



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

Inside

- 2 The Importance of Attending Mass From Beginning to End
- 3 What Is the Real Purpose of Our Lives?
- 4 Celebrating the Sacrament of First Communion
- 6 Getting to Know the High School Graduates of Our Parish Community
- 10 Congratulations to Our St. Joseph Graduates
- 11 IMMERSION Youth Group Works to Build a Strong Faith Foundation for Young Catholics

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JULY 2021

Our El Salvador Mission Team: *Providing Essential Aid and Building Relationships*

Traditionally a Catholic country, El Salvador has begun to reopen, and although nothing is confirmed yet, our Mission Team hopes to return for the first time since 2019.

“We’re really looking forward to returning to El Salvador when we can,” says John Sabo. “We’ve been going down there for so many years, and we’ve developed relationships with a lot of families. They recognize you and know you when you come back.”

The El Salvador Mission Team began in 2013 when Fr. Michael Denk led a conversation about mission work and the type of missions our faith community might want to become involved in together.

“He was familiar with doing mission work in Africa and El Salvador, and the Cleveland Diocese had groups going down to El Salvador already,” John says. “That was the direction we started leaning.”

John had been with his high school daughter on mission teams in the Appalachians and had enjoyed the experience.

“In light of that, I thought I would branch out a little farther,” he says.



The 2019 mission team

The mission trip is open to parishioners from other faith communities, and since 2013, they have generally traveled each year to El Salvador together for about a week in the spring.

“What we do when we’re there varies, from painting to teaching to visiting with families,” John says. “There are several Masses a day, and we travel around and build relationships. The children put on plays for us in the different towns. Every year, we do different things.”

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mission Team has continued to support families and individuals in El Salvador in different ways.

continued on back cover

The Importance of Attending Mass From **Beginning to End**



There seems to be an epidemic among Catholics in some parishes. They receive Communion and rush out the door, sometimes even before others have received the Eucharist. Some may remain, but often they, too, may depart before the final blessing, even before the celebrant priest processes out. This is an unfortunate circumstance – it is not that there is never a reason for an early departure, some sort of family emergency, a medical issue, or an unruly family member. However, assuring that you are the first out of the parking lot, being first in line at the local restaurant, seeing the kickoff of the football game, or getting to the golf course seem a bit trivial in relation to the beauty and the glory and the significance of the Mass and the Eucharist.

Rather than focus on the motivation for leaving before Mass is completed, we need to initially consider why we are even in attendance at Mass. The high point of the Mass is the reception of the Eucharist. Jesus instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. He held up the bread and said, “This is my body,” and then He held up the cup and said, “This is my blood.” The Catholic Mass is an awesome event for us as Catholics. Jesus Christ becomes truly present in the Eucharist. We gather at Mass to receive this gift, but we also gather in community to offer praise and worship to Him, to be spiritually fed, as well.

The *Code of Canon Law* makes it clear that we are to attend Mass – “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass” (1247). It does not say “in part” or “in parts of the Mass.” The expectation is that each of us as Catholics will attend a complete Mass. That, it would seem, is a sticking point with some. How often have we heard or participated in a conversation, the gist of which is, “What constitutes a complete Mass?”

There are so many considerations and perspectives about this issue. We might consider some of the counterarguments. For example, only one person left the Last Supper early – Judas Iscariot. Jesus has invited us to a banquet. Would we go to a meal with someone else, and suddenly get up and leave after we had eaten? That would seem to be a bit rude. Are we truly there to be part of our faith community? If so, should we not as a community begin and end together?

The official *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* says that at the end of Mass, we are “sent to do good works, while praising and blessing the Lord” (90). Our task as Catholics does not end with Mass. Christ has called us to mission – a mission of proclaiming God’s Word and serving others. There are 168 hours in a week. Even if we consider our Sunday Mass to be a two-hour commitment, that is a mere 1.2 percent of our total week.

We cannot give God that much time and that much commitment? After the Last Supper, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. He took with Him the Apostles Peter, James, and John. However, when He returned to where He had left them, He found them asleep. His exact words to Peter were, “Could you not watch with me for one hour?” That is a question and a challenge evidently for some of us, as well. Are we not at Mass because we love the Lord, and we care for those in our community? Or are we there for some personal and selfish reason? We reiterate that there may well be legitimate reasons for leaving a Mass before it is completed. God understands that. Nevertheless, we need to make sure that our reasoning is indeed sound and not something petty or minor. After we receive the Lord at Mass, we are, in effect, a walking tabernacle. We need to act that way.

A Letter from Our Pastor

What Is the Real Purpose of Our Lives?



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

Do you ever think about your purpose in life? Even as a priest, I certainly do. There are days and times of frustration when I think, “What am I really supposed to be doing? What does God want me to do?” For eons, philosophers have considered these very questions and written about them.

But the truth is that we, as Catholics, already know the answers.

When we consider the many facets of life in our parish communities, there are numerous activities and endeavors that go beyond attending Mass. From fundraising efforts, to social outreach/service, childcare and more, there are many ways in which we serve our communities.

Yet, as we undertake these important pursuits — both within and outside our parishes — we must always remember that our ultimate goal is salvation. After all, the only reason we exist, the only

reason our Church exists, is the same as the reason Jesus joined us and became a part of us here on earth — He came to save humanity.

We use the term the “body of Christ” to describe the Church with Christ as the head. We are all parts of that body, and the parts of the body must move in the same direction as the body itself — it simply won’t function if the parts are moving in different directions. We are all in this together.

When our lives are complete, we do not base our success or failure on how much money we have, or whether or not we are famous. Nor does our success or failure depend upon the difference between health and sickness, or pleasure and pain. Rather, it is the difference between being saved and not being saved.

I often think of my family members who have passed away,

and as a priest, I deal with that issue with others on a very regular basis. Sometimes, I wonder if they all fully realized that salvation was the answer to so many of our questions in life.

I am surrounded by memories of those who have gone before, as are you. We are apt to use the term “the communion of saints” in many ways in our Church. Someday, we will know more about the “communion of saints” and how it all works. In the meantime, we pray for everyone who has gone before us, hoping they have made it home.

Please pray for me as I pray for you!

Gratefully in Christ,

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

Fr. Timothy J. O’Connor,
Pastor



Celebrating the Sacrament of **FIRST COMMUNION**

We congratulate our parishioners who received the Sacrament of First Communion this spring.



Pictured left to right: PSR Principal Mrs. Eads, SJS 2nd grade teacher Mrs. Hunker, and PSR 2nd grade teacher Mrs. Heuring



ST. JOSEPH & NATIVITY



GETTING TO KNOW THE High School Graduates

OF OUR PARISH COMMUNITY

This summer, we celebrate the graduation of our high school seniors and college students, as they prepare for the next step on their educational, vocational, and faith journeys. We offer our congratulations to all of our graduates.



Carlie Bertke was a 2017 graduate of St. Joseph's School and is now a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. While at Steele, Carlie earned the Academic Award all four years, as well as graduating with Honors, and was also a part of the Med Health Tech program. Carlie participated for two years on the swim team and was a four-year softball player, also earning the SWC Scholar Athlete Award. Carlie's future plans are to major in Pharmacy at the University of Findlay.

Aiden Brattoli is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. Aiden has always enjoyed many sports but has played hockey since the age of 4. Aiden is a four-year letterman on the Steele hockey team and has created some great memories playing as the team won the Baron Cup three years in a row and the SWC all four years. Aiden enjoys the outdoors, vacationing and being on the computer gaming with his friends, having fun laughing and joking. Aiden will be attending Kent State University in the fall, majoring in Computer Science.



Alex Corr is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. During his high school years he loved playing football, and when not at work also enjoys playing video games, hanging out with friends, and working out. Alex is currently enlisting in the United States Coast Guard, where he will study to become an Operation Specialist.



Hope Craig is a 2021 graduate from Firelands High School. During her high school years, Hope was active in Choir and a

member of the Oberlin Choristers. She sang at the Black River Landings, Crushers Stadium, and Progressive Field. She taught third-grade PSR and was an altar server while at her previous parish, but due to the pandemic, she was not able to serve at St. Joseph's. For the past year, Hope has been working hard with her recruiters preparing to enter the Army. Hope ships out to Fort Sill, Okla. on June 6!



Avery Doll was a 2017 graduate of St. Joseph's School and is now a 2021 graduate of Elyria Catholic High School. Avery graduated with Honors and is a member of the National Honor Society and the Women's Ministry. Avery was a four-year varsity soccer player and was named First Team All-Conference, First Team All Greater Cleveland, First Team Division III, and earned the Academic Excellence Award for maintaining above a 3.7 GPA while playing soccer. Avery was accepted into the Nursing Program and will be attending Kent State University this fall.



Benjamin Domain was a 2017 graduate of St. Joseph's School and is now a 2021 graduate of St. Ignatius High School. While at St. Ignatius, Ben truly enjoyed his education, service, and social activities, being involved in Green Team, the Gonzaga Society, and the pallbearers. Ben will be continuing his education this fall at Miami University of Ohio, with acceptance into the Business School.



Mackenzie Fisher is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. She was an exceptional student-athlete and maintained being on the Honor Roll while playing volleyball and was also a member of the varsity cheer squad. She loved high school and is very excited for her future. She plans to attend LCCC through the Kent State University



continued on page 7

Partnership in the fall to earn her Bachelor's Degree. In her spare time, she loves hanging out with friends and family, going to the beach, riding four-wheelers with her brother, Mason, and playing with her baby brother, Lincoln.

Julia Freeble is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. While at Steele, Julia participated in cheer for the football and basketball seasons and was also in competitive cheer. After graduation, Julia will be attending LCCC and enroll in the Police Academy to pursue a career in Law Enforcement.



Alexandra Hall was a 2017 graduate of St. Joseph's School and is now a 2021 graduate of Elyria Catholic High School. Lexi participated in many extracurricular activities, including basketball, softball, and volleyball, Peer Ministry, Women's Ministry, SADD, Student Senate, and the Student Ambassadors. Lexi was Vice President of her class all four years, she volunteered at the St. Jude Helping Hands Food Pantry as well as the Second Harvest Food Bank. Lexi was inducted into the National Honor Society, was All-County and Conference for basketball, and was an All-Conference softball player. This fall, Lexi will be attending Miami University for Pre-Medical studies.

Logan Hoopes is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. While at Steele, Logan played on the football team, and also completed a year and a half of college classes. This fall, Logan plans to attend LCCC to finish his Associate's Degree and then transfer to Bowling Green State University, where he will major in Business and Marketing.



Michael Hughes is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. While in high school, Michael was a National Merit Scholar Finalist, a member of the National Honor Society, an AP Scholar, he graduated with an Honors Diploma with a cumulative GPA of 4.398! Michael had a perfect score on the ACT for both math and reading. He was an SWC Scholar Athlete, he played on the Greater Cleveland HS Hockey League First Team in 2019-20,



SWC All-Conference Hockey Second Team in 2020-21, and SWC All-Conference Honorable Mention Hockey 2020-21. Michael will attend the University of Southern California on scholarship in the fall, studying Real Estate and Development.

Cecilia Iliff is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. During her high school years, CeCe Lettered and was Captain of the Girls Varsity golf team all four years, volunteered with the Second Harvest Food Bank, Special Olympics, and the Give Kids a Smile Dental Program. She was also a member of the Leo Club, Student Council and was the President of the National Honor Society. CeCe has been accepted into the United States Naval Academy and will study Mechanical Engineering and train to commission as an Officer of the U.S. Navy!



Logan Janik is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. Logan's favorite classes while at Steele were Mr. McConihe's Government Class and Art with Mr. Trunzo! He enjoyed playing golf for the Comets and he also worked at Elyria Country Club as a caddy for four years. Logan graduated with High Honors and received the National Chick Evans Caddy Scholarship that covers full tuition and housing while at OSU. His future plans are to pursue a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and then attend Law School. Logan's other hobbies include tennis, swimming, video gaming, and hanging out with his best friend and girlfriend, Carlie Bertke.



Kaelin Jenkins is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. Kaelin graduated with High Honors for Academics. She will be attending LCCC this fall, and then transferring to Ohio University, where she will pursue her Bachelor's in Broadcasting and Journalism. Kaelin is also attending classes this summer, along with working full-time at Best Buy.



Lucas Johnson is a 2021 graduate from the Lorain County JVS Industrial Electrician Program and was an Honor Student while at Steele High School. He is an Eagle Scout from Troop 427. Lucas was involved in Amherst Steele's track



continued on page 8

High School Graduates of Our Parish Community *continued from page 7*

and field, as well as the swim team. Lucas' hobbies include camping and hiking, board games, and hanging out with his friends and family!

Alexander Jones is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. Alex will be attending Owens Community College this fall to study Sports Management and play baseball.



Matthew Mendak is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. Matthew graduated with Honors and was also an inducted member of the National Honor Society and was a member of the high school Concert Band. Matthew played varsity football, as well as track and field, earning the SWC Scholar Athlete Award in both sports. Matthew was an Eagle Scout with Troop 427. This fall, Matthew will be attending the Ohio State University, majoring in Engineering.



Cole Jones was a 2017 graduate of St. Joseph's School and is now a 2021 Graduate of St. Ignatius High School. Cole was an Honor Student, and a four-year member of the baseball team, a member of the Labre Ministry and the Arimathea Pallbearer Ministry. Cole will be attending Miami University's Farmer School of Business this fall.

McKenna Kessler is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. McKenna participated in many high school athletic programs, playing volleyball and basketball her freshman year, track and cross country her sophomore through senior years. McKenna was inducted into the National Honor Society and took college AP classes while attending Steele and making the Dean's list. McKenna will be attending Ohio University this fall, majoring in the medical field to become a Nurse Practitioner.



Madeline Patawaran is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. Madeline graduated with High Honors, along with her Associate Degree in Early Education from LCCC, and she was on the Dean's List at LCC each semester! Madeline is a competitive roller skater on the national level, placing several times at the national championships. She also enjoys art with painting, drawing, and digital art. Madeline will be continuing her education as a junior at Ashland University through the partnership program, starting in the fall to get her Bachelor's in Education K-5 and Intervention Specialist.



Leah Pietch is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. Leah was a member of the cross country and track teams. She plans on attending LCCC in the fall to major in Business.



Noah McClintock is a 2021 graduate of Firelands High School. Noah participated in Cross Country Sports for two years and prior to the pandemic and was a lifeguard at Kalahari Resort in Sandusky. Noah is a brother to four siblings and a very kind-hearted person. His future plans are to be a member of the United States Air Force as a linguist.

Alex and Marissa Poalson, Class of 2021 College Graduates!

Alex — cum laude B.S. Intervention Specialist K-12, Ashland University

Marissa — cum laude B.S. Health Sciences, Cleveland State University



Amaya Melendez is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. Amaya played all four years on the volleyball team and two years of basketball. In the fall, Amaya will be attending LCCC with plans to transfer to a University, at this time her major is undecided.



Hailey Shimrock is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. While at Steele, Hailey was a member of the Student Council and on the Cheer Squad all four years. Hailey was a team member of the Steele News Live tech program and had an NPR Podcast Honorable Mention during her junior year. Hailey was VP of her class, a member of

continued on page 9

ST. JOSEPH & NATIVITY

the National Honor Society, was also in theater, a member of the International Thespian Society, crew head for costumes and house crew, and a Scholastic Art Award recipient. Hailey was also a member of the Leo Club and Eco League. Hailey will be attending the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City to major in photography and minor in Fashion Business Management. She also runs her own photography business, Hay Shim Photography, LLC.



Joseph Torres is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. He was a member of the Steele News Live team, played soccer, and was in both choir and theater. Joseph has an amazing voice and was recently cast as the character of Audrey II in the musical Little Shop of Horrors.

Joseph plans to attend Cleveland State University this fall to study Marketing.



Sarah MacPherson Slack is a 2021 college graduate of the Ohio State University. Sarah graduated with Honors from the Fisher College of Business with a BSBA in Operations Management, and a minor in Studio Art. She is now working for Huntington National Bank as a Digital Project Manager at their Corporate Headquarters. Sarah enjoys painting, cooking, and spending time with her family and friends.

Michael P. Sliman, DVM is a 2021 Honors graduate of the Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine. Michael has relocated for his Internship at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Perdue University in Indiana.



Alissa Van Dress is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. While at Steele, Alissa participated in varsity cheer, Student Council, National Honor Society, choir, and theater. She plans to attend John Carroll University and major in Business Marketing, with a minor in English/Professional Writing. Alissa enjoys dance, fashion, writing, music, and traveling.



Olivia Van Neil is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. Olivia enjoys art and playing volleyball. She was the second-grade PSR Aide for two years. Olivia is an inducted member of the National Honor Society, she received an Honors Diploma from Steele High School, along with the President's Award. Olivia earned the Academic Award all four years. This fall, Olivia will be attending Bowling Green State University to major in Forensic Science and minor in Chemistry.



Abigail Smith is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. Abigail received the four-year Academic Award, was involved in Girl Scouts for eight years, and volunteered for Vacation Bible School and Special Olympics. Abigail will be attending Ashland College through the LCCC Partnership and studying Special Education.



Graham Solak is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. Graham's interests include fishing and baseball. Graham will be attending Lake Erie College in the fall, where he will continue his academic and baseball career.



Ava Zapolski is a 2021 graduate of Amherst Steele High School. While at Steele, she played both high school and JO volleyball her freshman year, was in choir for both her freshman and sophomore years, and was in the Med Tech Health program her junior and senior years. Ava will be attending Kent State University this fall and was directly admitted into the School of Nursing Program.



CONGRATULATIONS TO Our St. Joseph Graduates

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to our graduating eighth-grade St. Joseph students, and we wish them every success on their continuing educational journeys.

Amelia Abraham — Elyria Catholic High School
Lauren Amato — Magnificat High School
Jack Badr — Elyria Catholic High School
Isabella Bennett — Marion L. Steele High School
Abigail Buckley — Elyria Catholic High School
Alyssa Cardina — Elyria Catholic High School
Emily Csanady — Elyria Catholic High School
Savannah Hite — Firelands High School
Madeline Jeffries — Marion L. Steele High School
Mallory Makruski — Marion L. Steele High School
Joszeif Meszlenyi — Marion L. Steele High School
Jacob Michalak — Marion L. Steele High School
Jarielle Ortiz-Rodriguez — Elyria Catholic High School
Michael Romero — Elyria Catholic High School
Cassidy Seymour — Marion L. Steele High School
Amira Sliman — Marion L. Steele High School
Joshua Thomas — Lorain County Vocational School
Mia Towne — Elyria Catholic High School
Jeremy VanDyke — Marion L. Steele High School
Jada Williams — Marion L. Steele High School



IMMERSION Youth Group Works to Build a Strong Faith Foundation for Young Catholics

Throughout our lifetimes, we all see and hear immoral messages. As adults, we can discern and determine which messages are right or wrong. However, for teens in their formative years, this can be difficult. It's the job of our parish community to set our youth on a path to success and to help them develop a firm foundation in the faith.

One way to do that is through IMMERSION youth group, a ministry of our St. Joseph and Nativity Parishes. IMMERSION is a resource for all teens of the parish to learn more about the Catholic faith and to meet others striving to live a holy life. It's a chance to really explore the faith more deeply.

"Sadly, the world is bombarding us all day, every day with messages that are anti-Christ and against His teachings," says Youth Director John Kowalski. "Moral relativism continues to grow and encompass us."

John leads the two groups of IMMERSION — one for seventh and eighth-grade youth and another for ninth to 12th-grade youth. The seventh and eighth-grade program offers a strong focus on learning the Mass, and the high school program focuses on catechesis, while also covering the saints and other Catholic topics.

"IMMERSION focuses on more day-to-day challenges that students will have to their Catholic faith, as well as growth in their relationship with our Lord," John says.

John looks forward to being together for in-person events this summer and fall. Meeting virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic just wasn't the same.

"Human beings are social," John says. "We like to interact even if we are in small groups. We like to laugh, and we laugh more together than we do alone."

The time during IMMERSION meetings is really dedicated to learning the Catholic faith. It's a time to learn, share, pray and just be together.

"God deserves our acknowledgment in everything we do every day," John says. "I hope this gets incorporated in the teens' lives if it is not already there."

John organizes youth group time to be 10 to 15 minutes of a topic, followed by a game or activity to highlight the topic. He often uses videos to support the lessons. He also invites parents to help lead their teens to Christ and one way is through IMMERSION.

"Teens need to know there is more than the world they see," he says. "God's love will fulfill them beyond what they can imagine. They don't know what they are missing until they experience it."



A picnic party was held for IMMERSION in May 2021.

The IMMERSION summer sessions are going on now! The topic is miracles. Come at 7:30 p.m. on July 14, 28 and Aug. 11 at the former convent at St. Joseph's. Please contact John Kowalski to RSVP at 440-309-5006 or JohnKowalski@stjohnamherst.com. This is a rain or shine event!

This newsletter brought to you by the Catholic Communities of:

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200 Saint Joseph Drive, Amherst, OH 44001

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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.

Our El Salvador Mission Team *continued from front cover*

"We've been involved in the past year with food and aid," John says. "Our main contribution has been financial. Many of the stores in El Salvador were closed, so we sent what we could."

This year, the Mission Team hopes to begin planning a return trip to El Salvador for 2022. There are many different ways the faith community can support the return of the mission, but the primary way is through prayer.

"Always pray for us," John says. "As a team we also do fundraisers, and people have either sponsored or helped sponsor someone since we pretty much pay our own way."

Parishioners are also welcome to join the mission trip, and John emphasizes that age doesn't matter when serving our brothers and sisters in El Salvador.

"There is a wide range of ages on each trip," John says. "I can't speak for everyone, but I have missed going to El

Salvador and building those relationships. It's like I have family there now, and I want to see them again soon."



Blessing of the new water system

If you would like more information about the faith community's Mission Team, please reach out to John Sabo at 440-984-4429 or stjosephmissionteam@gmail.com.