OCTOBER 2019

BENEDICTUS

PHOTO: JOHN RAE

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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 November 9th/ 10th.

On the cover:
Parishioners in the foyer after Mass.

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

BREAKING NEWS, BREAKING BARRIERS

We are approaching the end of a five week preaching series: **Breaking Barriers**. Our parish vision is to be "a healthy and growing faith community that brings people to Christ, forms disciples, and sends them out to transform the world." The success that God has accomplished through our shared ministry at Saint Benedict has brought us to barriers that we need to break through to see continued growth. On the weekend of September 29th, I explained two such barriers: the **Back Door Problem** and the **Front Door Problem**. Discussions about these topics began over nine months ago with the Parish Leadership Team (formerly known as the Senior Leadership Team) and the Parish Pastoral Council. Much time, prayer, and deliberation took place before we arrived at these decisions. If you were not able to be present to hear the homilies throughout the whole series, **I strongly encourage you to watch them on Livestream**: livestream.com/saintbenedictparish

THE BACK DOOR PROBLEM

In the last 12 months, we've had 535 people take part in Alpha, including our Alpha team. We are thrilled at the impact of reaching so many people, especially because many of these people are not attending church. We believe that the best way to keep Alpha grads involved is to get them into a Connect Group or a Discipleship Group where they can have faith-centred relationships. Unfortunately, even though we've seen more success with Alpha, we have not done a great job of bridging the gap afterwards. At most, 20% of the Alpha grads have taken a next step into a group. We are losing people out the Back Door.

In response to this, we are going to be focusing

continued on next page

FATHER SIMON SAYS continued

our energy on helping as many people as possible to get into groups. We will be experimenting with our current Connect Group and Discipleship Group models by bringing them under the same umbrella, introducing a bit more flexibility, and offering increased support to the group leaders. I think this is a Spirit-led direction for groups at the parish. My dream is that one day we'd see everyone in a group!

THE FRONT DOOR PROBLEM

Fr. Alex began *Breaking Barriers* by pointing out that we see about 1400 people through our doors on average every weekend, but this is only about 2% of the 60,000 people living in our area. While we are one of the largest churches in Atlantic Canada, we need to reach beyond to the other 98% for Christ!

Our church has a maximum seating capacity of 650. Studies show that when a church is 80% full, it feels so full that people actually stop coming, and they might never return. We want to be a healthy, growing faith community, bringing people to Christ - not turning them away because of space issues.

We have been counting attendance at Saint Benedict since 2017, and we conducted a survey at all of the weekend Masses in August of this year. Here are some of the findings:
- The 9am Mass has been overfull for years, and last year it was on average 90% full. The next biggest Mass is only 54% full, so there is room for growth at other Masses.
- The 11:15am and 6pm Masses on Sunday have both seen an attendance decrease of 6.4% and 10%, respectively, since 2017.
- It has been very hard to find people to serve in ministries at the 6pm Mass.
- Across the board, parishioners were very willing to invite people to the parish. 57% of the people at the 9am Mass have invited someone. The other three Masses ranged from 33% to 41% of attendees making invitations.
- Parishioners at all of the Masses would invite their friends to the Mass they attend. However, inviting others to the 9am Mass was the second most popular choice at all of the other three Masses.

We want to create worship environments that are so engaging and prayerful that we would feel confident and enthusiastic about inviting an unchurched person to any Mass. In order to make space for the people we love (the 98%), we will be making adjustments to our weekend Masses, which includes ending our 6pm Mass. The changes are as follows:
- Saturday at 4pm - Kim Sampson (our current 6pm choir leader) will lead a full choir
- Sunday at 9am & 11:15am - both Masses will have a contemporary Praise & Worship style of music and be family-friendly with increased Children's Ministry
- Sunday at 4pm - Peter Togni will lead a traditional choir at a new Mass that we're calling our 'Contemplative Mass', as it will have dimmed lights, incense, chant, and more.

We are really excited about how we as a parish can continue to grow with these new changes. Many, many parishioners have shared their support for what is to come. A few have expressed sadness, and I want to acknowledge that.

Please use this opportunity as a moment to pray for our whole Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth, which is experiencing a great deal of far more dramatic changes as parishes are being merged and buildings are being closed. May all of these sacrifices lead to many more people coming to experience the difference of knowing Jesus.

MIND THE GAP

Lindsay Elford
Ora Ministry

This reflection is on next Sunday's Gospel, Luke 18:1-8.

Jesus' question, "Will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night?" reminds me of Luke 11:11-13, where he asks: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" Jesus is emphasizing God's goodness – he wants to reassure us that God is not like the unjust judge – that he has our best interests in mind, will answer our prayers, will grant justice, that he will help us.

This gospel highlights the epicentre of faith: that we must trust in God. Jesus is insistent here that God is trustworthy, and he should know. And one could say that we should just listen to him. But is it really that simple? How many of us, in our human struggles, have prayed desperate prayers that have not been answered as we have asked? How many of us have felt that God has delayed long in helping us? We can't ignore this stumbling block in faith. If we have experienced the disappointment, the devastation of unanswered prayer, we can easily become discouraged.

The beautiful thing here is that Jesus acknowledges that he understands this human tendency when he asks, hypothetically, "And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" He sees the difficulty, understands the complexity, and feels our pain. This is why he begins by emphasizing that we shouldn't lose heart. He doesn't explain the 'why' of our suffering, or the suffering around us. But for me, there is comfort in the knowledge that he understands my pain – because in his Passion, he trusted God with every unimaginable, excruciating step of the way.

As a parent, I know that I can't always protect my children from the pain of loss, or pain that has been inflicted by others. Also, although I am tempted to do so, I know that it is of no benefit to my children for me to take away the pain of a lesson that needs to be learned. It has taken me years to learn, but I now know that the best thing I can do is reassure them of my love with my presence, acknowledge whatever they feel, feel it with them, forgive them and their adversaries, and in doing so, share the weight of the pain. I, like many of our earthly parents, am not always perfect in this, but God is a perfect parent. I believe that this is what Jesus wants us to hear. He will sit with us, reassure us of his love, understand what we feel, forgive us and others, and in doing so, share the burden. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest," (Matthew 11:28). Jesus will bridge the gap between us and God, between our lack of understanding and God's all-knowing goodness.

Pray always, and do not lose heart.

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

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 Ryan Orlando.

What's your job at the parish?
RYAN: I am the Facility Manager for Saint Benedict Parish.

What staff team are you on?
I'm on the Mission Support Team.

How long have you worked at Saint Benedict Parish?
I've worked here for three and a half years.

What does your job entail? What's a typical week look like for you?
I'm responsible for the maintenance, security, and upkeep of the church and grounds. I oversee and foster relationships with contractors, suppliers and volunteers to manage all of the repairs and maintenance projects, building upgrades, and outsourcing and purchasing of building supplies. I also work with all the Ministry Leaders and make sure Saint Benedict Parish provides a functional and safe space for each ministry.

What do you like most about working at Saint Benedict Parish?
What I like most about working at Saint Benedict is the people. I've never had a job where I work alongside people who actually care about me, my family, my spiritual life, and my general well-being.

Do you have a favourite memory from your time working here?
When we hosted the DR16 and DR18 conferences. It was great to work with the vast number of parishioners who volunteered to help host the conference, as well as witnessing their enjoyment and sense of community throughout the entire event.

What do you like to outside of work?
My hobbies include camping, playing guitar, playing in the praise and worship band at Saint Benedict, watching movies, and spending time with my family.

SCIENCE & FAITH

John Rae
Bene Dictus Team

Theologian and philosopher Fr. Robert Spitzer (who you may know from the DVD course *In the Beginning: Evidence for God from Physics* that was offered at Saint Benedict in 2014) writes that conversion takes place on three levels. The intellectual, that deals with the external evidence for God, the moral, that enables us to live an actively virtuous life, and the spiritual, that strengthens our love for God.

One of our parishioners, Robin Arthur, has just written and published a book called *Science and the God Elusion*, where he broaches the intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects of our faith. In the foreword to the book, Dr. Stephen Weppner makes the point, "To attract an open-minded perceptive individual in a dialogue on science and God, there needs to be a generous dose of humility." Robin's grasp of his subject matter and writing style gives a clarity and conciseness to the points that he makes, and he comes across as someone who is gently sharing his profound insights with you.

His topics include the following: modern science, the new-atheists, evolution, the scientific and the spiritual, the moral law, religion and evil, and God's relevance today. By themselves, these can be fairly heady topics, but Robin's approach is that our gateway to these somewhat abstract considerations is through the particulars of our lived lives. To that end, he shares the personal struggles that he and his wife Theresa have gone through as they have

grappled with some deep issues in their lives. His personal journey also includes working in an environment of interfaith dialogue and spiritual diversity, so there are insights from that perspective as well. For someone who is looking for a well-written book that will give you some profound things to ponder and can function as an 'on ramp' to a deeper stage of your spiritual journey, I highly recommend Robin's book.

If you are interested in getting a copy of his book, either in paperback or Ebook format, it is listed on Amazon.ca and Barnes & Noble (BN.com).

MEN'S LEADERSHIP GYM

Matt Kerrigan
Bene Dictus Team

Every Friday morning at about 6:45, cars start rolling into the parking lot at Saint Benedict Parish. It's the men arriving for GYM (God, You, and Me). Not the gym for a physical workout, but the **Men's Leadership GYM** that provides a great workout for the spirit. 20 to 30 men come together every Friday (no weeks off!) for a talk, small group sharing, and Praise & Worship. They gather in the auditorium, grab a coffee, and by 7am they are underway. They always finish promptly at 8am as some members are off to work.

Ron Huntley, who started the Men's Leadership GYM, shared with me about how it almost didn't get started. He had been trying to start a men's prayer breakfast in Moncton before moving to Halifax. Since it hadn't come together, he had gone to Plan B: forming a Friday morning men's prayer group. He took this plan with him to Halifax. Although he didn't have high hopes based on his first experience, it all turned around when he encountered the enthusiasm of Adam Axworthy and Craig Sampson. When they were invited to join him, they came with enthusiasm. After that first meeting they asked if they could bring others. The next week more men showed up. Week after week, it continued to grow.

Ron was a veteran of Toastmasters and suggested that it would add to the dynamic energy of the group if each member prepared and gave a talk from time to time. Each take their turn giving a 15-20 minute talk when they feel ready. Their talks reflect their own life experience and journey of faith. After the talk, members get together in small groups to share their take on the talk. The ideas shared in small group discussions allow each member to make

the talk take root in their personal lives. Volunteers take on a variety of roles. Two of the key roles are performed by Scott LeBlanc (MC) and Mark Pilon (recorder). Scott introduces members and their roles and helps everyone adhere to the spirit of the gathering. Mark provides members with a summary and verbatim recording of the talk by email each week. Mark also keeps a calendar of scheduled speakers. Music ministry, prayer lead, coffee, and set up are shared among members with gifts in those areas.

For a deeper understanding of the impact of GYM, I asked for some comments.

"Proverbs 27:17 embodies what is at the heart of the Men's Leadership GYM: 'As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.' It's about supporting one another with the struggles that we as husbands, fathers, grandfathers, sons face in today's world," Scott Leblanc says. "We need other men supporting, encouraging and holding us accountable to live the lives God has in store for us. I've heard it said that God loves us just the way we are, but too much to leave us that way. GYM is the place that God shows his love for us but, through the men who attend, helps us become the men he calls us to be."

"Have you ever noticed that during family gatherings there are times when the men tend to gravitate together and talk amongst themselves?" asks Mark Pilon. "The Church is also a family, and there are times when men in the Church prefer to gather together and spend time with each other and to worship God. The Friday morning Men's Leadership GYM fulfils that need. There I can get the support and encouragement I need from other men through personal testimonies, talks about the Church's teachings, and being prayed over during difficult times. These are times of mutual support and here I have learned we men share many common struggles and issues."

"Men's GYM has been instrumental in growing me as a man and as a Connect Group leader at Saint Benedict Parish," says John Kuehn. "When I first attended, I was nervous and afraid of being judged by others, especially men. The environment of support and prayer – and to keep trying – helped me to become stronger in my faith, and as a leader of Praise & Worship! I give the GYM credit for supporting me through my post-Alpha faith transformation into a man who looks to Jesus for guidance and support."

Men's Leadership GYM is open and welcoming, and it meets downstairs in the auditorium at 6:45am every Friday morning. Why not join?

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MEET DAN RAMOS

Taya Vaci
Bene Dictus Team

By now we've probably all noticed a new face serving on the altar: Seminarian Daniel Ramos. He is in seminarian formation for the Companions of the Cross, and over the next 10 months we'll have an opportunity to welcome Dan into our parish. He kindly agreed to give us all a head start on getting to know him better.

Tell me about your discernment of the priesthood.

DAN: The idea of priesthood NEVER crossed my mind growing up. In 2011, when I was 20, I went to World Youth Day Spain and my interest in the priesthood was triggered by the young priests I saw there. The defining moment was at the end of 2012 when I felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to give priesthood serious consideration. I entered the seminary in 2014, shortly after obtaining a political science degree in university.

What led you to specifically join the Companions of the Cross?

While at a conference for young adults in Vancouver, I met vocations director (at the time) Fr. Allan Macdonald and Bishop Scott McCaig. I was really impressed by their community. What really drew me in was their strong brotherhood, the primary focus on evangelization, and the charismatic aspect of the community's vision and life.

COMPANIONS OF THE CROSS

How did you end up at Saint Benedict Parish?

Our community knows a lot about Saint Benedict from reading Divine Renovation. I also knew Fr. Simon very well and spent a few years living with Fr. Alex while he was a seminarian studying in Detroit. I wanted to learn from these brothers, and I most definitely wanted to experience all the amazing things happening here. I put Saint Benedict Parish as my number one choice for my parish placement and I got it!

Had you been to Nova Scotia before? Do you have a bucket list of things you would like to see or do here?

Yes! I spent 3 months in Halifax in the Summer of 2012 while on a mission trip with Catholic Christian Outreach. Here's my Nova Scotia Bucket List:
1. Eat lots of lobster
2. Surf
3. Do a local micro-brewery tour
4. Sail
5. Hike (or just see Nova Scotia's nature)
6. Skate on a frozen pond (I've never done this before!)

I'm open to suggestions!

Fr. Simon is known for his love of shawarma. Fr. Alex is known for his skinny jeans style. What is a fun fact about you?

I love everything about coffee shop culture. On my days off, you're pretty much guaranteed to find me at a coffee shop sipping on a latté and reading, writing, getting some other work done, catching up with friends, or all of the above. Hmm... Maybe I'll have my ordination reception at a coffee shop... (Just kidding!)

What is your hometown like?

Vancouver is my home. My parents immigrated there from the Philippines in the late 1980s. I have a sister and a brother, but I am the baby of the family. My home parish in Vancouver is pastored by Fr. James Hughes, who interestingly studied in the seminary with Fr. James Mallon!

Anything else about yourself you would like to share?

Growing up in the great city of Vancouver, I always heard the phrase "West Coast, best coast." Do I live by that motto? For the sake of making friends out here, I'm open to being convinced otherwise! So far, the East Coast hospitality I've experienced Halifax is making a convincing case!

Welcome to Saint Benedict Parish, Dan! We know your next 10 months with our amazing community is going to be a wonderful experience! East Coast, best coast! You'll see!

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21 DAYS OF PRAYER STORIES

Susan LeRue
Bene Dictus Team

Saint Benedict is an evangelizing, welcoming parish. We love to see and meet new people coming to our Church. That is the culture here. We're often encouraged to invite others to Alpha, and with that in mind, we thought you would all enjoy some examples of invitations to Alpha guests given by our parishioners. Enjoy!

COLIN MACMILLAN: Just today, I re-invited our son-in-law and gave him one of the cards for this Fall's Alpha session. We keep trying to get our family to go. Maybe some day... The 11:02 reminder on my phone was a great idea (although it sometimes went off in an awkward place, like the elevator or a meeting).

LYNDA TYLER: Having the little prayer card reminders is a wonderful idea. However, it seemed that the majority of the people I asked had already been to Alpha. Then, I happened to pick up a pamphlet that had the words 'Let go... and let God.' Later in the week, through the ministry of the Consolation Choir (which sings at funerals), a woman approached me and said that she had never felt so welcome and so at home in a church, and she wanted information about the parish. The Holy Spirit gave me a poke and said "It's your turn." Subsequently, a similar event occurred when I happened to be speaking with a couple who told me they had been away from their faith for a number of years. It was another perfect opening to tell them about Alpha. I continue to pray daily that they and all those who have been invited will find themselves hearing and experiencing the love of the Holy Spirit through the message of Alpha.

GREG EWERT: During my few terms with Alpha, I dutifully tried to invite people. My ask was genuine but my fragile ego was ready to run away at the smallest "No, thank you," or, "Maybe I'll consider it." Now I have a very useful and wonderfully easy tool to help me in my ask, those really neat business card-

size Alpha invitations. I made a point to keep a few in my shirt pocket every day. I was surprised at how many instances the Holy Spirit created for me to easily bring up the concept of Alpha with a friend or a stranger and where it was natural to pull out the Alpha invitation and give it with confidence.

I encourage everyone to keep a few of these cards with them throughout the year. You will be surprised at the times where the topic of Alpha comes up; and you can then simply reach into your pocket or purse, pull out this card, and give it to them. I also thought the prayer time (11:02) was an excellent way of keeping Alpha invitations on the forefront in your mind.

SUSAN LERUE: I was fishing for mackerel recently. It's always a great time to chat with people strolling by and asking, "Catch anything?" People are generally very friendly. This particular day the hot topics seemed to be the impending hurricane and the fires in South America, which soon developed into a great opportunity to pass them an Alpha invitation. That day I met and invited two couples I had never met before. I caught six mackerel and hopefully four people. I pray for them everyday at 11:02 when my Fitbit alerts me. I have no idea if they will come to Alpha or not. I did my part, now it's God's turn.

UPCOMING EVENTS

at Saint Benedict Parish

OCT 14 - Thanksgiving, Office Closed

OCT 15 - Memorial Mass at 9am

OCT 19 - Praise & Worship Night, 7:30pm

OCT 25-26 - Assembly of the People of God (Archdiocesan Assembly)

NOV 2-3 - Alpha Weekend Away

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

SaintBP Serve

At Saint Benedict Parish, we encourage all our members to serve in ministry. We have opportunities with hospitality, community outreach, children & youth, and more. Find out more at:

SAINTBENEDICT.CA/SERVE

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

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PARISH STAFF TEAM

CATHERINE GOULD (ex 27)
Discipleship Groups
CatherineG@SaintBenedict.ca

PHIL MARMEN
Music Ministry
PhilM@SaintBenedict.ca

ROB MCDOWELL (ex 26)
Preaching Support
RobM@SaintBenedict.ca

TANYA NOYE (ex 28)
Alpha & Engagement
TanyaN@SaintBenedict.ca

RYAN ORLANDO (ex 40)
Facilities
RyanO@SaintBenedict.ca

LAURA O'ROURKE
Children's Ministry
LauraO@SaintBenedict.ca

COREY ROBINSON
Youth Ministry
CoreyR@SaintBenedict.ca

KATE ROBINSON (ex 29)
Mission Support Team Leader
KateR@SaintBenedict.ca

PETER SALAH
Audiovisual
PeterS@SaintBenedict.ca

BILL SCOLLARD (ex 39)
Disciple Formation Team Leader
BillS@SaintBenedict.ca

ARLENE SIBLEY (ex 30)
Game Plan Support & Pastor's Assistant
ArleneS@SaintBenedict.ca

DINAH SIMMONS (ex 24)
Worship & Sacraments
DinahS@SaintBenedict.ca

MATT VAUGHAN (ex 42)
Communications
MattV@SaintBenedict.ca

CHRIS YETMAN (ex 21)
Finance
ChrisYetman@SaintBenedict.ca

FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES
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 - AUGUST 2019

SUNDAY COLLECTIONS	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
ENVELOPES	1,014	$30,348	$29.93
PAR (PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE)	434	$63,150	$145.51*
LOOSE	-	$5,841	-
ONLINE	-	$392.84	-
TOTAL	-	$99,732	-
PARISH DEBT REDUCTION	**RECEIVED**	**TOTAL**	**AVERAGE**
ENVELOPES	122	$3,951	$32.39
PAR (PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE)	60	$3,202	$53.37*
MORTGAGE BALANCE (AS OF MONTH END)			$409,721
PRINCIPAL PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			$9,851
INTEREST PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			$1,586
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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