District Governor Training
2021
S#1

Welcome!

Serra
District Governor Training
February 2021

District Governor Training
7:30 P.M. Central

Part 1: The District Governor Position
Feb. 15 (Mon)

Part 2:
--New Club Startups
Feb. 22 (Mon)
--Club Officer Training/Mechanics

Part 3: Club Officer Training (SLPC)
Feb. 29 (Mon)
--Content & Sample presentations

Part 4: DG Roundtable Discussion
March 4 (Thu)

The District Governor

"...knowing God’s joy!..."
Being a District Governor: MY STORY

- DG for 5 years
  - Iowa (6 Clubs, 4 Dioceses, 315 members)
- First two years: Totally ineffective
  - Lack of self-confidence
  - Mistaken belief that I had nothing to add
- Year 3: started to get some traction
  - Conference calls with Presidents—best practices
  - Club planning calendar each May
  - Offered to be program speaker
  - Club Officer training via webinar
  - Learned more about the Serra Ministry
- Years 3-5: I knew real joy! I was making a difference!

Key to being a Great District Governor

Servant Leadership:
"I go to serve. I am committed to the goal of developing other human beings."

VS.

Self-Serving Leadership:
"Interested only in privilege, power and prestige."

The Perfect Serra Club

- Prayer-based; not a social club
- Action follows prayer:
  - Engaging those not in Serra to join in prayer for vocations on a parish level
- Officers act as a TEAM and not solo players in accomplishing our Mission
- Programs that inform & inspire members re vocations mission
- Reports to Bishop & Vocations Director
- Knows it is part of something bigger than just itself
- Joy-filled / Energetic / Proud
District Governor Philosophy

- Questions
- Comments
- Discussion

District Governor Job Responsibilities

- District Governor Job Description
  - Richard Arlans & Bill Ohnsted (p. 3A)
  - Mike Downey, Central Region (p. 3B)
- The Four Essential Functions
- The Six Essential Actions
- Other Important Responsibilities
- The "Tool Kit" for DG's
- Region Fees

The Four Essential Functions

- Be the "FACE of SERRA"
  - Through personal presence, info & service you provide
  - Let Clubs KNOW they belong to something BIGGER than just their club
- Be a CHEERLEADER to Clubs you serve—inspire!
  - Advise v. Direct
  - focus on the "good" things they do and praise them for it!
- KNOW the Clubs you serve and your Bishops
- IDENTIFY and DEVELOP your replacement
  - Job Duration: 2-5 years?
Position Description for District Governor (PROPOSED)

Position Title: District Governor

Reports To: Regional Director and District Council

Mission, Role, & Purpose: The District Governor is recognized as the official “Face of Serra” among the clubs and clergy throughout the district; and thereby, enthusiastically understands, supports, and communicates the Serran mission. The position is also the official communication link between the local clubs, the diocese, and the USA Council.

Principle Activities and Responsibilities:
1. One time each year, be the program speaker at each club, and make multiple follow up visits as a way to access club strengths and weakness, providing recognition, support, and follow-up as needed; these visits are to be recorded in report form and submitted to the Regional Director and USA Council office
2. Maintain regular communication with club presidents and officers through personal visits, emails, conference calls, and phone calls as needed to assure agreed goals and objectives are being met
3. Responsible for organizing, participating in, and supporting district meetings which include: Spring Leadership Conference, District Council Meeting, District Convention, and incoming Club Presidents meetings
4. Identify candidates for the District Governor-Elect as a successor to the current District Governor
5. Encourage each club to attend Regional Meetings, Serra Rally, and Serra International Convention
6. Assure each club is represented at annual Serra International business meeting with a proxy

Other Activities and Responsibilities as Needed:
1. Maintain contact with Diocesan Bishop(s) and the vocation director’s office(s)
2. Attend important club functions including but not limited to: Club Chartering, Anniversaries, and Officer Installations
3. Recommend district clubs for Serra International and USA Council awards
4. Make clubs aware of and encourage each club to contribute to the Serra International Foundation
5. Maintain regular contact with the Regional Director and USA Council office concerning club and district activity
6. Promote membership growth within the district through the clubs and new club development
7. Encourages attendance at the Serra International Annual Convention
8. Annually accounts for receipt and disbursement of fees provided for District expenses
9. Submits required reports to the Regional Director and USA Council Office as requested
10. Supervised timely payments of per capita dues to the USA Council Office

Position Requirements:
1. Is a Serran in good standing with a working understanding of the Serran mission
2. Served as a club officer (Club President recommended)
3. Utilize the District Governor Manual to maximize effectiveness
4. Read the Serra International & USA Council Constitution, By Laws, Policies, and Procedures

Desirable Skills and Abilities:
1. Knowledge of current Catholic Church issues pertaining to vocations and personal Holiness
2. Ability of communicate clearly in writing, orally, and in public speaking
3. Possess planning, directing, and coaching skills within a volunteer organization

END
The Role of
Serra District Governor in the Central Region
JMD 1/9/2020

Primary Roles:
-- To be a cheerleader to the Clubs in your district; to encourage and advise (not direct) them.
-- To keep Clubs informed of information, policies, priorities, programs and training opportunities offered by the US Council of Serra and Serra International, including especially regional conventions, US conventions and SI Conventions.
-- To provide opportunities for your clubs to share current best practices and ask how other clubs are dealing with specific problems or issues (team learning).
-- To help develop leadership skills in the officer group of each club
-- To be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each club, including monitoring membership trends, and assist in developing plans to address weaknesses
-- To develop future leadership potential for the District, Region and Serra US
-- To recruit and train a replacement for yourself from among the officer groups of your clubs (preferably a former club president).
-- Job duration: 2-5 yrs.

Primary Contacts:
-- Club Presidents in your district
-- Vocations Directors and assistants (to coordinate Serra vocations efforts)
-- Bishops in your district (to determine their wishes of Serra)
-- Regional Director

Highly Recommended Strategies/Activities:
-- Conference calls 3 or 4 times a year with all club presidents (District Councils)
-- Personal visits to clubs ideally as program speaker (once a year highly recommended)
-- Officer training for all clubs in Spring
-- Participate in conference calls with regional director and other district governors in Region
-- Participate in webinars with US Leadership Committee for District Governor training (3x/yr)
-- Attend Serra Rally in January for your training and to gather information to pass on to clubs
-- Keep officer names & email addresses accurate for RD, DG, SI and Serra US communications

Other responsibilities:
-- Contact clubs that are in arrears on SI or US Council dues to encourage prompt payment
-- Assure that your clubs have filed the annual 990 EZ and are in IRS compliance
-- Encourage clubs to submit proxies to SI Annual meeting if no officers are attending
-- Assist in new club formation where interest has been expressed
-- Assist in regional conference planning in your district
-- Encourage clubs and individuals to contribute to Serra Intl Foundation annually
-- Recommend clubs for SI or US Council awards as appropriate

Expenses:
-- Clubs pay a fee of $3 per member ($1.50 for spouses) each year to the Club of the District Governor to help cover/offset travel, training and other out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the district governor in his/her role as such. The District Governor can withdraw from this fund as needed for such expenses. Keep basic account of how used each year.

Resources:
-- Regional director, other District Governors (past and present)
-- District Governor Manual
-- District Governor Resource Page on serraus.org website
  (training information, program talks, frequently requested documents etc.)
Annual Bishop’s Meeting

- **Who**: DG, President & President Elect of clubs in diocese
- **Preparation**: Short (1-Pg) Executive summary for Bishop of what the club(s) did last year and plans for coming year
  - Be sure to include prayer activities
  - DG may want to provide similar information about US Council
  - Mailed to Bishop in advance of meeting
- **Face-to-Face meeting with Bishop**
  - Ask for 20 min to half an hour
  - Don’t read the executive summary—ask Bishop for input and recommendations

Six Essential Action Items

- Visit Clubs personally
- Conduct regular concalls for all club presidents
  - District Council formation and use
- Conduct Spring Officer Training
- Participate in Reg Director concalls, meetings
- Officer Lists: accurate, complete, timely
- Check annually on IRS compliance

Other Important Action Items

- Attend Serra Rallys to keep self trained, informed and inspired
- Attend Leadership Webinars (3x/yr)
- Prompt Clubs to pay dues when necessary
- Prompt Clubs to have representation at SI Convention either in person or by proxy
- Encourage Clubs & Individuals to contribute to the Serra Foundation
- Lead or assist in new club formation
The District Governor's TOOL KIT

1. A freeconferencecall.com or GoogleMeet acc. for conference calls
2. Group email lists: 1) presidents; 2) treasurers; 3) all officers by club
3. Available presentations for club programs
   - District Update (slides 14, 15, 16)
   - "Membership: It’s more than Just Asking" (ppt) (pog 7A-7C)
   - "10 Keys to a Successful Club" (ppt) (pog 7D-7E)
   - Who Really was St. Junipero Serra (talk) (pog 7F-7L)
   - "Why a Serra Club is Special" (ppt) (pog 7M-7N)
   - Why a Serra Club is Special (talk) (pog 7O-7Q)
   - "US Vocations Update" (ppt) (pog 7P)

Serra District Governor
Training Feb. 2021

---

Serra 9E (Iowa) Membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Davenport Serra Club</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubuque Serra Club</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll Serra Club</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Bluffs Serra Club</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Des Moines St. Serra Club</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siouxland St. Serra Club</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>372</strong></td>
<td><strong>304</strong></td>
<td><strong>296</strong></td>
<td><strong>311</strong></td>
<td><strong>301</strong></td>
<td><strong>302</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Serra District Governor
Training Feb. 2021

---

Iowa--No. of Seminarians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Davenport</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubuque</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Des Moines</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sioux City</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Iowa</strong></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
<td><strong>62</strong></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Serra District Governor
Training Feb. 2021
District Governor Training
2021
S#1

9E Iowa—No. of Seminarians
Per 100,000 Catholics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>No. of Catholics</th>
<th>Nov 2011</th>
<th>Jan 2015</th>
<th>Apr 2017</th>
<th>Apr 2018</th>
<th>Jan 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Davenport</td>
<td>94,563</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubuque</td>
<td>190,292</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Des Moines</td>
<td>108,581</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sioux City</td>
<td>100,300</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Iowa</td>
<td>493,736</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The District Governor's TOOL KIT

1. A freeconferencecall.com or GoogleMeet accts. for conference calls
2. Group email lists: 1) presidents; 2) treasurers; 3) all officers by club
3. Available presentations for club programs
   - District Update (slides 14, 15, 16)
   - "Membership; Its more than Just Asking" (ppt)
     (age 7A-7C)
   - "10 Keys to a Successful Club" (ppt)
     (age 7D-7E)
   - Who Really was St. Junipero Serra (talk)
     (age 7F-7L)
   - "Why a Serra Club is Special" (ppt)
     (age 7M-7N)
   - Why a Serra Club is Special (talk)
     (age 70-70)
   - "US Vocations Update" (ppt)
     (age 7P)
4. District Governor Resource Page (serrans.org)
5. District Governor's Manual
6. To Save a Thousand Souls by Fr. Brett Brannen

Region Fees

- Essential to maintaining strong leadership and a strong region
- Central Region Fees (Annual):
  - District Governor Fee: $3/Serran ($1.50/spouse or under 35)
  - Region Director Fee: $2/Serran ($1/spouse or under 35)
  - Region Convention Fee: $4/Serran ($2/spouse or under 35)
DG's Job Description

- Questions
- Comments
- Discussion
Membership—It’s More than Just Asking

MEMBERSHIP:

“It’s More than Just Asking”

1. Create AWARENESS of Serra among Lay Catholics
   - Serra-sponsored Vocations Programs in Parishes
     - Parish-wide 31 Club Rosaries for Vocations
     - Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations
     - “Adopt a Seminarian” prayer boards & cards
     - “Call by Name” programs in parishes
   - Planned Publicity:
     - Articles & pictures in Catholic Newspaper (2 x year)
     - Presence on Catholic Radio (qtrly)
     - Bulletin announcements (Monthly or qtrly)
     - Parish ministry fairs
   - Serra Prayer for Vocations Cards in parishes
   - Printed tri-fold brochures in back of all churches

2. The GENERAL INVITATION to Catholic Community
   - Tri-fold brochures about Serra with contact information
   - Bulletin announcements w/ contact info
   - Business cards w/ contact info
   - Articles in Catholic Newspapers
   - Catholic Radio
   - Serra Prayer cards w/ contact info

3. The INDIVIDUAL Invitation
   - To Whom: Catholics with a special place in their hearts for Vocations
     - 40 - 70 Year Olds / “empty nesters”
     - Daily Mass & Adoration Participants
     - Parents & Relatives of Priests and seminarians
     - Adults in charge of Altar Server Programs
     - Parish Vocation Committee members
     - Your Catholic friends
     - Those recently widowed
     - Parishes without Serrans (recommendations from parish priest)
   - Invite with a Strategy
     - Triple team each prospect
     - “Plan” the invitation to join
     - Each member of Invitation Team contacts prospect twice
       - “Seven Touches” required to reach a person
Membership—It’s More than Just Asking

3. The INDIVIDUAL Invitation
   The Conversation
   • Be Excited, Joyful when talking about Serra
   • Share “Mountain Top” Experiences
   • Share impact on your own spirituality
   • Show impact on Seminarians (notes, thank you’s)
   • Talk about support of priests, sisters, bishop
   • Cost: $__ per month
   • Not about what you get out of it, but what you give
   • It’s God’s work
   • It’s about the future of our Church

3. The INDIVIDUAL Invitation
   Be Prepared for Objections
   • “I can pray for vocations without being in Serra”
     – Serra is more than just prayer—service to
       Vocations office & group affirmation and
       support of priests, religious and seminarians
     – Serra group prayers offer more quality, quantity,
       continuity & effectiveness for vocations
   • “Dues seem too high”
     – $__/month
   • “Not sure with the Priest Abuse Scandal and all”
     – Never been more important to affirm and support
       the many good priests and religious unfairly
       tarred by the scandal.

4. The Application Form
   • Form is confusing to prospects
   • Do NOT hand out in blank to prospects
   • Pre-fill: Club Name, Number and District No.
     and if possible Priest’s/Chaplain’s signature
   • Pre-fill: sponsor’s name with signature
   • Identify required fields for prospect to fill in with
     checkmark or hi-liting
   • Include self-addressed, stamped envelope to
     Treasurer & followup to make sure it is received.

5. New Member Orientation
   Options:
   – Special meeting w/ club officers to have each explain area of
     responsibility and opportunities to participate
   – New Member Orientation recorded webinar
     • 36 minutes with breaks for discussion
     • Should be viewed by new members in presence of at
       least one club officer
     • Link: https://serras.org/new-member-orientation_
       anytime-anyplace
   – NMO webinar as monthly program to refresh all members

6. Retention
   (Con’t)
   1. Engage new members immediately in club
      vocations work
     • Weekly or monthly club rosaries
     • Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations
     • Have them adopt a seminarian
     • Help with Newman Connection data collection effort
   2. Mentoring & Welcoming
     • Escort to first six meetings
     • Have all members—new and old—introduce
       themselves at every meeting
     • Encourage veterans to say hello at meetings

6. Retention
   3. Advance Communications of programs & events
      • Regular timely newsletters
      • Email reminders
   4. Quality Monthly Programs
      • Scheduled out well in advance
      • Specific, focused topics for speakers to address
      • Vocations focus
   5. Engagement in Leadership positions
      • Initially encouraging them to be part of a team or committee
      • Avoid throwing into officer position with no club experience
      • Encourage attendance at regional, national and international
        conventions/conference calls
Growing Membership is about Sharing the Joy of Serra!

Be a JOYFUL Serran!
10 Keys to a Successful Serra Club

# 1: Prayer is the First Priority
- Not all prayers are equal— the BEST:
  - The Mass
  - Eucharistic Adoration
  - One Hour Adoration Services
  - Multi-hour Adorations praying for vocations.
  - Weekly or Monthly Rosaries

# 2: Second Priority: get Others Praying for Vocations
- Prayer Boards/ Cards / Adopt a Seminarian Boards
- Eucharistic Adorations for Vocations
- Parish Vocation Committees
- Weekly or 31 Club rosaries promoted in each parish
- Called by Name program

# 3: Planned, Quality Programs
- Planned and laid out with speakers / events for the entire year
- Specific messages (e.g. Personal Prayer life, Reconciliation, Forgiveness, Adorations for Vocations, how would you pray?)
  - Not just Stories of Personal Vocation
  - Think out of the box—not just local priests, sisters

# 4: Monthly Newsletters / Communications
- Monthly
- Most Important Contents
  - Upcoming events for next 2 or 3 months
  - List of sick, deceased Club members to pray for
  - Contact info for anyone interested in joining

# 5: Growing Membership
- Membership is EVERYONE's responsibility
- All new members go through a new member orientation
- New members are immediately engaged in vocations work with other club members—club rosaries, adopt-a-seminarian, Adoration, cards
- New members have sponsors / mentors for first six months
- Welcoming environment at all events
- All members—new and old— introduced at all events

# 6: EVERYONE INVOLVED some way
- Annual Count On Me Survey
  - Mailed to each club member with name at top
  - Mailed with self-addressed, stamped return envelope
  - Summary table shared with officers
- For house-bound Serrans, promote saying rosary
- Everyone should be involved in at least one direct vocations activity (Mass, Adoration, rosary, adopted sem, appreciation events for priests & religious)
10 Keys to a Successful Serra Club

10 Keys to Successful Club

# 7: Officer positions rotate regularly

- Two Year Maximum for most positions
- Some exceptions: Treasurer, Newsletter

10 Keys to Successful Club

# 8: Annual Retreat for Members

- Focused on spirituality of members rather than vocations
- Chaplin or others to lead
- 3 Hrs followed by confessions/ 1Hour Adoration
- Possible subjects:
  - Making Prayer Meaningful, Forgiveness, Achieving Holiness, Praying by listening, Sacraments etc.
- Timing: Lent or Advent suggested

10 Keys to Successful Club

# 9: Be Financially Responsible

- Serra recommends annual audit, but not practical
- At a minimum, have most recent checking account statement shared with President and Board at Board Meeting

10 Keys to Successful Club

# 10: Affirm existing Religious Vocations

- Appreciation Dinners & Events
- Priesthood Appreciation Sunday & the other three Sundays set aside to pray for vocations

10 Keys to Successful Club

Be Joy-Filled Servants!

- Be inspired & passionate
- Have a great attitude even on mundane chores
- Know you are part of something bigger than just your club
  - Encourage attendance at regional, national & Serra Intl conventions
Serra Club of LeHigh Valley Presentation
“Who Really was St. Junipero Serra”
Jan. 12, 2018
By Mike Downey

I don’t think there’s ever been a time when our work for Serra and vocations has been more important than it is now.

These are difficult times for our Church. It’s a difficult time to be a Catholic. It’s an even more difficult time to be a priest or religious. Many, many, MANY good priests have been unfairly tarred by the scandal rocking our Church. Our Church is under attack from within and without. A good friend of mine—Father John Acrea from Des Moines—told me once that Satan never wastes his time. He attacks hardest what he fears most. Satan DOES fear priests. He fears the Church. He fears the growth in priesthood and religious vocations. Bishop Robert Barrons said recently this is not the time to cut and run from the Catholic Church. Instead we should fight back with the resources Jesus Christ has given us: prayer, fellowship and service.

One powerful resource that I think is under-utilized is the person for whom our organization is named: St. Junipero Serra. I believe this is because many Serrans are not aware of his amazing life.

If you were like me, you joined the Serra Club knowing darn little about Father Junipero Serra. I knew he was a Franciscan priest and missionary who established a number of missions in California. I knew that he said “always forward, never back” which has become the slogan of Serra. I knew he was on the path to sainthood, but I knew that could take years or decades in the Catholic Church. And I have to confess that the illustrated picture of Father Serra we used back then kind of reminded me of a grumpy old man.

Then a couple of years ago Bishop Pates in Des Moines asked me if the Serra Club could do anything to involve more Catholic Hispanics in the vocations effort. Then at a Serra meeting in Phoenix by God’s grace I ended up sitting next to Bishop Eduardo Nevares. He told me God had provided us a new Hispanic Saint. He told me to use St. Junipero Serra to reach the Hispanic community.
So, for the first time, I really dug into who St. Serra was. And what I uncovered WAS a saint! A saint whose zeal to do God’s will was contagious and overcame all obstacles!

Junipero Serra lived from 1713 to 1784, so all these events happened in the 1700’s. Rather than go through a chronology of St. Serra’s life, I’d like to share with you four qualities demonstrated during specific events in his life that defined this man as a saint for me.

**First, he CHOSE a life of humble service at great cost to himself.** It’s easy to miss the fact that for the first half of his life, Father Serra was not a missionary at all. In fact, by age 35 he had become a renowned professor of theology and philosophy at Lullian College in Palma de Majorca. I’m guessing this was a pretty cushy job especially for that time. You might say “He had it Made.” Yet at age 35 he decides to become a missionary to the new world! He gave up the easy life for a life of hardship, uncertainty, and danger. Yet there was no uncertainty or regret on Father Serra’s part. Such was his zeal and commitment to do God’s will.

**Second, he knew constant physical suffering as a missionary. But he never let it stop him.** After first landing on the east coast of Mexico, Father Serra set off to walk 250 miles to Mexico City. On the way he was bitten in the leg by either a serpent or insect. The leg became terribly infected with open sores and inflammation. This infection never healed. He bore this suffering throughout the rest of his life. Twice it brought him close to death during his missionary work. But he never let it become an excuse for not continuing with his missionary work, even though that work required WALKING thousands of miles in difficult conditions.

One commentary I read suggested this serpent bite was from Satan himself who feared the good work that Father Serra might accomplish and tried to stop him. It didn’t work. Thanks to Father Serra’s persistence and commitment to do God’s will, his missionary work bore incredible spiritual fruit in spite of a constantly infected leg.

**Third, he believed in the power of persistent prayer.** At age 56, after presiding over missions in central Mexico and Baja California for many years, Father Serra
undertook his famous mission journey to California. After a difficult, 900-mile journey, they arrived at their first destination, San Diego. But the mission trip was in jeopardy due to disease, famine, a shortage of supplies and hostile natives. In fact, the Spanish military commander had decided to abandon the mission journey and return. But Father Serra convinced the commander to wait nine days—until the Feast of St. Joseph—to see if a supply ship would arrive before abandoning the journey. Father Serra and the Franciscan friars with him began a nine-day novena of constant prayer to St. Joseph. At 3:00 pm on the ninth day of the novena—The Feast of St. Joseph—the sail of the supply ship was spotted and the mission journey—which would eventually result in the establishment of all the California missions and the baptism and confirmation of thousands of indigenous people—was allowed to continue. All because of St. Serra’ belief in the power of persistent prayer!

Fourth, Junipero Serra was an incredible advocate and protector of Native Americans. Father Serra was no milk-toast priest! He believed in the dignity and sanctity of all human life—pagan or Christian—and he fought for it! Contrary to media reports at the time of his canonization, his life as a missionary found him in constant conflict with the Spanish government and military authorities on behalf of the native people. Here are three examples:

Father Serra’s first assignment in the new world was the missions located in the rugged mountain area of Sierra Gorda—a 16 day walk north of Mexico City. He was head of these missions for 8 years when he was recalled to Mexico City. Shortly after he left the missions, the Spanish governor in the Sierra Gorda region took lands on which the native people lived and gave them to Spanish colonists. The native people came to Father Serra for help. Father Serra appealed the governor’s decision to the Viceroy—the highest Spanish authority in Mexico—and after a protracted legal battle, he won. The colonists were forced to give back the lands to the native people.

A similar situation arose in 1772 during the establishment of missions in California. Spanish colonists were permitted by the military to settle on mission lands that belonged to the native people. Father Serra traveled on foot and by boat back to Mexico City to appeal the decision to the new Viceroy. He arrived near the point of death due to his leg. But Father Serra survived and succeeded in the appeal in what is referred to simply as the “Regulation”. This “Regulation”
later became the basis for the first legislation in California, a sort of Bill of Rights for native Americans there.

As a final example of how Father Serra felt about the indigenous people, Father Serra wrangled a commitment out of the local governor that if Father Serra was killed or wounded by a native, the native would be forgiven and released. Then a native uprising occurred in 1775 at the mission of San Diego. A brother Friar and one other person at the mission were killed. Father Serra asked forgiveness for the leaders of the uprising. The governor reluctantly agreed to exile them instead of execution, as was normal.

Notably it was the skills Father Serra developed in Spain during the “academic” phase of his life that allowed him to become so effective an advocate and protector for the native American people. Isn’t God’s plan for us amazing!

Finally, I want to read you a story--some St. Serra folklore if you will. If you do any research on Father Serra, you will come across this story many times.

“Father Junipero, traveling on foot with a member of his order, arrived late one night at a remote monastery. Their brethren were astonished that they could have crossed the wide desert stretch without substantial provisions.

“Father Serra told the Superior they had met a Mexican family living in poverty along their way and that they had provided food and shelter. At this, a passing muleteer bearing wood for the priests’ fire laughed---there was no house for twelve leagues in any direction, he said, and not a soul who lived in the wasteland that Father Serra had traversed. Several of the brotherhood corroborated this. But Father Serra continued his strange story with a stranger conviction.

“Though they had begun their journey with a day’s supply of bread and water, they found they had underestimated the time it would take to cross the desert. At the close of the second day, their bodies and hearts weak with fear and exhaustion, they rejoiced to discover a small house sitting in the shade of three great cottonwood trees among the cacti. The trees were green and lush, and beneath them, a donkey was tied to a stump by a wall of the house where peppers hung, and a small Mexican stove stood by the door. A Mexican peasant appeared and welcomed them. He brought them in the home, asking them to
stay the night as his beautiful wife stirred a pot by the fire. Their child, wrapped in a simple garment, sat on the floor by his mother playing with a lamb.

“Father Junipero found this family happy and holy. They told them they were shepherds, as their shared their supper. Afterwards, the priests were overcome by weariness and fell into a deep sleep in the places provided for them. When they awoke with the dawn, there was no one to be seen. Supposing the good people were off tending their flocks, the two wayfarers took up their road again and arrived in health and safety at their destination.

“The brothers were astounded by this account, declaring there were indeed three great cottonwood trees in that part of the desert—they were a well-known landmark. But there was no house by them. So great was their wonder that some of the brothers took Father Serra and his companion to the very spot, and though they found the same cottonwoods, there was no house, no donkey, no oven and certainly no inhabitants. It was then that the priests sank to their knees and kissed the blessed ground, “for they perceived what Family it was that had aided them there.”

“Father Serra confessed to the Brothers how from the moment he entered the house he had been strangely drawn to the child, and desired to take him into his arms, but that he kept near his mother. ... After evening prayers, when he bade his hosts good-night, he did indeed stoop over the little boy in blessing; and the child ... lifted his hand, and with his tiny finger made the sign of the cross on Father Junipero’s forehead.” (Death Comes for the Archbishop, Willa Cather)

I have not been able to ascertain if this story is true. But I hope it is. It seems so appropriate that the Holy Family welcomed and aided Father Serra in his time of need, appearing to him as those very people whom he had given his life to serve: the poorest of the poor of Mexico...

Based on what I have discovered, I believe that Father Junipero Serra has a special relationship with God, and more important, that God has a special relationship with Father Serra.

What is the take away from all of this for those of us in Serra? Let’s review St. Serra’s path:
First, Humble Service. Are there two words that better describe what Serra clubs are all about? I confess that I am often envious of the Knights of Columbus. They are so visible, so well-known and recognized. The Serra organization on the other hand has to the best kept secret in the Catholic Church. Few Catholics know we even exist, fewer yet know what we are about. We could and should do more to change that. But let’s face it, much of what we do in Serra can be described as common and ordinary: setting up for, cooking and serving for gatherings to honor priests and sisters; pizza parties for seminarians; organizing golf outings for priests; putting up seminarian posters and prayer boards in parishes; sending birthday cards and care packages to seminarians, organizing a pizza party for altar servers, helping the vocations office with various tasks. Important—YES but hardly the stuff of headlines or frontpage news. Even our prayers for vocations, the foundation of our Serra work, are quiet and in the background of all that goes on in the Catholic Church: our rosaries prayed at home, novenas, hours spent in Eucharist Adoration for Vocations, First Friday and First Saturday Masses for vocations, attendance at ordinations. No one will ever know about these.

Except God. And that’s all that really matters. Humble Service.

How about bearing Suffering well? You know, I’ve just recently noticed that Serrans tend to be on the older side of age. Our bodies are not the same as they were at 30. Most of us bear aches and pains. Some of us bear much, much heavier health crosses. Rather than complain, let us—as my old Irish parish priest, Fr. Phelan, used to say--offer our sufferings up to God. Let us offer them up for vocations. Most important, let then never deter us from prayer and service for vocations.

Third, Persistent Prayer. Isn’t this what we’re all about? We pray constantly for vocations. But Priests and Sisters don’t just pop up out of the ground when we pray for vocations! We may not see the fruits of our prayers for a year, a decade or even ever! So what has to sustain us is faith that our prayers are working. But we know they are working because we have it directly from the Word of God. Jesus Christ told us: “Pray...Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more laborers to gather His harvest.” We may not know how, or when or even where, but by faith we know our prayers will result in new vocations. Let that faith sustain us in persistent prayer even when the positive feedback is not there.
Fourth, Advocate for Indigenous People. Who are the indigenous people of today? I think St. Serra would say--those who need priests but do not have them. That would include about every diocese in the Catholic Church in America. So we must continue our prayers and efforts to foster and support priesthood and religious vocations generally.

But we also need to recognize that our Church has changed dramatically in the past 50 years. Now, 35% of American Catholics are Hispanics. Yet only 5% of our priests are Hispanic, and most of these were not born here. Our Church has evolved into a bi-cultural institution in need of bi-cultural priests. The need for priests is great, but the need for 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation Hispanic priests is dire. Serra Clubs everywhere need to begin a special focus on fostering and promoting Hispanic priesthood and religious vocations in addition to their general efforts and prayers for all vocations. This will not be easy. Serra clubs are predominantly people of Caucasian descent. The cultural and language barriers are great. As Bishop Nevares told me, we will need to get out of our comfort zone. Serra needs to be a leader to guide the Hispanic Catholic community to pray for Hispanic priesthood and religious vocations. And who better to intercede for us in this effort? Our newly canonized Hispanic saint and namesake, St. Junipero Serra.

If you can take away one thing from this talk, it’s this: never forget that we have in St. Junipero Serra a great and skilled advocate and intercessor in heaven for our vocations cause.

If we follow his path—humble service, bearing our sufferings well, persistent prayer, and a special focus on those most in need of priesthood and religious vocations—we CAN face and overcome challenges that seem insurmountable to us at the time, especially with St. Serra on our side.

Serra is not a hobby, it’s not a social club, it’s a special CALLING. Let us carry out our Serra mission with renewed energy, never-ending persistence and real zeal—the same zeal that marked St. Serra’s life.

Thank You.
Why A Serra Club is Special

Why a Serra Club is Special in the Catholic Church

Why a Serra Club is Special:

#1 OUR MISSION

- To foster NEW priesthood and religious vocations
- To affirm and support EXISTING vocations to priesthood and religious life
- To increase our own holiness

#2 "Aggregated" to Church

- Only lay Catholic apostolate officially aggregated to Vatican
- At all times, a Cardinal is assigned to Serra for oversight and guidance
  - Current International Episcopal Advisor: Cardinal Tom Collins, Toronto CAN
  - Current US Council Episcopal Advisor: Bishop Tom Daly, Spokane WA

#3 Permanent Ministry

More Permanent than other vocations ministries
- Vocations Clubs & Parish Vocations Ministries tend to ebb and flow
- Serra Club cannot be chartered or de-chartered without express consent of Bishop
- Serra expected to be the stalwart that constantly fans the flames on the vocations fire to keep it burning brightly

#4 Putting Prayers into Action

- "Action follows Prayer"—Cardinal Tom Collins
- Clubs provide a way to put vocations prayers into action
  - -- Appreciation events for Priests, Sisters and Seminarians
  - -- Spiritually adopting a seminarian
  - -- Continuous prayers for vocations during Adoration
  - -- 7-Serra's Prayer teams for Vocations Directors
  - -- Engaging all Catholics in the 4 national vocations awareness events
    - Priesthood Appreciation Sunday
    - National Vocations Awareness Week
    - World Day of Prayer for Vocations
    - World Day for Consecrated Life
- "I can pray for vocations without joining Serra."
  - Serra provides only effective way to put prayers into action.

#5 Special Relationship with the Bishop

- Clubs work With and FOR the Bishop and Vocations Director
- Special Relationship with Bishop and priests, sems, sisters and religious in diocese
Why A Serra Club is Special

Why a Serra Club is Special:

#6 Part of Something Larger than just itself

- Each Club part of much larger network:
  -- 200 Serra Clubs in US/ 7,700 Serrans
  -- 450 Serra Clubs in world/ 12,500 Serrans
  -- Able to tackle vocations projects nationally & worldwide in coordinated effort
    -- Serraspark.org
    -- Nat'l Vocations Awareness events

Serra Leadership Training
District 126/TX Aug. 15, 2020

Pope Francis
Private Audience with Serrans 2017

"To be friends to priests, sustaining their vocation and accompanying them in their ministry: with this great gift you enrich the Church! This is, above all else, what a Serran is—a "special friend" whom the Lord has brought into the lives of seminarians and priests."

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."

The Church and priestly vocations need you.

Serra Leadership Training
District 126/TX Aug. 15, 2020

Why Serra is Special

- Questions
- Comments
- Discussion

Serra Leadership Training
District 126/TX Aug. 15, 2020
Why A Serra Club is Special
by Mike Downey Nov. 12, 2020

Congratulations on the formation of your new club here in Oklahoma City. What you have accomplished—especially in these times—is extraordinary. I’d like to thank you for choosing to be Serrans. Never has the need for fostering and supporting priesthood and religious vocations been more important to our Church!

It’s important for you to understand what Serra is all about and why a Serra Club is really special in our Church.

It starts with our Mission: To Foster and Affirm Priesthood and religious vocations, and, in doing so, to grow in our own faith. There are really three distinct missions embedded in this mission statement:

First: to foster new vocations to Priesthood and religious life.

Second: to affirm and support existing priesthood and religious vocations.

Third: to grow in our own holiness through what we do in helping achieve the first two.

This is the ONLY purpose for which we exist. Everything we do—our prayers, programs, service and fellowship—must be measured against this Mission. There are other lay groups in the Catholic Church that assist in the vocation effort (like the Knights of Columbus), but Serra is the ONLY lay organization whose sole purpose is to do this.

Second, Serra is special because it is officially aggregated to the Vatican and the world-wide Catholic Church. In fact, Serra is the ONLY lay Catholic apostolate officially aggregated to the Church. What does that mean? It means we are part of and under the direction of the Vatican. At all times, a cardinal of the Church is appointed as overseer and advisor to Serra. Our current Serra Intl Episcopal Advisor is Cardinal Tom Collins of Toronto Canada. He attends almost all Serra International gatherings—and most US Serra Council gatherings—to direct and advise us. What other lay organization in the Catholic Church has the regular, active oversight of a Cardinal? The Church also appoints an Episcopal Advisor for each Serra Council. Our current Episcopal Advisor for the US Serra Council is Bishop Tom Daly of Spokane, Washington. He also attends—in an active role—all Serra US gatherings above the club level.

Third, we are part of the infra-structure of the Church. We are more permanent than other vocations ministries. So while vocations clubs and parish vocations ministries my ebb and flow, as they always do, Serra is expected to be the stalwart that continually fans the flames and puts fuel on the vocations fire to keep it burning brightly. It is not hard to imagine a vocations club ineffective or even extinct in 5 years without belonging to something bigger and larger than itself. Because a Serra Club is part of something bigger and larger than itself, Serra Clubs are built to last.

Fourth is this. Cardinal Collins, our Episcopal Advisor, recently told Serrans “Action follows prayer.” Meaning while prayer is the foundation, true prayer almost always calls us to some kind of action—especially prayers for vocations. A Serra Club provides opportunities for that
action not available to an individual. Like appreciation events to honor our bishop, priests, sisters, religious and seminarians. Like spiritually adopting a seminarian. Like organizing Holy Hours for vocations and monthly rosaries in parishes. Like passing out prayer cards for seminarians during Catholic Schools week. Like organizing traveling crucifix programs. And many others.

People have said to me “I can pray for vocations without being a Serran”. Maybe. But a Serra Club is really the only effective way to put those prayers into action.

**Fifth—and this is very important**—because we are aggregated to the Vatican we are subject to the Church’s structure of authority. That means that a Serra Club works with and for the Bishop and his Vocations Director. Clubs do not report to District Governors. Nor do they report to Regional Directors. They do not even report to the President of the Serra Council or the President of Serra International. For sure, Serra Clubs do not report to themselves and operate independently of oversight. We report to the Bishop and Vocations Director in our diocese. They are our bosses.

**And because of that, Serrans have a special relationship with and access to the Bishop.** One of the great privileges of being a Serran is that we have the opportunity to know and work with the Bishop—as well as his priests, seminarians, sisters, and religious—in a way that few lay Catholics will ever have. Bishops regularly attend Serra Club functions such as the annual seminarian lunch or dinner, the priests’ appreciation event, and the sisters’ appreciation dinner, as well as occasionally serving as speaker at Serra monthly meetings. This close relationship with and access to the Bishop stands as one of the most special things about being a Serran.

**Finally a Serra Club does not stand alone.** There are 200 Serra Clubs in the US and 450 Serra Clubs worldwide. There are over 7,700 Serrans in the US and over 12,500 Serrans worldwide.

Being part of a larger network of clubs helps us do and afford things that individual clubs cannot. Like creating and maintaining a website to help Vocations Directors nationwide—the serrasspark.org website. Like offering parish vocations ministry training to dioceses all across the country. Like the 7-Serrans prayer teams now organized to pray for vocations directors across the country for one hour each day by name—even vocations directors in diocese that do not have a Serra Club. And like outreach to the USCCB, the Natl Diocesan Vocations Directors Assn, NCYC, FOCUS and the Natl YM Assn to coordinate efforts for vocations. Things just one club cannot do.

If all this is not enough to convince you that a Serra Club has a special role in our Church, let me share with you an excerpt from a talk by Pope Francis to Serrans during a private audience in 2017. These are his words:

“To be friends to priests, sustaining their vocation and accompanying them in their ministry: with this great gift you enrich the Church! This is, above all else, what a Serran is—a ‘special friend’ whom the Lord has brought into the lives of seminarians and priests.”...
“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 true 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.”

“The Church and priestly vocations need you.” Pope Francis’ words confirm beyond doubt how special a Serra Club is in the Church. Serra is not a hobby; it is not a social club. To be part of a Serra Club is a special vocational calling in itself. St. John Henry Neuman said: “God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission.” It is not an accident that you are now a member of a Serra Club. There are no accidents in God’s great plan. God has put this ministry in your heart. This is the work God has committed to YOU. Keep your Serra Club special!

Two last points. I believe the Oklahoma City Serra Club will be one of our strongest clubs. Continue to grow your membership. But realize there will never be enough Serrans for the prayers needed for vocations. So engage the Catholics in your community in praying for vocations, even if they may never join Serra. When the new Serra Club started in Coeur d’ Alene, Idaho about four years ago, the day they received their charter, they had 30 members but already had 300 families signed up to pray a rosary for vocations once a month. The next year on their anniversary date they had grown to 40 Serra members and over 500 families praying a monthly rosary for vocations. That’s what Serra clubs do—they multiple their prayers through service by engaging others to pray for vocations too. Make that a key goal of your club.

Lastly I pray that you will find the same joy and happiness that comes from doing God’s will through your Serra work that I have found in my Serra work. Let that Joy shine out for all to see. Share that Joy with one another and with our Catholic community.
US Vocations Update 2020

US Vocations Trends

- Shortage of Priests remains a CRISIS
- Lots of Good things happening:
  - Priestly ordinations steady to up since 2000
  - Grad level seminarians steady to up since 1995
- Total No. Diocesan Priests still declining due to
death or retirement (down 30% since 1965)
- US Catholic population up 50% since 1965!
- 35% of US Catholics are Hispanic while only 5% of
priests are Hispanic

Vocations Trends (U.S.)

What We Know about Vocations
(from A Priest in the Family by Fr. Brannen)

- Holy Spirit calls the vocation, not us
- Culture of Vocations critical to call being heard
- Key Influencers: Priests/Spiritual Directors, Mothers, others
- Time of most serious consideration: Age 17
- Time spent in Eucharistic Adoration
- 60% of Priests were altar servers
- 50% of Seminarians “discern out”
- 92% of Priests are happy being priests
- Inability to marry is not cause of shortage—mainline protestant
churches have same shortage

Priesthood Vocations USA
(CARA Research)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>New Priests</th>
<th>Total Diocesan Priests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>32,349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>30,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>28,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>27,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>25,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>25,757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>25,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>24,857</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

US Vocations Update

- Questions
- Comments
- Discussion