

# NEW CATHOLIC CHURCH COULD ONE DAY BE ENERGY-NEUTRAL

**FOLLOWING POPE FRANCIS' ADVICE ON SUSTAINABILITY, ST. BENEDICT'S WAS DESIGNED WITH A REDUCED CARBON FOOTPRINT IN MIND**

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Pope Francis' latest encyclical urged Catholics to work toward replacing fossil fuels "without delay," noting "climate change is a global problem with grave implications." The congregation at Saint Benedict parish in Milton seems to have gotten the message, breaking ground July 11 for a new church that could one day produce more energy than it uses.

"It's a very modern and optimistic kind of design," said Paul Crawford, chair of the parish's building committee. "We've taken a very green approach ... We won't be a big carbon sucker."

The church, which Crawford hopes will be ready by Christmas 2019, has been designed to reduce energy and water use, featuring geothermal heating and air conditioning. The design also includes spots for future solar panels, which could take the building to energy-neutral or even energy-positive status, said Crawford.

St. Benedict parish cov-

ers some of the newest swaths of Milton, south of Derry Road, and was formed in 2012 after breaking off from Holy Rosary parish. It has about 850 members, said Crawford, describing cramped conditions at Holy Rosary Church before the congregations split.

"It was packed," he told the Milton Canadian Champion. "Especially at nine and 11 on Sunday, there would be people standing at the back, standing at the sides."

Crawford describes the congregation as youthful and diverse.

"It's a new area with a high percentage of young families and some retired people," he said, noting the congregation follows St. Benedict's motto: All people are to be welcomed as if they were Christ. "It's a great motto for the kind of multicultural church we have. It's United Nations in our church."

Until their church is constructed, the people of St. Benedict's will continue to meet at Our Lady of Fatima school. Parishioners have raised more than \$235,000 of their \$2 million



Milton councillor Mike Cluett helps Diocese of Hamilton Bishop Douglas Crosby break the sod at the site of new church for St. Benedict's Parish.

Peter Wright/St. Benedict's

building fund goal, said Chris Barroll, a spokesperson for the fundraising efforts. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$15 million. The Diocese of Hamilton - of which St. Benedict's is a part - will front \$13 million, which the congregation will pay back over time, Barroll explained.

The church has been designed by Toronto's Larkin Architect, which has

worked on numerous other Catholic churches including St. Gabriel's in Toronto, Holy Spirit in Barrie and recent updates to the rectory at Guelph's Basilica of Our Lady Immaculate.

St. Benedict's will be built at the corner of Yates Drive and Louis St. Laurent Avenue, housing offices, meeting rooms, a roomy 900-person worship space and a parish hall featuring floor-to-ceiling windows.

Several parts of the church will feature exposed wood ceilings, with a tower bearing a cross as the central focal point outside. The sanctuary has a semicircle shape with designated space for wheelchairs, said Crawford.

With the design complete, the parish will soon accept bids from construction firms interested in taking on the project. They will open the bids July 27 and

choose a firm shortly thereafter, said Crawford, saying he expects the construction to take about 18 months.

"In a perfect world, you'd phone the guy on a Friday afternoon and they'd have trucks rolling into the site on Monday," he said, noting that in the real world, it might take a bit longer. "Our hope is that Christmas mass in 2019 will be in the new church. That would be our best hope."

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