



# Savannah Serra Club NEWSLETTER

September 2007

## Priesthood Sunday is a Chance to say, "Thank you, Father"

By Peter Paolucci

*One Sunday recently, at our summer mission church up in Maine, there was no priest to celebrate Mass and we only had a Eucharistic service instead. Sadly, this is happening with increasing frequency in many places, as Eucharistic services are becoming more commonplace.*

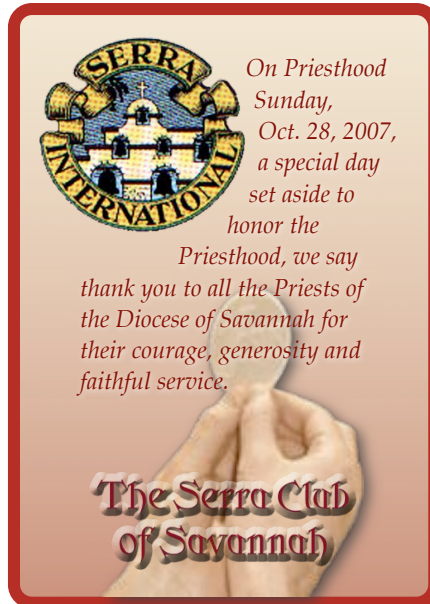
*"What would it be like if there were no priests?"*

In his message this year on World Day of Prayer for Vocations, Pope Benedict XVI concluded with the idea that "The Eucharist is at the center of every Christian community and is the source and summit of the life of the Church."

The Eucharist is at the heart of our liturgical life and should also be at the heart of our daily lives. As Catholics, we believe that Jesus is really present in the Eucharist and when we receive the Eucharist, we take Jesus into ourselves and also become one with the Father. This sets Catholics apart from the belief held by many other Christian denominations. Clearly we have a more intimate relationship with Jesus.

This is of course dependent on having enough priests to celebrate Mass for us each day. The centrality of the Eucharist in our Catholic faith makes the role of the priest and his service to the people a priority. We need more ordained priests to celebrate the Eucharist and to serve the Eucharistic people. In view of the importance of our priests to the celebration of the Eucharist, how often do we stop and take a moment to express our appreciation to them for all that they do for us.

A priest told me once what an honor it is for him to be a Priest. To be present at all the special and important



Our ad for the Southern Cross

moments in the lives of his parishioners; at weddings, baptisms and other sacramental milestones, as well as to be there to comfort those who suffer illness and loss. He said it felt as if he were a member of the family. And it was a very special privilege to preside over the Eucharistic Sacrifice each day as a representative of the people to God.

Without our priests, we would not be a Eucharistic community. Therefore it is essential to focus on the importance of the priesthood of Jesus Christ and its central place in the life of our Church.

**Priesthood Sunday, October 28, 2007** is a special day set aside to

honor the priesthood in the United States. It is a day set aside to reflect upon and affirm the centrality of the role of the priesthood in the life of the Church. On this special day, Catholics everywhere will join together in praying for our priests, in praising God for their courage and their generosity. We must all stand up and show our support for the sacredness of Christ's priesthood and our thankfulness for good priests, who are there for us when we need them.

I hope you will all find a way to personally show your appreciation to our priests, for all that they have done for us by faithfully serving our needs all these years.



# MY FIRST SERRA CONVENTION

By Sister Donna Jo Loeper, SSJ

I had the opportunity to attend the Serra International Convention in Atlanta from August 9–12. This was my first experience at the convention, and I didn't really know what to expect. I was pleasantly surprised by the opportunities to meet new people and to be stretched by some of the speakers.

Steve Ray is a convert, and he gave a very interesting account of how he left his evangelical Protestant church to become a Roman Catholic. Although he became emotional at times during the telling of his story, he also stressed the academic wealth that our church possesses. He had a clear understanding of how our faith was transferred from Jesus to the apostles and on down through the ages.

Jeff Cavins was one of my favorite speakers. He is the creator of *The Great Adventure: A Journey through the Bible*. Mr. Cavins feels that young people today are suffering – they have lost the narrative thread of their lives. They do not know where they came from or who they are. When they lose this narrative thread they give up. He feels it is very important for all of us to know our story and studying the Bible is one way to do this. He uses a narrative approach to teach the meaning of the Bible. The Bible is not organized like a regular story. There are many people who have good intentions to read the whole Bible, but they give up soon after they start. They become lost in some of the earlier books. Out of all the 73 books in the Bible, only 14 are part of the narrative. All the other 59 books fit into the context of one of the 14. This helps to make the Bible much easier to understand and to study.

Sr. Catherine Marie Hopkins, O.P. has been the Vocation Director for the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecelia for many years. She said that sometimes young people might not have a desire for the religious life because they do not know what that life is. (That could be a definite



challenge in our part of the country where we do not have as many sisters and brothers.) She also said that young people are interested in the wealth of Catholic teaching, and that religious witness is what people want the most.

My final favorite speaker was Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Atlanta. His story of how he grew up poor and non-Catholic but converted after attending a Catholic school is ample evidence of the importance of welcoming both non-Catholics and children of color into our present Catholic school system.

I found the convention to be a very good opportunity for some continuing education. There was a great variety of speakers that seemed to meet everyone's interests. During the banquet on Sunday evening, the man in charge of the 2008 Serra International Convention, August 12–17, 2008, in Aguas de Lindoia - Sao Paulo State, Brazil, had an opportunity to welcome everyone to his home country. He told about what has been planned so far and of how much the Brazilian Serrans would welcome everyone. It gave a good sense of the reality that the Serra Club is truly an international organization



# The Year Ahead

**Lloyd P. Crockett, President, Serra International 2007-2008**

Your Eminences, Most Reverend Bishops, Reverend Fathers, Beloved Sisters, Brothers and Sisters in Serra,

Thank you for this honor. I am both honored and humbled to be chosen as the new President of Serra International - and I want my first official act to be the adding of two new words to the official Serra vocabulary: First is "y'all" and second is "yonder." Now to put these words in their proper context - if we had been fortunate enough to have had Father Serra born in this part of the country, he would have said, *"Now, y'all, don't turn back, because we are going over yonder!"*

## **SERRA — THE YEAR AHEAD**

As we begin this new Serra year, it will be a busy time for your new Board, but we will have only one priority—to resolve the issues that confront us and to resolve them in a peaceful manner — and I will need your help to do this. The delegates in Spokane requested and the Board accepted a motion to begin a dialogue between the Serra Councils on the future structure of Serra. On this night, I can tell you that progress has been made, thanks to many prayers and the good works of many Serrans — and the dialogue has begun, but it is not finished! The dialogue will continue! To this end, I will call for another meeting of representatives from the Councils to be held in late November or early December — after the Fall conventions are completed. Their task will be to build upon the work that has already been done and to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees on the future of Serra. To facilitate this meeting, I am pleased to announce that Archbishop Elden Curtis of Omaha has agreed to serve as moderator and facilitator. We will heed Cardinal Rigali's sage advice to proceed "slowly and serenely" and this body will be charged with mak-



ing recommendations that would be best for Serra, best for our Church, and best for our bishops at whose pleasure we serve.

While this dialogue continues, your Board will be busy doing the work of Serra:

- ◆ Promoting vocations;
- ◆ building membership;
- ◆ improving communications;
- ◆ and enhancing our internal programs.

As we begin this journey, let us remember that we are all Serrans, dedicated to a noble cause. There is no right side or wrong side to the issues that confront us. There are loyal and dedicated Serrans on both sides of these issues — and it is our responsibility and duty to reach out with the hand of friendship to one another and say, "Now, come let us reason together," never forgetting that we have far more that unites us than divides us. So that at the end of this journey, future Serrans will look back and say "Thank you, Thank you," for coming together and building a stronger and more unified Serra for tomorrow. I pledge to you tonight that I will work with all my strength and with all my heart to make this dream a reality. With God's good grace and the help of our blessed Mother, St. Joseph, and Blessed Junipero Serra, we cannot, and we will not, fail!

Let me close by asking you to remember two things:

1. Remember, we are all one Serra under one Church. We come from 40 different countries, but one Serra, under one Church.
2. Remember, as we leave this banquet and begin this journey, our patron's famous words, *"Now, y'all, don't turn back because we are going over yonder!"*



## Serrans rededicate themselves at September meeting

Suzanne Aviles, President



Fr. Stephen Pontzer was an unexpected visitor at our September meeting. He thanked the club for supporting him and the other priests and religious of the Diocese. He said that the on-going support of Serra during his seminary experience was most helpful.

One visitor was welcomed. Her name is Johanna Ludlow and she is a member of Blessed Sacrament parish.

One of the programs prepared by Serra USA was used and included a recommitment and rededication ceremony. Maureen Kouvel read from Ephesians about the different spiritual gifts and Alex Guira read a meditation by Archbishop Romero which underscores the nature of discipleship. Serrans were asked to pledge to offering time, faithfulness, and prayerful support to the club's members and to the priests and religious of the Diocese. The theme of the meeting was "Siempre Adelante" which translates to "Always Moving Forward" and is attributed to Fr. Junípero Serra.

Sandy Humphrey gave an update on proposed activities for Priesthood Sunday which will be observed on October 28<sup>th</sup>. She has organized distribution of "Scriptural Bouquet" note cards to be offered to parishioners as a means of writing notes of appreciation to their parish priests. Walt Kessel created a poster to draw attention to the event and encourage people to write to their priests. We will also have an ad in the Southern Cross thanking our priests for their service.

Don't forget...



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

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