



The USA Council of Serra International

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# **Organizing a New Serra Club**

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# Foreword

*Why are we going to the next diocese or next town to form a new Serra club?*

*Consider the following:*

“Your organization (Serra International) tends the seedbed of God’s planting, his gentle summons to respond to these special vocations within the family, the local community, the parish and the diocese.”

- *Pope John Paul II*  
*(to the Serra International Board)*

“On behalf of the Church, I must tell you of my esteem and my encouragement for your numerous initiatives in favor of vocations. It is really admirable that laypersons, deeply convinced that the Church and society needs priests and religious, take as a purpose of their commitment as Christians prayer and hard-working action for the spread, development, perseverance, increase and assistance of vocations. You are mindful in this of Jesus’ words, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’ ”

- *Pope John Paul II*  
*(to Serrans)*

“The deep value of being a Serran, that which keeps us involved and committed, is that in Serra we are formed into a Christian community that gives moral and spiritual support to our lives.”

- *Thomas Ransdell*  
*Serra Club of Louisville, KY*

## Definitions

There are three stages of formation of a new club that generally correspond to the following characteristics:

### *Interested*

- Contact with bishop initiated/established
- Informal contact with individuals
- One to four people meet informally

### *Planning Organizational Meeting*

- Contact person name is given to Chicago office
- Informational material requested/mailed

### *Meeting Regularly*

- Formal contact established
- Regular meetings begin
- Contact person may request a bulk mailing of **serraUSA** magazine

### *Preparing Charter Application*

- Progressing toward charter
- Officers elected
- Club activities
- Vocation programs scheduled for six months after charter outlined
- Continue membership drive

## Definition

**Extension Committee:** a committee responsible for the formation of a new club. It is a subcommittee of the Membership Committee of the sponsoring club and is usually composed of a chairperson, a vice chairperson, a chaplain and three or more other members.

## Introduction

Many Serrans say that organizing a new Serra club is the most rewarding experience Serra offers. The Church today is in great need of priestly and religious vocations, and a primary purpose of every Serra club is to encourage, promote and support such vocations. Perhaps nothing we can do has a greater effect than organizing a new Serra club that will continue to work and pray for vocations for years to come. Although each instance is unique and details may vary, the basic procedure as outlined in these steps has proven effective in the past. The order of some of the earlier steps in the procedure may vary or overlap, but they should not be ignored.

Once the preliminary work is completed, a new club can be organized in a relatively short time, perhaps in just three or four months. Your dedication and persistent efforts will overcome many obstacles and you will soon celebrate the new charter with confidence.

The steps that follow outline the preliminary work for your new club-building effort, in addition to planning your first organizational meeting and the charter celebration of the new Serra club.

May God be with you in your endeavors.

## Step 1: Pray!

Do not underestimate the power of your prayer to bring success to your new club-building efforts.

## Step 2: Form an Extension Committee

The growth of the Serra movement depends on the dedication and work of this extension committee. While the district governor is charged with the responsibility to form new Serra clubs, it is the help and support of the Extension Committee that significantly determines that a club-in-formation will be a success.

The Extension Committee should be prepared to make a two-year commitment to the new club-building efforts of the district. This will provide consistency and continuity to each new club formed. The committee should include:

- a chairperson,
- a vice chairperson,

- the district governor,
- Serrans from the sponsoring club,
- Serrans from the district,
- the regional director and membership coordinator acting as support persons.

At least one of these members should have had previous success in membership campaigns or club-growth programs.

The vice chairperson should act for the chairperson in his or her absence. This way there will be experienced leadership at all times during the club's formation period.

The Extension Committee may be affected by subsequent steps, so the membership of this committee may be adjusted accordingly.

Pray!

### **Step 3: Identify an Area to Build a Serra Club**

**Regional Leadership:** The development of new clubs has provided the largest gain in Serran membership in the United States. In the USA Council, regional directors have been requested to assist district governors in developing new clubs in those dioceses that have no Serra clubs. Regional directors can assist in approaching bishops and vocation directors.

**District Leadership:** There are excellent written materials, manuals and videos available for starting new clubs. The governor should be familiar with these resources to properly advise and evaluate the efforts to start new clubs. New materials are being developed constantly. To determine if these may be appropriate for your district's efforts you should call and discuss these with the USA Council Membership Coordinator.

The identification of the target area may come from any one of a number of sources:

- An existing Serra club may see the need and possibility for forming a new club.
- An individual Serran may have a special interest in forming a new club in a specific area.
- The district governor or USAC regional director may see the need and possibility for a new club in a given area.
- Serra International may request that additional clubs be started in a given area.

- A bishop or another member of the clergy may ask Serra International or an existing Serra club to start a club in a given community.

In dioceses where there are one or more active Serra clubs, those clubs, along with the district governor, can best identify areas for potential clubs. In dioceses where there is no Serran presence, that is, neither a Serra club nor a district governor is assigned for that diocese, usually the See city would be the target area for the first Serra club in the diocese.

Pray!

#### **Step 4: Evaluate the Resources and Means**

- Read the manual, *Organizing a New Serra Club*.
- Communicate throughout district and USAC to the local level.
- Consult the district governor and district council to determine what each club is doing in starting new clubs and to learn if their membership efforts have been successful.
- Form a knowledgeable and trained Extension Committee. Again, specific assistance is available from the USAC Office in Chicago in orienting and training Serrans who will be on the Extension Committee. Request for this staff assistance may be obtained by contacting the Executive Director.
- Meet regularly with the Extension Committee, the district and sponsoring club leadership to learn about the target areas for new Serra clubs.
- Make sure the district leadership has completed the following tasks:
  - Chosen a realistic target area and done homework.
  - Met or made plans to meet with the bishop and local clergy to secure their support.
  - Established a time frame that should lead to charter within one year.
- Determine if there is a priest in the area who strongly supports the establishment of a Serra club and who could be an enthusiastic Serra chaplain.
- Determine if the Catholic population in the area is sufficient to support a Serra club.

- Determine if the clergy in the area are favorably disposed to the formation of a Serra club. If not, nearby clubs must examine themselves and determine whether they have been effective in promoting vocations or whether it is just a matter of the clergy not being aware of what Serra is doing.
- Determine if there is an active, strong, nearby club that can be a sponsoring club. If not, some creative methods must be used to get the new club started.
- Determine if there are any past district governors or other individuals in the district or even in neighboring districts who have had success in establishing new clubs and who can be called upon to lend their advice and expertise.
- Determine if there is an individual who is willing to make the commitment to lead the effort to start the new club.
- Determine if there is a District or Regional Council in the area. If so, it can be the source of valuable help.
- Determine if there is another club already working to establish a new club in the same (or overlapping) area. Check with the membership coordinator of the USA Council to verify whether or not this is so.

If there is no Serran presence in the diocese, someone familiar with the diocese, such as a pastor or vocation director, should be consulted for advice in these matters.

Pray!

## **Step 5: Establish Structure and Communication of the Club-in-Formation**

All Serra clubs-in-formation need the help and support from the other Serra clubs in the district. Furthermore, the extension committee should involve the district governor, regional director, and membership coordinator to assure that the new club receives the necessary and available assistance to successfully charter this new club.

While the Extension Committee plans the initial meeting (see p. 30 for meeting agenda), they will note that throughout the formation they need to provide guidelines for the club-in-formation to eventually elect temporary officers. The temporary officers will assume planning the meetings and establishing vocation, program, communication, and membership committees.

### **Suggested Resources**

The following background materials are available from the USA Council:

- What is Serra? (a booklet for new members) - item 179
- *Fifteen Ways to Promote Church Vocations in Your Parish* - item 14
- *Seven Steps to Forming a Church Vocations Committee in Your Parish* - item 13
- *Serra International information brochure* - item 77
- *This is the USA Council Serra International* - item 80
- *Building a New Serra Club brochure* - item 189
- *Gold Plastic Double-sided Prayer Card* - item 177
- *Introduction to the USA Council Serra International* - item 216
- *The Spirit of Serra orientation program with video*: - items 100, 231, 232, 233

Handbooks are available to explain the duties and responsibilities of:

- Serra members
- President
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Membership Vice President
- Program Vice President
- Communications Vice President
- Vocations Vice President
- Chaplain

Additional materials are available through the USA Council catalog.

The governor and Extension Committee should attend each of the club-in-information meetings and report the club-in-information's progress to USA Council membership coordinator. Establish procedures for regular flow of information between the Extension Committee, governor and the USA Council office in Chicago. The Extension Committee will assist the club-in-information to publish a newsletter. This newsletter develops interest, reminds prospective members of scheduled meetings, and gets them involved immediately.

## **Step 6: Secure Support from the Bishop**

No Serra club can be organized and chartered without the support of the bishop. The sponsoring club president, the district governor, the deputy district governor, the district governor-elect or the chairperson of the Extension Committee, or some combination of the above, should meet with the bishop, if at all possible, to request his support. But the bishop should not be contacted until it is certain that, given his support, an honest and concerted effort will be made by the sponsoring club to get the new club started.

To prepare for your meeting with the bishop:

- thoroughly reflect on possible answers to any searching questions that the bishop might have, i.e., what can Serra do in my diocese?
- take a set of Serra manuals and pamphlets to give him and
- obtain additional background material from Serra International and USAC.

At the meeting with the bishop, depending on his prior familiarity with Serra, your agenda could include:

- careful review of the history, aims and activities of the Serra movement (Many bishops are not acquainted with Serra and its objectives.)
- discussion of Serra's potential for cooperative vocation work in the diocese
- emphasis on faith formation

The bishop might refer you to the vocation director in the diocese to be certain that both the director and the bishop are in agreement relative to a new Serra club.

The bishop may express his support in any of the following ways:

- his personal invitation to laity, priests and religious to attend the first meeting of the club-in-information,
- his attendance at the first meeting or assignment to a vocations office representative,

- a written endorsement to be shared with laity, priests and religious or
- a verbal endorsement extending best wishes for the club's success.

Pray!

## **Step 7: Get in Touch with the USA Council**

The membership coordinator of the USA Council of Serra International is the source of help in the form of both advice and resources, and is just a toll-free phone call away (888-777-6681). The *chairperson* of the Extension Committee should contact this office as soon as possible after his or her appointment with the bishop and should keep it informed of all progress, difficulties and any change in the efforts to start the new club. Moreover, materials needed to get the new club started are available at no charge from USAC.

Send copies of all important communications to the district governor and the USAC regional director.

Pray!

## **Step 8: Ask the Bishop to Appoint an Acting Chaplain**

Ask the bishop to appoint a priest, deacon, or religious sister or brother as acting chaplain to work with the Extension Committee. The acting chaplain is probably the most important factor in the successful organization of a new Serra Club, as the enthusiasm of the chaplain carries through to the prospective members who are not familiar with Serra. Although the acting chaplain is appointed by the bishop, the Extension Committee can submit a list of recommendations for this position. It is important that he be interested in both objectives of Serra. Under no circumstances should the responsibility for organizing the new club be placed upon the chaplain because Serra is a lay organization.

The acting chaplain has three main areas of responsibility:

- to serve as the spiritual advisor and counselor to the new Serra club,
- to motivate and inspire activities and
- to work closely with the Extension Committee.

When the acting chaplain is assigned:

- arrange an introductory meeting between the acting chaplain and as many of the following as practical: the district governor, the sponsoring club president, the chairperson of the Extension Committee, a current Serra chaplain and another well-informed Serran,
- provide him with Serra literature and
- invite him to attend every meeting of the new club (including board of trustees meetings).

Pray!

### **Step 9: Identify Prospective Members by Meeting with Pastors, Local Clergy, and Religious**

Prospective members will be those who have shown Christian leadership or the potential for Christian leadership by their devotion to their families, their church, their community. To target them for membership in the new club:

1. The Extension Committee should contact the local pastors, clergy and religious to inform them of the new club-in-formation. Request to make a presentation similar to the new member orientation. This orientation program is very important. This program is perhaps their first introduction to Serra's work. The extension committee is encouraged to have prepared a presentation to articulate and communicate what Serra International is, does, and plans to do for the local church. The orientation program/meeting that accomplishes its goal to give the clubs' witness to Serra International and its vocation ministry to parishes, (arch)diocese, and church, will have shown to the local pastors, clergy, and religious their needed participation and support for the club-in-formation. At this time, please invite the pastors, clergy, and religious to share with the extension committee the names and addresses of those persons they feel would consider membership and involvement in the new Serra club. Contact can be made through:
  - a preliminary meeting with the vicar or dean, to inform him of plans and seek his advice;
  - deanery meeting or another regularly scheduled meeting;
2. When possible, obtain mailing lists for lectors, lay ministers, ushers and parish council members (present and past).

3. Request names of potential members from deacons, religious, Serrans and other lay people.
4. Identify a core group of leaders.

Pray!

*End of Preliminary Work*

*Begin Building a New Serra Club*

## **Step 10: Plan the First Meeting**

*Invite Prospective Members*

- Choose the time and place of the first informational meeting. It is recommended that the first meeting and subsequent meetings' time and place is not changed.
- Develop an invitation list, preferably on a computer or word processor, using the names and addresses of prospective members suggested by the clergy, laity and religious. (A computer or word processor will make future updates easier to handle.)
- Write a letter of invitation to each prospective member about the first meeting. Have the letter signed by the Extension Committee, possibly the acting chaplain, the pastor (if he agrees) or the local person who gave the candidate's name.
- If he is willing, the bishop may write his own letter of invitation on his letterhead to each prospective member. Provide the bishop with a sample letter. Offer to do the manual work (e.g., copying, stuffing envelopes, mailing, etc.).
- Mail letters at least two to three weeks in advance of the meeting.
- Include response cards with your invitations.
- Phone the prospective members who do not initially respond.
- Confirm the date, time and place with a call to those who said they would attend — the personal touch is always most successful.

*\*See Appendix A for sample Letters of Invitation.*

### **Suggested Resources**

The following list contains some materials available for new clubs in formation:

- Complete set of officer manuals
- *Handbook for Serrans*
- *Serra International Brochure*
- Double-sided Vocation Prayer Cards
- “31 Club” cards, posters and information brochures
- *What is Serra?* booklet
- National Coalition for Church Vocations (NCCV) catalog
- USA Council merchandise catalog
- Membership applications
- *SerraUSA magazine*
- *Introduction to the USA Council* brochure
- *Spirit of Serra* DVD
- *God's Call: A Family Affair* video
- *The World of Serra: Running a Successful Serra Club* video
- *Programs Manual Part II: Program Themes*

### *Plan the Program*

The orientation program is very important. This program is perhaps the first introduction to Serra's work many people will have and it is, of course, the program that all of you have made personal invitations to your peers to hear. The extension committee is encouraged to have prepared a presentation to articulate and communicate what Serra International is, does, and plans to do for the church. The orientation program/meeting may be a significant portion of a regular meeting devoted fully to the orientation of new members. The meeting may include a meal and hospitality so that the new members and Serrans may get acquainted.

We recommend that the guests and Serrans wear nametags. The orientation program/meeting should follow an agenda that fully describes the history and tradition of Serra International. It should also include a description of the new club's potential programming and outreach. The club chaplain is encouraged to describe the spiritual dimension of the new club. The orientation program/meeting must describe the new proposed club structure and practices.

The orientation program/meeting that accomplishes its goal to give the clubs' witness to Serra International and its vocation ministry to parishes, diocese and church, will have shown to its prospective members their needed participation and open invitation to join.

The committee members are also responsible for obtaining completed new member application forms and dues deposits. The new Serran should identify a committee that he/she would like to work on and be given some information about that committee's work.

At the close of the orientation meeting, the presenters should repeat and amplify the invitation to join. The Extension Committee should be prepared to schedule regular club meetings. The Extension Committee should also encourage the prospective members return and bring a friend to introduce to the other members.

Pray!

*\*See Appendix C for sample agenda.*

## Step 11: Begin Regular Meetings

The first regular meeting should be held within two weeks of the meeting. The Extension Committee is responsible for the continued formation and orientation at each of these meetings until the new club is chartered. During this time, the Extension Committee needs to:

- invite those who attended the first informational meeting, especially those who signed the membership cards;
- secure good speakers and programs to follow the brief orientation;
- begin a club-in-formation newsletter;
- plan traditional Serra vocation activities, like Altar Servers Awards, 31 Club, affirmation program for area priests and support for Vocations Week activities;
- encourage the members of the club-in-formation after the first few meetings to identify roles they may want to assume: president; vice presidents for vocations, programs, membership and communications; secretary; and treasurer (the timing for the election of acting officers varies with each club-in-formation, but is typically required at the time of charter application);
- keep your bishop, district governor, USAC regional director and the membership coordinator of the USA Council informed of the progress of the new club. Including them on the mailing list of the Club-In-Formation newsletter is a good way to do this (see p. 29); and
- encourage members of the sponsoring club, and especially the Extension Committee, to attend as many meetings of the club-in-formation as possible, but they should pay for their own meals; they should not be a financial burden to the club-in-formation.

The goals of these first meetings is to identify the club's mission and ministry as it fits within the diocesan vocation initiatives. Furthermore, the goals are to include establishing the club's internal and external programs. (Note: the vocation manuals and the program manual are available from the Chicago office.) These "First Days" programs are designed to use the tried and successful programs of the sponsoring club as a model for the new club to begin the work of Serra.

### Additional Suggestions

- Establish a definite pattern for semi-monthly meetings at a set place, day and time, and set a schedule.
- Encourage new members to invite other Catholic leaders to be members of the new Serra Club.
- Publish a club newsletter as soon as possible to develop interest, remind prospective members of the meetings and get them involved immediately.
- Ask the Extension Committee chairperson to write a column in each newsletter.
- Ask the acting chaplain to contribute a message.

The new Serra club needs to determine the needs and concerns of the parish and communities that it wants to serve. The Extension Committee should identify a core group of people who will be best able to determine the model club that will serve the community. This model will vary; feel free to try many formats.

For example, a new Serra club may want to reach out to families with children by providing child care. This would require a meeting place with space for the children to gather during the regular meeting. It would also provide an opportunity for the children to join the adults for shared prayer and refreshments at an appropriate time during the meeting.

At its regular meetings, the new Serra club should create a forum for education and fellowship. This is the foundation on which the new club will begin its vocation ministry. A Serra club will discuss, reflect, and act on ways the club will create a network of awareness, affirmation, support, and prayer for vocations throughout the area of service. The club is successful once it determines its role and function from this discussion and reflection. Please request a copy of the *Programs Manual Part II* from the Chicago USAC office. These programs guide the new Serra club to its unique role and function through group discussion and reflection on Catholic themes as they relate to Serra's mission.

Pray!

## **Step 12: Work to Build Membership**

*Maintain the Focus of the Club-in-Formation*

The focus of the Serra club-in-formation is to obtain the needed members to perform the ministry it wants to accomplish. "**Many hands make light work.**" This statement is very true. Beyond the programs and projects that a club wants to begin, it remains very important to continue to strengthen the new club's efforts by engaging everyone in the mission and ministry of obtaining the needed membership.

To assure continued activity in the new club, the Extension Chairperson (or an associate) should:

- plan to attend all regular meetings and monthly board meetings to follow through with the organizational process;
- commit him or herself to be available for counsel, assistance and support to the acting officers;
- stress the importance of organization and the value of tested manuals;

- point out the importance of reaching a membership of 25 active members as soon as possible in order to charter as a member club of Serra International; and
- stress the value of *the Serran* and *serraUSA* magazines, and regional and international conventions as integral features of affiliation.

In the area of membership, the Extension Committee should:

- involve and counsel the acting Membership Vice President in a strong effort to achieve charter eligibility (25 members);
- encourage new members to invite individuals from all the parishes; and
- form Program, Membership, Vocation and Communication Committees, which will give everyone an immediate sense of purpose.

### *Recruiting New Members*

The whole club-in-formation is on the Membership Committee. We recommend an interim membership vice president to provide leadership and focus to the membership goals of the new club. The club-in-formation is encouraged to select a membership program to use for their membership campaign. See the *Membership Manual* for more information on suggested membership programs. Involve your club membership: ask every prospective member to invite five potential members to the next club-in-formation meeting.

Identify and record a specific time frame for your club-in-formation membership goal. Remind the club that the opportunity to charter gets closer with each new member. In addition, during this time a club may learn valuable lessons it may apply to future annual membership campaigns and the awards that may be earned in the distinguished service and honor recognition awards program.

The USA Council suggests that the Extension Committee recommend that prospective members become members-at-large. Members-at-large pay dues to Serra International in the amount required by Article XI of the bylaws, and shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in Serra International except the right to vote and the privilege of holding office. This means that full membership-at-large is \$74.00 per year; spousal membership is \$37.00 per year. Members-at-large will receive the magazines, will be invited to attend regional or district conventions and the Serra International conventions. Members-at-large do not have delegate privileges at the annual international convention. The Members-at-large will gain knowledge on how to

The *serraUSA* magazine is available in bulk at no cost for each club-in-formation by contacting the Chicago office.

### **Your Club-in-Formation Charter Packet**

When you are ready to move toward charter, all the forms and information you will need are in the charter packet included in the portfolio you received when you started your club-in-formation. The packet is also available online at [www.serraus.org](http://www.serraus.org) or by request from the USA Council office by calling 888.777.6681.

The packet contains:

- Serra International charter application and guide
- Charter Agreement
- Club officers roster report
- Club membership roster
- Tax exemption form
- Suggested local club bylaws
- Charter night program suggestions
- New member induction ceremony
- Officer installation ceremony

create vocation awareness, and the knowledge and ability to organize the new Serra club.

Finally, active members are the best members. Do not immediately overload new members, but assign them to committees with specific tasks to be completed. They must become knowledgeable and active in Serra work. Throughout the organization of your new Serra club, should members decide not join your new club conduct an “Exit” Interview. This exit interview could provide invaluable information to a new club and the extension committee as feedback to make any appropriate changes to new club organization process. The Council may use this information to assist in the further development of its training materials.

## **Step 13: Move Toward Charter**

*Request an Application for Charter*

Congratulations! We are pleased that you have worked together to bring your Serra club-in-formation to these final steps toward charter. The charter process follows these guidelines:

- I. In cooperation with your district governor and your sponsoring club extension committee, the new Serra club must request and file a Charter application. This application includes the roster of officers, the charter members roster, the club resolution for tax exemption, IRS SS-4 form, and charter agreement. The new Serra club is encouraged to review the suggested local club bylaws and modify them for their use.
- II. With the assistance of the district governor, the new club requests these letters of endorsement.
  1. A letter from your bishop endorsing and authorizing the establishment of this club his (arch)diocese.
  2. A letter from the district governor supporting the work of the club.
  3. A letter from the regional director supporting the work of the club.
  4. A letter from the sponsoring Serra club president indicating his or her club's support and endorsement granting this charter.
- III. The new club should have completed membership applications and the initiation fees accompany this application. Note: Serrans transferring to this club from another club must com-

plete an application and indicate on it that it is a transfer application (no initiation fees are necessary for these members).

IV. Finally, schedule the Charter Night Celebration!

Thank you for all of your work for Serra.

Note: The monies rquired at the time of a charter application are the initiation fees for each individual member. The initiation fee is 25% of the Serra International dues. For those members of the new club who are transferring from another Serra club, these fees are waived. The financial obligations of the club begin once the club is chartered.

Twenty-five active members are normally required before a club is ready for charter. The Serra International Board of Trustees will make exceptions. However, this requires the charter application to be considered at a board meeting. New members and new Serra clubs are welcomed into Serra in a formal induction ceremony (see your club-in-formation application packet for a suggested ceremony program or call the USA Council at 888.777.6681 for a copy).

Pray!

**Step 14: The Charter Presentation**

.....  
.....  
*The work is just beginning...*

When all the intermediate details have been completed, plan the formal charter function, “Charter Night.” Serra International will provide instructions for organizing a charter celebration and sample programs when the application is approved.

Schedule the Charter Night for a date when the bishop can attend. It is strongly recommended that the charter celebration begin with Mass, celebrated by the bishop, if possible. Depending upon when and where the Charter Night is held, the Mass may be a regularly scheduled Mass in a parish church, or it may be a special Mass said, for example, in a hotel meeting room just for those attending the dinner and charter program. Schedule the Charter Night at least six weeks after the charter application is submitted.

Once the date is chosen, the club and the district governor notify the USAC Office. A representative of the Serra International and/or USA Council boards may be able to attend the Charter Night. At this time the Charter Committee appoints its members to the specific tasks for the actual charter function. These committees and their duties include:

***Arrangements Committee:*** The Arrangements Committee is responsible for the making the room and catering arrangements for the opening liturgy, hospitality room, and banquet. The new Serra club is encouraged to invite its members' families, clergy, and religious from the area of the diocese within which the club is chartered as well as the diocesan vocations director and other dignitaries from the Pastoral Center. In addition, an invitation should be extended to the district governor, the regional director, the sponsoring club and the Serra International and USA Council boards.

***Hospitality Committee:*** The Hospitality Committee is responsible for welcoming and greeting the guests as they arrive. The committee is also responsible for giving the guests the name tags, the charter program and the Liturgy aide for the optional Eucharistic Liturgy. Its mandate is to be that "no one is a stranger" at the close of the program.

***Program Committee:*** The Program Committee is responsible for determining the content of the charter program and planning the Eucharistic Liturgy. In cooperation with the district governor, the committee nominates a Master of Ceremonies for the charter program. A suggested program may be found in the appendix. The charter program should include a Eucharistic Liturgy and may be planned in consultation with the bishop, the Serra club chaplain, and the vocations director. The induction of new members and the Serra club officers may take place immediately following the introduction of the guests and opening remarks. While the Eucharistic Liturgy may serve as a commissioning ceremony for the new Serrans, the charter program should include time for the new members' and particularly the Serra club officers' induction ceremony. Suggested new member and Serra club officer inductions and a sample liturgy are available from the USA Council Office. Please feel free to adapt these to local custom and convention while remaining within the traditions of Serra International.

***Communications/Publicity Committee:*** This committee is responsible for the preparation and printing of the invitations to

the dignitaries and the nearby Serra clubs, name tags, charter program, optional Liturgy aide, press release for the diocesan and secular press, copies of any prepared remarks made during the charter function, and finally reporting with photos of the event for the Catholic and secular press. The committee is also responsible for arranging for a photographer. The necessary information should include the guest list, date, time and place, and other attendant information concerning the event. Copies should be forwarded to the Serra International and USAC offices.

### ***Presentation of Gifts and Welcome***

The Charter presentation should immediately follow the induction of the new Serra club officers. The district governor or his or her representative will present the charter. The new club president will accept the charter for the new Serra club.

The Serra International Board representative presents the gift of the statue of Fr. Junipero Serra from the Serra International Board. The sponsoring club or Extension Committee will present their gifts immediately afterward. These gifts are traditionally any of the following: the Serra bell, gavel, and club banner. These gifts may be presented to club president or other designated officer or member of the new club. An optional presentation may include the club president's lapel pin, the chaplain pin, new members' pins and member certificates. All these gifts and materials are available from the Serra International Materials Catalog.

### ***The Dinner/Reception and Program***

The Master of Ceremonies (MC) is respectfully asked to adhere to his or her time schedule rigidly. The MC shall call for the invocation of prayer or blessing before meals. In anticipation of the beginning the program immediately following the meal (perhaps during coffee or dessert) the MC will make brief opening remarks and open the program with the induction ceremony. Immediately following the induction of the club officers, the presentation of the charter and gifts may take place. The Serra International or USA Council representative may now be invited to make his/her remarks of congratulation and welcome to Serra International USA Council. Finally, the MC will invite the bishop or representative of the diocese to deliver the keynote address for the charter function. At the close of these remarks, the MC will invite the chaplain or vocations director to lead the prayer for vocations and thanksgiving after which the bishop is asked to give his episcopal blessing.

The governor will receive the official charter once the necessary paperwork has been completed. To ensure charter delivery in time for the club's charter night, the governor should be certain all necessary information is returned to the USA Council office six to eight weeks prior to the scheduled charter night.

**Materials needed for Charter Night include:**

- Charter document. This is usually presented by the District Governor.
- Blessed Junipero Serra statuette. It is presented to the new club on behalf of the Board of Serra International and is presented by the International trustee or other Serra International officer.
- Gift from the sponsoring club. This may be a Serra bell and gavel, a Serra Banner or other appropriate gift, normally presented by the sponsoring club's president.
- Membership, chaplain and president pins (optional).

*These should be ordered from the USA Council of Serra International at 888.777.6681 four weeks prior to Charter Night.*

Have as many members of the sponsoring club as possible attend the Charter Night function. Invite members of other Serra Clubs in the district, or possibly other nearby clubs, to attend the charter celebration (at their own expense). In addition to the Serra International Trustee and the USA Council Regional Director, invite other international and national officers, trustees and representatives, present and past, who may be able to attend Charter Night.

**Afterword:**

During the new club's first year, and even longer, the District Governor, the Extension Committee and the sponsoring club should continue to motivate and support the new club and its members. They must continue to show interest and enthusiasm by frequent visits. Leaders of the Extension should make it a point to personally invite the new club members and especially club officers to district or regional activities and accompany them if at all possible. These new members should be introduced as a group early in the program.

Besides visits by members of the sponsoring club to regular meetings of the new club, invite and encourage members of the new club to attend meetings of the sponsoring club. Informal meetings of the officers of both clubs can be advantageous. Encourage joint activities for members of the clubs, especially special events. The newly chartered club will prosper with continuing advice and counsel.

## APPENDIX A: LETTERS AND AGENDA

### Sample Letter of Invitation - from President of Sponsoring Club

*Sponsoring Club Letterhead*

Date

Name

Address

City, State, ZIP Code

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

A meeting is being held to introduce prospective members to Serra International on date. Serra is a Catholic laypersons' organization devoted to encouraging vocations to the priesthood and religious life and to helping fellow members grow in their faith. Because of your Christian leadership abilities and your strong commitment to the Catholic Church in our community, we think you would be interested in hearing the Serra story.

We are inviting you to attend an informational meeting on date to learn more about how Serra meets critical needs in today's church, who its members are and what it can offer you. The meeting will be at place from time. Adequate parking is available where. Someone will be there to direct you to the meeting room.

Please fill out the enclosed stamped postcard indicating whether or not you will be able to attend. We look forward to seeing you and sharing Serra with you.

Sincerely,

President of Sponsoring Club

Extension Chairperson

## Sample Letter of Invitation - from the Archbishop/Bishop

*Bishop's Letterhead*

Date

Name

Address

City, State, ZIP Code

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I understand that you have been invited to attend a meeting on date to learn about Serra International.

Serra Clubs make a significant contribution to the Church's efforts to encourage vocations to priesthood and religious life. Members gain through the fellowship and ongoing Christian education offered in their regular meetings. Serra helps Catholic laypersons grow in their faith and action.

The Serrans I know are Catholic leaders in many ways. I hope you will attend the meeting to hear the Serra story.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop/Archbishop

Diocese/Archdiocese

## Sample Letter of Invitation - from Acting Membership Chairperson of New Club

### *New Club Letterhead*

Date

Name

Address

City, State, ZIP Code

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

On the recommendation of your pastor, your name was presented to the trustees of the Serra Club as a prospective candidate for membership in Serra. Your Christian leadership gifts and interest and involvement in the Church and community made it important for the Serra Club members representing the Catholic churches in this area to invite you to a Serra meeting.

The Serra Club holds a luncheon meeting twice a month in a continuing effort to foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The camaraderie among the members and the opportunity to grow in our faith makes Serra an especially enriching organization to belong to.

We invite you to be our guest for our luncheon meeting at place on date at time and again on date at time. The meeting will conclude at time.

A Serran will be contacting you prior to this meeting. We look forward to seeing you on date and time.

Sincerely,

Membership Chairperson

Encl: Club Membership Roster  
Serra Brochure

## Sample Letter of Invitation - from New Chaplain

### *New Chaplain's Parish Letterhead*

Date

Name

Address

City, State, ZIP Code

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

In the last few years much has been said and written about the so-called "crisis" in vocations to the priesthood and religious life. It is a crisis that, with the passing of each year, is felt ever more acutely in our country and in our archdiocese.

(Arch)Bishop \_\_\_\_\_ has charged his priests with the duty of promoting vocations at every possible opportunity. Toward that end, I have made vocation promotion a priority in my preaching and in my teaching to the youth of our parish. It will remain a priority of mine, not only during my years at our parish, but also throughout the remaining years of my own priesthood. In fact, there are few priorities that I feel more committed to.

Vocation promotion, as essential as it is to the future life of the Church, is not something that I can tackle alone. I need your help. Therefore, I am inviting you to attend an informal informational meeting with the officers of the Serra Club, an organization of Catholic laity whose objective is the promotion of Church vocations. THE MEETING WILL BE ON date, time, place . \_\_\_\_\_

Recently (Arch)Bishop \_\_\_\_\_ gave his permission for the formation of a Serra Club in our district of the (arch)diocese. This invitation is being extended to you and other Catholics from our neighboring parishes with the hope and the expectation that we will begin to do our part to aggressively promote and support Church-related vocations among our youth and among the parishes of our district.

I extend this invitation to you, accompanied by the sense of urgency I feel for the future of priestly ministry, both in our parish and in the Catholic Church.

If you are unable to attend the meeting on date , please let me know by calling the parish office.

Let me conclude by expressing my thanks to you for your thoughtful consideration of this invitation.

Sincerely in the Lord,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chaplain

## Sample Letter of Invitation to Priests - from Diocesan Vocations Director

*New Club Letterhead*

Date

Name

Address

City, State, ZIP Code

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I invite you to embark with me on a wonderful endeavor to promote and support vocations to diocesan priesthood and religious life for the Church of name of district. District number of the (arch)diocese of \_\_\_\_\_ has been selected to begin a process of forming and establishing a Serra Club.

Serra International is a worldwide organization of lay Catholic men and women who promote and affirm vocations to the priesthood and religious life. In the more than 50 years since it was founded, Serra has grown into an organization of more than 20,000 members with chapters throughout the world.

Many Catholics have expressed overwhelming concern for the need for more priests and sisters. If this is true, then there should be many in your parishes that would like to help respond to this need. We believe Serra enables one to respond.

Therefore, I invite you and at least four of your parishioners to an INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON date, time, and place.

Enclosed you will find a brochure regarding Serra. You will also find a response sheet for you to complete and return to me in the enclosed envelope by date. I will send a letter to each of the people that you have listed to invite and remind them of the **INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON date**. In addition, a member of the name Serra Club will give them a call.

Thank you for your cooperation and willingness to attend to this important need in our Church:  
**VOCATIONS TO PRIESTHOOD AND RELIGIOUS LIFE.**

Peace and prayers,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Vocations Director

**Follow-up Letter to Prospective Members Who Attended First Meeting,  
but Did Not Commit**

*Sponsoring Club Letterhead*

Date

Name

Address

City, State, ZIP Code

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for attending our Serra Club meeting on date. We hope you will consider becoming a member of Serra and join us in our work for the Church. It was especially good to get to talk with you further during the social period following the presentations and question-and-answer session.

We have enclosed our club newsletter with details of the upcoming meetings. We hope you can set aside the hour and 15 minutes on date to join us. If you have a Catholic friend that might be interested in Serra, please ask him or her to come with you. If you have any further questions, please call.

We look forward to seeing you on date.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Extension Chairperson

## Sample Follow-up Letter After Club Is In Formation - from Acting Chaplain

### *Chaplain's Letterhead*

Date

Name

Address

City, State, ZIP Code

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Those who are familiar with the goals of the Serra Club are aware of its focus to foster, promote and support vocations to the priesthood and religious life. But beyond that, the Serra Club seeks to promote the gospel and our Catholic faith by encouraging its members in fellowship, through education, to fulfill their Christian vocation to service.

Cardinal Stritch, the late archbishop of Chicago, once wrote that “the first function of a Serra Club is to develop resolute Catholic men and women who will stand for things Christian. Serrans must be leaders with big Christian vision, men and women who will bring about a great Christian social renaissance.”

This is the challenge facing the newly formed name of club. Hopefully, the direct result of active membership for the majority of people who join Serra will be their own resurgent sense of vocation, not only within their careers, but especially as they live out their baptismal call to become the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Active membership in the Serra Club can become a specific response to all that our baptism obliges us to. Thus, will a Catholic presence be made more evident in our communities. Thus, will the Church, which is the Body of Christ, be strengthened and revitalized in our midst.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chaplain

## Follow-up Letter to Area Priests

### *New Club Letterhead*

Date

Name

Address

City, State, ZIP Code

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for your interest in forming a Serra Club in your area. Your continued support will be important in helping to attract new prospective members from your parish.

      Name       is the acting Club President and (s)he will pick it up from here. The next three meetings are scheduled for       dates, time, and place      . Other clubs in this district will continue to help as long as your club deems it necessary.

For your information, names of prospects from your parish are listed below. These are people who have attended at least one meeting or have expressed interest.

Thanks again for everything you have done. With continued help from you and other priests in your area, this new Serra Club ought to be chartered soon.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chaplain

## APPENDIX B: Sample Newsletter

### *Newsletter Mast*

The Name of Serra Club Serra Club is an affiliate of Serra International. There are over 600 individual, chartered clubs in 33 countries. It is an organization of Catholic men and women dedicated to the purpose of encouraging and fostering vocations to the priesthood and religious life. This special service to the church is accomplished in various ways:

- by bringing in guest speakers to update us on vocation issues;
- by supporting seminarians with visits and birthday cards;
- by sponsoring retreats for young people interested in religious life;
- by instituting altar boy recognition award programs; and
- by individually and collectively living out our Christian faith by using our gifts to build up the Body of Christ.

Our founding father, Junipero Serra, entered the Franciscan friary in 1729 where he studied and taught philosophy. At the age of 36, Junipero began his missionary vocation to the New World. He continued teaching, preaching and administering the sacraments everywhere from Mexico to several coastal towns and missions in California. Junipero Serra died at age 71 and is currently a candidate for canonization.

Each Serran strives to become more knowledgeable about principles of Catholic faith and current issues in the Church. Through Serran fellowship, speakers and spiritual readings, members grow in their understanding of what it means to be Catholic in today's society.

We invite you to join and learn more about the Name of Club Serra Club. We are pleased to have so many exciting speakers coming in. They are:

March 1 Warner Brown, archdiocesan office, "The Holy Land - Jerusalem, the Jewish, Arab, Palestinian Conflict"

March 15 Sr. Mary Faith, Immaculate Heart of Mary, "Worldwide Role of Today's Sisters"

April 5 Fr. John Johnson, St. John's Seminary

April 19 Fr. Michael Smith, "Morals of Our Priests"

May 3 Richard Henry

*Luncheon meetings are held at the Holiday Inn on Interstate 1.*

#### ***Serra Prayer for Vocations***

O God, Who wills not the death of a sinner \* but rather that he be converted and live \* grant we beseech you \* through the intercession of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin \* Saint Joseph, her spouse \* Blessed Junipero Serra \* and all the saints \* an increase of laborers for your Church \* fellow laborers with Christ to spend and consume themselves for souls \* through the same Jesus Christ \* Your Son \* Who lives and reigns with You \* in the unity of the Holy Spirit \* God forever \* and ever. Amen.

## APPENDIX C: Sample Introductory Meeting Agenda

- |       |                                                         |           |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| I.    | Opening Prayer                                          | 5 min     |
| II.   | Introductions                                           | 10 min    |
| III.  | Bishop (or Representative): Goals and Hopes             | 10 min    |
| IV.   | What Serra is. . .                                      | 10 min    |
| V.    | Vocations                                               | 10 min    |
| VI.   | Serra Outreach (External Programs)                      | 10 min    |
|       | A. Prayer                                               |           |
|       | B. Awareness                                            |           |
|       | C. Affirmation                                          |           |
|       | D. Support                                              |           |
| VII.  | Adult Faith Formation and Education (Internal Programs) | 10 min    |
|       | A. Mission and Ministry                                 |           |
|       | B. Speakers                                             |           |
| VIII. | Club Organization and Structure                         | 10 min    |
|       | A. Club Officers                                        |           |
|       | B. Club Committees                                      |           |
| IX.   | Questions - Discussion                                  | 15-20 min |
|       | A. New Club Formation -- Panel                          |           |
|       | B. Where will Serra meet?                               |           |
|       | C. Time of your next meeting                            |           |
| X.    | Closing prayer -- Serra Prayer for Vocations            |           |
| XI.   | Refreshments                                            |           |

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