

Praised be Jesus Christ!

My name is Father Benzes Thomas, O.Praem, and I am blessed to be assigned as the associate pastor of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Winfield. It is a great privilege to serve you.

Before I tell you a little bit about myself, I want to thank the Lord for the grace given to me to serve in the Diocese of Joliet. For the past three years, I have served as an associate pastor at St. Isidore Church in Bloomingdale. My three years of ministry at St. Isidore has been a very enriching experience, helping me grow closer to God's love and His Holy Will.

I was born on September 28th, the youngest of three children, and grew up in Kerala, in the southern part of India. I joined the Norbertine Religious Order in 1988, and I was ordained a priest on December 30, 2000. Following my ordination and my Mass of Thanksgiving at my home parish of St. Mary's Church in Kerala, I served as an associate pastor at a Norbertine parish in North India for two years.

Later, I was called back to the Abbey to assist with administration and the formation of students. Throughout my 26 years of priesthood, I have served as an Abbot (major superior of the community in India), pastor, novice master, director of formation, manager of schools, and spiritual director within the Norbertine communities in India. When I heard about my new assignment at St. John the Baptist, I immediately thought of the beautiful connection between St. John the Baptist and our founder, St. Norbert. In the 12th century, when St. Norbert established his first community house in Prémontré, France, he dedicated the chapel to St. John the Baptist. It was in that very chapel that St. Norbert and his first companions made their religious vows.

I look forward to my new assignment with gratitude, love, and deep trust in Jesus, who called me to be His minister and to share in His priesthood. I have been praying for all of you since receiving my assignment, and I will continue to lift you up in my daily prayers and the Holy Mass.

Fr. Benzes Thomas, O. Praem