



ST. JOSEPH PARISH & NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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DEC 2021

EUCHARISTIC ADORATION AND THE ADVENT SEASON:

Preparing Our Hearts to Receive the Christ Child

With Advent beginning and the Christmas season around the corner, many of us are left wondering how we can best welcome the Infant Jesus into the depths of our hearts. Amid the hustle and bustle that too easily smothers out the peace of Advent, we need to take serious steps to make sure we prepare our souls to receive the glorious message of Christ's salvation and celebrate His Holy Birth. One such step is by coming to Eucharistic Adoration.

"Being in the presence of the Holy Eucharist, and feeling Jesus' thirst for our souls, gives us an opportunity to feel the love He has for us," says Stephanie Sierra, a faithful adorer. "And what is Christmas all about? Love, and the birth of Our Lord Jesus. During the Advent season, we await Jesus coming to us, in the most vulnerable form of a baby, as 'God here present to us.'"

Adoration is normally available at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish at various times throughout the year, and all are welcome to come.

"The most important thing to remember about adoration is that you are alone with



Jesus there, and you can share your most dire needs and secrets with Him just as you would with your best friend," Stephanie says. "It is so enriching just to be able to spend time with Him there."

Those who begin to come to adoration are called to do so in a special way by the infinite love of God.

"When I first started going about six years ago, I did so on the recommendation of Fr. Michael Gaitley, the author of '33 Days to Morning Glory,'" Stephanie says. "In his book, he recommends praying the Rosary, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, and going to adoration in order to fulfill your consecration. Over time, adoration has helped me draw closer to Jesus,

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What is the Immaculate Conception?

A Closer Look at this Important Feast Day — Dec. 8

When it comes to Catholic trivia, there is one simple question that often evokes an incorrect response: “What is the Immaculate Conception?”

More often than not, this term is believed to designate Christ’s conception within Mary, through the power of the Holy Spirit. A good guess, no doubt. But that is incorrect!

The term “Immaculate Conception” describes the state of Mary’s soul within the womb of her mother, St. Anne. It has nothing to do with a special type of generative conception by her parents — Mary’s body was formed in the usual manner by her mother and father.

Instead, the term “Immaculate Conception” describes how Mary was preserved from the stain of original sin from the first moment of her existence.

Every person since Adam and Eve has been born with the stain of original sin, which can be washed away in the cleansing waters of Baptism. Yet, this fallen state never touched the soul of Mary, the new Eve. She was conceived with original sanctity and innocence, escaping all faults, depraved emotions and passions, and remained sinless. She was not exempt from the temporal penalties of Adam, however — including sorrow.



The belief in Mary’s Immaculate Conception has been held by the Church throughout history, though only officially declared a dogma in 1854 by Pope Pius IX. Highly devoted to the Blessed Virgin, Pius IX hoped the official definition would draw emphasis to the already existing belief, thereby inspiring deeper devotion to Mary. This dogma finds its roots in both Scripture and Tradition, and remains consistent with reason and the teachings of our early Church fathers.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated every year on Dec. 8 and is one of the few declared Holy Days of Obligation on the Church calendar. All Catholics are obligated to attend Mass on this day. It is also the patronal feast of our United States.

Why not make this liturgical feast a special day of devotion? Bring a rose to place before an image of the Blessed Virgin in the church sanctuary, or arrange a little altar at home for your children to decorate. Recite the Magnificat and discuss the Church’s teaching on the Immaculate Conception.

Once this beautiful feast is brought alive in our hearts and in our homes, we will never again mistakenly answer that “tricky” question, “What is the Immaculate Conception?”

THE MAGNIFICAT

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for He has looked with favor on
His lowly servant.
From this day all generations
will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is His Name.
He has mercy on those who fear Him
in every generation.*

*He has shown the strength of His arm,
He has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich He has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of His servant Israel
for He remembered His promise of mercy,
the promise He made to our fathers,
to Abraham and His children for ever.*

LUKE 1: 46-55

A Letter from Our Pastor

Stewardship Possibilities are *Endless* at Christmas



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

When I think of December, the first thing that comes to my mind is Christmas. While that may seem obvious, there are several other possibilities. I could think of Advent, which prepares us for Christmas. I could think of the Immaculate Conception, a Holy Day of Obligation, and the patronal festival of the United States. I could think of Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose popularity has spread far beyond the Hispanic community. December also brings the winter solstice. And it brings the end of the secular calendar year, which means getting my financials together for the upcoming income tax season.

But instead, I think of Christmas — one of the greatest feasts of the Christian year, along with Easter and Pentecost. The basic truth of Christmas, celebrating the birth of Jesus the Messiah, God Incarnate, is plenty of reason for us all to rejoice and worship. But we've piled so much extra baggage on

our Christmas observance, and worship is often almost lost in the shuffle.

We send Christmas cards to people we contact at no other time of the year. We put up wreaths, Christmas trees, and lights. We host parties for family and friends. We visit relatives. We plan and prepare Christmas meals. And we have Christmas gifts to buy. No wonder the Christ Mass becomes an afterthought!

Maybe, though, we can combine our Christmas activities with our stewardship commitments.

Treasure is the simplest. Shouldn't the most expensive Christmas present we give be the one to Jesus whose birthday we're celebrating? Risen and glorified, He needs nothing we have. But His Body — the Church — continues Jesus' mission here on earth and always needs additional resources.

Time and Talent may be a little more complicated, but can't we spend a little more of our time in worship and prayer? Stop by the church for a visit to the Christmas Crib and offer a

prayer of thanks for the gift of God's Son. Attend weekday Mass during the Christmas Octave. Gather your family for prayers together in the morning or at dinner in preparation for Christmas Day and through the Christmas season.

And Talent? There are lots of possibilities: Join the choir. Help decorate the church. Cook or bake for someone who is shut-in. Invite someone who will be alone to share Christmas dinner with your family. Offer to work in a soup kitchen if you will be alone. The possibilities are endless.

Yes, December means Christmas. But with some planning, we can make this hectic time a real blessing both for ourselves and others. Pray for me that I can keep Christmas properly, and I'll pray for you. And let's all have a Merry Christmas!

Gratefully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor".

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor



Greeters at St. Joseph and Nativity:

Offering a *Warm Welcome* to All Who Enter Our Churches

A few years ago, St. Joseph's Parishioner Phil Rawlings attended a retreat where he learned that one of the biggest reasons people fall away from the Catholic Church is because they don't feel welcome and that the atmosphere is not warm and friendly. He decided he wanted to do something about that. So, he started to arrive early to Sunday Mass to open the door, help people out of their cars and just serve as a smiling face.

Phil is now the Greeter Ministry coordinator, following in the footsteps of former coordinator Pam Belkis. He feels this is just one way he can share the faith and make people feel more welcome. The Greeter Ministry has become even more important since our parishes reopened following the COVID-19 closures — in addition to providing essential hospitality, the ministry's service helps to limit the spread of germs when people are not touching the door handles so much.

At Nativity, the ushers primarily fulfill the role of greeters, welcoming people when they arrive and helping with any questions. Marianne Pellittieri, her husband, Joe, and brother-in-law, Dee Darin, all serve as ushers. John and Kathy Rokasy also serve as ushers. For Marianne, it's



Greeters welcome parishioners and guests at St. Joseph's.

important that parishioners and visitors entering Nativity feel welcome.

"You want a friendly face to greet people when they come to Nativity," Marianne says. "We want everyone to feel welcome."

At both Nativity and St. Joseph, we want all those who enter to be greeted. Phil says this is the way to be a disciple of Jesus.

"We need to feed those who are hungry and invite the stranger in," he says. "Being a greeter ties in with these."

When Phil retired seven years ago, he decided to spend his extra time learning more about his faith through reading and becoming more involved at St. Joseph's. He enjoys

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"We need to feed those who are hungry and invite the stranger in. Being a greeter ties in with these." — PHIL RAWLINGS

Greeters *continued from page 4*

reading books from Matthew Kelly and is currently going through a devotional from St. Teresa of Calcutta, *Do Something Beautiful for God*. He also credits Fr. Timothy O' Connor for his inspiring homilies.

"Being involved in these ministries is just an extension of my faith growing because of reading and praying a lot more," Phil says.

Phil tries to pay attention to how he feels when he is greeted at a parish he visits, whether that be here in the United States or Europe. He says he always feels more comfortable when someone is there to hold the door and offer a friendly "hello."

Through this ministry, Phil has gotten to know people he wouldn't have otherwise met — both fellow ministry members and other parishioners.

"I have had acquaintances become friends through this ministry," he says.

Phil would encourage others to get involved at their parish by discerning and using their own talents. The commitments required for the Greeter and Usher Ministries are both fairly simple — they don't require standing in front of the congregation. They also take place during Mass, so not much extra time is needed.

"If we follow Mother Teresa and just do little things with great love, that is all we need to do," Phil says.



All are encouraged to get involved at their parish by discerning and using their own talents.



**If you would like to get involved as a Greeter at Nativity, please contact Marrienne Pellittieri at 440-320-3875 or mpellittieri@yahoo.com.
To get involved at St. Joseph's, please contact Phil Rawlings at 440-897-7437 or philrawli@aol.com.**

You Cannot Do It Alone

By NATHAN FRANKART, 1st Theology

Pease of Christ to you! As I said before, now that I have entered the graduate seminary, I hope that these articles can be more like explorations of topics rather than my experiences in the seminary. I believe this will be one of those articles. Don't worry, I will always keep you updated on the various comings and goings here in Wickliffe!

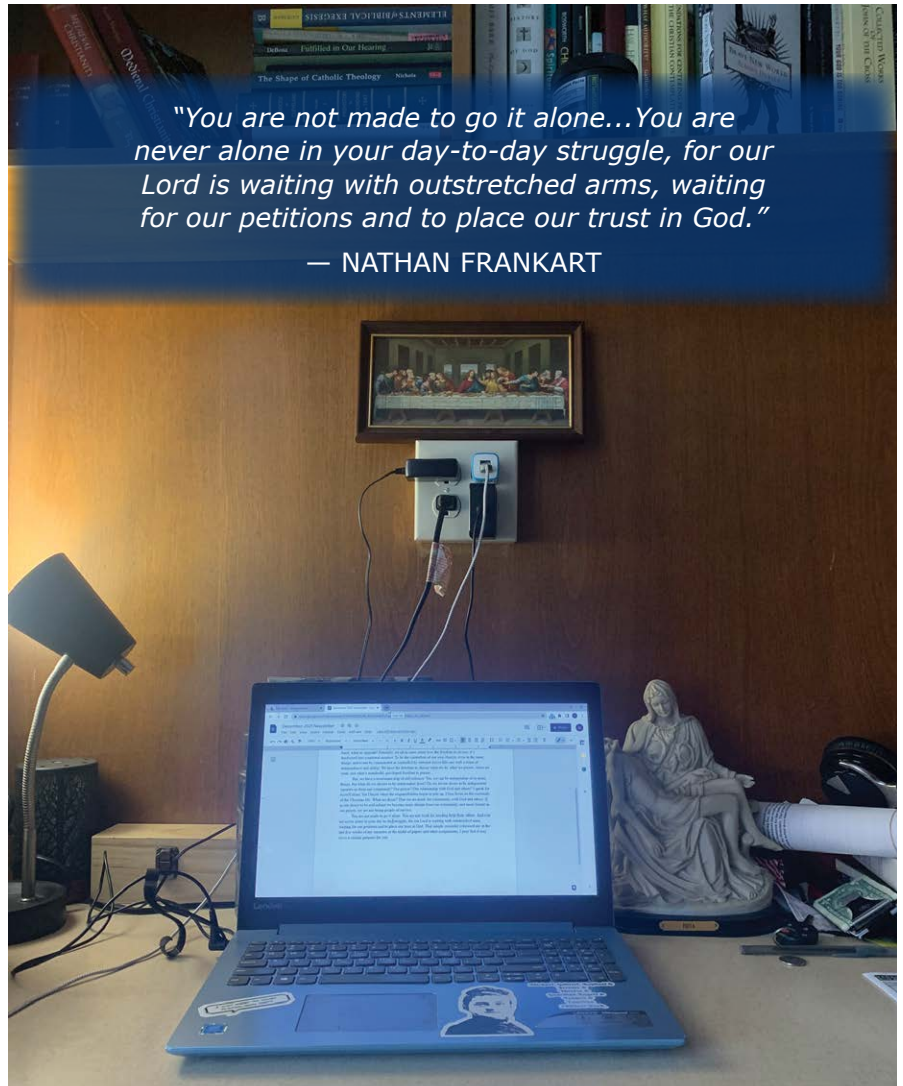
One of the greatest aspects of graduate school would be the sense of independence and freedom. I mean, I get to bring a computer for class to take notes on instead of taking them by hand — what an upgrade! Naturally, we all in some sense love the freedom to choose, it's hardwired into a national mindset. To be the controllers of our own choices, even in the same things, and to not be commanded or controlled by external forces fills one with a sense of independence and ability. We have the freedom to choose what we do, what we pursue, when we want, and what a wonderful, privileged freedom to pursue.

But, we have a worrisome trap of self-reliance. Yes, we can be independent of so many things, but what do we choose to be independent from? Do we let our desire to be independent separate us from our community? Our prayer? Our relationship with God and others? I speak for myself alone, but I know when the responsibilities begin to pile up, I lose focus on the essentials of the Christian life. What are those? That we are made for community, with God and others. If, in our desire to be self-reliant, we become more distant from our community and more distant in our prayer, we are not being people of service.

You are not made to go it alone. You are not weak for needing help from others. And you are never alone in your day-to-day struggle, for our Lord is waiting with outstretched arms, waiting for our petitions and to place our trust in God. That simple reminder refocused me in the last few weeks of my semester in the midst of papers and other assignments. I pray that it may serve a similar purpose for you.

"You are not made to go it alone...You are never alone in your day-to-day struggle, for our Lord is waiting with outstretched arms, waiting for our petitions and to place our trust in God."

— NATHAN FRANKART





Be Stewards, Not Consumers During the Advent and Christmas Seasons

The secularization of the Advent and Christmas seasons celebrates the “holidays” with full fury all the way up to the 25th of December. Between the gift buying, partying and rushed errands, we miss the true purpose of the Advent season, which was meant to be more austere, contemplative and penitential.

Indeed, through our hectic schedules, we often fail to properly grasp the significance of this season, due in large part to the successful secularization of our Catholic “holy day,” which is now simply reduced to “the holiday season.” This fact serves as a metaphor for our examination of conscience and confession of sins in the Sacrament of Penance during the season of Advent.

Look to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and reflect upon the “Infancy Narratives” concerning the incarnation and birth of Jesus Christ. If we only had the “Infancy Narratives” of these Gospels and no other information, we would have the Gospel of Christ in miniature. The angelic choir makes clear that Jesus is God and Man, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. The message to the shepherds makes clear that Jesus came for the outcast and rejected – for the sinner. The adoration of the Magi shows that conversion

is for all people and Jesus’ message is universal. It makes clear that Jesus will suffer and eventually die, but by way of paradox, this will fulfill His mission to redeem the world from sin and death. The wood of the manger and the swaddling clothes anticipate the wood of the cross and the burial shroud. Jesus is placed into a “feeding trough” for animals, symbolizing the Risen Lord who will become the Eucharistic Food for the world at Mass.

As stewards, we should have no anxiety that is rooted in buying gifts or being “ready” in the secular sense. We can ease our anxieties by focusing on our relationship to God, Church and one another. Am I right with God? Do I use His many gifts of Grace for conversion and true stewardship and discipleship? Do I repent of my sins and make a firm purpose of amendment? Do I go to confession regularly, especially when I am in a state of mortal sin? Am I ready to meet my Lord and Savior either at my particular judgment at the hour of my death, or at the General Judgment when Christ will return in glory at the end of time?

Pray that this season will truly be a season of “holy days,” not just a holiday. Let us not be consumers of religion, but true stewards of God’s manifold gifts.



The *ORIGIN* and *BEAUTY* of the Nativity Scene

With all the commercialism surrounding Christmas-time, it's far too easy for us to lose sight of the true reason behind the season. Overwhelmed by our endless to-do lists and the hustle and bustle of last-minute shopping, our focus quickly shifts away from the Christ Child's birth. And yet, hidden amongst the holly wreaths and garlands, the Christmas Nativity remains a tangible reminder of the Incarnation, pulling us back into time for a moment as we reflect upon the incredible gift of Christ's birth.

Interestingly, it was circumstances much like our own today which first led St. Francis of Assisi to recreate the Nativity scene nearly 800 years ago. Frustrated with the growing materialism and greed that seemed to pervade 13th century Italy, St. Francis wanted a way to visually remind people of Christ's humble beginnings — to show them that Christmas isn't about pomp and circumstance or material goods, but rather about unselfish love. Describing the idea to his friend Giovanni, St. Francis wrote, "I want to do something that will recall the memory of that child who was born in Bethlehem, to see with bodily eyes the inconveniences of his infancy, how he lay in the manger..."

And so St. Francis' idea took form on Christmas Eve in 1223. This original Nativity scene was a living one, even including live animals. Villagers were deeply moved by the silent display of humble beauty, and the Nativity tradition soon spread throughout Italy and surrounding Europe. It is a tradition that remains today in nearly every Christian church and in many homes. In fact, it's hard to imagine Christmas without a Nativity scene somewhere.

Coming in various sizes and styles, each Nativity replica continues to focus our hearts on the true meaning of Christmas — to help us remember that Christmas isn't about the amount of gifts under the tree or the festive decorations, but rather about celebrating Christ's birth. Many families have a tradition of hiding the Infant Jesus, only placing Him in the crib on Christmas morning. This helps build anticipation during the Advent season as we anxiously await the Divine's birth. Others go a step further, actually wrapping up the Christ Child to be opened as the very first gift of Christmas.

Yet, whatever your family's particular traditions, we hope that the Christmas Nativity continues to draw your heart heavenward this Christmas season — to center us all on the greatest gift ever given, our Incarnate Lord.

Holy Day and Holiday Mass Schedule

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

No Masses on Dec. 7

Wednesday, Dec. 8

9:00 a.m. at St. Joseph

12:00 Noon at Nativity

7:00 p.m. at St. Joseph

Christmas Eve

Friday, Dec. 24

4:00 p.m. at St. Joseph

6:00 p.m. at Nativity

8:00 p.m. at St. Joseph

Christmas Day

Saturday, Dec. 25

8:30 a.m. at St. Joseph

10:00 a.m. at Nativity

11:30 p.m. at St. Joseph

Sunday Dec. 26

NO VIGIL MASS

8:30 a.m. at St. Joseph

11:00 a.m. at St. Joseph

5:00 p.m. at St. Joseph

Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God *(not a Holy Day of Obligation this year)*

Friday, Dec. 31

No Morning Mass

4:00 p.m. Vigil Mass at St. Joseph

Saturday Jan. 1

No Masses

Epiphany

Sunday, Jan. 2

No Vigil Masses

8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph

11:00 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph

5:00 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph

UPCOMING EVENTS

Pre Baptism Class

Wednesday, Dec. 1 – 7:15 p.m. School

First Friday Rosary

Friday, Dec. 3 – 11:00 a.m. Nativity Parish

First Saturday Rosary

Saturday, Dec. 4 – 9:00 a.m. St. Joseph Church

Immersion and Immersion 7/8 Mini Retreat

Saturday, Dec. 4 – 9:00 a.m. Convent

Finance Council and Parish Council Joint meeting

Monday, Dec. 6 – 7:00 p.m. St. Joseph Social Hall

Parent Club Meeting

Tuesday, Dec. 7 – 7:00 p.m. School MPR

Immersion 7/8 Meeting

Friday, Dec. 10 – 7:00 p.m. Convent

First Reconciliation

Saturday, Dec. 11 – 10:00 a.m. St. Joseph Church

SJS Christmas Concert

Friday, Dec. 17 – 7:00 p.m. St. Joseph Church

Ha Seepoor Christmas Musical

Saturday, Dec. 18 and 19 – 7:30 p.m. at St. Joseph Church

Immersion High School Christmas Party

Sunday, Dec. 19 – 12:00 p.m. at the Convent

NO SCHOOL – CHRISTMAS BREAK

Wednesday, Dec. 22 – Monday, Jan. 3, 2022

Parish Offices Closed

Thursday Dec. 23 and Friday, Dec. 24 in observance of Christmas

Thursday, Dec 30 and Friday, Dec 31 in observance of New Year's Day

Knights of Columbus Meeting

Tuesday, Dec. 28 – 7:00 p.m. School Art Room

Vincentians Meetings

Thursday, Dec. 2, Dec 16 – 9:00 a.m. Conference room

R.C.I.A. Meetings

Mondays, Dec. 6, 13, 20 – 7:00 p.m. Nativity Parish Hall

Men's Group Meetings

Tuesday, Dec. 7 and 21 – 7:00 p.m. St. Joseph Social Hall

PSR Classes

Wednesdays, Dec. 1, 8, 15 – 5:30 p.m. St. Joseph School
(No class on Dec. 22 and 29)

Youth Choir Rehearsal

Wednesdays, Dec. 1, 15, 22 – 6:00 p.m. St. Joseph Church
(No rehearsal on Dec. 29)
Wednesday Dec. 8 - TBD

Teen and Adult Choir Rehearsal

Wednesdays, Dec. 1, 15, 22 – 7:15 p.m. St. Joseph Church
(No rehearsal on Dec. 29)
Wednesday Dec. 8 -TBD

Study Group for Consecration to St. Joseph

Wednesday, Dec. 1, and Friday, Dec. 10 – 7:00 p.m. Nativity Parish Hall (No meeting on Dec. 8)

Saturday Jan. 1

No Masses

Epiphany — Sunday, Jan. 2

No Vigil Masses

8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph

11:00 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph

5:00 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph



Our First Grade PSR class learns that we all belong to our parish community.

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.

Eucharistic Adoration and the Advent Season

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grow in my love for Him, and understand how much He really loves us.”

Adorers such as Stephanie find that coming to Jesus in the Eucharist regularly deepens their union with Him in an extraordinary way.

“Fr. Gaitley’s book also explains that St. Mother Teresa would talk about how when Jesus hung on the cross and said, ‘I thirst,’ He meant something much deeper than just saying, ‘I love you,’” she says. “She would say that unless you know deep down how much Jesus thirsts for you, you can’t know how much He loves you, and what He wants you to be for Him. This is really what inspires me to go to adoration so that I can know Jesus deep inside my heart. He is so in love with us, and He wants us to be so in love with Him. It is wonderful to get to know Him better!”

And they also find that their devotion to Christ truly present in the Eucharist naturally draws others to Him as well.

“I had started reading the Diary of St. Faustina during adoration, and I became very focused on her mystical experiences she had with Jesus, especially when He directed her and told her to start the praying of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy at 3 p.m. each day,” Stephanie says. “So I began praying it at 3 p.m. when I was in adoration, and slowly, sporadically, other women began joining me. It was great!”

**For further information about
Eucharistic Adoration, please contact
Josie Tornabene at 440-396-5429
or refer to future parish bulletins.**