

The Millennial Cross



*St. Helena Parish
Feast of Christ the King
November 25, 2001*

November 25, 2001



Dear Friends in Christ,

This is a great day!

When we began planning the Millennial Cross, more than five years ago, we had no idea what we would become in the process.

As we made plans, changed those plans and even started over a few times, we truly became LONG DISTANCE RUNNERS! But more than that we were touched by the meaning of the cross. It became more than a symbol. It gave us the opportunity to look backwards and forwards at our Faith.

We looked back to see Jesus, the Son of God, who died on the cross because He loved us. We saw the early Christians who used the sign of the cross to mark the place where they would meet in secret to remember Jesus and break bread. We also remembered St. Helena, our parish patroness, who is known as the Foundress of the True Cross.

We look from the present to the future. In Scripture John says, "We are now God's children. What we shall be has yet to be revealed." (John 3:2)

We are God's children. The cross has touched us. The cross has changed us. How we will grow and change in the future is yet to be revealed, so we journey towards the New Jerusalem – Heaven.

The Millennial Cross faces out toward the world, and with a generally eastern bias it shows us the way to Jerusalem. We have no idea how those who see it and take a moment to pray will also be touched and changed. We do know that someday those who come to know Jesus and live in His love will be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is.

God bless!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leo M. Dolan".

Leo M. Dolan, Pastor

THE FRISENHAHN FAMILY

“I wanted to do something to honor my parents,” said Raymond Friesenhahn. “They struggled so hard on this land to hold things together. We raised cotton and corn. And this land had lots of wild game. Still, with all the things that happened, there was never enough money. Sometimes we didn’t go to the doctor because we couldn’t pay. We used things like kerosene for healing.”

“But somehow,” Friesenhahn continued, “even in the hardest times my parents were always able to feed the city relatives and anyone else who was hungry. They believed in helping. I wanted to leave their mark on this land.”

The mark Raymond and his wife, Frances, are leaving on the Friesenhahn land is a reminder of Jesus who also fed the hungry and gave his life for us. It is an enormous Celtic style cross known as the Millennial Cross.



THE MILLENNIAL CROSS



The Millennial Cross rises 77 ½ feet out of a concrete base and is located upon one of the highest hills in San Antonio. The cross faces east in keeping with the Church's early tradition of building its large cathedrals with the altars facing east toward Jerusalem and the resurrection. In the past this general east-west alignment was also used when planning cemeteries. Bodies were buried facing east.

The Celtic cross is distinguished by the cruciform or circle at the top. The circle symbolizes the one eternal God who never had a beginning and never will have an end.

The Celtic or "Ringed" Cross has special meaning for St. Helena's Parish. It is said that the Emperor Constantine looked up at the sun and saw a vision of the cross. The cross with the ring at the top became a representation of Constantine's vision. Constantine was the son of St. Helena, who is known as the founder of the true cross.

The lower panels of the Cross are made of polished Carnelian granite from South Dakota. The halo or ring at the top is made of black Academy granite from California.

THE PLAZA – A PLACE FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION

A six-sided, hexagonal shaped, plaza – a place for prayer and reflection -- surrounds the base of the cross. At each of the six angles of the plaza there is a granite pillar. Embedded in these pillars is lighting which projects onto the plaza and the base of the cross. Beamed lighting from the base illuminates the cross itself. The Millennial Cross is visible for many miles especially at night.

The Millennial Cross commemorates 2000 years of Christianity on earth. It is also a tribute to those bishops, priests, brothers, sisters and lay people who left their homelands to bring the faith to Texas. Gratitude goes out to the Friesenhahn family for this dramatic remembrance.





The Jubilee Logo was designed to celebrate 2000 years of Christianity. It hung in churches all over the world during the year 2000. This Greek cross is inscribed in a circular blue field symbolizing the universe. The cross sustains and upholds humanity gathered in the continents represented by the five doves. The cross is the same color as the doves, a sign of the Incarnation whereby God enters into human history and redeems it. The light that comes from the center of the design represents Christ, who is the light of the world. The colors of the logo remind us that joy and peace are an integral part of the Jubilee celebration. The cross is surrounded by the words CHRIST YESTERDAY, TODAY, and FOREVER.

The Jubilee Logo is sandblasted on the base of the Millennial cross in two places. One Logo faces the St. Helena's church buildings and one faces the outside world. In the logo, which faces the church buildings, the words CHRIST YESTERDAY, TODAY, and FOREVER are carved in Latin. In the Logo, which looks out to the world, the same words are written in English.

Sandblasting allows for shadings of light and dark to represent the colors of the Logo. The rougher texture is lighter in color while the smoother surface is darker.

INSCRIPTIONS

Six panels surround the base of the cross. They contain the following inscriptions:

Panel A - Erected in the Great Jubilee Year 2000, during the twenty-third year of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II: Most Rev. Patrick F. Flores, D.D., Archbishop of San Antonio, Texas, assisted by Most Rev. Bernard F. Popp, D.D., Most Rev. Thomas J. Flanagan, D.D. and Most Rev. Patrick J. Zurek, S.T.D., Auxiliary Bishops of San Antonio. Rev. Monsignor Leo M. Dolan, Pastor.

Panel B - “Dear Friends, we are now God’s children; what we shall be has not yet been revealed, but we know that when Christ appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)

Panel C – This cross is erected through the generosity of Raymond and Frances Friesenhahn, in memory of their parents and forbearers, who brought their families and their faith from their homes in Germany to Texas.

Panel D –

Rev. Msgr. Leo M. Dolan, Pastor
Rev. Kenneth Hannon, OMI, Liturgist
Morkovsky and Associates, Inc., Architect
Stoddard Construction Co., Contractor
Finance Council
Ralph Yzaguirre Don Malik
Michael Kachmer Raymond Friesenhahn
Judith Alm

Panel E - In gratitude to God who sent to the people of Texas, dedicated and courageous priests, religious and laity, who leaving home and family, nurtured the faith here by the witness of their lives. “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their works to the end of the world.” (Romans 10:18)

Panel F – “May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.” (John 17:21).

IS THE MILLENNIAL CROSS A SHRINE?

(A building permit was required before building could begin on the cross. Since the structure was technically not a building, Architect Bob Markovsky applied for a permit to erect a shrine. This lead to our closing question, Is the Millennial Cross a Shrine and a closing reflection.)

Over the years many of us have been touched by the stories of Bernadette, Juan Diego and the three children of Fatima. In these stories we meet God reaching out to ordinary human beings. Because we want to remember the action of God at these special sites we bless them and call them shrines. People visit shrines to pray for special intentions, to give thanks and to rededicate themselves to being Christ for others.

How does the Church define a shrine? In the Vatican Document, *Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People*, written on May 8, 1999, by the Pontifical Council, a shrine is called “first of all a place of memory. The shrine recalls the memory of God’s powerful activity in history, which is the origin of the People of the Covenant and the faith of each believer.”

“In the second place the shrine recalls God’s initiative and makes us understand that that initiative is the fruit of pure gift and must be accepted in the spirit of Thanksgiving. One approaches a shrine above all to give thanks; conscious of the fact that God loved us even before we were capable of loving God.”

“In the third place as a memory of origin the shrine shows that this sense of awe and thanksgiving should never be separated from sharing with others and commitment to others...It would be fruitless to experience ‘time at the shrine’ if it does not then draw us to ...‘the time of service’ wherever God manifests Himself as love for the weakest and poorest creatures.”

So is the Millennial Cross a shrine? While it has not been the site of miraculous appearances such as Lourdes or Fatima, the Millennial Cross is certainly a reminder of God’s fidelity and his presence in our midst. The cross is a sign of Jesus’ unconditional love for us.

If we come to the Millennial Cross Plaza to remember God's gift of Jesus to give thanks for that gift and to rededicate ourselves to becoming Christ for others, the Millennial Cross can certainly become a shrine for us.

As stated in the Vatican Document on Shrines, "The mystery of the shrine does not only call to mind our origin in the Lord, it reminds us that once God has loved us He never ceases to love us....And we discover with the Israelites God's fidelity to each new today throughout history." And so, like Mary and John we stand at the foot of the cross and rededicate ourselves to becoming Christ for one another.

PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE



And so it is that the Parish of St. Helena, celebrating more than 25 years, continues to be a faith community of *People Helping People*. Like the early Christians who "devoted themselves to the apostles' instruction and the communal life to the breaking of the bread and the prayers" (Acts, 2:42) so also are similar activities carried out by the present day Christians of St. Helena's Parish. The communal life at St. Helena's is manifested in many ways – welcoming others, building community, inviting parishioners to use their talents and gifts, encouraging participation in parish activities, and honoring the cultural, racial and ethnic diversity of all those in the community.

As parishioners of St. Helena's look to the future, we must reflect on our purpose – a community of people called together by God and unified by the Holy Spirit. We must remember our beginnings of not only 26 years ago but also 2000 years ago and the words of Jesus, "Do this in remembrance of me."

Order of Blessing

At the end of Mass the assembly is led in prayer and then is invited to process to the Millennial Cross singing Psalm 98.

Deacon: Let us proceed to the place of dedication.

Response: We should glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Psalm 98: All the Ends of the Earth

Refrain: All the ends of the earth have seen the power of God;
All the ends of the earth have seen the power of God.

Sing to the Lord a new song, for God has done wondrous deeds;
whose right hand has won the vict'ry for us, God's holy arm.

The Lord has made salvation known, and justice revealed to all,
remembering kindness and faithfulness to Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen salvation by our God.
Joyfully sing out all you lands, break forth in song.

Sing to the Lord with harp and song, with trumpet and with horn.
Sing in your joy before the king, the king, our Lord.

Used with permission, GIA license # 9128.

READING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Philippians 2:5-11

Responsorial: Psalm 22

Response: Let the coming generation be told of the Lord.

PRAYER OF BLESSING

The Archbishop prays the prayer of blessing over the cross.

Response: Amen.

Deacon: We worship you, Lord, we venerate your cross, we praise your resurrection. Through your cross you brought joy to the world.

**Response: We worship you, Lord, we venerate your cross,
we praise your resurrection. Through your cross you
brought joy to the world.**

Lift High the Cross

**Refrain: Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
till all the world adore his sacred name.**

Come, Christians follow, where the Master trod,
our King victorious, Christ the Son of God.

Led on their way by this triumphant sign,
the hosts of God in conquering ranks combine.

Each new-born follower of the crucified
bears on the brow the seal of him who died.

O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
your death has brought us life eternally.

So shall our song of triumph ever be:
praise to the crucified for the victory.

Used with permission, GIA license # 9128.

Deacon: This sign of the cross will appear in the heavens,
when the Lord comes to judge us.

**Response: This sign of the cross will appear in the heavens,
when the Lord comes to judge us.**

CONCLUDING RITE

Intercessions

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord's Prayer

Deacon: Let us depart in the peace of Christ.

Response: Thanks be to God.

SONG: ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH