



the Serra Leader



Gary Davis

TURNING THE CORNER ON SERRA VISIBILITY!

by USA Council Past-President Gary Davis

A most amazing thing happened to me last Friday as I was leaving my office:

When the elevator arrived at my floor two employees from another department were already inside, ready to head home for the weekend. When I entered, of them asked me what my Serra lapel pin signified.

In response, I gave both of them a brief explanation about Serra being a Catholic organization that supports religious vocations. Despite this explanation, I nevertheless suspected that I still might be asked why our organization is starting another lawsuit about the proposed new bridge over the St. Croix River.

Instead, one person replied with, "Do you mean Serra International? I just heard about them on the radio."

I was shocked! What a pleasant surprise! Maybe we are turning the corner in our effort to develop visibility for Serra!

As you know, the scriptural theme for my presidential year was "Put your light on a lampstand." This philosophy really needs to be implemented on an ongoing basis, not just for one year. Raising our level of visibility as Serrans first of all honors the Lord for whom we undertake our efforts as Serrans. Secondly, it encourages others to step forward to join Serra in its critical work of encouraging and supporting vocations to the priesthood and vowed religious life. Finally, it provides a visible sign to others of our support for priests and religious and affirms them as they live out their vocations.

I'm sure that you could also think of other reasons as to why a greater level of visibility for Serra is necessary, but let's turn our thoughts to ways in which we can raise others' consciousness of Serra.

Starting in our own parishes, we can:

- ☐ Put a Serra ad in the parish bulletin.
- ☐ Have a "vocations corner" in the parish bulletin with news about Serra activities.
- ☐ Write regular vocation articles for the parish newspaper featuring Serran involvement.
- ☐ Wear Serra logo-ed clothing to parish events.
- ☐ Wear your Serra pin to parish activities.
- ☐ Participate as a Serran in the Parish Vocations Committee.
- ☐ Organize and support a parish vocations fair, including a Serra booth or a "God stuff" booth.
- ☐ Speak to your parish after daily or weekday Mass about Serra and recruit new members.

Ideas for things you can do at the metropolitan or district level may include:

- ☐ Form working relationships with your bishop and the vocations director.
- ☐ Place Serra ads in your diocesan newspaper related to major diocesan events.
- ☐ Alert your diocesan and secular newspapers regarding major upcoming events.
- ☐ Provide the media with stories in a format they can use.
- ☐ Obtain drafts of stories from the USAC Communications Committee and modify them to fit your needs.
- ☐ Introduce local reporters to Serran newsmakers and smooth the way.
- ☐ Get Serrans on local radio and TV stations to explain about Serra and what it does.
- ☐ Collaborate with other Catholic groups on major Church events and wear distinctive Serran clothing.

At the national level we can do similar things such as:

- ☐ Make appearances on Relevant Radio and major radio stations where possible.
- ☐ Make appearances on EWTN and major TV stations where possible.
- ☐ Contact national Catholic media outlets and interest them in doing a Serra story.
- ☐ Collaborate with the bishops and other major Catholic organizations.

I think you have a good grasp of the potential for raising our visibility and you can certainly think of many more examples of how that can be accomplished.

Please put this at the top of your Serran agenda and start implementing an Increased Visibility Program now. A good place to start is with your club Communications Vice-President, along with your District Public Relations Director (if your district has appointed one).

Together, with a little effort, we can place a light on that lampstand permanently, and Serra and our Church will reap the benefits.

May God Bless you.

Mary, Mother of Vocations pray for us.

FOCUS: College ministry prepares young adults to say "Yes" to God's call

In 10 short years, 108 men and 33 women have entered seminary or religious life through (or after) their involvement with the Fellowship of Catholic University Students

by Amanda Graf

A free sample, a test drive, a trial run --- wouldn't it be nice if all of life's major decisions came with a sneak preview of the challenges and rewards that are in store? As a missionary on a college campus, Evan Koop, 25, got a helpful glimpse into the spiritual fatherhood he hopes to experience as a priest.

"The idea of ministering to the spiritual needs of others' souls, leading them to Christ --- I got that experience," Evan said. "The way that it really brought me joy and stirred my heart was a great signpost for me on the way to seminary and, God willing, the priesthood."

Evan, now a seminarian with the diocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis, served for two years as a missionary with FOCUS (The Fellowship of Catholic University Students). FOCUS sends young, enthusiastic missionaries to college campuses where they invest their lives in the students they encounter. A missionary's experience of daily prayer, working on a team, and active ministry creates a deep desire to live for Christ and His Church. As a result, FOCUS has proven to be an effective instrument in fostering vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Since FOCUS was established in 1998, 108 men have entered the seminary and 33 women have entered religious life.

Today's college student has more opportunities for success than ever before, but the pressures and distractions of society result in overwhelming opportunities to be led away from the faith as well. A nationwide Gallup poll found that about 85 percent of Catholics, ages 18-25, do not attend Mass every Sunday. Only 0.1 percent of Catholic university students say they would ever consider a vocation to the priesthood.

This is where FOCUS steps in. FOCUS missionaries are dynamic young men and women who have graduated college and are trained in the teachings of the Church, Scripture, and the practical aspect of ministry, all of which is rooted in a life of prayer. The missionaries are then sent to college campuses (typically in groups of four) where they lead Bible studies, organize large group events, and mentor students one-on-one.

Evan said this practical application of his faith gave him invaluable tools for life as a priest. Missionary life taught him how to relate to people and evangelize in a way that was both attractive and effective. He said he wishes every seminarian and priest could have the same experience in FOCUS he had.

"You get over feeling awkward and uncomfortable and find out how to meet people with the Gospel in a way that both speaks to them and draws them further into the heart of the Church," Evan said.

Kirsten Goza, 26, seriously considered religious life when she graduated from the Franciscan University of Steubenville, but after college her debt kept her from pursuing that vocation right away. She was working at a travel agency when a friend told her about FOCUS. Though she had "no idea" what she was getting into, Kirsten knew the call to be a missionary was from God.

"It was life changing," Kirsten said. "I went to a Catholic college and was pretty rooted in my faith, but I attribute to FOCUS what it means to share that in whatever capacity the Lord asks of you."

Kirsten said FOCUS was not a break from her discernment, but rather an opportunity to serve others, develop her prayer life, and live in community with other women -- many of the aspects entailed in religious life. Through personal formation she said the

Lord revealed to her "His bigger plan."

In May, Kirsten became a pre-postulate with the Poor Clares, a contemplative order founded by St. Clare of Assisi. The night before she entered the convent she was enthusiastic and confident about her decision to enter into a life of prayer and penance as a cloistered sister.

"So often we think discernment is chasing after what God wants for us, but really it's a matter of being present to what He's calling you to, and within that, coming to know Him," Kirsten said. "It's really a deep intimate relationship with Him that shows us who we are and gives us the grace to be that."

Kirsten and Evan both agree that the devotion to prayer they learned through FOCUS was at the heart of their discernment process. Each said that they realized God was calling them to religious life when they stopped chasing after the answers and started deepening their relationship with Christ.

"In the end, we're all called to holiness," said Evan. "I think as our lives are conformed to Christ, He will begin to bring out the authentic desires in our own hearts, what He's placed in us from the very beginning, and you can begin to discern your own heart. It's not an exterior call; it's something He's built into the very fabric of your being."

ABOUT FOCUS: The Fellowship of Catholic University Students is a national student outreach organization serving both secular and Catholic college campuses. FOCUS brings the teachings of Christ and the faith and moral traditions of the Catholic Church to college students, giving them the tools to help share those teachings with their friends and family. FOCUS works with the local Catholic campus ministry and with the blessing of the local bishop. In 2007-2008, FOCUS has teams of missionaries on 33 campuses in 18 states. For a list of schools with FOCUS or for more information, please visit www.focusonline.org.

Amanda Graf is a senior at the University of Illinois, and is involved in the FOCUS program at her campus.

Celebrate!

PRIESTHOOD SUNDAY

October 28, 2007

What is "Priesthood Sunday"?

Priesthood Sunday, Oct. 28, 2007, is a special day set aside to honor priesthood in the United States. It is a day to reflect upon and affirm the role of the priesthood in the life of the Church as a central one.

This nationwide event is coordinated and sponsored by the USA Council of Serra International.

What happens on Priesthood Sunday?

The lay faithful of all parishes in the country develop their own special way of marking the day and honoring their parish priests both at Mass and other parish events, such as social celebrations and school activities.

Priesthood Sunday is designed to be an event led by the laity, but you can ask your parish priest to participate by talking about how he experienced and answered his own calling and about priests who have inspired him.

Priesthood Sunday offers an opportunity for priests and their parishioners to build a stronger working relationship. Together, they can dialogue to take an honest look at the challenges of the future and how they can collaborate to meet those challenges as a united force.

What is the USA Council of Serra International?

The USA Council of Serra International is an organization of lay men and women whose mission is to foster and affirm vocations to the ministerial priesthood and vowed religious life in the USA. More than 12,500 Serrans in over 300 clubs nationwide collaborate with their bishops, parishes and vocation directors to fulfill this mission. Through this ministry, Serrans work to further their common Catholic faith. Visit the USA Council at www.serraus.org.

PARISH PLANNING GUIDE

PRIESTHOOD SUNDAY

October 28, 2007

STEP ONE: Plan a liturgy

October 28, 2007

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings of the day:

READING 1: Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 34:2-3, 17-18, 19,23

READING 2: 2 Timothy 4: 6-8, 16-18

GOSPEL: Luke 18: 9-14

*For music and other liturgical ideas,
visit www.priestsunday.org*

Introduction at Mass

Parishioners and lay leaders may choose to celebrate Mass as a way to observe this special day. The parish liturgy committee may consider mentioning "Priesthood Sunday" in the introduction to the liturgy of the day. For example:

To be servants of God, we are called to be humble as Jesus himself was humble. On this, the Thirtieth Sunday of Ordinary Time, the Church in the United States observes "Priesthood Sunday." Through the lens of the paschal mystery -- that is, Christ's own life, death, resurrection and subsequent Spirit-gift who unites us to God's very self -- all of the baptized are called to mission. Faithful servants, whether lay or ordained, recognize that life is a journey. None of us is perfect, which is why we seek God's grace to mold our hearts into the image of Divine Love. We do not do this alone. We belong to a community called Church. This ordered community is served by parish priests who lead us ministerially and spiritually. Today in particular, we pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to inspire the mission of Christ and to strengthen the humble service of our priests.

Suggested Intercessions

The intercessions follow the Creed. After the intercessions, the blessing prayer is proclaimed by the liturgical assembly as a whole or by the chair of the pastoral council.

Introduction: Having heard proclaimed the saving works of God among us, let us now bring before the God of joy and promise our needs.

For God's holy Church: May our pope, bishops and priests continue to minister in humble justice and faithful service. Let us pray to the Lord.

For nations and their governments: May they work toward peace, justice and equity between one another and for the people they serve. Let us pray to the Lord.

For all who have suffered abuse: May those who have been abused by clergy find strength, hope and peace. Let us pray to the Lord.

For an increase in religious vocations: May men and women respond to the Holy Spirit's call to serve the church in the priesthood, diaconate or religious life. Let us pray to the Lord.

For all who suffer from sickness, hunger or loneliness: May they find in our communities faithful support and generous kindness. Let us pray to the Lord.

For nations ravaged by war: May the peace of Christ embrace the affected and the afflicted. Let us pray to the Lord.

For all of us gathered in this holy place: May God continue

to teach us to use wisely the good things God has given us. Let us pray to the Lord.

Good and gracious God, hear the prayer of your people. In your merciful love, inspire our priests to faith-filled service. Answer the prayers of all who believe in you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

If the blessing prayer is used the above prayer is omitted and the following blessing is used. The assembly may be invited to extend both hands over the priest.*

In your loving kindness, O good and gracious God, you sent your Son to be our shepherd and guide. Father _____ continues Christ's ministry of working in the vineyard by sustaining and guiding your holy people. Bless Father _____. Let your Spirit uphold him always in his service to the people of this parish. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The above blessing is adapted from "Blessing of Those Who Exercise Pastoral Service" from the Book of Blessing (Washington, D.C.: ICEL, 1987), p. 689.

Blessing of the Parish Priest(s)

A member of the parish council or other parish leadership organization, or a deacon may invite the members of the assembly to join in a blessing over the parish priest(s). This blessing may take place after the prayer after communion. This blessing is an alternate to the blessing following the General Intercessions.

The ministries of the Church are many and varied, but God shows God's goodness by sending priests to care for the people of God. Today we ask God to bless Father _____, who faithfully builds up the body of Christ.

Reflection

The great theologian, Bernard Lonergan, spoke of a "scotosis" - a blind spot. A blind spot prevents us from seeing clearly. In biblical language, a blind spot results because we harden our hearts and minds. Perhaps we can use Lonergan's "scotosis" for today's parable. Blind spots prevent us from being humble. Blind spots prevent us from being open to the God of Jesus Christ and all God calls us to be. "Humble" or "humility" comes from the Latin word for "dirt" or "dust." Take the image of a worm. A worm is close to the ground, and thus is covered in dirt and breathes dust. To be humble is to recognize that life is messy, especially the spiritual life.

As we know, life is a journey of being open to God's working in and through us by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit offers us the possibility to grow in the image and likeness of Christ. The gospel today has two characters, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector, who are spiritually in separate places. The Pharisee was self-righteous, and was blinded to his faults and imperfections - he lacked humility. The tax collector acknowledged his faults, and was, therefore, humble. While "God knows no favorites" because "the Lord is a God of Justice," God wishes for us to be faithful servants. God wants us to humble ourselves like his very Son, Jesus the Christ. By letting go of all that gets in the way of God's mission, we begin to see more clearly and live more justly. While all of us are called to live our baptismal covenant, some men are called to ordained ministry. In many of our communities, dedicated priests offer their time and talent, despite shrinking numbers and larger parish communities, by leading people not to themselves, but to the God of Jesus Christ. These humble servants serve God willingly, keep faith, and strengthen the community in their baptismal commitment to God's covenant. Whether we are ordained or lay, for our hearts to grow in the love of God, we must humble ourselves in order to see the way God intends. The journey of faith is a road of accepting God's gracious goodness into our hearts in order that we may share the faith, hope and love of God to one another.

STEP TWO: Set up a dialogue

How well do your parishioners and priests know each other? Start a dialogue to exchange concerns and ideas.

Use Priesthood Sunday as a starting point for opening parish communications. Set up an informal parish meeting with your priests. The purpose of this meeting is to give parishioners a chance to listen to priests talk about their everyday lives and need for support, and for the priests to hear the laity's concerns, needs and ideas for mutual support with priests. This meeting requires a little planning:

- Consult with your priest(s) to select a date for the meeting.
- Draw up a meeting agenda.
- Select a volunteer parishioner to record the highlights of the meeting's discussion.
- Decide on a start and end time for the meeting.
- If you need a second meeting, repeat the steps above.

One afternoon, I was waiting for Mass to start at St. John's and there was no priest. Some nuns were visiting from New York and they said they didn't have a priest in all their parishes anymore, and that Eucharistic services were common.

I thought, "What would it be like if there were no priests?" And I asked myself, "What are you doing about it?"

Elizabeth Shrier, Serra Club of Omaha, NE

STEP THREE: Celebrate!

There are many ways to celebrate Priesthood Sunday with the whole parish. Here are some ideas:

- Parish pot luck dinner to celebrate "Father's Day"
- Coffee cake reception following Masses
- School essay, poster or poetry contest
- Banner in front of church
- Send press releases and photos to local press
- Photo on cover of parish bulletin along with biography
- Check the www.priestsunday.org "Share Ideas" section to find out what other parishes and institutions are doing to celebrate the event

Celebration planning:

- Form a celebration committee
- Select dates for the committee to meet
- What parish groups would like to participate?
- Select a date for the celebration

NEED HELP?

Visit www.priestsunday.org!

Expanded versions of materials in this guide are available at the website. You may also download graphics for parish mailings, bulletin notices, and ads for other print materials.

Prayer of Affirmation and Strengthening in Holiness for Priests

*This composition is an arrangement of phrases from ancient ordination liturgies (cf. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites of the Ancient Churches of the East and West*) that emphasize the call to holiness. Ordinations always began with a Rite of Election. The proclamation which begins this prayer was at the end of that rite and invited the people to affirm the calling by prayer that the person would be strengthened in holiness to conform to their calling, recognizing that both calling and holiness come from God.*

Divine Grace, which always heals that which is infirm and supplies that which is lacking has called our beloved brothers to sacred ministry. Let us pray that they be confirmed and strengthened with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Fill them with grace and counsel, that they may love you with all their hearts, all their minds, and all their strength. Grant them irreproachable conduct, steadfast faith, and good works so that they may help and guide your people with unselfish motivation. Grant them wisdom, let their minds be sober and watchful, so that they may be filled with works of healing and words of instruction. May they teach your people in meekness and serve you in holiness with a undivided mind and a willing soul. May they be the light of your only begotten Son that the word of your gospel may be spread and your name may be glorified in every creature. May they serve at your holy altar with pure hearts and good consciences. Grant that they may prosper in all your commandments and the keeping of your laws, so that they may be able to minister joyfully on the day of your coming.



boring but important

*You ask, we answer:
Are clubs allowed to raise funds?
YES!*

by Ed Verbeke, USAC Executive Director

An important issue always discussed at the District Governors' Planning and Training session is how the activities of Serra are funded. We are all familiar with the Per Capita dues that we all pay. We are also familiar with the two Council-recommended assessments of \$5.00-\$3.00 for the District Governor and \$2.00 for the Regional Director to cover his or her out of pocket expenses connected with performing their duties. We also know that the clubs need funds to support their internal and external programs. Finally, we are also aware that even though our dues are not extravagant, the amount, no matter how small, are a frequent cause of emotional discussions. The Council's dues of \$42.00 a year --- \$3.50 a month --- is less than the cost of one gallon of gas in the Chicago area.

How can we keep the cost of membership down while still having the funds necessary to perform our mission? The answer is simple: Fund raising! By having innovative fund raisers we are able to provide the funds needed while building a corps of vocation supporters. Some of these supporters may not be able to become Serrans for various reasons, but are able to support our vocation efforts through participation by their financial contributions.

Are there any prohibitions against a club having a fund raising event. In a word, **no!** For the record, please note:

From the Serra International By Laws: Article XIII, Fund Raising to Promote the objectives and Purposes of Serra:

“While no Serra Club may devote itself to fund-raising as an objective, each Serra Club, at its discretion, may conduct activities to raise funds to assist it in promoting the objectives and purposes of Serra International. All income after expenses raised from such fund-raising activities shall be utilized solely for the purposes of furthering the objectives and purposes of Serra International as determined by the Board of Trustees of the Serra Club.”

From the Serra International Policy Manual, Clubs and Membership:

“Serra Clubs may conduct activities to raise funds to assist it in promoting the objectives and purposes of Serra.” *Passed by the Serra International Board on 02/21/1964; updated on 2/25/2003.*

The USA Council policy 4.1.7 states:

“Serra Clubs may raise funds to promote the objectives and purposes of the Council and Serra International.”

One of my favorite Serrans, the late Wilbur Kruse of Wichita, Kan., constantly promoted something he called “Friends of Serra.” Some of these “Friends” could support Serra financially; others supported Serra through prayer and vocation work. Perhaps your club should find and promote some “Friends of Serra” too.

Autumn: Time to make sure your Serran path is “in his steps!”

Fall is the perfect time to bring members together to refocus on our true mission and ministry in the vocations arena, and to get ready for another year of work. Whether your club adjourns for the summer or not, please take the time to lead your club through a recommitment ceremony. The following items can aid you in this process:

- ☐ **In His Steps** (item 153, \$0.30 ea.): A brochure (pictured at right) containing a brief commitment pledge and renewal prayer.
- ☐ **Spirit of Serra DVD** (item 100, \$5.00 ea.): The perfect resource to acquaint new members with the work of Serra or use as a refresher course. Ask about the accompanying leader's guide and study sheets!
- ☐ **Mission and Ministry Program series** (available for free download from www.serraus.org): A prayerful look at our unique Serran work.

For more information, call the USA Council office at 888.777.6681.



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