

S P R I N G B



p. 7
LIFE AND DEATH

p. 9
MANY HANDS, MANY HEARTS

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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 31st.

On the cover:

A young parishioner places a coin in the little church.

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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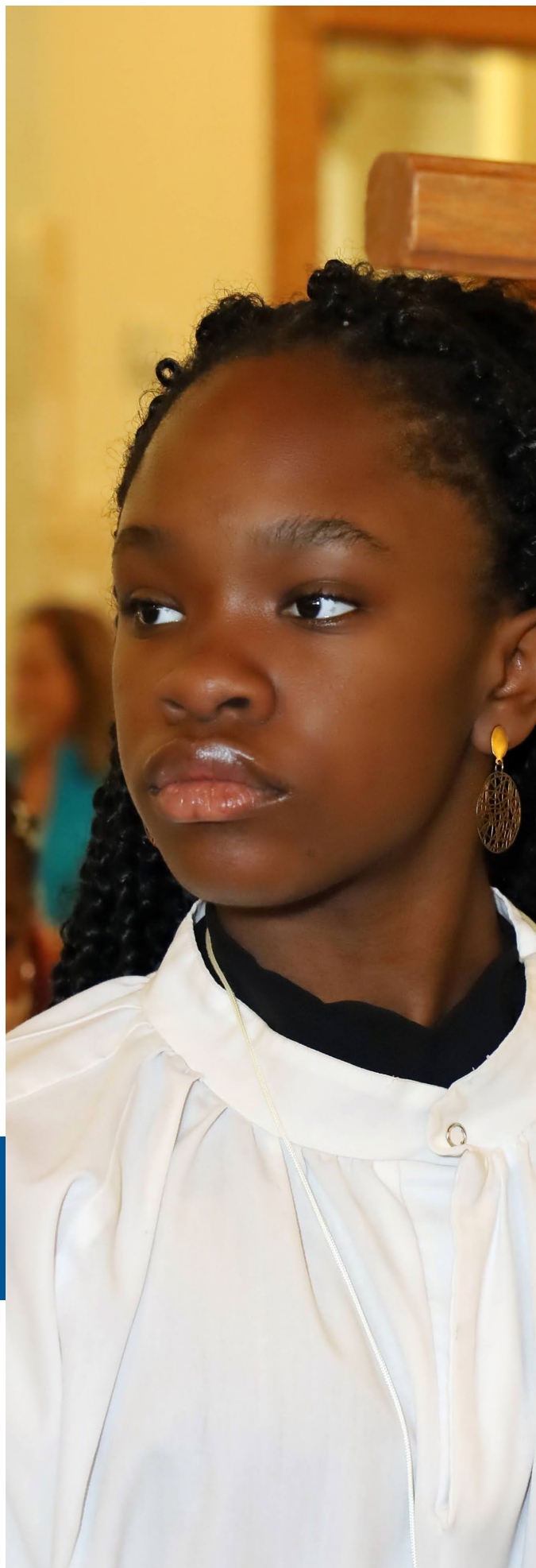
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BENE DICTUS - March 2024



FATHER SIMON SAYS...



Fr. Simon Lobo, CC

Pastor

LENTEN MILESTONES

In 2013, I walked the Camino de Santiago, an 800km pilgrimage across northern Spain. It took me about five weeks to complete. During that extended journey, there were several high points and many low points. At one point, my right achilles tendon became inflamed, so every step I took was painful. About halfway through the pilgrimage, I was tempted to quit. Thankfully, I had help from fellow pilgrims, lots of prayer support, and little milestones along the way that kept me going.

When I think of the season of Lent, I imagine our entire parish journeying together on a 40 day pilgrimage. We are almost at the halfway mark. Perhaps your first few weeks of Lent have been amazing and life changing. If you're like me, it's been two steps forward and one step back. As I fumble along, I'm mildly discouraged that I haven't been more faithful to the commitments I made on Ash Wednesday. Nevertheless, I'm not going to give up, and I urge you to keep going.

As a parish, we have very intentionally sprinkled milestones along the journey to give you signs of progress. Here are a number of ways you can be inspired to take that next step:

- Every Friday at 6:30pm, we have the **Stations of the Cross in the church**. This guided meditation walks us through 14 moments during Jesus' pilgrimage of suffering and death. If you've never tried this before, it's worth checking out. At **7pm on Good Friday, we will meditate on the Stations of the Cross with music led by the 4pm Saturday Mass choir**, be sure to mark your calendars.

Continued on next page...



FATHER SIMON SAYS continued

- If you are reading this magazine hot off the press, we are hours from the start of our **Lenten Mission**. Our guest speaker, Matt Regitz, is a gifted communicator who brings a wealth of experience from years of youth ministry, speaking at Steubenville youth conferences, and as a global leadership coach with Divine Renovation Ministries. Please plan to join us for all three evenings (**Sunday-Tuesday, March 3-5, at 7pm each night**). It would be ideal to come in person, but we are also streaming each night online.
- Fr. Dan, Fr. Isaac, and I, along with a number of guest priests, are gearing up for another marathon **12 hour day of Confessions from 9am-9pm on Friday, March 22** (with a break for 12:15pm Mass). So many people experience a lifting of heavy burdens when they go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. If it has been awhile, be sure to tell the priest, and he can help guide you. If you're not Catholic, you are still welcome to come to repent in a prayerful and confidential way. (Again, be sure to give the priest a heads up).
- This Lent we are also running a special **three week series called Dying with Christ — Living with Hope**. Two of our parishioners, Dr. Alana Cormier and Stephanie Potter, who are experts in medicine, ethics, and end of life issues, will be leading these sessions. **We will meet in the auditorium from 7-9pm on Tuesdays (March 12, 19, and 26)**. This is such an important subject, and we are blessed to hear from professionals who also share the Catholic perspective.
- I hope you have been appreciating our preaching series, **The Fundamentals**. We are looking at the four main sections of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. If you

don't have a copy, you can find a free version online at saintbenedict.ca/catechism. The series follows the Catechism: **Belief (Creed), Worship (seven Sacraments), Way of Life (10 Commandments), and Prayer (Our Father)**. After hearing the first homily, a parishioner said, "Imagine if the strongest part of my life was the core of faith. That blows my mind!" I encourage you to come out every week and bring a journal to take notes. May we all strengthen the core.

MAKING EVERY SUNDAY MATTER

We are blessed to have a huge team of hundreds of people who make our Sunday experience at Saint Benedict truly amazing. We were made to worship God, and so we want to offer him our Sunday best!

I have been invited to speak at a conference for priests and lay leaders in Saskatoon on March 13-14. The theme of this conference is 'Making Every Sunday Matter'. I'm simply going to share what I get to experience here every weekend. After some prayer and discussion, I've asked Fr. Isaac to present with me. This is one of the ways that Saint Benedict is going out to transform the world, as a beacon of hope for other parts of the Church.

I try to discern these invitations on a case-by-case basis. As much as possible, I want to go as a pair, as Jesus instructed his disciples. This offers a degree of spiritual support and protection, but I can also share the load by having someone else speak, and it can be an opportunity to apprentice someone else.

Please pray for Fr. Isaac and me, and the leaders we will meet in Saskatoon, as we prepare for this mission. 🙏

MEET CAMILA NOTARI



Matt Vaughan
Senior Communications Co-ordinator

From time to time, we feature a profile of 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 our new Children's Ministry Coordinator, Camila Notari.

What's your job title?

CAMILA: I am the Children's Ministry Coordinator.

When did you start working at Saint Benedict Parish?

January 29th, 2024.

What does your work here entail?

At Saint Benedict, SBPkids ministry helps children encounter Jesus and establish a personal relationship with him through the process of evangelization. We want to make it easier for families to attend Mass by providing age-appropriate activities for their little ones. The Encounter, our pre-teen program, offers a fun and unique way for young people to experience God's love. With SBPkids, we hope to inspire a new generation of faithful and devoted disciples of Jesus. SBPkids is for children from birth to Grade 6!

I work with volunteers, and I am responsible for recruiting, training, and coordinating them. I cannot emphasize enough how much I appreciate the SBPkids volunteer team. We strive to create a warm and welcoming community where everyone feels at home.

Where are you from originally?

I'm from Brazil.

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

I work here on a part-time basis. In my other job, I work in the field of Adult Education, where I am an academic lead. My background is in the cosmetic industry, where I have worked for over 20 years.

What was a key moment in your faith life that you can share with us?

I spent almost four years living in a Franciscan convent, discerning about being a nun. This experience profoundly impacted my faith and helped shape me into who I am today.



Camila with her family

My Catholic faith has brought me so many blessings. When my family found out that we would move from Ontario to Nova Scotia, I started searching for a church and came across the website for Saint Benedict. Even though the church was closed, we were given a tour by a very kind volunteer, and we felt that this place would

become our home. Four years later, Saint Benedict is not just the parish where we attend Mass, but also the first place we heard about Alpha. We learned how to pray in English as a family, our son was baptized here, and our daughter will soon be confirmed here as well. Thanks to God, I am now blessed to have Jesus as my boss!

What do you like to do outside of work?

I love reading, eating, and spending time with my family and friends. 📖

WARM AND FUZZY JESUS



Donna Davis
Ora Ministry

This reflection is for this Sunday's Gospel, John 2:13-25.

First impressions affect long-term perceptions. As a child, I learned in religion class that Jesus was my friend, my brother, someone who could relate to me and meet me wherever I was in my life. I refer now to this as 'warm and fuzzy Jesus.' It's cheeky shorthand, but also simple and evocative — you understand what I mean when I say it. When I use this phrase, I don't mean to denigrate the existence or importance of nurturing and tolerance, especially in Jesus. I am profoundly grateful that Jesus perfects both of those qualities and that he is beside me even though, in comparison to him, I am lowly. However, when we limit our understanding of Jesus to being only nurturing and tolerant, we miss his other equally important characteristics.

While this was my perception as a child, I recall clearly that my grandmother's image was radically different. She thought of Jesus first and foremost as 'Our Lord', and the first person of the Trinity she referred to always as 'the Almighty God'. The three persons of the Trinity were majestic, powerful, and supreme.

There was a time when I struggled to recognize the Jesus of my childhood as the actor in this Sunday's Gospel. John's description is dramatic: "Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers

and overturned their tables." How could I reconcile Jesus — my friend, my brother — with this angry man who sent people scurrying away in fear, who whipped animals and turned over tables? This was not warm and fuzzy Jesus. This was someone I didn't know: angry Jesus.


The Old Testament says that our God is a jealous God — jealous, mind you, not envious. John's Gospel depicts Jesus' righteous anger for the misuse of the temple, his dwelling place, by those who put greed above service and self-interest above devotion to God. Jesus' message is clear: such things must be driven out.



Then I thought, if Jesus so jealously protects the sanctity of the physical temple, how much more will he protect my own holiness? For, as Paul's first letter to the Corinthians tells us, our bodies are temples.

When I am under attack by forces that would use me in my weakness as a means to achieve sinful ends, how grateful I am for a Jesus who will cleanse this temple with the same force and righteous anger as he did the Great Temple. It is made of stone, but we are his own creations, carved on the palm of the hand of the Almighty God. He will not allow evil to occupy the space within us that he has claimed for Himself.

And now, when I think of Jesus driving out the forces that would mire me in sin and drag me from him, I see that this Jesus is one with my warm and fuzzy Jesus.

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



LENTEN MISSION WITH MATT REGITZ

7pm Atlantic on
March 3rd, 4th, and 5th
(Sunday, Monday, and
Tuesday night)

Join us in-person or online!

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A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE
TO RACISM**

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5 Days

Start Plan

SAVED FOR LATER SAMPLE

As Christians, we are called to confront and battle the injustices of the world, including racism. In this plan, you'll learn how God's identity reflects the beauty of our diverse world, and how we can look to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for how we should care for others.

More from Saint Benedict Parish

We would like to thank Saint Benedict Parish for providing this plan. For more information, please visit:

Visit saintbenedict.ca/bibleplan or scan this QR code.

LIFE AND DEATH

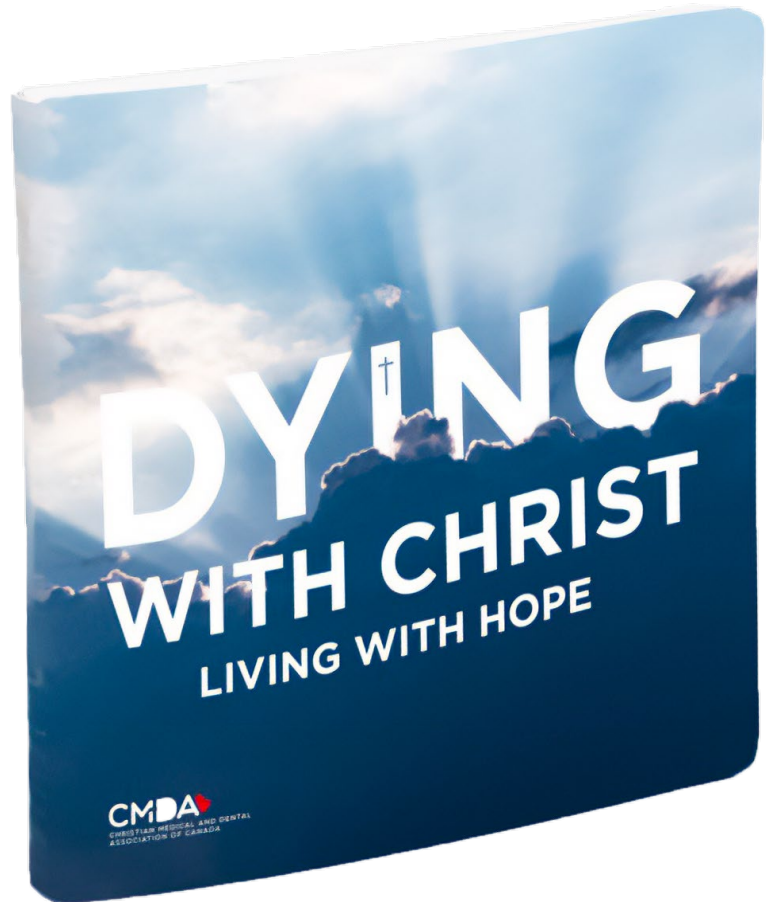


Stéphanie Potter
Bene Dictus Team

This March, a brand new discipleship series is launching for the entire parish. **Dying with Christ – Living with Hope** gives participants a clear idea of the Christian view of death and what we can do to accompany others during the dying process. Since death is inevitable, this resource, produced by the Christian Medical and Dental Association of Canada (CMDA Canada), provides participants with the means to discuss death with loved ones and to support others.

This video series was filmed in Canada and takes our unique experience as Canadians into account. It features three palliative care doctors, a palliative care nurse, the theologian in residence from the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and local Catholic theologian and professor at the Atlantic School of Theology, Dr. David Deane.

I was blessed to be able to work alongside the team at CMDA Canada to produce this video. The motivation to create this series came from my own experience of my mother's death. Her testimony as a Christian was profoundly transformative for me. Before that, my



experience of death had been divorced from an expression of faith in Christ, in a number of different ways. No matter how many times you've encountered death, a Christian death is truly something set apart.

The difference was twofold. The first difference was how she used her dying process as an opportunity to seek Christ. Her faith was always strong, but, in many ways, I saw it get refined like gold in a fire. As a nurse working in a nursing home, she had walked with so many of her patients in their last days and approached her own death with

expertise. When I should have been overwhelmed by the tragedy unfolding, I couldn't help but see how much closer she was coming to Jesus. Through the final years of her life, she gave a master class on dying in Christ. She was able to approach her death with such beautiful faith because she had spent her whole life preparing for that moment by cultivating a relationship with Christ and building up spiritual virtues.

The second difference came in my experience of community during that season. Both my household and my mother's household were blessed to be connected to Saint Benedict Parish. There was no need we had that God didn't fulfil through the care provided by our parish. The Dying with Christ – Living with Hope Series echoes that experience by reminding

DISCUSSING DEATH AND DYING

Death is inevitable. Yet, the process of death and dying is often hidden from view, only discussed when we are confronted with it or at a time of crisis. We encounter depictions of death and dying daily in mainstream media, but we may disassociate what we see on screens from our perception of our own mortality. Many people find death and dying a difficult, unsettling topic to discuss. This can come from fear of pain, suffering, loss of control, and fear about what will happen to our loved ones. Often, it takes an experience of grief to truly understand what death means in our lives.

Unlike our aversion to talking about death, we talk a lot about life. When we think about the arrival of a new baby, for example, we want to share our happy news with our friends, family, and even neighbours. According to our shared Christian faith, our earthly life is a preparation for death and eternity. Our death is not an abrupt ending, but a step on our journey towards oneness with God.

8 Dying with Christ

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- † If you had to pick one word or image that comes to mind when you think about death and dying, what would it be?
- † What do you think happens after we die?
- † If you were to receive a terminal diagnosis tomorrow, what do you think your reaction would be? What do you hope your reaction would be?

AT HOME REFLECTION

I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who believes in me will never die.
John 11:25-27

- Take time to pray over this section of the Scriptures and write your reflection on the next page.
- Do you struggle to believe the words of Christ in these verses? Why or why not?

Heavenly Father, give me a spirit of total surrender and trust in Your love for me. Help me to find my hope in You, no matter the struggles and suffering between now and eternity. **AMEN.**

Dying with Christ 9

us of our duty to care for one another. That care can be medical, spiritual, or practical. As a church, we can support families and individuals going through the dying process through prayer, accompaniment, and listening and through acts of kindness like preparing meals, offering respite care, offering help around the house, and providing financial support for unexpected expenses.

No matter how young or how old you are, this series offers a starting point to think about what it means to die as a Christian, and how we can help others going through the dying process. I hope you'll join us on March 12th, 19th, and 26th for this new series! 📍



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MANY HANDS, MANY HEARTS



Matt Kerrigan
Bene Dictus Team

I recently got the chance to meet and talk with Tulio Quintero, our parish's Facilities Coordinator. It was a great learning experience. I admit that I had never really taken the time to think through what is involved in the maintenance of our parish building and grounds. Early in the conversation, I began to see just how much is required to keep our church fit and functioning.

Tulio was quick to tell me that the 'secret sauce' for tackling the many projects at the church is a small army of dedicated volunteers. He has adopted a '5x5 principle' for gathering volunteers. It goes like this: someone asks five people if they're willing to help with a project, and then they are invited to ask five others, and so on.

Saint Benedict Parish's church building is 14 years old. Like any building of this size and activity, there is a lot of wear and tear. Its many parts and systems include heat and ventilation, electrical, safety, gardens and grounds, the roof, foundation, windows, doors, cleaning, lighting, and furnishings.

Tulio has oversight of all these



components. He is a trained chemical engineer with work experience in Health, Safety, and Environment, employee training, and infrastructure improvements. He realized that in a parish of our size there are many people who work in facility maintenance, as well as people who have retired from that career. Many of them have offered their help and expertise to Tulio. Whenever he reaches out for help with a project, the 5x5 principle kicks in and his broad network continues to grow.

After I had asked about the skilled volunteers, he was quick to point out that not every member of the volunteer group needs to have special skills or training. All that is required is a heart for helping. He has found there is a wonderful willingness to help here at Saint Benedict Parish.

One of his earliest projects as Facilities Coordinator was the removal of a wood planter adjacent to the foundation. As he reached out to people to help, he was delighted as his network of willing volunteers grew. The project started with Tulio serving breakfast to the crew. The social bonding at breakfast set the tone for the day, and carried over to the hard work outside.



In the course of our conversation, Tulio shared some of his personal story. In his home country of Venezuela, he and his family were persecuted in the destabilized political environment. They decided to flee, and settle somewhere they could live in peace. Tulio came to Halifax as a Protected Person, a kind of permanent resident classified by the federal government. It has been a very happy choice with Halifax as a good

place to start a new life. They are very thankful to God.

Tulio feels especially blessed to have landed in our 'explosively alive' parish. He took Alpha and now serves as part of the team. Thanks to Tulio and other Spanish speaking parishioners, we now have tables at Alpha specifically for Spanish speakers. He says that Alpha, along with its many virtues, creates a desire for people to become more

involved in the parish.



If you feel that desire to be more involved, you can contact Tulio: tulioq@saintbenedict.ca. You might want to start thinking about the five people you can invite to help out with you! 🙌

LENTEN RECONCILIATION



Keiran Bray
Bene Dictus Team

Reconciliation is such a beautiful Sacrament. Even though sin separates us from God, the gift of Reconciliation reunites us with the one divine God. It was Jesus who gave us this chance by giving his life for us.

Lent is the 40 day season between Ash Wednesday and Easter where we are called to pray, fast, and grow in faith. Lent is much more than just those simple ideas, it's more than just a cover; it's an entire book, and it's worth the read. You can focus on Lent as a time to prepare for the death of Jesus and what that means in your life. This may lead you to take steps to draw near to Jesus and prepare for your own death. Needless to say, there isn't one way you can live out Lent. There are so many ways you can decide to bring yourself closer to God during this holy and spiritual time. One great fit for Lent is the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Fr. James Mallon, the former pastor of Saint Benedict Parish, gave a talk a few years ago at the parish titled 'How to Make a Good Confession', which you can listen to at saintbenedict.ca/listen. In that talk, he outlines four parts of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (also known

as Confession). The first is contrition, the act of being truly sorry. Next is confession, where you get the sins off your heart. Penance is where you show God you are trying to change through your actions and intentions. Lastly, absolution, which Fr. James described as being "like a second baptism." You are renewed in your faith and your slate is wiped clean.

The act of confessing your sins is not only getting those sins out of the shadows,



it's giving God the chance to forgive them. Penance during Lent is especially important and meaningful. Lent is a time of prayer and fasting, but it is also a time of penance. An important step before penance is doing an Examination of Conscience. But what is that? An Examination of Conscience is an exercise where you prayerfully consider your sins, with the intent to identify your sins and prepare yourself for a proper confession,

leading to a proper penance.

I encourage you to make time on **Friday, March 22nd, between 9am and 9pm**, for Saint Benedict Parish's Lenten Day of Reconciliation. This is an opportunity to experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation in a meaningful way, to embrace this season of penance, to experience this kind of 'second baptism', right in the heart of Lent. 🙏

COOKIE COMFORT



John Rae
Bene Dictus Team

The future Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his book *Introduction to Christianity* that the cross "expresses the primacy of acceptance over action... Accordingly, from the point of view of the Christian faith, man comes in the profoundest sense to himself not through what he does but through what he accepts."

We are all capable of doing the right things for the wrong reasons, doing the letter of the law while ignoring the spirit of the law. Our actions always come bundled with intentions. As we enter Lent, we are given an opportunity to take a step back from our normal motivations and take stock of our default intentions that feed our appetite for action.

This parody of Psalm 23, by author John Sumwalt, uses humour to make this point: *My appetite is my shepherd, I always want. It maketh me to sit down and stuff myself. It leadeth me to my refrigerator repeatedly. Sometimes during the night, it leadeth me in the path of Burger King for a Whopper. It destroyeth my shape. Yea, though I knoweth I gaineth, I will not stop eating. For the food tasteth so good. The ice cream and the cookies they comfort me.*

In the Gospel of Luke, the Gerasene demoniac had developed an appetite for some pretty self-destructive behaviour, living in a graveyard in an animal-like state, and cutting himself with stones. His default intentions were being formed by his own collection of personal demons. Jesus, with his intention to usher in the Kingdom of God, shows those demons the door, then he takes up residence in the man's heart. Luke 8:35 says that after the man's encounter with Jesus he was "...in his right mind." As per Pope Benedict XVI's earlier point, in his new state of mind the man now has the true sense of himself. He could empathize with the Apostle Paul in

Ephesians 4:22, for he has detached himself from, "the old man, who was corrupted according to the desire of error."

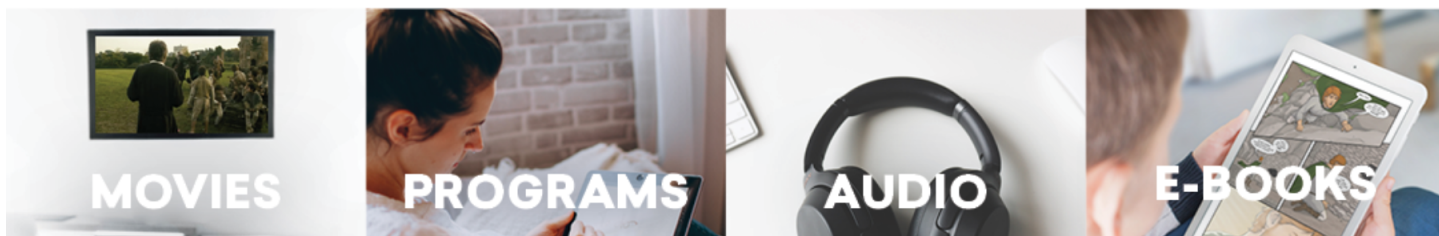
Lent gives us an opportunity to temporarily accept a new set of motivations: to be formed by the

acceptance of a "not my will but thine be done" response to the will of God, to take our normal set of appetites and put them on the back burner for a few weeks. Like the Gerasene demoniac, we might find that we will have no desire to go back to the way we were and that a new life motivated by the desire to be at the service of redemptive love will be our salvation. 🙏





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UPCOMING EVENTS

at Saint Benedict Parish

MARCH 3-5 - Lenten Mission

MARCH 12 - Dying with Christ starts

MARCH 22 - Lenten Reconciliation Day

MARCH 24 - Palm Sunday

MARCH 31 - Easter Sunday

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



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PARISH STAFF TEAM

CAROLINE DUBOIS
Sacraments Coordinator
CarolineD@saintbenedict.ca

JUDY LEWIS
Outreach Coordinator
JudyL@saintbenedict.ca

DAN PERERA
Youth Minister & Video Production
DanP@saintbenedict.ca

ARLENE MCALONEY
Alpha Coordinator & Pastor's Assistant
ArleneM@saintbenedict.ca

CATHERINE GOULD
Liturgy & Spirituality Coordinator
CatherineG@saintbenedict.ca

JACKIE LUPIEN
Life Group Assistant
JackieL@saintbenedict.ca

TULIO QUINTERO
Facilities Coordinator
TulioQ@saintbenedict.ca

NOREEN SMITH
Service & Outreach Team
NoreenS@saintbenedict.ca

JONATHAN HILSDEN
Music Coordinator
JonathanH@saintbenedict.ca

BEV MCPHEE
Office Coordinator
BevM@saintbenedict.ca

PETER SALAH
Audiovisual Coordinator
PeterS@saintbenedict.ca

MATT VAUGHAN
Senior Communications Coordinator
MattV@saintbenedict.ca

TANYA LERUE
Production & Digital Mission Team
TanyaL@saintbenedict.ca

CAMILA NOTARI
Children's Ministry Coordinator
CamilaN@saintbenedict.ca

BILL SCOLLARD
Life Groups Coordinator
BillS@saintbenedict.ca

CHRIS YETMAN
Finance Manager
ChrisYetman@saintbenedict.ca

For general inquiries, email:
office@saintbenedict.ca.

For information on weddings, please email
weddings@saintbenedict.ca.

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 - JANUARY 2024

SUNDAY COLLECTION	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
AUTOMATIC GIVING	400	\$58,372	\$145.93*
ENVELOPES	-	\$14,384	-
LOOSE	-	\$7,829	-
ONLINE	-	\$25,397	-
TOTAL	-	\$105,982	-
RESERVE FUND	RECEIVED	TOTAL	AVERAGE
AUTOMATIC GIVING	28	\$1,390	\$49.64*
ENVELOPES	-	\$2,363	-
TOTAL	-	\$3,753	-

*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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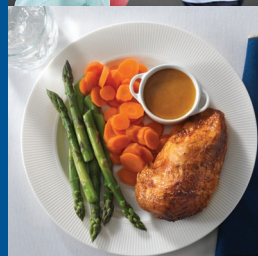
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