

NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER 2011
ST. JOHN BERCHMANS CHURCH AND SCHOOL

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

November is traditionally the month when we turn our thoughts to God and give thanks for all the blessings we have. In this spirit we will be having a parish thanksgiving mass on Thursday, November 24th at 9:00am. I am asking those who will be coming to bring the bread you will be sharing at your thanksgiving dinner to the church so that it can be blessed during mass. On November 6th I will be having my annual appreciation dinner for all our volunteers and their immediate families in the school cafeteria from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm. These people are the spirit of St. John Berchmans and this dinner is my way of thanking them personally for the service they give to all of us. If you are a volunteer and plan on coming to this dinner please call the rectory office as soon as you can and let us know how many people are in your group. This will greatly help me to plan for this event.

Our school continues to do well. I consider myself very lucky to be the pastor of a school that has a large number of students and a faculty and staff committed to making it the best it can be. When things begin to drive me crazy at the rectory or when I just need to take a break it does me a lot good to go over to the school and spend some time with the kids. The students do more for me than I do for them and I really enjoy the time I get to spend with them. Seeing them come to school in the mornings with their parents and grandparents reminds me of the times when my parents used to do that for me. Now that I am much older I see it as my calling from God to work for our students as others did for me so that they will have a lot of great opportunities and succeed in life. I invite all the parishioners who would like to know more about our students to come to our school mass which occurs every Wednesday at 8:15 am. There you will see a large group of well-behaved kids singing in the choir, proclaiming the scriptural readings, serving as altar servers, ushers, greeters, and leading the assembly in prayer after mass is over. It is really a special time and I invite you to be a part of it also.

The spiritual side of our parish continues to be very strong. The men's Acts team is busy preparing for their up-coming retreat which will start on November 17th and end with the 12 noon mass on November 20th. These men have been meeting faithfully every week for the last few months in preparation for this special event. All of them had been on a retreat themselves and are now working hard so that others may have a good experience like they had when they were on retreat. The Religious formation program continues to provide a tremendous service for our students. Our Director of Religious Education, Mrs. Rosalinda Rodriguez and the teachers are to be commended for the fine work they do. They have made a long-term commitment to our children and have been faithful in keeping it. These people are my heroes, and I appreciate very much all they do for our parish. If you should ever run into one of these teachers thank them for the service they give to our children and parish. The meeting we had last month for the Eucharistic ministers and Lectors went well; it was a good start. Attendance at the meetings was a little disappointing but there will be other meetings for those who would like to be part of these ministries. The new ministers we have are a big help but we still need a lot more. If you have been thinking about being a Lector or Eucharistic Minister this could mean God is calling you to one or both of these ministries. Please think it over and talk to me about it. I would love to have you be part of our team. Another big area of help we need is with our Vigil Team. These people go out in twos to funeral homes and lead those present in reciting the rosary. They provide a tremendous service to the family of the deceased and me. Being the only priest in a large parish has its challenges. Most of my time is spent trying to stay ahead of due dates and getting my work done in a timely manner. Having a Vigil Team is a real blessing to me. It frees me up so I can attend other parish activities. If you are

interested in the Vigil Team or want more information on what is involved please call Mrs. Rosie Gallegos at (210) 432-5763.

Our finances are improving slowly. I am very grateful to everyone who uses their weekly church support envelopes, those who support our fundraisers, and those who help out the church in whatever way they can. Your financial support has helped us tremendously. Because of your generosity we have been able to make needed improvements and repairs to our parish facilities which have benefitted all of us. As this calendar year comes to an end we will soon have the 2012 box envelopes ready for pick up in the gathering area of the church. I respectfully encourage those who have been using church support envelopes to continue and those who do not to please consider using them.

As mentioned in last week's bulletin the finance council decided not to pursue the demolition of the church ramp and replace it with a new one that is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Even though we had enough money on hand to complete the job the council felt the cost was just too much. We are now in contact with an architect to have plans drawn up for the CYO concession stand. This building could also be used by the parish for its festivals and the school to store things. I am hoping we will be able to see this project through to completion and that the cost to build the foundation will not be too great. If you are wondering if this building is even necessary I assure you it is. The current building is unusable and deteriorating. When we have games here the CYO has to set up in the sun with an extension cord to use for electricity. For cold drinks they have to bring several ice chests and fill them with ice. Later in the day the ice turns to extremely cold water and those who work the concession have to put their arms in it to find the drink a customer wants. We really need this building. Please pray that we will have the funds to construct it. Another concern I have is with our fields. The drought we are in caused many deep cracks and holes to form. The recent rains helped a little but there are still a lot of big holes and deep cracks. If you know someone who can give the church a good price on filling these holes with clean black dirt I would appreciate it very much if you would tell them to contact me at (210) 434-3247. I want to get this done before someone steps into one of the holes and hurts themselves.

A few years ago we began a process to renew both the outside and inside of our church. Different areas were targeted and we all worked hard to get them done. Everything was going fine until we were made responsible for payment of the school debt. This set the pace of our renovations back but after a few adjustments we have been able to almost get back to where we were before the issue of the school debt was brought up. As I look around our facilities I am proud of all we have accomplished but there is still much more I would like to see get done. Some of these are renovations to the chapel, sanctuary area, new restrooms, and a renewal of the gathering and assembly area of our church. I would like to replace the gravel on the north side of the church with flag stone and redirect the water coming out of the drainage spouts so that it flows under the sidewalks and into the parking lot instead of over the sidewalks. The sound system in the church needs to be improved and the asphalt needs to be placed on the area where the ACE students park their cars. A big concern I have is with our school roof. It is the original roof and is badly in need of replacement. We have set up a fund for this and so far we only have a tenth of what we need. Whenever it rains I am grateful for the rain but at the same time I'm worried about water damage to our school. These are just a few of the many things we need to do. Every one of these will take time and a commitment of hard work to raise the needed funds. I respectfully ask everyone to do what you can to help us meet these goals. May the Holy family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph watch over all of 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