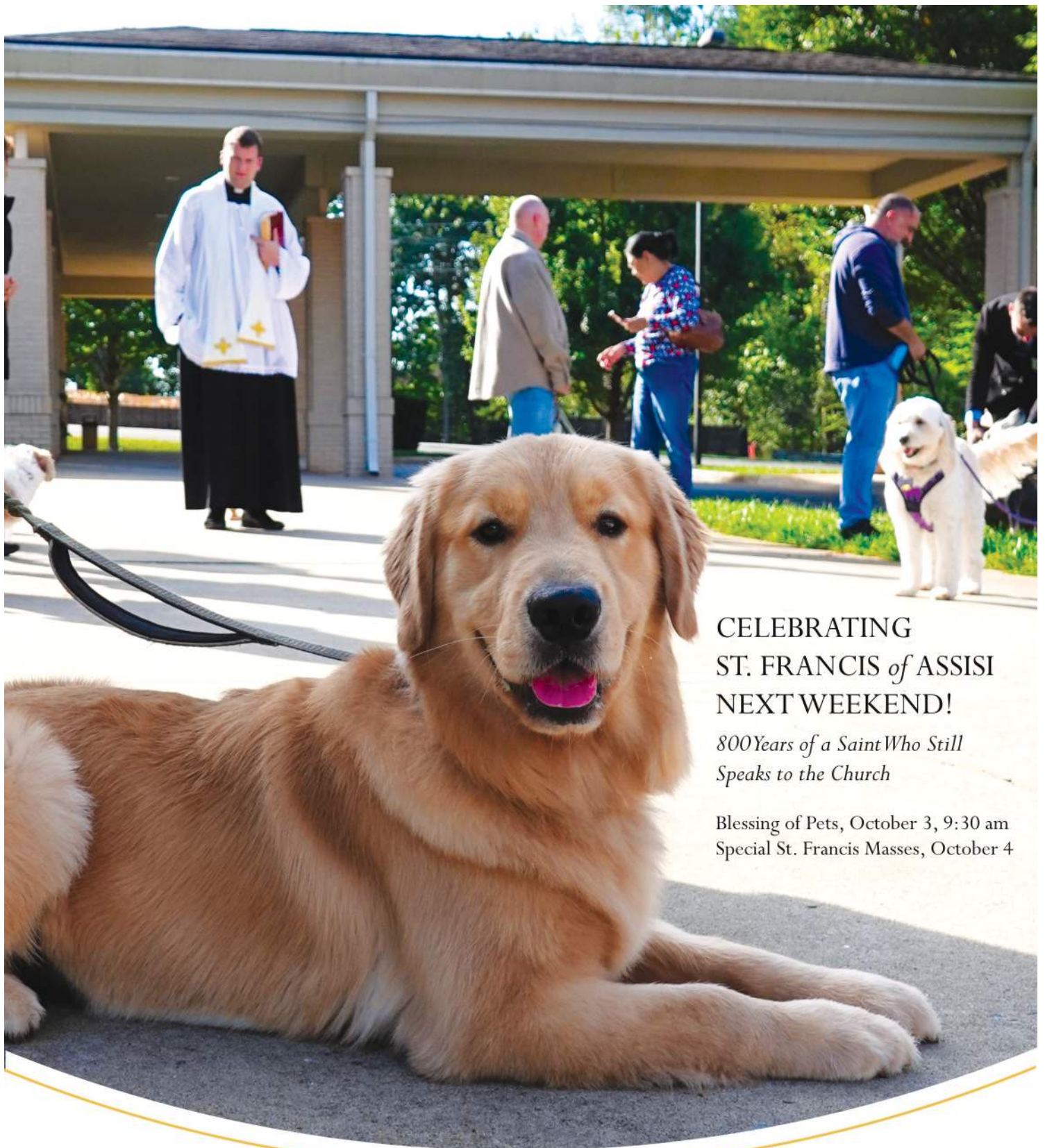




CELEBRATING
ST. FRANCIS of ASSISI
NEXT WEEKEND!

*800 Years of a Saint Who Still
Speaks to the Church*

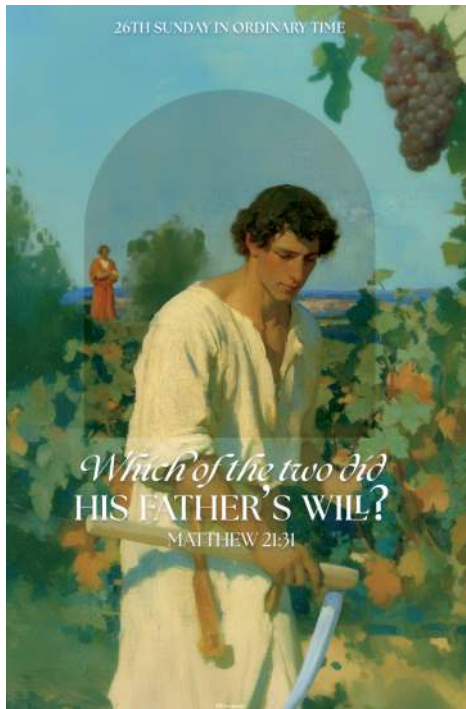
Blessing of Pets, October 3, 9:30 am
Special St. Francis Masses, October 4

SAINT ✠ MARK



26th Sunday in Ordinary Time • September 27, 2026 • Espanol Page 16

WELCOME TO ST. MARK!



Today is the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time. The readings can be found in the music handouts or in the St. Augustine Hymnal on page 934. The Order of the Mass can be found on page 7; Mass prayers are on the last page of the hymnal.

We invite you to make St. Mark your parish home!

Thank you for being a part of our parish, either as a visitor or a long-time parishioner. We are thankful that you are here and welcome you back anytime for Mass, prayer in our Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration Chapel or any of our programs.

At St. Mark, we believe we are all called as one by Christ to embrace the spirit of stewardship and engagement to Grow in Christ, Serve One Another, Share Our Gifts and Connect in Faith. This mission is our quest for holiness. It is by our intentional discipleship that each of us become stewards of the gifts God has given us and to share them with others. Our time, our talent and our treasure are given to us by God to share with others by spreading the Gospel and building His kingdom.

If you are interested in registering as a member, please go to stmarknc.org/registration or use the QR code. You may submit the form online or bring a paper copy to the Welcome Desk during business hours, including Sunday 8:30 am-12:15 pm. Forms can be found in the narthex. Please know, you do not need to be Catholic to join and come to our parish.



Please join us in the Prayer to St. Michael after the Final Blessing.

Please do not leave the church until after the priests, deacons, and servers have exited the church. Thank you.

Saint Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do Thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the Power of God, cast into hell, Satan and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

COMMUNION GUIDELINES FOR CATHOLICS

1. To be in a state of grace, that is to say, to be free of any unconfessed mortal sin—this includes, if married, being married in a way recognized by the Catholic Church.
2. To abstain for at least one hour before Holy Communion from any food and drink, with the exception of water and medicine.
3. To know what you are receiving and to approach the altar with devotion.
4. You may receive Holy Communion standing or kneeling.
5. **Please consume the Eucharist in front of the minister of Holy Communion, before walking away.**

For Non-Catholics: We welcome you to Holy Mass and are glad you are here. Please feel free to participate by singing, standing, kneeling, etc. However, the reception of Holy Communion is reserved for Catholics in a state of grace. At the time of Communion, please feel free to come forward with your arms crossed over your chest for a blessing or to remain in your pew. See page 1302 in the hymnal for information.

Thank you for generously sharing your gifts with the parish.



Online Giving

DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU CAN GIVE YOUR OFFERTORY ONLINE?

*Planned
Proportionate
Intentional
Consistent*



sign up at stmarknc.org/online-giving

FROM THE PASTOR



As Christian stewards, we are called to a high and holy standard — living as Christ's disciples every day and with every person the

Lord places in our path. But we can move towards this goal in “baby steps.” Jesus demonstrates this comforting truth through the parable He tells in today's Gospel from Matthew. It is the story of two sons whose father instructs them to go out and work in his vineyard that day. While the second son agrees to his father's request, he does not follow through — he fails to obey the father's will. The first son tells his father, “no.” At least he is honest! And in the end, he reconsiders and obeys his father.

The first son's honest, less-than-perfect response is consoling to us Christian stewards. Haven't we all felt this way at times when God's will for us seems to be just too hard?

We can be honest with God at these times. He knows our thoughts already, after all. But when we stay engaged in a real relationship with Him, even if it's just to say, “I don't think I can, Lord,” He will supply us with just the grace we need to change our minds and do what He is asking us to do.

We can even take a step backward from time to time because our Father is merciful and kind. What matters is that we keep baby-stepping along, assured of the grace we need to more closely imitate the actions and attitudes of Christ. This is the beauty of the stewardship way of life. ©Catholic Stewardship Consultants, 2026

Pastoral Pondering – On the *Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows*, the other priests, seminarians, and I, had the opportunity to attend the Final Solemn Profession of Sister Mary Lucia, DVM. It was a moving experience, and I thought it a good occasion to reflect on the importance of religious life in the life of the parish and the life of the Church.

Every Sunday we gather as one family: families in the pews, single adults, children, the elderly, deacons, priests, seminarians, and, often quietly among us, men and

women who have given their whole lives to God by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They are not a side chapel of the Church. They stand at her heart.

“The consecrated life is at the very heart of the Church as a decisive element for her mission.” — Pope St. John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*

What does that mean for us here at Saint Mark? It means that the Church is poorer—less herself—whenever we forget those who have left everything to follow Christ with an undivided heart. Baptism already consecrates every Christian. Consecrated life is a further, public, stable response to that same baptismal grace: a way of making the face of Jesus—poor, chaste, and obedient—visible in the middle of an age that is often restless, acquisitive, and self-directed.

A living sign of the world to come.

The Catechism teaches that those who profess the evangelical counsels “signify and proclaim in the Church the glory of the world to come.” In other words, a sister who owns nothing, a brother who lives in community, a contemplative who prays through the night, a consecrated virgin living in the world, a missionary who goes where no one else will go—each of them is a living reminder that this world is not our final home. Their lives preach what our words sometimes only hint at: God is enough.

That witness is not a luxury. In a culture that measures worth by productivity, possessions, and personal autonomy, consecrated men and women quietly insist that love can be total, that freedom is found in gift, and that joy does not depend on having more. They are, as one religious recently put it, a kind of medicine for the whole Body of Christ—an antidote to our easy compromises with comfort and control.

Many forms, one gift.

Consecrated life is not one mold. From the earliest centuries there have been hermits and virgins, monks and nuns, itinerant preachers and teachers, nurses and missionaries. Today the Church recognizes religious institutes of contemplative and apostolic life, societies of apostolic life, secular institutes, consecrated virgins and widows, and the eremitic life. Some live behind cloister walls. Some staff our schools, hospitals, and missions. Some remain in ordinary workplaces while belonging entirely to Christ. All of them exist for the holiness of the whole Church.

History itself testifies to this. The faith was planted and the poor were served in large part because religious families poured themselves out. That work continues. When we thank God for Catholic education, for care of the sick, for quiet hours of adoration offered for souls we will never meet, we are often thanking consecrated persons we may never see.

What this asks of us.

First, gratitude. If a religious sister taught you the faith, if a priest of a religious order heard your confession on retreat, if a contemplative community has prayed for this parish, thank God for them—and, when you can, thank them.

Second, pray for vocations. The Lord still calls. He calls from our families, our youth groups, our college campuses, and our pews. Parents, do not be afraid if your son or daughter begins to wonder about religious life. That question is not a loss to the family; it may be one of the greatest gifts a family can offer the Church. Young people: if the thought of giving everything to Christ will not leave you alone, do not smother it. Speak with a priest or a consecrated person you trust. The Church needs the diversity and richness of these charisms.

Third, our own fidelity. Consecrated life does not replace the vocation of marriage or the single life in the world. It illuminates them. The vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience are a concentrated form of what every disciple must live in some measure: detachment, purity of heart, and obedience to the Father's will. When religious are faithful, the whole parish is strengthened. When we in the pews are faithful to our own state of life, we honor the same Lord they serve.

The Church will never be without this gift, because Christ Himself is poor, chaste, and obedient, and He continues to draw men and women into that pattern of life. Let us esteem it. Let us pray for those who live it. And let us ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers—not only priests, but sisters, brothers, and all who will make His way of life visible among us.

We thank God for the witness of the Daughters of the Virgin Mother who serve here at St. Mark and for all of the religious in the Diocese of Charlotte who give witness to the beauty of consecrated life.

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

Please Pray For... To submit a prayer request, visit: stmarknc.org/prayerchain

Tom Addison	Charlie Donovan	The Kibbee and	Sarah Obermiller
Julie Andrews	Jane & William	Farnejad Family	Louise Painter
Donald Arrup	Dragoon	Dennis Koenig	Donna Paniagua
Maryann Bahret	James P. Durcan	Jackie Kopicki	Fernando Paverpai
Lizzy Balzer	Joanne Errick	Aubrey Lamb	Jack Parley
Daisy Bayona	Jack Evans	Craig Leiker	Doug Peterson
Deidre Beck	Charles Fillipo	Carolina Liendo	Nicole & Bruce
Barbara Benner	Al Fischlein	Marie Ligon	Preiss
Richard Biddy	Padraic Foley	Peter R. Loew	Angela & Gianni
Brian Blatchford & Family	Alan Friedl & Family	Kitty Long	Piraino
Marlene Bombay	Tom Fox	Wilfredo Lostaunau	Johnathan Rametta
Virginia "Gini" Bond	April Gallo	David Luongo	Joette Reid
Kathy Brandt	Valeria Gerbasi	Margaret Lynch	Lindsay Remington
Dave Breen	Daniel Gilbridge	Utelia Malwitz	Butch Remesch
Lynne Bridges	Denny & Monica	Tom & Colette	Natalie Roberts
Carman Butler	Golden	Manente	Thomas Rynne
Helen Sally Buff	Corbin Golightly	Sharon Marshall	Jack Schneider
Carmen Cabranes	Tom Goodwin	Melissa McDonald	Phyllis Searles
Anne Caestecker	Lucas Graf	Cathy Milligan	Mark Shields
Anthony Cain	Paige Grieshop	Terry Milstead	Todd Singh
Michelle Chicoine	Rachel Grieshop	Lucille Modica	Bill Sirnack
Rod Clair	Helen Haddad	Linda Morella	Robert Somerville
Jim Clark	Ron Haley	Mary Morgan	Betsy Spartz
Beth Collins	Victoria Hart	Haleigh Moss	Mike Tolbert
William Conklin	Fran Hehn	Niall Mulkeen	Alston Torres
Vic Crognale	Laura Hehn	Elizabeth Mulligan	William and Sharon
Ridge Curwood	Allan Helmbrecht	Angeles Murphy	Tumidanski
Janice D'Angelo	Madeline Louise	Maria Magdalena	Mario Valinhas
Sheila DeArmon	Henwood	Murphy	Haley Velez
Judy and Rich	Bill Hille	Carl Muti	Julio Velez
Deboer	Hannah Hopkins	Emily Nash	Jean Vogel
John Deluca	Frank Hunnicutt III	Paul Nealon Jr.	Elise Weiss
Joan Demarco	Cathi Kalberier	Paul Sr. and Sally	Al Wiltz
Henry Diener	Mary Kate Knight	Nealon	Patricia Zeggert
	Mary Kelley	The Ober Family	

MASS INTENTIONS

Sunday, September 27

7:30 am † Thuc-Cuong-To-Van-Hang-Dau
 9 am Andrea DiGiovanni
 11 am † Alvaro Torres
 1 pm St. Mark Parishioners
 4:30 pm † Dr. Carlos Ong
 5 pm † Jeremy Noonan

Monday, September 28

7 am † Santo Pagano
 9 pm † Jessmin Hall

Tuesday, September 29

7 am † Nancy Stone
 9 am † Richard Rigoulot

Wednesday, September 30

7 am Emily King
 Thomas DiGiovanni
 6:30 pm Purgatorial Society Mass

Thursday, October 1

7 am † John Sampogna
 9 am † James Byrnes

Friday, October 2

7 am Paige McCall
 9 am Frank & Tracie Kernan
 7 pm Leonardo Curz Family

Saturday, October 3

9 am All Souls in Purgatory & Conversion of Sinners
 5 pm † Barbara Conklin

Sunday, October 4

7:30 am † Benny Benedikovic
 9 am † Rose Seeling
 11 am † Janet Pearson
 1 pm † Esperanza Rodriguez
 4:30 pm † Ramon Fullon
 5 pm St. Mark Parishioners

† Deceased

Stay Connected With St. Mark.
 Find us on all social media platforms



or sign up for our weekly newsletter at
stmarknc.org/emailnewsletter

READINGS

Week of September 27, 2026

Sunday Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time:

Ez 18:25-28; Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9; Phil 2:1-11 or Phil 2:1-5; Mt 21:28-32

Monday: Job 1:6-22; Ps 17:1bcd, 2-3, 6-7; Lk 9:46-50

Tuesday: Feast of Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, Archangels: Dn 7:9-10, 13-14 or Rev 12:7-12ab; Ps 138:1-2ab, 2cde-3, 4-5; Jn 1:47-51

Wednesday: Memorial of Saint Jerome, Priest and Doctor of Church: Job 9:1-12, 14-16; Ps 88:10bc-11, 12-13, 14-15; Lk 9:57-62

Thursday: Memorial of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, Virgin and Doctor of the Church: Job 19:21-27; Ps 27:7-8a, 8b-9abc, 13-14; Lk 10:1-12

Friday: Memorial of the Holy Guardian Angels
 Job 38:1, 12-21; 40:3-5; Ps 139:1-3, 7-8, 9-10, 13-14ab; Mt 18:1-5, 10

Saturday: Job 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17; Ps 119:66, 71, 75, 91, 125, 130; Lk 10:17-24

PRAY FOR OUR MILITARY

Air Force: C3C Andrew Bauders; Airman Gregory Burke; Airman Antoinio Diaz; Lt. Col. Michael Dragoon; Capt. Stephen Hack; Capt. Ryan Loyd; Alejandro Martinez; Sgt. James McCormick; SCANG Sgt. John Andrew McCormick; 2nd Lt Connor Milligan; Airman Chloe Scott; Airman Michael F. Yellico

Army: 1st Lt. Amelia Andretti; Capt. Patrick Camatcho; Capt. Sarah Camatcho; Maj. Robert Caraccilo; Sgt. Maj. Darcy Fisher; Kyle Hawk; PFC. J. Parker Hogan; Capt. John Hughes; Pvt. Chaz Margo; Maj. Daniel McCormick; 2nd Lt. Maria Morelli; PV2 Matthew Pressley; Maj. Stephen J. Romeo; SSG Andrew Sales; Andrew Santos; Capt. Ramon Ricardo Tapia; Spl. Forces Nolan Tillotson; Josh Wagner; 1st Lt. Nick Worth; 2nd Lt. Matthew Zagar

Marines: LCPL. Richard Breier; 2nd Lt. Drew Brenner; Maj. Matthew Santoli; Cpl. Bobby Holden; Cpl. Baylin Prescott; Capt. Nathanael Rusciolelli

Navy: MIDN 3C USNA Kellan Azzopardi; DCFN Matthew J Bixler Jr.; LCDR. Matthew Giannone; SR Chase T. Golden; MIDN 3C USNA Malerie Lague; Lt. Albert Remmey, Jr.; LCDR. Jordan Mayo; LTJG. Rory Moran; OSSN. Daniel Pressley; LCDR. Jenna Hehn Quist; ENS. Tyler Spear; LCDR. William Vey; MIDN 3C USNA Patrick Walsh; CTT2. Zachary Wortham

Coast Guard: BM2 Hannah Schramke

..and all service members not listed.

STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship Spotlight: Divorce Support Group

This week our spotlight is on one of several support groups available at St. Mark. These groups seek to love others by walking with those going through difficult situations. "... In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world." (John 16:33) The St. Mark Divorce Support Group assists those considering, or in the midst of, separation or divorce.

Members are ordinary people who have lived through the difficult situation of separation or divorce, not a counseling group. They share stories - what helped them, what wasn't as helpful, and recommendations for healthy ways to cope with an awful situation. Most people who come to their meetings need information, legal and financial, as well as emotional support and spiritual guidance. Handouts for all newcomers include how to speak with children of all ages. Whenever possible, they strongly urge people to stay together and seek counseling (either with our parish priests or Catholic Charities). Separation and divorce are always the last resort.

The St. Mark Divorce Support Group meets every Monday at 7 pm, usually in room 204. On any Monday when the parish offices are closed, or if there is a space conflict, they meet at Lowe's Foods (exit 23), usually in the front booths or upstairs for larger groups. Some attendees come every week; some only when things are challenging.

Since this group began in September 2019, nearly 100 people have attended. Participants include men and women, young and older, some not yet separated, and some divorced for many years. Although they have opening and closing prayers, attendees do not need to be practicing Catholics. For more information, please contact divorce.support@stmarknc.org.

Saint Mark Purgatorial Society

Saint Mark offers the opportunity for you to have your loved ones remembered at a monthly Wednesday 6:30 pm Mass for a calendar year. Names enrolled for the year will also be placed on the altar during our Masses in November.

To enroll a family member, please contact the Office at 704-948-0231 or complete the form on our website at www.stmarknc.org/purgatorial-society.

The following members will be remembered on September 30, 2026: **Marilyn Bissinger**



This is a parish-wide, just-for-fun, connect-with-others-who-share-a-love-of-Christ, celebration, and family social event!

Thank you to the many volunteers, ministries, apostolates, groups, staff, and vendors who work to bring us this parish social each year.



What you need to know:

FOOD TRUCKS and DRINKS!

No Admission: This is not a fundraiser. Food and beverages will be available for sale from vendors (cash, debit/credit accepted.) Ice cream, hot dogs, and beverage tickets will need to be purchased from the Stewardship Tent. Picnic baskets are welcome!

Six Food Trucks: Lobster Dogs; Muchachos Tacos; Libretto's Pizzeria, St. Mark Hispanic Ministry Tamales, Elotes (Mexican Corn on The Cob), Fruit Cup, and Aguas Frescas; Fishbaugh Hot Dogs; and The Butcher Grill. Pay with cash or credit; Fishbaugh Dog will only take tickets.

Beverages: Primal Brewery, Wine, Soda and Water

Desserts: Bruster's Ice Cream and Kona Ice



GAMES and ENTERTAINMENT!

Activities: All activities are free. Split Second Sound DJ and Dance Party; Candid Capture Photo Booth; Inflatable Obstacle Course, Football Toss, and Bounce House for ages 5 and Under; Cornhole; Game Truck; Bingo; Face Painting; Crafts; Cookie Walk; and more.

Fun for the Entire Family: This is a family event. We will have tables outside but you can bring a chair, blanket and friends. There will be activities outside and in the Parish Hall.

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP



Men's Welcome Retreat
November 8 & 9, 2025



Men, There Is More to Life Men's Welcome Retreat November 7-8

Welcome.

Work. Family. Responsibilities. The constant demands of everyday life. It is easy to stay so busy taking care of what needs to be done that we rarely stop to ask the bigger questions: What matters most? What am I here for? Who is God calling me to be?

The St. Mark Men's Welcome Retreat is an invitation to step away for a weekend and give God some room to answer those questions. Led by men of our own parish, the weekend includes personal witness, fellowship, prayer, Mass and Adoration, with time to reflect on your faith, your relationships and the man God is calling you to become.

You do not need to be a "retreat guy." You do not need to know Scripture inside and out or feel like you have your faith life together. Come as you are. Whether you feel close to God, far away or somewhere in between, there is a place for you.

More than 400 men of St. Mark have already experienced a Welcome Retreat. Maybe this November, it is your turn.

Give God a weekend. You may be surprised by what He gives you in return.

November 7-8;
Space is limited.



REGNUM CHRISTI

A Night Out for the Men!

When: Sat., Oct. 3; 6 pm

Where: Monsignor Kerin Hall

Sometimes the best way to build a stronger parish is simply to get to know the guys sitting a few pews away.

All men of St. Mark are invited for a relaxed evening of good food, cold beer, football and fellowship. Come hang out with our priests and other men of the parish, catch the game, meet someone new and enjoy a night together.

Whether you've been involved in men's events for years or have never been to one before, this night is for you. Bring a friend, come hungry and stay as long as you can.

We'll also raffle off a few great prizes, so bring some cash and try your luck.

Good food. Good conversation. Good men. Come be part of it. Hosted by the men of Regnum Christi.

RSVP: Scan QR code

Contact: Joe Aiello, 419-787-4677,
atlanticpgm@gmail.com



Remember your compassion
and your mercy, O Lord

Psalm 25:6

Why Men Need Other Men

Faith was never meant to be lived alone. Men need other men who will encourage them, challenge them, laugh with them, pray with them and remind them what matters when life gets busy.

Between work, marriage, fatherhood and the responsibilities of everyday life, it can be surprisingly easy for men to become isolated.

Friendship often gets pushed to the bottom of the list.

But strong friendships with other Catholic men can help us become better husbands, fathers, friends and disciples of Christ.

At St. Mark, there isn't just one way to find that brotherhood. Men's Bible Study meets around Scripture, while the Men's Fellowship Group offers sharing and support for living Catholic values in today's world.

Exodus 90 builds brotherhood through prayer, sacrifice and weekly fellowship, and Be a Man encourages men to embrace their vocation and responsibilities.

Men also find fraternity through the Knights of Columbus, service opportunities and other parish ministries.

And sometimes it begins much more simply: showing up for dinner, watching a game, sharing a beer and getting to know another guy from the parish. The important thing is to begin.

Looking for a place to start?

The Men's Welcome Retreat, November 7-8, is an especially good opportunity. Take a look at the write-up the left and then scan the code and reserve your spot.

You don't have to join everything.

Just take the first step and show up.

Find a place to connect.

DAVIDSON COLLEGE Chaplains' Office
STALEY DISTINGUISHED CHRISTIAN LECTURE

FAITH, SPORTS, AND LEADERSHIP:

A Conversation with Coach Bob McKillop

October 7 @ 7 p.m.
Tyler-Tallman Recital Hall

Faith, Sports, and Leadership: A Conversation with Coach Bob McKillop

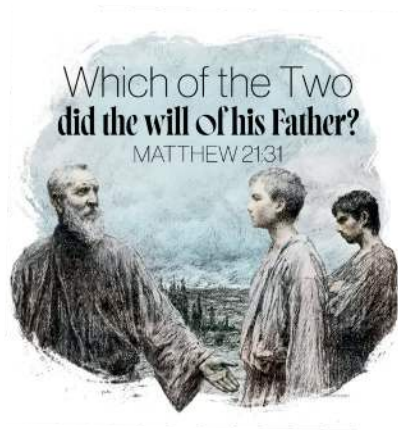
When: Wed., Oct. 7; 7 pm

Where: Davidson College Sloan Music Center Tyler-Tallman Recital Hall

Join Davidson College's Chaplains' Office for the Staley Distinguished Christian Lecture on Wednesday, October 7 at 7 pm in Tyler-Tallman Recital Hall.

Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame nominee and longtime Davidson basketball coach Bob McKillop will sit down with Chaplain Daniel Heath for a conversation about faith, sports and leadership. Drawing on more than three decades of coaching, McKillop will reflect on how faith has shaped the way he leads, cares for others, faces success and adversity, and understands the purpose of sports beyond wins and losses.

The event is free and no registration is required. For directions, enter "Sloan Music Center" in Waze. Parking is available along Concord Road, and the building is located directly on Concord Road.



Second Annual SK David Calabrese MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2026

Event Details
Cowan's Ford Golf Club,
761 Club Drive, Stanley, NC 28164
18-hole Captain's Choice with cart and lunch
Sign-in: 8:30 am
Shotgun start: 10:00 am
Registration: \$160 per player /
\$640 per foursome

Registration and Sponsorship Opportunities:

Contacts:
John Knight, 703.618.3779;
Rick Szafran, 704.564.2814;
Bill Pugh, 704.309.7466

Please pre-register and submit payment for players, teams, and sponsorships by scanning the QR code or visiting tournevents.com/kofcgolf.



Prayer and Praise Night

When: Tues., Sept. 29, Rosary starts at 7 pm; Prayer and Praise 7:30-8:30 pm
Where: In the church

Jesus said in Mathew 18:19-20: "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

All are invited to come to gather in Jesus' name and to ask Him for more of Himself in our lives and for healing. We have seen wonderful things happen as people receive prayer for healing.

Future dates: October 27 & November 24.

Contact: Fernando at 252-412-9978 (call or text)

Next Sunday: A Special Celebration of St. Francis of Assisi

This year, October 4 will be different.

The Church is marking the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi, one of the most beloved saints in Christian history. Francis died on October 3, 1226, and the following day, October 4, became his feast day.

In this extraordinary anniversary year, all Masses at St. Mark on Sunday, October 4, will celebrate the Solemnity of St. Francis of Assisi, with special prayers and Scripture readings for the occasion.

Instead of the readings normally heard on the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, we will hear readings chosen for St. Francis, including St. Paul's words to the Galatians, ***"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,"*** and Christ's invitation in Matthew's Gospel: ***"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."***

The anniversary has special meaning here in the Diocese of Charlotte, where our bishop, Bishop Michael Martin, OFM Conv., is himself a Franciscan friar.

The diocese is joining Franciscans and Catholics throughout the world in observing the Jubilee Year of St. Francis, remembering a saint whose radical love of Christ, humility, poverty and care for God's creation continue to speak to the Church 800 years later.

And Bring the Pets!

Our celebration begins a day early with one of St. Mark's favorite traditions. Bring your pets for the annual Blessing of the Animals on Saturday, October 3, following the 9 am Mass. Dogs, cats, birds and other safely contained family pets are welcome as we give thanks to God for the gift of His creation and celebrate the saint so closely associated with care for animals.



Blessing of Pets

When: Sat., Oct. 3; 9:30 am

Where: In front of church

Please join us with your finned, feathered and furry friends for a special Blessing of Pets as we celebrate the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

The tradition of blessing animals is closely associated with St. Francis, whose love for creation flowed from his deep love for God, the Creator of all things. For centuries, Christians have marked his feast by giving thanks for the animals in their care and asking God's blessing upon them.

Our pets can also hold a special place in our homes and families. They bring companionship, affection, joy and, sometimes when we need it most, comfort.

The blessing is an opportunity to thank God for these creatures entrusted to us and to remember our responsibility to care for His creation with kindness and respect.

"Praise be You my Lord with all Your creatures." — St. Francis of Assisi



Take a St. Francis Pilgrimage



Looking for a special way to celebrate the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi? The Catholic News Herald has created a St. Francis pilgrimage for his feast-day weekend, October 3–4, highlighting churches and other places throughout the Diocese of Charlotte with connections to the beloved saint.



For St. Mark parishioners, one stop has an especially familiar face. ***Our former Parochial Vicar, Fr. Alfonso Gamez, is now pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Lenoir.*** The parish, founded by Franciscan friars in 1932, will celebrate with Masses, processions, a parish festival and the opportunity to venerate relics of St. Francis.

The pilgrimage also includes St. Francis parishes in Mocksville, Franklin and Jefferson, as well as other Franciscan sites throughout the diocese. Several of the churches are designated pilgrimage sites where the faithful may obtain a plenary indulgence during this Jubilee Year under the usual conditions.

Find the complete pilgrimage guide in the Catholic News Herald or scan the QR code.



45+ Singles Fellowship Event

When: Sun., Sept. 27; 5-8 pm

Where: The Serve Pickleball + Kitchen
20220 Chartown Dr, Cornelius

Join us for an evening of fellowship and fun for those aged 45+! Whether you are a regular or a newcomer, we invite you to bring a friend and meet us for a great time of community. It's the perfect opportunity to connect and make new memories.

RSVP Today! let us know you're coming so we can plan for you.

Questions? Feel free to reach out to us at 45plussingles@gmail.com.

We look forward to seeing you there!



Healed and Restored: 4th Annual Hope for Healing Gala

When: Fri., Oct. 2; 7 pm

Where: St. Mark Parish Hall

Our mission: We assist women and girls who have experienced abuse, trauma, and exploitation in healing, rebuilding stability, and moving forward into thriving lives.

Join us for the 4th Annual Hope for Healing Gala on Friday, October 2 at 7 pm.

Come for a night of fellowship, cocktail hour, and hors d'oeuvres. Our keynote speaker is Christine Wisdom from Wisdom Integrated Counseling. Benefitting the women and girls served by Healed and Restored.

Cocktail attire is recommended. This is a free event to attend that's also a fundraising night, guests will be invited to make a financial gift to Healed and Restored

Scan the QR code below to register and reserve your seat. For more information visit our website at healedandrestored.org or email us at info@healedandrestored.org.



New Moms Connect

When: Wed., Sept. 30, 9:30 am

Where: North Meck Park

Are you a mom with a little one age 2 or under?

We'd love you to join us for a relaxed morning of connection, encouragement and community.

This new meet-up group is a wonderful way to get to know other young moms, share the joys and challenges of this season, and let the little ones enjoy some fresh air at the park.

We meet once a month at North Mecklenburg Park. Our next gathering will be Wednesday, Sept. 30 at 9:30 am. We hope you'll come and be part of this new community!

For more information, contact Hannah

Gordon: hannahigordon19@gmail.com

or click on the QR code to join the GroupMe.



At the name of Jesus every
knee should bend

Philippians 2:10



Young Adult Group

If you are 21 -39 and looking for ways to connect with other faithful, our Young Adult Group would love to have you join them. Activities include both group study and social events. This group may be especially helpful for those new to the parish or otherwise looking to build new friendships.

The October calendar is now available.

The best way to learn about upcoming events for this ministry is through their GroupMe.

Here you can find all events, chat with other members, make connections and find out about other things happening in the Diocese. Scan the code or go to:

https://groupme.com/join_group/87871689/ffPiyWbp.



Catholic Sports Ultimate Frisbee League

Catholic Sports is bringing Ultimate Frisbee to Charlotte this fall!

Young adults ages 18 and older are invited to join the 5v5 coed league. All skill levels are welcome.

Games will be played Sundays 4-7 pm, October 11 through November 22, at Providence Baptist Church in Charlotte.

Register with a team, a small group of four or fewer, or individually as a free agent. Register at catholicsports.net/charlotte-sports.

Questions? Contact Liz Kenney at elizabethmkenney@gmail.com

Interested in Learning How Fasting Can Become A Spiritual Practice That Brings You Closer To Christ?

Join St. Mark women for a Delay and Pray Study. Together, we will explore how to offer our fasting, sacrifices and struggles with food to God, learning tools for growing in both spiritual and physical freedom. Meetings will be held in a parishioner's home, space is limited.

Wednesdays, beginning October 7:30-8:30 pm for 6 weeks.

To register or learn more, contact: Camacho at annmariecamacho@gmail.com

Mary, Mother of Life

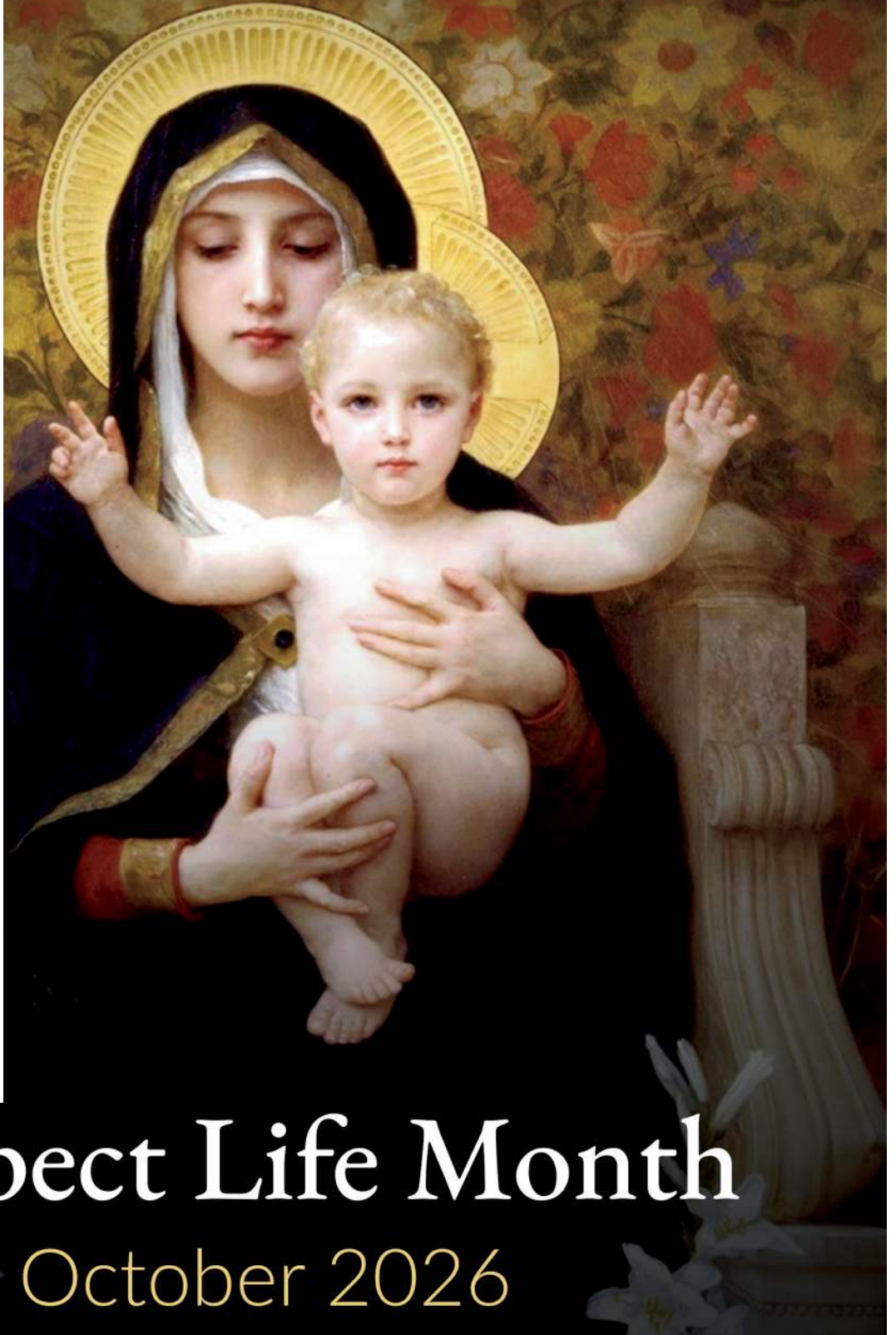
Respect Life Month: Prayer Put Into Action

Each October, Catholics throughout the United States celebrate Respect Life Month, a time to reflect more deeply on the dignity of every human life and our call to cherish and protect those who are most vulnerable, from the beginning of life to its end.

Here at St. Mark, October offers many ways to put that belief into action.

We can pray publicly for mothers and unborn children through 40 Days for Life and Life Chain, walk in support of our local pregnancy center, provide diapers and baby necessities to young families, donate coats and blankets to neighbors in need, give blood, or simply place a grocery gift card in the hands of someone struggling to make ends meet.

There is a place for everyone to help build a culture that recognizes the dignity of every human life.



Respect Life Month

October 2026

RESPECT LIFE IN ACTION AT ST. MARK

Stand With Us: Annual Life Chain Next Sunday!

When: Sun., Oct. 4; 2-3 pm

Where: Meet at Memorial for Life

On Respect Life Sunday, St. Mark will join Christians across the country for National Life Chain Sunday, an annual peaceful and prayerful public witness for life that began in 1987.

Participants simply stand along the roadway for one hour with signs and pray quietly for unborn children, their mothers and families, and for a greater respect for human life.

If you have never participated before, this is one of the simplest ways to begin. Meet at the Memorial for Life and then find a place along Stumptown Road. Signs will be provided in English and Spanish. Bring a Rosary, and feel free to bring a chair or umbrella.

You don't have to give a speech or know what to say. Just come and pray.



Community Blood Drive

When: Sun., Oct. 11; 8:30 am-1 pm

Where: St. Mark Parking Lot

St. Mark's Knights of Columbus are sponsoring with One Blood an October blood and platelet drive. One blood donation can save 3 lives.

All blood donated stays in the Charlotte area, saving local lives. Walk-ins are welcome or you can schedule an appointment directly with One Blood by scanning the code. Thank you to the Knights for their ongoing commitment to life.



oneblood
Share your power.

MiraVia 32nd Annual Fundraising Banquet

When: Sat., Oct. 24; 5:30-9 pm

Where: Charlotte Convention Center

Join MiraVia for its 32nd Annual Fundraising Banquet, "Where Love Gives Life," at the Charlotte Convention Center. This year's keynote address will be presented by the Sisters of Life, with Raymond Arroyo serving as guest emcee.

General registration is free and required and opens Monday, September 14 at noon. Individuals may reserve a seat or a table of 10. Registration closes September 30 at 5 pm or when seats are filled. Learn more and register at MiraVia.org/banquet.



Ongoing Grocery Gift Card Collection

We are running a little low on grocery gift cards used to help parishioners in need. Donations of \$25 ALDI and Food Lion gift cards are especially needed and may be left with the receptionist at the Welcome Desk in the Family Center.

Community Pregnancy Center of Lake Norman Walk for Life

When: Sat., Oct. 3; 8:30 am

Where: LangTree, Lake Norman

Join St. Mark's Walking with Moms in Need ministry for the Community Pregnancy Center of Lake Norman's 35th Annual Walk for Life at LangTree Lake Norman. Check-in begins at 8:30 am and the walk at 9:30 am. Participants may walk, form a team or support a fundraiser toward the Center's \$170,000 goal. Info: pregnancycenterfriends.org/walk/

Coat, Blanket, Toy & Baby Drive

When: Sat. & Sun., Oct. 10-11

Where: Parish Hall

Last year, the generosity of St. Mark parishioners helped provide coats to 749 men, women and children in need through our annual Coat, Blanket and Toy Drive.

Behind that number are hundreds of our neighbors who entered the colder months with something warm to wear because someone at St. Mark took the time to look through a closet, purchase a new coat or bring a donation to church.

This year, we hope to do it again, and we are expanding the collection to help some of our youngest neighbors, too.

In partnership with Walking with Moms in Need, we will also collect infant and toddler clothing and clean, gently used baby equipment for mothers and young families in our community.

The Coat, Blanket and Toy Drive will collect: coats in sizes infant through adult; blankets and comforters; toys, games, puzzles and books for children and teens; and bicycles.

The Baby Drive will collect: infant and toddler clothing, newborn through 5T, washed, stain-free and sorted by size; plastic toddler hangers; and clean, gently used baby equipment including Pack 'n Plays, strollers, high chairs, bassinets, bouncy seats and swings. Please, no shoes.

Please hold all donations until collection weekend, October 10 & 11. We are unable to accept items before then.

ADORATION

Meet Rebecca Spurgeon: Faith, the Eucharist and the Small “Yes” That Changed the Direction of Her Life



Rebecca Spurgeon recently joined St. Mark as our new Director of Faith Formation. As our parish gets to know her, Donna Fodale, St. Mark Adoration Coordinator, asked Rebecca to share something at the heart of her own Catholic faith: her love for Jesus in the Eucharist. Her answer is a beautiful testimony to what can happen when we simply show up and give God our “yes.”

Rebecca writes...

I recently asked our new Faith Formation Director, Rebecca Spurgeon, to share with us her love for the Eucharist. Her answer was too beautiful not to share. Thank you, Rebecca!

Rebecca writes...

I grew up Catholic, going to Mass every Sunday with my family. I knew what I was supposed to believe about the Eucharist. I learned in religion class that it is truly the Body and Blood of Jesus—but if I’m honest, I didn’t always live as though I believed it. Then COVID happened.

For the first time in my life, my family stopped going to Mass consistently. We watched Mass online, but something felt different. So much was missing from our lives during that time—friendships, community, school, work, family gatherings, and so much of our normal routine.

But there was something else missing, too. I could feel a deeper longing in my heart, even though I couldn’t quite name it.

A little over a year later, I was back at college and wanted to learn how to grow closer to the Lord. A missionary named Jayme challenged a group of us to attend daily Mass as often as we could, pray each day, and go to confession frequently.

I immediately thought of my grandma, who used to take me to daily Mass growing up. She would bribe me with McDonald’s breakfast afterward—and growing up in a big Catholic family that rarely ate out, that was all the motivation I needed! I had completely forgotten that daily Mass was even a possibility.

So that summer, I went home to Maryland and decided to give it a try. Through God’s grace, I started going to Mass almost every day. And somewhere along the way, something began to change.

The more time I spent with Jesus in the Eucharist, the more I began to realize that He wasn’t simply an idea I had learned about in religion class. He was truly present. He was inviting me into a relationship with Him. He is my beloved Father, and I am His beloved child—and you are, too.

I fell in love with Jesus in the Eucharist.

I began to desire confession, prayer, Scripture, good Catholic friendships, and time with the Lord. Eventually, I discovered Eucharistic Adoration. I would stop by the chapel before class or after practice, and before long, those quiet moments with Jesus became one of my favorite parts of the day.

And that is what I want to share with you: Jesus is worth showing up for.

My relationship with the Lord hasn’t always been easy or filled with good feelings. There have been plenty of dry seasons, distractions, and times when prayer felt difficult. But I’ve learned that I don’t have to pray perfectly or have my life together to have a relationship with God. I simply have to keep showing up and give Him the opportunity to meet me.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “If I find myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”

I think many of us know that feeling—a longing for something more. A desire for purpose. A desire to be known and loved.

What if that longing is pointing you toward Jesus?

He is waiting for you in the Eucharist.

If you have never been to daily Mass, start with one day. If you have never spent time in Eucharistic Adoration, stop by the chapel for five minutes. If you feel far from God, come anyway. If you don’t know what to pray, simply sit with Him. You don’t have to have everything figured out before you come.

For me, it all started with one small “yes” to showing up. That yes changed the direction of my life in ways I never could have imagined. It led me to a deeper love for the Eucharist, Scripture, prayer, and Catholic community, eventually to missionary work, and now to the joy of serving here at St. Mark’s.

But the point of my story isn’t what I have done. The point is what Jesus can do with a small yes. So, if you find yourself longing for something more, I invite you to come and see.

Go to Mass.

Spend time with Jesus in Adoration. Give Him your “yes.”

You may be surprised where He takes you.

Please consider signing up for a Holy Hour or becoming a sub. As Rebecca said, one small yes, can change the direction of your life in ways that you could never imagine.

Register at: www.stmarknc.org/adoration

TO BE A SUB PLEASE CONTACT
donna.fodale@stmarknc.org



YOUTH MINISTRY

High School Life Teen

All high school students are invited to join us for another exciting year of Life Teen!

Life Teen gathers on Sunday evenings after the 5 p.m. Mass for engaging talks, small-group discussions, games, prayer, fun and opportunities to build friendships. And dinner is always included!

Coming Up:

September 27: Color Games

Color Games is one of Life Teen's favorite nights of the year! High school students are divided into teams and compete in a series of colorful, messy and slightly crazy games designed for plenty of laughs and friendly competition. Come dressed in clothes and shoes that can get dirty, bring a friend and be ready for a great night of fun and fellowship with St. Mark Life Teen.

October 4: The Incarnation

October 11: Life in the Church

October 25: Harvest Festival for Middle & High School

Stay Connected! Sign up for Life Teen emails and texts through Flocknote. Scan the QR code or visit stmarknc.flocknote.com/lifeteen.



LIFE TEEN ANNUAL

COLOR GAMES

September 27
6-8 pm



Meet the Archangels!

Did you know that September 29 is the Feast of Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, the Archangels?

These three angels are each named in the Bible, and each was given an important mission from God.

St. Michael is the great defender. His name means "Who is like God?" In the Book of Revelation, Michael leads the angels in battle against evil. We ask St. Michael to protect us and help us have the courage to choose what is right.

St. Gabriel is God's messenger. He brought Mary the wonderful news that she would be the Mother of Jesus. Imagine being the angel chosen to deliver that message! Gabriel reminds us to listen for God's voice and to be ready to say "yes" to Him.

St. Raphael is the angel of healing. In the Book of Tobit, Raphael travels with a young man named Tobias, protects him on his journey and helps bring healing to his family. His name means "God heals."

Can You Find St. Michael?

The St. Michael picture on this page comes from a real stained-glass window right

here at St. Mark! The next time you are in church, see if you can find him.

Look closely at what St. Michael is holding and what is beneath his feet. How many details can you find in the real window that you see in the coloring page



And there is another angel celebration this week!

On October 2, the Church celebrates the Holy Guardian Angels.

God gives His angels the special job of watching over us and helping lead us toward Him. We can ask our guardian angels to protect us and help us make good choices every day.

Did you know there is a special prayer for your Guardian Angel?

You can pray it when you wake up, before you go to sleep, or anytime you are afraid or need help making a good choice.

A Prayer to My Guardian Angel

*Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide.*

Amen.

It's BACK! Come to our sixth round of this popular parish social event!

Wings and Trivia

Connect in Faith!

Saturday, October 17, 6:15-8:15 pm

Kerin Family Center Parish Hall

Bring your family... your friends... or just bring yourself and join in the fun! We will use the Kahoot app so teams need at least one charged mobile device.

Family trivia — *music, religion, sports, television & more* — will be played on your smartphone or join in with others and play as a team.



RSVP: Scan QR code or stmarknc.org/family-events



Save the Date...

Saturday, October 3

Men's Evening

Sunday, October 4

Prayer Chain for Life

October 10 & 11

Coat/Blanket/Toy & Baby Drive

Saturday, October 17

Blue Mass

Wings and Trivia

October 24-November 1

Thanksgiving Food Drive

Sunday, October 25

New Member Meet & Greet

Middle/High School Fall Fest

Monday, October 26

Concert in the Church

Sunday, November 1

All Saints Day

Monday, November 2

All Souls Day

Mass of Remembrance

November 7-8

Men's Welcome Retreat

Saturday, November 14

Marriage Date Night

Wed. November 18

Young at Heart Luncheon

Friday, November 20

Middle School Craft & Football

Tuesday, November 24

Prayer and Praise

Sunday, November 29

Advent Begins

St. Nicholas Breakfast

Saturday, December 5

Family Christmas Event

Tuesday, December 8

Immaculate Conception

Thursday, December 10

The Vigil Project

Saturday, December 12

Rorate Mass, Our Lady of

Guadalupe

December 15-23

Posadas

December 25

Christmas

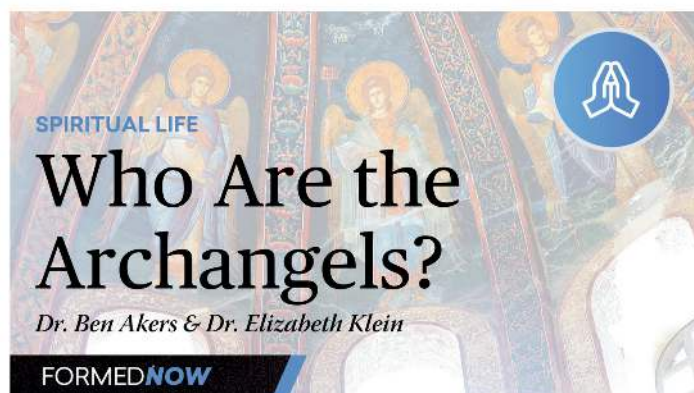
Wednesday, January 6

Young at Heart Luncheon

January 15-17

Marriage Retreat

formed
Forming Catholics for Life.



Who Are the Archangels?

Dr. Ben Akers and Dr. Elizabeth Klein discuss archangels and what role they have in our lives.

Our parish has a free Formed subscription for you! Simply scan the QR code or visit formed.org/signup to create your account and select our parish to get free access to this content and much more!



An offering from the AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE

Saint Mark Parish Directory

stmarknc.org | 14740 Stumptown Rd, Huntersville NC 28078
Parish Office | Mon-Thur 9 am-7:30 pm, Fri 9 am-4:30 pm
Sun 8:15 am-12:15 pm | Phone: 704-948-0231

Pastor

Very Rev. John T. Putnam, JV

Parochial Vicars

Rev. Kevin Martinez
Rev. Christopher Angermeyer
Rev. John Cuppett (in residence)

Deacons

Rev. Mr. Thomas Martin Rev.
Mr. Richard McCarron Rev.
Mr. Thomas McGahey Rev.
Mr. Tom McMahon Rev. Mr.
Louis Pais
Rev. Mr. Ramon Tapia

Director of Sacred Music

Manuel Mora
manuel.mora@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 130

Director of Finance

Richard Cataldo
richard.cataldo@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 116

Director of Parish Operations

Scott Bruno
scott.bruno@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 118

Liturgy Coordinator/Office Manager

Emily Bixler
emily.bixler@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 102

Sacristan

Sr. Mary Philomena
sacristan@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 211

Baptism Coordinator

Sr. Mary Jacinta
mjacinta@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 121

Sacrament Admin/Adoration

Donna Fodale
Donna.fodale@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 104

Annulments, OCIA

Rev. Mr. Rich McCarron
deacon.rich@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 113

Hispanic Ministry Coordinator

Emilio Gómez
emilio.gomez@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 117

Stewardship Coordinator

Karen Donahue
karen.donahue@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 136

Calendar Management

Sue Bruce
sue.bruce@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 123

Public Relations Coordinator

Amy Burger
amy.burger@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 155

Marriage Enrichment Coordinator

Christine Wisdom
christine.wisdom@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231

Director of Faith Formation

Becca Spurgeon
becca.spurgeon@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 137

Faith Formation Admin Asst

Sharon Torczynski
sharon.torczynski@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 103

Elementary Faith Formation

Coordinator
Maddie Torres
maddie.torres@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 124

Middle School Youth Ministry Coordinator

Olivia DiGiovanni
olivia.digiovanni@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 105

High School Youth Ministry Coordinator

Augustine Free
augustine.free@stmarknc.org
704-948-0231, Ext. 122

Tribunal Advocate

Rod Brostrom
rnbrostrom@rcdoc.org
Angelo Sedacca
aasedacca@rcdoc.org

Bulletin Team

bulletin@stmarknc.org

Mass Schedule

Mon/Tue/Thu: 7, 9 am
Wed: 7 am, 6:30 pm
Fri: 7, 9 am
7 pm (Spanish)
Sat: 9 am, 5 pm Vigil
Sun: 7:30, 9, 11 am, 1 pm (Español), 5 pm

All Masses may be watched live: stmarknc.org/livestream
Please use Online Giving or mail in your offertory
stmarknc.org/Online-Giving

Please do not attend Mass if you are sick, have a fever or are in a high-risk group.

Confessions

Confessions are held 45 minutes prior to the start of Mass for a 30 minute duration.

In addition, Wednesday: 6 pm – 7:15 pm and Saturday: 3 pm – 5 pm

Rosary in the Church

Tue: 7–7:30 pm
Wed: Immediately preceding 6:30 pm Mass
Sat: Immediately preceding 5 pm Mass Sun:
Immediately preceding 7:30 am Mass

Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration

Available in the Monsignor Bellow Adoration Chapel in the Family Center. See stmarknc.org/adoration for complete details.

Hospitalization

If you or your loved one are in an area hospital, call the Parish Office to reach one of the Priests. The Priests offer Confession, bring the Holy Eucharist to you or administer the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.

Baptisms & Weddings

The use of the Church for Baptisms, Weddings and other Sacramental events is available to active parishioners. Contact the Parish Office. (Please note that weddings and baptisms cannot be celebrated during Lent.)

Financial Counseling

Complimentary and confidential services are available to provide financial literacy training, personal financial coaching and/or advocacy support for you and your family. Contact the Parish Office.

Carolina Catholic Corner Gift & Book Store

Open daily in the Family Center

Coffee & Conversation Social Gathering

Tuesdays, 9:30 am, Parish Hall.

Cursillo

Visit www.CharlotteCursillo.com for information on upcoming retreat weekends, ultreyas and group reunions.

Natural Family Planning

Joe and Kathy Hack; Sympto-Thermal Method; 704-548-1834; hackhouse@bellsouth.net; ccli.org

Elisabeth Laskowski; Creighton Model;
creightonmodel@gmail.com; 484-332-9084

Crisis Pregnancy Help

Community Pregnancy Center of Lake Norman:
704-727-0535

Catholic Charities: 704-370-3262; Birthright:

704-975-8572; Post Abortion: 1-800-5-WE CARE

Poor prenatal diagnosis? You're not alone. There is help.
benotafraid.net

Taken Abortion Pill? It may not be too late: Abortion Pill

Reversal 877-558-0333 or abortionpillreversal.com

Parishioner Assistance

Financial:

St. Vincent De Paul Society:

Emily.Bixler@stmarknc.org

Life Crisis: Stephen Ministry

stmarknc.org/stephen-ministry

Food Insecurity:

Parish Office

stmarknc.org/assistance or

Emily.Bixler@stmarknc.org or

704-948-0231, Ext. 102

Al-Anon

Ellen | 704-907-8555

Alcoholics Anonymous

Tom | 704-604-7739

Alateen program

Paul G. | 704-641-0654

Divorce Support Group

For anyone going through separation and/or divorce. Meetings Monday 7 pm, Room 204. If parish offices are closed, meetings are at Lowe's Foods, exit 23.

Contact: divorce.support@stmarknc.org

DEL PÁRROCO



Como mayordomos cristianos, estamos llamados a un estándar alto y santo — vivir como discípulos de Cristo cada día y con cada persona que el Señor pone en nuestro camino. Pero podemos avanzar hacia este objetivo en "pequeños pasos".

Jesús demuestra esta verdad reconfortante a través de la parábola que cuenta en el Evangelio de hoy de Mateo. Es la historia de dos hijos cuyo padre les instruye a salir a trabajar en su viñedo ese día. Aunque el segundo hijo acepta la petición de su padre, no la cumple — no obedece la voluntad del padre. El primer hijo le dice a su padre: "no". ¡Al menos es honesto! Y al final, reconsidera y obedece a su padre.

La respuesta honesta y menos que perfecta del primogénito nos consuela a los administradores cristianos. ¿No nos hemos sentido todos así en momentos en que la voluntad de Dios para nosotros parece demasiado dura?

Podemos ser honestos con Dios en estos momentos. Al fin y al cabo, Él ya conoce nuestros pensamientos. Pero cuando seguimos comprometidos en una relación real con Él, aunque sea solo para decir: "No creo que pueda, Señor", Él nos proporcionará justo la gracia que necesitamos para cambiar de opinión y hacer lo que Él nos pide.

Incluso podemos dar un paso atrás de vez en cuando porque nuestro Padre es misericordioso y bondadoso. Lo importante es que sigamos avanzando con paso a poco, seguros de la gracia que necesitamos para imitar más de cerca las acciones y actitudes de Cristo. Esta es la belleza del modo de vida de la administración. ©Consultores de Administración Católica, 2026

Reflexión pastoral – En la *Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de los Dolores*, los otros sacerdotes, seminaristas y yo tuvimos la oportunidad de asistir a la Procesión Solemne Final de la Hermana María Lucía, DVM. Fue una experiencia emotiva y pensé que era una buena ocasión para reflexionar sobre la importancia de la vida religiosa en la vida parroquial y de la Iglesia.

Cada domingo nos reunimos como una sola familia: familias en los bancos, adultos solteros, niños, ancianos, diáconos, sacerdotes, seminaristas y, a menudo en silencio entre nosotros, hombres y mujeres que han entregado toda su vida a Dios mediante los votos de pobreza, castidad y obediencia. No son una capilla lateral de la Iglesia. Están en su corazón.

"La vida consagrada está en el mismo corazón de la Iglesia como elemento decisivo para su misión." —Papa San Juan Pablo II, *Vita Consecrata*

¿Qué significa eso para nosotros aquí en San Marcos? Significa que la Iglesia es más pobre—menos ella misma—cada vez que olvidamos a quienes lo han dejado todo para seguir a Cristo con un corazón indivisible. El bautismo ya consagra a todo cristiano. La vida consagrada es una respuesta adicional, pública y estable a esa misma gracia bautismal: una forma de hacer visible el rostro de Jesús—pobre, casto y obediente—en medio de una época que a menudo es inquieta, adquisitiva y autodirigida.

Una señal viviente del mundo que está por venir

El Catecismo enseña que quienes profesan los consejos evangélicos "significan y proclaman en la Iglesia la gloria del mundo venidero." En otras palabras, una hermana que no posee nada, un hermano que vive en comunidad, una contemplativa que reza durante la noche, una virgen consagrada viviendo en el mundo, una misionera que va donde nadie más irá — cada uno de ellos es un recordatorio vivo de que este mundo no es nuestro hogar final. Sus vidas predicán lo que nuestras palabras a veces solo insinúan: Dios es suficiente.

Ese testimonio no es un lujo. En una cultura que mide el valor por productividad, posesiones y autonomía personal, hombres y mujeres consagrados insisten en silencio en que el amor puede ser total, que la libertad se encuentra en el don y que la alegría no depende de tener más. Son, como dijo recientemente una religiosa, una especie de medicina para todo el Cuerpo de Cristo—Un antídoto contra nuestras fáciles concesiones con la comodidad y el control.

Muchas formas, un regalo

La vida consagrada no es un solo molde. Desde los primeros siglos ha habido eremitas y vírgenes, monjes y monjas, predicadores itinerantes y maestros, enfermeras y misioneros. Hoy la Iglesia reconoce institutos religiosos de vida contemplativa y apostólica, sociedades de vida apostólica, institutos seculares, vírgenes y viudas consagradas, y la vida eremítica. Algunos viven tras muros de claustro. Algunos emplean nuestras escuelas, hospitales y misiones. Algunos permanecen en lugares de trabajo ordinarios mientras pertenecen íntegramente a Cristo. Todos ellos existen para la santidad de toda la Iglesia.

La propia historia da testimonio de ello. La fe fue plantada y los pobres fueron atendidos en gran parte porque las familias religiosas se derramaron. Ese trabajo continúa. Cuando damos gracias a Dios por la educación católica, por el cuidado de los enfermos, por las horas tranquilas de adoración ofrecidas a las almas que nunca conoceremos, a menudo damos gracias a personas consagradas que quizá nunca veamos.

Lo que esto nos pide

Primero, gratitud. Si una religiosa te enseñó la fe, si un sacerdote de una orden religiosa escuchó tu confesión durante el retiro, si una comunidad contemplativa ha orado por esta parroquia, da gracias a Dios por ellos y, cuando puedas, agrádecéles.

Segundo, oración por las vocaciones. El Señor sigue llamando. Llama desde nuestras familias, nuestros grupos juveniles, nuestros campus universitarios y nuestros bancos de la escuela. Padres, no tengáis miedo si vuestro hijo o hija empieza a preocuparse por la vida religiosa. Esa pregunta no es una pérdida para la familia; puede ser uno de los mayores dones que una familia puede ofrecer a la Iglesia. Jóvenes: si la idea de entregarlo todo a Cristo no os deja en paz, no la asfijéis. Hablad con un sacerdote o con una persona consagrada en la que confiáis. La Iglesia necesita la diversidad y riqueza de estos carismas.

Tercero, nuestra propia fidelidad. La vida consagrada no reemplaza la vocación del matrimonio ni la vida de soltero en el mundo. Los ilumina. Los votos de pobreza, castidad y obediencia son una forma concentrada de lo que todo discípulo debe vivir en cierta medida: desapego, pureza de corazón y obediencia a la voluntad del Padre. Cuando los religiosos son fieles, toda la parroquia se fortalece. Cuando en los bancos somos fieles a nuestro propio estado de vida, honramos al mismo Señor al que sirven.

La Iglesia nunca estará sin este don, porque Cristo mismo es pobre, casto y obediente, y sigue atrayendo a hombres y mujeres a ese patrón de vida. Lo valoremos. Oremos por quienes lo viven. Y pidamos al Señor de la cosecha que envíe trabajadores—no solo sacerdotes, sino hermanas, hermanos y todos los que hagan visible Su modo de vida entre nosotros.

Damos gracias a Dios por el testimonio de las Hijas de la Virgen Madre que sirven aquí en San Marcos y por todos los religiosos de la Diócesis de Charlotte que dan testimonio de la belleza de la vida consagrada.

Próximos Eventos

Bendición de Mascotas

Sábado, 3 de octubre, 9:30 am

Frente a la iglesia

Misas en Honor a San Francisco de Asís

Domingo, 4 de octubre

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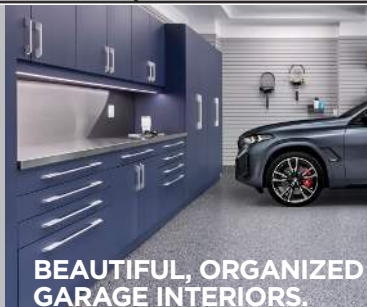
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