



St. Mark Catholic Church Altar at Christmas
Photo courtesy of Alex Hernandez

St. Mark Catholic School
Weekly School Bulletin
December 19, 2014

In this Issue:

Virtue of the Month
Reminders for the Next Few Weeks
Reminder – Parishioner Tuition Status
Make Sure Your School Payments/Fees are Current
End-of-Year Giving
Subs Needed For All Grades & After School Program
Don't Wait: Participate!
Home & School Association (HSA) News
In Alumni News...
Alumni Invited to Visit Over the Holidays!
At St. Mark, We Serve.
Check Out the New "Brag Board" Beginning in January
Seeking Host Families for St. Mark NET Team
Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP)
Correction from Last Week's Bulletin
Seen & Heard Around St. Mark
Lion Pride!
Principal's Corner

Virtue of the Month – Hope

Teachers discuss the Virtue of the Month with students by using either stories or activities to engage them into seeing the virtue in action. Ask your child what he/she is learning about "Hope" this month.

Reminders for the Next Few Weeks

Monday, December 22 – Friday, January 2: No School, Christmas Vacation

Wednesday, December 24, 5:00 PM, Church: Christmas Eve Liturgy, St. Mark Children's Choir, 5th Grade Christmas Pageant

The 5th grade will once again present the Christmas pageant during the Christmas Eve liturgy, and the St. Mark Children's Choir will sing during Mass.

Monday, January 5: School Resumes

January 5, 6, 7 & 12, 13, 14, School Library: ISEE Boot Camp for registered 8th graders

Friday, January 9, 8:30 AM, Church: All School Mass

Our All-School Mass will be held at 8:30 AM in the church. All are invited to attend. This Mass will be presented by the 8th grade. They will perform the Call to Worship, the Mass readings, and present the Communion gifts.

Reminder - Parishioner Tuition Status

In order to qualify for the parishioner tuition discount, the annual minimum parish donation of \$800 must be paid by December 31, 2014. Please refer to page 7 of the Parent Student Handbook for more information. Checks (made payable to "St. Mark Catholic Church") may be placed in the weekly collection basket, or [click here](#) to submit your electronic payment to the parish and/or set-up recurring payments.

Make Sure Your School Payments/Fees Are Current

A reminder to please make sure all of your school payments (this includes cafeteria and the After School Program) are up-to-date and all school fees are paid by Friday, December 19. Any unpaid balances will affect reregistration eligibility.

End-of-Year Giving

If you are considering an additional end-of-year donation, St. Mark Catholic Church and School are non-profit organizations that allow for you to make tax deductible donations. As the end of the year approaches and you review your tax-deductible donations, please consider donating to your own St. Mark community. Please also check with your company to determine if matching funds are available.

- To make a donation to St. Mark Catholic Church, [click here](#).
- To make a donation to the St. Mark Catholic School Gap Fund, [click here](#).

- To donate towards St. Mark Catholic School's technology fund through the Digital Wish website, [click here](#).
- If you would like to make a monetary donation to a particular department or program at St. Mark Catholic School (i.e. Athletics), please [click here](#). Please enter the amount under "Miscellaneous," and specify the program in the "comments" section.

Subs Needed For All Grades & After School Program

Substitute teachers are needed for all grade levels and for the After School Program. These are paid positions with flexible hours. If you would like to be placed on the sub list, or have additional questions, please contact [Toni Jobes](#) regarding Preschool and the After School Program, and [Rene O'Connor](#) regarding grades Kindergarten through 8th.

Don't Wait: Participate!



Have you RSVP'd for the Mardi Gras Auction & Dinner yet?

Remember, each event ticket you buy puts you one step closer to **free tuition for a year!** Simply fill out the reply card that accompanied your invitation and return it to the school office. Tables are already beginning to fill up, so don't wait!

Want to volunteer? There are still opportunities! If interested, please contact Auction Co-Chair Raju Kattady at rajukattady@hotmail.com.



Digital Wish Technology Donations: St. Mark is now accepting technology-specific donations through Digital Wish. [Click here](#) to help equip our students with iPads and iPad carts, and feel free to share this link with family, friends and associates who might like to help.

Home & School Association (HSA) News



Scrip Gift Cards: ScripNow eCards can be ordered online year round, so continue to stock up for the holidays and beyond! [Click here](#) for instructions.

Book Fair: Thank you for making this year's Book Fair so successful! Proceeds total \$3,380 and benefit our school library.

Paper Pulling/ Reading: Help Needed! We are still in need of additional volunteers for Paper Pulling/Reading in two of the first grade classrooms: Mrs. Bongiovanni and Mrs. Hazzard. If you can help, please contact Erica Cremer at erica.cremer@gmail.com.

Junior Achievement: Help Needed! We are also in need of volunteers for Junior Achievement for the following teachers: Helm, Bongiovanni, Ostermann, and Pennartz. JA classes span five weeks, and each class is 30 minutes long. All teaching materials are provided. The volunteer works directly with the classroom teacher to schedule sessions that are convenient for both. If you have questions or would like to volunteer, please contact Julie Rogers at julie.rogers@chase.com.

REMINDER: All volunteers including Paper Pullers, Readers, and JA must be Safe Environment trained. [Click here](#) for more details.

Faculty and Staff Christmas Dinner: HSA would like to thank all of our families who helped with this year's Faculty and Staff Christmas Dinner by providing food, monetary donations and time. It was truly a wonderful evening that allowed us to show how much we support our amazing teachers and staff.

Thank You from the Staff: The entire St. Mark staff would like to thank Father Cliff, the HSA, and our wonderful school families for another special Christmas party. We enjoyed delicious appetizers and desserts provided by HSA families. Father Cliff prepared fabulous main courses and sides. Each staff member was presented with a Christmas bonus, a lovely Christmas ornament, and a very special, personalized gift. The HSA officers asked students to describe each and every staff member. They put the responses in "list" format, and enclosed them in beautiful, personalized frames. This was definitely the "hit" of the party! The students' responses ranged from hilariously funny, to truly touching. We had a great time passing them around and reading each other's lists. We are so blessed to be able to work in such a generous, loving, and FUN community, and we appreciate the amazing support you show us each and every year!



In Alumni News...

Alumni Visit: High school midterms are over and a few of our alumni (current seniors at Jesuit College Prep), celebrated by paying a visit to some younger siblings during lunch.



Student Council Presents High School Advice to 8th Grade: A couple of weeks ago, we told you that our Student Council officers Nicola L., Savannah H. and Janice R. interviewed two St. Mark alumni from the Class of 2011 who are currently serving as Student Body Presidents at their respective high schools: Emily Patton (Ursuline) and Alexander Erturkuner (Jesuit). Both agreed to be interviewed through the St. Mark "Lions Mentor Lions" program. On Tuesday, our officers presented an overview of these interviews to the 8th grade classes. High school application advice, and tips for their freshman year of high school, were highlights. [Click here](#) to see the press release about this exercise, as well as a complete transcript of the interviews.

Alumni Invited to Visit Over the Holidays!

Calling all alumni! We know that many high school and college students will be home during the holidays. St. Mark resumes classes on Monday, January 5. Any alumni who are still on vacation are invited to come back and visit our campus any day that week! They can say hello to former teachers, have lunch with a sibling, check out their class composite photos, and see the updates we've made to the school. They simply need to check in at the front desk. We'd love to see them!

At St. Mark, We Serve.

5th grader Thomas W. recently spent some time volunteering at Catholic Charities of Dallas where he handed out food and toys to the needy. He chose to do this on his birthday and delay his celebrations. Nice work, Thomas!

Check Out the New "Brag Board" Beginning in January

Each month, a different grade level will be showcasing its projects and artwork on our new "Brag Board" located in the hallway leading to the Cafeteria. Be sure to check it out as you walk by! 5th grade will start things off for the month of January!

Seeking Host Families for St. Mark NET Team

Your kids have gotten to know and love the St. Mark NET Team this year through their weekly Wednesday school lunch. Now, you have the opportunity to have an unforgettable two weeks at home by hosting two NET Team members! We have a need for more families to sign-up to host for two weeks at a time between mid-January and May. No extra rooms/beds required; they travel with sleeping bags. Thank you for your generosity in supporting this

program that is doing so much good for the youth at our parish and school! Please contact Megan McQuaid for more information at mmcquaid@stmarkplano.org or (972) 578-9583.

Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP)

The next Women's Christ Renews His Parish retreat (CRHP) is January 17 and 18. Life gets busy with our many, many demands, but taking one weekend to spend with the Lord will be worth it. As the year 2015 begins, you will have an opportunity to say, 'Here I am, Lord'. In His gentle love, you might hear Him say, 'I am here for you.' You can learn more about the weekend and register online by going here: <http://www.stmarkplano.org/index.cfm?load=page&page=328>

Correction to Last Week's Bulletin

Emma Q. was a member of the team that won the blue ribbon in TV commercials at the recent Diocesan Speech Tournament.

Seen & Heard Around St. Mark

Class Christmas Parties: Thank you to our HSA Room Parents for all of the fun class Christmas parties today. From preschool to middle school, our students had a jolly good time! What a wonderful send-off before the Christmas break!

Annual Christmas Pageant: On Thursday evening, our students presented the annual St. Mark Christmas Pageant for family and friends. It always reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas. Thank you to all of our students for their hard work, as well as our amazing teachers and staff who have been preparing them for weeks. A special thank you to Father Cliff who makes it all possible through his vision and talent (it is Father Cliff himself who directs the program and creates the elaborate costumes for the children). A spectacular job by all!



Middle School Says "Merry Christmas" to Seminarians: On Tuesday, Mrs. Denvir delivered the many cards and gifts that our middle school "Secret Santas" prepared for the Holy Trinity Seminarians. It took more than two hours to set-up the extensive gift table in their dining room. The seminarians were so surprised and so grateful for the outpouring of support and generosity from our students. See a photo below and check out our [Facebook page](#) to see the response from the seminarians!



Seminarian Ivan Torres Serves at Mass: We had a surprise visitor at Mass today, Seminarian Ivan Torres, who has been making rosary bracelets for our 8th graders. He helped serve at Mass, then spent the morning visiting students in their classrooms. The students were thrilled to have him with us, and we are grateful that he was given permission to come to St. Mark today. See more on our [Facebook page](#).

3rd Grade Learns from Patriotic Paws: For the 13th year in a row, representatives from Patriotic Paws visited our third grade class and taught the students about how dogs are trained to serve wounded veterans. They saw how a service dog can provide assistance including opening the refrigerator door, picking up dropped items, and providing comfort by sitting in its owner's lap.



4th Grade Researches Global Christmas Customs: 4th grade has been researching Christmas traditions and customs around the world this month. The students each completed a report about food, customs, decorations and weather in their country during the season and brought in an ornament representing their country.

Band Concert: Our very own St. Mark band presented a holiday concert to students and staff on Thursday. Everyone sang along as they performed a variety of tunes including Christmas songs. Great job!





Lion Pride! Just one of the many reasons we're so proud to be St. Mark Lions...

St. Mark Band Wins: Congratulations to the St. Mark Band. They recently won first place in the Youth Division at the Richardson Christmas Parade and beat out 137 other entries!

Principal's Corner

As amazing as it may seem, the first half of the school year is rapidly coming to an end. We've participated in the parish carnival, hosted numerous HSA events, 5th and 8th grades took trips to The Pines, we met a real life cow, completed ITBS & CogAT testing, went on visits to high schools, had visits from high schools, 2nd grade received Reconciliation, and we introduced fall Enrichment Clubs, just to name a few. No wonder everyone is excited about our upcoming Christmas break! But during Advent, it is time to slow down and be aware that, in the midst of our busy lives and preparations for the celebration of Christ's birth in ancient Bethlehem, Christ is reborn in the Bethlehems of our homes and daily lives. And we do this by being holy people — kind, patient, generous, loving, laughing people — no matter how chaotic the Christmas rush. Please accept the following prayer as my gift to you as we slow down and reflect on the many layers of wonder that unfold through Advent.

Christmas Prayer

Lord, in this holy season of prayer and song and laughter, we praise you for the great wonders you have sent us: for shining star and angel's song, for infant's cry in lowly manger. We praise you for the Word made flesh in a little Child. We behold his glory, and are bathed in its radiance.

Be with us as we sing the ironies of Christmas, the incomprehensible comprehended, the poetry made hard fact, the helpless Babe who cracks the world asunder. We kneel before you shepherds, innkeepers, wisemen. Help us to rise bigger than we are. Amen.

Merry Christmas and Prayers for a Blessed New Year!

