

St. Benedict Parish
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25th September 2022

ALMIGHTY and eternal God, Who hast wished to restore all things through Thy beloved Son, the King of the universe, graciously grant that all the families of the Gentiles separated by the wound of sin, may be subjected to His most loving dominion

– Prayer for the Feast of Christ the King

Dear Parishioners,

Since my appointment as your Pastor on 8th November 2021, I can scarcely recall a time when we have not engaged in some type of new initiative. Whether it is improvements to the church, catechetical instruction, or the addition of extra Masses. I trust that these first steps have strengthened and encouraged your faith in Christ and your devotion to the Sacred and Immaculate hearts.

As stated in previous pastoral letters our purpose is to create a first-personal plural, the *We* of the parish of St. Benedict and I am pleased to announce that it is taking shape. For those of you, however, who may be new to the parish I wish to take this opportunity to re-state the habit of mind, or culture, we wish to bestow upon St. Benedicts.

By the great goodness of Almighty God and through the intercession of the Blessed Mother and Ss. Peter and Benedict we have, through no merit of ours, received the privilege of worshiping according to the traditions and customs of the church using the ancient liturgy, formerly known as Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite.

This means that we, primarily, attend St. Benedicts in search of the four ends of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: Adoration, Thanksgiving, Atonement and Petition. In pursuit of these ends we endeavor to please God in *ora et labora* (prayer and work). However, this cannot be done in the abstract. Both the prayer and the work must perpetually engage us in thought, word, and deed. It must also be concentrated and directed. Not the prayer of idle babbling. Not work for the sake of work but orientated towards building a legacy of faith for others to inherit as we have inherited. This is the very nature of “conservative” in which custom and tradition are found in equal measure with growth and development.

Since July of 2021, our Sunday Mass attendance has steadily increased from just under 300 souls to 600 at the time of writing. (See chart 1.) *“May the Lord, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand times over and bless you as He has promised.”* (Deuteronomy 1:11)

Increasing attendance, however, creates some challenges that must be addressed if growth is not to overwhelm our sense of who we are. This begins with a sense of belonging. To belong to the parish of St. Benedict, to be considered part of our first-person plural, one must live in the Diocese of Fort Worth and be a registered member of St. Benedict.

What does this mean? The first step is to complete the registration form, so we know who you are. The second is to show your support for the goals established for our parish. This is most simply achieved by attending Sunday Mass with purpose, but also finds a deeper utterance in participating in the parish devotions, most notably First Fridays and First Saturdays and in volunteering your time. (The Ushers, and the Choir are always recruiting and there are always projects around the property.)

Parish membership also finds a necessary expression in providing for the needs of the parish through the parish envelop system. It is after all your parish and the precepts of the Church are clear in this regard. (N.B. Our growth has been such that the number of new registrations has outstripped this year's envelop supply, but new envelopes will be available from Christmas.)

Our Parish has grown in membership significantly and now includes 183 families. Nevertheless, only 138 families contributed something to the parish in the last fiscal year. Parish income has increased steadily but slowly and is not keeping pace with Mass attendance or parish registration. (See chart below.) Our Sunday collection goal is \$13,000 per week and I will be writing to those who have not yet contributed inviting them to play a more active role in our parish.

Why then is it difficult to register at St. Benedicts? I have consciously made it more difficult to become a member of the parish by insisting that new enrollment requires a direct and personal conversation with me rather than a convenient web form or email. Why? There are a few reasons for this. Firstly, to prevent non attendees from registering online for their own convenience. Secondly to ensure that new parishioners are properly motivated to join our first-person plural and thirdly to have a personal interaction with new members. To date this has been haphazard requiring only a brief personal request for registration made at any time.

Beginning in the New Year, however, this will become more structured as our parish planning committee rolls out our membership packet. New members will receive a welcome packet of information about the history of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, the Traditional Latin Mass, and the foundation of St. Benedicts together with the goals and aspirations of the parish. As well as receiving their parish envelopes new members will also be given the opportunity to enroll in the Brown Scapular, consecrate their home to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to meet personally with the Pastor.

The benefits of parish membership include access to sacramental preparation, the enjoyment of good standing within the Diocese of Fort Worth and access to the sacraments of confirmation, matrimony, not least of all last rites and funeral services. (Please remember that in the aftermath of *Traditionis Custodes* only residents in the Diocese of Fort Worth who are registered at St. Benedict's are eligible to receive the sacraments according to the ancient usage.) Being a member of St. Benedict is however not all about what you can get out of it. *We* are the guardians of tradition, custodians of a set of values and principles handed on from one generation to the next, immutable, and timeless. To belong to St. Benedict's is to place a high price on these qualities and to live them in our daily lives.

In living these values parish finances are beginning to take on more significance as we continue to grow and establish ourselves as *the* Latin Mass parish in the Diocese of Fort Worth and as the best Latin Mass parish in Texas. Attached you will find the summary of Income/Expense Comparison for 2021/22. I am communicating this to you in good faith and in the interest of transparency. I am also compelled to share this information with you because we have been set a monumental challenge. To grow we must have space, and to provide that space, which is also worthy of our values, will require the assistance of every single member of the parish.

At a recent meeting of the finance council three priorities were established: First was to complete the improvements to the Church by Pentecost next year. This means replacing the roof, completing the repairs to the floor, the pews and new altar piece with the possible addition of decorative paintwork and architectural features.

Second is the desire to provide a second priest for the parish. The bishop has already approved the appointment of an assistant pastor to St. Benedict, and it is now an issue for the Fraternity of St. Peter to identify a suitable candidate. I ask for your prayers for our Provincial Superior during his discernment process and trust that God will provide a suitable addition to our parish in July of 2023.

Third was to ascertain from the Chancery if our current location fits within the overall strategy for the Diocese and if not, what are the possible alternatives. On this last we have already made some progress.

In a meeting with the Vicar General and the Chancellor on Wednesday 14th September I discussed the possible relocation of St. Benedicts to St. Mary of the Assumption church, the original home of the Latin Mass in Fort Worth, as the quickest means of creating additional capacity. While St Mary's is of the correct size and liturgical style for our parish and a clear and coherent argument was presented the proposal met with steady, unyielding, but cordial, negativity. Our Lady of the Assumption already has a strong existing parish life and there is no parochial justification to change its status.

Nevertheless, the Diocese was very much in favor of our re-developing our current site. This would include the building of a large new church dedicated to the celebration of the Traditional Latin Mass.

Moreover, the Diocese would look favorably upon a proposal that took advantage of current ecclesial circumstances to embark on a project which could capture the hearts and minds of a national audience. Furthermore, if a sufficiently well-designed project was forthcoming the Diocese may be prepared to re-evaluate the debt the parish currently carries to further the cost of construction.

In simple terms therefore, the Bishop is committed to keeping St. Benedict parish at its current location because of its easy access to the 820 Loop and proximity to Downtown. At the same time, he is incredibly supportive of our efforts to re-develop our current location thus creating the first purpose-built Latin Mass church in Texas since 1970. What will it look like? How big will it be? These things depend on us.

While I suspect that some will hear this news with a sense of disappointment, hoping for a return to St. Mary's as a quick solution to our rapid expansion, I am personally enthusiastic about challenges that lie ahead albeit a considerable effort will be required to prepare our proposal and mount a capital campaign. This is only the beginning of the journey. It will take us approximately five years to design, approve, fundraise, and build a new church. In the meantime, we continue to mature our plans, discipline our minds, and intensify our prayers.

With the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II earlier in September much of the western world was reminded of an immutable fact: Tradition, identity, community, and stewardship are key principles of our human nature. Regardless of our personal thoughts on constitutional monarchy one cannot help but admire the way in which the person of the monarch, at least in death, has united the disparate elements of a society and cemented within them values which are both humbling and edifying. If the temporal Queen of England in death was able engender such a response from her people, what might we be capable of as willing subjects of a living and eternal King.

To the values named above our first-person plural at St. Benedict, can also add; truth, merit, and justice as fruits of a life well lived as the autonomous agents of faith and hope in Christ the King. To concentrate our faith in these values, I have invited Fr. Josef Bisig F.S.S.P., Rector of Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary, to celebrate a Solemn High Mass with us on Sunday 30th October 2022, the Feast of Christ the King at 12:15pm. Furthermore, I commend to you the ambitions of the parish of St. Benedict to build a household of faith rich in tradition and humble in heart.

Please be assured of my prayers for you and I ask only that you remember me in yours.

“Brethren and saints, you share a heavenly calling. Think, now, of Jesus as the apostle and the high priest of the faith which we profess, and how loyal he was to the God who had so appointed him... Every household has its founder, and this household of creation was founded by God... What is that household? We are, if only we will keep unshaken to the end our confidence, and the hope which is our pride.” (Hebrews 3:1-6)

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Harkins', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Rev. Fr. Simon Harkins F.S.S.P.

Pastor

St. Benedict

Income/Expense Comparison by Category

7/1/2020 through 6/30/2022

Category	7/1/2020- 6/30/2021	7/1/2021- 6/30/2022	Amount Difference
INCOME			
Collection	242,950.93	460,024.58	217,073.65
Diocesan collection	5,842.00	2,576.00	-3,266.00
Mass Stipends Deposit	655.00	170.00	-485.00
Misc. Income	17,964.44	129,516.00	111,551.56
TOTAL INCOME	267,412.37	592,286.58	324,874.21
EXPENSES			
Administration			
Administration: Bank Fees	24.75	760.74	735.99
Administration: Office	4,606.72	3,058.57	-1,548.15
Administration: Rectory Furniture	3,373.18	213.00	-3,160.18
TOTAL Administration	13,364.89	8,397.95	-4,966.94
Auto & Transport			
Auto & Transport: Tolls	0.00	410.48	410.48
TOTAL Auto & Transport	0.00	410.48	410.48
Bills & Utilities			
Bills & Utilities: House Rent	6,000.00	600.00	-5,400.00
Bills & Utilities: Mobile Phone	0.00	864.35	864.35
Bills & Utilities: Telephone	556.06	167.43	-388.63
Bills & Utilities: Telephone, Internet, TV	3,806.64	5,063.80	1,257.16
Bills & Utilities: Electric	7,603.16	9,672.09	2,068.93
Bills & Utilities: Gas	4,450.69	3,590.55	-860.14
Bills & Utilities: Refuse	2,121.06	2,096.75	-24.31
Bills & Utilities: Water	8,232.71	8,790.09	557.38
TOTAL Bills & Utilities	54,621.88	54,994.54	372.66
Cathedraticum			
Cathedraticum	29,907.52	29,874.53	-32.99
TOTAL Cathedraticum	29,907.52	29,874.53	-32.99
Education			
Education: Books & Supplies	491.78	465.60	-26.18
TOTAL Education	491.78	854.61	362.83

Food & Dining			
Food & Dining: Groceries	5,360.24	7,167.74	1,807.50
Food & Dining: Restaurants	0.00	433.30	433.30
TOTAL Food & Dining	5,360.24	7,601.04	2,240.80
Green Bill			
Staff salaries & benefits	124,464.06	130,382.11	5,918.05
Building Insurance	9,583.00	7,330.14	-2,252.86
Loan Payment	48,000.00	48,000.00	0.00
Total Green Bill	124,464.06	130,382.11	5,918.05
Home			
Home: Furnishings	0.00	164.66	164.66
Home: Home Supplies	0.00	399.53	399.53
Home: Rent	0.00	2,400.00	2,400.00
TOTAL Home	0.00	2,964.19	2,964.19
Maintenance	13,013.52	32,491.62	19,478.10
Maintenance: HVAC	3,548.00	32,080.00	28,532.00
Maintenance: Janitorial	0.00	3,186.96	3,186.96
Maintenance: Landscaping	2,354.91	158.25	-2,196.66
Maintenance: Plumbing	168.00	19,182.25	19,014.25
TOTAL Maintenance	19,084.43	87,099.08	68,014.65
Misc. Expense			
Mass Stipends Payment	650.00	130.00	-520.00
Misc. Expense	17,791.50	0.00	-17,791.50
Remand Diocesan Collection	5,513.00	4,017.00	-1,496.00
Total Misc. Expense	23,954.50	4,147.00	-19,807.50
Shopping			
Shopping: Books	0.00	3,973.99	3,973.99
TOTAL Shopping	0.00	3,973.99	3,973.99
Spiritual Life			
Spiritual Life: Organist	650.00	100.00	-550.00
Spiritual Life: Sacristy	2,456.94	33,835.31	31,378.37
TOTAL Spiritual Life	3,106.94	33,935.31	30,828.37
Travel			
Travel: Air Travel	0.00	1,038.71	1,038.71
TOTAL Travel	0.00	1,038.71	1,038.71
TOTAL EXPENSES	274,356.24	365,673.54	91,317.30
OVERALL TOTAL	-36,759.01	194,545.08	231,304.09

