

# SAINT BENE



PHOTO: JOHNIRAE

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## **SAINT BENE**

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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 January 17th.*

### **On the cover:**

*A recent socially-distanced baptism.*

## SAINT BENEDICT PARISH CLERGY

Pastor: Fr. Simon Lobo, CC

Associate Pastor: Fr. Alex Colautti, CC

Permanent Deacon: Deacon David Viscount

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**BENE DICTUS - December 2020**



## FATHER SIMON SAYS...



**Fr. Simon Lobo, CC**

**Pastor**

### **AT THE TIME OF THIS WRITING**

Our provincial public health leaders have reinforced restrictions so as to limit an increase of COVID-19 cases, especially in Halifax. As the world is plunging into a second wave of Coronavirus, circumstances are changing rapidly, and so much of this is out of our control. We went from gathering sizes of 200 to 100 to 5 in the span of four days. By the time you read this, it is possible that our situation has changed again. I want to express the importance of following the directives of our appointed officials. At the same time, I want to acknowledge the pain that many must be experiencing. We do have local cases, and there are flare-ups all over our country and in different parts of the world. We all experience mental and emotional pain, having to be separated from people we love at this time. For many of you, there is an additional spiritual pain in that we are, once again, unable to gather in person for the celebration of the Mass and to receive Holy Communion.

Many years ago, a friend advised me to hope for the best and plan for the worst. I have no idea if the restrictions will lift (or if they have already lifted), but I believe we should brace ourselves for a Christmas like no other. It is very possible that our 'COVID Christmas' will be entirely online this year. But make no mistake, whether in person or online, Jesus is going to show up in power, breaking into our world, just as He did that first Christmas 2,000 years ago. As your pastor, I ask you to raise your sense of expectation for the coming of our infant Saviour.

*Continued on next page...*

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# FATHER SIMON SAYS continued

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## THE HOLY SPIRIT ISN'T CONFUSED BY ZOOM

Nicky Gumbel, the 'grandfather' of Alpha, used that phrase earlier in the pandemic, and it continues to be true for us. So as to help increase our expectation of what's possible online, I want to share one of many stories from our three Zoom Alphas this Fall. A few talks were pre-recorded for the Alpha Holy Spirit Weekend. A week later, during the actual Alpha Weekend, a lady was watching from home, and during Fr. Alex's talk, she said it felt like shackles and chains were falling from her wrists – she was being set free in Christ! (As it turns out, while this was actually happening, Fr. Alex was probably taking a nap, but the Holy Spirit was on the job.)

Think of the prophecy from Isaiah 61, which we hear this weekend, the Third Sunday of Advent: *"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners..."*

Jesus is continuing to fulfill this prophecy in 2020, with the power of the Holy Spirit, and He's even doing it over the internet! If you need some good news, if your heart is broken, if you are asking to be set free... I encourage you to pray that Jesus would come to you in a special way this Christmas!

## A SEASON OF GENEROSITY

I hope that you will embrace this season as a time to put others first and to look for ways to bless others with thoughtful gifts, no matter the size. I am blown away by the generosity of our parishioners – both our locals and those who have started joining us online, who

have become a part of our community. With Christmas falling so close to the weekend (Holy Family Sunday), I'd like to note that we budget for a special Christmas collection, in addition to the normal weekend collection. We would be so grateful if you would generously give to our parish as we form disciples who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus Christ! Please note that Christmas giving does not come out of Automatic Giving, but you can give with an envelope or at [saintbenedict.ca/give](http://saintbenedict.ca/give).

We want to make it as easy as possible, so there are several ways that you can share your gifts with us. Our preference is for you to sign up for Automatic Giving, formerly called PAR (that's what I use). You can also give with a credit card online, or you can send an e-Transfer to [finance@saintbenedict.ca](mailto:finance@saintbenedict.ca). Just recently, we set up Text to Give. Simply text "SBP GIVE" to 833-509-0800. It's really simple and convenient. I should note that all of these methods are safe and confidential. To find out more, please go to [saintbenedict.ca/give](http://saintbenedict.ca/give). You can also give via envelope through the slot by the entrance on the lower level. (It's been recently upgraded and enlarged to make it as safe and secure as possible.)

We are so grateful for your generosity, and we will do our utmost to be good stewards of all that we receive as a parish.

If you're reading this issue of the Bene Dictus hot off the press, then it's Joy Sunday - which means that we are fast approaching the celebration of Christmas. Please know that we love you, we miss you, and on behalf of all of the clergy and staff of Saint Benedict Parish, I want to wish you a very blessed and peaceful Christmas! 🕊

# NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE



**Megan Noye**  
**Ora Ministry**

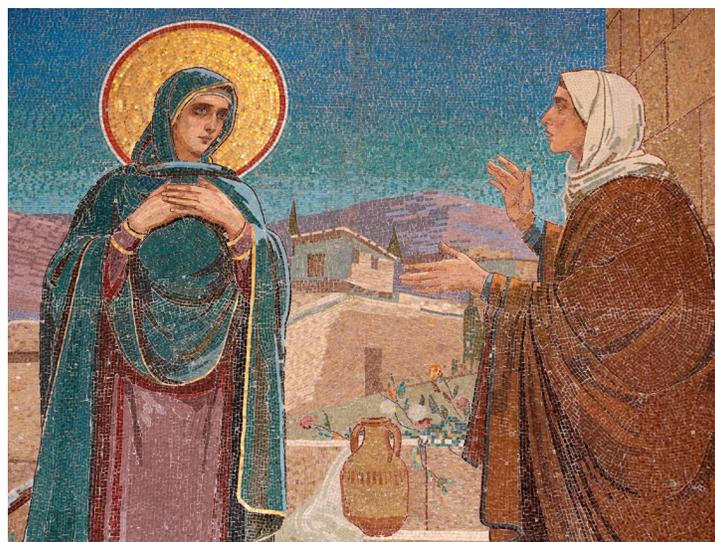
*This reflection is for next Sunday's Gospel, Luke 1:26-28.*

“For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Really let those words sink in... Nothing is impossible with God.

We live in a world where things are not guaranteed; where things don't always go as planned. Sometimes the computer crashes with all your important files on it. Sometimes the power goes out on a day that you needed it most. Sometimes heavy traffic makes you late for that really important meeting. When you think about it, we really do have very little control over most things in life. On Earth, we are surrounded by impossibilities. But, through God, all things can truly be made possible.

Every time I read this scripture, I'm deeply inspired by Mary's acceptance and knowledge that God can do all things. Although I know in my heart that this is true, Mary is completely faithful to the Lord in all actions, which can be difficult at times. Imagine being in her shoes: a young woman who has yet to be married, living in a town where carrying a child out of wedlock would lead to a lot of



awful stares and judgement. That sounds absolutely terrifying! But, at the same time, I can't help but smile thinking of the great joy that God must have had when Mary gave him her 'yes'. Mary completely trusted her heavenly father, without a doubt. If there is any perfect model for faith, it would certainly be her. Amidst her confusion (and, likely, anxiety) about what was being asked of her, all she could say was “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.”

Although the Lord has not asked of you or me something as extreme as this, it should still be appreciated that God also has plans for you and desires for you to do his will, to let him make all things possible

here on this Earth full of impossibilities. God asks for your 'yes' every single day, like he did with Mary. He wants you to live the life that he has perfectly designed for you: to have a relationship with him and share your faith with others always. That involves having the same courage that Mary did at the annunciation. I pray that when the Lord asks his will of me, that I too have the great faith to respond with the words: “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.” Amen.

*Megan 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.*

# STRAIGHT COMMISSION

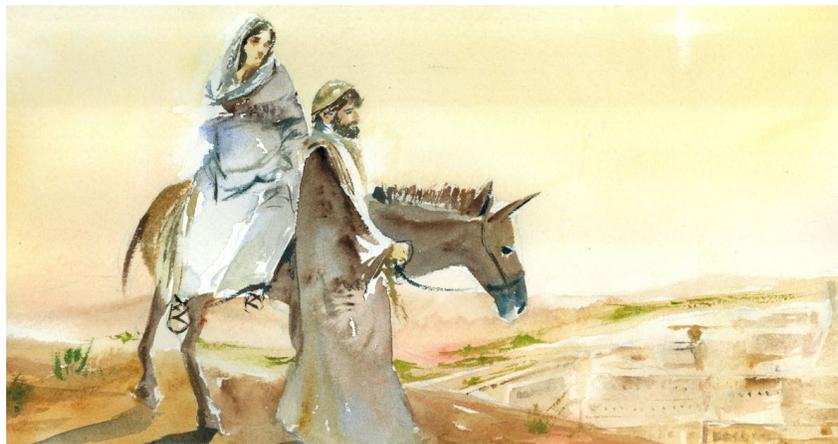


**John Rae**  
**Bene Dictus Team**

I operate a small business and COVID restrictions have had a devastating effect on this vulnerable business sector. I essentially work on 'straight commission'. Saint Joseph, with his carpenter's shop, in Nazareth, was in the small business, 'straight commission' niche. He knew what it was like to be forced to temporarily shutter his business because of government policy, which in his case was the census. Not only that, he was compelled to take his wife, Mary, at a vulnerable time in her pregnancy, and make the perilous journey to Bethlehem, only to have the privilege of discovering that there was no room in the inn. That first Christmas night it was the shepherds, who lived at the bottom of society's pyramid of privilege, who were the witnesses to this blessed event. Fittingly, it was Mary Magdalene who was the first witness to Jesus' resurrection who, being a woman, was vulnerable to the social exclusions of First Century culture.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus makes the point that worldly privilege is not all that it's

cracked up to be. When he encountered the religious leaders who were in the business of relishing in the richness of their ethnic privilege as 'sons of Abraham', Jesus had a few things to say to them: that the entry into the Kingdom is not a gate that you breeze through with your buddies, that it is more like the squeezing of a solitary soul through the eye of a needle, that it is the spiritual posture of being on 'straight commission'. Jesus makes it personal: "Who do you say that I am?"



At one level, the spiritual life is a vulnerable and solitary journey. The baggage of our various forms of privilege, cultural, religious, or economic, just

weigh us down. In Luke 6:20, Jesus says, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God." Paul, in Philippians 2:12, points out that you have "to work out your salvation with fear and trembling," which is the mindset of someone on 'straight commission'.

This year, as we make up our Christmas wish lists, perhaps we should step out and request that God put our personal vulnerabilities to good use. As a currency in the Kingdom, our vulnerabilities can be a gift that keeps on giving. 🙏

# AN UNCERTAIN ADVENT

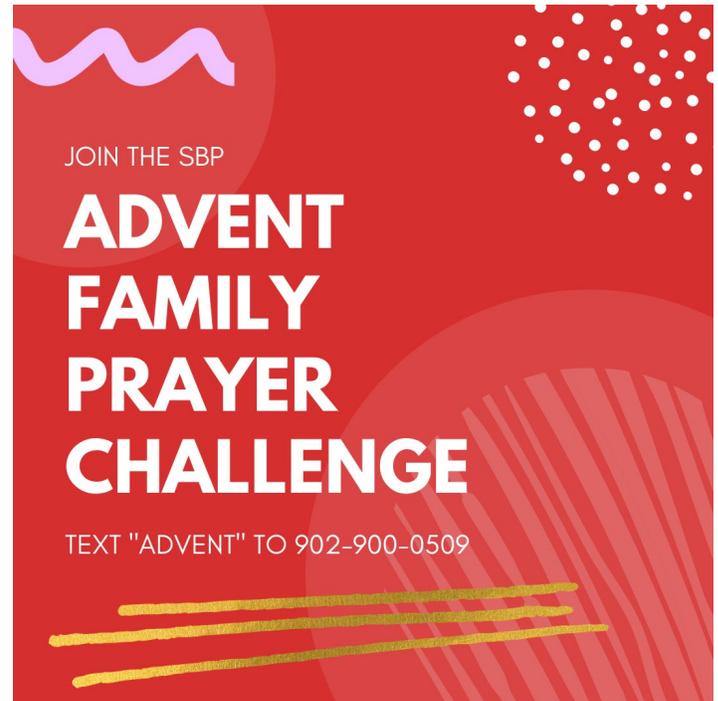


**Taya Vaci**  
Bene Dictus Team

My intention for this article was to connect with fellow parishioners and get them to share their Advent and Christmas traditions. It would have been perfect timing: hearing all the wonderful plans set out for December, making Advent Wreaths with friends, Christmas Eve Mass, turkey dinner with family... But within a few weeks, the second wave of COVID-19 hit our community here in Halifax, and everything has been paused. Saint Benedict's doors are once again closed to the public, the gathering limit is only five people, and it is unknown what Mass will be like for Christmas.

Dozens of families responded to my inquiries with a similar answer: "We're not sure what we're doing anymore," echoing how I imagined everyone around the world is feeling.

Then, in God's perfect timing, Deacon David's homily from the First Sunday of Advent (beginning the appropriately named "The Weary World Rejoices" preaching series) offered our community a new tradition to share in this December. If you have not yet heard the homily, I encourage you to go to the parish YouTube channel ([YouTube.com/SaintBP](https://www.youtube.com/SaintBP)) and watch it. It's the exact message our weary world needs to hear. Deacon David invites us all to join an Advent study that



will remind us to focus on the reason for Christmas – Jesus. Perfect timing. While most of us are unsure of what Christmas will bring, this Advent study is a new tradition we can implement. Go to [saintbenedict.ca/wearyworld](https://saintbenedict.ca/wearyworld) to sign up.

A second option for a new tradition is to sign up for The Advent Family Prayer Challenge. Another opportunity to enter this season through Scripture, prayer and reflection. Text **ADVENT** to 902-900-0509 to get daily reminders to join others in prayer. Anyone can participate, and you can do it by yourself or join virtually in a group.

Take this time of Advent to join with our community, focus on putting Christ at the centre of this season, and prepare our hearts for celebrating his birth! 🕯️

# SBPKIDS FAMILY CHRISTMAS



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

Are you ready for a Christmas ADVENTure?

Tune in to Saint Benedict Parish's livestream ([YouTube.com/SaintBP](https://www.youtube.com/SaintBP), [Facebook.com/SaintBP](https://www.facebook.com/SaintBP), [saintbenedict.ca](https://www.saintbenedict.ca)) at 3:00pm on Christmas Eve for a light-hearted and right-hearted presentation on the true meaning of Christmas.

Laura O'Rourke, our parish's Children's Minister and the host and producer of SBPkids Online Church, has put together a delightful Christmas program for families: **An SBPkids Family Christmas**.

Laura will be joined by Matt Vaughan, her sometimes co-host for the 9am Livestream Mass. They will meet a fascinating character named Reginald, who loves talking about Christmas but is sometimes very confused.

Reginald offers us his version of a Christmas story. His portrayal has us pondering the question, is there hope for Christmas? Troubled by the many trials and tribulations of the world, including the ever-present worries about COVID-19, this Christmas

season is especially about pursuing hope.

In trying to set Reginald on the right track, Laura introduces four different families and the story of their Advent Wreaths. Each family shows their unique approach to their advent wreath, but they all tell the timeless story of Jesus' birth, from Isaiah's prophecy to the creche in Bethlehem.

In a time of disruptions in many people's



lives, we are reminded of that first Christmas: Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus spent it on a long journey away from their home, ending

up sheltering in a humble stable. In spite of the very trying circumstances, the greatest hope of humankind arrived that night with the birth of Jesus.

The Family Christmas presentation begins at 3pm, an hour before Christmas Eve Mass. Viewers can participate by talking in the chat, commenting on the story as it unfolds.

Please join us for this beautiful celebration of the Nativity of Jesus, **An SBPkids Family Christmas**. It promises to add an entertaining and meaningful experience to your personal family Christmas. 🕊

# CHRISTMAS AT SAINT BENEDICT

Begins with **An SBP Family Christmas** at 3pm on December 24th, followed by carols and **Christmas Eve Mass**, livestreamed at 4pm.

Watch live:  
[YouTube.com/SaintBP](https://www.youtube.com/SaintBP),  
[Facebook.com/SaintBP](https://www.facebook.com/SaintBP),  
and [saintbenedict.ca](http://saintbenedict.ca).

For more information, visit  
[saintbenedict.ca/christmas](http://saintbenedict.ca/christmas)

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# GRIEVING DURING COVID



**Corinne Dixon**  
**Bene Dictus Team**

*"Blessed are those who grieve, for they shall be consoled."  
Matthew 5:4*

Grief is the deep sorrow caused by the death of a loved one, and it is a last act of love we give to the deceased. It is one of life's toughest challenges and one that we will all face.

Every grieving person will move through the stages of grief at their own pace. There is no correct timeline, it cannot be hurried, and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Support during this difficult time requires a delicate touch in the journey of healing.

In non-pandemic times we have traditions that are part of our healing and our faith. We gather at wakes and share stories that can bring joy, laughter, and tears; we express condolences; we show our love through hugs; we weep tears of loss; we pray the rosary together; and we break bread. We gather for a funeral Mass and sing songs of praise, thanking God for the life of our loved one. Mass is part of the grieving journey, and when we cannot share in it our loss is intensified.

In our current circumstances, we are faced with finding a new way to manage grieving. We may not be able to be at our loved one's side when they die, and we may feel guilty as a result. Family may not be able to travel, there are limits on gathering sizes, and

funerals may be very small or not possible at all. Virtual connections help, but they are not a substitute for a warm hug. The isolation that COVID-19 protocols require may not allow us to journey through the stages of grief and cause us to have both our spiritual and our mental health impacted. We do not get over grief, but over time we evolve through the process and the memory is always with us.

Our parish offers support for those who are grieving. The leaders of our Grief Support Group are not professional counsellors, but they lead with love, they are empathetic listeners, and they have deep faith. The group is a place of trust, with no judgement, and it is confidential.

"As a Catholic, what means a lot to me is the beauty of our Communion of Saints, and with that link a spiritual union exists between souls on earth, souls in purgatory, and saints in heaven," says Judy Rae, one of the Grief Support Group leaders. "This union allows us to stay united with our loved ones in a personal way. We can pray for our loved ones and we can intercede for one another."

"I am so grateful that our parish offers this," said Patricia Connolly. "It afforded me the chance to share my grief with others who understood what I was dealing with. The prayerful support and spiritual component allowed the Holy Spirit to work his wonders and begin my journey of transcending the loss and finding joy in my life again."

# 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 Auditorium.



For more information, email [griefsupport@saintbenedict.ca](mailto:griefsupport@saintbenedict.ca)

Since March, the ministry leaders have stayed connected with group members via email and monthly mailings. The leaders created a phone list and reached out to group members to check in and offer support and assistance as required.

In November, a face-to-face meeting was held with social distancing and safety protocols in place as new members were welcomed. Those of other faiths and from other parishes are welcome to participate.

“Grief can be very lonely,” said Carol Catchpaugh, another leader in the ministry.

“We wanted to do our best in this crazy year. I’m so grateful to belong to Saint Benedict; we are so blessed. I hope and pray that we can be in person again soon.”

Sometimes we need a reminder to cherish the time we have with our loved ones. It is comforting to know that when we need support, our God is all loving and we have a support group who can love us through our most difficult time.

*For further information, email [GriefSupport@saintbenedict.ca](mailto:GriefSupport@saintbenedict.ca) or call the parish office: (902) 443-0725. *



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# STAFF PROFILE: NOREEN SMITH



**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 Noreen Smith.*

## What's your job at the parish?

NOREEN: I passed my one year mark on staff last month. In October 2019, the title on my lanyard said, 'Office Manager'. That was when I was part-time. In January, I went full-time, and a new title went on the lanyard, 'Reception and Hospitality', as I was taking on more responsibilities with the Weekend Mass experience. With COVID-19, I shifted to leading a small team working from our homes on, among other things, calling everyone at our parish and connecting people to help each other. If we had been meeting in person and using name tags then, the new one would have said, 'Neighbour Care Team Lead'. This September I shifted gears again, as Father

Simon asked me to join the Parish Leadership Team. Now, my title is Ministry and Mission Support Team Leader.

## What staff team are you on?

I'm on two: the Parish Leadership Team and the Ministry and Mission Support Team.

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

Although I started working here last Fall, I first walked in the doors in the summer of 2016. A friend had told me to come, and I cried when I stepped into the foyer because of the presence of God in the people.



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

In our interoffice chat app, and I found out that you could attach a short description of what you do to your name. I put 'Help' next to mine, and then thought maybe people would think I was asking for some, so I changed it to, 'Help... in the indicative, not the imperative.' That's the nut of it, and that's why I love the name Ministry and Mission Support. The other

focus of 'Help, in the indicative', is ministry. I lead our team in corralling resources to support the many ministries in our parish. I also find myself with a toe in other pools — chat hosting for our livestreamed Masses, music in the Contemplative Choir, chatting on camera with Matt before 9am Mass, getting to be in an Alpha Room, etc.

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

My husband, Barry, and I had our own business in the cold chain logistics industry. That's about storing and moving food around the world at refrigerated and frozen temperatures — the kind of industry that you probably never thought about but benefit from all the time. Our warehouses were in Burnside. We sold our business about 5 years ago. Over the 25 years we had the company, my roles depended on what was needed, and what stage we were at in raising our four kids, and where else I was working.

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

It's all about the who, not the what: the people I get to work with on staff, the people I get to work and live with in our parish, the people in our community who don't know Jesus yet. What I like most is that I get to spend my days weaving in and out among these people in the company of the Person who loves them the most.

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

Too much to choose from... Maybe two memories linked by a space, the chapel. First: on March 15th, moments before we were told by the Archdiocese that we had to close the doors, I was praying. I asked God for a picture, and he gave me a movie: beings of light standing inside the church, pulling our front doors closed and then growing so incandescent that they lost form, and the light streamed out every window, farther than I could see. A second memory: a few weeks later, while praying, I noticed how terribly dusty the chains were that hold the red glass cup that holds the candle that always burns above the tabernacle. So, I decided to clean them. No candles, chairs, glass, brass, or people were hurt in the making of this movie, but it was a close one. I think these memories are my favourite because of the meeting of the sublime and the ridiculous. That's life.

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

Everything except run. I love to make things: I knit, sew, crochet, cook, grow plants, and make pottery. I love to make music: play guitar, ukulele, sing. I love to play board games with friends and family. I love anything to do with water: swimming and boating. I love writing, I love reading. I love driving my car or riding my Indian motorcycle. I love spending time playing in the Bible with my Father. I love hearing other people's stories and helping them make them. And I love sleep. I really love sleep. 🌹

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## *WAYS TO GIVE THIS CHRISTMAS*



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# UPCOMING EVENTS

at Saint Benedict Parish

**DECEMBER 13** - Gaudete Sunday

**DECEMBER 24** - SBP Family Christmas

**DECEMBER 24** - Christmas Eve Mass

**DECEMBER 27** - Holy Family Sunday

**JANUARY 1** - Mary, Mother of God

For full event details,  
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The Overview by visiting  
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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 - OCTOBER 2020

SUNDAY COLLECTIONS	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
ENVELOPES	-	\$16,026	-
AUTOMATIC GIVING	419	\$57,350	\$136.87*
LOOSE	-	\$893	-
ONLINE	-	\$17,211	-
TOTAL	-	\$91,480	-
PARISH DEBT REDUCTION	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
ENVELOPES	-	\$2,644	-
AUTOMATIC GIVING	52	\$2,487	\$47.83*
MORTGAGE BALANCE (AS OF MONTH END)			\$268,063
PRINCIPAL PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			\$10,742
INTEREST PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			\$697
TOTAL PAID (ON MORTGAGE)			\$11,439

\*NOTE: Automatic Giving average includes weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly withdrawals, which are totalled and divided by the number of givers.



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