

PARISH PROFILE

Reaching out with 'love and service'

CENTRALIA
BY ARMANDO MACHADO

St. Mary Parish in Centralia is a family-oriented parish with deep roots in the community. Members are dedicated to "proclaiming the teachings of Jesus Christ through ministry and family." And they commit themselves "to grow in our faith and reach out to others in love and service."

Founded in 1910, St. Mary Parish has 382 registered households. The pastor is Father Tuan Nguyen.

"They are very alive — they really reach out to people," Father Nguyen said of staff and volunteers who coordinate the parish ministries. "I really appreciate them very much. They believe in the mission to reach out to others; they see the face of Christ in all the people that they serve."

He said the ministries include programs for youths, the elderly, the homebound, and the Hispanic community. He said the Hispanic events include December gatherings to celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe, as well as Holy Week events, including a live depiction of the Stations of the Cross.

Father Nguyen said the same ministerial dedication is found at the five other parishes that he oversees as pastor in Lewis and Pacific counties: St. Joseph in Chehalis; St. Francis Xavier in Toledo; Sacred Heart in Winlock; St. Joseph in Pe Ell; and Holy Family in Frances.

St. Mary Parish

Founded: 1910

Registered Households: 382

Pastor:

Father Tuan Nguyen

Parochial Vicar:

Father Philip Raether

Address:

225 N. Washington Ave.
Centralia, WA 98531

Phone: (360) 736-4356

The parishes are separate church communities; they have no umbrella name. Father Nguyen is assisted by Father Philip Raether (parochial vicar), and Father John McLaughlin.

Father Nguyen also oversees St. Joseph Catholic School in Chehalis, which serves all six churches and has 162 students (Preschool-8). The principal is Kendra Meek. In addition, Father Nguyen oversees the Hispanic Ministry along with program coordinator Esperanza Lopez.

The school, originally called Holy Rosary Academy, was founded in 1885 by the Dominican Sisters of Edmonds. The present building opened in 1923 as St. Joseph Catholic School. The school mission is to "continue the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ. We promote

the spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional development of our students. We expect our students to become community leaders and to excel in their studies."

In Centralia, there was a St. Mary's School for 52 years until 1969. There had been difficulties in procuring dependable transportation for the outlying areas; enrollment was affected by this, as well as by varying population trends, according to written historical background provided by the St. Mary Parish office.

Between 1890 and 1910, St. Mary Parish was a mission church of St. Joseph Parish in Chehalis — which at that time was called St. John Parish. Masses at the mission church were held monthly in a private home, then in a structure previously occupied first by a saloon and later by the Salvation Army. Difficulty was encountered in acquiring a building because of opposition from non-Catholics, the historical material states. For a time, another building was used. The material notes that Centralia is situated in northern Lewis County — and that Lewis County is home to the earliest efforts to spread the faith in what is now Washington state.

January 21-22, St. Mary's participated in the new Progress P3 subscription program. Five dollars from each subscription they sold went to their youth group. For more information on this program contact **Marketing Associate Keri Hake** at 206-382-2075 or kerih@seattlearch.org