



Savannah Serra Club NEWSLETTER

March 2004



Fr. McCarthy



Cathy Gilligan speaks to Serrans the priests accused of abusive conduct. The Serrans were told about a number who simply left the priesthood and in one case, committed suicide.

February meeting held at Blessed Sacrament

On Saturday February 21st the members of the Serra Club met at the rectory of Blessed Sacrament Church with the Reverend Jeremiah McCarthy and Cathy Gilligan of the Tribunal of the Savannah Diocese. Initially Father McCarthy discussed in general terms the fact that the tribunal is responsible for the administration of canon law for the diocese and in large measure its workload dealt with issues related to marriage. Recently it was called upon to provide advice regarding canon law to priests who had allegedly been connected with child abuse.

Father McCarthy outlined the ongoing studies that were being conducted at the request of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The bishops established a National Review Board to monitor the new Office for Child and Youth Protection of U.S. Bishops. In addition to quantifying the extent of the abuse problem, each U.S. diocese was to provide statistical data to the National Review Board for the periods from 1950 to 2002. Additionally, the Board contracted with the John Jay College of Criminal Justice of City University of New York to conduct a descriptive study composed of the data on perpetrators and victims of child abuse by members of the clergy.

Father McCarthy noted that Bishop Boland had made public the information for this diocese that was supplied to the National Board and John Jay College of Criminal Justice. During the period of 1950—2000, there were 685 priests who served this diocese and there were abuse allegations made against seven priests during that period. Additionally there had been no allegations of sexual abuse by a member of the clergy in over 15 years.

The members of the Serra Club, Father McCarthy, and Cathy Gilligan then had a wide ranging discussion concerning the problem. A number of concerns were raised as to the media attention given

Perhaps the most startling information shared by Father McCarthy and Cathy Gilligan was the devastating impact upon the Serrans were told about a number who simply left the priesthood and in one case, committed suicide.



Congratulations to Fr. Ware

Rev. Joseph Ware, an 82-year-old retired Priest from Savannah, was selected as the Grand Marshall of the 2004 St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Born more than 80 year's ago in his family's Henry Street home, he is the third clergyman to be chosen Grand Marshall, following Msgr. T. James McNamara (1967) and Msgr. Daniel J. Bourke (1997).

Fr. Ware had previously served as Parade Chaplain in 1973, 1993, & 2003 and has been the parade committee's chaplain for the past 13 years.

"Among the days and years of my life, this is right up there at the top. This is the greatest honor a Savannah Irishman can have," said Fr. Ware.



to the handling of the problem, particularly in Boston. The media seemed more intent on focusing upon the negative aspects of the issue rather than have a fair and balanced presentation which showed only a very small percentage of the priests were involved in alleged abuse incidents. In fact, Father McCarthy was of the view that it was the media that forced the bishops to agree to conduct the John Jay study.

Cathy Gilligan explained the procedure followed by the diocese in those instances in which an abuse allegation is made. She focused in detail about the necessity for the diocese to follow canon law and not the civil law in conducting such an investigation and the treatment to be accorded a member of the clergy that had been accused of abuse conduct.

Lastly, the group discussed the issue of accountability. Clearly, the member of the clergy is accountable to the bishop and the local civil authorities. However it was noted that the bishops had not been held accountable by any authority for their conduct in mishandling the matter.

Sister Carmen Addresses Serra Club

Sister Carmen, IHM Vocation Directress, addressed the Serra Club of Savannah on March 2, 2004. Her discussion initially focused on her own call, which came as a result of one of her teachers asking her if she had ever thought about being a sister. She pointed out that an invitation must be given for people to consider becoming a religious.



a house and family etc. This surprised her as she expected to hear “happiness.” But upon reflection, Sr. Carmen now believes that the answer shouldn’t be that surprising as it may be a reflection of the materialistic outlook of many people these days.

She also mentioned there were young women who were interested in dedicating their lives to service because they found an emptiness in the normal goals of our society and a commitment to God would fill that void. Also, lay teachers in Catholic schools were possible candidates for the religious life.

In response to the question, “How can we affect parental attitudes towards vocations?”, Sr. Carmen suggested the following:

1. Pray for parents, that they will be supportive of their children who may have a vocation.
2. You also need to educate parents.
3. Have vocation education in schools. In-Continues

When she announced she wanted to be a Sister, her parents were very supportive. Her mother always said she was just on loan from God and would one day be going back to him. This was just a little early. The rest of the family was concerned that she was going to be taken away from them, but once they understood that they could visit her and vice-versa, they were supportive too.

When she asks parents what they want for their children their answers include, “Success, money,



Dear Suzanne,

It was a special grace for us to have the Serra Hour of Adoration in our Chapel here at Carmel. We were impressed with the dedication of the Serrans and shall certainly keep the group in our prayers in a particular way. The booklet used was very good ... we had no idea there was such a ministry in the Church. I realize we are far out in driving-distance and want to thank the Serrans for making the trip to our Carmel. May God bless you all.

Have a beautiful day!
Sister Carmela



clude a religious, parent of religious and/or a Serran.

4. Initiate Vocation Cup or Called by Name programs in parishes.

5. Include vocation discussion in sacramental education.

6. Get a parent of a priest/religious to write an

article for the diocesan newspaper.

7. Encourage the bishop to be supportive of vocation agenda in parishes.

Sandy Humphrey summed it up pretty well, "Sister Carmen was quite a gift to us, wasn't she?"

Serra District Conference

On March 5 and 6 the Serra District Conference "The Support and Sanctification of our Priests" was held in Atlanta.

Archbishop Donoghue celebrated the Mass on Saturday. In his homily, he said that we are going through a period of purification in the priesthood. It is always painful but it is always good, a moment of grace for the church. And the Holy Spirit is already healing the church from the damage done by the priest sex abuse scandal. This was a very comforting thought.

In his remarks, Fr. Brett advanced the thesis that God can raise up many vocations to fill the need for more priests but we must do our part. There will always be priests, but we will never have enough. We don't have a vocation crisis but rather a crisis of faith and generosity.

We need to begin with families, to fix the family. The family is the building block of Christianity and the church. Parents must be prepared to give their sons and daughters over to God's service to sustain our Christian community.

In many cases, parents can be a liability as they sometimes discourage their children to consider vocations.

How do we work on this? Fr. Brett suggested the following:

1. Prayers and Holy Hours
2. Provide good information
3. Retreats and spiritual direction
4. Sponsor discussion forums for parents including religious and priests.

Fr. Kurt Belsole, Rector of St. Vincent's Seminary in Latrobe, PA, echoed Fr. Brett's remarks that we don't have a vocation crisis but rather a crisis of faith and generosity in God. He also agreed that the Catholic family is the foundation of faith and believes that we must keep the church visible in the public square.

He went on to talk about the more stringent admission requirements for men to become priests today. He stressed the importance of this because each priest who falls can cause much damage in these troubled times.

Fr. Luke Ballman, Serra Chaplain for the Metro Atlanta Club, was very excited about the Elijah Cup Program which is currently operating in over 30 parishes around Atlanta. "This is a good way to bring vocation awareness to families and young people as well as the entire parish community," said Fr. Luke.

In a discussion about the impact of the sex abuse scandal on the many priests who are serving faithfully, Fr. Ricardo Bailey, a newly ordained priest and Serra Chaplain, said that "he appreciated the work that the Serra Club does to make the priests feel loved and appreciated. This is very important to all priests in this current environment."

In the hot topics session that wrapped up the meeting, Pat Carden, Programs VP of the USA Council and Serra International, presented many ideas which could help local clubs have meaningful programs on a regular basis. And Bob Goldsmith, Vocations VP, also stressed that the Parish Contact Program is the best way to create a "Culture of Vocations" in each parish.