



ST. JOSEPH PARISH & NATIVITY OF THE BVM PARISH

PARISH NEWSLETTER

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December 2019

Helping Those in Need Through the Annual Giving Tree

Many of us are already in the midst of our holiday preparations — purchasing plane tickets for upcoming travels, planning out menus for future gatherings and taking care of our Christmas shopping. This is the season, after all, for celebration and an overall spirit of good cheer. Yet, for a family or individual facing financial hardship, this time of year can quickly become burdensome. Already struggling just to make ends meet, the thought of providing something extra seems downright impossible.

St. Joseph parishioner Evelyn Caffarel says this is what makes the annual Giving Tree so important to our wider community, becoming the hands and feet that bring the peace and joy of Jesus to others.

“For more than 30 years we have been generously sharing our treasures with others in the Lorain County community through this ministry,” Evelyn says. “Just as a living organism grows and changes, so has our outreach through this ministry. Some organizations have been replaced, new ones have arisen, and the ministry has adapted to changes. Last year we gathered over 800 gifts, including 211 gift cards and 620 gifts which were distributed through Birthright, Blessing House, Genesis



Each year, St. Joseph parish children help decorate new ornaments for the tree.

House, WIC of Lorain County, Haven Center of Lorain and our own Vincentians.”

“It’s a beautiful way to share your talents and treasures to make someone else’s family happy during the Christmas season,” adds Diane Kirsch, Angel Tree coordinator for Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish. “Our children receive so much, while these children oftentimes have so little. Christmas is really

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Annual Giving Tree *continued from front cover*

supposed to be about giving rather than receiving, and this is a special way to live that out.”

Both Giving Tree ministries work with local charitable organizations to acquire names of individuals and families in need. Once gathered, administrative volunteers begin organizing labels and preparing trees for set up. Giving Trees typically go up the first weekend of Advent, providing parishioners with two to three weeks to shop for and return gift items — typically unwrapped — so that they can be distributed to the appropriate charity.

“Each label provides information about the recipient — age, clothing and shoes sizes, and wish lists — allowing parishioners to choose the angel they wish to buy for,” Diane says. “Some parishioners are very generous, choosing to purchase their entire list. Then they return their items at least a week before Christmas so that we have time to organize and deliver those items to where they need to be.”

Not only does this ministry bless those in need, but it becomes a great way to teach and involve parish children in the true spirit of Christmas.

“A lot of times parishioners with children will pick angels for children who have ages similar to their own child’s,” Diane says. “Then their kids can shop with them and it becomes really a lesson for their own children on what Christmas is truly all about.”

“It’s a great ministry for families to adopt,” Evelyn adds. “Each year many hands — both young and old — make this enormous job possible and a joy to behold.”

All parishioners are encouraged to become involved in the Giving Tree Ministry this Advent, either by selecting and shopping for an ornament off the tree or by assisting with the administrative duties required each year to make this beloved ministry possible. For more information about St. Joseph’s Giving Tree, please contact Evelyn Caffarel at 440-452-4361. For information about Nativity’s Giving Tree, parishioners may contact Diane Kirsch at 440-935-2301.



Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary’s Angel Tree.

A Letter from Our Pastor

A Time for *Mercy* and *Tenderness*

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

Advent and Christmas are upon us. We all know that our calendars will soon be overflowing with many holiday events, and our pews will be overflowing with all of those present for our Christmas Masses.

There is something special about the Church and about our faith during these holidays. And we are grateful for this holy and festive season. For those of us who are here for Mass every weekend, this is not a time to resent those who fill our pews and our parking lots. Rather, it is a time to be the loving and welcoming people Christ calls us to be. Hospitality is an important part of being a good steward, and this is a perfect time to practice it.

For those who may not have been with us for a while, we want you to know that you are welcome here! We hope that you like what you see and experience, and we want you to know that you always have a home here and are part of our family.

The term “the new evangelization” is something Pope Francis has emphasized in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, which he issued in 2013. The pope’s letter, with the title that means “The Joy of the Gospel,” has advice for all Catholics about how we should view



and treat each other as sons and daughters of God and members of His family, the Church.

Pope Francis writes: “There is a need for Christians who help show God’s mercy and tenderness toward every creature. We all know that today’s humanity is facing a deep crisis. This is why the new evangelization must necessarily use the language of mercy, which is more about gestures and attitudes than words.”

As the Holy Father reminds us, this is a time for “mercy and tenderness.” This is a time for us to show love for everyone, to our brothers and sisters in the next pew or on the other side of the globe. This is a time to share the Good News of Emmanuel, God-with-us, with all we meet.

Yes, December is a time for mercy and tenderness. May you and all of the members of our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parish Families have a blessed Advent and a Merry Christmas!

Gratefully in Christ,

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

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor,
Pastor



Vincentians Serve and

The members of our St. Vincent DePaul Society — also known as the Vincentians — see the face of Christ in the hungry families they serve. But as they go about these compassionate works, they are strengthening their own relationship with Christ as they follow His teachings.

The Vincentians, led by President Ed Molnar and Vice President Dave Wohlever, meet weekly to review the requests from area families and individuals for help either with food, toiletries or utility payments.

“We operate like a food pantry that provides food and toiletries to those who request help,” Ed says.

“Occasionally, if we have money left, we’ll help with partial utility or rent, or vouchers to Goodwill. But most of what we do is food.”

The group collects donated non-perishable food from the collection sites around the church building. One of the members will check with the help requests received at the parish office. A call is made to the person seeking help to get information about the family size and what the particular needs are.

“Half the time we ask them if they can come in to pick up the food,” Ed says. “We’ll pull food from the pantry and usually we provide three meals per day, for four to



*Back row standing (from left) Dave Wohlever, Ed Molnar, Jim Saccardi;
Middle row (from left): Jim Pecchio, Mary Trent, Doris Pippert, Mary Brotzki, Sherryl Saccardi;
Front row seated (from left): Ken Gremling, Erma Camp, Stephanie Sierra*

Grow Closer to Christ

five days. We will put the food in the vestibule for the family to pick up. If they don't have transportation, we'll take the food to the home."

If there is a request for utility or rent help, the society will try to provide at least half of what is needed.

"If we do provide utility or rent help, the money doesn't go to the recipient," Ed says. "We have a contact who calls the landlord or the utility company to verify the need. We'll make a payment directly to the landlord or utility."

The money used for these needs and food purchases, comes from the green envelopes we receive in our packets.

"Almost all our money comes from that," Ed says.

The work of collecting the food, talking with the needy, and sometimes delivering the food is no hardship for the Vincentians. Their stewardship of time and talent helps them grow in their faith.

"Jesus tells us that what we do unto others, we are doing to Him," Ed says. "I felt this ministry is the way I can help give back to my fellow men. It's another good way to give back to the community."

During the season of Advent, we have the opportunity to help in the Vincentians' work by either joining the group or donating food and money.

"If you don't have the time to do that — and most don't because we meet during working hours — one thing you can do is provide cash," Ed says. "We can use it."

While other food pantries in Lorain County are open only a couple days a week or on Saturday for a few hours, the Vincentians are the only group who will deliver food if the family has no transportation. If the need is dire, food can be supplied the next day.

"We set up the ministry to be able to be there for folks who need help right away," Ed says.

The ministry also began providing toiletries — toothpaste, soap and even detergent — when requests came in for them.

"This is important for people's dignity," Ed says. "If they can't buy food, they can't afford toiletries."

Serving in the Vincentians is an opportunity to live in stewardship. Giving of one's time is important in the ministry.

"You have to have empathy for the poor, and willing to put your faith into action," Ed says.

Dave Wohlever can vouch for the opportunity to build one's faith through serving in the Vincentians.

"I love working with people and I love helping people," he says. "It makes me strong in my faith. I thank God for all He's given me."

The act of providing food to those in need offers Dave the opportunity to see Christ in them.

"It's so wonderful when I give food and people thank me," he says. "I love so see their faces shining. And they are all so thankful. My faith is stronger than ever before."

Anyone is welcome to join the group. The meetings are usually once a week on Mondays at 8 a.m. in the parish conference room. The meetings last about one hour, depending on the food requests that have come in.

"If you really want to get closer to God, this is the way to do it," Dave says. "Come to a meeting and see what you like about it. If you want to join, we'll walk you through it."

**Interested in joining the St. Vincent de Paul Society and becoming a Vincentian?
Please contact Ed Molnar at 440-320-0120
or Dave Wohlever at 440-988-7078.**

Sister Stefana Osredkar, SND, Returns

St. Joseph and Nativity of the BVM



It's hard to believe that it's been 19 years since Sister Stefana Osredkar, SND, first became part of our St. Joseph and Nativity of the BVM Parish families. Sister left our parish at the end of October to return to the Sisters of Notre Dame Mother House in Chardon, Ohio, where she will continue her ministry and devotions to our Lord and Savior.

Throughout her years as a religious, Sister has given of her time, talent and treasure with a sincere spirit of generosity. She is loved dearly by our parish families and will be greatly missed.

Sister has been a longtime staff member at St. Joseph Parish. She spent 15 years working in the extended day care program at St. Joseph Parish School and the past four serving exclusively in Pastoral Ministry, through which she helped with funeral planning, and consoling those who are grieving. She also offered four-session "Journeying with Loss" workshops for those suffering the loss of loved ones. Her contributions to our parishes and parishioners are immeasurable.

Asked what part of her ministry has been closest to her heart she said, "I like to help grieving families however I can, because it is so hard for them to lose their loved ones. The time of grief is such a sacred and special time, both for them and for me. I am always encouraged by their faith." She added that she also felt a special connection to parishioners and their family members while visiting the homebound, those in hospital and in hospice. Sister said that she has been privileged to be able to offer Holy Communion to those most in need.

Sr. Stefana is a devout, kind, gentle, sincere woman, and has been a joy to know. She has asked to be kept in your prayers, just as she will keep you in hers.

If you would like to keep in touch with Sister, please send cards and letters to:

Sisters of Notre Dame
Attention: Sr. Stefana Osredkar
13000 Auburn Rd.
Chardon, OH 44024

She would love to hear from you!

to the Sisters of Notre Dame Motherhouse
Parishes Wish Sr. Stefana a Fond Farewell



Sr. Stefana with Joe Farkas



Sr. Stefana with Sam, Ella, Maggie, Lilly



Sr. Stefana with Marilyn Siekeres



Sr. Stefana with Marilyn Scheidler

St. Joseph and Nativity of the BVM Parishes Wish Sr. Stefana a Fond Farewell *continued from page 7*

Sr. Stefana with Sue Cotton



Sr. Stefana with Elizabeth Hanson



Sr. Stefana with Rosi George



Sr. Stefana with Rita Hiser



Sr. Stefana with Joyce and Tim Nye



INNKEEPER, WHERE CAN I STAY?

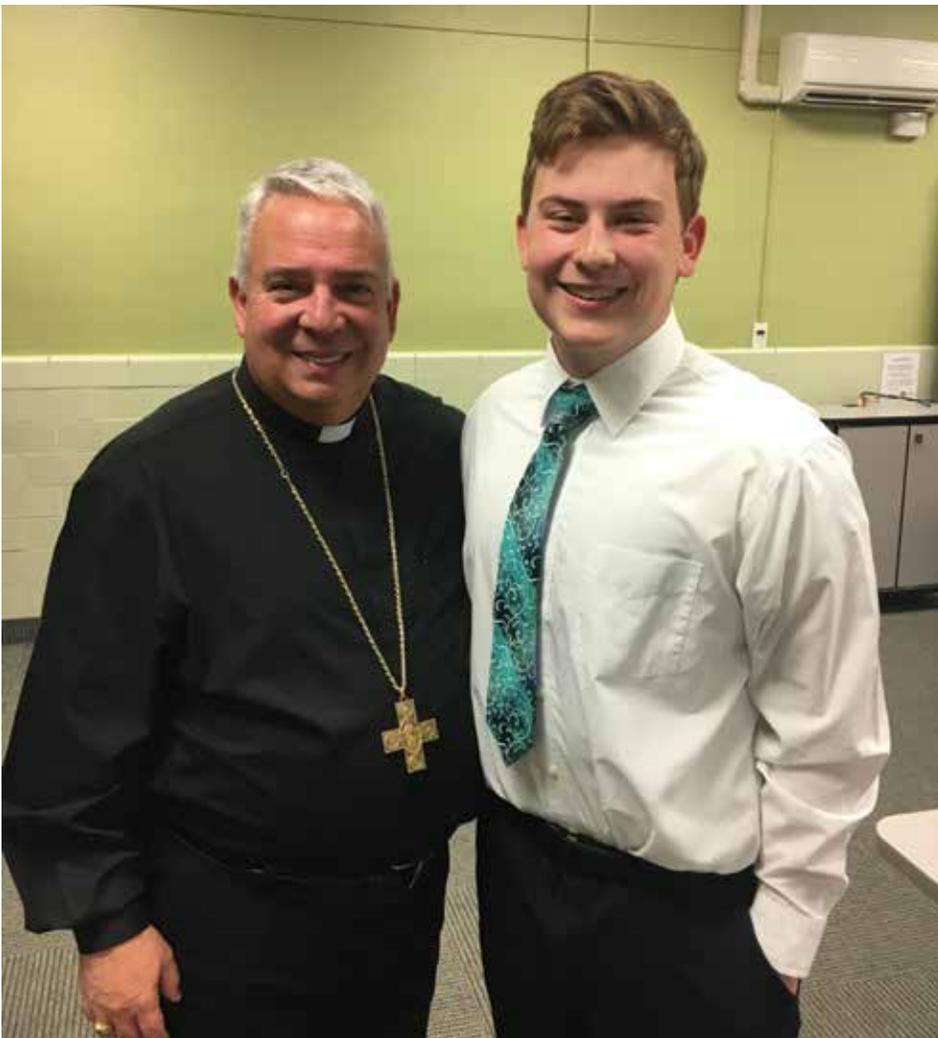
By NATHAN FRANKART

Pease of Christ to you! I was surprised to hear how many people found humor in the picture I provided for last month's article. I am glad to hear it provided joy to those who saw it, but this month, all I have to give is a simple picture of myself and Bishop Perez after the yearly seminarian bishop dialogue, in which we have time to ask questions to the bishop about discernment, formation and other aspects of our lives here at seminary. Unfortunately, nothing funny to see here — at least I hope there's nothing funny to see. Is my fly down? Is the bishop's?

December creeps into Borromeo once again, and we are here till the 20th, plenty of time to study for finals which loom off in the distance, ominously hovering over all, yet not stealing away our joyful anticipation in the coming celebration of Christ entering the world! This Advent season strikes me in a unique way, particularly upon meditating on where Christ was born. The Gospel reads "there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7), and perhaps I am taking liberties, but one could imagine an innkeeper forcing the Holy Family to take shelter in the stable because

he could not provide them room.

Now, my point is not to criticize this innkeeper. With no room in the inn for Mary or Joseph, the stable would be the only shelter providable. And yet, I think of myself being in the same position as that innkeeper. In reality, we are all the innkeepers of ourselves, we control our own souls and relationships with God. We can allow bringing Christ into our rooms, the inner sanctuary of our hearts, or place Him on the fringe, far away from our hearts, in a stable so that He is not close. Jesus will not force Himself into our inn. If we place Him in a stable, compartmentalize Him to one portion of our lives, He will stay there. But wouldn't the keeper of the inn reap so much benefit from giving the infant God a room to rest His head? How much more will we be rewarded if we allow Christ to take residence in our inn, not on the outside, but deep within the room of our heart? Give Jesus a room closer to your heart, and He will dwell deeper within you this Christmas season.



ST. JOSEPH and NATIVITY BVM PARISHES

Upcoming Activities and Events for December

Coffee and Donuts at Nativity BVM Parish

Tuesday, Dec. 3 — following the 8 a.m. Mass in Nativity BVM Parish Hall. All are welcome

The "Holiday Dinner" Sponsored by Nativity BVM Altar & Rosary Society

For all ladies of both Nativity BVM and St. Joseph Parishes, Tuesday, Dec. 3. Appetizers are at 5:30 p.m., Fireland's Chorus is at 6 p.m., and dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m.

Photo with Santa

Friday, Dec. 6 — 6-8 p.m. at St. Joseph School, open to all parish/area families.

Pre-Baptism Class

Wednesday, Dec. 11 — at 7:15 p.m. in St. Joseph School multipurpose room.

First Reconciliation for all Second-Graders

Saturday, Dec. 14 — at 1 p.m., Nativity BVM in South Amherst.

"Wonderful Women"

Wednesday, Dec. 18 — 7 p.m. in St. Joseph School multipurpose room. All ladies of both Nativity BVM and St. Joseph Parishes are invited.

St. Joseph Parish School Christmas Program

Friday, Dec. 20 — at 7 p.m. at St. Joseph Church.

Knights of Columbus Fifth Sunday Rosary

Sunday, Dec. 29 — at 2:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

CHRISTMAS AND SOLEMNITY OF MARY MASS SCHEDULE FOR ST. JOSEPH AND NATIVITY

Saturday Vigil Masses for Dec. 21

4 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church
5:30 p.m. Mass at Nativity BVM Church

Sunday Masses for Dec. 22

8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church
11 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church
5 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church

Dec. 24 — Christmas Eve Masses

4 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church
6 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church
8 p.m. Mass at Nativity BVM Church

Dec. 25 — Christmas Day Masses

8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church
10 a.m. Mass at Nativity BVM Church
11:30 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church

Saturday Vigil Masses for Dec. 28

4 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church
5:30 p.m. Mass at Nativity BVM Church

Sunday Masses for Dec. 29

8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church
11 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church
5 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church

Vigil Mass, Dec. 31, for the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God

4 p.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church

Jan. 1, Mass for the Feast of Mary, the Mother of God

9:30 a.m. Mass at Nativity BVM Church
11 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church

Sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent

Thursdays following the 7 p.m. Mass until 8:30 p.m. at St. Joseph Church
Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 12 Noon at St. Joseph Church



A Face-to-Face Encounter with Christ: *The Blessings of Eucharistic Adoration*

Imagine if the risen Christ were to appear to us right here in our parish community. Wouldn't we all go running to meet Him? More likely than not, millions of people would travel from around the world just to sit at His feet and soak in the incomparable graces of His presence. It may be hard for us to picture this scenario, and yet the reality is that we already are given the opportunity to rest in Christ's presence daily!

In the Catholic Church, we are blessed to have the real presence of Jesus dwelling in our midst in the form of the Holy Eucharist during all Masses. And at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, parishioners also have a special opportunity to partake in one of the most sacred experiences our Catholic faith has to offer: Eucharistic Adoration.

At Nativity, Eucharistic Adoration takes place Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. until 10 p.m. in the main church. The tabernacle doors are fitted with a luna that exposes the Host when the outer doors are opened. In this way, the Eucharist can be on display when adorers are present and safely tucked away when the church is empty.

For all who embrace this unique opportunity to draw closer to Christ, the spiritual rewards of adoration are abundant.

"Adoration is just spending that one-on-one time with the Lord," says Josie Tornabene, the coordinator of Eucharistic Adoration at Nativity. "I truly believe that it is Jesus Christ at the altar, four feet in front of you. You have heaven's door right there, and it's up to you if you



Individuals are invited to come experience Eucharistic Adoration at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The special tabernacle can be found to the left of the main altar.

want to knock and visit with Him. You have that time to thank Him or talk to Him about what's troubling you. It's the most relaxing time of day for me — it's just peaceful."

In today's busy world, it can be intimidating to commit time each week to Eucharistic Adoration. One of the greatest blessings of our week-long adoration is that even our busiest parishioners may drop in to spend time with the Lord as their schedules allow. He is always right there waiting!

"Our church is so fortunate to have the Lord right here, so you don't even have to travel far," Josie says. "If you don't have an hour, you can even spend just 10 minutes with God. He'll take anything — He wants us there with Him. Because we have keyless entry now, you don't even need to sign up, you can come any time. You can just stop in and say, 'Jesus, I'm in the area and

just want to thank You for everything You've given us.' One little 'thank You' goes a long way."

For newcomers and "seasoned" adorers alike, there are many ways to sit in Christ's presence. A selection of Bibles and other religious and devotional books are available for use during adoration, as well as a collection of rosaries. Whether you decide to spend your time in adoration reading Scripture, journaling or simply spending time in meditative prayer, the rewards of this time with the Lord are always great.

"God loves us so much, He has given us so much, and He has died for us," Josie says. "We can give him at least five minutes or an hour of our time. If we could actually see

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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.

A Face-to-Face Encounter with Christ

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Him there, you wouldn't be able to get to the church, it would be so packed. And yet, He is really there in the Eucharist during adoration, just four feet in front of you. This is something for everybody to grow closer to God and have that intimate time with Him. All of the time we spend with Him, He will remember."

Here in our faith community, we are blessed that Nativity offers us an opportunity to experience

the special graces God brings through the adoration of the presence of His Son in the form of the Holy Eucharist. In the words of Pope Paul VI in his *Credo of the People of God*, "The Blessed Sacrament... is the living heart of each of our churches. And it is our very sweet duty to honor and adore the blessed Host." Let us embrace this truly precious gift and go now to sit and rest in His presence!

If you would like more information about Eucharistic Adoration at Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or to become a scheduled adorer, please call Josie Tornabene at 440-988-7773.