

Living Our Faith Out Loud

St. Joseph Parish Newsletter



Why Me?

Fr. Stephen Banjare, SS.CC.

Whenever we face tragedy, the question that arises in our mind is often: "Why me?" Have we ever asked the same question when we are filled with the amazing graces of God? Isn't life so beautiful and amazing though it is mysterious? The more we contemplate life, the more we appreciate it.

Life is a series of unknown events and experiences, and it is full of surprises.

We may wish to know everything ahead of time, but that's not what life is all about.

This past spring, I was blessed to join the Marian Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Fatima (Portugal) and Our Lady of Lourdes (France) from May 11-20, 2023, with 15 pilgrims. We all had wonderful experiences of blessings that we received during this pilgrimage. I didn't expect much, but I really wanted to establish a deeper relationship with Mary. And I was blessed beyond my expectation.

I had never dreamt of

being so close to the Main Altar of the Eucharistic Celebration at the sanctuary in Fatima, where hundreds and thousands of priests were so far away with about

250,000 pilgrims. It was an incredible blessing to witness everything so close and be able to partake in the celebration.

One of the beautiful gifts of being Catholic is to be able to actively participate in the Celebration of the Eucharist. The ritual is the same everywhere. It reminds us that we belong to God's family, regardless of where we are in the world. We may not understand the language, but we do understand the Mass.

While processing to the main sanctuary for the Mass, a question that suddenly popped into my mind was: "Why me?"

I kept pondering it for a while, and even now, why did God give me this privilege to be so close to the Altar of Celebration when hundreds of other priests also surrounded it? The experience was no less than a miracle for me in such a huge crowd.

On the same day, in the evening, we had a candlelight procession with the Statue of Our Lady of Fatima. Again, a very unexpected thing happened to me. After putting on the Alb, I sat with other priests for the Rosary prayers before the procession. A man came up to me and called me.

I wondered why he was calling me. He said, "English?"

I said, "Yes."

He showed me the Fourth Glorious Mystery of the Rosary and indicated that he was inviting me to lead and introduce that decade of the Rosary. We did not understand each other's language, but again I said, "Yes."

Introducing the Fourth Glorious Mystery in English was a great blessing for me, but I kept asking, "Why me again?" There were many other priests and people there! Yet, I was the one blessed with the request.

This was really funny because while walking for the Rosary and procession, one of our pilgrims, Maria Pinto, told me, "If ever you get a microphone, please call me." And I asked her, "Why?"

Maria said, "So I could pray the Rosary."

I said, "That will never happen to me, Maria." Lo and behold, there I was at the microphone.

God works in a mysterious way, and His ways are known to Him alone. As it is written in Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Always count your blessings and live your faith out loud.

Because you never know when it'll be your turn at the microphone.

Our Lady Queen of Peace

Diane Tapper

A nine-day novena to Our Lady Queen of Peace. What a wonderful way to honor the Blessed Mother. The novena began Friday, June 30th, and concluded Sunday, July 9th, with a very well-attended brunch in Damian Hall after the ten o'clock Mass.

Each day of the Novena, we recited the Rosary, followed by a Mass celebrated by Fr. Stephen. At each Mass, a volunteer speaker would share their thoughts and reflect on how they felt the Blessed Mothers' presence in their day-to-day lives.

Each speaker had a wonderful and inspiring message for all of us. Each speaker chose a title to give their talk on. For instance, just to name a few: Queen of Angels, Mother of Mercy, Queen of Families, Mary, faithful disciple, Help of the sick, Mother of the Church, Cause of our joy, Mother of our Savior, Queen of Peace. I think it's safe to say that at some point, we have all read the many titles given to Mary.

I personally love reciting or listening to the litany of Mary.

The speakers then asked everyone to take a few minutes to share their thoughts with someone sitting nearby. This was a great idea. Not only could you listen to how someone felt about the message from the speaker, but by sharing,



you learned something from them and realized their thoughts were similar to yours. This helped you feel connected to one another, which I believe is what the Blessed Mother wants for us. Mary wants to help us connect with her Son on many levels. I looked forward to each day of the novena because I would get a little something different or get a little something extra to reflect on.

Mary has always held a special place in my heart ever since I was very young. I would love to see pictures of the Blessed Mother holding baby Jesus and hear stories of Christmas and the Holy Family in the manger. I have always loved the family connection. I'm proud to say my parents taught us to understand what Christmas was really about.

My Dad was a carpenter, a master craftsman. He and my Mom raised their ten children in the house he proudly built. As I became a mother myself, I admired my mother more and more. She was a beautiful

person, a loving wife, an amazing mother of ten, a caring daughter to her mom, and a great sister and friend to her four siblings. I knew exactly where she got it from, her Mom. My grandmother was another very special person.

She got that from loving Jesus and the Blessed Mother. Both women taught me to do the same. Listening to the novena talk on Mary Queen of Families reminded me of another memorable time in my childhood.

I attended St. Joseph School from first grade up to eighth grade. I guess you could say I loved Christmas just as much as the next kid. I was even lucky enough to land the role of an angel in the Christmas play with the other fourth graders. I'm pretty sure I could hear some of my siblings snickering in the audience. I could see the giggles on their faces. Even though it took all my courage to be up on that stage, I was honored to be the angel behind the manger, looking over Mary and her precious Son.

Mother Mary, Queen of Families, pray for us.



Homesick

Amanda Lawrence

Loneliness has plagued my mind like a virus lately...

While I watched the world struggle to shed the crumbling shell of its pandemic cocoon, I couldn't help reflecting on the souls I lost along the journey. Many passed on, while others sunk deeper into sin. Regardless, they abandoned me in my battle with isolation.

Loneliness isn't unusual—it's part of the human experience. At every stage of our lives, we're susceptible to it. I used to think I was lonely because I was alone. But even surrounded by admirers, I felt equally isolated. Such emotions have followed me since birth, trailing behind like a shadow.

In the past, I succumbed to the temptation to deal with my crushing feelings of isolation. Sometimes, I sought other humans to starve off the silence. Other times, I leaned into seclusion and let it embrace me like the companion it is. Neither remedy cured my lonesomeness.

I once believed I had always been by myself.

That wasn't true, though. God was with me through it all.

Whenever I face a new low, the hand of God reaches out and rescues me as He's done a million times before. Reflecting on past trials recently solidified the reality that I had to confront my loneliness without relying on another person. It also reminded me that I have an unspeakably remarkable relationship with God.

Who can rival it? No one.

Perhaps that's why I'm lonely, despite being in the presence of others. But being alone isn't all bad. Seclusion allows us to ask questions such as, What is my true vocation? Have I wasted my gifts or used them wisely? What's God's purpose for my life? And so on. Even Jesus went to deserted places to pray and pursue answers (Mk 6:31; Mt 14:13).

Realizing no human could cure my loneliness forced me to consider the many times I felt smothered by God. Acknowledging those responses to my isolating feelings was humbling. How did I expect anyone to contend with such support?

People cannot compete with God, nor should they try. He's the only infallible in life. I guess I just got so used to His presence, so spoiled by it, that I lost sight of humanity's genuine flaws.

God may not bless me with exotic vacations or fancy jewelry, but He always blesses me with enough grace to get through the day. Whenever I stop to ponder how amazing that is, my eyes leak.

Everything I possess is a divine blessing. I'm so overindulged sometimes that I forget I shouldn't have any of it, but as Psalm 23 reminds me, "The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack." For this, I am thankful, which makes it easier to offer every moment, especially the lonesome ones, to God while resolving to accept His will.

And what's better, I'm never alone. The gift of the Holy Spirit dwells in me like bone marrow. What I feel isn't so much loneliness as a profound longing for paradise, as if birth stole me from my homeland, and my soul knows it.

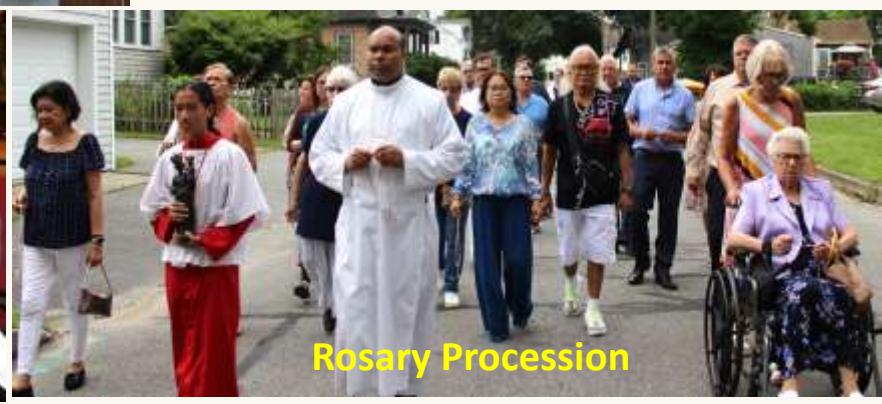
Maybe Providence has destined me to live solitary. Whatever the case, I'm confident I am no longer lonely, only homesick for Heaven. It's that knowledge and my faith that sustains me these days.



Seder Meal



Mother's Day Celebration

1st Holy Communion Retreat**Fr. Stephen's Birthday Celebration****Altar Servers Appreciation by KofC****Bike Blessing****Children Liturgy & Activities****Easter Vigil—Blessing of Fire****Blessing of Backpack****Palm Sunday Procession****Washing of the Feet****Rosary Procession**



Do With Me as You Will

Melissa DeTerra

“God will provide for all we need”

We have heard it said, “Do with me as you will,” but do we follow or listen to that? Are we even aware when we are doing His Will?

I started my career at St. Joseph’s parish, volunteering as a Catechist and Youth Ministry assistant while my children were in Faith Formation. I wanted to keep my kids and others fired up about continuing their faith while letting them know there is so much for them to be part of after Confirmation.

When I first volunteered, I have to admit it was more for me to be there for my children. Or was it God’s will, and I just followed?

After many years working under the former Director of Faith Formation, I decided to continue volunteering once she announced her retirement. But when her replacement was met with unexpected events that prevented them from continuing as the director, my volunteering duties were boosted to a higher level.

That’s when I realized my will was to be more than just a catechist. Sure, I was a volunteer, but I’m a parishioner at St. Joseph’s too. I wanted to make sure that my church family and community had someone to help form their faith. It was time to live by example and practice what I preached.

Was that me? Was this God’s Will? Either way, it affected my life more than I probably realized or stopped to think about.

Faith Formation isn’t just about teaching children. Parents are a child’s first and most important teachers – the Church is here to help form their faith with them; attending Mass as a family is a crucial step. To make a lasting impact, we must model good habits, live them out loud, and encourage others to do the same.

Involvement in our church, helping the Youth Ministry and Faith Formation students, led to my spiritual growth. I love all the

children and their families. They are my community, family, and faith; I treat every child as my own. Yes, we face struggles, but we try some things, and if they work, we continue them; if they don’t, we put them on the back burner and maybe try again another time.

God’s Will is, first, what inspires me to grow in my vocation. His Will is so strong and present that I continue offering myself and following it every day. And if it weren’t for my many faithful Catechists, I wouldn’t be who I am now. I’m nothing without my volunteers and the families supporting me and our parish community as it thrives and grows.

My goal is to leave a lasting impression on everyone I encounter, and I hope I’ve planted a positive seed within them that may bloom in the future, even if it hasn’t yet. I didn’t become the Director of Faith Formation because I needed a job. I became the Director of Faith Formation because I needed to “Live my Faith Out Loud.” God Bless!



Healing Prayer Service

Joyce Sabino

Father Stephen held a Healing Prayer Service on Sunday June 11, 2023 between the 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. Masses.

The day began with parishioners gathering at 7:30 a.m. to pray the rosary asking for the intercession of The Immaculate Heart of Mary. Holy Mass was held at 8 a.m. and the Healing Prayer Service began at the conclusion of Mass with Gospel readings and a fiery sermon, invoking the Holy Spirit, given by Father Stephen. He then led the congregation in praise and worship of our good God.

The service concluded with Father Stephen doing individual anointing and prayer over every

parishioner who came forward seeking the healing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The church was packed as more and more people came forward for the individual anointing and prayer.

It was a moving and faith filled experience as Father Stephen prayed over his parish family, and the parishioners praying for him and each other as each person stepped forward to



Last July, I visited Ohio for a two day youth retreat hosted by the Franciscan University of Steubenville. I had an excellent time. The Ministry Team was

Spiritual Growth in Steubenville

Gavin Santos

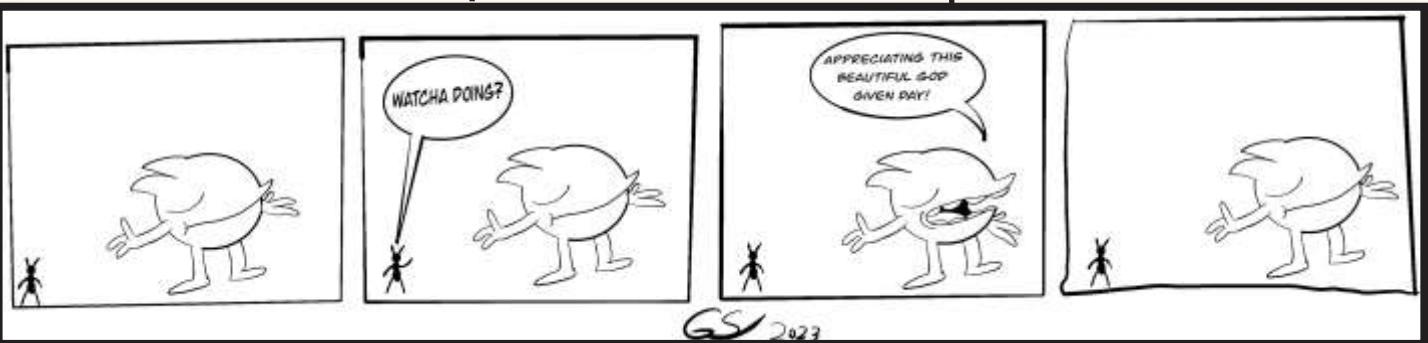
great. Oscar, our Dioceses' Youth Ministry Director, was one of the main speakers. It was cool.

A memorable part for me happened at the end of a three hour Adoration session when I experienced powerful confirmations of God's presence. Seriously. Great emotions overwhelmed me.

After Adoration, we attended Mass, and I just felt different. I felt so seen by the Holy Spirit.

I didn't love the early wake-ups or the 10+ hour bus rides, but it was all worth it. The spiritual formation shared at Steubenville moved my soul and changed my heart. I'll definitely be going back next year!

You should consider going if you're still in high school or know someone who is.



A Moment of Awakening—and it wasn't the Potato Cannon

Ron Desnoyers

In the Fall of last year, a decision was made by Fr. Stephen, other Church Leaders of St. Joseph's Parish, and Knights of Columbus representatives to start up a Knights of Columbus Council here in our parish.

Before the enrollment date, they approached me about joining. I responded with a halfhearted "maybe." After the Sunday 10 o'clock Mass many months ago, the lector announced that the council would enroll new members that day, which shocked me!

Despite my initial hesitation over volunteering more of my energy, I find the time spent with the Knights provides both spiritual fulfillment and a sense of community with other like-minded individuals. It also fulfills my desire to be part of a Men's Group and the expected comraderies that a person can enjoy in those groups.

My interest in doing more in the Church and my peers in the Church provided the final

"push" to get me over the line into a Third-degree membership in the Knights of Columbus, Fairhaven Council.

Fast forward to Saturday, April 22, when our Grandmaster volunteered us to assist in the Men's Meat 'n Greet Retreat sponsored by Camp Cathedral. There, a spiritual-based, motivational speaker encouraged men to learn to focus on the Word while navigating the complexities of society and the pleasures used by the devil to pull us away from God.

The St. Joseph Council helped prepare the supper's burger/hot dog components, including 35 pounds of bacon and a large quantity of pulled pork. It was the most unwholesome but best quality meal!

Everyone's assignment was self-generated. The most experienced Brothers took the grill station.

I served hot dogs and burgers

from grill to table. Other members provided additional help. We numbered 10 K of C participants supporting the function, which was perfect for our purpose.

Along with the laughter, fun, and pleasure one experiences in this type of event, there was an extra special element for me: the heightened sense of spirituality, safety, and comfort that permeated the day.

Many men attended the Retreat. They came from various backgrounds, cultures, occupations, ages, and socioeconomic circumstances. It seemed we all experienced a feeling of camaraderie.

Performing my duties among Christian men brought me joy and a sense of belonging. I remarked to my Brothers how I had never seen so many men who looked so entirely different in their manner and presentation from all walks of life, ages late teen to late 80s!



St. Joseph Parish

74 Spring Street, Fairhaven, MA 02719

St. Joseph's Parish Upcoming Events

Parish Picnic	September 17, 2023
Footsteps for Hunger	October 01, 2023
Bake Sale	October 7 & 8, 2023
Jubilee Celebration	October 14, 2023
Trunk or Treat	October 29, 2023
Thanksgiving Mass	November 21, 2023
First Sunday of Advent	December 2 & 3, 2023

Watch for details in the Weekly Bulletin

Vol. 3

SEPTEMBER 2023

Issue 1

8 St. Joseph Parish—A Catholic Community Called by God To Love, Witness, Evangelize & Serve



Saint Joseph School

100 Spring Street, Fairhaven, MA 02719

Tel: 508-996-1983 Fax: 508-996-998

Saint Joseph School is a Catholic learning Community devoted to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and dedicated to providing a quality spiritual and academic education based on faith, values, and excellence that meets needs of our students and their families.

Faith, Values and Excellence Since 1908 (Pre S - 8)

- Early Childhood Education
- Kindergarten through 8th Grade
- Challenging Curriculum
- Safe and Caring
- Faith Based Environment
- We See You, We Know You,
- We Recognize Your Needs,
- We Are Your Family



- Enhanced Learning in Small Classes
- Before and After School Care and After School Clubs
- Breakfast and Lunch offered through Chartwells
- Community Service Projects
- Member of the National Junior Honor Society

ACCREDITATIONS:

Accredited by the NAEYC Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (accreditation details). Saint Joseph School is Ministered by the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.



Your generous feedback will be greatly appreciated. Please send your feedback to
josephstewardship@gmail.com