

IN HIS STEPS

Introduction

[The "In His Steps" program was developed by the Program Committee of the United States Council (USAC) as an answer to three challenges:

- Pope John Paul II's request in 1989 and Vatican Cardinal Pio Laghi challenge in 1992 to Serra International to be the "lay arm of the Church for vocations" not just by words but by action;
- The National Conference of Catholic Bishops request to the United States of America/Canada Council (now USAC) that Serrans in the U.S. clubs be active in promoting their National Strategy for Vocations, "A Future Full of Hope"
- USAC's challenge to their Serra Clubs, long perceived as complacent, to be truly active in promoting both vocations to the priesthood and religious life and the personal holiness of its members.]

Leader: "In His Steps" is designed to be a program of renewal by which, on an annual basis, all Serrans recommit themselves to furthering Serra International's principles and objectives:

- 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.

Opening Prayer

Leader: Recall that we are in the presence of God as we pray, In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

R: Amen

(Read the Scripture passage out loud. [Ephesians 4:11-15])

Reader 1: A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians.

And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God....(L)iving the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love. The Word of the Lord.

R: Thanks be to God.

(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Meditation and Reflection out loud)

Meditation - Archbishop Romero's Statement of Hope:

Reader 2: It helps now and then to step back and take the long view. The Kingdom of God is not only beyond our efforts; it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete. Which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the Church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything. This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further developments. We

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provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything. And there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are the workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own."

Reflection

Leader: Archbishop Romero's words describe the ministry and mystery of Serra so well. No one can read or hear these words without realizing Serran prayers and Serran programs are instruments designed to permit the Holy Spirit " to enter and do the rest."

(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion)

Discussion Questions

1. What is my role in my club committee (vocations, membership, programs, communication)?
2. In what Serra club and/or diocesan vocation programs will I participate this year?
3. What other vocation programs should our club consider implementing in our area?
4. What can our club do to promote our members' spiritual growth this year? How can I help?
5. What can I do to build and retain membership this year?

(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)

Leader: Serra's ministry is not limited to mere statements of mission. In addition to prayer, our ministry promotes practical solutions designed to assist men and women to overcome societal impediments of hearing the call of the Holy Spirit to the priesthood and religious life.

In the United States the resources of the Church are being strained by an increase in the Catholic population without a commensurate increase in vocations to serve the People of God. Our ministry must not be allowed to diminish over time; but must experience a renewed vigor necessary for the challenges of the new millennium.

Serra accepted, met, and continues to meet the previously stated challenges, but Serrans will not rest on past successes. Our society and our Church are changing so we must increase our vocation efforts to meet the Church's greater number of faithful, a people that hungers for the sacraments and other Church ministries.

Recommitment Ceremony

Reader 3: There are many references in Scripture and other church writings identifying the Trinity with light and with fire, for example, the Light of Mercy, the Light of Justice, the Light of Hope, tongues of fire, and the burning bush. There is one description, however, with which every Serran can identify, for we were each baptized into Jesus and we each renew our baptismal promises at Easter.

(Facilitator light the candle) As we light this candle you are each to remember that:

This candle is a reminder of the one each Serran received at baptism. The candle's fire symbolizes Jesus, the Light of the World, and its fire, the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit. As the candle is consumed by fire so, too, must we be consumed by the fire of the Holy Spirit. Let the light and the fire of the candle be symbols of rededication to our solemn pledge to direct ourselves to the Serran

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principles of promoting vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life and to our own vocation to Christian service.

Leader: Are you are ready to walk In His Steps” to meet the new circumstances present in the United States?

R: I am

Leader: Will you accept and support the objectives and purposes of Serra International: to foster and promote vocations to the ministerial priesthood and religious life and to fulfill your own Christian vocation to service through spiritual growth, fellowship, and education?

R: I will.

Leader: Will you take an active part in the Serra programs and activities of your club that are designed to help accomplish Serra's mission?

R: I will.

Leader: Will you, by your daily living, strive to witness those Christian virtues that may help others to grow in their faith?

R: I will.

Leader: Will you pray often and work diligently for vocations, and encourage others to do the same?

R: I will.

Closing Prayer - The Serran Renewal Prayer

Holy Spirit, you are the love and light of the world. Continue to give all Serrans the courage and generosity to respond ardently to your call.

R: Here I am, Lord.

Fire each of us with a renewed spirit and enthusiasm to work for vocations for our Church. Deepen our commitment to the Serra mission that we may, indeed, walk "In His Steps" on our journey. Father, we ask this in the name of Jesus, Our Lord, through the intercession of Blessed Junipero Serra and Mary, the Mother of the Church and religious vocations.

R: Amen.

Bibliography

In His Steps, United States Council of Serra International Program Committee, 2000.

The original In His Steps program can be downloaded on line from www.serraus.org. This document provides background information on the development of the program and its suggested use. Additional prayers and activities are also included that can provide a variety of reinforcement formats throughout the year.

IN HIS STEPS

(Before the presentation begins, the presider or program VP should place forms on the tables with club projects listed on them for use at the end. There is a sample form in the Program Manual- Part II.)

Presider: "In His Steps" is designed to be a program of renewal by which all Serrans recommit themselves to furthering Serra International's principles and objectives on an annual basis.

Pause for a moment.

Let us begin as we always should, In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

Reader 1: A meditation from Archbishop Romero:

"It helps now and then to step back and take the long view. The Kingdom of God is not only beyond our efforts: it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the Church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything. This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further developments. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything. And there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are the workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own."

Pause for silent reflection.

Presider: Archbishop Romero's words describe the ministry and mystery of Serra so well. No one can read or hear this meditation without realizing Serran prayers and Serran programs are instruments designed to permit the Holy Spirit "to enter and do the rest". "In His Steps" is designed to be a program of renewal by which all Serrans recommit themselves to furthering Serra International's principles and objectives on an annual basis.

Reader 2: There are many references in scripture and other church writings identifying the Trinity with light and with fire, for example, the Light of Mercy, the Light of Justice, the Light of Hope, tongues of fire, and the burning bush. There is one description, however, with which every Serran can identify, for we were each baptized into Jesus and we each renew our baptismal promises at Easter. **(Light the candle.)** As I light this candle remember that:

This candle is a reminder of the one each Serran received at baptism. The candle's fire symbolizes Jesus, the Light of the world, and its fire, the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit. As the candle is consumed by fire, so too, must we be consumed by the fire of the Holy Spirit. Let the light and the fire

of the candle be symbols of rededication to our solemn pledge to direct ourselves to the Serran principles of promoting vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life and to our own vocation to Christian service.

Chaplain or Presider: O God our Father, we are gathered here to renew our commitment to Serra International's ministry. We pray for your help in our work of fostering vocations to the priesthood and religious life for the Catholic Church, the Church founded by your Son, Jesus. Holy Spirit, enter into our hearts and inflame us with greater zeal for our ministry.

And now, O God, we come to you and humbly petition:

- That Serrans live their vocation to Christian service as an active witness to the Gospel of the Risen Lord, we pray to the Lord.

R: Lord, hear our prayer.

- That Serrans throughout the world, trusting in the mercy and goodness of Christ the Lord, walk "In His Steps" to serve the Church with greater zeal, we pray to the Lord.

R: Lord, hear our prayer.

- That the Serrans of the Serra Club of (Club Name), inspired by their recommitment and filled with the Holy Spirit, renew their efforts in their ministry of promoting vocations and personal holiness, we pray to the Lord.

R: Lord, hear our prayer.

- That Serrans, through friendship, give moral and other support to seminarians as they struggle through their years of formation and study, we pray to the Lord. **R: Lord, hear our prayer.**

- That Serrans actively support priests and religious and encourage and unite young people to accept God's call to service in the Church, we pray to the Lord. **R: Lord, hear our prayer.**

O God, hear our prayers. Grant our petitions that we may serve our Serran ministry for your greater glory and that of your church.

R: Amen

Pause for a moment.

Presider: I now ask everyone to stand and answer, "**I will,**" to the Serran Pledge to Commitment.

- Will you accept and support the objectives and purposes of Serra International: to foster and promote vocations to the ministerial priesthood and religious life and to fulfill your own Christian vocation to service through spiritual growth, fellowship, and education?

R: I will

- *Will you take an active part in the Serra programs and activities of your club that are designed to help accomplish Serra's mission?

R: I will

- *Will you, by your daily living, strive to witness those Christian virtues that may help others to grow

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in their faith?

R: I will

*Will you pray often and work diligently for vocations, and encourage others to do the same?

R: I will

Holy Spirit, you are the love and light of the world. Continue to give all Serrans the courage and generosity to respond ardently to your call. Fire each of us with a renewed spirit and enthusiasm to work for vocations for our Church. Deepen our commitment to the Serra mission that we may, indeed, walk "In His Steps" on our journey. Father, we ask this in the name of Jesus, Our Lord, through the intercession of Blessed Junipero Serra and Mary the Mother of the Church and religious vocations.

AMEN

Presider or Club President:

Thanks to all of you for your past work for Serra. Your recommitment pledge and your willingness to work on club projects is appreciated. The fruits of your efforts will be a finer club with more spirit producing results, as Archbishop Romero said "far beyond our capabilities."

Before the presentation begins, the presider or program VP should place forms on the tables with club projects listed on them. (There is a sample form in the Program Manual Part II.) After the presentation, time should be given for members to fill this form out.

Some ideas for reflection and discussion following the presentation:

1. **What opportunities is God giving me today to go forward in my spiritual life?** *(Allow silent time for a personal written response. Emphasize that answers to #1 are private, and they will not be asked to share them with anyone else.)*
2. **How do we, as Serrans, proclaim God's message?**
3. **Why should lay people promote vocations?**
4. **How can Serrans contribute to creating a vocational culture?**
5. **"Every life is a vocation, every man and every woman is sent by God into the world." What does this mean to you, in your life?**
6. **What can I do to learn more about my Serra family?** (This might be an opportunity for the Presider to suggest :
 - ❖ read the Serran magazine
 - ❖ attend regional/district conventions
 - ❖ attend Spring Leadership Planning Conference)

In His Steps, a Program of Renewal and Recommitment (Leader's Program)

***Materials needed:** hymnal; a table holding one large lighted candle and lighted votive lights, several more than the number of participants; Bible or Lectionary; copies of the Participant Program, which includes the Renewal Prayer and the four reflection questions.*

Opening Hymn (*Sing verse 1 of "The Summons" (J.L.Bell) or of another appropriate hymn on discipleship.*)

Opening Prayer

Leader: We begin in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: Heavenly Father, we ask your blessing on our gathering. Open our minds and hearts to the working of the Holy Spirit. Help us to imitate the virtues of our patron, Blessed Junipero Serra, in the work we do as Serrans. We ask this in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.

Leader: Please be seated.

Scripture Reading (*Read aloud Eph. 3:14-19 or other appropriate passage.*)

Reader 1: A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians

I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name; and I pray that he will bestow on you gifts in keeping with the riches of his glory. May he strengthen you inwardly through the working of his Spirit. May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may charity be the root and foundation of your life. Thus you will be able to grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love, and experience this love which surpasses all knowledge, so that you may attain to the fullness of God himself.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Hymn (*Stand and sing verses 2 and 3 of "The Summons" or verse of another appropriate hymn.*)
(*A separate table holds a larger "Christ candle" and lighted votive candles, more numerous than the people present.*)

Leader: Please come to this table and take a lighted candle. Return to your tables in groups of three or four and place your candles in the center of your table.

Reflection

Reader 2: Blessed Junipero Serra was a man of faith. At life's crossroads Junipero Serra traded in an professorial lifestyle that promised him a beloved homeland, associations of his youth, a cloister and

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community, books and university, honor and a secure future for a missionary lifestyle that required him to say farewell to his home and life and embraced uncertainty and instability by moving forward and never turning back.

Blessed Junipero was a missionary at heart. The missionary is one who responds to the privilege of participating in the Mission of God by offering himself as worker and witness to the reign of God. Fidelity is the quality of response for a missionary to be true to one's self and one's vocation. Blessed Junipero was a visionary man who persevered with his mission in spite of adversity, controversy and hardships.

Leader: Please consider this question for silent reflection and write an answer for your eyes only:

"May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may charity be the root and foundation of your life." What opportunities is God giving me today to go forward in my spiritual life?
(Allow silent time for a personal written response.)

Discussion

Leader: In your small groups please answer the discussion questions on your program:

- 1. What is my role in my club committee (vocations, membership, programs, communication)?**
- 2. In what Serra club/diocesan vocation programs will I participate this year?**
- 3. What other vocation programs should our club consider implementing in our area?**
- 4. What can our club do to promote our members' spiritual growth this year? How can I help?**
- 5. What can I do to build and retain membership this year?**

(After all groups have discussed the questions and made notes for themselves, call all to a moment of silence.)

(Sing **verse 4** of "The Summons" or verse of another appropriate hymn.)

Leader: Note the candles that were unclaimed, waiting for the members that we will bring to Serra. It is our job to replace the numbers of members lost through normal attrition, plus add new members, every year. Without sufficient numbers of members we cannot do what we need to do as Serrans.

Promoting & affirming vocations to priesthood and religious life is our work. Serra is also a vehicle to promote personal holiness through prayer, participation in the Celebration of the Eucharist and through excellent internal programs. Good educational programming increases attendance and attracts members.

Recommitment and Closing

Leader: Please stand and read the "**Renewal Prayer**"

All: Holy Spirit, you are the love and light of the world.
Continue to give all Serrans the courage and generosity
to respond ardently to your call.

With one voice now, all Serrans say, "Here I am, Lord."

Fire each of us with a renewed spirit and enthusiasm
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to work for vocations for our Church.

Deepen our commitment to the Serran mission
that we may, indeed, walk **In His Steps** on our journey.

Father, we ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord,
through the intercession of Blessed Junipero Serra
and Mary, the Mother of the Church and model of discipleship.

(Sing verse 5 of "The Summons" or verse of another appropriate hymn)

Leader: Please take a candle home as a reminder of your commitment to your vocation and the work of Serra.

In His Steps, a Program of Renewal and Recommitment (Participant Program)

Opening Hymn, verse 1

Opening Prayer

Scripture Reading Eph. 3:14-19)

Hymn, verses 2 and 3

Silent Reflection:

"May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may charity be the root and foundation of your life." What opportunities is God giving me today to go forward in my spiritual life?

Discussion

- 1. What is my role in my club committee (vocations, membership, programs, communication)?**
- 2. In what Serra club/diocesan vocation programs will I participate this year?**
- 3. What other vocation programs might our club implement in our area?**
- 4. What can our club do to promote our members' spiritual growth this year?**
- 5. What can I do to build and retain membership this year?**

How can I

Hymn, verse 4

Recommitment and Closing

Renewal Prayer

**Holy Spirit, you are the love and light of the world.
Continue to give all Serrans the courage and generosity
to respond ardently to your call.**

**With one voice now, all Serrans say, "Here I am, Lord."
Fire each of us with a renewed spirit and enthusiasm
to work for vocations for our Church.**

**Deepen our commitment to the Serran mission
that we may, indeed walk In His Steps on our journey.**

**Father, we ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord,
through the intercession of Blessed Junipero Serra
and Mary, the Mother of the Church and model of discipleship.**

Hymn, verse 5