



## New Year Provides Valuable Opportunities for Us to Grow in Faith

It's that time of the year — as we are putting away our Christmas decorations, we hear the countless weight loss or gym commercials that tell us “new year, new you” or “this is your year.” But, what if we took that advice — “this is your year” — and applied it to our faith? What if we made a commitment to growing in faith and holiness in 2022? What if we took this year to find what is missing?

Fr. Nelson Restrepo encourages us all to make this our best year yet to practice our faith. We should genuinely follow our parish's mission of “following Jesus through the service and love He mandated without any distinction of color, language or race, all with the Blessed Virgin Mary.”

What are a few ways we can do that?

Consider taking the time to visit Jesus at Eucharistic Adoration on Fridays from 1 to 6:45 p.m. and stay for the 7 p.m. Mass. Attending this is one way to become more prayerful.

“Daily prayer is so important,” Fr. Nelson says. “Find ways to share the faith with others. Start a habit of reading the Bible with your family or find a spiritual book to read together.”



Fr. Nelson asks that we also work to evangelize those who are closest to us. We can do that by being a witness with our own lives.

“Testify with your life, and pray for people to know about the church,” Fr. Nelson says. “Don't be afraid to share the faith.”

Fr. Nelson says one easy way to evangelize is to start to pray before meals and even continue this when you eat at restaurants or with others.

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# Stewardship of Time: *The Foundation of Our Faith Lives*

A professor stood at the head of the class with a big glass jar. He put six big rocks in the jar with the rocks up to the edge and then asked his students, “Is the jar full?” They replied, “Yes.”

The professor told the students, “No, it’s not.” He then pulled out gravel and put it in the jar. He then asked, “Now is it full?” The students once again replied, “Yes.” The professor responded, “No, it’s not.” He reached down and pulled out sand, which he poured into the jar with the same responses. Then, he reached for a pitcher of water and poured it in, all the way to the brim. Then he asked, “Now is it full?” And the students replied, “Yes.”

The professor then asked, “OK, what did you learn from this?” One student responded, “No matter how many things you’ve got in the jar, there’s always room to put a little more in.” The professor told the class, “No, that’s not the lesson. The lesson is, if I didn’t put the big rocks in first, they would have never fit!”

Most Catholics may ask how this can apply to our own prayer lives. Essentially, every person must decide what the “big rocks” are in his or her life. And prayer should be one of those big rocks in the jar.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has told us stewardship is part of discipleship and is a way of responding to God’s call in every aspect of our lives. We refer to the three facets of stewardship as “Time, Talent and Treasure,” and when we consider the importance of these three Ts of stewardship, the “time” component comes first by design.

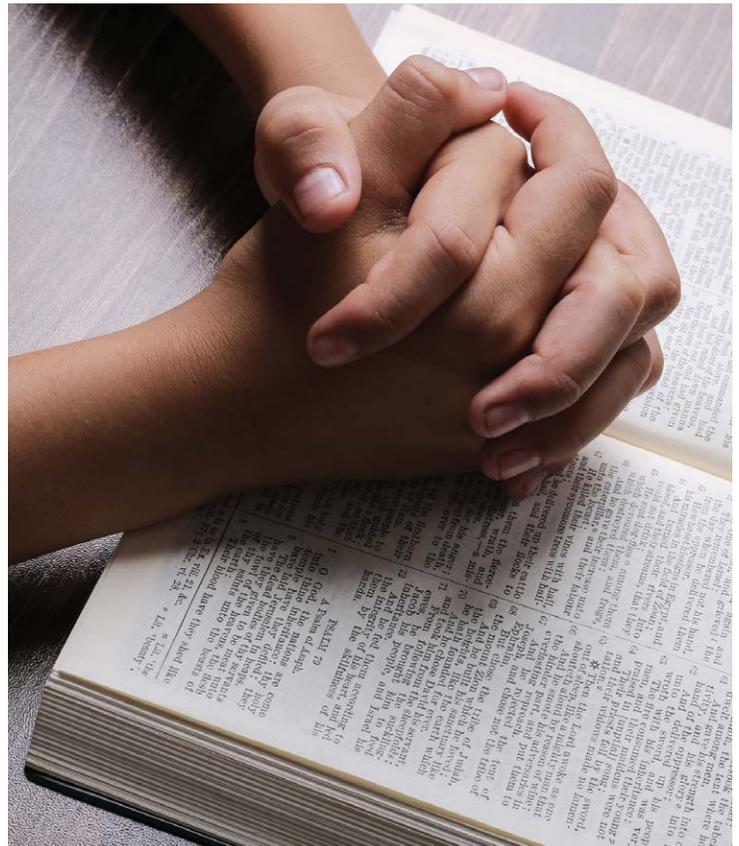
Stewardship spirituality is about trying to become more generous with our Time, Talent, and Treasure. And there’s a reason why “Time” is first. We need to take time to talk to God and take time to be quiet and seek to listen as He expresses His love for us and wants us to know His inspiration in our life.

There are many different forms of prayer. From weekly prayer such as the Mass, to daily personal prayer, such as a daily Rosary. Morning and night prayer are also important disciplines to maintain. Set aside a comfortable place in your home where

you can find silence. Focus on a spiritual image and take time to center yourself with Scripture or other spiritual reading.

For many, spending large portions of the day in silent prayer is not possible. But make it a priority to find moments of quiet throughout the day, and find ways to incorporate prayer amid your busy schedule. When you get into a vehicle, pray — before a meal, after a meal, if you’re faced with a tough decision. Just pray!

Just as in any human relationship, communication is a central aspect of a vibrant relationship with God. Prayer is fostering this communion of love with God. He loved us into existence, and He wants us to enter into a loving conversation with Him. We’ve got to talk to Him. And we must listen to Him. He will take care of everything if you just trust Him. He’s knocking at the door and waiting for us to open it in prayer.



2022

*A Letter From Our Pastor*

## Start 2022 with a Clean Spiritual Slate

Dear Parishioners,

We were all taught in school that the month of January gets its name from Janus, the ancient Roman god of doors and gates. His image was always carved or painted with two faces, one looking forward and the other backward. This reflected, of course, that you can go either out a door or in through one. From this very specific function, his role was generalized to include all beginnings and new endeavors.

Because of Janus' place in the Roman pantheon, it seemed natural to the Romans to name the first month of the civil year after him. (The Church year began back with the First Sunday of Advent, you'll remember.) And although we no longer worship the pagan gods of the ancient Romans, the name has stuck down the centuries.

But we're not immune to the human instinct that moved the Romans to name the first month after Janus. His double countenance, facing forward and backward, reflects how we approach the coming of each new year.

The last week of the old year finds the newspapers and TV programs giving a glance back at the past year ("the 10 best, or worst, movies of..." and such) along with

predictions of what the new year will bring. My personal favorite is always "the 10 worst predictions" for the year just ending.

Just like the secular world does — Janus-like — we both look back at our own successes and failures, happy events, and sad ones, during the year just ending, and forward to the new year as we prepare our resolutions.

When we reflect back on the blessings we've received, our hearts should be filled with gratitude — and blessings there have been, no matter how difficult the year has been. But for most of us, there have been failures and failings, too. That calls for repentance, and perhaps a trip to the confessional — but God, who makes "all things new" (Rv 21:5), will then give us a clean spiritual slate with which we may begin the new year.

I'd also like to challenge you to include your grateful response to God as you make your resolutions for the new year. You don't have to wait until you fill out a

commitment card to decide this is the year when you're actually going to attend Mass once a week in addition to Sunday (or begin worshiping every Sunday if you haven't been doing so) or to pray the Rosary every week or to begin regular prayers with your family. Include in your resolutions how you are going to get involved in some ministry in the parish or some service to the community, and then do so. Decide to be-

come more faithful in your financial stewardship if your treasure commitment is less than it should be. Look forward to the new year and bring Christ and His Church to the center of your resolutions. Then see what a good year it will be, with God at the center!

Have a happy, and holy, New Year.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Nelson Restrepo  
Pastor





## CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2022:

*Celebrating the Gifts and Blessings of  
Catholic Education, Jan. 30-Feb. 5*

Anyone that has ever attended a Catholic school knows one of the best weeks of the year is Catholic Schools Week. Regularly celebrated at the end of January and the beginning of February, this week is a great opportunity for Catholic schools across the nation to recognize all aspects of community within their school.

“One of the most exciting days of Catholic Schools Week is when we invite alumni back for Career Day,” says Brenda Budd, Principal of St. Joseph Catholic School. “It’s an opportunity for our students to see these alums doing great things in our community. The alumni that come back for Career Day are truly role models for our students.”

From recognizing alums in our community, to priests, sisters, our teachers, and our students, Catholic Schools Week is always known for fun. On Jan. 31, the Church celebrates the Feast of St. John Bosco, a saint known for the cultivation of community within the school at which he worked. Following in St. John Bosco’s footsteps, our staff and students at St. Joseph



foster community and faith through the annual school-wide Catholic trivia competition.

“The students are mixed up into groups and compete in a school-wide trivia competition about the faith,” Mrs. Budd says. “These students get to work together with people outside of their friend group for a friendly competition all while learning more about Catholicism.”

Our school combines the festivities of the Feast of

St. John Bosco, patron saint of school children, and student appreciation with a festival day every Friday of Catholic Schools Week.

“Our eighth-graders really take on a leadership role that day and show all the younger students how each of the carnival games are played,” Mrs. Budd says. “They help foster our strong sense of community among the students, just like St. John Bosco did.”

*If your family is interested in Catholic education at St. Joseph Catholic School,  
please call the school at 813-879-7720 to inquire about 2022-23 enrollment.*

## The Baker Family: *Cherishing the Gift of Our Parish Community*

When Joe and Veronica Baker joined St. Joseph Catholic Church in 1984, they had little idea of the boundless blessings and graces that Our Lord would bring to them through our parish family.

“I love just about everything about our parish — the people, the priests, and the atmosphere,” Joe says. “Volunteers are always ready to help out wherever needed. Our pastors, including Fr. Nelson, have all shared a bit of themselves with us. Our Sunday music is heavenly, and with its ‘bigger than life’ murals above the altar that depicts the Holy Trinity, as well as a dozen biblical references to St. Joseph on the upper side walls, the church itself is amazingly traditional and ornate.”

By being an active, integral part of our faith community, Joe, Veronica, their nine children and a number of their 10 grandchildren have come to know Christ in a profound, lasting way. All of their children and most of their grandchildren have attended or are currently attending St. Joseph School.

“Rooted deeply in their faith formation which began at St. Joseph Church, our children frequently teach us to be better Catholics and Christians,” Joe says. “One example is that every Sunday night, our entire family prays the Holy



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Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet together — mostly by phone. We began this tradition about 15 years ago.”

Currently, Joe serves on the Parish Advisory Council and as a lector, while Veronica serves as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

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**“Serving at St. Joseph Church is more of an honor than a sacrifice. We have been blessed to serve in a number of committees and ministries and have encouraged our children to participate, as well.” — JOE BAKER**

## The Baker Family *continued from page 5*

Two of their sons, Timothy and James, are choir members and cantors, and two of their daughters, Elizabeth and Rosemary, are elementary teachers at St. Joseph School.

“Serving at St. Joseph Church is more of an honor than a sacrifice,” Joe says. “We have been blessed to serve in a number of committees and ministries and have encouraged our children to participate, as well. Parish involvement has enabled me to grow in my devotional life, especially to my patron, St. Joseph. It has also given Veronica and me a means to contribute to the many wonderful changes we’ve seen at St. Joseph. More importantly, though, it has enabled

me to form relationships with our priests, staff members, and fellow parishioners.”

Last but certainly not least, the Bakers have savored the opportunity to make the Blessed Eucharist the center of their lives.

“I would like to thank Fr. Nelson and all of our previous pastors who have made daily Mass a pastoral priority,” Joe says. “Because of this commitment, St. Joseph Church has become my family’s second home. In fact, our children know that when they need a sitter for their children, they can find Veronica and me at the 7:30 a.m. Mass. They will often pop in to deposit a child or two for us to take home for the day. What a blessing!”

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“When you make the Sign of the Cross, people see that,” he says.

Fr. Nelson also wants us all to ask how we can give our gifts to the church.

“If we improve that and get more involved, we improve our community,” Fr. Nelson says.

In 2022, Fr. Nelson is excited about the remodel of the parish garage to make space for a meeting room. Once completed, the room should be able to hold about 60 people.

Also be sure to plan to attend the parish gathering from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on February 5th, to gather information for the Synod 2021-2023.



*Stay tuned to the parish bulletin for updates and information  
on 2022 retreats and other faith gatherings!*