

As we approach the end of the school year, it is a special time for children and young people. This weekend we will have the **blessing of our graduates**: Those making a transition from middle school into high school, those completing high school and any college or university graduates.

Last weekend we placed particular focus on children with **First Communions** at our noon Mass and baptisms at 5 p.m. and 9:30 a.m. Masses. Below is a picture of part of the noon First Communion group. On Saturday evening we had five **baptisms** including Winston and Zoe who are pictured below. I couldn't resist the picture with Mario who has more hair as an infant than I have had in my entire life! Each child is unique and each child is a beautiful gift from God.

I thank you for the many ways you support children by your Stewardship. Your gifts of time and talent make possible our parish programs. Your sharing of financial resources each week enables us to fulfill our parish mission. At this time of year we ask you to also support the Archdiocese of Seattle through the **Annual Catholic Appeal**. As of last weekend 231 families have pledged a total of \$51,971. This puts us \$6,855 over our parish required goal. Everything received over that goal will be returned to us in the form of a rebate.

As I have been mentioning, we will use the rebate for important renovation projects. This Thursday I will meet with our **Parish Council** to talk about the specifics of these projects. I am grateful to our **Finance Council** and to Steve Schilling from the **Building Commission** for helping put together this presentation. I will be communicating more to you in the coming weeks.

Next weekend we will have a bulletin insert with the names of those who have made a pledge to the Appeal. This is important to ensure that we have not missed any pledges. If you have not yet made a pledge, I encourage you to turn in your envelope this week. **On June 13, Archbishop Sartain will send a letter to those we have not yet heard from.** If you are not able to give a financial donation at this time or if you chose not to give a donation, I ask you to return an envelope with "prayer" or "zero" in the pledge space. **Our goal for 2011 is to receive 300 pledges.** As I mentioned above, we have already received 231. Last year we received 214 pledges so your combined response already exceeds 2010. For that I am grateful, but I do hope to hear from all St. Mary of the Valley Parishioners.

I want to conclude with a topic that is painful, but necessary to study so that we can have accurate information: the abuse of children by members of the clergy. At Ethics and Public Policy, **George Weigel** has important article. Here are the opening paragraphs:

*The American narrative of the Catholic Church's struggles with the clerical sexual abuse of the young has been dominated by several tropes firmly set in journalistic concrete: that this was and is a "pedophilia" crisis; that the sexual abuse of the young is an ongoing danger in the Church; that the Catholic Church was and remains a uniquely dangerous environment for young people; that a high percentage of priests were abusers; that abusive behavior is more likely from*

*celibates, such that a change in the Church's discipline of priestly celibacy would be important in protecting the young; that the Church's bishops were, as a rule, willfully negligent in handling reports of abuse; that the Church really hasn't learned any lessons from the revelations that began in the Long Lent of 2002.*

*But according to an independent, \$1.8 million study conducted by New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice, commissioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and released on May 18, every one of these tropes is false.*

You can find the complete article at:

[http://www.eppc.org/publications/pubid.4462/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.eppc.org/publications/pubid.4462/pub_detail.asp) I encourage you to read George Weigel's insightful reflections. Even better, you might want to read the study itself. As George Weigel points out, "***The John Jay study affirms that the Catholic Church may well be the safest environment for young people in American society.***" We want to keep it that way. For example, the Archdiocese of Seattle requires that those who work with children and vulnerable adults take Safe Environment Training. Their well-being is at the heart of our mission as a parish and archdiocese.

First Communions 2011 • Noon Mass



Picture by Theresa Moran: [www.portraitsbytheresa.com](http://www.portraitsbytheresa.com)

May 28 baptisms: Winston and Zoe



Mario

