



ST. JOSEPH PARISH & NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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An Inside Look at Theology on the Rocks

Faith, Fellowship, and Lifelong Learning

Theology on the Rocks is a regional adult faith formation ministry serving Catholics throughout Lorain County and the surrounding area. St. Joseph and Nativity Parishes are inviting parishioners to come experience the opportunity to gather in a social setting where various faith topics are explored and presented by speakers, priests, professors, and professionals.



Eight years ago, Anita Simko, Relationship Manager with the Catholic Community Foundation of the Diocese of Cleveland, made a call to a senior living community and had a discussion with the Marketing Director, Michelle, about the need to bring people back to the faith in their age group.

"A group exists for young adults called Theology on Tap," Anita says. "However, nothing existed for our age group, so we came up with Theology on the Rocks since, as we are older, we have our drinks on the rocks."

The main mission of the ministry is to provide programs for those 40 years old and over to grow in faith and develop a deeper relationship with Christ in a social setting.

"Formation at any age is important," Anita says. "Many people attend church regularly when raising their children, then fall away. Some are affected by cultural challenges, and some haven't left but haven't really connected either. At this age, our sphere of influence is far greater, and our ability to demonstrate Christ's love and sacrifice in our everyday lives is essential."

The planning committee works with the attendees to come up with relevant



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Stewardship Through the Eyes of the FIRST DISCIPLES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Letter from Our Pastor



Avoiding *Spiritual Drift*

Dear Members of our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parish Families,

By the time August arrives, many of us are caught between two seasons. Summer is still present, but signs of a busier time are beginning to appear. Vacations begin winding down, schools prepare to reopen, and routines that relaxed during the summer slowly start returning.

This transition happens every year, and with it comes a spiritual challenge that is easy to overlook. During the slower pace of summer, it can become easier to drift in our faith without fully realizing it. Prayer and our faith practices can become less consistent. Most of the time, these changes are not intentional – they happen gradually.

That is why August is such an important time to pause and refocus. Stewardship calls us to live intentionally,

not simply by habit or convenience. It reminds us that our relationship with God should remain steady in every season of life, including the less structured months of summer.

Living stewardship as a way of life means recognizing that our faith is not something separate from daily living. It influences how we spend our time, how we use our gifts, and how we respond to the needs around us. Even during changing seasons, we are still called to remain faithful disciples.

This month provides a good opportunity to recommit ourselves to the practices that keep us grounded – daily prayer, regular participation in Mass, and involvement in the life of our parishes. These simple habits strengthen our relationship with God and help us remain connected to the community

of faith around us.

It is often in ordinary moments that God does His most important work in us. A consistent prayer life, faithful Mass attendance, and small acts of generosity may not seem dramatic but, over time, they shape who we are becoming.

As summer begins to draw to a close, let us take time to reflect on where we may have drifted and where God may be calling us to grow. May we move into the months ahead with renewed focus, grateful hearts, and a deeper commitment to living our faith each day.

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor



Wonderful Women

Providing Fun and Exciting Ways to Connect with the Faith and One Another



Women, whether they are single, married, working, or raising kids, keep busy schedules, and often we forget to slow down and do something that rejuvenates us. Olivia Toney started Wonderful Women to create a space for women to pause, lean into their faith, and enjoy fellowship.

“I enjoy making things with our faith life fun, enjoyable, and exciting,” Olivia says. “I created this as a supplement to prayer and attending Mass. I know people are involved in other things, and I wanted something where they could just show up and didn’t have to commit.”

Every other month, when Wonderful Women meets, Olivia invites a guest speaker. Sometimes the speaker is a parishioner or a non-profit in the community, and other times Olivia invites someone to talk virtually. In the past, she has invited authors from within our parish, the captain of the Salvation Army, and her own aunt, Sister Sarah Deeby, a nun in Omaha, Neb.

Each meeting opens with a prayer, followed by introductions, and then a guest speaker. The ladies have a snack, a discussion, a game, and close with a song provided by members of the choir.

“I hope it’s a fun experience to connect with each other,” Olivia says. “Even if they just get one thing out of each meeting, and they leave maybe a little more joyful than when they came. It can be as deep or as light as you want it to be. Some of our discussions can be personal — other times it’s a lighter experience. I know it’s a sacrifice to come and I want it to be worthwhile.”

Children are welcome to accompany their moms, and Olivia often brings her 3-year-old daughter along. Volunteers bring snacks to each meeting of about 40 people. The Tuesday evening gathering starts at 7 p.m.

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and ends at 8:15 p.m.

Olivia is always taking recommendations for future guest speakers, so reach out to her if you or someone you know would enjoy giving a brief talk on a topic or experience.

Olivia has found that Wonderful Women helps her keep her faith close in her daily life.

“It motivates me to stay connected with my faith,” she says. “I want to be plugged in and connected to my faith, especially with having young kids now when it’s hard to find the time to stay connected and locked in. I’m always trying to think of new topics or people. I’m trying to keep the joy in my faith life and share that with everyone else, because I want that to be real.”

Inspired by Psalm 139:14, “I praise You because I am wonderfully made,” Wonderful Women is a gentle invitation to remember and explore who God made you to be.

If you’re looking for an evening of fellowship and insight into your faith, women of the parish are invited to the next Wonderful Women meeting in October. Upcoming meeting dates can be found in the bulletin or by joining the Wonderful Women email list.



To stay up to date on future meetings, contact Olivia Toney at olivia.sliman@gmail.com.

An Inside Look at Theology on the Rocks *continued from front cover*



topics of interest. This year, the group was provided a Lenten reflection by Bishop Malesic, and Bishop Woost walked through the history of the Mass. Additionally, a professor at the seminary, who has studied and written about St. Augustine, came to give insight about Pope Leo XIV being an Augustinian to help the group understand the spirituality of our Holy Father. Some nights are more of a lecture, and others include a panel discussion or field trip.

“We hope those attending have connected with others and, more importantly, connected with Christ,” Anita says. “Many people are intimidated by sharing their faith. We hope that giving this opportunity helps to start a conversation and opens the door. We pray that people attending our events can bring a piece of what they learn or experience to others.”

Focusing on helping people understand the Catholic faith and encouraging them to grow more has brought great fruit, as some have returned to the Church as a result of attending Theology on the Rocks, and other Christ-centered friendships have formed.

“The best way to participate is to attend a program that touches your spirit and bring a friend,” Anita says. “Invite someone to attend a faith program with us or invite people to attend Mass. This program demonstrates what happens when you share your faith in an everyday setting and has led to many yeses over the years from a great many people.”

Those interested in learning more can email theologyontherockswest@gmail.com.

Holy Ground Youth Group

Bringing the Wonderful Gifts of Faith and Fellowship to Our Young Catholics

Many young people today are searching for the truth. They often find that the messages of pop culture and modern society leave them wanting something more. As a result, many are being drawn closer to the Catholic faith in search of meaning, purpose, and a relationship with Christ. This is why the Holy Ground Youth Group is providing a place where teens can ask questions, build friendships, and grow deeper in their faith.

Holy Ground is for all youth in seventh to 12th grades. Those preparing for Confirmation are also required to attend youth group as part of their preparations.

Josh Gonzalez has been in the youth minister role for about a year. He wants to build a consistent and fun program.

“We have a really good time,” Josh says. “You can build a great community. Many friendships have been formed in the youth group. But beyond that, you should come to dive into faith with kids your age.”

On Aug. 15, the youth are going to The Fest, a Catholic festival hosted by the diocese. This is always a fun activity that both Josh and the youth look forward to. The event ends with Mass.

Holy Ground meets weekly on Sundays from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Youth are encouraged to attend 5 p.m. Mass. They have several activities during youth group — Eucharistic Adoration, lessons, and testimony nights. They also host student-led nights where a volunteer high school student shares their testimony or gives a lesson on what they learned about a topic.

“Often, we will focus on a topic that the students are either interested in or have asked about,” Josh says. “We really want them to learn the faith and learn about things they are interested in.”

During the 2025-2026 school year, the youth went through each sacrament and discussed its importance. They also talked about the basics of the Catholic faith, and a student originally from Brazil gave a powerful testimony.

“He talked about how he came from Brazil and moved to the States, and he wasn’t sure what God had in store for him, but it all led him to where he is now,” Josh says. “He is grateful, knowing that God had His hand in his life all along. That was a really, really cool thing to see — a young man talking about what God has done in his life.”

Students started to come forward after hearing his talk, and Josh has several lined up for the fall.

“Peer ministry is huge,” he says. “I think the youth often have a bigger impact on one another than many of the adult-led lessons because they’re hearing it from someone their own age.”

Josh wants to make sure there is a strong peer ministry within the group.

“My main goal with volunteers is that I never want the volunteers to outnumber the kids in the room,” he says. “I don’t think that benefits the kids in a way that will really help them build friendships and support from their peers.”



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"Peer ministry is huge. I think the youth often have a bigger impact on one another than many of the adult-led lessons because they're hearing it from someone their own age."

— Josh Gonzalez



Even though Josh isn't that much older than the youth, he knows that when other youth share their stories, it has a bigger impact.

"I'm only 21 years old, but even though I'm seen as an adult figure, whenever you see a student your age give a testimony and talk about what God has done in his or her life and talk about his faith, it really sparks a fire inside the other students because of that peer ministry," he says.

Josh has been serving in this role for just over a year, and he's really enjoyed it so far.

"I've enjoyed growing in relationship with the students," he says. "They're amazing. They're great kids. They're super bright, and they all want to learn more."

He admits they sometimes ask him questions that stump him.

"I'll say, 'I can't answer that right now, but let me look, do some research, pray, and then I'll come back next week and answer that question,'" he says.

Josh knows that he is growing in faith by serving in this role. He is so encouraged by how many youths are seeking the truth of the Catholic Church.

"They see all these things that are going on in the world, and all the things that peers at school may be partaking in, and they want to know, 'How can I better myself and grow closer to God whenever I see all these things happening?'" Josh says.

For Josh, it's important that no one feels excluded.

"All are more than welcome to come and join us and come learn about our faith and have some fun and grow in community and maybe make some friends and find a place here," he says.



Youth in seventh through 12th grades are welcome to attend on Sunday evenings from 6 to 7:30 p.m. All are welcome — even those who are non-Catholic and non-Christian.

St. Bartholomew:

Answering Christ's Call With Courage

When Jesus called the Twelve Apostles, they were ordinary people. They came from different backgrounds, possessed different personalities, and faced many of the same fears and uncertainties we experience today. What made them extraordinary was not who they were, but their willingness to follow Christ wherever He led them.

That same invitation is extended to each of us. Through Baptism, every Christian is called to holiness — not as something reserved for a few remarkable people, but as the ordinary vocation of every disciple. As St. John Paul II reminded the Church, we should never settle for a life of spiritual mediocrity. God continually calls each of us to grow in faith and to become more like Christ.

One of the saints who demonstrates this call so powerfully is St. Bartholomew, whose feast day is celebrated on Aug. 24. Although little is recorded about him in Scripture, Bartholomew faithfully followed Christ as one of the Twelve Apostles and devoted his life to proclaiming the Gospel. According to Christian tradition, he traveled extensively as a missionary before ultimately giving his life for the faith. His courage and unwavering commitment continue to inspire Christians nearly 2,000 years later.

Few of us will ever be asked to give our lives through martyrdom. Yet every day presents opportunities to live faithfully for Christ. We are called to witness through our words, our actions, and the way we treat others. We are called to choose honesty over convenience, forgiveness over resentment, generosity over self-interest, and faithfulness over complacency. These everyday choices may not attract attention, but they gradually shape us into the disciples God calls us to be.

Stewardship grows from this same response to God's call. As we recognize that everything we have is a gift from God, we begin offering our time, talents, and treasure not out of obligation, but out of gratitude. Like St. Bartholomew, we learn that discipleship is not measured by comfort or recognition, but by faithfulness.

The saints remind us that holiness is possible in every age and every circumstance. Their lives encourage us to keep our eyes fixed on Christ, even when the path is difficult. By learning from their example and asking for their intercession, we find strength to continue growing in our own vocation to holiness.

As we celebrate the feast of St. Bartholomew this August, may his witness encourage each of us to respond more generously to Christ's invitation and to live each day as faithful stewards and joyful disciples.



"St. Bartholomew reminds us that discipleship is not measured by comfort or recognition, but by faithfully following Christ wherever God leads."

Farming Faith at Home *Preparing Children for a Lifetime of Discipleship*

As a new school year begins, many Catholic families are preparing for another season of religious education, youth ministry, sacramental preparation, and parish faith formation programs. These opportunities play an important role in helping young people grow in their relationship with Christ. Yet the Church has long taught that the home remains the first and most important place where faith is formed.

Parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith. While parishes provide valuable support, the foundation of discipleship is built through the daily witness of family life. Children often learn more from what they see than from what they are told. The example of parents and grandparents frequently becomes one of the most powerful influences on a young person's faith journey.

Stewardship offers an important perspective on this responsibility. Children are among God's greatest gifts, entrusted to families with the mission of helping them grow in faith, character, and discipleship. Stewardship calls parents to nurture those gifts with intentionality, recognizing that faith formation is not limited to a classroom or parish program.

Simple practices within the home can have a lasting impact. Praying together before meals, attending Mass regularly, discussing Scripture, celebrating the liturgical seasons, and serving others as a family all help create an environment where faith can flourish. These moments teach children that faith is not something reserved for Sunday mornings but a way of life that influences daily decisions and relationships.

The beginning of a new school year provides a natural opportunity to establish or renew these habits. Just as families organize schedules around academics, sports, and activities, they can also make room for prayer,

worship, and faith-filled conversations. Doing so communicates that a relationship with Christ is a priority.

Faith formation at home also prepares children to recognize and use their own gifts. Stewardship teaches that every person receives unique talents and blessings from God. Parents help children discover those gifts and learn how to use them in service to others. This understanding lays the foundation for a lifelong stewardship way of life.

No family lives this calling perfectly. Every household experiences busy seasons and challenges. What matters most is the commitment to continue growing together in faith and seeking opportunities to place Christ at the center of family life.

As a new school year begins, families have an opportunity to strengthen the foundation upon which lasting discipleship is built. By embracing their role in faith formation and creating a home where Christ is present, parents help prepare their children not only for academic success but also for a lifetime of faithful stewardship and discipleship.



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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

First Friday Rosary

Friday, Aug. 7 — 11 a.m. in Nativity Church, light lunch to follow in Nativity's Parish Hall

Holy Ground Youth Group

Sunday, Aug. 9 — 6 to 7:30 p.m. at St. Joseph School

Hospitality Tuesday

Tuesday, Aug. 11 — 8:30 a.m. in Nativity Parish Hall, following the 8 a.m. Mass

Men's Group

Tuesday, Aug. 11 — 6:30 p.m. in St. Joseph School MPR

Wonderful Women

Tuesday, Aug. 11 — 7 p.m. in Nativity Parish Hall

The Fest

Saturday, Aug. 15 — at the Crushers Stadium in Avon

Preschool Orientation Meeting

Monday, Aug. 17 — 7 p.m. in St. Joseph School MPR

Kindergarten Orientation Meeting

Wednesday, Aug. 19 — 7 p.m. in St. Joseph School MPR

Vincentians Meeting

Thursday, Aug. 20 — 9 a.m. in St. Joseph Conference Room

St. Joseph School Walk-Thru

Sunday, Aug. 23 — 12 to 1:30 p.m.

Hospitality Sunday

Sunday, Aug. 23 — after the 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Masses in St. Joseph School gym

First Day of School for Grades 1-8 and Kindergarten with Last Names A-L

Monday, Aug. 24

First Day of School for Kindergarten with Last Names M-Z

Tuesday, Aug. 25

The Knights of Columbus Meeting

Tuesday, Aug. 25 — 7 p.m. in St. Joseph School MPR

First Full Day of School for all Kindergarteners

Wednesday, Aug. 26

First Day of School for Preschool 4-Year-Old A.M. Class

Monday, Aug. 31

First Day of School for Preschool 3-year-old P.M. Class

Monday, Aug. 31

Chair Yoga Flow Classes

Tuesdays and Thursdays in August at 9:30 a.m. at Mill Hollow Amphitheater

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.