



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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APRIL 2026

MEET PARISHIONER Michael Fox

Finding New Ways to Serve God and Share in Community

Longtime parishioner Michael Fox has worn many hats at St. Joseph Parish over the years — he was a student at the parish school, served as a frequent usher as a teen and adult, and is now an aspiring actor playing the part of Caleb the Zealot in the parish’s musical production “The Answer – The Musical.” Michael is a wonderful example of how being open to serving God and others can be a rewarding experience at any stage of life.

Born prematurely by nearly three months, Michael entered the world in a delicate condition. Placed on 100-percent oxygen for a few weeks, doctors warned his parents that he may experience developmental difficulties in his brain, eyes, and speech, and possibly not survive. Despite the grave prognosis, his family devoted themselves to prayer.

“My grandfather had a Rosary, and he just told my mom, ‘Don’t worry, he’ll be okay,’” Michael says. “It was kind of a miracle.”

Michael describes himself as “Catholic from the start.” He attended St. Joseph Parish School from first through eighth grade and attended Mass regularly. Even though he was raised in a Catholic household, he admits that going to church felt more like an obligation. It wasn’t until seven years ago, when he started praying the Rosary regularly, that he began



Michael Fox

to appreciate his faith. When daily Mass was offered on Thursday evenings, he started attending every week.

“It was a game-changer to be in an extra Mass,” Michael says. “I fell more in love with the Church and the Mass. It’s been amazing.”

Michael started serving the parish as an usher as a part of his community service requirement when he was preparing for Confirmation. He served as an usher for over

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PRACTICING STEWARDSHIP AT HOME:

Nurturing Faith in the Domestic Church

In the Catholic tradition, the concept of stewardship goes beyond attending Mass and making donations to the church; it encompasses a way of life deeply rooted in sharing our time, talent, and treasure for the greater good. This way of life is not confined to the church walls, but extends to our homes, where we cultivate the values of stewardship within our families. As parents, it is our sacred duty to instill these values in our children and foster a culture of giving, service, and faith within the Domestic Church.

Sharing Time

The first element of stewardship, sharing time, is a valuable lesson to teach children. Set aside regular family time for prayer, reflection, and discussing the needs of your local community. Engage in volunteer activities together, whether it's serving meals at a soup kitchen, participating in church events, or helping a neighbor in need. These experiences will show your children the importance of dedicating time to helping others and connecting with their faith.

Sharing Talent

Encourage your children to discover and develop their talents, and then guide them in using these talents for the benefit of others. It could be as simple as teaching them how to play a musical instrument, create art, or even cook. In sharing their talents, children will learn the joy of giving, and they will find purpose in using their skills to make a difference in the world. Emphasize the idea that everyone has something unique to offer, and it is through these talents that they can help build a better world.

Sharing Treasure

Stewardship also involves sharing one's financial resources. Involve your children in the family's budgeting and financial discussions to help them understand the importance of responsible money management. Teach them to set aside a portion of their allowance or earnings for charitable giving. Encourage them to support church programs, charities, and those in need. When children learn to give generously from a young age, it becomes a lifelong practice of sharing their treasure with those who need it most.

Teaching by Example

The most powerful way to instill the principles of stewardship in your children is to lead by example. Be open about your own acts of giving and service. Let your children witness your involvement in church activities, your support of charitable organizations, and your dedication to helping others. When they see your commitment to stewardship, they are more likely to embrace it as a way of life in their own journey of faith.

Embracing Stewardship in the Domestic Church

Stewardship is not limited to our interactions with the parish or the wider community; it is a way of life within the Domestic Church — our family. As parents, we have the opportunity and responsibility to shape our children's understanding of faith, generosity, and service. By sharing time, talent, and treasure within our homes, we create an environment where stewardship is not just a practice, but a fundamental aspect of our Catholic identity. Through this, we pass on the richness of our faith to the next generation, ensuring that they continue to be the stewards of God's gifts for years to come.

A Letter from Our Pastor

Living as *Easter People*



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

The joy of Easter does not belong to a single day on the calendar. The Church gives us an entire season to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus and to let this mystery sink in. Easter proclaims that Christ has conquered sin and death, and that His victory is not a distant idea, but a living reality meant to shape our choices, our relationships, and our priorities.

Living as Easter people means allowing the truth of the Resurrection to guide our daily lives. The risen Christ calls us to live with hope rather than fear and with trust rather than anxiety. He reminds us that God is faithful, that grace is real, and that renewal is always possible, even when life feels heavy or uncertain.

Easter also teaches us that discipleship continues beyond the empty tomb. The Resurrection is not simply something we admire; it is something we receive and then live. The Risen Christ sends His disciples outward with a mission, and He sends us as well — into our homes, our workplaces, and our communities — to reflect His love in practical ways.

This is where stewardship takes on its full meaning. Stewardship begins with gratitude, because everything we have is a gift from God. Our time, our abilities, our relationships, and our material resources are entrusted to us, not for ourselves alone, but for the good of others and the mission of the Church.

The Easter season invites each of us to take an honest look at how we are

living as stewards. Are we giving God our time through prayer and worship? Are we offering our talents in service, not only when it is convenient, but as a commitment of discipleship? Are we sharing our treasure generously and trustingly, confident that God provides and that the Church's work matters?

When stewardship becomes a way of life, parish life is strengthened. Ministries flourish, needs are met, and the Church becomes a visible sign of Christ's presence in the world. The Risen Lord continues

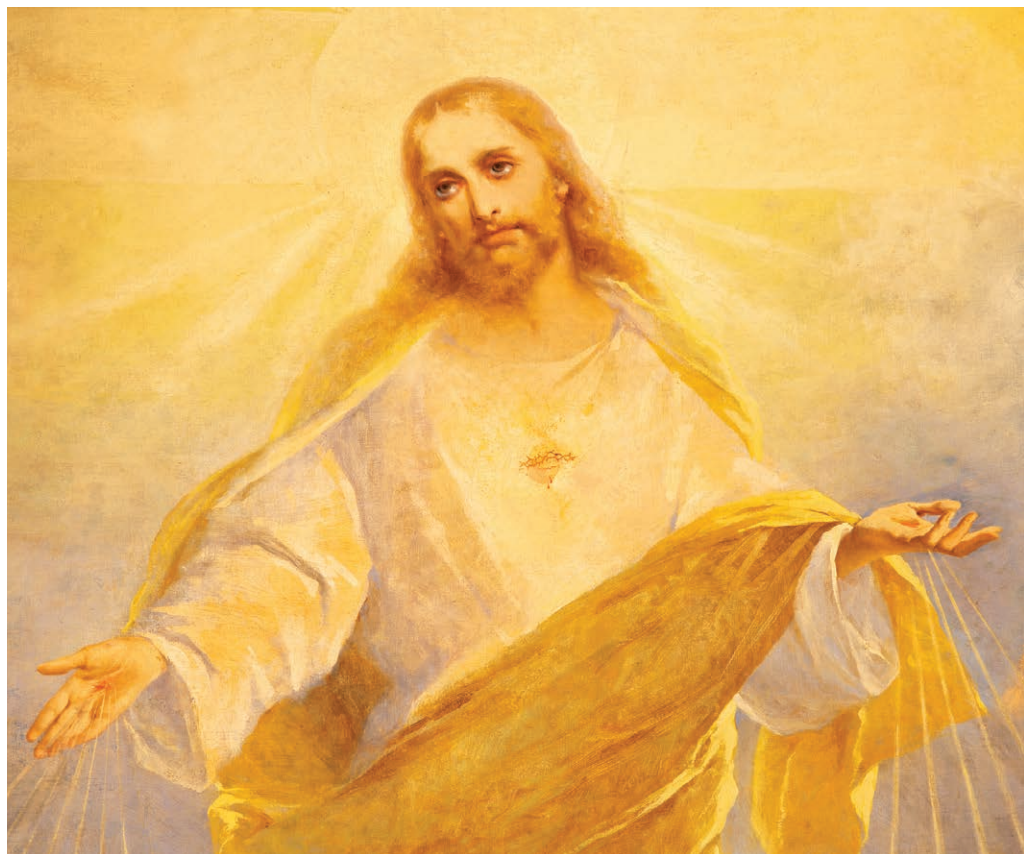
His work among us through ordinary acts of generosity, kindness, and faithfulness.

As we continue through this Easter season, may we live with grateful hearts and renewed purpose, allowing the joy of the Resurrection to shape who we are and how we serve.

Gratefully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor".

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor



Leaving a Legacy:

A Simple Way to Plan Ahead

Most of us know we should have a will. Many of us simply haven't gotten around to it.

Creating a will is one of the most practical ways to care for your loved ones. It ensures your wishes are clear, protects your family, and brings peace of mind during times when clear guidance matters most. Yet for many people, the process feels intimidating or easy to postpone.

Now, through the Catholic Community Foundation of Cleveland, St. Joseph Parish and Nativity of the BVM Parish are offering parishioners a simple, free way to take that important step.

FreeWill is a secure online tool that allows you to create a legally valid will in about 20 minutes. The process is straightforward and walks you through each step, helping you put your plans in writing without cost or pressure. The resource is free, confidential, and available to anyone who would like to use it, whether you are preparing your first will or updating an existing one.

There is no obligation to include a charitable gift. However, if you choose, FreeWill makes it easy to leave a legacy gift to St. Joseph, Nativity of the BVM, or other Catholic ministries that have been meaningful in your life. Even a small percentage of an estate can help sustain the mission of our parishes, strengthen ministries, and support future generations of parishioners.

For those with more complex estates, FreeWill can still serve as a helpful starting point. You may complete the online process and then work with an attorney to review or finalize specific details according to your situation. For many families, simply organizing basic decisions in advance can make later conversations much easier.

As parishioners, we often think about stewardship in terms of our weekly offertory, volunteer service, or involvement in parish life. Planning ahead is another meaningful expression of that same responsibility — a thoughtful way to care for both family and faith.

Taking time now to put your affairs in order is a practical, faith-filled way to care for your family and support the Church's mission beyond your lifetime.

To learn more or begin the process, visit www.catholiccommunity.org/freewill.

**For additional information, contact
Moira Wopershall, Director of Planned
Giving and Philanthropic Services,
at 216-696-6525 x8070 or
mwopershall@catholiccommunity.org.**

Taking time now to put your affairs in order is a practical, faith-filled way to care for your family and support the Church's mission beyond your lifetime.



Spring Cleaning *for the Soul*

Spring has a way of inviting us to begin again. As the days grow longer and signs of new life appear, many of us feel the urge to open windows, clear out clutter, and refresh our homes after the stillness of winter. The same desire for renewal exists in our spiritual lives as well.

Over time, it is easy for spiritual clutter to accumulate. Busy schedules crowd out quiet moments with God. Good intentions slowly give way to routine. Gratitude can fade as responsibilities and distractions take center stage. None of this happens suddenly, yet little by little our hearts can become weighed down without us even realizing it.

Spring offers a natural moment to pause and ask a simple question: *What in my life needs renewal?*

For many of us, renewal begins with prayer. Stewardship of our time reminds us that our relationship with God deserves intentional attention. Just as a home feels

different after it has been cleaned and reordered, our hearts find peace when we set aside regular time for prayer — even a few quiet minutes each day. Prayer recenters us and restores our awareness that everything we have comes from God.

As our relationship with God is renewed, we often begin to see our gifts differently. Each of us has abilities and experiences meant not only for personal success but for service. Spring can be an opportunity to rediscover how our talents might strengthen the parish community — whether through ministry involvement, helping a neighbor, or offering encouragement to someone who needs it. Small acts of service often become the first signs of renewed spiritual life.

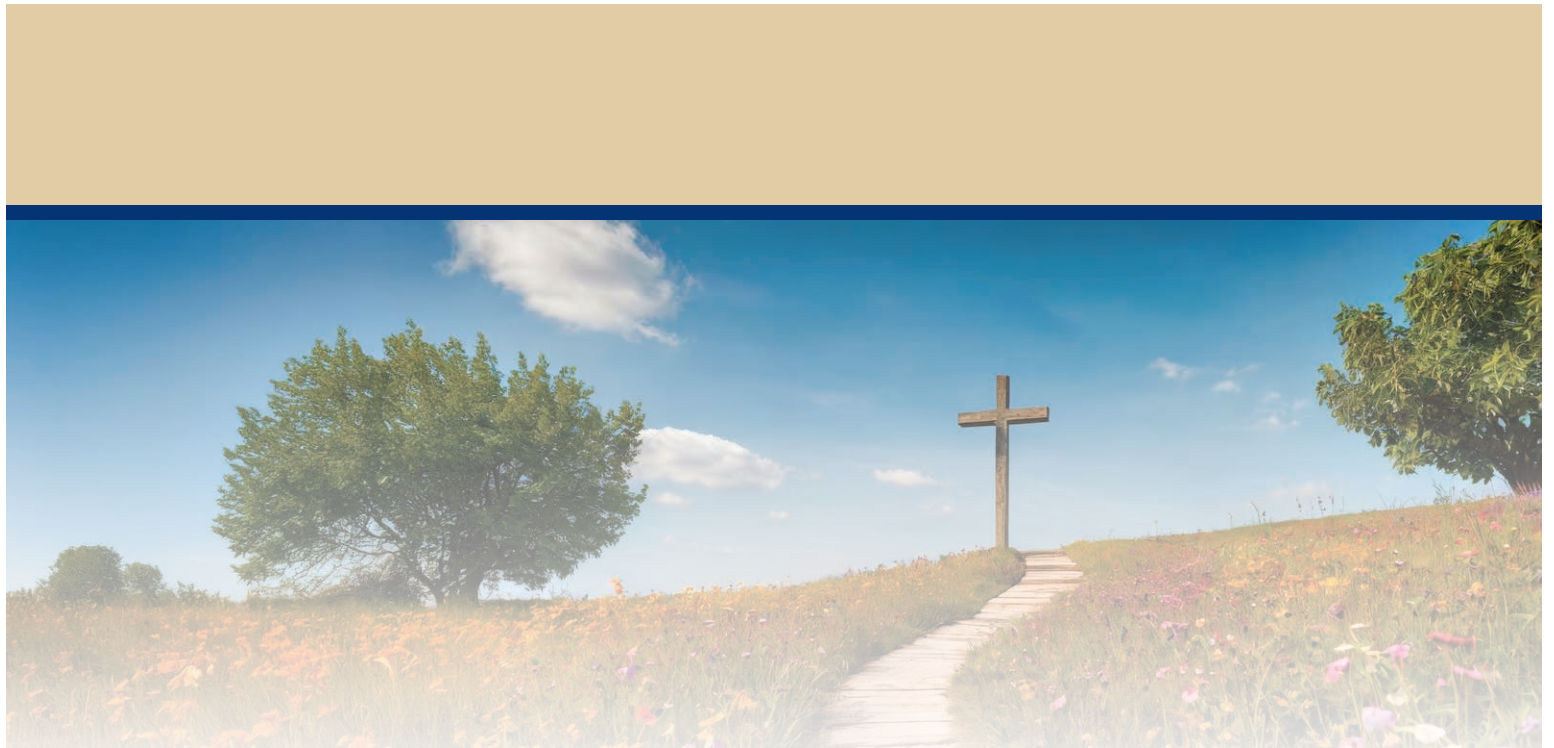
Renewal also touches how we view our material blessings. When gratitude grows, generosity follows. Stewardship of treasure is not primarily about obligation but about trust — returning a portion of what God has given us through the

offertory as a sign that our security rests in Him. Giving becomes less about what we part with and more about participating in the mission of the Church.

Like cleaning a home, spiritual renewal rarely happens all at once. It unfolds through small decisions made consistently: letting go of resentment, returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, recommitting to Sunday Mass, or simply choosing gratitude more often each day.

Spring reminds us that God is always at work, bringing new life where it once seemed dormant. He continually invites us to begin again, no matter how long we may have felt distracted or distant.

As Christian stewards, we respond to that invitation by making room for God to work within us. When our hearts are renewed through prayer, service, and generosity, the effects reach far beyond ourselves, bringing new life to our families, our parish, and our daily lives.



How We Can Continue the *Joy of the Easter Season* Embracing the Risen Christ, Now and Always

The words of Pope St. John Paul II, “We are an Easter people, and Alleluia is our song,” beautifully capture the heart of the Church’s Easter celebration. The joy that bursts forth at the Easter Vigil does not fade with Easter Sunday — it continues for 50 full days, stretching all the way to Pentecost. In fact, the Easter season is even longer than Lent, which lasts 40 days. The Church gives us 10 extra days beyond the 40 of Lent to rejoice, to practice joy, and to live as people transformed by the Resurrection.

From the lighting of the Paschal candle at the Vigil to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Church invites us

“Christians shouldn’t be sad people. We’ve got problems in our lives, but that isn’t the sum of our lives. Our life is that Jesus rose from the dead. He offers us the gift of eternal life.”

— Fr. Tim O’Connor

to remain in that radiant “Alleluia,” remembering that the Resurrection is not just a moment, but a way of life.

Fr. Tim O’Connor has lots of tips for us as we continue our Easter celebrations through Pentecost. First, let’s not let our Lenten resolutions end. If you picked up a new habit, keep it!

“If the goal of our Lenten resolutions is to help us to become even better disciples of Jesus, then why wouldn’t we continue them?” Fr. Tim says. “We started something good — why would we not continue?”

Fr. Tim hopes we will all continue to strive to become the best people we can be, even now that Lent is over.

“To me, those are the productive Lenten penances that carry,” he says. “Maybe we get started with something we haven’t done, or we reinstall something that went to the wayside.”

Lent is 40 days, and the Easter season is 50 days, ending on Pentecost. That’s intentional, says Fr. Tim. Christians are to be people of joy.

“Christians shouldn’t be sad people,” he says. “We’ve got problems in our lives, but that isn’t the sum of our lives. Our life is that Jesus rose from the dead. He offers us the gift of eternal life.”

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ST. JOSEPH & NATIVITY

Fr. Tim has a quote by his dresser that he looks at multiple times per day. It's from St. Teresa of Calcutta, "Let nothing so fill you with sorrow that you forget the joy of the risen Christ."

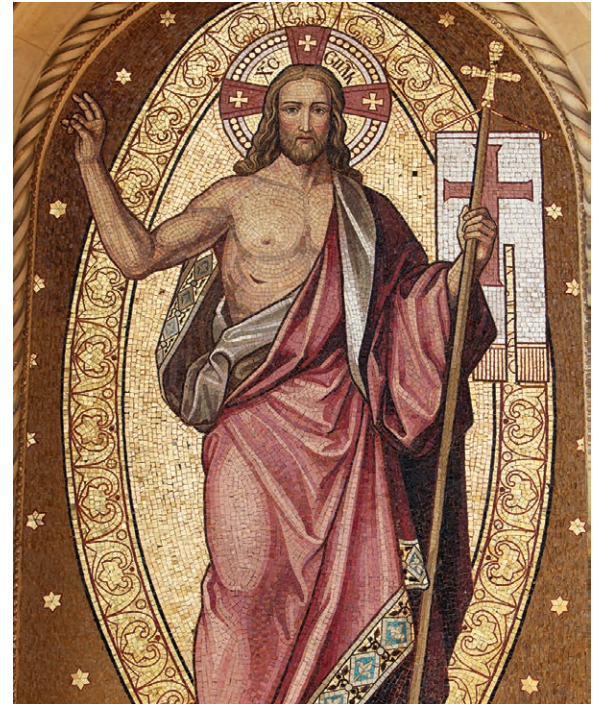
"That takes a real effort because we're very conscious of what distresses us, what we're sorrowful about, and what we're worried about," he says. "But Christ has risen eternally. So, take St. Teresa of Calcutta's words and apply them to your life."

There are some practical ways that you can continue to live this Easter season joyfully. One recommendation Fr. Tim has is to find something fun to do after Mass. It could be ice cream, a family movie, or time at the park.

"We need to plan our joy," Fr. Tim says. "It's one of the preludes of heaven — being happy forever."

Easter ends at Pentecost, which is the fulfillment of Jesus's promise to us. He will be with us always, and after He goes, according to John 14:26, "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name — he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you."

As we celebrate these joyful days of Easter, try to keep the joy flowing. Let us be Easter people. Look for the good even when it's hard and reflect on the risen Christ!



Meet Parishioner Michael Fox *continued from front cover*

20 years until a hip replacement surgery in 2020 made it difficult to continue. That year was a particularly hard time to endure both social and physical limitations.

"When the pandemic hit, I couldn't get to Mass, and that was heartbreaking," Michael says. "And then I had surgery in July of that year. So, I've learned not to take Mass for granted anymore."

Fortunately, Michael found a new way to serve his parish community. Christina Dupre, Worship and Liturgy Coordinator, invited him to consider trying out for the musical production, "The Answer – The Musical".

"I didn't think I had any business being on stage," Michael says. "But it turned into such an awesome experience. It got me out of my comfort zone. The cast and crew became like a family. We all share a love for Jesus, and it just shows in the music."

Since his theatrical debut, Michael has continued to develop his stage presence by getting involved with the adult choir.

"I help with audiovisual in the adult choir," he says. "I may not be super comfortable with it yet, but I do like being on stage. The adult choir has so much talent, and I love being around it."

Being involved in parish ministries is a two-way blessing, not only for the church community but for Michael himself. He enjoys the cooperative spirit of the musical team and describes his newfound passion as truly fulfilling.

"I've always thought it is really cool to be on a team, being a part of something bigger than yourself," Michael says. "And being a part of "The Answer – The Musical" has been awesome. I wake up happy, and I go to bed tired. It's good. I have never felt better."

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

Living a Life of Stewardship and Discipleship

As Catholics, we often look to the lives of saints for inspiration and guidance in our own faith journeys. St. Catherine of Siena, whose feast day is celebrated on April 29, stands as a remarkable example of someone who not only embraced her faith, but also exemplified Catholic stewardship and discipleship in profound ways.

Catherine Benincasa, later known as St. Catherine of Siena, was born in 1347 in Siena, Italy. From an early age, she displayed a deep devotion to God and a remarkable sense of piety. Her life's journey was marked by an unwavering commitment to the Catholic faith, love for Christ, and a strong desire to serve others.

One of the most significant aspects of St. Catherine's life was her dedication to serving the poor and marginalized. She tirelessly cared for those afflicted by the bubonic plague, demonstrating a selfless love and compassion for the suffering. This act of charity and service to the needy resonates with the Catholic principle of stewardship — using one's resources and talents to help those less fortunate.

In our modern context, St. Catherine's example challenges us to actively engage in acts of charity, volunteerism, and social justice. By following her lead, we can transform our communities through service and outreach, reflecting the love of Christ to those who need it most.

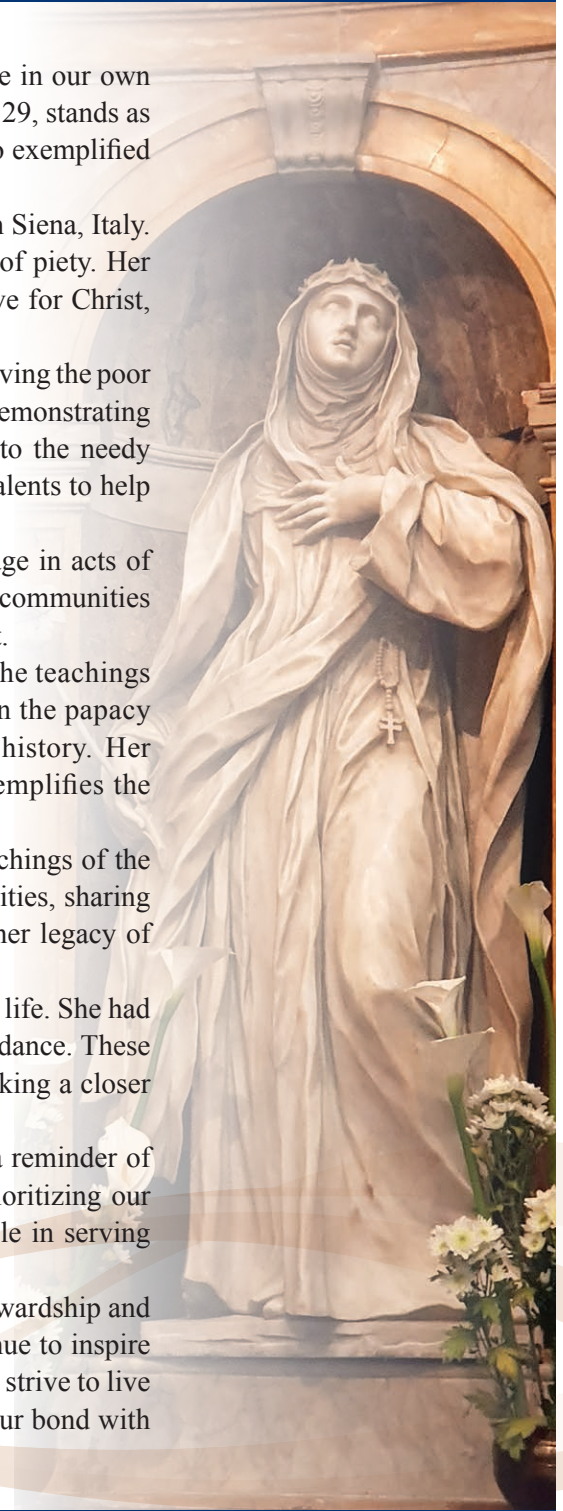
Catherine's life was deeply rooted in her faith and unwavering obedience to the teachings of the Church. She played a pivotal role in convincing Pope Gregory XI to return the papacy to Rome from Avignon, France, during a tumultuous period in the Church's history. Her dedication to the Church, even when it meant confronting powerful figures, exemplifies the essence of true discipleship.

Today, we can draw from St. Catherine's example of being obedient to the teachings of the Church and supporting its mission. By actively participating in our parish communities, sharing our faith, and upholding the traditions and teachings of the Church, we continue her legacy of faithful discipleship.

St. Catherine was known for her profound mystical experiences and deep prayer life. She had a strong personal connection with God and often received spiritual insights and guidance. These experiences remind us of the importance of nurturing our own prayer lives and seeking a closer relationship with God.

In our fast-paced, modern world, St. Catherine's devotion to prayer serves as a reminder of the significance of contemplation and spiritual growth in our faith journey. By prioritizing our prayer life, we can strengthen our relationship with God and better discern our role in serving others as Catholic stewards.

St. Catherine of Siena's life is a testament to the enduring values of Catholic stewardship and discipleship. Her dedication to service, unwavering faith, and spiritual depth continue to inspire Catholics worldwide. As we celebrate her feast day, let us reflect on her example and strive to live out the principles of stewardship and discipleship in our own lives, strengthening our bond with God and enriching our faith communities.



Everyone Else Along the Way

By DEACON NATHAN FRANKART

Peace of Christ to you! I will share this with you in humility, brothers and sisters, that I have in the past sought inspiration from my other coworkers in the office. Now, I have always written in my own voice, with my own words, and absolutely never any AI. But every once in a while, I will walk into the faith formation office of the parish I'm at, and I ask, "So what should I write about this month?" It's more humor and jest as opposed to seeking real help.

However, it has struck me recently that for the many years that I've been writing to you, I have rarely taken the time to highlight the amazing parish staff that I have been a part of over the years.

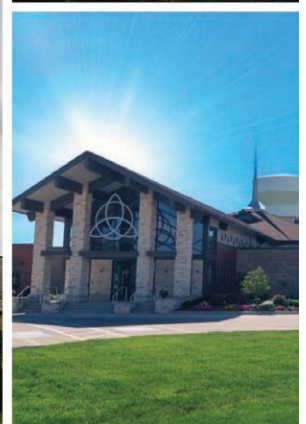
It started at St. Joseph, my home parish, the parish which you and I have attended Mass for who knows how many years. I encountered an incredibly hospitable office staff of servants who were some of the first people to encourage the priesthood in me. It all started with stuffing bulletins with inserts!

From there, I went into college, then seminary, and then MANY years of time in prayer and discernment in the school. It was here I encountered perhaps the most significant group of people on my journey — the administrative, maintenance, and dietary staff at the Center for Pastoral Leadership. They understood the process of formation, walked with us, listened well, and supported us on our hard days. I can't speak highly enough of them, and they are truly disciples to the disciples in the seminary.

Then came St. Ambrose, the high-energy, always-moving faith formation staff. It is from them that I learned how to radiate the joy that has been a hallmark of my life, or at least, one that I try to focus on.

And now at St. Mary in Wooster, they have become my biggest cheerleaders. Every single day, I'm reassured of their prayers. Every day, they demonstrate through their lives my hopes for what a parish could be like. I only wish that I could be here longer.

And very soon, I will be a priest for a whole new community of people. And I am ecstatic to find out how those people of God will form me into a holier, healthier priest.



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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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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.

No School

Friday, April 3 through Friday, April 10 — Spring Break

OCIA (formerly RCIA) Last Session

Monday, April 6 — 7 p.m. at Nativity Parish Hall

Altar and Rosary Society Rosary and Meeting

Tuesday, April 7 — 6:30 p.m. at Nativity Parish Hall

Men's Group Meeting

Tuesday, April 7 — 6:30 p.m. at St. Joseph School MPR

"Dinners on the Go" pick-up

Tuesday, April 14 and 28 — 5 p.m. at Nativity Parish Hall
(drive-thru service only)

Parent Club Meeting

Tuesday, April 14 — 7 p.m. at School MPR

St. Joseph School "Fun"draising Event

Friday, April 17 — 6 to 10 p.m. at the Amherst Eagles,
1611 Milan Ave, in Amherst

First Communion

Saturday, April 25 — 10 a.m. at St. Joseph Church

Confirmation

Monday, April 27 — 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Church

Knights of Columbus

Tuesday, April 28 — 7 p.m. at School MPR

Vincentians Meeting

Thursdays, April 2, 16, and 30 — 9 a.m. in St. Joseph
Conference Room

Sacred Sisters Prayer and Study Group

Wednesdays, April 8, 15, 22, and 29 — 6:30 p.m. at
O.S.E. Community Center

Holy Ground Youth Group

Sundays, April 12, 19, and 26 — 6 p.m. in School Gym
(event begins with 5 p.m. Mass. Meet near the Choir
before Mass)

PSR

Wednesdays, April 15, 22, and 29 — 5:30 p.m. in
St. Joseph School. (April 29th is the last session for K-7.)

Chair Yoga Flow Classes

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

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.