

# 1 life Christ

Insights into the Diocesan Priesthood

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Issue No. 9 March-April 2006  
Published by the Serra Club of Singapore  
at Church of the Holy Cross (info@serrasingapore.org)



The seminarians, priests and His Grace, Archbishop Nicholas Chia at the Charter Mass

## Serra Club of Singapore Formed

*"For the love of Christ and His chosen ones"*

The Serra Club of Singapore was inaugurated with a charter mass celebrated by our Archbishop, His Grace Nicholas Chia and concelebrated by 8 priests on 10 February 2006 at the Church of the Holy Cross. The club will be based at the Church of the Holy Cross and is the number 1082 club of Serra International. Father Richards Ambrose is the Club's Chaplain who will advise the club on spiritual and church matters.

### What is Serra Club

Serra Club is an international Catholic organization of lay people dedicated to fostering and promoting vocations to the ordained priesthood and consecrated religious life in the Catholic Church. The organisation is named after Blessed Junipero Serra (see separate story), a Franciscan Missionary who brought Catholicism to the US. It has a membership of over 20,000 Catholic lay men and women in 37 countries

around the world. The Holy See affirms Serra's role as the "vocation arm" of the Holy Catholic Church. Though it has a history of more than 70 years, Serra Club seems to be the Catholic Church's best-kept secret because up till now, the majority of Catholics here (and possibly elsewhere) do not know what Serra Club is all about.

Before forming the Serra Club of Singapore, the team was also promoting vocations to the Diocesan priesthood (at parish level) at the Church of the Holy Cross since 2002. Since learning about Serra International and its work last year, with the Lord's grace, the team was able to set up the Serra Club of Singapore to continue its mission to foster and promote more priestly vocations in the Catholic Church in Singapore. Being part of an international organisation has its benefits too as the Singapore team can tap on worldwide resources and experiences of other Clubs to further vocation promotion activities in Singapore. Another plus point is the fact that Serra International emphasises the sanctification of its members through specific programmes, to strengthen the members' own vocations to service as Christians. This is especially important as members need to be rooted spiritually in order to better serve with humility.

### Archbishop on Vocations Promotion

Over 150 guests, including some 15 overseas Serrans from Thailand and the Philippines, several priests and the seminarians attended the Charter Mass, which took place on a Friday evening. During his homily, His Grace shared on the importance of this ministry to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life. He encouraged the members to focus on prayer and be guided by the Holy Spirit in planning the activities ahead. He also exhorted all present to play a role, as promoting vocations should be the work of the whole community and not left to just a few individuals or the priests. To the Serrans of Singapore, it was an inspiring message and an affirmation as we embark on this new journey.



Fr. William Goh, Rector of SFX Major Seminary and Fr. Richards Ambrose, Chaplain of the Club con-celebrated the Charter Mass.

Following the homily, the President of the club, Sean Yeo together with the five Vice-Presidents (each in charge of a particular area of the ministry) stepped forward to receive a gift from Serra International, which was presented through the Archbishop. Next was the induction ceremony for all members (14 in total) of the club where each member pledged their time, their efforts and prayers to furthering vocations and deepening their own Christian faith. Members also received their respective Membership Certificate from the Archbishop.

It was a simple yet very meaningful Charter Mass. There was a sense of great joy not only visible on the faces of the Serra Club of Singapore members but on everyone who came for the mass.

Following the charter mass, the celebration continued with all the guests adjourning to The NUSS Guild House at Kent Ridge for dinner to commemorate this momentous occasion.

### Charter Dinner

The dinner started with a video presentation highlighting the importance of the priesthood as priests are the only ones who can celebrate mass and consecrate the Eucharist – in other words, bringing the Real Presence of Jesus to the people of God. The video went on to paint the state of the priesthood in Singapore and from the figures shown, we are in a crisis situation if nothing is done to promote more vocations to the priesthood.

Following the video, our Archbishop was invited to bless the symbol for the Serra Club of Singapore, which is to be kept in the residence of the incumbent President. The symbol is a picture that contains the logo of the Club, the



Sean Yeo, Archbishop Nicholas Chia and Chainarong (Immediate Past President of Serra Int'l) holding the Charter.



Members of the Serra Club of Singapore being inducted.

Serran Prayer for Vocations and the tagline of the club. Then it was the Club's turn to surprise and present our Archbishop with a token of our love and appreciation of him – by offering perpetual masses every Friday and a perpetual spiritual bouquet of 15 decades of the Rosary to be prayed daily on a collective basis by the Singapore Serrans for the intentions of His Grace. This is done in the spirit and mission of Serra International as it also aims to affirm current vocations.

Next in the programme, were speeches from the Chaplain of the Serra Club of Singapore, Father Richards Ambrose and Mr Chainarong Monthienvichienchai, the immediate past President of Serra International. Both shared their joy at the formation of the club and encouraged all present to pray for more vocations.

Franciscan Friar, Father Kim Suela, a National Coordinator of Serra Philippines National Council and Chaplain of the Serra Club of Makati City also came on stage to share his vision on promoting vocations. He also led our overseas Serran friends to sing a song to celebrate the occasion.

### For the love of Christ and His chosen ones

Sean Yeo rounded up the evening's celebration with a closing address and shared on the mission of the club – "As you may be aware, our tagline is *For the love of Christ and His chosen ones*". The key word here is love. We strongly believe that vocations promotion is not about hard selling the priesthood. It is about inspiring Catholics; young and old, to love Christ, His priests and His Church in a deeper way. Only when we truly love Our Lord, will we then be able to pray and offer our children for God's service. Only when we truly love Our Lord, will we then not be fearful when He calls."



The other 6 priests who concelebrated at the Charter Mass.



Sean Yeo presenting a spiritual cheque to Archbishop Nicholas Chia at the Charter Dinner Celebration.

# Blessed Junipero Serra



Blessed Junipero Serra may not be a familiar name to many of us, however this Franciscan missionary is a revered figure in the Catholic Church of the United States. Having been inspired by Blessed Junipero Serra's life, the founding members of Serra International, decided to name the organisation after Serra, hence the name Serra International and Serra Clubs.

Blessed Junipero Serra was born in 1713, Spain. At the age of 16 he entered the service of the Catholic Church and having sensed a call to religious life, he became a Franciscan. Later he went through a collegiate course of study and received the degree of Doctor and was appointed lecturer of philosophy. He followed an academic career as a university professor. He became a noted preacher, and was frequently invited to visit the larger towns of his native island in that capacity.

## Setting Up Missions in US

Blessed Serra was thirty-six years of age when he became a missionary in the New World. He left Spain and sailed for Vera Cruz, Mexico. Blessed Serra chose to forgo the use of a horse and traveled with no provisions from Vera Cruz to Mexico City. He dedicated his missionary vocation at the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. It was also during this time when he injured his leg in such a way that he suffered from it throughout his life.

Blessed Serra himself established nine missions in the Western US, beginning with San Diego in 1769, followed by those in San Carlos Borromeo, San Antonio de Padua, San Gabriel Arcángel, San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, San Francisco de Asís, San Juan Capistrano, Santa Clara de Asís and San Buenaventura, with a total of twenty-one missions eventually being established in the US.

Francisco Palóu, a close friend of Blessed Serra for forty years wrote how Blessed Serra approached his work with a "child's enthusiasm." He was a man of extraordinary single-mindedness and a man to whom

his religion was everything. Purity of heart is to will one thing and Serra certainly was among the pure in heart. Every chapter of his life reveals this sense that nothing mattered to him but the desire to serve God. It instilled in him a perseverance that carried him through incredible hardships and led him to prodigious accomplishments. Blessed Serra embodied his own saying of "always to go forward and never to turn back."

## Always Open to God's Call

He was also a man who remained open to God's call throughout his life. He showed us that following one's vocation is a dynamic, ongoing process rather than a one-time decision. Within his decision to choose a religious vocation, he remained faithful to listening to ways that God was furthering His call for him. It was a vocation within a vocation.

Blessed Serra found sanctity amidst the dust and drudgery of the mission trail, the crucible of constant physical pain, the routine of administration, the messiness of politics, the complexity of personnel problems and the anxieties of financing large enterprises. Knowing what it must have taken to build the missions, establish schools and regulate the interaction of the Spanish and Native American cultures, one easily see that Blessed Serra was a strong and competent man immersed in the demands of everyday life.

Besides extraordinary fortitude, his most conspicuous virtues were insatiable zeal, love of mortification, self-denial, and absolute confidence in God. All his actions were governed by the ever-present and predominant idea that life is a brief probation, trembling between eternal perdition on one side, and salvation on the other.

Blessed Serra's religious conviction also found in him a congenial mental constitution. He was even-tempered, obedient, zealous, humble and quiet. He had no quarrels and made no enemies. He sought to be a monk, and he was one in sincerity.

At the age of 70, and after traveling 24,000 miles, Blessed Serra died on 28 August 1783 at the Mission San Carlos Borromeo and is buried there under the sanctuary floor.

## Pope John Paul II on Blessed Serra

The late Holy Father, Pope John Paul II spoke about the significance of Blessed Serra, identifying him as "the apostle of California", "Very often at crucial moments in human affairs God raises up men and women whom he thrusts into roles of decisive importance for the future development of both society and the Church. Although their story unfolds within the ordinary circumstances of daily life, they become larger than life within the perspective of history. We rejoice all the more when their achievement is coupled with a holiness of life that can truly be called heroic. So it is with Junipero Serra, who in the providence of God was destined to be the apostle of California and to have a permanent influence over the spiritual patrimony of this land and its people.... Through Christ's paschal mystery, [the death of Serra] has become a seed in the soil of this state that continues to bear fruit "thirty- or sixty- or a hundredfold (Mt 13:9)."

**If you are interested to be a member of the Serra Cub of Singapore, please visit our website: [www.serrasingapore.org](http://www.serrasingapore.org) for more information or email us at [info@serrasingapore.org](mailto:info@serrasingapore.org)**

# A BOLD move for a Radical Calling ...

In a bold but refreshing move to reach out to the Catholic community, the St. Francis Xavier Major Seminary Fathers and seminarians have decided to harness the power of the Internet to publicise their Recollection Programme for 2006 via a chain email.

Hence, if you have recently received the email published below, please do not delete it, it is for real. ... Do pass it on to all our Catholic brothers and sisters out there. Let the whole Catholic community know about the needs of the church and be united in prayers.

Dear Friends,

Wishing you the peace and joy of our Lord Jesus Christ!

It has been some years now since our local Church embarked on our intensive programme of praying for vocations to the priesthood and religious life and we are confident that the Lord has heard the prayers of His people to send labourers to the harvest. Our local Diocesan Seminary is committed to participating in the Lord's plan of salvation amongst the men of today whom He is inviting to share in His work of shepherding His flock.

### To young men:

Thus, in the Name of the Lord of the Harvest, we would like to invite each of you, young man who receives this mail to consider seriously if the Lord is inviting you in the silence of your heart to serve Him in a radical and life-changing way. We would like to affirm our support to those of you who may feel the gentle nudging of the Lord and are trying to discover where these movements in your heart are leading you. Whatever the will of the Lord is, we can be sure that His will for each of us will be the abundance of life He promises and that His grace will be sufficient every step of the way. For our part, we will be organising quarterly Recollections to assist young men like yourselves in further exploring these stirrings within you and possibly discerning the gift of a priestly vocation that the Lord may be presenting to you. The details of the Recollections for 2006 are as follows:

### Dates/Speakers

<b>24 - 25 March</b> Rev Fr Ambrose Vaz	<b>26 - 27 May</b> Rev Fr Kenson Koh	<b>25 - 26 August</b> Rev Fr William Goh	<b>24 - 25 November</b> Rev Msgr Eugene Vaz
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**Note:** All Recollections are stay in at the Seminary and are Free of Charge. The Recollections will begin at 8pm on Friday night (kindly have your own dinner) and will end after lunch on Saturday at 1pm. Please inform us of your attendance by e-mailing [seminariansonline@gmail.com](mailto:seminariansonline@gmail.com) preferably 1 week before the respective Recollections and a seminarian will get in touch with you. These Recollections are only opportunities to meet and pray with the Seminary community and no commitment will be expected on the part of the participant.

We would like to use this opportunity to invite all young men who are 18 years old and above to attend these Recollections with us. However, those of you who are not ready to attend the Recollections or simply may have some questions that you would like to ask a Seminarian, are most welcome to write to us at [seminariansonline@gmail.com](mailto:seminariansonline@gmail.com) and we will be more than willing to share our thoughts with you.

### To all God's people:

We thank you for your concern and faith-filled response in interceding for more vocations in Singapore over these past few years and we would like to urge you to continue your prayerful efforts in the Lord's work of inviting young men to consider this beautiful vocation to serve as Shepherds of God's flock. Please continue to pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and continue being the mouthpiece of God in inviting and encouraging young men to take the bold step of seeking God's will in their lives. We would greatly appreciate your help in forwarding this e-mail to your relatives, friends, church/prayer groups and especially to young men whom you feel the Lord may be inviting to embark on this journey.

May all our united efforts in love of God and His Church bear much fruit for the Kingdom.

God bless,  
Fathers and Seminarians  
St. Francis Xavier Major Seminary  
Archdiocese of Singapore



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