



John Paul II Junior College

Scholarship Program for Impoverished Students

— Benque Viejo, Belize —



For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord,
plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

JEREMIAH 29:11



We are a Catholic ministry

that mobilizes the global Catholic Church to transform the poor and their communities materially and spiritually for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Rather than create new institutions to distribute aid, we support existing ministries and churches already serving the poor. In addition to being the most cost-effective way of helping the poor, empowering these ministries allows us to support the Church's spiritual mission and its important position of leadership in poor communities.

We consider every gift we receive as a precious resource from God. We direct every donation to its intended project, provide honest and accurate reports to our donors, and keep overhead costs to an industry low. We handle funds with utmost integrity and hold our ministry partners in the field to the same high standards by asking them to document costs and the impact of their outreach.

We invite you to join with us as we seek to transform the lives of the poor materially and spiritually — ways that please the Father and glorify him in Heaven and on earth.



Project Synopsis

Description

This project will provide scholarships for eight impoverished students, enabling them to receive a quality college education — an achievement that would otherwise be unattainable.

Purpose

To help establish a liberal arts college in Belize, giving economically disadvantaged students access to a quality Catholic education that can lift them out of poverty and create local leaders for the future.

Location

Benque Viejo, a small town on the western Belize/Guatemalan border.

Cost

\$22,200 is needed to fund eight partial scholarships for first-year students, salaries for the administration, housing for six missionary teachers from the U.S. and operational costs for one school year.



Highlights

- Belize's few institutions of higher learning are too expensive for impoverished students and are located in larger cities such as Belize City or San Ignacio.
- This situation is especially difficult for high school graduates who live in remote areas such as Benque Viejo.
- One example is students who have graduated from the Cross Catholic Outreach-funded Mount Carmel High School in Benque Viejo; they have found they cannot continue their education.
- Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish has addressed these problems by establishing John Paul II Junior College, which offers majors in liberal arts, business and English.
- The junior college's goal is to draw upon students from the Belize/Guatemala border-town area who will then use their education to benefit society.
- The school's student population comes from a low economic bracket, a situation that leads to a cash flow problem.
- Cross Catholic Outreach is committed to helping fund the school's scholarships, salaries, teacher housing for teachers and operational costs — *but we need your help!*

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

MATTHEW 25:35



Many of the students who attend John Paul II Junior College come from desperately impoverished homes such as this one in Benque Viejo.

The Need for Higher Education

In Belize, the college enrollment rate is less than half of Central America's already low average of 27 percent. Part of the problem is that many schoolchildren are pulled out of school early — even before high school. The primary reason for this is simple economics. Parents usually cannot afford to pay for school fees, supplies and uniforms. This creates a terrible downward spiral. Because children are not able to read, they are not acceptable for higher-level employment and therefore are unable to break out of the cycle of poverty. Those who do graduate high school and want to attend college or trade school also have limited options. Belize's few institutions of higher learning are too expensive for impoverished students and most are located only in larger cities such as Belize City or San Ignacio.

This situation is especially challenging for high school graduates living in remote areas such as Benque Viejo, a small town on the border with Guatemala.

Thankfully, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish is trying to address this issue. Their goal is to establish an affordable educational alternative by establishing John Paul II Junior College. It will be able to offer majors in liberal arts, business and English to students who might otherwise have ended their education prematurely for lack of money or because of the daunting prospect of travel. The junior college will also be one of the few options for those who want to pursue a liberal arts program that also values traditional Catholic formation.

According to Dean David Ruiz, the school's mission is in keeping with St. John Paul II's own vision of what a Catholic school should be. His goal is to create a generation of professionals trained in servant leadership.

“The mission of the Catholic school is the integral formation of students, so that they may be true to their condition as Christ's disciples and as such work effectively for the evangelization of culture and for the common good of society.”

ST. JOHN PAUL II



The Program

John Paul II Junior College follows the principle laid out by Christ in the Parable of the Sower — seed planted in good soil produces a harvest that is “a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown” (Matthew 13:8). In the same way, helping one student go to college can raise an entire Belizean family, even an entire community, out of poverty.

The scholarship program

This project will provide scholarships for eight impoverished students, so they can receive a quality college education — an achievement that would otherwise be unattainable.

A liberal arts curriculum

The two-year associate degree program focuses on three areas, including (1) Business Administration, (2) English and (3) Liberal Arts. These programs share a common curriculum that includes the Humanities, Philosophy, Theology and the Trivium.

A student retreat

Prior to the start of each school year, students attend a week-long retreat on the nearby grounds of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity. The retreat’s objective is to equip students with leadership skills, help them bond with their peers, and give them time for discernment and reflection.



John Paul II Junior College's main campus building, located on the outskirts of Benque Viejo.



Dean David Ruiz (left), Deacon Beau (center) and Fr. John Robinson (right) spoke to us about the school in their administrative office. “In Belize, college has been degraded to job training,” said Fr. John. “When these kids get out of school, they don’t know how to think. We started a liberal arts college to teach them how to think.”

The spiritual component

All students, faculty and staff are encouraged to invest the necessary time and energy for worship, prayers and contemplation. Masses are held once a week at school. In 2020, John Paul II added a new degree in theology, that will be part of a certification program to teach catechism or religion in Catholic schools.

A dedicated faculty

John Paul II Junior College actively seeks Catholic professors in the U.S. to volunteer to teach the college’s liberal arts classes. The school has already recruited a priest from the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity to teach theology and philosophy and to oversee campus ministry.



Help Now!

Jesus was often addressed as “teacher” during his ministry, and in John 13:13, he defines himself in that way. As a Church that believes Jesus revealed many profound truths, we believe this distinction is particularly meaningful. It reveals that a full education should include spiritual wisdom — something a Catholic college is uniquely qualified to provide.

At John Paul II Junior College, young men and women are eager to receive this Catholic training not only because they know it will bless them and help them escape poverty, but also because they believe an education comes with a deep responsibility to bless others. It is meant to prepare them to serve and influence their communities in positive ways. Your gift will encourage and empower these precious students. It will give them the support they need to attend classes. It will help prepare them for a role of leadership in the community.

Please seize this opportunity to empower the young people of Belize by helping John Paul II Junior College extend its educational and spiritual outreaches to a new group of students. By supporting the college as a beacon of hope, you will be training up and equipping the next generation of Catholic leaders for the glory of God!

Our Promise to You!

Donations from this campaign will be used to cover any expenditures for this project incurred through June 30, 2023, the close of our ministry’s fiscal year. In the event that more funds are raised than needed to fully fund the project, the excess funds, if any, will be used to meet the most urgent needs of the ministry.

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