



# ST. JOSEPH PARISH

## NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

### Inside

2 Palm Sunday: A Gateway to Holy Week and Stewardship

3 A Letter from Our Pastor

4 Hospitality Tuesday A Simple Tradition Strengthening Community

5 Upcoming Activities and Events

6 A Look at the Parish Prayer Chain Community Faithfully Lifting Others to God

8 A Historical Look at Our Lenten Practices and Traditions

9 Laying On of Hands 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

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## GET TO KNOW Josh Gonzalez, St. Joseph's Director of Youth Activities

### *Leading the Next Generation to Christ*

It takes a special person to lead the next generation in faith, and Josh Gonzalez is that person. He started as the Director of Youth Activities at St. Joseph last July. An education major, Josh has been involved in youth programs for many years.

"I've volunteered for our middle school youth group at my home parish, St. Mary of the Falls, for sixth to eighth grade," Josh says. "I've been doing that since high school. I was also a part of the youth ministry program there when I was in high school. This is my first job as a youth director."

Josh has a heart to help young people build a foundation of faith and knows the importance of starting early.

"I want kids to grow in their faith together in a community," he says. "I want them to realize that whatever struggles they go through, they're not alone. They have a good community. Growing in faith together is amazing."

Currently, the Holy Ground Youth Group meets Sunday evenings from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the St. Joseph's School gymnasium. Open to all students in seventh through 12th grade, no sign-up is required.

"I want to bring in as many kids as I can," Josh says. "All they really need to do is say yes and show up — there really shouldn't be any strings attached. My whole thing was that they don't even need to be Christian. Anybody can come to the youth group. It's something I've been passionate about. I've been telling the kids to invite their friends, no matter what their background is."

Reaching as many young people as possible with the Gospel message is Josh's passion.

"I've always been told the Church is losing young people, but I see how excited and curious they are about everything regarding the faith," he says. "It makes me very excited for the future of the Catholic Church. I see young people coming into the Catholic Church because they're curious. They want to learn more, see Christ in a new way, and be impacted by Him in a new way."

Josh works with a team of youth leaders — Mitch Rippee, Gabriel Goncalves, Alissa Van Dress, Sophie Shand, and Katelyn Drop. While he does most of the planning, the other leaders are welcome



*Josh Gonzalez began serving as the Director of Youth Activities at St. Joseph last July.*

*continued on page 7*

*Palm Sunday:*

## A Gateway to Holy Week and Stewardship

**P**alm Sunday, which marks the beginning of Holy Week in the Catholic Church, is a day of profound significance. It commemorates Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, where crowds waved palm branches and shouted "Hosanna!" as a sign of honor and recognition. While Palm Sunday itself is not directly about stewardship, it holds deep connections to the concept of stewardship and its importance in the Church.

The waving of palm branches by the people of Jerusalem symbolizes the act of giving. The crowd willingly offered their palm branches as a sign of their reverence and respect for Jesus, acknowledging Him as the King who came in the name of the Lord. This act of giving is a reminder of the sacrificial nature of stewardship — the sharing of our time, talents, and treasure in a manner that reflects our commitment to Christ and the well-being of our faith community.

**Stewardship of Time:** Palm Sunday offers a unique opportunity to reflect on the stewardship of time. In the Catholic faith, time is considered a gift from God, and how it is spent is a reflection of one's stewardship. Just as the crowds in Jerusalem took time to greet Jesus and honor Him, Catholics are encouraged to dedicate their time to acts of worship, service, and reflection. The choice to participate in the liturgical events of Holy Week, including the Palm Sunday procession and Mass, demonstrates a commitment to stewarding time for spiritual growth and communal engagement.

**Stewardship of Talent:** The crowd's enthusiastic shout of "Hosanna!" on Palm Sunday represents the stewardship of talent. Talents and abilities are God-given gifts, and the crowd's proclamation can be seen as a public expression of their talents used to honor Jesus. Similarly, stewardship encourages individuals to use their unique talents and skills for the betterment of their faith community. Whether through musical talents, organizational skills, or other abilities, we are called to contribute our talents to the service of the Church and its mission.

**Stewardship of Treasure:** Although the people of Jerusalem did not offer treasure in the form of money, the

concept of giving one's possessions and financial resources is inherent in the act of hospitality and support shown to Jesus. This spirit of generosity and giving is deeply connected to the stewardship of treasure, which encourages Catholics to support the Church financially. The financial contributions made by parishioners enable the Church to carry out its mission, support those in need, and maintain the resources necessary for worship and community service.

Seen in this light, Palm Sunday serves as a meaningful gateway into Holy Week, and it holds significant connections to the concept of stewardship. The act of giving and sacrifice demonstrated by the crowds in Jerusalem reflects the principles of stewardship that are central to the Catholic faith. As Catholics wave their own symbolic "palm branches" through the stewardship of time, talent, and treasure, they acknowledge that Jesus is Lord in their lives and the importance of supporting the Church and their faith community. By connecting Palm Sunday to stewardship, we are reminded of the call to emulate Christ's sacrificial love and the willingness to give generously for the greater glory of God.



A Letter from Our Pastor

## Approaching Lent with the *Heart of a Steward*



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

**A**s we continue our journey through the season of Lent, a time of reflection, penance, and spiritual growth, I would like to remind you of the importance of examining our stewardship commitments of time, talent, and treasure. This period is not just about giving up certain luxuries, but also about deepening our faith, renewing our commitment to God, and serving others with a generous heart.

**Time:** Time is a precious gift from God, and how we use it reflects our priorities and values. During Lent, it is essential to allocate more time to prayer, reflection, and service. Consider setting aside moments for daily prayer and Scripture reading. Attend Mass regularly and engage in devotional practices that help you draw closer to God. Additionally, volunteer your time to help those in need within our community. Acts of charity and service are a meaningful way to spend your time during this season.

**Talent:** Each one of us possesses unique talents and abilities bestowed upon us by God. Lent is a perfect time to reflect on how we can use our talents to further God's kingdom. Consider sharing your talents with the parishes and the broader community. Whether it's through participating in ministries, leading prayer groups, or offering your skills to those in need, your talents can be a source of blessing to others and an expression of

your commitment to God.

**Treasure:** The stewardship of our material resources is a vital aspect of our faith. During Lent, take a closer look at your financial commitments and how you can align them with your faith. Consider increasing your financial support to the parishes and charitable organizations that serve those in need. Sacrificing a portion of your financial resources during Lent can be an act of solidarity with the less fortunate and a way to live out the spirit of almsgiving.

Above all, I remind you to embrace a more profound connection with Christ during this holy season. Use this time to

reflect on the significance of Lent and how your stewardship can be a living expression of your faith and love for God.

May this Lenten season be a time of spiritual growth and transformation, as we examine and strengthen our stewardship commitments in the spirit of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. May we draw closer to God and one another, as we journey towards the joy of Easter.

Gratefully in Christ,

*Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor*

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,  
Pastor



# Hospitality Tuesday

## *A Simple Tradition Strengthening Community*

**H**ospitality Tuesday is held on the first Tuesday of most months, immediately following morning Mass at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This simple gathering that includes coffee, donuts, and conversations has grown into a meaningful expression of welcome, fellowship, and stewardship within the parish community. It supports the broader mission of Nativity and its partner parish, St. Joseph, by creating a welcoming environment and offering hospitality, which is one of the four pillars of parish stewardship.

Although no one can pinpoint the exact moment that this gathering began, parish memory traces the tradition back over five years to the generosity of one or two parishioners who, on separate occasions, surprised the weekday Mass-goers with donuts to share. What started as an unexpected treat revealed itself to be a moment of joy that naturally drew both parishioners and guests together in fellowship. That connection resonated deeply with many parishioners attending daily Mass, and the Altar and Rosary Society has since continued the practice each month.

Nancy Ann Smith moved to the area in 2017 and joined the parish after feeling welcomed into the community. She has been involved with Hospitality Tuesday for nearly four years — she got involved originally because she enjoyed the camaraderie that it fosters.

“I feel confident that it spreads a camaraderie that is good for feeding the community spirit, that God’s house is friendly and comfortable,” Nancy Ann says. “I don’t know if our efforts will be automatically valuable for others, but we feel the happy community spirit is an effort worthy of continuing.”

The Altar and Rosary Society officers who attend morning Mass prepare for a warm welcome in the Social Hall with coffee and donuts. At the end of Mass, Nancy Ann invites all those in attendance into the Social Hall to stay, visit, and enjoy a treat and one another’s company. Cleanup happens naturally, with many hands pitching in.

Hospitality Tuesday is open to all who attend the morning Mass, including guests from other parishes. The impact of these gatherings is felt in subtle but powerful ways. A welcoming environment can be the very thing that encourages a new family to join the parish. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet parishioners and spend some time socializing with the community.

“Daily Mass is a priceless gift,” Nancy Ann says. “Once a month, adding a donut just seems too easy a delight to resist.”

Whether you come for the coffee, the fellowship, or simply the joy of sharing a small treat after celebrating the Mass together, Hospitality Tuesday nurtures the sense of belonging that makes the parish feel like home.



**For more information or  
to get involved, contact  
Nancy Ann Smith at  
440-731-2369.**

## Upcoming Activities and Events

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### **Altar and Rosary Society Rosary and Meeting**

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

### **Men's Group Meeting**

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

### **Diocesan-wide Evening of Confessions**

Wednesday, March 4 — from  
5 to 8 p.m. at St. Joseph Church

### **First Friday Rosary**

Friday, March 6 — 11 a.m. at  
Nativity Church; Light Luncheon  
to follow in the Nativity's Parish  
Hall

### **First Saturday Rosary**

Saturday, March 7 — 9 a.m. at  
St. Joseph Church

### **Hospitality Tuesday**

Tuesday, March 10 — 8:30  
a.m. at Nativity Church Parish  
Hall (following the 8 a.m. Mass)

### **"Dinners on the Go" pick-up**

Tuesday, March 10 — 5 p.m. at  
Nativity Parish Hall (drive-thru  
service only)

### **Parent Club Meeting**

Tuesday, March 10 — 7 p.m. at  
School MPR

### **Pre-Baptism Class**

Wednesday, March 11 — 7 p.m.  
at St. Joseph School

### **No School**

Friday, March 13 — PD Day

### **"The Answer"**

Friday, March 20, and  
Saturday, March 21 — 7:30  
p.m. at St. Joseph Church

### **Knights of Columbus**

Tuesday, March 24 — 7 p.m. at  
School MPR

### **Fish Fry**

Friday, March 27 — 5 to 7 p.m.  
at Nativity Parish Hall, dine in  
or carry out (see bulletins for  
details)

### **OCIA (formerly RCIA)**

Mondays, March 2, 9, 16, 23,  
and 30 — 7 p.m. at Nativity  
Parish Hall

### **PSR**

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

### **Sacred Sisters Prayer and Study Group**

Wednesdays, March 4, 11, 18,  
and 25 — 6:30 p.m. at O.S.E.  
Community Center

### **Scripture Study**

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

### **Vincentians Meeting**

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

### **Chair Yoga Flow Classes**

Tuesdays and Thursdays in  
March — 9:30 a.m. in Nativity's  
Parish Hall

### **Stations of the Cross on Fridays during Lent**

Friday, March 6 — 7 p.m. at  
St. Joseph Church  
Friday, March 13 — 7 p.m. at  
Nativity Church  
Friday, March 27 — 7 p.m. at  
Nativity Church  
Good Friday, April 3 — Taize  
Stations of the Cross at  
St. Joseph Church

### **Holy Ground Youth Group**

Sundays, March 8 and 22 —  
6 p.m. in School Gym  
(Event begins with 5 p.m. Mass  
— meet near the choir before  
Mass)

### **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at Nativity of the B.V.M. Parish**

Monday through Friday,  
11 a.m. to 10 p.m.  
For information on adoration,  
please call Josie Tornabene at  
440-396-5429

### **Reconciliation (Confession) at St. Joseph Parish**

Saturdays of Lent from 11 a.m.  
to 12 p.m.  
Thursdays following the  
7 p.m. Mass until 8:30 p.m. —  
exception Holy Thursday  
Good Friday following the Noon  
Liturgy until 3 p.m.  
Holy Saturday from 11 a.m.  
to 12 p.m.

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# A Look at the Parish Prayer Chain

*Community Faithfully Lifting Others to God*

Those of us who aren't in the medical field often feel helpless when someone we care about is facing illness. We may not be able to diagnose, treat, or heal, but we can still do something powerful. We can show up with meals, kind words, and encouragement — and above all, we can pray. Prayer places our loved ones directly into God's care, inviting His presence and healing into their lives. Many of us could devote more time to praying for friends, family members, and those in need.

As we proceed through Lent, we have an opportunity to commit to deepening our prayer life and lifting others, trusting that God works through even the simplest prayers offered with love.

Roberta Machesky and Colleen Wyszynski co-lead the Prayer Chain. Their biggest request is for more prayer requests. They also welcome more people to join this important ministry. Roberta has co-led for about five years and was a member long before. When she retired, Roberta was looking to get more involved. The person leading the Prayer Chain at St. Joseph's wanted to step down. It was perfect timing, so Roberta put her name in the hat.

There is a prayer phone line at St. Joseph's. Roberta and Colleen take the requests from there and email them to the approximately 70 members.

"Who really wouldn't want more than 70 people praying for your intention?" Roberta says. "Prayer is so powerful."

Most prayer requests come from our parishes, but anyone is welcome to submit a request via the prayer line. The requests are usually regarding people who are hospitalized or having surgery. There have also been requests for babies and children with health problems.

"This ministry makes you feel like you're doing work for the Lord," Roberta says. "You're evangelizing in your own way. People requesting prayers know that so many people are praying for their intention, and that brings comfort."

Each member of the ministry responds to prayer requests in their own way. Some add the intention to their daily prayers, while others pause in the moment to pray, and still others bring the request to Eucharistic Adoration. Many members pray daily for these intentions, so it's not a one-time prayer.

"Being part of this ministry has made me much more humble in the way I pray — not 'my will



*Roberta Machesky,  
Prayer Chain co-leader*



*Colleen Wyszynski,  
Prayer Chain co-leader*

*continued on page 7*

*"This ministry makes you feel like you're doing work for the Lord. You're evangelizing in your own way. People requesting prayers know that so many people are praying for their intention, and that brings comfort."*

*— Roberta Machesky*

be done,' but 'Your will be done,'" Roberta says. "I've really increased my trust in the Lord."

Roberta has used the Prayer Chain for her family members for various reasons. She admits it has provided comfort to her and her family.

"It's increased my faith in the power of prayer," she says. "I've seen how powerful it can be."

Roberta and the other ministry members would welcome additional prayer requests and are always grateful to receive updates from those for whom they've prayed. Hearing how God is at work allows members to witness the power of prayer and be encouraged in their own faith.



**To make a prayer request, call 440-988-2848. To join the ministry, contact Roberta Machesky at 440-346-5836.**

## Get to Know Josh Gonzalez, St. Joseph's Director of Youth Activities *continued from front cover*

to share ideas or even take over a particular plan. They cover a variety of topics in the Church.

"We've covered sainthood, what it means to be a saint, how do we live like the saints, and why does the Catholic Church have saints," Josh says. "Our big thing from last semester was that faith is a choice, a commitment, and a connection. I called those 'the three Cs.' Without all three things, it's not really as fruitful as it can be."

Josh is also passionate about fostering hearts of service in the youth.

"We did a food drive for the Advent season," he says. "I'd also like to do something we did in middle school. We did a cardboard city to raise money for homeless shelters here in Cleveland. We stayed outside and camped in cardboard boxes. It was a lot of fun, and we raised a lot of money when I was in school. I would love to do that at the church this year."

Furthermore, Josh has hopes for other ventures like retreats, summer activity nights, and guest speakers. As Josh draws these kids together to learn about faith, serve

their community, and grow closer to Christ together, he asks parishioners to pray for them.

"I would love support and prayer," Josh says. "We could always use more volunteers. Donations are appreciated as well, but prayer is the biggest thing. Pray for me, pray for our volunteers, and pray for the kids."

As Josh notes, he is hopeful when he sees the youth so excited and curious to learn about their faith.

"I want to be somebody who helps them in that journey, to let them know that this is the true Church that Jesus established," he says. "We want as many people a part of it as we can."

**For any questions or to get involved, contact Josh Gonzalez at 440-650-7554 or [charles.j.gonzo@gmail.com](mailto:charles.j.gonzo@gmail.com)**

# A Historical Look at Our LENTEN PRACTICES AND TRADITIONS

**W**hen the Season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, we enter into a time of preparation, sacrifice, and penance, culminating in Holy Week and the joyous celebrations of Easter. And while the liturgical season of Lent offers us a time for solemn reflection, it is also widely welcomed each year as an opportunity to be drawn ever closer to our faith.

But just how did this penitential season come to be? And how did the reverent hallmarks of Lent — such as fasting and prayer — become so deeply ingrained in our observance of this season?

To understand the Lenten season, it is important to understand the word “Lent” itself, which is derived from two Anglo-Saxon terms: *lencten*, meaning “spring,” and *lenctentid*, which is the term for both “springtide” and “March” — of course, Lent often falls throughout most of March, and during the transition into (and renewal of) the spring season. In Latin, the corresponding term for “Lent,” *quadragesima*, refers to its dating from the 40th day before Easter.

This brings us to another hallmark of the Lenten season — its length of 40 days. However, Lent was not originally observed for this length of time. During the first three centuries of the Christian era, Easter preparations consisted of three days of fasting and prayer. In some places, this preparation was extended into the entire week before Easter — which we now observe as Holy Week. There is also some evidence that, in Rome, Easter preparation was as long as three weeks.

In its early form, Lent was an intense period of spiritual

and liturgical preparation for catechumens who were to be baptized at Easter. At the time, many members of the community observed this period of preparation alongside the catechumens. But, as time passed and more people were baptized as infants, the connection between catechumens and Lenten preparation gave way to a focus on the themes of repentance and fasting during Lent for all Christians.

It was not until the fourth century — upon the legalization of Christianity — that Lent developed into its current length of 40 days, which mirrored the length of Jesus’ fast and temptation, as chronicled in Luke 4:1-13.

Yet, interestingly, the Lenten observations of fasting and prayer did not always take place for 40 consecutive days. For instance, in Jerusalem, fasting was observed for 40 days, Monday through Friday, but not on Saturday or Sunday — thus, Lent lasted for a total of eight weeks. In Rome and the West, fasting took place for six weeks, Monday through Saturday, with Lent being observed over six weeks. The practice of fasting for six days over six weeks eventually prevailed, with Ash Wednesday being instituted to account for 40 fasting days before Easter.

And as the length of Lenten observance developed over time, so did the observance of fasting itself. At first, some areas of the Church abstained from all meat and animal products, while others made exceptions for certain foods, like fish. And while a person was to only have one meal a day, a smaller repast would be allowed so that manual laborers could maintain their strength throughout the day. Eventually, eating meat was allowed throughout the week, save for Ash Wednesday and on Fridays.

In fact, two of our most common and beloved Lenten and Easter traditions — the Shrove Tuesday meal and Easter eggs — developed from these early Lenten observations. Initially, abstinence from dairy products was observed during Lent, with dispensations given if pious works had taken place. Eventually, this particular rule of abstinence was relaxed entirely. Today, pre-Lenten pancake breakfasts, Easter egg decoration, and egg hunts remain as enjoyable seasonal opportunities for fellowship and fun within our parish families!



## Laying On of Hands

By DEACON NATHAN FRANKART

Peace of Christ to you! Before we get back into this ongoing segment, I thought I would share with you one of my final assignments for the seminary. On March 23 at 6:30 p.m. at St. Mary in Wooster, I will be doing a practice Mass for the community here at my transitional diaconate assignment. If, for some reason, you are itching to see a Mass — even a practice one — where I am the presider, here is your chance!

One of the more moving aspects of the celebration of priestly ordination is the laying on of hands. It is much like the laying on of hands for transitional diaconate ordination, where the bishop

continues the apostolic gesture, one that was first recorded in the book of Acts. This is where the term “apostolic succession” comes from — for thousands of years, an unbroken chain of prayer and gesture has been passed from bishop to bishop, and from bishop down to his priests.

But by ascending to the vocation of the priesthood, there is a special moment in which all the priests of Cleveland take part. After the bishop has prayed over us, each priest present at the ordination makes his way to the front to do the same.

Do you know how many priests are in the Diocese of Cleveland? What if you could witness nearly all of them in

the same room at once, praying over and interceding for the men who are about to join their ranks?

The collective witness of these priests gives a certain solemnity to the occasion, and it shows the unity of the greater Church of Cleveland. This is not merely a day of celebration for my family, friends, and future assignment parish — which I still do not know what it will be, as I’ll find out in late April — but one that extends to all the people in our area.

And it appears to be only a few short months away! I have already begun to do some planning and organization for the celebration. Maybe I’ll see you there!



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This newsletter brought to you by the Catholic Communities of:

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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 *continued from page 5*

**Reconciliation (Confession)  
at St. Nativity of the B.V.M.  
Parish**

*Holy Thursday following the  
7 p.m. Mass until 9 p.m.*

**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 on fasting are obligatory from age 18 to 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.*

**Easter Triduum**

**Holy Thursday, April 2**

*7:00 p.m. Mass of the Lord's Supper at Nativity B.V.M. Parish, with foot washing. Adoration and Confession follow Mass until 9:00 p.m.  
9:00 p.m. Adoration Closing*

**Good Friday, April 3**

*12:00 Noon - Solemn Liturgy of the Lord's Passion at St. Joseph - with Confessions afterwards until 3:00 p.m.  
7:00 p.m. TAIZE Stations of the Cross at St. Joseph*

**Holy Saturday, April 4**

*10:45 a.m. Blessing of the Easter Food at St. Joseph  
Confessions from 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 Noon at St. Joseph  
8:45 p.m. Easter Vigil of the Lord's Resurrection at St. Joseph*

*(Please note: There will be no 4:00 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph and there will be no 5:30 p.m. Mass at Nativity on Holy Saturday)*

**Easter Sunday, April 5**

*8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph  
10:00 a.m. Mass at Nativity  
11:30 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph  
Please note: There will be no 5:00 p.m. Mass on Easter Sunday at St. Joseph*