



ST. JOSEPH PARISH & NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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JUNE 2021

IN FACE OF PANDEMIC, *Flexibility AND Faith* HELPED ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL PREVAIL

The past year at St. Joseph School has been a year of changes, adjustments, and a unique opportunity for students to deepen their Catholic faith in the face of the challenges that the COVID pandemic placed before them.

“Overall, it has been all about flexibility and open-mindedness,” says Amy Makruski, Principal. “In hindsight, each day, each week seemed like an adventure. Everything was new, and equally old if that makes sense.”

But through it all, the teachers, staff, students, and parents did manage to make sense of everything they confronted, and are looking forward to more normalcy next year.

One of the greatest challenges for the faculty and students was not being able to attend Mass as often as usual, nor being able to be personally part of our community as usual.

“These things sometimes made it feel like the ‘practicing’ of our faith in our daily lives was lacking,” Mrs. Makruski says. “But this opportunity also gave us a chance



Everyone entering the school had to use one entrance, and then were greeted with a hand-sanitizing station and wellness check. Hallways were also designated for directional travel.

to more deeply explore the personal faith of the students. For part of the year when none of our classes were attending Mass, we would use our Friday mornings to deeply look at different topics about our faith, such as Catholic morals, special feast days, praying the Rosary, peace, and more.”

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Flexibility and Faith *continued from front cover*

As the school year has drawn to a close, the strongest feeling Mrs. Makruski has experienced is that of pride and appreciation for how well everyone worked together to make this school year a great one.

“I am proud that we have been in-person five days per week all year with no unscheduled days off, except to obtain the COVID vaccine for the staff,” she says. “I am proud of our teachers and staff who had to completely flip their ideas of teaching and learning and what their job entailed. I am proud that each person took a chance to come back and open this school when things seemed scary and unsure and at times impossible. I am proud of our students for rolling with the changes and making this as easy as it could be when it came time to put new procedures into practice. I am proud of our parents for being open and honest with me and being great communicators. I am proud that they answered the question, ‘Any health changes for your child?’ each morning, all year long! I appreciate their trust in all of us. We could not have been successful without all working together.”

With COVID restrictions in place, every part of the school day had to be addressed, from how everyone entered the school in the morning, and the direction walked in the hallways. Teachers had to rethink how they instructed students both in class and at home during what was called “synchronous learning.” Group projects, “specials” classes, and even recess all had to be re-thought.

With the year behind them, the faculty and staff are looking forward to some large and small plans.

“On the small side, we are looking forward to getting back to normal regarding school offerings, such as after-



St. Joseph Parish School students stay socially distanced within their own desk carrels during this past school year.

school homework labs and clubs, normal group work, more service opportunities, 100 percent of our students attending school in person, and attending Mass as a school once again,” Mrs. Makruski says. “I am sure there will be some ‘COVID Keepers’ that will stick around through next school year and become a normal part of our practice here at SJS, as well.”

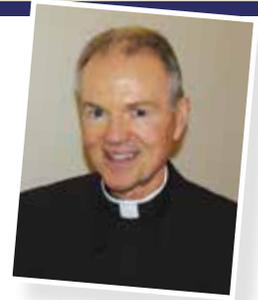
The big plans call for work to begin during the summer to renovate a classroom to become the SJS Design Studio. The room will house high-tech equipment such as a poster printer, laser engraver, vinyl cutter, and more.

“This will help our students build their STEM skills and create designs and prototypes to bring their ideas to life,” Mrs. Makruski says. “The Design Studio is planned to be fully completed by Catholic Schools Week 2022.”

Enrollment is still ongoing for the 2021-2022 school year. Families may call 440-988-4244 to schedule a private tour or to have questions answered. Those interested may also log onto the school website at www.sjsamherst.org to learn more.

A Letter from Our Pastor

Redefining Love Through the Sacred Heart of Jesus



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

One of the great feasts of the Christian year will occur in June, but it is often overlooked. It doesn't fall on a Sunday, and it isn't a Holy Day of Obligation. I am referring to the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, which will be on June 11 this year. This wonderful feast provides a great way to begin the summer.

However, despite widespread devotion and many parish dedications to the Sacred Heart, many Catholics have only a vague idea of what it's all about. So, let me try to briefly fill in the picture.

Often, when we think of the heart, we think of it as the seat of our emotions and feelings. The heart is often contrasted with the mind, as though our God-given reason were somehow evil or, at best, second-rate. But feelings come and go — we can't really depend on our emotions to be reliable, steady guides.

However, when classical theology refers to the heart, it is considering an aspect of human life that goes beyond our feelings. It includes our will, where we make decisions. The heart can be considered the center of our personhood.

In explaining Christian teaching about human nature, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "The spiritual tradition of the Church also emphasizes the heart, in the biblical sense of the depths of one's being, where the person decides for or against God" (368).

It is common to mistakenly label love as an emotion. Love often includes feelings, but true love is more than that. Real love is a settled attitude that wants the best for the person being loved. That's why the Church's teaching usually uses the term "charity" — to distinguish the Christian virtue from the more superficial popular concept of love.

The *Catechism* tells us, "Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. Jesus makes charity the new commandment. By loving His own 'to the end,' He makes manifest the Father's love which he receives.

By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive" (CCC, 1822-1823).

This sort of love, this charity — demonstrated by Jesus Christ and commanded to His followers — is no lightweight passing emotion. Feelings alone do not bring one to offer oneself to an agonizing death for the sake of someone else. No, that sort of sacrifice can only come from a considered and deliberate decision.

Although we sometimes forget that fact, Jesus is fully human as well as fully divine. So, His human heart was involved in His sacrifice on the Cross. Thus, simply put, devotion to the Sacred Heart reminds us of the basic fact that God loves us. It was a costly love, the ultimate act of charity, to give His life on our behalf.

We know the kind of love Jesus has for us. What kind of loving response are you going to make? How will that affect your use of your time, talent and treasure?

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor



PARISHIONER Tom Januzzi:

On Aug. 11, 2016, Tom Januzzi had an extraordinary experience that has since inspired him every day.

“I am a judge, and it had been a hard day at work as we had heard some difficult cases,” Tom says. “I went outside and saw that the sky looked so beautiful, so I took a picture of it. Then I noticed that it was about to rain, and there was a lady walking outside who was going to get poured on. I got her attention, and she said she was deaf and could only read lips. So, I gave her a ride home, took her cart out of the car, and gave her a hug. She said, ‘thank you’ in sign language to me.”

When Tom arrived home that evening, Our Lord had a unique blessing in store for him.

“I looked at the picture I had taken, and I clearly saw the face of Jesus in it,” Tom says. “When I looked at it a few weeks later, I saw other images in it as well, including one of Mother Mary. In fact, whenever I look at it, I see holy images in it, and it reminds me of the qualities of God’s love.”

Years later, Tom still cherishes the photo and spreads its message of hope with those he cares about.

“I give a copy of the photo along with my faith story to each one of our grandchildren when they make their First Communion,” Tom says. “I will continue to do this because I consider it to be an important part of our family history. I want them to know that their grandfather believes in Jesus and that his prayer life gives him a special relationship with God and the Blessed Mother.”

The experience Tom had with the photo often reminds him of the blessings and spiritual gifts he has enjoyed throughout his life and encourages him to grow ever closer to Christ. Since 2014, he has prayed the Rosary every single day without fail. He also prays at least an hour and a half before he begins each day.

“The more you pray, the more you will have a connection to Jesus, the Father, and the saints,” Tom says. “And



The photo taken by Tom Januzzi on Aug. 11, 2016

even though you may be busy, I have found that the more you pray, the more you have time to pray.”

Tom draws wisdom, strength, and peace from his wellspring of daily prayer. This enables him to be a faithful husband to Margie and a dedicated father to their four daughters and 12 grandchildren. When Tom and Margie were raising their children, they lived a full Catholic family life, embracing the stewardship vision, which essentially begins at home.

“We went to Mass every Sunday, and we sent all four of our daughters to Catholic school from kindergarten through high school,” Tom says. “We always had prayer time at meals and in the evenings. I began teaching Parish School of Religion (PSR) when our daughters were in school. The Catholic faith has always been very important to our family. Thankfully, all of our children are still churchgoing Christians, with three of them being Catholic. Our grandchildren attend church regularly as well, which is something we encourage them to do.”

Tom embraces his call to Catholic fatherhood by sharing God’s truths with his children in creative ways.

Encountering the Face of Jesus and Embracing a Prayerful Life

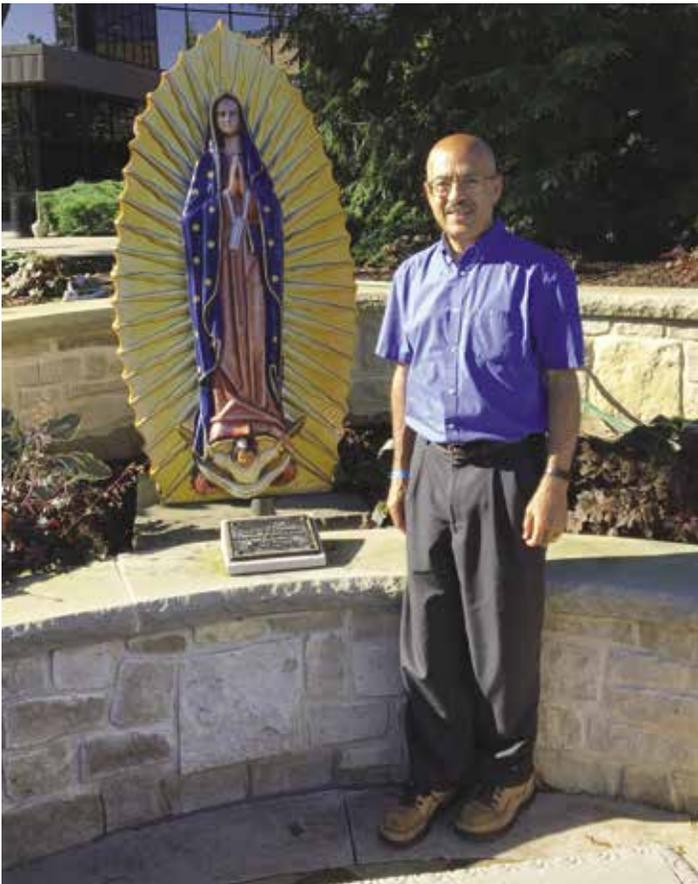
“I occasionally send my children and grandchildren text messages and emails featuring various things about our faith,” he says.

Presently, Tom teaches PSR for St. Joseph’s eighth-grade Confirmation class as well as seventh and eighth grade PSR for Sacred Heart Parish.

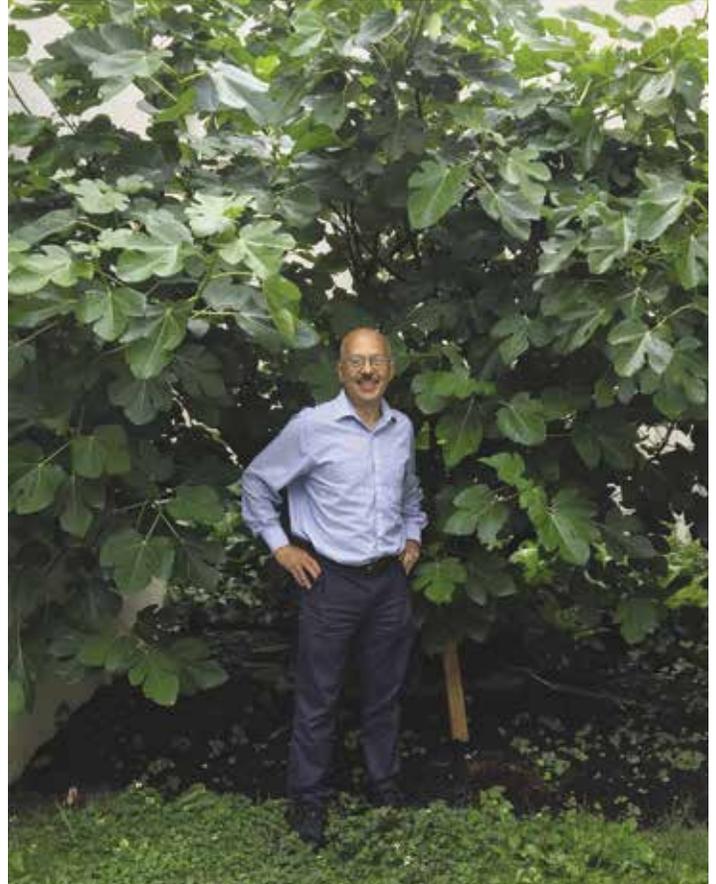
“I feel a real calling to teach the youth about Christ,” Tom says. “I know about the Catholic faith, and I also know that one of my jobs is to make sure that other people know about it as well. Through PSR, I am able to share the news of Christ.”

Tom strives to bring the Good News into the workplace as well, as far as he is able to in his prestigious position.

“I have been a judge for 20 years,” Tom says. “Jesus appeared to me and said, ‘Here I am,’ and now He asks me what I am going to do about it. I believe I need to do something about it, so I share various Bible passages and aspects of our faith with people at work. As a judge, I am not allowed to push my faith on anyone, but if someone opens the door and tells me they are Christian or wants to talk about God, I go right in and make sure I have a good talk to them about it.”



Tom Januzzi with Our Lady of Guadalupe



Parishioner Tom Januzzi

Parish Gardeners Share Stewardship Gifts to Keep Our Outdoor Spaces Beautiful

Since 1999, Carol Zellmer has handled the flowers and outdoor upkeep at Nativity. As she says, “the weeds don’t stop growing” — but Carol has the same persistence as the weeds, as she continues the important work of keeping the outdoor spaces at Nativity looking beautiful.

Carol takes care of cleaning up leaves, weeding, tree trimming, and planting flowers. Another dedicated parishioner does the lawn mowing, and Carol sometimes hires youth to help her with the bigger projects.

After Mother’s Day, she plants flowers. She’s proud to say there’s something blooming each season in the outdoor spaces. The weed pulling also keeps her busy throughout the summer.

“If we all find something we enjoy and do it, all the work gets done,” she says. “I enjoy being outside doing yard work.”

The work is hard, but Carol doesn’t think of it that way. She loves the sense of pride she feels when everything is looking beautiful. For her, Nativity is home, and we need to treat

it the same way we treat our own homes.

At St. Joseph, a devoted group led by Toni Grissinger keeps St. Joseph looking equally as beautiful. There are several workdays in the spring where all parishioners are invited to help with various outdoor tasks. Like Carol, Toni also feels a sense of pride when everything is done and loves to admire the beauty of it all. She is glad to play a small part in the beauty of St. Joseph’s.

“When someone is visiting or considering joining, you want it to look nice,” Toni says. “When it’s all looking good, it makes people feel more welcome here.”

In particular, Toni loves the peaceful nature of outdoor work. In turn, she feels this ministry gives her time with our Lord in prayer and quietness.

Carol and Toni are always looking for volunteers to help keep the outdoor spaces looking beautiful, even if a person can only give just a little time — every little bit helps!

“If people want to come to pull weeds somewhere, they are welcome to do that anytime,” Toni says.



The Jared and Anne Schuster family, St. Joseph



Carol Zellmer and Tom Russo, Nativity

If you would like to get involved in the outdoor work at Nativity, please contact Carol Zellmer at 440-935-2310 or dmk0259@centurytel.net.

If you would like to get involved at St. Joseph, please contact Toni Grissinger 440-988-2892 or toni7482@oh.rr.com.

A CATHOLIC'S GUIDE TO *Good Summer Reading*

Have you been wondering what to read during vacation this year? Why not give spiritual reading a try? There are thousands of titles out there — too many for any one person — just waiting to make a positive impact on your faith life. Reading is a fantastic opportunity for general spiritual direction and good practice for every searching soul.

Choose a title from “you can’t go wrong” authors such as Louis de Wohl, G.K. Chesterton, Peter Kreeft, Francis de Sales, C.S. Lewis, and Scott Hahn. Their works alone should take you well into the summer, and possibly through to the next decade.

Or, choose from this list of great Christian books, in no particular order:

The Story of a Soul by St. Therese of Lisieux

In this autobiography and all-time favorite Catholic book, St. Therese teaches her “little way” of spiritual childhood. Millions of copies have been sold worldwide.

Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

One of the most popular introductions to the Christian faith ever published, this series of broadcast talks has been collected into book fashion. *Mere Christianity* sets out to “explain and defend the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times.”

Rome Sweet Home: Our Journey to Catholicism by Scott and Kimberly Hahn

This offers a conversion story of a brilliant, anti-Catholic Scripture scholar and his wife to the Catholic faith. Now

well-known speakers and Catholic apologists, Scott and Kimberly recount their story with simplicity and love.

The Good News about Sex & Marriage: Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching by Christopher West

This down-to-earth application of Pope St. John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* is an easy-to-read, yet insightful account of the Church’s teaching on sex and marriage.

What Catholics Really Believe by Karl Keating

Addressing 52 of the greatest misconceptions of the Catholic faith, Keating draws upon Scripture and Tradition to dispel errors and explain the rationale behind Church teaching.

No Greater Love by Mother Teresa

This anthology collects the teachings and sayings of St. Teresa of Calcutta. Founder of the Missionaries of Charity and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, St. Teresa of Calcutta speaks joyfully about her work with the poor and God’s call in our lives.

Surprised by Truth edited by Patrick Madrid

Eleven converts give their Biblical and historical reasons for becoming Catholic. These unique personal testimonies continue to transform hearts throughout the world in an insightful read for Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

SOMETHING FOR YOUNG CATHOLICS

As for the little ones at home, nothing settles them into bed better than a good book. Seek wholesome

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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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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.

Good Summer Reading *continued from page 7*

children's literature that communicates Christian messages. Be sure they are positive, healthy stories with characters they can emulate that inspire virtues such as courage, justice, charity, patience, generosity and prudence. To name a few:

Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis

This series of seven fantasy novels is considered a classic in children's literature. *Chronicles of Narnia* alludes to traditional Christian ideas within the framework of an exciting tale of adventure.

Little Acts of Grace by Rosemarie Gortler,
Mimi Sternhagen (Illustrator) and Donna Piscitelli

This beginning-level book is a fantastic way to introduce 2 to 4-year-olds to Catholic customs. It is written in an age-appropriate, beautifully explained way.

All (or just one) of the 20 books
of the Mary Fabyan Windeatt saint biographies

This unbeatable collection of saint stories, appropriate for children of all ages, is perfect to read aloud with the whole family.

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta: Missionary of Charity
by Sr. Mary Kathleen Glavich

There is no better way to introduce children to St. Teresa of Calcutta! This book highlights her work with the poor and includes a special prayer for children.

The Story of Easter by Aileen Fisher

Tells the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, and explores how different cultures celebrate Easter. This is recommended for children in first through third grades.

Happy summer! Happy reading!