

ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST CATHOLIC CHURCH

THE WINGED LION

♦ COMMUNITY NEWS

In this edition
you can expect:

**100 Years of
Shepherding**
pg. 2

**We Are All
Called**
pg. 3

**Getting to
Know Fr. Tom**
pg. 4

Staffing News
pg. 6

**Holy Week for
Kids**
pg. 7

**Lent & Easter
2026**
pg. 8

SPRING 2026 EDITION

100 Years of Shepherding, and 50 Years of Belonging

“THE WORD ‘CATHOLIC’ MEANS ‘UNIVERSAL,’ IN THE SENSE OF
ACCORDING TO THE TOTALITY’ OR ‘IN KEEPING WITH THE WHOLE.’
THE CHURCH IS CATHOLIC IN A DOUBLE SENSE:
FIRST, THE CHURCH IS CATHOLIC BECAUSE CHRIST IS PRESENT IN HER.
‘WHERE THERE IS CHRIST JESUS, THERE IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.’
IN HER SUBSISTS THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST’S BODY UNITED WITH ITS HEAD;
THIS IMPLIES THAT SHE RECEIVES FROM HIM
‘THE FULLNESS OF THE MEANS OF SALVATION’ WHICH HE HAS WILLED:
CORRECT AND COMPLETE CONFESSION OF FAITH, FULL SACRAMENTAL LIFE,
AND ORDAINED MINISTRY IN APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.
THE CHURCH WAS, IN THIS FUNDAMENTAL SENSE,
CATHOLIC ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST AND WILL ALWAYS BE SO
UNTIL THE DAY OF THE PAROUSIA.

SECONDLY, THE CHURCH IS CATHOLIC BECAUSE SHE HAS BEEN SENT OUT
BY CHRIST ON A MISSION TO THE WHOLE OF THE HUMAN RACE.”

FROM SECTIONS 830 AND 831 OF *THE CATECHISM*

By Fr. Dennis Aréchiga

This Fall, our parish will be celebrating our 50th anniversary, and our Archdiocese will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of being an Archdiocese. Many people do not know what an Archdiocese is. The Greek word *arch* means to “rule over” or “to oversee.” The entire world is divided into geographic provinces called dioceses. The oldest diocese in Texas was that of Galveston, which in those days was larger than Houston! San Antonio became the second diocese in Texas in 1874. Our geographical boundaries, moving from west to east, include the following 19 counties: Valverde, Edwards, Kinney, Real, Uvalde, Kerr, Bandera, Medina, Frio, Gillespie, Kendall, Comal, Bexar, Atascosa, McMullen, Guadalupe, Wilson, Karnes, and Gonzales. Priests who work in our Archdiocese can administer sacraments throughout these boundaries; however, if they are requested to preside at a wedding or any other sacramental ceremony outside of these boundaries, such as in Austin or Laredo, our Office of Clergy must provide a letter of good standing to the outside diocese for this to happen.

Before Galveston-Houston became an Archdiocese on December 29th, 2004, San Antonio was the only Archdiocese overseeing the 14 other dioceses in Texas. When a bishop retires from a diocese or is transferred to another one, and there is a gap in leadership, our Archbishop is responsible to ensure all is running smoothly in that other diocese. Our Archbishop can also convene meetings with the bishops from his “dicastery” or grouping of dioceses that fall within our Archdiocese. The dioceses that fall under San Antonio include: Laredo, El Paso, Amarillo, Lubbock, San Angelo (the largest geographical diocese in Texas, which includes the cities of Odessa, Midland, and San Angelo), Fort Worth, and Dallas. The dioceses of Tyler, Austin, Beaumont, Victoria, Corpus Christi, and Brownsville are under the Galveston-Houston Province. Only Archbishops wear a pallium, which is a type of stole made of wool worn over the Archbishop’s vestments, which stresses the pastoral nature of their office as a shepherd of souls.

continued on page 5



We Are All Called to a Vocation in Life

By Deacon Oscar Vela

The word vocation comes from the Latin word *vocare*, meaning “to call”. We are all called to a vocation in life – a unique invitation from God to live a life of holiness. We were all graced with this call in our own baptism. It does not matter what career we have chosen; we are all called to follow Christ and grow in faith.

The major categories that the Catholic Church recognizes as vocations are:



Priesthood

Men called to this vocation are ordained through the Sacrament of Holy Orders and live their lives as shepherds of the people. Priests are ordained either to a diocese or to a religious order.



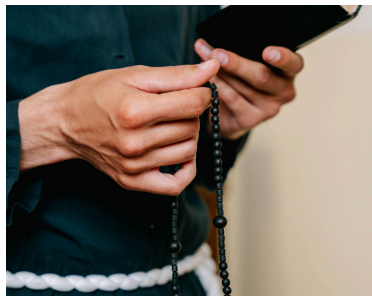
Religious Life

This vocation is made up of men (priests, brothers, and monks) and women (sisters and nuns) who take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. These vocations are lived within religious orders, such as the Franciscans and Jesuits.



Married Life

This is the most common vocation and is a call for a man and woman to come together in the Sacrament of Marriage. The love shared between the bride and groom is like the love between God and His church.



Consecrated Life

Men and women in this vocation also take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They dedicate their lives entirely to God.



Single Life

This is sometimes not included as a vocation, but it is recognized as a call to remain single and serve God and the Church in a way that cannot be done as a married couple.

Remember, we are all called to holiness. We sometimes need to be quiet so we can listen to God's call in our deepest selves. We should all seek to be “fishers of men” in our own unique way! Cast your net “Into the Deep” by helping to cultivate and nurture vocations, especially to the priesthood and religious life.

If you are interested in learning more about Into the Deep, St. Mark's Vocation Ministry, visit our webpage here: <https://www.stmarkevangelist.com/ministriesorganizations/into-the-deep>.

Deacon Oscar Vela is a Permanent Deacon at St. Mark.

A Q&A Spotlight: Getting to Know Fr. Tom Ovalle



If you've spent any time around St. Mark's, you've probably already crossed paths with Fr. Tom Ovalle, whose pastoral heart makes him very approachable. Serving our parish as a visiting priest, he brings a blend of faith-filled inspiration and genuine care for others to his celebrations of the Mass. We're excited to spotlight Fr. Tom in this edition so you can get to know the man behind the vestments a little better.

1. What inspired you to pursue the priesthood? The personal invitation and witness of the religious priests and sisters in my early years.

2. A childhood memory that still makes you smile: My father packing the whole family up to get on the city bus to take us downtown to view the Fiesta parades.

3. Favorite saint or spiritual role model (and why): I was introduced to St. John Bosco by the Salesian sisters in grade school. His advocacy for the education of underprivileged

poor youth and his devotion to the Blessed Mother under the title of Mary, Help of Christians, have influenced my life.

4. What part of your ministry brings you the most joy? Coming into contact with so many diverse, good and generous folks in all my assignments.

5. A meaningful lesson you've learned as a priest: That it's not what you say or do that is important, but who you are and how one relates to others in a caring, listening way.

6. A Scripture passage that has deeply influenced your life: Matthew's Chapter 5 that contains the Sermon on the Mount, that most famous of sermons that encapsulates all that is needed (principles) for Kingdom living.

7. A ministry or outreach effort you feel passionate about: Adult religious education that influences one's personal and spiritual life as well as family life.

8. How can parishioners best support you in your role? I have found that the parishioners of St. Mark's are very supportive of their priests, both the assigned pastors as well as the visiting priests. The full throated (singing and praying) participation of the Laity during liturgy uplifts both the assembly as well as the ministers.

9. Hobbies or activities you enjoy in your free time: Music, cinema, and reading take up my free time.

10. If you weren't a priest, what other career might you have pursued? Probably architecture.

11. Coffee or tea: Coffee.

12. Favorite comfort food: Pasta.

13. Favorite Liturgical season or Holy Day: Advent time that happens during my favorite season - Autumn.

14. Hidden talent or surprising skill: Trivia...it's amazing the amount of information I have collected and can recall at a moment's notice. I don't think I'm ready for Jeopardy but ready for Trivial Pursuit!

15. If you could have dinner with any historical figure (besides Jesus), who would it be? The Roman Emperor Constantine and his mother, Helena.

16. One hope or prayer you have for the people you serve: That we may always be courageous to speak the truth, to denounce what is evil, and to affirm the goodness in those around us.

17. Anything else you'd like the parish to know about you: That I taught High School for 10 years and was a University (LSU) chaplain for five years. I trust I've made Don Bosco proud.



50TH ANNIVERSARY

ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST
CATHOLIC CHURCH

1976 - 2026

100 Years of Shepherding, and 50 Years of Belonging (continued)

continued from page 2

When San Antonio became a diocese in 1874, Bishop Anthony Dominic Pellicer encountered a city that only had 13,000 people and four parishes! In 1926, Archbishop Arthur Jerome Drossaerts became the first Archbishop of San Antonio. The Coat of Arms of our Archdiocese, as described by the 2025 *Archdiocese of San Antonio Catholic Directory*, "shows the large cross of Christian faith, its center enlarged and squared to receive the cross peculiar to St. Anthony, called by heralds the TAU cross because of its resemblance to the Greek letter of that name. It is derived from the short crutch which the saint slipped under one arm to support his tired body during long vigils. Above the cross is the 'Lone Star' of the State of Texas. Crowning the shield is the miter, the liturgical headdress worn by bishops as a symbol of their special dignity and prominence in the church."

From the 2021 statistics of our Archdiocese, there were 182 Diocesan Priests and 182 Religious Order Priests; of the Diocesan Priests, 108 were

active and 74 were retired, revealing the high median age of priests, which is over 60! There were 339 Permanent Deacons, 78 Brothers, and 550 Sisters. Our Archdiocese is proud to have Assumption Seminary and to include five Catholic institutions of higher learning. In 2021, the total Catholic population was 812,035 out of a total population of 2,772,852, meaning 29.2% of those who live within our Archdiocese are Catholic.



On August 3rd, 2026, our parish is slated to host our Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, MSPS, for a commemorative 100th anniversary Mass. Truly, we are blessed to provide our sanctuary, which holds the most seating in our Archdiocese, for so many special celebrations that are usually held in Cathedrals, such as the Lumen Gentium Recognitions; Diaconal, Presbyteral and Episcopal Ordinations; the Chrism Mass on the Tuesday of Holy Week, where the holy oils are blessed for the coming year; and several other large ceremonies.

As we reflect upon 100 years of faith, we find ourselves experiencing another Season of Lent. May we use this season, in which we focus on ascetical practices of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, to strengthen our spiritual life these 40 days of Lent so that we may help make up a vibrant Church that forms future generations of believers within the hallowed grounds of this special section of South-Central Texas.

Fr. Dennis Aréchiga, Pastor.

Staffing News



Please join us in recognizing Brenda Houchens, who has retired after an exceptional length of service to our church. Brenda served our parish for more than 36 years, making her our longest-tenured employee.

She began her work in our preschool before moving into the bookkeeping department, where she spent many years supporting the administrative needs of the parish. Her long commitment to our community and her willingness to take on a variety of responsibilities have been appreciated throughout her time with us.

Brenda retired on Friday, January 16th, marking the close of a long chapter of service. As she steps into this next season of life, we extend our thanks for her many years with our staff and offer our best wishes for a fulfilling retirement.

Welcome

We're delighted to share that Esther Flores has joined our St. Mark Parish team as our new Assistant Bookkeeper. Esther brings a strong foundation with a Business degree from the University of the Incarnate Word along with many years of experience at USAA in finance roles.

Her background, dedication, and passion for financial stewardship make her a wonderful addition to our organization. She is quickly learning the ropes, has met many



parishioners with a smile on her face, and has a warm and welcoming personality. We're excited to see the fresh perspective and valuable contributions she'll bring to the parish.

Please join us in extending a warm welcome and heartfelt congratulations to Esther as she begins this new chapter with us.

Welcome, Esther!

HOLY WEEK FOR KIDS

March 29 – April 5



Ideas to Try this Week

On Palm Sunday, we remember when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. The people were so excited to see Him and waved palms while shouting, "Hosanna!"

Try this: Wave your palm at Mass and say a quiet "Thank you, Jesus."

On Holy Thursday, we remember the Last Supper. Jesus washed his friends' feet as a service to them, and he gave us His greatest gift – the Eucharist.

Try this: Do a chore at home without being asked.

On Good Friday, we remember how Jesus loves us so much that He died on the cross for each one of us.

Try this: Give up a favorite treat to remember Jesus' sacrifice.

On Holy Saturday, we are waiting for something amazing – Jesus!

Try this: Say, "Jesus, I trust in You!"

On Easter Sunday, we celebrate Jesus' rising from the dead. It is the happiest day of the year!

Try this: Say, "Happy Easter!" with a big smile.



What is Holy Week?

Holy Week is the special week when we remember the last days of Jesus' life and the joy of His resurrection at Easter.

2026 Dates

- Palm Sunday: March 29
- Holy Thursday: April 2
- Good Friday: April 3
- Holy Saturday: April 4
- Easter Sunday: April 5

Holy Week Helper Corner

Where our grown-ups helpers find the facts!

Inspired by: USCCB Holy Week resources | The Catechism of the Catholic Church | Vatican liturgy pages | Loyola Press kids' materials | Catholic Icing | Catholic Kids Bulletin



ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST
CATHOLIC CHURCH

LENT + EASTER 2026

SCHEDULE

STATIONS OF THE CROSS | 6:30 PM | ALL FRIDAYS DURING LENT

12
MARCH

LENTEN RECONCILIATION

11:00 AM

3
APRIL

*GOOD FRIDAY

LIVING STATIONS | 3:00 PM

THE LORD'S PASSION, VENERATION
OF THE CROSS, & COMMUNION
SERVICE | 6:00 PM

19
MARCH

LENTEN PENANCE SERVICE

6:00 PM

4
APRIL

EASTER VIGIL

8:30 PM

29
MARCH

PALM SUNDAY

SATURDAY VIGIL | 5:00 PM
SUNDAY | 8:00 AM, 10:00 AM, 12:00 PM,
2:00 PM SPANISH, & 5:00 PM

5
APRIL

*EASTER SUNDAY

8:00 AM, 10:00 AM, 12:00 PM, 2:00 PM
SPANISH, & 5:00 PM

1
APRIL

LENTEN RECONCILIATION

4:00 PM

6
APRIL

*EASTER MONDAY

8:15 AM MASS ONLY

2
APRIL

*HOLY THURSDAY

6:00 PM

ADORATION UNTIL 12:00 AM

REGULAR CONFESSIONS
SATURDAYS | 3:30 PM TO 4:50 PM
WEDNESDAYS | 4:30 PM TO 5:50 PM

*CAMPUS CLOSED EXCEPT FOR SERVICES

HAPPY EASTER

TO OUR ST. MARK FAMILY