



# Savannah Serra Club NEWSLETTER

July 2006



## Past-President's Report

Byron A. Stephens, Sr.

From ushering an over-anxious crowd into the Cathedral for the ordination of five young priests, to traveling up to Augusta, Georgia to assist the Augusta Deanery in establishing their own Serra Club, 2005–2006 was an exciting year for the Serra Club of Savannah.

I begin by thanking each member of the Savannah Serra Club for their total dedication and contribu-

tion of time, talent, and prayers. The Holy Hours and monthly meetings were well attended, and special recognition needs to be given to all committees.

Starting with the **Vocations Committee (Joe Hasbrouck, Chairman)**, I thank you for your continuing promotion of Priesthood Sunday, Vocation Awareness Week, and World Day of Prayer for Vocations. The vocation essay contest, in which over 100 young students participated, continues to be a great tool to inspire them to think of their religious values and a possible commitment to God and His Church.

Thanks also to the **Membership Committee (Suzanne Aviles, Chairman)** for maintaining a strong and contributing group of Serrans, including three new members inducted in the spring of 2006. The membership committee also developed a hand-out card designed to invite guests and potential members to the current Serra events noting the time, date and place for the Holy Hour and membership meetings.

The **Program Committee (Marilyn Stephens, Chairman)** gets a special thanks for "stepping out of the box" to educate and introduce the Serra membership to clergy and laypersons whose vocations reflect special dedicated works or teachings.

Presentations included Thabo Bailey and a panel of selected members of the youth groups who participated in World Youth Day in Germany, sharing their experiences and the effects the trip had on their religious beliefs and their exposure to other Catholic youths from all corners of the earth. Father Mark Ross told of his commitment to the Pro-Life

Movement, Father Michael Kavanaugh taught us the real meaning of the Ecumenical Movement, and Father Richard Young proved that an entire community can be his parish. Father Lee Yokum, a chaplain with the Third Infantry Division who had just returned from Iraq, brought a slide show that stirred both the mind and the heart.

Other activities throughout the year, in addition to our participation in the ordination and Bishop Boland's luncheon for the Seminarians and their families, were the Serra memorial service for Father Wellmeier and a Christmas Party that turned into a "celebration of life" for the beloved Polish seminarian, Dariusz Zurek so tragically taken from us.

The **Communication Committee (Peter Paolucci, Chairman)** has again raised the bar of excellence for the Serra Club of Savannah as our monthly Newsletter, constructed so beautifully under the expertise of **Walt Kessel**, took First Place as the Best Serra Newsletter in the Country. What a source of pride for us all! In addition to the newsletter, we have added Serra content of the Diocesan Vocations web site and along with Suzanne Aviles, have begun to develop our own Serra Club of Savannah web site. We also developed and delivered the presentation to the Augusta Deanery priests on how to start a Serra Club in their part of the diocese.

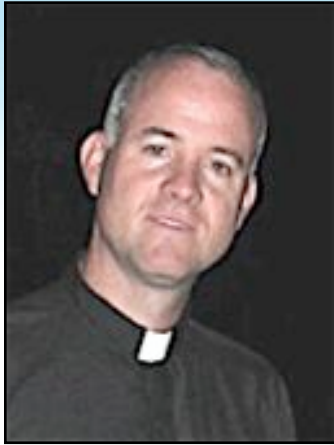
I thank Father Tim McKeown for his spiritual guidance. We will miss seeing him on a monthly basis.

I pray that God will continue to bless us and hear the prayers we offer for religious vocations in the Savannah Diocese.

Your Brother in Christ

*Byron*

Past President Serra Club of Savannah



## Farewell, Fr. Tim, Welcome, Fr. Martino

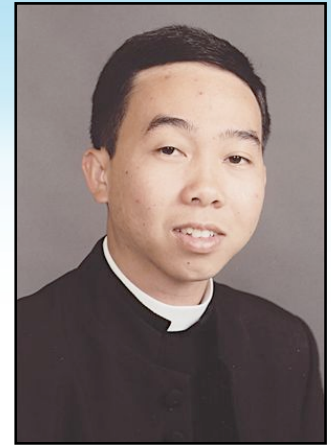
It seems like it was just yesterday that Fr. Tim came back from Rome and became Chaplain of the Serra Club of Savannah. Having the Director of Vocations located in Savannah and also the Chaplain of our club, was a particularly fortunate confluence of events.

We were able to effect close coordination of our activities in support of the vocations agenda of our diocese. Hopefully, now that our relationship with Fr. Tim has been validated, he will

continue to call on the Serra Club to support him in any vocations activity.

Thank you, Fr. Tim, for your spiritual guidance and dedication in support of our monthly devotional activities. We wish you all the best as you assume your responsibilities as Pastor of St. Matthew Church in Statesboro, GA.

Fr. Martino Ba Thong Nguyen, newly assigned as the Parochial Vicar at St. Frances Cabrini Church, will also become Chaplain of the Serra Club of Savannah. We welcome him and look forward to getting to know him better in the days ahead.



—PP

## Serrans Participate in “One in the Spirit” Celebration

On June 3, 2006, some 3,000 Georgia Catholics gathered in Perry, GA to participate in the “One in the Spirit” Pentecost Celebration. The day began with a procession of 110 banners from parishes, schools and other Catholic organizations in the Diocese of Savannah including the Serra Club of Savannah.

“It was a wonderful spirit filled day,” according to Jerry McManus who, along with his wife Cathy, was responsible for preparing the Serra banner and



carrying it in the procession.

“It was a perfectly orchestrated celebration with inspiring music, colorful pageantry, many young people, beautiful weather and great speakers.” There were over 3,000 in attendance including Jerry and Angela Egan, Suzanne and Julio Aviles along with the McManses. Suzanne and Julio were readers, in both English and Spanish, and did a superb job.

Jerry McManus holds the Serra Club of Savannah banner.



## Look Around You

With the ordination of another priest it seems appropriate to reflect on where does a vocation come from? The truth is that they come from among *us*.

How many men and woman in your own parish are caring and compassionate individuals who are good listeners, articulate speakers, and loving enthusiastic Catholics?

How many of these special, gifted people have ever been invited to consider becoming a priest, sister, brother, permanent deacon or full time lay minister?

Statistics show that 80% of the 18–30 year-olds in the United states and Canada have never been asked to consider a church vocation. The Church needs these people.

It is the Holy Spirit who plants the grace of a vocation in a person's heart. "Christ wants you!" "The Church needs you!" "God's people need you!" Sometimes the Holy Spirit's promptings are very clear in a person's mind and heart but more often than not the Holy Spirit relies on the help of other people to encourage and promote vocations. We have to be bold in our promotion of vocations to the priesthood and religious life. We must not be afraid to ask a young man or woman, "Have you ever thought that God could be calling you to be a priest or nun?"

Bishop Boland made an excellent point a few years ago in an Operation Andrew meeting at Benedictine. "Most of you are not called to be a priest, but several are called," he said. "You can't be forced into it by the church but rather it is up to you to embrace it. The church is there to endorse the call from God." He concluded by asking them to "put the priesthood on the menu and give God the chance to call you and you the opportunity to hear his call."

The conventional wisdom is that there is a shortage of vocations in the church today. I think there are still plenty of potential vocations out there but in this materialistic society we live in they are harder to discern. We have to do our part to help the voice of the Holy Spirit be heard and acted upon.

Remember, there are vocations which:

- ❖ Manifest themselves but must be fostered.
- ❖ Are not conscious of themselves but must be awakened.
- ❖ Do not dare manifest themselves but must be found out and encouraged.
- ❖ Are in fear of being lost and must be reassured.
- ❖ Meet with opposition and must be strengthened.
- ❖ Are paralyzed by poverty and must be helped.

As Serrans, let's do our part to be true to the Serra mission to foster and promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life by inviting someone to consider a vocation.



Just-ordained priest, Justin Ferguson, blesses Bishop Boland.

—PP

Published by  
**The Serra Club of Savannah**  
 Supporting Vocations in the Diocese  
 of Savannah.

President: Joe Hasbrouck  
 VP Communications: Peter Paolucci  
 Newsletter Contact: Editor-Walt Kessel  
 (912) 354-9493  
 <[waltkessel@comcast.net](mailto:waltkessel@comcast.net)>



## Summer Vocation

By Peter Paolucci

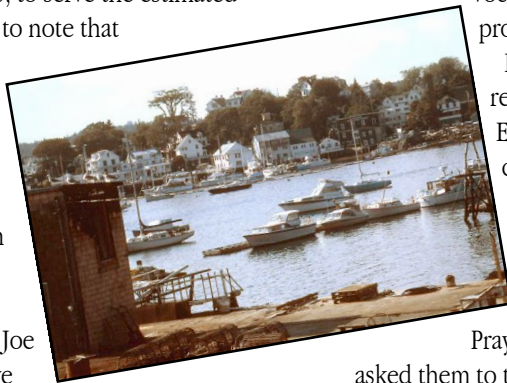
While summering in Maine for the past 28 years, Barbara and I have been attending St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Mission Parish in Fryeburg, ME. During that time we have seen a number of different priests, ministering to the Catholics in the Bridgton and Fryeburg area. It seemed as if Bishop Joseph had an inexhaustible supply of priests to be able to send a replacement each time there was an opening.

But that is no longer the case. When the current Bishop Malone looks out to his bullpen these days, the ranks are pretty thin out there and getting thinner. There are currently 85 priests serving the Diocese of Portland. With anticipated retirements and the projected ordination of only 2 new priests per year, that number is expected to shrink to only 65 by 2010, to serve the estimated 234,000 Catholics in Maine. It is sad to note that there were no new priests ordained in the Diocese of Portland this year.

But attending church here for the past few years, it was not obvious to us that this was the case. On many Sundays, there was not even an intercession for more vocations included in the Prayer of the Faithful.

For the past several years, Fr. Joe Daniels, the current pastor, and I have discussed how to raise the profile on the vocation issue in his parishes. A few weeks ago we discussed the issue with the St. Joseph Parish Council and agreed to a Vocations Promotion Plan for the parish.

For the next couple of weeks we ran articles in the bulletin, to bring the vocation crisis issue to the attention of the parishioners. On Sunday, July 16th, at Fr. Daniel's invitation, I spoke at all 5 masses at St. Joseph's Church and at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton the following Sunday, to review the vocation crisis and recommend what they could do about it personally and as a parish community.



First we discussed the key demographics of the priest situation. "Over the past 35 years, the total number of priests in this country has dropped 25% from almost 60,000 down to 45,000. During the same period, the number of US Catholics has increased over 30% from 45 million to 60 million. It was clear to all that we are facing a sobering picture of fewer and fewer priests trying to minister to a growing number of Catholics."

In the Gospel, Jesus sent the apostles out two by two... He surely wouldn't have been able to do that today.

By now most of the congregation must have been thinking, "OK there is a Vocations Crisis, but what can I do about it?"

First of all, I challenged the audience to accept the idea that we are all responsible for raising up priestly and religious vocations and reminded them that Pope John Paul II told us "There is an urgent need nowadays, for a more widespread and deeply felt conviction that all the members of the Church have the responsibility to look after vocations."

Next, I pointed out that both parents and parish communities must do their part to insure that there will be enough priests and religious to serve the growing number of faithful.

The Christian family offers favorable conditions for the birth of vocations and parents are called to prepare, develop, and protect the vocations that God may stir up in their families.

In addition, the parish community needs to accept its responsibility for promoting and calling forth vocations. Everyone must see the need for more vocations as a crucial part of parish life and it must be incorporated fully into the life and activity of the parish community.

We committed to including an intercession for church vocations in the Prayers of the Faithful regularly at each Sunday from now on. Then we handed out a

Prayer Card for Vocations written by the former Bishop and asked them to take one home and say the Prayer for Vocations on a daily basis to help ensure that there will be enough priests and religious to serve the growing number of faithful.

I concluded with the reminder that Pope John Paul II has said: "Prayer moves the heart of God. It is a powerful key to resolving the vocations question."

At the end of my talk, Fr. Joe led the congregation in reciting the Prayer for Vocations. It was a start. More to come.

