages to get ready for the questions my students will ask. I have used the Catechism of the Catholic Church to review the principles of our faith that explain why we believe as we do.”

To get involved as a Parish School of Religion volunteer, contact Amy Makruski at 440-988-4244, ext. 215.



Stewardship Through the Eyes of the First Disciples

In today's world, it is easy to become distracted. Work, family responsibilities, technology, and the constant busyness of life can pull our attention in many directions. In the midst of it all, we sometimes lose sight of the One who is meant to be at the very center of everything — Jesus Christ.

This is why it helps to look back at the first disciples. By walking with them through the Gospels, we can better understand what it means to be a disciple and how we are called to live as faithful stewards today.

One day on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Simon Peter and his brother Andrew were busy fishing when Jesus called out to them: *"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men"* (Mt 4:19). Fishing was not just their occupation — it was their livelihood, their identity, their way of life. Yet when Christ called, they left everything behind.

Luke's Gospel makes the radical nature of discipleship even clearer: *"If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple"* (Lk 14:26). Jesus is not calling us to reject our families, but to understand that true discipleship requires complete selflessness. Nothing — not even our closest relationships — can come before Him.

Still, Peter and Andrew didn't hesitate. Matthew tells us simply: *"At once they left their nets and followed him"* (Mt 4:20). No lengthy deliberation. No second-guessing. Just a wholehearted yes.

Soon after, the disciples gathered with Jesus on a mountainside and received His teachings — the Beatitudes, the call to be salt and light, the command to pray, fast, and give

alms. Jesus urged them to depend entirely on God: *"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides"* (Mt 6:33).

Strengthened by this encounter, the disciples set out to proclaim the kingdom: *"As you go, make this proclamation: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give'"* (Mt 10:7-8). Their lives were transformed, and they went on to transform the world.

Jesus also promised them a reward: *"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me"* (Mt 10:40). Through their faithfulness, the apostles drew countless souls to Christ. Today, we honor their witness as saints who now enjoy the eternal reward of heaven.

What does this mean for us? If we long for the same eternal reward, we too must embrace a life of discipleship — a life of stewardship. That means giving the Lord our **time** by making prayer a daily priority. It means offering our **talents** — whether fishing nets, teaching skills, or a gift for music — for the glory of God and the good of others. And it means sharing our **treasure**, recognizing that where we place our resources, we also place our hearts (Mt 6:21).

Just as He did on the shores of Galilee, Christ is calling us by name today. He walks the streets of our towns, inviting us to follow Him. The only question is: how will we respond?

May our answer be as immediate, courageous, and faithful as Simon and Andrew's — a resounding yes to the life of discipleship and stewardship.

Serving Behind the Scenes

Vincentians Perform Quiet Works of Mercy



John Chmielewski enjoys serving with the Vincentians to provide essential assistance to our neighbors in need.

The Vincentian Ministry exists to serve neighbors in our community who are struggling to meet basic needs — especially those who find it difficult to put food on the table or keep their homes warm and secure. Through the parish food pantry and assistance with utility bills, the Vincentians offer help that is practical, respectful, and grounded in faith. Those who seek assistance are treated not as anonymous cases, but as neighbors whose dignity is honored at every step.

While parishioners may be most familiar with the Thursday food distribution, much of the Vincentians' work happens quietly behind the scenes. Members gather every other week on Thursday mornings, beginning with prayer and Scripture before discerning how available funds can best be used to respond to current needs. This rhythm of prayer and planning shapes the ministry's steady, thoughtful approach to service.

Food assistance remains the primary way that the Vincentians help. Calls requesting support come in throughout the week and are returned personally by members on a rotating basis. During these conversations, Vincentians learn how many adults and children live in the household, any dietary restrictions, and the family's situation. This information ensures that what is provided is truly helpful.

"We try to give a week's worth of food," says John Chmielewski, a member of the ministry, noting that the exact amount depends on pantry supplies and the number of families being served.

Once the information is gathered, members access the pantry on Wednesday and Thursday mornings to pack boxes that provide three meals a day for three to five days when possible. When available, non-food essentials — such as soap, shampoo, toilet paper, and laundry detergent — are also included.

These interactions are about more than efficiency.

"We want them to have absolutely no stigma for asking for food assistance," John says. "We want them to know that we are very pleased to help."

Even brief phone calls are handled with warmth and care, reinforcing that asking for help is met with compassion, not judgment.

In addition to food, the Vincentians sometimes assist neighbors with utility bills or basic clothing needs. When financial help is provided, payments are made directly to utility companies after verifying the need, ensuring careful stewardship of parish resources.

Clothing or shoe requests are addressed through limited vouchers

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— John Chmielewski

redeemable at a local thrift store, allowing recipients to select items that fit their needs.

The ministry itself has grown quietly but steadily. Two years ago, the Vincentians numbered 14 members — today, the group has grown to 20. New members are welcomed into a well-established structure where responsibilities are shared, and no one serves alone. This growth has strengthened the ministry's ability to respond while preserving its personal, neighbor-focused approach.

The generosity of parishioners, through green collection envelopes and food donations, has made a measurable impact.

Over the past year, the Vincentians assisted 784 adults and 686 children, helping families navigate difficult seasons and work toward greater stability.

The Vincentians continue to rely on both volunteers and financial support to meet growing needs. As the Vincentians look toward 2026, their goal remains rooted in the Gospel — to continue doing God's work by serving neighbors in need, faithfully and quietly, for as long as that need remains.

To support this ministry through service or donations, contact ministry leader Ed Molnar at 440-320-0120 or e.molnar@oh.rr.com.

Meals for St. Elizabeth Center *continued from front cover*

that stands out is a Fourth of July dinner featuring sloppy joes, baked beans, pasta salad, and cupcakes. Her team has also prepared comforting meals, such as turkey and gravy, and fried chicken. She invites anyone to help with a meal, even if it's just for one time. The teams will take help anytime, and it's really rewarding.

"This gives them at least a meal that we help with," Linda says. "It's great because people come from outside, off the street, and eat too."

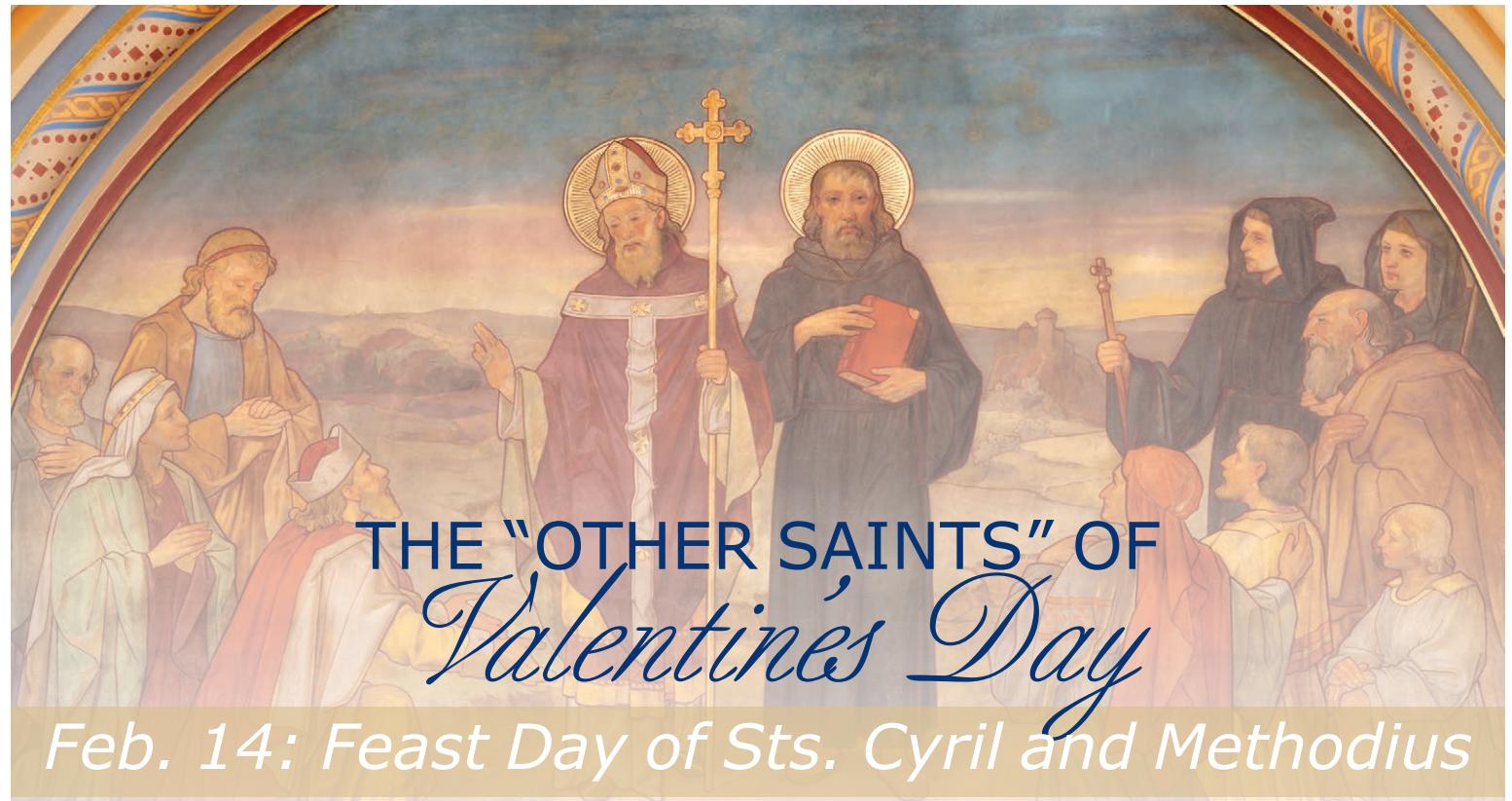
Christians are called to live out their faith through the Corporal Works of Mercy, mainly by feeding the hungry and sheltering the homeless. This ministry brings those teachings to life in a very tangible way. Preparing meals for those at the shelter offers not only food but also dignity, care, and a reminder that they are not forgotten. In serving both body and spirit, this ministry reflects Christ's call to

love our neighbors through simple acts of compassion. This is a way for St. Joseph's community to show they care. It's simple and meaningful.

Linda calls all of us to get involved in this ministry.

"I think it's worthwhile," she says. "At least you're helping someone. That's all Jesus wants us to do — to keep giving. I encourage anyone, if you could cook for the first Friday of the month, to help if they could."

To get involved in providing meals for the shelter, contact Linda Pizzoferrato at 440-986-1131.



THE "OTHER SAINTS" OF *Valentine's Day*

Feb. 14: Feast Day of Sts. Cyril and Methodius

Everyone knows Feb. 14 is the Feast of St. Valentine and, of course, the secular, commercialized day of romance known as Valentine's Day.

But for the Catholic Church, this day devoted to love is also the Feast of Sts. Cyril and Methodius — two ninth-century Greek missionaries known as the apostles of the Slavic peoples.

So, who were Cyril and Methodius?

Brothers from a wealthy senatorial family in Thessalonica, Cyril and Methodius became Christian missionaries to the region of present-day Czech Republic. In 815 and 826 respectively, Sts. Cyril and Methodius renounced their wealth and status and became priests. Both were living in a monastery on the Bosphorus — now known as the Istanbul strait that separates Europe and Asia — when the authorities from the Khazar Empire summoned Constantinople for a Christian missionary. Cyril was chosen and was accompanied by his brother. Both learned the Khazar language and converted many of the people.

Soon after the Khazar mission, there was a request from officials in Moravia (a region in the present-day Czech Republic) for missionaries who could preach and celebrate liturgical services in the local dialect. Although German missionaries had already labored among the people for some time, they had little success.

To fulfill this mission, Cyril and Methodius adapted the Greek alphabet into a script for the Slavonic language. The result was the "Cyrillic" alphabet, which was first used to translate the Bible and liturgical books. It also became the primary means of written communication for large portions of the world, including modern-day Russia.

The two labored in Moravia for four years until 868, achieving greater success than the German missionaries. After being summoned to Rome, they met with Pope Adrian II, who warmly approved of their methods. They were commended by the pope for their missionary activity and ordained bishops. Yet Cyril would not return to Moravia and died in Rome in 869.

To further Methodius' work in Moravia, Pope Adrian II appointed him archbishop of a new archdiocese in the territory, independent from the German church. Unfortunately, this had the effect of angering his German critics, who had him deposed and imprisoned for three years.

Pope Adrian's successor, John VIII, managed to have Methodius freed and had him reinstated as archbishop, after which he expanded his work to incorporate the region of modern-day Poland. The new Pope continued to support Methodius' use of the Slavic languages in worship and his translations of the Bible, despite continuing controversy with some elements of the German church.

Eventually, with the assistance of several Greek priests, he translated the entire Bible into the language that is known today as Church Slavonic. He chose his successor from among the native Moravian Slavs whom he had evangelized and died on April 6, 885.

Patrons of Moravia, and specially venerated by Catholic Czechs, Slovaks, Croatians, Orthodox Serbians and Bulgarians, Cyril and Methodius are eminently fitted to guard the long-desired unity of East and West. In 1980, St. Pope John Paul II named them additional co-patrons of Europe.

Anointed Hands *By DEACON NATHAN FRANKART*

Peace of Christ to you! Those who have a good memory might recall that around this time last year, I was wrapping up a series on the vows that a transitional deacon takes at their ordination. Rather than retreading that ground for the priesthood ordination, I've elected to highlight different aspects of the liturgy that signify the priesthood that were absent from the previous ordination in April. Consider these next few months, which will be some of the last that I write for the St. Joseph newsletter, to be a final send-off for the parish.

One of the consecrating actions of the ordination liturgy for priests can be seen in the anointing of hands. Anointing takes place across multiple liturgies within the Church, including Baptisms and Confirmations. You might recall at those celebrations a pleasant aroma rising in the air from the oil that is used (If anyone can find a candle version of that, it makes for a great Confirmation or Baptism gift!) The oil is chrism — it calls to mind a particular truth about ourselves and the Church and communicates a more solemn reality of what is taking place.

The particular truth lies in our calling — those anointed are entrusted with specific responsibilities. Kings are anointed for authority over others, prophets are anointed to preach what God commands them to for the People of God, and finally, ministers to God's altar are anointed to offer worthy sacrifices of praise. The Catholic priesthood, founded in the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ, possesses all three of these realities. And specifically, the anointing of the hands carries the authority to consecrate



the Eucharist through the prayers of the Church and in participation with those who are conscious and actively participating in the liturgy.

And what of the solemn reality? That would be the presence of the Holy Spirit being bestowed upon the person anointed, just as the oil is soaked into the skin and leaves its pleasant aroma. The presence of

God and the activity of the Spirit rest upon the priest as he goes forth to celebrate the sacraments of the Church for the People of God. It will be of you that I think of as I receive this sacrament, along with all the other people of God whom I've been blessed to minister to as I receive this anointing. For it will be for you that I will celebrate the sacraments.

The presence of God and the activity of the Spirit rest upon the priest as he goes forth to celebrate the sacraments of the Church for the People of God. It will be of you that I think of as I receive this sacrament, along with all the other people of God whom I've been blessed to minister to as I receive this anointing.



AD SPACE

ST. JOSEPH & NATIVITY

AD SPACE

St. JOSEPH PARISH & NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

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.

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Upcoming Activities and Events

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

Hospitality Tuesday

Tuesday, Feb. 3 — 8:30 a.m., Nativity Church (following the 8 a.m. Mass)

Altar and Rosary Society Meeting

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

Men's Group Meeting

Tuesday, Feb. 3 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph Church Gathering Area

First Friday Rosary

Friday, Feb. 6 — 11 a.m., Nativity Church (Light Luncheon to follow in the Nativity's Parish Hall)

First Saturday Rosary

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

Parent Club Meeting

Tuesday, Feb. 10 — 7 p.m., School MPR

St. Joseph School Early Dismissal – Winter Conferences

Thursday, Feb. 12 — K through 8, one-hour early dismissal
Winter Conferences, 2 to 8 p.m.

No School

Friday, Feb. 13 and Monday, Feb. 16 — President's Day weekend

Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18 —
Masses with distribution of Ashes
9 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church
12 p.m. Mass at Nativity BVM
Church in South Amherst
7 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church

"Dinners on the Go" pick-up
Tuesday, Feb. 10 — 5 p.m.,
Nativity Parish Hall (drive-thru
service only)

Knights of Columbus
Tuesday, Feb. 24 — 7 p.m.,
School MPR

Fish Fry
Friday, Feb. 27 — 5:00 — 7:00 p.m.
at Nativity Parish Hall —
eat-in and carry-out will be available

Holy Ground Youth Group

Sundays, Feb. 1, 8, 15, and 22 — 6 p.m. in School Gym
(Event begins with 5 p.m. Mass — meet near the choir prior to Mass.)

OCIA (formerly RCIA)

Mondays, Feb. 2, 9, 16, and 23 — 7 p.m., Nativity Parish Hall

PSR

Wednesdays, Feb. 4, 11, 18, and 25 — 5:30 p.m. in St. Joseph School.

Sacred Sisters Prayer and Study Group

Wednesdays, Feb. 4, 11, and 25 — 6:30 p.m., O.S.E. Community Center
(Note: no session on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18)

Scripture Study

Thursdays, Feb. 5, 12, 19, and 26 — 6 p.m. in St. Joseph Church

Vincentians Meeting

Thursdays, Feb. 5 and 19 — 9 a.m. in St. Joseph Conference Room

Chair Yoga Flow Classes

Tuesday and Thursdays in February — 9:30 a.m. in Nativity's Parish Hall

ASH WEDNESDAY IS FEB. 18 — REMINDERS FOR FASTING AND ABSTINENCE

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence for Catholics, but are not Holy Days of Obligation. Additionally, Fridays during Lent are also days of abstinence.

The norms regarding fasting are obligatory from the age of 18 until 59. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal as well as two smaller meals that together are not equal to a full meal. Likewise, the norms for abstaining from meat are binding from age 14 onward. If possible, the fast on Good Friday is continued until the Easter Vigil (on Holy Saturday night) as the "paschal fast," to honor the suffering and death of the Lord

Jesus and to prepare ourselves to share more fully and to celebrate more readily His Resurrection.