

St. Benedict Parish
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To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; in you, O God, have I trusted, I will never be ashamed.

Introit for the first Sunday of Advent.

3 December 2023

Dear Parishioners

It has been a little over two years since I first addressed you as Pastor of St. Benedict. Most will remember the occasion and the first tentative steps we have made on the road to form our first-person plural, the “We” upon which the Holy Spirit can rest to keep the light of Christ burning in an ever-darkening world. A sizable proportion of you will however be unaware of these steps and our formative principles having joined the parish only recently.

It may be necessary, therefore, at this time, to restate our goals to ensure cohesion of purpose and as the saying goes: “Things that go without saying, often go better when said.”

Our first-person plural is who *we* are and what *we* do. St. Benedict parish is an apostolate of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter and at the same time a part of the Diocese of Fort Worth granted exclusive use of the extra-ordinary form of the Roman Rite. We are therefore faithful Catholics who enjoy the special privilege of celebrating the ancient liturgy together with its Sacraments.

For new comers, in defining ourselves it is, however, often easier to speak of what *we* are not. *We* do not wish to be the biggest parish in the Diocese nor indeed among the apostolates of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter.

Instead, we seek first the kingdom of God through our words and actions. Our words, those of the Church, instituted by Christ, given to us by the Apostles, and hallowed by time. Our actions, those of the just man, who may stumble seven times but rises again to his feet.

“Lie not in wait, treacherously, to despoil the homes where honest men take their ease; seven times the just may stumble, and rise to their feet again, it is the wicked fall headlong into ruin. Not thine to triumph over a fallen foe; that thrill of rejoicing in thy heart over his calamity the Lord will see, and little love; his vengeance may yet change its course. Do not be impatient when the wicked thrive, do not envy the lot of evil-doers; villainy has no hope in store, its light flickers and is gone.”

(Prov 24:15ff)

We are not a “*mega*” parish as “*alter locus*”. Nor are we an aberration of the English, but rather true heirs of the Latin Rite of the Apostles who find themselves *hoc loco*.

We make use of our precious liturgical practices to direct and strengthen our knowledge of God, His creation, and His will, and by knowing more, we love more and come to serve Him better. The parish is therefore at the center of our spiritual life, not our social life.

The study of spiritual life is then something we take seriously. Not in a manualist or casuistic manner pointing the finger at others, but rather by the rigorous application of the intellect and the will to meet the challenges of the world. Intellect must discern truth from falsehood. Will must choose good from evil. To assist this spiritual development, we encourage participation in our Adult and youth catechism classes and encourage parents to instruct their children in the ways of our Faith not only in word but in example with our regular mother’s meetings, young couples’ group and meeting of men.

This spiritual journey begins with knowing our own faults and failings. By correctly examining one's conscience one identifies weaknesses with the purpose of amendment. Simply put, we do not blithely throw a lengthy list of what may, or may not, be sins at our Lord hoping that something will stick. But we carefully considered our misdeeds sifting the large from the small, the occasional from the habitual. Thus, by prioritizing our faults, we select the appropriate methods of correction. By enumerating our failures day after day, week over week we manifest, in the presence of Our Lord, our progress by His grace. Then we use the sacrament of Confession regularly out of devotion and not frequently out of necessity.

This, then, is the work of the parish. But work united with prayer. Not the prayer of long litanies or performative actions, but the true prayer of listening. Listening to the voice of an informed conscience, listening to the voice of God, and then, in conjunction with His blessing, acting rightly.

At St. Benedict’s our priority is spending time with the Blessed Sacrament, particularly at hours of adoration, most notably the recent Forty Hours, but also, in our weekly Friday & Saturday holy hours, our First Friday devotion to the Sacred Heart with evening High Mass and, beginning on 5th January, an extended period of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on First Fridays until Midnight.

As we look forward to Christmas and Epiphany we ask together with the universal Church that God would stir up our hearts to prepare the way for the Lord.

“Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way of Your only-begotten Son, so that through His coming we may be able to serve you with purified minds.”

Oration 2nd Sunday of Advent

It falls to us then as individuals and as a parish to use this Advent to purge ourselves of unlawful desires and inclinations to better prepare ourselves for the Incarnation. Give therefore thoughtful consideration to attending the weekly holy hours during December to listen to your conscience and to implore the Almighty to enlighten our intellect and strengthen our will to better do His bidding.

As a parish we move steadily onwards by God's grace. In the last twelve months we have Baptized thirty-seven infants, received five adults into the church, prepared twenty-six children for their First Holy Communion, and married six couples. Beginning in 2024 we will prepare another twenty-eight candidates to receive the sacrament of Confirmation. This is because of your openness of heart and your prayers in the presence of Our Lord.

Thanks to God our parish now comprises 280 active registered families with an average weekly Mass attendance of 680 and an average weekly income of \$14,500 (up 44% on the previous year). Our average monthly expenditure for the same period was \$25,048.

Our capital expenditure this year included: The new roof on the church and parish hall, the decoration of the church, new statues of Ss. Benedict and Scholastica, stations of the cross, brass replating/refinishing, new vestment cabinets, stained glass windows and of course the improvements to courtyard and totaled just under \$500,000 and we maintain our savings of \$300,000.

These improvements are possible only with your generosity, particularly at Christmastide. Please continue to care for your parish with your prayers, activities, and financial support so we may do more to honor our God and preserve the liturgical traditions as we have received them.

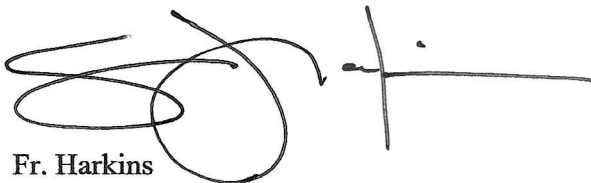
Our parish envelop system is the most obvious means of supporting the parish. Regardless of the size of the contribution, placing the envelope in the basket each week verifies your attendance and strengthens relationships within the parish. I am however conscious of the desire for alternative means of giving and beginning on the 1st Sunday of Advent I am pleased to announce our on-line giving capability available on our parish website (www.stbensfw.org).

In closing I want to thank our new parochial vicar Fr. Quirke for his assistance and his friendship. He, I am sure you will agree, is a valuable addition and will undertake the teaching functions in the parish over the coming months. As you have been generous to me in past years, please also remember Fr. Quirke. Importantly know that what all priests want for Christmas is a pair of black socks. For everything else, water is a fine drink when taken in the right spirit.

Please keep Fr. Quirke, me and all the members of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter in your prayers this Advent.

May God bless and reward you.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'H' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Fr. Harkins

Pastor

