



# ST. JOSEPH PARISH

## NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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*By DEACON NATHAN FRANKART*

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**MAY 2026**

## The Baby Bottle Campaign for Cornerstone Pregnancy Services

### *Providing Essential Care and Compassion for Parents in Need*

When St. Joseph parishioner Carol Solak asked Wendy Russo to help coordinate the Baby Bottle Campaign at Nativity, it was an easy “yes.” Already active in parish life and committed to serving others, Wendy didn’t hesitate to step into the role — especially because of what the campaign supports.

“I am very passionate about the pro-life cause, so that hit a nerve with me,” Wendy says. “I said, ‘Pro-life? Absolutely.’”

For Wendy, the campaign is more than simply handing out and collecting bottles each year. It is a tangible way to support women facing unexpected or difficult pregnancies — offering both practical assistance and hope.

Carol leads the campaign, which benefits Cornerstone Pregnancy Services, an organization in Elyria that provides free prenatal and postnatal care for women in need, guided by the Lord’s teaching.

Parishioners can pick up

a baby bottle on Mother’s Day weekend and return it on Father’s Day weekend, making it a simple yet meaningful way to participate in this effort.

“If a woman, or a man and woman, is in trouble, pregnant and has nobody else to turn to, they do help with diapers, baby food, and courses for mothering and fathering,” Carol says. “They are all about saving babies.”

Carol continues coordinating the campaign because it allows her to show compassion for women in need. Not every woman has the support necessary to carry and deliver a child — and that is where Cornerstone can step in.

“This fundraising is so important to supporting this mission and giving them a kickstart so they can do what they need to do for these mothers,” Carol says.

Wendy has helped coordinate the distribution and collection of baby bottles at Nativity for about four years. She believes it is important to continue raising awareness about the dignity of



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# Cultivate Your Personal Garden for Christ this Spring

**E**veryone loves springtime. The weather is warmer and beautiful flowers are blooming all around us.

But anyone with a beautiful garden will attest the flowers do not magically appear as if the season itself changes and miraculously makes the flowers bloom. Beautiful flowers and lush gardens are the result of hard work by the gardener.

Imagine a man is given some flower seeds. The man then buries the seeds in the ground and leaves them on their own. As the months pass and rain falls, some seeds may receive enough nourishment to bloom. But simply burying seeds in the ground will hardly make for a gorgeous garden. Rather, if the man truly wants to enjoy many beautiful flowers, there is much care and work ahead. Recognizing the hidden beauty within these simple seeds, he must cultivate the ground, plant the seeds in a solid foundation, and water and fertilize them throughout the year. Only then will he see the proper fruit these seeds were made to bear.

This simple illustration speaks to the heart of us this season. Not only as we look around at the flowers, but more importantly, as we reflect on the springtime of the Church. We have just celebrated the great feast of Easter when, through His death and resurrection, Christ offers us the greatest gift of all — eternal life with Him forever. This celebration leads us to reflect on the

many gifts God has given us in this life and the fruit they will bear, especially as we look to life eternal.

He has given each of us a multitude of gifts so that we can better serve Him and bring others to Him. Do we notice the hidden potential of our gifts? Do we see them, like the seed, as seemingly small yet so full of fruit? Everything we have — our time, talents, and treasure — is a gift from the Lord. Do we accept gifts in gratitude, then put them to use by cultivating and nourishing them so they will bear the proper fruit?

Just like springtime flowers we now enjoy, our time, talent, and treasure must be cared for. Our gifts need to be cultivated and nourished. Only then will we see them for what they are — wonderful gifts given by God meant for His greater glory.

Like the seeds, if we use our gifts flippantly, we may see some fruits here and there. But we are called to so much more. We are called to build a beautiful garden. We are called to offer God the most beautiful flowers of all.

This season, as we look at all the beautiful flowers around us and enjoy God's creation, let us think about the seeds in our own lives. Ask yourself if you have accepted the gifts God has given you — your time, your talent, and your treasure — and cultivated and cared for them properly?

Or do they just sit dormant within you, yearning to bloom?

A Letter from Our Pastor

## Honoring Our Blessed Mother in the Rosary



Dear Members of our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parish Families,

This month of May is dedicated to our Blessed Mother. And one of the ways that we honor her is through the Rosary.

The daily Rosary has been in my life since I was a child. It was a part of our family prayer life when I was growing up and has remained with me all these

years since.

Matthew Kelly writes about the Rosary in his book, *Rediscover Catholicism*, and I found his words very helpful in my own praying of the Rosary. Matthew tells us:

There are many different practical approaches to the Rosary. The first, of course, is to focus on the words. The words of the Rosary are deeply rooted in the Scriptures and Christian tradition.

The Our Father was, of course, given to us by Jesus Himself (Matthew 6:9-13). The Creed represents the first expression of Christian conviction. The first part of the Hail Mary comes from the message delivered by the angel Gabriel to Mary in Nazareth: "Hail, full of grace. The Lord is with thee" (Luke 1:28). This greeting is then followed by the words Elizabeth used to greet Mary during the Visitation: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb (Luke 1:42). The Glory Be is the simplest expression of Christian belief in the triune God. And from the times of antiquity, Christians have placed themselves under the name of God and the sign of redemption, thus giving us The Sign of the Cross.

The words of the Rosary are powerful and filled with meaning, but so are the mysteries that we use as a backdrop to each decade.

One thing is certain: your mind

cannot do two things at once. This is where many people become discouraged with praying the Rosary. They try to pray the words and meditate on the mystery at the same time. Impossible! We must decide between the two, choosing one or the other.

On those occasions when you choose to meditate on the mysteries (that is, the Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary), allow the words to float by. Get lost in the scene. Imagine yourself there.

When you choose to focus on the words, it may help to meditate on the mystery for three or four minutes before each decade.

I also find it very fruitful to unite an intention with each decade. Offering each decade for a person or a situation helps me to stay focused, and avails me the opportunity to pray for many people in my life (Matthew Kelly, *Rediscover Catholicism*, pages 268-269).

I hope that Matthew Kelly's ideas might be helpful to you as you pray the Rosary, especially during this month dedicated to Mary. And please remember me as you do, and I will remember you.

In Jesus and His Blessed Mother,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,  
Pastor



# Celebrating First Communion

## *Young Catholics and Families Mark Important Faith Milestone*

**W**ith eager faces and dressed in their finest, 29 children from St. Joseph Parish received their First Holy Communion on April 25.

Mrs. Amy Makruski, Principal of Saint Joseph School, and Parish School of Religion Coordinator, explains that preparation for this Sacrament is a progression that unfolds over several years. While formal preparation is concentrated in second grade, elements of First Communion formation are introduced as early as preschool and kindergarten. Ultimately, however, she emphasizes that preparation begins at home.

“Preparation begins informally before most children have had any structured educational experiences, as parents are the first educators of their children,” Mrs. Makruski says. “Formally, the second-grade curriculum includes preparation for First Reconciliation, then First Eucharist.”

Students at St. Joseph Parish School attended religion class daily, while children enrolled in the Parish School of Religion met each Wednesday evening beginning in October. Both groups used the Blessed series from Dynamic Catholic, which includes video components, engaging workbook pages, and opportunities for student reflection.

“It is an engaging and reflective series that helps students better understand the overall concept and purpose of the Eucharist,” Mrs. Makruski says.

Throughout the year, parents are also supported in their role of guiding their children. At a parent meeting prior to First Communion, Fr. Tim spoke about Eucharistic practices and emphasized the importance of the Sacrament. In addition, a special evening known as “Jesus Day” brought parents and children

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## Celebrating First Communion

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together, highlighting prayer as an essential part of preparing for First Communion as a family.

“It is up to the family to help their child get to Mass and to develop a prayer routine and relationship with God,” Mrs. Makruski says. “It is a large responsibility, but one that brings great importance and pride. It is arguably one of the most significant spiritual milestones in a young person’s life and is a doorway to future faith experiences.”

During the First Communion Mass, Fr. Tim took special care to recognize the children and their families, helping them embrace both the excitement and reverence of the occasion. The students assisted in various parts of the Mass and were photographed together in their special attire.

To mark the day, each child received a certificate and a small gift from the parish, along with an individual Rosary handmade by a parishioner. Mrs. Makruski says she is grateful to play a role in such an important moment in the lives of these young parishioners.

“It builds a type of foundation for their faith,” Mrs. Makruski says. “There is an innocence and purity about receiving the Eucharist at this age of reason that is so special.”



*“It builds a type of foundation for their faith. There is an innocence and purity about receiving the Eucharist at this age of reason that is so special.”*

— Mrs. Amy Makruski

## The Baby Bottle Campaign *continued from front cover*

life and appreciates the compassionate care provided by the staff at Cornerstone.

Wendy also supports the pro-life cause through prayer. She participates in the parish Prayer Chain, spends time in Eucharistic Adoration, and serves as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. She and her husband also support 40 Days for Life, including praying outside abortion clinics.

“You should give to help support women who are pregnant, who need assistance,” Wendy says. “Bottom line, we need to stop abortion and make that awareness known — that so many women are getting abortions without understanding what they are doing and the regret that they will have. That’s where my passion is — to help women not do this, not kill life, and then ruin their own life by doing that.”

**Support the Baby Bottle Campaign starting this month at Nativity and St. Joseph’s. Learn more about Cornerstone Pregnancy Services at [cornerstonepregnancy.org](http://cornerstonepregnancy.org).**



# Family Prayer: How We Can Build a Prayer Life

The family is often referred to as the “domestic church,” a title that sheds particular light on the importance of the Christian family unit. To live a Christian family life means much more than simply eating and sleeping together. It is in the context of family life that children first learn to live the faith. There, they learn what it means to be Catholic. The duty of Christian parenthood is a heavy one. How do we, as people who are struggling to live the faith ourselves, instill a love and understanding of Catholicism in our children?

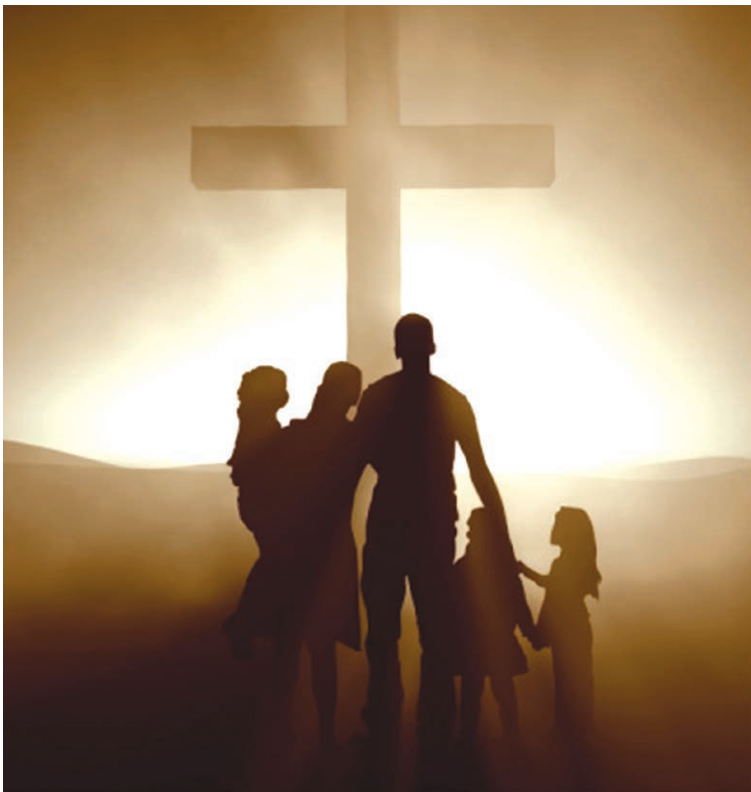
Make Christ the center of our lives! As parents, we are the first teachers of the faith for our children, but that does not mean that we need to know all the ins and outs of Church teaching. Nor does it mean that we must stand as “perfect” examples of Christianity. Rather, we must simply place Christ in the center of our lives – individually and as a family – and we must strive to get to know Him better. Gaining an understanding of Church teaching will serve to aid us in coming to know Christ better, but, before we even begin to

“learn” the faith, as it were, we must pray. Prayer is the soul of the Christian life. Many of the saints were not scholarly people, but all of them were prayerful people. They loved Christ and talked to Him often. That’s what it’s all about!

But how do we build a prayer life for ourselves and for our families? There are many different ways to pray. And every one of us will find that one form of prayer or another works best for us. Some may find that praying first thing in the morning is a wonderful way to start the day. Honoring God at the start of a new day surely gives Him a place of priority in our lives. Gather together as a family before school and work in the morning and say a few prayers. Thank God for the day, offer the day to Him, telling Him that we will work to live rightly throughout the day, and then offer Him some petitions. This is a great way to remember that God is the source of our lives, and that we ought to live every day for Him. Meanwhile, some families may find it best to offer prayers to God in the evening. This works as a great time to thank God for the conclusion of yet another day, to ask His forgiveness for the sins we committed that day, and to promise Him that tomorrow we will glorify Him. Still, others may find it beneficial to offer God prayers in the car on the way to school. However, whenever, and wherever you do it, make no mistake, praying together as a family is of utmost importance. What seems like an utterly simple act will make a huge difference in the life of the family.

When you gather to pray, if you feel at a loss as to how to address the Lord or what to say to Him, look to the Church for guidance. There are many beautiful prayers that have served us through the centuries. Pray an *Our Father* or a *Hail Mary* together, or pray a *Rosary*. The point isn’t what you say, but rather that you pray – that, together as a family, you offer God your hearts. One simple way to begin is to put the acronym ACTS – ADORATION, CONTRITION, THANKSGIVING, and SUPPLICATION – into practice. **ADORE** the Lord for His majesty. He is utter perfection. Recognize Him as such. Offer **CONTRITION** for all that we have done wrong. Ask His forgiveness for offending Him through our words or actions, and make a solemn promise to do better. **THANK** the Lord for all He has done and given to us – for the gift of

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## Family Prayer *continued from page 6*

our lives, of our family and friends, for the salvation He offers us through His Son, for the world, and so on. Finally, offer **SUPPLICATIONS** to the Lord. The Scriptures tell us, “Ask, and you shall receive.”

So, in confidence, approach the Lord with your wants and needs. Ask Him to heal a family member or a friend; ask Him to help you find a new job, or a new house, or whatever you may need at the time. In confidence, remember that, in accordance with His most perfect will, He will answer our prayers. Go to Him, individually and as a family, talk to Him, and know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, He hears you, and He wants to!

With such a prayer life intact, our children will begin to see how important it is to place the Lord front and center. They will begin to realize that God cares for each and every one of us more than we can begin to fathom, and they will, undoubtedly, fall in love with the One who is the source of all life! Additionally, don't sell short the part that the children play in the family's prayer life. How powerful it is to hear a young child address her Father in heaven, honor Him, ask His forgiveness, and plead for His help. The reality is that the whole family will grow stronger as a result of familial prayer.

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# The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima

## *Feast Day: May 13*

**W**hile World War I was raging, embroiling the globe in shattering conflict, the children of local farmers in central Portugal dutifully went about their families' business and led their flocks out to graze each day.

It was into this microcosm of ordinariness in the midst of turmoil that the supernatural occurred.

It has been more than 100 years since the first Marian apparition at Fatima on May 13, 1917, and in our contemporary world rife with ever-present conflict and during an ongoing pandemic, Fatima's hopeful message of penance, prayer, and devotion rings with renewed relevance.

The children chosen to receive the Marian apparitions — Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta — were prepared for this blessed privilege through catechesis. During the year 1916, the Angel of Portugal appeared to the children on three separate occasions to teach them to pray and to fortify them with the Eucharist.

During the first visit, as the children sought shelter from the spring rains in a cave, the angel appeared and taught them a specific prayer: "My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love You. I ask pardon for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope, and do not love You."

On the second visit, the angel chastised the children for not praying and offering sacrifices more diligently, and on the third, the angel again taught them to pray, and then they shared the Eucharist.

"It was in this way," as explained by EWTN in the documentary, *100 Years of Fatima*, "that catechized in prayer, reparative suffering, and the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, and strengthened by the Bread of Angels, that the children of Fatima were prepared for the visitation of the Queen of Portugal, the Immaculate Virgin Mary."

Eight months after the angel's last visitation, as the

Great War continued, the Blessed Virgin first appeared to the children, asking if they would return to the same place outside of Fatima on the thirteenth of each month for six months to meet with her. In the first visit, the Virgin also asked them to pray the rosary for world peace.

Over the next months, people increasingly gathered with the three visionaries at the time appointed for the Virgin's apparitions. Mary repeatedly underscored her central message:

to pray the rosary for peace, to make sacrifices for sinners, and to foster a devotion to her Immaculate Heart.

As she had promised, on the day of her last appearance to the children, the Virgin performed a miracle "so that all may believe."

On Oct. 13, 1917, before a crowd of approximately 70,000 onlookers, Our Lady of the Rosary appeared, and the children and onlookers beheld two apparitions. In the first, they saw the Holy Family, and St. Joseph and the child Jesus gave a blessing. In the second, Our Lord and Our Lady of Sorrows appeared, and Our Lord also gave a blessing. Then, onlookers offered varying accounts of the sun "dancing," expanding, and spinning before them.

This sixth Marian apparition marks the last time the three children

saw Our Lady of the Rosary, though she would appear in 1920 only to Lucia.

In 2017, on the centennial of this miraculous event, Pope Francis visited Fatima on May 13 and canonized Jacinta and Francisco during his visit.

Now more than ever, the importance of the message of Fatima reverberates throughout the faithful, as we consider the global and social conflicts unfolding before our families. Our Lady of the Rosary still calls us to pray and sacrifice for peace, to be a counterbalance to world chaos in our daily intentional actions.



## My Final Thoughts

By DEACON NATHAN FRANKART

Peace of Christ to you. When I first entered seminary, I played a small joke on my family calendar. Unfortunately, I was notorious growing up for not communicating my work calendar or sharing with my parents what I had to do while I was still in high school. So, I placed in my Google Calendar, on the third Saturday in May 2026 — at the time it was 2018 — one event, entitled “Ordination?”

That small joke becomes a reality in this very month, and one that I know I will see many of you and celebrate such an amazing day. I’d like to put this out to you ahead of time, so as not to hurt any feelings on the day of.

Thank you.

Thank you for your constant prayers, intercessions, interest, and support you have offered over these years. More likely than not, I won’t be able to share much with you personally or individually on the 16th and 17th. But don’t confuse my exhaustion or lack of time with a lack of gratitude.

I will no longer be your seminarian, but I will always be a son of your parish. It will be remembered, if all goes according to plan, as a place of my formation and home as I grow towards sanctity and holiness. I’m not presuming to have a cause for sainthood open anytime soon, but is it not the goal of Christian life?

It should be yours as well, to be saints of Jesus Christ alive on Earth today. You were made for this, literally formed in the heart of the Father for the purpose of evangelizing and bringing all people to a deeper knowledge of the love of Jesus Christ in their lives.

Don’t celebrate me on the 16th in isolation — celebrate it with your own holiness in mind. Because if I’m not helping you to grow in holiness, then the gift of my life in the Church needs to be deepened. That is all I want in my life. Be a saint, starting today. Be a saint, because that’s why I’m getting ordained. Be a saint, because Jesus wants your heart today, tomorrow, and for all eternity.



*I will no longer be your seminarian, but I will always be a son of your parish. It will be remembered, if all goes according to plan, as a place of my formation and home as I grow towards sanctity and holiness.*

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This newsletter brought to you by the Catholic Communities of:

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200 Saint Joseph Drive, Amherst, OH 44001

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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

**May Crowning and First Friday Rosary**

Friday, May 1 — 11 a.m. at Nativity Church  
Luncheon to follow in Nativity's Parish Hall

**St. Joseph School Musical Production — *Annie Jr.***

Friday, May 1, and Saturday, May 2 — 7 p.m.  
in the St. Joseph School gym.

**First Saturday Rosary**

Saturday, May 2 — 9 a.m. at St. Joseph Church

**Hospitality Tuesday**

Tuesday, May 5 — 8:30 a.m.  
at Nativity Church Parish Hall (following the 8 a.m. Mass)

**Altar and Rosary Society Rosary and Meeting**

Tuesday, May 5 — 6:30 p.m. at Nativity Parish Hall

**St. Joseph School May Devotional**

Friday, May 8 — 9:45 a.m. at St. Joseph Church

**Baccalaureate Mass**

Sunday, May 10 — 11 a.m. Mass

**Parent Club Meeting**

Tuesday, May 12 — 7 p.m. at School MPR

**St. Joseph School Spring Concert**

Friday, May 15 — 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Church

**Memorial Day Mass**

Monday, May 25 — 9 a.m. at St. Joseph Cemetery,  
weather permitting.

**Knights of Columbus**

Tuesday, May 26 — 7 p.m. at School MPR

**Vincentians Meeting**

Thursdays, May 14 and 28 — 9 a.m.  
in St. Joseph Conference Room

**Sacred Sisters Prayer and Study Group**

Wednesdays, May 6, 13, 20, and 27 — 6:30 p.m.  
at O.S.E. Community Center

**Chair Yoga Flow Classes**

Tuesday and Thursdays in May at 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