Parish Profile

St. Philip Parish: “A source of great spiritual growth”

Parish was established 57 years ago

WOODLAND

BY ARMANDO MACHADO

St. Philip Parish was made up largely of loggers and dairy farmers when the parish was established in Southwestern Washington by Archbishop Thomas Connolly in 1950. Today parishioners are mostly blue-collar workers but, as in the past, it carries on a tradition of being a caring, cohesive faith community.

“The community is close-knit, it’s a small parish,” said Bernadette Engerran, pastoral assistant for administration. “Everyone knows everyone — and there is a lot of support.”

She cited the many parish ministries and the dedicated parishioners who coordinate those groups.

The current pastor, Father Jerry Woodman, is away this month in Guadalajara, Mexico studying to improve his Spanish and learn more about the culture. The parish has a weekly Sunday Mass in Spanish to serve the parish community.

A source of spiritual growth

Lisa Ripp, parish administrative assistant, said, “The parish community has been an extension of our family; there are wonderful people here of all ages.”

Ripp, mother of five, said she and her husband Jeff are volunteers with the parish youth group.

Barbara Somers, the parish liturgy coordinator said the parish has been “a source of great spiritual growth for me. It’s a good group of people.” She said that “like any parish, there are differences in opinion and style,” but that overall, members are supportive of each other.

St. Philip was a mission church dating back to 1913. In 1950, Archbishop Connolly appointed Father Thomas Pitsch as the first resident pastor. Franciscans priests celebrated regular Masses at the church in its mission days.

Although Franciscans often named churches after St. Philip Neri, the current parish community is unclear whether the parish is named after St. Philip Neri or St. Philip the Apostle.

Parish history

When Father Pitsch was appointed pastor, a neighboring house, which became known as the old Brick Rectory, was purchased and remodeled. During Father Pitsch’s time as pastor, the parish grew and the church building underwent several improvements.

Father John Doogan succeeded Father Pitsch in 1952, and Father Doogan was replaced by Father Patrick O’Brien in 1954. As Father O’Brien settled in, a new program was introduced for giving religious instruction to elementary and high school students: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD).

In 1956, a woman named Lee Chester brought the idea of a new electric organ for the church. In 1962, under the leadership of Father Patrick Godley, St. Joseph Church in Kalama and St. Mary of Guadalupe Church in Ridgefield became missions of St. Philip.

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St. Philip’s young parishioners celebrate first Communion (left) and confirmation.