

SERRA in Asia



Issue No.1 • October 2010

Bangladesh • Hong Kong • India • Macau • Myanmar
Pakistan • Philippines • Singapore • Taiwan • Thailand



Inaugural Newsletter for Serra Clubs in Asia!

Thanksgiving Mass for the
Inauguration Ceremony of the 2010-
2011 New Board Members of Serra
Club of Macau in September 2010

Message from President of Serra Club of Singapore

Country representatives
at the 15th Serra Asian
Convention held in
Singapore in April 2010



My dear fellow Serrans,

It has been more than six months since we last met in Singapore for the “15th Serra Asian Convention 2010”. I hope all of you are keeping well.

For those of you who have pledged Eucharistic Adoration hours for Pope Benedict XVI, we have about seven more months (till 15 May 2011) to go. So, together, let's continue to persevere to complete the hours we have pledged.

Following from the convention, we felt that there is a dire need for greater communication and cooperation among the Serra Clubs in Asia in order for Serra to continue to grow further in this region. Hence, we have initiated the quarterly “SERRA in Asia” newsletter. We hope the newsletter will be a platform for Asian Serra Clubs to share their vocation promotion activities and to inspire all of us to have a deeper love for our Lord and His chosen ones. We also hope that this newsletter will be the avenue for Serra International to share with us their vision and their immediate plans.

In this inaugural issue, we feature an interview with our new Serra International President, Tomi Asenuga, to get to know him and his vision for Serra. We also learn about the experience and thoughts of SI President 2009/2010 Alejandro Carbajal on his year as President. I would like to take this opportunity to invite all of you to join me to keep Tomi in our daily prayers so that he will be able to lead Serra International to greater heights. I would like to thank Alejandro for a very successful year of Presidency and for inspiring many Asian Serrans at the convention in Singapore.

In order for the “SERRA in Asia” newsletter to be effective, we need your contribution and support. We also hope that you will share this newsletter with the Serrans in your Clubs and country.

God bless,

Sean Yeo

President, Serra Club of Singapore

Serra Club of Macau Welcomes New President



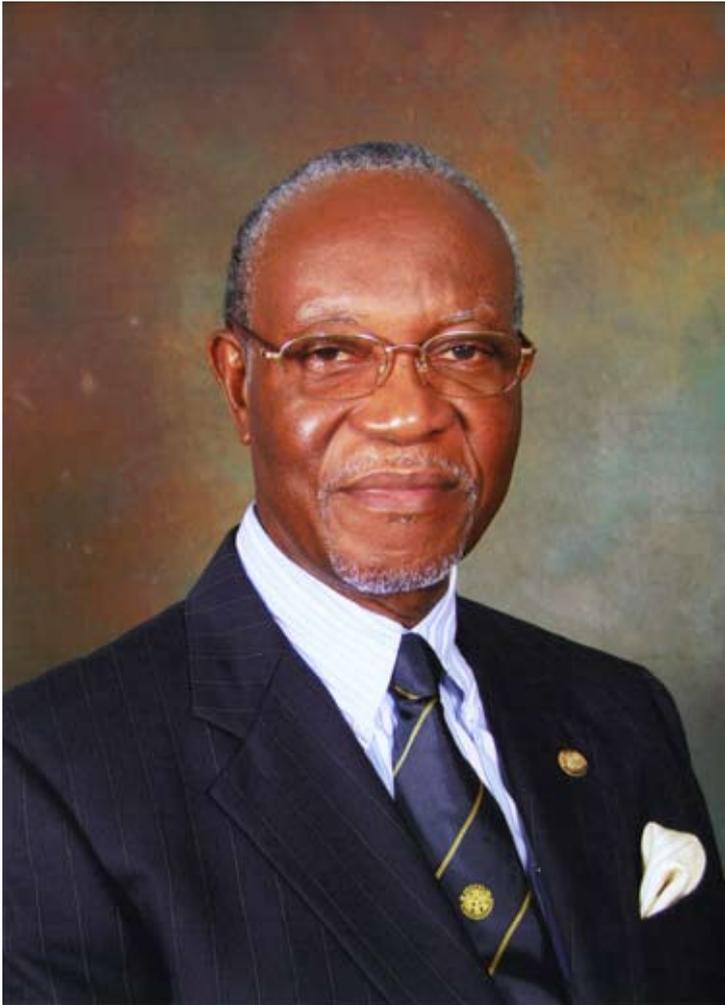
Serra Club of Macau has welcomed a new president, **Cristina Chow**, who incidentally is also the first lady president of the Club. The Club held a Thanksgiving Mass for the Inauguration Ceremony of the 2010-2011 New Board Members of Serra Club of Macau on 26 September.

We congratulate the new board members and we pray for them to continue faithfully to serve our Lord in this Ministry that He has lovingly given us.

We also congratulate **Sunny Kuan**, Immediate Past President of Serra Club of Macau, on his recent nuptials to Jessie. We pray for the Lord's abundant blessings on the newly married couple and that they will put Christ in the centre of their marriage. Congratulations, Sunny & Jessie!



Inaugural Speech of 67th President of Serra International The Year Ahead



**Inaugural Speech of
John Marcus "Tomi" Asenuga,
67th President of Serra International
At Serra's 68th
International Convention
Anchorage Alaska U.S.A.
5 September 2010**

**“The power of prayer
is what has brought
me to where I stand
tonight.” - Tomi Asenuga**

Your Eminence, Your Excellencies, Reverend Fathers, Deacons, Sisters, Brothers, fellow Serrans, and brothers and sisters from around the world:

When one first joins Serra, it certainly is not with the goal of becoming President. One joins Serra because its objectives and purposes align with one's own – a fervent desire to be a co-operator with the Holy Spirit in fostering and promoting vocations to the ministerial priesthood and the desire to answer the call to personal holiness.

Since I joined Serra, I have always loved what it stands for. My own bishop, His Eminence Anthony Cardinal Okogie, who, by the grace of God is here with us tonight, always encourages me to strive to do Serra's work for vocations. He taught us that the secret of Serra's success is prayer. The power of prayer is what has brought me to where I stand tonight.

Thank you all for your confidence in me. I feel honored by the nominating committee's and the delegate's actions in electing me as your President. Please pray for me and for Serra as we face the year ahead.

When I joined Serra, I became imbued with a powerful zeal to do its work. Yet, over the years, I came to understand that, to be effective, we Serrans must bend our wills to the Almighty's, allowing the Holy Spirit to direct us.

The story is told of our first Pope, St. Peter leaving Rome. You might say he was abandoning his vocation – the path that God had put before him. The Lord appeared, asking, "Quo Vadis?" – "Where are you going?" This question resonates with all of Christ's followers, from the Pope on down to each of us.

Where are we going? And where is Serra going? To know where we are going, it's important to know where we've been and then develop a road map that will lead us into the future. Our road map is our vocation objective – something that has remained largely unchanged throughout Serra's 75-year history.

We proudly, firmly, and resolutely foster and promote vocations to the sacred priesthood, and we proclaim that priestly vocations are a gift from the Lord, and that they are an example of the powerful mystery of God's love for us.

As we begin another era in our history, let us communicate and carry out our work in sincerity and truth.

What does it mean to communicate Serra in sincerity and truth?

Inaugural Speech of 67th President of Serra International

The Year Ahead

Sincerity, I believe, means an openness, a transparency, a willingness to examine not only our strengths, but also our weaknesses.

Where do we fall short? What can we do better? How can we better communicate Serra's message to a world filled with noise – a world that is increasingly deaf to the message we have to proclaim? How do we engage in new media and technologies to communicate between ourselves and to reach new audiences, especially the young?

Membership in virtually all fraternal organizations and groups such as Serra is falling, especially among youth and young adults. We need to ask ourselves how do we utilize new methods, such as social media, to reach this younger generation? For whoever wants that generation most, will get them.

We need to promote ideas such as that of a group of mothers from Omaha, Nebraska. They're using priest trading cards to foster vocations and support the Archdiocesan seminarian fund. There is no reason why Serra Clubs around the world couldn't adopt such an idea.

Communicating Serra in sincerity and truth means staying close to Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. [John 14:6]

In addition to reaching the young, we also need to ask how we can reach those areas of the globe where Serra Clubs do not exist or where Serra Clubs have become inactive.

As the first Serra President from the continent of Africa, I recognize the great potential to introduce Serra to the countries that make up Africa, many of which are experiencing a tremendous growth in religious faith and vocations. During my tenure, I intend to launch Serra across the African continent. To do this successfully, all hands in the entire Serra ship must be on deck.

Africa, the missionary land of yesterday has become the leaven for the global Church of tomorrow. From the spiritual wealth of Africa, missionary priests are being called to serve in the materially wealthy but spiritually poor countries of Europe and North America.

How do we, as Serrans, stand ready to take advantage of this global shift? This is a clear message to us all that Serra must be a global organization just as the Church herself is. Serra must be united and stand together to execute this task successfully, because our unity will give us the strength to succeed.

Earlier, I asked, where are we going?

Hopefully, we are all headed toward the same place – our heavenly home. For some of us, that might come peacefully while we sleep. For others it might come as the result of a long illness. For still others, it might come as it did for my brothers in Christ, Archbishop Munzehirwa of Zaire and Cardinal Biayenda of Congo-Brazzaville, both martyrs for the faith. For still others, it might come as suddenly as tomorrow. Whenever and however that time comes, let us not waste a moment. Let us strive to go forward together, united in Christ, keeping our destination always before us while doing the work of the Church here upon earth.

Fellow Serrans, know that by supporting the Church's priests around the world through your prayers and actions, you are doing work that is vital to the Church. Be guided by the words of Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 5, verses 14-16:

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Christ's final command to his apostles was: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations..."

We've been given our marching orders. Now let's pray, and follow those orders.

I want specially to express appreciation to a few people among numerous ones whose prayers, advice and support has sustained me thus far. Your Grace Archbishop Felix Job, my fellow Serrans from all clubs in Nigeria, my good friend and brother Jerome Elaiho, Ignatius Adegunle and his loving wife Bolatito, the complete list of 60 well-wishers who signed up to accompany me to Alaska, but could not make it because they couldn't obtain visas to travel. I commend John Woodward and the staff of the Serra International office for their support which I trust will continue.

I thank my wife Christine for her support and patient endurance in my changing work schedule. My sons Joseph and Paul have made me proud as a father with their presence here and the courtesy shown to all people with whom they have interacted.

I thank Almighty God for keeping us to this day and entrust the future into His Hands.

God bless you all!

Mary, Mother of Vocations, pray for us!

Biography of Serra International's 67th President John Marcus "Tomi" Asenuga



I was born into the Catholic family of Anthonio and Cecilia Asenuga, both of blessed memory, over seventy years ago in Lagos, Nigeria. My earliest formal education was in a Catholic school in Lagos while my secondary school education was at an Anglican missionary secondary school at Ijebu-Ode, about 80 kilometers from Lagos. Most students fortunate enough to attend this school as boarders were exposed early on to a regimen of discipline and integrity.

After completing that stage of my studies, I got a year's work experience as a clerk in one of the Federal Government establishments. As was customary amongst my peers at that time, because of a dearth of tertiary educational institutions for the course of study that I wanted to pursue, I departed Nigeria for further studies in the United Kingdom.

I commenced my study of Architecture in Essex and from there moved to Leeds in Yorkshire, in the north of England for two years, up to intermediate level. I completed my course of study at the Canterbury School of Architecture in Kent, and after a further two years, obtained a Diploma with a thesis of distinction.

Eagerness for more laurels led me to seek admission into Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts into its Graduate School of Design. I was admitted to pursue a three-year course of study in City Planning. Upon completion of my graduate degree programme, I earned Masters Degrees in City Planning and Urban Design having studied both concurrently. After Graduate School, I worked as an Advocacy Planning Consultant for neighborhoods designated as Model City Areas by the Department for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) of the U.S. government in Hartford, Connecticut and later in Roxbury, North Dorchester in Boston, Massachusetts. I subsequently returned home to Nigeria in 1970.

My working life in Nigeria commenced with a three-month stint as an Architect with the Lagos State Government. After that, I accepted the call to national duty and served in the Nigerian Army's Corps of Engineers. I worked on the Barracks Development Project embarked upon by the Government after the country's civil war. I was commissioned with the rank of Captain and became the Army's Pioneer Architect, giving noteworthy service for about 10 years. I voluntarily retired in June 1980 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Thereafter I practiced my profession in the private sector as a consultant and designed many distinguished buildings. Among them are projects executed for various religious bodies, to the glory of God. These include several churches, houses for male and female religious congregations and two major seminaries.

Though now in semi-retirement, I am still significantly engaged in projects, principally as service to both local social communities and private individuals.

The principal professional bodies to which I belong are those in the fields of Architecture and Town Planning. I served as President of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners. I was deemed suitable to be asked to serve as an External Examiner moderating final year students; I have overseen the theses of students in two Nigerian universities.

My dear Christine Adebisi (nee Degun) and I were married over forty-four years ago while both seeking the Golden Fleece in the United Kingdom. By the grace of God, I found both fleece and an incomparable wife. We are blessed with five children and nine grandchildren. As a family, we continue to be sustained by an ethos of love, religious devotion and a healthy lifestyle.

I was introduced to serve in 1987 at the time my local Ordinary introduced the Serra organisation into Nigeria in the Archdiocese of Lagos. As pioneers, we worked diligently – hand-in-hand – to midwife the formation of a Serra Club which was finally chartered in February 1989. I was its first Vice President Programs and have twice been the President of the Serra Club of Lagos, the premier such club in Nigeria.

My activities at the international level of Serra began in 2002, serving as the International Trustee for Africa. I was able to contribute my quota in various deliberations at board and committee meetings and became the President on September 5, 2010 at Serra's 68th international convention held in Anchorage, Alaska, U.S.A.

Biography of Serra International's 67th President John Marcus "Tomi" Asenuga

Serra is very important and dear to me, articulating as it does, in its objectives and dedication, a sense of service that resonates in me. It has been an enormous aid in deepening my commitment to supporting and fostering Church vocations in a myriad of ways. My dream is to plant the Serra seed across the continent of Africa on a large and lasting scale, and to work to establish a culture of vocational support among the Lay Faithful in the various countries of my beloved continent Africa, starting, as all good deeds do, at home in Nigeria.



How long have you been a Serran? What led to your service in Serra International?

I have been a Serran for twenty-one years. I was invited to join Serra in 1987. My local Ordinary who introduced Serra to Nigeria asked that a Serra Club be formed in the Lagos Archdiocese and I was one of the lucky pioneers who midwived the Serra Club of Lagos through till the time it was chartered in February 1989.

Before being invited to join Serra, I had been fulsomely involved in Church activities at various levels, while at the same time personally striving to strengthen and deepen my faith. With the passage of time, as I came to know more about Serra, I both liked and recognised in its objectives the opportunity for practical application of my faith. It fills an important place in my faith. I felt and continue to feel that I discovered a vehicle through which I can and do live my faith.

I became President of my Rotary Club two years before I joined Serra, but my engagement in the work of Serra has always spoken to me in deep and special places. The drive I discovered at the outset has not waned but rather waxed stronger, and my motivation grows. For what I have done through and for Serra to this day, I thank God and pray for his continuing grace that I may be led to do more. I see working for Serra as akin to working towards salvation; by fostering and promoting vocations to the Priesthood and encouraging and affirming vocations to consecrated religious life, we assure and ensure the continuity of the great gift of the Eucharist that our Lord Jesus Christ left us.

As the new Serra International President, what is your vision for the organisation?

My vision for the Serra International is that, even though it has been in existence for 75 years, it be renewed through the spread and growth of its adherents all over the world. By its work in fostering and promoting priestly vocations, Serrans through their prayers and deeds increase awareness among the Lay Faithful to develop a culture of vocation-support as practical practice of our faith.

Today in Africa, Nigeria is the only country where Serra Clubs exist. As it is by the providence of Almighty God that I am now President, I believe the time is now to introduce Serra to other African countries on a larger scale; indeed it is already happening. I will vigorously pursue this agenda throughout and beyond my tenure of office; it is a task in which I shall draw upon the strength and depths of all Serra International's resources throughout the world.

Presently, many see Serra as a Club for wealthy individuals. While money or treasures are important elements in executing many of our programmes, there are other elements of equal importance and necessity. Time for instance is the decimal by which the life God has given us is measured and allocating sufficient time is required for us to be good Serrans. I foresee many people joining the organisation in the future as they are effectively informed of what Serrans stand for and do.

Alejandro Carbajal

Tell us about your past year as SI President. What were the high points, the low points and what were the achievements you are most proud of?

On high points, on a personal level, it was the visit I made to Rome to attend the Audience with the Pope where I had the opportunity to greet him personally.

For Serra International, it was the good response that Serra gave to Msgr. Bonnici's request to improve the communication with the Congregation for Catholic Education and the approach and open dialogue with the United States Council.

The low points were the very few or sometimes non-existent communication between Serra International and most of the Councils and Serra clubs. Another was the membership in most of the Clubs, which is generally few and older and we haven't developed anything to improve this problem.

On the achievements that I am most proud of, it would be the restored communication between Serra International and the Council of the United States and the good response and support I had of all the Serrans around the world during this year.

What are some of the experiences that you have gained which will be useful as you continue to serve Serra Club?

The best experience was to have had the opportunity to meet great people. Despite the different cultures and ways of thinking, we remain committed and united in our great love for the Church and share a common desire to improve, and to pray and work for priestly and religious vocations.

I believe that open communication, dialogue and good-will can resolve any differences and that unity and charity are the foundation of all apostolate, especially in Serra.

We will have greater acceptance and participation of our bishops and priests in the way we renew ourselves, our commitment and the work we do for vocation in unity with the Church.

