



## 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. - Thurs. 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.  
Fri. 8:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

### Confessions:

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

## The Protection Ministry Creating Circles of Security and Safety at Our Parish

Though few of us will ever experience the disaster of a home fire, it's common practice to install smoke detectors in a home to ensure the safety and security of our loved ones. This is the example used by parishioner Eric Debus to explain the reason behind St. Mark's new Protection Ministry, which is devoted to increasing overall parish safety and awareness.

"In explaining this ministry, I always begin by saying most of us are likely to never experience one of these events," Eric says. "But even still, we would be naïve not to prepare ourselves for that to occur because we see that it does happen. Just like a smoke detector in a home, we want to make sure we are prepared in the event that tragedy occurs."

The Protection Ministry was actually launched as a response to a diocesan-wide initiative as a response to the mass shootings that have occurred throughout the country. And so Eric was recruited



Members of the Protection Ministry — (clockwise from top left) Eric Debus, Kim Harbert, Sam Shaneyfelt, Cheryl Fisher, Dick Munsey and Joy Medley.

by Fr. George, utilizing his expertise from over 20 years in law enforcement.

"Fr. George approached me some time ago about the ministry, knowing I had a law enforcement background," Eric says. "It's something that I'm really happy to do, too. With over 20 years in law enforcement, I've received a lot of training that others aren't fortunate to get. So it's a special thing to be able to pass that on to the parish and other members of the church in this way."

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# Teaching Children to Live a Life of Stewardship

**H**ow old do you have to be to practice stewardship? Can a 5-year-old embrace stewardship? How about a 10-year-old?

Although there is no guideline to what the right age is to begin to live a life of stewardship, God's call certainly extends to each of His children — even the young ones.

It is especially important to show children that they are not too young to share their time, talent and treasure to help build God's kingdom.

## Sharing Your Time

A young child can share of his time in a variety of ways appropriate to his ability. For example, during the day, a child can pray for a loved one that is hurt, or say prayers with his parents or siblings. He can participate in Mass each Sunday, and even take time from his day to thank God for a veteran who has served our country.

Spending time being virtuous — such as being patient, generous and kind — is also a great example of sharing our time for love of God.

## Sharing Your Talent

Using God-given talents to glorify God can also be performed by both young and old. An elementary school-age child can easily clean her room or perform chores such as raking leaves, doing laundry or taking care of pets. Making cards for people who are sick or who have had a death in

the family are other concrete examples of being a faithful steward.

Even using our talents — such as playing a musical instrument or football — to the best of our abilities to give God glory is an example of being a good steward.

## Sharing Your Treasure

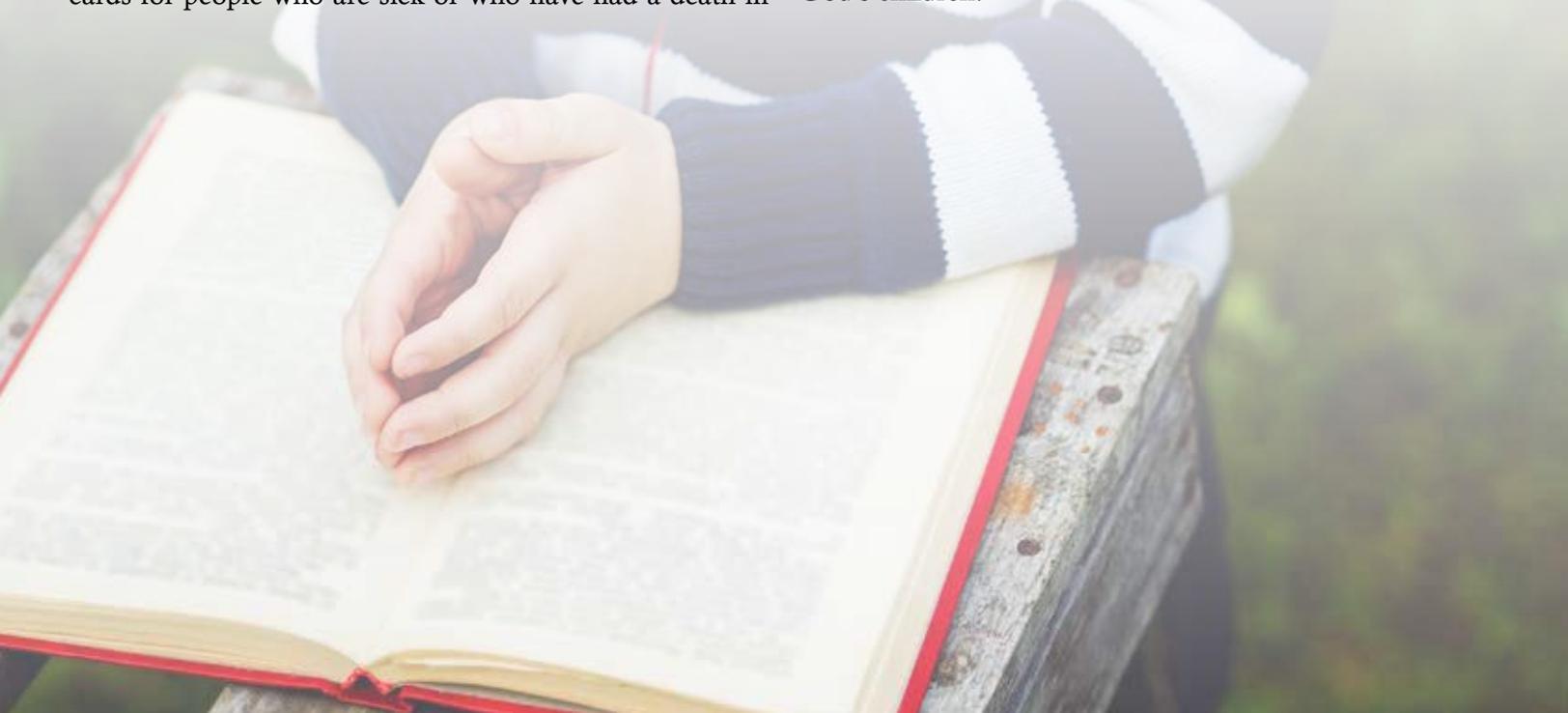
Although children do not have the same type of treasure to share as adults, instilling the importance of sharing finances is an important lesson.

If a child receives an allowance, he can return a portion of it to the Church in the collection basket. If he gets money for his birthday, he can give a small portion of it back to God in thanksgiving. Little ones can even share things like their Halloween candy with their siblings or friends as a way of demonstrating generosity.

## The Most Important Lesson

Above all, the most important lesson to teach our children is why we share. We don't share because we "have to." We don't share because our parents tell us to. We share our time, talent and treasure with God because we are thankful for the blessings He has given us and we want to thank Him for His generosity.

Teaching these lessons at a young age will allow a lifetime of good stewardship to follow for even the youngest of God's children.



# *Striving For “The Best Lent Ever” Will Prepare Us to Joyfully Celebrate Easter*

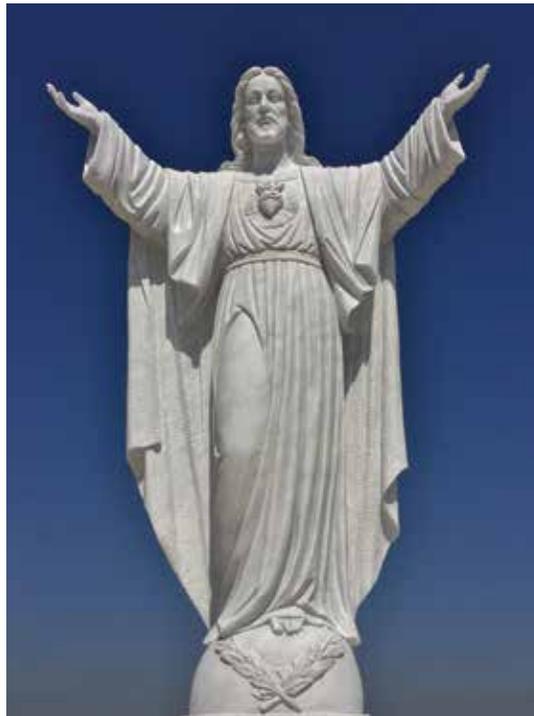
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

**T**he most important day in February won't come till the very end of the month. Alert parishioners may already have realized I'm referring to Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, which falls on Feb. 26 this year. That means we have most of the month to plan for Lent!

I know what you're thinking right about now: “Father seems particularly happy about getting ready for Lent!” Of course, when we approach Lent in the right way, it will help us get spiritually fit to celebrate Easter. Just as an Olympic athlete goes through a long period of serious training to win a medal, so we prepare during Lent for our great Easter celebration. And “giving up” something during Lent is not supposed to leave a vacuum — we're invited to put something more valuable in its place.

We're all familiar with the three traditional Lenten disciplines of **prayer**, **fasting** and **almsgiving**. These can serve as our framework for how we approach the season of Lent. One might decide, for example, to give up a half hour of television each evening. That doesn't mean you sit and stare at a blank wall for the half hour. Instead, fill it with prayerful reading of the Bible or a devotional book, or praying the Rosary.

Some people decide to forego desserts during Lent (fasting). But just losing weight is not the purpose of Lent! The goal is greater discipline in our spiritual lives. However, a family can put aside the money saved by skipping desserts and contribute it to a Church-related charity (almsgiving), so that our self-denial can benefit others.



These are just possible examples. There are many ways of combining prayer, fasting, and almsgiving into our daily lives during the Lenten season. The object is to develop a spiritual routine that challenges us but still fits into our lives with our individual responsibilities and schedules.

By the way, most of us will stumble at some point during our Lenten journey. Our first instinct will be to throw up our hands and give up. What we should do is just pick up where we left off and continue to do our best as we proceed on the Lenten journey.

Of course, most of February is Ordinary Time. But that gives us time to figure out what we should do in the areas of prayer, fasting and almsgiving so we can keep our best Lent ever and arrive at Easter spiritually fit.

In Christ,

Fr. George  
Pastor



# Called to Service: *Meet D*



*Fr. George blessing Deacon Vic and Jan Norton on their 50th wedding anniversary*

Some people slow down in retirement. Others switch gears. The latter was the case for Deacon Vic Norton.

Raised in a variety of different locations, with a father in the Navy, Vic spent most of his adult life between the Houston area and Massachusetts, working as a sales engineer. At the prompting of his wife, Jan, Vic decided to pursue the diaconate, and was ordained in 2007.

After retirement, the couple, who recently celebrated 50 years of marriage, decided to move from Mansfield, Texas, to Rhodes Ranch, to be closer to their three children and their families. They've been at St. Mark since 2016, and today, serve in a variety of different roles. Jan is involved as a lector and in the choir and Deacon Vic helps out wherever his ministry is needed.

Currently, in addition to serving at Mass at St. Mark and typically preaching on the third Sunday of each month, Deacon Vic also serves as the Chief Advocate for the North Deanery, training those who assist people

seeking an annulment of their marriage. Deacon Vic enjoys this role and the opportunity to work with people who often feel rejected and separated from Christ and the Catholic Church after a divorce.

"For some it can be extremely difficult and the tribunal has tried to recognize that," Deacon Vic says. "I just want to make it as easy as possible for people to get back and bring them closer to Jesus. In a lot of cases, people felt separated from the Church, from their faith and from God and [I want] to assure them that they still have God's love."

He is also involved in helping to prepare parents and godparents to have their children baptized, as well as visiting Good Samaritan Retirement Village, to bring Communion to the residents, and, at times, preaching at funerals or going with families to the cemetery.

"It's fun to educate the parents and godparents about the Sacrament of Baptism, and I hope they learn a little

# Deacon Vic and Jan Norton

bit more about our faith and our Baptism,” Deacon Vic says.

“It brings so much joy to me to relate with those people [at Good Samaritan], to see the smiles on their faces and to know what Communion with Christ really means to them,” he adds. “I’m blessed to be able to do this.”

In addition to serving others, Deacon Vic also finds that his own faith is nourished by participating in several Bible study groups, both with the ACTS group at St. Mark, as well as one closer to home, in Rhodes Ranch.

“It’s wonderful, when I can hear how other people interpret Scripture, what is God saying to them,” he says.

Deacon Vic and Jan are glad to be part of the parish family at St. Mark, confident they’ve found something special in this community. They look forward to continuing to serve, wherever God calls them.

“I’ve always felt St. Mark is the most welcoming community I’ve ever seen, and I’ve been in quite a few!” Deacon Vic says, with a smile.

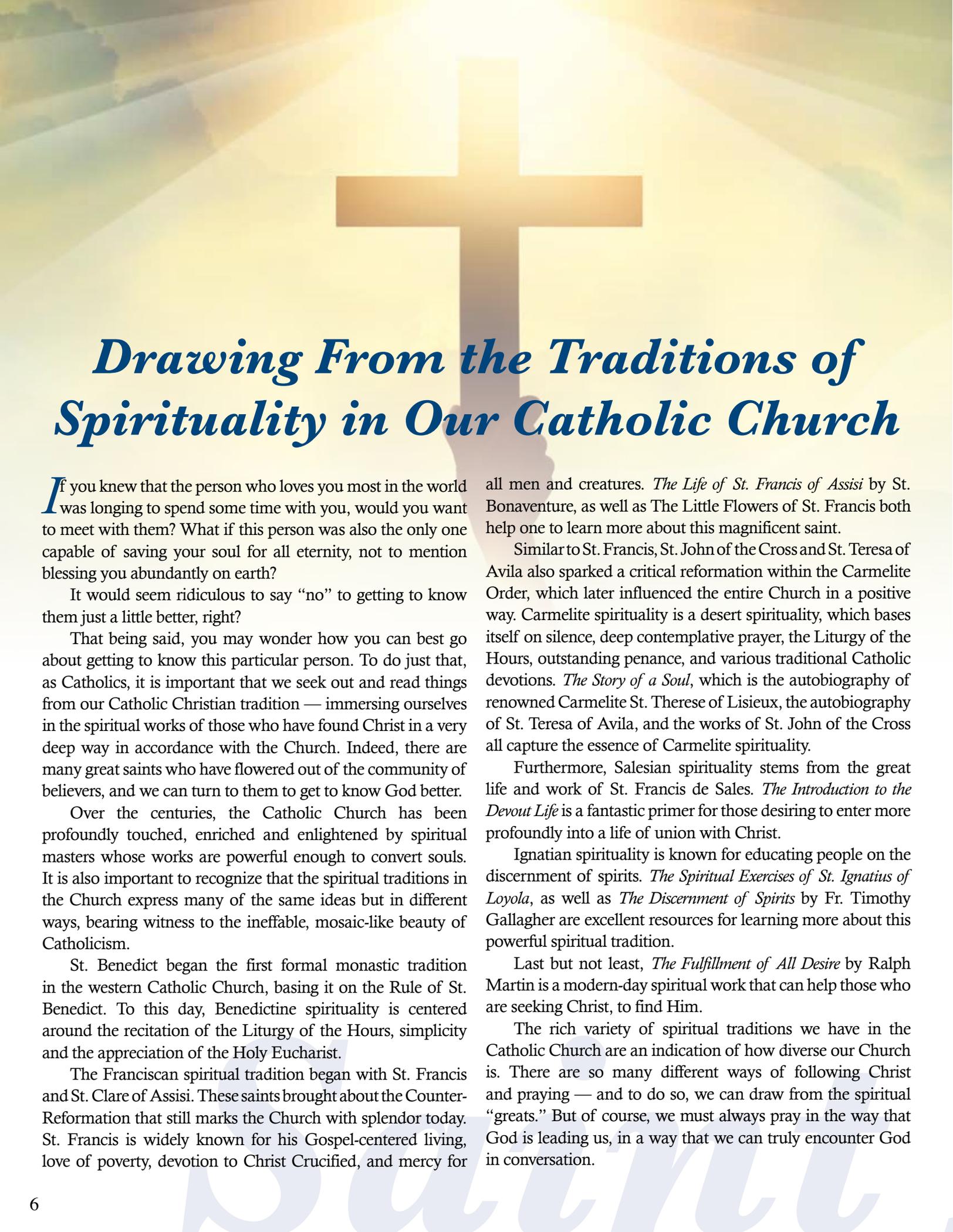
“At my ordination, I was handed the Book of the Gospels and given ‘marching orders,’ saying, ‘Believe what you read, teach what you believe and practice what you teach,’” Deacon Vic adds. “‘Deacon’ comes from the Greek word *diakonia*, which translates as ‘servant.’ I am a servant and I need to make sure that I show that.”

A special thanks to Deacon Vic and Jan for all the ways they’ve given back to our parish and community. We’re grateful for your witness of faithfulness to Christ and generous service to His Church. If you’d like to connect with Deacon Vic, please contact him at [vnorton@stmarkdenton.org](mailto:vnorton@stmarkdenton.org).

## An Update on Our Year-End Capital Campaign

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The 2019 Year-End Capital Campaign contribution for the construction of our church, as of Jan. 6, 2020, totaled \$838,549. These contributions were made up of 1,025 families out of 2,603 registered households (39 percent). This total is well over our \$600,000 goal and was an increase over last year’s contributions to this campaign, with over 100 more families participating. Thank you to all who contributed to this campaign. Your generosity and faithfulness continues to overwhelm and build up this faith-filled parish community.



# *Drawing From the Traditions of Spirituality in Our Catholic Church*

If you knew that the person who loves you most in the world was longing to spend some time with you, would you want to meet with them? What if this person was also the only one capable of saving your soul for all eternity, not to mention blessing you abundantly on earth?

It would seem ridiculous to say “no” to getting to know them just a little better, right?

That being said, you may wonder how you can best go about getting to know this particular person. To do just that, as Catholics, it is important that we seek out and read things from our Catholic Christian tradition — immersing ourselves in the spiritual works of those who have found Christ in a very deep way in accordance with the Church. Indeed, there are many great saints who have flowered out of the community of believers, and we can turn to them to get to know God better.

Over the centuries, the Catholic Church has been profoundly touched, enriched and enlightened by spiritual masters whose works are powerful enough to convert souls. It is also important to recognize that the spiritual traditions in the Church express many of the same ideas but in different ways, bearing witness to the ineffable, mosaic-like beauty of Catholicism.

St. Benedict began the first formal monastic tradition in the western Catholic Church, basing it on the Rule of St. Benedict. To this day, Benedictine spirituality is centered around the recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours, simplicity and the appreciation of the Holy Eucharist.

The Franciscan spiritual tradition began with St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. These saints brought about the Counter-Reformation that still marks the Church with splendor today. St. Francis is widely known for his Gospel-centered living, love of poverty, devotion to Christ Crucified, and mercy for

all men and creatures. *The Life of St. Francis of Assisi* by St. Bonaventure, as well as *The Little Flowers of St. Francis* both help one to learn more about this magnificent saint.

Similar to St. Francis, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila also sparked a critical reformation within the Carmelite Order, which later influenced the entire Church in a positive way. Carmelite spirituality is a desert spirituality, which bases itself on silence, deep contemplative prayer, the Liturgy of the Hours, outstanding penance, and various traditional Catholic devotions. *The Story of a Soul*, which is the autobiography of renowned Carmelite St. Therese of Lisieux, the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila, and the works of St. John of the Cross all capture the essence of Carmelite spirituality.

Furthermore, Salesian spirituality stems from the great life and work of St. Francis de Sales. *The Introduction to the Devout Life* is a fantastic primer for those desiring to enter more profoundly into a life of union with Christ.

Ignatian spirituality is known for educating people on the discernment of spirits. *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, as well as *The Discernment of Spirits* by Fr. Timothy Gallagher are excellent resources for learning more about this powerful spiritual tradition.

Last but not least, *The Fulfillment of All Desire* by Ralph Martin is a modern-day spiritual work that can help those who are seeking Christ, to find Him.

The rich variety of spiritual traditions we have in the Catholic Church are an indication of how diverse our Church is. There are so many different ways of following Christ and praying — and to do so, we can draw from the spiritual “greats.” But of course, we must always pray in the way that God is leading us, in a way that we can truly encounter God in conversation.

# *A Wonderful Time Enjoyed by All at Our 2019 Christmas Party*

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*St. Mark's 2019 Christmas party was held on Dec. 13.  
We thank all those who made the Christmas party such a success!*



# Saint Mark

6500 Crawford Road | Argyle, TX 76226  
(940) 387-6223 | [www.stmarkdenton.org](http://www.stmarkdenton.org)



## *The Protection Ministry* *continued from front cover*

Eric says that the Protection Ministry works in close collaboration with a company known as Guardian Response, contracted by the diocese to recruit and train parish volunteers. Under their guidance, Eric and his dedicated core team are working to create what he describes as circles of security and safety here at the parish. This will involve parish greeters and ushers, a medical emergency team, and finally, designated armed guardians.

“It starts with an outer perimeter of security created by parish greeters,” Eric says. “They are responsible for welcoming people to the church campus just outside the church. Once people make it inside, our ushers would be there to assist them. And then we have a medical staff in the event of a medical emergency. The fourth and final part is the armed guardians, present and ready in the event that someone does come onto our campus intending harm.”

By implementing these safety measures Eric says the Protection Ministry hopes to create a more secure environment here at St. Mark, and to foster a greater awareness and watchfulness over each other so that we remain prepared for any type of emergency.

“The ushers and greeters play a really big role in this process by fostering an overall awareness of who is on our campus and what their intentions are,” Eric says. “And that’s really what we want — to cultivate an environment where people truly watch out for one another.”

Though Eric says he’s sad that we live in a world where such safety measures are necessary, he also proud to be part of a parish that is taking initiative to get in front of potential dangers. He also is proud to be able to pass on his own expertise and to serve his parish community in this capacity.

Parishioners interested in learning more about or becoming part of the Protection Ministry may contact Eric Debus at [sgt206@hotmail.com](mailto:sgt206@hotmail.com).

Saint Mark