



The USA Council of Serra International

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## Chaplain's Manual

*"Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Mt. 9:38)*

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## *Introduction*

...Pastoral work for vocations needs, especially today, to be taken up with a new [vigor] and more decisive commitment by all the members of the Church, in the awareness that it is not a secondary or marginal matter, or the business of one group only,...it is an essential part of the overall pastoral work of each Church, a concern which demands to be integrated into and fully identified with the ordinary "care of souls"... Indeed, concern for vocations is a connatural and essential dimension of the Church's pastoral work.

--John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*

The Serra Chaplain has the wonderful opportunity to be a person of encouragement for those involved with the important work of vocations to the religious life and priesthood. He offers his support to the members of Serra, giving individual clubs spiritual guidance, wisdom and practical help with their endeavors. The Chaplain is also able to be a conduit between the leadership of the club and the Vocation Director, Vicar for Clergy and the Bishop in whose Diocese the Serrans serve. As National Chaplain to Serra, I offer my gratitude for all Chaplains who do so much in supporting those who help others in the important work of calling forth vocations while, at the same time, offering their encouragement to those who have already accepted the call.

--Most Rev. Peter Christensen, Episcopal Advisor, USA Council of Serra International, 2011

## *Purpose of Chaplain's Manual*

This guide is intended primarily for the club chaplain or co-chaplains. It describes the dual responsibilities of the Serra Club Chaplain, both practical and spiritual. It may be helpful to other club officers; for example, when making recommendations to the bishop for a new chaplain.

## Being an Effective Club Chaplain

The Serra club chaplain (priest, deacon, religious sister or brother) has two primary responsibilities, advice to the club and the spiritual development of Serrans. The club Board of Trustees will decide how often the chaplain should be reaffirmed and submit that recommendation concerning the chaplain to the bishop for his consideration. Appointment by the bishop makes the chaplain the bishop's liaison with the club and its spiritual adviser.

To be an effective club chaplain, he or she should understand Serra's organization, its structure, its main purposes, and its history. Above all, the club chaplain must know the three objectives of Serra:

- to foster and promote vocations to the ministerial priesthood in the Catholic Church as a particular vocation to service, and to support priests in their sacred ministry;
- to encourage and affirm vocations to consecrated religious life in the Catholic Church, and
- 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.

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## Position Description for the Club Chaplain

**Title:** Club Chaplain

**Reports to:** Archbishop or Bishop of the local Archdiocese or Diocese; Club President

**Position:** The Club Chaplain serves as the spiritual adviser to the Serra Club and is appointed by the local Archbishop or Bishop.

### Principal Responsibilities:

#### The Club Chaplain:

1. Makes himself or herself aware of the activities of all the club's standing committees and provides spiritual oversight.
2. Attends Club meetings and Board meetings as often as possible and occasionally is the speaker at the meeting.
3. Attends Regional/District and International Conventions when possible.
4. Makes himself or herself aware of all USCCB and Archdiocesan/Diocesan vocation initiatives.
5. Is available to the club Vice President of Vocations to consult and guide on specific programs and activities.

6. Is available to the Club Vice President of Programs for guidance in the use of programs that contain the current teaching of the Bishops, encyclicals and papal letters.
7. Writes a short message for the club newsletter.
8. Encourages other priests to recommend people for Club membership.
9. Is available to advise the Club regarding relationships with Catholic organizations with a vocations component.

**Position Requirements:**

1. Knowledge of Serra’s Objectives and Purposes
2. Ability to work collaboratively with club officers and members
3. Ability to commit sufficient time to adequately carry out the responsibilities of the position

**Desirable Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:**

Ability to communicate clearly and concisely orally and in writing

**Resources for the Chaplain**

- Club officer manuals
- THE SERRAN magazine
- serraUSA magazine and Serra Leader newsletter
- Attendance at Serra International conventions, especially the Chaplains' Program
- Attendance at Serra district/regional conventions and conferences.
- Interaction with other Serra clubs and chaplains
- Dialogue with Serrans, vocation directors, religious, and clergy
- Contacts and conferences with other chaplains

"I've been in many Church organizations and when I was invited to join Serra I thought I'd check it out. I firmly believed God called on me to get involved to promote vocations. At first I wasn't so sure, but when I got acquainted with our chaplain, I felt so very good about the mission of Serra!

"He inspired us with his dedicated leadership, his spirituality, his friendliness and his full belief that we could make a difference doing God's work in promoting vocations and supporting our priests and religious."

*-- Don DeDecker, Serra Club of Northwest Metro Denver, CO*

**Pope John Paul II addressed Serrans in December 2000:**

"Along with prayer, the work of fostering vocations also requires a constant effort to bring the need to people's attention through personal witness, so that God's call may encourage a ready hearing and generous response in those to whom it is directed. This is the aim of your efforts to spread an authentic culture of vocations."

## **A Brief History of Serra International**

The year was 1934; the place was Seattle, Washington, and four Catholic friends had an idea. They decided to meet regularly over a meal to discuss how their Christian values could be lived out in their professional lives. Soon more friends were joining them, and within several months they had decided on an additional focus: the encouraging of vocations to the priesthood and religious life. They chose Padre Junipero Serra, the noted Spanish missionary, as patron.

This small group has grown into Serra International. Serrans today are still dedicated to spiritual growth, continuing Catholic adult education, warm fellowship, and the encouragement of Church vocations.

Serra International chartered its first Serra club in 1935 in Seattle, Washington. Then, as now, the two great needs for the church were for informed Catholic lay leaders who understand and live their own Christian vocations to service, and for dedicated priests and religious.

In 1951, Serra International became aggregated to the Sacred Council for Catholic Education and the Pontifical Work for Priestly Vocations.

In 1986, Serra International voted to welcome women as well as men to membership in the organization.

Today, there are more than 1,100 Serra clubs in over 46 countries with a total membership of more than 21,000 laymen, laywomen and permanent deacons. Each Serra club is a member of both a national council and Serra International. Serra International, which has an office located in Chicago, links Serra clubs around the world.

## APPENDIX A: Duties of Club Officers; Committees

All club officers serve on the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee and the trustees make up the Club Board. A complete description of each position and their respective committees are detailed in the officer manuals.

### CLUB PRESIDENT

- Works closely with the four vice presidents, the secretary, treasurer, chaplain and trustees to strategize, plan, promote and coordinate the activities of the club.
- As the club's leader, ensures that both the goals of the club and the objectives of Serra International and USA Council are accomplished.

### PRESIDENT- ELECT

- Prepares for a smooth transition in the office of president and continuity in club programs.
- Assists current president by active participation in club planning and activities.
- Presides at club meetings in president's absence.

### VOCATIONS VICE PRESIDENT

- Chairs the club Vocation Committee.
- Coordinates and oversees all club vocation efforts.
- Collaborates with the diocesan vocation office on programs.
- Promotes and encourages the formation of parish, diocesan and/or deanery church vocations committees.
- Determines financial requirements of vocation programs and activities.

### MEMBERSHIP VICE PRESIDENT

- Chairs the club Membership Committee.
- Coordinates and oversees all club membership efforts.
- Invites other club members to serve on this committee and as chairpersons of the following subcommittees:
  - Recruitment • Orientation
  - Induction • Extension
  - Retention • Mentoring
  - Determines financial requirements of membership efforts

### PROGRAMS VICE PRESIDENT

- Chairs the club Programs Committee and presides at regular meeting in absence of both the president and president-elect.
- Carries out the third principle of Serra, namely, 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.
- With the Programs Committee, plans, conducts and evaluates programs of adult faith education.
- Determines financial requirements of the programs.

### COMMUNICATIONS VICE PRESIDENT

- Chairs the club Communications Committee.
- Coordinates and oversees all club communications efforts, including club newsletter and webpage, with the Communications Committee.
- Plans long-range for public relations with specific goals for the current year.
- Establishes contact with and keeps the local media informed of Serra events:
  - Diocesan Catholic newspaper editor
  - Religious editors of secular newspapers, broadcast personnel
- Keeps the serraUSA magazine informed of club events.
- Develops a cadre of club spokespersons.
- Determines financial requirements of communication efforts.

### TREASURER

- Maintains club financial records and disbursements.
- Reports financial status of club at each Board Meeting.
- Reports delinquent member status.
- Has accounts audited at close of fiscal year.
- Remits club dues to USAC in timely manner.

## **SECRETARY**

- Notifies members of appointments to club committees and special assignments.
- Assists the club newsletter editor.
- Assists the president in preparing an agenda for each club meeting.
- Prepares and maintains a current roster of membership.
- Takes minutes of each meeting for the permanent file.
- Keeps accurate and permanent attendance records at all club meetings.

- Maintains the permanent club history.
- Authenticates, by signature, all records and documents.

## **TRUSTEES**

- Three to five trustees serve the club
- Term of office: three years
- Knowledgeable and experienced Serra
- Monitors the programs of the club
- Evaluates the operation of the club related to bylaws and policies of Serra.

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## **Club Committees**

As an ex-officio member of every committee, the president ensures that each committee functions effectively and contributes to the overall work of the club by appointing the members of each committee. Every club member has particular skills and interests; assignments can be made accordingly. The key to a successful committee, and successful club, is that each member takes responsibility for some aspect of the club's efforts. Committee appointments should be developed prior to taking office and announced soon after the president's election.

Committees should be organized prior to elections and begin meeting immediately after the elections.

**The president and the executive committee should help club committees:**

- plan the year
- set goals
- develop effective committees
- encourage the full participation of all members
- discourage any one person from "taking over"
- encourage creative discussions that stimulate new ideas

- Determines the financial requirement for the event
- Determines the volunteer effort required for the event

## **Parish Contact Program Chair Responsibilities**

- Establishes and coordinates the club's Parish Contact Program. (Information on this program is shown in the PCP Manual.)

## **Special Events Chair Responsibilities**

- Chairs Special Events: Some examples are:
  - Altar Servers' Annual Picnic
  - Seminarian Luncheon
  - Bishop Dinner
  - Day at the Seminary



## APPENDIX B: THE CHARISM OF SERRA

by Reverend Joseph Cisetti, Chaplain  
Serra Club of Kansas City, Missouri

Each religious order is marked by a charism, a gift to share with the Church and the world. These charisms complement rather than oppose each other. Though their principal charism is prayer, contemplatives believe in mission work. Missionaries believe in prayer. Each community highlights one or more aspects of the Christian life. They accentuate what all of us should be doing in some way. Thus, while most of us are not called to join the Missionaries of Charity, we are all called to be concerned about the poor.

Just as each religious community has a charism, so does Serra. The charism for Serra is to be a leaven for vocations in the Church and in the world. The vast majority of Catholics will never join the Serra Club and yet all Catholics are called to be concerned about vocations to the priesthood and religious life. As with religious communities, Serrans highlight one important aspect of the Christian life. They highlight what every Catholic should be doing in one way or another.

To be a leaven for vocations means sharing a concern about living the Christian vocation well and in bringing concern and attention to priestly and religious vocations. A little bit of yeast can make the whole dough rise. Serrans can be that leaven in the Church and in the world today. The only limits on ways to do this are our own imaginations.

*Fr. Joseph Cisetti, Pastor, St. Bridget Parish  
Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Mo.  
Serra Club Chaplain since 1997*

Missionaries in foreign missions 'give by going' to these missions. Most members of the laity, and Serra in particular, 'go by giving' of their material goods to support those who have gone to do God's work. God blesses both.

*Fr. Steven Wood, Pastor, Holy Family Parish  
Ciudad Guyana, Bolivar, Venezuela*

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