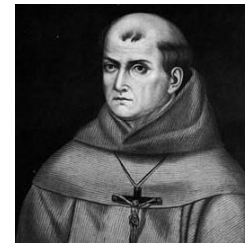




# SERRA CLUB OF ORANGE COUNTY



December 2021

Region 11

District 79

Charter 438

Newsletter

**OUR MISSION IS TO FOSTER, AFFIRM AND PROMOTE VOCATION TO MINISTRY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

## FUTURE EVENTS

Jan. 6 - Club Meeting, Speaker: Fr. Eugene Lee, St. Thomas More

Jan 13-16 - Serra Rally - Irving, Texas

Feb. 3 - Club Meeting, Speaker: Deacon Tony Patronite, St. Thomas More

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Christmas Celebration

Current and prospective members of Serra gathered for our Christmas luncheon this year at the beautiful home of Virginia Mort.

Deacon Bill Weeks conducted a Communion service for us. We heard Matthew's Gospel about the wise man who built his house on rock and it did not collapse and the fool who built his house on sand where the winds blew and it was completely ruined. Deacon Bill recounted the event where the winds blew the tents over at St. Cecilia's. People helped untangle the mess and pile the items to be taken away for scrap. The parish continued on. It had its faith. It had Jesus.

So too with us as we venture through life. We might be buffeted by the storms but if our house is built



on Christ we will withstand it.

After our meal, while awaiting dessert, our new Chaplain Sister Nadine led us in Christmas carols. It was not about our singing or our voices, she said, but rather about the prayers that these carols communicate.

I am so glad that we were able to gather together at the end of this year to celebrate Christ's birth. The year 2022 looks promising.

I wish you all a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

In God's Love,  
Catherine Walton, President

## SPEAKER



November's Serra Club speaker was Fr. Michael Nguyen, Parochial Vicar at St. Cecilia's Church in Tustin. Fr. Michael began his speech by expressing gratitude to the Serrans for our prayers which helped him get to where he is now. In fact, Fr. Michael was one of the first six priests to be ordained in the newly dedicated Christ Cathedral in 2019. Promptly after ordination, Bishop Vann sent Fr. Michael to Rome for another two years to receive his Canon Law degree and in 2021 he was assigned to his first parish, St. Cecilia's.

Fr. Michael's amazing life story begins with his parents' escape from Vietnam in 1975. His father comes from a very Catholic family, so much so that his father and all his siblings were sent to either seminary or convent school (yet all later married). In contrast, Fr. Michael's mother comes from a small village in South Vietnam and was raised Buddhist, but as life has its little nuances, she would walk every day past the statue of a woman and stop in front to admire it. She later discovered it was a statue of our Blessed Mother and she was already devoted to her. After war broke out in Vietnam in 1975, Fr. Michael's parents fled, and they later met on a boat in 1986. They arrived in the USA in 1987 and Fr. Michael was born in 1991. The family of six (parents, grandfather and siblings) lived in a small living space which made them grow very close. His parents wanted the American dream and knew the best way was to get an education. Dad enrolled at Orange Coast College and later UCI as a biology major while Mom would sew, babysit, anything to make ends meet. With a dream to become a doctor, his father applied and was rejected by 50 Medical

Schools, but his (and his wife's) determination could not be deterred and he opted for Dental School and was accepted to Northwest University Dental School in Chicago. After much deliberation, his father went alone to Chicago for six years while his mother raised the children alone. Fr. Michael's parents knew that Catholic school would nourish their children's faith but although Fr. Michael's eldest sister was able to attend St. John the Baptist school there was not enough money to have Fr. Michael attend. But by a miraculous twist of fate, a nun was the principal at the time and was able to maneuver to have the Nguyen children pay one tuition for two students. Another miracle occurred after Fr. Michael's father returned from Chicago and started working for a couple of years at a dental office. Soon after, the owners of the clinic offered to sell it to Dr. Nguyen, but he did not have enough money to purchase it at the time. However, someone at St. John the Baptist heard of Dr. Nguyen's dilemma and loaned him the money to buy the office. Fr. Nguyen thanks the grace of God for all this.

It was while attending a World Youth Day where he met singer Tony Melendez and was greatly moved by his life story. While Father attended UCI as a Biology/Pre-Med major, he also volunteered at Hoag. He loved what he was doing but something was missing. At a following World Youth Day, he met again and sat down with Tony Melendez and that is where Father felt a call for the priesthood. He continued two more years of study at UCI all the while praying for God's guidance. Curiously enough, while teaching Religious Ed at his parish a girl that rarely spoke asked him if he wanted to join the priesthood. Praying alone in a chapel, Father asked, "God, what do YOU want me to do?" Suddenly a sweet, very real clear voice responded, "Michael, if you want to become a doctor you will cure physical ailments but if you become a priest, you will cure spiritual ailments." He instantly turned around and realized he was sitting right next to the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe! In his head he starts to hear the song, "Here I am Lord, I come to do your will." He shares this with no one and continues his studies and achieves a great MCAT score. His parents are paying for medical school with great hopes for their son's future. Furthermore, the family plans a vacation to Vietnam for June all the while Fr. Michael has been accepted into seminary in May which will start in July. At the end of May he

tells his sister of his decision, and she is happy for him (and a bit envious). But how to tell his parents? He finds the courage to tell them after a family dinner at the Red Lobster, in the car, 3 minutes away from home....it does not go well. His parents are super mad, screaming because they wanted their son to become a doctor. The discussion lasted four hours trying to convince him to finish medical school just in case after discernment he opts not to follow the priesthood. As planned, the family goes on their vacation and his mother invites a few nice girls into the house for Fr. Michael to meet. Luckily, Father finds an unexpected and sole supporter in his Buddhist grandmother. In July he enters Mt. Angel Seminary and after ordination he is sent by Bishop Brown to the Pontifical North American College in Rome. Fr. Michael learned to speak the language and was fortunate enough to meet Pope Francis. Fr. Michael acknowledges that there are three things that only a priest can do: Mass, hear Confession and anoint the sick and should his life path lead him to do only that he will be satisfied having served the Lord and His kingdom.

Although today his parents are his biggest supporters, Fr. Michael is grateful for the Serrans that had his back when his family did not, which was very important to him.

Gabriella Negrete

## VOCATIONS REPORT



Seminarian Ian Gaston received the gift card for December, donated by Joan Golding. Ian is from St. Norbert Parish and is in Theology 3 at Mt. Angel Seminary. Last year Ian completed his Pastoral Year at St. Mary's Parish in Fullerton. Ian had been adopted by our longtime Serra Club members, Therese and John McAndrew.

This past year the McAndrews both passed on to their eternal peace and I adopted Ian.

On the Diocese of Orange website, [ocvocations@rcbo.org](mailto:ocvocations@rcbo.org), there are pictures and testaments from our nineteen seminarians. Ian shared the moment he knew he wanted to become a priest. In the summer of 2016 he was on a World Youth Day pilgrimage in Wadowice, where Pope John Paul II was baptized. During Mass, the words from the Responsorial Psalm leaped out at him. "I have called Lord and you have answered." At that moment, Ian realized his desire for the priesthood.

We had a great turnout for our Christmas luncheon at the home of Virginia Mort. Hopefully some of the guests who attended will join our Serra Club. When we meet in January, I will have the necessary information for members to adopt a seminarian. This is the most rewarding activity we have to support our seminarians. The Serra USA council mailed me "Prayer to Support Serra's Apostolate" booklets. I will pass those out at our meeting. The intent is to allow individuals outside of Serra as well as our Serrans to pray daily for the success of Serra's apostolate.

**VOCATIONS PRAYER:** Lord, in your love for the Church, you provide bishops, priests and deacons as shepherds for your people, and you call men and women to leave all things to serve you joyfully in religious life. May those you have raised up as servants of the Gospel and ministers for your altars show forth dedication and compassion. By those whom you have chosen to serve you as religious, provide by their way of life a convincing sign of your kingdom for the Church and the whole world. Amen.

Mary Brockschmidt  
Vice President, Vocations

**Editor's Note:** Traditionally, there will be no newsletter in January so the contributors can enjoy the Holydays with friends and family. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

## SERRAN BIRTHDAYS IN JANUARY

**JERRY STAUBER, CATHY WALTON,  
SILVIA URIARTE AND PAT MANZO**





# CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON 2021





## **Engage, Inspire, Ignite!**

Serra's USA Council's popular annual Serra Rally event will be hosted by the Dallas and Fort Worth area clubs this year in Irving, Texas. Join us as we explore our theme, "Serra Now More than Ever."

**The purpose of the annual Serra Rally is to keep Serrans powerfully connected to and enthusiastic about their vocations mission.**

**The way the Rally does this is three-fold.**

**At the Rally, you will:**

- Engage with other Serrans from around the country to strengthen your organizational network for sharing ideas, solving problems, and building morale
- Be inspired by top-notch lay and religious speakers who work on the front lines calling laborers to the Harvest
- Ignite and renew your dedication to our vocations apostolate via opportunities for profound spiritual development and conversion

Register at

<https://serraus.org/serra-rally-2022/>

Registration fee increases on December 15