



ST. JOSEPH PARISH

NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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August 2019

Parishioners Share Experiences in Taking Their Faith on the Road and Abroad

As Catholics, we have a weekly Mass obligation. Whether in Florida, Austria or Portugal, a traveler can find a Catholic Mass.

Justin Schmidt and Alison Ohliger — who were married at St. Joseph Church — traveled to Fatima, Portugal, last year and experienced the universality of the Catholic faith, even with Mass being said in Portuguese.

With a young family and busy lives — Alison as a nurse anesthetist (CRNA) and Justin pursuing his nursing degree, along with raising their two young children — it would seem all too easy to skip Sunday Mass, especially when enjoying a relaxing vacation.

But they don't skip Mass. In fact, they often also attend daily Mass during their winter or spring trip to Florida to visit Alison's grandfather.

"We go to the Church of the Ascension in Fort Myers Beach," Justin says.

"We have a good little routine when we go down there," Alison says. "We get up, go to 8 a.m. Mass and work out. It gets hot, so 1 to 3 p.m. is nap time. Then we get ice cream.



Alison Ohliger, Justin Schmidt, Oscar and Leo always make it a priority to attend Mass, even when they are on vacation.

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Excitement Abounds as New Year Gets Underway at St. Joseph Parish School

Calendars undoubtedly have been marked, backpacks readied, and uniforms purchased in anticipation of the first day at St. Joseph Parish School on Aug. 26. A full, five-day week will follow that exciting day so students can get in the swing of a new year with their schedules, classmates and teachers.

But even before the school year begins, there will be a back-to-school walk-through from noon to 1 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 25.

“We hope our families will attend 11 a.m. Mass, then stop by the school to check on their classrooms, meet their teachers, and see the building in a fresh and new way as the school year begins,” says principal Amy Makruski.

At the end of the 2018-19 school year, St. Joseph School said “goodbye” to several staff members.

“We are happy to welcome new faces to fill these positions in the 2019-20 school year,” Mrs. Makruski says. “We will be welcoming our new five-day preschool teacher and preschool director, Mia Haslage, to the staff, as well as new faces in physical education, and art.”

This year, our school will continue to use and develop its STEM curriculum, focusing on Problem-Based Learning at all grade levels.

“We are excited to be taking on smaller problems and issues on a classroom-based level to allow students to make changes in areas that are really meaningful to them,” Mrs. Makruski says. “Over the summer, the school has partnered with Bendix in Elyria to help further our recycling and composting programs that have been worked on over the past several years by the students that are entering the fifth grade. We are looking forward to seeing where this partnership, along with all of our hard work, will take us this year.”

Mrs. Makruski and the faculty also will be evaluating the after-school student life options. It is hoped that the school



will be able to offer some additional “club” type activities for the students in the younger grades.

While it might be easy for the school administrators and faculty to become caught up in the day-to-day obligations and challenges they meet, they readily acknowledge the strong foundation of support within our faith community

“As I enter the third year of my principalship and reflect on the relationship between the parish and the school as a ministry of the parish, I am filled with a sense of gratitude and awe,” Mrs. Makruski says. “It is because of the support of parish members, tuition assistance donors, and countless day-to-day supporters that the school is able to be successful. I feel the school is a necessary ministry of the parish, as it is part of the larger educational picture of providing religious education to the children — and families — of the parish. The families that choose the day school program are being provided with a rigorous academic program, as well as a daily, in-depth religious education experience that will last a lifetime. By forming disciples and future productive citizens, St. Joseph Parish School is proud to serve as a ministry of the parish.”

If you would like to arrange a tour of the school and learn more about enrollment, please call the school at 440-988-4244.

A Letter from Our Pastor

STEWARDSHIP: *A Positive Way to Live*

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

There is something about the month of August that is glorious. Summer is still in full force — the lazy, hazy days are with us, and some still have vacations on the horizon. And yet back-to-school preparations and a return to the busyness of life are just around the corner.

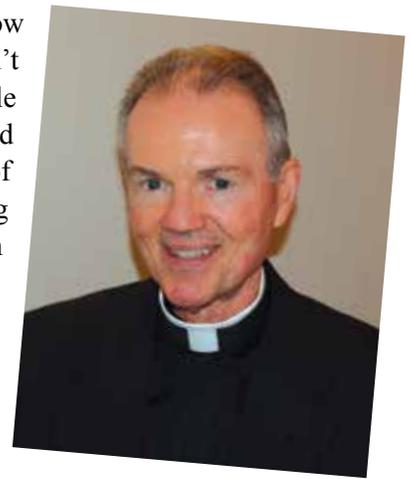
We are at that point in the year when some things are coming to an end and other things are beginning all at once. However, isn't that the way it always is? The Russian playwright and short-story writer Anton Chekhov once said, "People don't notice whether it is winter or summer when they are happy." There is certainly truth to that statement. You might say it is a stewardship statement.

You may be wondering how to make a connection between Chekhov's quote and stewardship. But the connection is found quite simply in the word "happy." I once heard someone say in a presentation about stewardship that people who live stewardship as a way of life are almost always happy. And there is a reason for that.

Stewardship is a positive way to live. It means being grateful and centering our thoughts on gratitude. In other words, our focus is on the good things in life, not on the bad. This does not mean we have perfect health or that all is ideal in our family, that we always sleep well at night, or that we enjoy everything that happens to us or around us.

However, it does mean that when the good happens, we thank God. We recognize that good and are filled with a sense of joy and gratitude.

You and I know people like that, don't we? We know people who always seem filled with joy, regardless of what may be happening to them or around them personally. To me, these kinds of people are stewardship people — the kind of people we all need to strive to be.



No doubt you have heard that living a life of stewardship means living with an "attitude of gratitude." That is not easy, for you or for me. But it is certainly worth striving for, with God's grace.

As we watch our summer season finish and the busier time of year begin, let us concentrate on how God has blessed us. If we do that, I truly believe that we can be those people Chekhov described. If we are happy, it will not matter what time of year it is.

I am grateful for you, for your support, your prayers and — most of all — your presence in my life. Thank you and may God continue to bless us all.

Gratefully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor".

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor



Back to the Basics: *Parenting 101*

It's back-to-school time again.

Parents are scrambling to unearth last year's backpack, purchase a mountain of school supplies, and find the perfect lunchbox that won't become a fading fad a few weeks after school begins.

Yet, these seemingly menial tasks are important — the role of parents in education is vital to classroom success. Studies reveal that increased parental involvement directly correlates to increased academic achievement.

Our role as parents, therefore, is crucial. We take the education of our children seriously and don't hesitate to drop everything to review spelling words, check homework or explain a math concept — not to mention the high volume of energy we exert washing school clothes, finding school shoes, making lunches, and carting children back and forth.

All of this is done in hopes of academic success and future security.

However, in light of these efforts, it is also important to examine what we as parents do for our children's spiritual formation. Many years ago, as we held our children at the baptismal font, we promised to "accept the responsibilities of Christian parenthood" by teaching our children through "word and example."

All too often, however, the spiritual formation of our children is lost in a sea of homework and extracurricular activities. We placate ourselves with the notion that they receive adequate spiritual education during religion class at school or through the parish religious education program.

Yet, we are exceedingly misled! Religious education is intended to merely *reinforce* what is taught at home. Parents are the *primary educators* of their children and are expected to pass on the faith through "word and example."

"Parents are catechists precisely because they are parents," explains the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in the *National Directory for Catechesis*. "Their role in the formation of Christian values is irreplaceable. They should speak naturally and simply about God and their faith, as they do about other matters they want their children to understand and appreciate."

Where do we begin? First and foremost, we must start with prayer and ask the Holy Family to guide our efforts in the spiritual education of our children. Bless the food before meals. Establish a simple routine of family morning and night prayer — a recitation of the "Morning Offering" upon waking, and an "Act of Contrition" at night is a sufficient starting point.

Also, keep in mind that it is impossible to pass on the faith to our children if we do not constantly pursue its knowledge and practice it ourselves. Faith formation is a lifelong process and we, as parents, are not exempt! Take advantage of the parish adult faith formation programs and seek spiritual reading — the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a great place to start.

Rest assured that your efforts will produce a firmly grounded spiritual foundation for your children.

And the reward? An unwavering hope in life eternal!

A Great Time Had by All at the Annual Nativity BVM Parish Polka Mass and Picnic

Parishioners had a wonderful time sharing food, fellowship and fun during the Parish Picnic at Nativity. We thank all those who joined us for this wonderful community event, as well as those who shared their stewardship gifts in order to make the event possible!



Parishioners Share Experiences in Taking Their

Going to Mass is a good way to start the day. We usually go to daily Mass about three times that week.”

In a parish with predominantly older parishioners, there is no cry room. The couple has to make do and keep Oscar and Leo occupied the best they can. After Mass, Alison’s grandpa enjoys spending time showing off his visiting family to his friends. The couple enjoys visiting with parishioners.

“The CatholicMasstime.org app (available on the St. Joseph parish website) is our best friend when we are on vacation,” Justin says. “There’s no excuse to not find Mass with the technology we have now. Fifty years ago you might have had to drive around to find Mass, but now we can get the Mass times on the app and find the closest Catholic church.”

“I feel whole when I am able to go to Mass,” Alison says. “On vacation there is no excuse, because you have even more time to go. That’s why we try to go to daily Mass. It’s a good way to start and end the week.”

The couple says attending Mass on vacation is also a way for them to show God gratitude that they are able to go on vacation. Plus, it’s important that they model Mass attendance to Oscar and Leo.

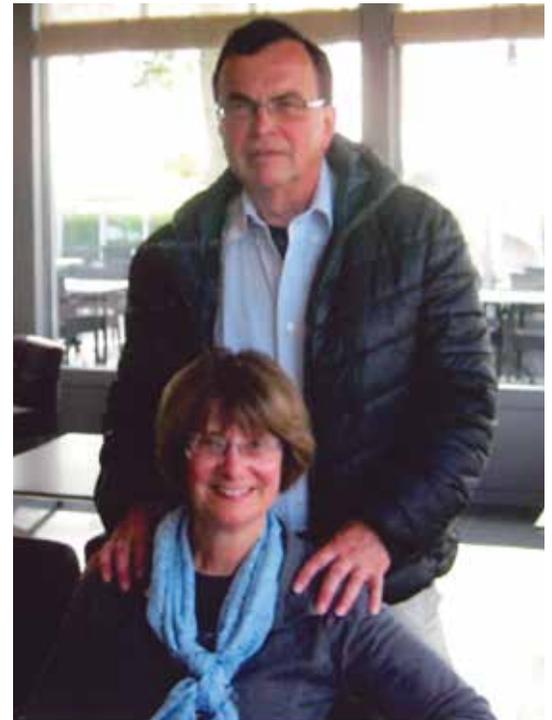
“It’s important for us to consistently attend Mass while we are on vacation,” Justin says. “We don’t bring up excuses — it’s about living by example. We can’t force the boys to keep attending Mass when they get older. We just have to show them how much we love it and they will learn to love it as much as we do.”

For Alison and Justin, no matter where they travel, they enjoy the opportunity to be together as a family at Mass and share their Catholic faith with their children.

“Kids are sponges,” Justin says. “We’d rather have them soak up a religious upbringing, versus sitting them in front of the television watching Sunday morning cartoons. The kids will be what you want them to be, in a sense. If we do the right things now, we set an example. We can mold them into religious people who are respectful and has morals and ethics.”

Nativity parishioners John and Kathy Rokasy have a similar story when it comes to taking their faith on the road. The couple took a trip this summer to Paris, Vienna and Amsterdam. This was their sixth trip to Europe since they were married 40 years ago.

“Our courtship took off because both John and I had traveled to many countries in Europe,” Kathy says. The couple’s first dates were spent eating popcorn and watching each other’s European photo slides.



Nativity parishioners John and Kathy Rokasy in Paris this summer.

“There are people from all walks of life and all different countries. They are all worshiping the same way and all praying the same way. Whatever language you are speaking, God is listening to you.” — Kathy Rokasy

Faith on the Road and Abroad *continued from front cover*

“We have a lot in common besides travel, too,” John says.

As cradle Catholics, the couple has spent more than 40 years practicing their faith together, and that doesn’t stop when they travel.

“A lot of people I speak to say, ‘Going to Mass on vacation is kind of boring,’” John says. “I would say go to Mass if you are in Europe. The churches there are treasure troves of history, art and music. Attending Mass there has a good secondary benefit.”

On this summer’s trip, the couple spent a lot of time in churches in the cities they visited, always attending weekend Mass and, when able, daily Mass. They even accidentally attended a funeral, baptism and witnessed a wedding from afar.

“We lost our son to a heart condition on Aug. 11, nine years ago at age 24,” Kathy says. “During the funeral we accidentally sat in on, they played ‘Ave Maria’ on the organ and cello. I looked over at John and we both had tears in our eyes. I said ‘That is him and my mother. They are both with us.’”

The couple would find the closest church and the Mass times from the person who managed the hotel or apartment at which they were staying.

John says they also enjoyed speaking to the priest after Mass, to get to know him a little better. One discussion before Mass, in France, resulted in the priest praying for the Diocese of Cleveland in English during the Prayers of the Faithful.

“The priest said, ‘For the poor people in the Cleveland Diocese whose churches are having to close,’” says Kathy with a chuckle. “Everyone turned and looked at us.”

John and Kathy prefer to tour Europe on their own, without guides. They try to stay in places that are more like a studio apartment than a hotel.

“We spend most of the day walking,” Kathy says. “We get food each day and then go back to our accommodations and make a meal.”

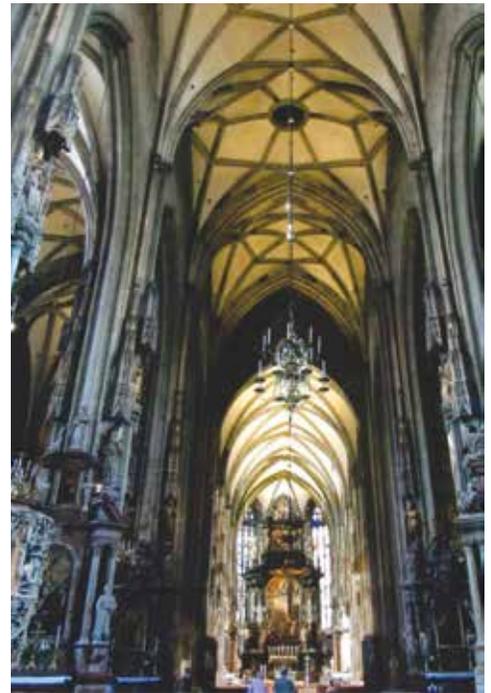
Mass and their Catholic faith are never far away during their vacations.

“God never takes a vacation,” Kathy says. “When you are on vacation, God isn’t. He is still there with us.”

The part that makes practicing their faith very meaningful to the couple is, no matter where they are, or in what language the Mass is being said, they always understand exactly where they are in the liturgy.

The universality of the Catholic Church shines through in these times.

“There are people from all walks of life and all different countries,” Kathy says. “They are all worshipping the same way and all praying the same way. Whatever language you are speaking, God is listening to you.”



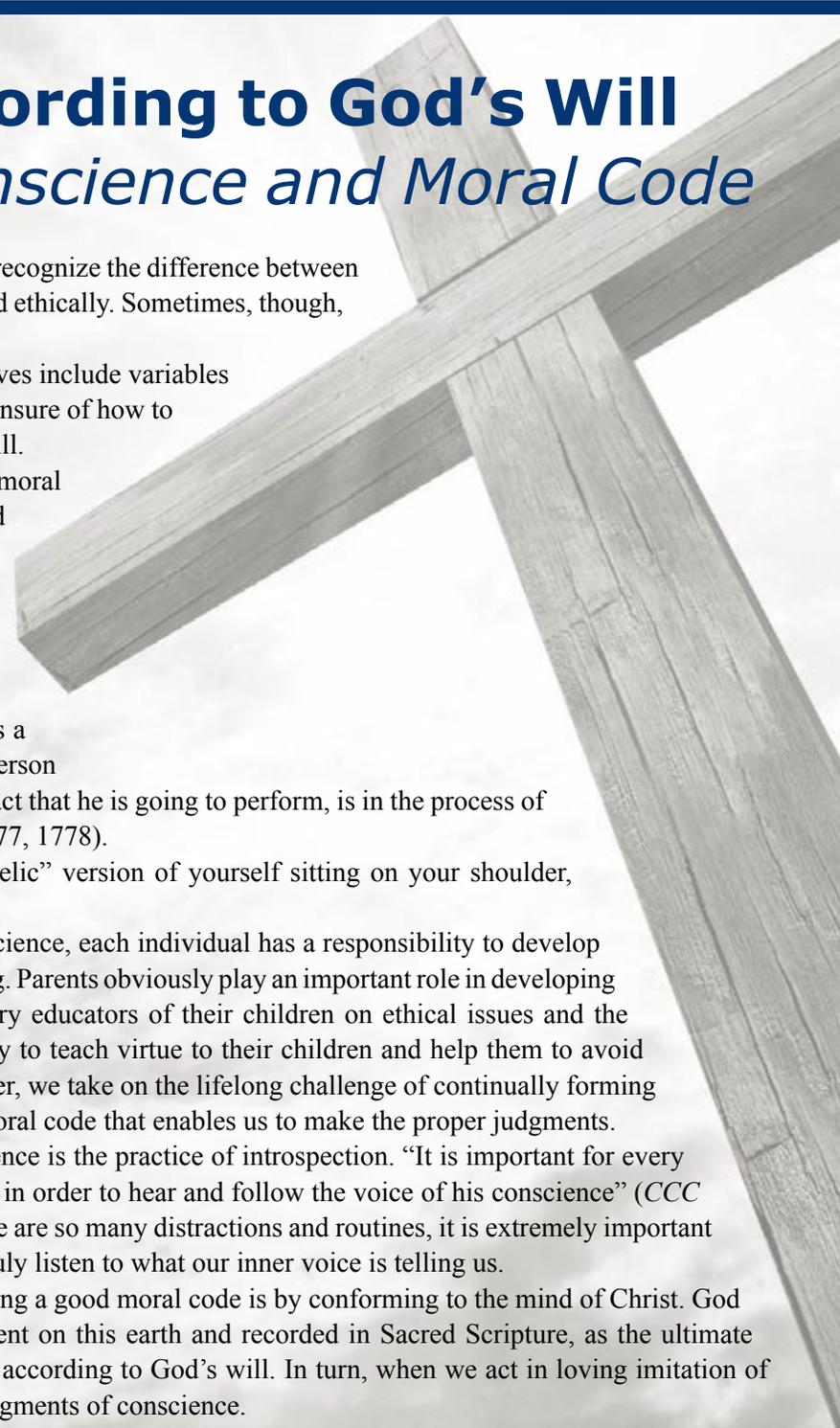
Nativity parishioners John and Kathy Rokasy attended Mass here in Paris this summer.

Are you “hitting the road” or getting ready to take a trip abroad?

If so, visit www.masstimes.org or www.catholicmasstime.org

to find a Catholic church celebrating Mass near wherever you happen to be!

Also, you can find the CatholicMassTime.org app on the St. Joseph Parish website.



Living According to God's Will

Forming a Conscience and Moral Code

As Christians, it is important that we recognize the difference between right and wrong — both morally and ethically. Sometimes, though, this line can become blurred.

Many situations we encounter in our lives include variables that can leave us internally conflicted and unsure of how to move forward in accordance with God's will.

So, how do we work through these moral conundrums? One way is to develop a solid Christian conscience.

A moral conscience exists in the heart of every individual. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking. Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed” (1777, 1778).

Think of your conscience as the “angelic” version of yourself sitting on your shoulder, giving you sound advice.

While everyone is blessed with a conscience, each individual has a responsibility to develop this conscience from the time they are young. Parents obviously play an important role in developing their children's consciences. As the primary educators of their children on ethical issues and the Catholic faith, parents have a responsibility to teach virtue to their children and help them to avoid fear, selfishness and pride. As we grow older, we take on the lifelong challenge of continually forming our own consciences, and establishing a moral code that enables us to make the proper judgments.

One valuable tool in forming a conscience is the practice of introspection. “It is important for every person to be sufficiently present to himself in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience” (CCC 1779). In contemporary society, where there are so many distractions and routines, it is extremely important that we take the time to look inward and truly listen to what our inner voice is telling us.

Another way to ensure we are developing a good moral code is by conforming to the mind of Christ. God the Father gave us Christ, physically present on this earth and recorded in Sacred Scripture, as the ultimate example of what to do and how to behave according to God's will. In turn, when we act in loving imitation of Christ, we are certain to make practical judgments of conscience.

The next time you are faced with a moral dilemma, take some quiet time to look inward, weigh the positive and negative outcomes, and listen to the voice of your conscience. Read the Gospels for examples of Christ's teachings. By making this a regular practice, you will find that the voice of your conscience will come in louder and more clearly than you may have initially expected.

In a Rut? You're in Good Company

By NATHAN FRANKART

Pease of Christ to you! Being home for summer break, I thought I could briefly share what my job looks like.

It's been a lot of sun and a lot of sweat being outside mulching, digging trenches and building garden beds. Not particularly useful skills for a life of ordained ministry, but very useful towards my summer goals — I've been losing weight and it doesn't show any signs of stopping!

There are a couple other aspects of my life that don't show any signs of stopping, and not all of them are good. One in particular is dealing with a round of spiritual dryness. There's no shame to admit that every once in a while, for whatever reason, whether it be a lack of time, a lack of effort or perhaps for no reason at all, prayer life can become dull, uninspired — well, boring. It feels like way more effort to set aside 10 minutes of time for silence than to spend two hours mindlessly idling, in front of a TV, a phone, a tablet or a computer. In fact, summers are notorious for seminarians for this exact reason — we break away from our conventional habits and have to sustain ourselves on our own, a great time for growth if properly utilized, and an integral aspect to our formation.

But, there is no use feeling sorry if spiritual desolation has crept into your life, it's not a mark against you — in fact, it's an expected and universal aspect to the spiritual life. Everyone will experience dryness or dissatisfaction at some point in their prayer life — the saints write extensively on this! St. Therese of Lisieux dialogues deeply on her inner doubts and struggles in faith, and St. John of the Cross created arguably his most impactful work on the inner spiritual life through his experiences of desolation detailed in *Dark Night of the Soul*. The doctors of our faith know the struggles of a dry spell, but they all respond to it in a manner in which we should emulate — not to engage in self-pity, or despair, but as Christ embraced His suffering, with grace, without hesitation, without anger, but silently bearing his burden. Take that spiritual desolation to the Blessed Sacrament, and dwell with the One who suffered most for you. That is where I plan to take mine.



The doctors of our faith know the struggles of a dry spell, but they all respond to it in a manner in which we should emulate — not to engage in self-pity, or despair, but as Christ embraced His suffering, with grace, without hesitation, without anger, but silently bearing his burden. Take that spiritual desolation to the Blessed Sacrament, and dwell with the One who suffered most for you. That is where I plan to take mine.

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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

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

Eucharistic Adoration (Chapel) at Nativity of the BVM:

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

Upcoming Activities and Events

"Wonderful Women"

Monday, Aug. 12, at 7 p.m. in St. Joseph Social Hall.

Feast of the Assumption Mass Times

12 Noon Mass on Thursday, Aug. 15, at Nativity BVM Parish
7 p.m. Mass on Thursday, Aug. 15, at St. Joseph Parish
(Please note there will be no Vigil Mass at either Parish)

St. Joseph Parish School Walk-Through

Please come and meet the teachers and see all that our St. Joseph Parish School has to offer on Sunday, Aug. 25, from Noon to 1 p.m.

St. Joseph Parish School

First day of school, Grades 1-8 — Aug. 26
First day of school for Kindergarten (last name A thru Ma) — Aug. 26
First day of school for Kindergarten (last name Mc thru Z) — Aug. 27
First full day of school for all Kindergartners — Aug. 28

St. Joseph Parish Pre-School Parent Information Meetings

3-year-old preschool, two-day p.m. program — Aug. 26 at 7 p.m.
4-year-old preschool, five-day a.m. program — Aug. 27 at 7 p.m.
4-year-old preschool, three-day p.m. program — Aug. 28 at 7 p.m.
(All meetings will be held in the School Multipurpose Room)

Knights of Columbus Meeting

Tuesday, Aug. 27, at 7 p.m. in the School Art Room.

Eucharistic Adoration

Mondays through Fridays from 11 a.m. – 10 p.m.
at Nativity BVM Parish.