

PARISH PROFILE

# Three faith communities take strides toward unity

*Sacred Heart Parish, Battle Ground, and its two missions each have 100-year histories*

BY KEVIN BIRNBAUM

The relationship between Sacred Heart Parish and its two missions, St. Joseph the Worker in Yacolt and St. Mary of Guadalupe in Ridgefield, is complex.

Each of the churches has well over 100 years of history; they can each boast third- and fourth-generation members; and they have "very distinct identities," said Father Matthew O'Leary, who served as pastor of the communities from 2004 until earlier this year.

## 'Tri-parish community'

And yet the three faith communities are bound — by a common priest, a common staff, a common mission and, increasingly, a common identity. They call themselves a "tri-parish community."



Father Roy Baroma Jr.

"I inculcate in them that though we are three communities, we are one family," said Father Roy Baroma Jr., priest administrator of the parish and missions for the past seven months.

In this, Father Baroma is building upon the efforts of Father O'Leary, who said he "worked very hard ... to create a feeling of being part of one big parish."

On Sept. 19, Sacred Heart hosted the first ever tri-parish picnic, "and it went very well," said Father Baroma. About 200 parishioners from all three communities turned out for an afternoon of food and games after Sunday Mass.

## PASTORS:

Father Thomas Lane, 1940

Father Joseph Vogel, 1949

Father Henry Buckman, 1952

Father George McLean, 1954

Father Sean Fox, 1962

Father Richard Stohr, 1976

Father John Frankovic, 1977

Father Dennis Zoet, 1983

Father John Kohler, 1986

Father William McKee, 1987

Father Franklin Lott, 1993

Father David Rogerson, 2002

Father Matthew O'Leary, 2004

Father Roy Baroma Jr. (priest administrator), 2010

## A welcoming community

Folks at Sacred Heart think of theirs as a fairly typical parish, albeit a particularly welcoming one.

"We have some very outgoing people who, when they see someone who they haven't met before, they introduce themselves, and it's pretty hard to get in the church and out, unless you're really fast," without being introduced around, said Judy Forel, a Sacred Heart parishioner since 1970.

Forel, who runs the inquiry portion of the RCIA program, said inquirers often tell her they're interested in Sacred Heart because it's the most welcoming parish they have attended.

The three communities' combined RCIA program is vibrant, with about eight to 10 participants each year, said Patricia Beseda, a Sacred Heart parishioner. There's also an active St. Vincent de Paul Society conference, and a pro-life group.

Age-wise, the parish is a healthy mix.

"We run the gamut from young families right on up to seniors, and we're becoming more diversified all the time," said Beseda.

## Challenges and opportunities

The tri-parish community has been hit hard by the economic recession.

"We're dealing with a very high unemployment rate," said Beseda. "We have a lot of people that are not working and that are in kind of dire financial straits."

This has led to a drop in donations and a strain on the St. Vincent de Paul Society's ability to respond to requests for help.

Sacred Heart, St. Joseph and St. Mary must also deal with the scheduling challenges that come with having only one priest among them. Father Baroma alternates weekends between Sacred Heart and the missions, and the staff often needs to "beg, borrow and steal" to find substitute priests to fill in wherever he's not, said pastoral administrator Carrie Moschetti.

On the positive side, last year saw the opening of Seton Catholic High School in Vancouver, the area's first Catholic high school in decades. Eventually, the school will move to its permanent site in Ridgefield, immediately adjacent to St. Mary of Guadalupe. The tri-parish community played a key role in getting the school started.

"The high school had been promised for a long time and it was one of those things that people heard about and it was coming, and yet it never materialized, so people really didn't think it was going to happen," said Father O'Leary, the former pastor. "And



Father Matthew O'Leary



## Sacred Heart Parish, Battle Ground

Founded (mission): 1877

Founded (parish): 1940

Households: 520

Street address: 1603 N. Parkway Ave.

Phone: 360-687-4515

Website: [www.sacredheartbg.org](http://www.sacredheartbg.org)

then when I arrived there new, I made it clear immediately that one of the direct responsibilities that I had been given by Archbishop [Alex J.] Brunett was to help get Seton Catholic High School up and running and make it a reality.

"I communicated that clearly to my parishioners, and a lot of the core group of people that helped to get the next stages of planning going really came from [Sacred Heart, St. Joseph and St. Mary]. Some of the greatest supporters, both in terms of volunteer time and financial support, have come from those three communities."

Father O'Leary said he believes the new high school will become a "rallying place" for all Catholics in the Southern Deanery.

## Three long histories

Sacred Heart, St. Joseph the Worker and St. Mary of Guadalupe all trace their history to the late 19th century. Bishop Aegidius Junger dedicated Sacred Heart as a mission church in 1877. At the time, priests from Vancouver served the church once every two months. New church buildings were built in 1897 and 1928. Sacred Heart was raised to parish status in 1940 and began serving St. Joseph, St. Mary and St. John, Vancouver, as missions. Sacred Heart's current church building was built in 1980.

When St. Joseph the Worker was established as a mission in 1892, Masses were celebrated in a log cabin. The original church building burned down in 1900 and was replaced by a small white church with a bell tower, where Mass was celebrated four times a year until 1940, when all Masses were discontinued in Yacolt. In 1952, Sacred Heart Pastor Father Henry Buckman began celebrating Masses in Yacolt regularly, and in 1960, a new church building was dedicated. In 1992, the church added a bell tower, and Arch-



## St. Joseph the Worker Mission, Yacolt

Founded: 1892

Households: 65

Street address: 220 W. Jones St.



## St. Mary of Guadalupe Mission, Ridgefield

Founded: 1888

Households: 202

Street address: 1520 N. 65th Ave.

bishop Thomas J. Murphy celebrated St. Joseph's centennial Mass.

St. Mary was established as a mission in 1888. A second church was built in 1902 across the street from where the current church stands. In 1959, Archbishop Thomas A. Connolly dedicated the church St. Mary of Guadalupe. It has been a mission of several parishes over the years.

St. Joseph and St. Mary were missions of Sacred Heart from 1940 until 1962, when St. Mary became a mission of St. Philip Parish in Woodland. After 40 years, Sacred Heart, St. Joseph the Worker and St. Mary of Guadalupe were reunited as a parish family in 2002.