

# **SCHOOL VOCATION AWARENESS PROGRAM**

Prepared by the  
Serra Club of Santa Clara  
January 2006

# PROGRAM SUMMARY AND OBJECTIVES

This pamphlet describes a program which is used at the different schools in the parishes of the Serra Club of Santa Clara. We invite the 8th grade students to prepare an essay (or e-mail) on a vocation topic we give them. Normally on the First Friday we celebrate Mass, have refreshments and a film on vocations. A Serran reviews the Serra Organization, our reason for being there and the film. We give a small prize to the essay contest winners. The pastor, the principal and the students enjoy it.

The objective is to introduce the students to the considerations involved in choosing a vocation to the priesthood and consecrated life.

Sample of Card to be placed at tables. Serrans are asked to sit with students.

**RESERVED  
FOR  
SERRAN**

## Certificate for Essay Contest Winner



## Pope John Paul II Calls for Vocations

ROME (AP) -- Pope John Paul II curtailed his participation in the annual Corpus Christi Mass and procession Thursday — another indication of his increasingly frail condition.

The 82-year-old John Paul presided over the open-air evening Mass in front of St. John Lateran, Rome's cathedral, but one of his closest aides, Cardinal Camillo Ruini, actually celebrated it.

After the Mass, the pope took part in a half-mile procession to another church, riding on the back of a white pickup truck covered with flowers and a canopy. The bed of the truck was outfitted with a gilded kneeler and chair, both of which were used by the pontiff.

During his homily — the only part of the Mass he celebrated — John Paul appeared in good form, however, his voice stronger and clearer than it had been in recent weeks.

At one point, he motioned for a young girl taking part in the offertory procession to approach him; he kissed her when she neared and smiled heartily afterward.

The pope has cut back on several of his ceremonial duties recently, letting others finish reading his speeches and sitting and kneeling in prayer while others celebrate Mass.

The pope has knee and hip ailments that make walking and standing difficult. He also displays the symptoms of Parkinson's disease, including slurred speech and a trembling hand.

His speech, though, was clear Thursday night when he issued a call for young men to consider joining the priesthood.

"If one of you has inside of you the call of the Lord to give yourself totally to him, to love him — with an undivided heart — don't stop yourself because of doubts or fears," John Paul said. "Say yes with courage and without reserve, trusting in him who is loyal in every promise."

The pope returned Sunday from a grueling five-day trip to Azerbaijan and Bulgaria, during which the Vatican suggested that future trips might have to be curtailed because of his condition.



PIER PAOLO CITO - ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pope John Paul II kneels during the procession from St. John Lateran in Rome, after presiding over evening Mass on Thursday.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. School Vocation Awareness Program Steps Needed to Conduct.
2. Sample letter addressed to school principal.
3. Essay Contest Guidelines.
4. Outline of Vocation Awareness Program.
5. Presentation Guide for School Vocation Awareness Program using video from Serra "God's Call- A Family Affair."
6. Article "What It Takes."
7. Article with quote from Pope John Paul II.
8. "Reserved for Serran" sign.
9. Certificate for essay contest winner.

# School Vocation Awareness Program

## Steps Needed to Conduct

1. Contact pastor and principal for approval to conduct programs and set date.
2. Reserve date for church, hall or schoolroom to conduct program.
3. Write confirmation letter to pastor, principal and teacher inviting them, outlining mass, essay contest criteria and awards.
4. If possible, arrange for a priest, seminarian or sister to give a talk on their vocation call during program.
5. Request help from mothers of students through teacher.
6. Equipment needed
  - Tables
  - Chairs
  - VCR
  - Video
  - Extension cords
  - Prayer cards
  - Serra reserved signs
7. Food and tableware supplies needed
  - Donuts- allow 1 1/2 per person Apple or orange juice
  - Milk
  - Coffee
  - Sugar
  - Cream
  - Plates-small
  - Napkins
  - Plastic spoons
  - Cups
  - Paper towels/Cleaner
  - Table covers if needed
  - Garbage bags
  - Scissors or box cutter
8. Essay copies.
9. Checks for essay contest winners.
10. Award certificates for winners if desired.

I mentioned at the beginning of this article that children often ask me two questions about my vocation to the priesthood. My answers to them are simply the follows, e.g. 1) that I am a priest because that's what God wanted me to be and 2) that I knew I wanted to be a priest when I was seven years old. I did not realize at that age what it all meant, but as I look back, I think I really had the faith (belief) that God did want me to be a priest, and I trusted that He would show me the way.

Along the way I received what every call from God needs — nourishment in form of encouragement. I was encouraged by my family to be a priest if that is what I felt I wanted to be. My father was not Catholic and had hoped I would go into medicine, but when I told him what I wanted to do with my life, he gave me unfettered support. I was encouraged by the teachers in school to listen and respond to God's call to serve Christ and the Church as a priest. I was encouraged and received the marvelous good example of the dedicated priests of the parish in which I grew up. In the seminary I continued to receive encouragement and nourishment from faculty and fellow students.

God so often works through others in calling men and women to such service to the Church. That is why it is so important for all of us to realize our role in serving as God's messengers. We need to encourage and nourish those who have already responded to God's call, especially those in our seminaries and houses of formation. We must continue to pray that the hearts of men and women will be open to receive and respond to God's call and that they have the courage to trust in that call and the faith to follow where that call leads.

serra USA 1 FEBRUARY 2003

# What it Takes

## one bishop's call to the priesthood

by Most Reverend Kevin M. Britt (deceased),

Episcopal Adviser to the USA Council of Serra International (former)



**Many times I am asked** (especially when I make visits to schools and religious education programs), “Why did you become a priest?” and “When did you know you wanted to be a priest?” The answers to these questions are both complicated and simple.

Here is the simple answer: a call to ministry, be it priesthood or vowed religious life, is a call from God. The word “vocation” comes from the Latin “vocare,” meaning “to call.” It is simply the reality that God calls one to give witness to Christ through a particular way of living the Christian life.

But the answers are also complicated: responding to the call from God can be quite a challenge. It can often mean changing one's entire perspective on life. Serving God as a priest or in vowed religious life calls one to put aside many of the goals and expectations that have been part and parcel of one's life since childhood. Most of us grow up with the expectation and encouragement of our families to seek a good education, find a well-paying job and settle down and start a family of our own. When God calls a person to priesthood or vowed religious life, we are invited to receive a good education, accept the job (ministry) we are needed to perform, be ready to go where we are needed to serve when we are needed, and to fit into the family (communality) we are called to serve.

Needless to say, such a call can be frightening, I think of Mary when she was called by God to be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God. Can you imagine what she must have felt and what a challenge this was in light of her life's situation? She was a very young girl, unmarried and uneducated. Yet she had the basic elements of what it takes to respond to God's call — faith and trust. She believed that God loved her and trusted in the angel's message that God was with her. Her response proclaimed her faith and trust; and sealed her vocation as the first disciple.

Needless to say, most of us called by God don't have quite the same dramatic experience that she did. Yet any one God calls must have the same faith and trust in God that Mary had in responding to her call.

One who is called has to have faith in the fact that God does want them to serve Christ and the Church as a priest or vowed religious. One has to have faith that God knows them inside and out, knows the good and bad in each, knows the secrets of hearts, the sins as well as the virtues, talents and skills. God knows and still God calls that person by name to a special ministry of service in the Church.

One who is called has to trust that God will help them overcome their doubts and questions about their worthiness or suitability to serve Christ and the Church as a priest or vowed religious. If this is truly a call from God, then in responding one will receive from God what is necessary to respond to that call and achieve the end to which God is calling. Like Mary, one has to “proclaim the greatness of the Lord” and trust that God will indeed manifest that greatness in shepherding one on their journey to service in the Church as a priest or vowed religious.

# Sample Letter to Principals

Serra Club of Santa Clara

USA Council. Region 11 . District 31

August 31, 2005

Kathy Almazol

St. Clare School

725 Washington Street Santa Clara, CA. 95050

Dear Kathy:

The Santa Clara Serra Club greatly appreciates your cooperation and interest in providing us the opportunity to have a vocation awareness video and program for the eighth grade students in the St. Clare School.

As we discussed, this will be presented Friday, October 7, 2005 with Mass at 9:00 A.M. followed by snacks for the students .with our presentation to be made in the eighth grade classroom.

The Serra Club is sponsoring a contest on the subject of ministry in the church as outlined on an attached page. Although we do not expect everyone to consider a religious vocation, the purpose is to have the youngsters give some individual thought to the Church's needs and reflect on ministry in the church for himself or herself. As an incentive we are again, giving a \$25.00 first prize and \$15.00 second prize for the best two letters. The criteria for judging will be content, sincerity, reflection, uniqueness and composition. The letter should be about 100 to 200 words.

A group of Serrans will review the letters and be the judges for the first and second prize. We will use the letters for an informal discussion about church ministry at the meeting. We hope that in having an open discussion about active participation in the church the subject will have more impact on the youngsters. I invite you to call me if you have any questions or suggestions on how we can improve the program.

Attached is an outline of the program that we will follow on October 7th.

We will be serving donuts, juice, and milk for everyone.

We look forward to seeing you on Friday, October 7th. We will pick up the essays on Monday, September 30, 2005.

Sincerely,

Tom Bommarito

Fr. Rick Rodoni , Pastor

Brian Hegarty

District Governor Robert Leach

6909 Westmoor Way San Jose, CA 95129 Tel: 408-253.8763 rcl1939@sbcglobal.net

# Essay Contest Guidelines

## E-mail from God Contest

**Project:** If you received an e-mail from God asking how you feel about religious vocations, how would you respond?

Create an e-mail of 5 paragraphs:

Paragraph one: attention. An introduction that captures the reader's attention.

Paragraph two. Three and four: Include, in any order, the following three topics:

1. Give a **reason to include vocations** to the priesthood and religious life in your life-choice options.
2. Explain **how ministry in the church is essential to** Church growth and to the World.
3. Identify the kinds of **personal gifts and qualities** individuals possess that, if given to Christ in a religious vocation, make our world a better place. (Personal gifts are things like leadership, dedication, humor, high energy, etc.)

Paragraph five: Include closing thought.

The e-mail will be judged on content, sincerity, reflection, uniqueness and composition.

We are awarding a \$25.00 first prize and a \$15.00 second prize for the best two letters. The prizes will be awarded on October 7, 2005.

God Bless you,

Serra Club of Santa Clara

7. After video showing” is complete—ask how call came to each individual summarizing that God works in mysterious ways. He can speak to us through other people, in special events, in prayer, books, movies etc. Highlight comment made by O' Quinn—”The most important thing in life is helping other people.”
  8. Reference may be made to TV series “Joan of Arcadia” where God talks to Joan through a myriad of strangers.
  9. Address concerns of being qualified to serve as a priest or sister- read excerpts from Pope John Paul II's address and/or article by Most Reverend Kevin M. Britt—”What It Takes,” stressing faith and trust in God.
- D. Have priest, sister, brother, deacon or seminarian tell their faith journey story that led to their vocation (if pre-arranged.)
- E. Recap and Conclusion of presentation
1. 8th graders to consider a religious vocation in thinking about what they would like to do with their lives.
  2. Encourage not discourage peers who are considering a religious vocation
  3. Be of service to the Church regardless if vocation is to religious life, married life or single life.
  4. Acknowledge and support those preparing for and those serving in a religious vocation.
  5. Grow in own spirituality.
  6. Pray for vocations on a daily basis.
  7. Keep open mind if called to serve.
- F. Discussion of Essay Contest results.
1. Normally there will be unique thoughts, lines, paragraphs in many essays that are outstanding— suggestion is to read these excerpts from 10 to 12 essays.
  2. Congratulate all students on the quality of their essays -- applaud entire class.
  3. Award checks and certificates to winners.
- G. Ask if pastor, principal or teacher have any comments—Thank all who participated.
- H. Distribute Serra prayer cards—suggest students keep and pray for vocations—close with all praying Serra prayer.

# Presentation Guide for School Vocation Awareness Program

- I. Mass with students—homily focused on servicing.
- II. Snacks for students—donuts, milk, juice  
Serrans sit with students.  
Grace led by priest or sister.  
Give students about 5 minutes to eat and socialize.
- III. Program
  - A. Introductions by M.C.
    1. Pastor, priests, sisters.
    2. Principal, 8th grade teacher, mothers who helped.
    3. Serra President and Serrans present.
  - B. All about Serra — Ask students what they know about the Serra Club.  
**Who we are ?**—brief history—source of name.  
Current membership/clubs  
**What we do ?**—Foster and promote religious vocations  
Pray for vocations to priesthood and religious life.  
Affirm and support existing religious vocations  
Grow in our own spirituality.  
Be of service to our Church.  
**Why we are here??** — not to “sell” them on vocations.  
God will do calling — not us.  
We just ask if they feel they have a calling — consider it.
  - C. Show video tape “God’s Call—A Family Affair” ( USAC CATALOG) on religious vocations.
    1. Prior to showing tape—ask students how they think call from God might come—letter? E-mail? Cell phone?
    2. When call from God might come?  
Early in life? Later in Life?—give examples.
    3. Mention sometimes call is not recognized or heard—sometimes it is not accepted.
    4. Ask students to really listen to video and note how and when God’s calling came to 6 individuals interviewed—tell them questions to follow video.
    5. Also ask students to listen for the common threads of how the lives of those who accepted call changed—(They found peace, happiness, and fulfillment.) If time permits play entire video—(24 minutes.)
    6. If time is restricted stop at “the Sacrifice” (13 minutes) as the message is clear at this point.

# Serra Club—Of Santa Clara

## Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the Serrans

1. What is the Serra Club of Santa Clara?

The Serra Club of Santa Clara is a chartered club of Serra International. Serra's name comes from Father Junipero Serra, the Franciscan founder of the California Missions. Serra has clubs in 37 countries with over 800 clubs and over 20,000 members. Serra International was organized in 1935 in Seattle, Washington by four laymen. Its' offices are in Chicago, Illinois. The Santa Clara Club was chartered in 1968 and serves 13 parish communities in the Diocese of San Jose.

2. What are the objectives and purposes of Serra?

- a. 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;
- b. 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.

In summary, we help others to recognize and respond to God's call to serve as priests, brothers, sisters, deacons and lay ministers.

3. What are the activities of the Serra Club of Santa Clara?

4. When and where does the Serra Club of Santa Clara meet?

Usually each Friday:

- a. Normally, the First Friday of each month for Mass and a Vocation Awareness Program at a parish school;
- b. Second and fourth Fridays for lunch at Mariani's Restaurant and;
- c. Third Fridays at a parish for a Mass to pray for vocations followed by a business sandwich lunch.  
At most lunches there is a guest speaker who speaks on vocations, scriptures, church issues and doctrine, etc.

5. How much time and work does a Serran devote to club activities?

- a. Assist Diocesan Vocation Director in his plans.
- b. Programs for National Vocation Awareness Week.
- c. Participate in World Day for Consecrated Life.
- d. Implement plans for World Day of Prayer for Vocations.
- e. Parish contact persons for each parish in our club's area.
- f. The establishment of Parish Vocation Committees.
- g. Parish School Vocation Awareness Programs with essay contests for eighth graders.
- h. Vocation poster contests for grades 2 to 4 and 5 to 7.

- i. Altar Servers' recognition programs.
- j. Promotion of San Jose State Campus Ministry Center.
- k. Affirmation programs for priests, brothers, sisters, deacons, and seminarians which include luncheons for the Bishop, Pastors, retired priests, and women religious, and Pray for a Priest and Pen Pal Programs.
- l. Daily prayers for vocations.
- m. Eucharistic Adoration with prayers for vocations.
- n. Monthly Mass for vocations (Club 31.)
- o. Monthly parish visits including Mass and luncheons.
- p. Annual Day of Recollection.
- q. Annual Mass with seminarians.
- r. Annual Mass for Deceased Serrans.

It is up to each individual Serran to determine the time he or she has to devote to Serra's work. All members are encouraged to participate in club vocation and social programs. It is understood that a member's schedule may prevent him or her from devoting time to the club each Friday. It is important to be involved in at least one activity in fulfilling Serra's objectives.

6. Does the Serra Club of Santa Clara have any social activities?  
 Yes. There are annual Serra International Conventions, annual Regional Conventions, Diocesan wide events and dinners, annual family night at the San Jose Giants baseball game, annual Christmas Party and dinner. Each luncheon is a social gathering.
7. Who may become a member of Serra?  
 You must be a practicing Catholic man or woman over 18 or a permanent deacon that is willing and able to assume the obligations of being a Serrano
8. What are the club dues?  
 Club dues are \$27.00 per month for individual members and \$47.50 total for married couples who are both members. This pays for all lunches at regular meetings, First Friday breakfast, 3rd Friday lunch or breakfast, International, National and District dues and the Serra Quarterly magazine. Serra is not a fund raising organization. Contributions to the Serra International Foundation, St. Patrick's Seminary or to any other religious organization are made on a personal and voluntary basis.
9. May I bring my spouse or a guest to Serra luncheons and other functions?  
 Yes. However, members will be expected to pay the cost of lunch for their non-Serran spouse and guests.
10. May I bring prospective members to a luncheon?  
 Yes. Members are encouraged to do so. There is no charge to either the member or prospective member for the first one or two luncheons attended by an invited prospective member. Members are requested to inform the telephone committee chairperson when a prospective member is being invited to a meeting or Serra function.
11. Which parishes are served by the Serra Club of Santa Clara?  
 Chinese Catholic Community Church of the Ascension Our Lady of Peace  
 Queen of Apostles  
 Sacred Heart - Saratoga  
 St. Clare

- St. Frances Cabrini
  - St. Joseph of Cupertino
  - St. Justin
  - St. Lawrence the Martyr
  - St. Lucy
  - St. Martin of Tours
  - St. Thomas of Canterbury
12. Who are the club officers for 2005 - 2006?
- President
  - President Elect
  - V.P. Programs
  - V.P. Vocations
  - V.P. Communications
  - V.P. Membership
  - V.P. Women Religious Secretary
  - Treasurer
  - Immediate Past President
  - Chaplain
  - Trustee Region 11
  - Director District 31
  - Governor
  - S.I. Foundation Rep.
  - Manuel Bettencourt
  - Betty Ford
  - Jim Striebel
  - Mary Ann Miller
  - Art Swain
  - Leo Strutner
  - Joan Kuczma
  - Jack Oneto
  - Lou Boitano
  - Greg Lynch
  - Rev. Michael O'Connor
  - Richard Herz
  - Jim Sweeney
  - Joe Lombardi
  - Greg Lynch
  - Robert Leach
  - Jim O'Brien
- For additional information contact Leo Strutner, V.P. Membership, at 408- 978-8004.