

Let me begin with some words of gratitude: First of all, thank you to all who have returned your Annual Catholic Appeal pledge envelope. As of Wednesday, we have received 223 pledges totaling \$48,067. We have now exceeded our parish required goal of \$45,116! **All donations over that amount will be returned to us in the form of a rebate.** As you know, we will use our rebate for important parish projects: renovation of bathrooms, expansion of the kitchen, replacement of hall carpet and establishing the playground for children.

**Along with the archdiocesan appeal, I thank you for your steady support of our parish.**

Based on your weekly giving, our Finance Council drafted a budget that addresses the ongoing needs of our parish, plus some additional funds for maintenance and youth ministry. On June 9 the Parish Council will review the proposed budget. I thank you for all the ways you share your gifts of time, abilities and financial resources. In their presentations on May 8, Steve Schilling and Oscar Rodriguez gave some indication of the volunteer hours given for the restoration projects, maintenance and basic pastoral ministries.

I want to thank all those who work so hard in the area of **religious education**. We see the fruits of that work in the children who receive their **First Communion** on these last two weekends of May. (Below is a picture of May 22 First Communion group.) On Wednesday we concluded a successful year of **Generations of Faith**. In addition to religious education, we have many people who give of time and talent in service to others. Two significant groups are the **Knights of Columbus** and **St. Vincent de Paul**. I also want to thank the ladies who provide funeral receptions. They often do this at short notice. For example, this past Tuesday they rallied to provide a beautiful reception for the family of long-time parishioner Marcella Kern.

**Marcella was a beautiful example of Stewardship.** When she was nineteen, she was struck with polio and became confined to a wheel chair. That did not hold her back from study and service to others. When in her forties, she and Wayne married. They had no children, but Marcella showed herself to be a marvelous “spiritual mother,” which was evident at her funeral Mass. Not only did nephews and nieces attend, but many other people, including a good number from our Hispanic community. Some of them had gotten to know Marcella as they cared for her in her final years. They gave beautiful testimonies of Marcella’s good humor and her genuine concern for others. Marcella should inspire us all: She shows that no matter what setbacks we face, God has a plan. Her life shows Stewardship in action.

In recent weeks I have been reading about some other heroic lives. As part of the preparation for World Youth Day in Madrid, I have tried to learn more about the **Spanish Martyrs**. I read about one that particularly touched me – a young layman named **Bartolomé Blanco Marquez**. While in prison, Bartolomé wrote a touching letter to his fiancée. Here is my translation:

*Maruja of my soul:*

*Your memory will accompany me to my grave. While my heart still beats, it will beat with love for you. God has willed that we sublimate these earthly affections, ennobling them by our love for Him. In these final days God is my light and my hope. Still, the memory of the person dearest to me goes with me right up to the moment of death.*

*I am helped by many priests. Like healing balm, they pour the treasures of Grace into my soul, strengthening me so that I can look death in the face. I tell you the truth when I say that it does not frighten me nor do I fear it.*

*My sentence in the courts of men will be my best defense before the Tribunal of God. They wanted to debase me, but they have ennobled me. They wanted to try me, but they have absolved me. They wanted to destroy me, but they have saved me.*

*Do you understand me? For sure you do! In killing me, they give me true life. In condemning me for defending the ideals of Faith, Fatherland and Family, they open for me the gates of heaven.*

*My body will be buried in the cemetery of Jaen. While there remain a few hours before this final repose, I only ask one thing: That in memory of the love we have (which every moment increases) attend to the main goal – the salvation of thy soul. In that way we will be united in heaven eternally, where nothing can separate us.*

*Until then, Maruja of my soul, do not forget that from heaven I will look for thee. Be a model Christian woman. You know that when all is said and done, worldly goods and pleasures mean nothing. What matters is the salvation of the soul.*

*My thoughts and gratitude to all the family – and to thee, my love, sublimated in the hour of death. Do not forget me, Maruja of my soul. Let my memory remind thee that there is a better life. Attaining it should be our greatest desire.*

*Be strong and rebuild thy life. You are young and good – and you will always have the help of God that I will implore for thee from heaven. Until that eternity where we will continue loving each other, world without end.*

*(Here ends the letter.)*

**The next day, October 2, 1936, Bartolomé was led before the firing squad.** According to documents supporting his cause for beatification Bartolomé went to the site of his execution barefooted, "in order to be more conformed to Christ." He kissed his handcuffs, surprising the guards that cuffed him. He refused to be shot from behind. "*Whoever dies for Christ should do so facing forward and standing straight. Long live Christ the King!*" he shouted as he fell to the ground under a shower of bullets. He was beatified October 28, 2007. Blessed Bartolomé, pray for us.

Our youth continue their preparation for the **World Youth Day** pilgrimage. We will take you with us, especially as we visit the sites of saints and martyrs in Italy and Spain. **I ask your prayers and support for our delegation as we enter the last two months of preparation.**

Some final notes: On Tuesday **Bishop Joseph Tyson** will be installed as Bishop of Yakima. Thank you to all who signed the prayer card for him. We keep him in our prayers as he takes on that great task. On Thursday evening I will be meeting with **parish music ministers.**

Remember those who give their time and talent to help us in our worship of God. This Friday I will be available for **confessions** from 7 to 8:45 p.m. and from 10 p.m. till all are heard. Next weekend we will have **Blessings of Graduates**. At the end of Mass I will invite students who are making a transition to come forward for a blessing.

