



ST. JOSEPH PARISH & NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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to Share in Faith and Fun

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SEPTEMBER 2026

The ANGEL SCHOLARSHIP FUND *Stewardship Guardians Making Catholic Education Accessible*

A Catholic education provides a strong foundation in academics and faith formation, but it is not financially accessible for all families. This is where the Angel Scholarship Fund comes in. Established in early 2022 by the Diocese of Cleveland and the Catholic Community Foundation, the Angel Scholarship Fund provides tuition assistance for Catholic school students in the diocese. In its first year alone, there were 4,300 donor households that contributed \$4.5 million to 180 Catholic high school and elementary schools.

“This fund was developed to make Catholic education more affordable by providing tuition assistance to students, with a priority for low-income families,” says Amy Makruski, principal of St. Joseph Parish School. “It was established to harness a new State of Ohio Scholarship Tax-Credit program that was passed by the Ohio General Assembly.”

Rooting a child’s education in Catholic faith and values helps mold model citizens and future leaders with strong Christian values and morals. For families struggling to provide, or who don’t have enough to pay for private school, this fund helps make Catholic education possible.

“This fund provides tuition assistance for families at St. Joseph Parish School — or any school the donor chooses,” Mrs. Makruski says. “It’s one of the major income streams that helps our school to fully fund the cost to educate students.

“These donors are choosing to support schools and student tuition,” she adds. “That makes them guardians of our Catholic institutions and ‘angels’ in that they’re making Catholic education affordable for so many families.”

Supporting our Catholic schools is so important for both

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*Eighth-grade student
Avery leads the Liturgy of
the Word at Mass.*



*A group of first-grade
students on the first day of
school for 2025-26.*

The Angel Scholarship Fund *continued from front cover*

individual families and our community.

“Parishioners supporting this fund give the school and parish financial security in being able to come closer to collecting income that more closely matches the cost to educate our students,” Mrs. Makruski says. “It also allows Catholic education to be accessible to families of all income levels, especially prioritizing low-income families.”

When folks contribute, their donation can be applied to their taxes.

“Currently, families can contribute for the 2026 tax year,” Mrs. Makruski says. “Between Jan. 1 and April 15, 2027, donors may choose which tax year they would like to apply their credit. When completing the form, donors should be sure to choose ‘St. Joseph Parish School, Amherst’ as their intended recipient, or the school of their own choice.”

Ohio taxpayers don’t need to be associated with a Catholic school to contribute. The maximum credit amount is \$750 for individuals — \$1,500 if

married filing jointly, when both spouses contribute \$750. Contributing to the Angel Scholarship Fund is an act of stewardship benefiting our young Catholic students and Catholic community.

“It allows donors to turn Ohio tax dollars into tuition at no personal extra cost,” Mrs. Makruski says. “A parish having a Catholic school associated with it is a blessing from God. By giving back in this way, parishioners are stewards of this gift and help secure the current and future operations of the school. They’re also helping attract and retain families in the faith, as well as grow the future parish members and leaders in our church community.”

Families apply for this fund when they fill out their enrollment paperwork.

“Each year when completing enrollment paperwork, families also complete an online application to be eligible for Angel Scholarship Funds,” Mrs. Makruski says. “This application prioritizes families that are below 300 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, but also makes funds available to those earning more.”

As Mrs. Makruski notes, it’s truly a scholarship that benefits every single student who applies for funds.

“In the 2026-27 school year, we’re giving away over \$90,000 in Angel Scholarship Funds,” she says. “We would love to double that in the 2027-28 school year, and we know we can do it with the continued support of our parishioners and outside donors.”

**To give online, go to CatholicCommunity.org/ANGEL.
You can also call the parish office at 440-988-2848
for a form for your tax consultant.**



Students in kindergarten and first grade enjoy Beach Day at school.



Fourth and fifth-grade students enjoy lunch together.

A Letter from Our Pastor

The Saints Show Us the Way



Dear Members of our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parish Families,

Throughout the month of September, the Church invites us to celebrate the lives of many remarkable saints through feast days and memorials on the liturgical calendar. During the final days of the month, we commemorate St. Matthew on Sept. 21, St. Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio) on Sept. 23, St. Vincent de Paul on Sept. 27, the Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael on Sept. 29, and St. Jerome on Sept. 30. Each lived in a different time, served the Lord in different ways, and possessed different gifts. Yet they all shared one important characteristic — they offered their lives completely to God.

In many ways, they lived stewardship long before the Church ever spoke of it in those terms.

When Jesus called St. Matthew, he immediately left behind his former way of life to follow Christ. Padre Pio devoted countless hours to prayer and hearing confessions, generously sharing his time and spiritual gifts for the sake of others. St. Vincent de Paul recognized the face of Christ in the poor and spent his life serving those most in need. The Archangels faithfully carried out God's will, reminding us that our highest calling is loving obedience to Him. St. Jerome used his remarkable intellect and talents to translate and teach Sacred Scripture, making God's Word more accessible to generations of believers.

Although their vocations were very different, each understood the same fundamental truth: everything they had was a gift from God and was meant to be returned to Him in loving service.

That is also the foundation of Christian stewardship.

Stewardship is not simply about supporting the parish or volunteering for a ministry. It is first a way of life that recognizes every aspect of our lives as a gift entrusted to us by God. Our time, our talents, our resources, our relationships, and our opportunities are all meant to be used for His glory and for the good of others.

Most of us are not called to extraordinary lives that will one day be recognized by the Church. We are called to something equally important — faithful discipleship in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life. Holiness grows through daily acts of prayer, generosity, service, forgiveness, and love. These are the same virtues that shaped the saints, and they are the virtues God desires to cultivate in each of us.

The saints remind us that stewardship is ultimately about becoming the people God created us to be. As we celebrate these great witnesses of the faith throughout September, may their example inspire us to follow Christ more faithfully, serve others more generously, and continue growing in holiness one day at a time. Like the saints before us, may we offer our lives to God with grateful hearts, trusting that He will use our gifts to accomplish His work in the world.

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor





An Inside Look at the Parent Club

Service and Community Upholding the Pillars of Catholic Education

A thriving Catholic school is built on the foundation of a healthy community and the positive relationships between students, staff, families, and parishioners. The Parent Club at St. Joseph Parish School aims to foster this cooperative spirit by supporting teachers and by organizing community-wide events to benefit the school and wider community. They demonstrate to students the importance of stewarding one's time, talent, and treasure to benefit others.

Kelly Hardwick, president of the Parent Club, explains that in addition to providing support and appreciation to the schoolteachers and staff, the Parent Club provides parents and caregivers with opportunities to get involved in the school beyond the academic subjects.

"We plan events throughout the year to keep SJS families engaged with each other and the community," Kelly says.

The club members meet once a month. They begin each meeting in prayer, asking God to watch over and guide the students and classroom teachers, and for wisdom in making prudent financial decisions. Kelly says that attending meetings is a simple but important way to get an overview of ways to support the school.

"By just showing up to a meeting, you can learn about all the opportunities for volunteering and stewardship," she says. "This group is mostly a ministry of time and talents. As parents, we are leading by example, showing our children how collaboration gets wonderful things accomplished for our school and community."

The Parent Club plans many family-friendly events throughout the year, including movie nights, school-wide picnics at the park, and a trunk-or-treat at Halloween. But perhaps the two most noteworthy activities that exemplify the school's mission are the Kris Kringle and Coming Together events.

"The Kris Kringle event has lovingly been referred to as a type of 'Christmas garage sale,'" Kelly says. "School families and parishioners donate new or gently used items. After the December meeting, we set up tables with festive tablecloths, and the next school day students are able to shop the Kris Kringle sale to pick out Christmas gifts for loved ones. All of the money is then donated back to the community."

The following October, the Parent Club collectively votes on organizations to donate the leftover funds from the previous year's Kris Kringle event. A couple thousand dollars has been donated to the Salvation Army's Angel Tree program.

"We work with Sliman's in Amherst and have been able to take up to eight tags from their tree and spend a couple hundred dollars per tag so that a child whose family is going through less fortunate times can have a great Christmas," Kelly says. "Our school families even organize a day to shop together for an Angel tag. This has been a wonderful example to our children about stewardship and a direct way for them to see how money they helped raise makes an impact to serve the community."

The Coming Together event began as a way for parents to gather socially after COVID shutdowns. Tickets for this event include a meal and musical entertainment. Every class in the school is assigned a theme for a basket raffle, which has demonstrated much creativity and thought. This is not just a major fundraiser for the club, but also a well-anticipated event for families to enjoy each other's company.

The Parent Club is a vital support system for the school, building on a culture of stewardship and service, as members demonstrate the importance of community as a fundamental aspect of Catholic education.

Any parent, guardian, grandparent, or caregiver can be involved with the Parent Club. Check the school website for meeting dates or email SJSParentClub@sjs-amherst.org for more information.

A Legacy of Faith

Passing on the Gift of Faith Through Stewardship

Stewardship begins with gratitude. When we recognize that every good gift comes from God, we naturally desire to share those gifts with others. While people often think about sharing their time, talent, and treasure, one of the most important gifts we can share is our faith.

None of us came to know Christ entirely on our own. Someone helped guide us along the way. Parents, grandparents, pastors, teachers, mentors, and faithful friends introduced us to prayer, taught us about God's love, encouraged us through challenges, and helped us grow as disciples.

The faith we possess today is, in many ways, part of a legacy that has been handed down from generation to generation.

Throughout Scripture, God's people are called to remember His goodness and proclaim His works to those who come after them. Parents are instructed to teach their children about the Lord. Elders are encouraged to share the stories of God's faithfulness. Each generation is entrusted with the responsibility of helping the next generation come to know and love Jesus Christ.

This responsibility is deeply connected to stewardship. As Christian stewards, we recognize that everything we have ultimately belongs to God. We are called to receive His gifts with gratitude, cultivate them responsibly, share them generously, and return them to Him with increase. The gift of faith



is no exception. God has entrusted us with the Good News of Jesus Christ not simply for our own benefit, but so that we may share it with others.

Parents fulfill this mission in a special way as the primary teachers of the faith for their children. Through family prayer, participation in the sacraments, and conversations about God's presence in everyday life, they help lay the foundation for a lifelong relationship with Christ. Yet the work of passing on the faith extends beyond the family. It is a responsibility shared by the entire parish community.

Grandparents often play a particularly

important role. Through their prayers, encouragement, and witness, they help younger generations understand the value of a life centered on God. Many Catholics can trace some of their strongest faith influences to a grandparent who prayed faithfully, attended Mass consistently, and demonstrated trust in God through both joyful and difficult times.

Catechists, ministry leaders, parish volunteers, and fellow parishioners also contribute to this important mission. Every conversation about faith, every invitation to Mass, every act of kindness, and every example of Christian discipleship can help someone grow closer to Christ.

Often, the most powerful lessons are not taught in a classroom but observed through the witness of faithful lives.

As stewards, we are called to think not only about the blessings God has given us today but also about the legacy we will leave behind. Material possessions eventually fade, but a faith-filled example can continue to bear fruit for generations. When we share our faith, encourage others, and help lead people to Christ, we participate in God's work of building His kingdom.

Each of us has received the gift of faith from someone who came before us. Now God invites us to share that gift with those who will come after us. By embracing this responsibility, we live stewardship in a profound way and help ensure that the light of Christ continues to shine in future generations.

Questions and Answers About Our **Annual Stewardship Renewal**

It's time for our Annual Stewardship Renewal. Every year, someone asks, as you may have asked yourself, "Didn't we just have a Stewardship Renewal? Aren't we sufficiently "renewed" by now?" Yes, we had a Stewardship Renewal last year, and we're going to have one next year, too! This is an annual occurrence – part of the rhythm of parish life at St. Joseph and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Just as the Church proposes a time of spiritual renewal each Lent, we believe in the importance of a yearly examination of commitment. Is the Lord asking you to give more time, talent, or treasure to our parish this year? The following Q&A about our Stewardship Renewal should help you discern your commitments to St. Joseph and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary this year.

**Commitment Weekend is October 3-4.
Don't forget to bring your
Commitment Card to Mass!**

I feel like my life is already too busy with family and work obligations. I barely even have time to relax. How can I possibly share my time and talents with St. Joseph and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary?

We all have many obligations to our families, jobs, schools, and other endeavors. But we also all have the same number of hours in the day with which to accomplish these things. The issue is not how much time we have, but how we prioritize that time.

Before you fill out your Commitment Card, take some time to reflect on your priorities and where God fits into your day-to-day life. Remember, living as true stewards of God's gifts involves giving back the first fruits of what He has given to us in thanksgiving, not the "leftovers."

I am happy with my current level of parish participation. Why do I need to keep filling out a Commitment Card every year?

As part of the renewal process, we must consider our current level of participation in parish life at St. Joseph and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Sometimes, the call to stewardship involves the quality of service in addition to its quantity. In looking through the opportunities for ministry available at the parish, you may find yourself drawn to a new ministry you haven't tried before or new ways to share of your time with God to enrich and enlighten your prayer life. So, even though your current level of parish participation might not change drastically, how you participate may evolve as you grow in living the stewardship way of life. Even if you end up continuing to participate in the same ministries as you have in the past, marking and turning in a Commitment Card means you have reviewed your present ministries and recommitted yourself to them.

I'm not very active in the Church and, frankly, feel like it may be too late to get involved. Why should I fill out a Commitment Card?

It's never too late to renew your faith life, and filling out a Commitment Card is a simple step through which you can immediately re-enter the life of the parish. Our parish community is not here to judge you but to welcome and nourish you in your faith journey. Begin by checking the box that says, "Attend weekly Mass and Holy Days of Obligation," and take some time to discern additional ways in which God is calling you from that starting point.

I'm physically unable to attend Mass or be active in parish life. Is there any reason for me to submit a Commitment Card?

Of course! Your prayers are just as important to the success of our parish community in carrying out its mission as ministry

ST. JOSEPH & NATIVITY

participation and financial contributions. Take a moment to look over some of the opportunities to spend quiet time with God listed in the “Stewardship of Time” section of the Commitment Card and take a step towards growing in your relationship with Christ and His Church.

I’m reluctant to make a financial pledge for the year in case my circumstances change and I’m unable to fulfill it. Should I?

Your Commitment Card is not a legally binding contract; it is a pledge of intentions. Make your pledge based on what you are setting out to do to give back to God and do your best to fulfill that pledge. If your financial circumstances change, your gift will likely change, as well, but it is still important to prioritize God first. Nobody is going to send the bill collector to your house if you can’t fulfill your pledge due to a change in your financial situation! But we’ve all got to start somewhere, and we must begin our commitment by writing down our goals for giving back of our gifts to God.

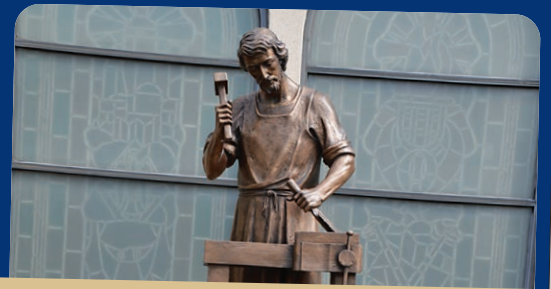
I’ve expressed interest in a ministry in the past by filling out a Commitment Card, but nobody from the parish ever followed up with me about it.

While we do our best to consistently follow up with everyone who has shown interest in the opportunities for ministry, we are human, and we sometimes fall short in our follow-up. If this has happened to you in the past, we sincerely apologize, and we encourage you to renew your interest in any activities in which you might like to participate by filling out a Commitment Card this year. Every year, we go into the renewal to make sure that everyone who has expressed interest is contacted with more information, and we will do so again this year.

I don’t agree with everything that goes on at St. Joseph and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I feel like when I fill out a Commitment Card, it condones the things I disagree with.

In filling out a Commitment Card, you are not making a pledge between yourself and your parish; you are pledging yourself and God. Disagreements occur in life. This is a part of being human, and we respect the opinions of every member of our parish family. But it is of utmost importance that each of us fulfills our discipleship of Christ by growing in our relationship with Him and utilizing the gifts He has given us to carry out His mission on Earth, regardless of disagreements or misunderstandings. Beyond helping the parish, filling out a Commitment Card expresses a devotion to spiritual growth and a strong belief in the Catholic faith.

SPEAK, LORD, Your Servant Is LISTENING



2026 COMMITMENT CARD

ST. JOSEPH PARISH

First & Last Name

Phone

Email

Spouse: First & Last Name

Spouse: Phone

Spouse: Email

Mailing Address

City

State

ZIP

Please bring this card to Mass on **October 3/4** or mail using the envelope provided. Thanks and God bless you!

Every parish family receives a special "Stewardship Package" in the mail that further explains our parish's vision of stewardship. It includes a booklet that describes every ministry in the parish, as well as your Commitment Card.

Vacation Bible School Brings Children Together to Share in Faith and Fun

This summer's Vacation Bible School program was a success! We thank all of our catechists who gave of their time and talent to provide a fun and educational week for our youngest parishioners!



ST. JOSEPH & NATIVITY



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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

**Altar and Rosary Society
Rosary and Meeting**

Tuesday, Sept. 1 — 6:30 p.m. Rosary in
Nativity's Prayer Garden, meeting to follow
in Nativity's Parish Hall

Men's Group Meeting

Tuesday, Sept. 1 — 7 p.m. at St. Joseph
School MPR

First Day of Preschool

Wednesday, Sept. 2 — for the 4-year-old
p.m. class

The Answer Oratorio

Wednesday, Sept. 2 — 7 p.m. at The Palace
Theatre, 617 Broadway, Lorain

First Friday Rosary

Friday, Sept. 4 — 11 a.m. at Nativity
Church. There will be no luncheon today.

First Saturday Rosary

Saturday, Sept. 5 — 9 a.m. at St. Joseph
Social Hall Lobby

Labor Day Mass

Monday, Sept. 7 — 9 a.m. at St. Joseph
Cemetery, weather permitting (In the event of
bad weather, Mass will be at Nativity Parish.)
No school, parish offices closed

**Hospitality Tuesday following the
8 a.m. Mass at Nativity**

Tuesday, Sept. 8 — 8:30 a.m. at Nativity
Parish Hall

Come and celebrate our parish Feast Day.

Dinners on the Go pick-up

Tuesday, Sept. 8 and 22 — 5 p.m. at
Nativity Parish Hall (drive-thru service only)

Pre-Baptism Class

Wednesday, Sept. 9 — 7 p.m. at
St. Joseph School

**"St. Joseph, the Good Steward" Parish
Retreat with Msgr. Robert Tucker**

Saturday, Sept. 12 — 9 a.m. at Nativity
Parish Hall

Knights of Columbus Steak Fry

Saturday, Sept. 19 — the Amherst Eagles,
1161 Milan Ave, Amherst
Doors open at 5:30 p.m., dinner
starts at 6 p.m.

Knights of Columbus Meeting

Tuesday, Sept. 22 — 7 p.m. at St Joseph
School MPR

Vincentians Meeting

Thursday, Sept. 3 and 17 — 9 a.m. in
St. Joseph Conference Room

Holy Ground Youth Group

Sunday, Sept. 6, 13, 20, and 27 — 6 p.m.
in St. Joseph School Gym
(Event begins with 5 p.m. Mass — meet
near the choir before Mass.)

Sacred Sisters Prayer and Study Group

Wednesday, Sept. 9, 16, 23, and 30 —
6:30 p.m. at O.S.E. Community Center

OCIA (formerly RCIA)

Monday, Sept. 21 and 28, at 7 p.m. at
Nativity Parish Hall

Chair Yoga Flow Classes

Tuesdays and Thursdays in September at
9:30 a.m. See bulletin for location

**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