



ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST CATHOLIC CHURCH

THE WINGED LION

♦ COMMUNITY NEWS

In this edition
you can expect:

**Answer the
Call: OCIA**

pg. 2

**Getting to
Know Fr. Albert**

pg. 3

**Volunteer
Heroes**

pg. 5

**Fiscal Year End
2025**

pg. 6

**Summer Bears
Fruit for YM**

pg. 7

Welcome, Liz

pg. 8

FALL 2025 EDITION



Answer the Call: Become a Sponsor for OCIA (fka RCIA) at St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church

By Allen Shreffler

Have you ever felt called to share your Catholic faith with others? The OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) program at St. Mark is seeking practicing Catholics who are willing to serve as sponsors for individuals preparing to become members of the Catholic Church. Catholic sponsorship is more than a title—it's a ministry of faith, friendship, and witness. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that sponsors are to be "firm believers, able and ready to help the candidates on the road of Christian life" (CCC 1255). Sponsors accompany candidates or catechumens through their journey of learning, conversion, and initiation into the Church.

In Scripture, we find beautiful examples of sponsorship and accompaniment. Think of Barnabas in the Acts of the Apostles, who stood alongside Paul, encouraging him and introducing him to the Christian community (Acts 9:26-27). Like Barnabas, sponsors today provide encouragement, spiritual support, and practical guidance to those seeking Christ and His Church.

Drawing from Guide for Sponsors (4th Edition) by Ronald J. Lewinski, we are reminded that sponsors are not expected to be theologians or experts in Church doctrine. What matters most is being a person of faith who is willing to listen, share, and walk with another person in their journey toward full initiation in the Catholic Church. Lewinski encourages sponsors to "share their own faith story, struggles, and joys in living as a Catholic."

As a sponsor at St. Mark's, you will have the opportunity to stand with your candidate during important liturgical moments, including the Rite

of Acceptance, Scrutinies, and ultimately the Easter Vigil, when they receive the Sacraments of Initiation.

This commitment extends beyond the sacraments. The Church reminds us that faith is a lifelong journey lived within the Christian community. Your continued friendship and encouragement can help nurture and sustain a new Catholic's faith well after they are received into the Church.

If you are a fully initiated, practicing Catholic in good standing, and you feel called to share your faith with someone seeking to become Catholic, please consider serving as a sponsor.

For more information or to volunteer, please contact the OCIA Team at St. Mark, or call the parish office at 210-494-1606 and ask for John Farrell.

As St. Paul reminds us: *"Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."* – 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Allen Shreffler is a St. Mark OCIA team member.





Sitting Down with Fr. Albert Toangutu Tomeka: Our New Parochial Vicar

By Fr. Dennis Aréchiga

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

The Beatitudes are Fr. Albert's favorite scripture, especially Matthew 5:9.

On July the 1st, our parish received a special blessing when Fr. Albert Toangutu Tomeka began ministering as our Parochial Vicar. Since Albert is new, I thought I'd conduct an "interview" with my new roommate and associate so that we can all get to know him better.

Fr. D.: Are you a diocesan or a religious order priest?

Fr. ATT: I am a diocesan priest for the diocese of Budjala in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, D.R.C.

Fr. D.: There are two African nations with the name Congo, are you part of the much larger one?

Fr. ATT: Yes, the one named "The Democratic Republic of the Congo," not the one named

"Congo Brazaville."

Fr. D.: How did you arrive here?

Fr. ATT: Fr. Jim Fischler, C.I.C.M., who was our former Vicar for Clergy, knew the bishop of Budjala, and on behalf of our Archbishop, Fr. Jim asked if their diocese could provide priests for San Antonio. Fr. Jean Baptiste Magbia Zabusu, who was formerly the Pastor of St. John the Evangelist here, was the first priest to come from Budjala. Archbishop Gustavo asked if they could send more priests, and I and Fr. Don were sent here.

Fr. D.: Did you speak English at the time that you were asked to come here?

Fr. ATT: No, I speak French and a couple of other national languages from my country, so I told my bishop I would not come unless I would be sent to study English first.

Fr. D.: Where did that happen?

Fr. ATT: I was sent to a language school in Nairobi, Kenya, for six months. Unfortunately, COVID hit, and I was not able to come here.

Fr. D.: So, what did you do?

Fr. ATT: I went back to Kinshasa, the capital city of the D.R.C., and was appointed to minister in a parish there, St. Kizito. I was there for three years.

Fr. D.: When did you come, and where did you arrive?

Fr. ATT: I came in December of 2021, and for a month, I stayed in the rectory at St. John the Evangelist Parish with Fr. Jean Baptiste.

Fr. D.: What were your first impressions of the United States?

Fr. ATT: It was cold because I came during winter, and I quickly got sick because of the cold weather! For two weeks, I couldn't leave the rectory. The food is very different here, and I experienced culture shock! Everything was very different.

Fr. D.: Then what happened?

Fr. ATT: I was assigned as a Parochial Vicar to St. Peter and Paul Parish in New Braunfels, where I worked for over a year.

Fr. D.: Why did you get transferred from that parish?

Fr. ATT: I learned how to pronounce Spanish and began



But wait... there's more!

Birthday:

March 3, 1978

Tea or Coffee?

Tea! I do not like coffee.

Salty or Sweet?

Neither!

Summer or Winter?

Winter

Favorite Foods:

Seafood & Vegetables

Favorite Snacks:

Nuts & Bananas

Favorite Prayer:

St. Michael the Archangel

Favorite Color:

Green, because it is the symbol of life, hope, & fruitfulness. I want my priestly ministry to be fruitful, hopeful, & alive.

Why St. Alphonsus?

Because he aligned his will with God's will, like Mary. They both aligned their wills. I want us to align our will with God's will, no matter what.

Why the Beatitudes?

The Beatitudes give us the roadmap to Heaven.

presiding at their Spanish Mass. Then, Spanish-speaking parishioners wanted to have appointments with me, but I could not communicate. I wanted to be able to minister to them, so I asked the Archdiocese to send me to a parish where I could be immersed in Spanish.

Fr. D: So that's how you ended up at St. Joseph's Parish in Del Rio?

Fr. ATT: Yes. I also ministered at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish there.

Fr. D: Did you learn Spanish, and did you enjoy living on the border?

Fr. ATT: Yes, I did, and if I could, I would live in Del Rio for 200 years!

Fr. D: Well, considering life expectancy, we'll see what happens!

Fr. D: Entonces si hablas español?

Fr. ATT: Si, por su puesto!

Fr. D: Okay, so how do you like Texas?

Fr. ATT: The people are very welcoming, loving, and friendly, but the weather is unfriendly and oppressive!

Fr. D: Would it get this hot where you are from?

Fr. ATT: No, we usually had temperatures not higher than 78 in my area!

Fr. D: So sorry! Well, tell me about your family.

Fr. ATT: I have five siblings, three brothers and two sisters. I am the oldest of the children. My mother's name is Therese, and she worked in a pre-kindergarten. She gets so excited when I visit home that she still wants me to sit on her lap, even though I'm very tall! My father's name is Pierre, and he was a primary school teacher. Unfortunately, he died this past February the 14th, which is also the day of my priestly ordination that took place in 2010, on Valentine's Day.

Fr. D: I'm sorry you were not able to go to your father's funeral. I know your upcoming visit home this November 4th will be an important time for you to be with your mother and family.

Fr. ATT: Yes, I am looking forward to going home.

Fr. D: What does your trip look like?

Fr. ATT: Well, I will fly to Washington, D.C., then to Brussels, Belgium, then to the

largest city in the Congo, Kinshasa. From there, I will take a 1-hour and 20-minute plane ride within the Congo, and then have to hop on a motorcycle, since the roads are at times impassable by car, for two hours to get to my hometown, Gbosasa.

Fr. D: Wow, a motorcycle! You and Deacon Gil will have that in common!

Fr. ATT: Yes, I will ask a relative of mine to accompany me.

Fr. D: We will be praying for your safe arrival!

Fr. ATT: Thank you!

Fr. D: Can you tell me about your hobbies?

Fr. ATT: I like watching soccer and used to play soccer but stopped playing due to knee problems. I like fishing and gardening. I liked fishing in Lake Amistad in Del Rio.

Fr. D: And you are my new guitar student too!

Fr. ATT: Yes, I want to learn the guitar.

Fr. D: Well, don't forget to practice.

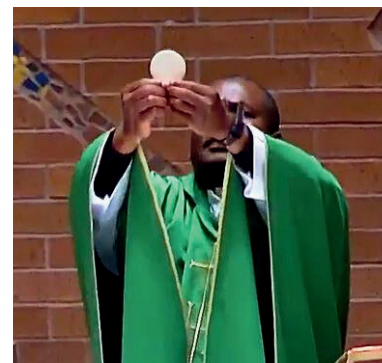
Fr. D: Who is your favorite saint and why?

Fr. ATT: St. Alphonsus of Liguori is my favorite saint because of his devotion to our Blessed Mother Mary. I also have a strong devotion to Mary.

Fr. D: Is there anything you want to say to your new parishioners here at St. Mark's?

Fr. ATT: Looking for God, encountering God, loving and serving God is my philosophy. We cannot serve God if we don't love Him. We cannot love God if we have not encountered Him. We cannot encounter God unless we search for God.

Fr. D: Thanks, Fr. Albert. We are so blessed to have you here with us!



From Volunteers to Heroes



On June 8th, the Knights of Columbus Council 7613 hosted a blood drive benefitting South Texas Blood & Tissue. Many volunteers answered the call to donate.

Our blood donor heroes gave a total of 32 units of blood and impacted a whopping 96 lives!

Thank you, heroes!



Annual Fiscal Year-End Reporting

FYE 2025 INCOME STATEMENT

FYE 2025 INCOME

ITEM	BUDGET	ACTUAL	DIFF
COLLECTIONS (SUNDAY & HOLY DAYS)	\$2,481,000	\$2,648,184	\$167,184
OTHER INCOME	\$389,084	\$578,652	\$189,568
FAITH FORMATION	\$38,850	\$26,534	(\$12,316)
YOUTH MINISTRY	\$65,000	\$35,246	(\$29,754)
RENTAL INCOME	\$20,000	\$12,667	(\$7,333)
TOTALS	\$2,993,934	\$3,301,283	\$307,349

FYE 2025 EXPENSES

ITEM	BUDGET	ACTUAL	DIFF
ARCHDIOCESE ASSESSMENT (12% OF INCOME)	\$356,964	\$386,711	(\$29,747)
PROPERTY INSURANCE	\$262,608	\$262,608	\$0
UTILITIES	\$202,000	\$256,416	(\$54,416)
REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE	\$192,000	\$353,265	(\$161,265) *
PHYSICAL PLANT	\$395,679	\$298,697	\$96,982
PASTORAL/ADMINISTRATION	\$787,080	\$531,652	\$255,428
FAITH FORMATION	\$160,712	\$137,158	\$23,554
YOUTH MINISTRY	\$166,320	\$163,335	\$2,985
LITURGY/MUSIC	\$430,360	\$395,376	\$34,984
INTEREST EXPENSE (CAPITAL CAMPAIGN)	\$27,000	\$20,414	\$6,586
TOTALS	\$2,980,723	\$2,805,632	\$175,091

*Variance due to remodeling the Pastoral Office

TOTAL NET INCOME/(LOSS) **\$132,258**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Savings Account SMECC	\$67,547
Savings Account SMCP	\$500
Catholic Community Endowment	\$135,457
Certificate of Deposit #1	\$152,985
Certificate of Deposit #2	\$153,040

West Campus Capital Campaign

Campaign Income	\$159,383
Paid on Loan	\$181,419
Campaign Reserve Fund (Pays WC Debt)	\$14,289
West Campus Loan Balance	\$488,019

OTHER	PRESCHOOL	CYO
INCOME	\$555,804	\$147,206
EXPENSE	\$547,124	\$155,916
NET INCOME/(LOSS)	\$8,680	(\$8,710)

Report as of Fiscal Year End June 30, 2025



Summer Continues to Bear Fruit for our Youth in St. Mark Young Church

By Megan Byers

Summer 2025 was a busy and fruitful summer for St. Mark Young Church. We welcomed Madison Pope to the staff at the end of May, and she got to dive right into the craziness of youth ministry by spending a week with a few of our middle school girls at Camp Wild Sky. As camp wrapped up, I took a group of high school juniors, seniors, and recent HS graduates to Steubenville Lone Star. Shortly after returning from those trips, our Teen ACTS Team of 62 people left for retreat and welcomed 32 retreatants into the ACTS community. It was a beautiful summer full of Jesus and full of hope. Radiant Hope!

Following Pope Francis' call to focus on hope this jubilee year, Life Teen announced their yearly theme, "Radiant Hope," at camp. We got to break open this theme and what the jubilee year is each morning with the middle schoolers, and it was cool to see how, even though Steubenville and Teen ACTS had different themes, hope was still present. Hope for our Church, because the Young Church loves God and wants to grow in faith, but also hope could be seen in the lives of each teen. There was a radiance in our young people after each event. Christ moved a lot this summer in their hearts to convict them and give them the grace to live differently and pursue a deeper relationship with God.

Continually, the best part of retreats and camps

for our young people is XLT Adoration. "XLT" is an abbreviated form of the word "Exalt" and has been used to describe a time of Adoration with praise and worship music played throughout the time of Exposition. It follows the Rite of Eucharistic Adoration while adding contemporary music to guide teens through their prayer. There is a talk given by a speaker that might not be a member of the clergy, and while they often use scripture during their talk, it is not given as a Gospel reading and homily format during Adoration, but rather before it begins.

This year, our teens got to experience XLT in three different locations and in three different ways, but it was impactful for the middle school girls at summer camp, upperclassmen at Steubenville, and teens at Teen ACTS, both retreatants and team members alike. To see our teens worship the Lord with their whole hearts and surrender everything to Him is a powerful experience, one that always draws me closer to the Lord and reminds me of the first time I encountered the love of Jesus during XLT.

One of our goals is to offer more times of XLT at St. Mark during the year so that our teens can continue to sit in the presence of Jesus, worship Him, and be given the opportunity to give their lives to Him, To surrender their worries and suffering, their joys and achievements, anything that weighs them down or helps them grow closer to God. This is radiant hope: that God would see our world in need of His love and



mercy and offer Himself in the presence of the Eucharist. What a blessing!

St. Mark Young Church has two times of XLT scheduled during this faith formation year: December 14, 2025, and April 12, 2026. Both opportunities will be open to the whole St. Mark community; all are invited to experience a different type of worship and to see our young people draw near to the Lord. We will share more information as we approach those dates. Thank you for your prayers and support. Please continue to pray for the young people of our parish!

Megan Byers is the Coordinator of Youth Ministry at St. Mark.



== Cheers to == RETIREMENT!

We want to wish Debbie Hofstetter, our former parish Administrative Assistant, a happy and blessed retirement! She retired in July after seven years and will now pursue the blessings of spending more time with her family and grandchildren, beefing up her craft room, and volunteering more with the Women's Guild ministry.

Thank you for your years of service at St. Mark. Our parish is not saying, "Goodbye," but "See you later, Debbie!"



Welcome, Liz Redshaw!

St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church, Fr. Dennis, Fr. Albert, and the staff are pleased to welcome Liz Redshaw to our team.

Liz took on the role of our new parish Administrative Assistant on August 4th. You can find her in the Pastoral Office during business hours. Liz is also a member of the Women's Guild and a craft artist!

She has a great can-do attitude and is eager to help our parishioners, ministries, staff, and visitors!