



# Savannah Serra Club NEWSLETTER

JULY 2004



President Don Waters

## A Message From President Don.

My first knowledge of Fr. Serra came during a vacation several years ago, when my wife, Kathi, and I made a side trip to a “historic mission” in Carmel, California. The structures had been well restored as a result of private donations. This site preserves the memory of the man who had lived and died here. Little did I know that years later, I would be reflecting back on his meager little sleeping room and his life of dedication.

Until three years ago, I knew nothing of Serra International and its purpose. When the idea to have a club in Savannah was introduced by Peter Paolucci, I readily agreed to help, because of my love for the Catholic Church and a desire to do my part in helping it remain strong. To stay strong, the Church must have enough priests.

At the Serra International Convention in Chicago, last year, I came face-to-face with members from all over the world, past Presidents and others who gave me a strong sense of community and a deep understanding of “what Serra is about”. The convention’s theme was “Duc In Altum” – cast into the deep - reflecting on how Jesus instructed Peter and his fellow fishermen to cast out again, after no results all day, and the fish would be in the net. Jesus would provide. Likewise, the Holy Spirit will deliver the men and women he calls, if we will just help provide the “net”.

Reflecting on this theme, I realized that we do not “recruit”, but create an environment which is more conducive to vocational recognition and development within our Diocese. How can we, in Serra, do this in Savannah?

As a new club, we must first develop organization and “critical mass”. Our most important challenge is to assure continuity, so that the Serra organization will be a permanent fixture in Savannah. I hope to increase membership, and have every member actively involved in ways that are meaningful to them. “There are many gifts, but one spirit.”

Second, we should be highly visible in our community. Young men and women considering vocations will see in us a group that says, “It’s all right if you want to choose this path.” Hopefully, we will counteract the influences that can

deflect the chosen from their spiritual path.

A third goal is to increase the ways we may work within and support existing programs in the Savannah area. We will actively meet with Pastors and other Parish representatives to learn how Serra may effectively interface with their efforts.

The major work of the Club is done by the separate committees. To help increase awareness of vocations, our Vocations committee, chaired by Joe Hasbrouck is working with the schools and CCD programs to start an essay contest among seventh graders. The editor of this newsletter, Walt Kessel, is sending it to many to increase awareness. Peter Paolucci, Chair of the Communications committee keeps the newspapers and parishes up to date on Serra events and provides content for the Newsletter. We will continue to have excellent programs, with featured speakers, as well as regular Holy Hours, coordinated by our Vice-President of Programs, Mrs. Suzanne Aviles. We will continue to support the Vocation Director to support Deanery programs.

In the short time Serra has been active in Savannah, it has increased awareness in the community and has made significant strides forward. In the coming year, I hope to maintain that momentum and have a self-sustaining organization.



# Meet Our Seminarians — Larry Napier

## “God Has Done Awesome Things In My Life”

This article first appeared in “The Worker,” newsletter of St. Joseph Church, Augusta. Reprinted with permission.



Just a couple of months ago, through a culmination of events, prayers, and guidance, I made the decision to become a seminarian for our Diocese. I wasn't fully aware at the time what a miracle this decision and opportunity are. Upon further prayer and reflection, I have come to realize what an incredible gift God has given to me. It has been a long journey to arrive at this point. It is truly a miracle of God's grace and mercy that made it possible at all.

For those of you who don't know me personally, I am a 22 year old junior at Augusta State University majoring in English. I was born and raised here in Augusta, and I have been a parishioner at St. Joseph for a little over ten years, with the exception of my first year after high school. I am also a member of the Alleluia Community, with which most of you are familiar.

I want to share with you some of my vocation story, which is continually revealing an unseen adventure. As I mentioned before, I've been at St. Joseph for over a decade with one year exception, and it is in this time frame that my story begins.

When I graduated from high school, I cared very little for Church, God, or anything having to do with the faith in which I was raised. Although I was on a journey seeking happiness and truth, I was unaware of it at that time. I had decided that happiness was somewhere in the world: parties, money, girls, or intellectual achievement, and not in God. I was sure of the promises of the world to fulfill the deeper desires of my heart.

This departure from my faith had begun in my early high school years when, as many unfortunately do, I began to value others opinions of me more than what Jesus thought. I was caught up in a sinful way of life, and although I knew what God had to offer was better, I was more afraid of my friends than God. I continued down this path even though I was more and more empty inside, trying to fill my life with worldly pleasures. In this sin, however, the quiet voice of the Lord was calling to my heart to open the door and allow Him to enter.

This pursuit by Christ only seemed to push me further away from my faith and anything having to do with God. Ultimately it came down to a fear that was growing inside me as I realized what God might be asking of me—to be a priest. The fear was more that of having to tell my friends that I love Jesus, than the fear of serving God as a priest.

As I ran from this calling in my heart, I tried ever more desperately to silence the voice of God with the illusions of the partying lifestyle. My attempt at running from God ended up just about the same way as Jonah's—alone, afraid, and in another city. I was a drug addict who was out following a jam band from show to show. There in my darkness and sin, the light and love of Jesus reached out once more to me.

I was in Mobile, Alabama at one the biggest shows of the tour, and as I stood in the middle of the concert trying to “get lost” in the music, God spoke to my heart. He showed me the shallowness of my

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life and how all the smiles around me were lies hiding the pain underneath. It was then that He offered me once again an invitation to come follow Him and receive His love and peace in my life. In that moment, because of the many prayers offered by my parents, grandparents, and friends, the grace was present for me to respond with a weak “yes”.

Later, through an incredible friend who is a priest, Fr. Ted Hochstetler, I was reconciled to God and the Church fully through the sacrament of Reconciliation. It was after the forgiveness given to me in this beautiful sacrament that I finally found what I had spent years looking for—happiness and truth. God loves me enough to forgive the greatest of my sins, and all that I desire—truth and happiness — can and will be found in Him. He continually reveals more of His glory and His love to me.

I share this for the same reason Mel Gibson gave when asked why he made *The Passion of the Christ*: he said, “I had to do it.” I, too, have to tell of the awesome things God has done for me in my life. The other reason I share this is another truth I’ve learned through my life and my experiences with God since then: God calls the broken, the sinful, and the weak to be used for the building of His kingdom.

Following the Lord to seminary, or wherever He may call me, these truths continue to become more evident as I see His power and glory revealed in me. I know that each time this happens, it is He who has made all things new in me.

As I go to study in Mexico this summer, and to Mt. St. Mary’s in the fall I ask you for your prayers. Pray that I will remain open to God’s will for me, no matter what He calls me to do or to be. Know that you are all in my prayers. I thank you and may God bless you.

In Jesus and Mary,  
Larry Napier

