

It was wonderful this week to have several sunny days. They have been so rare this year that it seems like the governor should declare a state holiday so that we could enjoy them. Samwise and I have done our best to take advantage of the warmer weather. (Samwise, of course, is always ready to go – the problem is on my side.) **I am praying that good weather will continue as we celebrate First Communion, weddings, baptisms and other joyous event.**

We have some sunny news in our parish. I am very grateful for your response to the Annual Catholic Appeal. As of last weekend, **we have 176 pledges totaling \$ 39,241.** We are well on our way to our parish goal, and with the support of everyone we will receive a rebate to apply to important needs here: Paying for renovation of the hall restrooms, replacing the carpet, expanding the kitchen and providing materials for a playground area for our children. In addition, we have many smaller projects, such as removing the deteriorated ties at the side of parish field (see pictures below).

I will be meeting with our **Finance Council** this Tuesday evening and with our **Parish Council** in early June to consider how we can move forward with the needs of our buildings and grounds, as well as the basic pastoral ministry of our parish. I ask your prayers for the members of the Finance and Parish Councils.

The Annual Catholic Appeal supports a variety of archdiocesan ministries, which directly affect us. Some of them are fairly obvious, for example, formation of seminarians, liturgy, financial services, priests' health and pension plans, multicultural communities, safe environment, care for homeless and families in crisis, etc. I would like to mention a ministry that relates very directly to our area: **Archdiocesan Detention Ministries.**

**Because the largest state prison is in our town, St. Mary of the Valley has always been involved in detention ministry.** In the past it was a direct responsibility of the Monroe pastor. Thanks be to God, the Archdiocese of Seattle has developed a ministry to "provide pastoral care of victims/survivors of crime and their families and the incarcerated and their families." At the Monroe Correctional Complex we have a very dedicated Pastoral Care Minister - Bernadette Pauls. She provides Bible Study, counseling and other pastoral services to the inmates and personnel at MCC. Bernadette assures the availability of priests for Mass and confessions. Fr. Sylvain Cibangu is the chaplain and other priests such as Fr. Lyle Konen volunteer their services at our local prison. I also offer Mass and confessions one evening a month.

To be part of Detention Ministry is one of the blessings of being pastor at St. Mary of the Valley. I know that over the years various parishioners have taken part in this ministry. **Some of the inmates have asked me if we could get volunteers from our parish to help with different needs there.** If you have an interest in this work, please let me know.

When Bernadette introduced me to the men at MCC, she mentioned that I was their pastor, since the prison is territorially a part of our parish. **One of the men surprised me by mailing a check for five dollars** – "which is 10% of my earnings." He added:

*"I have been told all of my life to 'straighten up and fly right.' I really didn't understand that concept before I came to God and the Catholic Church. The main thing that was missing in my life was Number One GOD, and Number Two was a sense of belonging meaning that I never belonged to anything that was community related, but God and the Catholic Church has given me and Alcoholics Anonymous is also a very important part of my life."*

I ask you to pray for those incarcerated. While for some the experience hardens their hearts, for others it becomes an opportunity to discover God and his plan. Jesus did say, "I was in prison and you visited me." By making a pledge to the Annual Catholic Appeal we are supporting those who minister to prisoners in our name.

Here at St. Mary of the Valley we are moving ahead in significant areas. I ask prayers for our **parish youth**, particularly our World Youth Day delegation. Making the finals plans for our pilgrimage seems as complicated as D-Day. Prayers, please, for us – and gratitude for your generosity in supporting our youth. I also ask prayers for young married couples. Last weekend we had a married couples retreat (picture below). **I am encouraged that so many couples desire that Christ be the center of their marriage.** At the same time, I am aware the enemy is at work trying to destroy families. More than ever, we need to pray and work together. In that spirit, I would like to make a final prayer request for our spiritual leaders: Archbishop Sartain, Bishop Elizondo and Bishop Tyson. This month Bishop Tyson takes on the enormous task of being bishop of the Yakima Diocese. **In the entrance of the church is prayer card that I ask you to sign.** I will give it to Bishop Tyson at the "Farewell Mass" for him this coming Friday.

Couples Retreat, May 14-15



Fix-It Day, May 14, deteriorated ties removed

