

Share the Good News

Jesus Christ: Yesterday, Today, and Forever ~

I have a number of things to share with you—all good, praise the Lord!

Vocations

Jesus Christ established the Church upon 12 priests. Not 12 parishes, or 12 dioceses, or 12 laymen, but upon 12 priests. Without priests, the Church doesn't exist. For good or bad, the Church has only ever been as healthy as the priesthood. To that end, we promote the priesthood and consecrated religious life because the Church needs the sacrifice of these people for the Glory of God and the salvation of souls, and because these are very special vocations, we want as many people as possible to experience for their own good. While the Church almost everywhere in the world continues to live through a vocations apocalypse, we have been blessed to have five ordinations and solemn professions from our parish family in the past 13 years. In addition to that, we have six people in formation for the priesthood or consecrated life now, with at least that number discerning entering formation in the next few years. The Serra Club and I are going to make a concerted effort in the coming years to improve upon those numbers. Every vocation takes a village to raise them up and this village of Columbia River Catholic has been stepping up. If you want to help with this heroic effort, please consider joining our local Serra club. You can email Shawn Madison at shawnemadison@comcast.net or simply mark "Serra Club" on your Stewardship form.

OCIA

The Order of Christian Initiation of Adults or OCIA, is the program whereby people are catechized in the Catholic faith and discern entering the Church. This is for people who are not baptized as well as people who are validly baptized somewhere else. It is also for Catholics who have been away from the Church for a long time and want a community, process, and catechesis as part of their return, and for Catholic adults who were baptized in the Church but never received the sacraments of Eucharist or Confirmation. Columbia River Catholic has over 60 people in our OCIA program this year—a record for us. This is great news and gives us an opportunity to thank Our Lord and consider inviting others to join OCIA. It is also a sign that despite a general decline in Mass attendance and participation in the sacraments for the Church throughout Western Civilization, things are going really well here. Praise God! If you want to join OCIA or invite someone else to join, please reach out to Mark MacKenzie at

markm@holyredeemervanc.org or simply mark it on your Stewardship form.

More Numbers

October and May are the two months of the year when parishes and missions across America count the number of people attending Mass. Holy Redeemer does it year-round and St. Thomas is moving in that direction as well. We know how many people are attending Mass on an average weekend in our three communities and whether or not that number is going up or down. I have something amazing to report in our numbers, something I'm not aware of happening anywhere else this has been done before: St. Thomas' Mass numbers have not gone down since losing our 11am Mass there last summer. The numbers at the 5pm and 8:30am Masses simply went up accordingly. Just as amazingly, and again I'm not aware of this being the case anywhere else this has happened: the financial giving at St. Thomas hasn't gone down either! This is a reflection of the seriousness of our parishioners' faith, and it is as inspiring as it is surprising! Just so you know, Holy Redeemer's average year-round weekend Mass count is 1500; St. Thomas' year-round average Mass count is 450; and Star of the Sea's year-round Mass count is about 93.

Piggybacking on our financial situation: In addition to overall income being up in Columbia River Catholic, our Annual Catholic Appeal numbers this year were fantastic. For about the fifth year in a row, Holy Redeemer's rebate exceeded all other parishes in the Archdiocese but for the Cathedral. Those rebates are a big part of our property's development. Meanwhile, St. Thomas and Star of the Sea saw the largest increase in giving the Annual Catholic Appeal year over year in the Archdiocese. The most important takeaway from this was participation. While Holy Redeemer continued to come in at #1 for the Archdiocese for a community its size, St. Thomas and Star of Sea saw participation increase dramatically.

If all of that wasn't amazing enough, at roughly the same time we were conducting the Annual Catholic Appeal, we took on two other charities as well: Mary's Meals and Catholic Cross Outreach. Taken together we saw \$130,000 leave Columbia River Catholic to feed children in the developing world in their place of education. These numbers represent something amazing here, they represent people growing in holiness. They represent a people who take their faith seriously.

Music

Our staff, volunteers, advisory bodies, much of our programming, and finances began consolidating two summers ago when

Share the Good News

we all came together as one parish family under the same pastor – me . That consolidation naturally continues.

Last spring Taylor Gonzaga, the music director at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, let me know that she was retiring. Taylor and her husband took in a foster child in the last year, and her life and priorities have changed substantially since then. Taylor retired last summer, and we've been relying on accompanists (pianists), cantors, and choir members to fill the gap since.



Also, last spring Angela Lee, Holy Redeemer Parish's music director, let me know that she wanted to cut back on her hours and responsibilities. She gave birth to her second child around Christmas and her life, and priorities have substantially changed since then. This weekend is Angela Lee's last as Holy Redeemer's music director. She has been with us for ten years and is such a lovely person, so

this is a difficult departure for many of us. There will be a farewell reception for her after the 11am Mass at Holy Redeemer this Sunday. Fortunately, she isn't going far (more on that below).

Since Taylor and Angela both brought their changed life situations to me at about the same time, it gave us a golden opportunity to hire one regional music director as we move toward becoming one parish in the next two years. The demand for highly talented and experienced music directors far exceeds supply, thus we are so blessed, and I am so pleased to announce that we have found one.

After a national search, we are very fortunate to be able to



hire a regional director of sacred music for Columbia River Catholic. As of this Monday, October 20, Karl Rhode will become Columbia River Catholic's first regional director of sacred music. Many of you know Karl as he has been a local fixture for ten years at St. Joseph Parish and recently

at Our Lady of Lourdes as well. Karl brings a great deal of talent and experience to this role, as well as enthusiasm, and I'm really looking forward to our future together. In a future

bulletin, Karl will get a chance to introduce himself, the direction of music at Columbia River Catholic, as well as the structure of his time and responsibilities for Columbia River Catholic. Of course, much of that will naturally evolve over time.

Back to Angela. Father Tim Illgen at St. Joseph Parish as hired her to conduct the 9am Sunday choir there. The amount of hours and responsibility fits just about perfectly for Angela. Angela is happy, Karl is happy, I'm happy, Fr. Illgen is happy, and if you're not already happy, in time you will be too!

Partners in the Gospel

A quick review. In the coming two years, across the Archdiocese of Seattle, the Catholic Church in Western Washington will go from 163 parishes and missions to 60 parishes. Two summers ago, those 163 parishes and missions consolidated into 60 parish families under 60 pastors. In two years' time all 163 parishes and missions will be canonically suppressed and reestablished as 60 parishes with new names. Between now and then, we will continue to discern together various aspects of our identity and future. It is very important that we remain engaged in this process. On the weekend of November 8 & 9, you will have an opportunity to attend a townhall style gathering after the Masses to explore the question "who are we?" There will be more about that opportunity on our website, bulletin, and in our Mass announcements.

Share the Good News

I had more things that I wanted to share with you in this pastor's column, but I ran out of room. Perhaps in another pastor's column. Suffice to say, by the grace of God things are going very well in our parish family, and we all have reason to be grateful and to share the good news.

May Almighty God Bless You,

Fr. Thomas Nathe