A Family Affair

The special Serra bond between parents and children
ON OUR COVER:
Ulysses Antônio and Roberto José Sebben, a father/son Serran team from União da Vitória, Brazil, grace the cover for this issue of The Serran featuring multi-generational Serran stories.

I have in the Serra Movement an ideal, a mission. In it, for those who love it, there is no ‘retirement.’

Ulysses Antônio Sebben
Serra Club of União da Vitória, Paraná, Brazil

The Serran Calendar

November 28, 2020
Serra Global Rosary for Vocations

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, from Father to Son
Serra itself is a vocation, and an extra special generational bond

An interview with Ulysses Antônio Sebben and Roberto José Sebben
by Anne McCormack

To see how the mission of Serra is transmitted through the generations, look no further than Ulysses Antônio Sebben and his son, Roberto José, who are both leading members of Serra’s Council in Brazil. Between the two of them, they hold 85 combined years of experience working and praying for vocations in the sixth most populous country in the world. The elder Sebben is a former Serra International trustee, and the younger currently holds that same position, one of the youngest members on the board.

When Roberto was just a child, his father Ulysses helped establish the Serra movement in Brazil in 1966.

“The founder of Movimento Serra in Brazil, Luiz Alexandre Compagnoni from Rio de Janeiro, personally came to me at my residence to talk about Serra and said that he wanted to found it in União da Vitória,” Ulysses Sebben recalls. Born in Bento Gonçalves in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, the elder Sebben had come to União da Vitória in Paraná in 1952 and worked as an Economic Sciences and History university professor from 1961 to 2000.

“The very next day, the first meeting took place,” Sebben continues. “At the end of the meeting, I was appointed to serve as president of the new club, which we call the ‘community’ here. This happened on May 26, 1966. Exactly on the day that we celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Caravaggio, protector of our family.”

Clearly, the Holy Spirit had guided Compagnoni to the person best suited to help him pioneer Serra in South America. Ulysses Sebben, who himself had attended São João Vianney Seminary in Palmas, Paraná for six years before moving to União da Vitória, was ready and willing to receive and enact the vision of Serra.

“Compagnoni convinced me that it was an important work of our Catholic Church and that I was being called to an important vocational and evangelizing mission,” Sebben says. “Immediately, without any restrictions, I took on and carried

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“Of course, Serra in Brazil of 50 years ago looked quite different from Serra there today.

“Serra, in the first decades that I belonged to it, was really very different: It was formed only by men and was elitist,” Sebben says. “Only relatively wealthy men could belong. Later on, women were able to join, and currently, the ‘poor’ (low-income people) are also part of it, and in Brazil, in large numbers. I venture to affirm, by personal observation, that the ‘poor’ members are the ones who most pray for vocations and for men and women of consecrated life. Without a doubt this is the biggest difference between the Serra that I knew in the past and the current one. A blessing!”

However, along with the blessing of large numbers of these dedicated members, the passing decades have created challenges for Serra in Brazil similar to those faced by Serra councils around the world. Of these, Sebben identifies one as the most concerning:

“At the moment, it seems to me to be the expansion and/or renewal of members, especially in older clubs that have aged and not renewed. The expansion is not taking place, unfortunately, at the same rate as the closure of these clubs’ activities.”

At the crux of overcoming this challenge is to identify, as Compagnoni did, members who feel the same way about Serra’s mission as Sebben did – that is, as a personal calling.

“I feel that it is necessary, in the first place, to find and prepare leaders who really embrace the Serra Movement with BIG love. People who are persevering, active and participative. Serrans who, when assuming a management role, really do it with the greatest dedication.”

To the person called to serve in Serra, and who sees Serra as more than just a monthly meeting, the rewards can be great:

“I have always had in my life ideals to be reached; in fact, those who have no ideals are already ‘half dead.’ Fortunately, it is not my case,” says Sebben. “I have in the Serra Movement an ideal, a mission. In it, for those who love it, there is no ‘retirement.’ Serra, to which I have belonged for almost 55 years, was decisive in my journey as a Catholic. Serra has taught me to LOVE deeply those who are called and consecrated and to pray daily for them. Through Serra, I have been able to participate in important national and international events. Among these, I have traveled to Rome and enjoyed audiences with Popes Paul VI, John Paul II (four times) and Benedict XVI. All of this profoundly marked my life. I thank the Lord for belonging to this blessed movement.”

What a source of pride it must be for Ulysses Sebben to share this joyful mission with his son, Roberto José. Roberto is a civil engineer and belongs to the Serra Club of Vale do Iguacu, in União da Vitória city. Roberto bears the distinction of being the only one of seven children born to Ulysses and
Iolanda, his wife of 60 years, to follow in his father’s Serran footsteps.

“I have countless memories of festive meetings in Serra, where I participated with my dad, with great joy,” says Roberto; as his father has been a Serran for 55 years, Roberto cannot remember a time where Serra was not a part of family life. “I remember being with the priests and sharing the happiness they provided.”

The fruit of this exposure was that Roberto could feel and understand the satisfaction his father earned from working for vocations. So, when a friend invited him to join, he accepted, at the age of 28. At that time he was still by far the youngest member in his club by about 20 years.

“What Serra means to me is dedication to vocational work, love, affection and friendship for those who accepted the call to serve the Kingdom of God,” Roberto says. Still, though he enjoys being a Serran and the faith-filled experiences it brings, he comments: “I think it is almost impossible for someone to love and dedicate himself to Serra as my father does.”

Now, like his father, Roberto has spent several decades as a Serran and has seen it morph over the years. He agrees that the foremost challenge before the organization is to renew itself with younger members.

“When a club has a majority of members at an advanced age, it is unlikely that a young person will join,” he says. “To be honest, I do not find the Serra meetings very attractive to young people, as they enjoy more lively encounters. Meetings with sound resources (instruments and songs) and video (real stories) related to the theme of vocation would be more attractive to them.” Roberto adds that more active participation of priests, religious and seminarians, with personal testimonies and interactive conversations, would greatly enhance such meetings as well.

Besides enlivening the format of Serra meetings which can be typically rather quiet affairs, Roberto draws upon his own experience as a second-generation Serran to suggest another way to begin the process of renewal: “I think parents should take their children and nieces and nephews to start making this transition.”

So, can we look forward to a third generation of Sebbens in Serra?

“I always tried to awaken in my two sons the religious feeling and participation in the Eucharist,” says Roberto. “They are currently completing their studies, with frequent trips and little free time. I believe that with the beginning of a stabilization in their professional careers, I will be able to have the joy of seeing them participating with me in the meetings of Serra.”
Then and Now: “Growing Up Serra”

Cindy Madigan Bell on the impact of Serra International conventions on children and teenagers

Green Bay, Wisconsin, Serran Cindy Madigan Bell is one of the kindest, loveliest people you could hope to meet in Serra. She’s also what you might call a true Serra “lifer”: daughter of James E. Madigan, Serra International’s 33rd president, Cindy has been attending Serra conventions for over 50 years, first as a child and later as a Serran herself with her husband, the late Serran Fred Bell, and their two young daughters. In 1990, Cindy wrote an article for *The Serran* magazine entitled: “Convention — The Ultimate Family Vacation.” In it, she described the multi-layered value of bringing children to Serra International conventions, which once featured extensive programming for the dozens of children who would attend with their parents — a sight rarely seen today. She graciously took the time to do this interview with *The Serran* to discuss the Serra legacy she received and passed down to a third generation.

Cindy, how old were you when you attended your first convention, and where was it?

CMB: My first convention was at Cleveland, Ohio (1964). I was 11 years old. Dad was delegate for the Serra Club of Green Bay. We didn’t know there was a kids’ program, so my parents brought along my cousin who was a bit older, to help babysit. While attending this convention, my parents learned of the kids’ program, which we participated in for many years. In Washington, DC (1973) and London, England (1974), I was a bit too old for the kids’ program, so I offered to help chaperone the kids. I was in college, studying to be a teacher, so they let me! My first convention as an “adult” was the Philadelphia convention in 1975 when Dad became international president.

Serra International conventions used to include very robust kids’ programs that ran simultaneously to their parents’ activities during the convention proceedings. Can you describe these?
CMB: Each convention was different based on the local host committee and the international convention committee working together. Usually there were some family events – like a buffet breakfast, travelers Mass, or a local theme night. The children were usually kept busiest whenever parents were busy (such as the night of the banquet, or some of the presentations). In the early years (when I was a kid), there was a teen program (ages 13-17), and a pre-teen program (ages 6-12). Often there were about 20-30 kids in each age group. I seem to remember the highest being around 100 total, but I can’t remember which convention.

Activities were planned and chaperoned by local Serrans, teachers, or college students/seminarians. When the two age groups were combined due to smaller numbers, the older kids were sometimes paired with a younger “buddy.”

The programs often included a visit to a museum, an amusement park (for the teens), or time at the hotel pool (or at the home of one of the local Serrans). The evening of the banquet, the kids often had pizza and movies at the hotel. Sometimes there were board games or card games.

Usually the program was all day long. But in the early years, some were maybe the morning and lunch.

When was the last full-on children’s program that you remember?

CMB: The Serra convention in Spokane, Washington, had a lot of input from Serra International Past President Mike Doohan. He and his wife had brought their children to several Serra conventions, so he saw the value in that. They worked hard to have a program for kids. My kids were too old for it by then (although Maureen attended as an adult – shortly before her wedding!).

What did your daughters enjoy most about the programs?

CMB: They enjoyed the unique locations, learning the history of various places, sampling new foods, etc. They often went to a zoo, museum, water park – which were different from activities available in our area. So it was educational as well as fun. They made friends with people of varying ages and from different states and countries.

At the convention in New Orleans in the ’80s, they had a pretend Mardi Gras at the theme night dinner. When the kids entered riding on small floats, they threw out candies and beads. They all had on little masks. It was a fun surprise! The next morning they had a kids’/family Mass. The priest asked if anyone knew what season of the Church year we were in. My daughter Erin answered, “Lent, because we had Mardi Gras last night!” Serra conventions are an opportunity to learn about our Church.

Clearly, the need for these programs has decreased as Serra’s membership has aged. Now as a grandparent, do you think there could be interest in such programs again, if Serrans’ grandchildren came?

CMB: It is difficult to predict if it is possible to revive the kids’ programs. Families are smaller, and there are more demands for a family’s time and budgets. However I would hope that it is possible – since those experiences had such a positive impact on my life.

What do you remember most about “growing up Serra”?

CMB: I remember the family vacations – driving to whichever city hosted the convention. I remember meeting new friends – from varied ages, backgrounds and cultures. We tried new foods, saw different architecture, plants and wildlife, and we heard different music. But ANY travelling convention can bring those learning experiences. Serra taught us that the Church, and Serra, are worldwide.

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Growing Up Serra

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When did you become a Serran yourself? Who invited you, and what ultimately convinced you to join?

CMB: Originally, Serra was for men only. Many men valued the opportunity to gather and share faith, and also to know people in the business world with similar ethics. That was changed at the international convention in Milwaukee (1986). The delegates’ meeting was very lively. Eventually the motion allowing women in Serra passed – partly due to a large number of proxies from Italy and Brazil. Then each club had to ratify that decision and add it to their bylaws. The Green Bay club was comfortable being all men (for the reasons I mentioned above). It took two or three years for them to change their bylaws to allow women. Once that vote passed, our Membership VP, John Levesque, invited some women to join. He realized that they were reluctant to be the FIRST woman in the club. So he invited three to join simultaneously; I was fortunate to be one of those three.

What convinced me to join? I think it was in my blood! I believed in the vocations mission of Serra and enjoyed the friendships with other Serrans around the world, and with priests, religious and bishops. Also, without my childhood experiences with Serra, I would still be involved in Church groups, because of my faith background. I might have even joined Serra later on in life – maybe around retirement age? But my childhood with Serra gave me opportunities and insights to become more active in Serra, and also to grow in my faith through Serra.

How has being in the culture of Serra informed your life and faith?

CMB: Any church involvement can help us grow in our faith. Serving as a lector or usher or Eucharistic minister, teaching religious education, or being active with Ladies’ Altar Society or Knights of Columbus, etc., all help us develop friends who share our values, and give us insights into our faith.

But Serra is unique in that it is a faith foundation. As Catholics, we need the Eucharist to unite us with those in the Communion of Saints (living and deceased). Without priests, we cannot have the Eucharist. Serra supports priests and religious, and those discerning. But Serra also encourages “a culture of vocations,” making each of us more aware of how God is calling each of us. Because of that, I believe I saw both my marriage and my role as a teacher as a vocation.

Also, I grew up in the 1960s and ’70s. Like today, much of the news included protests: for Civil Rights, or against the Vietnam War, etc. There was a lot of distrust towards the older generation, and any authority figures (including the Church and police). Through my father’s involvement with Serra, I got to know a wide variety of priests and religious. Occasionally, some came to our home for dinner. Despite the criticism in the media, I knew from personal experience that it is unfair to distrust an entire group of people. Through our family friendships, I learned that we should respect those who have answered God’s Call to the priesthood or religious life, while still recognizing that each of them has a unique personality, with strengths, weaknesses and backgrounds.

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“It was only natural that I would join Serra”

Kurt Metyko, son of Serra International President Frank J. Metyko, on what brought him to Serra

The Houston Serra Club was chartered in 1941 but my father (1918-1986) was living in Michigan at that time. He was in the Army Public Health Service during World War II and in 1943 he was stationed in southeast Texas to be in charge of public health for that area during the war. My best guess was that he joined Serra sometime between 1945 and 1950.

My father had a great love of the Church and, no matter how full his plate, never turned down any request from the bishop. Once he told me, “Kurt, that’s what it’s all about!” He was elected president of the Houston Serra Club in 1957, governor of District 10 in 1973 and Serra International President in 1977.

When I was in high school, he took me many times to meetings. In those days of eating fish on Fridays, the Houston Serra Club met every Friday downtown at the Rice Hotel. It was a gathering of the who’s who of Houston Catholic businessmen, based somewhat on the Rotary Club model. Although the club would give a burse to the bishop each year, the Bishop wanted it to be less exclusive and more service-oriented. The club followed his desires and that is one of the biggest changes from the beginning until now.

The second biggest change was the addition of women. I am proud that my dad was one of the leaders to support this in Serra; where would we be today without all the great work from lady Serrans? I can remember one of the charter members of the Houston Club never being happy with this change although he continued to attend and support the club until the day he died. Because my mother (1917-2012) couldn’t be a Serran at the time, she became a leader in Msgr. Voss’s Theresian International movement.

It was only natural that I would join Serra, and I did so as soon as I completed my two years of active duty in the Army in early 1968. I became president of the Serra Club of Houston in 1985 and governor of District 10 in 1993. I went on to become regional director of Region 10 of the USA Council in 2006 and USA Council President in 2011. Since 2014, I have been a trustee of Serra International and am currently SI Vice President of Membership. However, I am also a trustee of the Serra Club of Houston and chairman of my parish vocation committee!

I feel people are drawn to be Serrans by the beautiful charism of our mission. But we must have a workable program. If we get them involved in programs that are helpful to the ordinary, the vocation director, the seminary rector, the parish pastors and, most importantly, the priests and religious themselves, we could double the dues and it would still be worth it to them.
Presidential Profile: Dr. Ruben Gallegos
Defying expectations and achieving greatness in life and in Serra
by Anne McCormack

Serra International President Ruben Gallegos, Ph.D, has been a member of Serra for 27 years. In his own club of Brownsville, his talents for gaining members is well known: in his first year as a Serran, he doubled his club’s membership. Last year, the wider world of Serra discovered his knack for membership building when he initiated the Missionaries of St. Junípero Serra Contest which raised United States membership by 350, and gained thousands more prayer allies for our vocations mission.

This was an exciting win for Serra, especially considering a third of the membership building efforts of the contest occurred during a worldwide pandemic that saw most Serra clubs suspending in-person activities. Another unexpected outcome of the pandemic, and one unprecedented in the history of Serra, was the Serra International Board’s request of a sitting president to take on an additional consecutive year. The Serran magazine welcomes this opportunity to tell Dr. Gallegos’ life story.

USA Born and Bred

Living in the southern-most county of the United States, at the tip of Texas where we meet Matamoros at the border, Dr. Gallegos is often assumed by many to have come to the United States from Mexico.

“Let me make something absolutely clear,” he says. “I did not come from Mexico; the USA came to me.”

The Gallegos family came to what is now Texas on a thousands-of-acres land grant given by the Spanish monarchy in the 1600s. Over the centuries, the family grew, and the land was divided into smaller and smaller plots.

“In our case, the land grant was up to the river,” Dr. Gallegos explains. “My family was always here in the state of Texas – first when it belonged to
Spain, then when it belonged to Mexico, then when it became the Republic of Texas. We even have a relative, Gregorio Esparza, who died at the Alamo fighting for the state of Texas.”

Dr. Gallegos was born in El Calaboz (“That’s Spanish for ‘jail,’ so I was born in jail, he jokes), about six blocks north of the border. His parents, grandparents, and so on were all born north of the Rio Grande, and he has never lived south of it.

He grew up in El Ranchito, his father’s hometown, located near Highway 281.

“The guards used that highway to move on horseback from Fort Brown in Brownsville to Fort Ringgold in Rio Grande City,” Dr. Gallegos reminisces, adding that when he was growing up both forts were deactivated and the mounted guard were later replaced by the United States Border Patrol and their automobiles. “And of course, now you have the fence. But neither the patrol nor the fence stop the people from coming.”

Life in the Fields

Like most migrant workers of the time, Dr. Gallegos’ parents did not have much education (his father went up through the 3rd grade, and his mother, the 5th), and they married young. They had 11 children. Dr. Gallegos is their first child, born about a year after they married. His brother Jesse, a Harlingen Serran who is currently the USA Council’s VP for Communications, is the youngest. Two other brothers passed away as infants, so Dr. Gallegos and Jesse are bookends with seven sisters between them.

“My father was a seasonal laborer who worked his whole life in the fields,” Dr. Gallegos recalls. “My mother was outstanding, incredibly intelligent. How she raised nine of us with the income my father made is unbelievable. She never spoke a word of English. My father gave it a good shot. But we were a Spanish-speaking family until Jesse came.”

Dr. Gallegos, too, spent many long days working in the agricultural fields of Texas, California and Colorado from early childhood. He shares the experience of picking cotton:

“In those days you would start about 6:30 or 7 a.m. You make the sign of the cross and you hit it, man. You bend down and you don’t stand up until you get to the end of the row. You pick to the right and you pick to the left and then you weigh what you got at the end of the row. One of the times you get to the end of the row you get a taco of papas y huevo (potato and egg). Around noon you take 15 minutes for lunch and you get another taco, then you keep working until about 5 or 6 p.m. Once in a while you could stop to get a drink of water. There’s field managers yelling at you to keep down. You can’t stand up. You build a resentment that not only are you poor, but you’re also oppressed. I still have resentment about that to this day.”

Dr. Gallegos had uncles who regularly picked 500 pounds of clean cotton in a day, and therefore became part of what they called the “Cotton-Pickin’ Club.” He achieved the feat only once, when he was about 12 or 13.

And the pay? A penny a pound.

A Faith-Filled Youth

Mrs. Gallegos made sure the Catholic faith was a cornerstone of her brood’s upbringing. The children went to Mass every Sunday at San Ignacio de Loyola Church in El Ranchito. Dr. Gallegos became an altar boy at an early age, serving under Oblate priests from nearby San Benito.

“After the Mass in El Ranchito we would go to a little place called La Paloma. And after that we would go to Los Indios. At Los Indios Fr. O’Connor would go into the collection bag and give each of us three altar boys 10 cents, and we would buy a Coke and some Fritos. It was the best Coke and Fritos I had ever had in my life,” laughs Dr. Gallegos.

Eventually, the young Gallegos was selected to transport the priests and altar boys from Mass to Mass (“The priest would close his eyes for a while in the back of the car and go on to do the next one”) and to train new altar boys. One boy he trained later became a priest in the Oblate order.

He credits his experience as an altar Continued on next page
boy for expanding his worldview beyond what he knew as home. “One time a couple invited us for breakfast. I had never had a napkin that you put on your lap and I had never seen the fork on one side and the knife on one side, all of that. At our house, my dad would make the tortillas and we would catch them in the air, because there were so many of us. So thanks to Fr. O’Connor I was exposed to so many different things, and being an altar boy gave me responsibilities. Church helped you get away from feeling too poor or too bad. And that’s the reason why I donate money to the Church now – it’s payback time.”

**Wider Horizons**

As a child, Dr. Gallegos frequently helped his parents work in the fields, but enjoyed going to school and even found it easy. As he moved through the early grades in public school, his father asked, “When are you going to stop going to school and go to work?” The young Gallegos answered, “Why should I?”

The norm amongst migrant workers was not to pursue education beyond the 8th grade. Dr. Gallegos recalls the stolen future of his elementary school class valedictorian, who opted not to go to high school but rather to work at the local five-and-dime. Dr. Gallegos graduated third in his class, but read the salutatorian’s graduation speech anyway, because that child was afraid to speak before a crowd.

Dr. Gallegos had never heard the word “college” until he read about it in a magazine in the 5th grade. By the time he reached high school, he knew he wanted to go to college, but he didn’t know where. When the guidance counselor asked where he wanted to go, he said “University of Kentucky,” because he had seen the name in a sports page story covering a football player whose alma mater it was.

“I didn’t even know where Kentucky was,” chuckles Dr. Gallegos. “But it was on the sports page, so that’s what I said!”

He ended up staying closer to home, working toward an engineering degree at Texas Southmost College in Brownsville for two years. He ran out of money, and work in Colorado called him back to the fields – this time, cantaloupes.

“I’m picking cantaloupes in Colorado. They are heavy, and you carry them in a sack behind you. There’s a guy taking a survey of all the workers. Simple questions. He asked how many years of education I had. I told him I was a sophomore in college. He asked if I wanted his job! I told him,
‘No, I want to go back to college.’”

He did just that, returning to Brownsville to earn a Bachelor’s Degree in education at Pan American College (now University of Texas – Pan American). Dr. Gallegos later earned his Master’s and Ph.D in administration from East Texas University in Commerce, Texas.

Dr. Gallegos became a 5th grade teacher by the age of 20. By 28, he was selected to be principal for a school exclusively for migrant students that he had to design from scratch – that is to say, literally build the school and hire all new employees. His was the first elementary school in Brownsville to be federally funded and to staff a social worker, teacher aides and a full-time nurse.

It was there that he met his late wife, Norma, whom he first hired as secretary and then later as a 3rd grade teacher. Even in this Dr. Gallegos was very different from the culture in which he grew up – he was a ripe old 31 and already a homeowner when they married; she was 24. They had “only” two children, which was nearly unheard of! They were married for 46 years.

Dr. Gallegos went on to become a superintendent of schools and a university professor for eight years. He never lost his love for the public school system and eventually went back to administration there.

In 2000, the Dr. Ruben Gallegos Elementary School in Brownsville was named after him in honor of his contributions to the field of education.

**An Invitation to Serra**

Fr. O’Connor from Dr. Gallegos’ altar boy days must have been pulling some strings from heaven one Sunday afternoon in 1993.

“After Mass, I asked my wife where she wanted to eat, and she said, ‘I want to have tacos at Dairy Queen,’” Dr. Gallegos recalls. “Brownsville is the taqueria capitol of the world, and she wanted to eat tacos at Dairy Queen of all places? In a marriage, there are just some things you don’t argue with your wife about,” he says. “So I was standing in line at the Dairy Queen waiting for my two orders of tacos, hoping nobody would see me. Then I hear a voice from behind me saying, ‘Ruuuuben?’”

*Continued on next page*
It was his friend from Toastmasters, Bob Aziz.

“He asked if I would like to have lunch with him. I said ‘Sure, where?’ He said, ‘International Country Club.’ I said ‘Sure, sounds good.’ What he didn’t know is that I had a house there,” says Dr. Gallegos.

“I thought it was going to be just him and I having a good meal. All of a sudden there’s a guy greeting everyone coming in. Quite a few of the guys there knew me. I saw Bob and went and sat with him. Then we start with the meeting. I had never been to a meeting where there was so much praying and talking about the Bible. He never told me that ‘lunch’ was a meeting of the Serra Club of Brownsville. I signed up and paid my dues that first meeting. It was right across from my house and I could just walk over.

“By the second meeting I was asked to be the VP of membership. I felt so proud that I was named an officer by my second meeting – but I didn’t know three people had already turned it down!”

As a newly minted club Membership VP, Dr. Gallegos implemented a very simple plan: at the meetings, he passed around a clipboard on which members wrote the names and contact information for people they thought could be potential members. Dr. Gallegos would personally call each one and invite them to a special recruitment meeting. At this meeting, there would be a program and then each officer would speak briefly about what he or she did. But Gallegos saved the best for last.

“At that time we had as a member Reynaldo Garza, the United States’ first Hispanic federal judge, appointed by President Kennedy in 1961,” Dr. Gallegos says. “He was elderly then, but tall and with a very deep voice, and he would tell them why he was a Serran. This man was close friends with LBJ. When you have a prominent person like that speaking, people listen.”

Within a year, Dr. Gallegos had more than doubled the club’s membership, from 21 to 43.

Dr. Gallegos eventually became club president, district governor, Serra International trustee, and now is serving his second year as president of Serra International.

“I have really enjoyed Serra International, and I have never said ‘No’ when I am asked to do something for it because I believe that I am doing it for the Catholic Church.”

“As Ask Not What Serra Can Do for You…”

As far as growing Serra membership goes, getting new members is probably the easier part of the deal. What a
club does to retain them is more complex and possibly more important. Dr. Gallegos’ experience when he joined the Serra Club of Brownsville reflects a model that works, when applied deftly.

“Membership retention is important. I got involved right away and that’s what kept me in it,” Dr. Gallegos says. “If we can instill ownership in our members, we can keep them.”

Dr. Gallegos advises clubs: don’t wait to get members involved on committees or special projects. Give them public recognition in the local newspaper for the good work they do.

Creating a context of service and gratitude to the Church is also important in helping people understand why Serra is more than just another “club.”

“When I go to Mass, I go because I want to thank God… God has been good to me,” he says. “Working in Serra is one of the ways I give back.

Sure, some people may ask what they get for the dues they pay Serra. It’s not even $10 a month. You give the dollars in dues but you are also pledging that you will actually do something for vocations, as part of a worldwide effort, and that is building up the Church.”

Reflecting on his presidency, Dr. Gallegos says he’s most proud of the Missionaries of St. Junípero Serra Contest. It was piloted in the United States last year, and next year will be opened up to Serra councils worldwide. For the second year in a row, he will be donating $20,000 in prize money for the contest.

“I wanted to prove that we could increase membership,” he says. The first part was to increase the number of Catholics praying for vocations. The second was to increase members.”

Even though the contest was only official in the United States for its first run, another country took the spirit of the contest to heart with great success.

“I’m very proud of Brazil. They recruited 10,000 Catholics praying for vocations. The members have stayed about the same, but the goal of more Catholics praying for vocations was achieved. No other country can say they have done that, besides Brazil,” Dr. Gallegos says.

“Jesus came to this world as a missionary for God and everything he did was for that reason. He was the first missionary. Then he had 12 apostles who became missionaries. Then you have missionaries who were saints, like St. Junípero Serra. If you leave your club, go into the world and talk to others about praying for vocations, you are doing more than just asking them to pray. You are also telling them about St. Junípero Serra and about Serra International. You are a missionary for vocations.”

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Growing Up Serra
Continued from page 8

Years later when my husband, Fred, died, I was astounded and supremely grateful for the emails, notes, and prayers of so many Serra friends from around the country and the world. That support from faith-filled friends enhanced my faith.

Do either of your daughters belong to Serra?

CMB: One is a member. My daughter Maureen Shanley and her husband Devin are members, but their work and family responsibilities currently make it difficult for them to be very involved.

What would it take to attract younger members?

CMB: Young adults today are juggling a lot. They have jobs that often require more than a clearcut 9-5 workday/40-hour week. There is rarely a stay-at-home parent to exclusively care for children and the household chores. Parents are very involved with their kids’ activities — Scouting, coaching soccer, helping backstage for a school play, selling candy for the choir or band, etc. Personally, I think some creativity would be helpful. I have heard of a club in another state (or country?) that has meetings on Saturday mornings, with childcare provided.

Also, it may be difficult to get new young members to commit to a full year of membership. We might be able to invite them to assist with a single event (like ushering, or handing out water bottles, etc.). That way they would get to know a few other members and learn more about the organization. It might also be helpful to coordinate projects with another organization — like the Knights of Columbus, Boy Scouts, a school or diocesan vocations/job fair.
A global centre for business, finance, arts and culture, Toronto values its multicultural population and sense of community above all else. It consistently rank among the world’s safest and most livable cities.

Toronto Serrans are ready to welcome you to an unforgettable convention reminding us of the global brother- and sisterhood of Serra’s vocations mission. Come to Toronto to experience joy, fellowship, and renewed vigor for our unique contribution to the life of our Church!

Join us this summer at Serra’s 78th International Convention in Toronto!

Our Keynote Speakers

**His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Collins, Archbishop of Toronto**

Serra International’s beloved and devoted Episcopal Adviser will once again join us for the convention as its Honourary Chair. Find out why Cardinal Collins’ talks are so highly anticipated at Serra events.

**His Eminence Gérald Cyprien Cardinal Lacroix, Archbishop of Quebec and Primate of Canada**

Cardinal Lacroix served as a missionary in Colombia for nine years. Pope Francis has appointed him as a member of the Pontifical Council for Culture and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.
Come early and begin your convention experience with peace and spiritual grounding. Take a coach from our hotel or fly directly to Montreal for a pilgrimage tour of holy sites in Quebec, including Notre-Dame Basilica of Montréal above. Begins June 24 and ends at the Sheraton June 27.

Reserve time during your trip to visit Ripley’s Aquarium of Canada, which is sure to delight kids ages 1 to 100. Ripley’s is known for its immersive underwater exhibits which put you face to face with some of the ocean’s most dangerous and beautiful creatures.

Take a day bus tour on June 28 to experience the awesome power of nature when you see Niagara Falls and the surrounding vicinity. You can see the falls from the US side, too, but for panoramic vistas there’s no contest: the Canadian side has got the US beat, hands down.

What could be more Canadian than hockey? At Toronto’s Hockey Hall of Fame, go one-on-one against life-size, animated versions of today’s greatest goalies and shooters and view the finest collection of hockey artifacts from around the world, including the Stanley Cup.

Information on these and other attractions will be sent to you via email and will be included in your convention packet.
Meet Margo Geddie and Candice Tyrrell, who have come to be known as the “dynamic duo” of Serra USA membership. These two women from different clubs in Houston, Texas, helped lead their clubs to take home the top two prizes in the 2019-2020 Missionaries of Saint Junípero Serra (MSJS) membership contest. If you’re wondering how to replicate the results in your club, read on for practical tips and inspiration from Margo Geddie, Serra Club of Houston (first place) and Candice Tyrrell, Serra Club of North Houston (second place). So far, both clubs have retained the members they gained from the contest cycle, and have even added more.

Prior to the MSJS contest, what sort of membership recruitment initiatives were in place for your club?

CT: We had several recruitments scheduled on our agenda before the MSJS contest began and unfortunately then Covid-19 put a halt on everything. We had great things lined up and will continue to follow up with these parishes and others.

MG: Individual members would ask friends to join, but the response was more often than not, “I have too many things on my plate. I simply do not have time to join another organization.”

When you first heard of the contest, what was your initial impression? How about your club as a whole — what did they think about it?

CT: Our Serra Club of North Houston was very excited about the contest and thought, “We can win this!” Our officers became engaged in finding new members.

MG: Personally, I had no idea how I was going to get enough new members to win the contest. And as a member of the board of SI, I worried that I would be letting everyone down.

Who was on your membership team, and is there anyone in particular you would like to recognize for their efforts?

CT: My husband, Ed Tyrrell, was president of our club during the year and he made the Missionaries of St. Junípero Serra Contest front and center at every board meeting. Phil Duggan, Membership VP, was relentless sharing Serra’s mission and asking for parishioners at Mass and events to join. Some said he asked them around 500 times! Yolanda Cadena, Carol Cason and T. Wayne Brewster, our new Membership VP, recruited several members. I recruited around 25 new members mentioning Serra’s mission to almost everyone I came in contact with. I was very, very grateful to Ruben Gallegos for such a FANTASTIC idea...
and donating a large sum of money to promote the contest! What a blessing Ruben is for Serra! May God continue to bless him!

MG: Our Membership Chair, Brigette Larson, inspired all of us with her “You can do it!” attitude.

What sort of strategy did you develop once you signed up for the contest? Did you set a goal?

CT: We promoted the MSJS at every meeting! When we heard of the contest, it energized several of us board members to get the ball rolling and make those parish appointments to meet with the pastors to schedule recruitments. We set a goal to recruit the most members by the end of the contest and have a successful 1st place win.

MG: I am a Dame in the Order of Malta and one Saturday a month (before the pandemic of course) we would go to a Catholic Charities center to bag up groceries and distribute them to the poor. I thought to myself, “(The Knights and Dames) are very Catholic people and have a heart for vocations. I decided to bring applications with me to the center and asked several people to become Serrans. Almost everyone I asked said yes. I explained that they did not have to do anything more than pray everyday for vocations and we would use a portion of their membership fee to purchase vocation materials for the parishes within the Archdiocese. Quite a few people said yes and filled out their applications on the spot.

However, other members of the order said yes but never sent in their applications. So I had to figure out why and how to make it seamless for them to return the applications.

I had to come up with a solution, which I did. I created the envelope strategy. I put an application in an envelope along with the list of vocation materials we would be purchasing for the parishes with their membership fees, a Serra prayer card for vocations and the international rosary card. I then put a stamp on the envelope, addressed it to myself and used my home address as the return address. I then handed these envelopes to everyone I encountered who was vocation-minded. The envelopes came rolling in and in addition, new members who were on fire, asked their friends to join. It just snowballed. Everyone wanted the Houston Club to win because then we would have more money to purchase vocation materials to donate to the churches.

I wish I had come up with the idea earlier and implemented it earlier. Brigette had intended to give every Serran a pack of envelopes for them to distribute to vocation-minded people they knew, but then Covid hit so we were unable to do so.

What three key pieces of advice would you offer to other clubs trying to implement a successful membership recruitment strategy?

CT: 1. Prayer and Adoration for a successful recruitment.

2. Make appointments to speak with pastors at parishes to schedule recruitments. Do not be shy and do not give up!

Continued on page 21
When Galveston-Houston Archdiocese Vocation Director Fr. Richard McNeillie asked the Serra Club of North Houston to donate furniture for the Seminarian Preparatory Spiritual Retreat happening in just three days at a completely empty old rectory in Sugar Land, the club sprang into action. They provided and delivered beds, a recliner, sofa, washing machine and dryer, TV, and more.

TOP LEFT: Rolando Tolentino and Dennis Mottola deliver three twin beds. CENTER: Seminarians Luis Armas and Carlos Jaime help move furniture ahead of the retreat. TOP RIGHT: Teresa Brinkman donated a large leather sofa and matching recliner, making comfortable seating for seminarians in prayer (RIGHT).

For Priesthood Sunday, the North Houston club made and distributed individualized posters for 18 parishes. Each poster had the Serra logo, encouraging words, and photos of each parish’s priests.

The posters were placed on an easel visible to people entering the church. This simple tool not only expressed affirmation for priests, but also educated parishes on Serra and its vocations mission.
If you do not ask, you will not get new members. Keep brochures and applications forms with you.

3. Implement Serra Spark programs: Altar Server Appreciation, Traveling Crucifix, Holy Hour for Vocations, etc. and advertise that Serrans are sponsoring these programs!

MG: 1. Have every member of your club compile 20 envelopes and leave them in their cars. Then whenever anyone attends an event, make the ask of a prospect and hand them an envelope. (I recently ran out of envelopes and two people I had breakfast with said they wanted to become Serrans. These were missed opportunities, because I did not have any more envelopes in my car.)

2. Stress that you need prayers for vocations and money to purchase vocation materials. (Or whatever your club’s outreach needs are.)

3. Add these new members to your email distribution list and you will find that many of them turn into active members even though they said they were too busy to participate.

How does your club plan to use the prize money?

CT: Our Vocation Director, Fr. Richard McNeillie, had asked our Serrans to please donate furniture for the upcoming new seminarian silent retreat taking place in an old empty rectory at St. Theresa’s Sugar Land, Texas. Our club filled the old rectory with a large leather sofa and recliner, six twin beds, sheets, pillow cases and blankets and a new washer and dryer! Fr. Richard was very happy! We saw how out of date and yellowed the kitchen looks and plan to use the prize money to remodel the kitchen.

MG: We are using the funds to purchase vocation materials. We just purchased over $1,000 worth of Vianney Vocations materials for Western Academy, a local Catholic elementary boys school. The chaplain was astounded at the quality of the materials and said he had no ideas these resources existed.

How would you describe the culture of vocations in your area? Have you seen it change since you’ve been in your Serra club?

CT: I have noticed more priests are realizing all the Serrans do for seminarians, priests and religious. We are grateful to Fr. Richard McNeillie for asking Cardinal DiNardo to thank the Serrans at the ordination Masses! When priests hears a thank you from the top, they realize all Serrans do and motivates them to give their own shout-out for Serra.

MG: The culture is lighting up. Our vocations director said he has received more inquiries into entering the discernment process at this early time of year than ever before. Serra is doing its job!

Candice’s Elevator Speech

We desperately need more priests and sisters, and that is our Serra mission: to foster vocations. (This is followed by a description of Serraspark.org programs implemented in local parishes such as Altar Server Appreciation, Called by Name, Traveling crucifix and Adoration for Vocations, to name a few.)

Margo’s Elevator Speech

Serra promotes and affirms vocations to the Priesthood and religious life. We have the tools to create safe environments where young men and women who are being called to the Priesthood or religious life can come forward without trepidation to enter into the discernment process. We help them say “No” to those family members and friends who attempt to discourage them from entering into discernment and help them to say “No” to the secular media messages. We give them the courage they need to step up to the challenge of this hugely counter-cultural career path. We help them say “YES!”

Promotional Materials Used

Both clubs used the following materials to promote Serra during the membership drive. The first two items are available for purchase at https://www.vianneyvocations.com/serra-club/.

- Custom green and white Serra brochures
- Prayer card for vocations
- International Rosary card (contact jliston@serrainternational.org to request this item)
Think back. What was more exciting to you as a child, waiting for the arrival of Santa Claus and anticipating presents under the tree, or waiting for the birthday of Jesus? What’s more exciting to you now, buying and wrapping presents and preparing for parties, or waiting for Jesus’ birthday?

The Church gives us the season of Advent to help us refocus on the object of our deepest desire, to ponder how Jesus Christ comes to us in history, mystery, and majesty during Advent and Christmas. Look in *Meeting Programs — A Call to Holiness*, your programs manual, pages 22-23. The meeting program titled “Advent” (reprinted in full at right) could be used just before or during the first week of Advent to assist us in pondering these gifts.

*Katie Radford*
Programs Committee
USA Council of Serra International

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**Advent**

*Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.*

**Opening Prayer**

O Lord our God, you have made us and this beautiful world in which we live. As we celebrate this Advent season we pray that you enter into our lives more fully. Bring to us a peace that overcomes any doubt. Let us know the true meaning of waiting and understand the great love given to us through your incarnation. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Scripture**

“In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, ‘Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.’ But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’ But Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?’ And the angel said to her in reply, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon
you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God’ (Luke 1:26-35).

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

Introduction

The season of Advent resets the clocks and calendars of Christian worship and calls us to a new beginning. We once again begin the rhythms of community and embrace the themes that make the Christian journey so rich.

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

Documentary Tradition

Advent is the first season of the Church year. It is a four-week time period that blends together a penitential spirit, a liturgical theme of preparation for the Second Coming, and a joyful attitude of getting ready for the birth of Christ. It is a season of great hope and expectation. These blended themes are a summary of the lectionary readings. The scripture passages for the first half of Advent speak to us of hope for the future. They emphasize being alert and watching for the Lord’s coming since the time of his coming is not known. The readings for the second half of Advent focus on the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, where God’s promise to his people was fulfilled in the act of being born into the human family.

The movement from watching for the glory of God to seeing the glory manifest in the Christ child arouses our imagination and awareness. We are invited to a mature expectation of the Lord’s coming into our own lives. As Christians, we celebrate what already is, while standing in expectation of what is yet to be revealed. In essence, the reign of God is already among us but is not yet made manifest in its fullness. This waiting and watching clears a space in our hearts and souls that opens us to see the mysteries of God show themselves in the joy of the Advent season. During this time, we learn that how we wait and watch for the Lord is as important as learning how to meet him.

“When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. By celebrating the precursor’s birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: ‘He must increase, but I must decrease’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church #524).

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

Discussion Questions

1. What does watching mean to you?
2. How do you watch for the Lord’s coming in your life?
3. How can Serrans express this watchfulness in their club activities?

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

As the conception of Jesus was an Advent, a coming, this season becomes a time of joyful anticipation that Christ will offer us a new beginning by reaching out to cradle us in his loving forgiveness. Through God’s merciful gift of love, crooked ways are made straight, hardened hearts are filled with joy, and the disenfranchised are welcomed.

Bibliography

For several years, my husband and I were members of our club’s Membership Committee. Each year, we would meet with the committee and attempt to strategically develop a list of potential members. We discussed qualities that we needed to look for in a future Serran. We targeted people younger than ourselves. We especially looked for individuals who had a passion for vocations. However, I do not ever remember attempting to look at our own children or even grandchildren as potential Serrans. Since this issue of *The Serran* is focused on Serrans whose parents or children are also Serrans, I think it would be a good idea to highlight a SPARK Tool that can ignite a passion for vocation work in the families of Serra members.

Serra SPARK is a resource developed by the US 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. Serra clubs, parishes, and everyone committed to building culture of vocations can both learn about and expand their vocation activities with the information and tools available under the SPARK tab on the US Council of Serra International website, www.serraus.org.

Tool #22 is Video Resources on Religious Vocations for Different Ages. This tool is designed to help the viewer learn about vocations. Its message is the promotion of vocations to the priesthood and vowed religious life. To create a passion for vocation work, one needs to be informed about it. We need to hear about the discernment process, formation, obstacles that needed to be overcome, parental support, prayer resources, and the many ways God calls individuals. Personal stories are always the most inspiring.

This SPARK Tool #22 has many videos that have been curated from the internet. The videos are grouped under two headings – one for vocational paths open to men, and one for the vocational paths open to women. Within each heading, the videos are further categorized by appropriate audience: upper elementary and middle school; high school; and collegians and young adults. Each video is different, and are very well done. To watch the video, simply go to the SPARK website, go to Tool #22, pick your audience, and click on the video you want to preview.

So, how can you use this Tool with your own children or grandchildren? Watch a couple of the videos with them. The video on the Top Ten Friar Questions is very funny and one of my personal favorites. Follow Me: Journeys to the Priesthood is a video that features vocation stories from a number of priests in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and each story is unique. Among the videos for girls, Why Do Some Congregations Wear a Habit and Others Don’t, examines a question that many young ladies would ask. A Vocation Story from CMSWR is a brief and lovely music video and slideshow featuring the work and prayer lives of sisters and nuns from various orders. You only need to choose a video from among the dozens offered.

Through watching the videos and perhaps commenting on them, our children and grandchildren will be introduced to vocational work. By sharing your love for what you do as a Serran, you will be forming future Serrans. You may even be planting seeds for a vocation to the priesthood or vowed religious life in your own family!

If your local Serra club, diocese, or parish has a video that is not included on the Serra SPARK website and you would like to share 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.
Canadian Serrans Receive Special Honors

Vila Nova Carvalho and Dr. Moira McQueen are recognized for their dedication to the Church

Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice

Past Serra International Vice President Vila Nova Carvalho, Serra Club of Vancouver, has been awarded the Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifrice papal medal. Established by Pope Leo XIII in 1888, it is the highest recognition the laity can receive from the Pope. The award is given for distinguished service to the Church by lay people or clergy.

Vila Nova Carvalho has served the local Church faithfully by his numerous involvements in the Archdiocese and his parish of St. Joseph the Worker in Richmond. He is a Knight Commander of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem and has been a member of its governing council in the Western Canadian Lieutenancy.

Carvalho has been an executive member and president of the Richmond Right to Life Society and a member of diocesan consultative bodies that assist The B.C. Catholic and the homeless shelter of Catholic Charities. He also serves as advocate at the marriage tribunal and is a member of the board of the Catholic Independent Schools of Vancouver Archdiocese. Carvalho was one of six to receive this honor. Vancouver Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB presented the medals in October.

Christian Culture Gold Medal

Serra International Trustee and Halton Serran Dr. Moira McQueen, Executive Director for the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute, was presented the 2019 Christian Culture Gold Medal Award by Assumption University. This award recognizes Dr. McQueen as an outstanding exponent of Christian ideals.

Dr. McQueen was a lawyer before becoming Director of the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute. She teaches moral theology at St. Michael’s in the University of Toronto, and is a member of the Vatican’s International Theological Commission. Moira and husband Matthew have seven children and 11 grandchildren. She is president of the Serra Council of Canada, and the founding president of the Serra Club of Halton.

You can watch the presentation of the 2019 Christian Culture Gold Medal Award and her acceptance remarks and lecture entitled “Your Ethics as a Blessing” at www.assumptionu.ca/goldmedal.
A Year for Spiritual Awareness

By Maria Elena Beltran, Vice President for Vocations
Serra Club of McAllen, Texas, U.S.A.

Life is full of unexpected moments and events, some favorable and some unfavorable. Wherever we are and whoever we are, this year has certainly brought all of us to a screeching HALT!

The sudden closure of retail stores, restaurants, sport arenas and even churches has made us stay home and rediscover our own Domestic Church. The change of routine may have brought anxiety, fear, worry, and even anger. We may ask, “What’s going to happen?”, “When will I see my family again?” or “How long is the virus going to be here?” We may be in search of someone to blame for the turmoil.

If we can pause for a moment and reflect on how God is still in control, then our anxieties will be less overwhelming. We must remind ourselves that he is the author and illustrator of everything!

And though sometimes it feels our questions or prayers are left unheard or unanswered, we must trust in his faithfulness and in his love. There is merit in all things good and bad. In this quiet time, perhaps the Lord is presenting us with an opportunity to become more self-aware. Let us reflect on a few gifts that our Father has bestowed on us:

**Our Thoughts** – Are we going to allow our thoughts to be dominated by negative influences during this current crisis? Or will we focus on seeking and accepting God’s will daily? We are in control of our thoughts, even during a pandemic. Stay positive. Remember that we are guided by the assurance that our Blessed Mother brings calm in time of storm.

**Our Time** – What are we doing with the gift of time? We are blessed to have so many opportunities to choose to use our time wisely. Now we have time to pray an extra Rosary daily, attend virtual daily Holy Mass, read Scripture and spiritual books, and contemplate what’s really important in our lives. Have we called friends and kept up with them?

Have we thanked front line workers for keeping us safe? Are we improving relationships by getting to know family members better? Have we written a note or a card to priests, religious, and seminarians? Have we started a Zoom prayer group? Serra friends, may this gift of time be truly used in a constructive and fulfilling way.

**Our Service** – As we walk in Christ’s shoes, let us consider the gifts of talents and service. What are we doing in this time of crisis to be of service to others? Have we used our talents for the good of others? Are we doing outreach work like buying groceries for our neighbors, cooking a meal for a friend, volunteering at a food bank, sewing masks, lending a helping hand where we can, or simply giving an encouraging word? Perhaps we can seriously ask ourselves, “How can I be a better steward of my talents and service to others during this most difficult time?”

**Our Faith** – The gift of faith frames the lives of Serrans all over the world. We know the power of prayer, the Real Presence, the importance of evangelization, and the support and affirmation of priests, religious and seminarians. May the disposition of our own lives, as Serrans, serve as an example to others.

We are blessed with many gifts. In the midst of the pandemic, we can each pause, reflect and grow as we thank God for all of these gifts. Let us not undermine our own capabilities; rather, let us place confidence in our Heavenly and Sovereign Father. May we feel the inspiration and fidelity of our Blessed Mother in our lives always.

Let us relinquish our insecurities and doubts knowing that God is in control. May 2020 bring us a spiritual awakening and concomitant tranquility.
**Serra Membership Brochure w/ Blank Back**
Attract new members to your club with a trifold brochure that clearly explains Serra’s mission and reasons for becoming a Serran. Back panel is blank so you can add your club’s name and information. View the whole brochure online. Only $18 per pack of 50 brochures.

**Serra Christmas Card**
Serra’s beautiful Christmas Card reads inside, “May the joy of the Christ Child fill your heart and home in this happy season.” Several other designs also available. $8.00 per 10 cards with envelopes.

**Serra Drytech 3-Layer Mask**
Reusable Drytech face mask with full-color Serra logo on the right cheek. Perfect for Serra members to show support for vocations at Mass or other Church events. Individually packaged. $8.00 per 10 cards with envelopes.

**Men’s and Women’s Fleece**
Extra soft fleece jacket with Serra logo and zippered pockets. Available in various colors. $48.

**Serra Note Cards**
Natural smooth card stock with raised (thermographic) ink, providing visual and manual texture. Includes printed matching envelopes. A sharp way to send a note! $8 per set of 10 (quantity discounts).

**Serra Prayer Card**
The Serran Prayer for Vocations card has been redesigned for 2020. Priced to buy in bulk and hand out to members, family and fellow parishioners. $2.60 per 50, with deep bulk discounts available.
The Serra Club of St. Paul, Minnesota, USA, celebrated their 80th anniversary on Sept. 27, 2020, with an enthusiastic (small and socially distanced) group at Town and Country Club in St. Paul. At left, see club President Ken Dines with a commemorative Serra Bear, complete with a protective mask. The bear even had the Papal Seal and our patron’s motto, *Siempre Adelante*, on the foot, embroidered by club member Kati Ritchie.