

Catholic Daughters celebrate 100 years of service

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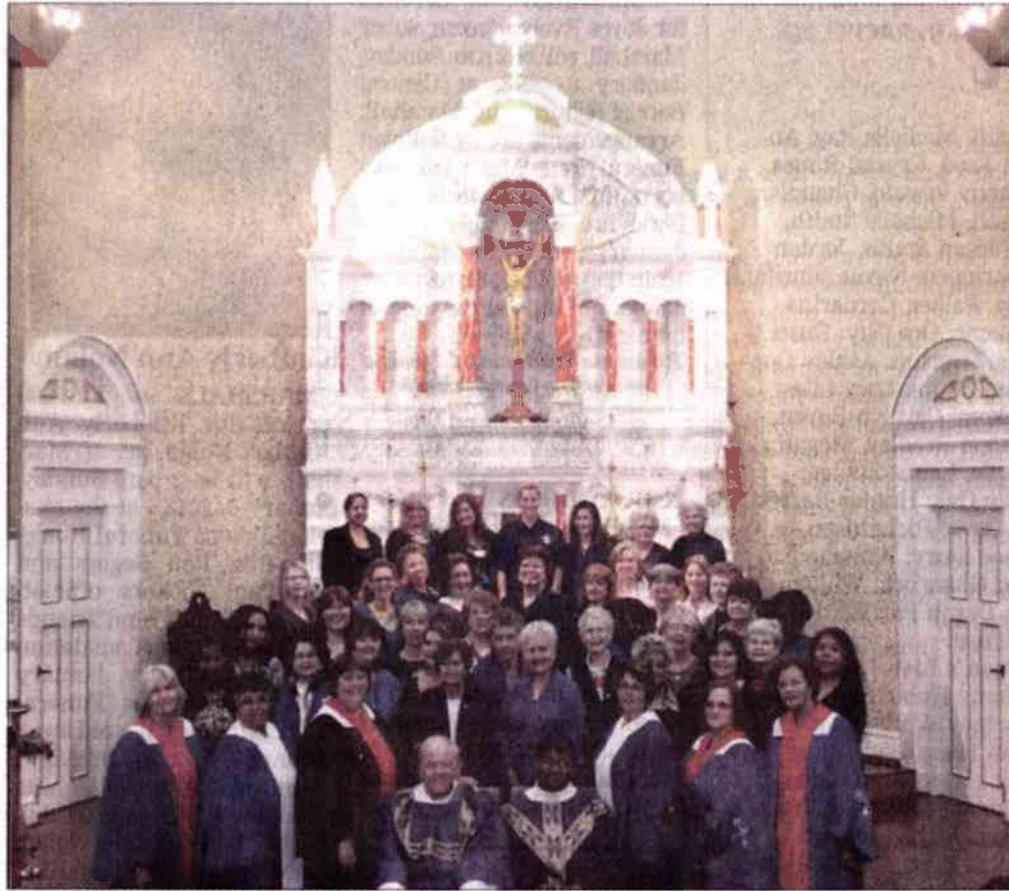
The local chapter of the Catholic Daughters of America will take time tonight to mark an historic moment; 100 years of service to the community, and to God.

"For over 100 years, the St. Joseph Court (of Catholic Daughters) has emulated its namesake, 'Santa Maria,' by seeing the spiritual face of Jesus in everyone," Father Denzil Vithanage of St. Joseph Catholic Church said in a letter to the group. "You have been willing to help where there is pain, poverty, sorrow or sickness. By practicing these charitable works, you are obeying Jesus when he told us that 'whatever you do for the least of these, you do to me.'"

Ft. Vithanage, as well as Bishop Joseph Strickland, will hold a special mass at St. Joseph's tonight at 5 p.m. to remember and acknowledge this group's history of service.

"Our motto is 'Unity and Charity,'" Laura Cisco-Kavanaugh, the group's Regent, said. "We are the women's organization of the Catholic church. Our Court, or chapter, is the second oldest in Texas after Austin. We have ladies from 18 years old to our oldest member that has been a Catholic Daughter for 72 years."

The group meets once a



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The local Catholic Daughters of America, Court Santa Maria #184, are pictured with Father Denzil Vithanage at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Marshall. The group will celebrate their 100th anniversary tonight.

month at St. Joseph's and engages the community in many service projects throughout the year.

"We give two scholarships to graduating seniors in the church each year," Ms. Cisco-Kavanaugh said. "We staff the

free meal the church hosts on the second Tuesday. The Blue Frog Grill donates the food and we serve. At each meeting we

put out spare change into a 'penny pot' that we send to the Franciscan Priests who have the leprosy colony. We give to the Madonna Plan that gives clean water to people in third world countries. In June, we have a salad supper and a baby shower where all the gifts that are brought are given to Living Alternative Pregnancy Resource Center for women who have decided to keep their children.

"Anytime Father Denzil says, 'I need...' we say, 'Ok.' We do whatever we can to help the church."

Following tonight's mass will be a catered dinner for the Catholic Daughters and honored guests, a dinner they have been preparing for, for 10 years.

"At the 90th anniversary some ladies got together and said for the 100th we need to start making plans to have it catered so we didn't have to work at our own function," Ms. Cisco-Kavanaugh said laughing. "Each November we've had a bake sale that went toward the dinner as well as several other fundraisers."

The group meets the second Monday of the month except during the summer when they don't meet. Their meetings themselves even serve the community.

"We each bring canned food

to our meetings that we then give to the food pantry."

These women have no plans to rest on their laurels in their centennial year.

"In February we are having a casserole sale for the Super Bowl," she said. "Our ladies make the best casseroles. The proceeds will solely fund the scholarships we give out in May. We are also trying to start back the Junior Catholic Daughters. We had a chapter but haven't had anyone to really step up and restart it. That's something that we are trying to get back."

"As Regent it takes a lot of time, but without all these ladies most of it wouldn't be possible but of course without God none of it would be possible."

Dues for membership are \$20 that includes State and National fees. Membership is open to any practicing Catholic women in the area.

"Most of the time, each parish has their own chapter, but we do have some women from Jefferson and Hallsville," she said. "Anyone from the area whose church doesn't have a chapter is welcome in ours."

Anyone who has been affected by this organization over the years is welcome to attend Mass tonight at St. Joseph's at 5 p.m. For information on the group contact the parish office at (903) 935-2536.