

ST. NORBERT AND OUR LADY OF THE BROOK PARISH



CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
OF NORTHBROOK

OUR MISSION

**We are the Catholic Community of Northbrook,
open to all, called by God, and inspired by the Holy Spirit
to encounter Christ and make Him known**

Wherever you are on your own spiritual journey, we invite you to join us as we commit to...

Develop a deep, personal relationship with Jesus Christ

Celebrate God's presence and grace through prayer, vibrant worship, and the sacraments

Build a welcoming, faith-filled community with a strong focus on fellowship and family

Foster peace, social justice and compassion for all

Share our God-given gifts as we serve one another and take the Good News out into the world

WHO WE ARE: OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish is a Roman Catholic community in north suburban Chicago, rooted in our early missionary history as well as our enduring spirit of ministry and service.

We rejoice in our parish life that includes over forty active ministries dedicated to liturgy, faith formation, support and care, outreach, and community life.

We take pride in our ecumenical spirit, embracing our interfaith families and sharing our OLB Worship Center with the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church community and the Shir Hadash Congregation.

We recognize that the challenges faced by the Divine Word missionaries who founded our parish in 1899 are the same challenges we face today...building disciples, providing a place of worship and faith formation, encouraging prayer, creating a parish family, ministering to the needs of the community, and spreading the Good News of Jesus.

We are especially mindful of present-day realities of the Northbrook community, our own parish, and the Catholic Church in 2017. These include...

- Declining Mass attendance and religious affiliation-engagement generally, most acutely among younger generations
- A dwindling number of ordained ministers and religious requiring even greater parishioner empowerment
- A generally well-educated, increasingly diverse and aging population with unique needs and priorities at each life stage
- Families and individuals, many who are dual-career couples, experiencing a society focused on busyness and doing, often stretching us ever more thin, while leaving us feeling detached from deeper purpose and a Christ-centered life
- The constant noise and distraction that leaves parishioners feeling less rather than more connected to their authentic selves, one another, and Jesus.

To address these challenges, we are choosing in 2017 to embrace the calls of Pope Francis and Cardinal Cupich. We rededicate our newly reunited parish to our core mission of bringing people to Christ in a more profound and meaningful way, recognizing that above all else we are a missionary people on a life-long journey of faith.

MISSION REFLECTION

Developing a Deep, Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ

Thoughtfully answering and responding positively to Jesus's simple direct question, "Who do you say I am?" stirs our hearts and minds to see God in Jesus Christ's humanity. With this profound understanding, we are challenged to seek discipleship with Him.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. Come to me all you who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." We are invited to know and personalize our relationship with Jesus. Through faith, hope and love we can unmask this mystery of a "God who is love".

Jesus meets us where we are, on the way. God works through the circumstances of our life-events, people, experiences- God is always reaching for us. An encounter with Christ is not an effort and we are open to this reality. Jesus is waiting for us.

We ask God to help us walk more surely in Christ's ways growing in hope and becoming faith-filled in His service.

Questions for reflection

- What is getting in the way of knowing and loving Jesus?
- What is God calling me to be and do?
- What are the many ways I can personalize my relationship with Jesus?

Celebrating God's Presence and Grace through Prayer, Worship, and the Sacraments

Our Eucharistic celebration with thoughtful prayer is at the heart of our Catholic identity and community. Here we receive the whole Christ, His word, His Body and Blood, and His Holy Spirit. He makes Himself known "in the breaking of the bread" when we receive the whole of Jesus' person. It is food for the journey.

This prayerful and thanksgiving encounter transcends the individual and breaks down our isolation and carries us from I to we. We encounter God's grace, finding Christ dwelling in our hearts and act on this discovery. It challenges us and sends us forth. "Be not afraid" and "Fear not" is Jesus' reminder and guarantee that He remains with us always.

Providing reverent, meaningful liturgies related to the sacraments, cultivating a spirit of openness in a truly welcoming manner, and providing catechesis on how to discern God's will, are templates for us to foster holiness and discipleship with Jesus. We will always recognize that everyone will be at different points on their holiness journey.

Questions for reflection

- How important and meaningful is the Sunday Eucharist to me?
- How does Mass connect to our daily lives?
- How might our parish collaborate with other organizations in living out missionary discipleship?

Building a Vibrant, Welcoming, Faith-filled Community with a Strong Focus on Fellowship and Family

Our Church is understood as family, called to community and participation. We have been called into this family through our baptism, a baptism that regenerates us and anoints each of us to play a vital role in God's mission of love. This totally unmerited gift of God's love urges us to show genuine hospitality, not just to those within our own parish but also to everyone in our community, and especially to those who are otherwise forgotten or marginalized. We strive to share with everyone, no matter where they are on their journey of life, the joy that comes from knowing Jesus Christ.

From this flows the joy of love experienced by families, and likewise by our holy Mother Church. As members of the Body of Christ, we come to know Jesus with our hearts and minds learned from the rich heritage of our Catholic faith. Teaching the faith to all ages is the responsibility of our entire community; everything we do is an opportunity to grow in faith.

We are called to a lifetime of learning and conversion. Educating all, sharing in small faith groups, communicating in open dialogue, participating in interfaith and community events, ministering to everyone, meeting people on their faith journey where they are, all play a role in involving the "People of God", our Church family and community. In these profound experiences, we seek to experience "merciful love which is ready to understand, forgive, accompany, hope, and above all, integrate."

The Lord's presence dwells in real and concrete families with all their daily troubles, struggles, joys, and hopes. This spirituality of family love is made up of many small gestures and also replayed out by those in our faith community. Remaining non-judgmental of all family situations and society's diverse cultural extremes, will allow us to grow in the life of God's grace.

Questions for reflection

- Who in our families and amongst our friends are unable to fully participate in our community today?
- How might(or could) my words and actions impact the faith lives of others?
- Do I see myself as having an open, genuine welcoming attitude with those around me at Sunday Mass? With the elderly? With the strangers in my midst? With the poor and forgotten? With the sick in body, mind, or heart?

Fostering Peace, Social Justice and Compassion for all

"God is found where love is needed most."

We are called as disciples to demonstrate that the challenging Gospel commitment of love and compassion is lived. *Agape*, Christian love, is a pure, selfless, and a liberating undertaking where God is on the side of the joy of life, health, and the lightening of its burdens. It respects the human dignity of all women and men made in the likeness of God. As members of the Body of Christ, we profess solidarity with the poor in their struggle along the path of social justice and peace.

In Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, the spirit of the Beatitudes calls us to reach out to all the marginalized as well as those poor in spirit. We offer food, clothing and shelter, but also the gift of being present to one another. With our service, we bear witness to Christ, encountering Him in new ways. These actions are not seen as sentimental projects, but as meeting the heroic duties of justice, goodness and love. We will inform ourselves about pressing moral and social issues so we can stand with those in need, helping them find a voice.

"When you have done all that is commanded of you, say, 'we are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'."

Questions for reflection

- What are some examples of people whose life and dignity are being threatened?
- Which ministries of our church tend to emphasize charity, social justice? Should I seek out and help?
- Can I commit to a spiritual discipline that seeks a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and learn to walk the extra mile with those in need?

Sharing Our God-given Gifts as we Serve One Another and Take the Good News Out into the World

Central to our faith community is to be a beacon of Christ, in worship, in prayer, and in our ministries. We are called to bring people to Christ, to foster an encounter with Him, and to help our brothers and sisters develop a personal relationship with Jesus.

Our mission will embrace the opportunity to evangelize the culture and encourage the exchange of ideas. We are to form disciples so they will go outward and share what they have found with others, continually bringing Christ into the world.

We willingly and lovingly share the love of God with others through our actions and authentic words. We also witness to them that God has been at work in our lives and we recognize this is the work of the Holy Spirit. A sense of belonging through faith sharing, prayer and bible groups, outreach ministries, and vibrant liturgies, will give witness to the saving love and grace of the Lord. With His word, strength and mercy, we will invite, encourage, and be supportive to all, be they committed believers, non-committed believers, and non-believers.

We are one human family, regardless of nationality, racial makeup, economic background, and ideological differences. We are called to be our brothers and sisters' helpers, loving our neighbors near and far.

Questions for reflection

- How do my choices impact the lives of others?
- What responsibilities do I have to our faith community and to the larger non-sectarian community?
- Do I scrutinize the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel?