



Serra's Council for the United States, Inc.

Vocations Manual

Revised January 2020

"Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:38)

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Introduction

The goals and objectives of the Serra Club - to promote and support vocations to the ministerial priesthood of the Catholic Church as a particular vocation of service and support priests in their sacred ministry; to encourage and promote vocations to the consecrated life in the Catholic Church; and to assist members to recognize and respond, each in his own life, to God's call to holiness in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit - are promoted in a special way through the work of the Vocations Committee.

As the Vice President of Vocations your primary role is to lead your club's vocation efforts. We encourage you to gather a strong committee of Serrans to help you further the culture of vocations in your club, diocese, parish, and community, as well as to affirm and help your committee to grow in holiness and together to spread the joy of God's call in each of our lives. May the Lord of the harvest bless you in all your endeavors and may He bless us with many faithful and joy-filled priests and consecrated religious!

Purpose

The US Council Vocations Committee provides this manual as an aid to your work and service as Vice President of your club's Vocations Committee. It is our belief that we are strongest when we work together in collaboration in this most important work. Therefore, it is our hope that the US Council Vocations Committee will be a source of encouragement and support in your efforts. We encourage you to use our resources, the resources of your fellow Serrans, and to share your great ideas and experiences with others, as well.

It is very important that you work closely with your Catholic Church community; following the directives and earning the respect of your local bishop. We encourage you to collaborate with your Diocesan Vocation Director and to support him in his efforts. Parishes will also benefit from your help. Establishing relationships with pastors or parish vocations ministries, to provide information, resources, or help in implementing vocations programs, helps you draw together as a community and extend the work of the Serra Club.

We also encourage your Serra Club, through the Vocations Committee, to cooperate with other lay organizations who share in your efforts.

Remember to stay connected to your Serra Club US Council community. Use the many resources available to you: the Serra International and Serra US Council Websites, the Serran magazine; the Always Forward, Never Back e-newsletter; the Serra SPARK website; and the US Council Vocations Committee Conference Calls. Plan to attend the Serra Rally and the Serra International Convention, as well as, any local, district, or regional meetings that are offered, so you can meet and share with other Serrans.

Challenges from Our Leaders

Pope Francis

“The Serra Club helps foster this beautiful vocation of being laity who are friends to priests. Friends who know how to accompany and sustain them in faith, in fidelity to prayer and apostolic commitment. Friends who share the wonder of a vocation, the courage of a definitive decision, the joy and fatigue of ministry. Friends who can offer priests support and regard their generous efforts and human failings with understanding and tender love. In this way, you are to priests like the home of Bethany, where Jesus entrusted his weariness to Martha and Mary, and thanks to their care, was able to find rest and refreshment.

Dear brothers and sisters, I encourage you to be friends to seminarians and priests, showing your love for them by promoting vocations and through prayer and pastoral cooperation. Please keep pressing forward! Forward in hope, forward with your mission, ever looking beyond, opening new horizons, making room for the young and preparing the future. The Church and priestly vocations need you. May Mary Most Holy, Mother of the Church and Mother of priests be with you every step of the way. And I ask you, please, to pray for me!”

(Audience with participants during the 75th Convention of Serra International)

American Bishops

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops asks all Serrans to help them build a culture of vocations in every parish in the United States, to increase the awareness of Church vocations, and to work to improve the vocations environment in all families.

Serra International

Our mission in Serra is to promote, support and encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life. This is such an important work that we are the only lay organization which is aggregated to a primary pontifical work instituted by the Vatican. *Pontificium Opus Vocationum Sacerdotalium* (The Pontifical Work for Priestly Vocations), was instituted to encourage and coordinate efforts to promote vocations to the sacred priesthood of the Catholic Church. It is to this work and mission that we as Serrans are called. It is in this work that we find our fulfillment.

As the Vice President of the Vocations Committee, it is your charge to guide your committee and your club in their work to further vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Encourage your members to use the gifts that our Lord has given them to contribute to the work of your committee. It is in this task that they will find their greatest joy and success and draw others to assist them in their work.

The Serra Club Vocations Committee

The Vocations Vice President is the primary club officer responsible for the club's vocation activities, is a member of the club's Board of Trustees, and is charged with forming, maintaining, and sustaining the club vocations committee.

Vice President of Vocations

Reports to: President

Position: This is an exciting position that helps the Serrans put our goals into action. The Vice President of Vocations leads the comprehensive Club vocation programs that meet the needs of the local diocese and encourages vocation committees in parishes.

Principle Responsibilities:

1. Attends all club and board meetings.
2. Serves as chairperson of the vocations committee.
3. Attends planning conferences and regional and district conventions.
4. Participates in the US Council Vocation conference calls.
5. Establishes comprehensive vocation programs for use by the club.
6. Develops long range plans for the committee.
7. Assists the President Elect in preparation of the budget for vocation activities.
8. Works with club members to carry out vocation activities.

Position Requirements:

1. Thorough knowledge of Serra SPARK and vocation programs.
2. Aware of the needs of local Diocesan Vocation Director and parishes.

Desirable Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

1. Knows current Catholic Church issues.
2. Can communicate clearly in writing and orally.
3. Ability to direct and motivate volunteers to carry out vocation programs.

Serra Club Vocations Committee

The Vocations Vice President is the chairman of this committee. Every local Serra Club should establish a dynamic and effective vocations committee. Ideally, the committee should consist of at least four members, forming sub-committees, as appropriate, for specific activities and programs. The committee should guide the club in establishing programs and activities that focus in the following categories of vocations work – Affirmation, Awareness, Invitation, and Prayer. Serra SPARK is the best resource for tools that are proven to work in all four of these categories. The committee should establish relationships with the US Council Vocations Committee; Serra District Governer; Serra Regional Director; other local Serra Clubs; lay organizations with common vocations efforts; and Diocesan Directors of Vocations and Consecrated Life.

Organizing an Effective Club Vocations Committee

Getting Started

Successful Serra Vocations initiatives depend upon an effective and organized club Vocations Committee. Through the active committee and regular reports to the general membership, the Vice President of Vocations turns creating a culture of vocations into a club effort. The following are basic criteria and guidelines for developing and maintaining a working club Vocations Committee.

Club Vocations Committee Goals

Carry out the objectives of Serra and strive to cultivate a culture of vocations within the local club. The Vice President of Vocations together with the committee should develop two to three written goals for the year. (See Appendix B for sample goals.) The committee should work closely with the Program Committee so that the vocations activities and the internal programs fully support each other and fulfill the three objectives of Serra.

Club Vocations Committee Responsibilities

The Vocations Committee is responsible for assisting the club in fulfilling and advancing its mission of fostering vocations. It should remind Serrans to respond to God's call in their lives, our common baptismal call to holiness, and to the call to serve, especially to the ordained ministry and consecrated religious life. The committee takes the lead in shepherding the whole club through initiatives of affirmation, awareness, invitation / encouragement, and prayer.

Club Vocations Committee Structure

The size of the club Vocations Committee should be determined by the amount of work to be done. The committee should be small enough to facilitate good progress, but both large and diverse enough to make the vocation initiatives work. It is recommended that the committee members be appointed on a rotating basis, that is, members should move from committee to committee annually or biennially so fresh ideas are exchanged. Where deemed advantageous or appropriate, subcommittees may be appointed.

Club Vocations Committee Composition

Ideally, the Vocations Committee should consist of members who are involved in diocesan and / or parish vocations work. It is helpful to have long term Serrans who can provide history regarding past vocation programs that have been effective. New and young Serrans who can provide fresh insights to the committee are an asset. The club chaplain may be an advisory member.

Club Vocations Committee Planning and Calendar

The Vocations Committee as part of their short term and long range planning, should develop a yearly calendar of vocation activities. (See Appendix A for a sample planning calendar.) The vocations activities chosen should foster the pro-vocations environment in the club. The committee should be aware of the financial impact of all vocation programming. They should communicate budgetary needs to the club president, treasurer, and board of trustees for consideration and ultimate approval.

Club Vocations Committee Meetings

The Vocations Committee should meet monthly or more often in order to fulfill its responsibilities; send notices of the meeting to the committee members in advance along with the proposed agenda; and keep and circulate adequate records. Be sure to delegate responsibilities for action items to individuals or small groups of committee members who work on them outside of committee meetings. Develop a follow-up system to assure that work on assigned items is satisfactorily progressing to the completion date.

Resources

Hundredfold: A Guide to Parish Vocation Ministry - for clubs or parishes that want help starting a Parish Vocation Ministry. <https://www.vocationministry.com/>

Serra SPARK - an online collection of best practice tools in vocations ministry. The Serra US Council has provided resources for many diocesan, parish, or club based vocations activities. <https://serraspark.org/>

US Council Vocations Committee – national conference calls each January, March, May, July, September, and November. Contact the US Council Vice President of Vocations to receive reminders about the calls.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops - usccb.org/about/clergy-consecrated-life-and-vocations/

Vianney Vocations – “Serra Store” <https://www.vianneyvocations.com/>

Serra Spark

The Serra Promotion And Resource Kit can be found at <https://serraspark.org/> Built by the US Council of Serra International for Vocation Directors and Vocation Promoters, in collaboration with the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors and under the guidance of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, it is a valuable resource for anyone involved in vocation work. Serra Clubs can both learn and expand their vocation activities with ideas and tools available along with numerous resources. All tools can be tailored to meet the specific needs of your club.

Distinctions should be made in the process of choosing any vocation tool depending on what the ministry intends to accomplish. Tools from each of the four areas should be employed to ensure vocation activities are well-rounded. Each of the tools below contain an active link that will take you directly to the Serra SPARK website which contains details about the tool.

Affirmation Tools

These tools encourage persons currently serving the church in their role as pastor, priest, brother, sister, nun, or deacon. They express appreciation to those in church vocations by offering support and friendship.

[Annual Vocations Events Resources - #11](#)

Awareness Tools

These tools are aimed at building a positive culture of vocations. They create an atmosphere that inspires vocations to emerge - in community, parish, classroom, or household.

[Traveling Chalice / Crucifix Program for the Parish - #4](#)

[Organizing Visits to Seminaries - #6](#)

[Parish Vocation Ministry - #10](#)

[Promoting Vocations in Parishes - #16](#)

[Organizing School Visits for Seminarians and Religious - #17](#)

[School Traveling Crucifix - #18](#)

[Maintaining a Parish Vocations Ministry - #19](#)

[Vocation Talks for Elementary, Middle, and High School - #21](#)

[Video Resources on Religious Vocations for Different Ages - #22](#)

Invitation / Encouragement Tools

These tools help the laity who may or may not have indicated their desire for a vocation in the church but who have shown a dedication to church service and love of the faith. They offer appreciation to those who possess the right qualities for a church vocation and encouragement to remain faithful servants of the Lord.

[Adopt a Seminarian - #1](#)

[Called by Name - #2](#)

[Altar Server Awards - #3](#)

[Focus 11 - #5](#)

[Discernment Retreats - #9](#)

[Quo Vadis - #15](#)

[St. Andrew Dinners and Miriam Dinners - #23](#)

[Master of Ceremony - #25](#)

[The Melchizedek Project - #26](#)

[Avow – A Discernment Program for Women - #27](#)

Prayer Tools

These tools acknowledge our dependence on God for calling those who will serve the church. They encourage communal prayer activities and /or encourage family or individual prayers.

[Involving the Homebound in the Vocation Effort - #7](#)

[Rosary before Ordination - # 8](#)

[Rosaries for Vocations - #12](#)

[Parish Vocations Prayer - #13](#)

[The 31 Club - #14](#)

[Holy Hours - #20](#)

[The Newman Connection - #24](#)

Club Quick Start Guide

The Serra SPARK Sampler contains five easy tools that are proven to create a culture of vocations in your club! The five tools (with active links to the SPARK website) include:

1. Adopt a Seminarian

As parish-level efforts, *Adopt a Seminarian* programs are grassroots means for the faithful to encourage, pray for, and provide for the material needs of those who are discerning a call of service as a priest or religious. The programs are a great way for Serran families to get involved in supporting seminarians. [Adopt a Seminarian - #1](#)

2. The 31 Club

With decades of history behind it, *The 31 Club* is a simple, easily-established program for clubs to use in their vocations-related efforts. It is an ideal program for the involvement of busy Serrans who want to help with vocations but need to be able to fit it into their schedules. [The 31 Club - #14](#)

3. Traveling Chalice / Crucifix

The Traveling Chalice / Crucifix provides a constant visual reminder when it is taken home from church after Sunday Mass. The family (or individual Serran) prays for vocations during a week-long period of time while also using the provided journal for writing down their experiences in prayer. [Traveling Chalice / Crucifix Program for the Parish - #4](#)

4. Priesthood Sunday

Planning for *Priesthood Sunday* and other major vocations-related events during the liturgical year is easier than one might think. Try these resources for idea and inspiration! [Annual Vocations Events Resources - #11](#)

5. Holy Hours

A *Holy Hour* conducted as Eucharistic Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament is a program that can be utilized by small or large groups of Serrans. Information includes a template for a Holy Hour for Those Called to the Priesthood or Consecrated Religious Life. [Holy Hours - #20](#)

Planning with the Diocese

One of the primary goals of every Catholic Diocese is to promote a positive culture for the discernment of vocations. This insures that vocations will flourish within the diocese. The Serra Club Vice President of Vocations should work closely with the local bishop's office to implement activities which meet the goals of the Diocesan Office of Vocations.

The Vice President of Vocations is an extension of the US Council of Serra International in the diocese. The US Council of Serra International has developed a close working relationship with bishops, through the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (UCSSB) Committee for Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations and with Diocesan Vocations Directors, through the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors (NCDVD). In 2016, under the direction of the The USCCB Committee for Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, the Serra US Council developed the **Serra Promotion and Resource Kit**, known as SPARK, to assist Diocesan Vocations Directors with a collection of programs and tools to help facilitate their vocations work.

Since that time the SPARK tools have proven helpful to vocations directors, with specific requests being made that we develop and archive additional specific programs and resources for their ongoing use. These materials are very useful for clubs and parishes, as well.

Serra SPARK tools are available at: <https://serraspark.org/>

In 2019, the US Council Vocations Committee was invited to create and offer free workshops for Vocation Directors and members / future members of Parish Vocation Committees. The purpose of the workshop is to educate attendees on the best way to: set up a Parish Vocation Committee; incorporate Serran programs into their vocation work; and utilize Serra SPARK. The Vocations Committee schedules and coordinates the Parish Vocations Ministry workshop in dioceses whose Bishop or Diocesan Vocation Director requests the training. Requests for the workshop Form, Maintain, and Sustain Parish Vocation Ministries with Serra SPARK may be made by contacting the US Council Vice President of Vocations.

Working with the Parishes

It is part of the role of the Vice President of Vocations, along with all of the committee members, to support and encourage vocation efforts within the parishes of their area. One important way to accomplish this, is to encourage each parish to establish a parish vocation ministry. Members of the Serra Club Vocations Committee are encouraged to serve as Parish Contact Ambassadors, each working to establish a relationship with their parish(es). The goal is to offer support in the vocations work within the parish; to pass along information on vocations programs and material offered through the Serra Club; and to encourage collaboration and the sharing of useful information and experiences in vocations efforts.

It's always important to respect and follow the directives of the pastor, as well as those of the diocese he serves. He will know what direction he would like his parish to take, therefore, it is important that the good relationship you build includes the pastor. It is the mission of the Serra Club to help him and support him in his vocation and help create the culture of vocations in the parish so that vocations will flourish.

SPARK tools have proven helpful to parishes as they choose vocation initiatives. Be sure to recommend that parishes investigate the resources. Serra SPARK tools are available at: <https://serraspark.org/>

Remember to recommend the Serra resource that is available to Diocesan Vocation Directors for parishes in their diocese. The US Council Vocations Committee has a free workshop for Vocation Directors and members / future members of Parish Vocation Committees. The purpose of the workshop is to educate attendees on the best way to: set up a Parish Vocation Committee; incorporate Serran programs into their vocation work; and utilize Serra SPARK. The Vocations Committee schedules and coordinates the Parish Vocations Ministry workshop in dioceses whose Bishop or Diocesan Vocation Director requests the training. Requests for the workshop Form, Maintain, and Sustain Parish Vocation Ministries with Serra SPARK may be made by contacting the US Council Vice President of Vocations.

Appendix A – Sample Vocations Committee Goals

1. To organize and support a Vocations Retreat at the catholic school for 7th graders in the fall of this year.
2. To facilitate establishing or growing a positive culture of Vocations through use of prayer and awareness activities using Serra SPARK.
3. To encourage each club member to participate in one or more of the Vocation activities being organized so that we will grow in our own call to holiness.
4. To collaborate with the local Knights of Columbus in our expansion of the altar server's recognition program.
5. To actively support any initiatives which the Diocesan Vocations Director sees as a priority this year.

Appendix B – Sample Planning Calendar

<p>January Finalize Plans World Day for Consecrated Life</p> <p>Attend Serra Rally</p>	<p>February World Day for Consecrated Life</p> <p>Finalize plans for National Catholic Sisters Week</p>	<p>March 8th-14th National Catholic Sisters Week</p>	<p>April Finalize plans for World Day of Prayer for Vocations</p> <p>4th Sunday of Easter World Day of Prayer for Vocations</p>
<p>May Prepare for ordinations</p> <p>Graduation event for High Schools seniors</p> <p>Enrollment in High School Outreach of Newman Connection</p>	<p>June Attend the Serra International Convention</p>	<p>July Plan events to go on school calendars: NVAW, Vocations retreat day, etc.</p> <p>Organize Seminarian appreciation event</p>	<p>August Assist campus ministers their new student orientation event</p> <p>Seminarian appreciation</p> <p>Plan activities for parish celebration of Priesthood Sunday</p>
<p>September Last Sunday of month: Priesthood Sunday</p>	<p>October Finalize plans for celebration of National Vocation Awareness Week</p> <p>Attend Regional / District Convention</p>	<p>November 1st week of month National Vocation Awareness Week</p>	<p>December Send encouragement cards / packages to seminarians</p>

Appendix C - The Work of Serra

US Council Vocations Committee

The role of the US Vocations Committee of Serra International is to support and assist our Bishops and Vocation Directors in their vocation activities by promoting a culture of vocations in each parish and with Catholic families. This is accomplished with local pastoral authority by advocating the establishment of vocation ministries and activities in all parishes of each diocese within the US and by encouraging parishes to involve each family and ministry individually and collaboratively in vocation awareness activities and discernment founded on prayer.

Serra International Vocations Committee

“Our Church and our world desperately need a leaven for priestly and religious vocations. Serrans can be part of that leaven today. The limits are our own imaginations. One important way Serrans can do this is to ponder the call of God in their own lives and consider how God has worked in their lives and led them to their own vocation. This involves having a sense of vocation, understanding the universal call to holiness and then living it in the nitty gritty details of one’s own life.”

(Handbook for Serrans Called to Holiness)

Appendix D - US Council Position Description for Vice President of Vocations

Position Title: Vice President of Vocations

Reports To: President

Position: Attend all Board and Committee meetings and functions; serves an active member of the Executive, Finance and Relationship Committees, is responsible for the operations of Vocations Committee; establishes comprehensive vocation programs for US Council and clubs.

Principle Responsibilities:

1. Attends all Board meetings.
2. Serves on the Executive, Finance, and Relationship Committees.
3. Oversees the operations of the Vocations Committee.
4. Serves as a member of the Vocations Committee.
5. Assists and attends Regional and District Conventions as appropriate.
6. Represents US Council vocation efforts with Bishops, Vocation Directors, and other organizations involved in vocation ministry.
7. Establishes comprehensive vocation programs for use by the clubs.
8. Develops a long-range plan for the Vocations Committee.
9. Collaborates with the USCCB, Bishops' Vocation Committee, and other US Vocation organizations.
10. Assists the President Elect in the preparation of the budget.
11. Participates as vital part of the Board leadership.
12. Performs such other duties as may be assigned by the President of the US Council.

Position Requirements:

1. Through knowledge of Serra and its Objectives and Purposes and the US Council its Objectives and Purposes.
2. Have served one term on the US Board, or served two years as a chairman of a US Council standing committee, or have served at least two years on the Serra International or Serra International Board.
3. Be knowledgeable of the requirements of vocation ministry.
4. Establish, along with, the Executive Director and the Relationships Committee a working relationship with other national vocation organizations.
5. Knowledge of financial statements.
6. Ability to work collaboratively with volunteers and paid staff.

Desirable Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

1. Knowledge of current Catholic Church issues.
2. Ability to communicate clearly and concisely both orally and in writing.

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