



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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St. Joseph Parish
 200 Saint Joseph Drive
 Amherst, OH 44001
 (440) 988-2848
stjosephamherst.com

Nativity of the BVM Parish
 333 South Lake Street
 South Amherst, OH 44001
 (440) 986-7011

MARCH 2023

Parishioner **Ron Dickinson** *Proud to Follow in Family Footsteps of Faith and Service*

“You Get a Chance to Share Your Life Experiences and Faith”

Growing up with his father as a strong example of service to others, Ron Dickinson has devoted time to serving in many capacities throughout our parish community.

“I felt fortunate I had grown up around it,” Ron says. “My dad was always very giving. He’s been very giving with his time and finances to help people. I think that kind of helped me to ingrain that into me.”

Appreciative that he was able to serve alongside his father back in his school days, Ron says this helped inspire him to give to others as well. He recalls his dad being involved in music ministry, faith groups, and serving the elderly.

“It was nice to have somebody that I was able to watch,” Ron says. “To this day, he wants to give. I feel blessed and lucky that I was raised in that kind of environment.”

Ron has been a parishioner at St. Joseph Parish for over 30 years. He and his wife, Patti, are both trained as registered nurses and have three children. While Patti can no longer volunteer due to her health, the two have helped around the parish for many years. Through their work, they have each given to our community members and people they have served.

“We try to stay as involved as we can in the church, helping in the community,” Ron says.



Ron and Patti Dickinson have been parishioners for many years at St. Joseph Parish and have served in different ministries in our community.

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Stewardship and Lent:

How The Wise Men's Gifts Symbolize Our Lenten Obligations

We experience great joy when we celebrate the coming of the Magi at Epiphany each year. For many of us, it is the completion of Christmas. Yet, the gifts offered by the Magi — gold, frankincense, and myrrh — can serve to guide us on our stewardship journeys as we observe Lent this month.

It may seem strange to connect the joyful celebration of Epiphany with the penitential season of Lent. But our spiritual life should not be divided into separate, unconnected bits, and in the same way, the Church's liturgical year also flows from one season to another. The different feasts and seasons certainly have different emphases, but they are intended to build on each other.

So, let's see if we can connect what the Magi gave Jesus with what we're going to offer Him this Lent.

The basic ingredients for our Lenten rule come from what is termed the "Three Notable Duties" — prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These in turn come from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). How do we connect the wise men's gifts with the Three Notable Duties?

Frankincense is the basic ingredient in the incense used in the worship of God, in the ancient world, and in the Church today. Offering it to Jesus points out His divine nature, and so it symbolizes prayer — the stewardship of time. Our Lenten rule needs to include prayer and worship. Of course, we are bound to worship at



Sunday Mass year-round. Maybe during Lent, we might add a weekday Mass. Perhaps we can increase the time we devote to private prayer at home or at adoration. Devotional reading from the Bible or another appropriate book can be added. In addition, don't forget the possibility of adding family devotions during Lent, so that the whole family prays together.

When we offer our gold to Christ to build His Church and to help His poor, we are engaged in almsgiving — the stewardship of treasure. While giving from the treasure God has entrusted to us is a duty throughout the whole year, maybe this Lent we can practice being a little more generous than usual. If our giving is a thankful response to the gift of eternal life that God has given us, we

will find that the giving is indeed a means of grace.

For centuries, myrrh has been associated with fasting. In the ancient world, it was regularly used in embalming. Generations of theological writers have seen the gift of myrrh as a foreshadowing of Christ's sufferings.

Fasting may be the most difficult of the Three Notable Duties for modern Americans. We usually think of fasting only under the heading of dieting to lose weight. Instead, try to think of fasting as a way to become more spiritually fit. Body and spirit affect each other. The whole sacramental system is built on the truth that we can receive spiritual grace through material things and physical actions.

Our specific requirements of fasting are limited — abstaining from meat on Ash Wednesday and on all the Fridays during Lent, and a reduction in the quantity of food we eat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. But the discipline of our physical bodies for our spiritual well-being does not have to be limited to Lent!

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh were indeed valuable gifts for the wise men to present to the Child Jesus, which is stewardship at its very core. So, when we look at their symbolism, we can see their relationship to the Three Notable Duties of prayer, almsgiving, and fasting. What gifts of our time, talent, and treasure are we going to offer to Jesus this Lent?

A Letter from Our Pastor

Reflections on Lent and Stewardship From Pope Benedict XVI



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

With the passing from this life of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI on Dec. 31, I found it fitting to share with you some of his teachings and reflections on Lent, as we have now embarked on our own Lenten journeys.

Pope Benedict was a lifelong scholar, a priest for 71 years, and pope from 2005 to 2013. Throughout his papacy, he offered us all a treasure trove of reflections, prayers, and advice for our Lenten journeys and constantly reminded and encouraged us during this 40-day journey to increase our faith and charity. In other words, through conversion of heart, we must intensify our commitment to stewardship with the sharing of our gifts during Lent.

In his final Lenten message as pope in 2013, he wrote: *"The celebration of Lent... offers us a valuable opportunity to meditate on the relationship between faith and charity: between believing in God — the God of Jesus Christ — and love, which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and which guides us on the path of devotion to God and others."*

While Lent is a time when we tend to ramp up our prayer lives, Pope Benedict always pushed us to do even more, and he encouraged us to take the next step as good and faithful stewards.

He explained how faith leads to charity, which is a response to God's love for us, thus urging us to use our renewed faith by sharing our time, talent, and treasure with others.

He wrote: *"The entire Christian life is a response to God's love. The first response is precisely faith as the acceptance, filled with wonder and gratitude, of the unprecedented divine initiative that precedes us and summons us. And the 'yes' of faith marks the beginning of a radiant story of friendship with the Lord, which fills and gives full meaning to our whole life. But it is not enough for God that we simply accept his gratuitous love. Not only does He love us, but He wants to draw us to Himself, to transform us in such a profound way as to bring us to say with Saint Paul: 'it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me'"* (cf. Gal 2:20).

Pope Benedict continued his 2013 Lenten message, saying: *"For its part, charity ushers us into the love of God manifested in Christ and joins us in a personal and existential way to the total and unconditional self-giving of Jesus to the Father and to His brothers and sisters. By filling our hearts with his love, the Holy Spirit makes us sharers in Jesus' filial devotion to God*

and fraternal devotion to every man" (cf. Rom 5:5).

While we grieve that he is no longer with us here, I remain grateful to our Lord for Pope Benedict XVI and his ministry, and invite you to reflect on his teachings and messages on Lent as you continue your own Lenten journeys with trust and joy.

Gratefully in Christ,

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

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor

Want to read more from Pope Benedict XVI on the Lenten journey? Pick up his 2006 book, Journey to Easter: Spiritual Reflections for the Lenten Season, and his 2012 book, Lent with Pope Benedict XVI: Meditations for Every Day.

Golden Agers Ministry Excited to Resume Monthly Meetings this Spring

A Great Social Avenue for Fellowship and Prayer

It's truly wonderful news — our Golden Agers Ministry is set to return to its monthly lunch meeting schedule in April, after a two-year hiatus during the pandemic. The group has missed the fellowship they share when they have gathered each month for prayer, lunch, and a program, but these activities are resuming for this long-standing ministry. The members will meet on the third Wednesday in April in the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish Social Hall, with details coming in the Sunday bulletins.

“We had our meeting with a very small group in December,” says Joyce Nye, ministry president. “We decided we wanted to wait until April for another meeting. The ministry is mainly a social avenue for our elderly, and I usually have a speaker, or a music group, or an activity, along with lunch.”

On occasion, lunch is catered from a local eatery, or at times the members bring in their own lunches. An area nursing home provides lunch, usually in September, while an Amherst nursing home provides cookies.

Golden Agers has long been a popular ministry for our older parishioners.

“They like it,” Joyce says. “In the past, the group has given money to St. Joseph School, and they always start the meeting with a prayer. In the last meeting in December, we started with a prayer for the people who died in the past two years.”

The Golden Agers members not only welcome each other in hospitality during the meetings, but they share stewardship by offering prayers.

“They pray a lot, they tell me,” Joyce says.

Although their ages may curtail many physical activities, the luncheon meetings enable the members to come together to enjoy a shared meal, camaraderie, and to enjoy the programs.

“The members can't be as active, but they have this social avenue to get out and meet with their friends and have a good

time,” Joyce says. “Anybody can join the ministry, there is no age limit. But it is for older people.”

Joyce became the ministry president when there was a need for a leader. She also serves as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. While Joyce isn't certain as to when the Golden Agers Ministry started, she notes, “it has been here a long time.”

The upcoming April meeting will feature a speaker on the local Meals on Wheels service.

“The members can't be as active, but they have this social avenue to get out and meet with their friends and have a good time. Anybody can join the ministry, there is no age limit. But it is for older people.” — Joyce Nye



For more information about the Golden Agers Ministry, contact Joyce Nye at 440-988-3565.

Vincentians Living Out Works of Mercy as Members Assist Communities in Need

The Gospel call to love our neighbor is familiar to all of us, but sometimes we are left wondering how to live that out in our lives. The Vincentians Ministry has an answer that is rooted in the Corporal Works of Mercy. Originating as a food pantry, the Vincentians provide food and more to our own community in need.

“Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” — these words of Jesus come to mind when Ed Molnar, a parishioner at St. Joseph and the president of the Vincentians, helps to pack food for struggling families.

“I am always reminded of this Scripture,” Ed says. “This ministry provides the opportunity to go out and do what Jesus asks all of us to do, to go out and help other people — to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. It’s an opportunity to live out Jesus’ teaching.”

The 14 members take on different jobs to keep the ministry running. Some return phone calls from neighbors in need and get to know their situation and how many people are in their family. The goal is to provide them with food for five days. Members will come and pack food boxes for those who have called, and when the food pantry opens one day each week, the families can come to pick up their food.

Sometimes the needs concern utility bills, rent, or medicine. Extra funds can be used to directly pay the utility company to make sure families have their basic needs met. If the sum is too big, the Vincentians do their best to cover enough of the bill to keep utilities on.

Parish and school food drives all support the efforts of the Vincentians. Donations from the green envelopes are used to purchase food and pay bills. Donations of both food and money from parishioners are what keep this ministry going. Ed estimates that about 80 percent of the requests are for food.



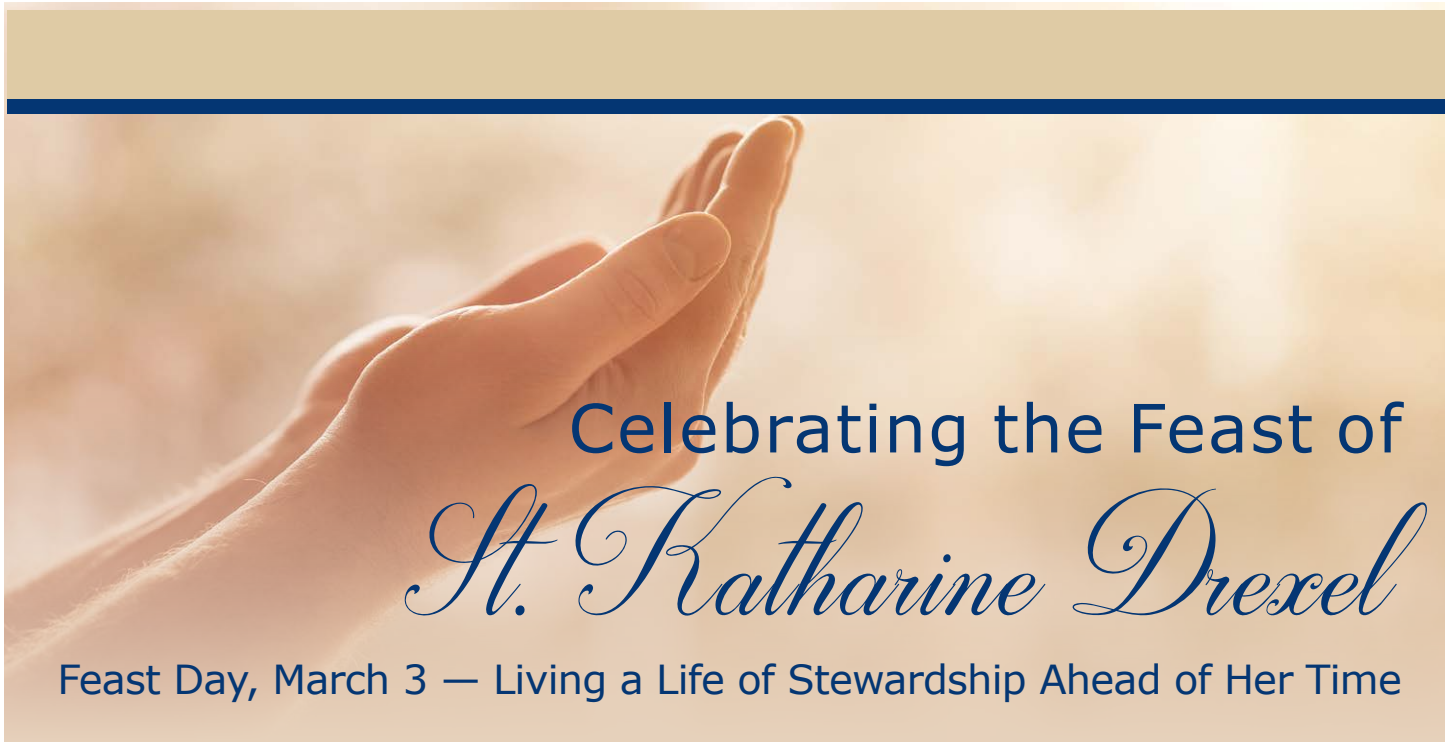
“I’m really grateful to our parishioners, they are so generous,” Ed says. “I’ve been a member of other parishes over the years and the parishioners we have here are some of the most generous I’ve come in contact with.”

The Vincentians are flexible and members contribute what time they have. The work is easily divided based on what each member has to offer.

“Members can devote as much time as they want and we’ll take whatever help we can get,” Ed says. “We leave it up to the member based on their schedule. Some of us are retired and we have lots of time. Others are still working or have family responsibilities and just devote one or two hours a week.”

The Vincentians meet every other week, and the ministry is open to parishioners from St. Joseph and Nativity. Parishioners can support this needed work by joining or by contributing with the green envelopes as part of the parish offering.

**To learn more or to get involved, contact Ed Molnar
at 440-320-0120 or e.molnar@oh.rr.com.**



Celebrating the Feast of *St. Katharine Drexel*

Feast Day, March 3 — Living a Life of Stewardship Ahead of Her Time

She was born on November 26, 1858 to a wealthy Philadelphia family and lived an early life of luxury, yet Katharine Drexel wasn't just an ordinary rich girl. Her parents instilled in Katharine and her two sisters one of the foundations of a stewardship way of life — their wealth was simply a gift from God that was on loan to them and designed to be shared with others.

Her road to a life of holiness and eventually sainthood — St. Katharine Drexel was canonized in 2000, and her feast day is celebrated on March 3 — began with that commitment to sharing her time, talent, and treasure with God and others as a young woman.

When the Drexel family took a trip to the Western United States when she was a young woman, Katharine witnessed the plight and destitution of the Native Americans of the region. This experience inspired her desire to act. This was the beginning of her lifelong personal and financial support of numerous missions and missionaries in the United States. The first school she established was St. Catherine Indian School in Santa Fe, N.M. in 1887.

Later, when visiting Pope Leo XIII in Rome, and asking him for missionaries to staff some of the Indian missions that she as a lay person was financing, she was surprised to hear the pope suggest that she become a missionary herself. After consultation with her spiritual director — Bishop James O'Connor, a Philadelphia priest at the time who later became the first Bishop of Omaha, Neb. — she made the decision

to give herself totally to God, along with her inheritance, through service to Native Americans and African Americans.

Her wealth was now transformed into a poverty of spirit, and her sense of stewardship became a daily constant in a life supported only by the bare necessities. On Feb. 12, 1891, she professed her first vows as a religious, founding the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament whose dedication would be to share the message of the Gospel and the life of the Eucharist among Native Americans and African Americans.

Always a woman of intense prayer, Katharine found in the Eucharist the source of her love for the poor and oppressed and of her concern to reach out to combat the effects of racism. Knowing that many African Americans were far from free, still living in substandard conditions

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Through the prophetic witness of Katharine Drexel's initiative, the Church in the United States was enabled to become aware of the grave domestic need for an apostolate among Native Americans and African Americans. She did not hesitate to speak out against injustice, taking a public stance when racial discrimination was in evidence.

The Feast of St. Katharine Drexel *continued from page 6*

as sharecroppers or underpaid menials, denied education and constitutional rights enjoyed by others, she felt a compassionate urgency to help change racial attitudes. She saw the need for quality education, and she discussed this need with some who shared her concern about the inequality of education for African Americans in the cities.

Restrictions of the law also prevented people of color in the rural South from obtaining a basic education. Founding and staffing schools for Native Americans and African Americans throughout the country became a priority for Katharine and her congregation. During her lifetime, she opened, staffed, and directly supported nearly 60 schools and missions, especially in the West and Southwest United States. Her crowning educational focus was the establishment in 1925 of Xavier University of Louisiana,

the only predominantly black Catholic institution of higher learning in the United States at the time.

Her joyous incisiveness, attuned to the Holy Spirit, penetrated obstacles and facilitated her advances for social justice. Through the prophetic witness of Katharine Drexel's initiative, the Church in the United States was enabled to become aware of the grave domestic need for an apostolate among Native Americans and African Americans. She did not hesitate to speak out against injustice, taking a public stance when racial discrimination was in evidence.

For the last 18 years of her life, she was rendered almost completely immobile because of a serious illness. During these years she gave herself to a life of adoration and contemplation as she had desired from early childhood. She died on March 3, 1955 at the age of 97.

Parishioner Ron Dickinson *continued from front cover*

Both Ron and Patti have served as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, including bringing Communion to the homebound.

"That was really nice," Ron says. "You go out and meet someone, and get a chance to pray with them and meet them, share your life experiences and your faith."

When their children were younger, Ron coached sports teams. He enjoyed teaching the young men in their formative years through coaching in CYO.

"Some of the kids are now in their early 30s," he says. "I get a warm, fuzzy feeling that they are doing well with their lives."

For a time, Ron volunteered on the parish's Cemetery Committee, cutting grass and trimming around the headstones. He has also served the elderly in our communities and was in charge of cleaning the church carpets, a project

that took a few days at a time. He has recently joined the Stewardship Committee and has been involved in prayer groups over the years.

Ron has been inspired by his wife's faith, who he says prays a daily Rosary and invites him to join her as well. In serving our parish and community, Ron doesn't ask for anything in return. Rather, when he helps, he says he receives the warm feeling and satisfaction of helping others.

"When my kids were younger, we built a house and money was tight," Ron says. "I was more focused on the secular and in some regards you have to — but I felt lost after a while. When I'm involved, it feels good. God came here — Jesus helped people and I think that's the road, the path that I feel like I do better when I'm able to do those things, able to help people in whatever way I can."

Journeying With Christ Through **STATIONS OF THE CROSS**

For Roman Catholics throughout the world, the Stations of the Cross are synonymous with Lent, Holy Week and, especially, Good Friday. This devotion is also known as the Way of the Cross, the *Via Crucis*, and the *Via Dolorosa*. It commemorates 14 key events on the day of Christ's crucifixion.

The Stations originated in medieval Europe, when wars prevented Christian pilgrims from visiting the Holy Land. Later, for the many who wanted to pass along the same route, but could not make the trip to Jerusalem, a practice developed that eventually took the form of the 14 stations currently found in almost every church. It was St. Francis of Assisi who devised the list of stations and started the tradition of reciting it as a type of devotional service. European artists created works depicting scenes of Christ's journey to Calvary.

In 1761, St. Alphonsus Liguori wrote: "The pious exercise of the Way of the Cross represents the sorrowful journey that Jesus Christ made with the cross on His shoulders, to die on Calvary for the love of us. We should,

therefore, practice this devotion with the greatest possible fervor, placing ourselves in spirit beside our Savior as He walked this sorrowful way, uniting our tears with His, and offering to Him both our compassion and our gratitude."

Praying the Stations of the Cross is one of the most popular devotions for Roman Catholics, and is often performed in a spirit of reparation for the sufferings and insults that Jesus endured during His Passion. The object of the Stations is to help us make a spiritual pilgrimage of prayer, through meditating upon the chief scenes of Christ's sufferings and death.

This devotion may be conducted personally, by making your way from one station to another and saying the prayers, or by having the celebrant move from station to station while the congregation make the responses.

A plenary indulgence may be gained by praying the Stations of the Cross. If, for some reasonable cause, the Stations are interrupted, a partial indulgence may be gained for each station.

Praying the Stations of the Cross

Opening Prayer

Station 1 Jesus Is Condemned to Death

Station 2 Jesus Carries His Cross

Station 3 Jesus Falls the First Time

Station 4 Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother

Station 5 Simon Of Cyrene Helps Jesus to Carry His Cross

Station 6 Veronica Wipes the Face Of Jesus

Station 7 Jesus Falls the Second Time

Station 8 Jesus Meets the Women Of Jerusalem

Station 9 Jesus Falls a Third Time

Station 10 Jesus Is Stripped of His Clothes

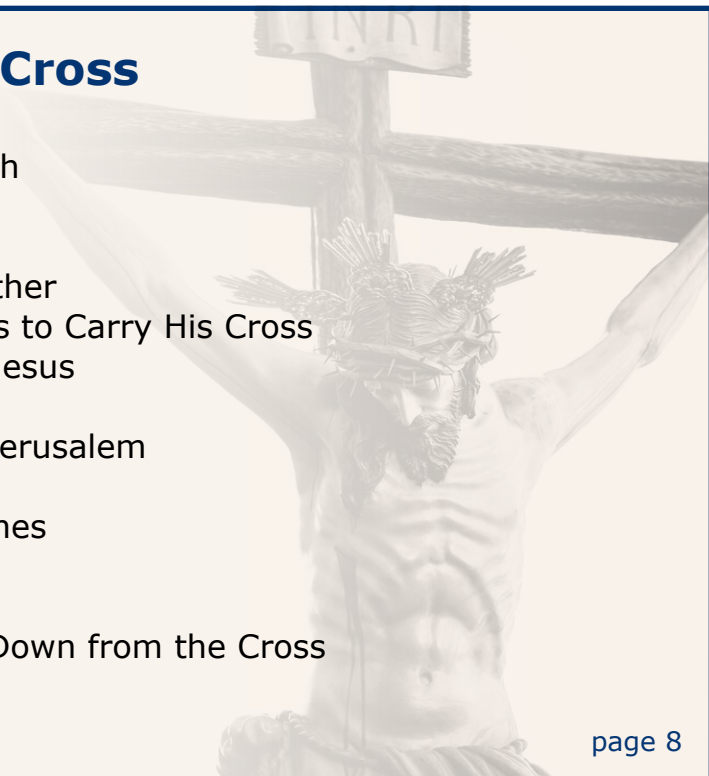
Station 11 Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross

Station 12 Jesus Dies on the Cross

Station 13 The Body of Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross

Station 14 Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb

Closing Prayer



Feelings on Lent

By NATHAN FRANKART

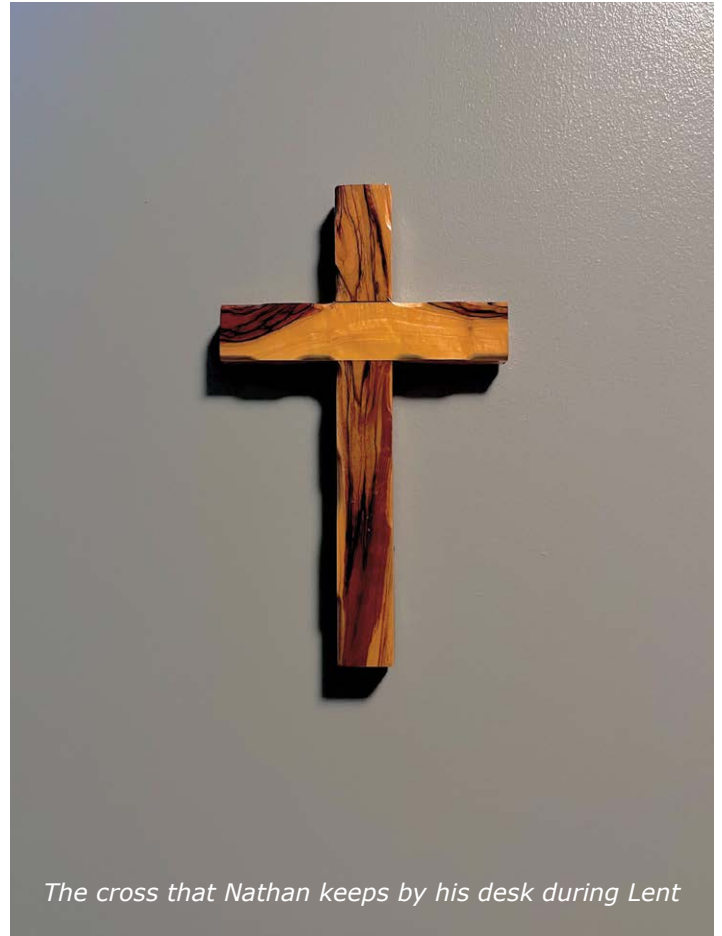
Peace of Christ to you!

Were you dreading it? Did you look ahead in the calendar and try to relish the last few days before Ash Wednesday? Did Fat Tuesday present itself as the opportunity to “have fun” for one last time before Lent began?

This is not an article about Catholic guilt, so don't worry, there will be no accusations leveled against anyone here. But depending on how you felt reading these questions above should tell you much about where your energies and focus should be this Lent — because, like it or not, Lent is a necessity.

And I mean a necessity outside of the context of the liturgical calendar. It's necessary beyond just preparation for Easter. Lent is the place of encountering ourselves and our need for God in the struggle that we enter into voluntarily so that when difficulty and struggle enter into our lives without our consent, the knowledge of relying on the Lord will be there from our previous experience. Jesus certainly went into the desert for 40 days to prepare for His future ministry, to ready Himself to preach the coming of the Kingdom of God. But I believe even more importantly, the fasting in the desert prepared him for the Passion.

It's not as though Jesus foresaw all things and chose to fast in the desert as an intentional act to get ready. Rather, the time fasting and praying would set a solid foundation for Christ to preach and teach, as well as suffer yet remain faithful, loving, and charitable through it all. Being prayerful during a time of fasting provides the necessary experience to aid us when trials do come. And they come to everyone. It will not solve, alleviate, or fix the difficulties of life. Rather, it gives the Christian faithful the opportunity to unite our difficulties and struggles to Jesus who does come to our aid. It is a reassurance that the God who upholds and loves God's people in times of fasting will do the same in the future. Every Lent provides the needed opportunity to learn all of this in new and deeper ways.



The cross that Nathan keeps by his desk during Lent

Lent is the place of encountering ourselves and our need for God in the struggle that we enter into voluntarily, so that when difficulty and struggle enter into our lives without our consent, the knowledge of relying on the Lord will be there from our previous experience.

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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 Events

First Friday Rosary

Friday, March 3 — 11 a.m., Nativity Church

First Saturday Rosary

Saturday, March 4 — 8:30 a.m., St. Joseph Church

Confirmation

Saturday, March 4 — 10 a.m., St. Joseph Church

Altar and Rosary Meeting

Tuesday, March 7 — 6:30 p.m., Nativity Church

Parent Club Meeting

Tuesday, March 7 — 7 p.m., School MPR

No School

Friday, March 10

THE ANSWER the Musical

Saturday, March 18 and Sunday, March 19 — 7:30 p.m., St. Joseph Church

No School — Spring Break

Monday, March 27 — Friday, March 31

PSR Classes

Wednesdays, March 1, 8, 15, 22 — 5:30 p.m., School (No class on March 29)

Youth Group Meetings

Sundays of March 5, 12, 19, 26 — 6 p.m., St. Joseph Social Hall

RCIA Meetings

Mondays, March 6, 13, 20, 27 — 7 p.m., Nativity Parish Hall

Men's Group Meeting

Tuesday, March 7 and 21 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph Social Hall

Vincentians Meeting

Thursday, March 9 and 23 — 9 a.m., Conference Room

Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes

Tuesdays and Thursdays in March — 9:30 a.m., Nativity Parish Hall

Stations of the Cross

Friday, March 3 — **Taizé, 7 p.m., St. Peter, Lorain** (together with St. Joseph Music Ministry)
Friday, March 10 — 7 p.m., Nativity Church
Friday, March 17 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph Church
Friday, March 24 — 7 p.m., Nativity Church
Friday, March 31 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph Church
Good Friday, April 7 — **Taizé, 7 p.m., St. Joseph Church** (together with St. Peter Choir)

Sneak Peek at Easter Triduum

(Verify times in parish bulletin)

Confessions

Holy Thursday, April 6 — Following the 7 p.m. Mass until 9 p.m., Nativity Church

Good Friday, April 7 — Following the Noon Liturgy until 3 p.m., St. Joseph Church

Saturday, April 8 — 11 a.m., St. Joseph Church

Blessing of the Food

Saturday, April 8 — 10:45 a.m., St. Joseph Church

Liturgy and Mass Times

Holy Thursday, April 6 — 7 p.m. Mass of the Lord's Supper at Nativity Church

Good Friday, April 7 — Noon Solemn Liturgy of the Lord's Passion at St. Joseph Church

Holy Saturday, April 8 — 8:45 p.m., Easter Vigil Mass at St. Joseph Church

Easter Sunday, April 9 —

8:30 a.m., Mass at St. Joseph Church
10:00 a.m., Mass at Nativity Church
11:30 a.m., Mass at St. Joseph Church.
There will be no 5:00 p.m. Mass on Easter Sunday