Holy Trinity Parish serves a diverse community

Prepares for expansion project

BREMERTON
BY ARMANDO MACHADO

Elsie Alameda is grateful for the Holy Trinity Parish community and the comfort it has provided her during her 27 years as a member.

“The parish has been my home — it is part of my life,” Alameda said last week. “I go to daily Mass; it gets me going everyday,” added Alameda, 73, who has been a member of the parish Social Justice Commission for six years.

“People in the parish show a lot of support — and Father Jack is a brother in Christ. He’s such a wonderful human being,” she said of the pastor, Father Jack Buckalew.

The parish was established in 1964 by Archbishop Thomas Connolly, who appointed Father James Knelleken as the first pastor. The celebration of Masses began at the Sheridan Park gymnasium. About 600 families were registered; there are now nearly 1,900 registered households. The church building was constructed in 1968.

Father Buckalew became pastor of Holy Trinity Parish in 1990. He started his work there having already had a special connection to the parishioners. For nine years he was the pastor of St. Joachim Parish in the Lummi Indian community — supported in part by the generosity of Holy Trinity’s children’s collections.

Holy Trinity celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2004 with a special anniversary in 2004 with a special collection.

Buckalew said the parish is looking forward to expanding the parish building for more office space for the 13 paid staff members (full-time and part-time).

The parish complex is united by interconnecting sections, including the church and a chapel. The interconnecting architecture was the result of an initial plan to include a parish school, but that did not occur.

A strong parish

Capital campaigns have included projects that resulted in renovation of the chapel about 15 years ago, and parish roof replacements about 10 years ago. The upcoming campaign for the office-space project is next. Construction is set to begin in spring 2008, and it will probably last six to eight months. The estimated cost is $800,000.

“I think it is a very strong parish,” Father Buckalew said. “We have our own Knights of Columbus — they were established about 10 years ago.” He also noted the dedicated work of all parish volunteers, such as those who work with local food banks, and those who work in youth ministry.

Father Buckalew said that for many years the parish was made up largely of parishioners of European descent, but that eventually changed. The community now has many families from different backgrounds, including Filipinos, people from Guam, African Americans, and Hispanics. Many of the families rely on employment from the nearby Navy base.

The pastor said parish high points have included the start of the Knights group and other church groups, as well as the addition of a Spanish Mass last year, and various cultural events and activities over the years. The Spanish Mass is celebrated by Father Abraham Cueva, who also conducts Spanish Mass in other Olympic Deanery parishes. Parish low points, Father Buckalew said, were mainly times when there were budget cutbacks to the Navy, resulting in unemployment and subsequent reductions in Sunday collections.

Helping the needy

“It’s a very lovely church. The parishioners are wonderful — and Father Jack is much beloved,” said Jo Clark, chairperson of the Social Justice Commission. Father Buckalew’s group has raised funds that benefit agencies that help needy children and homeless people, or offer pregnancy services and counseling.

For one month in 2003 and one month in 2004, the parish social hall was used to house homeless men of Kitsap County in a program in which other church communities were also involved. The program, called Homeless Outreach Shelter Team (HOST) was conducted in collaboration with Catholic Community Services.

Clark said that 200 parish families sponsor children and elderly people in foreign countries. And the group also supports a seminarian in Guatemala.

Two years ago, Holy Trinity parishioners organized a celebration commemorating Father Buckalew’s 30 years in the priesthood. The Holy Trinity Parish mission statement says that parishioners are “committed to the worship of God, the building of community and service to others by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We do this because we are loved by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to share in Jesus’ mission.”

Holy Trinity and Blessed Teresa of Calcutta will both be participating in the Progress Parish Partnership “P3” program this weekend. Five dollars from each subscription sold at their parishes will be donated to their parish groups. Interested in participating? For more information on this program contact Marketing Associate Keri Hake at 206-382-2075 or kerih@seattlearch.org