

PARISH PROFILE

New Mason County church will give parish room to grow

In a day highlighted by a flower-bedecked procession and blessing ceremony, St. Edward's Parish marked milestone on its journey to replace its aging church building

SHELTON
BY BARBARA WASHBURN

In a ceremony highlighted by sunny skies and a Marian procession to the site, St. Edward Parish blessed ground May 4 for its new church.

Scheduled for completion in April 2009, the 18,700-square-foot building will enable the parish of 940 households to replace its 77-year-old, structurally-unsound church with a building seating 425 worshippers, twice the capacity of the current church.

The celebration began with a Mass celebrated by St. Edward Pastor Father Ronald Belisle.

Deacon Owen Cummings, a theologian and professor from Mount Angel Seminary in Oregon, was guest homilist.

"What a privilege the building of a new place to worship is for St. Edward's Parish members and what a challenge at the same time," he told the assembly. "It is a constant reminder of people in a mission for God."

Father Paul Magnano, Vicar for Clergy for the archdiocese, and several area priests took part in the celebration.

Marian statue carried to site

Following Mass, the parish's CCD students led a "Flores De Mayo" (Flowers of May) procession up the hill to the new church site, with participants carrying flowers and a statue of Mary while praying the rosary in English and Spanish. Flores De Mayo is a festival in the Philippines held during the month of May in honor of the Virgin Mary.

The group was led by Christian Education Leader Mary Chapman and Adolfo De Los Santos of Hispanic Ministries. Many adults joined the children in the procession, along with Boy Scout Troop 110.

Objects blessed at the property included the shovel used to dig the hole for the planting of a wooden cross, and salt, symbolizing a request for God's protection for

the project. Water drawn from local lakes and rivers also was blessed, along with a medal of Saint Benedict, in honor of the parish's Benedictine heritage.

Participants were asked to position themselves around the actual footprint of the future construction, which was marked by orange colored chalk. This was to show that the church is composed not of buildings but of people, who are the true building blocks.

The cross, borne by Building Committee Chairman Don Gardner, was planted on the location of the future altar. The children placed the statue of Mary in its future location and crowned her.

Located about three miles from the current church on a 10-acre site with a view of Mt. Rainier, the new church facilities will be a U-shaped complex that will consist of

the church, parish hall and religious education center surrounding a courtyard.

Pending completion of the permit process, the parish hopes to break ground for the \$6.2 million project in June and open

in spring 2009, said Building Committee member Walter Siegl, a retired architect.

Siegl said the church interior will soar to almost 40 feet in height around wooden trusses and large windows.

BCRA, TACOMA



PHOTOS BY BARBARA WASHBURN

Clockwise from top left: the new St. Edward Church, parish hall and religious education center will be a U-shaped complex; clergy, building committee members and others pose after the cross planting, from left, Father Victor Cloquet, Father Paul Magnano, Father Ron Belisle, Robert Johnson, BCRA architect Jim Wolch, Don Gardner and general contractor Tom Motland; altar servers lead the procession from the church; Boy Scouts carry the American flag to the site; CCD student Bridgette Beatty crowns the statue of Mary.