



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

& NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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JAN 2021

CYO ATHLETICS

Bringing Youth Closer to Christ Through Physical Activity and Fellowship

In this time of the pandemic, our children need some sense of normalcy, and the activities offered by our CYO Athletic Association provide a safe path for them. But these activities provide an even greater benefit — bringing them closer to Christ as they enjoy physical activities and fellowship.

Jim Yanosko is CYO Athletic Director and has been working with coaches and parents since the COVID-19 restrictions went into effect, making sure our children have been able to take part in the sports they love, all under the mission of CYO.

“What I love about CYO is that we try to promote Christ’s teachings through athletics,” he says. “The CYO inspires young people to know God and to love God through athletics.”

Under CYO, all children taking part will play, regardless of their abilities.

“I’ve been coaching for years — the girls’ high school rugby team at Amherst — and I saw the mentality of ‘win at all costs,’” Jim says. “This is why CYO gets it, especially in early childhood development. A lot of thought goes into this.”

In particular, Jim recalls the coaching that was given to our volleyball team.

“[The coach] had kids who were very competitive,” Jim says. “But they didn’t focus on winning. He was teaching them the game, and how to be a teammate, respect, and honor. That’s what it’s about. That’s why I love CYO.”

Jim even incorporates the CYO principles in his high school rugby team coaching.

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HIGHLIGHTS

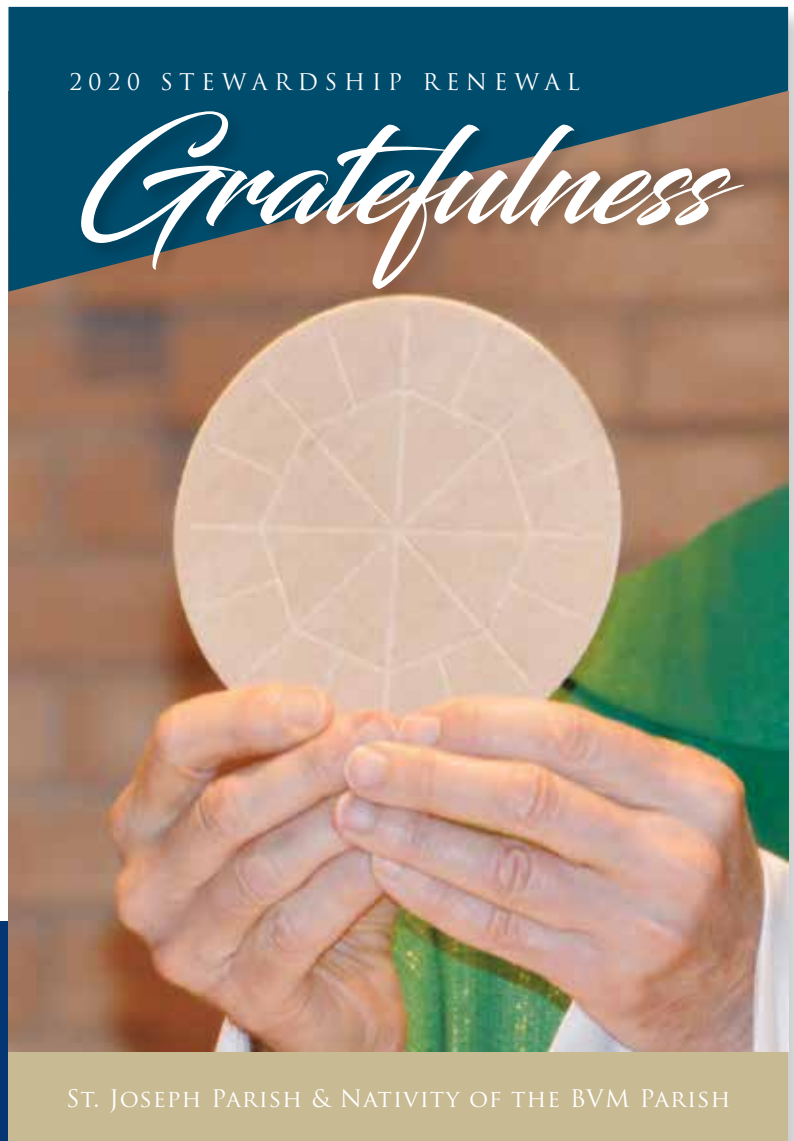
of Our 2020 Stewardship Renewal

A few months ago, our parish leadership conducted the 2020 Stewardship Renewal. The Stewardship Renewal gave our parish communities the opportunity to discern how we are using our gifts of time, talent and treasure in service to the parish and in return to God.

In this month's newsletter, we are happy to share with you some of the highlights of the Stewardship Renewal.

- There were 310 commitment cards received from 13 percent of registered households.
- There were 2,083 prayer (stewardship of time) commitments.
- There were 1,008 ministry (stewardship of talent) commitments. Of these, 195 were new ministry commitments, while 813 were re-commitments to parish ministries.
- There were 218 offertory (stewardship of treasure) commitments, with an average pledge of \$1,679.

An Important Note for All St. Joseph and Nativity Parishioners



Even though Commitment Weekend is over, we want you to know that it's not too late to sign up or re-commit to one of the over 50 ministries detailed in the Ministry Guidebook. You can request a commitment card by contacting your parish office or you can sign up online at StJosephAmherst.com. As a disciple of Christ, you are being called. How will you answer?

A Letter from Our Pastor



God's Time Is the Best



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

Most of us are not very fond of waiting. But New Year's Eve is an exception as people look forward to the stroke of midnight to welcome 2021. And we hope and pray that we will see an end to this COVID-19 pandemic early in this New Year.

Waiting for the moment — St. Paul has this great line: "When the fullness of time had come..."

"When the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons and daughters" (Galatians 4:4-5). God knew the right moment, when the fullness of time had come.

J. S. Bach has a choral prelude entitled, "God's Time Is the Best." Really, only God knows when that right moment is. Aesop, in one of his fables, draws this moral: "It's important to do the right thing in the right season." To do the right thing at the right time — timing sometimes is almost everything.

Why do we consult a stockbroker? Because we want to know if it is time to buy, to sell, or to hold on for dear life. A

doctor remarked that timing has a lot to do with an accurate diagnosis. If a patient comes too early without any real specific complaints, it's very difficult sometimes to establish a sure diagnosis. But if the patient waits too long to come, there may be nothing that can be done. Timing is so important.

Mark Twain wrote: "The right word is not the same thing as the almost-right word." He says that there is a lot of difference between lightning and a lightning bug. The right time is not always the same thing as the almost-right time.

Mothers and fathers, reflecting on their parenting years, can sometimes wonder if they pushed their children too hard too early? Or did they push them too hard too late to make much of a difference at all?

"When the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons and daughters."

We guess so often as to when that right moment is. But God always knows. We need to put our lives in God's hands.

"I want to do the right thing, Lord. Guide me to the right moment."

Mary and Joseph were asked to play their parts. Did they understand the whole plan? No, they didn't. But as Mary told the angel at the Annunciation, "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me just as you say." Mary and Joseph both trusted God: "If this is what you want me to do now, Lord, I will do it."

How do we approach this New Year? I would suggest that we approach it like Mary and Joseph did: trusting in God. Believe that the life you will live in 2021 is a life that you spend in the hands of God. Try to do the right thing, and look to the Lord for the right direction, and He will grace what you do. And you will do well, in God's own good time, and by God's own providence, for God's time is the best.

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor

Justin Hunker Reflects on the Many Blessings of Spiritual Renewal

Justin Hunker certainly has a lot of strong ties to St. Joseph Parish. He was baptized and received his sacraments here as a child. Later, he went on to get married here, and his wife, Ellen, is a second-grade teacher in the parish school. His mother, Robin Hunker, works in the school office and his mother-in-law, Kim Frankart, works in the parish office. Justin currently serves St. Joseph as a Eucharistic Minister and member of the Pastoral Council. So on any given day, you may be likely to find Justin somewhere around the parish! This was not always the case, and Justin will be the first to tell you that the Catholic faith was not always at the center of his life. He couldn't be more grateful, however, that God brought him back to a full life in the Church seven years ago.

"In 2013, I made a men's retreat," Justin says. "I was at a crossroads in my faith where I hadn't been going to Mass, but I started to go back and was yearning for what other people had there. So I went into the retreat weekend thinking, 'Okay, God, if I don't encounter You this weekend, then maybe religion or faith isn't for me.' Never give God an ultimatum, because He just so delivered! Everything about my life changed from that weekend on."

Inspired by the witness of the other men on the retreat who had experienced spiritual transformation or endured incredible hardships with the help of their faith, Justin began to pursue a more active faith life. While helping with the next men's retreat, he met Steve Frankart. The two became friends and then started doing business together in leasing and management. As God continued to work in Justin's life, his business partnership with Steve led to even more life changes.

"One day Steve started bringing his daughter around, and I didn't think anything of it because I'd met his other children," Justin says. "At some point, I joked, 'Would you



*Justin and Ellen Hunker with their children —
(from left) Elijah, Jude and Jonah*

help me meet my wife already?" and he said, 'I've been bringing my daughter around for a while now!' Once I got the father's blessing, I asked for her number."

Justin and Ellen were married five years ago, and the blessings continued to flow. Soon, the couple was teaming with fellow parishioners David and Marsha Gantz to start Operation Rescue, Inc., a non-profit organization that builds houses in El Salvador. Just as the men on the 2013 retreat had inspired Justin to deepen his faith, so, too, do the people of El Salvador.

"I've been to El Salvador five times now," he says. "The people have such a strong culture and community. They rely on each other and when their neighbors need something, they are there for them. They work together as a community. They don't have anything in this world. They're poor, but

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Justin Hunker *continued from page 4*

they're so happy because they know that God will provide for them."

Life is busy for the Hunkers these days, as Justin and Ellen work and raise their three young children. Not only do they continue to make the faith a priority in their home with blessings before meals and evening prayer, but they also continue to stay actively engaged in parish life, treasuring the sense of community that involvement brings.

"The more you give to something, the more invested you will feel in it," Justin says. "That sense of community is something we all long for. That's why it's important to invest your time in any parish and find a ministry you want to be a part of. You can give something that God has put on your

heart back to the Church, and that gift to the Church can be multiplied so many times over."

For Justin, a strong commitment to the faith and to his parish all goes back to the immense gratitude he feels for a heart renewed.

"I'm just so grateful," Justin says. "I'm so glad that God brought me back to Him with that retreat and moved me into the next chapter of my life. Ellen and I have this amazing life together and the children, and especially in this state of the world, I just feel blessed that we have more answers than other people might. I don't feel uneasy about it because I have hope. How blessed are people that are brought up in families that have faith."

CYO ATHLETICS *continued from front cover*

"If you focus on the right thing, winning will happen," he says.

Our CYO is open not only to those attending Catholic schools but also to parish children who attend our Parish School of Religion. Opening the organization to non-parishioners and non-Catholics is also being considered.

Besides the benefits of physical activity, playing on CYO teams can help our children grow in fellowship.

"It has to do with the fact that everybody plays," Jim says. "Everybody engages in prayer before a game, and after. You're doing the right things in practice, and you have a mix of kids who are very athletic with kids who aren't so much. Early on, the older kids help the younger. The better athletes help the others. Everyone plays and contributes. They are all part of the team."

Winter sports are currently underway, with sign-ups having begun in October. When the COVID-19 restrictions began to take effect last spring, some of the numbers of players and coaches dropped.

"It had been a fluid couple months," Jim says of the spring activities. "We knew it could end at any time, but we had to go with it."

Several coaches had to step down because they are caregivers for high-risk parents.

"They did the right thing," Jim says.

With this last year's fall sports, Jim was able to combine grades to make up teams in rookie tackle football, flag football, and volleyball. The boys and girls trained together for cross country, but the matches were done virtually. The team members ran at staggered times with outcomes determined by each member's run time. Contact was minimized — parents were not permitted on the course but had to stay in the parking lots. The number of spectators at the volleyball games was also limited.

With all of the safety guidelines that must be followed, Jim is understandably proud of the CYO coaches.

"I'm so proud of the coaches in how they stepped up," he says. "I'm hearing good things about how everything is going."

The next area of focus for the CYO is spring sports. Anyone with questions about coaching or children's signing up to play may call Jim Yanosko at 216-496-5303.

Why This Advent Was Important

By NATHAN FRANKART

Peace of Christ to you! I know that I won't be the first person to say this, and you've probably heard it 100 times already, but I've never been more excited to put a year in the history books. 2020, it's been nice knowing you, and I would appreciate it if you never happened again, please and thank you.

Other than the symbolism, it's hard to feel like a lot has changed over these last few months in particular, especially since the middle of November. We have lots of reasons to be optimistic about the future, whether personally or for the state of affairs of the world — but it's still difficult in some sense to make sense of everything or to find the hope necessary to be joyful. This is why I personally was so thankful for this liturgical season of Advent that has now come and gone for this year.



Father Mike McCandless with seminarians having an end of the semester Advent Celebration.

Advent is almost a microcosm of all of salvation history when the world was waiting for the coming of the Savior to redeem man, which was fulfilled in the birth and eventual death of Jesus Christ. Yet, we passionately celebrate that time of anticipation, the waiting for the King of Glory to come to the Earth. This liturgical season only lasts four weeks, yet it demonstrates the example of how we are to position ourselves before God and

towards the world. We are a people of hope. We are not a people of despair, of short-sightedness, of cynicism, of doubt, or of passive acceptance.

I remember Fr. Tim preaching on the first Sunday of Advent of how we are to place ourselves in Advent, as people of active anticipation, of active hope of the things to come. That of course, should begin with our own relationship to Jesus Christ, but it continues on outside of our inner hearts and should reach out into our community. Let others know we are Christian by our passionate hope in the things to come.



Collection Counters Ministry

Working to Ensure the Proper Safeguarding of Our Treasure

We all have our own gifts that we can use to glorify our Lord. Some of us are gifted with talents we can use through serving at Mass, like musical skills or a strong speaking voice. Others embrace opportunities to help behind the scenes, and the Collection Counters Ministry is a perfect example. Several volunteers gather to count, organize, and add the collections from all the Masses, for both St. Joseph and Nativity. As we all know, it takes the gift of treasure, large or small, to keep our parish operating. Likewise, it's an important ministry to accurately count the offering.

Betty Stock oversees this ministry at Nativity. Sandi Schuler has been in charge of this ministry at St. Joseph for many years, but she recently enlisted Alison Smith to take over.

"The most important part of Mass is, of course, the spiritual," Alison says. "But even the church has to pay bills, so if we can help even a little by getting the collection counted and organized, we're all glad to help out."

Alison enjoys the camaraderie of this ministry, as there is time to visit with one another while counting.

This ministry is a huge help to the office staff because they can take the counted money to be deposited. Volunteers ensure envelopes are marked accurately, as well as tally the loose bills and change. Those who volunteer take one weekend a month. Alison now works to schedule counters and act as a communication resource between the Collection Counters Ministry and the parish office staff. However, due to COVID-19 precautions, the office staff has been counting the collection for the time being.

Sandi believes anyone who donates their time to the Lord, in whatever capacity, experiences a rewarding feeling.

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"The most important part of Mass is, of course, the spiritual. But even the church has to pay bills, so if we can help even a little by getting the collection counted and organized, we're all glad to help out."

— Alison Smith



Alison Smith counts the collection at St. Joseph.



Erma Camp counts the collection at St. Joseph.

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Fr. Tim O'Connor Serving Both Parishes

Mass:

Monday, 9:00 a.m. — *St. Joseph*

Tuesday, 8:00 a.m. — *Nativity of the BVM*

Thursday, 7:00 p.m. — *St. Joseph*

Friday, 9:00 a.m. — *St. Joseph*

Saturday, 4:00 p.m. — *St. Joseph*

5:30 p.m. — *Nativity of the BVM*

Sunday, 8:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m. — *St. Joseph*

Confession at St. Joseph:

Thursday — Individual Reconciliation 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Saturday — Individual Reconciliation 11:00 a.m. to noon

Eucharistic Adoration (Chapel) at Nativity of the BVM:

Monday-Friday 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Collection Counters Ministry

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“I have been a member of our parish for over 50 years and have always felt a personal reward for any ministry I was part of,” she says.

Sandi encourages parishioners to continue to give as they are able, as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Collections have been down, but as she notes, expenses continue.

“Parishioners are encouraged to be faithful in sending their donations to the church on a regular basis,” Sandi says. “The information on the use of online offering can be found on the St. Joseph and Nativity website, stjosephamherst.com.”

To be a member of the Collection Counters Ministry requires honesty, confidence in counting money, and the ability to keep parishioners' donations confidential.

Counters are always needed to help when a counter is unavailable or to replace a regular counter, if necessary. For more information, please contact Alison Smith (St. Joseph) at 440-988-8613 or dsmith14@oh.rr.com, or Betty Stock (Nativity) at 440-984-5735 or bettystock222@gmail.com. To give to our parishes online via myEoffering, fill out a form at stjosephamherst.com.