

The History of Mary, Queen of Peace Parish

In the Beginning

“Go forth and teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19). In response to Jesus’ directive and because of the population growth on the Sammamish Plateau, Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen founded the parish of Mary, Queen of Peace on September 1, 1987. This new parish was formed from parts of St. Joseph parish in Issaquah, St. Jude parish in Redmond, and St. Anthony parish in Carnation. Father Stephen Szeman was appointed the first pastor, and Father Mike Raschko was appointed weekend assistant. With more than three hundred families gathered together, Father Szeman celebrated the first Masses on October 3rd and 4th, 1987, in the chapel of the Lutheran Bible Institute (now Trinity Lutheran College). The first child was baptized on November 21, 1987. From this temporary church home, the story of a growing parish is told in the hundreds of hours of planning and the multiple meetings of pastor and people.

As the parish grew and developed, many groups were formed to serve the needs of the parish: the Building Commission, the Women’s Club, the Religious Education Commission, the Knights of Columbus, the Liturgy Commission, the Mothers’ Enrichment Group, the Finance Council, and the Pastoral Council. In December 1987, the first parish staff positions were filled: Mary Keyser was hired as Director of Religious Education, and Kathy Doolin as Administrative Assistant. The members of all of these groups brought such devotion and vitality to the parish that we broke ground for the new church on May 28, 1989. In rain and puddles, Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen blessed the hope-filled event.

A Permanent Church Home

On August 25–26, 1990, Masses were offered for the first time in the new church. One month later, on September 23, Archbishop Thomas Murphy came to dedicate and bless the church of Mary, Queen of Peace. This was a wonderful day for all the people of the parish who had sacrificed and worked so long and hard. God blessed them all with a beautiful church.

From the beginning, its unusual design has been somewhat irreverently referred to as “the holy spaceship” or “the launching pad to heaven.”

Five months after the opening, in February 1991, a second financial campaign was announced. It was entitled, “Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, Let Us Build the City of God.” The aim of this campaign was to pay off the current debt and to put money away for completion of the parish building program. On May 25, 1991, the parish gathered to celebrate the thirty-eighth anniversary of Father Szeman’s ordination and to thank him for his leadership as the parish’s first pastor.

In June 1991, upon announcing his resignation for health reasons, Father Szeman received many expressions of gratitude to and prayerful support. To facilitate the transition, Father Anthony Bawyn served as the official pastoral caretaker of the parish. Listening sessions were held to give the faithful an opportunity to look at themselves, to discuss who they were, who they wanted to become, and the type of pastor they would like to lead them. The transition ended in November 1991, with the assignment of Father J. Paul Dalton as pastor. The listening sessions continued, so that the parish could offer its thanks to Father Bawyn for his excellent work and to speak of their values to Father Dalton.

Another series of firsts began: St. Vincent de Paul and Bundle Sundays were started; Theresa Hognehaut, an artist in the parish, created the representations of the Stations of the Cross; and Bill Taube, a permanent deacon in the archdiocese, was hired as Pastoral Assistant for Administration. On March 28, 1992, a gathering of parish leaders developed and adopted the parish's mission statement. On October 23, 1992, the parish community happily celebrated its fifth anniversary. On April 21, 1993, Father Dalton invited the parish to participate in a five-year plan to finish building the parish center. The theme of this plan, which included a stewardship program, was "Our Lives Will Bear Witness to Our Beliefs."

As with many a year, 1993 was filled with the wonderful ordinariness of parish work and living: meetings; religious education classes for children, teens, and adults; the regular liturgical life on weekdays and Sundays. Did something great happen during 1993 and the ensuing years? Yes! The greatness of this parish community, quietly (sometimes not so quietly) living out its life.

The second parish Pictorial Directory was published in March 1994. A Funeral Reception Committee formed in the spring of 1994. In June, the first parish golf tournament was played at the Snoqualmie Falls Course. That same month, a quarterly parish newsletter appeared, edited by Joe McNabb. Soon after, the newsletter was named *The Cornerstone*. One more break in the ordinariness of parish life came on April 30, 1995, when the Knights of Columbus met to discuss building a parish grotto to honor Mary, Queen of Peace. A senior citizen group was formed on October 22, 1995.

January 1, 1996, Father Dalton began his six-month sabbatical leave. Father Mike Raschko undertook the interim pastoral responsibilities. On May 11, the Knights began clearing ground for the grotto.

Completion of the Parish Center

The Building Commission Survey results were made public. "We should proceed with the completion of the plans for the multi-purpose facility now." With that big decision made, parish life went on. A beautiful funeral pall, designed and created by the Art and Environment Committee, was given to the parish on March 23, 1997. The formation of Small Church Communities began in July and became active on October 10, 1997. Preparation for the tenth anniversary also started in July. The theme chosen was "Ten Years of Peace." After months of arduous work, the parish gathered on October 10, 1997. Following a joyful and prayerful 5:00 p.m. Mass of Thanksgiving, everyone enjoyed an Italian buffet dinner. The cooperation of so many of the parishioners made this celebration a wonderful success.

In January 1999, Deacon Bill Taube retired as Parish Administrator, passing those duties on to Brenda Nulliner. Parish life advanced with the usual growth in wisdom, age, and grace. Quietly, the people of the Sammamish Plateau gathered to hear the Word of God, to worship, and to receive the Sacraments. Karen Hauser joined the parish staff to provide administrative support in the fall of 1999. We celebrated in 2000 with Father Mike on his twenty-fifth anniversary as a priest. The parish opened its website, www.mqp.org. The Building Commission met regularly with great patience, to frame the plans that would serve as the foundation for our continuing building project. In

December 2000, Building Commission Chairman Bill Haines and his wife, Gina, began formation preparation for his call as a permanent deacon.

At last, the big day arrived: the ground-breaking ceremony for the completion of the parish center. And oh, yes, the announcement of a capital fund drive. February 25, 2001, was commitment weekend for the “Celebrating Our Faith, Completing Our Vision” campaign. Over six hundred families participated in the initial campaign, contributing more than \$1,700,000. We were successfully launched; now the long wait began. From the first groan of an excavator, the building slowly emerged. Sloshing through puddles and mud became the usual approach to meetings and to weekday and Sunday Masses. To assist the many who found the mess too difficult, the 5:00 p.m. Saturday Mass was held at Sammamish Hills Lutheran Church, a gracious gesture of ecumenism. The foundation was poured. The concrete block walls rose level by level. Then the roof enclosed the space. Drywall workers moved in, followed by the glass and tile subcontractors. Rumors spread as to the date of completion. June? July? August? Finally the announcement: the dedication of and blessing weekend would be September 20–22, 2002, the fifteenth anniversary of Mary, Queen of Peace. Alleluia! The theme of this event: “Celebrating Worship, Peace, and Service.”

Continued Growth

Mary, Queen of Peace continues to foster spiritual and social growth and a sense of community among our 2100-plus registered families. Fine-tuning the parish facilities proceeded in 2003 and 2004, with the installation of the bells in the bell towers and the new tabernacle in the chapel, completion of the Resurrection Garden, hiring of Dave Dennis as the first parish Facility Maintenance Supervisor, and the wrap-up of the

building fund campaign. The parish library opened downstairs in September 2003, with a nice selection of inspirational books, and in that same month CYO started its first-ever soccer season.

In November 2003, the parish celebrated with Father Paul the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination and the arrival of new basketball hoops. In other sports news, the new Marian Social Hall got especially lively when the CYO opened its first basketball season. In January 2005, a debt reduction campaign, "Our Church, Our Community, Our Future" was announced, with the purpose of reducing the parish mortgage debt. The difference in the reduced monthly debt payments could be applied to the burgeoning needs of parish, in particular youth faith formation, pastoral care, and stewardship.

New groups in the parish during this period include the Helping Hands Meal ministry, Stewardship Commission, Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS), weekday preschool in partnership with St. Joseph School, Just Faith, and Knit One, Prayer Too. The parish hosted many social events, such as the annual Oktoberfest dinner, a wills and estate-planning seminar, an Anthony Kearns concert (one of the Irish Tenors), a John Michael Talbot concert, family Advent wreath-making, Mardi Gras, and Spaghetti Western dinners, youth mission trips during the summers, welcome get-togethers for new parishioners, and even a field trip to see the Dead Sea Scrolls in Seattle. As a parish, we continue to reach out to others in need through our Human Concerns Commission, which oversees the distribution of our own parish tithe of 5% of our ordinary revenue (Sunday stewardship, Holy Days, and children's donations) to local, national, and international charities. In outreach to our local community, we provide the use of our

parish facility to many community-youth and nonprofit groups for meetings, activities, and celebrations.

Liturgical and youth-program enhancements included adopting LIFETEEN as our youth ministry program and adding a 5:30 p.m. Mass on Sunday evenings, beginning in October 2006. Just Faith started in September 2006, and a Called & Gifted retreat and a parish mission was hosted in Spring 2007.

A Sister Parish

While on a July 2007 well-digging mission in Ghana, Africa, Father Kevin invited the host parish there to become a sister parish to Mary, Queen of Peace. We welcomed Father Matthew Yitierh, pastor of Our Lady of Annunciation parish in Ghana, as he visited Mary, Queen of Peace in September 2007. In July 2008, Father Kevin and other parishioners returned to Ghana to check on the progress of the well-digging project there.

Good-byes and Hellos

Growth also means change. Our Pastoral Assistant for Adult Faith Formation, Colleen O'Connell, was selected for the new Pastoral Associate position in September 2004, and Zoltan Abraham joined the parish staff as the new Pastoral Assistant for Adult Faith Formation. We were sorry to say farewell to Father Paul in May 2005, when he was reassigned after fourteen years as our pastor. We welcomed Father Kevin Duggan as he picked up the baton in July 2005 and was officially installed as our new pastor in October 2005 by Auxiliary Bishop Eusebio Elizondo. Deacon Bill Haines was reassigned to St. Louise parish in July 2006, and Deacon Bill Taube to St. Madeleine Sophie in September 2007. There have been several other staff changes during this

period, including the hiring of Kori Baker as Youth Minister, Mimi Arima as Pastoral Assistant for Children and Family Ministry, Nate Goldbloom as Assistant Youth Minister, and David Yackley as Liturgical Music Director.

The Mary, Queen of Peace family was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Father Paul Dalton on February 29, 2008. He was an integral part of the growth and development of our church from 1991 to 2005. His funeral was held at Mary, Queen of Peace on March 6, 2008.

In July 2008, after twenty years with Mary, Queen of Peace Parish, Father Mark Raschko left for Holy Rosary Parish in West Seattle. We were blessed with the addition of Father Paul Pluth as the weekend assistant. Father Paul came to us from Saint Anne Parish in Seattle.

From Here to Eternity

Mary, Queen of Peace celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary on November 10, 2008, with a Run/Walk of Faith, Mass with many of the founding parishioners, and dinner. Our parish has been blessed as we continue to grow and serve the Lord and our community.

This brief history ends with a universal thank you to the people of Mary, Queen of Peace Parish for their active participation in stewardship through worship, education, service, and social activities. Our lives will bear witness to our beliefs.