



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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JULY 2024

Get to Know Parishioners

Tony and Lori Melendez

Living Stewardship Every Day in the Church and Beyond Our Parish Walls

For over 22 years, Tony and Lori Melendez have been involved with Melendez Video, providing video services to clients from Ohio and many other states across the country. One day, after attending Mass as usual, Fr. Michael Denk approached Tony and Lori regarding the parish's Stewardship Renewal. This led to them meeting active parishioners who were involved in stewardship ministry.

"The Stewardship Renewal committee asked us to put together a video to show the parishioners how they could share their time, talents, and treasure here at St. Joseph," Tony says. "While putting these videos together we realized how many different ministries there were — 64 — and the need for more parishioner involvement. We decided it was time to answer the call and get involved."

From there, Tony joined the Eucharistic Ministry and Lori began helping out with the children's PSR classes. Since then, Tony has also taken on the Live Streaming Video Ministry for homebound parishioners and providing closed captions for those who



Tony and Lori Melendez

are hearing impaired. Lori now serves as a lector at the 8:30 a.m. Mass, and is involved with Sacred Sisters Prayer Group and Holy Ground Youth Group.

"At first, we got involved to help those who were currently serving in the church," Tony says. "Then the more we got involved, the more we realized that we were being called to be good stewards of our time, talent, and treasure. Everything we have is a gift from God. By being good stewards, we demonstrate our love and gratitude to

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STEWARDSHIP *and* PATRIOTISM:

CELEBRATING INDEPENDENCE DAY AS PART OF OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

Independence Day, celebrated on July 4, is a time when the United States comes together to commemorate its history, freedom, and the principles upon which the nation was founded. For Catholics, this presents an opportunity to reflect on how to be patriotic and practice Catholic stewardship for the good of the country.

Here are several ways to merge faith and patriotism on Independence Day:

- **Pray for the Nation:** Begin your day with prayers for the United States. Ask for guidance and wisdom for its leaders, unity among its people, and peace and prosperity for all. Prayer is a powerful way to combine faith and patriotism.
- **Be an Active Citizen:** Engage in civic activities that reflect your love for the country. This could involve voting, participating in local community events, or advocating for causes that promote justice, peace, and the common good.
- **Support Veterans and Service Members:** Show your gratitude to those who have served or continue to serve in the military. Consider donating to organizations that assist veterans and their families, or simply thank them for their service.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Care for the environment is an important aspect of stewardship. Protecting the nation's natural beauty, from its parks to its rivers, is a patriotic act that conserves the land for future generations.
- **Support Local Businesses:** Patronizing local businesses helps boost the economy and supports your fellow citizens. Shopping locally not only contributes to the well-being of your community but also to the country as a whole.
- **Promote Social Justice:** Advocate for social justice issues that align with Catholic teachings, such as caring for the poor, the unborn, and the vulnerable, supporting immigrants and refugees, and working towards racial equality. Addressing these issues is a form of Catholic stewardship that positively impacts the nation.
- **Educate Yourself:** Study the history of the United States, its founding documents, and the principles upon which it was established. Understanding the country's heritage enables you to engage in discussions about patriotism from an informed perspective.
- **Foster Unity:** In a time when divisiveness can be prevalent, strive to bring people together. Encourage open and respectful dialogue, build bridges of understanding, and work towards unity in the spirit of solidarity.
- **Practice Gratitude:** Reflect on the blessings and freedoms you enjoy in the United States. Gratitude is a cornerstone of stewardship, reminding you to acknowledge and appreciate the gifts you've received.
- **Share Your Faith:** Living out your Catholic faith and values in your community and throughout the country is a patriotic act. Be an example of love, compassion, and selflessness as you interact with others.

Patriotism and Catholic stewardship need not be mutually exclusive. In fact, they can be beautifully intertwined as you strive to make the United States a more just, peaceful, and compassionate nation. By living your Catholic faith and embracing your role as a patriotic citizen, you contribute to the common good and the well-being of the nation while also celebrating the freedoms and principles that Independence Day represents.

A Letter from Our Pastor

Sunday Mass: A Great Privilege and Responsibility



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

People filled the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist on May 18 for the Ordination of Michael Garvin as a priest of the Diocese of Cleveland, and many more watched a live feed of the liturgy on the diocesan website. Bishop Edward Malesic, the Bishop of the Diocese of Cleveland, was the main celebrant for this liturgy.

It was a joyful day for Fr. Michael Garvin and for our diocese. He has been appointed to serve as a parochial vicar [associate] at St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Parma.

On April 23, seven men were ordained as transitional deacons for the Diocese of Cleveland. They will be the next ones to be ordained as priests in 2025.

As you can see with these ordination numbers, we are not keeping up with the number of priests who retire or die each year. We are feeling the effects of this in our St. Joseph and Nativity Parishes with one priest, namely myself, to serve both parishes.

We need priests. We cannot have Mass without a priest. That is why Jesus has given His priests a share in His own priesthood: so that we could continue to do what He did at the Last Supper when He gave Himself to us in the Eucharist and told us, “do this in memory of Me.” (I celebrated my 75th birthday on June 3 and the 49th anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood on June 14. I am happy that Bishop Malesic accepted my offer to remain with you as your pastor for an additional year.)

As a Church and as parishes, we need to re-claim Sunday as “the Lord’s Day,” a New Testament title for Sunday which is found in the Book of Revelation 1:10. Sunday is not just a day like any other day — with the addition of Mass. Sunday is the day of Jesus’ resurrection, it is the day of Jesus’ appearances after He rose from the dead, and it is the day when the Holy Spirit came down upon the apostles and the Church at Pentecost.

For Christians, the Sunday gathering for the Eucharist replaced the Jewish Sabbath observance. “Christians are

those who keep the Lord’s Day, not the Sabbath,” writes St. Ignatius of Antioch.

Because participating in Sunday Mass each week is such a great privilege, it is also a great responsibility and carries with it a serious obligation. We read in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass. The precept of participating in the Mass is satisfied by assistance at a Mass which is celebrated anywhere in a Catholic rite either on the holy day or on the evening of the preceding day” (#2180). “The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason... Those who deliberately fail in this obligation commit a grave (i.e. mortal or serious) sin” (#2181).

Summer vacation is not a valid reason to miss Sunday Mass. In fact, our summer leisure ought to give us more opportunity to appreciate celebrating the Eucharist on the Lord’s Day.

To find a church while traveling, you may enter our parish website at www.stjosephamherst.com and then click on “extra links” at the very bottom of the home page. Then click on “Mass time for travel” and you will be connected with masstimes.org. This is a handy way to get to Mass while out of town on the Lord’s Day.

Please enjoy the pictures and the articles in this issue. And thank Jesus for sharing the gift of His priesthood with us so that we may celebrate the Eucharist each and every Sunday, the Lord’s Day.

Gratefully in Christ,

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

Fr. Timothy J. O’Connor,
Pastor

ST. FRANCIS SOLANUS

JULY 14



THE APOSTLE OF PERU AND ARGENTINA

working locally in Andalucía, a region of Southern Spain. St. Francis first felt drawn to North Africa, desiring to achieve martyrdom there. But his vision would shift to the American missions.

During his years in Spain, St. Francis first gained the reputation of a wonderworker and healer, a reputation later fortified by hundreds of witnesses who gave testimony to his works. While many accounts exist of his tending the sick and even nursing victims of the plague, St. Francis also found time to return to his hometown and quietly care for his mother after the passing of his father.

In 1589, St. Francis sailed from Spain to the New World aboard a slave ship. Several accounts tell of the devastating hurricane this 16th-century ship encountered. The storm would eventually split the ship in two! Yet, while the captain and the crew abandoned the frigate, St. Francis selflessly gave up his place in the lifeboat and stayed with the slaves to baptize and comfort them until their rescue.

Upon beginning his work in South America, St. Francis braved hitherto nearly unexplored regions of present-day Argentina and Paraguay. When he had studied philosophy and theology in seminary, St. Francis also pursued music and now played the violin for the native people. He also diligently learned multiple native languages and dialects to communicate with others in their own language.

St. Francis predicted his own death, which occurred in 1610 in Lima, Peru. In that same year, while preaching in Trujillo, Peru, he foretold the calamities that would occur in that city, which was nearly destroyed by an earthquake nine years later.

Pope Benedict XIII canonized the “Apostle of Peru and Argentina” in 1726. St. Francis’ feast is kept throughout the Franciscan Order on July 24 and in the United States on July 14. He is the Patron of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Peru.

Our vocations might not bring us across unexplored shores, but let us endeavor to model St. Francis’ strength, selflessness, and devotion to the Gospel as we pursue our own paths to sainthood in our current age.

Today, St. Francis Solanus is remembered as the “Wonder Worker of the New World,” and we occupiers of a digital age might feel distanced from this fearless missionary and healer.

Yet, his story shares details of his humanity. He fostered a talent for music. He learned languages to nurture hospitality. He was close to his mother. He desired to bring Christ and be Christ for others each day.

As we look again at his narrative, St. Francis Solanus and the virtues and habits of his daily life seem clearly relevant to us today, over 400 years later.

In 1549, individuals of renowned piety, Mateo Sanchez Solano and Anna Ximenes, welcomed their son into their home in Montilla near Cordoba, Spain. One story shares that his mother consecrated her son to St. Francis of Assisi while still in her womb.

This consecration might account for St. Francis’ proclivity to the Franciscan spirituality, for he entered the Franciscan order at Montilla and then studied in seminary at Seville. He spent the first 40 years of his life living and

Hospitality Ministry's Movie Nights Offer Fun Evenings of Fellowship and Entertainment

With hospitality as one of the four pillars of stewardship, we place importance on providing a welcoming environment for those we encounter.

“We are all travelers passing through this world and when we show hospitality to others, we share in the long and rich history of generosity, as modeled by Jesus’ life,” says Phil Rawlings, the leader of the Hospitality Ministry.

The Hospitality Ministry at St. Joseph has found a unique way to do just that, by sponsoring Movie Night for the parish community. The movies are all Christian in nature, and age-appropriate for early teens through seniors.

“We started showing them once the COVID restrictions were being relaxed as a way to restart this ministry, committed to loving God, loving others, and making disciples,” Phil says.

This is the third year of movie nights. The movies are typically screened on a Monday at 6:30 p.m. in the St. Joseph Social Hall. Some of the movies shown have included Breakthrough, Mother Teresa, Letters to God, Miracles from Heaven, God’s Not Dead, Courageous, and Fireproof, among others.

“All of these movies have been very moving and emotionally charged with few dry eyes by the end,” Phil says. “They have inspired us to be the best version of ourselves.”

Phil says he hears from participants that after the experience of attending Movie Night, they leave feeling proud to be Catholic Christians.

“If you need or want to ‘recharge your battery’ of Catholicism or just want to watch a high quality, clean movie with fellow believers, stop by and join us,” he says. “These movies give you an opportunity to grow in your relationship with God and with your brothers and sisters in Christ.”

In addition to its Movie Nights, the Hospitality Ministry along with our Knights of Columbus sponsors Hospitality Sunday, also known as Donut Sunday, every



(From left) Marilyn Siekeres, Wendy Rosso, and Joe Siekeres

calendar quarter.

“We offer free coffee, juice, and donuts after the 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. Sunday Masses in addition to fellowship with other parishioners,” Phil says. “Please join us to renew friendships or finally meet the parishioners that you’ve been sitting nearby in Mass every Sunday!”

If you have DVDs that might be appropriate for Movie Night, or if you have access to streaming movies that would be appropriate, Phil welcomes your help!

“If you need or want to ‘recharge your battery’ of Catholicism or just want to watch a high quality, clean movie with fellow believers, stop by and join us.”

— Phil Rawlings

**For more information or to help out, contact Phil Rawlings
at philrawli@aol.com or 440-897-7437.**

Welcoming the Incoming Kindergarten Class at St. Joseph School

Kindergarten Teacher Birgit Fada Looks Forward to New School Year

For around 35 years, Birgit Fada has taught many grades of elementary school. When she came to St. Joseph School, she had never taught kindergarten and was a bit nervous to get started. But Mrs. Fada soon found that she thoroughly enjoys the kindergarten year. This is her fifth year — she’s found her groove, and she loves teaching the kindergarten students.

“Kindergartners are so eager to learn,” Mrs. Fada says. “They are so proud when they learn something — you can see it in their faces.”

Mrs. Fada calls the students “little sponges.” There is one class of kindergarten at St. Joseph School, and as she does every year, Mrs. Fada looks forward to getting to know her students. She loves learning with them, and it’s always hard to see them move on to first grade.

“As a teacher, I just love to see them grow,” she says.

“They grow academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. It’s amazing to see how far they come.”

At the start of the year, Mrs. Fada has the students do a worksheet project that she tucks away for the year. They then do the same project at the end of the year. It’s fun for both her and the students to see how they have improved.

“At this age, they absorb everything,” Mrs. Fada says. “You see the growth. They have those light bulb moments all the time.”

Mrs. Fada loves to see how the students are doing as they move from grade to grade. She’s proud of the students she taught during her first year as a kindergarten teacher — they are now fourth-graders!

St. Joseph School is a special place to Mrs. Fada. She is so thankful for her fellow staff members, the students, and their families.

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Students enjoy a lesson during class time.



We wish all of our St. Joseph School students a wonderful 2024-25 school year!



As she does every year, Mrs. Fada looks forward to getting to know her students.

Welcoming the Incoming Kindergarten Class at St. Joseph School *continued from page 6*

“The kids are so sweet, and the parents are so supportive,” Mrs. Fada says. “They are caring and kind. It’s a wonderful place to work. This school is a family.”

Mrs. Fada has had many moments where a student’s faith has brought tears to her eyes. She loves to hear the people and the things they pray for.

“One day, while we were walking outside, a student looked at me and said, ‘Mrs. Fada, I just love Jesus,’” she says. “It was so beautiful.”

Watching the students learn, grow, and practice independence is a blessing for Mrs. Fada. She also feels

blessed by the close-knit family at the school.

To all of our students at St. Joseph School — have a great 2024-25 school year!

“As a teacher, I just love to see them grow. They grow academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. It’s amazing to see how far they come.” — Birgit Fada

Get to Know Parishioners Tony and Lori Melendez

continued from front cover

God, and we also set a positive example for others. Making new friends and growing spiritually in our faith has been a blessing in our lives.”

Tony and Lori married 40 years ago at Sacred Heart Chapel in Lorain, where Tony grew up. In 1993, they moved to Amherst and began attending St. Joseph Parish. They have been parishioners here ever since. They have four children, nine grandchildren, and two more on the way.

For 30 years, Tony worked as a physical education teacher and coach. Before having children, Lori worked as a sales representative for Monet Jewelry. Once the children came along her focus shifted to home, and providing daycare for friends and family.

For Tony and Lori, stewardship is part of daily life. The two of them serve outside of parish walls, as well, on various committees like the Amherst Historical Society, The Amherst Veterans Mural Committee, and the Lorain Sports Hall of Fame.

“Stewardship has taught us the importance of interacting with the world around us and having a positive impact and, ultimately, honoring the One who has given us so much,” Tony says.

As they raised their children, Tony and Lori brought their kids to weekly Mass and strived to set an example of living faithful Catholic lives. They feel blessed knowing their children and grandchildren now carry strong faith lives.

“In our marriage, we have our daily prayer times in which we pray together and separately,” Lori says. “We usually pray first thing every morning. We also use the modern technology of podcasts to listen to *The Bible in a Year* and other Christian messages.”

Both Lori and Tony remain grateful for the many opportunities they have had to grow spiritually through St. Joseph Parish.

“We feel very fortunate to have had great leadership and fellowship at St. Joseph Parish,” Lori says. “We feel that we’ve been given many opportunities through Mass and various church activities to learn and grow in our faith. Both of us have had the opportunity to participate in Renewal Retreats, which helped jumpstart us to seek a closer relationship with God. I truly enjoy my weekly meetings with the Sacred Sisters Prayer Group because it has helped me grow spiritually.”

DEFENDING THE FAITH:

The Imperative for Catholics in the Modern World

In an era marked by diverse ideologies and constant questioning of religious beliefs, the role of Catholic apologetics has become increasingly crucial. Catholics are called not only to practice their faith but also to be articulate defenders of it in the face of skepticism. Misconceptions about Catholic teachings, ethical concerns, and challenges to the Church's authority abound. In such a climate, being passive about one's faith is no longer an option. The call to defend Catholicism has never been more pressing. Catholic apologetics is the art of providing a reasoned defense of the faith. It involves explaining and justifying Catholic beliefs, practices, and traditions in a way that engages with the questions and criticisms of the broader society. Apologetics is not about arguing or imposing beliefs but rather about presenting a compelling case for the rationality and truth of Catholicism.

The Call to Become Better Defenders

Knowledge is Power: Catholics must equip themselves with a solid understanding of their faith by delving into the teachings of the Church, understanding the Bible, and being aware of the historical context of Catholic doctrines.

Apologetics Resources for Catholics

- **Catholic Answers:** A comprehensive resource offering articles, videos, and a radio show that addresses a wide range of questions and challenges to the Catholic faith.
- ***Summa Theologica*, by St. Thomas Aquinas:** A timeless work that delves into the philosophical and theological foundations of Catholicism, providing a solid intellectual basis for apologetics.
- ***Mere Christianity*, by C.S. Lewis:** While not explicitly Catholic, this classic work presents a rational defense

In a world where faith is often challenged and misunderstood, Catholics are called to be ambassadors of truth and defenders of their rich tradition. Embracing the art of apologetics is not a task reserved for theologians alone but a collective responsibility for every Catholic. By becoming better defenders of the faith, Catholics contribute to a more informed and respectful dialogue, fostering understanding and appreciation in the diverse tapestry of beliefs that make up the modern world.



Articulating Beliefs Effectively: Being a defender of the faith requires the ability to articulate Catholic beliefs clearly and coherently. This means developing the skill to explain complex theological concepts in a way that resonates with individuals from diverse backgrounds and belief systems.

Addressing Misconceptions: Modern society is rife with misconceptions about Catholicism, ranging from issues of morality to misunderstandings about the role of the Church in history. Catholics must actively address and dispel these misconceptions, presenting the authentic teachings of the Church with humility and conviction.

Engaging in Dialogue: Rather than retreating from discussions with those who hold different beliefs, Catholics should actively engage in dialogue. A respectful exchange of ideas fosters understanding and bridges gaps between different worldviews.

Utilizing Modern Platforms: The modern world provides a plethora of platforms for communication. Catholics can harness the power of social media, blogs, podcasts, and other digital mediums to share their faith and engage with a global audience.

of Christian beliefs, offering valuable insights into Catholic apologetics.

- ***Fides et Ratio (Faith and Reason)*, by Pope St. John Paul II:** An encyclical that emphasizes the harmony between faith and reason, guiding Catholics in articulating the rationality of their beliefs.
- ***The Case for Jesus*, by Brant Pitre:** This book explores the historical evidence for the reliability of the Gospels, providing a scholarly foundation for defending the truth of the Catholic faith.





YES, The Eucharistic Congress is Important

By NATHAN FRANKART, Seminarian

Peace of Christ to you!

I have special news to share regarding my summer! I petitioned to travel with the seminary this summer for a special event. Early this spring, I was selected to be a delegate for the Diocese of Cleveland for the upcoming 10th National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis. In a few short words, here's why the Congress is important.

I've been talking with a few people over the last few months regarding this event. It has been met mostly with confusion, something along the lines, "Okay, but is this really important?" It gives me the chance to share how important it is for all of us to recognize the universality of the Church we call home. The Catholic faith is best expressed when it comes to communion, when cultures and diversity converge to celebrate the gift of God's presence to humanity. The Eucharist acts as the ultimate connection, the deepest way we can share community with one another. And this Congress is a summit meeting about THE source and summit of our faith.

It's been over 80 years since the last Congress, and

so much of our American way of life and the life of the Church has changed. This large gathering will hopefully become a significant moment in the life of the American Church. The four-day conference will build relationships across dioceses, provide opportunities for workshops that emphasize new evangelization and catechesis in the modern world, and of course, the chance for deep reflection on Jesus present in the Eucharist. Most importantly, it will give evidence to the vibrancy and depth of the faith in our modern world and in our country. We will have photos and videos and stories and moments to share. And remember, it is not in the cleverness of our words that wins those to the faith, but the authenticity of our witness. I have no doubt that faith in the True Presence will increase because of this gathering.

So, pray for the success of the Congress! Pray that it is well intended, pray that the Father might abundantly bless our time there, and pray that it might be a catalyst for Catholics across our country to further deepen their devotion to the Eucharist.

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Address Service Requested

Fr. Tim O'Connor Serving Both Parishes

Mass:

Monday, 9:00 a.m. - *St. Joseph*
Tuesday, 8:00 a.m. - *Nativity of the BVM*
Thursday, 7:00 p.m. - *St. Joseph*
Friday, 9:00 a.m. - *St. Joseph*
Saturday, 4:00 p.m. - *St. Joseph*
5:30 p.m. - *Nativity of the BVM*
Sunday, 8:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m. - *St. Joseph*

Confession at St. Joseph:

Thursday - Individual Reconciliation 7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Saturday - Individual Reconciliation 11:00 a.m. - noon

Eucharistic Adoration (Chapel) at Nativity of the BVM:

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

Upcoming Activities and Events

Hospitality Tuesday

Tuesday, July 2 — 8:30 a.m.
(following 8 a.m. Mass)
Nativity Church and Hall

Mass at St. Joseph Cemetery —

Thursday, July 4 — **9 a.m.** St. Joseph
Cemetery, to be moved to NBVM
in the event of inclement weather.
*Note: There will be no 7 p.m. Mass and no
Confessions on this day*

Happy Fourth of July

Parish Offices Closed for Holiday
Thursday, July 4

First Saturday Rosary

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

Faithfully Fit Yoga Classes

RESUME every Tuesday and Wednesday
beginning July 9 — 9:30 a.m.,
Mill Hollow Park

Hospitality Sunday

Sunday, July 14 — following the
8:30 and 11 a.m. Masses,
St. Joseph Social Hall

Men's Group

Tuesday, July 16 — 7 p.m.,
St. Joseph Social Hall

Vincentians Meeting

Thursday, July 11 and 25 — 9 a.m.,
St. Joseph Conference Room