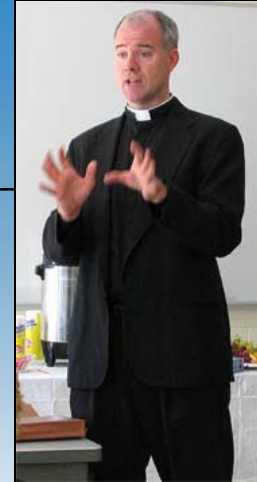




Savannah Serra Club NEWSLETTER

September 2004



Father Tim McKeown Reminds Serrans of Each Person's Call to Vocation

Fr. Tim McKeown, the new Vocations Director for the Diocese of Savannah, gave an instructional and inspirational presentation to Savannah's Serrans on September 18, 2004 at the monthly meeting. His topic was titled "Life as Vocation."

Fr. Tim began by comparing the average American lifespan of 77 years to the prospect of 10,000 years in eternity. When placed in perspective, our human life span is a very small part of our total existence. However, the smaller portion of our life determines where we will spend the larger portion. Through the gift of the Sacraments, we can work toward a

readiness for heaven. Beginning with the Sacrament of Baptism, we become a child of God. Next, the Sacrament of Reconciliation brings us back when we make bad choices and need help. The Eucharist serves as bread for the journey of life. For many of us, these latter two Sacraments can be

available any day of the week. As we approach adulthood we come to a fork in the road: Is our vocation to be found in the religious life (priest, sister, brother)? or in the lay life (married, single)? Eventually we must choose which road we will take, to which vocation God is calling us to serve Him and His community. He stated, "We are all called. We can't say one vocation is better than another." We tend to be

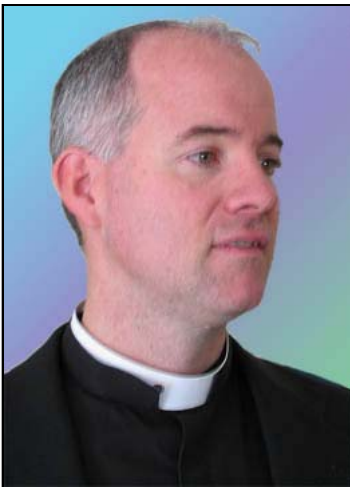
happiest in life when we follow the vocation God wishes for us. Father Tim said, "I'm excited about helping families, speaking to the Serra Club, and doing my other projects."

Priests tend to have the highest level of visibility among vocations by making Sacraments available. However, we are all called to "spread the seed." The person who sows the seed may only find out in heaven about results brought by their efforts. Fr. Tim suggested that by praying for vocations, our prayers may be the support needed by a student in another town who is discerning a vocation. He suggested also that by making vocations visible through posters or campaigns, we give young people the opportunity to visualize themselves in the same places as the priests and religious seen on the posters. Above all, he encouraged us not to despair if we do not see immediate results from our efforts. He reminded us, in the words of Mother Theresa, "God doesn't call us to be successful; He calls us to be faithful."

A short question and answer session ended

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the meeting and yielded additional information of note including details on the whereabouts of current seminarians. Of Savannah's twenty seminarians, ten attend St. Mary Seminary in Maryland; six attend St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, Pennsylvania; one is completing his degree at Franciscan University at Steubenville, Ohio; one attends school in Boston, and two study at the Pontifical University in Rome.

Fr. Tim explained that the formation process takes approximately six years of study. The first two years focus on philosophy studies and the last four concentrate on theology. Because discernment plays a part in each step of the process, a young man who leaves seminary should not be stigmatized. The graces received in studying philosophy and/or theology can lead to greater richness in the life of a man called to live any non-priestly vocation.

Questions from club members addressed the issue of a need for Spanish speaking



priests in the Savannah Diocese. Fr. Tim stated that Savannah's Diocese serves 75,000 registered Catholics. During certain seasons of the year, migrant workers who speak predominantly Spanish cause the number of Catholics to double in our Diocese. Bishop Kevin Boland encourages priests to learn Spanish well enough to offer Sacraments in Spanish. Many of our priests have taken the initiative to learn Spanish either by individual study or attending immersion courses offered outside the United States.

One of Fr. Tim's quotes gave much food for thought. He first quoted St. Irenaeus, "The Glory of God is man fully alive." Then Father added, "Find your vocation and live it to be fully alive."

—Suzanne Aviles

Vocation Essay Contest

All of us must follow the example of Christ and serve the needs of others. The sooner young people become aware of the possibility of a religious vocation, the better are their chances of exploring it as a life commitment. To stimulate the awareness that God has a plan for each of us and we must learn to listen for his whispering guidance, the Serra Club of Savannah is sponsoring a Vocation Essay Contest. The contest is patterned after successful programs in other dioceses. It is the Serra Club of Savannah's first effort to promote vocation awareness at the elementary school level.

The essay contest is aimed at 7th grade students in the Savannah deanery parochial schools and the CCD programs. Father Tim McKeown has picked "**Where is Jesus Today**" as the topic for the essay this year. The best essay from each class will be selected by its teacher. These will be submitted to the Club by December 15, 2004.

The Vocation Committee will review the essays and pick a set of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners from the schools and a set from the CCD programs. Both 1st place winners will receive a \$100 U.S. Saving Bond, an invitation to attend a Serra Club Meeting in the spring of 2005 with their parents and teacher, and will have their certificates presented in their class. The 2nd and 3rd place deanery winners in each program will have their award certificates presented in the class. The best essay from each class will receive a certificate. All certificates will be signed by Bishop Boland.

The Club considers this the main new program effort this year. The Program Committee is working on the plans for the Award Meeting. The Vocation Committee's parish contacts are working in their parishes to encourage participation. We hope this contest will become an annual event.