DECEMBER 2017

BENE DICTUS

P11 . . . . . .
WHAT'S YOUR (FAITH) STORY? MEET FLORA

P8 . . . . . .
CHRISTMAS UNPLUGGED

SAINT BENEDICT PARISH

45 Radcliffe Drive
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902-443-0725

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

WEEKDAY MASS
Monday to Friday 9am

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

Bene Dictus is your monthly newsletter available in print or in your email inbox.

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!

Please visit the Welcome Centre.

@SaintBP livestream.com/SaintBenedictParish

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SAINT BENEDICT PARISH CLERGY

Pastor, Fr. Simon Lobo, CC
Permanent Deacon, Dcn. David Viscount
Associate Pastor, Fr. Jim O'Connor
Intern Priest, Fr. Matthew Keshwah
Episcopal Vicar for Parish Renewal, Fr. James Mallon

FATHER SIMON SAYS...

Being the month of December, I hope that there will be many guests joining us at the parish. If you are reading this and you are one of these guests, I would like to say: Welcome!

I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOMED ME

As I mentioned in my homily on the Solemnity of Christ the King, we dream of being the kind of church that has an outward focus. Our Saint Benedict Game Plan (the big picture strategy for how we form disciples) begins with an icon representing an 'Invitational Church'. For me, this includes two main dynamics: 1. We go out and invite, and 2. We welcome guests with love.

In fact, we have a brand new Welcome Centre, which is a tangible gesture that great hospitality is a top priority for us. During the weekend Masses, you will see it front and centre in our foyer, because we want to make it easy for us to connect with people who are new or visiting our parish. Thanks to Chris Yetman and all the team who worked to make the Welcome Centre a reality. If you want to help us in this ministry, please sign-up at: saintbenedict.ca/saintbpserve, or visit the Welcome Centre.

THE GOD OF SURPRISES

Fr. Bob Bedard, the Founder of the Companions of the Cross, often spoke of how we should get used to God doing the unexpected. A few weeks ago, the Divine Renovation Ministry opened up a job posting for an office manager. I understand that several amazing candidates applied, but in the end they offered the position to Jen Ferrier.

continued on next page

FATHER SIMON SAYS continued

Jen has coordinated Alpha at Saint Benedict for the last five years. As she moves across the hall to serve with Divine Renovation, we are sad to see her go, but we are so excited for how God will use her gifts to serve the broader Church. We are not opening up a job posting, in the immediate future, for a coordinator for Alpha. We are praying and planning about our next steps, but rest assured that evangelization through Alpha will continue to remain a top priority.

PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

I know I began by welcoming guests at Christmas, but I'm getting ahead of myself. I've been hearing Christmas music playing since November 1st. That said, before we celebrate the birth of the Saviour, the Church offers us an important season of preparation called Advent. Over these first four weekends in December, we have a preaching series entitled *Room for Waiting*. I would ask you to lean into these four weeks of Advent as a time of waiting. In some ways, Advent is like Lent, so you might consider taking on a little spiritual practice or offering up a small penance. Remember: good things come to those who wait!

DATES AND TIMES

This year, the 4th Sunday of Advent and Christmas are on the heels of each other, which makes for a bit of holy chaos. There will only be two Masses on the 4th weekend of Advent (Saturday, December 23rd at 4pm and Sunday, December 24th at 10am). That's correct, we are merging our two Sunday morning Masses into one that day, in the interest of not overtaxing all who serve. Nevertheless, I would ask you to please make an effort to come to Mass on the 4th Sunday of Advent, as it is still considered a holy day of obligation.

Christmas Eve starts later that afternoon with Christmas Unplugged at 4pm. This non-liturgical service has grown over the last couple of years and is a wonderful way of being an Invitational Church. Please invite friends and family who don't normally go to church to check out this family-friendly service. See page 12 for the Christmas schedule.

A SEASON OF GENEROSITY

With Christmas Eve on a Sunday this year please remember that there are 2 envelopes for that weekend – our regular Sunday offering and Christmas offering overlap. These two collections are always considered separate, but this can be a bit confusing when Christmas Eve falls on a weekend. As we budget for both of these collections it would have a negative impact on our financial health to see a drop in either one. For those on PAR, a reminder that included in your package of special collection envelopes is one for Christmas. Thank you for your generosity to the parish throughout the year and through the final weeks of December.

May Advent & Christmas be a blessed time for you and your families!

GRIEF SUPPORT

Peter Mallette
Bene Dictus Team

Every day is a tough day when you grieve, but anyone who has experienced the loss of a loved one will tell you that the Christmas season can be particularly difficult.

Anne MacMillan, leader of the Saint Benedict Parish Grief Support Group says people are often flooded with a mix of complicated emotions at Christmas, and wonder how they will ever survive the holidays in their sadness and loneliness. MacMillan says the Grief Support Group is the most beautiful ministry to be involved with because you witness healing, and it makes you humble and grateful. "It's a pure privilege to be a part of."

The Saint Benedict Parish Grief Support Group was established in 2010 to provide friendship to people who are grieving, to be there for them, and to listen to them. The group meets the third Tuesday of every month (September to June) at 7pm in the St. Joseph Room. Each meeting normally attracts between 14 and 16 people. Most have lost spouses, but the group is open to anyone, regardless of their age, denomination, or where they live.

Anne MacMillan says when someone loses a loved one, the unrealistic expectation is that they get over it quickly, keep a stiff upper lip and fall back into a regular routine as quickly as possible, and if you can't do that, then there's something drastically wrong with you. Unrealistic indeed!

What makes the Saint Benedict Grief Support Group different from a secular group is the infusion of faith and prayer. "Each meeting begins with music that is tranquil and faith-filled." That's followed by a meditative prayer, and a Bible reading that reflects the theme of each get-together. The first half of the meeting focuses on prayer and study; the second half gives individuals time to talk. "No one has to say a word if they don't want to. There's no pressure to speak or share. Some people attend a whole year and never open their mouth, and that's ok."

MacMillan adds that trust is also paramount. "What's discussed in that room stays in that room."

MacMillan says, "Grief is a (healing) process and there's no time limit." She says it can take years for the pain to go away so that people can put the energy they regain, back into purpose and life activities. "It's also about finding Christ as a friend – not unlike Alpha."

MacMillan, a former nurse, says people are suffering and it's not being addressed because of the innate fear of death we have. Her personal motivation for being involved in ministry is to give hope to loss, and life to death. She says the Grief Support Group does that by providing people with hope, and showing them that in their loneliness and pain they are loved and not alone.

The next meeting of the SBP Grief Support Group is Tuesday, December 19th at 7pm. For more information, please contact Anne MacMillan at 902 443 1646.

DIVINE RENOVATION: FR. MICHAEL

Mia Ryan
Bene Dictus Team

It was a pleasure to interview Fr Michael LeClerc, the pastor of St. Ignatius of Loyola Parish. Many parishioners will remember him as the friendly and committed priest intern here at Saint Benedict Parish from January to June 2016.

Tell us about your parish.

St. Ignatius of Loyola Parish is located in the city of Montreal, next to Concordia University, and it is one of a small number of English-speaking parishes in a primarily French-speaking city. It is mid-sized for the diocese, with an average of 500 people attending Mass over the weekend.

What do you love about your parish?

I love the mix of parishioners – young, young at heart and so many who are saying 'Yes!' to our renewed vision for our parish. It is exciting that there is a core group of parishioners who are already disciples, and there are so many more who are excited by the many changes and our new direction.

Does your parish have a vision statement?

Yes, it is; We are a welcoming and joyful spiritual home where people encounter Jesus, choose to follow him and become fully alive. We are missionary disciples helping all people to know, love, and serve Christ and His Kingdom.

When did you first come across Divine Renovation? And what excited you about it?

I had heard of the book but I hadn't yet read it when I was approached by Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Dowd to do an internship at Saint Benedict Parish. As soon as I accepted it, I devoured the book and was so excited to see what was possible for a parish.

How has Divine Renovation impacted your parish?

Divine Renovation has called us to be a parish where people can really belong. This was lived out when we started having welcomers at our doors at Mass. On the feast of Corpus Christi, two of our welcomers spoke with a young family with great warmth, excitement, and so upheld the parish's values. This couple

and their daughter were 'church shopping', as they just moved into the area and were trying to find the best church for them. They felt so loved by the welcome they received that they kept returning and forged a friendship with the welcomers. When their second daughter was born, the two welcomers were asked to be the child's godparents.

What role has evangelization played in your Divine Renovation?
Evangelization has been key in two ways – ensuring quality experiences and creating an invitational culture. We strive to have a positive Alpha and weekend Mass experience so that parishioners want to invite others. We have also been intentional about creating an invitational culture through always seeking opportunities to talk about it and model it.

How has your parish's experience of the power of the Holy Spirit changed?
We never used to speak about the Holy Spirit – He used to be seen as a benign force. Yet now we believe that the Holy Spirit is an active force and an agent of transformation. We allow room for the Holy Spirit to work and the Holy Spirit takes up all the room that you give it!

Tell me about your Senior Leadership Team. How has it been impacted by Divine Renovation?
My Senior Leadership Team has reinvigorated my priesthood. I have a group of people who I love and trust, who are fully committed to success. I am now never alone in making decisions and we work through issues together to get the best solution. Also, they always push me to be better and to stay focused, so we will never stray into maintenance mode with them around!

What is your dream for your parish?
That everyone has deep and lasting friendships that they have made in the parish and can't wait to worship with them at Mass.

Father Michael wanted to make a special note and say that he misses everyone in the parish and so is really looking forward to seeing everyone when he comes to the Divine Renovation Conference in June, 2018.

UPDATE FROM THE SEMINARY

Dear family, friends & parishioners,

I am in my third year of studies and formation at St. Augustine's Seminary of Toronto for the Diocesan Priesthood of the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth. I am journeying with seven other men who are studying from four other Canadian dioceses. This fall, our Theology Studies have included: Prophetic Literature; Creation, Anthropology & Sin; Christology; Pastoral Counselling; & Introduction to Homiletics. Once again we are blessed with fantastic professors comprising priests, a deacon, and laypeople.

This fall marked our first concrete step in the journey towards ordination. On the Solemnity of All Saints, November 1, my seven brothers and I were instituted into the Ministry of Acolyte, by Bishop Richard Grecco of the Diocese of Charlottetown. It is the duty of the acolyte to attend to the service of the altar and to assist the deacon and the priest in liturgical celebrations, and especially as an auxiliary minister of Holy Communion. Conferral of this ministry is typically restricted to men preparing for eventual ordination to the diaconate or the priesthood.

In the liturgy of institution, each of us knelt before the bishop, put our hands on the paten containing the bread for consecration, and he spoke these words to us:

"Take this vessel containing bread for the celebration of the Eucharist.
Make your life worthy of your service at the table of the Lord and of His Church."

Please continue to pray for me and my seminary brothers in formation for the Holy Priesthood, that our lives may be worthy of this great vocation. You all remain in my prayers, and I look forward to seeing many of you over the Christmas holidays.

In Christ,
Patrick Salah

CHRISTMAS UNPLUGGED

Jenna LeBlanc
Bene Dictus Team

What is Christmas Unplugged?

It's not your ordinary Christmas service! Instead, it's designed to be accessible and fun for people who aren't regular churchgoers. It lasts one hour (exactly – no more!), and it's busy and engaging. There are familiar Christmas carols, a children's story, a short talk, and sometimes Santa even makes an appearance!

Why have Christmas Unplugged?

Christmas is a time where many people, even those who aren't religious, feel a tug on their hearts calling them back to church. But for someone who hasn't been to church in awhile, a long and crowded Christmas Eve Mass can be difficult and not very engaging – especially for children. Christmas Unplugged is a family-friendly, welcoming alternative for anyone who wants to reconnect with their faith around Christmastime.

"Mass is designed for people who have been initiated into faith; it presumes faith and belief – it's designed for insiders. Christmas Unplugged, is designed without a presumption of faith… We hope that it helps to break any negative stereotypes people may have about church."

– Rob McDowell, Director of Parish Life

At Christmas Unplugged, you don't need to worry about whether you remember the words or the motions. You don't need to wonder how you'll keep the kids still and quiet. Come out, have fun, learn a little, and you'll still get home in time for Christmas Eve dinner!

If this appeals to you – ***join us at 4pm on Christmas Eve in the church****.*

If there's someone in your life who might be interested in this event, ***invite them – and come along!*** *Stepping across the threshold of the church can be intimidating, and sometimes people have fears or previous negative experiences with religion. Accompanying your guests will make them feel much more welcome – and there's a good chance you'll have lots of fun and learn something, too!*

To hear more about Christmas Unplugged, listen to the latest episode of The Church We Want To Be, our parish's podcast. Matt sits down with Rob McDowell to go in-depth on Christmas Unplugged.

JUNIOR CHOIR

Gabbie Ricafort
Bene Dictus Team

What would have been an ordinary Saturday afternoon turned out extra special on November 18th. The Saint Benedict Junior Choir led Praise and Worship and brought cheerful smiles to the parish.

The 4pm Mass started with a little voice announcing, "Please rise and join us in singing our entrance hymn." The Junior Choir sang 'Mighty to Save' so beautifully that it instantly set a joyful mood.

The kids who were doing solos were very excited. Julia led the Psalm, and she did an amazing job. Aslyn sang the Alleluia with an angelic voice, while a few kids sang their own lines for the offertory.

"I was really excited when they gave me the offer to sing in front of everybody... I was really nervous but I got through it, and church choir is very fun! I made new friends and have tons of fun!" – Julia

The Junior Choir sang 'Forever' for the closing song, and as they were singing they started dancing. It didn't look rehearsed, but it seemed like they were having a lot of fun!

These 'ordinary' kids showed everyone that anyone can do amazing things for the glory of God. The children noticeably sang with grateful hearts. They enjoyed praising God as much as the churchgoers enjoyed being led by them. "It's the most beautiful music I've heard in Mass," said one parishioner.

"I think that choir is a good experience for kids who like to sing. We sing at holidays and once in a while at church. I got to have a short solo and it was really fun. We always play a game at the end of practice." – Lucy

The Saint Benedict Parish Junior Choir, led by Debbie MacIsaac, is a program for kids in Grades 3 and up who love singing songs and praising God. Choir practice is every Wednesday, 6:30pm-7:30pm. All kids welcome!

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

Worship

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WHAT'S YOUR (FAITH) STORY?

MEET FLORALBA

Peter Mallette
Bene Dictus Team

To say that Floralba Mosquera is involved in parish life @SaintBP would be a huge understatement. Flora, as she is known, serves with as a Eucharistic Minister, a Prayer Minister, as a member of the CWL, and sings in the choir at both 4pm Mass on Saturday and 6pm Mass on Sunday.

Flora grew up in Quibdo, Colombia. She was one of eight children, and was raised Catholic. Church was mandatory in their family – both parents and all eight kids sat in the same pew every Sunday morning.

Both she and her husband were educators in South America. Flora taught math and physics to junior high school students, her husband Olmedo was a university professor.

In 2008, fearing for their lives, Flora, her husband and three kids fled Colombia and settled in Halifax. Two years later during a late season snowstorm, Olmedo was tragically killed in a car accident. Alone with two sons and a daughter, and without a command of the English language, Flora says she was the most broken she has ever been in her life.

But that began to change when she walked through the doors of Saint Benedict Parish and heard about Alpha. In her grief, Flora admits she initially made every excuse not to attend Alpha; she had ESL courses and volunteer work. She even used the Halifax transit strike as a reason she didn't need Alpha in her life. But she ran out of excuses, and in 2012 she finally gave in and signed up. That's when her life changed. That's when she became hungry to know more about Jesus.

For starters, she joined the choir. Then she began reading the Bible at home and on the bus to and from work. She initially hid her Bible in a newspaper for fear the other passengers would see what she was reading. But the more she read, the braver she became, and it wasn't long before she didn't need the newspaper and often noticed other passengers reading her Bible over her shoulder.

Flora says before Alpha she was happy, but after Alpha, she became truly joyful for the first time in her life. She says her co-workers noticed a difference in her; even complete strangers started smiling at her on the pedway in downtown Halifax where she works. She credits her relationship with Jesus for that.

With three grown children and three grandchildren, Flora says that Jesus is now the centre of her life. Every day she recites a prayer Fr. James taught her, *"Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for everything you have done in my life. Use me Lord. I am open to do your will."*

In September, Flora volunteered to work in the kitchen serving meals at Friday night Alpha. Because so many additional people showed up the first night, Flora was unexpectedly asked to reconsider her kitchen commitment and instead be a table host. Without hesitation she said yes. She says there was no way she was saying "no" to Jesus.

MASS TIMES *for the* 4th Sunday of Advent Dec 23rd *at* 4pm & Dec 24th *at* 10am

CHRISTMAS
AT SAINT BENEDICT PARISH

DEC 24	DEC 25
7:30pm	9:00am
11:00pm*	11:15am

DEC 24th 4:00pm - Christmas Unplugged

**incense will be used*

FEAST *of the* HOLY FAMILY

December 30 @ 4pm
December 31 @ 9am, 11:15am & 6pm

SOLEMNITY *of* MARY, MOTHER *of* GOD

January 1 @ 11:15am

Feed Fr. Simon

(Pastor's Potluck)

January 1st

Details to come!

ALPHA CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Susan LeRue
Bene Dictus Team

Lisa Sutherland has been leading the Alpha Children's Ministry for the last five years. Her passion to work with children lead her to her chosen career with the Halifax Regional School Board as an Educational Program Assistant, working specifically with children with special needs.

Lisa also serves in the Contemporary Choir at the 6pm Mass; and with Vacation Bible School in the Summer.

Recently, Lisa posed the following questions about Jesus and Christmas to the kids, ages 4 to 11. (Please keep in mind that some of these children are churchgoers, while others are not.) Either way, I believe that our readers will thoroughly enjoy the innocence and beautiful answers these amazing little ones gave. Enjoy!

Why do we believe in Christmas?
"Because it's God's birthday." – *Aryanna (4)*
"Because God makes the whole world" – *Chloe (5)*
"That was the day Jesus was born, and my Elf on a Shelf tells me it's Christmas every time I see him." – *Cameron (7)*
"Because it was the day Jesus was born and we only receive presents because the Three wise men gifted Jesus with presents." – *Julia (10)*

Where was Jesus born?
"He was born from God." – *Emily (5)*
"Bethlehem." – *Raigne (8)*

Who were Jesus' parents?
"God and Mary." – *Emily*
"Mary and Joseph." – *Cameron*
"God and Mary, Queen of EVERYTHING!" – *Erik (10)*

If you could give Jesus one present, what would it be?
"I would give him some of my love, because I love him." – *Aryanna*
"I would give him toys, clothes, baby things. And pyjamas." – *Maria* (7)
"I would give him a card, love and a blanket." – *Raigne*
"I would give him a Christmas tree… So when we are at church, everyone will see it and it will glow down on us." – *Patrick* (5)
"I would give him Holy Water." – *Julia*
"I would give him my stuffy, a sleepy toy, 'cause it's cozy." – *Gavin* (5)

Where does Jesus live now?
"His spirit is in heaven, but his body is on earth." – *Maria*
"He lives in our hearts." – *Emily*
"He lives in a castle in Bethlehem that was made in heaven and he lets everyone sleep there and he has many supplies. It's a big castle, bigger then this church!" – *Cameron*
"He lives on the cross." – *Aryanna*
"He lives in a grave." – *Patrick*
"He lives here in Canada and in this church." – *Chloe*

Why did Jesus come to earth?
"Because he's the Lord and he's pretty much invincible and he doesn't hurt people. He just loves everybody even people who were being bad to him." – *Cameron*
"To make sure everyone is safe." – *Raigne*
"To tell everyone he wasn't actually dead?" – *Maria*

Thanks again Lisa! You are a gift to all of us at Saint Benedict Parish.

CALENDAR OF IMPORTANT DATES DECEMBER 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
10 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT SBP KIDS PREACHING SERIES: ROOM FOR WAITING	11 THE EXPERIENCE	12 **RECONCILIATION DRAMA** THE ENCOUNTER! (GRADES 5 & 6)	13 **RECONCILIATION DAY** EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT	14	15 MEN'S LEADERSHIP GYM	16
17 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT SBP KIDS NAME TAG SUNDAY	18 THE EXPERIENCE	19 COFFEE SOCIAL GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP	20 EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT	21	22 MEN'S LEADERSHIP GYM	23
24 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT - MASS AT 10AM CHRISTMAS EVE - MASS AT 7:30 & 11PM	25 CHRISTMAS DAY MASS AT 9AM & 11:15AM	26	27	28	29 MEN'S LEADERSHIP GYM	30
31 FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY (MASS AT 9AM, 11:15AM & 6PM)	1 JANUARY SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD MASS AT 11:15	2 COFFEE SOCIAL	3 EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT	4	5 MEN'S LEADERSHIP GYM	6 JAN BENE DICTUS COMES OUT

PARISH OFFICE CLOSED - DAILY MASS, 9AM

ADVENT PENITENTIAL DRAMA - JOIN US ON DEC 12TH

At 6:15pm we dim the lights, have soft music playing, candles, and some handouts for you to read and reflect on. At 7 we present a short dramatic presentation of Scripture, song and prayer followed by the Sacrament.

PRIESTS HEARING CONFESSIONS FROM 9:30 to 5 - DEC 13th.

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If you're interested in the sacraments of baptism or matrimony at Saint Benedict Parish, please note that in addition to preparation, we require that you get in touch with us a minimum of 3 months in advance of your hoped-for date for baptism and one year prior to your desired wedding date.

For more information on baptisms, please contact Carol: **baptisms@saintbenedict.ca**. for more information on weddings, please contact Deacon David: **weddings@saintbenedict.ca**.

For information on preparation for the sacraments of First Reconciliation/First Communion, please send an email to **PACT@saintbenedict.ca** (PACT stands for 'Preparing and Celebrating Together').

For information on becoming Catholic contact **RCIA@saintbenedict.ca**

****

For funerals, please call the parish offlce (and listen to the prompts) to be connected with our funeral ministry team.

FINANCIAL UPDATE - OCTOBER 2017

PARISH DEBT REDUCTION	REC'D	TOTAL	AVG/
ENVELOPES	187	$5,856	$31
PAR (PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE)	66	$3,457	see note
MORTGAGE BALANCE (AS OF MONTH END)			$638,505
INTEREST PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			$2,036
PRINCIPAL PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			$9,402

Principal payments include principal portion of monthly mortgage payment plus additional principal payments made from Parish Debt funds received.

SUNDAY COLLECTIONS	REC'D	TOTAL	AVG/
ENVELOPES	1,655	$48,357	$29
PAR (PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE)	384	$53,476	see note

Note: PAR options include weekly, bi-weekly and monthly withdrawals; therefore a 'weekly' average is unavailable.