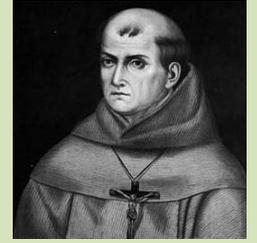




SERRA CLUB OF ORANGE COUNTY



March 2024

Pacific Region

District 79

Charter 438

Newsletter

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

FUTURE EVENTS

March 7 - Club Meeting, Speaker: Rev. Benjamin Nguyen

March 8 - 12 - National Sisters Week

March 9 - Serra Meets -9am -Zoom - Cardinal Thomas Collins

April 4 - Club Meeting, Speaker: Rev. Michael Khong

April 13 - Serra Meets - 9am - Zoom - Scott Hahn

May 2 - Club Meeting, Speaker: Rev. David Moreno

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



As we continue our season of Lent, we can put into use lessons we learned from our Lenten Morning Reflection this year.

The event on March 2 was well attended with a crowd of Serrans and non Serrans. We gathered in the parish hall at Holy Family. The day started out with Mass celebrated by Father Cheeyoon Chun, the next Director of Vocations. Then we enjoyed an array of continental breakfast items while registration continued. The speaker this year was



Monsignor John Urell. His theme was "Return, Rend, Repent and Rejoice." He was a fitting speaker choice for this location as Holy Family was Urell's first assignment as a priest in 1978 where he was associate pastor for five years. He was the first chaplain of the City of Orange Serra Club which he helped found. He is now retired after most recently serving as Pastor of St. Timothy in Laguna Niguel.

John Urell was inspired to be a priest when he was approached by Serrans Joe and Debbie O'Connor. In answer to his question as to why they thought he should be a priest they replied, "Because you're a nice guy and you get along with people." This is a reminder of the importance of asking and encouraging young men to be priests.

Monsignor began his talk recalling his baptism on October 21, 1951 at St. Joachim in Costa Mesa. His godparents lived in New York City. They were his grandparents who he never met. He asked us to discuss what we know about our baptisms and godparents. He said that later we will see why he had us start out talking about baptism.

As the theme for the day, he sang this refrain and then had us join in : Grant to us O Lord a heart renewed, Recreate in us your own Spirit Lord. Heart renewed. Recreate your spirit. This means it's there but it needs to be recreated and renewed and all the disciplines of Lent - prayer, fasting, almsgiving - help us do this - to renew our hearts and recreate our spirits.

The Four R words are the basis for this particular Lenten morning -Return, Rend, Repent, Rejoice.

Return - once there, left, come back - even now return to me with your whole heart. The Prodigal Son is the greatest story in scripture of return and was providentially our gospel that day. It is a practical story of return. A young man returned to where he knew he was loved God is aware we often stray, turn, walk, run away, but He is there for us. If you are in need of return to the Lord in any way, this is the season to do it. Lenten prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are ways to go about it.

Whatever we chose to do for Lent in response to the love of God for us - did we ask God if that's what He wants us to do? "I'd love to do this" you say - "yeah but you're going to do that" says God. Sometimes Lent comes at us whether we expect it or not.

If you're struggling with what you took on, it might be because the Lord didn't want you to take it on It can be a good thing for people not to be able to do their Lenten promises because it causes humility. I'm weak and You're strong, so come to my aid. Make me turn another way, perhaps.

Rend - tear into two or more pieces or tear your hair or clothing as a sign of grief or despair. Joel 2:13 says "Rend your hearts, not your garments." Rend your heart, tear your heart open so healing can begin. Outward sorrow is not enough when we sin against the law of God and the love of God. We must mean it on the inside. The spiritually proper

response to sin is a rending of our hearts, humbling ourselves in confession and repentance. We don't just slip into sin and we don't just slip out of it. We need to reflect on how to change our ways with God's help.

Repent - a deeper meaning comes from the Greek word metanoia, a shifting or changing of one's mind that then gets one to change their heart and then their behavior. Change the way I think and I'll change the way I act. It's a 3 step process that starts with repentance.

Rejoice - During the season of Lent? Yes. An example is the wonderful phrase in the Exsultet that is sung at the Easter Vigil. "O necessary sin of Adam that gained for us so great a Redeemer."

Rejoice in the Lord always does not mean to be happy but rather a deep joy in the presence and power of our Lord in our lives. In what do you rejoice even in the season of Lent? Even at a funeral during Lent we sing alleluia before the gospel. Why? Because we believe in the resurrection and we believe that the Lord who has created us and redeemed us will bring us home.

When we talk about returning, rending, repenting and rejoicing we are getting ready for the crescendo of the Lenten season.

Let's go back now to baptism - the crescendo of the Lenten season. All that we've been doing during Lent leads us to a decisive moment at Easter Sunday Mass when we renew our baptismal promises. Anything that you and I might do under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit during the season of Lent is all going to be focused on the 6 questions that will be asked of us at Easter Mass. The 6 questions are renouncing sin, the lure of evil and Satan and affirming our beliefs (basically the Creed). If what you're doing is not going to get you ready to answer those questions then drop it right now.

After the 6 questions we have the sprinkling with holy water. Monsignor noted that the way people avoid it, you'd think it was Clorox. It's holy water. Try opening your arms wide accepting it this Easter as a reminder of the gift of baptismal water. When we enter church we put our hand in the holy water font - hand in the water, sign of the cross. We are heading toward baptismal renewal.

Monsignor then handed out a scripture passage (Romans 12:1-2, 9-18) for us to do Lectio Divina - a very short version of a holy reading of the scripture. This particular scripture passage struck him as a perfect way to do some introspection on whether we are returning, rending, repenting and joyful in this Lenten season. It may be powerful for you in your own prayer and perhaps in your own preparation for the sacrament of penance during the Lenten season. He read it slowly then had us read it silently and circle a word or phrase that stands out to us. We asked the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and our minds and our souls to hear God's holy word.

Lectio Divina is a way of reading the scripture that allows me to look at the text word by word; allows me to be struck, surprised by a phrase, a sentence or a word; that allows God to speak to me through scripture - to me alone; to ask the question, perhaps, what is God asking of me from this scripture; to be able to spend time in conversation with the Lord and say this is what I think you're asking of me, is it so? How do you respond to the Lord with one or the other of these phrases?

It is Monsignor Urell's conviction that whatever word or phrase you center on is that on which God wishes to spend time with you. That is the phrase today for you and whatever it leads you to.

We walked over to the church in silence for half hour adoration pondering the scripture reading. We came back and shared either what phrase grabbed our heart, soul or mind or what was that experience of silence like. We shared in small group first and then with the whole group.

The only way any kind of change, repenting, rending, etc. can occur is because we know we are loved and so we respond to love. It is the one thing that will change me. Fear of Hell will work only if coupled with love of God and wanting to be with him forever.

Monsignor then focused on the 2nd reading for Ash Wednesday - the letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, kind of what this is all leading toward. After I renew my baptismal promises on Easter Sunday then maybe I will take more seriously the words of St. Paul. "Brothers and Sisters, we are ambassadors for Christ. God as it were appealing through us."

And so the priest says, "The Mass is ended go glorify the Lord by your life."

We are in the midst of the 3 year Eucharistic Revival movement in the US. How do we live our lives as men and women of the Eucharist? We receive the Body and Blood of Christ and live as if we are renewed and revitalized and given the Body and Blood of Christ into our bodies and souls. What we eat, we become. None of us is off the hook as ambassadors for Christ.

An Ambassador for Christ needs to know His ways, His heart, His mind. I have to be willing to change my mind if needed, to repent if needed, to return to the Lord. God uses each of us to proclaim His good news. If we don't, we need to ask, "What have I not done that I've been asked to do?" So we sharpen our focus during Lent. Keep it moving in the Easter season whatever happened in Lent to change your heart. We want to be restless in our faith until we finally rest in Jesus Christ at the end of time.

St. Paul is very serious when he writes that each of us will have to give an accounting of our lives in the flesh when we appear before the Lord. This is not to scare us but rather is a wakeup call and to realize that we were created in love, our lives will end in love and we will be judged on love.

Continue to have a Blessed Lenten season.

Happy Easter! 

In God's Love,
Catherine Walton

**SERRAN BIRTHDAYS IN MARCH
JEANNE BULLINGTON
AND
JOAN GOLDING**



SPEAKER



Our dear Serran, Mary Brockschmidt, had the great pleasure of introducing her adopted seminarian Fr. Brandon Dang (Vocations Director) as our February guest speaker. Although Fr. Brandon has visited our club in previous years, his presence today was a happy occasion in which we were all able to share in his faith journey and his gratitude to the Serra Club.

Fr. Brandon began his talk by thanking the Serrans for their love and support and how Jesus has led him to meet so many people, beginning with his own parish, St. Nicholas. He reminisced about his early years as a seminarian and how Fr. John Neneman helped him to discern about the priesthood. He was assigned on summer break to St. Cecilia's parish along with his good friend and fellow seminarian, the future Fr. Duy. It was here at St. Cecilia's that Mary Brockschmidt came up to him and exclaimed that he was going to be her adopted seminarian! He also remembers her delicious brownies.

Our Lady Queen of Angels was Fr. Brandon's first assignment, which he recalls fondly. He was having such a great time in Newport Beach that he was going to ask for an extended time at the parish. Surprisingly, while preparing for 8:30am Mass, the Bishop's secretary phones him asking him to come see Bishop Vann that very morning at 10:30. Nervous and contemplating on how to start dialogue with the Bishop, he was quickly relieved of the pressure when Bishop flatly tells him that he is going to be the next Vocations Director. His first reaction was that of concern, as he was only 2 ½ years ordained and not yet finished his first assignment. With a fatherly tone, Bishop Vann explained that he saw in Fr. Brandon "an aura of joy".

As Vocations Director, Fr. Brandon has learned to love the bride of Christ, the Church, even more. He states that the Church is about people and the priests coming in are to be entrusted to these souls. Therefore, his job is to vet and guide because what matters is quality and not quantity. At present there are 23 seminarians: 14 at St. John's Seminary, 7 at Mount Angel and 2 at Bishop White in Spokane, WA. Halfway through formation, seminarians go back to the diocese where Bishop assigns them to a parish to get a full parish experience. The PPF (Promulgation of Priestly Formation) 6th Edition promulgated this last August the following disciplines: 1. The Propaedeutic stage during the last year (focuses on the human level and not just academia). 2. Discipleship 3. Vocational Synthesis. There is also a huge change in the order of the diaconate. The last year of seminary is cut in half and formation is compacted and seminarians are ordained deacons six months prior to being ordained priests and deacons have completed seminary education.

In March of last year, Fr. Cheeyoon came in as Associate Vocations Director to help Fr. Brandon and in July will take over as Vocations Director. Fr. Brandon is still unaware of where he will be assigned but he can be assured of Serrans' continuous prayers and gratitude for his faithful service.

Gabriella Negrete

VOCATIONS REPORT



The seminarian who received the gift card for March, donated by Jeanne Bullington, is John Huan Nguyen. John is from Our Lady of La Vang Parish and is in Theology/Configuration Stage 2 at St. John's Seminary. Presently, John has not been adopted by anyone in our Serra Club.

I received a very thoughtful note from my adopted seminarian, Cody Schurter. Cody talked to our club member, Sophia Wickson, at his parish in Yorba Linda. Sophia shared that I recently had a valve procedure for my heart. Cody expressed his concern and said he had me in his prayers. I'm blessed that many friends have held me in prayer. The prayers really have helped me to feel better.

Cody's father was ordained a Deacon last year and he was also happy that his parents have now moved back to California. I do appreciate that Cody has been very responsive to my contacts. I have to share that the reason I adopted him is because we share the same birthday, February 15th. How special is that.

VOCATIONS PRAYER: O God, Who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of Your truth, send, we beg You, laborers into Your harvest, and grant them grace to speak Your word with all boldness, so that Your word may spread and be glorified, and all nations may know You, the only God, and Him Whom you have sent, Jesus Christ Your Son, Our Lord, Who lives and reigns, world without end. Amen.

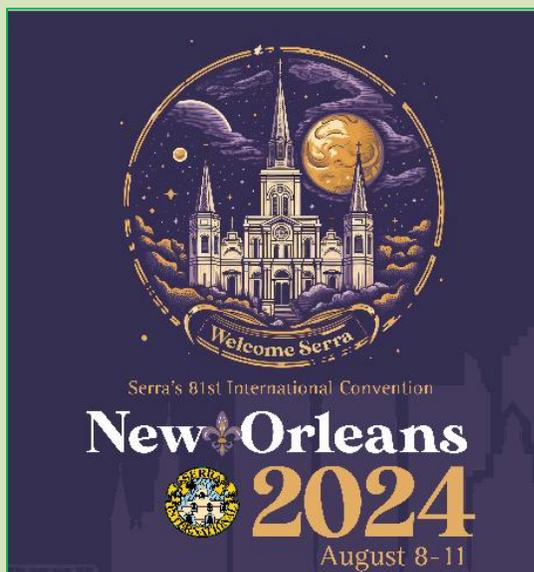
Any questions concerning discernment contact our Vocations Director, Father Brandon Dang at 714-

282-3036 or bdang@rcbo.org or Father Brandon's Associate, Father Cheeyoon Chun. Father's assistant, Elizabeth Sandoval, can be reached at esandoval@rcbo.org.

Mary Brockschmidt
Vice President, Vocations



June Craig (2009) and Mary Brockschmidt (2006) receive pins for 10 or more years of service to the Serra Club of Orange County



Serra International Convention

NEW ORLEANS – AUGUST 8-11, 2024

Join us for Serra's 81st International Convention in vibrant New Orleans, the perfect destination for an unforgettable convention! Immerse yourself in the rich Catholic heritage of the city, explore the beautiful St. Louis Cathedral, stroll the renowned French Quarter, and savor delicious Cajun cuisine while connecting with Serrans from around the world!