

SAINT BENEDICTS



p. 7
EASTER'S NEW ARRIVALS

p. 11
GOD'S STORY OF LOVE

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 June 2nd. Our annual Stewardship of Treasure booklet will be released in the coming weeks, so watch for that, too!

On the cover:

Two parishioners talk at a recent Leadership Summit.

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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BENE DICTUS - Easter 2024



FATHER SIMON SAYS...



Fr. Simon Lobo, CC

Pastor

THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

Happy Easter to you and all your loved ones. We have completed our 40 day Lenten pilgrimage, so now it's time to party! But as you feast on copious amounts of chocolate Easter eggs, it might be good to ponder what we are celebrating.

During the Easter Vigil, the Saturday night before Easter Sunday, we enter the church in darkness, but then we light a giant candle called the Paschal Candle. This represents the light of Christ breaking into our world and shining brightly. I want to focus on this word 'paschal' for a moment.

In staying on theme of our Lenten preaching series, here is a quote from the Catechism, paragraph 1067: "The wonderful works of God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God. He accomplished this work principally by **the Paschal mystery of his blessed Passion, Resurrection from the dead, and glorious Ascension**, whereby 'dying he destroyed our death, rising he restored our life.'" The first sentence makes a reference to the Old Testament. The English word 'paschal' comes from the Hebrew word pasach which means to 'pass over'. One of the pivotal moments for the Hebrew people was when God liberated his people from slavery in Egypt. He sent the 10 plagues, the last of which was the Angel of Death. The Hebrews were instructed to sacrifice a lamb and wipe the blood on the lintel and doorposts of their homes so that the Angel of Death would literally pass over them. Their lives were spared.

In the New Testament version of the passover, Jesus becomes the lamb that was sacrificed. Instead of us dodging death for a few more

Continued on next page...



FATHER SIMON SAYS *continued*

months or years, he destroys death and offers us a new kind of eternal life that was never possible before! The Paschal mystery refers to a few significant things that Jesus did for us: he endured suffering and death, then rose from the dead, and after 40 days he ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father.

These are the central mysteries of what we believe as Christians. So be sure to celebrate what Jesus has done for us, and keep an eye out for that Paschal Candle, which you will see throughout the Easter season, and at baptisms and funerals — as we begin life and enter eternal life!

Please pray for all of the people who have or will receive Sacraments of Initiation this Easter. We are blessed to have six adult baptisms at the Easter Vigil. There will be three adults received into the Catholic Church and Confirmed on Divine Mercy Sunday (9am Mass on April 7th). On Tuesday, April 30th at 7pm, Archbishop Dunn will come to celebrate Confirmations for four adults and 32 teenagers. Let's pray for all of these people that they will continue to take steps on their journey and in our Game Plan.

STAFF UPDATES

It is with a heavy heart that I inform you that a few of our staff are moving on for a variety of reasons, many of which are personal. We have been planning for some of these transitions for a while, but it does feel like a lot, as the following three are departing in the month of April.

Jonathan Hilsden has served the parish for nearly three years as our Music Coordinator. He has blessed us with his incredible talents and has taken our worship to a new level of excellence. He will be going to Madonna

House in Ontario for a time of retreat and discernment for the next chapter of his life.

Jackie Lupien has been working as one of four non-salaried staff members, generously giving her time to assist Bill Scollard with Life Groups. She has helped to increase the number of people in Life Groups and organized many of the resources that groups use to grow deeper in faith. She is moving with her family to Alberta.

Caroline Dubois stepped into the Sacraments Coordinator position a year ago. She has done a tremendous job working with the various sacramental prep teams and raising up new teams to support Baptisms, First Reconciliation and First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, and OCIA. She has discerned that she should be moving on from the position.

Lastly, Arlene McAloney, who is our Alpha Coordinator and my assistant, is taking time off until the end of April. She has booked some extended vacation to rest and prepare for the arrival of her first grandchild (who might have arrived by the time you read this). We look forward to her return in May.

I am so grateful for each of these people (and my whole staff team) who have served tirelessly, who have blessed us at the parish, and who each leave a legacy. May God guide their future. I also want you to know that we are trying to figure out if there are systemic issues that are impacting our staff. **Please pray that we can understand what complex factors are at the root of this, so that our staff can feel loved and supported as we strive 'to make disciples who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus.'** 🙏

LOOKING BACK AT LENT



Shelly Fillmore
Bene Dictus Team

As I sit and reflect on Lent, I'm left feeling emotional in all the best ways. I set out with the intention of not eating any sweets for 40 days. I was successful and that is a big deal for me. I also wanted to increase prayer and give donations, but was that enough? The self-doubt started to enter.

Our family donated to food banks and cleaned out our closets. We abstained from meat on Fridays, and we read scripture. I set out to increase my daily prayer time. I started every morning with Prayer40 on the Hallow app. I paused throughout the day to give thanks to God for all that he's given me and closed every night with the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Still I wondered: did I do enough?

It wasn't until our Lenten Mission that it came together for me, and what a beautiful mission it was. Each night built on the next and became more powerful. The band played perfect music sets, and the church was full. While I wasn't able to attend in person, I was able to watch at home with my three year old daughter.

We made it a 'stay up late night' and we watched every moment together.

Night One is when everything shifted for me. It was moving, meaningful and I felt the Holy Spirit as I sat at home. As we were watching everyone in the church place an offering in the boat on the altar, I turned to my daughter and asked her, "What would you give to Jesus?" With her bright blue eyes, she simply answered, "Everything." She didn't offer any other words or questions; she knew what the answer was, and it was the answer I had been searching for all Lent. It is to turn your life over to him and give him everything. My self-doubt left, and any worry and anxieties I was carrying from the weeks before were gone.

We prayed a simple prayer of surrender together, "Jesus, I give you everything," and went to bed. I have repeated this every single night since.

It's moments like these that I am so grateful for everything our parish offers. The in-person events, multiple media options, and our opportunities to have meaningful conversations with our family members can change us forever. 🙏



EMBRACE GRACE



Lori MacDonald
Ora Ministry

This reflection is for this Sunday's second reading, Colossians 3.1-4.

There are many options available on my journey through this life. Before me and throughout this Lent, I perceived two distinct ways to wander along the road ahead: the easy way and God's way. I met this fork in the road in a literal sense while I was walking one Saturday morning to my destination: Starbucks. At the outset of my walk, there were two options: the path well-travelled (smoother, faster, and more predictable) or the road less-travelled (hilly, icy, longer, and more beautiful). I chose the road less-travelled because it felt like God was calling me there, yet on this path I lost my footing a number of times. My heart raced as I regained my balance, and I wondered if I would regret my choice. There is unpredictability on the path of God's will, and I wasn't feeling particularly smitten with that. At my third slip, I realized my problem. Pace. I had already placed my Starbucks order, and the last thing I needed was to arrive there on this cold winter day and find my special treat to be as cool as the air stinging my lungs. As I slowed down, reevaluated the situation, and refocused my heart and eyes, I noticed something remarkable: the flash freeze the night before had left unique designs in the ice, both stunning and unrepeatable. As the sunlight fell between the trees onto the path before me, it illuminated the white



sheen on the ground, like an unsoiled carpet guiding my direction. As I proceeded slowly, cautiously, and captivated by the wonder of God, I remained cold, but my attention was no longer on my needs and desires. Instead, it was on the hand of the Creator.

Winter can be ugly and harsh. Perhaps that is why it seems an appropriate season for Lent. I am beginning to realize that things ugly, painful, unwelcome, harsh and all-but-defeating are, inexplicably, the very things God uses to dazzle, inspire, heal, soften, and give life to me. I suppose this moment of awakening is my very own spiritual Easter.

To embrace grace, I must adjust my pace. If I have learned anything this Lent, it is that life continues whether or not I am present in the moment or aware that time is quickening. It continues whether or not my eyes are on my problems or on the beauty of God

in and through them.

My prayer for you is not so much that the ice may melt, but that God's grace might be revealed in its reflection. It is not so much that your path may be easy but that, as you traverse each step, you might notice God's hand leading you. It is not so much that all the ugliness of this world might be stripped away, but that the beauty of Christ might be revealed in you amidst it. Christ is risen! May he rise again in you.

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

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY



Keiran Bray
Bene Dictus Team

Even in such a holy time as Easter, as followers of Jesus Christ, we seek out mercy daily, as we are all sinners. Thankfully, God has given us every opportunity to receive such an amazing gift.

Saint John Paul II declared in 2000 that the Sunday following Easter would be Divine Mercy Sunday. The Feast of Divine Mercy is a universal feast celebrated by the Catholic Church, known for its beautiful prayers in seeking the divine mercy of our God. This feast is connected to St. Faustina Kowalska, who wrote in her diary that Jesus visited her 14 times to express his wishes for the Feast of Divine Mercy.

Jesus meant for Communion and reconciliation to be the foundations of Divine Mercy Sunday. The Catholic Church has outlined what St. Faustina discovered in her encounters with Jesus. The first thing to do on (or before) Divine Mercy Sunday is Confession. This is in preparation for the mercy God has prepared for us later on. Then, at the Sunday Mass one week following Easter, you will receive Holy Communion. This time, after having received Holy Communion on Divine Mercy Sunday, you are meant to go to your pew and pray a prayer like this one: 'Lord Jesus

Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a poor sinner. Jesus, You promised St.

Faustina that the soul that's been to Confession and the soul that receives Holy Communion will receive the complete forgiveness of not only sin, but all punishment. Jesus, please give me this grace. Jesus, I trust in You. Amen.' The prayer doesn't have to be in exactly those words, as you can make your own prayer to Jesus by saying whatever you feel the moment needs to connect you with God.

While the Divine Mercy Sunday may not be quite as known as many other feast days, that doesn't take away from its purpose and importance. This is Jesus reaching out to us in a new way, hoping to grant us eternal life in his kingdom.



I am looking forward to the Easter season, including the potential for Divine Mercy in a major way. I invite you to embrace this day and feast, and to consider inviting friends and family to attend, too. Jesus wants to give his mercy to as many people as he can, and he wants us to help him do it.

* * *

In addition to Confession and Mass, you can celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday with Eucharistic Adoration from 2-3pm on Sunday, April 7th. The Divine Mercy chaplet, a Catholic devotional prayer, will be sung.

EASTER'S NEW ARRIVALS



Matt Vaughan
Senior Communications Coordinator

Every Easter, new Catholics complete OCIA (the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) and receive initiation Sacraments like Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation. I spoke to several members of this year's OCIA program about how they came to Saint Benedict, why they decided to formally join the church, and what God has been doing in their lives.

What did you think of church before you came to Saint Benedict Parish?

NICOLE SEWARDS: I hadn't been to church in a long time. I loved going to church as a kid, but in my adult life I did not think it was where I belonged.

JOSHUA JACKSON: I grew up in church and youth groups. Church has always had a positive impact on my life, even if I was not conscious of it.

XIAOCHEN SUN: I always thought going to church was an old tradition. They are different buildings where people gather based on their different beliefs. I found it hard to see myself in a church because I was raised to believe that faith is something imaginary and its purpose is to limit people's lives.

KALEB ELLIS: Before coming to Saint

Benedict, I felt a negative connotation around the Catholic Church. Growing up in a healthy Protestant household, there were no negative implications of my church in the media. Anything bad that was announced about churches was from the Catholic Church, which really clouded my vision on it.



Nicole Swards with her kids

How did you end up at Saint Benedict Parish?

NICOLE: I always drove by Saint Benedict while I was working in the area

and had a very strong desire to attend Mass. Then, last January, I decided to join a co-worker and very good friend of mine, Crystal Fidely, at Mass.

JOSHUA: I became interested in Saint Benedict after my wife and I started looking for a place to attend church. We wanted a Church that preaches and teaches true Christian values.

XIAOCHEN: My friend Steven introduced me to various churches, but I kept returning to Saint Benedict Parish due to its welcoming atmosphere and well-maintained facilities. I felt a sense of belonging. My daughter enjoyed the children's ministry, and I had an opportunity to attend Alpha. The availability of online content also allowed me to stay connected even when unable to attend in person.

KALEB: In 2021, a good friend of mine introduced me to the Catholic faith by inviting me to a Good Friday Service. After that, I started coming to church frequently. God gave me an amazing Christian community.

What was your first impression of



Joshua Jackson

Saint Benedict?

NICOLE: The smiles, music, and inside beauty of the people. It made me feel like I was welcome to be in a church.

JOSHUA: My first reaction was, "What is this incense stuff?" Seriously though, I was impressed by the reverence of God.

XIAOCHEN: I felt embraced by the warm welcome of the community. The church looked new and beautiful, but it still felt traditional. During the Mass,



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time didn't drag and I could easily focus on the experience.

KALEB: My first impression was that I did not belong here. I thought the church was beautiful and the people were amazing, but I did not feel like this was for me.

What made you decide to join the church through OCIA?

NICOLE: After attending Sunday Mass regularly, taking Alpha, and developing a relationship with Jesus and the Catholic Church, it was on my heart to attend OCIA.

JOSHUA: I wanted family unity. I grew up in a different faith tradition than Catholicism, but when the Holy Spirit started teaching me about the faith, I realized its truth and beauty.

XIAOCHEN: This has been a significant step for me. Through work and life experiences, and the roles of husband and father, I've pondered questions about the existence of objective truth and the pursuit of a meaningful life. It became evident to me that faith is not about limiting life, but rather about enabling a fulfilling and joyful life. In Christianity, values like family, love, and truth resonated with me. Through this journey, the true meaning of life became unmistakably clear to me: Christ is the way. OCIA has provided a wonderful avenue for me to start this journey of faith and discovery.



Kaleb Ellis

KALEB: There was a Catholic Christian Outreach event called Rise Up in Ottawa. I drove up with Christian Huntley, who is now my OCIA sponsor, and another friend. I had a powerful experience there that really made my conversion process a no-brainer: during Adoration, I felt a call to get prayed over at prayer ministry. I asked Jesus to tell me my next step. While getting prayed over, I kept getting the feeling that I should go get baptized in the Catholic Church when I got home. It was wild. The funny thing is I had no desire to convert to Catholicism at any point in my life up until that moment. God really works wonders in our hearts and changes us by his grace.

Did you take Alpha at Saint Benedict Parish ahead of joining RCIA? What was that like?

JOSHUA: I attended Alpha during the Fall session. We have since formed a wonderful Life Group that has continued to meet and discuss our faith journey together.

KALEB: I took Alpha in 2021, and I am now co-leading a table at the current Alpha.

XIAOCHEN: Participating in Alpha was truly eye-opening for me. It offered me a fresh perspective on life and motivated me to explore Christianity more deeply. Even though I had many questions and uncertainties as someone new to Christ, each Alpha session left me feeling increasingly curious and with a growing sense of capacity and desire to know the Lord. This awareness has been crucial for me in strengthening my faith.

What difference has this journey made in your relationship with God?

JOSHUA: My relationship with my creator is extremely important, the Catholic faith is helping me draw closer to God. It is a beautiful tradition that is the foundation of a healthy society. I truly believe that a Christian revival is beginning as many millennials like myself are seeking answers for what life is all about.

XIAOCHEN: This faith-seeking journey has brought hope and direction into my life. I now recognize the importance of reading the word of God and praying to deepen my relationship with Jesus. I am eager to grow in my understanding of Christ and I will strive to live a life that reflects his teachings.

KALEB: My relationship with God has grown exponentially. After putting Jesus first in my life, I never feel alone. Knowing the same spirit that was inside Jesus is inside me, and in each one of us, gives me strength and reassurance. The war has already been won, and no matter what battle the enemy fights with us, God will be there with us every step of the way. I am eager to learn, and I have a relentless drive for the Word of God. I am thankful for my faith community and for all the friends I have made through the church.

NICOLE: This OCIA journey has taught me about why I have loved the Catholic Church since I was eight years old, but with a new and deeper love for God, too. My life has meaning. The love I have for others and myself is being opened up in new ways I never thought existed in my soul. I am grateful for the OCIA journey, the time of the leaders and team to graciously share their knowledge, the time my sponsor has taken for me, and meeting new people who share the love I have for Jesus. OCIA has been a start, middle, and end, and I am looking forward to the next season God has in the works for my life and for others! 

GOD'S STORY OF LOVE



Stéphanie Potter
Bene Dictus Team

Every time we get close to Easter, I can't help but think about how different it is from Christmas. Besides the obvious differences, the Church clues us in that Easter is really the height of the Christian calendar. Even the lead up to Easter is different. Advent is four weeks followed by one big feast and the 12 days of Christmas. In Advent, we don't sing the Gloria. For most of Advent, we swap out the ordinary green colours of the priests' vestments and adornments for a sedate purple. The Scripture readings tend to be prophecies about the messiah or the work of John the Baptist preparing the way of the Lord. It's a season of thoughtful anticipation and preparation.

Lent might look the same on the outside — no Gloria, purple vestments, etc. — but it is different when we pay attention. Lent lasts for 40 days, during which we are called to pray, fast, and give to the needy. We are given more opportunities to seek reconciliation, to pray, and to draw our focus more clearly onto God. Rather than being a season of anticipation like Advent, it's a season of silence and temperance. There are no Alleluias in this season. We give praise and glory to God, but, like the followers of Jesus after his

crucifixion, wait in penitent silence. We are training ourselves up, body and soul, for the impending marathon of Holy Week.

During Holy Week, all our prayer and fasting get a big payoff. If we've invested ourselves in our Lenten preparation, we should be primed and ready to focus on the different days of Holy Week. Every day of Holy Week matters, but the high point is the Triduum (a fancy way of talking about the Thursday-Saturday before Easter Sunday). The Easter Triduum is essentially one long Mass stretched across 3 days, followed by Easter Sunday. How we experience each of these days will be unlike any other days in the Church calendar.

On Holy Thursday, we celebrate Jesus giving the Church the Eucharist at the Last Supper. No matter how long it's been since your first Communion, this Mass offers you the opportunity to think about what (or who) the Eucharist really is and how the gift of Eucharist has changed your life. We leave Holy Thursday in silence.

Good Friday is the day we remember the crucifixion of Jesus. We leave in silence on Holy Thursday and come back on Good Friday in silence. This is also the only day of the Church that no Catholic Church in the world has a Mass, because we don't have the Eucharistic prayer or consecrate any



new communion hosts. We can receive Communion, but it's from the reserve in the Tabernacle. On Good Friday, we can venerate the Cross and participate in the Stations of the Cross. We leave Good Friday in silence, too.

At the Easter Vigil, just like the apostles and disciples did, we hold vigil after we remember the crucifixion of Jesus. In that time of waiting, we consider the history of our salvation. This Mass features a series of readings from the Old Testament, taking us from Adam and Eve, through



Exodus with Moses, through to the Prophets awaiting the Messiah. We are reminded that we are part of a long line of people who were loved and saved by God. Our solemnity turns to joy as we turn on all the lights and ring the bells to celebrate the

Resurrection of Jesus. The hope of God's children, which we remember throughout the ages, is fulfilled in Jesus rising from the dead! This Mass has everything — fire, bells, Alleluias, resurrection! You're invited to bring bells to ring during Mass to celebrate! This is also the Mass where adults who are joining the Church are baptised, confirmed, and receive their first communion.

Easter Sunday picks up from Easter Vigil. It is the Sunday where we pay

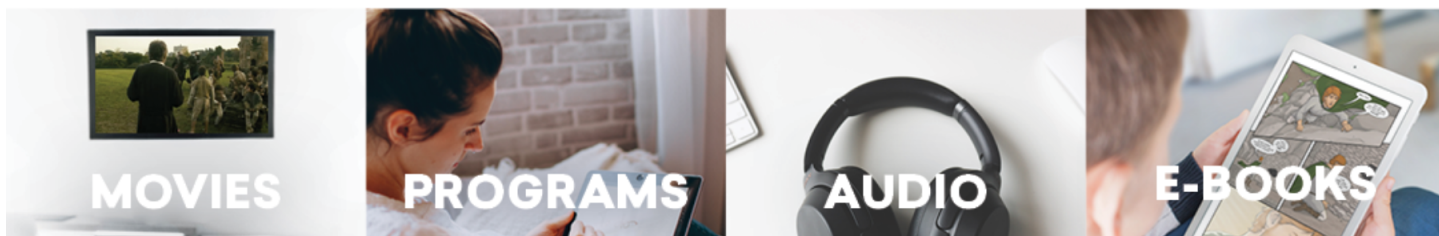


special attention to celebrating Jesus' Resurrection. We do this every Sunday, but we come to Easter Sunday after 40 days of Lent and the intensity of the Triduum. The Church helps us to prepare and puts us in the right headspace to appreciate and celebrate the magnitude of Jesus' sacrifice and the miracle of his resurrection.

Christ has risen from the dead and has conquered death, not just for himself but for us, his followers. We've heard it so often, that this incredible, wondrous, overwhelming reality of our salvation can be dulled. Through Lent and Easter, the Church gives us the chance to re-awaken our sense of the mystery by guiding us through the story of God's endless love for his children. 🕯️



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UPCOMING EVENTS

at Saint Benedict Parish

APRIL 7 - Divine Mercy Sunday

APRIL 22 - The Marriage Course begins

APRIL 30 - Confirmation Mass with Abp. Dunn

MAY 12 - Ascension

MAY 19 - Pentecost

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



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For information on Baptisms, preparation for the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion, youth Confirmation, or information on becoming Catholic through OCIA, visit **saintbenedict.ca/sacraments.**

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 2024

SUNDAY COLLECTION	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
AUTOMATIC GIVING	399	\$59,845	\$149.99*
ENVELOPES	-	\$ 10,281	-
LOOSE	-	\$5,974	-
ONLINE	-	\$21,664	-
TOTAL	-	\$97,764	-
RESERVE FUND	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
AUTOMATIC GIVING	26	\$1,395	\$53.65*
ENVELOPES	-	\$1,130	-
TOTAL	-	\$2,525	

*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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