

By the time you read this, our World Youth Day delegation will be in Italy. I want to thank you for the support and prayers which have made this pilgrimage possible. We will remember you and your intentions especially at the tombs of St. Francis and St. Clare in Assisi, Peter and Paul in Rome and the Martyrs of Spain.

I also want to thank Fr. Peterson for taking my place this weekend, and Frs. Gallagher and Ugalde on the following weekend. The parish is in good hands with Sr. Barbara and the other members of our staff: Anita, Kathy, Tania, Cathy and Michael. I am most grateful for their dedication and hard work.

World Youth Day has been a blessing and a valuable experience not only for the thirty-nine delegates from St. Mary of the Valley, but also for our entire parish. Young people unable to make the pilgrimage have participated in preparation activities such as Youth Empowerment Mornings. The fund raising and community building activities associated with WYD have made us a more united parish. When I came here two years ago, I held “Meet and Greet” sessions in parishioners’ homes. Of the dreams expressed, two stood out: Parishioners wanted greater attention to the needs of youth and they dreamed about achieving greater unity – especially the unity of Hispanic and non-Hispanic members. The activities involved in World Youth Day have done much to make those dreams a reality. We still have more to accomplish, but with prayer and trust in God we can work together to do something beautiful for God.

Before departing for World Youth Day, we filled out the Annual Report for the Archdiocese. Besides a detailed report on parish finances, they ask for statistics regarding sacraments and religious education. I was happy to report an increase in baptisms. We had sixty baptisms, including eight adults and four youth. In addition, seventy-two children received their First Communion and fifteen couples celebrated the Sacrament of Matrimony. As I have mentioned, I would love to do more marriages. Please let young people know that St. Mary of the Valley is a great place to get married (at least one future spouse, of course, has to be Catholic). We would also like to offer our facilities for receptions – and we are working on making them more attractive for this and other events.

At the other end of the life spectrum, my wish is to celebrate funeral Masses for all parishioners who die. This past year we had thirty-three funeral services. Please consider having a Mass with body present even if a cremation will take place later. And remember that our faith prohibits the spreading of ashes. Because of our respect for the human body, the mortal remains of those who have died are to be kept together and to be buried in a proper place (cemetery) with a marker. This enables family members to have a place to remember and pray for loved ones. Ideally, the body should be buried in the earth, in imitation of Jesus and the saints. I know that many are concerned about the high cost of funerals. I have some information on how a complete funeral can be celebrated at a modest price – including a dignified wooden casket.

Maybe I am thinking about funerals because I am getting older. (I do still have a good number of years still in me and I hope to spend them here in Monroe.) After returning from World Youth Day, I will be celebrating my sixty-fifth birthday. I am not saying this because I desire presents. ☺ I have enough shirts, sweaters, jackets, utensils, gadgets, etc. to last me many years. I would, however, like to get some liturgical supplies for our parish: a Ciborium Bowl (like the one

pictured below) and some larger Communion Chalices. I would like to have these when we begin the revised edition of the Missal this coming Advent. I would also like to complete the set of vestments (I will do this when I go to Peru at the end of December) and to obtain violet and red chalice veils. When I return from World Youth Day, I will be glad to give more information about liturgical supplies for our parish.

Please keep up your prayers while we are in Spain this coming week. One of the high points will be the Mass offered by Pope Benedict. During that Mass he will announce the site of the next World Youth Day. Some are speculating that it will be in Rio in 2013, but we shall see. On EWTN (available also via Internet) you can watch World Youth Day events live. You can also tune in to Sacred Heart Radio (1050 AM) – and follow us on our St. Mary of the Valley-Holy Family WYD blog - <http://youthtomadrid2011.blogspot.com/> and an SMV blog at <http://stmaryofthevalleywyd2011.blogspot.com/>

Final note: Be sure to vote in the August 16 Primary Election. Good citizenship is an important part of being a disciple of Jesus.



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