

SAINT BENEDICT'S



PHOTO: JOHN IRAE

p. 5
THE TOMB IS EMPTY 

p. 11
SEE CHRIST ALIVE 

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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.

The next issue of the Bene Dictus will be released on the weekend of May 16th/17th.

On the cover:

A young parishioner prepares to receive her First Communion.

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

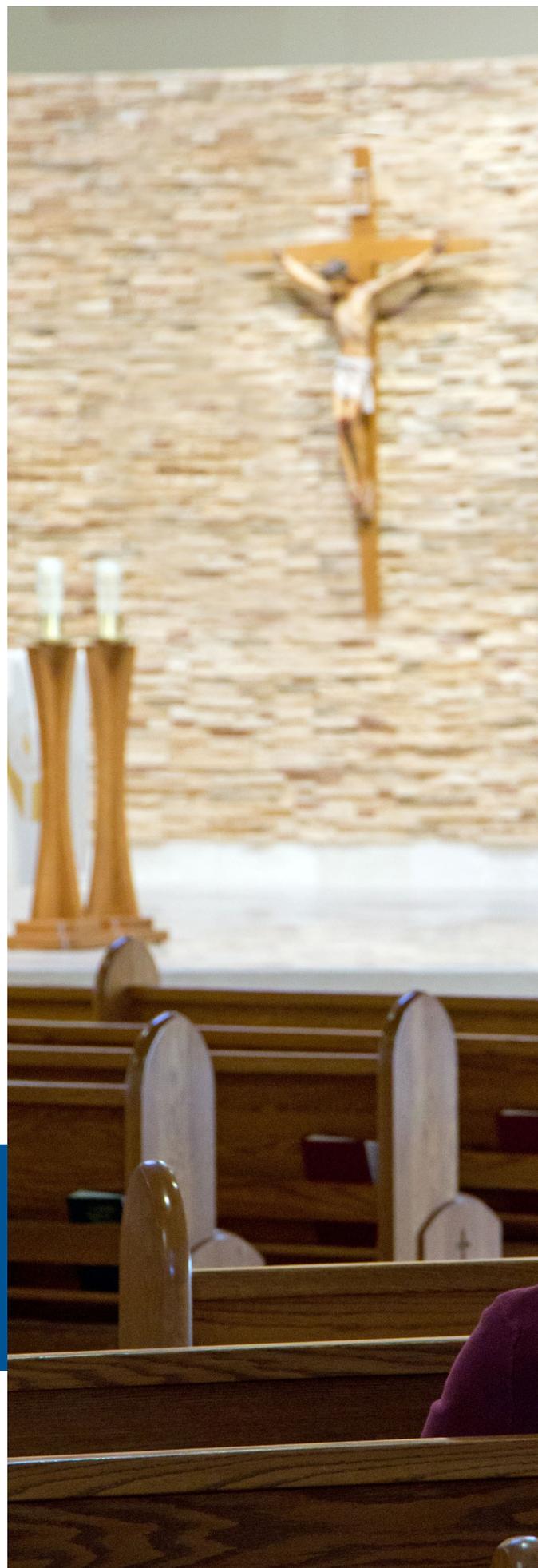
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BENE DICTUS - April 2020



FATHER SIMON SAYS...



Fr. Simon Lobo, CC

Pastor

EASTER SUNDAY CHANGED THE WORLD!

I hope you are having a very blessed and happy Easter! It's only been a few weeks since we entered into this crisis, but the world is a very different place. As I reflect on that first Easter, I am struck by the fact that the Resurrection was a monumental event that changed the world for the better! Make no mistake, Jesus died AND rose from the dead, triumphing over death itself. And now we can live an abundant life that is not dependent on anything but a relationship with the risen Jesus, who brings stability and peace.

The Gospel of John recounts that first Easter Sunday: 'When it was evening on that day... and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you... As the Father has sent me, so I send you,"' (John 20:19-20).

May Jesus fill you with his never-ending peace, and may we realize that, pandemic or not, we, as members of the Church, are being sent on a mission for the good of the world.

ONLINE CHURCH GROWTH

Sadly, our church building is currently closed, but our faith community is more alive than ever. Measuring the number of people who are watching our 9am Mass on Sunday, we estimate that our church has more than tripled in size! I need to give a huge shout-out to all of the staff of Saint Benedict who have stepped up even more than usual, working tirelessly to innovate.

Without missing a week, we moved to Alpha on video calls, we're running and launching new Groups online, and we've been livestreaming

continued on next page

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FATHER SIMON SAYS continued

Masses and Eucharistic Adoration. We've set up our post-Mass Digital Foyer and Digital Coffee Socials, and we're offering SBPkids Church Online and The Rise for teens digitally. This pandemic will not prevent us from making disciples who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus Christ.

The only way the mission of Saint Benedict can continue is if hundreds of parishioners serve in ministry. If you haven't done so, please think of new ways your ministries can serve in this new reality.

We are also looking for people to offer their gifts, particularly with video editing, graphic design, audiovisual, and more. If you feel called to serve in these creative and technical areas, please email office@saintbenedict.ca.

STEWARDING YOUR GIFTS

This current situation is compounded by a global financial crisis. If you are stressed about losing your job or your investments, please know that we are praying for you. You might have noticed that our collections in the Overview are also down. I have confidence that we will be okay, but, as always, we want to be good stewards of your financial offerings.

To those who are giving online or through Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR), thank you! Your gifts are making a difference in people's lives. As a parish, we are trying to be generous to those in need, and have passed on some gifts to support the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, who reaches those most in need in our community. I want to thank Chris Yetman and Ryan Orlando who have done everything they can to reduce parish expenses. (Ryan has gone so far as to unplug fridges that are not being used to save on electricity.)

With the support of the Finance Council, we feel that now is the time to invest in a couple of strategic areas. We plan to launch our new and improved website in the near future, and we want to upgrade our Livestream experience. At the moment, our parish is almost exclusively online, so we want to improve our digital presence.

If you feel called to offer an extraordinary gift to support our online presence, please contact Chris: chrisyetman@saintbenedict.ca.

SHARE AND INVITE

It is our dream that it would be normal for us to share good news and invite our friends and family to experience Jesus through our parish. This has become easier than ever before. Both Fr. Alex and I have extended family members who have watched our Livestream - some who aren't even believers. I know of parishioners who are sharing the Livestream with people who would not have been open to church in the past. Jesus can use us now to reach even more souls for Him. As my brother priest, Fr. Bryan Sabourin, says, "The Holy Spirit is not quarantined!"

We've also been blessed by a lot of free publicity through some positive media attention on CTV, CBC, *The Rick Howe Show*, and *100 Huntley Street*. Please feel free to share our website, the Livestream, and any of this other content with friends, family and through social media.

On Sunday, April 19th we will be starting a new five-week preaching series on how we can best respond as Christians in time of crisis.

Finally, on behalf of all of the Saint Benedict staff, please know that we miss all of you very much and we love you. We remain united in prayer and in mission! 🕊️



A SEEKER AFTER TRUTH



Donna Davis
Ora Ministry

This reflection is for next Sunday's Gospel, John 20:19-31.

Here's a thing about me: I'm a skeptic. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a skeptic is "habitually inclined rather to doubt than to believe any assertion... that comes before him," "a seeker after truth," "an inquirer who has not yet arrived at definite convictions." That describes me pretty well. Am I this way by nature or nurture? I'd have to say it's a little of Column A and a little of Column B. Either way, skepticism is ingrained in me, and it is not one of the traits people love most about me.

Now, while I may be a skeptic, I'm not a cynic. Rather than ridicule others or dismiss their beliefs, I respect people whose beliefs differ from mine. (As the saying goes, it would be a strange world if everyone were the same.) What I value most is the opportunity to make up my own mind, to test the evidence of a thing before I am expected to believe it. It should come as no surprise then that I have a special place in my heart for the Apostle Thomas – you know, Doubting Thomas.

In the Gospel for this Sunday, John tells us that, at a time when Thomas was not with them, the crucified Jesus – alive again – appeared. And when the disciples told Thomas this, he said he'd believe it only when he could see it for himself.

John does not explain why Thomas adopted this mindset. Could it be that he thought they were lying? I don't think so. As a member of a group in hiding from the Jews, it seems very clear to me that Thomas would trust the others with his life. Was Thomas simply feeble in his faith? Nothing suggests he was any less faithful than the other apostles. But he did doubt, and because of that, history has judged him harshly.

But in a way that warms my heart, Jesus did not single Thomas out for condemnation. When he appeared again, Thomas was present. Jesus invited Thomas to touch his wounds and said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." If we read this carefully, it's clear that Jesus wasn't actually just speaking to Thomas. Wasn't he speaking to all of the disciples, who just the week before were standing in Thomas' shoes, doubtful and cast down?



Later, Thomas went to India, establishing a Christian community that remains alive today. This is not the legacy of a doubter. His was a moment of skepticism. He just needed to see it for himself.

I've been in Thomas' shoes too, many times. And never – never – has Jesus ever wagged his finger at me, or called me weak, or shamed me for disappointing him. Instead, he meets me in my doubt, blesses me with his peace, and shows me who he is and the glory of all that He can do. And I am convinced, because I have seen it for myself.



THE TOMB IS EMPTY



John Rae
Bene Dictus Team

I'd like to relate a story told by Harry Pritchett:

Philip was a pleasant child — happy, it seemed — but increasingly aware of the difference between himself and other children. He had been born with Down Syndrome.

Philip attended Sunday school. The other eight-year-olds in his class learned, laughed, and played together. But because of his differences, Philip wasn't readily accepted by his classmates. Philip didn't want to be different. He just was.

On the Sunday after Easter, their teacher had collected 10 egg-shaped containers. Each child received one. The children were assigned to go out in the church yard and find a symbol for new life, put it in the egg, and bring it to the classroom. They would then mix up all the eggs, open them up, and share what they had found. The children ran around, gathered their symbols, and returned. They put all the big eggs on a table. Then the teacher began to open them. He opened one and there was a flower. He opened another one and a butterfly fluttered out. When he opened the last one, there was nothing in it. The children said, "That's not fair. That's stupid! Somebody didn't do it right."

Philip started to cry. "It's mine," Philip said. "It's mine."

The children said, "You don't ever do things right, Philip. There's nothing there!"

"I did so do it," Philip said. "I did do it. It's empty! The tomb is empty!" The teacher and class went into a deep silence.

That day, Philip became a part of that group of eight year olds. They took him in and he entered. He was set free from the tomb of his differentness. He was accepted and loved by the other kids, and that truly meant new life for him.

Contemplating the meaning of Easter, this is a good time to ask ourselves: what personal tombs do we need to be set free from? In John 10:10, Jesus says that he has come to give us "abundant life", and the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from his tomb, 2000 years ago, can work in our lives if we just give Him permission.




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PRAYING MASS ONLINE



Fr. Simon Lobo, CC
Pastor

While we wait out this pandemic, many of us are probably watching a lot of content online. Here are 10 ways that you can make Mass different from everything else you watch. (This is adapted from Fr. Simon's homily on March 29th, 2020.)

1. Set up a chapel area at home. It doesn't have to be fancy, or ornate, but a designated area that is sacred where you can go to pray. You might want to light a candle to add to your experience.

2. Go over the readings ahead of time. You may find that when you do this, it can better prepare you to receive from the readings when you hear them at Mass.

3. Dress in your 'Sunday Best'. Be comfortable, but if you want, you can choose to make your experience of Mass extra special by dressing up.

4. Pick a consistent time for Mass. If you can, you should try to watch the Mass live at 9am. But if you're not able to do that, pick a time and just commit to it every week. Set that time aside for God.

5. Speak the responses out loud and sing along. This might feel a little bit weird if you're by yourself, or just with your dog, but it's one of the ways in which we can engage with the Mass by praying actively, that is, singing the songs and saying the responses.

6. Pray with the gestures - stand, sit, and kneel. (Let's be honest, you

probably need the exercise.) Our bodies have a language unto themselves, and it's good to engage in prayer with your body. Depending on the type of rug you have at home (like old-school shag carpet), kneeling won't be that bad.

7. Engage with the community online. There are chat features on both Livestream and Facebook, which can be used to follow along with other people. It's sort of the equivalent of people sitting together in church, whispering during the homily. Even if you don't use the chat feature, it's good to remember that, as you watch and pray, there are thousands of other people praying with you and for you at Mass.

8. Savour the moments of silence. With our current situation, you may find yourself overwhelmed with noise and distraction. If there are moments during Mass when there is silence, resist the temptation to skip ahead, and just enjoy the silence.

9. Share with others afterwards. This is something so important for humans to do. When we experience something, it's good to unpack it later with other people. If you go see a profound movie, the best part is talking to people afterwards. So take some time after Mass to video chat with a friend or call a family member about something that you're going to take away from Mass. What's one thing you want to remember?

10. Don't try to multitask... monotask. This is probably the hardest one of all these tips, but it's important. Try to do one thing, and one thing well in this situation: pray the Mass together with everyone else. 

STAFF PROFILE: ARLENE



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 Arlene Sibley.

What's your job at the parish?

ARLENE: Game Plan Support & Pastor's Assistant.

What staff team are you on?

I'm on the Disciple Formation Team.

How long have you worked at Saint Benedict Parish?

Nine months.

What does your job entail? What's a typical week look like for you?

For my Game Plan Support role, I mostly focus on the Alpha program. The Game Plan's goal is to form disciples who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus. I can tell you first hand Alpha has been a life-changer for me, so I know it is fulfilling the mission. A good portion of my week is preparing for our Alpha guests on Fridays. As Fr. Simon's assistant, my goal is to do whatever I can to support him in being the best leader. As he mentioned at the Leadership Summit, "The best of the best leaders do fewer things."

What did you do before you worked at Saint Benedict Parish?

From college, I went into Travel & Tourism and spent 30 years as a Travel Counsellor,

specializing in Corporate & Group travel. From there, in order to fulfill the urge to be a grandmother, I opened Ar's Wee Ones Home Childcare, where I worked for the next 6 years. We did daily crafts, singing, reading, and playtime with six wee ones ranging in age from 11 months to 4 years old. Then I participated in Alpha in the Fall of 2017, and God put me on a new path to Saint Benedict Parish.

Do you have a favourite memory from your time working here?

About eight years ago, when I was not practicing my faith, I joined a hiking group. I was at a point in my life when I felt very alone and wanted to do something I normally would never do. I would meet 25 strangers in a parking lot, carpool to a



trail in the woods, and go on an adventure (and hopefully return). This was definitely way out of my comfort zone, but it became the thing I looked forward to each week. I met some great people, and it got me out of the house and into nature and along many beautiful coastline trails, which are my favorite. I love the ocean, the sound of waves crashing on the shore, the sound the tiny rocks make as the waves pull them out.

About a year into hiking, I really started to pay attention to sounds and sights, capturing what I could on my camera. Then I started to notice hearts on at least 90% of the hikes I was on. Once, I saw a perfect heart melted in the snow. I saw rocks, sea glass, seaweed, clouds, and trees. I'm not sure when it occurred to me, but God had been showing me that he had my heart. Perhaps it was when I stepped out of my comfort zone again and tried Alpha. I was going to a place full of strangers in the basement of a church that I had been to once or twice for Easter or Christmas. I was hoping I would make it through the first night without running away, but then it also became something else I looked forward to each week. After about a month, I started attending Mass, sitting at the back for a quick escape. Every week I came back, and eventually, with my brother's encouragement and the new friends I met at Alpha, I moved closer to the front. It was

there that I saw a heart in the grain of wood on the pew in front of me. I was right where I needed to be, and God was still watching over me.

Everyday has been a blessing on this journey and I am constantly being shown that I am not alone. Recently I decided to go back to where I started in the church and sit in that back section close to the door. This time it was not to escape, but it was to meet new people and share new experiences. My wonderful friends have joined me as they too agree we are to embrace the whole family we have in this parish. Two weeks ago as we were standing to pray, I looked down and saw the heart in the grain of wood. God brought me back to see that even then he was with me.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I like to be outside: hiking, snowshoeing, kayaking, and a bit of amateur photography. I have created a group in the church on WhatsApp of like-minded outdoor adventurers called "Way Makers". The idea is that once a week, weather permitting (no blizzard and no rain), you dress accordingly and we go out on a hike. We pack a lunch, enjoy fellowship, have a time of prayer, and sing a song or two. We enjoy the gifts of nature that we are so blessed with and the freedom to venture off trails for a little while. 🌿



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GARDENING MINISTRY



Susan LeRue
Bene Dictus
Team

Spring is at last upon us, and our parish is inviting those who have an interest in gardening to join our Gardening Ministry. No experience is necessary for the young or the young at heart; all you need is a willingness to get out in the fresh air and help make our church as beautiful on the outside as it is on the inside. There is nothing quite like flowers to make any property look like it's loved and cared for.

Since our opening, we have always enjoyed beautiful flower beds on our church grounds. We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Stella Fogarty, who tended to the plants and gardens at Saint Benedict for many years. As a



parish, we are blessed with so many who step up and help make Saint Benedict a community of service.

There are several flower beds on our property, and we are hoping to gather a small team of people who would spend some time planting and maintaining the gardens.

Also, if anyone would like to donate a plant or two from their own garden, we would be grateful for any perennials that are weed-free and tagged with the name of the plant on it, the colour, and the bloom time.

If you are interested in this ministry, or if you would like more information, please contact Earl at **sbpgardens@outlook.com**.

“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.” – Matthew 6:28-29

Please note that, like all parish ministries at the moment, serving in the Gardening Ministry will depend on government-implemented restrictions for COVID-19.

Photo credit: Adele Beaton



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SEE CHRIST ALIVE



Taya Vaci
Bene Dictus Team

Happy Easter! Christ has Risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!

While it has been an unusual time, on this Easter Sunday the certainty that Christ has risen is overwhelmingly prevalent in our community. When news that Mass and parish activities were suspended, our community did not hesitate in implementing ways to serve our parishioners and stay connected.

One way that we have been able to grow as disciples is through the opportunity to participate in Mass via Livestream. On Sunday mornings at 9am Atlantic, Fr. Simon and Fr. Alex say Mass with us at home. Amazingly, not only are Saint Benedict parishioners participating, but people from across the globe are also praying this Mass. The message of Christ has connected with the thousands that tune in each Mass.

We've been encouraged to participate at Mass as though we are physically there. Fr. Simon and Fr. Alex have recreated the typical environment of the foyer post-Mass, where we would gather to connect and chat. Viewers can use the chat feature to connect with each other and even ask the priests questions. Tune in for a good laugh and an inside look into the brotherly banter of the host and our priests.

We see Christ alive and working in all the parishioners who serve in the Care and Companionship ministry. They've been working with the same group of people that bring communion to the sick to call and connect with each of these individuals in isolation. Food for Families is a group created by parishioners who find people in need of support, and then they make and deliver meals to them. These two groups are making sure that the most vulnerable members of

our community are protected and loved.

Alpha was starting its eighth week when we were no longer allowed to have a gathering of more than 100 people. Alpha leaders decided to use technology to continue the remainder of the sessions. Guests

Our 9am Sunday Mass is on



livestream.com/saintbenedictparish

can join in online to hear the talks and break into virtual small groups, via video conferencing apps. Guests who have a desire to encounter Christ can do so, despite the need for physical distancing.

The inability to receive the Eucharist has been heartbreaking for many. Unfortunately, this is unavoidable during the temporary closure of the church. There is, however an alternative for those that desire the physical presence of Jesus. You have the opportunity to livestream Eucharistic Adoration every Tuesday on the parish's Livestream page.

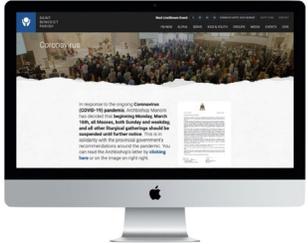
Many groups continue to gather bi-weekly via video conference. Much like

Alpha, these Groups come together to hear a talk and then break out into group discussion. These groups afford opportunities for socializing, spiritual growth, and prayer.

Visit saintbenedict.ca/coronavirus to learn how you can stay connected. Christ is risen and is working in his disciples! 🕊

STAY CONNECTED
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News, updates,
cancellations,
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UPCOMING EVENTS

at Saint Benedict Parish

APR 14 - Holy Hour, 12pm-1pm

APR 16 - Weekday Mass
Livestream, 12pm

APR 19 - New Preaching Series,
Divine Mercy Online

APR 25 - Feast of St. Mark

MAY 16 - Saint Benedict's 10th Anniversary

For full event details, be sure to subscribe to The Overview by visiting saintbenedict.ca

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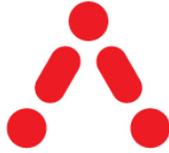
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How Saint Benedict Parish forms disciples who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus Christ

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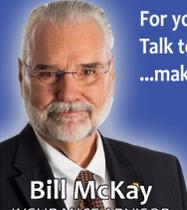
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If you are interested in the sacraments of baptism or marriage at Saint Benedict Parish, please note that in addition to preparation, we require that you get in touch with us a minimum of three months in advance of your hoped-for date for baptism and 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 Viscount: weddings@saintbenedict.ca.

For information on preparation for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion, please email FACT@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 - FEBRUARY 2020

SUNDAY COLLECTIONS	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
ENVELOPES	1,106	\$28,665	\$25.92
PAR (PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE)	428	\$59,252	\$138.44*
LOOSE	-	\$5,465	-
ONLINE	-	\$1,852	-
TOTAL	-	\$95,234	-
PARISH DEBT REDUCTION	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
ENVELOPES	120	\$3,147	\$26.23
PAR (PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE)	56	\$2,757	\$49.23*
MORTGAGE BALANCE (AS OF MONTH END)			\$349,625
PRINCIPAL PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			\$10,169
INTEREST PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			\$1,268
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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