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ARMED FORCES HONOR GARDEN GROUNDBREAKING DEC. 7

Saint Paul the Apostle Catholic Church in Horseshoe Bay will break ground on its Armed Forces Honor Garden at 5 p.m. Dec. 7, as the sun sets to memorialize Pearl Harbor Day. The public is invited to attend the ceremony.

When completed, the garden will hold five water scuppers in a fountain emblazoned with memorial stars, a restive area with memorial plaques, and a walkway of paving stones, to honor those who have served in the Armed Forces or made the ultimate sacrifice.

The garden is located on the grounds of the church at 201 Dalton Circle on Thanksgiving Mountain overlooking Lake LBJ and the Horseshoe Bay Resort.

“I am very happy to begin construction on our Armed Forces Honor Garden,” said St. Paul pastor Father Ruben Patíño, CSP. “More contributions are needed to finish the garden and I know our parishioners and others in the community will step up and help us complete this project.”

The church unveiled the ‘Lest We Forget’ statue of Jesus Christ embracing a U.S. soldier in a ceremony on Flag Day, June 14, 2015, launching the Catholic parish’s Armed Forces Honor Garden initiative. The statue -- along with the fountain -- will be focal points of the garden that surrounds them and is located in front of the Finn Family Life Center, adjacent to the church.

Since the unveiling, the parish has been conducting a silent donor campaign that has raised, to date, just over \$100,000. The original cost of the project was estimated at \$160,000.

Landscape architect for the project is Studio | 16:19 of Round Rock. Westway Custom Builders of Horseshoe Bay has won the bid to construct the garden.

The first of two phases will begin later in December, after the groundbreaking on Dec. 7. Westway owner Tom Classen estimates the first phase of the project will be completed within approximately 90 days.

The sale is underway of memorial stars honoring deceased military, and memorial plaques honoring family and friends who have served. Paving stones are also available to recognize the support of donors to the garden project.

Forms for memorial messages for the plaques and stars are available at St. Paul's parish office (830-598-8342) or by going to the web site at <http://stpaulshorseshoebay.org>. The Memorial Stars are priced at \$250; 5x3 plaques at \$200 or 15x5 plaques at \$600; and paving stones (15x3) at \$150 each. Other memorial opportunities, including scripture quotes, are available and those interested should contact Father Patíño at the parish office.

About the Armed Forces Honor Garden:

The idea for the memorial honor garden came from Father Patíño, who as a teenager was a member of the American Junior GI Forum in Corpus Christi, Texas. "Among my most poignant memories was being invited to be part of an honor guard to welcome home fallen American soldiers as they arrived at the airport and escort the bodies to their families in the small rural towns of South Texas," Fr. Patíño said.

The "Lest We Forget" statue was donated to St. Paul's by parishioners Gary and Patty Broad. A U.S. Army veteran, Gary was married to his wife Patty, originally from Canada, at St. Paul's in June 2014. When he learned of the statue and that it was created by sculptor Timothy Schmaltz, also from Canada, Broad considered it a "sign" for him to make a donation of the work.

For Father Patíño, the garden and the statue are a significant sign in our Christian beliefs: "I guess we can all find our own meaning to the title of the statue but for me it is about forgiveness and gratitude.

“Forgiveness because, as Christians, we are taught to respect human life; taking someone’s life goes against our beliefs. We can reconcile the issue from a theological perspective but the human dimension is another story.

“Somehow, we need to find peace with our lives and with our compromises; this has been a concern for all veterans of war. The statue evokes a feeling of gratitude, and the garden will provide a peaceful place for us to pray for our loved ones who have served our country loyally and contemplate how much we appreciate their valor and their service and their sacrifice.”