

Vol. 63 No. 3 | April 2017

# the Serran



## The Serra Big Idea Issue

Take your vocations work to the next level!  
Fresh ideas for club programming, membership and more inside.

**PLUS: Rome Convention Details**

“How many young people, boys and girls, today hear in their heart that ‘Arise’, and how many – priests, consecrated men and women – close the door? And they wind up frustrated. The doors are opened through prayer, through good will, through risk. Jesus told us that the first way to have vocations is prayer, but not all are convinced of this. Pray with the heart, with your life, with everything.”

—His Holiness Pope Francis, January 2017

## The Serran Calendar

**April 29, 2017**

International Rosary for Vocations  
Conference Call  
Call in details: <http://bit.ly/2mwoTaH>

**May 7, 2017**

World Day of Prayer for Vocations

**May 27, 2017**

International Rosary for Vocations  
Conference Call

**June 22 - June 25, 2017**

2017 Serra International Convention,  
Rome, Italy

**June 24, 2017**

International Rosary for Vocations  
Conference Call

**Oct. 29, 2017**

Priesthood Sunday  
[www.priestsunday.org](http://www.priestsunday.org)

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### ON OUR COVER:

Can you resist the allure  
of Roma, la città eterna?

Register for Serra International’s 75th  
Convention in Rome by May 15 and save  
\$100 off the regular registration fee!  
<http://bit.ly/2mUxjns>

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# The Courage of Vocation in the Eternal City

Serra International convention includes private audience with Pope Francis

**If you have been waiting for an extra-special convention to attend, this is the one.** Serra's 75th international convention in Rome this June 22-25, 2017, brings you all the excellent speakers and presentations you expect, but for the first time, we are honored to bring you the opportunity of a lifetime: **a private audience with His Holiness Pope Francis.**

## **Ergife Palace Hotel**

Our venue in Rome is the Ergife (Ehr-GEE-feh) Palace Hotel. This four-star hotel is in a quiet neighborhood about 15 minutes by car to downtown Rome and about 10 minutes west of the Vatican.

Ergife Palace offers a light-filled, modern design and Olympic-size swimming pool, Wi-Fi and

broadband Internet in the guest rooms. Our convention hotel rate is €110.00 per night for a single occupancy room and €130 per night for a double occupancy room. This rate applies even if you stay beyond the convention, and includes a daily breakfast buffet.

Make your own room reservations by emailing the hotel at [ergife.booking@ergife.com](mailto:ergife.booking@ergife.com) with "Serra International Congress" in the subject line of the email. In the email itself, provide the names of those who will be staying at the hotel, their arrival and departure dates, and any special requests for your hotel room. The hotel will contact you to confirm your reservation. For more information about Ergife Palace, visit [www.ergifepalacehotel.com](http://www.ergifepalacehotel.com).

*Continued on next page*



Photo by Jeffrey Bruno, CC-BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons

## Audience with the Holy Father

As a testament to the outstanding work of our Italian Serrans as well as a sign that Serra International is ever more recognized for its essential vocations apostolate, all convention attendees are invited to be present for a private audience with the Holy Father after the convention's Opening Mass at Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City on Friday morning, June 23. Convention registrants will be transported to the basilica by bus. The Vatican Swiss Guards will allow us to skip the line and enter through a special door.

## Convention Speakers

**Serra International Past President Chainarong Monthienvichienchai** will speak on the theme of the convention: "*Siempre Adelante*: The Courage of Vocation."

**The Most Reverend Jorge Carlos Patrón Wong**, Secretary of the Congregation for the Clergy, will deliver a presentation entitled, "Always Ahead, the Thrust of Vocations."

**Italian journalist and Vatican insider Andrea Tornielli** will speak on: "Proximity and Dialogue: Pope Francis as Seen through His Travels"

More speakers and topics will be announced soon. All convention presentations will be instantly translated into the four official languages of Serra: English, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese.

## Eucharistic Adoration

The opportunity to pray before the Blessed Sacrament will be present throughout the convention.

## Travel Opportunities

We are pleased to alert you to travel options to explore Rome and the surrounding area both before and after the convention. Download the following tour itineraries and costs from [www.serrainternational.org](http://www.serrainternational.org).

•**Pre-Convention Tours:** Experience a guided tour of the Vatican Museum and Sistine Chapel, a walking tour through Rome's city center, or a double-decker bus sight-seeing tour. Tour coordinated by Alfa FCM.

•**Post-Convention Tours:** Spend three days touring Tuscany and Umbria, taking in the sights of Pisa, Florence and Assisi. Tour coordinated by La Capinera Viaggi.

•**Catholic Pilgrimage (Pre- and Post-Convention Package):** This pilgrimage coordinated by Lion and the Lamb Journeys in Lafayette, Indiana, USA, brings you early to Rome to experience its holy sites, then whisks you away after the convention on prayerful journeys to Assisi, Florence, Padua and Venice. Free time to explore included.

## Convention Delegates

Delegates to the convention must submit their credentials to the Serra International office in Chicago by no later than May 30, 2017. Download the credential form from the convention page at [www.serrainternational.org](http://www.serrainternational.org).

**Plan to join us in Rome for the making of Serra history!** 🛎



Colosseum



St. Peter's Basilica



Trevi Fountain

# Try a Vocations “Rehearsal Dinner” in your club

## Relaxed event honors deacons-, priests-to-be and their families

by **Col. (Ret.) Jim Halloran, Jr.**  
USA Council Vocations Vice President  
Serra Club of Lake Charles, LA, USA

If you have ever participated in a wedding, you know that there is a rehearsal for it prior to the actual event. The evening of the rehearsal, a dinner is usually given so all in the wedding party can unwind and get to know each other. The Serra Club of Lake Charles, Louisiana, USA, has taken that concept and tailored it to fit equally momentous celebrations involving the taking of vows: the club hosts rehearsal dinners for deacons- and priests-to-be and their families. The objective of this program is to be a fun, visible way Serrans can celebrate seminarians and deacons, show gratitude for the families who raised them, and to show support not only for men who have answered the call, but also for those considering a vocation.

Usually, these are separate events, but occasionally they are combined. The club picks the venue and the meal, which is catered. The club’s main hands-on work is decorating the venue. Club members are encouraged to attend and to bring their spouse and/or guest(s). Each Serran and their guests, if any, are charged a set fee. The differences and the similarities of each dinner are explained below.

The Diaconate Rehearsal Dinner is a simple affair. The deacon(s)-to-be (transitional and/or permanent) get a letter explaining how many guests they can invite that the club will pay for (the Serra Club of Lake Charles covers up to 10). Also invited and paid for by the club are the bishop, bishop’s escort/driver, diocesan vocations team, diocesan seminarians (not applicable with permanent deacons), clergy representative from the seminary (not applicable with permanent deacons), their home church pastor, and past club chaplains. Of course,

the deacon(s)-to-be can invite as many guests as they wish, but they are responsible for covering the cost of those above the number allotted and stated guests listed above. The deacon(s)-to-be has to let the club know whom he wishes to attend six weeks in advance so that the club can send out the official rehearsal invitations and allow ample time to receive and process RSVPs.

The deacon-to-be rehearsal dinner program starts with the club president or master of ceremonies giving a welcome, followed by invocation and blessing of the meal by the club chaplain. After dinner, the club

president delivers a few comments, followed by remarks and benediction from the bishop. All that is left for club members to do at

**Modeled after a wedding rehearsal dinner, this Serran-coordinated event is held the night before ordination when priests’/deacons’ family and friends are already in town.**

the end is gather up the decorations.

The Ordination Rehearsal Dinner is more complex. The priest(s)-to-be get a letter explaining how many guests they can invite (20 guests each; the ordinand must pay for guests beyond this). The club covers the same individuals as mentioned in the above Diaconate Rehearsal Dinner. The same timelines for reply from the priests apply here.

The program is identical to the Diaconate Rehearsal Dinner, but after the meal the club vocations vice-president talks about the programs the club does to support seminarians. Then, a special Serra stole is presented to the priest(s)-to-be, and roses are given to each priest’s mother. This is followed by remarks by the priest(s)-to-be and comments by the Serra club president. To wrap up the evening, the bishop presents a diocesan or bishop’s medal to each parent of the priest-to-be, followed by his remarks and benediction. Recovering the decorations and going home is all that is left.

These events have averaged about 100-125 attendees per dinner. This has been a successful program for the club and is enjoyed by all who attend. ☺

# Let's Expand Serra with the "Family First" Membership Drive!

by Nancy E. Gibson  
USA Council Membership Vice President

**N**ew members are vital to a club's health and longevity, and to the future of Serra's vocations apostolate in general. Yet, finding new members can be a daunting prospect for some clubs. Not to worry! Backed by research, the USA Council Membership Committee has developed a new approach that takes the guesswork out of organizing your club's recruitment efforts: A **"Family First" Fall or Spring Membership Drive**.

## Membership Drives Don't Have to Be Scary

Our committee has found that formalized and goal-directed recruitment club membership drives are very successful. Therefore, this practice involves the entire club in a formalized recruitment drive with specific goals for percentage increase in membership. Target dates are established and periodic reports help your club measure its progress. Spring and Fall are optimum times to conduct a drive because you don't have to compete with winter holiday obligations or summer vacations.

## Whose "Family First"?

This particular drive does not target your own family members (though you should always promote membership in Serra to them, too!). What is unique and brilliant about the "Family First" approach is that it targets the siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews of priests and religious sisters and brothers. Think about it: these are ideal prospects for Serra!

Every Serran has several priests whom they hold near and dear. These are the priests who married you and your spouse, baptized your children, or were sources of strength when you lost a family member. Likewise, every Serran has several nuns who have earned a place of respect and affection in their heart. These sisters may have taught your children, ran a Catholic hospital, or delivered valuable parish ministry.

These are the people we hold in our minds and whom we ultimately honor when we contact their family members about potential membership in Serra. The message carried forward with this particular membership drive is: "We love our Church, we support your (brother/sister/cousin etc.) in (his/her) call to religious life, and we hope that others will hear that call and follow in your relative's footsteps. Won't you join us?" It is a powerful way to ask these people, already familiar with religious life through their relatives, to bear witness to their faith, perhaps in a way they had never considered before.

## Here's How It Works:


Each Serran in your club submits to the club Membership Team the names of four priests or sisters whom they would be willing to call to ask for the names of four local family members whom they think could be good Serrans. The Membership Team collates the names submitted from all members, removes duplicates, and returns the list of priests and sisters for each Serran to contact. From there, you go on with your usual introduction/orientation events. It's that simple!

Handy forms for collecting names, a suggested script for phone calls, and a recruitment drive timeline are provided free for download at <https://serraus.org/membership/>. Scroll down to "Membership Materials."

## Proven Success

Serra clubs in the Rio Grande, Texas, USA area used this recruitment drive method to increase membership last year. All five clubs in that district increased their membership by 15% or more!

## Questions?

We on the USA Council Membership Committee are happy to field and questions you may have. We also want to hear about your results with this method. Please contact the author at [ngibson1219@gmail.com](mailto:ngibson1219@gmail.com). 

# Want a Vocations Committee in Your Parish? Get results with Serra's 5-Star Program

by Bob Barrett  
District 15 Governor

**T**he need for a Vocation Committee in a parish has never been stronger than it is today.

It's our job as Christians to promote people of all ages toward the priesthood and religious life. Many parishes want a Vocation Committee, but many aren't quite sure how to start one. Serrans have been in the vocations "business" for 80 years, and we have a program in place that can solve this problem.

Created by the United States Council Vocations Committee, the "5-Star Program" is a one-year plan for parish Vocation Committee formation that is based on five tested vocations activities:

- **Traveling Chalice (or Crucifix)**
- **31 Club**
- **Priesthood Sunday**
- **Holy Hour for Vocations**
- **Parish Bulletin Articles**

**The Traveling Chalice** is our keystone activity program, and it is one that directly involves parishioners. In a nutshell, at the end of a Sunday Mass, before the congregation, a family, couple, or individual receives a special chalice from the celebrant, who may then comment briefly about vocations and offer a prayer. The recipients take the chalice home and place it in a prominent location where they will pray daily for or discuss vocations. This may be the only opportunity presented for this topic to be explored in depth for most parishioners, which is why it is so critical. It may prove to be a very important week in the life of the family or individual on several levels. When the week ends, the chalice is returned and the process repeats.

It's important to note that along with the chalice goes a memory book, in which recipients are encouraged to comment upon their experiences, thoughts and ideas that occur that week. Some of these comments are very thought-provoking, and provide a thread of conti-

nunity and solidarity for future recipients. The week could even result in a vocation, or in an enthusiastic candidate for the Parish Vocations Committee! (For details on how to run the same program as a Traveling Crucifix program in schools, see page 19.)

**In the 31 Club program**, a parishioner chooses one day per month (the same day, i.e., always the 12th, or the 22nd, etc.) to go to Mass and pray specifically for religious vocations. This is recorded via a large calendar posted in the church vestibule made up of large blank numbered squares for each day of a generic month, in which parishioners print their names as a sign of commitment to pray for vocations at Mass that day, every month. Again, these interested parishioners may turn out to be perfect candidates for the parish Vocations Committee.

Another way of developing vocations awareness in a parish is via **Priesthood Sunday, which takes place on the last Sunday in October**. Acknowledging the pastor and priests in the parish in a special service or social activity involving the whole parish and school, if there is one, is an extremely effective way not only to make them feel appreciated, but also to introduce the idea of religious vocation as an occupation and lifestyle choice to all in the community.

The fourth activity is to plan a **Holy Hour for vocations**, supported by the pastor of course. Those who attend would be natural prospects for the committee.

The fifth activity is **publicity** devoted to the programs above using the humble yet powerful **church bulletin**. Coverage of the four activities outlined above provides a continual stream of information to the congregation that says: "Religious vocations are a top priority in this parish" and thus, creates a culture of vocations over time. Serra International offers wonderful concise vocations-related articles ready to be inserted into your parish bulletin. It's a wise idea to have your bulletin editor armed with a stash of these at all times.

The 5-Star Program will absolutely work to create a culture of vocations in your parish. For details, visit <https://serraus.org/programs/five-star/>. You can do this! 🙏

# Featured Club Program: Easter Time

**A**fter the prayer, fasting and almsgiving of Lent we revel in the joy of the Easter Season. We are indeed an “Easter People.” A good way to orient our minds and hearts to this season of the Church year is to pray and discuss the adult faith formation program in the USA Council *Program Manual—Part II*, “Easter Time,” pages 31-32, at a club meeting.

A club can ask a guest speaker to use it as a framework for a presentation or a Serran can facilitate the reading of the material and the discussion. You may want to add to the references or change the discussion questions to take the program in a different direction. For example, here are some alternate discussion questions:

1. What do the 50 days of Easter Season celebrate?
2. What do we have in common with the apostles and the Church in the first century?
3. Why are other Serra members important in my journey of faith?

Easter to Pentecost is an important time when we strive to live a truly Christian life in the presence of the risen Lord Jesus.

—Aileen G. Fields, USA Council Program Chair

## Wondering what to do at your next Serra club meeting?

Improve your club programming INSTANTLY with the *Programs Manual—Part III*! Great club programs are FREE at your fingertips. Download the *Programs Manual—Part II* at <https://serraus.org/club-meetings-programs/> for year-round faith formation ideas. Use it to create instant club programs led by a Serran facilitator, chaplain, or to enrich the formal presentation of a guest speaker.

*Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.*

### Opening Prayer

Jesus, you give your Church constant growth by calling new members to your family. Continue to call us to conversion and help us to live out with faith the baptismal promises we received. Amen.

### Scripture

“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we preach), for, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. For the scripture says, No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”(Romans 10:8-13).

*Take time for silent reflection, and then read the Introduction out loud.*

### Introduction

Easter time is the time when the unfolding mystery of God and the Church take place. This program emphasizes that through Jesus’ resurrection we begin to fully enter the paschal mystery and integrate it into our every day lives.

*Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.*

### Documentary Tradition

“On the day of Pentecost when the seven weeks of Easter had come to an end, Christ’s Passover is fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, manifested, given, and communicated as divine person: of his fullness, Christ, the Lord, pours out the Spirit in abundance. On that day, the Holy Trinity is fully revealed. Since that



day, the kingdom announced by Christ has been open to those who believe in him: in the humanity of the flesh and in faith, they already share in the communion of the Holy Trinity. By his coming, which never ceases, the Holy Spirit causes the world to enter into the “last days” the time of the Church, the Kingdom already inherited though not yet consummated” (Catechism of the Catholic Church #731-32). Easter is the season of Alleluia; a hopeful sign of the time when all we will do is rejoice in God and be fully in His presence. This oldest seasonal practice of the Church draws heavily on the Gospel of John, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelation for its scriptural readings during the great 50 days. The readings focus on the followers of Christ as they celebrate in the gift of the spirit, spread the good news of salvation, and work toward the life of heaven on earth. Throughout the season of Easter, the scripture readings are of parallel and progressive selections. Material is presented on the life of the primitive Church, its witness and growth, its spirit of joyous faith, and its encounter with the risen Christ.

The scriptural message states that it is not a celebration of one man’s victory but a universal triumph of that One Man on behalf of all of us. Easter is the heart of our Christian faith. We are all born anew in Jesus’ death and healed by his suffering. Without a strong, unswerving belief in the resurrection of Christ, we could not be a people of the resurrection and bring the Good News of Easter to others. We share the great joy that accompanies the promised gift of everlasting life. Like the disciples, we don’t do this alone. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide our lives and our Church. During Easter, we struggle with the huge mystery of the resurrection and the urgent necessity of carrying on Jesus’ work of peace and healing, forgiveness and nurturance.

Jesus’ glorification in the Christian assembly is the central theme of the Easter season. It celebrates a resurrection faith that delivers us from the slavery of time, sin, death, and loss, which serves as an instance of courageous witness. Those who have been baptized, anointed, and admitted to the table at Easter are led more deeply into the very mysteries that they have now celebrated. The 50 days taken as a unit celebrates God’s gathering of a

scattered people to Himself by joining them to Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Easter Time is not just a remembrance, but is also recognition of the actual person of Jesus Christ in our midst, when we are gathered together in him whose very person is itself the feast.

*The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How do you know that you have faith?
2. Why is Easter a faith experience?
3. How important are other Serra members in my journey of faith?

*If time permits invite the small groups to share with the large group any insights that they gain from the group discussion, then read the Closing Reflection.*

### **Closing Reflection**

These 50 days can only begin to unfold their mystery and meaning when we accept the new life brought to us by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Its joy is ours now, if we take the time to embrace our new life, and celebrate it to the fullest as we reflect on it daily. The result is an incredible realization that we can alter this world’s illusion of perfection and help shed the light of Christ on our world, by being that light, to our highest ability at the moment.

### **Bibliography**

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# USA Serra Club Treasurers: Is all this talk of 990s making you nuts?

If so, this article is for you.

## What is a 990?

Form 990 is the annual information form that most non-profits are required to file with the IRS. It is an information return only and imposes no tax. The completed Form 990 is a public document that the IRS publishes on the website GuideStar ([www.guidestar.com](http://www.guidestar.com)). Clubs must also make the form available upon request.

## What does that have to do with me, the club treasurer?

As of Dec. 31, 2015, USA Serra clubs are required to prepare and file annual Form 990 with the IRS. This service was previously performed by Serra's USA Council. Usually, the club treasurer is the club leader in the best position to complete this form.

## Where do I find the Form 990?

The form and instructions can be found by searching "Form 990" online.

**Note:** Actually, there are three different versions of Form 990 which vary in the amount of information required and complexity to prepare. Which form is required depends on the amount of revenue typically received in a year.

• **Form 990** is required for organizations whose gross receipts are greater than or equal to \$200,000. Form 990 will not be discussed here since almost no USA club has gross receipts of more than \$200,000.

• **Form 990EZ** is required for organizations whose gross receipts are greater than or equal to \$50,000 and less than \$200,000. The exception to this is if an organization is designated as "Supporting" in which case the threshold is lowered to \$5,000. (See box, next page.) **Most clubs will be required to file Form 990EZ.**

• **Form 990N** is required for organizations whose gross receipts are normally less than \$50,000, or \$5,000 in the case of "Supporting" organizations.

## What information do I need to file my form?

**Assuming you are filing Form 990EZ**, this can be prepared using the information clubs historically have provided to Serra's USA Council on the annual Statement of Cash Revenue and Expenses. Form 990EZ requires basic revenue, expense, asset, liabilities, and net asset information. Since most clubs use a cash basis of accounting, the only asset will be their bank account balance and there will be no liabilities. Net assets are simply assets minus liabilities. In addition to the financial information, the form requires a list of Board members and answers to a series of questions regarding activities. **Clubs filing Form 990EZ must also file Schedule A.** Schedule A is a 5-year summary of revenue and calculation of public support percentage. The public support percentage is the amount of support received from a broad base of supporters and not investment income or large amounts from single donors. Form 990EZ and Schedule A can take anywhere from 2-5 hours to complete. **Completed Form 990EZs should be mailed to:**

Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service Center  
Ogden, UT 84201-0027

**If you qualify for Form 990N**, this one is the easiest form to file. There is no paper form. It must be filed online here: <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/annual-electronic-filing-requirement-for-small-exempt-organizations-form-990-n-e-postcard>. The information needed to file the form is your Federal EIN# and contact information of the principal officer. No financial information is required.

## When do I need to prepare my form?

All Form 990s are due on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month following the last day of the organization's fiscal year. Most clubs have a May 31 year-end date, so their filing due date is October 15. There is an automatic 3-month extension available by filing Form 8878 and a further 3-month extension available for good reason.

### What if I miss the deadline?

Penalties for late filing of Form 990EZ are \$20 per day up to a maximum of 5% of gross receipts. There is no penalty for late filing of Form 990N. Interest is charged on unpaid penalties. As you can see, penalties for late filing are substantial, so be sure to file on time.

### What happens if I don't file a 990 at all?

If an organization fails to file Form 990EZ or 990N for three consecutive years it will lose its exempt status. This means that contributions will no longer be tax deductible.

### Uh-oh. I haven't filed in a few years. Is my club in trouble?

Several clubs have lost their exempt status for failure to file Form 990 for three consecutive years. Clubs who have lost their tax exempt status should not file Form 990 because it will not be accepted by the IRS. Contact the USA Council office for information about your club's tax exempt status or search for your club by Federal EIN# on GuideStar at [www.GuideStar.org](http://www.GuideStar.org). If the club has lost its exempt status it will normally be noted on this website.

Serra International's attorney has been in discussions with the IRS for the past year to reinstate the tax exempt status of clubs that have lost it. Feedback from the IRS indicates that these clubs will have their tax exempt status reinstated sometime in the spring of 2017. The USA Council will send out notification to clubs that have lost their exempt status when the determination is final.

### This is a bit overwhelming. Can I get someone else to do it for me?

Clubs may prepare Form 990EZ or submit Form 990N themselves or seek a professional to prepare/submit it for them. When preparing the 990EZ it is helpful to use a prior return as an example and to have the form reviewed by someone experienced with tax forms. Prior year forms are available at [www.GuideStar.org](http://www.GuideStar.org). It may take anywhere from 2-5 hours to prepare the Form 990EZ. Form 990N can be completed in less than 30 minutes. At standard CPA rates it may cost between \$200 and \$400 to have Form 990EZ prepared by a professional.

### I've got more questions.

Contact the USA Council office at 888.777.6681. 

## “Supporting Organization” Status

“Supporting Organization” is a special class of nonprofit. Per the instructions for Form 990 Schedule A, it is an organization that is “responsive to the needs or demands of one or more supported organizations, and must constitute an integral part of, or maintain a significant involvement in, the operations of one or more supported organizations.” There are three types of Supporting Organizations with separate tests to qualify each.

At some point, all USA Serra clubs were designated as supporting organizations with the IRS. This is significant because it lowers the threshold for filing Form 990N from annual gross receipts of \$50,000 to \$5,000. This impacts most USA clubs because their annual receipts are less than \$50,000 and more than \$5,000. That means they must file the longer Form 990EZ rather than the easier Form 990N. Form 990EZ requires detailed in-

formation about revenue, expense, assets, liabilities, Board Members, and activity. Form 990N is filed online and requires none of this information. The difference in time and effort between the two forms is substantial.

The “Supporting Organization” status was reviewed in 2015 by the Serra International accountant and an outside tax accountant. It was determined that the designation of clubs as Supporting was incorrect. Serra International's attorney has been in discussions with the IRS for almost a year to get the designation changed. Feedback from the IRS indicates this may happen in the spring of 2017. After the designation is changed, clubs with annual gross receipts between \$5,000 and \$50,000 will be able to file Form 990N. Until that designation is changed, these clubs must file Form 990EZ. Clubs whose gross receipts are normally less than \$5,000 are unaffected. They qualify for filing Form 990N. Serra's USA Council will notify clubs when the IRS determination is final.

# The Serra Calendar, June 2017 to May 2018

Use this calendar to help plan your Serra year

## June 2017

**June 22-25:** Serra International Convention, Rome

\***June 24:** International Rosary for Vocations conference call

**Membership Tip:** Ask somebody to join Serra. Bring them to your next meeting.

**Program Tip:** “Ecclesia di Eucharista,” *Program Manual—Part II*, p. 79

\*At 8 a.m. Central Time on the last Saturday of every month, Serra hosts a Rosary for Vocations. Join via your smart device or telephone. See <http://www.serrainternational.org/content/international-rosary-vocations-conference-call> for more details.

## July 2017

**July 1:** Saint Junipero Serra’s Feast Day

**Serra International and USA Council dues are payable July 15.** If dues are not paid within 90 days of this date, a late fee will be assessed on the International portion.

**July 29:** International Rosary for Vocations conference call

**Program Tip:** “Junipero Serra: A Study Guide,” *Program Manual—Part II*, p. 82

**Membership Tip:** Invite your priest or seminarian to your home for a cookout with your family and friends.

## October 2017

**Oct. 28:** International Rosary for Vocations conference call

**Oct. 29:** Priesthood Sunday

**Program Tip:** “Mission and Ministry of Priesthood,” *Program Manual—Part II*, p. 11

**Membership Tip:** Begin planning for your club's Christmas party. Be sure to invite your bishop and the seminarians and postulants.

## November 2017

**Nov. 1:** All Souls’ Day. Use the Remembrance Mass for Ser-rans (and Priests and Religious) who have died in the past year.

**Nov. 4-11:** National Vocations Awareness Week

**Nov. 25:** International Rosary for Vocations conference call

**Program Tip:** “Life as a Vocation,” *Program Manual—Part II*, p. 71

**Membership Tip:** Design a plan to get Christmas greetings and gifts to priests and religious in your diocese.

## February 2018

**Sign up for the the Daily Lenten Reflections** to receive a spiritual reflection via email each day during Lent.

**Feb. 2:** World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life

**Program Tip:** “Church, Beacon of Hope,” *Program Manual—Part II*, p. 43

**Membership Tip:** Send a card, signed by all club members, to your archbishop and bishops and express to them how much you appreciate them and their vocation.

**Feb. 24:** International Rosary for Vocations conference call

## March 2018

**Club Officers:** April and May are the months for **SLPC Training and District meetings**. Make sure all your members are involved in one of the VP Teams. Split your membership roster and make phone calls to encourage members to come and attend SLPC as your guest.

**Program Tip:** “Lent,” *Program Manual—Part II*, p. 27

**March 31:** International Rosary for Vocations conference call

## August 2017

**Aug. 26:** International Rosary for Vocations conference call

**Program Tip:** ““Mary, Model of Hope,” *Program Manual—Part II*, p. 41

**Membership Tip:** The seminary school year begins! Ask your vocations director for a list of names of young men and women who are attending the seminary or convent. If you haven’t already, design an Adopt-a-Seminarian/Postulant program in your club.

## September 2017

Grant applications for the Serra International Foundation are due at the main office by Sept. 30.

**Sept. 30:** International Rosary for Vocations conference call

**Program Tip:** “Triumph of the Cross,” *Program Manual—Part II*, p. 55

**Membership Tip:** Arrange autumn visit to seminarians/postulants with care packages. Make plans now to return in the spring.

## December 2017

**Sign up for the Serra Advent calendar** to receive a little treat in your inbox everyday during Advent.

**Plan now to attend the Serra International Convention** in Nashville, Tennessee, USA, June 29-July 2, 2018!

**Program Tip:** “Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” *Program Manual—Part II*, p. 61

**Dec. 30:** International Rosary for Vocations conference call

## January 2018

**Serra International and USA Council dues are payable January 15.** If dues are not paid within 90 days of this date, a late fee will be assessed on the International portion.

**Attend the Serra Rally in Phoenix!** Dates TBA.

**Jan. 27:** International Rosary for Vocations conference call

**Program Tip:** “Ordinary Time,” *Program Manual—Part II*, p. 33

**Membership Tip:** Encourage club members to be involved in the Newman Connection project.

## April 2018

**April 22:** World Day of Prayer for Vocations

**April 28:** International Rosary for Vocations conference call

**Ordination season is coming:** If you have not already done so, begin planning your Club’s activities surrounding and involvement in your diocese’s ordinations.

**Program Tip:** “Easter Time,” *Program Manual—Part II*, p. 31

**Membership Tip:** Do something positive for the permanent deacons in your parish.

## May 2018

Submit your updated Club Officer Reports along with any changes to your club roster to the main office by May 15.

**May 26:** International Rosary for Vocations conference call

**May 30:** Deadline for Convention Delegate Credential submission

**Program Tip:** “Magnificat,” *Program Manual—Part II*, p. 53

**Membership Tip:** Seminarians are getting out of school. Find a way to keep in touch with them over the summer and see if they need assistance with anything.

# Meet the Serra Chicago Headquarters Staff



## **Peter Cunningham, Coordinator, USA Council Affairs**

Last November, Peter marked his 20th year at Serra, a job that has carried him through several organizational changes and the birth of four of his five children. Peter was born in Chicago's south sub-

urbs and has a background in biomedical engineering.

As USA Council Affairs Coordinator, Peter coordinates the activities of USA Council Executive Committee and Board of Directors, works with the council's national committees, and assists leaders at all levels in the council. Additionally, Peter does the lion's share of maintaining Serra's database management and works with clubs on issues of membership recruitment and retention.

What he enjoys most about working for Serra is having met and worked with many dedicated Serrans.

His pivotal role in database management explains why the one thing he asks Serrans to do to make his job easier is simply, "Write legibly!"



## **Sarah Knob, Office Manager**

A transplant to Chicago from her native Colorado, Sarah was hired by Serra International in 2013. Her main focus is on the bookkeeping for Serra International, its Foundation, and the USA Council.

In her bookkeeping role, Sarah's average day might include invoicing, dues collecting, preparing reports for board members, and more. Along with this, she works with other staff members on different tasks including convention and meeting preparation. Once the online portal is ready, she will be directing more of her attention toward training treasurers on how to update their membership rosters online.

"I love meeting Serrans from around the world at board meetings and conventions," Sarah says. "It's always great to help Serrans over the phone and through emails, but the times where I get to meet so many wonderful people in person is a great experience."

If Sarah could tell Serrans one thing that would help her do her job better, it would be: "Every member should have an email address and get excited about using our online portal to update their information. We can pro-

vide even better services to everyone if our online portal is well received and used by everyone."



## **John Liston, Executive Director**

Originally hired as an intern at the tender age of 16, John Liston rose to the position of Executive Director in 2013. He reports to the Serra International, Serra Council, and Serra International Foundation boards, working with them

to help grow and strengthen our apostolate and insure that we are making the best use of the resources provided to us. Additionally, he oversees Serra's Chicago staff and helps them perform the vital work required for Serra's continued success. All of this is done in service to and support of local Serra clubs.

"The joy and challenge of my job is that no day or week is 'typical,'" John says. The majority of his time is spent planning events such as the Serra International Convention and the Serra Rally, preparing for meetings with the three boards, answering questions from Serrans via phone and email, and working with the staff on various projects. In addition to these tasks, he is occasionally invited to speak at Serra events all over the world.

"There is something about Serra that draws out the best Catholics in the diocese," John says when asked what he enjoys most about working for Serra. "Working with these faithful, energetic, and inspiring members of the laity is something I wish all Serrans could experience. Additionally, working with Serrans worldwide has given a small insight into the global nature of our faith and how truly catholic (small 'c' intentional) the Church truly is."

If John could tell Serrans one thing that would help him do his job better, it would be: "Invite more of your friends to join Serra. I have heard so many Serrans call our apostolate 'the best kept secret in the Church' and that bothers me because there is no reason for Serra to be a secret. Every Catholic should have the opportunity to support vocations and grow in holiness as part of a local Serra club."

John was born in Dallas, Texas, USA, and will be getting married in Rome after the convention this year.



**Anne McCormack,  
Communications Coordinator**

Born and bred in Chicago, Anne McCormack remembers encountering Serrans as a child in her Catholic grade school and vocation fairs in high school. She came aboard Serra in 1997.

As Communications Coordinator, she is editor of *The Serran Magazine*, the *Always Forward, Never Back* e-newsletter, and is instrumental in the development of other Serran publications and promotional pieces. She is also the author of the yearly Advent and Lent reflections. Like the rest of the staff, she must wear many hats and assists with a variety of tasks. As the mother of a toddler and married to an endlessly touring musician, Anne mostly telecommutes but joins the staff downtown once a week and accompanies them on trips to several Serra meetings.

“My favorite things about Serra have always been traveling to meet Serrans, who are such amazing people, and having such great coworkers.”

As her key priority is communications for Serra, she urges Serrans to keep their contact information up to date with the office and also to take a moment to review the electronic and print publications that the office produces, which always contain important and useful information.



**Martha Perales-Clark, Translator**

Of the whole staff, Martha has the most Serra conventions, charters, and office moves under her belt; she has worked for Serra International since 1991!

Born in Guadalajara, Mexico, Martha’s primary duty is as a translator for the four official languages of Serra (Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and English) but over all these years she has truly become a jack of all trades. In a typical day, Martha’s tasks can have a wide range, from chartering of clubs to convention and meeting support, to coordinating the Monstrance Program, to database entry, to processing of Serra International Foundation donations. She is always very busy.

“I love the staff!” Martha says. “Serra is a good Catholic organization.” And Serra’s staff and members are so lucky to have her. 📞

**Serra International Foundation Grant Cycle**

The Serra International Foundation works year-round to support seminaries, dioceses, and houses of religious formation around the world. While the Foundation's fundraising activities continue throughout the year, the Foundation's grant cycle follows a specific pattern:

- **September:** By Sept. 30, grant applications for funding in the following grant year are submitted to Serra's office.
- **January:** The Foundation Grants Review Committee reviews all grant applications and makes its recommendations. The Serra International Board then reviews and approves the slate of grants for funding.
- **February:** Grant applicants are notified of the status of their request.
- **July:** Grant recipients receive their funding.
- **Following January:** After receiving funding, grant applicants submit an interim report on the status of their project by January.
- **Following July:** A final report on the status of their grant is submitted to the Foundation by the recipient.

These grant reports are used to create the stories featured in *The Serran Magazine*. Thank you for your continued support of the Serra International Foundation. Without your generous contributions, dozens of worthy vocations projects would go unfunded or underfunded. To apply for a Serra International Foundation grant, go to <http://www.serrainternational.org/content/grant-application-forms>.

**New: File ONLINE for Insurance Certificates**

The Serra International office offers United States clubs free certificates of insurance to protect club officers from liability when hosting meetings and special events. These events include monthly meetings, golf outings, special dinners, and more, but there are two exceptions: 1) An event where alcohol is sold by anyone other than a catering company; and 2) An event where minors will be chauffeured from one place to another.

To obtain an insurance certificate for your club, find the request form at <https://serraus.org/club-resources/>, fill it out, and click “Submit.” It takes two days for the insurance company to process the request and issue the certificate. It is best to file as soon as you know you need a certificate to ensure timely delivery.

# Your Chariot Awaits, Father!

## Toronto Serrans provide rides for retired priests

by Jerry Hayes, Programs Vice President  
Toronto Central Serra Club

**T**he Archdiocese of Toronto, Canada, which prides itself as being at the forefront of initiating positive change in the Church, is also leading the way with a support program to aid our retired priests in their well-earned leisure years. Our priests are retiring these days with varying degrees of independence and mobility. Their level of health has a tremendous impact on the decisions they make regarding a retirement environment that meets their needs. While some are capable of functioning autonomously, many rely on additional support so they can live in modest dignity.

The more independent lifestyle of retired priests usually means that the social environment that these men previously experienced with their peers while active in their parish communities is not always as readily available as it once was, so there is the possibility of isolation for some. Marisa Rogucki, Coordinator of Retired Diocesan Priests, makes sure that doesn't happen.

To combat loneliness and isolation, Marisa orchestrates opportunities for priests to participate in an ongoing variety of activities and events that allow them to rekindle friendships of past years and to share memories that otherwise might be forgotten. In addition to many luncheons put on by Serra or parishes, the priests

go on various field trips, including to sporting events and theatre.

As part of Serrans' mission is to support priests in their sacred ministry in whatever way we can, we are well placed to assist in this endeavor; just because these priests are no longer active in their ministries is no reason for Serrans to overlook their needs. Specifically speaking, a group of men from the Toronto Central Serra Club serve as chauffeurs for the retired priests who are unable to drive. Not only do these Serrans pick up the priests and ferry them to their required destinations and back, but they also assist them to their necessary level of need during the event (such as the ones listed above).

I myself have had the privilege of being the driver on a number of these outings and have found them to be an enlightening and rewarding experience. Not only have I enjoyed hearing the many stories that these men tell of their years doing parish work, but I have also thoroughly enjoyed being part of the outing itself. The satisfaction that I derive in sharing the joy that our priests exude is truly a reward unto itself.

This program can easily be tailored to fit any retired priest or religious activities in your diocese. May these programs and the happiness they foster for all involved continue for many years to come, and may Serrans continue to diligently ensure that this objective of sharing with others is one that is not quickly forgotten. ♪

### **This Priesthood Sunday (Oct. 29, 2017), don't forget to honor your retired priests! Here are two more great ideas from other Serra clubs:**

The Serra Club of Omaha, Nebraska, USA, used to hold a luncheon in honor of their retired priests for Priesthood Sunday, but because many of them found it more and more difficult to get to the luncheon (a challenge addressed by the Toronto club above), the Serrans brought the celebration to them. **Now they host a "Priesthood Sundaes" ice cream bar** at Saint John Vianney Residence, where about 20 retired priests live. See which is a better fit for your club if you have the same challenge: bring the priests to the celebration, or bring the celebration to them!

The Serra Club of Detroit-Oakland, Michigan, USA, created a wonderful **Prayer Bouquet fill-in form for parishioners to give to their priests on Priesthood Sunday**. For all Detroit retired priests, the Serra club as a whole offered hundreds of Masses, rosaries, hours of adoration, and various other prayers. A copy of the form with all the numbers was then sent to every retired priest. Go to <https://serraus.org/event/priesthood-sunday/> to see Detroit-Oakland's prayer bouquet fill-in form and consider adapting it for your own club this Priesthood Sunday.



# A Picture is Worth a Thousand Prayers

## Copy the Southeast Kansas City club's seminarian display idea

by Homer Radford, Vocations Vice President  
Serra Club of Southeast Kansas City

**T**he Serra Club of Southeast Kansas City, Missouri, USA, has developed an ingenious multi-tiered and easy program that not only raises funds for their local seminary, but also raises awareness for vocations, generates publicity for the club, AND provides high-quality Christmas cards to donors, all while saving money for the club.

### First, you need to know about Conception Abbey's Printery House

Conception Abbey and Seminary College in Conception, Missouri, USA, offers a wide variety of products for Christmas through their "Printery House." They produce high quality religious Christmas cards and other seasonal greeting cards, as well as ordination congratulations and appreciation and birthday cards for priests, deacons and religious. Visit [www.printeryhouse.org](http://www.printeryhouse.org) to see their items for all religious occasions. Proceeds from Printery House sales support the Benedictine monks living at Conception Abbey.

The Printery House also maintains affiliate and Christmas fundraising programs for interested organizations, where the organization earns a percentage of all sales conducted through the program. The Serra Club of Southeast Kansas City is an affiliate of the Printery House, which allows the club to order cards at wholesale prices. Every year, they order Christmas cards which are in turn given as "thank you" gifts to parishioners who make a donation to the club's Seminary Fund. This fund provides support for each diocesan seminarian at the annual Mass, Reception and Dinner for the seminarians and their families. Each year, the club purchases about \$2,000 worth of the cards for their fundraiser.

### How the seminarian photo display helps raise awareness and donations

Southeast Kansas City Serrans created five simple yet attractive displays bearing the pictures of all seminarians in their diocese. Two of these are on permanent display in two parishes. The other three are traveling displays that



The Serra Club of Southeast Kansas City's seminarian display and fundraising table at a local parish.

stay in a parish space for three or four weeks before moving on to another parish. The club has a total of 19 parishes in their service area. Parishioners are asked to take home one or more small sheets with a photo of a seminarian along with his contact information to be displayed in a visible place as a reminder to pray for him or to send him encouraging notes or other greetings.

Each October, the club begins scheduling visits to many of the 19 parishes well in advance of Christmas time. At the visit, one of the displays is set on a table-top along with the information sheets mentioned above. When parishioners donate \$20 to the Seminary Fund, Serrans staffing the display table offer a box of Printery House Christmas cards as a thank you. The donor can choose from a selection of seven different cards. Along with their card selection, they receive a printed copy of the club's newsletter and a trifold brochure containing basic information about the club.

The program nets about \$3,000 for the Seminary Fund. On top of that, the monks at Conception Abbey get financial support. And on top of those, the program introduces lay men and women to Serra, and encourages membership. It is a Win - Win - Win effort. Try it in your club! ☺

# Mercy and Vocation

## A Special Address by Cardinal Beniamino Stella

Dear Serrans,

The following address was given by Cardinal Beniamino Stella at the meeting for the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome on Oct. 20, 2016. In place of my article this month I would like to share this with you. In the last issue of *The Serran*, you read my own address to the Congregation for the Clergy. Notice how beautifully Cardinal Stella ties together the themes of mercy and vocations. St. Junipero Serra, pray for us!

Dante Vaninni, Serra International President

**T**he Venerable St. Bede helps us understand the evangelical dynamics of each call: Jesus enters into our lives, looks upon us and in doing so invites us to follow him. This commentary is offered in one of his homilies which he focuses on the encounter between Jesus and the publican in Matthew (Mt 9: 9-13). Here there are three central moments:

the calling that comes from God as he first enters our lives, then by noticing us, invites us to follow him. Therefore, the acceptance of his voice seems to depend primarily on this gaze, and Jesus' eyes perceiving the heart is the first movement of every vocation.

It is natural to ask, was that look of Jesus able to inspire the admiration and enthusiasm that encourages people to "drop everything" and to follow him in a moment of abandonment and trust? St. Bede says that Jesus "did not see so much the physical aspect, but rather his heart and inner goodness. He saw a tax collector and looked at him with feelings of love and chose him, saying, follow me." (St. Bede the Venerable, priest, OM 21; CCL 122, 149-151.). This "look" of Jesus is so merciful that it awakened an enthusiastic and generous response to life. Here mercy and vocation intertwine.

The Christian faith, therefore, is primarily a "matter of seeing." We can offer our lives to the Lord before every word or idea, because primarily he looks lovingly at our lives. The Gospels tell us that often in our human life we encounter the eyes of God, and we can think about how Jesus looked at the rich man. The text says, "Jesus looked steadily at him and He was filled with love for him" (Mk 10:21) Another example is seen in Peter after his denial,

as he was instilled with a true inner yearning and tears of repentance and deliverance. **These and in other cases, Jesus' look never humiliates; rather it shows attentiveness, wins over every superficiality or distraction, and is capable of engaging and uplifting the person.** Above all, it is a look of love and mercy.

A young Jorge Mario Bergoglio embraced this experience in 1953, on the same day as the Feast of Saint Matthew, when he felt his heart touched and joyfully decided to follow the path of ordained priesthood. To this, the bishop-elect chose his episcopal motto "*miserando atque elegendo*" (**Because he saw him through the eyes of mercy and chose him**) which is an expression of Saint Bede in reference to the calling of St. Matthew.

This supremacy of divine mercy is the foundation of all callings. It does not depend on our merits, it cannot be attributed to our plans for a personal lifestyle, and it is not due to personal effort. On the contrary, the vocation is born when we accept the merciful love of God who draws us forward to raise an "exodus of our self," and to put forth a free and joyful decision.

Pope Francis focuses on the look Jesus directed to Matthew, the publican, in one of his Santa Marta homilies: "For me it is a little hard to understand how Matthew could hear Jesus' voice, and in the midst of so many people he says, 'Follow me,' but Matthew has not even heard the voice. 'What was his heart feeling when he saw Jesus looking at him?'" It was this look that was the image that changed his life. In other words, it transformed him. In his heart, he only felt Jesus' look, and got up and followed him. A look from Jesus will always lift us up, guide us, will inquire; He never leaves us where we were before meeting him. He is never condescending toward you, never puts you down, rather he invites you to rise up, to feel his love, and gives you the courage and capacity to follow him." (Pope Francis, Santa Marta Homily September 21, 2013)

A look of mercy, then, is the source of our vocation and the personal history of every priest. God's love for us is in his call, "passing along the coasts" of our daily lives giving us the courage to follow him. It is a spiritual

*Continued on page 23*

# The Traveling Crucifix Program

## Perfect for raising vocations awareness in the classroom

**Y**ou might have heard of the Traveling Chalice Program, but when Serra's USA Vocations Committee heard that some teachers wished to use a similar program in their classrooms but were deterred by the obvious risks of displaying a precious object and leaving it unattended at night, they came up with a simple solution: use a wooden crucifix instead.

The purpose of the Traveling Crucifix program is to encourage children to pray for and promote vocations. Just as with the Traveling Chalice Program used in homes, the crucifix is placed in some highly visible place in the classroom where it is safe. This crucifix helps serve as a visible reminder of the classroom's commitment to pray together for vocations everyday during the week that the crucifix is displayed. A booklet accompanies the crucifix containing a recommended prayer and intention for each day, but these can be adapted to the age of the students.

In a school setting, the Traveling Crucifix Program encourages students to talk about vocations, about God's plan for them to grow in holiness, and to ask any questions that may arise. Teachers are encouraged to let the students see and hold the crucifix, even young children if supervised, making sure they treat it respectfully, like all sacred objects. A seminarian, a priest, brother, or sister could be invited to talk to the class about vocations.

After one classroom's week of prayer for vocations with the crucifix is completed, the crucifix moves on to another classroom. Some pastors may want the crucifix returned to them so they can present it to the next class, while others may want to call students forward from the last class to hand it off to the next class at Mass.

This is a simple yet powerful youth-centered program that Serra clubs should promote in their parish schools. ☪

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# Serra is Not for Everyone... But Its Mission Is!



**Greg Schwietz**  
President,  
Serra's National  
Council for the  
United States

A few months ago, we welcomed a new club into the Serra family: The Serra Club of North Idaho. This new club, with full starting support from our Spokane, Washington club (Club #2, celebrating 80 years this year), and District Governor Aileen Fields, is the first club in the Boise Diocese, 400 miles from its Chancery office.

It is an exhilarating experience to share the joy of starting a new Serra club, no matter where it is. The spirit and the promise that a new Serra club represents is the communal experience of Catholic lay people who wish to share their love for the Church and for our consecrated and ordained ministers.

The news of a new Serra club is in and of itself worthy of an entire column of reflection, but it is another activity simultaneous to this new club charter that captures my interest and imagination at this time. Namely, in support of the new club, its 30 new Serra members, and its newly expressed commitment to vocations work, **310 people signed up for the Serra-sponsored 31 Club Mass at three local parishes.** I call this the “second level of Serra.” And I call it exciting. (For more on the 31 Club and the 5-Star Program, see p. 7 of this issue.)

These 310 people committed to pray for vocations in a special way at one selected Mass a month. In effect, they are all supporting the Serra mission. Some of them are surely newly minted Serrans, but the majority of them have not signed on the dotted line, so to speak, and most never will, but they have done something that fits with their position and interest. They are part of the second level of commitment to the Serran mission.

It has been stated in the past and needs to be stated once again that Serra is not for everyone. In an article written in December of 1962 by our first Executive Secretary, Harry O’Haire, he states the sometimes forgotten principle: “Membership in Serra is select and se-

lective.” He goes on to say, “Membership in Serra is a privilege granted, not a right obtained. This is always kept in mind when members select new associates. Men (and women) are chosen who are dedicated and sincere, whose loyalty to the Church and to the successors of the apostles is unquestioned. Serrans recruit members who can and will fulfill their obligations of membership. This is recognized as their duty because these men (and women) who are chosen have to provide brain as well as brawn to meet the challenging tide of (today’s cultural challenges) and to carry out the responsibility of the laity

in the Church today.” (Parenthetical comments are my additions.)

Yet, Serra’s mission, to foster and affirm vocations to the priesthood and consecrated religious life, is a mission that is too large

to be held only by a few committed Serrans. It is our great opportunity and responsibility to lead and expand this noble mission to the larger Catholic community. And this is what I like about the example shared above regarding the large number of 31 Club supporters in northern Idaho. It shows that while there has been the formation of a core group of Serrans, uniquely committed to this mission and to each other to assist each other in his or her spiritual growth, there is yet another, larger group of faithful, interested Catholics, in this case *10 times* larger, who have been invited to join us in “our work.” And happily, they do.

So, as I see it, Serra has a big, noble mission, the responsibility of which has been formally and uniquely entrusted to us; namely, Serra is *the* premier, singly focused lay organization within the Church to foster and support religious vocations. This is the first level of Serra. But our role is that of not only doers. We not only provide, as Harry O’Haire said, “the brawn”; we must provide “the brains” as well. This means that our clubs must be always looking for ways to multiply their effect through proper inclusion of interested, committed

**Only select Catholics are called to be Serrans, and that’s as it should be.  
Make use of your club’s secret weapon:  
The second level of Serra.**

*Continued on page 23*



**John Liston**  
Executive Director,  
Serra International

# Be Not Afraid: Encounter Christ in Youth

I'm spiritual, but not religious." It's a silly phrase and doesn't have much meaning. Saying "I'm spiritual, but not religious" is like saying "I'm political but I don't vote or participate in any political activity." Regardless of how little sense that phrase makes, it is something I heard several of my peers say. For many, it became the "safe" answer when asked about faith and religion. No one can challenge you if you don't have a position. Yet, this phrase and what it represents always bothered me. Looking back, I realized they never engaged with their faith. Additionally, no one ever engaged with them about their faith. They didn't have a role model in their parish, a relationship with a priest or religious sisters or brother. They needed someone, like a Serran, to help them truly have an encounter with Christ.

Despite their aimlessness, the "spiritual, but not religious" still want and seek something "spiritual" – a connection to something larger than themselves. As Serrans responding to our own person call to holiness, and bearing joyful and public witness to our faith, we are in a prime position to connect with these people. While this might be uncomfortable for some, it is necessary for the survival of our Church.

These days, it's easy to surround ourselves with the comfort of like-minded people, news, and entertainers that all support our point of view. We can glide through life without taking any risks, without ever leaving our comfort zone. As Pope Benedict warned us, "The world promises you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness." We are called to go out and share our greatness as a light for the world to see; to lead and nurture future generations of Catholics by helping them find their vocations, whether they are called to be a priest, religious sister or brother, or whether they are called to grow in their faith

as a member of the Serra apostolate.

Serrans are called to help everyone encounter Christ on a daily basis. Pope Francis often speaks of encountering Christ. In his homily on April 24, 2015, the Holy Father said:

*[Christ] never forgets, but we forget the encounter with Christ. And this would be a good assignment to do at home, to consider: 'When have I really felt that the Lord was close to me? When have I felt the need to change my life, or to become better, or to forgive someone? When have I felt the Lord asking something of me? When have I encountered the Lord?' Because our faith is an encounter with Jesus. This is the foundation of our faith: I have encountered Jesus.*

As Serrans, we are called to remind everyone of this encounter with Christ and facilitate more such encounters. We do this through our prayer life and spiritual exercises. St. Louis de Montfort best explained the importance of spiritual exercise in "The Secret of the Rosary":

*It is a great mistake to think that only priests and religious and those who have withdrawn from the turmoil of the world are supposed to meditate upon the truths of our Faith and the mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ. If priests and religious have an obligation to meditate on the great truths of our holy religion in order to live up to their vocation worthily, the same obligation, then, is just as much incumbent upon the laity—because of the fact that every day they meet with spiritual dangers which might make them lose their souls. Therefore they should arm themselves with the frequent meditation on the life, virtues and sufferings of Our Blessed Lord...*

Inspired by the teachings of our faith, emboldened by those who came before us, we must go out and engage with the world, especially the young. When Jesus was gathering his disciples, he did not hold two lunch meetings a month and hope that potential disciples would read about these gatherings in the parish bulletin. He went out into the world and called the apostles from

*Continued on page 23*

**When Jesus was gathering his disciples, he did not hold two lunch meetings a month and hope that potential apostles would read about these gatherings in the parish bulletin.**

## The Serran Time Capsule 1961: St. Paul Vocation Days Draw 33,000

Can you imagine your club hosting an event that drew 10,000 people? No? How about 5,000? Still no? How about 1,000? **In 1960, the Serra Club of St. Paul, Minnesota, USA, put on a Vocation Fair that drew 33,000** children, parents, teenagers, and religious. The club decided to put on such a massive event *shortly after a similarly successful event was staged by the Mankato, Minnesota club.*

Serrans, this article reflects the culture of vocations in the United States over 50 years ago. This issue of *The Serran* is dedicated to igniting your club with new ideas to rekindle just such a culture of vocations, and maybe even a renaissance of incredible events just such as this one reported by St. Paul Serran Edward A. Harrigan in the March-April 1961 edition of *The Serran*.



**T**he kid with the Kennedy hair was solemnly devouring a hot dog. “Where is it?” a padre was asking him. The priest had just parked his car, and was starting off across the campus of St. Thomas College in St. Paul, where the Serra Club of that city was putting on a Vocational Conference. People were walking in all directions.

The kid looked up, swallowed, and said, “You mean the place to get something to eat?”

The priest had to say, “No, at least, not at the moment.” What he meant was the hall where all the booths were, with the priests and brothers and sisters.

“Oh, right over there,” said the lad, swallowing again, and pointing to the college armory.

Whereupon the padre thanked him, walked in the direction indicated, and became one of the 33,000 persons who on a recent weekend were given a capsule view of the Church’s religious life. The visitors ranged from toddlers hanging onto parents’ hands to monsignors and bishops.

It was a two-day exhibit, conducted by the 150-member St. Paul Serra Club on the Saturday and Sunday following Thanksgiving. Fifty-nine booths ranged across the armory floor and along its walls, flanking a large centrally located booth representing the Archdiocese of St. Paul. (The archdiocesan booth was so located deliberately, the ordinary, Archbishop William O. Brady, pointed out to Serrans and their guests at the Mass in the St. Thomas chapel which began the second day’s activities. “And properly so,” he said, since everything else revolves around it.”) Scores of delegates from orders and congregations of priests, brothers and sisters staffed the booths.

The conference aimed to, and did, present chiefly the work of religious already engaged in the St. Paul archdiocese, in accordance with the will of the ordinary, although both coasts were represented.

Each of the delegates told or showed the visitors how his or her order fitted into the life of the Church. Many showed slides and movies; some lectured. All distributed pamphlets and other assorted printed matter, but nothing was sold.

Special interest-getting gimmicks were used in a few booths. One of these was a cardboard “habit” of the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, with a mirror inserted for a face, wherein a girl could see herself garbed as a nun. Another was a device in the Christian Brothers’ booth, with which spectators could test themselves for “nerves of steel” needed in the religious life. You did have such nerves if you could move your finger along an irregular slot without touching either edge.

### Many Special Events

In addition to the displays, a program of special events was provided. Each of the days began with pontifical Mass, the first celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Leonard Cowley and the second by Archbishop Brady. Soft organ music enhanced the religious atmosphere in the exhibit hall. Organists were nun volunteers; they, as well as choir members for the pontifical Masses, offered themselves in numbers far beyond the needed quotas. Each day at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. the St. Paul Seminary choir sang, under the direction of Father John Sweeney, archdiocesan director of music.

Four times daily a Parade of Habits took place

during which representatives of participating orders ascended a stage to be introduced by name and a brief mention of their order's history and work... Movies were shown, simultaneously and continuously, in various rooms and auditoriums of the college from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. each day.

Special meals were served at nominal cost to exhibitors and to Serrans and their guests; the general public were accommodated separately. Coffee breaks, with free coffee, milk, rolls, and doughnuts, were arranged twice daily for booth attendants. A Serra booth was staffed throughout the conference by members of the Exhibits Committee, who proffered information and help to exhibitors. A large staff of ushers guided the general public, while a Transportation Committee carried school groups from appointed meeting places to and from the conference on regular schedules.

On Saturday alone, some 12,000 7th- and 8th-graders showed up—and the place was truly congested at times. Each group was guaranteed a minimum of two hours at the armory. While there, they looked at the displays, talked to the booth personnel, saw movies about the religious life at home and on the missions, and gathered hundreds of pounds of religious literature. Many returned for further information the next day.

Estimates placed the Sunday crowd at 21,000 teenagers, college students, parents, and non-participating priests and other religious.

### **Next Year a Bigger Hall**

Exhibitors were joyfully enthusiastic both over the opportunities afforded by the conference and the results it produced. Some went out of their way to buttonhole men wearing committee ribbons, thanking them and invoking blessings upon them.

“The only problem we had was the size of the crowd,” said (St. Paul Club) President Raymond M. Schneider. “If we have a show like this another year, we’ll need a larger hall or longer time.”

Probably no one was better satisfied with the project than Archbishop Brady himself. Said Mr. Schneider in a statement to his club: “I wish you could have been with me when Archbishop Brady visited every booth personally Sunday forenoon, on the final day of the Religious Vocations Conference. You would have heard his expressions of delight over the success of the conference, his words of encouragement for the priests, brothers and sisters, and his generous praise ‘for you good Serra men who have made this possible.’”

*Interested in reading this article in its entirety? Email [amccormack@serrainternational.org](mailto:amccormack@serrainternational.org) to get a complete scan.*

### **Stella, Continued from p. 18**

formation, that each of us is called to do in our prayer life. It is an exercise of memory: remembering how Christ looked at us with compassion, how he has called us, and has filled us with gifts so we can run the course of fulfilling our vocation. From this exercise will emerge an open heart that will be able to praise, to see, and to serve others with the same love that we have experienced. ☺

### **Schwietz, Continued from p. 20**

Catholics to join our many vocations activities. This is the second level of Serra.

Bottom line: We need to sponsor more diocesan and region-wide vocations-directed activities that purposely invite the participation of the larger Catholic community, bringing the two levels of Serra together for maximum effect.

Serrans are doers, and they are also leaders. And lead we must, as we meet the challenges of this time — with our history, with our legacy, of course, but more importantly, with leaders who have been properly and uniquely called to serve the Church as Serrans. I invite your comments. ☺

*gregschwietz@gmail.com*

### **Liston, Continued from p. 21**

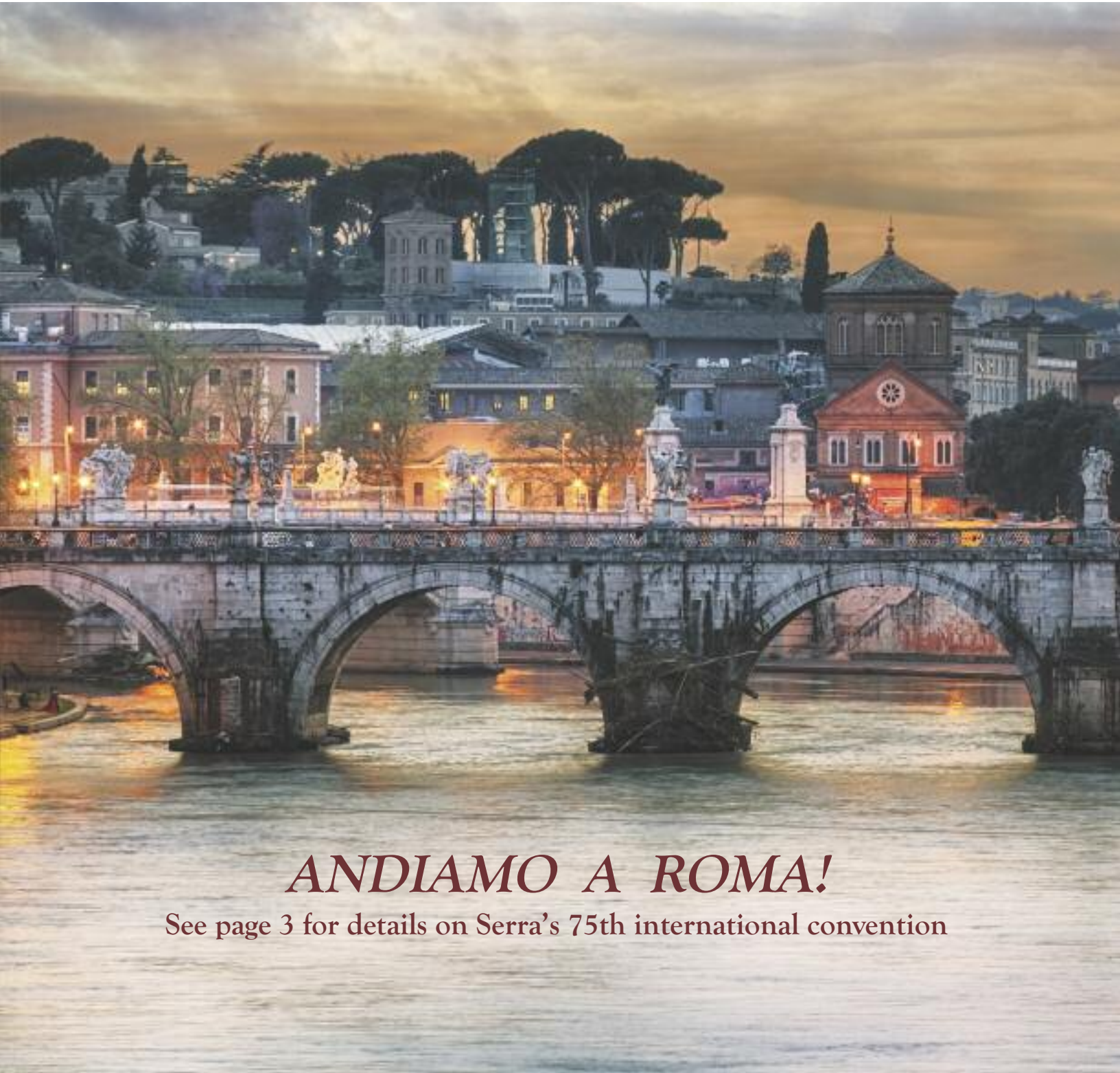
their places of work. He met them where they lived. So, too, must we go out an engage with young(er) Catholics and share the great joy we experience as Serrans. This must be done in order to fulfill our obligation to bear witness to the faith and to sustain our Church and our apostolate by finding future leaders. Seek out those who are “spiritual but not religious” and show them that religion and spirituality go hand-in-glove; let them see that what they are searching for has been in front of them the whole time. Engage with them. Mary, Mother of Vocations, pray for us! St. Junipero Serra, pray for us! ☺



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## *ANDIAMO A ROMA!*

See page 3 for details on Serra's 75th international convention