

This has been a good week. I am still basking in the glow of **Confirmation** last Sunday. It was wonderful to see so many young people receive this Sacrament of Christian maturity – after their months of diligent preparation. I was particularly moved by their participation in the retreats and in preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We asked our young people to consider making a “**Young Gentleman’s Pledge**” or a “**Young Lady’s Pledge**.” I was deeply moved by how seriously they took this pledge. Together with their parents and all those who support them in their journey, I want to do my part in helping them have a “beautiful love,” a love that for most will be realized in the Sacrament of Marriage, but for others perhaps in the priesthood or religious life. I am deeply humbled that several young people from our parish have approached me regarding discernment of God’s will for their future.

I want to again thank Kathy, Tania, Sharon, Susan, Jesse – and all those who made last Sunday’s Confirmation ceremony so beautiful. Bishop Elizondo, of course, brought his great enthusiasm and energy. What a magnificent man he is! As is inevitable, there were glitches and I will be doing an evaluation with the parish staff. If you have observations – things we did well, things we can do better – please let me know. **One of the things I want to do for our next Confirmation is to invite adults who have not yet been confirmed to participate.** Anne O’Neil can give a wonderful testimony! Below are some pictures of the newly confirmed. There were a lot of photographers so we all tended to be looking different directions, but **if anyone has a picture that shows the entire group, I would appreciate it for our parish records.**

This Sunday is **Education Sunday** for the **Annual Catholic Appeal**. I am grateful to **Doug and Lisa Sackman, Gerardo and Herlinda Vallejo**, for giving witness talks. This Sunday’s readings speak about our unity with Christ and his Church. The Annual Catholic Appeal is our way of supporting the work of the Church in Western Washington, of which St. Mary of the Valley is an integral part. I am confident that we will reach our goal of \$42,360.

Anything over that goal will come back to our parish in the form of a rebate. I want to dedicate the rebate to “**parish improvement.**” On Tuesday, I will be doing a “walk-through” of our parish facilities with some members of the Building Commission. This will help us formulate a plan for what we need to repair, maintain and improve. Some of the areas are obvious to all, for example, the bathrooms in the parish hall. Other things are part of our long range dream: for example, a larger hall, a better kitchen and a new playground for our children. In May I will have meeting with the Finance Council, Building Commission and Parish Council, at which we will discuss these needs and dreams. Meanwhile, I thank you for your support of the Annual Catholic Appeal so that we can have a rebate to address some of these needs.

And, of course, I thank you for your Stewardship to our parish in our weekly Sunday collections. We have sent out **quarterly reports** (January through March) to all who gave an identified donation to our parish. Out of gratitude I signed all the letters and prayed individually for the families who support our parish by Stewardship of financial resources. In addition, I am grateful to all who give of their time and talent as volunteers in the parish. We have accomplished a lot these past ten months and we will continue to do great things together.

I want to make a special invitation to our final **Generations of Faith**, this Wednesday, beginning at 5:45 with dinner. The following evening (April 29) we will have a special **“Peru Adventure”** presentation. **Aaron Howard**, who spent five weeks with me in Peru last October and early November, will give a slide presentation on the Peru delegation, the people we met and work of the Mary Bloom Center. Please come to learn more about this work – and how you can be a part of it. The presentation will begin at 7 p.m. on Thursday evening in our parish hall.

Finally, a few other invitations: This Friday I will be offering the 9 a.m. Mass as **“one month Mass”** for my brother-in-law Alex. On Saturday, May 1, at 9 a.m. I will offer a Mass to inaugurate a **month of prayer regarding immigration**. Whatever your perspective, I invite you to join with me in prayer. Obviously this issue deeply affects our parish and we need to ask God’s help for our nation and for all people who live within our country. For all moms, I invite you **to Mom’s Night Out** on May 6. That same evening will be **National Day of Prayer** here in Monroe. Speaking of moms, all parishioners are invited to the **“Festival for Mothers”** that our Hispanic Youth will present on May 8 – and the following morning, our 9:30 and noon Masses will feature **“Crowning of Mary”** with special Mothers Day Prayers. And for families with members, who will be sixteen by August of 2011, please plan on coming to the information evening regarding **World Youth Day** on May 26.



