

PRESS RELEASE

St. Mary Catholic Church

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The Parish and Finance Councils of St. Mary's Catholic Church in San Saba have spent the last two years making plans to build a multi-use facility that will include a religious education center, parish offices, a fellowship hall and a kitchen.

In the Fall 2013, members of the parish spent several months evaluating the facilities considering the growth and overall needs of the Catholic community. It was determined that a new multi-use facility and renovation to the existing Religious Education Center would best fit the needs of the parish.

In addition to the Church sanctuary, St. Mary's currently has three buildings; the Parish Hall; the Office/Rectory and the Hedberg Religious Education Center. The oldest of these was built in the late 1800s and is now being used as a Parish Hall. Attached to the Hall are the Parish Offices and Rectory. These buildings have been remodeled and garages and porches closed in to provide the space needed. However, this series of attached structures were found to be in need of extensive repair, including foundation work; exterior wall bracing; windows; electrical and plumbing upgrades to meet codes; and renovation to meet ADA standards. The cost for such repair and remodeling would have exceeded the value of the buildings.

The third building, the Hedberg RE Center, was a three-bedroom house that was converted to classrooms and a small meeting room for religious education. The Religious Education Program has outgrown this building but it is structurally sound. Once a new multi-use facility is completed, this house will be remodeled to be used as the Parish Rectory.

This new facility will not only meet significant needs of St. Mary's it will also allow the parish to offer the use of the classrooms and hall to the community for adult and youth education and events. In 2015 and 2016 St. Mary's hosted the San Saba 4-H Club Summer Program, Mobile Health Screening and regional trainings. This new facility will allow the church to continue to host such programs and possibly add new events.

The Building Project is divided into three phases:

- Phase I: Construction of a multi-use facility that encompasses a religious education center, parish offices, a fellowship hall and a kitchen.
- Phase II: Renovation of Hedberg Religious Education Center allowing for a new Parish Rectory.
- Phase III: Removal of existing Hall/Rectory/Office structure and installation of parking and landscaping.

On Nov. 9, 2016, the Most Rev. Daniel E. Garcia, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Austin and Rev. Javier Toscano, pastor of St. Mary's presided over a groundbreaking ceremony at the location of the multi-use facility. Students from the RE classes joined Bishop Garcia and Father Toscano in turning the first shovels of dirt.

"The event marked the first step of turning our dreams into a reality," said Bishop Garcia as he blessed the ground and turned the dirt.

More than 200 people assembled to witness this magical event and twirled in the excitement of seeing the first steps unfold before their eyes. The bishop called upon every one present to "pray for God's help to bring this construction to a successful completion and that all those who work on the project will be safe from injury."

This historical event could not have happened without the generosity of the St. Mary's parishioners; the San Saba Community and the Diocese of Austin. Together parishioners and non-parishioners have pledged \$301,000 towards the construction of this building and a matching grant was received that allows the project to move forward.

The groundbreaking signifies the start of Phase I with completion planned in Summer 2017.

Funding is in place for Phase I; however, fundraising is ongoing for Phase II and III. The St. Mary's team will graciously continue to accept pledges and one-time donations. Anyone wishing to receive more information on the project or how to make a contribution may contact Joanne Weik at (325) 205-2175 or marycc@centex.net.