



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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MAY 2024

Health and Wellness Ministry Promoting Parishioners' Well-Being Nativity's Melanie Caruso Reflects on Good Stewardship of Our Health

Pope Francis once said, "All of us must care for life, cherish life, with tenderness, warmth." As Catholics, this focus on life must include our own personal health journeys — including our emotional, spiritual, and physical health. Dedication to all three of these areas is an important task in each of our lives. Caring for our health means prioritizing our health and wellness.

The Health and Wellness Ministry in our parish community focuses on these physical, spiritual, and emotional needs. Melanie Caruso is one of the ministry volunteers, having come out of retirement to help and be involved in the parish.

"She was a nurse and she wanted to be able to do something," says ministry leader Debby Romes.

Melanie, a parishioner at Nativity since 1974, worked as a registered nurse for a number of years, as well as a realtor for even longer.

"I love it at the church," she says. "I like helping people and I like being around people. They needed help. I'm at the church all the time and I enjoy it."

Melanie has been able to devote time to serving with the Health and Wellness Ministry. Most of her service has included assisting with blood pressure screenings and blood labs, and performing tasks such as registration or snack distribution.

"It's very important for people to be aware of their blood pressure and health," Melanie says. "If it isn't good then they are directed to get in touch with

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PENTECOST:

The Church's Birthday Offers a Lesson in Stewardship and Discipleship

Celebrated 50 days after Easter, Pentecost holds immense significance in the Catholic Church. It marks the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and Mary, empowering them to spread the Gospel. This event is not only a cornerstone of the Church's liturgical calendar but also a powerful lesson in stewardship and discipleship.

Pentecost, often referred to as the “birthday of the Church,” underscores the central role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Catholic. The Holy Spirit is a gift from God, just as all our talents, time, and resources are. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and Mary reminds Catholics that their own lives should be characterized by the openness to receive and share the gifts God has bestowed upon them.

- **Sharing the Good News:** One of the primary messages of Pentecost is the universal mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel to all nations. The apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke in languages they did not know, allowing them to communicate with people from various backgrounds. This moment teaches Catholics that the call to discipleship and stewardship is not exclusive but extends to all people. Catholics are called to be good stewards of the Good News, sharing it generously and inclusively with others, just as the apostles did.
- **Being Empowered for Service:** Pentecost is a reminder that the Holy Spirit empowers individuals for service. The apostles, who were once fearful and uncertain, were transformed into bold witnesses of Christ's teachings. This transformation illustrates the transformative power of the Holy Spirit and how it equips Catholics for service to the Church and the world. Stewardship, in this context, entails using

one's talents, time, and treasure to serve others and advance the mission of the Church.

- **Unity in Diversity:** The diverse crowd present at the first Pentecost, representing various nations and languages, highlights the theme of unity in diversity. Catholics are called to embrace and celebrate the diversity of God's creation while recognizing the common bond of faith. This is a vital aspect of stewardship — respecting the unique talents and backgrounds of each individual within the faith community and utilizing these differences to build a stronger, more vibrant Church.
- **Being Responsive to God's Call:** Pentecost serves as a reminder of the apostles' responsiveness to God's call. They were willing to leave behind their old lives, filled with uncertainty and fear, and accept the mission to spread the Gospel. This act of responding to God's call is fundamental to discipleship, which encompasses a willingness to be generous with one's time, talents, and treasure in service to God and others.

Pentecost is a pivotal moment in the Catholic Church's history, and its significance extends beyond the historical event. It is a lesson in stewardship and discipleship, emphasizing the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the call to share the Good News, the empowerment for service, unity in diversity, and the responsive nature of discipleship. Catholics are reminded that, like the apostles, they are called to be good stewards of the gifts and blessings they have received, using them to serve and enrich the Church and the broader community. Pentecost serves as an annual reminder that the Holy Spirit continues to guide and empower Catholics on their journey of faith and stewardship.

A Letter from Our Pastor

Mary Undoer of Knots



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

We dedicate this beautiful month of May to Mary, the Blessed Mother of Jesus and our Mother too. She has so many titles that call for our affection: Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mary the Help of Christians, to name but a few.

There is one that I have rather recently discovered and which really warms my heart and stokes my imagination. It is Mary Undoer of Knots. And it is a gift to us from the devotion of Pope Francis.

Living through today's unsettling times, I have turned to Mary under this title many times. She brings me a lot of comfort as I remember my own mother patiently and skillfully undoing the knots in my shoelaces and my rosary beads.

I would like to tell you about this devotion and then include a prayer that Pope Francis composed to Mary Undoer of Knots.

The original Mary Undoer of Knots is a 300-year-old painting that has become the fastest growing Marian devotion in the world today, thanks in large part to Pope Francis. This devotion dates back to 1700, when German artist Johann Melchior Schmidtner painted an image of Mary untying the knots of a ribbon. The knots symbolized the difficulties of a couple whose marriage was falling apart. After many prayers to Our Lady, the couple reconciled.

The original painting is located at the church of St. Peter am Perlach in Augsburg, Germany. Mary is draped in blue and stands under a dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit. She is assisted in untying the knots by several angels.

Pope Francis first saw the painting while studying in Germany in the 1980s. He encouraged devotion to Mary Undoer of Knots in his native Argentina. In 2005 he had the image inscribed on a chalice and given to Pope Benedict XVI. Devotion to Mary Undoer of Knots has grown rapidly in recent years.



Here is the prayer that Pope Francis composed:

Holy Mary, full of the presence of God, during your life you accepted with great humility the holy will of the Father and the legacy of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and evil never dared to entangle you with its confusion.

Since then you have interceded for all of our difficulties as you did at the wedding feast of Cana. With all simplicity and with patience, you have given us an example of how to untangle the knots in our complicated lives. By being our Mother forever, you arrange and make clear the path that unites us to Our Lord.

Holy Mary, Mother of God and ours, with your maternal heart, untie the knots that upset our lives. We ask you to receive into your hands (here mention your prayer request) and deliver us from evil and untie the knots that keep us from being united to God. So that free of all confusion and error; we may find Him in all things, keep Him in our hearts, and serve Him always in our brothers and sisters.

Mary, Undoer of Knots, pray for us. Amen.

Gratefully in Christ,

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

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor



The Significance of the *Visitation* of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a significant event in the Catholic Church, commemorating the visit of the Virgin Mary to her older relative, Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John the Baptist. This event, celebrated each year on May 31, holds profound theological and spiritual significance in the Catholic Church.

A Journey of Faith and Joy

The Visitation marks a moment of profound faith and joy as the Virgin Mary, upon receiving the angel Gabriel’s message that she would conceive and bear the Son of God, hastened to visit Elizabeth. It is an embodiment of Mary’s humility and obedience, as she embarks on a journey to serve her older relative, who is also blessed with a miraculous pregnancy.

Encounter with the Messiah

The meeting of Mary and Elizabeth is a poignant moment, as it is the first recorded encounter between Jesus, still in Mary’s womb, and John the Baptist, in Elizabeth’s womb. According to the Gospel of Luke, when Mary greeted Elizabeth, the baby in Elizabeth’s womb leaped for joy. This profound connection is a testament to the divinely ordained roles of Jesus and John in the plan of salvation.

A Sign of God’s Presence

The Visitation is a powerful sign of God’s presence and grace. Mary’s visit brings blessings to Elizabeth’s household, and it is during this visit that Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, proclaims Mary as “blessed among women” and acknowledges the significance of Mary’s role in God’s plan. Mary’s Magnificat, a beautiful hymn of praise to God, is also recited during this encounter, emphasizing the importance of humility, gratitude, and recognizing God’s blessings in one’s life.

A Model of Christian Charity

The Visitation exemplifies the concept of Christian charity, demonstrating the importance of caring for one another. Mary’s willingness to travel to assist her relative, who was likely in need of support during her pregnancy, reflects a deep sense of compassion and solidarity. This act of charity serves as an example for Catholics to emulate by reaching out to those in need, particularly family and friends, in times of joy or difficulty.

The Role of Women in Salvation History

The Visitation underscores the significant role of women in salvation history. Mary and Elizabeth play pivotal roles in the unfolding of God’s plan. Mary’s “yes” to the angel’s message initiates the Incarnation, and Elizabeth, in recognizing the divine presence in Mary, blesses her and the child in her womb. This highlights the importance of women as key figures in God’s redemptive plan.

Celebrating the Feast of the Visitation

The Feast of the Visitation is celebrated on May 31 in the Catholic Church. On this day, Catholics are encouraged to attend Mass, reflecting on the Visitation’s significance and drawing inspiration from Mary’s faith and charity. It is also an occasion for Catholics to honor the role of women in the Church and to renew their commitment to humility, service, and the praise of God.

The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary holds immense significance in the Catholic Church. It signifies a moment of faith, joy, and divine presence, emphasizing the importance of Christian charity, the role of women in salvation history, and the recognition of God’s blessings. The solemnity celebrated on May 31 serves as a reminder of these essential aspects of the Visitation, inspiring Catholics to live out these values in their own lives.

Celebrating **Cinco de Mayo** in the Catholic Church *Honoring Mexican Culture and Heritage*

Cinco de Mayo — the fifth of May — often synonymous with lively festivities and cultural pride, holds a special significance for Catholics, particularly those of Mexican-American descent. Beyond its portrayal as a secular celebration, Cinco de Mayo is deeply intertwined with the Catholic faith, serving as a reminder of spiritual resilience, unity, and the enduring connection between cultural heritage and religious beliefs.

At its core, Cinco de Mayo commemorates the Battle of Puebla in 1862, where Mexican forces achieved a remarkable victory over the French army. While not a decisive battle in the grand scheme of the Franco-Mexican War, it symbolizes the courage and determination of the Mexican people to defend their homeland against foreign aggression. Many of the soldiers who fought in this battle were devout Catholics,

drawing strength from their faith as they faced overwhelming odds.

For Catholics, Cinco de Mayo offers an opportunity to reflect on the intertwined histories of Mexico and the Catholic Church. The faith has played a central role in shaping Mexican culture and identity for centuries, providing spiritual guidance and support in times of adversity. As such, Cinco de Mayo is not merely a secular celebration but also a testament to the deep-rooted connection between cultural heritage and religious beliefs.

This connection is especially significant for Mexican Americans, who often find themselves navigating the intersection of faith and culture in their daily lives. Cinco de Mayo becomes a time to honor their heritage and express their faith through cultural traditions. Special Masses and prayer services dedicated to the occasion are held at parishes around the U.S. allowing

parishioners to come together and offer prayers of gratitude for past victories and petitions for continued blessings.

Moreover, Cinco de Mayo serves as a celebration of community and solidarity within the Catholic Church. Through music, dance, and traditional rituals, parishioners strengthen bonds of faith and fellowship, recognizing the diversity and richness within their shared faith tradition. This sense of unity extends beyond national borders, connecting Catholics of Mexican descent with their brothers and sisters around the world.

Cinco de Mayo is a day to celebrate cultural pride, honor the sacrifices of Mexican ancestors, and reaffirm the enduring values of the Catholic faith. On this day, Mexican Catholics are reminded of the spiritual resilience that has sustained them throughout history and the divine grace that continues to guide their journey.



School Music Program

Brings Many Joys of

Music is not simply a way to express oneself — it is also a way to give praise and worship to God. At St. Joseph School, the students have a weekly opportunity to attend a music class that teaches them about many different types and concepts of music. However, it is also an opportunity for them to learn how to turn their thoughts toward God, through music.

Gabie Whiteman returned to SJS in 2017 as the music teacher. She teaches preschool through eighth grade and has the opportunity to work with each class once a week for 50 minutes. She loves the chance that she has to teach the kids about music and their faith.

“Each week I teach the whole school a contemporary Christian rock song,” Mrs. Whiteman says. “We sing it all together as a school every Friday morning in our whole school meeting. I make sure that they know and understand why we are singing these words and what they mean. I want them to take this type of music and see it as another form of worship. And they sound amazing doing it.”

Music classes are highly active, especially in the lower grades. They focus on a lot of movement to help the students learn the concepts that are being taught. Each year there are two concerts — one for Christmas and one in the spring. Students also have the opportunity to participate in Friday Mass and a musical in the spring. The spring musical includes students from the fifth through eighth grades. This year it will be a production of Disney’s *Newsies JR*.

“I believe strongly that kids should know and learn music across all genres,” Mrs. Whiteman says. “We sing traditional folk songs, Christian rock, pop, rock and roll, oldies, musical theater, and, of course, hymns.”



SJS students participating in their weekly music class



Music teacher Gabie Whiteman

Faith and Song to Our Students

Mrs. Whiteman shares that she loves being part of each child's education at SJS. This position creates a space for her to help her students grow, but also for her own spiritual growth as she works with the kids each day.

"I have known a lot of these students since preschool," Mrs. Whiteman says. "They have a great respect for me and the music program. I always try to keep up with the things that are of interest to them, and this has helped to create a great bond between us. I love watching the quieter shy student grow to be able to sing a solo at a concert."



SJS students participating in their weekly music class

If you have questions about the music program at St. Joseph School, contact Gabie Whiteman at 440-988-4244.

Health and Wellness Ministry Promoting Parishioners' Well-Being *continued from front cover*

a physician. Any help you can give people on that line is very important."

For Melanie, serving in the ministry is part of caring for others and a greater mission of helping those in need.

"It's part of stewardship," she says. "You're giving your time and care to others. I think it works with faith — you walk the talk. We're here on this earth to help one another. If you want to believe in Jesus, you help one another and take care of people. You give your time to take

care of them and help them. A lot of people, they just don't understand how important it is."

Due to some changes to the hospital's offerings, the Health and Wellness Ministry is no longer providing blood pressure screenings and labs. Debby notes they are working on what they will be doing moving forward.

"Things are being reorganized," she says. "And we're coming up with a plan with how we'll approach things from now on."

To get involved in the ministry, or for more information, contact Debby Romes at debromes@yahoo.com.

Deepening Your Faith: The Transformative Power of Catholic Podcasts



In the digital age, where information flows ceaselessly, Catholics are finding solace and spiritual growth in the world of podcasts. These audio treasures not only serve as a source of inspiration but also as powerful tools for deepening one's faith and understanding of Catholicism. Let's explore how embracing Catholic podcasts can be a transformative journey for believers, accompanied by a curated list of the top 10 Catholic podcasts that you can easily access online.

The Power of Catholic Podcasts

Podcasts have become a cornerstone of modern communication, allowing individuals to consume content on the go. For Catholics seeking to fortify their spiritual journey, podcasts offer a unique blend of convenience and depth. Whether you're commuting, exercising, or simply relaxing at home, these audio programs provide a space for reflection and education, and serve as companions in the journey of faith.

Ten Catholic Podcasts for Spiritual Growth

- 1. Catholic Stuff You Should Know:** Delving into various aspects of Catholicism, this podcast combines humor with profound insights, making complex topics accessible to all.
- 2. Word on Fire Show:** Hosted by Bishop Robert Barron, this podcast explores the intersection of faith and culture, offering a deep dive into the teachings of the Church.
- 3. Pints with Aquinas:** A lively exploration of the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, this podcast invites listeners to engage with the rich intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church in a friendly, conversational style.
- 4. The Catholic Talk Show:** Covering a wide range of topics, from history to current events, this podcast provides a fresh perspective on Catholicism with a dose of humor.

- 5. Catholic Answers Live:** A live call-in show where apologists answer questions about Catholicism, providing valuable insights into the teachings and practices of the Church.
- 6. The Liturgy Guys:** Exploring the beauty and richness of the liturgy, this podcast offers a deeper understanding of the rituals and traditions that form the heart of Catholic worship.
- 7. The Jeff Cavins Show:** Hosted by Bible scholar Jeff Cavins, this podcast delves into Scripture, offering listeners a profound and practical understanding of the Word of God.
- 8. Catholic Feminist:** A thought-provoking exploration of feminism and its intersection with Catholicism, this podcast encourages critical reflection on gender issues within the context of faith.
- 9. Catching Foxes:** A candid and humorous take on the challenges and joys of living out the Catholic faith in the modern world, this podcast is both relatable and insightful.
- 10. Among the Lilies:** Designed for Catholic women, this podcast explores topics relevant to their spiritual and everyday lives, fostering a sense of community and solidarity.

How to Access These Podcasts

To embark on your faith-enriching journey, simply visit the websites of the respective podcasts listed above or search for them on popular podcast platforms such as Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, or Stitcher. Subscribe to stay updated on the latest episodes and let these podcasts be your companions in deepening your Catholic faith.

Catholic podcasts offer a unique and accessible means for believers to grow spiritually and learn more about their faith. Embrace the transformative power of faith in your ears and let these podcasts accompany you on your journey of Catholic discovery.

A Life Update

By NATHAN FRANKART, Seminarian

Peace of Christ to you!


The summer has officially started, which means I am once again free from my seminary obligations and onto my next big adventure — continuing to discern the possibility of military chaplaincy.

As you may recall, last year I received my officership training down at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Ala., followed by a stint at Robins Air Force Base in Georgia. Both bases gave me hands-on and much-needed experience in understanding the mechanics of the modern-day Air Force. The lessons I gained in leadership will prove incredibly valuable to whichever path of priesthood I end up discerning for my future.

Now, I move into a more concrete experience, moving out of training environments and stepping into the daily operations of base life. I will be entering into the chapel team at McConnell AFB for the summer, working to provide Airmen with their religious needs regardless of denomination or religious expression. I am excited to deepen my knowledge and understanding on the day-to-day life of a chaplain under the expertise of great mentors and excellent leaders.

Additionally, I will be writing to you later this summer to relay back my experiences of the 10th Eucharistic Congress, taking place in Indianapolis this summer! It will be taking place in the middle of July, and I am honored to be selected along with some other seminarians to represent the Diocese of Cleveland at this monumental moment in the American Church's history. We will be celebrating the source and summit of our faith with, hopefully, as many as 80,000 other Catholics from across the country. Pray for my safe travels and for the safety of all pilgrims who will travel to celebrate, venerate, and honor the Eucharist at this national congress.

I will come back in late July to Amherst to get ready to start formation all over again. I will be entering into 4th theology at St. Mary's — believe me, I struggle to even type that, let alone believe that it is true. I am, every day, one step closer to priesthood, thanks to the goodness of God and the prayers of this community. I can't wait to share the good works the Lord continues to provide for me.



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AD SPACE

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This newsletter brought to you by the Catholic Communities of:

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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 Events

Blood Drive

*Thursday, May 2 — 4 p.m., Vitalant
bus at St. Joseph parking lot*

First Friday Rosary

*Friday, May 3 — 11 a.m.,
Nativity Church*

First Saturday Rosary

*Saturday, May 4 — 9 a.m.,
St. Joseph Church*

Drama Club Performance "NEWSIES Jr."

*Friday, May 3, and Saturday, May 4 —
7 p.m., St. Joseph Social Hall*

Hospitality Tuesday

*Tuesday, May 7 — 8:30 a.m.
(following 8 a.m. Mass),
Nativity Church and Hall*

Altar and Rosary Society Meeting

*Tuesday, May 7 — 6:30 p.m.
Nativity Parish Hall*

Parent Club Meeting

Tuesday, May 7 — 7 p.m., School MPR

SJS May Crowning Devotional

*Friday, May 10 — Following the 9 a.m.
Mass, St. Joseph Church*

SJS Spring Concert

*Friday, May 17 — 7 p.m.,
St. Joseph Church*

Baccalaureate Mass

*Sunday, May 19 — 11 a.m.,
St. Joseph Church*

No School

Monday, May 27 — Memorial Day

Knights of Columbus Meeting

Tuesday, May 28 — 7 p.m., School MPR

Preschool Graduation – morning session

*Friday, May 31 — 10:30 a.m.,
St. Joseph Church*

Preschool Graduation – afternoon session

*Friday, May 31 — 12 p.m.,
St. Joseph Church*

Vincetians Meeting

*Thursday, May 2, 16 and 30 — 9 a.m.,
St. Joseph Conference Room*

Holy Ground Youth Group

*Sunday, May 5, 19 — 6 p.m.,
St. Joseph Church*

Men's Group Meetings

*Tuesday, May 7 (Program Meeting)
and May 21 (Prayer and Share) —
7 p.m., St. Joseph Social Hall*

Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes

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