



# St. Rita

catholic community

A Letter From Our Pastor

## The Spring Winds of Change Reach Our St. Rita Parish

Spring rolls around in the second year of a priest's first assignment and it's time to start getting nervous about the winds of change being in the air. Well, those winds blew strongly at St. Rita in 2016 and we find ourselves bidding farewell to Fr. Luca Simbula, as his ministry at St. Rita draws to a close. Then the intrigue begins – who will replace him? When will the new priest come?

But 2016 finds the Diocese of Dallas short on priests. Four men were ordained on May 21, but two of them are returning to Rome to finish degree studies. Selfishly, I would say that this was not a good year to send two newly ordained priests back to Rome for yet another year of academics. But I know better – I was on that program – ordained June 27, 1980, and sent back in September to finish an advanced degree in Spiritual Theology (Spirituality). I would not trade that experience for anything. And I happen to believe the Diocese of Dallas benefited significantly from that investment in an extra year of studies for me.

So, what about a third priest for St. Rita? We are not the only parish asking that very question. It is being asked at St. Francis Parish in Frisco and at St. Ann Parish in Coppell. And I recently found out that St. Jude Parish in Allen needs a third priest. And all three of those parish communities are larger than St. Rita!

If St. Rita is assigned a third priest, the earliest that would happen will be well into summer. Fr. Josh and I both have vacations planned in that timeframe. I have plans to be off from June 13 to July 1 – ALL vacation days from calendar year 2015, I must add! Fr. Josh has been asked by the diocese to attend a program at Notre Dame July 11-14, and then he is taking vacation time from July 18 to Aug. 5 – leaving him with still five vacation days carried over from 2015-16. I remind you that Canon Law prohibits a priest from celebrating more than two Masses per weekday. Canon Law also limits priests to three Masses on Sundays and Holy Days, but Bishop Farrell has granted us an exemption to celebrate a fourth

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## The Spring Winds of Change Reach Our St. Rita Parish *continued from front cover*

Mass if needed by the parish to help parishioners fulfill their Sunday and Holy Day Obligation. Something has to give, folks!

After appropriate consultation in the parish, it has been decided to cancel the 6:25 a.m. Mass Monday through Friday beginning on Memorial Day, May 30, and extending at least until Aug. 15. If a third priest will not be assigned to St. Rita by Aug. 15, then it is likely that the 6:25 a.m. Mass will not return to the weekday Mass schedule because the school needs an 8:00 Mass on Wednesdays and Fridays – more to come on that possibility if it develops over the course of the summer. We will retain the 5:30 p.m. Mass – very few parishes have an evening Mass on weekdays and our attendance at 5:30 Mass is two to three times the number in attendance at 6:25 Mass; many neighboring parishes have early morning Masses but not evening Mass. Our weekend Mass schedule – including Saturday 8 a.m. Mass – will remain the same and Confession times will not be impacted.

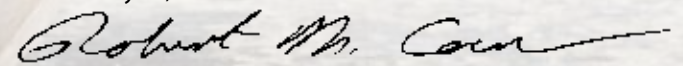
I assure you that this step is not taken lightly. And do not think that Fr. Josh and I are eliminating the 6:25 Mass because we don't want to rise early in the morning – speaking for myself, I much prefer celebrating Mass at

6:25 a.m. to celebrating Mass at 5:30 p.m. But St. Rita is blessed to have consistency in celebrating Mass at 5:30 p.m. every day of the week. And even with this change, we are in need of substitute priests for 31 sacramental celebrations between May 30 and Aug. 15.

Being shorthanded as we are also means that our response time to emergency situations and health crises might not be as speedy as you might be accustomed to. Tending to the sick and dying is still a very high priority for us, but our calendars are already very full, even with three priests on staff. There are also some ministries and groups that will go without a priest's presence – Fr. Josh and I simply have not perfected the art of being "priests-and-a-half"!

So, please pray for us as we muddle our way through the months, and maybe year or years to come. And stay tuned for further developments. Pray for vocations to the priesthood!

God bless you,



Fr. Bob Coerver



## Building Up Our School and Community: The Parents' Club of St. Rita Catholic School

Our parish is blessed to have a wonderful school community in St. Rita Catholic School! Along with a strong academic and spiritual education, the school provides students and their families with a true community experience through dozens of activities and events throughout the year, such as a book fair, a carnival, fundraisers, various holiday events – and the list goes on! Have you ever wondered how the school makes it all happen? In addition to the dedicated staff and teachers at the school, the Parents' Club at St. Rita is instrumental in helping the school offer so many activities and events.

“Our job is to support the children, the teachers, the program, and our sister school, St. Mary of Carmel,” says the outgoing Parents' Club President, Kimberly Sims. “We have a chair for every single parent-run committee – about 85 chairs! If you think of all the activities at the school, there is a parent running each of them – Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, the Fun Run, the Concert and Auction, the Book Fair, Field Day, the volunteer system, welcoming newcomers, and so on. We make sure that all chairs have support to do what they're supposed to be doing.”



*Kimberly Sims, outgoing Parents' Club president, and her daughter, Audrey*

In addition to the activities and events that are run every year, the Parents' Club also takes on special projects. Last year, the club was able to buy an extra set of textbooks for all middle school students so that they would no longer have to carry a set of heavy books back and forth to school each day.

Beyond the essential support that the Parents' Club provides the school, Kimberly, whose daughter, Audrey, is in the fifth grade, has found that the organization also offers parents a great way to get to know one another and feel connected to the school community.

“I love seeing this group that is so willing to help make the school as good as it can be, and getting to work together,” she says. “Now I know a lot of the parents [of students in other grades], and I'm getting to know more about the school. It's a really good perspective. We have a great school with very active parents and lots of volunteer support.”

The Parents' Club also seeks to create opportunities for the parish and school to come together with the broader local community.

“Community Cool Down is a carnival event following the 5K, and

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## Outreach Angels Offer *Meals*

Our Outreach Angels Ministry may not be visible to most of us, but when we have lost a loved one, their caring hands offer Christ's mercy to us in times of sorrow.

Nan Roper oversees the work of the Outreach Angels, who provide food and drinks for parishioners and their families after a funeral.

"Typically, we have the meal in the church hall for the guests after a funeral so they can enjoy time together and have something to eat," Nan says. "Depending on the time, we can serve breakfast, lunch or dinner, and we'll also deliver food to the home."

The group is notified through our parish receptionist when Nan receives an email stating there has been a death either of a parishioner or family member, and that the family is interested in speaking with her about a funeral meal.

Once Nan gets the details of what is needed, she will contact one of her four team leaders – Team A, B, C, and D – to notify their team. Each team has about 20 members.

"I rotate the teams, so one group is not constantly being called upon," Nan says.

The team leader then emails the members with a list of things needed, and the menu. The team members sign up stating what they will bring for the meal.

"I contact the family and let them know what we are providing, and the time for the meal," Nan says. "It's best to have one contact person. I'm usually present at the meal, and I try to be there for it all. When I can't I have a helper."

Nan has been leading the group for two years, and the ministry has been in existence for about 10.

"The members do it because they like to be helpful," Nan says. "I do it for the same reason. At a time of sadness it feels nice just to be there. We do it out of our homes, there is no cost to the family, and for some meals we have 150 people, and others 30 – but it's all free to the families. We feel it's something nice we can do that takes one thing off their plate. We care, and we try to think of what we can do."



*The team leaders for the Outreach Angels display some of the foods they serve to funeral guests during their ministry. (From left) Theresa Miller, ministry coordinator Nan Roper, Pat Wolf, and Betty Supinski.*

Nan agrees that the Outreach Angels are showing Christ's mercy in taking care of the funeral meal. During the church construction, however, the ministry hasn't been able to provide as many meals as they ordinarily would. But the ministry members know they have had to be patient during the building project.

"It is so rewarding to do it," Nan says. "It means so much to the families and friends. They are so grateful, and we're happy to do it."

Besides serving the meal, the Outreach Angels are present for the mourners as a support system.

"We're letting them know we care," Nan says. "We may not know them personally, but we show love for them and their families. In doing that for the two hours during the meal, we do what we can to support the family."

Serving the meal can be an emotional experience for the Outreach Angels, especially if ministry members know the deceased or their families. But taking care of the families offers an opportunity for healing, Nan says.

Some of the members are those who know firsthand what the service means.

Joyce Day shared that the Outreach Angels did not exist when her husband passed away in 2005.

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"But I have since then been to several services where the Angels did supply lovely benefits," she says. "So I decided to 'pay it forward' by helping this group whenever I can."

B. Jessica Aceves joined the ministry in 2008 after the death of her daughter, Jennifer.

When she was making the funeral arrangements with Fr. Mark, he suggested a reception, but Jessica hadn't considered having one – or how to go about it. Father told her about the free service provided by the Outreach Angels.

"I couldn't believe it," Jessica says. "When you are bereaved, for someone to take that worry away from you – I never forgot it."

On the day of the funeral, Jessica entered the church hall where the Outreach Angels had everything set up. The tables were beautifully set, and food was arranged on two tables.

"I had people from out of town, and I didn't know what to expect," she says. "I thought, this is too wonderful, and I want to help out."

She approached the ministry director at that time, thanked her for the solace she received from the service, and asked how she could help. Jessica has been helping ever since, knowing what the Outreach Angels' efforts means to those grieving.

*If you are interested in joining the Outreach Angels Ministry, please call Nan Roper at 214-293-3988.*

## The Parents' Club of St. Rita Catholic School

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we really make an effort to make that a community event, so it is a free event for the community as well as the parish," Kimberly says. "It's a great way to link the community with the parish."

Kimberly has enjoyed her year as president of the Parents' Club and the ways in which the position allowed her and her husband, Ryan, to live out stewardship by becoming more involved with their daughter's school.

"[The Parents' Club] is a good way to participate in something you really care about – your kids – that also benefits the parish," she explains. "And it's a good way to

take your own talents and put them to use and pool them to benefit the church and community, as well."

As working parents, Kimberly and Ryan understand that it can be difficult for busy families to find the time to fit one more commitment into their hectic schedules. But as they have learned from experience, active participation in the Parents' Club at St. Rita is time well spent!

"We all think time is an issue, but you can do as little or as much as you want," Kimberly says. "Doing something is important, and you get more out of it than you're giving – you really do."

*Are you interested in finding out more about how you can become involved with the Parents' Club at St. Rita Catholic School? If so, please contact the incoming president for 2016-2017, Amy White, at [white.amyg@gmail.com](mailto:white.amyg@gmail.com)!*

## Stewardship

### Don't Take a Vacation From Stewardship This Summer

Everyone deserves a vacation. After nine grueling months of school, kids get to enjoy the summer to relax and regroup before beginning a new grade. Employees, after diligently working long hours and dealing with stressful situations, deserve time away from the office to enjoy their favorite getaway. And of course, holidays like Easter and Christmas offer us the opportunity to slow down, share time with family and friends, and celebrate our faith more fully.

No one would argue that we need to mentally refresh our minds and bodies from time to time so that we can come back rejuvenated and ready to do our best.

Taking a break from some things, however, is not a possibility.

Take stewardship, for example. Imagine saying to yourself, "Well, this month I think I will not pray, not share any of my talents with anyone in need, and I will hoard my treasure." What would doing this accomplish? You certainly wouldn't feel refreshed, rejuvenated and ready to be at your best. Instead, feelings of greed, selfishness and spiritual unrest may occur. Stepping back from being a good steward just doesn't make sense.

So, now that summer has arrived in full force and our leisure time each day has increased, how can we remain good stewards?

It is likely that the regimented opportunities available during the school year are no longer available. Youth ministry and parish religious education formation may also be on summer break.

So, where do you turn? How can you keep your faith alive?

First and foremost, don't stop praying. The slow-paced days of summer are a perfect time to quiet ourselves for a few moments and try to reconnect with God. Why not take a moment of your free time each day to read the Gospel or a spiritual reflection while lounging in a hammock?

Or, if you enjoy writing, keep a summer spiritual journal and write in it somewhere peaceful like in your backyard at dusk.

Maybe, if you like to read, you could brush up on your favorite saint while on a road trip.

Or, if you have never given it a chance, why not pick up a rosary and say one decade each day until it becomes natural to say the whole thing?

Next, try to participate in an outreach program over the summer. Think of the life of Christ – everything He did on Earth was an act of service. Now, think of the gifts God has bestowed on you. He wants you to share them with others like He did, and summer gives us the time to do just that.

If you like working with kids, you can volunteer at the Vacation Bible School by helping to decorate, organize or being a team leader for the younger children.

If you are handy with tools, you may call Habitat for Humanity to see how you can help build a home for a family in need.

Or, if you are musically inclined, you can share your singing or instrumental gifts with a local nursing home. Maybe you are good in the kitchen. If so, you could offer your culinary skills to a local soup kitchen or food bank.

If you are a strong student, you could offer tutoring services to neighborhood kids to help prepare them for the next school year.

No matter what gift God has given you, there is a way to share it.

Getting paid for volunteering sometimes happens. And, if you have a summer job while on break, you'll get a paycheck for sure. Have you ever taken an opportunity to think about sharing the first fruits of your check?

As a young adult, returning a portion of your paycheck to God is an important thing to consider. After all, without Him, you wouldn't even have the talent to accomplish the job in the first place. Giving a portion back to Him is a way to say "thanks." Remember, the collection basket is not just for parents.

Whatever you do this summer, don't take a break from being a good steward. Remember that the time God gives you is a gift. What you do with it – whether on vacation or not – is meant to give Him glory. Why not use the extra time off to do just that?

## “A Perfect Way for Me to Be a Good Steward of My Faith” *Serra Club of Metropolitan Dallas*

**W**e understand stewardship as giving back our gifts to God through our church and community. And one of the most important gifts we can give to the church is supporting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. For many years, the people of our St. Rita community have been stewards of vocations – in turn, 12 of our members currently serve with the Serra Club of Metropolitan Dallas.

St. Rita parishioner John Vallala is fulfilling his term as President and will complete it in the late spring of this year. John has been involved with the Serrans for almost four years.

“I firmly believe that being involved in the Serran Community is something God wants me to do,” he says. “I enjoy it, and it is a perfect way for me to be a good steward of my faith and to serve God and others. Fostering and increasing vocations should be the mission of all of us. It is so important to the life and future of the Church.”

In 1934, four Catholic friends from Seattle had an idea, and they decided to meet regularly over a meal



to discuss how Catholic Christian values could be lived out in their professional lives. Soon, more friends were joining them, and within months, they had decided on an additional focus – the encouraging of vocations to the priesthood and religious life. They selected Padre Junipero Serra – now St. Junipero Serra – the noted Spanish missionary, as patron. What began with four members has grown into an organization – Serra International – with more than 1,000 Serra Clubs in 44 countries, with a total membership of more than 20,000 men and women.

Pope St. John Paul II described Serra International in this way: “Serrans (the name given to members of the Serra Club) accept as their responsibility the promotion of vocations to the priesthood and religious life. They possess a deep appreciation of the ministerial priesthood as being essential to the Church. Serrans have been generous in offering their support to those who hear the call to serve Christ as priests and religious.”

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**Weekday Masses**

*Monday-Friday, 5:30 p.m.*  
*Saturday, 8:00 a.m.*

**Weekend Masses**

*Saturday, 5:30 p.m.*  
*Sunday, 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 10:45 a.m.,*  
*12:30 p.m. (Bilingual), 5:30 p.m.*

## Serra Club of Metropolitan Dallas *continued from page 7*

The Serra Club of Metropolitan Dallas boasts almost 60 members from a number of parishes in greater Dallas. They meet more than monthly, although their monthly meetings include prayer, a luncheon and more. As John points out, the Metropolitan Serra Club of Dallas exists – as do all Serra Clubs – for three basic reasons:

1. To foster and promote vocations to the ministerial priesthood in the Catholic Church, as well as vocations to consecrated life
2. To encourage and affirm vocations already existing
3. To assist our members in recognizing and responding in their own lives to God’s call to holiness.

“We accomplish this in a variety of ways, including promoting a chalice for vocations at parishes and schools, an opportunity for individuals and families to pray for vocations in a directed way, encouraging vocational awareness, and making vocations prayers available,” John says. “We hold two annual reflections and dinners, one during Advent and one during Lent. We also work closely with the Vicar for Vocations for the Diocese of Dallas.”

Membership in the Serran Club is open to Catholic lay men and women, and to those who have been ordained to the Permanent Diaconate.

*If you would like more information about the Serra Club of Metropolitan Dallas, or if you are interested in becoming a member, please contact John Vallala at 972-849-5494.*