



# Heart of the Parish

“People are the Heart of the Parish”

February 2023

## Introducing Father Gadache...

Father Michael Gadache will become St. Bernard’s pastor in July 2023, and though he will have a dual assignment, he has stated that being the pastor of St. Bernard will be his main focus. His second assignment from the Archdiocese is to continue as Chaplain for the African groups, Our Lady of Africa and St Michael, who may eventually combine into one group and will be based at St. Bernard.

Father Gadache has considerable experience as a pastor, 13 years in his home country of Nigeria, and more recently at St. Pius X. He sees his mission first and foremost as a pastor leading his people in their spiritual journey.

Father Gadache’s name on legal documents is Father Ahmadu Michael Gadache, but he is popularly known as Father Michael Gadache, and prefers to be called that. He was born and grew up in Nigeria. He has a large extended family in Nigeria, including one sister and four brothers. He was educated and ordained in Nigeria and became and remains a diocesan priest of the diocese of Minna in central Nigeria. As



reported in our bulletin a few weeks ago, the parish in Minna where he served as pastor, Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church was the victim of terroristic violence against the Catholic church in Nigeria. In January the rectory was attacked and burned; its current pastor, Fr. Isaac Achi was killed and his assistant was wounded. Fr. Achi was also Father Gadache’s uncle. He wrote the following about Fr. Achi:

*“ Fr. Isaac Achi will be greatly missed by family, friends and the entire Catholic Diocese of Minna. He was not just a priest, but also a father figure to very many people and families. He will be greatly missed. Rest in Peace, dear Father.”*

(Continued on back page)

So how does a native Nigerian priest come to serve parishes in the United States? Nigeria has a large population of Catholics, and a significant number of young people in its seminaries and convents. The Minna diocese has a good number of priests to serve its needs, and its bishop was open to sharing them as missionaries to the U.S., saying, “It is all one church” and he feels it is our collective responsibility to teach and preach the gospel everywhere in the world. So when Fr. Gadache was asked to be a missionary to the U.S. to help with our shortage of priests, he was eager to accept. Two priests were requested, and both accepted. He had visited the U.S. in 2015 and was excited for the opportunity to serve here. It has been a serious culture shock, especially the food, but he is adjusting.

His first assignment in the U.S. in 2019 was at St. Pius X, but housing was not immediately available there, so he was housed at St. Leo the Great rectory. He made good friends in that parish who helped him adjust to his new culture, and they remain close friends today. When housing became available at St. Pius X, he moved there, where he served as Associate Pastor, and is currently acting Pastor in the temporary absence of the assigned Pastor.

In his rare free time he likes to read and write and follow “futbol”, i.e. soccer. He only had time to watch a bit of the World Cup on TV, and since Nigeria did not make the finals in Qatar, he rooted strongly for the U.S.

Fr. Gadache’s second assignment is as Chaplain to the African Community, who will also adopt St. Bernard as its home base. This benefits St. Bernard by increasing its Mass attendance, a numbers criteria the Archdiocese uses to determine how many priests are assigned to a parish, and the number of Masses celebrated. The African Community is a group of people with the commonality of all originating from various African countries and being Catholic. Their desire is to preserve their native religious customs to pass down to future generations so they are not totally lost as they are assimilated to life in the U.S. They live all over Omaha, perhaps belong to other parishes, but need a home church that will welcome their presence and join their services as they choose.

Father’s duties as their Chaplain is to offer sacraments such as Baptism in their traditional manner if requested, to assist them with whatever social events they plan, and now help them make a transition to their new home base of St. Bernard.

As St. Bernard’s pastor he will also work to blend St. Bernard’s and the African communities into a cohesive whole on our joint path to harmony and serving God and each other.

### **Call to Action—Irish Hooley, March 11**

Several opportunities to volunteer—2 hour shifts—as greeters, check-in table, drink ticket sales, raffle table, servers, decorators, kitchen help, clean up.  
Contact: Rose Flores at Rectory, 402/551-0269

### **Upcoming Events**

Irish Hooley—March 11

Parish Fish Fry—March 24

Mary T. Mick, Editor