



The Line

Diocese of the West



February 2016 Vol. III Issue 1

Bishop Win Mott: bpwinmott@gmail.com

DOW Assistant: Cherie Salmon-dowbishopassistant@gmail.com

Editor: Susan Peterson - smprrp@sbcglobal.net

Hello Brothers and Sisters in Christ

As we begin this Lenten season, I'd like to share this reflection with you:

Someone once said that to recognize the signs of God, pay attention to your stirrings. Look closely when you feel the swell of joy within, or the tightness as your throat closes up in sorrow. Live in that moment, poke around in its corners, and feel the texture of its walls. Sit with it for awhile, long enough to sense the presence of God sitting with you.

For many of us, this attention falls in the realm of discipline. We are so consumed with the goings-on around us that slowing down and looking inward requires a determined act of will. For Christians, Lent is a time to do exactly that.



Explorefaith.org

The Bishop's Corner

Getting There

Many years ago, when I lived in Dubuque, Iowa, the largely Roman Catholic population there liked to call Lent the "peanut butter season," because in those pre-Vatican II days, it meant an obligatory season of no meat in the lunch bucket. Such thoughts are not uncommon among us as well, as many prepare to give up something for Lent. For some, it is utilitarian, a chance to shed some of the Christmas pounds added on. For others, it is a way of reminding themselves of the sacrifice of Christ by a little dietary denial.

None of this is a bad thing. But Lent is most importantly not a season in itself, but a crucial part of Easter. Just as Advent is a preparation for the Christmas feast, so Lent is preparation for the forty days of Easter celebration. In the distorted world around us, Advent has become the Christmas feast, and Christmas season a time of recovery, interrupted by New Years. Lent has been essentially ignored, being seen as unnecessary, a negative in an era of positive spiritual thinking. God should be grateful that we remember him at Easter, so the reasoning

The Bishop's Corner (continued)

goes, and not expect some kind of extra effort.

So we need to depend on each other for sharing the Lenten pilgrimage. And it is indeed a pilgrimage, an interior trip through the wilderness of our soul to reach the fulfillment of the promises of God, accomplished by him in sacrificial, painful love, and in Resurrection. Those who skip all that and go directly to the gladness of Easter will have no real clue what the excitement is about. On the other hand, those who have made Christianity into a year-long Lent, filled with denial, rules to be kept, judgement and condemnation of various activities and people, and (self) righteousness to be upheld, will have no excitement at all.

For the rest of us, the Easter pilgrimage begins on Ash Wednesday with the reminder of our own mortality and inability to return to paradise through our own sin, which has exiled us from God and his goodness. In the spiritual inventory which follows, it is tempting to stack our good deeds in one mental pile and our bad in another, and assess that the former is higher than the latter, and therefore, you are mostly OK, and I am all OK. This is good Buddhism. But it fails to understand that the problem is not sporadic sins, but essential sin, the basic separation of yourself from God, an exile from which you cannot return, having been deported from paradise most forcefully and absolutely. For we do not live in paradise, not even on weekends and holidays. We live in a world which continually outdoes itself in proving how sick, evil, destructive, and selfish it is, and how far from the love of God it is. Each of us is part of that world. We are not aliens who have been parachuted in from

paradise, but beings who are fully participating in this world. That we are better than our neighbors is a comforting but false illusion.

“And there is no health in us.” In that thought, the pilgrimage can begin. We are utterly, completely, and wholly dependent on the mercy of God, now and in the age to come. The journey is entirely a trip in hope of being led in our blindness, out of our dire situation. It is a pilgrimage which begins in the negative, to understand that we bring nothing to the table except repentance. Once we understand that we cannot do this by ourselves, not even in the smallest part, progress can be made. The rest of the pilgrimage is the deepening understanding of my sin and alienation, revealed as I become strong enough to see and accept it, and the deepening understanding of the profound nature of God's love culminating finally, in the traumatic depths of the Cross, and exhilarating heights of the Resurrection. It is thus, a pilgrimage towards both reality and joy, of losing illusions about both world and self, and gaining insight into the historic acts of God for us and all his world. One is left panting at the end, overwhelmed with the final destination: “Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice,” for “this is the Day the Lord has made.” Then the words of the Easter epistle can be dealt with in perspective, “therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Bon voyage. Vaya con Dios.

Your bishop,

+Win



The Bishop's Corner (continued)

From the Sublime

In news from the Diocesan front, we continue to grapple with the decision made for us that we are no longer to function as a Diocese. Such processes can cause misinformation and confusion. So let me try again to make it clear. I will attempt to make it simple, but PLEASE contact me if you have questions. I am very happy to deal with any and all questions. I am not happy to deal with rumors and gossip.

This time, I will outline what you need to do first, and then repeat the summary of what has happened. You only need to read the first part if you don't want extra information. So, PAY ATTENTION, hear we go:

1. On April 6, 2016, the Diocese of the West will cease to function.
2. If you are a congregation, your VESTRY must act by then to choose a Diocese to belong to. Failure to act will mean you are in MDAS, but not in good standing. (In A FEW cases, some congregations' bylaws require a vote of the whole congregation: in ONLY those cases, a congregational meeting must decide.)
3. If you are a priest or a deacon, you must indicate to me by April 6, to what Diocese you wish me to send Letters Dismissory. (Those at Clericus going with MDAS have already done this: you may pass Go without further action.) Failure to act means you will be a priest or deacon in MDAS, NOT in good standing.

4. You have two choices:

a) The Diocese, by unanimous vote of the Standing Committee, is organizing the "Convocation of the West," to continue our community.

All who choose to join us will be going to the Missionary Diocese of All Saints (MDAS). Each parish deciding to be in the Convocation must accept the Constitution and Canons of MDAS. A sample form to use and send to me as Bishop is as follows:

"The Parish of (your church name) hereby accepts the constitution and Canons of the Missionary Diocese of All Saints as its diocesan authority," attested by the signature of the clerk of the vestry.

b) Parishes wishing to join another Diocese need to send me a request for a letter of transfer, also attested by the vestry clerk, that a vote of the vestry (or congregation, if your by-laws require it) has favored the diocese chosen. I will act on all requests by April 6, with one exception; if the parish is significantly divided, I will not authorize a transfer to another diocese, and we need to talk.

There, was that so bad? Please pay attention to only this information, not to someone else's idea. I realize the joint letter from Bishop Grote and myself was also confusing. Ignore it, and read the above.

Now for the summary of what has led to this optional reading; (many have already seen this.) I announced my retirement to Archbishop Foley Beach, effective August 31, 2016.



The Bishop's Corner (continued)

This triggers a sustainability review by the ACNA to ascertain whether a diocese meets the ACNA minimum requirements of 12 parishes, each with an average Sunday attendance of 50 or more and a total for the diocese of 1000, or if there is some extenuating factor which means the requirement should be waived.

The Archbishop, being collegial, asked the Reformed Episcopal Church for their recommendation, since we are an REC diocese. The REC bishops recommended the diocese not continue and not elect a new bishop, but rather become a convocation within another diocese.

Our Standing Committee realized that the ACNA would be extremely unlikely to overrule the recommendation from the REC about one of its own dioceses and there was no point in proceeding with the sustainability review. The Standing Committee thus accepted the recommendation to transition to the "Convocation of the West," and looked at possible dioceses to join. The Committee unanimously chose the Missionary Diocese of All Saints, as being most compatible with our community. Reasons are available on request.

Thus, we are now in the details of the transition.

SYNOD

The final Synod of the Diocese of the West (unless and until it rises again), and the initial Synod of the Convocation of the West will be held together April 5-7, in Boerne, Texas, hosted by St. John's Parish. It will be Tuesday evening to Thursday noon. Details will be forthcoming from them.

All priests and deacons are voting delegates. In addition, each parish is entitled to two voting lay delegates selected by the parish. Voting in the Convocation will, of course, be restricted to those who are part of the Convocation. Meetings are open to all who wish to observe as visitors.



Parish News

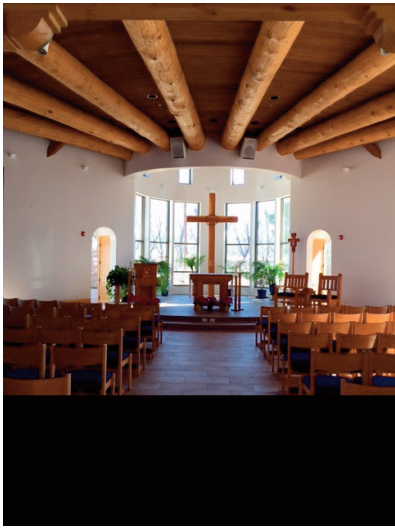
The annual clericus for the Diocese of the West was held on the first of February, at the Holy Cross Retreat Center in Mesilla Park, New Mexico. The theme of this year's meeting was "Journey Through the Kingdom." The purpose of the clericus is for clergy and interested lay ministers to come together as a community for worship and continuing education. Bishop Mott gave four presentations on the importance of sacramental and eucharistic life within our own lives, as well as the lives of all members of the church, along with some thoughts and ideas on teaching its principles. Bishop Mott used the prayer book liturgy of Holy Communion as the foundation of that life within the church.

An excellent summation of the presentations, with additional insights, was given by Father Chris Linebarger in his sermon which he preached during the Tuesday afternoon Pontifical Eucharist, on being the church in the 21st century.



Parish News (continued)

We all learned much, not only from the presentations and sermons, but also from the lively discussions that always seem to happen whenever we meet together. It is the fellowship and the sense of community that makes the clericus an excellent environment, not only to learn from one another, but also to discern anew what God is calling each of us to do for His Kingdom.



The Beautiful Chapel at Holy Cross Retreat Center

Parish News (continued)

Homily for The Presentation of Christ (Candlemas)

Listen once more to the opening line of Malachi's prophecy: "BEHOLD, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts."

We know from the gospels that this messenger is none other than John the Baptist. We usually think of John preparing the way for Jesus in his

preaching on repentance and in his ministry of baptism, for this is indeed true. But Malachi sets a different stage for us concerning the messenger and our Lord. Since there is only six months between the birth of St John the Baptist and Jesus, it is clear that the prophecy meant that suddenly after the messenger, the Lord Himself will come. So, soon after John's birth, God entered His temple. Jesus' presentation signifies God's entrance to His throne room. The God made man entered His temple, and presents Himself to those who were really searching for Him.

This feast of the Presentation of our Lord is one of those days where so much is going on, no one title seems to suffice for the feast. So, the church has called it several things: the Presentation of our Lord, the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Candlemas, and early on in the East, it was known as the Meeting of the Lord and His Mother with Simeon and Anna, sometimes simply shortened to The Encounter. There are so many things to see and wrestle with in this gospel passage for this feast, that there is no shortage of material for homilies. And that makes us clergy really happy, right?

This afternoon I would like to briefly speak to you about the significance of our Lord's presentation in the temple, focusing on expectations and responses of three of the main characters in this story: Mary, Simeon, and Anna.

I grew up in the dispensational, evangelical world. And in that world, we took Biblical numbers seriously. We took them literally, usually when they weren't meant to be taken literally. A



Parish News (continued)

literal 1,000 year reign of Christ and not a day over. Cattle were grazing on exactly 1,000 hills of which God owned. But in taking these numbers literally, we missed the deeper significance of what these numbers symbolized. Indeed, we often missed the whole point of the story because we were so focused on the literal-ness of everything. Indeed, this is often our problem when reading poetry and prose. So, when I became an Anglican, I learned how to read the Scriptures afresh, with new eyes. And these Biblical numbers now leapt off the page.

Our gospel story today is chock-full of numbers, even the ones that are simply assumed, and we must not miss them, for they help to tell the story. According to the Mosaic law, and this is all spelled out in Leviticus 12, a mother who had given birth to a baby boy was considered unclean for seven days. This was not some arbitrary number. It is the number of perfection, fullness, completeness, and wholeness. It is the number of days for the creation. It is a reminder that man is made by God and belongs to him. It is a reminder that man was made good, but has brought sickness upon himself in sin. It is a reminder that God has provided a way to make man new again. But a woman was also to remain isolated for 33 more days after the 7 days “in the blood of her purification.” 33 is the age of our Lord when he was crucified. 33 plus 7 make 40. So when the forty days were over (and this was doubled if it was a baby girl) the mother was to “bring to the temple a lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtle dove for sin offering”; if she wasn’t able to offer a lamb, she was only required to take two turtle doves or two pigeons. Then the priest prayed for her and she was

considered clean.

During Advent, we wait expectantly for our King to come. We anticipate with great joy and fervent expectation like a mother waits with joy; who labors in great pain, because she instinctively knows and she’s confident, that at the end of her labor, there is going to be the joy of new life. He who cannot be contained was contained in this young girl’s womb. The omnipotence of the Creator made as vulnerable as a baby, flailing his arms against the cold and the dark. Laid in a feeding trough. Laid right in the midst of animal breath, and straw and manure. Laid in our midst, for us and for our salvation. The king of the universe, God himself, stoops down to take on flesh. God becomes vulnerable in Jesus Christ. He humbles himself and makes himself dependent upon us, upon Mary. And, as Pastor Eugene Peterson observes, “Jesus’ birth excites more than wonder, it excites evil - Herod, Judas, Pilate. Ferocious wickedness is goaded to violence by the birth of this child. Can this little infant survive the machines of terror? We want him to live. We need him to live. We long for his rule.”

Jesus is born, and for 40 long days the world waits with bated breath for the King of the universe to enter into his temple. 40 days, the sign of desert waiting. Why does Mary present herself and Jesus at the temple? Yes, it is to fulfill the prophecy of Malachi 3:1, but it is more. Our Lord was conceived by the Holy Ghost. Mary remains a spotless virgin and therefore, is not under obligation to keep the purification laws. In other words, she really doesn’t have to go to the temple for herself. But Mary isn’t interested



Parish News (continued)

in herself. She knows that God has entrusted the chosen Messiah with her. Mary's very soul magnifies the Lord. Her spirit rejoices in God her savior. Besides the law which obligated the mother to purify herself, there was a second law which commanded that the first-born son should be offered to God. Additional laws were wrapped up in these two laws. After a child was presented, it was to be ransomed with a certain amount of money, and then sacrifices were to be offered. Mary submits herself and her Son to these laws precisely, down to every last detail. She remains forty days at home, she denies herself the freedom of entering the temple, she abstains from all things sacred. And on the day of her purification, she walks several miles to Jerusalem, with the world's Redeemer in her arms. She waits for the priest at the gate of the temple. She then makes her offerings of thanksgiving and expiation. With the utmost humility and gratitude, she presents her Son to his Father, by way of the priest. Then Mary redeems him with five shekels, according to the law, and receives Jesus back for 33 more years. Mary is the ark. She is the quintessential sign of the church. Jesus will reside with her. Mary will raise and protect the King. And she will present Him to the Father once more, 33 years later, for the redemption of the world.

We encounter two more people in our gospel reading: two elderly, devout Jews whose lives are dedicated to prayer and fasting. Both Simeon and Anna have been waiting for Messiah to come. So have the Jewish leaders. The leaders of Israel were looking for God's Messiah to bring an all-out war that would bring God's violent justice swiftly and get rid of their enemies once

and for all, the Romans. But Simeon and Anna knew better. In their humility, they were able to see the very heart of God. Their lives were filled with prayer, and they learned how to love with the heart of the one whose name is love. When King Jesus arrived, they knew he was the one, because their lives were filled with the knowledge and love of God.

The Kingdom of God has come in Christ Jesus. On this day, we celebrate Jesus coming to his temple as King, even while he is yet a baby. This baby will grow in knowledge and stature, and in him the Father will be well pleased. He will suffer and die for his people, crushing sin and death, for his Kingdom is not one of violence, but of love.

My brothers and sisters, this is our hope. Mary presents her Son to the Father, and the Father establishes his Son's everlasting kingdom, and of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end. It is imperative that we see this, as did Simeon and Anna. The kingdoms of this world are based on pride, greed, and anger. We must enter into the life of the kingdom, which is built on humility, thankfulness, and love.

The Spirit of the Lord enables Simeon and Anna to recognize the Kingship of Christ, because they are humble and in tune with the God who is love. They are able to see and know the love of God. This is precisely the life we are to live. But how? How can we do this? How can we live under the Kingship of Jesus? In his fourth chapter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul calls on God's people to "Rejoice in the Lord always;



Parish News (continued)

again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.”

This is how we live and work in and for Christ’s never-ending Kingdom. Dostoyevsky, the greatest novelist of all time, in my humble opinion, said that “Beauty will save the world.” Be a lover of all that is good and true and beautiful. Be a lover of God’s wonderful creation. Be a lover of people. Read good books. Watch good films. Listen to good music. Cook and eat good food. Invite people into your life and into your home. Enrich one another with great conversation. Laugh together. Cry together. Pray together. Sing the Psalms together. Always have words of gratitude and thankfulness on your lips. Don’t let bitterness take root in you. And the moment you smell it creeping into your life... stamp it out! for this is the work of the devil.

Jesus says, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your

good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Do you see Jesus today? Do you trust that he has come into his temple and that the Father has established his Kingdom? He loves you and wants you to be filled with his love, for this is the life of His Kingdom. As we come to the table, may we know and experience the love of God in Christ, who has come to rule both in this world and in our hearts. Amen.

Father Chris Linebarger, Christ the King Anglican Church



Parish News (continued)

The Fruit of the Holy Spirit: Patience

The virtues of love, joy, and peace link hands with one another, it seems to me, but patience, in my view, links hands with them all since patience is strengthened by all the preceding virtues. St. Paul in I Corinthians 13 states that God’s love (agape) is patient and kind (verse 4). Of course, it is the Holy Spirit who lives in all





Parish News (continued)

these virtues and produces them as His own harvest in the lives of Christians. St Augustine of Hippo wrote of the Holy Spirit as the *vinculum caritatis*, or bond of love between God the Father and God the Son in the Blessed Trinity, and I rather like the idea of the Holy Spirit Himself inspiring, producing, and linking all these virtues in love and harmony, as if they were all brilliantly glowing gems in a beautiful necklace worn by the believer.

Patience accompanies faith in the life of the Christian, as we are reminded in St. James 1:2-4, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

When our faith, or our faithfulness, is being tried or tested, this process produces and enhances our patience. St James encourages us to allow patience to be fully produced and improved in our lives, so that we may be mature and whole, lacking nothing. Some people, we know, seem specially endowed with the virtue of patience, while many of us struggle with the exercise of this virtue. Yet for all of us, the testing of our faith produces patience. The more patient we pray to become, the more testing we must endure.

However patient we may think we are, we could always be more patient. St. James defines the full extent of patience thusly: “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long

patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” St James 5: 7-8

We are called to be patient until the coming of the Lord! A little later in chapter 5 of his epistle, St. James exhorts his readers to remember the prophets who spoke in the Name of the Lord, and Job as examples of suffering affliction patiently. (St James 5:10-11) To suffer affliction patiently means that we behave well while enduring meekly the trials and opposition we encounter by being faithful witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ. How well we behave while we are waiting and enduring is a sign of our patience. Grumbling, complaining, and finding fault with others are signs of impatience rather than patience. Therefore, in St James 5:9, following the exhortation to be patient, St. James warns, “Murmer not one against another, that ye be not judged: behold the Judge standeth before the doors.”

Patience and endurance are mentioned often in the New Testament, and sometimes the Greek word for endurance is translated as patience. Endurance has more to do with our attitude and steadfastness under trials, whereas patience applies not only to endurance, but to how much we can endure both trials and peoples’ faults or mistreatment of us. An old synonym for patience is long-suffering. Can we suffer long the behavior of certain people, especially if they are family members? Matthew Henry interprets the virtue of patience in Galatians 5:22 as “patience to defer anger and a contentedness to bear injuries.” The opposite of patience is impatience, which





Parish News (continued)

can quickly lead to irritability and anger. It may be helpful to imagine patience linked hand-in-hand with peace on the one side and kindness on the other, since if we are filled with these virtues, then we shall have patience with others, and with ourselves too.

Throughout Holy Scripture, the Lord God is proclaimed to be long-suffering and to treat mankind with patience. (Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Psalm 86:15; Romans 2:4; 9:22) St. Peter goes so far as to say that we must consider the long-suffering of our Lord as salvation. (II St. Peter 3:15)

J.I. Packer wrote, “Patience does not just grin and bear things, stoic-like, but accepts them cheerfully as therapeutic workouts planned by a heavenly trainer who is resolved to get you up to full fitness.”

In view of God’s patience with us all, how patient we ought be with everyone, as well as with ourselves, and in all our trials, how meekly we should endure until the Lord delivers us of them all!

The Reverend Christopher Parrish - St. Luke’s Chapel in the Hills Anglican Church



Prayer Requests

Continue to:

Pray for our Christian Brothers and Sisters in the Middle East and North Africa who are being persecuted for their religious beliefs.

Pray for God to lead us in the Diocese of the West as we all move forward. May our choices always be His will.

Pray for those confined to hospitals and nursing homes. And to those who provide care for them.

Pray for the leaders of Christ’s Church, and especially our own Bishop Mott.



Hint of Humor





Late Breaking News:

St John’s Anglican Church in Boerne, Texas is delighted to host this year’s Synod. We have been looking forward to an opportunity to host and this year we have the facilities that will accommodate the event.

information on the Synod, go to our web site at <http://www.stjohnsboerne.org/>. See you in April.

Fr Don+

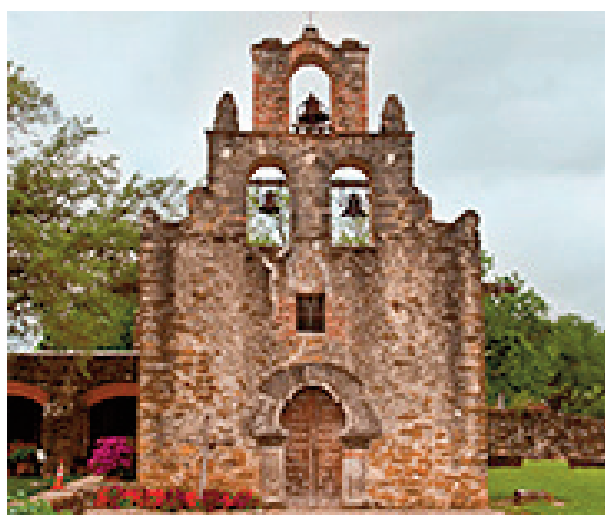
Boerne is a unique small city, population approximately 12-15 thousand. Main Street is lined with art galleries, boutiques and antique shops, and is a short drive from St. John’s. If time allows, some may wish to take a look.

Likewise, San Antonio has places of interest for anyone wishing to spend additional time in the area. The Alamo, the River Walk, and the historic Spanish Missions are well worth visiting. My favorite is the Missions.

I realize it is difficult for many to come our way, distance being the main obstacle. Therefore, we have done our best to keep the cost of the Synod and the lodging to a minimum: Registration is \$50.00 per person; Comfort Inn and Suites, a short drive from the church, is \$75.00 per night, and includes breakfast.

San Antonio International Airport is approximately a 30-40 minute drive in non-rush hour traffic. The drive is all interstate highways. Depart on Interstate 410 westbound to Interstate 10 westbound. Exit 542 will bring you through town to FM1376, turn right at the EMS Station and St John’s is at the top of the first rise to the right. St. John’s is prepared to provide transportation to and from the airport.

We hope you will be able to join us. For further



Mission, San Antonio



The River Walk, San Antonio

