

St. Joseph Church
Libertyville, Illinois
Our Past and Present – All in God's Hands

We are blessed as a faith family with God's abundant and never-ending love for us. We feel that our growth as a parish reflects this steadfast love of God. We hope this history reflects God's compassion, mercy, spirit and strength as God guides and inspires our faithful leaders and parishioners in our continuing unfolding story. Empowered by God's spirit over the span of over 100 years, so many gifted clergy, religious, and lay persons have contributed their talents to build our parish and in essence, become our parish! The faces have changed but always reflecting God's Spirit.

We keep all readers of this history in our prayer, and we ask for your prayers as well, as our story is ever-unfolding, ever changing, with the constant of God's loving care for us.

The Early Years

The Des Plaines River, which runs through Libertyville, connects us in a most vital way with the history of St. Joseph's Parish. In 1673, Jesuit Missionary Fr. Jacques Marquette and his French Canadian partner, Louis Joliet, returned from their exploration of the Mississippi River by way of the Illinois and Des Plaines Rivers. The Chicago Treaties of 1832-1837 demanded the relocation of the Potawatomi Indians from their villages along our stretch of the Des Plaines to reservations in Kansas. White settlers from Eastern United States were encouraged to move into this area. In the mid-1800's, Catholic settlers worshiped west of Libertyville at Saint Mary's of Fremont Center or east of here at St. Patrick's located in what became Lake Forest.

First Beginnings

In 1885 Fr. Charles Hahn from St. Michael's in Chicago established a mission in Libertyville worshipping initially in the old Town Hall. In 1886 the first Catholic parish church, named for Ss. Peter and Paul, was built on North First Street with Fr. Thomas Kearney as Pastor. His rectory still stands at 629 North First Street. In 1897 Fr. Wm. J. Meehan next led the parish to be followed by Fr. Patrick Scanlon in 1901.

Fr. Scanlon guided the rebuilding of this first church after a major fire in 1904 included its relocation to the present site on Maple Avenue. Following the completion of the new church, the parish name was changed to St. Joseph. On July 2, 1905, Auxiliary Bishop Peter J. Muldoon traveled to Libertyville to dedicate the new brick church. Parish membership then numbered approximately 75 families and the new church had a capacity for 300 people. Fr. Wm. Kinsella then became Pastor in 1910 and supervised the new rectory construction at 121 East Maple Avenue.

St. Joseph's Early Years

In 1912, Fr. Stephen Luttrell succeeded Fr. Kinsella, continuing as pastor until his in 1923. He was followed by Fr. Martin Nealis who oversaw the brick construction of the first parish school at 131 East Maple. Soon after the house at 217 Park Place was purchased to serve as convent for the Sisters of Mercy who staffed the new school, which by now housed 150 students. 1931 brought Fr. Edward Loughry to St. Joseph's, and despite the depression years of the early 1930's, motivated the parishioners to retire the school debt. His memory lives on through constant use of our Loughry meeting room.

Post WWII Growing Pains

In 1946, the Rev. Harry C. Koenig a Librarian and Professor of Church History at Saint Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein began to help Fr. Loughry serve the growing parish at Sunday worship services. The rapid growth shortly after WWII required the appointment of our first Assistant Pastor, Fr. Roger Jones. Fr. Koenig continued to help out until 1955 when he was appointed pastor for the Sacred Heart parish in Chicago. By this time, some 300 children were enrolled in St. Joseph's Parochial School, clearly pointing to the need for greater classroom space. Fr. Loughry launched a pledge drive with parishioners pledging \$263,000 toward construction of a new school. Later, in 1957, Fr. Loughry became ill and requested that former pastor and now Monsignor Koenig, be appointed administrator for St. Joseph's Church. He kindly returned and administered the new school's construction, opening in 1959 for 498 students.

Our Present Church

Early in the 1960's our growth reached 1,000 families and created a pressing need for a larger church. Under Msgr. Koenig's guidance, the current, beautiful and modernistic church was completed in 1966. Upon the of Fr. Loughry, Msgr. Koenig became pastor and remained until 1974 when he was appointed Director of the Cardinal Stritch Retreat House. The Koenig Center, site of our special family Masses and other parish-wide activities, continuously reminds us of his contributions to our Faith Community.

Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Grady became pastor for a brief period until appointed Bishop of Orlando, Florida. In June 1975 Msgr. John P. O'Donnell, a former rector of Quigley Preparatory Seminary became our pastor, moving on in 1984 to become pastor of St. Patrick's in Lake Forest. His successor, the Rev. James O'Connor, experienced one of the fastest growth periods as Libertyville ed into a full-fledged suburb. This raised the urgent need for more ministries and parish family activities leading to the building of the new Koenig Parish Center. In July of 1991, Cardinal Bernardin named Fr. Ronald Anglim to succeed Fr. O'Connor as pastor of St. Joseph's. Fr. Anglim established our first "strategic plan" following the guidelines set forth by Vatican II. This plan introduced a major expansion in service activities and additional ministries that necessitated greater lay participation through an educated, paid staff and more trained volunteers.

The Journey Continues...Rev. John E. Hennessey, Pastor

The Projects and Processes

Fr. Hennessey succeeded Fr. Anglim and serves as our 11th pastor. Fr. John was entrusted to our faith family in July, 1997. A Parish Steering Committee was formed and subsequently Fr. John empowered a new Parish Pastoral Council. New parish mission and vision statements were overseen by this Parish Council and a capital campaign during his tenure bore the fruits of new construction outlined elsewhere in this document. The new construction supported in many ways the initial parish goals of the new Parish Pastoral Council of welcoming and hospitality. Beginning in 2009 and currently in process, he has empowered the Joe! Study Task Force to assess our ministries and parish and strategically plan for our future.

The Pastoral

“God Is Love” was the theme of Fr. John’s ordination on April 27, 1967 and also of his 40 years Celebration at St. Joseph Parish in April, 2007. A prayer for our parish began “Gracious and loving Father, from my earliest days I had a yearning to serve people and to help make your world a better place. You called me through that yearning – molding me to be a priest of Jesus Christ...”

Fr. John’s tenure is marked by a commitment to encourage and promote the gifts and graces of those he serves. Collaboration is a hallmark of his ministry and he has invited many to share in the responsibility of the parish. His pastoral style enables him to recognize, encourage and trust the spirit-driven gifts of others. During his years as pastor he has sent 25 parishioners to the Called and Gifted lay ministry program – the highest of any pastor or parish in the Archdiocese and received an award for his contribution to lay ministry empowerment in 2010. Stewardship as a way of life embracing time, talent and treasure was and continues to be more fully integrated into the life of the parish. Christ Renews His Parish Retreats were initiated along with post-formation opportunities in faith formation. New leadership groups formed such as the Mens and Womens Councils and an abundance of faith formation opportunities continue to be nurtured. Social Justice efforts are supported through our St. Joseph Food Pantry and a school has been built for the poor in Moshi, Tanzania. These are just some of the examples of growth experienced under the support of Fr. John. Always referring to God as the source of the growth of the parish, Fr. John has expressed gratitude for his ministry with us: “I am grateful to be a priest, a servant of God and of the Church.”

The Growth Process Revisited

In 2002-03, we planned and implement a three-year Centennial Campaign to raise funds to meet building expansion and renovation needs identified by the Centennial Committee.

In 2004, the people of St. Joseph Parish kicked off their year-long observance of the parish’s 100-year anniversary. Although a ministry to local Catholics dated from as early as 1885, St. Joseph Parish traces its foundation to the opening and dedication of the first St. Joseph Church on Maple Avenue in 1905. The observance of the 100-year anniversary was planned to begin with liturgical celebrations around the theme of Remembering our heritage, Celebrating our parish family, and Continuing in God’s Spirit especially through the structure of the Parish Pastoral Council and the four Commissions of Spiritual Life, Education, Human Concerns and Parish Life. In keeping with these focuses, the 100-year was marked by a series of liturgies,

social events, music concerts and closing event of Joe's Dance Party which initiated the transition to build the next 100 years.

Construction in 2005-2006

In 2002, as part of the Archdiocesan Sharing Christ's Gifts Campaign, called at St. Joseph's the Centennial Campaign, St. Joseph Parish implemented a plan for enhancing the church. According to Bob Blanke, then Director of Administration of St. Joseph's the subsequent Centennial Campaign adapted its name to align with the approaching 100 year anniversary of the parish, set a \$3 million dollar goal and out of this provided a new sound system for the church, new restrooms in the church, increased handicapped accessibility in the church and a narthex. In addition, money was targeted for an expansion of the Social Justice Ministry. One of the first improvements was for the school which received a new sprinkler system. All planned capital improvements were done in light of actual bids and affordability. The fundraising raised \$2.65 million in cash and pledges towards the goals.

Priests Residence, New Parish Office and Ministry Center (former rectory), and Gym Foyer Renovation

To increase quality of life for our priests and to bring Pastoral Staff together, a capital venture was initiated to raise between \$800,000 and \$900,000 to construct a new residence across from the school which includes a renovated rectory to provide for more offices for staff. The new rectory construction at 210 Park Place was completed in 2007 and the Parish Office and Ministry Center, the former rectory, was renovated and parish staff were all brought together in its upstairs offices in summer, 2008. The lower offices were designated at that time as meeting rooms. With the refacing of the east entrance of St. Joseph School and the renovation of the gym foyer and washrooms, our Centennial Campaign projects were completed during fiscal year 2008.

Leavetakings:

Farewell to Fr. Victor Ivers

In December, 1980, our beloved Fr. Ivers retired from the Navy after 30 years of service at military bases in the United States and on other Navy facilities in so many places abroad. In February, 2007, he departed what was his home here at our parish for the past 20 years. His parting words to our faith family were "To all of you Christians: Be faithful always – as disciples of the Lord." Fr. Ivers currently resides at a nursing home and rehab center.

Farewell to our "good sisters"

Sister Ramon Naughton, who served our parish family since 1977 was born to eternal life on May 15, 2008 and rests in the arms of God. She served our parish family since 1977 and coordinated the Ministry of Care Program, Ministry of Praise for the homebound, and CanShare, a self-A memorial liturgy was held in her memory in June, 2008, attended by our faith family and the Sisters of Mercy, whose legacy began at St. Joseph Parish in 1926 when the parish school was built.

Sister Carmeline Goebel, R.S.M. moved home to Mercy Hall in Chicago 41 years of service to our faith family as our Religious Education Director and then assisting in that program. The Sisters of Mercy and were honored at a reception after Sister Ramon's Memorial Mass. Sister Mary Barbara Hassler continues to serve our parish and give witness as a religious sister.

Deacon Dennis Dunn born to Eternal Life

Dennis was born to Eternal Life on October 26, 2008. A long-time member of our parish family he and his wife Nancy dedicated themselves to sacramental formation, conducting the baptismal preparation class at St. Joseph's for 35 years. Together with Nancy, he set the structure and precedent for small faith sharing groups and chaired the small group committee for the all-parish program Renew. He was a published author, having written a Lenten retreat program used in diocesan parishes and his great heart, compassion and outreach to the parishioners of St. Joseph's touched the lives of countless parishioners. He was ordained a deacon on April 28, 1966 and his ministry as a deacon was focused in large part on his prison ministry at Cook County Jail where he was a chaplain, helping those incarcerated to reconnect with God. He was an active part of Pastoral Staff, devoted to good liturgy through his homilies and involved as a spiritual director to Christ Renews His Parish retreats and post-CRHP experiences at St. Joseph's. His was a life well-lived and well-served in the Lord.

Significant Influences on Parish Direction

New Mission and Vision Statements

In 2006, a new Mission and Vision Statement were devised to set direction for the parish and to accommodate the changes that have occurred since the original ones were devised:

Mission Statement:

St. Joseph Parish, Libertyville, is a family of faith in the Catholic Tradition. We are called in Baptism to be disciples of Jesus Christ and stewards of all God's creation. As disciples we are formed and fed at the Table of God's Word and of His Body. In Gratitude we are sent forth from the Eucharistic celebration to continue the ministry of Christ in our community and in our world.

Vision Statement:

Our parish is more than a set of buildings; it is a faith family, brought together by our baptismal call to discipleship, the sacramental traditions of the Church, and the real desire to foster Christian community in an ever-changing world.

To live this vision, all members of our family are called to: Grow our relationship with God by joyfully celebrating the liturgy and sacraments and by participating in comprehensive faith formation; Cultivate an expanding atmosphere of Christian hospitality; Continually examine our call to discipleship through the sharing of time, talents, and resources; and Dedicate ourselves to the work of social justice.

The passion with which our faith family lives this vision determines the extent to which we will be identified as grateful disciples.

The Joe! Study

In the Spring of 2009, Fr. Hennessey began a conversation with the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) to discuss the future of our parish. In response to the discussion, the PPC established a Task Force. The Task Force is comprised of individuals from the PPC, parish staff and members of the Parish-at-large. It sponsored a pew and online questionnaire in October, 2009 whose responses served as the foundation for the questions of the subsequent and current Focus Groups. Some of these are: How can we reach out to those parishioners we don't see very often? What kind of Catholic Family of Faith are we and what do we want to be? How could limited human and financial resources impact our future? The Task Force chose the book "Growing an Engaged Church" as a tool to assist as we explore who we are as a community and how we need to plan for our future and has provided a format to measure strengths and identify areas needing growth. The Joe! Study is an instrument which is a key element of the book and measures the current level of engagement within our Family of Faith. The results of the Joe! Study will guide the development of a plan which will outline our future. The goal is to establish expectations of one another and of the parish, both leading to clearer understanding of expectations, increasing parishioner engagement and greater parish unity as we look to the future and information gathered from the Joe! Study will be used to prepare a long-term plan for our parish.

We hope you have enjoyed a short synopsis of our parish history and current direction!

If you are seeking a faith family, are new to the parish, or have been with us for many years, we welcome you! We rejoice in your presence with us and encourage you to take full advantage of the many opportunities to contribute through our many ministries!

Please contact the parish office at 847-362-2073 with any questions or needs you may have and you will be received with a warm welcome and given assistance.

*In Jesus's words we invite you, whether new or current parishioners, to
"Come and See"*