

This week we arrive at the mid-point of Lent – and a lot is happening here at St. Mary’s. I would like to use this bulletin column to bring you up to date and to invite your participation.

First and most important **we are accompanying those preparing for the sacraments:** the catechumens and candidates who will receive baptism, confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil (April 3, 8 p.m.), the young people who will be confirmed by Bishop Elizondo at our 9:30 a.m. Mass on April 18, and the children who will receive First Holy Communion on May 16 (9:30 a.m. Mass) and May 30 (noon Mass).

This Sunday we have an important step in the preparation for the Easter Sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist. Our catechumens will receive the first of the three **Scrutinies** or pre-baptismal exorcisms. As I point out to the catechumens and candidates, this does not mean they are possessed by the devil. Like all of us, they have to face attacks and temptations from the Evil One. And we know that when we draw closer to God, the devil often steps up his attacks. The Scrutinies solemnly declare that the power of Christ is infinitely greater than the power of evil. In his suffering, death and resurrection, Christ has won the definitive victory. Our task is to open our hearts to his grace and power. The official “Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults” (RCIA) gives this explanation of the Scrutinies:

*The scrutinies, which are solemnly celebrated on Sundays and are reinforced by an exorcism, are rites for self-searching and repentance and have above all a spiritual purpose. The scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the hearts of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good. For the scrutinies are celebrated in order to deliver the elect from the power of sin and Satan, to protect them against temptation, and to give them strength in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. These rites, therefore, should complete the conversion of the elect and deepen their resolve to hold fast to Christ and to carry out their decision to love God above all.*

The Scrutinies will take place at the 9:30 am Masses on March 7, 14 and 21. In addition to Ranelle, Janashay, Fernanda and Nydia, we have some youth who are preparing for the Easter Sacraments and who will also receive the Scrutiny prayers: Krystal & Emily Beach, Blake & Hunter Bingham, Kelsey Faulds and Dell Roesler. **The grace of the Scrutinies will also extend to the young people preparing for Confirmation, to the parents and children preparing for First Communion – and to all of us who need Christ’s strength in the spiritual battle.**

Speaking of the spiritual battle, I encourage you to take part in **40 Days for Life**. Blessed Mother Teresa said, “The greatest destroyer of peace is abortion.” We pray for those tempted by abortion, those seeking post-abortion healing, those who work in the abortion industry – and all of us that we will have a deeper conversion to the God of life. This Wednesday evening, St. Mary youth and others will unite in that prayer. Please consider joining them as they meet here at 5:45 p.m. to leave at 6 p.m. – and to return here by 7:30 p.m. The following Thursday (March 18) I invite you to join me, Sr. Barbara and others between 3 and 4 p.m. in front of the Planned

Parenthood abortion clinic in Everett. Dom and Alicia Thomeyer, Oscar and Maria Rodriguez welcome you to join them at various hours of prayer. Below are pictures from St. Mary Parish participation in the 40 Days for Life.

Next Saturday (March 13) we will have a special event for all parish liturgical ministers: servers, ushers, lectors, Communion ministers, choir members, sacristans, greeters, etc. (March 13) Fr. Steve Sallis, from the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission, will give a **Liturgy Workshop** beginning at 10 a.m. and concluding with lunch at noon. If you are a liturgical minister (or interested in learning more), please come this Saturday. Since this workshop includes lunch, I ask you to notify the parish office (360-794-8945).

On March 19 we will celebrate two sacraments of healing. At the 9 a.m. Mass I will offer the **Anointing of the Sick**. (I will write more next week about who is eligible for this sacrament). At 7 p.m. we will have our **Lenten Penance Service**. Around ten priests from the Snohomish Deanery will join me in offering the sacrament of spiritual healing. Please mark that event on your calendar.

To help you in your planning, I am putting an insert in this bulletin with the full parish calendar for the next four weeks. (Last weekend we printed a mistaken version, which I ask you to disregard.) On the calendar you will notice the meetings of important consultative bodies: **Stewardship Commission** (March 10), **Finance Council** (March 15), **Building Commission** (March 16) and **Parish Council** (March 18). The first part of the Parish Council meeting will include members of our **Hispanic Leadership Group**. We have a number of very important matters to discuss at these meetings. I will keep you informed of the results.

Regarding our Building Commission, I want to make a special appeal to the men of our parish. With our limited finances, I depend heavily on volunteers to maintain our grounds and buildings. As part of your Stewardship, I ask you to consider donating your skills and manual labor, especially on March 20 – our **Parish Clean-Up Day** in preparation for Holy Week. This weekend at both English and Spanish Masses, I will be passing around a clip board to sign up for Clean-Up Day. While I am emphasizing the need for men (including high school and middle school), there will also be tasks for ladies of the parish.

At the Parish Clean-Up Day, our **Knights of Columbus** will be serving coffee at 8 a.m. and lunch at noon on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Next weekend the Knights will offer a delicious breakfast between the 9:30 a.m. and noon Masses. Also next weekend they will have their annual membership drive. I encourage all the men of St. Mary's to become Knights. The Knights are my right hand in carrying out the work of our parish and they do vital work in our community and beyond.

In conclusion, a personal announcement: Archbishop Brunett has invited me to be one of ten priests accompanying him to Rome from June 7-13 for the papal Mass concluding the **Year for Priests**. Your prayers and support have a lot to do with this. Special thanks to all who signed up to take the Vocation Crucifix to your home and to say the Prayer for Priests in your family.





