



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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"An Active and Rewarding Ministry"

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MEET THE Jaskiewicz Family

Learning and Growing Together in Faith

Art and Stacie Jaskiewicz had heard nothing but positive reports about St. Joseph Parish School and wanted the best for their son. With that in mind, they decided to enroll him in the preschool, and it was the beginning of a new phase of their faith journey.

"After enrolling Arthur at St. Joseph, it became evident that faith was needed for us to deepen our relationship," Art says. "Enrolling him in the preschool program was the start of our involvement at the parish."

Art and Stacie met 21 years ago through their employer, and at the time, actively living the Catholic faith wasn't a critical part of their relationship. Stacie was raised Lutheran, and Art was raised Catholic and had been an active member in his high school years at his parish, St. Stanislaus in Erie, Pa.

"There was a period when I fell out of good practice and struggled to be an active participant in the Catholic community," Art says. "I never lost or doubted my faith, but rather developed some bad habits."

As Arthur continued in preschool, Stacie felt called to the faith and decided to go through the RCIA process as a



The Jaskiewicz family — (from left) Max, Art, Arthur, and Stacie

candidate. She urged Art to attend classes with her, and he was impressed and humbled by her commitment.

"Stacie often had questions after her meetings or after Mass, and then I realized I was missing that involvement, interaction, and sharing of the faith I had in my youth," Art says. "Eventually I went from being a guest to an active member of RCIA and the parish."

When Stacie joined the Church at the Easter Vigil in 2016, Art and Stacie officially became members of St. Joseph. They also became increasingly more involved in parish life.

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The Harmonious Path to *Stewardship*

Liturgical Music in the Catholic Mass

Mass is a sacred and central act of worship that brings together the faithful to partake in the Body and Blood of Christ. At the heart of this divine celebration lies liturgical music, which serves as a powerful medium to deepen our connection with God. The significance of liturgical music during the Mass cannot be overstated. Let's explore the profound importance of this musical element and how parishioners can live out stewardship by sharing their time and talents through participation in parish music ministries.

Liturgical music plays a multifaceted role in the Mass. It uplifts our souls, allowing us to transcend the mundane and connect with the divine. Here's why it holds such significance:

- **Enhancing Worship:** Music adds depth and emotion to the Mass, helping us express our love, gratitude, and devotion to God. It is a channel through which we can praise and adore Him.
- **Scripture Reflection:** Many hymns and chants are based on the Scriptures, reinforcing the message of the Gospel, and aiding in its reflection. The music often accompanies the liturgical readings, making the Word of God resonate more deeply within us.

- **Community Bonding:** Singing together fosters a sense of unity among parishioners. The choir and congregation become a spiritual family, bound by the common goal of glorifying God through music.

Stewardship is the responsible and generous use of our time, talent, and treasure, in thanksgiving for God's gifts to us, and for the service of God and others. Participating in parish music ministries is an excellent way to actively live out stewardship.

God has bestowed unique gifts on each of us. Those gifted with musical abilities can use their talents to serve the Church. Whether you sing, play an instrument, or have skills in music composition and arrangement, your contribution is invaluable.

Joining a music ministry allows you to work collaboratively with fellow parishioners. The bonds formed while creating harmonious melodies extend beyond the rehearsal room, enriching your sense of community and shared faith.

By actively participating in the music ministry, you contribute to the spiritual ambiance of the Mass. The beautiful hymns and melodies you create can inspire others and bring them closer to God.

When you offer your musical talents in service to God, it is an expression of gratitude for the gifts you have received. You become a steward of the gifts God has bestowed upon you, using them to bring His message to life.

Liturgical music is not merely an embellishment of the Mass — it is an essential element that elevates our worship, deepens our connection with God, and strengthens our sense of community. Through active involvement in parish music ministries, you can live out stewardship by sharing your time and talents in a way that enriches the spiritual experience of the entire parish. As you make music that resonates with the hearts of your fellow parishioners, you are living out your faith, serving your community, and contributing to the beauty and sanctity of the Mass.



ST. JOSEPH & NATIVITY

A Letter from Our Pastor

Embracing Stewardship in the Year Ahead

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

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, it is a time of reflection and renewal, an opportunity to set intentions for how we can grow in our faith and continue to live out our calling as stewards of God's blessings. The concept of stewardship is deeply ingrained in our Catholic faith, reminding us that all we have comes from God and should be used in a way that glorifies Him.

The beginning of a new year is often marked by resolutions — commitments to change, to improve, to grow. This year, I invite you to consider making stewardship a central theme in your resolutions. To live stewardship as a way of life, we must embrace it with a heart open to God's grace, and with practical, intentional actions. Here are some suggestions on how to do just that:

GRATITUDE: Start with a heart full of gratitude. Each day, thank God for the gifts you have received — your family, your health, your talents, and your resources. When we recognize that all we have is a gift from God, it becomes easier to share those gifts with others.

TIME: Make prayer — Stewardship of Time — an integral part of your life. Seek God's guidance in your

stewardship journey. Commit more time to daily prayer, including praying with your spouse, your children, and before meals. Perhaps consider praying the Liturgy of the Hours in the morning and evenings. Pray for wisdom in using your time, talent, and treasure to further God's kingdom and help those in need.

TALENT: Identify your unique talents and how you can use them to serve others. Whether it's sharing your skills in music, teaching, organization, or any other area, offering your talents for the benefit of your parish and community is a meaningful form of stewardship.

TREASURE: Stewardship also involves managing our financial resources wisely. Commit to tithing or giving a percentage of your income to support the work of the church and charitable causes. In doing so, you invest in the spiritual and physical well-being of your community.

FORMATION: Deepen your understanding of stewardship and its role in your life. Read the Scriptures, study Catholic teachings on stewardship, and engage in discussions with fellow parishioners. This will help you grow in your understanding of this calling.



COMMUNITY:

Build strong relationships within your parish community. In unity, we can accomplish more. Working together as a community of stewards, we can make a significant impact on the world around us.

Remember that stewardship is not just a one-time commitment; it is a way of life. It's about consistent, intentional choices that reflect your love for God and your neighbors. By embracing stewardship in the year ahead, you will find fulfillment, purpose, and a deepened connection to your faith.

Let us embark on this new year with hearts filled with gratitude, dedication, and the desire to be faithful stewards of God's blessings. May our collective efforts bear witness to His love and grace in our lives and in the world.

May God bless you abundantly in this coming year, and may you find joy and peace in living stewardship as a way of life.

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor

Boss Club™ Offers St. Joseph Parish School Students Unique Learning Opportunities

There are so many career paths students can follow after graduation — it would be downright impossible to expose them to all the opportunities that exist. So a relatively new club at St. Joseph Parish School is giving the sixth through eighth-grade students the opportunity to explore life as an entrepreneur.

Boss Club, currently in its second year, is being offered as a beginning course for sixth-grade students, and there's an advanced course for seventh and eighth-graders.

"The advanced course is for those students that want to further explore entrepreneurship and the businesses or business ideas they created in the first session last school year," says Amy Makruski, Principal.

It's important that students have opportunities that will give them an edge as they enter high school and college.

"This program provides some real-world education for students at a young age to expose them to and prepare them for the world they will enter," Mrs. Makruski says.

St. Joseph Parish School is a STEM-designated school. Teachers and staff work to engage students in many ways so each student can learn in their own way. The Boss Club is another way to teach concepts that will stay with them in the future.

"The goal of Boss Club is to engage students in critical and creative thinking, in regard to a business model," Mrs. Makruski says. "It helps students design, launch, and run

a small business while incorporating Christian values like philanthropy and ethical considerations."

Mrs. Makruski knows that teaching students entrepreneurship will prepare them well for the future.

"This program helps give them the soft skills that are desired by employers of today and the future — creativity, confidence, grit, and being a good self-starter and self-manager."

This program is rooted in Christian values, which is vital at St. Joseph Parish School. There are even Scripture sections with reflections and discussion throughout the courses.

"The courses are centered on being a disciple of Christ and using the talents you possess to serve others," Mrs. Makruski says.

The Boss Club also allows students to form new and deeper relationships. A student may be working on a business or product that aligns with the work of other students whom they may not know as well. They also have the opportunity to get to know the instructor.

"Collaboration and cooperation are essential to the course," Mrs. Makruski says. "Relationships are also formed through consulting experts from real-world companies and businesses. The instructor can help to facilitate connections between the students and community partners. This authentic experience and relationship further shapes the quality and depth of this curriculum."

**Learn more
about St. Joseph
Parish School at
sjsamherst.org.**

St. John Neumann: A Stalwart of Catholic Education

In the Catholic tradition, the name of St. John Neumann shines brightly as a pioneer of Catholic education. His life and work have left an indelible mark on the Catholic Church in the United States. Born on March 28, 1811, in what is now the Czech Republic, Neumann's journey from humble beginnings to becoming a revered saint and bishop is a testament to his unwavering commitment to Catholic education.

From a young age, Neumann demonstrated a thirst for knowledge and a strong desire to serve God. His family's modest background did not hinder his pursuit of education. He learned several languages, a skill that would prove invaluable in his later work with immigrant communities in the United States. In his early adulthood, Neumann entered the seminary in Bohemia, where his academic achievements and profound spirituality marked him as a promising candidate for the priesthood.

In 1836, Neumann decided to follow his calling to serve the Catholic Church in America, a decision that would set him on a path of great significance. He was ordained a priest and embarked on his mission to the United States, a country filled with immigrants yearning for spiritual guidance and education.

St. John Neumann recognized the pivotal role that education plays in nurturing the faith and intellectual growth of the Catholic community. He observed that Catholic immigrants in the United States often faced challenges in maintaining their faith and identity in a predominantly Protestant society. Neumann saw education as a means to preserve and strengthen the Catholic identity in the face of adversity.

Neumann's early experiences in America led him to understand that the establishment of Catholic schools was essential. These schools not only provided quality education, but also instilled in students a deep sense of Catholic identity and values. He worked tirelessly to establish parochial schools, create a diocesan school system, and promote the importance of education for Catholic children.

In 1852, he became the fourth bishop of Philadelphia, where he continued to dedicate himself to the establishment and expansion of Catholic schools. During his tenure, he increased the number of schools and introduced various reforms to ensure high-quality education. Neumann encouraged religious orders to come to the diocese and assist in the education of children, particularly those from immigrant backgrounds.



In addition to his work in Philadelphia, Neumann played a crucial role in the foundation of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, a religious congregation devoted to education and social services.

St. John Neumann's commitment to Catholic education left an enduring legacy. His influence is still felt today, as Catholic schools across the United States continue to thrive, providing students with a strong foundation in both faith and academics.

In recognition of his remarkable life and work, St. John Neumann was beatified in 1963 and canonized in 1977. His life was a testament to the power of education in preserving the faith and nurturing the spiritual growth of Catholic communities, especially in the United States. St. John Neumann's commitment to Catholic education continues to inspire educators, students, and the faithful, reminding us of the enduring importance of quality education in the service of God. His feast day is celebrated on Jan. 5.

Lectors Share God's Word with Reverence and Clarity

"An Active and Rewarding Ministry"

Proclaiming the Word of God is an important aspect of the celebration of the Mass. Lectors are responsible for providing a clear and prayerful proclamation of the readings within our liturgies. Stephanie Hyster oversees the Lector Ministry at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, where seven lectors regularly serve.

"We have been together for many years," Stephanie says. "We have a couple people that were on the regular rotation and then decided to take a

break, but are always willing to help if we need it. I prepare a schedule in December of each year and send it out."

The schedule is set up in a way where the assigned lector is responsible for the Mass schedule from the first of the month to the 15th, or the 16th through the end of the month.

"Holidays and holy days are scheduled separately," Stephanie says. "I will send out an email and ask for a volunteer. When someone has a conflict with their personal schedule and their lector schedule, they send an email, text, or call to ask someone to cover. This has worked very well for us."

Stephanie has served as a lector for close to 20 years. When Fr. Denny came to Nativity, he asked her to handle the schedule. At that time, there were not many lectors involved.

"I felt like I was reading all the time, and that people were getting tired of listening to me," Stephanie says. "I just started asking parishioners and relatives if they would be willing to help — some sought me out at Mass and asked how they could get involved."

Proclaiming the readings at Mass is about more than simply reciting words off a page. Stacy



(From left) Dereck Johnson, Christine Gentile, Stephanie Hyster, Deb Rak, and Donn Hyster (not pictured — Jordan Irvin and Stacy Ostrander)

Ostrander notes that sharing God's Word at Mass can help deepen a lector's own faith.

"The time I spend pre-reading and practicing is a prayer in itself," Stacy says. "As a result of becoming familiar with the week's readings, proclaiming the Word at Mass is more of a conversation to the parishioners, rather than just reading at them. Being a lector is an active and rewarding ministry."

"We really try to present the reading in a meaningful way so it's more meaningful to parishioners," Stephanie adds.



Lector Jordan Irvin proclaiming on Ash Wednesday — with a little help from daughter, Stevie

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Lectors Share God's Word with Reverence and Clarity

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There is minimal training required to become a lector. The only training is understanding when to go to the altar, and lectors are asked to sit at the front.

"We have not screened people with regard to their skills in reading," Stephanie says. "Some are a little stronger, but I believe it's more about getting people involved. When I have recruited readers and they comment that they are worried if they mess up, I always say, 'If you can't make a mistake in a church, where can you?' The real commitment is the preparation before Mass so that you are familiar with the reading."



Lector Dereck Johnson

For information about the Lector Ministry at Nativity, contact Stephanie Hyster at 440-396-3454 or stephanie.hyster@gmail.com — at St. Joseph, contact Chris Annable at 440-668-0308 or christineannable7@gmail.com.

Meet the Jaskiewicz Family

continued from front cover

"Fr. Tim O'Connor was supportive in accepting me as Stacie's sponsor and then blessing our marriage at that same Easter Vigil and welcoming us to the parish," Art says. "It is one thing to attend Mass and be involved in ministries to satisfy one's calling. Then there is setting the example for our children. When you involve the whole family, you learn and grow together."

Today Arthur is an altar server, and Art and Stacie are involved with the RCIA process. Art is also an usher for the 11 a.m. Mass and holidays and is a Parent Club Representative. In addition, Art joined the Knights of Columbus and last year helped coach CYO basketball.

"Each ministry is meaningful in that they bring something different to the community and to me," Art says. "Catholicism is a community-based religion and being involved in the different ministries helps build community togetherness. It goes without saying that it has helped me be a better father, husband, and person."

Every parishioner has something to give, so Art would suggest signing up for a ministry and just trying it. If that ministry isn't for you, try a different one.

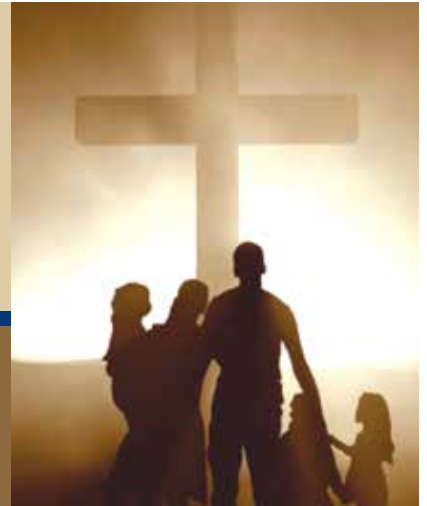
"Just like the Life cereal commercial of the '80s, try it, and you might like it even if you don't like anything — Mikey did," Art says. "You have nothing to lose in attending a meeting or function. You'll find good people at every level willing to help. There are numerous events hosted by both parishes, the school, and other groups that could use a volunteer."

Art and Stacie are grateful to everyone who has been involved in their family's growth at St. Joseph, including Fr. Tim for his guidance, wisdom, and leadership, and the school administration for their patience and faith-based education for their children, Arthur and Max.

"I thank my wife for bringing me back to my faith and my children for helping me realize how faith can make me a better person, let alone a better father," Art says. "I thank the ministries I am involved with as each of those has shown what I can give back to the Church. Finally, I thank the parishioners. Every Sunday, I open the door for you, and you thank me with a smile."

HOSPITALITY EXTENDS TO OUR FAMILY

AT HOME AND IN OUR PARISH



As Catholics, we are members of two very important family units. First, there are our own families, which consist of our spouses and children. And as a parish community, we are members of a larger “family of faith,” along with our clergy and fellow parishioners. Of course, both types of units share in the Catholic faith, as we gather to celebrate Mass each Sunday.

Yet, all does not appear to be well. The modern media unfortunately seems to place a heavy emphasis on the destruction of both types of family units. At the same time, the “families of faith” in our own parishes have also been threatened by a number of issues, from scandals and mismanagement of resources, to drops in Mass attendance and school enrollment.

All of these threats and issues most certainly promote a hostile environment for today’s American Catholics. In turn, we may feel that there is little we can do to counter the negativity that is so pervasive within our country towards those practicing the Catholic faith.

The good news is that finding the solution to such seemingly insurmountable problems often begins in the most simple and basic of places — at home. In this particular case, it begins in two homes — that of our own family, and in the parish home of our “family of faith.”

Certainly, we would like visitors in our own homes to feel welcome, whether they are extended family, familiar

friends or new acquaintances. Therefore, we do whatever we can to make these visitors feel appreciated — we might prepare a homemade meal for our guests, or serve them a fresh cup of coffee, all while we initiate a friendly and insightful conversation.

Of course, this effort to make visitors to our home feel welcome is a wonderful example of providing *hospitality*, one of the four key pillars of stewardship.

So, if we consider our other family unit — the “family of faith” in our own parish — the same can be applied to those entering our church for worship and fellowship. Whether we make an effort to get to know some of the familiar faces we see at church each Sunday, reach out to someone who is new to the community, or extend a warm welcome to those visiting our parish, we are following Jesus’ example of hospitality at its most foundational and engaging level.

Of course, while hospitality serves to enhance worship and fellowship for the entire parish family, it also impacts our community on a day-to-day basis. If we foster a welcoming environment in our parish home and present the many opportunities to minister and serve, involvement will only increase throughout the community! Therefore, if hospitality continues to flourish throughout the parish and its many ministries, so will the stewardship way of life!

While hospitality serves to enhance worship and fellowship for the entire parish family, it also impacts our community on a day-to-day basis. If we foster a welcoming environment in our parish home and present the many opportunities to minister and serve, involvement will only increase throughout the community! Therefore, if hospitality continues to flourish throughout the parish and its many ministries, so will the stewardship way of life!

I'm Tired

By *NATHAN FRANKART, Seminarian*

Pease of Christ to you! If I am nothing else, I will settle for being authentic. I admit it. I'm tired.

OK, here is the context before you start spreading the news. These last few months living and working at St. Ambrose have been nothing short of astounding. The People of God here have an intense desire to serve the Lord, to serve their community, and to serve one another. They care deeply about making this parish a welcoming environment that thrives on activity. The support and care I've received surpassed my expectations of what could be possible from a parish community.

And yet, despite all this bragging, I'm tired. And that aggravates me. I'm not tired because I do too much — I get tired of my routines and habits. Even though it's an amazing ministry, I have to admit, I sometimes feel unfulfilled. This is humanity on display. We can be in our best environment, living our best lives, surrounded by everything that we've ever needed, and more. And yet, sometimes, it can still fall short. We can be left tired, annoyed, frustrated, disappointed, or unfulfilled.

I tread on this subject lightly. It's hard to admit that even when we are in the midst of so many blessings, there can still be a longing in our hearts, something unfulfilled, something that isn't completely satisfying. It's this place where sin and temptation love to work their way in, to create a foothold where they ought not.

Even if this is a place where evil can take a hold in our life, this sensation, this feeling of wanting more, this can be the most incredible place of encounter with Jesus should we allow ourselves to speak this truth. It's not selfish to acknowledge this, not having everything in our hearts filled. It's what Christ will ultimately do when we join Him for eternity. This experience can serve us well here on Earth if we unite it to God. It is Him who reminds us of our return to the Father. That is why this life can never be truly, completely satisfying. At least not without Jesus at the absolute center of it all.

When you have everything, and you still want more, go to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, in daily Mass, in adoration, or on Sunday. Go to Him who satisfies every desire.



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This newsletter brought to you by the Catholic Communities of:

& ST. JOSEPH PARISH & NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

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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. - 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

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Monday, Jan. 1 — 10 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph Parish
Parish offices closed

FIRST SATURDAY ROSARY

Saturday, Jan. 6 — 9 a.m., St. Joseph Church

PARENT CLUB MEETING

Tuesday, Jan. 9 — 7 p.m., School MPR

BLOOD DRIVE

Thursday, Jan. 11 — 4 p.m., St. Joseph parking lot

NO SCHOOL

Friday, Jan. 12
Monday, Jan. 15

FINANCE COUNCIL MEETING

Monday, Jan. 22 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph conference room

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS MEETING

Tuesday, Jan. 23 — 7 p.m., School MPR

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Monday, Jan. 29 — 7 p.m., St. Joseph Conference Room

CATHOLIC SCHOOL WEEK/SJS OPEN HOUSE

SJS Open House is on Sunday, Jan. 28 — 12 p.m.
(following the 11 a.m. Mass)
Catholic Schools week is Sunday, Jan. 28-Friday, Feb. 2

VINCENTIANS MEETING

Thursday, Jan. 4 and 18 — 9 a.m., St. Joseph
Conference Room

RCIA MEETINGS

Monday, Jan. 8, 15, 22, 29 — 7 p.m., Nativity Parish Hall

PSR CLASSES

Wednesday, Jan. 10, 17, 24, 31 — 5:30 p.m.,
St. Joseph School

FAITHFULLY FIT YOGA CLASSES

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