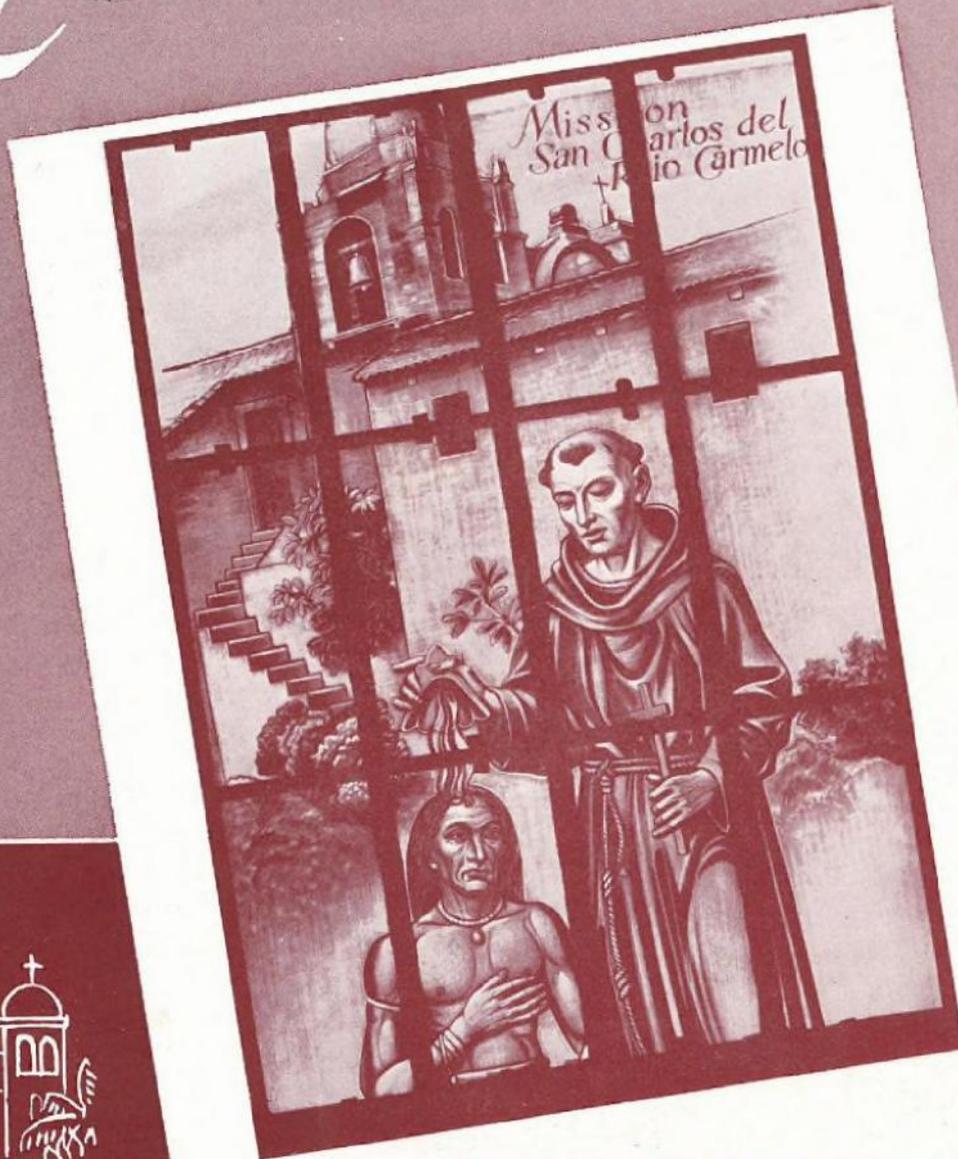


the Serran



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MARCH-APRIL, 1958

A Concept of Serra

HARRY J. O'HAIRE, Executive Secretary

Serra Club is a voluntary association of outstanding Catholic laymen who dedicate themselves to a two-fold objective, fostering and sustaining vocations to the priesthood, and furthering Catholicism through enduring friendships among Catholic men.

With the prior permission of the Ordinary of any diocese, Serra Clubs may work on vocations to the religious life generally, and most clubs do. One major internal activity is the continuing education of the membership so that each Serran will learn to think and act with the mind of the Church.

A SHORT HISTORY

Founded in Seattle, Washington, by four humble men in 1934, Serra took on these objectives from which it has not deviated. Named after Father Junipero Serra, the Franciscan missionary who founded the first missions in California, Serra is modeled after other successful service clubs with the exception that it has a deep spirituality. From 1934, until 1938, five clubs came into being: Seattle, the parent; Tacoma, Spokane, Portland in Oregon, and San Francisco. Recognizing the need for organization and coordinated program, these five clubs gathered at Seattle for the first convention July 2, 1938, to form what is now Serra International and to adopt a constitution which, with slight modification, is the constitution of the organization today. By 1941 Serra had grown through action of volunteer Serrans to thirteen chartered clubs, having extended through Montana into Minnesota, with one club in Wisconsin, and one in Illinois.

During the five years that followed, ten more clubs came into charter status, and by 1946 there were chartered units extending as far as St. Louis, Houston, and Pittsburgh.

STEADY GROWTH

The newly-elected Board of Trustees met in the first post-war convention in Salt Lake City in 1946. They invited the Archbishop of Chicago to serve as Episcopal Adviser, and suggested they desired to establish an international headquarters office to unify program planning, coordinate club activities, and accelerate extension. In March, 1947, such an office was opened in Chicago, and shortly thereafter two additional clubs, Kansas City, Missouri, and Billings, Montana brought the roster to 25.

The convention at Chicago during April, 1947, ratified the opening of the Chicago office and the employment of an Executive Secretary. By February 1, 1958, the Serra organization had spread from nineteen dioceses in eleven states, to 169 clubs in 70 dioceses and archdioceses in 37 states, Canada, Puerto Rico, and Mexico, with Lima, Peru our first chartered South American group, and Liverpool, the first Society in England. Many

other prospective clubs are in process. Eight thousand members constitute Serra and this number is very small. But there is a good reason for that. Membership in Serra is select and selective.

MEMBERS MUST BE ACTIVE

Men in Serra must be active. No one may be carried as dead weight. The pruning process goes on continuously. Membership, a gratuitous gift, requires reciprocity, loyalty to the Movement in service and dedication; not only willingness to do completely what is required, but more important, performance. Each member has committed himself to serve on committees to the best of his ability and to take such time as is necessary to do any work required.

Membership in Serra is a privilege granted, not a right obtained. This is always kept in mind when members select new associates. Men are chosen who are dedicated and sincere, whose loyalty to the Church and to the successors of the apostles is unquestioned. Serrans recruit members who can and will fulfill their obligations of membership. This is recognized as their duty because these men who are chosen have to provide brain as well as brawn to meet the challenging tide of atheistic communism and to carry out the responsibility of the laity in the Church today. Our Holy Father has repeated the words of his predecessor, St. Pius X, when he said, "The greatness and difficulty of our time does not allow any true disciple of Christ to be satisfied with mediocrity." The Church needs a group of responsible laymen in the lay apostolate. Especially does she need them in Serra's work in the lay apostolate.

ATTENDANCE COMPULSORY

Attendance at Serra meetings is compulsory. Men who do not attend faithfully must be dropped. By accepting membership in the club each member assumes the personal obligation to be faithful in his attendance and to attend every possible meeting. A requisite of membership is perseverance, for, in its way, of itself, Serra is a lay vocation, and the Serran will have to be persevering in his attendance and in attention to details until eventually he gains the true understanding of the meaning of membership.

Other groups to which laymen belong may be interested in membership from a standpoint of numbers or of financial support. Serra Club is not concerned with either. Serra is not a fund-raising organization. It was never intended to be, though Serra Club does make its annual contribution to the Ordinary of the diocese as a gesture of loyal obedience, to create an awareness of responsibility to the seminary, and to awaken in the individual his duty in charity and injustice.

Numerical growth will be slow. Each man must be made fully aware of all his obligations. He is

instructed carefully, inducted with dignity and integrated into the whole club and movement.

AGGREGATION TO THE PONTIFICAL WORK

With membership comes a wonderful gift from the Holy Father. In May, 1951, the Holy Father aggregated Serra into the Pontifical Work for priestly vocations with its unlimited spiritual benefits. Serra is the only lay organization directly and independently so affiliated. Fifty-four times a year the Serran is eligible to earn a plenary indulgence for himself or the souls in purgatory. At the hour of his death he is able to earn for himself a plenary indulgence. Every Mass said for the repose of his soul is as one on a privileged altar. But all of these gifts impose an obligation, a gift back in service, in active membership.

Serra's two objectives are clearly defined and there has been no deviation from them. At regular meetings Serrans fulfill their objectives only when they educate the membership in Catholic thought by making of every club a "university in Christian principles for Catholic laymen."

A UNIVERSITY OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

Serrans who learn to think with the mind of the Church qualify themselves as well-informed Catholic laymen. They gain an understanding of what is expected of the Catholic layman. They acquire a Christian conscience, give better example in their Christian lives, and establish a truly Christian environment in which vocations will prosper and grow. The Serrans can and will correctly counsel and encourage young people to seek their proper vocation.

South America needs more than 20,000 priests. Europe, because of war and diabolical encroachment of communism, needs thousands more. America, which has benefitted from the missionaries for many years, now is called upon to repay that tremendous debt in kind, through vocations and service. That is why a group of laymen acquaint friends and associates, but particularly themselves, with this great need. Working for the first objective, under the direction of the Ordinary, and in complete cooperation with the Director of Vocations, Serrans help fill the need, through prayer, example, education, and work, but most of all through prayer.

Laymen must concern themselves with priestly vocations and with all vocations to the religious life. Serrans concern themselves particularly with overcoming parental objection for they are aware of the problem of secularism even in the finest Christian home. Serrans are aware that the element of material sacrifice has been virtually eliminated from the lives of those living in upper class and middle class homes. They know, too, that the home is the primary source of vocations.

FOSTERING VOCATIONS

How to foster vocations? First of all by prayer. Next by personal example. Serra has movies on the priesthood and the sisterhood which are circulated to parent groups and to schools. Clubs conduct essay contests, vocation rally days, altar

boy projects, and some 80 other activities which tend to create an awareness in the minds of parents and young people of the need for and acceptability of a vocation. Each club adopts these projects one by one as it is able. All of this must be done in cooperation with and after prior permission of the Ordinary. Serra works in filial obedience at all times.

Serra Clubs, through their own ingenuity and creative genius, have developed these effective activities to help them fulfill the first objective. Where in 1947, Serra Clubs prayed for vocations and gave the bishop an annual check and felt they had discharged their full responsibility, now they are striving mightily to do even better the job required. Serra Club meetings are founded in friendship and fellowship and they are the place for valuable instruction. These things come to be as each group works sincerely toward their accomplishment.

Next to faith and family, Serra must be first. If it cannot be so, in time, a member should withdraw. Blessed with many graces; gifted with spiritual and social opportunities; aggregated to the Pontifical Work for Priestly Vocation with its many, many indulgences; the opportunity to work hand in hand with the bishop to extend and enhance the priesthood; the invitation to have closest unity with, and understanding of the priesthood; are gifts the like of which members may never receive again.

Serra membership requires hard work, but it is a work of love, the love of God and fellow men. Dare any Serran deny his vocation? Bishops and priests are the direct successors to the apostles, and Serrans, in the Mystical Body are invited to work shoulder to shoulder with them. What a glorious privileges?

PRAY AND WORK

Serra members learn to know their responsibilities, then meet and fulfill them. Make your club distinctive and Serra International through you will operate most effectively. Strive to maintain the total membership in faithful attendance. Assist the program committee and, to provide the club with material that is really worthwhile, worth the time and effort for men to attend. Pray that Serra may never flag in its important work. Pray that the Serra movement may fulfill its promise. Let it and the individual members never be found wanting. Our Heavenly Father was speaking to the men of Serra in our time when He said, "Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." Remember Our Lord said, in the ninth chapter of St. Luke, "It is for thee to go out and proclaim God's kingdom." Father Serra has said, "Always to go forward—never to turn back." This must be the universal feeling of Serrans—furthering Catholicism in the lay apostolate. It is a glorious heritage. It is a wonderful opportunity. Embrace it—welcome it—be good Serrans or be not at all. Serra work is God's work. Work hard for and in Serra, for as we serve Him well, He will bless us and Serra abundantly.