

ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST CATHOLIC CHURCH

THE WINGED LION

♦ COMMUNITY NEWS

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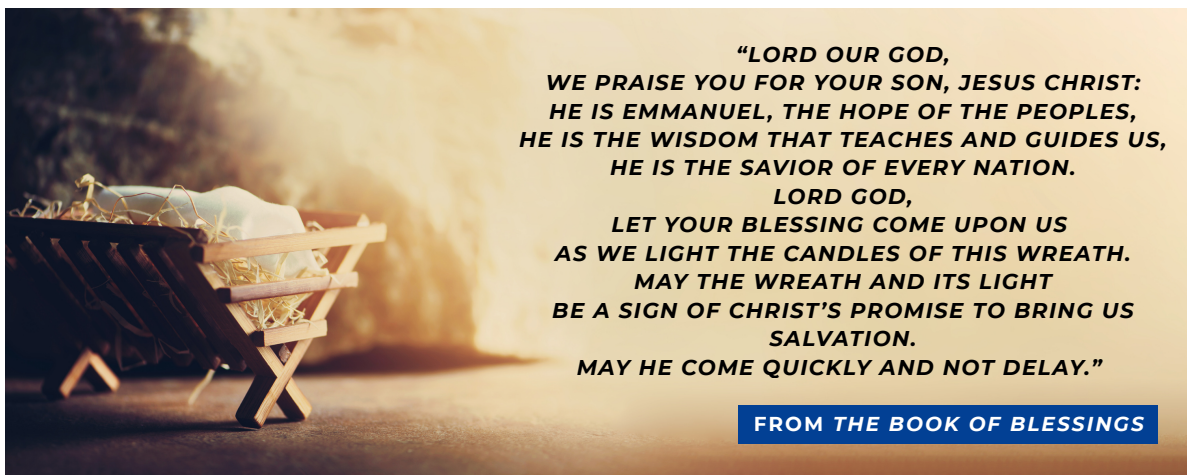
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WINTER 2025 EDITION



**"LORD OUR GOD,
WE PRAISE YOU FOR YOUR SON, JESUS CHRIST:
HE IS EMMANUEL, THE HOPE OF THE PEOPLES,
HE IS THE WISDOM THAT TEACHES AND GUIDES US,
HE IS THE SAVIOR OF EVERY NATION.**

**LORD GOD,
LET YOUR BLESSING COME UPON US
AS WE LIGHT THE CANDLES OF THIS WREATH.
MAY THE WREATH AND ITS LIGHT
BE A SIGN OF CHRIST'S PROMISE TO BRING US
SALVATION.
MAY HE COME QUICKLY AND NOT DELAY."**

FROM THE BOOK OF BLESSINGS

Journeying with Matthew into Advent, the New Liturgical Year, and the Coming of Emmanuel

By Fr. Dennis Aréchiga

One of the great blessings in being a Catholic includes our rich liturgical calendar with its unique colors, symbols, and prayers that carry us throughout the year just as the seasons march through time. The Advent wreath reminds us that faith is a journey. It is important not to rush through these coming four weeks but to seek to savor their meaning. We begin with the Gospel for the First Sunday of Advent, Matthew 24:37-44, which reminds us that as suddenly and unexpectedly as the flood came in the time of Noah, so will the second coming of the Son of Man be. This image of being prepared continues in the second and third weeks, where we hear of John the Baptist preaching his message of repentance, for the Kingdom of God is at hand. In week three, the eleventh chapter of Matthew recounts Jesus telling John's disciples, who were sent as emissaries from John in his imprisonment, that he indeed is the Christ who grants sight to the blind, healing to the lame, deaf, and leprous, as the Good News is proclaimed to the poor.

The fourth week of Advent switches its focus to Mary and Joseph. The infancy narratives are only found in Matthew and Luke. In Matthew, we find a focus on St. Joseph and his many dreams: first, to not be afraid to accept Mary as his wife; second, to flee to Egypt from King Herod's design to kill the infant; third, to return in safety back home. Just as Joseph's dreams guided him, we too are called to be open to the messages God sends us in our walk of faith.

Advent finds us beginning a new liturgical cycle, moving from Luke's Gospel in Year C to Matthew's Gospel in Year A. Matthew's Gospel was written at a time of great stress, when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman Empire in 70 A.D. We know Matthew's audience was made up of Jewish-Christians, unlike Luke, who focused more on Christians of Gentile origin. Because of this, more than any other Gospel, Matthew has the most quotes from the Old Testament. We hear in the biblical commentary *Sacra Pagina*: "[The Gospel of Matthew] was written for a largely Jewish-Christian community in order to help

them see that their Christian community in order to help them see that their Christian faith was consistent with their Jewish heritage and the continuation of it." In Matthew, we hear that Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. In Matthew 5:18, Jesus tells us that not one iota or smallest part of a letter will pass away from the Law. In 15:24, we hear: "I have been sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel".

We know that Mark's Gospel, the first to be written, is the shortest and most terse. John's Gospel, written several decades after the others, has a completely different structure with its book of signs, lengthy discourses, and stories unique to John and not found in what we call the three Synoptic Gospels; synopsis means to compare and contrast things put side by side. Even when Matthew and Luke share similar sayings, there are definite differences between them. While the genealogy found in Luke begins with Adam, Matthew's starts with Abraham and carefully brackets the history of the

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25 Years of Quilting with Purpose, Stitching with Heart

By Pat Brookes and Mary-Catherine Gomez

St. Mark's Quilt Group, known as the Lion's Pride, began 25 years ago. Two parishioners, Pat Tollette and her friend Pat Brookes, both skilled in quilting, wanted to share their quilting knowledge and talent. They asked the St. Mark's pastor at that time, Fr. Kevin Ryan, if they could start a quilting ministry here at St. Mark's. Fr. Kevin gave permission along with a location, day, and time that the group could meet.

On September 1, 2000, the group started with approximately 10 members of various quilting skills. They met in the Shalom Room. Pat Brookes taught a beginner's class where the ladies learned to make a crib-size quilt. Later, more advanced quilters joined the group.

The main mission of the St. Mark's quilters was, and still is today, to provide "Comfort Quilts" to those in need here at our parish and in the San Antonio community. Fr. Kevin

was a big supporter of the quilters and visited them when he could. Fr. Dennis, our current pastor, also supports the quilt group. When asked, he blesses our quilts two to three times a year, and he shares a meal with us. The quilters surprised Fr. Dennis last Christmas with a musical-themed king-size quilt.

Now, we are meeting in Christopher Hall Room 201, where we have three closets that not only contain our completed quilts, but also our quilting supplies. We have about 20 active members with varied talents and different skill sets. We are constantly learning from one another. Not only do we quilt, but we also socialize and track each other in case one has a special need. Some of our quilters enjoy quilting by hand and doing appliqué. One quilter makes religious wall hangings; others like to work with panels. When requested, we can also provide a "Fidget Quilt" for those with Alzheimer's and dementia.

Our "Comfort Quilts" have



gone all over the country to family members struggling with health issues. We have also sent quilts to different countries. For example, we gave 14 quilts to the local Ukraine support group. One of our members has a friend in Sri Lanka who asked if we could donate quilts for the children's hospital there; we sent an assortment. Throughout the year, we donate children's quilts to a local pediatrician. Any child who is in the hospital on Christmas Day gets a quilt. Last spring, we visited the Tiny Houses on the east side and donated 33 quilts to assist the homeless. Every year, we make a quilt for St. Mark's Women's Guild for the annual Spring Luncheon so they can raffle it. The money raised goes toward scholarships for five high school seniors in the parish.



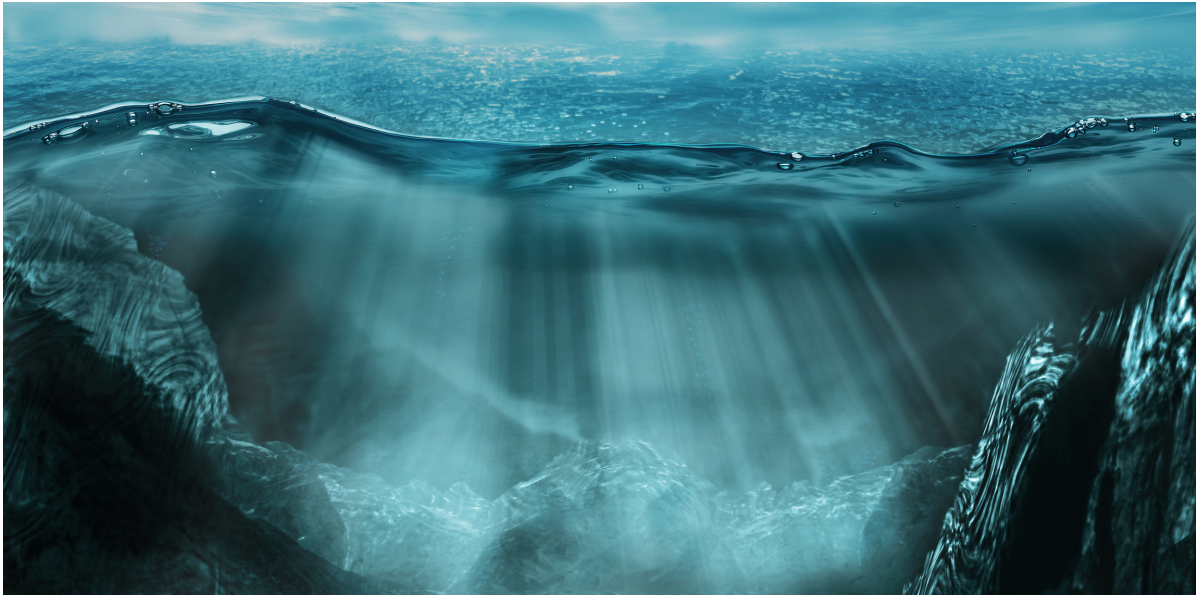
It is not unusual for the quilters to supply their own fabrics and batting, and to pay for the quilts to be quilted by a long-arm quilter. If you know of someone who can no longer sew or quilt, please consider a fabric donation to the quilting group. We do not charge a fee for the "Comfort Quilts;" however, we do accept donations to continue this ministry. Any money donated is used to provide items to make more quilts or to cover the quilting cost.

If you have a family member or friend who is getting chemotherapy or is in hospice, or is having surgery, or has a chronic illness, please feel free to request a quilt. Parishioners are encouraged to go to Christopher Hall on Fridays from 9 am to 12 pm to select a "Comfort Quilt" for your family member or friend. If you would like to learn to quilt, or perhaps you are a quilter looking for a group to quilt with, look no more. Please join us on Fridays. For more information, contact Mary-Catherine Gomez at 210-507-2868 (landline) or Pat Brookes at 210-416-3933.

"Whatever talent you have is a gift from God. How you use that talent to help and bring joy to others is your gift back to God." God has given the quilters, known as the Lion's Pride, individual talents that they share with others to help His church. We ask St. Clare of Assisi, patron saint of quilters, to pray for us and to aid this ministry.

Pat Brookes and Mary-Catherine Gomez are the Lion's Pride co-leads.





Be a Friend in Christ, Plant Seeds of Faith, and Help Guide Vocations with Into the Deep at St. Mark

By Tony Morgan

A little more than a year ago, when Fr. Dennis asked me to start a vocation ministry here at St. Mark, I candidly, and perhaps a little secretly, had my reservations. You see, I had been first involved in lay vocation promotions more than 10 years ago with the San Antonio Serra Club, and then the Lay Vocation Promoters for the Archdiocese. I strongly believed in our mission to encourage the creation of vocation committees in the 170 or so parishes throughout the archdiocese, but, honestly, this was somewhat akin to the proverbial “pulling of teeth.” Why was it so hard?

Well, one of the reasons was that this is really a “top-down, bottom-up” process. What do I mean? Let’s start with “top down.” A successful vocations program must begin with our clergy, from the Pope to our Archbishop to our Pastor. Pope Leo XIV met with priests responsible for vocations ministry and seminary formation on June 26, 2025. During this gathering, the Pope encouraged these priests to remember their friendship with Christ. He explained to them that Jesus’ words, “I have called you friends” (Jn 15:15), are “key to understanding the priestly ministry”. Pope Leo XIV also said that becoming a friend in Christ “means being formed in relationships, not just in abilities.” Archbishop Gustavo has a great heart for vocations as well, and last year, he brought many parishes together in an initiative to create vocation committees in every parish within the Archdiocese. Finally, I can personally

attest to our pastor’s heart for vocations, which is evident in his support of Assumption Seminary, newly ordained priests, and various initiatives here at St. Mark, like our Traveling Chalice program.

Being a “friend in Christ” starts with relationships, and those relationships begin with the family and the parish. This is the “bottom-up” part of the vocations process. “The overall mission of any Catholic parish is to help its members fulfill their primary vocation: to grow in holiness. A parish vocation ministry helps parishioners (especially youth) discern God’s will for their specific vocations. And it all begins within the family; when the family’s faith is especially strong, vocations flourish!” (Hundredfold: A Guide to Parish Vocation Ministry, Rhonda Gruenewald)

Into the Deep is a unique ministry because, at its core, it is a family made up of every St. Mark parishioner. There are many ways that we, as a parish family, can encourage our youth to be open to God’s call – whether to marriage, priesthood, or religious life. But, we do need volunteers to help with this endeavor; so, if you have a heart for vocations and the Holy Spirit is calling you to this ministry, please consider joining Into the Deep. We meet on the 3rd Thursday of the month from 5 to 7 pm in Matthew/Mark. Please call Tony Morgan at 210-303-7062 to learn more about the Into the Deep ministry.

Tony Morgan is the Into the Deep lead.

Where Your Treasure Is: A Reflection on Service, Fellowship, and the Women's Guild

The St. Mark Women's Guild has over 230 members. Everyone who joins has a gift or talent they share within the St. Mark community. A new parishioner will ask what do they have to do. The answer is simple, as just belonging to the Guild opens an opportunity to see yourself grow, love, share & contribute, learn, have fellowship & sisterhood, and receive friendship that can be rewarding at any stage of your life. Some of our members have been here since 1976, when St. Mark the Evangelist began, and some have moved here to be part of our history!

We welcome any newcomers to come to our General Meeting, normally held on the 2nd Thursday of each month. As you can see from the announcements in the weekly bulletin, we have a lot going on each month. You can be an observer or join in wherever you want, and of course, prayers are always welcome.

This past August, we had a Trash & Treasure Sale, which prompted one of our parishioners to send the following thank you. It was truly heartfelt, and I wanted to share it with the entire St. Mark community.

Blessings,
Barbara James
Women's Guild President



Trash to Treasure

"For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be" (Lk 12:34). Most of the St. Mark's parish community knows of the Trash to Treasure sale conducted by the Women's Guild. We just completed another sale this past August. The event is a phenomenon that should be studied as to how to bring forth the Kingdom of God in our midst in real time. The event is community service in action.

The ladies of the Women's Guild work tirelessly throughout the months to prepare for the big sale in the Event Center, the last building on the West Campus. Led by Carol Hamann, they organize, label, box, and price the donated items that come from parishioners and estate sales for the big sale. Everything - art, furniture, tools, toys, appliances, glassware, exercise items, wheelchairs, collectibles - except clothing, is accepted and gladly received. Even a water buffalo head was happily received and sold at a more recent event. The Wednesday of set up, I even saw a full-sized Santa Claus being carried under the arms of Jonathan Basset. I asked, "Why are you mugging Santa?" No response came, only a laugh, so as not to throw off his stride in placing Santa to his sale position. The ladies scurry about to clean the gently used items and seek a bargain price to attract the consumer. They also feed all their volunteers breakfast and lunch. The Knights of Columbus and other hardy parishioners bring these items to the Event Center. It is like watching the workers at an Amazon warehouse at Christmastime. All the money made by the Women's Guild is donated to the designated charities of the church. The leftover items are bagged up and picked up by Catholic Charities to be placed in their stores for resale.

Truly, the words of the gospel ring true: "Provide money bags for



yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy" (Lk 12:33). As I reflect on this powerful event of the people of St. Mark's working together, I realize the true treasure is the Body of Christ. These ladies and these helpers are the treasure. Another treasure came from a father at the event, who explained to his children that the items were possessions of people who had passed away and that they could not take anything with them to Heaven. He then said, "I am slowly starting to understand that myself."

In the spirit of the Women's Guild, let the trash go and see the real treasure found in each other in our service. This is the true money bags that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven.

Don Hanson

YOUR GENEROSITY HELPS MOVE THE WORLD

To the Parishioners of St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church:

St. Mark's Knights of Columbus Council 7613 and the American Wheelchair Mission wish to thank Fr. Dennis Arechiga and the parishioners of St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church for their generosity and support during our Wheelchair Sunday fundraiser last November.

For our fraternal year, which ended June 30, 2025, your giving raised \$42,811. That amount will purchase 285 wheelchairs and affects the lives of 2850 people. It will allow children to go to school, adults to be able to go to work, and the elderly, who may have been confined to a bed for many years, to become mobile.

If you were not able to participate in our fundraising back in November, we encourage you to go online and make a donation at any time. Just go to www.amwheelchair.org/donate. For "Campaign," choose Knights of Columbus, and for "Organization," choose Council 7613. Please know that for every dollar contributed, 100% goes to the purchase of a wheelchair.

All of your donations are 100% tax-deductible. The American Wheelchair Mission is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Their tax ID number is 26-4571639.

A Brian Nelson
Archdiocese of San Antonio
Program Director & Texas Knights
Assistant Wheelchair Chairman



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CAMPAIGN: KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS
ORGANIZATION: COUNCIL 7613

Journeying with Matthew into Advent... continued

Hebrew People into the fourteen generations, each from Abraham to King David; from King David to Jechoniah at the time of the Babylonian Exile; and from the Exile to the time of Joseph.

It is in Matthew that we have the Beatitudes, which, although also found in Luke, are greater in number than in Luke, also adding that the meek, the merciful, the clean of heart, and peacemakers will all be blessed. Just as the Lord's Prayer is both in Luke and Matthew, it is Matthew's version that has the greater detail and is the one used in our personal and

liturgical prayer. While Luke has the Sermon on the Plain, Matthew has the Sermon on the Mount, which includes passages unique to Matthew's Gospel. Herein lies one of my favorite passages in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 6:25-34, which speaks of how God cares for the birds of the sky who do not sow or reap yet are fed by our heavenly Father. The passage warns us against worrying, since that cannot add to our lifespan, and instead challenges us to contemplate that if God clothes the grass of the field, which flowers and quickly fades, how much more will He care for us? Verses 33 and 34

call us to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself." The Sermon on the Mount gives us the confidence to know that God does indeed care for us; therefore, we should not hesitate to ask for things that we perceive to be good and according to God's will.

As we begin a new liturgical year, let us pray that our hearts be open for the coming of the Lord. Let us reflect upon these words by Saint and Pope John Paul II from his homily to the Roman Parish of St. Maria Josefa of the Heart of Jesus, given on December 16, 2001:

"Advent invites us to rejoice, and at the same time, it exhorts us to wait with patience for the coming of the Lord now approaching. It exhorts us not to be discouraged, to resist every kind of adversity, with the certainty that the Lord will not delay his coming.

This vigilant patience...favors the strengthening of human ties in the Christian community. The faithful realize that they are little ones, who are poor and in great need of God's help, and they come together to receive the Messiah who is about to come. He will come in the silence, the humility, the poverty of the crib, and will bring his joy to all who welcome him with open hearts."

May we enter this new liturgical year and Advent with minds that are open and hearts that long for Emmanuel.

Fr. Dennis Aréchiga,
Pastor



St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church
Advent 2025
Nov. 30 - Dec. 24
Thursday, December 4
Individual Confessions
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Monday, December 8
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Holy Day of Obligation
8:15 a.m., noon, & 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, December 11
Reconciliation Service
6:30 p.m. - 8:45 p.m.

Friday, December 12
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
6:30 a.m. Rosary & Mañanitas
7:00 a.m. Mass *Bilingual*
with reception to follow
8:15 a.m. Daily Mass

Sunday, December 14th
La Posada (Bilingual)
After the 2:00 p.m. Mass

Christmas Eve Masses, Dec 24th
4:00 p.m. (*Children's Mass*)
4:15 p.m. (*Event Center*)
7:00 p.m., and 10:00 p.m.

Christmas Day Masses, Dec 25th
8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. (*Bilingual*)

Friday, December 26
Campus Closed - No Mass

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
Wednesday, Dec. 31.
Vigil Mass 6 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 1.
8:15 a.m. Mass only

Office Closures:
Our offices will close on Dec. 23rd at noon and will reopen Dec. 29th with special hours of 9 am-noon through Jan. 2nd. Our offices will be closed New Year's Day. We will resume our regular office hours Jan. 5th.