



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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By *NATHAN FRANKART*

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APRIL 2022

Our RCIA Sponsors: Sharing in a Profound Journey of Faith



Easter Vigil is a special Mass for so many reasons. For those entering into the Catholic faith, the Easter Vigil may be the most memorable Mass of their lives. Alongside each candidate and catechumen is a dedicated sponsor who has walked beside them as they journeyed into the Catholic Church.

Art Jaskiewicz was the sponsor for his wife, Stacie, when she came into the Church in 2017. What he initially thought would be an easy job quickly became more profound. Their journey began when Art and Stacie had their son and began to think about his education. Art had shared good memories about his Catholic upbringing and education, and the more they thought about it, the more Stacie began to consider converting to the Catholic faith.



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Art and Stacie Jaskiewicz and family



Cultivate Your Personal Garden for Christ This Spring

Everyone loves springtime. The weather is warmer and beautiful flowers are blooming all around us.

But anyone with a beautiful garden will attest that the flowers do not magically appear as if the season change itself miraculously makes the flowers bloom. Beautiful flowers and lush gardens are the result of the gardener's hard work.

Imagine that a man is given some flower seeds. The man then buries the seeds in the ground and leaves them on their own. As the months pass and rain falls, some seeds may receive enough nourishment to bloom. But simply burying seeds in the ground will hardly make for a gorgeous garden. Rather, if the man truly wants to enjoy many beautiful flowers, there is much care and work ahead. Recognizing the hidden beauty within these simple seeds, he must cultivate the ground, plant the seeds in a solid foundation, then water and fertilize them throughout the year. Only then will he see the proper fruit these seeds were made to bear.

This simple illustration speaks to the heart of us this season — not only as we look around at the flowers, but more importantly as we reflect on the springtime of the Church. We are celebrating the great feast of Easter when, through His death and resurrection, Christ offers us the greatest gift of all — eternal life with Him forever. This celebration leads us

to reflect on the many gifts God has given us in this life and the fruit they will bear, especially as we look to life eternal.

He has given each of us a multitude of gifts so that we can better serve Him and bring others to Him. Do we notice the hidden potential of our gifts? Do we see them, like the seed — as seemingly small, yet so full of fruit? Everything we have — our time, talents, and treasure — is a gift from the Lord. Do we accept gifts in gratitude, then put them to use by cultivating and nourishing them so they will bear the proper fruit?

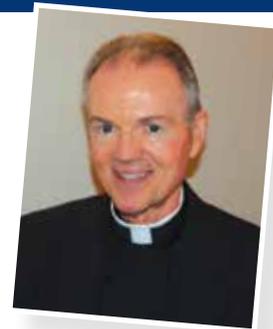
Just like springtime flowers that we enjoy, our time, talents, and treasure need to be cared for. Our gifts need to be cultivated and nourished. Only then will we see them for what they are — wonderful gifts given by God meant for His greater glory.

Like the seeds, if we use our gifts flippantly, we may see some fruits here and there. But we are called to so much more — we are called to build a beautiful garden. We are called to offer God the most beautiful flowers of all.

This season, as we look at all the beautiful flowers around us and enjoy God's creation, let us think about the seeds in our own lives. Ask yourself if you have accepted the gifts God has given you — your time, talents, and treasure — and have cultivated and cared for them properly. Or, do they just sit dormant within you yearning to bloom?

A Letter from Our Pastor

All Things and All People Are *Made New*



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

We associate the Easter season with springtime — a time of new life and new beginnings — and Holy Scripture addresses this idea of newness many times. The Lord declares, “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5).

This idea of being “new” is important to us as Catholics, and it is important to our community. We need to strive to do this on a regular basis — even on a *daily* basis. Think of the fact that all was once new. Regardless of how you view the development of this earth and those of us who occupy it, all was once new.

During this ongoing Easter season, we need to retain that idea of being “new.” And being “new” means conversion into being what God has in mind for us to be. And we have often pointed out that conversion is at the heart of a life of stewardship.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it, “The Paschal mystery

has two aspects: by His death, Christ liberates us from sin; by His Resurrection, He opens for us the way to a new life” (654).

In other words, Christ’s Resurrection is the source of our new life — our own future resurrection. St. Paul wrote about it to the Romans in the following words (Rom 6:5), “For if we have grown into union with Him through a death like His, we shall also be united with Him in the resurrection.”

Hope for a new life beginning now and extending on into heaven is the result of Jesus’ Resurrection. What greater grounds for thanksgiving can there be than this Easter hope? We should sing with joy about God’s promise to us: “Behold, I make all things new!” (Rev 21:5).

St. Paul also wrote (Col 3:1-2), “If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.”

Jesus’ Resurrection and His promise of a new life for us mean that we need to live in conformity with our status as adopted children of God.

How do we show our joy and our gratitude to God for this amazing gift He has given us? We join in worship and praise God by word and song. We share the Good News of Jesus’ victory over death with our family, friends, and neighbors. And we offer back to the Lord a portion of the time, talent, and treasure He has entrusted to us.

Yes, the Easter message that we share in the benefits of Christ’s Resurrection indeed makes all things new — the ultimate foundation for all Christian stewardship.

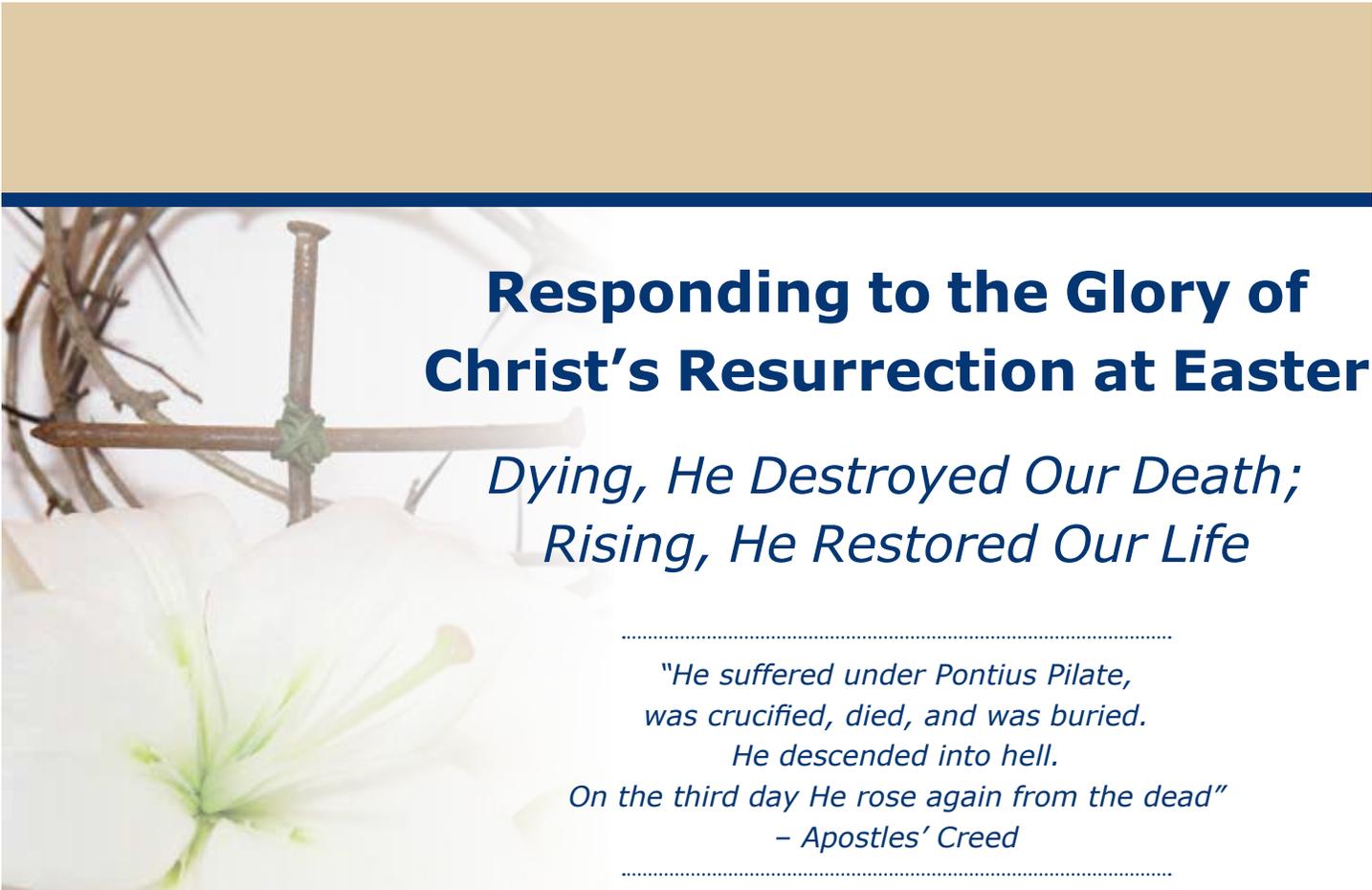
The Lord is risen, alleluia!

Gratefully in Christ,

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

Fr. Timothy J. O’Connor,
Pastor





Responding to the Glory of Christ's Resurrection at Easter

*Dying, He Destroyed Our Death;
Rising, He Restored Our Life*

*"He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.*

*On the third day He rose again from the dead"
– Apostles' Creed*

As we have recently come to the end of our Lenten journey toward Easter, let us take a moment to meditate on three pivotal lines from the ancient creed, which comprise the central events of our redemption.

Far from being a mere myth or legend, in Jerusalem around the year 33 A.D., Jesus Christ — the Son of God made man — was tortured at the hands of the Romans. He was flogged, beaten, spit upon, and crowned with thorns. He was made to carry the cross through the crowded streets to Golgotha and, once there, He was crucified — He was nailed to a cross and died. Just as someday we will each be laid in our graves, Jesus was laid in His.

The most obvious question that confronts the observer of this horrific reality is “why?” Luckily, Christ made the impetus for His self-sacrifice quite clear: “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life” (Jn 3:14-15).

The reasons Christ died on the cross are twofold, one negative and one positive. The negative cause is sin. Only in witnessing the cost of redemption — the death of the Son of God — can we begin to comprehend the profound magnitude of sin: “You have been purchased at a price,” says St. Paul (1 Cor 6:20).

Conversely, Christ willingly accepted the cross because of love. St. John famously says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

Uniting these two causes, St. Paul says, “God proves His love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

In His limitless compassion, Christ entered into the fullness of human suffering — physical torment, emotional agony, and utter isolation — so that He might share complete solidarity with mankind. Accordingly, His passion and death not only accomplished our redemption but by the cross, He also showed us the way to true discipleship. For Christ taught His disciples long before His crucifixion, “if anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Lk 9:23).

Christ's is the final and perfect covenant between God and man, and it is a covenant of love, with Christ Himself as its high priest. Nevertheless, this covenant is not based on love as popular culture conceives of it, but love as Christ displayed it: “The way we came to know love was that He laid down His life for us” (1 John 3:16).

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Responding to the Glory of Christ's Resurrection at Easter *continued from page 4*

Joined with the passion, Christ's Resurrection is the key to the entire Gospel — for in rising from the dead, Jesus proved true His bold promises. He had prophesied to the apostles, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again" (Jn 10:18). The Resurrection vindicates this promise and validates His teaching and miracles.

Furthermore, Christ, "the firstborn from the dead," opened the door to eternal life and to new creation (Col 1:18). Out of the darkness of despair, the scattered and frightened disciples saw the risen Christ and were renewed and transformed. Filled with faith in the crucified and resurrected Savior, they evangelized the known world.

St. Paul summarizes the centrality of the redemptive power of the Easter Triduum with his characteristic zeal:

"If Christ has not been raised, then empty (too) is our preaching; empty, too, your faith. Then we are also false witnesses to God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins" (1 Cor 15:14-17).

This Easter, let us respond to the glory of Christ's Resurrection by exclaiming, as St. Thomas the Apostle did, "My Lord and my God!" And may each of us be filled with faith in God of our salvation, hope in the rewards He has won for us, and love for Him who has deigned to bestow them on us.

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Meet Parishioner Jennifer Jackson-Ausperk

Embracing a Life of Service, Faith and Family

When Jennifer Jackson-Ausperk was attending St. Joseph Parish School as a child, she remembers being very nervous reading a petition at Mass. Now, Jennifer is a lector at St. Joseph's. While she still gets nervous, she enjoys serving in this way.

"I love connecting with the Word," she says. "I don't get to present to people as much in my current job as a preschool director as I did when I was an educational consultant. This allows me to talk in front of people."

Jennifer has a long history at her parish home of St. Joseph's. Her dad, Skip Jackson, was very involved at St. Joseph's, helping construct the sports complex and coaching for the Catholic Youth Organization for many years. Since Skip's passing in 2001, Jennifer has strived to carry on his legacy at St. Joseph's.

"My parents have been part of this parish since before I was born," she says. "I love hearing stories about my dad and thinking about his legacy here."

Jennifer and her husband, Adam, have a son, Henry. Their daughter, Alice, was born in 2017. She was stillborn, and her funeral was held at St. Joseph's.



Jennifer Jackson-Ausperk



*Jennifer Jackson-Ausperk
with her son, Henry*

Jennifer is so thankful to

all those who came to the funeral and offered support.

Jennifer also serves on the Mission Team. She loves international travel, although mission trips have been put on hold due to the pandemic. Jennifer is also an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and Co-Chair of the Parish Council.

"I love that on the Parish Council I get to learn more about what is going on at St. Joseph's," she says. "I can be a voice for people."

As a social person, Jennifer appreciates getting to know new people through her involvement at St. Joseph. And while she is involved in several ministries here at St. Joseph's, it wasn't always this way. Angry at God for the loss of her father, she fell away from the Church for about five years. What helped bring her back was when her best friend, Fr. Terry Grachanin, announced he was going into the seminary to become a priest.

"I made a vow right then to fully support him in this new chapter of his life," she says.

Having then become involved in many events at Borromeo Seminary, Jennifer met many priests and future priests during Fr. Terry Grachanin's time in the seminary. After

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Meet Parishioner Jennifer Jackson- Ausperk

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five years away, Jennifer came back to the Church in 2006. She was excited when Fr. Michael Denk was assigned here, as she had gotten to know him while attending events at Borromeo Seminary.

“I can’t even begin to tell you how much happier I am when I’m involved because of the sense of family that I feel,” she says.

Jennifer encourages everyone to find a way to get involved at our parishes. There is something for everyone — from bakers to cleaners, from introverts to extroverts.

“When you become involved and give of your time, talent, and treasure, your church family grows, and walking in the doors is like coming home,” Jennifer says.



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— Jennifer Jackson-
Ausperk

Our RCIA Sponsors: Sharing in a Profound Journey of Faith

continued from front cover

“Being a sponsor brought me back into the Church full speed,” Art says. “There’s a time frame in college that I call ‘the dark ages,’ when I fell out of practice. When my wife asked me to be her sponsor, I thought it would be easy. But being a sponsor means more than just standing there and saying, ‘Yes, I’ll help you become Catholic.’ It’s setting an example — going to church and volunteering.”

While Art wasn’t able to go to all of the meetings with Stacie, they started having conversations at home as Stacie thought of more questions. These conversations didn’t just help Stacie understand her new faith, but they also drew Art back to his roots.

“Then I started going to the meetings,” Art says. “They had good food and nice people. I went to hear what they had to say, to support her, and obviously to eat good food!”

Sponsors aren’t required to attend RCIA meetings, but Art recommends that they do go to meetings when they can. He has remained involved with RCIA since sponsoring Stacie by giving presentations on different topics. He has also seen the benefits when sponsors attend with their candidate or catechumen.

“As your candidate grows, you’re there to answer questions for them that they might not want to ask in class or that pops up after,” Art says. “Having their sponsor there with them makes it easier for them.”

The RCIA journey culminates with the beautiful Easter Vigil Mass.

“It was a lot more meaningful to me when she went through this process and was standing up there being converted at the Easter Vigil,” Art says. “It was one of the greatest moments next to the birth of our kids.”

RCIA sponsors are practicing Catholics in good standing with the church. They do not need to be a parishioner at St. Joseph Parish or Nativity to sponsor someone entering the Church. If you are interested in attending or helping with RCIA classes, please contact the parish office at 440-988-2848.

THE PRAYER CHAIN MINISTRY

Gathering as the Body of Christ to Reach the Heart of God

After Nancy Ann Smith's son suffered from a terrible truck accident, as well as a serious fall from a roof, she knew just where to turn — the Prayer Chain.

"As his mother, I wanted prayers offered for his physical recovery, which in each case, took months," says Nancy, who co-founded the Prayer Chain at Nativity Parish along with Carol Brewer. "In my heart, I also prayed that these accidents would not cause him to fall away further from the Catholic faith he grew up with. In the end, his recovery has happened, *and* he has become closer to God through the experiences he had."

Both Nativity and Saint Joseph Parishes have their own respective Prayer Chain ministries. Basically, each chain is a system that informs its participants of various prayer intentions which are submitted. By using a prayer chain model, the prayer needs can be shared with many people very quickly. Anyone may submit a prayer request by text or phone, who will then contact the next person in line to pray for the intention, and so the chain begins. Chain members can offer the request up to the loving heart of Our Lord in whatever way they choose, such as by praying the Rosary or asking their favorite saint to intercede.

"Being inclined to pray for each other and each other's worries binds a group together a caring spirit," Nancy says. "I believe this is one way that the Holy Spirit nurtures our community."

St. Joseph's Prayer Chain is currently led by Mary Tornabene, who receives the requests and sends them out to everyone on the chain.

"Our Prayer Chain can be described as a group of kind-hearted people who make the time to pray for those in need," Mary says. "We are very fortunate to have the dedicated people we have on our Prayer Chain. We have

close to 60-some members and many have been on it for years. So, often when we get a new member, they will say they are happy to be in a group where there are so many nice people. We may be a quiet group, but when we join together in prayer, we are really powerful."

In the end, those who give their time and talent to the Prayer Chain find themselves abundantly rewarded in return.

"Being on the Prayer Chain might help a person to become a more prayerful person and grow in friendship with God, as it brings them into more frequent conversation with Him and allows them to see the answers to their prayers 'up close'," Nancy says. "God has blessed me tremendously through this ministry, and the prayerful conversations I have with God are now more frequent and approached with deeper love and appreciation with Mary and Jesus and the saints. When we try to do something to help others get familiar with God, the benefits just pour freely upon our lives."

If you would like to join the Prayer Chain at Nativity, or to submit a prayer request, please contact Nancy Ann Smith at 440-731-2369, Carol Brewer at 440-670-0858 or 440-434-2643.

To get in touch with the Prayer Chain at St. Joseph's, please call the Parish Office at 440-988-2848 and follow the designated prompts. All prayer intentions are to be kept private. Generally speaking, parishioners can also sign up to be on either prayer chain on Time, Talent, and Treasure Sunday.



Listen

By *NATHAN FRANKART*

Pease of Christ to you!

There is a song that I have been playing for over the last year, and I think you should listen to it as well. It is not your typical spiritual song or hymn, although there are plenty of beautiful songs that I would also recommend elsewhere. There is no shortage of artfully crafted pieces of music that give praise to God, in which we can pray with and through them. But the one I am thinking of is different.

I first encountered something like this at Catholic Youth Summer Camp, where often middle schoolers and high schoolers struggle to sit in silence in prayer. As a solution, the prayer teams played an instrumental score set over ephemeral waves of sound — something that mimics the ocean.

The artist is William Augusto, and the piece is called **“Soaking in His Presence.”** Camp staff would play this over Eucharistic Adoration or personal prayer times in chapel. It became the background track of an entire summer camp where teens came to know Christ.

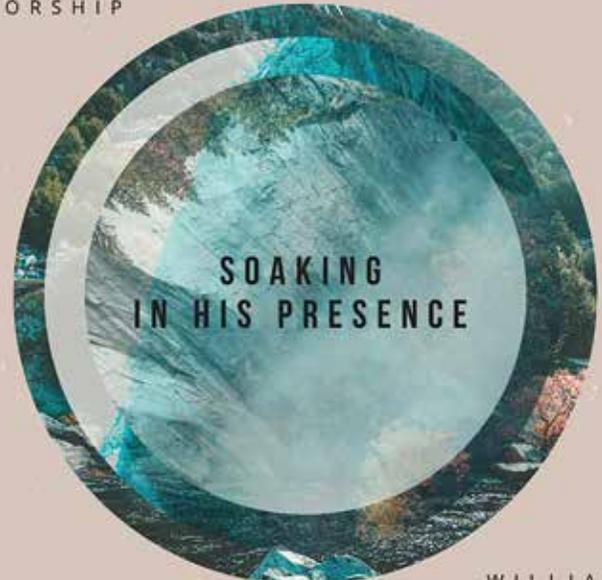
There is something profoundly moving about it personally, and I still often reach for it in my own spiritual life. And it isn’t the most striking music you’ve ever heard. I don’t expect the Cleveland Orchestra to pick it up in the next performance season!

But this work, the peace that it instills, the invitation that it provides to drown out the busyness of the world, does more than provide an opportunity to meditate and relax. I’ve heard the voice of Jesus so many times in prayer through this song. It occurred to me that for all the graced moments this song has provided me over the months, I have never shared it.

So, here it is for everyone to take in. Use it for prayer, for relaxation, for whatever. I just know for myself it is more than just a few sparse notes played over a few hours. It has been the conduit to real spiritual growth, and a greater understanding of my relationship to Jesus. I’m indebted to the composer who used his gifts so well that they both glorified God and revealed His nearness to me. May we all be able to do the same with what God has given us.



INSTRUMENTAL
WORSHIP



WILLIAM
AUGUSTO

AD SPACE

AD SPACE

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

Stations of the Cross

Friday, April 1 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph Church
Friday, April 8 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph Church
(Mime Stations of the Cross)

First Saturday Rosary

Saturday, April 2 — 9 a.m., St. Joseph Church

Immersion 7/8

Friday, April 8 — 7 p.m. Convent

Immersion High School

Sunday, April 10 — 12 p.m.

Dinner on the Go pick up

Tuesday, April 12 and 26 — 5 p.m., Nativity Church

No School and Parish Office Closed

Friday, April 15 and Monday, April 18

Jesus Day

Wednesday, April 27 — 5:30 p.m., SJ Church and Social Hall (second-grade students)

First Communion

Saturday, April 30 — 10 a.m., St. Joseph Church

Men's Group

Tuesday, April 5 and 19 — 7 p.m., SJ Social Hall

Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes

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

Holy Week Schedule:

Sunday, April 10 — Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion
4 p.m., Saturday Vigil Mass at St. Joseph
5:30 p.m., Saturday Vigil Mass at Nativity B.V.M.
8:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., Sunday Masses at St. Joseph

Monday, April 11

9 a.m., Mass of Holy Week at St. Joseph

Tuesday, April 12

8 a.m., Mass of Holy Week Nativity B.V.M.
7 p.m., Christ Mass at St. John Cathedral
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at Nativity B.V.M.

Monday through Wednesday of Holy Week,
11 a.m.-10 p.m.

Reconciliation (Confession) at St. Joseph Parish

Saturdays of Lent, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

Thursdays following the 7 p.m. Mass until

8:30 p.m. (except Holy Thursday when it will be at Nativity B.V.M.)

Good Friday following the Noon Liturgy until 3 p.m.

Holy Saturday 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

Easter Triduum Schedule:

Holy Thursday, April 14

7 p.m., Mass of the Lord's Supper at Nativity B.V.M. (with washing of feet) Adoration and Confession to follow
Mass with 9 p.m. Adoration Closing.

Good Friday, April 15

12 p.m., Solemn Liturgy of the Lord's Passion at St. Joseph with Confession to follow until 3 p.m.
7 p.m., Taizé Prayer at St. Joseph

Holy Saturday, April 16

10:45 a.m., Blessing of Easter Food at St. Joseph
11 a.m., Confessions until 12 p.m.
8:30 p.m., Easter Vigil of the Lord's Resurrection at St. Joseph

Easter Sunday, April 17

8:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m., Masses of Easter Sunday at St. Joseph
10 a.m., Mass of Easter Sunday at Nativity B.V.M.