

**DETAILED OUTLINE**  
**Membership Development Presentation to Local Clubs**

- 1) Opening Statement
  - a) Look around your clubs; look around this room. Who will be on the membership roster in 10 years? In 20 years? In 30 years? Who will be in this room 10 years? In 20 years? In 30 years.
  - b) Given actuarial tables the answer is no one that is here now will be here then.
  - c) Will Serra span generations of Catholics?
  - d) Will there still be a need for our mission?
  
- 2) Purpose of this presentation
  - a) Answer the questions, “Is membership critical? I mean really critical?”
    - i) and if we do think it is what are we to do about it.
  - b) We will identify some of the membership issues.
  - c) We will provide some perspective for your club.
  - d) We will suggest action plans
  - e) Finally, we will charge you with the answer with a call to action.
  
- 3) Before we move forward let’s review the query. “What is Serra?”
  - a) We are a Catholic Organization.
    - i) A Catholic Club working within the Catholic Church
    - ii) Within the structure of the Catholic Church
    - iii) We have been charged by Pope John Paul II to carry out a very important mission!
  - b) We are an organization of lay people
    - i) Important that we are lay people
    - ii) Looking at our mission from a lay person’s perspective
    - iii) The Church’s faithful.
    - iv) The layperson is the largest sub set of the faithful.
  - c) Dedicated to strengthening, advancing our own faith
    - i) We’re not just in it for others; we’re also in it for us.
      - (1) Understanding and strengthening our faith in Jesus Christ is a way for us to better relate to our humanity, to our world, to one another.
      - (2) Is a way to assure ourselves or eternal happiness
  - d) We have a love of the Catholic Church
    - i) The one organization since the birth of Christ that has stayed whole, stayed universal, that has been the conscious to the world.
    - ii) Our Church has withstood great adversity from without and within.
    - iii) We have survived purges and wars, we have survived heresy
    - iv) We have survived bad management, bad scandals
    - v) And yet we are here, the Church built on the rock of Peter.
  - e) We have a love for the ordained ministry, of our priests
    - i) We know the importance of the ordained ministry

- ii) We understand the importance of the priest in our Eucharistic centered Catholic Faith.
  - f) Our mission is to foster and affirm vocations to the priesthood and the avowed ministry.
    - i) We do this through prayer, awareness, affirmation, and support
    - ii) We have a great faith in the importance and strength of prayer
    - iii) We make others aware of our mission, aware of the challenges
    - iv) We affirm the people that go before us as leaders in our faith
    - v) We support them with our time, talent and treasure
  - g) This is Serra...
- 4) Today's Membership Issues
- a) Our US membership is FLAT
    - i) Is flat good?
      - (1) Flat is good if our present level is effective in carrying out our mission.
      - (2) Flat may indicate we are successful in replacing natural attrition with new members.
      - (3) Flat may be good if previous trends were declining
    - ii) Is flat bad?
      - (1) Flat may indicated stagnation.
      - (2) Flat may be an advanced sign of future membership problems.
      - (3) Flat is bad if there is an increasing need and no one to carry out the mission.
  - b) Membership is local
    - i) Each of our local clubs should analyze the condition of their membership
    - ii) Here are some factors to consider (and there may be more)
      - (1) What is the membership numbers trend?
        - (a) Steady growth.
        - (b) Steady decline
        - (c) Stable
      - (2) Are you loosing members?
        - (a) What's your "churn". (Percentage of lost members to total membership)
          - (i) Voluntary Churn--disinterest
            - 1. Cause
            - 2. How to reduce
          - (ii) Involuntary Churn—death, health, relocation
        - (b) Why? From natural causes or disinterest?
      - (3) Do you have a steady gaining of new members?
        - (a) Why do new members join?
      - (4) How broad is your member activity base
        - (a) Are each of your members involved in something other than paying dues.
        - (b) What percentage of your members attend meetings regularly?
        - (c) Are your new members involved with programs or projects?
      - (5) How diverse are you?

- (a) Do you have a healthy representation of men and women?
  - (b) Does your club accurately reflect the racial make up of your parishes
    - (i) Mexican American
    - (ii) Asian
    - (iii) Black
    - (iv) White
  - (c) Comment on Diversity
    - (i) Important for our long range effectiveness.
    - (ii) Be diversified for results rather than for its own sake.
    - (iii) Diversity training
      - 1. What is it?
      - 2. Why is diversity important?
      - 3. How it would result in carrying out the Serra mission?
      - 4. On going challenge
  - (d) Leadership
    - (i) Same people all the time?
      - 1. Leadership not willing to give up the office.
      - 2. Membership not stepping forward.
      - 3. Lack of confidence
- (6) How old is your club?
- (a) What is your average age now?
  - (b) What was the average five years ago?
  - (c) How many years has your average Serran been a Serran.
  - (d) A comment about age:
    - (i) Our advanced age can be our advantage rather than a negative.
    - (ii) We are a senior group and be proud of this status.
    - (iii) We require an advanced maturity
    - (iv) Requires a time commitment only afforded by an older demographic.
    - (v) Requires a talent level unique to experienced individuals
    - (vi) Requires a level of financial commitment
    - (vii) Requires special relationships and established rapport.
  - (e) Youthful members would not be turned away but not a focus of recruiting efforts.
- iii) Each club needs to describe the health of their own club membership.
- (1) Honestly & openly discuss it among your executive board
  - (2) Analyze the numbers.
  - (3) Come to agreement
    - (a) Verbalize it.
    - (b) Write it down
    - (c) Present the “State of the Membership” to the membership.
  - (4) Make a wish list with regard to
    - (a) More numbers
    - (b) More active

- (c) More diversity
- (d) Broader active base
- (e) Younger or older trend
- (5) Set objectives
  - (a) Specific number
  - (b) Specific time frame

5) Membership Focus

- a) Keep your club numbers up by keeping your current members satisfied.
  - i) Keep them active in existing or new programs
  - ii) Maintain mission focused club programs
- b) It's easier to maintain existing members than gaining new members.

6) The target market for new members

- i) Daily Church Goers
- ii) Church Council and Catholic School members
- iii) Bible Study Groups
- iv) Eucharistic Adoration attendees
- v) Empty nesters
- vi) Transfers
- vii) Other

7) The action plan

- a) An Epiphany
  - i) A sudden realization
  - ii) An enlightenment
  - iii) A bolt of lightning, a light bulb goes off
- b) Someone in your organization
  - i) Has the answer
  - ii) Has the leadership
  - iii) Clear vision of the challenge
  - iv) Clear vision of the solution
  - v) Now find that person
  - vi) It's probably YOU
- c) Approaches—a Brain Storming Approach
  - i) "Gifting Serra"
  - ii) "Hire it Done"
  - iii) "The Power of Many"
  - iv) "The Power of the Clergy"
  - v) "Ask and You Shall Receive"
  - vi) "Location, Location, Location"
  - vii) "The List"
- d) Action
  - i) Set a plan
  - ii) Review activities
  - iii) Review progress

- iv) Adjust plan as appropriate
  - v) Report to the general membership
  - vi) Celebrate success
- 8) District Governors and New Clubs
- a) New clubs gain new members quickly
  - b) Identifying areas for new clubs
    - i) Review your diocese for opening areas
    - ii) Look for opportunities in dioceses that do not have a Serra Club
    - iii) Directed by the bishop
- 9) Close
- a) In the best of times, in the worst of times...Membership is critical, Membership is our future, Membership will determine the success of our carrying out our mission.
  - b) Who among you will take up the challenge to motive, to inspire, to spark an Epiphany?
    - i) Who among you will take up the challenge...NOW
  - c) Let the Serra montra guide you...Be not afraid..
    - i) Moses was an unwilling leader.
    - ii) Others throughout history did not feel they were up to the task, were unprepared or undeserving
  - d) So I ask again...
    - i) Who among you will take up the challenge???

**SPEECH SCRIPT**  
**Membership Development Presentation to Regional Conventions**

**OPENING:**

My fellow Serran's, look around this room, look around your clubs. Who will be sitting in this room 10 years from now; 20 years from now, 30 years from now? Who among your present clubs' membership will be shown on the membership roster 10 years from now; 20 years from now, 30 years from now? Actuaries and life expectancy charts can tell you the answer ranges from just a few to absolutely none! Average life expectancy in the United States falls somewhere in the late 70's. It's a natural phenomenon that we will die; it's not a frightening new trend nor a devastating world plague! As mortals, we accept the fact that we will all die. We all know that, it's the timing we can't yet come to terms with. I like the approach, "Take me Lord at your Will, but can't you wait till tomorrow?" Sooner or later tomorrow will come for each of us.

This begs the not so rhetorical questions, "Will Serra span generations of Catholics?". "Is the need for our mission short term?" I tend to feel that our mission is important today. It's more than important, it's **critical** today and will be **critical** tomorrow. The point is the Catholic faithful that will be carrying out this important mission will be in the capable hands of people that are not members today. These future Serrans are now out there in our Church pews praying, receiving the Sacraments practicing their Catholic faith. Think about them; envision them in your minds. What are our future members doing right now? Do they know they will be called to serve? How will they answer? What will stir them to accept the mission. Who will ask them? Who will train them? Who will mentor them?

The answer to the last three "Who" questions is, "YOU", "YOU", and "YOU"!

**PURPOSE:**

Today I will present an important topic that is critical to our long term mission: Membership. Serran Membership! We will investigate the importance of membership. Identify and analyze some of the issues and concerns. Provide some perspective for your club. Action plans will be suggested. And finally, each of you will be charged with finding the answer for your particular club and be called to take action!

**WHAT IS SERRA:**

This is a good time to review exactly "What is Serra?". We are a Catholic organization of men and women working within the Catholic Church, through the structure of the Catholic Church. We work at the convenience of our Bishops and have been charged as

the lay vocation arm of the Church to promote vocation by Pope John Paul II. That to Serran friends is not a small charge and should not be taken lightly.

We are an organization of lay people. The laity of the Church is served by the ordained ministry we are committed to support. We are the largest subset of the Church. The Church needs our support, needs our membership needs our perspective. The laity is the Church.

As a group we are actively dedicated to strengthening, advancing, and practicing our own, individual Catholic faith. We are not just in it for others; we are in it for us, as an individual; for ME. Understanding and strengthening our faith in Jesus Christ is a way to better relate to our own individual humanity, to our own physical world. Our faith, developed with the support of our Serran group, will assure us of eternal happiness in Jesus Christ.

We have a focused love for the Church. The Church that was founded by Christ on Peter's rock. The Church that has remained universal since Jesus Christ. The Church that has gone through adversity from within and without. The Church that has survived purges, wars and heresy.

We have a focused love and admiration for the ordained ministry with today's focus on our priests. We know the importance of the ordained ministry. We understand the importance of the priest in our Eucharistic centered Catholic faith. (Without a priest, there can be no Eucharist.)

Our mission is to foster and affirm vocations to the priesthood and the avowed ministry. We accomplish this through prayer, awareness, affirmation, and support. We have a great faith in the importance and strength of prayer. We make others aware of our mission, aware of the challenges, aware of the need to support the ordained. We affirm the people that go before us as leaders in our faith. We support them with our time, talent, and treasure.

This is Serra. This is what we do. Is this important? Is this critical? Of course, it is! The Serran mission is timeless. We need to be at the disposal of our Bishops and our Popes. We need to be.

### **TODAY'S ISSUE:**

Our US membership is Flat. We can view this in different ways. Flat may be good if the level of membership is sufficient to sustain itself and carry out our mission. Flat is good if it speaks to the function of replacing our members lost to natural attrition with new members. Flat is good if previous trends were showing declines.

Flat is bad if it indicates stagnation. It is bad if the trend is an advanced sign of future problems in membership levels. Flat is bad if our need is increasing and membership levels are not maintained to meet the demands.

The point that needs to be made, however, is membership is local. Membership needs to be analyzed, reviewed, evaluated, and acted upon at a local level. We do not have “national” members. We do not have an “international” membership status. Each Serran is a member of a local club. So, the question needs to be addressed locally at the club level. How is your club when it comes to membership health?

## **MEMBERSHIP EVALUATION—CLUB LEVEL**

Here are some factors to consider. There may be many other factors to consider and I am hopeful that this discussion will bring those out at your club levels.

### ***Number Trends:***

What is your membership numbers trend? Are they growing, in decline or stable? Do these trends match the growth trends of the Church in the area you serve? Do you know them? Get to know them?

### ***Member loss:***

Are you losing members? This is more than a closed ended question. The whys of membership loss needs to be analyzed. Your membership numbers may increase but if you are losing members you need to understand why they are leaving. This can be measured in “churn” rates. Churn is reported as a percentage. It is calculated by the number of members lost divided by the number of total club members. Churn can be further broken down into voluntary and involuntary churn. Voluntary are those people leaving because they just no longer wish to be members. Involuntary are those that leave due to unforeseen circumstances like death, sickness or relocation. When honestly reviewing your churn rates you can identify important issues and trends that effect membership levels.

### ***New members:***

Are you bringing in new members? How often? Is it a slow steady trend? Is it in bunches? Is it none at all? New members are the lifeblood to all organizations. This is not unique to Serra. We need to identify our new member number trends to better understand the dynamics of our lifeblood.

### ***Membership activity base:***

How broad is your membership activity base. Are each of your members involved in something. If not you need to find out if they want to be or are at least given the opportunity to play a role that they are comfortable with. Are your meetings well attended? Do you immediately get new members involved with programs and projects? New members are lost quickly if they are not involved in areas they are interested in. We need to find these areas out.

### ***Diversity:***

How about your diversity. Is your diversity showing? Is there a healthy representation of men and women? Do your clubs accurately reflect the racial make up of your parishes? Do you know the racial make up of your parishes? Diversity must be addressed at the club level. Diversity is important from the standpoint it shows your clubs openness and inclusiveness or the need to improve it. It is also important that the Catholic community does not “pass you by” for being exclusive and unapproachable. You may wake up and find ourselves outside the “mainstream.” Serra needs to be mainstream to be effective.

Be careful not to be diverse for the sake of diversity; be diverse for the sake of results. Successfully supporting vocations cannot be done in an inclusive vacuum. It must be universal. Our organization began as a uniquely male organization. We have come a long way in accepting women with an understanding that such diversity supports our mission. Taking it further, who could argue that without such diversity, our organizations would today be in peril? This same scenario could be played out if we do not move toward being more open to enlisting the support of other racial groups. We would be a healthier organization if we were open to being a microcosm of our local churches.

Look around you. Is your diversity showing? It should be.

### ***Leadership and membership***

A healthy club develops their leadership through encouraging and supporting its members into leadership positions. Without regular changes in leadership, a club will get stagnant and can effect negatively the inclusion of new members. Cliques develop negatively impacting new member inductions and retainment. New members with leadership capabilities are discouraged and valuable talent is lost. New ideas, new approaches, new focus is lost when leadership is not changed regularly. Leadership transitions are important to membership development and membership satisfaction.

### ***Age...Age...Age***

This issue of age keeps surfacing; and mostly in a negative light. In short, we keep hearing we are old or at least an aging organization. Frankly we need to come to the realization this demographic is not one to be considered a negative; rather, a wonderful demographic that has lead to the success of Serra and will be important for the further success of achieving our mission. Our mission draws the more experienced. We are a mature, advanced, senior, experienced filled, wisdom filled organization who's mission can be carried out only by the more senior, more connected, more faith developed members of the Church that have the resources and a focused commitment. Read into this what you want but the fact is we would not have made the gains we have with anything less than the advanced experience we have in our clubs.

In the spirit of Ronald Regan, our advanced age is our advantage and we should not use it as a way to regulate “younger” organizations to a lower status... Serra is a senior group and we need to understand the importance of this and to be proud of it. We have a talent

level unique to individuals that have skills developed through years of professional careers and/or church work. We have a special relationship with the clergy and church hierarchy that can only have been developed through years of working in church organizations.

Youthful members should not be turned away or made to feel unwelcome. They should still be encouraged to participate based on their abilities. The point is we should not look to a “youth” movement in our membership to achieve a healthy membership status.

After saying all that, our local club still needs to be evaluated as to its age status. It is a factor that needs to be considered in the over health of the membership. After all, we do need to replace ourselves. We are not going to replace ourselves with older members. What is our club’s average age? Where was it five years ago? What is the trend? What is an “ideal” average age? May be “mean” age is a better indicator of “age” health. (The “mean” age is the age at which half the members are above and have the members are below.) How does your club’s age distribution look?

All these can and should be taken into consideration when analyzing a clubs age health. But let us never feel defensive about our ability in advancing years. How old was Moses when God called on him?

### ***Summary of the evaluation of your membership***

Each of you needs to set a plan to view your clubs membership health. It needs to be honestly and openly discussed among your executive board. Come to an agreement based on empirical data not anecdotal summations. Verbalize your condition in a proactive way. Write it down in a “State of the Membership” statement.

Based on the evaluation you can make your wish list. How many? How active? How old? Then set a few basic specific time and quantity objectives, set action plans and report on them at each meeting. This will demonstrate leadership’s interest. This evaluation and follow up will win the interest of the general membership and will gain results.

## **NEW MEMBER TARGET**

Basic to any focus on new member recruiting should be the “who” before the “how.” Getting the “how” before the “who” is like getting the “cart” before the “horse.” You need to know whom you wish to target to be effective Serrans. Then you can set your action plans to recruit them.

Approaching from the “whom” also demonstrates a “specialness” to membership. The new members were specifically recruited for their dedication, talent, and skills. It demonstrates a focus on quality not just the numbers.

So who will your target market be. Here are some suggestions that are not intended to be the only targets but developed to excite discussion: Daily church attendees, members of church councils and parochial school boards, bible study groups, Extra Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, choir members, lectors, transfers from other parishes, empty nesters, recently widowed, etc. People in these groups may tend to have the basics for being active, contributing Serrans. They are dedicated to their faith, have a demonstrated love of Christ, the Church and priesthood. They want to be a part of an important ministry, to support ministerial vocations in service of the Church and its faithful.

## **NEW MEMBER RECRUITING PROGRAMS—ACTION PLANS**

I often discourage myself of telling people what to do. Rather I would like to think people come to their own solutions in their own way. Like an Epiphany! An enlightenment; a sudden bolt of lightening; the light bulb goes off; an “I always new that” moment. Better to **inspire** people rather than motive them. Motivating is the “carrot or the stick.” Inspiration is winning the hearts and minds. In a volunteer organization like Serra, inspiration is more accepted, more celebrate.

Rather than attempt to give suggested answers, I would like to suggest approaches. I suggesting approaches, the club members will have the answers. Your members have the answers to any issue including membership development. Someone in your club has the vision, has the inspiration and will catch the spirit if given the opportunity. Suggest that person might be YOU!

Here are some approaches to new member development:

### ***Gift of Serra***

“Gifting Serra” would be an approach that positions the Serra experience as a gift you give someone. What better gift than to provide someone an avenue to develop one’s faith, supports our clergy, and encourages vocations? Most of us know who first asked us to be a Serran. Most of us were honored and are forever in debt to that person who helped us become involved with Serra. Gifting Serra surely demonstrates that it is better to give that receive. The giving provides eternal returns of gratitude. Our members should not look at recruiting new members as a “sales function” but a giving of a gift.

### ***Hire It Done***

“Hiring It Done” is a business concept that says you would never hire someone for the sake of having more employees. Rather you hire people when you have a task to do, a new product to bring to market. “Hiring It Done” would identify a new program that the club wants to do and then go out into the parish and find the person that shares the same desire to do it. What better approach than to go to someone with an idea, with a vision of a program and suggest to them that their experience and talents are what is needed to get the program off the ground? It wins new membership but more, it advances the Serran mission in a meaningful way that yields immediate results.

### ***The Power of Many***

“The Power of Many” focuses on the non-member that is already doing the work of Serra through their own personal projects. The prospective member is working on or heading up a project that fits with our mission. Here the Serra member would demonstrate to the non-member that the projects they are doing could be more effective with the whole group working in support. The “Power of Many” would put the resources of Serra behind worthy projects.

### ***The Power of the Clergy***

“The Power of the Clergy” calls on the influence of the pastor or bishop in a number of ways. The parish priest or bishop may suggest parishioners that would fit well with our group. This would give us an opportunity to inquire based on the powerful reference from the priest or bishop. The clergy may also wish to make a direct suggestion to a prospective member. Your priest may also be enlisted to support the Serra membership through a follow up contact encouraging acceptance to the call; or report from the pulpit the worthy cause of Serra. In all cases, the clergy should be an important part of recruiting efforts.

### ***Ask and You Shall Receive***

“Ask and You Shall Receive” highlights the importance of ASKING. Stated differently, if you DON’T ask you WON’T receive. How many of us would have joined Serra if we weren’t asked? Very, very few of us. We must instill an attitude in our membership to be proud to part of Serra, to proclaim to people the mission of Serra and to highlight the personal benefits, then ASK prospects to consider membership.

### ***Location, Location, Location***

“Location, Location, Location” is a common answer to the question of the three most important success factors for retail. Location can mean lots but exposure is being referenced here. Look around the church at Sunday Mass. How many of the people you see know Serra? Know there is a Serra club in the Church? That needs to change. Programs need to be implemented to promote vocations through awareness. That means getting the message out about our mission and how to become a member.

### ***The List***

“The List” refers to the prospect list. Each club needs one. It lists prospective members and a short way of identifying who is the main contact, what needs to be done next. And at the appropriate time do the “ask.” Invite the person to be a member.

These are just a few approaches to finding and recruiting new members. These were designed to inspire discussion and set actions that best work for your club.

## **IN CONCLUSION**

“In the best of times, in the worst of times...” membership development will always be critical. Members are our future. Members (people) will determine the success of our carrying out our mission. One can look at it two ways: First, if you wish success membership development is critical. Second, if you DON'T want success, then DON'T develop your membership.

So we ask, “Who among you will take up the challenge to motivate, to inspire, to spark an idea, to ignite an epiphany?” Who among you will take up the challenge NOW and carry the message to your clubs.

Let the Serra mantra guide you and all that take up the challenge, “Be not afraid...” Moses was an unwilling leader and look at what he accomplished with God's help. So I ask again...Who among you will take up the challenge??? Who among you will “Be not afraid...”