

MAY NEWSLETTER 2011

ST. JOHN BERCHMANS CHURCH AND SCHOOL

I hope this newsletter finds you in good health and peace.

For Catholics the month of May has been thought of traditionally as the month of Mary. During this time I have looked to her and asked her intercession for our parish. I know from personal experience she has a special care for all those who invoke her help. Six years ago my father was dying of cancer. Even though his condition deteriorated daily he continued to pray the rosary with all his strength. His last two spoken words were, "Hail Mary," then he died a peaceful death. I know our Blessed Mother took him to his heavenly home and she will never forsake those who turn to her. Just as she helped my dad she will also help us if we ask her to. Our church bells play the Angelus Monday through Friday at 12:00 noon and 6:00pm. The next time you hear these bells think of our Blessed Mother and say the Angelus prayer or reflect on it, you will be glad you did.

The big event this month is our annual festival which will be on Sunday, May 15th. It will start with mass at 10:00am and continue on the rest of the day. So far I just have a few concerns. One concern is with the raffle and dinner tickets. They have been coming in very slow. At many church festivals the biggest income producer is by far the raffle and dinner. These two items generate a big part of a festival's income. We are just a few weeks away and so far our raffle and dinner ticket sales have been disappointing. If you cannot sell or buy all your tickets then do what you can and bring the unsold ones to the rectory. We can sell the raffle tickets during the festival. Another area of unease is with the number of bingo prizes we have received so far. Again, it has been very poor. Any new item with a value of ten dollars or more may be dropped off at the rectory. Dora Duran has been in charge of this raffle for many years and has always done a good job. She deserves our support. If you can donate a prize please do so as soon as possible. This will be a big help to Dora. A final thing we are in need of is more people to step forward and help out. Like with other churches, it seems like the same people help out over and over again. While I am grateful to these people who generously give of their time to the festival I am also painfully aware that there are a whole lot more people in our parish who can help but do not. In terms of the number of registered parishioners we have we are a big parish. It doesn't seem fair to me that in the midst of all these people a few should shoulder the burden for the whole festival. This festival benefits all of us and we should all do what we can to help out. As always I am counting on you to tell everyone you know about our festival. Let us all do what we can to make this festival a big success.

March 31st was the last day for our bookkeeper, Esther Barrett. She has taken on a new job as an accountant with the Archdiocese of San Antonio. I will miss her greatly. With the Archdiocese she will be working full time and have health benefits for her and her family. Something we are unable to do. I am grateful to God for the time Esther was with us and I wish her all the best in her new assignment. As I began the task of looking for her replacement I soon found out how difficult it would be to find a person who had the abilities for our available position and could do the job on a part time basis. After several days of going nowhere I put the whole thing in God's hands and tried not to think about it too much. A few days later there was a letter on my desk from a person interested in the position we had. I called her and arranged for a time when Esther and I could both interview her. A few minutes into the discussion I knew she was the person we needed and my prayers were answered. I am very happy to say we now have Sylvia Ann Luna working for us. She comes to us highly recommended, very proficient in the bookkeeping software we use and only wants to work part time so she can devote time to her children. God is good and has blessed us with Sylvia. I am so happy to have her and I know she will be a tremendous asset to our parish.

Besides the festival, there will be several other events going on this month. One event is our annual first communion masses. The school will be having theirs on Saturday, May 7th at 10:00am and the religious formations first communion will be on Saturday, May 14th during the 5:00pm mass. These are special times for me and I look forward to them. Seeing the children excited about receiving our Lord for the first time and seeing their extended families rejoice with them fills me with a deep sense of happiness, joy, and gratitude to God for the priesthood he bestowed on me which allows me to have a share in this special time. I am also very grateful to the children's teachers who gave so much of their time to the formation of these kids. May our good Lord bless them for the good work they have done with our youth.

Our seminarian intern, Oscar Tello was assigned to our parish from September 2010 till May 2011. I have enjoyed his time here and I am sure the parishioners have also. As the month of May drew near I sadly began to think about organizing his farewell party. A few days later I was asked by a person in the Pastoral Care Center if Oscar could continue to stay here after he had completed his pastoral year in May. I immediately said yes and added he could stay here as long as he wanted. I am glad Oscar's time with us has been extended and I hope he can stay here for a long time. He will soon be ordained a deacon and shortly after that a priest for the Archdiocese of San Antonio. I know he will be a good priest and the parish he will be assigned to will be lucky to have him.

Another thing happening this month is the end of our academic school year and the end to our religious formation year. The school year has really flown by and it just doesn't seem that long ago when we first started. I know the children are looking forward to their vacations and having some time off. It will be a happy time for them but a terribly sad time for me. Just the thought of not having

children around here for the entire summer saddens me. I really enjoy the time I get to spend with them, their teachers and staff. There have been times when things get me down and I would go over to the school and spend some time with the kids at lunch and then go with them to recess and play tag, kick ball, basketball or just joke around with them. Their joy and happiness would give me just the lift I needed. I truly believe these kids have given more to me than I have given to them. I thank God for them and the blessings they are to the parish. I would hate to think of how the parish would be if we did not have our school. We are now accepting registrations for the 2011-2012 school year at SJB School. Those who have children 4 years old and older or know of someone who does are asked to please consider SJB School as the educational choice for their children or friends children. We are very proud of our teachers and the accomplishments of our students. You may ask why should I send my child to St. John Berchmans School or recommend it to my friends or relatives. The answer is simple. At SJB School all students get to know the 3 most important things, the 3 most joyous things, the 3 most fulfilling things of their lives, that is 1) every day they get to know Jesus Christ, 2) everyday they get to know his church and 3) everyday they get to know their own value, importance and place in the community right now, today. If you want more information please call the school office at 433-0411. You will not be disappointed!

A new church ramp is the next renovation we will be doing and it looks like it will be done sometime this month. Some people question why it has taken so long to do this and others question why we need one at all. First of all the ramp we have now is not compliant with the Americans with Disability Act. Some of our parishioners find it very difficult to go up the ramp because it is too steep. As Catholics we are to take to heart the teachings of our Lord. He once said whatever we did to the least of my brethren you did to me. If we have the financial means to help those in need then we must. The reason it is taking so long to construct this ramp is because many things had to be done before any concrete is poured. I had to write a letter to the Archbishop asking his permission to do this and why I felt it was necessary. He advised me to contact others at the Pastoral Center before he would give me the ok to proceed. After this we had to make sure we will have a proper foundation. Our soil is quite fertile with lots of clay so the design of the ramp support was of high importance. Since the church is on a pretty stiff foundation (piers) that doesn't allow for much movement and the new ramp would have to be somewhat stiff to have a movement similar to the church. To obtain this information the architect contacted geotech firms who provided us with the proper foundation support information. Different firms gave us their proposals and after a careful review we selected the one whose price was within our budget. After the architect was advised as to what type of footing base would be required he went to work to make the plans and submitted them to the general contractor. Knowing that the cost of the examination would be out of proportion with just the ramp I decided to add to the geotechs work the area of a future concession stand I would someday like to build. I am excited about this ramp we will soon be constructing. It will add beauty to the front of the church as well as provide a much needed easier access to our church for our elderly and those with disabilities. Because it will be built the right way it will give us good service for many years to come.

After this project is done I want to help our CYO replace their old facilities with new ones. The concession stand, storage room, and restrooms they now have are in dreadful condition. As mentioned earlier a geotech firm has taken soil samples of where the buildings currently are and will analyze it. This data will tell the architect what kind of foundation is needed. I am hoping we can use a slab on grade. I have instructed the architect to draw up plans for all three buildings. Right now we will work on building a concession stand, then when funds become available the storage room and later on the rest rooms. I am happy with the progress the CYO has made so far in raising money for their project and I hope we will be able to start work on this concession in the near future.

In conclusion I want to thank everyone for all you have done for me. I am touched by how caring our people are and I thank God for his goodness to us. The other day I was having breakfast with a group of parishioners and during this time the subject of doctors was brought up. I had briefly mentioned how mine wanted me to get a tread mill and start using it regularly. A few days later I was told there was someone behind the rectory that wanted to see me. To my surprise the person had a brand new tread mill (still in the box) and said it was a gift to me by an anonymous person. It was assembled a few days later. The other day a couple told me they heard about what I got. They gave me a very generous amount of money to buy training shoes and anything else that would be needed for my new exercise regimen. I felt humbled by their kindness. When the architect told me it would be a good idea to get soil samples of the places where the foundation for the ramp and concession stand would be, I was all for it until he told me what the geotech services might cost. This additional cost really bothered me a lot and I was seriously considering not having the test done. Just as I was about to call this off a person came up to me and gave me a very generous check to be used in whatever way I wanted. The next day I was given a letter addressed to me. The person who wrote the letter said how grateful they were to God for what he has done in their life and gave me a very generous sum of money. What I received from these two anonymous donors almost paid the entire cost of the geotechs services. I thought to myself, God is so good! These are just a few examples of the goodness of our people and our God. I could give many more examples of things that happened in April but that would make this newsletter too long. These are shared with you so that your faith will be strong and you will not give up on our parish and our God. May the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, watch over us and keep us in their care.

Remember, God loves you and so do I.

Fr. Rudy T. Carrola, Jr.
Pastor, St. John Berchmans Church and School