



JANUARY 2012

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Celebrating Catholic Schools Week at St. Joseph School

St. Joseph Parish School celebrated its 61st Anniversary last September. Our beloved school is thriving because of the commitment to Catholic education by our pastor, Fr. O'Connor, and, secondly, by our generous parishioners. As part of Fr. O'Connor's dream of a day school someday totally supported by our parish, tuition was reduced this school year by \$100 per student. St. Joseph Parish School is the only school in the Diocese of Cleveland to reduce tuition during this school year.

Catholic Schools Week (Jan. 29 to Feb. 5) is an annual celebration of Catholic elementary and secondary schools and their contributions to their communities and to the nation. The theme for Catholic Schools Week 2012 is "Catholic Schools: Faith. Academics. Service." This theme focuses on the commitment to forming our children in matters of our Catholic Faith, to high expectations and academic standards, and to the giving of one's time and efforts to serving others as an expression of faith and good citizenship.

The boys and girls begin each day praying a decade of the rosary for members of our parish, their families, clergy, and for those who have asked for special prayers. The school day is extended thirty minutes beyond state standards so that formal religious instruction may be taught daily. The traditions and values



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Adult Education Opportunities at St. Joseph's

You asked, and we listened! You asked for opportunities to increase your understanding of our faith at your adult level, rather than as the child you were when you last studied the Catholic Faith. You asked for Scripture study. You asked for the chance to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation and the opportunity to re-learn our faith from the ground up. We answered, and through the efforts of people among us who truly understand that stewardship demands that we give back what God has given to us, many adult education offerings are available here at St. Joseph's.

Every Sunday morning, you can study the Scripture readings of the particular day from 9:30-10:30 in the Conference Room. "Scriptures with Steve" uses the Lectionary (book of Readings) to break open the Word of God, to help us realize its impact in our life TODAY. There is no charge, and no commitment is required. Join Steve Stasik and listen to what God is saying to you today!

Steve also leads Scripture studies throughout the year, and the most recent group concluded its meetings on Dec. 20. Watch the bulletin to see what's next – what a great resolution for 2012: study the Bible and hear how God speaks to us through His Word, His Son, Jesus!

Sunday mornings at 9:30, we have been viewing "Catholicism,"



a ten DVD series that explores the richness and beauty of our Catholic faith. Written and narrated by Jesuit Fr. Robert Barron, this series introduces and re-educates us in the rich tradition that is our heritage as members of this faith family that was established by Christ through His apostles. Due to the interest in our first run of the series, we will begin again once we have completed the 10 DVDs. Other adult educational opportunities will arise as requests are made and materials are made available, thanks to the efforts and generosity of many of our committed parishioners.

If you are an adult who was not confirmed and wishes to complete your sacraments of Initiation, you are invited to join our Adult Confirmation Class. This six-week session is taught by the RCIA leaders of our three cluster parishes of St. Joseph, St. Raphael and Holy Spirit. It begins on Thursday, Jan. 19, with the 7:00 p.m. Mass here, moving into St. Joseph Hall immedi-

ately following Mass. This six-week review of our faith meets for the remaining Thursday evenings of January and February, after which class members will be welcomed to the sacramental celebrations of Confirmation when the bishop visits each of our parishes this winter or spring.

Finally, any adult or young person who is interested in becoming Catholic is still and always warmly welcomed to our parish RCIA, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (or Children). RCIA sessions meet in the rectory at 6:00 Sunday evenings until Easter, and you are invited to join the class at any time or to contact Lorrie (933-3152, lorenecoh.rr.com) for more information.

Stewardship is truly about sharing all of our gifts, gifts that were given to us by God and which we are bound to return to Him through our lives and with love. Faith is among the greatest of these gifts. Come, share faith with us!

A Letter from Our Pastor

Thoughts for a Hope-Filled 2012

Dear Parishioners,

We ring in the New Year with great hope. We make plans. And we forge ahead to realize our dreams.

As stewards of God's bountiful blessings we focus on striving to be the best disciples of Jesus Christ that we can be. And working together with our fellow disciples we want to make sure that our parish and our diocese have the tools necessary to welcome others into our great Catholic family of faith.

Our St. Joseph Parish Combined Campaign is now underway with a diocesan portion and a parish portion.

The Diocesan Campaign is taking place in stages among all of the 174 parishes of our Cleveland Catholic Diocese under the leadership of the Catholic Community Foundation. The Diocesan Campaign is entitled "Rooted in Faith – Forward in Hope."

A diocesan goal of \$125 million has been set to carry out the work of the Church in the Diocese of Cleveland in five critical areas: 1) revitalizing and renewing parish life as the center of our faith; 2) strengthening our faith through evangelization and lay faith formation; 3) ensuring access to high quality Catholic education; 4) investing in clergy formation and care for our retired priests; and 5) ministering to the needy of our region through health and human services.

You may view an excellent eight-minute video of explanation from our Diocese which can be accessed on our parish Web site www.stjosephavonlake.org and then by clicking on the tab on our home page which offers more information about our "St. Joseph Parish Combined Capital Campaign."

If you would like even more information about the Diocesan Campaign – and I hope that you do – you may enter the Web site of the Catholic Community Foundation at www.catholiccommunity.org and then click on "Rooted in Faith – Forward in Hope."



The results of our Parish Feasibility Study last summer showed the priorities of our parishioners in this order: 1) eliminate our parish debt, 2) build a multi-purpose family center (which includes a gym) and 3) if there are sufficient funds raised, add additional parking as well as more consolidated office and meeting space.

This study indicated that we have the ability to do a combined campaign here in our parish with a working goal of \$3.5 million. This would include our diocesan campaign goal of \$1,520,000 of which we would receive \$456,000 [or 30 percent] back; this could, in effect, satisfy whatever might still be remaining of our parish debt. With the \$2+ million balance of a \$3.5 million campaign we would be able to satisfy our first and second priorities and maybe even some of our third.

Our Combined Campaign is already in motion. Committees are being formed and are meeting. I have had the opportunity to meet with many families and individuals about advance gifts. My priestly ministry has been blessed by what people have told me about their love for and commitment to our parish. Your generosity continues to humble me and remind me of how fortunate I am to serve as your pastor.

I know that I will have much more to share with you during this New Year and I look forward to doing so. May the Lord bless you and all of the members of our beloved St. Joseph Parish Family with a bright and hope-filled 2012.

Gratefully in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Fr. Timothy J. O'Connor

Pre-Cana Retreat Represents an Integral Part of Marriage Preparation



There is something romantic about the holidays that always seems to produce plenty of new engagements amongst the young couples of our parish community.

A Catholic nuptial Mass only takes an hour to perform, but the marriage that results from it lasts a lifetime. Accordingly, the parish takes very seriously its responsibility of working with engaged couples to provide a firm foundation for their marriage.

To help engaged couples prepare to enter into holy matrimony, St. Joseph has developed a program of preparation. After an introductory meeting with Fr. O'Connor, the future spouses take the "Prepare and Enrich" marriage assessment – an inventory of their views on all aspects of marriage. After the diocese processes the assessment, the couple meets with a sponsor couple from the parish's Couples Ministry to chat about the results and discuss various areas of married life that they might not have fully considered yet. Finally, the couple meets with Fr. O'Connor again to continue developing their understanding of the Sacrament of Marriage and to finalize wedding plans.

In the midst of this process, the couple also participates in the parish's annual Pre-Cana retreat.

"Each winter we host our one-day Pre-Cana retreat where the couples get to know each other better and think together about some important aspects of married life that they might not have given much thought to yet," says Pre-Cana coordinator Peggy Murphy. "A lot of young couples don't realize that a marriage takes a

great deal of work — they get engaged and have stars in their eyes. The Pre-Cana day is a great way to give them some concrete things to think about: how do you 'fight fairly' with equal give and take? How do you resolve celebrating the holidays? How are you going to handle the finances? It's a good time to find out beforehand!"

A team of 12 married couples will put on the day-long event, which includes all three meals and Mass in the evening.

"We have a wonderful group of couples that have been together a long time," Peggy says. "Since we're a stewardship parish, we also have several more sign on to help out at the stewardship renewal each year. It's going to be great having such a big team: everyone that signed up is really into their marriages and it's a perfect example for the young couples to see these families giving back."

The retreat will feature presentations, discussions and time for the couples to talk privately.

"We'll touch on the big issues like communication, morality in marriage, sexuality in marriage and handling finances — I always do a presentation on life changing events as well," Peggy says.

As a widow of eight years, Peggy offers a unique witness to the permanence of the marital bond.

"I tell the story of my marriage and how I'm living my vows still now," Peggy says. "I think that aspect of marriage isn't something the couples anticipate discussing, but it is very important. Since my husband, Bernie, has passed away I've kind of done these days as a tribute to him."

There is only room for a total of 25 couples to sign up for the retreat and the spaces always fill up quickly. Since the retreat portion of marriage preparation is a diocesan requirement, Peggy highly recommends that engaged couples sign up early.

This year's Pre-Cana retreat will be held in St. Joseph Hall on March 10 from 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. To cover the cost of the materials and meals, there is a fee of \$60 per couple. For further information or to reserve a spot, please call Peggy at the church office or e-mail her at pmurphy162@hotmail.com.

Catholic Schools Week *continued from cover*

of the Catholic faith are infused into each subject and activity throughout the day. The culmination of the weekly religious instruction is the school Mass on Friday morning. Classes help prepare the weekly liturgy and participate as lectors, servers, and choir members.

St. Joseph Parish School has a tradition of strong academic programs and a long history of outstanding student achievements. Our students consistently receive outstanding scores in all subject areas on the IOWA Test of Basic Skills. In the last three years, six of our graduates have been recognized as National Merit Award recipients. Differentiated instruction, academic enrichment for the gifted and talented, along with remedial support is offered to students at all grade levels. Our dedicated science lab and state-of-the-art computer lab offer students the most up-to-date technology. Laptop computers, iPads, Student Response Devices and ActivBoards bring the latest technology and the world to the classrooms.

Our children are encouraged to be the hands, heart, and voice of Christ by serving those in need in Lorain and Cuyahoga counties. Each year our students collect food and monetarily support area shelters, volunteer



in nursing homes and inner city elementary schools, and financially support local and national charities. Through their numerous service projects, the graduating class of 2011 earned the Presidential Service Award for their dedication and commitment to the service of those in need.

St. Joseph Parish School is a community-based school rooted in our Catholic Faith. With an excellent academic program taught by outstanding educators in a nurturing Catholic environment, children are prepared spiritually, morally, intellectually and physically to serve the Church, their communities, and the nation.

Our Family in the Armed Forces

When you gather your family for prayer, please remember these members of our parish family who are placing their lives on the line to protect and serve us!

<i>Michael Baker</i>	<i>William Hayes</i>	<i>Jessica Moran</i>	<i>Jacob Smith</i>
<i>Jeff Capretto</i>	<i>Joseph Hisey</i>	<i>Sean Ortiz</i>	<i>John Stanley</i>
<i>Dan Collister</i>	<i>Scott Hutcherson</i>	<i>Michael Paradis</i>	<i>Christopher Stover</i>
<i>Carin Cozza</i>	<i>Greg Jones</i>	<i>Robert Pate</i>	<i>Daniel Urbin</i>
<i>Timothy Gaydosh</i>	<i>Brendan Mackin</i>	<i>Adam Petrella</i>	<i>Larry van der Oord</i>
<i>Craig Goodwin</i>	<i>Christopher McMenamy</i>	<i>Patrick Ruth</i>	<i>Scott Vorisek</i>
<i>Scott Hardman</i>	<i>Charlie Meyer</i>	<i>Michael Schumacher</i>	<i>Tony Zelasko</i>
<i>Patrick Harris</i>	<i>Matt Monschein</i>	<i>Dr. Roy Seitz</i>	

If you have any loved ones in the service, please let us know so we can add them to our honored list and keep them in our prayers.

Stewardship: New Year's Resolutions

The New Year has arrived and we are all busy making and trying to keep our list of New Year's Resolutions. Many of us choose resolutions geared toward health and fitness. After all, possessing good overall health is critical to our well-being. Others of us try to avoid a particularly bad habit. Maybe you need to quit smoking or stop swearing. Still others of us plan things we have always wanted to do, but never get around to doing.

As the days of January continue onward, however, many of us find the luster for keeping our good-intentioned resolutions to be fading fast. By the end of the month, most of us have given in to our temptations and returned to our old ways. We are only human, right? Discouraged by this yearly failure, many of us don't even bother making New Year's Resolutions anymore, especially if we feel like we won't succeed.

Maybe our failures lie in both how we make our resolutions and what resolutions we actually choose. What we need to understand is the "root" of our resolution. For example, if you resolve to eat less candy to drop those recently added holiday pounds, is the "root" of your resolution a selfish one – wanting to look better since you overindulged? Or, are you genuinely seeking to stop giving in to each "sweet tooth" craving by practicing mortification – giving up of a personal pleasure



to glorify God? If the "root" is a selfish one – only to benefit yourself – then often it is difficult keeping in the long run. If we are trying to glorify God though, our mission is much more important and worth keeping.

Tying your New Year's Resolutions into the principles of stewardship – giving of your time, talent, and treasure back to God – is a great way to ensure that the "root" of your resolution is right on track! For instance, resolving to pray each evening before going to bed glorifies God, brings you peace before slumber, and allows you to grow in your relationship with Christ. The "root" is pure. Your desire to keep it will be stronger and make it easier for you to keep. In the same way, resolving to return your talents to God by helping others in need is

an excellent choice in creating a selfless resolution with the right "root." Furthermore, resolving to re-evaluate your finances is also extremely important and the beginning of a new year is a great time to do it. Are you giving back to God out of gratitude for all He has given you? Or, are you merely dropping a dollar or two in the collection basket just to feel good about yourself?

If you are not where you would like to be as a good steward – either with sharing your time, talent or treasure - you can resolve to do better. The New Year is a perfect opportunity to start anew and become the good steward God desires each of us to become. And, when we choose selfless things that build His kingdom instead of ours, we are sure to not only stay on track, but to succeed!

Acceptance, Support and Understanding Never Alone Ministry

The Never Alone Ministry is aptly named. Its members can rest assured that someone is there for them.

“It’s that feeling of total acceptance,” says Peggy Murphy, the group’s coordinator. “Each of us has had these experiences. It really has helped me.”

The experience Peggy mentions is the loss of a loved one. The Never Alone Ministry is a monthly support group for anyone suffering any loss, regardless of how much time has passed.

“Everyone is welcome, whether the grief is old or new,” Peggy says. “No matter what age, everybody is welcome to come and share their feelings. Or, if they’re not into sharing their feelings, they’re welcome to come and listen.”

The group meets on the first Sunday of each month at 1:00 p.m. in St. Joseph Hall. Peggy started this ministry in the summer of 2010, after seeing that there was no grief support ministry available to parishioners. Since that time, the members of the group have forged lasting friendships.

“I’ve gotten to know them very well and realized that so many of us have very similar experiences,” Peggy says. “We’ll call and check up on each other; if someone misses a meeting, we’ll call and make sure she’s OK.”

The Never Alone Ministry is a fairly small group; there are usually around six people who attend the meetings. Several of these people, including Peggy, have suffered the loss of a spouse. Because of the size of the group, the members are able to share a deep connection and truly give each other their support.

“The people out there, especially what’s been demonstrated in the people that come to the group, need



a place where they can let their feelings out and know that they’re going to be accepted,” Peggy says. “Because someone else knows where they are and where they’ve been, because someone else has been in the same place.”

A major component of the support meetings is faith. The group prays at each meeting and recognizes the role that God plays in their grief.

“We are a faith-based group,” Peggy says. “We may not get over the loss, but we’ll get through it with the help of God. We have people who are not afraid to talk about their faith and acknowledge that their faith is what’s getting them through this.”

Peggy believes her involvement in the group has also enhanced her own faith.

“It probably has made it stronger,” she says. “I can get together with a group and discuss my faith in relation to how it’s helped me get through this. The older I get, the stronger my faith gets. Having this group and helping other people, that helps too.”

For more information about the Never Alone Ministry, contact Peggy Murphy at 440-933-3152 or pmurphy162@hotmail.com.

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St. Joseph Parish of Avon Lake

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Save the Date! January 2012

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| Jan. 1 <i>Happy New Year</i>
<i>(regular Sunday Mass schedule)</i> | Jan. 22 <i>8th Grade COMPLETE Confirmation</i>
<i>Packets DUE</i> |
| Jan. 2 <i>Parish Offices CLOSED</i> | <i>Anniversary of Roe vs Wade 1973 –</i>
<i>PRAY FOR LIFE!</i> |
| Jan. 3 <i>Main Street Mass, 10:30</i> | Jan. 24 <i>Eucharistic Adoration 8 AM-8 PM</i> |
| Jan. 4 <i>Eucharistic Adoration 8 AM-8 PM</i> | Jan. 26 <i>Adult Confirmation Class; Market Day</i>
<i>pick-up</i> |
| Jan. 6 <i>First Friday – 24 Hour Adoration begins</i>
<i>after 8:30 AM Mass</i> | Jan. 27 <i>8th Grade Confirmation all-day Retreat</i> |
| Jan. 7-8 <i>St. Vincent de Paul Food Drive</i> | Jan. 29 <i>Catholic Schools Week Begins</i> |
| Jan. 8 <i>Never Alone Bereavement Support 1:00 PM</i> | Jan. 31 <i>Eucharistic Adoration 8 AM-8 PM</i> |
| Jan. 10 <i>Eucharistic Adoration 8 AM-8 PM</i> | |
| Jan. 17 <i>Eucharistic Adoration 8 a.m.-8 p.m.</i> | |
| Jan. 19 <i>Adult Confirmation Class convenes at 7 PM</i>
<i>Mass and following</i> | |

Sunday, the Lord's Day, Mass Schedule

Sat. — 4:30 p.m. | Sun. — 8:30 & 11 a.m., 5 p.m.

Weekday Mass Schedule

Mon., Tue., Wed. — 7:30 a.m. | Thu. — 7 p.m. | Fri. — 8:30 a.m.