



Serra International

Vocations Manual

- **Club Leadership**
- **Project Portfolio**
- **Affirmation**

“Pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.” (Mt. 9:38)

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Organizing an Effective Club Vocations Committee

Successful Serra vocations programs and activities depend upon an effective and organized club vocations committee. The following are some basic criteria and guidelines for developing and maintaining a working club vocations committee.

Introduction

“Christ, who commanded prayer for the laborers in the harvest, has also personally called those laborers... But usually he calls by means of us and our words. So, do not be afraid to call. Go among your young people. Go and meet them personally and call them. The hearts of many young people, and not so young people, are ready to listen to you. Many of them are looking for something to live for; they are waiting to discover a worthwhile mission, to devote their lives to it. Christ has attuned them to his call and yours. We must call. The Lord will do the rest, he who offers each individual his or her special gift, according to the grace that has been given to that person.”

Pope John Paul II

Since 1935, Serra International has responded to this challenge through the first of its two objectives, fostering Church vocations. Through the years, Serra has supported the ministry of its members to call out and affirm dynamic men and women as they share their ministry in the service of the Church. Serrans’ particular ministry focuses on promoting vocations to the ministerial priesthood and religious life. We know that men and women of all ages are seeking the opportunity to serve God and their neighbor. Serrans, through their prayers and vocation activities, invite these men and women to explore their call to service in the Church.

Purpose

This guide is intended primarily for the club vice president for vocations and other members of the vocations committee. It also will be helpful to club chaplains and Serra Club members.

While organized vocation programs are important, do not overlook the opportunities for grass-roots, personal vocation work that does not require club committee meetings and structures. There are daily opportunities to develop a deeper appreciation of Church vocations among youth, friends, relatives and in other organizations. Almost every Catholic action program can foster Church vocations as long as those with potential vocations have the opportunity to work side-by-side with priests and religious. Potential candidates cannot help but be impressed when they see the Church’s efforts in education, spiritual renewal, rights for minorities, prison reform, human development, world justice and peace.

Vice President for Vocations

Responsibilities

- chair the club vocation committee;
- maintain the success of all club vocation efforts;

- encourage the formation of a diocesan and/or deanery Church vocations committee;
- invite the following to participate in club vocations efforts:
 - Serrans
 - club chaplain
 - local vocation directors from both the diocese and the religious orders
 - priests, religious and laity interested in Church vocations
 - representatives of priests' senates, sisters' councils, seminarians and novices.

Goals

- to study particular needs and problems at the diocesan level;
- to consider possible activities and carry out those that offer the greatest promise; and
- to initiate and maintain successful vocations programs that meet the needs of the local diocese.

Club Vocations Committee

Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of the club vocations committee is to establish a comprehensive vocation program through joint efforts of the bishop, vocation directors, and competent priests, religious, Serrans and other lay persons.

Structure

The size of the club's vocation committee should be determined by the nature of the job to be done. It should be small enough to facilitate good progress, but both large and diverse enough to make the programs work.

In larger clubs, this committee should consist of three to nine people appointed on a rotating basis. Where deemed advantageous or appropriate, subcommittees may be appointed.

Composition

Members of the vocations committee should:

- have special interests in Church vocations;
- have the time and energy to work on vocation projects;
- represent a variety of experiences and points of view;
- be of a variety of ages; and
- have previous experience as a club officer, if possible.

Meetings

The committee should:

- meet monthly or more often in order to fulfill its responsibilities;
- send notices of the meeting to the committee members in advance along with the proposed agenda; and
- keep and circulate adequate records.

The committee also should work closely with the internal program committee to help Serrans themselves gain a deeper understanding of and appreciation for Church vocations.

Resources

- Vocations Manual
- Individual programs like:
 - **Called by Name**
 - 31 Club

Evaluating Your Club Vocations Committee

From time to time the vocations committee should rate their program as “S” (Strong), “A” (Average), or “W” (Weak) on the list of statements which follow:

1. The vocation program is headed by a capable, dedicated chairperson (the vice-president for vocations).
2. There are at least three committee members, appointed on a continuing basis.
3. The committee meets monthly and conducts meeting efficiently.
4. At its meetings, the committee has an agenda and completes it.
5. The committee uses the *Vocations Manual* as a resource in its planning of vocations programs.
6. The chairperson collects and distributes pertinent information on Church vocations to the committee members.
7. The committee works closely with the diocesan vocation director, pastors, seminary rectors, sisters’ councils, priests’ senates and other vocation personnel in the area through the diocesan/deanery Church vocation committee.
8. The committee coordinates its vocation programs with other organizations in the area.
9. The committee works closely with the internal program committee in developing a “vision of the priesthood and religious life” among Serrans.
10. Programs are directed to various groups according to need and possibilities for success: adults, elementary and high school students, college students, seminarians, parents, etc.
11. A large percentage of club members participate in vocation activities.
12. Serra club members cooperate in developing a diocesan vocation program.
13. There is continuous experimentation with new vocation activities to supplement the traditional activities in the area.
14. There is a continuing effort to evaluate the Church vocation program and to make whatever changes seem to be indicated.

How to Establish a Comprehensive Diocesan/Deanery Church Vocation Program

1. Identify what needs are not now being met by other agencies and programs, what the competencies of your club members are, how the diocesan/deanery committee suggests that your Serra Club can contribute, and establish your objectives.
2. Decide what individuals or groups you wish to concentrate your efforts on:
 - **Grade School Students** who begin to make their vocation decisions early in life, some while in grade school.
 - **High School Students** in public as well as Catholic schools who need to look at a Church vocation as a possible life choice.

- **College Students** who often see the need for a reevaluation of their career choices as time goes on and find that Church ministry fits well with their new values.
 - **Potential Permanent Deacons**, those eligible men who are interested in serving the Church in this particular ministry.
 - **Altar Servers** who are already involved in service to the Church and should be encouraged to pursue ministry in the Church.
 - **Youth Groups** offer opportunities for Serrans to introduce Church ministry activities.
 - **Military Personnel** who are returning to civilian life, often are reexamining their values and evaluating the priesthood and religious life as a possible vocation.
 - **Single Adults** who need whatever assistance Serrans can give.
 - **High School Seminarians** who need help deciding wisely regarding their future.
 - **College Seminarians** who feel the pressure of intellectual and spiritual excellence at this level and need Serrans' support to continue to make their studies meaningful and purposeful.
 - **Theologate Seminarians** who continually need to be exposed to experiences that broaden their perspectives and test their vocations.
 - **Priests and Religious** (ten years and less) who need help developing their potential during a period of adjustment.
 - **Priests and Religious** (over ten years) who, in the words of one priest, experience the ideal relationship between older priests and religious, and Serrans like this: "I look around this room and see people who have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with me in building the Church these past twenty-five years. You were there when the Church became vitally involved in human relations. You were there in the beginning days of Cana, CFM, urban planning, inner city work and now you are creating a Christian concern for the problems of underdeveloped countries. You have brought your professional talents to the exacting task of Christianizing the world, and you have shared those talents with your priests and religious. What better way could you have fostered vocations?"
 - **Serrans** who need to be informed on, dedicated to, and motivated to work for Church vocations.
 - **Parents** who are called upon to help their children answer questions like: What vocation shall I choose? Shall I marry, remain single, or follow a Church vocation? What professions require my particular talents? How can one know what to do? When should the choice be made?
3. Pinpoint what changes you aim to bring about among each of these groups: increase their knowledge about Church vocations, seminary and religious order requirements, develop different attitudes, motivation and inspiration, self-understanding, etc.
 4. Put the club vocation objectives in writing.
 5. Select appropriate programs. Consider the following:
 - Which programs have a track record of success?
 - Which programs encourage longer-lasting, effective results?
 - Which programs use the unique characteristics or abilities that your Serra Club has to offer?
 6. Publicize your programs in diocesan and parish publications. Coordinate these efforts with the club vice president of communications.
 7. Follow through constantly.
 8. Determine strengths and weaknesses and adjust accordingly.

Club Vocations Vice President Position Description

Serra International Suggested Club Position Description for the Club Vice President of Vocations

Position Title: Vice President of Vocations

Reports To: President

Position: Attend all Club, Board of Trustees and Committee meetings and functions; serves as the Chair of the Club Vocations Committee; establishes comprehensive Club vocation programs that meet the needs of the local diocese and encourages the formation of diocesan, deanery or parish vocation committees.

Principal Responsibilities:

1. Attend all Club and Board of Trustee meetings
2. Serve on the Club Board of Trustees
3. Serve as the Chairperson of the Vocations Committee
4. Assist and attends Regional and District Conventions as appropriate
5. Represents the Club vocation efforts with Bishop, Vocation Directors and other
6. Establish comprehensive vocation programs for use by the club
7. Develop a long range plan for the Vocations Committee
8. Attend and actively participates at the Spring Leadership Planning Conferences
9. Assist the President Elect in the preparation of the budget.
10. Understand the responsibilities of the board president and able to perform these
11. Participate as vital part of the Club leadership
12. Perform such other duties as may be assigned by the President and/or the

Position Requirements:

1. Thorough knowledge of Serra International and its Objects and Purposes
2. Be knowledgeable of the requirements of vocation ministry
3. Ability to work collaboratively with volunteers

Desirable Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

1. Knowledge of current Catholic Church issues
2. Ability to communicate clearly and concisely orally and in writing

VOCATIONS PROJECT PORTFOLIO

Introduction

There are many signs that a Church is alive and committed to prayer and service. One sign is the number of people, young and old, who respond to the call to serve the Church. As priests, deacons, sisters, brothers, and lay ministers, they commit themselves to serve the Church in so many ways.

But studies tell us that more than 90% of Catholics say they were never invited to consider Church ministry. After years of offering Mass together and participating in religion classes, they never seriously visited with anyone and discussed this important question.

Catholics want dedicated Church leadership. Often, good people are reluctant to step forward. They need the support of other Catholics who respect them and their gifts. They need to be *called by name* to serve the Church.

This portfolio describes some of the ways Catholics *call* other Catholics to vocations in the Church.

More can be done in most parishes and schools. Pope John Paul II wrote, "The fostering of vocations cannot be considered a marginal activity, but must be incorporated fully into the life and activity of the community." Will you join Serrans and others who accept the challenge of fostering vocations in your community and Church?

Called By Name

Called By Name is a national, parish-based program. It has two objectives; to raise the consciousness of Catholics to foster vocations and to surface the names of individuals who may possess the qualities necessary for a vocation to priesthood or religious life.

Background

Called By Name has roots in the New Testament in the Acts of the Apostles. To expand their ranks, the Apostles asked the Christian community for names of individuals. They then called upon the Holy Spirit to guide them as they chose new followers.

In 1985 in St. Louis, a Serran adopted the Apostles' approach and started the **Called By Name** program. As he looked at his own choice of vocation, he said, "I might have become a priest, but no one ever asked." **Called By Name** asks the entire people of God to share in the responsibility to call forth people from the community to consider the priesthood and religious life.

In 1991, Bishop Elden Curtiss, Chairman of the Bishops' Committee on Vocations, spoke to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops about the vocation program, **Called By Name**. He noted the importance of this program in making initial contacts with those who might feel called to a vocation to the priesthood or religious life.

Bishop Curtiss stated that **Called By Name** helps Catholics become more actively involved in fostering vocations. He recommends **Called By Name** as a significant way for Serrans and Catholics to begin to rebuild vocation programs in our dioceses.

How the Program Works

*When is a good time of the year to do **Called By Name**?*

A good time to have this program is either in the spring beginning with World Day of Prayer for Vocations (4th Sunday of Easter) or in the fall beginning with National Vocations Awareness Week.

When does a diocese or parish do the program?

The program takes place on three successive Sundays.

- On the first Sunday, all homilies explain the program to parishioners. Parishioners then are asked:
 - to pray for the success of the program, and
 - to recommend individuals, ages 18–35 years old, who might have the necessary qualities and be called by the Lord to a religious vocation.
- On the second and third Sundays, the pastor or a religious vocation speaker is asked to share his or her call with the congregation.

How does the program work?

Parishioners submit the names of potential candidates. The names are compiled. These people are then invited to an information-sharing meeting. After the meeting, potential candidates are able to join support groups for those considering a religious vocation.

Can the program be modified?

Flexibility is a key point of **Called By Name**. One diocese had the parish priest submit names of potential candidates. Each priest then personally contacted the men, asking them to join him at an informational meeting.

The Role of Serrans

Serrans have two primary roles; (1) to encourage each diocese to adopt **Called By Name**, and (2) to provide the necessary volunteer support.

Life Awareness

The **Life Awareness Weekend Retreat** program targets single adults, ages 18–50, who may be interested in pursuing a religious vocation. During the **Life Awareness Weekend Retreat**, adults listen to presentations and participate in discussions as they discern their vocation. Support groups are available after the **Life Awareness Weekend Retreat** to help continue the discernment process begun during the weekend.

Background

The **Life Awareness Weekend Retreat** program began in 1983 in the diocese of Galveston–Houston, Texas. Serrans had read an article in *U.S. News and World Report* entitled, “19 Million Singles — Their Joys and Frustrations.” The article indicated that a large percentage of the 18–50 year-old age group remain undecided about and still searching for a meaningful life commitment. In response to the article, the Serra Club of Northwest Houston started **Life Awareness**.

Since it began, a total of 695 men and women have participated in **Life Awareness**. Through 1991, 67 (13%) of the participants have pursued a religious vocation; 18 entered the diocesan priesthood, 13 entered religious order priesthood, 33 entered women religious orders, and three became brothers. Retreat groups have been evenly split between men and women. The average age is 26. The participants have come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, 67% Caucasian, 26% Hispanic, 3% African–American, and 3% Asian.

Just as **Life Awareness** has flourished in Galveston–Houston for over nine years, it has been equally as successful in the Dallas–Fort Worth area. The Serra Clubs in the Dallas–Fort Worth area adopted the **Life Awareness** program as their district–wide vocation program. Modeled after the Galveston–Houston weekend, their program has attracted 166 men and women. Of those, 16 have entered the seminary or religious life and 31 men and women continue to discern.

How the Program Works

Who coordinates a Life Awareness Weekend Retreat?

Serra Clubs can coordinate a **Life Awareness Weekend Retreat** individually, in groups of clubs, or in conjunction with other vocation–oriented organizations. In Houston, the weekend is sponsored and administered by the Serra Clubs in cooperation with the Diocesan Vocation Office and the Passionist Director of the Retreat Center.

Where can Life Awareness take place?

Life Awareness can be held at a seminary, retreat center, or other convenient overnight facility that has meeting and dining facilities.

What goes on during a Life Awareness Weekend Retreat?

The weekend begins on a Friday evening when the retreatants are greeted by Serrans, registered, and guided to their private rooms. A buffet meal is served to welcome the retreatants. The evening closes with prayer and an informal social follows.

Saturday and Sunday are devoted to presentations and discussions. Individual time is spent in counseling with the religious staff. Many of the staff members are on–site all weekend and are available for one–on–one visits and consultations with the retreatants.

On Sunday, the Bishop of the diocese celebrates the closing Mass, when possible. He then joins the group for lunch and visits with the retreatants.

If a retreatant is interested in continuing the discernment process after the weekend, how is that followed up?

The diocesan vocation offices often conduct monthly support groups that can be very valuable. Frequently, about 30% of the retreatants express a desire to continue discerning.

The Role of Serrans

Serrans serve in a variety of roles:

- arranging for all publicity and advertising,
- doing the fundraising,
- assembling the religious staff,
- qualifying the applicants,
- preparing and serving food, and
- greeting and registering of the retreatants.

Parish Vocation Committee

In the decree of the Second Vatican Council, parish communities should strive to make a parish family “vocation conscious.” Our parishes remind us that God calls all of us to choose a vocation that expresses our love of God in the world. A Parish Vocation Committee can raise awareness about and share information on the various Catholic vocations, to the priesthood and to religious, married, and single life.

As a parish-based organization, a Parish Vocation Committee must work closely with the priest, lay and religious teachers, youth groups, parish council, and all other groups that make up the parish family. As a committee of the parish, a Parish Vocation Committee also needs to establish definite goals, objectives, and activities.

Guidelines for Forming a Parish Vocation Committee

Why form a Parish Vocation Committee?

Because the parish family needs to pray and work together to encourage and foster religious and priestly vocations.

Who forms a Parish Vocation Committee?

A parish priest, a Serran, or any other interested, committed person.

How do you form a Parish Vocation Committee?

There are two main steps.

Initial Planning:

- Five or six parish members explore the possibility of forming a Parish Vocation Committee.
- This group will answer such questions as:
 - What is the purpose of the Committee?
 - What key people should make up this Committee?
 - Would members of this Committee be elected, appointed, or would they volunteer?
 - Will this planning committee disband when the formal Parish Vocation Committee is organized?

Forming the Parish Vocation Committee:

Committee Members

- The number of permanent Committee members may vary from parish to parish.
- All parish organizations could be represented.

Chairperson and Officers

- An initial chairperson should be selected who will help define the mission of the committee.
- Other officers may then be selected.

- A Vocation Director also can be selected. This person would be the liaison with the Vocation Director of the Diocese.

Mission Statement

- The Mission Statement should answer the following questions:
 - What is the purpose of the Parish Vocation Committee?
 - To whom is this group accountable?
 - What are the criteria for membership?
 - With whom will this group communicate?

What are the responsibilities of a Parish Vocation Committee?

A Parish Vocation Committee develops short-term objectives and strategies for a growing vocation ministry in the parish. These objectives are to be reviewed annually and presented to the parish council for approval. Some objectives and strategies might be:

- To develop a parish ministry of private and liturgical prayer for vocations.
- To engage in ongoing study and reflection on vocation ministry, especially as it changes in our Church.
- To make available vocation materials and opportunities for discernment that are offered by national or diocesan offices or religious communities.
- To organize and facilitate special vocation presentations in the parish.
- To be personally available to young people who need spiritual and vocational support.
- To reach out and encourage young adults to consider religious life or ordained ministry.
- To develop programs for parishioners who are currently single and who may be considering a *Second Career Vocation*, an adult vocation to the religious life or priesthood.
- To develop and maintain a list of individuals in the parish who may be candidates for ordained ministry or religious life and offer continuing support and recognition.
- To invite all parishioners to identify potential candidates for ordained ministry or religious life.
- To provide the *Leadership Interview* to selected candidates, conducted by persons trained for this ministry.
- To evaluate the parish vocation program yearly.

Parish Vocation Resources

One of the most interesting and unique aspects of Serra is that members come together from many parishes. This provides a broad base for the club, but it sometimes distances Serra's work from the parish environment where vocation seeds are planted and often bloom. Serra can extend its influence into a parish by being a vocation liaison, offering resources and enthusiasm.

31 Club

Background

The **31 Club** is one of Serra's simplest, most successful, and most fundamental vocation programs. It is an excellent way to make Catholics aware of the need for an increase in priestly and religious vocations at the parish level where vocations often begin.

The **31 Club** is an important program for all Serra Clubs. Jesus Christ said, "Pray the Lord of the Harvest that there will be laborers for the vineyard." Through the **31 Club**, Serrans have the opportunity to actively respond to his call in solidarity with other Serrans and Catholics in the community and the world.

The **31 Club** began in New Zealand in 1982 by a club that was waiting to receive its charter. Since then, it has spread to numerous parishes in countries all around the world, showing the Internationality of Serra. The program has been described as a true example of the Mystical Body of Christ in action.

How the Program Works

Materials Needed (available from the USAC office)

- **31 Club** Posters (11 x 17)
- **31 Club** Membership Prayer Cards (business-card size — available in English and Spanish)
- **31 Club Brochure**

Getting Started

- Order one **31 Club** poster for each parish or school that is starting a **31 Club** and enough **31 Club** membership prayer cards for each participant.
- Hang a poster in a visible place in churches and schools so that others can watch the growth of the club.
- Work with the parish pastors to schedule a Sunday when a Serran can speak at Sunday Masses to encourage parishioners to become members.
- Work with the pastors, school principals, and parish directors of religious education to schedule a time when a Serran can speak at schools and parish groups.

How to Become a Member

Becoming a member is simple. It lasts for three years, then ends, and members are asked to rejoin. To become a member:

- Each person chooses one date of the month when he or she will go to Mass and offer it for vocations.
- Each new member signs up for that date on the poster in the parish lobby or school.
- Each new member receives a membership card to remind him or her of the day on which he or she has pledged to offer Mass for vocations.
- At Mass on the designated date, the member prays for all priests, sisters, brothers, deacons and lay ministers who have served or are serving his or her parish, and prays that future church vocations will be forthcoming from the parish.

Altar Server Programs

There are thousands of boys and girls nationwide who are actively involved in serving the local Catholic Church as altar servers. During this time, many of them may think about priesthood or religious life. Parish-based altar server programs provide outstanding opportunities for local Serra clubs to recognize the valuable service these young men and women offer the church. At the same time, Serrans help create an awareness of religious life as a vocational choice.

Altar Server Recognition Night

In Houston, Texas, St. Cecilia Parish has had great success with the Altar Server Recognition Night. It has been very popular with the parish altar servers, with over 75% of them attending each year. The members of the Vocations Committee of a Serra Club organize the evening and the Chair of the Committee presides over the activities.

Materials Needed

- Names and addresses of parish altar servers and their parents
- A room
- Beverages and snacks

How-to

- Gather the names and addresses of altar servers and their parents in the local parishes
- Set a date at least a month in advance
- Reserve an appropriately-sized room at a local parish (e.g., social hall, school lunchroom, or parish community center) for 7 pm to 9 pm on the appointed date
- Invite the altar servers and their parents
- Schedule speakers, including:
 - the pastor of the parish that is hosting the evening; he can thank the boys and girls for their service to the Church and encourage them to consider priesthood and the religious life; and

- a well-known Catholic professional person from the area who can provide some interesting highlights from his or her experience and encourage the boys and girls to lead healthy lifestyles and work hard toward their life goals

Altar Server Recognition Days

Several years ago, the Serra Club of Southwest Houston, in conjunction with the Galveston–Houston Diocesan Vocation Office, developed the *Houston Altar Server Recognition Days*. This program was designed with two purposes in mind; to honor and recognize the 4,500 altar servers in the diocese and to acquaint more young men with seminary life and encourage them to consider a religious vocation.

Materials Needed

- Names and addresses of parish altar servers, their parents, and parish coordinators of altar servers
- A large meeting room at a local seminary
- Presenters from the club and a newly-ordained priest
- Food/lunch materials for a cookout
- TV with VCR
- Videos on seminary life and the priesthood
- Small remembrance (e.g., a gold cross)

How-to

- Choose two Saturdays in the spring of the year
- Gather the names and addresses of the altar servers, their parents, and parish coordinators of altar servers from all of the parishes in the diocese
- Reserve space at the local seminary. (Plan on having 100 to 125 altar servers attend each Saturday session.)
- Set up a schedule. Below is a possible model.

Schedule

9:00 am Guided tours of the seminary

10:00 am Boys play games/Presentation for parents and adult parish coordinators

12 noon Cookout

1:30 pm Presentation by newly-ordained priest

2:00 pm Videos on seminary life or the priesthood and open discussion

- Choose presenters and plan the presentation to parents and adult parish coordinators.

The morning presentation could include:

- Information on the overall vocation situation in the Catholic church
- Diocesan and Serra vocation programs
- Descriptions of what Serra is doing to help the vocation problem

During the afternoon presentation, the newly-ordained priest could:

- Describe why he entered the seminary and became a priest
- Thank the boys for their service to the Church
- Bless the boys and give them a small remembrance

- Assign responsibilities for leading games and preparing lunch to club members

Scouting

Background

What is Scouting?

Scouting is the world's largest youth organization. With more than 1,250,000 Catholic boys and adults in the movement, scouting helps strengthen and extend the Church's work with youth.

Scouting's specially tailored programs of religious formation augment the religious instruction that Catholic youths receive in the Catholic schools and through CCD classes. These programs offer a scout the opportunity to develop better relationships with the world and with God.

What Church organization works with scouting?

There is a Diocesan Committee on Scouting in each diocese. The committee is made up of the diocesan chaplains appointed by the bishop, plus Catholic adult volunteers. The committee supervises and promotes all religious activities for packs, troops, and posts. It also works to deepen and strengthen the faith of the Catholic adult volunteers in the movement.

How the Program Works

What scouting activities does the Diocesan Committee on Scouting sponsor?

The Diocesan Committee sponsors various activities that are directly related to religious vocations. Some of them are:

- scout retreats
- vocational camporees
- field trips to a seminary
- community and parish service projects
- field masses
- training sessions for spiritual and apostolic formation of the lay person
- adult vocation workshops
- participation in the Bishop's Campaign for Human Development

The Role of Serrans

How can a Serra Club or an individual Serran assist the Diocesan Committee on Scouting?

A Serra Club or an individual Serran can:

- Invite the local scout chaplain to speak at a Serra Club meeting.
- Pay the salary of a Catholic chaplain at a summer camp.
- Serve as a religious emblems counselor at a local unit.
- Work with non-Catholic sponsored troops on the parish level in preparation for the Ad Altare Dei and Pius XII Awards.
- Assist in organizing and operating a scout retreat. With permission of the chaplain, give a talk on vocations from the viewpoint of a parent or layperson.
- Become active on the Diocesan Committee on Scouting.
- Sponsor a **Bishop's Troop** trophy, flag or patch to the Catholic-sponsored unit with the best program of religious activities.
- Assist the Diocesan Committee in planning and carrying out a **Bishop's Dinner for Scouting**.
- Ask local scout officials if they will canvas their executive board members, business and industrial leaders about summer employment for seminarians.
- Invite Catholic laypersons involved in scouting to be Serrans.

Other Programs For Youth

Explore Week for Boys

What is Explore Week?

Explore Week is a vocation awareness program for boys in grades 7 through 12 sponsored by the diocesan vocation office. Young boys spend one week at the local seminary during the month of June each year. The program costs a nominal fee and consists of recreation and sports, prayers, workshops, and thoughtful group discussions. If necessary, the diocesan vocation office may be able to provide some financial assistance.

Explore Week teaches about the priesthood and vocations in general. The program provides the means for young men to reflect on what God may be calling them to do. It tends to focus on ways to lead a better Christian life by looking at ambitions and future goals rather than trying to sell the boys on entering the seminary.

*How successful is **Explore Week**?*

In the Galveston–Houston Diocese, the **Explore Week** is considered to be the most effective program in encouraging young men to enter the seminary and the priesthood. Now in its 29th year, it continues to stand alone among all the different vocations awareness programs used in the diocese. About 40% of each year's group of boys have attended previous sessions.

*What is **Explore Week** like?*

Daily activities include morning and evening prayer, celebration of the Eucharist, workshops, discussion periods, and recreation. To keep the groups of those attending to optimum size, the junior–high–school boys attend one week and the senior–high–school boys attend the following week.

*What is a Serra Club's role in an **Explore Week**?*

A Serra Club plays a significant role in an **Explore Week**. In Galveston–Houston, for example, members of the Club register the young men, guide them to their rooms, and conduct guided tours of the seminary for the parents who accompany their sons.

As the week progresses, other Club members are engaged in acting as referees for softball, basketball, and other activities. The Serrans also provide a mid–week evening barbecue for all of the boys. The other Serra Clubs in the district assist in promoting and advertising the **Explore Week**.

Insight for Girls

*What is **Insight**?*

Insight is a summer weekend experience for young women in junior and senior high school who are interested in exploring their Catholic faith, the vowed religious life, and the challenge of leading a Christian life. It was conceived and developed in 1989 by the Serra Club of Southwest Houston in conjunction with the Galveston–Houston diocesan vocation office.

During the weekend, the girls stay at a local seminary and are bussed to a convent nearby for Saturday's program. Sunday morning's program takes place at the seminary. There is a nominal charge that includes the overnight accommodations and five meals.

*How successful is **Insight**?*

Those who have been involved in **Insight** continue to be impressed by their deep interest girls in learning more about their faith and their desire to lead prayerful, Christian lives. In the last few years at least 30% of those attending each year had attended a previous session.

*What is an **Insight** weekend like?*

An **Insight** weekend is conducted on two successive weekends; junior high girls the first weekend, senior high girls the following weekend. Usually 35–40 girls attend each weekend session. Registration begins at 7:00 pm on Friday, then a get–acquainted session, introduction of staff, objectives of the weekend, and a song and prayer session.

On Saturday morning, the girls are bussed to one of the local convents. They experience the convent and what a sister's lifestyle is like. In addition, they participate in workshops and discussions on careers in the sisterhood, how to lead a Christian life, and the importance and power of prayer. One of the highlights on Saturday is the *Emmaus Walk* where each girl chooses one of the sisters or novices to spend some time with. There is also time for fun and games before the weekend concludes with Mass on Sunday.

*What is a Serra Club's role in an **Insight** weekend?*

Serrans take a very active part in planning, registering, and assisting in other activities for the **Insight** weekend.

Additional information is available from:

Diocese of Galveston–Houston, Office of Vocations
1700 San Jacinto Street
Houston, TX 77002–8291

VOCATIONS AFFIRMATION

Introduction

Serra clubs and members recognize the need to affirm those who have chosen and committed themselves to a church vocation because we have dedicated ourselves to the service of vocations in the Catholic Church. Vocation affirmation programs demonstrate our oneness with our priests, brothers and sisters in their ministry.

Priests, brothers and sisters are asked to give their energy and creativity continuously and unselfishly, often without some sign of gratitude or support. We show our thanks and appreciation to those who serve the church when we get involved as a club or as an individual in any of these affirmation programs.

The following pages list a variety of programs and suggestions for affirming priests, brothers, sisters and seminarians. Many programs are suitable for entire clubs as well as individual members.

Select a program that matches the resources and interests of your club and encourage each member to take an active role in it. Individuals may want to become involved in a one-on-one program, like the friendship programs.

Priests

“ . . . (P)riests who have been actively involved in the ministry for a more or less lengthy period of time seem to be suffering today from an excessive loss of energy in their ever-increasing pastoral activities. Likewise, faced with the difficulties of contemporary culture and society . . . they are more and more aware of their need for ongoing formation.” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 3)

The demands of the priesthood have changed dramatically in recent years. Priests, however, have not gained an extra hour of the day or day of the week in which to perform all of the duties expected of them. Also, the ever-increasing workload is harder to manage as the numbers of priests has declined.

Affirmation programs “remember” the priests in a very Eucharistic sense. As we affirm their vocation, we see in our priests the same way of life that Jesus led. At the same time, we remember them to our community. When we invite them to a dinner, a softball tournament or a concert, we welcome them to share in a joyous occasion.

Getting Started

- Contact your local parishes or the diocesan office of vocations.
- Gather the names, addresses, birthdays and ordination dates of your area priests.
- Assign a club member the responsibility to maintain address lists and calendars for the club.
- Once a year, check back with your local parishes or diocesan office for changes in parish assignments, newly ordained priests or transfers into the diocese.

Brothers

If we look in the hallways of many of our Catholic schools and hospitals, we will find brothers ministering to the needs of children and adults. Like priests and sisters who are members of a

particular order, brothers take vows to live according to the charism or spirit of their particular community. Unlike priests, they are not ordained.

Sometimes we are unaware of the contribution that brothers make in our parishes, communities and dioceses. We know who priests are because of their visibility at the altar and their dress. Brothers are not as visible, but no less important.

Affirmation programs for brothers focus on the importance of their ministry in our world, especially because it *is* different from what priests do.

Getting Started

- Find the nearest community of brothers.
- Contact the community and meet with one or two of the brothers.
Discuss:
 - What the brothers might need from your club.
 - What other clubs already are doing to assist them.
- Identify the brothers' needs.
- Gather the names, addresses and birthdates of the brothers.
- Decide what needs your club would like to meet.
- Decide which program will meet those needs.

Considerations

- Determine what type of program your club can support.
Some considerations might be:
 - The size of your club vs. the size of the community.
 - Whether your club wants to work one-on-one with individual brothers or with the whole community.

Sisters

Religious women take vows to live according to the charism of their community. In the past, the image of religious women was defined clearly. Recently, their roles in society and perceptions about them have changed. In the midst of these changes, religious women have continued to live out dedicated lives of service.

The daily lives of religious women are more diverse than in the past. They often face the same kind of professional and personal crises that the laity face. Many communities deal with the same concerns about finances, housing, retirement and education that families encounter. A number of communities are in the process of reexamining their missions and revitalizing their charism.

Religious women need the prayers, hospitality and witness of Serrans to affirm their call and to persevere. The enclosed programs are intended to express Serrans' gratitude for their service and hope that their numbers will increase.

Getting Started

- Contact convents and motherhouses in your local area.
- Discuss the needs of the community with the sister who is in charge of the house or local community.
- Contact the convents in your diocese for names, addresses, birthdates and dates of vows of all of the sisters in your area.
- Identify which needs the club would like to meet.
- Decide which program will meet those needs.

Considerations

- Many sisters are living in small communities, more like the size of a typical family. Some of their needs may be very practical and ongoing.
- Their available time for dinners or events may be limited because of commitments to their jobs or their communities. Consider affirmation programs that are smaller and ongoing rather than large, three-hour, one-evening events.

Seminarians

“The Seminary can be seen as a place and a period in life. . . . It is a community established by the bishop to offer to those called by the Lord to serve as apostles the possibility of reliving the experience of formation which the Lord provided for the Twelve.” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 60)

Seminarians are not ordained yet they are set apart from the rest of the laity. In this sense, the lives of seminarians are in transition. They have begun the journey to ordination. Along the way, they will grow intellectually, spiritually and personally. They will be examining their choices, asking themselves hard questions and prayerfully responding to God, the church and the community.

Because their lives are *up in the air*, they need the loving, prayerful encouragement of Serrans to persevere in their studies and training. Programs for seminarians are meant to support and sustain their calls to follow the Lord.

Getting Started

- Find the nearest seminary.
- Contact the rector of the seminary and meet with him.
Discuss:
 - What the seminarians might need from your club.
 - What other clubs already are doing to assist the seminarians.
- Identify the seminarians' needs.
- Ask the diocese for the names, addresses and birthdates of all seminarians studying for your diocese.
- Decide what needs your club would like to meet.
- Decide which program will meet those needs.
- Invite one or two seminarians to club meetings. Ask them what needs they have that the Serra club might help with.

Considerations

- Determine what type of program your club can support.
Some considerations might be:
 - The size of your club compared to the number of seminarians.
 - How frequently you want to be in contact with the seminarians.
 - Whether your club wants to work one-on-one with individual seminarians or as a group with a whole class.
- Don't forget the seminarians' parents.
 - Invite them to participate in events, if possible.
 - Send them a congratulations card at their sons' ordination.
- Remember that seminarians are students. Supply snacks or break time food during finals. Set up a tutoring program between Serrans and seminarians. Establish a special emergency fund through the rector of the seminary.

Special Seminarian Programs

Mass at Seminary

How-to

- Contact rector of the seminary and schedule a day when Serrans can come to Mass at the seminary.
- Invite the seminarians individually to attend with the Serrans.

Suggestions for a Successful Program

- Plan a small reception after Mass, if possible, so that the seminarians and Serrans can get better acquainted.

Welcome Back Picnic

How-to

- Contact the rector of the seminary.
- Schedule a day when Serrans can put on a picnic or barbecue to welcome the seminarians back to school.
- Invite the seminarians, individually if possible, to attend.
- Assign preparations (food planning and buying, refreshments, entertainment) to various members of the club.

Suggestions for a Successful Program

- Make arrangements for an alternative site indoors, in case of bad weather.

“You and Me” — Seminarians and Youth

How-to

- Ask local seminarians if they would be interested in working with local youth.
- Talk to the youth minister in your local parish.
- Determine which youth programs could benefit from the involvement of a seminarian.
- Help coordinate the seminarians' and youth group's schedule of activities.

Suggestions for a Successful Program

- Ask the youth minister to devote one program a year to vocations. Have a seminarian speak about his experiences before and after his decision to enter the seminary.
- Ask a seminarian to referee or participate in youth group activities like volleyball, basketball, spring flings or retreats.

Friendship Programs

Friendship programs are one-on-one projects that demonstrate a Serran's affirmation of vocation through personal, ongoing contact. Since most priests, brothers, seminarians and sisters experience loneliness at some time, friendship programs can be a stable foundation as they deal with the many joys and pressures of their service.

“Hello, my name is...”

How-to

- Attend meetings and programs in your local parish.
- Stay a few minutes after Mass on Sunday.
- Call the rectory or school and make an appointment to meet the priests, brothers, seminarians and sisters who work in your parish.
- Introduce yourself. Tell him or her that you are a Serran. Describe what you do for a living. Offer to take him or her out for a meal or invite him or her to your home.

“Adopt a Priest/Brother/Seminarian/Sister”

How-to

- Get a list of the names and addresses of priests, brothers, seminarians and sisters in your local area.
- Each Serran selects a priest, brother, seminarian or sister to *adopt* as their own.
- Contact the priests, brothers, seminarians and sisters by letter or phone and set up an initial meeting to invite him or her to be part of your family.

Pen Pals

How-to

- Find a monastery, seminary or convent that is far from your club and in an area not served by another club.
- Get a list of the priests, brothers, seminarians or sisters who might be interested in corresponding with a Serran.
- Each Serran selects a priest, brother, seminarian or sister as their *pen pal*.
- Write the *pen pals* frequent letters, especially on special occasions like birthdays.

Cards, Remembrances and Gifts

Remembering an anniversary, a birthday or a holiday through a Card, remembrance or gift is an effective way of expressing your gratitude to a priest, brother, seminarian or sister for his or her tireless work and commitment to the Lord.

Occasions

- Birthdays
- Ordinations/Final Profession of Vows
- Anniversaries
- Holidays (e.g., Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter)

How-to

- Gather the names and addresses of the priest, brothers, seminarians or sisters from the diocese, convents and seminaries.
- Assign each Serran one addressee.
- If one of your club members is unable to come to most meetings because of health or age, ask him or her to take charge of the program. This member might be responsible for keeping the calendar of special days up to date, buying the cards or mailing them.
- Assign your Affirmation Committee to write a card to each priest, brother, seminarian and sister.
- Purchase cards or gifts from your local religious stores or from Serra International.
- Set aside a few minutes at your Serra club meeting for everyone in attendance to sign letters or cards.
- Include an invitation with the card, letter, remembrance or gift to join your Serra club at your next meeting.

Sports and Cultural Events

Sports events are large-scale programs that provide an opportunity to step back from the daily pressures of vocations and ministry and relax in a casual, supportive atmosphere. Priests, brothers, seminarians and sisters appreciate the chance to play and compete with and against Serrans.

How-to

- Decide what sports event(s) your club will sponsor and who will be participating.
- Choose a date and site for the event(s) at least six months to one year in advance.
Some questions to consider:
 - What month, day of the week and time of day are the most convenient for the potential participants?
 - What sports events can the club hold at that site?
 - What equipment will the participants need? Can they use their own equipment? Can they rent equipment? How much will equipment rental cost?
 - Can your club have a banquet after the sports events have ended?
 - How will participants who have difficulty driving or do not have cars get to the site?
 - What will the total expense be per person for the day? Include any room charges, taxes and tips along with court or green fees.
 - Whose insurance (the site's, the club's, each person's or Serra International's) will cover injuries? (*Check with Serra International for more information on insurance coverage.*)
- Review and sign contracts for the site.
- Set up committees to take charge of individual events, food, transportation, hospitality, finances and other areas as needed.
- Get the names and addresses of the participants.
- Purchase invitations and mail them out four to six weeks in advance.
 - Invitations could be in the form of a flyer or a printed card (like a birth or wedding announcement).
 - Ask for sign-ups for partners or teams on the invitation form.
 - Choose an RSVP deadline of at least three to four weeks before the event.
 - List the costs for the day and how much they need to pay in advance.
 - Include a card or tear-off form for them to send in with their reservation.
- Set up a schedule for the day. Include:
 - Starting and ending times for each event and banquet.
 - Times and places for special contests like "longest drive" at a golf outing or "fastest match" for a tennis tournament.
 - Times and places where food and drinks will be available.
 - Costs of food and drinks, if any.
 - Locations of locker rooms.
- Send out confirmation letters with the schedule of the day to the people attending at least two weeks before the event.
- On the day of the event:
 - Check to see that everything is set up the way your club requested it.
 - Have club members available to take care of any last-minute reservations.

Cultural Events

Cultural events offer a chance to relax and see the creative world through the eyes, ears and bodies of other people's work. This type of affirmation can be looked at in two ways, as an opportunity for Serrans and priests, brothers, seminarians and sisters to meet and enjoy a cultural event or as a chance for them to get away from all of their daily concerns by themselves or with friends.

Materials Needed

- Tickets

How-to

- Contact the local parish, seminary or convent.
- Invite an individual or small group to go with you or offer to drop off the tickets to an event.
- Suggested cultural events are:

Dramatic plays
Comedy shows
Movies
Dance concerts
Art gallery openings
Auctions
Music concert
Opera
Museums
Benefits

Dinners, Luncheons and Appreciations

Whether formal or informal, dinners, luncheons and appreciations show priests, brothers, seminarians and sisters that Serrans support their work, especially through the sharing of bread at a common meal. A dinner with area bishops or the newly-ordained is an ideal opportunity to talk about the work of your club and what your club has accomplished. It is also a good chance to listen to what the bishop envisions for Serra or what the newly ordained priests are looking for in their relationships with Serrans.

Occasions

- Holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter)
- Anniversaries (especially Jubilees)
- Annual dinners for:
 - Retired clergy
 - Seminarians
 - Sisters
 - Clergy
- Bishop's dinner
- Appreciation dinner
- Recent ordination
- Gala dinner and auction

Materials Needed

- Names and addresses of invitees
- A room and a menu
- Invitations
- Decorations, entertainment or speakers
- Name tags
- Place cards or a seating arrangement
- Gifts
- Transportation, if needed
- Serra materials

How-to

- Formal
 - Gather the names of the invitees (active and/or retired) from your local parishes, diocesan vocations offices, seminaries or convents
 - Set a time and date at least one to two months in advance.
 - Reserve an appropriately sized room at a local restaurant or hotel.
 - Purchase invitations and mail them out. (If you are planning a very formal event, your club might consider engraving or calligraphy for the invitations.)
 - Decide on an appropriate gift for your guests (if you will be honoring them with a gift).
 - Decide on the menu, decorations, entertainment or speakers.

- Simple flower arrangements for each table make wonderful decorations that can be given away at the end of the evening.
 - An instrumental soloist (piano or harp) or a small chamber group can help create a more formal atmosphere.
 - A less formal entertainment might be a caricature artist.
 - Arrange for a group of Serrans to pick up, and later drop off, any guests who are without transportation.
 - Give a small group of Serrans the responsibility of greeting the guests as they arrive, showing them around the room and introducing them to other Serrans and guests.
 - Prepare a seating arrangement and name tags.
 - Arrange for a group to arrive in advance to set up the decorations, place cards or seating, name tags, gift table and Serra materials.
- Informal
 - Choose a format for the meal. Some suggestions are:
 - Barbeque
 - Sunday brunch
 - Pot luck dinner
 - Picnic
 - Pick a date and time that is convenient for your intended guest(s).
 - Invite your guest(s) by phone, by letter or in person.
 - Decide on the menu. Make a mental list of courses or items that you will need for your meal because your guest(s) may ask to bring something.

Professional/Financial Assistance

Although our priests, brothers, seminarians and sisters are well-educated and trained for their ministries, many do not have the expertise that Serrans have in a variety of skilled areas. Offering your professional or financial assistance can relieve the stress of a broken window, a dead car or a bad debt.

As a Teaching Source for...

...Professional Concerns (medical, legal, managerial, etc.)

How-to

- Contact your local rectory, seminary or convent.
- Find out what kinds of professional concerns the priests, seminarians, brothers or sisters might have.
- Schedule individual or group meetings to talk about their concerns.
- Areas of concern include:
 - Legal dilemmas (like current or potential lawsuits)
 - Medical problems
 - Money/office management
 - Estate planning
 - Accounting/budgeting procedures
 - Insurance
- Give lectures on:
 - how to manage the personnel in the parish
 - how to read a balance sheet
 - how to control the cash flow of the parish
 - how to avoid legal problems

As a Resource for...

...Financial Support

How-to

- Contact your local parish, convent or seminary.
- Find out who is in the seminary or in graduate studies from your area (graduate education is part of ongoing formation of priests, brothers and sisters as well as preparation for seminarians).
- Decide what your financial contribution could be.

...Skilled Manual/Professional Labor

How-to

- Contact your local rectory, seminary or convent.
- Find out what kinds of skilled labor (e.g., carpentry, plumbing, electrical, house painting, gardening) are needed.
- Provide lawyers to advise on car repair problems, collections, small claims court, wills.
- Arrange for accountants to give tax advice, etc.
- Arrange times and dates for the “expert” Serrans to go to the rectory, convent or home and assess the job.

...Employment/Consultation

How-to

- Post notices at the local seminary of summer work or part-time positions available at your company.
- Keep a record of the professions of your local priests, brothers and sisters. You may need their professional services sometime in the future.

Prayer Programs

Prayer programs focus on vocation affirmation in the context of a prayer-filled environment. They range from large-group gatherings to individual efforts.

Serra Day of Recollection

Materials

- Invitations
- Speaker(s)
- A place
- Food and drinks
- Name tags
- Paper, pencils, markers, newsprint, etc.

How-to

- Choose a day and time three to six months in advance. (Generally, weekdays are better for priests and those who work in parishes. Seminarians, however, will probably be free on the weekends.)
- Reserve space at a local retreat center, monastery, parish center or school. Depending upon the schedule of the day, you will need:
 - One large gathering room for all of the attendees.
 - Rooms that will comfortably seat 10 –12 people for small group discussions or reflection.
 - Dining room (Clarify with the place’s staff who will provide food and drinks, how much it will cost and when it will be served.)
- Choose a theme for the day that would be appropriate for your guests.

- Contact and confirm a speaker for the day. (Suggest two or three different people as possible speakers and contact all of them. Discuss the schedule of the day and what their fee will be, if any.)
- Send out invitations to the priests, brothers, seminarians and sisters.
- Set up a schedule. Below is a possible model.

Schedule

8:30 a.m.	Arrival/Introduction
9:00 a.m.	Speaker presentation
10:00 a.m.	Small-group discussion
11:00 a.m.	Large-group discussion
12 noon	Lunch
1:30 p.m.	Speaker presentation
2:30 p.m.	Small-group discussion
3:30 p.m.	Large-group discussion
4:30 p.m.	Mass
6:00 p.m.	Dinner (or departure)

- Contact the speaker a week before the event for any last-minute details. Find out what materials the speaker will need and what materials he or she would like the attendees to have available.
- Before the attendees arrive, prepare name tags and any other materials that they will need for the day.
- An hour before the day begins, set up morning coffee, tea, juice and doughnuts.

Retirement Programs

Although their active ministry may have ended, retired priests, brothers and sisters continue to witness to their call. These affirmation programs remind them that Serra has not forgotten and still appreciates their ministry.

Many of the programs previously described in this booklet can be modified to the needs and abilities of the retirees. See pages 1–15 for suggestions.

How-to

- Contact your local parish, diocese, monastery or convent for names of retirement homes for priests, brothers and sisters.
- Find out what the particular needs of the retirees are.
- Work with the staff of the home as well as the retirees themselves as you develop your retirement affirmation program.

Resources for Vocation Affirmation Projects

Organizations to contact for videotapes:

Argus Communications
 One DLM Park
 P O Box 7000
 Allen TX 75002
 (800)527-4747, in TX (800)442-4711

Franciscan Communications
 1229 S. Santee St.
 Los Angeles CA 90015
 (800)421-8510, in CA (213)746-2916

Liguori Publications
Audio/Visual Department
One Liguori Drive
Liguori MO 63057
(314)464-2500

Maryknoll World Video and Film Library
Maryknoll NY 10545
(914)941-7590

Mass Media VIDEO Ministries
2116 N. Charles St.
Baltimore MD 21218-5787

***From the USCC (United States Catholic
Conference):***

Charged with the Grandeur of God

(Videotape, \$24.95; Audiotapes, \$29.95; Study Guide, \$2.95)

The Priest and Stress (\$3.95)

The Continuing Formation of Priests: Growing in Wisdom, Age and Grace (\$2.50)

Publishing Services
United States Catholic Conference
3211 Fourth St., NE
Washington DC 20017