

TABLE OF CONTENTS

U2 FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

A message from Fr. Michael and his thoughts on Family and Youth Ministry

03 CHRONICLES OF A SACRAMENTAL COORDINATOR

Hear from Adriene and Sam and get the inside scoop on what they do as Sacramental Coordinators

O5 THE SACRAMENTS

An outline of the Sacraments that fall under Family and Youth Ministry (The Sacraments of Initiation)

08 FAMILY MINISTRY

A look into what Family Ministry is and what it looks like at our parish

09FEATURE FAMILY PROFILE

Meet the D'souza's! An interview with an active family in our parish

10 YOUTH MINISTRY

A look into what Youth Ministry is and what it looks like in our Parish

11 KIDS CORNER

Find fun activities for the kids at the back of this edition of Fiat!



Written by: Fr. Michael Simoes

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we begin another pastoral year at St. Mary Star of the Sea, our 111th year of serving the Port Credit community, we look forward to all the graces and blessings that the Lord has in store for us. Looking back and looking around, there have been many changes that have come to our parish since I arrived in 2019. Within the Church, we are seeing new families and new faces every week. And outside our church, much of the same with the new developments being constructed. These changes, both inside and outside the church, present to us new challenges and opportunities to live the mission of the Church to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit as the Lighthouse of Port Credit - a harbour of refuge and a beacon of hope for all.

In living the mission and vision of St. Mary Star of the Sea, there are some special ministries that we would like to highlight in this issue of Fiat: Family Ministry and Youth Ministry.

Family Ministry

In his book <u>The Evangelizing Parish</u>, Cardinal Arinze explains:

"The family is that natural society founded on the marriage of a man and a woman. It is where life is procreated and nurtured. It is the cell of society, a "community of love" (Gaudium et Spes, 47), "the beginning and basis of human society" (Apostolicam Actuositatem, 11), and "the domestic church" (Lumen Gentium, 11). The health and condition of the family are of great importance to the health and condition of both the Church and the State."

With the importance of the family to both the Church and the State, the parish becomes a missionary outpost to support families live their identity as the domestic church.

And as we witness in times like these, the family has been under siege from a culture that wants to redefine the family. With these overwhelming cultural forces, the parish becomes a harbour of refuge for families. With this vision, the programs that we offer are opportunities for families to find a community of believers and other families where a sharing of life can happen and families can be strengthened to engage the culture around them with faith, hope and love.

Youth Ministry

In his book <u>The Evangelizing Parish</u>, Cardinal Arinze explains:

"Young people occupy an important place in the hearts of their parents and in the life of the Church and the State. They are a gift and a responsibility to their parents, the parish, the diocese and the State. The parish must have a well-reserved and cared for place for them. It is not to call them the leaders of tomorrow. They are a very significant sector of the parish today."

With our family ministry, we want to support parents in being the first educators of the faith to their children. With our youth ministry, knowing that there are many challenges that they face in the world and the virtual world, we want to provide a harbour of refuge for them to learn more about their faith in a safe and fun environment. As they grow older and the challenges get bigger, we want to lead them closer to Jesus and grow in their Catholic identity within the Church.

I am very blessed that I do not have to do this alone. Thanks to Adriene and Sam, we are able to live out our mission to support families and young people. With their love for Jesus and His Church and their passion for ministry, what you will read is a testament to their hard work and dedication.

My hope for you is that as you read through this issue of Fiat, you will be inspired to get involved in these special ministries to share more zealously the saving power of Jesus Christ. When we do this, we will make our parish a beacon of hope to the Port Credit community.



CHRONICLES OF A SACRAMENTAL COORDINATOR

When it comes to sacramental preparation, especially for First Communion and Confirmation, what most of you might see are parents dropping off their children for their classes, hearing the children during these classes, and of course when the children are about to make their sacraments in the church.

What you don't often see is the administrative and reflective work that goes into coordinating preparation for the sacraments. Here are some insights from the chronicles of serving as a Sacramental Coordinator, as seen through the lens of Adriene and Sam.

August: Prepare Registration & Information Packages
As the summer settles and we gear up for another year, we begin preparing the registration form and information packages that will be sent out to schools for parents interested in registering their children in the sacraments.

September: Launch Registration and Host Parent Information Sessions. As registration opens, we also host Parent Information Sessions to meet with the parents and answer any questions surrounding the program, the sacraments, and anything else that comes to mind.

October: Parent Faith Formation Begins

Parents of the children begin their faith formation series. They engage in small group discussions about their faith and deepen their connections with other parents. Their faith formation series concludes in early December.

January-June: Preparation Classes and Retreats

Classes begin and we get to meet the children. One of our favourite parts of being a sacramental coordinator is getting to know the kids over time. In between classes and retreats, we also meet with our amazing volunteers to pray and plan each session to ensure everything runs smoothly.

Just before the sacraments are administered, Adriene will diligently be working on certificates and getting the administrative tasks taken care of.

Adriene: "One of my other favourite parts of being a Sacramental Coordinator is sharing the load with an amazing team of individuals who love the Lord so much that they want to pour out to the families going through preparation. It is the greatest gift to witness not just our volunteers, but our parents and children come alive in their relationship with Jesus Christ. During the retreat for First Communion, we give the parents and children time before the Blessed Sacrament. There is something so beautiful in seeing families be before the Lord. Though the process of sacramental preparation can be challenging, I am truly humbled and honored to have this role in planning, preparing, and teaching families in the ways of the faith."

Sam: "Being the Sacramental Coordinator is truly one of the greatest joys of my ministry. Of all the responsibilities I carry, there is nothing that brings me more fulfillment than walking alongside young people as they prepare to encounter Christ in the sacraments. It is such a gift to witness their openness, their honesty, and their eagerness to learn more about the faith. The questions they bring (sometimes simple, sometimes profound) create opportunities to explore the beauty and depth of our Catholic tradition in ways that continue to inspire me as well. To be entrusted with guiding them through this journey, helping them grow in both knowledge and love of God, is not just part of my job, it is a privilege and a blessing that I treasure deeply."



Sam & Adriene





Real Voices

"When we moved to Port Credit during the pandemic, we were seeking a Catholic parish where we could belong and have our first child. Isabella, baptized, Fr. Michael and the administrative staff welcomed us with such kindness and guided us through every step, making the experience feel special. Fr. Michael also took the time to meet with us and guide us through the online training required. The online learning was self-paced and accessible, and it helped us remember the true meaning of baptism and the commitment that parents take on afterward. We are grateful to have found a spiritual home in this community. When it came time to baptize our second child, Leo, it was an obvious choice, and our connection to the parish grew even stronger.

It's not always easy to attend church activities regularly after having kids, as life can become overwhelming, but we encourage them to be part of the church community. This helps our children grow in their spiritual formation."

Jacqueline & Nathan Tracey

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

First Steps in Faith

The moment we encounter a new face at the parish is also the moment that our journey with them begins. This becomes especially evident when we have families requesting for the sacrament of baptism for their child. It is a sacred time to meet with the family to intentionally support them as they prepare for their child's baptism and, more importantly, to help them embrace their role as their child's primary educator in the faith. The time of preparation invites parents to go deeper understanding how remarkable this sacrament is for their child and their family, and how they can live out God's plan for their family life in the Church.

Baptism is not a one-time event that simply checks off a milestone, it is the beginning of the Christian journey and a life in freedom with Christ.

When we encounter families inquiring for baptism, it becomes an entry way to something much larger. It is an opportunity to walk with a family in a new season and to help prepare them in their role of growing the church through the sacrament of baptism. It is a blessing to witness families baptizing their first child, and then years later, watching these children grow up with the parish being a part of their lives.





"Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit and the door which gives access to the other sacraments." - CCC1213



THE SACRAMENTS OF FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

Preparing Hearts for Jesus

When I, Adriene, arrived at the parish in late 2020, I was tasked with establishing some sort of program for sacramental preparation. With the uncertainty of the pandemic at the time and the strict guidelines that we were under, we used an online program for the first year, then went into a hybrid program the following year, and finally moved into an in-person program. Over these 5 years, it has been a complete rebuilding of the program and establishing a catechesis team to implement an inperson program that caters specifically to the children in our parish family.

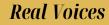
When we first ran in-person classes, we used a pre-existing program that helped build the foundation of a new program. In the summer of 2024, a core team of catechists and I sat before the Lord to really pray on what our program should encompass to reach the hearts of our families and the children going through this preparation.

Through the working of the Holy Spirit, we wrote the programs "Redeemed" for first reconciliation and "Given" for first communion. They were inspired and born out of prayer that seeks to bring the children back to the basics of the Catholic faith and launch them into a deeper understanding of the Sacraments

all while helping them get to know who Jesus Christ is and what having Him in their lives can do for their hearts. Our family ministry incorporates the first reconciliation and first communion preparation program. Our preparation program for first reconciliation and communion has been designed to encompass the entire family. Before the children begin their preparation, we first invite their parents into a faith formation series to provide them with an opportunity to grow in their knowledge and love of faith alongside other parents.

We have seen parents come to life in their faith as this time of formation allows them to ask questions and go deeper. We cannot give what we first do not receive. We also include parent and child retreats throughout the preparation which encourages families to come, united as the domestic church, to pause and pray together.

Our family ministry, through the First Reconciliation and Communion program, has allowed opportunities for busy parents and children to be in front of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and to pray intentionally before Him. This time of preparation is a sacred time as it is not only the children's hearts that are preparing for Jesus, but the entire family's.





"Having our daughter actually understand what the sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion were about was something very important for my husband and I. Our older children had done programs in the past at other parishes, but the level of concern for these children at this stage in their lives as Catholics at St. Mary Star of the Sea was exceptional. Taking a look through the workbook, and listening in on some of their classes, I knew she was getting good and true formation that was thorough, but at the same time, age appropriate (and fun!). Extending the Program to include the parents was impactful for me; allowing me to explore and strengthen my own faith alongside the other parents better equipped me to answer her questions (and my other children's) at home." - Jennifer Medal, mother

"I loved when they took us into the room beside the front of the church [the Sacristy] and showed us all the things. I got to see and learn about what Fr Michael wears and uses during Mass. I also liked making new friends." - Cecilia Medal, First Holy Communicant Class of 2025

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Sometimes I think the Sacrament of Confirmation gets left behind. Although it is the final Sacrament that completes the Sacraments of initiation (Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation) and is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace (CCC 1285 [89]) it always seems to be the one that is misunderstood.

Pentecost, from where we get the Sacrament, was such a pivotal point in the life of the apostles and is the very reason we have the Catholic Church today. The Sacrament of Confirmation is the continuing on of that mission, in which the candidates are "enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. They are, as true witnesses of Christ, obligated to spread and defend the faith by word and deed (CCC 1285[90]).

I take my role as a Sacrament Coordinator and catechist earnestly, because Confirmation was such a transformative time in my own life, I strive to create with intention the same opportunity for all those who come to us for preparation. In my first couple of years of taking over Confirmation preparation we tried different programs and while they did an adequate job of preparing the candidates, with a changing culture, we knew we had the resources to be able to build something intentional and specific to the youth of our community. Inspired by and following in the footsteps of Adriene and the First Communion sacramental team, through prayer and reflection, we were able to write our own Confirmation program "Belong."

Real Voices

"I chose to be a catechist for Confirmation this year because I love working with students with vastly different understandings of and relationships with God. I enjoy seeing students start to develop their own prayer lives and wrestle with their questions" - Confirmation Catechist



With clear instruction from the catechism we are to have a preparation that leads candidates to a closer relationship with Jesus Christ, to become more familiar with the Holy Spirit and to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church and to our parish community (CCC 1309). That being said, our program consists of four pillars; Catechesis, Encounter, Community & Mission

Catechesis: Focusing on an understanding of Sacraments, specifically the Sacrament of Confirmation and how that fits into their life. We will also focus on salvation history and where they [the candidates] fit into that

Encounter: Learning to listen to and act on the promptings of the Holy Spirit in their life. Exploring how they can and should participate in the Sacraments as well as encouragement for the frequent reception of the sacraments and coaching them in their prayer life

Community: Help the candidates to foster community amongst themselves, to help them find community with the Saints and community of our parish.

Mission: A call to action; helping the candidates to understand their adulthood in the faith, that they are the ones defending the faith, they are the ones who will carry on the faith.

This Sacramental year will be the first year that we are launching this program! We look forward to seeing how the Holy Spirit will work in the lives of our young people!

FAMILY MINISTRY

WHAT IS FAMILY MINISTRY?

At St. Mary Star of the Sea Parish, our family ministry is anchored in our parish vision, which is to be a harbor of refuge and a beacon of hope for families. It is a ministry dedicated for families to find a place of shelter and restoration from a world that is filled with constant noise and confusion. At its foundation, this is a ministry that exists to support families in becoming the domestic church they are called to be.

The domestic church is where children first learn about the faith. It is where they first encounter the gospel proclaimed through the witness, example, and teaching of their parents. The Church tells us that the home is the first school of Christian life where "one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous - even repeated - forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life." CCC 1657.

Here at St. Mary Star of the Sea Parish, our family ministry strives to build up families as the domestic church through different avenues. This includes:

- Preparation for First Reconciliation and First Communion which was designed to enrich a stronger faith life in the entire family.
- Family Ministry events that build fellowship and community with other families within the parish.

As a harbor of refuge and a beacon of hope for families, we hope to create a meaningful culture of encounter within our family ministry where grandparents, parents, and children come together, rooted in Jesus Christ, to know each other and Him better. As we continue to grow our family ministry, may we also look to the loving example of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and ask for their intercession for all families.

Real Voices

I remember the anticipation of lighting an advent candle each week of Advent with the wreath my mother had made using beautiful greens. I wanted to begin this tradition with my family for years. When we heard from Adriene about the Advent wreath event, my son and I were really excited to join. We enjoyed negotiating where the different items would go. We pondered Adriene's words of insight about Advent. And after, we loved receiving blessings from Fr. Michael. Lighting the Advent wreath each week at home, brought even more focus on Christ during the Christmas season. This year, we are looking forward to blessings and bonding again! - Monica Maria & Daniel Scotta (Mother and Son)





FAMILY MINISTRY EVENTS

All Saints Day Party in conjunction with Youth Ministry

 Families were encouraged to dress up as saints and were invited to an afternoon of fellowship where we had various games and activities planned for the children.

Advent Family Craft Event

 Families were invited to a crafty, cozy afternoon where they learned more about Advent and made Advent wreaths for their homes.

Family Day of Confessions

 In Lent, we hosted a Family Day of Confessions where we had two confession times open where parents could bring their children into the hall to participate in meaningful, faith-based, activities while they were upstairs receiving the sacrament.

Easter Egg Hunt

 On Divine Mercy Sunday, in conjunction with the Youth Ministry's Divine Mercy Sundae Fundraiser, we hosted the Family Easter Egg Hunt. Eggs were hidden in the rectory backyard and in Mary's garden for children ages 3-10 could participate.

FEATURE FAMILY PROFILE

Meet the Donza Family!



Q: When did you join the St. Mary Star of the Sea parish community?

A: "We joined the parish the summer of 2021."

Q: What special moments or highlights has your family experienced at the parish?

A: "Special moments that stand out to us personally are our children's Baptisms. We've also met many wonderful people at the parish – individuals and families – who have become close friends to our family."

Q: "When you think about your home as the 'domestic church,' what does that mean for you and your family in everyday life?"

A: "The home as "domestic church" can be understood in two ways. On the one hand, home refers to the physical place where the family inhabits, and the objects contained within it. For our family, we try our best to cultivate a space of beauty for the whole family to enjoy. Furnishing our home with a family altar at its centre, sacred images, great works of literature, music, and art that reflect truth, goodness, and beauty is therefore very important. These materials or objects — both meant to delight and edify — set the appetitive tastes of members of the family, especially the children. Moreover, they serve to communicate a deeper, hidden reality that points to a life of grace in God in a material world. On the other hand, home also refers to the spiritual place of encounter with the Risen Lord revealed through our daily habits, norms, and practices in the home.

These include our family's prayers and devotions, our labours, our regular reception of the Sacraments and daily reading of Scriptures, our participation in the liturgical rhythms of fasting and feasting with the Church, the education and formation of our children, our leisure, and our commitments to our family, friends, and the wider community.

Because we are embodied souls, both the material and the spiritual contribute to the overall atmosphere of the home which help form the human persons inhabiting it. As parents, we bear the amazing responsibility and gift of setting the norms for our children in the home until such a day they are called to go out of it. Ultimately, we abide by the precepts of the Church, trusting that God will furnish us (and our children) the graces to live out our vocations with peace and joy."

Q: In what ways has being part of St. Mary's shaped or strengthened your family's faith?

A: "The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass every Sunday is the pinnacle of our common life together as a family. Our family has benefited greatly from attending First Friday Adoration, Confessions, Stations of the Cross, spiritual direction, and retreats held at the parish. Through these, we were able to connect with other parishioners and families and formed a small community of friends. This has given our family great consolation and encouragement through very hard times. This sense of belonging has reminded us that we are not alone in our walk of faith."

Q: The vision of St. Mary Star of the Sea is be a "harbour of refuge and a beacon of hope". How does this vision resonate with your family's experience here?

A: "In view of the vision of St. Mary Star of the Sea as "a harbour of refuge and beacon of hope", our family witnessed this two-pronged vision "come to life" in fruitful ways at the parish, particularly during the pandemic, or the numerous social and ministry events that have taken place at the parish, the catechetical and sacramental programs offered, and many others including behind-the-scenes work (other sacramental celebrations, numerous hospital and school visits, summer camps, pilgrimages, retreats, building renovations, administrative work, the list is endless). We are deeply grateful for the parish staff and volunteers for all their hard work and indispensable contributions to the life of the parish."



YOUTH MINISTRY

"YOUTH MINISTRY REMINDS US THAT OUR YOUTH ARE NOT ON THE MARGINS OF PARISH LIFE.., THEY ARE AT THE HEART OF IT."

WHAT IS YOUTH MINISTRY?

Youth Ministry is where young people find a place to belong in the Church. It gives them the chance to experience the joy of faith, build friendships rooted in Christ, and know that they are seen and loved.

In a world that can often feel uncertain, Youth Ministry offers stability and hope. It creates opportunities for young people to encounter Jesus in prayer, in the sacraments, and in community with one another. These moments of encounter remind them that faith is not just something learned in a classroom, but a way of life to be lived with joy.

Youth Ministry is also a reminder to the whole parish that our youth are not on the margins of parish life—they are at the heart of it. When we nurture their faith and walk alongside them, we don't just build up the next generation of the Church, we strengthen the Church here and now.



YOUTH MINISTRY EVENTS

Annual LifeTeen Retreat

 All youth in high school are welcome to attend our Winter Retreat in association with St. Josephs Parish and St. Francis Xavier Parish a time in which they can retreat and develop further their relationship with God

Steubenville Conference

• A conference for high school students where they gather with hundreds of other youth their age to worship God and learn more about their faith!

Stella Maris Summer Camp

• For all youth from Kindergarten to Grade 6. Stella Maris Summer Camp is our own parish day camp that runs for two weeks in July

Edge Camp

• For all youth in grades 6-8 a sleep away Catholic Adventure camp that allows them to get out of their comfort zone while also learning about their faith - this camp runs for one week in August

Pancake Sunday Fundraiser

 An Annual Fundraiser where the Youth make and sell pancakes in order to fund our parish Summer Camp!

Ongoing Formation

 We will continue to have opportunities for all youth and their ongoing formation throughout the year



WORD SEARCH

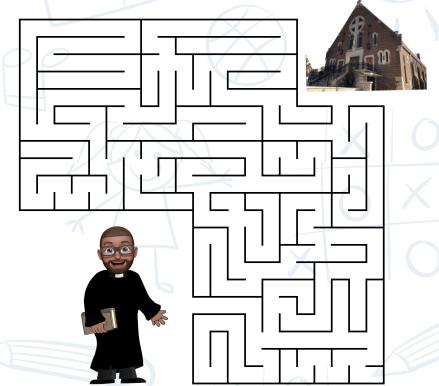
Can you find all the hidden words? They're sneaky! some go top to bottom, and some even run diagonally! Circle them as you go!

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THE MAZE GAME

Help Fr Michael get back to the parish!



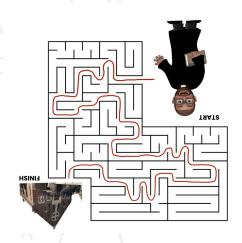
SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you spot the difference between these two picture? Circle the differences you can find!









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YIZMEK KEK

CALLED SERVE

As a parish that seeks to be a harbour of refuge and a beacon of hope, this vision cannot be brought to fruition without the working of the Holy Spirit and the many hands that support the good work that has begun here. We are so grateful for the volunteers who willingly give of their time and talents to help others encounter the transforming love of Christ in our parish.

"We were initially drawn to the First Communion preparation for the parents of the children that were getting ready for First Communion. We saw this as a great opportunity to contribute to our parish community and help the parents deepen their faith and share our experience as parents growing in the Catholic Faith.

We have also had a great opportunity to assist with the parents who are preparing for the baptism of their babies and young children. Having the chance to share with parents the importance of learning about our faith so we can properly teach and form our children from a young age. It is important to set a strong foundation for our children with our faith and love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

In sharing our knowledge of our Catholic faith, it has allowed us to further grow in our faith. We have really enjoyed interacting with the parents and children and working alongside Father Michael and the team at St. Mary's Star of the Sea."

- John & Carol Sanchez (Baptism Preparation, Family Ministry)

"I first joined St. Mary's in 2022 and felt so welcomed by the parish that I knew I wanted to become involved in parish life. Having worked with young children, I was thrilled when Adriene asked me to volunteer for the Children's Communion Preparation course. The concepts can be hard to grasp and the children always have a lot of really good (and sometimes funny) questions. I find that, in finding answers for them, I grow more deeply in my own understanding and humility. I feel privileged to be a small part in helping to pass on Catholic Tradition and the love of Christ to each of these little souls. "Truly I tell you, anyone who does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child, will never enter it.""

- Brenda Trikas, (First Communion Preparation)

If you are interested in volunteering or would like more information on how to get involved please contact:

Adriene - aadona@archtoronto.org

Sam - scameron@archtoronto.org

St. Mary Star of the Sea Parish



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CUSTODIAN

SERGIO IAVICOLLI

SUNDAY MASS:

Saturday (Vigil): 5pm Sunday: 9am and 11am

DAILY MASS:

Mon: No Mass Tues: 7pm Wed-Sat: 9am

ADORATION:

Wednesday and Thursday: 9:30-10:30 (following Mass) Friday: 9:30-12:00pm

First Friday: 9:30-12pm and 7-8p

