

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER
ST. JOHN BERCHMANS CHURCH AND SCHOOL

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

So far this winter has been a little odd. January of last year was unbearably cold. This year it was warm most of the time. February is usually a very cold month so we'll see what happens. Please keep all the street people, those who do not have adequate shelter, and those who have to work out doors in your prayers. May God help all these people with the situations they are in.

Right now our school is taking registrations for PK3 – 8th grade for the 2012-2013 school year. If you are interested in visiting the school please give them a call at (210) 433-0411 to schedule a tour. I know it is a big sacrifice for parents to make, but take it from me, a person who attended a catholic grade school, high school, and college,---it is worth it. I thank God for my parents who made sacrifices for many years to send their children to catholic schools and for this I will always be grateful to them. These schools helped to make me the person I am today and I am thankful to God I now have an opportunity to pass this same blessing on to the children of our parish school. Our students are our greatest treasure for today and tomorrow. I feel it is imperative that we, as parishioners of SJB, do all we can to make sure our school will always be able to continue providing strong academic programs while integrating faith in all levels of learning. I feel this is our mission from God and we must not back down from this great service to His children. I am blessed to be a pastor of our school and I will do everything I possibly can to make sure it flourishes. I respectfully ask everyone to stand with me in support of our teachers, students, and staff.

Our festival will be on Sunday, May 6th, and the dinner will be on Sunday May 20th. Please give these events your support. The money we make from this event funds the repairs and renovations we do to our facility. If you can help out in any way it would be very much appreciated.

Lent will soon be upon us. Before He began his ministry, the scriptures tell us Jesus spent forty days in the desert. He prayed, fasted, confronted the temptations of the devil and prepared for his mission. As we begin Lent on Ash Wednesday let us imitate Jesus. Like Jesus we too are called to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Using God's Word and the spiritual practices the church gives us. We can, little by little, grow into the kind of people God wants us to be. This year Ash Wednesday falls on February 22nd. We will be having a mass at 8:15 am then services at 10:15 am, 12:15 pm, and 5:15 pm. The last mass will be at 7:00 pm. In addition to this we will be having Stations of the Cross every Friday during Lent by a parish organization. To properly dispose ourselves for Easter we will have a parish mission with Deacon Sandoval from March 12th to the 14th in the church. There will be a Penitential service on Wednesday, March 14th, at 7:00 pm. I will be trying to get five other bilingual priests to help out. Please say a prayer this will be successful. With so many parishes having reconciliation services and fewer priests around it is difficult to get the entire number of priests we need.

Our finances are getting better. I am so grateful to God for this and for blessing me with a great finance council and bookkeeper. Our bookkeeper, Mrs. Sylvia Luna, does much more for us than just paying the bills. Her organizational skill, knowledge of church and state regulations, as well as her ability to help us save money is priceless to me. Because of her diligence we are current on all our bills and I really appreciate the weekly financial reports she gives me. These reports along with the advice I get from the financial council helps us keep the parish on the right track. Because of this great advice we are able to improve our parish facility while at the same time strengthen our financial accounts. Recently we have completed a few improvements to our parish facility. The water fountain in the church has been giving us problems for a long time. It would shoot out water towards the floor creating dangerous puddles where people could slip and fall. It has been replaced by a new one. In the church the walls in the gathering, baptismal, and minister's room have been painted and the water damage on the walls and load bearing pillars has been repaired. The vinyl base in the minister's room has been replaced with a wooden one and a new vinyl base has been put in the gathering, baptismal, and the hallway leading to the restrooms. The hand railing on the entrance ramp to the rectory has been sanded and repainted and the burned out lights in the walkway between the rectory and church have been fixed. The parking lot lights that were not working have been repaired giving us twenty-five percent more light at night.

Right now we are working on filling the holes in our fields and repairing the damaged fence by Weir Street. The drought we recently had caused a lot of holes to form in our fields. This is a dangerous situation as someone can unknowingly step in one and hurt themselves. I am estimating we will need to purchase about five or six yards of clean back dirt to take care of this problem. The spiritual side of our parish continues to be strong. Under the exceptional leadership of our D.R.E., Mrs. Rosalinda Rodriguez and the catechists, the children in our religious formation continue to grow in their knowledge and appreciation of the Catholic faith. Many of them will soon be making their Holy Communion and others will be confirmed by Bishop Cantu on May 26th. It takes money to keep our religious program going and again I want to thank you the parishioner of SJB for making this possible. Your financial support of the CCD fundraisers and of the church helps us pay for the items we need to continue educating our children in the faith. The Acts Core has some new members. We thank those who will be stepping down from the service they have given and we keep them in our prayers and we welcome the new members who have taken their place. The Acts community has done a lot of good work with the retreats they have sponsored. Many people have commented on what a great experience these events were for them. The Knights of Columbus continue their numerous charitable works on a state and local level and are always ready to help me with anything I may need. I appreciate all they do for the parish and I respectfully ask all men who are practicing Catholics eighteen years and older to consider joining the SJB Knights of Columbus council. We have a Spanish speaking group that meets on Monday evenings in the church for prayer and fellowship. This group, called Ultreya, gives a tremendous witness to the Catholic faith. If you are interested in being part of this group come on over to the church around 7 pm. You will be welcomed with open arms. I am proud of all the good works our St. Vincent De Paul does for the people of our community. Almost all of their work goes unnoticed by others and that is fine with them. What they do, they do to receive acclaim from God and not from others. These are just a few of the many organizations we have in the parish. Their spirituality, rooted in the Lord, and is what makes our parish great.

In closing I just want to thank everyone for all the good things you do for the church. I wish to extend a big thank you to Mr. X for replacing the broken bleachers on our basketball court. He paid for all the needed materials with his own money and did the work himself. Our webmaster is another volunteer who deserves special mention. He added two pages on our home page under the "what's up" link. One page is for those who want to wish someone a happy birthday and the other is for those who are celebrating an anniversary. He also put on a link on our home page to the site, "Catholics Come Home". This site has a lot of great information. I also want to thank a grandfather of one of our sixth graders. Like Mr. X, he is always cutting the grass, raking leaves, picking up litter or doing some work on our grounds. He is a tremendous help. I also want to thank the kind people who keep an eye on me and are always making sure I am ok. They invite me to breakfast, decorate the rectory for Christmas, invite me out to dinner, do volunteer work in the rectory and are always ready to help me in whatever way they can. They are a true blessing and I thank God for putting them in my life. There are many more individuals whose thoughtfulness makes our parish the special place it is. Let us continue to build on the good we have here by serving our Lord in each other. 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.

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