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The Serran



Understanding St. Junípero Serra
Historical and Spiritual Lessons from Our Patron



“Some people may ask us, ‘Are you discouraged?’ No. The Church is in God’s hands and we just simply dispose ourselves to do God’s will.”

His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Collins, Episcopal Adviser for Serra International

The Serran Calendar

August 31, 2019

Serra Global Rosary for Vocations

September 28, 2019

Serra Global Rosary for Vocations

September 29, 2019

Priesthood Sunday

October 26, 2019

Serra Global Rosary for Vocations

November 3-9, 2019

National Vocation Awareness Week (USA)

January 15-19, 2020

The Serra Rally, Ventura, California

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ON OUR COVER

This beautiful, contemporary styled icon of Saint Junípero Serra hangs at the Carmel Mission in California. It was completed by Brother Claude Lane, a noted iconographer and Benedictine monk, at Mount Angel Abbey in Willamette Valley, Oregon, in 2008.

Photo by Don Simoneaux

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Detail of the bronze statue of St. Junípero Serra outside of San Buenaventura City Hall in Ventura, California. While St. Junípero stood at just over five feet tall, Finnish sculptor John Palo-Kangas created this representation of our patron scaled up to over nine feet in height.

What Made St. Junípero Unstoppable?

Four traits from our patron's life to apply to our mission today

The following is a lightly edited transcript of the talk given by Serra International Episcopal Adviser His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Collins at the Serra Rally in Ventura, California, on January 18, 2019.

The Serra Club's encouragement of a culture of vocations is enormously important for the work and the mission of the Church. Each one of us has a sacred vocation, the most important of which comes the sacrament of Baptism. We're all called to be Saints, but in different ways. All of us have different particular callings within our life in Christ as disciples of the Lord. There is obviously a great need for the promotion of the particular vocation to the priesthood and religious life because it is to the service of us all. It is something we all need. We all need to have someone to go to confession to. We all need priests to serve us.

Obviously, the discipleship for the Serra Club should be rooted in Saint Junípero Serra. Whenever you have a saint as a patron of any organization, that's the one you should look to for guidance. We need to go back to the roots, go back to the source, go back to this great saint. I've been re-

flecting on four points that we could learn from his life: prayer, study, zeal, and hope, and how we can apply these to the modern work of Serra.

Prayer

Our patron was a man of prayer. At one point he was praying away that supply ships would arrive just before the feast of St. Joseph. It was a prayer of intercession, putting it always in the hands of the Lord God. It's just like in the reading from yesterday's Mass and Psalm 95:8: "Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness." The problem with Moses then was that he kept whacking the rock! He didn't trust that God would do it. I think that's a good thing for us to remember, that prayer is really essential to this: the *only* thing that Jesus told us about vocational work is "Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into the harvest." So the foundation of our vocation work has to be, for our own lives and for everybody else, to develop and strengthen a spirit of prayer which will help all of us to be better disciples. Certainly this is the foundation, the culture, out of which vocations to the priesthood and religious life will arise.

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One particular form of prayer that's always very good to see during this conference is that we have a time and a place for an Adoration Chapel. Where there is more emphasis upon adoration of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, there are more people responding to vocations. It's not magic, it's just obvious. It's that profound reality. Archbishop Fulton Sheen always stressed daily Holy Hour for priests. (As a side note something that maybe we should all consider about all these horrible things we're hearing in the news about what priests have done in the past is that I can't imagine at the same time they were making a daily Holy Hour. I doubt it.) The key is a life of prayer. Whatever our vocation may be, from adoration comes action. We certainly see that in our patron's life. It's constantly moved by prayer, and that is fundamental.

One of the things that the Serra Club can do would be to encourage prayer — obviously within the club meetings; encourage the establishment of places of prayer within the dioceses; encourage adoration Holy Hours. When we get young people, old people or anyone more deeply engaged in the life of prayer, then we all serve in our vocation more faithfully. That's the foundation. And it isn't whacking the rock to make the water come out! We do have to think things through, we do have to plan, we do have to organize and do all those good things as God wants us to do, but it always comes back to the foundation of prayer. I remember there's some account from somewhere where there was a shortage of vocations to the priesthood, and the pastor simply said, "Let's all get on our knees and pray." It's just obvious, that's the heart of it all, and so it was from the beginning to the end of St. Junípero's mission in his life.

Study

A second point is study. Now this may not seem as obvious as prayer, but I remember reading the life of one of my great heroes, St. Francis DeSales. With a name like "DeSales," you might think he would be the patron saint of merchandising, but he's actually the patron saint of writers. He encouraged others to do as he did in his own life: to spend some time every day in study: reading, studying, reflecting, knowing our faith. The faith that is encouraged only by enthusiasm bubbles up and bubbles back; it doesn't have staying power. God put our heads at so prominent a place on our bodies that we must assume he wants us to use them. This is sensible. Obviously some people study a lot and get more degrees than a thermometer and there's always a danger of pride with that, but anything has dangers. Still, we've got to know our faith. For example, read the Catechism of the Catholic Church (especially before

going to bed because it is a bit dry!). But seriously, study. St. Junípero Serra had a doctorate in theology. He was a professor in Mallorca. The teaching he gave was from the fruits of a deep meditation and reflection and study of the faith.

We don't need to have the academic stuff, but we do need to know our faith, and especially now because some of the chief threats and dangers we have to the faith are intellectual. It is as in the days of the founding of the Dominicans, where during the Albigensian Heresy people were getting unclear teaching, and also they were getting bad example from the clergy. So St. Dominic and his followers (as well as St. Francis parallel to that for St. Junípero) decided to become teachers and preachers and to know the faith clearly.

Study is important. There's a lot of fuzzy thinking going on. We've got to think it through. So the second point we can learn from our patron is study and thinking, and that's what St. Francis DeSales spent an hour doing every day: reading and studying.

Zeal

Zeal. That's important. Fire. You must become fire, the fire of the Lord. We can't have some kind of bland organizational thing. We've got to have a personal love of our Lord Jesus Christ and proclaim it to the ends of the earth. We've always got to have this zeal, but especially in times when, as a pilot may say when flying, "There's turbulence ahead" or "We're running into a bit of bumpy air." Well we're going through that right now, so fasten your seat belts, but we have to have the zeal, the understanding, to do that.

How would you describe St. Junípero Serra? The image that keeps coming to my mind is the Energizer Bunny. It's probably not very devout to picture him that way, but he just kept going on and on! Obviously he had zeal. He gave up a position as the very well-esteemed professor in his home island and went way off to the distant corners to serve the Lord, because of his love for the Lord. Zeal for the Lord overcame him. After landing at Veracruz, his foot got injured and all of his life he suffered from that. Despite this, he walked all the way to Mexico City, he walked everywhere. He was indefatigable. He constantly kept on the move, setting up missions here, there and everywhere in the midst of fighting with the government, fighting with all kinds of people within the Church and outside the Church, facing enormous struggles that make any struggles that we may face in our mission look like nothing. And he kept on moving, he just kept on going. He was persistent. It's zeal for the Lord.

That's the kind of priests and religious we want, who have this zeal for the Lord, not just an organizational or career thing. We need to be on fire with zeal for the Lord like St. Junípero. He kept on going until he died. That's a pretty good way to be for all of us. It means that we have this strength to go up against these struggles that we face in our world, which are different from his, probably less severe than some of his although in other ways maybe more severe. He faced direct contradiction and violent attacks. In some parts of the world, Christians are being persecuted and murdered, but in our part of the world it's not something we face the way Saint Junípero did.

Studying the apocalypse has had a profound effect on my own life. There, the two challenges facing Christians were persecution and seduction. Some of them were going to be thrown to the lions, so you have the enemy as the beast. But most of them were not. Most of them faced seduction by the power of the Scarlet Woman or the false Jerusalem, Babylon the Great. They had to remember, "I am a citizen of Jerusalem while living in Babylon the Great," and that's more like the sort of challenge we face in the modern world. St. Junípero Serra faced the other kind of difficulty. Nevertheless, we need to have that zeal, that strength.

Hope

Finally, I think that along with prayer, study and zeal, what we need to have is hope. Not optimism; optimism says, "Every day in every way things are getting better and better." I don't see any evidence of that.

In his great poem "If" Kipling said that if you can keep your head when people all around you are losing theirs and blaming you for it, then "you'll be a Man my son!" Somebody else said if you can keep your head when others all around you cannot, you don't understand the seriousness of the situation. But there is hope. Hope is clear-eyed. Hope is realistic. Hope sees the world around us as it is but also sees it within the context of the divine plan of God, divine providence, and that makes all the difference.

Hope looks into evil and does not deny it as evil, doesn't pour a syrup of goodness over evil. Hope looks right into it but sees it within the broader perspective of the providence of God. Therefore hope is based on faith; not faith

as "when I wish upon a star," which is the secular parody of faith, but faith as an act of the intellect moved by the will, moved by the grace of God. That's what faith is. Jesus is Lord: that's an act of faith, because it isn't obvious that Jesus is Lord; it's therefore moved by the grace of God in the world which denies Christ our Lord. We proclaim that by God's grace. We see clearly the heart and the reality and we're ready to give a reason for the hope we have. We're ready to use our minds by God's grace to explain and present our hope because it is based upon a faith that sees with cold clarity the reality that surrounds us immediately, but sees that within the context of divine providence. That's why to nurture our faith that gives us sight, we need to be immersed in the Word of God and the living faith of the Church, and at times in prayer. We need prayer, study and zeal. That will lead us to hope.

(St. Junípero) constantly kept on the move, setting up missions in the midst of fighting with the government, fighting with people within the Church and outside the Church, facing enormous struggles that make any struggles that we may face in our mission look like nothing.

That's why St. Junípero was unstoppable: it was his hope. When the missions were burning down and things were going wrong, he expected that. You don't get discouraged by that because it's in this world, and this world is full of

problems. What sustains us is a hope based on the reality of the providence of God.

Some writer once said that the "One thing I know for sure is that God's providence rises before the dawn." That gives us the strength to bring forth fruit in love, in a love that is not a mere emotion, but a love that is deep and profound; a love that is sustaining and unstoppable; that is effective and is rooted in faith in Christ our Lord. The energy that leads us to be able to do that despite the storms and turbulence of life, whatever they may be, outside the Church or inside the Church, is hope rooted in faith that bears fruit in love. That is what St. Junípero Serra showed in his life. Although there are many differences between our time and his time, we can look to our heavenly patron for guidance in our own work as disciples of Christ and our own vocation work. Some people ask us, "Are you discouraged about this or that?" Well, no. The Church is in God's hands and we just simply dispose ourselves to do God's will.

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done"; too often we say "*My* kingdom come, *my* will be done." No, we've got to have that disposition of trust in the providence of God that leads us through faith to hope to love. 🙏



Though Mission San Gabriel Arcangel was not one of the missions founded by St. Junípero Serra, its bell tower is the one depicted in Serra International's logo. This mission was among others vandalized in response to St. Junípero's canonization in 2015.

Defending Saint Junípero Serra in the Marketplace

Sifting through facts, fiction and perspectives on our controversial patron

*The following are excerpts from a talk given by author and educator **Christian Clifford** at the Serra Rally in Ventura, California, on Jan. 19, 2019.*

Junípero Serra Ferrer, O.F.M. (given name Miguel José Serra Ferrer) has been given many titles: Father of the California Missions; Apostle of the California Missions; Apostle of California; Evangelizer of the West; a Founding Father of the United States; the United States' first Hispanic Saint.

Not everyone admires Serra, though. Since his canonization on Sept. 23, 2015, memorials of this saint have been vandalized six times — at Monterrey, twice in Carmel, in Mission Hills, Old Mission Santa Barbara, and Mission San Gabriel. The front wooden doors and a side wall at Mission Santa Cruz were spray painted in red with the message “Serra St. of Genocide” and most recently, another house of worship, Mission Santa Barbara, was vandalized.

Once the canonization was announced by Pope Francis in January 2015, many in the media, both Catholic and mainstream, portrayed it as controversial; one was either for or against it. Serra's story, though, is not so black and white.

Serra the Miracle

Serra International President Mario Biscardi, challenged you last summer (Aug. 7, 2018), “If you need inspiration, look no further than our own patron, Saint Junípero Serra, whose travails show us what prayer, faith and sacrifice can achieve.” He was spot on!

When Serra left Old California (Baja) and entered New California, he was an old man who came to uncharted territory. Here he would rise above the life of an ordinary man. Recall that he discerned God's call to be a missionary and sacrificed so much by leaving his loved ones to serve Christ by serving strangers. He even shared with the governor that if the natives should kill him, that they should be forgiven and pardoned. He tried his best to learn native languages so that he could help them understand the Faith; he stood up for justice, penning what has been coined as the native bill of rights; and he was also a man of his time — using self-flagellation as a form of penance and upholding corporal punishment, common practices during Serra's day.

For many it is not a shock that Pope Francis dispensed of the usually required second miracle. Serra's life is a second miracle! He was 5'2”, short by even the standards of his time. He voluntarily left the comforts of home knowing full

well he would never return. On his first night in New Spain, just outside Veracruz, he was bitten by an insect. It would cause him great pain, off and on, for the rest of his life. He was asthmatic. He was only expected to live a few days—we know this because he was baptized hours after he was born—and look at what he accomplished. He lived 70 years, 9 months and 4 days. The average age in the late 18th century was between 30 and 40 years. His life was one well lived. Many of us already knew this, having prayed to him to intercede on our behalf for many, many years.

The Controversy Surrounding Serra's Legacy

This perspective is rooted in pain and suffering. It is a tragic history. Our nation's first "Original sin" was the decimation of natives. It is important to note that it worked its way westward from the East, from predominantly White Anglo Saxon Protestant America. The Spanish story in California gets wrongly placed with that history. As Boyd Cothran, professor of Indigenous and Cultural History at York University in Toronto put it, "In a lot of ways, what does Serra represent? In their (native) minds, Serra represents the totality of the colonial experience, so when they're criticizing Serra, they are criticizing coercive Christian colonization and massive deaths and loss of culture."

Opponents contest that Serra (1) perpetrated genocide, (2) enslaved others and (3) was cruel.

It is true that many native Californians who came in contact with the mission system did perish prematurely. This was almost entirely due to epidemics and pandemics. Benjamin Madley, associate professor of history, University of California, Los Angeles, puts it into focus: "The indigenous population of California under Spanish rule dropped from 300,000 prior to 1769, to 250,000 in 1834. After Mexico won its independence from Spain, and after the secularization of the coastal missions by the Mexican government in 1834, the indigenous population suffered a much more drastic decrease in population to 150,000 (there were three province-wide pandemics—in 1806, 1828, and 1838). The period immediately following the U.S. Conquest of California has been characterized by numerous sources as a genocide. Under U.S. sovereignty, after 1848, the Indigenous population plunged from perhaps 150,000 to 30,000 in 1870 and reached its nadir of 16,000 in 1900."¹

Next, I would like to speak to the accusation of enslavement. The missions only worked if laborers were plenty. According to scholars James Sandos and George Harwood, missions were designed to attract, not destroy. After learning the basics of what it meant to be a Spanish Catholic, the native was required to work like the Spaniard.

To leave the Mission one had to ask for permission. If one did not return on the prescribed day one was seen as a deserter. It is estimated that 4-10% did.² People from the mission would be sent out to retrieve the deserter. They would be given multiple chances to return. Once the final request was made and there was no response, soldiers, including Mission Indian auxiliaries, would bring the culprit back, by force if needed. The fear was the mission Indian would revert to old practices opposed to Christianity, thus putting their eternal salvation in jeopardy.

Last, a few contend that Serra was cruel. In the previous example, Serra would have allowed for corporal punishment to make a point that desertion is not an option. This would be taught first and if broken, physical punishment would occur. This would happen to a Spanish soldier who deserted too. It would have happened to an errant school boy in Spain if he misbehaved. Cal Poly San Luis Obispo professor emeritus of History Dan Krieger explained in a *Santa Maria Sun* article that thick whips of cord were used that rarely broke skin.³ In this case Serra was a man of his time; society did not frown upon corporal punishment.

Andrew Galvan, Ohlone Indian and curator at Mission Dolores in San Francisco sums it up best. In a *San Francisco Magazine* article he asserted, ". . . I blame the system, not the individual. Serra was a very good person operating in a very bad situation."⁴

The vast majority of Serra historians have exonerated him of accusations that he perpetrated genocide, enslaved others, and was cruel.

What Serrans Can Do

The Catholic Church is confident. The ecclesial court proceedings to question Serra's holiness began on Dec. 12, 1948. The evidence brought forth were 2,420 documents (7,500 pages total) of Serra's writings, 5,000 pages of materials written about him from those who knew him, and testimony of people inspired by his life. A summary of findings would be collected into the *Positio* (position paper)—Serra's position was 1,200 pages.⁵ The evidence propelled Pope Francis to share in the homily at Serra's canonization on September 23, 2015 in Washington, D.C., "Junípero sought to defend the dignity of the native community, to protect it from those who had mistreated and abused it."⁶

I happened upon a statement by a Native American university professor who was very outspoken in the days leading up to Serra's canonization. She wrote, "In the 65

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Much Ado About Generation Z

What You Need to Know About the Youngest Generation of Catholics

On Saturday, Jan. 19, at the 2019 Serra Rally in Ventura, California, **Christina Lamas, Executive Director for the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry**, provided an eye-opening presentation on the mysterious “Generation Z” to Serrans. Who are Generation Z? They are the youngest Catholics today, generally categorized as being born between 1996 and 2010. How are they unique? Lamas listed the following key points:

- This generation has never known a world without computers or cell phones.
- They are savvy customers.
- They are globally focused because of their interaction with the cell phone.
- They are very dependent on technology, which has permeated every aspect of their lives.
- This generation is the most racially, ethnically, religiously and sexually diverse in United States history.
- This is the first generation not heavily exposed to Christianity or the Church.
- They are highly independent.
- They do not like structure and they do not like authority.

Following are highlights from Lamas’ presentation:

On a pastoral lens for Generation Z:

Let’s accompany our young people, but let’s walk with them with the generosity of hope, a generous spirit of authenticity, where we have a desire to really engage with them. This generation wants to be engaged. We need to be a Church that desires to know the life of young people and wants them to be a part of the life and the vitality of our community; a Church that is merciful, empathetic, understanding, loving and embraces a young person just as he or she is. They want to feel that they have a mission and a purpose. They are looking for it. How can we provide those opportunities for them to begin to explore how God is calling them in their lives?

On Pope Francis and Generation Z:

Pope Francis tells us that the young people of today will be the street preachers on every corner of the world. They have it at their fingertips. Just imagine, when a young person is on fire for Christ, and they are truly living out their discipleship, what they can do with this cell phone. How many people within their circles and outside of their circles can they evangelize?

On the impact of parents and grandparents:

According to research from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), “Although many parents

may express concerns about their teens not communicating enough with them in general, many Catholic teens say their parents rarely or never speak to them about religion. Only 8% report their parents talk to them about religion daily and 20% say their parents do so at least once a week.” If parents are engaged (with faith), it is more likely the young people will be engaged. The power of grandparents is huge within generations.

On Generation Z’s potential receptivity:

Millennials have had a negative experience of the Catholic Church and Christianity in general. The Catholic Church is not the only religion experiencing the drop out of people disengaged and disaffiliated with the faith; this is across the board. But Generation Z has no imprint, no damage that needs to be undone. They’re starting at zero, a blank slate. This may be good or this may be bad, but I think that it can be taken as an advantage if we change how we interact with Generation Z, because they have the potential to drastically change and mold and define Catholicism into the next centuries to come.

Why we need to be on YouTube and Instagram:

Social media is a huge component of how they’re living their lives. High usage on social media such as Instagram and YouTube is an indication of two things: their social status and community. They are looking on social media for places to belong. Ninety-five percent of Generation Z are on YouTube. If we are not ministering to and engaging with this generation on YouTube and Instagram (not so much Facebook), we are missing the boat. They won’t hear the message. By far, social media is the best way at this point to reach this generation.

On the value of transparency:

Generation Z values transparency, authenticity and honesty. They know what’s phony, they know what’s false news, and if you’re not authentic they can’t trust you.


On the questions they need answers for:

Young people are asking themselves the following questions: Who am I? Where do I fit in? What difference do I make? Once we can engage one on one, we can help them begin to discern how God plays a role in their lives and in answering those questions.

On the best way to learn about them:

The best way to learn about Generation Z is in having one on one conversations with them. If you have grandchildren, nieces, nephews in Generation Z, reach out to them and have conversations with them, because that’s what they’re thirsting for.

What Serrans need ask themselves:

What do you think most needs to be transformed in your local ministry efforts with Gen Z? 

From Catholic Youth and Young Adults By the Numbers: A Brief Summary of What We Know About Catholic Youth and Adults by Dr. Charlotte McCorquodale

There are many important numbers that help us to understand the current realities of Catholic youth and young adults today. These numbers indicate a trend of young Catholics leaving the faith or at minimum practicing their faith less than previous generations.

Recent research conducted by The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) show that the majority of Catholics leave the Church at a young age and that their struggle with what the church teaches is a primary reason. Those who leave are just as likely to be male as they are female, and their demographics generally mirror those of all young Catholics their age.

- 63% of those interviewed said they stopped being Catholic between the ages of 10 and 17
- 13 is the typical age at which those interviewed for the CARA study said they decided to leave the Church, and 13% of respondents said they were ever likely to return to the Catholic Church
- 23% of those interviewed for the CARA study say they left the faith before age 10
- 50% or more of those interviewed who have left the Church said the following two reasons were either "somewhat" or "very" important to their decision to leave: that they had stopped believing in what the Catholic Church teaches and that they did not like the Catholic Church's rules and judgmental approach
- 71% is the “retention rate” for Hispanic or Latino/a youth which is 10% higher than non-Hispanic or Latino/a youth but still down from 82% just 10 years ago.



Postage stamps depicting St. Junípero Serra issued by the governments of Spain and the United States.

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years that the California Missions were run by the Catholic Church, the numbers of California Indians went from about one million to 350,000.” Having researched Serra and the missions for some time, the commonly accepted number among scholars is that California Indians numbered approximately 300,000 pre-contact. Therefore, I asked her for her sources. She kindly replied with her rationale. When I replied that it would be fair to present the consensus view, her tone changed. She got very personal and argumentative – asking how long I have been working on this [mission studies] and that she did not think I was in any position to question her because I was white. It was hard to read. I replied, “I am sorry that my question offended you. I am Catholic. Your assertion deals with my history too.”

It is easy to run or fight in such an instance. However, Christ compels us to practice the third way, to not back down and make the aggressor rethink their thinking. I pray she did.

Saint Junípero Serra wrote to Fray Miguel de Petra from Mexico City on Sept. 29, 1758, “I realize my nothingness

and febleness for such a glorious enterprise. But God is powerful, and can call great things out of nothing . . .” It is evident to me that the reputation of a man who believed this and lived it is worth defending.

At Serra’s canonization on Sept. 23, 2015, Pope Francis shared that Serra embodied going forth, met people where they were, and served and defended those on the margins.

Let’s do what Pope Francis shared and couple them with a deep relationship with and intercession of Saint Junípero Serra. If we do, we are destined to bring others closer to God’s love and truth. We must heed the advice of John Lancaster Spalding, first bishop of the Diocese of Peoria and a co-founder of The Catholic University of America, “. . . with dignity rather than in a combative spirit, enter into the living controversies of the age.”⁷ 

Christian Clifford is a veteran Catholic school teacher and author of three books about Catholic Church history in Spanish-Mexican California. He and his family live in the San Francisco Bay Area. For more information, visit the books category at www.vianneyvocations.com or go to www.Missions1769.com.

¹ Madley, Benjamin. *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846–1873*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016 (351).

² Figures are from Robert Archibald, “Indian Labor at the California Missions: Slavery or Salvation?”, *The Journal of San Diego History* 24(2), Spring 1978 and Gregory Orfalea, “Was Junipero Serra a Saint?”, *Commonweal Magazine*, August 31, 2015.

³ <http://www.santamariasun.com/cover/13613/mission-to-sainthood-father-junipero-serra-helped-establish-the-california-mission-system-but-is-he-saint-material/>

⁴ <https://www.modernluxury.com/san-francisco/story/junipero-serras-missions-destroyed-entire-native-cultures-and-now-hes-going-be-s>

⁵ Weber, Francis J. *The Life and Times of Fray Junípero Serra*, EZ Books: San Luis Obispo, 1988 (101-102).

⁶ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150923_usa-omelia-washington-dc.html

⁷ Curti, Merle. *The Social Ideas of American Educators*. Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1971 (353-54).



Increase Vocations Awareness in Your Parish

National/Worldwide Vocation Awareness and Appreciation Events

Several times a year, the Church provides opportunities for the faithful to celebrate vocations. Four such events are **Priesthood Sunday**, **National Vocation Awareness Week**, **World Day for Consecrated Life** and **World Day of Prayer for Vocations**. Serra Clubs are encouraged to provide support to parishes to celebrate these events. Gather resources 90 days prior to each occasion.

Priesthood Sunday September 29, 2019

Priesthood Sunday is a special day set aside to honor priesthood in the United States. It is a day to reflect upon and affirm the role of the priesthood in the life of the Church as a central one. Compared to the other national and world vocations celebrations, Priesthood Sunday is more a personal one for parishes and organizations with a chaplain, who cultivate close working relationships with their priests and therefore could benefit from a special day to express their gratitude. Starting in 2019, Priesthood Sunday was moved from the last Sunday in October to the last Sunday of September, to allow it to better stand on its own apart from National Vocations Awareness Week (see next item). Note: Dioceses and parishes may choose to celebrate this occasion on a different Sunday that fits their schedule. Share resources with parish schools during summer months. Begin planning in July.

World Day for Consecrated Life February 2, 2020

In 1997, Pope Saint John Paul II instituted a day of prayer for women and men in consecrated life attached to the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2. This feast is also known as Candlemas Day, the day on which candles symbolizing Christ, who is the light of the world, are blessed. So too, those in consecrated life are called to reflect the light of Jesus Christ to all peoples. When Feb. 2 does not fall on a Sunday, World Day for Consecrated Life is transferred to the following Sunday. Begin planning in November.

World Day of Prayer for Vocations May 3, 2020

World Day of Prayer for Vocations is observed on Good Shepherd Sunday. The purpose of this day is to publicly fulfill the Lord's instruction to "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest" (Mt 9:38; Lk 10:2). As a climax to a prayer that is continually offered throughout the Church, it affirms the primacy of faith and grace in all that concerns vocations to the priesthood and to the consecrated life. Begin planning in February.

National Vocation Awareness Week November 3-9, 2019

NVAW is an annual week-long celebration dedicated to the promotion of vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life in the United States through prayer and education, and to renew our prayers and support for those who are considering one of these particular vocations. This event was established by U.S. bishops in 1976. Begin planning in August.

All the resources you need to plan these events are available at www.serraspark.org. Choose Tool #11.



Serra: The Action that Follows Prayer

by Richard Arians
President-Elect, Serra's USA Council

Many Serrans are asked, “What do you Serrans do?” We confidently answer, “We pray for vocations.” But then we receive the response for which we have no answer: “Well, I don’t need to be a Serran to pray.”

Serrans routinely ask religious leaders what more we can do to gain “an increase of laborers for Your Church.” The universal answer is, “Pray.” Serrans certainly pray, yet the Church continues to be challenged with a shortage of young men and women choosing a religious life of service. It’s easy to suggest that something is missing; or if the parts are there, they are not connecting.

Serrans know well our three-fold mission to promote and support religious vocations to the priesthood, to promote and support vocations to consecrated life, and to recognize and respond to our own call to holiness. Or do we? Do we just mumble the third one? Or, to be more precise, are we really living our mission?

When asked what more can we do, former Episcopal Adviser to Serra’s USA Council Bishop Andrew Cozzens observed that Serrans are “event-based.” He agreed those events were critical and appreciated, then suggested we move to enrich our mission by becoming more reflective. Serra International Episcopal Adviser Cardinal Collins reinforced the importance of prayer and adoration, “because action is what follows prayer.”

The prayer life of Serrans goes far beyond reciting our familiar “Prayer for Vocations” and “Prayer for the Perseverance of Vocations.” Serra’s United States Programs Committee has developed a rich platform for group reflection, adoration, Bible study, faith building, and sharing. Our *Call to Holiness Manual* (available for download at <https://serraus.org/club-meetings-programs/>) provides a resource for assisting Serra clubs to help their members to recognize their personal call to holiness. The manual contains over 50 programs that can be led by clergy, deacons, or lay people. Each program includes an introduction, prayer, scripture, reflection, discussion, and tradition. Each program is liturgically referenced. Programs can also be referenced by liturgical holiday and season.

The Programs Committee regularly updates and revises the manual to be relevant so it can be used by clubs to plan their meetings throughout the year. This last Lent, a Lenten Reflection series was developed and presented to Serra Clubs around the world. It featured a four week-long series that came from the manual: Week 1 — “Ash Wednesday”; Week 2 — Reconciliation through Commu-

nity”; Week 3 — “Mary Magdalene, The Apostle to the Apostles”; Week 4 — “In His Steps: A Program of Renewal & Commitment.” This was followed with another series of reflections to prepare Serrans for a retreat. This included: “Prayer: A Path to Vocational Call”; “God the Father”; “The Holy Spirit in My Life”; and “The Beatitudes.” These prayer-based, faith-focused programs inspire Serrans to action.

Being Catholic today is a challenge. A deep faith based on prayer is critical to meeting that challenge. Only the strength of our faith withstands controversy and personal struggle. The strength of our faith defends our Church. The strength of our faith will keep our mission always moving forward.

It is the responsibility and mission of Serra clubs to assist their members in realizing their call to holiness. Then, when someone asks us what Serrans do, we can answer, “We’re the action that follows prayer. Join us.” Take advantage of the the rich resources provided by Serra to support our call to holiness. Find them, learn them, use them. ☪



Brochures promoting the USA Programs Committee’s resources were distributed at the Serra Rally in January 2019.

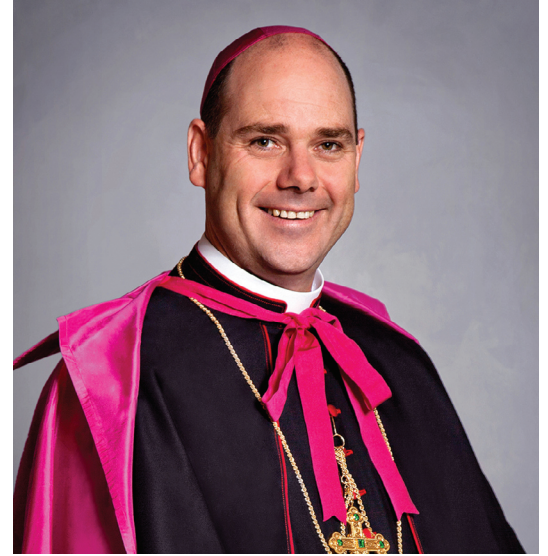


Meet Most Rev. Michael Robert Kennedy

New SCANZSPAC Episcopal Adviser

Bishop Michael Kennedy became the Episcopal Adviser for Serra's Council for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific (SCANZSPAC) in February 2019. He succeeds Bishop Les Tomlinson who had that role for six years. Bishop Kennedy is very supportive of Serra and will assist and to advise the Board to the best of his ability.

Bishop Michael is no stranger to Serra. Before his appointment as a bishop, he was a speaker at a SCANZSPAC Convention and knows the members of the Serra Club of Wagga Wagga (New South Wales) and some members of the SCANZSPAC Board. He is the brother of Andrew Kennedy, Governor of District 92.



Personal Details

Bishop Michael Kennedy was born on 13th May 1968 in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia. He is the youngest of nine children born to John and Fidelma Kennedy.

Education

Bishop Michael was educated in Wagga Wagga by the Christian Brothers. Following that schooling, he attended the Sydney Catholic College of Education undertaking a Diploma in Education. He then taught for three years at Xavier Catholic College in Albury, New South Wales in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga.

In 1992, he entered Vianney College, the Wagga Wagga Diocesan Seminary. In 1994, he continued his academic studies in Rome. He obtained a Licentiate in Sacred Theology at the Urban College of Propaganda Fide and a Diploma in Mariology at the Marianum Pontifical School.

Diocesan Priest

Bishop Kennedy was ordained to the priesthood on 14th August, 1999. Over the following 12 years, he held the following positions:

Assistant Priest and Parish Priest (various parishes)

Rector of St Francis' Residential College at Charles Sturt University

Lecturer in Moral Theology, Mariology and

Church History at Vianney College

Director of Vocations, Diocese of Wagga Wagga

Member of Diocesan Council of Priests and College of Consultors

Member of Diocesan Catholic Schools' Commission

Vicar Forane

Bishop

In an announcement by Pope Benedict XVI made on 7th December 2011, Father Michael Kennedy was appointed as the 10th Bishop of the Diocese of Armidale. He was ordained and installed as Bishop of Armidale on 9th February 2012 at Sts Mary & Joseph's Cathedral Armidale.

In November 2011, Bishop Kennedy was appointed the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Wilcannia / Forbes Diocese in addition to his pastoral role in Armidale. He held this position until July 2014.

Current Appointments:

Member of *Bishop's Commission for Life, Family & Public Engagement*

Bishop's Delegate to the *Australian Catholic Marriage and Family Council*

Chair of the *Studies in Catholic Thought Reference Group*





Mario Biscardi
Past President,
Serra International

Just Do It!

Overcoming inertia to achieve your membership goals

Recently, I was shopping at a regional mall when a long-time Serran and friend spotted me, and so we went for a coffee and a chat. After the usual pleasantries and updates on what is

happening in our lives, he asked me whether my Serra membership drive for the year was successful, to which I responded “Yes, it was. I have brought in two new Serrans and so I have done my part.” He said, “No, I meant Serra’s membership drive. Did Serra double in size in one year?” I explained that the Serra membership drive was not to double the size of Serra in one year. Yes, if you do the math and every Serran brings in one new Serran in one year, Serra doubles its membership (*and wouldn’t that be nice!*) but read the literature and you will not find anywhere that states that I asked Serra to double its size in one year.

This is a very typical response that I have received from many good Serrans around the Serra world during the past year as your President, and sadly, it is the reason why Serra has not experienced the growth in membership that Serra needs in order to remain relevant to our Church everywhere.

Now, as I reflect on this “ask” to every Serran, I have no doubt at all that this was a goal that surely every Serran could have accomplished. Surely, each one of us could bring in one new Serran in one year! That is a very doable goal within one year. Surely we could find a good Catholic in our family (less than 20% of our Serrans are registered as a “spousal member”) or a good Catholic friend or fellow parishioner who would be interested in joining Serra to befriend our priests and help foster new priestly vocations. Failing all this, surely each Serran knows at least one priest or one religious or one deacon or one seminarian, who could refer someone to Serra.

I believe that all Serrans can achieve this membership goal. All that we need to do is embrace the membership strategy and overcome our own inertia. They say that a

plane uses most of its fuel during take-off and in reaching its cruising altitude. A much lesser portion of fuel is needed to fly the plane to its destination. The same goes for us in achieving our goals. As the Nike slogan goes, “Just do it,” and when we do, it gets done!

Only one club in all of Serra has successfully completed its membership drive and as a result, its membership has doubled in one year. I am aware that about 25 clubs in the USA and Canada have increased membership between 20% and 50%, and I am certain that many more clubs have increased between 10 and 25%.

They say that a plane uses most of its fuel during take-off and in reaching its cruising altitude. A much lesser portion of fuel is needed to fly the plane to its destination. The same goes for us in achieving our goals.

When I conveyed this information to my good friend and Serran, he was amazed and thought that with that level of success, membership in Serra must have increased significantly over the past year. Unfortunately, that is not so. Typically, clubs have been showing an aging and declining membership everywhere except

in Canada, the Philippines and Nigeria which seems to have no difficulty attracting youth to Serra. Additionally, new club formation seems to have stalled, and so our overall numbers have not increased as much as we would have expected. However, the new members gained over the past year by clubs that embraced the membership strategy and focused on membership growth, has helped us to stem the decline and in fact show a small gain over the past year.

Those clubs that embraced the membership strategy and have done very well, should be recognized and commended for their good efforts. They are:

CANADA:

Durham Region Serra increased membership by 100%

Markham and Scarborough - increased 35%

Toronto Central (*my club*) - increased 30%

PHILIPPINES:

Philippines Council increased 35%

USA:

- North Houston, TX – increased 44%
- Reno, NV – increased 44%
- Colorado Springs, CO - increased 42%
- Cincinnati, OH - increased 40%
- Providence, RI - increased 36%
- Memphis TN - increased 35%
- Atchison Region, KS - increased 30%
- East Valley, AZ - increased 30%
- Northeast Fort Worth, TX - increased 30%
- Tiffin, OH - increased 27%
- Metropolitan Dallas, TX - increased 27%
- San Bernardino, CA - increased 27%
- Northeast of Houston, TX - increased 25%
- New Orleans, LA – increased 24%
- North Idaho, ID - increased 24%
- San Diego - North Coast - increased 24%
- Indianapolis, IN – increased 23%
- Williamson County, TN - increased 23%

- St. Mary’s & Sidney Deaneries, OH - increased 22%
- Fort Worth, TX – increased 21%
- Honolulu, HI - increased 20%
- Twin Cities Airport, MN - increased 20%
- North Central North Dakota, ND - increased 20%

I asked my fellow Serran whether he was successful in bringing in one new Serran this past year. At this point, his head hung low and looking at the floor, he thanked me for the coffee and walked away quietly.

In closing, our membership strategy was a three-year campaign and we could not realistically expect all Serrans and all Clubs to achieve it in one year. That is something that only our Good Lord can do quite easily. **However, we now have “built the foundation.” In the coming year, we will “build the structure” of the house, and in the following year, we will “finish the interior” together, and make Serra strong again.**

Fellow Serrans, we need to maintain the focus on membership for the next couple of years, and I am delighted that your incoming President, Dr. Ruben Gallegos, has stated that membership will continue to be our #1 focus. By doing so, we will be successful in revitalizing Serra everywhere.

May our Good Lord bless all your efforts in promoting membership in Serra! ☺



Join us in a monthly international prayer of the Rosary, *via conference call!* At 8:00 a.m. Central Time (-6:00GST) on the last Saturday of every month, Serrans worldwide gather to recite the Rosary for vocations.

Upcoming Rosary dates for 2019:

- August 31, 2019
- September 28, 2019
- October 26, 2019
- November 30, 2019

To join from your computer, tablet or smartphone, go to:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/31431598>



USA Council Outstanding Club Newsletter Award

Each year, Serra's USA Council presents awards to the best club newsletters in each of its regions, and a single award to the highest-scoring club newsletter in the country. The awards will be presented at the Serra Rally in January.

Three judges around the nation review newsletter submissions and rate them on 100-point scale, where up to 60 points are awarded for quality of content and up to 40 points are awarded for quality of appearance (layout and pictures).

To submit, a club member should send the following to the Serra International office at 333 W. Wacker Drive, Suite 500, Chicago, IL 60606, ATTN: Anne McCormack, by Oct. 15:

THREE copies EACH of TWO CONSECUTIVE newsletters published since September of the previous year

A COVER SHEET including:

- title of the newsletter
- name of the newsletter editor
- name of the club
- city and state where the club operates
- name of the region
- a contact name, phone number and email address for the person submitting the entry

How to Craft a Great Serra Club Newsletter

A newsletter doesn't have to be long in order to be good. Some of the best newsletters are only a single sheet. Work with your club's budget when it comes to newsletter length, color, and paper choice.

- Prominently place: Serra logo, newsletter edition, name of Serra Club, website, officers, and newsletter editor contact information.
- Maintain a consistent publishing schedule.
- Include a letter from the club president.
- Include news from your district, region, national council and Serra International.
- An interesting title is always a plus!
- Focus on useful news for your fellow club members: ample advance notice for big club initiatives, concise reviews of past events, an easy-to-read club calendar.
- Include at least one item of spiritual content, written by club chaplain, club Programs VP, or reprinted from another trusted source.
- Create an attractive, inviting design with thoughtful headlines, high quality pictures, and readable font.
- Make good use of "white space" — don't crowd the page with dense blocks of text. Break it up with pictures, pull quotes, boxes and moderate margins.
- Limit your choice of fonts to two or three clean choices throughout the newsletter.



Do Your Members Know the “Big Picture” of Serra?

Thank you for being a Serran. Our work is so important and brings many blessings to each one of us. As I give thanks for Serra, I think of all the vocations that we have protected with our prayer and support. I recall the young people I know who have been inspired by our work to discern a religious vocation and realize this number is multiplied by an unknown number when we think of all the Serrans who have carried out our mission for years.

To the Serrans of the Serra Club of East Harris County, congratulations on your club’s Golden Anniversary. From your humble beginnings, some dedicated Catholics agreed that forming a Serra Club was the best way to promote and foster vocations in your archdiocese. As the years passed, your club grew and prospered to the dynamic club you have today.

For a club to live on and carry out the work, it must bring in new members. I pray that all Serra clubs accept this important challenge to find new members to serve our ministry. To make a real difference, we need to grow and I want to encourage each club to hold two membership drives a year.

Get Those Precious New Members on Board with the New Member Orientation Resources

When our clubs acquire new members, we need to make certain the new members understand the need for and beauty of this ministry. Please schedule an orientation session for them. Mike Downey, a regional director from Iowa, has prepared a 36-minute PowerPoint presentation that helps us understand the big picture of Serra. It would be great if you could invite the new members to an informal evening to see this show with some experienced Serrans and really take time to help our new members understand how important our work is and what it means to belong to our international organization. Download the New Member Orientation presentation from <https://serraus.org/materials>.

Serra SPARK: Everything You Need to Run Vocations Programs in Your Area

Do you wonder where your dues go? Check out www.serraspark.org.

The Serra Promotion and Resource Kit (SPARK) was requested by the National Council of Diocesan Vocation Directors (NCDVD) to help them with their work. This website provides great resources for vocation directors and vocation supporters. SPARK helps people not reinvent the wheel—when you want to start a vocation activity in your parish, SPARK makes it easy. Choose one of the programs on the website, then just add a few personal touches and brand it with your diocese and club name. Happy exploring on www.serraspark.org! Remember—your dues have helped our vocation directors and vocation supporters save time and money.



**Judy Cozzens,
President,
Serra’s National
Council for the
United States**

The Bus Ride to Heaven

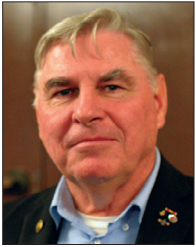
One deacon I met tells this story. When he was young, he thought about being a priest but he ended up marrying a faithful woman and raising a family. His wife knew of his great love for the Church and encouraged him to become a Permanent Deacon. With great enthusiasm he went through the diaconate program. He was thrilled to be a deacon and had a very vivid dream on the night of his ordination. In that dream, he dreamt that he died and was driving a large city bus to heaven. Dressed in his Deacon clothes, he arrived at the pearly gates. He jumped out of the bus yelling, “Lord, I made it and I am a Deacon.” The Lord looked at him and said, “Where are the people on your bus?”

This story has always touched my heart and helped me realize that not only do I want to go to heaven, I also want to fill my bus with as many people as possible and help them get to heaven also. How can I do that? Well, one really good way is to be a Serran and promote many religious vocations to serve our Church and help many people be ready to meet the Lord.

We are Serra. We serve because we love the Lord. Lord, we pray you will bless our work for our beautiful Church and help us grow in holiness and in our Serra Ministry so we can insure our children and grandchildren will be blessed with religious vocations to enliven their faith. 🙏

How many people are on your bus to Heaven?

Are You the Little Engine that Could or the Big Engine that Can't?




**Col. John J. Halloran, Jr.,
Vice President,
USA Membership**

Most of us remember the children's book *The Little Engine that Could* by Watty Piper. It was about a big engine that broke down going up the mountain with a long train. Other big engines were asked to take over and all of them had excuses as to why they couldn't. The request eventually came to the Little Engine who agreed to try. Of course, the morale of the story is about optimism and hard work.

How does this story relate to membership? Even though membership recruiting is everyone's responsibility, there are still a number of Serrans, who like the big engines have excuses as to why they can't lend a hand. Among such excuses are: "It's the job of the club Membership Vice-President or Membership Committee"; "I don't take rejection well"; "I've never been told no in my life, so if I don't ask, I can keep my streak going"; "I'm not good at it"; "I didn't sign up to recruit but to promote and foster vocations"; etc. The excuses or reasons are many but the laborers are few. Therefore, in many clubs membership recruiting falls to just one person or a handful of people trying to bring in new members.

As the story goes, the Little Engine takes on the responsibility of pulling the long train even though he wasn't that confident in himself. We know this by his constant affirmation: "I-think-I-can, I-think-I-can." Once he got the long train over the mountain his statement changed to "I-knew-I-could, I-knew-I-could." For many of us, one of the hardest things to do in Serra, or any organization that you belong to, is to ask others to join. Most of us became a Serran because someone, usually a friend or family member, asked us to. We were honored to be asked and thankful that we were, but we remain afraid to ask others.

I ask you to not be considered the big engine in your club. Take on the Little Engine task; the Little Engine may not have been sure he could perform the task, but his optimism carried him through. You will find over time that your motto will change from "I-think-I-can" to "I-knew-I-could."

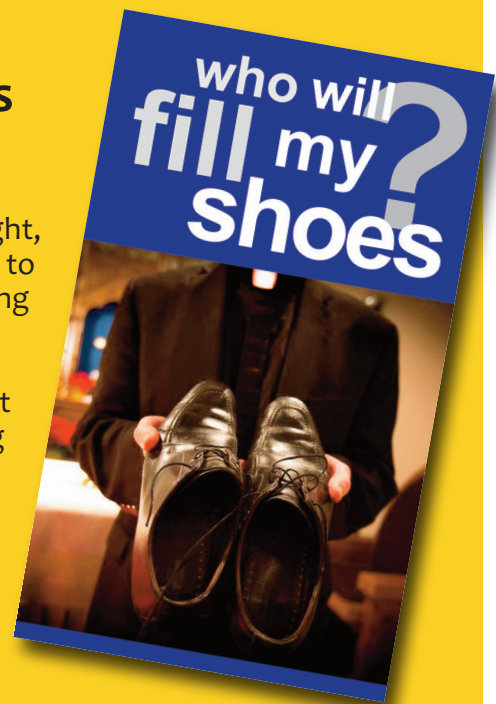
Your club needs you, Serra Council needs you, Serra International needs you, but most importantly that person who doesn't know how great Serra is, needs you to ask. Remember that optimism and hard work can overcome every obstacle. Are you the Little Engine that could or the big engine that can't? 

Here's a free tool to help your club's membership efforts this Fall.

Distribute in your parish pews the prayer card shown at right, with the Serran Prayer for Vocations plus a customizable line to include your club name and contact information encouraging others to join our vocations apostolate, on the back.

Download the file at <https://serraus.org/membership/>. Have it customized at your local print shop or on your desktop using Adobe Acrobat. Print as many as you need. The file is marked for trim at your local printer.

Having trouble customizing the card? Contact Anne McCormack at amccormack@serrainternational.org for help.





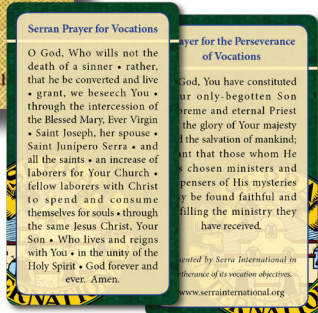
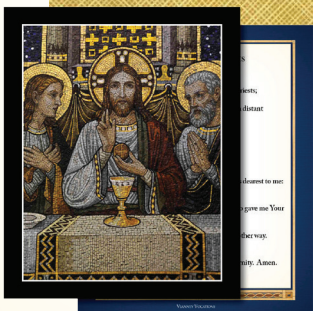
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Welcome to Serra

Handbook for
Serrans Called to Holiness



NEW MEMBER WELCOME KIT



Welcome new members to your club and introduce them to the Serra way of life. Each New Member Welcome Kit comes in a separate box and includes several basic items:

- Welcome letter from USA Council President
- Handbook for Serrans Called to Holiness
- Color Enamel Member Lapel Pin
- Durable Plastic Serran Prayer for Vocations Card
- Daily Prayer for Priests Card

\$19 at serrastore.org

Consider adding another gift for new members such as a shirt embroidered with the Serra logo. Browse ideas at the online Serra store.





Serra International
333 W. Wacker Drive Suite 500 | Chicago IL 60606
888.777.6681 | www.serrainternational.org

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Celebrate!

PRIESTHOOD SUNDAY

September 29, 2019

**Yes, Priesthood Sunday has MOVED to September!
Start planning now. See p. 11 for details.**

