The Serra International Foundation showed us that God has not abandoned us. We, therefore, with full confidence cry out: “The Lord is our help and our shield.”

Fr. Isaac Tsegula
Bishop’s Secretary,
Catholic Diocese of Zomba, Malawi

The Serran Calendar

December 26, 2020
Serra Global Rosary for Vocations

January 30, 2021
Serra Global Rosary for Vocations

February 2, 2021
World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life

February 27, 2021
Serra Global Rosary for Vocations

April 25, 2021
World Day of Prayer for Vocations

June 28-July 1, 2021
Serra’s 78th International Convention
Toronto, Ontario, CANADA

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Serra International Executive Director: John Liston
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www.serrainternational.org
Generous Hope in a Tumultuous Era

God calls servants always, and we must assist

A Letter from Serra International Foundation President Tim O’Neill

My Dear Fellow Serrans,

Preparing for this article I never imagined I would be writing to you in the midst of a global pandemic. Like you, I thought we would be in the middle of our usual activities. I was looking forward to seeing everyone at our Serra International Convention in New Orleans. Unfortunately, life threw us all a major curveball. So, to you as a valued supporter, I’m writing to let you know how your Serra International Foundation has adjusted.

First of all, thanks to the generosity of so many Serrans and Serra clubs, the Serra International Foundation was able to provide over $100,000.00 in grants to 30 worthy organizations helping to foster and support vocations to the Catholic Church around the world this past year.

Through your gifts we were able to support the United States Council for their work on the Serra Spark online resource kit. Other grants that continued Serra’s collaboration in the work of vocations include our support of the Pontifical North American College in Rome, the Institute of Priestly Formation in Omaha, Nebraska, USA, and the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors. These ongoing grants of support enhance Serra’s relevance in the work of vocations and help provide Serra a great deal of respect from the highest levels of the Church hierarchy.

This Fall, in a tremendous show of solidarity, Serrans from around the world donated through the Serra International Foundation nearly $30,000.00 to rebuild the San Gabriel Mission in California that suffered a disastrous fire.

The Serra International Foundation was founded in 1951 to assist Serra in fulfilling its objectives of fostering and promoting vocations in the Catholic Church. Since that time, the Foundation has funded a wide range of programs for the formation and training of priests and consecrated religious. The Foundation Board, looking with anticipation to 2021 as our 70th anniversary year, has implemented a strategic plan to move the Foundation into a better position to serve our organization and to ensure that funds are available for our future success. Many opportunities will be available for our donors and friends to help celebrate this momentous occasion.

Throughout this special Foundation Edition of The Serran magazine, you will read articles and see pictures of many grant recipients and the great vocation work they are accomplishing.

On behalf of the Serra International Foundation and those grant recipients, Thank You. Thank you for helping us to go forward to create community and give support to those who serve in the work of vocations… even in the middle of a global pandemic!

May you stay safe and well.

Tim O’Neill
President, Serra International Foundation
A

At the dawn of the 70th anniversary of the Serra International Foundation, the countdown has begun for a new strategic plan set to launch in January 2021.

Inspiration for the plan arose from a comprehensive study of the Foundation by Bookmiller and Associates in the first six months of 2020 and presented to the Serra International Foundation Board in July. The study emphasized numerous good ideas put forth over the years, while acknowledging challenges preventing their implementation. The study’s conclusion and recommendation was for Foundation leadership to adopt a "laser focus" to identify priorities and implement change.

A Strategic Plan Implementation Committee formed in August and identified overarching priorities. Building on strengths, addressing challenges, and seizing opportunities, the committee developed five-year goals, as well as an action plan for the first year based upon the findings of the Bookmiller study. The Foundation Board approved the plan in October.

The committee articulated a new vision for the Foundation to significantly expand fundraising activity to address growing financial needs and to ensure sustainability of both the Foundation and of Serra International.

The plan is built upon the mission of Foundation as the fundraising arm of Serra International for the purpose of raising funds to hold, invest and disburse for its objects and purposes, namely:

- to give financial aid to foster and promote vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life; and
- to enhance the image of Serra International as the global lay apostolate for vocations in the Catholic Church.

Throughout the next five years, this plan will provide opportunities to celebrate the Foundation’s work over the past 70 years, provide increased financial support for Serra International and for vocation programs, and increase awareness of the work of Serra International internationally. Culminating in 2026 with the Foundation’s 75th anniversary, the plan will position the Serra International Foundation to advance to the next level of development on behalf of Serra International.

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Serra International Foundation 2021-2026 Strategic Plan

- Increase fundraising each year to achieve $1M between 2021 and 2026.
- Develop a robust major gift/planned giving program/campaign.
- Develop a marketing plan to communicate a compelling case for support for Serra International.
- Expand and improve the Serra International Foundation’s online presence and image to create a dynamic tool with which to engage members and donors.
- Implement the 2020 Bookmiller Strategic Plan to address the highest priority needs critical to strengthening and sustaining Serra International and the Serra International Foundation.
New Annual Giving Developments

You’ll notice some changes in your annual appeal letter from the Serra International Foundation this Fall! We have made these adjustments to better recognize your generosity, make it easier to give, and encourage you to continue or become part of the meaningful work of the Serra International Foundation through your donation.

New in your annual appeal mailing this year:

- Personalized letter
- Reply form offering more ways to give
- New giving levels
- Cumulative giving: all gifts you make to the Serra International Foundation in the current year will be added together and will qualify you for the level associated with your total annual giving.
- Donors will be recognized in the Serra International Foundation issue of The Serran magazine (November 2021)

New individual donor levels:

- **Serra Gold** $5000+
- **Serra Leadership** $2500 - $4999
- **Serra President** $1000 - $2499
- **Serra Partner** $500 - $999
- **Serra Associate** $250 - $499
- **Serra Friend** $100 - $249

Club Donations

We encourage every club to consider a gift to the Serra International Foundation. 100% participation is the goal! The following club recognition levels include:

- **Mallorca Club** $10,000+
- **Carmel Club** $5000-$9999
- **Mission Club** $3000-$4999
- **Padre Club** $2000-$2999
- **Banner Club** $1000-$1999

Please prayerfully consider your year-end giving and make a donation as generously as you’re able! Can we achieve 100% participation among boards, members and clubs?

Top Donating Clubs of 2019

**Banner Clubs**

- East Harris County, TX
- East Valley, AZ
- Kansas City, KS
- North Houston, TX
- Bronx-Westchester County, NY
- Allentown, PA
- Bethlehem, PA
- Baltimore, PA

**Mission Clubs**

- Des Moines, IA
- West Orange County, CA
- Houston, TX
- Reading, PA
- Grand Rapids, MI
- Lafayette, IN

**Padre Clubs**

- Brownsville, TX
- Beaumont, TX
- Philadelphia, PA

**Mallorca Clubs**

- Lake Charles, LA
- Toledo, OH
- Davenport, IA
- St. Louis, MO

Top Donating Club and Siempre Adelante Award Winner

- Wichita, KS

Thank you.
## 2019 Slate of Grants Funded by the Serra International Foundation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Grant’s Purpose</th>
<th>Grant Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Pontifical North American College (p. 17)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Priestly formation</td>
<td>$25,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serra Nat’l Council for the United States, Inc.</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Digital resource center</td>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Institute for Priestly Formation (p. 14)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Summer program</td>
<td>$10,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Seminarian program</td>
<td>$5,000.00</td>
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<td>Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles (p. 11)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Expanding vocation outreach of consecrated life</td>
<td>$4,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Paul Catholic Priest Vocations Training Centre</td>
<td>D.R. CONGO</td>
<td>Formation program</td>
<td>$3,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Catholic Diocese of Zomba (p. 12)</td>
<td>MALAWI</td>
<td>Tuition fees for 30 seminarians</td>
<td>$3,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Congregacao das Irmas do Apostolado Catolico - Palotinas</td>
<td>MOZAMBIQUE</td>
<td>Vocation programs for young women</td>
<td>$2,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation of the Mission, Western Province</td>
<td>KENYA</td>
<td>Library update</td>
<td>$2,000.00</td>
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<td>Divine Word College</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Student scholarships</td>
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<td>John Paul II Foundation for Life and Family</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Shepherd's Heart for the Family formation initiative</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lugazi Diocese</td>
<td>UGANDA</td>
<td>Stipends for 93 priests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mater Redemptoris House of Formation</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Retreat, vocation visits and pilgrimages</td>
<td>$2,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Joseph Minor Seminary</td>
<td>PAKISTAN</td>
<td>Solar energy system</td>
<td>$4,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocations Ireland (p. 8)</td>
<td>IRELAND</td>
<td>Youth program/training</td>
<td>$2,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daughters of Holy Mary of the Heart of Jesus (p. 7)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Vocation program</td>
<td>$1,500.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fractured Atlas</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Pray to Love program</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missionary Sisters of St. Columban</td>
<td>MYANMAR</td>
<td>Vocation program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serra Club of Nashville (p. 18)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Programs to foster and promote vocations</td>
<td>$1,200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help</td>
<td>TANZANIA</td>
<td>Construction project</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters of Providence</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>$1,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diocese of Bridgeport, Vocations Office (p. 13)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>St. Andrew Dinner program</td>
<td>$750.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Daughters of Holy Mary of the Heart of Jesus are a religious congregation of pontifical right that was born into the Church in 1998, originally proceeding from another religious congregation, Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Founded by Mother María de Jesús Velarde, the Daughters originated in Spain but have schools and novitiates in North, Central and South America, and Europe. In the United States they are based in Steubenville, Ohio. A grant from the Serra International Foundation benefitted vocations outreach programs for the Daughters at the Steubenville location.

We praise God for all those who support us spiritually and financially. We are overjoyed that the Lord blessed us with the largest class of postulants in our nine years in the United States, during the 2019-2020 school year. This was a record indeed! The largest class prior to this one was of three postulants in 2017. Their entrance will have a very positive impact on the continuity and expansion of our ministries, once they finish the four years of formation that our Institute offers them in-house. They are certainly enjoying living in our new novitiate building where there is plenty of room to pray, receive classes from the Sisters, study and learn how to become a Daughter of Holy Mary of the Heart of Jesus.

After our relocation to a closed parish in Steubenville in 2014, our former novitiate became available to serve as a second retreat house within our property, which we have named “Casa Velarde.” It has a maximum capacity of 26 women. It is conveniently located farthest from the new novitiate and closest to the church.

Unfortunately, the mandatory shutdown of churches and youth ministry due to the coronavirus pandemic limited the number of young people and families that we were able to welcome to our property to participate in our programs. However, the good news is that we were able to restart our most important vocational ministry, our Come and See Retreat, in July, with a very small group of seven participants. In addition, our lay prayer movement for girls, adolescents and women called DOYMAR was launched successfully on August 28 with 13 girls, 10 teens and seven college-age women in attendance.

All the programs that our community of professed Sisters run are aimed at promoting the renewal of society starting at age seven, mentoring girls as spiritual mothers, with responsibility and accountability to God, until adulthood. The goal is to foster the truth that sets them free from destructive patterns and equips them with guidelines, criteria and skills that empower them to overcome the challenge of secularization and enable them to reach their maximum potential as human beings, created in the image and likeness of God.

Looking back at all the years the Lord has blessed us, we are very grateful for the stability of our programs and trust that we have earned from youth and families in more than five states, especially in Ohio, where our novitiate is located. Please continue to pray for us as we reach out to more than 160 girls personally each month using the phone system we acquired through the Serra Foundation to invite them to come to hear the voice of the Lord in prayer and respond to His love. 🙏
Vocations Ireland: A Message for All Ages

NET Ministries build many bridges in a single year in Ireland

by Margaret Cartwright, Director

The Serra International Foundation grant was a wonderful contribution to Vocations Ireland. This grant enabled Vocations Ireland to continue to host a National Evangelisation Ministry Team, also known as NET MINISTRIES.

This team assisted Vocations Ireland to engage with young people ages 16-35. This engagement took place in schools, parishes and youth gatherings.

With many of our vocation directors being of an older generation, we found it a great help to have young people work alongside them.

The following are the five objectives of the Vocations Ireland NET Ministry Team:

- Outreach to young people
- Disciple and form young people
- Create a link between parish, families and school
- Help religious men and women to minister to young people via social media
- Improve relationships between religious and young people and the understanding of vocations.

Youth Ministry at Schools

The team provided 25 “encounter days” to 1,102 students in 12 different schools.

For 176 students in two schools that could not offer the team an entire day to work with the students, the team held six one- to two-hour rallies. These rallies included fun fact introduction, games, rotating experiential learning activities, a talk on a theme chosen by the school, a drama, and end with prayer.
Two schools that were not able to permit retreats still wanted the team to do some ministry. In these situations, the team would mingle at lunchtime with the students gathered in small groups. They would chat with students and witness on a very informal level. It was the first time both these schools had permitted any type of ministry involvement and improved the local priest’s relationship with the schools.

Parish Ministry

The majority of the NET Team’s parish ministry took place in newer parishes where they worked very closely with the parish priest. In the Carmelite-run Knocklyon parish, the parish priest gave the students full access to the parish centre where they ran encounter days with youth groups. Confirmation encounter days were provided for 135 students. They were successful in starting a youth group for students aged 12-18 with 14 young people attending. They also provided a four-week program that involved social nights, teaching nights, prayer night and ended with a farewell party for the team. This parish was so delighted with the outcome that they engaged a team for 2020-2021 to continue to build on what the Vocations Ireland team had begun.

In other parishes where the team were placed, they worked specifically with the local priest and Vocations Ireland to develop various types of prayer initiatives for young people in an attempt to develop the youth of the parish. They also engaged with the older members of the parishes which helped toward building better relationships within the parishes.

The NET Team also took part in street pilgrimages bringing the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of Dublin and ending with Adoration and Benediction in the Blessed Sacrament Fathers chapel. The theme for this day was “Come Alive: Walk and pray with Jesus.”

They also led Light/Night Fever ministry where they went out into the streets with youth and religious working together to invite people into Dublin churches to light a candle for themselves or someone else and say a prayer. They led the music in the church also for these events. We witnessed many people at these events who had not been inside a church in years. Some were moved to tears or to go to Confession which was always readily available. This was powerful ministry which benefited young and old alike.

Engagement with Religious

Career days

The NET Team accompanied religious when attending career fairs, the National Ploughing Championships, and Divine Mercy Conference. The purpose of their attendance at these events was to reach out to young people and help them to look at different types of vocation: to marriage, single or religious life. Information was shared in the form of brochures, prayer cards, and question-and-answer sessions.

The conferences were specifically aimed at youth ministry and how it operates in Ireland. It became noticeably clear that we need to stop seeing young people as a “problem to be solved” and that we need to bring groups together in an effort to work and grow together.

Religious Conferences

At these gatherings of religious communities, the idea was to really help religious meet young people and find new ways to relate to them. These gatherings proved invaluable to both religious and youth, both of whom were surprised at how little they knew about each other. Many of the team had not really engaged with religious before coming to Vocations Ireland and were very thankful for this opportunity, saying it is now an option to consider and one that they would never before have even given a moment’s thought.

Vocations materials distributed by the Vocations Ireland NET Team on their travels

Continued on next page
Vocations Ireland

Continued from previous page

to. The religious, too, were surprised by how free the young people were in talking about their relationship with God, and were struck by the relationship some of them had with Jesus. The young people’s openness and ease gave the religious great confidence and encouragement to work more with young people and to be open to learning from them. The team really took on board the need to bring hope to older religious through conversation with them about how alive young people are in the Catholic Church today.

Young People and Social Media

The team undertook a major piece of work with religious through the making of short YouTube videos leading up to Vocation Sunday. The “Made for More: An Extraordinary Calling” video series was commissioned and developed by Vocations Ireland. The team travelled, interviewed, filmed and edited videos with various religious orders showcasing the joy of religious life, and their vocation stories. The video project’s goal was to give young people an inside glimpse into religious life and to explain why religious life/priesthood/missionary life is so important. They made 19 different three-to-four-minute videos over the course of three months. Each video took four to six hours of editing to complete, so a lot of work went into this project. The team worked with the Franciscans, Dominicans, St. John of God Brothers, Augustinians, Redemptorist nuns, Daughters of Charity, diocesan vocation directors, Sisters of Marie Reparatrice, Our Lady of the Missions, Cistercian sisters, Poor Clare Sisters in Galway and Limerick, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Mercy Sisters, Carmelites, St. Joseph of Cluny Sisters, Holy Faith Sisters, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and Comboni Missionaries. You can view the fruit of their labors at www.vocationsireland.com. Click “Videos” and select Vocation Sunday 2019.

At the end of this year when I spent time in pastoral supervision with the NET Team, they commented on how they would not have had the opportunity to minister to as many young people as they had, nor would they have had such close involvement with religious or learned so much about the vocation to religious life and priesthood, if not for Vocations Ireland and the financial support of those such as the Serra International Foundation.

Finally, this just leaves it for me on behalf of Vocations Ireland to say a very sincere thank you to Serra Foundation for their generous contribution and support. I know that individual members of Serra also contributed from their own pockets, so I wish to thank them also.

Having young people and religious work so closely together this year had been wonderful. It helped both understand each other better. But the witness that this gave in our schools and parishes was also amazing opportunity. It also helped open doors for the religious to engage more with the parish life and the school communities. Thank you.
As we reflect on the past months, it is hard to believe all that has happened in such a short time. The world has changed dramatically. And, yet, amid all that has occurred, God's Voice has become louder to many who are discerning a call to religious life. It has been a blessing to meet these young people with our hearts wide open in order to listen and accompany them in their discernment journey.

The start of our year began like previous years, with travel to universities and outreach to several college campuses. The generosity of the Serra International Foundation made it possible for two sisters to travel to Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, in September 2019, which was a new venture for us. We spent a week on the college campus meeting one-on-one with young women discerning a possible vocation, joining the young women's discernment group to share vocation stories, participating in St. Paul's Outreach events with the missionaries and students, and giving a talk on St. Thérèse Lisieux in the women's dorm, where over 50 young women joined us! We also had many meals with the students in the dining hall and were able to establish a ministry of presence in a relaxed and comfortable environment for the students. One young woman we met on this trip is now actively discerning with our community.

The next adventure that the Serra International Foundation helped make possible was a trip to the FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) Student Leadership Summit in December 2019 – January 2020. Five of our sisters packed up a van and road-tripped together from California to join thousands of young people for four days in Phoenix, Arizona. We encountered hundreds of young people actively discerning their vocation and spent extensive time talking with them one-on-one. We continue to keep in touch with many young women we encountered there, one of whom became a candidate with our community this August 2020.

At the end of February 2020, three sisters traveled once again to south Louisiana. We spent one week with students on both campuses of Louisiana State University and the University of New Orleans. God Is Full of Surprises

Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles’ college outreach knows no bounds

by Sr. Maria Goretti, Vocation Directress

Continued on page 13
Located in the southern region of Malawi, the Zomba Diocese was established in 1958 by Pope John XXIII. It is one of the eight dioceses of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) which comprises 18 parishes. It covers an area of 3,522 km² and present statistics show the diocese as home to 233,051 Catholics. It has over 124 out-churches, five deaneries, two technical colleges, 16 Catholic secondary schools, 76 Catholic primary schools, and six health centres.

Zomba Diocese has 54 local and active priests who are working in parishes and various institutions of the Church. While a majority are working in parishes, a small segment of them continue to serve the Church in the social, political and health sectors inside and outside the diocese. We remain very thankful for their dedication and commitment in their pastoral work of bringing Christ to the people, with them leading by example worth standing in persona Christi.

Being a diocese with limited resources, we asked the Serra International Foundation for financial support for the formation of students in the major seminaries, which in the long run shall ensure future availability of priests in the diocese and the entire Church. The grant we received, of US $3,000, contributed to part of the tuition and medical, stationery and transport expenses which we have paid for 42 seminarians total.

Despite challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic and limited funding, the seminarians have been sustained in the formation through the support from Serra International Foundation. Without the grant, it wouldn’t have been possible to keep these young men in the houses of formation. From this note, we are pretty sure that the future of the sacred ministry is to be carried on until Christ comes.

The Serra International Foundation offered a ray of hope to the sustenance of our major seminarians in formation houses for this academic year. Such funding occurred at a time when the limited availability of financial resources in our diocese is making it too hard to keep seminarians in places of formation and consequently accomplish our evangelization mission and the development of humanity through health, education, and to look after the welfare of the underprivileged. The Serra International Foundation showed that God has not abandoned us. We, therefore, with full confidence cry out: “The Lord is our help and our shield.” 🙏
The St. Andrew Dinners program has been part of the Bridgeport Diocese’s vocation program for approximately 10 years. The dinners provide young men, accompanied by their local clergy, an opportunity to learn more about the diocesan seminary program. The evening consists of evening prayer, dinner, talk from Bishop Frank Caggiano, and conversation with diocesan seminarians.

Originally, we scheduled three dinners for this academic year. Thirty-six high school-aged men, eight clergy, and the bishop attended the Oct. 22, 2019 dinner in Stamford, Connecticut, USA. Fifty-four high school-age men, nine clergy, and the bishop attended the Jan. 28, 2020 dinner in Trumbull, Connecticut. The Vocation Office database of potential candidates has increased by 39 new prospects. There is also repeat attendance at vocation events throughout high school by 15 prospects which is a good indicator of active interest.

Bishop Frank Caggiano spoke to the men about Christ’s calling of the first four disciples and told them that God was calling each of them to follow Him. He told them that he would pray that those whom the Lord was calling to priesthood would have courage to leave everything and respond to the call. One of the seminarians gave a vocations testimony, and the clergy and seminarians sat at tables with the guests to answer questions about life as a priest and what seminary life is like.

The final St. Andrew Dinner for the 2019/2020 academic year was scheduled to be held on April 1, 2020 in Danbury. Unfortunately, due to circumstances with Covid-19, we had to cancel that event. Nonetheless, we have always recognized the immense value that the St. Andrew Dinners have had for our vocations program and look forward to resuming them as soon as circumstances allow. Thank you for the Serra International Foundation grant in support of this ongoing program.
Since 1995, the Institute for Priestly Formation has been sponsoring a summer program for diocesan seminarians, which takes place on the campus of Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, USA. The overall purpose of the program is to provide the time and place in which diocesan seminarians can deepen their relationship with God, come to know their identity as future diocesan priests, and learn to find God in the midst of everyday life so as to help future parishioners do the same.

An eight-day silent directed retreat and weekly spiritual direction provide the “golden thread” which weaves together all aspects of the summer experience. Intellectual formation compliments and integrates with spiritual formation through a series of four different classes offered over the summer: Christian Prayer and Discernment; Growing into Authentic Manhood with Christ the Priest; Prayer and Priestly Identity; and The Mystery of the Liturgy: Receiving in Celebration and in Life. Seminarians also engage in apostolic service for five weeks, visiting various institutions in the area on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

In 2019, our 25th anniversary year, the summer program hosted 177 seminarians from 71 different dioceses, including three dioceses from Canada. To staff the program, 60 adjunct spiritual directors and 15 adjunct faculty assisted the full-time spiritual directors/faculty during the nine-week program. Nearly 50 apostolic service sites in the greater Omaha area were visited by the seminarians as part of the program.

We have collected and analyzed assessment data every year for over 12 years. The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate whether the program goals and objectives are being met. Each year we have reported the same outstanding results in spiritual growth using pre/post change scores over the summer program objectives as reported by the IPF assessment committee. Upon their recommendation, we have moved to doing a full assessment with statistical analysis every two to three years. We still collect the data every year.
Since our beginnings in 1995, when we hosted six seminarians, we have grown so that our total over the past 25 years has now reached 3,003 seminarians who have participated in the program. We have been assisted by generous grants from the Serra International Foundation since 2002. The steadfast support of the Foundation has made a major contribution to the success of this important program. Although dioceses pay a fee for each seminarian-participant, that fee does not cover the entire cost of the seminarian’s participation. We depend on the generosity of others to help make up the difference. We are deeply grateful for the Foundation’s generosity which helps us meet our costs.

Continued on next page

Fr. Jeff Eirvin, the Director of Vocations in Portland and President of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors, teaches a course on “Prayer and Priestly Identity” to the seminarians at IPF.

Institute for Priestly Formation
Summer 2019 Seminarian Testimonies

IPF gave me the tools needed to live a life in relationship with Christ even throughout the busyness of everyday life.

My experience at IPF has been the single most important thing that has happened in my prayer life. I didn’t learn about different types of prayer or why I need to pray but I experienced communion with Trinity dwelling within me and learned how to remain in that place.

The priesthood can only be lived out in relationship with the Heart of Jesus. IPF helps a man to deepen that encounter, and to remain faithful to it.

IPF changed the way I pray and the way I see God working in my life. I will be a better priest because this program taught me to live my ministry from a place of deep communion and intimate friendship with God. Every seminarian should go to IPF if possible.

IPF has helped me to gradually see myself as how Jesus sees me: I am a beloved son of God. My life will never be the same. Thanks, God, for the gift of IPF. After many successful years, the Institute has been guided by the Holy Spirit to bring seminarians into the laboring love of the Father, Son and Spirit in a very personal way. I know I will carry many of these experiences and teachings throughout the rest of seminary formation and into my priesthood. To be able to relate to the people of my parish, I must first be able to relate to God.

I always believed that heaven and earth met on the altar during Mass, but I didn’t know of His presence working in my daily life until IPF. I can’t wait to bring that awareness into my future ministry.

IPF taught me, through class, spiritual direction, and time for prayer, that there is nothing more beautiful, worthwhile, or fulfilling than a relationship with God. IPF opened a door, and God did the rest.

IPF gave me the tools needed to live a life in relationship with Christ even throughout the busyness of everyday life.
Vision 2025: Hearts on Fire for Christ

During our anniversary year, we engaged in a strategic planning process which resulted in a five-year plan which we are calling Vision 2025. Here are some highlights of the Vision:

New Mission Statement:
In collaboration with Catholic seminaries and dioceses, we form seminarians, priests and bishops in holiness and accompany them in their ongoing spiritual growth, so they can more effectively lead others to Christ.

Vision Statement:
We envision a joyful and powerful renewal of holiness across the U.S. Catholic Church as more diocesan seminarians, priests, and bishops seek and commit to a personal, deep, and sustained spiritual communion with the Trinity.

Two other newly developed statements, Major Animating Objectives and Statement of Beliefs and Convictions, can be accessed via our website: http://priestlyformation.org/about/mission-and-vision.html

While affirming all of our existing programs, including the summer program for diocesan seminarians, the Vision calls for focusing on these areas of program growth:

• Retreats for bishops
• Retreats for priests 5-10 years ordained
• Adding another section of our Spiritual Direction Training Program
• Offering symposia to help seminaries and dioceses respond to the new Program for Priestly Formation

Throughout this summer, we are engaging in consultation meetings with an eye to program planning. The top priorities are the first two programs mentioned above: a program for bishops and a program for priests 5-10 years ordained. Organizationally, the Board voted to accept the planning process’s recommendation that all of the Institute’s advancement work should be consolidated with the work of the IPF Foundation. As a result, the position of Director of Mission Advancement was discontinued and a new President of the IPF Foundation hired as an interim in order to oversee this transition.

In addition, a committee was organized to a candidate search for a candidate to become the new Executive Director. As a result, Father Brian Welter, currently vice-rector at Mundelein Seminary, Chicago, will become the Institute’s Executive Director as of July 1, 2020. Father Gabuzda, current Executive Director, will remain on the Institute’s staff as Director of Programming and Mission.
In An Extraordinary Year, the Realization of the Extraordinary Nature of the Call to Priesthood

Pontifical North American College pre-academic year Fall program focuses on priestly formation

by Mark Randall, CFRE
Executive Director, Pontifical North American College (Rome)

While in some ways, the content of this year's September workshop remained consistent, the circumstances of this last year made for a very heightened focus on the importance of the work of priestly formation. Every Fall at the North American College, before university courses at the Ecclesiastical Universities begin, each class of seminarians receives a month of intensive conferences on some aspect of our formation. This is the College's opportunity to supplement what the seminarians receive in the classroom with practical, hands-on learning adapted specifically for the culture to which the seminarians will return in their dioceses. For the second-year men, these conferences focus on Priestly Identity. Over three weeks of conferences and a week-long silent retreat, various faculty members from the College shared from the wealth of their experience to illuminate this theme.

Fr. Rodrigue offered brief conferences each day, inviting them to meditate more deeply on the meaning of the priesthood and the mystery of our call to share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The retreat each year is greatly anticipated and provides a time for rest and renewal before the beginning the new academic year. The opportunity to spend such time with God, reflecting on the priestly experience shared by our formation and the men's experiences in formation over the previous year, comes as a great blessing. The third-year class undertakes an individually directed week-long retreat. Since two of our classes had not yet finished their 14-day mandated quarantine, we utilized our facility that is normally dedicated to the priest sabbatical program.

Fr. Randy Soto, the Carl J. Peter Chair of Homiletics, gave a series of conferences on preaching. Discussing everything from the theology of the homily to practical tips for preparation and delivery, Fr. Soto gave great life to the conferences by sharing many of his own experiences in the pulpit. The seminarians also broke out into smaller groups to write and preach practice homilies. Each group had a faculty moderator who provided feedback and encouragement. Men in second and third year each have this week-long experience.

The final week of conferences built on the previous weeks' material, with lectures on the biblical and historical roots of the priesthood, the theology of the priesthood, and a presentation on priestly celibacy by Fr. David Songy, O.F.M. Cap., of the St. Luke Institute. The culmination of the month was a panel discussion open to any and all questions from the seminarians on priestly identity and ministry.

For the seminarians in Third and Fourth Theology, the College invites professionals from the United States to give the men helpful insights into their future ministerial experiences. Week-long conferences on Pastoral Counseling, Marriage Preparation, developing leadership skills and presiding at the Liturgy are all intended to help the seminarian round off his classroom experiences with an eye toward his new role in the life of the Church.

The College is aware of its tremendous blessings: that the men have been able to return, have remained healthy, and can be back at their formation again!
Fifteen men participated in University Catholic’s Melchizedek Project for the Diocese of Nashville this past school year. The goal of our Melchizedek Project is to educate and inspire Catholic students to seriously consider a vocation to priesthood. The Melchizedek Project participants are actively seeking God’s will for their lives.

**Monthly Gatherings**

University Catholic’s Melchizedek Project hosted monthly gatherings throughout the school year. The young men met with Fr. Gervan Menezes, Melchizedek Project Director, for a very nice meal, fellowship, and a program.


Monthly gatherings also included a vocation talk from a priest mentor or seminarian. These guest speakers shared their personal vocation stories and provided great inspiration.

The dinner meetings provided a safe and welcoming environment for men to openly explore the priesthood. Lively question-and-answer sessions always followed. Trust and relationships were built, and the discerning men felt free to call upon Fr. Gervan and the other priests for guidance.

While the coronavirus pandemic unexpectedly ended the school year in mid-March, it did not hamper the effectiveness of University Catholic’s Melchizedek Project. Fr. Gervan has remained available to each of the men by phone or skype during the period of nationwide quarantine.

**Weekend Discernment Retreat**

In November 2019, University Catholic’s Melchizedek Project hosted a weekend Discernment Retreat. Twelve
Quadruply Blessed: Four Melchizedek Men to Attend Seminary

Four men from University Catholic’s Melchizedek Project (2019/20) will attend seminary in the Fall. All four attended Vanderbilt University. Will Braeuner of Nashville graduated with a degree in civil engineering and will attend Notre Dame Seminary in Louisiana for the Diocese of Nashville. Chris Pistrang from Cleveland, Tennessee graduated with degrees in Classical and Mediterranean Studies and Ecology, Evolution, and Organismal Biology. He will join the Dominican Friars Province of St. Joseph in New York in July. Patrick Deneen from Bloomington, Illinois earned a degree in African American and Diaspora Studies. He will attend seminary for the Diocese of Peoria. Andrew Schaffer dropped out of school to apply to the seminary for the Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas.

In the midst of secular colleges in the Bible belt, University Catholic has had much success in helping the best and the brightest discern the Lord’s call. These men continue University Catholic’s proud history of formation and will bring our number to nine men in seminaries across the country in the Fall. Two of University Catholic’s earlier graduates have been ordained to the priesthood: Fr. Josh Altonji, a 2011 graduate of Vanderbilt University, was ordained in Birmingham, Alabama in 2017; Fr. Stephen Schumacher, a 2014 graduate of Vanderbilt, was ordained in May in St. Louis, Missouri. All of these men will attest that their vocations were nurtured, if not discovered, through their involvement with University Catholic.

The Melchizedek Project has been a tremendous help for the Diocese of Nashville in fostering vocations to the priesthood. Our efforts are building the universal Church as well, with representation from dioceses throughout the United States.

young men participated in the get-away at Tims Ford Lake, which included talks, quiet reflection, Mass and confession. Bishop Mark Spalding was a presenter along with Fr. Gervan Menezes, Fr. Austin Gilstrap, and Fr. John Sims Baker.

The Discernment Retreat was so successful that one of the young men in attendance left college at the end of that semester and began the process for applying to seminary!

The Discernment Retreat was also a wonderful opportunity for all participants to take a break from their busy schedules for quiet, prayerful time to consider God’s call for them. The weekend also helped bond friendships among the retreatants and priests in attendance.

Avow: Discernment Group for Women

The young women at University Catholic were so inspired by our Melchizedek Project that we started an Avow group in January for women to consider vocations to the religious life. The first session attracted over 30 college-aged women and featured a guest speaker from the Dominican Sisters of the St. Cecilia Congregation in Nashville. That night launched multiple more gatherings early in the semester before schools were closed due to COVID 19 quarantine.

We are extremely grateful for the Serra International Foundation Grant for supporting our efforts.
Wherever You Are, Go to Church

by Dr. Ruben Gallegos, President, Serra International

My mother, Maria Cavazos Rodríguez Gallegos, was very devoted Catholic. Growing up, my family attended St. Ignatius Church in El Ranchito, Texas, USA. She used to tell me, “Wherever you are in the world, always go visit a Catholic Church.

I visited Mexico. Of the many churches I visited there, I want to highlight three. First, is the Basilica of San Juan de los Lagos located near Guadalajara, Jalisco. In 1623 the youngest daughter of an acrobat fell and was killed. The image of Our Lady was placed on the child and she was brought back to life. The miracle spread throughout Mexico and the number of pilgrims to the church grew and grew. Second is the Holy Cross Church and Franciscan convent located in Querétaro where St. Junípero Serra would go rest and pray. I saw the church where he prayed and the room where he slept. Third is the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe located in Mexico City. Our Lady appeared and spoke to St. Juan Diego as he walked through the mountains. She requested that a church be built on the spot of her appearance. It was not until St. Juan Diego’s cloak full of roses with the image of Our Lady miraculously emblazoned upon it was revealed that the archbishop believed and agreed to build the church.

I visited Spain. First, I visited Petra, Mallorca, the birthplace of St. Junípero Serra, and St. Peter’s Church, where he was baptized in December 1713. It is from this church that he left to become a missionary in Mexico and California. Second, I visited Le Seu Cathedral of Palma in Palma, Mallorca. Finally, I visited Gaudí’s famed Basilica de la Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. This basilica has been under construction for many years and no one knows when it will be completed.

I visited Italy. At the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi I learned that the basilica was highly damaged by earthquakes in 1997 with the exception of the area that houses the tomb of St. Francis of Assisi. In 2017 as a member of the Serra International Board, I was fortunate to have met Pope Francis, and of course I visited the unforgettable Basilica of St. Peter.

I visited Brazil and its Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida in the town of the same name. Historical accounts state that in 1717, a statue of the Blessed Virgin was found in the Paraíba River by three fishermen who miraculously caught many fish after invoking the name of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. The shrine can hold up to 45,000 worshippers. I found hope in the Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida.

Last but not least, I have of course visited many churches in the United States, where all my family was born. In New York City, I always visit St. Patrick’s Cathedral. In Washington, DC, I visit the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Finally, special to my heart is the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan de Valle located in San Juan, Texas, the home for thousands of agricultural migrant workers. As a former migrant worker and son of migrant workers, I picked cotton in the Russell Town Plantation and El Campo. It was not an easy life. One day my friend, Norma Linda Martinez, asked me to take her to the basilica in order to attend Mass and bring back holy water to Brownsville, where we lived. At the end of the Mass I asked her to marry me and she said yes. We were married for a wonderful 46 years and I miss her. I found love in the Basilica of San Juan del Valle.

If you want HOPE, visit a Catholic Church.
If you want LOVE, visit a Catholic Church.
If you want PEACE, visit a Catholic Church.
Hope, love and peace be with you. 🌟
Support Our Serra Foundation
by Richard Arians, President, Serra’s USA Council

The Serra International Foundation is the fundraising arm of Serra International. It has a board of Serrans that conducts the business of the Foundation, largely raising funds, accepting grant applications, and dispensing of the funds they raise. The money raised from Serrans across the United States and the world is used to support the formation and training of our priests and consecrated religious. More recently, it immediately answered the call of our US Serrans to support the rebuilding of the San Gabriel Mission severely damaged by fire. Our own United States Council won grants to fund our SPARK program that provides tools to vocation directors and the laity working to build a culture of vocations within our parishes. Without the help of the Foundation, many of these projects would be difficult to complete.

The United States Council of Serra International strongly supports the work of the Foundation. Many of our US Serrans contribute to the Foundation as a way to financially support our Catholic ministry on a more global basis. Further, our leadership training encourages each club to appoint a Foundation representative that keeps our clubs informed of the Foundation’s activities.

As we approach the end of the year, we want to remind and encourage our US Serrans to consider a contribution to the Foundation through a one-time donation, scheduled recurring donations, or target funds from retirement distributions.

Finally, a prayerful “Thank You!” to all of you that have contributed to the Foundation in the past.

Richard Arians
President
Serra’s USA Council

IGNITE
your Parish Vocation Ministry
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www.serraspark.org

Built by Serrans for Vocation Directors/Promoters
A free online vocations promotion toolkit by Serra’s United States Council in collaboration with the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors
2020 is a year that did not go according to plan for any living person. However, God invited us to focus on what truly matters, when all of us are forced to take actions that would have been unthinkable 12 months ago. For many, this included not physically receiving the Eucharist for weeks or months. While televised Masses allow us to receive Spiritual Communion, I have spoken with dozens of Serrans who went to extraordinary lengths to safely participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in person.

Alongside our focus on the physical and psychological health needs of the world as we work to end this global pandemic, we must never lose sight of the need to maintain our spiritual well-being. “The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life.’ The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch” (CCC 1324).

The Eucharistic miracle that occurs at every Mass would not be possible without the holy men who answered God’s call to serve as priests. During his farewell address, the outgoing Secretary General of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Msgr. J. Brian. Bransfield, reflected on the priests and bishops he served during his time at the USCCB saying: “I see men who answer calls they never expected to get. I see men who respond to the direction of Our Lady at Cana in John’s Gospel: ‘Do whatever He tells you.’ These courageous men continue to serve us and our Church in circumstances that no one was prepared for because they understand their sacred obligations and the need to bring Christ into the world.” These priests have been and continue to be supported by Serrans and those who share our understanding of the need for an increase in priestly and religious vocations.

The articles in this issue of The Serran illustrate how the Serra International Foundation supports priestly and religious vocations throughout the world to ensure that we will be able to receive the Eucharist now and for generations to come. This year has been difficult and presented all of us with unforeseen choices, but the decision to support our Foundation should be an easy one and a priority for all Serrans, even in 2020.

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**Executive Director**
John M. Liston
One of my favorite saints is St. Ignatius of Loyola. He is known as the patron of retreatants, as founder of the Society of Jesus, and as a staunch defender of the Catholic faith. He has a colorful history and spent his adult life serving the Church and the Pope. However, there is another important aspect of Ignatius that is often overlooked – he designed a 30-day retreat especially to help men and women discern their path in life. Individuals who participated in the *Spiritual Exercises* withdrew from the world for 30 days to prayerfully consider how God was calling them to serve Him.

For many young men and women today, a 30-day withdrawal from the world is not a possibility. They feel moved to discern God’s call but cannot afford the time or money to leave everything for an extended period. For young women there is an alternative that can be used as a means of vocational discernment. I would like to invite you to become acquainted with a SPARK tool that can foster discernment in the midst of daily life.

SPARK is a resource developed by the USA Council of Serra International specifically for diocesan vocation directors. However, the Serra Promotion And Resource Kit is also valuable source of ideas and concepts that will succeed for anyone involved in vocation work. Local Serra clubs, parishes, and everyone committed to building a culture of vocations can both learn about and expand their vocation activities with the information and tools available under the SPARK tab at www.serraus.org.

Tool #28 is **Avow – A Discernment Program for Women.** This tool is a relatively new addition to our SPARK website. Avow, launched in 2018, is an innovative discernment program created by Sr. Clare Matthias, CFR, along with Vianney Vocations. The program revolves around small-group discussion, study, and prayer as a means of mutual support for women who want to make the journey of discernment together.

Using Sr. Clare’s book *Discerning Religious Life* as a guide, the participants attend a series of small-group meetings. They learn about religious life, prayer, and the principles of discernment. They focus on their relationship with Jesus and a regular prayer life as the firm foundation for discerning their vocations. Avow groups explore the many dimensions of religious life, including the nine essential elements taught by the Church. Participants walk through a “six-month discernment challenge” with the goal of moving from discernment to decision.

Young Catholic women who have participated in Avow assert that the program’s discernment in a group setting is an approach that works. It facilitates women’s discernment of religious life at large while also inspiring them to look into religious communities to which they feel called by God. The Avow program does not favor or recommend any particular religious order, but allows the participants to consider all religious communities. Avow groups are facilitated by a woman religious, FOCUS missionary, or a campus minister.

Avow has been described as “a book club and a prayer group rolled into one.” The program’s focus on small groups allow women the mutual support of others who want to make the journey of discernment together. I hope all Serrans will take time to learn more about this tool by reading about it on our SPARK website.

If your Local Serra club, diocese, or parish has used the Avow program and is willing to share a newspaper article or other written information about it with other Serrans, please contact Dr. Anne D. Roat, Vice President for Vocations of the US Council of Serra International at vpvocusserra@gmail.com.
One of your Serran friends says, “Pop quiz! How many forms of consecrated life can you name?” Would you reply, “Cloistered and not cloistered” or “Communities for men and communities for women”? Or do you know more forms of consecrated life?

You are invited to expand your knowledge and appreciation for the forms of this vocation by using “The Many Forms of Consecrated Life,” a program written for use at your club meeting or for Serrans’ private prayer and study. It is one of the several programs added to the second part of the Programs Manual by the USA Council Programs Committee.

All of the programs in the manual are complete presentations that can be used in place of a speaker or panel. Any Serran can facilitate the program at a club meeting. Or an outside speaker could use it as an outline or a handout. Each program is divided into sections: an Opening Prayer, a quote from Scripture, an Introduction, quotes from our Documentary Tradition, Discussion Questions, a Closing Reflection and a Bibliography.

We encourage you to use this program for a club meeting, especially close to February 7, 2021, World Day for Consecrated Life.

Katie Radford
Programs Committee
USA Council of Serra International

Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.

Opening Prayer

O God, throughout the ages you have called women and men to pursue lives of perfect charity through the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. We give you thanks for these courageous witnesses of faith and models of inspiration. Their pursuit of holy lives teaches us to make a more perfect offering of ourselves to you. Continue to enrich your Church by calling forth sons and daughters who, having found the pearl of great price, treasure the Kingdom of Heaven above all things. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen. (Adapted from the Prayer for the Year of Consecrated Life, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

Scripture

Joshua also said to the people, “Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will perform wonders among you.” (Joshua 3:5)

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

Introduction

In the Bible, sanctifying means separating oneself from those things that would contaminate one’s relationship with God. Thus, sanctification carries with it the connotation of separating oneself from all that is unclean in order to pursue a life that seeks holiness and purity.

From this scriptural view, consecrated life arose in the Church as a form of Christian living by those to follow Jesus in a more intense way. While the consecrated life is a distinct and specific vocation within the Christian tradition, some form of this life has existed in many cultures and in all the world’s great religions. Specifically, as Catholics, we believe that every baptized person is called to holiness. For some, the consecrated life is the way they choose to grow in holiness by conforming their lives to Christ’s so intensely that they make a public profession of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Vatican II highlights two reasons why a person might undertake this state of life. First, in order to be set free from those obstacles that could hold them back from loving God more perfectly, and secondly, in order...
to consecrate themselves in a more thorough way to the service of God. By dedicating themselves to this special way of living, these individuals become outward signs in the Church and participate in a special way in the salvation of the world. *(Lumen Gentium #44)*

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

**Documentary Tradition**

The state of consecrated life is one way of experiencing a “more intimate” consecration, rooted in Baptism and dedicated totally to God. In the consecrated life, Christ’s faithful, moved by the Holy Spirit, propose to follow Christ more nearly, to give themselves to God who is loved above all and, pursuing the perfection of charity in the service of the Kingdom, to signify and proclaim in the Church the glory of the world to come. *(Catechism of the Catholic Church #916)*

**Eremetic Life** - Without always professing the three evangelical counsels publicly, hermits “devote their life to the praise of God and salvation of the world through a stricter separation from the world, the silence of solitude and asiduous prayer and penance.” *(Catechism of the Catholic Church #920)*

**Consecrated Virgins and Widows** - From apostolic times, Christian virgins and widows, called by the Lord to cling only to him with greater freedom of heart, body, and spirit, have decided with the Church’s approval to live in the respective states of virginity or perpetual chastity “for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven.” *(Catechism of the Catholic Church #922)*

**Religious Life** - Religious life was born in the East during the first centuries of Christianity. Lived within institutes canonically erected by the Church, it is distinguished from other forms of consecrated life by its liturgical character, public profession of the evangelical counsels, fraternal life led in common, and witness given to the union of Christ with the Church. *(Catechism of the Catholic Church #925)*

**Secular Institutes** - By a “life perfectly and entirely consecrated to sanctification,” the members of these institutes share in the Church’s task of evangelization, “in the world and from within the world,” where their presence acts as “leaven in the world.” “Their witness of a Christian life” aims “to order temporal things according to God and inform the world with the power of the gospel.” They commit themselves to the evangelical counsels by sacred bonds and observe among themselves the communion and fellowship appropriate to their “particular secular way of life.” *(Catechism of the Catholic Church #929)*

**Societies of Apostolic Life** - Alongside the different forms of consecrated life are “societies of apostolic life whose members without religious vows pursue the particular apostolic purpose of their society, and lead a life as brothers or sisters in common according to a particular manner of life, and strive for the perfection of charity through the observance of the constitutions. Among these there are societies in which the members embrace the evangelical counsels” according to their constitutions. *(Catechism of the Catholic Church #930)*

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

**Discussion Questions**

1. Do you know people living any of the forms of consecrated life? How do you know they are consecrated?

2. Vatican II emphasized the universal call to holiness for all the People of God. If this is true, then in what sense does a person achieve holiness through living one of the many forms of consecrated life?

3. Identify the many ways Serra fosters vocations to the consecrated life.

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

**Closing Reflection**

Consecrated life in the Church began with its inception and continues, in its many traditions, to find inspiration in the life, words, and actions of Jesus. Jesus Christ himself is the ultimate root of the consecrated life and the vocation to this way of life is a gift. Bestowed by the Father by means of the Holy Spirit, consecrated life is faithful to the Gospel as it embraces those specific characteristics of the life of Jesus by living a life that is chaste, poor, and obedient so that the unfathomable riches of His mystery are present in

*Continued on next page*
Planning ahead for the educational programs at member meetings?

You know how important club program planning is during regular times, but good programming is especially critical during this pandemic, when Serra meetings are held via the Internet. Quality club programs are an anchor that keeps members unified and interested and growing in faith. They are opportunities to grow in holiness and in love of the Church. Also, good programs at meetings entice people to come to the next meeting, thus helping member retention.

How about coordinating program topics with the Church's liturgical year and various national vocations events? It's easy because much of the information you need is laid out on the USA Council website, www.serraus.org. In the blue banner at the top, click on “Club Resources.” In that drop-down box, click on “Programs” and on that page you will find “Meeting Programs by Liturgical Calendar.” The left side of this list is a row of dates and names of various solemnities, feasts and memorials plus national vocations events. On the right are names of appropriate ready-to-use programs from the Programs Manual—Called to Holiness, with room for you to jot down other topics which are appropriate for the season.

We have reprinted December 2020 through June 2021 on page 25 of this issue of The Serran. Give this planning tool a try.

USA Council Programs Committee

Consecrated Life
Continued from previous page

the world and draw everyone toward the Kingdom of God.

While these counsels are often experienced in a public profession of vows by a consecrated person, they provide an example for all disciples to live a life consecrated to God. For example, all of us are called to live the evangelical counsels in some form because they put limits and boundaries on basic human desires for money, sex, and power.

Poverty allows people to put relationships at the center of their lives instead of the collection of material possessions. Choosing intentional or voluntary simplicity enables us to focus on our relationship with God, ourselves, and others in order to support those experiences in our lives that hold real lasting value rather than transitory or passing value.

Chastity is sexual purity which can be experienced differently depending on our state of life. For people who are single, married, ordained, and vowed the experience of chastity is refraining, monogamy, and abstinence.

Obedience is about submission of our will to an appropriate authority in order to have a structure for discernment in place. Through our baptism, we made a promise of obedience to God as Lord of our lives and an obligation to discern God’s will for us.

Living the Christian life is all about the correct orientation of our priorities as children of God. As Catholics, we are universally called to set boundaries on our basic human drives and desires so that we are able to focus more clearly and intentionally on our God and align ourselves with what is holy. The Consecrated Person, living the Gospel in a radical way, is a shining example for the rest of us.

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<td>Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>January 1</td>
<td>Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God</td>
<td>“Ordinary Time,” p. 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 11</td>
<td>Ordinary Time begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2</td>
<td>Feast of the Presentation of the Lord &amp; WDCL</td>
<td>“The Many Forms of Consecrated Life,” p. 89</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 7</td>
<td>(celebration of) World Day for Consecrated Life</td>
<td>“Lent,” p. 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 17</td>
<td>Ash Wednesday</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 19</td>
<td>Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 25</td>
<td>Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 28</td>
<td>Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>Holy Thursday of the Lord’s Supper (Holy Thursday)</td>
<td>“The Mass,” p. 95</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>Friday of the Passion of the Lord (Good Friday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 3</td>
<td>Holy Saturday; The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night</td>
<td>“Easter Triduum,” p. 29</td>
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<td>April 4</td>
<td>Solemnity, Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 11</td>
<td>Sunday of Divine Mercy (Second Sunday of Easter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 25</td>
<td>World Day of Prayer for Vocations</td>
<td>“Prayer: A Path to Vocational Call,” p. 82</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord</td>
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<td>May 16</td>
<td>Ascension (if observed on Sunday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 23</td>
<td>Solemnity, Pentecost Sunday</td>
<td>“The Holy Spirit in My Life,” p. 41</td>
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<td>May 24</td>
<td>Ordinary Time resumes</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 30</td>
<td>Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>Feast of The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary</td>
<td>“The Magnificat: The Visitation...” p. 56</td>
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<td>June 6</td>
<td>Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ</td>
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<td>June 11</td>
<td>Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus</td>
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<td>June 12</td>
<td>Memorial, The Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary</td>
<td>“Our Lady, Undoer of Knots,” p. 69</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 24</td>
<td>Solemnity of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>“The Great John the Baptist,” p. 105</td>
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</table>
Thanks to the incredible generosity of so many Serrans, the Serra International Foundation has raised nearly $30,000 to help California Mission San Gabriel's restoration efforts after fire damaged the mission roof and church interior in July. Not only was this mission founded by our patron, St. Junipero Serra, in 1771, but it is the mission whose iconic bell tower is featured in our logo.

We offer our deepest gratitude to all Serrans who contributed to this very special fund. Stay tuned for a full story on the Mission San Gabriel restoration in the next issue of The Serran magazine.