ST. BERNARD CATHOLIC CHURCH

A Catholic Community in the Benson Neighborhood since 1918

November 6, 2026

A LETTER TO THE ST. BERNARD FAMILY, PAST AND PRESENT

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings to you in the peace of Christ.

God be praised that I have returned to ministry after six weeks away. My time away from you gave me time to pray and reflect. Not a day passed without my thinking of you, praying for you, and reflecting on my vocation as your shepherd and on St. Bernard Parish, past, present, and future.

This letter is the fruit of my prayer and reflection, and I write it with humility, love, remorse, and care.

It is addressed to everyone who has ever been part of our dear St. Bernard: old and new parishioners, families who have worshipped here for generations, students and alumni of our school, children and parents of our Child Care center, teachers, staff, volunteers, ministers, benefactors, and friends.

In a special way, it is addressed to the members of the Our Lady of Africa Catholic Community and the St. Michael French Community, past and present. You came from many nations, languages, and cultures, and you found a home at St. Bernard. You brought your faith, music, languages, and joy to our altar. Through the Sunday African Mass, the prayers and gatherings of our French-speaking family, and countless celebrations, you have enriched the whole parish and reminded us that the Church is truly universal. To the founders and pioneers, to those who have moved to other cities or returned home, and to those who still gather with us each week: you remain part of this family.

Some of you are with us every Sunday. Some of you moved away, drifted away, or quietly stopped coming. Wherever you are, this letter is for you.

St. Bernard is more than a building on North 65th Street. It is a family: one parish, one school, one Child Care, and many communities united in Christ. And a family is not complete when any of its members are missing.

If at any time you felt hurt, overlooked, judged, unwelcome, or unloved here, whether by a word, a decision, a silence, or a failure to reach out, I am sorry. We are sorry. If any of you felt that your language, your culture, or your community was not fully welcomed or understood, we are sorry for that too. Some

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wounds may be recent; others may go back many years. Whether the fault was great or small, intended or not, we humbly ask for your forgiveness.

As I write, I come before God on my knees, not because I am better than anyone, but because I know how easily misunderstanding and hurt can divide a family of faith. I do not want any of you to carry that burden alone or in silence.

YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN. YOU HAVE NOT BEEN CUT OFF. YOU STILL BELONG HERE.

Your baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, weddings, and funerals happened here. So did your classrooms, your playground laughter, your children's first steps in child care, your years of service, your choirs and celebrations, and your quiet prayers in the pews. All of it remains part of the story of St. Bernard. You helped build this community, and it still carries your fingerprints.

Please do not let a past hurt, a careless word, or a painful memory convince you that St. Bernard no longer has a place for you. The door is open. The table is set. Your seat is still here.

As Our Lady of Africa prepares to celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2027, we especially long to see familiar faces return and to give thanks together for all that God has done among us.

We pray for God's grace and mercy upon us all: for healing where there has been hurt, for reconciliation where there has been distance, and for a renewed spirit of love that makes everyone feel at home, in every language and from every land.

Come home when you can. Visit us. Call us. Pray with us. And wherever life has taken you, carry St. Bernard in your heart, as we carry you in ours.

With love, gratitude, and prayers,

Rev. Fr. Michael Gadache
Pastor, St. Bernard Parish, Omaha

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