



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

Inside

2 Entering into Lent
How We Can Make the Most of this Solemn, Sacred Season

3 The Joy of Lent

4 *Compassion The Musical*
An Opportunity to Engage with the Living Story of Christ

6 St. Joseph Preschool:
Introducing Our Youngest Learners to a Strong Catholic Education

8 Seminar Article

9 The Story of the Annunciation of the Lord

St. Joseph Parish
200 Saint Joseph Drive
Amherst, OH 44001
(440) 988-2848
stjosephamherst.com

Nativity of the BVM Parish
333 South Lake Street
South Amherst, OH 44001
(440) 986-7011

MARCH 2022

MEET PARISHIONERS **Chuck and Gloria Hobor** *Embracing the Opportunity to Give Back to God Together*

Those who wish to convert to the Catholic faith often take part in the RCIA process. While Chuck and Gloria Hobor help facilitate the RCIA process in our parish community, Chuck first entered the program as a participant — not once, but twice!

“I jokingly tell the participants that I didn’t fail the first time,” he says. “The issue is that there is no intimidation about becoming Catholic — you have to do it when you’re ready.”

Chuck, once a committed Lutheran, came to the RCIA process in 2013 with Gloria as his sponsor. Although married in the Catholic Church, the two practiced their respective faiths throughout their many years of marriage, actively participating in their own churches.

“We were reading out of the same book, but not on the same page,” he says.

Having attended Mass with Gloria and the kids, Chuck already possessed a good understanding of the faith before ever converting to the Catholic faith. When he eventually became Catholic, he credited much of his journey to Gloria’s support and personal faith.



Chuck and Gloria Hobor help facilitate our RCIA process. Chuck himself participated in the program not once, but twice, before entering into the Catholic faith in 2013.

“She was next to me every step,” he says.

Because of his Lutheran faith, Chuck has long understood the importance of giving back to God the gifts he has. Gloria herself has been involved in many capacities over the years, often participating and offering assistance in the programs in which children were involved at the time.

For Gloria, this has meant taking on many different roles over the years, especially those involving teaching — in

continued on page 5

Entering into Lent

How We Can Make the Most of this Solemn, Sacred Season

How might we make the most of this solemn, sacred season? There are three main aspects to Lent in which the Church asks us to engage — prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. We don't need to take on many things in order to make this season worthwhile, but it is important to consider how we might deepen our faith lives during this time of year.

Perhaps we might be inspired to take each aspect of Lent to heart, and pick something we can do within each category, so to speak, in order to truly enter into this sacred season. Each one — prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, provides us an opportunity to grow spiritually and prepare for Easter.

PRAYER

Let us start with prayer. In order to grow our personal and communal prayer lives, we need not spend the entire day in the church. Rather, perhaps consider adding one new devotion to your prayer life.

For example, if you aren't already spending time each day in prayer, maybe it's time to start spending five minutes each morning with the Lord while enjoying your breakfast and coffee. If you usually start your day by opening your computer and phone to check messages and emails, start instead with a morning prayer or Scripture, offering your day up for the Lord and whatever may come. If you already have a regular prayer routine, perhaps you might consider adding a daily Divine Mercy chaplet at 3 p.m. during the hour of mercy, or a family Rosary after supper cleanup.

FASTING

While we often think of food when it comes to fasting, there are other ways we can fast during Lent. Fasting means abstaining from something in order to grow spiritually. This could mean giving up Facebook or cutting down on internet use. Perhaps you might consider fasting from watching your favorite TV series and instead watch daily Mass. Another idea of fasting is giving up takeout or delivery and instead using that extra money to give to the poor.

ALMSGIVING

Giving alms may be the less obvious of the three but is no less important for growing spiritually. Giving alms can mean a number of things. Perhaps this means giving a bit of extra money to charity during these 40 days. It might also mean visiting with a grieving friend, listening, and helping out those in need. You might also consider stepping out and helping in a new capacity, whether in a new ministry or volunteer effort.

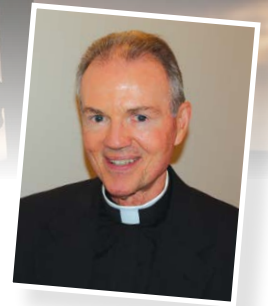
Lent affords us a wonderful opportunity to renew our spiritual lives. While it may not always seem so easy, it is necessary to use this time to prepare our hearts and lives for Easter. We might be tempted to simply look ahead to the joy of Easter without considering the sacrifice of Lent, but in that way, we would be missing out on the chance to grow, learn, give, and pray. We cannot have the Resurrection without the Cross. Lent is a reminder not to be filled with sadness and dread over our sacrifices, but to take up practices that help us engage in our spiritual lives, purify ourselves with God's help and rejoice when Easter comes around.





A Letter from Our Pastor

The Joy of Lent



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

Have you ever thought about the joy in sacrifice that Lent provides? Most of us don't delight in sacrifice; in fact, in our daily lives, we often do our best to avoid challenges and practices that push us outside of our comfort zones.

In Christianity, there is a beautiful irony between joy and sacrifice, and we are presented with a wonderful opportunity to embrace this uniquely during Lent. In one of his Lenten messages, Pope Francis shared, "Lent is a fitting time for self-denial; we would do well to ask ourselves what we can give up in order to help and enrich others by our own poverty."

While giving up sweets in favor of healthy snacks for Lent is a common and noble endeavor, the goal of Lent should not only be a spiritual excuse to lose weight! In choosing acts of self-denial, we are saying "no" to things

in order to get into the practice of saying "no" when inclined towards sin, ultimately deepening our faith and our relationship with the Lord. Victory can be found when we deny ourselves and pick up our crosses and hardships in order to grow closer to Christ!

Therein lies the joy. When we grow closer to God by denying our will, we say "yes" to a life of abundance with Him. Our God is a benevolent God; He will not hold back His grace from those who honor Him and choose challenging things to grow and give Him glory. Christ even tells us Himself, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Without question, Lent is a time for conscious penitence and spiritual preparation for Easter. And it is important to remember that God loves us whether we make Lenten changes or not. At the same time, Lent provides

us an opportunity to make God a greater part of our life, and to take our faith to new levels. Stewardship is a God-centered way of life — a spiritual way of living that, above all, acknowledges God's presence in all we do.

Lent is a time for every one of us to do more than simply deny ourselves; we need to welcome God into our lives in greater ways so that when we get to Holy Week and Easter, we have an even greater appreciation for the sacrifice the Lord made for us. Talk about pure joy!

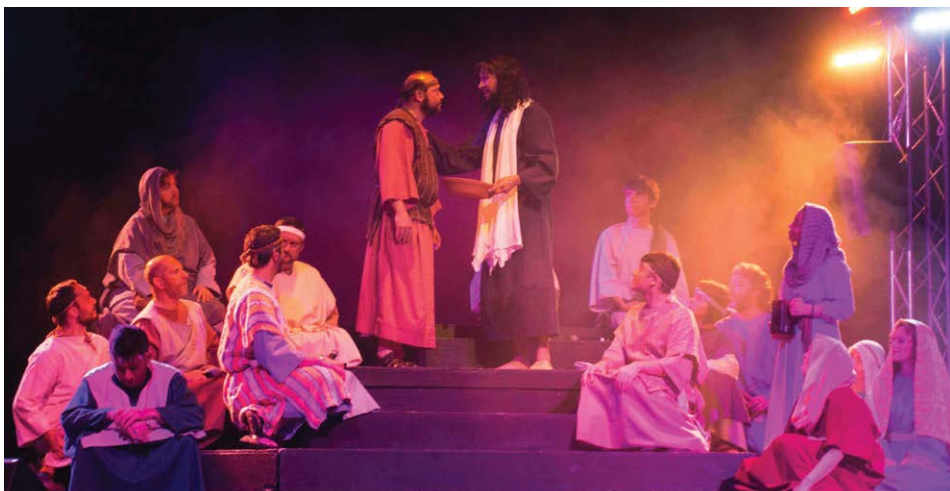
May you and your loved ones enjoy a holy and joyous Lenten journey.

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor

CompassionTheMusical: An Opportunity to *Engage* with *the Living Story of Christ*



CompassionTheMusical is a production that is put on during the Lenten season. Worship and Liturgy Coordinator Christina Dupre is the writer and director of this musical. She shares about the production and how it can help lead us into a deeper experience of Lent.

“For me, Lent is a time of reflection,” she says. “It is a time of spiritual growth. It is a time of personal repentance and change. We present that in the music and presentation. It is like a living Bible study.”

The story starts in the year 64 AD, the day Peter is crucified. The production is the story told through Peter’s eyes. Act I is Jesus’ ministry and Act II is the Passion of Christ.

“For those in the musical, this is an opportunity to evangelize,” Christina says. “The production is family-oriented with a lot of theology. It pretty much follows the Gospel of John for the narrative and we make sure to have a lot of the elements of the disciples and the women in Scripture.

“We invite everyone to come and see the musical,” she adds. “We are reminded of God’s sacrifice and the grace He gives us. No matter who you are or what you have done, God’s grace covers you. If you have doubts, come and see the living Gospel. We are not

continued on page 5



It is the story that has been told millions of times — the Gospel, the life of Jesus Christ our Savior. For us, this experience of watching a production of the life of Christ is an invitation to dive deeper into our spiritual journey this Lent.

Lent is a period when we fast and pray with Christ. After His Baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert where He fasted and was tempted by the devil. This time was a preparation for Him before He began His ministry. We take this time to prepare our hearts and honor this sacrifice before we solemnly commemorate His passion and death and rejoice in His subsequent Resurrection.

CompassionTheMusical continued from page 4

the Mass, but we are an enhancement of it. We hope to lead people to come to church with a more profound understanding of His life and death.”

As Lent is a time of reflection and growth in our intimacy with Christ, we are called to participate in His sacrifice of the 40 days in the desert. He invites us to grow closer to Him through denying ourselves comforts and luxuries, as well as growing in our prayer life and increasing our almsgiving.

This Lent, say “yes” to experiencing the Gospel in a different way, growing in understanding of His life and, thus, growing closer to Him.



Performances of *CompassionTheMusical* will be at St. Joseph’s in the church on March 18-19 at 7:30 p.m.

Parishioners Chuck and Gloria Hobor continued from front cover

turn using the talents she has developed as a university professor.

“I feel that I should give back what God gave me,” Gloria says. “It’s up to me to give back to the Church.”

To help give back, Gloria awakes early each morning to pray. She regularly prays the Rosary, Divine Mercy, and reads Scripture, reflecting on God’s Word. Gloria does this first thing in the morning when it’s still dark out and she can’t see the work of the day that needs to be done.

“My faith has just become deeper and deeper,” she says

While both Gloria and Chuck have been involved in their faith for years, it has only been in the last several years they have given to the Church together. Both of them appreciate the opportunity of working together in our faith community’s RCIA process. In addition, they have since begun serving as Eucharistic Ministers, and each is in their own prayer group. Volunteering their time and talents has helped the two in their own individual faith journeys while helping them to grow together as a couple.

“This way, we’re walking it together,” Gloria says.

“I feel that I should give back what God gave me. It’s up to me to give back to the Church.” — GLORIA HOBOR



Music class is a favorite activity.



Three-year-old students enjoyed some Christmas fun.



Three-year-old students enjoy a fun lesson.

St. Joseph Preschool:

Introducing Our Youngest Learners to a Strong Catholic Education

Science, culture, religion, technology — these topics and more are all taught to students 3 to 5 years old at St. Joseph Preschool. This program is blessed with 48 students between three classes — 3-year-olds; 4-year-olds, five days; and 4-year-olds, three days. Every one of those students is precious to the teachers and aides at the school. Director and teacher Mia Haslage, teacher Dawn Huston, and teacher aide Amanda Wilkinson truly enjoy seeing how each child grows and learns as the year progresses.

“Everything is so new to them,” says Mia Haslage, who is in her third year of teaching at St. Joseph Preschool. “You can teach them so much, and they are so excited about learning. I am always shocked at how much they retain and learn.”

St. Joseph Preschool is housed in the same building as the grade school but has its own area. Teachers follow a Catholic curriculum, which is an excellent introduction to the faith.

“The 3-year-olds learn that God made them as helpers and how to use their body parts to help,” Ms. Haslage says. “The 4-year-olds learn that God made the world. Students learn about prayer, and we learn parts of the church and help get them ready for next year when they will attend Mass at school.”

The St. Joseph Preschool program is based on child-led learning as much as possible, and play is encouraged. There are always sensory bins and a dramatic play area — like a pizza shop, camping supplies, or a construction set. Throughout the school year, there are also many opportunities for families to be involved — from “Trunk or Treat” at Halloween, to parent readers.

In 2019, St. Joseph Preschool received a five-star rating from the Ohio Department of Education’s Step Up To Quality program. They will reapply this year.

continued on page 7

St. Joseph Preschool *continued from page 6*

Having grown up in Lorain, Ms. Haslage came to St. Joseph Preschool right after she graduated from Cleveland State. After spending her last semester helping at a preschool, she knew she wanted to work with children in this age range after graduation. She feels blessed to have found her current position, as it can often be hard to find a preschool position immediately after graduation.

“I love this age,” Mrs. Haslage says. “They are so innocent and pure. I learn so much from them.”

Ms. Haslage admits the students are full of energy, and the days can be tiring. But she loves every minute of it.

The St. Joseph Preschool program also offers before and after-school care.



A student enjoys a fun learning activity.



Four and five-year-old students enjoyed pumpkin carving last fall.

**If you would like to learn more about
St. Joseph Preschool, please visit sjsamherst.org.**



“I Do”

BY NATHAN FRANKART

Pease of Christ to you! Every once in a while, I receive a special invitation in my mailbox. Opening the invite to a dear friend’s wedding is always exciting and comes with a flurry of thoughts. “I am so happy they are committing their lives to each other. I can’t wait to see how beautiful the ceremony will be. But I better run to the registry page before all the moderately priced gifts disappear. No way I can afford that brand-new lawnmower.”

I have several weddings to attend over the next few months, and I can’t help but reflect upon them. I know someone’s immediate assumption would be that weddings must be complicated for me. But really, it is quite the opposite! There is nothing that I take greater joy in than seeing two people committing to a vocation together and bringing their desire to unite before their friends, family, and the Church. In a way, it reminds me of why I began discerning in the first place.

I know the experience of being absorbed by the love of another person, where the only proper response seems to be a lifetime commitment, a dedication of all my gifts, talents, struggles, sorrows, all of my being. That person just happens to be Jesus Christ. But weddings also remind me of the foretaste of what is to come for us at the

Second Coming of Jesus. The complete union of God and man will not be unlike that of a wedding, where there is feasting and joy and love.

Weddings do not remind me of my anticipated commitment to celibacy. They remind me of the ultimate joy that is to come when the Kingdom of God is entirely and fully manifested. There, God “will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more” (Rev. 21:4).

Weddings remind me of the foretaste of what is to come for us at the Second Coming of Jesus. The complete union of God and man will not be unlike that of a wedding, where there is feasting and joy and love.

THE STORY OF THE Annunciation of the Lord

The Feast of the Annunciation, recognized as a solemnity, is one of the most important in the Church calendar. First, it celebrates the actual Incarnation of Our Savior — the Word made flesh in the womb of His Mother, Mary. Second, it is a principal Marian feast. Three other feasts honoring Our Lord’s Mother are: the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God (Jan. 1), the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Aug. 15), and the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Dec. 8). All three are Holy Days of Obligation.

The feast of the Annunciation was first celebrated around the fifth century. It is the reason why we celebrate Christmas on December 25. Christmas comes exactly nine months after the Archangel Gabriel invited the Virgin Mary to be the Mother of God, an event we commemorate on March 25.

The biblical account of the Annunciation is in the first chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke, which describes the news given to Mary that she was to become the Mother of the Incarnate Word of God, records the “angelic salutation” of Gabriel to Mary, ‘Hail, thou who art highly favored. The Lord is with thee’ (this is the origin of the repeated “Hail Mary” prayer of the Rosary); and Mary’s response to God’s will, “Let it be done to me according to thy word.”

Her exultant hymn, the Magnificat, found in Luke 1:46-55, has been part of the Church’s Liturgy of the Hours, at Vespers (Evening Prayer), and has been repeated nightly in churches, convents, and monasteries for many centuries.

On this special day, we reflect upon the Incarnation of Jesus Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary as the antecedent to the explosion of joy, caroling, gift-giving, eating, drinking, love, and family unity that surrounds the birth of the Savior. With the Incarnation, God has become one of us. From all eternity God had decided that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity should become human. Now, as Luke 1:26-38 tells us, the decision is being realized. The God-Man embraces all humanity, indeed all creation, to bring it to God in one great act of love. Because human beings have rejected God, Jesus will accept a life of suffering and an agonizing death: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13).

Mary has an important role to play in God’s plan. From all eternity, God destined her to be the Mother of Jesus and closely related to Him in the creation and redemption of the world. We could say that God’s decrees of creation and redemption are joined in the decree of Incarnation. Because Mary is God’s instrument in the Incarnation, she has a role to play with Jesus in creation and redemption. It is a God-given role. It is God’s grace from beginning to end.

Together with Jesus, the privileged and graced Mary is the link between heaven and earth. She is the human being who best, after Jesus, exemplifies the possibilities of human existence. She received into her lowliness the infinite love of God. She shows how an ordinary human being can reflect God in the ordinary circumstances of life. She exemplifies what the Church and every member of the Church is meant to become. She is the ultimate product of the creative and redemptive power of God. She manifests what the Incarnation is meant to accomplish for all of us.



AD SPACE

AD SPACE

This newsletter brought to you by the Catholic Communities of:

& ST. JOSEPH PARISH & NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

NON PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID

PERMIT 58
AMHERST OH

200 Saint Joseph Drive, Amherst, OH 44001

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

ASH WEDNESDAY

Wednesday, March 2 — Mass at St. Joseph at 9 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Wednesday, March 2 — Mass at Nativity BVM at 12 p.m.

LIVING STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Friday, March 4 — time TBD at Nativity BVM Church

FIRST SATURDAY ROSARY

Saturday, March 5 — 9 a.m. St. Joseph Church

PARENT CLUB MEETING

Tuesday, March 8 — 7 p.m. School MPR

WONDERFUL WOMEN

Tuesday, March 8 — 7 p.m. St. Joseph Social Hall

PRE-BAPTISM CLASS

Wednesday, March 9 — 7:15 p.m. School Art Room

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Friday, March 11 — 7 p.m. St. Joseph Church

IMMERSION 7/8 MEETING

Friday, March 11 — 7 p.m. Convent

DIOCESAN WIDE EVENING OF CONFESSION

Wednesday March 16 — 5 p.m.
St. Joseph Church

COMPASSION THE MUSICAL

Friday, March 18 — 7:30 p.m.
St. Joseph Church
Saturday, March 19 — 7:30 p.m.
St. Joseph Church

SPRING BREAK NO SCHOOL

March 21 – March 25

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS MEETING

Tuesday, March 22 — 7 p.m. School Art Room

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Friday, March 25 — 7 p.m. St. Joseph Church

IMMERSION LENTEN SERENITY NIGHT

Friday, March 25 — 7 p.m. Convent

SJS BLOOD DRIVE

Thursday, March 31 — 4 p.m.
St. Joseph Social Hall

VINCENTIAN MEETINGS

Thursday, March 3,17,31 — 9 a.m.
Conference room

R.C.I.A. MEETINGS

Mondays, March 7, 14, 21, 28 — 7 p.m.
Nativity Parish Hall

FAITHFULLY FIT YOGA CLASSES

Tuesdays and Thursdays in March 9:30 a.m.
Nativity Parish Hall

PSR CLASSES

Wednesdays, March 2,9,16,30 — 5:30 p.m.
St. Joseph School — cancelled on March 23

YOUTH CHOIR REHEARSAL

Wednesdays, March 9,23,30 — canceled on
March 2 and 16

TEEN/ADULT CHOIR REHEARSAL

Wednesdays, March 9,23,30 — canceled on
March 2 and 16