In the Folds of Her Mantle
Serra’s Unforgettable International Convention in Mexico City
ON OUR COVER:
Attendees to the Serra International Convention in Mexico City in June 2019 were given the chance to see the miraculous tilma of St. Juan Diego at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, on which the image of the Blessed Virgin is preserved. To protect the tilma, it is encased in bulletproof glass, and this is as close as visitors are allowed to observe it.

“IT was not the bishop; it was Juan Diego, a layperson justlike you, who received the news that the Mother of God is also our Mother. Mary of Guadalupe has chosen you, the laity, to be the ambassadors.”

Fr. Eduardo Chávez, Canon of the Basilica of Guadalupe

The Serran Calendar

January 16-19, 2020
The Serra Rally, Ventura, California

February 2, 2020
World Day for Consecrated Life

March 8-14, 2020
National Catholic Sisters Week

May 3, 2020
World Day of Prayer for Vocations

June 26-28, 2020
Serra’s 78th International Convention

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On the morning of the longest day of the year, over 200 Serrans from Canada, USA, Mexico, El Salvador, Paraguay, Peru, Brazil, Italy, the Philippines, Australia, England, and Nigeria donned colorful bandanas and boarded buses from their hotel in downtown Mexico City to Tepeyac Hill. They were bound for the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the most visited Catholic pilgrimage site in the world. It was here, in 1531, where the Blessed Virgin appeared to a middle-aged indigenous man, St. Juan Diego, and asked that a church be built there in her honor. The “sign” she sent to the local archbishop through her humble envoy — her portrait miraculously emblazoned on the inside of his plant-fiber cloak — would become an instant icon for Mexico, and eventually one of the most reprinted and recognizable images in the world.

Serrans had not come to Mexico City just to visit Our Lady, though. They were assembled for Serra’s 77th International Convention, a highly anticipated four-day annual event meticulously and lovingly prepared for all by local Serrans, especially Serra Council of Mexico President Fernando Dosal and Malena Dosal, and Past Serra International President Alejandro Carbajal and Geli Carbajal.

The trip to and from the Basilica was a perfect example of the extraordinary thoughtfulness and care taken by the convention planners. Serrans were given gold, red or blue bandanas to wear according to their category (Serra International Board, club member or convention committee/staff). Furthermore, this detail made Serrans stand out as an impressive and unified group in the congregation, and made them easy to find when roaming over the sprawling Tepeyac pilgrimage complex. On the bus, baskets of granola bars and water, plus pesos for the bathrooms at the basilica were distributed to each pilgrim. Every detail was seen to.

A particularly beautiful gesture planned by the convention committee was the presentation of large baskets of food for the poor brought to the basilica altar by representatives of each council in Serra. This underscored, in a very visible way, the global nature of Serra International, and our commitment to our Church.

After Mass presided over by Carlos Cardinal Aguiar Retes, Archbishop of Mexico City, Serrans enjoyed exploring the entire pilgrimage site, climbing the beautifully landscaped hill to find multiple chapels, sculptures, kiosques, exhibits, and views of the city.

It is exquisite experiences such as this one that make Serra International Conventions an integral part of understanding one’s identity as a Serran, beyond the day-to-day hard work accomplished in clubs and districts. Too, such experiences enhance a Serran’s understanding their identity as a part of the truly Universal Church brought to gether by Christ, the Eucharist, our mission for vocations, and in Mexico City, by Our Lady of Guadalupe.

¿No estoy yo aquí que soy tu madre?
Am I not here who am your Mother?

Our Lady of Guadalupe welcomes Serrans during Mexico City convention
The Serran | Vol. 66 No. 3

IGLESIAS DE SAN FRANCISCO

Early arrivals to the convention were treated to Mass with Serra’s Council for Mexico and Central America Episcopal Adviser Most Rev. Emilio Carlos Belauzarán, Archbishop Emeritus of Yucatán, and Most Rev. Ricardo Valenzuela, Bishop of Caacupe, Paraguay, at San Francisco Church (right). This church, built in the early 1700s, is the third church built on the site of the first Catholic monastery/church complex in what was then called “New Spain,” established by Franciscans in the 16th century. The church was a short walk from the hotel in Mexico’s Distrito Federal. Below, Serrans walk to church following Fernando Dosal and a Serran carrying the orange umbrella.

ABOVE: Conveniently located downtown and surrounded by shops and restaurants, the Hilton Mexico City Reforma was an excellent convention venue. The hotel staff was excellent and the food was outstanding!

RIGHT: Paraguay Serrans Nilda Ortiz, Nancy Montania, and Evangelina Chaparro show off their truly terrific St. Junipero t-shirts.
BASÍLICA DE NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUADALUPE

After Mass during which Serrans from all over the world brought gifts of food for the poor to the altar (right), convention attendees took time to explore the beautiful grounds of the pilgrimage site.
THE FAB FOUR
Fernando and Malena Dosal (left), and Geli and Alejandro Carbajal (right), were the tireless behind-the-scenes force who made the Mexico City convention one of the most memorable for Serra International. We are so grateful to them and the whole convention planning committee for creating such a wonderful experience for Serra!

1. The Manalo sisters of Canada take a break between convention presentations.
2. Paraguay Serrans pose for a photo with Archbishop Valenzuela.
3. Serrans from Brazil outside Guadalupe’s original basilica completed in 1709.
4. Adam and Betty Lara conduct a membership workshop for Serra’s USA Council.
The convention hotel was walking distance to many of Mexico City’s iconic attractions, including Zocalo Square (5), Palacio de Bellas Artes (6), and Gran Hotel (9).

7. Mariachis and incoming Serra International President Ruben Gallegos serenade Serra employee Martha Perales Clark, who retired after 28 years of service.

8. Fr. Gervan Menezes of Nashville, on a rare moment off duty from setting up liturgies, peruses the silent auction table.

10. Fernando Dosal high-fives Fran Pulumbarit while members of the Canadian Council pose for a photo at the banquet.
The True Message of Our Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe

Father Eduardo Chávez
Canon of the Basilica of Guadalupe

The following is a slightly edited text of Fr. Chavez’s talk delivered on Friday, June 21, 2019, at Serra’s 77th International Convention in Mexico City. Translation by Martha Perales Clark.

It is a great honor to be here at this wonderful Serra International Convention where we all find ourselves in the hands of God through the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe. In a very special way, we all work for vocations so that many will rise to the priestly life. I am very happy that, to a small extent, I can collaborate and, above all, talk about the first disciple and evangelizer of the Church throughout the Americas.

Our Lady of Guadalupe has been the Patroness of Mexico since 1746, and declared the Patroness of Latin America in 1910. It is not that we, Mexicans, commanded to impose the Virgin of Guadalupe as Patroness of all the nations in the Latin American continent; certainly not. The bishops in each country asked the Pope that she be their Patroness. In 1935, she became the Patroness of the Philippines. And, yes, in 1999 St. Pope John Paul II proclaimed her the Patroness of the entire American continent: Canada, United States and Latin America.

Therefore I come to talk to you about our Patroness, the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe, who spoke to Juan Diego saying: “I am your Mother,” the Mother of all those on this land who are one, meaning the entire continent, and its many diverse lineages, and nations of those who love her. She is the Mother of many in parts of Europe, Africa, Asia, the Philippines. She is the Mother of every human being.

The Real Message of Guadalupe

I want to bring to your attention “The TRUTH of Guadalupe” with capital letters because the truth being spoken of is Jesus. The focus of the Virgin of Guadalupe is not her, it is Jesus. If you look at the dark sash above her abdomen, you can see she is pregnant. She is the first shrine and immaculate tabernacle where Jesus is. The Virgin of Guadalupe is Mary as we know her from the Gospel, who says, “Do whatever He tells you.” She is not the origin of the message; it is Him.

“T want, and desire so much a Sacred House (a Shrine) to manifest Him, to exalt Him, to offer Him my personal love; He who is my help, He who is my salvation, He who is my look of mercy.” She wants a Sacred House in whose center is JESUS. The center of the Sacred House, that is to say, the Temple, is not her, it is Him.

St. Juan Diego’s tilma on which this image is supernaturally imprinted has not decayed in nearly five centuries. His tilma, made from the plant fibers of izotl (yucca species) normally would have degraded within a few years.
Everything is Him, Him, and Him. She is God’s instrument of love to take part in the true and living God – the Way, the Truth and the Life – in a perfect enculturation.

The Perfect Enculturation

The Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe spoke Nahuatl, not Spanish. A key word in her message to Juan Diego is mamahuaztli. The mamahuaztli was a ladle-shaped incense burner made out of fired clay. The cup at the end of its long handle held hot coals and copal resin. The Aztec priests would use it to carry burning incense as they moved about. By using Juan Diego’s language, the Virgin of Guadalupe puts Jesus in the human heart, beyond traditions, culture, and language. She knows how to take the good, the true, the seeds of the Word, and brings them to the fullness of Jesus Christ our Lord. This is called the enculturation of the Gospel. Later I will tell you more about the word mamahuaztli and you will never forget it.

In that perfect enculturation, the Virgin of Guadalupe from the perspective of Sacred Scripture is the woman of from Revelation, Chapter 12: “A great sign appeared in the sky ... a woman dressed in the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a 12-star crown on her head. She was pregnant.” This passage describes precisely the Virgin of Guadalupe. The four-petal flower, the only four-petal flower on the dress, is at the abdomen level. For the natives this means the solar flower, or the “sun of justice.” So she is taking elements of Sacred Scripture that the Europeans would recognize and understand, but also communicated to the natives in a way that they could also understand it: she showed herself as the pregnant woman with “the sun of justice” in her womb.

The apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe on Tepeyac hill took place from December 9 to 12, 1531. The question is when is the winter solstice? Is it from December 9 to 12, 1531. The question is when the winter solstice took place from December 9 to 12, 1531. The Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe was December 12, 1531. It is not just one more apparition; it is Jesus through her, a much stronger apparition than only Mary’s. Here, Mary does not come alone! In the immaculate womb of Guadalupe, Jesus comes through his Mother. That’s wonderful, and you will wonder: Father Eduardo, what does the Feast of Panquetzaliztli have to do with it? Here, she is introducing you to the true Easter. It is as if the Virgin of Guadalupe told them: “It is not your hearts, it is not your blood that feeds the gods; it is my Son, it is His Body, it is His Blood that feeds you, indigenous people. I understand, I know perfectly well what human sacrifices are, because I was at the foot of my Son’s Cross. No more human sacrifices. My Son is the only and eternal sacrifice.”

The Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe, in the perfect enculturation, knows how to manifest Jesus Christ our Lord. She knows how to have Him dwell in the human heart. She knows how to take the good and true of this culture and bring it to its fullness in our Lord Jesus Christ. She is what she does. The prophet says: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The Virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will name him Immanuel, ‘God with us.’” The Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe says in her message: “I want, so much desire, a Sacred House.” Do you know what a Sacred House is? It is a Temple. For the indigenous, building a temple meant building a new civilization, not just building a physical structure. So what is the Blessed Virgin asking Juan Diego, and all of us? It is a new civilization of the Love of God.

Saint John Paul II says: “America, which historically has been, and is, a melting pot of peoples, has acknowledged in the mestizo face of Santa Maria de Guadalupe, the Virgen of the Tepeyac, a great example of the perfectly enculturated evangelization. Therefore, the Virgin of Guadalupe is revered as Queen of all America not only in the center or in the south, but also in the north of the Continent.”

The Story of Our Lady of Guadalupe

To know the Virgin of Guadalupe, one must go to the Secret Archives in the Vatican, to the Archive of the Indies, and to the Archive of France. There is a chronicle, the oldest in existence, named the Nican Mopohua, meaning; “Here it is told, here it is narrated, and here it is said.” The oldest copy of this important document on the Virgin of Guadalupe is in New York.

Before the archbishop could give his approval for building a Sacred House for the Virgin, he asked Juan Diego to give him proof of the apparition – a sign. Juan Diego shared the request with the Virgin,
and she replied: “Very well, come tomorrow and I will give you the sign.” At that time, Juan Bernardino, Juan Diego’s elderly uncle, was very sick and in great need of a doctor. Because of this, the following day, Tuesday, December 12, Juan Diego was in a rush to find a priest to absolve and prepare his uncle to die. He thought: “If the Virgin stops me, I will waste time. I will get the priest first.” And he took an alternate route down the hill to avoid the place where he would regularly encounter the Blessed Virgin. At that moment, the Virgin appeared to him as he was coming down the hill and stopped him, and said: “Where are you going?” Juan Diego answered, “An uncle of mine, your servant, is seriously ill and about to die,” and explained his behavior. That is when the Virgin of Guadalupe told him: “Do not be afraid, am I not here to have the honor and joy of being your Mother? Or am I not your protection, your shelter? Are you not in the folds of my mantle, in the crook of my arms?”

You remember the Nahua word, mamahuaztli? The Aztec priests used this tool to make the new fire at the Feast of Panquetzalistli, just as we make the new fire at Easter. But mamahuaztli also means, “In the crook of my arms, in the folds of my mantle” — exactly what the Virgin of Guadalupe says. In other words, it is she who takes you to the Sun of Justice, to the true light and to the true God and Lord.

When Juan Diego heard this, and realized that the Virgin of Guadalupe told him that his uncle had been healed, Juan Diego believed her. “Your uncle is already well,” she says. Do you realize that it is Jesus, through the Virgin of Guadalupe, who goes to Juan Diego’s house where Juan Bernardino, his sick uncle, is? It is Mary who takes the priest to anoint his uncle, as well as taking the Anointed One to heal his uncle, and giving the old man her full name: Saint Mary of Guadalupe. This is not only an apparition of Mary, a “mariophany”; it is a theophany. It is the appearance of Jesus through our Blessed Mother of Guadalupe.

And what of the sign? “Go to the hill, there you will find the flowers,” she told Juan Diego. Tepeyac was a dead, barren, stony hill. There were no flowers in the freezing month of December, but Juan Diego believed. He did not say: “I’ll see if my uncle is well; if it is true, then I will come back.” He believed and said, “Yes, give me the sign.” Juan Diego went to the hill, found the flowers as the Virgin had said, and placed them in his tilma (cloak), which, for an indigenous, is like an extension of his own person. He went back down the hill and showed them to Mary Most Holy.

First page of the Hvei Tlamahuicoltiça (“The Great Event”), a Nahuatl tract by Luis Laso de la Vega, published ca. 1649. The tract contains the Nican Mopohua narrative detailing the Marian apparition and miracles at Guadalupe in 1531.

arranged the flowers and said, “This is the sign. Take it to the bishop to approve the Sacred House.”

The Laity’s Role in Evangelization

Note: it was not the bishop; it was Juan Diego, a layperson just like you, who received the news that the Mother of God is also our Mother. Mary of Guadalupe has chosen you, the laity, to be the ambassadors. Jesus’ Sacred House is the Church, and it cannot be built without the bishop’s approval. Juan Diego stood before the bishop and loosened his tilma, and at that moment the flowers fell and the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe was seen imprinted on his tilma. What kind of sign is this for us? It is your Catholic Church symbolized in the layman’s tilma, the image of the Virgin Mary in the hands of the bishop, centered on Jesus Christ our Lord, with the flowers as the Truth of God, the scent of Divinity of the Catholic Church, the laity, the consecrated persons, and God’s truth through Guadalupe. And it is all centered on Jesus Christ our Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Are you the sign of God? You are the Catholic Church. Through the Virgin of Guadalupe you are part of the sign of God. You are that Sacred House to be shown, manifested, and offered with all her love. Is the Catholic Church the sign? The Virgin of Guadalupe is the Mother of the Church, she is the Blessed Tabernacle, and Jesus is centered on her. The Sacred House is a sign devoted to Jesus. The flowers, the tilma, the consecrated, the laity, the Divine truth, and the Catholic Church is centered on Jesus Christ our Lord in a civilization of love. Therefore, I envy you, Serrans, because Mary has chosen you, the laity, to be the light of the world, bringing Jesus everywhere.
The Tilma and Indigenous Identity

The tilma is a sacramental sign. It represents protection, sustenance, divine support, consecration, marriage, dignity, and mission. The tilma is a “shroud of protection” because it serves as a robe, protection from the cold, the sun’s rays. The tilma was used for sustenance: to sow, to reap. The tilma is a consecration, a kind of baptism. God manifested through the Virgin of Guadalupe. Mothers, your child throbs through your heart, you give space, food, love, tenderness, care, protection, everything through your umbilical cord. Mary has Jesus in her immaculate womb, her umbilical cord beating with the heart of God. Also Jesus, true God, the Creator of the whole world, wanted to beat in the heart of Mary. God omnipotent who needs no one, nevertheless needed a young girl, a maiden from Nazareth, to be His Mother. Her pregnancy moves me deeply. It is wonderful how God has manifested in this land, in America. Though God’s direct involvement the earth is not lost, but transformed. He chose to intervene with the throbbing of His Mother’s heart.

When the Virgin stamped her colors and designs on Juan Diego’s tilma, she dignified him as a human being, and dignified his people with Jesus Himself incarnate, because only the noble indigenous decorated their tilmas with colors and images. Also, the tilma was considered a marriage garment, two pieces with a seam in the middle, therefore, the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the tilma is a spiritual marriage with Juan Diego’s people and with us. Even today, the tilma is made with threads from a plant called izotl, but this fabric decays and crumbles in no more than two years. It is impossible that the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, in a humid and salty environment like that of Tepeyac, could last almost 500 years. Mathematically, her image is perfectly proportioned. Every year, 23 million people visit the Basilica of Guadalupe.

I conclude with the following: the indigenous parents would tell their young ones: “My zocoyotito of mine, my dearest, my little beloved one, flesh of my flesh, my creation. You are my necklace of fine gems, my headdress of Quetzal plumage; behave yourself, be honest, be true, be of one face and one heart. Always keep in mind and in your heart, that you are my image, you are my portrait, anyone who sees you sees me.”

Thus, I say to you, brothers, may anyone who sees you may also see the immense love of God, through the Virgin of Guadalupe, in your church, and throughout the whole world. My gratitude to Serra International for all it does for the Catholic Church, and thank you for everything you do for the priests.

May God abundantly bless you!
Serrans, Our Priority Is Clear: We Must Keep Growing Our Membership

State of Serra Address by Past President Mario Biscardi

The following address was given by Past President Mario Biscardi at Serra’s 77th International Convention in Mexico City on June 22, 2019.

Fellow Serrans, one thing that I can say to you for sure is that when you become President of Serra International, the year goes by very quickly.

You are elected in June and in the fall the Executive Committee meets with the Congregation of the Clergy and North American College at the Vatican. Before you know it, it is Christmas time. Then immediately following is the USA Serra Rally, then for us in Toronto it’s the annual Ordinandi Dinner where over 2,500 Catholics, including over 800 Catholic high school students and over 300 university students, gather to honour our ordinandi. Then it’s Easter and soon thereafter here we are at the Serra international convention.

And so the “shelf life” of a President of Serra International is very short, and that is why I chose to spend my year focused on our #1 priority, namely, membership growth.

My work on membership growth was mainly focused in Canada and I began this initiative as president-elect in April last year when I was invited to be the very first speaker for the Diocesan Vocation Directors Association of Ontario, which has 19 dioceses, four of which are close to Toronto. If there are similar vocation directors associations in your state or province or country, I strongly encourage you to become familiar with them, and work with them to support each other in fostering and promoting vocations as well as promoting Serra in places where there is no Serra. Vocation directors are our best advocates in getting the bishop’s approval to have a Serra Club established in their diocese. It has worked very well for me in spreading Serra in Ontario and so I strongly encourage you to do so.

I and Fran Pulumbarit, District 1 Governor for Ontario which has 10 of the 17 Serra Clubs in Canada, did a presentation to 14 vocation directors attending the inaugural meeting of this new association of Diocesan Vocation Directors in Ontario in April of last year. We were given only 20 minutes, but with the questions that followed, we were privileged to present Serra to them for over an hour. Most of the attendees had not heard about Serra and they loved what they heard, so much so that immediately following my presentation, four of them came up to me to book a time to meet with them in their own diocese and do a similar presentation to a group of interested individuals.

Fran and I followed up on this opportunity and within the next six months, we made five similar presentations to major cities in Canada where no Serra club had ever existed. In addition to that that, we made similar efforts with the Filipino and Chinese communities in Toronto, where we have six Serra clubs present. Today, we have opportunities to form nine new Serra Clubs in Canada which would, Deo volente, increase the number of Serra Clubs in Canada by over 50%. The seed has been planted. We now have seedlings present. What they need is good weather, nourishment, and plenty of sunshine from our Good Lord.

I know that the same good efforts and more have been made in the USA under the overall support and leadership of Judy Cozzens, President of USA Council, who has made tremendous efforts not only in new club formation but also in preventing weak clubs from failing.

I am aware that about 30 new clubs are in various stages of formation in the USA, and I am also aware of several weak clubs that have been revitalized and resurrected from their previous moribund state.

Judy and I also participated in the effort to start a new Serra club in Chicago where it now appears that we may have a Serra club within the next year after some 50 years of waiting, and we may have a couple more clubs in the outskirts of Chicago. On behalf of all Serrans, a big thank you to Judy, for all her efforts in membership growth.

My #1 focus has been well presented via presentations, email notices to all Serrans registered in Serra International’s membership portal, articles in The Serran magazine, and by Councils themselves in their own publications and email distribution lists. The ask to all Serrans was a very simple one: Each Serran is to bring in one new Serran in 2018 and again in 2019. Each District is to bring in one new Serra Club in 2018 and again in 2019.

What membership campaign could be more simple and achievable than this, and also have a very significant impact on Serra and our Church?

Those that embraced the membership campaign and actually did something to grow Serra, did very well, and it gives me much pleasure to recognize and thank these Serra Clubs and Councils on behalf of all Serrans:

CANADA: Only one club in the world achieved 100% growth – Durham Region in Ontario Canada – thanks to a new club president who focused on membership with the full support of the past club president.

• Markham & Scarborough - 35%
• Toronto Central - 30%

Deo volente,
PHILIPPINES: Philippines Serra Council increased by 35% and I am told by Blessida, Past President of Philippines Council who is here today, that it has since increased to 40%. This is truly amazing. Philippines Council is the only Council to show significant growth. On behalf of all Serrans, a tremendous “Thank you,” Blessida, for this awesome achievement in less than one year!

USA: The following Clubs increased between 20% and 50%:

- North Houston, TX - 44%
- Reno, NV - 44%
- Colorado Springs, CO - 42%
- Cincinnati, OH - 40%
- Providence, NJ - 36%
- Memphis, TN - 35%
- Atchison Region, KS - 30%
- East Valley, AZ - 30%
- Northeast Fort Worth, TX - 30%
- Tiffin, OH - 27%
- Metropolitan Dallas, TX - 27%
- San Bernardino, CA - 27%
- Northeast Houston, TX - 25%
- New Orleans, LA - 24%
- North Idaho, ID - 24%
- San Diego North Coast, CA - 24%
- Indianapolis, IN - 23%
- Williamson County, TN - 23%
- St. Mary’s & Sidney Deaneries, TN - 22%
- Fort Worth, TX - 21%
- Honolulu, HI - 20%
- Twin Cities Airport, MN - 20%
- North Central North Dakota, ND - 20%

Sadly, however, the overall number of Serrans decreased over the past year, and only Canada, Nigeria and the Philippines showed positive overall growth.

But, were it not for the successful efforts of the aforementioned clubs, our overall loss would have been much greater.

Our task of increasing membership is clearly not over. This past year, we have built the foundations. Next year, we will build the walls and structure. And the following year, we will finish the interior. The opportunities are there. We just need to embrace the membership campaign and work at it.

And so my fellow Serrans, time will tell whether we will be successful or not. And it won’t be us that will be the judge of that. It will be our good Lord’s Church and the priesthood that He established that will judge whether Serra is a meaningful support or not, and whether the Serra “tree” bears fruit when the master comes looking for fruit.

Truly, membership growth is everybody’s business. It is therefore vitally important that each individual Serran does their part in making Serra stronger for the future, and valued and meaningful by those whom Serra serves, namely the Church and the priesthood which our good Lord established for the salvation of souls.

In closing, I strongly urge you to continue with the membership growth strategy for the next two years, and make Serra much stronger everywhere. It can be done, and it needs to be done.

Mary, Mother of Vocations, Pray for Us.
Dr. Ruben Gallegos, President, belongs to the Serra Club of Harlingen, Texas, USA. He joined Serra in 1993 and served as club president, district governor, regional director, and as a board member of Serra’s National Council for the United States and Serra International. In 1970 he graduated with a Ph.D. from East Texas State University. He worked 33 years in the field of education with the last nine years as university professor. In 2001, Brownsville named the Dr. Ruben Gallegos Elementary School after him for his contributions in the field of education for children in migrant, bilingual, and multicultural educational programs.

Michael Bragg, President Elect, belongs to the Serra Club of Toledo, Ohio, USA. Michael is a partner in the law firm Spengler Nathanson PLL in Toledo. Michael is a 4th Degree Knight of Columbus with the St. Joan of Arc Council 15905, President of the St. Joan of Arc Athletic Board, sits on the Executive Committee of the Maumee Valley Historical Society, and sits on the board of Friends of Russian Orphans. Michael is a past president of the Toledo Bar Association Real Estate Committee and currently sits on the Bar Admissions Committee.

Mario Biscardi, Past President, belongs to the Toronto Central Serra Club. Mario has been a Serran since 1981, and during this time has been instrumental in the formation of five new Serra clubs in the Archdiocese of Toronto, plus two other dioceses in the surrounding area. Mario recently retired after a 40-year rewarding career with a major Canadian bank, having spent 18 years in lending to the real estate and construction industry as well as 14 years in the commercial and corporate banking area in Ontario. He is now very active as a consultant and also volunteers his time in various Church-related charitable and non-profit organizations.

Bertha Rosa Acuña Hallatt, Programs Vice President, belongs to the Serra Club of Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico. She became part of the Serra International Board in 2015 as an Area Representative for Mexico and Latin America. She has been coordinator for the organization, classification and rescue of 17th and 18th century colonial archives and historic library of the Cathedral of Cuernavaca. She has been an active member of her local club for 25 years as secretary, vice president of Communications and club president, where she has been very successful in the relations of the club with the bishop and the seminary.

Kurt Metyko, Membership Vice President, belongs to the Serra Club of Houston, Texas, USA. Kurt is a civil engineer. Kurt became a Serran in 1968, joining his father Frank (1977 Serra International President). Kurt held all the club, district and U.S.A. Council positions culminating with the 2011 presidency of Serra’s National Council for the United States. He has been a member and past chairman of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston’s St. Mary’s Seminary Advisory Board, serving from 1978 until 2014. Kurt also serves, since 1997, on the Board of the Shalom Center in Splendora, Texas, a counseling center for Catholic priests and religious.

Giuseppe Miccoli, Vocations Vice President, has been a member of the Serra Club of Ferrara, District 76 Emilia Romagna, Italy, since 2004. He served two terms as club president and two terms as District 76 governor. Giuseppe holds a degree in Physics and is Senior Researcher at IMAMOTER Institute, Italian National Research Council, C.N.R. He is an Opus Dei co-operator, a Catholic Alliance Association member, a member of Serra Pomposa-Speyer Friends Association, church pastoral staff member and pastoral co-operator of St. Benedict Salesian parish, and a member of Ferrara-Comacchio Diocese, Pastoral Office for Laity.

Greg Schwietz, Communications Vice President, joined the Serra Club of Omaha, Nebraska, USA, in 1983. He served in numerous capacities at the club level for many years including as club president. His commitment to the Omaha club continued at the board level until 2005. Subsequent Serra leadership positions included District 9 W governor, USA Council Region 9 Director, Serra International Vice President of Vocations, and USA Council Vice President of Communications and President.
Thomas Castellanos, CPA, Treasurer, has been a member of the East Valley Phoenix, Arizona club since 2002, and during this time has been instrumental in the formation of two Serra clubs in the Diocese of Phoenix. Thomas has worked as a top financial officer for over 30 years, and currently serves as CFO of a healthcare not-for-profit organization with services across the USA. Thomas has been active in real estate transactions for nonprofit organizations for over 20 years, which included board of director training and strategic planning. He volunteers his time in various Phoenix Diocese roles, lay associations, and related charitable and non-profit organizations.

Margo Geddie, Secretary, Serra Club of Houston, Texas, USA, started her career in wealth management with Morgan Stanley over 25 years ago and today is a Senior Vice President-Wealth Management. Margo serves on the Advisory Board of St. Mary’s Catholic Seminary and is a member of the Catholic Endowment Foundation of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. She also is a sustaining member of the Junior League of Houston. She has been a Serran for over 15 years and has served as club president and chair of the Serra International Vocations Committee.

Emanuele Costa, Trustee, graduated from the University of Genoa with a Degree in Economy and Commerce. After spending some 20 years between Genoa, New York and Miami managing the family-owned shipping business, he started his own private equity company, now based in Milan, Italy. He now resides in Lugano, Switzerland. Joining the Serra Club of Lugano in 1997, he has been Club President, District Governor and President of the Italian National Council.

Jeannette D’Souza, Trustee, Serra Club of Bangalore, India, grew up in Agra, the city of the Taj Mahal in India. Jeannette holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree, and is a retired banker who lived and worked in Kuwait in the Middle East from 1966 to 1990. She further trained as a pastoral counselor specializing in marriage counseling. She and her late husband Carlos were the founding members of Serra in India in 2003, and ever since, she has been working passionately towards fulfilling the Serra goals in India. She has been instrumental in introducing several innovative ideas to foster and promote vocations, in compliance with the local customs, with the help of a hard-working and dedicated team.

Blessida Garcia Diwa, Trustee, is a member of the Serra Club of Tuguegarao, Philippines. Blessida is a nurse by profession, a Serran for 18 years, and holder of a Doctor in Public Administration degree. She served as regional director of the Department of Tourism Cagayan Valley Region Philippines for 18 years. Today, she is the marketing manager of Diwa Press, Diwa Construction. She and her spouse, Rolando Diwa, Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus and also a Serran, serve as Eucharistic Ministers of Christ. She was president of the Serra Club of Tuguegarao from 2006-2010, district governor from 2011-2013, and served as president of Serra’s National Council of the Philippines from 2015-2017.

Charles (Chuck) Furr, Trustee, Serra Club of Honolulu, spent 33 years with the Agricultural Department of Dow Chemical Company in sales and marketing. Joining the Serra Club of Honolulu in 1993, he had been a president and district governor within Serra before joining the Serra International Board. He is active in his parish, the Knights of Columbus, the Vocations Committee of LARC (Leadership Association of Religious Communities) and more.

Fred Gorges, Trustee, lives near Wichita, Kansas, and is a member of the Downtown Wichita Serra Club. He joined Serra in 1994. He has held positions in his club as VP of Programs, VP Vocations, and President. He has also served as District 12-25 Governor for five years, and as Region 9 Director for two years. Fred has been involved in the transportation business for 43 years. He owns and operates a transportation company, FCG Inc., that contracts solely to FedEx Ground.

Affonso Iannone, Trustee, has been a member of the Serra Club of São Paulo since 1964. He was born in São Paulo, Brazil, where he obtained a Master’s degree in Business Administration from the FGV University of São Paulo, associated with Harvard University. Affonso worked for Ansaldo Energia Company his entire life. He was responsible for the building of electrical power plants in Brazil and South America. In these 50 years of Serra life he was president of his club, governor of District 112, and Coordinator of the Brazilian Region South. He became president of Serra International in 1998 and later became the president of the Brazilian Serra Council.

Continued on next page
Adam Lara, Trustee, has been president/owner of National Utilities Discount for the past 18 years. Adam and his wife, Betty, joined Serra Club of McAllen in 2014. They immediately were selected to serve on the Board of Directors and work together on increasing membership by facilitating workshops throughout the Diocese of Brownsville. Bishop Daniel Flores has asked Adam and Betty to serve on the Case Development Council for the Diocese of Brownsville. Adam is serving as club Membership VP and has been named District Governor-Elect for District 126. Adam has served on other boards and foundations, mainly focusing in recent years on Rotary International. Adam joined Rotary International in 2008, has been recognized for his outstanding leadership service, and was named “District Rotarian of the Year.”

Betty Lara, Trustee, is the president/owner of Utilities Services Experts USA, an Energy Brokerage Firm for consumer use. As members of the Serra Club of Brownsville, Texas, USA, since 2014, she and her husband Adam were asked by Bishop Daniel Flores to serve on the Case Development Council for the Diocese of Brownsville. Betty has served on other Boards and Foundations mainly focusing in recent years on Rotary International. Betty has received Rotary International’s Avenues of Service Citation Award, of which only 150 are awarded yearly around the world. She has received multiple Rotary awards and has served that organization in many roles.

Moira McQueen, LLB, MDiv, PhD, Trustee, belongs to the Serra Club of Halton, Ontario, Canada. Dr. Moira 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. She is the president of the Serra Council of Canada, the founding president of the Serra Club of Halton, and is proud to serve on the Board of Serra International.

Richard (Dick) Petersen, Trustee, and his wife Celine are charter members of the Serra Club of Tri-Cities, Washington. He is a convert, having gone thorough RCIA in 1982. He has been district governor and regional director for the Serra’s USA Council, and has served two years on the USA Council Nominating Committee, two years on the USA Council Long-Range Planning Committee, and as chair of USA Membership Committee for two years. In addition to Serra, Dick is a 40-year member of Kiwanis International, where several years ago he and another Kiwanian started a foundation that grants scholarships to high school seniors. He has been on the board of the Benton Franklin Humane Society for 27 years, and is a 35-year member of the Knights of Columbus.

Robert (“Bob”) Rudman, Trustee, belongs to the Serra Club of Williamson County, Tennessee, USA. An Economics major and hockey player graduating from Boston College, Bob went on to marketing management with National Broadcasting Co., American Brands and Johnson & Johnson before starting a manufacturer’s representative company which developed for 20 years new markets of distribution and products for many blue chip companies. Bob was awarded the Exemplary Community Volunteer Award for 2014 and 2015 by the Heritage Foundation of Williamson County for his volunteer work. Most recently, Bob was Chairman of Serra’s 76th International Convention in Nashville. Although he is retired, he remains involved in marketing consulting for many non-profit organizations.

Roberto Sebben, Trustee, has been a member of the Serra Club of Vale do Iguacu in Brazil since 1990. He has served his club as president and has also been a district governor. He is a civil engineer working with building and residential projects, and is an expert in civil law. Roberto and his wife, economist Sandra Mara, have two sons, who are both surgeons.

Cristhian Arce, Trustee, Serra Club of Villarrica, Paraguay

Anne Larkins, Trustee, Serra Club of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

A note from our Serra International Board of Trustees

Serra is always on the lookout for capable, dedicated leadership. As our vocations apostolate continues to grow globally and to take on an increasingly significant role in vocation pastoral action across the universal Church, it is important that Serra’s Nominating Committee is able to choose the best candidates for service on Serra’s international Board of Trustees. If you know someone in your Serra Club or district who is willing and able to serve as an international officer or trustee, your encouragement may be what he or she needs to step forward. All Serra Clubs, district governors, and district governors-elect are asked to recommend qualified candidates for Serra’s international Board of Trustees. Contact the Serra International office at jliston@serrainternational.org.
The following address was given by President Gallegos on June 22, 2019 at Serra’s 77th International Convention in Mexico City.

M y wife and I used to share a tradition: After Mass, I would ask her, “Where do you want to go?” and I would mention a place to eat and she would say, “No.” One day after Mass she said, “I want to go eat tacos.” You know, Brownsville is the taco capital of the world. So I said, “You want to go to Pepe’s or how about Antonio’s?” I was waiting for her to say “No” as usual. But then she said: “I want to have tacos at Dairy Queen.” Can you imagine? Tacos at Dairy Queen? My God. So this time I said, “No, we are going to Pepe’s,” because I am a macho man guy.

As I was arriving at Dairy Queen I said, “I hope nobody sees me here at Dairy Queen eating tacos.” As I was eating tacos at Dairy Queen, I heard someone call my name. This guy by the name of Bob Aces was there and he says, “What are you doing tomorrow?” And I said “Nothing.” He asked me to have lunch with him. I said, “OK.”

I showed up for lunch and found out it was a meeting of the Serra Club of Harlingen. I have always been very close to the Catholic Church. I was eight years an altar boy. So I joined.

At the next meeting Henry Martinez said, “Ruben, we have a vacancy.” And I felt so proud to be named Vice President of Membership. I didn’t know the regular guy had resigned. Later on I found out that two other guys had rejected the offer.

Two things: one, I was invited to go to a meeting; two, I was involved. And 26 years later, here I am looking at you and saying, “My God, what I am going to do?”

So, I pray the Rosary and light a candle to the Lady of Guadalupe. If you have a problem, pray. If it’s a bigger problem pray some more. But you know, having been a school administrator and a university professor, I also like to do some research. When I have a problem I’m sure when I read the Bible I’ll find guidance, which is what I needed when I became president of Serra International. So I read the Bible and I wanted to share with you Exodus 18. Moses wants the Israelites to fight. So he goes up the hill, he raises his hands to the heavens and prays. Then, because he gets tired, he lowers his arms. As long as he had his hands pointing to God in heaven the Israelites would win. The moment he lowered his hands the Israelites were losing. His friends got a hold of him and sat him on a rock and helped him hold his hands up. And the Israelites won that battle.

And this is where we are. Are we tired? We have to keep on praying. We need somebody to help us. In Matthew 14, the apostles were in a boat and being really rocked by the waves. And they see in the distance what they thought was a ghost coming toward them. It was Jesus. St. Peter said, “I want to do that.” And Jesus said, “Come.” If you ever think that Jesus was the only one to walk on water, remember that St. Peter did that too.

Until the wind hit him right in the face. He worried and started sinking. Jesus reached out, grabbed him, and went to the boat. He told Peter, “Do not be afraid.” All St. Peter had to do was keep his eyes on Jesus. We have to do that. We have to pray more. We have to keep our eyes on Jesus. Finally, in Luke 9 Jesus summoned the 12 apostles and told them, “I want you to go preach the Kingdom of God. Just the way you are go. No food, no extra clothing, just get out there.” And you know what? From 12 came the true Church of 1.2 billion Catholics. We Serrans are 12,000, we ought to do better than that. Of course, they had Jesus; you have Ruben Gallegos.

I propose that for this coming year, we become Missionaries of St. Junipero Serra. It’s about time we go out and ask people to join us and pray for vocations. We cannot continue with only 12,000 praying for vocations. By the end of the year we’ll have 60,000 praying for vocations and an increase in membership.

The Missionaries of Saint Junipero Serra Contest is on! We are piloting this membership incentive in the USA for 2019-2020. Be a top club for membership growth measured between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020, and win a cash prize. For more details including how to register, visit www.serraus.org.
Our Church, through the action of the Holy Spirit, asks young men and women to give their life to serve as priests, brothers and sisters. We, as Serrans, recognize that we can all help them to answer that call. The Serra Apostolate Prayer Team is a quiet discipleship behind the scenes to pray regularly for the success of our particular Serra International Apostolate.

Simple and practical, members use this small prayer guide that is able to fit into your prayer book or pocket. Opening with “The Grail Prayer,” each day of the week has two Scripture citations for personal reflection, along with praying the Our Father thoughtfully and intentionally. The prayer guide concludes with St. Augustine’s poetic Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

This printed prayer guide will be debuted at the 2020 Serra Rally in Ventura. If you want to join the team, contact Barbara Meehan at brmeehan@yahoo.com and we will send you a copy. You can see the complete copy below.

“…if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father.” – MT 18:19

Let us begin as we do everything important in our lives:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, I give you my hands to do your work.
I give you my feet to go your way.
I give you my eyes to see as you do.
I give you my tongue to speak your words.
I give you my mind that you may think in me.
I give you my spirit that you may pray in me.
Above all, I give you my heart that you may love in me, Lord Jesus, who lives and works and prays in me.
Amen.

Scriptures for Personal Reflection: Part I

Pray in support of our particular Serra apostolate.

Sunday
…in you I place my trust. —PS 56:4

Monday
I will ponder your precepts and consider your paths. —PS 119:15

Tuesday
…pray always without becoming weary. —LK 18:1

Wednesday
…ask anything of Me in my name. —JN 14:14

Thursday
…so that thanks may be given… for the gift granted us through the prayers of many. —2COR 1:11b

Friday
Persevere in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. —COL 4:2

Saturday
…everyone who asks, receives; …who seeks, finds; …who knocks, the door will be opened. —LK 11:10

PRAY thoughtfully, slowly and deliberately each line as Jesus taught us: Our Father …

Scriptures for Personal Reflection: Part II

Pray as Scripture and our apostolate tells us.

Sunday
He went up on the mountain by himself to pray. —MT 14:23
The work and outreach of the US Council of Serra’s Vocations Committee continues to grow exponentially! The first SPARK Parish Vocation Ministry workshop and training was held on Oct. 12, 2019 in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The training is based on the vocations promotion tools offered at www.serraspark.org. This initial offering was met with enthusiasm and a request for a return visit.

Father Michael Ackerman, vocations director for the Diocese of Pittsburgh, extended the invitation in September and Dr. Anne D. Roat, the Vice President for Vocations of the US Council of Serra International, was quick to accept. Greg Schwietz, immediate past president of the US Council and Richard Arians, incoming president of the US Council, were selected to conduct the training.

At Father Ackerman’s request, Bishop David A. Zubik, the local ordinary of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, invited parishes in his diocese to attend the inaugural offering. Eight parishes registered for the workshop that was held at St. Paul Seminary in Pittsburgh. In addition to securing the venue, Father Ackerman arranged for meals and hospitality, as well as handling the registration process. The costs for these items were the only outlays the diocese incurred. All other expenses for the workshop were covered by the US Council of Serra International (this is one example of how our membership dues are spent).

Attendees rewarded the trainers with wonderful testimonials. Thomas Holmes from St. Bernard Parish in Mount Lebanon, Penn., advised other parishes, “Go and attend the workshop and you will come away with a toolbox full of ways to build a culture that effectively promotes vocations.” Lenora Fazio, also of St. Bernard Parish, wrote, “It is a must-attend for all parishes who don’t yet have a vocation council in place. Every single parish must implement this to promote a much-needed increase in vocations and to support current priests who are already overworked.” Peter Konieczka from St. Joseph Parish in Verona, Penn., noted, “I am glad your organization exists because it can be daunting/intimidating to start a new (vocation) council but with your resources, including personal support for the first year, I feel more at ease.”

Local Serrans from the Pittsburgh Serra Club were an integral part of the workshop experience. They provided fellowship and support during the training. Pittsburgh Club President Bill Caye, and immediate Past President Alice Hirsch were outstanding assets at the workshop.

Father Ackerman’s comments following the workshop summarized the experience: “The workshop was fantastic, and Greg and Dick were wonderful. Thank you for putting this together. I really thought the whole thing was well-done, organized, and planned. Those who attended greatly enjoyed the workshop and found it to be useful and provided great ideas to start a (vocations) council.”

Dioceses interested in hosting a workshop should have their diocesan vocation director or bishop contact Dr. Anne D. Roat, Vice President for Vocations of Serra’s US Council, at vpvocusserra@gmail.com.
Vocation directors need our prayers... NOW

Be a part of the Seven Serrans Prayer Team for Vocation Directors

Vocation directors’ jobs are very difficult. One vocation director may serve four parishes on top of his vocation director duties. Another may be a half-time director with no secretary to help. The pressure is great: many vocation directors have pastors tell them that vocations is their job and offer no help... and all this at a time when vocations numbers are in decline.

Clearly, vocation directors need our prayers, and since this is part of our mission, we want Serrans to step up. This is the best gift we can give them.

What does this look like? The NCDVD has sent Serra’s US Council board a list of names of vocation directors and their assistants. The USA Council will match these up to our Serra clubs, who will assign seven members to pray for them by name for one hour a week for the next year. Your club may be asked to pray for more than one director. Each person on the team should choose one day of the week to pray, so the director has someone praying for them for one hour each day of the week. This program is modeled after the Seven Sisters Apostolate praying for priests.

Mass is a wonderful prayer, and offering your Mass and Communion for your assigned vocation director alone is the beginning of a good hour of prayer for him. You can complete the hour with a rosary or time in front of the Blessed Sacrament. A holy hour in Adoration is another great idea.

We need about 300 prayer teams to cover all vocation directors in the United States. We want each team of seven Serrans praying for a director to send him a personal card with their commitment. Is your club up to the task? I hope so! Please send the name and e-mail address of your preferred Serra club member contact to me at jcozzens@msn.com and I will send you your vocation director match(es), along with more details.

At the time of this writing, I have confirmed over 160+ prayer teams of Serrans that have committed to be prayer warriors for our Vocation Directors. Only 62 more to go. As I have communicated with hundreds of Serrans, I have found a generous group of people that are willing to commit their time in prayer to lift up others.

I am grateful for each one of you as we forge forward trying to rebuild Serra and secure a good future for our Church. I pray the Lord will bless our work and reward you for your part in it.

Does Serra need a membership slogan?

Many of us have heard advertising slogans on TV or radio or seen them on a billboard. Do they really work and should Serra have a membership slogan? If so, what should it be?

Immediate Past Serra International President Mario Biscardi made membership his #1 priority but his campaign did not even come close to his desired results. The current Serra International President, Dr. Ruben Gallegos, has also made membership his #1 priority and has included a financial incentive. Will this endeavor be more successful? Only time will tell.

Neither of these initiatives had a slogan to go with it to catch Serrans’ attention. Is there a value to having one? We all know “Click it or Ticket” or “You could learn a lot from a dummy. Buckle up.” These phrases have helped reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on our highways from motor vehicle accidents. On the other hand, military slogans like “The Few, The Proud, The Marines”; “An Army of One”; “Aim High – Your Career Starts Here”; or “Forged by the Sea” have not been as successful as the respective Military Services had hoped for.

Many of our Military Services have failed to meet their annual recruitment goals, which has led to a reduction in entry standards on occasion. The Military Services exceed their quotas when something big happens like the 9/11 attack.

So, is having a membership slogan worthwhile? That answer depends on your point of view. A slogan can be very effective, ineffective or not even memorable. If you think a membership slogan would be beneficial, send me (colhalloran@hotmail.com) your slogan for evaluation.

Ana Alonso head of Global Marketing Recruitment for Shell, said, “Engagement has to be human, because people trust people more than brands. Our people are the ones who personify Shell.”

You are the people who personify Serra. You make the difference in the success or failure of this organization. As Ana said, engagement has to be human, therefore we need you to be the face of Serra and contact a dedicated Catholic to be a member. Out of all the programs we have used to promote recruiting, asking is still the number one reason why a person joins.

As Smokey the Bear said, “Only you can prevent forest fires.” Only you can be either proactive or reactive and that will determine the future of Serra.
Martha Perales Clark: The heart and soul of Serra’s staff
At her retirement, Martha Perales Clark reflects on almost 3 decades with Serra

Martha Perales Clark was hired as a Spanish translator for Serra in 1991. She was supposed to go to the convention that year in her native Guadalajara, but at the last minute she was asked to stay behind. In time, Martha would handle the translations of all four official languages of Serra (Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and English.)

In the 28 years that followed, Martha’s duties grew to include so much more than just translations. She processed grant applications and awards for the Serra International Foundation; oversaw the Serra club charter application process; managed the Serra International convention delegate credentials; sent the Serra monstrances all over the world; and so much more.

Martha has served six Serra International executive directors, 27 Serra International presidents, and she has survived four office moves. To her fellow Serra office staff, she is like family.

Martha may have missed that first convention to Guadalajara in 1991, but after traveling all over the world with Serra, she finally made it to Mexico for Serra’s 77th International Convention, which was to be her last before she retired in September. At the convention, Serra Mexico Council President Fernando Dosal presented her with a silver coin engraved with her name, number of years served, and Mexico City’s Angel of Independence.

Here we share a Q&A with Martha, Serra’s longest-serving staff member. We are so proud of Martha and we will miss her very much!

When did your family arrive in the U.S.?
We arrived in the summer of 1967 and made our home in Chicago’s northwest neighborhood of Logan Square. This was a time of major social change and unrest due to the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement. Our mother, who considered the U.S. as the “promised land,” sought a better life and opportunities for her three children by immigrating from Mexico, the city of Guadalajara, Jalisco, to the U.S. and set roots in Chicago. Our mother related that God was the one who chose Chicago because she was unsure of where to go. By faith she let the Spirit of God lead her path.

Where did you work before coming to Serra?
Under the administration of the City of Chicago’s late Mayor Harold Washington, I was the Bilingual Administrative Assistant in the Mayor’s Office during all his tenure until his death. In addition to translating, I greeted and interpreted for individuals asking for an audience with the Mayor.

How did you find out about this position at Serra?
Following the passing of Mayor Washington and the arrival of a new administration, I found it necessary to seek employment elsewhere. By the fall of 1991, while looking at the Classified section in the Chicago Tribune, I found Serra International’s job advertisement seeking a person that could translate from English to Spanish and Spanish to English, and I immediately applied.

In all your nearly 30 years working at Serra, what is your favorite memory?
Many special moments will remain in my heart. However, the most endearing moment was at the 2017 convention in Rome during the Serra International Board of Trustees’ audience with Pope Francis. It was a transcendental experience to see Pope Francis, the Vicar of Christ.

You’ve seen Serra through lots of organizational changes. Are there any ways in which working for Serra has changed you?
As translator for Serra International, I translated reports and articles as well as the President’s messages to the membership, the bishops’ speeches for conferences, and I interpreted for the Board of Trustees. These tasks gave me a greater understanding of the Catholic Church and its leadership, and above all, it strengthened my Faith.

Do you have any parting words for Serra?
I am deeply grateful for the past 28 years to have been part of the Serra family and its mission. I believe that it was God’s plan for me to be at Serra. It was a pleasure to work under the guidance of the Executive Director, the President, and all of the Board of Trustees, and with an excellent group of coworkers. I will not say “good-bye” to friends - instead, hasta luego!
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“I often think that prayer—the unum necessarium—is the one aspect of vocations work which we tend to forget or to undervalue.”

Pope Benedict XVI
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