Serrans gather in Dallas

Find out what makes a culture of Vocations!
We cherish your work, we pray for your strength, we pray that you grow and stay steadfast in all that you do; because we need you and we need you to stay strong.
Most Reverend Edward J. Burns, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Dallas

The Serran Calendar

May 27, 2023
Serran Global Rosary

June 10, 2023
Serra Meets: Kevin Wells

June 24, 2023
Serran Global Rosary

June 22-25, 2023
International Convention
Chiang Mai, Thailand

July 8, 2023
Serra Meets: David Rinaldi

January 18-21, 2024
Serra Rally, Miami, Florida

August 8-11, 2024
Serra’s 81st International Convention
New Orleans, Louisiana

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The Serran magazine is the official publication of Serra International. It is published quarterly. Views expressed in this publication may not reflect the views of the Board. Send letters or manuscripts to gorges@serrainternational.org. The Serran does not accept advertising.

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Vocation as a Mystery

Keynote Address from Most Reverend Edward J Burns, Bishop of Dallas

We are with you during this whole process, and we need you to stay strong in the whole process. You are a gift to the Church, and we so very much appreciate all that you do. I also want to say thanks for the very warm welcome; it's a joy to receive it. I have to share with you that when I first arrived in 2017, I went to the State Knights of Columbus Convention in Houston, and it was there I have to tell you. I thought the Knights of Columbus were Bishop friendly; they booed me. I was a little taken aback by it, but what really occurred was I stood up and introduced myself. There were about a thousand Knights of Columbus, hundreds really, but when I introduced myself, I said, "Hi, I'm Bishop Edward Burns. I'm the new Bishop of the Diocese of Dallas, and I arrived from my former Diocese of Juneau, Alaska." I shared with them that the faithful of Juneau, Alaska, told me that by being assigned to Texas, I was being downsized. Well, they started to grumble, and in the grumbling, unfortunately, I didn't have enough sense to stop there. I kept going, and I said, "Oh, you think that's something? Listen to this," and I shared with them that in Juneau, Alaska, there are a lot of souvenir shops around due to the visitors from cruise ships. Well, the souvenir shops have a lot of t-shirts in them. This one T-shirt has an outline of Alaska and an outline of Texas, and the caption on the t-shirt is "Texas, how cute." That was when they went "Boo." It was Cardinal DiNardo who said to me, "You better run." Speaking of Cardinal, I want to say a word of welcome to His Eminence Cardinal Collins; it's good to see you. Welcome to Dallas, and we really are grateful for your presence. You honor us in so many ways.

Today I'd like to discuss vocation as a mystery and the mystery of vocation. I was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I was in high school, and I worked after school as a janitor in a factory. I remember thinking about what I wanted to do with my life, and I remember the thought came, as a thought should come, as we create a vocation culture; for every young person to at least consider what God has in store for them, and I remember because I worked for hours after school, and the factory was huge, and it was absolutely empty. It was after the three o'clock shift had already gone home, and I thought to myself, "Wouldn't it be interesting to be a priest?" As soon as I thought that, I shuddered. I said, "No, absolutely not," and I did a darn good job putting out a stiff arm to the idea, but as God has His plans, He continues to gnaw at you about what He has in store. So I remember coming into contact with my parochial vicar, my parish of Saint Agatha at Elwood City. I remember asking him, Father Hoffman, I said, "I just want to talk to you. Is there a possibility that we could meet sometime?" and he said, "Ed, absolutely it would be great." So I remember I didn't want anybody to know about it. I didn't want anybody to know that I was even thinking about the priesthood. So whenever I was going home that one Thursday, where I was going to meet Father Hoffman after dinner, my friends were asking, "What are you doing tonight?" I said, "Oh, nothing. I'm just staying home tonight." Well, I knew that was a lie. I was definitely going out, and then we're done with dinner, the whole family, and we're cleaning up after dinner, and I'm getting ready to go out. Mom said, "Where are you going tonight?" I said, "Oh, I'm just going out with Yo," who was a buddy of mine; and that was another lie because I wasn't. I didn't want to say, "I'm going to the rectory and talking to the priest about becoming one." I didn't want to say that at all. I lied twice already, but I thought to myself, "Well, I'm lying for the Lord." Father Hoffman was a chain smoker, and I sat in his little office. "So Ed, tell me..." and he's smoking his cigarettes, putting them out, light-
Bishop Edward Burns, Bishop of Dallas, celebrates mass for the Serrans.

ing up another one, and I'm sitting in this small office of his, with all this smoke, and I, of course, identified it as The Cloud of Unknowing. I went home afterward, and I went into the game room. My mom and dad were sitting there, and I then sat on the ottoman just to see what they were watching. My mom, who has keen senses, goes, “Sniff-sniff.” She looked at me, and she goes, “You've been smoking.” I said, “Mom, No, I wasn't smoking.” “Yes, you have. I can smell it on you. You've been smoking.” I said, “Mom, I haven't; the person I was with was smoking.” She goes “Yo smokes? Wait till I talk to his mother!” You know how lies continue to pump out, it's never ever okay. Well, with the whole mystery, I just had no real sense of why God was calling me. I put a stiff arm out to it because I'm thinking, “Surely, not me.” You know there are other guys; who are far better, far smarter, far holier. They would definitely be the type who would follow the call for the priesthood but one of the things that Father Hoffman did, and he was so very wise, is that he not only supported it; but he did indeed pose to me the very adventure of entering into the mystery of vocation, and he would always introduce to me. What would be the next step to enter into the mystery of vocation? The next step through spiritual direction, prayer, interaction with the vocation director, and then ultimately, entering into the seminary. I entered into the seminary in the 1970s, and in that, I saw men; who I knew were far better than me, and I rejoiced with that, but it was also difficult whenever I saw some of them leave, and I was still there. I had really no clear sense of, “Lord, are you sure?” With my vocation, it was something that I knew I felt comfortable with, but there was still a sense of anxiety with it, not being absolutely sure. One of the things that I cherished was the realization after my ordination of why it is the Lord called me and how the Lord was using me as his instrument.

I was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on June 25, 1983. I’ll never forget, and I will share this with you; because this is what endears my heart to Serra. As we had Serra Clubs in Pittsburgh, they were just so gracious and strong, and they were absolutely impressive. We always had a Serra dinner the Tuesday after the ordination in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, and at that Serran dinner, it was just a great opportunity to highlight the Bishop who ordained them, the parents of the newly ordained, as well as the newly ordained. It was, for me, truly the opportunity to build a vocation culture. Then our families, each one of us, there were twelve of them, twelve of us, who were ordained that year. Each family received a visit by the Serrans, and they came to our home. They visit with our families as well as with the newly ordained and in it they thanked our parents too.

“Each family received a visit by the Serrans, and they came to our home. They visit with our families as well as with the newly ordained and in it they thanked our parents too.”

I’m stationed at Immaculate Conception in Washington, Pennsylvania. We had the responsibility of a 444-bed hospital, and it was my week for call. Well, the hospital called, and it was about 11 o'clock. I'm still watching the news, I'm relaxing on my couch, I'm dressed casually, and they said that there is a gentleman in room 495; “Father, he's not going to last the night,” and his wife is here and would like to have the anointing. I said, “I'll be right there,” and I threw my blacks back on, and I go up to the hospital and there's no activity since it's almost 11:30 at night. While I'm going down looking for the room number, everything was quiet, little activity by the nurses' station, and it was in room 495. I walked in, and there was a small little light in the corner, an elderly man in the bed, and his wife sitting there by his side. Just holding his hand and I said, “Hi, I'm Father Burns from Immaculate Conception, and I just wanted to come and anoint your husband and see if there's anything that you need.” She goes, “Thank you, Father,” and she never really looked at me as I'm going through the prayers and the anointing. I'm praying for her and for those who serve the sick and anointed him. Then I am taking my stole off after concluding the prayers and she finally then looked at me and said “Father, let me tell you something. My husband and I [Continued on page 18]
What is a Culture of Vocations?

by Mike Downey, President, USA Council of Serra International

We use this term a lot in Serra. Creating a Culture of Vocations in parishes and dioceses is our primary strategy to achieve our Serra mission.

But what does it mean? How do we know we have achieved it? What are the signs that a Culture of Vocations exists in a parish or diocese? Unless we can clearly articulate the answers to these questions, Serrans cannot be sure of our success in fostering and affirming all priesthood and religious vocations.

Let’s start with the word “culture.” It means a set of shared values, attitudes and behavioral norms that bind a community of individuals together.

For Catholics, these shared values, attitudes, and behavioral norms are defined by the teachings of Jesus Christ. It begins with the belief that Jesus Christ is God—one of the three persons in the blessed Trinity—and that we are formed in the image and likeness of God. Our God is a God of love, so too must we love one another. And Christ taught us that God must be first in our lives. And that means God’s will comes first. God’s will means, first and foremost, striving to know and put into action the special, unique purpose for which God created us—each day, each season of our lives and for our lives as a whole. A Christian community helps and supports each other in this goal.

So what is a Culture of Vocations? It is about priesthood and religious vocations but also much more. It means a Christian community where God comes first. And because God comes first, each member of the community strives to do God’s will—not our own will or what someone else wills for us. That means every person in the community striving to discover and act upon the special purpose for which each was created by God and supporting others to do the same.

How do we know a Culture of Vocations exists in a parish or diocese? Look for signs that God comes first. One of the best signs is regular Eucharistic Adoration—especially Adoration for multiple hours at a time. Adoration is not obligatory and shows that God does come first in Catholics’ lives. Another is long lines and many hours set aside for confession. Group rosaries are also evidence of God being first. A parish or diocese with a strong Culture of Vocations will be one where marriages are strong, where there is a Culture of Life, a culture of prayer, fasting, almsgiving and a culture of inclusion and forgiveness.

It is only in this environment that we can be sure that every call to a vocation—whether it be to ordained ministry, the religious life, the married life, or the single life—will be heard and responded to by individuals who know they have the support of Christians in the community. They know because those Christians are on the same journey themselves, even if it be something other than those vocations which are expressly promoted and supported by Serrans. First and foremost, they seek to discover and do God’s will in their lives. For them, God comes first!

This is what a Culture of Vocations means and what we strive for in Serra.

It Starts with Each of Us Individually

Christ’s calling is uniquely individual. So for Serrans, creating a Culture of Vocations must begin within each of us individually before we can change others. Each day we arise from sleep, we need to put God first and ask what is the special, unique purpose he has for us this day, for this season in our life and for all our life. This is what growing in holiness is all about. We must first ask of ourselves the same thing we seek from those called to priesthood or religious life—to put God first, to discover his will for us and to strive with courage to achieve His will for us.

To grow a Culture of Vocations in our parishes and dioceses, we must first grow it in ourselves.

God bless you!
Serra Rally 2023
Irving, Texas

Photos by Wayne Mikols

Winners of the 2023 Face of Serra Award: Wayne Snyder, John Caton, Mike Downey, Debbie Koop, Rose Marie Stimpfl, Richard Arians, and Anne Roat.

Cathy Mikols, Juanita Smith, and Jim Burns enjoying the Rally.

Cardinal Collins holding court during our outing to El Fenix.

Bishop Burns celebrating Mass with Cardinal Collins and the priests in attendance at the Rally.

Bishop Joseph Strickland of the Tyler Diocese speaks at the closing dinner.
Bishop Burns celebrates mass on Friday evening at the Cathedral Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Dallas.

Cardinal Collins and crew preparing to celebrate the closing Mass.

Eucharistic adoration on Saturday.

This year’s Rally was enhanced by wonderful musicians.

Cardinal Collins poses with David and Diana Pieper.

Interior of the Cathedral Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Dallas during Friday mass.
A Concept of Serra

Keynote Address from His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Collins

You will notice, first of all, that I have a clock here; this is always a hopeful sign. There is a famous story of how a mother was there with her son in Church, when the priest incensed the altar. The son said, “What does that mean?” “Well, that’s our prayers rising up to God,” and when the priest kissed the altar, “Oh, that is reverence for the altar.” Then the priest took out his watch and put it there before the homily and the little boy said, “What does that mean?” and his mother said, “Nothing at all.” However, I will try to prove that wrong, and have it mean at least a little something, I hope. It is just a joy to be here, as always, at Serra. To spend this time in reflecting upon the will of the Lord and how we can follow in the great example of our heavenly patron Saint Junipero Serra. I do not know the Spanish, “Siempre Adelante” or “Always Forward.” Forward, I think that’s the kind of attitude we need and it is not the kind of attitude that is based on illusion, or optimism, or anything like that. We think of what he faced. I agree that the troubles we have are almost nothing, and yet, in the midst of it, I think we see in our heavenly patron, not optimism, which is usually not justified; if you look around there is not much to be optimistic about, but rather hope.

Hope looks coldly at the realities we face in this Babylon the Great, this world that is fallen. In a world subject to original sin which there are the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: war, civil strife, famine, plague, and everything else you might want to think about. It looks at it coldly and accurately, realistically, and yet, in the light of faith and that allows us to see beyond that. Faith gives us the vision to see not our immediate struggles only, but to see them in the midst of in the context of the heavenly city, Jerusalem, which is our only true home. If we see that, then we can deal with the issues before us, whatever they may be, with energy and hope, and we won’t be slowed down by the disasters we face because what energizes us is the vision of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ Our Lord. That is what gives us energy so we can then go from the vision of faith, which gives us that sublime energy, that is not dependent upon the local circumstances, and then it gives us the strength for a life of love and service.

My favorite hymn is Oh God Beyond All Praising, you know, “We’ll triumph through our sorrows and rise to bless you still, To celebrate your beauty and glory in Your ways, and make a joyful duty our sacrifice of praise.” So I think making that joyful duty, our sacrifice of praise, is really what we see in the example of Saint Junipero Serra and what we see in our lives today; because he had his problems, he had physical problems, he had walking with great physical difficulty all across California and everywhere. He had all kinds of struggles and difficulties and rejection and everything, and yet, in the midst of that serene hope, always forward, not on the basis of his strength, which he didn’t have much of, but on the basis of the grace of God. That is what strengthens us, and it immunizes us against the discouragements that come from trying to proclaim the Gospel of Christ in Babylon the Great because that can happen and sometimes it can lead to anger and bitterness. Just take a look at social media, the Catholic internet is a fearful place.

Now that’s not for us; we are to move forward with that hope and so what I’d like to do is just reflect upon a talk given, a couple of years ago, in June of 1956, and I received a copy of this by another Cardinal. Cardinal Samuel Stritch, when he was talking about the meaning of Serra, at a Serra convention in New Orleans, he made several points and I’d just like to update them. Hard be it, for me to update the great Cardinal Stritch, but I will do something of that nature and make some comments. He had some good points that were valid back in 1956, which is a lot closer to the founding of Serra, and we are trying to make valid today with appropriate adaptations. He spoke of Serra as having grown greatly in the days, that would have been about 20 years or so since its founding, it had grown to become a big organization. He said the danger of a big organization is that you can forget where you came from. You forget the key simple principles that should guide you.

So he said now is the time, several decades on, to go back to the principles that are at the heart of Serra and make sure we keep faithful to them as we advance into the future; and if that was true in 1956 it’s certainly true in 2023. We’re even farther down the path and it’s good to go back to the foundations, to the roots. One of the points he stresses, and I think it is something Serra has always been very faithful to, is the relationship with the diocesan bishop. After all, it was the layman gathered together seeking to, in times of prayer and everything, to serve the Lord who asked to discuss with their local bishop, “What should we do? What is needed by the Church?” and he said, “What about dedicating yourself to the vocation mission?” and he set that mission for them. That’s what we have been at ever since; but it’s that relationship with the local bishop I think that is very important, and you can see that last night when the local bishop of this diocese celebrated Mass for us. I think I can speak for anyone who has had any experience of Serra, how much we appreciate that relationship, that direct relationship, with Serra and the local bishop because the Church is universal, but the Church is also local. There are particular needs
and difficulties in every different place, and that's why each diocese has a bishop whose mission is to discern, to pray, to reflect, and in communion with the Holy Father in Rome and the whole Universal Church, but also with all of those who are gathered in the local community, "what is the will of God for this community now?" That is what we do in all kinds of different ways. I have been a bishop for about 25 years now. I was a bishop, first, in Northern Alberta, Fort McMurray with the community of 50,000 Catholics. Then I moved across the North Saskatchewan River to the Archdiocese of Edmonton with 350,000 Catholics. Now I am the bishop of a much smaller diocese geographically, from 85,000 square kilometers to only 13, but with two million Catholics. So it is our own little happy family, you might say, and I wish I could say they all go to Mass, but that's another matter. Cardinal Samuel Stritch said in his talk, "The work of vocations was given to the first Serra Club to press upon in the place of the priest and the Church, the Church of Christ, and the responsibility of the layperson in helping the bishop in this great work."

So that is a good meditation, I think, that is one point he makes, that connectedness, which is very richly, strongly present throughout the all the different Serra Clubs and around the world. Then he talks about what a good Serran is. Now it is some wisdom from back then, but I think it's absolutely good to focus, keep our minds on the foundations, the farther we go, the more we move along, we ought to be sure we're keeping on track. Basically, he makes two points; he says that there are three different dimensions, it's holiness, knowledge of faith, and the vocation mission; those are the three points. Which really is: why did God make me? God made me to know, to love, and to serve. We need to know our faith, we need to know the Lord. To know Him, as the great Pope Benedict said, not as a theory, not as a message to be memorized, not as something like that, but as a person to be encountered. To know the Lord and to know our faith though as well. The Ten Commandments are not the ten suggestions, we have to know them as well. Doctrine is good, the great John Henry Newman said, "Religion without doctrine is like filial love without a father." That's one of our greatest problems now, as Pope Benedict said at the very beginning of his pontifical ministry, and throughout his life, really, it's the dictatorship of relativism that is our problem, our greatest problem right now, and believe me it is a dictatorship. There is an iron fist behind the velvet glove and we're all facing it in different ways. I'm heading back for a little struggle with that in a few days and so let's all pray for one another. It is to know, to love, deep in the heart, not the heart in the sense of emotion only, but the heart of the sense of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, he specifically mentions that, and to serve. That's the work, that's then the practicalities of helping with the vocation ministry, a particular type of service: head, heart, and hands. I always figure when people come to my office proposing something, I say, "What does it say to the head, the heart, and the hands." The knowledge, is it well thought out? The heart, is it something that is real and vibrant? Not the heart against the sense of emotion, but the sense of steadiness. The heart, it's rather boring until we're having a heart attack. We need a boring heart; that's what we want. We want what is steady, it's hidden, and it gives us life. So head, think clearly; I always say that God put our heads in so prominent a place in our bodies that he wants us to use them, and just bumbling around is not a good thing. For all kinds of purposes people use a lot of intelligence and creativity and thinking, and what do we do for the mission of the Lord, for the mission of Serra, for the mission of Christ Our Lord as Christians?

God made me to know, to love, and to serve. We need to know our faith, we need to know the Lord.

I don't use exciting devices during homilies, I think they're a bit distracting, but once when I was on the staff of the seminary, there was this big Chapel and a marble floor, and it was a Mass at seven in the morning. Now for me, I'm one of those horrible people who's bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, eager, "Great! Seven in the morning!" but most of the people, their heads were slumping forward. The priest was giving a homily and took a bag of coins and threw them on the floor, and boy, all the heads jerked up, but he made a good point. It's the only demonstration I've ever seen in the homily where they actually made a good point. He made this point that people are willing to do all kinds of things: use their intelligence and creativity to spend hours of devotion and faithfulness chasing after coins, just after cash; and believe me, you don't want to be the richest corpse in the cemetery. So what's the point? No one ever said that their last wish was that I wish I'd spent more time at the office. Where do we spend our time and energy? God gave us a head to think, a heart to love, [Continued on page 20]
President’s Message

by Greg Schwietz, President, Serra International

In a recent interview with Piergiorgio Aquillino, Editor and Chief of Il Serrano, Italian Council and Greg Schwietz President of Serra International we offer a recap of that discussion.

Piergiorgio Aquillino: What does it mean to be a Serran? How are we to live this Serra-ness?

Greg Schwietz: To be a Serran is to answer God's direct call to encourage and affirm priests and consecrated religious in a very special way. It is our own unique vocation. For me, to be a Serran has meant a remarkable opportunity to meet and affirm young people during that important time of their life as they search for God's will for them, possibly in a very special vocation. Then it allows me to continue a supporting relationship as a friend to those who have made that definitive decision to say “yes” to God's call. Finally, the community in which this all happens is a local “club”, a small group of dedicated, like-minded Catholic friends, who wish not only to support the Church's ordained and consecrated servants but also to continue to help each other grow deeper in our own Catholic faith.

PA: In a time where communication is paramount, what values are we called to witness and how do we communicate them today?

GS: Effective communication is to me one of the continuing pillars of Serra's outreach. While most of the time we rightly think of the need for communication as that activity between and within the various components of Serra worldwide, equally important is for us to consider how we as Serrans can promote the worthiness of ministerial priesthood and consecrated religious life to the larger Catholic Church. This has been a focus of Serra from its early days.

The other component of communications that I find important is the need to remind Serrans around the world about how very important our remarkable Serra mission and activities supporting that mission are to the Church. Our Church leaders continually thank me, as the organization's representative, for the promotion of religious vocations and fraternal support that is seen and felt of Serrans. What we do as Serrans is and must remain “important and relevant” to the Church.

PA: Thinking now about vocations as a call, an invitation, a self-offering; How is it possible to make this vocation call still relevant today?

GS: The mystery of a vocation call is one that we as Serrans are dealing with all the time. Our support of young men and women during this life stage is significant. In our support of seminarians, we are affirming that the process of discerning God's call should be recognized for what it is, that God has a plan for each of us, and our task and theirs is to discover that plan with the help of others. God promises all of us that there is some important work that HE WANTS for us. We have gifts, we have experience, we have hopes and desires, and God will put all these to work for HIS PLAN. There is not a task too menial or too great that cannot be brought to the glory of God and to benefit His plan. We have great saints who serve as role models for our young people who have been great popes or theologians as well as door keepers, farmers and tradesmen.

To say that St Junipero Serra lived in simpler times is probably a great understatement, but he faced his own challenges. To be content with his current state as a respected professor in Spain or answer a call that challenged him beyond where he was at the moment. It was his continued listening to God's voice that inspired him to quickly say yes when the call for foreign missionaries was issued. He left it all behind, stepping out into a great unknown, but with a confidence that faith alone can bring. That is the message that we need share with young people today.

PA: During Pope Francis homily in Washington DC at the celebration of St Junipero Serra's canonization (National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, September 23, 2015) he said, “He chose a motto that inspired his footsteps and shaped his life: he was able to say, “Siempre Adelante.’ He was always ahead, because the Lord waits,…” What meaning does this motto still have today?

GS: Siempre Adelante must be one of the best mottos in the world of all time. Forward movement is key to answering The Great Commission, Christ’s command to the apostles and disciples to bring the kingdom of God to all nations. As we know, this motto is a statement of faith in God’s great plan. Whether we are clear about it or not, He alone knows what good He will bring simply with our YES, our fiat. Despite our weaknesses,
our frailties, our broken spirits, we place the entirety of ourselves, the good and bad, the strong and weak, upon God’s altar, and ask Him to bless it, and then we must move out into the world with confidence answering Christ’s command. Siempre Adelante!

This motto, one that we are so proud of repeating, was part of a consoling letter which St Junipero Serra addressed to his mother and father, informing them, for the first and last time, of his decision to go to the new world as a missionary. Writing to a friend who would in turn read this letter to his illiterate parents, he said: "I wish I could share with them the great joy that fills my heart. Surely then they would encourage me to move forward and never turn back. May they be advised that the actual work and practice of an Apostolic Preacher is the greatest calling which they could have wished for me… Let my parents rejoice that they have a son who is a priest… who daily in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, prays for them with all the fervor of his soul…” It is this moving forward that Pope Francis reflects upon both at the canonization celebration and again during his address to Serrans attending the great Serra Convention in Rome in 2017. It is the embracing of the unlimited possibilities of the Gospel.

PA: What final comments do you have to impart to Serrans around the world?

GS: As a parting comment, I would like to remind my Serra friends of the importance of prayer, both individual and communal. As we recite the Serra Prayer for Vocations, we remember the words of scripture, Ezekiel 33:11. "O God who wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live"; we pray for an increase of laborers, invoking the intercession of Blessed Mary, St Joseph, the saints and in particular, our patron, St Junipero Serra. Traditionally we think of these laborers to be young men and women who "spend and consume themselves for souls", but I believe we are also praying for lay men and women to act on this prayer as SERRANS within our many Serra Clubs and communities throughout the world, as they foster and affirm these vocations which minister and sustain the Church of today and tomorrow.  

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Serran Prayer for Vocations

O God, Who wills not the death of a sinner but rather that he be converted and live, grant we beseech you, through the intercession of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Saint Joseph, her spouse, St. Junipero Serra, and all the saints, an increase of laborers for your Church, fellow laborers with Christ to spend and consume themselves for souls through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

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Introducing the Serra Challenge Coin

This program encourages priests or vocation promoters to seek potential candidates for the priesthood. When they feel as though they've found a worthy candidate, they are encouraged to present the above coin to him as a reminder while he discerns where God might be leading him.

In an interview with the Tennessee Register, Serra International VP of Communications, Bob Rudman said “Upon explaining it to the board, they’ve all been excited about it because they realize that yes, we pray for vocations, but we really haven’t asked the priests to go out of their way and select the people that they consider to be appropriate and capable people of being priests.”

Rudman also stated, “It reinforces to the recipient that a priest thinks enough of you to feel that you’re capable of being a future priest,” he said. “It’s like a snowball. It’s really an awakening of a priest that this is a big priority, that they should be constantly looking for individuals.”

You can purchase the Serra Challenge Coin using this QR code.

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Serran Prayer for Vocations

O God, Who wills not the death of a sinner but rather that he be converted and live, grant we beseech you, through the intercession of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Saint Joseph, her spouse, St. Junipero Serra, and all the saints, an increase of laborers for your Church, fellow laborers with Christ to spend and consume themselves for souls through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

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Introducing the Serra Challenge Coin

This program encourages priests or vocation promoters to seek potential candidates for the priesthood. When they feel as though they've found a worthy candidate, they are encouraged to present the above coin to him as a reminder while he discerns where God might be leading him.

In an interview with the Tennessee Register, Serra International VP of Communications, Bob Rudman said “Upon explaining it to the board, they’ve all been excited about it because they realize that yes, we pray for vocations, but we really haven’t asked the priests to go out of their way and select the people that they consider to be appropriate and capable people of being priests.”

Rudman also stated, “It reinforces to the recipient that a priest thinks enough of you to feel that you’re capable of being a future priest,” he said. “It’s like a snowball. It’s really an awakening of a priest that this is a big priority, that they should be constantly looking for individuals.”

You can purchase the Serra Challenge Coin using this QR code.

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Celebration of World Day for Consecrated Life: Invitation to Encounter and Mission

by Sr. Francesca Kearns

Pope Francis in his message for the 27th World Day for Consecrated Life reminds us that we are sisters and brothers on mission. He writes while on his mission journey in East Africa. On the occasion of the World Day for Consecrated Life, 2 February, 2023 the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life invited all in Consecrated Life to walk together as a community in the synodal spirit of participation, where members exercise responsibility for one another through mutual listening, excluding no one. The joy of encounter and shared mission permeated the gathering of more than 140 consecrated women and men as we gathered for Liturgy in Sacred Heart Cathedral, on Sunday February 5th. The participants represented 18 of the 60 Congregations of men and women serving in the Archdiocese. Movements that have consecrated women were also represented as were Consecrated Virgins. The founding Congregations of these women and men began many of the parishes and social services in the Archdiocese during its 175 years of promoting God’s mission.

In the beginning days of the Archdiocese many missionaries came from Canada, Mexico and Europe. Today we are blessed by a growing group of missionaries that come from Africa, Asia and Latin America with renewed energy to serve the poor and abandoned. As they serve the growing immigrant population they bring oxygen to the call of the 2023 Synod: Communion, Participation and Mission. They invigorate the goal that no one be excluded or feel excluded from this journey.

The growth of our Archdiocese and its increasing needs impulses new enthusiasm to be available for the good of humanity. There is increased joy in being channels of God’s love that makes provision for the flourishing of all human beings. The celebration of the Liturgy for World Day of Consecrated Life and the Reception that followed was made possible by the collaboration of many of the Diocesan Offices and lay movements. The Serrans from District Ten created a reception that sang of the joy of serving others while promoting vocations to Consecrated Life. The sharing across congregations, nations and ages brought to life the feeling that we are all brothers and sisters, together in life and in history, which is the history of salvation. Our deep appreciation to Cardinal Dinardo and all who made this memorable celebration possible.

The Serra Challenge Coin

Research has shown that priestly vocations begin with invitation. Simply inviting a young man to consider the priesthood is often the spark he needs to think more seriously about his vocation.

Serrans been inviting men to consider the priesthood for decades. The new Serra Challenge Coin is an aide for invitation, acting as a “sacramental,” a physical reminder of the grace of God’s call. While the coins can be given out by anyone, ideally they would be presented by the man’s parish priest, leading to deeper conversation.

The handsome, oversized coins have substantial heft in the hand, and act as an enduring token of the invitation to consider the priesthood. The face is engraved with a nicely-designed cross, while the back has an intricate crown of thorns and the words: “Have you considered becoming a priest?”

Five coins come packaged in a handsome glossy black box, with a card inside encouraging invitation.

Encourage young men with this challenge coin engraved with the question: “Have you considered becoming a priest?” The new custom-minted coin is larger than a silver dollar and twice as thick, offering a substantial, permanent reminder to consider God’s call.

Five coins come in a handsome box. Excellent for priests to give to altar servers, or for anyone who wants to encourage young men to consider priesthood. $25 per box of 5 coins

SERRASTORE.ORG
What is Cultural Outreach?

By Jesse Gallegos, VP for Cultural Outreach

Praying for a fruitful culture of vocations and for priestly vocations and religious life. USA Council President, Mike Downey, developed the Serra Hispanic Ambassador program. Mike found out that about 50% of Catholics are Hispanic but only 5% of all US priests are Hispanic. This creates a need for more Hispanic priests. From this program, the Cultural Outreach Committee is committed to reaching out to other cultures and ethnicities. One of the best attributes of being a Serran is our ability to embrace diversity.

The Cultural Outreach Committee objectives are to study ways to promote Serra to the various Catholic cultural communities in club, cities, areas or regions; help cultivate relationships through community-connected members, by promoting the mission of Serra, and asking more Catholics to pray for vocations in their cultural dialect; and provide appropriate training, materials, and guidance in reaching out to the unique cultures in the Serra Catholic community.

We want to find cultural ambassadors, establish Satellite “clubs”, or create a vocations committee within these diverse cultures – why not you? The two crucial pieces to the success of any Serrans endeavor – the bishop and parish priest. Their support is essential and required to promote the culture of vocations in our remarkably diverse Catholic communities.

In the Code of Canon Law, Book II; Title III, Chapter 1, Can. 233 §1 in part reads. The duty of fostering vocations rests with the entire Christian community so that the needs of the sacred ministry in the universal Church are provided for sufficiently. Our goal is to ask more Catholics to pray for vocations in their native language and, God willing, more priests and religious for the diverse cultures in the US.

Always Forward, Never Back - Siempre Adelante, Nunca Retroceder.

Jesse Gallegos, VP for Cultural Outreach, culturaloutreach@serrainternational.org
On a beautiful day, Friday, February 18, 2022, after Mass at St. Charles Borromeo, Fr. Miguel Solorzano approached me and asked if I would help him start a Hispanic Serra Club at St. Charles. I was attending a funeral Mass at St. Charles and responded I would be happy to help. To first begin the process, I typed a letter to Cardinal DiNardo for his approval to charter a new Serra Club. I received the Cardinal’s response right away approving the new Serra charter. The journey began and Fr. Miguel got to work appointing a president and officers for the new Hispanic club. I got to work reading up on the Serra International Charter procedures and heard there was a new Quick Start Charter Manual. I immediately asked Serra US president, Mike Downey, to please forward the manual to me on how to go about chartering a new Serra club more simplified.

I will say the journey was definitely more work than I had anticipated, but with Fr. Miguel and the new officers he appointed, every meeting was a true joy! Mayra Meza Suarez, new president, and the new officers were a delight to meet with from the beginning! After communicating by phone with Fr. Miguel and Mayra for several weeks, our first charter committee meeting was scheduled on April 26. The Holy Spirit was truly involved because every agenda and every minutes of the meetings I typed evolved miraculously with no hesitation and as if someone was telling me what to type. It was as if I could not wait to schedule and type up the next agenda to keep the ball rolling for Fr. Miguel and his amazing officers on this beautiful journey. Yolanda Cadena, from our North Houston Apostolate club, rode with me to the meetings and was my Spanish sponsor for translating from English. Fr. Miguel also helped translating from English in the meetings. Mayra translated “What Our Dues Do” from English to Spanish for the officers and for their first recruitment weekend, which was held at St. Charles on June 25 and 26.

We scheduled and held another recruitment weekend at Assumption church on July 23 and 24. Pearl Campbell, our Serra District 10 Governor, also attended our committee meetings and we appreciated her presence. After the April 26 meeting, our next meetings would be held on May 18, June 2, June 15, July 20, and August 17. Six meetings which would last from 6:00 p.m. to around 8:30 p.m. We had lots to cover, and we accomplished quite a bit in every meeting. We had an agenda and a mission to have this Hispanic Serra club successfully chartered. Fr. Miguel knew we need more Hispanic priests, and his heart was to help accomplish this mission with a new Hispanic Serra Club. Fr. Miguel is the most joyful and faith-filled priest you ever want to meet! Fr. Miguel and his officers voted on the name Serra Hispanic Club for Vocations of North Houston. They wanted club in the name which they said would attract younger members because they like to be part of a club. I filled out the charter application form and charter information sheet and Yolanda Cadena kindly translated the bylaws into Spanish, which were requirements of Serra International for approval of the new charter. Finally, a charter date was set for Tuesday, August 23, 2022, with Auxiliary Bishop Italo Dell’Oro, celebrant for Mass, along with celebrants Fr. Miguel Solorzano, Fr. Rafael Davila, Fr. Jesus Lizalde, Fr. David Garnier, and Dcn. Rolando Rodriguez. We were blessed to have thirty-five new Serra Hispanic members attend Mass and the beautiful fajita dinner installation. We were graced by the presence of Jesse Gallegos, Serra US VP of Communications and President of Serra Club of Harlingen, Texas. In addition, Betty Lara, Serra International Foundation Board Trustee and US VP of Programs, and Adam Lara, Serra International Board Trustee, attended from the Serra Club of McAllen, Texas. Jesse, Betty, and Adam presented the new president, Mayra, with the gavel, bell, and Charter Proclamation. We are all very thankful for their attendance.

Thank you, Bishop Italo, Fr. Miguel, Pearl, Betty, Adam, and Jesse, for your important roles in the installation presentation of officers and new members. A huge thank you to the Serra International office, John Liston, Barbara Luster, and Giovana Rodriguez Garcia for all their help with whatever I asked, and to Mike Downey, Bob Campney, and Adam Liess for their help as well. The new Hispanic club now has forty-seven paid members! Jorge Suarez, Mayra’s husband, is the VP of Membership and doing a great job! Praise God, more prayers for vocations! Thank you, Fr. Miguel, president Mayra, all the officers, Pearl and Yolanda for an incredible journey we will all never forget! God bless you and your new Serra Hispanic Club for Vocations of North Houston!

Gratefully yours in Christ,
Candice Tyrrell
Serra Hispanic Club Sponsor,
Serra US VP of Membership
You Might Not Know This About Serra

**Monthly Global Rosary for Vocations**

*The third Saturday of every month, Serrans from around the world gather online to pray the Rosary for Vocations*

**Serra Meets**

*Online Lecture Series; second Saturday of every month, featuring world-class presenters providing Serrans with information they can use in their work to create a culture of vocations.*

**Serra International YouTube Channel**

*Leadership videos for Serra Club Officers, Serra Presentations, and Spiritual Reflections for Serrans. Scan the QR code for the link.*

**New Member Kit**

*Cost: $11.75, Kit contents, Initiation fees sent to Serra, then Kits get processed for shipment to Club Officers. For more information on these new member kits, contact Barbara Luster, bluster@serrainternational.org.*

**Resources for Club Officers**

*Serra Spark Website; www.serraspark.org. Featuring dozens of tools for vocation directors, Serra Clubs, parishes, and schools to use to help create awareness of vocations and assist those in discernment.*
National, Regional and District Conferences for Serran

Serra Councils, Regions, and Districts all offer training and leadership opportunities for those who want to take their membership in Serra to the next level and serve the organization in a broader capacity.

Ignite Program

The USA Council offers free workshops for dioceses in the United States to assist them in setting up Parish Vocation Ministries.

Training

Serra Portal Tutorials; scan the QR code for training videos on Serra’s YouTube channel

Serra’s Aggregation to the Pontifical Work

In 1951, Serra’s Aggregation to the Pontifical Work for Priestly Vocations, was instituted by the Holy Father. Serra is the only Lay organization directly and independently affiliated.

Number of Serrans Worldwide

14,750

This spread has been designed using images from Flaticon.com
“With the Mysteries that we have in our church and in our lives, it’s important for us to be mindful of God’s presence in these moments.”

bad times. We have four beautiful children, and they’re all on their way home now to be with us. It was 50 years ago that we vowed our love for each other and that we were going to celebrate this marriage.” Then she said, “Father, I’m going to continue to sit here and celebrate this marriage with him until death do us part.” I was just so moved by that; what I thought was going to be a very routine hospital call became for me one of the most beautiful expressions of love I’d ever witnessed. With that I cherish the wonderful mystery of the vocation of marriage and the way that marriage proves, for us, the true beacon of love and hope that this world needs shining the light on commitment, sacrificial love, dedication, and the gift of life. All of that which continues to be a mystery. So with the mysteries that we have in our Church and in our lives, it’s important for us to be mindful of God’s presence in these moments; God’s presence in our lives, God’s presence in the call that he places before us, and how it is that we are to stay connected to God throughout the course of our vocations in order to bear the fruit to bear the wonderful gifts that he calls us to.

After that assignment I went off to the seminary as our Vice Rector, and then I was Vocation Director. After that, I was Director of Clergy Personnel for the Diocese, and it was my bishop at the time who said that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops had an opening for the Director of Vocations and Priestly Formation at the time. As the Director of Clergy Personnel, I’m thinking he’s asking me who should we send. So I said okay, fine, and I started thinking up some names of some of our priests who I thought would be good. Then the bishop looked at me and said, “Ed, I’m wondering if you’d be interested in that position.” I said, “Really?” So it was an opportunity to engage with the USCCB, and they offered me the position, and that’s when it was a joy to come into contact with so many people like Cardinal Collins and a whole host of others in the work of the Diocese. Jo-Ann Bresowar said to me, “If you get a chance, mention the monstrance that all of you have here in your Eucharistic adoration.” That monstrance, while I was at the USCCB learning about all that’s happening in the Church and all that monster institute you have here, I learned one day that Saint Pope John Paul II blessed six monstrances for the six continents of the world during the year of the Eucharist for vocations. I said look at that, and it was at a Wednesday audience. He blessed all of these monstrances, and I sent a message to a contact I had over in the Vatican, Father Benicci. I said, “Father Benici. Ed Burns, here at the USCCB. I see that His Holiness had blessed these monstrances. We’d be interested in using the one that was blessed for North America etc.” He wrote back, “Good because I’d like you to have it,” and I said, “No, no. It’s not that we’re asking for it. We just want to use it.” He said, “We need somebody to help circulate it,” and that’s why it came into our possession. We’re grateful for Serra, which continues to advance this monstrance. That very monstrance that you have in your adoration chapel right now is a monstrance that went through so many different dioceses in Eucharistic processions. In fact, that is the very same monstrance that went through the Eucharistic procession through the streets of Manhattan. If you get a chance, google “God on the Streets,” and you’ll see a whole video by Grassroots films that shows that monstrance going through the streets of Manhattan. Some of the things that are important to know is, in keeping our God so close to who we are and our vocations; we bear much fruit.

When I was at the USCCB I came to the understanding of finding out how priests responded to events that just impacted the lives of so many people. It was twenty-some years ago that this one priest boarded American Airlines Flight 175 in Boston to fly to California, to be with his family. And this priest, it was a gift from his family. A first-class ticket to go visit his sister, and the priest was the Registrar of Stonehill College in that area. He is a priest of the Holy Cross Fathers. Well, as he’s boarding the flight, first class, he’s getting to a seat and there’s a young executive sitting behind him, who went to Stonehill College, and met his wife at Stonehill College. He’s on his cell phone talking to his wife, and he says, “Peg, you wouldn’t believe who just came on board. Father Grogan.” “Father Grogan. Oh, tell Father Grogan I said hi.” So Peg and Father Grogan exchanged pleasantries through the husband. The husband, pretty much, I’m sure, said, “Well honey, I’ll talk to you at the other end. God bless. Love you, bye-bye.” Well, Father Grogan and this gentleman; they were on American Airlines flight 175, which was the second airliner that flew into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. On that day, I was in Washington. On September 11, I’d begin to hear about stories of priests and what they did on that day. We heard about Father Mychal Judge, who was the chaplain for the New York City Fire Department. His death certificate of September 11 is 0001; he was the very first one. His helmet was presented to Saint John Paul II. What I learned, also, is that there was a priest at the Capitol, and he was scheduled to be the chaplain for the day, as the Congress has a chaplain for a day. So this priest from Chicago, who was a friend of the actual Chaplain of Congress, was going to give the prayer. There had already been the hits by the two planes in New York, and then also at the Pentagon, and so with that, everybody’s scrambling at the Capitol building. The Speaker Pro-Tem called Congress to session early and called the chaplain. The chaplain changed the prayer to reflect what was happening in New York and at the Pentagon, and the chaplain offered the prayer. The priest finished the prayer, and the Speaker Pro-Tem said, “In light of the events that are happening, Congress will recess until further notice,” and the gavel came down. What’s interesting is that, in the history of events of the U.S. government, the only act of Congress on September 11, 2001, is a prayer of a priest, and with it comes, I think, a real sense of the priest’s presence.

“In keeping our God so close to who we are and our vocations; we bear much fruit.”
It’s powerful to see how you are indeed His instruments in creating this vocation culture. It’s absolutely powerful to see how we can continue to watch God’s love just unfold because you’re going for a ride and you’re never, never quite sure.” With all of that, it’s amazing, the adventure; and I said that Father Hoffman placed before me the absolute adventure, mystery, and challenge.

I’m still living it, and I’m absolutely amazed, and I can even ask my brother priests here about their mystery and how it all unfolded. We never know the absolute beauty of who we’re going to encounter in our ministry, and these wonderful people change our lives. When we stand before people, and we preach, I have to say I cherish that, and I’m humbled by it; because I know there are times, so many times, I’m preaching to saints. When I look at the lives of the faithful, I’m touched by how committed and dedicated they are, especially after all the hellacious things that have occurred in our Church, and how we, as leaders, in the Church, are called to be strong, truthful, and to truly be the man we say we are; and in those moments continue to challenge people to see. Challenge people to see that the Church is the perfect manifestation of God’s presence. The Church is the perfect manifestation of Jesus Christ’s gift to us. The leaders of the Church and the people in the Church; not so perfect; and with that do we look at how Jesus established his Church, and the very mystery that exists there? Jesus at the Last Supper with the twelve gathered around him. My Heavens, the very mystery that exists there. One had betrayed him, one was about to deny him, another was probably doubting what he was saying and doing. Then in Luke’s gospel, a fight breaks out. There’s an argument at the Last Supper over who’s going to be the greatest in the Kingdom of God. That’s the first Eucharist, and you think about what the Church has gone through. I always say to people, “My friends, you never separate yourself from Jesus because of Judas.” You never separate yourself from Jesus because of Judas; because if you do, the evil one is laughing, and that’s exactly what the evil one has wanted through the terrible scandals within our Church. We always look at the Church as the perfect manifestation of Jesus Christ. In it, we then enter into the adventure, into the mystery of what God is calling us. So my friends, with all of that, I want to say, you, good Serrans, are a gift to us. You, good Serrans, are so committed and dedicated to building up a vocation culture within our Church. We cherish your work, we pray for your strength, and we pray that you grow and stay steadfast in all that you do; because we need you, and we need you to stay strong. For all of that, I ask God’s blessing upon you, and I also want to thank you so much for the good work you do and for the wonderful invitation to be with you this morning. My friends, thank you.

With that, I started learning that there was a priest on one of the planes, and he was in first class. In learning about that, I called the provincial of the Holy Cross Fathers. I said, “Can you tell me about Father Grogan?” and he said to me, “Ed, you want to read the letter from the widow of the man who sat right behind him?” I said, “Really?” he said, “Let me fax it to you,” and I was so grateful for that. He faxed this letter, and in this letter, the woman writes to the provincial about knowing Father Grogan. In it, she said, “My two young girls and myself are struggling in order to make some sense out of what happened, and why is it our beloved husband and father is dead.” She said to the provincial as she was speaking about her Agony through the whole situation, “But, there is one element of consolation that I have, and I hold on to, and that is that Father Grogan was present. I knew Father Grogan and my husband knew Father Grogan.” She’s writing this; it’s absolutely beautiful. She said, “And there is absolutely no doubt in my mind; that from where my husband sat and where Father Grogan sat, they watched the terrors of that day unfold before their eyes.” She said, “But knowing Father Grogan. There’s no doubt in my mind in those last dreadful moments that he exercised his Priestly Ministry.” When I read that, I was just absolutely touched; because with every priest, and every priest’s activity, and especially when celebrating the sacraments he serves In personae Christi, Jesus Christ is present. Even in those very dark moments of our world and our lives, when a priest comes, there is that sense our Lord, Jesus Christ, is present.

When learning about the presence of a priest, I’m struck by how it is the mystery of God’s love that continues to unfold for us. When listening to the stories about various priests then, I can tell you; we could go through this room, and many of you can speak about how a priest has touched your life or has touched members of your family’s lives in such a powerful way. These moments are specific; they are beautiful; they are necessary. With Serra, I want to say that the work that you do in building up the vocation culture and the work that you do in encouraging vocations within the Church, you are actively participating in the wonderful mysteries of God’s love. His divine plan for each of us; it’s powerful to see how you are indeed His instruments in creating this vocation culture. It’s absolutely powerful to see how we can continue to watch God’s love unfold. So I have to say, back to my life, which as much as I, just this young guy from Western Pennsylvania, being a solid Steelers fan, and being Called; it really amazed me. So, I will tell you that when I received the call that Pope Benedict XVI had named me a bishop, well, that was a jaw-dropper. Then the second jaw drop was Juneau, Alaska, it was foreign. People were asking me, in Alaska, they said, “So Bishop, what were you doing before you were the Bishop of Juneau, Alaska?” I said, “What was I doing? I was in Pittsburgh minding my own business, that is what I was doing.” But with it, you never know where the Lord’s going to call you. I always said to men whenever I was a vocation director, “Hold on to your seat
[Continued from page 9] passion, do something! You don't want to be saying, "Oh, I love you Jesus, oh," Don't just stand there, do something. The head, heart, and the hands all together are necessary, and they must be coordinated all together. All head, and we're just flipping over the place; all hearts and we're bumping into trees and we're crying; all action and we're just spinning wheels. He said that a good Serran must be someone who has a deep holiness of life: the heart, not in a superficial sense, but the heart of Christ; and a good Serran must know their faith: the head, in the non-abstract sense just know the faith; and then the good Serran must do something, and that's the activity that flows from it. Unless we have the head and the heart, what the hands are going to do is going to be fruitless. That's what Bishop Gino used to say, he encouraged priests to spend an hour every day in adoration before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and one priest said, "I'm too busy to do that," and he said, "Well, spend two," so there we are.

First of all, a good Serran he says is called not just to be, he didn't say a couch potato Catholic, but you know what I mean, just a mediocre, "We'll get through the day, we'll be sort of Catholic and that's it." No, we don't dip our toe in the pool of life, we dive in. There's a wonderful photograph, it's a shot along the edge of a pool during a swimming race and all the swimmers are just caught in a moment in the air and you know that in half a second they're going to hit the water. It's called commitment. The Lord doesn't ask us to dip a toe, he says, "Give the whole thing." Now this is a thing that I've thought of, and I remember speaking of this once at a vocation conference; it's something that's touched my heart a lot. There's a story from the Egyptian desert. Those those cranky old desert fathers and mothers were really pretty astute and one young lad comes up to his spiritual father and says, "I do all I need to do. I follow all the rules and still, nothing seems to be happening. What am I to do?" So the old monk just stretches out his hands like this and flames shoot out of his fingers, and he says, "You must become fire." Now that is it, that's what is needed. Our faith is not something we do, it's what we become. We must become fire, be on fire with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It's not enough just to have faith as a subdivision of where we are, we must be immersed. We must become fire, not just this or that or whatever. This is holiness, there is no universal call to mediocrity. The second Vatican Council speaks of the universal call to holiness, and that doesn't mean that just a few people are canonized; that doesn't mean that any of us are perfect. That's why the lord gave us a confession, we need it. It's very significant that at the ordination of a priest, bishop, or deacon, that before they are ordained, they're flat on the floor and we ask God to have mercy on them. We ask all the saints to pray for them because it's highly possible that they will not be faithful, and so we need to pray to the Lord because the first target of Satan is a priest or a sister or anyone who's trying to be a faithful Catholic. It's no surprise; it's a tribute to the Catholic Church from the demonic forces. A priest is horizontal in Church on two occasions: face down in his ordination, and face up at his funeral. We hope between the one and the other he knows what he's doing. In the seminary where I lived and taught for many years and was a spiritual director, we used to have a little prayer for priests taken from the prayer of the ordination. "May the priests be found faithful in fulfilling the office committed to them." So that is true, that's it, it is a life of holiness.

We're all called to holiness, the universal call. That's why one of the great books that he refers to is Saint Francis de Sales, the great Bishop of Geneva who was a courageous preacher of the faith in a time of great difficulty. In his book Introduction to The Devout Life, which says that lay people of the Church are called to holiness, it's not something for priests or sisters or something only, it's all of us. Devout means not exactly pious, it means focused, laser-like.
They should publish a new edition of Saint Francis de Sales classic on spirituality the “Introduction to the Laser-Like Life.” Devoted means dedicated, focused on the service of the Lord.

That’s what we’re called to do, and he refers to, and I think this is very appropriate, but maybe just because it was the month of June, the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a great sign of the universal call to holiness. I have recently spent a lot of time meditating and reflecting on the Sacred Heart of Jesus; I must say it was stimulated to some degree by the fact that the month of June has been hijacked. Hijacked certainly in Ontario by forces which are inimical to the Christian faith although they seem to be brightly colored and cheery, but they are not. They’re raising banners that are not of Christ our Lord and dedicating the month of June to a vision of the human person which is not help to people who are struggling with different things they think they’re helping. It is, in fact, disastrous; they’ve hijacked June, the month of the Sacred Heart. That is love for people facing all kinds of struggles and no struggles at all. This is the Sacred Heart. I recently wrote last year a rather lengthy pastoral letter. I don’t write many pastoral letters, like short ones you can read in Church; usually mine are about ten pages long and, I want them to be chewed over. I put a lot into it; you may want to look on the Archdiocese of Toronto website, I think it’s called Heart Speaks to Heart or something like that. It’s very important, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, June is the month of Sacred Heart, and see Margaret Mary is very much part of that and also devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. That heart speaks to heart, I look at Jesus, and Jesus looks at me, and we’re happy.

There’s a great writer Dietrich Von Hildebrand who’s written things on the heart very deep, and we have the great letter of the great Pope Pius XI, Haereticus Aqua, based upon the prophet Isaiah. With joy, you shall draw water from the wells of salvation. It’s a beautiful encyclical letter on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so I recommend, just read it, it’s wonderful. The whole thing is that the heart is not just a symbol, a superficial valentiney type heart, which is an emotion that comes and goes, but rather it is that steadiness of love. Love is steady, love is hidden, love is faithful.

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and there’s all kinds of other biblical foundations for devotion to the Sacred Heart) it comes from more than the visions of Saint Margaret Mary, important though they were. The heart is a sign of love: faithful love, steady love, deep love. It’s not just emotion, it’s the steadiness that matters, it’s the faithfulness. It’s not going back and forth like the clouds in the sky, it’s deep and abiding. It is a love that is not disconnected from reason. Head, heart, and hands all must go together. There is a toxic substitute for compassion, sometimes called mercy, sometimes called love, sometimes it’s called equality. This kind of emotional, “Gosh, let’s go out!” can be actually fatal to people; it’s like feeding candy to a child forever, “Oh I love you, here, take some more candy!” This is not a helping. The heart must be connected to the head and reason and love, and that’s what the truth of the Sacred Heart of Jesus calls us to. A heart of love which is reasoned, it’s not just emotional. Then we have compassion, which really is fruitful forever because it’s based upon the love of Christ. Then you see the heart, there’s a spear hole, a wound in it. After all that’s what happens when one loves. We think of great and faithful saints and people who’ve suffered a lot for being faithful in this world. Well even Jesus himself who received the wound in His side, He came to His own and His own did not receive Him. You have the crown of thorns around the top of it, indeed part of the life of love in this world until finally we see the Lord face to face. Then there’s the cross on top surmounting the Sacred Heart, and the flames of fire, the fire of the burning bush that is bright and does not go out. It’s not the flicker and flame of a temporary infatuation, we’re not based on an infatuation in anything in this world. That level, that life lived in the spirit of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is what is called for all of us. That is the level of Holiness which Cardinal Stritch I think was referring to, the first point of foundation of our life as Christians, serving the foundation of a life of Serrans.

Holiness is always the start for everything we do in this world, and there are different ways we give our lives to the Lord. We get the confession regularly because we’re not naturally that way, we’ve got defective steering, we keep going in the ditch, so let’s be realistic. Praying in front of the Holy Eucharist, time in adoration, and confession. They always say that if you’re going to leave your umbrella behind, don’t do it in a Catholic Church because it’s likely to be stolen. You think of the good image of the Catholic Church, we’re not a tight little sect of the saved. We have the arms of Saint Peter’s reaching out, the great piazza there with the Pope blessing the crowds, the pickpockets working the crowd; it’s so Catholic. If you seek a perfect church, when you find it, join it. On that day it will
We have to know our faith and know it well.

Catholics say they have all the answers.” Actually, we do, it is Jesus Christ. We need to know our faith and not just simply have a vague emotional reaction. This is what the great Pope Benedict said to seminarians always, “Pray hard and study hard.” We need to have a pilot that knows how to fly the plane, you want to know that he doesn’t just want to have a nice emotional relationship with the airplane, you got to know what you’re doing. I’m very confident when I have a feeling the guy actually knows how to do it. That’s important, competence is a grace; let’s know our faith. Bishop Gino says, “Don’t simply say do good things, get something specific.” He says an hour of adoration before the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament; I would say read one chapter of the Gospel every day until you die, at which point it will not be needed. One chapter, it takes one minute, two minutes maybe, and it’s something particular to do.

I really thought about that because there were these Catholic organizations and councils and things in my own area where a parent was troubled about toxic signage that was being proposed for the schools, replacing the cross of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. He said to the people making this decision, It is terrible to cause a child to stumble and go astray, better that you should have a millstone but around your neck and thrown into the sea.” They didn’t know what he was talking about, they thought they thought he was telling about killing people, well he was quoting Jesus our Lord. It was Gospel: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I would suggest also the Catechism of the Catholic Church. I’d recommend from Vatican II read Lumen Gentium, the document on the church, and Dei Verbum, on scripture. Read the word of God, pray the word of God; lecture divina and things like that. Read the lives of the saints; know the faith. Often God teaches us through the saints. It’s like Pope Benedict who said once that it’s like in a church where we have stained glass windows. The stained glass windows of the saints are the people that the light shines through, and it helps us see. Read the lives of the saints about married couples, single people, and also if you wish, about priests. The Fathers of the Church, I mentioned the desert fathers of all these little things.

There was this man called John Cassian who wrote of all this great wisdom from the early days. And Catholic literature, there’s a lot of good stuff. The Lord of the Rings, a very profound Catholic book. Dante’s The Divine Comedy, it’s wonderful. The greatest poem based upon the greatest theologian; Dante based upon Thomas Aquinas, you can’t have anything better than that. I think it was C.S. Lewis that said, “Dante and Shakespeare divide the world between them, there is no third.” If you want to think about the priesthood, I found the three things that speak to me, since I was a kid, about the priesthood are: Death Comes to the Archbishop by Willa Cather, although I don’t like that idea so much these days. It’s southern, I think in New Mexico, and it’s wonderful. Willa Cather has great book on the priesthood about the founder of the church in Southwest United States. Also, the Father Brown stories by G.K. Chesterton; they’re great, especially the early ones, the later ones he was turning them out to keep the cash flowing and food on the table; but they’re great and they’re wonderful, profound. Another book, this by Taylor Caldwell called Grandmother and the Priests, which is good little stories about the priesthood. None of these people, by the way, were Catholic when they wrote those stories, but they nailed it, they know what they’re doing. That helps us to know our faith.

Cardinal Stritch says after we have grown in our knowledge and love for the Lord, holiness, and repentant holiness, (we’re all stumbling along) and knowledge of the faith in different ways; then help the bishop. Do whatever you can there, use your creativity in the local situation which differs in every place. You have to just read the local situation to see what’s needed, and that’s the thing I encourage people to do.

I’ll end with a poem by a person who, unlike the others I mentioned, actually was a Catholic. This is, for me, one of the best descriptions of the priesthood. It’s also it’s in the breviary, they put in the back so priests can read it actually. I studied Old English and Middle English literature; that’s my passion on the side. The poem is by Chaucer. It’s a description of the Parson in the Canterbury Tales, and, although friars like St. Junipero Serra don’t turn out too well in the Canterbury Tales, the Parson I’m sure was much like Father Serra; he’s a parish priest. He’s on this pilgrimage, Chaucer describes the pilgrims on their way to Canterbury.

"A good man was there of religion, He was a poor Country Parson, But rich he was in holy thought and work. He was also a learned man, a clerk, Who Christ’s own gospel truly would preach; Devoutly his parishioners would he teach. Benign he was and wonderfully diligent, And in adversity, very patient, And as such he was proven, many times. Full hesitant was he to curse for his tics. But rather, would he give out of doubt Unto his poor parishioners about, Of his own offering and even of his own substance. He could, in little things, have enough. Why was this Parish in houses, far asunder;
but he neglected not for rain or thunder,
in sickness or mischief to visit the furthest in his Parish.
Great and little upon his feet, and in his hand, a stave.
This noble example to his sheep he gave,
The first he wrought, and afterward he taught;
Out of the gospel he these words caught;
And this figure, he added also thereunto.-
That, if gold would rust, what shall iron do?
For if a priest be foul, in whom we trust,
No wonder is another man to rust?
And shame it is, if a priest take keep,
A dirty shepherd, then a cleaner sheep.
He did not set his benefice to hire,
Or leave his sheep encumbered in the mire,
And ran to London, to old Saint Paul’s.
And seeking himself a chantry to make money for souls,
Nor with brotherhood to be enrolled;
So that the wolf might not make it miscarry;
He was a shepherd, not a mercenary.
But if any person proved obstinate,
Whatsoever he were, of high or low estate,
Him he would snybben sharply for the nonys.
But dwelt at home and kept so well his fold.
So that the wolf might not make it miscarry;
He was a shepherd, not a mercenary.
And holy though he was, and virtuous,
He was not haughty towards sinful people.
Nor haughty his speech of hoity-toity and pompous,
But in his teaching discreet and benign.
To draw his fold to Heaven by kindness, fairness.
By good example, that was his business.
But if any person proved obstinate,
Whatsoever he were, of high or low estate,
Him he would snybben sharply for the nonys.
Him a better priest I believe they’re nowhere none is.
He waited after no pomp and reverence,
Nor made of himself a spiced conscience,
But Christ’s own law, and His apostles’ twelve
He taught, but first he followed it himself.”

Amen.

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**Club Anniversaries 2023**

**75**
- Reno, NV, USA — February 12, 1948
- Wichita, KS, USA — March 5, 1948
- Grand Rapids, MI, USA — April 12, 1948
- Dallas, TX, USA — April 22, 1948
- South Bend, IN, USA — April 23, 1948
- Memphis, TN, USA — June 1, 1948
- St. Clair County, IL, USA — July 3, 1948
- Green Bay, WI, USA — October 1, 1948

**70**
- Clarksburg, WV, USA — February 21, 1953
- Amarillo, TX, USA — April 29, 1953
- Baton Rouge, LA, USA — July 29, 1953
- Corpus Christi, TX, USA — September 17, 1953
- Evansville, IN, USA — November 19, 1953

**60**
- Lexington, KY, USA — February 23, 1963
- Hong Kong, Hong Kong — February 25, 1963
- Alexandria, LA, USA — March 7, 1963
- Baltimore, MA, USA — May 22, 1963
- Dubuque, IA, USA — June 3, 1963
- North Cheshire, England — November 6, 1963

**50**
- Taubate, Brazil — April 1, 1973
- Lages, Brazil — April 25, 1973
- The Bronx and Westchester, NY, USA — May 20, 1973
- Curitiba, Brazil — July 19, 1973
- Ozamis, Philippines — October 18, 1973
- Champaign-Urbana, IL, USA — December 3, 1973
- Santo Antonio da Platina, Brazil — December 13, 1973

**40**
- Diamantina, Brazil — February 12, 1983
- Cascina, Italy — February 12, 1983
- Bage, Brazil — May 6, 1983
- Para de Minas, Brazil — May 13, 1983
- Ouro Preto, Brazil — July 3, 1983
- Venezia, Italy — July 31, 1983
- Campinas, Brazil — September 16, 1983
- Julio de Castilhos, Brazil — October 7, 1983

**30**
- The Cathedral of Immaculate Conception, Thailand — June 30, 1993
- Tuxtla Gutierrez, Mexico — August 15, 1993
- Sioux Falls, SD, USA — September 21, 1993
- Planalto, Brazil — November 6, 1993
- Sagrados Coracoes, Brazil — November 6, 1993
- Sao Mateus Perpetuo Socorro, Brazil — November 6, 1993

**25**
- Candido de Abreu, Brazil — February 1, 1998
- Carambei, Brazil — February 1, 1998
- Içara, Brazil — February 1, 1998
- Ilheus, Brazil — February 1, 1998
- Juranda, Brazil — February 1, 1998
- Peabiru, Brazil — February 1, 1998
- Portelândia, Brazil — February 1, 1998
- Raiz da Serra, Brazil — February 1, 1998
- Salvador-Cristo Operario, Brazil — February 1, 1998
- Santo Amaro da Purificacao, Brazil — February 1, 1998
- Tabapua, Brazil — February 1, 1998
- Tanabi, Brazil — February 1, 1998
- Tocantinopolis, Brazil — February 1, 1998
- Arezzo, Italy — February 1, 1998
- Chihuahua, Mexico — May 6, 1998
- Ibadan, Nigeria — May 15, 1998
- Nakhonratchasima, Thailand — May 30, 1998
- Valle Scrivia/Oltrepo, Italy — June 6, 1998
- Oakleigh Deenery, Australia — June 24, 1998
- Eunapolis, Brazil — June 24, 1998
- Green Bay West, WI, USA — July 8, 1998

**20**
- Hemet Valley, CA, USA — February 6, 2003
- Bangalore, India — February 25, 2003
- Fraser Valley West, Canada — March 29, 2003
- Reggio Calabria, Italy — July 1, 2003
- Ponsung, Thailand — August 15, 2003

**10**
- Salem, Tamil Nadu, India — April 28, 2013

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