



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.

At St. Mark, Jerry and Tammie Pruitt Find Much More Than Just a Brick-and-Mortar Church

Ask parishioners Jerry and Tammie Pruitt what St. Mark Catholic Church means to them, and they will tell you that this place is much more than four walls and a roof. For this couple, our faith community here at St. Mark is a true support network and circle of friends. The couple's genuine love for our parish is the inspiration behind the many ways they serve. Both are Eucharistic Ministers and have been on team for ACTS retreats, and Tammie also participates as a lector, a sacristan, and a member of the new Hearts and Faces of Christ Ministry.

After attending an ACTS retreat in 2009, Jerry and Tammie first decided to make St. Mark their home parish, and within a very short time, they became involved in parish life and began to feel connected to the faith community.

More recently, the Pruitts gained an even deeper realization of the treasure they have in our parish family.



The Pruitt family — (from left) Tammie, Sierra, Savannah, Ally, and Jerry

"This past year, I battled breast cancer, and one of the biggest support groups I had was the community at St. Mark," Tammie says. "I would come out of surgery on a Friday afternoon and say, 'I need to go to church' — it was my source, my energy, my lifeline. I definitely think that the support

Jerry and Tammie Pruitt continued from front cover

we received this past year — that and the prayer — was a huge part of the reason I survived.”

Tammie felt incredible support from fellow parishioners, whether they would stop her after Mass to let her know she was in their prayers, or simply give her a comforting look as she offered them Holy Communion. At the same time, Jerry found encouragement in his weekly faith-sharing group. The couple also considers their marriage group to be a vital part of their support network.

Both of the Pruitts grew up with parents who modeled participation in church life, and it is important to them to pass that value on to the next generation. As a restaurant manager, Jerry finds himself working many evening and weekend hours, so he often has to get creative to find ways to keep an active faith life.

Working to keep high school students — including their own daughters — close to Christ is a priority for the Pruitts.

“Seeing my parents model an active faith life has made me want to be more involved,” Jerry says. “I have to balance my work schedule to work in Mass — and the ACTS retreats when I’m on team — and it’s also flexible enough that I can go to adoration during the week. I make the effort so our girls can see that even though I’m working, I’m fitting [church life] in because it’s important.”

Having witnessed their parents’ dedication to service, the three Pruitt girls — Savannah (19), Sierra (18), and Ally (16) — have all been involved in parish life, as well. In addition to helping with VBS and Teen ACTS, Ally cantors and sings in the choir. Savannah and Sierra,

who served as altar servers and Eucharistic Ministers here at St. Mark, have both continued to attend and participate in Masses while they are away at college.

Reflecting on their daughters’ active faith lives, both Tammie and Jerry give credit to the St. Mark community for instilling a love of service in their girls.

“It goes beyond the parenting, and it’s definitely the village that has helped with that,” Jerry affirms.

As much more than a brick-and-mortar church, the “village” and “lifeline” that Jerry and Tammie have found in our faith community here at St. Mark are what inspire them to participate in parish life in any way they can.

“It’s easy to be a servant when you’re feeling that kind of support!” Tammie says.

“This past year, I battled breast cancer, and one of the biggest support groups I had was the community at St. Mark. I would come out of surgery on a Friday afternoon and say, ‘I need to go to church’ — it was my source, my energy, my lifeline. I definitely think that the support we received this past year — that and the prayer — was a huge part of the reason I survived.” — Tammie Pruitt



Reflections at the End of the Year

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

*I*t seems as if we just finished Lent and Easter, and here we are at Advent and Christmas. To say this is a busy month for many is an understatement. Although December is a month of love, it can also be a difficult month for some. For those with families, it may be a month of travel as people rush to be united with loved ones, sometimes after a long period of separation.

There is no shortage of reminders as to what time of year this is. However, for us as Catholics, we may need to refocus to see where we are in our faith lives. Were you aware that for us, December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception? In that regard, we celebrate a Holy Day of Obligation on Friday, Dec. 8. Advent begins on Dec. 3, and you may notice that we begin to wear purple as a sign of Advent. That color changes to white or gold beginning at Christmas.

Of course, this is also the last month of the regular calendar year, which may add additional tasks to our own schedules as we finalize things for the end of the year. However, there are many opportunities for us during this month to share, to pray and to celebrate in a Christian way, and I would encourage you to make an effort to be part of these. Right here in our parish, much is happening along



those lines, and a careful reading of the bulletin will alert you to the “when, where and what” of these upcoming opportunities.

As I indicated earlier, this can also be a difficult time for some. In the midst of our own celebrations and joy, we need to be aware of that reality and of those living with it. This is a time to reach out, and it is a time to show love.

This December, let our minds be focused on Christ, Who will be born for us at Christmas, and for Whose coming we must always be prepared throughout the year. This is a time to thank God and to pray. It is a time to reach out to love and live peacefully with one another. We need to remember that life

continues after December, in spite of everything we feel we need to get done.

My prayers and blessings go out to each of you and your families. May God continue to watch over you. May the year 2017 end well for all of us!

In Christ,

Fr. George
Pastor

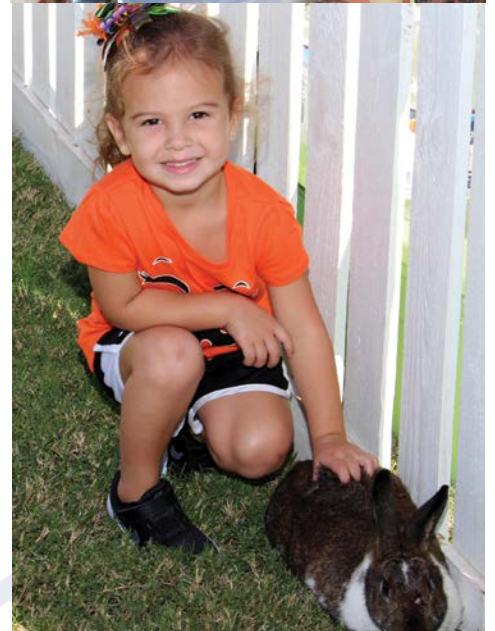


St. Mark's

St. Mark's Oktoberfest was truly an amazing family event. It was held on Oct. 1, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The preparations take months to coordinate, and there were over 400 volunteers the day of the festival! We would like to thank all the volunteers that helped with the festival to make it a success.

With an excellent menu of German cuisine and craft-brewed beer, the German music rounded out a wonderful atmosphere. We had over 1,200 participants this year and could not have asked for better weather. This year, we added vendor booths to the event and hope to invite them back next year!

Thank you again — for all those who attended this event and to all of our volunteers for making it all happen. — *Kim Harbert*



Oktoberfest



Engaging in Confirmation Process Leads Youth on Next Steps of Their Faith Journey

Different images may come to mind when reflecting on the Sacrament of Confirmation. Maybe you remember the bishop giving you a “tap” on the cheek, as a reminder to be willing to suffer for Christ. Perhaps the scent of chrism, in the sign of a cross on your forehead, is one you’ll never forget. Or maybe picking a sponsor or a Confirmation saint was a decision that you thought long and hard about. But regardless of what stands out in your mind, when you received the Sacrament of Confirmation, you were anointed with oil, sealed with the Holy Spirit, fully initiated into the Catholic Church.

Each year, a group of young people from our parish joins the ranks of the fully initiated, receiving the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, in Confirmation. Not only does this time of preparation help the young people learn about their faith, but it also encourages them to embrace it personally. And here at St. Mark, our catechists strive to engage our youth through the preparation process.

“I don’t remember much from my Confirmation class, other than sitting in the back with my cousin, making jokes,” recalls our High School Youth Minister, Brad Horn. “So, I’m trying to engage the teens, because when I was going through Confirmation, I wasn’t engaged. It’s not just about teaching them the faith, but it’s about giving them the tools to be a disciple.”

The Confirmation program meets every Sunday afternoon, from September through the beginning of the new year, and is an opportunity for young people, age 15 or older, to

intentionally prepare for the sacrament. Students learn about their faith in a setting that includes teachings, small-group discussion, videos, and activities, covering topics such as the fundamentals of Christianity, Jesus, prayer, the Church, the sacraments, and more.

“In Baptism, they’re marked with the Holy Spirit, marked as a child of God,” Brad says. “In Confirmation, they receive the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, infused in their soul. We want to give them the tools and practices to help them fight the spiritual battle and to help them understand that when they say ‘yes’ on the day of their Confirmation, they’re not just saying ‘yes’ to God — they’re saying ‘yes’ to the Church, to be brought into the mission of the Church, which is to go out and make disciples of all nations.”

Brad believes that the small-group setting gives teens a chance to engage on a more personal level and integrate their faith into their lives.

“My experience in Confirmation class was somebody just talking to me, and I didn’t care about it, I was very disconnected from it,” he says. “We want to make sure these teens are understanding of what they are committing to when they go before the Bishop — they’re committing to the mission and life of the Church and committing to being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We focus on building that relationship with Christ and the Church. These small groups give them freedom to ask questions and express their doubts, and we try to tackle those questions and get them talking about their faith.”

In addition to the weekly Confirmation sessions, students also have

the opportunity to attend a Confirmation retreat at The Pines Catholic Camp shortly before they receive the sacrament. They are also invited to choose a patron saint and reflect on, and draw inspiration from that person’s life of holiness.

It’s Brad’s hope that, quite the opposite of those who mistakenly view Confirmation as some kind of “graduation,” that the teens who receive this Sacrament of Initiation will see it as the next step in their journey of faith.

“My hope is that they’re excited to be Catholic, they’re proud to be Catholic and are excited to pursue it,” Brad says. “I hope that they come away with a love for Christ and a love for the Church. My hope is that they will make their faith a priority, and understand that when God and their faith are at the center of their lives, everything will fall into place and it will be the best thing for them.”

Please continue to pray for our young people who will be confirmed in early 2018.



The bishop confirms our young people, sealing them with the Gift of the Holy Spirit and empowering them to live as fully initiated members of our Church.

If you would like more information on our youth Confirmation program, please contact High School Youth Minister Brad Horn at 940-387-6223 or bhorn@stmarkdenton.org.

Hispanic Community Grows in Unity Through Ministry

As Catholics, we are all one Body of Christ, regardless of language or culture. Here at St. Mark, the Spanish Ministry brings the Spanish-speaking members of the community together. Through this ministry, the members of our Hispanic community are able to worship in their own language and keep their traditions alive. They also hope to continue to grow and share their culture with all parishioners.

St. Mark celebrated its first Mass in Spanish on Oct. 1, 2011. Since then, the Spanish Mass has been celebrated each Saturday at 7 p.m.

“We feel so welcome at the parish with the Spanish Mass,” says Adriana Noriega, who coordinates the Spanish Ministry, along with Clara Sanchez. “There are people who understand some English, and others not so much, but everyone understands Spanish. While the priest gives the homily in English, we have someone to translate for him. We like that it’s him giving us the message, but we can understand it.”

“There’s nothing like our language,” Clara says. “It’s so important for us to be able to be together and have the Mass in Spanish.”

The Mass has its own Spanish-speaking lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and music ministry. Many members of the Spanish Ministry also belong to prayer and Rosary ministries in Spanish.

“We also have young people who came to the United States when they were very young, and they speak English,” Adriana says. “They can go to the Mass in English but they also enjoy going to the Spanish Mass. It’s nice for them to have a place to express their faith in a more Hispanic way — for example, we have different music, and more physical contact. They enjoy serving and participating.”

This year, the diocese will begin a program to evaluate the needs of the Hispanic community across the diocese. Several parishioners at St. Mark will participate in this program, including Adriana.

“We will be part of a group that will meet every 15 days to talk about the Hispanic community in our diocese,” she says. “We plan to interview people we know and find out the ways in which the Church can support them. The idea is that this will be part of a larger program for the whole country, which will unite all of the immigrant communities in the

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“We want others to be able to get to know us and understand us — we may not always understand each other, but if we get to know each other, we will find that we have so many similarities! We want to share our culture with everyone. I think there is a lot we can learn from each other.” — Adriana Noriega

Saint Mark

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United States. This way, we hope to be able to bring more people to a personal encounter with Jesus, and to spread the Word of God. We also hope that this program can bring the Hispanic cultures and Anglo cultures together, and become more united. This way, both cultures can become richer.”

As the Hispanic community at St. Mark continues to grow, Adriana and Clara hope that the Hispanic and Anglo communities can continue to learn from each other, and grow together as one community of faith.

“As we grow in unity as a Hispanic community, we can also grow in unity with the whole parish community,” Clara says.

“We may be different, but both cultures are good,” Adriana says. “We want others to be able to get to know us and understand us — we may not always understand each other, but if we get to know each other, we will find that we have so many similarities! We want to share our culture with everyone. I think there is a lot we can learn from each other.”

If you would like more information about the Spanish Ministry, please contact
Adriana Noriega at 940-206-2845 or Clara Sanchez at 940-395-9149.

Saint Mark