

St. John the Evangelist

Catholic Church

Founded 1961

When the Diocese of Austin began in 1948, there was no Catholic Church in Marble Falls as there were very few Catholics in this area. When the granite quarry became busier and people came to enjoy the lake, more Catholics began working on the area ranches.

A man named Herbert Huber moved his family here from Ohio, and asked Bishop Louis J. Reicher if anything could be done about having Mass in their home.

Father Elmer Rupp, a priest from Burnet celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in Hubert's living room each Sunday at noon. By 1954, attendance at the Mass grew sufficiently to warrant a mission. The growing "parish" wanted a permanent church and enlisted Bishop Reicher to listen to their plans for their dream. Bishop Reicher helped them buy a plot of land for the church. But the church was still just a "dream".

At this point, Faith began to move John Alexander's mountain. Mr. Alexander, whose company owned the granite quarries in Marble Falls at that time, became interested in the "parish" and its plans. He called Father Jeremiah Buttomer, C.S.C., a new priest who had replaced Father Rupp. He told Father Buttomer that he envisioned a solid granite church, and he would donate the stone to build it. The generous offer was made with the understanding that other sources would need to pay the remainder of the construction costs. Father Buttomer wrote to the Catholic Church Extension Society expressing his need for funds, and was given a gift of \$15,000, which the late Archbishop John F. Noll of Fort Wayne had donated. Now they had the "next egg" to guarantee the completion of the church.

Generous contributions came forth in the form of donations of time and money. Walter Cocks, Jr. donated the complete set of plans and supervised construction without charge. Robert Moore furnished all of the electrical equipment. H.L. Hicks and Glanville Smith contributed direction and technical knowledge, and Cyril Zierden served as a combination foreman and contractor for the project. Many of the Texas Granite employees donated their time and skills to fit our own Texas granite into the beautiful church we now cherish.

Jesse Castaneda and a group of volunteers built a 11/2 ft. granite "wall", which outlined the circular driveway at the front of the church. What was once a dirt road became a beautiful accent to the driveway. He also constructed the granite benches in the circular area as well as the lovely cross at the front of the church.

A temporary portion of the church was erected in December, 1957 and when the first Mass was held on Christmas day, it marked the first time that Catholics in the Marble Falls area were able to worship in a church rather than the tents and private homes in years past. Work on the completion of the church was begun in January 1960 and completed on December 27, 1961. It was named St. John's in honor of Saint John the Evangelist, and dedicated on his feast day.

"Your faith will move mountains" (Mt. 21,20:22)

The church was built at a cost of approximately \$100,000, and boasted a variety of unique

features:

- 16 inch thick walls.
- Floors of polished granite with split joints that are set in a sand bed rather than on a concrete slab.
- A massive altar which weighs well over a ton.
- The crucifix above the altar is of hand carved wood and is flanked by two etched carved plaques. The one on the left is St. John the Evangelist, patron saint of the church and on the right is Our Lady of Guadalupe, patron saint of the two Americas.
- 14 Stations of the Cross made of Carnelian granite with sandblast etchings depicting the passion and death of our Lord.
- The altar, communion rail, candlesticks, baptismal font and holy water stoups are also of Carnelian granite from outside the state, but all other granite used is from the local granite quarry.
- Granite was even incorporated into the pews by means of 14 inserts, each a different color representing the Eastern, Western, Northern and Southern parts of the United States.
- The church was heated with an electrical heating system in the ceiling which produced radiant heat. Like rays of the sun, it warms the occupants directly without first warming the air.
- 800 lbs. Of granite was used in the cross alone which adorns the roof of the church.
- The outer walls are rough granite with sparkling particles which catch and reflect the sun's rays like crystals.

As the parish continued to grow the need for more space in the church became apparent. Mike O'Connor donated his time as general contractor to construct the West wing of the church. Again, John Alexander donated the granite for the project. The wing was dedicated in November of 1982.

When one looks at our church today, and the mountain from which its stone was quarried, we can hear the words of our Lord sound loud and clear "Your faith will move mountains".

As we celebrate our forty years, we pause to remember the generous donations of time, talent and treasure, all of which now proudly stands as an outstanding shrine to man's faith in the living God.