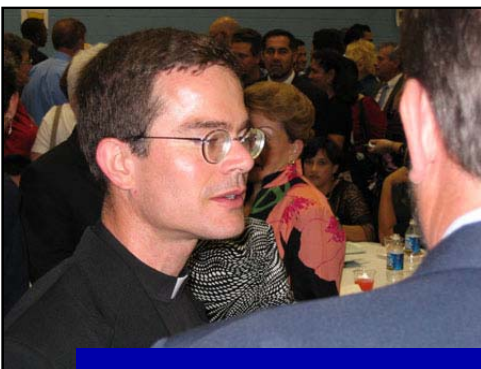




Savannah Serra Club NEWSLETTER

June 2005



Prayers Answered With Five New Priests Ordained

On Saturday June 4, 2005 the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist was filled to capacity as people from all over the Diocese came to witness Bishop Boland ordaining five new priests for the Diocese of Savannah. Deacons Fredy Angel, Raphael Estrada, Ray Levreault, Chidi Osondu and Mark Van Alstine became priests according to the order of Melchizedek and joined the ranks of our diocesan priesthood to minister to the growing number of faithful in South Georgia. This is the largest number of priests ordained at one time for service in the Diocese of Savannah since the 1960s.

The ordinations of these new priests are due to the prayers of the Catholics throughout the diocese. For over 40 years the faithful in South Georgia have been praying for an increase in vocations and the Lord of the Harvest has answered their prayers.

At the reception which followed the Ordination, the Serra Club of Savannah presented purple stoles emblazoned with the Serra emblem to all the newly ordained priests. The stoles will be used in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, (Fr. Angel wears his at left.)

A priest is a man chosen from among men to speak the word of God. We must pray for them so that they might be sustained in their ministry to bring the Eucharist to the people of God.

Surely the Lord of the Harvest has heard and answered our prayers.

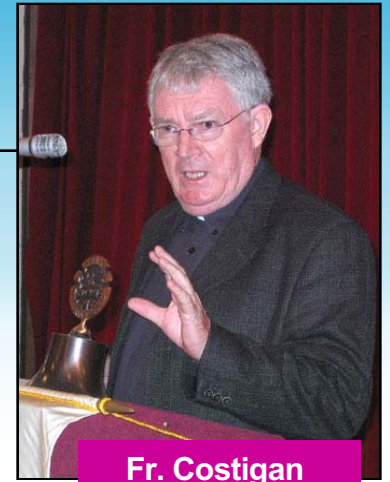
—PP

Top to bottom: Fr. Chidi Osondu, Fr. Fredy Angel, Fr. Mark Van Alstine



Fr. Costigan speaks at May meeting

Fr. James Costigan, Pastor of St. Michael Church on Tybee Island, was born in Ireland where his family life had a strong influence on his ultimate decision to become a priest. Every evening they said the rosary as a family and he lived near the church, where he was an altar server. In poor health as a youth, he was attracted to the priesthood while he was quite young. One of his friends provided an early affirmation of his inclination when he told young Jim, "If anyone becomes a priest it will be you."



Fr. Costigan



Fr. Rafael Estrada,
Fr. Ray Levreault

Things did not go that smoothly in the seminary as Jim's shy nature almost derailed his vocation. "If you don't get over your shyness, I'll be sending you home," the Dean of the Seminary told him. With the help of his friends plus the Dean, he did get over his shyness and was ordained in 1968. "I guess the Lord had something in store for me," he said.

That year, 13 priests were ordained for the Diocese of Savannah with 10 of them coming from Ireland and 3 from Georgia. The priest population of the diocese substantially increased during those years but soon, when the post Vatican II impacts began to be felt, many priests left their ministry. "In short order we went from having too many priests to too few," he reflected.

Fr. Costigan has always been interested in renewal. Early in his ministry, he made a Cursillo, which had a big impact on him. He served at Sacred Heart Church in Savannah for 10 years, where he did many renewal weekends. In Augusta, as pastor at St. Mary's on the Hill for many years, he also conducted numerous missions.

Then Fr. Costigan learned about the Retrouvaille Movement, a renewal experience for couples. Originating in Canada, it is a life encounter for persons who have experienced hurt in their relationship. Divorced, separated or soon to be divorced couples are prime candidates for this renewal experience. About 8 years ago, Bishop Boland asked Fr. Costigan to head up the program for the diocese.

Retrouvaille involves a team of 3 trained married couples and a priest, who work with the troubled couples to help them rebuild their relationship and improve their communication skills. The program continues beyond the Retrouvaille weekend with 12 follow-up sessions. It has been functioning in Augusta for the past two years and Fr. Costigan hopes to bring it to Savannah in the future. There is a need however for trained couples, who have experienced the program, to become involved.

This has been a very satisfying experience for him as feedback from the couples as well as children of these troubled couples has been very positive. Many have commented that it was a blessing, how much their parent's relationship improved, after attending Retrouvaille.

During the Q&A session, someone asked, "How can a priest, who isn't married, advise troubled married couples?"



Fr. Costigan (Continued)

“For a priest, the church is his bride,” replied Fr. Costigan. “I have experienced hurt in my relationship with the church and almost got a divorce. So I have a lot in common with the couples, who attend Retrouvaille,” he added.

At the end of the meeting, Monsignor Nelson, who attended the presentation, commented, “I never knew Fr. Costigan was so shy, since whenever he comes into a priests meeting, all hell usually breaks loose.” It is a blessing to our diocese that Fr. Costigan got over his shyness and came here from Ireland to serve the faithful of South Georgia.

—PP



New Officers Installed

On Saturday May 21, 2005 outgoing President Don Waters turned over the helm of the Serra Club of Savannah to Byron Stephens. President Don introduced the new slate of officers to Regional Director Pat Carden, who inducted them as follows:

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|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| President | Byron Stephens, St. James |
| President Elect | Joe Hasbrouck, St. Peter the Apostle |
| Secretary | Josie Lee, St. James |
| Treasurer | Marilyn Stephens, St. James |
| VP Membership | Suzanne Aviles, Cathedral |
| VP Programs | Marilyn Stephens, St. James |
| VP Vocations | Joe Hasbrouck, St. Peter |
| VP Communications | Peter Paolucci, Cathedral |
| Trustee | Julio Aviles, Cathedral |
| Trustee | Frank Saponaro, St. James |
| Trustee | Alex Guira, Cathedral |

She congratulated President Byron and his fellow officers on their election to head the Serra Club of Savannah. “The well being of the club depends to a great extent upon each of you during the coming year. The spirit of the Serra movement, like vocations, is yours to promote, foster and preserve. Each of you has dedicated yourself, with a whole heart to fulfill the objectives of Serra and the goals of this club. I wish you well,” she concluded.

Next, incoming President Byron presented a Certificate of Appreciation, signed by Bishop Boland, to Don Waters for dedicated service to the Serra Club of Savannah. And Pat Carden gave Don his Past President’s pin to recognize his leadership of the club last year.



—PP



Top: Regional Director Pat Carden gives out-going President Don Waters his pin. Bottom: New President Byron Stephens with Pat.



GOD HAS A PLAN FOR YOU

By Peter Paolucci

On Friday May 20, I spoke to the 7th and 8th grade classes at Blessed Sacrament School during their Career Week. In the presentation, I challenged the students to answer the question, “What are you going to do with the rest of your life?”

We discussed the fact that God has a plan for each of them. They shouldn't be trying to figure what they want to be when they grow up but rather try to find out what God wants them to do with their lives. “You should pray every day for God to reveal His plan for you, thinking and asking: ‘Jesus, what do you want me to do with my life?’ And listen for the answer! Listen to your heart.”

A vocation is a call from God to do something specific for Him and his kingdom. The primary vocation of every person is to be holy. It is a divine calling to love and serve God, to obey his commandments and to cooperate with Christ in the work of redemption by loving and serving others. God calls each of us to do important work, to do a couple of things, to be like Jesus and to be holy.

But we are all called to a secondary vocation, a “state in life” in which we are called to be holy. There are different “states of life” or types of vocations. Many people are called to the vocation of marriage, which is an ordinary vocation. But some are called to be priests, brothers or sisters, which is an extraordinary vocation.

We reviewed the current situation of our existing priests beginning to age and retire and asked where more priests are

going to come from in the future? We have a good news bad news story: a growing numbers of Catholics being served by fewer priests. In order to have the Eucharist we need more priests to serve the faithful.

“I am not trying to convince you to become a priest or religious,” I stressed. “Most of us are not called to serve God in that way, but we are all called to do the will of God and each of them should at least consider if they're being called to the priesthood or religious life. God is a mystery and He reveals himself to us in different ways. Each of us has been created for a special purpose and we'll only be happy when God reveals our special purpose to us. We must keep asking God what does He want me to do? We must at least put the priesthood and religious life on the menu. Give God the chance to call you and you the opportunity to consider his call.”

“Let me encourage each of you to remain open to the possibility that perhaps you are being called to recognize the unique value of the priestly or religious vocation and mission. I hope you will respond generously to the Lord like the Blessed Virgin Mary who immediately accepted the announcement of the Angel Gabriel. Be open to the Holy Spirit, He may be calling you,” I concluded.

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President: Byron Stephens
VP Communications: Peter Paolucci
Newsletter Contact: Editor-Walt Kessel (912) 354-9493 <
waltkessel@comcast.net