DECEMBER 2019

BENE DICTUS

PHOTO: JOHN RAE

p. 7 ..... CONTEMPLATIVE MASS

p. 11 ..... CHRISTMAS UNPLUGGED

SAINT BENEDICT PARISH
45 Radcliffe Drive
Halifax, Nova Scotia
902-443-0725
saintbenedict.ca

SUNDAY MASS
Saturday: 4pm
Sunday: 9am, 11:15am, 6pm

WEEKDAY MASS
Monday to Friday: 9am

CONFESSIONS
Saturday: 3 - 3:45pm
Thursday: 9:45 - 10:30am

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER?

Visit the Welcome Centre in the foyer after Mass for more information!

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The Bene Dictus is your monthly magazine featuring stories about how Saint Benedict Parish forms disciples who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus Christ. It is available in print or in your email inbox.

The next issue of the Bene Dictus will be released on the weekend of January 11th/ 12th.

On the cover:
A young parishioner at last year's Christmas Unplugged.

SAINT BENEDICT PARISH CLERGY

Pastor: Fr. Simon Lobo, CC

Associate Pastor: Fr. Alex Colautti, CC

Permanent Deacon: Deacon David Viscount

Episcopal Vicar for Parish Renewal: Fr. James Mallon

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FATHER SIMON SAYS...

Fr. Simon Lobo, CC
Pastor

AN ENTHUSIASTIC WELCOME

It's that time of year again: the Advent and Christmas seasons! In the coming weeks, we will have many guests passing through the doors of our church. If you are a guest and reading this, I want to offer an enthusiastic "Welcome!", and I sincerely hope you are blessed by our parish. I know that we are blessed by your presence.

If you read this shortly after the time of its release, then I would like to wish you a holy Advent. The word, "Advent" comes from Latin 'ad-', meaning 'to' and 'venire', meaning 'come.' It is a time of preparation during which the Church focuses her attention away from the challenges and realities of the present, and, filled with hope, looks towards the future 'Advent' of Jesus, our king, which we celebrate in a particular way on Christmas day.

If you're reading this after December 24th, then I'd like to say Merry Christmas! May the birth of Jesus the King bring you an unsurpassable joy that overflows into the lives of all those you love.

MASS CHANGES AND THANK YOU

We continue to move ahead with the changes to our weekend schedule, which we announced back in October, so we can grow as a church of disciples who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus. Beginning the weekend of January 5th, the music at the 4pm Saturday Mass will be led by a choir. Both the 9am and 11:15am Sunday morning Masses will feature contemporary Praise & Worship music. The final Mass of the day will be the 4pm Sunday Contemplative Mass. The Contemplative Mass will cultivate an atmosphere of sacred silence that we hope will

continued on next page

FATHER SIMON SAYS continued

put us into deeper touch with the liturgical and musical treasures of the Church. My hope is to create an environment of worship where people come into authentic contact with the transcendent presence of God.

At our Liturgical Ministry Come & See on the weekend of November 17th, we had an opportunity for people to sign up to serve in ministry, and the response was amazing: we had 160 new sign-ups for ministry! Thank you to everyone who responded to the call to serve. I know that you will receive far more than you give. Don't worry if you feel you've missed your chance, or if you would like to serve at the 4pm Sunday Contemplative Mass, you can visit the Welcome Centre after Mass or visit **saintbenedict.ca/serve**.

GROUPS UPDATE

I'm excited to share that at the end of this Fall's Alpha, we are launching at least eight Connect Groups and Discipleship Groups. These groups will extend the amazing Alpha experience and provide an environment where Alpha alumni can continue to connect, grow, and pray together on their journey of discipleship. Please pray for the successful launch of these groups and their leaders as we move towards a day when, as 'fishers of men' (Matthew 4:19), there will be no more catch and release!

GENEROSITY

There is something about Christmas that stirs up a spirit of generosity. I would like to thank all of our givers in advance: it is your generous financial giving that enables Saint Benedict Parish to fulfill its missionary mandate to raise up disciples of Jesus. In addition to our weekly collection, including the 4th Sunday of Advent, we rely particularly upon the Christmas collection for our financial well-being. Please consider how you might share with the church what God has so generously shared with you.

Saint Benedict carries a mortgage debt from the construction of the building. It continues to be paid down, but we have noticed a decline in giving to this particular need over the past year. Currently, the mortgage stands at about $390,000. The specific amount can be seen on the back of each issue of the Bene Dictus. Please prayerfully consider how you might help parish debt either by signing up through PAR or by making online donations at **saintbenedict.ca/give**.

On the feast of the Holy Family, the first Sunday after Christmas, we celebrate the mystery of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, embracing the mystery and trials of family life. One of the many, many hardships Jesus endured was being exiled from his home as a refugee when Mary and Joseph took their son and fled to Egypt to escape from Judea. As an expression of our solidarity with Christ and and all those who suffer exile around the world, we are very excited to announce an opportunity to be generous as a parish family by sponsoring a refugee family. We will announce the sponsorship at our Christmas Masses and follow-up with a collection specifically for the refugee family on a weekend shortly after Christmas. Stay tuned for further details on the family.

We wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour and King!

WAITING WITH JOHN

Stephanie Potter
Ora Ministry

This reflection is for next Sunday's Gospel, Matthew 11:2-11.

A time of transition. When John the Baptist appeared, it was to shake up the children of Israel. As a prophet, his calling was to unsettle them in their comfort and to call them to repentance. John the Baptist is the sort that sounds like a warrior Messiah – feisty, wild, eating locusts. Likely a Bear Grylls sort, come to think of it. When they made the movie The Greatest Story Ever Told, they cast none other than Charlton Heston to play John the Baptist. That's a man ready to come in and draw a crowd, at first for the spectacle, but then for the force of his conviction. It was a fractious time in Israel. They were a people groaning under the weight of foreign rule, whose Scriptures had foretold the coming of a Messiah who would finish the work promised to Abraham – to make them a great nation.

But John knew he wasn't the Messiah. Despite all the questions swirling around him, all the suspicions and gossip, he had met the Messiah when he was still in the womb and leapt for joy in recognition. He was ready and willing to cede his moment in the spotlight to the one Israel – and in fact the world – was waiting for. He had spent many years in the wilderness, making a way and preparing those with ears to listen. His entire life was designed around waiting and making room for the very thing the people didn't know they needed. Because what they needed wasn't a warrior King in the earthly sense. We need the same thing: we need a Messiah who comes

to conquer, not by waging war, but by sacrificing Himself.

So when John asks Jesus if He is the one to come, the Messiah, Jesus' answer is exactly right. He has come to heal, to cleanse, to raise the dead – He has come to save. He hadn't embarked on a massive military campaign, rallying the young and the able. Rather, He sought out the broken, the hurting, and the weak. This was the answer John needed. This was the answer John was waiting for his whole life. This was the answer that the world was holding its breath for. The Messiah has come to save us.

Stephanie is a contributor to Ora, where you can read reflections for the weekend Mass readings. Go to ***oraministry.weebly.com*** *to read more.*

ALPHA WEEKEND AWAY

Taya Vaci
Bene Dictus Team

The Holy Spirit was obviously present and working during the recent Alpha Weekend Away. An amazing 165 guests from five parishes participated, including people from Saint Benedict, Christ the King (Dartmouth), Holy Trinity (Sackville), Stella Maris (Spryfield), and Saint Ignatius (Bedford).

The most notable part of the weekend is the Holy Spirit talk, which is followed by an opportunity for guests to come forward and be prayed over by prayer team members. The time of prayer is private between guest and team, but the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is visible to everyone in the room.

During the final hours of the weekend, there is a time to share for anyone who wants to talk about their experiences of Alpha thus far. Here is some of what they said:

- One guest shared that they felt the Holy Spirit holding them during a time of Praise & Worship, and what a beautiful comfort that was.
- A guest shared that they felt Alpha allowed them to remove a metaphorical mask, and that it gave them immense relief.
- A family shared that Alpha was what connected them to Saint Benedict Parish. They even moved apartments to be closer to the church.
- One guest shared that they had lived in Debert, when it was a military barrack many years ago, and coming back made them realize that "the military did not build Debert; the Holy Spirit built Debert."

The Weekend Away is the foundation of the Alpha program. Alpha sees lost and broken people, some who would not even walk into a church, come out of the weekend healed from years of damage. It sees lifelong Christians experience the Holy Spirit in a real, tangible way.

Do you know someone who went to the Weekend Away? Ask them about it. If you've not yet tried Alpha, this should give you the inspiration to sign up for a winter session that will include a Weekend Away, one where you can experience the Holy Spirit alive in Debert!

ALPHA KIDS SAY...

Susan LeRue
Bene Dictus Team

Again this year, our parish is blessed to have Lisa Sutherland leading our Alpha Children's Ministry with the assistance of some very dedicated volunteers. On a recent Friday night, she asked the children at Alpha a few questions about Christmas. Please keep in mind that some of these children are churchgoers, while others are not. Enjoy, everyone!

Do you know where Jesus was born?
"He was born in Bethlehem." - *Zoe (age 8)*
"He was born in December." - *Vicky (6)*
"In a cottage." - *Karo (8)*

Who is Jesus?
"Jesus is my saviour and he is Mary and God's son." - *Eloho (7)*
"He is our Saviour and our healer and our creator." - *Rebecca (7)*
"God." - *Vicky*

Do you remember the gifts Jesus received when He was born?
"Frankincense and myrrh." - *Cruz (11)*
"Same as what Cruz said, and the little drummer boy played himself." - *Alexandra (9)*
"Um... One of them was a cylinder I think, and one was a square shape, and one was a diagonal triangle, I think?" - *Eloho, using her hands to make the shapes she described*
"Gold and coins, money!" - *Zoe*
"Oh! Love?" - *Vicky*

Where does Jesus live now?
"In Heaven, which is technically a separate dimension from this world, as I like to call it." - *Cruz*
"He lives everywhere, with every single one of us." - *Alexandra*
"Heaven! Oh, and on Easter he is on earth, but every other day he is not!" - Rebecca
"Sometimes he lives down here, sometimes he lives up there." - *Eloho*
"With us?" - *Ivana (6)*

Why did Jesus come to earth?
"To help us not sin and teach us to forgive." - *Alexandra*
"So he can prepare us for what is to come, or help us on our long journey." - *Cruz*
"To save us all from being evil." - *Eloho*

Is there a special tradition that you do every year with your family?
"We always get together with family and have ham or turkey." - *Alexandra*
"Every year we set up a stable with a manger and Jesus, Mary, and Joseph and all the animals and have it underneath the tree." - *Cruz*
"We usually go to my school to party at night, and we go on the stage and we sing all together." - *Vicky*
"My grandma and grandpa are staying with us." - *Ivana*

What is the happiest part of Christmas for you?
"Giving gifts to other people." - *Rebecca*
"The joy of spending time with family and knowing you are loved." - *Cruz*
"Being with my family and friends and God and Jesus and Mary." - *Zoe*

CONTEMPLATIVE MASS

Taya Vaci
Bene Dictus Team

The January 2020 shift in Mass times is soon approaching. With the restructuring of the Masses, we will have the opportunity to attend a 4pm Sunday Mass with a style that is unique from the other three Masses.

Peter Togni, the choir director of the 4pm Sunday Choir at Saint Benedict, as well as Fr. Alex Colautti, have been involved in the forming of this Sunday afternoon Mass. They have shared some aspects of what we can expect from the 4pm Sunday Contemplative Mass.

What are some things we can expect to experience during this new Mass that is different from the existing Masses?

PETER: The most noticeable items will be softer lighting, more incense, and bells. This Mass offers over a thousand years of tradition.

FR. ALEX: This Mass will feature similar style music to the existing 11:15 Mass, but it will also be rich in chant and other ancient forms of singing. The priest will chant the consecration, the congregation will chant the Our Father in Latin, and a few more of the Mass parts will be in Latin as well.

What will be the music style?

PETER: The music will be Gregorian chant in Latin, as well as chant in English. The nature of the music is that it invokes inner prayer and reflection, a chance to move away from the noise of the world and step into 'God time'. In this Mass, you will hear choral music from the 13th century to the present day, featuring many of the masters from the centuries, including Palestrina, Bach, Haydn, and Mozart.

Will there be a large Latin component, like in Latin Mass?

FR. ALEX: Saint Benedict is what is called a Roman Rite church, which means it emerges from the Roman liturgical tradition. One of the marks of this tradition is the use of Latin. We don't see the use of Latin too often, as most of the prayers are spoken in English, but we do see a role for a slightly expanded use of Latin in the Contemplative Mass over the current practice at the 11:15am. The hope is that it would be an expression of the beautiful tradition of the Roman Rite. It's still a Saint Benedict Parish Mass, which means most of the Mass will continue to be in the vernacular, and still include prayer partners, hospitality, the use of projectors, and many of the things that have come to characterize the way we worship at Saint Benedict.

Can anyone come to this Mass?

PETER: Absolutely! The Mass is contemplative in nature, but it's meant to be open and inclusive. We are all welcome for the chance to experiment with

possibilities in this expression. We will be able to draw more deeply from the great musical tradition of the church.

FR. ALEX: We have evidence of an increasing hunger for an experience of worship that brings people into deep contact with the transcendence of God through the beautiful musical and liturgical treasure of the Catholic Church. It is both ancient and new. I think of Saint Augustine, who referred to God as, "O Beauty ever ancient, ever new." My theory is that the more secular and noisier our modern world becomes, the more people yearn for an encounter with God in the sacred and transcendent. That's what we're seeing today, and I believe Saint Benedict Parish is a place uniquely positioned for people to have precisely that kind of encounter.

What about this new Mass are you most looking forward to?

PETER: I am most looking forward to the deep prayer and contemplation that will be at the heart of this Mass, and music that brings to mind holiness and the call to follow Christ. I am hoping that someone will be drawn to it who has had no experience with this liturgy.

What are your expectations for this Mass?

PETER: It is my hope that the 4pm Sunday Mass will be a true place of deep prayer and worship, and I hope it will also be a place of refuge, comfort, and hope.

FR. ALEX: My dream is that the Contemplative Mass will be a place where both churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike can walk through the front doors of Saint Benedict Parish and have profound encounters with the transcendent beauty of God through an experience of worship that they can't find anywhere else.

If you're interested in the new Contemplative Mass, you can check it out at 4pm on Sunday, January 5th, and every Sunday after that.

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PARISH STAFF PROFILE

Matt Vaughan
Communications Coordinator

Each month we'll be featuring a profile on one of the Saint Benedict Parish staff members so parishioners can get to know them a little better and get a better sense of what they do at the parish. This month, we're featuring Dinah Simmons.

What's your job at the parish?
DINAH: My job has changed a number of times over the years. I started out as Director of Religious Education. That changed to Director of Catechesis, then to Director of Faith Formation. I was also Pastoral Associate. There may have been a few others I don't even remember! I think what's on my name tag now is Director of Sacramental Preparation and Liturgy, though that could be simplified to Worship & Sacraments.

What staff team are you on?
I am on the Worship & Sacraments Team, and I am also on the Disciple Formation Team.

How long have you worked at the parish?
I started 20 years ago at St. Lawrence Parish and was part of the amalgamation of the three parishes that formed this one. I've been here at Saint Benedict since it opened.

What does your job entail? What's a typical week look like for you?
I oversee more than twenty ministries, and I really try to support and encourage them, to help them feel connected to the parish vision and Game Plan, and to work with the team leads on any issues. I do what I can to support and help them to feel part of the bigger picture of the parish and of our mission.

On Sundays, I'm often involved in PACT sessions (preparation for First Reconciliation and First Communion). I sit with the families at the 9am Mass and some weeks we head downstairs afterwards for a family-centred session. Often times during the week I'll meet with one or two team leaders from the ministries I oversee. And there are a lot of emails going back and forth with team leads. Then there's also regular staff team meetings, as well as working on things like the Prayers of the Faithful, preparing for various meetings, preparing for the next weekend, that sort of thing. I also do some Bible studies. And I'm the spiritual advisor for the Catholic Women's League. Those are some of the main things!

What do you like most about working at Saint Benedict Parish?
Definitely the people! Often when I'm at Mass, I watch the lines of people going to and from Communion, and I feel such a connection, such a love for them. I love seeing the families I've journeyed with in PACT and other ministries, seeing them get

more deeply connected and growing in faith. I am so grateful for the ministry leads, for their commitment and generosity. I work with such giving and loving people on our staff team and all the ministry teams. And I don't just work with them or for them; I journey in faith with them. I get to grow in my discipleship alongside them.

Do you have a favourite memory from your time working here?
What first comes to mind is being asked by Fr. Owen Connolly in my job interview if I would be able to do some adult faith formation. (My original job description was focused on children's faith formation.) I said "Sure," but I was thinking: *there's no way I can speak to groups of grown-ups; that's way too scary*. But I took it on. Journeying in faith with adults has become such a rich experience, such a gift: learning together, praying together, sharing one another's stories. In particular, I have loved doing Bible studies. I've lost track of how many I've done!

There was also the time when some parishioners nominated me for the Elizabeth Seton award, given by the Sisters of Charity. They said they wanted to recognize my support and encouragement during the time of transition from three parishes to one. At the award luncheon, so many of them were there; it was a great joy and a great blessing for me.

Many of the same parishioners – and my Bible study friends in particular – secretly took up a collection so I could join one of Fr. James' pilgrimages to the Holy Land. That was certainly the trip of a lifetime and I was overwhelmed by such generosity.

Finally, all the people who came to Mom's funeral, and to my Aunt Mary's funeral, all the people who were so kind to them every time I brought them to Mass or to parish events. I am so deeply grateful for the ways our parishioners have shown God's love to me.

What do you like to do outside of work?
I'm a big fan of mystery stories; I've read every Agatha Christie. I love reading in general, and in addition to mysteries I read poetry and lots of books on spirituality. I love board games. My daughter has a huge collection so we play lots of different ones. I enjoy doing crossword puzzles. I love to swim. I enjoy going for walks. I also volunteer with the. St. Vincent de Paul Society, I'm an Associate of the Sisters of Charity, and I'm on the board of a local non-profit organization. I enjoy spending time whenever I can with my grandson Elliott, who just turned two, and I am always happy being with my family.

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CHRISTMAS UNPLUGGED

Matt Kerrigan
Bene Dictus Team

Advent is a wonderful time of anticipation. From the beginning, we encounter many signs that something of great importance is coming to our spiritual lives. We begin to count the weeks with our Advent wreath, or even the days on an Advent calendar. Our eagerness is rewarded in great celebrations on December 23rd, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day, and then spilling over into the days of Christmas. An important part of our celebrations at Saint Benedict Parish is Christmas Unplugged.

It all started with an idea that staff member Rob McDowell had. He proposed a Christmas Eve service, not a Mass, for those people who don't attend church on a regular basis but who feel drawn to church at Christmas. Making Rob's idea come to life has involved great teamwork and inspired leadership, especially from Laura O'Rourke, Director of Children's Ministry, and Judy Savoy, the Worship Arts Coordinator.

Here is Laura's take on this beautiful celebration:

"Christmas is a time when people seek spirituality on a deeper level. By the end of the Advent

season, people are feeling the pressure of the season and looking for that peace on earth that angels sang about on that night in Bethlehem. Christmas Unplugged was created to be a place for these people to wander into.

"As beautiful and life-giving as a Christmas Mass is, it can also be overwhelming and confusing to someone who has never attended one, or who hasn't attended one in a long time. Christmas Unplugged is meant to make stepping into a church at Christmas a little easier.

"Like Jesus, born in a stable where shepherds could enter without shame, Christmas Unplugged was created to meet people where they are: families of excited children and earnest parents looking for the real meaning of Christmas in the hustle and bustle of the season.

"Christmas Unplugged is aimed at families with children who are not regularly attending Mass at Saint Benedict Parish. It allows our Saint Benedict community to

practice our invitational culture, because it is the ideal thing to invite families to at Christmas time. It is also for those in our church family to attend with invited guests, serve, and engage their children in the joy of the season.

"With Christmas carols, stories, and poems, generations will be able to participate in the joy of the season together. After a special visit from a certain 'jolly old elf', families will be reminded of the real meaning of Christmas with a Gospel message and will be invited into that peace on earth by worshiping the newborn King by candlelight. Members of our Saint Benedict hospitality team will be waiting for guests on their way out with apple cider and candy canes."

All are welcome! Invite your friends and neighbours to start their Christmas celebration at this family-friendly church service on Monday, December 23rd from 6:30pm to 7:30pm.

UPCOMING EVENTS

at Saint Benedict Parish

DEC 10 - Advent Reconciliation Drama

DEC 11 - Advent Day of Reconciliation

DEC 14 - Gregorian Prayer Night

DEC 23 - Christmas Unplugged

DEC 24-25 - Christmas Eve & Christmas Day

For full event details, be sure to subscribe to The Overview by visiting saintbenedict.ca and scrolling to the bottom of the page!

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES

Christmas Eve:
7:30pm & 11pm
Christmas Day:
9am & 11:15am

CHRISTMAS UNPLUGGED

December 23rd: 6:30-7:30pm

for more information, go to saintbenedict.ca/christmas

Connect Groups

Alpha Team

Ministry

Alpha

Discipleship Groups

Invitational Church

How Saint Benedict Parish forms disciples who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus Christ

Worship

THE GAME PLAN

PARISH STAFF TEAM

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Office@SaintBenedict.ca

If you are interested in the sacraments of baptism or marriage at Saint Benedict Parish, please note that in addition to preparation, we require that you get in touch with us a minimum of three months in advance of your hoped-for date for baptism and one year prior to your desired wedding date.

For information on baptisms, please email Carol: **baptisms@saintbenedict.ca**.

For information on weddings, please email Deacon David: **weddings@saintbenedict.ca**.

For information on preparation for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion, please email **PACT@saintbenedict.ca**.

For information on becoming Catholic, please email **RCIA@saintbenedict.ca**.

For funerals, or to be connected with our funeral ministry team, please call the parish office at **902-443-0725** and listen to the prompts.

FINANCIAL UPDATE - OCTOBER 2019

SUNDAY COLLECTIONS	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
ENVELOPES	1,140	$36,825	$27.18
PAR (PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE)	429	$60,281	$140.52*
LOOSE	-	$6,097	-
ONLINE	-	$1,262	-
TOTAL	-	$98,620	-
PARISH DEBT REDUCTION	**RECEIVED**	**TOTAL**	**AVERAGE**
ENVELOPES	121	$4,003	$33.08
PAR (PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE)	59	$3,057	$51.81*
MORTGAGE BALANCE (AS OF MONTH END)			$389,854
PRINCIPAL PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			$9,928
INTEREST PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			$1,509
TOTAL PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			$11,438

*NOTE: PAR average includes weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly withdrawals, which are totalled and divided by the number of givers.

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