MAY 2019

BENEDICTUS

PHOTO: JOHN RAE

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SAINT BENEDICT PARISH

45 Radcliffe Drive
Halifax, Nova Scotia
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

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 June 8th/9th.

On the cover:
Our Junior Choir leading worship at 11:15am Sunday Mass.

SAINT BENEDICT PARISH CLERGY

Pastor: Fr. Simon Lobo, CC
Associate Pastor: Fr. Alex Colautti, CC
Intern Priest: Fr. John Farley
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

LIVING HOPE COMES FROM THE LIVING JESUS

You might have noticed that we spend 40 days in the season of Lent, but 50 days in the season of Easter. For some reason, it's easier to emphasize the trials and self-denial of the desert than it is to sustain the celebration of the resurrection. I would encourage you to take on something positive during these 50 days to keep growing deeper in your relationship with Jesus. It could be a simple as listening to music that connects your heart to God.

Since there was such a positive response to the large group study of Mary Magdalene this past Lent, we thought we would offer another Discipleship Group in the parish auditorium on Thursday nights at 7pm from April 25th to June 27th. Please don't be intimidated by the title: *Symbolon*. It refers to the beliefs of the early Christians: when they entered into a special relationship with another, they would take a clay seal and break it in two, each taking half. When the parts were rejoined, it was a proof of authenticity. Though our relationship with God can feel distant or stagnant, He is always inviting us to reconnect with him. If you've missed the first couple of weeks, don't worry, you are welcome to drop in when you are available. You can also catch up or follow along at your leisure by watching episodes online through Formed: saintbenedict.ca/formed.

THE EASTER VIGIL NINE

It was an incredible joy to celebrate Sacraments of Initiation with nine members of our parish on the evening of April 20th at the Easter Vigil.

continued on next page

FATHER SIMON SAYS continued

Congratulations to Amanda, Chandra, Jessica, and Kyle who were all baptized this year. They're all quite young, and they all decided of their own accord to take this step to embrace the Catholic faith. Jason, Paul, and Rebecca took the step to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church, having come from other Christian traditions. Janet and Janna were baptized and received First Holy Communion as children, but were never fully initiated. On that sacred night, all nine of them received the Sacrament of Confirmation, this special filling of the Holy Spirit.

I was so inspired to hear about each of their journeys that brought them to this point. For some it had been many years in the making, and for others it was more recent. Almost all of them have had a powerful experience through Alpha, a sign that this tool for evangelization is bearing fruit! I was also edified to hear of all of the sponsors who have supported these folks very intentionally. In one case, a sponsor prayed and fasted from meat every Advent and Lent for five years in hope of the future baptism of their friend (a devout Hindu)! This is so inspiring and such a reminder that we are called to have a 'living hope', a confidence that Jesus desires to reach every one of our loved ones.

STAY TUNED

We have our annual Stewardship of Treasure preaching series coming up on May 19th, May 26th, and June 2th. Thank you for your generosity to the parish! We will be publishing our annual booklet to show the fruit of our giving and to be transparent about the parish's finances.

Thanks again to the 9am Band for helping us to enter into worship on the eve of Divine Mercy Sunday. In the early church, the first novena (nine consecutive days of prayer for a particular intention) took place between the Ascension and Pentecost. Our next Praise & Worship Night will be on Saturday, June 1st, during the earlier part of this novena, and we can pray in anticipation for a new Pentecost for Saint Benedict and the universal church.

At all four Masses on the weekend of Pentecost (June 8th and 9th), we will be celebrating and counting new disciples: those who have begun a relationship with Jesus in the last 12 months. If you (or others you know) fall into this category, please come out and courageously come forward, not to draw attention to yourself, but to give glory to God. So often we can confuse being a disciple with arriving at a level of perfection in our spiritual lives. This is not what we're talking about. We want to celebrate those who have made an intentional decision to start the journey with Jesus.

Finally, we had several strong candidates apply for the two part-time positions of Game Plan Support and the Pastor's Personal Assistant. Thanks to all of the amazing candidates who took that step of faith to apply. Thanks also to the outside HR support we received to help with the process. In the end, we decided to hire Arlene Sibley fulltime to serve in both roles. She will be starting the week of June 10th. Congratulations Arlene and welcome to the team!

A SHEPHERD'S SHEEP

Megan Noye
Ora Ministry

This reflection is on next Sunday's Gospel, John 10:27-30.

When I was growing up and heard about Jesus' followers being analogous to sheep, I would turn my nose up at that idea. In my view, sheep were mindless and compliant. I thought that they followed with no questions asked in the most vacuous way. Even the term 'sheepish' is used to describe a meek individual with a lack of confidence. That is what I thought it meant to be a sheep, and I wasn't very attracted to that idea. I was convinced that I was not a sheep.

Was I ever wrong about that! Today, I now whole-heartedly admit that I am a sheep. However, I do not stand by my previous thoughts of what that meant, and what it means to be a follower of Jesus. To be a follower of God is to be obedient. But obedience is not a form of weak submission. Being obedient to God is empowering; it means that we are choosing to live out our true identity in Christ.

If sheep wander on their own, they barely stand a chance. If they are out by themselves, they don't know how they should be living and how to stay alive. They are clueless without the guidance of their shepherd. I think that Jesus actually has quite a sense of humour to refer to us as sheep. Even if we don't admit it sometimes, we are completely lost without him. In times where I feel as though life is spiraling out of control and I am drowning in my anxieties, it is usually a time when I have stopped actively following Jesus. After realizing that I have strayed and attempt to regain my place alongside Jesus, I begin to feel more at peace. I begin to feel more joyful. I begin to feel more myself again.

Sheep are also easily persuaded to stray from their path. It takes hard work and effort to stay on track. But the hard work is worth it. When we are persistent in following God, we receive the gifts that he has promised us. By following our shepherd, we choose to receive the gift of eternal life, so that we may be safe in His love and never perish. I pray that I may always choose to be an obedient sheep and follow the path that the Lord has intended for me. Amen.

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

SPIRITUAL WARRIORS

Susan LeRue
Bene Dictus Team

Spring is a time of new life, and May is when we celebrate Mother's Day, and it is also traditionally the month we as Catholics honour our spiritual Mother, Mary.

We thank God for her example of holiness, gentleness, humility, and love. We also thank Him for sharing her with us as our Mother: "When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, 'Woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.'" — John 19:26

Gentle Woman, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, and Queen of the Angels are just a few of her titles. She is powerful in interceding for us, her children. In times of spiritual discord and battle, she is one of our strongest heavenly allies.

And did you know that we have a little band of spiritual warriors here at Saint Benedict? We do! They meet every weekday after 9am Mass, with their weapons in tow and go into battle. They are the ninja-like prayer warriors, and they are not to be messed with by evil forces. They are a band of parishioners who pick up their rosaries daily and ask Mary to intercede to her son Jesus for the needs of our priests, our parish, the sick, the Church, and for the world. I can only imagine Jesus' heart melting as his mom looks at Him lovingly in the eyes and presents our needs to Him. How could He refuse her anything?

I've heard it said that praying the Rosary is like taking the hand of Mary and walking through the life of Jesus with her. I like to think of the rosary as a link, a chain that reaches outside of time, one that bridges our hearts to the hearts of Jesus and Mary. As we walk with her, we meditate on the mysteries of the life of Jesus. Who else would be better to take this journey with than Jesus' Mom, our Blessed Mother?

"There is no surer means of calling down God's blessings upon the family… than the daily recitation of the Rosary." – St. Pius XII

Mary, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, Pray for us. Amen.

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ALPHA CELEBRATION

"DO YOU TRUST ME?"

Dan Arsenault
Bene Dictus Team

Marc is 19 years old and from Lower Sackville. Marc is looking to pursue a career with law enforcement in the future.

DAN: Marc, give us a little background of your faith journey.

MARC: I grew up in a Catholic family, however I only went to church at Christmas and Easter, and I didn't talk about my faith much growing up. First Communion, Confession, and Confirmation were more of a checklist to me, just going through the necessary motions. I didn't give a second thought to reading the Bible after Confirmation, and for four years my faith was on the back burner. Through those years I struggled with a lot of anxiety, trying to gain self-esteem and approval from friends, and fitting in with the crowd. My self image and how my friends perceived me were constantly creating anxiety within me.

DAN: What brought you back to your faith?

MARC: In grade 12 I was looking into some volunteer activities that would look favorable on my application for the RCMP. I ended up being directed to the youth program at Saint Benedict. I reluctantly tried it. The first night I felt so welcomed that it really touched me in a special way. Corey Robinson was a great mentor, and in the small group discussions I found myself opening up about my faith. Something special was happening. This led to going to Steubenville Atlantic, where I really felt the Holy Spirit's presence. Sharing this experience with great friends made me realize that I really need to take this faith thing more seriously. From there I transitioned into a youth leader, something that was uncomfortable at

first, but I took a step of faith.

DAN: Can you share your experience with Alpha? When did you first try it?

MARC: I was invited to try Alpha for the first time by my friend Mark Saldanha. I reluctantly agreed to try it in the winter of 2018. Much like the youth group, it was uncomfortable at first. What made me come back each week was the welcoming atmosphere and the kindness of all the people. I thought, "What do I have to lose?"

I have done Alpha three times now. After my first time at Alpha, Tanya Noye asked me to be a table host. I thought to myself, "I'm just getting the hang of this youth leader thing, and now this?" The role with adults was even more nerve-racking for me, but I enjoyed Alpha so much the first time, that I replied to her with a "yes!" Alpha has had such a huge impact on my life in these past couple of years. It really helped me open up.

DAN: Can you sum up the last couple years of your faith journey? What has changed?

MARC: I think I need to mention one other significant experience from the Alpha Weekend Away last year. Ron Huntley was giving a talk and I felt the Holy Spirit working through him when he spoke the words of God to us: "Do you trust me?" I felt as if God was speaking directly to me and convicting me of a lukewarm faith and that I wasn't giving myself fully to God. I was scared to take that leap of faith. I had my own timelines and plans: graduating high school, joining the RCMP, and getting on with my life. When I got involved with Saint Benedict, my file was closed with the RCMP on my first application. This shook my faith a bit, and I felt like I didn't have as much control over my life as I once thought. So I pressed on and said, "Okay God, my plans in my head did not work out, all I can do now is trust in your plan and whatever it may be, it is going to be the best plan for my life."

My anxiety from those four years away from my faith have changed now. I still struggle at moments, but I do have more control over it since I put my faith in Jesus Christ. I now give my anxiety and fears over to God daily. I can hear him say, "What do you have to fear?" I know I have Jesus with me at all times and my anxiety attacks are far fewer than before. Making new friends in Christ and knowing that I am not alone in facing my fears has been amazing. I am not alone in that fight. The Bible verse from Matthew 6:34 has been very helpful to me: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself, each day has enough trouble on its own."

TAKING THE PLUNGE

Matt Vaughan
Communications Coordinator

Chandra was one of the nine people who joined the church at Easter. I asked him about his experience with Alpha, RCIA, and baptism.

MATT: What did you think of church before you came to the parish?

CHANDRA: I was not aware of the importance of Mass or the effects of the readings and Gospel. I never used to be attentive during the church services, and often felt bored and sleepy whenever I visited them in India.

MATT: What was your first impression of Saint Benedict?

CHANDRA: I came to Saint Benedict in September 2018, a month after I arrived in Halifax from India. My first impression was, "Wow, how wonderful and welcoming the people are here," and I enjoyed the first homily of Fr. Simon. Everything changed when I decided to visit Saint Benedict, and now it's my new home.

MATT: What did you think of Alpha?

CHANDRA: Alpha was a life-changing experience. It was an eye-opener for me and transformed my life. I learned about Jesus and how much he loves me. All I had to say was yes to Jesus and be open to receive him in my heart. I was able to develop a personal relationship with Jesus, where I could establish two-way communication. I also started reading the Bible, which again I never thought of doing. Through Alpha, I made some good friends as well, who are now part of my extended family in Canada. Alpha is a great place to explore Christianity.

MATT: What made you decide to join the church?

CHANDRA: I wanted to become Christian since 2015, after I experienced the power of family prayer at my friend Angelo's home in Kerala. I was healed of my back pain, which I had for several years, during the family rosary at his home. Then, I started to learn the faith and attended a retreat. I gave up my Hindu worship, which I was doing every morning since my childhood. I also began to attend the church service occasionally. However, I had not personally accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. After Alpha, I believed that Jesus died for my sins and was resurrected from

the dead, and he is ready to offer me a new life. Then I decided to take the next step with the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, to join the Church Jesus founded.

MATT: What was the morning on Holy Saturday like?

CHANDRA: It was exciting, as I was waiting for this day to enter the Church and to receive Christ in the Eucharist. I was also nervous about all the things that were going to change in my life. I prayed to God and asked him to take control. I even chose a new Christian name, Charles Anthony Cruz, and accepted Saint Anthony of Padua as my patron saint.

MATT: How do you feel now that you've officially joined the church?

CHANDRA: I feel very happy and blessed. I also feel responsible to go and share with others the Word of God and the joy that I experience.

MATT: What's next for you?

CHANDRA: I want to know more about Jesus by reading the Bible and spending time in prayer. I want to grow in relationship with him every day. I want to actively participate in the parish in different ministries to serve the community which brought me to Jesus.

FR. MATTHEW IN OTTAWA

Susan LeRue
Bene Dictus Team

Fr. Matthew Keshwah spent several months with us at Saint Benedict from September 2017 to June 2018. He was kind enough to give us an update as to how he is doing at Saint Isidore Parish in Kanata, Ontario.

Fr. Matthew has had several visits from Saint Benedict parishioners in his first eight months back in Ontario. Fr. Matthew says, "It makes me feel like a little bit of Halifax has joined me. It's incredible. Life is good, and I'm feeling great."

SUSAN: Would you tell us a little about Saint Isidore Parish and how your ministry is developing there since you've come back from Saint Benedict?

FR. MATTHEW: Saint Isidore Parish has a long history, over 130 years worth. What first started as a country church surrounded only by farms is now a parish that has found itself at the centre of Canada's high tech area in Kanata, Ontario. Our little country church building was bursting at the seams a decade ago. So, in 2011, they built a big, brand new church to deal with the growing demand. In addition, we have been notified by the city that 5,000 to 8,000 new homes are set to be built all around our new church building in the next 5 to 10 years!

Since arriving as the new pastor on August 1st, 2018, the parish has grown from about 550 people attending on a weekend to around 650! In the last nine months, we have welcomed 98 newly registered parishioners as the hope and excitement of our parish's renewal spreads by word-of-mouth.

We have just completed our first Alpha session with great success, and a new parish leadership team has been established to bring vision to all areas of parish life and to support their pastor. While the changes in the parish are moving us from maintenance to mission, the resistance to change from some people continues to be present.

I have been sharing a vision regularly in homilies about the need to reach the lost and make evangelization the centre of our identity and mission as a Catholic parish. Many of our core members and ministries are getting on board with this new direction, and they are getting excited about the possibilities. I shared with them the health and vitality I witnessed at Saint Benedict Parish, and the joy in the hearts of all the disciples who have been transformed by the Holy Spirit and Alpha.

While we have much work to do in the months and years ahead to continue these first steps to parish renewal, our hope comes from knowing that this is possible, and I have seen the good fruit in the people I met at Saint Benedict Parish.

Please know that I pray for all of you regularly, and I hope to visit you soon.

Come back anytime, Fr. Matthew. Thank you for sharing your journey through this last year. God bless you and all the parishioners of Saint Isidore abundantly.

Grief Support Group

If you have suffered the loss of a loved one, there is hope.

The group gathers on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, September to June, in the St. Joseph Room.

For more information, call Anne at 902-443-1646

women's prayer breakfast

saturday, june 1st, 9am-12pm
tickets on sale soon!

Go to
saintbenedict.ca/calendar-events
to see what's
coming up!

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If you're 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 - MARCH 2019

SUNDAY COLLECTIONS	REC'D	TOTAL	AVG/
ENVELOPES	1,571	$56,659	$36.07
PAR (PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE)	405	$54,149	see note
LOOSE	-	$6,280	-
TOTAL	-	$117,088	-

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

PARISH DEBT REDUCTION	REC'D	TOTAL	AVG
ENVELOPES	161	$4,315	$26.80
PAR (PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE)	62	$3,157	see note
MORTGAGE BALANCE (AS OF MONTH END)			$458,725
PRINCIPAL PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			$9,668
INTEREST PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			$1,770
TOTAL PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			$11,438

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