



Liturgy Schedule

Saturday Vigil:

5:00 p.m.,

7:00 p.m. (Spanish)

Sunday:

7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m.,

11:30 a.m.,

4:00 p.m. (Lifeteen)

Daily Mass:

Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri, 7:30 a.m.;

Wed, 12 p.m. (noon)

Adoration:

Mon, Tue, 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.;

Wed, 8:00 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.;

Fri, 8:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Confessions:

Sat, 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Transforming Your Marriage from “Great” to “Awesome”

St. Mark parishioners Dave and Monica Fowler felt like they already had a pretty strong marriage when they decided to attend their first Marriage Renewal experience in 2010. At the time, Dave was even a little skeptical about attending, wondering what he and his wife had signed up for. Yet, they were blown away by their weekend experience, which brought them to a whole new level of intimacy and a greater understanding of marriage as a sacrament.

“We tell people that we had a great marriage before, but after that weekend we had an *awesome* marriage,” Monica says. “After being married for more than

20 years, I really didn’t think that I could learn more about my husband, but I did on that weekend. It allows us to learn so much more about each other through our daily communication.”

“It really brought us closer together,” Dave adds. “It teaches you to communicate more effectively and to bring more intimacy into that communication. We also felt that we did lots of separate ministries before, but it led us to really want to do more together.”

Begun by Fr. Gabriel Calvo in the 1950s, the Worldwide Marriage Encounter movement was designed to strengthen and

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Family prayer time at one of the Marriage Encounter team meetings.

Transforming Your Marriage from “Great” to “Awesome”

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encourage Catholic couples in their sacramental relationships with one another. The movement quickly took off and is currently offered in 87 different countries. Its purpose remains to provide a weekend away for married couples, free from all the distractions and tensions of everyday life, where they can gain practical tools for strengthening their marriage, refocus themselves on God, and rekindle their relationship with one another.

“Through Worldwide Marriage Encounter we discover our dreams together, rekindle our romance, and gain a greater awareness of God’s presence in our marriage,” Monica says.

By providing an opportunity for couples to get away for quality time, the Marriage Encounter Weekends help couples remember where their vocation begins – namely, with each other. It helps them refocus on God and one another so that they may then go forth and share His light with others through various ministries.

“For us, at least, the Marriage Encounter Weekend has had a tremendous bearing on our calling to serve others in our community, reminding us to go forth as a couple rather than simply as individuals,” Monica says. “That way, when we go forth and continue our involvement in the Knights of Columbus or my involvement with the ACTS retreats, we are also reflecting one another.”

Here in the East Texas Area, Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekends are offered five times a year. Each weekend is guided by a team of sharing couples and a priest, and includes practical tips and strategies for strengthening marriages, testimonies from sharing



The Fowler family.

couples, and private time for couples to reflect and communicate together.

“I think couples owe it to themselves to get away for two nights without any distractions and really focus on each other,” Dave says. “Because our lives are so busy and there are so many

distractions, each couple deserves to have a weekend that is completely focused on God and each other. Then, they can walk away from that weekend with a much deeper relationship with each other and God.”

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The next available Marriage Encounter Weekend will be June 9-11 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Las Colinas, Texas. Couples are asked to put down a \$100 deposit to reserve their spot. Financial aid is also available to for those in need. For more information, please contact Dave and Monica Fowler at fdave0429@gmail.com or 904-864-7201, or visit the Dallas/Fort Worth/East Texas Marriage Encounter website, www.dfwme.org.

A Letter From Our Pastor

We Cannot Be Part-Time Christians

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

May is traditionally celebrated in the Church as the month of Mary, our Blessed Mother. As the Mother of the Church, she provides us with an example of what it means to be a servant of God and our fellow humans, as well as how to obediently fulfill the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

As Catholics, we are called to model the life of Jesus. That can be difficult, and there are certainly challenges to living as a disciple of Christ. But living stewardship and discipleship brings intense contentment and joy to those who take that risk. As we hear in St. Paul's letter to the Romans, "All things work for good for those who love God."

After Jesus Himself, we look to our Blessed Mother as an ideal steward and an example of what stewardship means. As the Mother of Christ, she lived her life and her ministry in a total spirit of faithfulness and service. She responded to the call to be a disciple. For us to be disciples, we also need to be good stewards of the gifts we have received. Our Church and our parish are gifts to us from God.

At no point in Holy Scripture does Jesus tell us that following Him is easy. We know it is not always simple and effortless. It requires dedication and commitment. Pope



Francis has said on more than one occasion, "We cannot be part-time Christians and Catholics! We should seek to live our faith at every moment of every day."

I suspect that is how Mary lived her life from that moment she turned it over to God and His Will. So, let us vow together during this month of Mary to follow her example, and seek to be the kinds of good stewards that will make our faith community even stronger and more effective.

I pray that we all can find the strength to live and practice our faith as we should. This means being faithful to the sacraments and looking for ways to help and serve one another. We have a great parish – let us make it even greater.

As we hear in Holy Scripture, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! May the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). Pray for me, as I pray for you.

In Christ,

Fr. George
Pastor





Altar Flowers Ministry Helps Our Work

Take 200 poinsettias and 200 lilies, plus dozens of other blooms, add them up, and the answer is our very talented and dedicated Altar Flowers Ministry.

Helen Fairchild is the coordinator of the ministry that includes about 20 other volunteers who make sure our altar is beautifully decorated with fresh flowers as they work in stewardship for us and the Church.

“We provide flowers for the two main holidays, Christmas with the poinsettias, and Easter with lilies, and these are all donated by the parish,” Helen says. “Our parishioners are always very generous, and we have lots of funds to purchase these flowers. We also do altar flowers for memorials – if someone calls and asks to have flowers in memory of a loved one, or an anniversary, for example. Last year, we had flowers for the 50th anniversary of a priest’s ordination.”

The ministry had its beginnings when Fr. George had joined the parish shortly before Easter.

“We didn’t know and he didn’t know we needed to order lilies months in advance,” Helen says. “So we did white roses in a large arrangement because lilies weren’t available. It sort of expanded, and whenever we needed altar flowers, Father would give them my name and we’d work on them.”

Helen had worked for about 20 years making artificial arrangements until her daughter suggested her mother work with real ones.

“Artificial flowers will go in the different directions you put them,” Helen says. “You have to work differently with live flowers, which is wonderful.”

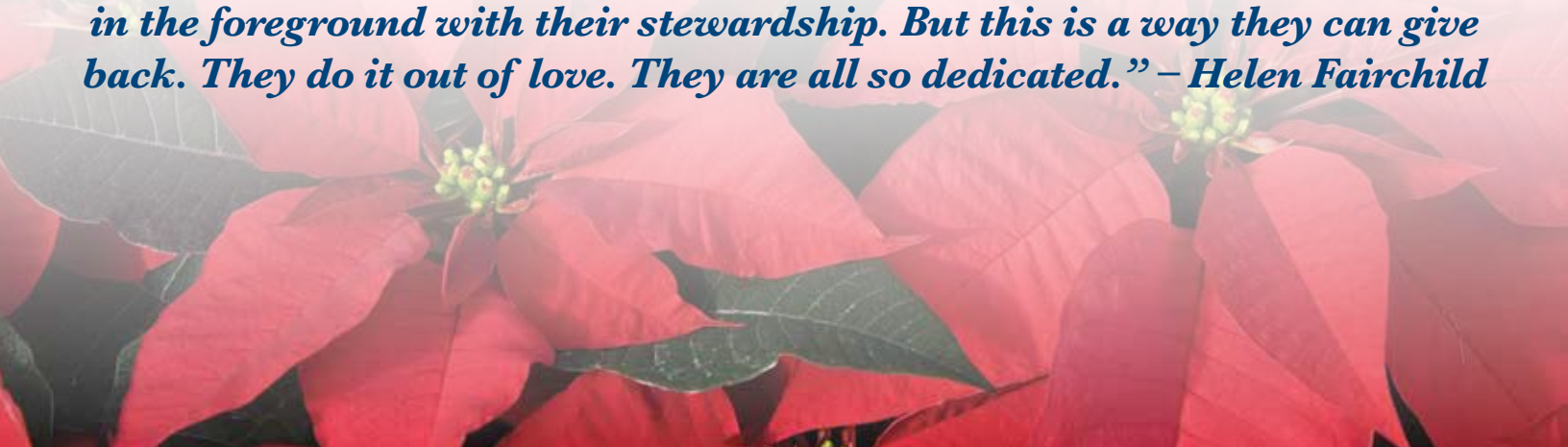
As the Altar Flower Ministry members prepare the arrangements, they feel a special connection with our Lord.

“I can do this to glorify God, and when I do an arrangement, and when the others work with the flowers, we’re getting close with the Lord on the altar,” Helen says. “It’s a special time. In talking with the others, they don’t want to be in the foreground with their stewardship. But this is a way they can give back. They do it out of love. They are all so dedicated.”

While we admire the beautiful arrangements in front of and behind our altar, we have no idea the work that goes into caring for them. There are some guidelines the ministry follows according to where Father wants flowers to be placed.

“Flowers have special needs,” Helen says. “During our Christmas decorating we order our 200 poinsettias about two months in advance. Now we know how many

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A close-up photograph of several white lilies with yellow centers, set against a blurred background of green leaves and other flowers. The lilies are the primary focus of the top half of the page.

Ministry Worship Bloom

we need and we have the funds to purchase them. We arrange them in front of the altar and sometimes on a side arrangement in a Christmas tree shape – I hope to expand that. We put them through the chapels and all through the sanctuary. We begin the process when we have to pick them up and transport them. And watering – they usually will last about a month. We water them once a week. So, it takes a lot of people doing it. This is when all extra hands come in. Some will volunteer to get the poinsettias – for some, it’s a family affair with the kids helping. Last year, we were fortunate to have a trailer to move them all in.”

The Easter lilies are ordered six weeks in advance.

“This year, the lily growers had a tough time getting the flowers to bloom,” Helen says. “Since Easter changes each year, the weather affects them. We got the lilies three days before we needed them. When we get them, the stamens are removed so the yellow pollen won’t get on altar cloths and people’s clothes. We take them out of each lily, and then water them.”

It takes the ministry a full day to prepare the lilies and set them out.


Helen says that a spiritual dimension enters their work as they choose the flowers to use.

“Certain flowers denote special things,” she says. “On the Assumption of Mary, there’s lots of stories about the flowers she liked and are associated with her, so we try to match those. Pentecost will be bright flowers. We try to match whatever the holy day is. Like Easter lilies – we’re glorifying God. During Lent, we use no flowers at all. When we’re preparing for Christmas in Advent, we use greenery until we reach Christmas, and then on Christmas Eve, we go in to the church and decorate. For our RCIA candidates, we use white lilies and gold in celebration for their joining us. That’s really a wonderful time.”

The ministry also will prepare flowers when requested for baptisms, and always for First Communion.

“I was a convert, so I don’t have the background of a life-long Catholic,” Helen says. “So, I use a Catholic website and see what is a traditional flower to use. For First Communion, we use more muted colors, pinks, baby blue, light yellow, colors associated with children in this first part of their lives.”

The ministry does not prepare flowers for weddings or funerals, however, unless there is a special request.

A close-up photograph of several bright red poinsettias with green leaves, filling the bottom half of the page.

Help is always welcome in the Altar Flower Ministry, especially at Christmas and Easter. Every effort is made to contact those who have turned in cards during the Stewardship Renewal. However, volunteers are welcome to call Helen Fairchild at 940-367-5207.

A Look Back on Holy Week and Easter at St. Mark

This April, our St. Mark community shared in the most important time on our liturgical calendar – Holy Week and Easter. And our children enjoyed this year's Easter Egg Hunt!



“A Beautiful Story That God Is Giving Us”

Meet the Kulle Family

Parishioners Dan and Crystal Kulle have a long history here at St. Mark – one that matches their own long history together. The two were both already members of St. Mark when they first met as freshmen in high school 20 years ago, shortly after Crystal’s family first moved to the area. The two didn’t start dating until their senior year since, as Dan will tell you with a laugh, Crystal was slow to warm up to him! Yet, today, it is clear that God has always had great plans for this couple – two decades after that first meeting, the Kuller are celebrating 12 years of marriage and have just welcomed their sixth child into the world!

After becoming high school sweethearts, Dan and Crystal both attended Texas A&M. While their shared Catholic faith had always been a part of their lives, both feel that they grew even closer to God and His Church during their college years.

“Crystal and I both got really involved [in Church life] in college at St. Mary’s at Texas A&M,” Dan recalls. “Through Confession is probably how I feel like Jesus revealed Himself to me, and ever since then, faith has really been a priority in my life.”

Dan and Crystal were married in 2005 and have been blessed with six children – the oldest is 11 years old and the youngest was just born. Six years ago, Crystal joined a few friends who were looking to form a group of like-minded mothers of young children, and together they began the parish group called Cause of Our Joy.

“We do play groups and book clubs and nights out – a lot of fun things,” Crystal says. “It’s been huge in helping me be confident in my faith and my Catholic motherhood. It’s just good to have a group of moms who share your basic ideals. We pray for each other and make each other meals when we have babies – and someone is always having a baby!”

Having the support of this wonderful group of fellow moms has been a blessing to Crystal as she experiences both the challenges and joys of motherhood.

“Just growing as a mother is such a humbling and fulfilling, but also sacrificial and unselfish thing,” she explains. “I just feel that God has sanctified me through it all the time. Of course there are the painful moments, but also those that are so joyful, and you just feel so loved by God and thankful for it all.”

While Crystal has found fellowship with the women of St. Mark, Dan has found a similar support system by



The Kulle family – (from left) Dan, Adam (in front), Noah, Josh, Shae, Emma (in front), and Crystal

participating in the biannual men’s conferences, as well as a men’s Bible study group led by his friend, Westin Thaggard.

“The Bible study is a faith-building group that meets weekly,” Dan says. “We’re trying to grow our faith, but we are also there to support each other. The guys in the group – we’ve become very close through it. The coolest thing about it is that we have people from across [an age] spectrum – you have Westin and I with young families, one who is retired, and people in between. We all bring a different perspective, and especially the ones who have been through more of life’s challenges have some great advice to offer us.”

The Kulle family is excited to see the incredible growth that is happening at St. Mark, with the recent and ongoing addition of many ministries, family-friendly events, and even

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Saint Mark

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Meet the Kulle Family

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adoration. They credit this spiritual renewal in the parish to the loving and compassionate example of Fr. George, who inspires parishioners to more actively live out their faith.

As Dan and Crystal strive to keep faith at the center of their lives by participating in parish life, they hope that their children will see their example and remain close to the Church, as well.

“The important thing to me is that my kids see the ultimate goal and the ultimate purpose of life, and that they don’t find their happiness in the things that aren’t permanent, but instead search for happiness in being with God,” Dan says.

While 20 years ago, Crystal would never have believed that today she and Dan would be married and the parents of six beautiful children, she is thankful for the countless blessings that God has written into the story of her family’s life together.

“Our children are our greatest blessing – they are from God and we want them to go back to God, so we just want to all grow together,” Crystal says. “I never would have thought my life would turn out this way, but it’s a beautiful story that God is giving to us.”

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Five of the six Kulle children (from left) Noah, Adam, Emma, Josh, Shae

Saint Mark