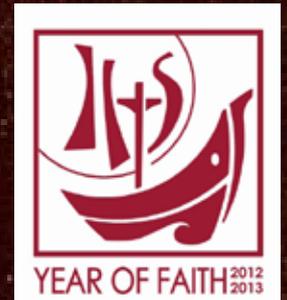


Serra+Connects

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

Issue No. 3 • November-December 2012

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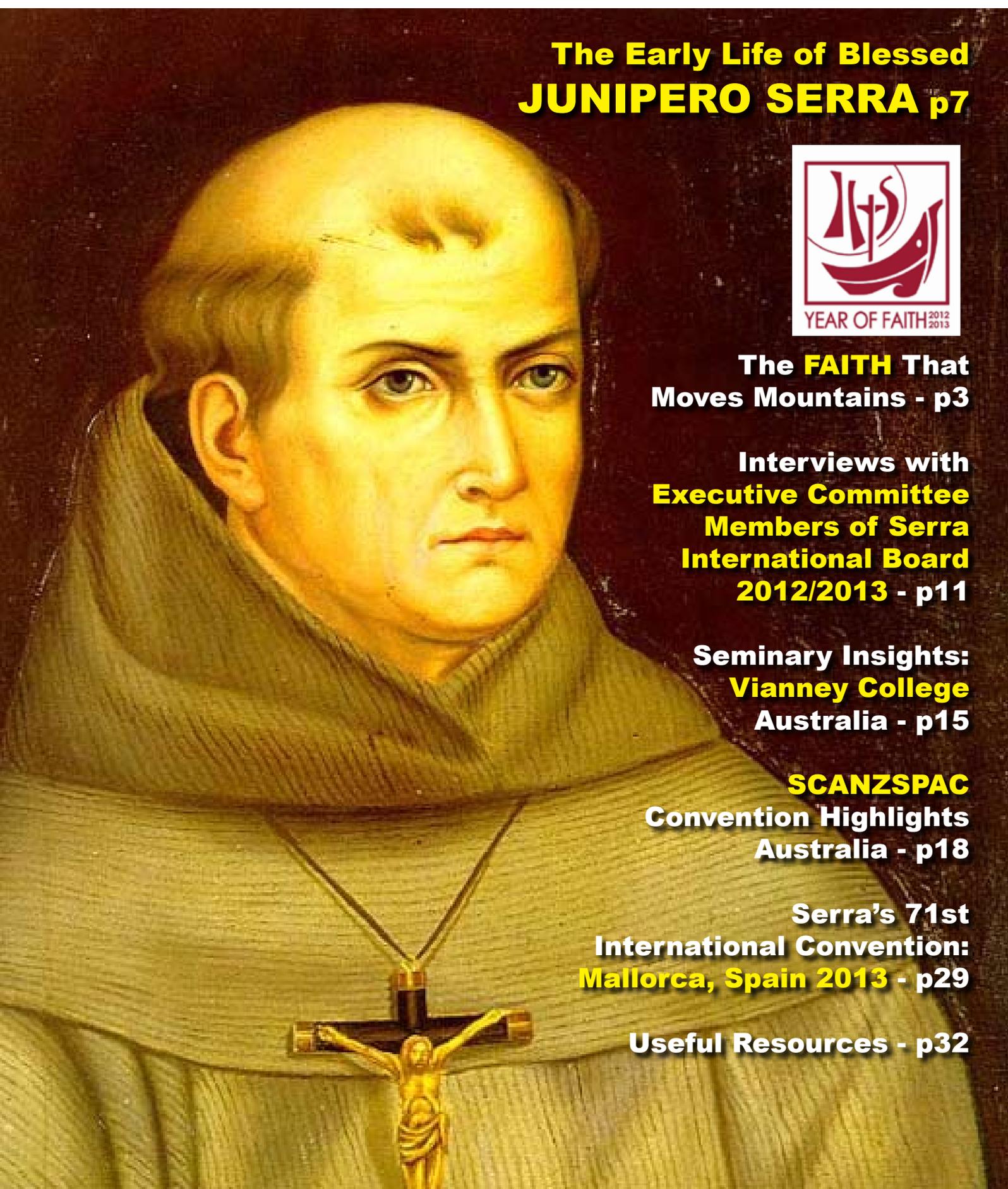
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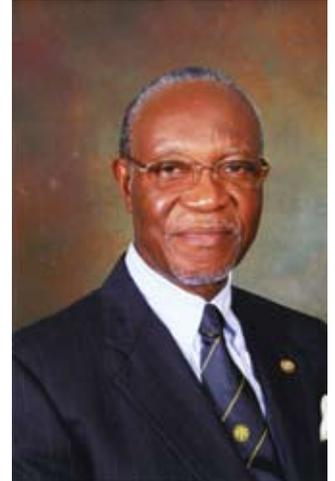
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President's Message

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

On 11 October 2012, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI initiated a year dedicated to The Faith. Our Faith. Given our task of promoting the priesthood, the sacrament which Christ gave His Church to demonstrate visibly that faith, we must also participate in this year's events that much more. In this issue, Jon Haines, Assistant Director of Research and Communications, has reflected on what we as Catholics can glean from the Holy Father's presentation of the Year of Faith thus far and he has found that the life of Father Serra has many similarities with the Holy Father's. Please take your time to consider the recommended ways to participate in the year -- studying the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the documents of the Second Vatican Council in view of the truth presented in prior councils. The Catholic faith is a treasure that is perennial and never changes -- it's worth the investment of your time to learn as much as you can. God bless your endeavors this year!



Editor's Message

My Dear Fellow Serrans,

Wishing you the love and peace of our Risen Lord!

In early October 2012, my wife, Lucy and I had the privilege of attending the SCANZSPAC Biennial Convention in Wagga Wagga, Australia. We have never been to Wagga Wagga and were naturally excited about going there especially after reading the article on the Convention which was featured in the previous issue of "Serra Connects". When we reached Wagga Wagga, we were amazed by the peace and tranquillity of the place. Our gracious host, David Connell (President of Serra Club of Wagga Wagga) shared that Wagga Wagga has been voted the "happiest city in Australia". We certainly agree and can attest to that, after being greeted by many happy residents there.

What really made us very happy was the opportunity to meet our joyful fellow Serrans from Australia and New Zealand. We found out that the Serra Clubs there start their meeting with Holy Mass. Furthermore, the Serrans in Wagga Wagga have an admirably strong devotion to Eucharistic Adoration. They started the Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations 25 years ago and are offering more than 80 hours of Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations each week with the help of some 200 collaborators. We were very inspired when we learnt that David and his wife Pat did not miss their 2 am slot for Eucharistic Adoration in the wee hours of Saturday morning, in spite of the fact they were so busy getting ready for the Convention.

In this issue, the Editorial Team has selected the painting of Blessed Junipero Serra for the cover. We have also done a bit of research into his early life in Mallorca, Spain and put together an article for your reading pleasure. We hope that the early life of Blessed Junipero Serra will inspire all of us to have greater zeal in witnessing to our faith courageously in this "Year of Faith".

We also hope that many Serrans will be encouraged to make plans to attend Serra's 71st International Convention in Mallorca from 20-23 June 2013. The organizing committee of the Convention led by Tim O'Neill has put in many hours planning this Convention which will coincide with the 300th Anniversary of the birth of Blessed Junipero Serra.

The year 2013 is an important year as we will be celebrating the 300th Anniversary of the birth of Blessed Junipero Serra which also coincides with the closure of the Year of Faith (24 November 2013).

May the life of our beloved Patron inspire us to persevere in faith to work and pray for vocations in Serra's global lay apostolate for vocations.

"Stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." 1Cor16:13-14

God Bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean Yeo".

Sean Yeo

Editor, Serra Connects



The FAITH That Moves Mountains

By Jon C. Haines

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



As the Church goes, so goes Serra. In the West, Serra's population is aging and fewer young are interested in our work, though there are still many. We can find all kinds of places to put the blame, but in the end I think we need to look on a more fundamental level rather than simply "Our communities aren't promoting themselves well with such and such a program." The problem is a problem of faith, the purpose of any Catholic group's existence in the first place. In the United States for example, since the end of the Second Vatican Council (1965) the number of ordinations has gone from 1,575 to 450, seminarians from 49,000 to 4,700, regular Mass attendance 65% to 25%.¹ It's fair to stand back and ask, what happened to the much spoken of renewal?

On the day of the 50th anniversary of Vatican II's opening, Pope Benedict XVI opened the Year of Faith lasting from 11 October 2012 until 24 November 2013 which was precluded by a document called *Porta Fidei* (Door of Faith). This is also the year of the 300th

anniversary of the birth of Fr. Serra. I do not wish to force any connection between the two, but there actually is quite a significant similarity present in the direction and drive of both men's missions and context of faith. I hope that, by the analogy of what we know about Fr. Serra's mission, we can learn about three main purposes of this Year of Faith. First, we will look at the similarities between Pope Benedict and Fr. Serra to gain context and see the overall purpose as a response to a "profound crisis of faith."² The second major purpose is to encourage the faithful and people in general to reflect on what they believe and understand that a worldview that takes modern science as its only reference point will strangle knowledge of God. The third major purpose of the year is recognizing the need for a correct interpretation, or hermeneutic as our Holy Father calls it, of the Church's perennial doctrine which is more needed than ever. Lastly, we will consider given the cause of this crisis, the solution that he recommends.

¹ Jones, Kenneth C. *Index of Leading Catholic Indicators: The Church since Vatican II*. Fort Collins, CO: Roman Catholic, 2003. Print.

² Benedict XVI, His Holiness. "APOSTOLIC LETTER PORTA FIDEI." Letter. 11 Oct. 2012. Apostolic Letter "Porta Fidei" N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Oct. 2012. <<http://www.annusfidei.va/content/novaevangelizatio/en/annus-fidei/lettera-apostolica--porta-fidei-.html>>.

Need for Renewal

It is no accident that Pope Benedict would write his papal encyclicals on each of the theological virtues of faith, hope and love, but then save faith, which is traditionally mentioned first, as his last encyclical for the date of this anniversary. Cardinal Ratzinger's choice of the name "Benedict" is also not without significance, as it is a sign of renewal, just as St. Benedict fled the debauchery of urban life to create a band of brothers who would reconquer an already supposedly Christian land for Christ all over again. Pope Benedict has called together a Synod of Bishops who are meeting in Rome as I write this sentence. The opening speech, which was given by Cardinal Wuerl of Washington DC, stated the following:

"The current cultural landscape calls the Church to re-propose the Catholic faith, to re-propose the Gospel message, to re-propose the teaching of Christ...A Tsunami of secular influence has swept across the cultural landscape."³

In the time of Fr. Serra, many Christians felt they were equally under assault and battling for the soul of the world. The protestant reformation and counter-reformation seemed to be tearing Christendom apart. Wonder and awe seeming to rival God was now found in the technological accomplishments of man through the application of the modern scientific method, which for many acted as a retroactive justification for the metaphysical reduction of all things to mere physical parts. It no longer seemed necessary to see things from 'spiritual perspective' but only a mechanical one. The earth and humanity no longer seemed to be the center of the solar system when it was found that the sun actually is, making humanity less important--particularly when man seemed to pop into existence because of the successful 'coincidences' of genetic evolution. The 'new world' had just been discovered which seemed to contain other human beings with no geographical connection to Adam's bloodline. These issues were presented as an attack on faith and continue to advance secularism in the hearts and minds of many today and were surely not at all unfamiliar to Blessed Junipero Serra.

From the year 1744 Blessed Serra was a philosophy professor in Mallorca where he held the chair, or professorship of Blessed Duns Scotus. Though we have very few of his philosophical writings, it would be very odd if he did not address the philosophical issues of his day. He left the position to go to the new world in 1749 to teach the newly discovered natives who had no faith in Christ because they did not know of

Him. They knew of God, but not God Himself and after working with the natives it became clear that every day events, such as the rising of the sun, were seen with a unique hermeneutic--a spiritual one. In 1966, Father Ratzinger was appointed to a chair in dogmatic theology at the University of Tübingen and later moved to be a professor at the University of Regensburg, often focusing in hermeneutics, or the "method of interpretation," which will become important in the third point. The similarities extend beyond professors seeking to renew a culture.

Rational Foundations of Faith

A primary purpose of the Year of Faith is to cause people to reflect on what they believe, particularly if they claim to be Catholic. Are they Catholic, or even religious, only because their parents were? Are they being honest with themselves about their belief or not? Early in his pontificate, Pope Benedict tried to call attention to the issue in his lecture at Regensburg--which became famous for criticizing Islam rather than the subject of the paper: faith and reason. Now in the initiating document, *Porta Fidei*, Pope Benedict has stated:

"To a greater extent than in the past, faith is now being subjected to a series of questions arising from a changed mentality which, especially today, limits the field of rational certainties to that of scientific and technological discoveries. Nevertheless, the Church has never been afraid of demonstrating that there cannot be any conflict between faith and genuine science, because both, albeit via different routes, tend towards the truth."⁴

Many, if not all of the issues mentioned in Fr. Serra's time in the previous paragraph continue to cause "a profound crisis of faith that has affected many people,"⁵ because it is accepted that knowledge beyond modern science is not possible, though St. Thomas would be very disappointed in their understanding of Aristotle. There is so much that I want to say on this topic, but I would be overlapping with content that I regularly write on my blog at battleforthechapel.com. Instead, let's ask, how did Fr. Serra deal with this? His faith carried him on. He did not choose to ignore the scientific issues of the day that were 'pressing in' upon Christianity. He did not choose to remain a pure academic dealing with concepts like univocity of being, for his whole life where he never brought what was in his head down to his heart. He did neither. Rather, he learned what he needed to learn, reached the conclusions he needed to reach, went on to teach what he needed to teach in the new world and set the example he needed to set to be a follower of Christ--because it was reasonable, and reasonable to have faith. Dare I say it--Pope Benedict

3 Arocho, Junno. "Cardinal Wuerl: 'Tsunami of Secularism' Has Swept the Cultural Landscape." EWTN News. EWTN, 8 Oct. 2012. Web. 17 Oct. 2012. <<http://www.ewtn.com/vnews/getstory.asp?number=121728>>.

4 *Porta Fidei*, Point 12.

5 *Porta Fidei*, 2.

thinks each of us needs to take a similar journey. He recommends, and even grants an indulgence to those who, during this year read the Catechism of the Catholic Church. How much do you know of what it means to be a Catholic Christian? Do you have an answer for those who claim modern science is reasonability itself? In the West, we are no longer dealing with natives who are religious but not Christians, we are dealing with a post-Christian secularism. As St. Paul states, are you ready to give an account of your faith, particularly insofar as it is accessible to human reason for the sake of other souls? Hint: take a look at Aquinas' Summa Theologica. In the next section, Pope Benedict goes beyond human reason and asks us, what does the Catholic faith as a whole look like, and do we believe it?

Pope Benedict recommends and even grants an indulgence to those who, during this Year of Faith, read the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Doctrinal Interpretation

Another purpose for the Year of Faith is to reduce recent misunderstandings of what the Church teaches and promote authentic doctrine in what has been called "the New Evangelization". Since the time of Vatican II, number of participants in the Church weren't the only thing that plummeted. Suddenly 77% of Catholics believe they don't have to attend Mass on Sunday, 65% believe Catholics can divorce and remarry, 53% say that Catholics can have an abortion, 10% accept the Church's teaching on birth control and 70% believe the Eucharist is a mere "symbolic reminder" of Our Lord.⁶ Cardinal Wuerl in the same opening speech in Latin to the opening of the synod stated the following:

"This current situation is rooted in the upheavals of the 1970s and 80s, decades in which there was manifest poor catechesis or miscatechesis at so many levels of education. We faced the hermeneutic of discontinuity that permeated so much of the milieu of centers of higher education and was also reflected in aberrational liturgical practice," he said. "Entire generations have become disassociated from the support systems that facilitated the transmission of faith..."⁷

6 1958 Gallup poll vs. 2003 Fordham University Study

7 "EWTN.com - Cardinal Wuerl: 'Tsunami of Secularism' Has Swept the Cultural Landscape." News. Eternal Word Television Network, n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2012. <<http://www.ewtn.com/vnews/getstory.asp?number=121728>>.

The hermeneutic of discontinuity, a phrase originally coined by Pope Benedict refers to the view that the Second Vatican Council supports new or different theology than, and replaced the understanding of, the Catholic faith which came before it. The hermeneutic of continuity which Pope Benedict is asking us to take on is one which views the Councils of Nicea, Trent, Vatican I as the already solid foundation of interpretation (hermeneutic) through which we should understand Vatican II, which in no way negates the statements of these prior Councils. The Second Vatican Council should only be an attempt to present the same content in a different way relevant to contemporary man.

The Holy Father pointed out an example of this in the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate* about which he commented on 12 October 2012:

"In the process of active reception, a weakness of this otherwise extraordinary text has gradually emerged: it speaks of religion solely in a positive way and it disregards the sick and distorted forms of religion which, from the historical and theological viewpoints, are of far-reaching importance; [because] for this reason the Christian faith, from the outset, adopted a critical stance towards religion, both internally and externally."⁸

Now what is the significance of this seemingly negative statement? The significance is the same significance that Fr. Serra understood. The truth can be presented to convey a totally different message if it is given out of context, or in the Holy Father's case, out of a hermeneutic of continuity with the past. He is saying that this document, though giving all valid statements, is weak in reiterating previous conciliar teachings and might give the impression that the *Nostra Aetate*'s recognition of what we have in common with other religions neutralizes their critical errors.

In the new world at the time of Fr. Serra, the culture of the continent was dominated by pagan religion--whose beliefs ranged from belief in the earth as our eternal mother to placating the sun with thousands of bloody human infants. These religions, despite the modern day criticism he receives for it, is what Fr. Serra sought to renew for the natives. He sought to show them that the God after whom they were seeking and seeing in the hermeneutic of their daily lives is called Jesus Christ, though they didn't know it yet. He taught them Latin. He taught them Catechism. By teaching them many European practices he brought many good things alongside some bad, such as disease. Even after teaching them Catechism, some still tried to

8 "Pope Pens Rare Article on His inside View of Vatican II." Vatican Radio. Radio Vaticana, 10 Oct. 2012. Web. 16 Oct. 2012. <<http://en.radiovaticana.va/articolo.asp?c=628717>>.

interpret Christianity in the hermeneutic of their prior religion which created various non-Christian practices within the Christian people. However, in the end, the effort of Fr. Serra paid off--California for one, owes to him much of its foundational documents and cities. He renewed the religion of the people there by carrying out the Great Commission⁹: not by only telling them that they were on the right track by looking for God in the first place, but by also telling them about where they "had things wrong," summarily speaking. The sun for example is a reflection of God, but is not God Himself. He was an example of faith.

This is not unlike what St. Benedict did in the 4th century nor unlike what the Holy Father is trying to do today. Europe has become a foreign land to Christianity in many ways, even within the Church. Fifty years after the Second Vatican Council a very large number of places in the Church had adopted an interpretation or hermeneutic which Popes prior to the council would never have dreamed of, which holds that our doctrine given throughout the ages must be adapted in every age to that age. Abortion may be wrong in one century, but given enough time, that may change and the same is true with the Assumption of Mary (1954), real presence of Christ in the Eucharist (John 6:53-56), Papal Infallibility (Vatican I), etc.

In the opening week of the Year of Faith, Pope Benedict also made statements which were quite sobering and helpful for our understanding of doctrine in a hermeneutic (or lens of interpretation) of continuity.

"The Council Fathers wished to present the faith in a meaningful way; and if they opened themselves trustingly to dialogue with the modern world it is because they were certain of their faith, of the solid rock on which they stood. In the years following, however, many embraced uncritically the dominant mentality [a hermeneutic of discontinuity], placing in doubt the very foundations of the deposit of faith, which they sadly no longer felt able to accept as truths."¹⁰

Lastly and in summary, the Holy Father requests that we learn the authentic interpretation of the Second Vatican Council, something which is nearly impossible without learning the doctrines of prior councils and events (including the life of Christ). In order to affirm



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and to have true faith in these things (assent to them) we must first know them--this even goes for our belief in God in the first place. This is why in *Porta Fidei* he states:

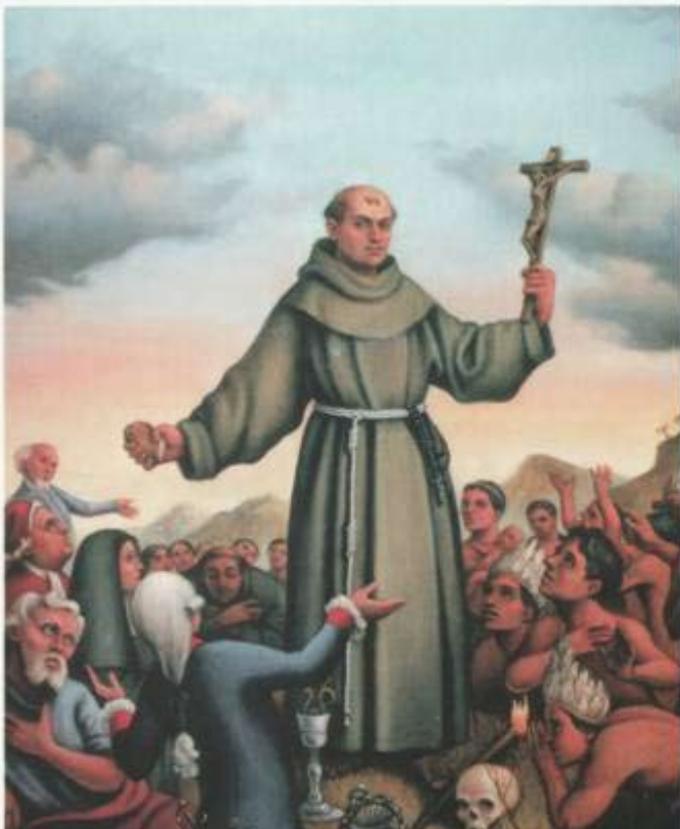
"Evidently, knowledge of the content of faith is essential for giving one's own assent, that is to say for adhering fully with the intellect and will to what the church proposes...In order to arrive at a systematic knowledge of the content of the faith, all can find in the Catechism of the Catholic Church a precious and indispensable tool. It is one of the most important fruits of the Second Vatican Council...It is in this sense that the Year of Faith will have to see a concerted effort to rediscover and study the fundamental content of the faith that receives its systematic and organic synthesis in the Catechism of the Catholic Church."¹¹

Now that you are all experts on hermeneutics, ask yourself, how much has my perspective been skewed by the secular or dissenting dominant mentality? Do I know the faith Christ's Church proposes to me and believe for no other reason than I really do believe? It is important to read books not just created in the last 50 years but also to tap into the treasury knowledge and reflection of the saints and those who have gone before us. Only by knowing what we are getting ourselves into can we really stay and say that we are fully onboard.

⁹ Matthew 28:16-20. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (20) Teaching them to observe all things [whatsoever I have commanded](#) you."

¹⁰ Benedict XVI, His Holiness. "HOLY MASS FOR THE OPENING OF THE YEAR OF FAITH." *The Year of Faith: Homilies*. Vatican, 11 Oct. 2012. Web. 16 Oct. 2012. <<http://www.annusfidei.va/content/novaevangelizatio/en/benedetto-xvi/omelie.html>>.

¹¹ *Porta Fidei*. 10, 11.



BLESSED JUNIPERO SERRA **His Early Life in Mallorca**

By Caroline Grace Wong

“Very often, at crucial moments in human affairs, God raises up men and women whom He thrusts into roles of decisive importance for the future development of both society and the Church. Although their story unfolds within the ordinary circumstances of daily life, they become larger than life within the perspective of history. We rejoice all the more when their achievement is coupled with a holiness of life that can truly be called heroic. So it is with Junipero Serra, who in the providence of God was destined to be the Apostle of California, and to have a permanent influence over the spiritual patrimony of this land (USA) and its people... Father Serra was a man convinced of the Church’s mission, conferred upon her by Christ himself, to evangelize the world, to “make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). He not only brought the Gospel to the Native Americans, but as one who lived the Gospel he also became their defender and champion.”¹

2013 marks the 300th anniversary of the birth of Blessed Junipero Serra, Patron of all Serra Clubs around the world, and the 25th anniversary of his Beatification by Blessed Pope John Paul II. It is only appropriate therefore that Serra’s 71st International Convention be hosted next year in Mallorca, Spain, the birthplace of our beloved Patron. In anticipation of this significant

event for Serrans, the editorial team felt it was an opportune time to go back 300 years and take a peek at the early life of Blessed Junipero Serra in Spain, where he spent the first 35 years of his life.

Much is known and written about his wonderful works in mission territory, especially in California, USA where he founded nine missions, such that he is widely known as the “Apostle of California”. However, it was in Spain where his character was first formed and where he spent his formative years, that molded him into the zealous, undaunted missionary who would “always go forward, never turn back!”.

Join us as we go back in time to where the young Miguel Serra once lived, before he became Blessed Junipero Serra to the world.

His early years in Petra and the pious nurturing of his parents

Miguel Jose Serra was born in the Spanish village of Petra, on the little farming and fishing island of Mallorca, at one o’clock on the autumn morning of 24 November 1713. Mallorca is one of the largest of the Balearic Islands located off the eastern coast of Spain in the Western Mediterranean Sea, the other islands being Ibiza, Formentera and Minorca. The name derives from Latin “insula maior” meaning “larger island”, later Malorica, “the larger one” in comparison to Minorca, “the smaller one”. The climate of Mallorca is a Mediterranean climate with mild winters and bright summers. The island is blessed with enormous quantities of olive, orange and almond trees as well

¹ Address of Pope John Paul II at the Basilica of the Mission of San Carlos in Carmel, 17 September 1987



Bl. Junipero Serra's childhood home

as grape vines. Colonised by the Moors, they were liberated by James 1 of Aragon and has since had a long tradition of Catholicity.

Miguel was the third child of Antonio and Margarita Serra, the first to live past infancy. A daughter, Juana Maria, would also survive. Both industrious farmers, his parents were devout, Third Order Franciscans, who lived in a small stone home at No.5 Calle Barracar, in the south eastern and oldest section of Petra. Being sickly and a weak little baby, Miguel was baptized within a few hours of his birth in the parish Church of San Pedro. Later, his parents would make the short pilgrimage to the mountain-top Shrine of Nuestra Senora de Bon Any (Our Lady of the Good Year) and consecrate Miguel to her. Neither of Miguel's parents had any formal schooling. They taught him the rudiments of the faith, the secrets of nature and the dignity of labor at home and in the fields. When Miguel was seven, his parents enrolled him in a nearby Franciscan primary school, Friary of San Bernardino. There, he would learn religion, Latin, mathematics, reading, writing and vocal music. Because of his gifted voice, Miguel was permitted to join in chanting the Divine Office on occasion.² He would share in the family chores, participated in the Church year (Holy Mass, feast days, processions etc.), and though sickly he was not pampered or lazy but self-sacrificing, used to hard work, and determined to do God's Will. All these factors combined to make the frail child, still of diminutive height, good material to be an *alter Christus* ("another Christ").³ Indeed as shared by Fr. Joe Scerbo: "The hard work of his holy parents laid the foundations of the missions we know today!"⁴

His Novitiate in Palma and his deep experience of God's Love

At the age of fifteen, Miguel went to the Mallorcan capital, Palma, to be tutored for three months by the

canon of the cathedral in studies supplementary to those supplied by the friars' school in Petra, where he had learned Latin and acquired skill at Gregorian Chant. His schooling and the pious nurturing of his parents led the boy to conceive a strong desire to enter into the Franciscan Order, but, at fifteen, he was still too young. The tutoring was to pass time, test his vocation, and prepare Miguel to enroll as a student of philosophy at the Convento de San Francisco, where there was a school to prepare students for the priesthood, as well as for secular professions.⁵

At the age of sixteen, after a year of study, he formally requested admission to the Order. Less than five feet tall and having a delicate frame, the boy was taken by the provincial for a twelve- or thirteen-year-old, and told to wait. When both the canon who had been Miguel's tutor and some Franciscans pleaded his cause, the provincial reconsidered and permitted the young man to enter the Convento de Santa Maria de los



Bl. Junipero Serra was baptized here

Angeles de Jesus, just outside the walls of Palma. On 14 September 1730, he received the pale blue (almost gray) Alcantarian habit of the Observant branch of the Friars Minor. This habit was a woollen, ankle-length habit with a cowl, a cord with three knots (for the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience), a woollen cape for cold weather, and simple leather or hempen sandals. Fray Junipero Serra himself writes about his novitiate: "In the novitiate, I was almost always ill and so small of stature that I was unable to reach the lectern, nor could I help my fellow novices in the necessary chores of the novitiate. Therefore, the Father Master of Novices employed me solely in serving Mass daily. However, with my profession, I gained health and strength and grew to medium size [about 5'2"]. I attribute all this to my profession, for which I gave infinite thanks to God."⁶

During the ensuing months, Miguel underwent his basic training as a Franciscan aspirant. Prayer, meditation, choral attendance, spiritual reading, silence, promptness and physical chores were punctuated only by the festivities of an occasional feast day. He spent what little spare time he had delving into books of asceticism and mysticism. And he took great delight reading the chronicles of the Order which portrayed histories of the Franciscan apostolate in Spanish provinces and homeland. It was this reading that stirred

2 Blessed Fray Junipero Serra – An outstanding California Hero by Msgr. Francis J. Weber, page 9-10

3 The Father of California: Blessed Junipero Serra by Sister Maria Philomena, M.I.C.M, 6 December 2008

4 Telling the Story of Padre Serra" DVD by Rev. Fr. Joe Scerbo, S.A., Ph.D

5 The Father of California: Blessed Junipero Serra by Sister Maria Philomena, M.I.C.M, 6 December 2008

6 The Father of California: Blessed Junipero Serra by Sister Maria Philomena, M.I.C.M, 6 December 2008



Convento de San Francisco, Palma

in him the desire of one day being a missionary. The Spanish age of conquest in the New World was indeed a challenge to the spiritually venturesome. And while his initial burst of enthusiasm for an active missionary life was submerged by obedience, it never died.⁷ At his profession, he took the name of St. Francis' childlike companion, Brother Juniper. On 15 September 1731, at the age of eighteen, Miguel made his profession and took his new name: *"I, Fray Junipero Serra, vow and promise to Almighty God, to the ever blessed Virgin Mary, to Blessed Father Francis, to all the saints, and to you, Father, to observe for the whole span of my life the rule of the Friars Minor confirmed by His Holiness, Pope Honorius III, by living in obedience, without property, and in chastity."* *"With the pronouncement of these words, Serra was a Franciscan for life. He vowed himself to be one of the trees in the forest of Saint Francis, striving for the hardiness and resilience of the juniper tree, undaunted by the worldly winds of adversity."*⁸

*"His experience in the novitiate left a deep impression on him. He wanted to repeat his wonderful experience of God's love as a novice, in the New World."*⁹

Priesthood and the Great Professorial Years

Leaving the novitiate house, Fray Junipero moved to the Convento de San Francisco within the city walls. Here, in the center of medieval Palma close to Cathedral and sea, he would spend the next six years as a student before he could become a priest. An excellent student, Fray Junipero had no trouble with his studies. He was ordained a priest at age 24, and earned a doctorate in Sacred Theology at 29. At the age of 30, not only was he invited to preach the Corpus Christi sermon (an honor not accorded to everyone but only to the most outstanding speakers), but he was also unanimously chosen to fill one of the two Duns Scotus Chairs of Sacred Theology within the Lullian University. He was as accomplished at preaching as he was at teaching.

7 Blessed Fray Junipero Serra – An outstanding California Hero by Msgr. Francis J. Weber, page 11

8 The Father of California: Blessed Junipero Serra by Sister Maria Philomena, M.I.C.M, 6 December 2008

9 Telling the Story of Padre Serra" DVD by Rev. Fr. Joe Scerbo, S.A., Ph.D

His easy eloquence, ability to simplify difficult theological concepts to make them understandable to all, resonant voice and fiery earnestness won him many listeners in academic circles. The sermons that he preached all over the island of Mallorca were his first active missionary efforts. After one particularly inspiring sermon, it was recorded in one panegyric delivered on 25 January 1749: *"There is a sermon that deserves to be printed in letters of gold."*¹⁰

Zeal for the Salvation of Souls and Departure to the New World

By all the reasonable standards, Fray Junipero Serra, now in his early thirties, had achieved all any friar could ever have anticipated. And there was promise of future advancement in the ranks of his own Order. Seemingly none of that interested him. At the height of earthly honors, at the age of 35 after much prayer and deliberation, Fray Junipero Serra decided to renounce everything and follow his deep desire to be a missionary to convert native peoples in the New World.

After Fray Junipero left Mallorca for Mexico in 1749, he wrote a letter to the parish priest at Petra, asking that he inform his parents about his becoming a missionary. That letter, referred to by one writer as the "magna carta of Serra's apostolate," reveals the friar at life's crossroads, a man who in strength of character, assisted by grace, made the irrevocable decision to leave aging parents, beloved homeland, associations of youth, cloister and community, books and university, honor and future renown for a spiritual motive based on the Gospel. By absorbing the message of that letter, one can understand the Junipero of the future. Fray Junipero Serra asked the priest to tell his parents about the "great joy" that filled his heart at becoming a missionary. Knowing that, *"surely they would always*

In the novitiate, I was almost always ill and so small of stature that I was unable to reach the lectern, nor could I help my fellow novices in the necessary chores of the novitiate. Therefore, the Father Master of Novices employed me solely in serving Mass daily. However, with my profession, I gained health and strength and grew to medium size. I attribute all this to my profession, for which I gave infinite thanks to God.

10 Blessed Fray Junipero Serra – An outstanding California Hero by Msgr. Francis J. Weber, page 14

encourage me to go forward and never to turn back. Let them remember that the office of an apostolic preacher, especially in its actual exercise, is the greatest calling to which they could wish to be chosen. Since they are advanced in years, let them recall that life is uncertain and, in fact, may be very brief... Since this is true, it will be very much to the point and most conformable to the holy will of God if they will not emphasize the very little help that I could give them with regard to the needs of this life. Rather they should strive to merit from God, our Lord, that if we see each other no more in this life, we may be joined forever in future glory. Let them rejoice that they have a son who is a priest, though an unworthy one and a sinner, who daily in the holy sacrifice of the Mass prays for them with all the fervor of his soul and on many days applies the Mass for them alone, so that the Lord may aid them... The same I say to my beloved sister in Christ, Juana, and to my brother-in-law, Miguel. Let them not be concerned about me now, but rather let them commend me to God that I may be a good priest and a holy minister of God."¹¹



Convento de San Francisco, Palma

Fray Junipero Serra never came back to his hometown. But deeply convinced of his call to evangelize the New World, he like St. Paul and all the other great missionaries before him, "endured difficult and dangerous travel, illness and isolation, an ascetical life-style, arduous labor ... disappointment and opposition."¹²

The journey to Beatification

On 9 May 1985, about two hundred and one years after his death on 28 August 1784, Fray Junipero Serra was declared Venerable for sainthood by the Holy Father Pope John Paul II, in the light of his apostolic zeal and life of heroic virtue. The latter visited his grave at his Mission Carmel, California two years later. "Like Father Serra and his Franciscan brethren, we too are called to be evangelizers, to share actively in the Church's mission of making disciples of all people. The way in which we fulfill that mission will be different from theirs. But their lives speak to us still because of their sure faith that the Gospel is true, and because of their passionate belief in the value of bringing that saving truth to others at great personal cost. Much to be envied are those who can give their lives for something greater

than themselves in loving service to others. This, more than words or deeds alone, is what draws people to Christ. This single-mindedness is not reserved for great missionaries in exotic places. It must be at the heart of each priest's ministry and the evangelical witness of every religious. It is the key to their personal sense of well-being, happiness and fulfillment in what they are and what they do. This single-mindedness is also essential to the Christian witness of the Catholic laity. "In him who is the source of my strength I have strength for everything" (Phil. 4:13). These words of the great missionary, Saint Paul,



remind us that our strength is not our own. Even in the martyrs and saints, ...it is "(God's) power shining through our human weakness" (Praefatio Martyrum). It is the strength that inspired Father Serra's motto: "always forward, never back"... It is the strength that can make each one of us... missionaries of Jesus Christ, witnesses of his message, doers of his word."¹³

Beatification, the second in three steps towards sainthood, requires the performance of a miracle through his intercession. In 1960, Sr. Mary Boniface Dyrda, O.S.F, prayed a Novena to Fray Junipero Serra and attributed her miraculous healing to his divine intervention that succeeded in ridding her of lupus, the disease that nearly killed her. This cure was verified by the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and accepted by His Holiness Pope John Paul II as a miracle in 1987. On 25 September 1988, Pope John Paul II proclaimed Fray Junipero Serra Blessed at St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City, describing him as, "...a shining example of Christian virtue and the missionary spirit."

In order to be declared a saint, another miracle must be obtained through the intercession of Blessed Junipero Serra. Let us turn to our beloved Patron, and seek his intercession for more holy vocations to the priesthood and for Serrans across the world to be ever more zealous in their apostolate.

Blessed Junipero Serra, pray for us!

¹³ Address of Pope John Paul II at the Basilica of the Mission of San Carlos in Carmel, 17 September 1987

¹¹ Ibid. page 17

¹² Address of Pope John Paul II at the Basilica of the Mission of San Carlos in Carmel, 17 September 1987

Mario Biscardi **Vice President (Program)**



When and how did you start serving in Serra?

I was recruited in 1981 by John Gennaro, a Past Serra International President. As a former minor seminarian, I was immediately attracted to the notion of strong Catholic men gathering twice monthly for Mass, a meal and a Guest Speaker from within the Church to educate us in our Church and to grow in our Faith.

What are the greatest joys and challenges of serving in this apostolate?

My greatest joys have been:

1. Founding of the Toronto Central Serra Club in 1985
2. By 2012, I have been involved in the founding of 6 Serra Clubs in District 26
3. Founding of the Ordinandi Dinner in 1991 which has since grown to the largest Catholic dinner event in our Toronto Archdiocese to celebrate new priestly vocations

My greatest challenges have been introducing Serra in Dioceses where there are no Serra Clubs.

What are your plans as Serra International's Vice President for Programs?

To promote better communications and sharing of best practices amongst Serrans in all parts of the world.

Could you please share with us a bible verse that sums up your personal relationship with God?

John 6:66-69 - "After this, many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then Jesus said to the twelve: "Will you also go away?". And Simon Peter answered Him: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou has the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God".

Daniel Grady **Vice President (Membership)**



When and how did you start serving in Serra?

As a bank officer, I was expected to serve the community in some way. I had served on some charitable boards, but was looking for something that would also serve the Church. I knew a senior bank officer who was a member of Serra and I joined him for a meeting, and decided to join in 1997.

What are the greatest joys and challenges of serving in this apostolate?

First, Serra has given me the opportunity to deepen my personal relationship with priests in our area, which I have found a great blessing and source of faith. Secondly, it has strengthened my connections with Catholics (in my home town, across the US, and around the world), which has made the day-to-day living of my faith a lighter 'burden'. The challenges are

time and money, a small price to pay for what I have gained from Serra.

What are your plans as Serra International's Vice President for Membership?

I'm looking into membership growth in the US. More strategically, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles to membership, so we can address the fundamental issues that keep us from being a stronger force for the Church.

Could you please share with us a bible verse that sums up your personal relationship with God?

Wow ... that's tough, but I often try to keep in mind the last phrase of Joshua 24:15: 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'

Fernando Cavada **Vice President (Communications)**



When and how did you start serving in Serra?

It was in 1975, when Domingo Izquierdo arrived in Arica, a northern city in Chile, promoting Serra and inviting to form a club in that city. He was the governor of district 56 which included Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

What are the greatest joys and challenges of serving in this apostolate?

The greatest joys: to feel you are serving the Lord and our Catholic Church. To acknowledge the seminarians, priests and religious in our prayers, and working so that God's people take ownership of this task. To pray and work for vocations is a task for the whole Church. Having Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI recognize our work.

The greatest challenges: Devoting the best of myself to Serra in order to accomplish my work as a club

member and international board leader.

What are your plans as Serra International's Vice President for Communications?

As Vice President of Communications I did not continue publishing the bulletin ("The Serran") since "Serra Connects" replaces it at a great advantage, and for that reason I am currently trying to come up with a magazine in the four major languages in the Serra world.

Could you please share with us a bible verse that sums up your personal relationship with God?

"You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."
(John 15:16)

Robert Goldsmith **Treasurer**



When and how did you start serving in Serra?

I began my service to Serra in 1995 when our parish priest, a wonderful pastor and man of God, who had much experience in Serra encouraged Marie and I to become charter members of a new Serra Club to be formed in our area to be called the Serra Club of Southern Maryland. I became active in this new club and in the second year was selected as a trustee and then in the third year, I became the second president of the club, a position I would hold for four years.

What are the greatest joys and challenges of serving in this apostolate?

There is no doubt that the greatest joy in being a Serran is the honor of getting to know the seminarians as they discern a possible call to service and the young priests as they begin their service. Following the journey of such a young person is a thrill and gives you a perspective that is unique and gratifying. Also the opportunity to get to know many Serrans around the world committed

to service, and dedicated to their work and the Lord is both inspirational and insightful. The challenges are clear in that we must get our message out to so many of our fellow Catholics and make them realize the seriousness of the situation and challenge them to help in our efforts.

Could you please share with us a bible verse that sums up your personal relationship with God?

My favourite here is the end of John 6:66-69 "As a result of this, many of His disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied Him, Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that You are the Holy One of God."

Gregory Schwietz **Vice President (Vocations)**



When and how did you start serving in Serra?

I was first introduced to Serra around 1980. As a young married couple, my wife and I were very active in TEC retreats in Omaha, and in starting the National TEC Conference. TEC, which stands for Teens Encounter Christ, is a national retreat for young people aged 17 to college age, focusing mostly on seniors in High School. At that time, one of my co-workers on the national TEC board, a man 30 years my senior named Francis Shaefer, was also a strong Serran and an inspiration to me. He assisted in drawing up a grant request to The Serra Foundation which, when granted, helped TEC establish its first national office that year. The TEC Conference continues today, with active TEC Centers in 70 dioceses.

Later, I joined the Omaha Serra Club in 1983. It remains my home club. My interest at the time was to find an adult Catholic community. I found one. I liked three things about the club at that time - 1) strong, faithful adult men whom I could relate to 2) an additional way to be in contact with priest friends I had made in TEC and 3) the inter-generational nature of our club introduced me to many older Serrans who were strong catholic men, and served as spiritual mentors.

What are the greatest joys and challenges of serving in this apostolate?

The joys, of course, include the many rich Serran relationships that I have gained over the years. In addition, it is an honor to be involved through Serran activities with so many good men and women who have answered the Lord's call to a life as a priest or a consecrated religious. Also, I like the prayer activities that our club and others dedicate themselves to.

The challenges of this apostolate are similar to many other volunteer organizations, in that the work load can

become a little too much if members do not shoulder a shared responsibility to be active.

What are your plans as Serra International's Vice President for Vocations?

The work of Vocations can be found at two levels. First, the level of Catholic leader formation, which our programs and bi-weekly meetings support. Secondly, it is the work of Serra to help foster and support priestly vocations. As a consequence, Serra has become known over the years as THE Catholic organization which exclusively focuses on that mission. It is our world-wide mission of Vocations support that I wish to support and to continue in the good efforts initiated by my predecessors.

Could you please share with us a bible verse that sums up your personal relationship with God?

John 12:24 – "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

I think that good things come with effort. Sometimes more than you know, sometimes more than you WANT to know, but always with faith that God has His Hand on the till of the ship we are sailing. There are so many things and events in my life which I would have hesitated to make the sacrifice to become a better person, had it not been for some expression of support, some word of encouragement, some challenging voice, from my spouse, a friend, a Serran. As a consequence I do not fear change, even though I may resist it like anyone. Serra needs to prepare itself for the vocations needs of the church in the 21st century. I am committed to help it realize that need.

Janet Dell Freeman

Secretary



When and how did you start serving in Serra?

I actually started serving in Serra as a member in March 1993. However, I often say "I grew up in Serra." Tiffin Serra was chartered in 1955 and I attended the Chartering Night Banquet as a college student dating a young lawyer (whom I married in 1959). Through the years I assisted my husband with his Serra duties, prayers and attended Serra International Conventions. It was my privilege to be one of the first three women admitted to Tiffin Serra in 1993 and subsequently served as their first woman President in 1995. In 1997, I was elected first woman District Governor for District 51, then was appointed to the Serra International Foundation Board in 2003, served as President of the Foundation in 2006-2007 and became a Serra International Trustee in 2007. I am currently serving as Secretary for the SI Board of Trustees.

What are the greatest joys and challenges of serving in this apostolate?

One of the greatest joys in my life occurred in Rome in 2007 when as President of the Serra International Foundation I presented His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI a check for his personal vocation activities. To meet and greet the Vicar of Christ was a memorable event and the pictures and memories will sustain me for the rest of my life. It has been a great joy to witness the growth of the Serra apostolate throughout the world. Meeting, working beside and praying with fellow Serrans from around the globe has been a joy, as well as attending SI conventions where we are spiritually enriched at magnificent Masses and liturgies in beautiful churches and cathedrals. The speakers, homilies and sacred music are always edifying.

One of the greatest challenges of serving in this apostolate is spreading the good news of Serra to areas and countries where Serra does not exist. In America, there are many dioceses where Serra is unknown and needs to be introduced. Many priests and religious as well as countless lay people have no knowledge of Serra and the goods work performed. A challenge also exists in attracting young people to become involved in the work of praying for and promoting vocations. We need to encourage them to take an active part in Serra, leading them to a deeper spiritual union with God and enjoying fellowship where all members are united in one common purpose.

Could you please share with us a bible verse that sums up your personal relationship with God?

"Dismiss all anxiety from your minds. Present your needs to God in every form of prayer and in petitions full of gratitude. Then God's own peace, which is beyond all understanding, will stand guard over your hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus." (Phil 4:6-7)

I also frequently rely on Isaiah 41:10 "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous Right Hand."

Vianney College, Wagga Wagga New South Wales, Australia



“ The Holy Spirit is the giver of vocations and He is the chief Formator. We, in the work of vocations and priestly formation, must try to make ourselves worthy instruments of the Holy Spirit. ”

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

The most noticeable element is probably the fact that a large minority of the seminarians (8 out of 20) came to the seminary from overseas. There were none in the first intake in 1992 and the first overseas student did not arrive here until 2005. This has been a trend with all Australian seminaries over the last 20 years. There are still men coming forward from Australia but not in sufficient numbers to meet the requirements of the local dioceses and it only seems logical that we turn to the rich harvest of vocations from Asia and Africa. These overseas seminarians are mostly men who have not been able to gain access to seminaries in their own country because those seminaries are overflowing and have no vacancies.

Among the Australians, there are more coming from our own diocese. Of the 26 priests ordained for Wagga over the 20 years of our existence only three originated from the diocese. At present five of the 15 Wagga students here now came to us from parishes within the diocese. This shows, I believe, the influence of the younger, newly ordained priests in attracting vocations.

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

Initially they struggle to adapt to the discipline of seminary life. The academic requirements are heavy, even for above average students. And they are challenged by a society which largely does not understand their beliefs and commitment.

Their strongest virtues are generosity to God and to others, a love of the Church, a spirit of brotherhood among themselves, and a strong spirit of prayer.

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

Every Ordination to the Priesthood from the seminary is a proud moment. Perhaps the proudest moment was when our first ex-student was ordained bishop earlier this year.

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

The priests of the future will need to be more consciously “missionary” than in the past. The society they are sent to evangelize is becoming less Christian and the priest of the future, working in Australia will find himself not so much ministering to the “churched”, those already practicing the Faith, but rather will be called on to propose the Faith to those who have never had the Faith or who have long lost it.

However, we are not dealing here with a merely human effort. The Holy Spirit is the giver of vocations and He is the chief Formator. We, in the work of vocations and priestly formation, must try to make ourselves worthy instruments of the Holy Spirit.

Contact:

Rector: Rev. Fr. Peter Thompson

Number of Seminarians: 20

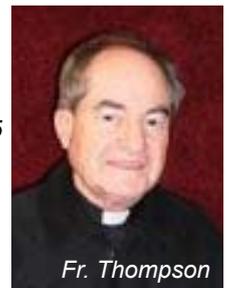
From the Diocese of Wagga Wagga: 15

From other Dioceses: 5

Average Age of Seminarians: 30

Educational Level:

This is difficult to answer. One has a PhD, about half have some kind of a university degree, others have a trade certificate, for example, we have two qualified electricians. The younger ones have gathered various degrees and diplomas while at the seminary. Almost every student leaves here with a Bachelor of Theology.



Fr. Thompson

AUSTRALIA

“I Left A Better Person For The Experience.”

Serra Club of Wagga Wagga, New South Wales

This comment made by a delegate at the recent Serra Council of Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific (SCANZSPAC) Biennial Convention echoed comments made by most of the attendees. The convention was an amazing success. This same woman also wrote, “I was so reluctant to leave, I stayed and went to Sunday 10.00am Mass at the Cathedral, a holy and special place, to pray for guidance for a way forward.” and “Personally, I gained a lot, made some friendships I hope will continue and introduced me to a city that I want to return to.”

At the time of taking on the task of organizing this event the Wagga Wagga Club was advised to expect around 60 participants. However, **99** attended the convention sessions and **118** attended the dinner ... almost double expectations! The regional international board members representing Australia, New Zealand and South Pacific were absolutely delighted.

The Serra Club of Wagga Wagga recently celebrated its 30th anniversary and has had the honor now of hosting this event twice over the years. The small band of very dedicated members worked tirelessly to ensure its success and their reward was evident on their faces with their broad smiles and the very sincere thanks from so many attendees.



The event commenced on the Friday afternoon as visitors arrived, with Mass at 6.00pm in the Cathedral followed by an informal dinner at St. Michael's Parish Centre. Local President and MC, David Connell, gave an informal welcome to all pointing out some of the tourist attractions in Wagga Wagga and region and then referred to the motto of Serra of “**Always go forward, never turn back**” explaining his interpretation of these words as being applicable to our Faith and originating from St. Paul with explanation from St. Augustine that standing still in our Faith is not an option...we must always strive to move forward and David explained that this meeting is about just that ...that the host club's objective has been to ensure that every attendee left after the event stronger in their Faith.

There were many highlights and different people referred to different highlights but all were rated very highly. Max Spencer, President of SCANZSPAC presented the formal welcome and every speaker was truly outstanding.

The high quality was mentioned frequently. The main speakers were Sister Mary Martin O.P. of the Order of Dominican Sisters based at Ganmain, Father Peter D. Thompson, C.M., Rector of Vianney College, Sean Yeo, Serra International President Elect, the Most Reverend Bishop Michael Kennedy and the Most Reverend Bishop Gerard Hanna. The Most Reverend Bishop Kennedy was also the after-dinner speaker on Saturday evening.

The members of the SCANZSPAC Board were also inducted during the Mass at the Cathedral on Saturday night.



The Most Reverend Bishop Gerard Hanna

The new Sacred Heart Primary School Hall proved to be the ideal venue on Saturday night for the dinner and the presence of the Holy Spirit was truly evident in the mood of the evening as many new friends were made and experiences shared. The Most Reverend Bishop Kennedy

gave a most inspiring after-dinner presentation on his personal vocational journey. The International President Elect, Sean Yeo, presented the International Serra Award, known as the Harry J. O'Haire Award. This award is made annually to one outstanding member internationally and this year it was presented to an Australian, Phillip Connors who has a most impressive record over many years as a former President of the Melbourne Club (three times), a District Governor (twice), President of SCANZSPAC and ongoing dedicated service as a member of the Melbourne Club and SCANZSPAC Board. Jim Parnell, local Wagga Wagga Club member, is also a previous recipient of this award and was present for the occasion.

As the evening drew to a close a big surprise was yet in store as the Most Reverend Bishop Hanna moved to take the microphone and announced that special medals had been awarded by Pope Benedict XVI to local members of Serra – Norman and Margaret Corbett. The elation and noise in the hall may have



been heard across Wagga as tears of joy flowed and Norman and Margaret moved to the podium to accept this honor. They had absolutely no idea that this was to happen, nor did most of the people present. The Benemerenti medal, presented each to Norman and Margaret, was first awarded by Pope Pius VI (1775–1799) to recognize military merit. In 1831 under Pope Gregory XVI (1831–1846) a special Benemerenti medal was struck to reward those who fought courageously in the papal army at Ferrara, Bologna, and Vienna. In 1925, the concept of awarding this medal as a mark of recognition to persons in service of the Church, both civil and military, lay and clergy alike, has become acceptable. These medals are very rare indeed and a truly great honor for the outstanding service of these two amazing people in recognition of their outstanding service to the Catholic Church over a great many years.



Norman and Barbara Corbett during the announcement of the Medal Recipients

Throughout the course of this convention many spoke of the need for personal spiritual growth and there is now a renewed emphasis on this within Serra. This is in fact one of the three main purposes of Serra as follows:

To assist its members to recognize and respond in their own lives to God's call to holiness in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit.

Serra is Faith in action and for the 118 persons who attended this event over the weekend of 5-6 October the motto of **"Always go forward, never turn back"** has been lived out in the lives of so many of the attendees. Just the sharing of life experiences, the courage and faith of so many, not just the speakers, gave so much witness and encouragement to everyone.



Phillip Connors and Sean Yeo

CANADA

Welcome to the Serra Family

Serra Club of Halton Region, Ontario

Serra Club of Halton Region was chartered on 13 September, 2012 (a "Fatima" day). This is the 3rd and newest Serra Club in the Diocese of Hamilton, and is blessed by not only a strong membership but also the full confidence and support from the Vocation Director, Reverend Father Wojciech Kuzma, and the Most Reverend Bishop Douglas Crosby, O.M.I., Bishop of Hamilton Diocese who is also a strong supporter of Serra.



Mary Our Mother in the Order of Grace

Address by the Most Reverend Bishop Michael Kennedy at
the SCANZSPAC Biennial Convention, 5-6 October 2012



1. Pentecost: A Fresh Start

“We call the Catholic people in Australia to a Year of Grace ... Like the disciples at the first Pentecost, we commit ourselves to start afresh from Christ”. With these words the then President of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, the Most Reverend Archbishop Philip Wilson, traced the itinerary for us all to walk in this Year of Grace, and it is the same itinerary walked by the original disciples at the first Pentecost.

In the days following Our Lord’s death, resurrection, and ascension, Christ had seemingly been taken away from his disciples. They had been through a lot: they had abandoned their master; they had fled the cross; they had lived in fear of being recognized as Christ’s disciples; reports of the resurrection had surely tested their faith; even after the resurrection appearances some ‘hesitated’ and ‘doubted’ to believe. (cf Matt 28:17)

They were indeed dark days for the disciples – they did indeed need to start afresh from Christ. This ‘fresh start’ was given them by God himself with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The disciples were filled with the gifts of the Spirit: wisdom and understanding, knowledge and reverence, right judgement and courage, and wonder and awe. The Holy Spirit had an immediate impact in their lives: they threw open the doors to live and proclaim their faith in Christ openly and boldly. And the rest, as they say, is history.

This new beginning was not their doing. It was rather, a work of God’s grace. However, the disciples did have to prepare for this fresh start, and they prepared in the way that Christ told them to – by undertaking a period of common prayer, in longing and anticipation for the gift of the Spirit. Quoting the Acts of the Apostles (1:14) Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, puts it like this:

“Before he (God) would pour forth the Spirit promised by Christ, we see the Apostles before the day of Pentecost “persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and with Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with his brethren”, and we also see Mary by her prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation.”(LG 59)

In other words, Pentecost didn’t just happen to happen; it happened because the fledgling Church, in obedience to Christ, gathered around Mary and together with her was united in prayer. Only then did God the Father send forth God the Holy Spirit, enabling and empowering, or *gracing* the Church to start afresh from Christ, God the Son incarnate.

2. A New Pentecost: The Year of Grace

Why is the Church now having a ‘Year of Grace’ in Australia? Because like the first disciples we are, and have been for some time, living through some dark days. Certainly all has not been gloom, but few would deny that we have been living through a time of crisis in the Church. There is a moral crisis, all too evident in a number of our priests, but this moral crisis goes well beyond the clerical abuse crisis. Too many of us have made room for sin in our lives, our homes, our marriages and our families; we have learnt to live with sin rather than seeking to be free of it. There is also a catechetical crisis: the fact that many adult Catholics do not know or understand the fundamental truths of the faith. We have lived through a liturgical crisis causing many to wonder whether the Mass is something of our own making rather than a precious gift received from God and passed on by successive generations. There is a crisis of faith: the friends who were once moved by faith to kneel beside us at Mass are no longer there. We might compare our current state as a Church to that of the pre-Pentecost Church: they had abandoned their

master; fled the cross; lived in fear of being recognized as Christ's disciples; and hesitant in faith. Sadly, so have we.

Returning for a moment to the Most Reverend Archbishop Wilson's letter announcing the *Year of Grace*, he said: "As bishops, we asked ourselves where we can turn with so many issues confronting us. Our response in faith is to start afresh from Christ." Listening to the Scriptures and to the Second Vatican Council, the way to start afresh from Christ is by "persevering with one mind in prayer ... with Mary the Mother of Jesus." I am suggesting then, that for this Year of Grace to bear fruit, for it to 'grace' us both as individuals and as a Church to start afresh from Christ, we must live it as both a prayerful time and a Marian time.

3. The Year of Faith

In just a few days on Thursday 11th October we will celebrate the beginning of another important year in the life of the Church: the *Year of Faith*, a year that will overlap with and complement our *Year of Grace*. Pope Benedict XVI specifically timed the Year of faith to begin on the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Pope Benedict recently recalled (in a talk to the International Congress on Mariology 8 Sep 2012) that Blessed Pope John XXIII wanted the Second Vatican Council to open precisely on 11 October, because it was the same day on which in the year 431 the Council of Ephesus had solemnly proclaimed Mary to be "*Theotokos*", the Mother of God. (NB: *The Church already knew and believed this*) On the day he opened the Council Blessed John XXIII said:

"Mother Church rejoices that, by the singular gift of Divine Providence, the longed-for day has finally dawned when – under the auspices of the virgin Mother of God, whose maternal dignity is commemorated on this day – the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council is being solemnly opened here near St. Peter's tomb."

Returning to the forthcoming Year of Faith, Pope Benedict went on to say: "presenting Mary as an exemplary model of faith, I invoke her special protection and intercession on the Church's journey, entrusting this season of grace to her, blessed because she believed."

4. The Virgin Mary is Not an Optional Extra

The Year of Grace and the Year of Faith come at a moment in the life of the Church when many, following

the lead of Blessed Pope John Paul II, are speaking of a springtime and a new Pentecost. As we recognize and acknowledge the darkness and great evil around us and within us, it is simultaneously a time of great hope in the Church. I too share this enthusiasm. Pope Paul VI famously commented that it seemed the smoke of Satan had entered into the very temple of God (the Church) as if through some crack. But along with this stench there is also a whiff of something sweet and refreshing running through the Church, like purifying incense.

We seem to be at a turning point. In his address at Australia's first National Conference on the New Evangelization in Sydney this August, the Most Reverend Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization, commented that we are at the end of an era that has marked our history for almost six centuries and that we now find ourselves on the horizon of a new epoch that the Church must help to mould. This would not be the first time that the Church has undertaken this task, he said.

This double year of Grace and Faith would seem to be the time for us to prepare for what the Holy Spirit may ask of us in the New Evangelization. It is, above all, in times like our own that it behoves us to recall the following fact about the Virgin Mary as stated in *Lumen Gentium* 62:

"(The) motherhood of Mary in the order of Grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son (that's us) who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties.... Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix."

It is indeed the time to start afresh from Christ and to get back to basics. In the Year of Grace these basics include the Blessed Virgin Mary whom the Archangel Gabriel saluted as the one "full or filled with grace", and in the Year of Faith these basics include Mary whom Saint Elizabeth declared blessed because she believed or had faith. The Blessed Virgin Mary is not an 'optional extra' to our life of faith. *Lumen Gentium* 65 said: "Mary,

in a way, unites in her person and re-echoes the most important doctrines of the faith: and when she is the subject of preaching (and worship) she prompts the faithful to come to her Son, to his sacrifice and to the love of the Father.”

Before you all start checking your watches, I assure you I have no intention of explaining today just how Mary unites and re-echoes in her person each of the important doctrines of the faith. Time just doesn't allow it. But I would like us to look at just one thing Vatican II said of Mary that is particularly relevant to us in this Year of Grace, and it is the title of my talk today: The Church, in *Lumen Gentium* 61 says Mary “is a mother to us in the order of grace.” This raises two questions for us: What is grace? And how is Mary our Mother in this regard?

5. What is This Life of Grace?

Grace is the free and undeserved gift that God gives us to respond to his call to become his children. God's gifts are so many, that we speak of many different types of grace: Sacramental graces (the particular gift proper to each sacrament); Special graces (also called charisms); Graces of state (corresponding to our state in life); Actual Graces - the divine assistance and interventions along the path of our life.

God's greatest gift to us, however, his greatest Grace is Himself! We call it sanctifying grace because it makes us holy or saintly. (Sometimes it's also called habitual grace because it is not passing and momentary, but stable and constant.) The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that this grace is nothing less than “a participation (or sharing) in the life of God. It introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinity. It makes us partakers of the divine nature. It is supernatural, sanctifying and deifying.” (1996-1999) Just as God the Son shared our human life in Jesus Christ, so through sanctifying grace we human men and women share in God's life – not by nature, but by grace, by gift!

I am sure you are familiar with these words of Jesus: “I have come that you may have life and have it to the full”. Have you ever wondered what he meant by this? Not a full physical life encompassing good health and plenty of thrills (hang gliding and bungy jumping), but the divine life, the life of grace.

Sharing in Divine Life, we do not cease being human and simply become God. Only God is God, but he shares his life with us. When you place metal into a fire, the metal changes but it does not stop being metal. Whilst remaining metal it takes on the properties of fire – it gives off light and heat. So too the human soul that

is inserted into the Divine Fire; that participates in the life of God. It remains human but receives or takes on the properties of God.

This grace, this Divine Life, was obtained for us by Jesus Christ: by his life, death, and resurrection. As St. Irenaeus so succinctly said, “For the Son of God became man so that we might become God.” (CCC 460) We first receive this Divine life in baptism, and continue to grow in it with every sacrament worthily received. It is especially nourished and strengthened with every good Holy Communion, and if we ever lose this Divine life by serious sin, it is restored to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and we “start afresh from Christ”. This is why we must all be inviting our non-practicing friends to come and celebrate the sacraments with us.

6. How is Mary Our Mother in the Order of Grace?

A mother is she who gives life. But a mother cannot give life all on her own; she must cooperate with another - by herself she is powerless. Now Mary is not the mother of the physical life of my body; she is the mother of the spiritual life of grace in my soul. And like any mother, Mary is powerless to give me grace on her own; but she does cooperate with another - with Christ – to bring me grace. In fact, many people cooperate with Christ to bring me grace.

Cooperating with Christ is not an exercise in mutual help, nor is it an exercise in which the two parties contribute equally, or rely on each other. When it comes to grace, God is always what we call the “prime and principal mover or agent”: it comes from him and it is his work that he brings to completion, BUT God does not force his grace on anybody - it requires our freely given acceptance and response; it requires our collaboration and cooperation. As we read in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2002): “God's free initiative demands man's free response The soul only enters freely into the communion of love.”

Not only must we cooperate with God to remain living in his grace ourselves. We are also called to cooperate with God in bringing his grace to others and in keeping his grace alive in others. We listen again to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2003): “Grace is first and foremost the gift of the Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us. But grace also includes the gifts that the Spirit grants us to associate us with his work, to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church.” My parents, as well as many priests, religious, teachers, and friends, have all cooperated with God in bringing me the life of Grace. When you encourage a loved

one or friend to come to Mass with you or when you accompany them to the church for confession, you are cooperating with God to bring the life of Grace to a soul. When you offer the Lord your sufferings for poor sinners, you are cooperating with God to bring the life of Grace to a soul.

God, who could have saved us and given us grace all by himself – with no help from anybody – chose to do so with the assistance, collaboration, and cooperation of human individuals. One person in particular stands out - The Blessed Virgin Mary. *Lumen Gentium* 61 says this of her:

“In the designs of Divine Providence she was the gracious mother of the Divine Redeemer here on earth, and above all others the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ, she presented him to the Father in the temple, shared her Son’s sufferings as he died on the cross. Thus, in a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the work of the Saviour in restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace.”

7. Conclusion:

Both in her life on earth, and now in the glory of heaven, no other human person is as closely united to and associated with Christ as is Mary; no other human person has or does cooperate as much with Christ to bring us his grace as does Mary.

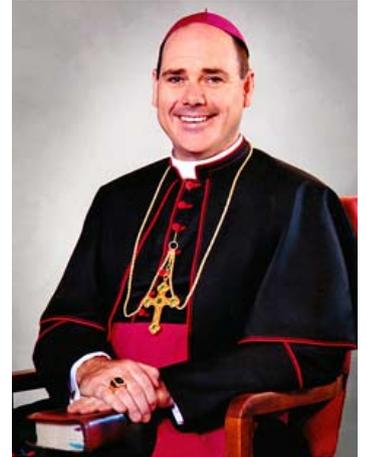
During this Year of Grace I have become more conscious of God’s grace in my life and have been praying to grow in grace. But I have also grown in the awareness that growth in grace means also to grow in our likeness to Christ, and to grow in our likeness to Christ necessitates dying ever more to our old selves. When I find myself hesitant to continue on this path, I ask our Heavenly Mother, our Mother in the order of Grace, to beg from God on my behalf those graces that I am too fearful to pray for myself.

I invite each of you in your own way to ensure that our Mother in the order of Grace is a part of your Year of Grace.

We pray: “Lord God, as we venerate the memory of the Virgin Mary, now in glory, grant that by her intercession we ourselves may share in the fullness of your grace. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

About the Most Reverend Bishop Michael Kennedy

The Most Reverend Bishop Michael Kennedy was born in Wagga Wagga, Australia in 1968, the youngest of nine children of John and Fidelma Kennedy.



He has a Diploma in Education and taught at Xavier Catholic High School at Albury. He entered the Wagga Wagga Diocesan Seminary (Vianney College) in 1992 and continued his priestly academic studies in Rome at the Urban College of Propaganda Fide, where he obtained a Licentiate in Sacred Theology, and at the Marianum Pontifical School, where he obtained a Diploma of Mariology. Notably, he was the first seminarian of Vianney College to be ordained as priest.

Ordained in 1999, the Bishop served in the Griffith parish, at St. Francis Residential College within Charles Sturt University, and in the Albury parish. In 2007, he was parish priest of Leeton from where he was appointed to the care of the Church of Armidale.

He has also lectured in Moral Theology, Mariology and Church History at Vianney College since 2000. In 2003, he was appointed the diocesan Director of Vocations and a member of the diocesan Council of Priests. He served on the diocesan Schools Commission (2002-2004) and as National Chairman of the Confraternity of Catholic Clergy (2005-2009). He was, until his appointment to Armidale, a diocesan Consultor and Vicar Forane.

He was ordained as a bishop and installed as the 10th Bishop of Armidale on 9 February 2012.

Starting Afresh From Christ

Renewal from the Heart of the Church

An Extract of a Talk by Sr. Mary Martin, O.P.
at the SCANZSPAC Biennial Convention, 5-6 October 2012

The phrase *Heart of the Church* in the title has three meanings. First, it means Christ; He is the Church's Heart and her model for renewal. Secondly, it means a particular kind of lifestyle which the Church teaches is at her heart and has a message of renewal for all lives. Thirdly, it means our hearts. Genuine renewal in the Church must always begin in one place: the human heart; yours and mine.

Blessed John Paul II warned in his letter for the year 2000, that renewal doesn't mean *doing* new things, but of *becoming* someone new¹; becoming holy. Our goal is union with God, but God, who is perfect charity, can only fully unite Himself with persons of perfect charity or holiness. Charity means loving God above all things and loving everyone else for His sake, but to reach perfect charity, we must allow ourselves to be transformed by grace.

We cooperate with grace, by living a lifestyle which removes the obstacles to its growth within us and the biggest obstacle we have to overcome is ourselves; our own egos. God wants our hearts: He knows that without them, He really doesn't have us. The saints teach us that even though we may be daily Mass-goers, we can still cling to our egos in many ways.

So our faith teaches us that we need to recognize which things feed our self-centredness and prevent us from surrendering our hearts to God. There are three: first: the world or worldliness, which tempts us to desire possessions and prestige above spiritual things; second, the flesh, or sensuality, which tempts

us to treat ourselves, others and even God as objects of pleasure; and third, the devil, who tempts us to rebel against God and desire complete independence from Him. When these permeate society they become three belief systems which Blessed John Paul II explained attack the Church: worldliness becomes materialism; sensuality becomes hedonism, and the devil's lies become false notions of freedom².

Christ lived a life of poverty, chastity and obedience, in direct opposition to the powers of darkness in this world, against all that feeds the human ego and hinders perfect charity. He chose to be poor: to own no material possessions; to have "nowhere to lay His head". He told us not to worry about what we should eat or wear, but to trust God for everything, and He Himself lived in this way to show us how true his teaching really was. He chose a celibate life: pure and chaste and free from the exclusive attachment of marriage, so that He could give Himself totally to God the Father and to all mankind with a full and undivided love. And He chose a life of absolute obedience to His Father's will, which was "food and drink" to Him, and which led Him to His death on the Cross.

Christ calls all Christians to start afresh from Him by imitating His life, but not all in the same way. In order to understand this, we need to clarify three terms: "counsel" (as in, *evangelical counsel*), "virtue" and "vow". Poverty, chastity and obedience exist as counsels, virtues and vows. As counsels, they are special Gospel values offered by Christ for our imitation. They are, if you like, three pieces of divine advice: as if Christ were to say: "To reach Christian perfection more easily be poor in fact and in spirit, and give your possessions to the poor; be celibate for God and give Him your undivided heart; be obedient to God and give your whole life over to be governed by His Church.

¹ Blessed John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Inuente*; 38: "There is a temptation which perennially besets every spiritual journey and pastoral work: that of thinking that the results depend on our ability to act and to plan. God of course asks us really to cooperate with his grace, ... But it is fatal to forget that "without Christ we can do nothing" (cf. Jn 15:5).

² Blessed John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*: 87-91

Christ doesn't call everyone to practice the evangelical counsels as He presents them in the Gospel, but all are called to live the *spirit* of the counsels or the *virtues* of poverty, chastity and obedience. Why? Because these virtues work to remove all the obstacles to perfect charity in all areas of our lives: the obstacles posed by worldliness, by sensuality and by the devil's lies. No one can reach Christian perfection, without living the virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience.

No one can reach Christian perfection, without living the virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Dangers of Not Practicing the Virtue of Poverty

What faces those who don't practice the virtue of poverty? They become vulnerable to materialism, which is the belief that the more a person has of this world's goods the happier they are. Materialism, having excessive possessions and/or refusing to be detached from them, exposes the Christian to three dangers in particular.

First, spiritual writers tell us that for us fallen human beings, possessing things little by little becomes being possessed by them. The Faith teaches us that only God can help us to *be* more, but we can't possess Him if we're intent on possessing things.

Second, possessing lots of needless things makes us stingy. If possessions make us feel secure, and security equals happiness, then we're not going to share them or it with anyone else. Giving to the poor to the point that it actually curbs our lifestyle, our fun, and our desires is just going to be too difficult. The saints show us that we resist this temptation by striving to be generous with our goods.

Third, if we pursue possessions, ultimately we'll become worldly – that is we'll start to believe and behave as if we belong solely to this world and not to eternity; that real success means worldly success: a higher salary; a paid up mortgage. Our hearts turn firmly in the direction of the earth and away from heaven, making it harder for us to experience the truth of the words "Blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". The saints teach us that true success lies in us conforming

our lives to Christ's and being detached from everything else.

Blessings of Those Who Practice the Virtue of Poverty

First, we really put our money where our mouth is. We say loud and clear that *God* is the centre of our lives and not *things*. We're free to stop rationalizing away or watering down our Lord's teachings; trying to serve both God and wealth. The saints show us that if we're really striving for a simple, generous, unassuming, unworldly lifestyle, we're free to really listen to the Gospel and its demands.

Second, this poverty, of course, includes poverty of spirit. Factual poverty helps poverty in spirit, because hopefully, we don't tend to have any "tickets" on ourselves when we live a materially simple lifestyle. "Learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart", our Lord said. We're to follow Him and cherish our hiddenness.

Lastly, factual and spiritual poverty helps the theological virtue of hope to grow in us. Hope is that supernatural gift we received at Baptism which helps us to trust in God for the true wealth which leads to salvation. That wealth is, of course, grace. This is the exchange for detachment from material wealth – openness to receive an abundance of grace, which is spiritual wealth.

What is the Virtue of Chastity?

First, we are all to be chaste for love of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom, even if we're married. Whether married or single, all must be aiming to give God their hearts in charity. If charity isn't present in married love, then it becomes merely physical, possessive and self-centred. Chastity safeguards that charity. In fact, the Church warns that "To the degree that a person weakens chastity his or her love becomes more and more selfish...and no longer self-giving"³. The human heart longs to be loved truly and infinitely and only God can love like this. That's why His love must be present in married love, and must be the love to which married people look for final fulfilment.

The virtue involves the gift of an undivided heart to the beloved; in other words, our whole selves, but to give one's whole self demands self-mastery. The self-mastery we need in order to give ourselves truly is impossible without the virtue of chastity.

³ Pontifical Council for the Family, *Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*; 16

Dangers of Not Practicing the Virtue of Chastity

The unchaste become vulnerable to hedonism, which is the belief that pleasure, especially sexual pleasure, and not union with God, is the goal of man's existence. Hedonism opens those who refuse to live chastely to two dangers in particular, dangers from which many Catholics are not immune. First, unchastity results in a desensitisation to the sacredness of the human body. Immodesty, the Church teaches, degrades our bodies into objects of pleasure. And what of the danger to which people expose their souls by watching sexually explicit scenes on T.V. or at the movies? One Catholic laywoman said to me: if a movie has sex-scenes that aren't suitable for under 18s, they're not suitable for over 18s either! It's a good point.

Second, unchastity results in a mysterious hardening of the heart. Spiritual things, even God Himself, simply lose their attraction, until they can't even be tolerated. How often have you heard, "No Grandma, I don't go to Mass anymore, I just don't get anything out of it", or "Granddad, no more prayers – it's such a waste of time"? Sometimes those who say these things are just ignorant of what prayer and the Mass are, but sometimes it boils down to an unchaste lifestyle. If you hear family members complain in this way, ask them what they're watching or reading, find out how they're living.

Blessings of Practicing the Virtue of Chastity

First, just as poverty, nurtures the virtue of hope, chastity nurtures the theological virtue of charity. Charity is other-centred, not self-centred. It's not enough for married couples not to contracept and not to be adulterers to be truly chaste. It's not enough for celibates to abstain lifelong from sexual relations to be truly chaste. These external signs should point to purified hearts that can love selflessly and supernaturally. So, the chaste love of married saints shows a kindness, respect and forbearance between spouses, even after years of marriage. Celibate saints show us that the fruit of celibate love is a deep respect for the human person and a willingness to sacrifice for the salvation of others. Finally, chaste love opens us to deep prayer; deep intimacy with God. The world desperately needs people of deep prayer because the world desperately needs Christ, and people of deep prayer radiate Him.

The Virtue of Obedience

Christ founded the Catholic Church and gave her the authority to govern in His name, "He who hears you, hears Me". He gave the supreme governing authority to the Holy Father, His representative on earth.

All Christian obedience, therefore, means submitting

to God's authority, for our salvation and that of others. God's will often comes to us through His representatives or, "lawful superiors". If we all don't realize that Christ teaches, sanctifies and governs us through the hierarchy; that *Christ's* authority is behind Canon Law and the rubrics of the Liturgy, then the Pope and the bishops in union with him, will be just a group of male executives and the Church's legislation, just a bunch of rules that can be bent or broken. Faith makes all the difference.

But the virtue of obedience doesn't only include obedience to ecclesiastical "lawful superiors", but also civil "lawful superiors", like employers, State officials and Departments, as long as they make legitimate demands or laws. This is because all legitimate authority comes from God and the virtue of obedience urges us to obey such authority for that reason.

Dangers of Catholics Who Refuse to Practice Obedience

First, disobedience to God and His Church affects the whole Church and thus the world. Obedience helps the salvation of the world, but disobedience makes it sink deeper into the mire. No one's spiritual life is his own affair and deliberate disobedience to God and his Church, wounds God's Kingdom on earth.

We all disobey God and His Church every time we sin, but hopefully we fight against it, but take one area in which in some places there seems to be widespread disobedience: in the Liturgy. The Church teaches that the Liturgy is the source and summit of her life and activity. Disobedience here hampers the flow of the Church's life and the fruitfulness of her activity. The second danger of unchecked disobedience is that it makes a person, whether they know it or not, work for the diabolical spirit, who always makes disobedience seem virtuous.

The Blessings of Practicing the Virtue of Obedience

Firstly, the saints show us that no one can be truly free until he is able to obey. By putting on the mind of Christ, we fill our minds with truth and Christ said that the truth sets us free. But Christ's mind, in all its fullness, is given first to the Church. Staying with her, we'll neither be deceived into the schismatic modernist left, or the schismatic "Iefebvrist" right, but in mind and heart, we'll keep steadily to what is Catholic.

Secondly, just as poverty nurtures hope and chastity, charity, obedience to Christ and His Church nurtures the theological virtue of faith. The Catechism states, "By faith, man completely submits his intellect and will

to God⁴. Scripture calls this the obedience of faith. Faith allows us to put things into perspective; it makes us live mindful that one day we must die and face God. The Church teaches that we prepare for death best by growing in love because on love we'll be judged and love is impossible without faith and obedience.

Four Challenges Facing Serra

There are four challenges which face the Serra Club, as you endeavor to start afresh from Christ.

Challenge 1: In a sense, the teenagers amongst whom you largely promote vocations are a challenge. In western cultures, they are mostly non-practicing, uncatechised, and thus at heart spiritually empty. 80-90% of Catholic students in Australia don't practice the faith. Good as they are, what can activities, like vocation Masses and vocation-essay competitions mean to

“ **The Church teaches that we prepare for death best by growing in love because on love we'll be judged and love is impossible without faith and obedience.** ”

most Catholic students who live as practical atheists? Are we not just encouraging sacrilegious, or at least unfruitful holy communions at most vocation Masses? How can many of these students write intelligently about vocations when they aren't interested in giving themselves to anyone? Don't we need to find new ways to deal with a generation that thinks it doesn't need God?

Challenge 2: Few people understand the theology of Religious life. A vocation which people don't understand can't be effectively promoted. Many Catholics see Religious as no more than the Church's cheap workforce, dedicated to nursing or teaching or making altar breads and although it's an honour to work for the Church, Religious life means more to her than this.

Challenge 3: Many Catholics tend not to support things that support the faith. This is a huge vocation problem. If the faith isn't supported, the environment in which young people can think about God's plan is impossible.

Catholic schools, for instance are supposed to be prime creators of this faith-culture. And are they?

Finally, Challenge 4: is the challenge of authenticity. You Serra members in working for vocations are basically announcing to the Church, that young people should be responding to God's call to give their lives totally to Him, but in saying this, are you not committing yourselves to strive relentlessly to live out your vocations authentically? It's said that the odour of hypocrisy travels further and is more widespread than the odour of sanctity. If young people see us who profess to love Christ and His Church, trying to serve both God and wealth; sensual and self-centred; cutting corners in our obedience; in short, selling ourselves, perhaps in small ways, to the world, the flesh and the devil, so will they. Why should they sacrifice if we don't?

Doesn't Christ warn us that unless we're striving for union with Him, anything else we do in the Church will be of no use whatsoever? How shall we respond then to that holiness modeled for us by the poor, chaste and obedient Christ? If you seriously want to brave the spiritual purification, which this life is supposed to be, please count the cost. Not everyone in your life will approve, because your life will be seen as a reproach to theirs and they may cause you to suffer. Some will think you fools, but many others will be inspired by your authenticity for Christ, and it will infect them, and then, through your prayer and action, Christ *will* draw many to genuinely start afresh from Him.

About Sr. Mary Martin

Sr. Mary Martin de Porres was born in London, England. She emigrated to Australia in 1996 to join the reformed Dominican community, the Conventual Sisters of St. Dominic. She is now a finally professed member, who



teaches Religion and English Literature at Saint Mary Mackillop Colleges, a new Independent Catholic school in New South Wales, Australia.



Max Spencer

President of SCANZSPAC

Ever since you were elected as the President of SCANZSPAC in July 2011, you have been travelling actively and making personal contacts with the Clubs.

Could you share with us the challenges the clubs are facing and your plans going forward?

Since becoming President, my main focus has been to encourage our Clubs to become more passionate about recruiting new members to Serra. In October 2011, I convened a special membership meeting with club presidents to thrash out what strategies were being employed to bolster membership. An awareness of the plight of membership has been widely canvassed. Our problem is simply we, as Serrans are growing rapidly older as our average age is well over sixty-five. Serrans have become complacent and I am trying to implore Serrans to promote membership to ethnic groups within the church and to particularly target more female members. I will continue to foster the establishment of new Serra Clubs around Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific but the continuation of Serra will

largely depend on increased younger membership into our existing Clubs.

How long have you been a Serran? How would you inspire someone to join Serra?

I was invited to join Serra in 1991. I developed a real love of what it meant to be a Serran from the moment I became a member. I have served as President and been on the Board of the Canberra club since 1994. My portfolio was Vice-President Vocations for many years. In 1998 and 2006 I coordinated the biennial conventions for SCANZSPAC in Canberra. I served as Vice-President Membership on the SCANZSPAC Board for 2010-11 and became President in July 2011.

To encourage membership I would personally promote Serra as the vocation arm of the Church as put forward by Blessed John Paul II. Secondly, I would promote Serra as a lay Catholic vocation as I sincerely believe it is. As prayer is the ultimate provider of new members it is my desire that all Clubs participate in regular adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Our ardent prayer to our Mother Mary and Her Son Jesus will not go unanswered.

David Connell

President of Serra Club of Wagga Wagga

Congratulations on the success of the SCANZSPAC Biennial Convention! What is the highlight for you in organizing the Convention?

To see so many prayerful, happy, holy people together in one place...all with the very clear intention of 'moving forward' in their Faith and looking for ways to support priestly and religious vocations.

Both you and your wife Pat have been Serrans for 15 months. You were made the President of the Serra Club of Wagga Wagga in July 2012 while she is the Secretary. Tell us how both of you became involved in this Serra lay apostolate for vocations?

God started our 'calling' 25 years ago! I was Honorary Deputy Chairman of Calvary Hospital (LCM) at the time and Sr. Brigid Gleeson, the Sister-in-Charge, was most enthusiastic about our joining both Serra and Eucharistic Adoration. Pat & I attended a couple of meetings, liked the people and the meetings very much, but practically it just wasn't possible to attend the meetings. I had sold my accounting firm and took up assisting other

accounting firms in practice improvement and strategic planning. The business grew very fast and Pat & I travelled very extensively across Australia and New Zealand...usually being

out of town when Serra meetings were held. However with some gentle 'arm-twisting', Sr. Brigid convinced us to join in the Eucharistic Adoration – initially an all-night vigil on Friday night – I asked her what was the most difficult roster hour to fill and she advised 2.00 – 3.00 am...I accepted (being not quite sure why or what I had committed myself to!). Later the Eucharistic Adoration extended to every night during the week and I just continued...every Saturday morning. For a time whilst I could, I also attended Thursday evening. Pat joined me shortly after and, in a sense, that made us both more accountable.

Meanwhile, whenever Norm Corbett saw me, he kept the invitation alive! He never gave up. Eventually



I advised him that the travel and being out of town so much was an issue for me but “when I retire I’ll give it my full attention”! Four years ago I was very unexpectedly approached by a large Australian public company with deep pockets and they made an offer to me that I could not refuse. I fulfilled my legal restrictive covenant requirements with them and they announced my ‘retirement’. Norm was on my doorstep in an instant. What could I say...in March 2011, Pat & I joined Serra. At the AGM the following June, we were elected President Elect and Secretary Elect, much to our surprise. As we left the meeting, we looked at each other and said “How did that happen”? After we were elected, it was mentioned that there was a bit of a surprise in store for us...our Club was to be the host club for the SCANZSPAC Biennial Convention in October 2012! We did accept that as a pleasant surprise because of the opportunity to meet so many holy people and to find out more about Serra. We were very much on a steep learning curve and the more we became involved the more convinced we were that we were called to this work...God had called both of us to the work of Serra. One thing I came to realise very quickly after my ‘retirement’ is that I (and Pat too!) am not a person for sitting idle. I now refer to it as a ‘gap year’ and I’ve now established two new businesses but rather interestingly they have not impacted upon Serra meetings. I’ve also written a book, taken trips, taken the chainsaw to the garden and much more. God is blessing us in our ‘retirement’.

Serra Club of Wagga Wagga started the Eucharistic Adoration about 25 years ago. Together with over 200 attendees, your Club does over 80 hours of Eucharistic Adoration for Vocations every week. Could you share the background of this initiative and what kept both you and Pat going for Eucharistic Adoration for the last 25 years?

Eucharistic Adoration in Wagga Wagga commenced for just a First Friday all-night vigil soon after Serra was established just over 30 years ago but gradually it took hold and there became a call for ‘more’, so a separate roster committee was established to organise Eucharistic Adoration at Calvary Hospital Chapel. This has grown to over 200 attendees and many attribute the establishment of the seminary at Vianney College to this devotion. Back-up arrangements appear to work well and there is a press-button secure code for entrance to the chapel. During renovations to Calvary Hospital different chapels and churches were experimented with but found to be too open and subject to ‘visits’ by unsavoury persons in the early hours of the morning. The Calvary Chapel is attached to Calvary Hospital with very quiet surroundings.

Pat and I cannot remember how we started attending at 2.00 am (no doubt it was a challenge) but now it has become part of the routine of our lives and many others. Our climate ranges from below freezing point in the winter (-5°C is reasonably common!) to above 40°C in the summer but with heaters and air conditioning the chapel is made more comfortable. The Little Company of Mary is very supportive. We live about 10 minutes

from the chapel but know of attendees who live 15 kilometres away and attend at 3.00 am! Our routine which has now become a habit is to set the alarm for 1.35 am and we are usually back in bed by 3.15 am!



There can be no doubt that this hour of devotion has steered us through many of life’s difficulties as our five children have grown to adults and business, health and family challenges have come and gone. The peace and quiet in our very busy lives is simply incredible. We talk to our God and I know He answers...even on the occasions when I fall asleep! I am convinced that this is when God does his best work with me because I don’t answer back or talk too much!

Today at ages 64 and 60 respectively we have no intention of giving up this important aspect of our lives and it has become a habit for us and the many others who support this devotion. As a new President of a Serra Club, I have been advised by many that I’m ‘in’ for life! Time will tell but I would like to see Eucharistic Adoration expanded to a full week (168 hours) and extended throughout the Diocese. There is no doubt in my mind of the value of this exercise not just to the individuals who attend but also to the parishes and dioceses involved.

“ There can be no doubt that this hour of devotion has steered us through many of life’s difficulties as our five children have grown to adults and business, health and family challenges have come and gone. The peace and quiet in our very busy lives is simply incredible. We talk to our God and I know He answers...even on the occasions when I fall asleep! I am convinced that this is when God does his best work with me because I don’t answer back or talk too much! ”

Norman & Margaret Corbett

Recipients of Benemerenti Medal and Certificate Conferred by the Holy Father



Norman and Margaret with the Most Reverend Bishop Gerard Hanna (centre)

Norman and Margaret, Congratulations on being awarded the Benemerenti medal! Norman, you have been the President of Serra Club of Wagga Wagga till July 2012. What is the one motivating factor that kept you going as President of your Club over the past 21 years?

I joined the Serra Club of Wagga Wagga, Australia in 1988 and was its President for 21 years until recently when I passed on the baton to the incumbent President, David Connell.

Apart from the Grace of God, there were two main reasons which kept me going despite the challenges and difficulties of the Serra apostolate. Firstly, the ideals of Serra attracted me and I felt this was God's calling for me. We persevered in the apostolate as we were confronted with the shortage of priests and hence we felt the need for us to pray and support all our priests and for more vocations. The second reason was the unflinching support of the previous Bishop of Wagga Wagga, the Most Reverend Bishop William Brennan who gave us his unstinting support by assuring us that there will always be a priest to celebrate Mass for the Serrans for vocations.

The Most Reverend Bishop Brennan founded Vianney College, the Seminary of Wagga Wagga in 1992 amidst much opposition. I really knew then that we had to support our Bishop and the seminarians and so began our real work. We are very proud of our Seminary and all associated with it. The pride we feel when there is something special on at the Cathedral, such as a priestly Ordination is truly immeasurable; to see all these young men who have become so much part of our lives being ordained to the priesthood is wonderful.

We are greatly blessed and privileged to work for vocations with the current Bishop of Wagga, the Most Reverend Bishop Gerard Hanna who has been most supportive of the Serra apostolate. And personally, I have been truly blessed to have been given this wonderful gift to serve as the President of Serra Club of Wagga Wagga for so long and for all the Graces received. Thank You, Lord!

Margaret, you have been “mom” to the seminarians of Vianney College, Wagga Wagga for over 20 years. Could you share your experience being a “mom” to the seminarians?

The joy, love and friendship that we experienced since my involvement as a Serran with the seminarians of Vianney College (in Wagga Wagga) is a real Grace from God. It has been 18 years since I became a Serran in 1994. I feel that I have been given a very great privilege and I thank God everyday for this wonderful gift of the Serra apostolate for vocations.

The seminarians are so much part of my family, it is wonderful! One of the seminarians travelled 500 km when he was on holidays, to see me in hospital when I was very ill. Another used to come to our house and spend his day off to catch up on some rest and have a home cooked meal. Our house is always open to any of the seminarians for they are like family to us.

It is a great gift to us to be able to journey with our seminarians each step of the way from their seminary days to their priestly ordination by giving them our support and by being there for them at each milestone of their formation. The pride I feel when a seminarian is ordained to the priesthood is something I imagine a parent would feel. I pray that God gives me more time in this Serra apostolate for vocations. I am very proud of all the young men who have sincerely tried to discern the priestly calling, even those who entered the seminary and later discerned that the priesthood was not their calling and left. Many of them still keep in touch with us. I am very proud of my “priestly family” and pray every day for all of them. Thank You, Lord for this gift of Grace!

“ I feel that I have been given a very great privilege and I thank God everyday for this wonderful gift of the Serra apostolate for vocations. ”

Serra's 71st International Convention Palma de Mallorca (Spain) 20-23 June 2013

**Personal Invitation from the Serra International
Convention Committee Chair, Tim O'Neill**



Greetings Fellow Serrans,

Please accept my personal invitation to join Serrans from around the world in attending Serra's 71st International Convention. This convention will be a very special occasion in that we will be celebrating the 300th Anniversary of Blessed Junipero Serra's birth. The convention will be held in the city of Palma de Mallorca, Spain not far from the actual birthplace of our patron. Serrans will enjoy visiting his home place as well as the museum named in his honor. As chairman of the convention committee, I wish to report that the goal of the committee is to have as many Serrans, spouses, guests, priests and religious join us so that we can mutually work for Vocations through prayer, training, fellowship, and sharing. There will be an increased awareness among leaders and members of ways to accomplish our mission.

Reasons to Attend the SI Convention:

There are many reasons for attending a Serra International Convention: spiritual growth, training and education, leadership development, sharing of information, motivation to excellence, increasing communication skills and building community. I enjoy the last reason, building community, the most as I have enjoyed meeting several Serrans from all locations of the world.

Make this an event for the Family:

My wife Sally and I have attended 10 Serra International Conventions since 1990. We made this a family vacation with our sons Connor and Collin. Our family has enjoyed the friendships of fellow Serrans that we have come to know, and have enjoyed sharing our passion with this very special group of Catholics. I sincerely feel Serra is something that can be shared by the whole family, and that is what makes it such a great organization to belong to and to participate in. Sally and I have enjoyed helping and planning of the conventions because we feel that this is a vital element in supporting clubs and motivating Serrans to accomplish the mission and ministry of Serra.

Serra Banners to be Displayed at the Serra Junipero Museum, Palma de Mallorca, Spain:

A special committee was assembled at the 69th SI

Convention in Ottawa Canada to plan the 300th Anniversary Convention. Six members from around the world have been meeting to organize and plan for this special convention. Each club has been asked to plan an event for their club in celebration of Blessed Junipero Serra's birth anniversary. Special banners have been made to be displayed at club meetings and events. These banners can be brought to the Convention and left at the museum so that each club will be acknowledged as making this historic pilgrimage and celebration.

Invited Speakers:

Invited keynote speakers for this important 300th Anniversary celebration include His Eminence Zenon Cardinal Grocholewski, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome, and His Eminence Sean Cardinal O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston, Massachusetts, USA. All events will be held in the heart of Palma close to the Mediterranean coast over which looks the beautiful 13th century Cathedral of Santa Maria de Palma, the venue for all convention liturgies.

Convention Theme:

Our theme for this 2013 convention is : **FOR WOE TO ME IF I DO NOT PREACH THE GOSPEL - THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF FRAY JUNIPERO SERRA**

Register Today and Plan to Join us in Palma de Mallorca, Spain for the Convention:

Please join your fellow Serrans at this important event, More information and registration forms are posted on the Serra International website (www.serra.org)



Tim & Sally O'Neill

Serra's 71st International Convention
Mallorca 2013

On Saturday we will visit Petra



Father Serra House



Inside the Museum



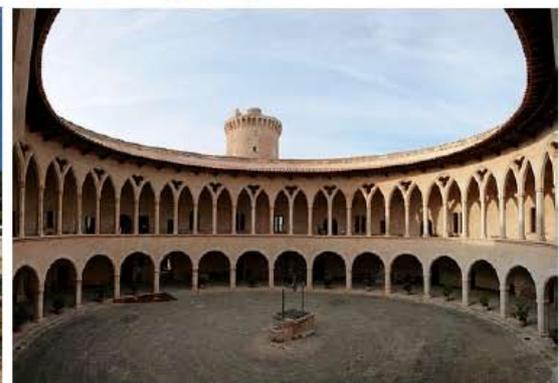
The Museum



Church of Petra

We will travel by coach to the Town of Petra where we will visit the house where Father Serra was born, the museum dedicated to him and the Church of the Convent. We will then celebrate a welcome Mass in the Church of Petra.

The Castle of Bellver in Palma

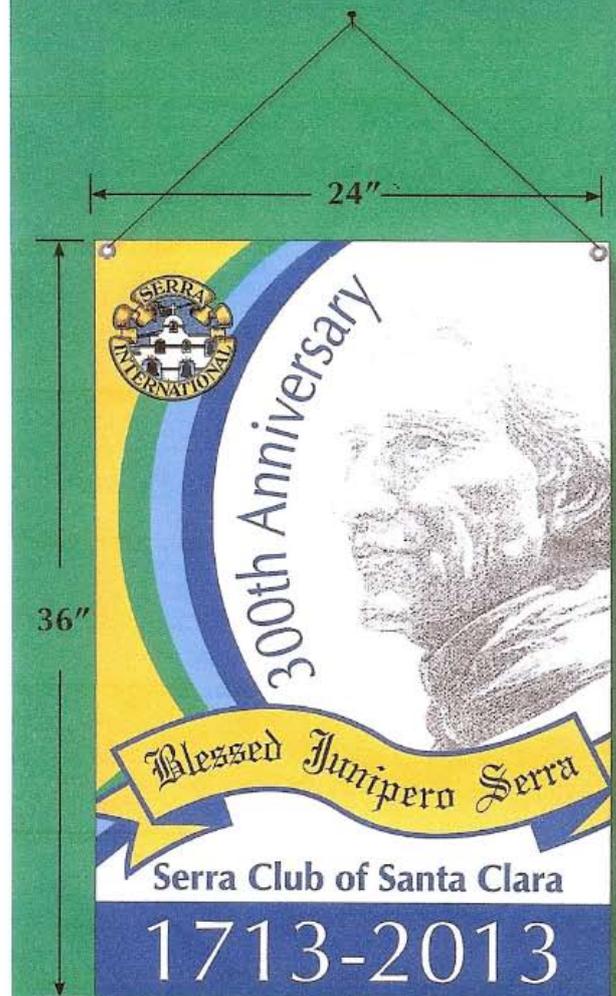


The welcome reception by the Mallorca Authorities will take place here.

The Bellver Castle is situated on a hill in the forest of the same name at 3 km. from Palma and at 112 metres above sea level dominating the entire bay of Palma and most of the island of Mallorca. The 360° panoramic views from the roof top are spectacular Building began at the beginning of the fourth century under the reign King James II by Pere Salva, the architect of the Almudaina Palace and it is the only circular castle in the whole of Spain. Three towers form part of the main building and surround the central courtyard and the fourth one known as the Homage Tower is separated by a bridge that used to be a draw bridge. The castle is built on two storeys. The ground floor has Romanesque semicircular arches whilst the columned walk of the top floor is has Gothic arches and rib vaulting A moat 13 feet wide surrounds the castle.

300th Blessed Junipero Serra Anniversary Banner WITH your Serra Club name.

- ▶ \$100.00 ea. (includes shipping, USA only) a major portion goes for the Majorca 2013 celebration.
- ▶ Order by e-mail bob@grandpromotions.com or fax order to 952-473-1062
- ▶ Pay by Credit Card (call 952-473-0220) or by check – payable to Grand Promotions. Send to GP at 1001 Twelve Oaks Center Drive, Suite 1020, Wayzata, MN 55391
- ▶ Only three items needed:
 - 1) Send order as above, call with CC#,
 - 2) send SHIP TO information and
 - 3) send the name of your Serra Club.
- ▶ Orders received by the 1st of each month will be sent out the second week and once each month thereafter. Promote this great celebration by purchasing a SERRA ANNIVERSARY BANNER.
- ▶ Serra Club outside of the United States e-mail for shipping costs. Orders only taken in US \$.

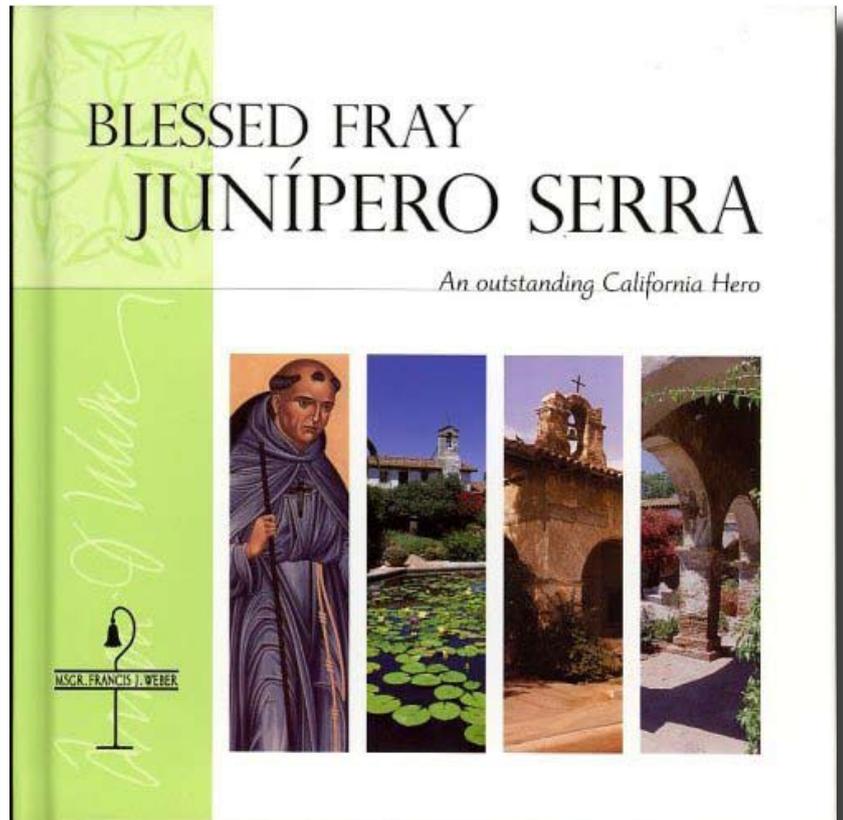


ORDER ORDER ORDER

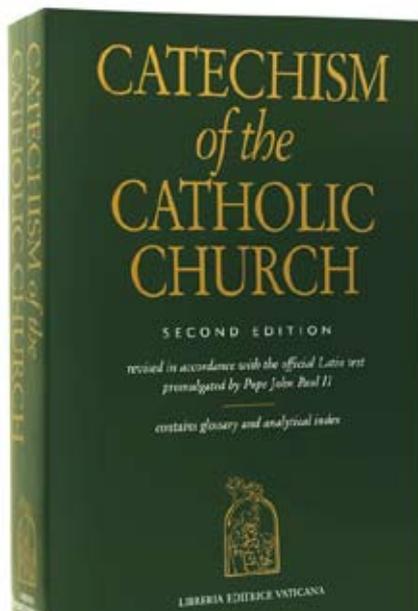
Blessed Fray Junipero Serra An Outstanding California Hero

by Msgr. Francis J. Weber

Published on 1 January 2008, this 152-page hardcover book is a very inspiring, beautifully illustrated, full-color biography of Fray Junipero Serra, founder of the California mission system, and a personal hero of Msgr. Francis J. Weber, who has been promoting the Serra cause for almost half a century. Using historical documents and never before published graphics from church archives, master-historian and long-time archivist for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Msgr. Francis J. Weber reveals the remarkable life of Fray Serra, his work, and its impact on California history. Today his name adorns more buildings, schools and businesses, appears on more postage stamps and is featured in more artwork than any other Californian. That one little man who personally possessed nothing could have occasioned so varied an assortment of interest and acclaim is, in itself, a remarkable tribute to his spiritual and historical stature.



Read the Catechism in a Year



For this Year of Faith, our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI encourages the whole Church to study and reflect on the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Here is an easy and free way to do it. Simply subscribe to the following website:

<http://www.flocknote.com/catechism>

You will start getting a little bit of the Catechism emailed to you on a daily basis. Read that little bit every day and you will read the whole catechism in a year.