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p. 4
PREPARING FOR LENT

p. 9
THE GIFT OF CONFIRMATION

PHOTO: JOHN RAE

SAINT BENEDICT PARISH

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The Bene Dictus is our monthly magazine featuring stories about changed lives at Saint Benedict Parish.

The next issue of the Bene Dictus will be released on the weekend of March 2nd.

On the cover:

A parishioner places a candle during a recent Proclaim night.

SAINT BENEDICT PARISH CLERGY

Pastor: Fr. Simon Lobo, CC

Associate Pastor: Fr. Isaac Longworth, CC

Associate Pastor: Fr. Dan Ramos, CC

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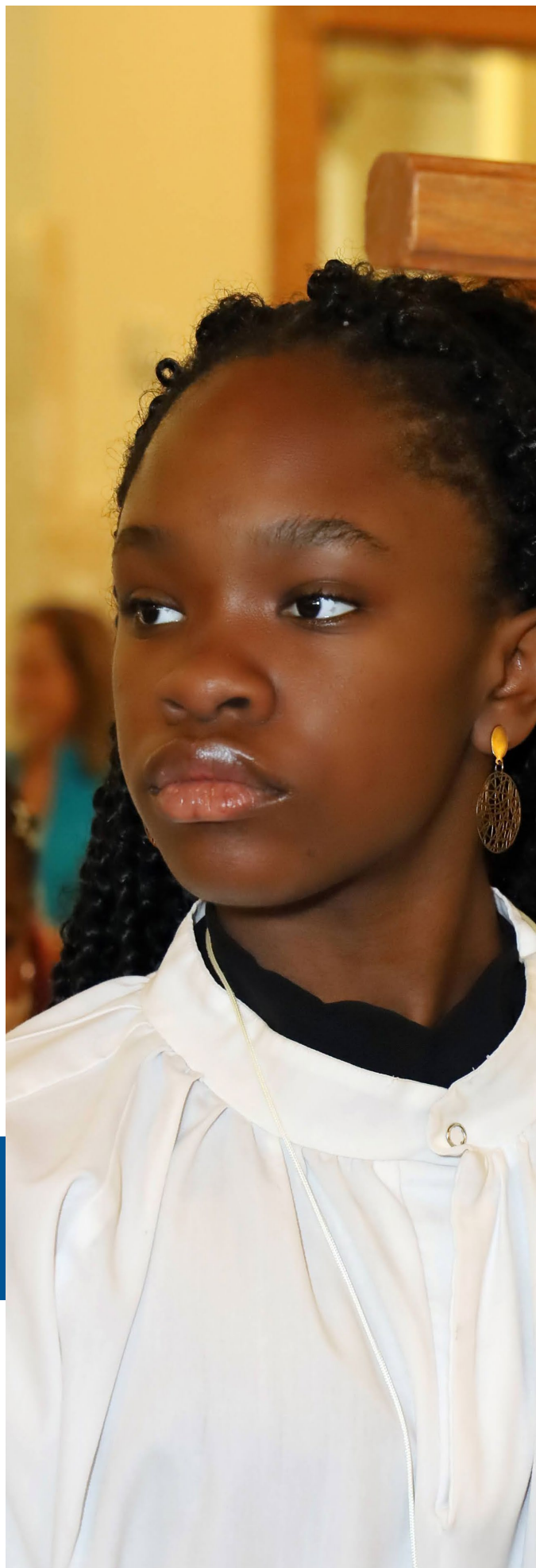
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BENE DICTUS - February 2024



FATHER SIMON SAYS...



Fr. Simon Lobo, CC

Pastor

FOR THE LOVE OF LENT

This year Ash Wednesday falls on February 14, which also happens to be Valentine's Day. We will have three Ash Wednesday Masses at 12:15pm, 5pm, and 7pm (the 7pm Mass will be streamed online).

This might sound weird, but I genuinely love the season of Lent. I go through periods of spiritual laziness, so this is a great opportunity to re-engage with all of my heart. We are invited to focus on three things: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. You might consider modestly increasing your Daily Prayer Time, praying the Stations of the Cross (by yourself or at 6:30pm on Fridays in the church), or coming to our side chapel for Eucharistic Adoration (Tuesday nights and all-day Wednesday). Personally, I want to add a short time of prayer at the end of my day, the Examen, as a way of reflecting on where God was present throughout my day.

We often begin Lent by asking, "What are you giving up this year?" It could be as simple as denying yourself desserts, alcohol, or some other favourite food. For some it might be more beneficial to limit the amount of entertainment and social media that you consume. The goal here is not to inflict suffering on yourself but to choose to discipline yourself so as to make more space for God. Jesus speaks about how our prayers are more powerful when they are accompanied with the practice of fasting.

Finally, almsgiving refers to financial generosity, specifically to the poor, that is over and above our normal giving to the parish and other charities. As a very small act of almsgiving, I usually renew my annual child sponsorship for Chalice at this time of year.

Continued on next page...



FATHER SIMON SAYS *continued*

One of the common mistakes in the lead up to Lent is to take on grandiose commitments, lose steam, and then give up. I recommend that you ask God, “What simple, concrete act are you asking me to make this Lent?” He has a plan that is tailor made for you.

FOCUSING ON CATECHESIS

Every year Archbishop Dunn asks all of the parishes to focus on a particular priority. This year the emphasis is on Catechesis, which is a fancy word that refers to ongoing formation and education in the Catholic faith. This is not merely an abstract expectation, but an essential call of every disciple—that we never stop growing and learning. With that in mind, we will be preaching on catechesis throughout Lent.

Sometimes catechesis can be reduced to classroom learning. I know of some parishioners who are highly educated with multiple degrees but who admit to having an elementary understanding of the faith. They plateaued in their Catholic intellectual formation many, many years ago. A disciple is a lifelong learner, and so we should be continuously consuming good Catholic content to deepen our understanding by reading books, listening to podcasts, and watching educational videos, such as those available for streaming on Formed.org. (We have an account on Formed so you can access it for free; visit saintbenedictthfx.formed.org and follow the instructions.)

However, ‘book-learning’ alone is a very narrow understanding of catechesis. Catechesis includes learning to pray and read the Bible, learning how to worship God through music, gathering for fellowship with other believers, working at eliminating sinful

and unhealthy habits in our life, participating in ministries that serve others, seeing our lives as a mission-field, etc.

This is a long list, but thankfully we will be growing in catechesis not only this year but for the rest of our lives. We just need to go one step at a time.

PREACHING ON PURPOSE

In 2022, Fr. Alex and I co-authored (with two other people) a practical handbook on preaching. Since then, we have been invited to speak to groups of priests. We gave workshops to 60 priests in Winnipeg in October, then to 120 priests in Orange County, California, last month. It has been humbling to see God use us to minister to other priests. I dream of a preaching revolution in the Catholic Church!

With that said, the truth is that the Companions of the Cross priests at Saint Benedict Parish are just regular guys, trying to do our best, but we are imperfect. We collaborate as a team on our weekly homilies. We sincerely try to exercise our ministry as Priest/Prophet/King with charity and clarity.

Fr. Isaac and I preached two messages on December 31st and January 1st that many appreciated and many others struggled with. Pope Francis says that the homily is a dialogue. During Mass the priest—inspired by the Holy Spirit, we hope—communicates to all of us. But that word is meant to spark a conversation between God and us that is to continue throughout our week. Some who were struggling reached out to us so that we could continue the conversation with them. All three priests here will continue to make ourselves available to anyone who would like to keep the dialogue going. 🙏

PREPARING FOR LENT



Shelly Fillmore
Bene Dictus Team

Lent is fast upon us. For Catholics, Lent is a 40-day season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, a season to draw closer to God.

It is the season of preparation to celebrate Jesus' resurrection at Easter. During Lent, there are many ways we can seek the Lord. Reading scripture, serving, giving donations, and practicing self-control through fasting. There are many ways to do this. From daily prayer and donating to giving up some of your favourite treats, the possibilities are endless. Last year, I decided to fast from coffee. It was challenging, to say the least. On day five, when the headaches set in, I was ready to throw in the towel, but thanks to daily prayer, I was able to withstand it.

This year, while I won't be refraining from coffee, I am preparing with my family, deciding on a few things we will be planning to do to embrace the Lord's resurrection fully when Easter comes around. Here are some ideas for you and your family to consider:

Slow down and pray – Set aside 5 to 15 minutes daily for silent prayer or meditation. I love using the Hallow app for specific Lenten prayers and daily meditation.

Celebrate with the whole family – Get everyone involved, especially if you have children. Invite your kids to choose one or

two ideas that they will do this Lent. You can create fun posters or pictures to help remind them each day. My family will be using a sticker chart.

- **Deep clean** – Clean out closets and cabinets and donate gently used items.
- **Spread kindness** – Go out of your way to bring a smile to someone's face. Buy

someone a coffee, tell them how blessed you are to have them in your life, or say hi to a stranger.

- **Get involved** – Attend our Lenten mission, March 3-5th!
- **Find a way to serve** – Fill out the form at saintbenedict.ca/serve to tell us about your skills, experiences, and passions. Let us help you use the gifts God has given you.

- **Read a good book** –

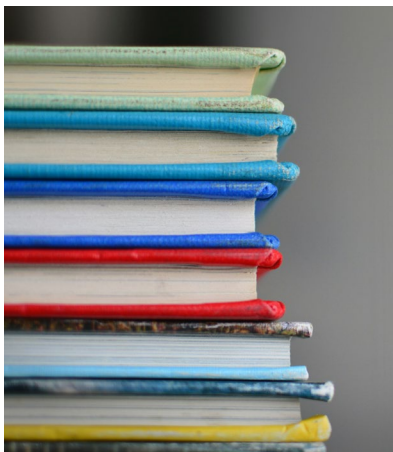
Recommendations I will check out this Lent:

- *St. Augustine's Confessions*
- *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis
- *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis
- *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis
- *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri Nouwen
- *I Believe in Love* by St. Therese of Lisieux

- **Reach out** – Invite a family member or friend to Mass.

- **Unplug** – Minimize screen time and spend more time being present.

Lent can be an incredible way to draw closer to faith. I invite you all to use this time to create a meaningful connection to God and slow down, even with all the distractions of a busy world. 🙏



FIXING A BROKEN HEART



Aurea Sadi
Ora Ministry

This reflection is for this Sunday's Psalm, Psalm 147.

French fries. Ice cream. Cookies. Cake! When I am broken-hearted, these are the things I reach for. Whether it is heartbreak caused by an ex-boyfriend, a lost friendship, an estranged family member, or witnessing the hurtful actions of one person toward another, heartbreak sucks. Heartbreak can literally feel like there is a hole in your heart. And personally, I want to fill that hole left in my heart with something, anything that will make the emptiness and hurt go away. And the easiest filler for me is something tangibly comforting... and delicious. But that really doesn't fix my heartbreak.

Like many people, I want to fix things when they are broken! However, fixing broken things is one thing. Fixing broken people? That's a whole different thing altogether. Human heartbreak is ultimately the loss of a relationship. Romantic or platonic, it doesn't matter. And if I have learned anything it is:

1. We were made for relationship!
2. We are in relationship with every part of God's creation.

It blows my mind every time I think that God didn't need to create me – he wanted to. He wanted a relationship with me. Even when I do heart-breaking things! He can fix that. He can fix me. The writer of Psalm 147 is very clear about God's power to heal the brokenhearted. True healing comes from

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the one whose heart broke first. The one who created us. As humanity chose over and over again not to love God as he loved them, his heart broke. Yet he continued to reach out to us to offer healing for the brokenness we felt, and oftentimes caused.

God did not leave his creation alone, just as he does not leave me alone. He doesn't turn away in our relationship, I do. I make the choice to let him fix me, heal me, love me... or not. God gave me that freedom, trusting that I will come back to him always, broken heart and all. What greater gift is there than that?

Okay, there is one thing greater. To show how much he wants to do this for me, he sent his only Son – who literally broke! – in order to reconcile our relationship.

Through Christ's sacrifice, Christ's love, I am reconciled to God. And it's not just me! It's all of humanity. God created all to know and witness that love. Broken as we are, God loves us unconditionally, always. And if we are all given this gift of healing love, then let us constantly remind one another of that important fact! Being capable of love and receiving love is important. But knowing we are loved makes all the difference. When I know I am loved, the brokenness falls away. When I know that I am loved, I know how to love another. And when we love others so they know they are loved, broken hearts can be fixed.

Aurea is a contributor to Ora, where you can read reflections for the weekend Mass readings. Go to oraministry.ca to read more. 🙏



SAINT BENEDICT PARISH

LENTEN MISSION

WITH

MATT REGITZ

Matt Regitz is a global leadership coach with Divine Renovation Ministries, and he's coming from Texas for our Lenten Mission! Sessions will be at 7pm Atlantic on March 3rd, 4th, and 5th, join us then!

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[Facebook.com/SaintBP](https://www.facebook.com/SaintBP)**

MISSION AND MONEY



Matt Kerrigan
Bene Dictus Team

Like every business and, for that matter, every family, our parish needs to create and manage a budget. Budgeting is the meeting place between our limited resources and our dreams and aspirations. Each year, our parish budget is shared in the Stewardship of Treasure booklet. This in-depth booklet reviews our budgetary process, which helps parishioners develop a more comprehensive view of our parish budget. You can access last year's Stewardship of Treasure booklet on our website at [**saintbenedict.ca/give**](https://saintbenedict.ca/give).

A parish budget is most interesting when it comes to our dreams and aspirations. It is there that the mission, vision, and many movements of discipleship are revealed. Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting Maria Pacurar, the chairperson for the Saint Benedict Parish Finance Council. In her professional life, Maria is a professor of Finance at Dalhousie University.

There are eight members of the Finance Council, along with Fr. Simon and the Finance Manager, Chris Yetman. They each serve a three-year term which may be renewed once. Members are appointed by Fr. Simon. In asking

members to serve, it is important to have diverse skills and perspectives. Our council has engineers, accountants, developers, builders, financial planners, and entrepreneurs. The council meets for an hour or more every month, except in July and August. Beyond the professional diversity, there is also missionary diversity, as members serve in a variety of ministries in the parish.

Maria noted that referencing the parish mission and vision is a constant thread of their discussions. Their counterpart in this work is the Parish Pastoral Council, which acts as a vision carrier for the parish. They maintain an overview of the mission and Game Plan, and they do their best to reflect our aspirations as we grow. The aspirations and intentions find momentum at the Parish Pastoral Council, and then they find the means for implementation with the Finance Council. Significant decisions like purchasing the new organ, paying off the mortgage, or tithing 10 percent of the parish's ordinary income to support those in need require extensive discussions by both councils.

Both the Finance Council and Parish Pastoral Council are mandated by the Archdiocese. Council approval is needed for all non-budgeted expenses over \$5,000. The annual budget is presented to the Archdiocese for approval. The Finance Council carefully reviews and

approves the annual budget prepared by the Finance Manager and Parish Leadership Team in consultation with the staff.

A challenging factor in the process is accurately estimating the income side of the ledger. All available funds come from the generous donations of parishioners. Maria credits Chris Yetman, our Finance Manager, with giving accurate guidance to the council on sound estimates of revenues and expenses. However, she admits estimating revenue based on the generosity of parishioners is a challenge. It requires a balance of financial acumen and faith-based trust.

“As a finance professional, I am accustomed to relying heavily on data for forecasting and budgeting,” Maria explained. “However, in parish finance, we sometimes have to lean on faith,

trusting that the Lord will provide, especially when the task is developing a balanced budget. Thankfully, many of our parishioners are donating via Automatic Giving, which provides more predictable and stable revenues. It gives us the confidence that we can consistently fund vital initiatives that support our mission and make a real difference in people’s lives. Each gift is much more than just money; it’s an act of faith and a support of our shared mission.”

Maria shared that, as in all aspects of parish life, a prayerful presence within the council contributes to all their deliberations. She mentioned that she loves attending parish Leadership Summits because it allows her to experience the pulse of our faith community. She and her council colleagues truly appreciate the bold mission of our parish and the great generosity of parishioners supporting it. Thank you to Maria and our council members for their continued commitment to this essential work! 🙏



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THE GIFT OF CONFIRMATION



Stéphanie Potter
Bene Dictus Team

As a parent with young kids, it seems like I'm in a constant rotation of sacrament preparation programs. First it was Baptisms, then First Reconciliations and First Communion, and now I have a batch of kids who are ready to think about Confirmation. Unlike their Baptism, Confirmation is a sacrament they choose to pursue themselves, not something I just sign them up for. I remember when I was around their age, it was another one of those big sacrament years where kids would appear out of the woodwork after lots of years away from spiritual and religious formation. In the (far too many) decades since I received the Sacrament of Confirmation, the program at our parish has changed pretty dramatically. To learn more about this program, I reached out to Heather Orlando, who serves as the Team Lead for Confirmation at Saint Benedict Parish.

What does the Confirmation program look like?

HEATHER ORLANDO: This year we are holding the Confirmation sessions on Thursday nights in tandem with The Rise Youth Ministry. We will be meeting for two Thursdays of each month leading up to the end of April. This means that youth already engaged with The Rise can easily attend on those nights. It also promotes The Rise for those seeking Confirmation but are not yet connected to the parish. Each session we will be using video material from The Chosen Confirmation program. The videos are very engaging, and the presenters are all well-known Catholic speakers and personalities

from Steubenville Conferences and Catholic social media. We will have two break-out sessions each night that include the videos and small group discussions. We are hopeful that the teens will bring lots of questions and open hearts.

If you think back to your experience of Confirmation, how would you say this program is different?

It has been more than a few years since I was confirmed, and I remember it being a very positive experience. I grew up in a pretty great parish. The Chosen Confirmation program is amazing. If the presenter is talking about the early Christians in Rome, they are filming in Rome. It is so engaging to watch, I personally get a lot out of this series. We may only receive the Sacrament of Confirmation once, but we should continue to reflect and even pray for a re-stirring of the Holy Spirit in our lives at all ages. We should always be asking for a strengthening of the gifts that were poured out on us. We need all the gifts to shape our intellect and focus our will to live a life destined for sainthood!

What's the time commitment for parents and young people preparing for Confirmation?

We want teens to take this journey very seriously. A part of that is to attend our twice-monthly sessions. It is also important to say that those taking this step should also be attending Sunday Mass and open to regularly going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These are fundamental precepts of our faith. Saying 'yes' at Confirmation is in no way an end or graduation, but rather a tangible sign of



maturity and acceptance that this amazing Catholic Church is the place where we respond to a loving and relational God who desires us to not 'go it alone'. Parents don't just get to be a chauffeur to 'class', they should be asking questions, sharing their faith journey with their kids, and praying. It is a smaller commitment than the other extracurricular activities teens are involved in, but I promise the payout is greater than anything else.


For the young people and adults out there thinking about Confirmation, what advice would you give to them or those around them?

Coming for Confirmation preparation does not mean you have to be confirmed. It is building the foundation by which you make that decision and ultimately the commitment. But sacraments are not contracts. We get to come – maybe confidently, maybe awkwardly – and ask all

sorts of questions. In all of that, the God of the Universe is waiting. He lets us know that he has chosen us way before we even thought of coming. He wants to anoint us with supernatural gifts not only for our personal needs but also so that we can live a life of purpose with him.

* * *

I'm glad to hear how much thought has been put into our Confirmation program and that there's an opportunity for young people to profoundly encounter Christ. Creating those opportunities can transform lives and continue to renew the Church and lead to a long-term relationship with Jesus.

For families interested in finding out more about sacramental preparation – Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Communion, Confirmation, or Marriage – you can email our Sacraments Coordinator, Caroline Dubois, at carolined@saintbenedict.ca. 

SERVING AT THE RISE



Keiran Bray
Bene Dictus Team

In the modern world, youth face many challenges in their faith. The fact is, as a young person, being a Christian at school and work can be challenging. Having a community of faith that you can relate to is crucial to facing the challenges set before you day after day.

This is where The Rise Youth Ministry comes in. If you were to join the team at The Rise, you would meet people like yourself as you help guide kids from grades six to twelve closer to Jesus. Dan Perera is our parish's Youth Ministry Coordinator, coordinating with leaders to run The Rise each week, and I had the chance to speak with him about those nights and how a leader helps. I also had the opportunity to meet with many of the current team members at The Rise to hear what they had to say about leading groups of young people.

Typically, a night at The Rise begins with fellowship, with everyone eating snacks, playing games (like ping pong), and whatever they feel like doing to relax and have a nice time with their peers. The night then shifts into small groups for the remaining 90 minutes or so, where teens gather in groups to talk about whatever may be on their hearts. This happens every Thursday evening from 7-9pm in the auditorium downstairs at Saint Benedict Parish.

Dan told me the mission of The Rise is to help youth at Saint Benedict Parish come to know Jesus and learn about Catholicism

in small groups, which he said is “the bread and butter of our ministry.” The goal is to strengthen everyone’s relationship with Jesus, not just the youth.

“As much as we are there to serve on team and be a role model and mentor the youth, there’s so much that a leader can learn themselves, and God can use the people around them to really impact their faith,” Dan said. Becoming a leader at The Rise and serving God in that way forces you to develop yourself. As Dan told me, “You cannot give what you don’t have.”



Marc Deveaux described a leader's experience at The Rise in two parts: the first is the opportunity to have other leaders help guide you and learn from each other, which benefits everyone. The second is small groups with people to share knowledge and ask questions. The Rise revolves around fellowship between disciples.

“Whatever is said in the small groups absolutely stays there, otherwise there would be no formation within small groups,” Marc said. “We wouldn’t be able to share what we’re struggling with unless we knew that everything said in those small groups is said in confidence.”

There is really no harm in giving this ministry a shot. I know I did, and so far, it’s been a learning experience. I have learned so much through the other leaders and the youth in my years as a student at The Rise and now in my few months as a new leader. In my life, ‘you can’t give what you don’t have’ has been very true. 🙏

LOST GOODS



John Rae
Bene Dictus Team

At one point, I was in the business of setting up accounting software used in inventory management. The Cost of Goods Sold calculation had a factor called 'Normal Spoilage', which was set at two out of every 100 units in inventory. That 2% was always written off in the profit calculations as either being lost or unsellable goods.

In the parable of the lost sheep, in Luke chapter 15, Jesus asks, "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?" If that shepherd was using standard accounting methods, he wouldn't, because that one lost sheep was already factored into the "Normal Spoilage" calculation for his flock. That sheep could be safely written off. Jesus is obviously not a fan of this standard accounting method, for in the rest of the parable he says, "Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do

not need to repent."

If one of us, as an independent modern person, was that lost sheep, we might say, "Who needs a shepherd anyway? I can manage my own life by myself." There is the temptation to believe that we can manage our own life and make it meaningful totally on our own. Remember though the word of 1 Peter 5:8, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." In this case, the spoilage rate would be 100%. Your chances for survival grow exponentially by being part of a flock. We are made for relationship.



So, whose inventory are you in just now? The systems of this world all offer to feed you on their brand of meaning and purpose, they all want to shepherd you. So a bit of due diligence, on your part, may

be in order. Ask those systems what their normal spoilage rate is. If you find out that the possibility of your suffering and death, your being written off, is already pre-factored into their calculation of using you as part of them doing their business, you might want to start looking for a higher quality shepherd. I can give you the name of one who comes highly recommended and uses a 0% normal spoilage rate for the souls under his care! ♥



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UPCOMING EVENTS

at Saint Benedict Parish

FEBRUARY 13 - Pancake Supper

FEBRUARY 14 - Ash Wednesday

FEBRUARY 18 - New Preaching Series

FEBRUARY 23 - Gregorian
Prayer Night

MARCH 3-5 - Parish Mission

For full event details, be
sure to subscribe to
The Overview by visiting
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For information on weddings, please email
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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 **OCIA@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 2023

SUNDAY COLLECTION	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
AUTOMATIC GIVING	413	\$63,764	\$154.39*
ENVELOPES	-	\$32,873	-
LOOSE	-	\$9,108	-
ONLINE	-	\$36,626	-
TOTAL	-	\$142,371	-
RESERVE FUND	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
AUTOMATIC GIVING	29	\$1,905	\$65.69*
ENVELOPES	-	\$2,588	-
TOTAL	-	\$4,493	-

*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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