

The Excalibur

The Online Nazareth RHS Student Newspaper



Fr. Liju Augustine – Serving God

By: Jazmyn Leger

Fr. Liju is the current priest for Nazareth Regional High School. This is his second year with us at our school. He was born and raised in India, and he moved to the United States 18 years ago. Fr. Liju came here at first for further education, but then he fell in love with his parish and the work for his congregation. While he was living in India, he was a Bishop. Fun fact: Fr. Liju knows quite a few languages. The ones he is most proficient in are English, Hindi, and Malayalam.

Fr. Liju has stayed in the United States for more freedom in every aspect of life. He has found that here he has more opportunities to connect people to God.

I had the wonderful opportunity to interview Fr. Liju Augustine

about his life at the parish and here at Nazareth – how he became a priest and what he does for his community.

Is there anyone who influenced you greatly to become a priest?

Nobody has directly influenced me in becoming a priest, but my family has been important in helping me grow closer to Jesus. Their support and love have played a big role in deepening my faith and my sense of calling.

Do you have any future plans for your parish?

Always. There's always a plan. I'm always thinking, "What can

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January 2025 – Issue 1

Fall/Winter Edition



- Special Events -

- 9/9 First Day of Classes
- 10/3 Open House
- 10/15 Fall Sports Pep Rally
- 11/1 Memorial Mass
- 11/7 Winter Sports Pep Rally
- 11/11-26 Food Drive
- 11/26 NHS Induction Ceremony
- 11/27 Thanksgiving Mass
- 12/9-13 Senior Spirit Week
- 12/20 Christmas Prayer Service
- 1/10-11 Homecoming Weekend

Fr. Liju Augustine – Serving God (cont.)

I do for them tomorrow? What about a month from now?” The needs of the people are like those of a family – you don’t just plan for today; you plan ahead. It’s the same with the parish. I’m constantly looking ahead, ensuring I provide the spiritual nourishment they need to grow. So, I plan, because it’s not just about today, but about preparing for tomorrow and the future of their faith.

What has been the most rewarding part of your ministry?

The most rewarding part is when people come to me and say, “Father, thank you. Thank you for helping me become closer to the Lord.” That is truly the most amazing part of my ministry. It’s not about anything grand, but those moments when I can see someone’s heart touched and their relationship with God deepened. I love my vocation, and if I can help someone take even a small step closer to the Lord, that brings me the greatest joy. It’s these personal connections, these moments of growth, that truly make the work worth it.

What role do you see the church playing in addressing social justice issues?

I really appreciate my church because they’ve always been proactive in social outreach. For example, during the holiday season, I asked if we could collect toys for children in need, and the response was immediate. We gathered the toys, and I delivered them to the children’s hospital. This is just one example, but it shows how the church can make a real difference. It’s about coming together to serve and reflect the values of love and compassion.

How do you engage your parishioners, especially the young ones, in worship?

I have a great team, and we try to make things interactive. For example, every first

Friday, I invite them to join me for Eucharistic Adoration. They start with some fun – playing in the gym for about 30 minutes – before we come together for adoration. It’s important that they experience faith in a way that feels natural, not just sitting still and praying for an hour. I want them to understand that faith is lived, not just spoken.

How do you maintain your own spiritual health while serving others?

Well, for me, it comes down to putting faith into action. If I have faith but don’t live it out, then my faith is essentially dead. I can sit and pray all day, saying, “Lord Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,” but if I’m not willing to help others, then what does my faith really mean? Jesus is the perfect example of this. When the Good Samaritan saw someone injured, he didn’t just walk by like the Levite and the priest did. He stopped, he helped, and he showed love in action. If I don’t practice my faith in service to others, then who am I? My spiritual health comes from not just praying but living out the teachings of Christ by serving those in need. That’s what keeps me grounded and strengthens my own relationship with God.

How do you ensure that your ceremonies and Masses are both spiritually enriching and relatable to everyone?

It’s about using symbols and language that everyone can understand. Whether someone is black or white, rich or poor, sick or healthy, we all experience common things. For example, when I talk about hunger, thirst, or even something simple like a headache, everyone can relate because we’ve all felt these things. I try to speak in a way that connects to people’s everyday lives, so the message resonates with everyone, no matter their background or situation.

Reaching for the Stars: My STEM Journey at the Intrepid Museum

By: Lizmarie Recio

In October, Zariel Archie and I had the incredible opportunity to attend a STEM program at the Intrepid Museum in Manhattan, where only 50 girls were chosen to participate. During this program, we learned about space, built CubeSats, and even met astronauts.

What is a CubeSat?

You might be wondering: What is a CubeSat? A CubeSat is a small satellite that gets launched into space. We were given the exciting opportunity to build one! The experience wasn't just about building the CubeSat – it was also about collaboration. We worked in groups, which allowed us to connect with other girls in STEM from around the world, including places like New York, Saudi Arabia, and Philadelphia.

Day 1: Getting Started

On Day 1, we introduced ourselves to our teams, attended lectures, and played with simulators designed to help us understand and prepare for building our CubeSat. It was so inspiring to see and interact with other girls who are also passionate about STEM. We also met and heard from many astronauts, including Kathryn Thornton and Charles “Sam” Gemar, which was such a surreal experience. I was a little starstruck hearing their stories and insights.

Day 2: Building and Inspiration

On Day 2, we began building and testing our CubeSats. This was a hands-on and engaging experience. We also got the chance to meet Richard Garriott, who was incredibly



inspiring. He is not only the creator of MMOs (massively multiplayer online games) but also a second-generation astronaut. His story really resonated with me. When he was younger, NASA told him his eyesight was too poor to become an astronaut. But he never gave up on his dream. He went on to invest in companies, create his own games, and eventually fund his own journey to space. His perseverance and determination left a lasting impact on me: Never give up on your dreams!

Day 3: Solving Real-World Problems

On Day 3, we were given a challenge: to create a way to use satellite technology to help solve New York City's traffic problems. This task pushed us to think “outside the box.” My group's idea was to design a satellite that would measure highly concentrated areas of traffic in NYC, provide

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Reaching for the Stars: My STEM Journey at the Intrepid Museum (cont.)

data to improve traffic flow, and address congestion issues. We even created a budget and built a model for our project.

After presenting our solution, the semifinalists were announced – and to my surprise, my group was chosen as one of them! This was such an exciting moment because it gave us the opportunity to present our project to the head of a department of NASA and a leader from an investment company that funds innovative projects.

During the revision stage, we worked closely with one of the astronauts, Charles “Sam” Gemar, to improve our project. Then, the head of the investment company approached us and gave us a challenge: to pitch our project to him in one minute, Shark Tank-style. This was a thrilling and unique experience.



Final Thoughts

This program was such an amazing opportunity. Not only did we learn about STEM and build a CubeSat, but we also connected with inspiring girls and mentors from around the world. Meeting astronauts, hearing their stories, and presenting solutions to real-world problems helped me realize the importance of perseverance, collaboration, and creative thinking. I am truly grateful for this experience and everything I learned along the way.

Transforming Lives/Developing Leaders: New Mentorship and Service Classes

By: Robert King

At the beginning of the current school year, Nazareth added two new classes to its roster: a Leadership/Mentorship class for Juniors and a Service/Learning class for Seniors.

The Junior Leadership class is designed to give those in the class an opportunity to mentor Nazareth's younger students – freshmen and sophomores. They can help the younger students learn how to navigate Nazareth and the challenges of high school, applying what they have learned from their own experience. They can also put into action what they are learning about leadership in the class, including what makes a good leader and the basics of strong leadership.

As the mentorship program develops, we may be able to incorporate members of the XBSS/Campus Ministry Club, so that we can also develop their



Members of the Leadership Class helping at the annual "Freshmen Follies" event

leadership and mentoring skills and include a spiritual dimension that has a special focus on our XBSS values.

The Service Learning and Social Justice class for seniors, which I am taking this year, teaches us the tenets of social justice and how we can apply them in our service projects. Each student gets involved

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Transforming Lives/Developing Leaders: Mentorship and Service Classes (cont.)

with a service site that they have chosen, such as an animal shelter, hospital, or library. They must then apply what they have learned in the class to their volunteer work.

Because of this class, I have had the opportunity to volunteer at Brookdale University Medical Center, where I have been able to meet and learn from both patients and nurses and apply the tenets of social justice to my service.

Through our service projects, we have been able to learn so much – connecting what we are learning in the class with our service projects, all while giving back to our communities.

Both the Junior Leadership and Senior Service classes are a step in the right direction for Nazareth, and we hope to see more students in those classes next year!



Members of the Leadership/Mentoring Class
with their “mentees” at the “Freshman Follies”

Technology Club @ Naz

By: Analiz Ortiz

Being a part of Nazareth Regional High School's Technology Club has increased my interest in technology – coding, building computers, photography/camera work, and other activities. Our experience has been educational and exciting!

I remember the first meeting. I wasn't sure what to expect, but as soon as I walked into the Technology room, I was greeted by a group of students who shared my interest in technology. The club's members ranged from beginners to experts in the field, which made it a great environment for learning and growing. The club advisors, Mr. Manny Trama and Mr. Korey Armstrong, are the technology teachers at the school, and they seemed passionate and eager to help students explore the world of tech. Mr. Trama explained that the club's main goals were to create projects, learn new skills, and help the school by recording and taking pictures of school activities.

One of the best parts of the club has been learning new skills that I wouldn't have learned in regular classes, including photography. We take videos and pictures for our school's basketball teams, special performances such as the Christmas Show and Black History Month Show, Masses, and graduation. Everyone felt rusty at first, but we eventually got used to it by practicing and everyone was willing to help one another.

Most of our members love to work on building and repairing computers. Mr. Trama teaches Robotics, 3D Printing, and coding classes, so he can help us in many ways, such as showing us how to fix a 3D model or log into our Chromebooks.



Aside from coding and building computers, the club has also worked on some hands-on projects. One of the coolest ones was creating a small robot using Arduino, an open-source platform for building electronic projects. We used sensors and motors to make the robot move and react to its environment. It was fascinating to see how coding and hardware can come together to create something that moves and interacts with the world.

The Technology Club has also been a great place to make new friends. Although we all have different backgrounds and skill levels, we share a common interest in technology, which makes it easy to bond. It has been awesome to collaborate with people who have similar interests but different strengths and experiences.

We are also interested in learning more about artificial intelligence and machine learning, two areas that are rapidly growing in the tech world. The Technology Club has opened our eyes to so many possibilities, and we are grateful to be part of such an innovative and supportive group.

Finding My Place: My Story as a Rookie Cheerleader

By: Teresa Gaston

Since my freshman year, I have struggled to find my place in extracurricular activities. I wanted something I could pick up quickly, something engaging to challenge me and offer multiple benefits. During sophomore year, I often had conversations where classmates asked if I was on the cheer team. When I said no, they'd respond with comments like, "You look like a cheerleader" or "I had a feeling." Those interactions planted the idea of cheerleading in my mind, and by the spring of my sophomore year, I had decided to try it out.

Making the team was exciting, but my first practice quickly changed how I saw cheerleading. The techniques were much more complicated than I expected. Every move required precision, strength, and careful body positioning. Stunts needed both skill and complete trust in my teammates. Our coach pushed us hard, breaking down each motion to show that cheerleading wasn't about looking good. It was about perfect execution. The strict early morning and after-school practice schedule tested my endurance and mental strength, but I grew more determined with each practice.

Cheerleading has taught me so much about myself, even in small but meaningful ways. I realized I don't learn new things as quickly as I had assumed. Mastering routines, cues, cheers, and stunts was more challenging than I had imagined. I also discovered how much confidence truly matters. Success in cheerleading isn't just about skill; it's about carrying yourself with self-assurance. If you focus only on how you look and worry about making mistakes instead of supporting your

teammates and giving your best effort, success will be out of reach. Teamwork is essential, and that lesson has stuck with me. The work is challenging, but maintaining an optimistic and encouraging attitude makes all the difference in the long run.

What I love most about cheerleading is how much it builds character. I've been on the team since last summer, and my first practice was a humbling experience. My ego was quickly checked when I realized what I had signed up for. Still, I never once thought about giving up. I reminded myself that I couldn't quit when I had barely started. Why give up when the journey has only begun?

Being a rookie – whether in cheerleading or anything else – reminds me that we're all just figuring things out for the first time. No one is ever truly prepared. But when you step into something new, you walk away with valuable lessons about yourself. Cheerleading has made me more confident, resilient, and bold. I can't predict when or how the challenges will get more demanding, but I'm excited to see where this experience takes me.



Former Coach Serves Once Again

Volleyball team sweeps the tier and heads for championship game under veteran leader



Coach Fisher, facing camera, during home game. Below, Joeli Gomez send shot to the net.

Nazareth's varsity volleyball team finished its season with a 9-0 record in league play under the direction of long-time math teacher **Monique Fisher '82**.

The team led Tier 3 of the Brooklyn-Queens Catholic High School Athletic Association and defeated Bishop Loughlin in straight sets to earn a spot in the championship game November 9 against Msgr. Scanlan.

Fisher, who coached the team from 1987 to 1995, returned to the job this year.

"We were excited to do so well with our seniors," she said, adding that the winning season "was a gift for them as they graduate."

The team has just seven players, five of whom are seniors.

Fisher herself started playing volleyball for Nazareth as a freshman in 1978. "It was the sport with the first season," she explained.

She earned a full athletic

scholarship to Northeastern University in Boston and graduated from there in 1987.

She returned to Nazareth later that year to teach math, and she became the coach.

She works now with her daughter Alicia, who coaches the junior varsity team, and with a niece, Amber Phillips, who is an assistant for both teams. While a busy schedule that includes teaching and coaching can be tiring, she said, "the kids keep us young."

2024 League Games

Date	Result	Opponent
Sep 10	W 3-1	St Edmund's
Sep 12	W 3-0	St Saviour
Sep 19	W 3-1	Cristo Rey
Sep 24	W 3-1	Bishop Loughlin
Sep 26	W 3-1	St Jean Baptiste
Oct 1	W 3-0	St Saviour
Oct 7	W 3-0	Cristo Rey
Oct 15	W 3-0	Bishop Loughlin
Oct 21	W 3-0	St Jean Baptiste



Editor's Note: The article above is from the November 2024 edition of [The Excalibur II Nazareth Alumni Newsletter](#) (click on link)

Senior Spirit Week Photos



Tuesday – Jersey Day!



Tuesday – Trip to Bowl 360!

Senior Spirit Week Photos (cont.)



Wednesday – Senior Follies!



Mr. Meyerend, Ms. Davis, and Principal DiRe – wearing Senior Follies T-Shirts



Friday – Blackout Day/ American Dream Trip



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