

A big “thank you” to all who signed up for the **Spring Clean-Up** on March 20! Some 87 people signed up at the 9:30 and noon Masses last Sunday – and this weekend we will catch up with the people attending the 5 p.m. Mass. There is a lot of work to be done on our parish grounds. If you have Internet access, you can see a series of pictures of our landscaping needs: <http://stmaryvalleybloom.org/stmarylandscaping.html> The pictures show James Yap (who is a landscape architect) and Jose Rodriguez (who works with a landscaping firm) inspecting our parish grounds and formulating a working plan. I am grateful to James and Jose for their Stewardship of time and talent in this regard.

At our **Knights of Columbus** meeting last Tuesday we discussed the Parish Clean-Up Day. Our Knights will provide coffee and donuts at 8 a.m. this Saturday and a sandwich lunch at noon for all volunteers. Two of our Knights, John Lenac and Steve Schilling, have begun some of the preparatory work. They brought power washers to clean the sides of the “islands” in our main parking lot. I am sure you noticed the difference. The power-washing prepares for more extensive work on the islands. We will need a lot of muscle power to accomplish all we want to do this Saturday. As a preparation for the Spring Clean-Up, our **Building Commission** will meet on Tuesday evening to determine how we will organize the work teams. I am very excited about this, not only because it will make our parish more beautiful and more welcoming for Holy Week, but for what it says about the spirit of Stewardship here at St. Mary of the Valley.

Regarding Stewardship, these are days of meeting with consultative bodies that help bring together various forms of participation in our parish: **Finance Council** on Monday evening, **Building Commission** on Tuesday, and **Parish Council**, together with the **Hispanic Leadership Group**, on Thursday. Last week I met with our Parish Stewardship Commission. Headed by Traci Adams, the **Stewardship Committee** has a lot of energy to promote the four pillars of Stewardship: Prayer, Formation, Hospitality and Service. To achieve our parish mission we need the active participation of every member – Time, Talent and Treasure.

I was greatly encouraged by the participation of our young people in **40 Days for Life**. The future belongs to those who embrace life and reject the culture of death that surrounds us. Below are some pictures from the prayer vigil on Wednesday evening in front of the Everett Planned Parenthood abortion facility. In these final weeks of Lent, please continue to pray for an end to abortion – not just that the taking of an unborn human life will be illegal, but that it will be simply unthinkable to kill an unborn baby. In another part of the bulletin, you will see a schedule of times for parish participation in the 40 Days for Life. Also, Sr. Barbara and I invite you to join us this Thursday (April 18) for an hour of prayer from 3 to 4 p.m. (You can meet us in the parish parking lot at 2:30 p.m. or at 32nd and Hoyt at 3 p.m.). We are engaged in a spiritual battle – and we know that Jesus has already won the decisive victory by his cross and resurrection. Still, for the sake of our children and for our own salvation, we need to commit ourselves to constant vigilance and prayer.

Part of the spiritual battle is the ongoing prayer for forgiveness and healing. At our 9 a.m. Mass this Friday, I will offer the **Anointing of the Sick** to any who are struggling with serious illness. For example, if you are going for an operation or if you have been diagnosed with an illness such as cancer, diabetes or clinical depression or if you are dealing with a chronic physical ailment or emotional addiction, you may receive this beautiful sacrament of healing. And on Friday evening at 7 p.m. we will have our **Lenten Penance Service**. About ten priests from the Snohomish Deanery will be here to offer the opportunity to individually receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. No matter how long you have been away from the sacrament, now is the time to take this step. We have today the example of the Prodigal Son, who swallowed his pride and courageously returned to his father's house. Also, by a nice coincidence, this Friday is the **Feast of St. Joseph**, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Although he was not the physical father of Jesus, he was father in every sense that matters. We ask St. Joseph's intercession for all our dads – and for the gift spiritual fatherhood that our society so desperately needs.

And some final notes: This Sunday we take up the collection for **Catholic Relief Services**. We can be proud of the work CRS is doing in aiding earthquake victims in Haiti – and also in Chile. During my years in Peru I saw a number of CRS projects, not only emergency assistance (for example, during the 1990 drought), but also long range efforts such as support for small businesses, crop and livestock improvement, etc. Also this Sunday, we will have special invitation for a **Knights of Columbus representative**, the blessing of couples celebrating **wedding anniversaries** this month and the second of the three pre-baptismal **Scrutinies** (9:30 a.m. Mass). Please keep in your prayers those who will be receiving the Easter Sacraments on April 3, those who will receive the **Sacrament of Confirmation** on April 18 – and the children who will receive **First Holy Communion** in May. And that all of us might renew the grace and power of the sacraments we have received.



