



# Savannah Serra Club NEWSLETTER

July 2008



## Fr. Mariusz Fuks Celebrates First Mass at St. James



There was a very nice turnout for Fr. Mariusz Fuks' first Mass at St. James Church on June 8, 2008 and numerous Serra Club members were there as well.

Many of the attendees remembered him as a "youngster from Poland" and to see how far he's come was beautiful. "The new Fr. Fuks looked like a young Polish prince in his gold and garnet vestments," observed Marilyn Stephens. During the Mass, many attendees no doubt recalled him and Dariusz as altar servers at St. James after they arrived in the US. "The beautiful music was provided by the St James choir and a Polish hymn sung by a member of the choir, was joined spontaneously by the members of Fr. Mariusz's family in the pews. The homily was delivered by Fr. John Dietrich, House Spiritual Director at Mt. St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, which Mariusz attended.

At the end of Mass, he expressed his heartfelt thanks to all those who helped and supported him over the last 5 years. Mariusz, his family, and the parishioners shed many tears

of joy. "After Mass, Fr. Mariusz was especially gracious in giving his personal blessings to many people in the narthex, didn't turn anyone away and spent time with everyone as well," remarked Joyce Egan.

Over 200 people attended the reception, which followed in the St. James gym. At the dinner, a priest-friend of Mariusz from Poland got up and gave a long toast in Polish. As the Polish Priest would say something humorous, the large Polish section of the room would laugh loudly while the locals remained mute. After each paragraph, a young man translated what was said into English. After translation, the locals would laugh loudly, while the Polish group was silent. It was very funny but according to Jerry McManus, you had to be there!



By Msgr. Owen F. Campion



## Sign of troubling times

### Drops in priestly, religious vocations reflect cultural problems facing the United States

A few weeks ago, a priest told me that his diocese had just ordained two new priests, whereas 40 years ago the number would have been eight or 10. His observation was true. The number of vocations to the priesthood, despite the fact that some see a faint sign of increase, has fallen dramatically in the United States.

By the same token, the number of vocations to the Religious life has declined so much that it is virtually nonexistent for many communities.

The result of all this is that there are dramatically fewer priests and Religious today in the Church than there were two generations ago. So, much is changing in the Church, and much will continue to change.

Catholics who note these circumstances often suggest reasons. As far as priesthood goes, the problem, it is said, is celibacy. Or, if not celibacy, it is inferior training in the seminaries.

As far as women Religious are concerned, the problem, it is said, is that congregations of women Religious either were too strict in the past or they are not strict enough today.

There may be truth in all these observations, at least to some extent. But, it is important to remember that the Church exists within the general culture. Its members live in the general culture. The attitudes and conventions of the culture affect Catholics, and they have a mighty influence upon the young, from whom vocations usually come.

Look at this fact. A vocation to the priesthood or the Religious life requires an absolute gift of self. Fifty years ago, the absolute gift of self did not seem so outlandish. Every U.S. family had at least one son, husband, brother or father in the military. During World War II, everything in the American culture, the laws, the pronouncements of politicians, the churches, the entertainment in-

This article originally appeared in the June 22, 2008 edition of Our Sunday Visitor. We thought it would be of interest to our Serra Club members and other readers. We are grateful for permission to reprint it.

dustry and common conversation extolled the absolute gift of self.

Indeed, without this cultural support, many families would have found their grief at the loss of a loved one in battle or a loved one's permanent impairment as a result of wounds, unbearable.

Once, marriage was universally considered a lifelong commitment. The culture assumed that it was. Religious denominations assumed that it was. People assumed that when they pronounced their marriage vows, the vows meant absolute devotion to each other for life.

All that changed with the gradual coming of peace, albeit always in the background, at least as a possibility, while the country fought the Cold War.

At the same time, Americans became accustomed to a life of personal ease. New inventions enabled people more and more to be comfortable.

The philosophy began to emerge that people had only themselves, individually, to think about. Responsibilities to others always were secondary to responsibilities to self, or more precisely, preferences for self. Divorce rates surged upward. Birth control, once a practice primarily used among non-Catholics, came to be common among Catholics. Then came abortion.

Absolute gift of self in behalf of a greater, nobler cause was not even given a decent funeral as a cultural feature that had served society well. Instead it was scorned as ridiculous, unworkable and unhealthy.

Look again at the Catholic vocations problem. Something is happening that is more widespread than just the Catholic experience. Vocations are down in the mainline Protestant denominations, too, in which celibacy is not required.

It is also important to realize that the slump in vocations is not a worldwide experience for the Catholic Church. Vocations are historically high in many places, precisely in cultures in which the



willingness to give self to a greater cause, despite the cost, still is high.

We must concern ourselves as Catholics with the current vocations situation. But, we

shall be wasting our time if we ignore the greater cultural problem in which we live.

Msgr. Owen F. Campion is associate publisher of Our Sunday Visitor.



The Serra Club will again provide an opportunity to gift our priests with a "Spiritual Bouquet" of family prayer offerings and notes of appreciation. Sunday, October 19th through October 26<sup>th</sup>, a box for each priest will be placed in the vestibule of our churches for your notes. Note cards will also be available there for those who wish to use them. Let's make this a celebration of love and appreciation!

Last year we were able to serve nine parish communities with this program: Blessed Sacrament, The Cathedral, St. Frances Cabrini, St. James, St. Peter the Apostle, Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Michael's, Sacred Heart, and Hunter AAF. Should contacts be made in additional parishes, Serra Club would be pleased to assist them with this event.

Organizational materials and information will be available for each parish at our Serra Club meeting September 13th. Of course, volunteers are the key! A Serra Club member (or team of Serrans) is responsible for each parish.

Questions? Sandy Humphrey 598-9264



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

President: Peter Paolucci  
VP Communications: Peter Paolucci  
Newsletter Editor: Walt Kessel  
912.354.9493  
<waltkessel@comcast.net>



# Coat of Arms of His Holiness Benedict XVI

Throughout the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United States, his papal coat of arms was prominently displayed. When Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected Pope, he chose a coat of arms rich in symbolism and meaning that transmits to history his personality and Pontificate. A coat of arms consists of a shield bearing several important symbols and surrounded by elements that indicate the person's dignity, rank, title, jurisdiction and more. The shield chosen by Pope Benedict XVI is very simple: it is in the shape of a chalice, a commonly used form in ecclesiastical heraldry.



The principal field in the center is red containing a large gold shell that has a triple symbolism. Its first meaning is theological, intended to recall the legend of St. Augustine: meeting a child on the beach who was trying to scoop up the sea into a hole in the sand. The child's explanation helped Augustine understand how futile it was to try to encompass the infinity of God within the confines of the limited human mind. The scallop shell has been used for centuries to distinguish pilgrims and Benedict XVI wanted to keep this symbolism alive, treading in the footsteps of John Paul II, the great pilgrim. The scallop is also an emblem featured in the coat of arms of the ancient Monastery of Schotten in Bavaria, to which Joseph Ratzinger feels closely spiritually bound.

In the upper part of the shield, called "chape", there are two symbols that come from the Bavarian tradition which Joseph Ratzinger introduced into his coat of arms when he became Archbishop of Munich and Freising in 1977.

In the dexter corner (to the left of the person looking at it) is a Moor's head in natural brown color with red lips, crown and collar. This is the ancient emblem of the Diocese of Freising. The Moor's head is usually depicted wearing a white band around his head instead of a crown, indicating a slave who has been freed; whereas in German heraldry the

Moor is shown wearing a crown. It is a common symbol in the Bavarian tradition, known as the Moor of Freising.

A brown bear, in natural color, is portrayed in the sinister (left) corner of the shield, with a pack-saddle on its back. An ancient tradition tells that the first Bishop of Freising, St. Corbinian, set out for Rome on horseback. While riding through a forest he was attacked by a bear that tore his horse to pieces. Corbinian not only managed to tame the animal but also to make it carry his baggage to Rome. This explains why the bear is shown carrying

a pack.

It has been a venerable tradition for the Supreme Pontiff to surround his armorial shield with crossed keys, one gold and the other silver, in the form of a St. Andrew's cross: these have been variously interpreted as symbols of spiritual and temporal power. They appear behind the shield or above it, and are quite prominent. The keys are therefore the typical symbol of the power that Christ gave to St. Peter and his successors.

In both secular and ecclesiastical heraldry there is always some form of headpiece above the shield, usually a crown. The Supreme Pontiff's arms have featured a "tiara" since ancient times but Benedict XVI decided not to include the tiara in his official personal coat of arms. He replaced it instead with a simple mitre. To recall the symbolism of the tiara, the Papal mitre shown is silver and bears three bands of gold (the three powers: Orders, Jurisdiction and Magisterium), joined at the center to show their unity in the same person.

There is also a completely new symbol in the arms of Pope Benedict XVI: the "pallium", which is the typical liturgical insignia of the Supreme Pontiff. It stands for the Pope's responsibility as Pastor and a visible sign of collegiality and subsidiarity.