



# ST. JOSEPH PARISH

## NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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*Celebrating Christ's Love and Unwavering Compassion*

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**JUNE 2026**

## The Communion to Shut-Ins Ministry at St. Joseph

### *Offering Valuable Connection and Companionship for Our Entire Faith Community*

For those who are unable to attend Mass, receiving the Eucharist brings not only important spiritual nourishment but also vital social interaction with others. At St. Joseph Parish, shut-ins can receive Communion thanks to the generosity of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

Tootie Tsacoumangos has coordinated the Communion to Shut-Ins Ministry at St. Joseph for about six years. She works with a group of 27 active ministers who take Communion to about 70 people twice a month. These ministers visit assisted living and nursing homes as well as individual residences, spending some time visiting and providing essential human connection. Tootie explains that bringing Communion to others is directly fulfilling Christ's instruction to serve the less fortunate.

"We're supposed to be Christ's hands," she says. "Not only are we to listen to the Gospel, but we're called to act on it. To take Communion to others and visit the poor and sick is part of what Christians are supposed to do."

It takes about an hour and a half to two hours on a Sunday morning for the group of Extraordinary Ministers to visit the list of shut-ins. In terms of stewardship, Extraordinary



*Some of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who bring the Eucharist to shut-ins*

Ministers not only give their time, but they also share their social skills and talents with the recipients.

"We each take our own personality to the people we see," Tootie says. "We are able to talk to the shut-ins in our own words, serving them either through our prayers or simply by chatting. We reach out in a way that helps us to become friends."

Serving as a part of this ministry fosters a closeness among the other Eucharistic Ministers, too. Tootie says it is very special to be able to visit with the shut-ins, and the other Extraordinary Ministers recognize that in each other.

"It is very gratifying, and the people who do this are very dedicated," she says. "We share a camaraderie with each other. The people we visit

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# Stewardship AND Evangelization

## *Sharing the Message of Christ's Salvation and Heavenly Glory*

**J**esus came to save the world and to draw all men to Him. When we think of the salvific work of Christ, many of us think of his life, death, resurrection, and His ascension into glory. And while those salvific events are of primary importance in salvation history, it doesn't end there.

Christ wants everyone to know the salvation He has won for them. He wants every soul to experience heavenly glory. Therefore, after having conquered death through His cross and resurrection, Christ commissioned His disciples to carry the Gospel to the world. They were charged to “preach the Gospel to all nations,” winning, through their words and examples, souls for the kingdom! What a task! The disciples were overwhelmed at the thought of carrying the Gospel to all nations after Christ had returned to heaven. But the Lord assured them, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). When the Holy Spirit descended upon them on the feast of Pentecost, all those in the crowd were amazed. They all spoke in different tongues, preaching the same message, and everyone there could understand!

And so it was that the Church was established through the

power of the Spirit and for the purpose of evangelization. Each of us has been baptized in that Spirit, and through that, made a member of the Church. It is, thus, up to each one of us to actively participate in the Church's mission — proclaiming the Good News to all the world and building up the Kingdom of God!

Each of us must re-evaluate how we are using the gifts God has given us to build up His Kingdom. Do we preach the Good News in all that we do and say? The same Spirit that descended upon the apostles on Pentecost remains with us now, giving us the strength and courage to labor in the vineyard of the world.

Christ came to save the world, and He established the Church as the “universal sacrament of salvation” (*Lumen Gentium*, 241), by which many people throughout the world would know the glory of His truth. St. Paul describes the Church as one body with many parts. And just as each part of the body has a particular function, so each member of the Church has a particular calling — but united as one body in the Spirit, all of the members are to carry out the Church's one mission. How is God calling you to carry out this mission? What particular gifts has He given you with which you ought to build the Kingdom?



A Letter from Our Pastor

## Grateful Reflections on the Vocation of the Diocesan Priesthood



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

On May 16, Father Nathan Frankart was ordained to the priesthood of Jesus Christ. As a son of our two parishes, that was a weekend of great rejoicing. And now he is serving as a parochial vicar at Saint Mary Parish in Hudson, Ohio. Let us keep him in our daily prayers!

By contrast, on June 14, I celebrate the 51st anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood. I suppose for so many of us celebrating long-time anniversaries, the question we have in common is, "Where have all those years gone? It seems like only yesterday!" And for me, it truly does.

I am grateful every day to be a priest and so thankful that the Lord has chosen me to serve Him and His Church in this way. In these 51 years of priestly ministry I have served in parishes, in seminary work as a faculty member at Borromeo Seminary College, in ministry at Saint John the Evangelist Cathedral, as diocesan director of music, as secretary to Bishop Anthony Pilla, as pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Avon Lake, as pastor of Saint Vincent de Paul Parish in Akron and, since July 1, 2015, as pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Amherst and as administrator and then, in 2018, as pastor of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in South Amherst.

On June 3, I celebrate my 77th birthday. Canon Law requires priests to offer their resignations to their bishop before their 75th birthday occurs. I had

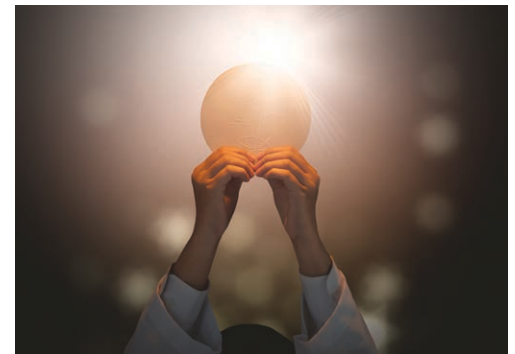
done this and also volunteered to stay an extra year, which Bishop Malesic accepted. I have made this offer three times, and three times the Bishop has accepted my offer. So, this month, I begin my third "extra year" as the pastor of Saint Joseph Parish and as the pastor of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, which will take me to June 2027.

I am very happy to be able to be with you for another year, and I hope that you are happy too!

My original intention in being ordained a priest for the Diocese of Cleveland was to be a parish priest, the primary apostolate of the diocesan priesthood. I was asked to serve in other capacities over the years, all of which assist the Church in our Diocese in some way and, I trust, have enriched me so that I might better minister here today at Saint Joseph and Nativity Parishes.

I have never thought of leaving the priesthood, thanks be to God and His grace. I love being a priest and, although I had opportunities to look at other callings earlier in life, I have no regrets today about the choice I made 51 years ago. And for this I am grateful. I have had headaches in the priesthood, just as everyone has challenges in their own callings. But I have never had second thoughts about being a priest, and I thank the Lord for this grace.

If a young man is looking to do something significant with his life that will positively benefit others, the



priesthood is a marvelous way to spend it. I can attest to this personally.

Preparation for the diocesan priesthood normally involves college and philosophy studies at Borromeo Seminary, followed by graduate school theology and pastoral studies at Saint Mary Seminary. Both are located at the Center for Pastoral Leadership in Wickliffe, Ohio. Special arrangements can be made for prospective seminary students who have already completed some or all of their college studies.

If you or someone you know might be thinking about a possible vocation to the priesthood, please talk with me. I will be happy to help you explore this call. And, after 51 years in priestly ministry, I can tell you from my heart that it is a wonderful and meaningful way to spend your life.

Gratefully in Christ,

*Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor*

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,  
Pastor



## Understanding the

# Lord's Prayer

**H**ow should we pray? Many of us were never “taught” how to pray, and yet, as disciples of Jesus, prayer must be the foundation of our lives. But if we were not taught how to pray, how can we be expected to do so?

Maybe we weren’t taught how to pray as children, but 2,000 years ago we were: by Jesus Himself. Jesus not only gave the disciples a prayer to pray, which we now know as “the Lord’s Prayer,” but Jesus also **directed** the disciples as to how they should pray.

The Lord’s Prayer has played a large role in the prayer life of the Church from the very beginning. And even now, it serves as the most fundamental Christian prayer. When we pray it, we are offering the Father words that Jesus taught us. But beyond that, what does the Lord’s Prayer offer us in the form of direction? How are we to pray today? Let’s take a closer look at the words of the prayer and find out.

When you pray, say:



**Our Father, Who art in Heaven** — In this, Jesus revealed God as Father to the disciples. He told them to address him, not only as “Father,” but as “Abba,” meaning “Papa.” Through Christ’s incarnation, we have become adopted sons and daughters of the Lord. When we pray, we are to call upon God in a very personal and respectful way. Meanwhile, we must not cease to recognize that God, whom we address as our personal “abba” is, at the same time, beyond all comprehension. He is, while Father to us all, utterly transcendent.



**Hallowed be Thy Name** — Immediately after telling us how we are to address the Lord, Jesus tells us to humbly adore the Lord, recognizing His holiness and praising Him for that. And as we are invoking God as our Father, we should praise Him for who He is — for His utter transcendence — and the many things He has done.



**Thy Kingdom Come** — In this petition, Jesus tells us to always look forward to the second coming. We were all created to live with God in eternal glory. That is the sole purpose of our lives, and that ought to be the goal toward which we strive every day. So, in our prayer, we should ask God to come in His fullness. In other words, our prayers should always be focused on the heavenly kingdom — the coming of which we eagerly await.



**Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven** — Christ wills that all people be saved, and that all things on heaven and on earth be gathered into Him. In this petition, Jesus tells us that our prayers must be concerned with the Father’s will, not our own. We may want someone to be healed or want help finding a new job. And, while it is proper to ask that such things occur, Jesus reminds us that the Father’s will is greater than our own — beyond asking for things, we should pray for His will in all things. In other words, when asking God for something, we ought to pray, “if it is in accordance with Your will,” knowing, all the while, that God wills for nothing less than to see all men enjoy eternal glory with Him — something much greater than any earthly desire we may have.



**Give us this day our daily bread** — We offer this petition in trust. Knowing that God is the source of all life, we ask that He give us everything we need: the nourishment of our bodies and our souls.

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## Understanding the Lord's Prayer *continued from page 4*



**Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us** — We ask God's forgiveness for all of the sins we have committed — anything we have done to offend Him in any way. And yet, at the same time, this petition carries with it a great responsibility. Recognizing how important it is for us to forgive one another, Jesus commands us to ask forgiveness inasmuch as we forgive others. Not only should we ask for forgiveness — if we do not forgive others, then we cannot expect forgiveness from the Lord.



**Lead us not into temptation** — In this petition, we are not being told to plead that God not tempt us. God cannot tempt us, for He is pure goodness. Rather, through this petition, Jesus tells us to ask God to give us the strength to turn away from evil temptations. If we live by the Spirit, we will inevitably see what is good versus what is evil and choose the good.



**But deliver us from evil** — This petition directly follows the previous one. Not only ought we to live

in union with the Lord, seeking only what is right and asking for His strength to do so, but we also need His protection. Satan is very real. Just as we recognize God as a real and personal being, so too, Satan is real and alive — roaming the world and seeking to turn our hearts away from God. In the final petition of the *Our Father*, Jesus shows us the importance of remaining ever mindful of the battle between good and evil and of our need to call upon God's help in times of trouble.

With a final **AMEN**, we exclaim, "So be it!"

What a powerful prayer! There is so much packed into this short prayer that we should pray every day. How often do you think about what you're saying? How often do you reflect upon it as a directive for your prayer life in general? The fact that this prayer was Jesus' response to the question, "How shall we pray?" tells us that, beyond simply using it as a prayer, we ought to spend time reflecting on the practical implications therein. May we all gain a deeper understanding of the Lord's Prayer, and through that, a deeper life of prayer and a closer relationship with God.



# Celebrating

## St. Joseph Parish School's Kindergarten Graduation *A Big Step for Little Feet*

On Wednesday, June 3, at 7 p.m. in St. Joseph Church, St. Joseph Parish School celebrated the kindergarten graduation for 28 students. Birgit Fada, a teacher of over 30 years, led them through their kindergarten year.

"This year's kindergarten class has worked very hard on their early reading skills and has shown growth in their sight words, fluency, and comprehension," says Principal Amy Makruski. "This class, although larger, works very well together and comes to school each day ready to learn."

While the school starts with a preschool program, by kindergarten, students get to join school-wide events, such as Friday morning meetings.

"It's a time we all get together as a school family," Mrs. Makruski says. "They love seeing the big kids and their old buddies."

Kindergarten is a year for many firsts. One of them is joining the other grades at Friday morning Mass at 9 a.m.



*Kindergarten students work on a fall craft in the library.*

"The kindergarten class begins to attend this Mass after Christmas," Mrs. Makruski says. "Once they're there, it's wonderful to have the whole school together to practice our faith. They also look forward to the spring concert in May when they get to perform for their families and loved ones."

Kindergarten is a big milestone for those little ones. Next year, as they hit the numbered grades, they need to be ready with reading, math, and lots of other skills.

"Recognizing this milestone serves many purposes that will help shape these little children into their future," Mrs. Makruski says. "Celebrating graduation helps to build confidence and self-esteem and allows them to feel pride for something they have accomplished, which is not always easy for children."

Goal setting and perseverance are important skills.

"In August, some of these children didn't want to leave their parents," Mrs. Makruski says. "In June, they're

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*The kindergarteners work with their older buddies on a partner project.*



*Kindergarteners participate in the Tinker/Build after-school activity.*

## Celebrating St. Joseph Parish School's Kindergarten Graduation

*continued from page 6*

independently walking across a stage to graduate. This growth should be recognized, leading to a positive attitude towards school and achievement.”

The event creates lasting memories for students, families, and teachers.

“It takes a team to shepherd young children through school and young families, as well,” she says. “It’s an accomplishment for the student and their caregivers.”

As Catholic school students, the children learn prayers and practice the faith as a group.

“They’ve grown closer to Jesus by learning to be good friends, being kind to others, and learning how to say sorry,” Mrs. Makruski says. “They’ve learned they’re a special gift from God and that God loves each of them.”

As they jump into summer, they’re looking forward to first grade, where they’ll see their friends and find new ways to challenge themselves.

“Our kindergarteners look forward to reading independently



*A visitor from the Amherst Public Library came to read with the kindergarten class and gave them each a book.*

and doing harder math,” Mrs. Makruski says. “They want to continue to grow in the skills they’ve already learned. Another fun thing is they each get their own desk, which is exciting when you’re 6.”

Even at 5 or 6 years old, children learn to be good stewards of the faith with their gifts and talents.

“Most children learn through play, interaction, and modeling,” Mrs. Makruski says. “They use their talents and gifts to comfort each other, share, and take turns. Through

adult encouragement, they start to notice what they’re good at and that these gifts aren’t just for themselves, but for others.

“A child praised for their coloring may create a card for a sick classmate or a teacher,” she adds. “A child recognized for a kind act is more likely to repeat it. A child who gives up some of their own time and is selfless experiences the feeling of serving others. That’s the best way to get stewardship to grow in their lives and in our school. It starts with our young students.”

## The Communion to Shut-Ins Ministry at St. Joseph

*continued from front cover*

are very grateful and always say ‘thank you.’ But we should be the ones thanking them for the opportunity to visit.”

Anyone over the age of 18 who has been commissioned by the Diocese of Cleveland can serve in this capacity after some specific parish training for this ministry. Extraordinary Ministers rotate the dates they serve, so they can expect to visit shut-ins for about four to eight Sundays throughout the year. Tootie would love to recruit more Extraordinary Ministers so they can be sent out every week as opposed to twice a month.

“It’s just such a lovely ministry,” Tootie says. “You get to know the people, and they get to know you. There’s no better use of one’s time than to do this.”

**If you are interested in bringing Communion to shut-ins for St. Joseph, contact the parish office or Tootie Tsacoumangos at 440-864-5438, or email [johnandtootie@gmail.com](mailto:johnandtootie@gmail.com) — for Nativity, contact Lynn Johnson at 440-752-6519 or [Gerry.Lynn.Johnson@gmail.com](mailto:Gerry.Lynn.Johnson@gmail.com), or reach out to Wendy Russo at 440-986-0304 or [wrosso777@gmail.com](mailto:wrosso777@gmail.com). To be placed on the list of shut-ins who receive Communion, please contact the parish office.**

## Stewardship

# GIVING DURING THE Summer Season

**“W**e’ve stopped delivery of the mail. We’ve taken the dog to the kennel. The iron is unplugged, and the stove is turned off. Is there anything else we need to do before we leave on vacation?”

Aren’t you forgetting something? Did you remember to write a check to your parish for the Sundays you’ll be gone?

“But I won’t be at Mass at home those Sundays. Can’t I skip those envelopes when I’m away? After all, I’ll put a dollar or two, or maybe even five, in the collection at the church where we visit. Isn’t that enough?”

Many Americans, whether we have school-age children at home or not, operate on an academic calendar. We assume our organizations operate September through May and then take it easy during June, July, and August. And to some extent, many parish activities do function on such a schedule. Our parish may not hold Religious Education classes during the summer. Our choirs frequently take a break. Even many of the parish staff members take summer vacations! Can’t our giving take a vacation during the summer, too?

Even as we form the question in our mind, we know the answer. The prime reason for keeping up our pledge all summer long is that God doesn’t go on vacation. He continues to sustain us throughout the summer months. He persists in pouring out blessings on us, even during the hottest weather. He keeps on meeting us in His sacramental presence when we go to Mass wherever we travel. As God remains faithful to us during the summer, we are called to be faithful in our

commitments to Him and our parish family, even during our vacation time.

God’s steadfastness in giving to us is the primary reason for us to respond by being faithful in our stewardship toward Him. But there is also a practical reason why we need to keep up our pledges of time, talent and treasure throughout the summer — the Church needs our involvement year-round.

Even though some parish activities are reduced during the summer months, the parish’s expenses are not. After all, there are still Sunday Masses and weekday Masses, too. The parish staff members still need their salaries. And of course, we need to run the air conditioning in our church during the hot summer months. Despite the fact that some parish functions are suspended, other activities may take place, such as Vacation Bible School. And although the regular parish Religious Education program may be suspended, the summer expenses are often the highest, as textbooks and other supplies are bought for the upcoming school year. Our parish has to pay its bills on a year-round basis, just like your family.

Our parish plans a budget for the year, taking into account the commitments that you, the members, have made. If parishioners do not live out their financial commitments to the parish, the budget will not balance.

Our giving needs to be maintained throughout the summer, just as God maintains His generosity to us. Our stewardship is a response to God’s gifts. And God pours out His gifts and His grace upon us all year long.

## The Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

### *Celebrating Christ's Love and Unwavering Compassion*

**T**he Sacred Heart of Jesus is probably the most widely recognized representation of Christ's love and unwavering compassion for all of humanity. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been practiced for centuries, and this devotion continues to play an important role in today's Catholic faith. As we celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on June 12, we have a wonderful opportunity to learn more about this essential Catholic devotion and its role in Church history.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart extends as far back as the 11th or 12th centuries. While there are no definitive texts or histories that verify initial devotees, it is understood that the devotion grew out of the Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries of the time. By the 16th century, documented devotional prayers and exercises had been formulated, and the ascetic writers began making more extensive references to the Sacred Heart. But it was not until the 17th century that devotion to the Sacred Heart moved beyond being practiced on a private, individual basis. St. Jean Eudes established the first feast of the Sacred Heart, and this was shared with devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It was then that the devotional feast of the Sacred Heart began to spread to other dioceses and religious communities.

However, the devotion as we know and understand it today largely stems from the visions of Jesus Christ to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. While these visions were numerous, the most remarkable revelation, known as "the great apparition," occurred during the octave of Corpus Christi in 1675. As Jesus said to

Margaret Mary, "Behold the Heart that has so loved men... instead of gratitude I receive from the greater part (of mankind) only ingratitude."

Reporting her vision to Fr. Claude de la Colombière, Margaret Mary was then directed to write an account of the apparition. Despite her initial reluctance to do so, as well as her misgivings upon its completion, this written account would soon be published and widely read among both clergy and laymen, thus playing an instrumental role in spreading the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Another book, *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, was written by Jesuit Father Croiset after Jesus told Margaret Mary to have Fr. Croiset write it. Following Margaret Mary's death in 1690, Fr. Croiset composed a short biography of her life that was amended to his book, which served to further increase interest and practice of the devotion.

Over the course of the next century, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus would continue to spread. By the latter half of the 18th century, a Mass of the Sacred Heart was given papal approval for Poland and Portugal, followed two decades later by Venice, Austria, and Spain. Then, in 1856, the Feast of the Sacred Heart was officially established by Pope Pius IX.

While the specific readings and exercises for the feast day have been changed and replaced over the years, the basic tenets that extend back to the visions of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque remain the same — the acknowledgment of and devotion to Christ's unending compassion and love for all of us.

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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

**Hospitality Tuesday**

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

**Altar and Rosary Society Rosary and Meeting**

Tuesday, June 2 — 6:30 p.m. Rosary in the prayer garden, meeting to follow in Nativity's Parish Hall

**Men's Group**

Tuesday, June 2 — 6:30 p.m. at St. Joseph School MPR

**Kindergarten Graduation**

Wednesday, June 3 — 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Church

**Last Day of School Early Dismissal**

Thursday, June 4 — 11 a.m. at St. Joseph School

**Eighth-Grade Graduation**

Thursday, June 4 — 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Church

**First Friday Rosary**

Friday, June 5 — 11 a.m. at Nativity Church, light lunch to follow in Nativity's Parish Hall

**First Saturday Rosary**

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

**Pre-Baptism Class**

Wednesday, June 10 — 7 p.m. at St. Joseph School

**Wonderful Women**

Tuesday, June 16 — 7 p.m. at Nativity Parish Hall

**Knights of Columbus**

Tuesday, June 23 — 7 p.m. at School MPR

**Vincentians Meeting**

Thursdays, June 11 and 25 — 9 a.m. in St. Joseph Conference Room

**Sacred Sisters Prayer and Study Group**

Wednesdays, June 3, 10, 17, and 24 — 6:30 p.m. at O.S.E. Community Center

**Holy Ground Youth Group**

Sundays, June 7, 14, and 28 — from 6 to 7:30 p.m.

**Chair Yoga Flow Classes**

Tuesday and Thursdays in June — 9:30 a.m. at Mill Hollow

**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