

# Principal found to launch Tri-Cities Prep

By **JOE HARWOOD**

Herald staff writer

Tri-Cities Prep officials say they shot for the moon when they went shopping for a principal to head the area's first Catholic high school.

The moon shot apparently was accurate, they say, because the man they hired brings 24 years of teaching experience and 19 years working as a school administrator.

And having spent the past seven years in the coastal desert of Peru, the Rev. Thomas Bunnell doesn't see any problems with the hot Mid-Columbia summer just around the corner.

"I'm at home in this climate," Bunnell said. "But winter might be another story. Down there it got down to 60 and it was considered cold."

Bunnell, a Jesuit who was born and raised in Tacoma, said he decided to accept the job — despite the cold — out of a sense of adventure.

Just finding Bunnell was an adventure, school officials said.

"When we first started exploring, we found there wasn't a lot of (Jesuits) available," said Kathleen Corboy-Rigby, spokeswoman for the school.

"We aimed high and went for our dream," she said.

The school, which will be built on 28 acres on Road 100 near Interstate 182 in Pasco, is the result of at least five years of planning, prayer and fund raising.

"The people here were ready to set out for adventure," he said. "They are setting themselves up for excellence."

With a mission to educate Christian — not just Catholic — leaders, the emphasis at the school when it opens in fall 1998 will be on high academic and moral standards that revolve around a value-centered education.

And that seems to fit Bunnell's background, experience and vision. His educational philosophy involves finding opportunities to excel, then seizing those opportunities.

"I go for the best in terms of plugging people into opportunities," he said.

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— *the Rev. Thomas Bunnell, Tri-Cities Prep*

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Bunnell, 52, appears to have seized on such chances throughout his life.

Ordained into the Society of Jesus in Seattle in 1974, Bunnell received his bachelor's degree from Gonzaga University and his master's degree in education from the University of Washington.

He also has studied in Germany,

at the University of Vienna, in Spain and at the University of Arizona.

Bunnell has spent the last seven years in Piura, Peru, serving as president of Colegio San Ignacio, a Jesuit grade and high school with about 1,400 students.

Before that, he was principal of Seattle Prep for 12 years followed by one year as the school's president.

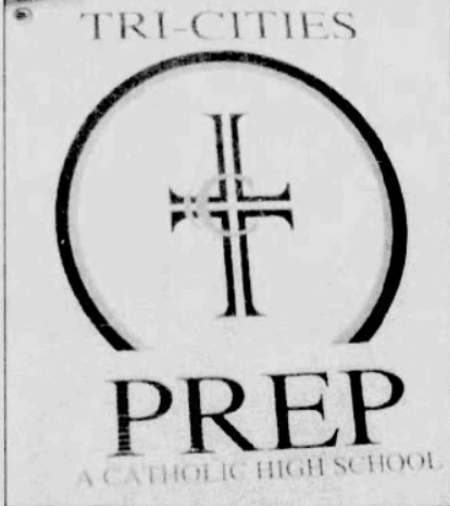
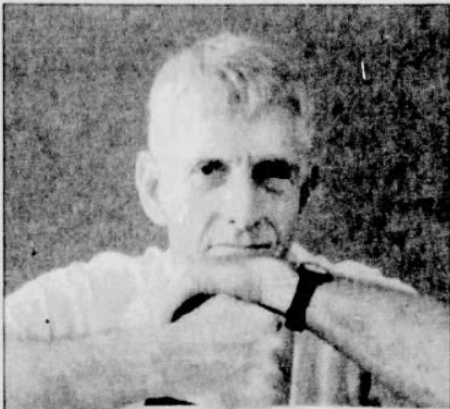
Bunnell has taught a variety of classes, ranging from his favorite, religion, to computers, theater and English.

He speaks and writes fluently in German and Spanish.

As for challenges facing the yet to be opened school, Bunnell said building enrollment is among the top priorities.

"We have to get the message out about the school," Bunnell said. "Not just to the parishes and local Catholic grade schools, but the whole community."

"That's the key for us," he said.



Herald/Tracy Montauk

The Rev. Thomas Bunnell will be the principal at Tri-Cities Prep.