

First of all, **congratulations to all of our Confirmation candidates!** After months of preparation, we have arrived at the great day. We welcome Bishop Eusebio Elizondo – and we ask that the Holy Spirit strengthen our young people for the great challenges they face. We always want to stand with them.

I encourage our young people to considering attending **World Youth Day**. On May 26 I will be having a meeting about how you can be part of our parish delegation or participate “virtually” in this great event. Parents with children who will be 16 years of age in August of 2011 are also welcome to attend. And, of course, I am looking for other adults who will accompany the young people and me on this trip to Madrid.

Below is a picture from the Easter Vigil of the neophytes as they received their baptismal candles. Also I have included some fun pictures from the Easter Egg Hunt. **Special thanks to Kathy King, Alan Cunningham and all those who brought such joy to our children on Easter morning.** You can see more pictures of these events at:
<http://stmaryvalleybloom.org/stmaryalbum.html>

Next Sunday is **Education Sunday for the Annual Catholic Appeal**. I am grateful to Doug and Lisa Sackman, as well as Gerardo and Erlinda Vallejo for their willingness to give a witness presentation. This is an important time for us to pull together as a parish – and to support the work of the Archdiocese of Seattle. By our contributions to the Annual Catholic Appeal we support youth ministry, the formation of seminarians, religious education of young people and adults, aid to the needy throughout Western Washington and the care of our retired and infirm priests.

I know that the recent media focus on our Holy Father has upset some. It will take time to sort it all out, but it seems to me to be more a matter of insinuations that substantial charges. **George Weigel** had an article (printed in *Newsweek*) that put the controversy in a broader context. Here is part of what he had to say:

The sexual abuse of the young is a global plague. Portraying the Catholic Church as its epicenter is malicious and false. Forty to 60 percent of sexual abuse takes place within families. There were 290,000 reported cases of abuse in public schools in 1991-2000. There were six credible cases of sexual abuse reported in the Catholic Church in the United States in 2009: six, in a Church of some 68,000,000 members. Having learned the lessons of 2002, the Catholic Church in America today is likely the safest environment for children in the country. No institution working with the young—not the public schools, not the teachers unions, not the Scouts—has done as much to face its past failures in this area and to put in place policies to prevent such horrors in the future...

You can find George Weigel’s full article at: <http://www.archden.org/index.cfm/ID/3702> I believe **this is an opportunity to put all the fact on the table** – not only our terrible failures, which cause us shame and call us to repentance – but also our success in dealing effectively with

this fundamental matter. As I said last Sunday, we are working hard in the Archdiocese of Seattle to regain and maintain your trust. **The protection of children and young people requires constant vigilance – not only in the Catholic Church, but all institutions of our society.**

On Saturday, May 1, we will have a special 9 a.m. Mass to pray for our nation – particularly for our immigration system. One hundred and eighty-five parishioners filled out postcards earlier this year regarding that issue. The most important thing we can do is prayer. May 1 is the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker – a good moment to pray for working people and their families. I ask you to join me in making May a special month of prayer – for the unity of our parish, our Church and our country. On May 31 (Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary) I will offer a concluding Mass for this month of prayer. More in next week's bulletin.

In conclusion **I would like to thank our Knight of Columbus for the beautiful Divine Mercy image.** Last Sunday we concluded the Divine Mercy Novena. About a hundred people participated and then joined the 40 Days for Life victory celebration in our parish hall. Thank you, brother Knights – and all who participated in these wonderful events!







