



ST. JOSEPH PARISH & NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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AUGUST 2021

Parish Health and Wellness Ministry Provides Holistic Care for Mind, Body and Spirit

When we think of wellness, we consider the mind, body, and soul. When we are attending Mass and other events at Nativity and St. Joseph, we are working on strengthening our souls. We want to make sure we are practicing wellness in the form of the body and mind, too, keeping our bodies in shape to truly be a temple of the Holy Spirit.

At St. Joseph and Nativity, we have the opportunity to take part in screenings to ensure our bodies are healthy, thanks to a dedicated group of volunteers in the Parish Health and Wellness Ministry. Kathy Northeim and Deb Romes have dedicated many years to this ministry, along with being retired registered nurses — Deb worked as an ICU nurse and Kathy worked in diabetes education.

Mercy Health sponsors this ministry as a way to reach out to those who may not otherwise receive health screenings. Others who visit the screenings just enjoy the convenience and the fact that there is no co-pay or need for an appointment. The ministry has been on a bit of a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but



Kathy Northeim performs a diabetes screening.

many ministry members were still working, just in different ways.

“Our mission is about reaching out to improve the community with the poor and the underserved,” Kathy says. “The underserved was anyone affected by COVID-19 — a lot had family that was ailing. They spent a lot of time just trying to keep in touch with family, who may have been affected by the virus.”

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Parish Health and Wellness Ministry Provides Holistic Care for Mind, Body and Spirit *continued from front cover*

As the threat of the virus wanes, ministry members look forward to once again starting the screenings, blood pressure checks, and lab tests. Mercy Health supplies everything that is needed for the screenings, and also provides education on other health concerns, like breast cancer. In early 2020, Mercy Health also supplied COVID-19 safety items like masks and hand sanitizer.

Full lab screenings are typically held at Nativity in March and St. Joseph's in October. The screening provides a complete metabolic panel (electrolytes, glucose, liver, kidney function); lipids test (total cholesterol and triglycerides); hemoglobin A1C (diabetes indicator); thyroid hormone; prostate-specific antigen (men ages 40 and over) and blood pressure checks. Kathy wants to thank a fellow ministry member, Alexis Demitriou, for always being willing to help with the screenings.

Having worked as a diabetes educator for many years, Kathy is passionate about continuing this work.

"Diabetes is so manageable," Kathy says. "If I can find one person that has elevated blood pressure or blood sugar, they can turn their health around. Both issues are silent."

Having worked in the ICU, Deb focuses a lot on cardiac health.

"The church is there to help your soul, and we want to help people focus on the body and the soul," Deb says. "If your body isn't in good shape, you are going to have a tough time."

"This is holistic care for the body, mind, and spirit," Kathy says. "We need to focus on physical health. Your body needs fine-tuning, also."

In addition to the screenings, parish nurses are also a resource for people of the parish, when they have health issues.

"This is faith-based for me," Deb says. "It's just the idea of being able to help people."

For the ministry members who are retired nurses, this is a way to maintain their skills. They receive free continuing education classes at Mercy Health. This is also a way to meet others working at wellness in their parishes. Anyone with a desire to help people with their health may get involved in this ministry.

"The church is there to help your soul, and we want to help people focus on the body and the soul. If your body isn't in good shape, you are going to have a tough time." — Deb Romes

Please refer to the bulletin for information on future screenings and events from the Health and Wellness Ministry. For more information, please contact Kathy Northeim at 440-984-3366 or Deb Romes at 440-988-4515.

A Letter From Our Pastor

Strive to Be Swifter, Higher and Stronger Stewards

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

At the end of July and for the first week of August, the eyes of the world are focused on the Olympic Games in Tokyo. We watch with amazement and admiration as athletes from all over the world run, swim and perform seemingly impossible gymnastic routines. Their feats in these and other events will show the dedication and determination it takes to prepare to compete against the best athletes in the world.

The athletes will be doing their best to fulfill the Olympic motto, "*Citius, Altius, Fortius*" – "Swifter, Higher, Stronger." Although the Olympics will be using this phrase in the context of athletic competition, I think we could apply these words to our own lives of growing in virtue.

This is not to say that we need to defeat the other members of our family, neighbors or fellow parishioners. Indeed, we should seek ways to help them, not compete with them. But we ought to live each day so that we work for goals in a "swifter, higher, stronger" way than we did the day before.

St. Paul uses a similar athletic image and applies it to the spiritual life when he wrote, "Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor 9:25-27).



St. Paul was referring to the ultimate goal of the whole Christian life. The "imperishable crown" he mentions is that given to those who are with God in heaven, where they "shall reign forever and ever" (Rev 22:5). And we should never forget that "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil 3:20). As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, "Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness" (1024).

We also celebrate during August the human person who most perfectly exhibited dedication to a "swifter,

higher, stronger" cooperation with God's will, the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary falls on Aug. 15, in the very middle of the month.

Here is a stewardship suggestion for August: make a commitment to devote at least half the time you spend watching the Olympics this month to prayer and worship. It may be a challenge, but you will find your soul becoming "swifter, higher, stronger."

Gratefully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, which reads "Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor

Meet the Reichert Family:

Following God's Merciful

When Matt and Sarah Reichert's 9-year-old daughter, Katie, was diagnosed with epilepsy at the age of 3, the two parents weren't quite sure where to turn, but God's merciful hand guided them every step of the way.

"We prayed a whole lot during that time, and it was a spiritual wake-up call for us to come back to God," Matt says. "God showed us that He could bring a lot of good out of her illness. It was there for a reason."

Part of this divinely ordained reason was to revive the life of grace in their souls, particularly through the Renewals at our parish.

"Through her sickness, I connected with a leader of the Women's Renewal, which brought me to attend it in 2015," Sarah says. "It was a great way to connect with other people who knew our family's story and had been praying for us. In fact, Katie was weaned off of her epilepsy medication in 2018 and has been seizure-free since 2016. It is a real answer to prayer."

One good thing led to another, and Sarah ended up serving as the lay leader for the 2016 Women's Renewal.

"I still stay in contact with the women I was with at the Renewal," Sarah says. "For Matt and I, being involved with the Renewals has helped us make more connections with our parish and our community. This has helped us find a home base here in Amherst, especially because neither of us grew up here."

Furthermore, Matt was inspired to go on the Men's Renewal in 2016 and serve on the Men's Renewal Team in 2017.

"I have a group of men I met through the Renewal that I meet with to discuss spiritual things, as well as issues affecting my life as a husband and father," he says. "Going on the Renewal helped my prayer life as well."

In addition to the Renewals, the Reicherts live out the stewardship vision in other ways as well. Matt is a member of the Knights of Columbus and an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. And this past year, Sarah enjoyed coaching Katie's Catholic Youth Organization (CYO)



Matt and Sarah Reichert with their children, Katie and Alex

volleyball and basketball teams. Katie's twin brother, Alex, plays CYO sports as well.

"It was a great experience for both of us," she says. "I like the idea of kids learning together to be part of a team and work with other personalities. Sportsmanship helps people understand how to be good to other people."

"Being active in the parish helps me feel more a part of the community, and closer to the Catholic Church," Matt says

Guidance and Living in Stewardship

of he and his family's involvement. "How much you get involved is how much you get out of it."

Sarah also gives her time as a lector and as President of the Parent Club at the parish school, which she finds very fulfilling.

"The main reason we send our children to our parish school is because it is a smaller community-based school, and as a school parent I feel it is important to support its staff and students," Sarah says.

Over the years, the Reicherts have been very pleased with the academic, social and religious environment that St. Joseph Parish School provides.

"Our kids are very happy there," Sarah says. "I like that the school uses a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) focus, and does it in a Catholic way. I am glad that they teach the kids how to garden as well. This is the second year that they have planted a garden with them. The students

research how to grow food and work on how to get it to people who need it. There is a committee of families in charge of tending it."

The ingenuity used by our parish school is thoroughly appreciated by a lot of the students as well.

"I like that my school uses STEM and that we try to do a lot of things to help the community out," Alex says.

Most importantly, the Reicherts are deeply grateful that St. Joseph School embraces the Catholic faith and allows it to shape its mission.

"We appreciate that the school hasn't lost its Catholic objective," Matt says. "It is always nice to see the children come home frequently with Catholic materials. It is great proof that they are still teaching them the faith."

"I like that what we learn at school helps me understand what is going on at Mass," Katie adds.



The Reicherts enjoying the opportunity to live out stewardship as a family

Our Parish School of Religious Education

STUDENTS AND CATECHISTS LOOKING FORWARD TO IN-PERSON CLASSES

When PSR begins classes on Oct. 6, everyone will be meeting at St. Joseph School for in-person classes after a year of being apart and having online sessions only.

“We are looking to go back to in-person,” says Angela Eads, Principal. “We’re looking forward to going back to normal.”

Children attending public school in grades K-8 are those eligible for the Parish School of Religious Education. The sessions run from 5:30-6:45 p.m. each Wednesday, with breaks scheduled throughout the year.

“I know there are other activities,” Mrs. Eads says. “If parents need some flex in the schedule, I’m willing to work to make it happen. It’s important.”

The number of children attending the online sessions this past year did not drop to any extent, but many in the older grades did not complete the year. Mrs. Eads attributes this to the older students’ involvement in their other online activities for school.

“But now they will be going back and will be engaged with their teachers,” she says. “They can check-in and have the opportunity to ask questions and build a relationship with another trusted adult.”

The duties of the catechists in the school include planning and presenting the lessons each week. Mrs. Eads has resources and materials available to them, and she is also



willing to meet with them to help plan the lessons.

“I enjoy doing that,” she says. “I’m happy to help with that. Besides offering the lessons, the catechists keep the class in order and serve as role models to the kids. They are open to questions from them.”

For our catechists, sharing the Word of God and helping our children learn and understand the Catholic faith, in turn, deepens their own faith.

“You learn from the kids as much as they learn from you,” Mrs. Eads says. “You are sharing your faith with your students. I feel that the kids are coming to class and look up to you. Being a part of this program makes me feel I’m doing the right thing. Kids want to know about their faith.”

The catechists also can witness firsthand the impact their teaching has on their students. The students connect with their teachers who have this opportunity to share their faith. These public school students can come together with others like themselves and share their faith with each other. Mrs. Eads also brings the School of Religious Education students together throughout the year for Advent services, Stations of the Cross, and other activities to help them feel part of the church community.

“We get to experience these things with the kids,” she says.

There is currently a need for catechists, specifically for grades 4-7. Anyone interested in becoming a catechist may call Mrs. Angela Eads at 440-988-4244, ext. 247, or email her at angela.eads@sjs-amherst.org. Registration can be done online by logging on to <https://forms.gle/CT1jUarhszVdu48L8> — the link will go to a Google form. A form must be filled out for each child in a family.

The Importance of Loving God More Deeply at Mass

When young people see a person that intrigues them, that attraction becomes the topic of conversation at every opportunity. This attraction alters behavior so that we become enthralled with the other and desire to share our enthusiasm.

Imagine if we were more enthralled with the presence of Christ in our lives. Imagine if we fully recognized that Christ is truly present to us in His precious Body and Blood, and present as well in the proclamation of His Word and in the gathering of our community, praying and singing (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium* [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy], para. 14). Recognizing the living Christ in all these ways would awaken in us the desire to be with the One who is the object of our most fundamental, pure, and holy attraction to our merciful, loving, and gracious Savior.

If we were to recognize the presence of Christ in these beautiful ways, wouldn't our desire to be more completely in His presence increase? Surely our desire to be better stewards of our time with the Lord would grow. Our attention to the readings and other prayers of the Mass would bring about within us deeper communion with the One who suffered and died for us. If I recognized that God is the answer to all my pangs of hunger, that Christ is my way to the Father, and that the Holy Spirit works to convert my heart and soul every day, would I not seek to fill that hunger at the banquet of the Lamb?

While active participation in Sunday Mass is an obligation for Catholics, we also will do well to see the lovely, motherly care the Church shows us in establishing that requirement. *The Code of Canon Law* states clearly in paragraph 1247, "On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass." Sometimes, we might hear that as an overbearing rule. But it might more correctly be understood



as our Mother, the Church, helping us learn what is best for us. At Mass, we hear the living Word of God proclaimed. He speaks to us. We receive as hungry, needy sinners, the precious Body and Blood of Christ. We encounter Christ's living presence in our brothers and sisters worshiping God with us. If we truly understood that amazing truth, then how might it affect our lives? How might it affect our relationships? How might it impact our decision to bring our children along to Mass? How might it awaken within us a deeper attraction, fascination, desire for the Lord?

Generally, when we find ourselves fascinated with someone, we do not decide to spend as little time as possible with them. We do not ration our time with them. We want to spend time with them, to see them, to listen to them, to get to know them, to develop a healthy, loving relationship with them.

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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.

The Importance of Loving God More Deeply at Mass *continued from page 7*

Considering our reliance on the Lord of life and love, our fascination with His mercy, His goodness, His willingness to call us to Himself, maybe we should ask ourselves about what happens in us at Mass. As I prepare to come to Church, do I find my mind turning to a receptive welcome of the Lord, just as I'll be welcomed at the door of Church? Have I dressed for the important weekly (or daily) moment of meeting my King? Do I expect some profound wisdom from God in the readings? Am I open to correction, to challenge, to affirmation in the readings of God's Word? Do I intently pray along with the priest presider throughout the Mass? Do I make an offering of my life, along with the bread and wine? Do I genuinely hunger for the Body and Blood of Christ? And do I long for that blessing that

sends me on my way with the mission to build the Kingdom?

Instead of worrying about what "counts" when it comes to Sunday Mass, maybe we should work hard at fostering our love for the Eucharist, our desire for eternal life, our attraction to the Master who calls us into a life of active discipleship. Instead of a merely heavy-handed requirement, maybe we can see more clearly that being at Mass together helps nourish us for a whole week of building God's Kingdom. Coming with those expectations, desires, and hopes, leaving early when unnecessary would disappear as a temptation instantly. Coming late because other things have taken priority would not typically happen, other obligations notwithstanding. Christ desires our company at Mass, from beginning to end. Let's draw near to Him.