

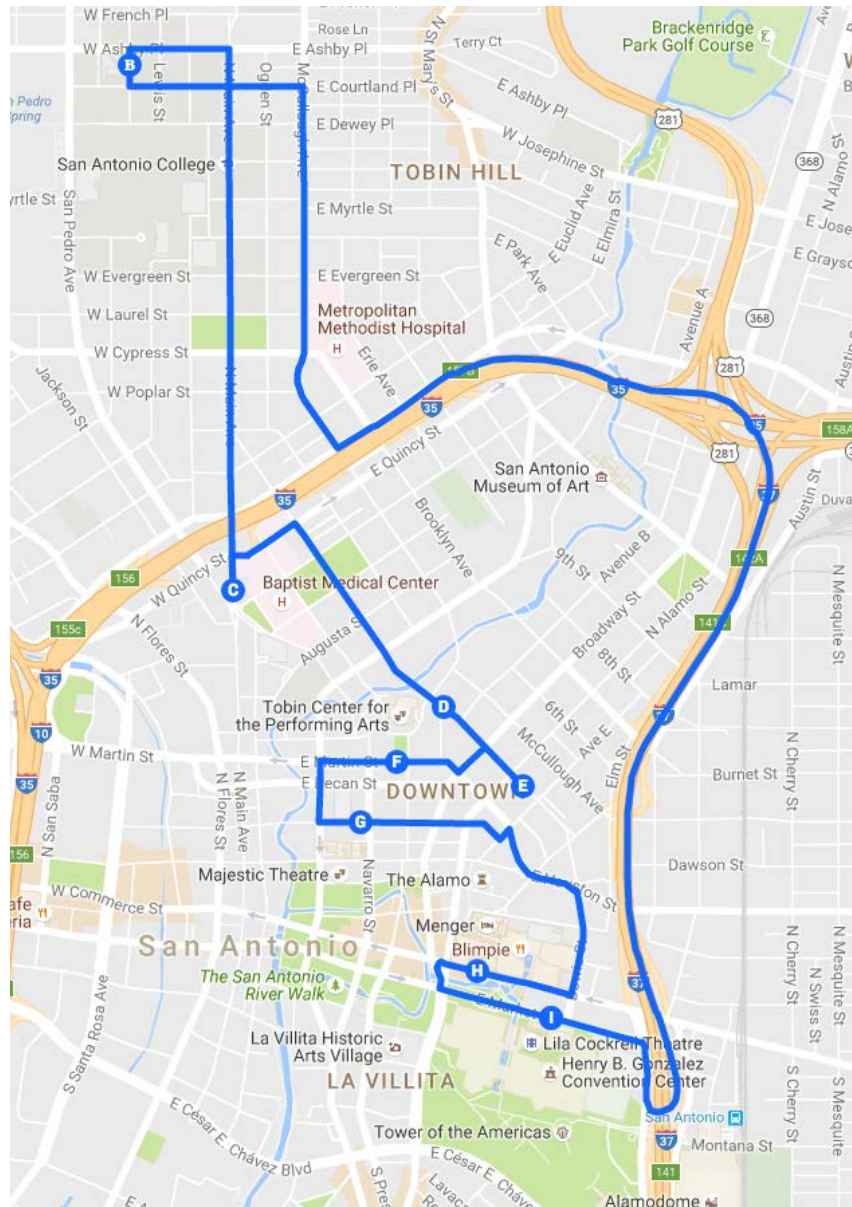
American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting

San Antonio, Texas, November 21, 2016

A21-221 Historical Houses of Worship Tour

Meeting place:

Registration area, outside Exhibit Hall 1, Convention Center



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Schedule

1:15 Depart (by bus) Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center (I)

1:30 Arrive **Temple Beth-El**, 211 Belknap Place (B)

2:00 Depart Temple Beth-El

2:10 Arrive Central Christian Church, 720 N. Main Ave. (C)

2:40 Depart (by bus) Central Christian

Drive by **First Baptist**, 515 McCullough Ave (D) (no stop)

2:45 Arrive **First Presbyterian Church**, 404 N. Alamo St. (E)
Use Avenue E entrance.

3:15 Depart First Presbyterian

3:20 (3:30 if walking) Arrive **St. Mark's Episcopal Church**, 315 E. Pecan St. (F)

4:00 Depart St. Mark's Episcopal

4:05 (walking) Arrive **Travis Park United Methodist**, 230 E. Travis St. (G)

4:30 Depart (by bus) Travis Park Methodist

4:40 arrive **St. Joseph Catholic Church**, 623 E. Commerce St. (H)

5:00 (or later) depart St. Joseph

5:05 (walking or driving) arrive **Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center (I)**

San Antonio overview:

European settlement in the San Antonio River region dates to 1718, when the Spanish established Villa de Bexar, consisting of a mission and presidio (fort). By 1731, upon orders from the Spanish government in Havana and Vera Cruz, fifteen Spanish families from the Canary Islands had moved to the region, and a town called Villa de San Fernando, after the Spanish King, was laid out. A mission to the Payaya Indians of the region, San Antonio de Velero (later known as the Alamo), was established by Fray Antonio de Olivares in 1744 near the head of the San Antonio River, which had been named for San Antonio de Padua. Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821, and Tejas was formed as a state of Mexico, with San Antonio as the provisional capital. The General Colonization Law of 1822 encouraged white settlement. In 1836 Texas gained its independence from Mexico after bloody battles at the Alamo (February 23–March 6) and San Jacinto (April 21). A year later, the new Constitution of the Republic of Texas declared the region a county, Bexar, with San Antonio as the county seat. In 1845, the region was annexed by the United States as the State of Texas, leading to war with Mexico. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 required Mexico to cede the territory, along with most of what is now the southwest region, to the US.

By start of the Civil War, the population of San Antonio had grown to some 15,000, including many German immigrants. After the war, in which San Antonio served as a Confederate depot, native-born Anglo immigrants, mostly from southern states to the east, moved into the frontier town, resulting in a mixed population of Hispanic, German, and Anglo. Soon, it became the largest city in the state, a position for which it would vie with Galveston over the next several decades. As the southernmost city on the Chisholm Trail, San Antonio provided supporting manufactures for the cattle industry, including barbed wire. These were central to economy of the city. It was also a key transportation, distribution, and military hub for points west.

Temple Beth-El

211 Belknap Place

(210) 733-9135

<https://www.beth-elsa.org>

Congregation: Jews came to San Antonio in the mid-nineteenth century with other immigrants from Germany. Galveston was the second busiest port for Jewish immigration at this time and many immigrants found their way from there to the bustling mercantile center that was San Antonio. As elsewhere in America, many of the early Jewish immigrants developed careers as merchants and bankers. Forty-four men came together in May 1874 to found Temple Beth-El. The new synagogue became a charter member of the Union for Reform Judaism which had been organized only the year before.



Temple Beth-El from Brownings at the English language Wikipedia

The early history of Temple Beth-El was shaped by the assimilationist ideals of the Reform movement, which emphasized social justice and ethical practice more than tradition ritual. Even before a building was constructed, the congregation had resolved to ban hats inside the synagogue. Prayer shawls were nowhere to be seen. Rabbis were referred to in the same manner as Protestant clergy as “reverend” ministers. The community’s first



Temple Beth-El, c. 1877, UTSA Special Collections, MS 362

temple, the term itself a mark of Reform Judaism, was dedicated at 202 Jefferson Street on Sept. 10, 1875. The congregation grew quickly, so the first building was razed and a second on the same site dedicated on Sept. 18, 1902. Many of the community’s rabbis were leaders in progressive causes. Ephraim Frisch (1923–42) was an outspoken supporter of teaching evolution in schools and of workers’ rights, and an

opponent of the poll tax and Zionism. Not all of his congregation appreciated his confrontational style. He was forced to retire in 1942 after a controversial letter decrying arrest of labor activists. His assistant and

successor, David Jacobson (1938–76) was a persistent advocate of racial desegregation. The congregation was on the forefront of women’s ordination hiring the first woman to serve in Texas as an assistant rabbi in 1979 and in 2014 hiring Mara Nathan as its senior rabbi.

Architecture: In 1927, Temple Beth-El opened its third building located slightly out of the heart of downtown. It was designed to seat 1000 people. The congregation has remained committed to remaining in this building in the center city rather than following many of its members to the suburbs. The stunning neo-classical, auditorium-style synagogue is typical of many Reform synagogues of the period. Especially noteworthy is the contrast between the earth tones of its dome and the whitewashed stucco of its exterior walls. The large, simple dome is visible from all approaches to the site and has become a commanding symbol of the congregation.

Iberian-Renaissance-style ornament extending to the top of the wall accents the tri-partite entrance. Tablets representing the Ten Commandments are at the top, Hebrew inscriptions appear above the side doors, while on either side of the front wall large tablets declare in English, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples” (Isaiah 56:7b). The building was designed by the local firm of Seutter and Simons. Malcolm G. Simon was a member of the congregation. Albert S. Gottlieb of New York, a specialist in synagogue architecture, served as consultant.



The soaring interior is light in color. The ark containing the Torah scrolls has bronze doors with seven-branched candlesticks recalling the ancient Jerusalem temple and is set in a huge classical marble frame. The arch above the ark declares in English “Thou Shalt Love Thy

Neighbor as Thyself” (Lev. 19:18b). This socially concerned theme is echoed in the scriptures set in some of the building’s art glass windows. Originally a pulpit desk stood in front of the ark. Now it has been replaced with a more open arrangement.

The various additions to the synagogue complex include the Dreeben Family Pavilion, a twenty-seven-foot square structure with glass walls and a dome that echoes the synagogues’. It was designed by the San Antonio firm Marmon Mok Architects.

Useful sources:

Temple Beth-El’s 125th Anniversary video (1999) may be viewed at https://www.beth-elsa.org/125th_Anniversary_Video

“San Antonio, Texas,” *Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities* <http://www.isjl.org/texas-san-antonio-encyclopedia.html>

First Presbyterian Church

404 N Alamo St.

(210) 226-0215

<http://fpcsanantonio.org>



Congregation: First

Presbyterian Church is the

oldest Protestant congregation

in San Antonio, established

with nine members in 1846 in a building remembered as “the Old Adobe” at the corner of Soledad and West Commerce. A second building was begun in 1860 at Houston and Flores, near San Fernando Cathedral. Delayed by the Civil War, this Gothic Revival structure was not completed until 1879. The church moved three quarters of a mile east to its present site in 1910.

Many pastors have served the church over the years. Louis Zbinden’s long tenure (1971–2002) was especially noteworthy for the increased commitment of the church to local and global mission. During his tenure, the church took a lead in establishing many outreach programs to the homeless and needy and those living downtown. These included a childcare center, a homeless shelter, and a dental clinic.

From the Civil War until Presbyterian reunion in 1983, the congregation was part of the southern Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Recent controversies within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) led First Presbyterian to vote in November 2015 to withdraw from the P.C. (U.S.A.) and affiliate with ECO: A Covenant Order of Presbyterians. This denomination was formed in 2012 for

churches “who desired to live more faithfully under the authority of God’s word” than they deemed possible in the P.C. (U.S.A.).

Architecture: First Presbyterian was completed in 1910 in a Gothic Revival style by Atlee B. Ayres (1874-1969), a San Antonio architect best known for his residences, but who also designed churches throughout Texas. In the eclectic vocabulary of American church architecture in the first decades of the twentieth-century, Presbyterians joined Episcopalians in often preferring Gothic, while Methodists tended toward Romanesque, and Baptists toward neo-classical. A spire was planned for the building, but never built. Later additions and remodelings in 1924, 1952, 1966, and 1988 have altered and extended the church complex.

The exterior of the building is rough-faced ashlar with a central set of doors flanked by battlement towers. The architect took advantage of the corner lot by placing a taller tower there.



Like many Protestant Gothic Revival churches from before World War I, this building does not have a clerestory of windows supported by interior columns, but a hammer-beam ceiling sheltering two ranks of pews with a center aisle and aisles along

the side. This facilitates a Gothic aesthetic with a maximum seating capacity. And clear sightlines to the pulpit and table for all worshipers. The interior is lined with stained-glass windows. Some of the older windows are non-pictorial designs of colored glass and Gothic tracery. Other windows contain scenes popular in Protestant churches of the period, including Jesus praying in the garden and Mary of Bethany sitting at the feet of Jesus.

The 1966–67 remodeling of the sanctuary moved the choir from the chancel to the rear gallery, installed a new pulpit to the side, and expanded the chancel. Among other things, this allowed for a stronger devotional and liturgical focus on the Lord’s table. Behind and above the table is a stained-

glass window of the ascension of Jesus. In keeping with historic Presbyterian liturgical practice, chairs for the ministers are located behind the table. The chancel is flanked by a tub pulpit on the left hand side and a baptismal font on the right. A celtic cross, often used as Presbyterian symbol, hangs over the chancel. The shields in the woodwork include the diagonal cross of St. Andrew, another reference to the denomination’s Scottish heritage.

For Further Reading:

Julius M. Gribou, Robert G. Hanley, and Thomas E. Robey, eds. *San Antonio Architecture: Traditions and Visions*. San Antonio: AIA San Antonio Chapter, 2007.

Central Christian Church

720 N Main Ave
(210) 227-5273

www.cccsa.org



www.andrewbutlerphotos.com

Congregation: Central Christian Church traces its history to May 1883 when David Pennington, a traveling evangelist of the Christian Church, visited San Antonio and began holding meetings. A year later a white-framed building was begun on Camden Street. The Camden Street Christian Church held its dedication service in July 1884. The movement to which the congregation belonged traces its origins to two church leaders in the Appalachian frontier at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Alexander Campbell of Pennsylvania and Virginia and Barton W. Stone of Kentucky. They sought to restore Christian unity by emphasizing simple fidelity to the Bible. Yet there are at least three denominations today that stem from them. The one to which Central Christian belongs is the mainline Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The continued growth of the congregation led to the building of a larger church on Main Avenue. Opening in 1903, it was brick and stone church in a neo-classical style with large art-glass windows donated by various members and societies of the church. Despite challenges during the depression, the church continued to grow steadily through intentional

evangelism and the wartime growth of San Antonio. Over the years, the congregation has supported the creation of many other Christian churches in San Antonio. In 1990 the congregation purchased land on Evans Road and established Stone Oak Christian Church under the theme “One Church, Two Locations.” In 2007, Stone Oak became a separate congregation taking the name North Central Christian Church. The current senior minister, Michael S. Passmore, came to the church in 2012. The associate minister, Nelson Torres, has served the church since 2004.

Architecture: This church was completed in 1950 to designs by Texas church architect Henry Steinbomer (1902–64). Between the end of World War II and his death, Steinbomer produced 150 church projects in Texas, 75 in San Antonio alone. He replaced the earlier domed church on the site with the familiar combination of portico and spire that was very popular in the mid-twentieth century. While the associations are to British Colonial America and beyond that to London churches of Christopher Wren or James Gibbs (such as the latter’s St. Martin-in-the-Fields), Central Christian was constructed using the characteristic San Antonio materials of tan brick and limestone. The open book in the front pediment signals the importance of the Bible in the Disciples of Christ tradition.



In the interior the exposed, dark roof beams and brackets suggest a Southwestern aesthetic in some contrast with the exterior. The center aisle leads to a chancel centered on the Lord’s table, reflecting the denomination’s practice of

weekly Lord’s supper and a baptistery reflecting its practice of believers’ baptism by immersion.

St. Mark’s Episcopal Church

315 E. Pecan St.

(210) 226-2426

<http://www.stmarks-sa.org/>



Congregation: Protestant Episcopal services were first organized in the region in 1850, by U.S. Army chaplain

J. A. Fish, who established the Trinity Mission. The mission met in various places in the early years. Military officers who participated included Colonel Robert E. Lee, who occasionally presided as a lay leader during services and would soon become the head of the Confederate Army. In 1858, a parish was organized with Lucius H. Jones as rector. Fish was a New Yorker and a member of the Ecclesiology Society, an organization dedicated to the study and advancement of Christian architecture. It was like at his instigation that the noted Anglican Gothic-revival architect Richard Upjohn was invited to design the church for the parish. Upjohn is perhaps best known for his Trinity Church, Wall Street, in New York City. The land for church, along with that for Travis Park and three other churches surrounding it (only two are extant) was donated by Samuel A. Maverick, one of the original signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence and later mayor of San Antonio. In the post-Civil War period, the neighborhood would become the home of wealthy residents.

Upjohn’s church design: Upjohn furnished plans and specifications for the modest-sized church that were inspired by the Gothic Revival the principles that the New York Ecclesiology Society (in conversation with the London-based Ecclesiology Society) had been developing for nearly two decades. The load-bearing exterior walls are of locally quarried limestone ashlar (finely cut square or rectangular masonry), supported by exterior buttresses topped with angled caps. The four bays house not pointed arched windows but broader ones consisting of an upper quatrefoil above three pointed windows, all defined by mullions of cypress (rather than the more expensive stone). Louvers under the windows provided for cross-ventilation during the summer. The large windows and louvers addressed the challenges of the warm climate. The steeply pitched roofline created a sharp gable on each end of the building, but the slope was interrupted partway down with



a concave angle to create a sheltering effect. The seven-sided apse is appropriately located in the east, requiring the congregation to face the direction of the risen Christ during services. The original door was located on the south side, facing Travis Park, and a

bell cote is tucked into the southeast corner of the nave. Inside, exposed timber trusses are supported by wooden columns and side brackets. Quatrefoil tracery within the trusses symbolizes the four evangelists. The basilica plan features a center aisle and two side aisles. A central pointed arch defines the transition between the nave and the elevated chancel.

Later additions: Construction began on the building in 1859 but was halted with the onset of the Civil War. Lee, the Rev. Jones, and others left to support the Confederacy. The congregation, whose numbers were diminished by the departure of the military, worshipped in the basement of the still incomplete First Presbyterian Church and later in Wolfe Hall, which the congregation purchased in 1869. St. Mark's, with walls completed only partway up, stood like a medieval ruin until construction resumed in 1873. The building was completed in 1875. Thus, the furnishings post-date the Upjohn period, although the rector and bishop's chairs resemble his earlier designs.

Several additions, renovations, and restorations have taken place over the years. The parish house and education building was completed in 1927 by local architect Alfred Giles. The church itself was significantly renovated in 1949 by architect Henry J. Steinbomer. At this time, the louvers were transformed into columbarium cotes, the nave was expanded, side doors closed up, and a new main entrance through a narthex beneath a 64-foot Gothic tower created. The cloister was also designed during this period by Steinbomer. The chapel was added in 1951. Restoration of the building to the earlier, Upjohn era, occurred in 2012-13.

Of Note: Lyndon B. Johnson and Claudia Alta (Lady Byrd) Taylor were married in this church on Nov. 17, 1934.

Further reading and helpful websites: Lewis F. Fisher, *St. Mark's Episcopal Church: 150 Years of Ministry in Downtown San Antonio, 1858-2008*. Maverick Publishing Company, 2008.

Texas Sacred Places Project.

<https://sites.google.com/a/sacredplaces.org/texas-sacred-places-project/index/list-of-counties/bexar-county/bexar-county---st-mark-s-episcopal-church/history>

St. Mark's Episcopal. "Architecture."

<http://storage.cloversites.com/stmarksepiscopalchurch/documents/Architecture.pdf>

Travis Park United Methodist

230 E. Travis St.

(210) 226-8341

<http://www.travispark.org/>



Congregation: In another example demonstrating close links between Christianity and the military in this region, a 26-year-old Texas Army colonel stationed at San Antonio, William Barrett Travis, wrote the *New York Christian Advocate* in 1835, requesting Methodist missionaries be sent to Texas. Although Travis, the commander of the Texas garrison at the Alamo died in the ensuing battle, missionaries were sent in 1837. By 1846, a church was organized by the Reverend John Wesley DeVilbiss. In the frontier town, the Methodists held services in a variety of locations until 1852 when they erected a small building, Paine Chapel, which housed the congregation or some thirty years. In 1883, having outgrown the now somewhat dilapidated building, the congregation purchased a lot at the present site and laid the cornerstone on Feb. 25. The building was completed three years later, with the first services in the auditorium occurring on Feb. 26, 1886. The congregation pursued several moral reform agendas, combatting "the open saloon, the card table, modern dance, and a whole train of kindred vices," as stated in an 1895 conference resolution.

Architecture: Constructed of loadbearing rough-faced limestone ashlar, the church exhibits an eclectic façade featuring Romanesque elements. The round tower anchors the building on the corner lot, and the auditorium fans out diagonally from this point. Round-arched windows, complex facades on the two street sides, and elaborate ornamentation in the form of hanging arches in the gables, rows of dentils, and triangular chevrons around the tower adorn the building. The original tall, slender spire was replaced by a shorter cap in the mid-20th century, and later replaced again with the current spire.

The original building was modest, with an auditorium seating 450. In 1901–2, the building was significantly enlarged, with additions on the south (back)



and east sides. The new auditorium, which had a moveable partition that allowed opening up the space to provide additional seating, could seat 1400 at full capacity. The curved pews and central pulpit stage was a typical arrangement for evangelical congregations during the period.

The congregation purchased the building next door, Harmony Hall, in 1910, and used it for Sunday school classes, choir rehearsal space, and a chapel. What was conceived as a remodeling project for the building in 1948 resulted in the reconstruction in the modernist International Style popular at mid-century. The



striking cruciform shaped stained glass window, a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Porter Loring, was installed in 1950. The Old and New Testament program of the window was conceived by architect Henry Steinbomer and the window was designed and executed by Joseph Meyer of the Jacoby Stained Glass Studio in St. Louis, Missouri. The window contains over 4,000 pieces of glass from several European countries.

Further reading: Josephine Forman, *We Finish to Begin: A History of Travis Park United Methodist Church, San Antonio, Texas, 1846-1991*.

Travis Park United Methodist. Who We Are: History.

<http://www.travispark.org/who-we-are/history>

St. Joseph Catholic Church

623 East Commerce St.

(210) 227-0126

<http://stjsa.org/>



Congregation: *Siehe die*

Wohnung gottes bei den Menschen [Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people (Rev. 21:3)] are the words inscribed on the cornerstone of this church, along with the date, 8 May 1868. And if the people are in the mall, the sentiment remains accurate. Surrounded on three sides by the Shops at Rivercenter, St. Joseph's stands on property that is reputed to have been the second site of Mission San Antonio de Valero (the Alamo) before it was moved to its present location in 1724. Indeed, this congregation, the fourth Catholic parish established in the city, initially intended to occupy the mission, but had to look elsewhere when it was retained for military purposes after the Civil War. Comprised of German immigrants, the new

national parish represented the changing demographic of a city in which Germans outnumbered all other Anglos (American, English, and Irish) combined: 5630 to 5475 in 1876 (Marmac Guide 247). Earlier parishes had been established for the city itself, San Fernando (1731); for the Irish, St Mary's (1856); and for the



Polish, St. Michael's (1866).

Architecture: Architects G. Friesleben (the city engineer for San Antonio) and Francois Giraud designed the Gothic Revival church, which features a smooth limestone ashlar exterior. The spare, tripartite front consists of a pointed arch entry portal beneath a small round window and bell tower (the spire was added in 1898), flanked by lancet windows. Exterior buttresses

support the interior vaulting and roof, and with pointed-arch windows define the bays. Inside, the church features the basilica plan with a single aisle and apse. The vaulted ceiling is supported by slender columns. The building was completed in 1871. Paintings of the Ascension and of the Virgin Mary flanking the altar, along with the stations of the cross, were created by Fuhrwek Pefferkorn, one of the first pastors of the church. Stained-glass windows, installed in 1902, were imported from the Emil Frei Art Glass factory in Munich. The building has undergone a number of reservation projects, including work in 1978 and 1999.



Of note:

*In 1892, congregants formed the still-renown San Antonio Liederkrantz, an all male choir devoted to preserving German liturgical music.

*In 1944, the congregation refused an offer to sell the property for the development of the new Joske's department store. The store was then erected around the church, resulting in a close-quarters architectural embrace that earned the church the nickname, St. Joske's.

*The church has been overseen since 1982 by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

Further reading:

Yves Gerem, *A Marmac Guide to San Antonio*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2001.

Ben Heimsath, "St. Joseph Proves Value of Holding Out."

<http://www.heimsath.com/sacred-space-holy-place/st-joseph-proves-value-of-holding-out>