

# SAINT BENEDICTS

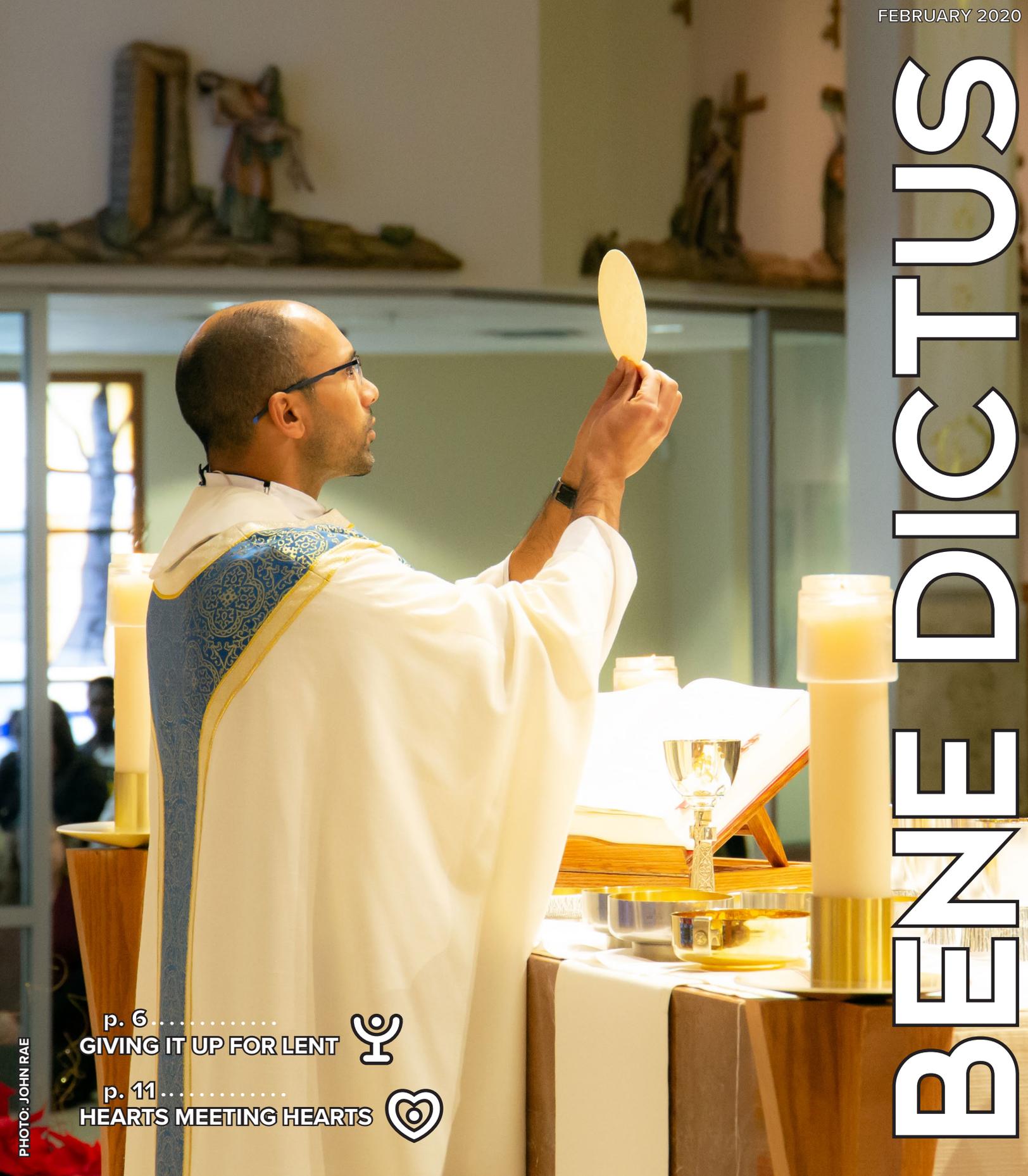


PHOTO: JOHN RAE

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**GIVING IT UP FOR LENT**



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**HEARTS MEETING HEARTS**



**SAINT BENEDICT PARISH**  
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Saturday: 4pm  
Sunday: 9am, 11:15am, 4pm  
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**CONFESSIONS**  
Saturday: 3 - 3:45pm  
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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 March 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>.*

### **On the cover:**

*Fr. Simon elevates the host at 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

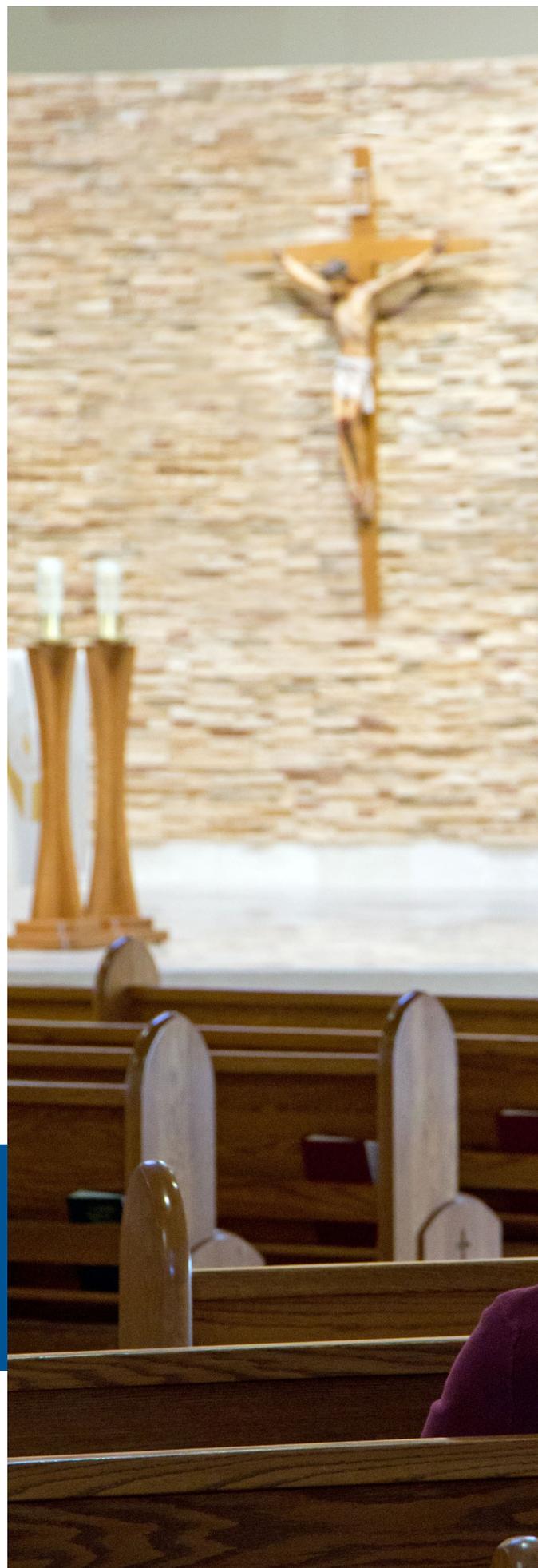
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**BENE DICTUS - February 2020**



## FATHER SIMON SAYS...



**Fr. Simon Lobo, CC**

**Pastor**

### **COMPANIONS OF THE CROSS UPDATE**

Thanks again to all who prayed for the Companions during our General Assembly. For Fr. Alex, Dan Ramos, and me, the community is our spiritual family. By caring about the Companions, we all feel loved and supported. We had some very meaningful sessions together, making progress in the right direction. I am pleased to announce that Fr. Roger Vandenakker, CC, has been elected the new General Superior of the Companions of the Cross. Please pray that God's grace of leadership would be upon him.

### **SUSTAINED HEALTH → EXCITING GROWTH**

At our most recent Leadership Summit, where ministry and group leaders gathered, I took some time to celebrate some big 'wins' in the last few months. For example, we had 3,000 people come through our doors this Christmas – our biggest attendance on record. Another 160 people signed up to serve in ministry during our Liturgical Ministries Come & See. There are now hundreds and hundreds of parishioners who faithfully serve in the parish, and that is a huge part of the success of Saint Benedict.

In September, I spoke about the 'Back Door' and 'Front Door' problems. In response to this, at the end of the Fall Alpha we were able to intentionally onboard 83 people into eight new Groups (including 12 new group leaders). This is a 70% retention rate, which is absolutely remarkable. As of January, we implemented some tweaks to our weekend Masses – both timing and styles of worship. Thanks to the many, many people who have helped make this such a smooth transition. I'm hearing a lot of positive feedback about the music at the respective Masses. Also,

continued on next page

[saintbenedict.ca](http://saintbenedict.ca) **2**

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# FATHER SIMON SAYS continued

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with growing interest in our new 4pm Contemplative Mass on Sunday, we exceeded 200 in attendance in our third week!

Finally, I have come to depend upon the generosity of you, the parishioners. In addition to finishing 2019 strong, we have also raised \$27,000 (at the time of this writing) towards our goal of \$35,000 to support a refugee family. This is another concrete demonstration that we strive to be a parish that exists for those beyond our walls.

## **APPROPRIATE STAFFING CHANGES**

We are so grateful to see what God is doing in our midst, and we want to structure ourselves for sustainability and ongoing growth. Though there has been a lot of shifting of staff roles, we have not added to our overall headcount. In fact, in 2017, we had the equivalent of 15 full-time paid staff members. Today, about 2.5 years later, we have 14.75 full-time paid staff members, and the opportunities continue to increase. After much prayer, discussion, and planning, we believe that the time has come to bring in someone with many years of leadership and management experience to help Saint Benedict professionalize and reach the next level. I presented the idea to the Finance Council, and after a robust back-and-forth conversation, they have given me their endorsement to move forward with this hire. Please pray that we can find the right person with the combination of business acumen and spiritual leadership to take on this challenge. We are referring to this position as the Saint Benedict Parish Managing Director.

We want everyone, including our staff, to work in the areas of their giftedness. As we transition, I have asked Fr. Alex, Tanya Noye, and Rob McDowell to support me as part of the Parish Leadership Team (PLT).

The new hire will eventually join us. In turn, I have asked both Bill Scollard and Kate Robinson to step off the PLT. Bill will be focusing primarily on Groups, overseeing all of our current Connect Groups, Discipleship Groups, and launching several new Groups. Once the new hire is in place, Kate will be overseeing all ministries and the systems that support this, including ChurchSuite - our new disciple tracking tool. Thanks to both Bill and Kate who continue to serve and be so committed to the mission of forming disciples who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus Christ.

## **COMING ATTRACTIONS**

I am pleased to announce that we have another all-star Parish Mission guest speaker, Fr. Mathias Thelen, who will be sharing about how we can learn to hear God's voice today. We will have three evenings beginning at 7pm on Monday, March 2nd, then continuing on Tuesday the 3rd and Wednesday the 4th. There will also be an informal Q&A session after 9am Mass on Wednesday, March 4th. Please plan to attend and bring a friend. You won't want to miss this young, dynamic priest from Michigan. If you want to do a bit of research ahead of time, go to [encounterministries.org](http://encounterministries.org).

We are hosting another Divine Renovation conference, DR20, from June 15th-18th. Once again, we will be asking for hundreds of Saint Benedict parishioners to serve as we welcome delegates from around the world. This year, there will be sessions on the Monday and Thursday at Saint Benedict, with larger sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday at the Cunard Centre downtown. In addition to serving, you, the Saint Benedict parishioners, are encouraged to register as participants for this inspiring gathering. 🙏

# STRIVE FOR GREATNESS



**Kendra Lang**  
**Ora Ministry**

*This reflection is for next Sunday's Gospel, Matthew 5:17-37.*

When Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven," his disciples must have felt discouragement and confusion. The scribes were well-educated Jewish men who were dedicated to preserving and defending the law, while the Pharisees were members of a sect that strived to strictly adhere to Jewish law, practices, and traditions. People within these groups considered themselves as having the highest standards, and yet Christ was calling his closest followers higher. They probably wondered to themselves, "How could we live up to this standard?" I imagine that it took time to develop a full understanding of what these words meant, and I also wanted to examine this phrase more so that I could grasp what Jesus calls me to as a disciple.

The word 'righteousness' comes from the Greek 'dikaiosunē', and, when used in reference to God's people, it is understood as a New Covenant gift from Christ. Righteousness is a gift given to us in baptism; it is received by faith and serves as a sign of a person's relationship with God. As baptized disciples of Christ, our relationship with God the Father is restored

and transformed by adoption. Only in relationship with Him are we able to love rightly and be obedient to God's law in a way that goes beyond fulfilling the bare minimum. Instead, we strive for greatness.

This relationship was what was missing in the lives of many of the scribes and Pharisees: they did not know Christ, but rather saw him as a threat to their leadership status, knowledge, identity, and security. They, ironically, did not perceive that he was the Son of God, the fulfillment of the

prophecies they had studied with dedication, and the completion of God's covenant with Israel.



As sons and daughters of God, we have access to the grace that enables us to overcome temptation and the inclination to sin so that we can instead choose love faithfully and freely. Without the help of the Holy Spirit, it is all too easy for our pride to blind us and for us to begin living as if everything

relies on us.

*Spirit of Truth, please grant us humility and help us to rely on you in everything. Let our actions be inspired and guided by your love, and give us righteousness so that we reflect your goodness and lead others to you and your heart. Make us one with you, and help us be courageous, wise, and faithful to your call. Amen.*

*Kendra is a contributor to Ora, where you can read reflections for the weekend Mass readings. Go to [oraminsty.weebly.com](http://oraminsty.weebly.com) to read more.* 

# SACRIFICE AND GUARD



**John Rae**  
Bene Dictus Team

In 1 Corinthians 3:16, Saint Paul tells us, “You are holy, for you are God’s temple and God dwells in you.” The Catechism talks about the “common priesthood of all the faithful,” (CCC 1547). In other words, we are all priests in our own little temples.

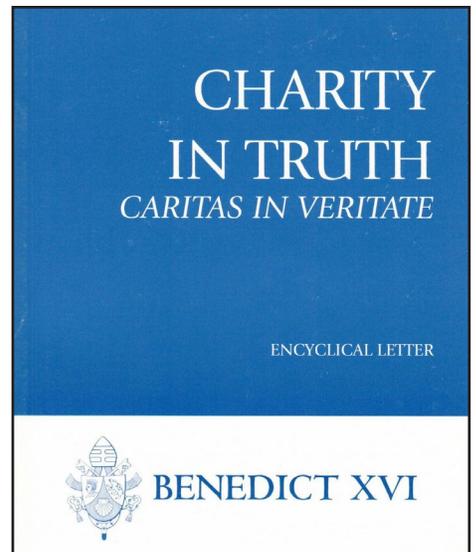
If you had a GoPro camera mounted on a drone and flew it over the Garden of Eden, you would see that Eden was laid out like a temple and at the centre, the Holiest of Holies, there is a tree with seven branches (the forerunner of the Jewish menorah). Now, a temple needs a priest, and in Genesis 2:15, it gives the job description of the first priest. “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to serve [*to sacrifice*] and to guard.”

In our temples, what do we sacrifice and what are we to guard? The model for our sacrifice is the Eucharist, where we offer simple bread and wine and receive back the body and blood of Christ. What we lay on the altar is returned to us in a vastly superior form. What we are to guard is our sacred centre, that place where God comes to commune with us heart-to-heart. We must guard our hearts so that they do not become hardened.

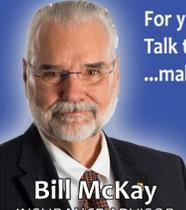
What is the name on our altar and what do we sacrifice on it? The Lord’s Prayer gives us a clue. We are to sacrifice our resentments on the altar named *forgiveness*. Even some secular philosophers point out that resentment is the poisonous venom that fuels the engines of the toxic pathologies and ideologies that threaten our individual and societal well being. Saint Augustine has said, “Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.”

Lethal resentment, when sacrificed to God on the altar of forgiveness, is returned to us as high-octane love, or caritas, which is the theme of Pope Benedict

XVI’s encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, where he explains how ‘charity in truth’ (the English translation of the title) is the principal force behind the true development of every person and of all humanity. 



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# GIVING IT UP



**Taya Vaci**  
Bene Dictus Team

*Ash Wednesday, which falls on February 26th this year, marks the start of Lent, a season in which we prepare for Easter through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. During Lent, many Catholics commit to fasting from many different things so as to imitate Jesus' sacrifice during his 40 days in the desert. Some Saint Benedict Parishioners shared their plans for Lent.*

**Heather & her daughter Clara (4 years old)** - "We're going to take on an extra bible study."

**Robert** - "This Lent, I'm going to commit to reading the book of Haggai every day. It's a short book, it's but something I can meditate on each morning."

**Johnny** - "I'm going to give up 30 minutes of TV every day, and instead I'm giving that time to devotion and prayer."

**Sarah** - "Drinking soda is my caffeine boost during lunch break, I'm going to give that up. Pray for me!"

**Mia (10 years old)** - "I'm going to give up watching YouTube at Lent."

**Peter** - "I'm going to commit to attending Mass every day."

**Marinko** - "Instead of listening to music and the radio throughout the day, I'm going to replace that time with Catholic content, like podcasts and talks."

**Michelle** - "I'll fast from having chocolate treats."

**Alina (8 years old)** - "No junk food during Lent."

**Corinne** - "I'm giving up screen time to make more time for prayer and reflections. I also want to commit more attention to those in need."

**Ainslea** - "I'm going to give up sugar."

**Brent** - "I want to use my electrician skills to help people in need. Not as a client, but as a goodwill gesture."

**Debbie** - "Time I would normally have spent on social media is going to be committed to prayer and reading the Bible."

**Crystal** - "I'm going to commit this Lent to being more mindful of my choice of words. Reading the 15th chapter of Matthew has shown me that what comes out of my mouth should come from my heart."

**Elias** - "Growing up in Oman, meat was considered a celebratory meal. During Lent, my family would follow a no-meat fast to replicate a somber season."

**Butch** - "I'm going to use my gifts to serve others in my community."

**Jason** - "I'm committing to spending time reading the Bible daily."

**Philson & Olivia** - "We are going to commit time to reading Gary Chapman's book *The Five Love Languages* and praying daily as a couple."

**Amanda** - "I'm going to give up time on social media, specifically the time on Facebook."

**Mary** - "This year I'm going to really challenge temptation and give up eating junk food."



*Lent is just a few weeks away. Hopefully these commitments will inspire each of us to contemplate and pray for ways in which we can honor Jesus Christ during this Lent season. Have you thought about what you can do? *

# STAFF PROFILE: LAURA



**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 Laura O'Rourke.*

## **What's your job at the parish?**

Laura: The fancy title I carry is Director of Children's Ministries, which means I oversee the evangelizing of babies, kids, and preteens here at Saint Benedict Parish.

## **What staff team are you on?**

I'm part of the Disciple Formation Team (DFT). While everyone on staff here has a clear mission to make disciples for Jesus, the DFT is made up of the staff members whose ministries clearly welcome individuals at any faith level and leads them along a path of meeting Jesus and going deeper into their relationship with Him.

## **How long have you worked at Saint Benedict Parish?**

I've worked here for three and a half years.

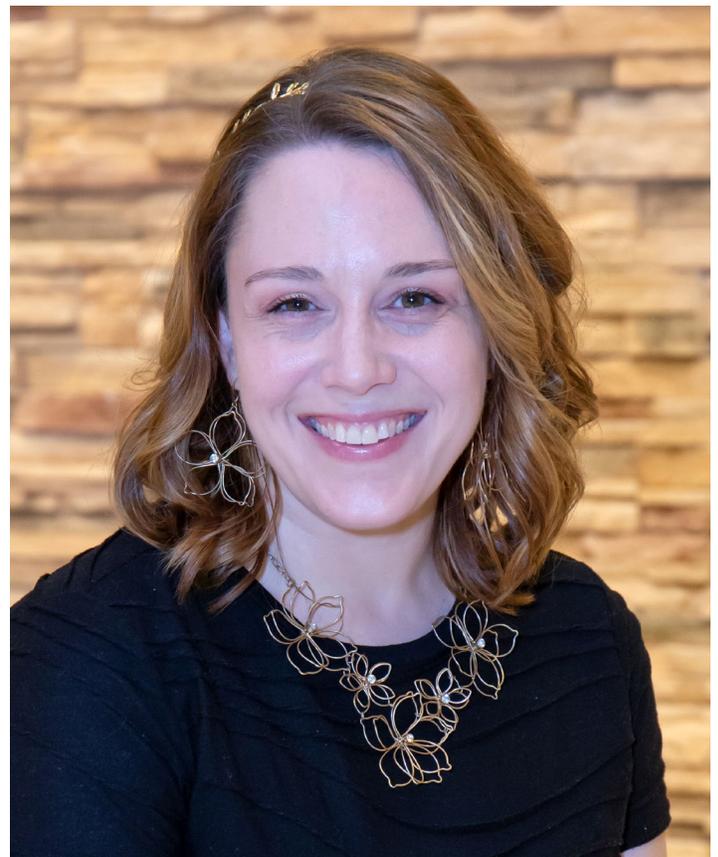
## **What does your job entail? What's a typical week look like for you?**

On a weekly basis, I oversee three ministries: WOW (Wee Ones' Word), our Sunday morning nursery & preschool program run primarily by Chantal O'Laughlin; SHINE (Seeking Him In Everything), our Sunday morning program for kids in elementary school, which I primarily run; and The Encounter, our Thursday evening youth group for grades 5 & 6. I'm also the person in charge of

Vacation Bible School, a weeklong summer event for kids, and I partner with Judy Savoy in the fall to help plan Christmas Unplugged.

Programming for kids and youth rarely happens during a typical 9 to 5 schedule, so my week doesn't look typical either. I'm also a Mom with three boys 10 & under, and my husband travels often with Divine Renovation Ministry, so each week is unique. That said, I've managed to find a bit of a routine to fall back into.

My week usually starts on Tuesdays with a day chock-full of meetings collaborating with ministry teams and leader support. Wednesdays are the days that are least structured. I try to prepare my talk for the following youth night and get done some of the important things that don't have to



do with weekly ministry prep. Thursdays are long days where I'm often here from morning until after 10pm, getting ready for The Encounter.

You will usually find me around the church all day on Saturdays, planning for and setting up our Sunday morning children's ministries. Sundays are long days as well, starting bright and early to be here in time for 9am SHINE and I stick around until early afternoon to clean up after 11:15am SHINE. By the time I get home, I try to get a quick nap in before heading out again to lead a small group of women, which has been running for almost as long as I've been working here. While that isn't part of my job description, it is part of my ministry and is part of how I structure my week.

On Mondays I'm usually pretty exhausted, so I try to take those days to reset and refocus so I can start fresh on Tuesdays. And since Sundays are a work day for me, I have been trying to set aside Fridays as a day of Sabbath, to rest, pray, and worship.

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

Immediately before working at Saint Benedict I was a stay at home mom for half a year. I had come off of my third maternity leave and realized it wouldn't be financially prudent of me to return to working at the company I had been working at for five years, knowing that I'd have to also pay for the care of my three kids. (Fun fact: a colleague at my previous job, Arlene Sibley, is now my colleague here at Saint Benedict Parish!) Want another fun fact? For years before working at the church, I also wrote a professional mom blog, which was once listed in Reader's Digest as one of the top mom blogs in Canada!

### **What do you like most about working at Saint Benedict Parish?**

Honestly, I loved feeling called to the work I am doing. Feeling called has allowed me to step up in confidence and use the gifts that I have discovered through this experience that God has given me. I feel so blessed to connect with kids on their faith journey in such an honest and real way. Of course, there is also the added bonus of working somewhere that is more flexible than previous work experiences, which is so helpful for my family life as well.

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

My favourite memories are constantly changing each new time I hear a story of a kid or preteen (or even a toddler) begging to come to church or youth group. Knowing that God has used me to help change the culture of this place to be somewhere these growing individuals want to be on any given week is a privilege. I know many of the kids I see on a weekly basis have personal relationships with Jesus already, and it gives me so much hope to think that this will be a lifelong truth they will hold on to.

### **What do you like to do outside of work?**

I'm a huge fan of TV shows (but very rarely watch movies. I really like that a television show isn't a multi-hour commitment). I also like to do my nails weekly. I try to find time as often as I can to both read and run, but I like the first much more than the second. And when I have a large period of free time (which is very rare), I try to do something extra creative, like cross-stitch. ♡

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# DR20: JUNE 15-18



**Susan LeRue**  
Bene Dictus Team

We are very excited to announce that another Divine Renovation conference will take place here in Halifax from June 15th to 18th. The DR20 countdown is on, and many volunteers will be needed.



## **What is Divine Renovation?**

Divine Renovation is a ministry devoted to parish renewal. It was born out of a vision from Fr. James Mallon, who served as our pastor from 2010 to 2017. Fr. James implemented strategies of church renewal now known worldwide as **Divine Renovation**. He is also the author of the book with the same name, *Divine Renovation: From a Maintenance to a Missional Parish*.

## **What effect did release of the book *Divine Renovation* have on Saint Benedict Parish?**

Requests came in from all over the world for Fr. James to speak at conferences and retreats, and as more and more people read

the book, more and more requests came. The interest was so great that there was an ever-increasing demand on our parish staff to handle incoming calls, emails, appointments, and more. At the same time, priests and other church leaders from all over the world started visiting Saint Benedict Parish to spend time with the parishioners and staff.

## **How was the volume of interest met?**

With all this demand on Fr. James and the staff, it was obvious that there was a need to inform others who had a thirst for parish renewal. Hence, the first Divine Renovation conference, DR16, was held at Saint Benedict Parish in 2016, with a DR18 being held two years later. Now, it's time for DR20!

## **How does being a part of a Divine Renovation parish affect individual parishioners?**

The Divine Renovation model encourages people in the pews; it raises them up as leaders. It gets them involved. We are all part of the story.

## **How is the Divine Renovation affecting the world globally?**

Currently Divine Renovation is working



with parishes on three continents, in seven countries; at this time, there are a few thousand parishes active in the Divine Renovation process. The goal of the Divine Renovation Ministry is to inspire and equip 35,000 parishes to become missional by 2028.

**What will be different about DR20?**

DR20 will be much larger. There will be three venues: Saint Benedict Parish, St. Mary’s University, and the Cunard Centre, with some Masses being held at St. Mary’s Basilica Cathedral. Also, DR20 will be open to anyone who wants to attend, including our own parishioners.



**What can volunteers expect from DR20?**

“Getting to volunteer at this conference will be eye-opening and life-changing for people in terms of who they’re going to get to connect with and the things that they’re going to get to do,” says Mike Tanner, the Director of Communications for Divine Renovation Ministry. “You’re making friends with pastors from Denmark and South Africa, or a music ministry lead from South Australia, or a Religious Education director from

Bulgaria. It’s wild that we all get to come together in this one place. Getting the chance to serve in that is just mind-blowing.”

**How and when can I find out more about Divine Renovation Ministry?**

There will be a Meet-and-Greet at Saint Benedict on the weekend of February 22nd-23rd with Divine Renovation Ministry’s staff

after all Masses. The opportunity to sign up to serve at DR20 will be on the weekend of March 7th-8th.

Please pray for the success of DR20, and mark your calendars for June 15th-18th.

*“Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.” – Mark 16:15*



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# HEARTS MEETING HEARTS



**Matt Kerrigan**  
**Bene Dictus Team**

I have often heard parishioners at Saint Benedict say how much they feel a sense of belonging in the parish - that it is 'like family'. Outstanding hospitality and many shared experiences like Alpha, Connect Groups, and Discipleship Groups contribute to knitting our close bonds.

What happens if life's circumstances intervene and interrupt the bond of this shared journey? What if sickness, injury, or even the normal aging process makes me lose my mobility and energy? What if I can't make it out to Mass or to other activities in the parish? It would be easy to fall out of touch.

In the past year, a new ministry has sprung up at Saint Benedict to offset those disconnecting circumstances. It is called the **Care and Companionship Ministry**. In our parish, Sheila Kidd has been the proponent and leader. It developed out of nine parishioners in Sheila's discipleship group who were ready to step out into this ministry.

A lot has unfolded since then. The number of parishioners now bringing care and companionship has grown to 24. Sheila and Dorothy Edem have made contact and established a liaison with administrators in several Assisted Living facilities serving our community. Residents who are largely on their own, without family members and close friends to brighten their days, are

now reattached to the Saint Benedict family through a companion who visits regularly. The same is true with the hospitals. Patients with extended stays who would benefit from a visitor to support and cheer them up also are reconnected to parish life through this ministry. Fr. Michael Grace, our Archdiocese's hospital chaplain, ably and enthusiastically helps coordinate in the hospital setting.

There are also people who would benefit from a regular companion visiting them in their own homes. Making that connection is a bit more challenging.



The referral for a companion would have to come directly from the person themselves or from someone close to them knowing their situation, and with their permission. If you know of someone who you feel would be open to a regular parish visitor, you could refer the contact information by phone or email.

The main qualifications for this ministry are an ear for listening and a caring and compassionate heart. There is some basic initial training for all who offer to be companions and there is ongoing support offered at monthly meetings. The meetings are on the last Saturday of each month at 10:00 am in the Marguerite Room. The next meeting is Saturday, February 22nd.

Aside from volunteer companions, there is also a need for volunteer administrative support. If you have some time to answer phone calls, or to follow up on phone calls received, your help would be greatly appreciated. If you are comfortable in carrying out administrative work, your efforts would help extend the reach of our parish as hearts reach out to hearts in Christ.

**For more information or referrals:**

**Phone: 902-222-6185**

**Email:**

**[careandcompanionship@saintbenedict.ca](mailto:careandcompanionship@saintbenedict.ca)**

**If you are considering serving, there are pamphlets in the parish office. ♡**

## ***UPCOMING EVENTS***

at Saint Benedict Parish

**FEB 15** - Praise & Worship Night,  
7:30pm

**FEB 23** - Divine Renovation  
Meet & Greet

**FEB 25** - Pancake Supper

**FEB 26** - Ash Wednesday

**MAR 2-4** - Parish Lenten Mission  
with Fr. Mathias Thelen

For full event details, be sure to subscribe to The Overview by visiting [saintbenedict.ca](http://saintbenedict.ca)



**LENTEN  
MISSION:  
MARCH 2-4**

# FR. MATHIAS THELEN

ENCOUNTER MINISTRIES

Fr. Mathias will be sharing about how we can learn to hear God's voice today. The main sessions will be at 7pm on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, with an informal Q&A after 9am Mass on March 4th.



**ASH WEDNESDAY  
MASSES**

**FEBRUARY 26TH  
9AM, 4PM, & 7PM**

## Connect Groups

Alpha Team



Ministry



Discipleship Groups



Alpha



Invitational Church



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

Worship



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# PARISH STAFF TEAM

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

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

**PETER SALAH**  
Audiovisual  
PeterS@SaintBenedict.ca

**NOREEN SMITH (ex 0)**  
Office Manager  
NoreenS@SaintBenedict.ca

**PHIL MARMEN**  
Music Ministry  
PhilM@SaintBenedict.ca

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

**BILL SCOLLARD (ex 39)**  
Groups  
Bills@SaintBenedict.ca

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

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

**COREY ROBINSON**  
Youth Ministry  
CoreyR@SaintBenedict.ca

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

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

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

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

**DINAH SIMMONS (ex 24)**  
Worship & Sacraments  
DinahS@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 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 - DECEMBER 2019

SUNDAY COLLECTIONS	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
ENVELOPES	1,502	\$47,298	\$31.49
PAR (PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE)	425	\$61,071	\$140.52*
LOOSE	-	\$7,369	-
ONLINE	-	\$4,629	-
TOTAL	-	\$120,367	-
PARISH DEBT REDUCTION	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
ENVELOPES	145	\$5,158	\$35.57
PAR (PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE)	58	\$2,782	\$47.97*
MORTGAGE BALANCE (AS OF MONTH END)			\$369,840
PRINCIPAL PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			\$10,002
INTEREST PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			\$1,435
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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