


Serra+Connects

Connecting Serra Clubs Around the World + Abiding as One in Christ

Issue No. 2 • September-October 2012



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My Dear Fellow Serrans,

Wishing you the love and peace of our Risen Lord!

One of the joys and challenges of serving in this global lay apostolate for vocations is attending the annual Serra's International Convention. For each convention that I have attended thus far, I have had to travel close to 24 hours (or more) with at least one or sometimes even two stop-overs in order to get to the venue. I must admit that the long travelling time can be a discouragement. Due to work commitments I cannot be away for a long period of time. But the joy of making new friends and renewing old friendships has motivated me to go to Serra's International Conventions year after year. Furthermore, if not for these, I would not have had the opportunity to visit and experience the various places where the conventions were held, for example, Providence in Rhode Island where Serra's 70th International Convention was held recently.

The first Mass that my wife, Lucy and I attended in Providence was the early morning Mass on 20 June at the Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral. Initially, we planned to go for the noon time Mass as we had arrived in Providence only the evening before. Hence it was indeed a grace of God that we were able to get up early in time for the morning Mass. As we sat in the pew waiting for the Mass to begin, we were initially expecting the usual small morning Mass crowd. However, to our pleasant surprise, we saw many parishioners streaming endlessly in for the Mass and soon the whole Cathedral was packed with about 500 people. It was then we realized that the Mass was to mark the beginning of the "Fortnight for Freedom" campaign. It was really heartening to see the many young and old parishioners who were there very early in the morning to pray for religious freedom! It was certainly divine providence that we had the opportunity to unite our prayers with our Catholic American brethren at the Mass too. I was also very edified by the number of priests and seminarians present at the Mass which was celebrated by Most Reverend Thomas J. Tobin,

Bishop of Providence. Until today, that Mass has left a deep and lasting impression on me. This indeed was one of my greatest joys of attending Serra's International Convention.

It was also in Providence that the inaugural issue of "Serra Connects" was launched. On behalf of the Editorial team, I would like to give thanks to our Lord for blessing this initiative. I would also like to thank all of you for your kind words of encouragement. In order for this newsletter to be an efficient communication platform in the Serra world, we need your prayers as well as your contribution of articles and news of your clubs' activities. We need you to share with us the good works that you have been doing in promoting vocations. We also need your feedback of what you would like to see in the upcoming issues. Hence, please do send us your comments to info@serra.org.

In this issue, we have added a new column called "Seminary Insights". The objective of this column is to help Serrans gain a better insight into life in a seminary and the challenges that formators and seminarians face. We are very grateful that Father Christopher Mahar, Rector of the Our Lady of Providence Seminary has kindly provided the insights pertaining to the seminary we are featuring in this issue.

Let's continue to unite our prayers for the Lord of the harvest to bless us with more vocations to the priesthood. Let's also continue to pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance to be more effective in this global lay apostolate. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (Zech 4:6).

Mary, Mother of Vocations, pray for us.

God Bless,



Sean Yeo

Editor, Serra Connects

Calling all Serra Clubs! We want your Group Photo + Christmas Greeting for Year-End Issue of Serra Connects!

Share the joy of Christmas! We invite you to email a recent photo of your Club members with a Christmas message (up to 100 words) to info@serra.org before 1 November 2012!



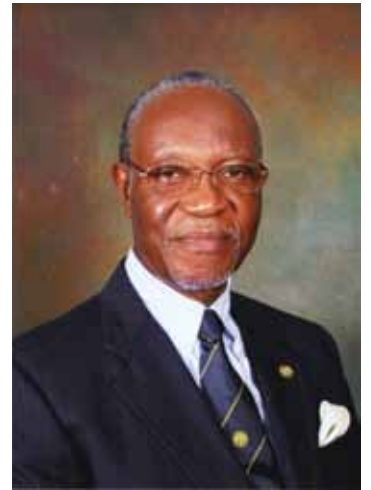
Serra International's President, John "Tomi" Asenuga on Serra Connects

The launch of Serra Connects was something that was a long time coming. Over the years Serra International has had many different magazines, the most prominent of which was called The Serran. With the advent of the Internet and much more efficient and cost effective communications, the print magazine was no longer an ideal choice.

In the last six months an idea was sparked when the Serra Club of Singapore proposed to the Serra International office to create a bi-monthly publication which would have two goals - to connect Serrans vertically and horizontally (spiritually and socially/with each other). For my part as President, and those who have gone before me, it has been a real challenge to involve Serra Clubs around the world. There are a great number of ideas for promoting vocations in local areas and no forum for sharing these ideas. In Serra Connects there is a section titled "Serra Around the World" which features contributions from Serra Clubs worldwide on their vocation promotion activity. Socially Serra Clubs often feel isolated --and though Serra hosts its international convention each year at the beginning of summer, many are not able to come for obvious reasons. The publication perpetuates the discussion, exchange of ideas and awareness that Serra is more

than just international -- it is global.

Secondly, the publication attempts to unite us as Serrans in the faith that Christ has given us. There is a section on a matter of the theology, philosophy or spirituality for each issue called "Serrans' Call to Holiness" written by Jon Haines, Serra International's



Director of Research and Communications. There is a section which lists the resources that are especially advantageous for Serrans to use in their apostolate. There has also been a section for a bishop or priest to give his own spiritual or pastoral advice.

I would very much encourage all Serrans to keep an eye out for this publication in their e-mail boxes separately from The Bellringers. It is sure to benefit the Serra world, if not Serrans themselves. †

Serra's 'That We May be ONE' 54-Day Rosary Novena



Dear fellow Serrans,

We would like to thank all of you who have prayed with us in the "Serra's 'That We May be ONE' 54-Day Rosary Novena" from 16 July 2012 to 7 September 2012. With the intercession of Our Lady, "Queen of the Most Holy Rosary", we know the Lord has heard our prayers said in unity for a common intention. May our Lord continue to bless you abundantly for your love and generosity.

Mary, Mother of Vocations, pray for us!

Yours in Christ,

John "Tomi" Asenuga
President

Sean Yeo
President-Elect

Highlight of Providence Convention



**Serra's 70th International Convention
Providence, Rhode Island, 23 June 2012**
**The Good Work begun in you
will be perfected unto the day of
Christ Jesus. (Phil 1:6)**

At Serra's 70th International Convention held in Providence, Rhode Island in June, we had the great privilege of hearing from His Eminence Justin Francis Cardinal Rigali, Serra International's Ninth Episcopal Adviser (1999-2008) who gave us an insightful and inspirational keynote address. Given below is a snippet of the address, the full text can be found on www.serra.org.

The theme that you have chosen from Saint Paul is a clear indication that the work of Serra International must always be considered a work of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is the one who performs the work. It is a work that advances His Kingdom. It is a work that expresses a vision of faith that is distinctively Catholic. In it Jesus Christ invites us to partnership with Himself. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, He is able to make our lowly work effective for His cause. This, then, is the partnership to which Serra International is proud to be committed.

This is what is at stake in Serra International. This is the Catholic vision of faith in Jesus Christ and His

Church that Serra International exists to promote and to extend. What an exhilarating role you Serrans are invited to fulfill as you strive for holiness and yearn to enrich the world with the priesthood of Jesus Christ!

And so by your prayers and labor of love, entering into partnership with Jesus Christ in His Church, you foster and promote vocations to His priesthood. And in so doing, you are effectively contributing to the building up of His Kingdom: an eternal and universal Kingdom: a Kingdom of truth and life, a Kingdom of holiness and grace, a Kingdom of justice, love and peace.

Dear Serrans, what a great privilege you have, what a splendid activity you are engaged in! May no obstacle or challenge impede you in pursuing the great goal of promoting the priestly work of Jesus Christ and His Church."

*Justin Cardinal Rigali,
Serra's 70th International Convention, 23 June 2012*

Seminary of Our Lady of Providence



If we are faithful to Christ, He will be faithful to us. If we trust in Him and believe that He never leaves us, never ceases to guide us and provide for us the means, the gifts and the fortitude to accomplish His work here, we will see great things in priestly formation and in the Church.

How has the profile of the average seminarian changed over the years since the establishment of the seminary?

The profile has changed significantly in recent years with regard to the age and college experience of the men entering formation. Whereas in the late 1990s most of the seminarians were post-college age, the majority of the seminarians now are entering just out of high school or in the immediate few years following. Another major change has been the development of the seminary in Providence from a diocesan seminary to a regional college seminary with representation from dioceses around New England, and even as far away as the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

What are the most common struggles and strongest virtues of the seminarians?

The common struggles undoubtedly involve the contrast between the culture typical of college age students and the spiritually rich environment of seminary formation. While many college students will extoll the virtues of working hard into the late hours of the night (or perhaps become beset by the vices which are occurring in the same time frame), our seminarians abide to a curfew and strive to excel in prayer and openness to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. We encourage fraternal communion and pastoral charity based upon the example of Christ in the Gospel, while each day they are experiencing a world that does not always embrace these virtues. Essentially the seminarians here are being taught to become men for others, not for themselves, and it is remarkable to witness their growth in maturity, humility, service, charity and the ability to offer sincerely the gift of self in their everyday lives. The Church has much to look forward to in these men.

What are the proudest moments in the history of the seminary?

It is difficult to focus on any particular moments in the history of the Seminary of Our Lady of Providence which could be considered our proudest. There have been significant individual milestones and events, such as when the Rector, Msgr. Robert J. McManus, was named Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Providence (Bishop McManus is now the Ordinary of the Diocese of Worcester

in Massachusetts) or when the diocese opened a second dormitory in order to accommodate the growing number of seminarians entering around 2006. The seminary has been filled to capacity, in fact, in each of the last two years. Yet beyond any of these individual accomplishments, what the seminary is most proud of consists in the fine men who have given themselves so generously to being formed here for service and fruitfulness in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. These are the moments, begun here in their nascent form, that will continue to mark this house of priestly formation as a beacon in the world we live in, directing souls towards Christ for years to come.

What is the seminary's greatest challenge in attracting more seminarians and forming priests for the 21st century?

I believe the real challenge in the 21st century will be the same challenge that has existed throughout all the centuries of Christianity: to remain faithful to Jesus Christ in a world that has increasingly made efforts to divorce itself from its very foundations in Him. If we are faithful to Christ, He will be faithful to us. If we trust in Him and believe that He never leaves us, never ceases to guide us and provide for us the means, the gifts and the fortitude to accomplish His work here, we will see great things in priestly formation and in the Church. †

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Number of Seminarians

From the Diocese of Providence: 10
From other Dioceses: 16

Average Age of Seminarians: 20

Educational Level:

All college; mostly those doing a bachelor's degree in Philosophy, although three have already completed degrees and are simply completing their philosophy and theology requirements as outlined by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in the Program of Priestly Formation, 5th Ed.



Fr. Mahar



Serra's Third Objective and the Internet

By Jon C. Haines

*Jon C. Haines is Serra International's
Assistant Director of Research and
Communications*



In 1934, four Catholic businessmen, Harold Haberle, Daniel Rooney, Leo Sharkey and Richard Ward would begin what was to become known as Serra International. They organized weekly luncheon meetings for professional men to exchange ideas on Catholic thought, and labeled this the “University of Christian Principles,” though it was far from a university as such. During these informal meetings, they became conscious of the need to set up an organization that encouraged the spiritual growth of its members, and worked to strengthen Catholicism in modern society. However, over the next few months, the founders came to the conclusion that the group that began to grow around them should also devote itself to a worthwhile Catholic objective. After seeking the advice of their bishop, the Most Reverend Gerald Shaughnessy, he helped them determine what that purpose should be - what Serra International would eventually become famous for throughout the world - members of the Catholic lay faithful helping to promote and foster vocations to the sacred priesthood.

In 2005, Serra International amended its objectives

and purposes as follows:

- To foster and promote vocations to the ministerial priesthood in the Catholic Church as a particular vocation to service and to support priests in their sacred ministry;
- To encourage and affirm vocations to consecrated religious life in the Catholic Church; and
- To assist its members to recognize and respond in their own lives to God’s call to holiness in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit.

This third objective is a reflection of the original purpose of the organization. In 2009, Serra International’s episcopal adviser, Archbishop (now Cardinal) Timothy Dolan asked what is Serra doing to meet its third objective. That eventually led to the creation of my current position of assistant director, focusing on research and communications. Much work is to be done.

At Serra’s 70th International Convention in Providence Rhode Island this year, I spoke about just this-- how we are going to meet the third objective from

the perspective of communication. Here at Serra International's headquarters in our Chicago office, there is only so much we can do on a day to day basis. First, in order to pursue holiness, it is important to be able to recognize Christian principles. Second, we must consider the next step after recognition: response. Lastly, we will take a closer look at how effectively our communication is being done to bring about this recognition and response.

Assistance to Recognize

In order to *recognize* Christ's call in our lives we have to ask: What is the call to holiness? Living holiness can take very many forms in our Catholic tradition--as a Serran, lay person, a priest, steelworker, Dominican, mother or father. However, there are many aspects which are universal.

When recognizing Christian principles, three ideas are important to understand. First, all decisions, which are the basis of defiance to or compliance with the will of God, begin in the intellect. Holiness consists in choosing God, not just in a general way but in daily words and deeds of our lives. Love is not abstract, it comes down to picking that thousandth sick man up off the street as Mother Teresa once said. She said she never would have picked that man up if she had not picked up the first man. The knowledge that this was the correct action the first time was what allowed her to choose to do it, rather than her feelings of revulsion. Therefore one could say that having a properly informed intellect as a Christian is not only helpful to our spiritual lives in the pursuit of Christian holiness but also one could say



that it is essential, given that many of the things that we should do, we will not instinctively want to do.

I believe that the best way to sum up holiness is in the old Latin maxim "*Salus animarum suprema lex*" or, the salvation of souls is the highest law. Many recent groups unfavorable to Tradition would downplay the phrase as something from the "medieval church" as though it does not belong in our present day Catechism.

It is important to recognize that this is not only a heresy called "modernism", the idea that doctrine can evolve and change based on the century in which it is interpreted even to contradict itself later on, but also this is clearly incorrect because the idea is merely another way of stating what Christ Himself stated. In Matthew's Gospel (22:26-40) we find: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." To love in this way requires a daily decision and recommitment of oneself to the good of the beloved. To love someone is to want their salvation which is the highest good--union with God.

In order to live for the salvation of souls (including our own), we must be able to recognize more opportunities to decide to love--opportunities to build virtue. In the same way that taking a driver's education course is not necessary to be able to physically drive a car with a manual transmission (trial and error), so too learning the philosophical foundations for theology is not essential nor is theology necessary to become holy. Neither is a coach necessary to play soccer or a hunter safety course needed to hunt. So why would a spiritual director or book be needed for the spiritual life? Reading and spiritual direction are needed more than ever and Serrans, given the importance of their mission, ought to seek them out in local areas.

The means available to Serra headquarters in assisting with the third objective fit conveniently with our discussion on the importance of the intellect. Part of my goal in fulfilling this objective is to communicate the often times dense philosophical and theological teachings of Holy Mother Church and its Tradition (Christ as the official source) in a more distilled way relevant to Serrans (recognize the call) in order that it bear fruit in their own lives (respond to the call).

The second important idea is that it is necessary to recognize that Christian principles are the theological underpinning of our spiritual lives. Consider how differently you would live your life if you misunderstood the theological principle that grace builds upon our nature and instead believed that it is actually what saves us. You would probably receive the sacraments thinking that the sacraments themselves save you, rather than the decisions that you make being aided by the grace that you received from the sacraments. Or consider how you might act if you believed that the Pope directly communicates with God... Or that he has

Serrans' Call to Holiness



no special inspiration from the Holy Spirit at all? You would either treat him like God Himself or you would not give any more consideration to him (or to his teaching) than you would to a wise spiritual director. These theological confusions that can occur in the intellect, though in cases of true ignorance our culpability is reduced, still cause us to live at the least imperfectly. Our fallen nature (incapability or misunderstanding in this case) takes us away from God, the direction we do not want to go. Thanks to the Magisterium established by Christ, theological principles do not need to be controversial though they often are. On most topics that are controversial, the Church has already taken a clear stance/definition. And if it is not clearly defined, likely it is not very relevant to how we live, but rather abstract--for example how did the Virgin birth actually come about? We as Serrans need to do our part to promote authentic Christian teaching that is loyal to His Church.

Particularly important for us to understand as Serrans is that there is a greater and greater misunderstanding of the role that Christ's Church plays in the world and a devaluing of the priesthood itself due to an almost anti-clerical theology that arose in recent decades. Sources for a proper understanding should be Council documents, encyclicals, lives of the saints and Sacred Scripture, rather than the latest book of a theologian or the National Catholic Reporter opinion column.

The third important idea is to recognize that Christian principles are the philosophical underpinnings of Christian theology. Some of you may wonder what philosophy has to do with spiritual 'fuel' or theology. It is essential. The reason that recently the Holy See increased the amount of philosophy that candidates for the priesthood need to study by six semester hours was its recognition that most of the theological problems in the Church today are resulting from so called "post-metaphysical" philosophy--a belief that absolute truth cannot be known by us and that modern science is the only way to know something about the world.

Philosophy is the interlocutor between Christian faith and secular thinking, Muslims and Buddhists because it is what all intelligent beings have in common -which is logic and thought itself. I would recommend taking a look at the following two documents for more details:



Aeterni Patris (1879), *The Decree on the Reform of Ecclesiastical Studies of Philosophy* (2011).

Today secularism appears to be a major threat to Church vocations. It is a philosophy. The founding principles of secular humanism and scientism in the 17th century, despite their claim to the opposite, lack reasonability. The Serran "University of Christian Principles" could help prevent the contraction of Church vocations in the face of growing secularism by using the very thing secularists claim to monopolize: rationality... perhaps without even mentioning a word about God. One can only imagine how many Catholic young men, unaware of their calling to the priesthood, headed down a different path when they heard from their university philosophy professor that "God is an illusion." Example sources of philosophy are Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Duns Scotus, St. Thomas Aquinas and G.K. Chesterton.

Assistance to Respond

The second part of meeting the third objective is to assist Serrans to respond to the newly recognized call. Remembering that holiness is care and concern for the salvation of souls, what ways can assistance be given to our members to accomplish this outside of their own revelations for themselves? A famous scholastic principle is "a cause must be greater than or equal to its effect." Considering the fact that we are to care about the salvation of other souls in addition to our own, you cannot give what you do not have.

I view assistance taking place in this area by suggesting opportunities to practice and apply the newly recognized Christian principles. For example, have you ever wanted to learn *Lectio Divina* or Gregorian Chant? I have written a guide on my blog. Have you prayed Serra's "Eucharistic Adoration for Priestly Vocations"? After I designed it and its production was

Serrans' Call to Holiness

made possible by a very generous donor in Singapore, the book has reached the most and least recognized places of prayer in the Catholic Church. But just the fact that it sits in those places is only one step of the way there. The response consists in praying it just as reading about the virtue of charity is not building the virtue of charity.

Another way that we might assist in responding to the call is by organizing events online. Because of the change in the technology of communications taking place every month, the distance between individuals gets smaller and smaller. Have you ever heard of an event sponsored by a Serra Club or other organization which you found out about after the fact? Have you ever wanted to tell as many people as you could about an event but could not get the contacts? Send the event to me and I can informally announce it on the Serra Facebook page or other medium that has been created. Technology can be used for good or ill and so it is important to get the best use out of it for good that we can. God knows there are enough opportunities being taken advantage of to use it for ill.

What Has Been Done So Far

In order to grow, Serrans must look onward and outward towards Christ coming from the East as well as towards those behind them who do not know Christ or are also journeying towards Him. These should be invited to follow Christ, perhaps to join Serra's ranks. In recent decades there has been an emergence of a new almost vicarious type of community which cannot be ignored: the online community. For Christians this has the advantage of giving community to those who are isolated in their faith socially or geographically and are looking for a place to share. I know that many youth, though it is in a less perfect way, are online in Catholic pages, forums, blogs seeking a support system in their faith because they cannot find it where they live.

Prospective younger Serrans would not only want

online community with Serra, but one can plausibly argue they need it in order for Serra to stay in their consciousness or become part of their life. In fact for almost any topic that a person today can think about, an online "community" sharing this interest is available to support that interest. This is the very reason that Facebook became such a successful undertaking.

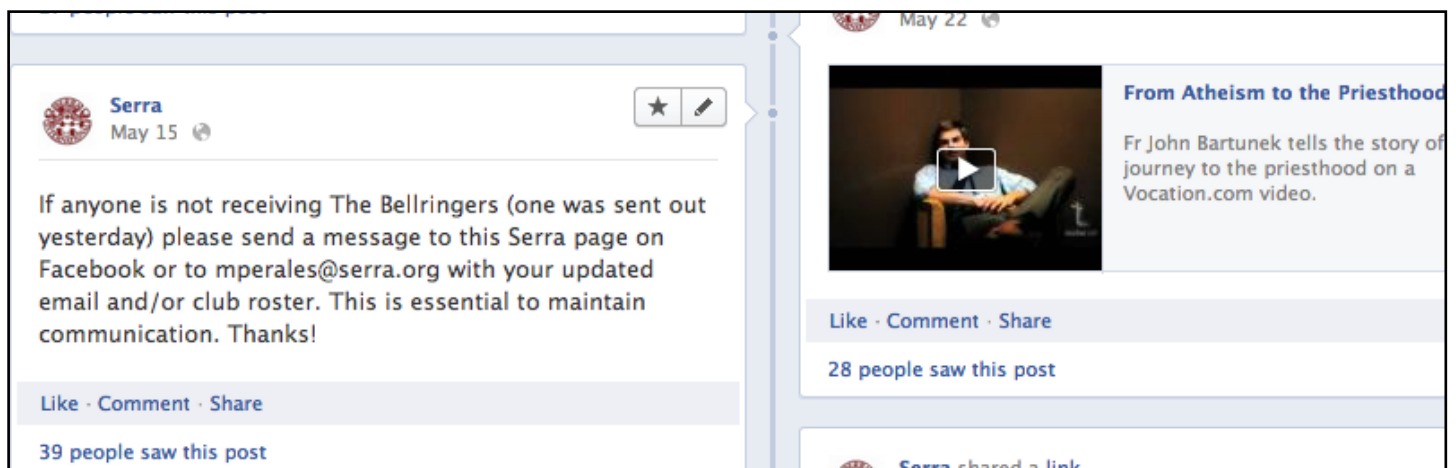
In order to accomplish the above mentioned goals, communication from intellect to intellect is required. Please consider the following quote:

"I would like then to invite Christians, confidently and with an informed and responsible creativity, to join the network of relationships which the digital era has made possible...The web is contributing to the development of new and more complex intellectual and spiritual horizons, new forms of shared awareness. In this field too we are called to proclaim our faith that Christ is God, the Saviour of humanity and of history, the one in whom all things find their fulfillment (cf. Eph1:10)"
--Message for the 45th World Communications Day, Benedict XVI

The Church as well has begun to take great strides towards communicating with the online audience which is starving to hear the Gospel - nearly every event is 'marketed' online. In the past year I have begun to push Serra into various online domains in the following ways.

As many of you know, there is a Serra Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SerraVocationApostolate). But not only this, it has grown into a place where about two-thirds of the members are under 40 and comment with relative frequency. Even if these people do not immediately become Serrans, as Pope Benedict said, shared awareness is key. If people do not know that Serra exists, that eliminates a whole block that might seek it out to join. In recent weeks I have had at least six messages from strangers to Serra asking how they can get involved.

Second, I have created a blog (www.battlefortheCORE.com/).





The main purpose of the blog is, through attempting to clarify faith-based and philosophical issues and by establishing the dichotomy and legitimate dialogue between the priesthoods of Catholicism and secular humanism (via Comte), to ensure that...more men will be encouraged to follow their calling in the correct priesthood (in our view). The priesthood of Comte (self claimed followers of 'rationality' claiming that God doesn't exist) often gets in the way of those being called to the priesthood of Christ...and the reverse is true (Catholic priests get in the way of people like Dawkins)...and I want to make sure that is more true more often. News commentary on related items as well gives a sort of real-time experience of seeing this contention between the ideologies unfold.

Blogs are a particularly appealing way to draw awareness to the Serra apostolate and foster online Serra community. With the blog created in January 2012, entitled "Battle for the Core of the World", I have been following the "40, 30, 20, 10 percentage content rule" for blogs which creates content with enough variety to interest the most people. Around 40% are posts directly related to your goal for the blog, 30% is closely related content 20% mentions and can assist in the previous two while 10% is not related - for example cooking. This is necessary to give a "one stop shop" feel and to involve those whose lives do not belong to one topic--it is important to aim at the same point from various angles or it is difficult to hold a long term readership due to the possibility of exhausting topics. By doing the above, readers become more involved in the main topic of the blog by their commentary. In a way, a project like this has the purpose of creating a certain publicity for Serra among Catholics and at the same time producing good and useful content which is beneficial to reflect on. Maybe one day, Serra will have multiple blogs on various topics intertwined with the promotion of the priesthood. I certainly hope so because I have experienced the good apostolic results that writing can bring using the Internet.

Since January 2012, the blog has gone from about 80 views per day to about 450 per day. Last week I hit the 50,000th view. In April, *Battle for the Core* was voted the #9 Catholic blog by St. Peter's List, a top of the line blog which has nearly ten thousand daily views. I hope to reach the top! In addition, about 15% have clicked a link to the Serra International's Web site itself

which I listed on the blog. This has caused the Serra International's Web site traffic to go up about 20% because of a single link. The majority of these visits are from non-Serrans, who, compiled from the data profiles that list their ages, over 50% are between the ages of 19-30. A number of these non-Serrans have commented in a very positive way on the "Prayer for Priests" Program listed on the Web site.

Thirdly, I have created a YouTube channel for Serra International (www.youtube.com/SerraVocations). Our YouTube Channel has thousands of views of videos that promote the Catholic priesthood, including interviews with seminarians and priests, music videos, and other special initiatives. If only more Serrans knew about these things, it would actually make my job easier in spreading these beneficial materials.

Fourth and lastly, as a part of the Serra Unites! Campaign, Serra International, with the help of its Web developer, is now able to offer to Serra Clubs their own microsites (domain within Serra.org) at no cost to Clubs. Serra Clubs have worked very hard to maintain their own Web sites at various addresses costing much time and money, and even still at a relatively low level of uniformity and integration, which demonstrates the "Serra" brand. For the same reason Facebook pages became successful, overlapping responsibilities can be consolidated into one network of Web sites where a Club webmaster has the ability to update standardized pockets of information for the Club. In this way, any person familiar with one Serra Club's Web site is now familiar with the layout of all Serra Club Web sites' layout across the world. Each Serra Club doesn't have to reinvent the wheel. This also allows someone looking for a Serra Club to find the information he or she needs even geographically much more efficiently. I have created a page located under the resources tab on the Web site where you may apply for your Club's microsite by filling out the form provided and emailing (uploading in a few weeks) the necessary pictures. The Webmaster of Serra.org will contact you.

In conclusion, it is important for us as Serrans to understand and recognize the call to holiness so that we may be able adequately to respond to that call which is itself the salvation of souls and takes concrete form in our daily lives. It is no surprise that one of the most effective instruments Christ gives us to bring this about is the very priesthood which we are promoting. Serra International is also attempting to provide resources and assistance for this task of holiness particularly through the means of communication available through the Internet. †

Fostering Vocations in the Young Through **EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION**

By Fr. Antoine Thomas, c.s.j.



Among all the means Jesus offers us through our Catholic Church to know Him and to love Him, is there another one, along with Holy Scriptures and daily Mass, that can greatly help foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life, for the young people living in the 21st century in this Cybernetic age? Can Eucharistic Adoration be a privileged means to foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life in our youth and young children? I will examine the challenges faced by young people and Catholic Educators (parents, catechists, and priests) today, and how Eucharistic Adoration strongly encouraged by many Popes, in particular the last two, addresses these challenges and can help in fostering, preserving and nurturing the seeds of vocation that God has planted in the hearts of His young children.

Modern Idols

The young people of the Third Millennium are in danger. Why? Because there are modern seductions that can easily abort vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. Parents who truly love and care about their children should be alarmed by two seductions to the young. Firstly, we know the impressive amount of hours per week children and teenagers spend in front of the television, and computer, playing video games, listening to iPod and chatting on Facebook. These potentially dangerous screens, if not prudently monitored by parents, will penetrate and imbue the

hearts and minds of their children with the spirit of the world; its corruption will risk to do irreversible damage to them and even destroy their innocence by feeding their imagination and memory with thousands of harmful images that will diminish their ability to distinguish the real world from their imaginary fantasy world, along with listening to loud and sometimes harmful music.

Secondly, even though sports have a very useful place in our lives, sports and competition may also become a kind of idolatry. Indeed, do we not often hear from children and teenagers that they have not gone to Mass on Sunday because they have to play on a team? Then, the Commandment to honor the Lord's Day is not respected. Sports become the Sunday religion, one of the modern idols that competes with the worship of God. How many families and their children have chosen sports in place of the Sunday Mass, and thus gravely neglected their duty to give glory and praise to God?

We can use the computer and watch certain programs on television with prudence and without offending God. And likewise, sports can be practiced in a positive way. Yet, let us not forget the example of the saints, such as Mother Teresa, who said, "**My television is the Tabernacle.**" As a very intelligent and loving mother, she educated her thousands of sisters to daily come

there, at the feet of Jesus, to adore Him and be with Him, to foster our baptismal vocation to “**adore the Father in spirit and in truth**” (John 4:24).

God’s Call Heard Clearly through Silent Adoration

Can we really foster vocations today in our increasingly noisier world, saturated with electronic gadgets, without leading young people into a silent and personal encounter with Jesus? Whoever has an experience of true friendship knows that it sometimes takes time to become an intimate friend with someone, and that it requires spending a lot of time with the person, listening to him or her and asking questions about what seems important for that person, among other questions. We know how shallow that friendship would be if that dialogue was limited to e-mails, chatting on the phone or online but with rare true encounters, where we are in the presence of the other person. Now, how can young people want to consecrate their whole life to God, to Jesus, if they only hear about Him during Catechism class and one hour per week at Sunday Mass? Is it enough to fall in love with Jesus? Indeed, when we read the stories of many consecrated persons, the ones of the saints more particularly, we clearly see that they spent a lot of time in the presence of Jesus before the Tabernacle, in silence, outside the Liturgy of Hours and the celebration of Mass.

Firstly based on my own experience, time spent in Eucharistic Adoration helped me to hear God’s call more clearly. Though I was a good practicing Catholic boy up to the age of 17 years old, I won’t say I was a friend of Jesus even then. No one brought me to experience Eucharistic Adoration as it was not yet much practiced in our French Catholic parishes. Around the age of 22, I decided to let God take control of my life since I did not know what to do with it. I made two decisions, perhaps the wisest of my life at that time (!): to go to daily Mass



and also to pray the Rosary every day as a sign that I wanted Mary to form me and to guide me. I began to want to stay longer and longer in silent prayer before and after Mass. I began to be more and more convinced that if I solely satisfy my Sunday obligation without a daily and personal time spent alone with Jesus at the tabernacle, I would never become an intimate and true friend to Him. It was when I began to experience times of Eucharistic Adoration more regularly that the calling of Jesus in my soul became louder and louder.

From that time onward, I began to realize what I had been missing since early childhood in my relationship with Jesus. Going to Mass every Sunday was not fulfilling my love for God at all. Attending Mass almost every day as a college student started to make my relationship with Jesus much more personal and more fulfilling. When I finally began to be introduced to silent times of Eucharistic Adoration on a regular basis, it was hard to live one day without it. It has now been twenty-seven years among the Brothers of Saint John that I have been spending two hours of silent prayer each day in intimacy with our Lord in Eucharistic Adoration.



This has become my lifeblood. Without those times every single day, I know that I would be very scattered with apostolic work- hopefully good- yet making me drift away from my friendship with Jesus and Mary. St. Mark reveals in his Gospel that Jesus **“called to Him men of His own choosing, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve that they might be with Him and that He might send them forth to preach.”**(Mark 3:14).

I have received testimonies of other young religious, who too, acknowledged how Eucharistic Adoration in silence has triggered their decision to follow Jesus in a consecrated life.

Catholic Educators Crucial First Witnesses of Eucharistic Adoration

It should always be a great joy for Catholic parents when they witness a growing desire for silent prayer in their children and teenagers. Yet, are there not millions of Christian parents in the world who truly care about their children’s soul and who are at a loss about the new challenges of educating their children in a more and more secularized society with its new countless temptations? Indeed, many catechists and priests struggle in trying to interest the children of the Third Millennium in the knowledge of Jesus Christ; yet, don’t they miss to do something that Jesus Himself, several Popes along with the angel of Fatima urged them to do for children? Can potential vocations to the priesthood and religious life among our children, today more than ever, be harvested without them witnessing in their own parents’ daily life and in the life of their other Christian educators, a true life of Adoration?

Jesus has been given to us in that amazing gift of the Eucharist; should we not do everything we can to bring even pre-school children to discover the mysterious presence of our Lord? Yet, to receive the mystery of the Eucharist, Eucharistic Adoration may greatly help to nurture our vocation to holiness starting as a little child.



We know from Genesis chapter three, where death and suffering originated. Down the generations, the same sin of interior pride continues to lead children and adults to exterior acts of disobedience and therefore to disrespect and rebellion against God Himself. It is



common to see teenagers withdrawn in themselves, getting more and more bundled up into texting all day long, along with spending much time on the computer or in sports, who find themselves more and more drawn to these gadgets instead of honoring God. We need to help them to desire to think and speak about God as the ultimate good for human beings. This is why we need to seriously reach out to children at a very young age beyond the mere classes of Catechism. The great remedy given by God, and given again to us by Jesus is to: **“adore the Father in spirit and in truth.”** (John 4:24). I travel a lot and often visit families. I have met parents who have set a time for family prayer each day and who also bring their children to a time of Eucharistic Adoration. The difference among children who benefit of it compared to others who don’t have such parents is striking.

For us Christian educators, we know that children are not the parents’ possession, but God’s, Who created their soul directly in the body in His own image. Knowing this, the most profound desire we need to have for our children is to help them to come to know God and love Him, since He is the only One who can fully make a human being happy. And what is the way in which God wishes to become known and loved today as Creator, and as our Father, if not through Adoration? St. Therese of the Child Jesus, our youngest Doctor of the Church, may serve as an inspiration to all those among us who want to lead our children and teens to a true knowledge of God. She said, quite simply, **“I want to know God and to love Him in order to make Him known and loved”**. May this be the motto of all Catholic educators, namely to desire to help our young people discover who Jesus Christ is, through faith to encounter Him in a very personal way and make known to them the infinite love of Jesus for each one of them.

It was in response to this desire that the inspiration of leading children in Eucharistic Adoration came to be.

It is a new and fresh complementary contribution to Catholic education, confirmed by an amazing number of encouraging testimonies, and very much supported by our last two Popes. After many years of leading Holy Hours for young people, I can tell you the benefits are numerous for both them and their families. Children who previously had only the weekly experience of Mass, discover that the Host is actually the Person of Jesus, mysteriously hidden. They develop a greater interest in the mysteries of our Faith and the liturgy of the Mass. They understand—more than other children of their age who have not experienced Eucharistic Adoration—the relationship between the gift of the Eucharistic Presence of Jesus and His sacrifice on the Cross out of love for mankind. They become much more aware of the various degrees of sin and seem very eager to receive the sacrament of Confession often. Families accompanying their children witness a growing desire for peace and forgiveness within the family.

What did God ask the Spiritual Leaders of the people of Israel? ***"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest."*** (Deuteronomy 6:5-7). And what does Jesus ask from us Christian educators of children? ***"The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth for the Father seeks such to worship Him."***(John 4:23). Then, Jesus commands to us adults with these pressing words: ***"Let the children come to me and do not hinder them; for to such belong the Kingdom of Heaven."*** (Matthew 19:14). Jesus requests to parents and catechists is not to give children catechism classes only, but to lead them into the presence of Jesus and dwell there under His loving gaze. This is how His calling inside the soul of young people resonates louder and louder, in silence and solitude.

Eucharistic Adoration Awakens our Young People to God's Call to Holiness & their Desire to Respond to God's Love

Now, what is God's plan for each one of us that we need to communicate to our youth today? It is the need to awaken in them their unique and ultimate vocation which is the basic call to holiness. Reading to and with them a few excerpts from the Bible during Eucharistic Adoration will certainly help them to become aware of the wonderful dignity of their vocation. These are some of the most important revelations that will awake



the soul of children to eagerly desire to know God and to love Him: ***"But to those who did accept Him He gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God."*** (John 1:12-13).

St. Paul too, teaches that holiness is indeed our unique vocation, whether we are called to be priest or religious or married or single as he writes in chapter one of his Epistle to the Ephesians: ***"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before Him. In love He destined us for adoption to Himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of His will, for the praise of the glory of His grace that He granted us in the Beloved."*** (Ephesians 1:4-6).

Can we seriously prepare children for First Communion without often leading them to adore Jesus truly present behind the veil of the consecrated host?

Church Teachings on Eucharistic Adoration and the Need for Personal Witness of Priests

Our Good Shepherd continues to ask us through His Church, through the voice of several Popes, the urgent need for the spread of Eucharistic Adoration. Pope Pius XII, in 1947, In Mediator Dei, wrote: ***"This practice of adoration is based on strong and solid reasons. For the Eucharist is at once a sacrifice and a sacrament; but it differs from the other sacraments in that it not only produces grace, but contains in a permanent manner the Author of Grace Himself. When, therefore, the Church bids us to adore Christ hidden behind the Eucharistic veils and to pray to Him for spiritual and temporal favors, of which we ever stand in need <like praying there to be enlightened about our vocation>, she manifests living faith in her divine Spouse who***

is present beneath these veils, she professes her gratitude to Him, and she enjoys the intimacy of His friendship.

Pope John-Paul II wanted Eucharistic Adoration to spread around the world. Eucharistic Adoration chapels have been greatly multiplied and numerous parishes have been offering adoration in numerous dioceses. It is very impressive to know how often John Paul II taught on the Mystery of the Eucharist spending much time in Adoration of our Lord in deep recollection, no matter how filled his daily schedule was. In 1988, in *Dominicae Cenae*, he strongly urged us with those words: ***“The Church and the world have a great need of Eucharistic worship. Jesus waits for us in this sacrament of love. Let us be generous with our time in going to meet Him in adoration and in contemplation that is full of faith and ready to make reparation for the great faults and crimes of the world. May our adoration never cease”***. In 2003, In *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, John Paul II underlines how priests should be the first to adore the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, after the celebration of Mass most particularly which is for altar boys a very strong invitation to discover their possible vocation to the priesthood.



Is it not what we, Christian teachers and educators need to do also if we really want young people of our era to think of giving their lives to Jesus? When they come across priests and religious who adore our Lord daily, hidden in the Tabernacle or exposed, then the Lord can much more easily work in their heart. I travel a lot and I can see that Religious Orders that have daily silent times of Adoration have no problem



to attract young people to embrace their consecrated life. This is why we can easily understand why Pope John Paul II valued Eucharistic Adoration as a very privileged means to discover one's vocation and to let it mature in front of Jesus. He was so convinced of the fruits of it that more than any other Popes before him he encouraged it during his whole Pontificate, not only for priests and religious but even for children and families as well. One of the most explicit statements he made on Eucharistic Adoration as privileged means to foster vocations to consecrated life for young people was made from the Vatican, May 28th 1996. He said: ***“I urge priests, religious and lay people to continue and redouble their efforts to teach the younger generations the meaning and value of Eucharistic adoration and devotion. How will young people be able to know the Lord if they are not introduced to the mystery of His presence?”***

Priests who do care about forming altar boys, not just to serve at the altar, but more spiritually with times of Eucharistic Adoration, are indeed blessed by God with vocations to the priesthood. If seminarians are not strongly invited to spend a daily time of silent adoration every day, what kind of priest will they be? Perhaps will they become good administrators and perhaps will they also display all kind of skills. Yet, what does Jesus want first and foremost from the priests He has chosen? At the last Supper, Jesus clearly called His new priests, “friends”, not just servants.

Finally, we know how much Pope Benedict XVI continues to stress the importance of Eucharistic adoration outside of Mass. During the Vigils in Cologne, at the World Youth Day (WYD), he exposed the Blessed Sacrament and stayed before Jesus in a silent adoration in front of a quiet crowd of over a million of young people. He wanted this Adoration again in Sydney, Australia, in 2008. Why does Pope Benedict hope by adoring Jesus before the young people of the world? Because



he knows that beyond teaching and preaching, Jesus Himself can draw young people powerfully and invisibly to Him if only we, Christian educators, believe in that Eucharistic attraction. This is why during the final Mass, in Cologne,

at Marienfeld, he started his address to the WYD participants in these words: ***“Dear young friends, yesterday evening, we came together in the presence of the sacred Host, in which Jesus becomes for us the bread that sustains and feeds***

us (John 6), and there we began our inner journey of adoration. In the Eucharist, adoration must become union...”

Here, the Pope touches on several fruits flowing from our Eucharistic Adoration; one of them is to realize a deep communion among those who adore. During the Youth Camps with the brothers and sisters of my community, we see how the times of daily adoration bind the young people with us in silence and make them desire that life more, even though they are not all called to that religious life.

Let us then listen to Jesus through Scriptures and our Popes, understand and implement without delay regular times of encounter with Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament firstly, during Mass and secondly outside its celebration. †

About Fr. Antoine Thomas, c.s.j

Fr. Antoine Thomas is a native of France. In 1985, he joined the Brothers of St. John (a religious community founded in 1975 by Fr. Marie-Dominique Philippe, O.P.). Fr. Antoine has been a priest for 20 years. He was ordained priest on 1 February 1992 in Paray-Le-Monial, France.

Since December 2010, Fr. Antoine has been the full-time Chaplain of the Canterbury University (20,000 students), Parish Priest at St Teresa Parish in Riccarton, New Zealand and local superior of his community. Fr. Antoine has given many Youth 2000 retreats throughout the United States, as well as seminars and retreats to seminarians and to active and contemplative sisters throughout the world. He has developed a Children's Eucharistic Adoration program known as "Children of Hope" (www.childrenofhope.org) which is being implemented in parishes and Catholic schools around the world. He has led children, teens and families in Eucharistic Adoration in the US, Canada, France, Australia, Haiti, Nicaragua, Romania, Philippines, Singapore and now in New Zealand. In each diocese, he helped in training Eucharistic Adoration leaders among catechists, parents and priests who understand the urgency of this children's adoration ministry in the Cybernetic age. He has been invited to speak at four Eucharistic Congresses in Guadalajara, St. Paul, Minnesota, in Charlotte, North Carolina and in Quebec, Canada. In each place the message is essentially the same: *To help children encounter Jesus in His silent and loving presence in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, in faith, in hope and in love, to adore Him*

and to gaze upon Him with joy.

Fr. Antoine often appears on EWTN Programs, most especially for children and teenagers. He has filmed several series for them, as well as appearing on "Life on the Rock" and "Mother Angelica Live". He has been on Catholic Answers, Q&A for kids for years, on Relevant Radio and other Catholic Radio throughout the US in the past 10 years.



Fr. Antoine was in Singapore for the first time, at the invitation of the Serra Club of Singapore as one of the speakers, for its 15th Serra Asian Convention held in April 2010. Among the many fruits of his visit to Singapore, during the Serra Asian Convention, was the formation of a community (www.adorejesus.com) that promotes Eucharistic Adoration for children in Singapore. Currently monthly Children Eucharistic Adorations are being held in at least 10 parishes in the diocese, from none before, a real first for the Archdiocese, as well as some Catholic schools. Father was back again in Singapore in July 2011, as one of the speakers, for the Serra Eucharistic Congress 2011 for the youth.

Archbishop Cousins Award 2011-2012

**Rev. Father
Domingos S Un**
Chaplain of Serra Club of Macau



Can you share with us how you feel about winning this award?

When I received news of winning the best Spiritual Director award, I felt unworthy. This award is also a source of encouragement for me. In fact, I merely did what was required of me. There are still many inadequacies, and I will need everyone's understanding and guidance. I must give thanks to God for His love. Through winning this award, I see God's mercy, patience and tolerance. I strive to do what is required of me to the best of my abilities and to always place God's matters before all else, with the salvation of souls as my top priority.

You have been Chaplain of Serra Club of Macau for the last 10 years, what is it that keeps you going, as you have your own Parish duties too which already keeps you very busy?

I understand that, as a shepherd in the church, all the faithful are lambs entrusted to me by God. Regardless of their needs and requests, I will respond to them to the best of my ability. I always remind myself to do all my work to the best of my ability, and these include parish work, taking care of the pastoral needs of schools, as well as being the spiritual director of Serra Club. Each and every task is completed with dedication and love. My motivation is the salvation of souls. In this complicated world, people are in dire need of Christ's

teaching and wisdom to guide them and give them direction. I am aware of what God sent me to do, and as a humble servant of God, I strive to bring God's presence to others. Perhaps it is this conviction that has sustained me in my priestly life, and has motivated me to persevere in my pastoral work.

As Chaplain, can you share with us the most important role you play in the club?

I attach importance to the progress of the Serrans' relationship with God, and I am aware that they need guidance in the faith and their spirituality, and I render support to the best of my ability. The spiritual life and growth of the Serrans is my greatest goal. I explain the scriptures to them and conduct spiritual retreats and days of recollection for them, and constructed a close-knitted, family-like group with the Serrans. I also lend a listening ear and share their joys and sorrows, acting as their spiritual companion and friend. I am willing to be their spiritual guide, accompanying them as they grow in their faith. It is unavoidable that disagreements and different views on how things should be done arise from time to time. I strive to be the mediator on such occasions. Through these years as their spiritual director, I have increasingly gained the trust of the Serrans, and the Serrans turn to me for advice related to both the Club and their personal lives. I hope that they will be able to experience God's love and care through me. †

Blessed Junipero Serra Award for Promoting Vocations 2011-2012

Serra Club of Toronto Central, Canada

***Interview with Jerry Hayes,
Immediate Past President, Serra Club of Toronto Central***

It is rare and interesting to note that this same Ordinandi Dinner initiative won this same Junipero Serra Award in 1994 and again in 2012, what do you think are some of its winning formula?

A great deal of planning goes into the orchestration of the Ordinandi Dinner each year which really begins immediately at the conclusion of the previous year's event. With the primary focus being the Ordinandi themselves, the Catholic community, not only from within the Archdiocese of Toronto, but from many areas surrounding the Greater Toronto Area make this evening an annual event that is a priority date on their calendar. The format of the evening ensures the finale is highlighted by the vocation stories of the Ordinandi themselves. Our venue and schedule always ensures as well that ample time is provided for attendees to reunite with the large number of clergy who attend the function and in turn allows them an opportunity to rekindle old acquaintances with not only former pastors but many others with whom they have crossed paths over many years.

With the above in mind, the committee has endeavored to not only create an event which is conducive to this camaraderie and allows for the ensuing interaction, but continues to introduce new elements into the evening agenda. The most significant in this area surrounds greater student involvement at the dinner. Although high school and university students have always been openly welcomed, in 2009 an initiative was introduced with secondary school teachers and senior school board members to further encourage student attendance at a more elevated level. The committee members attended secondary school

chaplancy meetings providing literature and answered questions on the dinner itself in an attempt to educate the teachers and school chaplains about the format of the evening, and to motivate them at a more personal level to orchestrate initiatives, within their own school, board to assist with student attendance. This strategy has proven extremely successful since its inception in creating a much larger student presence.

The committee attempts every year to ensure that ticket prices are kept affordable so as to ensure accessibility to as many as possible and subsidizes ticket prices for students and accompanying chaplains to ensure that the evening remains a vocations awareness raiser rather than a fundraiser.

This Ordinandi Dinner started way back in 1991, how has your club managed to keep it relevant and current?

The basic feature of the dinner which has become the highlight of the evening is the proclamation of the individual "vocation stories" of each of the Ordinandi. These stories of course vary tremendously from one man to the next, but all are truly spoken from the heart. Their stories outline their vocation journey which started out with some as mechanics and carpenters, roofers and bus drivers, as well as others who had degrees in medicine and law. The stories themselves, however, do tend to bear a common element outlining the struggle that these men often faced in making this decision to follow Christ, when at the same time they are also surrounded by all that is happening in today's very secular world.

Three years ago, one of the men who was a widower, was able to speak of his children and grandchildren who would attend his ordination and the impact that they had on his life changing decision. In 2011 a man who was born into the Jewish faith was ordained as a priest. With these examples and many others that are constantly occurring, the vocation stories continue to add a new dimension each and every year. There is no doubt that the Ordinandi themselves ensure that the dinner is always relevant and current for all attendees.

Earlier, I also mentioned “student participation”. In an attempt to not just create an evening agenda focusing on the adult audience, students have also been provided with an opportunity which affords them closer association with the Ordinandi on a more personal level. Over the past two years we have now provided a one hour segment (before the dinner begins) for all student attendees to gather with the Ordinandi in a restricted area of the hall to personally “meet and greet” the Ordinandi and present questions to these men regarding their path to ordination. The venue is very similar to a press conference and students are allowed to present questions of their own choosing. The responses are in turn answered randomly by the Ordinandi in an open manner. This program has not only served to foster an opportunity which allows the students to connect on a much more personal basis with these men, but has also offered the students a chance to see how these men’s hopes and aspirations are really no different than their own. In many cases students have come into the room feeling that a person who would aspire to the priesthood would have qualities far beyond those of the normal person you would meet on the street, but they have left the session

feeling that these men have also faced on occasion the same doubts and daily tribulations that each of us experience in our own lives.

Can you give us an example of how the Ordinandi Dinner has helped in promoting priestly vocations?

One of the points we always make clear, is that we do not have an expectation that coming to the dinner will result in a person immediately experiencing an epiphany which will direct them to the priesthood. We have, however, had priests in our own archdiocese indicate that their attendance at the dinner during their formation years has guided them to the priesthood. Often men will question during their own time of discernment as to whether or not God is really calling them. The fact that this evening allows the Ordinandi to openly express these uncertainties as part of their ongoing journey also allows others who may be having these same doubts to see that they are not alone. Yes, we have had priests come to us indicating that the Ordinandi Dinner did have a major impact in their decision to proceed to ordination. However, I can also say that others who have been present at the dinner, and who remain silent on the matter, may have in fact had a mustard seed of interest planted within their being at one of these events, which in turn has now fully blossomed within them in their formation into men of God with whom we are currently sharing in the celebration of the Eucharist. †

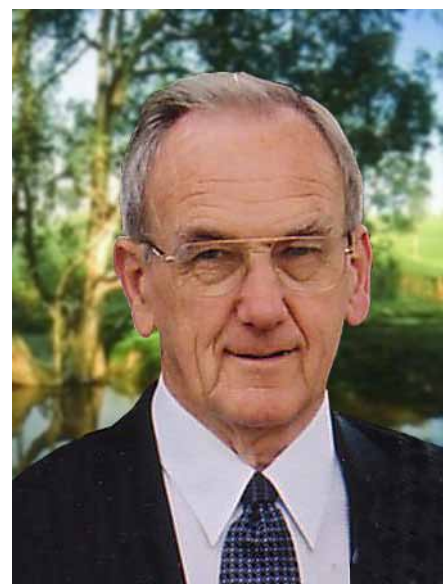


Jerry Hayes, Mario Biscardi, Celeste Iacobelli

Harry J. O'Haire Award 2011-2012

Phillip Thomas Connors

Serra Club of Melbourne



How did you get started in Serra?

Along with several others, I was invited to attend a Mass and Dinner in July 1972, to hear about an organization called Serra International.

The aims and objectives of Serra were explained to the gathering, and I immediately felt that this was not only a very worthy, but necessary organization, as I often thought that too much was expected from our priests and religious. A large number of Catholics seemed to feel that priests should be available, 24/7, and that they had to be perfect in every way. To me, this was unfair and expecting too much. Ordination to the priesthood does not remove their human failings, and they, like everyone else, can experience pain, doubt, anger, and depression.

You have served in Serra for an impressive 40 years, how did you keep your enthusiasm for vocations alive for such a long time?

One of the great joys of Serra has been the wonderful friendships that my wife and I have made over the 40 years that I have been a member. The dedication and example of so many great Serrans has been an inspiration to me.

Serra is not an elitist club, but it is certainly a privilege to belong to it. Someone asked me to join, and we as Serrans should return this favor and offer the privilege of belonging to Serra to others.

It is important that our meetings are educational. They can also be entertaining, there is nothing wrong with

that, but we must leave a meeting with more knowledge than when we arrived, and with the desire to return for more. This is how we will keep members.

One of the greatest privileges of the Serra Club of Melbourne is that we always commence our meetings with the celebration of Mass. Over the years this has enabled me to develop friendships with not only our Chaplains, but other priests and religious, and also our bishops, who have all been very supportive of Serra.

The congratulatory cards that the club sends to all priests and religious on the occasion of significant jubilees was established at the very first meeting in 1968, and has continued ever since. Each year the club sends several hundred cards, and the warm response that we get is very wonderful. This alone is reason to be a Serran.

What has been the highlight of your service through all these years?

I have been honored to have served as:

- President of the Serra Club of Melbourne on three separate occasions, from 1981 to 1982, 1995-1996, and 1999 to 2000.
- Governor of District 89 in 1984-85 and 1999-2000.
- President of SCANZSPAC 2002-2003
- Vice President Communications for the Melbourne Club from approximately 1978 to today with a break when District Governor in 1984-85 and when President in 1981-82, and 1995-96.
- Vice President Communications for SCANZSPAC since joining the Board in approximately 1999 or 2000. †

AUSTRALIA

WELCOME WELCOME TO WAGGA WAGGA!

Serra Club of Wagga Wagga, New South Wales

Starting Afresh from Christ



Serra Council of Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific (SCANZSPAC)

This year, on 5-6 October, the small Serra Club of Wagga Wagga, has the very great privilege and honor of hosting the Serra Council of Australia, New Zealand and South Pacific (SCANZSPAC) Biennial Convention.

The name Wagga Wagga itself tends to generate just a little mirth and I explain that it is an aboriginal name that translates to "Place of many crows". The double use of a name signifies the plural or many and there are quite a few towns in the region with the double names and other aboriginal names.

Wagga Wagga is in a very rich agricultural region that produces all manner of agricultural products from wine and cheese to beef cattle, sheep, wool, orchards, vegetables and cotton ...just to name a few. It is a city of about 75,000 people.

The Diocese of Wagga Wagga is about one hour's flight from Sydney and one hour's flight from Melbourne ...very centrally located and is led by the very popular Bishop Gerard Hanna. It has around 30 parishes and another 7 to be officially added shortly. It is estimated that it contains around 40 churches, about 35 schools and around 800 teachers and most importantly from our perspective, a seminary known as Vianney College. This college at present has 19 seminarians and in its 20 years has produced over 30 priests. Our club is very small with around 15 members but it is a remarkably active group that has enjoyed the privilege and blessing of having many of the same office bearers for very long periods. This small club initiated Eucharistic Devotion, around 25 years ago, on the 1st Friday of every month (all night) and today that has been extended by a special roster group and there are now over 200 attendees for the 80 plus hours of devotion every week. This club also manages an active '31 Club' that



is strongly supported by our Bishop, plays a very active role in assisting with arrangements for special occasions for the seminarians (especially ordinations), Barbeques, vocation days at each of the Catholic High Schools, an annual raffle, numerous Masses, and much more.

This work is quietly and unobtrusively carried out by these leaders and their fellow members and includes so much activity that newcomers can only wonder in awe as to how this has happened. Much of the answer though lies in recognition of the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Patron of Serra, Blessed Junipero Serra. Its support base of friends and supporters is very strong.



On SCANZSPAC Biennial Convention, in recent weeks the activity of our club has been non-stop with preparations. Over 600 invitations have been mailed, outstanding speakers have been secured, a full-page article about Serra has been published in our Diocesan newspaper and every member has made an extra special effort to obtain assistance from our many supporters and friends with our goal being to ensure that every attendee will not only leave with a fond memory of Wagga Wagga hospitality and their many new friends but especially a much renewed relationship with Christ arising out of our theme of "Starting Afresh From Christ". We are determined to ensure that not only will Wagga Wagga be remembered as the 'place of many crows' but more so...the 'place of many, many friends'.

We have also recognised the enormous opportunity that being a host club provides and we have commenced working on our objectives of increasing membership, increasing volunteers for every aspect of our work, increasing Eucharistic Devotion and in particular sponsoring at least one new club. The power of prayer of course should never be underestimated and one can only wonder... was the establishment of Serra and the Eucharistic Devotion connected to the subsequent establishment of a seminary that has produced so many new, young priests for our Diocese?

If you wish to attend this convention please email david@businessventurers.com.au †

Editor's note: The term "Eucharistic Devotion" used in the above article is the same as what we commonly refer to as "Eucharistic Adoration".

THAILAND

Thailand Serrans waste no time for vocation promotions in 2012

Serra Club of St. Luke, Lopburi



Vocation promotion activity at St Gabriel Church

The Serra Club of St. Luke in the central province of Lopburi, about a 2-hour drive from Bangkok, Thailand was chartered only last year but it wasted no time in working hard for vocation promotions.

Under the leadership of Club President Busaba Sonjai, the Club members have been 'going out to the deep,' visiting parishes in their diocesan district. They talked to the parish priest and requested his support to organize regular meetings of the parishioners to talk about vocations, normally on a Sunday or Saturday after the Mass.

"We work closely with our John Paul Seminary. However, preparing for the event was not an easy task. We had a lot of our own meetings, campaigns and follow ups," said Club President Busaba. "It gave us an opportunity to be more creative in planning activities that would be more meaningful for them, especially for the young people."

So far they have already covered three parishes. Each visit was well-planned and received positive feedback when the program was over.

In each parish, the Serrans always look out for young Catholics with the hope that some of them are searching for vocations. "We meet them, talk to them, share meals, pray and share with them our thoughts and hear their views."

In the process, the Serrans have discovered certain issues.. One of the strong values in Thailand is the family unit. "This is the barrier for young people to

join the seminary, knowing that they need to help their family," said Busaba.

"The pressure of being a youth is another barrier. They are still wandering and undecided. Falling in love in the process of searching is part of the journey in which they have to make a choice."

"In the reality of our vocation promotion apostolate, it seems that we are at the beginning stage of preparing the soil. However the situation has now changed a little, and we may have some seedlings ready. In the parish of St. Gabriel, there is a young man who works in a cancer center and is still a Buddhist but is starting to prepare himself for baptism."

Busaba added with joy in her face that "He told me he has already made up his mind to join the Camillians."

Commenting on her work for vocation promotions, Busaba confessed that "I have experienced many challenges. I see the need for more time, energy and finance. It needs a lot of patience and understanding."

However, in working as a team with the Serrans in her Club, Busaba realized that "it enhances our friendships. It touches our hearts and eventually lifts our spirit to God."

When asked what surprised her most so far, Busaba gleefully replied, "In every parish a group of them has enthusiastically invited us to help form a Serra club in their parish. And I gladly accepted their invitation." †



Support from parish priest



Busaba Sonjai addressing the meeting

USA

“Take the Journey” Vocation Program

Serra Club of Baltimore, Maryland



St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore

For several months at our board meetings and also, at the general meetings, this topic would come up for discussion -- Is the “Take the Journey” program educating young men about vocations especially the priesthood? Then the questions of effectiveness of the program and does it validate the money spent on buses and lunches would follow.

On a spring afternoon while purchasing flowers for friends, the answer to the above questions came from a Spirit guided direction. The cashier was a rising senior and had completed his junior year at Calvert Hall High School. After exchanging comments about his future goals, I asked if he had attended with his classmate one of the “Take the Journey” sessions held at the seminary. With a smile, his answer was affirmative. Then I asked what he learned from the session. His surprising response was, “I learned about the life of seminarians. The seminarians play video games, golf, and basketball and watch TV. It was fun talking with the seminarians, eating in their lunch room, and touring the Seminary. Even the Mass was inspiring for us.” His responses brought home to me that God works in mysterious ways. What the Serrans expected were more lofty results but the young men had their own expectations filled. This young man may not enter the seminary but he may encourage his own children some day to enter religious life or the priesthood. He, also, may be more supportive of his parish priests because of his encounter with the “Take the Journey” program.

For the past six years, the Serrans of Baltimore have financed the “Take the Journey” program under the auspices of the Archdiocesan Vocation Office. The junior classes of four all boys high schools participate in the program which is offered eight times a year on a school day from 9:00 am-2:00 pm. The vocation director or another priest speaks to the students about his vocation to the priesthood. Then the film, *Fishers of Men*, is shown with small group discussions following the film. The students are very astute in their questioning and discussion within the group. After the small group activity, the boys return back into the larger

group and give various summaries of the small group discussions.

After the film and discussions, the students attend the 11:30 Liturgy with the Seminarians and then eat lunch with the seminarians. The seminarians conduct small group tours of the seminary and answer any question that the participants pose. Before returning to the buses, the juniors assemble again for a summary of the day and ask any further questions of the vocation director or their teachers about the happenings of the day.

To finance the “Take the Journey” program, The Serra Club of Baltimore sponsored a 90 minute concert held in St Mary's Seminary and University Chapel during the spring. In 2012, the concert had three groups who provided music: the seminary organist, two sopranos who sang four Latin hymns, and the Irish Chorale that consisted of 40 baby boomer members. The audience's reaction after the concert was unanimous—“We are looking forward to next year's concert.” Also, some concert funds are used to support two or three seminarians during the academic year. If you want to contribute to next year's concert, April 21, 2013 or buy a ticket, please contact Serra Club of Baltimore at 410-323-4833.

This fall, 2012, the Serra Club is partially funding a vocation day for 5th graders both boys and girls in the Archdiocesan schools. The day consists of “lectures” about the four vocations, talking with priests, brothers, and religious, and doing activities about vocations. The students prepare posters and prayer cards during the day. The day was organized by a committee of Religious Vocation Directors for their respective orders.

The Baltimore Club hopes to reinstate the “Take the Journey” for juniors in girls' high schools in the Archdiocese. As soon as the logistics are in place, a similar program for the boys will be provided for the girls. †

CANADA
**Annual Celebration of
Priesthood and Religious Life Dinner**
Serra Club of Hamilton, Ontario



Bishop Ustrzycki, Bishop Tonnos and Bishop Crosby

A car load of Serrans went to the Ordanandi Dinner in Toronto a number of years ago. We were so impressed with their work, that we said we can do it, but we want to do it differently.

So, the Annual Celebration of Priesthood and Religious Life Dinner was born. The dinner held at the Liuna Station gives the Catholic community in the Hamilton and surrounding area a chance to celebrate those who celebrated their 50th anniversary of Priesthood and Religious life .

We also honour, any Deacon who is going to be ordained in that year. The family of the Deacon is invited by the Serra Club.

Our emcee for the evening was Father Ian Duffy, the club's chaplain. In attendance were The Most Reverend Douglas Crosby, Bishop of Hamilton, Bishop Anthony

Tonnos, Bishop Emeritus of Hamilton, Bishop Matthew Ustrzycki, auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Hamilton, Father Kevin Cull, vocation director, many priests, seminarians, religious, students from local high schools, colleges, Universities, Serrans and special guests.

As we have had success with these dinners, the executives had made a decision to establish a Seminarian Bursary Fund to help candidates studying for the priesthood in the Hamilton Diocese. This was announced by our Club President, Marjorie Mullen at the dinner.

What a wonderful way to honour our priests who have served us for so many years and the religious sisters who work so hard. †

CANADA

Serrans help to bring **VIANNEY HOUSE** to life

Serra Club of Vancouver, British Columbia



Fr. Joseph addressing the guests at the ceremony

On 27 June 2012, Vianney House, named after the patron Saint of priests, was officially opened for business. It was a culmination of a dream and the hard work of Fr. Joseph Nguyen, the Vocation Director of the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Archbishop Michael Miller, a host of dignitaries from the Archdiocese and members of the Serra Clubs of Vancouver and the Fraser Valley West attended the official blessing. The ceremony was then followed by a BBQ feast put together by well-wisher donors.

Fr. Joseph hopes that the Vianney House will help young men, discerning a vocation to the priesthood or religious life, who come and seek solitude for contemplative prayer. The house has a chapel for prayers, six bedrooms and spacious grounds – ideal for those seeking to find the answer if God is calling them. It will also be the official residence of the Vocation Director, Fr. Joseph Nguyen, who will be available to help and assist those who choose to live there during their discernment.

The house has a very interesting history. It was built around the 1940s for the Sisters of Charity of the Order of the Immaculate Conception. It was built as a residence for the Sisters who operated and administered in the adjacent St. Vincent's Hospital which was itself built in 1939. There is an unusual twist in the history of the residence. Whereas it previously housed residents who provided physical healing, it will now house residents who will provide spiritual healing.

After the house had undergone some renovations to update it generally, it still needed some key components to meet the needs of its future residents. The Serra Clubs of Vancouver and Fraser Valley West who work very closely with Fr. Joseph Nguyen undertook this task. They raised the required funds, thanks to a grant from the Serra Foundation of Canada and to some generous Serrans. The residence is now fully furnished and ready for its occupants. According to Fr. Joseph, the house will also serve as a meeting place for vocation related activities both of the Archdiocese and the Serra Club of Vancouver.

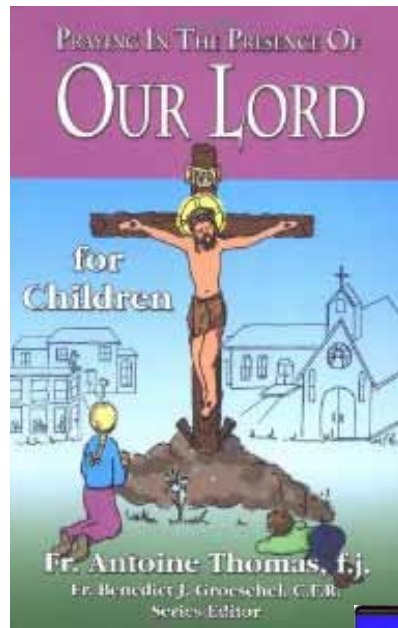
The Serrans in association with their Chaplain have instituted various programs to manifest their affirmation of the clergy and to spread the message of the need for more vocations. Some of the main programs include (i) an annual golf tournament for the priests (ii) a biennial luncheon for the Sisters and Brothers (iii) an appreciation dinner for the priests (iv) an annual award for the altar servers (v) award of scholarships for seminarians (vi) adoration for vocations and (vii) assisting at major services and ordinations at the Cathedral (viii) Serrans meet each First Friday for Mass celebrated by the Chaplain and (iv) four times a year for spiritual talks. Our members also serve at the National and International levels. †

Resources: What's Available

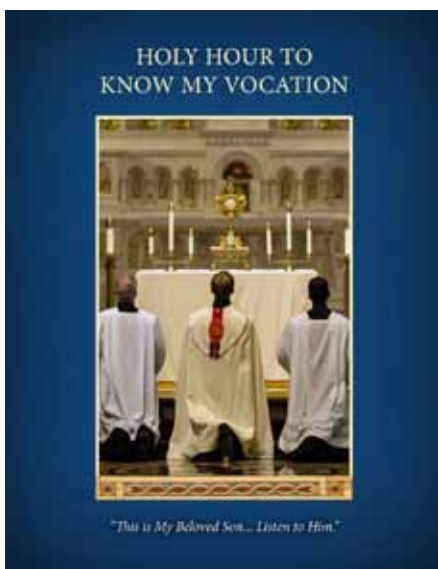
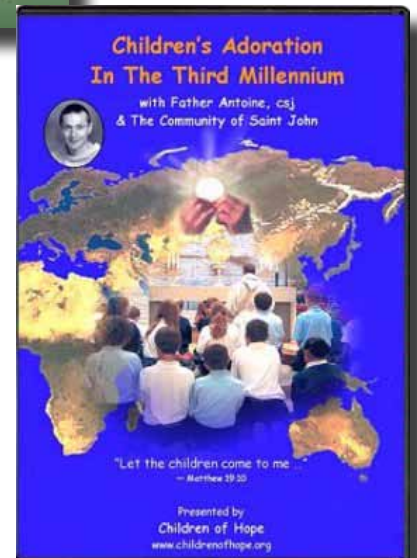
Book and DVD by Fr. Antoine Thomas, c.s.j.

To date Fr. Antoine Thomas has produced a book and a few DVDs and a music cd.

His book "Praying in the Presence of Our Lord" is a detailed guide for boys and girls aged 5-10 years old to help them learn how to foster a sense of God's presence in their lives throughout the day. It contains solid Catholic teaching that uses a powerful - and lively - combination of Scripture, writings of the Saints and more. As Fr. Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R., notes in the introduction to this book, "It is by praying that we can be with Him.", this book teaches children why we pray and how we pray: in Adoration before our all-loving God, at Mass and during the Church's liturgical seasons, the prayer that Jesus taught us, the "Our Father", the Rosary, using the Psalms, for others, throughout the day - at home, in school, in church and at play! It is available on www.childrenofhope.org



Among his DVDs, the "Children's Adoration in the Third Millennium" is excellent and will be an inspiration for all who understand the command of Jesus to, "Let the children come to Me..." (Matthew 19:14) and who are interested in implementing Children's Eucharistic Adoration in their family life, school or parish. It is available in English, Spanish and French on www.childrenofhope.org.



"Holy Hour to Know My Vocation"

Sam Alzheimer of Vianney Vocations, publisher of Fr. Brett Brannen's book, "To Save a Thousand Souls" has published a 6-page booklet, "Holy Hour to Know My Vocation" which comprises a 3-part meditation. This booklet can be used by an individual or a group.

The booklet costs US\$2 per copy and can be purchased online at: <http://www.vianneyvocations.com/store/products/brochures-and-booklets/holy-hour-to-know-my-vocation/>