

The WINGED LION

SPRING 2025

Celebrating the Jubilee Year of Hope

By Rev. Dennis D. Aréchiga

In his wisdom, Pope Francis has called the universal Church to celebrate a Jubilee Year of Hope. Hope, along with faith and love, make up the three theological virtues. Hope has been defined in an article by the Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops as "Trust in God's promise... Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit." Faith and hope are closely intertwined since without faith in God, our lives would lose so much, if not all, of our meaning. Truly, the gift of our faith forms the foundation of our hope.

What are God's promises to us? In John's Gospel chapter 14 verse 6, Jesus tells us, "I am the way and the truth and the life." The direct Greek translation of the word way is "*odos*" or road. This scripture challenges us to only travel upon roads and journeys that keep us faithful to our discipleship in Christ. Whether we go to work, volunteer in a ministry, or visit someone in need, we are called to choose pathways that align with our values of faith.

The Word of God reveals the hidden truths of life. From sacred scripture we learn of how we were made in God's image and likeness, called to be baptized in the waters of new life, and to ponder on the riches of Jesus' parables and teachings. God promises that if we seek truth, God's wisdom will visit us and guide our steps. God's truth has the power to illuminate the darkness of sin and sets us free by enlightening us and guiding our conscience to know right from wrong.

Jesus promises to give us the gift of life. This includes the promise of eternal life. As a priest, I preside at so many funerals of men and women, young and old, some strong in their faith, and some perhaps lacking in their faith. One of the most common gospels used at funerals comes from the same section of John chapter 14 that precedes the verse we are contemplat-

ing, is the one in which Jesus tells his disciples that, "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be." (John 14:2-3) This beautiful passage portrays heaven as a mansion with many dwelling places including a room set aside for each one of us if we have faith and show charity to our neighbor. Passages such as these give us the hope of one day experiencing the gift of eternal life, but the Lord also wants to give us a fullness of life while in this world.

In the world we struggle with imperfection, hardships, and at times, division. Jesus promises to give us a peace that the world cannot give. It is his peace that can help us withstand the trials and crosses sent our way. Jesus does not promise to shield us from suffering and pain, but instead to help us embrace our own cross with the gift of hope. In the passage above from Romans, we hear that suffering gives us endurance, and endurance, proven character, and hope that does not disappoint.

In another section of the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul tells us that "if God is for us who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). He goes on to say nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, including persecution, or famine, or the sword (times of persecution and war). With our Good Shepherd at our side, we are never alone. As long as we remain tethered to God, we will find a strength that, as Isaiah says, make

the elderly find vigor and the young dream new dreams.

The quote listed in the first paragraph reminds us that hope calls us to not rely on our own strength, but on the Holy Spirit to give us the grace and strength that we need. What a relief that we don't have to rely only upon our own self as we search for hope, but instead, can receive the gift of hope from God above.

As we journey through this jubilee year, may we not let our own imperfections and worries over the lives of loved ones, problems in our world, or any other challenge bog us down so low that we act in ways of despair instead of in ways of hope. We don't have to carry our burdens alone; let us invite the Lord to help and guide us along the way, faithful to his many promises. Through prayerful listening and open hearts may we open ourselves to receive the graces only God can give in order to receive God's gift of hope.

Rev. Dennis D. Aréchiga, Pastor of St. Mark

— “

And not only that,
but we also boast in our sufferings,
knowing that suffering produces endurance,
and endurance produces character,
and hope does not disappoint us,
because God's love has been poured into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Romans 5:3-5

” —

Pastoral Council, Two Years Strong

By Steven Treu

Now two years strong, your St. Mark Pastoral Council has kept busy. In the last twelve months we have accomplished the following:

- Completed the first parish-wide selection of four new council members through nominations, a lengthy discerned evaluation, early voting procedures, and a final parishioner election.
- Researched and formulated the development of additional young family ministries at St. Mark.
- Monitored and helped grow our St. Mark young adult ministry.
- Researched and helped develop new St. Mark marriage support ministries.
- Gathered and formulated ideas to better gather and store parishioner data.
- Began discernment over (1) a possible Building and Grounds Committee, (2) parish poll on

needs and/or concerns, (3) joint work with Pastoral Councils in our deanery, (4) adding a parishioner comment segment to our monthly meetings, and (5) enhancing our ministry fairs and parish fair.

- Recruited a St. Mark high school student to report to the Council on youth activities, developments, and needs.
- Hosted the Archdiocese deanery-wide training session for Pastoral Councils.
- Presented Stewardship Weekend pulpit talks.
- Presented Archbishop Appeal pulpit talks.
- Planned and organized a Pastoral Council yearly retreat.
- Reviewed and analyzed various Vatican documents regarding formation and functioning of Pastoral Councils.
- Formulated ideas to better gather and store parish data. We have

begun to implement this and have uploaded all Pastoral Council records onto the St. Mark server.

- Continued discernment on how to better attract young families to our Church.
- Held monthly meetings, except during the months of July, August, and December.
- Reviewed regularly and assessed parish activities, staff updates, deanery activity, ministry reports, and Archdiocesan developments.

We look forward to continued discernment and productivity toward enhancing our Church in the Jubilee Year 2025, themed *Pilgrims of Hope*. We always invite and encourage sharing your comments and ideas with any of our Pastoral Council members. God bless each of you and our greater Church.

Steven Treu is the St. Mark Pastoral Council chair.



St. Mark Pastoral Council Members, pictured from left to right: (bottom row) Gary Richmond, Diana Palacios, LaVerne Dysart, Mercedes Ramirez, Barbara James (Secretary), Rose Griffith, and Jennifer Tollette; (top row) Steven Treu (Chair), Tony Morgan, Fr. Dennis Arechiga, Paul Kienlen, and Michael Bossaller (Vice-Chair).

Introducing: Into the Deep, a St. Mark Vocation Ministry

By Megan Byers

Fr. Ian Robbins, a former parishioner of St. Mark, now priest at St. Mary's in Frederickburg, went to summer camp with our teens in August 2023. During one of our conversations, he shared with me that he was the only religious vocation to come from St. Mark from our generation of youth that attended Life Teen. "You're lying," I replied. "There is no way that is true, our youth group was massive." We then listed anyone we knew that went to seminary or discerned religious life for a while, but each one decided not to continue, and most of them are now married, except for Fr. Ian. However, there is now someone in formation with the Servants of Christ Jesus in Denver, Colorado and a few other men in our parish community discerning the priesthood. Praise God!



This conversation really ignited a fire within me. As the youth minister of our parish, I feel a deep responsibility to help teens discern their future and make a vocation to the priesthood or religious life not seem so terrifying. As a teen I remember participating in a Vocation Night. We watched this epic video that portrayed the heroic virtue of priests. Then an elderly religious sister was given the microphone and said a few words. I distinctly remember the sheepish phrase, "We have fun."

It wasn't until I was shown an equally epic short film in college about religious sisters, showcasing *their* heroic virtue that I began to realize the beauty of the vocation. There were always visiting members of religious orders or Vocation Directors around St. Mary's Catholic Center. The SEEK Conference hosted by Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) also helped my understanding of religious vocations and helped me connect with many religious orders because they were invited to attend, give talks, and pray alongside us.



Giving young people an opportunity to witness priests, brothers, or sisters enjoying activities that the youth love helps them begin to imagine their life as a professed religious person. Based on my experiences working at a summer camp, I truly believe there is no better way to promote vocations than for a teen to see a sister go white water rafting or a priest dive into a mud pit. Exposure is crucial for a teenager and young adult discerning their vocation!

In order to do that at our own parish, in 2024 we hosted

"Called to Love" a Vocation Night for youth ministry. I worked with the Archdiocesan Vocation Office to invite members of religious communities from the San Antonio area to come, be a representative of their order, and be present to the teens. Among our guests we had representatives of the Archdiocese, 6 religious communities, and almost every religious vocation or stage of discernment: Sisters, Seminarists, a transitional Deacon (who is now an ordained priest), our pastor Fr. Dennis, and Bishop Gary Janak. You should have seen the teens' reactions to Sister Sydney and Sister Bernadette from the Salesians playing basketball! We hosted this event again in February 2025.



All of what I have shared so far is my own personal story about why I am involved in the vocation ministry at St. Mark. I can't

speak for each member, but I can share our common mission:

Guided by our love of the Catholic faith and by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, St. Mark's Vocation Ministry will follow Christ's call to cast our nets "Into the Deep". By inspiring parishioners to cultivate and nurture vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, religious life and sacramental marriage, we seek to be "fishers of men".

The goal of Into the Deep is to spread awareness about vocations, provide support to those discerning their vocation, and create a culture at St. Mark that prays for vocations. Our parish is large; statistically, we should have more people becoming priests, deacons, and professed religious than we do. If we aren't talking about it or praying for the members of our community who have a calling to religious life, then how will they know to discern that calling for themselves?

Our guiding scripture for Into the Deep is from Luke's Gospel (Lk 5:1-11) when Jesus calls Simon, James, and John to be his disciples. *"Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."* The use of the phrase "fishers of men" in our mission statement comes from the same story but in Mark's Gospel. Our intention is not to exclude women, but to use a

phrase Jesus speaks in scripture about following Him and becoming His disciples. This can be achieved through any vocation, by both men and women, as we are all called to holiness! Let us pray that each member of our parish listens to this call and responds joyfully.

Megan Byers is the coordinator of middle school and high school youth ministry at St. Mark.

Visit us at stmarkevangelist.com/into-the-deep or use the QR code to sign up for our Traveling Chalice and pray for vocations!



Traveling Chalice in the 1st family's home.

A Year in Review: Grateful for our Stewardship

By Rev. Dennis D. Aréchiga

Stewardship calls us to sustain the life of our community of faith and its mission to evangelize all peoples by sharing our faith with others. Since my first two years at St. Mark the Evangelist Parish, I have been impressed by the generosity of our parishioners, ministries and organizations. In this newsletter, we are enclosing the annual general financials for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, which runs from July 1st through June 30th.

We are blessed in that both our weekend attendance and collections have risen over the past two years. When I first arrived in the summer of 2022, we were still coming out of the pandemic. When we were invited to come back in person for liturgies, it was not a wave but a trickle of parishioners returning. Attendance at weekly Masses has gone up from about 1,800 in the summer of 2022 to about 2,200 in 2023 and 2,400 in 2024. Attendance always dips in the summer to due travel and for other reasons, but September is a good barometer of where our attendance will be for the rest of the year. In the first Sunday of September we had 2,730 attending our six weekend Masses! Over 700 persons attending our 10 a.m. Mass which is the best attended, usually followed in order of higher attendance, by the Sunday 12 p.m., Saturday 5 p.m., Sunday 5 p.m., Sunday 8 a.m., and 2 p.m. Spanish Mass. The Spanish Mass has gone from about 180 persons to now over 300 persons a Sunday within the past two years.

As you can see, our collections have also risen. Unfortunately, so have our expenses. We were shocked last year to learn of our insurance premium rising over 35% in one year! Every month we pay slightly over \$22,000 to insure our property's 14 buildings. We have also had to replace several outdated air conditioner units. The buildings on our property have aged, and there

are innumerable maintenance repairs needed.

One budget item that stands out is "Repairs and Maintenance" at \$255,705 over budget. Part of this number being high included the many repairs mentioned above, but mostly the cost of remodeling of the rectory which was completed in February of 2024. The rectory remodel involved enclosing the upstairs loft to provide privacy to the bedroom located on the second floor, replacing the spiral staircase with a new traditional staircase, and remodeling two small bedrooms to become a new bathroom and office that flow from the downstairs bedroom. We are now ready to

under the title of "debt relief", so that we can continue to pay down the debt without accessing our operational or savings accounts. We do have a second collection every month, usually on the 4th Sunday of the month, for this purpose. Any discretionary funds you may have that could be directed to this account would be greatly appreciated!

We thank you, our faithful parishioners, for your generous support of our parish. We also thank the Women's Guild and Knights of Columbus for making large contributions to the rectory repair. The Women's Guild also paid for new AC units in Shalom, Building 9, and for other parish projects.

Truly, whatever donations you make for their Trash and Treasure and Book and CD Sales end up coming back to the enhance our parish and sustain its needs.


On the pastoral side, we recently reintroduced Sponsor Couples that will journey with all of our couples preparing for marriage. Our Young Adults had over 25 persons at one of our recent events. We hope to become engaged in a marriage retreat movement soon. For Spanish speakers, we are beginning two new

gatherings for adult faith formation. The numbers of those enrolled in faith formation, O.C.I.A., and Adult Confirmation classes continue to rise, and our St. Mark's Catholic Preschool continues to flourish with strong enrollment as well.

Please pray that our parish and school may continue to fulfill its mission as last Fall we celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the founding of our Diocese of San Antonio. Once again, thank you for your support to our parish.

In Christ,

Fr. Dennis D. Aréchiga
Pastor of St. Mark



Those who confer
benefits will be
amply enriched,
and they who
refresh others
will themselves
be refreshed."

Proverbs 11:25

house an additional priest if and when one is assigned to us.

Regarding our debt, we are pleased to share that as of September 2024 the total owed on our West Campus Debt is \$609,348! Every month we make a payment of \$15,118.21 of which approximately \$13,200 goes towards principal. God willing, the loan will be paid off in February of 2028. We do not take monies from our operating account or savings or CD's to pay this debt; it comes from the Capital Campaign Account, which had a balance of \$50,328 as of August 2024. Since the monies in this designated account will soon expire without an additional cash infusion, we encourage parishioners to consider making a separate donation to this fund,

Blessings in Fiscal Year 2024

FY 2024 INCOME STATEMENT

FY 2024 INCOME

ITEM	BUDGET	ACTUAL	DIFF
COLLECTIONS (SUNDAY & HOLY DAYS)	\$2,400,000	\$2,489,485	\$89,485
OTHER INCOME	\$389,084	\$578,652	\$189,568
FAITH FORMATION	\$142,986	\$130,103	(\$12,883)
YOUTH MINISTRY	\$87,500	\$38,392	(\$49,108)
RENTAL INCOME	\$49,000	\$24,886	(\$24,114)
TOTALS	\$3,068,570	\$3,261,518	\$192,948

FY 2024 EXPENSES

ITEM	BUDGET	ACTUAL	DIFF
ARCHDIOCESE ASSESSMENT (12% OF INCOME)	\$325,824	\$298,672	\$27,152
PROPERTY INSURANCE	\$183,000	\$258,532	(\$75,532)
UTILITIES	\$207,400	\$208,922	(\$1,522)
REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE	\$288,900	\$544,605	(\$255,705) *
PHYSICAL PLANT	\$325,920	\$272,315	\$53,605
PASTORAL/ADMINISTRATION	\$655,464	\$574,283	\$81,181
FAITH FORMATION	\$142,986	\$130,103	\$12,883
YOUTH MINISTRY	\$173,457	\$141,903	\$31,554
LITURGY/MUSIC	\$346,306	\$270,730	\$75,576
INTEREST EXPENSE (CAPITAL CAMPAIGN)	\$31,427	\$26,028	\$5,399
TOTALS	\$2,680,684	\$2,726,093	(\$45,409)

*Variance due to remodeling the Rectory for 2 Priests

TOTAL NET INCOME/(LOSS) \$147,539

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Savings Account SMECC (As of June 30, 2024)	\$161,084
Savings Account SMCP (As of June 30, 2024)	\$15,694
Catholic Community Endowment	\$121,290

West Campus Capital Campaign

Campaign Income	\$137,910
Paid on Loan	\$155,336
Campaign Reserve Fund	\$50,328
West Campus Loan Balance	\$649,024

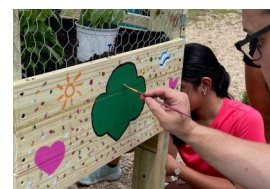
PRESCHOOL	
INCOME	\$483,822
EXPENSE	\$447,348
NET INCOME/(LOSS)	\$36,474

CYO	
INCOME	\$173,408
EXPENSE	\$165,579
NET INCOME/(LOSS)	\$7,829



Speaking of blessings, we start our first annual Spanish Mission, Misión Cuaresmal en Español, this year! Join us on April 5 from 9am to 3pm in Shalom.

Girl Scouts Aim for Silver, Take TLF Gold



By Ana Balboa

Four of our girl scout troop ladies finished a very special project for Traveling Loaves & Fishes, Inc. (TLF) as part of their Silver Take Action project. The girls found out that TLF did not have easy access to fresh herbs for the meals they prepare. They met with the TLF kitchen manager and came up with a plan to

build an herb garden.

The girls met for several days over the summer to build and install the planter with a solar-powered irrigation system. The planter also has a water collection basin to collect rainwater. However, in the event that there is no rain, the basin can be manually filled to ensure the planter is getting water regularly. The

design is intended to require minimal maintenance and to be sustainable.

The planter is installed on the west campus in the fenced-off area next to the gym. We hope that TLF can harvest fresh herbs from the planter for the delicious meals they prepare.

Ana Balboa is the leader of Girl Scout Troop 2346 at St. Mark.

A Royal Start to Fiesta for Preschool

By Melanie Rutkoski

Students, parents, and staff members of St. Mark Catholic Preschool had a wonderful time with Rey Feo LXXVI and his Royal Court on March 7th. During the well-attended assembly, King Fabian Castillo, Sr., shared his "Blueprint for Success" reminding us to follow our dreams and to never give up! Every student deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Ultimately, great blessings come when loving parents and passionate teachers work together to promote

and celebrate faith and education throughout each child's journey. So, let's throw some confetti as St. Mark Catholic Preschool continues to celebrate this 45th year together! Please contact the Preschool Office to learn more about the offerings of St. Mark Catholic Preschool, (210) 494-9282.

Melanie Rutkoski is the St. Mark Catholic Preschool director.

Right: El Rey Feo LXXVI, Fabian Castillo, Sr., visits with the preschool.



Studying the Way, a New Bible Study Ministry

By Tony Morgan

Our parish is blessed with a rich love of studying God's Word through various Bible study ministries. The new Studying the Way Bible study hopes to complement this wonderful tradition through the talents of Gail Dereszewski.

Gail, a long-time parishioner and very experienced Bible study instructor, holds a Master of Theology degree from St. Mary's University. She has many years of experience in pastoral ministry as a pastoral associate, director of the Rite of Christian Initiation (now called the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults or OCIA), spiritual director as well as many other qualifications. Gail is also currently one of St. Mark's spiritual directors. Her passion for sharing how God has been present in her life and her love of God's Word has created a strong desire to serve the people of St. Mark through this new ministry.

Studying the Way will meet on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 pm beginning in September 2025. Our first study, a 25-week deep dive on the Book of Isaiah, will feature a large group format led by Gail followed by small



group breakout sessions facilitated by our dedicated team of table leaders. Weekly instructor-authored commentaries and the Ignatius Catholic Bible Study Isaiah commentary by renowned Bible teachers Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch will be included. Registration for this study will take

place this summer, so please keep an eye out for bulletin announcements with specific dates.

Studying the Way is excited to become part of the rich Bible study tradition

at St. Mark, and we hope you will prayerfully consider joining our ministry. We humbly offer you this encouragement from Romans 15:4-6, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Tony Morgan is a small group table leader for Studying the Way.

UPCOMING EVENTS

APR

5

Spanish Mission
9AM

APR

13

Holy Week Begins

APR

17

Last Supper & Adoration
6PM - MIDNIGHT

APR

18

Good Friday services
begin at 3PM

APR

19

Easter Egg Hunt 9AM
Easter Vigil Mass
8:30PM

MAY

27

Fr. Dennis' 25th
Anniversary of
Ordination

SAVE THE DATES

May 28 - Celebration for Fr. Dennis' 25th Anniversary of Ordination

July 21 - VBS 2025 begins

St. Mark Parish Communications Updates

Our parish utilizes several mediums for ministries, our pastoral staff, leaders, and organizations to communicate important messages. Our parish is growing, our ministries are thriving, and our communications processes have needed an update!

We are excited to share our new communications guidelines and 2025 Newsletter Publication Schedule is now available and was sent to ministry leaders in March. If you haven't received it, please reach out to us to make sure ministry news and messages get out to the people of our parish.

We'd like to emphasize our new email address below as the new contact for all St. Mark ministry communications needs. This email will reach the new team within our staff dedicated to communicating what's happening in and around our community.

Gratefully,
Your New St. Mark Communications Team
Sarah Tarrillion, Monica Frederick, & Laura Boren

COMMUNICATIONS@STMARKEVANGELIST.COM

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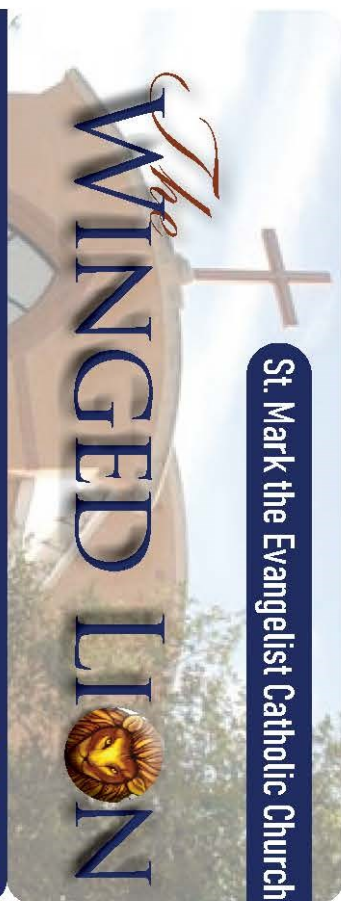
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COMING SOON

PLEASE STAY TUNED
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The Winged Lion Publication Policy

St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church reserves the right to publish article submissions and edit all submissions for form and content.



St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church

Pastor: Rev. Dennis Aréchiga

SPRING 2025

Mass Schedule

Saturday 5:00 pm
Sunday 8:00am,

10:00 am (Livestreamed)
12 Noon 2:00 pm (Spanish)
5:00 pm

Monday 8:15 am

Tuesday 8:15 am
Wednesday 8:15 am,

6:00 pm (Day Chapel)
Thursday 8:15 am
Friday 8:15 am

First Saturday Mass 9:30 am
Holy Days 8:15am, 12pm & 6pm

Eve of Holy Day 6pm

Reconciliation

Wednesday 5pm - 5:50pm
Saturday 3:30-5pm
or by appointment

Adoration

Tuesday-Thursday, 9am-4:45pm

Our mission:
TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS
OF JESUS CHRIST TO ALL GOD'S
PEOPLE BY WORD AND ACTION.

He said to them, "Go into the whole world and
proclaim the gospel to every creature..."

Mark 16:15



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