

Thank you for your generous response to Haiti Earthquake Relief. Over three thousand dollars were donated at our three weekend Masses, including children's boxes that contained almost thirty-two dollars in coins. In the regular collection for parish support we also received a nice surprise. An anonymous donor tied a ribbon around bills totaling over seven-hundred dollars with a note saying, "I had a good year." Thank you. And thank you all for your Stewardship that enables us to fulfill our parish mission and to help needy brothers and sisters in our local area – and throughout the world.

This Sunday Jesus announces that the Spirit has anointed him to "bring glad tidings to the poor...liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and let the oppressed go free." Jesus clearly identifies with the weak and marginalized.

What group in our nation is more vulnerable than unborn children? Thirty-seven years ago, six men on the Supreme Court voted to withdraw legal protection from the tiniest members of American society. It was an unfortunate ruling – and like other unjust decisions (e.g. the Dred Scott case) it will one day be reversed. A reversal, by the way, will not make abortion illegal, but will allow state and national legislatures to make specific laws regarding treatment of the unborn.

Regarding protection for the unborn – and support for their moms and dads - huge number of people converged on our state capital last Tuesday. I was pleased to see a good representation from St. Mary's. The size of the crowd prevented us from converging into a single group, but I did get a few family pictures that I posted on our parish website. Pictured below are Michael & Diana Bizak with their children, Hannah & Thomas. And the picture of Eryn Chestine sums up why the pro-life movement continues to gain strength.

The day began with a Mass at St. Michael Parish. Fr. Ed White preached an excellent homily. After describing the devastation caused by the abortion license, he spoke about our hope for the future. Fr. Ed used a striking image that caught the attention of young people, as I discovered in



talking with middle school students from my former parish, Holy Family in Seattle. Fr. Ed mentioned the scene from The Lord of the Rings where King Aragon enlists the help of departed souls to combat the evil engulfing Middle Earth. We also have army of souls (the Communion of Saints) on our sides in this great contest of our age.

Another vulnerable group in our society are immigrants. The American Bishops are deeply concerned about the needs of immigrants who make up such a

large and vital part of our Church. They have developed a well thought-out call for Comprehensive Immigration Reform. This complex issue touches us very personally here at St. Mary's. On January 29 I will be having a meeting of our parish Social Justice Committee to consider how we can best respond to the postcard campaign, proposed by our bishops. If you have specific interest and concerns on this issue, please join Jim Bloss, other parishioners and me this Friday at 7 p.m. in Room 3 of our parish hall.

Speaking of parish consultative groups, we had a great meeting of Building Commission on Tuesday evening. I will report next week on pending projects, but this week I would like to mention projects completed since our December 1 meeting:

- Light bulbs in parking lot replaced
- Assessment of parking lot drainage system
- Drains cleaned out and monitored
- Church flashing screwed down
- Church Gutters cleaned out
- Moss killer set down on roof
- Outlet replaced (in the church in the main aisle)
- New thermostat for church, ongoing monitoring of heating system
- Sound system monitored and adjusted
- New outside carpet installed at the east entrance
- Broken garage door opener replaced in the rectory

Jim Yap and Jose Rodriguez meet with me on January 30 to begin developing a plan for our landscaping. We will be doing this, especially in preparation for our parish Spring Clean-Up on March 20. The Building Commission will meet again on March 16.

Another important consultative body meets this week – our parish Finance Council. Our ability to realize parish dreams depends on our financial health. At the Thursday evening meeting we will have a six-month report on income and expenses (July 1 through December 31, 2009). I thank you for your support of St. Mary of the Valley and as your pastor, I pledge to be a good steward of your trust. In these final weeks of January we will be sending you the summary of your donations that you can use in preparing your income tax statement. If you discover any discrepancies, please notify Anita at the parish office.

Finally I look forward to seeing you at Generations of Faith this Wednesday. After the dinner, we will break into groups. I will be with the adults continuing to discuss with you the most fundamental element of our Christian life – prayer. Even if you have not yet attended, I encourage you to come to this month's Generation of Faith.

